

1071
"THE MAN FROM ANGEL ALLEY!" THRILLING LONG COMPLETE
SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

The GEM

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

2^D



Collared!
MEET THE
MAN FROM ANGEL
ALLEY
*in the Fine
St. Jim's Story*
INSIDE.

MAN HUNT! KIDNAPPING! IMPERSONATION! THRILLS AT—

The MAN FROM ANGEL ALLEY!



Grand Long Complete Story
of Tom Merry & Co.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1 A Name from the Past!

"TALBOT, old bean! Ready?"

Tom Merry put his head into Talbot's study in the Shell passage in the School House. Tom was looking merry and bright; he seldom looked otherwise.

The world seemed a cheery place to live in, to Tom Merry, that cold, clear afternoon.

It was a half-holiday, it was fine, the St. Jim's First Eleven were playing Abbotsford Football Club, at Abbotsford, and Tom was going over with his comrades to watch the game and yell encouragement to Kildare and his merry men. So, as far as Tom Merry was concerned, all was calm and bright.

Manners and Monty Lowther had gone to wheel the bikes out. Tom was calling Talbot, who seemed to have forgotten the time to start—which was rather uncommon, for Talbot of the Shell seldom forgot things.

The handsome Shell fellow was standing at the study window, staring out into the cold, clear sunlight in the quadrangle.

He seemed lost in thought—to such an extent that he did not hear the door open, or Tom's cheery call. Tom's bright face clouded slightly.

He could only see Talbot's back, but in his attitude, in the droop of his usually erect head, he could read despondency and trouble.

Talbot's looks were generally cheerful if a little more grave than those of most fellows of his years. It was only when something recalled to his mind a distant and shadowed

past that his handsome face clouded and the black look that Tom knew well came into his eyes.

"Talbot!" rapped out Tom.

The Shell fellow heard him then, and turned from the window.

He smiled faintly as he caught Tom's look of concern.

"Yes, Tom!"

"Aren't you coming?"

"Where?"

Evidently Talbot had forgotten—plain proof that he was deeply disturbed, though he had summoned a smile to his face at sight of his chum.

"You've forgotten the football match at Abbotsford?" asked Tom.

"Oh!" ejaculated Talbot.

"Kildare would be flattered!" said Tom, with a laugh. "The big guns of the Sixth would be rather surprised if they knew anybody in the Lower School could possibly forget them."

"Of—of course! I—I was thinking of something else." There was a newspaper crumpled in Talbot's hand, and Tom wondered if it contained something that had troubled his chum. Yet how could it? "I—I say, I think I'll give it a miss, Tom!"

"Something else turned up?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, you're not going to miss a big fixture like this, to frown in the study," said Tom. "Get a move on!"

"The fact is, I don't feel much inclined to watch a football match this afternoon," stammered Talbot. "You fellows get off—"

"Not without you," said Tom cheerily. "You're feeling sort of inclined to stick indoors this afternoon—what?"

"Yes, that's it."

—ST. JIM'S WHEN TALBOT TACKLES AN OLD ENEMY!



Rogue Rawdon, one of the Angel Alley gangsters! No wonder Talbot of the Shell gets a large size shock when Rawdon introduces himself as the Shell Master's nephew.



"Look here," said Tom quietly, "what is it? Give it a name. You're only making fatheaded excuses. You don't want to have tea with Linton, and you don't care two straws about his nephew from Australia! What's happened?"

"Nothing—exactly."

"What's happened inexactly, then?"

Talbot drew a deep breath.

"The—the fact is, I—I've had rather a knock." He made a gesture with the crumpled paper in his hand. "I hate something from long ago."

"I knew it," said Tom. "And now it's come into your head I'm going to help you push it out again. What's the news?"

"There's a man—Rawdon—Rogue Rawdon he used to be called in the gang in the old days when I was—was—"

"Don't!" said Tom sharply. "What's the good of remembering that you were in bad hands when you were a little kid and unable to kick out for yourself?"

"I try not to remember," said Talbot, with a sigh. "But anything like this reminds me that there was a time when I was called the 'Toff,' and that but for good luck, Tom, and your friendship, I might have been in the position of this scoundrel Rawdon to-day."

"Never, if he's a scoundrel," said Tom. "Who and what is he?"

"One of the worst of the old gang," said Talbot bitterly. "I've not seen him for years, but I remember him as clearly as if I'd seen him only yesterday. His latest stunt is the motor bandit line, and he's wanted now for stealing cars, and—and shooting a policeman who tried to get him. The bobby's badly hurt—and they're after Rogue Rawdon."

"I hope they'll get him."

"Same here, of course. He's a bad egg—bad all through—one of the most daring and reckless rascals I knew, even at that time—that wretched time that seems like an evil dream to me now. He's still on the run, and he's been tracked to Lexham. That's only twenty miles from here. I suppose they'll get him—I hope they will."

"He was never a pal of yours—even at that time?"

Talbot's lips quivered.

"No; I drew a line—even then."

"You're not concerned about him?"

"Not in the least! I'd lend a hand cheerfully to bring the villain to book for what he's done. Only—"

"I understand," said Tom softly.

It was the news in the paper—the story of "Rogue Rawdon" and his villainy—that had brought back the evil past to Talbot—flooded his mind with black recollections of the days when he had been the "Toff," the companion of thieves and rascals in the gang that had haunted the "rookery" in Angel Alley. That past had been long thrown behind. Few fellows at St. Jim's remembered what they had vaguely heard of it; every fellow in the school knew Talbot of the Shell to be as straight and honourable a fellow as any at St. Jim's. But, dead as the

past was, it was still a part of his life.

"Well, you see—"

Tom Merry came into the study. Talbot coloured a little under the steady gaze of his chin.

"All the more reason why you should get out—fresh air cures a fellow of all that! Come on!"

"Well, Linton's asked me to tea—that is, he asked me to come in to tea one day this week. A fellow wants to be civil to his Porra master."

Tom Merry laughed.

Tea with Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, in his study, was an honour and a distinction for any Shell man. But it could not be called either an inspiring or an enjoyable function. A fellow in the Shell who was asked to tea with Mr. Linton could not, of course, decline. But it was on record that many a fellow had wished that he could.

"Gammon, old bean," said Tom.

"Honest Injun," said Talbot. "He's asked me, and as to-day's Wednesday—"

"Thursday or Friday or Saturday won't do?"

"Well, you see—"

"Cut it out," said Tom. "As a matter of fact, you can't butt in on Linton to-day—he won't want you."

"Eh—why not?"

"Because he's got a jolly old visitor coming," grinned Tom.

"Oh, I hadn't heard—"

"Nephew from Australia," said Tom. "Fellow old Linton hasn't seen since he was a kid of six. Man's at Southampton, coming up by car to-day. Expected to barge into St. Jim's some time this afternoon. Linton's killing the fattest calf for him. Half the House knows it."

"Oh!" repeated Talbot. "I remember now I've heard something—"

"Of course; no doubt Linton's simply yearning for your company at tea," said Tom, with playful sarcasm. "But I'm sure he won't miss you to-day, with this man Carstairs butting in. In fact, you'd be in the way. Linton would tell you, gently but firmly, to call another day."

Talbot laughed a little.

"So come on!" said Tom.

"I—I think I'll stay in. I'd rather like to see Linton's nephew—a man doesn't come from Australia every day—"

"You'll see him all right, as he's staying with Linton! Baggy Trimble could tell you what room's been got ready for him, but I've forgotten. Anyhow, he's staying here for a time, so you will be able to feast your eyes on him if you want to."

Talbot was silent.

"Any more gammon to cough up?" asked Tom.

"Well, you see—"

past was, it lingered at the back of Talbot's mind, and this news had brought it all to life again.

"So, you see, I—I'd rather stick in. I—I really don't feel fit for company this afternoon, old chap," said Talbot.

"You've got to let me settle that for you," said Tom.

"You're not going to mope indoors and get into the blues for nothing. Ten miles on a bike, and watching a good game, will blow it out of your head like cobwebs."

"I'd rather—"
"Rats!"

There were footstaps in the passage, and Manners and Lowther looked into the study.

"Why the merry thump don't you fellows come?" demanded Lowther. "We've got the bikes out, and we've been waiting."

"What's up?" asked Manners, with a glance at Talbot's clouded face. "You two haven't been rowing, surely?"

"Only arguing," said Tom. "Talbot thinks he isn't coming to Abbotsford, and I think he is. Lend me a hand to turn him out of the study."

"Look here—" began Talbot.

"My dear man," said Tom, "there's a time for words and a time for action. This is the time for action. Lay hold of you men!"

"Anything to oblige?" grinned Lowther.

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"You duffers!" exclaimed Talbot, half-voiced and half-lavishing, as the Terrible Three gathered round him and propelled him doorwards. "Look here—"

"Go it!" said Tom.

Talbot staggered into the passage.

"Look here!" he gasped.

"Help him along!"

The Terrible Three helped Talbot along the passage—playfully but firmly. They reached the stairs, and Talbot gave in.

"Cluck it, you asses! I'll come!"

"That's right, old bean! Hop it!"

And the four Shell fellows went out together, and a few minutes later were in the saddle, riding for Abbotsford.

CHAPTER 2.

The Man in Abbotsford Wood!

"WACE, you fellows!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, chirped cheerily.

There were a good many St. Jim's men on the road to Abbotsford that afternoon. The First Eleven match excited plenty of interest in the Lower School as well as in the Upper. Many fellows went over by train; some went over by car; but most of the juniors relied on push-bikes. Among the cyclists were Blake & Co., of Study No. 6; and they came in sight ahead as Tom Merry & Co. whizzed along the broad country road.

And as the Shell fellows drew up to the Fourth-Formers, Gussy cheerily called out his challenge to a race.

"Going to Abbotsford?" called back Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll beat you there!"

"Wats, deah boy! We'll leave you standin'!"

"If you beat Study No. 6," offered Blake, "I'll admit that the Shell isn't the fatheaded Form at St. Jim's!"

"And that's admitting a lot!" remarked Digby.

"Much too much!" said Herries.

"Well, go it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "There are some more men coming on behind who will pick up what's left of you fellows when you've raced us a few miles."

And, having levelled out across the wide road, the eight juniors started fast and whizzed on at great speed.

In a few minutes they were strung out, with Tom Merry and Talbot in the lead.

Tom glanced at Talbot, and smiled.

The black look was gone from Talbot's face, the cloud from his brow; his eyes were bright. As Tom had predicted, cheery company and a run in the keen, fresh air had banished the cobwebs from his mind. Less than a mile from St. Jim's, Talbot of the Shell was his old self again; and the troublesome memory of Rogue Rawdon and other old, dingy associates was dismissed.

"We're going to beat those Fourth Form Kids," said Tom.

"Yes, rather," said Talbot cheerily. "Put it on! We shall be early for the match at this rate, but we'll get good places."

Tom Merry glanced back.

Manners and Lowther were thirty yards behind; and just behind them Blake and Herries and Digby came on in a bunch.

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Further back was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. A trouser-clip had slipped, and Gussy had dismounted to replace it, a proceeding which left the swell of St. Jim's hopelessly out of the race.

While after mile flew under the whirling wheels.

They passed plenty of traffic on the road, and about a mile out of the town of Abbotsford they turned into a bridle-path through Abbotsford Wood. This saved a good deal of distance, and it was also a pleasant, shady path, out of the dust of traffic, the honking of cars, and the smell of petrol.

Tom Merry and Talbot were still in the lead; but Tom had a suspicion that Talbot could have shot ahead if he had liked. Talbot was a good man with a bike, as he was with most things. Blake had passed Manners and Lowther now; Herries and Dig were just behind them. As for the swell of St. Jim's, who had proposed the race, he had dropped out of sight far behind.

Near the end of the bridle-path, close by the town of Abbotsford, Jack Blake put on a spurt and shot ahead.

"Go it!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And he put on speed, Talbot following suit. Tom drew level with Blake, and kept level; and Talbot, with a smile to his chum, raced ahead. It was Talbot who shot out into the road, winner of the race; and there he jumped off his bike and waited for the other fellows. Close to the town the traffic was too thick for bike-racing on the road.

"Shell wins!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Blake.

The three juniors waited, and Manners and Lowther, Herries and Dig, joined them a few minutes later. They started back along the path for Arthur Augustus, but the swell of St. Jim's did not come in sight.

"Where has that ass got to?" exclaimed Blake.

"Oh, he's coming!" said Herries.

"So is Easter!" grunted Blake.

Along the road came three juniors on bikes—Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House at St. Jim's. They waved to the group of School House men.

"You kids taking a rest?" called out Figgins. "You'll be late for the match. Poor little laddies lagged out!"

"You cheeky New House ass!" roared Blake.

Figgins grinned back as he sped by.

"We'll tell you about it afterwards, if you're too tired to come on!" he called.

And Figgins & Co. disappeared up the road.

Blake clambered on his machine.

"Come on!" he said. "No good waiting for Gussy—I dare say he's stopped to tie his necktie—or perhaps he's forgotten his pocket-mirror and gone back for it! Follow on!"

Blake started, and the rest of the School House fellows followed him. They were soon in the stream of St. Jim's men heading for Abbotsford Football Ground.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was driving at his pedals, a good distance behind. He had turned into the wood to follow the bridle-path; but, unluckily, his comrades being out of sight ahead, Gussy had taken a wrong turning where another path branched off.

The swell of St. Jim's was putting on speed; and he was rather surprised that he did not sight his comrades ahead. It was not really surprising, as he was following a separate and distinct path; but Gussy was not yet aware of that.

"Bai Joyce!" ejaculated D'Arcy suddenly.

The path he was following merged into a more track, grassy and brambly; and he slowed down, staring around him in dismay.

It dawned upon his noble brain that he had taken the wrong turning, and he jumped off his machine.

"Wotten!" he remarked.

Obviously, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not going to win that race. That, however, worried him less than the possibility that he might arrive at Abbotsford too late to see the kick-off. And Arthur Augustus was very keen to see the great match from start to finish.

He reflected for a few moments. To ride back to where the paths joined meant riding back half a mile or more. As the two paths were not very far from one another, it would be quicker to push through the tract of woodland that separated them; at least, so it seemed to Arthur Augustus at the moment.

Leaving the track, therefore, Arthur Augustus rode the bike into the wood, to thread his way among trees and brambles to the bridle-path his comrades had followed.

Wheeling a bike through a wood was not, however, an easy task, and, above all, not a swift one. The ground was thick with fallen leaves, and brambles sprawled all over the place. There were thorns—thorns in abundance, and Arthur Augustus was made aware of their presence by a gradual flattening of his tyres.

A man leaped in the way of the fleeing bandit, only to reel away, half-stunned by a terrific upper-cut!



He became aware that both tyres were punctured—probably in many places—and both of them nearly as flat as pancakes. This did not look promising for his ride into Abbotsford, when he got out of the wood. But the swell of St. Jim's was not out of the wood yet.

Several times, as he progressed, Arthur Augustus heard a crackling and a rustling in the wood behind him, and once he glanced round, and caught a glimpse of a figure moving amongst the trees.

He took no particular heed of it, however, the punctures in his tyres occupying most of his thoughts.

It was hard work riding on soft ground with flat tyres, and Gussy bent well over the handlebars.

Suddenly, as he was passing under a huge tree, he felt himself gripped by the collar and swung into the air. For a moment he hung on to the handlebars of his bicycle, and the front wheel reared up; then he left go, and the machine crashed into a bush. Before he knew what was happening the swell of the Fourth found himself flying through the air, to land with a crash on his back.

"Yoop! Yawooo!"
Gussy, with all the wind knocked out of him, lay on his back and gazed up at the man who was just dropping from a branch of the tree. He was dressed in dirty, muddy clothes, and Gussy recognised him as the man he had seen in the wood earlier that afternoon.

As the unfortunate Arthur Augustus started to rise, the man ran to the bush into which the bicycle had crashed, and, heaving it out, leapt on to it and started to pedal furiously away.

But the cycle-thief had not noticed that the thorns of the bush had torn the already deflated tyres to shreds. As the pedals whirled round, the bike pitched over, with torn tyres tangled in the wheels, and the man came to the ground with a heavy hump.

He sprawled there, gasping, spitting out an oath.
"Oh owkiey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The unkempt man staggered to his feet. He grasped the bike and lifted it, but a glance was sufficient to show that it was unrideable. He gave the swell of St. Jim's a savage glare, and started towards him, his fists clenched, his eyes burning with rage.

Arthur Augustus jumped back, putting up his hands. The man's look was positively dangerous.

But the rascal changed his mind, and, turning from the startled junior, he plunged into the wood and disappeared.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He stood staring after the vanished man, till the rustling and crackling in the wood died away. His heart was beating fast. The man was no ordinary cycle-thief, he knew that, and he did not seem to be a common tramp. He looked like a townsman who had been roughing it in the open air for several days. Whatever he was, he was a desperate character. D'Arcy shivered a little as he remembered the savage glare in the burning eyes that had been turned on him.

Quietly he picked up the bike and wheeled it away. Arthur Augustus was brave as a lion, but he cast several uneasy glances behind him as he went, and he was intensely relieved when he emerged at last into the open sunshine on the Abbotsford road.

And his thoughts returned to the football match, as he trundled his hapless machine into the town, and left it with a cycle dealer for new tyres to be fitted. And in the wintry wood, Rogue Rawdon, who had fancied that he had found a chance of getting clear of the countryside, where he was hunted, and had been disappointed, lay in the fallen leaves, and cursed his luck.

And as he lay, savage, desperate, like a hunted beast, he raised his head suddenly and listened. There were sounds in the wood, that had been so silent—a distant crackling of brambles, a calling of voices. The colour changed in Rogue Rawdon's stubble face, stubbly with an unshaven beard of several days' growth. Softly, like a hunted animal, the man who was wanted rose from the fallen leaves, and stole away silently through the wood, no longer a hiding-place for him. Silently he crept away, like a wolf hunted from his den.

CHAPTER 3.

At the Football Match!

"PLAY up, St. Jim's!"

"On the ball!"

"Bravo, Kildare!"

In the crowd on the Abbotsford ground, Tom Merry & Co. stood in a group, their eyes on the eleven active figures in red-and-white that represented St. Jim's. The first half of the game was going strong, and there had been hard play from the kick-off, and all the St. Jim's fellows present were encouraging their team with all their vocal resources. Abbotsford were a hefty team, but Kildare and his merry men were at least holding their own, and they were going to win, in the opinion of all the men who had come over from the school to watch them.

At a little distance from the School House group stood Figgins & Co. of the New House, equally enthusiastic and vicious. There were five New House men in the St. Jim's First Eleven, and the opinion of Figgins & Co. was that that quintette were going to beat Abbottsford, more or less aided by the six School House members of the team.

"Good old Monteith!" trilled Figgins.

"Good old Baker!" said Kerr.

"They're getting the game," said Fatty Wynn. "Rather too many School House men in the team, that's the only danger."

Tom Merry & Co. looked round at the New House group. "You ass!" said Blake witheringly. "There's only one danger—but that was Kildare letting so many New House duds into the eleven."

"Duds!" roared Figgins.

"New House men are all duds, more or less, you know," said Lowther.

"Oh, come!" said Talbot. "They're all jolly good men, and that pass that Monteith gave Kildare was a beauty."

A House row had threatened, but Talbot's remark had the effect of pouring oil on the troubled waters. The rival juniors transferred their attention to the game again.

"I wonder where that ass Gussy is?" grumbled Blake. "He's missing all this! It's too good to miss! I'll jolly well kick him when we get back!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, here you are!" Blake turned his head as the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus threaded through the crowd to join his friends. "You frajbious ass, you're half an hour late."

"Do you always ride so fast in a bike race, Gussy?" inquired Monteith Lowther. "I can see you collecting whole stacks of pots and things if you do."

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Anything happened, old bean?" asked Talbot.

"Yoss, wathah!"

"Forgot your eyeglass and had to go back for it?" asked Manners.

"Weally, Mammahs—"

"There goes Kildare with the ball! Hurrah!" roared Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Get ready to yell out 'Goal!' you fellows!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning his celebrated eyeglass on the field.

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

"On the ball!"

But the rush did not materialise, and the ball went back to midfield. There was no need to yell 'Goal!' just yet.

"How does it stand so far, you men?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Nix to nix!" answered Herries.

"Plenty of time to score before the interval," said Tom Merry. "The game's young yet. What have you been up to all this time, Gussy, if you haven't been back for your eyeglass or your silk socks?"

"Weally, Tom Merry! I have had wathah a feahful experience," said Arthur Augustus. "I seem to have taken the w'ong path in the wood."

"You would!" agreed Lowther.

"Wats! So I wheeled my bike through the wood back to the wright path, and punctured both tyres—"

"Brilliant!" said Lowther. "Gussy isn't the fellow to do things by halves!"

"And then I was attacked—"

"Oh?"

"A feahful wuffian rushed on me from the wood—a wuff-lookin' beast who wanted a shave vevy badly," said Arthur Augustus. "He pitched me ovah and collared my head, and tried to get away with it. The howwid wottah faikly tore the tyres into wags, and fell ovah; and then I suppose he realised that there was nothin' doin', and he cleaved off."

Tom Merry & Co. turned their attention from the game for a moment to stare at the noble Gussy.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

"Isn't it like him?" said Blake. "Can't let him out of my sight for a minute. Next time I'll lead him on a chain."

"Weally, Blake—"

"What was the man like?" asked Talbot; and something in his voice made Tom look at him quickly. He divided the thought that was in the mind of the one-time "Toff."

"I can weally hardly say," answered D'Arcy. "A wuff-lookin' byute, who looked as if he had wuffed it a lot, with a howwid, stubbly beard. I had to wheel the bike to a shop in Abbottsford, and then I dived in at the police station. That is why I am so late. I felt it my duty to report the match to Inspectah Smart, in case that howwid wottah should jump on somebody else, you know. Inspectah Smart was vevy interested."

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"Why, that was quite a sensible action!" exclaimed Monteith Lowther, in astonishment. "How did you come to think of it, Gussy?"

"Wats! Inspectah Smart seemed vevy much stueck by it," continued Arthur Augustus. "He asked me quite a lot of questions about the man. I did not expect him to be so vevy much concerned about a wotten bike-thief; but he weally seemed to think it vevy important. He was starlin' for the wood with three constables when I left the station."

"Let's hope they'll get him," said Digby. "Bike-thieves ought to be jolly well collared and run in."

"Yass, wathah!"

Talbot did not speak; but it was easy for Tom Merry to read his thoughts. He was thinking that the man in Abbottsford Wood was Rogue Rawdon—the major handit who had been traced as far as Lexham, a few miles distant, and lost sight of there.

There was a sudden yell from Figgins & Co.

"Monteith! Monteith! New House! New House!"

"Bai Jove! It's a goal this time!" Arthur Augustus completely forgot his adventure in the wood now.

St. Jim's attacked hotly; and the defence was broken up. Monteith of the New House drove the ball in, beating the Abbottsford custodian to the wide. The leather went into the net; and there was a roar from the St. Jim's men that rang far beyond the football ground.

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

"They've got something to think about now," said Blake, as the teams lined up again. "That was a jolly good goal, though it was taken by a New House man."

"Because it was taken by a New House man, fathead!" snorted Figgins.

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "No House rags here. It was a jolly good goal for St. Jim's."

"Yass, wathah!"

The game went on, ding-dong, till half-time; but Abbottsford were unable to equalise. St. Jim's were still one up when the whistle went.

There was a buzz of talk among the groups round the ground—St. Jim's men and Abbottsford supporters. Through the crowd a policeman's helmet was seen, and in another direction another helmet showed up. Tom Merry, looking round, spotted yet a third helmet. It looked as if the police force of Abbottsford were rather keenly interested in the football match. And a few minutes later Inspector Smart was seen, trailing among the crowds, with eyes keen and alert on all sides.

"Something's up," said Blake. "Pickpockets in the crowd, perhaps. Look after your ten-guinea watch, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Looks as if the peelers are after somebody," said Manners. "I wonder—"

"What?" asked Tom.

"Why, I saw something in the papers yesterday about a motor bandit, named Rawlings or something, who was dogging the bobbies in this direction. But I suppose he wouldn't have the nerve to show up at a football match."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

He shot a quick glance at Talbot of the Shell.

Talbot did not observe it.

His eyes were fixed on an uneven face, the face of a man in shabby clothes that appeared for a moment among the crowd, and then disappeared again. Talbot's face was white.

Tom touched him on the arm.

"What is it, Talbot?" he asked in a low voice. "For goodness' sake what's the matter, old chap?"

Talbot looked at him.

"I've seen him!" he breathed.

"Him? Who?"

"Rogue Rawdon."

"Here!" exclaimed Tom.

"I knew him at once—though he's changed, and has a half-grown beard now. He's here—in the crowd—"

"My only hat!"

Tom stood dumb.

There was a sudden howl from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, you fellows! Look out—he's here—"

"Who's here, fathead?" asked Blake. "Plenty of people here."

"The wottah who tried to wob me of my bike."

"Oh, enabst! Where?"

"He has disappeared; but I saw him—I am suah it was he!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's excitedly. "He was almost at my elbow—"

Talbot's eyes met Tom Merry's. The man who had attacked D'Arcy in the wood was Rogue Rawdon; and he was among the crowd on the Abbottsford Football Ground. Talbot's face was black and troubled. From a little

distance came a deep murmur of voices, swelling into a shout. From lip to lip a name passed—and the name was that of Rawdon—Rogue Rawdon!

CHAPTER 4. The Hunted Man!

THE players had come back into the field and the whistle went. But hardly an eye turned on the rival footballers when the ball was kicked off in the second half. The crowd on the Abbotsford ground buzzed and swayed with excitement; and the excitement was quite unconnected with the great game of Soccer. On every lip was the name of Rogue Rawdon; and the crowd thrilled with the knowledge that the hunted motor-bandit was even then mingling among them—unknown.

The St. Jim's fellows were as keenly excited by the startling news as anyone; but only three of them—Talbot, Tom Merry, and Gussy—had any particular interest in the man.

From the buzzing talk about them, as one after another picked up news and passed it on, the juniors learned what had happened.

The fugitive motor bandit had been rooted out of Abbotsford Wood, and had been seen running in the road. He had vanished, and he had been seen again in the streets of Abbotsford—at all events, a man suspected to be the motor bandit had been seen. He had vanished once more near the football ground; and it was suspected that he had entered, in the hope of finding concealment in the crowd—none of whom, of course, knew him by sight. Up and down, and round about, Inspector Smart and a number of constables were quartering the ground, hunting through the crowd for the desperate man who was wanted.

Hardly a glance was turned on the football, for a time.

Somewhere within the Abbotsford enclosure, among the seven or eight hundred people who were gathered there, was the sinking fugitive, almost within reach of the arm of the law.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Do you know your fellows, I believe it is the same man who tried to bag my bike! Fwom what the people are sayin', it must be the same man."

"Isn't it like you to butt into a jolly old motor bandit?" asked Blake. "Isn't it just what you would do?"

"Weally, Blake—
"My hat! That man Rawdon carries a revolver, and handles it pretty freely, according to the papers," said Manners. "He's wanted for shooting a policeman who tried to cop him. The man's in hospital now, badly hurt. If they bag him here he may begin to shoot."

"Nice—in a crowd like this!" said Lowther. "But perhaps it's a mistake—and he isn't here after all."

"Pretty strong nerve to come in here, I should think," said Herries.

"Well, he's safest in a crowd, I suppose," remarked Blake. "Nobody seems to know him by sight."
"Bai Jove! If he's the man who was in the wood, I should know him!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Well, keep your peepers open, and bag him if he comes this way," said Digby. "We'll all help."

"Yaas, wathah."
Talbot did not speak. His eyes were searching the openings in the crowd; but the unshaven man did not come under his view again.

"You're sure?" whispered Tom.
"Quite!" muttered Talbot. "It was Rogue Rawdon."

I'd know his face anywhere. I'd be glad to get a chance of helping to lay him by the heels." He smiled faintly at the relief that flashed into Tom's face. "He never was a friend of mine, Tom—not even an associate or confederate—I knew him only because he made the old rookery his headquarters, in the old days. He was a ruthless brute. Whatever I was, Tom, I was never anything like that. I'd get him, if I could, and be glad of the chance."

"Hullo!" roared Blake. "They're after him!"

"Look out!"

"They've got him!"

"Tally-ho!" yelled Figgins.

There was a wild commotion in a far corner of the enclosure. A man was running—desperately, dashing people out of his path as he ran. After him Inspector Smart and several policemen were speeding, shoving startled people right and left in their haste.

"Stop him!"

"Seize him!"

"It's Rawdon! Collar him!"

A man leaped in the way of the fleeing bandit, only to reel away, half-stunned by a terrific uppercut.

The moment's delay brought Inspector Smart within

FIFTY YEARS HENCE?



Our artist looks into George Alfred Grundy's future! When Grundy saw this effort, he didn't notice the egg, and said: "That's me! Only you want more room to show the real size of the crowd!"

"Goal!"

Half a dozen voices shouted. Abbotsford had equalised; the game was going on, regardless of the excitement reigning round the ground.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "This is frightfully exciting! you men—I had clean forgotten the game, you know."

"Well, we came here for the game, not for a jolly old motor bandit," said Blake. "I'm glad he's gone! I don't like poggus at close quarters."

"Wathah not!"

The desperate man was gone—still in flight, though closely hunted. The St. Jim's fellows turned their attention to the game again. Gradually the excitement died down, and football was the order of the day once more.

Right up to the finish the game was hard and fast; and Tom Merry & Co. soon forgot the incident of the motor bandit. It was almost on the stroke of time that Kildare put the ball in for St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. yelled deliciously.

"Goal! Goal!"

"St. Jim's! Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove! I wathah think we've won this match," remarked Arthur Augustus.

Gussy was right. In the few minutes that were left, Abbottsford fought hard to make it a draw; but they failed. And when the final whistle went, the men in red and white trooped off, winners by two goals to one. And the St. Jim's crowd woke all the echoes of Abbottsford in celebration of a victory for the old school.

CHAPTER 5.

Rogue Rawdon's Last Chance!

THE man who lay in the thickets by the Wayland road was breathing hard; and every few minutes a muttered oath left his lips. He lay concealed, with glittering evil eyes under his knitted brows.

Rogue Rawdon was not a bad-looking man at his best. Now, unshaven, grimy, haggard, he looked desperate and wretched—pitiable, but for the sheer evil that gleamed in his eyes. He had always been a hard and ruthless man; and now that he was hunted like a wild beast, with a long sentence of penal servitude hanging over his head, he had thrown aside all the feelings that linked him to his fellow-men. It was a tiger in human form that lurked in the thicket watching the road.

How he had escaped, after being so nearly run down at Abbottsford, he hardly knew. Desperate running and dodging, winding and turning, among fields and woods, had saved him. He had dropped his pursuers, and now he was miles from Abbottsford, and he was sure that the hunters were no longer on his track.

But there was little hope in his heart. He was known to be in the neighbourhood; and the hunt would be harder and harder, the net drawn closer and closer. To get away—to place distance between him and the place where he had been last seen—had led to his attempt on D'Arcy's bicycle—a desperate attempt that had failed him, and had brought the hounds close on his trail. Now he had shaken them off again—but for how long?

His evil eyes watched the road.

He still had his revolver, and several cartridges in it unspent. The thought that haunted his mind was to get possession of a car. If not a car, then a motor-bike; failing that, a push-bike—anything to carry him swiftly from the vicinity from where he was known to be lurking.

Where he lay in the thicket, a lane branched off from the Wayland road, leading to Rylcombe and St. Jim's. Car after car passed on the main road, and his eyes followed them hungrily; but he dared not show himself. He was in a mood to shoot a man down to get possession of a car; but there were too many about—he dared not risk it.

But surely, sooner or later, a car would turn into the lane. It looked as if it was seldom used by cars; but there were tyre marks in the mud; cars sometimes came through, at all events. And the fewer the better, for his purpose—if one came.

And when a little green car slowed down at the corner, and stopped, and the driver leaned out trying to read a half-obliterated signpost, the heart of the hidden man beat faster.

From his covert, he watched the motorist—a young man of about thirty-five, very near his own age.

The man in the car had sunburned cheeks; and his face, though not handsome, was pleasant, with an open, healthy look. He wore a rather wide-brimmed soft hat, that shaded his face. Rogue Rawdon, used to reading men at a glance, had little difficulty in "placing" him. A Colonial, on a visit to the Old Country, was what Rawdon guessed him to be.

Obviously, he was a stranger in the land, so far as the roads and lanes about Wayland were concerned. He stretched out a brown neck, with a half-comical expression on his face as he tried to read the sign at the corner of the lane. That sign had seen service; and even a keen pair of Australian eyes could make little of it.

The young man toiled the car round the corner, and stopped as close to the post as the rugged grassy bank permitted.

He was only a few yards from the man in the thicket now. "I reckon this will be the lane," Rawdon heard him mutter the words aloud. "I reckon this will see me through to Rylcombe and the school. I'll have to take a chance, anyhow."

Rawdon, at the same moment, had resolved to take a chance.

He wished that the car had stopped farther up the lane, farther from the main road; but it was not likely that he would have a better chance than this. And Rogue Rawdon was the man to make the most of any chance that Fate threw in his way.

He rose to his feet and stepped out of the thicket on to the grassy bank beside the lane.

The young man in the car glanced at him immediately.

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His expression did not indicate that he liked Rawdon's looks. The hunted man had composed his features, and he touched his battered hat very civilly to the motorist. But nothing could disguise the gaunt shabbiness of his appearance, the unshaven uncleanness of his face.

"Excuse me, sir!" Rawdon's voice was as civil as his salute. "You seem to be in a difficulty. I'm a native of these parts, and I dare say I can help you."

"That's good of you," said the man in the little green car. "I'm looking for the lane that runs through from the Wayland road to the village of Rylcombe, near a school called St. Jim's."

"You're on it, then," said Rawdon. "The sign would tell you so if it could be read."

"Thanks."

"But there's three turnings ahead, without any sign," said Rawdon, with a grin. "You might take any of them."

"Bother!" said the young man. "They don't waste a lot of money on signs for travellers in the Old Country."

Rawdon's guess that he came from a Dominion was confirmed.

"I've got to get to Rylcombe, sir. I've been promised a job there," said Rawdon. "Maybe you'd be kind enough to give me a lift as far as the village; I've walked a lot today."

The Australian eyed him for a moment.

"A man doesn't get spruce, tramping miles and miles looking for a job, sir," said Rawdon. "I'm pretty well down and out; but I'm not a beggar. I'd be glad of a lift to Rylcombe; and I could show you the way."

"Jump in!" said the motorist tersely. "I'll be glad to give you a lift on the way to a job; and I'll certainly be glad to get straight to the school without losing myself in the lanes. Hop in!"

Rawdon opened the door and "hopped" into the car. The sunburned young man drove on up the lane.

Rawdon sat very quiet, stilling the quick beating of his heart. His hand, in his pocket, rested on the revolver.

He was waiting.

In summer, the lane was deeply shaded and hidden by thick foliage; and even after the winds of autumn had stripped the trees, it was thickly screened by branches and trunks.

A hundred yards from the main road, it was as hidden and solitary a spot as the fugitive motorist could have desired for his purpose.

His eyes glowed.

A car, though only a small one, in his hands! There were a couple of large suitcases—and a change of clothes was what the hunted man wanted almost, as much as a car. And the unsuspicious man who drove beside him was utterly at his mercy.

The lane was muddy and rutty; the green car bumped on at a moderate pace. As it drew near a cart-track that led away into Wayland Wood, Rawdon asked:

"The motorist gave a sudden, convulsive start, as something hard and round was pressed into his ribs.

His eyes turned on Rawdon.

"Keep steady!" Rogue Rawdon's voice was a sibilant whisper. "It's a gun that's jammed in your ribs; and if you twist a finger, you get it right through you. I'm a desperate man."

The burning glitter in his eyes made good his words. The motorist drove slowly on, without speaking.

"I'm not going to a job at Rylcombe. I'm a hunted man—hunted with ten years' penal servitude at the finish if they get me. Understand?"

"I understand!" said the young man at the wheel quietly.

His face paled a little; but he was quite calm. His hands were steady. But he made no motion of resistance; for he could read in the man's haggard eyes that if he did a bullet would pass through his body at the same moment. Rogue Rawdon, as he had said, was desperate.

"I don't want to hurt you," went on Rawdon's sibilant tones. "But I want this car—and I'm going to have it! I don't want the report of a pistol to reach anybody's ears—it's as much that as anything else that saves your life this minute. But don't try me—don't give me trouble! I'm wanted for shooting a man—and I'd rather shoot a dozen more than be taken. Is that clear?"

"Quite!"

"You're cool, anyhow!" said Rawdon. "All the better! Don't give me trouble, for your own sake. They say that the policeman I shot will recover—and if he does, I don't want to put my neck in the rope. But I'm not a man to be taken alive. I'd kill you as I'd kill a fly, to get clear."

"You look it!" said the young man dryly.

"No doubt! Turn off the lane, into that track! Drive as far into the wood as the track goes."

For a brief second the Australian hesitated. The muzzle of the revolver glared harder into his ribs.

"Don't make me!" breathed Rawdon. "It might be safer for me to leave you dead in the wood, unable to describe the

man who got your car away. I'd like to keep clear of it if I can—don't drive me to blot you out."

"You hold the cards!" said the Australian; and he turned the car from the lane into the cart-track.

The early dusk was falling now. The cart-track, used by the wood-cutters, ran a considerable distance into the dusky woods. But there were no wood-cutters about now. A quarter of a mile from the main road, where cars passed every moment, they were as solitary as if in a wilderness.

The little green car jerked over the ruts left by heavy cartwheels. It reached the end of the track, and stopped.

"Get down!"

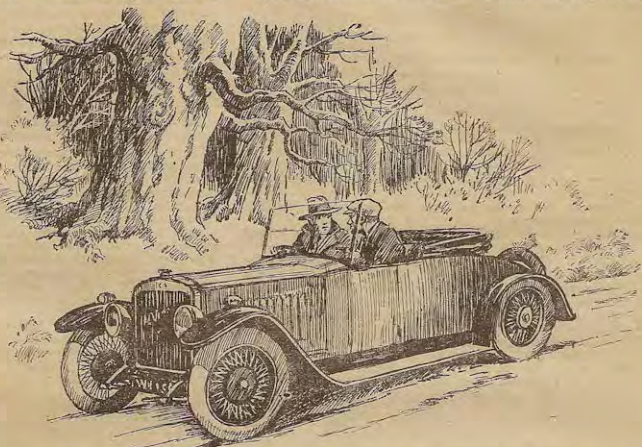
Rogue Rawdon followed the Australian from the car, his revolver still jammed against him. He took a dingy muffler from his neck, and signed to the young man to place his hands together for binding. Again the Australian hesitated, his eyes gleaming. That he was no coward, was shown by his perfect coolness in so strange and perilous a situation. But he realised that he was in the hands of a man utterly desperate; and he read death in the gaunt eyes over the revolver.

He placed his wrists together, and Rawdon bound them with the muffler. Then he hooked the end of the muffler over a branch and tied it.

"You'll keep quiet!" he said. He reversed the pistol in his hand, and made a menacing gesture with the butt. "One call—and you go down with a cracked skull! You get me?"

"I get you," said the Australian, "and I reckon the police will get you, too, for this, and I'll help them all I can. You've got the upper hand now—make the most of it."

Rawdon gave him an evil look, and turned from him.



"Keep steady!" whispered Rogue Rawdon. "It's a gun that's jammed in your ribs!"

CHAPTER 6.

Late 1

"WEADY?"

"Not quite, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped out of the cycle-shop in Abbotsford High Street. Some juniors were standing outside with their machines.

"Not weady yet," said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows cut off, if you like. I won't keep ye waitin'."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Blake. "We'll wait. If we let you ride home alone, you'll only get into more trouble."

"Weally, Blake—"

"No need for those Shell fish to wait," said Blake. "But we'd better hang on. You're not safe without a keeper or two."

"You utter ass!"

"Well, see you later," said Tom Merry, and he put a leg over his machine. Manners and Lowther and Talbot followed his example, and the four Shell fellows rode away down the street.

Blake and Herries and Dig remained with their chum, to wait until Gussy's bike was a going concern again.

As they rode down the street Tom Merry & Co caught a good many remarks from Abbotsford people on the exciting episode on the football ground that afternoon. Abbotsford was a quiet place as a rule, and this was an unusual bit of excitement for it, and the name of Rogue Rawdon was on almost every tongue. From what they heard the juniors gathered that the elusive "Rogue" had vanished, and had not been captured.

Tom was rather glad when they were out of the town. He had noticed that the dark, troubled look had returned to Talbot's face. Every mention of Rogue Rawdon's name was a reminder to the handsome Shell fellow of the dark old days when he had been called the Toff. Tom would have been deeply relieved to hear that the motor bandit

had been caught, and he hoped, at least, that the fugitive rascal had cleared out of the neighbourhood.

As they rode through the bridge-path in Abbotsford Wood the Shell fellows remembered Gussy's adventure of the afternoon, and looked about them a good deal in the shadows that were already falling on the woodland.

But Rogue Rawdon had been rooted out of that quarter before he had made his appearance on the football ground, and he was not likely to have returned to it.

Had they chanced upon him the Terrible Three were quite prepared to have collared him, and Tom had no doubt that Talbot would have lent a willing hand.

But there was no sign of him, and they left the wood behind and pedalled along the road back to St. Jim's.

They rode mostly in silence. Talbot was in a very quiet mood, and though he answered cheerfully when spoken to, he did not want to talk. The others fell in with his

mood and little was said before St. Jim's at last came into sight.

"Hallo, there's Linton!" remarked Manners.

At some distance from the school gates, Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was walking slowly along the road.

The juniors noticed that he glanced up at every car that passed, as if looking for some car in particular.

"Looking for somebody," remarked Tom Merry.

"His jolly old nephew, perhaps," said Lowther.

"His nephew must have arrived at St. Jim's before this, surely," said Tom. "I heard that he was expected in the afternoon. It's past tea-time now. Trimble said he was coming up by car from Southampton."

"How did Trimble know?" asked Talbot.

Tom Merry laughed.

"How does Trimble know everything?" he said. "I suppose he heard Linton telling Latham or Railton. Baggy generally knows everything that's going on."

Mr. Linton stopped as the four Shell fellows drew close, and as he looked as if he wished to speak, they jumped down.

"Have you boys been to Wayland?" asked the master of the Shell.

"No, sir, Abbotsford," answered Tom. "We've been to the First Eleven match there."

"Ah! Yes! Quite!" assented Mr. Linton. "I suppose you have not heard anything of a motor accident on the road anywhere?"

"No, sir," answered Tom.

"My nephew, Mr. Carstairs, is coming to the school this afternoon," the master of the Shell added, as if in explanation. "He is much later than I expected. He telephoned from Lextam at three o'clock, so he should have been here an hour later—and it is now five."

Mr. Linton was obviously a little uneasy.

"May have missed the road, sir, if he is coming by car," said Talbot. "There aren't a lot of signposts about."

"Yes, that is possible," assented the Form master. "I hardly think there can have been an accident; he is used to driving a car in Australia, I believe. As a complete stranger here he may have missed the road."

Mr. Linton gave the juniors a nod, and walked on. They remounted and rode on to the school. Looking back from the gate they could see Mr. Linton pacing to and fro, with his eyes on every car that passed.

Having put up their machines, the four Shell fellows went in to the School House, Kildare and his team had already returned, and they found the House full of the victory at Abbotsford. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth met them as they came up to the studies.

"Heard?" asked Baggy.

"What and which?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Kildare beat them at Abbotsford—"

Tom chuckled.

"Well, as we watched Kildare beat them, old fat toad, you're rather late with the news," he said. "Nothing fresher than that?"

"There's a motor bandit hanging about," said Trimble. "From what I hear he's been seen at Abbotsford, and he shot a police-inspector stone dead, and wounded three bobbies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's what I've heard," said Trimble. "Perhaps he didn't shoot him quite stone dead—"

"Perhaps not!" chuckled Tom.

"We know all about the jolly old motor bandit, too!" chorried Lowther. "You're getting awfully late with the news, Baggy. Nothing fresh?"

Baggy looked rather put out. He liked to be the first man with the news.

"Well, Linton's nephew from Australia hasn't turned up," he said. "I fancy there's been a motor smash—"

"What a happy fancy," said Manners. "You might try to fancy something a bit more cheerful."

"Or perhaps—" said Baggy thoughtfully.

"Perhaps which?" grinned Lowther. Baggy evidently wanted to produce something startling in the way of a surmise.

"Well, according to the papers, that man Rawdon—the motor bandit, you know, is supposed to be looking for a chance to get hold of a car," said Baggy. "He may have shot Linton's nephew dead, and bagged his car."

"Good!" said Lowther. "Better go and suggest that to Linton. He would be no end bucked."

"Put some exercise books in your bags first," chuckled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot went rather abruptly into his study and closed the door. Baggy Trimble rolled away in search of more sympathetic listeners. He was rather pleased with his startling theory to account for the lateness of Mr. Linton's nephew. Manners and Lowther went on to No. 10, and Tom Merry, after hesitating a minute or two, followed Talbot into his study.

He found the Shell fellow staring from the study window into the quad, where the other desk was already falling. Tom touched him on the shoulder.

Talbot looked round, his face troubled and disturbed.

"Thinking of what the fat ass Trimble was saying?" asked Tom. "For goodness' sake, don't think of such rot."

"Trimble's a fool," said Talbot. "But as a matter of fact, I shouldn't be surprised. Rawdon is exactly the man for it."

"Rot!" said Tom. "The chap is a stranger from Australia, and he's missed his way; old Linton may hear him hunking any minute. Chuck Rawdon out of your mind, old bean, and come along to my study for tea."

"I can't help thinking."

"Piffle!" said Tom. "Chuck thinking—it will give you a pain in the brain! Come on."

And Talbot of the Shell was dragged away to No. 10 for tea, where, in the cheery society of Tom Merry & Co., Rogue Rawdon was once more dismissed from his mind.

CHAPTER 7.

In Merciless Hands!

ROGUE RAWDON knelt by the open suitcase in Wayland Wood, his brow wrinkled in thought, his eyes gleaming under knitted brows. The Australian, a helpless prisoner, stood where he had been placed, in the deep shadow of the tree. His face was grim and dark as he stood there, helpless in the hands of the motor bandit, wondering how the strange adventure was to end. Rawdon seemed to have forgotten his existence.

The Rogue had taken the suitcases from the car, carried them under the trees and opened them with keys taken from his prisoner.

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He sorted over the contents without ceremony.

In seizing upon the green car, the rascal's chief thought had been to obtain possession of the car itself, to put a distance between himself and the men who hunted him, and to get a change of clothes. His luck was in, so far. He had the car, and the suitcases contained everything that he needed in the way of a change. He was about the same size as the Australian, and he had dressed himself in a suit that fitted him fairly well.

He had set up a shaving mirror, and shaved himself with the necessities taken from one of the suitcases, and washed clean at the pond in the wood. The difference that a wash, a shave, and a change of clothes made in the haggard rascal was enormous.

He had shaved clean, chiefly because Rogue Rawdon, in his natural state, wore a tooth-brush moustache, and was described as wearing one in his published descriptions. He looked years younger now, and considerably better-looking. All of which his prisoner watched with silent anger.

It had been in the rascal's mind to escape in the car, leaving its owner bound to the tree, gagged, to keep him silent. That would give him the night, at least, to make his escape—for it was unlikely that the bound man would be found before morning.

But it seemed now that other thoughts were working in the fertile brain of the desperate outcast.

He had examined everything in the suitcases, among other things a packet of letters. Several of those letters were from Mr. Linton, who, as he gathered from the letters themselves, was a Form master at St. Jim's, the school near Rylecombe. And the information Rogue Rawdon derived from the letters seemed to have given him food for thought.

The Australian was still watching him grimly, with suppressed anger. He was helpless, and it was futile to speak. Now that the fugitive rascal had changed his looks, he expected to see him step into the car and drive away. But Rogue Rawdon, though apparently he had nothing more to do there, remained—his wrinkled brow showing how hard he was thinking.

He came towards the Australian at last. There was a strange look in his eyes as he regarded the young man.

"I've been looking through your bags and some letters that—" he began.

"You're the kind that would!" said the Australian, with a curl of the lip.

Rawdon laughed shortly.

"I'm not in position to be particular! I'm wanted for shooting a man who's in hospital now. I make out that your name's Carstairs—James Carstairs—"

"That's no secret."

"Nephew to a Form master at St. Jim's—a Mr. Linton. You're fresh from Australia, and were going to the school when I held you up."

"What about it?"

"Well, you won't get to the school just yet," said Rawdon, watching him as he spoke, "and I dare say your uncle will be a little anxious. I'm going to leave you safe when I quit, but I might let this Mr. Linton know you're not snashed up in an accident, if you think he's anxious."

The young man looked relieved.

"You seem a precious sort of scoundrel," he said. "But I own up I'll be obliged if you'll do that. You wouldn't risk a lot giving my uncle a phone call from some town you pass through. The old boy is certain to be worried if I don't turn up."

"This is your first visit to England?"

"Yes. I didn't get nearer than Gallipoli in the War."

"Born out in Australia?"

"No; taken there as a little kid—five or six. Look here! If you'll let my uncle know I'm safe, I said Rawdon."

"He can't have seen much of you," said Rawdon.

"Naturally, as he's never been to Australia, and I've been there since I was six. But he will be worried if I don't turn up. He's expecting me this afternoon. In fact, for your own sake, you'd better let him know I'm all right."

"How's that?"

"Well, if I'm not in by night he will make a fuss. He will reckon it's an accident, and he will go to the police about it. The police may figure what sort of an accident it was."

Rawdon smiled.

"You're right," he said. "I'd better stop your uncle from worrying that's a certainty."

"I phoned him from Lexham this afternoon, so he's already bothering at my not turning up, I should say. The sooner you relieve his mind, the safer for you."

The advice was good, though the Australian's concern, of course, was wholly for his uncle, the Shell master of St. Jim's.

"I got you!" assented Rawdon. "Well, I guarantee that this Mr. Linton is not going to be anxious about you much."

longer. I'm going to satisfy him that his nephew from Australia is safe and sound."

There was such a strange note in his voice, that Carstairs looked at him quickly, suspiciously.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What have you got up your sleeve?"

Rogue Rawdon laughed.

"Something that I'm not telling you," he answered. "But you can bank on it that your dear old uncle's mind will be relieved before long. And you can thank your lucky stars that that man in hospital is expected to recover."

The Australian looked at him.

"Because," said Rawdon slowly, "with the game I'm going to play, it would be safer for me to leave you buried in this wood. And if I had a rope ahead of me, anyhow, I reckon your number would be up. But, as the matter stands, I'm not making it a hanging matter, if I can help it."

Carstairs did not answer.

from his care, he intended to leave him for a considerable time.

The hapless prisoner wondered what the villain's game was; but he was unable to ask questions, for a gag was inserted carefully into his mouth, and tied there with strings round his head. Bound, gagged, hardly able to move a finger, the young man was lifted into the green car, and covered carefully out of sight with a rug.

Helpless, hidden under the rug, he heard the purring of the engine.

Rogue Rawdon was backing the green car out of the cart-track, into the lane. Once in the lane, he drove away at a great speed, heedless of ruts and bumps. That he knew the country well was evident. By the shortest possible route, he drove to Wayland Moor, and in the thickening dusk the car rushed on by a lonely track over the wide moor. And then, with bumping and jolting, it left the track, and stopped almost on the verge of an abandoned chalk pit.

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CHAPTER 8.

A Meeting on the Moor!

"I WONDER," remarked Jack Blake, with an air of exaggerated patience, "when we shall get back to St. Jim's—or whether we shall ever get back there at all!"

"Oh, we'll get along with the milk in the morning!" said Dig.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Late for call-over, anyhow," sighed Herries.

"If you fellows think it was my fault—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with much dignity.

"Oh, of course not!" said Blake. "It never is your fault! If there's trouble anywhere around, you're bound to butt into it; but it's not your fault, it's our misfortune."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

The Shell fellows had long disappeared. Blake & Co. were waiting for Gussy's bike to be handed out. But Gussy's bike was not ready yet.

Really, it could not be helped. Still, the Fourth-Formers had to think about call-over. They were already late; and

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It was only for the sake of his own worthless neck that the rascal was sparing a life that might be dangerous to him.

"But I'm leaving you in a safe place," said Rawdon. "Luckily, I know this country well. I've worked this neighbourhood years ago, and I never forget a country I've worked. That's why I made a break in this direction when the cops were after me. I reckon I know where to drop you—a place where you won't be found."

"If you leave me here, you may be three hundred miles away before anybody comes along, from the look of things." "That's not good enough," said Rawdon. "I've got to stick you where you can't be found for two or three days at least—until I've had time to take my bearings, and then I reckon I can fix things better. I'll find a better place for you later; but for a couple of days, at least, you're going to have a rough time. I'm sorry. It can't be helped. I'd do more to keep out of ten years penal."

He turned away. The suitcases were repacked, and placed in the car. Then, with neckties, braces, strips of torn cloth, anything that would serve, the Rogue bound his prisoner still more securely, arms and legs. Evidently,

the later they were. the bigger the trouble. They did not want Mr. Railton to mark them absent when he called the roll in the School House. D'Arcy had already proposed that his friends should ride on, and leave him to wait alone; but Blake and Herries and Dig scouted that idea. They were sticking to their noble chum; but naturally they ragged him a little. Really, as Blake pointed out several times, there had been no need for Gussy to run into the fugitive motor bandit in Abbotford Wood. There had been no stern necessity for him to take the wrong track and puncture his bike with a variety of thorns. Blake and Herries and Dig took the view that Gussy went around specially looking for trouble and collecting it, just as some fellows collect postage stamps.

Still, everything comes to an end; and that wait at the cycle shop in Abbotford ended at last. The bike, with brand-new tyres, newly swept and garnished, was handed over, and Arthur Augustus paid the bill, and at long last put his noble leg over the renovated jigger.

"No good going home by road," declared Blake. "We've got to take the shortest cuts now. Wayland Moor is the shortest—if we don't tumble into the old chalk pits."

"That way is hardly safe, Blake, especially with the dusk comin' on," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Lots of accidents have happened—"

"Look here, you don't mean to have another accident to-day, do you?" demanded Blake aggressively. "I should think one a day would be a reasonable allowance, even for you."

"I was thinkin' of you chaps, of course. I am not likely to have an accident on a bike! But you—"

"Why, you frabjous, fooling, fooling cuckoo—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, let's get off!" said Herries. "If Gussy falls into a chalk pit, we'll jolly well leave him to it."

"Weally, Hewies—"

Blake started, and Herries and Dig followed. Arthur Augustus had some more to say, but as his friends were whizzing out of hearing, he left it unsaid, mounted, and followed them.

The chums of the Fourth rode rapidly out of Abbotford, and into the lane that led to the moor. It was quite true that the lonely paths across the moor were hardly safe, especially with dusk falling; but it was equally true that that route saved several miles. That latter consideration was enough for Blake, who did not want to collect unnumbered lines, or a licking, when he arrived at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah dark!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as the four cyclists rode across the moor. "It will be quite dark before we are out of this, deah boys. I'll be careful, Blake."

"Fathead!"

"Well, you know what you are on a bike, old chap!" said D'Arcy. "And in a place like this we are fah from all help."

"There's no time to slay you now," said Blake, in a concentrated voice. "But when we get in, look out for sudden death."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Put it on," said Dig.

Darker and deeper fell the shadows of night on the wide waste of Wayland Moor. The juniors "put it on," but after a time they had to slow down. Tracks on the moor were barely marked; and in gathering darkness were hard to discern. And the moor was pitted with ancient abandoned

chalk pits, few of which were fenced in. A fellow who pitched into a diseased chalk pit would have reason to remember the ancient adage that more haste was less speed.

Through the dusk ahead of the juniors there came the sound of a motor-car engine. Blake strained his eyes through the thickening gloom.

"My hat! There's a car ahead of us!" he exclaimed. "That's some ass who has lost his way! He's a mile at least off a road."

"Wathah lucky we're bumpin' into him, deah boy."

"How's that, ass?"

"Why, we shall be able to set him wight, you know."

Blake grunted. He was thinking more of getting back to St. Jim's than of rendering services to stray motorists.

"He's off the track as well as off the road!" said Digby, as they came in sight of the car. "And he hasn't any lights on! Some sort of a silly fathead!"

"A priceless chump, and no mistake," said Herries.

"Vass, wathah!"

The juniors could barely make out the car in the gloom. It was at some little distance from the track they were following on the open moor, and in the direction, as they knew, of an old chalk pit. It showed no lights, but the engine was throbbing, and it was slowly labouring across the hilly, bumpy ground towards the track.

Arthur Augustus halted, and jumped down.

"What are you stopping for, fathead?" demanded Blake.

"That chap must have lost his way, deah boy. We're bound to see him wight!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, all right—the night's yet young!" said Blake sarcastically.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, he's stopping!" said Dig, in astonishment.

The four juniors had their lamps going, and the motorist saw them gleaming through the dusk. It did not occur to the juniors that that might be the reason why the car halted before reaching the track.

They stood by the machines, staring at the unlighted car, which was little more than a shadow in the gloom. They could make out, however, that its colour was green.

"Well," said Blake, "of all the chumps, I fancy that chauffeur is the jolly old limit. He must be able to see our lights, and so he must know that this is a path; but he's stopping! Why doesn't he come on?"

"Betah speak to him, I think," said D'Arcy. "He has been fawtighfully close to one of the old pits, in that direction. Betah put him wight."

"Oh, all right!" sighed Blake. "We'll get home about midnight."

"We weally cannot leave a man stwanded on the moor, Blake, even if he is a howlin' ass."

"Brr-r-r-r!"

And the juniors, leaving the track, wheeled their machines towards the half-d car, with the benevolent intention of putting the motorist right, and delivering him from the pitfalls amid which he seemed to be wandering.

CHAPTER 9.

A Change of Identity!

ROGUE RAWDON gritted his teeth.

Up to that moment all had gone well with the cunning rascal; the strange and daring scheme that he had formed had worked like a charm.

The Australian, bound, gagged, wrapped in a thick

Potts, the Office-Boy!



motor ruf, had been slipped down a steep descent into the old chalk pit. There, in one of the rifts at the bottom of the pit, the Rogue had left him—callous to the prisoner's certain sufferings in a night spent in such a place. All the Rogue was thinking of, was to bestow the man safely, where he could not be found—and that, certainly, he had done.

He clambered back to the moor, and started the car, to drive back to the track he had left. And then the lights of four bicycles appeared in front of him, and he stopped again. To his bitter rage, the lights on the track remained stationary, and then advanced towards him—why, he could not guess. He was sure that the cyclists, whoever they were, had not been near, or in possible sight, when he had removed his prisoner from the car. What did they want?

Rogue Rawdon watched the advancing lights with his teeth set and a glint in his eyes. So far, his luck had been phenomenal; but to be seen, within a score of yards of the deep pit where he had left his prisoner threatened trouble.

For Rawdon was not now thinking of letting out the car to top speed and fleeing into another country. His fertile brain had hatched a sater scheme than that.

The man whose car he had taken was expected at St. Jim's that day. He was about Rawdon's age and build; he had not been seen, by the only man at St. Jim's who knew him at all, since he was six years old; and Rawdon was in possession of all his personal effects. To drive to St. Jim's and present himself there as James Carstairs from Australia, was a scheme that was certain of success from its very daring.

He could keep up the character easily enough. He had been in Australia, years ago; and Mr. Linton never had. His perusal of the packet of letters had given him a fairly clear idea of the Australian's personal affairs; and he was too wary and cunning to be caught off his guard. He was going among absolute strangers; and the part he had to play was easy enough to an experienced rogue who had, in his time, played many parts.

The Australian was safe at the bottom of the chalk pit. Later, as soon as he had made good his footing at St. Jim's, he could devise some still safer and less exposed place of concealment for the hapless man. For the present he could stay where he was.

Rogue Rawdon was hunted far and wide, but if there was any place where the police would never dream of looking for him, it was within the walls of a public school.

Once installed there as Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia, he would be absolutely safe from detection.

He would take care never to go outside the walls in the daytime. And within the walls, who could ever know Rogue Rawdon?

The hunt for him would slacken after a time. A week, a fortnight, then the coast would be clear, and—for his thoughts went ahead—it was probable that St. Jim's was a crib worth the cracking, and when he went he would take the contents of the safe with him.

His only problem was to find some hiding-place for his prisoner, where the hapless man would not actually perish for his neck's sake! That problem he would deal with later; it was not a difficult one. He might hire a cottage or a bungalow somewhere, convey the prisoner there, and take him food at night. Till then the man could remain where he was, safe out of sight, if not comfortable.

The Rogue had the whole scheme out and dried, and all

he needed was to get clear of the moor and arrive at St. Jim's with some plausible tale of having missed the road, on his way from Loxham, to account for his late arrival. And then Blake & Co. happened.

Rogue Rawdon sat at the steering-wheel staring towards the four bike lamps as they converged towards him.

His eyes glittered savagely.

With the glare of the lamps in his eyes he could hardly discern the four juniors as they halted close by the cur.

"Hallo!" shouted Blake.

Rawdon drew a deep breath.

"Hallo!" he called back.

"Lost your way?" called Blake.

Rawdon gritted his teeth, but he felt a throb of relief at the same moment. The cyclists were only a bunch of officious fools who thought that a motorist had lost his way. He took his cue at once from Jack Blake's question.

"Yes," he answered. "I seem to have got off the track somehow."

"Bai Dove!" came another voice. "It's wathah lucky we wopped on you, sir. You are not twenty yards from a wathah deep chalk pit."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Rawdon. The pit referred to was the one in which he had left the Australian.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This moor is dangerous for strangers," said Blake. "Why haven't you got your lights on? Lamps gone wrong?"

"I was just going to light up," answered Rawdon; and he switched on the lights.

In the bright glare he made out the four juniors. He started, and his heart almost ceased to beat for a moment as he recognised the boy whom he had hurled from his bicycle in Abbotsford Wood earlier that afternoon, standing among the others, and staring at him through an eyeglass.

But he was relieved the next moment. There was no sign of recognition in D'Arcy's face.

The change in Rawdon's appearance was too complete for that.

Not the slightest resemblance did Gussy see between this clean-shaven, well-dressed motorist and the ragged, stubbly, unkempt ruffian who had handled him that afternoon in Abbotsford Wood.

Rawdon smiled faintly.

A Scotland Yard detective would have known him; the police who had his description might have known him; but the schoolboy who had met that desperate fugitive in the wood was not likely to know him.

"Well, if you'll tell us which way you want to go we'll set you right," said Blake.

Rawdon was perfectly cool again now. It was clear that not the slightest suspicion existed in the minds of these schoolboys.

He knew the way as well as Blake did, but it was his game to let it be supposed that he had lost his way on the moor.

That was the only plausible explanation of his presence there.

"I'm looking for Rylecombe," he said. "Do you know it? A village about a mile from a well-known school—St. Jim's?"

Blake laughed.

"Well, rather, as we belong to the school," he answered.

Rawdon started.

It dawned upon him that these four schoolboys belonged to the very school he was planning to enter as an impostor.

He drew a sharp breath.

Cat-o'-Nine Lives!



"You are St. Jim's boys?" he exclaimed.

"Yas, wathah!"

So these were four boys belonging to St. Jim's—boys who would see him at the school, hear him spoken of under the name of Carstairs. Rogue Rawdon's brain worked rapidly, as it was wont to work.

"I'm delighted to meet you," he said. "As you are St. Jim's boys you probably know my uncle at the school—Mr. Linton."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Blake in astonishment. "Mean to say you're the nephew Mr. Linton is expecting at the school this afternoon?"

"That is so—my name is Carstairs."

"You're jolly late getting in," said Herries. "Trimble said you were expected before tea."

Rawdon laughed lightly.

"I should have been in some time ago but I have been trying short cuts," he said. "You see, I am Australian, and have not been in this country since I was six years old—and this doesn't seem a safe country to guess at short cuts. You want a few more notice-boards up, I reckon."

"Yas, wathah! I am vewy sowwy you lost your way, Mr. Carstairs," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am vewy glad we happened to be heah to set you right."

"Very lucky for me, if the place is full of chalk pits, as you tell me," answered Rawdon easily. "I was beginning to wonder whether I should have to camp out here till morning. I was rather an ass to try a short cut across a place like this. But a man told me I could reach Rylcombe—"

"So you can if you keep to the track," said Blake. "Look here, sir, we're riding to Rylcombe now to get back to the school. If you keep our lights in sight you're all right."

"Thank you very much—and the sooner the better," said Rawdon. "I've had enough of this moor."

"Get going!" said Blake.

The Fourth-Formers remounted and rode back to the track they had left. Rawdon drove the car bumping after them.

They pedalled along the track, and the car followed.

Twenty minutes later Blake & Co. came out into Rylcombe Lane, and they passed through the village, with the green car in their wake.

On the road from Rylcombe to St. Jim's the car could have passed them easily enough as the motorist could have no further doubt of his route. But he preferred to keep in their wake.

Rogue Rawdon had realised very quickly how it would further his scheme to let the juniors arrive at the school with the news that they had met Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia, who had lost his way on the moor.

It was an excellent way of preparing the ground for his imposture.

So he carefully kept behind the juniors, and Blake & Co. reached the school with the green car still in the rear.

It had long been dark now, and the gates of St. Jim's were closed. Taggles came grumbling down from his lodge in answer to Blake's emphatic clang at the bell.

"Huh!" said Taggles. "You, is it?"

"Yas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I twust you did not think that anythin' had happened to us, Taggles!"

Taggles grunted again. It was unlikely—very unlikely—that he had been worrying on that score.

"Which you're to report to Mr. Railton," he said. "Ere, what's this—this 'ere car—"

"Friend of ours from Australia, old bean!" said Blake blandly. "Come on, you men—the sooner we see Railton the less likely he is to bite."

And the chums of the Fourth cut across the quad to the School House.

CHAPTER 10.

All Serene!

"DEAR me!" said Mr. Linton.

The master of the Shell had made that remark at least a dozen times as he stood in the big doorway of the School House with Mr. Railton.

He was worried.

The Housemaster was sympathetic, but he pointed out that there were a dozen or more reasons to account for James Carstairs' lateness, apart from a motor smash.

"But it is really very singular that my nephew does not arrive," said Mr. Linton. "I think, perhaps, I had better phone the police station. There may have been an accident."

There was a pattering of footsteps in the quadrangle.

"Here are the truants, at all events," said Mr. Railton. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,197.

The master of the Shell glanced very indifferently at Blake & Co. as they came in. They were not in his Form, so their escapade had nothing to do with him. And he was thinking wholly of the young man from Australia.

Mr. Railton, however, eyed the four delinquents severely.

"What does this mean, Blake?" he asked. "You are more than an hour late for calling-over."

"We're sorry, sir," said Blake, wondering whether it was lines or a licking, and assuming his most penitent air. "But—"

"We was wathah delayed by punctures to my bike, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I had to get the bike wathah repaired!"

"And we met Mr. Linton's nephew, sir!" said Blake, with great artfulness. "He had lost his way, and we stopped to set him right."

The master of the Shell almost jumped. His indifference to the Fourth Form truants vanished at once.



Talbot raised himself to his knees, but for the moment he was out of

"You have seen my nephew?" he exclaimed. "Excuse me, Mr. Railton, but I am a little anxious, as you know."

"Quite so!" said the Housemaster, with a nod.

"Blake! If you have seen Mr. Carstairs—"

"Yes, sir!" said Blake. "Somebody told him of a short cut across Wayland Moor, and he lost his way there. We came back that way, so—"

"There has been no accident?"

"Oh, no, sir! He just lost his way, and we stopped to set him right. That made us a little later," said Blake.

"Bai Jove! It did not delay us more than about five minutes, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Ow! Wow! Somebody is treading on my foot! Ow!"

Mr. Linton stared at the juniors, and Mr. Railton smiled, Arthur Augustus screwed up his noble features in anguish.

"Oh dear! What did you twend on my foot for, Blake?"

Ow!

"Shurrup!" hissed Herries.

"Weally, Howwies—"

"That will do," said Mr. Railton. "As you seem to

have been of assistance to Mr. Carstairs I will excuse you; you may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said the four juniors together; and they were about to vanish when Mr. Linton exclaimed:

"Where is my nephew now, Blake?"

"At the gates, sir, in his car," answered Blake.

"Oh, thank you!"

Mr. Linton hurried down the steps, and Blake & Co. departed. As they came up to the Fourth Form passage, late for tea, and extremely anxious to get to that meal in Study No. 6, Baggy Trimble met them.

"Heard, you fellows?" asked Baggy eagerly.

"Which?" grunted Blake, without stopping.

He was more anxious for tea than for Baggy's news, whatever it might be.

"Linton's nephew hasn't come after all!" said Baggy, following the juniors to Study No. 6.

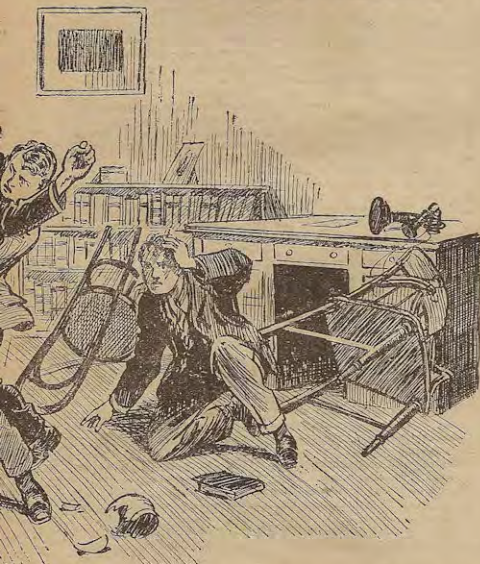
Blake grinned.

"Hasn't he?"

"No; and there's a ferocious motor bandit—man named Rawlows or something—lurking about," said Baggy. "It's suspected that he's met Linton's nephew and shot him dead."

"Oh crikey!"

"And stolen his car to escape in," said Trimble. "I suppose you fellows haven't seen his body lying about!"



fight. The Terrible Three were giving a good account of themselves!

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

As Mr. Linton was even then greeting the man who called himself James Carstairs from Australia, and whose bona fides the juniors had no reason to doubt, this struck Blake as rather rich.

"Look here," said Baggy, "it's a jolly serious matter, you know! Linton is frightfully scared about it! From what I hear there's very little doubt that Rawford—I mean Rawlows—had shot old Linton's nephew and bagged his car. It's awful, you know."

"Terrific!" agreed Blake.

"Peculiar!" said Dir.

"Dreadful!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"You silly chump!" grunted Herries. "Linton's nephew came in just behind us, and he's in the House by this time."

Baggy jumped.

"He's come!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, fathad!"

"Then he ain't shot?" exclaimed Trimble.

Really Baggy seemed quite disappointed to hear that his imagined tragedy had not happened.

"He didn't look shot," said Blake. "Sorry, old fat bean, but he's quite alive and well!"

And the chums of the Fourth, laughing, went into Study No. 6, leaving Baggy Trimble looking quite blank, like a fellow whose house of cards had fallen to pieces round him.

About a quarter of an hour later, when Blake & Co. were tucking into a late but hearty tea, Talbot of the Shell looked in.

"Twot in, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; and the other fellows gave Talbot welcoming grins. Talbot of the Shell was welcome in almost any study at St. Jim's, in either House.

"I've just heard from Trimble that Mr. Linton's nephew has blown in, and that you fellows have seen him," said Talbot.

"That's so," assented Blake.

"Then he's all right?" asked Talbot.

Blake stared a little.

"Right as rain," he answered. "My hat! You haven't been worrying about your jolly old Form master's jolly old nephew, surely?"

Talbot smiled a little.

"Well, that ass Trimble suggested that he might have fallen in with that scoundrel Rawdon, the motor bandit," he said. "It seemed possible—"

"We found him lost on Wayland Moor," said Blake. "I fancy he had rather a narrow escape of going over into a chalk pit, car and all. But we didn't see any motor bandits cavorting around. We leave motor bandits to Gussy—he likes meeting them in woods!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Talbot of the Shell nodded, and left the study.

"Well," said Blake, "the jolly old poet says that 'kind hearts are more than coronets,' but I never heard of a fellow worrying about his Form master's giddy relations before. Pass those sardines!"

Talbot came upon the Terrible Three as he went back to the Shell passage.

"It's all right about Linton's nephew," he said.

"Of course it is," said Manners. "Why shouldn't it be?"

"Well, I thought it possible—"

Talbot coloured and paused.

"You thought it possible that Trimble had got it right for once?" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Now, what on earth could have put it into your head that Trimble could possibly get anything right?"

Talbot laughed.

"Well, it's all serene, anyhow," he said; and he went into his study.

His brow was clear now. Because of his memory of Rogue Rawdon and his reckless and desperate ways, he had been haunted by a fear that the man from Australia might have met disaster at the hands of the motor bandit. He was relieved in his mind now; and he dismissed Rogue Rawdon at last from his thoughts.

He would not have dismissed him so easily had he been able to see the face of the man who, in those very moments, was sitting in Mr. Linton's study, in cool and composed conversation with the master of the Shell. Talbot when he went to bed that night, if he dreamed at all, certainly never dreamed that Rogue Rawdon was sleeping under the same roof.

CHAPTER 11.

Safe Quarters!

MR. CARSTAIRS sat up in bed and smiled in the morning sunlight that streamed in at the window of his room.

Mr. Carstairs was feeling in a smiling humour that morning.

He had slept well; and not even in his dreams had he remembered the man who lay bound, gagged, wretched, at the bottom of the chalk pit on Wayland Moor.

There was plenty of time to think of him later when the Rogue had decided how to dispose of him.

He yawned a little, and smiled. He was in a cheerful mood. Cool and resourceful as he was, Rogue Rawdon had hardly expected to carry through the deception with such consummate ease.

Even the unexpected meeting with the St. Jim's juniors on the moor, which had alarmed him for the moment, had turned out to his advantage; it had heralded him, as it were, at St. Jim's as Mr. Linton's nephew.

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Mr. Linton had greeted him without a shade of suspicion. If he failed to trace any resemblance between "James" and the little boy he vaguely remembered more than a quarter of a century ago, that was hardly surprising.

The man came in his nephew's car, with his nephew's baggage and papers, and a seeming familiarity with his nephew's affairs; and there was no reason why the Form master should be suspicious.

Rogue Rawdon played his part well. He had greeted Mr. Linton with a mingling of respect and affection; he had talked easily of Australia and his affairs there; and commented on things in the home country like a stranger in the land.

He had dined with the Head, and quite pleased that old gentleman, leaving both Dr. Holmes and Mrs. Holmes with an agreeable impression of Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia.

He had been taken into the Common-room, introduced to several members of the staff, and passed muster there with ease. He had met two or three of the Sixth, and they had rather liked him.

He had gone to bed early, pleading fatigue from his journey; and with his door locked he had grinned confidently and gleefully at his reflection in the glass.

He had passed muster, though he was glad to get out of sight after a few hours of it.

But he woke bright and cheerful in the morning. So far as he could see there was not a shadow on the horizon. All he had to do was to lie low, in this safest of all hiding-places, till the hunt for him slackened.

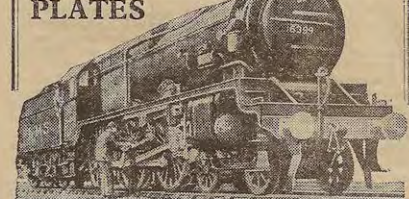
After that he would choose his time to disappear; choose the disguise which he would adopt for his next journey; and place himself in funds with whatever the Head's safe contained of value.

It was a pleasant prospect for the hunted rogue. Outside St. Jim's many hunted him; many knew his looks. Inside St. Jim's, who was to guess that he was other than the man he represented himself to be?

Of all hiding-places he could have selected, surely a school was the safest—the very one he would have chosen!

Tap!

"Come in!" called out the man sitting up in the bed. Mr. Linton entered.



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Somewhat stiff and crusty as the master of the Shell was, there was a kind expression on his face as he came across to the bed. Mr. Linton retained a dim but affectionate memory of a younger sister who had married an Australian, more years ago than he liked to think of and whose only son was now—as he believed—his guest.

"Good-morning, my boy!" he said. "You have slept well?"

"Excellently, thank you, uncle," answered the young man. "I suppose it is time I turned out."

"Suit yourself, James," answered Mr. Linton. "We are early risers here; but you may please yourself in every way. I thought I would come in as I shall shortly be busy in my Form-room."

"This is very kind of you, sir," said James. "You must not, of course, let my visit here interfere with your duties in any way. I shall knock about the place very contentedly while you are occupied."

His face hardened a little, unconsciously, as he felt Mr. Linton's eyes scrutinisingly upon it. There was no doubt or suspicion in Mr. Linton's looks; but the Rogue was prepared for both.

"No, I see little resemblance to my dear sister," said Mr. Linton, gazing at him. "No doubt you are more like your father."

"You remember my father well, sir?"

"It is so many years, you see—" hesitated Mr. Linton. "I am afraid I do not recall him very clearly."

"I am generally supposed to be very like him, sir," said Rawdon easily.

"No doubt," assented Mr. Linton. He glanced at the clock. "Your breakfast will be sent up here, James. Probably you would like to take a run in your car this morning and look round the country?"

The Rogue shook his head.

"The fact is, uncle, nothing would please me more than to loaf about this delightful, old-world place," he answered. "We have nothing like this in Australia, of course; and I feel that it will be a long time before I have seen enough of St. Jim's."

Mr. Linton smiled genially.

"That is very natural, James," he assented. "Well, you are your own master in every way. I shall see you again at lunch."

After a few more words the master of the Shell left him, and repaired to his Form-room where the Shell were already gathering.

Breakfast was brought up to James; an excellent breakfast to which Rogue Rawdon did full justice. It was quite unlike the hunted meals he had snatched in the past few days.

The St. Jim's fellows were all busy in the Form-rooms long before Rogue Rawdon turned out, bathed and shaved and dressed—all of which he did with meticulous care. It was a very well-groomed young man who strolled to the window and stood looking out into the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

He smiled as he looked out.

The green old quad, the gray old buildings, made him smile. He wondered what his old associates at the "rookery" would have thought had they dreamed of him in such surroundings.

There was an opening of doors, a clattering of footsteps, and a buzz of voices. It was morning break, and the Fourth and the Shell came out with a rush, and the old quad, so quiet a few moments ago, was alive with St. Jim's fellows.

And Rogue Rawdon, still with a smile on his face, stood at the window, looking out on the cheery crowd, smiling, almost laughing, as he reflected how unlikely the noises were to look for him in that place, amid that crowd of schoolboys. And he did not know, he did not guess, that the eyes of one of the schoolboys—unnoticed in the swarming crowd—were fixed on him as he stood at the window.

CHAPTER 12.

The Face at the Window!

"TALBOT!"

"Hallo!"

"Come and help us punt this footer about, old bean."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry had the football under his arm. Manners and Lowther were with him, and Talbot of the Shell joined him cheerily as he strolled across the quad. And Tom was glad to see that the haunting black look was gone from the face of his chum and that he looked his old cheery self. Evidently Talbot had dismissed Rogue Rawdon from his mind at last, and with him the memory of past troubled days.

"Hallo, you fellows!" Baggy Trimble butted into the four Shell fellows. "Seen Carstairs yet?"

"No," answered Tom, "and don't specially want to. From what I hear, he's no worse for being shot yesterday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you know, it seemed jolly likely, didn't it?" argued Trimble. "That awful character Rawbones is still loose, I believe. But, I say, if you want to see old Linton's nephew I know which is his room—"

"I suppose he won't ask us there, fathead?"

"No; but he's looking out of the window," said Baggy, "so you can squat up at him if you like."

"Blessed if I want to," answered Tom. "Get out of the way, Fatty, we're going to punt this footer; and if it catches you on the nose it will turn it up farther—"

"Yah!"

Monty Lowther had glanced up at the window towards which Baggy had directed the attention of the Shell fellows. "So that's the jolly old nephew!" said Monty. "Better looking than his jolly old uncle, what?"

At that the other Shell fellows glanced up. Manners and Tom Merry nodded carelessly to Lowther's remark; there was no doubt that "Mr. Carstairs" was better looking than the crusty master of the Shell.

But Talbot gave a faint exclamation, or rather a cry. He stood as if rooted to the ground, staring hard at the face at the window.

His eyes seemed to be starting from his head, and every vestige of colour had deserted his face.

"Good heavens!" he breathed.

Tom stared at him.

"Talbot!" he gasped. "What—"

"Talbot, old man!" exclaimed Lowther in consternation. Talbot did not move. His eyes seemed glued on the face at the window; the face of the man who was glancing carelessly over the crowd of schoolboys below.

Tom caught him by the arm.

"Talbot! Gone potty?" he exclaimed. "What on earth's the matter?"

Talbot withdrew his gaze at last from the face at the window. He looked at Tom Merry, his face white, his eyes strangely, almost wildly, startled.

"I say, what's up?" exclaimed Baggy Trimble, bursting with curiosity. "I say, do you know that chap Carstairs, Talbot, or what?"

Talbot laughed, a harsh, jarring laugh. It startled his chums.

"Let's get out of this," he muttered. "Don't let him see me."

"Why not?"

Talbot of the Shell did not answer.

He hurried away, and the Terrible Three followed him in blank amazement, almost wondering whether Talbot was wandering in his mind. Baggy Trimble stared after them in bewilderment.

Talbot stopped in a quiet corner hidden by the elms. His face was still pale, but his manner was calm now. Startling as was the shock he had received, it did not take the Toff long to pull himself together.

"Now—" began Tom.

"You saw that man?" Talbot's voice was strained. "Is it certain that he is called Carstairs, and that he came here as Mr. Linton's nephew?"

"Eh? I suppose so," said Tom blankly. "He's a stranger hero, anyhow, and Linton's nephew, Carstairs, is the only stranger in the place. Trimble says that that is his room. But what—"

"That man's name is not Carstairs," said Talbot quietly. "Talbot, old man!"

"He is not—and cannot be—Mr. Linton's nephew."

"Draw it mild, old bean."

Talbot breathed hard.

"You know the man?" asked Manners in blank amazement.

"Yes."

"Well, who—what—"

"I know him," said Talbot, with a tremble in his voice, "years ago—before I came to St. Jim's. When I was called the Toff—when I was—"

"But—but what?" gasped Lowther. "How can you have known Linton's nephew?"

"He is not Linton's nephew."

"But—but he must be—Linton thinks he is, anyhow."

"I cannot understand that. I know that he is not our Form master's nephew, and cannot be. I tell you," said Talbot in a hard voice, "I tell you I know every line of his rascally face—he is clean-shaven now, but I know him as well as if he wore his moustache—I tell you, I know him."

"Then who the merry thump is he?" exclaimed Tom Merry in amazement.

"The man I spoke of to you yesterday."

"What?"

"The man who tried to rob D'Arcy of his bike in Abbottsford Wood."

"Talbot!"

"The man who was almost caught on the football ground yesterday afternoon."

"Are you mad?"

"The man who is wanted by the police for wounding a constable and a good many other crimes!" Talbot's voice was tense. "Tom, I know his face as well as I know yours, or my own. That man is Rogue Rawdon!"

"The Terrible Three stood silent, agast."

"It is Rogue Rawdon, the thief, crackman, and motor bandit; the villain I knew and detested and despised years ago at the rookery in Angel Alley."

"You're mad, Talbot," said Tom at last. "It's impossible! How could Rogue Rawdon come here calling himself Mr. Linton's nephew?"

"I don't know! I don't care! I know who he is."

"It's impossible. You've got that man Rawdon on your nerves!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake, Talbot—"

"It's a resemblance!" muttered Manners.

"One of those resemblances you hear of sometimes, you know," said Monty Lowther. "For goodness' sake, Talbot, don't go and make an utter ass of yourself. You see, it's impossible."

"It seems impossible!" said Talbot more quietly. "But it is not impossible, for it has happened. That man is Rogue Rawdon! I knew him yesterday, when his face was unshaven, unkempt. I know him now, as I knew him years ago—I should know him among a thousand."

"Think, old man!" gasped Tom. "If he's the man you imagine, where's Linton's nephew? You can't fancy that he let that rogue come here in his place?"

Talbot compressed his lips.

"Where's Linton's nephew?" he answered. "That is a question that must be put to Rogue Rawdon. Only he knows where Linton's nephew is, as he has come here in the man's name. I only hope that Linton's nephew is not lying dead in some lonely spot, shot by that ruthless rascal."

"Good heavens!" breathed Tom.

"How he has worked this, I cannot even guess," said Talbot. "But he was always cunning and resourceful; and chance must have favoured him—and luck! But there is no doubt about it, Tom, and I must act at once."

"For goodness' sake—" muttered Tom. He simply could not believe that it was possible, and he dreaded Talbot making a terrible mistake.

"There goes the bell!" said Monty Lowther uneasily. "Leave it till after third school, anyhow, Talbot. The man will keep, whoever he is."

Talbot did not reply. The Shell fellows walked back towards the House. The face had disappeared from Mr. Carstairs' window now.

With troubled looks, Tom and his friends headed for the Form-room, joining the rest of the Shell going in for third school. Quietly, Talbot dropped behind them, and when the Shell gathered in class, he was missing.

Tom gave an anxious glance round the Form-room for him, but Talbot was not to be seen with the rest of the Shell.

Mr. Linton noted his absence at once. But it was so unusual for Talbot to be late for class, that the master of the Shell made no comment on it, and a third lesson commenced without him, the Form master supposing that Talbot would come in in a few minutes.

But Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at one another in dismay. What was Talbot doing?

CHAPTER 13.

Face to Face!

"INSPECTOR SKEAT!"

"Yes,"

"Talbot speaking, from St. Jim's School."

"Talbot!" repeated the deep voice of the inspector, seated at the telephone in the police station at Wayland.

"Yes. You remember me?" added Talbot, with a faint note of bitterness in his voice.

The Wayland inspector coughed. There was no doubt that he remembered Talbot—the St. Jim's junior who had so strange a history.

Talbot was in Mr. Linton's study in the School House. While Mr. Linton was in the Form-room with the Shell, in third school, Talbot was using his telephone, for a

purpose that would have astounded Mr. Linton had he been aware of it.

"I remember you, sir," answered Mr. Skeat very civilly. "I have something to tell you, Mr. Skeat," went on Talbot quietly. "I have seen a man I knew years ago—at a time when—when you remember? You knew it all the time."

"Quite so, Master Talbot."

"The man is called Rogue Rawdon."

Talbot smiled faintly as he heard a startled gasp at the other end of the wire.

"Rawdon!" breathed Mr. Skeat.

"Yes."

"Great Scott! If you are right, my boy, this information is of immense value!" exclaimed the inspector. "Rawdon is known to be somewhere in this neighbourhood. Yesterday he was almost seized at Abbotsford, a few miles from here, and he knocked down Inspector Smart with a pistol butt—on the football ground."

"I was there, and I saw him," said Talbot. "I have seen him since, and can tell you where to lay hands on him."

"Where?" gasped Mr. Skeat.

"Here, at St. Jim's!"

"My word!" breathed the inspector.

"Please listen to me, sir, and remember that I am certain of what I say," said Talbot. "The man has come here calling himself Carstairs—he represents himself as the nephew of Mr. Linton, my Form master. Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia was expected here yesterday. Somehow—I cannot imagine how—this man has come in his place."

"What a—?"

"He must have got rid of Mr. Linton's nephew, somehow, and seized his car—for he came here in a car."

"That was a game we expected him to play. But—"

"If you see him, sir, you will recognise him, if you have an accurate description of Rogue Rawdon."

"I have! But—"

"There is hardly any change in him, except that he has shaved off his moustache. I will swear to his identity."

"There was a pause."

"I know you are a sensible lad, Master Talbot, and not likely to make mistakes," said the inspector at last. "But are you absolutely certain of this? You see the position I should be placed in, if it—"

"You want to get Rogue Rawdon?"

"Yes—yes."

"He must have done something with Mr. Carstairs. If Mr. Linton's nephew is still living, he must be a prisoner somewhere. I fear that he may have been killed. I tell you, Mr. Skeat, that Rawdon is here, calling himself Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia."

"There was another pause."

"I will come over," said the inspector, at last. "I will bring half a dozen men—Rogue Rawdon is not easy to handle; if it is he, But—"

"It is the man," said Talbot quietly. "He does not suspect that he is known here—he knows nothing of me or my presence in the school. How long he intends to keep up this game I cannot guess; but you had better lose no time, sir. If he should see me, he would know me; and he would know then that I knew him and—"

"I will come as soon as I get off the telephone, in a fast car," said Mr. Skeat. "I will ask the Head's permission to search the vicinity of the school for Rawdon—and contrive to see this nephew of Mr. Linton's—and if he is the man—"

"That will do," said Talbot. "As soon as you see him, you will know that he is the man you want."

"Leave it at that, then!" said Mr. Skeat; and he rang off. Evidently the Wayland inspector was still dubious. He was keen to get hold of Rogue Rawdon; too keen to miss a chance. But Talbot's story was so astonishing that he prudently resolved to proceed with caution.

Talbot put up the receiver in Mr. Linton's study. His heart was beating, as he turned from the telephone.

He was ten minutes late for class now; but that was a matter of little moment in the circumstances. In half an hour, or less, Inspector Skeat would arrive, and the handcuffs would be clapped on the wrists of Rogue Rawdon, and the desperate motor bandit would be a prisoner.

Talbot turned from the telephone—and a startled cry left his lips. Even as he turned, the door of the study opened.

In the doorway stood the man who was believed, by all the House, to be Mr. Linton's nephew from Australia.

Talbot backed away a pace, his heart thumping.

Rogue Rawdon, for the moment, did not observe him. He had come down from his room, and dropped into his "uncle's" study, a natural proceeding on the part of Mr.

Linton's "nephew." He was thinking of nothing in particular at that moment, except sitting in Mr. Linton's armchair before Mr. Linton's fire, and looking at the morning paper over a cigar. He was rather interested to see the latest reports of his own escape.

He stepped into the study, closed the door behind him, and then became aware of the presence of a schoolboy in the room.

He glanced at the handsome Shell fellow.

"Hallo!" he said genially.

Talbot drew a deep breath. His back was to the window, and he hoped that the Rogue might not recognise him.

"Aren't you boys supposed to be in class now?" drawled Rawdon lazily.

"Yes," said Talbot. "I'm late!"

He made a step towards the door.

But Rogue Rawdon's eyes were fixed on him now, with a startled look in them. He backed to the door, and put his shoulders against it, his eyes still fixed on Talbot of the Shell—sharply, scrutinisingly, suspiciously. Recognition was dawning in his face.

"You!" he said softly.

Talbot's heart almost missed a beat.

"The Toff!" said Rawdon, in the same soft voice.

Talbot stood silent, tense.

"The Toff!" said Rawdon again. "By gad! You here! I remember now—I heard something—you chucked the old gang, and went to some school or other. By gad! This is the school!"

Talbot did not speak.

The Rogue knew him, and knew, too, that at a glance Talbot would know him also. Rogue Rawdon did not need telling that the recognition was mutual; he could not keep up his imposture with the Toff. And Talbot knew what was coming—what must come. He backed a little farther away, towards the window, where a jar of flowers stood on a low table. His hand, groping behind him, fastened on the edge of the jar. It was the only weapon that was within his reach.

A terrible expression was gathering on the face of the Rogue. His hand slid into his pocket—Talbot knew for what.

"You here!" Rawdon's voice was like the hiss of a serpent. "You! Then my game here is queered. You know me!"

"I know you," answered Talbot quietly.

The Rogue's eyes burned at him. In every detail his cunning and daring scheme had been a success; in every detail but one! In the most cunning scheme of the most cunning rogue there was always a flaw. But how could he have foreseen, how could he have guessed, that the Toff was an inmate of the school where he had planned to carry out his daring imposture? He could not have foreseen—he could not have guessed! But that one mischance had wrecked the whole scheme—unless—

A revolver glimmered in his hand.

"It is lucky that I came on you here—alone!" His voice was hardly more than a whisper. "I will not ask you if you will keep my secret—I know you will not. But—dead men tell no tales, Toff! This revolver is going off by accident. I left it here on my uncle's table. A foolish schoolboy meddled with it, with fatal results—"

"Useless," said Talbot quietly, though his lips were white. "I saw your face at the window, Rogue Rawdon, and I have already telephoned to Inspector Skeat at Wayland. That is why I was here when you came. He knows that Rogue Rawdon is playing the part of Mr. Linton's nephew at St. Jim's. If that revolver goes off—by accident—it will not be a shooting fatality—you will be wanted for—murder!"

The Rogue's face whitened.

"You have telephoned—"

"Yes."

"To the police?"

"I had just finished when you came in."

"Is that the truth, or a lie to save your life?" hissed the Rogue. His eyes burned at Talbot over the revolver.

Talbot shrugged his shoulders.

"You remember the Toff," he said. "You remember whether he was a liar or not."

"Yes," said Rawdon slowly. "Yes. Then they are coming for me?"

"They are coming."

There was murder in Rogue Rawdon's eyes, as he glared at Talbot over the revolver. And Talbot knew that, if Carstairs had been killed, his own life was not worth a pin's fee. If the Rogue's neck was already forfeited to the rope, he would not leave alive the schoolboy who had defied him. And so, when Rawdon lowered the revolver, Talbot knew that Mr. Linton's nephew was still living.

"It's not worth my neck," said Rawdon, in a choking voice. "Thank your lucky star for that, Toff! But you will be silent—very silent—while I get to the car and clear? The game's not up yet."

(Continued at foot of next page.)

He clutched the revolver, and strode towards the schoolboy. A moment more and the heavy butt would have crashed on Talbot's head, stretching him senseless on the study floor.

But in that moment Talbot's hand came from behind him with the heavy jar in it. With the same movement of his hand he sent the jar whizzing at the evil face that was approaching him.

Crash!
Rogue Rawdon staggered back, with a curious yell, as the jar crashed in his face. As he staggered, Talbot sprang forward, tore the revolver from his hand, and sent it crashing through the window. It fell into the quad, with a shower of broken glass.

The next instant Talbot was in the grasp of the desperado, and they reeled and staggered to and fro in the study, fighting like tigers.

CHAPTER 14.

The Capture of Rogue Rawdon!

"**B**AI JOVE!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the Fourth Form room, uttered an ejaculation, as the crash of a breaking window rang through the House.

The crash was followed by sounds of a struggle, and a voice that rang far and wide—the voice of Talbot of the Shell.

"Help, help!"
Tom Merry leapt to his feet in the Shell Form room. "That's Talbot!" he panted.
Manners and Lowther jumped up. Mr. Linton, in amazement, rushed to the Form-room door, and threw it open.

"What—what—" he ejaculated.
Tom Merry passed him, tearing into the passage.
"Merry!" exclaimed the master of the Shell.
Tom did not heed him. From a distance came the panting voice of a fellow who was fighting for his life:
"Help! Oh, help!"

The cry came from Masters' studies. Tom Merry tore away breathlessly. At his heels Manners and Lowther tore along. For they knew now—they knew that what Talbot had told them was true, and that at that very moment he was struggling in the hands of the man he had denounced. They knew it—and they tore to the rescue.

"Help!" came the cry once more in breathless, panning tones. There was a crash as some article of furniture was hurled over in the struggle.

Then there was a low, choking moaning. It came from Mr. Linton's study, and Tom Merry, his eyes blazing, hurled open the door.

Talbot, strong and sturdy as he was, was no match for the muscular Rogue. He had put up a gallant fight; but he was on his back on the floor now, and the ruffian was kneeling on his chest, with both hands grasping the schoolboy's throat.

Talbot could cry out no more. He was choking in that savage grip, his eyes almost starting from his head. But he was still resisting gamely as his comrades burst into the study.

Tom Merry hurled himself on the Rogue, grasping him, and dragging him away from Talbot of the Shell.

They rolled on the floor together.

"Help!" roared Tom.

Manners and Lowther leaped on the rascal. Talbot raised himself to his knees, panting, choking, gasping. For the moment he was out of the fight. But the Terrible Three were giving a good account of themselves.

Had the revolver been still in Rogue Rawdon's hand, there would have been a fearful deed in the study. But the revolver lay in the quad outside, and the desperate Rogue had only his hands. And the Terrible Three were good men with their hands, and they were three to one.

In spite of his frantic struggling, the Rogue was borne to the floor, the Shell fellows sprawling over him.

"Hold him!" gasped Tom.

"We've got him!" spluttered Manners.

"Oh, my hat! Help!" yelled Monty Lowther.

Talbot staggered up. Exhausted as he was, he lent what aid he could to his comrades. And there was plenty of help coming now. The upper rang through the House. Masters and boys were turning out of every Form-room. Masters' passage swarmed; the doorway was crammed; Blake and D'Arcy dashed in and lent their aid; Levison of the Fourth was next; and then the study was swarming with excited fellows.

Rogue Rawdon, torn, dishevelled, his face inflamed with rage and hate, was hardly recognisable as the man who had passed as Mr. Linton's nephew. He was fighting like a

wild-beast, and the whole crowd lent their help in securing him. Desperate as the rascal was, the odds were too heavy for him.

He lay panting and exhausted at last, with many hands grasping him, his eyes burning up at his captors like a tiger's.

"We've got the brute!" panted Lowther.
"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Who is he? I seem to have seen him befoah somewiah!"

"Boys!" Mr. Linton, breathless, agitated, forced his way through the crowd in the study. "Boys! What—what does—Bless my soul! Is that my nephew? What does this mean? Release my nephew immediately!"

"Linton's nephew!" stammered Blake. "What the thump do—"

"Gwreat Scott!"
"He is not your nephew, sir!" Talbot's voice was calm. "He is Rogue Rawdon, the motor bandit, and the police are coming here for him. He got rid of your nephew, sir, and stole his car—"

"What?" gasped Mr. Linton. "What? Impossible!"

"It is true, sir!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Talbot, old fellow—" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"It is Rogue Rawdon, sir!" said Talbot. "I know him as well as he knows me. The police will be here soon, and they will know him, too!"

Mr. Linton blinked at him, and blinked at the desperate man gasping in the grip of the juniors.

"Talbot, it is impossible! If this man is not my nephew, where is my nephew?"

"You must ask him, sir! But I am convinced that your nephew is still alive. The villain has hidden him away somewhere!"

Blake uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! Is that what he was up to on the moor, when we came on him last night?"

"It is—it is impossible!" gasped Mr. Linton. "I—I could not be so deceived. James— I—I mean—wherever you are—is this the truth?"

There was the harking of a car at the gates of St. Jim's.

"The police are coming, sir," said Talbot quietly. "They will tell you who this man is."

Rogue Rawdon burst into a harsh, bitter laugh.

"You've got me!" he said. "The police would never have got me. I owe it to you, Toff! I owe it all to you!" His eyes glinted at Talbot of the Shell. "You've got me for the cops, Toff, and I'll remember it! I'm going to the stone jug now; but when I come out—when I come out—"

Talbot shrugged his shoulders.

"Bai Jove! Heah comes Mr. Skeat!"

The portly inspector from Wayland came pushing through the crowd.

"Mr. Skeat," gasped the master of the Shell, "this—this man—"

"Rogue Rawdon!"

The inspector's eyes danced as they fell on the prisoner.

A moment more, and the handcuffs clicked on Rogue Rawdon's wrists.

St. Jim's was left in a buzz of wild excitement, as the car sped away with Inspector Skeat and his men and the captured motor bandit. It was the biggest sensation that had ever happened at the old school.

And an hour later, James Carstairs, rescued from the chalk pit on Wayland Moor, arrived. Now that the Rogue was a prisoner, for his own sake, he told where the Australian had been concealed. Mr. Linton's nephew, pale and worn from his terrible experience, arrived at the school in the inspector's car, and scores of eyes watched him with the keenest interest as he was helped into the House.

Talbot of the Shell was the hero of the hour. Mr. Linton thanked him, crustily but cordially, and the young man from Australia thanked him still more warmly. The Head sent for him, and, having heard the whole story, thanked him, too. Rogue Rawdon, safe behind prison walls, nursed a bitter grudge; but to him the Toff gave no thought. The Rogue had crossed his path, bringing back black and bitter memories. But the Rogue was gone again to his deserts, and was dismissed from mind, and Talbot of the Shell was once more his happy and cheery self.

THE END.

(Gee, chums, that was a thrilling yarn, wasn't it? Next week you'll split your sides reading "Figgins in a Tink!" It's a wow!)

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Another Splendid Flying and Footer Yarn!

YOUNG THUNDERBOLT!

And his Team of Butterflies



By

ARTHUR S. HARDY.

CHAPTER 1.

Escape!

FOR the fourth time Mr. Harland Jackson listened to the story his son Clifford told, and once more he paced the room. Hank Parsons, the pilot-instructor attached to the Butterfly Airplane Works, tossed the butt of a cigarette aside and lit up another; he had his own views as to why Cliff had been carried away in his own airplane and left in it on a deserted moor.

"And you say you could never identify the men who trussed you up like a Christmas turkey and flew away with you, my boy?" said Cliff's father.

Young Thunderbolt, to give Cliff Jackson his other name, shook his head. The outrage referred to had taken place last week-end.

"I couldn't do it, guv'nor," he answered. "You see, when

I heard the engine of my air-bus running and ran out on to the aerodrome to see, the men were hiding behind it. When I darted round its nose and attacked them they were just black shadows, and they had their faces masked. One got at me from behind, and another from in front, and I was knocked silly and trussed up before I could say knife.

All I know after that was being in a moving plane, and coming down somewhere. My hands and legs were tied up, and a gag was pulled over my mouth, and I was blindfolded. I never had such a rotten time in my life. I thought I should have died. And when at last a ranger came along and moved the pile of bracken and bushes which had been piled up all round the plane, I was just about all in. He set me free, and as soon as I felt better I started the engine and flew the old bus to the Boro' Football Ground, where Hank dropped out of the team just to give me a chance."

"And you scored two goals and squared the match, although the Boro' had a clear two goals lead, 'Thunderbolt,'" said Hank, with a grin. "We could never have done that without you."

Mr. Jackson looked very disappointed.

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"Then what it amounts to is this," he said, "that you have nothing to say which will help the police to try to get the men who burnt open my safe and stole the plans and deeds that were stored in it?"

The boy's eyes lit up.

"Guv'nor," he answered, "I'd rather keep the police out of this. For my own part, I don't quite trust our night watchman, Roberts, at the works. I reckon he must have been in it. I would have Garside arrested to-morrow, only we haven't any evidence to bring against him. I'd stake my life that the Clipper people are behind all the attempts which have been made of late to damage the reputation of the Butterfly airplanes; but it is a matter of suspicion without proof. Let the police carry on their investigations, sir; but at the same time let us do all we can to protect the Butterfly planes."

Harland Jackson frowned.

CLIF SCORES AGAIN!

Sensational Air battle above Aero-plane Works at dead of night! Invading bomber shot down in flames!

"Then you believe that some more attempts will be made to damage the works, Cliff?" he said.

Young Thunderbolt turned to Hank Parsons with a grin.

"Ask Hank what he thinks," he said.

"I'm with Young Thunderbolt, sir," put in Hank. "I'd keep the police out of this for the present. Why not start

some inquiries at the works on your own? If the scoundrels who are working against you and the Butterfly planes, Mr. Jackson, to say nothing about the Butterflies' team, once got the wind up, they might show their hands."

"Crook Garside doesn't seem to mind much what we do," said Mr. Jackson. "Do you think he was one of the men who burnt open my safe and attacked my boy, Parsons?"

"I'd stake my life on it. Crook Garside is a born criminal. He's as bad as Snarler, the old trainer of the City football team, who's in goal. I wouldn't trust your watchman, either. Efficient, but a creepy type of man. He and Crook have been spending a lot of money lately. Crook pretends to have won his betting. Why shouldn't Clippers have paid him money to steal those plans of your new Helicopter plane?"

"The funny thing is that they didn't steal the plans of the new plane, Hank. My boy saw to that by removing

them from the safe and putting some duds in their place. The real plans are hidden where nobody will ever find them, and I reckon I shall have the new air-bus ready for you to try out by next summer, Hank."

The air pilot laughed.

"There's nothing I like better than trying out a new bus, sir," he rejoined. "But I heard some of the men at the works saying only this morning that the plans are hidden in the offices at the works."

Harland Jackson beamed.

"I know. That's what my boy wants them to believe; he thinks that if it's Clippers we are up against they will be making another attempt to damage the works—soon."

"And he's right, sir," said Hank emphatically.

"Especially," said Young Thunderbolt, "as Snarler, the old City trainer, has escaped from gaol."

"What?" The exclamation came from both men.

"I saw that a prisoner had escaped from the county gaol," Cliff explained, "and I bought an evening paper; then I rang up the prison before I came home, and they told me it was Snarler. Snarler's mad, guv'nor. He tried to ruin the City team before you took it over and put Hank to train us in Snarler's place. We are almost sure that one or other of those rascals blew up a Butterfly Minor airplane, and I caught Snarler red-handed at the air docks down on the river, attempting to set fire to the Mayfly waterplanes. What's the betting he doesn't try something on again?"

"Where did you first see the news of Snarler's escape, my boy?"

Cliff passed a copy of the evening paper to his father. There was a marked column on its front page.

"Daring Escape From the County Gaol!" said the big type heading, and below smaller type told the story of a daring escape of a prisoner who had run to the wall whilst exercising in the prison yard, scaled a ladder, risked impaling himself by scrambling over the spikes, and then dropped fifteen feet down into the street. An alarm had been raised immediately, but nobody had seen the man climb the wall. The man was Snarler.

CHAPTER 2.

Danger in the Air!

CLIFF JACKSON'S father was a long-suffering man. Often he had wanted to sack Crook Garside, Snarler's cousin, but he always had hesitated for fear of causing trouble among the other hands. But in the morning of the day after Snarler's escape from the county prison, Mr. Harland Jackson sent for Garside.

Snarler's cousin swaggered into the luxurious office at the Butterfly Works, and kept his cap on his head and his hands in his pockets as he leered mockingly at Cliff and his father.

"I understand you wanted to see me?" he said.

Cliff rose, went up to him, and threw his cap across the floor.

"The chief did, Garside," said he. "But not with your cap on."

Garside bit his under lip and glared at the boy.

"You'll get what's coming to you soon!" he snarled.

"And you ought to get what's coming to you now," said Mr. Jackson. "Garside, we have every reason to believe that you were one of the two men who attacked my son last Thursday night and robbed my safe, but I don't want to sack you, since you would be almost certain to stir up a lot of trouble among the men. I intend, therefore, to leave it to your own common sense as to whether you leave the works voluntarily and without any fuss, or stay on here until the police come to arrest you."

"Bah! Arrest me? Try it, and see where you get off."

In spite of Garside's bluster his face had blanched and his eyes were shifting uneasily towards the door. He was guilty right enough, Cliff knew.

"I intend to try it," Cliff's father answered quietly. "I shall arrive at the works at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, bringing a car-load of police with me, and if you are still here I'll give you in charge."

Garside forced a grin, but his voice shook when he spoke. "You must be mad," he cried. "It's known that two or three men were in that safe. If you say I was one of 'em, who do you suppose were the others?"

"The night watchman was one of them," said Mr. Harland Jackson. "I sacked him this morning; he's gone, and you can take it from me that he will be only too glad to sell you—at a price."

Garside pivoted nervously on his heels—perhaps to hide his tell-tale face.

"Rot!" he cried. "I'm going back to work. Bring your police in the mornin' and I'll show you where you get off."

But all the same, and in spite of his bluff, Garside was missing from No. 3 Factory when Cliff and his father arrived in the morning with a police car following closely on the wheels of their own.

"I dinna ken what's become of him, Mr. Jackson," said Sandy McFarlane when the chief went round making inquiries. "All I do ken is that he didna turn up this morning, and he's sent me excuse."

"Shall we drive along to his lodgings and arrest him there, sir?" asked the inspector who was in charge of the police car.

"No! Forget it, inspector," said Cliff's father. "We might have a hard case to prove and we don't want the scoundrel to slip through our fingers; we'll wait until he shows his hand."

Sandy McFarlane gave a snort of disgust. The dour but good-natured Scot, who was in charge of the show-rooms at the Butterfly Works, shook his head.

"I canna see where all this is going to lead to, Mr. Jackson," he said. "If I had tae deal with a rascal like Crook Garside, I'd take him along to me office and put him thrif' the third degree until he declared hisself; and then I'd send him tae gaol."

"That is to say, providing you got the necessary proof of his guilt, Mac," smiled Mr. Jackson. "Garside is going to furnish us with such proofs—soon."

"Hoots, mon, but you're optimistic," said Sandy Mac.

Nothing unusual happened at the Butterfly Works that day, and Cliff put in whole-time in the workshops, only stopping to eat a sandwich. He was keen to learn a fitter's job.

Just before sundown he started the engine of his Butterfly Minor, which was waiting for him out on the airplane testing ground, and flew home. There he parked his air-

(Continued on next page.)



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bus in its shed and, mounting a motor-bike, streaked back into the town.

He stopped at the police station, but he might as well have saved himself the journey; no fresh news concerning Snarler had come to hand. The escaped prisoner was still at large; nor had the police anything encouraging to say about Crook Garside. When they called, on their own initiative, at his lodgings in the afternoon, they had found Garside in bed. He had said some hard things about them, and had threatened to sue Harland Jackson for heavy damages.

"He's dubbed me a thief," Garside had said, the police reported, "and I'll wring a small fortune out of him; I'm not gonna do any more work."

Bluff, thought Cliff, as he rode his motor-bike warily home. Young Thunderbolt kept his eyes open these days, for he had many enemies since he had started to run his Butterfly Works' team in the City's colours. But the men he passed were business men going home, and the shadows which hung in dark patches beneath the trees were only shadows.

Next day, Cliff organised a night guard whose duty it was to guard the works regularly throughout the night. Cliff enrolled his entire team of Butterflies for this special duty, the boys to watch in pairs, and perform four-hour stretches.

Bunny Coote, the fourteen-stone goalie, was in it; Riffles Soames and Irish Kelly, the backs; Stoney Mason, Dribbler Hanson, Cliff's special chum, and Tom Selwyn, the halves; Skinner Shaw, Dapper Dawes, Cliff himself, Bobby Roberts, and Shrimp Martin, forwards. All volunteered for duty.

Whenever Cliff took his turn Hank watched with him—

for Hank believed that Cliff was in real danger. "Just you think it over, Thunderbolt," said Hank. "It was you who got your dad to put the Butterfly Works' team in the City colours; you got rid of Snarler; you are responsible for all the booming the Butterfly Aeroplane has got out of your flying the team all over England; you saved the plans by taking 'em out of the guv'nor's safe just before the thieves burnt it open; and as Young Thunderbolt you've become the star of the centre-forward and goal-scoring in England; and, best thing of all, it was you who caught Snarler red-handed when he tried to burn the Mayfly planes, and got him put in goal."

"Snarler's at large, and his cousin, Crook Garside, has been sacked from the works. Who are they going to get

if they don't get you; and what's the odds they don't make another attempt to burn out the Butterfly Works?"

"If they do try it," answered Cliff, "they'll find us prepared, Hank."

They were standing in the shadow of the great range of factory buildings which, set side to side, covered nearly three-quarters of a mile of ground.

Out on the testing ground Cliff's aeroplane lay gracefully at rest with the beams of two strong searchlights set on her. Last week, when Cliff had rushed out and found two men tampering with his aeroplane, there had been no searchlight, and the men had got him and stolen his plane. He was not taking that risk a second time.

Overhead a bright moon hung high in a cloudless, star-spangled sky. There was a white frost.

"'Air-raids did with the War, Hank—so I've heard," said Cliff.

"Cepting when our flyers are bombing the Afridis," grinned Hank. "But mind you, I shouldn't mind if a raider did come, for I'd give it him hot and strong."

Cliff knew Hank had a reason for speaking like that. Hank was no idle talker.

"What's the big idea, Hank?" he asked.

Hank turned on his heel and started across the testing ground in the glare of the searchlights, motioning to Cliff to follow.

He stopped at one of the new hangars which had been erected in the place of the ones which had been burned down some weeks ago.

Hank, who had taught all the Butterflies' team to fly, and was the star pilot up at the works, as well as the trainer of the football team, pulled out a key and unlocked the door.

Switching on the powerful lights inside, he passed into the hangar, and Cliff, who followed close, was astonished to see a man tied up to the iron struts against the party wall. The man was roped to the struts and bound by the ankles, a handkerchief served as a gag over which two burning eyes glared feverishly.

"Come out, my little bucko," said Hank as he pulled off the gag and released the man.

"Red!" gasped Cliff, as he recognised the night watchman. "What does it mean, Hank?"

(Continued on next page.)

Ask Me Another The Oracle Knows the Answer.



If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! There must be something the Oracle doesn't know! Can't YOU find it?

WHEN I dropped into the sanctum this morning, chums, I found the Editor struggling to stand up in a pair of roller skates. "You're just in time," he shouted, when he saw me; and he proved to be right, for I was able to catch him in my arms as he fell. Unfortunately for me, he clutched at my whiskers for support, and I lost several very fine specimens from my collection of face fungus. After I had unstrapped the skates from the poor old Ed's feet and helped him to a chair, he asked me where he could learn skating, so I told him he had better come to my night school.

"D'you mean to tell me you belong to a night school?" he asked. "Yes, sir," I told him; "I take gym." "Jim?" He's your elder brother, I suppose?" chortled the Ed. I then explained.

I couldn't knock the skin off a rice-pudding! But, talking of gymnastics, there's a letter here somewhere about gymkhana." The Ed. looked hurriedly through the immense pile of letters on his desk, sent in to me from enthusiastic "Gonies" from all over the world, and found the one he wanted.

"This is from Martin Merriman, of Leeds," said the Ed. "He wants to know what a gymkhana is, and how it gets its name? Know anything about it, my lad?"

"A display of sporting events is called a gymkhana," I told the Editor. "The word originally was used for sports held at the military stations in India, and, in fact, gymkhana comes from a Hindustani expression."

"And what might that be?" the Editor asked. I told him. "The word gend-khana is Hindustani, sir, and

means racquet court. The English soldiers altered the first part of the word, and made gymkhana of it. The idea of these sports was to relieve the monotony of the life out there; nowadays gymkhanas are held in England, and include races of all kinds, as well as tent-pegging, lemon-slicing, obstacle racing, and so on."

"There's absolutely no fogging you!" groaned the Ed. "What's a tornado?"

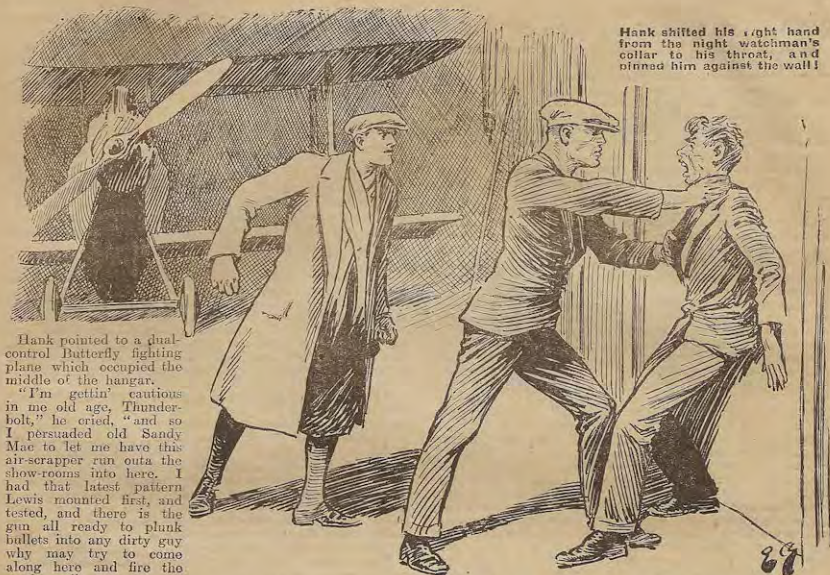
"A very violent wind, sir, like a whirlwind. It can best be described as a funnel-shaped cloud, which gets narrower as it comes nearer to the earth. A tornado not only whirls round and round, but it also moves across the country at a rate of thirty or forty miles an hour. The great places for tornadoes are the Mississippi Valley and the Southern American States, where they do a great deal of damage, believe me."

"The next question is about barnacles? What are barnacles?"

"Funny things, sir, that fasten themselves on to the bottoms of ships and on to rocks at the seaside. They may be said to hold on by their heads while they feed themselves with their feet. Very odd, believe me."

"I've got to give it up," said the Ed. "You can't be caught napping."

"No, sir," I chortled. "Though readers' queries on my rain, they cannot fog my mighty brain! And now, Ed., old sport, what about another go on the old skates?" With that I took the Editor round the room several times, and by the time I had finished with him he had cut the figure 8 and his face and hands in five places.



Hank pointed to a dual-control Butterfly fighting plane which occupied the middle of the hangar.

"I'm gettin' cautious in me old age, Thunderbolt," he cried, "and so I persuaded old Sandy Mac to let me have this air-scrapper run outa the show-rooms into here. I had that latest pattern Lewis mounted first, and tested, and there is the gun all ready to plunk bullets into any dirty guy why may try to come along here and fire the works."

"Fire the works!" Cliff looked dazed.

Just then Roberts tried to run, but he was tripped in a flash by Hank, who jerked him on to his feet by his coat collar and shook him violently.

"That's what I said, kid," answered Hank. "Now steady, Guy Fawkes, or I'll dot you one on the boko. Well, having got the fighting bus here, I pretended to lock the doors, but I left 'em open and I watched."

"Cliff, there must be any number of spies around the Butterfly Works, for no sooner had the boys gone home than a man crept along here. I was watching, see. He tried the doors, found them open, and ran away. Less than an hour later this guy comes along. Somebody brought him to the corner in a car, and I saw him scale the wall with a rope ladder down at the bend and drop over this side."

"He came here and went into the hangar. He shut the doors and put the lights on, but he didn't know that I went in in the dark with him, and slipped round behind the scrapper plane. I was up in the rear cockpit before he could look round. He climbs up into the bus, and he's just nailing about laying a length of fuse around the carburettor when I nails him from the back. Gives him one for luck, and tosses him out on to the ground. I had him trussed up nicely before his brain cleared."

As he stopped speaking for a moment Hank shifted his right hand from the night watchman's collar to his throat and pinned him against the corrugated-iron wall.

"Now, cough it out!" he cried savagely. "Who paid you to do it?"

"Crook Garside!" howled the terrified man. "But I'm to have my liberty, mind, if I own up."

"Your liberty," howled Hank. "Why, a poisonous snake like you oughta be drowned! Did you help Crook Garside to burn the gov'nor's safe last week, and to get hold of Cliff's plane, and fly away with him?"

"No! Ouf! Ow! Yes! You're choking me!" whined the prisoner.

"Serve you right if I put a bullet through you! Answer me a question? Does Crook Garside know where Snarler's hidin'?"

The night watchman's cunning eyes glowed.

"I know where he is, but I won't say another word unless you promise I'll get off. I'll turn King's evidence, if you like, but I want my freedom."

Hank looked round at Cliff in disgust.

"That's the sorta cheap crook he is!" he cried. "It makes me shiver to touch him."

Hank shifted his right hand from the night watchman's collar to his throat, and pinned him against the wall!

His fingers tightened on the watchman's throat. "You had a grand job here, good wages, a bonus at Christmas, and kind treatment, and yet you sold the gov'nor," he cried. "You—worm!"

His fingers were like steel. The man writhed under Hank's clutch.

"Let me go, and let me off, and I'll tell you something you don't know, and if you won't let me speak—the Butterfly Works are doomed!"

With a gasp of surprise Hank released his victim.

"What's that!" he cried.

The man reeled back, feeling at his throat.

"Crook Garside is with Snarler," he panted. "They've both been over to Clipper's this week. Jefferson Marlowe, who designed the Clipper plane, is plumb crazy mad; that's why he's been paying men to try to burn out the Butterfly Works. Snarler's mad, too, and Crook Garside doesn't care what happens as long as he blows up the Butterfly Works. They're coming over here tonight in a Clipper bombing plane. Marlowe and Snarler are gonna bomb the works. I saw Garside this morning—over there, and he said he meant to drop off the big bomber as she went flying back, as soon as he was over safe country. Meant landing by parachute, and gettin' away to the coast. Snarler and Marlowe don't know it, but they'll be spotted for a cert while flying. I was paid two hundred and fifty pounds to make a start by firing the hangars a second time."

"You nice guy," grunted Hank. "When's that bomber comin'?"

While Hank and the watchman had been talking, and himself listening, Cliff had heard a strange throbbing sound high up in the air. He raced to the doors of the hangar now, and, looking upward, saw a black shadow floating serenely across the face of the moon.

"She's here—now—Hank!" he cried.

With a leap Hank gained the front of the fighting plane, and with a vigorous swinging of her propeller, started her engine throbbing.

"Up into the back with me, Thunderbolt," he cried. "It's our only chance—we've gotta go up and fight her—and here you—" he glared down as he began to taxi the fighting plane towards the searchlight-flooded flying ground. "If you've got any of the man or sportsman left in you, nip across to the works and switch off those lights."

CHAPTER 3.

The Butterfly Sweeps the Board!

As the fighting plane roared up to meet the stars, the great black shadow of the big Clipper bomber hung over the sheds like a bird of evil omen. While Hank steered straight at her, Cliff watched. He saw something fall from her, and a few long seconds later a startling crash echoed from below. Cliff looked down and saw the flames shooting up from one of the new hangars—on where the hangar had been, to be more correct, among a few scraps of twisted iron. He heard the jingle of falling glass after the roar, and noticed that scarcely one single pane of glass was left intact in the sides or roofs of the Butterfly factories.

Hank swooped upwards in a steep climb, the Butterfly fighting plane behaving like a clampon. He circled wide of the bomber, climbing, climbing, and as a second terrific explosion and blinding flash down on the ground told that the second bomb had struck at the heart of the Butterfly Works, he roared above the bomber.

For the first time the pilot of the bombing plane, a Clipper beyond the shadow of a doubt, saw the small fighting plane and realised his danger. Having risen high above the bomber, Hank swooped down and rained a hail of bullets, not at her pilot, but into her wings, her tail, and her engine. He dropped the fighter to the bomber's level and flew alongside, riddling the tapering end of her fuselage with a hail of shots as he came after a quick turn.

The black plane swerved, shivered, and turned away from the Butterfly Works and over the town.

Round her, buzzing and humming like an angry hornet, Hank and Cliff roared in the fighting plane, holding their fire now, content that they had driven the raiders away from the Butterfly Works. Ahead, far below them, Cliff could make out the winding river. He saw shafts of light sweep upwards from just beyond the town and focus both the planes; they were lights from the artillery barracks, and in the flood of light Cliff was able to see the men in the big bomber. There were three of them, one whose head was bare and his face uncovered.

There was no mistaking that sour visage and those cunning eyes; the man was Snarler, the escaped prisoner. The man in the pilot's seat wore a crash-helmet and goggles. He was unrecognisable; he must be Jefferson Marlowe, the crazy inventor of the Clipper planes, Cliff supposed. And the third man—he would be Garside, no doubt.

"I'm gonna circle 'em and dog 'em till they come down, Cliff," bawled Hank through his speaking-tube. "They can't escape us this time."

Round and round the big, sombre-looking bomber Hank

circled, now rising high above her, then swooping down in a glorious dive, showing a speed that rattled the bombers. Every time he circled it, and ran in close as if intending to use his gun again, Hank scared the wits out of the pilot. Suddenly the big machine began to spin.

Cliff heard the man in the back of her scream, saw him rise and climb out, saw him give a last look over his parachute equipment before he jumped into space.

The man hurtled down, plumb straight, like a dropping weight, and suddenly Cliff saw the parachute rip open. The man floated like a mushroom down towards the heart of the town.

But for the bomber there was no hope. Flames leapt from her engine! She turned clumsily and went into a deadly nose dive. Passing over factory roofs and missing chimney-stacks by a miracle, she turned at last towards the river, into which she crashed, throwing up a fountain of spray and steam as high as the rooftops.

Hank made a careful and perfect landing on an aerodrome which was strewn with litter from the blowing up of the works. The searchlights and other powerful dazzle-lamps of the drome had not been put out of order, and he and Cliff were able to study the extent of the damage. The new corrugated-iron temporary hangars were in ruins. Many of the factories had been badly damaged, and some of the concrete walls had gaping holes; but on the whole it might have been a lot worse.

"I'm going to phone the gov'nor," Cliff said to Hank, but there was no need for that, for his father's car sped up to the edge of the testing-ground as Cliff started across it.

With a cry of joy, Harland Jackson hugged Cliff in his arms.

"Thank Heaven you're safe, boy!" he cried. "I knew it was Hank and you up there fighting that Clipper bomber. As I was coming through the town a man attached to a parachute came down right bang in the middle of High Street, and it's a miracle he's alive. They've rushed him to hospital and the police are standing by."

"Crook Garside," cried the boy.

"Yes, it was Crook, lad. I heard the Clipper plane had crashed near the river and I drove there. She came down within a hundred yards of the Mayfly Docks, Cliff. They got the two men out while I was there. They were both dead—"

"Snarler—" said Cliff.

"And Jefferson Marlowe," added his father. "I'm sorry about Marlowe. He was not in his right mind. I heard only this morning that he had been called upon to resign from Clippers and there was some talk of putting him under restraint. This means the end of the Clipper competition, I reckon, boy."

It did. The sensation caused by the bombing of the Butterfly Works, and the part the Clipper plane played in it, wiped away the competition hitherto offered by Clippers.

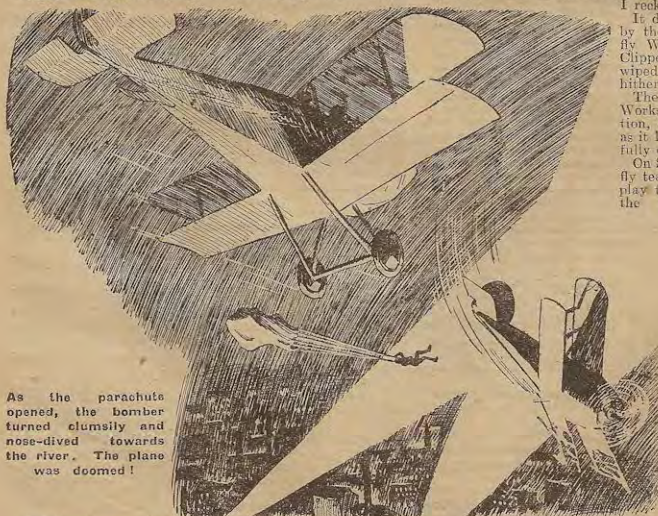
The damage to the Butterfly Works was found, on investigation, to be not one half as bad as it looked, and the whole was fully covered by insurance.

On Saturday when the Butterfly team flew to Birmingham to play the Villa, they were given the biggest reception ever

handed out to a football team—and when Young Thunderbolt dashed between the backs to register the first goal the cheering was heard for miles. The latest results show that the team is now top of the League table, and also well on its way to winning the Football Association Challenge Cup.

THE END.

(Young Thunderbolt's won through against terrific odds, and he's put the Butterflies at the top of the League! Look out next week for a rousing new sea story: "Deep-Sea Fats!")

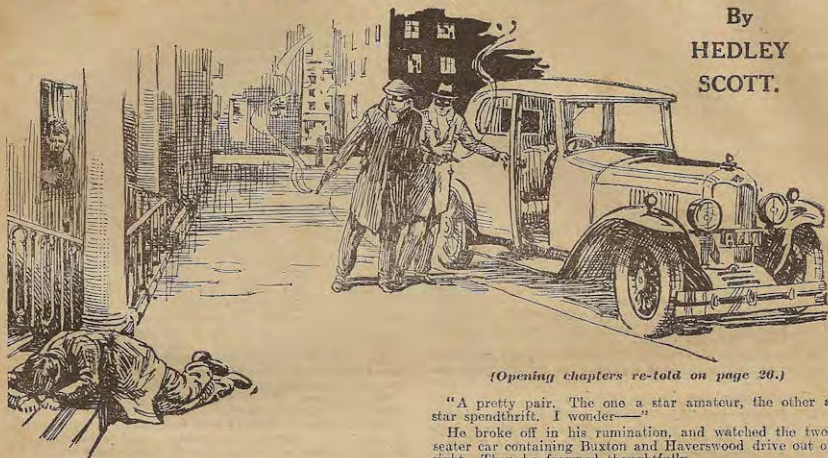


As the parachute opened, the bomber turned clumsily and nose-dived towards the river. The plane was doomed!

Further Chapters of Our Knock-Out Sporting Serial!

THE RANGERS' RECRUIT!

By
HEDLEY
SCOTT.



(Opening chapters re-told on page 20.)

"A pretty pair. The one a star amateur, the other a star spendthrift. I wonder—"

He broke off in his rumination, and watched the two-seater car containing Buxton and Haverswood drive out of sight. Then he frowned thoughtfully.

Rested!

"BRAVO, boys!" Major Carstairs' opinion of the game was briefly expressed. "And better luck next time!"

To Bill he flashed an engaging smile, and—
"Excellent, my lad!"

Bill felt elated. The majority of the players, too, had something appreciative to say to him as they tubbed and dressed, for it was undoubtedly due to "Ginger" that the Rangers had shared the points with Chelsea.

There was a sneer of contempt on the face of Marchant Buxton. To his mean nature the winning or losing of a match meant nothing. But there was a shock in store for Buxton. Old Sandy, the trainer, watched him dressing, saw him adjust his inevitable monocle, and then took him by the arm.

"Mr. Buxton," he said briefly, "I thought ye'd like to know that I'm suggesting to the Board that ye take a rest for the next few matches."

"What the devil—" began Buxton heatedly.

Sandy did not linger, did not see the ungovernable rage that swelled the veins in Buxton's forehead. They showed for a single moment. Buxton had himself in hand. He passed out of the dressing-room and was met by Haverswood. The dude, from past experience, was able to read the true nature of Buxton, despite the mask.

"The hound!" Buxton could contain himself no longer. "I'll get him! I'll get him if—"

His words ended in a venomous intake of breath. Haverswood laughed lightly and took his companion by the arm.

"A little more discretion, my dear fellow," he whispered. "There are people about. Play your part and smile at the fans who worship you—a trifle apologetic for the benefit of those blighters who reckon you let the Rangers down this afternoon. That's the spirit."

They passed through the straggling groups of hero-worshippers, and Buxton played up. But once safely clear of the precincts of Stamford Bridge, his thoughts returned to what was now an obsession with him—vengeance on Bill Hartley. Neither Haverswood nor his companion had observed the well-set-up figure of Peters Locke watching them as they passed out of the Chelsea ground, but they would have been interested in what was passing through the great detective's mind.

"What news, my lad?"

Ferrers Locke shifted ever so slightly in his armchair as his boyish assistant entered the room. It was the Monday following the Rangers' match with Chelsea, and the detective was taking life easy.

Drake, a handsome lad of fifteen, smiled contentedly. "Easy job that was, guv'nor." He consulted his pocket-book. "Adolph Haverswood, son of Malcolm Haverswood, deceased. Has run through a fortune since his old man snuffed it. His old man, by the way, was pawnbroker and diamond merchant. Adolph Haverswood, if he does any work, does it for the Tindian Film Company, Limited, of which he is a director."

Locke nodded.

"Tindian Film Company formed three years ago, taken up by private subscription; have produced and shown one film—'The Hunchback of Chicago.' Film a failure. Now engaged on producing another thriller."

"Shouldn't like to have any shares in that company," remarked Locke dryly. "You might run down to the studios wherever they are, and—"

"Outside Weybridge, guv'nor—" "And have a nose round," concluded Locke.

Jack Drake was about to reply when there came a

piercing ring from the door bell.

"Pycroft, for a wager," smiled Locke.

Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, it was.

"Mornin', Mr. Locke! Mornin', young 'un!"

Pycroft tossed his bowler hat into an armchair and dumped his huge bulk into another. There was a worried frown across his brow, which was usually in evidence when he called on the Baker Street detective.

"Chief ramping off again," he stated cryptically. "The Press is making a big feature of the unsolved crimes, organized robberies in particular. Chief thinks it's time all of us chaps were fired. But what can we do?" Pycroft spread his large hands in a gesture of helplessness. "These are not ordinary robberies; there's brains—big brains—behind 'em."

Locke nodded, while Pycroft drew in a deep breath. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,197.

GUNMEN IN LONDON!

Shooting of detective who knew too much! Amazing daylight thrills in London by unknown gangsters!

and at the same time helped himself to one of Locke's choice cigars.

"Now tell me the worst," said the Baker Street detective gently. "What's upset you personally? It isn't the chief. He's done that too often to make you look like this."

The C.I.D. man coloured up with embarrassment. "Well, the truth is, Mr. Locke," he blurted out. "I've been superseded. There's a Glasgow inspector been sent down to London specially to take over my job. He's supposed to have a clue. The chief's swallowed him and his tales of a clue to the gang responsible for these robberies, and given him a free hand."

"His name?"

"Inspector McDougall," said Pycroft.

Locke raised his eyebrows.

"I know him by reputation. A good man, too. Pluck, intelligence, initiative. Will go a long way."

Pycroft grinned.

"Oh, I've got nothing up against him personally. But it seems hardly fair that he should be allowed an absolutely free hand while the rest of us have to conform to the usual system. He's—"

Pycroft was rudely interrupted by a furious tocsin on the telephone buzzer.

Idly Locke reached for it, but his languid air dropped from him like a cloak as he listened to the excited voice humming over the wires.

"Will be along immediately, Hartley!"

The receiver snapped down, and Pycroft and Drake looked inquiringly at Ferrers Locke.

"This is bad luck," murmured Locke. "What a pity!" Then aloud: "Follow me, Drake, and Pycroft—prepare for a shock. I'll tell you as we go along."

A few minutes later Locke's high-powered car was roaring through the metropolis regardless of speed regulations.

Bill Hartley and Tich Freeman switched on the wireless and stretched themselves before the fire. A good morning's training, a good lunch, and both Tich and Bill reckoned they were entitled to seek the comfort of an armchair for half an hour before they returned to the Rangers' ground for afternoon ball practice.

"Have you heard about Buxton?" said Tich, by way of opening the conversation.

Bill shook his head.

"Rested for a fortnight," said Tich, with a grin of satisfaction. "Directors reckon he's getting a bit stale. It's my belief that they're pretty annoyed over the Chelsea match. Serve 'im right. The rest'll take a bit o' the conceit out of 'im!"

Bill smiled. Tich really had his knife into the Rangers' armour, the more so now that Tich and Bill were chums.

"He's a wrong 'un," said Freeman with emphasis. "Why the way he looked at you on Saturday would have hanged a chap in the olden days. 'Allo!" He twisted a wry face in the direction of the loud-speaker. "Ere's a talk on bloomin' economies! Switch the blessed thing off, Bill. No wonder some folks call 'em 'wireless deceiving sets.'"

Bill obligingly switched off. Barely had he done so than from the street below came the sharp crackle of an automatic pistol.

"Did you hear it?"

Bill jumped to his feet and reached the window a fraction of a second in front of Tich.

Crack! Crack!

Two more reports awoke the echoes of the quiet neighbourhood. Followed a low moan and the soft thud of a falling body. With face agast Bill flung up the sash of the window and peered out.

"Crikey!" The ejaculation came from Tich. "At our door!"

With a trembling finger he pointed downward.

Huddled over the steps of their porch was the figure of a man. A few feet away from him stood two men, their identities being completely hidden under eye-slotted masks. In their hands revolvers still smoked. Beyond them was a stationary saloon car.

"Hi!"

Bill's yell caused them to start.

Crack! Crack!

Two more shots rang out, and instinctively Bill ducked. But the shots were not fired at him—they completely missed him.

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stilled the huddled figure over the porch steps. Came the purr of a motor accelerating, and when Bill essayed another look over the window-sill it was to see the fast saloon car disappearing round the first corner.

"Good heavens!" Bill licked his dry lips and turned a bewildered face upon Tich.

But Tich was already moving downstairs to the succour of the wounded man. Bill raced in Freeman's wake.

The street was in an uproar. From adjacent houses poured inquisitive tenants, and from the same direction as that in which the assassins had vanished raced a policeman.

With faces expressive of their horror Tich and Bill knelt beside the stricken figure on the steps.

It was that of a stalwart man of forty-odd, plainly but neatly dressed.

For a moment his eyelids flickered, the spasmodic breathing became more steady. Then the eyes in that deathly countenance opened and fixed on Bill's anxious face with a puzzled stare.

"It's all right, old chap," muttered Bill protestingly. "The murderous dogs have cleared." Then in an undertone to Tich: "By Heaven, Tich, he's badly hit!"

The lips of the injured man moved tremblingly. Again the eyes opened. Recognition came into them as they stared with a bright, unnatural fixity into Bill's.

"Mon"—the voice was weak, scarcely audible—"Mon—Hartley, you're in danger. Have— Tell Ferrers Locke—"

Bill lowered his head to catch the remainder of the stricken man's words, but they merged into an incoherent jumble and finally trailed away altogether.

"He's fainted!" whispered Tich. "Poor devil!"

The constable pushing his way through the over-growing crowd overboard Tich's remark. Then he gave that still form one searching look and shook his head.

"He's a gonner!" And quickly to Bill: "Phone for an ambulance, will you, sir?"

Bill was about to comply with speed when he caught sight of the sudden horrified expression that flashed into the constable's face as he leaned over the dead man. From his inside jacket pocket he withdrew an official-looking notebook and a police badge. Then he stiffened, and, hardly knowing that he did so, came to attention.

"Good heavens!" The ejaculation was vibrant with horror. "It's Inspector McDougall!"

"Fire!"

BILL slammed up the steps to his flat like an antelope in full flight. His heart beat abnormally fast with excitement. In some way he was connected with the tragedy that had overtaken Inspector McDougall.

Ferrers Locke—
The name of the famous Baker Street detective had been the last words uttered by the victim of that sensational shooting affray. "Tell Ferrers Locke—"
Feverishly Bill asked for Locke's telephone number. In a torrent of excitement he acquainted the detective with what had happened. That done, he calmed down somewhat and remembered the ambulance. Here he experienced a delay in getting through to the right authorities, with the result that Ferrers Locke, Drake, and Inspector Pycroft arrived in the former's high-powered car at almost the same moment as the ambulance.

Pycroft's emotion was plainly apparent. Doubtless he accused himself of many undutiful thoughts towards the man who had snatched his place at the Yard, and deeply regretted them. To Locke, more experienced and self-controlled, the crime element came first. Here at his feet lay the terrible proof that Inspector McDougall had indeed "got on to" the bandits responsible for a long series of unsolved robberies. How else his sudden end, within such a short time of arriving in London to track the audacious gangsters down?

With a practised eye Locke examined the dead man, noted the position and the number of wounds, and then turned to Bill.

In a few words Bill explained exactly what had happened, as he had seen it from the window of his flat, and concluded—
Inspector McDougall's warning. Locke's brow wrinkled in thought.

"Do you know where Inspector McDougall lodged, Pycroft?" he asked quietly.

"No. 4A, Rutley Street, Soho," volunteered the C.I.D. man.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

BILL HARTLEY, a six-foot edition of brawn and muscle, with a head of flaming red hair, is "sent down" from Oxford. Arriving home, Bill quarrels with his father, and then leaves for London to find work. En route, he falls foul of Sir Charles Buxton, a wealthy man about town, who was behind the plot that brought about Bill's dismissal from the 'Varsity. In London Bill meets an old friend in Major Cartwright, chairman of the Carlton Rangers F.C., who offers him a trial with the eleven. Bill is eventually signed on, only to find that Buxton is the Rangers' centre-forward. As a result of a frame-up, Bill is accused of theft and placed in a police cell. Thanks to the timely intervention of Ferrers Locke, detective, Bill proves his innocence and is released in time to play against Chelsea. He shows the same Buxton does his best to give Bill a good time, but his efforts prove of little avail, for the Rangers' recruit scores the only goal for his side, and the match ends in a draw.

(Now read on.)

"We're going there at once, then!" snapped Locke. He cleared a way to his car, Drake and Inspector Pycroft following him, and Bill unconsciously doing the same. Just as Locke was about to let in the clutch, he became aware of Bill's presence.

"Jump in, Hartley!" The car roared away, and was soon heading for Soho at racing pace. Immovable as the granite features of the Sphinx was Locke's drawn face and deep-set eyes. Not a word escaped him until entering Ratley Street. Then a whistle of dismay flow from his lips.

"Too late! The birds have been before us! Look!" At the end of the street, billowing skywards in a gesture of mockery, wreathed a trail of smoke. Followed the thunderous clanging of an approaching fire-engine!

"McDougherty's lodgings, for a wager!" Locke's chance shot was on the target. One look at Pycroft's astounded expression told him that, apart from the hoarsely voiced imprecation that followed it.

"Making certain of destroying poor McDougherty's clues," said Locke, with a wry grimace. "That is, if he left any in his digs!"

Locke's car came to a standstill as near the blaze as was comfortable. Already the first fire-engine was a hive of activity as the firemen snarledly attended their stations. Streams of water gushed from their hoses on to the blazing mass. Above the clangor of the bell of a second engine, speeding towards the conflagration, the vicious swish of the pumped water, and the murmuring of the crowd, the officer in charge bellowed in Locke's ear:

"Second floor! Looks like a petrol fire the way she's burning! Old property! Not much chance of saving it!"

Locke nodded and his lips set in a thin line. "It's a deliberate fire right enough," he answered.

"People out of it, of course?" "Sure!" yelled the fireman. "Apartment house! Most people at business—"

He broke off abruptly as the half-demented landlord of the property plucked him by the arm.

"Can you save the building?" "Doing our best, sir," said the fireman stolidly. "But this ain't no ordinary fire!"

"It isn't!" groaned the landlord. "It isn't! And I'm insured for only a third of its value! By heavens, if I could lay my hands on those two men—"

Locke took the excited man by the arm and led him away. Briefly he introduced himself.

"I am sorry I did not arrive earlier," he said gently. "The two men you mentioned just now—tell me about them. They arrived by car, wore masks—"

The landlord eyed him in amazement. "You know them? You know about them?" he babbled.

"Very little yet awhile," said Locke dryly. "But I hope to know more about them very soon."

"There is little to tell, Mr. Locke. About ten minutes ago two men wearing masks, as you say, forced their way into my apartments at the point of the pistol and compelled me to show them the rooms I had recently let to a Mr. Draper, of Glasgow—"

"Ah!" ejaculated Locke. "McDougherty was wise enough to adopt another name, was he?"

The excited landlord, hardly heard Locke's muttered words.

"It was monstrous, sir!" he gabbled. "They turned Mr. Draper's rooms inside out, looking for something or other, and then hustled me out and locked me in my own cupboard."

"But the fire—" said Locke gently. "I only became aware of that when I had broken open the cupboard. Mr. Draper's dog was barking something shocking. Rushing up to his rooms, I found them ablaze like—like—"

Words failed him, and he made a hopeless gesture in the direction of the blazing building.

He would have gabbled on in similar strain indefinitely, but above the tumult suddenly came the shrill barking of a dog. Looking upward, Locke and the landlord saw the diminutive form of a fox terrier at a broken window on the third floor.

Someone else saw that pitiful-looking creature as the curtain of smoke lifted—Bill Hartley.

"Good gad! Did you see that dog, Drake?" Bill's grip fastened on Drake's arm in a painful vice. "Why, it'll be burned to death!"

Other people in the swelling crowd had seen the dog now, had heard its repeated barking.

"Where's the escape?" The square, however, had drawn off to a narrow street adjoining, for on arrival at the scene of the fire the officer in charge had said that it would not be wanted—that there was no human being in the blazing structure.

"The escape!" The square, however, had drawn off to a narrow street adjoining, for on arrival at the scene of the fire the officer in charge had said that it would not be wanted—that there was no human being in the blazing structure.



Bill clambered on to the window-sill with the dog in his arms, and even as he jumped, the walls caved in!

Like a chorus the words echoed towards the smoke-laden sky. Already the motorman was backing the four-fold ladder into position, what time the impatient firemen waited to ascend it. But there was someone in the crowd quicker still.

Before anyone could stop him, a red-headed youth of striking build plunged into the ground-floor opening of the burning building and was lost to sight in a vortex of smoke and flashing sparks.

"Guv'nor!" roared Drake. "That's Hartley! Oh, the mad idiot!"

"Heaven help him!" said Locke softly.

Again came the yapping of the terrified animal crouched at the window, testimony that at least it was still alive. Meanwhile its rescuer, blinded by smoke, half-choked, and already sick with exhaustion, plunged up the burning staircase, scattering a whirl of snapping sparks that closed around him like a garment of fire.

Tongues of flames leaped wickedly at Bill's smoke-begrimed face as he fought on. The courage of his purpose was vividly outlined in the set of his chin and the deadly intent in those grey eyes. If it cost him his life he would get to that dog.

And well nigh cost him his life it did. As he parted across the first landing and jumped for the blazing stairs ahead he heard a booming roar, became engulfed in a smother of hissing sparks and leaping jets of flame, and realised that he could not possibly return by the way he had entered. The landing behind him had collapsed.

The second landing!

How Bill reached it he hardly knew. His senses were leaving him; his lungs felt as though they would burst; his eyes smarted and almost refused their office. But the will to win kept him going. Not for nothing had he been nicknamed "Ginger for Pluck."

The alternate barking and whining of the dog drew nearer as Bill mounted the stairs leading to the third floor. Here it was impossible to see for rolling, choking clouds of smoke. Blind instinct told Bill the way.

He staggered into the room, saw the demented, terrified dog perched precariously across the window-sill, and held

