

FINE FOOTBALLS AND CASH PRIZES FOR JOKES! (See page 11.)

The GEM

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GUSSY "WAITS ON" THE MASKED BURGLAR! A DRAMATIC INCIDENT FROM "THE BLACK DOMINO!"



UMLOSI STRIKES TERROR INTO THE CHINKS! A THRILLING SCENE FROM "ST. FRANK'S versus FOO CHOW!"

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The BLACK DOMINO!



Who is the man in the black domino, the masked burglar who robs Tom Merry's old governess? The chums of St. Jim's are staggered when, with the mystery man in their hands, Figgins deliberately lets him escape!

CHAPTER 1. Masked Trousters!

"**M**ONTE CARLO to-morrow!" It was Tom Merry of the Shell Form at St. Jim's who spoke. He addressed a group of juniors belonging to the old school.

They were Blake, and D'Arcy, and Figgins, and Kerr, and Wynn of the Fourth, and Monty Lowther of the Shell, sitting round the tea-table on the veranda. It was evening, and they were just finishing a late tea, but amid strange surroundings.

The veranda offered a view, across a wide garden, of the Promenade des Anglais of Nice, and the blue Mediterranean rolling placidly in the distance.

Tom Merry & Co. were in Nice, on the shore of the sunny Mediterranean, and they had enjoyed the wild delights of the carnival. The carnival was almost over now, much to the regret of the juniors of St. Jim's, who had entered keenly into the fun of going out in mask and domino, and pelting all and sundry with confetti in the streets and squares of Nice.

Dusk was falling upon the sea and the shores, and the moon was glimmering up over the Maritime Alps.

A silver glimmer fell upon the bay, and the lights gleamed from the jetties, where through the glass walls the gambling-

tables could be seen in full blast, each table surrounded by a crowd of keen players attracted by the rolling ball like moths attracted by the flame of a candle.

It was the last day of the juniors' holiday in Nice, but before going home to England and St. Jim's, they were to pay a visit to Monte Carlo.

And they were naturally looking forward to it very much. "Monte Carlo to-morrow," said Tom Merry again.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Do you know, I wathah think I shall like to twy my luck there."

Jack Blake sniffed.

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Kids are not allowed in the gaming-room," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We shall see the terrace and the bay, and the scenery, and the outside of the casino," said Tom Merry; "but chaps under age are not admitted, so it's no good thinking of going inside."

"Wats!"

"My dear ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy, and I certainly shall not be satisfied with bein' excluded from the casino at Monte Carlo. I shall insist upon goin' in!"

"You'll get chucked out."

—GRAND YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE!

By Martin Clifford.

"I should wefuse to be chucked out."

Tom Merry laughed.

When Arthur Augustus, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, got an idea into his head, it was usually very hard to get it out again; and somehow or other, D'Arcy generally contrived to have his own way. But he was not likely to get his own way in this case. The officials of the casino at Monte Carlo were no more likely to admit a boy of fifteen to the gambling-rooms, than D'Arcy was to break the bank if he got admitted.

"What a glorious sunset," said Tom Merry, gazing away through the palm-trees of the garden towards the crimson glow over the Cape of Antibes. The sky was red and blue and yellow, with a wave of bronze green in it, colours the juniors had not seen in an English sky.

"Blow the sunset!" said Fatty Wynn. "What's the good of a sunset when a chap's hungry? You can't eat sunsets."

"Who's for a trot on the esplanade?" said Tom Merry. "Good ideal, deah boy."

Fatty Wynn put his hands on the arm of the chair to raise himself. He rose from the chair, and his knees knocked against the tea-table, and it reeled.

"Hallo, look out!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

But the warning came too late.

The crockery danced on the table as it reeled, and the teapot rolled fairly off—right into the lap of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The lid came open, of course, and the contents of the pot streamed out over the knees of D'Arcy's trousers.

There was a wild yell from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sprang up wildly.

He caught the edge of the table as he did so, and sent it reeling over towards Fatty Wynn. And it was the fat junior's turn to yell then, as a shower of clattering crockeryware came pouring over him.

"Ow!" roared Wynn. "You potty duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

"Scalded, Gussy?" exclaimed Blake.

"No! Ow! No! My twousahs! Ow! They're wuined! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right," said Monty Lowther. "There's no harm done. It was only a fresh lot of water I had put in the pot—the tea was all gone. So it doesn't matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Bai Jove! What pwice my twousahs!"

"Seven-and-six," said Lowther, pretending to misunderstand.

"Lowthah! You uttah ass!"

"Well, eight-and-six!"

"I wegard you as an impertinent beast, Lowthah. You know I was not alludin' to the pwice of the twousahs at all!"

"My dear duffer—"

"I decline to be called a duffah. Fatty Wynn, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps Fatty declines to be called an ass!"

"He is an ass, you know, and that makes all the difference. The uttah ass has soaked my twousahs with tea."

"I'm smothered!" gasped Fatty Wynn, who was helplessly reclining in the chair, with upset tea and bread-and-butter, and rolls, and broken teacups all over him. "I'm—in a horrid state. There's a pat of butter on my neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My waistcoat's soaked!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

"You frightful dummy!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"You frabjous cuckoo!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a fwabjous cuckoo. I wegard it as addin' insult to injuwy."

"You burbling ass!"

"I am sowwy to have to delay changin' my twousahs, but undah the cires, I have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin', Wynn."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Pway put up your hands."

"Ass!"

Arthur Augustus seized Fatty Wynn, and yanked him out of the chair, and there was a fresh crash.

The fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's closed with D'Arcy, and they struggled on the veranda.

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry, as Wynn's foot crashed into a flower-pot.

Crash! Smash!

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll pulverise you!"

"I'll thwash you!"

"Cave!" gasped Monty Lowther suddenly.

But the warning came too late.

A feminine figure appeared at one of the french windows of the veranda, and Miss Priscilla held up her hands in horror.

"My darling boys!"

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy Gets Left!

TOM MERRY & CO. seized the desperate combatants and dragged them apart. Miss Fawcett was gazing upon the scene in amazement and horror. Behind her appeared the portly form and beetroot complexion of Major Figgins, Figgys's uncle.

"My dear boys!"

"Huh!" grunted the major. "You rascals!"

"Bai Jove! Leggo, Wynn!"

"Rather!"

The combatants let go each other—all the more willingly because the juniors were dragging them apart. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was whirled away from his adversary, and sent crashing into the palms, and Fatty Wynn sat down on the broken china.

There was a howl of anguish, and Fatty Wynn jumped up even more quickly than he had sat down.

Miss Fawcett came towards them.

"Fighting!" she exclaimed. "Is it possible?"

"Bai Jove!"

"My darling children—"

"Huh! Young rascallions!"

"My dearest boys—"

"It's all right, dear," said Tom Merry. "Wynn and D'Arcy were trying a new—new game. They have been soaking one another with tea, and—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And they've really quite enjoyed it."

"Bless my soul!" said Miss Fawcett. "It really looked as if they were fighting."

"Well, not exactly fighting," said Tom Merry. "They were simply—simply contending to—lick one another, you know."

"Indeed! I am so glad you were not fighting," said Miss Priscilla.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I suppose you have seen nothing of my nephew?" said the major, glancing at the boys.

Figgins grinned.

"Here I am, uncle!"

The major grunted.

"I don't mean you, you young rascal! I mean Archie Hilton. Have you seen anything of Archie to-day?"

"He was at the jettty yesterday, sir," said Tom Merry.

"I haven't seen him since then. That was in the evening."

"Gambling as usual, of course!" grunted the major.

Tom was silent.

"Well, well, you needn't tell me—I know well enough," said Major Figgins. "I haven't seen him at all to-day, either. I suppose he will turn up, like the bad penny. Miss Fawcett, would you care to take our usual little walk on the promenade?"

"With pleasure, major."

The juniors set the table up, and replaced what of the crockery was not broken. Major Figgins and Miss Fawcett went down the garden path towards the gate that opened upon the Promenade des Anglais, the great esplanade of Nice.

"We may as well have a run out, too," Tom Merry remarked. "Let's go and get the dominoes."

"Right you are."

The juniors went in, and ascended the wide staircase to the large room they occupied in common.

There were seven beds in a row in the room, and it reminded the juniors of the dormitory at St. Jim's in far-off England.

Tom Merry & Co. had worn their dominoes—black hooded cloaks—at the various functions of the carnival, and they had found great fun in the disguises. They soon had the dominoes on. Fatty Wynn and Arthur Augustus were in the room changing their things. Changing did not take Fatty Wynn long, and he was ready to get into his domino in a few minutes; but with Arthur Augustus it was another matter.

"Buck up, Gussy," said Tom Merry, as he slipped on his domino. "We're ready."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall have to be home for dinner, you know; we're going out again afterwards."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "It would be absurd to miss dinner, of course."

"Good old Fatty! Catch him missing dinner!" grinned Kerr.

"Well, really, you know—"

"I shan't be more than a quartah of an hour," said Arthur Augustus. "There was a splash of tea on my shirt, you know, and I shall have to change that, too. That involves tying my necktie afresh."

"Hang the shirt!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"It won't be noticed under the domino, anyway."

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you do not think I could be slovenly, because it would not be noticed undah the domino," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "You might as well say that a chap need not wash his neck because it would not be noticed undah his collar!"

"Will you get on?" shouted Blake, for the swell of St. Jim's, in his usual way, suspended his occupation while he was talking.

"I'm explainin' to Tom Mewwy—"

"Look here, we shall go without you."

"I twust you will not be so weekless. You would be bound to get into some swape or othah."

"Will you buck up?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Pwavy don't be unwasonable, deah boy! How can I buck up when I am talkin'?"

"Leave off talking, then."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"How long will you be?" asked Blake, breathing hard through his nose, and with difficulty restraining himself from committing assault and battery upon the spot.

"About a quartah of an hour."

"Good-bye, then!"

"I might make it ten minutes."

"We'll give you ten seconds."

"Pwavy don't be an ass!"

"Au revoir!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

But the "deah boys" were gone. Their footsteps died tramping away down the staircase, and there was a slam of the door below. Arthur Augustus gave a dissatisfied sniff.

"I wogard that as unfriendly," he murmured. "But I certainly shall not huwvy myself. Wathah not!"

And the swell of St. Jim's proceeded to deal with his necktie in the most leisurely way in the world.

CHAPTER 3.

The Gambler I

TOM MERRY & CO. went down the garden in a crowd. They had no doubt that the swell of St. Jim's would buck up, and follow them, and if he didn't, that was his own look out.

The sun had sunk now behind Cap d'Antibes, and the dusk was thickening over the sea and the shore. Coloured lights flashed and gleamed along the front and in the streets of Nice, and gay crowds of revellers poured along the esplanade. The Jardin Publique was gaily illuminated, and the Casino Municipal and the Jetee were a blaze of lights.

Tom Merry & Co. left the gate, and mingled with the crowd.

A figure in a black domino was standing near the gate, looking towards the sea, across the promenade. The face was masked, but it struck Tom Merry for a moment that there was something familiar in the figure.

As Tom glanced at it, the man in the domino moved, and walked quickly along the path towards the jetty. That was the direction in which the juniors intended to go, and they followed.

Alone, the black domino was inconspicuous in the darkness; but in the crowd it stood out in relief, for almost

all the revellers wore bright colours—mostly pink and black, the carnival colours for the year.

The black domino remained under the eyes of the juniors as they went on. It suddenly detached itself from the crowd and stopped at a seat facing the sea, where two pedestrians had sat down to rest and gaze at the last rays of the sunset. They were not masked, and Tom Merry recognised Miss Fawcett and Major Figgins.

Then the identity of the man in the black domino flashed upon him.

It was Archie Hilton, the major's nephew!

Tom Merry had seen little of Archie Hilton during his stay in Nice, but that little had convinced him that the major's anxiety about his elder nephew was not unfounded.

Hilton was a desperate gambler, and Tom Merry had seen him losing large sums of money at the gaming-tables in the casino, in the jetty, and at the kursaal.

The young man, who was weak and good-natured, had been kind enough to the juniors, and they liked him very well, but they could not help seeing that he was ruining himself.

He played for high stakes, and played hard, in the desperate hope of retrieving his losses, and the natural result was that he lost more and more money.

Hilton had been the major's ward, and the major still kept an eye on him; but the young man was master of his own fortune now—within certain limits—and all the ready money he could raise was spent at the gaming-tables as fast as he could raise it.

The public gaming-tables, the scandal of the Riviera, had been his ruin, as they have been the ruin of thousands of visitors to the sunny south coast, and to thousands more of the natives of the towns where they are allowed to flourish.

Tom Merry knew that Hilton had tried to borrow money from his uncle, and that fact alone was proof enough that his losses had been heavy. The major had grimly refused to lend him anything for the purposes of gambling.

An eddy of the great crowd, pushed back by the gendarmes to allow a procession to pass, jammed in a crowd round the seat, enclosing the major and Miss Fawcett and the black domino. The juniors were crammed against the seat, and for some minutes they could not move.

The young man in the black domino tapped the major on the shoulder.

Major Figgins looked up sharply, annoyed by what he supposed to be a liberty taken by a carnival reveller.

"Uncle!"

"Hallo, is it you, Archie?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Where have you been all day?" growled the major.

"I've seen nothing of you."

Hilton shrugged his shoulders.

"At the casino."

"Playing, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"With the usual result?"

"I have bad luck."

"Do you ever have good?" snorted the major.

"Yes—sometimes."

"And does it last?" asked Major Figgins sarcastically.

"It must change soon."

"Not before you are ruined."

"Uncle, I want you to help me. Excuse me, Miss Fawcett, for speaking about this before you."

"My dear boy—"

"Uncle! If you lend me a hundred pounds—"

"I will not!"

Tom Merry & Co. moved uncomfortably. The young man was speaking in his usual tones, naturally supposing that all the people round him were French—or perhaps little caring. But the crowd wedged them in, and the juniors could not get away.

"You might, uncle!"

"Never!"

"Then let me realise my own money," exclaimed the young man passionately. "By my father's will I cannot dispose of Hilton House without your consent."

"Your father was a wise man."

"I want to sell my property—"

"And throw the money into the maws of these foreign thieves," said the major grimly. "Never, with my consent."

"But—"

"Never, I say!"

"It's my own fortune, and I suppose I can do as I like with it," said Hilton; and the part of his face that showed below his mask was white with anger.

"That's where you're mistaken," said the major. "You cannot. I'm going to prevent you from ruining yourself, whether you like it or not!"

"I know the luck will change."

"Nonsense!"

As Arthur Augustus sprang up wildly he caught the edge of the table and sent it reeling over towards Fatty Wynn. "Ow!" roared Wynn as a shower of clattering crockeryware came pouring over him. "Oh! You potty duffer!"



"If I had had a hundred pounds this afternoon at the casino, I could have changed it into a thousand."

"Huh!"

"Besides, I'm going to throw up la boule, the game they play here; it's an unfair game, anyway," urged Hilton. "I am going over to Monte Carlo to play roulette instead. That's a fairer game, as you know."

"Huh!"

"Give me a hundred pounds to try my luck, and I will not sell Hilton House."

"You won't sell it anyway, Archie. When you are a little older you will thank me for having saved you from making a fool of yourself."

"Don't drive me to desperation, uncle," said the young man in a low, concentrated voice.

"Nonsense! Enough of this, Archie. I will never advance you a penny to gamble with—never. The gambling thieves here to get enough English money, without you ruining yourself to make them richer. Have sense!"

"I tell you—"

"Enough of all that, I say. This is not a discussion to be held in a lady's presence. You are distressing Miss Fawcett."

"I must have money."

"I am surprised at you, Archie. If I were your father I'd pack you off to England to-morrow. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

The young man made a fierce gesture.

"Then that is all you have to say?"

"Yes."

"Very well."

Hilton turned away. The wedged crowd loosened then, and he was able to stride away from the spot. Tom Merry followed him a few paces anxiously. But Hilton was going in the direction of the major's villa, which was next door to Miss Fawcett, on the Promenade des Anglais, and Tom Merry felt relieved. Without money, Hilton could not gamble, and he was evidently going home.

The juniors moved on their way as soon as the crush permitted, and were soon in the midst of the laughing, confetti-scattering crowd in the Jardin Publique.

But some of them—and Tom Merry, at least—could not forget Archie Hilton, and the desperate tones of the young man rang in Tom Merry's ears as he moved amid the merry crowd. What did Hilton intend to do?

Tom Merry asked himself that question without being able to answer it, and it troubled him strangely.

CHAPTER 4.

The Black Domino!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY proceeded with his changing in a leisurely way, in the blissful belief that the St. Jim's juniors were waiting below for him in the garden.

He was rather surprised at not being called again; and as he was not called, he took more and more time. The result was that it was a half-hour or more before he finally

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descended the stairs, and went out through the veranda into the garden.

The sun was quite gone now, but there was a silver glimmer of moonlight on the garden, silvering the feathery fronds of the palm-trees.

Arthur Augustus looked up and down with a puzzled expression. There was no sign of the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Tom Mewwy!"

Silence!

"Blake!"

No answer!

"Tom Mewwy! Weally, deah boys—"

Only the echo of D'Arcy's voice among the palms answered him, and he was forced at last to the conclusion that his friends had gone.

"The wottahs!" murmured D'Arcy. "Fancy goin' without a chap when I was only goin' to keep them about a quartah of an hour—or half an hour at the most. I wegard it is absolutely wotten. I doubt whethah I can continue to wegard such wank outsiders as wiends."

The swell of St. Jim's was undecided what to do. He could join the merrymaking crowds on the esplanade, but he was not likely to find his friends among the revellers.

D'Arcy sat down on one of the garden seats on the veranda and polished his eyeglass.

The house was not lighted up yet, and it was very dusky on the veranda.

The swell of St. Jim's was quite invisible to anyone entering the garden, while on his part he could see the garden clearly, with the silver glimmer of moonlight falling upon it.

He was looking into the garden, and he gave a sudden start as he observed a black shadow flit across the gleam.

He knew what it was at once—a black domino.

The swell of St. Jim's carefully replaced his eyeglass and stared at the domino.

The movements of the wearer were so stealthy that he could not help seeing that the man was paying a surreptitious visit to the Villa des Fleurs.

Arthur Augustus knew that it was not one of the juniors, for the stature of the masked man was that of a fully-grown-up person.

Who was it?

A very natural suspicion flashed into D'Arcy's mind.

The house was deserted. Miss Fawcett was out, and the juniors were all out—with the exception of D'Arcy. Most of the servants had been given leave to go out and join in the festival, and those who had not been given leave had

taken advantage of Miss Fawcett's absence to go without it. D'Arcy knew that from the silence of the house. Only in the kitchen was there a light, where the cook was preparing dinner.

What an opportunity for a thief to visit the house—a rascal, perhaps, who had watched the villa and learned the habits of its inmates.

The carnival allowed a law-breaker to go about the streets masked without attracting any attention, as almost all were masked.

D'Arcy's heart beat faster.

In the gloom, the black domino was almost invisible. Only when it came into the gleam of the moonlight could the junior see it.

It disappeared into the shrubbery close under the veranda.

D'Arcy remained motionless in the chair. He was as brave as a lion; but he was a boy, and the masked visitor was a man, and the junior was not likely to get the best of a tussle. D'Arcy's idea was to watch, in the hope that help might come. There was no doubt now of the intentions of the black domino.

He meant to enter the house.

D'Arcy knew that he was watching the veranda keenly through the holes in his mask, from the shadow of the shrubbery. The junior remained quite still. He was sitting in deep darkness, and had no fear of being seen.

The silence and darkness of the veranda seemed to reassure the nocturnal visitor.

D'Arcy heard a rustle as he emerged from the shrubbery, and a stealthy footstep on the wide steps of the veranda.

He did not stir.

The black domino loomed for a moment into view, passed him unseeing, and disappeared into the open doors.

He was in the house.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, trembling with excitement.

The robber was in the building itself. What was to be done? D'Arcy, with a shock, remembered that there was a large sum of money in the house. Miss Fawcett had taken a large sum from the Credit Lyonnais that morning, for the expenses of the journey to Monte Carlo, and to settle the accounts at Nice before leaving, and the juniors had escorted her home with it.

D'Arcy remembered that there must be three hundred pounds in Miss Fawcett's desk—and he remembered the desk, too—an exceedingly flimsy thing for a sum of money to be deposited in.

"Bai Jove!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's.

The black domino evidently knew that there was money in the house. After all, it had not been carefully kept secret. D'Arcy remembered that at lunch the previous day Miss Fawcett had mentioned her intended visit to the bank that morning, and Hilton, who was present at lunch with the major, had cautioned her not to let the servants know that she had so much money there.

But the black domino evidently knew. He might have watched the old lady visit the bank, and leave it, and waited for his opportunity ever since.

D'Arcy followed the stealthy visitor into the house.

He trod on tiptoe, making no sound. In the darkness of the interior the black domino had disappeared, but Arthur Augustus moved in the direction of Miss Fawcett's little sitting-room, where the old lady kept her account-books and transacted her business. The desk was there, and if the thief intended to visit it, that was the direction he would take.

In the lower hall the moonlight fell into a wide window, and in the patch of light D'Arcy caught a glimpse of the black domino.

He was on the right track.

The black domino paused at the door of Miss Fawcett's room, and entered. The door was not even locked.

It closed behind the thief.

D'Arcy reached the door in turn, and hesitated. Should he follow the man in? What use was it for a boy to tackle a man?

In that quiet room, far from help, a stunning blow would stretch him helpless on the floor, and the villain would escape with his booty. He might be armed, too!

D'Arcy paused in thought.

He was determined that the man should not plunder Miss Fawcett and escape, but the question was, how to prevent him? There came a faint crack from the interior of the room.

The thief was breaking open the desk.

What was to be done? To wait for the man to come out—to fling himself upon him and yell for help—that was all D'Arcy could think of. But was help likely to come? Who was likely to hear him, at the length of the great garden from the public road, and in the interior of the house?

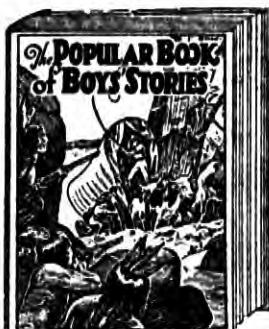
Better wait till the man was out of doors again—there was more chance of being heard and helped then when he tackled him,



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Then a bright idea flashed into D'Arcy's brain. The door of Miss Fawcett's room opened inwards. The key, of course, was on the inside, and D'Arcy could not obtain it. A few feet away was another door, with the handle on the side nearest Miss Fawcett's door. If those two handles were tied together neither door could open, and the thief would be prisoner in Miss Fawcett's room. D'Arcy was wearing a cord sash with his domino. He whipped it off in a twinkling, and doubled it round the door handle. Then, pulling it tight, he fastened the other end to the next handle.

It did not occupy the swell of St. Jim's a minute. But the door could not open now, unless the man within exerted sufficient force to break the cord—which was not likely, for it was strong and doubled.

Arthur Augustus chuckled softly. There was another loud crack in the room. The thief was forcing open another drawer.

He little dreamed of the trap he had fallen into. Arthur Augustus stole quietly out of the house, and took up his station under the window of Miss Fawcett's room.

The room looked out over the garden, from the first floor, and the drop from the window to the ground was about fifteen feet.

It was a pretty steep drop for the thief to take—if he took it; but there was no other way for him to escape. D'Arcy stood there ready to tackle him when he dropped, and undoubtedly he would have an advantage in doing so, for the man was certain to roll over when he touched the ground, and the junior would be able to spring upon him before he could recover himself.

Arthur Augustus smiled softly. He prayed inwardly that his chums might return, or that the major might bring Miss Fawcett home before the thief finished his robbery and tried to escape.

In the stillness of the night, broken only by the distant shouts on the esplanade and the murmur of the sea, Arthur Augustus could hear the sounds the thief made in the room, as he broke open drawer after drawer in the desk.

The window was dark, for the man dared not show a light; he was working in the darkness or the faint glimmer of moonlight.

The sounds ceased at last. Had he found what he wanted? Arthur Augustus grinned. A surprise awaited him when he tried to get out of the room with his plunder. Three or four minutes passed in anxious silence. Then a black shadow appeared at the window; it was thrown open, and a black domino appeared in the moonlight.

CHAPTER 5.

Almost Caught!

D'ARCY kept carefully in the shadow of a great mimosa, and the keen, anxious eyes that swept down into the garden did not discern him standing there. He watched the window. Outside it was a small balcony, the same width as the window, with an iron trellis. The window opened in the French fashion upon hinges.

The black domino stepped upon the little balcony, and glanced down feverishly into the garden. Up and down the garden his wild and alarmed gaze swept, and D'Arcy caught the glitter of his startled eyes through the holes in his mask.

The man had evidently tried the door and found it fast. He had come to the window, after vainly trying to open the door.

Doubtless, after discovering the door fastened, he had expected to find the window watched. He was looking for the watcher, but he could not see D'Arcy.

The junior waited silently.

He heard a muffled expression above. It was caused by the sound of footsteps in the garden.

D'Arcy heard a cheery voice.

"I wonder if that ass has gone out?"

Jack Blake was speaking. The reference to D'Arcy was not complimentary, but D'Arcy had never been more pleased to hear the voice of his chum in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

He stepped out of the shadow, and shouted.

"Blake! Tom Mewwy! This way!"

"Hallo!"

"Where are you?"

"Here, you ass! Quick! Burglars!"

"Now, then, don't be funny!"

"Ass! Burglars, honah bwight!"

"Phew!"

Every word rang out clearly in the still air of the evening. The man on the balcony above did not lose a syllable.

He lost no more time in hesitation. With a crowd below his chances of escape would be cut off for good. He swung himself over the iron trellis with his hands, and lowered himself as low as he could, and dropped.

His feet were about nine feet from the ground when he dropped. They crashed upon the earth, and he rolled over.

D'Arcy was watching for him.

He leaped upon the rolling form at once and clutched it, yelling to the chums of St. Jim's for help.

Tom Merry & Co were already dashing through the palms towards the spot. They were fully aware that D'Arcy was in earnest now.

The black domino struggled desperately.

Arthur Augustus held to him gamely, but the man was desperate. D'Arcy was forced back, and hurled to the ground with stunning force.

The masked man sprang to his feet.

The juniors of St. Jim's were rushing up, and they caught sight of him now.

"There he is!" yelled Figgins.

"Collar him!"

"Wescue, deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy feebly.

"Go it!"

"Collar the cad!"

The black domino hesitated a moment, and then dashed among the palms. He eluded some of the juniors, but three or four sprang to stop him. Tom Merry grasped the domino, but a crashing blow on the chest sent him to the ground. He crashed down, and the man leaped over him and ran.

Behind him came Figgins and Monty Lowther and Blake.

The three were close to him. Blake grabbed the fluttering domino and wrenched; the silk parted, and he was left with a great fragment in his hand, and he reeled back and fell with his own effort.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet.

"Aftah him! He's got Miss Fawcett's money!"

"Collar him!"

The juniors all dashed in pursuit, but the black domino was going down the garden like lightning, and only Lowther and Figgins had a chance. They were close upon him. Monty Lowther caught his foot in a trailing root and went down with a heavy bump. His chance was gone, but Figgins kept on.

Figgins' long legs had never stood him in such good stead, even on the football field at St. Jim's. They seemed to go like lightning. He was gaining; his outstretched hand touched the fluttering domino.

But he did not grasp that as Blake had done.

Closer—closer! The other juniors behind gave a shout. Figgins had him!

The fugitive was almost at the gate. Once on the promenade, among the crowd of dominoes, he would be safe. But Figgins was upon him.

Closer—closer, and almost at the gate Figgins sprang. His hands fastened upon the shoulders of the black domino, and the man went heavily to the earth, with Figgins on top of him, grasping him and pinning him down.

"Got him!" gasped Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

The juniors came racing up.

The black domino made a desperate effort, but Figgins had him tight. The man was face downwards, and Figgins' knee was in the small of his back.

There was no chance for the black domino now, unless Figgins chose.

"I've got you!" said Figgins cheerfully. "No good struggling! I've got you, you blessed Nice rotter! Parlozevous Anglais?"

"Let me go!"

Figgins started at the English voice.

And then occurred what astounded Tom Merry & Co. beyond measure.

They were within a dozen paces of the two, captor and captured, when Figgins rose from his prisoner, and the black domino sprang up and whipped out of the gate and disappeared.

Figgins leaned against a tree, panting.

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**Our Grand New Feature—
A THRILLING SERIAL STORY
TOLD BY SPECIAL PICTURES. THE
FIRST TWELVE PICTURES APPEAR
—In Next Wednesday's Number.**

Tom Merry came breathlessly up.
 "Figgins! You—what—why—"
 Figgins only panted.
 "After him, deah boys!" shouted D'Arcy.
 The juniors, without stopping to inquire into Figgins' strange conduct just then, dashed out of the gates upon the Promenade des Anglais.

But the black domino had disappeared.
 A group of revellers hurled a shower of confetti at the juniors and danced on. Among the endless dominoes of all colours the torn black one was not to be discovered.

The juniors searched for a few minutes, and then gave up the quest as hopeless. The black domino was gone, and he had taken Miss Priscilla's three hundred pounds with him.

Tom Merry & Co. returned in silence to the garden.
 "What on earth did Figgins let him go for?" exclaimed Blake. "He had him safe, and we should have been up with him in another second or two. Can't understand it."
 "Figgins must be hurt," said Kerr anxiously, and he ran towards his chum, who was still leaning against the tree in the shadow.

"What's the matter, Figgy?" asked Lowther.
 "Nothing."
 Figgins' voice, as he replied, seemed very strange.
 "Bai Jove! You aren't ill?"
 "No."
 "Hurt?" asked Kerr.
 "No, I'm not hurt."
 "Hungry, I suppose?" said Fatty Wynn sympathetically.
 "Of course, when a chap's hungry he's not fit for anything."
 "I'm not hungry, you ass!"
 "Then why did you let that Fwench wascal go?"
 "He wasn't a Frenchman."
 "Bai Jove!"

"Oh, some English bounder, I suppose, on the make here during the carnival," said Tom Merry. "There are a lot of them here, I know. But English or French, the thief ought to have been arrested, Figgy. I can't understand you."

"Besides, he had Miss Fawcett's money," said D'Arcy.
 Figgins started.
 "I—I didn't know that!" he said, stammering. "How do you know he had Miss Fawcett's money?"
 "He had burgled her room, you see."

"Oh!"
 "Three hundred pounds," said D'Arcy. "I suppose he had it. He was twyin' to escape, you see, and I had fastened the door of the room. He must have wobbled the desk before he twied to get away, of course."

"I—I didn't know!"
 "I called out that he had the money, deah boy."
 "I didn't hear—I—I mean I didn't notice. I never thought—Oh!"

The last exclamation was almost a groan. The chums of St. Jim's looked at Figgins in surprise and concern.

"Don't take it like that, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "It can't be helped now. You were not to blame, anyway. I suppose you couldn't help letting him go."

Figgins was silent.
 "It's wotten, though."
 "Perhaps the money isn't really gone," said Figgins eagerly. "Let us go and see. He may have taken the alarm before he had time to get it."

"Huh!"
 "Dear me! What is the matter, my dearest children?"
 Miss Fawcett and the major had returned.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins Is Mysterious!

FIGGINS did not speak. He kept his face in the shadow. He knew that it was white, and did not wish it to be noticed. The major and Miss Fawcett looked at the excited and somewhat dishevelled juniors in surprise.

"What has happened?" asked Miss Priscilla, alarmed at once.

"It's all right—" began Tom Merry.
 "But what has happened?"
 "Don't be alarmed, dear. Someone came here to rob the place while we were all out."

"Oh dear—oh dear!"
 "Nobody is hurt."
 "Thank goodness!"

"But I'm afraid the money's gone," said Tom Merry.
 "The thief must have seen you go to the bank this morning, and dodged in here to lift the tin."

"Huh!" said the major.
 "Oh dear—oh dear!"
 "I feah that the money is gone, Miss Fawcett," said

Arthur Augustus. "I did my best to collah the wascal. We all did our best."

"My dearest children," said Miss Fawcett, "I am only glad you are not hurt. You might have been murdered. If there should be another burglar you must not touch him. Your precious lives are more valuable than the money."

"Weally, Miss Fawcett—"
 "But we're not sure the money's gone," said Kerr.
 "Let us ascertain at once," said Major Figgins.

They proceeded at once into the house. Kerr dropped behind, and touched Figgins on the sleeve. The Scottish junior was curiously concerned.

"Figgy, old man—"
 "Yes, Kerr?"
 "You let that chap go on purpose."

"For goodness' sake—"
 "You can rely on me, old chap."
 Figgins groaned.

"You know, then?"
 "I can guess," said Kerr. "It's beastly! But I had noticed a black domino before this evening, and I couldn't help putting two and two together. But are you sure?"

"Yes!" groaned Figgins.
 "I am sorry, old chap!"

They entered the house. The desk in Miss Fawcett's room was broken in half a dozen places. Several drawers were standing open, and had evidently been hastily ransacked.

Miss Fawcett uttered a little cry.
 "It is gone!"
 "The money?" said the major.

"Yes."
 "You are sure?"
 "It was in this drawer," said Miss Fawcett. "There was a big bundle of notes. Everything is gone."

"I suppose you had the number of the notes?" said the major, with a businesslike air.
 "I—I had not; but they will have them at the bank, of course."

"Then I will look into the matter for you. I will go to the bank—it's closed now; but that doesn't matter—and get the numbers, and communicate with the police."

"Oh, thank you so much, major!"
 "Not at all. I hope we shall be able to recover them."

The major strode towards the door. Figgins went out quickly after him.

"Uncle!"
 "Yes, lad, what is it? Quick—there is no time to lose!"
 "You are—are going to the police?"

"Yes, at once, as soon as I have the numbers of the notes."
 "But—but—"
 The major looked at him in astonishment.

"What is the matter with you, boy? What are you stammering about? There is no time to lose. I want to prevent the circulation of the notes."

"Yes, but—"
 "Come, come!"
 "I—I—"

The words died on Figgins' tongue.
 "You are over-excited," said the major. "You're not yourself, my lad. Go to bed."

"But—"
 "Come, don't detain me!"
 And the major strode from the house.

Figgins stood silent, motionless. He was evidently stricken with dismay, though only Kerr understood the reason.

Miss Fawcett was content to leave the matter in the hands of the major. The robbery, and the thought that her darling Tom might have sustained some injury in the struggle—though, as a matter of fact, he had not sustained any—had quite upset her.

The old lady decided to go to bed at once, her faithful Hannah attending her, and the juniors dined alone, at a later hour than usual.

Figgins ate hardly anything, and was very silent. The others tried to comfort him, but without much success.

"It wasn't your fault the chap got away, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "It's no good worrying over it."

"You couldn't help it, Figgy," said Blake.
 "Weally, Figgy, I wouldn't wowwy, you know."
 "It's all right!" said Figgins.

"Then cheer up, old chap!"
 "I'm not bothering about that," said Figgins. "It's something else."

"You've been too long without your dinner," said Fatty Wynn, with a shake of the head. "It has a dispiriting effect on me, too. Try some of this spinach."

"I don't want any."
 "Cauliflower is ripping."
 "Rats!"

"Figgy, old man—"
 "Oh, don't bother; I'm not hungry."
 Fatty Wynn stared at him.

"You're ill," he said, "that's what's the matter with you—you're ill. You had better have a good square meal, and then go to bed."

"I should recommend a quiet stroll on the ffront, to soothe your nerves Figgay. I will come with you, if you like, and recite my 'Ode to the Moon,' which I have written specially for 'Tom Mewwy's Weekly.' It begins—"

"Oh, bosh!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Don't bother!"

"Bai Jove!"

Figgins was evidently not to be cheered. He suddenly started up from the dinner-table, as a new thought came into his mind.

"Anybody got a time-table?"

"I have!" said Kerr, who always had a time-table, always

"Good! We can take a cab to the station. You're coming, Kerr, old man?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Shall we all come?" said Tom Merry, who did not want Figgins to go out of his sight in his present curious mood.

"Oh, no, don't trouble to come."

"But—"

"We shall be all right."

"We're going out somewhere," said Blake. "We might as well come to the station with you."

Figgins turned red.

"Look here, I—I'd rather go with Kerr. Don't mind me. I—I'm worried just now. But I'd rather go with Kerr."

"Oh, all right!"

"I'll finish my dinner, unless you want me specially," said Fatty Wynn, looking up from his tenth plate.



"Kerr! Quick!" shouted Figgins. "Help me stop him!" The two juniors laid hold of Hilton and he was dragged off the step of the train. He came down on the platform with a heavy bump, the juniors sprawling with him. "Ow! Oh!" he yelled.

up to date; and, what was more remarkable still, could understand it and find out the times of trains from it. "Here you are, Figgy!"

"Trains from Nice to Monte Carlo in that?"

"Yes."

"Look out the next train, will you, Kerr?"

"Right you are."

Kerr opened the time-table, and scanned the columns of figures. The other juniors stared blankly at Figgins.

"We're going to Monte Carlo to-morrow, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "You're not thinking of going over to-night, surely?"

Figgins shook his head.

"Then what do you want the time of the train for?"

"I—I want to go to the station and see the train out."

"What on earth for?"

"Oh, I want to, that's all!"

Tom Merry looked very serious. The thought came into his head that Figgins had been so upset by the struggle that he was not quite himself.

"Better stay in, Figgy," he said. "You see—"

"I can't!" said Figgins. "Found the train, Kerr?"

"Yes; it leaves in a quarter of an hour."

"That's all right, Fatty; stay and finish."

"Good!"

Figgins and Kerr left the dining-room, and donned coat and cap, and hurriedly left the villa. The juniors left behind looked at one another in great astonishment.

"Blessed if I understand Figgy!" said Blake.

"He must have got over-hungry, and it's upset him," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh bosh!"

"Look here—"

"Seems to have something on his mind," said Monty Lowther. "I suppose he's bothered because he let that burglar chap go."

"He said it wasn't that."

"Then I don't savvy."

"He may have some idea of catching the burglar at the station," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, "if the man stole the three hundred pounds to gamble with at Monte Carlo; but I don't see how Figgins could know, either."

"Nor I."

"Bai Jove! We ought to go along, too, in case—"

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Tom Merry shook his head.
 "No, Figgins doesn't want us, for some reason. It's all right. Let's finish our dinner."
 And they finished it.

CHAPTER 1. Black Suspicion!

"**W**HAT have you got there, Blake?"
 The juniors were having their coffee after dinner on the veranda in the moonlight. Jack Blake was carefully turning over a fragment of cloth in his hands, as if he hoped to discover something from it.

He did not immediately reply, as Tom Merry asked the question. Tom set down his coffee-cup and looked curiously at the Fourth-Former.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "They can make coffee in Fwance, I will say that. They are a centuwy or so behind us in ewerythin' else, but they can make coffee."

"Yes, rather!"

"You haven't dwunk your coffee, Blake."

"No," said Jack Blake absently.

"What are you moonin' about, you duffah?"

"I was thinking—"

"Wats! Dwink your coffee, and come out for a stwoll," said Arthur Augustus. "I was thinkin' of lookin' in at the Jetty Casino this evening—not to gamble, of course. But it's a wathah cuwious study watchin' the gamblahs. It's so surpwisin' that there can be so many silly asses collected in one place, you know."

"It's curious," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "These places make enormous profits out of the gambling tables—all out of the losses of the players. They'd have to shut up if they gave the players a chance of winning, and yet people go there and play. It's curious."

"It's much the same as the Turf at home," said Lowther. "The races and the bookmakers and armies of touts are supported out of what? The losses of chaps who think they can win on horses. There are silly asses everywhere."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wonder—" said Blake.

"What is that chap mooning about?" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon his chum.

"You see this," said Blake, holding up the fragment of black silk.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "I asked you what it was, but with your usual Fourth Form politeness you didn't answer."

Blake grinned.

"I was thinking—"

"Oh, of course, upon an occasion like that I can pardon a little inattention!" said Tom Merry gracefully.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Do you know where I got this rag?"

"I don't know. At a remnant sale?"

"Ass! It's a rag I yanked off the domino of that chap who burgled Miss Fawcett's desk. I caught hold of the domino, you see, and he jerked it away and left this much in my hand. I fell down."

"It was wathah careless of you—"

"Don't interrupt, Gussy. Now, this rag—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"This rag may be a clue to the blessed burglar," said Blake seriously. "If we could find a chap in a black domino with a big piece missing—"

"Bai Jove! That's a wathah good ideah!"

"But there are such a giddy crowd of dominoes here," said Tom Merry doubtfully. "I suppose there are ten thousand going up and down the streets of Nice at the present moment."

"But black ones aren't so common."

"Wathah not!"

"The carnival colours this year are pink and black—pink and black edging or ribbons, you know," said Blake. "Black dominoes are not seen very often. In fact, I've no doubt that's why the chap wore a black domino, because it would help him to sneak about in the dark without being seen. Of course, a pink domino would show up anywhere and be seen a hundred yards off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, a black domino—"

Blake paused suddenly, a very queer look coming over his face.

"I wemembah seein' one domino that colour to-day," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I wemembah Hilton went out in a black domino."

"H'm!"

"That's so," said Fatty Wynn, looking up from the pear he was carving. "You remember when we saw him talking to the major on the seat, Tom Merry, bothering him for a hundred pounds, he was in a black domino."

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"I remember," said Tom constrainedly.

"Bai Jove!"

The same thought that had occurred to Blake was in Tom Merry's mind, and as D'Arcy looked at their startled faces it occurred to him also.

Monty Lowther glanced from one to another.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Tom Merry.

"Nothing," said Blake.

"Nothin', deah boy," said D'Arcy. "It's imposs."

"What is?"

"Nothin'."

"Well, of all the giddy asses!" exclaimed Lowther wrathfully. "Have you any idea what they are driving at, Wynn?"

"No," said Fatty Wynn; "unless they think they would like some of these pears. If they do they can ring for some more. I can manage these five."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Are you thinking of going out and looking for a chap in a black domino?" said Lowther, looking at the chums.

"N-n-no!"

"What's the trouble?"

"Nothin'."

"You don't think—My hat!" Monty Lowther gave a soft whistle. "My hat!" he repeated. "Why did Figgins let the chap go? He could have held him if he liked."

The same question was in every mind. Even Fatty Wynn looked up from the big ripe pears, interested and startled.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I can see you all think the same. It's imposs, of course. But why did Figgins let him go?"

"The man spoke to him," said Lowther.

"In English," said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"That's why Figgy is so concerned about the matter," said Tom Merry, with a slow shake of the head. "He thinks the chap is making for Monte Carlo, and he's gone to the station to stop him. It looks like it."

"Bai Jove! It's wotten!"

"It's the only way to account for Figgy's conduct. Poor old Figgy! What a blow for him—his cousin!"

"Wotten!"

"That's how he knew the money was there, and exactly where to look for it," said Tom Merry restlessly. "It's plain enough now. He came back in this direction after leaving the major, you remember, and he had said that he was desperate."

"Bai Jove!"

"It seems awful!" said Monty Lowther, in a low voice. "But it was the gambling. He wasn't himself, and, of course, he intends to pay it back."

"I suppose so."

"I suppose the gaming-tables here are responsible for scores of such happenings," said Tom Merry bitterly. "This isn't the first case, and won't be the last. But—but can we be certain about it? I think we ought to make certain, somehow, because—"

"Bai Jove! We might pwetend not to know, and—"

"But the major has called in the police."

"Phew! I nevah thought of that."

"I remember now Figgy seemed to want to stop him," said Tom Merry miserably. "But he couldn't tell the major. He would be savage. But—but if our suspicion is correct the police mustn't have a hand in it. It would be a fearful disgrace for the poor chap, and for Figgy as his cousin, and the major. I believe the major would go ahead and let him be punished; he's as hard as nails. But—"

"But it wouldn't do."

"Exactly. If it was—the chap we suspect, I shall ask Miss Fawcett to let the matter drop," said Tom Merry.

"But would she? It's a large sum of money," said Blake doubtfully.

"She would, at least, if I explain. But, of course, we must have proof. A mere suspicion's no good; she would scout the idea."

"True!"

"If we could find the domino—"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "That's how he disappeared so suddenly. I thought he had vanished navelously suddenly, though the crowd was thick. While the chaps out there were in our way, and chucking confetti at us, he whipped into the next garden—the major's garden."

"Whiv, of course."

"And if we're on the right track I'll wager that the domino is in his room now, and he's gone out in his ordinary clothes."

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"We'll jolly soon see."

"Can we get in, do you think?"

"We must!"

Tom Merry led the way to the gate that joined the two gardens. The others followed him in silence. Tom Merry suddenly held up his hand.

"Look!"

They looked over the gate. From the major's house a form had emerged—a man in an overcoat and a bowler hat. He was striding down the path towards the gate. The juniors did not need telling who it was.

"Hilton!" muttered Lowther.

The figure disappeared.

CHAPTER 8.

Clear Evidence!

HILTON had not seen the juniors at the side gate. He was looking straight before him as he strode down the garden towards the gate upon the Promenade des Anglais. He disappeared, and the juniors heard the sound of a gate closing.

Tom Merry gave a sudden start.

"After him—quick! He—" Then he paused. "No—no! We are not sure yet—"

"But—"

There was a sound of wheels in the road. Hilton was gone now. It was too late now, even if the juniors had been sure.

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"And he must have had the money on him," muttered Lowther. "That is, if—it—"

"If he was the thief," said Blake.

"We are not sure," said Tom Merry. "A moral certainty isn't enough to accuse a man on. If we had collared him and searched him, and let him know that we suspected him, and he turned out to be innocent—"

Blake shivered.

"It would be too rotten."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But one thing's certain," said Tom Merry. "We can get into his room and look at the domino. It will be there; and that will show."

"Good!"

"Come on, then."

The juniors knew Hilton's room. It opened upon the veranda with french windows, and the young man had just come out that way. The house, like most, was deserted for the carnival. There was a light below stairs, but that was all. The juniors crept cautiously upon the veranda and stopped outside Hilton's window.

It was unfastened. Like most of the french windows in Nice, it fastened on the inside, and could not be secured from without. Hilton had closed it, but it opened readily to Tom Merry's touch.

There was little likelihood of Hilton returning. He had gone to one of the gambling dens of Nice, or to the station for Monte Carlo. The juniors knew that. They entered the room, and Tom Merry closed the window and pulled the blind across it.

Then he switched on the electric light.

He had little doubt that he would find the black domino there. If Hilton was innocent, he would naturally leave it there—there would be no need to conceal it. If it were concealed, that was a sign of guilt; but Hilton was not likely to conceal it—he never dreamed that he was suspected—save by Figgins, who knew. As for the tear in the domino, Tom Merry doubted whether Hilton was aware of it.

Tom was right.

Almost the first object that caught his eyes as he turned on the electric light was the black domino, lying across the bed, whither Hilton had carelessly thrown it after taking it off.

The juniors gathered round it.

For some moments they did not care to touch it. That domino could prove everything. If a fragment was missing, it was clear that Hilton's domino was the same domino as that worn by the thief at the Villa des Fleurs—in a word, that Archie Hilton was the man who had robbed Miss Fawcett of three hundred pounds.

Tom Merry picked up the domino at last.

He held it up to the light, and there was a general exclamation.

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"It's true!"

There was a great gash in the black domino, and a fragment was missing.

"Blake!"

Blake nodded, and drew the fragment from his pocket—the piece that had been left in his hand as the thief broke away.

He fitted it to the gap in the domino.

(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

WHEN FATHER PAPERED THE PARLOUR!

Visitor: "Is your father in, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Yes; but he's wrapped up in work."

Visitor: "Oh, I didn't know he was studious."

Tommy: "He isn't—he's papering the parlour!"

A football has been awarded to F. Richards, 8, Midmoor Road, Balham, London, S.W.12.

PUTTING IT PLAIN.

Office-boy: "Please, sir, may I have the day off?"

Manager: "Whose funeral is it this time?"

Office-boy: "The opposing team's, sir!"

A football has been awarded to F. Shakesby, 4, Bowick Grove, Southcoates East, Hull.

OBVIOUSLY.

Mike: "I say, are you the head of a donkey?"

Pat: "No, I'm not."

Mike: "Are you the tail of a donkey?"

Pat: "No, of course I'm not."

Mike: "Then you must be no end of a donkey!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 455, Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.

HEARD IN SCHOOL.

Teacher: "A fool can ask questions that wise folk cannot answer."

Boy: "No wonder we didn't pass our examinations!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Wood, 2, Welbeck Street, Sandal, Wakefield.

FALLING OFF.

Algy: "Adolphus, dear man, you seem to be getting thin lately."

Adolphus: "Yaas, dear boy; since I've taken up horse-riding I've fallen off a great deal!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Bachell, 7, East Tenter Street, Great Alie Street, London, E.

NO GRAZING GROUND.

Supporter of Visiting Team: "This is a poor ground. There's hardly a blade of grass to be seen."

Groundsman: "Well, yer ain't come 'ere to graze, 'ave yer?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Evans, 83, Midland Road, Nuneaton.

IT WAS A PEAR-TREE!

"You farmers should learn more about modern agriculture, you know," said the exasperating young man, in a patronising tone. "Now look at the way you are pruning that tree. You'll never get a good crop of apples from it."

"Quite," replied the farmer. "It's a pear-tree!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Newell, 45, Jennings Street, Edgeley, Stockport.

WHY THE TRAIN WAS LATE.

Country Stationmaster: "Late s'morning, bain't 'ee, Jargo?"

Guard: "Ay. Driver Williams stopped so long talkin' to signalman 'bout gardin, 'e let engine go off the bile!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. A. Pye, 61, St. James' Road, Stratford, London, E.15.

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It fitted exactly.
 "There could be no further doubt.
 "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is howible! The fellow is a thief!"
 "It's settled now!"
 "And he must have had the money on him," said Fatty Wynn.
 "Certain enough."
 "Bai Jove! It may not be too late to stop him now!"
 "Let's get out of this!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "I'll take the domino with me, as well as this piece; it may be necessary to bring Hilton to his senses, and this will be a handle. If he gets out of this scrape he shan't get into another."

"Wathah not!"
 Tom Merry rolled up the domino, with the fragment inside, and thrust it inside his coat. Then the juniors switched off the light, and quitted the room.

They returned to Miss Fawcett's garden, and paused in the shadow of the trees, there to hold a whispered consultation.

"The point's settled now," said Tom Merry. "Hilton is the thief! He's either gone to one of the Nice casinos or to the station. From what he said to the major, I should imagine he's gone to the station, to take the train to Monte Carlo. It's pretty clear that Figgins thinks so, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Besides, he buzzed off just in time to catch the train, too," said Lowther.

"Exactly!"
 "Bai Jove! He ought to be stopped!"

"Figgins and Kerr are at the station before this," said Tom quietly. "They'll stop him if he goes there. My idea is that we ought to make sure that he doesn't spend the money in Nice. He may try to do so if he scents Figgy at the station."

Tom Merry went up to Miss Fawcett's room and tapped. Miss Fawcett had gone to bed as her nerves were very much upset; but she was not asleep. When Hannah informed her that Tom wished to speak to her, she admitted him at once.

"What is it, my darling?" asked Miss Fawcett. "Has the major returned?"

"Not yet, dear."

"Are you not going out with your friends?"

"No," said Tom. "I want to ask you a favour."

"Yes, dear. You know you may ask me anything."

"I—it's a rather peculiar one," stammered Tom, turning red.

Miss Fawcett smiled her sweet smile.

"I am sure you would not ask anything I could not grant, Tommy dear," she said; "but go on, and tell me what it is."

"I want you to tell the major to stop the police looking for the burglar."

Tom Merry blurted out the words.

Miss Priscilla looked at him in blank amazement.

"Tommy!"

"Yes, I know it's odd," said Tom Merry, reddening, "but—I've a reason. Will you do it, dear?"

"But the bad man has taken three hundred pounds in French notes, Tommy darling," remonstrated Miss Fawcett.

"I cannot afford to lose so much money. I do not wish the wicked man to be punished, certainly; but the money will—"

"I think it might be recovered without the police, dear."

"I fear not."

"Dear," said Tom Merry, "I am to have some money when I am of age—a great deal, I believe. I should like to make up the loss out of that and—let this matter drop."

Miss Fawcett smiled again.

"Of course, that would be impossible, Tommy dear. It is a great sum of money, and I cannot imagine what is your reason for wishing to let the thief escape."

"I will tell you, if you like," said Tom slowly, "but I would rather not."

"My dear child—"

"But I will explain. Supposing a silly young fellow—not much more than a lad—was driven desperate by losing all his money at gambling, and took this money to try again?" said Tom Merry.

"Of course, it would be stealing—he would be a rotten thief—but not like an ordinary criminal, dear. Suppose there was a chance, too, of getting the money back without a fuss?"

"Tom, do you know this to be the case?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

Miss Fawcett was silent for a full minute.

"I do not see how you can know," she said, at last. "I do not fully understand, Tom dear; but I know you are the soul of truth. I will do as you wish. As soon as the major returns, I will tell him the matter is to be dropped."

"Thank you, so much," said Tom Merry, kissing the old lady's cheek. "I only hope it is not too late. Good-night, dear."

And Tom Merry hurried to join his chums downstairs, where they all waited for Figgins and Kerr.

CHAPTER 9.

Figgins Puts It Straight!

FIGGINS was at the barrier, trying to gain admission to the platform, and a sturdy porter on guard there was stopping him.

"He wants a ticket," said Figgins, as the man repeated the word "billet."

"I'm trying to make him understand that I haven't a ticket, and that I want to go on the platform to see a chap, but it's no good."

Kerr chuckled.

"He means that you're to get a platform ticket," he said.

"Oh!"

Kerr slid two coins into a slot-machine near the platform gate, and extracted two tickets. They gave admission to the platform, and the man at the gate grinned, and allowed the juniors to pass in.

Figgins looked anxiously up and down the platform.

"I don't see him here," he said.

"You wouldn't," said Kerr. "Even if he's here, he's not on this platform."

"Why not?"

"I suppose he's not going to Marseilles? It's the other side for Monte Carlo—l'autre cote, as they call it."

"Oh, good!"

"Come with me!" said Kerr. "You're rather wool-gathering just now, Figgy. This way."

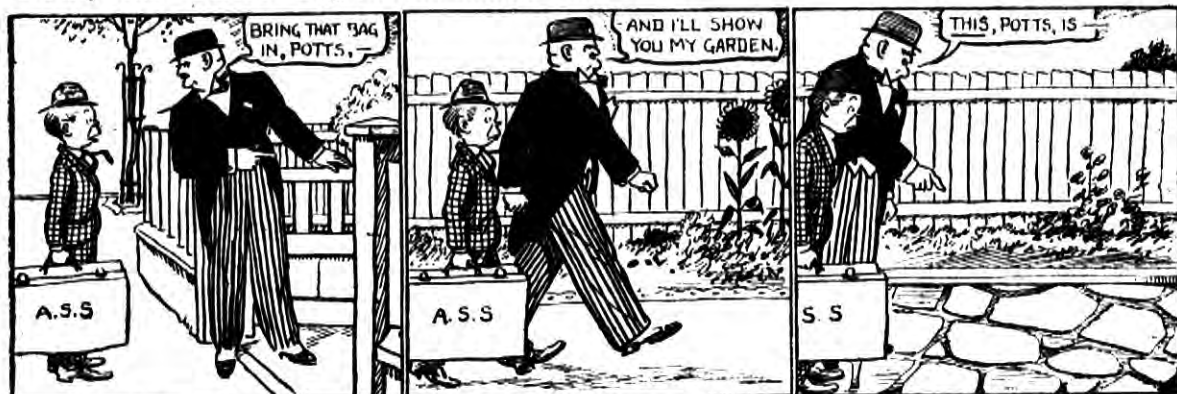
Figgins pressed his hand to his forehead.

"I'm not quite myself," he said. "It was a horrible shock, Kerr."

Kerr nodded.

"I suppose there's no doubt, Figgy?"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"None at all. I hadn't the faintest idea, of course, that it was my cousin when I brought him down. But I recognised his voice, and—and I let him go."

"It's rotten!"

"What else could I do?" muttered Figgins. "He's my cousin."

"Nothing, I suppose," said Kerr. "It's rotten, though!"

"Of course, I didn't know at the moment about his having the money on him," said Figgins. "I don't know if it would have made any difference if I had known. He's my cousin, and I thought of the disgrace. It's awful!"

"It's all right if we can stop him in time."

"Yes, that's so."

"Come on, Figgy!"

Kerr led the way, and they crossed the line to the side where the Monte Carlo train was to come in. It was time now for the train to be in the station, and Figgins looked down the line towards Marseilles, but there was no sign of the train there.

Figgins wrinkled his brows anxiously.

"Ask one of the porters whether the blessed train's gone," Kerr, he said.

Kerr shook his head.

"It's all right, Figgy."

"But it's late, then."

"French trains are always late, old chap. I don't suppose anybody in Nice has ever had the experience of seeing the Monte Carlo train start at the time printed in the timetable. If such a thing happened, it would give the whole staff a shock that they would never recover from."

Figgins grinned faintly.

"Well, I don't care, so long as we haven't missed it," he remarked.

They waited in silence. The crowd of people gathering on the platform indicated with sufficient clearness that the train had not, indeed, gone yet.

There was a rumble down the line at last, and it rolled in. It was five minutes late.

But the people on the platform—the quai—seemed in no great hurry to take their places. Perhaps they knew there was plenty of time yet. As, indeed, there was. Figgins looked anxiously up and down the platform. The train did not start, and three minutes had elapsed.

A voice was heard on the middle platform of the station.

"L'autre cote, m'sieur. Vous avez le temps."

"Somebody in a hurry, trying to get in on the wrong side of the train," grinned Kerr. "Lots of time yet—the train's only eight minutes late, and that's nothing for a French train."

"It may be Archie."

"Very likely."

"Look!"

A man came quickly round the end of the stationary train upon the platform where Figgins and Kerr were standing. He came along quickly towards the nearest door on the train, in too great a hurry to see the juniors.

It was Archie Hilton!

Figgins and Kerr ran forward at once. Hilton had reached for the handle of the carriage door, and was entering the train, when Figgins' grasp fastened upon his arm.

The young man gave a violent start, and his face went deathly white as he looked round.

He gave a gasp of relief as he saw that it was his cousin. The flash of terror in his eyes did not escape Figgins, and the junior knew that for a moment Hilton had dreaded to find himself in the grasp of a gendarme.



POTTY!

But Kerr had a suspicion that Hilton was a slippery customer, and he leaned in a careless attitude against the door to wait, determined that Hilton should not pass him if he gave Figgy the slip.

Hilton's face was sullen as he went into the waiting-room with Figgins. As the train had just gone, the room was almost empty, and they easily found a quiet corner.

"Well?" said Hilton sullenly.
"You know what I've got to say," said Figgins, who was very pale. "I let you go when I had you down in the garden, Archie. I acted on impulse!"

"Well?"
"But I didn't know that you had Miss Fawcett's money in your pocket!"

Hilton laughed sneeringly.
"Why did you think I had gone into the villa, and why was I running, then?"

"I didn't have time to think."
"And you would have captured me if you had known?"

"I don't know," said Figgins dubiously. "I hope so. Anyway, it's not too late now. You used to be an honourable chap, Archie. I would never have believed you capable of a thing like this if I hadn't found you out myself!"

Hilton was silent. The sneer had gone from his face now, however, and there was a flush in his cheeks.

"Archie, how could you? You—a thief!"

"I'm not a thief!"

"You've taken three hundred pounds belonging to Miss Fawcett."

"I—I am going to return it. You can't imagine that I meant Miss Fawcett to lose the money, Figgy!" said Hilton hoarsely. "It was merely a loan—only, of course, I couldn't ask her to lend me money. I took it. I had to have it."

"Why?"

"Oh, you know very well!"

"You were going to Monte Carlo with it."

"Well, what then?"

"You stole the money to gamble with."

Hilton's face flushed.

"You'd better be careful what you say!" he broke out passionately. "I'm not a thief, and you shan't call me one! I am going to return the money, of course."

"Do you know the major has already taken the numbers of the notes to the police?"

"The meddling old fool!"

"Archie! Our uncle—"

"It was all his fault!" said Hilton savagely. "If he had lent me the money I wanted—"

"You would have gambled it all away by now, and would want more," said Figgins. "What's the good of trying to deceive yourself, Archie? You know you would!"

"Oh, it's no use talking! I must try my luck again."

"Not with stolen money."

"It's only borrowed. I shall repay Miss Fawcett every penny."

"What if you lose?"

"I am not a beggar. I can raise the money ten times over next year, or the year after. I have property, only it's tied up so that I cannot touch it all at once, as you know."

"And jolly lucky for you, too!" said Figgins. "You've blued all you could turn into money. You'll lose this and you won't be able to repay it."

"I shall win. I have a feeling that—"

"Bosh!"

Hilton bit his lip and was silent. There wasn't much politeness about Figgins' answer, but it came straight from his heart.

"It's disgracing us already, even if the money is returned," said Figgy. "I'll keep the secret. Kerr knows, and he'll keep it, too. If the other fellows suspect anything—and they may—they'll keep their mouths shut. Uncle need never know. But the money must be returned."

"I tell you—"

"Besides, think, Archie! The police know the numbers before this, and they'll be on the look-out for anybody passing the notes."

Hilton smiled faintly.

"That's nothing, Figgy. Do you think the croupiers at Monte Carlo even look at the numbers of the notes, when they are taking in dozens of them every few minutes? The notes may be discovered in a day or two in the coffers of the bank, but who's to know who played them on the roulette table? Nobody!"

"But—"

"That's if I lose—there's no danger: but if I win—"

"Oh, rats!"

"If I win I shall return Miss Fawcett exactly the same notes."

"You wouldn't win."

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"Anyway, the money would be returned in time."

"That won't do."

"It must do!"

"You ought to leave this place, Archie. It's the ruin of you. You were a decent chap in England," said Figgins, almost aghast, "and now you're discussing playing with other people's money like a blessed burglar!"

"Oh, don't preach to me!"

"The money's got to be returned, Archie, and at once!"



"Gwast Scott!" exclaimed Gussy. He turned his eyeglasses and guised Tom Merry & Co. as, tattered and dishevelled, they came with Hilton. "Have you been thown out?" "Doesn't he know Tom Merry." "Yass, wathah!" said Gussy emphatically.

Can't you see that if I let you go with it I should be a thief, too—your accomplice?"

"Don't use that word to me, Figgy. I've been very patient, but—"

"What other word do you want?"

"You know how I look at the matter."

"Yes; like a fellow who's lost his senses by gambling, and doesn't know right from wrong," said Figgins angrily.

"Look here, that money is going to be given back to Miss Fawcett. Do you understand?"

Hilton rose to his feet.

"I'm going," he said.
 "Where—to the Villa des Fleurs?"
 "No."
 Figgins came closer to him.
 "You will come with me, Archie."
 Hilton gave him a dangerous look.
 "Careful, Figgy!"

"Will you come with me, or shall I send for a gendarme?"
 said Figgins resolutely.
 Hilton gritted his teeth.
 "Do you mean that, Figgy?"
 "Yes, you'll find that I do."
 "I'll come with you."
 "Come on, then!"
 Hilton's face was dark with rage. He followed Figgins
 from the *salle d'attente*, and they joined Kerr. The
 Scottish junior looked at his chum inquiringly.



Really upon the dis-
 ease out of the casino
 ask like it? asked
 suddenly.

"We're going back to the villa," said Figgins abruptly.
 "Right-ho!"

They left the station. Hilton walked between the two
 juniors. They crossed the road, and a tram came clanging
 along. Figgins and Kerr quickened their pace to get out
 of the way. Hilton suddenly dodged back.

"Look out!" shouted Kerr, on the alert at once.

But the tram, for the moment, was between Hilton and
 the juniors. They ran round it, and caught a glimpse of a
 pair of legs disappearing round the nearest corner.

"This way!" gasped Figgins.

They ran to the corner, but Hilton was gone. There
 were three or four ways he might have gone, and the
 crowd was thick. Pursuit was hopeless.

Figgins set his teeth hard.
 "The cad! He was deceiving me all the time! Well, it's
 the police now!"

Kerr grasped his arm.

"Hold on, Figgy; give him a chance! He's not himself
 now, you know. Give him another chance. He can't get to
 Monto to-night. The last train's gone, and if he went by
 road he wouldn't have much time before the roulette tables
 were closed."

"Even so," said Figgins, "he will go by road, and I'm
 going to stop him if I can."

He made a movement in the direction of the taxi rank,
 but Kerr caught him by the arm.

"It's no good, Figgy," he said. "Let's go home and get
 some rest, and we'll catch an early train in the morning for
 Monte Carlo. We can leave a note to tell Miss Fawcett
 where we are going, and we might arrive about the time
 the casino opens."

Figgins looked doubtful, but after a few moments' thought
 he agreed.

When the two juniors eventually arrived back at the Villa
 des Fleurs they were very much surprised to learn that the
 rest of the party knew all that they themselves knew—that
 Archie Hilton was the thief.

The two parties discussed the whole affair, and unani-
 mously agreed that they should one and all catch the early
 morning train for the far-famed Monte Carlo.

CHAPTER 10.

Off To Monte Carlo!

"B A I Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking out
 of the train window the next morning. "This is
 wippin' scenery!"

"Jolly good!" said Kerr.

"It's as good as some parts of Somerset and Dorset," said
 Figgins, who hailed from that part of the world. "Not
 better."

"Oh, no!"

"Still, it's vewy good," said D'Arcy. "Look at that—
 Oh!"

The train plunged into a long tunnel, and the scenery was
 blotted out.

"Bai Jove!"

"Lots of tunnels on this line," said Kerr. "You catch
 glimpses of scenery between the tunnels."

"What was that station we just passed, Kerr?" asked
 Tom Merry.

"Eze," said Kerr.

The train rushed on. It kept up a pretty good speed.
 The morning was fine, and the juniors had a good view of
 the coast scenery as the train sped along, excepting when it
 plunged into a tunnel, as was frequently the case.

They gazed with great admiration at the beautiful bay of
 Villefranche when they passed it, and D'Arcy jammed his
 monocle into his eye to gain the last possible glimpse of it.

"Bai Jove, that's good!" he exclaimed, dropping his eye-
 glass at last.

"Go hon!"

"It's weally good. Look at— Oh!"

The train plunged into another tunnel.

"Bai Jove, this seems to be an underground railway!"
 ejaculated D'Arcy. "The tunnels don't smell vewy nice,
 eithah!"

"Close the window, then, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

Jack Blake jammed up the window. There was a sudden
 yell from Arthur Augustus, who had his hand on the frame.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Great Scott! You've shut his hand in it!" exclaimed
 Lowther.

"Phew!"

"I am sorry, Gussy! Are you hurt?"

"Oh, you ass!"

"You see—"

"Didn't you see I had my hand there, you duffah?"

"You see—"

"Let's look at your fingers," said Tom Merry anxiously.
 "If they're injured—"

"Oh, it's all wight," said D'Arcy calmly. "My hand
 wasn't caught in the window, you know. It's all wight."

They glared at him.

"Then what on earth were you yelling about?" demanded
 Tom Merry indignantly.

"I wasn't awah that I was yellin'."

(Continued on page 17.)

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ANOTHER PAGE OF NOTES AND NEWS FROM -



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

HALLO, chums!—Looking forward to meeting our new pal, Mick Ray, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? I'll say you are. You can take it from me, the thrilling adventures of this young Mountie, which will be shown to you every week in a special series of twelve pictures, with short captions, will be better than going to see an exciting film! Yes, sir!

Mick will be with you next Wednesday—start with him on the trail of nerve-tling adventure and travel with him, week by week, through the perils and thrills of his job as a Mountie.

Besides our grand new picture-story serial, there will, of course, be another grand St. Jim's story from the pen of popular Martin Clifford. I can promise you that this yarn, which goes under the unusual title of

of Fulham, "and since then I have taken it regularly. My father reads it after me and after my father my sister reads it. When they have finished I exchange it with a friend." That's the ticket, old lad! Sorry your joke was not quite "up to scratch." Try again!

"I would like to say how I look forward to Wednesday (GEM day)," says R. C. Harris, of Bradford. "The tales are simply ripping." Thanks, R. C. Harris. Try again at winning one of the Jester's grand prizes.

Thanks for your letter, "Regular," of Monmouthshire. I am sorry to say that your suggestion is impracticable. It would not prove popular with the majority of the GEM readers. But, after all, "Nelson Lee" readers can still read of the adventures of the St. Frank's chums.

"THE FOUR-FOOTED PHANTOM!"

is one that contains all the ingredients of a first-class, tip-top, A1 school story, plus eerie and amazing events which cause no little stir at St. Jim's.

How would you like to come face to face with a strange-looking horse, its eyes gleaming fiercely, and with steam pumping through its nostrils? You wouldn't! Nor would I. Well, that's what happens to many fellows at St. Jim's when the phantom horse stalks through the school passages. You'll read all about it next week.

Another thrill-packed instalment of "ST. FRANK'S VERSUS FOO CHOW!"

—starring the boys of St. Frank's in China, a column of the best jokes of the week, and another chat from yours truly complete this all-star number of the GEM. Is your copy delivered to your door every week? It will save you a lot of time and trouble to come to this arrangement with your newsagent, for it's the best way of making sure of your GEM every Wednesday.

A REMINDER.

Just let me remind you once again, chums, that now is the best time to get "The Holiday Annual" and "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," for owing to the reduction in price of the "H.A."—it is now only five shillings—and the big increase in the number of pages of the "Popular Book"—it has 192 pages now, and is only two shillings and sixpence—there is a big demand for these two wonder annuals. Step in early for yours, chums!

READERS SAY THEIR SAY.

"I was first given an old copy of the GEM by my friend," says F. G. Hageman, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,337.

THE HOME-MADE PLANE!

A "home-made" aeroplane very nearly won an air race the other day. The plane was put together out of various spare parts by the members of the Cinque Ports Flying Club, and it was entered for the Folkestone Aero Trophy. Flown by the instructor of the club, after a neck-and-neck race with a D.H. 60 machine, the "home-made" one lost the race by only eighteen seconds. Well, all you makers of model planes, what do you know about that? Perhaps some of you will be building yourselves real planes one of these days!

NOT SO GOOD!

In America there is a Hole-in-One Golf Club, and the qualification for membership is the doing of a hole in one. There are 340 members of the club, and the other day they held a meeting and attempted to do a hole in one. The hole was 148 yards long, and these 340 members drove 1,698 balls—but only one succeeded in achieving his object and holing out in one!

HORSES WHO KNOW!

It is a well-known fact that horses are very intelligent animals, but here are some amazing facts about the horses which belong to the Great Western Railway in London. They live in stables upstairs, which are reached by winding inclines, and when they come in at night they walk calmly up to bed.

One of the horses has difficulty in getting to sleep, and so he swings himself to sleep on a chain which is slung across the back of his box! Another horse reports sick when he is not feeling well. He goes to the "colic box" of his own accord, rolls over on his back, takes hold of the special bit which is suspended from the ceiling, and is then ready to have his medicine poured down his throat!

Before going on an extra long shift the horses have extra rations, and they will not go without them! All the horses know when it is Sunday and they make no preparations for going off to work as they do on week-days. Every year in the summer the horses go to a holiday camp in the country to freshen them up before the winter comes.

All this reminds me of a story of an elephant in India. This elephant's coolie driver decided that if he gave the elephant two slabs of his special cake less than usual he, the coolie, would be able to make money. One day he started on this idea, but the elephant was suspicious, and he picked up the slabs of cake in his trunk and weighed them thoughtfully. He soon came to the conclusion that he was receiving short weight—and he slung the slabs at his driver, who was standing near by!

THE DRINKING GHOST.

There are some that say that the old Weston Cross Inn, built in the Wye Valley three hundred and fifty years ago, is haunted. It must be admitted that these people have some cause for expressing this opinion.

The landlord's wife has seen the ghost, she says, and it is an old man with white hair and a benevolent expression—not one of these fierce-looking things carrying its head under its arm or anything really thrilling like that, but just an old man. Now here's the strange part of the whole thing. The landlord doesn't believe in ghosts, and he decided that some one was playing a joke on him, so he made up his mind to catch the joker. He told his wife to put a tankard of ale in the old corn loft above the coach house every night, and his wife did so. Every morning the tankard is empty—but still the landlord can't catch the drinker! Is it a ghost or a joker?

DIRECTION BY WIRELESS.

Captain Magnus Anderson has just completed a neat little invention which, when incorporated with an ordinary portable wireless set, makes it possible for him to ascertain his position immediately, even in the most dense fog, by simply tuning in to the nearest wireless station. One of the chief advantages of this clever new device is that it can be worked by anybody, and does not require a specially skilled operator.

LUCK!

Some people just are lucky! You can't achieve luck; either you're born lucky or you aren't, and if you are in the former class things will always work out right—at least, that's how it seems to the rest of the world who think they aren't lucky!

Arthur Coleman was a miner, and he had a very serious accident. He fractured his skull, his spine, and both his legs. Now either of the first two fractures would have been fatal for most people, but three months after his accident he left hospital, and with the aid of a stick—walked a mile! He must have been born lucky!

Stephen Betters is a Luton man, and three months ago he had a motor-cycle accident and broke his neck. Now it is quite possible to live after breaking your neck, but nearly always your legs are paralysed. Not so with Mr. Betters, for he is already walking about again! Now then, who said that no fellow has any more luck than the next chap? Whoever he was, he can go to the bottom of the class!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE BLACK DOMINO!

(Continued from page 15.)

"You uttah ass!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as an ass. I uttated an ejaculation because I was startled by Blake closing the window so suddenly, and it threw me into quite a fluttah."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I say," interrupted Fatty Wynn, who had been looking very thoughtful, "is there a grub department on this train, Tom Merry?"

"I don't know."

"Good old Fatty! It's nearly half an hour since breakfast so he must be famished."

"Nothing of the sort. I may be a little peckish but I was really thinking of Figgins. He ate next to nothing at brekker."

"I'm all right," said Figgins.

"That's all very well, Figg; but you can't be allowed to make yourself ill," said Fatty Wynn argumentatively. "I'm not going to stand by and see you do it. You'll need to keep up your strength, too, if you're going to look after that cousin of yours. You had better come along to the restaurant car, if there is one, and have a feed."

"I don't want one!"

"You ought to have one. I'll come with you to keep you company, and just take a bite or two with you."

"Rats!"

"You had better come," said Fatty, getting up.

"Bosh!"

"Well, I'll go, and I'll bring you something solid," said Fatty Wynn.

And he stepped out of the carriage into the corridor.

"Don't be gorging when we get to Monte," said Kerr.

"You might get carried on to Italy if you are."

"I shall be back in a jiffy. I shall just stop to get something to eat, and then I shall bring Figgins some sandwiches."

"Yes, we know you."

Fatty Wynn deigned no reply to that remark. He went down the corridor in search of the restaurant car. The others sat down and watched the scenery, Figgins with a puckered brow.

He was wondering whether he would be in time to prevent Hilton from losing the stolen money at the gaming-tables in the casino.

"That's Monaco," said Kerr, as the train stopped. "Last station before Monte Carlo. This is where the prince has his diggings. Somebody told me that you see his palace from the train."

"Bai Jove! Is that so?"

"I suppose so."

The train was passing the palace on the hill where the prince of the smallest principality of Europe dwells in sight of the quarter from whence he draws his revenue. Monaco is a strange principality. Independent—on sufferance—it flourishes, a mere spot surrounded by foreign territory. From the Casino Company the prince draws a huge yearly revenue, and the company pay this, besides his "army" and all the local taxes; and after that, the casino pays a profit to its lucky proprietors.

A huge profit and huge expenses—all met out of the losses of the gamblers who visit the casino for the purpose of "trying their luck," and perchance "breaking the bank."

The train rushed on towards the town of Monte Carlo, and eventually reached the station.

"My hat! Where's that ass Wynn?" exclaimed Kerr.

"The duffah! He'll be cawwied on!"

"I'll go for him."

"Bai Jove! Huwwy, deah boy!"

Kerr and Blake rushed off down the corridor. The other juniors alighted from the train, and waited on the platform for them.

Blake and Kerr rushed into the restaurant car, and found Fatty Wynn seated at one of the little tables, doing full justice to coffee and sandwiches, the only provender he had been able to obtain.

He was raising the coffee-cup to his lips when Blake grasped him by the shoulder.

"Come on, Wynn!"

"Ow!" gasped Wynn.

His arm jerked as Blake grasped it, and the coffee streamed over his chest.

"Yaroo!"

"Serve you right, Fatty!" said Blake. "Now let's get out before the train starts again."

Fatty Wynn tossed a ten-franc note to the garcon, and then stepped out on to the platform, with Blake and Kerr, just as the train began to puff out of the station.

CHAPTER 11. In Disguise!

"THIS way out!" said Tom Merry.

"Ascenseur! Ascenseur!"

It was a sing-song voice at the end of the platform.

"That means a lift," said Kerr. "Are we going out of the station by the steps, or up by the lift?"

"In the lift," said D'Arcy immediately. "It is no use makin' an unnecessary effort, deah boy!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Gussy shall pay!"

"Weally, Blake—"

The station of Monte Carlo lies very low on the shore of the bay. The casino and hotels are high up, and can be approached by the steps cut in the hillside, or by the lift. Arthur Augustus had chosen the lift, and the juniors marched into it. The uniformed attendant closed the gates, and the lift mounted. Arthur Augustus paid for the seven passengers, and bade the attendant keep the change out of a ten-franc note—a little generosity which made the attendant take off his cap and bow three times to the very floor of the lift.

The ascent occupied only a few moments, and then the attendant threw open the lift gates, and the juniors stepped upon the terrace.

The man took off his cap again and bowed to the ground, and Arthur Augustus took off his silk hat and bowed in reply in the politest possible manner.

Then Tom Merry & Co. walked up the terrace into Monte Carlo.

There are few more beautiful sights in the world than the surroundings of Monte Carlo. The juniors gazed out over the lovely bay, and away towards the Alps.

"Wippin'!" said D'Arcy.

"You can see Italy from a part of this terrace," said Kerr, looking round. "We're not going to Italy, so we may as well have a look at it."

"I'd rather look for my cousin, just now," said Figgins.

"Sorry, old man! Come on!"

They walked on, and passed under a long covered way, and came out in sight of the casino, the gardens, and the Cafe de Paris.

It was a cheerful and inspiring sight on a sunny morning.

There were crowds of well-dressed promenaders, and some of them glanced curiously at the group of juniors. Perhaps they were surprised to see a party of fellows, evidently schoolboys on holiday, without any elder in such a place.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle, and looked round. "Better ask somebody the way," he remarked. "We ought to go stwaight to the casino."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"What on earth do you want to ask the way for? Come on!"

"But—"

"Oh, come on!"

"But I insist upon inquirin' the way, Kerr. It will save time."

"Duffer! There's the casino under your nose."

"Bai Jove! Is that the casino?"

"Yes, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. I wish it to be undahstood, once for all, that I absolutely wefuse, undah the circs, to—"

"Come on!"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Exactly! Come on!"

The juniors marched on towards the steps of the casino, and D'Arcy frowned indignantly, and followed them. They came up to the handsome building where so many millions are won and lost yearly, and ascended the broad flight of steps leading to the entrance vestibule.

Two men in uniform were at the open doors, and they immediately closed up to prevent the entrance of the St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry stopped, and looked at them. Both the men shook their heads, but in quite a polite way.

"We want to enter," said Tom Merry.

The man replied in rapid French.

"What is he saying, Kerr?"

"He says that boys are not admitted."

"My only hat! I'd forgotten that!"

The juniors gazed at one another in dismay.

In the excitement of the chase after Archie Hilton, they had completely forgotten the most rigid rule of the casino

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at Monte Carlo—that persons under age are not admitted to the gambling-rooms on any pretext whatever.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"Well, this is rotten!"

"We are looking for a friend," said Tom Merry appealingly. "Nous cherchons un ami."

The man shook his head.

"Il est defendu, m'sieur."

"What does that mean, Kerr?"

"It means that it's forbidden."

"Explain to him that we don't want to gamble, and that we're only looking for a chap we know, and want just to speak to him."

Kerr explained in fluent French. The man before them listened politely, but shook his head.

"Non, m'sieur—non!"

"Suppose you tip the beast?" suggested Blake.

"No good!"

And the juniors walked away, followed by curious glances from the crowd of promenaders and loungers. They strolled disconsolately into the wide gardens, and sat down on one of the long wooden seats to discuss the plan of campaign.

Tom Merry was frowning.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "We've got to get into that blessed place somehow—that's settled."

"Yass, wathah!"

"Then how's it to be done?"

"Bai Jove! That's a puzzle!"

It was indeed a puzzle. The juniors could find no solution to it. Admittance was refused to all comers under age, and there was no getting over a difficulty like that. The doors were impassable. What was to be done?

"Gwest Scott!"

"Oh, do ring off, Gussy, while we think!"

"Weally, Blake—"



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"Cheese it!"

"I've got an ideah!"

"Rubbish!"

"I vegard that as a wude wemark, Blake. If there were time at the pwesent moment, I should feel called upon to administah a feahful thwashin'. Howevah, I will overlook it! I've got an ideah!"

"Well, what's the idea?" asked Tom Merry, not very hopefully.

Arthur Augustus had a way of propounding the most astounding plans, generally impracticable.

"You wemembah the time when Kerr dwessed himself up at St. Jim's as somebody? I think it was as Skimpole—"

"It was weally that that made me think of the ideah."

"How? What?"

"Why, if a chap like Kerr could dwess himself up so as to take people in, it stands to weason that a fellow like myself could do it wippingly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah, Blake."

"Ass! Are you thinking of dressing yourself up as Skimpole?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what's the rotten idea?"

"It is not a wotten ideah!"

"Frabjous ass!" shrieked Blake. "If you've got any idea at all, get it off your chest, before I dot you on the boko!"

"I should uttahly wefuse to be dotted on the boko. Howevah, I will pwocceed to explain, if you will have the gweat kindness to leave off intewwuptin' me. I was thinkin' that, as only chaps ovah ago are admitted to the gamin'-rooms, I could disguise myself as a grown-up chap."

"My hat!"

"Good!"

"Ripping!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beamed upon his chums, greatly pleased by the reception his brilliant idea had met with.

"Weally, deah boys, you are vewy complimentawy," he remarked. "Of course, it is a wippin' ideah, I know, and I'm just the fellow to cawwy it out!"

"Eh?"

"Rats!"

"Rats—and many of 'em!"

"Weally—"

"It's a good idea," said Blake. "But you're not the chap to carry it out. If you tried it on, you would be carried out yourself, by the attendants."

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy deserves a vote of thanks for his suggestion," said Kerr. "But, of course, we can't allow him to try it."

"Of course not."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Kerr's the chap," said Figgins. "Kerr can impersonate anybody. They have lots of fancy dress balls and theatricals among the people here, and there's bound to be a costumier."

"That's so."

"Well, if you chaps think so, I'll try willingly," said Kerr modestly.

"Weally—"

"Now, don't be an ass, Gussy! I suppose you remember you went in disguise to the Grammar School, and were bowled out at once?" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"That was the fault of the othahs."

"Rats!"

"Lowthah, I insist upon—"

"Bosh!"

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Rubbish!"

But, after a lengthy dispute, it was decided to carry out D'Arcy's idea, and Tom Merry, Figgins, and Kerr were selected as being the most likely members of the Co. to bring about success.

The juniors then left the gardens, and proceeded to look along the shops of Monte Carlo. There were many fine, handsome shops, and after a search the juniors found what they wanted—a hairdresser and costumier's. They poured into the shop, and a fat Frenchman, with a shiny smile and a moustache like a brigand, came forward to meet them.

He spread out his fat hands and bowed. There was no one else in the shop. He waved his hand to a glass door.

"Ze saloon," he said.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"My hat! He thinks we want a shave!"

D'Arcy looked at himself in the glass, and ran his hand over his chin.

"Bai Jove! I wondah if I had bettah have a shave, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you think there is wathah a wuffness on my uppah lip?"

"Yes, about as much as there is on a billiard-ball," said

Tom Merry. "Pitch it to this chap in French, Kerr, and tell him what we want. Only don't mention about getting into the casino—that's a dead secret."

"What-ho!" said Kerr.

Kerr poured out a strong flow of French. His comrades listened in great admiration. He could "pitch out" French, as Blake had remarked, just as if he understood it. Kerr's gifts as a French scholar came in very useful now, as they had before. The fat gentleman looked surprised at first, but when Kerr showed a note, his surprised expression gave place to a beaming and benevolent smile, and he led the juniors into a room at the back of the shop, and was soon producing his disguises for their needs.

"What have you told him, Kerr?" asked Blake.

"That we're going to disguise ourselves for a joke on somebody," said Kerr. "It's strictly true. It will be the biggest joke of the season, I think, if it comes off. We shall be the only kids who have ever got into the casino."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Frenchman had spread out a wonderful assortment of wigs and beards and moustaches on the table. It was evident that he did a good deal of business in this way, doubtless for private theatricals among the wealthy residents of Monte Carlo in the season.

Kerr explained that they wanted to be made-up to look like fully grown-up persons, and the Frenchman nodded and set to work.

Figgins, Kerr, and Tom Merry submitted to his hands, allowing him to do as he liked, and he worked a change in their appearance with marvellous rapidity.

Figgins was changed into a gentleman of about fifty, of a somewhat sanctimonious cast, Kerr was brought up to the age of twenty-five or so, and the costumier suggested that he might pass for Figgins' son. Tom Merry looked about

"For goodness' sake don't stride along like that, Figgy!" said Kerr. "A man of fifty wouldn't take steps as long as that."

"By Jove!"

"And don't walk with your hands in your pockets, Tom Merry. You have to consider appearance a little more at forty."

"By George!"

"And if you could make your voices a little deeper it would be better."

"Good!"

"Don't talk, if you can help it," said Kerr. "Leave the jabberjoe part to me. I can sling it to them in French, and you chaps can be fellows who don't speak the language. See?"

"Right-ho!"

In spite of Tom Merry's apprehension, no one glanced at them curiously in the street. The disguises were evidently passing muster.

They came in sight of the casino again.

Their hearts beat as they mounted the broad, stone steps. The crisis was coming now—the next few minutes would decide.

The uniformed doorkeepers did not even glance at them.

They were the same two men who had stopped the juniors from entering the casino a short time before; but they were completely deceived this time.

Tom Merry, Figgins, and Kerr entered the great vestibule. They could not help exchanging a glance of triumph as they walked in.

The first line of defence, so as to speak, was passed in safety. But they still had to obtain tickets of entry into the casino, for at Monte Carlo entrance is impossible without that preliminary. The authorities of the casino are

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forty when he was finished. Their comrades looked on in the greatest astonishment.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy at last. "Why, I shouldn't know you myself, deah boys."

"These blessed beards feel awfully odd," said Figgins. "And the stuff he sticks them on with tickles."

"If you like, Figgy, I will go instead."

"Thank you for nothing."

"You see, it would be more successful, and—"

"Bosh!"

The disguises were finished at last. Then there was a change of clothes—for, of course, the boys' clothes did not suit their new appearance. The costumier had clothes of all shapes and sizes, and he made the three juniors look their parts wonderfully well. Tom Merry looked like a somewhat small gentleman, Figgins a good-sized one, and Kerr a young man with a ruddy complexion.

The fat Frenchman rubbed his hands and beamed when all was done.

"Magnifique!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "C'est magnifique."

"Yaas, wathah! I think you'll pass, deah boys!"

"I think we shall," said Tom Merry, surveying himself in the glass. "My hat! If I met myself in the street like this I shouldn't know myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, let's get off," said Kerr. "We've got to run the gauntlet at the casino yet. You fellows had better not come out with us. No good being seen together."

"That's so."

And the juniors settled with the costumier, and left a considerable amount as deposit for the clothes they had borrowed, and then the three disguised adventurers quitted the shop, and bent their steps once more in the direction of the casino.

CHAPTER 12.

Into the Casino!

TOM MERRY'S heart beat as he came out into the sunny street. It seemed to him that the disguise must be apparent in the sunlight, and that the passers-by would see through it at once. He glanced at Figgins, and saw that the long-limbed junior was just as excited as himself. Kerr was as cool as an iceberg.

very careful as to whom they admit. The rule for the exclusion of minors is so rigid that particularly youthful-looking men of twenty-five and twenty-six have been excluded, on the mere possibility of their being under age. After a few visits, when one becomes known to the officials, a season ticket is granted, but for the first few visits the formality of obtaining a "billet d'entree" is indispensable.

Tom Merry glanced about him in the vestibule. He had been told that tickets of entry were to be obtained in the ante-room on the left as he entered, and he immediately made for the room.

It was an apartment of no great size, with a long table, or, rather, counter, along each side, at which the casino clerks sat in a row. A gentleman with whiskers, who was evidently an official of authority, was there, and he was treated with great respect by the others. Kerr, who was the spokesman of the party, addressed himself to one of the clerks sitting on a stool behind the table on the left.

The man glanced at him, and drew out a little card, and dipped a pen in the ink.

He asked the names, residence at home, residence in the Riviera, and occupation of the juniors.

He spoke without the slightest suspicion that he was addressing boys, and Kerr replied with perfect coolness.

He stated the exact truth. The names were given as Kerr, Figgins, and Merry, friends travelling on the Continent. The home addresses were given correctly, and the address in Nice—Villa des Fleurs, Promenade des Anglais. Occupation—none; and certainly the juniors had no occupation, unless going to school can be called one.

The replies were satisfactory, and the cards of admission were written out, and signed, and the juniors wrote their names upon them.

"C'est tout," said the clerk; and he turned indifferently to a big American, who was loudly inquiring for a ticket.

"That's all," said Kerr. "Merci, monsieur!"

And the juniors walked out of the ante-room.

"Then it's all right?" asked Figgins.

"Right as rain!"

"Let's get in, then."

They entered the inner vestibule—a great apartment, with a bar at one end, and the entrance doors of the casino proper at the other.

Officials stood on guard at the entrance to the gaming-rooms, and they stopped the juniors.

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Tom Merry's heart sank. Was it to be a failure, after all? But Kerr quickly explained.

"We have to leave our hats in the cloak-room, and our coats," he said. "They're more particular here than in the casinos at Nice."

"Oh, is that all?" said Tom Merry, greatly relieved.

"That's all."

"Where's the cloak-room?"

"Over yonder in the vestibule."

The juniors deposited the borrowed hats and coats in the cloak-room, and received a tin billet for them, and then strolled towards the entrance doors again.

This time the doorkeepers allowed them to pass, with bows and smiles, and the door swung open, and Tom Merry and his comrades entered the famous gaming-rooms of Monte Carlo.

The door swung to behind them.

A close atmosphere, a subdued hum of voices greeted the juniors.

From the nearest roulette tables came a clear, metallic voice.

"Faites vos jeux, messieurs!"

A pause, then:

"Les jeux sont faits!"

Another pause.

The roulette ball was whizzing on its course.

"Rien ne va plus!"

The ball dropped into a slot.

"Cinq rouge impair et manque!"

Tom Merry and his comrades walked slowly up the vast apartment.

There were roulette tables on all sides, arranged in groups of three, and each was served by half a dozen or more croupiers, and surrounded by eager players.

Early as the hour was the casino was crowded.

Round each roulette table chairs were placed for the players, and they were all occupied; but outside the chairs players were standing in rows two or three deep. When the casino was crowded, the rows round the tables are sometimes four or five deep, and there is a struggle to throw one's stakes on the board, and sometimes a still keener struggle to get possession of one's winnings. For players are frequently unscrupulous, and a gambler favourably placed for capturing a stake will sometimes coolly take possession of it; and unless the croupier is very keen, and has been watching, he will keep possession of it, too, in spite of the rightful owner. Hence, frequent scenes at the roulette table—scenes which are quieted as quickly as possible by the croupiers.

Persistent annexers of other people's stakes find themselves marked in the long run by the casino detectives, and refused admission; but the temptation to a losing player to seize another gambler's winnings is very strong, and the mere act of gambling loses all restraint of honour; and the confirmed gambler, when his own money is gone, is always firmly convinced that with one more chance he would win back all his losses, and come out ahead of the bank.

The sight was not a pleasant one to the juniors. With their wholesome minds and clean ideas, the sight of men buried in the intense interest of gambling could not be either pleasant or edifying.

But it was curious and interesting, and, apart from their mission there, they were glad of an opportunity of seeing one of the most remarkable sights of Europe.

They stopped at the first roulette table to look at the game, and to see if Hilton was among the crowd of players.

The roulette wheel was still revolving, the ball in the slot opposite cinq—five. Cinq was one of the numbers coloured red. It was an odd number, and it was below eighteen, which explained the croupier's explanation as the juniors came in: "Cinq rouge impair et manque!"

The croupier in charge of the wheel picked the ball out of the slot. He glanced up and down the table.

"Faites vos jeux, messieurs. Make your game, gentlemen!"

And the crowded gamblers commenced placing their stakes.

The money thrown on the table was a surprise to the juniors.

Most of the play, certainly, was in ten-franc notes.

But many were playing with fifty-franc notes and with banknotes of high values.

A man who was sitting at the end of the table, beside the end croupier, was playing on the even chances—red and black, or pair or impair, or passe and manque, and playing the high every time. The juniors could not help staring as they saw it. For a man to be putting 20,000 francs—about £250—on the chance of a turn seemed amazing to them, yet he was perfectly calm about it.

"Les jeux sont faits!"

"The stakes are placed."

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Still some notes were thrown on, and the croupier took the ball in his finger and thumb. With one hand he sent the wheel spinning, with the other he threw the ball upon the wheel, to revolve in the opposite direction.

The ball spun round so fast, that it looked like a circular streak of white. Still the players were placing their stakes upon the green cloth.

The croupier's keen eye detected the moment the ball showed a sign of ceasing to revolve, and of falling into the slots.

Then his warning rang out:

"Rien ne va plus!"

"Nothing goes any more," literally—a warning that no more stakes were to be placed on the table.

The ball clicked into a slot.

"Dix-sept noir impair et manque!"

"Seventeen, black, odd, and below eighteen."

Tom Merry glanced at the player of the high stakes. He placed six thousand francs on red—six banknotes for a thousand francs each.

They were swept away with the rest.

The player did not move a muscle.

From a great heap of banknotes before him on the table he selected another bunch for his next stake.

The juniors turned away.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Hilton isn't here!"

"By Jove!" said Figgins. "I can understand the fascination of this business! If you win on a number they give you thirty-five times what you stake!"

"Yes, but there are thirty-six numbers and zero," said Kerr. "The chances against your number winning are thirty-seven to one."

"Yes, but—"

"And the casino doesn't make a huge profit out of its losses!" added Kerr.

Figgins grinned.

"I suppose not."

"Anyway, we're not going to play," said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

"Right you are!"

The juniors walked down the great series of apartments, looking at each of the roulette tables in turn in search of Archie Hilton.

He was not to be seen.

In such an immense and crowded place it was, of course, difficult to find anybody, and if Hilton was changing his table or had gone for a coffee, or was taking a rest, the task of discovering him would be endless.

He was certainly not at any roulette table as the juniors came to it, but it was possible that he had just reached one they had left.

After making a tour of the roulette-room, the juniors turned back, and looked at each table on the way to the exit.

Still Hilton was not to be seen.

"There are the trente-et-quarante tables," said Tom Merry. "He may be there."

"Good!"

They went into the trente-et-quarante rooms.

The game of trente-et-quarante is played with cards, and is very different from roulette. There are only even chances in the game.

The juniors stopped at the first trente-et-quarante table they came to.

The dealer of the cards was just laying out a row of them. He finished a row, and said:

"Quatre!"

Then he laid out another row.

"Cinq! Noir gagne."

"What on earth does he mean?" asked Figgins.

"The first row represents black, and the second red," explained Kerr. "The row nearest to thirty in number of points wins. Black row was thirty-four, red row thirty-five, so black wins."

"Oh, I see!"

The stakes were gathered in or paid, according to whether the players won or lost, and then the cards were thrown aside, and a fresh pack dealt from.

"Trois!"

"Quatre!"

"Black wins again," said Kerr.

Tom Merry nodded. He was not much interested in the game; he was looking round for Hilton.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

"Look!"

At the farther end of the trente-et-quarante table stood a form they knew well—it was Archie Hilton.

His face was very pale.

He had evidently had a stake upon the green cloth, and from the expression of his face it was equally evident that his stake had been swept away by the croupier.

The juniors drew back from the table, and moved along quietly towards Hilton.

CHAPTER 13.

A Scene at the Roulette Table!

HILTON did not look at the juniors. Had he done so, he would certainly not have recognised them. He had not the faintest idea that Tom Merry & Co. were near him.

Doubtless, he guessed that Figgins and his friends would follow him from Nice to Monte Carlo, but, knowing how rigidly boys were excluded from the casino there, he did not dream for a moment that they could follow him past the portals.

Tom Merry & Co., therefore, were not in his mind at all. He was thinking wholly of the game, and his worn and jaded looks showed how intensely he was feeling the chances of the cards, and how deeply he felt his losses.

Losses, it was clear, he had already had. How much of Miss Fawcett's three hundred pounds was left was a question.

Tom Merry, Figgins, and Kerr looked at one another. Exactly how to act they were uncertain. As they hesitated, Hilton moved away from the table, and, with his hands thrust deeply in his pockets, sauntered along to the roulette rooms.

Perhaps he had had enough of trente-et-quarante for the time, and was inclined to try his luck at the roulette tables.

The three chums followed him. "Blessed if I know exactly what to do!" Tom Merry remarked. "If we were to collar him, it would make a scene here."

"He's got to be stopped," said Kerr.

"That's certain!"

"He may come out quietly if I speak to him, and avoid trouble," said Figgins. "We must not lose sight of him again. He may have done playing, though, and if he's going to leave, we can quietly follow him out."

"Good!"

Hilton strolled along the crowded rooms, and entered one of the side apartments where tea-tables were ranged in rows.

He sat down at a table and ordered black coffee.

He drank three black coffees in quick succession, evidently for the purpose of bracing his nerves, and threw a twenty-franc note on the table, and did not wait for any change.

He left the tea-room, passing three coffee drinkers at an adjoining table without giving them a glance, and little guessing how keenly they were watching him. Tom Merry & Co. wanted to avoid trouble, if possible. But if Hilton recommenced playing, they meant to stop him.

They followed him into the roulette rooms again.

A player who had just put a thousand-franc note—his last—on red, rose from a chair close to Hilton, and departed. Hilton immediately took the chair. A place at the gaming-table is not easily obtained, and in the busy hours there is keen competition for the chairs.

Hilton sat down, and drew out a pocket-book. The juniors saw it all. There were many notes for a thousand francs each, and a large number for a hundred francs. He evidently still had most of Miss Fawcett's money left.

Tom Merry was glad to see it. The juniors had not been so far behind Hilton, and the loss so far was not irreparable—if he stopped from gambling now.

And he should be stopped, upon that the juniors were determined. Tom Merry and Kerr looked at Figgins, and the long-limbed junior nodded and bent over Hilton's chair.

He tapped the young man on the shoulder. Hilton looked round, with an irritated expression.

"Archie, old man!" whispered Figgins, forgetting for the moment that he was in an unrecognisable disguise: "Archie!"

Hilton stared in blank amazement.

"Archie—"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Figgins!"

"Are you mad?"

"Oh, I forgot! I got into this rig to get in here," explained Figgins. "They don't admit fellows under age, you know."

Hilton stared at him, as if he were not quite able to believe his eyes.

"Figgins!" he muttered.

"Faites vos jeux, messieurs."

Hilton turned quickly to the table. Figgins caught him by the shoulder, and forced him to turn back.

"Archie—"

"Let me alone!"

"Don't play!"

"Get back!"

"Don't play, Archie!"

"Fool! Let me alone!" said Hilton fiercely.

Figgins' lips hardened.

"Archie, that money's not yours. You can't play with it."

"I will!"

"You won't!"

Hilton made a movement to thrust a banknote upon the

table, and Figgins forcibly jerked his arm back. The banknote fluttered upon the table.

"No, you don't!" said Figgins grimly.

Hilton was white with passion.

"Hang you! Go away!"

The nearest croupier was looking curiously at Hilton. He took him to be a reckless young man of whom an elderly relation had come in search, to save him from losing his money.

Such a scene was not at all in accordance with Monte Carlo etiquette. The casino asks no one to enter. The man came in; he was supposed to be old enough to know his own business best. Anxious relations looking for reckless young men did not fit into the picture at all, so to speak. The croupier's lips curled, and several players along the table began to grin.

"I won't go!" said Figgins. "Not till you come with me!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry.

Hilton stared at the new voice. He realised that Figgins was not alone. His weak face was red with rage now.

"Go away!" he muttered.

"I won't!"

"Listen! If you don't go immediately, I will call one of the attendants, and tell him who you really are!" said Hilton fiercely. "When they find you are in disguise, you will be thrown out of the casino at once."

"You'll be thrown out, too, then," said Figgins, "for I jolly well shan't let go of you!"

"Figgins—"

"I mean business!"

"Do you mean to say that you'll make a scene here, hang you?"

"I'd do more than make a scene to prevent one of my family from being a thief!" said Figgins sturdily. "Besides, what does it matter? For all the side they put on, it's only a blessed gambling den, after all."

"Get away!"

"You'd better come; they're looking at us already. If you don't want a scene, now's your chance to slide out quietly."

"Will you let me alone?"

"No!"

Hilton clenched his hands convulsively.

"Go!"

"I won't!"

The next moment Figgins staggered back under a furious blow.

"Take that, then!"

CHAPTER 14.

Thrown Out!

THERE was a general exclaiming at once. Disputes were common enough at Monte Carlo, and the croupiers sometimes had plenty to do in smoothing down excited disputants. But matters seldom proceeded as far as blows. The croupier near Hilton sprang up, and two or three burly attendants rushed to the spot at once. "Messieurs!"

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Hilton was on his feet, quivering with anger. Tom Merry had caught Figgins in time to save him from falling. Figgins seemed dazed by the sudden and furious blow.

"You cad!" exclaimed Kerr fiercely.

Hilton gritted his teeth.

"Let me alone, then, you interfering puppies! Get out!"

Figgins recovered himself.

"You are coming with us, Hilton!"

"I will not!"

"Collar him!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The attendants laid hands upon the disguised juniors. A "row" is the one thing that is intolerable at Monte Carlo. It disturbs the serenity of the gamblers; it gives the casino a bad "tone." The attendants were all ready to rush up at a hint of a row. The disguised juniors were seized.

Without ceremony, they were dragged towards the exit.

They struggled furiously.

In the tussle, their beards and moustaches came off, and there were exclamations of amazement from the attendants and the crowd gathering round, mingled with laughter as the trio were recognised to be boys.

Such a trick had probably never been played upon the casino before, and all were astounded, and the laughter was general.

"Mon Dieu!"

"Garçons!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry wrenched himself loose, and grasped Hilton. Hilton resisted fiercely, but the champion junior athlete of St. Jim's was not to be disposed of easily.

"You're coming, too!" he exclaimed.

Hilton struggled.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"Un autre!" exclaimed the croupier.

The mistake was a natural one. Hilton was taken for another boy in disguise, and he was immediately hustled by the attendants.

His wild expostulations were taken no notice of. He was allowed just time to collect up his money and return it to his pocket, and then he was marched out of the casino between lines of grinning people.

Straight down the long room, past the roulette tables, and out into the vestibule they went.

The attendants watched them grimly, while they obtained their hats and coats from the cloak-room, and then marched them out of doors and down the steps, and left them.

The juniors were in a strangely tattered state now. Their facial disguises had gone, and their clothes were torn, and they looked very odd.

Hilton was panting with rage.

"Hang you!" he exclaimed, heedless of the gathering crowds of curious idlers. "Oh, I hate you all! Now I shall not be allowed to enter the casino again."

"All the better for you," said Tom Merry.

"Hang you!"

"Bai Jove! What does this mean?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The St. Jim's juniors had been waiting outside the Cafe de Paris, opposite the casino, for their friends to come out. They had hardly expected them to come out in such a fashion.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass critically upon the dishevelled juniors.

"Gweat Scott! Have you been thwown out?"

"Doesn't it look like it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But it's all right, we've got Hilton."

The young man was making a movement to go. Figgins slipped his arm through his cousin's. He tightened his grip as Hilton strove to throw it off.

"You're coming with us, Archie?"

"No," said Hilton, between his teeth.

"You must!"

"Hang you!"

"If you want to go alone you must hand over Miss Fawcett's money," said Figgins quietly.

The crowd gazed at the group, passing free remarks in French. Hilton's face was crimson. He made a gesture of assent, and walked away with the juniors.

"Let's get back to the costumier's, and get these things off," said Kerr.

"Good!"

"Come with us, Archie."

"I'm in your hands," said Hilton sullenly.

Figgins made no reply. They walked to the costumier's. The fat Frenchman soon had the three juniors relieved of their disguises, and they washed off the paint and stain, and donned their own clothes. Then they settled up with the Frenchman for the damage done to the clothes and the loss of the beards and moustaches.

Hilton, meanwhile, sat silent and sullen, evidently in deep and troubled thought.

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He glanced at Figgins as the long-limbed junior came out of the inner room, washed and cleaned, and in his own clothes, and looking himself again.

"Well?" said Figgins.

Hilton gave a nod.

They left the shop, and in the street Hilton handed over his pocket-book to his cousin.

"There is all I have," he said.

Figgins thrust the book into his pocket.

"Very well," he said. "I will get the balance somehow and return it all to Miss Fawcett. You ought to be thankful, Archie, that you're saved from becoming a—a thief."

Hilton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want to ever speak to you again," he said bitterly. "I will never see you again if I can help it."

He turned away.

Figgins' face was very gloomy. He had a strong regard for his cousin, and in all that he had done he had only done his duty. But it was too much to expect that Hilton would look upon it with a friendly eye.

Hilton strode away towards the railway station. There was a sudden exclamation, as a gentleman and a lady came up the path from the station.

"Hallo, Archie! You here?"

It was Major Figgins, and with him was Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

CHAPTER 15.

The Gambler Cured!

MAJOR FIGGINS clapped his nephew on the shoulder as he spoke, and there was no escape for Hilton. He would gladly have got away from the major, but it was impossible.

"Come to the hotel, Archie. I shall be staying at the Imperial, and Miss Fawcett and the boys will be there," said the major. "We'll have a walk round the rooms later."

"I'm done with the rooms!" muttered Hilton.

"Good! I'm glad to hear you say so. You'll come to lunch?"

Hilton hesitated. But it occurred to him that he was actually penniless, and that in Nice he had borrowed to the full limit of his borrowing powers. His only possession at the present moment was the return half of a railway ticket, and a few francs.

"Thank you, uncle," he said.

"Hallo, you boys!" said the major, with a genial nod to the juniors. "What do you mean by slipping off to Monte Carlo before Miss Fawcett and myself, eh?"

"You see—" began Tom Merry.

"My dear boy left a note for me," said Miss Fawcett. "He said he had hopes of recovering the stolen money in Monte Carlo."

The major laughed.

"Well, the police in Nice haven't very high hopes," he remarked. "All they know so far is that the notes have not been passed in Nice. They may very likely find their way over here, but I don't think Tom is likely to get on their track. Ha, ha, ha!"

"We have recovered them, sir," said Figgins.

"What!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Fawcett.

"Here they are!"

Figgins took out the pocket-book and turned out the contents. Miss Fawcett received her money back in complete astonishment.

The major looked like a man in a dream. Archie Hilton, gnawing his lip, stared in another direction, apparently greatly interested in a motor-car that was snorting up the road from Monaco.

"Huh!" ejaculated the major.

"My dear boys," said Miss Fawcett. "I—I do not understand."

"There's roughly twenty-five pounds short," said Tom Merry. "We will get that later, dear, and make up the whole sum."

"My darling Tommy."

"Huh! But how did you recover the money?" exclaimed the major, in blank amazement. "Tell us that, you young rascals."

"We—we recovered it," said Tom Merry, stammering.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My dearest boy explained to me his theory last night that the money had not been taken by a common burglar," said Miss Fawcett. "He thought it was taken by some young man who was a victim to the dreadful mania for gambling which is so common here."

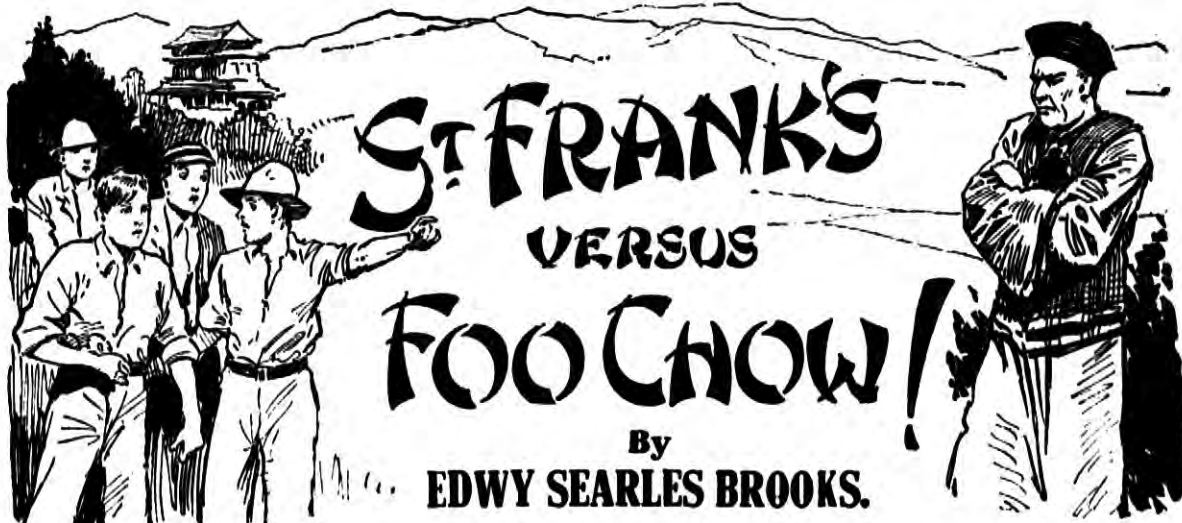
Major Figgins gave a violent start.

"He thought he might be able to recover it, and he has succeeded," said Miss Priscilla, with a fond glance at her ward.

"Huh!"

(Continued on page 23.)

THERE ARE THRILLS GALORE IN THESE GRIPPING CHAPTERS OF—



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

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 and succeed in rescuing Yung Ching. Handforth takes him to a friendly Chinaman he knows, while Nelson Lee & Co. go back to the stronghold. When Handforth returns from his mission he is made captive, taken to Yang Fu, and tortured. When Nelson Lee hears of Handy's fate he knocks Foo Chow to the ground!

A Ducking for Foo Chow!

"HURRAH!" yelled the St. Frank's fellows, swarming up.

"It's a dirty trick!" roared Dorrie. "I was goin' to knock him down, Lee!"

The air was electric. Foo Chow's soldiers were approaching, most of them dumb with amazement and horror. Foo Chow himself, dazed and hurt, slowly picked himself up. There was an expression on his face which indicated that a climax was at hand. This was to be the end of all pretence.

The Chinese millionaire had lost "face" in a manner that appalled him. Before the eyes of his own troops he had been knocked down by this foreign devil! They had witnessed this terrible event! For in the eyes of a Chinaman it was nothing less. Only by drastic methods of the most bloodthirsty type could he save his face. There was black murder in his heart as he prepared to rap out an order.

But just then the St. Frank's fellows were infected by the same irresistible impulse that had affected Nelson Lee. With a chorus of yells they swept down, and Foo Chow was momentarily smothered.

"Hurrah!"

"In the fountain with him!"

"Duck him!"

Foo Chow emerged, held in a spread-eagled position. Then, with a rush, he was swept off to the nearest fountain pool. With a fierce swing the juniors released him, and he descended with a deafening splash into the water.

"St. Frank's for ever!"

"Down with torturers!"

"Hurrah!"

"Duck him again!"

The juniors were swarming round excitedly, and even the Moor View girls were anxious to take a hand.

"Dorrie, this is terrible!" muttered Lee. "I was a fool to precipitate this thing! I did the very act for which I criticised you!"

"We're all human," said his lordship bluntly. "You just happened to smash him about one second before me, that's all. So it comes to exactly the same thing. The infernal cur! Gloatin' in front of us! I'm not a vicious chap as a rule, but, by the Lord Harry, I'd like to give that skunk a yard of cold steel!"

"But the price will be deadly!" muttered Lee in horror.

He was referring to the action which had already been taken. But it seemed that Fate was again favouring the holiday party. For just then a powerful car came roaring up at high speed. Even before it had stopped a number of officers leapt off.

One of them had seen Dr. Foo Chow, as the latter

attempted to scramble out of the fountain. He came running up, ignoring the juniors, and with his face streaming with perspiration, and with his eyes afire with wild alarm.

He spoke rapidly, desperately. At first Dr. Foo Chow was too infuriated to listen, but then his own expression changed. He grasped the officer fiercely, and the man talked more.

For the first time the St. Frank's fellows saw their "host" excited. His eyes blazed. Without giving any of the juniors a glance, he hurried off to the waiting car.

"This looks like somethin' big!" muttered Dorrie in wonder.

"It is something big," replied Nelson Lee quietly.

Other officers were rushing about, shouting orders. The soldiers were forming up and running down towards the drawbridge at full speed. Within three minutes there was not a uniform in sight. Even Foo Chow himself had gone—soaked to the skin, just as he was!

Undoubtedly there was something big in the air.

The Guns of War!

WONDERING what was going to happen next, Irene Manners was in a feverish state of excitement.

"What does it mean?" she asked breathlessly.

"It's no good asking me," replied Doris. "Mr. Lee knocks Foo Chow down, the fellows pitch him in the fountain pool, and then he goes off without even speaking to any of us!"

"And there's plenty of excitement about now, too!" added Dick Hamilton, looking at the palace. "Look at all these Chinks! The servants, and the palace attendants! Why, they're jabbering together, dotty with excitement!"

"I say, there's one man there who can speak pidgin English!" said Reggie Pitt quickly. "Let's go and ask him what's happened."

They ran up, and soon found the man they required—one of the uniformed servants who was generally on duty in the handsome marble foyer. The man was looking a sickly colour, and was trembling with fright.

"Plenteo bad news!" he exclaimed, after he had been questioned again and again. "Allee same fighting!"

"What do you mean—fighting?" asked Church.

"Troops of Yung Li Chang sweep into this plovinee," replied the man, with chattering teeth. "Heap big armies invade! Thousands—thousands—plenteo thousands! Yang Fu allee same plepare for war."

"That's enough for us!" said Dick Hamilton quickly. "Come on; let's go and tell the guv'nor."

They ran back and found that Nelson Lee had already heard the news. As a matter of fact, the great detective

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had some knowledge of Chinese, and although he had only caught a few words here and there, he had understood the gist of the news that Foo Chow's officers had brought.

"Yes, boys, I know," he said, as they excitedly told him. "It is something very big. And, mercifully, the news came at a very opportune moment. Foo Chow was so startled that he did not wait to revenge himself upon us. This other business is a thousand times more important."

"But is it really war, sir?" asked Dick.

"It is fairly clear that Yung Li Chang has taken his enemy completely by surprise," replied Lee. "By what I can gather, there is a huge advance afoot—by Yung Li Chang's picked armies."

"But—but why?" asked Dorrie. "Why is he invading this province? I thought Yung Li Chang was a peaceful sort of cove?"

"He is, but Foo Chow has driven him to this action," replied Lee. "It is Foo Chow who desires his enemy's lands, and it is certain that he has told Yung Li Chang that his son is a prisoner in Yang Fu, and that he will be tortured unless certain territories are surrendered. It seems that Yung Ching's father, instead of being intimidated, has called his armies together, and is making a swift advance upon Yang Fu."

"Good gosh!"

"Foo Chow's calculations were all wrong, for he had never counted upon this swift stroke on the part of Yung Li Chang," went on Lee. "Our friend has been playing with fire, and he now finds himself being burned. This may mean salvation for all of us."

"Oh!"

"How, sir?"

"Tell us, Mr. Lee!"

"If we fall in with Yung Li Chang's troops we shall be safe, but we must not count too much upon that chance," replied Nelson Lee. "It will be far better if we take some action ourselves. The opportunity has come, and we should be mad not to take advantage of it."

"Hurrah!"

"What can we do, sir?"

"The first thing is to keep calm," replied Nelson Lee pointedly. "This sudden event has taken Foo Chow and all his officers completely by surprise. It is the very last thing they expected. And so, in consequence, they are in a state of utter confusion. Perhaps it will mean a chance for us."

"Oh, listen!" cried Mary Summers suddenly.

They all were silent, startled by her tone.

"Thunder!" said Reggie Pitt quickly.

"Gad, I knew there was a storm about—" began Lord Dorrimore.

"That is not thunder, but gunfire!" interrupted Nelson Lee. "Listen! That sound is unmistakable!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Gunfire!"

"Then it's real war!"

"I—I didn't know these Chinese had guns, sir," said Church. "I thought they were all primitive—"

"A moment's careful thought would have banished that idea, Church," put in Lee. "Foo Chow's army is supplied with the latest type of rifles and machine-guns, so it stands to reason that heavy artillery is also available. And Yung Li Chang is just as progressive as Foo Chow. In any case, the Chinese have used big guns for centuries, although I will not guarantee the accuracy of their aim or the effectiveness of their fire."

Boom—boom—boom!

Reggie Pitt's assumption that the sound was the rolling of distant thunder was excusable. The booms came from a great distance, and were more of a vibration than an actual sound. As yet the guns were far away.

"Yung Li Chang has taken a leaf out of Foo Chow's book by making an unsuspected declaration of war," said Nelson Lee. "More than that—he has invaded this territory. And who can blame him? He has no desire to annex any land, but he is determined to rescue his son from Foo Chow's clutches. The soldiers of Yung Li Chang are sweeping through the province—with the one object, doubtless, of capturing the capital."

"He's caught old Chow on the hop!" said Lord Dorrimore happily. "By glory! No wonder he's scooted without even changin' his clothes. The blighter is scared out of his wits, I expect."

"He is attempting to organise his army," replied Lee. "A big proposition, Dorrie, considering that it is not prepared for active service. Foo Chow's troops will be rushed to the front at a moment's notice, and utter confusion will reign for hours—perhaps for days."

"But—but how will that help us, sir?" asked Dick Hamilton quickly.

"It helps us very materially," replied Lee. "Practically no soldiers are left here, guarding us, for in this acute

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emergency Foo Chow is far more concerned for the safety of his capital than he is for us. He will concentrate all his efforts upon checking the advance of the invading army. As you have seen, every soldier has already been withdrawn from this island."

"But where do we come in?" asked Dorrie.

"The Wanderer," replied Lep quietly.

"What?"

"Your yacht, old man—"

"The Wanderer!" yelled his lordship. "You—you think we can grab her an' hold her? By the Lord Harry! That's a scheme, if you like! Lee, old man, you always get the big ideas!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll capture the Wanderer."

"Let's make a rush now!"

"Steady, brothers—steady!" said Browne, of the Fifth. "We must allow Brother Lee to make all the plans. I will confess that the prospect is enticing, but we must not advance without the general's command!"

The prospect was indeed thrilling. Every face was flushed, and every heart was beating rapidly. The Wanderer! Foo Chow's gorgeous marble palace seemed a mere hovel compared with the familiar friendliness of Lord Dorrimore's steam yacht. If only they could get on board once more—and hold the vessel against all attacks! Perhaps they could even reach the open sea, and freedom, and complete liberty—

"Mind you, perhaps this is merely a wild hope, without any prospect of accomplishment," Nelson Lee was saying. "We may find that there are still plenty of soldiers here, so it will be as well to act warily. Our only course, in any event, is to choose our moment, and make a swift dash for the drawbridge—when it is down. Then a swift rush down the causeway to the quay, and after that— Well, much will be left to chance."

"But if we grab the yacht—what then?" asked Mr. Stokes.

"Let us grab the yacht first."

"But shall we try to get to the open sea?"

"It will be far more feasible, I think, to go up-river, into Yung Li Chang's friendly territory," replied Nelson Lee. "The girls, of course, will be left here in your charge, Mrs. Stokes."

"Oh, no fear!" cried Irene indignantly.

"Not likely!" cried Doris.

"We're all in this!" insisted the others.

"But it's impossible!" said Mrs. Stokes. "There might be a lot of fighting!"

"Well, we can fight, can't we?" asked Doris sternly. "It isn't fair that we should be left out if there's any excitement," she added, her pretty face flushed with indignation. "Just because we're girls we're left in the cold."

"It's a shame!" chorused the other girls.

"All the same, you must allow me to know best, young ladies," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Under no circumstances can you join in this adventure. Indeed, there is no certainty that there will be an adventure. So the sooner you simmer down the better. This affair has got to be organised. We must do some scouting, and we must see how the land lies. To begin with, we'll pretend to act in the same way as usual—and keep our eyes well open."

And Nelson Lee, talking quietly, gave out concise instructions.

The Panic in Yang Fu!

"SOMETHING'S UP!"

Handforth came to that conclusion with a bit of a shock. It seemed to him that he had been helpless in that cage for hours—for long, wearisome, tortured hours. As a matter of fact, the period had been only just over two hours. But the torture he had suffered had almost deprived him of his dogged, bulldog determination.

At the time he had thought that his adventures in that torture-cellar were merely nothing. He had laughed at Dr. Foo Chow's efforts to force him to speak. But now that the reaction had set in, he was feeling weak in every limb. He trembled so much that it was difficult for him to keep upright in that dreadful cage.

Already his neck was so sore that he was almost afraid to move. Now and again he had sagged through sheer physical weariness. But he had always been brought harshly to his senses by that terrible tightening of his throat.

Those flat stones beneath his feet, too, were unstable. With horror he realised that a sudden hasty movement would upset them all—and leave him there, strangling.

And he knew that he could expect no help from the curious crowds. He had long since arrived at the conclusion that these people bore him no actual enmity. But this cage was set there by the soldiers, and to interfere with it might mean death. No, even if Handforth died of strangulation before their eyes, they would not interfere.

The business of the day had continued placidly in the big square. And then came a subtle change.

At first Handforth was only dimly aware of it. The natives had ceased their buying and selling. They stood in groups, talking. A kind of hush had descended over the city. Then came the distant booming of thunder of guns. Handforth found himself awakening from his lethargy. He forgot his thirst and his discomfort.

"Yes, there's something up!" he told himself.

Almost at the same moment a number of soldiers appeared on the other side of the square. They were running and shouting—and, indeed, making as much noise as they possibly could. The manner in which they swept through the square, yelling and gesticulating, was rather extraordinary. Of soldierly discipline there was not the slightest sign.

And then the crowds became infested with the same panic. Everybody was talking at once, jabbering excitedly, running about in aimless fashion; and as the minutes passed so the panic increased.

More soldiers appeared. From every corner of the city came the same babel of insane excitement.

"They've all gone dotty!" said Handforth, staring. "I've never seen such a thing in all my life! What's happened?"

There was nobody to answer the question, nobody to explain the meaning of this dramatic change. Not ten minutes ago the square had been peaceful and placid, full of drowsy Orientals, on good terms with everybody.

And now it was a seething mass of chaotic humanity.

which was now, indeed, like a true Chinese cangue. Truth to tell, Handforth was on the point of utter exhaustion. At last his powers of endurance were failing him. The unfortunate junior had gone through a terrible experience, and even now his plight was scarcely less serious.

If he attempted to walk, he was in danger of breaking his own neck. For the top of that cage was still unbroken, and it was heavy. He hardly knew how he had reached his present haven, and, with a weakness stealing over him, he made no attempt to get farther.

All he wanted to do was to rest; but rest was impossible, for that great wooden collar did not allow him to lie down, or even to sit down. He could only crouch there, in that little backwater, his thirst torturing him, and his brain reeling with the confusion which raged on every hand.

Rain to the Rescue!

"READY?" asked Lord Dorrimore tensely.

"Yes; we might as well make the attempt now," replied Nelson Lee. "It makes little difference, in any case. There will be no tame capture of the Wanderer, Dorrie. Foo Chow is not so panic-stricken as we at first assumed."

"All the better," said his lordship. "I'm after some gore, Lee! I like a bit of excitement with my fightin'!"

"Wise words, O my father!" rumbled Umlosi, his eyes blazing. "Speak thou the command, Untagati, and let us

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Soldiers and more soldiers. They came endlessly—long lines of troops rushing along, and all going in the same direction. An extra big batch came along, and the gathering crowds were swept helpless out of the way, trampling one another and screaming wildly.

About fifty helpless natives came rushing towards the centre of the square. With a wild surge they smashed headlong into the cage, and Handforth was sent hurtling over within those treacherous wooden bars.

For a dreadful moment he thought that his last minute had come.

Crash!

There was a splintering of wood, a smashing of timbers, and then the crowd was sent hurtling on, many of the unfortunate Chinese being trampled down and badly injured.

Edward Oswald Handforth, dazed and hurt, was rather astonished to find that he could still breathe. There was a dull pain in his legs—a strangling sensation at his neck. But then, with a sudden shock of relief, he found that his cage was smashed—battered and torn by that sudden collision with the human flood.

The bars were completely shattered on one side; the top of the atrocious affair was separated from the rest of the contrivance. And the leader of Study D, reeling drunkenly to his feet, found that he could walk! Round his neck was that heavy mass of wood, but he was no longer a prisoner.

He never knew quite how he managed it, but he got free of the crowds and sought refuge in a shady corner, a kind of backwater, where, for the time being, he was comparatively safe. Nobody took the slightest notice of him. There was too much panic for that.

If only he could get rid of that great wooden collar,

enter upon this battle! For am I not longing to slay these unclean sons of dogs?"

Nelson Lee hesitated.

"I don't like the boys being in this fight, but we can't very well help it," he said. "They'll never consent to be left behind, and we need them, too."

"I feel just the same as you do about it, old fellow, but we can't afford to be too particular in a big emergency like this," said his lordship. "It's now or never! It's a fight for our freedom! And if some of us get bowled over—well, it's better than all of us waitin' to be massacred."

"As you say, Dorrie, there is no alternative," agreed Nelson Lee. "Thank goodness we have persuaded the girls to remain within the palace!"

They were standing near the terrace, in front of the palace, and from this point they could see right down the long drive to the outer gates. These stood wide open, and the drawbridge was down, but there was no clear passage. Lined up near the great gates were fully fifty of Foo Chow's troops, and every man was armed with rifle and bayonet.

Would it be possible to smash through that grim guard?

It was small wonder that Nelson Lee hesitated. He and Dorrie and Umlosi were prepared to fight grimly and tenaciously, but it seemed dreadful to ask these junior school-boys to undertake similar risks.

Foo Chow had left this strong guard deliberately, so that his prisoners could not possibly escape. And the drawbridge was down, so that cars could come across at a moment's notice, in the event of an emergency.

Surely those guards would be sufficient! They were armed to the teeth, and these white people were utterly without a

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weapon. It did not seem that Foo Chow had left anything to chance.

In the distance the guns were booming more continuously. They were nearer, too. The battle was increasing—developing with a rapidity which heartened the prisoners. Yung Li Chang was making a swift, deadly invasion. Perhaps he would get the decision within a few short hours! But this seemed too much of a dream, and it was useless to take anything for granted. The only way was to act on their own.

And when this opportunity had gone, what then?

The skies were overcast now, and an occasional rumble of thunder was added to the distant sound of the guns.

"Are we ready, sir?" asked Dick Hamilton tensely.

"We're waiting for the order, sir!"

Every member of the party was there—all the men and all the boys. Mrs. Stokes and the girls were in the background, waiting, with fast-beating hearts, to see the result of this dash.

"Think of Handforth, sir!" urged Church. "If we only get free, we might be able to rescue him."

"Yes, rather!"

"And these Chinks will flee as soon as they see us rushing at 'em!" said Reggie Pitt. "They may be armed, but I don't suppose they'll fire. If they do—well, we're ready to go under fighting. Anything's better than waiting for Foo Chow's tortures."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's make a fight for it, sir!"

"We're all game!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

And Nelson Lee, in face of that valiant spirit, could not withhold his command any longer. He suddenly made up his mind.

"Yes!" he snapped. "We'll make a fight for it! Come!"

"Hurrah!"

It seemed a mad enterprise indeed, but the madness of it was nullified by the knowledge that Dr. Foo Chow would put them all to the torture if they tamely remained in captivity. Of this Nelson Lee was certain. There had been a look in Foo Chow's eyes which meant evil when he had picked himself up, and when he had been flung into the fountain.

With a wild cheer the juniors swept down the great drive. Nelson Lee, Barry Stokes, Lord Dorrmore, Umlosi, and Phipps were in the forefront, for Phipps was anxious to take his share. Archie's valet was no laggard when it came to a desperate encounter.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with Foo Chow and his army!"

"On, the Remove!"

Without a single weapon, without anything but their valiant spirit, the handful of Britishers surged on to the attack. There was something epic in this desperate attempt to capture the Wanderer.

Ahead, the Chinese soldiers were preparing. There were more of them now—a hundred strong. What insane folly was this? How could this handful expect to break through such an armed mass?

The troops were collected in the great gateway—packed there. There was no other exit from the island. It was only necessary to hold this one path, and escape was out of the question.

But that attacking force looked deadly, in spite of its small size!

Crack, crack, crack!

To Nelson Lee's horror a splutter of rifle-shots rang out. So these men had been ordered to fire, after all! There was a whine of bullets as they sang overhead. The aim of these men was atrocious, and not one shot took effect.

And then, like some Heaven-sent gift, came a sudden spatter of rain. Great drops they were—enormous drops which fell to the ground with distinct splashes. And then came a crashing burst of thunder.

Everything seemed to happen at once.

As that cannonade rolled out overhead, the rain increased in force. And it was at this very moment that the St. Frank's party ran headlong into the Chinese guards.

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, Remove!"

"Wau! This is indeed living!" roared Umlosi, grappling with one of the Chinamen, and whirling him round his head. There was something rather terrifying in Umlosi's terrific strength.

Nelson Lee expected a massacre then and there—a confused firing of rifles—a deadly charge with the bayonet. What chance was there for these unarmed boys against—

Swish—swish! Boom!

The rain now pelted down in blinding torrents, and the thunderstorm was at its height. Screaming and yelling, the Chinese soldiers broke. They turned before the attack of the holiday party, and did not even wait to get to grips. Only

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Umlosi and Dorrie had had any actual contact with the enemy.

The rest fled before there was any hand-to-hand struggling. They broke in every direction, and ran. It was like magic. In less than a minute the road was clear, and the enemy had vanished.

"We've scared 'em off!" gasped Fullwood. "The way is clear!"

"I knew they'd be scared of us!" yelled Reggie Pitt.

"On the Remove!"

There was not a minute's delay. Sweeping across the drawbridge, the St. Frank's party found itself still unhindered. Once across that bridge, there now lay the causeway—a wide, twisting descent which led straight downwards to the river level. Here there was a concrete quay, where there were boats in plenty. The Wanderer was lying out in the stream, guarded by her own batch of Chinese.

"The cowards!" panted Dorrie, as he ran. "Gad, Lee, I never dreamed they'd break like that, though! Doesn't it prove how wise we were to make this attempt?"

"It proves that Providence is on our side, Dorrie," replied Lee. "These Chinese soldiers may not be like our own troops, but they are devils in real battle. They are valiant, too, hurling themselves into untold dangers with a fearless, fatalistic abandon."

"But the beggars bolted!"

"Not because they were afraid of us!" said Lee grimly.

"It was the rain!"

"Good glory! The rain?"

As they raced down the causeway, Dorrie revealed his astonishment.

"Yes, old man, the rain," said the detective. "These Chinamen are like cats. If there is one thing they dread more than anything else, it is a heavy downpour of rain. They would rather enter the fiercest battle than face a storm."

"But—but that seems utterly incredible!" ejaculated his lordship. "Hang it all, you can't mean it! That's only a yarn!"

Nelson Lee glanced behind.

"Haven't we had concrete proof?" he asked.

It was true. And although most of the boys felt that their desperate charge had scared the Chinese into flight, it was really the thunderstorm which had brought about that amazing effect.

In battle, the Chinese are iron-nerved. They are desperate, grim fighters, careless of death itself, but they will go scuttling for shelter if there is even a shower. A heavy thunderstorm will make them forget battle and everything else. Duty means nothing when there is a drenching in view!

So it was Providence, indeed, which had helped the holiday party on this fatal afternoon!

A Desperate Venture!

"ONE moment, brothers—one moment!"

William Napoleon Browne seized Church and McClure, one with each hand. They had been running together, tearing down the causeway with the rest of the adventurers. Willy Handforth was with them, too, and he checked.

"We can't stop!" panted Church. "We've got to help in capturing the yacht!"

"Let the others attend to that trivial affair," said Browne, forcing them to a halt. "Seizing the yacht will be child's play, and four of us can be easily spared."

They looked at him, agast.

"But you're not—scared?" gasped McClure.

"Alas, Brother Mac, that a Browne should be faced with such an accusation!" said William Napoleon sadly. "Am I not better known—"

"Sorry!" interrupted McClure. "But it seems so rummy—"

"The rain has come to our aid—the rain has made this adventure possible," continued Browne. "I have heard, on the highest possible authority, that the Chinese would rather face machine-gun fire than a thunderstorm. Judging from their generally uncleanly condition, I believe it. The Wanderer, I assure you, will be taken without trouble. We have other work."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Church. "You—you mean—"

"Ted!" shouted Willy.

"Three minds with but a single thought," agreed Browne swiftly. "We are about to seize the yacht—we are on the point of defying Foo Chow and all his works. But can we call it a success if we fail to rescue Brother Handforth? Let us speed to Yang Fu, and tear him from the grip of his torturers."

"But—but can it be done?" asked McClure breathlessly.

"Why not?" said Willy. "Ted's been shoved into a cage, and it's a cert that he's in that big central square. They

always do these things in public. Besides, Foo Chow mentioned something of the sort. We ought to find Ted in no time."

"But how are we going to get there?" asked Church.

"Leave it to me," said Browne calmly. "Would I have suggested this mission if I had had no plan?"

They raced up the causeway again, leaving the other members of the party to engage in the fight for the Wanderer. And Browne was undoubtedly right. It was far better for these four to make a lightning raid upon Yang Fu, and rescue their unfortunate schoolfellow. Even now, perhaps, it would be too late, but an attempt was essential.

At the top of the causeway Browne paused and pointed.

An open car was standing there, having been abandoned at the outset of the downpour. Owing to the blinding rain, scarcely anybody had noticed it, and the heavens were still delivering sheets of water.

While this was terrifying to the Chinese, it was a glorious gift to the whites. The air was cooled, and the drenching was a welcome relief. But the greatest feature of all was that the rain rendered the enemy well-nigh powerless. It seemed absurd, but it was a fact.

That car had contained two officers, and they had evidently come to the island stronghold on an urgent mission. Yet, in spite of this urgency, they had leaped from the automobile at the first downpour of rain, and had dashed for shelter beneath a thick banyan-tree. In every respect it was characteristic of the Chinese.

"Come, brothers!" said Browne firmly.

They made a swift rush for the car, and piled in without any attempt being made to stop them. It was a powerful two-seater of racing type, without any hood. Browne pressed down the electric starter, and the engine roared.

"Hurrah!" yelled Church. "We're off!"

"Off to Yang Fu, to rescue Handy!" breathed McClure. "It seems too good to be true! I don't suppose we shall be able to find him. In any case, isn't it like going out of the frying-pan into the fire? Isn't it like deliberately entering the lion's mouth?"

The car was now roaring along the highway, Browne at the wheel, and his companions packed in next to him, and all soaked to the skin.

"It would be more correct to say, into the dragon's mouth," remarked Browne. "But do not be alarmed, brothers. I would not have suggested this scheme had there been no hope of success. I am relying upon the rain to continue."

"Great Scott! You mean that we shan't be stopped in the city?" asked Willy.

"If the storm is still raging the streets will be empty," declared Browne. "For in Yang Fu there is plenty of shelter—and where you find shelter, there you will find Chinamen when it rains. If this storm abruptly ceases before we reach the city gates, we shall reluctantly turn back."

"Not without Ted!" said Willy.

"Without Ted!" said Browne gravely. "For what help can we be to Brother Ted if we, too, are swiftly conveyed to the chamber of horrors? But be not pessimistic. The storm increases rather than diminishes."

It was a fact.

Ever since midday the air had been heavy, and in the early part of the afternoon the clouds had been gathering. And the storm was now raging with intensified fury. The lightning blazed, and the thunder rolled; but the latter sound was like sweet music to the four St. Frank's fellows in the car.

It was fortunate that the great highway was clear, for Browne was driving at something like fifty miles an hour, and the downpour was so tremendous that the visibility was poor. The flooded road sent up great sheets of water as the car hurtled over it.

With a sudden pressure of his foot Browne jammed on the brakes, and the powerful automobile went skidding giddily sideways. But the Fifth-Former regained control at once, but only in the nick of time. The gates of Yang Fu had loomed up out of the blur of rain, and the car simply shot through the gateway and into the rough street beyond.

That concrete highway only commenced outside the city, but within the walls the roads were uneven, tortuous, and now deep in mud. But, as Browne had anticipated, the place was like a town of the dead.

There were no human beings within sight.

Incredible as it seemed in the midst of all this excitement, the entire population had scuttled into shelter, and the merciless rain beat down upon the empty streets with tremendous

velocity. It could be seen splashing up like fog from the low roofs. The road, like a quagmire, was causing the car to skid and slither alarmingly, for Browne was still driving fast.

And he only drove at random, too. He kept straight on, and good fortune took him to the big central square. Here the same aspect of desertion was apparent, but there were people visible in the doorways, crouching in the shelter. And the rain seethed down as though the heavens were seeking some revenge upon the city.

"What's the use?" shouted Church, the rain pouring down his face. "We've got here, and I don't think we're in much danger. But how can we find Handy in this great place? We might search for hours—"

"I say—quick!" interrupted Willy. "Look at that poor beggar wallowing in the mud there! Pull up, Browne! Oh, these fiends! We can't go by and see the poor brute suffering like that!"

"Brother Willy, your heart is of the right kind!" said Browne firmly.

He swerved, and the car skidded giddily in the mud and swung round.

Out in the mud, some distance from the nearest building, a poor creature was lying helplessly in the drenching rain, a victim of Chinese torture! Only his head could be seen, and this was protruding through a great, square wooden collar.

It was impossible for the unfortunate one to rise, for that collar was too heavy. Neither could he lie down. He could only crouch there, in a kneeling attitude, resting the edge of that cumbersome collar in the mud.

The sight had touched Willy's heart, and he was burning with rage as he jumped from the car and sogged through the slush to the poor creature's help. It was Willy's intention to remove that barbarous wooden collar.

"All right, old son!" he muttered, as he bent down.

"We'll soon have you out of this—"

"By George! Willy!" came a low, husky cry from the mud-spattered figure.

Willy started as though he had been shot.

"Ted!" he gasped. "Oh, Ted!"

With blazing eyes, he turned.

"Quick!" he shouted. "It's Ted! If this isn't Fate, what is? We didn't even know it was him, and yet—"

"Oh, the brutes—the curs!" shouted Church, as he flung himself into the mud by Handforth's side. "Handy, old man! Poor old Handy! Quick! Can't somebody help me with this fiendish thing?"

"Steady, brother—steady!" urged Browne. "A sudden wrench, and Brother Handforth will be past rescuing! See! Do my eyes deceive me, or is there a primitive metal catch here? Splendid! Coolness, brother, is always the better method!"

With deliberate fingers Browne forced back a rude iron catch—which Handforth himself had been unable to reach, or, at least, upon which he had been unable to exert any pressure.

With all his strength Browne strove, and the catch succumbed.

The great collar broke into two, and Edward Oswald Handforth rolled clear. From all sides eyes were watching through the rain, but not one Chinese ventured out to interfere with this little drama.

"Ted!" muttered Willy, horrified.

Handforth's neck was swollen and chafed. Indeed, it was so grazed that Handforth uttered a low moan as he put his hand to it. Then he sank back in the mud, overcome by a sudden wave of exhaustion.

"Into the car with him!" said Willy huskily. "Thank Heaven we've found him, that's all! Browne, old man, we've got you to thank for this—"

"Pray defer any thanks, Brother Willy, until we are clear of the city," interrupted Browne in a tense voice. "The rain is stopping and the populace stirs. Let us reveal a modicum of speed."

Gently Handforth was conveyed to the car and placed next to the driving-seat. The others clung anywhere—to the footboards, to the rear. Browne lot in the clutch, and turned the automobile round.

And out they went through the city, with a clearing sky overhead, and with a glad feeling in their hearts. The rain was stopping, and just overhead there was a patch of brilliant blue.

And as they shot through the great gateway in the city wall and found themselves upon the main highway, the sun burst out from behind the departing storm clouds.

The desperate mission had succeeded!

(Don't miss next week's thrilling developments in this popular serial. Order your copy early.)

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THE BLACK DOMINO!

(Continued from page 22.)

Hilton carefully avoided meeting his uncle's glance. "Take Miss Fawcett to the hotel, Tom," said the major. "I want to speak to my nephew very particularly just now. You will excuse me for a few minutes, my dear lady?" "Certainly, major."

Miss Priscilla and the juniors moved on, and the major remained alone with his nephew. Hilton stared at the sea. The major stared at Hilton. As the young man did not speak, the old soldier broke the silence.

"Have you anything to say, Archie?"

"About what?"

"About this matter—the matter of the robbery from Miss Fawcett?"

"You are insulting," said Hilton, turning deadly pale. "Do you mean to imply—"

"The truth," said the major coolly. "I ought to have guessed it. That is why Tom Merry asked his governess to take the matter out of the hands of the police. That is how he recovered the money by finding you at Monte Carlo. It is useless to deny it. I knew that pocket-book Figgins had the money in. It is yours."

Hilton's lips trembled.

"Uncle!"

"My dear lad," said the major, more kindly, "I don't want to be harsh with you. I have feared something of this sort for a long time, and I am only glad that those lads have succeeded in saving you from crime."

"It was your fault. You would lend me nothing."

"No; this won't do, Archie! Listen to me. You are my sister's son—the son of my sister and my oldest chum. I can't let you go to the dogs without an effort to stop you."

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Hilton's face softened.

"That's kind of you, uncle; but—"

"If you refuse, I shall have to consider whether it would not be better for you to be in prison than haunting gambling dens," said the major sternly. "You can take your choice."

"I will do as you wish."

The major's rugged, wrinkled face lighted up.

"That's right, my boy—that's right, Archie. That's like a man. You won't be sorry for it, either, I think."

And the major looked more satisfied than he had looked for some time as he walked on to the hotel with his nephew.

It was easy for Tom Merry & Co. to see that something had passed between the major and Hilton when they rejoined the party; but they did not know what it was, and they did not think of inquiring; but that Hilton had decided to lead a new life for some reason they soon knew.

He haunted no more gambling dens, and he gradually resumed the old liveliness of spirits that had been so long overcast by the wretched infatuation of gambling.

And, needless to say, the juniors of St. Jim's enjoyed their holiday at Monte Carlo, and all the more because of Hilton's change of ways and pleasant companionship.

But that holiday, like all things, came to an end at last.

The day arrived when Tom Merry & Co. had to bid farewell to Monte Carlo, and to board the train that was to bear them back to the northward, through France and Paris to England, home, and school.

THE END.

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