

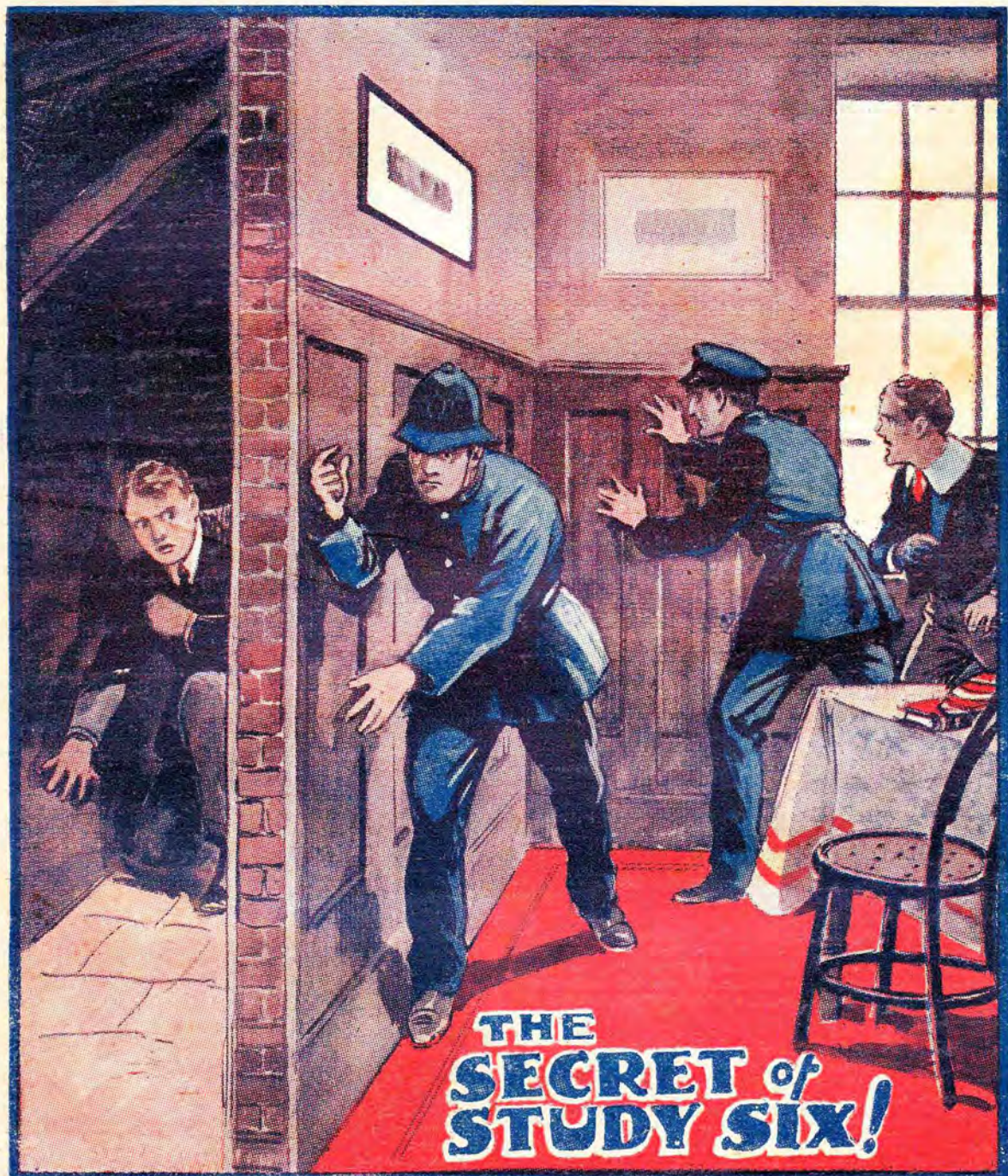
"THE SECRET OF STUDY SIX!" is THE School Story of the Week **INSIDE!**
—Starring the Chums of St. Jim's



The **GEM**

THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

2d



**THE
SECRET of
STUDY SIX!**

THRILLING SCHOOL ADVENTURES AND SURPRISES ARE THE—

The SECRET of STUDY SIX!



Lord Conway, a fugitive from the police in connection with a ten thousand pounds diamond theft, finds loyal helpers and safe refuge at St. Jim's. But Tom Merry & Co., the faithful supporters of Gussy's elder brother, are not prepared for the treachery of a cad of the school who suspects their secret!

CHAPTER 1. Bad News!

"POSTMAN!"
"Hurrah!"
Six or seven juniors of St. Jim's, crowded in the doorway of the School House, shouted "Hurrah!" as Blagg, the postman from Rylcombe, was seen toiling across the quad in the hot August sunshine.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther and Manners were leaning up against the door, apparently too tired by the hot weather to stand without assistance. Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were sitting on the stone balustrade outside. Arthur Augustus, the swell of the Fourth Form, stood in the middle of the doorway, in the most elegant attitude. Hot as the weather was, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not, apparently, need any support. He stood quite erect, with his eyeglass screwed into his eye, watching the old quad.

It was a half-holiday, and the weather was blazing. Cricket practice, by common consent, had been postponed till the sun was a little lower; and there happened to be no special match on that afternoon. It was just the weather, as Blake of the Fourth had suggested, for a run up the river.

But alas!

Funds, which were always in a fluctuating state in the junior Forms at St. Jim's, were "down" now—very down. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—were stony. The chums of the Fourth were almost in the same hapless condition. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was able to scrape up a few odd shillings. It was just the afternoon for a nice little excursion, and tea at a

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riverside inn—but funds were wanting. There was one hope—the afternoon's post.

The juniors of the School House—like most juniors of the school—lived always in hopes of a remittance arriving. They had their regular allowances of pocket-money, but they had, as a rule, affectionate uncles and aunts, or elderly cousins, or even grandfathers, who sent them extra tips. And besides the regular relations, so to speak, there was always a possibility of a stray uncle or aunt turning up and sending a little reminder in a financial shape. And the juniors had agreed to wait till the afternoon's post came in, to ascertain whether a remittance might arrive. Nobody was expecting one, as a matter of fact. But, as Monty Lowther pointed out, it was the unexpected that always happened. And there was a chance that the unexpected might happen that afternoon.

D'Arcy's "governor," in particular, might send even a fiver—and even five shillings, let alone five pounds, would have been very welcome to the stony juniors. They waited for the postman—and the postman was late. Perhaps Blagg found his bag heavy to carry through the dusty lanes on that blazing afternoon. Perhaps he paused at certain wayside places of refreshment. At all events, he was late, and the juniors were growing impatient. It was too hot to be angry, or they might even have lost their tempers.

The sight of the postman toiling in was a welcome relief to all. Never had the squat figure of Blagg seemed so pleasing to the eye.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scanned the postman through his eyeglass, and then turned that gleaming adornment upon the chums of the School House.

"I've got a wippin' suggestion to make, you chaps," he remarked.

Blake yawned.

—STAR FEATURES OF THIS YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Wait till the cool weather comes," he said. "We can stand it better then."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's have it in the autumn," said Monty Lowther, with a nod, "or, better still, in the winter. Or perhaps you could make it while you're at home in the vac and we needn't be bothered at all."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Blessed if Blagg isn't crawling like a blessed caterpillar!" said Tom Merry. "Suppose we go and meet him."

"Too hot!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! He may not have a lettah for any of us, and then it would be so much twouble wasted."

"Quite right," said Monty Lowther, with a yawn.

"I was goin' to suggest that if there is a wemittance for any of us, we should agvee beforehand to share it out all alike all wound," said Arthur Augustus. "If we make the awwangement in advance, it will be as fair for one as for anothah."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "Jolly good idea! I'm willing!"

"Same here!" said Digby. "I'm not expecting anything, so really it will be a ripping idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as a good ideah, you know!" said Arthur Augustus modestly. "You see, I may get a fivah fwom my governah. He's wathah a decent old sort, you know, though he has his little ways—"

"Lord Eastwood is a ripping old sort, and he hasn't any little ways!" said Jack Blake. "I decline to allow you to speak disrespectfully of my esteemed friend Lord Eastwood!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Blagg!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Blagg! Come hither, come hither, my little Blaggy, and do not linger so!"

"It's quite poss that I may get a fivah fwom my governah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after bestowing a withering glare upon Blake, who bore it quite serenely. "And I may get a wemittance, too, fwom my eldah bwothah, Lord Conway. Conway is wathah an ass, but he's all wight!"

"I should think there ought to be a letter for one of us," said Herries thoughtfully. "My pater might be sending me something. I told him in my last letter that I wanted a new collar for Towser."

"Blagg! Blagg! Hurry up!"

The postman looked up at the juniors, and grinned through the perspiration that was clinging to his red face.

"Ere I am, young gents!"

"Anything for us?"

"One letter for Master D'Arcy, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake slapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the back.

"Gussy, your idea was simply ripping!" he exclaimed. "We'll all share alike—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy cheerfully. "I stand by the awwangement, of course. Whatevah is in the lettah, you chaps share in it."

"Done!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Pway hand it ovah, Blaggy, deah boy; and there's a tannah for you!"

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

"Buck up with the letter, Blaggy!"

"Hurry up!"

"Quick!"

The postman grinned, and with a leisurely hand sorted out the letter for D'Arcy. It was too hot for hurry.

Blake took the letter from the Rylcombe postman's hand and tossed it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"There you are, Gussy!"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Blagg shouldered his bag again, and went round the side of the House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced at the letter.

"Oh, it's not fwom my governah!"

"Don't say it's only a tailor's bill!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy! It's fwom my majah, Conway, and I shouldn't wondah if there is somethin' in it."

"Open it and see!" shouted Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus inserted a penknife in the envelope, and slit it open. He drew out the letter from within. The juniors watched him eagerly; there was no enclosure—merely the letter, and nothing more.

Jack Blake gave a snort.

"I'm rather inclined to agree with you, Gussy—Conway is rather an ass!"

Arthur Augustus nodded as he unfolded the letter. He glanced at it, and his look became fixed.

A strange, startled look came into his face, and the colour ebbed from his cheeks, leaving his face deadly white. His eyeglass dropped from his eye, and swung at the end of the cord.

"Oh! Good heavens!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy muttered the words in a low, choking voice, and staggered back.

"Gussy!"

"What is it?"

"What's the matter, Gussy, old man?"

"Bai Jove!"

Jack Blake clapped D'Arcy on the shoulder. All the fun was gone out of his face. His chum was in trouble; he could see that.

"What is it, Gussy? Is it bad news from home?"

"Oh! Yaas, wathah! Poor old Conway!"

"Not—ill?"

"I'll! No."

"Not—," Blake could not speak the word.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Dead? No—he's all wight. Oh deah! Poor old Conway! The idiots!"

"Eh?"

"The uttah asses!"

"What!"

"I—I—I'm sowwy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I—I can't show you the lettah, deah boys. I—I can't tell you what's in it!"

"Can't we help you, Gussy?"

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head miserably.

"No, deah boy. It's imposs."

"Lord Conway is in trouble?"

"Yes; howwible twouble!"

"We won't ask you any questions, Gussy, if you don't want to answer them," said Tom Merry quietly. "But if we can advise you—"

"I'm afwaid you can't, Tom Mewwy, old son. You'll hear all about it soon, I suppose—fwom the papahs."

The juniors stared at him.

"From the papers!" exclaimed Digby.

"Yaas!"

"Good heavens!" said Tom Merry. "What is it—an accident?"

"No!"

"Then, what— But I won't ask you. If we could do anything, Gussy, you'd tell us; mind, we're ready all the time."

"I—I know that, deah boy. I—I think I will wetiah now. I—I've had wathah a shock! It's thwown me into quite a fluttah! Poor old Conway!"

Arthur Augustus thrust the letter into his jacket pocket, and moved away towards the staircase. The others did not follow. They knew that the swell of the School House wanted to be alone.

They remained in the doorway, staring at one another. Snipe of the Fourth came by, with a quick, inquisitive expression on his face. Snipe had caught a few words, and he was very curious.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Mind your own bizney!" said Blake gruffly.

The cad of the Fourth turned to Tom Merry.

"Anything wrong with Gussy?"

"Find out!"

"Oh, all right, I will!"

Snipe turned towards the stairs. Tom Merry stepped after him, and laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't bother Gussy now, Snipe; he's had some bad news from home and he doesn't want to be worried."

"I suppose I can speak to a chap if I like?" said Snipe defiantly.

"No, you can't!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"If you put a foot on the stairs, Snipe, I'll sling you down them head first," said Tom Merry, in low, quiet tones. Snipe gave him a savage look; but he did not go upstairs. He swung away, and went out into the quadrangle.

"I wonder what the matter can be?" Blake said, in a low voice. "It must be something pretty bad to cut Gussy like this."

"Yes; it's rotten!"

"I don't think I'll go out this afternoon," Blake said.

"You fellows can buzz along, if you like."

"I don't feel much inclined to go out," said Tom Merry.

"Same here!"

"I think the same."

The juniors were all of the same mind. Many a time they had made fun of their elegant friend, but in a time of trouble there was only friendship and honest concern in their hearts. What was the matter? They could not tell; but they were too deeply concerned for D'Arcy to think of a holiday that afternoon.

They hung restlessly about the doorway of the School House. Arthur Augustus had gone up to his study, and he did not come down again. After a time Jack Blake went upstairs to the Fourth Form passage.

He paused outside Study No. 6. The door was closed. Blake listened for a moment; he did not want to disturb D'Arcy.

There was a long, deep, quivering breath in the room—almost like a sob. The swell of St. Jim's was there.

"Oh deah! Poor old Conway! It's feahful! What evah shall I do? Oh deah!"

Jack Blake passed on with a clouded brow. He could not force the confidence of his chum; but his heart ached for D'Arcy at that moment, and he wished that his chum would tell him what was the matter.

CHAPTER 2.

The Man in Hiding!

"SLACKERS!" said D'Arcy minor—more generally known in the Third Form as Wally.

The Third Form junior paused in the doorway of the School House, and directed his remark to Tom Merry & Co. The chums of the School House did not usually "slack," but certainly they looked as if they were slacking at the present moment.

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther.

"Slackers!" repeated D'Arcy minor. "What do you mean by hanging about the House on a sunny afternoon like this?"

"More rats!"

"Still, it's just as well," said Wally. "I've come to look for you. I want you."

"What's on?"

"Blessed if I know!" said D'Arcy minor. "But it's rather mysterious. I suppose you know the old barn in the Wood Field?"

"Yes, rather!"

"There's somebody there!"

"Eh?"

"There's somebody there," repeated Wally, "and it's jolly mysterious! I thought I'd come and fetch some of the fellows to have him out."

The juniors stared at D'Arcy minor. They did not quite understand what he was driving at.

"Look here! Are you pulling our legs?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Not at all."

"Why shouldn't there be somebody in the Wood Field barn? Tramps often go to sleep there. Who is there—a tramp?"

"I don't know. This is the how of it," said D'Arcy minor. "I dropped into the barn—"

"You've been climbing on the roof?"

"No, ass. I've been over to Wayland, and I passed the barn on my way back. I had Pongo with me, and Pongo ran into the barn. Of course, I thought he had gone after a rabbit, and I followed him. A rabbit would have come in all right for tea in the Third Form Room," explained Wally.

"You poaching young rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild! It's not my fault, I suppose, if Pongo goes for rabbits," said Wally warmly. "Well, I followed Pongo into the barn, and I heard somebody scuttle up the ladder into the loft as I went in."

"He wanted to get away from Pongo, I suppose."

"Oh, rats! It wasn't a rabbit—or if it was, he had the feet of a man and a very decent pair of boots on," said Wally. "That was all I saw. The trapdoor slammed down, and when I went up the ladder it was tight, and I couldn't open it."

"What did you go up the ladder for?"

"I wanted to look into the loft."

Monty Lowther shook a warning finger at the scamp of the Third.

"Curiosity, my son, is a serious vice—" he began. But the hero of the Third Form interrupted him without ceremony.

"Oh, bosh! Don't play the giddy ox! I came here to

get some fellows to have the chap out, whoever he is," said Wally.

"Jameson and Gibson have gone over to Rylecombe, like a pair of silly asses, so I'll take you kids, if you like."

The Fourth Formers and Shell fellows looked speechlessly at Wally. To be called kids by a fag of the Third Form was a little too much.

"You cheeky young ass—" began Manners wrathfully.

"Oh, cheese it! Where's Gus?"

"In the study," said Blake.

Wally snorted.

"What on earth is he doing in the study on a blazing day like this?" he demanded. "Got an impot?"

"No."

"What's the row, then?"

The juniors were silent. Wally was D'Arcy's younger brother, and perhaps entitled to know that there was bad news from home. But, after all, it was the business of Arthur Augustus to tell him if he was to be told.

"Better ask him," said Blake, after a pause.

Wally looked from one to another in surprise.

"What's on?" he demanded. "I can see that there's something on. Anything the matter with old Gus?"

"Ask him; he's in the study."

"My only Aunt Jane! What's all the blessed mystery about?" demanded Wally. "Well, I'll ask him, if you like."

The fag tramped into the House and up the stairs. He stopped at Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage and kicked at the door, and then turned the handle. The door did not open; it was locked.

Wally kicked again on the lower panels, and augmented his summons by hammering upon the upper ones with his fist.

"Gussy!" he roared.

"Hallo! Is that you, Wally, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! Let me in."

"I—I don't want to be disturbed just now."

"My only Aunt Jane! Are you beginning to take a nap in the afternoon, you blessed old fogey?" shouted Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I want you to come out."

"Imposs."

"I've got something on," said Wally. "Look here—"

"I've got to go out and keep an appointment in about half an hour, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, without opening the door. "Pway excuse me."

Wally grunted.

"Oh, I suppose it will take you all that time to get dressed, then," he said. "All serene, you blessed old duffer!"

"Weally, Wally—"

But Wally was gone, and his piercing whistle died away down the passage. He descended the stairs by sliding down the banisters, and joined the juniors at the door of the School House.

"Gussy coming out?" asked Blake eagerly.

Wally shook his head.

"No. He says he's got to keep an appointment in half an hour. Look here, will you fellows come? My view is that there is something up."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you remember there were a blessed lot of footpads hanging around this neighbourhood last week," said Wally.

"A couple of silly duffers were robbed."

"I was one of them," said Blake, frowning.

"Yes; I said duffers," said Wally cheerfully. "Well, some of them have been arrested, but not all. I shouldn't wonder if that chap hiding in the barn was one of the gang. He may have nipped in there to keep out of the way of the police. Anyway, he's up to no good, or why should he slither off into the loft, and fasten down the trapdoor when he heard somebody come into the barn? The barn is jolly lonely, and it's pretty clear to me that he's sneaked in there for no good."

Tom Merry nodded slowly.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said. "But it's a good quarter of an hour's walk from here; and I should think he would be gone before we got there."

"Not if he's one of that gang. He wouldn't dare to cross the fields in daylight. The police are still looking for them, and all the keepers on the estates round here have been warned to look out."

"Might as well go," said Digby. "If Gussy is going out to keep an appointment, he won't want us; and it's no good hanging about doing nothing."

"Quite right!"

"I'll take you there," said Wally loftily. "If it's a footpad in hiding, it will be a feather in our cap to bag him, and it will make the New House chaps simply green with envy. Figgins & Co. will be simply wild."

That was enough to decide the School House juniors.



Creak—crash! "Look out!" yelled Manners, but his warning came too late. The ladder, not strong enough to stand the strain that Tom Merry & Co. put on it, suddenly broke in half. The four juniors descended in a wild heap, and let out yells of anguish as they smote the floor. "Ow! Oh! Yarough!"

They had nothing to do, and a chance of scoring over the New House was not to be neglected.

"We're on," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Buck up, then, and come on."

And, with Wally in the lead, the School House juniors crossed the gates, in the westerling sun.

Wally gave a shrill whistle, and Pongo bounded up. Herries paused.

"Might as well fetch Towser," he remarked. "If there's a dangerous character in the barn, Towser's the dog to tackle him."

"Oh rats! He'll fight with Pongo," said Wally.

"You can carry that mongrel."

"That's all very well, but—"

"I'll catch you up," said Herries, and without any further argument, he hurried off to the kennels behind the School House for Towser, the bulldog.

Herries overtook the others at the stile in the lane. Towser was with him, and Towser made a straight line for Pongo. Wally caught his shaggy favourite up in his arms just in time to save him from being pinned.

"Look here," roared Wally, "you keep your beastly brute off my dog!"

"You keep your beastly dog out of his reach!" retorted Herries. "Not that there's much danger of Towser touching him. Towser's rather particular what he bites."

Wally glowered, and marched along with Pongo in his arms. In the westerling sunlight the juniors reached the old barn. With a growl, Towser ran into the barn—he had evidently smelt the presence of a stranger.

There was the sound of a loud bang.

"That's the trapdoor," said Wally.

The juniors rushed into the barn. It was empty, save for Towser, who stood in the middle of the stone floor, growling as in disappointment.

CHAPTER 3.

The Wrong Man!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked about them in wonder. The stranger, whoever he was, whose presence D'Arcy minor had discovered in the barn, was evidently still there.

It was equally evident that he had descended from the loft after Wally's departure. Doubtless the loft was a stuffy place to stay in for any length of time, especially in the hot weather. But the sight of the bulldog had scared the stranger to his place of refuge again.

The trapdoor at the top of the steps had banged down before the juniors could get into the building.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Monty Lowther. "Either it's one of the footpad gang, as Wally says, or else it's some humorous joker playing tricks with us."

"We'll soon see."

Tom Merry ascended the ladder, and tried the trapdoor above. It was closed, and seemed to be fastened, for it did not move under the steady pressure of his hand.

"It's locked or bolted," said Digby.

"Can't be," said Monty Lowther. "I've been up in that loft before. There's no lock or bolt, or fastening of any kind, on that trapdoor."

"It seems jolly tight," said Tom Merry.

"Then he's standing on it."

"My hat! He must be!"

Tom Merry put his shoulder to the level door, and braced himself upon the ladder. He exerted all his strength to

force the door up. It shifted ever so little, and the ladder under Tom Merry's feet strained and creaked.

Tom Merry ceased to press, with a gasp. The task was beyond his strength.

"Call out to the bouncer," said Wally.

Tom Merry rapped out on the under side of the trapdoor with his knuckles.

"Hallo, there!" he shouted.

"Are you there?" bawled Monty Lowther.

Rap, rap, rap!

There was no reply.

That the stranger was there, was certain; but he did not answer, and the trapdoor was not released from above.

"Who are you?" shouted Blake.

No reply.

"Look here! If you care to show yourself, we shan't do you any harm!" Tom Merry called through the trapdoor. "We suspect you of being one of the footpads, and we're going to make sure—savvy?"

Silence.

"It can't be an honest man, or he'd answer," said Manners. "I'm jolly certain it's somebody in hiding."

"Might be one of the Grammar School chaps japing us," Herries suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be that. He couldn't have remained here all this time. He couldn't guess that Wally would come back with a crowd of us."

"No, that's so."

"It's one of the Nobbler's gang, for certain. Look here! You chaps get on the ladder beside me, and brace yourselves under the trapdoor, and we'll give a big shove," said Tom Merry.

"Right you are!"

The juniors crowded upon the ladder. Four of them succeeded in getting their shoulders under the trapdoor, with their feet firmly planted on the rungs of the ladder.

"Now, then, all together!" shouted Tom Merry.

And the juniors gave a simultaneous heave.

Creak! Crash!

But it was not the trapdoor that gave way. It was the ladder. The old, rotten wood did not stand the strain, and the ladder cracked across and broke.

"Look out!" yelled Manners.

Bump! Crash! Bump!

Four juniors sprawled on the floor of the barn with wild yells.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Yah!"

"My hat!"

The rotten ladder was falling to pieces. Tom Merry & Co. sat up and groaned. They were not really hurt—only very considerably bumped. Above them the trapdoor remained sealed as fast as ever.

"Well, of all the asses——" said Wally.

"You young cheeky fathead——"

"Oh, pick yourselves up and sort yourselves out!" said Wally, with a sniff. "Blessed if I know how we're going to get up to the loft now!"

It was rather a question. The decayed ladder was in fragments, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not have put it together again, as in the celebrated case of Humpty Dumpty. The trapdoor of the loft was far above the juniors' heads, and there was no possible means of reaching it.

"We might climb on one another's shoulders," Blake suggested vaguely.

"Rats! We couldn't open the door that way."

"No; but——"

"But the chap can't get down, either, I should think," Digby remarked. "Look here! I've got an idea!" He sank his voice to a whisper. "Let's get out——"

"Bosh!" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his bruises. "I'm not getting out till we've collared that rotter, whoever he is!"

"Ass! I don't mean to go away for good. Let's get out and leave Towser here on guard," Digby whispered; "then the chap, if he wants to bolt, will have to drop out of the window of the loft. He won't care to tackle Towser in the dark, I should think."

"Not much," said Herries.

"Well, then, we can make a pretence of going away, and we can watch in the bush close by the barn, and collar him as he gets out. He won't stay here all night—you can be sure of that, after what's happened. He'll know we shall spread the news that he's here."

Digby's idea seemed a good one. The only objection to it was that it was getting dark, and that at dark the gates of St. Jim's were locked by Taggles, the school porter. The juniors would have to miss calling over.

"And that means lines," remarked Manners.

"Who cares?" said Digby.

"Well, I do, for one," Blake remarked. "But I think that if we explained to the Head that we stayed out to collar one of the footpads who attacked him the other night, it would be all serene."

"I should think so."

"We'll risk it," said Tom Merry.

"Right you are!"

Herries stationed Towser on the floor of the barn, under the trapdoor. He pointed to the trapdoor, and Towser understood perfectly.

"Watch him!" said Herries. "Seize him, Towser!"

And Towser showed his teeth with a gleam in the dusk of the barn. Towser was an unreliable dog in some respects, but he could be relied upon this time.

"Watch him, Towser!"

The words could be clearly heard by the man above in the loft, and he knew that he was being watched by a bulldog. And it would have required a very bold man to jump down from the loft into the very teeth of Towser in the dark.

The juniors crowded out of the barn. It was getting dark in the fields, and Ryloombe Wood was a blur. Far away through the evening haze the grey tower of St. Jim's soared skyward over the trees.

The juniors stood chatting outside the barn till the dusk was thick enough to hide their movements. Then they tramped away, still talking loudly for the man in the barn to hear.

Behind a thicket at some distance they halted.

"Take care now," said Tom Merry. "This is where Boy Scouts come in useful. We've got to get back to that bush beside the barn without being seen."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors crept back towards the barn through the thick dusk. In a few minutes they were under cover of the flowering bush, within six yards of the barn, on the side where the wall of the loft was pierced by a window.

Within the barn Towser was patiently watching the trapdoor. Outside the juniors were watching, less patiently, but quite as vigilantly, the only window in the loft. There was no escape for the man hidden there.

Whichever way he attempted to leave the loft he was certain to be seen. And if he remained there, it was only a question of sending for the police, for the juniors were

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firmly convinced that this man was a member of Nobbler's gang of footpads.

They waited while the darkness thickened over the fields and the woods.

Suddenly Tom Merry held up his hand.

From the darkness had come a sound—the sound of a footstep. But it did not come from the direction of the barn. It came from the distant road—someone was crossing the field from the road to the barn.

"Hist!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Hist yourself!" said Blake.

"Quiet!"

"Rats!"

"Someone's coming," murmured Tom Merry. "It's somebody coming to the barn. Look here! The place must be a rendezvous, and that's another of the gang coming."

"Sure as a gun," agreed Monty Lowther. "Let's collar him! Hark!"

A sharp, clear whistle rang out from the gloom—twice in succession. It was answered by a whistle from the barn.

"It's a signal!"

"My word!"

Tom Merry made a sign to the juniors. The footsteps came right on, and as a dark form loomed up in the darkness the juniors of St. Jim's made a rush. In a moment they were round the newcomer, and had seized him.

There was a startled gasp from the stranger. He struggled in the grasp of the juniors, but they had him down on the ground in a twinkling.

"Careful!" gasped Blake. "Hold his hand; he may have a revolver!"

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 4. A Sudden Surprise!

"Bai Jove!"

That sudden exclamation from the stranger they had seized stupefied the juniors.

They let him go as if he had become red-hot.

Blake gasped.

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry, dazed.

"Arthur Augustus!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors released the swell of St. Jim's—for it was really he. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet and groped for his displaced eyeglass. He was breathing very hard.

"You—you uttah asses!" he gasped.

"Gussy!"

"You feahful, frabjous clumps!"

"D'Arcy!"

"You burblin' fatheads—"

"Gussy, old man—"

"You have wumped all my clothes and simply wuined my necktie," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What are you doin' here?"

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "It's a mistake. But what are you doing here? Did you know we were here?"

"Wathah not!"

"Then you didn't come to join us?"

"Certainly not, you ass!"

"Then, what are you here for?" demanded half a dozen voices at once.

D'Arcy smoothed down his rumpled trousers without replying.

"We took you for one of the gang going to join the chap in the barn," replied Tom Merry.

D'Arcy gave a start.

"Chap in the barn!" he murmured.

"Yes; there's a chap hiding in the loft over the barn, and we're going to have him out," Tom Merry explained.

"We suspect him of being a member of the gang of footpads who attacked the Head the other night, and robbed you and Blake."

"Ass!"

"Eh?"

"Fathead!"

"Look here—"

"The man isn't a footpad, you uttah ass!"

"How do you know?" Blake demanded.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy knows something about him," said Digby. "He was signalling to him as he came up; they whistled to each other."

"My hat—so they did!" exclaimed Manners. "What does it mean, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"What do you know about this chap in the barn?"

"Weally, you see—"

"The young ass!" said Lowther. "He might have been

going into danger, you know, with this scoundrel in the barn."

"You uttah ass! How dare you call my bwothah a scoundwel?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Monty Lowther staggered in surprise.

"Your brother?" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Your brother's here!" said Blake, pulling Wally forward.

"Here I am, Gussy!" said Wally cheerfully. "What on earth put it into your head that I was in the barn?"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"I—I—I—" he stammered.

"Oh, you're off your rocker!" said Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Well, now you're here, you can join us," said Blake. "That chap in the barn must have heard us, I suppose; but it doesn't matter. We're going to watch for him."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We know he's a had egg, whoever he is!" Blake exclaimed. "Towser's watching for him in the barn, under the trapdoor, and we're going to watch here. If he doesn't

A PROBLEM!



* Quack Doctor (addressing crowd): "Two years ago, my friends, I was a physical wreck. Now I'm going to tell you what wrought this wonderful change."

Voice in crowd: "What change?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. G. Foster, Beech Cottage, Greenham Common, near Newbury, Berkshire.

come out soon, it would be a good idea for one of us to cut off to the police station in Rylcombe and fetch a bobby."

"Bai Jove!"

"Good egg!" said Digby. "I'll go, if you like!"

"Well, we can't wait here all night," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "And, now that the man has heard us, we can't expect to take him by surprise. It would be better to fetch a policeman."

"I—I—considah—"

"But suppose it's only one of the Grammar School cads playing a jape on us?" Lowther suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"One of the Grammar School chaps wouldn't stay out after calling-over like this for a jape," he replied.

"Well, who's going for the bobby? We can give him a tip if he's not wanted after all. He would do the walk any time for a bob."

"Quite so!"

"Buzz off, Dig, and buck up."

"Right you are!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught the junior by the arm.

"Hold on, Dig, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

The Fourth-Former stared at him.

"What for?" he asked. "The sooner we get it over, the better. There will be a row if we don't get back to the school pretty soon."

"Yaas; but—"

"Blessed if I can understand you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, in perplexity. "You whistled when you came up. Does that mean that you were signalling to someone in the barn?"

D'Arcy was silent.

"Do you know who it is?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy at last.

"Who is it, then?"

No answer.

"You're not pulling our leg?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Blake abruptly. "Do you mean to say, Gussy, that this was the appointment you had—you were coming here to meet this chap in the barn?"

D'Arcy flushed in the dark.

"Yaas," he said.

Wally chuckled.

"Then we've been on the wrong track," he said. "I suppose it's a lady all the time."

"Weally, Wally—"

"If she was a lady, she has jolly big feet, that's all," said Wally. "But perhaps Gussy prefers 'e mbig."

"You disrespectful young ass—"
 "Look here, Gussy, explain yourself!" Blake exclaimed.
 "Who is this chap in the barn, and what have you got to do with him?"

"I can't explain, deah boys."
 "You don't mean to say that you're getting mixed up with Lumley-Lumley's old friends, and Snipe's friends, the bookmakers?"

"I wegard that question as an insult!"
 "Then, what are you making ouu this giddy mystery about?" Blake demanded, exasperated. "If you know the chap in the barn, who is it?"

"You—you see—"
 "Explain yourself, you ass!"
 "Undah the cires—"
 "Hark!" shouted Herries. "He's coming, and Towser's got him!"

Gr-r-r-r!
 It was the voice of Towser from the shadowy barn, growling, yapping, snarling. The juniors rushed towards the doorway. Arthur Augustus dashed after them.

"Call him off!" he shrieked. "Hewwies, call him off!"
 "Rats!" said Herries.

D'Arcy grasped his arm.
 "Hewwies, old man, call the bwute off; he's my bwothah!"

"Towser's your brother?" exclaimed Herries, in amazement.

"No, you ass; the man in the barn!"
 "But Wally's here!"

"My eldah bwothah, you ass—Conway!"
 "Great Scott! Lord Conway?"

"Yaas, yaas!"
 "My hat!" Herries rushed into the barn. "Towser! Towser! Towser, come off! Towser! Towser!"

Gr-r-r-r! Gr-r-r-r!

CHAPTER 5.

Wanted by the Police!

TOWSER was growling furiously.
 The interior of the barn was dark as pitch. Tom Merry struck a match and held it up. The light flickered through the shadows of the barn.

The juniors expected to see a man struggling with the bulldog, with Towser's jaws fastened upon him somewhere.

But no man was visible. Towser was standing under the trapdoor growling fiercely, and the trapdoor was closed. What had happened was pretty clear. The man had made an attempt to descend, and had found the bulldog ready, and had retreated into the loft again and closed the trapdoor.

Herries patted Towser's head.
 "Good old Towser!" he murmured. "Isn't he a ripping dog, you chaps?"

"A little too ripping, if he had started ripping Lord Conway's bags with his teeth," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry struck another match, and held it up so that he could see the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was pale and worn-looking.

"Is it true, Gussy?" Tom Merry demanded.

"Is what true, deah boy?"

"That it 's Lord Conway in the loft?"

"Yaas."

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "What on earth is old Conway playing hide-and-seek here for? Look here, you're gammoning, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"If it was Conway, what did he want to bolt into the loft for?" demanded Wally. "He must have known Pongo when Pongo smelt him out. It's all rot!"

"I—I can't explain—"

"You'll have to. The fellows will all chuckle over this. They'll think there's insanity in the family, I should say," said Wally. "What on earth—"

"You mustn't tell the fellows."

"Why not?"

"You'll see it in all the papahs to-morrow, I expect," groaned the swell of St. Jim's.

Wally looked startled. The match went out, and from the darkness came Wally's voice, sounding strangely husky.

"What is it, Gussy? Is there trouble at home?"

"Yaas, Wally, deah boy."

"Bad trouble?"

"Howwid!"

"What's happened?"

"I suppose you must all know now," groaned Arthur Augustus. "Conway told me to keep it a secret that he was here, and I was comin' here to meet him secwetly. I hadn't the faintest ideah that you chaps were here, of course."

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A voice came from above. The man in the loft had heard all that was said. The juniors heard the trapdoor open.

"If you will keep that bulldog quiet, I will come down."

"Towser's all right, sir," said Herries. He recognised the voice of Lord Conway, the eldest son of the Earl of Eastwood, at once.

"Very well."

Herries grasped Towser's collar with a firm hand. Tom Merry struck a match, and a handsome athletic form swung itself out of the trapdoor, and dropped into the barn below.

It was Lord Conway!

He looked pale, worn, almost haggard now—travel-stained, torn; but it was the young man they knew well—the man who had been always a kind brother to Arthur Augustus, and a kind friend to all the juniors.

A few months ago he had taken Tom Merry & Co. on a cruise in his yacht to the South Seas; and in that voyage the juniors of St. Jim's had learned to like the viscount more than ever.

The match went out; darkness swallowed up the viscount and the juniors. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice was heard.

"I'm awfully sowwy, Conway, old boy. I kept the secwet all wight. These chaps came here quite by chance. I know it's wotten for you. But you can wely upon them to keep the secwet. That'll be all wight."

"You can certainly rely upon us, Lord Conway," said Tom Merry. "I don't understand in the least what's the matter, or why you should want to keep your visit here a secret, but if you do, we'll keep the secret right enough."

"Yes, rather!" said all the juniors together.

There was a short silence. The juniors waited for Lord Conway to speak.

The viscount spoke at last. His voice was strained and husky.

"Thank you, my lads!" he said. "Since you have seen me, I had better explain. You will see it all in the papers to-morrow, in any case, as Arthur says."

"Yaas, wathah!" groaned the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am suspected of a crime—"

"What, sir?"

"I think you fellows know me well enough to make it needless for me to say that I am innocent," said the viscount proudly.

"We know that, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But suspicion has fallen upon me. It is partly my own fault—I cannot tell you exactly how. I hope that in a few days it will be cleared up—but I cannot tell. But now the police are in search of me."

"The police!" said Tom Merry, in a horrified whisper.

"Yes."

"To arrest you?"

"Yes."

"You—you don't mean to say that there is a warrant out for your arrest, sir?" muttered Monty Lowther.

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

"I wrote to Arthur, and told him to meet me here," said Lord Conway quietly. "I knew this old barn, and I thought I should be safe here till I could see him. It is necessary for me to hide for a few days, and I thought of the old tower at St. Jim's, and the secret passages in the School House. I meant to ask Arthur to help me—"

"Of course, I'll do anythin', deah boy," said D'Arcy brokenly.

"Now you are all in it—"

"We'll all stand by you, sir," said Tom Merry firmly.

"Blessed if I care whether it's lawful or not. We know you're true blue, and that's enough."

"That's vewy kind of you, Tom Mewwy."

"We all say the same!" exclaimed Blake.

"Thank you!" said the viscount softly. "It will turn out all right; I am sure of that. My dear boys, I would not ask this of you, but—I have no choice. You will help to hide me, then? Somewhere in St. Jim's I should think I could be stowed away in safety, and you could bring me in food when it is safe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll do it with pleasure, sir," said Tom Merry. "We haven't forgotten how kind you have been to us many a time."

"Rather not, sir!"

"We'll stand by you to the finish," Monty Lowther exclaimed.

"Thank you again. There must not be a word said on the subject of my being here," said the viscount. "I will remain here till later, and then you can let me into the School House. I think I remember you telling me, Blake, that the secret passage opened from a panel in your study."

"Yes, sir. It's been screwed up now, but I've no doubt we could get the screws out again," said Blake.

"Good!"
"It's a wippin' ideah," said D'Arcy, "and if the police should come, they will nevah think of a secwet passage. But, of course, they'll nevah suspect that you are in hidin' at St. Jim's."

"I hope not," said Lord Conway. "Leave me now. I will remain here—"

"Come to the school at half-past ten, sir," said Tom Merry. "We will help you in over the wall, and get you into the School House. You will be safe here until then."

"Good!" said Blake. "That will be after lights out. We can sneak down from the dorm and let you in, sir."

"It's a shame," the viscount muttered—"it's a shame to drag you into this."

"Rubbish, sir!"

"Well, you had better be gone now," said Lord Conway. "You will be late for calling-over as it is."

"I'll get up to the study now and look at those screws in the panels," said Jack Blake. "Better to have them out ready. I'll do that while you others are at prep."

"Good egg!"
The Terrible Three went to their study in the Shell passage to do their belated prep, and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy went to Study No. 6.

Snipe, of the Fourth, met them outside the study. The cad of the Fourth was very curious. He had not forgotten the incident of the letter in the afternoon. His keen green-grey eyes scanned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face very sharply.

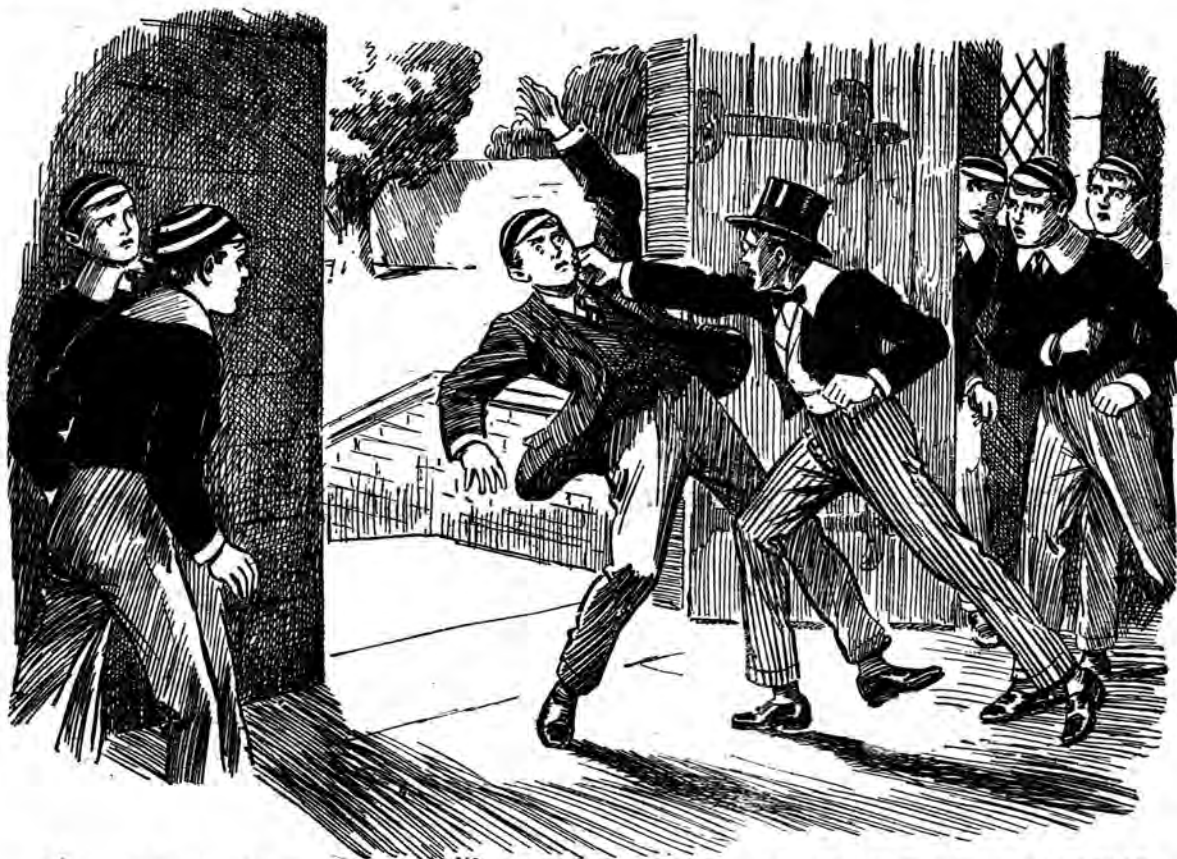
"I hope it's all right now," he remarked.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"I fail to undahstand you, Snipe," he said frigidly.

"Your bad news from home, I mean."

"Weally, Snipe—"



"It seems that your elder brother is a thief," said Knox, with a sneering laugh. "Oh!" The prefect said "Oh!" as D'Arcy's fist thudded on his chin, and he went flying through the doorway as if he had been shot from a gun.

"Yaas, wathah! You'll be all wight here, Con, old son?"

"Yes, yes!"

And the juniors shook hands with Lord Conway and left the barn. The man who was hiding from the police remained alone in the darkness.

CHAPTER 6.

Snipe Discovers!

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, met the juniors as they came in.

He jerked his thumb towards Mr. Railton's study door.

"That's your way," he said.

"Vewy well, Kildare, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

And the juniors went in to see the Housemaster of the School House, and received an imposition apiece for missing call-over, without saying a word in their defence, excepting that they were very sorry to be late—which was true enough.

"Never mind the blessed lines," said Tom Merry, as they left the Housemaster's study. "We can do them. Lucky Railton never asked too many questions."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope it's nobody ill—"

"It is not."

"Anything gone wrong at Eastwood?"

"Pway mind your own bisney, Snipe!"

Snipe shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that the special D'Arcy brand of politeness?" he asked sneeringly. "Where have you fellows been all the time? I noticed you missed call-over."

"Find out!"

And the chums of the Fourth went into their study, and Blake slammed the door with considerable emphasis in Snipe's inquisitive face.

The cad of the Fourth stood silent in the passage, an expression of wonder and spite on his thin, keen face.

"What on earth's up?" he muttered. "What does it mean? There's something jolly wrong, and they're mixed up in it—Tom Merry, too, as he went out with them. I'm jolly well going to get to the bottom of it."

Jack Blake gave a snort as he turned on the light in the study.

"Blessed if I can stand that chap!" he exclaimed. "He gets on my nerves. What does a chap want to inquire into other chaps' bisney for?"

"Because he's a howlin' cad, deah boy."

"You get on with your prep," said Blake. "I'll find a screwdriver and begin on these screws. It will be a long job."

"We'll take it in turns, deah boy."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

Blake, who was an amateur carpenter in his spare time, had a box of tools in his study. He selected a screwdriver, and examined the secret panel. The Fourth-Form passage in the School House was one of the oldest parts of the school. The partitions between the studies were modern, but the wall that ran along the back of them was of oaken panels, and was part of the original building.

It was in this wall that the secret panel was placed, which had been discovered by accident some time before. By the Head's orders it had been screwed up to prevent juniors from exploring the dangerous recesses of the secret passages.

The screws were many and strong, and had been driven in tightly. It was likely to be a task of some hours—and a tiring task—to get them all out again. Blake started work with steady patience.

The study door suddenly opened, and Snipe came in without knocking.

"Excuse me, you fellows—"

He stopped, staring at Blake. Blake took the screwdriver hastily away from the screw he was manipulating, and turned crimson. He gave the cad of the Fourth a furious look.

"You rotter!" he shouted. "What do you want?"

Snipe grinned.

"I just looked in to borrow a Latin dictionary—"

"You lying cad!" said Blake. "You came in to spy."

"Yaas, wathah! You are a spyin' hound, Snipe!"

Snipe gave a shrug.

"I didn't know you were trying to open the secret panel," he said. "How should I know? What the dickens do you want to open it for?"

Herries rose from the table. He did not speak a word, but he seized hold of Snipe and swung him round.

"Ow!" roared Snipe. "Ow! Leggo!"

Herries let go, but not till he had planted his heavy foot fairly behind the cad of the Fourth.

Snipe flew through the doorway as if he had been a shell projected from a powerful gun.

"Yaroooh!"

He bumped against the opposite wall, and rolled on the linoleum. Herries stood in the doorway, pushing back his cuffs.

"Now come in again, if you like!" he said.

Apparently Snipe did not like. He crawled up, and limped away down the passage, muttering furiously to himself.

Herries closed the study door.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Night!

LIGHTS out in the junior dormitories. The Fourth-Form—the School House portion of the Form, at all events—were all in bed as Kildare, of the Sixth, turned out the lights.

"Good-night, kids!"

"Good-night, Kildare!"

The dormitory closed. The juniors chatted with one another from bed to bed, and one by one the voices died away.

But there were some who did not sleep. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were to meet the Terrible Three in the Shell passage at a quarter past ten.

When ten o'clock struck most of the juniors were asleep. Ten minutes later Blake sat up in bed, and quietly slipped out and got dressed. Digby and Herries and Arthur Augustus followed his example. Then the juniors silently quitted the dormitory.

As they crept down the dormitory passage three forms loomed up dimly in the gloom.

"Here we are," said Tom Merry's voice.

"Good!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's get to the box-room then," said Tom Merry. "Hush!"

The juniors remained silent and still as a faint footfall was heard in the gloom.

They listened with bated breath.

If it should be a master or a prefect on his round they had a very good chance of being discovered and sent back to their dormitories, and in that case what would happen to Lord Conway, waiting outside the school wall?

The footfall came nearer.

"It's not a master!" muttered Tom Merry. "It's somebody creeping, and a master wouldn't creep."

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"It might be Knox, the prefect."

"Quite poss, deah boy."

"Listen!"

The footfalls ceased.

In the darkness of the Shell passage, someone was standing within a few paces of the chums, but they caught only a dim shadow.

Who was it?

Not a master, or a prefect, creeping about in the dark in this mysterious way, careful not to let his footfalls be heard.

A voice came softly from the shadows.

"Are you duffers there?"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Wally!"

There was a faint chuckle.

"So you're there?" said the scamp of the Third.

"Yes, you young ass. You startled us."

"Frightened you, you mean?" chuckled Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"What on earth are you doing here?" demanded Blake. "Why ain't you in bed in the Third Form dorm?"

"Why ain't you in bed in the Fourth Form dorm?" demanded Wally in his turn.

"We're out to help Lord Conway."

"Well, so am I."

"You young ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! I certainly agwee with Blake, Wally. You are a fwabjous young ass. The best thing you can do is to go stwaight back to bed."

To which Wally's reply was monosyllabic and disrespectful.

"Rats!"

"You cheeky young beggar!"

"I've got a suggestion to make," said Wally. "You can go back to bed, if you like, and leave the whole matter to me. Or I'll come with you. There isn't any third course."

Tom Merry laughed lightly.

"I suppose we'd better take the cheeky young rascal with us," he said. "You can come, Wally, but don't make a row."

"Rats!"

"This way to the box-room," said Tom Merry, and he led the way, to save further arguments. There evidently was no getting rid of the scamp of the Third, whether he was of any use in the party or not.

The juniors ascended the box-room stairs, and went into the room, feeling their way in the dark. Outside the box-room was a flat lead of a lower roof, and from that the juniors had more than once reached the ground by means of a rainpipe. A rainpipe, however, might not be sufficient for Lord Conway, and on this occasion Tom Merry had provided a long and strong rope, knotted at intervals through its length.

He drew the rope out of the empty box in which it had been concealed already, and stepped out of the window upon the leads.

One end of the rope was secured to a chimney stack and the other allowed to slide down into the darkness below.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye and peered down into the darkness.

"Bai Jove! That looks a long dwop!" he remarked.

"Let me help you down," said Monty Lowther. "I could tie the end of the rope round your neck, just under the chin, and—"

"Pway don't be a silly ass!"

"No need for us all to go down," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to go in a crowd and attract attention."

"Wathah not!"

"You Fourth Form chaps had better remain here, and—"

"Wats!"

"You see—"

"You Shell fellows can stick here," said Blake, "and—"

"Now, don't be a silly chump!"

"Oh, dry up, all of you!" said Tom Merry. "Four of us can go and meet Lord Conway—the others stay here. I'm leader, so—"

"Ahem! You've made a delightful mistake," said Blake.

"You see, I'm leader—"

"Rats!" said Wally. "As the chap here who has most loss sense, I think—"

"Weally, you know—"

"We're not getting on very fast, are we?" Tom Merry remarked. "And Lord Conway will be waiting by this time. Let's leave it to Gussy, as he is the party most directly concerned in the matter."

"Jolly good ideah!"

"Well, all right, we'll leave it to you, Gussy," said Blake.

"Then I make it hearts," said D'Arcy. "I—I mean, I'll settle it! Tom Mewwy, Blake, and Wally come with me, and the west wemain here!"

"What an utterly rotten idea!" said Lowther.

"Silly, in my opinion!" said Manners.

"Just like Gussy, though," said Digby.
 "Oh, very like!" said Herries.
 "Weally, deah boys—"
 "Come on!" said Tom Merry.
 And he swung himself down the rope.
 D'Arcy and Wally and Blake followed, and the rest of the juniors remained on the leads of the building, waiting for them to return.
 With cautious steps the juniors made their way round the School House, and cut off towards the school wall.
 From many windows in the School House lights were still shining—the masters were up, and most of the Sixth.
 But the quadrangle was dark and silent.
 The juniors reached the school wall, and Tom Merry climbed the slanting oak, and reached the top of the wall.
 He looked up and down the road outside.
 The night was dark, only a star or two gleaming in the dusky sky. Tom Merry gave a low whistle.
 It was answered from the deep shadow of the wall. A tall figure stepped out into view.
 "Is that you, sir?"
 "Yes, Tom."
 "This way, then."
 A minute more, and Lord Conway was helped over the school wall, and stood within the grounds of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

The Secret Passage!

THE juniors were trembling with excitement.
 The first part of the scheme had worked successfully; they had quitted the House in secrecy, and Lord Conway had been admitted to the quad.
 The next step was to get him into the School House.
 Tom Merry took hold of the young man's sleeve.
 "This way, sir!" he said.
 "Yes, Tom."
 "Come on, you fellows!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Are you all wight, Conway, old boy?"
 "Yes, Arthur!"
 "No dangah since we left you in that wotten old barn?"
 "None."
 "You've got here without bein' seen?"
 "I think so; in fact, I'm certain!"
 "Jollay good!"
 "Quiet!" whispered Tom Merry.
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Hush! Hush! Somebody's coming!"
 They stood stock still in the darkness. A dim figure loomed up and passed them as they stood in the black shadow of the elms.
 Someone was coming from the School House towards the wall on the road.
 The shadow passed; the faint sound of footfalls died away in the deep night.
 Tom Merry drew a deep breath.
 "That was a narrow shave."
 "Who was it?" muttered Lord Conway. "Is there any suspicion—is someone on the watch?"
 "No; it was Knox, the prefect."
 "Knox—a prefect!"
 "I think so; I believe I know his outline. He's going to break bounds, and go down to the Green Man in Rylcombe! It's a little way he has!"
 "Oh!"
 "He didn't see us; and he won't be back for an hour or two at least. Come on!"
 Tom Merry led the way round to the back of the School House.
 Lord Conway and the juniors followed him. Tom Merry groped along the ivied wall for the rope. He found it, and gave it a jerk as a signal to the juniors on the leads of the outbuilding.
 There was a faint whisper from above.
 "All serene!"
 "Will you climb first, sir?" asked Tom Merry. "There are knots all along the rope."
 "Quite easy, I think."
 Lord Conway went up the knotted rope with perfect ease. The juniors followed him, and they stood in the gloom on the leads.
 "Get the rope in, Blake!" said Tom Merry, as he led the way to the window of the box-room.
 "Right-ho!"
 Blake coiled the rope over his arm, and was the last in. The rope was stowed away in the box it had been taken from, and Monty Lowther closed the window softly.
 "Where now?" muttered Lord Conway.
 "To Study No. 6, sir. You know it well, don't you?"
 The viscount laughed softly.
 "Yes; I've had tea with you there—just before we went on our voyage to the South Seas," he remarked.

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

NOT TAKING CHANCES!

House-hunter: "I want a house in an isolated place, at least five miles from any other residence."
 Estate Agent: "I see, sir. I suppose you want to practise the simple life."
 House-hunter: "No. I want to practise the saxophone!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Rutherford, 64, Mayflower Street, Belfast, N. Ireland.

AN EYE TO BUSINESS.

Small Boy (to not-so-famous cricketer): "Can I have your autograph, please, sir?"
 Cricketer: "What again! But I only gave it you yesterday!"
 Boy: "I know, but I need five of yours to swap for one of Don Bradman's!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Keverne, 77, Wardrew Road, S. Thomas, Exeter, Devon.

A LUCKY ESCAPE.

Club Bore (ending long fishing story): "And would you believe it—that fish got away from me after all!"
 Victim: "Lucky fish. I wonder how he managed it."
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ronald James, 8, Canterbury Avenue, Ilford, Essex.

A "HANDY" ANSWER!

Warder: "Hey! What are you doing with that file?"
 Convict: "Why, surely you haven't any objection to my manicuring my finger-nails!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Harris, 25, King's Drive, Heaton Moor, Stockport.

JOHNNY'S SUBJECT!

"Well, boys," said the teacher, "you can draw anything you like this afternoon."
 Half an hour later, he inspected the work of his class.
 "Why, Johnny Brown," he said, "your drawing paper is blank. Why haven't you drawn something?"
 Johnny: "I have. It's the Invisible Man!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Hodgkiss, 44, West Bank Street, Salford.

OUT OF TUNE!

Musician: "When I bought these shoes, you guaranteed me perfection in everything about them."
 Shopwalker: "Quite so, sir. Any complaints?"
 Musician: "Yes. One of my shoes squeaks in D flat, and the other in F sharp."
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. A. W. Blake, 112, Duncombe Road, Upper Holloway, London, N.19.

(STOAT)ALLY DIFFERENT!

Teacher: "What boy can tell me the difference between a stoat and a weasel?"
 Bright Lad: "Please, one is weaselly distinguished, and the other is stoatally different!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to Stanley Prescott, 247, Newton Road, Loughton, near Warrington, Lanes.

A WELCOME WARNING!

Kind Old Lady: "Here's sixpence for you, and, by-the-bye, the lady next door wants her rugs beaten."
 Tramp: "Thanks for the warning, ma'am!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. S. McCowan, Bengoe School, Hertford.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,383.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This way, sir."

The juniors trod away carefully from the box-room. They reached the Fourth Form passage, and Blake opened the door of Study No. 6. The juniors crowded in, and Blake closed the door carefully.

"We shall have to have a light," he muttered. "See if the blind is down, Tom Merry. I put it carefully down before I went to bed."

"Yes, that's all right."

"Good!"

Blake struck a match softly, and lit a bicycle lamp which he had in readiness. The juniors stood, with pale, excited faces and beating hearts, while Jack Blake felt over the panelled wall.

The traces where the screws had been were visible enough, but Blake had filled up the holes with putty, and so the fact that the screws had been taken out was not immediately perceptible.

Unless the panels were looked at carefully, no one was likely to notice that the screws were missing.

Blake was feeling for the spring.

There was a faint click in the darkness.

A wide panel shot open, and a dark aperture behind was revealed.

Lord Conway stared into it with wide eyes. The opening did not seem inviting, but it meant safety to him!

"There you are, sir!" said Blake.

"Thank you, my lad! Is not this secret panel known in the school?"

"Oh, yes; most of the fellows know about it!"

"Then, if the police should come—"

"They'd hardly think of looking here, sir."

"But if they did," said Tom Merry, "there's a way out—a secret trapdoor giving on to the roof, and you could get out that way, and down the ivy into the quad. Of course, that would be only as a last resource."

Lord Conway looked reflective.

"Once when I came here," he said, "you had a show on—amateur theatricals. You had disguises of all sorts—beards and moustaches and greasepaints."

"We've got them now, sir."

"Then I think I will borrow some," said Lord Conway. "I have done something in the amateur theatrical line myself, and I think I could get up a disguise which might save me if I am driven from this retreat."

"Bai Jove! What a wippin' ideah!"

"Ripping!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "Suppose we disguise you now, sir, before you go into the passage, in case it should be needed?"

Lord Conway hesitated.

"I don't like keeping you out of bed," he said. "I—"

"Oh, rot, sir!" said Tom Merry. "We want to help you!"

"Very well, then."

"The things are all in this study," said Tom Merry. "We can give you a change of clothes, and any disguise you like."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors lost no time.

CHAPTER 9.

In Hiding!

LORD CONWAY waited while Blake dragged out the chest under the cupboard which contained the clothes used by the juniors in the theatrical performances, and Tom Merry opened the case of greasepaints and powders.

"Here's some clothes that would do, I think," said Blake.

He sorted out a shabby black suit of clothes. It was a man's size, and had been worn in some play by a manservant. In their little shows the juniors sometimes pressed a gardener into service for parts a boy could not take. The suit was shabby and respectable, and very different from the viscount's own clothes. Lord Conway seemed to shiver a little as he looked at the things, but he nodded his head.

"Bai Jove! I don't think anybody would recognise Conway in those feahful clothes!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather not!"

"Don't make a row!" said Wally severely.

"Cheeky young beggar!"

"Will you put them on, sir?" Tom Merry asked.

"At once!"

Lord Conway changed his clothes. The difference in his appearance was startling when he was clad in the suit of shabby clothes.

"Bai Jove, what a difference!"

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"Now some smudges on the face," said Blake.

Next, Lord Conway's eyebrows were roughened up and touched with charcoal, and a dab of red was smudged on his nose.

In the dilapidated-looking man of middle age now represented, few would have dreamed of recognising the handsome young viscount.

"Bai Jove, it's wonderful!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"A 1," said Wally.

"That is wathah a vulgah expression, Wally—"

"Br-r-r!"

"Weally, you young wascal—"

"Now, we'd better get you some bedclothes, sir," said Tom Merry. "You will want to go to sleep in the secret passage."

Lord Conway shook his head.

"I have been accustomed to roughing it in the Yeomanry," he said. "I can sleep on a hard floor very well."

"But we can get the things, and—"

"If the passages were searched, they would be found here, and it would be a proof of my presence, and of complicity on the part of someone in the school."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"I suppose you're right, sir," said Tom Merry slowly; "but it will be horribly uncomfy for you to sleep on the floor."

"That is little."

"Luckily the nights are very warm this time of year," Blake said. "You won't be cold. But—"

"I shall be all right."

"As for grub, you can nip out into the study and get it," said Blake. "We've got a lot in the cupboard here ready, and I've packed this little bag with sandwiches and cake and a bottle of ginger-beer. You can hang it on your shoulder."

"Thank you, that was very thoughtful. I shall certainly get hungry."

"Now we'll show you how to get out of the passage if you have to."

"Good!"

The juniors entered the secret passage. Blake closed the panel after the last of them had entered.

Before the juniors lay the mysterious recesses of the ancient building; haunts wherein the olden time monks had hidden from their persecutors, and where—if old tales were true—many a secret orgy had been celebrated by the brethren of the cowl and sandal.

Black passages, tenanted by spiders in myriads, with great webs stretched across in the darkness; stone steps, rotting with age and mould; grim, dark walls of stone!

Blake paused, lamp in hand, at the foot of the stair that wound upward in the thickness of a great stone wall.

"Here we are!" he said.

"Where does that lead?" asked Lord Conway.

"To the roof of the School House—the oldest part of the place."

"Lead on, then."

Blake ascended the spiral stair. It was narrow and choking. The air was misty and heavy. At the top of the stair the junior halted; the lamp gleamed upon solid stone round him, with no trace of an outlet.

Lord Conway looked puzzled.

"It looks to me like the end of a blind alley," he said.

Blake nodded.

"It looks like it, but it isn't," he said. "Look here!"

He pressed upon the corner of a huge square stone.

It turned as on a pivot, and a breath of fresh air came through. Lord Conway looked out of the opening.

"You can get out on the roof," said Blake. "In the corner—yonder by the chimney-stack—there's thick ivy to climb down on, and under the ivy are hidden points of stone for the hands to take hold of. It was all arranged, five hundred years ago or more, by the chaps who used to dig here."

"It's wonderful!" said Lord Conway.

"Jolly lucky for us now!" said D'Arcy.

Blake closed the stone, and they descended. Ten minutes later they stood by the secret panel in the wall of Study No. 6.

"Will you sleep in the study, Con, old boy, and wetiah into the secwet passage in the mornin'?" D'Arcy asked.

"It would be more comfy."

Lord Conway shook his head.

"No, I will be on the safe side—accidents might happen."

"Vewy well."

"And now, good-night!" said the young man in a moved voice. "I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently for what you have done for me."

"Oh, rot, sir!" said Tom Merry. "It's nothing!"

"Wathah not!"

(Continued on page 14.)

HALT HERE, CHUMS, FOR YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT.



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters to:
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Have you ever noticed what widely-separated parts of the world readers who ask for Pen Pals write from? If you keep your eye on the feature at the foot of this page for a few issues, you can read addresses in practically every country in the world. It shows that fellows appreciate a good thing like the GEM wherever they are!

No wonder, when Martin Clifford writes such ripping yarns. He is at the top of his form again next week, in a grand, long complete story entitled:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE!"

Mystery and thrills are the twin key-notes of this great yarn. A strange new boy arrives at the school—a boy who knows neither his name nor where he comes from. What is the mystery of this newcomer? Who is he? Where does he come from? These are the problems that baffle Tom Merry & Co., and Martin Clifford's masterly powers of story-telling weave around this unique situation a yarn that will grip you to the last word.

Next week's issue contains another instalment of our magnificent serial, of course, and there are all the usual popular features—"Tom Merry's Weekly," "The Gem Jester," "The Editor's Notebook," and so on.

So step it out to the newsagent's next Wednesday, chums!

THE FLYING TUG!

If recent experiments are anything to go by, the day is not far off when aeroplanes will cover the whole world towing lines of gliders filled with goods behind them. During the tests which have been made, a powerful plane took off with three gliders in tow, took them up to a good height, and then made long flights across country, while the pilots of the gliders released their aircraft one by one, and volplaned to earth. It is hoped that, in the future, a "flying tug" will be able to start off from, say, London, with a string of gliders in tow, and will then travel to distant destinations, dropping the gliders at various points along the route.

BEE'S "CLOCK IN" TO WORK!

A bee-keeper who wanted to know how hard his charges work has just perfected a really amazing device which records every time a bee enters or leaves the hive. It consists of what is known as a selenium cell operated by an invisible ray. The ray shines across the entrance to the hive and on to the selenium cell. When a bee gets in the path of the ray, it cuts it off from the cell, which then, by a complicated

system of electrical impulses, operates a recording instrument. When first tried out the system failed because some of the bees came home drunk with honey, blundered into the delicate instruments at their "door," and put the apparatus out of order! But the device has now been perfected, and its records show that, during the "rush hours," about one hundred bees pass through the hive every ten seconds.

A LIGHTNING FREAK!

Lightning from the clouds plays queer tricks when it strikes the earth, but rarely has there been such a freakish discharge as that which struck a man at Ramsgate. The "victim" was hurrying into his hotel to shelter from the terrific downpour of rain which accompanied the thunderstorm when he stepped on a wire mat charged with electricity, and received a terrific shock. The lightning didn't kill him, for, apart from the shock to his nerves, the only damage done was to his back collar stud, which was completely burnt away. What happened was that the electricity ran through his body till it reached the metal centre of the stud, and, in passing through this, generated so much heat that the celluloid in the stud caught fire.

WHAT'S A BOLOMETER?

James Reid, a GEM reader at Streatham, wants to know what a bolometer is. It's an instrument used for measuring heat, Jim, and is so sensitive that it can detect the heat of a candle five miles away. During the War, experiments were made with bolometers to try to trace enemy aircraft at night through the heat of their engines, and in some cases the bolometer picked up the tracks of a raiding aircraft long before it could be heard even by the sensitive microphones used by the anti-aircraft batteries.

IT MADE ME LAUGH!

First Actor: "Hallo, Jones, I hear you've got a part in a new show. What's the salary?"

Second Ditto: "There isn't any. But we eat a real pudding in the second act!"

PEN PALS COUPON

18-8-34.

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Miss Phyllis van Rensburg, 112, Henry Street, Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, South Africa, wants girl correspondents in U.S.A. Sport; films; age 17-20.

Harry Crichton, P.O. Shannon, District Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, South Africa, wants to hear from stamp collectors; age 12-16.

Cecil Sheppard, 555, Hovel Street, Albury, N.S.W., Australia, wants a pen friend, age 16-17, interested in science and who would like to learn a little about Australia.

Ron Hudson, 26, Bartle Avenue, East Ham, London, E.6, wants pen pals in Ireland, Hungary, Rumania, and Italy; age 16-17; swimming, tennis, sports, and books.

Dillon Marsh, P.O. Hamburg, Cape Province, South Africa, wants pen pals.

Miss Lily B. Hartley, 19, Hanover Crescent, Brighton, Sussex, wants girl correspondents in England, Scotland, and Ireland; films, story writing; age 13-15.

A. S. Taylor, 64, Broomfield, Adel, Leeds, 6, Yorks, wants a pen pal, preferably in the British Isles; age 12-20; home cinemas, county cricket, Test matches.

J. B. Jones, 5, Acacia Grove, Englishcombe Park, Bath, Som., wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of the old issues of the "Schoolboys' Own Library."

Miss Patricia Weekes, 64, Harrington Drive, Lenton Sands, Nottingham, wants a girl correspondent in Africa, Australia, or America; age 11-15; films, sports, stamp collecting.

Miss Frieda Salmon, 73, Seen Keen Terrace, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, China, wants girl correspondents in Hawaii, Europe, Canada, and U.S.A. Age 15-17.

Bernard H. Brodie, Cricklewood, Chesterfield Road, Orangezicht, Cape Province, South Africa, wants pen pals interested in sport; age 13-16.

Peter Watts, Rippledene, Wraysbury Road, Staines, Middlesex, wants pen pals; age 11-13; music, engineering.

Isidore Sacks, Hotel Rio Grande, Muizenberg, South Africa, wants pen pals interested in sport; England and Australia; age 14-16.

Miss Phyllis Russell, 110, Campbell Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants to hear from Guides; interested in sports; age 17-18.

Basil Arbuckle, Bellevue, Amanzimtoti, South Coast, Natal, South Africa, wants correspondents.

Miss Dulcie E. Wilson, Hill Rise, Harden, N.S.W., Australia, wants girl correspondents.

Geoffrey Stokoe, 13, Frederic Street, Marygate, York, wants pen pals; age 11-13; swimming, books, and cycling. Overseas Preferred.

Jack Robinson, 5, Elm Street, Great Harwood, near Blackburn, Lancs, wants to hear of a correspondence club; sports, literature, drawing.

(continued on page 28.)

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THE SECRET OF STUDY SIX!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Well, good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, Con, old boy! Wely on us!"

The secret panel clicked shut. Lord Conway was left in darkness and solitude. The juniors left the study silently.

"It's rotten hard on your major, Gussy!" Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's heavily.

"Beastly," said Wally.

"Good-night, you chaps!"

The juniors separated. Wally going back to the Third Form dormitory, the Terrible Three to the Shell quarters, and Blake & Co. to the Fourth Form dorm. They turned in, and slept all the sounder for their unusually late hours.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy Hits Out!

ST. JIM'S was astounded the next morning!

Astounded is hardly the word—they were amazed, stunned, electrified!

The news got out by degrees.

The Head himself was the first who knew—it was in the newspaper that he perused over his breakfast.

Some of the masters learned it next—then the seniors—and finally the juniors got on to the matter, and the whole school knew.

They knew—and stared.

That it was true there was no doubt—for it was in the papers. All the papers had it that morning. The evening papers of the night before had had it; but evening papers never found their way to St. Jim's.

After second lesson the school buzzed with the amazing news.

Fellows collected in little groups and discussed it with bated breath.

They read and talked and marvelled on only one subject.

Fellows met one another, and the first remark of each was: "Have you heard that about D'Arcy's brother?"

To which each invariably replied: "Yes."

For all had heard it by this time.

Some fellows spoke to D'Arcy about it. Most of them were too delicate to mention it to the swell of St. Jim's. They knew that it must be an awkward and unpleasant subject for him.

But others were harder.

Snipe, in especial, questioned the swell of the Fourth when that Form came out after morning lessons.

He walked up to D'Arcy before a crowd of fellows and spoke loudly. D'Arcy was looking pale and troubled. It was clear that he knew all about the black news as well as anybody else did.

"I say, D'Arcy," Snipe exclaimed, "have you heard?"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and turned a freezing glance upon Snipe.

"Heard what?" he demanded.

"About your brother Conway?"

"Weally—"

"He's robbed a diamond merchant of ten thousand pounds—Ow!"

D'Arcy's fist shot out in a flash, and Snipe went down upon his back with a bump that seemed to shake the passage.

D'Arcy stood over him, his fists

THE GEN. LIBRARY.—No. 1,383.



No. 27. Vol. 1. (New Series.)

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

MISS PRISCILLA FAWCETT SPEAKING



My dear boys,—I want to talk to you about my darling Tommy. I mean Tom Merry, your junior lieutenant, or captain, or whatever the word is.

You probably know that I am Tommy's guardian, and he may have shown you some of the knitted woollen underwear which I send him periodically. I always warn him to wear it next to his skin, because I know you boys are always running about in all sorts of weather at your sports, and if he were to catch a cold it might turn to something serious.

I know I must appear a shade old-fashioned to some of you. Perhaps I am, but I don't mind. I believe in old-fashioned remedies, and in taking care of yourselves. Why, goodness me, you boys of to-day seem to think nothing of risking your limbs in hazardous games like football and cricketball, if I have got them right, while when you are at the seaside you are impatient to be off on some dangerous escapade.

But there it is, I suppose boys must seek adventure, and all my efforts to tie my Tommy to my apron-strings are useless! He's a darling, devoted boy, and I know he thinks the world of me, as I do of him, but I hear he has literally fought his way to the leadership of the junior school—his Form-master's very own words—and when I think of my darling Tommy engaged in a bout of fisticuffs I feel a little faint. Still, I suppose it is all right, so long as he wins every time—excepting for the poor lad he defeats!

A very unpleasant-looking boy who said his name was Gore spoke to me just now and asked if I was Tommy's nurse. I told Gore that I was certainly responsible for Tommy's bringing up—but before I could go on Lowther and Manners, Tommy's chums, led Gore off quickly by the arms, and I heard the most awful yells from the quadrangle immediately after.

Perhaps it is just as well sometimes for an old lady like myself to shut one eye!

SNAPSHOTS.

Blake: "What's an unanswerable question?"

Lowther: "One you don't know the answer to!"

Crooke teased Herries' dog, Towser.

Crooke is going on better than Herries intended.

Gussy offered to join the school choir—but his voice was not so "quired"!

"What is soap?" asked Mr. Selby. No fag has solved it yet!

FINAL TEST THRILLS GALORE IN

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

A gaping wicket—howzatt, umpire?—and back to the pavilion goes Tom Merry, junior captain of St. Jim's, clean bowled by one of the fizziest balls that ever left the hand of S. Q. I. Field, star bowler of the "Aussies"! Yes, the "Aussies" are here for the last visit—and how! Harry Noble's team, gathered from Greyfriars, Rookwood, and other schools, are one hundred per cent Australian. Noble and Field are bowling out the Saints one after another—oh, there goes Lowther! Blake follows—and Herries. Four down for a handful of runs! If this goes on the "Ashes" are in the "Aussies" pockets! This is the deciding match of the series.

Hallo, though—watch Figgins and Fatty Wynn. New House to the fore this time—stolid old Fatty, putting a straight bat to everything, keeping his end up, while Figgins, once having got his eye in, hits with freedom all round the wicket. Leather-hunting for the "Aussies" now—but how can they field? "Squiff" alone is worth fifty runs to his side in the "fours" he saves! "Fraid St. Jim's won't make a big total this venture. Figgins is still there—20 not out—when the last wicket falls with the total at 32.

Against a moderate total the Australians open convincingly. Noble is soon set. Conway hits out, and is caught at 25. Squiff bats with ease from the very first ball. But—watch, boys! Sma-ash! Did you hear those stumps rattle! That's Fatty Wynn, that was! Field leaves with only six. Derwent comes in—crash! Clean bowled first ball! Whoopee! Wynn is on form. Crashity-crash—wickets are tumbling. The "Aussies" turn to collapse now! All out for 35—pretty stunning, what?

Funny how nerves upset even good players in vital matches. Brilliant flashes are followed by sudden landslides. Saints go in again with hope and determination written on their faces. Merry and Figgins are the opening pair. Watch Merry—how'd you like to be in his shoes? I wouldn't! A "duck" in the first innings—his second and final chance to make good, and many runs expected of him! Tom Merry takes centre coolly as if he were Hobbs himself. He faces the first flashing delivery from Squiff, the bowler who spreadgaled his stumps before. Clack! Swift through the slips the red sphere speeds—she's gone for "four," boys, and Merry stands cool and calm as a statue to receive the next!

Merry's example has a good effect. What a lot depends on a skipper! Figgins begins easily, making runs in his reckless style. Shade too reckless, aren't you, Figgy, old man? Oh, Jiminy, take a peek at Figgins wending his way pavilion-wards—victim to a smart catch by Squiff!

Blake is next man—stolid Yorkshire. Blake makes no attempt to provide fireworks. He leaves that to Merry, whose eye is in. Clack! Boundary four again! Clack! Boundary six! High and clean over the

Merry's Weekly



Week Ending August 18th, 1934.

BEST MATCH IN DECIDING GAME

ropes! Heads, boys! Merry is right among the runs—but Blake does no more than hold on. Something seems to be bottling him up. He ventures at last—to turn and survey a shattered wicket! Lowther follows. Lowther goes! Digby fares the same! What's in this bowling that Merry scorns but which reduces his partners to impotence? Merry didn't like that first innings "duck," and he's winging it out now with a vengeance! The rest are coming and going, though, pretty fast. Merry smashes out all round the wicket—golly, hope I can bat like that some day! Merry's century is in sight—bang! Clean over the pavilion for his hundredth run! And the last wicket falls with St. Jim's total at 126—104 of them Tom Merry's!

The "Aussies" need 124 to win. There's time if they go for bowling. Noble does and so does Squiff! A nice, steady start. No flinching at it, but they're quickening rapidly. Noble scores slower than Squiff. The Greyfriars man passes his twenty, approaches thirty. Fatty Wynn is doing all he knows to separate them—once break up this pair and the rest may collapse! Merry adroitly lays a fielding trap for Squiff—and he walks right into it! Lowther makes a lightning leap and the ball is fast in his hand! "Aussies" first wicket partnership broken at 57. Conroy plays for safety while Noble goes after the runs. Fatty Wynn bowls magnificently, keeping the score down. Merry changes his bowlers repeatedly, never letting the batsmen settle down! Captaincy may dispose of these dogged "Aussies" where sheer bowling cannot! Crash! Conroy's bowled—Derwent of Highcliffe follows. Fatty Wynn hits a "spot" and sends back three batsmen running! "Aussies" fighting now, backs to the wall, Gordon Gay of Rylcombe Grammar School and Harry Noble of St. Jim's are partners in a fierce effort to hold off the St. Jim's attack! They want twenty to win! Two fours, reckless shots by Gay, bring victory only 12 distant. Noble smashes a six—six only wanted! Now, what? Noble opens his shoulders, lifts the next one from Wynn clear of the fieldsmen. But what's Merry doing out there on the very boundary? A trap? Merry sprints—down comes the ball like a meteorite. Merry leaps upward and backward—grabs, holds the ball safe and firm in the palm of his hand! Victory for St. Jim's in the Fifth and Final Test Match. Hurray! Oh, hurrah! Hurray, St. Jim's! And three hearty cheers for the losers!



Solution of
Last Week's
Puzzle

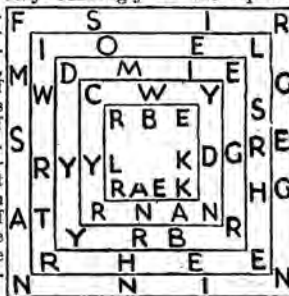


MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! Can't go out in this storm, as the camper said as the tent blew away over his head! Before going any further, let's say we think the team which is fired with most ambition deserves to win the "Ashes"! A local farmer complains that insects cost him £200 a year. Why on earth does he buy them, anyway? Just a moment—Skimpole on the phone. Skimpy says four tons of silver paper would cover the whole of the St. Jim's sports field. Yes, but who wants to clean up a mess like that? Phone again. Excuse me. Mellish says he went to Sandycroft because he hates walking on stones, and he has just found the only pebble on the beach—with his bare foot! Hallo, it's Fatty Wynn this time. He says since accepting a lift on the pillion of a motor-bike, he knows what it is to be "bumped off"! Here's a tip on how to drive a motor-car successfully: The faster you go, the easier it is for disaster to overtake you! Got it? We met a man at Brightsea who is good for half a million. We personally would be very, very good for less than that! A Scotsman was fishing when he hooked up an old boot. He is still trying to hook up the other one! Now, one for Wales: Why wouldn't Noah have a Welshman in the Ark? Because he was afraid of "leeks"! Interval for lemonade—sorry we can't reach you! Talking of refreshments, what's the difference between a riddle and an elephant sitting on a bun? One's a conundrum and the other's a bunundrum! Was there anybody who hadn't heard that one before? Thanks! I'm so glad! Or as the seventeen-stone female singer belted: "Carry me home to Kentucky!"—have a heart! A Wayland rustic who has reached the age of a hundred and three and has never had his beard trimmed wants estimates. Just one more, or you'll miss your train. The fussy old lady appealed to the guard: "Nearly all the seats are full, and I must sit with my back to the engine!" "All right, madam," answered the guard. "Hop in. I'll have the engine put on the other end for you!" Chin, chin, chaps!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

The names of ten St. Jim's juniors are hidden very cunningly in the squares below. Taking alternate letters only, find two of their names in each of the squares. After choosing your first letter, you can of course move clock-wise or anti-clock-wise.



clenched, his eyes blazing with wrath and indignation.

"You uttuh cad and liah!" he panted.

"You uttuh wottah!"

Snipe sat up dazedly.

"Ow!" he groaned.

"You lying cad! Wepeat those words and I will wipe up the floor with you!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"It's in the papers!" groaned Snipe.

"It may be in the papahs," said D'Arcy, "but no one will say to me that my bwothah is a thief without gettin' it stwaight fwom the shouldah!"

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish of the Fourth.

"I suppose we're not called upon to believe that the police are all wrong just because Lord Conway is your brother."

"You may hold what opinion you like, I suppose, so long as you do not state it in my pwesence!" said D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Quite right!" chimed in Tom Merry.

"And we'll back you up, Gussy, all along the line."

"Yes, rather!"

"Thank you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

Lefevre of the Fifth came up. He was looking very curious. Lefevre wasn't a bad sort of fellow, by any means, but he had a touch of inquisitiveness, and inquisitiveness had been given out to him in greater quantities than discretion.

He gave Arthur Augustus a patronising nod.

"Bad news about your brother, D'Arcy," he said.

"Yaas."

"How did he come to do it?" said Lefevre.

"That's what I say."

"He didn't do it."

"Oh, he did it right enough! It's quite clear—"

Biff!

"Yarooooh!"

Lefevre sat down with remarkable suddenness.

There was a buzz in the passage. It was almost unprecedented for a Fourth Former to knock down a fellow in the Fifth.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's blood was up, and at that moment he would probably have knocked down a Form-master if the latter had cast any aspersions upon the honour of his brother.

Lefevre sat up dazedly.

"Yow!" he mumbled. "W-what was that? That's what I say—Ow! Why, you cheeky young hound, I'll smash you!"

He sprang up and rushed at D'Arcy.

But Tom Merry & Co. closed round the swell of St. Jim's at once, and the captain of the Fifth was pushed back.

"Hands off!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"I'll smash him!" roared Lefevre.

"He's bunged me on the nose! That's what I say! I'll smash him!"

"Rats!"

"Get out of the way! I—"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "You had no right to speak about D'Arcy's brother as you did!"

"None at all!" said Blake.

"What! His brother is a thief!"

Biff!

"Yoop!"

Lefevre sat down again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Reilly. "Faith, and it's like a jack-in-the-box entirely!"

Lefevre staggered up. The juniors closed in a solid phalanx round the flushed, excited swell of St. Jim's and Lefevre had no chance of executing vengeance upon him.

The Fifth Former rubbed his nose and glared at the juniors, and finally walked away.

The juniors turned out into the sunny quad. Knox, the prefect, was standing

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in the doorway, and made a motion of guarding his pockets as D'Arcy came by.

"Look out!" he exclaimed.

And there was a laugh from some fellows lounging by the door. Arthur Augustus halted, and turned a blazing eye upon the Sixth Former.

"What do you mean by that, Knox?" he exclaimed.

Knox laughed a sneering laugh.

"Oh, I was afraid it might run in the family, that's all!" he said. "It seems that your elder brother is a thief, Oh—"

Crash!

Knox, the prefect, caught D'Arcy's fist on his chin and went flying through the doorway as if he had been shot from a gun.

"Oh! Ow!"

Right down the School House steps he went rolling, to land at the bottom, dusty and dishevelled and aching all over.

It was amazing that the elegant junior of the Fourth could have put so much force in that blow.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "I shouldn't like to be a punching-ball when Gussy is going it strong!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

Knox staggered up. He had never been respected by the juniors; he did not deserve respect. Once he had been very near losing his prefectship for his conduct towards them. But to be knocked down by a fellow in the Fourth Form was a very new experience for him. He charged up the steps at D'Arcy with a murderous look.

"Stop!"

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, rapped out the word.

Knox paused.

"What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly.

Knox was trembling with rage, and he could hardly speak distinctly.

"He knocked me down," he exclaimed—"knocked me down the steps—D'Arcy did—I, a prefect! I—I—I—"

"D'Arcy!"

"He called my brother a thief, sir!" said Arthur Augustus in a shaking voice. "I'll do the same again, sir, if he repeats his words!"

"You have no right to do anything of the sort, Knox."

"It's true!" yelled Knox. "It's in the papers!"

"The papers are often mistaken."

"The police are looking for him."

"The police are often mistaken, too."

"But—but—"

"And even if it were perfectly true, which I do not for one moment believe, it would be utterly caddish and ungenerous to cast it up at D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "If you applied such a term to his brother I cannot be surprised that he struck you. It is very wrong for a junior to strike a prefect, but in this case the provocation was very great, and I excuse D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir."

Knox was in such a rage that he dared not speak, or he would have said words that would have caused trouble for him. He turned away in bitter silence.

D'Arcy approached the Housemaster timidly.

"Mr. Railton, you said that you don't believe the charge against my brother," he muttered.

Mr. Railton looked down at him with a kindly smile.

"Not for a moment, D'Arcy. I know Lord Conway well, and I believe him to be as true and honourable as you are yourself. It is some terrible mistake."

"Thank you, dear sir, thank you!"

"You must try to bear this patiently, D'Arcy," said the Housemaster in his deep, kind voice. "Try to be patient and to keep your temper. I am sure it will be found out to be nothing but a mistake."

"You're vewy kind, sir, and—and I will keep my tempah if I can, sir," faltered Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 11.

Under Suspicion!

THE story was a strange one, yet there did not seem to be room for a mistake.

The diamonds, to the value of ten thousand pounds, were missing, and it was supposed to be Lord Conway who had taken them.

The papers published the whole story, with a photograph of the jeweller's shop in Hatton Garden, photographs of the jeweller himself, his wife, and his little girl and her favourite kitten. They would have published photographs of the coal cellar and the coal therein if they could have obtained them. There were photographs of Lord Conway and Lord Conway's father, the earl, and a view of Eastwood House, where Lord Eastwood lived, and another view of St.

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Jim's, the Public school where Lord Conway's brothers were educated.

There was a reprint of Lord Conway's maiden speech in Parliament, and there was a sketch of the steam-yacht which had lately been wrecked in the South Seas. In short, there were all the particulars, important and unimportant, with which the reporters are accustomed to feed the unhealthy curiosity of a portion of the public. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groaned in spirit as he saw his family name and his family affairs dragged into that dreadful publicity.

But worst of all was the charge against Lord Conway.

Mr. Shenstein, the Hatton Garden jeweller, had sent those jewels to Lord Conway's rooms, on the request of his lordship written on his lordship's own paper.

There the viscount was to select a diamond tiara, which he intended to give as a wedding present to a lady of his family who was about to be married.

As Lord Conway's position was unquestioned, the jeweller's messenger had, of course, had no hesitation in leaving the diamonds there, Lord Conway not yet being out of bed when they arrived.

The diamonds were called for later.

They were gone!

What was more startling was that Lord Conway had gone, too!

Mr. Shenstein had been unable to believe his ears at first. A noble viscount "bolt" with his diamonds! Lord Eastwood's eldest son, heir to the earldom, steal!

It seemed impossible!

But ten thousand pounds was not to be lightly lost, and Mr. Shenstein remembered how young men got into debt, even those with the best prospects, and are driven to desperation in their efforts to raise money.

Telegrams flew to Eastwood House, to every known resort of Lord Conway. He was not to be heard of, and the diamonds had disappeared.

Mr. Shenstein went to the police.

The Scotland Yard detectives, of course, knew all about it as soon as they were told.

Lord Conway was in debt—he had had the diamond ornaments sent him on approval in order to make a coup before he bolted—and he was gone, and Mr. Shenstein's diamonds were gone with him.

And Scotland Yard put detectives on the track at once. The well-known Inspector Fix was placed in charge of it, and search was made for the missing viscount up and down and round about.

The country was ringing with it.

It came out that a friend of Lord Conway's had been staying with him overnight at his rooms—a Mr. Raby.

The police looked for Raby to get information respecting the viscount, and found that Raby had disappeared, too.

Then the theory seemed inevitable that they had fled together with their loot.

It was discovered that Raby was an old friend of the viscount, that they had been at school together, and that they had always been great chums in all parts of the world. And it came out that George Raby had saved Lord Conway from the jaws of a bear in the Rocky Mountains, narrowly escaping death himself in doing so. Raby had almost lost the use of his left arm from a bite of the grizzly, and by that injury he could be known at once and tracked.

"Poor old Waby!" Arthur Augustus remarked, almost tearfully. "He was an ass, you know, old Waby, but a vewy good-natured ass. You wemembah him at our place in the cwicket week?"

"I remember," said Tom Merry.

"He was weak and always gettin' into twouble, and Conway was always gettin' him out," said D'Arcy. "But, of course, he wasn't a thief. That's impos."

"It's a very odd case," Tom Merry remarked. "It seems clear that the jewels were sent to your brother's rooms and never came back."

"Yaas, that's cleah enough."

"Someone must have taken them."

"Yaas, that's extwemely pwob."

"Why doesn't Raby come forward?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Pewwaps he's fwightened; he may be afwaid of bein' suspected," the swell of St. Jim's remarked thoughtfully.

"More likely to get suspected if he bolts than if he doesn't."

"Yaas, that's so, too."

"And Lord Conway," said Blake, with a puzzled look—"what on earth has he bolted for?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"He is in hiding, stowed away at the school," said Tom Merry in a low voice. "But why? When he is suspected, why doesn't he own up?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"The proper thing for a suspected man to do is surely to face the music and prove his innocence," said Digby.

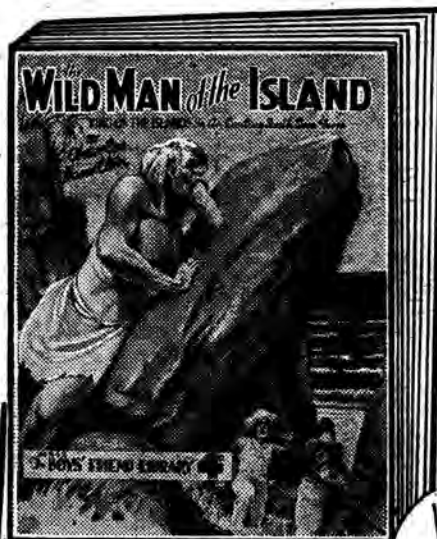
"Yaas, but—"

"But what?"
 "But I dare say he has his reasons."
 "I suppose he must have, or he wouldn't be in hiding," said Herries. "But I must say it's jolly odd!"
 D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Herries.
 "I twust that doesn't mean you suspect my bwothah of stealin' the beastlay diamonds, Hewwies?" he said.
 Herries snorted.
 "Of course I don't, ass!"
 "All wight, then."
 "But I said it was jolly odd, and it is jolly odd!" said Herries. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it! A suspected man ought to face his accusers—I mean, unless he's got jolly good reasons for not doing it."
 "In that case, then, I should say that he had jolly good reasons," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat stiffly.
 "Yes, I suppose so, but—"
 "Not much good jawing it over that I can see," Tom Merry remarked. "Anyway, we know that Lord Conway is innocent, and that settles that."
 "Oh, yes, rather!"
 "Yaas, I should wathah say so!"
 But all the juniors, including D'Arcy himself, were very much puzzled and disquieted.
 Lord Conway was innocent. Of that they did not allow a moment's doubt to enter their minds. But why did he hide from the police? Why had he fled, when he must know that his flight and his remaining in hiding must expose him to the blackest suspicions?
 It was a question they could not answer.
 "We shall have to give it up," said Monty Lowther.
 "Let's go and have a row with the New House chaps and forget all about it."
 "Good egg!"
 "Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
 "What's the matter?"
 "Look!"
 Tom Merry's hand rose to point to the gates.
 A man with a square, powerful figure, in an inspector's uniform, had entered, with two constables at his heels.
 The two policemen belonged to Rylcombe; the other man was a stranger. The juniors looked at them, and the same thought entered all their minds at once.
 "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.
 "The police!"
 "Gwreat Scott!"
 "The police!" said Tom Merry quietly. "And they've come to search the school!"

CHAPTER 12. The Search!

INSPECTOR FIX and his two companions were shown into the Head's study. But they had been seen by half St. Jim's, and the whole school was in a buzz with the news.
 Two policemen and a Scotland Yard inspector!
 The meaning of the visit was clear.
 St. Jim's was to be searched.
 The authorities suspected that the missing viscount had come to St. Jim's. He had two brothers at the school there, and the old place was full of nooks and crannies where a fugitive might be stowed away. And what could be more natural?
 The suspicion was quite natural under the circumstances, but most of the fellows laughed at the idea.
 "The asses!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "As if the chap could be here!"
 "Yes, awful rot, isn't it?" said Clifton Dane. "But you never know what the police may or may not think."
 "I suppose they're going to search the school," Gore remarked. "I wish them luck!"
 "Yes, rather!"
 "The duffers!"
 "Awful asses, aren't they, Tom Merry?" said Bernard Glyn.
 "I dare say they are," assented Tom Merry.
 "Do you think Lord Conway came in this direction?"
 "He's often been in this direction, hasn't he?"
 "I mean since he bolted."
 "That's for the police to find out, isn't it?" said Tom Merry. "If he's here, I dare say they'll find him."
 "Let's ask D'Arcy if he's seen him," said Hancock of the Fourth.
 "Oh, let D'Arcy alone!" replied Tom Merry.
 "But we might ask—"
 "Let him alone, I say! What's the good of jawing to him about it? Can't you see he's sick about it already?"
 "Well, perhaps you're right."
 Several fellows, however, asked D'Arcy whether his brother had come to see him since he had bolted. To each and all of them D'Arcy made the invariable reply:

"Oh wats! Don't bothah!"
 Snipe did not ask him. But there was a peculiar green gleam in Snipe's eyes. Snipe was thinking of the peculiar incident of the previous day, and it seemed to Snipe that at last some light was being let in on the mystery.
 Snipe was, in consequence, keeping his ears and eyes open.
 Inspector Fix and his two companions were shut up with the Head of St. Jim's for about ten minutes.
 Then Dr. Holmes sent for Mr. Railton.
 The Head, looking very disturbed and distressed, explained the matter to the master of the School House.
 "Inspector Fix suspects that Lord Conway may have come here to conceal himself," said the Head.
 "Most unlikely," said the Housemaster.
 "You have seen nothing of him?"
 "Nothing."
 "And heard nothing?"
 "Not at all."
 "The inspector wishes to search the college."
 Mr. Railton nodded.
 "No objection to that, that I can see," he remarked. "In fact, it will be really more satisfactory, under the circumstances."
 "Very good!" said Inspector Fix, in a dry voice. "First, however, I should like to see the brother of Lord Conway. He has a brother or brothers here, I understand."
 "Yes—two—one in the Fourth Form, and the other a mere lad in the Third."
 "Let me see the elder, then, if you please."
 "I will send for him."
 And Arthur Augustus was summoned to the Head's study. Toby, the page boy, came for him, and found him with



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Tom Merry & Co. The chums of the School House had been expecting it.

"Master D'Arcy wanted in the 'Ead's study," said Toby.

"Vewy good, Tobay," said D'Arcy.

And Toby went his way. The swell of St. Jim's looked at his comrades in great distress.

"That means that the police boundahs are goin' to question me," he remarked.

"It looks like it, old fellow."

"It will be deuseid awkward posish for me," said D'Arcy slowly. "Of course, I cannot tell them any cwammahs, and I cannot tell them that old Conway is here. What am I to do?"

"Better say nothing," said Digby.

"But that would look suspicious, too," said Blake. "If Conway wasn't here, of course, you'd say so at once. If you don't say so, it's equal to admitting that he's here."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then, what's to be done?" said Dig.

"Blessed if I know!"

"I shall have to be guided by cires, I suppose," said D'Arcy. "Anyway, I have to go to the Head's study, I suppose."

"I suppose so."

Arthur Augustus made his way slowly to the apartment where the inspector from Scotland Yard was waiting for him.

Mr. Fix looked at him very keenly.

"This is Master D'Arcy," said the Head.

Inspector Fix nodded.

"You are the brother of Lord Conway?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You are aware that Lord Conway has fled from his rooms in London, and cannot be found?" the inspector queried.

"Yaas."

"Do you know where he is?"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass frigidly upon the inspector.

"I do not wegard that question as cwicket," he said.

"I wegard it as wotten to ask a chap to give away a chap he knows."

"D'Arcy," said the Head warningly.

Mr. Fix coughed behind his hand.

"I sympathise with the young gentleman," he said. "But I am here to do my duty. Have you seen your brother to-day, Master D'Arcy?"

"No."

"Did you see him yesterday?"

"I decline to ansawah that question."

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the Head.

"I am sowwy, sir," he said; "but I must decline to ansawah that question. The chap has no wight to ask it."

Inspector Fix coughed again.

"Has your brother come to this school to seek concealment?" he asked.

D'Arcy did not reply.

"Do you not wish to answer, young sir?"

"I have nothin' to say."

"Nothing?" asked the inspector, with a smile.

"Nothin' whatever."

"Very well; I'm satisfied," said Inspector Fix good-temperedly. "I quite understand your feelings, and sympathise with them. I will now proceed to search the school, with your permission, Dr. Holmes."

"Certainly, sir!" said the Head.

And Arthur Augustus realised, miserably enough, that his replies had had just the effect he had dreaded—the effect of assuring the inspector that he had, in reality, seen his brother since the latter's "bolt" from London.

"You may go, D'Arcy," said the Head gently.

And the swell of St. Jim's went.

Then the search began.

Inspector Fix had left two constables at the gates of the school, and there were three more posted about the place where they could keep watch for any possible fugitive endeavouring to break away from the buildings.

Two constables accompanied the inspector in his search.

They went up and down, and through and round the School House in the most thorough manner.

The New House was left till later—as both Conway's brothers were School House boys, he was, of course, more likely to have sought refuge in that House. The School House, too, was an old, rambling building, full of nooks and crannies, and the New House was modern and compact, and it would have been difficult to conceal a stow-away there.

Crowds of fellows followed the police in their search—at a distance.

Every nook and corner of the old building was ransacked.

Even the empty boxes in the box-rooms were examined, and the wide, old chimneys and wardrobes, and the cup-

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boards in the studies. Study No. 6 was given a very thorough search, and Blake & Co. became anxious when the oak panelling was tapped in one or two places. But fortunately the police discovered nothing, and the search went on in other quarters. They looked everywhere, but in vain.

The police at the gate had orders to allow no one to pass out—no one whatever. But no one attempted to go. For a whole hour the search went on untiringly.

Then Inspector Fix called a halt.

He was still as suspicious as ever that Lord Conway was in the school; D'Arcy's manner of answering him in the study had convinced him of that.

But if Lord Conway was there, he was not to be betrayed, and there did not seem to be any means of finding him.

The inspector paused, baffled, in the Form-room passage, and consulted with his two followers. It was then that Snipe of the Fourth came up with an expression of righteous determination upon his face.

"Have you finished, sir?" he asked.

"Don't ask questions!" snapped Mr. Fix, somewhat crossly.

"I mean, I could suggest—"

"Oh!" The inspector's manner altered at once. "What could you suggest, my boy?"

"If you haven't searched the secret passages, sir—"

Mr. Fix's eyes gleamed.

"Secret passages! So there are secret passages here?"

"Yes, sir. I think it is my duty to tell you, and assist justice, if I can," said Snipe, in a very virtuous way.

The inspector did not express any opinion upon that point.

"Where are the secret passages?" he asked.

"There's one that opens through a panel in D'Arcy's study," said Snipe.

Mr. Fix gave a start.

"D'Arcy's study?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take me there at once."

"That panel has been securely screwed up long ago," said Mr. Railton, who had heard what Snipe said, not with a favourable ear.

"Oh!" said the inspector.

"It was unscrewed yesterday, sir," said Snipe.

"Oh, are you sure?"

"I saw Blake unscrewing it sir. D'Arcy was present. I wondered at the time what they were doing it for."

The inspector's eyes glittered.

"Take me to the room," he said concisely.

"Yes, sir. Follow me, please!"

And in two minutes Inspector Fix and his followers were in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage in the School House.

CHAPTER 13.

In Danger!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation as the inspector entered the study.

The chums of the Fourth were there, and so were the Terrible Three. The study had been already searched, and then the chums had gathered there, with the idea of keeping as near to the secret panel as possible. They were uneasy about it. It might be remembered at any time by some fellow who might injudiciously blurt out the facts in the hearing of the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

The panel certainly looked innocent enough. Blake had leaned an easel against it, and there was a chair backed against the wall, as if that were a spot no one had any need to approach.

The inspector's keen eye noted the chair and the easel at once as he entered the study for the second time, and he smiled.

That smile struck the chums of the School House like a cold chill.

"Do you want anything here, sir?" asked Jack Blake, as calmly and politely as he could.

"Yes; I want to search the study."

"Bai Jove! You have searched it once, my deah sir!"

"Yes; and now I want to search it again."

"Are we to turn out our pockets, sir?" asked Monty Lowther, with polite sarcasm. "I've suspected Gussy more than once of concealing criminals in his watch-case, sir."

Mr. Fix laughed.

"No, you need not trouble about your watch-cases or pockets," he said. "I shall be satisfied if you open the secret panel."

The juniors stared at him in dismay.

The thrust was so sudden that they could make no attempt to conceal their feelings. Arthur Augustus' jaw dropped.



"Very well done," said Inspector Fix, reaching out a hand and grasping the young man's shoulder. "But you can't go yet, Lord Conway!" With a sudden spring, Lord Conway tore himself from the inspector's grasp, brushed aside the policeman, and leaped out into the quad! "Stop him!" yelled Mr. Fix.

"The—the secret panel?" he murmured.

"Certainly!"

"My hat!"

"Please open it at once," said Mr. Fix politely, but firmly.

"Secret panel?" said Blake reflectively. "Did you say a secret panel, sir?"

"Yes, I did."

"If you think there is a secret panel here, sir, perhaps you had better look for it," said Blake. "Are you sure you haven't been reading a newspaper serial story, sir, and that it hasn't got into your head?"

The inspector smiled.

"Will you kindly show me the panel?" he asked.

"Weally, Mr. Fix—"

"Then I will ask Mr. Railton."

"Weally—"

The inspector stepped to the door. The Housemaster was in the passage, and he stepped into the study as Mr. Fix spoke to him.

"I should be glad if you would show me the secret panel, sir," said Mr. Fix.

"Certainly!"

Mr. Railton stepped to the panelled wall and removed the easel and the chair. The inspector smiled again. Mr. Railton glanced over the wall, and then looked at Blake.

"This panel was screwed up by order of the Head, Blake," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"The screws have now been removed."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Who removed them?"

"I did, sir."

"We all took a hand in it, sir," said Digby.

"Why?"

"We—we wanted to open the panel, sir."

Mr. Railton said no more. He pressed the spring, and the panel flew open, disclosing the dark aperture beyond. Jack Blake lurched against the mantelpiece and knocked off a large jug, which fell upon the fender with a terrific crash and was smashed to atoms.

The Housemaster looked at him quickly.

"Blake!"

"Very good," said the inspector quietly. "That is enough."

He stepped into the opening, followed by the constables, electric lamps lighting the way.

Mr. Railton remained behind, looking sternly at the juniors.

"Blake," he exclaimed, "I can only take it that Lord Conway has come here and that you have concealed him in the secret passage. You knocked down that jug to alarm him and warn him that the police are here."

Jack Blake hung his head, and did not reply.

The Housemaster was about to speak again, but he checked himself, and followed the constables into the secret passage.

It was clear that the inspector believed that he was upon the track of the fugitive already, and that the capture of the viscount was only a question of time.

The chums of the School House looked at one another miserably.

"Bai Jove, it's all up now!" groaned D'Arcy.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"There's a chance," he said. "It will take a good hour for them to search all the passages behind the walls. In that time—"

"Lord Conway will know they're after him, and he'll get out by way of the spiral stair," said Manners, in a low voice. "But he can't stay on the roof. It's overlooked by several upper windows, and he might be seen there."

"He can get down into the quad without being seen."

"Every outlet from the school is being guarded," said Blake.

"But there is the disguise."

"Yaas; that's the last chance."

"Let's get out," said Tom Merry restlessly. "We may find him in the quad if he has gone down already, or we may be able to help him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was no sign of the police returning from the secret passage yet. The chums of the School House quitted Study No. 6, and went out into the sunny afternoon.

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Figgins & Co. of the New House came over to speak to them.

"Jolly exciting, ain't it?" said Figgins.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose, as a matter of fact, Lord Conway is here," Figgins remarked. "Is there anything we can do?"

"Nothing—except keep mum," said Tom Merry.

"We'll do that."

"Of course, we don't believe a word against old Conway, Gussy," said the Co. together.

"Thank you, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "Of course, it's all a wotten mistake!"

"Oh, we know it is."

"This way," said Tom Merry.

They strolled round the School House. In a secluded corner, shadowed by buildings, was a thickly ivied wall, and under the ivy was concealed the stone projections by means of which it was easy to climb to and from the roof.

A man had just dropped from the ivy.

Figgins and Co. stared at him in astonishment.

He was a man with dark, rough eyebrows, rusty black clothes, and a generally tired and dusty and dilapidated appearance.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins.

"That's not a detective, surely?"

The stranger laughed softly.

"No," he said. "You know my voice, I think, Figgins."

Figgins jumped.

"Lord Conway!"

CHAPTER 14.

Mr. Bunn's Young Man!

LORD CONWAY was breathing hard after his exertions. But he was quite himself. He was perfectly cool, in spite of his narrow escape and the danger that still surrounded him.

"You got out of the passage all right, then, Con?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes," said the viscount. "I heard a crash in your study and was on my guard at once. I closed the stone behind me at the top of the stair, and came down this way from the roof. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn will say nothing, I'm sure."

"No fear!" said Figgins & Co. together.

"The gate's guarded, sir," said Tom Merry uneasily, "and—a fellow might come round the corner here any minute."

"Where can he hide?" muttered D'Arcy.

"It can't be done. It will have to be faced out," said Tom Merry, after a moment's thought. "That inspector chap is jolly keen, and if he found a stranger hiding about he would guess a disguise at once. Lord Conway had better not be seen talking to us, or it will throw suspicion on him at once. I've got an idea. He can wait in Taggles' lodge."

"Taggles' lodge?"

"Yes; he can be Mr. Jones, the young man from Bunn's, come about the bill we owe him."

"Bai Jove!"

"Figgins can take him there and explain to Taggles."

Figgins whistled.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll do my best."

"Better give Taggles a tip."

"That's all right. I'm in funds now."

"Jolly lucky," said Tom Merry; "because we're not."

"All serene. Will you come with me, sir?"

"Certainly," said Lord Conway. "It's a bold game; but it's the only chance, so far as I can see."

And he walked away with Figgins.

Tom Merry felt in his pockets. He had an old bill from Mr. Bunn, for confectionery supplied. He ran after the disguised viscount and thrust it into his hands.

"That's the bill," he said.

Lord Conway laughed.

"Thank you, Tom; you think of everything."

The disguised viscount walked across the quadrangle with Figgins. The policeman at the gates eyed him as he went into the school porter's lodge, but not with any particular interest. He had Lord Conway's photograph and description; but neither was in the least like the rusty, shabby man who was going into Taggles' lodge with Figgins of the New House.

Taggles looked up with a grunt as they came in. He eyed the stranger in his suspicious way. He eyed Figgins more suspiciously still.

"Wot is it?" he asked.

Taggles had been a victim of many junior japes, and Taggles was generally on his guard when dealing with fellows in the Fourth and the Shell.

"Do you mind if Mr. Bunn's man waits here for a bit,

Taggles?" asked Figgins, showing a half-crown's milled edge between his thumb and finger.

Taggles was all politeness at once.

He had glanced at the bill in the young man's hands, and saw Mr. Bunn's name upon it, and he had no suspicion of the facts.

"Suttingly, sir," said Taggles. "He can wait 'ere, suttingly. Sit down, sir."

"Thank you," said Mr. Bunn's supposed young man, in a cracky voice, very unlike Lord Conway's usual deep, clear tones, "I will. It is hot weather this afternoon, sir—very hot, even for August."

"It is," said Taggles—"it are! Very tiring and very thirsty weather it are!"

And Mr. Bunn's young man sat down.

Figgins slipped the half-crown deftly into Taggles' horny hand. He drew the porter aside, and spoke in a low voice.

"You understand, Taggy," he murmured. "The chap is not to be allowed to get in with that little bill."

Taggles grinned.

"Yes, sir."

"If he asks for Tom Merry, tell him he must wait a little longer, and keep him quiet," said Figgins. "Tom Merry doesn't want to get that little bill—not till after the afternoon's post gets in. You savvy?"

"Master Merry's expectin' a remittance by afternoon post, I suppose, sir?"

Figgins did not reply to that question, but he winked.

"If you can keep him here till afternoon post, Taggy, it will be worth another half-crown to you!" he whispered.

"I'll manage it if I can, sir," said Taggles, with a wink in reply to Figgins' wink. "You rely on me, Master Figgins. I hunderstand."

It was very doubtful if Taggles did understand; but Figgins was quite willing to let it go at that.

"All right," he whispered. "I rely on you."

He turned back to Mr. Bunn's young man, who was sitting bolt upright with his back to the window.

"You don't mind waitin' 'ere a bit, Mr. Jones?" he said.

"No, sir," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice. "But how long am I to wait? I have the bill here."

"Yes, yes, that's all right."

"Perhaps you will take it to Master Merry yourself, and tell him I am waiting here for the money?" Mr. Bunn's young man suggested.

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "I—I'll mention to him that you're here, Mr. Jones, certainly. Perhaps you'd better keep the bill till you see him."

"But—"

"If you don't mind waiting a bit—"

"I ain't going without the money," said Mr. Bunn's young man acidly.

"Oh, the money's all right, of course!"

"I 'ope it is," said Mr. Bunn's young man darkly.

Figgins winked again at Taggles, and quitted the porter's lodge.

The school porter was all civility to his guest. A half-crown was a big tip, and the prospect of another in an hour's time was very gratifying to Taggles. He knew that Figgins was a fellow of his word. Taggles meant to earn that other half-crown if he could—he did not guess how easy it would be.

"I don't remember seeing you about Mr. Bunn's before, sir," said Taggles. "Perhaps you are a noo young man?"

"I have never worked for Mr. Bunn before," said the guest.

"Ha, I thort I'd have known if you had, sir!" said Taggles. "I 'ope your chair is comfortable," he added, as Mr. Bunn's young man shifted.

"Yes, yes, quite, thank you; but perhaps I ought to see Master Merry—"

"I shouldn't 'urry—"

"But I have this bill—"

"It will keep, sir. Could I get you anythin' to drink?" suggested Taggles.

"Perhaps a little milk and water—not too strong," said Mr. Bunn's young man.

"Suttingly, sir."

Mr. Bunn's young man gave a little start as a shadow crossed the open doorway and darkened the sunlight that fell into the lodge.

The shadow came to a point at the top—the helmet of a policeman!

Mr. Bunn's young man raised a paper and looked at it seriously.

The policeman stepped in.

"Anything wanted?" said Taggles.

"Yes, we want to search the lodge," said Mr. Fix, following the constable in. "We have the authority of Dr. Holmes."

Taggles sniffed.

"If you think I've got any thieves 'id about 'ere, you can search and welcome," he said. "I'm sure me and Mr. Jones don't mind."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice.

The search in the secret passages of the School House had evidently ended.

There was now a trace of irritation in the usually calm and placid countenance of Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard.

On the discovery of the secret passage opening from Study No. 6 he had felt certain of the capture of the stowaway of St. Jim's.

But the passages, in all their winding recesses, had been searched in vain.

There was no trace of the young man.

The inspector had asked Mr. Railton if there was any other exit from the passages save that into Study No. 6.

There were two, and Mr. Railton had pointed them out to him. One was by means of a panel into the Head's study, but the Head was there, and it was certain that that had not been used by the fugitive. The other was by the stone door at the top of the spiral stair, giving access to the roof. By the latter, Mr. Fix at once made up his mind, the stowaway had gone.

Mr. Fix had searched the roof, and had discovered in the ivy traces of a rapid descent. His last doubt that the fugitive was on the premises vanished. But where was he? How had he vanished in the open sunlight, in the middle of the day? He could not have left the spot where he had climbed down from the roof without appearing in full view of a hundred windows and hundreds of pairs of eyes. Yet Mr. Fix questioned right and left without obtaining any satisfaction.

Either all St. Jim's was in a conspiracy to defeat him, or else the viscount had vanished into thin air—or else—what else there was to think, Mr. Fix could not guess.

And so Mr. Fix was growing what the juniors of St. Jim's would have described as "ratty."

The inspector glanced at Mr. Bunn's young man very crossly, and took no further notice of him.

The policeman searched the lodge through carefully, Taggles looking on with expressive sniffs.

The search occupied a quarter of an hour.

Then Mr. Fix and his myrmidons left the lodge, leaving Taggles and Mr. Bunn's young man together.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice. "Dear me! Whom are they searching for, Mr. Taggles?"

"Fellow named Lord Conway, who's stole a 'eap of diamonds," said Taggles. "They won't find 'im 'ere."

"No, I hope not," said Mr. Bunn's young man. "Dear me! The time is getting on. Perhaps it would be better for me to go and look for Master Merry."

"I'd wait a little longer, if I was you, sir," said Taggles.

And Mr. Bunn's man waited.

CHAPTER 15.

Caught!

TOM MERRY & CO. had watched Mr. Fix and the constables enter the porter's lodge.

Their hearts were in their mouths. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaned against one of the old elms, and his face was the picture of misery.

"Buck up, old man!" said Tom Merry comfortingly, as comfortingly as he could. "Keep your pecker up, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy heavily.

But he did not look as if he were keeping his pecker up. He breathed a deep sigh of relief when the constables emerged from the lodge, and he saw that the disguised viscount was not with them. Figgins' eyes danced.

"My hat!" he exclaimed in a subdued voice. "They've missed him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They haven't seen through the disguise," Tom Merry said, "and if Taggy lets him wait in the lodge till they're gone—"

Figgins chuckled.

"Taggy will keep him there if he can," he said. "There's a half-crown for Taggy if he does."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank goodness!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Old Conway's got through that all wight. But it must have been a fearful time for him."

Inspector Fix came over towards the juniors. There was a deep wrinkle in Mr. Fix's brow.

"Found him, sir?" asked Monty Lowther cheerfully.

Mr. Fix frowned darkly.

"No," he said, "I haven't found him!"

"Would you like to look in the kennels, sir, or in the

drinking fountain? There's the letter-box in the School House, too—"

"Shut up, Monty!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Rats! I'm only trying to help Mr. Fix with suggestions, and to make easy the path of law and order, and justice and things."

Mr. Fix smiled sourly.

"You don't care to tell me where Lord Conway is," he said. "Well, I'm having the place carefully watched, and I know he is here. I shall have him soon. He was seen leaving the train at Wayland yesterday, and I know he was here."

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Keep your secret if you like; it's only a matter of time. I don't leave this school till I've seen him."

The constables entered the New House, evidently with the intention of searching that building.

"My hat!" said Digby. "He's sticking to it!"

"Confound him!" muttered D'Arcy. "Why can't the chap be satisfied and go away?"

"He feels pretty certain that Lord Conway is here."

The bell rang, and the juniors went in to classes.

Needless to say, their thoughts were very little upon their

SOME FUN!



Convict: "When does the fun begin?"

Warder: "What fun?"

Convict: "Well, the judge said that I was to be sent here for the time of my life."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alan Gill, 57, Bransty Road, Whitehaven, Cumberland.

work that afternoon. But most of the masters made allowances for the excitement in the school, and dealt easily with them.

Afternoon lessons seemed an eternity to Tom Merry & Co. It seemed to them that the hour of dismissal would never come.

It came at last, and the juniors poured out of the Form-room into the quad, eager to know what had happened during the afternoon.

They felt pretty certain that the stowaway of St. Jim's had not been captured; they would have heard of it, even in the class-room.

But what had happened?

Tom Merry caught sight of a policeman the moment he put his head out of the House. The constable was resting against the stone balustrade by the side of the School House steps. Another could be seen in the distance by the gateway. The school was still being watched.

"Better have a look in Taggy's lodge, Figgy," Tom Merry suggested.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right you are!" said the New House junior.

Figgins strolled round to the porter's lodge. Taggles was not there; his duties had called him away. But Mr. Bunn's young man was still in the little sitting-room. He looked up eagerly at Figgins.

"You've been here all the time, sir?" muttered Figgins.

"Yes—more than two hours."

"And Taggy—"

"He does not suspect anything; he's only been trying to keep me here. But he must begin to wonder," said the young man. "The police have not gone yet?"

"No, sir; they're not going till they've found you, Mr. Fix says."

"If Mr. Fix sees me here a second time, he will suspect," said Lord Conway quietly. "I had better make an effort to leave the school."

Figgins nodded.

"I suppose so, sir."

"Tell Arthur that I will be in the old barn to-night at ten; until then I shall hide in the woods, if I can get so far," said the young man.

"Very well, sir."

Figgins left the lodge. He joined the juniors outside the School House, and communicated what Lord Conway had said to him.

"It will be wisky twyin' to pass the offciah at the gate," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully.

"More risky to remain," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"The police don't intend to go—and if they stay, Lord Conway can't."

"You're wight, deah boy."

"And I don't see why the man at the gate should stop him; after all, he's only Mr. Bunn's young man."

"Quite twee."

The juniors strolled down to the fountain in the quad. from which they could obtain an easy view of the gate. A few minutes later the rusty black figure of Mr. Bunn's young man emerged from the porter's lodge.

D'Arcy drew a deep breath.

"There he goes, deah boys."

"Good luck to him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Bunn's young man went to the gateway with a jerky walk. The policeman on duty there stepped into his path.

"Are you going out, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, officer," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice.

"Sorry, sir; but I've orders to stop you."

"Stop me, officer?" said Mr. Bunn's young man, in tones of great surprise.

"Yes, sir; inspector's orders!"

"But I have waited in the porter's lodge for over two hours, and I cannot see Master Merry!" expostulated Mr. Bunn's young man. "Mr. Bunn may be getting anxious about it."

The policeman grinned.

"I cannot let you pass, sir, without asking the inspector," he said.

"Goodness gracious!"

"Ere's Mr. Fix, sir; I'll call him."

Inspector Fix came up. He was looking heated and irritable. In spite of his firm conviction that Lord Conway was at St. Jim's, stowed away somewhere in the old school, a doubt had crept into Inspector Fix's mind. Was it possible that he was on the wrong track, after all—that he was wasting time at St. Jim's? It was not a pleasant reflection for the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

"Well, well, what is it?" exclaimed Mr. Fix sharply.

"Am I to let this gentleman pass, sir?"

Mr. Fix looked sharply at the young man from Mr. Bunn's.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Mr. Bunn's young man, if you please, sir."

"Ah, I saw you in the porter's lodge, I think!"

"Yes, sir. But Master Merry has not come to see me, and I shall take the bill away with me, sir. I cannot wait here any longer."

A peculiar expression dawned upon Mr. Fix's face. In the porter's lodge it had not been so easy to scan Mr. Bunn's young man's face closely. In the sunlight it was a different matter, and Mr. Fix's eyes were trained to detect signs of make-up.

Deciding to take no risks of the young man escaping, the inspector invited him to step into the porter's lodge again to be questioned. Then he reached out his hand and grasped the young man by the shoulder.

"Very well done," he said—"very well done, and I never guessed it till now! But you can't go yet, Lord Conway!"

With the spring of a tiger, Lord Conway tore himself from the inspector's grasp, brushed aside the policeman, and leaped out into the quad.

"Stop him!" Mr. Fix yelled.

CHAPTER 18.

Good News!

"STOP him!"

The inspector's voice rose to a shriek.

Lord Conway bounded through the gates into the road, and as he did so two stalwart forms in blue bore down upon him, and he was seized.

He struggled for a moment—but only for a moment. He realised that he had no chance, and he dropped his hands.

"Very well," he said quietly. "You have me—I shall not resist."

"Better not, sir."

The constables drew back into the gateway. Lord Conway stood between them.

"Well, inspector," he said, with a rueful smile; "so you have found me!"

Mr. Fix laughed.

All his good humour had been restored by his success, and by the knowledge that he had been right all along—that the man he sought was at St. Jim's.

"Exactly, my dear sir," he said; "I have you! A nice little game of hide-and-seek, sir; quite a nice little game. And now—"

"Conway, old boy!"

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It was Arthur Augustus' voice. The swell of St. Jim's ran into the gateway, his eyes burning.

"Con, old boy, we'll back you up; we'll——"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"The game's up, Arthur. Don't lose your head."

"Weally, you know——"

"You must not resist the law."

"But——"

"Quiet, old fellow," said Conway, laying a calming hand upon the swell of St. Jim's. "Quiet!"

"But—but you're not goin' to be awwested, Con!" gasped D'Arcy.

"That depends entirely upon Lord Conway," said the inspector quietly. "If he likes to tell us where the diamond thief is, he's as free as air. Otherwise——"

"What!"

"Where is Mr. Raby?" asked the inspector.

Lord Conway set his lips.

"Where is he, Lord Conway?"

"I have only this to say, Mr. Shenstein will be paid if the diamonds are not recovered."

"Then I'm afraid we must take you into custody, sir," said the inspector.

"Oh, Conway!"

The inspector turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with quite a benevolent smile. It was surprising to see the effect of success upon Mr. Fix.

"You need not be worried about your brother, Master D'Arcy," he said. "If he chooses to tell us where the thief is, all will be well; if he does not, he must be content to lie under the suspicion of being a confederate. Mr. Raby was in your brother's rooms, and he bolted with the diamonds——"

"My governah would pay for them, I know that," said D'Arcy.

Mr. Fix smiled again.

"Yes, but he would not pay for the rest of Mr. Raby's little misdeeds—forged cheques and other little things," he said. "We want Mr. Raby, and we're going to have him. Lord Conway expected to draw the whole pursuit upon himself by bolting suddenly; and certainly he proved himself guilty to the reporters. When the case was put into my hands I knew what was what. We want Mr. Raby; and I don't think Mr. Raby will find it easy to get out of England."

"I trust that he will," said Lord Conway quietly. "Raby was led into this by designing rascals; he was more sinned against than sinning. He saved my life, and I was bound to stand by him."

Inspector Fix shook his head.

"It won't do, my dear sir—it won't do," he said. "I shall have to ask you to come with us."

"I'm ready."

"Perhaps Dr. Holmes will lend us a conveyance."

Five minutes later Inspector Fix was driving away with his prisoner in the Head's car. But that explanation had left the juniors of St. Jim's relieved at heart; and it chased the clouds from D'Arcy's face. As for Wally, he yelled with delight when he heard how the matter really was.

"Isn't it just like old Con?" he exclaimed. "Isn't it just like him? Of course, he was standing up for somebody else, and he was bound to, as the chap saved his life. It's just like my old duffer of a brother. I can just see Gussy doing it, too, if one of you chaps came a mucker."

"I trust I should always stand by my friends," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "But I know that none of my friends would evah do anythin' so howwible as stealin'. I am afraid Conway has been vewy careless in his selection of his friends, and I shall talk to him seriously on the subject when this affair has blown ovah!"

"Dr. 'Olmes wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study!" announced Toby.

"Bai Jove! Now for a waggin'," said D'Arcy.

But, contrary to expectations, a ragging did not await the swell of the Fourth.

Dr. Holmes questioned him as to what had happened, and Arthur Augustus told the whole story.

"I do not say that I either approve or disapprove," said the Head when he had heard everything. "I only say that I am glad that matters have turned out so well. You must not do anything of this sort again, D'Arcy."

"Very well, sir," said D'Arcy meekly.

He could say that safely; the circumstances were peculiar, and were certainly never likely to arise again.

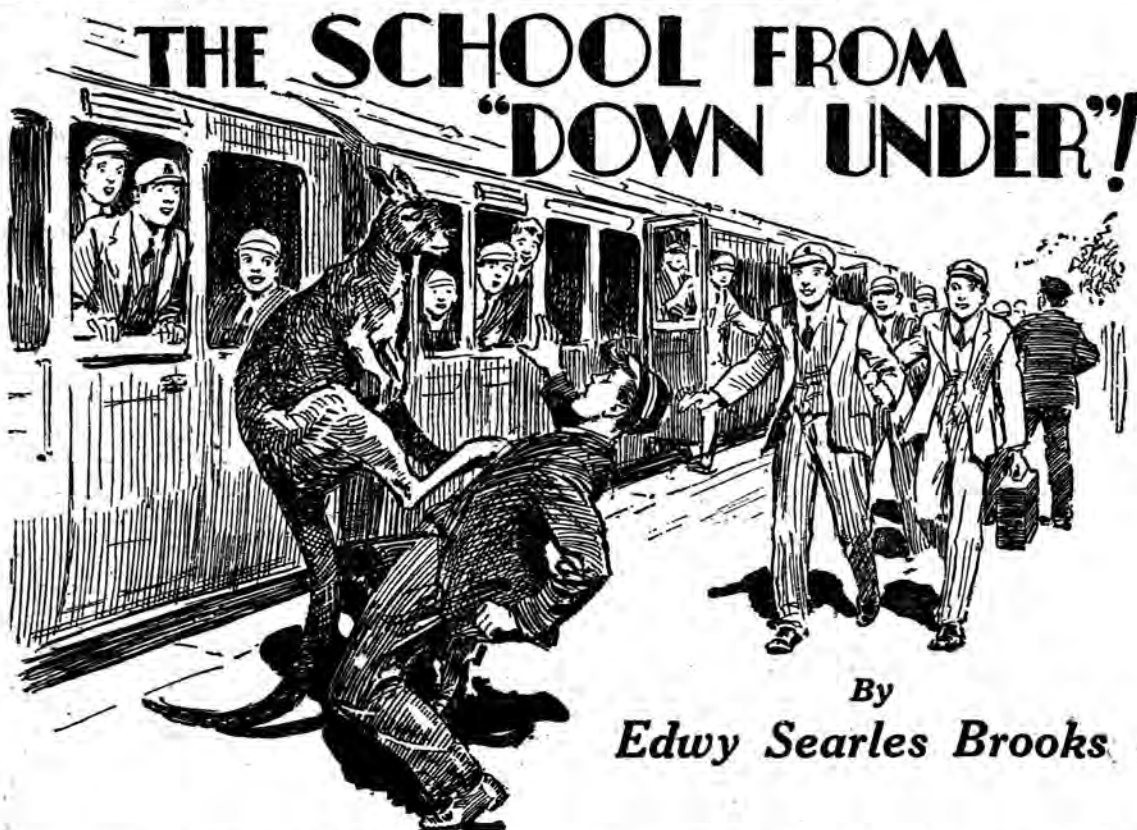
And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the Head's study, feeling perfectly well satisfied with the Head and with himself.

But the chums of St. Jim's awaited further news with great anxiety.

Lord Conway had placed himself in a very peculiar and

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MASTER WHO IMPRISONED TWO BOYS IN A DUNGEON!



By
Edwy Searles Brooks

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Some schoolboys from Australia take over River House School, near St. Frank's, for the summer, and immediately the two schools are at grips in a friendly "war." After a cricket match between the schools, Jerry Dodd, of St. Frank's, discovers that one of the Aussies, Jim Sayers, is an impostor, but keeps his discovery secret, because he wants to find out what the impostor's game is. Handforth and Dodd go to the River House School one night to investigate. Through the window of a study they see Mr. Rutter, an Australian master who is secretly in league with Sayers, talking with the impostor. Unfortunately Handforth makes a noise and the master darts to the window.

Rutter's Cunning!

RUTTER was a man of instant action. He flung the study window open, and leapt out. The sound from outside had made it clear to him that something, or somebody, was there. But when the master stood outside the window he saw nothing. Not a sign of any living thing.

"What on earth—" began Sayers, at the window.

"Quiet!" hissed Rutter.

They stood like statues. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. No echo of running footsteps, no swishing of bushes.

Rutter moved up and down, and he cursed as he caught his knee against the brick angle of the cucumber-frame near by. Then he walked a short distance in the other direction, finally returning to the window.

"What was it?" whispered Sayers.

"Nothing," growled the other. "At least, nothing that matters. A prowling cat, probably. Sounds are always exaggerated on a warm, still night like this. Move aside; I'm coming in."

"Geewinnikers! I'm relieved," said Sayers. "I thought, for a moment, that somebody had spotted us."

"I was at the window before they could have escaped," said Mr. Rutter. "The truth is, boy, we're both getting jumpy. It won't do. We shall have to cut out these secret meetings. They're foolish, anyway."

"Why are they foolish?" said Sayers. "We must have a talk now and again; and it's risky in the day-time."

"Nothing of the sort," said Mr. Rutter. "You can

always make an excuse to come to my study, and if we have anything to say, we can say it in private. To meet like this at night is dangerous; and you mustn't come down to me again, Sayers. Let that be thoroughly understood."

"Talking like a real schoolmaster, aren't you?" sneered Jim Sayers. "Better keep that sort of thing for the other chaps. You can't order me about as you like."

"All right—all right!" snapped the master. "But we'll say no more now. I'm going to bed, and you'd better go to bed, too. See that you don't disturb anybody."

He closed the window, and pulled the catch into position. A moment later the light went out, and silence descended.

Outside, Jerry Dodd and Handforth were not three yards from the window, and they were congratulating themselves upon the astute way in which they had fooled the Australian master.

Lying flat on his back Jerry raised his hands, and gently slid the glass "light" on the cucumber-frame. From the inner side of the dusty glass he and Handforth had seen the light go out in the study, and they knew it was now safe for them to emerge.

"Phew! That's better!" breathed Handforth. "It was getting pretty stuffy in here."

There were no cucumber plants in the frame; nothing but grass and weeds. Jerry Dodd, in that crucial moment, had spotted the frame, and he had seen that the glass top was half back. Jerry knew that there was no time to escape, and he had yanked Handforth's arm. Both of them had scrambled into the frame, and Jerry had pulled the light right over. It had all been done in a matter of seconds.

And there the two St. Frank's boys had crouched, hidden by the dusty glass, whilst Rutter had searched about not two yards away. But it had been a narrow shave.

"Lucky thing for us they didn't think of looking in the frame," murmured Jerry. "It was our only chance; and the dodge worked."

"What do we do now?" whispered Handforth.

"Go home, of course."

"But we've done nothing."

"Haven't we? We've seen Rutter and Sayers together. We know they're in league," replied Jerry grimly. "And look here, Handy, we've got to keep this thing strictly under our hats. We mustn't tell a soul. Promise me to keep mum?"

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"Why, yes; but I don't see—"

"We mustn't let these Australian blighters know that we've twigged their game," continued Jerry. "I'm ashamed to admit that they're Australian; but facts are facts. The time is not yet ripe for us to take any action. We'll lie low and watch."

"That's it; we'll play the waiting game," said Handforth eagerly. "By George! We'll shadow them wherever they go! And, in the meantime, it's our secret."

The two St. Frank's juniors were under the impression that they had hoodwinked Rutter; but they little guessed that in reality it was Rutter who had hoodwinked them.

For at that very moment, whilst they talked in whispers, the Australian schoolmaster was not six feet away, his face hidden behind the rusty grille of a cellar. Every word he heard.

Rutter had acted with considerable ingenuity. With the quick brain of the desperate man he had grasped the situation, and had then behaved accordingly.

In that first minute, when he had climbed out of the window, he had caught a glimpse of the cucumber-frame top moving. In that flash he knew that the intruder, or intruders, had sought refuge under the light. He had glimpsed the figures lying under the glass.

Had he chosen he could have exposed them then and there, challenging their right to be in the River House grounds.

But he knew that they must have overheard something of what had been said in the study. And if he precipitated a showdown it would mean exposure on the spot, and the wreckage of all his plans.

Somebody was suspicious—somebody had crept to the study window, and had seen him and Sayers together. That was serious enough. But who were they? And how much did they actually know?

Rutter saw in a moment that he had a unique opportunity here of discovering the identity of his enemies. That they were not ready to take action on their own account was proved by their desperate move to conceal themselves. Keeping his head, Rutter might yet save the situation.

So he had affected to see nothing; he had told Sayers that the sound had been made by a stray cat—knowing full well that his words were clearly audible to the lurkers in the cucumber frame. He had lulled them into a sense of false security. Cunningly, deliberately, he had hoodwinked them.

Immediately after switching off the light in the study he had sent Sayers up to bed. And, like a rabbit, he had bolted down into the cellar, making straight for that open grating.

Thus the scheming schoolmaster was there now. He had heard every word of the whispered conversation between Jerry Dodd and Handforth. He had recognised Handforth's voice—and the other voice was Australian. Dodd, of course! Jerry Dodd, the boy who came from Bathurst—the same district of New South Wales as the real Jim Sayers!

This was an alarming enough discovery. Clearly Jerry Dodd suspected. That was the reason for his midnight visit. Jerry believed that there was something wrong with the impostor. In a word, it was palpable to Rutter that he and his schoolboy confederate were walking on the edge of a volcano. But as yet they were safe.

The two St. Frank's boys had pledged themselves to secrecy; Rutter had heard them say that they would play the waiting game.

Well, he would play the waiting game, too.

The advantage was with him, for he knew what they were intending and thus he could be ready. A little careful planning, and he would have the upper hand.

The Hunters Hunted!

THE hot August days slipped by. Nothing much mattered at St. Frank's except cricket. Nipper and his stalwarts again played a junior test match against the boys of the Australian School. It was a fine match, keenly played by both teams, and it was the Australians who by hard hitting and fine bowling forced a victory.

"Well, that makes us all square, chum," said Curly Baines after the game. "Later on we shall have to have a final test match to decide the rubber."

"Meanwhile, we'll see what we can do about the real Test Match at the Oval," grinned Nipper.

"We're planning to go," said McVittie eagerly. "No need to worry about this week, of course. The match doesn't start until Saturday. All the best play will be next week."

Everybody was agog concerning the big Test Match. The St. Frank's fellows and the Australian boys were equally excited. And for the time being, japes were "off." Not that the rival schoolboys would not indulge in a jape at short notice if the opportunity arose.

Handforth, although he played cricket in the matches, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,383.

seemed strangely preoccupied. He had formed the habit lately of going off alone, and not returning for some hours. And he never enlightened Church and McClure as to the nature of these mysterious missions. They were becoming a bit fed-up, for they had never known Handforth to keep a secret for so long. Their burly leader had not let an incautious word slip out, and when they had questioned him he had brusquely told them to go and eat coke.

Mr. Rutter, at the Australian School, had kept his eyes well open. So far he had said nothing to Sayers. He was not willing to trust the boy too much. Sayers believed that everything was all right, and it was better to leave him that way.

Curly Baines and the others were giving Sayers the cold shoulder. He was not sent to Coventry, but more or less ignored. All the boys of the Australian School had been incensed at the publication in the "Bannington Gazette" of a highly coloured account of the outrage at St. Frank's. Little did they guess that Mr. Rutter himself had given the newspaper reporter all the necessary details! The Australian boys felt that they had been dishonoured, and for that reason they were reluctant to indulge in any further japes, lest evil-minded people should misunderstand.

Mr. Rutter knew quite well that Jerry Dodd and Handforth had been shadowing him. Evening after evening the schoolmaster had gone out for walks—not because he cared for country walks, but because he was anxious to learn if he was being shadowed. On some occasions it was Jerry who followed him, on other occasions Handforth. They watched his movements closely; but, naturally, they had never seen him engaged in any suspicious activities. They believed, moreover, that their own movements were unsuspected. Well, this was all to the good. The young amateur detectives were still keeping their secret, and they were playing the waiting game as they had arranged.

Yet Rutter was now beginning to get a little anxious.

He knew that he must soon act, or the two St. Frank's boys might take others into their confidence. They would grow tired of this shadowing business. So far Rutter and Sayers were safe. But how long would it last?

"Going out, Handy?"

Edward Oswald Handforth, looking very absent-minded, halted in the Triangle. The evening was overcast—sultry and thundery. It was not yet dusk, although it looked like it owing to the lowering clouds.

Church and McClure, who had been lounging on the Ancient House steps, chatting with Archie Glenthorpe and Fullwood and "Skeets" Bellon, approached their rugged-faced study chum.

"Going out?" repeated Church casually.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Handforth in a careless voice. "I might."

"We'll go with you if you like," said McClure generously.

"Well, I don't like," replied Handforth, frowning. "I thought I left you fellows in the Common-room."

"That was ten minutes ago," said Church. "You passed us on the steps just now, and you didn't even see us. What's the matter with you, Handy?"

"Nothing, ass!"

"There's something on your mind—some secret or other."

"Rot!"

"You're always going out on your own, and when you come back you never say what you've been doing," continued Church. "It's not like you, Handy. There's a new waitress—down at the tuckshop, I know, and at first we thought—"

"Who told you to think?" demanded Handforth, turning red. "Blow the waitress! I haven't even seen her. What's she like?" he added, with a show of interest.

"Oh, young—between fifteen and sixteen," said Church, giving McClure a nudge. "Small, you know, but dainty and graceful; red-gold hair and hazel eyes."

"My only hat!" said Handforth, with a start. "And you say she's in the village tuckshop?"

"Come with us, and treat us to ice-creams, and we'll introduce you," said McClure. "She's certain to serve us, of course, as soon as she catches sight of you."

They went out into the lane, and, at first, Church and McClure thought that they had "clicked." But suddenly Handforth came to a halt in the middle of the lane, and he shook his head.

"This girl will have to wait!" he growled. "It's a beastly shame, of course. I'd like to go down with you chaps and be introduced, but it can't be done. I've got to meet Jerry."

"Jerry Dodd?" said Church, in surprise.

Handforth did not appear to hear. He was thinking—and he was absent-minded, and when Handforth was absent-minded he had a way of letting things slip out.

"Let it rip," said McClure. "This girl is mora

important, Handy. Come with us to the tuckshop. Where else do you want to go, anyhow?"

"It's no good you questioning me about Rutter, because I won't tell you anything," replied Handforth impatiently. Church gave McClure a wink.

"My dear chap, we wouldn't think of questioning you about Rutter," he said. "Perish the thought. Why should we worry about one of the masters of the Australian school? If it comes to that, why are you interested in him?"

"I'm not going to tell you chaps anything, until I've proved, beyond question, that Rutter is a crook," declared Handforth firmly. "I'm keeping that secret to myself. I know he's a crook, of course but I've got to prove it. That's why Jerry and I are shadowing him."

"Well, we wish you luck," said Church. "But don't you think you'd better be careful? It's a tall order, following a schoolmaster about. You might get yourself into trouble."

Handforth was still very absent-minded.

"Somebody's going to get into trouble—and it won't be Jerry and me," he replied dreamily. "By George!

"Well, you can ask all you like—and I shan't tell you anything!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "What was I talking about just now?"

He tried to remember, for he had a dreadful suspicion that he had been incautious. However, his chums were looking very calm and innocent.

"We were asking you to come to the tuckshop—to meet the new waitress," said Church.

"Oh, yes! Well, I can't come!" said Handforth. "So long, you chaps! I'll see you later."

And without giving them an opportunity of saying anything else, he broke through a gap in the hedge, and went striding off across an empty meadow. They saw him plunge into the depths of Bellon Wood beyond.

"Well, what do you make of that?" asked Church at length.

"Sounded like a lot of bunkum to me," replied the Scottish junior.

"I'm not sure of that," said the other, frowning. "Handy was so absorbed that he didn't even know what he was saying. His thoughts were miles away."

"But what he said doesn't make sense," declared



As Handforth and Dodd walked across the floor of the old abbey ruins, one of the big stone slabs on which they stepped suddenly gave beneath their weight. The next moment they were plunging down into a black abyss! Mr. Rutter grinned maliciously as he watched the success of his trap.

Rutter and Sayers are going to get it in the neck before long!"

"Well, Sayers deserves it—Sayers is a cad!" said McClure.

"A cad? He's worse than that!" declared Handforth. "He's an impostor!"

"Of course he is," said Church.

"A rotten masquerader, using Sayers' name," continued Handforth indignantly. "And that beast, Rutter, is in 'co' with him. But don't worry! Jerry and I are going to get to the bottom of the mystery, and then we'll have those blessed crooks just where we want them!"

"So you're going to meet Jerry Dodd now?"

"Yes."

"So that you can shadow Mr. Rutter?"

"We've been doing it all this week," said Handforth, with a grunt. "Haven't discovered much yet, worse luck. But to-night things may be different." He suddenly started, coming to himself with a jerk. "Eh? What have you chaps been asking me?"

"Now, don't be an ass, Handy," said McClure. "Haven't you said all along that you won't tell us anything? We were asking you—"

McClure. "Mr. Rutter, of the Australian School, a crook! Sayers an impostor, using somebody else's name! Why, it's drive! And he and Jerry Dodd are shadowing Mr. Rutter, trying to get evidence!"

They both laughed.

"Poor old Handy!" said McClure. "Even the lure of a pretty girl couldn't draw him!"

They came to the conclusion that there was nothing in it. They knew their Handy of old; he had discovered many a mare's nest, and most of his chases, undertaken in the guise of detective work, proved to be wild goose chases. So Church and McClure just shrugged their shoulders and gave the matter no further thought.

Meanwhile, Handforth met Jerry Dodd at the farther side of the wood. The Australian was perched up a tree, armed with binoculars. From that eyrie he could see the River House School clearly.

"Just in time, Handy," said Jerry as he slithered down. "Rutter's gone out for a walk. He's taken the footpath this time by the river."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Another wasted evening, I suppose," grunted Handforth. "Blow Rutter and his walks! Why can't he do something crooked? I'm getting fed-up with this sort of thing, Dodd."

"Then you're not much of a detective," said Jerry Dodd. "A good detective sticks to his man for days—weeks—months, if necessary. He never gets impatient. Sooner or later Rutter will show his hand, and then we'll have him."

They hurried away, taking the empty, deserted meadows beyond the wood. It was a short cut to the river, and Jerry knew that they would easily overtake the Australian schoolmaster.

"I think we ought to take some other chaps into our confidence," said Handforth, after a short silence. "Church and McClure, for instance. And what about your own study chums?"

"Rats," said Jerry. "It's no good telling Jarrold anything—he's too long-winded. He's such a peaceful chap, too. As for 'Boomerang,' he wouldn't be any good to us—although he's an Aussie. No, we'd better keep it to ourselves."

"Well, Churchy and Mac are getting troublesome," growled Handforth. "They questioned me as I was coming out this evening."

"You didn't tell them anything?"

"I don't think so."

"What do you mean—'you don't think so'?" asked Jerry Dodd. "Don't you know?"

"Of course I didn't tell them anything," growled Handforth. "I can keep a secret as well as anybody. But they question me so much that I shall let something out before long. Better let me tell them right off. They'll help, too."

"Well, we'll talk about it later," said Jerry Dodd. "For the present, we'd better keep on the alert. We shall be on Rutter's trail in a minute."

Sure enough, when they broke through a hedge soon afterwards, they saw the tall, straight figure of the Australian master on the towing path, not a hundred yards ahead. Mr. Rutter was walking leisurely along, smoking his pipe.

But he never once glanced back. His attention was held by the view ahead of him, and it was soon apparent that he was on the look-out for somebody. For when a figure appeared from behind some willows, Mr. Rutter walked forward sharply. Handforth and Jerry Dodd, crouching back into the cover of the hedge, saw that the newcomer was Jim Sayers. Schoolboy and schoolmaster were talking together earnestly.

"This looks a bit different," murmured Jerry. "It's the first time they've met since we've been on this shadowing game, Handy. It looks like business."

"By George! I hope so," breathed Handforth.

It was well they crouched far back into the hedge, for, through the tall grasses and weeds at the hedge bottom, they saw Rutter and Sayers looking searchingly about them—as though to make sure that they were unobserved. Then,

satisfied, they went off at a brisk walk, still keeping to the towing-path.

"Come on!" murmured Jerry.

He dived through the hedge. Handforth followed. Keeping well to the other side, where their movements were completely screened, they followed. And at the bend of the river, some half-mile up, they saw that the quarry had left the stream. The two Australians had taken to a narrow footpath, leading to a yellow cornfield, which ultimately went to the Edgmore estate.

It needed every care to keep out of sight now. By making a wide detour, and running hard, they got to the other side of the cornfield. Then, crouching down, they waited.

In due course, Rutter and Sayers emerged. There was open parkland in front of them now, but they were not walking leisurely. They strode on as though they had a purpose—and Handforth saw, with a sudden start, that they were making for some ivy-covered ruins which towered picturesquely skywards some little distance ahead.

"My only sainted aunt! Do you twig that?" murmured Handforth. "They're going to the old abbey ruins!"

"Didn't I tell you?" said Jerry, his eyes burning. "There is something on this evening!"

There was no longer any question of it. Rutter and his schoolboy companion would never have come to the abbey ruins unless they had a definite motive. The shadowers followed, crouching low and keeping well out of sight.

It was easier now, for dusk had descended. Under that lowering sky the old ruins took on a sinister aspect. The gaunt piles were full of shadows.

Mr. Rutter and Jim Sayers were just black shapes now. They vanished amongst the ruins, and as soon as they had disappeared, Jerry Dodd and Handforth broke into a run and went racing across the open, exposed space. Breathless, they arrived at the crumbling, ivy-covered walls. Jerry laid a detaining hand on his companion's arm, preventing him from entering the ruins.

They peeped round, concealed by the festooning creepers which half choked an entry. Rutter and Sayers were standing within.

The floor of the ruins was grassy, with great stone slabs here and there. The roof was the sky, and on every side the broken and jagged walls arose like shadowy sentinels.

"Yes," Mr. Rutter was saying, in an earnest voice. "We can't wait any longer, you young fool! This thing must be done to-night. What's the matter with you? Are you afraid?"

"Aw, forget it!" said Sayers tartly. "I'm game enough. Go on—lead the way."

They moved forward, and Mr. Rutter went plunging down some crumbling stone steps which led to the old vaults. Sayers followed. For some moments Handforth and Jerry heard the sounds of the footsteps, then came complete silence.

"Well I'm jiggered!" murmured Handforth, with a catch in his voice.

"Come on!" said Jerry after a few moments.

They broke cover, and went walking across that roofless space. They took four strides, and then, without warning, one of the great stone slabs, on which they stepped, tipped beneath their weight.

They flung up their hands, shouting in alarm, but it was impossible for them to save themselves. They went shooting down, plunging feet foremost into a black abyss.

The Trap!

THUD! Thud!

The two startled Removites, after whirling down into the mysterious blackness, suddenly crashed against something fairly soft. They went rolling over in the inky darkness, bruised and battered and grazed, but with no bones broken.

Jerry Dodd was the first to sit up. He was dazed and bewildered, and he was under the impression, at that moment, that he and Handforth were the victims of an accident. But in a flash he had reason to change his mind. "Look!" he gasped.

A gurgle sounded from Handforth, for at the moment the burly leader of Study D was half-blinded by dust, for, in falling his head had slithered into a corner, where there was a pile of loose earth.

Jerry, however, saw something which filled him with rage and dismay.

Overhead there was a slit of daylight—at first it had been a square. It grew smaller and smaller until, finally, it vanished altogether. And to Jerry Dodd's ears came a thud. He knew just what had happened. The great stone slab had returned to its original position!

The two boys were in total darkness. And somewhere above them, Rutter stood in the deep dusk with a triumphant expression on his sallow face.

For Next Wednesday—

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Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THAT grievance of yours, Eddie Rowas, Montreal, is scarcely justified. To quote your letter: "I can't understand why in the wide world you have a whole school of Australians, besides five or six at St. Frank's, while you have absolutely no Canadians." Let's take this in the proper order. The reason I have introduced an Australian school into the present serial is that we, in England, have been entertaining the famous Australian Test cricketers; and as the Editor of this go-ahead Old Paper always likes to give his readers something topical, he and I thought it would be rather a good wheeze to feature our "cobbers" and rivals, the Aussies. Unfortunately, the great Dominion of Canada cannot offer us anything quite parallel in the way of sport. Now, as for your grievance. In Study No. 1 in the Ancient House, there is a great pal of Ralph Leslie Fullwood's—to wit, Clive Russell. And Clive Russell, let me tell you, Eddie, is as thoroughly Canadian as you are. In the Remove, he represents Canada—just as Jerry Dodd represents Australia.

He had rushed up the stairs just in time to see what had happened.

"It worked, boy—it worked!" he gleated.

The boy who was using the name of Jim Sayers stared in horror. He was agast.

"But—but I don't understand!" he stammered. "What happened?"

"The two boys who were following us walked into the trap which I had prepared for them—that's all!" said Rutter grimly. "Like fools, they fell right into it! And now they're below us—imprisoned in a dungeon so strong that—"

"But we can't do a thing like that!" protested Sayers, pale with fright. "You're mad, Rutter!"

"I should have been mad if I had not taken care of those interfering brats!" retorted Rutter harshly. "You young idiot! Don't you see that we're in danger? Handforth and Dodd know too much—and for days they have been trying to learn more."

"Dodd!" said Sayers, with a gulp. "But Dodd is Sayers' neighbour, in Australia!"

"And if he does not know that you are an impostor, he suspects it," said Rutter. "Listen, boy! I'll tell you something."

He did so. He told Sayers of what had happened that night at the River House School.

"The young fools never guessed that I had seen them—and that I heard their talk," concluded Rutter. "But I found out then that they were determined to keep the secret to themselves. So it was safe enough for me to let them go. Since then they have been shadowing me. I knew that they were shadowing me to-night. At one time I thought it would be necessary to capture them one at a time. Far better for them to have fallen into the dungeon together."

"But—but what are we going to do now?" asked Sayers hoarsely. "With Handforth and Dodd, I mean?"

"There are two things we can do with them," replied Rutter, his voice cold and deadly. "We can either keep them prisoners down there for good—"

"For good?" repeated Sayers, frightened at the dread suggestiveness of the words.

"Yes, for good!" snarled Rutter. "Either that, I say, or we can think of some way to ensure their silence. In any case, they are safe for the time being. They can't get out, and nobody can trace them here. There will be a hue and cry, of course; but nothing can be discovered. In any case, we are safe enough."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Sayers uneasily. "You say there's no real evidence; but if Handforth and Dodd get away, or are rescued, they'll talk."

"Whatever they say, they can't prove that we trapped them," replied Rutter. "In Heaven's name, boy, why can't you realise that we're in a tight corner? Something drastic had to be done. I did it, that's all. Now we'd better get away from here. If there's any more talking to be done, we'll do it on the way back to school."

The St. Frank's Junior XI, W. E. Townsend, Huddersfield, is made up as follows: Nipper (captain), Vivian Travers, Harry Gresham, E. O. Handforth, Jerry Dodd, Reginald Pitt, Jack Grey, R. L. Fullwood, Jimmy Potts, John Busterfield Boots, and Bob Christine. Jack Grey is the wicket-keeper. Other Removites and Fourth Formers who are frequently in the Junior XI are Charlie Talmadge, Hussi Khan, Tregellis-West, Yorke, Oldfield, and Clapson.

"Names List," No. 7. Modern House Fourth Form: Study No. 1: Bob Christine, Roddy Yorke, Charlie Talmadge. Study No. 2: Hubert Churchman, George Holland, Ernest Lawrence. Study No. 3: Harry Oldfield, Len Clapson, Billy Nation. Study No. 4: Sessus Yakama. The latter, a Japanese boy, has the privilege of a study to himself.

If there is an occasion for detective work to be done, in a forthcoming serial, Harry C. Blundy, Ilford, it's any odds that Nelson Lee will be brought in to do his stuff. But, after all, in a story like "The School From 'Down Under'," there is not much for a man of Nelson Lee's capabilities to do.

Believe it or not, Richard P. Rowe, Skegness, the E. S. B. portrayed at the top of this page is yours truly—the author of all the St. Frank's stories. As I have had occasion to remark on other occasions, however, you mustn't take too much notice of that photograph!

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Jerry was the first to get to his feet after the fall into the dungeon, and when he pulled an electric torch out of his pocket he was gratified to discover that the bulb was not smashed. The beam of light shot out, hovered round, and rested upon Handforth.

"By cripes!" ejaculated Jerry, with concern.

Handforth's face was smeared with blood and grime. He was sitting on a great pile of dried ferns. It was this "cushion" which had broken their fall, saving them from broken bones. Rutter had spent many hours at dead of night tipping the dried ferns into the dungeon.

"You're hurt, chum!" said Jerry, with concern.

"It's nothing—only a nose-bleeder," said Handforth, blinking. "Jolly good thing you've got that light, Jerry! Whoa! My left ankle's twisted a bit, and it's giving me what-for. Where are we?"

Jerry flashed his light round. He saw a grim stone dungeon—solid walls and a solid floor. There was a door to the dungeon, but it was of immense thickness. He walked over to it, and put his shoulder against it. There was no sign of movement. Overhead, the stone roof of the dungeon was quite out of reach. In any case, that stone slab was certain to be securely fixed.

"We're in a nasty mess, Handy," said Jerry quietly. "What's more, we were trapped like a couple of feather-brained children."

"Trapped?" repeated Handforth, jumping to his feet.

"What else? We were fools to walk into it!" said Jerry Dodd bitterly. "Rutter must have known that we were following him; he must have known for days that we've been shadowing him, too. And this evening he led us here, into the ruins—he knew that we should walk over that loose slab. Jumping kangaroos! And we haven't an atom of proof; not a single scrap of evidence against Rutter. Even if we do escape, we can't accuse him of harming us."

Handforth pulled himself together.

"What do you mean—if we do escape?" he repeated. "There's no 'if' about it! We've got to escape. Dodd! Unless we do we shall starve to death."

"I don't think so!" said Jerry grimly.

He swung his torchlight round, and then Handforth saw, for the first time, a big two-gallon jar in the corner. It was full of water. Beside it stood an old wooden box, and in the box there were several loaves of bread, a tin of biscuits, and a whole cheese. It was a significant discovery.

"Food! Enough to last us two or three weeks," said Jerry. "You see what it means, Handy? Rutter has no intention of starving us—but he means to keep us prisoners."

"Prisoners—in this dungeon—where there's no difference between night and day!" said Handforth hoarsely.

And they looked at one another with blank consternation. Then their expressions changed, for in that silence they heard a slow, measured knocking!

(Is someone coming to the rescue of Handy and Jerry already? Don't miss next Wednesday's thrills and surprises!)

THE SECRET OF STUDY SIX!

(Continued from page 22.)

dangerous position by his chivalrous, not to say quixotic, notion of standing by a friend who had gone to the dogs. But on the morrow came good news.

The news of Lord Conway's arrest had been telegraphed all over the country; and the next day came fresh news—that Mr. Raby had given himself up.

The astute inspector had reckoned upon that.

It showed that there was good in the man. True, Raby had had no real chance of escape. Lord Conway's effort to gain time for him might have turned out well, but the watch was too close for him to have much chance of getting out of the country. But as soon as he heard that Lord Conway was suspected and arrested, Raby walked to the nearest police station and surrendered himself.

"So, you see, the chap wasn't an uthah wottah, aftah all," D'Arcy remarked. "All the same, he ought to be sent to prison. Chaps who steal ought to go to prison; in fact, I wathah think he ought to have somethin' lingewin' with boilin' oil in it!"

Raby did go to prison—and Lord Conway was released. His innocence was made as clear as Raby's guilt.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the recipient of endless congratulations from the other fellows at St. Jim's.

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 13.)

C. Chisnall, 29, Kenslow Avenue, Berridge Road, Weet, Nottingham, wants pen pal in Nottingham; secondary school; cricket, rugby, cycling, stamps, swimming; age 14-15.

Miss Bernice Robinson, Stuart Mill, Avoca, Victoria, Australia, wants girl correspondents in British Isles, Africa, India, Pacific Islands; age 16-18.

Miss Mary Blair Brown, 767, Umgini Road, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants girl correspondents in England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; outdoor sports; age 18-21.

G. Arthur Barker, High Street, Kegworth, near Derby, wants correspondents in Germany and Spain.

Oscar Nomm, "Kentman," 11-12, Tallin, Estonia, wants correspondents. "He is an old Etonian."

G. E. Ellis, 234, Brockley Grove, Brockley, London, S.E.4, wants a correspondent interested in art and sport.

Colwyn Neely, 539, Berea Road, Toll Gate, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants to hear from a stamp collector in Ireland.

Jack Hudson, 500, Englehardt Street, Albury, N.S.W., Australia, wants to exchange stamps and photos.

Ernie Jeffs, 26, Willis Street, Armadale, S.E.3, Victoria, Australia, wants pen pals in any English-speaking country, more especially in Ireland, Hollywood, and South Africa. Interested in wireless, talkies, and all sports; age 13-15.

Edward Downes, 80, Ward Street, North Adelaide, South Australia, wants pen pals interested in stamps and sports; age 13-16.

Miss B. Tricker, 115, Bury Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, wants a girl correspondent, age 13-15, who is interested in dancing and sport.

The quixotic chivalry of Lord Conway appealed to their boyish imagination, and they voted him a hero; and a great deal of glory was reflected upon the swell of the School House.

It had come out that Snipe was the fellow who betrayed the secret passage to the searchers of the School House; but in the joy of the good news, Arthur Augustus felt that he could forgive him.

"You are an uthah wottah, Snipe," said D'Arcy, wagging a contemptuous finger at the cad of the Fourth. "In fact, I cannot help regardin' you as a weptile!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"But, undah the circe, as things have turned out all wight, I think we had better let the wottah off," said D'Arcy. "Give him one kick, Hewwies; you have the biggest feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Herries gave Snipe one kick, which helped him to quite a considerable distance.

And Snipe looked as if he had a pain somewhere when he walked away afterwards.

"Now, you fellows come to the tuckshop," said Arthur Augustus. "I've just had a fivah from my governah, and ewevy chap who's glad to hear the good news about old Conway can come and feed!"

And, to judge by the number of fellows who followed Arthur Augustus to the tuckshop, about half the school was rejoicing in the good news.

THE END.

(The new boy who didn't know his name and address, in next week's gripping story of the chums of St. Jim's.)

Miss René Miller, 12, Boyd Avenue, Thornbury, Bradford, wants girl correspondents in Canada, Australia, Singapore, Egypt, India, and South Africa; interested in films and photography; age 18-21.

J. Lee, 92, Cavendish Road, Kersal, Manchester, 7, wants members for his Aeronautical Correspondence Society. Write for particulars.

Miss P. Cunningham, 101, Marlborough Road, Sandford, Ranelagh, Dublin, wants girl correspondents.

The Pioneer Club (Eric L. Fenner), 58, Thimblemill Road, Bearwood, Birmingham, wants members in all parts of the world for its correspondence, sport, and stamp sections.

T. William Fletcher, 37, Melton Road, Asfordby Hill, Melton Mowbray, Leics., wants correspondents in the Empire; model aeroplanes, meccano, and animals.

Miss J. Meath, the Raggett, Luttermouth Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, wants girl correspondents in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and India; art and chemistry; age 13-14.

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Tony Baylis, Whitehall, Alcester, Warwickshire, wants pen pals interested in anything, especially stamps, all sports, and to exchange news.

Stephen R. Hughes, 391, West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, wants pen pals, especially in Canada, France, Australia, and New Zealand.

Ivan Bradley, 11, Mark Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants pen pals interested in cigarette cards.

B. Hesketh, 65, Bridgeman Street, Bolton, Lancs., wants pen pals anywhere abroad, except U.S.A.; age 15-17.

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