

You Must Read "TOM MERRY, THE BOY 'TEC!" Inside

The GEM

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TOM MERRY RUNS AWAY FROM SCHOOL AND HELPS TO—

TOM MERRY

CHAPTER 1.

Strange News for Tom!

"MERRY!"

Tom Merry half-opened his eyes, with a drowsy yawn.

The School House at St. Jim's was sunk in silence and slumber. The moonlight, growing paler as the hour of dawn drew nigh, glimmered faintly on the old elms in the quadrangle. In the Shell dormitory in the School House silence and darkness reigned.

"Merry!"

"Lemme alone," murmured Tom Merry sleepily. "'Tain't rising bell yet."

"Wake up!"

Tom felt himself shaken by the shoulder. He opened his eyes wider and stared round him. A candle glimmered in the gloom of the long, dark dormitory.

"Are you awake, Merry?"

"Yes, I am," said Tom, taking a grip on his pillow, "and it's no use your imitating Railton's voice, whoever you are—you can't take me in like that! What the dickens do you mean by waking me up in the middle of the night?"

"Merry—"

"I'll Merry you!" exclaimed Tom wrathfully; and he hurled the pillow with a deadly aim.

There was a splutter as the candle went out, and the sound of a fall in the darkness.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"How do you like that?"

He exclaimed. "I don't know who you are, but you've only got what you asked for!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked the voice of Tom's chum, Manners, from the next bed. "What are you chattering about, Tom?"

"Somebody just woke me up, and I've biffed him. I suppose it's Blake or one of those kids from Study No. 6, playing a little game on us. I say—"

"Merry," said a severe voice from the darkness, "I suppose you do not know that I am your Housemaster or I should care you!"

Tom gave a gasp.

"My hat! You don't mean to say you're really Railton?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, I am Mr. Railton."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm—ha, ha!—awfully sorry, sir. I thought it was one of those bouncers from Study No. 6 working off a little jape on me. Ha, ha, I'm sorry!"

There was a scratch, and a match glimmered out. The candle was relighted, and Tom, sitting up in bed, saw that it was indeed the master of the School House standing beside him.

Mr. Railton was looking rather flushed. He had been startled by the pillow suddenly bowling him over in the dark. But he did not look angry.

"Merry, I want you to get up immediately and dress yourself, and come with me to the doctor's study," he said.

"The doctor, sir? At this time of the night?"

"It will be light in an hour, Merry."

"But—but—but—"

"Dr. Holmes will explain, Merry. Get up and dress yourself, and come down to my room."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton left the dormitory, leaving the candle standing on Tom's washstand. Tom stared at Manners, and Manners stared at Tom.

"Well, this beats everything," said Tom. "What on earth can they want? Which of our latest little games was bad enough to make the doctor get up an hour before daylight to see into it, Manners?"

Manners shook his head.

"Don't ask me. Blessed if I understand it. It can't be THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,231.

the strike we had last week—the Head hasn't said a word about that."

"No. Then what is it?"

"Maybe he doesn't want to haul you over the coals at all," suggested Manners. "Perhaps it's something else he wants you for?"

"I don't see what it can be. I suppose I'd better go."

Tom got out of bed and dressed himself. He was amazed and intensely curious. Manners was just as curious, and he did not go to sleep again when Tom left the dormitory.

Tom Merry joined Mr. Railton, who was waiting in his room, and the Housemaster led the way to the Head's study. Mr. Railton knocked, and the knock sounded strangely hollow in the silence of the sleeping House.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Head.

Mr. Railton opened the door.

Dr. Holmes was seated at his table, and had evidently been leaning his head upon his hand. He had raised it at the knock. His face was looking unusually pale and serious, and there was a worn look about it which did not escape Tom's notice.

"Merry is here, sir," said Mr. Railton.

"Thank you!" said the doctor quietly. "Come in, Merry!" Tom Merry entered the study.

Mr. Railton stepped out again and closed the door. Tom Merry was alone with the Head—the dreaded and yet kindly personage who ruled the destinies of St. Jim's.

"You may sit down, Merry."

Tom sat down.

His face expressed the wonder he felt. He heard a sound from the quadrangle without, and understood that Mr. Railton had left the House. What could it all mean?

The Head caught his expression.

"I dare say you are greatly surprised, Merry," he said, "but I can explain to you in a few words. Do you remember a short time ago the visit made to this school by a celebrated London detective?"

Tom Merry started a little.

"Do you mean Ferrers Locke, sir?"

"Yes."

"I remember, sir."

"You were of some assistance to him, Merry," said the doctor. "He told me how you had helped him in his search for the rascals who were committing robberies in the neighbourhood, and that it was really due to you that he was able to effect their capture."

Tom coloured.

"It was very kind of him to say so, sir. I tried to help."

"And you succeeded. Now, Merry, Mr. Locke has made a most unusual request, yet one which I think it will be consistent with my duty to grant, if you are willing. I may mention first that Mr. Locke has obtained the full permission of your guardian, Miss Fawcett. Would you like to go to London for a short time—a few days—and assist Mr. Locke in a case he has now in hand?"

Tom drew a deep breath of amazement.

"The details of this case," continued the Head, "will be told you by Mr. Locke, as far as he deems expedient. I need only say that unless this gentleman succeeds in the work he has undertaken a heavy loss will fall upon me—a very heavy loss indeed. To be quite frank, Merry, my honour is involved, and Ferrers Locke is trying to save me from the result of a piece of villainy on the part of a man I trusted." Dr. Holmes passed his hand across his brow. "Mr. Locke thinks you could be of great use to him in this matter—in what way I do not exactly know—and he has asked me to let you go to him for a few days, if you are willing. What do you say?"

Tom's eyes were dancing.

"Oh, sir, I should like it awfully. It—it would be ripping."

Tom Merry goes to London in search of a Gangster! Gussy goes to London in search of Tom Merry! The Gangster finds Gussy! Who finds the Gangster?

—TRAP A GANG! READ THIS YARN AND BE THRILLED!

—THE BOY 'TEC!



The Head smiled slightly.

"Then you are quite willing to go?"

"More than willing, sir. If I can help Mr. Locke I shall be awfully glad. I should like to go, above all things."

"Then we will consider it settled, Merry. You will leave the school at once and catch the six o'clock train at Rylcombe. Mr. Railton has kindly gone to get the car out, as I do not care to call attention to the matter by having any of the servants awakened. It is only a short time since I received Mr. Locke's urgent message. How long will it take you to pack a bag, Merry?"

"Only a few minutes, sir. But—"

"What is it, Merry?" asked the Head, as Tom paused.

"Could I take anybody with me, sir? Could I take old Manners?"

The doctor hesitated.

"Without consulting Mr. Locke, I cannot say," he replied.

"You had better leave it till you see Mr. Locke in London, and ask him. Then, if he gives you permission, you can easily wire to Manners."

"Yes, sir. May I tell him anything about it? He was awake when I left the dormitory, and he will ask me."

"You had better tell him that you are called suddenly away, then," said the Head. "You may say that you are going to see Mr. Locke."

"Very well, sir."

And Tom Merry left the study. He was in a state of high delight as he made his way back to the Shell dormitory in the School House.

Tom, like a healthy British lad, was fond of anything that smacked of adventure, and this was an adventure, indeed! He had liked Mr. Locke very much when the famous detective was down in Rylcombe, and he would be very glad to

see him again. And he was already thrilling at the prospect of aiding the detective once more in a difficult and perhaps dangerous case.

He was so delighted that he didn't walk into the dormitory in the usual way, but came in doing the cake-walk, and in the gloom he cake-walked into Manners' bed, and fell plump across his chum's legs.

"Hallo!" roared Manners, who was dropping off to sleep again. "What's that? None of your little games!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom, as Manners gripped him by the hair on the back of his head, and began to tug. "Chuck it! It's only me!"

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" said Manners, releasing him. "What do you mean by sprawling over me and making me jump out of my skin? What did the Head want?"

"Me."

"What else, fathoad?"

"I'm called away suddenly," said Tom. "Ferrers Locke wants me in London. Can't tell you any more now. Don't be curious; it's a fault in little boys. Jump out of bed, and help me pack my bag."

"You're rotting!"

"My dear kid, I'm telling you the solid truth. I'm going to London, and Railton is going to drive me down to Rylcombe to catch the six o'clock train."

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"Well, I'm blessed!" said Manners, in amazement.

"So am I," said Tom. "Lend a hand."

Manners helped him pack his bag. He was soon ready. Tom Merry was never very long about anything.

"My hat!" said Manners, with a sigh. "I wish I were coming. I shall be lonely without you, with Monty Lowther away, too."

"I wish you were coming, old chap," said Tom. "I asked the Head, and he said I must ask Mr. Locke. If he says you can come, I'm going to wire."

Manners rubbed his hands.

"I say, that will be jolly! It will make Study No. 6 green with envy."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, it will be one ahead of Jack Blake and his lot," he remarked. "We shall come back covered with glory. Blake will be ready to kick himself, and as for Figgins & Co. over in the New House, why they'll have to hide their diminished heads. Hallo, there's Railton calling!"

"Good-bye, Tom, and don't forget that wire if you can fix it."

"Good-bye, old kid! Rely on me."

And the chums shook hands and parted. Manners sat on his bed to think over the surprising happening, and Tom Merry hurried downstairs and joined the Housemaster, his bag in his hand.

"Are you hungry, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Oh, no, sir," said Tom, who was too excited to be hungry.

"H'm! You won't get anything to eat till you get to London," said the Housemaster, "I have cut some sandwiches. You had better eat some, and put the rest in your pocket."

"You are very kind, sir."

Mr. Railton was indeed very kind. He had a spirit-stove going in his study, and hot coffee and sandwiches ready for Tom Merry. Tom had thought that he was not hungry, but the smell of the coffee made him aware that he was, and he ate four sandwiches and drank two cups of coffee with a keen relish. Then Mr. Railton wrapped the rest of the sandwiches up in some paper, and Tom put the packet in his coat pocket.

The car was waiting outside. Tom did not see the Head again.

Dawn was breaking over the quadrangle at St. Jim's, and a pale, silvery light glimmered on the old elms, and ghostly shadows lay between.

Three figures in coats and mufflers came out of a side door in the School House, with towels over their arms. They stopped and stared at the waiting car in amazement. They were Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, and they were going down to the Rhyl for an early morning swim. Study No. 6 meant to come out strong in the swimming competitions on sports day, and even the languid Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was kept up to the mark by the energetic Blake.

"Hallo, we're not the only early risers!" exclaimed Blake. "I wonder what that means? Why, it's Tom Merry, or his ghost!"

The juniors stared at Tom Merry as he came down the steps of the School House. Tom caught sight of them and nodded affably.

"Where are you going, kid?" asked Blake.

"Important business," said Tom airily. "I'm going up to town."

"Have they sent for you from Colney Hatch at last?" Blake inquired.

Tom climbed into the car.

"I've no time to listen to your poor little witticisms, Blake," he said loftily. "I'm going up to town on important business. Mind you're good little boys while I'm gone!"

Blake breathed hard.

"Do you want to take a thick ear up to town with you?" he asked. "If so— Er—good-morning, Mr. Railton!"

The Housemaster smiled.

"Good-morning, Blake! I see you are going for a swim. That's right."

He stepped into the car. Manners leaned out of the window of the Shell dormitory and waved his hand to Tom Merry.

"Good-bye, old Tommy! Remember me to Mr. Locke!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom, waving his cap.

The car buzzed away. It passed the gates of St. Jim's, and disappeared towards the village of Rylcombe. The chums of Study No. 6 were left staring blankly at one another.

"You heard that?" said Blake, at last.

"He's going to see that detective chap who was down here," said Herries.

"That's it! Now, what's the little game?"

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"Weally, I don't know, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I haven't any ideah."

"I know you haven't," said Blake. "You needn't tell us that, Gussy."

"Blake, don't be wude!"

"Tom Merry is going up to town," said Blake. "Going to see that detective chap. What's the little game? Kids, we've got to get on to this!"

"Rather!" said Herries, with an emphatic nod. "If anything's on, I don't see why we should be left out of it."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"We'll screw it out of Manners somehow," said Blake. "If necessary we'll follow Tom Merry to London, and see what his little game is. Come along!"

They went down to the Rhyl and had their swim. But Blake was unusually thoughtful all the time. Something was evidently on, and he was determined that Study No. 6 should not be left out in the cold.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom and the Detective!

FERRERS LOCKE was waiting at the London terminus for Tom Merry.

Tom stepped from the train and looked about him, and the next moment the famous detective tapped him on the shoulder.

"So you have come, Tom?"

Tom looked up with a bright smile as the detective shook him by the hand.

"Yes, sir, I was very glad to get your message. I hope I shall be of some use to you, Mr. Locke."

"I hope so," said the detective. "Come this way. I have a taxi waiting, and you will come to my diggings first, where I shall explain to you."

Tom was soon seated beside the detective in a cab, which rattled away through the London streets, already busy in the early morning.

Tom was intensely excited and curious, and wondering what he was wanted to do; but he did not venture to ask any questions, patiently waiting till Mr. Locke should speak.

The cab stopped at the door of Mr. Locke's "diggings" in Baker Street, and Tom accompanied the detective to his rooms. Breakfast was laid for two.

"Have you breakfasted, Tom?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, with a smile; "but that was two hours ago."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Then you must be ready for another. Sit down, Tom, and make yourself comfy. Now, I am going to explain to you as much of the case as I think it expedient for you to know, and I am sure you will not be curious about the rest."

"Certainly not, sir!"

"I want you to help me in a way which only a lad like yourself could help me. Did Dr. Holmes tell you anything of what was at stake?"

"He said that unless you were successful in this case, sir, he would be put to a heavy loss."

"That is quite true. I will explain. A large part of Dr. Holmes's money was in the hands of his solicitor, Reuben Scarlett, who has absconded with that, and with a great deal belonging to other people. Unless he is discovered, and forced to disgorge his plunder, Dr. Holmes will be practically ruined. That is not the worst. The doctor was in charge of money belonging to his sister, an invalid lady at Bournemouth, and this also he entrusted to Scarlett. Dr. Holmes is an excellent Head of St. Jim's, Tom, but as a man of business he lacks something in experience. People will say that he ought not to have been deceived so easily by this rascal, Scarlett; they might even say worse things. I know the doctor is the soul of honour and uprightness, and I am anxious to set him right in this matter. That can only be done by capturing the thief and recovering the money, or such of it as remains."

Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming.

"I understand, sir. I hope you will be able to catch the scoundrel."

"I hope so, Tom; and that is what I want you to help me to do. Reuben Scarlett has disappeared. We know at Scotland Yard that he has in his possession a great quantity of securities, and in all probability a large sum in bank-notes, and at every great railway centre detectives are watching for him, and he will find it impossible to get out of the country. We have reason to believe that he is hiding in London."

Tom nodded as he started on his second egg.

He was keenly interested in the statement of the case in which he was to take part.

"My suspicions," continued Ferrers Locke, "centre upon a certain house, which Scarlett is known to have frequently visited. It is a small private school, which was started only a few weeks ago by a man named—or, at least, known as—Gilbert Crane. Whether that is his real name or not I cannot at present say. Scarlett was certainly on intimate terms with this man Crane, of whose antecedents so far we have been able to discover nothing. He apparently came from nowhere, and is known to nobody."

Tom looked puzzled.

"Yet you say he keeps a school, sir?"

"Yes, a small private school, called Hyam House."

"But surely people don't send chaps to a school with a headmaster of that sort, sir. You generally want to know all about the place and the people before you send a kid there."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Quite so, Tom; but this is not an ordinary school. It is a home for the not-wanted."

"The what?"

"For boys whose people are too poor or too careless to care where they go," explained Mr. Locke. "Mr. Crane has, I believe, six boys under his charge, and they do not look very happy from what I have been able to see of them. He advertises that boys are taken complete care of at Hyam House, and when a boy is sent there, I imagine, his people wash their hands of him. They pay Mr. Crane's fees, and that is the end. The boys there, I think, are all orphans, and regarded as burdens by the people who send them to Mr. Crane to be looked after—poor relations, you understand, who cannot be entirely cast off."

Tom nodded.

"I see, sir. A bit different from St. Jim's."

"Yes, very different. Yet I am going to ask you to go there, Tom, and enter Hyam House as a new pupil."

Tom Merry started, and dropped his egg-spoon.

"Are you, sir?"

"Yes; and now you see how you can help me. I have reason to think that Mr. Crane is in some kind of collusion with the defaulting solicitor, yet I have not been able to obtain a particle of evidence to that effect. Except for the fact that his antecedents are unknown, Mr. Crane appears to be quite respectable. His little establishment seems to be quite open to the light of day. If I could prove that he is a rascal I should have something more definite to go upon. But he is too careful."

And the detective's brows puckered slightly.

"Now, Tom, I am going to take you to Hyam House, as a new boy, on the same terms as the others there," he went on. "I shall be Mr. Fawcett, the brother of your old governess; Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and in disguise, of course. You have been taken away from St. Jim's, and sent to Hyam House, for reasons which I shall satisfactorily explain to Mr. Crane. I may say that, although we are using a stratagem, I have no desire to make you say anything that is not true. That would be inexcusable, for I am far from believing that the end justifies the means. You will go under your own name to Hyam House, and you will say nothing that is not in accordance with facts."

Tom Merry looked a little relieved.

"You know what I want you to do? If this man Crane is a rascal, I want you to discover it and tell me so, if you can; and if there is any individual living in concealment on the school premises I want you to let me know. Such an individual is pretty certain to be the man I want."

"Ah! I think I could manage that, sir."

"There is one point I must mention, Tom. Mr. Crane does

not use his boys gently, and he will probably give you a warm time at Hyam House. Canings seem to be the order of the day there. You are not afraid of getting hurt?"

Tom made a grimace.

"No, sir. I've had some experience of that kind of thing."

The detective looked at him, curiously.

"Indeed, Tom. I thought you had a fine set of masters at St. Jim's?"

"So we have, sir. But we had a rotter once. He was a chap named Amos Keene, and he was master of the Shell. He was a brute, and he was down on me, and I had a warnin' time till he left St. Jim's. I don't mind a bit of it over again, sir, if I can help you and the Head."

"That's right, Tom; you are a good lad. I may say that I counted upon your willingness, and I have already made an appointment to see Mr. Crane this morning, before lunch, to bring him his new pupil."

"I am ready, sir; but—"

"Speak out, Tom."

"There's my chum, Manners, sir, at St. Jim's. I told him I'd ask you to let him come if it were possible. I suppose it couldn't be managed?"

The detective looked thoughtful.

"I'm afraid it couldn't, Tom, just at present. You see, two boys from St. Jim's might make Mr. Crane wonder."



"I'll Merry you!" exclaimed Tom, hurling the pillow at the figure with the candle, quite unaware that it was his Housemaster!

Perhaps we can do something for Manners later on. At present—

"Very well, sir; I'll write to Manners and tell him, if you don't mind."

"That will be all right." The detective rose from the table. "There's a desk, Tom. You can write while I am preparing for the interview with Mr. Crane, of Hyam House."

So Tom sat at the desk, and dashed off a letter to Manners. He had finished, and was looking at the pictures on the walls of the room, when the door opened and an old gentleman entered. Tom glanced at him. He was dressed in a black frock-coat and trousers, slightly rusty, and carried a silk hat in his hand. He looked about fifty-five or sixty, his grey hair being very thin on top. He had a white moustache, and a wrinkled forehead.

"Excuse me," said the old gentleman, in a thin and slightly querulous voice, "I expected to find Mr. Locke here."

"He has just stepped out, sir," said Tom politely. "I'm expecting him every minute."

"Dear me! Then I suppose I must wait."

"Won't you sit down?" said Tom, pulling out an easy-chair.

"Thank you, my boy! What is your name?"

"Tom Merry, sir."

"Tom Merry! Dear me! Then you must be Miss Priscilla Fawcett's ward, who was lately at St. James' College?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom in astonishment.

"And you don't know me?"
 "I—I don't think so, sir."
 "Dear me. You don't know Miss Fawcett's brother! Dear me!"

"Miss Fawcett's brother. He is in India, sir!"
 "Ah, you were not aware that I had returned from India, and was residing with my dear sister at Laurel Villa, at Huckleberry Heath," said the old gentleman, beaming upon Tom Merry.

"No, sir," said Tom; "I—I'm sorry I didn't know you, sir. I haven't seen you, you know, since I was a little chap."
 "Not at all. You saw me only twenty minutes ago."

"I don't think so, sir."
 "Yes, you did, Tom!" said the voice of Ferrers Locke.
 Tom stared round in amazement. The detective did not appear to be in the room. Then he looked at the old gentleman again. The latter was laughing heartily.

"Ha, ha, Tom! I am glad to see that my disguise is so good!"

Tom Merry gave a gasp.

"Mr. Locke!"

"Exactly," said the detective, speaking in his natural voice, his deep tones in strange contrast with the grey hair and white beard. "You saw me twenty minutes ago, Tom. I was Ferrers Locke then; now I am Joseph Fawcett. You think I shall pass?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, staring at the deceiving old gentleman. "You are really Mr. Locke?"

"Yes," the detective laughed, "really. The real Mr. Fawcett is still in India, I believe. I have only been to Huckleberry Heath once in my life, and that was when I went yesterday to obtain Miss Fawcett's permission for you to help me in this case. Do you think I shall pass muster with the master of Hyam House, Tom?"

"I should think so, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically. "It's—it's splendid, sir!"

"Thank you, Tom! Mind, I am Mr. Fawcett now, and not over fond of you, because of your pranks at St. Jim's and your general recklessness, which has caused myself and my sister a great deal of anxiety. Come along!"

A taxi was waiting outside. The pseudo old gentleman stepped into it with Tom Merry, and they were driven away at a rapid rate in a southerly direction.

Hyam House was on the south side of the water, and a good drive from Baker Street. While the cab rattled on Ferrers Locke gave Tom fresh instructions, and the boy listened eagerly. He fully understood the part he was to play at Hyam House, and he was ready and eager for the adventure.

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprising Recognition!

FERRERS LOCKE and Tom Merry were shown in at Hyam House by an unamiable-looking manservant, who then departed to inform Mr. Crane of their arrival.

The room into which they were shown had a large window looking out upon the grounds of Hyam House. Tom Merry looked out with some interest, anxious to see as much as he could of what his new home was to be like. Several boys were playing in the grounds, but there was none of the shouting and merry laughter which Tom was accustomed to.

The boys, who ranged in age from eleven to fifteen, seemed to be very quiet—strangely quiet, and did not seem to enjoy their play very much. Perhaps that was because a man with flinty grey eyes stood watching them. The latter had his back turned to the window, where Tom Merry stood, but it seemed to the boy at once that there was something familiar in the lines of his figure.

Was that Mr. Crane, the master of Hyam House? Evidently—for the sullen-looking manservant was crossing towards him, undoubtedly to acquaint him with the fact that visitors were waiting.

Where had Tom Merry seen Mr. Crane before? The boy was deeply puzzled. He was anxious to see the man's face, but as yet he could see nothing but his back. Ferrers Locke glanced curiously at Tom.

"What are you thinking of, Tom?" he asked quietly.

"Is that Mr. Crane, sir?"

The detective glanced out of the window.

"Yes; that is Mr. Crane."

"I believe I have seen him before, sir."

"Indeed! That would be a strange coincidence."

"He'll turn round in a minute, sir, and then I shall be sure."

Tom kept his eyes fixed on the master of Hyam House. As he expected, Mr. Crane turned as the manservant approached nearer, and then Tom caught a full and clear

view of his face. It was not a pleasant face. The features were hard, the expression cold, and the eyes were small and grey, and looked like flints. The hard chin was adorned with a tuft of beard, and a scanty moustache was on the upper lip. Tom uttered a sharp exclamation.

"I knew I knew him!"

"That is very strange, Tom. What can you know of him?"

"You remember that chap I was telling you about, sir," said Tom eagerly, "the master of the Shell at St. Jim's. He was a brute, and he had to leave the school."

"Yes, Tom," said Ferrers Locke, looking interested.

"His name was Amos Keene, I think you said?"

"That's it, sir. Well, this is the chap."

Ferrers Locke started.

"Mr. Crane is the man you knew at St. Jim's as Amos Keene!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Mr. Locke," said Tom, with conviction. "I am certain of it. He is dressed differently, and he is wearing a beard and moustache now, and he wasn't then. But I'd know his eyes anywhere. He's Amos Keene!"

The detective's brows contracted for a moment. This was a contretemps he had been far from expecting, and yet he was glad to know that his suspicions regarding Mr. Crane were well founded.

"He was a brute, sir, at St. Jim's," said Tom, "and he got mixed up in a burglary, and had to leave the school. He plotted with a scoundrel to injure a boy who suspected him, and Blake had a narrow escape. Keene was really kicked out of St. Jim's, and he very nearly went to prison. That's why he's changed his name, of course. He could be sent to penal servitude now if Dr. Holmes cared to prosecute."

"Tom, my boy, your coming here has done a great deal for me already, though by chance," said Ferrers Locke. "I know that half my theory is true; Crane is a rascal, and, therefore, it is extremely probable that he is in association with the scoundrel Scarlett." Ferrers Locke spoke in a low and cautious voice. "But you say that the man has changed his appearance since you saw him last?"

"Entirely, sir. There's something about his figure, and there's his eyes. Otherwise, I shouldn't know him for the same man."

"But you are quite certain?"

"Quite, sir."

"Good! Don't appear to recognise him. He will know you as Tom Merry, if he is the man you think; but you must appear to know and see nothing. Can you do it?"

"Trust me, sir."

Mr. Crane was walking quickly towards the house. As he disappeared from sight the faces of the boys seemed to brighten, and the play went on with more boyish spirit. It was easy to see that Gilbert Crane, alias Amos Keene, was not liked by the boys of Hyam House.

A minute later Mr. Crane entered the room.

He gave a start as his eyes fell upon Tom Merry, but recovered himself in a moment. But that start, slight as it had been, did not escape the keen eyes of Ferrers Locke.

Whatever doubt the detective might have entertained of the correctness of Tom Merry's assertion was dissipated now. He knew that Mr. Crane knew the boy from St. Jim's, and was, therefore, undoubtedly the person Tom Merry took him for.

Nothing, however, showed in the detective's manner. He played the part of Miss Priscilla Fawcett's brother to the life. Mr. Crane shook hands with his visitor.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Fawcett," he exclaimed; "and this is the lad you spoke of in your letter?"

"Yes, this is the lad," said the detective. "Tom, this is your future headmaster—Mr. Crane."

Tom Merry made his best bow.

"I am very glad to receive—Master Fawcett—"

"No, no!" interrupted Joseph Fawcett, to give the detective the name of the character he had assumed. "Master Merry, if you please, sir."

"Ah, I beg your pardon!" said Mr. Crane blandly. "I am glad to receive Master Merry in my establishment."

"And now, Thomas, I think you may run away while I speak to Mr. Crane," said the brother of Miss Priscilla peevishly.

"Certainly!" exclaimed Mr. Crane. "Go into the garden, Master Merry. You will find your new schoolmates."

Tom Merry obeyed. The two gentlemen were left alone together. Mr. Fawcett sat down again.

"I must explain to you," he began, "that this boy is a great trouble."

Mr. Crane nodded assent.

"I quite believe that, Mr. Fawcett, from his looks."

"He has until very lately been in the charge of my sister, Miss Fawcett," continued the visitor. "He is, as a matter of fact, still in her charge, but I have taken an interest in the matter. Miss Fawcett is absurdly attached to the boy,

and can see nothing wrong in what he does, and would let him go to ruin if no one interfered. For Master Merry has been lately at a school called St. James' College, of which you may have heard. I believe it is a well-known Public school, but I know little about these matters. The best part of my life has been spent in India."

Mr. Crane nodded.

"I have heard of the school," he said.

And the visitor did not appear to notice the gleam that came into his eyes as he spoke.

"I have induced Miss Fawcett to take the boy away from St. James' College," resumed the gentleman from India. "I believe that a school of this kind will be far better calculated to give him the training he requires. There is not, I believe, any of the modern leaning to indulgence and leniency in your system, Mr. Crane."

Mr. Crane's lips tightened a little.

"Not at all."

"Tom Merry's pranks at St. James' College have been a constant source of worry," Mr. Fawcett went on, "and at last I have induced my sister to leave the matter in my hands. The result was my communication with you."

Mr. Crane bowed.

"I noticed," went on Mr. Fawcett, "that the boys in your grounds are nicely quiet, and there is none of the objectionable noise and horseplay that is so detestable, from my point of view. If you can make Thomas Merry like the rest in that respect, Mr. Crane, you will have earned my undying gratitude."

Mr. Crane rubbed his thin hands together.

"I shall do my best, sir. And I think I may say I shall succeed. You will allow me to offer you a glass of wine?"

"Thanks, no!" said Mr. Fawcett. "You are very kind, but I am compelled to think of my liver, which has suffered from twenty years spent in a tropical climate."

"Ah, yes; no doubt!" said Mr. Crane sympathetically.

"I leave Thomas Merry entirely in your charge, with every confidence," said Mr. Fawcett, rising. "The cheque for the fees I shall post you this day. I think that is all."

"You would like me to call Master Merry in to say good-bye—"

"Er—no; I don't think you need trouble," said Mr. Fawcett, taking up his hat. "My taximan is waiting, and he will undoubtedly overcharge me as it is. I think I need not see Thomas Merry again. Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, my dear sir!" said Mr. Crane, shaking hands very cordially with his visitor.

Joseph Fawcett seemed to be a man after his own heart.

The cab rolled away with Ferrers Locke, and Tom Merry remained, unfriended, in Hyam House. And the days he spent there were not likely to be happy ones, judging by the expression upon Mr. Crane's face as he stood looking at the boy from the window.

"Tom Merry!" he murmured. "What a strange chance that he should come here—that we should meet again! The boy I hated at St. Jim's—the boy who was the cause of my ruin there, and through whom I was kicked out of the school, and compelled to take this wretched little establishment in a suburb, under an assumed name! Master Tom Merry, I think that the time has come to pay off some old scores."

And Mr. Crane rubbed his hands with anticipation.

CHAPTER 4.

Not to be Left Out!

JACK BLAKE rose from the table in Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's, and pushed away his books.

"Finished already?" asked Herries, looking up.

"No," said Blake.

"Then what are you chucking it for?"

"Got something more important to think about. Blow prep!"

"What about Mr. Lathom in the morning?"

"Blow Lathom!"

"You'll get an imposition."

"Blow the imposition!"

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up plaintively, "you are interwuptin' my work. Yaas, wathah!"

"Blow your work!"

Herries and D'Arcy looked at one another. There was certainly something the matter with Blake that evening.

"Well, if you've got something on your chest," said Herries, "get it off. What are you bothered about?"

"I'm thinking of Tom Merry and that detective bouncer," said Blake. "Manners had a letter this afternoon, and he won't let on a word as to what was in it."

"Yes, I asked him, and he was quite wude," said D'Arcy.

"He's going about in an awfully cocky way," said Herries thoughtfully. "He seemed to think that Tom Merry is going strong, and is going to put Study No. 6 quite in the shade."

"Which is all rot!" said Blake.

"Extweme wot!" assented Arthur Augustus.

"All the same, we've got to know what Tom Merry is up to, and what's going on generally," said Blake. "Are we going to be left out in the cold?"

"Certainly not!"

"We've got to take a hand in the little game."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I don't see how," said Herries. "Tom Merry is in London, and that's a good step from here. You can't step over and see what he's up to, unless you've got the seven-league boots; and you haven't."

"What's the matter with following on his track?" said Blake.

Herries stared.

"Going to London?"

"Yes."

"The three of us?"

"Oh, no," said Blake hastily; "that would be too big an order, of course. But why shouldn't one of us go on Tom Merry's track, and see what the little game is?"

Herries whistled.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You hear that, Herries? If Gussy has the nerve, I don't see why you want to hang out."

"I'm not hanging out," said Herries. "I'm game if you are."

"That's settled, then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus seemed quite excited about it.

"It's a jolly wippin' ideah!" he exclaimed. "Of course, Blake is the chap to go. He's just the fellow to do it."

"Not at all," said Blake coolly. "We'll cast lots who's to go. That's only fair. Besides, the two who stay behind have got to keep the secret, and I don't think either of you would have sense enough for that."

"Let's toss up," said Herries, with spirit. "I'm quite ready to go, and so is Gussy, of course."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy; but he spoke a little more dubiously now.

Blake produced a penny.

"You and I first, Herries," he said. "The loser to toss again with Gussy."

"Agreed!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Sudden death, or best two out of three?"

"Oh, sudden death!" said Herries recklessly.

Blake tossed the penny and caught it.

"Heads!" said Herries.

Blake opened his hands and showed the figure of Britannia.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Now it's between Gussy and me."

He threw up the penny.

"Heads or tails, Arthur Adolphus?"

"Tails," said Arthur Augustus nervously.

Herries showed the King's head.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's Gussy!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

D'Arcy looked very uneasy.

"Of course, this is all a joke!" he remarked. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it?" said Blake. "I'll 'ha, ha, ha!' you, you bouncer! If you don't carry out the scheme you'll get scragged."

"And expelled from the study," said Herries.

"Come on, Gussy. I thought you had more grit!"

"You're not afraid?"

Between two fires, D'Arcy surrendered.

"Of course, I'm quite willin' to go, deah boys," he said.

"It will be quite an adventure, and you know what an adventurous chap I am."

Blake winked at Herries.

"Of course we do," he said. "You're just the kind of chap to do the trick, Gussy."

D'Arcy purred.

"Then I will go and ask the Head's permission."

Blake thumped him on the chest as he rose from his chair, and he sat down again suddenly, his eyeglass dropping off in the shock.

"Blake, I wish you would not be so wuff!"

"I wish you would not be a silly goat!" said Blake.

"Ask the Head's permission! Do you think he would be likely to give it?"

"But—"

"You ass!" said Herries. "This sort of thing has to be secret. Do you think Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake go around asking the Head's permission before they take up a case?"

"But—"

"You've got to keep mum, donkey!" said Blake. "You've got to leave St. Jim's darkly, at dead of night, and—"

"And mizzle off without a soul being the wiser!" exclaimed Herries.

"Exactly! And we'll keep it a secret that you're gone as long as we can."

"I see, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "Of course, I'm game. I have a great deal of spiwit when I'm woused."

"Then wouse up your spiwit at once," said Blake, "and listen to your instructions. I saw the postmark on that letter Manners had to-day, which he wouldn't let us read."

"Did you weally?"

"Yes, I did, weally. The postmark was Kennington. Tom Merry must have posted it after he left Locke's house, because the detective lives in Baker Street. Do you know what that shows, kids?"

"It shows that he took it out of his pocket," said D'Arcy.

Blake gave him a withering glance.

"Anything else?"

"Weally, I can't think of anythin' else," said Arthur Augustus, after some reflection.

"Can't you, Herries?"

"It shows he went to Kennington, and posted the letter there," was Herries' brilliant contribution to the discussion.

"My hat!" said Blake. "Can't you see, duffers, it shows that they took a taxi? Tom Merry must have passed hundreds of pillar-boxes near Baker Street—anyway, he must have passed two or three—and what would he want to wait till he got to Kennington before posting the letter for? They went in a car or a taxi, and didn't stop till they got to that salubrious subbub. Which shows—"

"That he didn't walk."

"Herries, old chap, don't you make any more of those splendid guesses. You'll make me ill; I can't stand too much brilliance all at once."

"Oh, don't rot! Get on!"

"Well, Ferrers Locke and Tom Merry took a cab to Kennington," said Blake. "They must have done it pretty soon after Merry's arrival in town, as Manners got that letter this afternoon. Ergo—that's Latin—the case they are engaged on is in Kennington."

"How do you know they're engaged on a case?"

"Because Manners as good as said so. He's blowing about it for all he's worth."

"Most likely he's romancing."

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"Most likely you're an ass," said Blake politely. "What else could Tom Merry have gone up to see Ferrers Locke for?"

"They might be gone to the Oval to see a cricket match," said Herries.

"Rats!" said Blake decidedly. "The cricket season is over, idiot!"

"That's so. Well, what do you make of it?"

"That the case, whatever it is, is in Kennington," said Blake, "and it's to that part of London that Gussy will have to go to find Tom Merry."

"You ought to be a giddy detective, Blake," said Herries admiringly. "I really think you must be a relation of your namesake, Sexton of that ilk."

Blake gave a smile of gratification.

"Now, Aubrey," he went on, "you understand. You're to go up to town and get on the track of Tom Merry, and we'll keep your absence a secret. You don't want to funk it?"

"My deah Blake, I am perfectly weady, and I will do all that's poss to get on the track of Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy.

"Right-ho!" said Blake heartily. "We'll make these bounders in the Shell sing a little smaller before we've done with them. Now, it's best to strike while the iron's hot, Gussy. Get ready to go!"

"What about my pwpewapation?"

"Blow your preparation! I'll do it for you."

"Vewy well."

"We'll pack you a little bag," said Blake. "I suppose you've got plenty of money? You're always wallowing in filthy lucre."

"I think I have a couple of fivahs, and a pound note or two, and some silvah."

"That's more than enough. Now, to get ready. You'll catch the eight o'clock train at Rylcombe for Euston, change at Wayland. We'll see you off at the gates, and then we'll fix it up to answer for you at calling-over."

So it was arranged.

It was a reckless plan, but Study No. 6 had their backs up, and on such occasions Blake said that a little recklessness was called for.

Half an hour later Arthur Augustus was gone from the old school, on the track of Tom Merry, or, as he expressed it himself: "On the twack!"

CHAPTER 5.

Tom Merry Has a Warm Time:

"MERRY! I—er—think your name is Merry?"

Mr. Crane looked sharply at Tom Merry as he made the remark.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

He was quite aware that Mr. Crane, alias Amos Keene, knew very well that his name was Merry, but he was playing the part assigned him by the detective.

Not by the slightest sign did he allow the master of Hyam House to suspect that he had recognised him.

"Ah, Merry!" said Mr. Crane, with a nod. "I want you to understand that your way of life at Hyam House will be very different from what you have been accustomed to at the school you have lately left."

"Yes, sir."

"There will be no foolish indulgence here. You are a mischievous, wilful boy—I understand so from Mr. Fawcett, I mean—but those qualities will not flourish at Hyam House. I expect you to be quiet and obedient."

"I shall do my best, sir."

"You will be expected to work well, and to show a good result of your work," said Mr. Crane. "You will find a list of rules posted up in the dining-room. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

Tom left the master's study. He breathed more freely when he got outside it. He had never liked Amos Keene, and now he liked him less than ever.

The boys of Hyam House were accustomed to sleep in a single large room, which served as a dormitory. They took their meals in the dining-room—a large apartment looking out on the grounds. Hyam House had once been a private house, standing in its own grounds, and was a very old building. It was mostly in great need of repair, and the grounds were in a very uncultivated and ill-kept condition. The place seemed very well suited for the kind of establishment Mr. Crane had started there.

Tom Merry went into the dining-room.

He knew that Mr. Crane was not to be trifled with, and that the kindness he was accustomed to at St. Jim's would be sadly lacking here. Yet he could not change his nature, and he was still Tom Merry—Merry by name and merry by

nature. He came into the room, where the gloomy-looking boys were assembled, like a ray of sunshine.

There were six boys present. They had come in for dinner. The table was laid, but it was not yet the time for Mr. Crane to make his appearance. Until he did so none of the youngsters ventured to approach the table. Nor were the viands on it of a tempting kind, from Tom Merry's point of view. Slabs of bread, and cold meat and vegetables, all of the scraggiest kind, formed the menu at Hyam House.

Every eye was fixed upon Tom Merry as he strolled in, his hands in his pockets, whistling a careless tune. Some of the boys looked horrified, as if whistling were almost an unpardonable sin in the precincts of the funereal private school.

Tom gave a general nod all round.

"Hallo!" said Tom cheerfully. "I'm the new boy. My name's Tom Merry. I'm glad to see you all."

"Don't speak so loud," said a pale-faced youth with freckles. "Mr. Crane will be angry if he hears you."

Tom laughed. "Oh, I dare say the Crane-bird will get used to it in time," he said. "What's your name, chappy?"

"Herbert Foster."

"Well, how do you do, chappy? I say, I'm jolly hungry. Do you kids dine alone, or are you waiting for anybody?"

"We're waiting for Mr. Crane."

"Well, if he doesn't hop in soon I shall start," said Tom. "I'm awfully peckish, though I must say that mutton doesn't look any too enticing. I wouldn't give it to my terrier at St. Jim's."

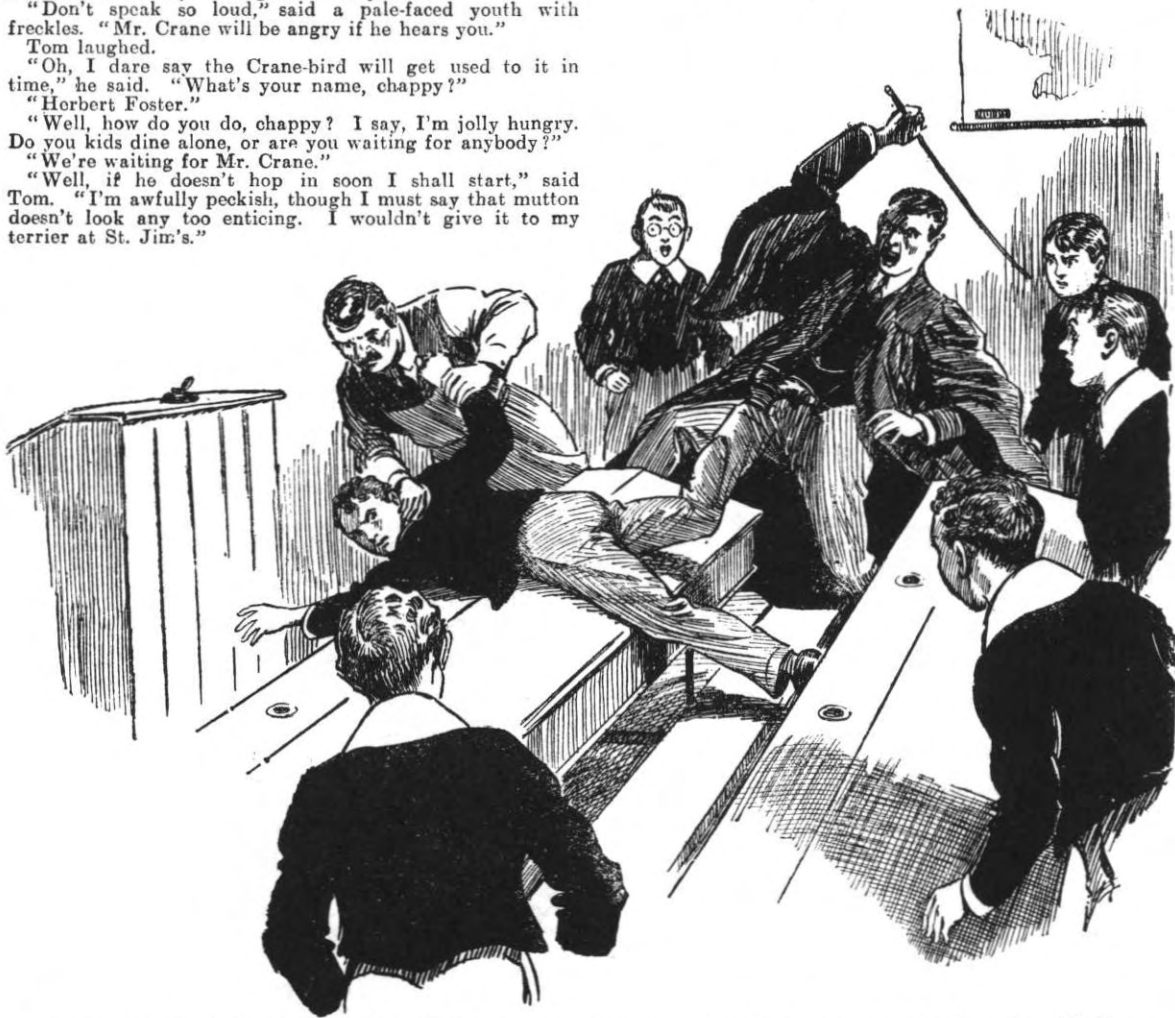
"Yes, sir," said Wickers.

Mr. Crane took his seat at the head of the table. He did not trouble about the formality of grace. Tom sat down with burning eyes.

The fare was certainly bad, but he had a healthy boy's appetite, and he wanted something to eat. He did not mean to go all day without his dinner, and he had already made up his mind to circumvent Mr. Crane somehow.

Poor as the fare was, the Hyam House boys cleared their plates very rapidly. They were evidently hungry; but no one ventured to ask for a second helping. Second helpings were tabooed at Hyam House.

After dinner they went into the grounds to amuse themselves till afternoon lessons. Tom went with the rest, feeling extremely hungry and dissatisfied.



Mr. Crane suddenly received Tom's foot right in his waistcoat! With a yell the master leapt backwards, while Tom continued to struggle violently.

"Indeed," said a cold, hard voice.

Tom started a little.

Mr. Crane must have been very close behind him, and he had now entered the dining-room with his silent, cat-like tread.

He fixed his cold, flinty eyes on Tom as the latter turned. "Indeed, Merry! You are pleased to disapprove of the fare provided for you?"

"Well, sir, it isn't what I've been used to," said Tom frankly.

Mr. Crane smiled sarcastically.

"It is what you will have to get used to, Merry, I think. No doubt you will be able to eat it with enjoyment when you become really hungry."

"I hope so, sir."

"In order to give you every opportunity, Merry, you will miss our dinner and have nothing to eat till tea-time to-night," said Mr. Crane, with a cold smile. "Wickers, you will not serve Master Merry."

"I say, you were silly to get Crane's back up like that," said Herbert Foster, joining Tom. "It's a favourite trick of his to make a fellow miss his dinner. It saves the grub, you see. He's the champion mean man, and when he takes a spite against you he lets you know it. We don't enjoy life here."

"I see you don't," said Tom. "If I had a schoolmaster like that I should put him through it pretty well."

"Well, you've got him now," said Foster.

"Yes, of course," said Tom hastily. "I'm nearly famished. How long before lessons?"

"A quarter of an hour yet. There's a bell rings when it's time."

"Where's the larder?"

Foster started.

"What do you want with the larder?"

"Grub," said Tom laconically.

"You don't mean to say—"

"I mean to say I'm fearfully hungry, and want something to eat," said Tom determinedly. "Tell me where the larder is. I don't want you to help me."

Foster grinned.

"Oh, I'll show you," he said. "But Crane will half kill you."

"I'll risk that."

Foster explained the bearings of the larder to Tom, but did not venture to enter the house with him.

Tom went in boldly enough, but he scouted cautiously to see that the coast was clear before he approached the larder.

He found the way easily enough, and having dodged Wickers, the ill-tempered looking manservant, he reached the larder.

It was not a very well-supplied one; but there was plenty for Tom. Giving a hasty glance round, he started on the remains of a ham, eating as fast as he could, in case of interruption.

Tom had a healthy appetite, and he had a foreboding that there might be no tea for him after this escapade, and so he did not spare the ham. It is probable that he consumed as much, now that he was on his mettle, as the rest of the scholars at Hyam House had eaten between them at dinner-time.

Then he turned to a cold pie, and made a clean sweep of it, and finished up with cheese and biscuits. The whole he washed down with a jug of milk.

"Well," murmured Tom, as he pushed open the door of the larder again, "I feel better now, and that's one advantage. I wonder if there will be a row."

He had not long to wonder.

As he emerged from the larder, he came face to face with Wickers, who stared at him in amazement. Then he gave a shout.

"You've been a-boning the grub, you young himp!"

Tom Merry nodded coolly.

"My dear chap, you are quite right," he said. "As you so energetically and grammatically put it, I have been a-boning the grub."

"You young himp!"

"Let me pass, like a good fellow."

"Yes, I'll let you pass," said Wickers, and he made a grab at Tom Merry's collar.

Tom dodged promptly, and Wickers stumbled over his foot and measured his length on the floor. By the time he had risen again, Tom had vanished.

The new boy at Hyam House rejoined the others in the grounds. Herbert Foster looked at him curiously.

"Have you had a feed?"

"Yes."

"There will be the dickens to pay. There's the bell. Come on!"

The boys trooped into the house. They entered the school-room, a large and lofty apartment, which had been the drawing-room of the house when it had been a private mansion. There was the master's desk at one end, and half a dozen forms with desks in rows.

Mr. Crane was standing by his desk, a frown upon his face, and a cane in his hand.

His expression, as he glanced at Tom Merry, showed that Wickers had informed him of Tom's little escapade in the larder.

"Merry!" he said, in his cold, cutting voice.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Come out here!"

Tom Merry obeyed. The rest of the boys stood up, looking on with interest not unmixed with fear. Tom Merry faced the master coolly.

"Merry, I hear that you have been to the larder and gorged yourself in a most disgusting manner there," said Mr. Crane.

"That is not the case, sir."

"Do you deny that you went there?"

"No, sir. I went there, and ate enough to fill me up," said Tom cheerfully. "I was awfully hungry, and I wasn't sent here to be starved, you know."

Mr. Crane's face went black with rage.

"I have already noticed that you are inclined to be self-willed and insolent, Merry," he said. "I shall punish you severely, as a lesson to yourself and to others. Hold out your hand!"

Tom hesitated a moment, and then held out his hand. The cane came down with a savage slash upon it.

"Now the other."

The other palm was served the same.

"The other again."

Tom Merry put his hands behind him. He could see plainly enough that Amos Keene bore him an old grudge from the days of St. Jim's, and meant to make him suffer, now that he was, as he imagined, in his power. Obedience

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was useless when the master's object was to goad him to resistance as an excuse for a severe punishment.

"Hold out your hand!" shouted Mr. Crane.

Tom Merry did not stir.

The boys looked at one another in amazement. They did not know Tom Merry.

"Wickers!"

The manservant came in.

"You will hold Master Merry while I flog him," said Mr. Crane.

"Yes, sir."

"You won't!" said Tom Merry, with a glint in his eyes.

"Don't touch me, you brute, or you'll get hurt."

"Take him up, Wickers," said Mr. Crane, in a low voice of concentrated fury.

"Yes, sir," said Wickers.

But he approached Tom cautiously.

The hero of the Shell at St. Jim's was an athletic lad for his age, and he had his fists clenched. He had no respect for Wickers, and evidently meant to hit out.

Wickers made a sudden rush. Tom Merry's right came out, and Wickers sat down suddenly. He held his hand to his nose, from which a red stream was flowing.

"Seize him, you fool!" shouted Mr. Crane.

"Tain't so blessed easy!" murmured Wickers, staggering to his feet.

"Seize him, or I shall instantly discharge you!"

Wickers scowled savagely, and made another rush at Tom Merry. Tom hit out again, and Wickers gasped as he received a drive in the same place again; but he managed to grasp Tom, and then the boy's strength was as nothing against that of a full-grown man.

Tom was gripped and sprawled across a desk, and Wickers held him savagely, face downwards, and then Mr. Crane brought the cane furiously into play.

Tom Merry wriggled and struggled.

He had never had a caning like that before in his life, and till that moment he thought he had never known what pain really was. A birch was simply nothing in comparison with the stinging, lashing cane.

He would not cry out. He set his teeth obstinately, determined that no sound of pain, no appeal for mercy, should pass his lips. But he struggled desperately, and Wickers had all his work cut out to hold him.

And Mr. Crane, approaching too near in the enjoyment of his cruelty, suddenly received a drive from one of Tom's lashing feet full in the region commonly known as the "bread-basket." It doubled him up, and he staggered away, gasping, and held on to his desk for support. Tom tore himself loose from Wickers.

"That—that will do!" gasped Mr. Crane. "Merry, you will go to the dormitory at once, and remain there, without food or drink, till bed-time!"

Tom left the room.

He was aching in every limb, and he was glad to get away. His heart was burning with resentment and fiery indignation. He might not have gone so quietly if he had been, as Mr. Crane imagined, an ordinary pupil at Hyam House. But Tom Merry was there to play the part assigned to him by Ferrers Locke, and he did not want to fail the detective. Whatever usage he received at Hyam House, he had no choice but to put up with it till the work of Ferrers Locke was done. Then—well, then he would be at St. Jim's again, and Mr. Crane, alias Amos Keene, would in all probability be in prison.

CHAPTER 6.

The Swell of St. Jim's on the "Twack."

"BAI Jove! I wonder where I've got to, don't you know!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared about him as he made the remark.

The swell of St. Jim's was in London at last; but he could hardly be said to be fairly on the "twack," as he called it.

He had caught the train at Rylcombe, which Blake had instructed him to catch. He had arrived at Euston in the small hours of the morning, and had passed the remainder of the dark hours at the station hotel. He had plenty of money, and so far his task had been simple. He did not rise till twelve o'clock, and then he spent an hour and half over a breakfast and lunch combined.

After that he thought it was time to get on the "twack."

But that did not seem very simple. Viewed from the distance of St. Jim's, the matter seemed far easier than it seemed now that Arthur Augustus was on the spot.

After some reflection he took a taxi to Kennington. The driver looked at him curiously.

"What part of Kennington, sir?" he asked, with the

extreme respect of a London cabby for a fare who looked as if he would tip liberally.

"Oh, any part!" said Arthur Augustus vaguely. "Get on there as quickly as poss, my good fellah. I am in a huwwy."

The taximan drove off.

He drove Arthur Augustus across London, and set him down in the Kennington Road, and Arthur Augustus thanked him politely.

Then Arthur Augustus looked round him.

Here he was in the district where, according to Jack Blake's clever deductions, Tom Merry was engaged with the London detective.

But it seemed that a search for Tom Merry would be a good deal like hunting for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

D'Arcy, having dismissed the taxi, walked on, turning over hastily in his mind various plans for effecting the purpose for which Study No. 6 had dispatched him from St. Jim's.

Where he was and where he was going he had no very clear idea.

And at last, tired and quite confused, he halted, and stood looking round him upon a busy scene, lost and completely nonplussed.

"Bai Jove! Where can I possibly be, I wondah?"

He muttered the words aloud.

"'Ere yah, sir!"

A ragged-looking newsboy rushed up to D'Arcy with a paper extended in his grimy fingers. He had a bundle of others under his arm.

D'Arcy looked at him in amazement.

He mechanically accepted the paper held out to him.

"Thank you!" he said politely.

The newsboy stared at him.

"'Ere, none of yer little gimes!" he said.

D'Arcy stared at him haughtily.

"I fail to compwehend," he said.

The newsboy gasped.

"You—you what?"

"I fail to compwehend," he said.

"Oh, strike me pink!" said the vendor of "Stars" and "Newses."

They stared at each other. A more striking contrast than they presented could hardly have been imagined.

D'Arcy had dressed himself in a style befitting the importance of the expedition, before leaving St. Jim's.

He wore his shiniest silk topper, his palest lavender kid gloves, his handsomest boots and neatest spats, his best diamond studs, and the most brilliant of the brilliant assortment of waistcoats in his store at St. Jim's.

The newsboy was clad, the lower half of him, in some garments that might have been trousers once, but now consisted chiefly of holes. He wore a coat that had belonged to someone the size of a Lifeguardsman, and though it had been sheared away to make it wearable, it still nearly trailed on the ground behind him. He wore the wreck of an ancient bowler hat on his head, and what had once been boots on his feet.

His face was grimy, but it was a good-natured face, and the little keen, twinkling eyes had some humour in them.

"I do not know how to stwike you pink, or any other colour," said D'Arcy. "Nor should I do so, my good boy. Go away!"

"None of yer gimes!"

D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Go away!"

"A blessed bilk!" said the newsboy. "A blessed, blinking bilk!"

"Are you alluding to me?" said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"Yes, I am. Where's yer penny?"

"What?"

"Yer penny."

"Oh, a penny! You want me to pwsent you with a penny to buy sweets?" asked D'Arcy innocently.

The newsboy gave him a withering look.

"Sweets! Oh, lummy! I don't eat sweets. I smokes cigarettes!"

"Then you are vewy w'ong," said Arthur Augustus.

(Continued on next page.)

A few more miles to go



A FEW more weary miles to go before there is a halt for tea. Now is the time for Wrigley's. The delightful flavour of Wrigley's Chewing Gum will buck you up—will refresh the mouth and take away the parched feeling.

And Wrigley's "after every meal" will aid digestion and cleanse the teeth.

In two flavours—P.K., a pure peppermint flavour; and Spearmint, a pure mint leaf flavour. Only 1d. a packet, but the finest quality money can buy.

The flavour lasts—British made



WRIGLEY'S

1^D PER PACKET



"You will not gwow up stwong, and you will wuin your wind, and will not be able to play cwicket."

"Oh, lummy! Gimme the penny for that paper, and lemme go afore I jump on yer!"

"Oh, I perceive!" said D'Arcy. "You wequire payment for this papah." He fumbled in his pocket and produced a half-crown. "I have nothin' smallah than a half-crown. Can you give me change?"

"Oh, lummy! You'll give me fts!"

"You will oblige me," said D'Arcy, "by being wespectful in your mannah. I am not accustomed to being addressed with impertinence. You must not be impert, or I shall feel that it is my duty to chastise you!"

The newsboy looked puzzled.

"What does that mean in Henglish?" he asked.

"I shall give you a severe licking, that is what it means," said D'Arcy. "I do not want youah papah. I did not ask you for it. Go away and play!"

The newsboy seemed dazed.

"A licking?" he said. "You lick me? You—you tailor's dummy, you lick me—me," 'Arry 'Arris? Come on, then! I want to have that there lickin'!"

He laid his bundle of papers carefully on the pavement and squared up to D'Arcy, much to the horror of the swell of the School House at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was no coward. In spite of his dandified ways he was as plucky a youngster as any at St. Jim's, and that was saying a good deal. But he shrank, with a shiver of horror, from the idea of fighting a London newsboy in the street. And then, his clothes, his hat—above all, his waistcoat! How they would suffer in such a rough-and-tumble scrimmage! He could stand a fight, and, if necessary, a licking, as well as most fellows. But to have a newsboy's grimy hands on his face—to have the tousled head jammed against his beautiful waistcoat—horror!

"Keep away, you extremely wude person!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wufuse to entah into any such mattah at all. Yaas, wathah! I wufuse to soil my hands upon you."

The newsboy danced round him, brandishing a pair of very dirty fists.

"Come on!" he yelled.

"I wufuse! I distinctly wufuse to come on! It is not poss for a person of my dig!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "Keep your distance, you wude boy! Go away! I will call a constable and have you taken into cus— Oh!"

The "Oh!" was elicited by a tap on the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus.

"There you har!" yelled 'Arry 'Arris. "Now come on!"

"Go away!"

"That's one for your boko! There's one for your fancy weskit!"

"O-o-oh!" gasped D'Arcy, as he received a drive in the chest. "You will pwovoke me to wetaliat, you wude boundah! I shall weally have to thwash you!"

And D'Arcy, throwing his "dig" to the winds, went for the newsboy. But the street arab had not passed the years of his brief career in the gutter without learning how to use his fists in a way that was positively amazing to the swell of St. Jim's. He danced round D'Arcy, planting in a blow here and there, till poor Arthur Augustus was bewildered, and did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

A crowd gathered round, looking on with great amusement, the rougher section of it cheering on 'Arry 'Arris, who was now wildly excited.

"Come hon!" yelled 'Arry, tapping D'Arcy on the nose and then on the chin. "Come hon! There's a oner for your smeller! There's a tap for your kisser! Yah! Come hon!"

The last tap was too much for D'Arcy.

He sat down violently in the gutter, and, as it happened to be a muddy one, he sent up a splash round him as he sat down. There he remained, looking up in almost idiotic bewilderment at the newsboy, who was executing a kind of war dance round him and brandishing his grimy fists.

His tall hat was in the mud beside him, his trousers were muddy all over, his beautiful waistcoat soiled from the top button to the bottom. His eyeglass dangled round his neck. His gloves were split and soiled.

"Have some more?" shouted 'Arry 'Arris. "Ere's some more, if you want it! Come hon! Get hup and come hon! Why don't you get hup?"

"You wude boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

"If you've had enough, say so. Have you had enough?"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"That's all right, then. You'll think twice next time afore you insult 'Arry 'Arris," said the newsboy, calming down somewhat and picking up his bundle of papers. "Ere you are, sir! 'Ere's your paper! 'Speshul edition! Latest murders! 'Ere you are!"

And 'Arry 'Arris was gone.

D'Arcy sat in the muddy gutter, wondering whether the world was coming to an end. He, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, had been knocked out and left sitting in the gutter by a newsboy of the London streets! Evidently something was wrong with the laws of Nature.

"Let me lend you a 'and, sir," said a rough but civil voice; and a flashily dressed individual plucked D'Arcy from the gutter. "That's right!"

He plucked Arthur Augustus from the gutter. The crowd dispersed, but D'Arcy's new friend did not leave him. He stood holding the swell of St. Jim's by the arm till he recovered himself.

"Thank you!" said D'Arcy feebly. "Allow me to weward you with half-a-crown."

The flashy individual shook his head.

"Not at all, sir. I only want to help you. Would you like to come into my 'ouse for a brush-up arter that little fall? You look rather soiled, sir—you do, really. 'Ere's your 'at."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured D'Arcy. "Is your house near here?"

"Tain't fur, sir. Lean on my arm—so. You are a sight to be seen in the street—you are, sir, and no mistake."

D'Arcy shuddered. His weakest spot was his personal appearance, and the knowledge that he looked dilapidated and disreputable was gall and wormwood to him.

"Thank you!" he gasped. "I shall be vevy glad to come."

"That's right, sir! This is the way."

The flashy individual led Arthur Augustus away from the scene of the fight. D'Arcy was too dazed to notice where they were going, and too grateful to the friend in need to think of suspecting him of ulterior motives.

They passed through several streets, and D'Arcy did not notice that each was darker and meaner than the last, till the last was a mere alley—a dismal alley, where dwelt dirty, unshaven men and slatternly women. His guide pushed open a door, and D'Arcy was pushed into a dusky room.

The door slammed. The sound of the slam awoke, for

Potts, the Office-Boy.



the first time, a vague alarm in D'Arcy's breast. He looked quickly round him.

"What is this place, my good friend?"

"It's my digs," said his guide, with a chuckle. "And now I'll trouble you to 'and over your watch and chain and spare cash, Mr. Blooming Dandy."

And Arthur Augustus realised that he had been trapped, and that he was at the mercy of one of the thieves of London.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry Makes a Discovery!

TOM MERRY came down in the morning with an ache in every limb. He had not slept much during the night, for the effect of the thrashing Mr. Crane had given him had been lasting. He was looking a little paler than usual when he took his place at the breakfast-table in the dining-room at Hyam House. Mr. Crane looked at him with a sour smile.

"I hope you have learned your lesson, Merry," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom quietly.

Breakfast was a dismal meal. There wasn't much to eat, and what there was wasn't of the best. The boys of Hyam House ate as much as they dared under the eye of Mr. Crane, and then they adjourned to the school-room.

Mr. Crane was severe and fault-finding. He was especially so with Tom Merry. But Tom was very careful, and he contrived to get through the morning without another caning. At dinner-time Mr. Crane addressed his remarks chiefly to Tom, seeking to provoke the boy into a hasty answer.

"Are you satisfied with the food to-day, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom cheerfully.

"You are sure you would not like it improved?" asked the master of Hyam House, with sarcasm.

"Well, yes, I should, sir," said Tom.

One of the boys giggled. Mr. Crane fixed a cold, icy glance upon him.

"Foster!"

"Yes, sir," said Foster, trembling.

"You laughed, Foster. What did you laugh at?"

"At what Merry said, sir. I am sorry, sir."

"Ah! In order that you may be sincerely sorry, you will miss your dinner, Foster."

"Yes, sir."

"And as you are the cause of Foster's fault, Merry, you will miss your dinner, also."

Tom's eyes flashed.

"Well, Merry, have you anything to say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Are you quite sure?"

Tom looked the master straight in the face.

"Do you want me to speak what I think?" he said bluntly.

"Really, I should be honoured," said Mr. Crane.

"Well, I think you would not be allowed to starve boys in this manner if it were known," said Tom Merry.

The boys looked terror-stricken at this reply. Mr. Crane turned crimson.

"Indeed, Merry! You will go to your dormitory, and remain there the rest of the day without anything but bread and water."

Tom hesitated.

"Wickers!" roared Mr. Crane. "Remove Merry from the room!"

"Yes, sir."

"You needn't trouble," said Tom Merry, rising from his form. "I'm going."

He walked out of the dining-room. He went up to the large room used as a dormitory, and sat on one of the beds, thinking. He was sitting there when he heard the boys go into the school-room, and detected Mr. Crane's unpleasant voice from below, dealing with the class.

Then he rose, a gleam in his eyes. He had already ascertained that Mr. Crane's establishment consisted only of himself and Wickers, besides the boys. Wickers, he knew, was now down in the kitchen. Tom Merry had the upper part of the house to himself. He stepped cautiously to the door of the room. There was no sound in the house save a drone from the school-room below, and a distant clink of washing knife and forks and dishes in the nether regions.

"Now's the time," murmured Tom.

He removed his boots, and left them inside the door. Then he stole out of the dormitory.

It has already been said that Hyam House was a very old building, and had been a mansion in its palmy days. The establishment of Mr. Crane occupied less than half of the house, and there was a wing quite unused. Mr. Crane doubtless hoped that his school would grow when its peculiar advantages became more widely known, but at present Tom Merry was his seventh pupil only. A large part of the house was locked up and unused.

Tom had intended to explore the uninhabited part of the house during the night. But he would have found it difficult, and perhaps dangerous, and now his banishment to the dormitory had given him the opportunity of effecting his purpose in the daylight.

He was at Hyam House to learn whether any person was secretly living in the building. He would never have a better chance than the present of making the discovery. The other boys were too terrified by Mr. Crane to dream of venturing out of their own quarters. Tom Merry was not so easily terrified.

He crept along the passage leading into the disused wing of Hyam House. It was dark and dusty and neglected. He turned into a passage running at right angles with it, out of which several doors opened. The air of the whole place was that of dust and neglect and desertion. But a sudden gleam came into Tom's eyes.

The handles of the doors in this passage were dirty from want of care and use. But the handle of the last door was far cleaner than the rest. There was only one way of accounting for that—the door of that room was frequently opened, while the other doors were never touched.

Tom had already learned, by talk with the boys in the dormitory the previous night, and the whole wing was supposed to be uninhabited. He had hinted at the possibility of some friend of Mr. Crane's residing there, and Herbert Foster had positively assured him that there was no one in the house, so far as any of them knew, beside themselves, Mr. Crane, and Wickers.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as he advanced closer to the door. He put his ear to the keyhole to listen. He heard nothing, but smelt something—a very distinct odour of tobacco. He wasn't fond of tobacco smoke, but he sniffed up that scent with a great deal of satisfaction.

Someone was smoking a cigar in the room of the deserted wing. Who was it? Wickers was below; Mr. Crane was in the school-room with the class. Who was in the room

Mistaken Identity!



there smoking a cigar. Some secret dweller in Hyam House! There was no other explanation.

Tom, his heart beating hard with excitement, placed his eye to the keyhole, and looked through. At first he could see little, but soon he made out most of the interior of the room, and saw that, unlike the other rooms, it was furnished. He caught a glimpse of the grate, and saw that a fire was burning in it. A moving figure crossed his line of vision. A man was in the room, moving about, and the next instant the door was flung open.

Tom had perhaps made some slight sound without noticing it. He started back as the door was flung open. A man with a sandy-coloured beard, and pale, grey eyes appeared in the doorway. He gave Tom Merry a startled glance.

"Who are you?" he cried. "What are you doing here?" Tom was dismayed for a moment, but he did not lose his accustomed coolness.

"Nothing, sir," he replied. The man sprang forward, and seized him by the arm. "You spying young hound! Who are you?"

Tom Merry struggled.

"Let me go!"

"What are you doing here? Who are you?" cried the man, shaking him violently.

"I am a new boy here," said Tom; "that's all."

"What is your name?"

"Tom Merry."

"You—you young rascal! You were spying here! Crane—Crane!"

He shouted the name at the top of his voice, and the house rang with it.

"Crane!"

There was the sound of an opening, then a slamming door.

"Crane—Crane!"

Mr. Crane came panting along the corridor.

"Scarlett, you fool, what are you shouting like that for? Are you drunk?"

Tom's eyes danced.

Scarlett! There was no doubt now. He had run the defaulting solicitor—the man whose flight threatened to ruin the Head of St. Jim's—to earth! But his satisfaction was short-lived. He caught sight of Crane's face as he came swiftly along the passage, and what he saw in it made him shiver.

"Crane, who is this boy?"

"Tom Merry!" Crane ground his teeth. "What did he come here for? Don't let him escape!"

He ran forward swiftly to seize Tom. The boy was desperate. He knew that he had to deal with two men who were desperate, whom the fear of exposure and penal servitude might drive to any cruel deed.

He gave Scarlett a sudden terrific kick, and the man released him, with a cry of pain. It was only for a moment, but a moment was enough for Tom Merry. He darted away along the passage to the end.

"After him!" panted Crane. "There is no outlet that way!"

He dashed after Tom Merry, Scarlett following more slowly. Tom heard his words, and his teeth came together hard. He turned and rushed back towards Mr. Crane. Before the villain could guard against this sudden attack, Tom Merry's lowered head crashed upon his stomach, and he reeled back, and went with a thud to the floor.

He gave a gasp as all the breath was knocked out of his body, and lay wriggling and groaning on the floor, while the boy, his own head reeling from the concussion, dashed on. Scarlett made a clutch at him, with a murderous light in his eyes. Tom dodged with the neatness of a Rugby three-quarter, and ran on swiftly, with the rascal in hot pursuit; but Mr. Crane did not join in the chase now. He still lay on the floor groaning.

Tom ran as fast as he could. Scarlett was shouting to Wickers, and, as Tom dashed along the corridor into the inhabited wing of the house, he heard the manservant ascending the basement stairs. He redoubled his speed, and reached the door opening upon the grounds. Right out into the sunny afternoon he dashed.

"After him!" screamed Scarlett. "Seize him, Wickers!"

They dashed out into the open after Tom. Wickers, who was evidently in the secret, put on a short spurt, and drew very near to Tom. The solicitor panted on behind. Both of them realised now that Tom Merry meant to make a break to escape from Hyam House altogether, and that, if he went, he would carry out into the world the secret so carefully hidden by Mr. Crane.

Everything depended upon capturing him. What was done with him afterwards was another matter. His capture, before he could gain the street, was the important point now.

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"Cut him off from the front, sir!" shouted Wickers.

And Scarlett dashed off to obey. The manservant panted upon the track of Tom Merry. Tom was breathing hard now. He was one of the finest sprinters in the junior forms at St. Jim's; but the concussion when he butted into Mr. Crane had made him sick and faint, and his treatment since coming to Hyam House had, of course, detracted from his form. He felt himself failing, and heard the thudding footsteps of Wickers coming momentarily nearer and nearer.

He dodged the man and raced away, running parallel with the high wall of Hyam House. He could have cut off towards the front, but there he knew that the scoundrel, Scarlett, was watching and waiting for him to cut off his escape.

Closer behind sounded the heavy footsteps and panting breath of Wickers. The ruffian's outstretched hand almost touched the boy's shoulder. Tom Merry felt a puff of hot breath on his cheek. He threw himself suddenly to earth.



It was an old trick, but the ruffian behind was not prepared for it, and it succeeded. He went on, right over Tom Merry, and fell helplessly upon his face. He gave a gasp of pain, and his hands crashed down upon the rough ground.

Tom was on his feet in a moment. He had succeeded beyond his hopes, and had gained a respite. He ran on again. The high wall bounding the grounds of Hyam House seemed to shut him off from hope. But a sudden gleam darted into his eyes.

In one corner a tree grew very close to the high wall. As soon as he observed it, and saw his chance, Tom Merry dashed straight for the tree; but Wickers was now on his feet, and chasing him hotly again.

Tom made a desperate spring, and caught a low branch. At the same moment, Wickers, with a frantic spurt, reached him, and grasped one of his ankles as he clung to the branch above.

"Got you! Oh!"

Tom was too desperate to hesitate at anything then. His free foot crashed into Wickers' face, and the ruffian reeled back, with the blood spurting from his nose and mouth. His grasp relaxed, and Tom, with a final effort, dragged himself upon the branch. He lay along it, holding on dizzily, gasping for breath and utterly exhausted.

Wickers staggered to his feet, holding his hand to his face, and glared up at him. He reached up to get a grip on the branch. Tom drew himself farther into the tree, and scrambled along another branch to the wall. Wickers saw that he could not overtake him in time.

"Here, stop!" he exclaimed. "You'll break your neck getting over that wall. I'm not going to hurt you. Come back, and Mr. Crane will let you off."

Tom gave a gasping laugh.

"Not good enough!" he murmured. "Wickers, old dear,



Ferrers Locke took a flying leap and landed on top of Scarlett, while Tom bravely hurled himself at Crane, just as two policemen appeared in the doorway!

you must be a simple merchant if you think I could swallow a yarn like that. Good-bye, Bluebell!"

Tom hung on the wall with his hands, and dropped on the outside. It was a good drop, but Tom Merry was active. He fell lightly upon his feet, and ran along the passage which lay outside the wall. A minute more, and he was in the street.

Five minutes more and he was at the telephone office, ringing up Ferrers Locke. Meanwhile, Wickers returned sullenly towards the house. He met Mr. Crane coming out.

"Where is he?" gasped the master of Hyam House.

"Blessed if I know!" said Wickers sullenly.

Crane turned deadly pale.

"You—you haven't let him escape?"

"He got over the wall."

"Fool! Idiot! Traitor! All is lost!"

"I know all is lost; and a nice hole you've got me into, as well as yourself. I'm going to be about one minute before I clear out of this house for good!"

"Stop! I—"

"You'd better clear, too. That boy knows something. The next thing will be the police coming down on us!" said Wickers roughly. "I'm off, anyway!"

Crane stood half-dazed, his hand pressed to his forehead. Scarlett came round from the front of the house and joined him.

"Where is the boy? You have caught him?"

"He has escaped!"

Scarlett reeled against the wall.

"Then all is lost!"

"He can know nothing!" panted Crane. "How can he know anything?"

"He heard you call me Scarlett."

"The name would mean nothing to him."

"He may have seen it in the papers. What was he searching through the deserted wing for? He came here for some purpose. He may be a spy of the police."

"Nonsense! He is a schoolboy."

"How do you know?" snarled Scarlett. "He might be a spy. He is more than old enough to be one of the assistants of Ferrers Locke, who has the case in hand."

"Impossible! I know he is simply a schoolboy, because he was in the Shell at St. Jim's when I was master there."

"St. Jim's! And it is the headmaster at St. Jim's who is one of the greatest sufferers by my absconding!" exclaimed Scarlett. "How do you know that the boy has not been sent purposely to spy out—"

"It is absurd. I cannot imagine so."

"I cannot help fearing so. I shall not remain here."

"It is not safe to go, especially in the daylight."

"It is more safe than to remain," said Scarlett; "and if you are wise you will go, too. We can watch from a distance and see if the police arrive, and then—"

"Where shall we go?" asked Crane despairingly.

"To Flash Bill's den in the Borough. That is our only chance now."

"It is giving up everything!"

"It is escaping penal servitude!"

"I—I suppose it is safer. Let us go. Heavens, what a fool I was to help you in this matter at all! It's too late to think of that now. Let us go."

In five minutes the two rascals were outside Hyam House. From a street corner at a distance they watched the house, and a quarter of an hour later saw an inspector and two constables stop at the gate.

"You see that?" whispered Scarlett.

Crane groaned under his breath.

"I see. Let us go!"

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprise for Arthur Augustus!

"HAND over your spare cash and other walybles!" said the rough voice, in the dusky den into which the unlucky Arthur Augustus had been entrapped. "And sharp, unless you want a knock over the head, young shaver!"

The blood of all the D'Arcy's boiled in the veins of Arthur Augustus.

"You extremely impertinent person!" he exclaimed.

"How dare you address me as a young shavah! Let me out of this dirty place immediately!"

The ruffian chuckled.

"It's easier to get into Flash Bill's 'ouse than to git out ergin!" he said. "Come, I don't want to hurt you! 'And over that watch!"

D'Arcy measured him with his eye.

He was alone in the room with the ruffian, who had produced a life-preserver from his pocket.

He evidently meant business, and Arthur Augustus had no chance whatever against the life-preserver, or against the ruffian without it, for that matter.

Slowly and reluctantly the swell of St. Jim's took out the lovely gold watch which cost his "governah" thirty guineas, and handed it to Flash Bill.

The ruffian looked at it with sparkling eyes.

It was a prize such as very seldom came his way, though Flash Bill was one of the most cunning and successful thieves in London.

"Good!" he commented, stowing it away in his pocket. "Now your cash!"

The two fivers were reluctantly handed over.

"My blessed word!" said Flash Bill. "I didn't know I had caught a blessed Rothschild! Have you got any more about you?"

"Only a note and some silvah," said D'Arcy, almost tearfully. "I considah you a wuff and a most dishonest bwute!"

"Oh, don't say these unkind things!" implored Flash Bill. "Just 'and over the rest of your tin, before I fire you out on your head!"

D'Arcy was about to obey, when the door suddenly opened, and a stream of daylight came into the dusky room, which was lighted only by a small window high up in the wall.

Two men entered quickly, and closed the door behind them.

Flash Bill swung round with a startled oath.

"Wot the dooce— Why, is it you? What's happened?"

"The game's up at Hyam House, that's what," said one of the newcomers. Neither noticed D'Arcy in the shadowy room for a moment. "The gaff is blown!"

"My word!"

"We've come here to lie low for a bit," said the other.

And D'Arcy gave a start of surprise as he heard the voice, for there was a tone in it familiar to his ears. He looked quickly at the speaker.

The two men had been muffled up, though the afternoon certainly was not cold. Now they had turned down their collars, and Arthur Augustus saw their faces. Like Tom, he instantly recognised Amos Keene, in spite of the change in his appearance since the time he was master of the Shell at St. Jim's.

And he was not so cautious as Tom Merry had been.

He stared open-mouthed at the rascal, and at the same moment Crane caught sight of him.

"Hallo! Who is that, Bill? Why, it's—er—"

The swell of St. Jim's was not a person easily forgotten. In spite of his dilapidated appearance, the late master at St. Jim's knew him at once.

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus made his best bow.

"How do you do, Mr. Keene? I am vewy glad to see you—vewy glad indeed!" he said affably.

Flash Bill stared from one to the other.

"Allo!" he exclaimed, with a hoarse laugh. "Is this 'ere an old friend of yours, Crane?"

Crane was gritting his teeth savagely.

"How came he here?" he muttered. "He knows me."



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D'Arcy shrank a little from his savage look.

He had been slow to divine that Crane might be a friend of the ruffian who had entrapped him, but now that knowledge burst upon his mind.

"Weggly, Mr. Keene," he exclaimed, "I know you, of course, but I wegard you in a vewy friendly way. I think—"

Crane turned quickly to the door and locked it.

"I brought 'im 'ere for a gold ticker," said the ruffian, "and he has shelled out uncommon well, I must say."

"He must not go! He knows me, and—"

"Weally, I must go! I have a most important engagement, my dear fellah, and—"

"He will blab! He must not go!" said Crane shrilly. "You must keep him safe here, Bill, now that he has seen us!"

"That's easy done," said Flash Bill carelessly. "There's plenty of rooms in this old rookery where he can be locked up for as long as you want. If you two coves are going to hang up in the house you can look after him."

D'Arcy looked extremely alarmed.

"I pwotest against anythin' of the sort!" he exclaimed. "I cannot stay here undah any circumstances! It is quite impos, I assuah you, deah boys!"

Flash Bill grinned.

He gripped D'Arcy by the collar, and dug his knuckles into the back of his neck.

"Come along, kid!"

"But I assuah you—"

"Git on!"

D'Arcy was dragged away. The ruffian drew him along a reeking, filthy passage, and pitched him into a small room, with a single tiny window high up in the corner. The only furniture the room contained was a sack on the floor.

"Them's your quarters, Mr. Blessed Fine Gentleman!" said Flash Bill, with a hoarse chuckle. "I 'opes as 'ow you'll be nice and comfy!"

"You wuff, wude bwute—"

The slam of the door cut off the rest of D'Arcy's eloquence. Flash Bill returned to the front room, and rejoined the two rascals there.

"Now gimme the lay," he said.

Scarlett explained what had happened at Hyam House.

"I reckon that kid Merry was sent to spy out," was the ruffian's comment. "Anyway, if the police are there, you had no choice but to clear. And if that smart kid Merry is a chum of this Gussy cove, as you say, why, you'd better be careful with Gussy. Why, if he got out and said a word, the whole game would be blown!"

"He shall not get out!" said Crane savagely.

"You're safe 'ere," said Flash Bill. "You was lucky to get away in time. There ain't no chance of the p'lice trackin' you 'ere. You've only got to lie low for a bit."

He unlocked the door.

"So-long! I've got a ticker to sell, and a jolly good long price I fancy I shall get for it! I'm off!"

And Flash Bill departed, to effect the sale of poor Arthur Augustus' gold watch to a "fence" in the New Cut, while the swell of St. Jim's languished in durance vile in the foul den in the Borough slum.

CHAPTER 9.

Tracked Down!

"**F**LOWN!"

Ferrers Locke uttered the one word.

He spoke quite calmly. He was disappointed, but his cool, calm face did not show it. Tom Merry looked and felt, as he would have expressed it, "rotten."

"It's all my fault," he said.

The detective patted his head.

"Not in the least, Tom. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"If I hadn't given myself away to that chap, and had let you know secretly that he was there, you could have swooped down and collared him," said Tom remorsefully. "That was the arrangement, and I mucked it up."

"You did your best, Tom, and you did it uncommonly well," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "You could not help what happened. And when you were discovered your only resource was to escape from Hyam House as quickly as possible. Thank goodness you were able to escape! The police arrived too late—that was only to be expected."

Ferrers Locke gave a regretful glance round Hyam House.

He had, immediately on hearing from Tom by telephone, communicated with the Kennington police by phone, and they had gone with all possible haste to Hyam House.

The detective had dashed down from London as fast as a car could carry him.

He arrived in time to find the police in possession of the house, and Tom Merry waiting for him there, and the boys of Hyam House lost in amazement. But the birds had flown, as he had feared and expected.

Ferrers Locke was philosophical. It was a defeat, but Tom Merry had done much, and the detective took the defeat calmly.

But now both Crane and Scarlett had disappeared into the wilderness of London, and in all Hyam House Ferrers Locke failed to discover a clue to the direction in which they had fled.

Evidence was discovered to prove that Scarlett had been there, and that Crane had been his confederate. But where were they now?

Ferrers Locke left the house with Tom Merry.

He had arranged for the boys of Hyam House to be taken to the police station until their parents could be communicated with. Wherever they went it was pretty certain that their future quarters would be an improvement upon Hyam House, and so they were in high spirits.

Tom Merry's face was serious as he walked beside the detective.

"I suppose you won't want me any more," he said, with a sigh.

The detective smiled.

"I may, Tom. I have not only to find the two rascals who have fled from Hyam House. I had a letter to-day from the Head of St. Jim's, and he has given me someone else to find. You may read the letter."

Tom Merry stopped, in wonder, and read the letter the detective smilingly handed to him.

"Dear Mr. Locke," so ran the epistle from Dr. Holmes—"I have a favour to ask you, if you can spare time to look into the matter. Otherwise, it must be left to the police."

"Some of the boys here have had an inkling of Tom Merry's business in London, and some boys in the School House, who are his rivals in a boyish way for distinction in our little world here, seemed to have resolved to emulate him. It was discovered this morning that a junior named D'Arcy was missing, and on questioning his study mates, Blake and Herries, it came out that the three had cast lots to decide which of their number should follow Tom Merry to London and discover, as Blake expressed it, what larks he was up to."

"Well, the nerve of those Fourth Form kids!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"The lot fell upon D'Arcy," the letter continued, "and he actually left Kylcombe by the night train, and is now somewhere in London. The absurdity of such a quest does not seem to have occurred to the juniors. I dare say D'Arcy will be found wandering about Euston Station. I should mention, however, that he was instructed to proceed to the suburb of Kennington, Blake having deduced by the postmark on a letter received by Manners that Tom Merry was in that district."

"Cute!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He handed the letter back to the detective.

Ferrers Locke was smiling.

"I did not get this letter till late in the day," he said. "I made inquiries at Euston, and learned that Master D'Arcy had stayed at the hotel there, and had taken a cab for Kennington. I found the cab, and the driver informed me where he had set the lad down. Since then I know nothing of him, but I fear that he may have fallen into bad hands."

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Poor old Gussy!" he exclaimed. "He is a funny merchant, but he is a jolly good sort. I hope nothing's happened to him."

"Ere y'are, sir. Ere's yer piper!"

It was a boyish voice as a paper was thrust into Ferrers Locke's hands.

"Hallo, 'Arry!" said the detective, with a smile, as he felt in his pocket for a coin. "Busy, as usual?"

"Bless my boots!" said 'Arry 'Arris. "It's Mr. Locke! Mighty glad to see yer, sir. Ain't got any little jobs for yours truly like the last, sir? I'd do anything for you, Mr. Locke, and like it better'n selling pipers!"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Not at present, 'Arry," he said good-humouredly. "I shall send for you when I want you again. But what's the matter? Have you been in the wars?"

He glanced at the newsboy's face, which showed signs of a recent conflict. One of the eyes had a purple circle, and the nose was red and swollen.

"Only a little scrap," said 'Arry cheerfully. "You should ha' seen the swell when I'd done with him, sir."

"Hallo! So you have been fighting with a swell, have you?"

"You bet, sir. He cheeked me, and I sat on him. Awful swell from the country, I reckon. He wouldn't fight at first—said it wasn't pos for his dig, whatever that means."

Tom Merry pricked up his ears.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "That sounds like old Gussy!" Ferrers Locke looked interested.

"What was the lad like, 'Arry?" he asked.

"Oh, awful swell!" chuckled 'Arry. "Fancy waistcoat an' spats, and topper as shiny as a plate-glass windy. Awful haw-haw! Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha! I left him sitting in the gutter, and I saw Flash Bill help him out, and so I bet he'll go home without his ticker."

"I say, that sounds awfully like D'Arcy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is it possible that it was poor old Gus, Mr. Locke?"

"We will see."

The detective questioned the newsboy closely. 'Arry 'Arris willingly gave a minute description of the "swell," and his description left no doubt in Tom Merry's mind that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whom he had met.

"It's D'Arcy, sir!" exclaimed Tom excitedly. "Now, young shaver, put down your papers and put up your fists."

"Allo! What's biting you?"

Tom Merry squared up to 'Arry 'Arris in a warlike way.

"That chap you licked is a friend of mine. We come from the same school. One good turn deserves another. You licked him, and now I'm going to lick you! Come on!"

The newsboy deposited his papers on the pavement.

"Right-ho!" he exclaimed. "'Arry 'Arris is yer man. Come hon, then!"

In another second they would have been at it hammer and tongs; but Ferrers Locke, laughing, grasped each of them by a shoulder, and they were swung apart.

"I say, sir—" expostulated Tom Merry.

"I say, sir—" ejaculated 'Arry 'Arris.

"You are not going to fight!" said the detective.

"Let me give him just a lick, sir," urged Tom.

"Lemme give 'im just a wipe, Mr. Locke—just a little wipe round his kisser," implored 'Arry.

"Not at all. Both of you be quiet. Listen to me. I'm afraid some misfortune has happened to D'Arcy, the boy you fought with, 'Arry. I want to find him."

"Oh, I see!" said 'Arry, calming down. "Is that the lay?"

"Yes; you say you saw Flash Bill helping him?"

'Arry 'Arris grinned.

"Yes; and I knows Bill, and so do you, sir. He'll have his ticker. I saw him a-piloting the kid along, and I guessed where they was going."

"Where do you think?"

"To Bill's place in Paradise Alley, where he could skin the greeny," said 'Arry promptly.

Tom Merry looked very anxious.

"We must look for poor old Gus, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "We must look for him. Can you guide me to Flash Bill's place, 'Arry?"

"Easy, sir—leastways, I'll point it out. I don't want to be picked outer the Thames, found drowned, to-morrow," said the street Arab, with a wink.

Tom Merry shuddered. The glimpse he was getting of the life of the grim, great city was not wholly a pleasant one.

"Very well," said Ferrers Locke. "Come along, Tom."

They followed the lead of 'Arry 'Arris. Street after street was passed, bewildering to Tom; but Ferrers Locke evidently knew exactly where he was all the time. Towards the end of the journey he stopped and spoke to a couple of policemen, and Tom discovered that the latter were following him at a cautious distance. Some distance from the alley 'Arry stopped.

"That there's the place, guv'nor," he said. "Flash Bill's den is the little 'ouse with the shutters. So-long!"

The detective pressed five shillings into his hands, and 'Arry 'Arris promptly disappeared. Ferrers Locke stood looking towards the shuttered house thoughtfully. Suddenly he made a dash forward and seized a man who had slouched out of a narrow turning.

"Flash Bill!"

Before Flash Bill knew what was happening the handcuffs

clipped on his wrists. He stared at the detective in rage and terror.

"No good making a row!" said Ferrers Locke crisply. "I have the police within easy call. Where is the boy you robbed to-day?"

"The—the boy!" stammered Flash Bill.

"Yes. Still in here?" The detective had quickly noted Flash Bill's look of apprehension towards his hovel. "Open the door, then."

"S'elp me, guv'nor, he ain't—"

"Open that door!"

Flash Bill made a spring to escape. He was lying on the ground the next moment, and a stream of notes and coins jerked from the pocket of his ragged coat.

"Ah!" said Ferrers Locke grimly. "You are in funds, my friend! I know what that means. This way, constables! There is your prisoner!"

"It was a gold ticker," said Flash Bill mournfully—"a lovely gold ticker! I ain't 'urt the kid, Mr. Locke—I swear it!"

"We shall see. I—"

Flash Bill submitted quietly to the constables. He knew that there was no chance of resistance. Ferrers Locke tried the door of the hovel. It was locked. Flash Bill's manner left no doubt in the detective's mind that Arthur Augustus was still in the house, and he did not hesitate to take strong measures. He put his shoulder against the flimsy door, and it crashed in under his weight.

The detective dashed into the room. Two men sprang to their feet, and Ferrers Locke gave almost a yell of amazement and triumph.

"Scarlett!"

And Tom Merry cried in astonishment:

"Amos Keene!"

The two rascals, thus unexpectedly brought face to face with their tracker, stared at Ferrers Locke in rage and terror, blankly, for a moment. Then they made a rush to escape. Like a tiger Ferrers Locke flung himself upon Scarlett, and bore him to the floor. At the same moment Tom Merry valiantly seized Crane, and held him fast.

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"Help, here!" shouted Ferrers Locke.

The two constables dashed into the room. In a moment they saw how matters stood, and joined in the fray. The odds were too great, and in a couple of minutes Scarlett and Crane were secured and handcuffed.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Who'd have thought it? But where's old Gussy?"

In the confusion, Flash Bill had contrived to decamp, handcuffs and all; but in the keen satisfaction of securing the greater prize, nobody cared for that. Tom Merry went along the little, dusky passage, shouting the name of Arthur Augustus.

"I say, D'Arcy! Are you here, Gussy? Answer, Adolphus! Where are you, Aubrey?"

A feeble voice answered from behind a bolted door.

"Here I am, Tom Mewwy, in this extremely dirty room!"

Tom Merry had the door open in a twinkling. D'Arcy came towards him, looking more like a scarecrow than the elegant swell of St. Jim's. Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! You do look a funny merchant, Adolphus!"

"Oh, take me away from here!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "Take me somewhere where I can get a clean collah, for goodness' sake!"

Tom linked his arm in D'Arcy's.

"Come on, old kid! You're all right now. We're going back to St. Jim's, and everything in the garden is lovely! Here he is, Mr. Locke—a little soiled, but as good as new!"

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus.

Back to St. Jim's, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus went in company. The case was finished. The rascals were captured, and it could not be denied that D'Arcy, as well as Tom Merry, had had a hand—though unconsciously—in bringing about the desired result.

Ferrers Locke accompanied the boys to St. Jim's to see the Head. His interview with Dr. Holmes was a very satisfactory one to both. The detective had succeeded in a most difficult case. The doctor had escaped ruin, and possibly unpleasant imputations. For, with the defaulting solicitor, almost the whole of the securities, and a large part of the cash he had absconded with, had been recaptured. The losses caused by Scarlett's dishonesty were almost wholly made good, while the rascal himself went to penal servitude for a long term; and in the same gang at Portland he had the honour of the company of Amos Keene, alias Crane.

Ferrers Locke shook hands heartily with Tom Merry when he left.

"You helped me a great deal, Tom," he said. "I shan't forget what I owe you in a hurry; neither will the doctor, I can answer for it."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom. "I say, you won't forget to send for me again, will you, if you should want me?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I won't forget, Tom. And who knows what may happen?"

"Jolly good sort, that chap!" said Manners, when the detective was gone. "Here you are, back again, covered with glory, Tom, just as I predicted."

"Oh, you're a giddy prophet, you are!" said Blake, coming up. "Jolly lucky for all of you, I think, Merry, that I thought of sending Gussy up to town to help you out!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

Manners stared.

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"I don't see it!" said Blake obstinately. "Gussy tracked the giddy criminals to their lair; you can't deny that."

"Why, he was taken there by his ears!" exclaimed Manners excitedly.

"Oh, weally, Mannahs!" said D'Arcy.

"I don't care how he got there," said Blake. "The detective chap went there because he was there, and found the bouncers he was looking for. I don't deny that Tom Merry had a hand in it, but it was Study No. 6 that brought the business to a success. It was Gussy who scored all along the line. And that fellow Scarlett might be still going about with the Head's cash in his trousers pocket if we hadn't thought of sending Gussy to see the thing through. It was Gussy's innings all the time."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Manners once more.

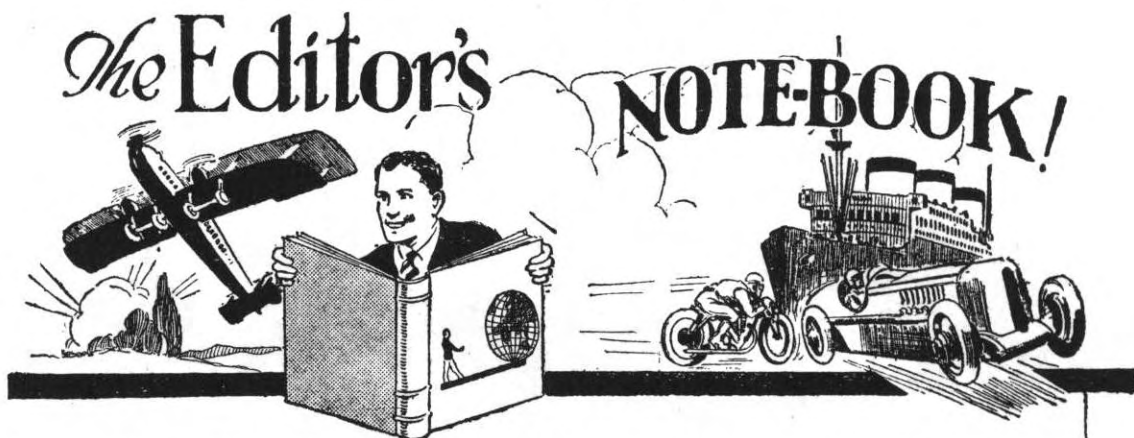
Tom Merry laughed heartily.

"Let it go at that," he said. "It's a case of honours divided!"

THE END.

(It was lucky for Gussy that Tom Merry found him! But Gussy's in worse trouble next week in "THE ST. JIM'S SPEED COPS!")

YOUR EDITOR HAS NEWS FOR YOU—READ IT!



Address all letters The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

HALLO, chums! I've just finished preparing next week's issue, and Jingo, it's a real, sparkling GEM in every sense! The finest tit-bit of the issue is the long complete story of St. Jim's. Unusual things happen as you will gather from the title of:

"THE ST. JIM'S SPEED COPS!"

Look out for thrills and surprises, for in this yarn Martin Clifford is seen at his best.

"THE WINGER!"

How do you like this newcomer to the GEM? How does Snap Fane appeal to you? Drop a line to the address given above and let me have your candid opinion, boys! Meantime, look out for the Winger's next thrilling adventure.

"HANSOM'S HOPELESS HOAX!"

comes from the pen of Owen Conquest, and it's a rare story of school and adventure that will please all of you. Potts, the one and only office-boy, can't keep out of next week's issue; he reckons he's the funniest character in the GEM. Anyway, he's worth his place, and once again he'll supply you with a tonic laugh.

HIGH LIFE!

Many and various are the ways of making a living these days, but the job of sitting on a flagpole is, perhaps, the world's weirdest! Yet there's money in it—big money. Ask Alvin Kelly, the world's champion flagpole sitter, who has been known to collect £100 a day in fees for his amazing job. It was in 1924 that Kelly leaped into prominence, for he obliged the manager of a film company by sitting on the flagpole above a cinema in Los Angeles for 13 hours. Since then this enterprising young man, who obviously doesn't suffer with nerves, has grown rich in his profession. In seven years he has "performed" in over 100 cities, and has sat up aloft for 5,000 hours, or more, regardless of wind, rain, and snow. Kelly started climbing telegraph poles at the tender age of seven, since when he has been, incidentally, boxer, high-diver, aeroplane stunter, sailor, and steeplejack. By the time this appears in print Kelly will have arrived in England, so if you see a very earnest young man perched high up on a flagpole reading his newspaper, don't jump to the

conclusion that a lunatic has escaped! It may be Kelly "doing his stuff."

JACKIE COOGAN'S SUCCESSOR!

"I'm fed up with this camera work. I want to go off with the boys for a bit!" You can imagine a harassed film director tearing his hair and gnashing his teeth when one of his star performers decides to call a halt in the day's work. But in the case of Jackie Coogan, the boy film star, it's different. You see, Jackie's only seven years of age, hardly old enough to realise what an important young fellow he is, or fully appreciate the value of the £15,000 a year contract his father has negotiated for him. Jackie made a great hit in "Skippy," and since then various film companies have been eager to bag his services. This amazing youngster likes film work, but he also likes to have a bit of time off to play with his pals. That's only natural, but it's likely to cause his directors a little perturbation when a most important "shot" is to be made if Jackie suddenly decides to cry off for the day so that he can go and join his pals, or alternatively, if he busies himself with his toys on the studio floor. Film stars are temperamental folk even at the age of seven.

WILL EVERYBODY OWN ONE?

"All aboard? Right! Off we go!" So will commence the daily "flip aloft" from the ordinary size back gardens in the days to come if the Cierva Mark IV Autogiro catches the public's fancy. This latest model—it will be on sale in a few months' time—can "take off" in a run of a dozen yards, and climb or descend vertically by reason of its three special rotating blades. These blades are made to fold up, an improvement on earlier models. A 100 h.p. engine develops a

"forward" speed of close on 100 miles per hour and it is claimed that this autogiro will land on an average size roof with safety—providing the roof is flat of course!

HONESTY'S REWARD!

A taxicab driver of Milan has to thank three things for the sudden windfall of £5,000 that has come to him. First, his honesty; secondly, the forgetfulness of a lady passenger; and thirdly, the law of Italy which decrees that five per cent of the value of an article found and delivered up to the authorities should be paid to the finder. In this case the "find" was a bag of jewellery reputed to be worth £100,000, which an actress had thoughtlessly left in the taxicab. The jewels remained undiscovered for forty-eight hours, as the taxi-driver had packed up for the week-end. You can imagine his surprise when he returned to work, opened the door of his cab, and found himself looking at the equivalent to £100,000!

HIS OWN BRIDGE!

"The boy must go to school," said the Board of Education in effect, "so we shall have to build him a bridge." Thus it comes about that George Frederick Wise, five years of age, is to have a bridge built specially for his use. It's like this. Young George lives on a farm in Lincolnshire, and his nearest school is almost five miles away, and to get to it he would have to travel along a 40 ft. wide drain for two and a half miles, and cross a few meadows until he reached the roadway. Then he's not finished; like good old Felix, he would have to keep on walking for another two miles before he reached the village school. You can imagine that George wouldn't be too fresh for lessons after that—hence the decision of the powers that be to build him a bridge. It will cost forty pounds to construct, and it will enable this lonely youngster to make a short cut to the main road where he can pick up an omnibus to take him the rest of the journey to school. We wonder whether George will ever get fed up with going to school and decide to burn that very special bridge some night when it is dark. We hope not!

SPLENDID GIFTS!

Portable Gramophones, Pocket Knives, Pencil Cases, Wireless Sets, Wireless Valves, Accumulators, Fountain Pens, Electric Torches, Watches, Footballs, Boxing Gloves, etc. These are but a few of the splendid Gifts included in the Nestlé's Milk Chocolate Presentation List which will be found in the revised and enlarged edition of Nestlé's Gift Book. Here is a splendid opportunity for you to obtain these attractive Gifts by collecting the Free Gift Coupons which will be found in Nestlé's popular chocolate packings. You should send for one of these Gift Books and with it will be sent a voucher for five free coupons to start your collection. Address your letter or postcard to Nestlé's (Gift Dept.), Silverthorne Road, Battersea, London, S.W.8, and be sure to mention GEM LIBRARY. This offer only applies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

THE FIGHTING FOOTBALLERS!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1. A Footer Crisis!

"IT'S not good enough!"

Tommy Dodd of the Modern House at Rookwood made that remark. A number of Modern House juniors who were with him in the Hall supported it with a loud:

"Hear, hear!"

Jimmy Silver, leader of the Classical House juniors and junior captain of Rookwood, frowned.

"Look here, Tommy Dodd—"

"Not half good enough!" said Tommy Dodd with emphasis. "Three Moderns out of a team of eleven picked to play against Bagshot this afternoon! I ask you!"

"Shame!" came an indignant yell from the Modern House juniors.

Jimmy Silver sighed.

"Who'd be a junior skipper? Now, look here, you chaps, be reasonable—"

"Just what we are!" said Tommy Cook. "It's you that's unreasonable, Silver!"

"Rats!" snorted Arthur Edward Lovell. "Jimmy's done the right thing—chosen the team he thinks best, regardless of what House the chaps belong to. It so happens that eight of the team selected are Classical men and only three of them are Moderns!"

"Shame!"

"Shame—bosh!" said Lovell candidly. "That merely shows the Moderns can't play footer like the Classics!"

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Lovell—"

"Hark at 'em!" said Lovell scornfully. "Haven't a ha'porth of logic between 'em! Best thing we can do, you men, is to mop up the floor with 'em; they'll understand that!"

"You silly Classical idiot—"

"You pie-faced Modern clump—"

"Can it, for goodness' sake!" roared Jimmy Silver, above the rising din. "Ragging won't settle it. Listen to me, Dodd! You've always been a sport—"

"I hope I always am, Jimmy Silver!"

"Well, I hope so, too!" nodded Jimmy Silver. "But really you've gone off the rails a bit this time. I've only put three Modern chaps in the team for this afternoon's game—"

"Yes, and it's like your blessed cheek!"

"One way of looking at it," said the leader of the Fistical THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,231.

Four, preserving his sangfroid with difficulty. "Another, and the true way of looking at it is, as Lovell has pointed out, that the fact of only three Moderns going in is quite accidental. The team has been selected entirely on its merits."

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Well, it's true, anyway," said Jimmy Silver patiently. "I'm sorry if you fellows are disappointed, but it can't be helped."

Tommy Dodd nodded.

"That's your point of view. Now listen to mine. This Bagshot match is important; I'm told they've improved quite a lot this year."

"Quite true!"

"It's up to us, therefore," said the leader of the Modern juniors, "to include in our team the very best we have available, and my opinion is that that hasn't been done. I don't say you've overlooked the Modern chaps deliberately—"

"I should jolly well think not!"

"But I do think you've unconsciously been prejudiced against us," said Tommy Dodd seriously. "For instance, you've left out Doyle; that's a mistake."

"Not altogether, old bean."

"Then there's McCarthy; he's come on wonderfully in the trial games. He really ought to take Conroy's place at right-half. Yet you've put

in Conroy—just because he's in your own House!"

"Not at all!" said Jimmy Silver. "Conroy was given the place because, in my opinion, he was better than McCarthy."

"Then your opinion's wrong!"

"Possibly; but I happen to be junior captain, and what I say goes, whether it's right or wrong!" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "That's all I can say about it, I'm afraid."

Tommy Dodd snorted.

"Then it's not good enough. Not for the Modern House, anyway!"

"No fear!"

"Mind you," said Tommy Dodd, "I'm not acting entirely from the House point of view. What I'm doing is in the interests of the school at large. You're not a bad skipper in a way, Jimmy Silver; but I fancy you're getting cete—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And all the time you're prejudiced in favour of your own House. Well, somebody has to make a stand about it

TWENTY-TWO PLAYERS TURN OUT FOR ONE TEAM!

Pitched battle on Footer Field to
decide which eleven shall play!

sooner or later, and I'm going to make mine now. Either you put in two more Moderns, at least, or I stand down this afternoon!"

"Same here!" said Tommy Cook and Towle, who were the remaining two of the three Moderns Jimmy Silver had selected for the Bagshot match.

The din died down suddenly. Classics and Moderns alike realised that a crisis had suddenly been reached in junior football. All eyes were turned to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy had gone a little pale.

"You really mean that?" he asked.

"Absolutely!"

"We're backing up Dodd," said Towle.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Then I suppose that means the entire giddy House is in it? If I choose three other Moderns to take your places, they'll refuse, too?"

"What-ho!"

"Right-ho, then!" said the leader of the Fistical Four. "In that case, you leave me no alternative but to turn out with an all-Classical team this afternoon."

"Hear, hear!" came an approving murmur from the Classics.

Tommy Dodd gasped.

"You seriously mean you're prepared to leave out all the Moderns—me and Cook and Towle—rather than put two more in?"

"Just that!" said Jimmy Silver, with a nod. "That finishes the argument! Rawson, Van Ryn, and Jones! You'll hold yourselves in readiness to play against Bagshot this afternoon."

"Oh rather!"

"All members of the revised team will be expected to turn up to a confab in the pavilion soon after two," added Jimmy. "I shall have to rearrange some of the positions; and we want to be all set by the time the Bagshot men turn up."

"What-ho!"

"That's that, then!"

And Jimmy Silver turned to go his way.

There was an excited yell from the Moderns.

"Half a mo—"

"You can't—"

"You mustn't—"

"You'll be licked!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Bagshot'll make rings round you!"

"If they do, it'll be the fault of the Modern House!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "I'm fed-up with jaw, anyway! Let's chuck 'em out, you men; they can jaw all the rest of the day in their own House!"

"Hear, hear!"

"This way, Dodd!"

"Why, you benighted Classical worm—"

"You fozzling Modern frump—"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Thud, thud, thud!

A wild and whirling scrimmage developed round the notice-board, under which the crowd had assembled. For a moment it looked as though a pitched battle would result. Then the tall figure of Bulkeley of the Sixth came on the scene with an ashplant, and the war-whoops of the juniors quickly changed to whoops of pain.

The Classics broke up their ranks, and the Moderns beat a hurried retreat to their own House.

Peace once more reigned in junior circles at Rookwood. But not for long. Tommy Dodd and his followers left the Classical House, determined that Jimmy Silver's decision should not be taken lying down. What they could do to meet the emergency remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 2.

Tommy Dodd's Coup!

"KIDNAPPED."

"Eh?"

"Kidnapped." By Robert Louis Stevenson.

said Tommy Dodd.

"And phwat should that have to do with the Bagshot match?" asked Tommy Doyle in his rich Irish brogue. "Faith, an' if the best thing you can do at this moment is to talk about books, then—"

Tommy Dodd threw down the book he had just picked up from the table, round which most of the Modern Fourth had gathered, and grinned.

"Fathead! I'm not telling you the title of that book just to pass the time away. It's given me an idea. Why not kidnap the Classical team and turn out against Bagshot ourselves?"

"M-m-my giddy aunt!"

"Well, why not?" asked Tommy Dodd. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If Jimmy Silver

thinks an all-Classical team can lick Bagshot, then we think an all-Modern team can do it!"

"Oh, quite! But—"

"Haven't you overlooked a rather important detail?" chuckled Tommy Cook. "I'm all in favour, if it's possible. The problem is—how the thunder we're going to kidnap eleven able-bodied sportsmen? Do we chloroform 'em?"

"Ass!"

"Well, I don't see—"

"You wouldn't, old bean! You don't often see very far!" said Tommy Dodd frankly. "Admittedly, it's a problem, but I think it can be solved. Remember any special instructions Silver gave his team while we were over there this morning?"

Tommy Cook scratched his head.

"Well, I remember him telling them to turn up in the pavilion soon after two for special instructions, but—"

"Good enough!" said the leader of the Modern juniors. "That means they'll all be assembled there at one spot at a time when nobody else is hanging about."

"Oh! Then you think we can go for 'em then?"

"Go for 'em—nothing!" said Tommy Dodd cheerfully. "When I can't think out better wheezes than that, Tommy Cook, I'll give up trying to think at all! My plan is to lure 'em quietly to a place where we can lock 'em up safe and sound for the rest of the afternoon. Now, Dicky Dalton was telling us in class this morning about the crypt—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"To which there's only one known entrance. That entrance happens to be quite near the pavilion. Suppose Silver and his crowd heard cries for help coming from the crypt, ten to one they'd all rush over to the giddy rescue, wouldn't they?"

"Great pip! I suppose they would."

"Right-ho! Well, we can arrange for the cries for help. We'll do it, in fact. All being well, the Classical team will crowd downstairs. Then we'll lock 'em in. And, of course, take over the Bagshot match. Agreed?"

For a moment the Moderns gasped; then they swarmed round their leader, shaking his hand and thumping his back with wild enthusiasm.

"The jape of the term, by gum!" said Wadsley. "Tommy Dodd, you're a genius!"

"Half a minute! If cries for help can be heard, won't they be heard after we've locked 'em up?" asked Towle more cautiously.

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"I thought of that; but I don't think so. It'll make a difference when that iron-clad door's shut; and you must remember that when the games are on and the spectators are yelling there's plenty of noise about."

"Anyway, we'll have the key, so it won't matter much," grinned Tommy Cook. "I'll run down to old Mack and bribe him to let me have it now."

"Good egg! Then come back and change into footer togs," said Tommy Dodd. "No time to lose, anyway, you men. Jump to it now!"

And the Moderns jumped to it.

• • • • •

"Help!"

"Hallo, hallo! What's that?"

"Help! Oh, help!"

Jimmy Silver and the Classics who had turned up to the confab in the pavilion looked at each other with startled faces.

"Coming from the back somewhere," remarked Kit Erroll. "Sort of muffled, too. I wonder—"

"Sounds to me just as if it might be from the crypt," said Jimmy Silver.

"Just what I was going to say!"

"Better look into this," said the leader of the Classical juniors, rising. "Funny that old Dalton should have been telling us all about the crypt this morning! Kim on!"

The muffled cry rang out again, and the footballers, who were already in their football garb, jumped to their feet and followed their leader out of the pavilion.

The door leading down to the crypt was at a tree-sheltered spot behind the pavilion, almost at the end of the range of school buildings. Had the Classics not been in such a hurry they might have noticed quite a number of juniors hiding in the shelter of the trees. But the cries for help, which were being most realistically performed by Lacy of the Modern Fourth, sounded urgent, and Jimmy Silver and his men had no eyes for the trees.

"This way!" said Jimmy Silver. "They're coming from the crypt all right! How the thump did the chap get locked in?"

"Better get the key from Mack," said Newcome; then, as he came in sight of the ancient door of the crypt: "Hallo, hallo! It's open!"

"Well, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver opened wide the heavy old oak door and peered down into the gloom. At the same moment there was a moan from the murky depths of the crypt.

"Help!"

"All serene, old chap! We're here!" called out the unsuspecting leader of the Classics.

He led the way down the solid old stone steps into the blackness below. The rest of the Classics, not for one moment dreaming that they were falling into a neatly laid trap, swarmed after him.

They reached the bottom.

Someone struck a match, and a dim light appeared in the gloomy old place.

Simultaneously Lacy of the Modern House, who had been waiting below, leaped up the steps three at a time, and a crowd of Moderns appeared silhouetted against the daylight at the top.

Jimmy Silver uttered a yell.

"Quick! It's a jape!"

"Oh jiminy! Stop 'em!"

There was a wild rush to get to the doorway in time. Unfortunately, in their eagerness to get there first, the Classics got jammed, and seconds before they reached the top the door had crashed into its place.

Slam!

There was a sound of a key turning in the rusty old lock. The dismayed Classics heard from the other side of the door, muffled by the thickness of the oak, a cheer.

"Done it!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Classics!"

"Trapped!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "You see the idea, chaps? Those idiots are going to take over the Bagshot match from us!"

"Oh, my hat! It's all a Modern jape!"

Had it been possible to see anything, unutterable dismay would have been depicted on the faces of the Classics. But in the blackness of the ancient crypt nothing could, of course, be seen. Plenty was heard. Whole volumes of uncomplimentary references to the Moderns were spoken in the first few seconds after the closing of the door.

Unfortunately, that didn't help matters.

The Classics heard Tommy Dodd's voice coming faintly through from the other side.

"Sorry to have to do this, Jimmy Silver; but you forced us to it, you know! We'll let you out later—after we've licked Bagshot!"

"Then we'll be here for the rest of our lives!" was the only effective retort Jimmy Silver could then shout back in reply.

The fuming Classics heard a laugh from the Moderns.

"Well, good-bye, all!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "See you later!"

The voices of the Moderns died away into silence.

"Oh crikey! Are we to spend the rest of the afternoon in this hole?" came Arthur Edward Lovell's voice from the blackness.

"Give a yell," suggested Jimmy Silver.

They gave one. Then another. They yelled till they awoke the echoes of old Rookwood.

But they awoke nothing else. No answering yell came from the other side of the door. From all appearances, Tommy Dodd's ruse was going to prove entirely successful!

CHAPTER 3.

Three Down!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! All ready for the fray!"

Thus Pankley, the captain of the Bagshot Junior Eleven, as he stepped down from the charabanc which had brought the visiting team and their supporters.

Tommy Dodd shook hands with Pankley, whom he knew quite well, and grinned cheerily.

"Hope you've come prepared for a licking!" he remarked. "We're in form."

"Not quite such good form as that, though!" said Pankley cheerily. "Where's Silver?"

"H'm!"

"He's not turning out to-day," explained Tommy Cook. "There's been a slight rearrangement of the team."

"Oh!"

"No bizney of ours, of course, but rather surprising to see Silver dropped," said Poole. "Pretty hot at centre-forward, I always thought. Wasn't he your skipper last time?"

"H'm! He was. There's just been a slight alteration for this game, you see."

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"Oh, quite!"

And Pankley & Co., looking a little mystified, dropped the subject and went into the pavilion to prepare for the game.

Quite a crowd had assembled to watch the game when the Bagshot men reappeared, and there was a cheer for the visitors.

Then Tommy Dodd and his all-Modern team emerged, and a buzz went up, quickly changing to a roar of surprise and consternation from the Classical section.

"Where's Jimmy Silver?"

"And Lovell and Raby?"

"And Kit Erroll—I say, you chaps, there's not a Classical among 'em!" yelled Dickinson. "What's happened?"

"What have they done with our crowd?" demanded Hooker. "I say, Dodd!"

But Tommy Dodd was deaf to the inquiries that were being hurled at him from all sides. He went to the centre of the field with Jobson of the Fifth, who was acting as referee, and tossed up with Pankley for choice of ends.

The Classics in the crowd were agog with excitement.

"Look here, you chaps, we can't allow this!" roared Higgs. "The wrong team's turned out; let's raid the field and scrag 'em!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Half a mo!" said Dickinson. "Can't do that with the visiting team there. It would be bad form."

"Bad form be blowed!" snorted Higgs, who was rather an aggressive individual. "I vote we walk on the field and—"

"Well, anyway, if that argument doesn't appeal to you, think of what Jobson'll do," said Dickinson. "He'll rush straight over to the senior match and fetch out the prefects—probably a master, if there's one about!"

"H'm! There's that, of course," grunted Higgs; and he decided that, on second thoughts, he would not lead a raid on the junior footer pitch.

"Well, whatever they've done to Silver and the rest, the Moderns have made sure of one thing," remarked Hooker, as the teams lined up. "That's a jolly good licking for Rookwood!"

"Rats!"—from the Moderns.

"You'll soon see," said Hooker darkly.

And soon they did see.

Pankley kicked off for Bagshot, and almost before the echo of the ref's whistle had died away, Putter, on the Bagshot right wing, was seen to be racing down the field with the ball bobbing at his feet.

There was a yell from the Bagshot supporters.

"On the ball!"

"Go it, Putter!"

Wadsley, the Rookwood left-half, went forward to meet the oncoming Bagshot player. Putter feinted, then was round Wadsley like a flash of lightning, leaving the Rookwood player standing. Towle, the home left-back, loomed into the picture. Putter hooked the ball neatly over to Brown, at inside-right, and Brown tapped it to Pankley.

A groan went up from the Rookwood crowd, while the visitors' supporters got ready to shout. Pankley steadied himself in a fraction of a second, then fairly slammed the ball at the goal, leaving the custodian no earthly chance to save.

"Goal!" went up a roar from the delighted visitors.

First blood to Bagshot!

Tommy Dodd was looking serious as he kicked off again. The success of his great wheeze depended to a large extent on the result of this match. Only if his all-Modern team gained the day would he prove his case against Jimmy Silver!

The leader of the Moderns had felt confident before the match that they could do it. Bagshot were not regarded as a first-class team; certainly the fixture did not rank in importance with the home fixtures against Greyfriars or St. Jim's. But Tommy Dodd began to wonder now whether he had not overestimated the abilities of his team.

He had good reason to wonder before half-time was reached.

The all-Modern team played quite good football; but it was not good enough. After a lapse of twenty minutes Pankley notched a second goal. A third was added soon after by Brown.

The half-time whistle went with the Rookwood side three goals down.

The players' faces were gloomy as they returned to the pavilion.

And then—

CHAPTER 4.
The Winning Way!

"HOPELESS!"

Thus, Arthur Edward Lovell. The imprisoned Classics had hammered on the door of the crypt, and yelled themselves hoarse in their endeavours to attract attention. Over an hour had now passed, without a sign that they had been heard, and the Classics had at last abandoned their efforts.

"Nothing to do but wait till they let us out," said Raby. "Wonder how the silly asses are getting on against Bagshot?"

"By Jove!"

It was a sudden exclamation from Jimmy Silver.

"Found a stick of dynamite in your pocket?" asked Putty Grace, somewhat sarcastically. "Nothing short of that'll get us out!"

"What idiots we are!" said Jimmy Silver excitedly. "Didn't Dalton tell us this morning that there was another entrance to the crypt?"

"Oh, my hat! He did. Not much good, though," said Newcome, after a moment's reflection. "He said the door this end wanted a lot of finding, and it led, anyway, into a passage that travelled underground for a mile to that old ruin by the river."

"What of it?"

the trip without anxiety. The juniors could see for themselves how frequently parts of the roof had fallen in, and the thought that it might do so again at any moment was not a nice one.

But luck was with them quite definitely now. They got through it all, unscathed, and at last came out through a little low arch into the old ruin that was a well-known landmark on the river bank near Coombe.

A cheer went up from them as they emerged. Then it quickly changed to a laugh when they found that every man-jack of them was covered with dust and grime that had converted them into a passable representation of a nigger minstrel troupe.

"No time for a wash and brush-up, anyway!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "It's us for Rookwood now!"

"What-ho!"

And without any further talk, they broke into a run.

Thus it came about at the very moment when Tommy Dodd was leading his men on to the field again for the second half of the game, eleven breathless juniors, their footer clothes almost completely hidden with dirt, came sprinting on the scene.

Tommy Dodd stared at the Classics as he might have stared at an apparition.



The Bagshot team, coming out of the pavilion, were surprised to see a group of Rookwood juniors, in footer togs, fighting furiously in the middle of the field!

"Well, it's dangerous. Didn't he say nobody had been through it for years because of the danger of the roof falling in?"

"If you're afraid to risk your neck for the House, Newcome—"

"Oh, all serene, then!" sighed Newcome. "Thousand to one we don't find it in this black hole, anyway!"

"Come on and try, anyway! Spread out and see what you can discover, chaps!"

It was a remote chance, and even Jimmy Silver, in his heart of hearts, did not think it would come off.

But luck seemed on the turn for the Classics. After a quarter of an hour of groping about in the pitch darkness, one of the imprisoned team gave a yell.

"Here you are, chaps! Here's an opening!"

"This is it!" said Jimmy Silver excitedly. "This way, you men!"

The Classics groped their way blindly in the direction of his voice.

Soon they found themselves in a low, narrow passage, as dank and unpleasant as could be imagined.

It was a long and tiring journey that followed. At times the juniors had to climb over piles of rubble that scarcely gave room for a human being to get through. Nor was

"M-my hat! It's—it's—"

"It's us, old bean!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Who said you could keep Classics down? Go for 'em, you men!"

The Classics, after their exasperating imprisonment, were only too willing. They fairly flung themselves on their ancient rivals.

The Bagshot team, coming out of the pavilion, were surprised, soon after, to see that the football field had suddenly been turned into a battlefield. Excited pairs of juniors were rolling over on the grass, pummelling each other furiously, while here and there an eight-handed mill was in progress.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Pankley. "I fancied there was something queer about this match, you men. It really begins to look like it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jobson, the referee, came out at that moment. He gave one look at the astonishing scene, then rushed on to the field.

"Stop!" he yelled in a voice that was heard even above the din of the battle. "You young demons! If you don't stop, I'll—"

But there was no need for Jobson to finish his threat. The combatants had suddenly realised that their visitors were among the spectators, and that was sufficient to end it. Classics and Moderns dropped their hands and looked to Jobson.

"I can explain this, Jobson," said Tommy Dodd, rather breathlessly.

"It'll need some explaining," said Jobson grimly. "Get on with it!"

Tommy Dodd explained.

The explanation was listened to by almost the entire crowd of spectators, not to mention the Bagshot players. And as Tommy Dodd concluded, the grins with which they had listened changed to a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's it, is it?" remarked Jobson. "What it amounts to is that Bagshot have been playing the wrong team."

"Exactly!" nodded Jimmy Silver.

"Then what happens now? Do you cast lots and form a fresh eleven?"

"Not quite!" grinned the leader of the Fistical Four.

"First, what's the half-time score?"

"Just about what it usually is," smiled Pankley. "Three—"

—nil, in our favour!"

"As I expected! Then I'll tell you what, Pankley. As you've really been playing the wrong team, and as the right team has had quite as much tiring work as the first half would involve, what do you say if we take over the game, with the score as it stands?"

"All serene, as far as we're concerned, old bean!" replied Pankley cheerfully. "We'd just as soon lick you as Dodd's team!"

"Remains to be seen!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Then, if you're agreeable, Jobson—"

Jobson scratched his head.

"Dashed if I know what the rules of football say about a problem like this, Silver. Seems to me you're the team

that should be playing, anyway, and if Bagshot are willing, as they seem to be, carry on!"

"Look here—" protested Tommy Dodd feebly.

"Spectators off the field!" said Jobson briskly. "I believe you're a spectator, Dodd?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd gave it up. Really, he could hardly do otherwise. Jimmy Silver's team undoubtedly had more right to the game now that they had so unexpectedly turned up, and, as the ref had ruled in their favour, there was nothing more to be said.

Pankley's men were soon on the defence.

Before the second half was ten minutes old, Jimmy Silver had netted once. Then Lovell scored one. Newcome made the score level.

With ten minutes to go, Jimmy Silver made a brilliant solo run and sent the ball crashing through the hands of the goalie.

"Played, Silver!"

"Go it, Classics!"

Just to clinch matters, Kit Erroll scored the fifth and last just before the whistle went for full-time. Jimmy Silver and his merry men ran out winners by 5—3, and, as Pankley ruefully admitted, the best team of the three had got there!

"Well, that's that!" remarked Jimmy Silver, as he led his men back through the cheering Classics. "I fancy it's settled the argument with Tommy Dodd. Where is he?"

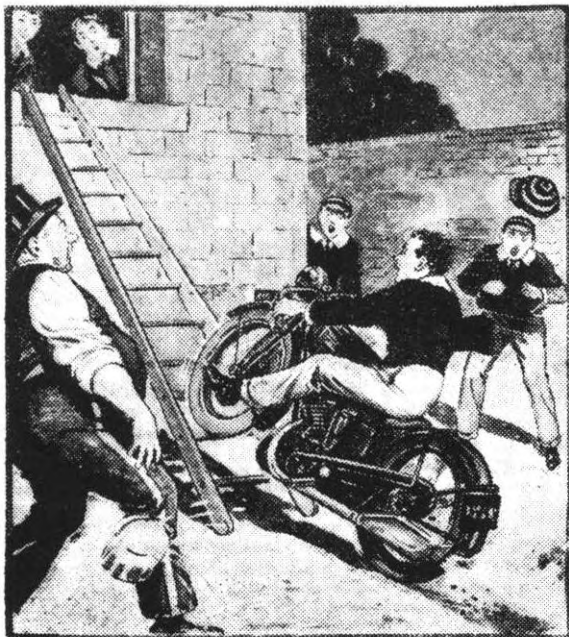
But Tommy Dodd and his team were not to be found. Like the Arabs, they had folded their tents, and, as silently, stolen away.

They had nothing more to argue about in connection with Jimmy Silver's choice of a junior team. And when the next match came along and three Modern names appeared in the team selected, those three favoured ones were very pleased to play!

THE END.

(Well, that made you laugh, didn't it? You'll laugh more next week when you read "HANSOM'S HOPELESS HOAX!")

The GEM 2^D



BEST THING OF THE WEEK!

THE "GEM"—EVERY WEDNESDAY!

What is Figgins up to in the small cover reproduction alongside? He's not on duty at the moment, but wait till you meet him flat out in:

"The St. Jim's Speed Cops!"

NEXT WEDNESDAY.

Next Week's GEM will also contain a ripping Rookwood yarn by Owen Conquest entitled:

"HANSOM'S HOPELESS HOAX!"

And there will be another of those All-Thrill yarns of

"The Winger!"

As well as the usual topping GEM features which you know so well.

THE WINGER!



CHAPTER 1.

The Winger Stages a Big Coup!

A BIG saloon car stood against the kerb in the Edgware Road. Seated in the back was a sleek young man with a small radio set on the seat beside him.

"Hallo! Detective-Inspector Thomas—hallo!" he called quietly into the transmitter.

There was a silence for nearly a minute. Then a small voice came from the receiver:

"Hallo! Who's calling?" it asked.

The suave young aristocrat smiled complacently and winked at the uniformed chauffeur seated in front.

"Oh, I'm the Winger, old man!" he murmured softly.

"Fine day, isn't it? By the way, would you like to stop me committing a crime?"

"What do you mean?" came a snapping answer from Detective-Inspector Thomas, of Scotland Yard, the officer whose special duty it was to round up this daring young crook. "Of all the infernal cheek, you—"

"All right, Thomas, don't get hot!" cut in the Winger. "I only called you up because, as usual, I'm infernally short of money. Wouldn't like to give me ten thousand, would you?"

"I'd like to give you ten years!" barked the detective angrily.

The Winger sighed into the transmitter.

"I thought so, sergeant—sorry, I mean, inspector," he bleated. "Well, tootle-oo, old chap! By the way, isn't that sad news about old Cohen, the diamond merchant, dropping dead in the street to-day? Especially as nobody else knows the combination of the firm's safe. But there you are. In the midst of life, etcetera. Poor old Cohen!"

In his private office at Scotland Yard Detective-Inspector Thomas sat, with livid face, glaring at his portable radio set. The Winger's voice ceased. Outside the roar of the traffic made the inner silence seem more ominous.

Inspector Thomas jumped up and paced angrily to and fro. Then he called up Limehouse Riverside Police Station on the radio set.

"The Winger's going to get busy again, Hull!" he barked. "He had the audacity to call me up—"

"But I shouldn't think Sergeant Hull could possibly lend me ten thou', Thomas," interrupted the Winger's silky voice. "Don't be silly, man. Hallo, Hull! How are you?"

Thomas in his office, and Hull in his at the riverside station, both exploded. But a small, weedy lad, seated in Sergeant Hull's office, sprang off the table.

"What's his game, guv'nor?" he barked. "He's up to something. What did he mean by talking about Mr. Levi Cohen who dropped dead this afternoon in Cheapside?"

"Lord knows!" gasped Sergeant Hull. "Nothing perhaps, and perhaps something."

Snap picked up the "late extra" and scanned the short paragraph:

"SUDDEN DEATH OF CITY DIAMOND MERCHANT!"

"Mr. Levi Cohen, managing director of Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen, dropped dead this afternoon while proceeding to his office in Hatton Garden, to hand over the Borrowdale diamond to its owner, for whom it has been reset."

"It is understood that Mr. Cohen was the only man who knew the combination of that safe. Therefore, it is believed that it will be necessary to engage the services of a locksmith to open the safe."

Snap looked at the clock. It was seventeen minutes to six. Grabbing a telephone directory, he picked out the number of Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen.

"Hallo! Limehouse Police Station speaking!" he said, with a cheeky glance at Sergeant Hull. "What are you doing about the safe, sir?"

"Oh, there's no need for the police to worry!" answered someone at the other end. "The guv'nor, Mr. Fliss, has engaged a locksmith to come to break it open if necessary. We'll all be here, and I don't think the police will be needed, thanks!"

Snap hung up the receiver and snatched up his cap.

"See you later, sergeant," he cried, darting from the office with his pocket radio set.

Not until he was outside Messrs. Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen's office did he stop running. He was just in time, for the clerks were coming out and the office was being closed.

Snap waited until he saw an office-boy, then sidled up alongside him.

"I'm Snap Fane, unofficial Thames-side detective!" he grinned. "I want to know which locksmiths are going to open the safe, and when?"

"Why, Yates, in the Edgware Road," answered the boy. "I say, Snap, I read about you in that affair of the Calshot Castle. Tell us things—"

But Snap was away like a deer. Leaping aboard a bus, he worked his way to the Edgware Road and sprang off opposite a locksmith's shop, with "Abraham Yates" over the door.

"I bet a quid the Winger's up to some game about that diamond!" he muttered, strolling past the closed shop. "Jingo! He's a oner, is the Winger!"

He turned round when abreast of a sleek saloon car, and casually glanced inside at the young fop who sat back among the luxurious upholstery.

Then he turned back, stopping when he saw the shop door.

THE WINGER GETS CAUGHT ON A JOB And Wrecks a House to Escape!

open and a man, who was evidently the locksmith, come out, carrying a toolbag.

"Good-evening, Mr. Yates!" he grinned, touching his cap. "Hope you manage to open the safe all right to-morrow morning."

The locksmith gaped at Snap.

"Who're you, sonny?" he asked.

Snap grinned, touched his cap again, and sped away, leaping aboard an east-bound bus.

"Had to make sure it was him," he muttered. "I'll know Mr. Yates again by the wart on his nose and three grey hairs growing in it."

Had Snap waited a few seconds longer, he would have seen a very strange sight, for, as Mr. Yates came abreast the saloon car, the door opened and the sleek young man stepped out, apparently colliding accidentally with the locksmith.

Then, before Mr. Yates suspected anything, he was sent flying into the arms of the chauffeur. A sponge saturated with drug was pressed over his mouth and nose, and as the car glided away, driven by the sleek young man, he subsided unconscious to the floor.

Not one of the many passers-by noticed anything more than a well-dressed young man, apparently pushing his elderly companion into the car by way of a joke.

"Wonderful how dead safe it is to do things in the easiest way, Blake," said the Winger, steering in and out of the traffic. "I've always said it would be easier to kidnap a gentleman in Piccadilly than to do the same thing in a village street."

"You're right, chief," agreed Blake, the Winger's first-lieutenant.

"A good job, though, that Snap Fane has never really seen my face," smiled the Winger. "He's got more brains than that ass Thomas. He came out here to take a look at Yates. Well, that's all to the good."

"Sure Snap didn't smell a rat, chief?" asked Blake.

"Quite!" answered the coolest crook in London.

An hour later the saloon car dived down a lonely lane in Berkshire, and ran in through the double gates of a large country house.

"Take Yates away and strip him," ordered the Winger. "Place my disguises handy in my dressing-room. He's near enough my size and I'm glad he's got a wart on his nose—makes a distinctive mark for Snap Fane to be sure of his locksmith to-morrow."

Blake carried the unconscious locksmith into another room. The Winger sat down and began to tune-in on his own short wave length with his pocket radio set.

Zzz-zz-zz-zz-zzz—

The atmosphere carried his code message in circles. And in hotels, garrets, and lodging-houses, members of the Winger's gang listened in.

Inspector Thomas, in his office at the Yard, heard those buzzing noises. Sergeant Hull, in his office at Limehouse, also heard them.

And a small boy, selling apples in Hatton Garden, pricked up his ears as there came those sinister noises from the bottom of the basket.

"The Winger—he's getting busy!" muttered Snap Fane.

"Sweet apples, fourpence a palind!" he shouted when people passed.

And when nobody was near he listened and jotted down the short and long buzzes.

"Coo! If only I could get hold of the Winger's code, I'd have him!" he mused. "Still, I'll know Mr. Yates again by the wart on his nose and the three grey hairs sticking out of it."

CHAPTER 2.

The Three Missing Hairs!

SNAP spent all the night in that alleyway, dodging the police as they passed by on their beats. The streets began to fill with people going to work. Office doors were opened and charwomen went in and came out, their tasks finished.

Then came the clerks, typists, and office-boys. Snap watched the office-boy, to whom he had spoken the previous evening, enter Messrs. Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen's office.

"Jingo! I'd give a quid to take his place for three hours!" he muttered wistfully.

A limousine car drew up outside the office about ten o'clock, and two gentlemen of Jewish appearance got out and entered.

"Fliss & Cohen!" murmured Snap. "Hallo! This'll be Mr. Borrowdale, the owner of the diamond," he decided, as another car drew up and a prosperous-looking, elderly man stepped out and went into the offices.

The stage was set. Mr. Borrowdale had gone in to get THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,231.

his diamond. The surviving directors of the diamond firm were inside. Wanted now only the locksmith.

And Snap had not long to wait, for, within three minutes of the entry of Mr. Borrowdale, Mr. Yates came hurrying down the street, looking eagerly at every brass name-plate as he passed, and carrying a small brown bag.

"Abe Yates!" muttered Snap, a feeling of disappointment surging through him. "Jingo! There's no doubt about that at all! That fellow's Yates all right, even to the wart on his snitch."

Mr. Yates stopped opposite Cohen's, and, like a flash, Snap darted across. The cute lad had changed his appearance and, from having been an untidy apple-seller, he now looked as spruce as any office-boy around.

Close on the heels of Mr. Yates, he entered the office and, when in the vestibule, he doffed his cap and smiled.

"They're waiting for you, Mr. Yates," he smiled.

"Shall I take your bag, please?"

Before the locksmith could protest, Snap was in possession of the bag and had entered the outer office.

It was a bold move, but it succeeded, and in two minutes Snap stood in the inner sanctum of Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen, with the locksmith believing him to be one of the staff, and the directors thinking he belonged to the locksmith.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Yates! You are a trifle late," murmured Mr. Fliss. "Well, here is the safe. Do you think you can open it without using an acetylene flare?"

The locksmith walked across to the huge steel door which stood flush with the wall, and examined the locks in silence for a few moments. Then he turned to Snap and reached out for his bag.

For a moment his eyes met those of Snap Fane, who, up to now, had not presented his full face to him. And as he did so the grey eyes beneath the shaggy eyebrows hardened like steel.

He turned casually away, the bag in his hand.

"Great Scott! It's Snap Fane!" muttered the Winger—for it was him, disguised as Abraham Yates whom he had so cleverly kidnapped the night before. "The little beggar! I wonder if he suspects me?"

But, so far, Snap was in ignorance of the near presence of the master crook. The disguise was accurate, even to the wart on the nose and the tangled grey eyebrows and stooping figure of the locksmith.

"If I hadn't been a locksmith, I could have made myself into a very successful burglar, gentlemen!" croaked the Winger, kneeling before the safe. "There are few combinations which I cannot master. Now, silence, please!"

With one hand in his coat pocket, the bogus locksmith began to turn the combination, his ear pressed close against the lock. Around him stood the directors and Mr. Borrowdale, and at each door of the office stood elderly clerks.

Snap was forced to stand in the background, and, so sure was he that this really was Mr. Yates, that he was not worrying. His entire attention was concentrated on external things. Maybe the Winger would make a raid, just when the safe was opened!

"I don't like it," he mused, carefully eyeing each one of the men in the room. "I suppose that is Mr. Borrowdale."

A click thrilled through the room. Another, and then a soft, purring noise as of some delicate mechanism set into motion.

It stopped. Then came a sharp snap and a gentle, hissing noise.

A smooth laugh escaped the locksmith as he turned back from the open safe. Snap gave a start. That laugh! He had heard it before when he was aboard the Calshot Castle!

His heart gave a leap. That was the Winger's laugh!

"Excuse me, sir!"

Without more ado, Snap pushed his way through the gentlemen who were now gathered around examining the stone. And as he did so, he saw the Winger's hand dart into the open safe and extract a thick wad of banknotes.

Snap edged closer and stared at the Winger's face. The eyebrows, that wart on the nose, the straggling grey hair, untidy and frizzy!

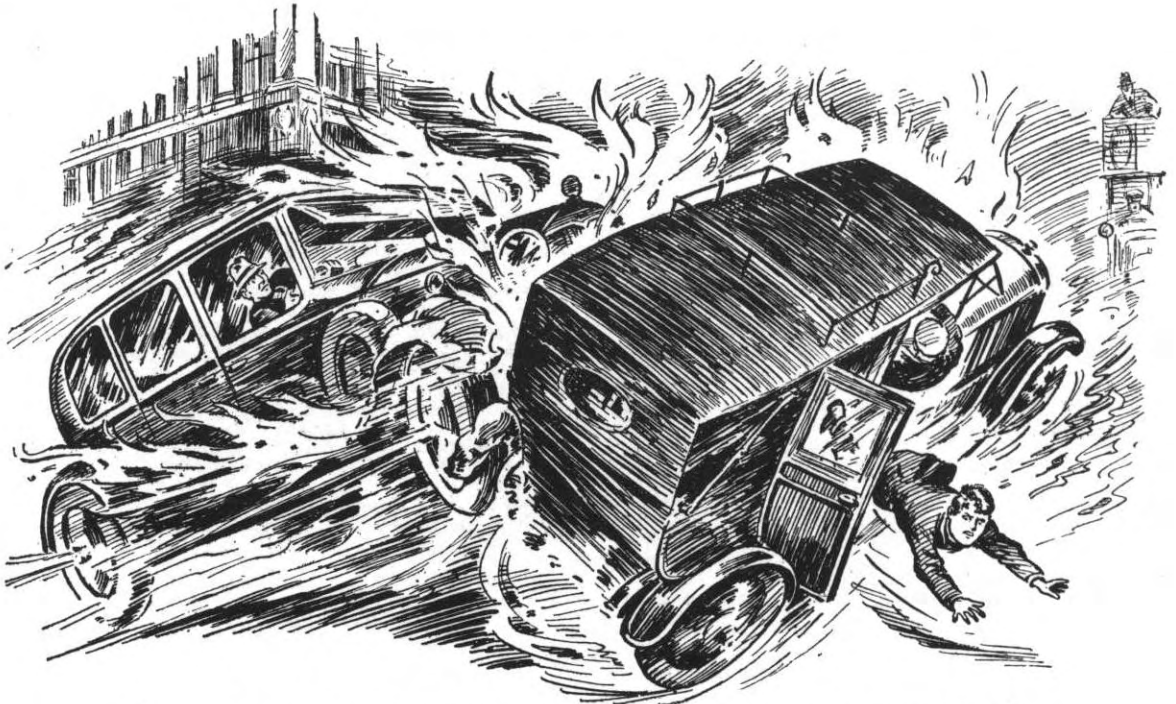
He stared harder. Was he dreaming? Surely this was the same man he had spoken to last night in the Edgware Road!

"Gosh! There are three grey hairs missing from the wart!" he cried excitedly.

"Eh!" The two directors and Mr. Borrowdale stared at him.

The Winger turned around and gaped, open-mouthed, into Snap's astonished, excited face.

"What is your office-boy talking about, gentlemen?" he asked coolly.



The car and the taxi collided with a terrific crash! Snap flung open the door and leapt out!

"Our office-boy! This boy does not belong to our office!" cried Mr. Fliss, staring suspiciously at Snap.

"We thought he was your boy. He came in with you," added Mr. Cohen.

The Winger gripped Snap by the collar and held him fast, his other hand still in the side pocket of his coat.

"Who are you, boy?" he snapped.

"Snap Fane! And you're the Winger!" shouted Snap. "You've just taken a wad of notes from the safe! I saw you—"

While this scene had been going on the Winger had been buzzing out his emergency signal from the radio set in his pocket.

"You're talking rot, boy!" he said calmly. "I think, Mr. Cohen, that you ought to send for the police. This boy may be a criminal. He attached himself to me just inside your office, and, of course, I took him to be one of your staff—"

The rest of his words were lost in the loud rattle of a motor-car dashing past outside. Then:

Crash-smassh!

The outer wall was smashed in. Bricks and glass flew in all directions, scattering the men in the office as the bonnet of a motor-lorry shot clean through the wall.

Snap and the Winger were sent reeling against the safe. Messrs. Fliss, Cohen, and Borrowdale were hurled to the floor amid a heap of falling masonry.

"You young cub!" smiled the Winger, pushing Snap into the safe and slamming the door.

Snap did two things. He picked the Winger's pocket and put his toe between the door jamb. A mighty heave and he sent the heavy steel door outwards.

The office was full of dust and sprawling figures. A great hole gaped in the wall, with the motor-lorry almost filling it. And through the hole he just caught a glimpse of the now erect figure of the Winger leaping into a saloon which was slowly passing by.

Snap made a rush to go after him. A hand gripped his collar and held him fast.

"Not so quick, my lad!" growled Mr. Fliss. "I saw you come out of that safe!"

"Lemme go! That's the Winger!" shouted Snap desperately.

Another hand fell on his shoulder. He looked up into the grim face of a uniformed policeman.

"Caught in the act, eh?" growled the officer, snatching the wad of banknotes Snap had taken from the Winger's pocket.

CHAPTER 3.

Snap Makes a Capture!

"I TELL you I'm Snap Fane!" shouted Snap. "Ring up Scotland Yard and ask Mr. Thomas. Or ring up Limehouse and ask Sergeant Hull."

He took a leap through the hole in the wall, the policeman and two clerks following him.

"Where's the driver of this lorry?" he asked some bystanders.

The driver was nowhere to be seen, which was as Snap had expected.

"See the game?" he asked eagerly. "I caught the Winger out. He had an emergency gang outside, and when he knew I had him cornered, he wirelessed them on his pocket radio to crash the lorry through the wall. That gave him a chance to get away. I saw him, too, after he shoved me into the safe."

"What were you doing with the money, then?" asked Mr. Cohen. "There are ten thousand pounds here in twenty-pound notes."

"The Winger took it, and as he shoved me into the safe I picked it out of his pocket," explained Snap. "Gosh! Believe me somebody, and get busy! He'll get clean away! What about the diamond? Is that all right?"

"The diamond, Mr. Borrowdale—you had it when the crash came!" cried Mr. Fliss.

"I've got it all—Great Scott! It's gone from the case!"

They crowded around Mr. Borrowdale, who stood staring down at the empty case.

"Might have dropped out when I fell and dropped the case!" he cried.

"Rats to that!" barked Snap. "Here, come on, let's do something! The Winger didn't want the diamond. What he wanted was the ready cash. Take me to Scotland Yard, officer."

More valuable time was lost, however, and it was over half an hour before Snap had found a constable to identify him. Then, in a taxicab, he was taken away, together with the notes and Mr. Borrowdale.

"There may be fingermarks on them," suggested the policeman.

"Not likely!" grinned Snap. "When the Winger leaves his trade marks about like that, he'll have given up crime—Look out, there!"

They had entered the Strand, when, without warning, a large motor-car came dashing out of a side turning.

Snap flung the door of the taxi wide open and leapt clean out!

Crash! The two cars collided, bonnet to near-side door.

"The Winger!"

(Continued from previous page.)

Over went the taxi. A sheet of flame burst from the petrol-tank, and in a second both cars were in flames.

Snap landed on his knees in the road, rolled over and narrowly escaped being killed by a motor-bus which stopped with a screeching of brakes.

On the rebound he was up. Locked together, the private car and taxi were blazing like a furnace. People surged around the wreck, dragging the constable and Mr. Borrowdale out, both of whom were cut about the face with splintered glass.

A young man was pressing from the crowd. Snap instantly eyed his pockets. The breast pocket of his coat bulged suspiciously.

Snap edged closer. The young man made a signal, which was instantly answered by a young man in a light raincoat who had assisted to drag the constable from the blazing wreckage.

Snap made no sign. Merging with the crowd, he followed behind the two men as they went down towards the Embankment.

"Those chaps belong to the Winger's gang," he decided. "Better track them to their destination and round up the whole gang. Jingo! The Winger made a coup this time!"

Keeping close, Snap followed the two young men until they suddenly stopped beside a sports car standing beside the kerb.

"Gosh! They're off!" he gasped as they sprang into the car.

For a second Snap pondered what to do. There were no policemen in sight, and for him to tackle the men alone would be worse than useless.

Useless, too, for him to try to stop them. They would simply push him away, and while he was explaining to passers-by, they would dash off.

He must detain them and attract a policeman.

"Got it!" he muttered, taking to his heels. The man in the raincoat started the engine. Snap sped past the car, jumped from the pavement, and pretended to dash across the road.

The car started. Snap gave a grunt and purposely slipped. Right down in front of the moving car he fell, blocking its escape with his own body.

A wild screeching of brakes and shouts from passers-by mingled.

The car skidded and one wheel touched Snap's arm.

He let out a wild shriek and rolled clean underneath. Then closed his eyes and did a quiet little grin to himself.

One young man jumped out and stared at Snap's motionless figure under the front wheels. He stooped lower, then gave a snort.

"Snap Fane, by Jove!" Snap heard him say.

A crowd had gathered around the car, making it impossible for it to go backwards and get away. Snap had won. If, as he suspected, the stolen money was in the pocket of one of these men—it was safe at last.

Groaning, he crawled from under the car, staggered to his feet, and fell against the young man who stood among an angry crowd.

"Now then, what's this?" asked a policeman, pushing his way towards the crowd.

"This lad raced across the road right in front of our car, officer," explained the young man he clung to. "He slipped and fell, and I think one of my front wheels squeezed his arm. Are you hurt, boy?"

Snap let his hand wander into the man's breast pocket. His fingers touched the wad of notes and he grinned to himself.

He suddenly lowered his hands and seized the young man by the wrists.

"Officer, arrest this man and his pal as being members of the Winger's gang," he said. "One of them crashed into a taxi in the Strand, and, in dragging the policeman out, picked his pocket of this money which was stolen from the safe of Cohen, Fliss, & Cohen."

He pulled the man's coat open and snatched the wad of banknotes out, handing them to the astonished officer.

Swiftly Snap explained to the astonished officer and crowd what had happened.

"And to prove what I say, call a taxi and take us all to Scotland Yard to see Inspector Thomas!" he added grimly.

Ten minutes later Snap, the two young men, and the policeman who had arrested him in Cohen's office, sat in Inspector Thomas's office.

"Okay, Mr. Thomas?" grinned Snap. "Gee! But perhaps the Winger's still got the diamond, and that's worth more than ten thousand quid. Let's try to get in touch with him."

He pulled out his pocket radio and buzzed out the Winger's call sign.

"Hallo, the Winger!" he cried into the transmitter as an answer came. "Snap Fane speaking from Scotland Yard."

"You little demon!" answered the Winger silkily. "I saw you get my men arrested, and I'll get even with you for this!"

"Why didn't you pinch the diamond instead of trying to get away with the money, Winger?" asked Snap, winking at Thomas.

"My dear boy, what's the use of that stone to me? It would mean that I should have to go to Amsterdam, or some such rotten place to sell it, and I just loathe the Holland—so bleak and dreary! By the way, may I congratulate you upon having more savvy than either Mr. Thomas or Mr. Hull? Really, I would have thought they might have smelt a rat when I spoke to them about poor old Mr. Cohen."

He cut off, and Snap switched off also.

And, in cells, two of the Winger's gang waited trial.

"Two of 'em, anyway!" Snap told himself that night as he turned in aboard his tiny paddle-boat in Barking Creek.

"I'll get the Winger one of these fine days!"

(Isn't the Winger a lad, chums? He seems able to get away with anything! In next week's complete yarn he positively exerts himself! Don't miss it!)

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