

"ST. FRANK'S VERSUS FOO CHOW!" THRILLING STORY OF ADVENTURE
IN CHINA—WITHIN!

The GEM

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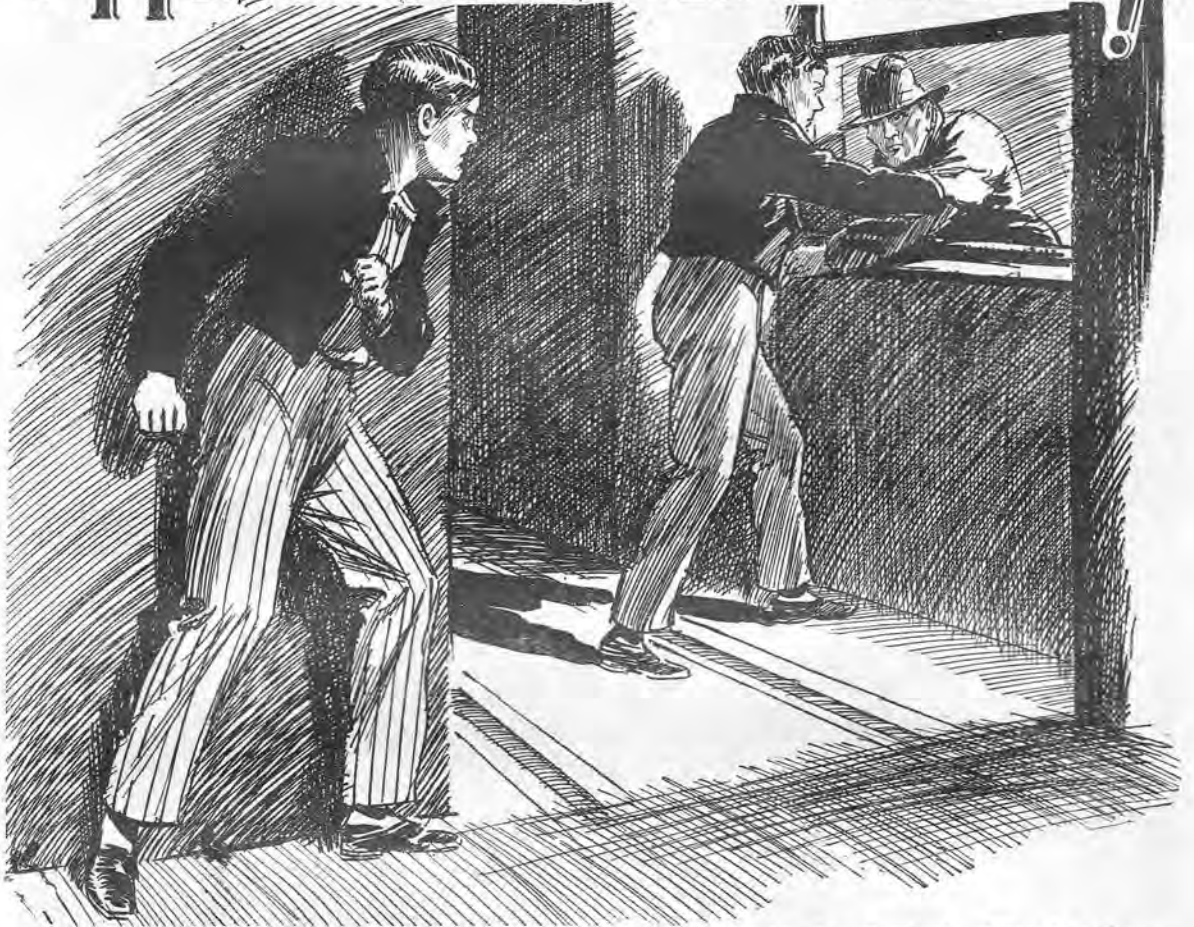
2^D



JUST OUT—
AND ONLY 2/6!

A BULLY AND A CAD IS THE MYSTERY NEWCOMER TO ST. JIM'S—

The MYSTERY SCHOOLBOY!



Why is the new boy admitting a midnight intruder to St. Jim's? That's what the spying Mellish wants to know; but little do Mellish or the Chums of St. Jim's guess the real purpose of Richard Thurnel in coming to the school!

CHAPTER 1. The New Boy!

"RYLCOMBE!"

A diminutive individual sitting in the corner of a railway carriage rose to his feet and threw open the carriage door as the name of the station was called out.

Rylcombe was the station for St. Jim's, and the diminutive person was the new boy for the school.

He stepped out upon the platform with a rug over his arm and a bag in his hand; he was an odd-looking person.

In stature he was shorter than most of the fellows in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, but his figure seemed to be developed and filled out very much more than was usual with a junior. His face was quite smooth, but there were traces about the chin that seemed to hint that the youth had had a narrow escape of having an early crop of beard. His eyes, too, were very keen, but somewhat sunken; his nose was somewhat long and thin; and his hair, which was of a pale colour, was thin, too.

He was an odd-looking boy, and had he been dressed in a man's clothes would certainly have passed for an undersized fellow of over twenty.

But he was dressed in Etons, with a broad collar and a silk hat in the usual style.

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He glanced up and down the platform, and walked down the train. A porter was shoving a large trunk on a trolley.

"That's my trunk," said the stranger. "Put it on a cab or something for the school—St. Jim's. I suppose you know where that is?"

The old Rylcombe porter grinned and touched his cap.

He knew a great deal about St. Jim's, and, as a matter of fact, there was hardly a fellow there—from Kildare, the captain, down to the fags of the Third and Second Forms—whom he did not know by sight, if not by name.

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anybody here from the school to meet the train?"

"I dunno, sir. I hain't seen nobody."

"Good!" said the stranger. "Is there a place in this station where one can have a drink?"

"Yes, sir; you can get a ginger-beer at the buffet, sir, when it's open," said the Rylcombe porter. "It's closed now."

Master Thurnel snorted.

"It's closed, is it? Then what's the good of it to me? And do you think I can guzzle ginger-beer?"

The porter stared.

"Most of the young gentlemen like ginger-beer, sir."

"Rats!"

And Master Thurnel walked out of the station. The

—BUT TOM MERRY & CO. SHOW HIM "WHERE HE GETS OFF!"

By Martin Clifford

porter stared after him. He had seen all sorts and conditions of boys arrive at St. Jim's, but he had never seen any new arrival quite like Richard Thurnel before.

The porter shook his head and wheeled the trolley down the platform. The trunk was placed on the station hack, and the driver waited for Master Thurnel to mount into it. "You can wait," said the new boy; "I want to get something to drink."

"Pass the tuckshop, sir, on the way," said the driver.

Master Thurnel sniffed.

"Bless the tuckshop!"

There was a refreshment establishment of a very different sort next door to the station. From behind the glass doors there came the sound of the clinking of glasses and a chorus. Master Thurnel's eyes lighted up as he glanced in that direction, and he walked over to it, pushed open the swing-door, and entered.

The driver and the porter looked at one another in helplessness and astonishment.

"Wot do you think of that, Jim?" gasped the old porter.

The driver shook his head.

"He's a rum 'un!" he remarked.

"Hallo, kids!" exclaimed a cheery voice, as a bunch of juniors came tearing up to the station. "Hallo! Is the train in?"

The porter touched his cap.

"Yes, Master Merry."

"Is there a chap for St. Jim's knocking about, then?" asked Jack Blake breathlessly. "We've come to meet him. He's coming into our study in the Fourth Form."

"Yes, he's here, Master Blake."

"Bai Jove! Here's his twunk on the cab," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's all wight; he can't be gone yet."

"He's not gone, Master D'Arcy."

"Good! Where is he?"

The porter pointed to the glass doors of the public-house a dozen yards away.

"He's there, Master Merry."

"Oh, don't be funny! Where is he?"

"It's the truth, sir."

Tom Merry stared.

"He's gone into that public-house?"

"Yes, sir."

"What for?"

"To get something to drink, sir," said the Rylcombe porter stolidly. "Which he's an odd-looking boy, sir. He's much smaller than you young gents, but he looks a lot older."

"We'd better look into this," said Tom Merry abruptly.

Blake nodded.

"I don't understand it," he said. "Come on!"

The juniors hurried towards the public-house into which Master Thurnel had disappeared a few minutes before, and Tom Merry pushed open the glass doors and looked in.

He saw the new boy for St. Jim's. Thurnel was standing at the bar drinking. There was no one else in that division of the bar. A barman was leaning across the counter, grinning and talking to the extremely precocious new boy.

The juniors stared at the scene dumbly for a moment. There were many kinds of boys at St. Jim's—good, bad, and indifferent—but they had never seen one like this before. Some of the "smart" fellows in the Sixth Form indulged in the luxury of whisky-and-soda in the strict privacy of their studies, with the knowledge that they would be expelled from St. Jim's if they were discovered. But even the smart seniors never did this sort of thing. They would never have

ventured to do it. The new boy, whatever else he lacked, did not lack nerve.

"The young rotter!" muttered Jack Blake at last.

"The uthah wapsallion!"

Tom Merry strode into the bar.

His face was flushed with indignation. The new boy was a disgrace to the school, but Tom Merry didn't intend to let him disgrace St. Jim's in public.

Thurnel was just raising the glass to his lips as the indignant Shell fellows strode in.

Tom Merry stepped quickly towards him and struck the glass with his open hand, sending it whirling through the air.

Thurnel gave a startled cry.

Half the liquid splashed over his waistcoat and shirt-front, and the rest was lost in the sawdust; the glass crashed on the bar and fell to the floor in many pieces.

Thurnel whirled round towards Tom Merry, who faced him with flashing eyes.

CHAPTER 2.

Chucked Out!

THURNEL clenched his fists, and he seemed for a moment as if he would spring upon the hero of the Shell. But Tom Merry was so evidently ready for him that he hesitated. The other juniors, too, were crowding in behind Tom.

They were ready to seize Master Thurnel and dust the sawdust off the floor with him, and they would have been glad of half an excuse to do it; and the new boy read it in their faces and retreated a step towards the bar.

"What—what do you mean?" he exclaimed savagely.

"The question is—what do you mean?" said Tom Merry. "How dare you act like this! You are the new junior for St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Richard Thurnel?"

"Yes."

"Then what do you mean by this, you cad? You belong to St. Jim's, and here you are drinking in a public-house!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The barman has no right to serve you. Get out of this at once!"

Thurnel gritted his teeth.

"I won't!"

"You won't?"

"No!"

Tom Merry's face set grimly.

"I'll give you two seconds to get out!" he said. "Then if you don't go on your feet, you'll go on your neck!"

Thurnel hesitated for a moment.

"Now, are you going?"

"No!"

"Collar him!"

The juniors had only been waiting for the word. They rushed at the new boy and collared him promptly.

Thurnel struggled savagely.

From his diminutive form and his thin, sallow face no one had expected him to show much strength, but there was something of a surprise for the juniors of St. Jim's in the extremely peculiar new boy.

He fought like a tiger, and half a dozen of them had plenty to do to drag him to the door. His strength was unexpected and surprising. But they got him to the door, and Tom Merry held it open while they hurled him through.

Master Thurnel went spinning into the street.

He staggered across the pavement and collapsed in the road, sitting down in a puddle left by the late rain.

The panting juniors followed him more slowly.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "What a stwong beast! I should weally neval have expected it fwom his looks!"

"Nor I!" said Blake.

Thurnel staggered to his feet. His jacket was splashed and his trousers caked with mud. His face was red with rage.

"You hounds!" he yelled. "What do you mean by this?"

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versus
Foo Chow!"**

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beginning on page 23.

Who are you, and what do you mean by interfering with me?"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. He had not explained that he belonged to St. Jim's; he had assumed that the new boy would have guessed it.

"We're from the school," he said. "We've been sent to meet you."

"Oh, you needn't have come!"

"I'm jolly glad we did come," said Tom Merry. "We've saved you from acting like a blackguard and disgracing the school you're going to join."

Thurnel laughed sneeringly.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" he said. "I suppose I can drink what I like without asking your permission."

"That's just what you can't do," said Tom. "You would never be allowed to enter St. Jim's at all if I reported what I saw just now."

Thurnel's expression changed.

"I suppose you're not going to tell tales?" he said hastily.

Tom Merry smiled scornfully.

"We're not likely to sneak," he said. "You needn't be afraid of that. But I warn you that you'd better be careful. Besides the caddishness of the thing, you can't do this sort of thing without being found out. And if a prefect found you in a public-house you would be expelled."

"Yaas, wathah; and serve you jolly well wight!"

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it's no good asking you to mind your own business," he said. "I'd better get to the school. Are you fellows coming into the hack?"

"No; there isn't room for so many, and we don't particularly want your company either," said Tom disdainfully. "We shall see you safely off and follow."

"Do as you like."

Thurnel stepped into the hack and told the driver to start. He pulled out a cigarette-case, and the juniors saw him lighting up as the hack rolled away.

They looked at one another in surprise and consternation.

"My 'only hat!" said Jack Blake. "What sort of a critter is it? He's coming into the Fourth Form, and he drinks whisky and smokes cigarettes."

"That's what makes him look so jolly old, I suppose," remarked Digby. "He's got a face that might be any age."

"And he's coming into our study!" said Herries.

Jack Blake snorted.

"Oh, it's just our luck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But there's one thing that's a dead cert," said Blake. "And that is, that he won't play any of his Smart Set tricks in Study No. 6. Let me catch him smoking there!"

"What ho!"

"I can foresee a high old time for that merchant," said Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if I know what to make of him!"

And the juniors looked very thoughtful as they strolled after the hack in the direction of St. Jim's. It was hard, indeed, to know what to make of the new boy, and the rest of the School House was soon in the same state of doubt.

CHAPTER 3.

Master Thurnel Arrives!

MR. RAILTON came into the Hall as the new boy, alighting from the hack, entered the School House at St. Jim's.

Master Thurnel glanced at the Housemaster, and the Housemaster glanced at him, and then looked at him fixedly. The somewhat unusual countenance of Master Thurnel attracted his attention.

"You are Richard Thurnel?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"I am Mr. Railton, your Housemaster. This will be your House here," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose you are hungry after your journey. Noble!"

A handsome, sturdy junior came up at Mr. Railton's call. It was Harry Noble, otherwise called Kangaroo, the Cornstalk junior.

"Yes, sir?"

"Will you take Thurnel to the dining-room, where I have directed supper to be laid for him? Do anything you can for him, please, and show him his quarters. He will share Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage with Blake and the others. Taggles, that trunk is to be taken up into the Fourth Form dormitory."

And Mr. Railton retreated into his study.

Noble glanced at the new boy. He was rather struck by his appearance, and didn't much like the looks of Master Thurnel; but he was good-natured and prepared to do anything he could to make a new boy comfortable.

"This way," he said.

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"All right."

Thurnel followed the junior to the dining-room of the School House, where a cold supper was laid. The new boy sat down at the table.

"Hungry?" said Kangaroo.

"Yes, a little. I had a smoke in the train, though."

Kangaroo stared.

"You had a what?"

"A smoke!"

"You'd better not talk about it here, then," said Kangaroo. "Juniors are not allowed to smoke at this school—nor seniors, either, for that matter, though some of them do. You'll get into a row."

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes, I know I shall have to keep anything like that dark."

"You'll do better to drop it altogether," said Kangaroo warningly. "It's not considered form here to do anything of that sort."

"Oh, rubbish!"

The Cornstalk's eyes gleamed.

"I'm not in the habit of having my remarks called rubbish," he said quietly. "You'd better be a little more careful, or—"

"Or what?" asked Thurnel.

"Never mind," said Kangaroo, appearing to swallow something with difficulty. "I won't hammer a new boy on his first night at school."

"You won't hammer me!"

"I've said I won't," said Noble, keeping his temper with difficulty. "Have you come to St. Jim's to look for trouble? It looks like it!"

"Not at all," said Thurnel, attacking the cold viands with a good appetite; "so long as I'm left alone I shan't trouble anybody. I suppose a fellow can have a smoke in his own study if he likes?"

"It's against the rules."

"I suppose you always carefully obey all the rules of the school, don't you?" observed Thurnel, with a sneer.

"Well, no. I suppose I break as many as most chaps," said Kangaroo. "But there are some rules one doesn't break, and there's an unwritten law, too, that a fellow isn't to do anything caddish. Smoking in secret is caddish."

"Thank you!"

"Besides, you can't do it. You won't have a study to yourself, you know. You will share No. 6 with four others—four decent chaps, too—and they wouldn't stand it."

"They may have to."

Kangaroo laughed.

"Well, I don't think I can see them doing it, that's all. If you smoke in No. 6, Jack Blake is just the chap to send you out on your neck."

"We shall see."

"Now, be a sensible chap, and don't begin by setting your study-mates against you," urged Kangaroo, kindly enough. "That's a bad start to make."

"They had better let me alone, then."

"Well, you'll get hurt, I expect, that's all."

Thurnel laughed.

"You think I cannot take care of myself."

Kangaroo surveyed the thin, wiry form, the sallow face, with its curiously-old expression, with a look of disdainful disfavour.

"Well, you don't look like an athlete," he said.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive," said Thurnel. "I would undertake to put you on your back in two minutes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo's hearty laugh rang through the dining-room.

Thurnel's eyes glinted green, but he went on quietly eating his supper.

"That amuses you, doesn't it?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

"You think I couldn't do it?"

"I know you couldn't," said Kangaroo impatiently. "What's the good of talking rot? It's as much as Tom Merry can do to put me on my back."

"Let's try."

"Oh, rot! You couldn't touch me!"

"Let's try!"

Kangaroo gave a shrug.

"Well, we'll try, if you like. But what's the use?"

Thurnel did not reply. He faced Kangaroo, and they grapsed one another. They closed and struggled for a few seconds, and then the Cornstalk's feet were swept from under him, and he was laid with a bump on the floor.

Thurnel sat down and went on with his supper. Kangaroo sat up and watched him with a dazed expression.

He had been put down with the greatest of ease, and the new boy had not turned a hair. He was eating calmly, without his breath coming in the least faster.

Noble staggered to his feet



"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Gussy, as he entered the study with his chums. He stared into the smoke-filled room in utter amazement—for seated in the armchair, coolly smoking a cigarette, was the new boy. "Oh, come in," said Thurnel, "and shut the door!"

"Well?" said Thurnel, looking up.

"I—I don't know how you did it!" said Kangaroo heatedly. "I'd like to try that over again!"

"Oh, all right!"

Thurnel stood up and stepped away from the table. Kangaroo grasped him more carefully this time, and they wrestled.

The Cornstalk put all he knew into that tussle. His blood was up now—all he could do he did. And the Cornstalk was a tough customer. He was one of the finest athletes in the Lower School, and the only fellow who could hold his own against Tom Merry. But he could not hold his own against the surprising new boy.

He was forced backwards, resisting desperately but unavailingly till he collapsed, and his head was rapped on the floor.

Then Thurnel rose lightly and left him there.

Kangaroo scrambled up.

His face was red with exertion and mortification. Kangaroo could take a defeat like a man; but to be defeated by this thin, undersized, smoking and unfit-looking new boy—that was galling.

Thurnel grinned.

"Like to try again?" he asked.

Kangaroo shook his head.

"No, it's no good! You're stronger than I am."

Thurnel sat down to finish his supper. Kangaroo sat

on the edge of the table and watched him. He could not understand it. He realised clearly that he was no match for this fellow, and he could not understand it at all.

Thurnel finished his supper. Then he drew a leather cigarette-case out of his pocket. He caught Kangaroo's glance and replaced it.

"It won't do here, I suppose?" he remarked.

"Nor anywhere at St. Jim's," said Kangaroo.

"Oh, rot!" Thurnel rose to his feet. "Where's my study?"

"This way."

Kangaroo led the way in silence up the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. He stopped at the door of Study No. 6 and pushed it open.

The study was deserted. Blake and his chums had not returned yet—they were walking back to the school from Rylcombe.

Kangaroo stepped into the study, and Thurnel followed him in. He cast a decidedly disparaging glance round.

"Is this the room?" he asked.

"Yes, this is it."

"And there are four other fellows besides myself here?"

"Yes—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy."

"Pretty close quarters?"

"Some of the studies are smaller."

"Well, I suppose a chap must put up with what he can get," said Thurnel.

Kangaroo did not reply. Thurnel seated himself in the armchair. Then out came the cigarette-case.
 "I don't want to force my advice upon you," said Kangaroo quietly. "It's really no business of mine. But I warn you once more to quit smoking here."

"Thank you for nothing."
 "If the fellows find you smoking when they come in there will be trouble."

"Oh, hang the fellows!"
 "Very well—it's your business."

Kangaroo quitted the study. Thurnel grinned, stretched himself in the chair, and lighted his cigarette.

The new boy was still smoking, in a haze of blue smoke, when Tom Merry & Co. returned.

CHAPTER 4.

No Smoking Allowed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY opened the door of Study No. 6.
 "Bai Jove!"

And then, after a moment's pause of stupefaction, the swell of St. Jim's ejaculated:

"Gweat Scott!"
 He peered into the blue haze of the study.
 Blake, Herries, and Digby were a little behind him. They saw the swell of the Fourth stop and stare, and heard his amazed ejaculation without knowing the cause.
 "What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"
 "Anything wrong in the study?"
 "Look!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and stared

into the study. He was too amazed for words. The others joined him, and they stared in, too.

Thurnel turned his head in the armchair and glanced at them.

"Oh, come in!" he said.

"My only hat!"

"My respected Aunt Selina!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Thurnel grinned.

"Oh, come in and shut the door!" he said.

"Come in!" said Blake abruptly.

The juniors entered the study, coughing in the smoke. Blake closed the door. He had no desire for the new boy's strange manners and customs to attract attention from without. Blake felt quite up to dealing with Master Thurnel himself. He crossed to the window and pushed it up to its fullest extent. Then he turned upon the new boy and regarded him wrathfully.

"Now, what does this mean?" he demanded.

Thurnel yawned.

"I don't quite follow you," he said. "If you mean what does my being here mean—why, this is my study. I have been told that I'm to share it with you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! We know that!"

"That's bad enough!" said Blake. "It's horrid enough to have to share a study with a worm like you!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"But what I want to know is, what do you mean by turning the study into a filthy pot-house?" demanded Blake fiercely. "Don't you know the juniors are not allowed to smoke at this school?"

"I just heard so!"

"And even if they were allowed, do you think we want our study reeking of tobacco?"

"I really haven't thought of it," said Thurnel.

"Then it's time you did!" burst out Blake wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"My dear chap, I smoke—it's my way. I don't want to interfere with you, but I'm not going to change my habits to please anybody," said Thurnel.

"You jolly well are!" said Blake. "Throw that cigarette into the fire!"

"Bosh!"

"Throw it in, I tell you!"

"I won't!"

"Then we'll jolly well do it for you! Collar him!"

Four pairs of hands were laid simultaneously upon Master Thurnel.

He resisted savagely, and hit out. Digby dropped on the floor, dazed, and Herries rolled over him. Then Blake closed with the new boy, hooked his foot behind Thurnel's leg, and brought him to the floor with a heavy crash that made the furniture in the study jump.

"Got him!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! What a strong beast!"

"Let me up!" yelled Thurnel.

"Sit on him!"

"Pin him down!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You hounds!" gasped Thurnel. "I'll fight any two of you!"

Blake snapped his teeth.

"You shall fight any one of us, any time and any place you choose," he said. "But this isn't a fair fight at present—it's a punishment. We're teaching you discipline."

"Ow!"

"Sit on him, Herries! Now then, which pocket are your cigarettes in, Thurnel?"

"Yah!"

"Which pocket—do you hear?"

"Find out!"

"That's just what I'm going to do," said Blake coolly.

"Hold him down, you chaps, while I turn out his pockets."

Thurnel changed colour.

"Stop!" he yelled. "Stop! I—I won't have my pockets turned out! You spying cad! Don't you dare to go through my pockets."

Blake's eyes blazed.

"Well, of all the worms!" he ejaculated. "Do you think I want to spy into your things, you cad? I'm going for the cigarettes."

"Let me get up—"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah, wats, and many of 'em, deah boy!"

"I tell you—"

"We've got him!"

Jack Blake went through the new boy's pockets in search of the cigarette-case. He turned the pockets out one by one, depositing the articles contained therein on the floor. All kinds of things were turned out, including a matchbox, two or three loose cigars, and letters. Thurnel was resisting all the time. The idea of the St. Jim's juniors going

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through his pockets seemed to strike him with an unaccountable terror.

"My hat—plenty of tin, anyway," said Herries, as plenty of loose silver jingled out on the floor.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Not just yet, my pippin. I want the cigarettes."

"They're in my breast pocket."

"Hallo! What's this?"

Blake had dragged a paper out of one of the inner pockets.

The juniors could not help looking at it in their surprise.

It was a plan of St. Jim's.

"Let it alone!" said Thurnel.

The juniors stared at him.

"My hat!" said Blake. "You must take an interest in the school when you bring a plan of the place along with you. What on earth were you doing with that, Thurnel?"

"Mind your own business."

"Weally, Thurnel—"

"Oh, here's the cigarette-case!"

Jack Blake dragged the case out to the light. He took out the cigarettes, broke them up, and threw them into the wastepaper basket.

The new boy, helpless in the grasp of the juniors, watched the sacrifice with a sullen brow.

"That's done," said Blake. "Let the beast get up now."

The new boy was released.

He rose, gasping, to his feet, and then collected up the various articles that had been removed from his pockets and stowed them back where they had been taken from. His eyes were glittering with anger.

The juniors watched him curiously. They wondered how he was going to take the rough handling he had had—not that they cared much. They were quite able to deal with Master Thurnel if he cut up rough.

Thurnel turned to them at last.

"Now, then," he said, between his teeth, "which one of you is going to be licked first?"

CHAPTER 5.

A Tough Customer!

JACK BLAKE grinned.

"Perhaps you'd better begin with me," he remarked. "It would give me a great deal of pleasure to dust up the floor with you."

"Put up your hands, then."

"Pway hold on a minute, deah boys. Undah the circs, I wegard it as my place to give this uttah boundah a feahful thwashin'."

"Dry up, Gussy."

"I wefuse to dwy up. As the pwincipal person in the study—"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake—"

"Well, I did say rats to you."

"Then I shall have no wesource but to administah a little cowvection. Pway put up your hands, and I will thwash you before I thwash Thurnel."

"Ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass. Pway—"

"Are you going to take off your jacket?" asked Thurnel.

"I warn you that I mean business. You kids have got to understand your place in this study."

Blake stripped off his jacket, and turned back his cuffs.

"I'm ready," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Stand aside, Gussy."

"I wefuse to stand aside. I—"

"Collar him!"

"I decline to be collahed! I— Oh!"

Herries and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's and whirled him to the armchair, and sat him down in it with a bump. Then Herries sat on his knees and Digby on his shoulders, and the elegant junior struggled in vain to rise.

"Ow! Yow! Leggo! Gewoff!"

"Keep quiet, then!"

"I wefuse to keep quiet."

"Sit on him," said Blake.

"We're sitting on him," grinned Digby. "Now, then, go ahead and show that new cad how you can box, Jack."

"I'm going to!"

The study door opened, and Tom Merry looked in. He glanced in surprise at the junior in his shirtsleeves and the angry face of Thurnel.

"Hallo! Trouble?" he asked.

"Just a little argument," said Blake. "We're just going to begin."

"Good! I looked in to ask you chaps to come along to our study."

"We'll come in a minute," said Digby.

"Right-ho! I'll stay and watch!"

"Ready, kid?" said Blake, advancing towards the new junior.

Thurnel nodded savagely.

"Yes, come on."

"Here you are," said Blake cheerfully.

And he led off by an attack. Blake was one of the best boxers in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and almost a match for Tom Merry of the Shell. That the sallow-faced new boy would be able to stand up against him for two minutes, he never imagined. But a surprise was waiting for him, as for Kangaroo in similar circumstances.

Blake's attack was met grimly, and to his surprise his guard was swept away and a heavy fist crashed upon his jaw.

He staggered back, and sat down with a bump that raised the dust from the study carpet, and brought an ache into his bones.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove!"

Blake sat looking dazed, holding his jaw in his hand.

Herries and Digby jumped up in their surprise and ran to help him up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose from his armchair. He was looking very concerned now.

"Bai Jove, deah boy!"

"I'm all right," muttered Blake.

But he did not feel all right.

His jaw was aching horribly, as if it had received a drive from a hammer, and his head was a little dizzy. Where did the sallow new boy get the strength from that he had put into that blow?

Tom Merry started. There were several things about Master Thurnel that surprised him, but this exhibition of strength surprised him more than anything else.

"Well, get up!" said Thurnel. "I suppose you haven't had enough yet?"

Blake staggered to his feet with the assistance of Herries.

"Not much," he said. "I shall take a little more knocking out than that!"

"Come on, then!"

A thin, narrow face, with sly eyes, peeped in at the door—it belonged to Mellish of the Fourth, the cad of the School House. He had heard the row in Study No. 6, and, having seen Tom Merry enter, he imagined that the hero of the Shell was engaged in strife with the Fourth-Formers, as was not uncommonly the case.

He stared in astonishment at the new boy and Jack Blake. Mellish would as soon have tackled a lion in its den as have faced Jack Blake of the Fourth. And what he saw made it clear that Jack was getting the worst of the tussle.

"My only hat!" said Mellish, in amazement.

"Get out!" said Herries brusquely.

Mellish shrugged his shoulders. He was up against the chums of Study No. 6 all the time, and he was not likely to miss an opportunity like this if he could help it. He came in and closed the door.

"Why shouldn't I see the fun?" he demanded.

"Stay if you like," said Thurnel, with a glance. "This is my study, and you can stick here if you like."

"Thanks!" said Mellish.

Herries made a wrathful movement towards the cad of the Fourth, but Blake signed to him to let Mellish alone. One row at a time was enough.

"Well, are you coming on?" asked Thurnel, with a sneer. Blake's eyes blazed.

"Yes, you cad!"

"Well, I'm waiting!"

And Jack Blake came on, his eyes gleaming, and his teeth set. Blake intended to lick the new boy, or to be licked himself, and he wouldn't give in as long as he had strength enough to keep upon his feet.

"Go it, Jackie!"

The new boy met the attack with a sneer upon his face. As they sparred, it was seen that he was considerably longer in the reach than Jack Blake, and this gave him a great advantage.

For a couple of minutes they boxed fiercely, and Blake succeeded in putting in two or three good blows upon the sallow face of the new boy.

Then came Thurnel's opportunity.

He drove in his right under Blake's chin, and as the Fourth-Former whirled and staggered, he followed it up with his left, catching the boy on the temple.

Blake fell like a log.

He did not rise again.

Digby and Tom Merry ran to him at once.

Blake blinked at them dazedly. His head was swimming, and he could hardly see them with his dancing eyes.

"Blake!"
 "I—I'm all right!" muttered Blake.
 He could not realise that he was defeated. He made a gallant effort to stagger up, but he sank back again, his head whirling.

"Keep still, Blake!" muttered Tom Merry.

"I—"
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Don't twy to wise."

"I—"
 "Leave it for a bit, Blake," said Digby. "You can tackle him again another day. You'll have to chuck it now."
 Blake gasped painfully.

"I—I won't chuck it! I'll lick him! Help me up!"

"You can't—"

"I tell you I will!"

Blake tried to scramble up, but it was in vain. As he stood on his feet his senses swam, and Tom Merry helped him to the armchair. He sank into it with a gasp.

Thurnel looked on with a sneering smile.

"Well, are you finished?" he asked.

Tom Merry glanced at him with a flash in his eyes.

"Blake is finished for the present," he said. "But this won't be the end of it!"

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm willing to give him another licking whenever he likes!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, don't crow, you cad!"

"And I'm ready to give you one, too, for that matter!" said Thurnel.

"I'll remind you of that to-morrow," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't think I ever saw a fellow I should more enjoy licking!"

"I'm ready any time."

"Licked!" said Mellish, looking at Jack Blake in wonder and satisfaction. "Licked, by George!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Digby savagely.

"Licked!"

Mellish went grinning out of the study. It was an item of news to be retailed in the Common-room with infinite relish by the cad of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 6. Spreading the News

"RATS!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

"Tell that to the Marines!"

Such were the polite remarks that greeted Mellish when he announced in the Junior Common-room in the School House that Jack Blake had been licked by the new boy.

Mellish and his yarns were well known, and nobody believed for a moment that the tale was true, and they expressed their opinion with Lower School frankness.

"Well, you can jolly well see for yourselves!" said Mellish spitefully. "Go and look at Blake, and you'll see that he's doubled up."

"Rot!"

"Well, go and see!"

"Bosh!"

"Hallo, here's the new kid!" exclaimed Clifton Dane of the Shell.

Thurnel came into the Common-room.

He glanced about him, and strode across the room. Mellish immediately joined him. Mellish meant to lose no time in making up to the new power in the Fourth. The prospect of seeing the reign of Blake come to an end was delightful to the junior. And if he succeeded in becoming the toady and chum of the new fellow he could hope to repay some of the little debts he owed Study No. 6—with interest, too!

"Hallo, Thurnel!" said Glyn of the Shell. "Is it true you have been fighting one of the chaps in Study No. 6?"

"Yes," said Thurnel.

"Licked?"

"Do I look like it?"

"Well, no," said Bernard Glyn, looking at him. "Your chivvy looks a little hammered, but not so very much. How is Blake?"

Thurnel laughed.

"Better go and look at him."

"Hang it, it can't be true!" exclaimed Hancock. "You haven't licked Blake!"

"What did I tell you!" said Mellish triumphantly.

"Faith, and I can't understand it, for one!" said Reilly of the Fourth, with an extremely disparaging glance at the new boy. "Thurnel doesn't look as if he could lick a mouse!"

"He's licked Blake," said Mellish, "and he could lick you!"

"Faith, and I—"

"Go and look at Blake!"

"Well, I will, for one," said Kerruish. "I'll ask Blake if he's been licked, and if it's a yarn, I'll tweak your nose, Mellish!"

And Kerruish and a dozen more juniors rushed off to look at Jack Blake, and ascertain whether he really had been licked or not.

But Study No. 6 was drawn blank.

It was in darkness, and the Fourth-Formers were gone.

"Nobody's here!" exclaimed Kerruish, looking in.

"Oh, they'll be in Tom Merry's study!" said Mellish.

"Come on, then!"

And the eager seekers for knowledge rushed away down the passage and turned into the Shell quarters, and Reilly kicked at Tom Merry's door.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Tom Merry, from within.

But Kerruish opened the door instead of buzzing off. The chums of Study No. 6 were in the room, along with the Terrible Three.

Blake was sitting in the armchair, looking very silent and gloomy. He did not look up as the juniors crowded in at the doorway. Mellish grinned insolently at Tom Merry & Co.

"I say, Merry, isn't it a fact that—"

"Get out!"

"That Blake has been licked by the new kid Thurnel?"

"Buzz off!"

"Is it true, bedad?" asked Reilly.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"Ask Blake," sneered Mellish.

"Is it true, Blake?"

"Have ye been licked entoirely?"

Jack Blake looked up.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I've been licked, if you're particularly anxious to know."

"Licked hollow!" said Mellish.

Blake was silent.

"By the new kid?" asked Kerruish.

"Yes."

"He doesn't look as if he could lick a giddy grasshopper!" said Hancock. "What were you thinking about, Blake?"

"Faith, and ye're going to try again, Blakey darlint?"

"Yes."

"Sure, I—"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Tom Merry. "You're bothering us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Faith—"

"Get out!"

"Yes, let's get out," said Mellish. "You're satisfied now, I suppose? Blake simply couldn't stand up to the new fellow. He had no chance."

"I could stand up to you, Mellish, as easily as ever," said Blake, with a dangerous look. "I should recommend you to keep your mouth shut."

Mellish hastily retreated into the passage.

Manners slammed the door after the wondering juniors, and they returned to the Common-room to discuss the startling news.

Hitherto, in the Fourth Form, Blake had disputed with Figgins of the New House the leadership of the Form, but there had been no rival in the Fourth excepting Figgins. Now the new boy had come, all was changed.

Blake's reign was over.

Dick Thurnel was to be cock of the walk in the Fourth, and from what the fellows had already seen of him it did not seem likely that he would be a particularly pleasant fellow to get on with.

Jack Blake turned his gaze downwards again as the door of Tom Merry's study was closed.

His expression was gloomy.

He had been licked, and there was no getting out of it, and the licking was a particularly rankling one.

Blake's depression cast a shadow over the group of juniors in the study.

"It's no good bothering about it," Lowther remarked. "After all, everybody gets a licking now and then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Buck up, Blake, old man!"

Jack looked up.

"It isn't the licking," he said. "I suppose I can take a licking as well as anybody. But to be licked by a worm like that! He's a rotten worm!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It might have been Figgins, or Kerr, and I wouldn't



"Stop that bullying!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I won't!" said Thurnel savagely. "Then I'll make you!" cried Tom; and he grasped the new boy by the coat collar and simply tore him away from Wally D'Arcy.

have minded a bit," said Blake. "That would have been different; they're decent chaps. But to be licked by a worm like that—a fellow who smokes and drinks; a dirty, low-down cad—well, that's enough to make any chap feel beastly!"

"Yaas, that's twue enough, deah boy."

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"It's a curious thing," he remarked. "There's a lot I don't understand about that new chap. He's a puzzle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He doesn't look so strong, and yet he's as strong as a horse. He must have heaps of muscle. I couldn't give a drive like the one he gave you—and I can punch hard, too. One would almost think that he was an undersized man masquerading as a boy," said Tom Merry, with a slight laugh.

Blake nodded.

"I can't understand it, either," he said. "I'm going to tackle him again, but I know I've got no chance. I shall be licked again. But he'll have a fight on his hands every day regularly if he tries to be cock of the walk in Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah! I shall make it a point to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"You'd better let him alone, Gussy; he'd walk over you," said Lowther.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And we don't want your beauty spoiled," said Monty Lowther. "It won't stand much spoiling, you know."

"I considah—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Blake rose from his chair.

"I think I'll go and bathe my chivvy," he said; "it aches."

And the leader of Study No. 6 left the study.

Tom Merry & Co. glanced at one another without speaking. All of them were feeling decidedly gloomy.

CHAPTER 7.

The Safe!

MELLISH looked round for Thurnel as he came into the Common-room.

The new boy was standing by the mantelpiece with a shadowed expression on his face. Perhaps he was a little surprised that no one appeared inclined to pay court to him. As a matter of fact, no one liked him at all. He might be feared in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, but he was not likely to rouse much friendly regard. And Jack Blake was a general favourite, and his defeat was not pleasing to anybody but Mellish.

Thurnel glanced up at Mellish as the cad of the Fourth came up with an ingratiating smile upon his narrow and cunning face.

"I'm jolly glad you licked Blake," Mellish remarked, by way of beginning. "He's a rotter, and I've never pulled with him."

"Oh!"

"You'll be cock of the walk now in the Fourth."

"Oh!"

"You may have to lick Figgins—Figgins of the New House, you know. But if you can lick Blake you can lick Figgins; they're much of a muchness."

"Oh!"

Thurnel's monosyllabic replies were hardly encouraging, but Mellish was not easily beaten.

"You'll find Study No. 6 down on you after this," he remarked.

"I suppose so," said Thurnel, with a short laugh.

"They all stand together, you know, as thick as thieves," said Mellish, encouraged. "You won't get much friendship there."

"I don't want any."

"Of course you don't. A chap like you can find friends anywhere," said the cad of the Fourth. "I'd like to chum with you myself, for that matter. I say, would you like to have a stroll round the school, as it's your first day here?"

Thurnel nodded.

"I should, very much," he said.

"Then come with me."

Thurnel followed him from the Common-room.

The part of the cicerone to a new boy was a novel one to Mellish, but he was willing to take any amount of trouble for the sake of ingratiating himself with the fellow who had licked Blake.

He showed Thurnel over the interior of the School House, explaining to him the plan of the various quarters, the passages, the studies, and the Form-rooms.

"I'll show you round the outside to-morrow," he remarked; "it's too late to-night. You'll like to see the gym and the New House and the ruined chapel and the old tower. Everybody goes and looks at them, you know. A scientific chap came here to look at the old tower once, and they say he's writing a book about it. It's awfully interesting."

"Oh, rats!" said Thurnel.

"Well, yes, it's rats, and no mistake!" said Mellish. "A lot of rot, I call it, making a fuss over chunks of old bricks and stones not fit for an owl to live in. Would you like to see the school library? It's in the School House. You see, most of the school buildings are in this House. The New House is just a boarding-house that was built about a hundred years ago, when St. Jim's was growing too big for one House."

"The library?" said Thurnel, with a yawn. "Oh, yes! By the way, where do they keep the school silver and things?"

"Oh, you've heard about the St. Jim's plate?"

Thurnel coloured a little.

"It's famous, isn't it?" he asked. "You see, I—I've been told a lot about the school before I came here. My father knows fellows who were here."

"Oh, I see!"

"The St. Jim's silver is famous, so I've heard."

"I should think it is!" said Mellish. "Why, the plate is more valuable than that belonging to any other Public school in England. Part of it has belonged to St. Jim's from time immemorial, and part has been presented to the school at different times by governors and so on. They say that the whole lot is worth over five thousand pounds."

Thurnel's eyes glistened.

"That's a great deal of money."

"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose it's kept in a safe place?"

Mellish grinned.

"You may be sure it is."

"I should like to see it. Have you ever seen it?"

"Yes, rather! I had a peep at it on the occasion of a big feed given to the governors," said Mellish. "It's only used on state occasions like that. You jolly well can't see it, though!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's kept safely locked up, of course!"

"I'm curious to see it. I've heard such a lot about it," said Thurnel. "Where do they keep the stuff?"

"Oh, it's in the library!"

"Well, let's go and look at the library, then."

"This way."

Thurnel followed the cad of the Fourth into the library.

It was a long, lofty apartment, with the high walls covered with bookcases. Thurnel looked up and down the room.

He was not interested in books, but he wondered where the receptacle was in which the plate was stowed away.

Mellish watched him with a grin.

"Well, where is the silver?" asked Thurnel.

"Guess."

"In one of those cabinets?" asked Thurnel dubiously.

"They don't look strong enough to keep valuables in."

"Ha, ha, ha! No; they only contain manuscripts and antiques and things," said Mellish. "Look here!"

He led the way to a bookcase, in no way dissimilar in appearance from the rest, upon the top of which stood a bust of Shakespeare.

"Well?" said Thurnel, puzzled.

"This is the place."

"This bookcase?"

"It's not a bookcase, really," said Mellish, with a grin.

"It's an imitation, you see. They are only the backs of the books there, but as it's always kept locked nobody can find out the difference. I only knew by watching the butler when he was putting the silver away after it had been used."

Thurnel looked at the dummy bookcase with great interest.

It was designed to look exactly like the rest of the cases that lined the walls, and the only thing that distinguished it from the rest was the bust above.

"Is it well fastened?" he asked.

"I should say so. There's a Yale lock on it, and another on the iron door inside, opened by a different key."

"I suppose the butler keeps the keys?"

"The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,335.

"That's where you're wrong! The Head keeps them."

"About him?"

"I don't know—I think so."

"I should like to see the silver," Thurnel remarked regretfully. "It must be worth seeing."

"What-ho!" said Mellish. "Gold and silver plate, and big flagons, you know—heaps of things, worth a lot of money."

"It would be jolly good fun to get the keys some day, and have a look at the things," Thurnel remarked, with a sidelong glance at Mellish.

The junior shook his head.

"I couldn't be done."

"Why not?"

"Well, one doesn't know where the Head keeps the keys, for one thing, and then there's the risk."

"It would only be a licking if one was found out."

"I don't know. It might mean being expelled. The Head wouldn't like to risk having the keys get into anybody's hands," said Mellish. "I know jolly well that I shan't try to do anything of that sort."

"Nor I," said Thurnel, laughing. "Of course, it was only just an idea that passed through my mind. It would be too risky altogether."

"I should say so."

"I suppose there has never been any attempt to steal the silver?" Thurnel remarked, looking at the hidden safe with a curious eye.

"Yes, there has—twice, I think. But they can't get at this safe, you know. It's made of iron, and sunk in the solid stone of the wall, and the door's of iron, too, under this dummy bookcase."

"Not much chance for a burglar, then, unless he could get the key."

"You're right."

Thurnel took a last glance at the bookcase door, and then turned away and followed his guide from the library.

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry Takes a Hand!

"BLESSED if I can understand it!" Tom Merry made that remark at tea-time the next day.

Monty Lowther, who was cutting cake in the study, glanced up.

"What is it you can't understand?" he asked. "I mean, which is it—as I suppose there are about a million things a bit too steep for your intellect?"

"It's about that new chap."

"Oh, Thurnel! What's fresh about him?" asked Monty Lowther. "I've heard that he chucked Figgins across the passage as if he were a sack of potatoes."

"Yes," said Tom Merry reflectively. "He's licked both Blake and Figgins now, and he's cock of the Fourth."

"He'll be cock of the whole Lower School if he's not put down a bit," said Manners, looking up from the interesting task of extracting jam from a nearly empty jar with a tablespoon. "Mellish is trying to egg him on to tackle you, Tom."

"I'm ready, if he wants to."

"Do you think you could lick him?"

"I don't know, but I jolly well know I'd try hard," said Tom Merry. "I don't like the airs he puts on any more than the Fourth Form do; but I don't much like being put in the position of going for a new kid. Let him begin it, though, and I'll see what I can do. But there's another thing—"

"The thing you can't understand?" said Lowther. "What is it?"

"I've just heard it from Reilly. He says he went into the dorm a few minutes ago and Thurnel was there."

"Nothing remarkable in that."

"No, ass. It was what Thurnel was doing that was remarkable."

"What on earth was it?"

"Shaving!"

"What?"

"Shaving!"

Monty Lowther jumped up and ceased cutting cake. Manners paused with the jam spoon poised in the air. Both of them stared in blank astonishment at the hero of the Shell.

"Shaving!" ejaculated both together.

Tom Merry nodded.

"So Reilly says. He saw him!"

"Reilly must have been romancing."

"Well, I thought so at first, but I asked him honour bright and he said yes. So he was telling the truth."

"Shaving!" repeated Monty Lowther. "But what on earth was he shaving for? A fellow of fifteen!"

"I remember noticing that he had a sort of hairiness about his chin," Manners remarked. "It was just as if he had a beard on the way. I know some chaps grow hair on their faces early. There was a fellow in a circus once who had a big beard at sixteen."

"But it's amazing!"

"Yes, rather; there's no doubt about that."

"Reilly says that Thurnel was doing it secretly. You see, just at tea-time it was not likely that anybody would be going to the dormitory," Tom Merry remarked. "It was a safe time for Thurnel to choose if he wanted. But I don't see why he should want to keep it secret. If he's bothered with an early beard there's nothing to be ashamed of in it. Most fellows, in fact, would feel rather cocky about having a moustache coming at fifteen."

"I imagine so."

"But he's keeping it dark, because he gave a jump when Reilly entered, and cut his face," said Tom Merry. "Then he bundled Reilly out and kicked him down the passage."

"My hat!"

"Now, what do you make of that?"

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," said Manners, resuming operations on the jam jar. "Is it possible that there's some swindle?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, suppose a chap was going to enter for a prize, or an examination, or something with an age limit," said Manners. "He might make out that he was younger than he really was, you know, especially if he was an undersized chap. I know that sort of thing is sometimes done."

"But I don't see what a fellow could have to gain by it in this case," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "There's no prize to be won in the Fourth here except the usual school prizes—not money ones. Of course, he might be going to enter for one of the junior scholarships, but—"

"Well, that's possible."

"He doesn't seem the kind of chap who swots for a scholarship," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "You see, he doesn't know more than enough to just scrape into the Fourth. He's not a studious chap. He's been in hot water with Mr. Lathom this afternoon, Dig told me, for inattention to his lessons. He's about the last chap in the world to swot for a scholarship."

"Then what could be his motives for pretending that he's only fifteen if he's really older?"

"I can't say."

"It's more likely that he's really the age he says, and afflicted with an early crop on the chin," remarked Manners. "Reilly says he cut himself when he was caught shaving."

"Yes."

"Well, I'll take a squint at his chivvy next time I meet him and see whether he's out. I can't help thinking Reilly may have been romancing."

The subject was a puzzling one. The Terrible Three settled down to their tea, but the new boy was still in their minds. After tea the chums of the Shell left their study, and they looked round for Thurnel. The new fellow was in the quadrangle, chatting with Mellish, who was the only boy with whom he had made anything like a friendship as yet.

The Terrible Three looked at him.

"Look at his chin!" murmured Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

On Thurnel's chin there was a cut such as might have been made by a razor hastily jerked. It was pretty clear that Reilly's story was true. The new fellow was in the habit of shaving himself.

It was astonishing, but undeniable. The new Fourth-Former had been a puzzle from the first; he was a greater puzzle than ever now.

"I give it up," said Tom Merry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "It's no good trying to make him out."

There was a shout from the quad. Three fags of the Third Form came racing along after a football. Wally D'Arcy, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, was punting the ball about with Jameson and Gibson.

The footer came bounding along towards the School House steps.

"Get out of the way!" yelled Wally.

Thurnel did not move. The footer passed close to him, and the next moment Wally had shoved against him, unintentionally, but rather roughly.

The new boy's eyes blazed with sudden temper.

He reached out after Wally, caught him by the ears, and swung him back.

The scamp of the Third Form yelled.

"Here, leggo!"

"You cheeky young cub—"

"Leggo, you ass, or I'll kick your shins!" gasped Wally, "Do you think you're going to pull my blessed ears out? Leggo!"

"I'll—"

(Continued on page 12.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received, and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

BOTH WRONG.

-Officer: "Look here, my man, why don't you be more careful?"

Army Clerk: "What is wrong, sir?"

Officer: "Why, instead of addressing this letter to the 'Intelligence Officer,' you've addressed it to the 'Intelligent Officer.' You should know there's no such person in the Army!"

A football has been awarded to L. Lawrence, 49, Cutmore Street, Gravesend, Kent.

A TURN FOR THE WORSE.

Office-boy: "Yes, my brother's had very bad luck. Just as his business was turning the corner the crash came."

Boss: "What was his business?"

Office-boy: "Driving a taxi!"

A football has been awarded to D. Russell, Tutton Hill, Colerne, Chippenham, Wilts.

LONG-WINDED.

Orator: "And now, friends, just a few more words—"

Reporter (to assistant): "Bring me a few more quires of paper—quick!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. G. Pickering, c/o Cottage Hospital, Ramsey, Isle of Man.

THE QUICKEST WAY.

Motorist (drawing up on lonely road and addressing yokel): "I say, you, can you tell me the quickest way to York?"

Yokel (eyeing ancient car): "Ay—take a bus!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Gill, Lynwood, 28, Park Way, Golders Green, London, N.W.11.

STUNG!

Smith: "It's wonderful what some insects can do. A grasshopper can jump two hundred times its own length."

Brown: "That's nothing. I once saw a wasp raise a fourteen-stone man three feet off the ground!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Oakes, 184, Park Street, Grimsby, Lincs.

WEATHER-LIKE.

Lodger: "This steak is like the weather to-day—a bit raw."

Landlady: "Your account is like the weather, too—unsettled!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Steptowe, 12, Alton Road, Croydon, Surrey.

SO RESTFUL.

First Tramp: "Why is the letter 'K' like a good rest?"

Second Tramp: "Because it comes at the end of work!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Gammon, #1, Deri Street, Pontyrywaith, Rhondda, S. Wales.

SOME HUNTER!

Wragg: "Did you have any luck when lion hunting in Africa?"

Bragg: "Rather! I didn't meet a single one!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Garner, 70, Humberstone Drive, Leicester.

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"Take that, then, you beast!"

And Wally kicked out. Wally was about the last fellow at St. Jim's to submit quietly to having his ears pulled by a Fourth-Former.

Thurnel uttered a cry of pain.

"You whelp!"

He grasped Wally savagely, and rained angry blows upon him. Wally yelled and struggled. The toughest specimen of a Third Form fag at St. Jim's could have given a good account of himself in a tussle with most of the Fourth-Formers at St. Jim's. But in the grasp of the new boy he was as helpless as a baby.

"Stop it!" he howled. "Rescue! Ow!"

Jameson and Gibson rushed back.

"Let him alone!" shouted Gibson.

"Stand back, you cub!"

Tom Merry, with a face set and angry, ran up.

"Stop that bullying at once!" he cried.

Thurnel looked at him savagely.

"Mind your own business!"

"This is my business! Let him go instantly!"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!"

And Tom Merry grasped the new fellow by the collar and simply tore him away from Wally.

Wally staggered away with tousled hair and burning face, gasping for breath.

"The beast!" he panted.

Tom Merry whirled the new boy back towards the School House steps. Thurnel caught at the stone balustrade in time to save himself from falling.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry between his teeth, "if you want this to go further I'm ready!"

CHAPTER 9.

A New Development!

THURNEL clung to the balustrade for a few moments, breathing heavily. Tom Merry had not handled him before.

Wally D'Arcy rubbed his ears and grinned as he looked on. There was a rush of other juniors to the spot.

"Very well," said Thurnel between his teeth. "I'll give you what I've given Blake. I'm ready!"

"Not here!" muttered Mellish hastily. "You're right under the Head's window!"

"I don't care!"

"But I do," said Tom Merry. "Come into the gym!"

Thurnel hesitated, but Tom Merry walked away towards the gymnasium, and the new boy followed.

Mellish walked with him, while the others crowded round Tom Merry. There was no doubt as to which side the general sympathy was upon.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, met the crowd in the doorway of the gym.

The big Sixth-Former glanced curiously at Tom Merry's set face.

"What's wrong, Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry looked a little uneasy.

"Nothing," he said.

Kildare laughed.

"Nothing—but a fight, I suppose?"

"Well, you see—"

"The new kid is looking for trouble," explained Monty Lowther. "It seems a pity to disappoint him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare shook his head. He tapped Thurnel on the shoulder, and the new junior looked at him sullenly.

"Just a word to you, Thurnel," said Kildare quietly.

"You've been in too many rows since you came here. You've not been at St. Jim's twenty-four hours yet, and you have been fighting all the time."

"Well?"

"Well, you've got to stop it!" said Kildare sharply. "I don't interfere in these matters among juniors as a rule; but you are too quarrelsome, and it's got to stop. Merry, you are not to fight Thurnel to-day."

"But—"

"You heard what I said."

"Yes," said Tom Merry resignedly.

"Thurnel, if you are mixed up in a fight again to-day I shall look into it, and, if you are wrong, report you to your Housemaster to be caned!"

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right!" he said.

"Remember what I have said."

And Kildare walked away.

Thurnel looked at Tom Merry, with a sneer.

"That saves you from a licking just now," he remarked.

"Possibly," said Tom; "but the fight will come off, all the same. We can't have it out to-day."

"Why not?"

"You heard what Kildare said?"

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Captain of the school."

"Well, he won't know, anyway; and we're not bound to fight in the gym," said Thurnel. "If you're not afraid, we can fight now."

Tom Merry reddened.

"You shall see to-morrow whether I'm afraid or not!" he said. "But I shall not fight you to-day."

"Bah!"

Tom Merry's hands clenched hard, but he turned away without a word.

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders again, and his brows lowered as he found himself left alone with Mellish.

Tom Merry carefully avoided Thurnel that evening. The fight between them was to come off the following day, and Tom Merry had no desire to avoid it; but his promise to Kildare kept him from finishing matters with the new boy that day. He kept clear of Thurnel, and during the evening he put in half an hour doing some boxing practice with Lowther and Manners in turn.

He was boxing with Lowther in the study when Manners came in and stood looking on. Tom Merry and his chum were in their shirt-sleeves, sparring away actively, all the advantages on Tom's side. Lowther was no mean antagonist, but there was no doubt that Tom Merry was far and away the better boxer of the two.

"Good!" said Manners. "You're in jolly fine form, Tommy!"

Tom Merry paused for a moment and nodded.

"Yes; and I feel jolly fit," he said. "I really think I shall be able to give Thurnel a tussle to-morrow."

"What-ho!" said Lowther. "He's a strong beast, I know; but he can't box better than you do, Tom, I'm sure of that! Why, you'd make a regular pug!"

"I shall give him a tussle, anyway."

Potts, the Office Boy!



"He's a curious beast," said Manners. "I've just heard the latest about him. Blessed if I know what to make of it!"

"What is it?"

"He's taken a studious turn."

Lowther gave a whistle.

"I heard from Dig that he was the biggest dunce in the Fourth Form," he said. "He claims to have had a private tutor before he came to St. Jim's; but Dig says his tutor must have been a humbug. The chap only scraped into the Fourth Form by a miracle. And Dig says he's a slacker, too."

"Yes, I heard that Lathom was down on him, and he's got lines, too," remarked Tom Merry.

"That's so," said Manners. "But you never can tell."

"But what's the news? You don't mean to say he's swotting?"

"That's just what he is doing!"

"Phew! That makes it look as if there was something in the scholarship theory. But what particular form of swotting is he doing?"

"He's got permission to study the manuscripts in the library."

"My hat!"

"Now, you know, I do that," said Manners. "I have a half-hour in the library three times a week, digging into the manuscripts. I have a taste for that sort of thing, and, besides, I need it to go in for the Craven Prize. But that chap—"

"He's the last chap I should have expected to see interested in antiquarian knowledge," said Lowther.

"Exactly!"

"It must be a dodge for getting into Lathom's good books. You know Lathom is a great deal of a bookworm."

"Yes; but Thurnel has obtained permission to use the library for half an hour every day, immediately after morning lessons. Lathom told me so himself. He has charge of the St. Jim's records, you know, and I was asking him about some of the manuscripts, and he told me I should now have a kindred spirit in my researches. I thought at first it was some other chap going to swot up knowledge for the Craven. Then he told me it was Thurnel, the new chap."

"It's odd!"

"Jolly odd," said Manners. "I'll jolly well tackle him on the subject, I know that, and see whether he knows anything about it. I bet two to one that he couldn't read black-letter. It's a dodge to curry favour with Lathom, I suppose. It makes me like the chap less than ever. I'll catch him in the library, and make him own up if he can't read the things."

"Serve him right," said Tom Merry. "It's a rotten caddish trick to take advantage of Lathom's simplicity. But now put the gloves on, kid—Lowther's had enough."

"Right you are."

Manners donned the gloves, and the two Shell fellows sparred in the study, Monty Lowther sitting on the table looking on, swinging his legs. There was a knock at the door, but the chums of the Shell did not hear it in the noise of the trampling of feet and bumping of furniture.

The door opened, and Wally D'Arcy of the Third put his head in.

"Hallo, I see you're going it!" he remarked.

"Yes; get out," said Lowther.

"Rats!"

"No room for infants. Travel!"

"I've called to speak to you kids," said the hero of the Third cheerfully. "Stop that rot for a minute, and listen!"

Tom Merry paused, and dropped his hands, laughing.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"In the first place, I'm much obliged to you for stopping that new beast ragging me as you did," said Wally.

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"We're going to give him a lesson about cuffing Third-Formers," said Wally mysteriously. "Now, I suppose you chaps have noticed that he is altogether too fresh, haven't you?"

"Well, rather."

"He's got to be put up to a wrinkle about laying his paws on the Third," said Wally. "We're going to do it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then you'd better keep it dark, Wally."

"I thought you chaps might like to have a hand in it," explained Wally. "My scheme is to give him a good ragging to-night."

"I'm to fight him to-morrow," said Tom. "I shan't touch him till then. But you'd better be careful, kid. He's not a safe chap to jape."

"Neither am I; but he japed me," said Wally. "I'm not going to take that sort of thing lying down, you know!"

"Better leave him alone."

"Rats! I thought you Shell chaps might like to take a hand; but if you won't, you won't! You'll keep it dark, though?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Mind, mum's the word."

"Right you are!"

And D'Arcy minor quitted the study, satisfied that he could rely upon the discretion of the chums of the Shell, if not upon their assistance.

Tom Merry and Manners finished their boxing, and descended later to the Common-room. Thurnel was there, chatting with Mellish, and he glanced at Tom Merry, who was careful not to glance at him. Tom did not want any further disputes with the new boy till the time came for meeting him in a fair and square fight on the morrow.

"Careful," muttered Mellish, as the Terrible Three came by.

The chums of the Shell heard the word, and they noticed that Thurnel stopped speaking till they were out of hearing. Thurnel and Mellish were evidently discussing some matter that they wished to keep secret from the rest of the juniors. Thurnel did not speak again till there was no chance of being overheard.

"Right," he said. "But I suppose these fellows would not sneak?"

"Probably not; but it's safer to keep anything like that dark," said Mellish.

"Quite right."

"It will be easy enough to get out of the dorm," said Mellish. "We've only got to wait till the other fellows are asleep, and then sneak out quietly."

"But getting out of the House—"

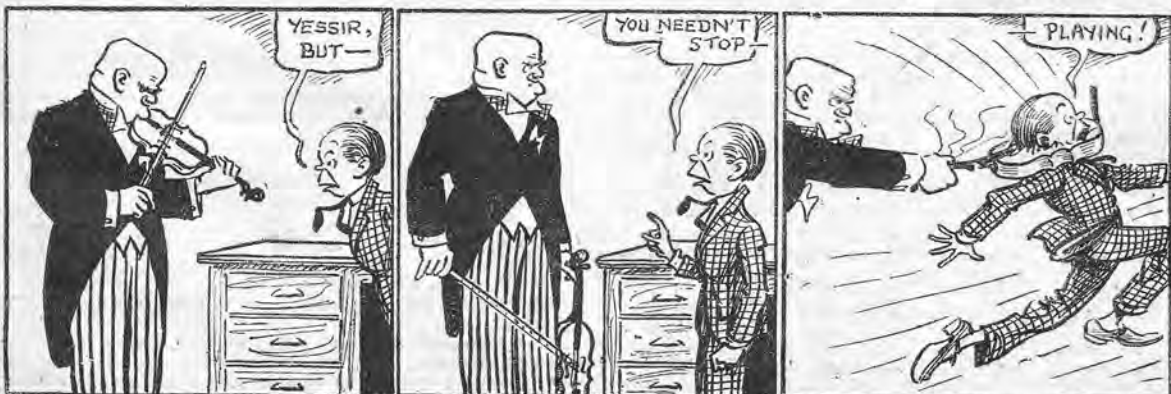
"It's all right—the little window at the end of the passage opens on to a safe place for getting down the ivy."

"Good!"

"We can get over the school wall at the slanting oak," said Mellish. "It's a place where Tom Merry has been over often enough."

"Fine!"

NOT CHARMED!



"You must have a jolly good nerve, breaking bounds the second night at the school."

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"And I don't quite see it, either," said Mellish. "What's the good of going down to the village for cigarettes to-night when to-morrow's a half-holiday and you can go down without any risk or trouble?"

"Well, I want them to-night—and then, it's partly the fun of the thing. If you don't want to come with me—"

"Oh, that's all right—I'll come!"

"Good. That's settled, then; and now, mum's the word."

And no more was said on the subject.

But the end of the Fourth was very much puzzled, and several times that evening he looked very curiously at the new boy.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy Gets the Soot!

"QUIET!"

"Quiet yourself!"

"Don't make a row, young Jameson!"

"Who's making a row?"

"You are!"

"Rats!"

Wally breathed hard through his nose. Three shadowy forms had stolen along the corridor in the School House, and stopped outside the door of the Fourth Form dormitory.

They were D'Arcy minor, Jameson, and Curly Gibson, of the Third.

The three fags were half-dressed, and Wally D'Arcy carried a bag in his hand, which he was taking extraordinary care of.

"Will you shut up?" he demanded in a fierce whisper. "It would make too much row to bang your napper against the wall now."

"It would take too much trouble, too," said Jameson. "Anybody that tried it would get hurt!"

"Dry up!"

"Well, don't you jaw, then."

"If we weren't on a raid," said Wally, in concentrated tones, "I'd take you by the scruff of the neck, Jimmy, and damage the door with your cokernut."

"Poof!"

"Why, you—you—"

"My Aunt Matilda!" said Gibson. "How long are we going to stand here while you two duffers slang one another? I'm going back to bed!"

"Hold on!"

"Well, come to business, then!"

"Jameson says—"

"Wally says—"

"Oh rats! I'm off!"

"Stop, you ass!" said Wally, making a clutch at his discontented follower, and banging the bag against him. "There! Now you've made me spill some of the soot!"

Gibson gave a howl.

"You dangerous lunatic! Have you spilled it over my bags?"

"Well, I suppose some has gone over your bags," said Wally. "I think some must be in Jameson's slippers. Never mind; there's a lot left!"

"Never mind!" breathed Jameson. "Oh, you frabjous ass!"

"Don't made a row!"

"You burbling jackass!"

"Look here—"

"I'm smothered," said Gibson—"smothered!"

"Well, I don't see why you can't be smothered quietly!" grunted Wally. "I never saw such a chap for complaining! I—Hullo!"

"Cave!"

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage and a glimmer of light. It was half-past ten, and all the boys ought to have been in bed. The three fags guessed at once that it was a master going his rounds.

For a moment they stood dismayed.

There was no escape from the wide, long corridor, and the footsteps were coming towards them. But Wally was seldom nonplussed. He quickly and quietly opened the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, and dragged his comrades in.

Then, as quickly and quietly, he closed the door behind them.

"Hush!" he whispered.

"Hush yourself!" whispered Jameson.

"You ass!"

"You duffer!"

The footsteps approached the door, and passed. The juniors breathed more freely. Wally had been afraid that

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the passer might notice the spilt soot, but, apparently, he had not done so.

"All serene!" muttered Curly Gibson.

"Good! Now, which is Thurnel's bed?"

"Haven't the faintest idea!"

"Better find out for certain!" said Jameson. "We don't want to bung the stuff on the wrong chap by mistake!"

Wally chuckled softly.

"No; that would be rough."

"Don't cackle, young D'Arcy. You may wake them up."

"You cheeky ass—"

"Well, I was only warning you!"

"I'll jolly well warn you soon, with a dot on the boko!" said Wally. "We shall have to strike a match to see which is which of the Fourth Form asses."



Gussy made a wild grab after the bag, but he crashed into Wally Arthur Augustus as the bag of soot banged upon

"Got a match?"

"Of course I haven't! I thought you would have sense enough to bring a match!"

"I haven't one!"

"Have you a match, Gibson?"

"No."

"Well, of all the frabjous idiots!"

"Shut up!" whispered Jameson. "I can hear somebody moving."

The three fags remained still and breathless.

There was a sound in the dormitory of somebody moving in bed, and a grunt as a sleeper settled down into a more comfortable position.

"It's all right," whispered Wally. "He's not awake."
 "Hush!"
 "I say—"
 "Hark!"
 A voice came through the gloom—a voice the fags knew well. It was that of D'Arcy major—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.
 "Who's that talking there?"
 The fags made no sound.
 "I heard somebody moving about. Is it a burglah?"
 Wally chuckled silently. There was something very curious in D'Arcy's apparent expectation that a burglar would be kind enough to announce his presence.
 "Well, don't make a wow!" said D'Arcy drowsily. "I believe somethin' woke me up."
 And he breathed deeply and regularly again.
 The fags did not dare to move for some minutes.
 Then Wally groped through his pockets carefully in search of a stray match. He found one at last—a vesta adhering to a chunk of toffee. He separated the match and the toffee, and struck the former with some difficulty.



They staggered and fell together, and there was a fearful yell from and burst open. "Ow! Gewwoogh!"

It flared up, and the light glimmered in the long, dark dormitory.
 Wally hastily looked up and down for Thurnel.
 "My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated.
 "Hallo! What's the row?"
 "There's a bed empty—and another!"
 "What!"
 "Bai Jove! I am sure I can heah somethin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sitting up in bed. "I am quite certain of it, Blake!"
 "Gr-r-r-r!"
 "Blake, deah boy!"
 "Br-r-r-r!"

"Blake! I wathah think there are some burglahs here. Wake up, deah boys!"
 There was a grunt from Blake's bed. The match was out, and the three fags were as silent as mice.
 "Oh, go to sleep, Gussy!"
 "I wefuse to go to sleep. There is somebody moving about in the dorm."
 "Well, let 'em move!"
 "It may be a burglah."
 "Oh, bother!"
 "Weally, Blake, you wemembah that an attempt was made to burgle the school silvah once, and we cannot be too careful, you know."
 "Rats!"
 "Well, I intend to investigate, anyway."
 "Investigate, then, and shut up!" said Blake.
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Br-r-r-r!"
 Arthur Augustus rose silently from his bed. He was convinced that somebody was moving about in the dormitory, and, as that somebody had refused to speak, D'Arcy was inclined to think that it was a burglar. The fags stood silent and dubious. If they were discovered there would be no chance of carrying out the jape on Thurnel.

Arthur Augustus groped for a matchbox, but he did not find one. He felt his way through the dark towards his washstand, where he remembered there was a box, and ran right into Jameson, who gave a gasp.
 "Oh!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus fastened upon the fag at once.
 "I've got him, Blake!"
 "Got what?"
 "The burglah!"
 "Then keep him!" said Blake. "Don't bother me!"
 "Help!"
 "Oh, dry up!"
 "I tell you I've captuahed the burglah! Help!"
 Jameson made a desperate effort to tear himself loose, and dragged Arthur Augustus over, and went sprawling with him.
 D'Arcy gave a yell:
 "Ow! Oh! Help! Burglahs!"
 There was no doubt that there was somebody in the dormitory, and a dozen Fourth-Formers turned excitedly out of bed.
 "Look out!"
 "Jump up!"
 "A light! A light!"
 "Got a match?"
 "Help, deah boys!"
 "Rescue!" gasped Jameson.
 Wally and Gibson groped towards him in the darkness. Wally seized a pair of ears, to drag D'Arcy off the fag, but the fiendish yell from Jameson revealed the fact that the ears belonged to him.
 "Leggo!" he shrieked.
 "By George! I thought—"
 "Wally!" gasped D'Arcy, recognising his brother's voice.
 "Yes, ass!"
 "Weally, Wally—"
 "Cut it, Jimmy!"

D'Arcy, in his amazement, had relaxed his hold upon Jameson. The fag wrenched himself away, and leaped clear of the Fourth-Former. D'Arcy made a wild grab after him, but he crashed into Wally. They staggered and fell together; and there was a fearful yell from Arthur Augustus as the bag of soot banged upon his head and burst open.
 "Ow! Gewwoogh!"
 "My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally.
 He tore himself away. The jape was evidently off now; lights were being struck on all sides and the three young rascals had barely time to escape.
 "Sorry, Gussy!" gasped Wally. "It was meant for Thurnel, but you will shove your silly head into things."
 "Gewwoogh!"
 "Hook it!" exclaimed Jameson.
 "What-ho!"
 The fags made for the door. They darted out of the dormitory and scudded away down the passage before a hand could be stretched out to seize them.
 Jack Blake lighted a candle, and Digby had lighted a bicycle lantern. The light streamed upon Arthur Augustus as he staggered to his feet.
 For a moment the Fourth-Formers gazed at him in the silence of utter astonishment. Then there was a wild yell of laughter. Arthur Augustus was simply smothered with soot.

(Continued on page 17.)



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

HALLO, chums! Before I start to give you the details about next Wednesday's tip-top programme, and tell you an item of good news, I must again thank the hundreds of readers—new and old—who have written in during the last week or two. Their letters have been full of praise for the present programme of the GEM. It makes my task of editing our weekly paper so much easier when I know that the contents of it have the warm approval of all my chums. I am sparing no effort to maintain the high standard of stories that the GEM has always been noted for, and backed by the loyal support of all my readers, we shall go from success to success.

GOOD NEWS.

Now here's the good news for you. Shortly, a grand new feature is starting in the GEM. It's a type of feature that has never yet appeared in our paper, but you can take it from me, it will make an instantaneous appeal to every one of you. I shall not tell you the nature of this special treat now, but I shall give you full details of it next week. Watch out for more news about the GEM's new feature, chums.

For next Wednesday Martin Clifford has written us a very lively yarn of the Chums of St. Jim's. It is called:

"TOM MERRY & CO. GO GAY!"

Our schoolboy favourites are always a gay crowd of fellows, with their light-hearted japes and leg-pulling, but in this ripping story they excel themselves. When Tom Merry and his chums get the chance to go to the South of France for a holiday trip, they naturally seize it with both hands, so to speak. Their adventures en route and the jolly time they have at the Nice Carnival makes a story that you will remember for many a day. Travel with them on this jolly trip and experience their exciting escapades on the Riviera.

For sheer thrills it would be impossible to find a serial to beat

"ST. FRANK'S VERSUS FOO CHOW!"

The next instalment of the adventures of the St. Frank's chums in China, in their grim fight against the sinister Foo Chow, is once again packed with thrilling action. Poor old Handy, too, finds himself in a perilous position. To make him tell where he has hidden Yung Ching, Foo Chow sentences him to cruel Chinese torture. How Handy faces this terrible situation in characteristic fashion, and the stirring events that follow, is told in next week's powerful chapters.

Potts, the office-boy, will again amuse you with another funny adventure, and the prize laughs of the week from readers, for which footballs and half-crowns are

awarded, and another chat with your Editor, complete this star number.

READERS' OPINIONS.

Here are a few extracts from letters I have received from my chums.

"I was not a reader of the GEM," says Ernest Young, of Lambeth, S.E.1. "but I bought the free gift numbers and liked them very well. So from now on I shall be a firm reader."

"I have been reading the GEM and the 'Magnet' for one year," writes L. L. Bong, of Singapore, "and have found them to be the best weekly papers ever published."

"I have been a reader for several years now of the 'Nelson Lee Library,'" says W. Leitch, of Aberdeen, "and now that it has amalgamated with the GEM I intend to give to this paper the same support as I have always given my favourite paper."

BUMPER BOOKS FOR BOYS.

Let me remind you again, chums, of the unequalled value—in quantity and quality—offered in the 1934 issues of "The Holiday Annual" and "Popular Book of Boys' Stories."

The "H. A.," now reduced to the remarkably low price of five shillings, is just the book that GEM readers will revel in, for it contains many magnificent school stories, starring the popular chums of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood Schools. In addition, this bumper book includes a host of thrilling adventure yarns, bright and breezy poems, and many other fascinating and humorous features. If you have not already got your "Holiday Annual," take a tip from me—see about getting this grand book without delay.

The "Popular Book of Boys' Stories" has been considerably increased in size, for it now has 192 pages, and the price is just the same—two shillings and sixpence. If you like stories of the Wild West, flying, the Foreign Legion, detective adventure, motor-cycle racing, and many other phases of gripping adventure, this book will suit you down to the ground. Get a copy to-day—it contains hours of exciting entertainment.

NOT SO LUCKY!

No doubt you have all heard of lucky wells—they are usually called wishing-wells. There are several of these wells in England, and it is said that if you drink of the water from the well, you will be lucky. There is a lady who has cause to doubt the truth about the statement that the well at Upwey is lucky, for it certainly did not wish her well! She bent down to sip the water, fell down the steps, and broke her leg!

William Grayson, a barge hand of Hull, performed a particularly heroic feat recently, when attempting to rescue a nine-years-old boy from drowning at Selby. It was known that the boy had sunk to the bottom, and so, in order to make it possible for him to remain on the bottom for some time while looking for the boy, Grayson plugged his ears and put iron shackles on his legs to prevent him from rising to the surface. Then he clipped a clothes peg on to his nose, and putting a hosepipe in his mouth so that he could breathe, he went into the water and actually remained on the bottom for twelve minutes! Unfortunately his efforts were unsuccessful.

GOLD PEPPER.

Here is a story from the gold-fields of Kenya. There was a miner who had gathered together a small quantity of gold-dust which he put in a little glass bottle. It so happened that one day, shortly before the evening meal, he had had cause to pick up the bottle, and when he put it down again he placed it on the dinner table. He had a guest to dinner that evening, and after dinner he noticed that a lot of his gold had gone. He hastily made inquiries and found that his guest had thought it was pepper, had sprinkled it over his steak and onions—and eaten it! What do you know about that? I reckon that that must have been just about the most expensive meal that fellow ever ate!

UP-TO-DATE KENYA.

Talking of goldfields reminds me that in these days in Kenya, to live in a brand new gold town is almost like living in London—in some ways at least. Such names as Piccadilly Circus, Golders Green, Hampstead Heath, Hyde Park, and Rotten Row abound! And what of the stores? Yes, sir, they certainly have multiple stores in these places. True, they are built of corrugated iron and are generally only on one floor—but it is possible to buy the very latest things in fashions at them! It seems that even gold prospectors like to look natty at times!

SOME BARK!

How far can you hear a dog-bark? What's that? you say; it depends on what sort of dog it is. Well, let's say a fox-terrier. My answer is 6,500 miles; at least, that is the longest distance I know of the bark being heard, but it may not be a record. You don't believe it? Well, of course, this was probably a very special fox-terrier, and all that, but you see, the dog in question used the telephone! He was an intelligent dog! The dog's name is Jeremy, and he belongs to the A.D.C. of Sir Frederick Sykes, the Governor of Bombay. Not long ago Sir Frederick's little son, Bonar, went to stay with his parents in India, and he became very fond of Jeremy. In fact, he liked the dog better than anything else he saw in that country. Bonar came back to England, and one day his parents were inspecting the Beam telephone system in Poona, and they spoke to their son in England by phone—and so did Jeremy who was with them, for when he heard Bonar Sykes' voice he barked his very best bark!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MYSTERY SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 15.)

Had the juniors not known who it was they would never have recognised the swell of St. Jim's.

His head, his face, his elegant pyjamas, all had disappeared under a coat of blackness.

D'Arcy had disappeared.

A wild figure of African blackness had taken his place. From under the clouds of soot came a gasping voice:

"Gweat Scott! Oh, bai Jove! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-wow-wow! I feel howrid!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You look horrid!" gasped Blake. "My hat! Where did you get that soot?"

"Ow! It was that young wascal Wally brought it here to throw over that new wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and ye got out of bed to look for trouble, and found it!" said Reilly.

"Ow!"

"Better clean yourself down," said Hancock. "You can't get into bed again in that state! Ha, ha, ha!"

"A lucky escape for Thurnel," grinned Blake. "He—why, where is he?"

He glanced towards Thurnel's bed.

It was unoccupied.

The glances of a dozen juniors followed Blake's. Thurnel's bed was empty, the clothes turned back where the junior had crept out of it. Mellish's bed, which was next to it, was empty also. Both of them were gone!

The juniors forgot even the sooting of Arthur Augustus in their surprise. Where were the new boy and the cad of the Fourth gone together at that hour? They had left the Fourth Form dormitory surreptitiously, and their absence would never have been discovered but for the Third Form raid.

What did it mean?

CHAPTER 11.

A Mysterious Meeting.

"MIND how you drop!"

"All right!"

Mellish whispered the warning as he stood at the foot of the wall in the shadow of the thickly hanging ivy.

Thurnel had just clambered out on the window-sill.

He took a strong grasp of the ivy and swung himself down to the ground much more actively than the cad of the Fourth had done.

He joined Mellish on the ground and laughed slightly.

"Nothing much in that."

"Well, this way," said Mellish.

"I'm following you."

Mellish led the way across the dark quadrangle.

There were but few stars showing in the deep, dark sky, and not much moon.

From the windows of several of the masters' studies a light shone, as did also from one or two of the Sixth-Form rooms. But the great mass of the School House was dark on the facade that fronted the quadrangle.

Thurnel walked quickly, following Mellish without a pause through the darkness, never losing sight of him for a moment. As a matter of fact, the new boy seemed more at home getting about in the dark than Mellish was, though he was a stranger to the place.

The cad of the Fourth halted abruptly.

"Here's the wall."

"Good!"

Thurnel peered about him in the gloom. Close to the wall grew a thick old oak with a trunk slanting towards the wall, over which the branches hung, shadowing the road outside.

"You see?" whispered Mellish. "You have to climb up between the trunk and the wall—you squeeze your way up. Do you think you can do it?"

"Oh, yes—that's easy!"

"Shall I wait for you?"

"No need, now you've shown me the way," said Thurnel. "You can go back, only leave the window unfastened for me."

"Right you are!"

Thurnel clambered up between the tree trunk and the wall. Mellish stood watching him, the darkness hiding the cunning smile on his face.

Mellish was suspicious by nature, and he flattered himself that few fellows could succeed in pulling the wool over his eyes.

Thurnel's expedition in the village that night, at so much risk, for the simple purpose of smuggling cigarettes into the school, seemed to Mellish's keen mind not exactly to square with the probabilities. True, he knew that Jack Blake had destroyed the new boy's smokes. But that was not a sufficient reason for Thurnel running this risk and taking so much trouble.

There was more in the new boy than met the eye—Mellish knew that. He was quite convinced that Thurnel had some motive for leaving the school at night with which he had not acquainted him.

What that motive might be Mellish could not guess, but he had a dim suspicion that the new boy had already formed undesirable acquaintances in Rylcombe, and intended to visit them—perhaps to spend a jolly time.

But whatever might be the new boy's motive for going out at that hour, the Paul Pry of St. Jim's meant to learn what it was.

Mellish had no scruples about spying and listening, and he was only waiting for Thurnel to get fairly over the wall to follow him.

He heard the new boy clamber over and drop into the road, and then he himself climbed quickly to the top of the wall. He peered over in the darkness and caught a glimpse of Thurnel's figure disappearing in the gloom. But Thurnel was not going towards the village; he had started off in exactly the opposite direction.

Mellish chuckled softly, greatly admiring his own sagacity. He had bowled the new boy out in his falsehood at the very start. As the new boy disappeared up the road Mellish dropped silently from the wall and crept after him.

On the other side of the road was a ditch, separating the road from the borders of a wood, and crossed at some distance by a plank bridge.

Mellish heard the creaking of the planks as the new boy crossed it into the wood. The cad of the Fourth was decidedly puzzled.

What Thurnel could be penetrating into the deep, silent wood for at that hour was a mystery to him. The wilder spirits at St. Jim's had sometimes indulged in poaching, but that was hardly likely to be Thurnel's aim.

Mellish was more intensely curious than ever. He stole along the road to the bridge and crept silently over it, and found himself in the darkness of the footpath under the trees.

He was about to feel his way forward when a voice fell upon his ear, and he stopped dead, his heart beating like a hammer.

"Is that you, Dick?"

Mellish hardly dare breathe. Dick was Thurnel's name, and he understood in a flash now what it all meant. Thurnel had come out to meet someone in the shadows of the wood—a man to judge by the voice, and not a particularly desirable acquaintance for any boy, to judge by the aroma of spirits that was wafted to Mellish with the breath of the speaker.

Mellish thought for the moment that he had been seen and mistaken by the stranger for Thurnel, and he stood trembling. But the next moment he was reassured. Thurnel was near him in the darkness, though he could not see him.

"I'm here!" said Thurnel's voice.

He was so close that Mellish could have touched him by holding out his hand. The cad of the Fourth, hardly daring to breathe, and with his heart throbbing painfully, backed away. The blackness of the path completely hid him from sight, but he was afraid that his breathing would betray him.

But he did not go too far to hear the voices of the two speakers. Mellish was more curious than ever, and he did not mean to lose a syllable if he could help it.

"Good!" went on the harsh voice Mellish had first heard. "I've been waiting for you ten minutes, Dicky."

"I came as near half-past ten as I could."

"Oh, all serene; I don't mind! But I've been anxious, Dick."

Thurnel chuckled softly.

"There wasn't so much for you to be anxious about, dad, as for me."

Mellish could hardly avoid an exclamation.

Then this was Thurnel's father!

The mystery was deeper than ever. Why should the new boy's father follow him to St. Jim's and meet him in this surreptitious way, at such a time and place, instead of coming up to the school in the light of day?

"Well, we're both in it pretty deep, Dick, though I admit you ran most of the risk. But it went off all right!"

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"Yes."

"Nobody says you're older than you make out?"

"No one, as far as I'm aware."

"Good! How have you got on with the boys?"

"Oh, that's all right! I've licked some of them—they were astonished to find a chap like me lick them so easily." And Thurnel chuckled.

The other uttered an exclamation.

"That was a bad move, Dick—a very bad move!"

"I don't see it," said Thurnel sullenly. "I wasn't going to stand any cheek from the young brats, I suppose?"

"Yes, but you must have attracted attention now, and caused remarks to be passed upon your strength," said the other. "You make up wonderfully well as a boy on account of your small size, but your face looks much older, and if you give away the thing like this you will be found out. It would have been wiser for you to avoid all rows and put on a pretence of being weaker, not stronger, than the others."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"It's not all right!" said the other irritably. "It was a false move. You must keep clear of rows in the future."

"Oh, all right; but—"

"But what?"

"I've got a row on now—I'm to fight to-morrow with a chap named Merry, in the Shell."

"Then don't!"

"But I must—it's arranged!"

"Make it up with him!"

"I can't!"

"You must! Don't be a fool, Dick. It won't hurt you to eat humble-pie. Remember how short your stay here is to be and how much there is at stake."

Thurnel was silent for a moment.

"Oh, very well!" he said at length. "I'll do my best. I suppose I can arrange it, and, as you say, it's best not to attract too much attention at first if it can be helped. I'll make it up with Merry somehow."

"That's better. All the game would be up if they discovered that you were a man of twenty-two instead of a boy of fifteen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was a great pity that you weren't educated up to it, Dicky, and you might have gone to a higher Form and run less risk of detection. There are fellows of more than seven-

teen in the Sixth Form, for instance—though it would have been difficult to send you into the Sixth direct. But it's all right as it is so long as you play your part well."

"It's as much as I can do to keep my place in the Fourth. All the cramming I did for the last four weeks has only just enabled me to scrape in."

"But it's all right now?"

"Oh, yes; I can hold my own now."

"Good! And you won't have to stick it long."

"I can't stick it long," said Thurnel abruptly. "The class-work is a horrible grind to me, and I show my ignorance at every turn. A month's cramming was enough to give a start, but I can't take to kid's studies at my age, and I can't do the work. I'm supposed to be a lazy slacker already. I don't mind that; but there may be trouble when it's found out that I'm a regular spoofer."

"Well, it won't last long; it all really depends on you. Have you discovered what you went to the school to find out?"

"Yes."

"Already?"

"Yes. I haven't let the grass grow under my feet, you may be sure," said Thurnel. "They're kept in the library."

"Good!"

"I've got permission to spend a half hour in the library every day, at a time when no one else is there, to study the old manuscripts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, it's rather good, isn't it?"

"Extremely good! I—"

"Hark!"

"What is it?"

"I thought I heard a sound of breathing."

"Impossible! We are alone here."

"I'm not so sure," muttered Thurnel, breathing hard.

"Until the game is over, and I'm out of the school, I'm afraid of every shadow."

"Yes, but—"

"Let's part now. I—"

"But you haven't told me about—"

"I've drawn a sketch of it on paper," said Thurnel, groping in his pocket. "Here it is. You'll learn from that all that I've learned. By to-morrow night I hope to have the whole thing ready. Now go!"

"Right! You can't be too careful. But I didn't hear anything."

"Good-night!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Thurnel stood alone, his eyes straining in the gloom. The man he had met was gone. The last sentence had been spoken in a faint whisper, which would not reach the ears of the listener a few feet away. But was there a listener? Thurnel's eyes were gleaming, and he stood with bent head, listening with the straining attention of an alarmed wild animal.

The crackle of a twig caught his ear. The sound was between him and the road, and therefore could not have come from the man who had just left him, who had gone in the opposite direction.

Thurnel's eyes gleamed green in the dark.

He stepped quickly along the path, and his outstretched hands came in contact with a form stumbling along in the gloom. His grasp closed upon that form with a grip like that of a vice, and there was a vain struggle, and a gasp of affright.

"Let me go!"

"Mellish!" said Thurnel, between his teeth.

CHAPTER 12.

A Secret to Keep.

MELLISH wriggled in the powerful grasp of the new boy.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"You have been spying!"

"I—I haven't heard anything—not a word!"

Thurnel gritted his teeth. He dragged Mellish out of the shadow of the trees to the less dim gloom at the end of the plank bridge. Mellish was white with fear.

Thurnel still held him fast, and glared at him with burning eyes.

"You followed me?"

"I—I—"

"Tell me the truth!"

"Ye-es!" muttered Mellish, scared by Thurnel's expression. "I—I—"

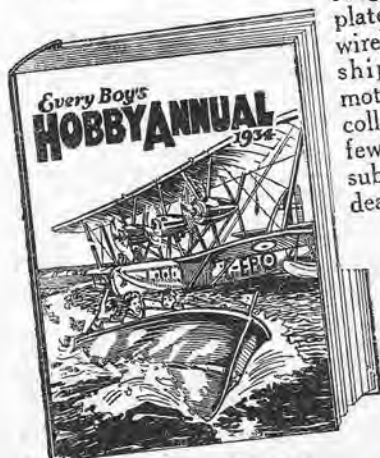
"You have heard all that I said?"

A lie trembled on Mellish's lips, but he caught the glitter of Thurnel's eyes, and dared not utter it.

"Yes," he muttered.

Thurnel released him. Mellish staggered to his feet, trembling in every limb. He was horribly afraid of Thurnel at that moment, he hardly knew why.

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"Stand there!" said Thurnel. "Don't go!"

"Yes."

Mellish stood shivering.

Thurnel was silent for some minutes, his eyes fixed upon Mellish. His brows were wrinkled in an effort of thought; he was evidently trying to recall exactly what he had said, and which Mellish had overheard.

"You cad!" he said at last. "You—you spying worm!"

"I—I won't say a word!"

Thurnel laughed grimly.

"You'd better not. You saw how I dealt with Blake and Figgins. If you dare to say a word to give me away, I'll use you worse than that."

"I—I promise!"

"So you know," went on Thurnel quietly, "that I'm older than I pretend to be—that I'm older than the oldest fellow in the Sixth—that I'm playing a part in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's?"

"Yes!" stammered Mellish.

"Have you guessed why?"

"No."

"What is your idea on the subject?"

"I—I haven't any," said Mellish. "I—I'm astonished. I can't understand it. I don't know why you should play such a trick."

Thurnel looked at him searchingly, as if he would read his very soul.

"Are you sure of that?"

"Ye-es!"

"I suppose you're very curious about it?"

"Oh, no, no!"

"Don't tell lies!" said Thurnel abruptly. "You know perfectly well that you won't be easy in your meddling mind till you've found out the truth."

Mellish shifted uneasily. He was beginning to recover his courage now, however. After all, Thurnel could do no more than lick him; and he had Thurnel in his power now, and could make terms.

"Well, if you like to explain to me—" he began.

"I will," said Thurnel. "I've come into the Fourth Form at St. Jim's for a certain purpose. I'm going to enter for a prize—a money prize!"

"Oh!"

"It's a prize of a hundred pounds, and it's offered by an old boy at St. Jim's, and is only for competitors in the Fourth Form."

"Which prize is it?" said Mellish. "I know most of them, I think, but I don't know one that answers to that description."

"It's not offered yet; it's going to be made known on governors' day. My father knows the man in question, and so we have information about it. We're hard up—though we're keeping it dark—and that hundred pounds may be more to us than you can imagine. Do you understand?"

"Oh, it's a new prize?"

"Yes."

"I see. It's plain enough now."

"You will keep the secret?"

"Of course! I don't want to give you away," said Mellish; "only no more of your bullying, please. I'll keep the secret out of friendship, not because I'm afraid of you. If you like to stand my friend, I'll keep your secret."

"You had better be careful."

"You'd better be careful yourself," said Mellish, with growing confidence. "I'm not going to be under your thumb. If I said a word you would be kicked out of St. Jim's, and you know it. Here, hands off!"

Thurnel had suddenly seized him.

With a powerful grip, he forced the cad of the Fourth down towards the deep flowing ditch by which they had been standing.

Mellish was completely helpless in the grasp of the powerful junior. He was forced down till his face was close to the silent, glimmering water.

"Leggo!" he gasped hoarsely. "You mad idiot, I shall be in a minute! Let me go!"

"Do you see the water?" said Thurnel between his teeth. "One shove more and you would be under it, and then—"

Mellish shuddered.

"Don't—Thurnel—for mercy's sake! Are you mad?"

"Will you be silent?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Mind, I should think no more of shoving you under the water now than of wringing the neck of a chicken," said Thurnel in low, concentrated tones. "You won't find it a paying game to play with me, Mellish. Do you understand?"

"Let me go!"

Thurnel released him.

Mellish rose, shaking in every limb, and looking at the new junior in unexpressed terror.

"Now let us get back to the school," said Thurnel.

"Ye-es!" muttered Mellish thickly.

"And mind—not a word!"

"Yes, yes!"

Mellish was trembling in every limb as he followed Thurnel. He did not speak a word. A strange and terrible fear of his companion was tugging at his heart. They entered the House in grim silence and ascended the stairs to the dormitory. In the passage outside the Fourth Form dormitory Thurnel stopped, muttering something under his breath, and grasped Mellish by the arm.

The cad of the Fourth shrank back.

"Let me alone! I—"

"Fool! Look there!"

Thurnel pointed to the dormitory door. There was a gleam beneath it from within.

Mellish started.

"A light there!" he muttered.

"Then they're awake?"

"I suppose so."

"Hang them! What can it mean?"

"It may be a master going his rounds, you know," said Mellish maliciously. "If a master found a chap was out he would wait there for him."

"Hang him!"

Thurnel hesitated some moments, and then strode on.

"It's no good hanging about here," he said; "we've got to go in!"

"That's so; but—"

"Come on!"

And Thurnel pushed open the dormitory door and entered. Two or three candles and a bicycle lantern were burning in the Fourth Form dormitory. There was no master present, as Thurnel had feared; and there was only one fellow out of bed.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was standing at his washstand, busily engaged in scrubbing his head and face. He was striving to remove the soot which had been deposited upon him by mistake, and he was succeeding, but it was a long and weary task.

Several juniors were sitting up in bed to keep D'Arcy company while he washed his sooty head, but most of the Fourth had gone to sleep again.

D'Arcy raised his head from the basin and wrung his hair out and began to towel it as Thurnel and Mellish came in.

"I think it is all wight now, deah boys," he remarked.

"Well, it looks better," said Blake critically. "There's still a smudge or two on your aristocratic chivvy."

"Bai Jove!"

"But it's all right. How many times have you washed your topknot?"

"Five times, deah boy, in fwesh watah."

"Then it ought to be getting clean. You're soaking your towel. It won't be very fit to use in the morning."

"Oh, that's all wight!"

"Well, if you think so—"

"I think it's all wight. You see, it's not my towel."

"Ha, ha, ha! Whose is it?"

"Yours, deah boy."

"Mine!" howled Blake. "Why, you frabjous ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Digby.

"What are you cackling at, Dig, you ass?"

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

"Yaas, watah! I wegard it as funnay," said Arthur Augustus. "I have already used Dig's towel, too, and that is quite wet and gwimey."

"What!" yelled Digby.

"Isn't it funnay, deah boy?"

"No, it isn't, you ass! You—"

"Yes, it is!" said Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop your cackling!"

"Bai Jove, heah are those wottahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy, turning to look at Thurnel and Mellish. "They've come back!"

Jack Blake glanced across at the returned juniors. Thurnel and Mellish were going to their beds without a word. Blake noticed how pale and troubled Mellish looked, and he caught the cloud on the new boy's brow. Thurnel and Mellish had evidently not had a very pleasant excursion.

D'Arcy suspended his towelling for a moment, felt for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye and fixed his glance upon the two juniors.

"Where have you been?" he inquired.

There was no reply.

"I twust you have not become suddenly afflicted with deafness, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I asked you where you had been."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Thurnel.

D'Arcy coloured with anger.

"You uttah cad!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Weally, Thurnel—"

Thurnel grunted and kicked off his boots. He was not in a good humour. He had bound Mellish to secrecy, and he thought that he had scared the cad of the Fourth sufficiently to make him keep the secret; but he was still uneasy. There was more at stake than he had explained to Mellish. He was not in a humour to be questioned, and his naturally savage temper was easily provoked.

He undressed without saying another word, and got into bed.

CHAPTER 13.

Thurnel's Strange Behaviour.

TOM MERRY was looking serious as he came out of the Shell Form Room after lessons the next day. The afternoon was a half-holiday, and, under ordinary circumstances, the chums of the Shell would have spent a considerable part of it on the football field, preparing for the coming season. But there was another matter now that claimed the attention of the Terrible Three. Tom Merry's fight with Thurnel was fixed for that day.

"I suppose we'd better see Thurnel and fix up the time?" Monty Lowther remarked, as the chums went down the passage.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. The sooner it's over the better!"

"Not feeling uneasy, Tommy?"

Tom laughed.

"Well, I don't feel very confident in tackling a chap who has licked Blake and chucked Kangaroo and Figgins about. But I'm not nervous, if that's what you mean. I shall stand up to him till I can't stand any longer, anyway."

"That's the tune."

"The Fourth Form are out," said Manners. "I don't see Thurnel, though."

"Where's the new kid, Blake?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake, "or care, either, for that matter! Gussy's got a fight on with him now, and he's looking for him."

"Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! He was wude to me last night, because I pointed out to him that he was actin' disreputably in bweakin' bounds at night."

"Oh, he breaks bounds at night, does he?"

"Yes; he went out with Mellish," said Blake. "I don't know what they were up to; nothing that would bear the light, I expect."

"Well, we know Mellish. I expect you're right. But where is the new kid now?"

"I weally do not know. He disappeared immediately aftah the fellows came out. I suppose we shall see him at dinnah, though."

The juniors strolled out into the sunny quadrangle.

"Let's have a run out," said Lowther. "The row can wait till after dinner. We shall see Thurnel then."

"Right you are!"

"I'm off!" said Manners.

"Where are you off to?"

"The school library."

"But you don't go there till the afternoon," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to have an extra dig into those blessed old manuscripts, surely?"

Manners chuckled.

"Not much. But I imagine that's where Thurnel is. You remember I told you he asked permission to study the manuscripts for half an hour in the morning after lessons?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, that's where he is now, I suppose."

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder!" said Tom Merry. "But we don't want to disturb him."

"Yes; but I can fix up about the fight. I want to see him at work, too. I'm curious. I know jolly well that such a duffer as he is at lessons doesn't care twopence for all the manuscripts in St. Jim's. He's either fooling

Lathom to entry favour, or he's got some dodge on. I'm going in early to my studies to-day, you see, and I shall do my work on the manuscripts in the library while he's doing his. Savvy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Go ahead, then; but I don't see what his little game can be unless he really wants to study the blessed thing. It's no joke to shut yourself up for half an hour a day in the library unless you really want to study."

"That's what puzzles me," said Manners. "I know jolly well that his swotting over manuscripts is all humbug, anyway."

And Manners walked away in the direction of the school library, while his chums went out into the quadrangle.

Manners was a studious lad, and a haunter of the old dusky library of the School House. A great deal of leisure time that the other fellows spent on the river, or in the woods, Manners spent within the walls of the library, turning over old manuscripts and rare volumes. And Manners, hardly consciously, felt that sense of annoyance which a quietly studious lad feels at seeing a slacker and a dunce attempt to assume the credit of studiousness.

Manners swung open the big, heavy, oaken door, and stepped into the library. The sun was shining in at the windows of the long, lofty apartment.

Manners glanced round idly for Thurnel.

He expected to see the new boy sitting at one of the little tables near the cabinets, studying, or affecting to study.

But Thurnel was not so occupied.

He was standing at a bookcase between two windows, upon the top of which glimmered a bust of Shakespeare.

Manners looked at the new boy in surprise and amazement.

The Shell fellow had not meant to enter the room in a stealthy manner at all, but his foot had made no sound on the deep carpet, and Thurnel had not heard the door open. He had his back towards the door, and was as yet quite unconscious of Manners' presence.

Manners watched him, with a grin.

He knew that the bookcase the new fellow was examining was a dummy one, merely an ornamental outer covering for the iron door of the hidden safe. There were rows of dummy shelves, with dummy book-covers over them and glass outside, and the appearance was the same as that of the other cases. Manners' natural thought was that Thurnel supposed the case to be a real one, and that he wanted to take one of the books out of it.

Thurnel was making a careful examination of the case. He felt over it with his hand carefully, and paused at the lock; and then he felt in his pocket, and drew out something which he inserted in the lock.

There was a faint click.

The glass door swung open.

Manners gazed on in astonishment. He knew that that door was always kept locked for the purpose of concealing the door of the safe beneath. How did it come about that Thurnel had a key?

With the glass door, the apparent bookshelf came open, too, and revealed the fact that there was nothing inside the glass but rows of imitation backs of books.

Within, an iron floor was disclosed.

Thurnel examined it with glittering eyes.

He did not show any sign of surprise at the appearance of an iron safe door in a place where rows of books should have been, and it dawned upon Manners that the new boy knew as much about the safe as he knew himself.

The Shell fellow caught his breath.

This, then, was the explanation of Thurnel's desire to study old manuscripts in the library at an hour when the room was certain to have no other occupants.

It was not the manuscripts, but the hidden safe that he was curious about. How did he know of it, and what was his interest in it?

Manners could only stare at him. Thurnel was examining the door of the safe with the most intense interest.

Manners strolled suddenly forward.

"What are you doing, Thurnel?" he exclaimed.

Thurnel gave a sudden cry.

He whirled round and faced Manners, with a face so ghastly pale that the Shell fellow thought for a moment that he was going to faint.

He could not speak. He could only stare blankly at Manners, with terror in his eyes. So evident was his fear that Manners almost pitied him.

"Oh, it's all right!" he said. "You haven't been caught by a master. Buck up!"

"I—I—" stammered Thurnel.

"Better close that bookcase," said Manners. "If anybody came in and found it open, you would be asked what you meant by it."

Thurnel nodded, and turned to the dummy bookcase without a word. He closed it and locked it, and it resumed its

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former appearance. Then he looked at Manners again, still without speaking.

Manners fixed his eyes upon the new boy's white face. The terror he had read in Thurnel's eyes had raised strange suspicions in the Shell fellow's mind.

"What were you doing, Thurnel?" he asked.

"I—I was looking at the safe," stammered Thurnel, beginning to recover himself.

"How did you know it was there?"

"Mellish told me about it. I was curious to see it," said Thurnel. "I hear that the school silver is kept there, and I wondered what the safe was like, that's all."

"Oh, that's all, is it?" said Manners suspiciously. "Then how did you get the key to open the outer door?"

"I haven't a key."

"Rats! You opened the door. Look here! You must have stolen that key from the Head's study. I wonder you didn't steal the safe while you were about it," said Manners scornfully. "You've got to take it back."

"I—I—"

"Come on. You've got to put the key back where you found it, and I'm going to see you do it!" said Manners determinedly.

"I—I haven't a key, I tell you!"

"Then how did you unlock the bookcase door?"

"I—I opened it with a wire—"

"A wire!" exclaimed Manners in astonishment.

Thurnel nodded.

"I don't believe it. You couldn't."

"Well, I did."

"Show me the wire, then."

Thurnel hesitated a moment, and then drew a twisted wire unwillingly from his pocket. He held it out for Manners' inspection.

"You opened the lock with that?"

"Yes."

"Then let me see you do it again," said Manners incredulously.

"Oh, rats! I will if you like."

Thurnel unlocked the case again. Manners watched him

closely. There was no doubt that the new boy at St. Jim's could pick a lock with the ease and skill of an accomplished cracksmen.

"Can you open the safe door, too?" asked Manners.

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Of course not; it's a patent lock."

"Oh, I see!"

"Close the door again and lock it."

Thurnel did so.

"Now," said Manners, "you'll get out of this room! You won't come back here to study any more manuscripts, either!"

Thurnel looked at him fiercely.

"I'll please myself about that."

"No, you won't," said Manners coolly; "you'll please me. I don't quite know what to make of you; but I know this much, that if you ever enter this room again I'll go straight to the Head and tell him exactly what I saw you do here."

Thurnel changed colour again.

"Look here—"

"I don't promise to keep it dark, in any case," added Manners. "But one thing's certain—if you come into the library again you'll have to answer for your little game just now to the Head. Now, get out!"

Thurnel looked at him. The desire was strong upon him to hurl himself upon the Shell fellow, and it showed plainly in his eyes. But he knew that he was in Manners' hands. He went quietly out of the room without a word.

Manners stood for many minutes in deep thought when he had gone. The new boy was a surprise in every way. But of the latest development Manners had not the faintest idea what to think. What did it mean?

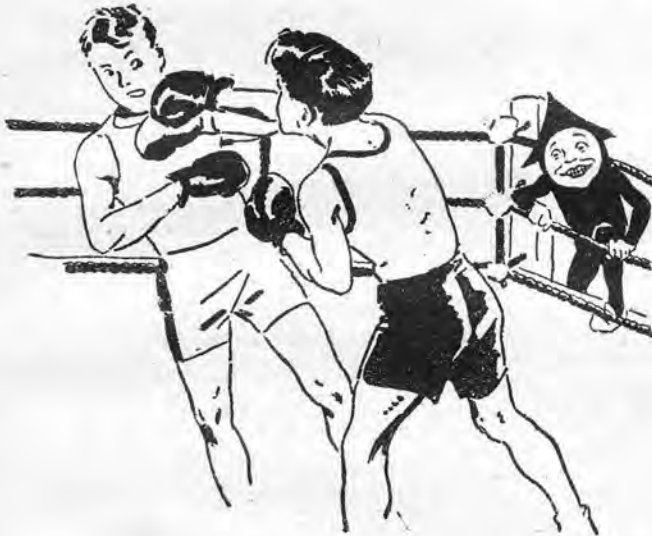
He returned to his study when he had finished studying, and Tom Merry and Lowther listened to his story in amazement.

"Looks to me as if Thurnel is a regular young crook," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to keep our eyes on him in future."

"If I see him in the library again I shall go straight to the Head, as I promised," said Manners.

(Continued on next page.)

What's behind the punch?



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"Quite right, old man," said Lowther. "But what about Thurnel's fight with Tom? Did you say anything to him about that?"

"By Jove! I forgot all about it; it went right out of my head!" exclaimed Manners.

"Shall I go and have a word with him, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. The sooner it's fixed up the better, if we're going to fight," he said.

"Don't mention what I saw in the library to him," sang out Manners.

"Right-ho!"

Monty Lowther was not gone five minutes.

"Another surprise, you chaps!" he exclaimed, coming into the study and shutting the door behind him. "The fight's off!"

"Off? What do you mean?" asked Tom Merry.

"Thurnel says he won't fight you now; gave no reason," said Lowther.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if he doesn't want to fight, I don't," he said. "We'll let it rest at that. Meantime, we'll keep an eye on Master Thurnel. He's a mystery, and no mistake, and I'm puzzled to know what his game is. But he's bound to show his hand sooner or later."

Tom Merry was right. Thurnel was to show his hand within a very few hours!

CHAPTER 14.

In the Night!

"YOU fellows asleep?"

It was a faint whisper in the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Jim's.

The dormitory was dark and silent. It was close upon midnight, and everyone in the great building was in bed. The light was out in the last window, and all the school slept—or almost all. The last stroke of midnight had died away, when Thurnel sat up in his bed and whispered the words.

There was one junior who heard him, but he did not make a sound. It was Mellish, the cad of the Fourth. He lay quite still, breathing regularly, though his heart was beating faster than usual.

Mellish felt that a crisis was coming; Thurnel intended to leave the dormitory again, and this was the opportunity for the cad of the Fourth to learn the whole of the strange secret. And Mellish did not mean to lose that opportunity. He had not stayed awake for nothing.

"Are you asleep?"

The voice was a little louder now.

There was no reply in the deep silence of the dormitory. Thurnel waited a full minute, and then he crept silently out of bed.

Mellish heard a faint sound as the dormitory door closed. Thurnel had gone out.

The cad of the Fourth sat up in bed.

He was trembling with excitement.

Where was Thurnel gone? What did it all mean? Mellish was determined to know. He got out of bed and crept to the door.

He listened intently there for a few moments, and then opened the door softly, crept into the passage, and closed it. Then he listened again.

There was no sound in the passage. Where had Thurnel gone? Mellish stole along to the head of the stairs, and paused suddenly and drew back into the shadow.

In the glimmer of a star-lit window he saw Thurnel.

The new boy, quite unconscious of the espionage, was moving in the direction of the window by which they had quitted the School House the previous night. Mellish followed noiselessly, and heard him open the window.

But Thurnel did not climb out. There was the sound of a soft, faint whistle in the gloom, as it was answered from without.

The cad of the Fourth felt his heart beating almost to suffocation.

There was someone standing below the window, to whom Thurnel had given the signal whistle.

Mellish, straining his ears, heard a faint, rustling sound in the deep silence, and knew that it was the sound of the thick branches of ivy moving under the weight of a climber.

A dark form loomed at the open window, and Thurnel helped the climber in.

Mellish crouched in the gloom.

Who was it?

He could not doubt that it was the man Thurnel had met the previous night in the wood, and whom he had doubtless communicated with since.

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But what was Thurnel's father doing there, entering the School House of St. Jim's at midnight like a burglar?

Mellish was alarmed now. He realised that there was something more in this than he had dreamed at first. He had not been able to guess the meaning of Thurnel's mysterious conduct, but now he could guess only too well—though he hardly dared to think that what he had guessed was the truth.

The window was silently shut, and then the two dim figures passed Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth held his breath.

Where were they going? Mellish guessed before he saw the direction they were taking. They were making for the school library.

The cad of the Fourth followed them with a thumping heart.

Not a word was spoken; only a faint sound guided him through the shadows on the track of father and son.

They reached the library door. It was locked, but a faint click told that the lock had not delayed the two more than a moment.

They entered the library, and the great door was closed. Mellish remembered that there was a small apartment opening off the library, a room that was sometimes used as a study by the Head. There was another door to it. Mellish crept away, and in a minute or less he was in the little room. The doorway communicating between it and the library was filled only by a thick curtain on brass rings. Mellish pulled one corner of it aside and looked into the library.

A glimmer of light struck his eyes again and he could see what was happening quite clearly.

Thurnel was holding an electric torch. A full-grown man was with him, and the man had some instrument in his hand. The dummy bookcase was swung open, and the door of the iron safe was revealed. It was upon the lock of the safe that the midnight visitor was busy.

Mellish drew a sharp, deep breath.

The man was a crackman, there was no doubt of that. Thurnel was his accomplice. He had been sent to the school for the purpose of making this robbery possible—to ascertain where the silver was kept, the famous St. Jim's plate—to discover how it could be got at—and at the right moment to admit the crackman into the house.

And he had succeeded in all—so far.

Mellish trembled with excitement, and then crept away. He had seen enough—more than enough. He was trembling so between fear and excitement that he could hardly walk.

He stole away towards Mr. Railton's room. He pushed open the door and entered, and closed the door again silently.

"Mr. Railton!"

There was a stir in the bed.

"Who is that?"

"Mr. Railton, wake up, for Heaven's sake!"

"I know that voice. Is that Mellish?"

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing up at this hour, Mellish?" asked the Housemaster, sitting up in bed.

"There are burglars in the House, sir!" gasped Mellish. "For goodness' sake get up! There are two of them in the library, sir, and they're opening the safe where the school silver is kept."

Mr. Railton sprang up.

"What!"

"It's true, sir."

"This cannot be a joke on your part, Mellish, surely, but—"

"It will be too late to save the silver soon, sir!"

"Come here, Mellish!"

Mr. Railton switched on his reading-lamp and looked into Mellish's face, and read his expression. The junior's terrified look was sufficient to convince him that it was no joke. The news was true.

"Very good, Mellish," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I will let you explain later how you came to be up and aware of what is going on. Remain here. I will call some of the prefects to help me; you would be of no use."

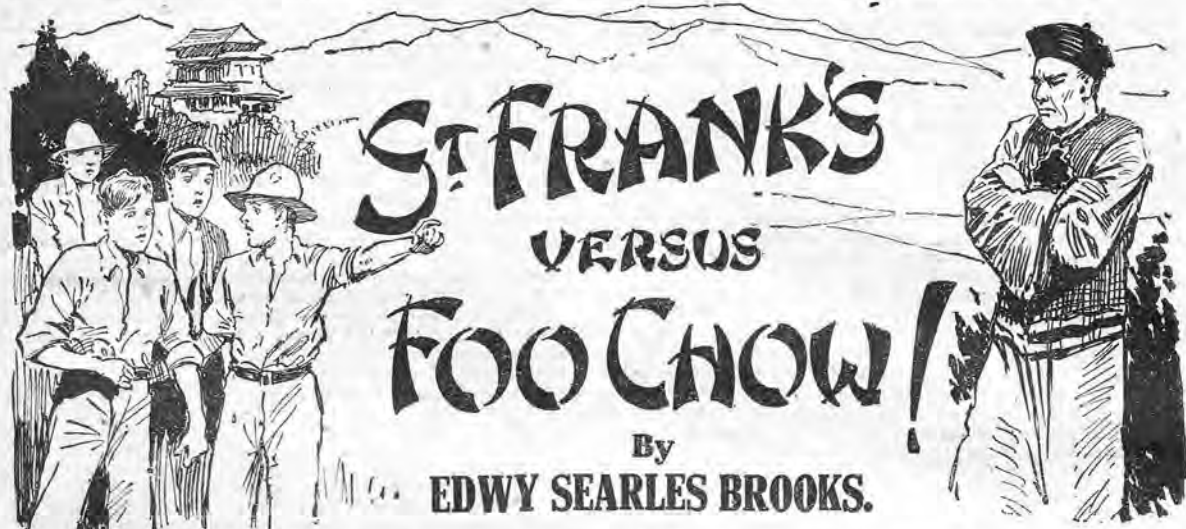
Mr. Railton dragged on his trousers and left the room. Even in his scared and excited state Mellish could not help grinning. The Housemaster's warning was not needed; Mellish had not the faintest intention of helping to tackle the burglar.

He listened at the door. For a long time he could hear nothing. Was the Housemaster calling Kildare and Darrell and the other prefects? Had they gone to the library? If so, they were moving very quietly. Mellish could hear no sound. Five or six minutes had passed—whole nights they seemed to the anxious junior.

Then suddenly, through the deep silence of the night, came a wild uproar.

(Continued on page 23.)

FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF THE ST. FRANK'S CHUMS FOR THRILLS!



Yung Ching, of the St. Frank's Remove, has been kidnapped by Dr. Foo Chow, an all-powerful war lord of Inner China, who covets the province of Hu Kiang, ruled over by Yung Ching's father. A holiday party from St. Frank's set sail to rescue him, but they are captured by Foo Chow and imprisoned in his island stronghold. Nelson Lee and a few others, however, escape in a car, and afterwards succeed in rescuing Yung Ching. Handforth takes him to a friendly Chinaman he knows, while Nelson Lee & Co. return to the stronghold, where they are stopped by Foo Chow's soldiers.

Foo Chow Holds His Hand.

THE Chinese officer looked expressionless. "Excellency not come," he said, saluting. He added some words in Chinese, and the soldiers stood aside. A moment later the car was gliding past the Oriental gardens towards the great palace which stood in the centre of the rock island.

"It is fairly evident that these officers here are without any definite instructions," remarked Nelson Lee. "They know that we broke out, and they know that Foo Chow himself is still absent. I expect they are very surprised to see us back—although they don't allow their emotions to be seen. I rather think we had better carry on as though nothing had happened."

"Go to bed, you mean, sir?" asked Willy.

"Yes. You boys will certainly go to bed," replied Lee. "Your brother, Willy, can hardly be expected before the morning, so there is no reason for us to lose our sleep. And there is no need for anxiety, either. We can trust Unloshi."

"Rather, sir," agreed Willy. "I'm not worrying about Ted in the least. And after all this excitement I can do with some sleep."

Dorrie stopped the car on the terrace, just in front of the imposing entrance. And at that moment Mr. Beverley Stokes came out, accompanied by William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, and Dick Hamilton and Reggie Pitt and one or two other Remove fellows.

"Oh, guv'nor!" shouted Dick, running up. "We didn't know what had happened to you! Where the dickens have you been all this time?"

They swarmed round animatedly.

"We heard the commotion an hour or so ago, when you broke out," said Barry Stokes quickly. "Fortunately, Joyce and the girls have been asleep all the time, and know nothing. What happened, Lee?"

"Dorrie had a sudden wild desire for action, so we broke loose," smiled Nelson Lee. "Very fortunately, too. For we not only found Handforth and Church and McClure, whom we all thought dead, but Handforth minor had also got into trouble. And we ended up by rescuing Yung Ching from his torturers."

"By jingo, you've been busy, sir!" said Dick Hamilton eagerly. "Handforth & Co. alive! I say, you chaps, this is ripping!"

"You bounders," said Pitt, slapping Church and McClure on the backs. "You don't know how we've been worrying—"

"Oh, we were all right!" said Church awkwardly.

"One moment, brothers," said Browne. "While rejoicing in a general way, it appears to me that something is lacking. It is not customary for Brother Handforth to make himself obscure. We do not hear his manly tones, neither do we see his rugged features—"

"Handy's gone off with Yung Ching," explained McClure. "The idea is to leave Chingy in the hands of a friendly Chinaman, so that he'll be safe. But you needn't worry. Unloshi's looking after Handy."

Explanations followed swiftly.

"Why, this is splendid news," declared Mr. Stokes enthusiastically. "My only regret is that I should have been left out of this joyous adventure. It was too bad of you, Dorrie, to go off without me."

"Hear, hear, sir!" said Dick indignantly. "Why couldn't we have joined in the fun?" he added, turning to Nelson Lee. "I must say it was a bit too thick to leave us here!"

"Murky in the extreme," agreed Browne sadly.

"Sorry, you fellows, but the whole thing happened so infernally unexpectedly that we had no time to pass round a general call," chuckled Dorrie. "But don't you be too previous. It's more than likely that we shall have to suffer tortures as a punishment. The rack, I expect—with the thumb-screw thrown in as a sideline."

"Well, I fancy we shall soon know our fate," remarked Nelson Lee, glancing round. "A car is approaching, and if it does not contain Dr. Foo Chow I shall be much surprised."

Lee was right. A small car purred up, and the Chinese millionaire alighted from it and bowed with all his customary courtesy.

"Congratulations, my friends, on your excellent coup," he said softly. "I can find nothing but admiration for such an exhibition of daring."

"I hope your Rolls-Royce isn't particularly crocked?" asked Lord Dorrimore, with mock solicitude. "It always gives me a pain when I spoil the beauties of a Rolls!"

Dr. Foo Chow was in no way put out.

"I regret that the car is considerably damaged," he replied. "But as for that—a trifle. Cars are things of commerce. We can obtain others. One, more or less, makes no difference. I have already ordered a duplicate from my reserve fleet. I trust that you are all unharmed, and in no way the worse for your encounter with my hot-headed soldiers?"

The Chinaman's solicitude sounded so earnest that it was difficult to credit that his sincerity was forced. Yet it could be nothing else—since he himself had ordered his soldiers to capture the rescue party.

"We are all quite well," said Nelson Lee curtly.

"I am relieved," purred Dr. Foo Chow. "Pray do not imagine, gentlemen, that I am annoyed by the recent escapade. It is the natural outcome of this unfortunate—but necessary—confinement. I have done my best to make your captivity pleasant, but I realise that there comes a time when action can no longer be avoided. An exuberant burst of high spirits, eh? A little lifting of the safety-valve? Naturally—naturally. You can be quite assured

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that I am full of admiration, and that I shall forget this excess of zeal."

"That's very handsome of you, Dr. Foo Chow," said Dorrimore, adopting the same mood. "We had an enjoyable time, an' now we're goin' to get a little sleep. You don't mind tellin' the lackeys that we shan't need callin' untill about ten o'clock?"

The Chinaman bowed.

"Your wishes shall be attended to," he said politely. "I would like to mention that there is one little condition which, very reluctantly, I must impose."

"Condition?" repeated Lee.

"A mere trifle," said Dr. Foo Chow, smiling. "You will naturally realise that I am anxious concerning the welfare of Yung Ching. I shall therefore be obliged if you will tell me precisely where he can be found?"

"Why not find him yourself?" asked Dorrie curtly.

"I have mentioned that I am willing to overlook this escapade completely," pursued Foo Chow. "I must remind you that I will do so on condition that Yung Ching is produced without any unnecessary delay."

"You can go to the deuce!" said Lord Dorrimore, snapping his fingers. "You an' your threats are about as useful as a kid's pop-gun. Yung Ching was taken out of your clutches—an' he'll stay out. I'm fed up with these politenesses. Let's have somethin' plain!"

Again Dr. Foo Chow bowed.

"As you wish," he said smoothly. "It is always better to have a thorough understanding. I regret, however, that our amicable relations are becoming strained. I am far from blind, and I observe that two members of our party are missing." He looked round and nodded. "Our young friend of the aggressive voice, and the excessively black gentleman from Africa," he added, smiling. "No doubt they will inform me as to Yung Ching's whereabouts—when I question them later."

Nelson Lee felt rather anxious. He could imagine Dr. Foo Chow's methods with Edward Oswald Handforth—if the latter refused to give satisfaction—as he certainly would refuse.

"We understand, then, Dr. Foo Chow, that it is not your intention to make any reprisals for our recent activity?" asked Lee pointedly. "Since we have abandoned pretence, it would be as well to be quite frank."

"Splendid," said the Chinese millionaire. "No, gentlemen, there will be no reprisals. I am not vindictive. I do not indulge in petty revenge. Moreover, I realise how excellent your excuse is. However, I would like to add that my forgetfulness will entirely depend upon the alacrity with which Yung Ching's hiding-place is vouchsafed. For the present, let us call a truce."

He smiled, and walked into the palace. His words had been mild and polite, but there had been something in his tone which had sounded utterly devilish. Foo Chow was not the type of man to display his emotions. But Nelson Lee could guess that he was consumed with rage at the trick which his prisoners had played upon him under his very nose.

For, regarded in a cold light, the exploit had been an amazing one. This Chinese potentate's captives had actually broken loose, and had spirited the boy away! As a piece of unadulterated nerve, it would have required some beating. As a colossal achievement, it was a gem.

Handforth Does the Trick!

"THANK goodness!" murmured Edward Oswald Handforth, with intense relief.

"Pardon?" asked Yung Ching politely. "You speak?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Handforth.

He did not wish to explain to his companion that he had been completely lost. During the last fifteen minutes he had had no idea of his bearings, and had begun secretly to despair of ever finding the home of Ah Fong. But now, rounding a clump of trees, he recognised his ground. Ah Fong's house was actually within sight.

"You pleased, eh?" smiled Yung Ching. "You glad because you're notee lost any more?"

"Eh?"

"I savvy fine," smiled Yung Ching. "You plentee worried, and talkee to me about St. Frank's and footer and clicket. And allee time you lostee, I glad you allee light now."

Handforth grunted.

"Fat lot of good trying to spoof you!" he said tartly. "As a matter of fact, I did get out of my bearings a bit, but you needn't think I was actually lost, you young ass! I've only been here once before—and all in the dark, too!"

"You plentee clever!" agreed Yung Ching enthusiastically.

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They approached the house, and Handforth was wondering how he could awaken the Ah Fong family. But it was an unnecessary thought. For Ah Fong himself appeared in the doorway as the pair approached.

"Me makee gleeting," he said impassively.

"By George, this is a bit of luck!" said Handforth as he peered forward. "I thought you'd be asleep, Ah Fong."

"No sleepee."

"How's little Seng?" asked the leader of Study D.

"My son allee same good," said Ah Fong. "Sleepee fine, then wakee. Me put cold water on bandage. Seng sleepee more. Plentee gettee well."

"That's the way," said Handforth, with approval. "You can't do better than keep to the cold-water cure. It'll do him more good than all your heathen treatments put together. Me wantee flavour," he added, dropping into his own brand of pidgin in order to make himself understood.

"Flavour?" repeated Ah Fong, puzzled.

"Yes, me wantee flavour—you do me goodee turn," explained Handforth. "This Chinese boy my friend," he added, indicating Yung Ching. "Him wanted badly by Foo Chow. You hidee him?"

The Chinaman regarded Yung Ching with the same impassive look.

"Who this boy?" he asked.

And, without waiting for Handforth to reply, he spoke in Chinese. Yung Ching spoke in Chinese, too, and Handforth listened wonderingly. He couldn't understand how on earth anybody could make head or tail of such gibberish. As a matter of fact, Yung Ching's language was totally different from Ah Fong's, for they belonged to different provinces.

"Him boy from the Kiang," said Ah Fong, turning to Handforth. "Him boy belong to Excellency Yung Li Chang. Notee one of Excellency Foo Chow's people."

"He's Yung Li Chang's own son!" replied Handforth promptly.

Ah Fong was startled into a sharp cry.

"Son of Excellency Yung Li Chang!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling as he gazed at Yung Ching with awe. "I not know. Allee same solly!"

He positively bowed and scraped before Yung Ching, much to the latter's discomfiture.

"Allee peoples honour Yung Li Chang," explained Ah Fong softly. "Him gleat man. Excellency Yung Li Chang gleat man in China. Good luler—plentee kind to peoples. No taxes. Allee people in Hu Kiang plovinee plentee money. No starvee. No plague. Excellency Yung Li Chang gleat and honourable man. I do allee for savee honourable son."

"I don't know what the dickens you're getting at, but I suppose you mean you'll hide Ching away?" asked Handforth.

Yung Ching nodded.

"My honourable father muchee esteemed by evelybody," he explained. "This man is fiendly. I safe, Handy. This is good. Plentee blains for you to blingee me. Ah Fong goodee man."

"Ah Fong do all he can," said Ah Fong quickly. "Honourable white boy savee my son from tiger. Me do muchee in return."

He led the way into the house, and made it clear that he would not only conceal the fugitive, but guard him with his own life. Handforth, with great difficulty, managed to make Ah Fong understand that it would be a good idea to supply Yung Ching with a complete change of native clothing, and to send one of his own sons away before dawn to some relatives in the city. Yung Ching would then take the place of this absent son, but would only show himself occasionally, and at a distance from any neighbours.

It was quite a good idea, for an addition to the household would have been at once noticeable, and commented upon. A few simple precautions would probably make Yung Ching quite safe.

"Well, that's all settled, then?" said Handforth at last. "It'll be getting daylight soon, so I'd better clear off. We don't want anybody to see me in this particular district, Chingy. The sooner I get back to the palace, the better."

Yung Ching nodded.

"Plentee blainy idea," he agreed promptly.

"Well, so long, old son!" continued Handforth, shaking hands. "You can rely upon us to get you out of this fix in next to no time. Just stick here, and pretend to be one of Ah Fong's sons, and go easy with the neighbours. We'll come for you as soon as ever we get the chance."

"I wait," said Yung Ching placidly.

After shaking hands with Ah Fong—much to that gentleman's consternation—Handforth went off. His plan was to reach the highway as quickly as possible, and to walk to the palace. Once on that concrete road it wouldn't matter if Foo Chow's men discovered him, for they would not be able to tell from which direction he had come.

Now that the night's excitement was over, he was



Without warning, two groups of menacing figures rose from the undergrowth on either side of the road and bore down upon Handforth. In a moment the St. Frank's junior realised he was trapped by Foo Chow's soldiers! But he was ready for them. "Come on!" he roared aggressively. "I'm not afraid of you fatheads!"

beginning to feel tired and sleepy. He realised that he hadn't been to bed, and that the past ten or twelve hours had been packed with action. As a natural result, he was bodily weary, and his steps became flagging.

"Still, it's no good getting slack now," he told himself. "I'll tumble into bed as soon as I get to the palace, and have a good sleep. Chingy's all right, and those rotten soldiers of Foo Chow's will never find him."

He reached the highway after an hour's walk across the deserted fields, and dawn was now beginning to show itself in the eastern sky. However, it was still gloomy in the extreme, and the whole countryside looked dead and deserted. Handforth found it difficult to realise that he was really in the midst of countless enemies.

He realised it a few minutes later, however. For, without warning, two groups of men rose from the undergrowth on either side of the road and bore down upon him. Evidently Dr. Foo Chow had these men placed there in readiness.

He was trapped!

Handforth paused, all his weariness gone.

"All right!" he said aggressively. "Come on!"

A moment's consideration would have told him that it was a sheer waste of good energy to fight. He was going back to the palace, anyhow, so there was nothing to be gained by showing battle. But it was Edward Oswald Handforth's nature to show battle. He just couldn't help himself.

He didn't even wait for the soldiers to pounce upon him. He saw that they carried no rifles, and that their swords were sheathed. Then he sailed in with both fists.

Crash! Slam! Biff!

In rapid succession he delivered three rapid blows, and a trio of Chinamen went down, howling. Handforth was feeling thoroughly fit again.

"Come on!" he roared. "I'm not afraid of you fatheads! Try to touch me, and I'll jolly well smash the lot of you!"

They closed in upon him relentlessly, and although several of them were hurt, they soon rendered him incapable of further action.

"Yang Fu—Yang Fu—Yang Fu!"

The Chinamen were talking excitedly and volubly, but the only words which Handforth could understand were "Yang Fu." It was obvious that they had received orders to convey him to the town of Yang Fu, and not back to the palace. There was something significant in this.

"You—you rotters!" he panted, as he was held. "So you're going to take me to Yang Fu, are you? By George! Torture! You're going to shove me in old Chingy's prison, I'll bet! You—you—"

"Be thou of good cheer, young master!" came a booming rumble from the outer gloom. "I, Umlosi, come to aid thee! And am I not a warrior of warriors? Wau! These insects are but vermin beneath my contempt!"

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth. "Good old Umlosi!"

He recommenced his own struggles, astonished to find Umlosi so near. He had had no inkling that any other member of the St. Frank's party was within a mile of him. But the African chieftain, true to his promise, had never allowed Handforth out of his sight.

He dashed into the Chinese soldiers like a tornado sweeping across a stricken city. The damage he wrought within a single minute was startling, and he had nothing but his bare hands, aided by his stupendous strength.

The Chinamen were sent this way and that—knocked over like skittles. Umlosi simply forged a way through the soldiers to the side of Edward Oswald, and the whole scene was one of confusion.

Half a dozen men were clawing at the black giant at the same time, whilst others rushed upon him in a frontal attack. Contemptuously, he drove them off, lifting man after man, and hurling them from him as though they were mere dummies. Not once did they attempt to use their swords, having obviously been forbidden to do so.

And at last Umlosi's efforts were rewarded. He forced a way through the yelling, screaming crowd, and he and Handforth won free. The concrete highway was left strewn with battered Chinamen.

"By George!" panted Handforth. "That was the way to do it, Umlosi, old son! You put up a ripping fight, and I'm proud of you!"

"'Twas nothing, my young master!" growled Umlosi. "Thou art the one to be praised—since thou, a boy, didst account for many of these sons of pigs!"

They hastened on, and as the dawn light increased they glanced back and saw the defeated Chinamen picking themselves up, and limping away across the grassland which bordered the road.

In the Limelight!

IRENE MANNERS stared, and rubbed her eyes. "Doris!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Quick—quick! Umlosi's out here, coming towards the palace! And there's somebody with him— Oh, quick! Tell me who it is!"

Doris Berkeley came to Irene's side. They had nearly finished dressing, and were almost ready to go down, and Irene was standing at a window which overlooked the long, palm-bordered drive which led from the palace to the drawbridge. Mary Summers and Winnie Pitt were dressing, too, but they all came to the window.

"What is it, Renie?" asked Doris quickly. "You sound quite excited! Umlosi isn't so very marvellous—"

"Oh, don't—don't!" interrupted Irene tensely. "Who is it with him?"

All the girls stared out wonderingly, struck by Irene's

tones. Of course, they knew nothing of the night's happenings, for they had gone up to bed before Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrinmore had set off on their adventure. In fact, they had gone up to bed with the conviction upon them that Handforth & Co. were dead.

They didn't know it, but Mr. and Mrs. Stokes were waiting in the big foyer of the palace to tell them the good news as soon as they appeared. Church and McClure and Willy Handforth were now fast asleep.

"Why, it's—it's—" began Doris, as she took a quick breath. "But it can't be—Winnie, you tell me!"

"It's Ted Handforth!" said Winnie Pitt joyously.

For just one moment they continued to gaze. The two figures were far down the drive. Umlosi's being naturally an unmistakable one. His companion was a nondescript sort of individual in tattered clothes. He was too far distant for his face to be recognisable. But there was something eminently characteristic in his walk and his bearing.

"It's Ted—it's Ted!" cried Irene excitedly. "And—and we thought—Oh, but we can't be sure yet! Let's rush down and meet them!"

She flew to the door, but Winnie pulled her back.

"You haven't got your shoes on!" she exclaimed. "And Doris isn't finished, either! We can go down—"

"Here you are, Renie—here are your shoes!" put in Mary breathlessly. "Don't trouble to lace them up. Oh, we must find out about Ted!"

A minute later they all dashed out into the wide upper corridor, and found Ena Handforth with one of the other girls; and Ena was looking pale with excitement, too.

"Have—have you seen him?" asked Doris.

"Yes—my brother!" breathed Ena. "Oh, I can't believe it! After—after what we all feared—"

She didn't finish, but sped downstairs. Mr. and Mrs. Stokes were talking to Nelson Lee, and they attempted to pull the girls to a halt.

"We can't stop!" cried Doris. "Ted's come back!"

"But we want to tell you—" began Mrs. Stokes.

"Handforth back!" broke in Nelson Lee. "Come, Barry, we'd better make certain! I hope the girls are right! I've been anxious ever since he went off with Yung Ching."

Outside, Handforth was standing in the middle of the drive, nearly scared out of his wits. Five or six girls were rushing upon him, and Umlosi's black face was wreathed in smiles.

"Thou art come to life again, my young master," he murmured. "For did we not all think that thou and thy friends were dead?"

"Ted!" shouted Ena, as she fairly flung herself into her brother's arms. "Oh, Ted, you bouncer! Where have you been? Why didn't you come back yesterday? We all thought—"

She broke off, hugging and kissing him—much to Handforth's embarrassment. All the same, it was jolly good to be back again, even though the palace was as much a prison as all the rest of this enemy-ridden country.

"Ted! You're alive!" cried Irene happily.

Almost before Ena could release him, Irene had given him a kiss of welcome, and poor old Handy was flushing to the roots of his hair with discomfiture. But he was thrilled as well. By George! He had never dreamed that Irene would be so worried!

But the others kissed him just as excitedly.

"Oh, I say!" he protested feebly. "I—I mean—I'm all grubby and tired, and I need a bath and a change of clothes—"

"But you're safe, Ted!" interrupted his sister happily.

"But what about Church and McClure?"

"My hat! Haven't they turned up?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Then they're alive, too?"

"Of course they're alive!" said Edward Oswald. "What rot! Fancy you girls thinking that—"

"Church and McClure are fast asleep," interrupted Nelson Lee, as he hurried up. "Well done, Handforth! I will confess that I have been worrying about you. It's all right, girls. There have been no fatalities, and with Handforth returned we are now a complete party again."

"Everything went all right, sir," said Handforth.

"Ching is safely in Ah Fong's hands—"

"Hush! Not so loud!" warned Lee. "Under no circumstances must we discuss Yung Ching's whereabouts here."

"A crowd of Chinks tried to stop me, sir, but Umlosi came along and we had a bit of a scrap," said Handforth. "I'm blessed if I can understand where he sprang from. Still, we've got back all right."

Nelson Lee did not think it necessary to explain the actual reason for Umlosi's opportune appearance. And Handforth, glad to escape, rushed indoors for a bath and a change. The idea was for him to tumble straight into bed.

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But he appeared half an hour later, resplendent in white flannels, and looking quite himself again. He had decided that he couldn't possibly sleep until he had told the girls all the details of his adventures, and until he had shown himself in respectable attire.

By now there were many of the juniors down, and they were all talking excitedly with the girls. There was such a lot to talk about! Yung Ching had been rescued! Handforth & Co. were alive! And Chingy had been safely hidden away somewhere.

"Hurrah!"

"Here he is!"

"Good old Handy!"

A crowd of fellows swarmed round Handforth, cheering, and all grabbing for his hand. And Edward Oswald was by no means averse to a little limelight. It was just the sort of thing he relished.

"Don't be dotty!" he said gruffly. "You shouldn't be such asses as to think I should get myself drowned! And Church and McClure are fast asleep in their beds—snoring like the dickens!"

"Ted, you've been doing wonders!" said Irene, as she came through the crowd, her eyes sparkling, and her pretty face alight with admiration. "We've heard all about it from Mr. Lee. The way you saved that little Chinese boy from the tiger was just too marvellous for words!"

Handforth blushed with modest embarrassment.

"Oh, it was nothing!" he protested. "I was going to tell you all about it, you know—"

"We've heard everything from Mr. Lee," said Irene. "He told us how you had made friends with a Chinaman, and how you all went into Yang Fu, and smashed into the prison—and how you rescued Yung Ching. We all think it was simply wonderful! We may be prisoners, but we're still full of spirit!"

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth feebly.

He felt swindled. He had sacrificed his much-needed sleep so that he could tell everybody of the wonderful things that had happened during the night. And now he found that they knew everything. All his thunder had been stolen! It was a bit too thick!

"Handforth, what are you doing here?" asked Nelson Lee, coming up with a frown. "You ought to be in bed. After your experiences of yesterday, and with no sleep during the night, it is absurd for you to dress yourself like this. Church and McClure are in bed, and you ought to join them."

Handforth nodded.

"Yes, I suppose I might as well, sir," he said gruffly. "You've been telling everything, so I'm dished! I might have guessed it!" he added bitterly.

"I'm awfully sorry, young 'un!" smiled Nelson Lee. "But, you see, it was quite impossible to satisfy the boys and girls with a mere promise that you would tell the story when you came down. You see, we expected you to be asleep until the evening—"

"Hallo! Here comes Foo Chow!" interrupted Dick Hamilton, with a curious note in his voice. "He's got a great crowd of armed soldiers with him, too. Doesn't look very healthy, sir."

Nelson Lee turned, and there was a light of anxiety in his keen grey eyes.

Handy is Blunt!

DR. FOO CHOW bowed with suave politeness. His soldiers had halted some distance away, but were in readiness for instant action. They were picked men, too—Foo Chow's biggest and most imposing guards.

"Ah, my young friend, so you are back within my hospitable grounds," he said gently, as he gazed at Handforth. "We have already noticed the advent of your black friend—but he is of no account. You are the young gentleman I desire to question."

Handforth glared.

"You can question me until doomsday, but you won't get any satisfaction out of me," he replied bluntly. "I suppose you're wild because I broke loose yesterday, and because—"

"On the contrary, I have already forgiven that little escapade," said Dr. Foo Chow. "I make all allowances for the natural exuberance of youth and spirits. At the same time you must remember that I am your host, and that certain courtesies are due to me. You have taken an active part in concealing Yung Ching, and, lenient as I am in most things, I find it impossible to overlook such conduct. I must reluctantly take certain steps to obtain the information I desire."

"One moment, Dr. Foo Chow," said Nelson Lee. "I hold myself entirely responsible for this boy's actions—"

"Nevertheless, my dear sir, it is the boy himself who can supply me with the facts I require," broke in Dr. Foo Chow blandly. "I have a certain form of procedure in these little affairs, and I cannot vary them. This boy has been—shall we say over zealous ever since he arrived? I think it is time his wings were slightly clipped. Indeed, I do not intend to be pestered with his high-spiritedness any more!"

A note of vindictive hatred had crept into Foo Chow's final words, and as he spoke he made a sign to his guards. They instantly swept up, and swarmed round Handforth. In a moment he was isolated from Nelson Lee and the rest. That movement had obviously been rehearsed.

"What does this mean?" demanded Nelson Lee sharply. The Chinese millionaire ignored the query, and gave an order. The soldiers whipped Handforth's arms behind him, strapped them, and marched him off. His indignant protests were completely ignored. The group of St. Frank's juniors and Moor View girls watched with startled dismay.

"It means, Mr. Nelson Lee, that I am master here," said Dr. Foo Chow purring. "I'm allowing you this semi-liberty for my own convenience; but, in return, I, at least, expect a recognition of the usual amenities due to a host. This particular boy has displeased me, and I am taking him in hand."

Without another word, Foo Chow walked away, and the fellows and girls crowded round Nelson Lee.

"What are they going to do with him, sir?" asked Reggie Pitt anxiously.

"Poor old Ted!" said Ena. "Just when we were rejoicing over his return, too! Oh, they're going to torture him! Please, Mr. Lee, can't we do something to save him from this?"

"Torture him!" murmured Irene, turning pale. "Oh, but that's—that's too terrible! Even Foo Chow wouldn't do—"

She broke off, staring rather dazedly. And there were other pretty faces which were pale with anxiety, too.

"There is no sense in denying that the situation is serious," said Nelson Lee gravely. "But you need have no fear that Handforth will be tortured. If there is any question of such a fate overtaking him, I shall supply Foo Chow with the information he requires."

"And will Handy be released then, sir?" asked Dick. "Undoubtedly," said Lee. "I was afraid of something like this, but we are, unfortunately, powerless to prevent it."

He walked off, feeling that there was nothing he could say that would satisfy the anxious youngsters. He met Lord Dorrinore and Mr. Stokes farther along the terrace. "You were right, Mr. Lee," said Barry Stokes quietly.

"Yes," muttered Lee. "They've got him."

"I just saw the poor beggar bein' carted off," said Dorrie grimly. "Gad! Isn't there anything we can do, Lee? As soon as the young 'un gets back, safe an' sound, he is shoved under arrest! They've taken him into the palace, but about fifty soldiers are guardin' that particular doorway."

Nelson Lee said nothing. Seldom had he felt so utterly powerless as he felt now. Foo Chow had been right when he spoke of "semi-liberty." Here were the members of the holiday party walking about freely, as though they were guests in all truth! And yet what were they but helpless, impotent captives? Even that night dash was only bringing a mass of trouble in its train! Yung Ching had been hidden away, but for how long could his hiding-place be kept secret?

"If they're going to torture him, Lee, we shall have to speak," growled his lordship. "Hang it all, Handforth is white—he's British. Better let Yung Ching be tortured than one of our own blood—hateful as it is!"

"We must wait," replied Lee quietly. "Foo Chow won't do anything drastic at once. It isn't his way. These Chinamen prefer slower methods. But you may be sure that we shall not allow Handforth to suffer."

In the meantime, Edward Oswald had been taken to a great apartment in a far corner of the palace, where the members of the holiday party were not allowed to penetrate. Foo Chow came there, and found his prisoner arguing heatedly with the Chinese officers and soldiers who surrounded him. But it was a very one-sided argument, since Handforth was doing all the talking.

"Easy, isn't it?" he was saying in a sour voice. "About five hundred of you dropping on one victim! I suppose you're feeling pretty satisfied, eh? You're crowing over your beastly victory? You can all go and boil yourselves! I don't care a snap for the whole cartload of you!"

Dr. Foo Chow approached.

"Very interesting, my boy, but a waste of breath," he said softly. "This spirit of bravado, I fear, is one of your great weaknesses. I do not wish to harm you in any way, neither do I desire to part you from your fellow countrymen. A

few words from you will be sufficient to earn an immediate release."

"Oh!" said Handforth coldly. "Go on!"

He deliberately looked Foo Chow up and down with contempt. Handforth was quite fearless. In fact, he took a certain amount of pleasure in openly displaying his disgust.

"You are fortunate in the fact that I am a man of patience," said the Chinese millionaire, smiling. "I hope you will understand that I am the complete master of the situation. You have taken Yung Ching, and you have concealed him. Tell me this spot, and your liberty will be restored."

Handforth laughed.

"That's a good one!" he said mockingly. "Liberty, eh? A fat lot of liberty in this place! I might just as well be surrounded by soldiers here as surrounded by them anywhere else! Liberty! Cheese it, Dr. Foo Chow! I'm not so jolly green as all that!"

"Indeed, you are quite shrewd," replied Dr. Foo Chow. "However, let me point out that there will be a great deal of difference between the types of captivity. With your own friends you will be virtually a guest. But there is another method I can adopt, and that will not be so comfortable."

"Tom Merry & Co. Go Gay!"



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"You won't get anything out of me, if that's what you mean," said Handforth bluntly.

"You must realise that the finding of Yung Ching will be a comparatively simple matter—a question of time," said the Chinaman. "My countless soldiers have but to search, and Yung Ching will be found. But much trouble will be saved if you speak at once. So, for your own sake, I suggest a little exercise of that voluble tongue of yours. Tell me the hiding-place of Yung Ching, and you shall be returned to your friends."

Handforth laughed again.

"You can go and eat coke!" he said calmly.

"Our native prisons are not particularly cheerful," pursued Dr. Foo Chow smoothly. "A few hours in one of them—with the addition of a little gentle persuasion—may loosen your tongue. I do not propose to argue, since you are obviously stubborn."

He turned and gave some orders. Handforth was at once

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hustled out of the room and taken to a waiting motor-car. Foo Chow had plenty of automobiles at his disposal, it seemed.

Edward Oswald was handcuffed now, with great, heavy manacles which hurt his wrists considerably. And a thick chain was placed at his feet and clamped to either ankle by means of a steel fastening. In addition, he was held by two guards.

"Go ahead!" he said tartly. "You've got me now, and I can't make any fight. But just you wait! Wait until the other chaps get busy! By George, you're going to get a shock, you ugly rotters!"

He was vouchsafed no reply, and the car sped smoothly

over the drawbridge, and made a swift run through the country, and straight on into Yang Fu. Through the winding streets, and straight to the prison—that prison from which Yung Ching had been rescued.

Handforth was curiously interested. He regarded the whole affair from an outsider's point of view, for he could hardly realise that this business was really grim. Since the party's arrival in China, all the members of it had been treated fairly well, and Handforth did not guess that he was now face to face with the harsh reality of genuine Chinese imprisonment.

(Poor old Handy's in a dangerous position now. What happens to him? See next week's gripping chapters.)

THE MYSTERY SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 22.)

A sound of shouting, of scuffling, of fierce trampling and struggling!

Mellish gasped.

The burglars had evidently been attacked. The House-master and the prefects had come upon them in the library, and they were resisting.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The fight was desperate, but short. In a minute or less the struggling had ceased, and only a furious voice raised in rage was heard. It was the voice of the disappointed cracksmen, uttering wild oaths.

The noise had alarmed the House. Doors were opening and voices calling. Seniors and juniors came out in their pyjamas, and the electric lights in the passages were switched on.

Mellish ventured out of the Housemaster's room at last. Tom Merry came tearing down the stairs, and caught Mellish by the shoulder.

"What is it? What's happened?"

"Burglars!"

"My hat!"

"I found 'em out and gave the alarm!" said Mellish importantly. "They're in the library. I—"

But Tom did not wait for more. He rushed off to the library. A crowd was gathering there. Mellish followed. The light was switched on in the library now, and the bright illumination showed up the scene.

On the floor, bound with several cricket balls, lay the cracksmen. Thurnel was standing up, secure in the grasp of Darrell and Kildare. He was white as death. The cracksmen was fuming wildly, but Thurnel spoke no word. He was haggard and despairing. Mr. Railton had gone to the telephone in the corner, and was ringing up the police station in Rylcombe.

"Thurnel!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What does this mean?"

"Yaas, wathah! What does it mean, deah boy?"

Thurnel did not speak or look up. But Mellish was ready to answer.

"Thurnel was the chap who let the burglar in!"

"What!"

"He's his son!"

"Rats!"

"It's true! He's really over twenty years old, and he's been spoofing us," said Mellish. "I found him out. It hadn't been for me they would have had the school silver, and we'd have never seen it again!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Thurnel looked up with a haggard face.

"Well, it's true," he said. "Not much good denying it now. But that fellow who spied upon me isn't much better than I am, either!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Railton put down the receiver.

"Go back to bed, boys," he said. "The police will be here in half an hour to take these two to the station. Kildare and I will remain up. The rest will return to bed."

And the juniors of St. Jim's returned to bed, but not to sleep.

It was a nine days' wonder at St. Jim's. Captured, the Thurnels had no motive to conceal the facts, and the whole story was soon known. Thurnel, the father, was a cracksmen well known to the London police. Dick Thurnel, owing to his diminutive size, had been very useful to him in many of his lawless enterprises.

The elder Thurnel, who had had a good education, and had indeed fallen from a good station, had conceived the idea of sending the boy to St. Jim's, as a means of obtaining an entry to the school and information respecting the whereabouts of the school plate, which would have been a haul large enough for him to retire upon, if it had come off. Unfortunately for him, and fortunately for St. Jim's, it had not come off.

But for Mellish the plan would have succeeded. There was no doubt upon that point. But the cad of the Fourth did not figure in the eyes of his schoolfellows as a hero, as he had expected. It was pretty generally believed that he had been watching the new boy for his own mean reasons, when he had accidentally discovered that he was engaged in a burglary.

There was little credit due to Mellish, and he received little. The discovery was a great shock to the Head of St. Jim's. He had been completely deceived by the elder Thurnel into admitting the new boy to the school by forged documents, which it had been easy enough for a man like Thurnel to obtain.

St. Jim's had had a lucky escape; and so had the chums of Study No. 6—for they had the study to themselves again.

"It was a rotten trick for the boundahs to play on a respectable school!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I regard it as most ungentlemanly of them. But as it's turned out it's all right. We've got our study to ourselves, and there's not likely to be another new beast yet awhile. So it's all right!"

And D'Arcy's chums agreed that it was indeed "all right."

THE END.

(Tom Merry & Co. on the Riviera! Read about their jolly adventures in next week's lively yarn, "TOM MERRY & CO. GO GAY!")

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