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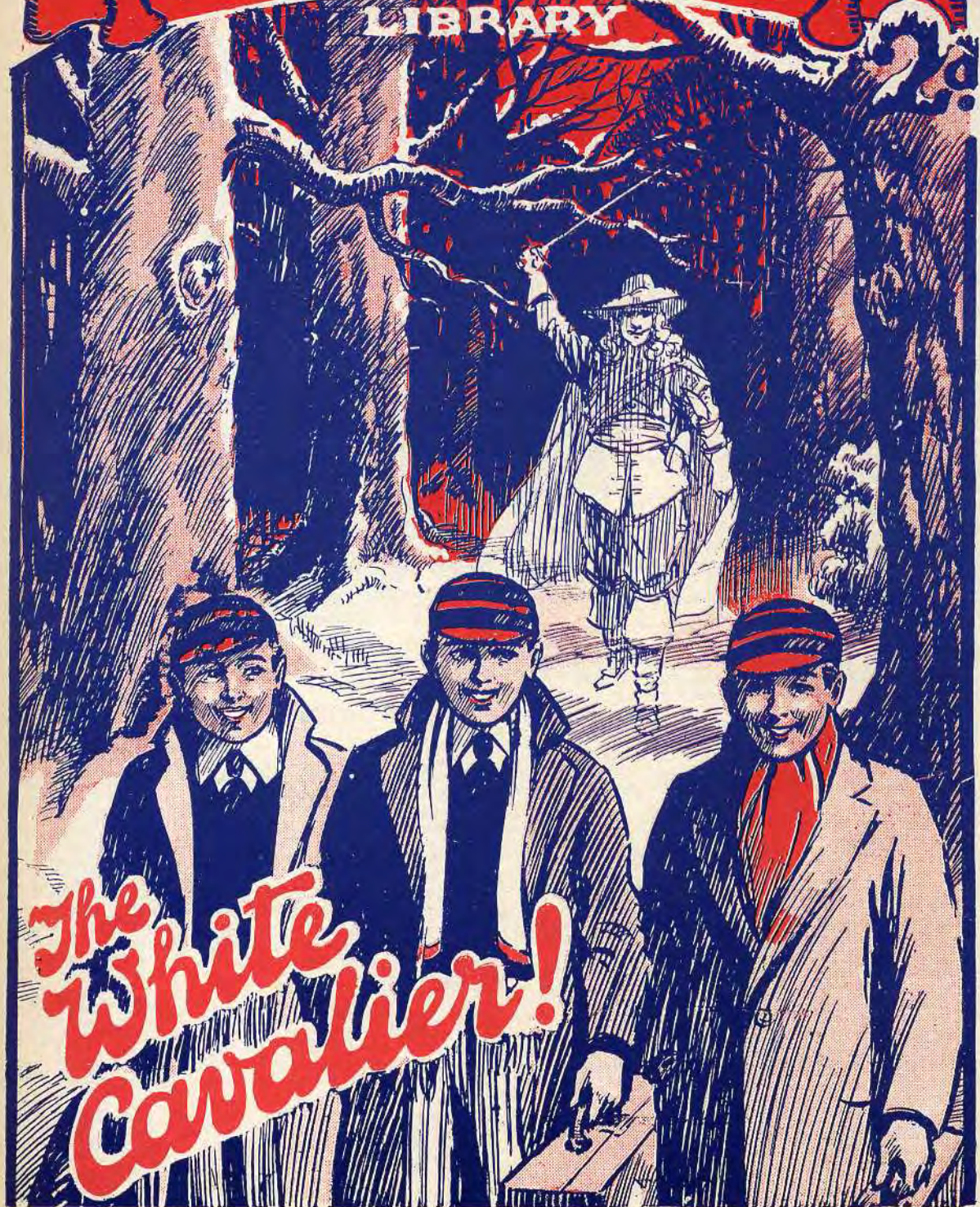
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A GRAND LONG STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., DEALING—

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Cardew!

"MASTER CARDEW!"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Ralph Reckness Cardew of the St. Jim's Fourth.

He stopped.

His companions, Levison and Clive of the Fourth, stopped also. Both of them frowned.

Cardew did not frown. He smiled whimsically at the man who had addressed him on the lonely road two or three miles from Reckness Towers in the winter dusk.

Levison and Clive were staying with Cardew for the Christmas holidays. They were returning now from a long ramble over the moors—in which Cardew had rather reluctantly joined his comrades. The slacker of the Fourth preferred to take things easily—very easily. But with two such energetic friends as Levison and Clive, things were not always to be taken easily.

From the shadows of the leafless trees by the road a figure had suddenly emerged.

It was that of a squat man, muffled up in a shabby overcoat and muffler, with a cap pulled down over his low forehead. His face—what could be seen of it—was far from prepossessing, and his eyes glinted like those of a rat.

"Hold on a minute, Master Cardew!"

"Certainly," drawled Cardew. "Anythin' to oblige!"

"Oh, come on!" said Levison impatiently.

Cardew shook his head.

"This gentleman wishes to speak to me, Ernest, old bean," he answered. "Where are your manners?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Clive. "You don't know the man."

"Not from Adam."

"Well, come on, then."

To Levison and Clive, the shabby man looked like a tramp or a footpad; it was easy to see that he was, at least, a suspicious character.

"You see, the gentleman knows me, though I don't know him," said Cardew gravely. "As the proverb says, more people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows. Where did I have the pleasure of makin' your esteemed acquaintance, my tattered friend?"

"You don't remember me, Master Cardew?"

"Have I really seen you before?"

"You have, sir, more'n once."

"Then I must apologise for forgettin' your existence," said Cardew. "Why didn't you forget mine? One good turn deserves another!"

"I want to speak to you, sir——"

"Fire away!"

"Alone, if you don't mind, Master Cardew," said the man, with a glint of his black, rat-like eyes.

"Dear man, I haven't any secrets from my friends," said Cardew urbanely. "You can cut on."

"I've been looking for a chance to speak to you for days, sir. I knew you'd be at Reckness Towers for the holidays, and I've been hanging about. You see, it's important."

"I think I understand," said Cardew, with great gravity. "Owing to a strong and insurmountable disinclination to work, you find yourself up against it financially. You happen to know that I am well provided with cash, and you see no reason why some of the cash should not pass into your possession. If I'd been alone, you'd have knocked me on the head with that cudgel you've got under your arm—what?"

The man muttered something under his breath.

Levison and Clive grinned.

Certainly, the fellow looked a dangerous character to meet on a lonely road at nightfall.

"Bein' with my friends, I'm not knockable on the head."

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They look upon Cardew as a slacker, but there are times when the dandy of the Fourth can exert himself. He certainly shows great activity and interest in his attempt to solve the mystery of the White Cavalier, and you'll follow his whimsical methods with full enjoyment.—ED.

so to put it," went on Cardew, "so you are claimin' old acquaintance and a loan. Have I got it right?"

"Step aside for a few minutes, sir, and let me tell you——"

"Who are you?" demanded Cardew.

"You remember Jimmy the Rat, sir?"

"Ye gods! What a name!"

Cardew reflected. His brow darkened, and his comrades, looking at him, could see that the strange name recalled something to his memory—something that was not pleasant.

"I remember," he said curtly.

"Now you'll let me speak to you, sir, in private?"

The Fourth-Former of St. Jim's hesitated a moment.

"You fellows mind hanging on a minute or two?" he asked apologetically. "I won't keep you long."

Without waiting for an answer, Cardew of the Fourth moved aside with the shabby man.

Levison and Clive stood where they were, watching the two. They were well aware that the scapegrace of St. Jim's had a good many questionable acquaintances whom they had never seen. Apparently, "Jimmy the Rat" was one.

"Well?" said Cardew crisply, when they were out of hearing. "Cut it short, my man. My grandfather's expectin' me home."

"I'm up against it, sir," said Jimmy the Rat. "It's some time since you've seen me, sir; but you remember I did some things for you?"

Cardew's lip curled.

"I remember you carried messages for me to a look-

WITH THEIR CHRISTMAS VACATION AT EASTWOOD HOUSE!

CAVALIER!



maker when I was fool enough to back gee-gees on the races," he said. "I remember that I paid you for your services. Anythin' else?"

"I kept it dark for you, sir," said the Rat. "Lord Reckness never knew what was going on last summer holidays, sir, under his very nose."

"You were paid liberally to be discreet. Is that all?"

"No, sir, that ain't all," said the Rat sulkily. "Look here, sir, I've had bad luck, and I've been put away for six months."

"Prison?"

"Yes."

"Injustice, of course?" said Cardew sarcastically.

"I never had fair play," said Jimmy the Rat. "I was found loitering under suspicious circumstances, as they called it. The police are down on me!"

"They don't know what a nice man you are!" said Cardew.

The Rat breathed hard.

"I've been out only a few days, sir, and I'm broke to the wide. But I ain't begging, sir. I've got something put away, as soon as I can get my hands on it. But a man wants money to see him through. If you could spring a tenner, sir, it would see me clear till I can get my hands on what I've mentioned—and I'll send the tenner back, with another along of it, if you like."

Cardew stared at him.

"I haven't any tenners to chuck away," he said. "I could let you have a quid, if you're hard up. That's the limit."

"You don't believe I'd return the money?"

"I know you wouldn't."

"I give you my davy, sir, that in a few days I can have my hands on five hundred pounds," said the Rat hoarsely.

"Whose?" grinned Cardew.

"That's neither here nor there, sir. I've got something hidden away, and I know where to look for it—but a man must live. It's hidden safe; but it may take me a day to find it, or a week—p'raps longer. You see, I was in a hurry when I shoved it out of sight, and—"

"Peelers after you?"

"P'raps—and p'raps not. Anyhow, that's the truth."

Cardew eyed him curiously.

The man, so far as he knew him, had been a racing rough. He had made use of the fellow, paid him for his services, and forgotten his existence. He did not like being reminded of it; he would have preferred to forget all about that little outbreak of blackguardism the last summer holidays. But such acquaintances are easier to make than to get rid of, as Ralph Reckness Cardew had discovered before.

"You don't believe me?" muttered the Rat, eyeing Cardew half-appealingly, half-savagely.

"Of course not," Cardew shrugged his shoulders. "In any case, I couldn't, and wouldn't have any dealin's with you, James. But don't tell me any fairy tales about the five hundred pounds. You've never had a tenth part as much in your hands in your life."

"Look 'ere, sir, I'll tell you!" whispered the Rat. "I'll put it straight. It's a diamond necklace!"

"What?"

"I had it in my hands," whispered the Rat eagerly. "But they was after me. I was seen getting down from a window, and it was a hot chase. They'd have had it, but I cut across a wood, sir, and shoved it out of sight in a hole in a tree-trunk. Ten minutes after that I was run down and searched; but, as they found nothing on me, they had to believe that I wasn't the man they was after; it was easy to make a mistake in the dark. But I couldn't go back then and hunt for the necklace; I had to clear. And only a few days afterwards, coming back, I was nabbed, and

charged with frequenting with felonious intentions, and all that. I hit a policeman, and that made it worse. They never knew anything about the necklace. I was put away; and now I'm out again, sir, I'm after it. You see—"

Cardew listened, his face growing blacker and blacker.

This man had performed questionable services for him, and kept the secret. It was evident that he had formed the opinion that Cardew was not much better than himself.

"Good gad!" breathed Cardew.

But his face cleared again. His anger was deep and bitter, but he intended to draw the man on.

"I see," he said lightly. "Let's have it clear, though. You bagged a diamond necklace—"

"That's it, sir," said Jimmy the Rat, his doubts relieved by Cardew's light tone and manner.

"From somebody's house?"

"A country house," said the Rat.

"And you hid it in a tree near by—"

"Not very near. I had run about a mile before I hid it, sir. I wasn't anxious to part with it."

"And now you want a little cash in hand, so that you can go back and retrieve the necklace?"

"Just that, sir."

"And you'll pay up when you've sold it?"

"You've got it, sir."

"And because you know that I've dabbled in backing horses, and made use of a dingy rascal like you, you dare to tell me this story," said Cardew, his light manner gone now, and his voice trembling with anger.

"Look here, sir—"

"You scoundrel!" said Cardew, between his teeth.

"Oh, come off that, Master Cardew," sneered the Rat, his eyes glinting evilly. "You ain't much better than me, if you come to that. You took in your old grandfather, and was a shady young blackguard, and you know it. You

don't dare to let me go to Lord Reckness and tell him. Cough up the tenner, and don't ask questions."

"You want my answer?"

"Yes, I do, and sharp."

"Here it is."

Crash!

Cardew's clenched fist lashed out, and all the force he could muster was behind the blow. There was a wild yell from Jimmy the Rat as he sprawled headlong across the snowy road.

CHAPTER 2.

Handling a Ruffian!



ALPH RECKNESS CARDEW stood looking down on the sprawling ruffian, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing. Jimmy the Rat sprawled and gasped helplessly on the road.

Levison and Clive ran quickly towards their chum.

"Cardew—"

"What—"

The blaze of rage in Cardew's usually impassive face startled them. From the sprawling ruffian came a torrent of curses.

But Cardew recovered his coolness in a moment or two.

He burst into a light laugh.

"Our friend Jimmy the Rat has made a little mistake," he drawled. "He is a shady rascal, and has done some shady things for me, which he thinks I would prefer my grandfather not to know. The price is a tenner—from his point of view. My view is quite different, an' I've tried to make it clear."

The Rat sat up in the snow, cursing.

"The rotter!" exclaimed Clive, hotly.

"Your own fault, Cardew," said Levison.

Ralph Reckness Cardew nodded.

"Right—you're always right, old bean," he said. "My own fault entirely. But it was really thick. Mr. Jimmy's opinion of me is altogether too uncomplimentary. You will be interested to hear that some time ago he stole a diamond necklace from a country house, which he hid in a hollow tree a mile from the scene of the robbery—"

"Eh?"

"And having retired since from the public view for six months, he has been unable to search for it," continued Cardew. "It may be rather a difficult search, as he shoved it into a tree in a wood in the dark. He requires some ready cash to keep him goin'—see? And he thinks I'm not a particular sort of chap. He really thinks that I'm not at all shocked at such proceedings. And I'm to have my tenner back when he's sold the stolen necklace."

"Good heavens!"

Cardew's chums stared at him aghast.

"A little mistake on his part, as I've tried to make clear to him," drawled Cardew.

Levison drew a deep breath.

"If you mix with the scum of the racecourse, what do you expect them to think of you?" he said. "The man's a thief, and he thinks you're no better."

Cardew winced.

His pride had been bitterly wounded. He had, in reckless hours, mingled with such wretches as Jimmy the Rat; he could not have failed to give them the impression that he was a reckless young rascal. But that they should have regarded him as being one of themselves was a bitter wound to his pride. In his eyes, Jimmy the Rat was a dog to fetch and carry at his bidding. In the Rat's mind Cardew was another such rogue as himself, only more fortunately placed in the world. It was difficult, and very bitter, for Cardew to realise that he could have been so regarded by anyone.

The Rat staggered to his feet.

"You young hound!" he muttered thickly. "You put on airs with me. You make out you're better than I am. You're worse, 'cause you're rich, and you needn't do anything shady except that you like it!"

"A hit—a very palpable hit!" drawled Cardew. "From a certain point of view, my young friends, I am worse than James."

"Oh, chuck it, and come on!" said Clive gruffly.

Jimmy the Rat gripped his stick hard.

"You ain't done with me yet," he said savagely. "You want me to come to Reckness Towers and see his lordship—what?"

Cardew laughed contemptuously.

"Come as soon as you like—and you'll be kicked off my grandfather's land like a dog!" he answered. "I shall tell

Lord Reckness the whole story myself, you crass fool, now that you've started to use the matter as a threat!"

The Rat gritted his teeth.

"That chicken won't fight," said Cardew scornfully. "Now get out of the way before I handle you again."

"You ain't going afore you've shelled out," said the ruffian hoarsely. "Make it a fiver, and go!"

"I'll make it a thick ear, if you like!"

"Then take what you're askin' for!"

And the ruffian made a sudden rush at Cardew, whirling up the cudgel.

"Look out!"

But Cardew was looking out.

He leaped back and avoided the slash of the heavy stick, and at the same moment Ernest Levison leaped at the ruffian, and struck. His clenched fist landed on the side of the Rat's head, and the man went staggering.

Before he could recover, Sidney Clive had struck, and Jimmy the Rat collapsed into the snow.

Cardew coolly picked up his cudgel, and sent it whirling away over the leafless branches.

"Have some more, James?" he asked lightly.

A groan was the only answer.

"He's had enough, my dear young friends," said Cardew. "Shall we be gettin' on, after this pleasant and friendly meetin'?"

"Come on," said Clive.

And the three juniors tramped on up the dusky road, leaving Jimmy the Rat sprawling in the snow and groaning.

They walked on in silence, till Reckness Towers rose in the distance against the gloomy sky.

Cardew's lightness of manner was gone again; his handsome face was dark and moodv.

"By gad! I wish we'd run that rotter in now, you fellows," he said at last.

"Oh, let the brute rip," said Levison. "You're done with him now, at all events."

Cardew laughed.

"But it was too thick," he said. "Still, I'm done with him, as you say. He won't dare to show up at Reckness Towers; and I don't care two straws if he does. In fact, if he does, I'll have him run in, on his own confession of havin' committed a robbery."

"What on earth does he think of you, to tell you such a story?" muttered Clive.

"Well, I led him on and pulled his leg a little, you see," smiled Cardew. "But for that I don't think he'd have been quite so frank. It's rather an interestin' story, too—in some country-house, somebody has lost a diamond necklace; and the giddy treasure is hidden in a hole in a tree about a mile from the place, and nobody knows. Even the Rat doesn't seem clear exactly where he put it—he will have to search for it to find it. Now, if I'd got a few more details from him, we might have found a little harmless and necessary amusement in huntin' for the giddy diamonds ourselves—"

"What rot!" said Clive. "Might be a hundred miles away."

"Or two or three hundred," said Levison.

Cardew nodded.

"That's so—anywhere in Great Britain, I suppose. But come to think of it, the police ought to know about it—if they can get hold of Mr. Jimmy, they can make him tell them where he put the necklace, perhaps. It belongs to somebody, and that somebody ought to have it back."

"That's so," said Clive.

"You'd better tell Lord Reckness the whole story when we get in," said Levison. "He can communicate with the police—and they can get after that scoundrel."

"That's the programme," assented Cardew.

The following day Jimmy the Rat was being looked for by a number of men in blue who were very anxious to find him.

But the Rat, on his side, was evidently not anxious for a meeting.

He had vanished.

Obviously, the rascal had given up hope of obtaining any assistance from Cardew; he realised his mistake, and he was keeping very carefully clear of the neighbourhood of Reckness Towers.

In a few days Cardew had dismissed the matter from his volatile mind. He had quite forgotten it by the time the day came round for the three Fourth-Formers to go on to Eastwood House, to join Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's house-party there.

Certainly Ralph Reckness Cardew never expected to hear again from "Jimmy the Rat," or to see that unsavoury individual. But it was the unexpected that was destined to happen.

CHAPTER 3.

Something Like a Ghost Story!



"O it, Gussy?"

"If you fellows would weally like to heah—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Pile in!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, adjusted his celebrated eyeglass in his noble eye, and glanced round at the circle of faces in the old oak-panelled hall of Eastwood House.

Snow was falling without, in the deep December dusk; the winter wind wailed among the old trees in the park, and whistled round roofs and chimneys. But in the dusky old hall a great log fire diffused warmth and comfort, casting strange lights and shadows among the armoured figures and the hunting trophies on the old walls. The firelight was soft and pleasant, glowing on cheerful and bright young faces, on the green leaves and red berries of the Christmas holly.

"Shall we put the light on, you fellows?"

There was a chorus in the negative.

"Oh, no!" said Cousin Ethel. "The firelight for a ghost story."

"Just the thing," said Tom Merry. "We should miss the thrill in the electric light."

"Shove another log on the fire," said Blake.

Tom Merry tossed a fresh log into the glowing embers in the old wide grate.

A shower of sparks shot up, and for a moment or two the old hall was illumined, and a crowd of faces came out of the shadows.

Tom Merry and Lowther and Manners, of the St. Jim's Shell, were there—and Blake and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth, Wally of the Third, and his friends, Reggie Manners and Frank Levison, sat in a row on a settee, and next to Frank sat Doris Levison, and next to her Cousin Ethel. Farther back in the shadows, the scent of a cigar betrayed the presence of Lord Conway, Arthur Augustus' elder brother.

The sparks died down, and faces grew indistinct again, in the ruddy glow.

"Go it, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "We're waiting for you to make our flesh creep."

"As a mattah of fact, Lowthah, it is wathah a thwillin' stow," said Arthur Augustus. "I twast that it will not make you gals feel fwightened."

"I think not," said Cousin Ethel, with a smile.

"If you feel feahfully fwightened, you know, we'll turn on the electwice light at once," said Arthur Augustus.

"Please don't," said Doris Levison. "We'll try very hard to keep calm."

There was a chuckle from somewhere.

"Cut in, Gus," said Wally of the Third. "You're keeping us on tenterhooks, you know. And life's short."

"Weally, Wally—"

"You're a bit long-winded, old chap."

"You are a diswespectful young sweep, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I am vewy much afwaid that you do not get enough lickin's at St. Jim's. I weally considah—"

"But what about the ghost story?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway dwy up, Wally, and do not intewwupt me," said the swell of St. Jim's. "The stow is about the White Cavalier, you fellows. He lived in the weign of King What-do-you-call-him—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther. "We haven't had that

jolly old monarch in the history class at St. Jim's, that I remember."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"King Charles the First!" came Lord Conway's voice from the shadows.

"Yaas, wathah! I knew it was King Somebody."

"The chap who had his head bobbed?" said Lowther.

"Order!" said Blake.

"Well, this chap was named Sir Something D'Arcy," went on Arthur Augustus, "and was a welation of the Lord Eastwood of that time. I dare say you fellows wemembah fwom histowry lessons, that there was a feahful wow goin' on at that time between the king and the House of Commons. I suppose he considahed that they talked too much, as vewy pwobably they did. They got to fightin' about it, and Sir Thingummy D'Arcy took the side of the king."

"Sir Fulke D'Arcy!" murmured Lord Conway.

"Yaas, wathah! I knew it was somethin' or othah. Well, this chap, Sir Fulke D'Arcy, was in no end of battles and sewaps, and at one time he held this vewy house against the Parliament. He had collected a lot of money, and melted down a lot of plate, and so on, the king bein' hard up for the sinews of war; but befoah he could get away with it, some of the Ironsides came along lookin' for him,



Cardew leaped back and avoided the slash of the heavy stick, and at the same moment Ernest Levison sprang at the ruffian and struck. His clenched fist landed on the side of the Rat's head, and the man went staggering. (See Chapter 2.)

and he was besieged in this house. You can still see twaces about the place where the bullets were flyin' in those days. Are you feelin' fwightened yet, Ethel?"

"Not at all."

"Wight-ho! Now, when Sir Somethin'-or-othah found that he was goin' to be besieged, he washed his twearure away into the deer park, about a mile away, and buwied it there, so that it would be safe even if the Cwomwell chaps got hold of the house and knocked him on the head. That was wathah thoughtf'ul of him, you know, and showed gweat pwesence of mind. I wathah think that I inhewit that sort of thing fwom him. You fellows know that I am a fellow of some tact and judgment."

"We've heard you mention it," said Blake gravely.

There was an audible smile in the shadows.

"Then he was shut up in the house, with the Parliamantawians all wound him," went on D'Arcy. "There was no end of sewappin', and one wing of the house was knocked fairly ovah, and it is in wuins now, as you fellows may have noticed. The Cavaliers put up no end of a fight, but the Ironsides were too many for them, and they got the place at last."

Arthur Augustus paused.

"How Sir Thingummy got out is not vewy cleah," he continued. "I suppose he fought his way out, sword in hand, cuttin' down the cwop-eared knaves, you know. Anyhow he did get out."

"He was bunkered, and considered it time to bunk!" suggested Monty Lowthah.

"He wetweated," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "His ideah was to get to the deer park, and wecovah the tweasure he had collected for the king, and get away with it to join the Woyal forces. Unfortunately, he was ovah-taken in the deer park befoah he could cawwy out his design, and the cwop-eared knaves washed on him, and he put up a last fight undah an oak-twee, which is still standin', and there he was cut down. His fwends were——"

"Cut up, I suppose?" asked Lowther.

"Weally, you ass——"

"Order!" said Manners.

"His fwends were slain or taken pwisonah," said Arthur Augustus, "and the estate was what they called sequestered, which is a legal expression for stealin', and remained in the hands of the Parliamentawians till the Westowation. But long befoah that time, the White Cavalier began to haunt the deer park. You see, the cwop-eared blightahs knew all about the tweasure bein' buwied there, and they started huntin' for it. On a feahfully dark wintah's night, when the snow was fallin', and the wind howlin', and——and so on, you know—that sort of thing——"

"Oh, quite!" said Blake.

"Well, on that feahful night a partay of cwop-eared knaves were huntin' for the tweasure, when a weird figure appeared in the gloom of the twees, and they saw Sir Thingummy, dwessed all in white, with a phantom sword in his ghostly hand, and the othah ghostly hand waisted to wave them away. They were feahfully scared, and they bolted."

D'Arcy paused again.

"You gals fwightened?" he asked.

"Not at all."

"Not the least little bit."

"You fellows feelin' at all nervy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I will wing for the bullah to put on the light, you know, if you feel eweepy."

"We're bearing up," said Manners gravely. "But, I must say, Gussy, that you have a really thrilling way of telling a ghost story."

"Awfully!" said Herries.

"Hair-raising!" said Digby solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah! I have told this stowy a good many times, you know, and I weally think I put it wathah well," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Well, you know, to get on with it, on anothah feahful wintah's night, an officah of the Ironsides was seekin' the tweasure in the deer park——"

"Did they always seek it on wild winter's nights?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, deah boy; they appoah to have done so, accordin' to the legend," assented Arthur Augustus.

"I should have picked out a summer's afternoon myself. But I dara say they had their reasons. Get on, old chap!"

"Where was I when you intewwupted me?"

"On a wild winter's night——" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, yaas! On a wild winter's night, with a storm wagin', and——and——thundah-and-lightnin' effects genewally, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! This isn't a funnay stowy, you fellows!"

"Our mistake!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Well, the Ironside chap was seekin' the tweasure in the deer park, with a pocket-torch or somethin'——"

"What! A what?" ejaculated Manners.

"No; I suppose it would be a lantern in those days. I think they would call it a lanthorn," said Arthur Augustus. "Well, whatevah it was, it showed a feeble light, and the blightah was suddenly startled to heah a feahful gwoan. He looked wound huwriedly ovah his shouldah, and there was Sir Thingummy, in gleamin' white, hauntin' the spot where the tweasure was buwied. But the Pwuitan chap may have thought it was a twick of some sort—he mayn't have believed in ghosts, you know—as a mattah of fact, I don't myself, and I don't suppose you fellows do. Anyhow, the chap was at the ghost with his bwoadsword, and wan him thwough."

"And the White Cavalier gave up the ghost?" asked Lowther.

"Wats! What happened next is not vewy cleah—you see, there were no witnesses on such a feahful night. But the next mornin' the cwop-eared knave was found lyin' in the snow, with a feahful wound on his head, havin' been stwuck down by the White Cavalier, you know. And, accordin' to the legend, the White Cavalier always haunts the deer park when the snow is on the gwound, it havin' been Chwistmas-time when he was done in—I mean, slain—and anyone who is not fwightened away by his feahful looks, gets knocked on the head with the hilt of his sword. He has not been seen lately—not in my time at all, in fact——"

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"Probably not!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And there was a chuckle.

"But it's a feahfully thwillin' stowy, isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps we had bettah wing for lights befoah you fellows get nervy."

"The way you tell the story would thrill a marble statue or a Cheddar cheese, old chap," said Monty Lowther. "I'm feeling frightfully creepy. Fancy seeing Sir Thingummy What's-his-name, dressed up in his ghostly what-do-you-call-em, with a phantom thingummybob in his hand——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"A crack on the napper from a phantom thingummybob would be no joke," said Blake seriously.

"Weally, Blake——"

In the ruddy glow of the fire all the faces seemed to be smiling. Gussy's ghost story had not exactly made the guests at Eastwood House feel creepy, for some reason.

"The fact is, deah boys, it is a vewy thwillin' stowy, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "All wight in heah, with the fiah, and plenty of company; but out in the deer park, in the snow, at night, it would be wathah feahful to heah a dwcadful gwoan all of a sudden——"

Groan!

Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly.

Just behind him, in the gloom, he was interrupted by a deep, horrible, hair-raising groan.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up so suddenly that his eyeglass dropped from his eye, and his chair flew backwards.

"What—what—what was that?" he gasped.

He stared round, and the grinning face of Wally of the Third showed up in the shadows.

"Only little me!" said D'Arcy minor cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah young ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Conway touched a bell, and the portly butler of Eastwood House appeared. The electric light blazed out in the old hall, gleaming on polished oak and red holly-berries and laughing faces.

"Some story, what?" yawned Wally of the Third. "My brother Gus is no end of a card at telling a funny story."

"You young ass, it was not a funnay stowy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust you were not fwightened, Ethel——"

"Not very much!" said Cousin Ethel demurely.

"And you, Dowie——"

"Hardly at all," said Doris.

"I weally fail to see what you fellows are gwinnin' at. It was not a funnay stowy, but vewy twagic and thwillin'——"

"We'll take your word for it, Gussy," assured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A bell chimed.

"Time to dress for dinner," said Lord Conway, laughing.

"I hope you haven't taken away the appetites of your guests, Arthur."

"Bai Jove. I weally hope not!"

Arthur Augustus' hope was well-founded. He hadn't!

CHAPTER 4.

The Light in the Deer Park!



"WALK it!" said Ernest Levison.

"Good idea!" agreed Clive.

Ralph Reckness Cardew groaned.

"It's a good mile!" he said.

"More! Two, I should say," said Levison of the Fourth.

"Oh gad!"

"Let's go round by the park and make it three!" suggested Clive, with a laugh.

The three Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's stood outside the little country station of Easthorpe, which was the station for Eastwood House.

The dusk was falling; there was snow on the ground, and a keen wind blew.

After a rather long journey in the train, Clive and Levison were feeling disposed to stretch their legs a little. Cardew of the Fourth, as usual, was indisposed for exertion in any shape or form.

"The car might have waited!" remarked Cardew.

"Oh, Gussy gave us up, of course," said Levison. "We're two hours late, owing to missing the connection."

"Owing to Cardew missing the connection, you mean, and us having to root him out of a waiting-room," granted Clive.

"Mea culpa!" said Cardew. "My fault! Why didn't you leave me behind?"

"Fathead!"

"I dare say we can hunt up some sort of a conveyance

here," said Cardew. "There aren't any taxicabs; but there may be a hack, or a coach, or even a hay-cart——"

"Walk it."

"We don't want to be late for dinner. Gussy is rather particular on such points, you know."

"We've lots of time."

"It's jolly cold."

"Walking will make you warm."

"Oh dear!"

The three juniors were coming on, after Christmas Day, to join the party at Eastwood House. Levison's sister and young brother were already there, and Ernest was looking forward to seeing Doris and Frank again, under Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's hospitable roof. The car from Eastwood had met their train—the train they should have come by. Naturally, it was gone now, as they had not come by the specified train. Cardew had dawdled about carelessly at a junction back on the line, the connection had been missed, and a slow train had brought the trio on to Easthorpe two hours late. It was Cardew's fault, but he did not seem to be in the least perturbed by it. He was only perturbed by the prospect of walking to Eastwood House.

"I say!" he exclaimed suddenly, as if struck by a sudden bright idea. "There's a telephone at the station."

"What about it?"

"We can telephone to D'Arcy——"

"Bosh!"

"He will send the car. We can wait for it at that jolly old inn, and knock the balls about in the billiards-room while we're waitin'." Cardew nodded towards the Eastwood Arms, from the old diamond-paned windows of which a ruddy light gleamed hospitably in the dusk.

Levison smiled grimly.

"We're not going to bother D'Arcy to send the car a second time; and knocking billiard balls about is barred while you're in respectable company, old man. Come on."

"But——"

"I'll tell them to send the bags on," said Levison. "They'll be at Eastwood House before us going by cart."

"Let's go by the cart!"

"Rats!"

"I dare say it's quite a nice cart——"

"Fathead!"

Levison quickly arranged about the baggage, and then the three juniors started. Cardew was still reluctant; but as his two chums started, he decided to follow them. On second thoughts, too, he realised that he did not want to arrive at Lord Eastwood's mansion sitting on the bags in a village cart.

Levison and Clive enjoyed the tramp in the keen air after the stuffiness of the train. Cardew, as a matter of fact, enjoyed it, too; his laziness was as much a pose as anything else.

Levison knew the country well; he had visited Eastwood House more than once before. From the high-road he turned into a narrow lane that ran between overhanging, leafless branches.

Cardew stared ahead of him in the deepening dusk, genuinely dismayed by the rutty, muddy lane, and the impenetrable darkness into which it appeared to lead.

"I say, is this the end of everywhere?" he inquired plaintively. "Where on earth does this dashed tunnel lead?"

"It's a beautiful lane in summer," said Levison.

"Is it summer now, fathead?"

Levison laughed.

"It's a short cut. It leads between the home park of Eastwood and the old deer park. If we cut across the deer park we can make it shorter still."

"Oh, my hat! Are we goin' to risk runnin' into herds of ferocious deer in the dark?"

"There are no deer there now, ass, and not for twenty years past, I believe. Nothing there but trees and ghosts," said Levison, with a chuckle.

"Ghosts?"

"The deer park is haunted. Gussy told me the story last rac. Some old Cavalier johnny was blotted out there hundreds of years ago, and he comes back to revisit the giddy glimpses of the moon on the old familiar spot."

"I say, I'm afraid of ghosts!" said Cardew. "Frightfully superstitious, in fact. Let's trot back and telephone for a car."

"Come on!"

"Oh dear!"

The three juniors tramped on by the narrow lane. Darkness was quite fallen now, but there was a glimmer of the moon in the dark sky. Overhead, the branches on either side met, the bare boughs twining like lace against the glimmer of the moon.

Levison stopped at last and looked about him.

"Here's the place," he said. "We cut through the deer park here and get into the grounds. I know the way like a book. We pass the haunted oak where the ghost walks."

"I don't really mind ghosts," groaned Cardew. "But mud and snow—and tumblin' over roots in the dark——"

"This way!"

Levison led the way among the old gnarled trees of the deer park. Sidney Clive followed him, and Cardew trailed on behind.

"We shall see the haunted oak soon!" said Levison cheerily. "When the ghost walks, there's a dim, unearthly light seen, popping about among the trees. You see, the giddy ghost is looking for a treasure that was buried in the days of Charles the First. As he buried it himself, he ought to know where it is; but you never can tell, in a ghost story."

"Great gad!" ejaculated Cardew.

"What——"

"Look!"

Cardew pointed.

"My only hat!" breathed Clive.

In the dense darkness under the old trees, at some distance ahead of the St. Jim's juniors, a light gleamed.

It gleamed close to the ground, and was in motion.

Slowly, but incessantly, it moved, among trees and frozen brambles and masses of banked snow, travelling to and fro, near the ground, exactly as if it were a lantern in the hand of some unseen searcher.

The three juniors stopped.

They felt their hearts beating faster.

After the words that Levison had just uttered, the sight of that strange, moving light in the old deer park was startling.



"My hat!" muttered Levison. "What the thump can it be?"

Cardew laughed softly.

"The giddy ghost, lookin' for the treasure!" he said.

"Rot! It's somebody looking for something," said Levison, recovering himself. "Nobody has a right to be in this deer park unless he belongs to Eastwood House. Can't be a poacher, I suppose? Who the thump can it be?"

"Gussy may have dropped his eyeglass, and come out to look for it with a lantern——"

"Ass!"

"Let's see!" said Clive.

"Come on!" said Levison.

The three juniors hurried on, extremely curious to know what the moving light in the deer park might mean. That the ghost of the ancient Cavalier was revisiting the scene of his last fight they were not likely to believe, uncanny as it seemed.

In the thick wood it was impossible to run, but they tramped on very rapidly. Suddenly the light stopped.

"The jolly old spectre has heard us!" murmured Cardew.

"It's gone!"

The light vanished.

Black darkness reigned, broken only by the faint glimmer of the moon over the tree-tops. The juniors halted again.

"Well, that does it!" said Levison. "Whoever it was, he heard us, and doesn't want to be seen."

"The phantom, of course," said Cardew. "He's vanished into thin air by this time."

Levison shouted:

"Hallo! Hallo! Who's that? Who's there?"

His voice rang and echoed among the trees. But there came no reply. The echoing of his shout died away, and there was deep silence in the old deer park. The juniors stood silent for a minute or more, looking at one another in the deep shadows.

"It's jolly queer!" said Clive, at last.

"It's somebody who has no business here, that's certain," said Levison. "But I can't imagine what his game is."

"My dear man, it's the giddy spook!" yawned Cardew.

"Fathead! Let's get on!"

The juniors tramped on through the deer park. They kept their eyes well about them; but no sign was seen again of the moving light, no sound was heard of the unseen bearer of the lantern, if lantern it was.

In spite of their nerve and their strong disbelief in ghostly visitations, the three juniors felt a creepy feeling coming over them as they threaded their way among the shadowy trees, and they were glad to get out of the deer park into the open grounds of Eastwood House.

CHAPTER 5.

The Slacker!



YOU fellows missed a treat!"

"How's that?" yawned Cardew lazily. There was a cheery gathering in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's "den" at Eastwood House.

All the St. Jim's fellows were there, including the three latest arrivals—Levison, Clive, and Cardew.

The juniors had gone up to bed; but it was their custom to gather in D'Arcy's den for a final "jaw" round the log-fire before dispersing to their various apartments.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was reclining at his ease in a deep armchair. He had taken out a little gold cigarette-case, in an absent sort of way, and then, catching Levison's eye, had slipped it back again into his pocket. That kind of thing was not suitable for Eastwood House; and though Arthur Augustus would have made no remark, he would have thought the more! Cardew stifled a yawn, and stretched his elegant legs to the log-fire.

"You missed the treat of your lives through losing your train," went on Monty Lowther. "Gussy was telling ghost stories in the hall just before dinner. He made our flesh creep!"

"Made our hair rise on our heads!" said Blake.

"Caused each particular hair to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine!" said Manners solemnly.

Arthur Augustus, standing elegantly before the fire, his spotless shirt-front gleaming in the light, beamed innocently on his guests.

"Bai Jove, you fellows, do you think I told the stow weally well?" he asked. "As a mattah of fact, you know, I have told that stow a good many times, and I dare say it impwoves with pwactice, you know."

"It does!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"I think you have heard the stow of the White Cavalier, Levison? I believe I told it to you once."

"Twice, old chap," said Levison.

"If you would like to hear it again—"

"I wouldn't give you all that trouble for anything. But it's no end of a story, and you tell it in your own inimitable manner, old scout!" said Ernest Levison, with owl-like seriousness. "By the way, has the ghost been walking lately?"

"It is not on record that it has been seen for a vewy long time, Levison. As a mattah of fact, of course, it is only a yarn," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, there are no such things as ghosts!"

"Who knows?" yawned Cardew.

"Gammon!" said Clive tersely.

"Well, weally, you know, Shakespeare said—I think it was Shakespeare—there are more thingummies in the what's-it's-name and the thingummybob, than are dweamt of in your what-do-you-call-it," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Oh, my hat! Did Shakespeare say that?" exclaimed Cardew, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pewwaps it does not run exactly like that; but something of the sort," said Arthur Augustus. "You are wathah stwong on Shakespeare, I believe, Mannahs—what was it pwecisely?"

"There are more things in the heavens and the earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I knew it was somethin' of the kind," said Arthur Augustus.

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"The fact is, we saw the giddy spook, as we came along," said Cardew. "We came through the deer park, you know, and he was there, searching for the phantom treasure with a phantom lantern."

"Bai Jove!"

"Kats!" said Herries cheerfully.

"Honest injun!" said Cardew. "At least, we saw the light shifting about the park close to the ground, as if somebody was looking for something. I thought D'Arcy might have dropped his eyeglass and gone out to hunt for it; but it wasn't that—"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"But it was somebody, or something," went on Cardew. "If the weather wasn't so cold, and if it wasn't so windy, and if I wasn't so dashed lazy, and if it wasn't so jolly comfortable here, I should propose going on a ghost-hunt in the deer park."

"What a lot of 'if's,'!" said Tom Merry, with a smile. "But did you really see anything in the park, Levison?"

Levison of the Fourth nodded.

"Yes, just as Cardew says," he answered. "There was a light moving about, as if somebody was searching for something with a lantern."

"Bai Jove!"

"He put the light out when he heard us," said Clive. "Levison shouted to him, but he did not answer."

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Dig.

"Goodness knows!"

"Oh, it was the giddy spook," said Cardew. "Ghosts don't answer when they're shouted at. He just vanished into thin air."

"I wonder who could have been wootin' about in the deer park?" said Arthur Augustus in astonishment. "Nobody ovah goes there at night. It's a feahfully lonely place."

"Has young Wally lost Pongo?" grinned Blake. "Might have been your jolly old minor hunting for his dog."

"Pongo is chained up in the stables now," said Arthur Augustus. "The pater has vewy pwopahly wefused to have him in the house again, since he tore up Ethel's music-books. Besides, Wally was with us when I was tellin' you that ghost stow befoah dinnah. It is vewy wemarkable that anybody should have been wootin' about in the deer park aftah dark. Weally, it looks as if there might be somethin' in the ghost stow aftah all. Accordin' to the legend, Sir Thingummy goes awound at night with a ghostly lantern lookin' for buwied tweasure."

"Some goat playing ghost, perhaps," said Lowther.

"But why should anybody play ghost, with nobody to see him?" said Tom Merry. "Nobody could have known that these chaps were going to take a short cut across the deer park."

"What price a ghost hunt?" asked Blake. "It's rather a wheeze, you know. It's the right time of year and the right time of night—"

"Good!" said Lowther. "'Tis now the very witching hour of night when churchyards yawn—"

"I don't know whether our giddy elders would approve," said Blake thoughtfully. "But we can go down from Gussy's balcony without bothering anybody. What?"

"Good!" said Dig.

"Yaas, wathah! You fellows like the ideah?" asked Arthur Augustus, looking round.

There was a general nodding of heads. Only Ralph Reckness Cardew leaned back lazily in his chair.

"Leave me to frowst over the fire," he said. "You can tell me all about it when you get back, if you get back alive."

"Afraid of ghosts—what?" asked Herries.

"Frightfully!"

"Oh, buck up!" said Dig. "Let's all go!"

"Get a move on, Cardew," said Levison.

Cardew shook his head.

"The very thought freezes my blood," he said. "Think of facing a giddy phantom in his lair! Not little me. I'll enjoy Gussy's fire while you're gone, and when you come in you can tell me all about it."

"Evey man to his taste," said Arthur Augustus cheerily. "Get your coats and mufflers, you chaps—it's jollay cold out of doors."

The juniors were soon stirring actively. Nobody had much expectation of rooting out a ghost in the deer park, but all were curious to know what the mysterious light might mean. Only Cardew did not seem to share the general curiosity.

Tom Merry & Co. went out of the french windows to the balcony, and thence descended to the gardens, warmly wrapped up against snow and wind. Ralph Reckness Cardew was left alone in Gussy's den, and as soon as the juniors were gone the dandy of the Fourth drew out a little gold cigarette-case and lighted a cigarette. On second thoughts, however, he threw it into the crackling logs, which was undoubtedly the best thing he could have

done with it, and yawned portentously. Cardew of the Fourth had been only a few hours at Eastwood House, and he was already bored—a frame of mind that generally haunted him wherever he was. He stared at the fire and wondered disconsolately how he was going to kill time till the other fellows came back.

There were books in D'Arcy's bookcase—plenty of them—but he was disinclined for reading. He was disinclined for bed. He was disinclined to join in the ghost-hunt—but he rather wished that he had gone with the others. Finally he rose from the armchair, stretched himself, and, having sorted out a coat, a muffler, and a cap, he slipped out on the balcony and followed the track of Tom Merry & Co. through the glimmering snow in the direction of the deer park.

CHAPTER 6.

The Ghost Hunters!



"OLLY cold!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And windy!"

"Beastly windy!"

"And snowy!"

"Why grouse?" said Tom Merry cheerily. "If it wasn't cold and snowy it wouldn't seem like Christmas. Let's hope that the giddy ghost is walking."

"No such luck!" said Blake.

Nino St. Jim's juniors were tramping through the snow to the deer park, their heads bent to the keen wind.

The ground was thickly carpeted with snow, and the flakes were still falling lightly, whirling in the winter wind. A crescent moon showed over the high branches of the park, but the light was faint. Dark and gloomy the old deer park loomed up before their eyes, and as they approached its dusky shades unconsciously the juniors fell silent, or spoke in whispers. In those gloomy shades, somehow, the ghostly Cavalier did not seem so remote from possibility as he had seemed in the well-lighted house, in the ruddy light of the crackling logs. In the darkness, the solitude, and the silence, it would hardly have seemed surprising if a fearsome figure had appeared among the old trunks of the trees, or a phantom light had glimmered out in the shadows.

Several of the fellows had electric torches in their pockets, but they did not turn them on. If anyone was rooting about in the deer park the light would have given him the alarm.

As it was a good many hours since Levison & Co. had seen the ghostly light flitting among the old trees, it seemed unlikely that the unknown bearer of it would still be there. Still, whoever he was, he must have had some motive for lurking in the deer park at night, and the ghost-hunters hoped for the best.

"Our luck's in!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "Look!"

"Bai Jove!"

The crowd of juniors stopped.

Far ahead of them, in the gloomy depths of the deer park, glimmered a light—held low to the ground and moving about slowly among the underwoods.

Levison caught his breath.

"That's it!" he said. "Just the same that we saw—"

"Just!" agreed Clive.

Tom Merry stared at the glittering, flitting light, perplexed and puzzled.

"What on earth can it mean?" he said. "It's somebody searching for something, that's clear. But who—and what?"

"I—I—I say—" Herries spoke in a whisper. "It—it can't be a ghost, of course!"

"Of course not!" said Digby, but his voice lacked conviction.

"Let's shout to him, dearh boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then the light will go out!" said Levison. "Whoever he is, he doesn't want to be seen."

"Quiet—and come on!" said Tom Merry. "We'll jolly well find out who it is, and make him explain himself."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors trod on silently through the snow, deeper and deeper into the gloomy recesses of the old park.

The mysterious light flitted before them like a will-o'-the-wisp in the darkness.

It looked like an electric torch gleaming on the ground from an unseen hand. Whoever held it was swallowed up in the gloom and totally invisible to the eye.

All of a sudden the light vanished.

Levison compressed his lips.

"The brute's heard us, same as happened before," he said. "He knows we're here now, so we may as well show a light. Come on!"

Five or six electric torches gleamed out. The beams of white light glimmered and glanced on the gnarled, frosty trunks of the trees. Tom Merry & Co. hurried on to the spot where the light had vanished.

But it was difficult to trace the exact spot. The mysterious light did not show up again; all was dense darkness, save where the juniors' torches glimmered on the snow that was stacked among the trees. To and fro the St. Jim's fellows went, flashing the lights here and there and



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed on again as he heard the rustle in the underwoods. "Bai Jove! I'm wunnin' him down!" he muttered. "Oh, owumbs!" The electric torch he carried was struck suddenly from his hand by some invisible force! (See Chapter 6.)

everywhere, and listening intently for a sound from the mysterious roamer of the deer park.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted suddenly.

"Found him?" called out Tom Merry.

"I've found his twacks in the snow, dearh boy."

"Oh, good!"

The juniors gathered round the swell of St. Jim's at once, with eager faces.

Arthur Augustus pointed to a deep track in the snow that led away between two great trees.

His noble face wore a smile of satisfaction.

"On the twail, what?" he said.

"Looks like it," said Herries. "I say, if I had my bulldog Towser here, he would follow up this trail and nail the rotter in next to no time."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Levison glanced keenly at the trail in the snow.

He smiled.

"The fellow's got rather small feet," he remarked, "and he wears very nice boots."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy, inspecting the trail again. "Looks more like a boy's twack than a man's."

"That's what it is," said Manners.

"Anyhow, we are goin' to bag him," said Arthur Augustus. "Man or boy, he has no wight to be wootin' about my patah's deer park, you know. Bai Jove! What are you gwinnin' at, Lowthah?"

Monty Lowther chuckled. His eyes followed Levison's glance from the track in the snow to D'Arcy's elegant boots, and back again. He knew what Levison of the Fourth had already guessed.

"You really want to bag the blighter, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah."

"If I see him, shall I collar him?"

"Certainly, deah boy."

"Collar him at once, without giving him time to dodge, what?"

"Yaas, that's the ideah."

"Here goes, then!"

Monty Lowther made a sudden jump at the swell of St. Jim's, and grasped him by the collar.

"Got him!" he roared.

"Why, what—"

"Which?"

"Bai Jove! Leggo!" howled Arthur Augustus, struggling.

"Are you gone pottay, Lowthah, you howlin' ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "They're Gussy's own tracks!"

"Welease me, you uttah ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's tore himself away from Lowther's grasp. He jammed his celebrated eyeglass into his eye, and gave the humorist of the Shell a withering glare.

"Lowthah, you uttah wuffian—"

"You asked for it!" said Monty Lowther meekly. "I appeal to all you fellows—didn't he?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you sillay asses—"

"They're your own tracks, fathead!" roared Blake. "You've walked round this tree, and walked round again and found your own trail."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, greatly entertained by the expression on Gussy's countenance.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as the truth dawned upon his noble mind. "Weally, they do look like my own twacks, you know. I must have walked past this spot and then come wound again. They weally look like my own twacks."

"That's what they are, fathead," said Digby.

"Weally, Digby, I object to bein' called a fathead!"

"Why don't you object to being one?" sighed Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"The giddy phantom will be clearing off all this time," he said. "Let's get going."

"Lets," assented Blake. "That is, if Gussy is finished walking round and round in his own footsteps, like a cat chasing its tail."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on," said Clive. "It's jolly cold standing stilt."

"We had bettah sepawate, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "We can covah much more gwound in diffewent diwections."

"Good egg!" assented Tom.

"If we miss one anothah again, we can head for home," went on Arthur Augustus. "Let's awwange to be back by eleven. We shall heah it chime fwom the village."

"Done!"

And the party split up into singles, and proceeded to explore the wood in different directions.

All of them were curious to know who had roved the deer park in the winter darkness with the light; though they did not expect to discover that it was the phantom of the ancient Cavalier. Certainly they would have been extremely surprised to meet Sir Fulke D'Arcy prowling on the scene of that combat of bygone days.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus about ten minutes later as his electric torch gleamed on a print in a patch of snow.

He bent down and examined it.

It was the print of a boot—a large and heavy boot. D'Arcy's eyes gleamed as he examined it.

Certainly the track might have been left by some keeper who had passed through the park; but it was not very likely. Possibly, at least, it was a clue.

The swell of St. Jim's was at least, this time, on the track of some other person, and not on his own track as before.

He sought for more footprints, but a hard patch of bushy ground, almost clear of snow, lay before him. But he

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pushed on hopefully, following the direction in which the solitary track pointed.

There was a faint rustle.

D'Arcy stopped, his heart beating faster. Someone was close at hand in the dense underbrush.

"Is that one of you fellows?" he called out.

There was no reply.

Obviously the rustle had not been made by one of the St. Jim's juniors. They were all scattered at a distance now.

Arthur Augustus flashed his light to and fro, discerning nothing but frozen brambles, great roots, and dim trunks, and patches of snow. He was about to push on again; but he hesitated, feeling a strange thrill running through his veins.

In the silence and solitude and darkness of the deer park, the ghost story did not seem so improbable as when Gussy had told it in the hall of Eastwood House. Arthur Augustus feared no foe; but the legend of Sir Fulke D'Arcy came very strongly into his mind at that moment. If a figure in glimmering white should emerge from the black shadows—

"Oh, wats!" muttered D'Arcy uneasily.

He pushed on resolutely, ashamed of his momentary hesitation. There was another rustle, as if some unseen loiterer was retreating before him in the underwoods.

His heart beat faster.

"Bai Jove! I'm wunnin' him down!" he murmured. "Oh, cwumbs! Oh, my hat! Bai Jove!"

The electric torch was struck suddenly from his hand. It seemed to D'Arcy that something had whizzed through the air and struck it away. It fell to the ground and was instantly extinguished.

D'Arcy stood in black darkness, his heart thumping. He stared round him, seeing nothing; but as he stared there was a rustle, and he sprang in the direction of the sound.

His hand touched a moving form in the blackness.

"Bai Jove! I—"

Crash!

"Oh!"

A crashing blow fell upon the junior's head, and he reeled. One faint cry escaped him, and he fell heavily upon the ground. There was a quick, panting breath, and two eyes glittered above him in the gloom like a wild animal's. But the swell of St. Jim's did not stir. That savage blow had stunned him, and he lay unconscious.

A rustle in the thickets, and silence. In the black darkness Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lay still.

CHAPTER 7.

Missing!



"IRST home!" said Jack Blake cheerily.

He came into D'Arcy's "den" from the balcony and crossed at once to the log-fire. He was cold.

Herries followed him in.

"Glad to get back," remarked Herries. "No luck, of course. If I'd had Towser with me—"

"Good old Towser!" yawned Blake.

"What a ripping dog he is!"

"Yes, isn't he?" said Herries.

"And how ripping it would be to have him here!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And still more ripping not to have him!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Herries.

Robert Arthur Digby came trailing in, snowy and a little wet and muddy. He joined his chums at the fire.

"Any luck?" he asked.

"None."

"Same here." Dig looked round. "Where's Cardew?"

"Gone to bed, I expect," said Blake. "He wasn't here when we got in. There isn't any smell of baccy in the room. Cardew is improving."

"He could do with it," remarked Herries.

"Bow-wow!" said a voice from the balcony. And Levison of the Fourth came in with Sidney Clive.

"Caught anything?" grinned Blake.

"Not even a cold."

"Cardew gone to bed?" asked Clive.

"I suppose so. He's gone somewhere."

"I suppose he didn't come out after us, after all?"

Blake sniffed.

"No fear! Catch that slacker exerting himself!"

"Oh, rats!" said Clive. "I shouldn't wonder if he came out after us. He must have got fed-up sitting here by himself."

"More likely gone to bed." Blake yawned deeply.

"That's where I'm going. When are those asses coming in? It's well past eleven."

"Oh, those Shell bounders have lost themselves very likely," said Herries. "As for Gussy, of course, he would lose himself if he could; but I don't see how he could in his father's park."

"Better stay up for him, though," remarked Blake. "If there's one thing more certain than another, it is that Gussy will hunt up any trouble that may happen to be going. If he's fallen into a ditch, or lost his way a yard and a half from home, we shall have to go out again and dig him up."

"Here comes somebody," said Levison, as there were steps on the balcony outside the french windows.

It was Tom Merry who came in.

"All home?" he asked.

"Three duffers missing, so far," said Blake. "Manners and Lowther and the one and only."

"They won't be long now. Better stay up till they come in," said the captain of the Shell, warming his hands at the glowing logs. "Cardew's gone to bed, I suppose?"

"I think so. I wish Gussy would come in," said Blake, staring into the winter night from the open window.

"Oh, he's all right."

"I know he is, fathead! But I wish he'd come in, all the same."

There were footsteps and voices a few minutes later on the steps to the balcony.

you know Gussy." Irritation was evidently mingled with Blake's anxiety for his noble chum. "But there's no pit or anything in the deer park. Why doesn't the howling ass come in?"

"May come in any minute," said Herries.

Blake grunted.

"Bother him! It's past twelve! If he doesn't turn up we shall have to wake up his pater. Lord Eastwood won't be pleased, either, to hear of this midnight ghost-hunting stunt."

"Wait a bit longer first," said Tom.

And the juniors waited.

Their faces were grave and anxious now.

Belief in the legend of the White Cavalier was absurd. Yet it was in their minds how the story ran, that ghost-seekers in the deer park had been struck down by the sword-hilt of the phantom Cavalier. If nothing had happened to D'Arcy, why did he not return? Yet what could have happened to him in his father's park, unless there was truth in that strange old legend, and—but that was impossible!

The minutes ticked by slowly.

Tom Merry rose at last. The juniors were too anxious to be sleepy, even at half-past twelve. Tom crossed to the window, and stared out across the balcony into the night. There was a glimmer of a crescent moon over the blackness of the park.

All was silent and still.

"This won't do!" said Levison at last, joining the captain

Try This Puzzle Round The Yule-Log!

HIDDEN NAMES!



This week we are introducing the names of some well-known characters from Rookwood school into our "Anagrams" feature. The majority of these characters played a part in our popular story, "The Rookwood Dictator," and will appear in the new serial just starting on page 24 of this issue. See how many names you can discover, by transposing the letters in each of the following sentences. The solution will be given next week.

1. Very slim Jim
2. Dr. fuming if lean.
3. Lively "rags."
4. I rock Tony.
5. Ma, hold the pussy!
6. German orders.
7. Kneel—set target.
8. Crew out—man her.
9. Mont never loaning "tin."

"Oh, here they are!" exclaimed Blake, in relief.

Manners and Lowther came in together.

"Isn't Gussy with you?" demanded Blake.

"Gussy? No. Haven't seen him."

"Bother him!" said Blake.

"Gussy was bound to be last," remarked Monty Lowther.

"I daresay he's dropped his eyeglass, and is hunting for it. Most likely he will come home with the milk in the morning."

"Br-r-r-r!"

The juniors gathered round the log fire, and Blake thoughtfully put on a few more logs. D'Arcy was likely to be cold when he got home. It was close on midnight now, and Blake was feeling a little uneasy. Certainly, it seemed improbable that anything untoward could have happened to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in Lord Eastwood's deer park. But he must have heard the chime of eleven, and it had been agreed that that should be the signal for the return of the ghost-hunters. Why did not D'Arcy come?

As the minutes passed the other fellows began to share Blake's growing uneasiness.

Certainly, it was strange enough that the swell of St. Jim's did not return.

"Nothing can have happened to him," muttered Blake. "What on earth could happen? Nobody believes in that idiotic ghost story, I suppose?"

"Of course not," said Tom. "But—"

"He can't have lost his way—he couldn't if he tried," said Blake. "There isn't anything for him to tumble into. Of course, he would fall into a pit if he had half a chance—

of the Shell at the window. "Something must have happened to Gussy, though goodness knows what!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I think we'd better tell Lord Conway," he said. "You can see his window from this balcony. He may be still up."

Tom Merry stepped out on the balcony. From a distance along the great facade of Eastwood House a lighted window glimmered into the night.

"That's Lord Conway's room," said Tom. "He's not gone to bed yet. I think I'll call him."

"Better," agreed Levison.

Tom Merry left D'Arcy's den, and made his way to the rooms of Gussy's elder brother. He tapped at Lord Conway's door.

There was a movement within, and the door was opened. Lord Conway, in a smoking-jacket, with a cigar in his fingers, glanced out at the St. Jim's junior in astonishment.

"Merry! Not in bed yet!" he exclaimed.

"No," said Tom. "Will you come along to Gussy's room?"

"Something up?"

"I don't know; but— He may have come in this minute—but—"

"Has Arthur gone out?" asked the viscount, very quietly.

"Yes. You see—"

"I'll come."

Lord Conway accompanied the captain of the Shell to D'Arcy's den. He found the St. Jim's party there, with

troubled, anxious faces; but Arthur Augustus had not arrived.

"Now, what's happened?" demanded the viscount tersely.

He listened quietly while the juniors told him of the ghost-hunt, and the amazing and inexplicable delay of Arthur Augustus in returning. He raised his eyebrows a little as he heard Levison's story of the mysterious moving light in the deer park, which had led to the hapless enterprise.

"That's a queer story," said Lord Conway. "The ghost business is all rot, of course. If you saw a light moving in the park, someone was there. You're absolutely certain of it?"

"Quite!" said Levison.

"Cardew saw it, too," said Clive.

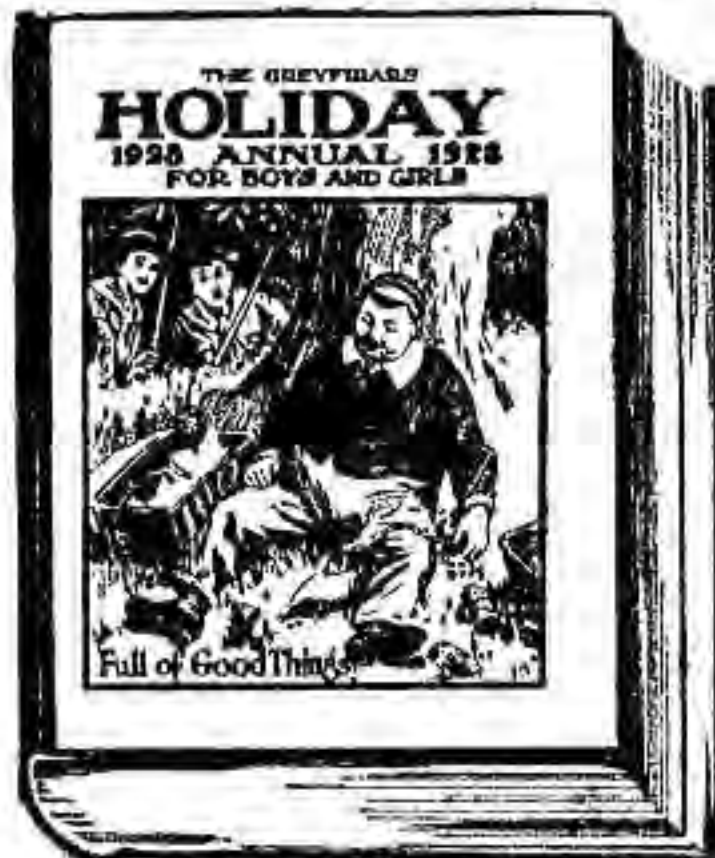
"Is Cardew out of doors now?"

"No; he stayed in. I think he's gone to bed."

"More sensible than his friends, if he has," said the viscount dryly. "You should certainly not have gone out into the park at a late hour. If someone has been roving about the place with a light, he can't be there for any good—though I cannot imagine what he can possibly want there. It looks as if Arthur may have fallen in with him, whoever he is. Certainly, something must have happened to keep him out after you had all returned. He must be searched for. Are you sure Cardew has gone to bed?"



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"Well, he stayed in, and he was gone when we got back," said Blake. "I suppose he has."

"He might have followed you out. Anyhow, we must make sure that only one is missing, and not two, before a search is started. One of you cut along to Cardew's room and see if he is there."

"I'll go," said Levison.

He hurried away, and came back in a few minutes with a startled face.

"Well?"

"Cardew's not in bed!"

"Not?" exclaimed Clive.

"He's not in his room," Levison's face was dark with anxiety now. "He must have come after us, after all. But—but if so, why hasn't he come back? What can have happened?"

"So there are two missing!" said the viscount grimly. "Something must have happened, that is certain. And—"

"Hark!"

Tom Merry rushed to the window, and rushed out on the balcony. From the silence of the night there had come a cry in the distance.

"Help!"

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry.

He raced down the steps from the balcony, Lord Conway a second behind him. And at the heels of the viscount came the St. Jim's juniors in a breathless crowd.

CHAPTER 8.

Not so Slack!

"H gad!" murmured Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The dandy of the St. Jim's 'Fourth' was not feeling cheerful.

He was in the darkness of the old deer park, and the silence and the solitude weighed down his volatile spirits.

Cardew, bored with his own company, had followed Tom Merry & Co., with the intention, as he would have expressed it, of being bored with their company, instead.

But he had not fallen in with the juniors. He did not know the shortest route to the old deer park, and the darkness and the snow were baffling. He had expected to fall in with the ghost-hunters sooner or later; but he had seen and heard nothing of them. As a matter of fact, he had entered the deer park at a considerable distance from the spot where Tom Merry & Co. had entered it, and the juniors had scattered far. Cardew heard eleven o'clock chime out in the distance from the village through the clear, frosty air; but he did not know that that chime was the signal for the St. Jim's party to give up the quest and return to the house. And with his usual thoughtlessness, he had neglected to provide himself with a pocket torch or a lantern, expecting to join the other fellows in the park.

Now he was alone in the wintry darkness, discontented with the outcome of his own slacking, in the first place, and carelessness in the second. More than once he had lost his way, but he had found the path by which he had crossed the deer park with Levison and Clive that afternoon. And as it was a plain indication of the way back to Eastwood House, Cardew was thinking of following it home.

"Oh gad!" he repeated. "What a night! If you wanted to go ghost-huntin', you ass, why didn't you start with the others? And if you didn't start with the others, why couldn't you stay where you were? What sort of a silly owl do you call yourself, anyhow?" Cardew was addressing himself. "Well, I'm fed-up—and I'm goin' back! If they're still rootin' round for ghosts, let 'em root, and be blown to them!"

Cardew was about to start for home, when a low sound from the blackness struck upon his ears.

He gave a sudden start, and shivered.

It was a low, painful moan, that had sounded faintly in the deep gloom of the underwoods.

It sent a thrill through Cardew, and for a moment his heart thumped. But he recovered himself in a moment.

"That's the giddy ghost!" he murmured. "Either the jolly old phantom, or some giddy practical joker playin' ghost. The odds are on the joker, I think."

He stood listening intently.

The faint moan was repeated. It was a sound full of pain, and Cardew realised it. Someone was lying hurt in the black shadows of the trees close at hand.

"Good gad!" breathed Cardew.

The moan came again.

"Who's there?" called out the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's.

There was no answer, and for some minutes deep silence reigned. But faintly, eerily, that painful moan was heard again at last. Cardew succeeded in "placing" the sound now.

He turned from the path and plunged into the blackness of the trees. He struck several matches, one after another, but the wind blew them out as fast as they were struck.

"Where are you?" called out Cardew.

But no voice came in reply.

But that faint, sobbing moan was repeated, and the sound guided the dandy of the Fourth. He groped his way along, and suddenly stumbled over something that lay on the ground.

"What—what—?"

Even before he bent to touch it, he knew that it was a human body. A shudder ran through Ralph Reckness Cardew from head to foot.

"Who is it?" he breathed huskily.

He bent and groped with his hands, and felt a body and a face. He struck a match again, sheltering it with one hand. The wind caught the flame, and it danced and flickered, and in a moment more it was blown out. But that moment was enough. In the momentary glimmer of the match, Cardew recognised the white, unconscious face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

"Gussy!"

It was Arthur Augustus who lay at his feet, moaning faintly as consciousness strove to return.

"Good gad!"

Cardew was utterly amazed. The swell of St. Jim's was

insensible, and Cardew could feel a large bruise on his head. He had been struck senseless; and evidently his comrades knew nothing of it, as he lay there alone and unconscious in the blackness of the deer park.

For a few minutes Cardew was utterly bewildered and at a loss. To leave D'Arcy in his present state was impossible; but it was necessary to get help at once. The unknown who had struck him down might yet be lingering near at hand in the blackness; but the thought of his own danger did not cross Cardew's mind. Reckless scapegrace as he always was, blackguard as he sometimes was, fear had been left out of his composition. He was thinking only of the hapless Arthur Augustus.

His mind was made up at last.

He stooped over the insensible junior and raised him from the ground. Slowly but steadily he hoisted Arthur Augustus on his back.

Cardew was of light build, elegant and graceful. But there was a great deal of strength in his elegant frame.

With the swell of St. Jim's on his back, he plunged to the path he had left, and started for Eastwood House.

No word came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was still unconscious, though moaning at intervals.

Cardew tramped on doggedly, bent under the weight of the Fourth-Former. The distance to Eastwood House was considerable, and whether he could carry D'Arcy's weight that distance Cardew did not know. He only knew that he was going to try, and that he would not give in until he sank down exhausted in the snow.

He was out of the deer park at last. Heavier and heavier the weight of the insensible junior seemed to bear upon him, crushing him like a scarcely endurable load.

Bending under it, aching with fatigue, but with his spirit still indomitable, Cardew tramped on.

Flakes of snow were falling upon him. Round him the bitter wind moaned and whistled. But his brow dripped with perspiration, in spite of the bitter cold.

Again and again he felt himself sinking under his burden, and every time he braced himself for a fresh effort, and tramped doggedly on.

Fellows at St. Jim's who looked on Ralph Reckness Cardew as an incurable slacker would not have thought him a slacker if they could have seen him now.

On and on, in the wind and the darkness.

Would the house never come in sight? Cardew was dazed with exhaustion when at last a glimmer of light struck his eyes from the distance.

It was the lighted window of D'Arcy's "den" that he could see. The light shone like a beacon to him.

He was sinking—sinking under his burden, but he tramped on, his teeth set hard. He tried to call out, but only a whisper came. But the light shone nearer and nearer. Minute by minute it shone nearer and clearer. The curtains were drawn back. He could even see the interior of the lighted room and moving figures there. He tried to shout again. Help was at hand now, and he lowered the insensible D'Arcy to the ground, rested for a full minute, and then shouted.

"Help!"

His voice rang now through the frosty air.

"Help! Help!"

He knelt in the snow, supporting Arthur Augustus' unconscious head on his knee. He stared through the darkness and the whirling flakes towards the lighted window. He knew that help was coming. Voices were calling to him.

"Help!"

"Where are you?" It was Tom Merry's voice. "Is that Cardew?"

"Yes; this way!"

"Here he is!" shouted Tom.

He came panting up.

"This way, Lord Conway."

The viscount was on the scene in a second more. He gave a sharp cry as he saw Arthur Augustus in the light of Tom Merry's torch.

"My brother!"

"Only stunned, I think," said Cardew. "He's had a nasty knock. I found him in the park, and I don't know what happened before that."

Without answering Lord Conway picked up Arthur Augustus in his powerful arms and carried him away to the house. Levison caught Cardew by the arm. The dandy of the Fourth was standing unsteadily.

"You came after us?" said Levison.

"Yes, old bean, and missed you," said Cardew. "Lucky I did, though. Poor old Gussy was for it if he hadn't been found."

"Who could have harmed him?" said Tom Merry between his teeth. "What awful scoundrel—"

Blake, with a white face, was hurrying after D'Arcy and the viscount. Herries and Dig ran after Blake.

The other juniors remained with Cardew to help him in. Lightly as Ralph Reckness Cardew was taking it, they could see that he was utterly spent. He leaned heavily on Ernest Levison's arm.

"Who could have done it?" breathed Clive.

"The johnny with the giddy mysterious light, I fancy," said Cardew. "Who else? Gussy must have run into him."

"But—but why—"

"Goodness knows!"

"You found Gussy in the deer park?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes; not far from the giddy haunted oak."

"You carried him here?"

"Alone, unaided, I did it, like giddy old Coriolanus," said Cardew lightly. "I've always looked on Gussy as a light-weight. After carryin' him that distance, though, I am driven to believe that Gussy's growin' stout. Some load, I can tell you."

"Come in, old fellow," said Levison softly. "We'll join hands and make a chair for you and carry you in."

"You jolly well won't!" said Cardew coolly. "I'm not so far gone as all that, though I don't claim to be so hefty as our friend Thomas here. I can walk, but you can lend me your arm."

And Cardew, leaning heavily on Levison's arm, walked on to the house with Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 9.

Mysterious!



ASTWOOD HOUSE was in something of a ferment the next day.

The attack on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the one topic above stairs and below stairs.

Arthur Augustus was in bed.

He was in under the doctor's care, and his friends were deeply relieved to hear the medical gentleman's report that the matter was not serious, serious as it had looked at first.

D'Arcy had been stunned by a blow on the head from "some heavy instrument," the doctor said. Doubtless a stick. He had a great bruise, and in the morning he had a terrific headache. But there were no bones broken, and it was only a matter of time before the swell of

(Continued overleaf.)



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St. Jim's would be himself again. In the meantime, he had to keep to his room and keep quiet, and receive the visits of the doctor. Which was exceedingly unpleasant for Arthur Augustus in holiday time, as he remarked lugubriously to Blake when that youth was allowed to visit him for a few minutes in the afternoon.

"It's wotten!" said Gussy sadly. "In the term, you know, it wouldn't have mattered vewy much—with classes to miss. But fancy bein' knocked out in the vacation, you know. It's too fwightfully wotten!"

"Thank goodness it's no worse, old chap!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! It might have been worse. The fellow might have bwoken my jollay old bwain-box," assented Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

And Blake forbore to remark that there was nothing in it to damage. It was no time for Fourth Form jokes.

During the day Arthur Augustus was well enough for a brief interview with the police-inspector from Easthorpe, who had been informed of the happening by Lord Eastwood.

The inspector made notes, and stated that the unknown ruffian should undoubtedly be run down and laid by the heels. But it was fairly obvious that he was very much puzzled as he left Eastwood House.

That was not a surprising circumstance, for all the household were puzzled, excepting certain individuals who found an explanation in the legend of the White Cavalier.

Below stairs there were many believers in the grim old legend. Even the stately butler of Eastwood House shook his head gravely as he discussed the matter with the footmen. The coincidence was, at least, striking. According to the legend, a moving light in the deer park indicated that the ghost was walking. Anyone having the temerity to attempt to hunt down the phantom was liable to be struck down by the sword-hilt of the phantom Cavalier. From the point of view of believers in the legend, nothing could be clearer. It was the phantom of Sir Fulke that had struck down Arthur Augustus.

Lord Eastwood was not likely to share belief in such an explanation. But he was totally at a loss to discover any other.

D'Arey had been struck down, senseless, with a stick, and certainly not with a phantom sword-hilt, in the earl's opinion. But D'Arey had seen nothing of his assailant—heard nothing but a rustle. The moving light that had been seen proved that somebody had been in the deer park—some person unknown. But who—and why? What was there in the snowy, frozen deer park to attract anybody? Why should anyone, discovered there, have struck down Arthur Augustus, in order to effect his escape? What had he to fear? Poaching was out of the question—trespassing was not a serious offence. And who should have any motives for trespassing there at such an hour of the night? It was a complete puzzle to his lordship, and it was equally a puzzle to Lord Conway. They were almost driven to conclude that some lunatic was wandering about the frosty woodlands. But no news could be had of any escape from the asylum in the county.

Tom Merry & Co. were puzzled, and, in fact, bewildered. The thing seemed absolutely inexplicable to them.

Someone had been rooting about the park at night. D'Arey had fallen foul of that someone, who had stunned him and fled. But the juniors could not even begin to guess what it all meant.

Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison discussed the matter with the juniors; but they could make no suggestion to throw light on it. Wally of the Third took his celebrated Pongo to the scene, with the intention of scenting out the assailant by his aid, and Reggie Manners and Levison minor accompanied him with subdued grins. The grins were less subdued when they came back to tea—unsuccessful.

All that could be done was to have a watch kept on the park, in the hope of catching the unknown rascal if he should return.

"He's not likely to return," Tom Merry remarked. "But then he wasn't likely to be there in the first place. Yet he was there, that's certain, so he may have the same motive for coming back. It's quite a puzzle."

"Beats me hollow," said Manners.

"And little me," said Monty Lowther. "I'd give a term's pocket-money to be within hitting distance of the rascal who laid Gussy out. But we might pass him on the road and not know him."

Blake clenched his hands.

"Wouldn't I like to be close to him—just once!" he said.

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"I think we'd all like that," said Levison. "How jolly lucky Cardew followed us out last night!"

"Jolly lucky," agreed Tom. "And fancy that giddy slacker carrying Gussy on his back all the way home! Not much slacking about that."

"It was splendid!" said Doris Levison.

Meanwhile, Cardew was the hero of the hour. Certainly he had done a very creditable thing, and he had saved Arthur Augustus from what might have been a dangerous illness. Gussy would assuredly have been found sooner or later by the searchers; but he might have lain for many hours in the snow and bitter cold, and the result of such exposure might have been very serious indeed.

Lord Eastwood thanked the dandy of the Fourth very sincerely; Lord Conway shook hands with him with unusual cordiality; Lady Eastwood thanked him with tears in her eyes. Even Wally of the Third felt it incumbent upon him to say a few words; though, as a rule, the scamp of the Third did not think much of Lord Reekness' grandson. Tom Merry & Co. were quite hearty in their appreciation, and Cousin Ethel and Doris both gave Cardew a generous meed of praise. Cardew bore his blushing honours thick upon him, with his usual nonchalance.

Blake was the only visitor allowed to the "interesting invalid," as Lowther called Gussy, till the evening. Then



"Our luck's in!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "Look!" The ghost-hunter glimmered a light—moving slowly among the underwoods. "That's

Cardew was allowed to go up and see him, at D'Arey's special request.

He found Arthur Augustus propped up on pillows, with bandaged head, and Lady Eastwood by his bedside.

"Feelin' a bit rotten—what, old bean?" asked Cardew, as he stood by the bed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mendin', though?"

"Oh, yaas," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm gettin' on all wight. I'm to keep quiet, you know, and not talk vewy much, the doctah says. But I must weally thank you, Cardew, for what you did for me."

"Don't mench, old bean."

"But I must mention it, old fellow. It was simply wipin' of you to cawwy me home on your back all that great distance. I weally do not quite compwehend how you did it—a wathah bulky fellow like me."

Cardew smiled.

"You see it had to be done," he said. "So there you are! You'll soon be merry and bright again, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus. "And then I am goin' to look for that wascal who biffed me on the cwumpet, and give him a feahful thwashin'."

"I'll hold your hat," said Cardew.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was looking thoughtful. He was

"Nobody's weally seen anybody there, only the movin' light. And that's part of the stow. If I believed in ghosts, I should weally think—"

He paused.

"A phantom sword-bill wouldn't make that jolly old lump on your napper, old bean," said Cardew gravely. "It would only make a phantom lump, I should think."

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"Yaas, it's all wot, of course," he said. "It was some wuffian, though goodness knows why he was there and what he was doin'. I suppose he will never be found."

Cardew's face was more thoughtful still as he went downstairs, leaving the injured junior to repose. Levison and Clive met him at the foot of the staircase.

"How's Gussy?" they asked together.

"Keepin' his pecker up, but hard hit," said Cardew. "I'd give a lot, you men, to get hold of the rotter who hit him."

"Not much chance of that, I'm afraid," said Levison. "The man isn't likely to come back while a watch is being kept, whatever his motive may have been for being there at all. Even if we found the man rooting about the park again, we couldn't prove it was the same man; and outside the park, of course, we've no clue at all to the brute."

"None?" asked Cardew, with his whimsical smile.

"None that I can see," said Clive.

"I wonder if a slackin' ass like myself could see somethin' that's lost on you two brainy fellows?" said Cardew thoughtfully.

"Rat!"

"You don't think it's likely?"

"No."

"Then I shan't ask you to help me," said Cardew gravely. "I shall request the assistance of Miss Cleveland."

"How on earth can Cousin Ethel help you?" demanded Clive, in astonishment.

"She was staying here last summer," said Cardew.

"What has that to do with it?"

"Lots, perhaps."

And Cardew walked away with his hands in his pockets, leaving his two comrades staring after him blankly, and almost wondering whether the cool, clear-headed dandy of the Fourth was wandering in his mind.

CHAPTER 10.

Cardew's "Case."



COUSIN ETHEL gave Cardew of the Fourth a sweet smile when he joined her after breakfast the next morning. Ethel had been up to see Arthur Augustus, and she found Cardew waiting for her when she came down. Cardew was not the kind of fellow Ethel most admired—a circumstance that was easily explained by the fact that he did not bear the remotest resemblance to George Figgins of the New House at St. Jim's.

Ethel, however, was feeling very kind to Cardew now; he had acted really well, and he had done her Cousin Arthur a great service, and Ethel was grateful on Arthur Augustus' account. So she gave Cardew her sweetest smile when she found him waiting for her.

"May I have the honour of baggin' you for a little while, Miss Cleveland?" asked Cardew. "I know there's a frightful lot of competition, an' I'm generally left out in the cold. But if you'd walk on the terrace with me for ten minutes or so I'd try not to bore you."

"Certainly," said Ethel.

"Who's coming skating?" called out Tom Merry.

"Not little me," said Cardew.

"Slacker!" said Tom good-humouredly. "Aren't you too lazy to live? You're coming, Ethel?"

"Miss Cleveland is goin' to let me bore her for ten minutes or so," said Cardew. "After that she will be free to lead the strenuous life, while I slack around and watch."

And Cardew strolled on the terrace, in the sunshine of the winter morning, with the rather puzzled girl. Ethel realised that Cardew had something to say of importance—in his own eyes, at least—and she wondered what it could be.



ers stopped. Far ahead of them, in the gloomy depths of the deer park, it," said Levison. "Just the same that we saw—" (See Chapter 6.)

keen—very keen—to lay by the heels the scoundrel who had handled Arthur Augustus so savagely. He would have given a very great deal to bring the dastard to justice. And Cardew had been giving the matter a great deal of reflection.

"Of course," said Arthur Augustus, with some hesitation, "it was some wuffian who biffed me, Cardew. It's all wot to think it might have been the White Cavalier—what?"

Cardew looked at him curiously.

"Utter rot," he agreed.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"But it's a weird coincidence, isn't it?" he said.

"You were stayin' at Eastwood House a lot last summer, Miss Ethel," Cardew remarked.

"Yes," said Ethel.

"Did you hear any news of a burglary or a robbery in this neighbourhood?"

Ethel's eyes opened.

"There was the burglary at Hundon Lodge," she said.

"About a mile from here?" asked Cardew.

"You know the place?"

"Never seen it or heard of it till this minute."

"Then how did you know it was about a mile from here?" asked Ethel, more and more surprised.

"Deduction, my dear Watson, as jolly old Sherlock Holmes would say. I suppose it never occurred to you, Miss Ethel, that a fellow about my size had the makings of a first-class detective, such as you read of in newspaper serials?"

"I must say it never did," said Ethel, laughing.

"But you never can tell!" said Cardew, with a shake of the head. "Now, I've never heard before this minute of Hundon Lodge and the burglary there last summer. You can take my word for that."

"Of course."

"So would it surprise you to hear that I can give a guess at the article that was burgled?"

"It would—very much indeed!"

"What about a diamond necklace?"

Ethel started.

"You must be joking," she said. "If you have never heard of the matter, how could you know that Lady Hundon's diamond necklace was stolen?"

Cardew's eyes gleamed.

"Right on the wicket—what?" he asked. "May I venture further to deduce that the necklace has never been recovered, and the thief was not found?"

"That is quite correct," said Ethel. "Lady Hundon is a friend of my aunt, Lady Eastwood, and she has often mentioned it. But you do not ask me to believe that you have really guessed all this?"

"Deduction, my dear Watson—deduction," said Cardew. "A diamond necklace worth five hundred pounds—what?"

Ethel smiled.

"That is not so correct," she said. "I believe the missing necklace is worth more than a thousand pounds."

"My mistake!" said Cardew. "Of course, that frowsy ruffian wouldn't know the actual value of the thing. Thank

you very much, Miss Ethel! You have helped me very considerably in completin' my case. Did I mention that I was settin' up as a detective?"

"You did!" said Ethel, laughing. "Are you going to find Lady Hundon's diamond necklace?"

"Exactly."

"You are not serious!" exclaimed Ethel in astonishment.

"Serious as a judge," said Cardew. "More serious than modern judges, in fact—say, as serious as a professional humorist. I'm goin' to find the diamond necklace, and the man who biffed Gussy last night. He was the man who pinched the necklace."

"But—but what—how—"

Levison and Clive came out on the terrace.

"Oh, here you are, you slacker!" said Levison. "Come on—you're keeping Miss Cleveland away from the skating."

"I resign Miss Cleveland to the strenuous brigade," said Cardew gracefully. "I have completed my case, with Miss Ethel's assistance."

"Your—your what?"

"Case!" said Cardew tranquilly.

"Wandering in your mind, old bean?"

"Not at all."

"Blessed if I know what you're driving at," said Clive.

"But chuck it, old man, and come and skate."

"Can't be did. I've got to go down to the village to see the police-inspector."

"What on earth for?"

Cardew smiled.

"Haven't you ever read a detective story?" he said chidingly. "Don't you know that when Sherlock Holmes or Sexton Blake has completed his case he calls in the assistance of the official police?"

"Eh?"

"Followin' their example, I'm goin' to do the same. Ta-ta!" And Cardew raised his hat to Ethel and walked away.

"What bee has he got in his bonnet now?" asked Clive, in utter wonder.

"I don't quite understand him," said Ethel, perplexed.

"But he thinks he can find the man who attacked Arthur last night, and he thinks it is the same man who committed a burglary at Hundon Lodge last summer—though he had never heard of the burglary till I mentioned it to him. It is very odd."

"Blessed if I make it out!" said the mystified Levison.

They went down to the frozen lake to join the skaters. Tom Merry & Co. were already on the ice.

"Where's Cardew?" asked Blake.

"Gone down to Easthorpe," said Clive. "He says he's gone to put the police on the track of the man who biffed D'Arcy. He seems to think that he can find him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors. Of all the house-party staying with Arthur Augustus at Eastwood House, Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker and dandy of the Fourth, seemed the least likely to make any progress in solving the baffling mystery of the deer park.

"Oh, that's rich!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The news took Tom Merry & Co. by storm.

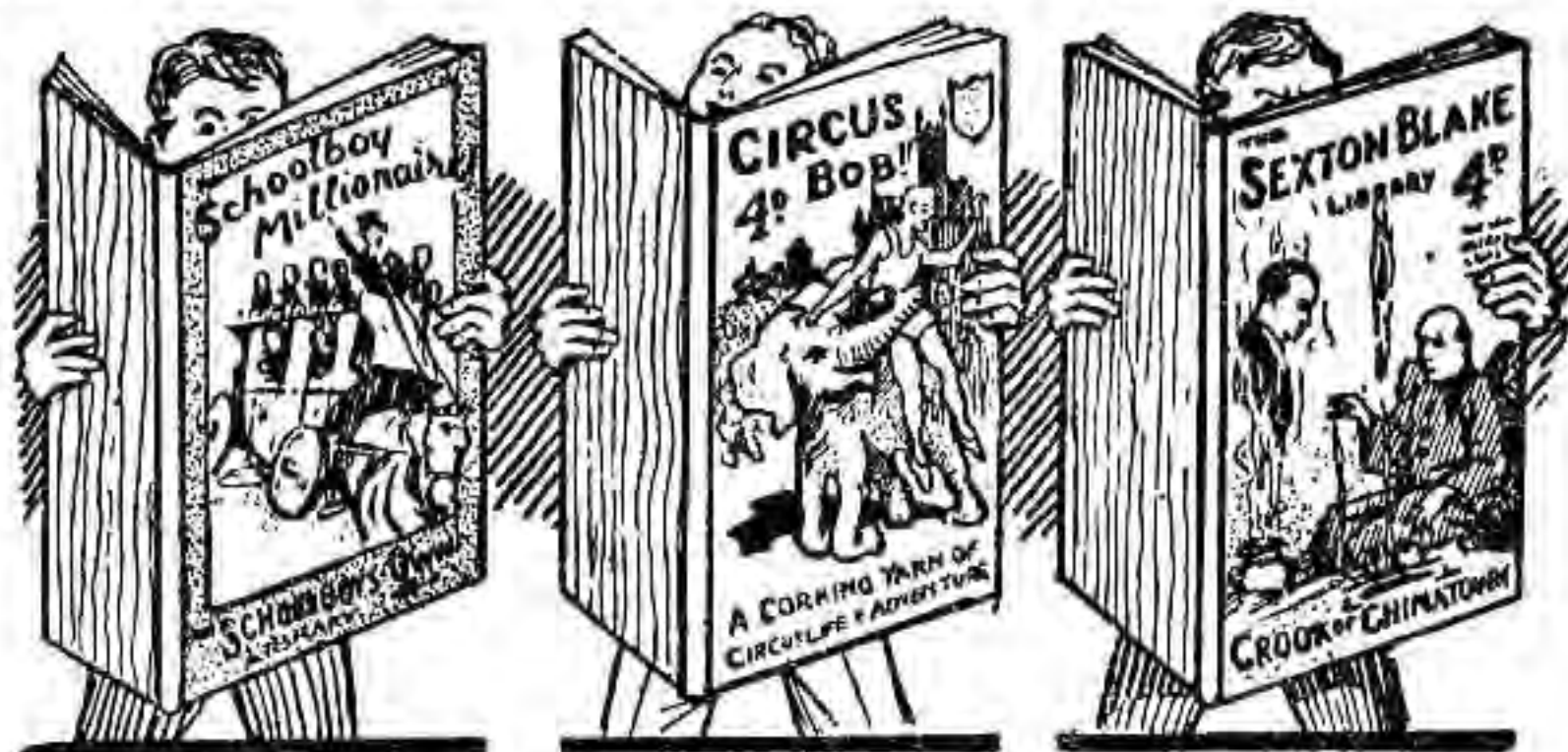
"Cardew must have bats in the belfry," said Manners. "He's more likely to catch a cold than the man who biffed D'Arcy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of the slacker of the Fourth taking the role of Sherlock Holmes, was too much for Tom Merry & Co., and they laughed loud and long as they skated over the ice.

Cardew, as he sauntered down the drive, heard the roar of laughter through the frosty air, and guessed its cause. He smiled, and glanced back at the gliding figures on the ice.

"The merchant who laughs last laughs best!" he murmured. And, leaving Tom Merry & Co. to disport themselves merrily on the ice, and Arthur Augustus watching them cheerily from an upper window, Ralph Reckness Cardew walked away to Easthorpe, whistling snatches from an opera as he walked.



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CHAPTER 11.

Doubting Thomases!



OT him?"

"Produce him!"

"Hand him over!"

These remarks, and a good many more, were made to Ralph Reckness Cardew as he came in to lunch.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to be in a hilarious mood.

Cardew raised his eyebrows slightly.

"What's the merry joke?" he asked.

"You are, old bean," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was only a jest of Cardew's,"

said Cousin Ethel, with a smile.

"Jest so!" murmured Lowther. Monty could never

Lord Conway came along and caught some of the juniors' remarks, and he turned to Cardew.

"Some practical joke of yours?" he asked.

"Not in the least."

"Do you mean to say seriously that you have been able to give useful information to the police?" asked the viscount in astonishment.

"Exactly."

"But what—"

"I'm keepin' that dark at present," said Cardew gravely, "for two reasons. In the first place, there exists the remote possibility that I have made a mistake and jumped to an off-side conclusion—"

"Not very remote?" murmured Blake, and there was a chuckle.

"In the second place," proceeded Cardew calmly, "all these Doubtin' Thomases don't believe a word of it, so I'm leavin' it to events to convince them. So if you don't mind,

"FOOTBALL is a religion in the North and an amusement in the South." That is the opinion of Michael Gilhooly, the half-back of Queen's Park Rangers, who has had experience in both the North and the South.

"Play up, Mac!" is a cry which is scarcely ever heard on the ground of the Celtic club. There is a good reason for this, as the Celtic have more than once this season held a side in which there were eight "Macs."

Dixie Dean, the English International centre-forward of Everton, is keenly interested in whippets. He has one dog, which has won several heats, named "Warney"—after the full-back and captain of the Everton team, "Warney" Cresswell.

Elisha Scott, of Liverpool, and Mcbaffy, of New Brighton, are both Irish goalkeepers. They are also brothers-in-law, and they both live at New Brighton.

A professional footballer who plays for England may either have six pounds in cash or a gold medal to celebrate the event. Five of the ten "pros" who played against Wales last season chose the medals.

Fowler and McPherson, of Swansea Town, are partners in business. That may be one reason why they now play in the Swansea forward line. Anyway, if they are as successful in their business partnership as they have been in getting goals this season, there should be no complaints.

Halifax Town can claim to be unique among the football clubs of England. They have an honorary chaplain.

Melealf, the Preston North End half-back, was recently appointed deputy organist at a church a few miles outside Preston.

When Barnsley started in Second League football in 1898 the highest-paid member of the staff only received three pounds per week, and many of the first team players only got two pounds. Even at this figure the players had often to wait until Saturday afternoon for their money.



FOOTBALL FANS AND SPORTSMEN FOLLOW THIS CHEERY FEATURE EVERY WEEK.

How's this for heroism on the football field. In a recent match Barrass, the forward of Manchester City, was badly hurt. He went off, had two stitches put into the wound in his head, and then went back on the field to play a big part in a victory gained by his side. Yet people say the pro footballer only plays for the money he gets!

Last season Manchester City scored twenty-one more goals than Portsmouth; but, on the other hand, Portsmouth conceded twelve fewer goals than Manchester City. As they finished with an equal number of points, Portsmouth gained promotion, and Manchester City stayed in the Second Division. Yet people say that attack is the best defence!

Leicester City have joined the football clubs whose players are taken for a day's golf every week as a part of their training. This idea started with the Arsenal at Highbury.

The Sheffield United defence can be said to be the A B C of football. It often consists of Alderson, Birk, and Chandler.

There is one football club manager who has ordered that no member of the team shall smoke at all on the morning of a match.

resist the temptation of a pun, good or bad—generally bad. "But should Cardew jest so?"

"But I wasn't jestin'," said Cardew, with an air of surprise. "Sober as a humorist. I've called at the police station in Easthorpe—"

"What on earth for?" demanded Tom Merry.

"To give them a description of the man they want," answered Cardew calmly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Did you get a laugh?" asked Lowther.

"Not at all. The inspector Johnny seemed quite serious, and he pulled up his socks at once to start lookin' for the man."

"Great Scott!"

Cardew spoke with complete seriousness, without the flicker of a smile on his face. But the juniors could only suppose that it was some queer jest of which they could not see the point. Cardew was seeking to pull their leg, somehow; that seemed clear enough.

sir, I'd rather say nothin' for the present; especially in view of the remote—very remote—possibility that I've been barkin' up the wrong tree."

The viscount smiled.

"I hope there is something in it, at all events," he said, and he walked away, his expression very plainly indicating his opinion that there was nothing in it.

At lunch Cardew was regarded with some curiosity by the other fellows. D'Arcy was not yet down; but all the rest of the party were there, and they were all interested in Cardew's strange claim that he had "spotted the winner," as he described it himself.

After lunch Cardew strolled out on the terrace, and Levison and Clive joined him there. To Tom Merry & Co. Cardew's surprising statements constituted some weird jest; but his own chums did not know what to think.

"Look here, Cardew, are you just making an ass of yourself?" asked Clive.

Cardew shook his head gravely.

"No; Nature did that long ago," he answered.

"Oh, don't be a chump!" said Clive. "I can't understand how you can have spotted anything that nobody else has spotted."

"The things you can't understand, old bean, would fill the 'Encyclopedia Britannica,' with a few left over."

"You'll get chipped to death, talking out of your hat like this, you know," said Levison uneasily.

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars would put it, the chipfulness is terrific," said Cardew, with a nod. "But when the giddy desperado is laid by the heels and bottled up in the stone jug, all through little me, what then?"

"And when is that going to happen?" asked Clive sceptically.

"Probably to-night."

"Why to-night specially?"

"Because ghosts—that kind of ghost specially—don't walk in the daytime," explained Cardew. "The only doubt is, will he have the nerve to come back to the park to-night, after being nearly nabbed last night, and only getting away by lifting Gussy on the crumpet? I think so, because he's hard up and can't afford to lose time."

"He—he—he's hard up!" stuttered Clive.

"Right up against it," said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl of laughter. The other juniors had come out in time to hear the dialogue. Cardew regarded them blandly.

"Surprised you, what?" he asked.

"Go it!" chuckled Lowther. "Good old Sherlock Holmes! Can you tell us the colour of his eyebrows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Certainly," said Cardew. "Nearly black. Further description about five feet six, rather big feet, rather red nose, teeth blackened by tobacco, fingers ditto."

"That's the description of the man who biffed Gussy?"

"That's it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't where you laugh," said Cardew, raising his eyebrows. "This is where you say 'Marvellous!' Read Conan Doyle."

"Tell us the rest," said Lowther. "What does he come rooting about Lord Eastwood's park for?"

"Lookin' for somethin' he left there in a hurry last summer."

"And how do you know that?"

Cardew tapped his forehead.

"Brains, old bean. If you had any you'd catch on."

"Why, you ass—"

"Cardew knows something," said Ernest Levison abruptly. "I can't make out why he is mystifying us like this; but there's something in it."

"As much as you could put into a thimble, leaving room for a finger?" suggested Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus was able to come down to tea that afternoon. His noble napper was adorned by a bandage, and he looked rather pale; otherwise he was himself again. The swell of St. Jim's heard the remarks on Cardew's extraordinary essay as an amateur Sherlock Holmes, and he was very much puzzled and perplexed.

"Bai Jove, this is wemarkable, you know!" he said. "Of course, I did not see the wottah who biffed me, so I can't recognise the description; but you say Cardew said he has big feet?"

"That's one detail," grinned Tom Merry.

"But as it happens he is wight."

"Wha-a-ut?"

"You see, just befoah I wan into that villain, I had picked up a twack," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Your own?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No, you ass—a stwange twack in the snow in the park! And it was the twack of a man with big feet."

"Great Scott!"

"Well, I suppose Cardew saw the track when he came along," said Blake. "That accounts for it."

"Yaas, wathah! I nevah thought of that."

"I believe I've got rather good eyesight," yawned Cardew. "But seein' tracks in the dark is rather beyond me. I had only matches with me, and the wind blew them out as fast as I struck them."

"Then you did not see the twack, Cardew?"

"Not a bit."

"That makes it still more wemarkable, deah boy; for it must have been the twack of the wottah who biffed me, and it was a wathah big one."

Cardew smiled. D'Arcy's testimony had a considerable effect on the juniors. It was borne in upon their minds that there was something behind Cardew's airy persiflage; that he was not, as they had supposed, merely "talking out of his hat" for the sake of some weird jest.

Wally of the Third came in rather late to tea. He was looking rather excited as he came in.

"You are late, Walter," said Lady Eastwood.

"Sorry, mums, I've been after Pongo," said Wally. "He got away again."

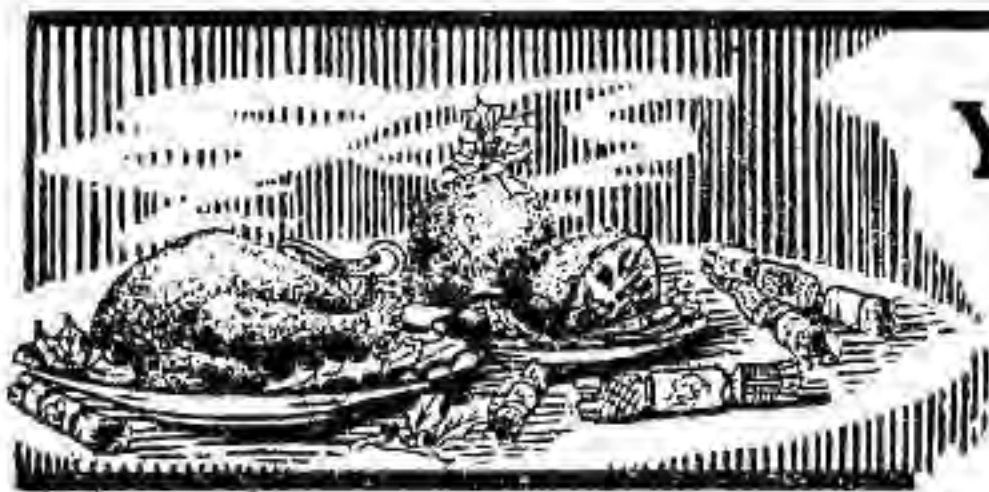
"For good this time, I hope?" asked Lord Conway.

"Bow-wow!" said Wally. "I say I went into the deer park to look for him, and found him all right. What are the bobbies up to there?"

"Bobbies in the deer park?" asked Tom Merry.

"More than a dozen," said D'Arcy minor. "Rooting about, peering into bushes, pawing into hollows of trees. I asked the inspector chap what the game was, and he said

(Continued overleaf.)



YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT!

ONLY ONCE A YEAR!

CHRISTMAS a few weeks off; already I can picture my thousands of chums making their rounds of the shops—those glittering palaces of wondrous toys and Christmas gifts and happy, eager faces! The twenty-fifth is drawing near; for the youngsters' huge stockings are being fished out of cupboards in readiness for the annual visit of Father Christmas. Then it is that hearts beat wildly and speculation runs riot as to what those stockings will contain on the morning of the twenty-fifth. Of course, you GEM readers have ceased to believe in that cheery legend of a white-bearded old gentleman in crimson cloak descending the chimney, yet you will agree that it was a happy inspiration that brought it into our lives. Others, younger than ourselves, still believe in it. We would not have it otherwise, for the earliest stage of youth is all the happier when it comes into contact with romance. It was so in my time, it was so in yours, and I trust Father Christmas will live through all the generations to come.

THE END OF THE RACE!

To me, the approach of Christmas is likened unto a Marathon race. Every effort has been put forward to win THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,035.

through. Some of the runners have sped along the track of accomplishment with more success than others; some have had to stop and take a breather; some have experienced ill-fortune. But with Christmas Day looming near, the tape that marks the end of the race is in sight. After a race extending over a period of a year, all the contestants are worthy of a rest and a little relaxation from

the strenuous training that has been necessary to attempt the distance. Then it is that the victors—the successful people—join hands with those less favoured. Then it is that goodwill and good-fellowship shine out strongly on all sides. Then it is the time-honoured greeting is voiced throughout the world:

"A MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

And we all live for that day. You chaps realise of a sudden that another year has settled on your shoulders. Before tackling a new year you enjoy yourselves according to your lights. And I wish you the very best of enjoyment. Although I have never seen my thousands of loyal chums, and although that pleasure will always be denied me, I feel that I have been in your company for some considerable time. I know you all; we're friends. You've stood by me during the year, and I am grateful. Therefore, to you all, boys and girls, young and old, I wish you "A Merry Christmas!"

Your Editor.

they were acting on information received. I suppose the pater knows."

"Bai Jove! They can't think that the chap who biffed me is still there!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in surprise. "It stands to reason that he cleaved off at once."

Wally chuckled.

"They wouldn't be groping in holes in tree-trunks after him, Gussy. But they're after something. The inspector didn't tell me what, though I asked him. Jolly queer."

"I daresay they'll find somethin'," said Cardew. "A dozen men searchin' in the daylight have a better chance than one johnny rootin' about with an electric torch at night."

Wally blinked at him.

"Mean to say that you know what they're looking for?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"What is it, then, you ass?"

"Same article that the phantom was looking for last night, when Gussy interrupted him and bagged a clip on the cranium."

"Bosh!" said Wally, and he devoted his attention to tea-cakes.

"Weally, Cardew—"

"May I use the telephone?" yawned Cardew.

He strolled out into the hall, and went to the telephone cabinet. The early winter darkness had now fallen; the lighted windows of Eastwood House gleamed out on the snow. Several juniors, greatly curious, followed Cardew into the hall. He gave them a cheery smile.

"Lend me your ears," he said. "In my character of Sherlock Holmes, I'm telephoning to the official police, you know, to see whether they've made anythin' of what I gave them."

Cardew rang up Easthorpe Police Station. He was through in a few moments.

"That Inspector Blane? Cardew speakin' from Eastwood House."

The juniors, gathered round the open door of the telephone cabinet, looked at one another as they listened.

"You've found it?"

Some of the juniors, close to the receiver, could catch the Easthorpe inspector's reply as it came through.

"Yes, Master Cardew! We've been at it all the afternoon, and it was found in a hollow tree. It had slipped down out of reach, but we fished it out."

"Oh, good!"

"Lady Hundon will be delighted: she had, of course, given up all hope of ever recovering the necklace, after all these months."

"No end bucked at the idea of delightin' her ladyship, though I haven't the honour of her acquaintance. But I suppose you're keepin' it dark till you've got your man? He won't come back again if he hears that the necklace is found, what?"

"You may rely on that, Master Cardew. We've already got wind of the man—he has been staying at a hedge ale-house about half a mile out of the village. He won't be out of our hands long now."

And Cardew rang off.

CHAPTER 12. Captured!



Cousin Ethel was singing, and Manners of the Shell sat at the piano. The evening was growing old; but bedtime in vacation was rather later than at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. were not yet thinking of going to their rooms. A cheery party were in the music-room. Arthur Augustus was looking quite merry and bright now, though he confessed that he still had an ache in his "nappah." Cardew of the Fourth strolled to a window occasionally, and looked out into the

wintery night, and the snow gleaming in the starlight.

Cardew was in expectation of something; but the other

fellows had almost forgotten the mystery of the deer park now. The dandy of the Fourth had been questioned on all sides after that talk on the telephone with the Easthorpe inspector, but he had explained nothing: only mentioning, in his airy way, that the matter was, so far, an official secret. But all the St. Jim's juniors knew by this time that the mystery was no mystery to Cardew, and that he could have enlightened them if he had chosen. What he knew, and how he knew, was puzzling enough; but they realised that he had not been talking "out of his hat" after all.

Cousin Ethel had just ceased to sing, when there was a sound of knocking, and a murmur of voices in the great hall of Eastwood House. Cardew smiled. The voice of Lord Eastwood was heard from the hall, and the deeper tones of Lord Conway, and the voice of the Easthorpe



As Cardew groped his way through the snow, he suddenly stumbled over something that lay on the ground. "What is it?" he breathed. He struck a match and in the flickering rays of light recognised the white, unconscious face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! (See Chapter 8.)

inspector. And then Reggie Manners came bolting excitedly into the music-room.

"They've got him!" howled Reggie.

"What?"

"They've got him!"

"You young ass," said Manners of the Shell. "Who's got whom?"

"That wuffian?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather! Bagged him in the deer park!"

"Gwest Scott!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush from the music-room at once. Cousin Ethel and Doris went with the juniors. Cardew did not move from his chair.

Levison turned back from the door.

"Come on, Cardew."

"I'm quite comfy here, thanks," yawned Cardew.

"But they've got the man—"

"They're welcome to him."

"Don't you want to see him now they've got him?" demanded Levison of the Fourth.

"Not the least little bit. There are certain occasions, old bean, when auld acquaintance should be forgot, in spite of auld lang syne," said Cardew.

"Blessed if I can understand you, you ass," exclaimed Levison impatiently.

"You'll understand when you see the man."

Levison hurried out into the hall after the others.

Almost all Eastwood House had gathered there; the butler and the footmen hovered in the background; and in the middle of the hall, two burly constables stood, grasping the arms of a squat man who stood between them. Inspector Blane was explaining to Lord Eastwood, with a smile of satisfaction on his plump face.

Levison stared at the prisoner, and uttered a cry of amazement.

For he knew the man.

"The Rat!" he stuttered.

Clive caught his arm.

"Levison! You've seen him before—it's the man who spoke to Cardew that evening near Reckness Towers——"

"I know him."

The two juniors had seen "Jimmy the Rat" only on that one occasion, but they remembered the sharp, hard face, the lowering brow, the glittering, rat-like eyes.

Jimmy the Rat stood between the two constables, his teeth set, his face grim with savage rage and sullen hatred. To all the fellows but Levison and Clive he was a stranger. But they could see that he answered to the description Cardew had given of D'Arcy's unknown assailant.

"As we took him on your land, my lord, I thought your lordship would like to know," the inspector was saying. "We'd been watching the park ever since dusk, and we got him at last."

"And that is the man who struck down my son?" said Lord Eastwood sternly. The Rat met the old gentleman's stern, indignant glance with a savage stare.

"That's the man, my lord—no doubt about that. Master Arthur came on him when he was searching in the park for Lady Hundon's necklace. No doubt he had been searching there a good many nights. But in his hurry, he had slipped the necklace into a hollow tree, and, of course, it wasn't easy for him to spot the tree again." The inspector grinned. "Might have taken him a month to find it, searching at night. I had a dozen men on the spot this afternoon, and it was a whole afternoon before we got it. Of course, this rogue did not know it had been found when he came back to search for it once more."

The Rat gritted his discoloured teeth.

"You can't prove——" he hissed.

"We'll do our best," said the inspector genially. "We'll do our best for you, Jimmy the Rat. We'll take him to the station, my lord; and perhaps your lordship will tell Master Cardew that we're much obliged to him for putting us on the track. A very keen young gentleman, my lord."

Jimmy the Rat gave a start.

"Cardew!" he exclaimed, in a choking voice. "Young Cardew helped you cop me, did he?" He dragged at his handcuffed wrists in rage; and the two constables grasped his arms more firmly. "Cardew! It was him, then! He don't dare to let me see him——"

"Quite a mistake!" drawled a quiet voice.

Ralph Reckness Cardew stepped out into the hall.

"If it's a pleasure to you to see me, old bean, here I am," he said negligently. "You won't see such good company where you're goin', I fear."

The juniors grinned.

Jimmy the Rat fixed his eyes on the handsome, careless face of the dandy of the Fourth.

"You got me copped!" he said hoarsely.

"I had that pleasure, dear man. Never was so pleased in my life!" assented Cardew.

"I'll remember this——"

"Do!"

"I shan't always be in the stone jug," hissed Jimmy the Rat, "and when I come out——"

"That's enough!" interrupted the inspector. "Take him away!"

And the Rat, white with rage, was marched away by the two constables, the satisfied inspector following.

The door closed on them. Jimmy the Rat was gone, to pay his penalty. Lord Eastwood fixed his eyes on Cardew. The dandy of the Fourth was smiling, quite unmoved by the ruffian's malevolent threats.

"Cardew, my boy, it appears that you gave the police the information upon which they acted," said Lord Eastwood. "They have recovered Lady Hundon's diamond necklace, which was stolen from Hundon Lodge last summer; they have captured the brute who attacked Arthur last night. May I ask——"

"Yaas, wathah! How did you do it, old bean?"

"Quite simple, sir," said Cardew. "I happened to have met that man before, under—under rather odd circum-

(Continued on page 21.)

CHRISTMAS TUCK!

How some of the favoured dishes originated.

PLU^m pudding and turkey between them help to "make" Christmas. A fellow would not think he had kept the Great Day unless he had sat down to a good feed in which those two items figured pretty prominently.

And when the knives, forks, and spoons are rattling most of us believe we are eating exactly the same sort of fare as they tucked away in Ye Good Olde Days. But they kept Christmas differently then.

Turkeys three hundred years ago were so uncommon as to be almost unknown, at least in this country. Plum pudding came later still. It started in the olden times as plum broth, which was eaten as soup before the dinner proper was commenced on! Many fellows to-day would like to "kick off" with the Christmas pudding—but it would be a poor sort of feed in the guise of the old plum soup!

Before the turkey came to Britain, gigantic barons of beef formed the great "obstacle" of Christmas dinners, that mountain of meat—for people in those days were enormous eaters, and they stuffed in an almost unbelievable way—being flanked by boars' heads, with peacocks and geese to act as stand-bys.

WRONGLY NAMED!

There was tremendous ceremony with that boar's head. In the castles and large houses of the rich, that part of the fare was ushered in with music, the musicians stalking proudly before the carrier of the big dish, banging and blowing on their instruments for all they were worth.

The turkey is not only a newcomer, but a decided foreigner. It is an impostor, too (though it sounds very ungracious to call the plump, toothsome bird ugly names, at Christmas especially!), for it has no right whatever to be called Turkey, the country after which it is wrongly named, knowing nothing of it!

It was the old seafarer, Cabot, historians think, who brought the first turkeys to Britain. That was in the sixteenth century. People, for some reason, imagined he had found them in Turkey, whereas the fathers and mothers of our modern Christmas bird are natives of North America. There the old male birds—"stags," as they are termed—sometimes tip the scale at 60 lb. and more. It would need

to be a pretty substantial sort of table to stand up to that dish nowadays, and very hefty appetites to make anything like serious inroads upon it!

A NOISY MARCH!

Turkeys are smaller when raised here at home, weighing on an average about 15 lb. each. It was a fine thing which old Cabot (or whoever was really responsible for the discovery) did for England, for the breeding of turkeys for the Christmas market is a huge, all-the-year-round industry, particularly in Norfolk.

Before trains and motor-lorries came, getting the turkeys to distant markets from the home-farm had a great deal more fun in it than now. The "growers" just ship them aboard train or lorry to-day and hurry them to London or elsewhere, and it is seldom anyone ever sees the sight, once common, of a big flock of "gobblers" being marched along the highways to where they will be sold—perhaps a long journey of many miles.

But that is how it was done. Men and boys and dogs all took a hand as turkey-drovers, and all enjoyed the noisy march—excepting, perhaps, the birds!

Mince-pies were here before turkeys were dreamed of in England, though they called them Christmas "pies" in the roistering, boisterous days of Queen Bess. Well, it is all very wholesome fare, as different as maybe from some of the weird tuck which they consume with tremendous gusto in other parts of the world.

PECULIAR TASTES!

The Cornish folk in bygone days relished jellyfish when they could get it, at Christmas or any other time. They leave that now to the Japanese, who "go for" the watery stuff with as great eagerness as the Chinese lap up birds'-nest soup! The Iclander has to make-do at Christmas, unless his luck is very much in, with blubber and dried fish, with flesh of the Arctic shark to help it down.

Monkeys, of course, figure on the bill-of-fare of many races, particularly the South American Indians. That meat, in spite of the touch of cannibalism, almost, which attaches to it, sounds certainly more promising than a plateful of roasted bat. People who can eat bats must have extremely peculiar tastes!

African natives never find among the Christmas dishes of the white communities there one of the dishes they esteem tremendously—crocodile meat. But then they will eat lizards also, and enormous ants and bloated caterpillars. The latter they even dry sometimes and store away for use when other fodder in winter runs a bit short.

Seaworms, fat and well over a foot long, make a fine stew—so they say who like it, and fish-eyes and sheeps'-eyes are not looked on with suspicion when they are dished up in the West Indies and Asia Minor. No chance of mistaking this sort of tuck for anything more civilised, however cunning it may be "dressed," though a lot depends on the name.

stances. I happened to know that last summer he stole a diamond necklace, and hid it somewhere in a hollow tree, in a wood about a mile from the scene of the robbery. I needn't tell you how I happened to know that—it's of no consequence. But I'd forgotten him when I came here to spend a few days with Gussy. It was no bizney of mine to bother my head about him."

"But—"

"But after Gussy was knocked over I did some thinkin'," said Cardew. "Puttin' two and two together, and makin' four of it. Somebody unknown was rootin' about a park at night with a light, and was so anxious not to be caught at it that he made a brutal attack on a fellow who came on him there. It was a remarkable coincidence, at least, an' I wondered whether it might possibly be Jimmy the Rat huntin' for his hidden loot."

"Oh!" exclaimed Levison.

And Clive nodded. He understood now. Cardew smiled.

some thin' there. Mr. Blane acted on the information received, and there we are!"

"Upon my word!" said Lord Eastwood.

Cardew glanced round.

"You fellows are not playin' up?" he said, with gentle reproach. "Now I've explained the whole thing, this is where you say 'Marvellous!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you know, it was weally vewy elevah of Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, if he had not happened to know anythin' about the wottah, in the first place, he could not have worked it out like that."

"No fear!" agreed Blako.

"My laurels are fadin' already!" said Cardew sadly. "Just like Sherlock Holmes and jolly old Watson—as soon as I explain how I do those amazin' things, you don't think it marvellous at all. I shall give up the detective bizney from now on! If you ever want an inquiry after your missin' intellect, Gussy, call in some other detective!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about a little music?" suggested Cardew. "Doris was goin' to sing—"

"You got me copped!" said the Rat hoarsely. "I had that pleasure, dear man," assented Cardew. "Never was so pleased in my life." "I'll remember this!" hissed the prisoner. "I shan't always be in the stone jug, and when I come out—" "That's enough!" interrupted the inspector. "Take him away." (See Chapter 12.)



"So I made a little local inquiry, as Sherlock Holmes would say—that is, I asked Cousin Ethel about the local news of last summer, and I knew she had been stayin' here. I learned that a diamond necklace had been stolen last summer from a house about a mile from here, and never recovered, or the thief caught. That put the lid on, to my mind."

"And I never thought—" said Levison.

"You didn't know the man, and I did," said Cardew calmly. "He was a stranger to you; you'd only seen him once, and forgotten his existence. Owin' to certain circumstances I needn't go into, I knew quite a lot about him. You see, Lord Eastwood, I'd come on the man before more than once, and knew he was a thief and a rascal. I put two and two together, and walked down to the police station to put the result before the inspector, leavin' these fellows no end tickled at my takin' up the character of Sherlock Holmes."

"Well, we never knew—" said Tom Merry.

"Of course you didn't, old bean—I was the man who knew! The inspector Johnny thought there was somethin' in my idea that the necklace Jimmy the Rat had captured was Lady Hamilton's necklace, and that the wood, where he hid it in a tree, about a mile off, was Eastwood Park, as someone was rootin' about the park at night searchin' for

"Hear, hear!"

And the St. Jim's party trooped back into the music-room.

All the fellows agreed that it was by no means "marvellous" now that Cardew had made that simple explanation. Some of them could not help wondering, too, under what exceedingly queer circumstances Cardew had gained a knowledge of Jimmy the Rat, in the first place.

Still, as Blako remarked, Cardew had "delivered the goods," so to speak—the missing necklace had been found, to the great delight of the owner, and D'Arcy's assailant was under lock and key. And, incidentally, it was demonstrated beyond doubt that the moving light in the park and the painful experience of Arthur Augustus there were not due to a ghost walking in the old deer park, and were not to be laid to the account of the White Cavalier!

THE END.

(Now look out for another topping story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled: "THE MISSING FOURTH-FORMER!" which will appear in next week's issue of the GEM. An early order will save disappointment, chums.)

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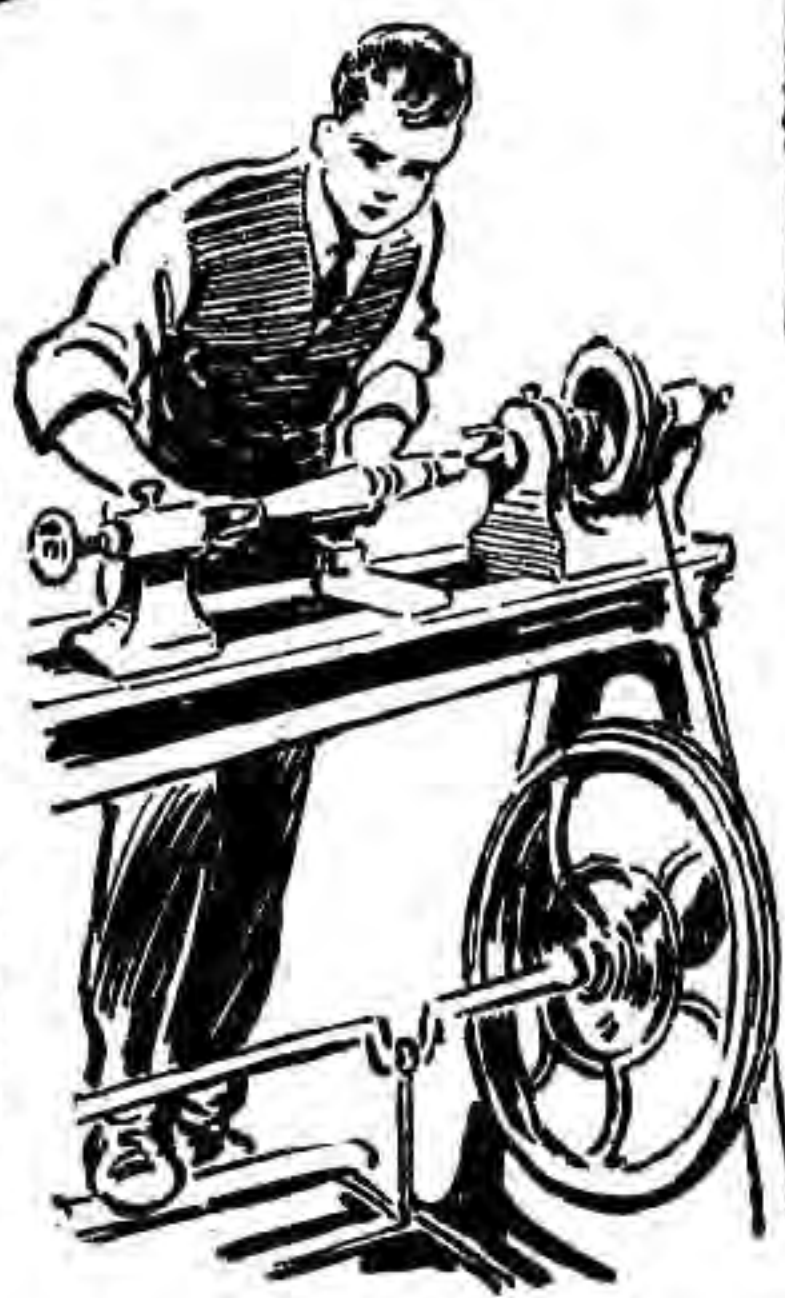
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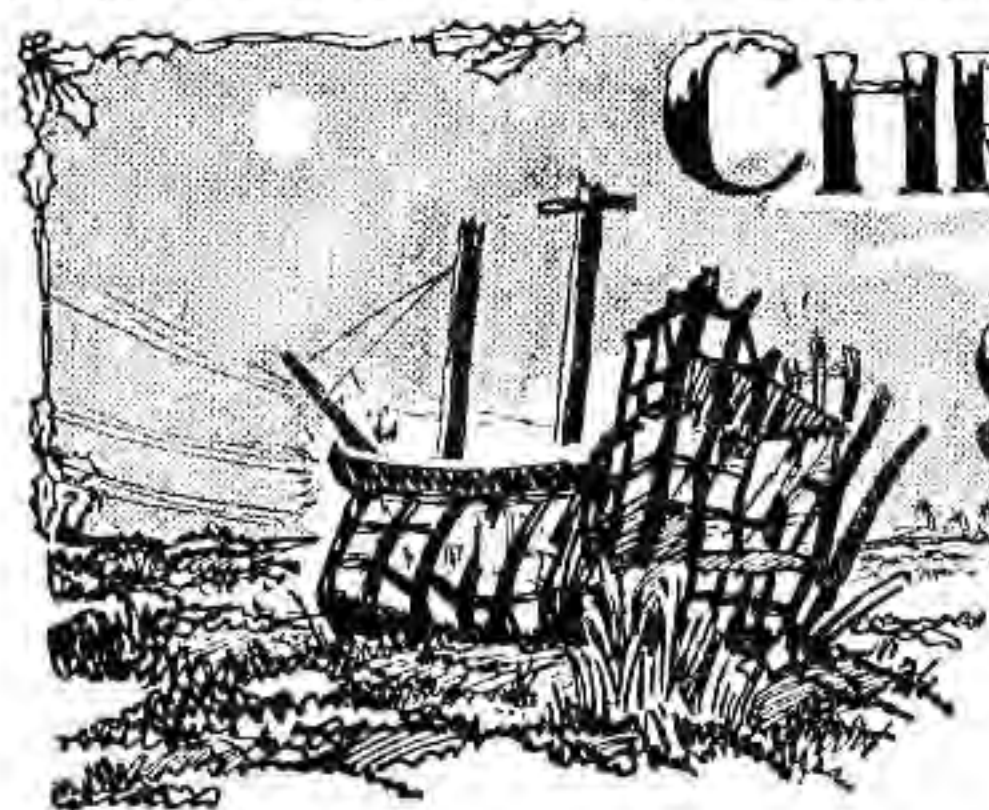
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WEIRD STORIES OF UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS at sea that will be told afresh in the fo'c'sle of many a ship this Yuletide!



CHRISTMAS GHOSTS

AT
SEA!



ON Christmas Eve, from behind the old oak panelling in the moated grange, from dust-grimed, hidden chambers in thick and ancient walls, from cramped nooks and crannies in houses of lesser magnificence, ghosts that have lain quiet throughout the rest of the year emerge to join forces with their transparent fellows who have nightly roamed a regular beat.

So those who are given to seeing spectral visitants would have us faithfully believe. The spectral visitors clank and groan, twist and grimace, and disport themselves generally, the whole united tribe of land-ghosts—all because it is Christmas. There are others of the wraithly tribe that land-men never see, and seldom even hear about.

But they are well-known, these ghosts of the ocean, to the older generation of sailormen. True, they are not so frequently encountered to-day as of yore, for somehow ghost-ships and their spectral crews seem nervous of wireless and the "floating cities" that now plough the seas where once old windjammers fought a vastly slower way.

The ocean ghosts whose appearances are well-known in shipping circles are not all those of wrecked or vanished merchant ships and their crews. Some of them are decidedly sinister. They are the ghost-hulks of pirate vessels, and their appearance betokens some dire misfortune to the ship's crew that spots them. Many a fo'c'sle at this time of year will be thick with yarns of ships of shadow, with no earthly substance. And they are not all mere legends.

Ghostly Crew of Pirates!

There is the ghost pirate-ship which sails on no sea but beats eerily through the fever-stricken, misty mangrove swamps of Southern Florida. Travellers who profess to have seen it declare the ghost-ship to be just a mass of decaying timber and wind-tattered sails—but the ghostly crew of dead-and-gone pirates is complete!

A weird blue light shines dimly through the rotting ribs of the vessel. Whirling white, steaming mists of the enormous swamp play about it, and the ghost-crew enacts over again the scene which is supposed to have brought them and their ship to their everlasting fate.

This was the cutting-out and looting of a merchant brig, somewhere off Cape Florida. The pirates compelled every man-jack of the brig's crew, from captain downwards, to walk the plank. One of the victims called down vengeance on the cut-throat sea-raiders. The vengeance came, with terrifying promptness. An enormous wave bore down on the pirate ship, hurled it skywards, and sent it smashing miles inland, dumping it eventually in the trackless South Florida swamp where to-day they are all, as unhappy ghosts, paying dire retribution.

A ship that sails the open seas as a ghost that has often been seen by responsible persons is the old "Flying Dutchman." One of its appearances is recorded in a private journal written up about fifty years ago by people who were cruising aboard the "Bacchante."

Old Vanderdecken's Boast!

The account describes the "Flying Dutchman" as a phantom shape all aglow with a strange red light, making for some ghostly port, with masts and spars crowded with billowing canvas. The look-out man who reported this particular appearance of the "Flying Dutchman" shortly afterwards came hurtling to the deck from his perch in the cross-trees.

Such is the sinister influence of the wraith of the "Flying Dutchman." Wherever she goes, trouble is born—as has been happening, so sailormen aver, for the last three hundred years or more. Usually she appears in a heavy

gale, beating down the Gold Coast of West Africa, still with old Vanderdecken at the helm.

Vanderdecken was the captain who brought the "Flying Dutchman" to her present ghostly state, according to legend, or tradition, or rumour—which-ever you prefer. A swashbuckling old Dutchman, he tried again and again to get his vessel round the Cape. Winds and tempests flung him back. Never yet had weather beaten him, and he declared he would keep his helm that way and somehow get round the Cape if it took him till all eternity. He didn't get round, and he hasn't got round yet!

Spooks' Spiteful Tricks!

There are other sea-ghosts that play spiteful tricks, so it is alleged, on mariners who attempt to interfere with them. When smuggling was almost an industry in very many coast-villages there were also law-breakers known as wreckers. They took their title from their trade, which was enticing vessels near the coast on to the rocks by means of lighted lanterns, the gleam from which the ill-fated ships mistook for regulation lights that should have spelled safety. The safety lights marked the entrance to harbours and snug coves. The mistaken ship that tried to "make" such a faked anchorage hit the rocks for sure when led on by the wreckers' lanterns.

Then the wreckers got busy, looting the ship's stores and cargo. The coastwise men of Kerry will tell you a yarn of a great, gaunt ship, whose masts had been swept away, which Kerry wreckers once had the joy of spotting, wedged tight on the rocks. She and all her cargo was theirs, without the trouble of having to wreck her! And what a cargo it was when the wreckers boarded the deserted ship! Treasures from the East—silk, rugs, and what not, all representing fine gold! The wreckers bundled all the best of it into their own boats and were pulling gleefully ashore when their comrades, watching from the safety of the cliffs, saw the boats engulfed in a moment—simply swallowed up in the sea!

But that was not all, for the wrecked ship herself then showed her true colours. She was a ghost ship, and as such, her gruesome joke ended, she straightway sailed clean off the rocks and bore strongly against the wind out to the open sea.

Those Kindly Spooks!

There is good and bad in everything—even in spooks! So we are not startled unduly when we hear old salts swapping yarns relating to alleged good deeds on the part of alleged ghosts. Master mariners have been prompted out of their course by the urgent fidgeting of a sea-spook.

Sorely against their will, but too superstitious to disobey the eerie bidding, they have risked the keen displeasure of their owners by wasting power and time on what might easily have proved a goose (or ghost!) chase in mid ocean.

The helm has been put hard over, the duly appointed course departed from, and presently the object of the ghost's prompting has become plain—a boatload of wrecked mariners tossing about on the ocean's bosom and almost despairing of ever being picked up!

Such cases have happened. The real explanation, if it is not ghosts, is beyond us. However it may be, here's a merry, merry Christmas to all such kindly spooks!

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STANDING BY A PAL! It's years since Kit Erroll has seen Albert Biggs, a waif of the slums. But Kit has never forgotten how Biggs once saved his life. The chance comes Kit's way to square the account, and although Erroll's friendliness towards the waif means a first-class row with Mornington, Biggs' old pal has no regrets!



His Own Enemy!

A GRAND NEW SCHOOL SERIAL,
DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF
JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

VALENTINE MORNINGTON quarrels with his chum, Kit Erroll, over an imaginary slight, and goes off for the afternoon with Peele & Co., a shady set of rotters. Anxious to patch up the row, Kit Erroll follows, but is hailed in the lane by a youthful tramp. He recognises the waif as Albert Biggs, an acquaintance of his former dark days, when he, too, had been a waif in London.

Biggs is on his way to Rookwood in the hope of obtaining a job. Erroll, pleased to see him, promises to help him.

Kit goes back to the school for money, and returns to find Peele & Co. ragging Biggs. He chips in to save his friend, but finds the odds much against him. He calls to Morny, standing by, for help, but his erstwhile friend turns a deaf ear to his appeal.

(Now Read On.)

Erroll Speaks for His Chum!

"THAT'S the ticket, Morny!" panted Peele. "Here, help us with the rotter, old man!"

"Go and eat coke!" said Mornington coolly.

"If Erroll will promise to give this beastly tramp the boot, though, I'll jolly soon chip in and help him make mincemeat of you, Peele!"

Erroll did not answer. His face went a trifle white, and his eyes gleamed. Not even to gain his chum's help would he do that. He guessed now that his chum had overheard his conversation with Albert Biggs, and he felt he understood Morny's attitude now. His tid with his chum earlier in the afternoon had just put the perverse Mornington into the mood for any excuse to quarrel with him.

With blazing eyes he redoubled his efforts, and after a fierce struggle, managed to stagger to his feet.

Peele staggered back under a drive that jarred every tooth in his head, and Lattrey went spinning away again, his nose streaming. But they closed in again instantly, while Gower, dodging Erroll's fists, leaped on his back from behind.

Erroll went down with a heavy crash, again.

"Now, into the dashed ditch with him!" hissed Peele, his face convulsed. "Gad! We'll make the rotter—Ow!"

Peele howled and crashed over under an unexpected drive from a grimy fist as hard as iron.

It was Albert Biggs—joining in at last, his eyes blinking and bloodshot. He joined in like a tornado, his fists whirling.

"Good man, Bert!" panted Erroll.

It was help at last, and Erroll scrambled up again, his eyes gleaming with fight. Mornington scowled, and stepped from the stile as though to intervene. But he changed his mind and seated himself again, looking on sardonically.

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"Come on, you men!" gasped Peele savagely, scrambling up again in a fury. "Lattrey, you lunk, come on! We're three to two! Smash the cads!"

Lattrey ceased hugging his nose—he was hanging back now, but as Peele and Gower made another rush he joined in—not very willingly, however. Nor did he stay in long. A grimy fist rattled his teeth, and a second smacked home on his nose again.

It was more than enough for Mark Lattrey, and he dodged and ran, stopping a few yards away to nurse his injuries. The next moment Gower was also out—sent spinning yards away by a hefty drive from Erroll's fist. And he stayed out.

Both Erroll and Albert turned their attention to Peele, but Peele was not hero enough to face them alone. He broke away, shouting furiously at his chums.

It was just then that four juniors came scudding along the lane. The four were Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome. They stopped and stared at Erroll and Biggs, and then at Peele & Co, savagely nursing their hurts some yards away.

"Hallo, what's the merry trouble?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Dear old Peele again, I see—three to two, eh?"

"And it looks as if the two have licked 'em," grinned Lovell. "What was the trouble, Erroll?"

Erroll mopped his heated face without replying. His glance went to Mornington, still seated on the stile, and it was a troubled glance.

Jimmy Silver did not fail to notice it, and he looked curiously at Mornington.

"What's the game, Morny?" he asked, staring. "We saw something of what was going on when we came along. It beats me to see a fellow sitting watching while a gang of cads pitch into his pal!"

"Any of your bisney?" drawled Mornington.

"Yes, it is! It's too thick sitting there smoking beastly fags while your pal fights against odds!" said Jimmy Silver curtly.

"Some pal!" sniffed Lovell. "I don't think! Blessed if I should care to have a pal like that!"

"Erroll asked for trouble and got it!" said Mornington coolly. "He was backing this filthy tramp up against Rookwood chaps! I wasn't going to back him up in that, pal or no pal!"

"Oh!"

The juniors looked very curiously at Albert Biggs, who was rubbing his eyes and panting breathlessly, and looking very flushed and unhappy.

Erroll spoke then.

"This chap isn't a tramp, Morny," he said quietly. "He's a fellow who's on his beam ends at the moment—a decent chap who befriended me when I myself was down and out years ago. He's an old chum of mine, and I wasn't going to see cads like Peele bully him. If you'll come along with me now, Morny, old chap, I'll explain."

"With—with this filthy tramp?" asked Mornington, a glitter in his eyes.

"With my chum, Biggs," said Erroll steadily. "He's a good sort, really, Morny, and I'd like you to know—"

"Thanks, but I'd prefer not to!" said Mornington. "I'll come along quickly enough if you'll boot that low cad back the way he came. But if you prefer his company to mine—"

"It's not that, Morny—you know it isn't," said Erroll in great distress. "I can't turn—look here, old man; come along and I'll explain just why—"

"Thanks, no!" said Mornington deliberately. "I should be afraid of losing my wallet or my watch! Come on, Peele, old chap! We'll continue our little stroll."

And Mornington, giving Albert Biggs a deadly look, dropped from the stile and joined Peele & Co. who were just moving away. They walked on towards Rookwood, Peele & Co. mopping injured noses and eyes.

Erroll stood staring after his chum with a look of amazement.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Jimmy Silver. "The rotten cad! That was a rotten thing to say before that chap!"

"Rotten!" muttered Lovell warmly. "The chap's down on his luck; but he looks a decent enough kid! What started it, Erroll?" he went on, raising his voice.

"I left my friend here, waiting in the lane for me," said Erroll huskily. "I was coming back again when I saw Peele, Gower, and Lattrey attack him. So I rushed up and joined in. That's all."

"All, is it?" said Lovell, with a sniff. "And you mean to say that Mornington, your best pal, sat there and let those cads handle you without offering to interfere? He wouldn't be a pal of mine long if he did that to me—let me down in that rotten way!"

"Not worth calling a pal!" said Raby. "Don't look so pipped, Erroll—you're well rid of a chap of that kind!"

Erroll flushed, and caught Albert Biggs' arm.

"Come on, Biggs," he said huskily.

He led the ragged youth away towards Coombe, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co to themselves. His heart was heavy, but he felt no bitterness towards Mornington, curiously enough. He was of a forgiving nature—too forgiving, perhaps.

He felt sure that, had Morny not been in such a bad temper, he would willingly have come to his aid against Peele & Co. In fact, the incident would never have taken place had not his chum been in one of his evil moods. Erroll never dreamed that it was Mornington himself who had

started the trouble with Albert Biggs. Had he done so, he would have been far more upset than he was.

As the two got out of earshot of the Fistical Four, Albert Biggs turned to Erroll, his pinched, braised face full of distress.

"I'm sorry this 'as happened, sir," he said. "I wouldn't 'ave come after this job of garden boy at Rookwood if I'd knowed as you was there, Master Erroll. I can see as it won't do you no good knowing a ragged bloke like me there."

"What rot!" exclaimed Erroll, setting his lips hard. "I'm jolly glad you came, Bert!"

"I know. You're a good sort!" said the waif huskily. "But it won't do, and I ain't allowing it! It'll only cause trouble between you and your pals, like. Look 'ere! Don't you come no farther wi' me. I'm clearin' outer this place right away. Not as I ain't grateful to you—you can lay to it that I am. But—"

"What rot!" said Erroll. "We'll see about that. Think I care for those chaps—those three who scrapped with us, I mean? They're about the biggest snobs and cads in Rookwood. You needn't worry about them, I can tell you."

"I ain't worrying about them so much," said the ragged youth. "I'm thinkin' about that other bloke—the one as sat on the stile. I ain't goin' to comp between you and 'im, though—"

"Rats! I'm getting you that job, Bert!" said Erroll flatly. "As for Morny—the chap you mention—you needn't worry about him, either. He doesn't really mean what he says, and he just happens to be in a bad temper this afternoon. He's mad with me because I wouldn't go with him to a boxing affair at Latcham. But he'll be right as rain when he gets over it."

"Yes; but—"

"No good butting, old chap!" said Erroll grimly. "I've found you row, after all these years, and I'm not letting you go, Bert. I've never forgotten how you stood by me when I was down and out. I should have starved but for you. I've never forgotten. I owe you a lot, and I'm going to repay it."

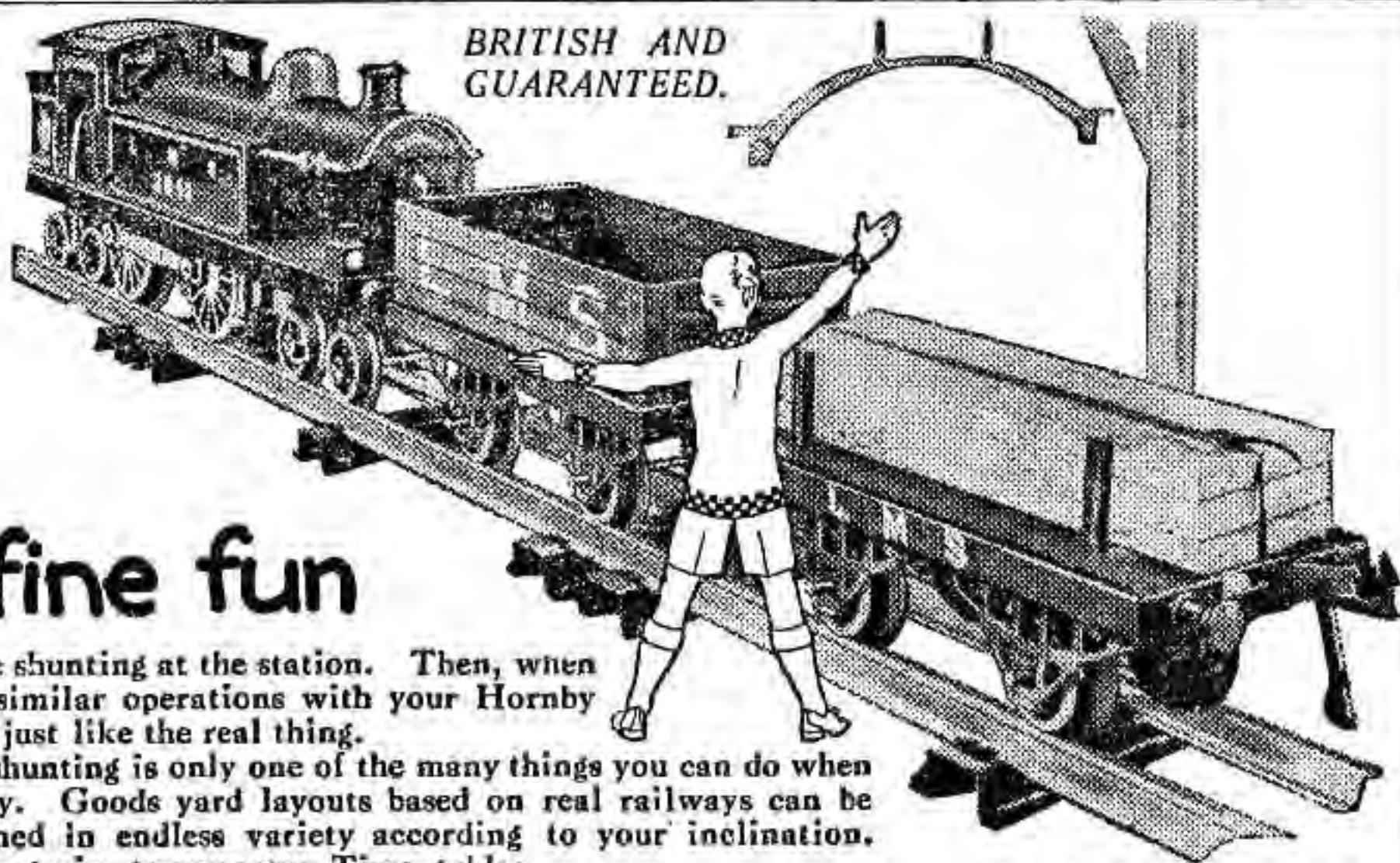
"Master Erroll—"

"You're coming with me now for some grub!" said Erroll quietly. "After that I'm going to rig you out in some clobber. Luckily my logs will about fit you. Then we'll see about that job. I'll eat my hat if I don't— Oh, my hat!"

(Continued overleaf.)

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Erroll broke off in some alarm, and hurriedly finished straightening his collar and tie. Coming towards them was the athletic figure of Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth at Rookwood.

As Erroll expected, the master sighted his dishevelled appearance at once.

"Erroll!" called the master, glancing at Albert Biggs curiously. "One moment! I wish to speak with you."

"Yes, sir."

Kit Erroll crossed over to the master of the Fourth.

"You have been fighting, Erroll?"

"Ye-es, sir," said Erroll.

"Who is this—this individual, Erroll? Am I to understand that you have been fighting with him? He appears—"

"Oh, no, sir! He—he is a friend of mine, sir!"

"What?"

"Some—some fellows were bullying him," said Erroll.



"I've vowed to kick this interloping sponger out of Rookwood!" hissed Mornington. He twisted Biggs round with savage fury, raised his boot, and lashed out at him. At the critical moment Erroll grabbed Mornington's arm, and the kick missed its object by a foot. (See page 28.)

hurriedly. "I chipped in because—because he's a friend of mine, sir."

"Oh, indeed!" Mr. Dalton looked curiously again at Albert. Fellows at Rookwood were not expected to make friends with tattered youths of the road. Indeed, Dicky Dalton was astonished. "You—you say this youth is a friend of yours, Erroll?"

"It's quite true, sir," said Erroll, flushing. "You—you see, sir, I knew him years ago—in the old days when I was living in the slums—before my father found me and rescued me!"

"Oh! I—I see!" said the master. He knew Erroll's history quite well, and he understood now. "He—he was a friend of yours, then?"

"Yes, sir," said Kit Erroll stoutly. "He's one of the best. He took me home and befriended me when I was starving and homeless. I haven't forgotten, sir."

"And now he has come to Rookwood to visit you, Erroll?" said Mr. Dalton, the stern note leaving his voice.

"He—he didn't come to visit me, sir. He didn't even know I was at Rookwood. He saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a garden boy at Rookwood, and he came to apply for the job."

"Oh!"

Dicky Dalton looked again at the ragged waif. It must have struck him that a youth, dressed as he was dressed, and obviously without references, could have little hope of obtaining such a post. Erroll read his thoughts.

"I—I was going to see you about him, sir," he said in a

low, eager tone. "Please don't look at the way he's dressed, sir. He's had bad luck, and has been tramping round for work. I can supply him with decent clothes, and you'll see he will look a different fellow then. And he's as straight and honest as any fellow at Rookwood. I can vouch for that, sir."

"H'm! You were going to speak for him, Erroll?"

"Yes, sir. I met him by accident just now in the lane. I remembered at once what I owed him, and I determined to do my best to get him the job," said Erroll, looking pleadingly at Dicky Dalton's handsome face. "If—if you could only do something for him, sir—I know it sounds like awful cheek on my part, but—"

"I quite understand, my boy," said Dicky Dalton.

He called across to Albert Biggs, and the ragged youth came over, looking rather scared. He raised his ragged cap to the master.

"So you wish to apply for the job of garden boy at Rookwood?" asked the master.

"Yes, sir. Only—only—" Albert Biggs halted, looking at Erroll in some confusion.

"He's afraid he's worrying me too much," explained Erroll hurriedly.

Mr. Dalton smiled. He had intended to question the boy, but the frank blue eyes of the ragged youth were quite enough for Dicky Dalton. He had not spent years as a schoolmaster without acquiring a good knowledge of character.

"Very well!" he exclaimed. "It is quite out of my province, of course, Erroll. The matter chiefly concerns Babbage, the Head's gardener. But I will speak to him on your friend's behalf, and I have no doubt, if the position is not already filled, that it will be all right. Your friend had better come along at six o'clock."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Erroll.

while Biggs also mumbled his thanks. "It's jolly decent of you, sir!"

"Not at all, my boys!"

With that, Dicky Dalton smiled and walked on.

"That's our Form master," said Erroll breathlessly. "By Jingo, I think you're all right now, Bert! He's a jolly good sort, and he'll work it for us."

"Then—then you think—"

"It'll be as right as rain, old chap! Now come along for that feed, and afterwards I'll get you some old togs of mine."

And with that Erroll led his old friend towards the village, delighted to think that the chance had come his way to repay in some small measure the debt he owed to the waif who had befriended him in those dark days of the past.

Mornington's Ultimatum!

"WELL?"

Valentine Mornington spoke half-mockingly.

The dandy of the Fourth was sprawling in the armchair in the study he shared with Erroll. He had apparently just finished tea, for the tea-things were still on the table. There was a cigarette in his fingers, and he eyed Kit Erroll through half-closed lids as that junior entered the study.

Kit Erroll eyed him steadily, a cloud on his face. He had had tea at the village tuckshop with Albert Biggs. After

tea he had left his old friend in the woods and had returned to school for a suit of his old clothes—an old lounge suit that fitted Albert Biggs fairly comfortably. Kit had left him there to change, and had returned to Rookwood, though it had required all his persuasion and pleading to make Biggs either accept the suit or to continue with his desire to get the job at Rookwood.

Biggs was no fool, and he had already seen that his friendship with Erroll promised to make things unpleasant for that junior in more ways than one. But Erroll's arguments and pleadings had overcome his doubts and fears, and eventually Biggs had promised to turn up at six as instructed by Dick Dalton.

Since the trouble in the lane Erroll had not seen Mornington, and so he looked at him expectantly now. Certainly some explanation was only to be expected from his chum for his disloyalty that afternoon.

"Well?" repeated Mornington. "Go it, old chap! I'm waitin' for the tellin'-off—the seathin' scorn and contempt you feel for the pal who let you down so badly. Go it!"

Erroll closed the door quietly. Despite his chum's half-mocking smile and words, he saw clearly enough the uneasiness and the trace of shame in Mornington's face.

"I'm glad you understand the position, Mornington," said Kit quietly. "But I've nothing to say!"

"You mean you'd rather not speak to me?" said Mornington. "You've decided to throw me over, what?"

"No, not that," said Erroll quickly. "I mean that I would rather let the matter drop, Morny. I know you acted as you did because you were in a bad temper—you weren't yourself! I feel very sick about it; but I'd rather let it drop and forget it!"

Mornington puffed at his cigarette in silence for a moment or so. He was plainly taken aback by his chum's attitude, having expected recriminations, if not a row.

"Had your tea?" he asked at last.

"Yes, in the village!"

"With that—that beastly tramp, I suppose?"

"With Albert Biggs, my old chum!" said Erroll quietly. "Morny, old fellow, I do wish you'd drop this attitude. Biggs is a decent kid—a fellow down on his luck through no fault of his own. He was absolutely starving—hadn't had a bite to eat since yesterday noon. I'm only trying to repay a debt I've often longed to repay."

Mornington laughed harshly.

"What rot!" he sneered. "The outsider's spoonin' you,

trying to sponge on your good nature, Erroll! Where is he now?"

"I left him in the woods! I've taken him a suit of clothes to change into!"

"I thought as much!" said Mornington. "Peele told me just now that he saw you hurrying out of gates with a bag! I guessed that was it. So you're going on with this rot, going to try to get that beastly young hooligan on the staff at Rookwood?"

"Yes. I've already spoken to Dicky Dalton, who's seen him and promised to do his best for him. He's got to come here at six for the interview. I think he'll get the job all right."

Mornington's face darkened, and he threw his cigarette into the grate with a savage gesture.

"You fool, Erroll!" he snapped. "I suppose you mean to pal on with the brute here—a dashed low tramp!"

"I don't suppose I shall be allowed to pal on with him, Morny—at least, it wouldn't do for me to knock about much with him. It wouldn't do, as the chap is on the staff. But I certainly shall be his friend, and shall do my best to make him comfortable and happy here—just as he did with me in the old days."

Mornington rose from his chair, his eyes glittering.

"You mean that, Erroll?" he snapped.

"Certainly; I can do nothing less! Why should it matter to you, old man; it won't interfere with our friendship!"

"Yes, it will!"

"But how—"

"I'll see to that!" said Mornington, his eyes blazing with unreasonable fury. "Think I'm goin' to be pals with a chap who pals with guttersnipes? Not likely!"

"Morny—" began Erroll miserably.

"Let's have this straight!" said Mornington savagely.

"You mean to go on with this foolery, Erroll?"

"Yes!"

"Whether I like it or not—whether I object to your picking a chap out of the gutter and bringing him here to make a pal of him?"

"You're looking at it in the wrong way, Morny," said Erroll earnestly. "Look here, what has come over you, old chap? You've been jolly decent for a long time now—it's ages even since you smoked—and now, all at once, you start this game—palling with sweeps like Peele and smoking rotten fags! Chuck it, old man! There's better stuff in you than—"

(Continued overleaf.)

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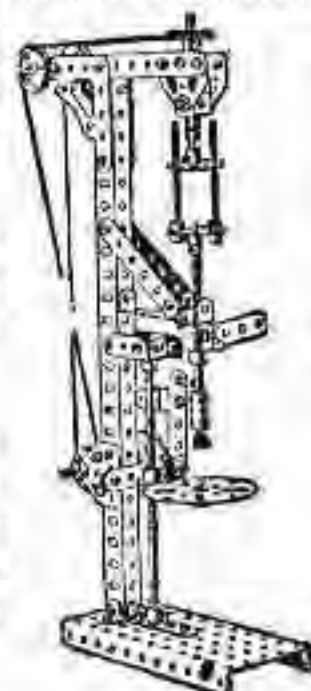
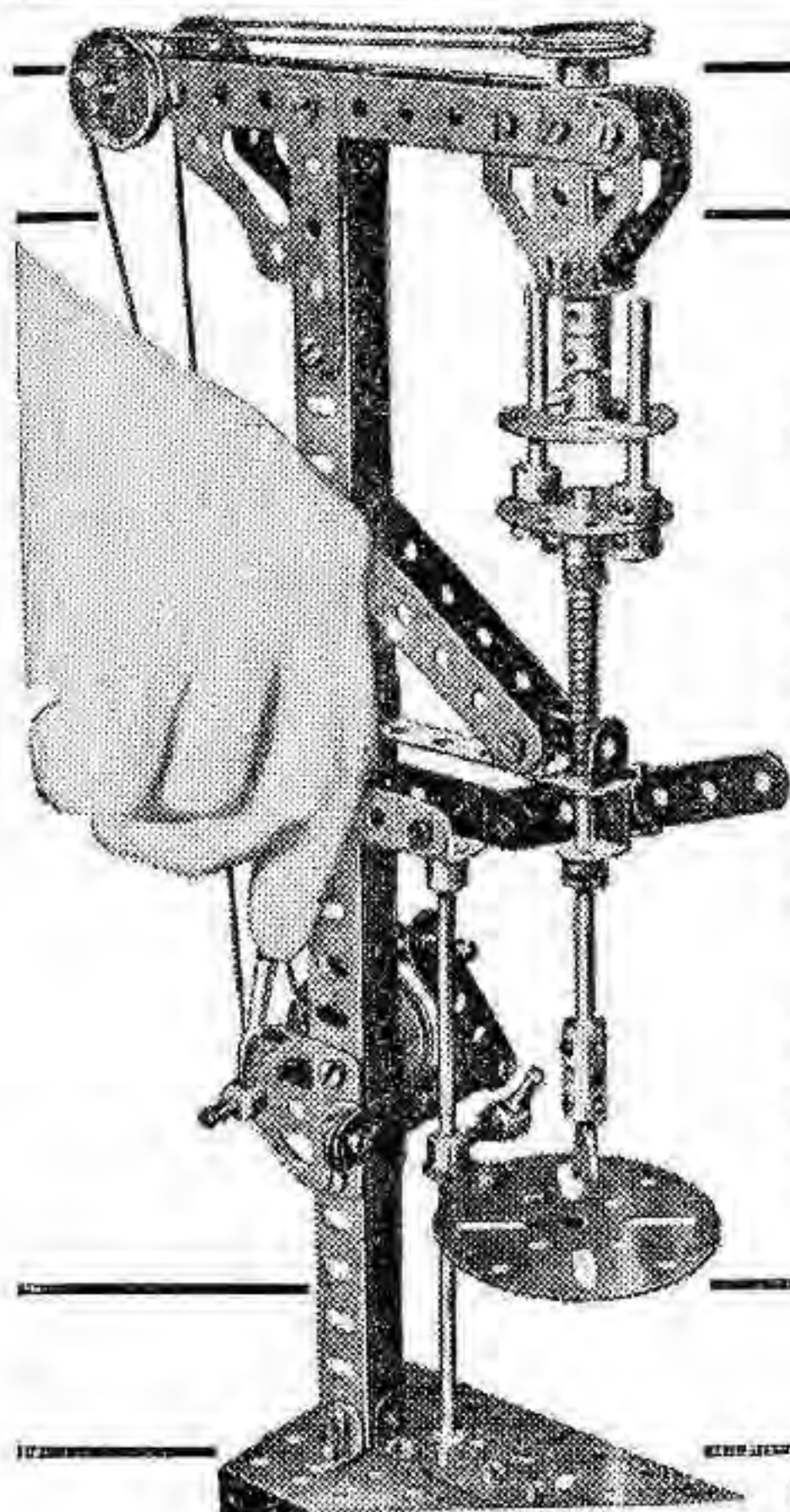
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"Oh, can it!" said Mornington, his lip curling. "We got sermons enough on Sundays. I asked you a question, Erroll; I want an answer here and now! Are you goin' on with this foolery?"

"It's the least I can do for a fellow who shared his last crust with me, who helped me when I needed help badly, Morny."

"Yes or no?" snapped Mornington ruthlessly. "You can choose between the two, Erroll—myself or that sweep? You can see what he is—a low-down guttersnipe, probably—almost certainly—a thief and a vagabond! You'll be introducing him into Rookwood. There'll be robberies—things stolen right and left! I'm not gettin' mixed up in things like that, and I don't want you to. Bah! Take my advice and have nothing more to do with him. Give him some cash and clear him out!"

"I—I can't do that, Morny," said Erroll, in great distress. "I can't turn the poor kid down, especially after raising his hopes. He's a good kid, and he's keen to become respectable—to live an honest life. He's used to squalor and criminal surroundings. But there's stuff in him to fit him for something better than that. It's a chance to give him a fair start in life. I can't let it go—can't throw him aside now. I should never forgive myself, Morny."

"You mean that?"

"Yes. But Morny—"

"That's enough! If you prefer a low, thieving tramp to me, then you're welcome to him—for good! And be hanged to you!"

And with that Mornington pushed angrily past his protesting study mate and flung out of the study, slamming the door after him.

Kit Erroll drew a deep, deep breath.

Mornington was a fellow not easy to get on with at the best of times. The dandy had once been known as the hardest case at Rookwood—one of the worst fellows, perhaps, in the school. But those days had gone, and for a long time Mornington had been a changed fellow, respected and liked by most.

None the less, there were times when the old nature seemed to assert itself, and only Erroll's influence, as was generally felt, kept Valentine Mornington from "kicking over the traces" again.

Many times and oft Kit Erroll's patience had been sorely strained. But this time it appeared to be perilously near breaking point.

And Kit knew that, with all his faults, Mornington was a fellow of his word. Morny had said that Kit would have to choose between him and his chum from the slums, and he knew Morny meant what he said.

Leaving the study, Erroll made his way down to the gates. It was already past six, and he was anxious to learn how Albert Biggs had fared in his interview.

As Kit neared the gates he was startled to see two fellows struggling there. One was a youth with a pale, pinched face, dressed in a lounge suit—a suit Erroll easily recognised as his own. It was Albert Biggs, and the other fellow was Mornington.

"Outside, you low-down cad!" Mornington was shouting. "Now, Peele, you funky cad, come and lend a hand! Help me pitch this pushing sponger out into the road, where he belongs!"

Peele, Gower, and Lattrey were lounging by the gates, and they seemed to grasp the situation in a moment.

"Gad! It's that rotten tramp!" yelled Peele. "On him, chaps! Now's our chance to get our own back. Down him!"

Erroll stared a moment, his brow darkening. Then, as Peele & Co. dashed to aid Mornington, Kit set his teeth hard and rushed for the spot, his eyes blazing.

"Morny," he panted desperately, "let the kid alone! It's not like you to do this sort of thing, old fellow. Chuck it! Be decent, old man!"

"Rats!" hissed Mornington. "I've vowed to kick this interloping sponger out of Rookwood, an' I mean to do it!"

"Morny—"

Mornington took no heed of his chum. Albert Biggs had ceased to resist for the moment, and, twisting the waif round with savage fury, Mornington raised his boot and lashed out at him.

At the critical moment Erroll grabbed Mornington's arm again to prevent him, and the kick missed its object by a foot. But the sheer force of the lunge almost overbalanced the junior, and he all but fell over.

(Another grand instalment of this topping new serial will appear in next week's GEM. Don't miss a line of it, chums.)

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