

"THE BULLY'S REVENGE!" AND "THE SECRET WORLD!" Super School, Wild West and Adventure Stories Inside.

The GEM

2¢



HIS CONVICT BROTHER!



Lynn started to his feet as there came a tap at the window, and he stared in amazement at the white face pressed to the glass. He knew the face—he knew the hideous garb the man was wearing. It was his convict brother!

CHAPTER 1.

Convict No. 79!

"TRAIN in five minutes!" said Tom Merry.

Quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows were pouring upon the platform of Wayland Junction Station. It was a keen, bright afternoon—the junior eleven of St. Jim's was returning to the school after a footer match with Wayland Wanderers. They were in a state of great satisfaction with themselves and everything, for they had beaten the Wanderers by three to one, and the Wanderers were a good team.

There was five minutes to wait for the train, and Tom Merry & Co. bumped down the bags containing their football things and waited. Fatty Wynn of the Fourth looked at his watch, and bolted for the refreshment-room. Football made Fatty Wynn hungry, and he never lost an opportunity of filling the aching void. When he was hungry he ate to satisfy his hunger; when he was not hungry he ate in case he might be.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, adjusting his eyeglass carefully in his right eye and looking over his comrades, with a cheerful smile. "I wathah think we did jolly well this aftahnoon!"

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"Yes, rather!" said Jack Blake, his chum.

"Hurrah for us!" said Figgins, the leader of the New House.

"You fellows backed me up splendidly, I weally must say—"

"Eh?"

"You fellows weally backed me up splendidly—"

"You mean, we made up for your blunders," put in Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"And prevented you from doing much damage to the side," remarked Lynn of the Fourth.

"Weally, Lynn—"

"And brought off a win, in spite of your assistance," grinned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Figgay! I—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly. "Look there!"

He nodded towards a group that had just come on the station platform.

At the sight of the newcomers the juniors became serious. For they were two warders and a convict—the convict in handcuffs, guarded by the two warders.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "Poor boundah! I wondah what he's done?"

The prisoner walked with his head

down, his whole aspect telling of the shame that overpowered him at being thus exhibited to the public gaze with the brand of a felon upon him. The juniors felt sorry for the convict. But among them there was one who seemed to be more terribly struck than the others by the sight of the convict. It was Lynn of the Fourth. He fixed his eyes upon the prisoner, and a low cry escaped him. Then, with clenched hands and a white, set face, he turned away from the scene.

The prisoner was a young man—handsome and well-built, and in any other circumstances he would have looked a fine fellow. But now he walked with downcast face and slouching shoulders, overburdened with shame.

The two warders who guarded him seemed kindly enough to him, but they were taking every care of him and were evidently prepared for an attempt on the prisoner's part to "bolt."

The convict raised his eyes for a moment as he came down the platform with his guards, and his glance rested upon the group of schoolboys.

A deep flush for a moment suffused his cheeks.

"Poor chap!" muttered Blake. "It seems rotten to show him in public this

—STARRING THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S AND FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

way. I suppose they're going down by the express to Portmoor from here."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I've seen convicts brought through this station before," he said in a low voice. "It's not a pleasant sight. I should think some other way might be found of taking them to prison."

"I should think so."

"He doesn't look a bad lot, either," Manners remarked. "Quite a young fellow, and good-looking, too. I wonder what he's done?"

"He's got good feelings left, anyway. Did you notice how he coloured?" said Figgins. "He's ashamed of being seen in that rig-out."

"No wonder."

"Bai Jove! I feel awfully sorry for the chap, you know, whatever he's done," said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! You seem to be quite ovahecome, Lynn! You don't happen to know the man, do you?"

Lynn did not reply.

There was not a vestige of colour in his face, and his eyes had a strange gleam in them. He had turned his back towards the convict and was looking almost wildly down the line, as if eager for the train to come in and take him away from the painful sight.

Suddenly the convict uttered a sharp exclamation. He had caught sight of Lynn among the juniors, and he started forward so suddenly that the two warders, imagining that he was about to run, closed upon him, and grasped him in an iron grasp.

"No, you don't, No. 79!" said the chief warder grimly.

The young man gasped.

"I—I wasn't trying to get away!" he exclaimed. "Don't—don't stop me! That's my brother!"

"Now, then, No. 79—"

"Let me speak to him!" The prisoner's voice was dry and husky. "Don't you understand? It's my brother! He was kept away from me during the trial—I haven't seen him. For mercy's sake let me have a word with him!"

The juniors of St. Jim's heard every word.

They were too astounded to speak. This convict in manacles was the brother of Arthur Lynn!

Lynn, perhaps, was surprised, too, at being so claimed in public, for he did not move, did not speak, and his glance remained fixed upon the up line and did not turn for a second towards the convict.

The warders seemed to hesitate. There was no great harm in the convict speaking to his brother if the boy was indeed his brother; and they were not unkindly men. While they hesitated the young man called out to Lynn:

"Arthur, don't you know me? Won't you speak to me?"

Lynn did not answer, and the juniors looked at him in surprise.

"Is he your bwothah, Lynn?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes," muttered Lynn.

"Why don't you speak to him, then?" asked Manners.

Lynn gritted his teeth.

"I won't speak to him! Hang him! I don't want to see him!"

"Bai Jove! If he's your bwothah, Lynn, you might speak a word to the chap!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed

indignantly. "Blood is thickah than watah, you know."

"Hang him!"

"That's n't the way to speak of your brother, anyway!" said Tom Merry roughly. "You might be decent to a fellow down on his luck, whatever he's done."

"Yaas, watahah!"

Lynn made a furious gesture.

"Hang him! Why can't he let me alone?"

"Weally, Lynn—"

The warders had permitted the convict to come nearer to the group of schoolboys, convinced now that he was not thinking of escape.

"Arthur, won't you speak to me?"

The convict stretched out his manacled hands in impassioned appeal to the boy.

Lynn turned towards him with gleaming eyes.

"Let me alone!" he said in a hard, bitter voice. "Haven't you disgraced me enough? Haven't you disgraced us all enough?"

"Arthur! I was innocent!"

Lynn burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Yes, I know you said that you were innocent—and your employers, the

Shunned and despised by his own brother at St. Jim's, Convict 79, desperate and hounded by the police, yet finds willing helpers in Tom Merry & Co. and Ferrers Locke, the famous detective.

judge, the jury, and the public, they were all wrong, and you were right!"

"They were all wrong, Arthur!"

"Lies!" said Lynn bitterly.

"You're guilty and you know it, and I know it! I wish you could be buried in prison all your life, instead of only for three years, so that you could never come out and disgrace us more than you've done already!"

The convict searled back.

"Is that how you speak to me, Arthur?" he muttered. "I—I hoped that you would believe in me, at least! As Heaven is my witness, I never touched the stolen bonds—I do not know where they are at this moment."

"Rubbish!"

"Arthur, listen to me. The firm offered to let the case go without prosecution if the bonds were returned—if I had had them, do you think I should have refused?"

"You did, anyway!"

"I was innocent."

"Rubbish! You mean to sell the bonds when you come out of prison—it will be safer then!" said Lynn bitterly.

The convict's face was white and strained.

"You don't believe me, Arthur?"

"No, I don't!" retorted Lynn, and he turned away.

The warders led the convict to the farther end of the platform. Lynn stood with white face and clenched hands. There was condemnation in the look of his companions, but he did not care.

The local train from Rylcombe, which was to bear the football party back to

St. Jim's, came puffing into the station. It stopped, and Tom Merry & Co. clambered into it. On the other side of the platform the express had stopped, and the two warders were helping their prisoner into it.

From the carriage in which he sat between his guards, Convict No. 79 looked out, and turned a last miserable glance upon Arthur Lynn.

Lynn did not look round.

He stepped into the train—not into the same carriage with Tom Merry & Co.—and shut the door sharply. Not a glance did he turn upon the express moving out of the station, with the convict sitting between the two warders.

Thus the two brothers parted. Away, as fast as the express could bear him, went Convict No. 79, back to the prison he had once escaped from—back to shame and misery—dishonoured by the world, disowned by his brother!

CHAPTER 2.

Friends in Need!

TOM MERRY & CO. sat very silently in the crowded carriage in the local train.

The scene they had been witnesses of had had a painful effect upon their spirits and all their light-hearted gaiety had passed away. Even Fatty Wynn who had brought a bag of sausage-rolls into the carriage, ate them very slowly and with less than his usual enjoyment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his eyeglass in a reflective sort of way. The juniors were glad that Lynn of the Fourth was not in the carriage with them. They were sorry for the junior's humiliation and shame. But they could only feel that he had been heartless and unfeeling. Whatever his brother had done, blood, as D'Arcy said, was thicker than water.

"It's wotten!" said Arthur Augustus, as the local train began to move out of the station. The express had already gone from the other side of the platform. "I wegard it as wotten for Lynn to have a bwothah a convict. But I think he might have spoken decently to the poor chap."

"I should think so!" said Blake, with emphasis.

"I suppose he was trying to keep it dark at the school," Kerr remarked thoughtfully. "I've not heard anything of the case, and the man appears to have been in prison already. He was being taken back after escaping, I think."

"I remember seeing something in the papers about a convict escaping from prison; but I never guessed that it was Lynn's brother," Figgins remarked.

"I wonder if he's innocent?" said Manners.

"It's not likely," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Besides, a chap's own people would believe in him, I should think—and this fellow's own people seem to have given him up."

"Well, Lynn's nervous about what the chaps may think at the school," said Manners. "It's not nice for a fellow to be known to have a relation in prison."

"Bai Jove! No."

"I think we might as well say nothing about it," said Tom Merry, looking round. "Lynn's a decent chap really, and it would make things awfully hard on him."

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"Agreed!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Mum's the word!"

The local train crawled on slowly through the landscape. The juniors thought of the express, whizzing through the countryside fast—too fast for the hapless man in the manacles who was being whirled back to prison.

The train stopped.

Tom Merry glanced out of the window.

"Not Wylcombe yet?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up from polishing his eyeglass.

"No; we're waiting for another train to pass."

The train was stationary a few minutes, and then moved on again slowly. Tom Merry & Co. began to chat now, the gloomy impression upon their spirits gradually passing off. Suddenly Tom Merry gave a cry:

"Great Scott! Look!"

A man had jumped on the running-board, and the next moment the carriage door swung open. The man scrambled in, and the door swung wide in the wind.

"The convict!"

"Lynn's brother!"

Tom Merry caught the carriage door and shut it. The man in convict garb turned a wild look upon the juniors.

"Don't give the alarm!" he muttered hoarsely. "Have pity on me! You are my brother's schoolfellows—I am Gerald Lynn."

"Bai Jove!"

"I am an innocent man!" the convict said huskily. "My brother will not believe me—but it is true!"

The St. Jim's juniors were silent.

They were utterly taken aback by the strange happening. The man whom they had supposed to be speeding towards the prison at the full speed of the express train had clambered into the local Rylcombe train while it was waiting on the siding—and they were too amazed to speak. The sight of a ghost would hardly have startled them more.

"How on earth did you get here?" gasped Tom Merry at last.

The convict sank into a seat, where the boys made room for him, breathing hard. He was evidently almost exhausted.

"I had slipped the handcuffs," he said. "The warders did not see—and I leaped from the train when I had a chance."

"My hat!"

"You might have been killed!"

The convict laughed cynically.

"Better be killed than go back to that living tomb!" he replied. "Better death a thousand times! I could not stand that again—the shame, the misery, the oppression, the degradation. You don't know what it's like, you youngsters. If you want to give me up pull the communication cord."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We shall not do that, at all events," he said.

"I swear I was innocent!" said Gerald Lynn hoarsely. "The bonds were stolen, but I was not the thief! If Ferrers Locke had been able to take up the case I think he would have cleared me; but he was abroad—and the police, they are blind! I was innocent!"

The juniors could not help believing him.

"I'm sorry for you," said Tom Merry softly.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

The man's face brightened up.

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"You will help me?" he asked.

"It's a jolly serious thing helping a convict to escape," said Kerr. "But how could we help you, if we wanted to?"

"Don't say a word about my having got on this train, for one thing. I shall jump off before we get to a station."

"That's all right," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you have nothing you could give me in the way of clothing?" asked the convict, with a glance towards the bags on the racks.

"Only footer things—and our things wouldn't be nearly big enough for you," said Tom Merry. "There's Figgins' raincoat—Figgins is a long-legged bouncer, and it might cover up those things you're wearing—if Figgy—"

"He can have it," said Figgins, with pleasure. "Only—if the police find it on him—"

"There's no name on it," said Kerr; "that will be all right."

"I should not say a word of your having helped me, of course," said the convict eagerly. "It would not benefit me, even if I were cad enough. You ought to help me—I am an old St. Jim's fellow. Ten years ago I was in the Shell at St. Jim's."

"Poor fellow!" said Tom Merry. "It's rotten! And I can't help thinking that you're telling the truth—that you are innocent!"

"Before Heaven I am!"

Figgins uncoiled the raincoat from the rack. It was certainly a long one; Figgins, though a youth, was a youth whose growth had outstripped his years, and he was nearly as tall as the convict, though not so well filled out. The convict, with eager, trembling hands, drew the waterproof round him, and gasped with relief as he saw that it concealed the tell-tale garb of the convict prison.

"I suppose that's all we can do for you," said Figgins.

"Yes, thanks—thanks!" The young man peered anxiously from the window.

"Are we getting near a station?"

"Five minutes yet!"

"There's another thing," said Kerr quietly, "and that's cash."

"Bai Jove! You're wight, deah boy!"

"Whip round," said Tom Merry.

The juniors turned out their pockets. Among the number it was easy to raise a sum of between two and three pounds, D'Arcy's contribution being a ten-shilling note. The convict looked at it and hesitated. He had taken the waterproof willingly enough, but he seemed to have a strange unwillingness to take money from the juniors.

"Shove it in your pocket," said Tom Merry. "You may be able to get a change of clothes with it, and—anyway, you will want tin to get away."

"Thank you!" said the convict.

Tom Merry looked out of the train window.

"Two minutes more," he said.

The convict opened the door.

"For goodness' sake be careful!" exclaimed Blake in alarm, as he watched the green embankment gliding by.

"Mind—"

"I shall be all right."

The convict stepped out upon the footboard with iron nerve. At the right moment he jumped, and rolled among the bushes of the embankment. The juniors crowded to the door and window of the carriage to see what had become of him. A form rose for a moment amid the bushes, and a hand was

waved, and they knew that he was safe. Then the convict disappeared into cover again, and the train glided on, and a minute more and the juniors were stepping out of the carriage in Rylcombe Station.

From a carriage farther up the train Lynn stepped out, with a gloomy, pale face and fixed eyes. The juniors glanced at him. Of their adventure with the convict he knew nothing, and they could not help wondering what he would say if he knew.

CHAPTER 3.

An Unexpected Meeting!

TOM MERRY borrowed a newspaper from Mr. Railton the next day to look in it for some account of the escape of Convict No. 79.

He could not help taking an interest in Lynn's brother—wondering whether the unhappy man had succeeded in making good his escape.

He hoped that Gerald Lynn was free. In spite of appearances, in spite of the finding of judge and jury, and the apparently overwhelming evidence, Tom Merry could not help doubting Lynn's guilt.

He had not spoken, he had not acted like a guilty man.

True, his own brother did not believe in him. But Arthur Lynn was more occupied in thinking about himself than about his brother—more troubled with the disgrace that had fallen upon his name than with the misfortune that had fallen upon Gerald.

There was a brief paragraph in the newspaper relating to the convict. It only chronicled that a convict who had escaped from Portmoor Prison, and who had been recaptured, had succeeded in making his escape a second time while being conducted back to prison—leaping for liberty from an express train.

The country was being scoured for the man, but he had not yet been found. As he was in convict garb, and without any known resources, his recapture was only a matter of a short time.

That was all.

But Tom Merry drew a breath of relief when he had read it. The recapture of Convict No. 79 might be only a matter of time, as the paper stated, but at all events he had not been recaptured yet. And Tom Merry felt a keen desire that the wretched man would succeed in making good his escape, though liberty without his name being cleared would be a poor enough gift!

Jack Blake disinterred a number of old papers from the library, and the chums of St. Jim's therein read up the trial of Gerald Lynn with great interest.

It seemed a clear enough case. In the bank where Lynn had been employed a number of bonds had been stolen, and from a safe to which Lynn had access. Some of them had been discovered at his rooms by the police, and that was the heaviest weight of evidence against him.

There were other circumstances, but that was the worst. His defence had been simply denial. He had not been able to account for the bonds concealed in his rooms, had no been able to prove where he was at the time the bonds must have been abstracted from the safe; and could not deny that he was in debt, and that he had promised his creditors a speedy settlement.

Everything told against him, and he had been found guilty, condemned to three years' penal servitude. He might have been dealt with more gently if he had handed back the undiscovered bonds; but he had persisted that he knew nothing about them. As they were easily negotiable securities, the jury's opinion was that he was willing to serve his term for the sake of being enriched when he came out of prison and recovered his plunder from where he had concealed it.

"It looks a jolly bad case," Blake remarked, after reading the reports.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, and his own people have given him up, apparently," he said.

"That's bad!"

"Only I can't help thinking that he was telling the truth," said Tom Merry musingly. "I thought there was truth

the aid of a lad, and he had served the famous detective so well that Ferrers Locke had never forgotten it.

More than once Mr. Locke had visited Tom Merry at St Jim's, when business or pleasure had brought him to that part of the country, and he was well known by sight to the fellows at the old school.

Tom Merry and Blake quitted the school library.

They were looking very thoughtful. As a matter of fact, they were both seemingly more concerned about Convict No. 79 and his unhappy fate than was his own brother.

Arthur Lynn glanced at them in the passage as they went into the quadrangle. There was uneasiness and suspicion in his look. He hesitated a moment, and then came up to them.

"I suppose you fellows have heard

"It isn't a waistcoat, you ass; it's trousers—and I'm not goin' to twy them on. It's only a question of being measuared this time. It will not take more than a quartah of an hour, pwobably."

"Right-ho, then!" said Tom Merry. "We can stand and look on and offer suggestions."

"Good!" said Blake, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus regarded them rather dubiously. The suggestions they were likely to offer would probably be conceived in a humorous spirit. But he did not want to walk down to the village alone, so he nodded consent.

The three juniors strolled down to the school gates together. As they turned out into the road they caught sight of Lynn just ahead of them, and quickened their steps to overtake him. Lynn gave them a nod.



As the train began to move slowly, Tom Merry suddenly gave a cry. "Great Scott! Look!" A man had leaped on the running board, and the next moment he had the door open and was entering the compartment. "The convict!" exclaimed the juniors.

in his looks, and he certainly was fearfully in earnest when he was speaking to his brother. There have been plenty of cases of miscarriage of justice! It's not anything new."

"That's right enough."

"You remember what he said in the train," went on Tom Merry—"if Ferrers Locke, the detective, had been in England at the time he would have helped him. If he wanted to have Mr. Locke take up the case, I should think he must have been innocent. Mr. Locke would certainly have got to the truth, whatever it was."

"No doubt."

"Mr. Locke is back in London now, I know," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "I should like to see him to know what he thinks of the case."

"He might come here to see you," Blake suggested.

"I hope he will."

Ferrers Locke, the famous private detective, was an old acquaintance of Tom Merry's. On one great occasion Tom Merry had had the honour of helping him in a case, in which he needed

my brother escaped yesterday?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"You haven't said a word about it?"

"We have promised not to."

"Oh, good!" said Lynn. "I—I can't help feeling uneasy. It would be rotten for me if it got out, that's all."

"If I were in your place, I should be thinking more about my brother than about myself," said Tom Merry.

"It's worse for him than for you."

Lynn's lip curled.

"I've no time to waste on him," he said. "He's disgraced his family, and that's enough for me!"

And he walked away with a gloomy brow.

"You chaps comin' down to the village with me?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, stopping in the passage.

"What are you going to Rylcombe for?"

"To see the tailah, desh boy."

"No time," said Blake. "It's only an hour to afternoon school, and it will take you hours to try on the new waistcoat."

"Going down to Rylcombe?" asked Blake.

"Yes; I want the latest paper," said Lynn.

The chums of the School House understood Lynn had seen the morning paper, and was anxious to know whether Convict No. 79 had been captured.

Lynn was buried in thought, and uttered hardly a word as they walked into the village.

At the shop of Mr. Wegg, the local tailor, D'Arcy halted, and Tom Merry and Blake stopped, too. They were going in to give D'Arcy the benefit of their valuable advice in selecting his new trousers.

The local from Wayland had just come into the little station on the opposite side of the road, and several passengers were coming out of the station doorway. Lynn, who was about to leave the chums of the School House, stopped, his eyes fixed upon a man who had come out of the station—a man of

about thirty-five, in a dark overcoat, with a clean-shaven face, and piercing, light-coloured eyes. It was evident that Lynn knew the man.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.

The man was crossing the street, and he caught sight of Lynn the next moment. He gave a little start.

"Lynn!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Mr. Lanbury."

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed Mr. Lanbury, in a sharp, abrupt voice.

CHAPTER 4.

Enter Ferrers Locke!

TOM MERRY and his companions looked on at the scene in astonishment. They remembered the name of Lanbury; it had been mentioned in the report of the trial given in the papers.

Mr. Lanbury was the cashier of the bank from which the bonds had been stolen, the crime for which Gerald Lynn was suffering three years' penal servitude. The juniors looked at the man with interest. Mr. Lanbury looked like a man who was cool, determined, and possessed of self-control; but he was evidently startled and shocked in some way by meeting Lynn minor in the streets of Rylcombe. Why the sight of the schoolboy should have such an effect upon the bank cashier was a mystery.

Lynn himself seemed to be surprised. "I was wonderin' what you were doing here, in this country place, Mr. Lanbury," he said.

The man recovered his calmness in a moment.

"I have run down to see a friend who lives in the neighbourhood," he said. "But what are you doing here, my boy?"

"I'm at school here," said Lynn. "St. Jim's."

"Oh, I was not aware of that!" said Mr. Lanbury. "Is St. Jim's near here?"

"Yes; half a mile down the road."

"Oh!"

"Is there any more news of my brother, Mr. Lanbury?" asked Lynn.

The cashier's brows came together in a frowning line.

"No," he said; "he has not been found. You are aware, I suppose, that he broke away from the warders who were taking him back to prison?"

"Yes."

"There is no news of him since then." Mr. Lanbury glanced at the other juniors. "Is this disgraceful story known at your school, then, Lynn?"

Lynn flushed.

"No, Mr. Lanbury. These fellows know it, and they're keeping it dark. If—if you're going to stay in the neighbourhood, I should like you to say nothing about it. It would be rotten for me."

Mr. Lanbury nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "I can understand that it would be decidedly unpleasant for you if the boys at your school knew that your brother was a convict, and such things soon get about. I shall say nothing."

"Thank you, Mr. Lanbury."

Mr. Lanbury nodded to the juniors, and walked down the street.

Tom Merry was keen enough to see that the chance meeting had annoyed

the cashier extremely, though why it should do so he could not guess.

Lynn nodded to the juniors, and walked on down the street, with a gloomy shadow on his brow.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at his watch.

"Bettah go in now," he remarked.

"I don't want to have to huwwy oval my twousaha."

"Great Scott!"

It was a sudden exclamation from Tom Merry. A man had appeared in the doorway of the railway station and was sweeping the narrow village street with a keen, searching glance.

One look at the clear-cut, intellectual face and keen, grey eyes was enough for Tom Merry. He knew the old friend whom he had not seen for a long time. It was Ferrers Locke, the detective.

Tom Merry ran across the street at once, followed by D'Arcy and Blake.

"Mr. Locke!"

The gentleman started.

"Hallo, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. And he shook hands very cordially with the hero of the Shell, and then with Blake and D'Arcy.

"I heard you were back in England, sir," said Tom Merry. "I never expected to see you here this afternoon, though."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Were you coming to the school, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

Mr. Locke shook his head.

"No, Tom. As a matter of fact, I am down here on business. May I ask you lads not to mention to anyone that you have seen me?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Locke!"

"Certainly, sir," said Tom Merry. "We won't say a word."

"Very good," said Mr. Locke. "By the way, did you see a man leave the station just now—a man in a dark overcoat?"

"Mr. Lanbury?"

The detective started.

"You know him?" he asked.

"Lynn knows him," said Tom Merry.

"Lynn?"

"Lynn of the Fourth Form, sir."

"A relation of Gerald Lynn, the escaped convict?" asked Mr. Locke, with keen interest.

"His brotner, sir."

"Oh! And he pointed out Mr. Lanbury to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Did you see which way Mr. Lanbury went? I have to see him," the detective explained.

"Down towards the bridge, sir," said Tom Merry. "He must have turned up one of the side lanes; he's out of sight now. But he must be going to cross the bridge from the direction he's taken."

"Thank you. Not a word, mind, about having seen me."

"Mum's the word, sir."

And Mr. Locke, nodding to the three juniors, walked up the street.

The juniors looked after him in wonder.

What was Ferrers Locke, the detective, doing in Rylcombe?

Was he there in connection with the escape of Convict No. 79? Tom Merry's heart sank a little at the thought.

"He's after Convict No. 79!" said Blake, to whom the same thought had occurred.

"Bah Jove!"

"Poor old Convict No. 79!" said



Archie the Aviator, engrossed in his SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY, is heading straight for a forced landing in the wrong place! But Old Sol doesn't mind—he's been waiting for a chance to read this grand story himself!!

"THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS"

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Tom Merry. "He has no chance of getting clear if Ferrers, Locke is after him!"

"Rather not!"

"But I don't see it," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Mr. Locke is a private detective. Why should he be up against Gerald Lynn? Lynn spoke of him as a man who would have helped him in his defence if he had been in England at the time."

"He may be lookin' into the mattah now on Lynn's side."

"But why should he come to Rylcombe to do that?" asked Blake. "The bank robbery took place in London."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Well, what have you got in your noodle now?" Blake demanded.

"He's watching the cashier."

"Phew!"

"That's it," said Blake, with sudden conviction. "He's come down here to watch Lanbury, though what Lanbury wants here is a mystery. Perhaps he knows where Convict No. 79 is, and is going to communicate with him, and Mr. Locke will surprise them."

"Blessed if I can make it out at all," said Tom Merry. "One thing we can be sure of; whichever side Ferrers Locke takes will be the right side."

"Yaas, wathah! But the time is passing, deah boys, and we haven't settled about those trowsahs."

"Oh, blow the trousers!"

"Weally, Blake—"

The juniors crossed the street again to Mr. Wegg's shop, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the door. Tom Merry and Blake followed him into the somewhat stuffy sanctum of Mr. Wegg, the tailor. From D'Arcy's mind, at all events, all other thoughts were banished now. He was thinking only of the most important of all subjects—new trousers!

CHAPTER 5.

The Prodigal Nephew!

MR. WEGG greeted the juniors with great politeness. Mr. Wegg was a little stout man with a round red nose, upon the bridge of which a pair of pince-nez found a resting-place. Mr. Wegg was nearly bald, with a wisp of hair carefully brushed across his shining head, as if to show up his baldness to the greatest possible advantage. He had a very polite manner. Mr. Wegg did a great deal of business with the St. Jim's fellows, and especially with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Not that the swell of St. Jim's was in the habit of wearing clothes made by a country tailor. He would have rejected the idea with scorn of appearing, as a rule, in clothes made by any but the best Bond Street artist. But there were times when repairs had to be done, and when new garments were required in a hurry, and on such occasions D'Arcy patronised the local sartorial artist: but he was careful not to give Mr. Wegg his "head," as he expressed it. If Mr. Wegg showed any desire to make D'Arcy's trousers or waistcoats as he made those of the Rylcombe youths, D'Arcy came down upon him gently, but very firmly.

"Good-aftahnoon, Mr. Wegg."

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen," said Mr. Wegg, rubbing his hands. "I have some very fine things in trousers, Master D'Arcy."

"Vewy good!"

"I have some very fine new suitings,

if the other young gentlemen would care to see them," Mr. Wegg suggested. "Come into the fitting-room."

"We're simply here as lookers-on," said Tom Merry, with a smile, as the juniors followed Mr. Wegg into a small room behind the shop.

"They're very fine suitings," said Mr. Wegg. "And here's—"

He broke off suddenly at the sound of a loud thump on the ceiling overhead. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whose repose of manner was perfect, did not appear to observe it. But Tom Merry and Blake glanced upwards.

Mr. Wegg coloured a little and coughed.

"My nephew Adolphus," he explained. "He has come back from London on a visit to me. You remember my nephew, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Wegg!"

All the juniors remembered Adolphus Wegg very well.

The tailor's nephew was an ambitious youth with a vacant mind and a taste for anything but work.

While he had been a resident in the village of Rylcombe he had walked abroad in splendid garments, the best that his uncle's shop could produce.

Master Adolphus was a man-about-town in Rylcombe, but the country village was too narrow for his aspiring soul. Like Cæsar, he was ambitious, and, like Cæsar, he suffered for it. He had gone off to London quite suddenly, and there were rumours in the village that he had equipped himself for the journey at his uncle's expense, but without his uncle's consent—in other words, that he had robbed the old gentleman of a considerable sum before going.

But Mr. Wegg perhaps considered the price a cheap one for getting rid of his troublesome nephew, who lived upon him, and had very expensive tastes, and at the same time openly patronised him, and was ashamed of the shop that supported him.

Mr. Wegg's patience with his nephew, who was a scapegrace and worse, was one of the topics of Rylcombe, and the village gossips all remarked that the old gentleman seemed to grow younger and more cheerful as soon as his expensive and fashionable nephew was gone.

"My nephew has some business in Rylcombe," Mr. Wegg explained awkwardly, "though I am sure I do not know what it is. I am afraid London has not improved him."

"I am sowwy, Mr. Wegg."

"I am afraid he has learned late hours and dissipation," said Mr. Wegg, with a sorrowful shake of the head.

"He used to lie in bed till ten in the morning, after keeping late hours at the Green Man, but now he seldom rises till twelve. He was out very late last night, and I think

he is only just getting up."

"Bai Jove!"

"London has not improved him," said Mr. Wegg sadly.

Mr. Wegg's words were proved true the next moment by the sudden appearance of Mr. Adolphus in the doorway of the room. Mr. Adolphus was clad in a gorgeous dressing-gown, and had gorgeous Turkish slippers on. His face was pasty in

colour, and his eyes bleared and blinking.

He blinked at his uncle, not for the moment seeing the juniors, who were partly concealed by the open door.

"Ain't there somethin' to drink in this 'ouse?" he asked.

Mr. Adolphus had learned many things—how to drink and gamble and idle his time away—but he had not yet mastered the difficulty of the aspirate.

"Adolphus—" began the much-enduring Mr. Wegg.

"Ain't there anythin'—"

Mr. Adolphus paused.

He had suddenly caught sight of the three juniors, looking at him with unmistakable expressions of disgust. He had the grace to colour.

"Good-afternoon," he mumbled.

The juniors nodded coldly.

"Come back to see the old place,"

Mr. Adolphus volunteered. "Slow after London, I give you my word. How they stand it 'ere I don't know!"

And with that disparagement of his native village, Mr. Adolphus rustled back into the parlour. His frowny head emerged again for a moment.

"I'm expecting a visitor, nunky," he said.

"Yes, Adolphus."

"Show 'im up as soon as he comes," said Adolphus. "Mr. Brown is the name. You remember that name—Mr. Brown."

"Yes, Adolphus," said the patient Mr. Wegg.

And Adolphus retired again.

Mr. Wegg, looking very shame-faced, began to sort out his trousers for D'Arcy's inspection to cover up his confusion. The juniors made no remark. They wondered at the little old gentleman's patience with his prodigal nephew, but it was no business of theirs.

CHAPTER 6.

"Mr. Brown!"

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY turned his attention to the trousers.

Mr. Wegg spread out his rolls of cloth with great pride, and the swell of St. Jim's adjusted his monocle and surveyed them critically. After due consideration the cloth was chosen and the necessary measurements taken.

Mr. Wegg put down his measuring-tape at last.

Just as he did so, there was a tinkle of the little bell, which announced a newcomer in the tailor's shop.

"Pray excuse me a moment, young gentlemen," said Mr. Wegg.

"Certainly, my deah man!"

Mr. Wegg stepped out into the shop.

(Continued on the next page.)



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The door of the fitting-room was left half open.

The juniors could not, however, see who was in the shop, and they felt no curiosity in the matter. But they jumped, and D'Arcy forgot even his trousers, as there came a voice they knew.

"This is Mr. Wegg's, I think?" "Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "That's the chap Lanbury."

"Queer!" said Tom Merry. "Yes," answered Mr. Wegg. "What can I do for you to-day, sir? I have some very fine selections in suitings."

"I wish to see Mr. Adolphus Wegg. I understand that he is staying here."

"Yes, certainly. My nephew is expecting a visitor."

"Very good. Please tell him I wish to see him. I am Mr. Brown."

"Very well, sir."

The juniors gazed at one another silently.

They could not very well help hearing what was said, in subdued tones, within six feet of them.

Mr. Lanbury, the cashier of the Central City Bank, was the visitor whom Adolphus Wegg was expecting, and he had come there under an assumed name. What did it mean?

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry and Blake were silent. They were utterly puzzled.

Mr. Wegg went into the passage which ran beside the shop and the fitting-room. He was heard to call up the stairs, and the tones of Adolphus replied. The tailor returned into the shop, and then Mr. Lanbury passed the open door of the fitting-room as he went upstairs.

All three of the juniors saw him pass, though he did not see them. And then Mr. Wegg returned to his customers.

The juniors did not linger in the tailor's shop.

The matter of the trousers had been satisfactorily settled, and the chums of the School House bade good-bye to Mr. Wegg and quitted the shop. In the street they looked at one another with astonished looks.

"Well, my only chapeau!" Blake ejaculated.

"So young Wegg has been chumming up with bank cashiers in London!" Tom Merry remarked. "If I were a banker, I shouldn't care to have a cashier who had friends like Adolphus. I should be afraid he might help himself from the safe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What the deuce does he mean by going about under an assumed name?" asked Blake. "If he's a friend of young Wegg's, why can't he come under his own name?"

"I don't understand it," said Tom Merry abruptly. "It looks to me as if there's something fishy going on. You remember when Lynn was with us, and we first saw Lanbury, he was crossing the street to us. We were standing outside Mr. Wegg's shop at the time, and he was crossing from the station to it. It's pretty clear now that he was going into the shop then, and he didn't because young Lynn and we were outside. He walked down towards the bridge, and ne came back when the coast was clear."

"It's queer!"

"What is he so jolly secretive about?" said Tom Merry. "I wish I knew where to find Ferrers Locke."

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Two strokes rang out from the church clock.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "We're late for lessons."

"Bai Jove, there will be a wow!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And the three juniors ran down the lane towards St. Jim's as fast as they could.

The Shell and the Fourth had long been in their Form-rooms when the trio reached St. Jim's, and they hurried there at once. Tom Merry was given fifty lines for being late, and he accepted them meekly, and went to his place in the Form.

In the Fourth Form Room Mr. Lathom was a little milder. He looked at Blake and D'Arcy over his spectacles, and asked them to explain.

"I was delayed at my tailor's, sir," Arthur Augustus explained. "I am vewy sowwy I am late, and Blake is vewy sowwy."

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"Very well," said the kind little Form-master. "You may go to your places, but it must not happen again."

"Thank you, sir."

And the two juniors took their places, very well satisfied with themselves and with Mr. Lathom.

Blake's place was next to Lynn, and during maths he asked Lynn some questions, while Mr. Lathom's attention was chiefly directed towards the blackboard.

"Do you know much about that man Lanbury, Lynn?"

Lynn looked at him in surprise.

"No," he said. "I only knew him by sight. I saw him several times when I visited my brother at the bank, that is all."

"Was he a friend of your brother's?"

"They were on friendly terms."

"Did you know he had a friend named Wegg?"

"Wegg? No."

"Know any reason why Mr. Lanbury should go about calling himself Mr. Brown?" asked Blake.

Lynn looked astonished.

"No. Does he?"

"He does."

"Blessed if I know why, then!"

"Yes; it's jolly odd, isn't it?"

"I should say so," said Lynn, in wonder.

"I remember hearing my brother say once, though, that Mr. Lanbury had some sporting friends, and that it wouldn't be a good thing for him if it were known at the bank. He might call himself Mr. Brown when he went to see them. But I don't know anything about it."

"Oh!" said Blake. "And Adolphus Wegg is one of his sporting friends, perhaps? I don't know what to make of it, but it seems to me that I smell a mouse."

Mr. Lathom turned round from the blackboard.

"Blake!"

"Yes, sir!" said Blake meekly.

"Take fifty lines for talking!"

"Yes, sir."

And Blake did not talk any more.

Lynn tapped the Yorkshire junior on the arm as they came out of the Form-room after lessons were over.

"What were you asking those questions about Lanbury for?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, I wanted to know, you know!"

"I think, perhaps, Lanbury may be down here to help the police look for Gerald," said Lynn. "I shouldn't wonder. I know Gerald was very bitter against him at the trial, and threw out

hints that Lanbury knew what had become of the bonds."

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Blake, much interested.

"Yes. It was rot, of course."

"How do you know it was rot?"

"Gerald was found guilty," Lynn explained.

"Well, I think you might stick to your own flesh and blood, even if he was found guilty, so long as there was a doubt left!" Blake exclaimed.

"There wasn't a doubt left," said Lynn gloomily.

And he walked away. Lynn was very restless that day.

The meeting with the escaped convict the day before had unsettled him. The knowledge that a dozen fellows at St. Jim's knew all about his disgrace weighed upon his mind. He did not speak upon the subject himself, and he did not exactly think that the juniors were speaking about it, but he dreaded everything.

It was bad enough for a dozen fellows to know his secret, and a chance word might make it known to the whole school.

It was like a black cloud upon Lynn's mind and spirits.

He did not enter the juniors' Common-room when most of the juniors of the School House gathered there in the evening. Fellows who did not know his miserable secret wondered what was the matter with Lynn, who was generally cheerful enough.

Lynn did his preparation in his study, with Hancock and Dacre, who shared the room with him. When preparation was over, Hancock and Dacre rose and yawned and prepared to go downstairs.

"Coming down?" asked Hancock, looking at Lynn, who did not rise.

Lynn shook his head.

"No; I'm going to do some German," he said.

"My hat! Fancy doing German without having to!" said Hancock, with a whistle of surprise.

"Queer taste!" said Dacre.

And the two juniors quitted the study, leaving Lynn getting out his German grammar and dictionary. But Lynn did not do any German. He was far from being in a humour for work.

He sat at the table, his pen in his hand, his brow wrinkled in thought.

His nerves were in a strange twitter.

Lynn was thinking now of his convict brother, and wondering whether, in the crowded Common-room below, there were whispers on the subject—whether fellows were whispering to each other that Lynn had a brother in prison.

Suppose the escaped convict were captured near St. Jim's—and he certainly was lurking not far away. It would cause a sensation in the school—the convict's name might come out—and the similarity of name could not fail to excite remark. Without any chatter from the juniors who already knew, the rest of the school would be put in possession of the facts.

Lynn's feelings were very bitter.

Gerald had disgraced the family. Why could he not have been content to take his punishment quietly, and remain in silence in his prison—not bring himself out again before the public gaze in this way?

Such were the black and bitter thoughts of the Fourth Former, as he sat at the study table, his idle pen in his hand. Outside, the night was black and almost starless, and a biting March wind swept through the branches of the old elms in the quadrangle. The windows rattled as the wind smote them.

Tap!

Lynn did not notice the sound. It was not much louder than the scraping of the old elm branches against the walls outside the window.

Tap!

Lynn started to his feet. The tap was upon the pane of the window; and his eyes turned quickly in that direction, and he saw the outlines of a white face pressed to the glass.

The junior turned pale.

He knew the face—he knew the hideous garb of which he could catch a glimpse. The face at the window was the face of his brother.

CHAPTER 7.

Shunned!

LYNN stood transfixed—his hands clenched, his face deadly white—his eyes fastened upon the face at the window.

He could not speak; he could not move. It was as if a ghost had risen to confront him.

His brother! Here at St. Jim's!

It was like a horrible dream. It seemed to him that his fevered imagination was playing him tricks, and that it had conjured up that pale vision of a face at the window. But the tap, sounding sharply again upon the glass, showed him that it was real enough.

It was his brother.

Lynn staggered towards the window. Then, as a hasty thought shot through his mind, he turned back and locked the door. No one was likely to come to the study; but if someone should come—should see his brother! As in a vision of horror, Lynn saw all the hideous possibilities—the alarm given—the police—the convict dragged away before the wondering eyes of all St. Jim's—himself covered with shame, cowering under the eyes of his school-fellows!

Tap!

Lynn hurried across to the window, and opened it. He stood looking at the figure before him, crouching partly upon the window-sill, partly in the thick tendrils of the ivy upon which the convict had climbed.

The junior's eyes gleamed; hatred was burning in them.

"Arthur!"

The convict's voice was low and faint; he was weak with cold and hunger. But it did not touch the heart of the angry junior.

"What do you want here?" he muttered. "How dare you come? Haven't you disgraced me enough already?"

The convict shrank from his savage words.

"Arthur! Brother!"

"Don't call me your brother," said Lynn, in a thick, savage voice. "You're no brother of mine! You're a convict—a thief and a convict!"

"I am a convict, Arthur, but no thief."

"Bah!"

"Help me in, Arthur, for mercy's sake! I am cold to the bones! I shall fall!"

Lynn stood back from the window.

"Get in, if you like, he said. "I shall not touch your hands."

"Arthur!"

"I hate you!"

The convict turned a white face upon the boy. He had climbed partly into the window; but he rested there upon his elbows, and came no farther.

"Put the light out," he said quietly.

"I may be seen from the quadrangle," Lynn silently raised his hand and put out the light.

"I came here in a last hope," said

the convict, in low and shaking tones. "I climbed the ivy to your study window, Arthur. I waited till you were alone; I have waited since, I don't know how long, trying to find the courage to knock."

"Oh, I hate you! Why will you come here to shame me?"

"I did not come to shame you, Arthur," the voice went on miserably in the darkness. "Heaven knows I felt as much for you as for myself, Arthur, when that sentence was passed upon me—a sentence I had never deserved!"

"Bah!"

"If I have broken prison it is because I hope, when in freedom, to make a fight to clear my name."

"Lies—lies!"

"I had hoped that you might help me, my brother; help me with what I need to make my escape—clothes, food, money. Even if you believe me guilty, Arthur, you might remember that I am your brother; that your mother is my mother, and that she is equally fond of us both, and how it must wring her heart to know that her elder son is shut up in misery in a convict prison!"

"I wish you were there still!"

"Do you mean that?"

"Mean it?" said Lynn furiously. "Of course I mean it! I wish you were there—buried in the deepest cell they have—there, or anywhere, where you could bring no more disgrace upon us!"

There was a sound of a sigh in the darkness.

It did not soften the boy's heart. He was too occupied with his own terrors and troubles to have a single throb of pity for what the convict must be suffering, innocent or guilty.

"Then you will not help me?" said the convict.

"No!"

"Because—because you are afraid, Arthur, or because you hate me?"

"Because I hate you!"

The convict groaned.

"Good heavens!" he said in a low and shaken voice. "What am I to expect from the world when my own brother turns on me?"

"Leave me in peace."

"Very well, Arthur"—the convict's voice was firm again—"very well! Be it so. I came here to swear to you that I am innocent; to see if you would help me!"

"I will not help you!"

"I could force my way in; I could force you to help, Arthur, by threatening you with the shame of seeing me arrested here under your eyes!"

Lynn trembled with rage.

"You—you hound!" he muttered "I expected that; I was looking for that! Now—"

"I shall not do so, Arthur," said the convict quietly "You have shunned me; you refuse to help me. I will take nothing from your hands that is not freely given. You wish me to go—I will go!"

There was a slight sound as the convict slid back from the window.

Lynn started.

His unwelcome visitor was going. It seemed almost too good to be true.

"Good-bye Arthur!"

The junior did not reply.

"I am going, Arthur. I shall make one attempt to get away towards the sea, and if I fail I shall give myself up. Before I go, Arthur, give me your hand—for the last time."

(Continued on next page.)



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A TRIPLE PART.

Actor: "I can't possibly take the three parts you've given me."

Stage Manager: "Why is that?"

Actor: "Well, in the first scene I have to fight with myself and then dash in and separate the two of us!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Pollitt, The School House, The Grammar School, Wolverhampton.

STUNG.

The electrician came home one night to find his son had a bandaged finger. "Hallo, Jack!" he said. "Cut your finger?"

"No, dad," replied the boy. "I picked up a wasp and one end wasn't insulated!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Reed, Prieska, Brookland Drive, Chilwell, Notts.

A PRESSING ENGAGEMENT.

Jock: "Say, Donald, may I use yere mangle a minute?"

Donald: "Ay, but what d'ye want it for?"

Jock: "Tae clean oot ma toothpaste tube!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Norris, 5, Cheapside, Fishponds, Bristol.

UNBEATABLE.

Tom Merry: "I say, Gussy, why is the GEM like a hard-boiled egg?"

Gussy: "I don't know, deah boy. Why is it?"

Tom Merry: "Because it cannot be beaten!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Wahlstrom, c/o Hospital, Porirua, New Zealand.

A PAINFUL DUTY.

Father: "I am obliged to punish you, and it will pain me."

Son: "But, father, if you've done nothing wrong, why pain yourself?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Hobbs, 2139 1/2, 7th Avenue West, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

CRUSHING.

A quiet little man had been hustled and jostled about by a crowd who were waiting to board a tram. For a long time he suffered in silence. Then he turned to a young man and asked him how old he was.

"Eighteen," was the reply.

"Well, don't you think you're old enough to stand on your own feet now?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Packer, 26, Langhorn Street, Heaton, Newcastle.

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Lynn did not move.

The convict did not speak again. He slid into the ivy, and there was a rustle as he clambered down. Lynn seemed turned to stone.

The convict was gone.

Lynn listened—listened with bated breath and straining ears at the open window, in terror lest there should be some sound of alarm—some sound to show that the man had been seen.

The rustle in the ivy ceased—the climber was gone. There was no sound in the wide, dark quadrangle.

Lynn bent his head from the window. Surely the man would be able to get clear! For, his own sake, not for the convict's sake, Lynn hoped it. After all, the quadrangle was deserted at that hour. The night was cold and windy; no one was likely to be out of doors from either House at St. Jim's.

He started as the chime from the clock-tower came through the air.

Nine o'clock!

The booming strokes of the great clock came with a sound like thunder to the straining ears of the Fourth Former.

He shivered. He remembered that at nine o'clock, in almost every weather, it was the custom of Figgins & Co. of the New House to take their sprint round the quadrangle before going to bed.

What if they met the convict?

Lynn listened in silence and anguish. But there was no sound from the wide, gloomy quadrangle. Surely his fears were groundless. He closed the window at last, and turned on the light in the study. His face, as he looked at his reflection in the glass, was colourless. He was startled at the ghastliness of it.

A hand tried the door. There was an exclamation in the passage.

"It's locked!"

Lynn hastily unlocked the door. Dacre and Hancock came in.

The two juniors stared at Lynn.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing!" muttered Lynn.

"You look as if you've seen a ghost," said Dacre.

"I'm all right."

Lynn walked unsteadily from the study; he could not face their eyes. The two juniors stared after him in astonishment. But Lynn did not look round. He wanted to be alone—to get to some quiet place by himself, where his ghastly face and terrified eyes would not betray him to every observer.

CHAPTER 8.

A Meeting in the Dark!

FIGGINS rose from the table in his study in the New House, and stretched his long limbs and yawned.

Kerr put down Xenophon. Kerr was a fellow with what was regarded by the other juniors as extraordinary tastes. He would read Greek for pleasure, and the other fellows would hardly have consented to read it under torture. But Kerr could do things easily which was difficult or impossible to his friends.

Fatty Wynn was seated in the arm-chair in Figgins' study, with his feet on the fender, and his eyes half-closed. Fatty had just disposed of two whole pork-pies, and was feeling very comfortable.

He did not move as Figgins rose, but a sort of apprehensive shiver passed through him. He knew that Figgins was going to drag him out for a sprint in the cold, windy quadrangle, as always.

"Come on, Fatty!" said Figgins.

Fatty Wynn did not seem to hear.

"Bung a book at him, Kerr," said Figgins. "That rotten Xenophon will do!"

Kerr smiled.

"Wake up, Fatty!" he said.

"Come on, Fatty!" said Figgins.

"Time for a sprint before bed. Buck up! Kerr, put away that silly rot!"

"I say, Figgy, I feel very comfy here," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, I'll soon alter that!" said Figgins cheerfully.

And he did. It required only a tilting of the armchair, and Fatty Wynn shot out in a heap on the hearthrug. He gave a roar as he landed there.

"Ow! You ass!"

Figgins grinned.

"Buck up!" he said pleasantly. "No slacking allowed in this study. Get a move on!"

"I suppose I'd better come," said Fatty Wynn resignedly.

"I suppose you had," agreed Figgins. "Come on!"

And the three juniors left the study, Fatty Wynn still grumbling a little, and descended the stairs of the New House.

"Blowing great guns!" said Thompson of the Shell, as they passed him at the door.

"All the better," said Figgins cheerily. "It will wake Fatty Wynn up."

"I say, Figgy—"

"This way!" said Figgins, pushing Fatty out into the quad. "Now, get a move on!"

And the reluctant Fatty, taken by either arm by Figgins and Kerr, found himself going round the dark and windy quad at a rapid trot.

"Nothing like a sprint before bed to keep you in form," Figgins gasped, as the wind smote them. "You'll sleep all the better for it, Fatty. I think—Oh, my hat!"

Bump!

Figgins had run right into a dim, shadowy form in the dark, and he staggered back, panting for breath.

There was a sharp exclamation from the shadowy form, and hurried retreating footsteps.

Kerr made a sudden spring.

"Got him!" he shouted. "Quick! He's getting away! Hold him!"

Figgins' powerful grasp descended upon the struggling form, and Fatty Wynn a moment later lent his aid. The struggling unknown resisted unavailingly.

"Got him!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Let me go!"

It was a breathless, strangled voice.

"Phew!" said Figgins. "That isn't a kid! Some blessed trespasser! Hold him while I strike a match."

Scratch!

The match glimmered out in the darkness of the quad. The next moment the wind extinguished it.

But the momentary glimmer had been enough to reveal a startling sight. The man in the grasp of the New House juniors was no stranger to them; they knew the white, haunted face; they knew the garb that branded the man as a convict! It was Lynn's brother!

"My hat!" gasped Figgins.

"Lynn's brother!"

"Phew!"

The man's struggles had suddenly

ceased. He, too, had recognised the juniors; he knew them for three of the fellows who had been in the railway carriage when he had entered it; one of them for the fellow who had lent him the raincoat.

"What on earth are you doing here?" asked Figgins.

The convict panted.

"I came to see my brother. Let me go!"

"You can go fast enough," said Figgins, drawing the convict into the deeper shadow of the school wall. "It was a risky thing to come here. Have you seen Lynn?"

"Yes."

"What did you want to see him for?" asked the shrewd Kerr. "I suppose you didn't run such a fearful risk for nothing?"

"I wanted help!" muttered the convict.

"Has he helped you?"

"No."

"H'm!" said Figgins anxiously. "I say, this is rather thick, you know. We don't want you to be taken, but it would put us in a rotten position if it were known that we'd seen you and hadn't said anything. You oughtn't to have come here, you know."

Convict No. 79 groaned.

"I know it!" he said. "I am going. I shall not return."

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "What did you want your brother to do—give you clothes, I suppose, and tin?"

"And food!" said the convict hoarsely. "I'm starving!"

"Poor chap!" said Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn could feel for troubles like that. The two pork pies he had just eaten seemed to rise in judgment against him.

The fat Fourth Former groped in his pockets and brought out a chunk of milk chocolate. He pressed it into the convict's hand.

"Begin on that!" he said.

"Thank you!"

"I—I say, we ought to do something for the chap," said Figgins irresolutely.

"I—I believe it's punishable to help a convict escape, but—but—"

"This is an exceptional case," said Kerr.

"Yes. You think so, don't you, Kerr?" said Figgins, who had unbounded faith in the judgment of his Scottish chum.

"Yes, I do!"

"Good! We'll do something for him."

"I can never thank you enough!" said the convict.

"That's all right. I suppose you want clothes most of all, so that you can get rid of that rig?" said Figgins thoughtfully. "I don't see why we couldn't get you some. Look here, Fatty! Cut off to the study and bring all the grub there is in the cupboard, and my woollen scarf!"

"Right you are, Figgy."

Fatty Wynn disappeared into the darkness.

"Where did you pass the night?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"In the pit on the moor."

Figgins shuddered. He remembered how cold the previous night had been.

"By Jove," he said, "you're having a rotten time! I should think the prison would be better."

The convict gritted his teeth.

"Never!" he muttered. "Never that!"

"Look here!" said Figgins. "You'd better cut now! I'll manage to get some things for you by to-morrow—some clothes and tin and Tommy, you know."

I'll speak to the other fellows—the chaps you saw in the train, you know—and we'll fix it up. But you can't stay here. Where can I see you to-morrow?"

"You're an old St. Jim's boy, I believe?" said Kerr.

"Yes, yes!"

"Then you know this neighbourhood well?"

"Every inch of it!" said the convict.

"You know the old monk's cell in Rylcombe Wood, then?" asked Figgins.

"Yes."

"I'll come there to-morrow, and bring you the things, or leave them there for you, if you're not there," said Figgins.

"That all right?"

"Heaven reward you! It is more than my own brother will do for me," said the convict, in a faltering voice.

"It's a go, then!" said Figgins. "I wish I could do something more for you now. I can give you some grub, that's all."

"It is what I need more than anything else. I have not eaten to-day."

Fatty Wynn's plump form loomed up in the darkness. The Falstaff of the New House had not been long gone.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed.

A well-filled bag was pushed into the convict's hand, and Fatty Wynn passed a thick scarf round his neck.

"Better cut off now!" he said. "Pratt had his eye on me when I came out, and he may come buzzing out to see what's on."

The convict made a hasty movement.

"I will go. Thanks—a thousand times, thanks!"

He disappeared into the gloom. Figgins & Co. heard him drop from the school wall into the road. With grim

and thoughtful faces the three juniors returned to the New House.

CHAPTER 9.

Ferrers Locke Visits St. Jim's!

FIGGINS did not see Tom Merry that evening; but the next morning he met the hero of the Shell in the quad, when the Terrible Three came out for a run before breakfast. Then Tom Merry heard of the visit the convict had paid to St. Jim's.

"And Lynn refused to help him?" said Tom Merry.

"So he said."

"And you've promised to, Figgy, old man?"

Figgins coloured a little uneasily.

"Well, what could I do?" he said.

"The poor chap was starving. It would be better to hand him over to the police than to let him sleep in pits on the moor in this freezing weather, and go days without grub."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I know it's risky, and I know it might get me into trouble," said Figgins, "but I'm going over alone after morning lessons to take the things to him—"

"That you're jolly well not!" said Kerr. "We're going! We're all in this."

Figgins nodded.

"We've got to get some clothes for the chap," he said. "Men's clothes, of course; ours would be no good. I suppose we shall have to cut down to the village and get some of old Wegg's cheap second-hand clothes."

"Good idea!"

And that was arranged. The juniors

accordingly visited Mr. Wegg after morning lessons and selected the various articles required. Then Mr. Wegg suggested that the poor man might like an overcoat. But the available cash did not run to an overcoat, and the purchases were made up into a bundle, and paid for, and the juniors left Mr. Wegg's establishment.

"Better not go in a big crowd to see the man," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to attract attention. You buzz off with the things, Figgy—you and Kerr and Fatty. We'll get back to St. Jim's."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

And the New House juniors took the path into the wood, to penetrate into the cold recesses where the convict lurked in hiding, and Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy walked back to the school. Just as they came in sight of the school gates Tom Merry caught sight of a well-built figure ahead in the road, about to turn into the school gateway.

"Mr. Locke!" he exclaimed.

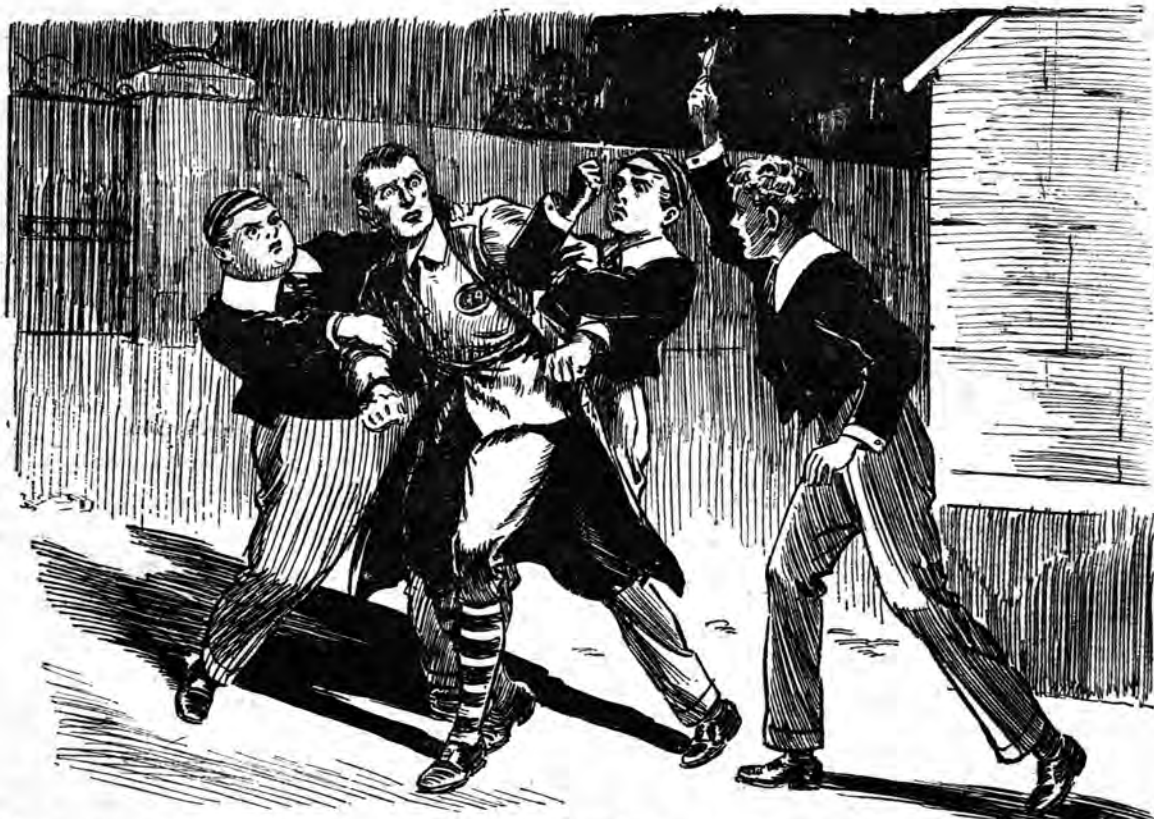
And he ran forward and overtook the detective.

Ferrers Locke shook hands with the juniors, and walked into the quadrangle with them. The detective looked just as the juniors had known him of old, and several fellows lifted their caps to him as he went in. There was a thoughtful expression upon the quiet, clear-cut features of the famous detective.

"You were coming to visit us, sir?" said Tom Merry.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I was going to speak a word to you, Tom, before I left, certainly. But, as a matter of fact, there is a boy here I



The match glimmered out in the darkness of the quadrangle, and the man in the grasp of Kerr and Wynn was revealed. It was Lynn's brother. "My hat!" gasped Figgins. "What on earth are you doing here?" "I came to see my brother!" panted the convict. "Let me go."

came specially to see. I mean, Arthur Lynn, the brother of the escaped convict.

"I—I wanted to speak to you about No. 79, sir," said Tom Merry. "We know something about him."

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Locke!"

The detective looked at them in surprise.

"You know something about Gerald Lynn?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Locke."

"Very good. You shall tell me after I have seen Lynn," said Ferrers Locke. "Perhaps you can take me to the lad?"

"Certainly. I'll take you to his study, and Blake can hunt up Lynn and bring him there," said Tom Merry.

"Thank you, Tom."

Ferrers Locke was taken up to Lynn's study in the Fourth Form passage. The study was empty, and Mr. Locke sat down to wait. He did not have to wait long. Lynn opened the door and came in, and Tom Merry and Blake discreetly retired. Ferrers Locke rose to his feet. Lynn closed the door, with an evident fear that strange ears might hear something of what was said, and turned a look of uneasiness upon Ferrers Locke.

"You—you are Mr. Locke," he said nervously, "the detective?"

"Yes."

"You want to see me?"

"That is why I am here."

"Is it—is it something about my brother?"

"Yes."

"For goodness' sake, don't say anything outside this study!" muttered Lynn. "The fellows here don't know. Tom Merry knows, and a few others, but they've promised to keep it dark. The school doesn't know."

Ferrers Locke fixed a penetrating look upon the boy.

"I have no intention of saying anything outside this study," he said. "I wish merely to ask you a few questions. Have you seen your brother?"

Every vestige of colour faded from Lynn's startled face.

"Have I—I seen him?" he panted.

"Yes."

"How—how could I see him?" said Lynn, trying to speak calmly. "I—I did see him at the railway station the other day—the warders were taking him back to prison. Is that what you mean?"

"Have you seen him since?"

"That is a—ridiculous question," said Lynn, in a dry voice. "How could I see him? You—you do not imagine that he would come here, surely?"

"Yes. I do."

"Mr. Locke!"

"Listen to me," said the detective, with the same penetrating look fixed upon the junior's white, changing face. "I can see by your looks that you have seen him since then."

"I—I—I—"

"He escaped from the warders at Wayland, after the express had left the station," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Then he disappeared. It occurs to me as very probable that, being in need of everything—especially a change of clothes—he might make an attempt to get into communication with his brother here to obtain them."

Lynn was silent.

"To a man situated as he was, without hope of aid from any other quarter, that would naturally occur as a resource," went on the detective, "and as his brother, you would probably run the risk of helping him, although he is a convict."

Lynn seemed to choke.

"But be assured that I do not seek

your brother with the intention of injuring him in any way," the detective went on. "I am here as his friend."

Lynn's eyes opened wide.

"His friend!" he repeated. "A convict's friend!"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes, I knew your brother in London soon after he had left school, and I had formed the opinion of him that he was incapable of the crime he was convicted of. When I returned to England a few days ago I decided to take up the case, to sift the matter to the bottom, in the hope of finding out something to his advantage. I am convinced that your brother was innocent."

Lynn panted.

"Innocent!"

"Yes."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Surely this is good news to you?" said the detective, a little puzzled by the boy's expression. "You must be glad to know that?"

"Oh!"

"It is not only my opinion, but I hope to prove it," said Ferrers Locke. "I have my eye upon a man whom I strongly suspect. I wish to see your brother, but not to arrest him or to betray him to the police. I want to know all he can tell me about the case. He may be able to throw some light upon the mystery of the stolen bonds, and enable me to help him clear his name."

"Clear his name!"

"Yes. If he is innocent, as I hope and believe, I shall leave no stone unturned to clear him and bring the guilt home to the guilty party."

"And you hope to succeed, sir?"

"I have every hope."

Lynn staggered to a chair and sank into it. He was overcome.

The detective watched him with a puzzled look. He was keen enough to observe, but he did not understand the strange emotion of Arthur Lynn.

"Surely you are glad to hear all this?" he asked. "You must be glad at the merest chance of having this disgrace removed from your name, and having your brother restored to liberty."

"Yes, yes!" Lynn groaned. "Innocent! Oh, heavens!"

"You believed him guilty?"

"Everybody did."

"You are not to blame for following the crowd," said the detective. "The evidence was very strong, and the real criminal was very cunning. But—"

"Innocent!" groaned Lynn. "And he came here to ask help—and I—I sent him away!"

The detective's face hardened.

"Then you have seen him?"

"Yes," muttered Lynn.

"Where—and when?" rapped out the detective.

"Here—last night! He climbed to my study window," Lynn faltered. "He told me he was innocent, and I did not believe him. I told him to go."

"Without helping him?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where he went?"

Lynn shook his head.

The detective's brows contracted a little. But he made no remark. He picked up his hat and stick.

"You are going to look for him?" asked Lynn.

"Yes! Good-afternoon!"

Ferrers Locke quitted the study and closed the door behind him. His firm tread sounded down the corridor and died away. Lynn sat motionless, white, stricken.

"Innocent!"

The word rang in his ears, and

seemed to beat in his brain like a hammer. His brother, whom he had despised, shunned, and driven away—his brother innocent! The shame and disgrace which had cut him so deeply—they were to be lifted, to fade away; the stain upon his name was to be erased. It seemed like a dream.

"Gerald—poor Gerald!"

Lynn leaned his elbows upon the table, and buried his face in his hands. Remorse was gnawing at his heart.

"Poor Gerald! Will he ever forgive me? Oh, what a brute—what a fool I was! I should have known! But how could I know?" Lynn started to his feet. "I—I knew where to find him—if I only knew!"

But he did not know. The brother he had cast from him was lurking somewhere—starving, perhaps, ill-clad against the cold, in fear of capture. And he—

Arthur Lynn groaned in misery as he thought of it.

CHAPTER 10.

Ferrers Locke Learns Something!

TOM MERRY was waiting for Ferrers Locke at the door of the School House.

The detective's face was very grave as he joined him.

"I suppose Lynn's told you, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

The detective nodded.

"Yes, he's told me all he knows," he replied. "It is not much. It is very curious that you should have anything to tell me on the same subject, Tom. Come out under the elms, where we can talk freely."

"Yes, sir!"

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy strolled out under the elms with the detective. The fellows who saw them walking together little dreamed of the subject of their conversation.

"Now, Tom, what can you tell me about Gerald Lynn?"

Tom Merry hesitated and coloured.

"I don't want to appear to be questioning you, sir," he said, "but would you mind telling me whether you are for or against the poor chap?"

The detective smiled. Tom Merry's expression showed where his own sympathies lay.

"Why do you ask, Tom?"

"Because we've helped him, sir; and—and, in the circumstances, we couldn't tell you anything if you're hunting him down."

"I am not hunting him down, Tom. I am looking for him because I want to see him for his own sake."

"Do you believe that he is innocent, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then—then you have taken up the case for his sake—to prove him innocent?" said Blake.

"Exactly!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief.

"That's jolly good news," he said. "Of course, I suppose most convicts say they're innocent. But we couldn't help believing that poor chap. He seemed so earnest, and it seemed such hard cheese for his own brother to turn upon him."

"Tell me all you know about him, Tom."

Tom Merry described the meeting at Wayland Junction, where Convict No. 79 was disowned by his brother, and then the affair of the railway carriage. Then, with a little more hesitation, he explained how Figgins had met Convict No. 79 in the quad the previous night, after the unfortunate man's fruitless

visit to his brother's study. He explained, too, where Figgins & Co. were even then—gone with the purchases they had made at Mr. Wegg's.

Ferrers Locke listened with a curious expression upon his face. When Tom Merry had finished, the detective was smiling.

"You seem to have been going pretty strong," he said. "Luckily, the man is innocent, and I hope to prove it. If he had been a criminal—"

"Well, sir, if he had really been a bad character we should have seen it, and we shouldn't have believed in him, and helped him," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I'm wathah a keen chap, you know, sir, and I don't think he would have been able to take me in," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

Ferrers Locke smiled again.

"Well, well, as it happens, you have done what was right," he said. "In my opinion the man is undoubtedly innocent, and he has suffered wrong. You will tell me where he is, then, Tom, so that I can see him?"

"Certainly, sir! He's in the old monk's cell in the wood. You remember, I pointed it out to you a long time ago, when you were here, and we had a ramble in Rylcombe Wood?"

Mr. Locke nodded.

"I remember it quite well, Tom. I think I will go there at once."

"One minute, sir. I've something more to tell you."

"Indeed!"

"You were looking for Mr. Lanbury when you came down to Rylcombe yesterday, sir—at least, we guessed you were," Tom Merry said.

"Well?"

"I have gathered, from what I have been able to read of the case, that Gerald Lynn suspected Mr. Lanbury of knowing something about the robbery of the bonds."

"Yes, that is the case," said the detective gravely.

"I don't know whether you were watching him, sir, but we thought you might be, as you came out of the station just afterwards," said Tom Merry. "But, in any case, what he has done is so queer and suspicious that I think we ought to tell you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mr. Lanbury has been to Mr. Wegg's shop, in the village, to visit Mr. Wegg's nephew, under the name of Brown," said Tom Merry. "We were there when he came, and he gave the name of Brown. I don't see why he should go under an assumed name if he's an innocent man."

"That stwuck me at once," said D'Arcy, with a nod.

"What kind of a man is this Mr. Wegg's nephew?" asked Ferrers Locke, rather abruptly.

Tom Merry gave a faithful and by no means flattering description of Adolphus Wegg. The detective listened with deepest attention.

It was very clear, from Ferrers Locke's look, that he attached the greatest importance to what Tom Merry was telling him.

"Young Wegg left Rylcombe some time back," Tom Merry concluded.

"There was talk about his having robbed his uncle, but I don't know about that. Certainly, he's a rotten, disgraceful bounder. He stays in bed till mid-day and gets drunk when he gets up. Old Wegg seems to be worried to death about him, but he doesn't like to turn him out. I'd turn him out, jolly sharp!"

"What-ho!" said Blake emphatically.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! Now, let's talk things over quietly, as the gangster said, putting a silencer on his gun. A Wayland man pleaded that he stole a grand piano in a moment of weakness. Weakness? Which reminds me that I went to a party, but didn't enjoy it much. The fellow next to me was cross-eyed, and kept eating off my plate. There was a blaze in a Wayland poulterer's shop. Fortunately, somebody pulled the "game" out of the fire! Two footpads attempted a hold-up in Rylcombe lane. Two minds with but one swindle thought. I hear the youth of Japan is going air-minded. The land of the Rising "Sons"! By the way, we are disappointed to have

"The curious thing is that Mr. Lanbury was coming to see Wegg, and he went down the street, instead, when we were outside the tailor's shop," said Tom Merry. "Young Lynn was with us then; he first pointed out Lanbury to us. Afterwards, Lanbury came back to see Wegg, and gave the name of Brown. We were in the fitting-room when he came into the shop, and he didn't see us, and at the shop to-day Wegg said that Brown was coming to see his nephew again."

"Ah!" said Ferrers Locke. "Then the business is not settled yet?"

"No, sir. Wegg said his nephew was going to leave when it was settled."

Mr. Locke smiled grimly.

"Mr. Wegg is quite correct there," he said. "His nephew will leave—when it is finished. But he will not return to his usual haunts, I think. To tell you the truth, Tom, I lost the track of Mr. Lanbury yesterday, in Rylcombe, and I had come to the conclusion that he had returned to London. But if this Mr. Brown is going to visit our friend Wegg again Mr. Lanbury cannot have returned to London."

"I suppose not, sir."

"It must be very important business to keep the cashier away from the bank for two days," the detective remarked musingly. "And how curious that a respectable bank cashier should have business with a disreputable character like this Wegg—business, too, to be done under an assumed name! Tom, I don't know whether you realise it, but you have given me exactly the information I needed."

And after a little further talk, to elucidate any possible point that the juniors might have passed over, Ferrers Locke quitted the school and walked down the road with a very satisfied expression upon his face.

He went to carry hope to a man in the depths of misery.

"Well, I rather think that we've got reason to be satisfied," Blake remarked, in a very thoughtful way.

"Yaas, wathah! It is vewy fortunate I was on the scene."

"You?" exclaimed Blake and Tom Merry together.

"Yaas, wathah!"

to report that Mr. Selby turned a complete somersault—and landed on his feet! Crooke asks what he can put money into with the certainty of a fair return? What about stamp machines? "Learn the piano in twenty-four hours!" reads a local advert. Yes, we think that is what Gore must have done! "Sleep on your trouble," says Mr. Railton. Yes, but what if your trouble happens to be a lumpy mattress? Dr. Holmes possesses a hundred-year-old Eastern slave whip. The desert thong. "You haven't kept up the instalments, and I want that car back!" said the collector. "All right," replied the bandaged motorist, "you'll find it half-way through the brick kiln at the bottom of the hill." A Wayland cafe advertises: "We supply clubs and socials." After trying their cakes, we recommend the use of the clubs. "Shy Masters," states a headline. Wally D'Arcy asks: "Where to?" A five-mile walk, we hear, will kill hay fever germs. The difficulty is to get the little bounders to go for a five-mile walk. "What sort of fish are the Shellfish?" asks a reader. We have been called "jelly-fish," and "crabs," but we always consider every Shellfish a "whale" of a fellow. Re-elly!

All the best, boys!

"What have you had to do with it?" Tom Merry inquired pleasantly.

"Weally, Tom Mewvy—"

"Hallo, here's Lynn!" said Blake.

Lynn came up, his face pale and troubled.

"I—I say, you chaps," he said, in a faltering voice. "I—I release you from the promise you made to me, if you like—about my brother, I mean. I've seen Mr. Locke, and he says that Gerald was innocent, and he hopes to prove it."

"I think he will, too," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Locke generally does anything he undertakes to do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gerald came to me last night for help," said Lynn, with a haggard look. "I refused him."

"We know that," said Tom Merry quietly.

Lynn started.

"How do you know?"

"Figgins met him in the quad."

"Oh! Do you know where he is now?" Lynn asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"Have you told Mr. Locke?"

"Yes we've told him, and he's gone to see your brother," said Tom Merry.

Lynn trembled.

"Tell me where he is!" he exclaimed.

"Tell me! I—I want to see him, to tell him that I believe in him, and to ask him to forgive me for—last night."

Tom Merry hesitated for a moment. But Lynn's request was evidently one to be complied with, and Tom Merry had not the heart to refuse.

"All serene!" he said. "I suppose I'd better tell him, you chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy; and Blake nodded.

"Mind you don't attract attention in going there, that's all," said Tom Merry. "Your brother is in the ruined cell in Rylcombe Wood. You know the place?"

"Yes," said Lynn. "Thanks!"

He ran off towards the school gates. Tom Merry shouted after him.

"Hold on! Have you got a pass out, Lynn?"

But Lynn did not heed, probably did not hear. He ran on, and was lost to sight in a few moments more.

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CHAPTER 11.

A Last Repentance!

"THERE you are!" said Figgins. It was very quiet in the solitary ruin in the heart of Rylcombe Wood. Of the old stone cell which had sheltered an anchorite monk in the olden times, only the walls and part of the roof remained. In the shattered brickwork birds had built their nests, safe there in the depths of the tangled wood.

The wintry sunlight filtered through the branches over the old cell, and through the gaps in the rotten roof. They showed Convict No. 79, not now in his convict clothes.

A thirty-shilling suit of Mr. Wegg covered his limbs; and although the fit was not good, and the cut of the clothes would have made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy despair, the change was a decided improvement upon the prison garb.

Figgins & Co. looked at him quite admiringly. A good meal, too, had made a difference to the convict. There was colour in his face now, and light in his eyes. And the gratitude in his looks went right to the hearts of Figgins & Co.

"There you are!" repeated Figgins. "I think you're really nicely fixed up now, you know. I've put the tin in the jacket pocket. Now we shall have to be buzzing off, but we'll give you a look in again, and bring some more grub. If you get a good chance to do a bunk, don't mind us; but if you're still here, the grub will come in handy."

"I don't know how to thank you," said the convict, in a faltering voice. "If I can only get safely to London, and see Mr. Ferrers Locke, I shall be satisfied."

He held out his hand hesitatingly.

Figgins did not appear to notice the hesitation. He gripped the hand in his hearty way, and Kerr and Wynn followed the example. They left the old stone cell and plunged into the wood.

There was a step in the brushwood, and Ferrers Locke stood before them. The detective nodded to the juniors with a smile.

"Just in time to see you," he remarked.

"Mr. Locke!"

"It is all right," said the detective. "I have seen Tom Merry, and he has told me. I am here as Gerald Lynn's friend."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Figgins, in great relief.

The detective nodded, and passed on towards the ruin.

Figgins & Co. went on their way to the school. They had no time to lose; afternoon lessons were at hand. Ferrers Locke stepped into the doorless aperture of the cell, and his tall shadow fell in the sunlight across the cracked stone floor.

The convict gave a violent start.

As the shadow fell, a desperate gleam came into his eye; his hand closed in a grip upon a heavy stone. Then he looked up, and recognised Ferrers Locke. The stone dropped from his hand upon the floor with a crash.

"Ferrers Locke!" he cried.

The detective's brow was stern for a moment.

"Lynn! I've come to save you, I hope; but if it had been a warder, what were you going to do with that stone?"

Lynn turned crimson.

"I will never be taken!" he said.

"That will not do, Lynn. You are

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innocent now; if you make yourself a criminal, I cannot save you."

"You believe in my innocence?"

"Yes."

"Thank goodness!"

"I began to investigate the case immediately I came home from abroad," said Ferrers Locke. "I hope to bring the facts to light. But you must not injure your own case, Lynn. If you are found, you must not resist. Promise me."

Lynn nodded.

"If you believe in me, if you are working for me, I can bear anything!" he exclaimed. "It was the thought of being shut up in that stone tomb, without hope, without a chance, that drove me crazy. But if there is hope—"

"There is hope, my poor fellow."

"How did you find me?"

"I owe that to Tom Merry and his friends. I owe them more than that—I owe them information which will probably help to clear up the whole affair," the detective said quietly.

"Heaven bless them!" said the convict. "They have stood by me, and helped me, when my own brother turned his back upon me and disowned me."

"Not now, Gerald—not now!"

It was a cry of repentance, as Arthur Lynn sprang in at the open doorway of the cell. His face was red with running, and beads of perspiration, in spite of the cold, showed on his face.

"Gerald!"

The convict turned a stony look upon him.

"What have you come for?" he asked. "Is it to find me out and hand me over to the police?"

Lynn panted.

"Gerald, I'm sorry! I believe in you now; I want to help you."

The convict's face softened. "You believe in me, Arthur?" he muttered.

"Yes, yes! I believed you guilty; that—that was why I was hard. But since what Mr. Locke has told me—"

"You might have known me better, Arthur."

Lynn's face was full of remorse.

"Forgive me, Gerald!"

The convict held out his hand.

Ferrers Locke glanced at the brothers, and stepped outside the cell. For many minutes there was a murmur of voices in the old ruins, then Lynn came out.

"Mr. Locke, I hope you will succeed," he said thickly. "But whether you do or not, I shall always stand up for my brother."

"Good!" said the detective; and he shook hands with the junior. "And I think I shall succeed, my lad."

Lynn plunged through the wood. He was glad that he had come there—glad that he had been able to see his brother, and assure him of his repentance, his trust. His heart was lighter as he tramped through the wood back to St. Jim's.

The bell for afternoon school had long sounded, and the Fourth Form were in

the class-room when Lynn reached the school. Mr. Lathom looked over his spectacles as the junior, breathing hard from his long tramp, came into the room.

"You will take fifty lines, Lynn," said Mr. Lathom. "You are nearly an hour late."

"Yes, sir," gasped Lynn, sinking into his seat on the form. He was glad that the Form-master did not ask him where he had been.

In the old ruin in Rylcombe Wood, Ferrers Locke remained for more than an hour in close talk with Convict No. 79.



At the same moment as Mr. Lanbury said good-bye, his hand-preserved head and he sank to the floor, that eyes were watching.

At the end of that time he rose from the stone seat.

Convict No. 79 looked at him anxiously.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now I shall return to Rylcombe, and I bid you hope for the best," said Ferrers Locke. "And if you are discovered, mind, no resistance."

Gerald Lynn nodded.

"I am entirely in your hands, Mr. Locke," he said.

The convict remained buried in thought for a long time after the detective had left him. The woods were very silent.

The early winter dusk fell upon the lonely woods, and the convict looked out into the gloom. It was his chance now. The vicinity was being

soured for him, but if he could reach London, if he could bury himself in the heart of the great city, there was a good chance that he might elude the search until Ferrers Locke had succeeded in clearing his name. And that Ferrers Locke would succeed the convict felt an inward conviction.

He stepped from the stone cell at last, and moved away slowly and cautiously through the wood. From the wood he tramped out upon a deep, lonely lane, and he set his face towards London with hope in his heart, but with his nerves in a twitter.



came out of his pocket and a swift blow was struck. A short time later, the man on the floor, stunned. But the rascally bank cashier little knew what was coming from the next room!

There was the sound of a horse's hoof on the road. A mounted constable reined in his horse, in the light of a glimmering lamp, and called upon him to halt.

The convict halted, with despair in his heart. All passers in the lanes and byways were being stopped and questioned; the convict was perhaps the fiftieth the mounted constable had challenged upon that dusky road.

"Have you seen— Great Scott!" exclaimed the constable. "Let me see your face! Surrender, Gerald Lynn!"

Lynn sprang back, with a fierce light in his eyes. But he remembered his promise to Ferrers Locke, and held out his hands with a gesture of surrender.

The next moment the handcuffs clicked upon his wrists.

"Caught, by hokey!" said the constable.

That night Convict No. 79 slept once more in his old cell at Portmoor Prison.

CHAPTER 12.

Mr. Wegg's New Lodger!

MR. WEGG was delighted.

The tailor who had the honour of making extra pairs of trousers for the honourable Augustus D'Arey of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's had done a good stroke of business, beside which even his dealings with the expensive Gussy faded into insignificance.

It was towards dusk that evening that his new customer had presented himself. He was a man with a thick, greyish beard and very dark complexion. He was well but quietly dressed, and he took an interest in the subject of clothes which quite won the heart of Rylcombe's fashionable tailor. He explained that he had recently returned from abroad, and that he was in want of many new things, and he selected coats and trousers and waistcoats from Mr. Wegg's stock with a freedom which showed that he had come home from abroad with his pockets well lined with cash.

Besides extensive purchases of ready-made attire, he had given orders for several suits, in various styles, and with an utter recklessness as to expense. True, Mr. Wegg's prices were not Bond Street prices. But they gradually rose as the guilelessness of the stranger became more apparent, until the last suit that the gentleman ordered approximated in prices to anything charged by London tailors.

If the stranger within the gates had money, and was determined to spend it, there was no reason why honest Mr. Wegg should not make hay while the sun shone; so Mr. Wegg reasoned, at all events.

The stranger's extreme liberality might have excited the suspicion of the wary old tradesman but for the fact that he revealed a wad of banknotes in opening his pocket-book and that he paid down ten pounds—two crisp and rustling fivers—on

account, and the notes were undoubtedly good.

Mr. Hamlin—the name the liberal customer gave—explained that he was staying in Rylcombe for the night, if not longer but complained of the accommodation offered at the local inn, and referred to the fact that he had heard it mentioned that Mr. Wegg had a room to let.

To which Mr. Wegg replied that he certainly had had a room to let, but that his nephew had just paid him a visit, and was occupying the room in question. But as it would be undoubtedly a great advantage to have that paying customer in the house for reasons of measuring and fitting—and perhaps because the wily Mr. Wegg was unwilling to let so wealthy a bird fly out

of the cage—the old tailor mentioned that he could undoubtedly have a room prepared for the stranger, and that he would be honoured if Mr. Hamlin would accept it—at a merely nominal charge, of course—the nominal charge being about three times that charged at the inn.

Mr. Hamlin accepted the offer with gratitude, and his bag was brought from the station and deposited in the room in question which adjoined that occupied by the promising nephew of Mr. Wegg. Mr. Wegg apologetically expressed a hope that his guest would not be disturbed by any slight noise his nephew might make, explaining that the young man had learned late hours in London.

"He's out now," Mr. Wegg explained. "Probably he won't be 'ome till very late. But perhaps you're a sound sleeper, sir?"

"To which Mr. Hamlin replied that he slept as soundly as a top, and, being tired out after his journey, and with the pleasant fatigue of looking over Mr. Wegg's splendid assortment of cloth in all qualities and styles, he thought he would go to bed early.

At nine o'clock therefore, Mr. Hamlin found himself ensconced in his room.

He set down the candle and fastened the door, and then looked in the glass, and a peculiar smile lit up the grey-bearded face. That smile made the face look very young for a moment, in spite of the grey beard.

Mr. Hamlin's next proceedings were extremely mysterious, and would have amazed his worthy host, if Rylcombe's fashionable tailor could have seen them—which he could not.

The gentleman from abroad first removed his boots and drew on a pair of rubber-soled shoes. Then he removed his beard, which Mr. Wegg had never dreamed was a detachable one. Then he washed his eyebrows, and from black they became a pleasant brown in colour. By that time Mr. Hamlin looked twenty years younger, and bore a remarkable resemblance to the famous detective, Mr. Ferrers Locke.

Then, setting the candle before the glass, and with one more glance to make sure that the blind was safely down, the new lodger in the Wegg household commenced making up his face with materials which he selected from his bag.

A pointed black moustache gave him a decidedly foreign appearance, and a short, pointed dark beard added to the effect.

With these, and a few other minor adjustments the mysterious gentleman soon eradicated any resemblance either to Ferrers Locke or Mr. Hamlin.

It was by this time ten o'clock, and Mr. Wegg was gone to bed. The lodger had heard his door close on the landing above, ten minutes ago. The house-keeper slept on the ground floor, and there was no likelihood that the old lady, who was troubled with rheumatism, would ascend to the upper part of the house. Mr. Wegg being a widower, the house had no other occupants, save his hopeful nephew, at present busily occupied in "keeping it up" with a circle of choice spirits at the Green Man.

The mysterious lodger unlocked his door quietly, and looked out upon the dark landing. The house was very silent.

He stepped out, and two steps carried him to the door of the fashionable Adolphus' apartment; and in a moment more he was in that room.

He closed the door, lighted the gas, turning it barely half on, and looked about him. The room was in a state of disorder worthy of the reckless young blade, Adolphus Wegg. Boots and trousers were everywhere. There was an empty whisky bottle on the mantelpiece, and a dirty glass on the table, and cigar-ends on most of the articles of furniture in the room, and quite a swarm of them on the floor. The new lodger examined some of the cigar-ends, and very quickly detected that they were of expensive brands—indeed, it looked as if Mr. Wegg was in the habit of spending much money a week in cigars only. Which was a very costly habit for a tailor's nephew with no fixed occupation.

The new lodger, having looked searchingly about the room, noting the traces of the delightful and fashionable West End habits of Mr. Adolphus Wegg, settled at last before a bag which lay in a corner of the room, and which was locked.

The lodger seemed to have come prepared for every possible emergency, for he produced a peculiar contrivance from an inner pocket, and quickly and with great facility picked the lock of Mr. Adolphus' bag, and opened it.

Not a recess of that bag was left unexplored by the inquisitive lodger whom Mr. Wegg had so unsuspectingly taken into his house to fleece. It really looked as if the lodger, after all, was not the person who was being taken in.

A singular assortment of things came to view in that search. Sporting papers with heavy underscoring in special places, a betting book full of the most mysterious figures, a pack of marked cards, and a set of loaded dice were among the private treasures of Mr. Adolphus.

But apparently the inquisitive lodger did not find what he sought, for he gave a grunt of dissatisfaction as his search concluded.

He replaced everything in the bag just as he had found it, and relocked it, and then expended some time in a close and systematic search of the room.

This search also appeared to be fruitless.

With a muttered word of discontent, the lodger turned out the light, and left the apartment as silently as he had entered it.

Having gained his own room and locked the door, he stood for some moments in thought. So far, although his search had been unsuccessful, all had gone well. If Mr. Wegg, by any untoward chance, had discovered the inquisitive person in the act of searching his nephew's room, he would never have recognised him as his new lodger, Mr. Hamlin, but would have undoubtedly taken him for a common burglar.

But the worthy tailor of Rylcombe was sleeping the sleep of the just on the next story, without a suspicion.

"If he has them, he has them on him," the lodger muttered, apparently referring to Mr. Adolphus, "and he must have them, or why should Mr. Brown come to see him here. It is not for the pleasure of visiting him. I suppose, after all, he would not be likely to leave them off his own person. But I must be very sure before I act."

He sat in the darkness thinking. Presently he rose, and felt with his hands over the wall that divided his

room from Mr. Adolphus' apartment. Mr. Wegg had hoped that he would not be disturbed when Mr. Adolphus came in late, but Mr. Wegg must have been very sanguine to hope that, for the wall was a mere lath-and-plaster partition, and voices, if raised above a low level, could have been heard in conversation through it.

Mr. Hamlin gave a low murmur of satisfaction, and there was a scratching sound in the darkness and a sound of fragments falling. For some reason best known to himself, the mysterious lodger was excavating a hole through the wall in a top corner, standing on a chair to do so. In the next room, as he had noted while he was there, the wardrobe cast a deep shadow upon that corner, and the opening would certainly not be noticed, unless Mr. Adolphus made a special search for it—which he was not likely to do, never having heard or dreamed of Mr. Hamlin and his inquisitive ways.

Mr. Hamlin seemed to be provided wonderfully well with any tools he might require. In a very short time the lath and plaster was penetrated, and a small opening about an inch wide formed a connection between the two apartments.

With his ear to that little opening, Mr. Hamlin would be able to hear every word that was uttered in Mr. Adolphus' room, and, with his eye to it, he would be able to see a good half of the room as soon as the gas was lighted there.

He stepped down from the chair, well satisfied with himself.

There was nothing to do now but to await Mr. Adolphus' return, and the new lodger settled down by his window to wait, with a corner of the blind pulled back to give him a view of the street.

The moon was climbing over the roofs of Rylcombe, and the rays fell with a cold clearness in the old High Street. Across the road there was a glimmer of light from the railway station, but the houses were dark and silent. The lodger started a little as he saw a dark figure leaning against one of the houses opposite. When footsteps sounded in the street that figure would detach itself from the shadows and come forward, as if to look at the newcomer in inquiry, and then it would fall back to its old position, almost invisible in the gloom.

Mr. Hamlin smiled softly.

It could not be Adolphus who was thus watching whoever came to his uncle's house—he could have no motive for doing so. Was it his visitor, Mr. Brown, waiting for the prodigal to return, to have a second interview with him?

The lodger wondered.

Twelve o'clock had rung out from the village church when an unsteady step and a fragment of a song sounded simultaneously in the street below. The watcher drew a breath of relief. He was sure that it was Mr. Adolphus returning.

There was the grating of an unsteady key in the lock of the side door beside the shop. In the silent house, the door could be heard to open. The dark figure darted across the road, and did not reappear again. The lodger, listening within his locked room, was not surprised to hear two men instead of one ascending the rickety stairs.

Mr. Adolphus had come home, and Mr. Brown was coming up to his room with him. The lodger left his post by the window, and stepped softly upon the chair by the wall, and applied his eye to the hole he had made there.

A glimmer of light struck his eye. Mr. Adolphus was in his room, and had lighted the gas.

CHAPTER 13.

Struck Down!

MR. ADOLPHUS was walking somewhat unsteadily as he came into his room, and his hands missed the gas several times before he succeeded in lighting it. There was a strong smell of gas in the room, perceptible to the lodger on the other side of the wall.

"I wanted to see you."

"I told you where you could find me," said Adolphus. "Why couldn't you come to the Green Man?"

Adolphus blew out a cloud of smoke.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Lanbury, breaking the silence.

"What are you going to do, rather?"

said Adolphus. "It ain't for me to say. I'm marking time."

Mr. Lanbury was silent for a few moments. He clenched his hands hard, as if he could barely restrain himself from springing upon the nephew of Mr. Wegg.

"I've offered two thousand," he said at last.

"And I've said five," said Adolphus, puffing contentedly at his cigar. "No hurry, matey! I'm willing to wait, absolutely!"

"A thousand was what was agreed upon."

Adolphus chuckled.

"You arranged that," he replied. "I said 'Yes,' because I wanted to get the job on. But I didn't mean to 'and over the ten thousand pounds' worth of bonds to you for a thousand quid. Not much!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Old yarn, then!" said Adolphus.

"I don't want any of your lip, I can tell you that, Mr. Lanbury! I'm as good a man as you are, and I tell you so plain. Talk a bit more civil when you're talking to a gentleman!"

The cashier set his white lips hard.

"The bonds are useless to you," he said in a low, but quite audible voice.

"If you made any attempt to rid yourself of them, you would be detected at once. They are what is called easily negotiable, but they require to be negotiated by a man of City experience, and not in this country, either, for safety's sake. You cannot dispose of a guinea's worth of that paper by yourself!"

"Very likely."

"What is the use of it to you, then?"

"It's worth five thousand quid to me," said Adolphus cheerfully. "Anyways, I don't part with 'em under that!"

"You are mad," said Lanbury irritably, "and your folly may mean ruin to yourself, as well as loss to me! Suppose the bonds are discovered?"

"They won't be!"

"Where can you keep them? If you hide them in your room, they might be discovered while you are absent."

Adolphus chuckled knowingly.

"I reckon I'm a bit too fly to leave them about," he replied.

Mr. Lanbury started.

"Do you mean to say that you are mad enough to carry them about on your person?" he asked hoarsely.

"Safest place, ain't it?"

"Fool! Suppose in one of your drunken escapades you were arrested by the police—they would be discovered at the station."

(Continued on page 23.)



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

HALLO, chums! When I was out at lunch the other day I came upon a man of muscle performing in the street. Of all itinerant open-air performers the strong man is the one who can always attract attention, and a huge crowd had gathered round to watch this man's feats of strength. As I arrived on the scene he took up a long piece of wood about three inches thick and selected a large nail from his "bag of tricks." He then asked one of the spectators to point out a spot on the piece of wood, through which, he said, he would force the nail. Using only a piece of rag to protect the palm of his hand from the nail-head, he exerted his strength for about ten seconds and—hey presto!—the nail was pressed right through.

The strong man's next feat was to bend with his hands a long bar of iron by forcing it against the back of his neck! Having done this he commenced to strike his fore-arm—which, incidentally, was black with bruises—with the bent bar of iron. In about two minutes he had straightened out that bar again. The strong man then took up three swords, and it looked as though something interesting was coming. But, unfortunately, the long arm of the law was coming, too! Two policemen appeared on the scene and the performance was abruptly terminated by the strong man having to "move on."

STRENGTH.

This man of muscle's feats, however, pale into insignificance beside the stunts of a Sunderland miner, who has the appropriate Christian name of Samson. The latter can resist the efforts to strangle him of sixteen men—eight aside—pulling on a two-inch rope wound round his neck! Other feats he does are to twist a horseshoe into a coil, and bend a iron bar with his teeth. Samson will also allow a five-cwt boulder to be

broken with mallets on his chest, and bricks to be smashed on his head! But his crowning achievement is to lie down on the ground and let a motor-car full of people run over his body! Phew!

"GUSSY'S GREAT IDEA!"

All Fools' Day is drawing near and obviously a St. Jim's story of First-of-April japing is indicated. So Martin Clifford has provided for your entertainment next Wednesday one of his very best efforts in this line. It is a lively, full-of-fun yarn of japing and counter-japing, with the one-and-only Arthur Augustus playing the leading role. Gussy gets a great idea for a super jape, but no one will listen to it. Instead, Gussy himself becomes the victim of the jape of his school-fellows, so he sets to work to get his own back with his wonderful wheeze. The resultant fun—it's the jape of the term!—will keep you chuckling throughout this ripping long yarn.

"THE THIEF OF PACKSADDLE!"

For Wild West school adventure and thrills Frank Richards' great yarns of "The Packsaddle Bunch!" are unbeatable, and next week's number contains another gripping yarn from his pen. It tells of a daring highway robbery, in which Dick Carr and his chums become involved, and there follows a thrilling adventure for the cow town schoolboys in trying to bring the road-agent to book.

"The Secret World!"—our tremendously popular serial—is getting more and more thrilling with each week's chapters. Affairs between Northestia

PEN PALS COUPON

23-3-35

and Gothland have reached a climax with the rescuing of Prince Oswy, and there can only be one outcome now—war! And you may be sure that the boys of St. Frank's are not going to be left out of it! There are many big thrills ahead for them—and for you in reading about their adventures. Watch out for next week's grand number, chums.

THE EYE OF A NEEDLE.

Threading an ordinary darning needle with two hundred strands of cotton is a task that requires a very steady hand and a great deal of patience, and it is a task quite beyond the skill of most people. So Mrs. Cloutier, of New Hampshire, U.S.A., must have been justly proud when she succeeded in threading 224 strands of cotton through the eye of a darning needle—thus setting up a new record. But her record was short-lived, for she had a strong challenger for the title of world's champion needle-threader. He is an Ottawa tailor, and he added twenty-six threads on to Mrs. Cloutier's record, bringing the total up to 250!

THE BOY SOCCER STAR.

Catch 'em young seems to be the aim of many professional football clubs these days in enlisting players for their staffs. There have been several instances this season where boys who have shown marked skill at the game have hardly left school before they have been engaged on the ground staff of big clubs. No player can sign professional forms for a club until he is seventeen, so the young player is taken on in some other capacity and trained and coached on the right lines until he is of age.

Wolverhampton Wanderers recently heard about the brilliant footballing ability of a schoolboy of Binley Heath. The boy is Arthur Bailey, and he is only thirteen. But such is his skill that the "Wolves" have got in early to make sure of his services when he is old enough to be a "pro." Arthur, who has gained much fame around Binley Heath with his clever forward play and goal-scoring achievements, is very keen to get into big football, and he will now have every chance of fulfilling his ambition.

TAILPIECE.

Stage Manager (to applicant for job of understudy to his leading man): "You say you used to have a very strong part on the stage?"

Applicant: "Yes, sir—I used to shift scenery about!"

THE EDITOR.

Miss Mary Dennison, Pentfield, Thurnby, nr. Leicester, wants a girl correspondent in New York: age 10-11: pets, films, books.

Sydney Storer, Ward 1, Highwood Hospital, Brentwood, Essex wants correspondents in France and Germany; age 12-14: languages.

John Regan, 28 Nottingham Avenue, Kelvinside, Glasgow, wants a French correspondent: age 13-15: meccano, electricity.

Cyril Thomas Holland, 14, Duret Road, Dagenham, Essex, wants a correspondent in South Africa: age 12-14: motor-cycles and cars.

Paul Abbott, Holmdale, Beacon Road, Herne Bay, Kent, wants correspondents age 14-17: sports, amateur journalism, correspondence clubs.

S. P. Crocker, 33 Pennsylvania Road, Ellacombe, Torquay, Devon, wants correspondents keen on the old "Nelson Lees."

Harold Jones, 34, Surrey Road, Peckham Rye, London, S.E.15, wants a correspondent overseas: stamps: age 13-17.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.



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.

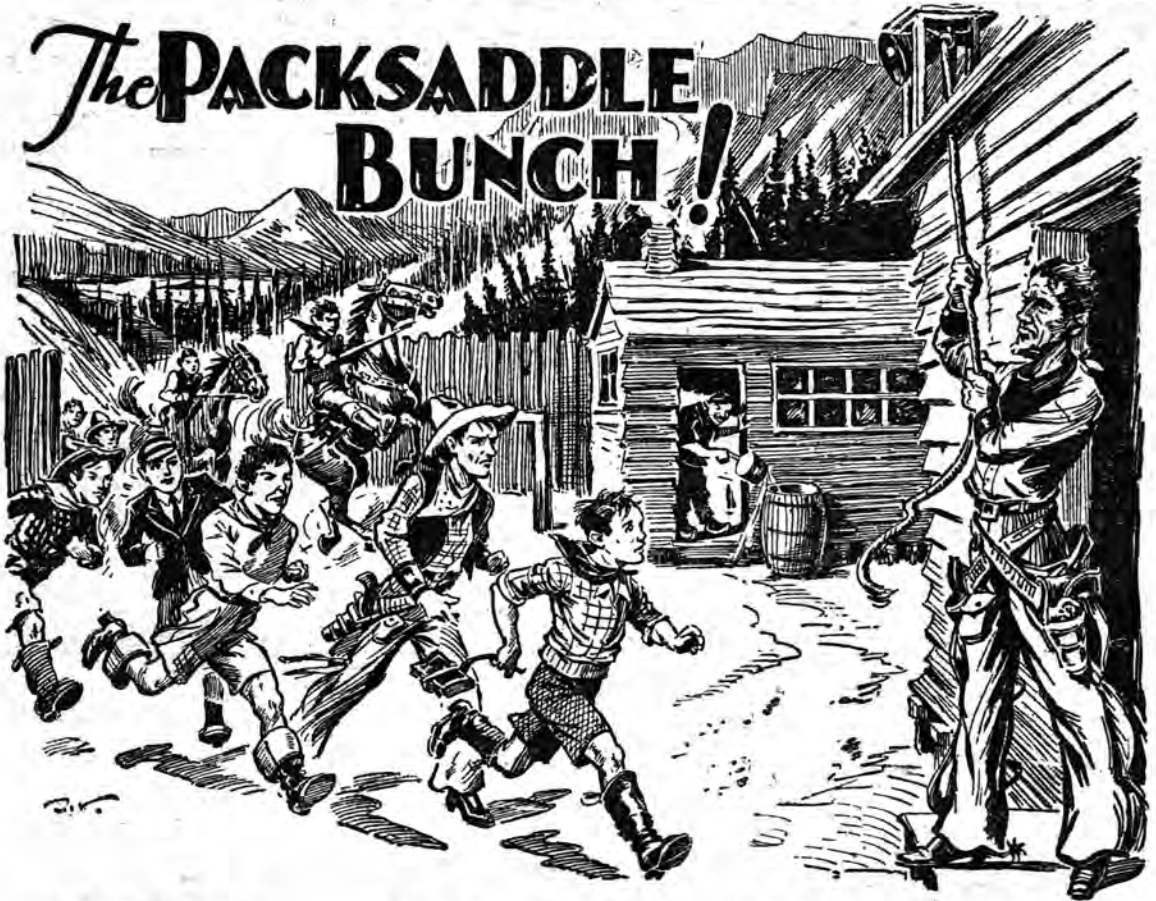
F. S. Burton, 8, Cordelia Street, Smith Grove, Mile End, London, E.3, wants members for the International Film League.

Dylfrig R. Thomas, 7, The Grove, Barry, Glam., wants a pen pal (in France, for preference) who is interested in music, foreign stamps, and English.

Jack Harrower, 14, Tongue Street, Yarraville, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents keen on radio.

Daniel Cantor, 12, Alarizi Road, Jerusalem, Palestine, wants correspondents in the British Empire and U.S.A.; age 13-15.

The PACKSADDLE BUNCH!



While the Cat's Away—

"HOWLIN' coyotes!" ejaculated Bill Sampson, schoolmaster of Packsaddle School.

He stared from the porch into the school-room.

Red wrath was in Bill's rugged, bearded face.

What he saw going on in the school-room was enough to make any schoolmaster wrathful.

Bill, certainly, was no ordinary schoolmaster. Indeed, Dick Carr, the tenderfoot, when first he saw Bill in his big cowman's boots, red shirt, and ten-gallon hat, had found it difficult to believe that Bill was headmaster of Packsaddle.

But he was; and he ruled the rough cow town school with a rod of iron—rather, with a cowpuncher's quirt, that was more efficacious than a rod of iron.

When Bill was around the Packsaddle bunch walked warily, and if they talked, they talked turkey!

But when Bill was not around, Small Brown, the teacher, bitterly deplored the fate that had led him to that cow town school in Texas.

Dick Carr had known what a "rag" was like in his old school in England. But he opened his eyes wide at the rags that happened at Packsaddle when Bill was not riding herd over the bunch.

Now Bill was opening his eyes and his mouth! He stared, he glared, and he used some expressions that he had learned as a puncher on the Kicking Mule ranges. But he was unheard in the din! Above the roar of voices and the trampling of feet, however, the squeal of Mr. Brown could be heard.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

Mr. Brown was not enjoying life! The bunch were!

All the bunch knew that Bill had ridden down to Packsaddle burg that morning to see Lick, the town marshal. But they did not know that Bill had chanced to meet Lick near the school, and got through his business unexpectedly soon, and blown in again. Had they been wise to that, the Pack-

THE BULLY'S REVENGE!

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

saddle bunch would have bolted for their desks like prairie rabbits for their holes.

"Go to your places!" Small Brown was squealing wildly. "I shall report this to Mr. Sampson! Carson, release my ear—release my ear immediately! Dixon—Parker—let go my arms! Poindexter, stop pulling my hair! Kavanagh, if you dare to pull my nose, I will—gurrgrggh!"

"Where's that riata?" roared Steve Carson.

"Here you are, Steve!" yelled Poker Parker.

"Lynch him!" shouted Poindexter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Dick Carr. He was sitting on his desk watching the startling scene.

Small Brown wriggled in many hands.

Even Mr. Brown, nervous as he was, did not believe that his pupils really were going to lynch him! Even the rough-and-tough Packsaddle bunch stopped short of that!

It was a game—but a rather rough game! Recently there had been an outbreak of a lynch mob in the cow town. That had put the idea into the head of Steve Carson. With Bill safely off the scene, as he figured, Steve went ahead with his game.

Pie Sanders threw the rope over one of the roof beams. The noose dangled over Small Brown's head.

A crowd of laughing fellows dragged him under it. He wriggled and struggled. But they had hold of him anywhere and everywhere, and there was no escape for the hapless Mr. Brown.

The loop of the lasso was passed over his head. For one awful moment, Small Brown almost thought that the excited bunch were going to put it round his neck! But Slick Poindexter slipped it down under his arms.

Mick Kavanagh dragged on the other end.

A dozen fellows scrambled to grasp the rope with Mick, and dragged on it, and Small Brown swung off the floor.

"Up with him!" roared Carson.

"Lynch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oooogh! Release me—urrgrggh!" spluttered Small Brown, as he went up on the rope, arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

—ANOTHER GRIPPING STORY OF THE TEXAS COW TOWN SCHOOL.

Except for the hard grip of the rope round his narrow chest, Small Brown was not getting hurt. But he was scared out of his wits. His horn-rimmed spectacles slid down his nose, and he blinked wildly over them, like a frightened owl. He howled and squealed.

Roars of laughter answered him. The lynch game entertained the Packsaddle bunch enormously. It was the wildest rag ever perpetrated, even at Packsaddle, and the bunch fairly let themselves go.

"Urrrrrgh! Oh dear! Oh!" squealed Small Brown.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spin him!" shouted Carson.

"Wooooooo!" spluttered Small Brown as a dozen hands shoved at him, spinning him round like a top as he swung on the rope.

"For goodness' sake, you fellows—" gasped Dick Carr. He was the only fellow in the school-room not taking part in the uproar. "I say, suppose Bill came in—"

Big Steve looked round at him with a sneer.

"Aw, can it!" he jeered. "You're the only guy here that's got cold feet! You don't dare horn in, you pesky skunk."

Dick flushed crimson.

It was not fear of the consequences that kept him out of the rag. But the bully of Packsaddle saw a chance to score and he did not miss it.

"Stick where you are!" jeered Steve. "When Bill gets mad about this, you can tell him what a good little angel you are!"

"Come and give him a spin, you Carr!" shouted Poindexter.

"He's afraid!" sneered Steve.

That was enough for Dick Carr. He jumped off the desk and joined the shouting crowd. Small Brown was getting enough, if not too much, without his help, but he was not going to have the bunch figuring that he was afraid to do as the others did.

He gave Mr. Brown a spin in his turn. Round and round went Mr. Brown on the rope, amid yells of merriment.

"Swing him up to the roof!" shouted Steve Carson. "Tie that end of the rope, you Sanders! Now swing him up."

Steve was warming to the work! From Small Brown came a squeal of sheer terror. Several voices were raised in protest. Steve was carrying the thing too far even for the rough Packsaddle bunch.

But the bully of Packsaddle was not to be denied. He grasped the swinging teacher by the ankles, to give him a swing up to the roof of the school-room.

Bill Sampson, in the porch, unseen in the excitement, seemed to be petrified by what he saw. He knew that Mr. Brown had trouble when he was absent, and despised him for not being able to handle the bunch. But this wild scene surprised even Bill.

As Carson was starting to swing Mr. Brown, Bill woke to life, as it were, and strode into the school-room.

"Let up!" he roared.

There was a howl of alarm as the bunch stared round.

"Bill!" yelled Poindexter.

"Sure, it's Bill!" gasped Mick Kavanagh.

There was a rush back to the desks. Steve Carson, wildly excited, and anxious to display his nerve before the bunch, gave Small Brown a powerful swing before he rushed to his desk after the others, and the hapless man

on the rope nearly hit the roof as he swung up.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Bill. "I'll sure—" He broke off with a yell.

Small Brown, swinging back from the height, crashed on him as he came, knocking him over headlong.

The stout pine planks of the floor shook as Bill's weight landed on them. "Yarough!" roared Bill.

"Oh, great gophers!" gasped Slick.

And the Packsaddle bunch stared on blankly as Bill Sampson sprawled on the floor, and Small Brown gyrated over him at the end of the rope.

Bill Handles the Bunch!

BILL SAMPSON picked himself up. The bunch watched him breathlessly.

There was deep silence in the Packsaddle school-room, broken only by a breathless squeal from Small Brown. They were all tough at Packsaddle—Steve Carson the toughest of the bunch! But they all felt cold chills under the eye of Bill Sampson. Big Steve had displayed his nerve by giving Small Brown that last swing right under the eyes

When Steve Carson, the Bully of Packsaddle, roped in his master, he roped in a licking and tried to rope in revenge.

of his headmaster. But Steve wished now that he hadn't! It had fixed Bill's eye specially on him. And Bill's eye had a glint in it that was alarming.

Bill had had a hard thump on the ear, but he did not worry about that; he was as hard as hickory. Standing with his thumbs hooked in his gun-belt, Bill surveyed the bunch grimly.

"Release me!" came Small Brown's squeal.

Bill gave a scornful snort.

"I guess there ain't no hurry, Mister Brown, seeing as you let yourself be fixed up that-a-way!" he answered. "Say! Ain't you got as much sand as a gopher? Ain't you got as much backbone as a musketeer? Search me!"

"I—I—I—"

"Aw! Pack it up!" Bill turned to the class again. "I guess this here rookus is the limit, and then some and a few over!" he hooted. "You figure you're at this here school to hang up my teacher like he was a horse thief? You figure you're here to paint Packsaddle red, like you was a bunch of cow-punchers let loose after the round-up? Forget it! I'll tell a man I'm the guy to ride herd and keep you from stampeding! Yep! I'll tell all Texas!"

Bill turned to the teacher again.

Grasping Small Brown with one hand, he held him as easily as an infant, to take his weight off the lasso. Then he loosened the noose with his other hand and jerked Small Brown out of it.

The teacher, gasping and spluttering, was set on his feet.

"Now" roared Bill. "I guess the whole bunch was in this here rookus? That so, Mister Brown?"

"Yes, yes!" gurgled Small Brown.

"I—" "And I'll say that Carson was the big chief! You step out here, you Carson. I sure want you, a few."

Big Steve set his teeth. He had been

the originator and ringleader of the wild outbreak. After the feast came the reckoning.

He assumed a swagger, which rather belied his feelings, as he came out of the class. The bunch were not going to see him show the white feather if he could help it.

"I guess I'm here, Bill," he said coolly.

Bill gave him a glare.

"Yep! I'll say you're some bulldozer!" he roared. "You're a bully boy with a glass eye, you are, and then some! I'll mention that I'm the galoot to give you something to cure it! You hear me whisper."

Bill's "whisper" could be heard across the playground and along the banks of the Rio Frio!

"Now, you put your cabeza into that riata!" roared Bill, holding the loop of the lasso from which he had released Small Brown.

"I guess not!" answered Big Steve. "What the great horned toad—"

He got no further.

Bill's mighty grasp was on him. Head and shoulders were shoved through the loop, and it tightened under Big Steve's arms. Steve was heavier than Small Brown, but Bill lifted him in one hand with ease.

He stepped back, leaving Carson swinging, his feet a yard or more from the floor.

"That's yours!" roared Bill. "You was the king-pin, and you cinch the king-pin's canful, Mister Brown, you hand me my quirt."

Small Brown almost bounded to the schoolmaster's desk. He bounded back with the cowman's whip.

Bill grasped it. It rang round Steve Carson in a series of cracks like pistol shots, as he swung on the rope.

The bunch watched. They knew that their turn was coming! Bill, it was clear, had his mad up!

Crack! Crack! Crack! rang the quirt on Big Steve Carson, and he swung and spun on the rope, yelling.

"Let up, Bill, you gink!" yelled Big Steve. "I'm sure telling you to let up, you pie-can!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Quit!" screamed Big Steve. "I'll sure get you for this, Bill Sampson, you ornery old geek!"

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Will you let up?" shrieked Steve.

"Not so's you'd notice it!" roared Bill. "Not by a jugful! Nope! I guess I'm the man to ride herd over this bunch! You got a few more coming."

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

"I'll get you!" yelled Big Steve, as the quirt cracked and rang. "I'll see you get yours, Bill Sampson, you pesky skunk! I guess my popper will come a-shooting when I put him wise to this."

"What you giving me?" roared Bill, red with rage.

Steve was the son of Two-Gun Carson, the gambler and gunman of Packsaddle. There were plenty of men in Santanta County who feared the hard-faced, ice-eyed gunman, who packed two guns, and was like lightning in handling them. But Bill Sampson was not on the tally of those who feared him. Steve's threat had only one effect on the Bill—he had been about to quit with the quirt—and now he went on with it instead.

Crack! Crack! Crack! rang the quirt and Steve writhed and howled and yelled with anguish.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

"Any more from you?" roared Bill. "You want to tell me any more about your doggoned popper coming a-shooting? Say!"

Steve had no more to tell Bill on that subject! Swinging on the rope, helpless as Small Brown had been, Steve groaned and gasped, and said nothing.

Bill Sampson snorted and strode towards the class, the bunch eyeing him and the quirt in his hand with great uneasiness.

"Git on your hind laigs, you'uns!" roared Bill.

The class stood up.

"Now, I guess you're getting yours!" said Bill. "I'm sure going to larn you'uns that my doggoned teacher, Mister Brown, is here to teach this outfit, and sure not to be strung up on a rope in this goldarned school-room! I guess I'm going to have you feeding out of his hand afore I'm through! I'm sure going to quirt you like you was a herd of ornery steers!"

And Bill did!

Passing along the rows of standing schoolboys Bill laid on the quirt, hard and heavy.

Every fellow in the bunch got it, and roared.

Bill paused when he came to Dick Carr.

"You was in this here rookus, too, you tenderfoot?" he asked. "I sure reckon I spotted you out of your place."

"Yes, rather, I was in it!" answered Dick promptly. He was not keen on getting the quirt by any means, but neither was he keen on faring better than the rest of the bunch. And he had been in it, though unwillingly.

And Bill gave him his full share.

By the time Bill Sampson was through, it was a wriggling, gasping, worried bunch that stood at the desks—repentant of that wild rag on Small Brown.

Even Bill, hefty as he was, was a little breathless when he had finished handling the quirt.

"Now, get to it!" he said. "Mister Brown, I kinder reckon this here class won't give you no more trouble."

Bill was right there! All desire to give trouble had, for the time, at least, been taken out of the Packsaddle bunch.

They wriggled on the benches as Small Brown resumed instruction. From Steve, swinging helplessly on the turning rope, came a savage howl:

"You, Bill Sampson, you let up on a guy! You sure ain't leaving me strung up this-a-way, you galoot?"

"Guess again!" answered Bill coolly. "You're fixed up like you fixed up Mister Brown, and I guess you stay fixed! Yep!"

"I'm telling you—" yelled Carson.

"Aw! Pack it up! You spill any more, and you sure get some more quirt!" snorted Bill. "You stay there, Steve Carson, and I guess you better do some thinking! You ain't running this here school, not by a whole lot, you ain't! You want to chew on that, doggone your hide."

"I'll get you for this! I'll—" Crack! rang the quirt round Steve's legs. He yelled frantically.

"Spilling any more?" roared Bill.

Steve did not spill any more.

Class went on at Packsaddle—Small Brown grinning, the bunch wriggling, and Steve rotating on the end of the rope slung to the roof-beam. And never had a class at Packsaddle been so orderly. Bill walked out, leaving Small Brown to carry on—but there was not a whisper when he was gone! Bill was the man to handle the bunch, if no other man could!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

Not till Tin Tung clanged the bell for the end of class was Steve released from the rope.

He staggered out of the school-room, his face black with fury. In the playground he gave Bill a bitter and furious look. Bill did not heed it; but many of the bunch noticed it, and they were not surprised when Steve led his horse out of the corral, mounted, and rode down the school trail to Packsaddle town, and they wondered whether he would be able to make his words good, and whether Two-Gun Carson, the gunman of Santanta County, would come a-shooting.

Big Steve on the Warpath.

DICK CARR glanced at Big Steve several times in class that afternoon.

It was a quiet class—amazingly quiet for Packsaddle. The bunch had not forgotten the lesson of the morning.

Small Brown very nearly had them feeding from his hand, as Bill had promised.

Dick and other fellows noted that Steve seemed to be in a state of expectation.

Many times he lifted his head to listen when there was a sound of hoof-beats from a distance.

But as the afternoon wore on Steve's brow grew blacker, and it was clear that he was disappointed.

All the fellows knew what he was expecting—the arrival of Two-Gun Carson to talk to Bill. But Two-Gun Carson did not seem to be in a hurry to hit Packsaddle School.

Slick Poindexter winked at Mick Kavanagh.

"I guess Old Man Carson knows the place that's good for his health," Slick whispered—"and he knows that it ain't named Packsaddle School."

At which some of the bunch chuckled.

Steve caught the words in the unaccustomed silence of the school-room and glared round savagely at Slick.

"You watch out!" he snarled. "I guess I've put my popper wise, and he allows he's coming up to talk to Bill."

"He sure ain't burning the wind, nohow!" said Slick.

"He's sitting in a poker game this afternoon with some rancher guys from White Pine!" snarled Steve. "I guess he ain't got away yet. But you'll sure see him along."

"No more whispering in class!" Small Brown yapped. "Carson, you were talking in class."

"Aw, go and chop chips, you Brown!" snarled Steve.

Rap!

Greatly daring Small Brown rapped Steve's knuckles with a pointer.

"Wake snakes!" murmured Poker Parker.

Big Steve leaped up in his place. From Bill he had to take his medicine; taking it from Small Brown was another matter.

The class were using geography books. Steve's book was in his hand. He hurled it direct at Small Brown's head.

Bang!

"Wow!" yelled Small Brown, as he went over backward.

There was a snigger from the bunch. Small Brown had banked on the lesson Bill had handed out that morning. But it was clear that the bully of Packsaddle was not quite tamed yet. Small Brown realised that as he sat down on the pine planks with a heavy bump.

Bill Sampson glared in from the porch.

"Say!" he roared. "You shouting for more, you Carson?"

"You figure I'm letting that little pie-faced gopher crack my knuckles?" yelled Steve.

Bill did not answer that question; he strode in, gripped Steve, and swung him off the bench.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The quirt got busy round Steve's riding breeches. Small Brown picked himself up, set his horn-rimmed spectacles straight; and blinked.

"Now you sit down you Carson!" roared Bill.

Steve dropped into his place, panting.

"You, Mr. Brown!"

"Sir!" gasped Small Brown.

"Take that pointer and rap that young guy's knuckles good and hard!" roared Bill.

Steve clenched his hands convulsively. Small Brown picked up the pointer and stepped to him.

"I tell you I ain't standing for it, Bill Sampson!" panted Steve. "I'm telling you—"

"Don't spill any more! Put your paws on that desk!"

Steve put his hands behind him.

Bill's eyes glittered, and he gripped the quirt hard. Steve's hands came from behind him and were laid on the desk.

Rap, rap, rap, rap!

Small Brown rapped good and hard, as the cowpuncher schoolmaster bade him. Steve sat it out, silent, breathing rage, the bunch looking on breathlessly. Bill's quirt was ready, but it was not needed. The gunman's son took the knuckle-rapping like a lamb.

"Chew on that!" snorted Bill, and he tramped out of the school-room again, his quirt under his arm.

There was no hint of trouble in the school-room after that. Bill was at hand, and nobody in the bunch wanted to bring Bill horning in again. Small Brown wielded unaccustomed authority that afternoon.

Steve sucked his knuckles, breathed fury, and listened hopefully for the sound of a horseman riding up to the school gate.

But no rider came.

Two-Gun Carson, who ran the game of poker as a business, was perhaps kept away on that account. If he was getting the dust off a crowd of ranchers from White Pine he was not likely to interrupt that profitable transaction to come up to the school. Anyhow, if he was coming he was leaving it late.

But most of the bunch figured that Steve had been talking hot air, and that his popper would think twice or three times before he came up to Packsaddle School gunning after Bill.

When class was dismissed by Small Brown, perhaps Steve had come round to the same opinion, for his scowl was blacker than ever. Several times he went down to the gate and stared along the trail to the cow town.

But there was no sign of a horseman riding up.

Either the poker game was keeping Two-Gun, or else he had thought better of it and was not coming a-gunning.

When Tin Tung served out supper in the chuckhouse, and the sun sank westward behind Squaw Mountain, nobody expected to see Two-Gun Carson arrive at Packsaddle—and there were a good many grinning faces round the long trestle table, contrasting with Steve's, which was black with bitterness.

After chuck he went out into the playground with his friends Poker Parker and Slim Dixon. They eyed him rather uneasily in the thickening dusk.

"Say, what's the game Steve?" asked Poker. "Your popper won't be coming now, I reckon."

"I reckon not!" snarled Steve. "But I'm sure getting Bill myself!"

"Aw, forget it!" muttered Slim. "Ain't you cinched enough of Bill's quirt for one day, you geek?"

"I guess Bill's going to cinch the next!" said Steve, between his teeth. "He's in his room now; you can see the light from his window. I'm getting on the roof over the window with my lasso." He lowered his voice. "One of you guys will heave a rock at the winder, and when Bill puts his head out

quences. After he had lambasted Bill he was going to mount his horse and ride down to Packsaddle town. Two-Gun Carson would see him through. He banked on that.

Taking his coiled lasso over his arm, Big Steve crept away through the shadows to the side of the schoolhouse, where he clambered up.

The roof slanted, but over the windows was a parapet that ran the length of the building.

Sitting on that parapet, Steve had Bill's window directly below him. He prepared his rope for a cast.

If Bill put his head out of that window

The Wrong Man!

"EVENIN' Mr. Carson!" said Bill Sampson politely. "Evenin'!" said Two-Gun,

with a sarcastic sneer.

Bill was sitting in his big office, as he called it. The lamp stood on the table, and near it lay a big Colt.

It looked as if Bill figured that a Colt might come in useful, and had one handy that evening.

The Packsaddle bunch were at chuck when Two-Gun Carson walked in. He had left his horse at the gate and walked into the schoolhouse porch and into the house as if it belonged to him. Bill's door on the hallway stood wide open, and Two-Gun stepped in—to be greeted with politeness by the cow town schoolmaster.

Two-Gun Carson was a slim, agile



"Carry me home to die!" exclaimed Bill Sampson, as he entered the school-room. "I'll sure—" He broke off with a yell as Small Brown, swinging back from Carson's powerful push, crashed on him as he came, knocking him headlong. "Yarough!" roared Bill.

to see what's the matter I get him with my rope."

"You doggoned, locoed gink!" gasped Slim. "Bill'd take the skin off'n us! I guess we ain't sitting in no such game!"

"Count me out, Steve!" said Poker promptly.

"I'm telling you—" hissed Steve.

"Aw, can it!" said Poker and Slim together, and they cut the matter short by walking back into the lighted chuckhouse.

The bully of Packsaddle ground his teeth. With rage and vengeance running riot in his breast, he had fully made up his mind.

Bill had strung him up in the school-room and quirted him. He had thought out his plan of vengeance. Bill was going to be strung up and quirted in his turn! It was a wild and reckless scheme, but Big Steve was in the mood for it.

It was easy enough if all went well; it was only the consequences that mattered. Steve was reckless of the conse-

quences. Steve had him! And he was going to be made to put his head out.

The window-shutters were wide open. There were no sashes or glass to the window, or to any at Packsaddle.

By leaning over, Steve could have tossed a stone in, and that, he figured, was quite enough to make Bill put his head out to see what was going on.

But as he looked down over the wooden parapet, taking his bearings, the lamplight at the window was darkened by a shadow. A stetson hat came out into view—and Steve's eyes glittered.

For what reason Bill was looking out he did not know, and did not care. He only knew that that was just what he wanted and he whizzed his riata down and roped in the head and shoulders in the twinkling of an eye.

Throwing himself back on the roof, he dragged at the rope, putting his whole weight and strength on the pull.

man, handsome in a dark and rather sinister way. He packed two guns, whence his name in Packsaddle. His eyes, narrow and keen, looked like slits of ice. His profession was that of a "sport," or gambler—he lived on the game of poker, and lived well.

That peculiar profession was not thought of highly in the cow country—but Two-Gun was treated with a good deal of respect. A man who packed two guns, and was remarkably swift and skilful in the use of them, had to be respected.

He stepped towards Bill's table with the soft, cat-like tread of the gunman. He did not remove his hat—they did not stand on ceremony at Packsaddle. Bill's own big stetson was on his head as he sat at his table.

Bill nodded cheerfully and good-humouredly. The revolver lying ready on the table looked as if he expected trouble, but his face expressed nothing.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

of the sort. His hands were in the pockets of his leather crackers, and he did not withdraw them.

"I guess I've moseyed in to talk to you about Son Steve, Bill Sampson!" said the gunman in his quiet voice.

"Spill it, old-timer!" said Bill affably.

"Steve allows that you strung him on a riata in the school-room—"

"Like he did my teacher!" said Bill.

"That cuts no ice with me!" said Two-Gun. "I'm here to tell you, Bill Sampson, that I don't stand for it! You get me?"

"I sure get you!" assented Bill. "And now you get me! I guess I'm running this here school! I don't take no back-chat from any guy in the bunch! I handle that bunch, without asking advice from any galoot in Texas! You ain't to talk turkey, and you can squat down and talk till you get a crick in the neck! You shoot any lip this-a-way, and I'll sure heave you up in Bill's windy quick it will make your head swim! You got that?"

Two-Gun's right hand made a stealthy movement. Bill stirred in his seat.

"Don't!" said Two-Gun Carson coldly. "Keep your paws in your pockets where they are, Bill! I guess if you reach for that gun I'll fill you full of lead afore you handle it!"

"You reckon?" yawned Bill.

"I'll say so!" sneered the gunman. It looked like it. Two-Gun's hand was close to his Colt. If it came to gunning, he could have drawn and fired long before the cow town schoolmaster could have grasped the revolver that lay on the table near the lamp.

"You figure yourself a big noise in Packsaddle, Bill Sampson!" went on Two-Gun. "I guess I don't give a continental red cent for that! You ain't quirting Son Steve any more! Got that? I allow I don't stand for it! I'm telling you—"

"Pack it up!" said Bill. "I guess no poker sharp is cavorting around this school, bulldozing Bill Sampson! Nunk! You've spilled enough, Mr. Carson! You're going out of that window on your neck!"

Bill's right hand flashed from his pocket. Carson's hand whipped to his gun.

But he did not pull it.

Bill did not reach for the Colt that lay on the table. There was a gun in the hand that came out of his pocket. He had been grasping it there all the time!

The gun looked the "bad man" of Santaunta County full in the face. Bill grinned over it.

"Stick 'em up!" said Bill casually.

Two-Gun Carson panted with rage. He did not dare to touch his gun. And casually as Bill spoke, the gleam in his eyes over his levelled revolver was warning enough. Two-Gun's hands went up over his head.

"I guess that's hoss-sense!" said Bill, with a nod of approval. "Why, you ornery, card-sharpping, pesky son of a lobo-wolf, I guess I was stringing you along all the time! Soon's I saw you humping in, you pie-faced clam, I had you fixed! I'll say I put that Colt on the table jest to amuse you! You figure I'd give you the pull on me! Forget it!"

The gunman's face worked with fury. "Keep 'em up!" said Bill, heaving his great bulk out of his seat. "I guess if you try any gun-game on me, Two-Gun Carson, you figure that Son

Gun, you get yours so sudden you won't know what landed you on the other side of Jordan! allowed 'ou was going out of that window on your neck, and I'll say that's what's coming to you, and coming quick! You won't want your hardware, old-timer!"

Keeping the gambler covered, Bill stepped round the table, and with his left hand jerked away the two guns.

He threw them carelessly under the table.

"I'll sure get you for this, Bill Sampson!" muttered the gunman, his voice thick with rage. "I'll sure—"

"I'll say I've had that from Son Steve, and it didn't cut a lot of ice!" drawled Bill. "Pack it up! You'll want your breath to yap when you go out of that window!"

Bill holstered his gun now that the gunman was disarmed. His powerful grasp descended on Two-Gun Carson.

The gunman was no weakling. He was strong and active. But he crumpled up in Bill's hefty grasp.

Struggling, he was swung round the table. With a grasp on the back of his collar, and the back of his belt, Bill Sampson heaved him into the window.

Two-Gun sprawled out across the wooden sill.

Bill grasped his ankles, to tilt him headlong out. With a heave, he sent him hurtling.

The next moment Bill gave a roar of surprise.

Two-Gun, hurtling out of the window, should naturally have crashed to the ground below. Instead of which he jerked into the air, as if plucked by an invisible hand above!

"Great gophers!" roared Bill.

He stared blankly, his eyes almost popping from his bearded face. A choked howl came from Two-Gun Carson. No more than Bill did he realise, for the moment, what had happened.

"What the thunder—" yelled Bill.

He put his head out of the window, staring amazedly. Then he saw. From the roof above a rope ran. The loop of the lasso was over Two-Gun's head and arms. It had tightened round him, dragging him up as the rope was dragged from above.

His feet barely touched the ground. He struggled wildly in the grip of the taut rope. But he struggled in vain. With his weight on the rope, there was no possibility of loosening the gripping noose.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Bill.

Horrible gasps and gurgles came from Two-Gun Carson. He writhed in the rope.

Bill stared up. Over the wooden parapet above, a face appeared staring down. Steve Carson's eyes blazing with excitement and revenge.

"I guess I've got you, Bill!" he yelled. "I've cinched you sure, you ornery old bulldozer, and you get the quirt."

Steve had knotted the end of the lasso to the chimney-stack. His prisoner was secure.

He scrambled over the parapet and dropped. There was a quirt in his hand.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill Sampson. "Carry me home to die! I guess this beats the whole deck, and then some! Haw, haw, haw!"

Steve spun round and stared at him, framed in the lighted window.

Till that moment he had not begun to doubt that it was Bill whom he had roped in.

His jaw dropped.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill. "Say, Two-Gun, you figure that Son

Steve don't want some quirting! Haw, haw, haw!"

"What!" gasped Big Steve.

"Who—"

"You was laying for me, you young gink!" roared Bill. "I guess you roped in your popper! Say, Two-Gun, if you allow that young Steve don't want any quirting, I'll say that I'll leave it to you."

He reached out with his knife, and cut through the rope. Two-Gun Carson came to the earth with a bump. Big Steve stared at him, transfixed, as he wrenched himself out of the noose. Bill Sampson, roaring with laughter, slammed the window shutters.

"Steve—"

"What—"

"Thunder—what—"

Loud and startled exclamations came from the Packsaddle bunch. They were heading for the bunkhouse after chuck, when Steve Carson came speeding across the playground.

After him came a running figure, with cracking quirt.

For a moment the bunch supposed that it was Bill. But it was not so big as Bill! It was Two-Gun Carson.

Having been at chuck when the gunman hit the school, the bunch had not known that he was there. Now they knew—and they stared almost in stupefaction. If Two-Gun moseyed in, they had reckoned he would be gunning after Bill. But he did not seem to be thinking of Bill! Quirt in hand, he chased Big Steve, and Big Steve ran and dodged and yelled and roared, as the enraged gunman handed out lick after lick with the quirt.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Dick Carr, in amazement.

"What the thunder—" gasped Slick Poindexter.

"He's sure got his mad up!" gasped Poker Parker.

"You said it!" grinned Mick Kavanagh.

Wild and frantic yells came from Big Steve as he stumbled and fell, and Two-Gun stood over him, lashing with the quirt. The bunch stared on, amazed. Bill Sampson came striding from the house, and he grasped the gunman, and jerked him back. Two-Gun panted.

"Can it, you geek!" he yelled. "I'm telling you you don't quirt him enough—I guess—"

"Quit guessing, old-timer, and beat it," said Bill, and he jerked the gunman away, and walked him to the gate, where his horse was hitched. "Say, it's you for the tail, and pronto."

He pitched Two-Gun on his horse, and gave the animal a smack. The gunman went clattering down the trail, and Bill, with a grin, slammed the gate. Dick Carr, Slick, and Mick picked up Big Steve, and helped him to his bunk in the bunkhouse.

He was gasping and groaning there, when Bill looked in.

"Say, you Carson, I reckon I ought to quirt you a few!" said Bill. "But I'll say that your popper has sure given you enough, and then some! He sure did not like being roped in and strung up, not a whole lot! Nunk! You figuring on asking him to call agin, and talk to your schoolmaster?"

Steve's only answer was a groan. Evidently he was not figuring on that. Nobody wanted to see Two-Gun Carson at the school again—and Steve least of all!

(Next Wednesday: "THE THIEF OF PACKSADDLE!"—another gripping yarn of the adventures of the cow town schoolboys.)

THERE ARE THRILLS GALORE IN THESE GREAT CHAPTERS OF—

The SECRET WORLD!



As Nelson Lee, bearing the rescued Prince Oswy, and Lord Dorrmore galloped towards the Gothland troops, they hurled the "grenades" before them. Bang! Crash! Bang! Unfamiliar with such explosions, the native horses promptly stampeded!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A Shock for Kassker!

NORTHESTRIA, an unknown medieval world hidden in the Arctic by a surrounding barrier of volcanoes, which supply the eternal light and heat of the land, is on the verge of war with Gothland, an enemy country separated from North-estria by a huge lake.

It is in this strange world that Lord Dorrmore, Nelson Lee, and a crowd of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls are stranded when the Titan, their airship, crashes. The North-estrians, suspicious of the newcomers, make them prisoners, and to prove whether they are friends or not, a party of sixteen is sent into Gothland to rescue Prince Oswy, the young brother of Princess Mercia, the girl ruler.

The raiders cross the lake in a speed-boat obtained from the Titan, and they get a surprise when they are welcomed to Gothland by soldiers of Kassker the Grim, the ruler. The rescue party are taken to Hunric Castle, there to discover that they are trapped. An executioner and chopping-block are ready for the beheading of the daring raiders.

"Ho!" roared Kassker. "Seize thou this young fool!" he went on, indicating

Willy Handforth. "It seemeth he wears the uniform of Mercia's bodyguard. 'Tis well! Let him be the first to suffer this death."

Willy didn't turn a hair. "Go ahead!" he said curtly. "Just try it on!"

But the other juniors were looking at the scene with grave apprehension. Their hearts were beating furiously. There was something terrible in Kassker's swift, drastic methods. There were no inquiries—there was no trial—there was nothing except the executioner and the axe!

"Hold! Hold!" commanded Lee. "Order thy men to retreat, Kassker. I give thee warning! Lay no hands upon us, or it will go ill with you."

The Gothlander glared.

"And who art thou to threaten?" he sneered. "Out upon thee, fool! Dost think thy words carry weight? Soldiers surround all of ye! The axe awaits thy necks! Thou hast a nerve to bid me hold!"

"You will be wise to abandon this murderous project, Kassker," said Nelson Lee quietly. "We came here for the purpose of demanding the person of Prince Oswy of Northestria. Hand him to us, and we will go in peace."

Kassker stared in amazement, and then turned to Attawulf the Terrible.

"Didst hear?" he ejaculated. "This

fool would try to bargain with me! And he and his rabble are in my power, to treat as I wish. By my bones! Not one shall suffer the swift death of the axe! All will go to the torture!"

"Thou art wise, my lord," agreed Attawulf viciously.

"Ay, we will have some merry entertainment," agreed Kassker, nodding. "Since these carrion hold themselves capable of bargaining, I will show them my power."

"Perhaps we shall show you ours," said Lee briefly.

"And what powers hast thou, rat?" asked Kassker contemptuously.

"Many, boastful Kassker!" replied Lee, with equal contempt. "If it so pleased me, I could kill you as you now stand. Your armour would avail you naught. Did you think we came here blindly, like so many animals going to the slaughter?"

Kassker's eyes narrowed.

"Away with them!" he thundered. "Nay, let us see one execution first! It pleaseth me to see the axe descend. Take this young boy."

Two men seized Willy, and dragged him away. Edward Oswald Handforth gave a thick shout of alarm, but before he could take any action, Nelson Lee decided that the time had come for a little demonstration.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

Crack!

Lee had pulled the trigger of his automatic pistol. The bullet ripped a hole clean through Kassker's armour, and the overlord of the Gothlanders gave a wild scream of agony.

For about three seconds there was a tense silence.

Kassker the Grim was staring at his right arm—staring at it with wide, startled eyes. And on all sides the other Gothlanders were looking frightened and uneasy. Many were getting their weapons ready. Lances were being raised, and swords were being drawn. The air was electrical with impending strife.

"By my marrow and bones!" snarled Kassker. "What is this? A wound! My armour pierced as though it were matting!"

They stared at Nelson Lee with sudden fear. Kassker's wound was slight—a furrow of the forearm, exactly as Lee had intended.

"Hold!" shouted Nelson Lee, swinging round, and addressing his words to all. "Thou hast seen my power! If any man dares to disobey my orders, Kassker will die. I have but to act, and he will fall, a corpse."

The soldiers murmured with frightened amazement.

"Fool!" thundered Kassker. "Think-est thou to frighten my swordsmen with thy lies? 'Twas a trick—"

"And I have another trick," interrupted Lee. "You will die, Kassker, if any of your men move a single step. Order them to remain as they stand—motionless. If anyone dares to raise a hand, or to attempt to use a weapon, you will fall dead."

There was such a world of intensity in Nelson Lee's tone that even Kassker was taken aback.

"See!" shouted Lee, seizing an unexpected opportunity.

For at that very moment a large, sluggish bird had perched itself on one of the high walls of the courtyard. It flew off at that very second, and Lee gave a slight nod to Lord Dorrmore. Dorrie understood.

Crack!

To a hunter of his lordship's type, such a target was ridiculously easy. His shot sped true, and the bird, half-way across the open space, suddenly fluttered in its flight, and then fell with a thud upon the stones, and gave one or two convulsive twists. It was stone dead.

"By my faith!" breathed Attawulf the Terrible.

His face had gone yellowish—a pale, ugly colour. His eyes were filled with terror. And Kassker the Grim was hardly in better condition. All the soldiers were standing like men of stone. They had heard Lee's words—they had seen this bird mysteriously killed—and they were apprehensive lest Kassker himself should fall next.

"Did you imagine that we should come here unprepared?" demanded Lee curtly. "We are not mad enough to trust you, Kassker. You will die just as that bird died, if I so please." He whirled round and addressed the soldiers. "Every man will remove his armour," he continued curtly. "Let there be no delay!"

Kassker gave a curious gurgle.

"Obey!" he croaked. "Strip your armour, accursed knaves."

The overlord of the Gothlanders was nothing but a craven wretch now. His arrogance had gone—his bullying tone was a thing of the past. He had seen two examples of what these strangers could do. And he knew—the conviction

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was strongly upon him—that death would come to him if any of his men made the slightest effort to disobey.

And Lee was not bluffing! If any of those juniors had stood in danger of being beheaded at Kassker's orders, Lee would have shot the man with less pity than he would have shot a rattlesnake.

The only way now was to take the bull by the horns, and to beat Kassker the Grim at his own game. Afterwards, such a chance might not occur—for the Gothlanders would be accustomed to these modern methods of death-dealing. But now, all the advantage was with the invaders.

"The armour!" shouted Lord Dorrmore. "Off with it!"

The soldiers needed no urging. Kassker's order had been enough. For these men knew, from long experience in the Gothland army, that the slightest act of disobedience meant instant death.

"I am sick at heart, N'Kose!" muttered Umlosi miserably. "There is no fight—there is no use for my trusty spear! What manner of battle is this? Wau! Thou hast brought me to a mare's nest, my father!"

"Sorry, old lad, but we can't have everything in this life," grinned his lordship, who was just beginning to enjoy himself. "But you never know your luck. There might be plenty of scrappin' soon."

"What's the gov'nor up to?" muttered Nipper curiously.

Nobody could quite understand why Nelson Lee had ordered the soldiers to remove their armour. But by this time all had obeyed. And the men lost their impressive appearance—they stood out as uncouth ruffians.

"You all have rope!" said Lee briskly. "Use it!"

"Bind up these men, sir?" yelled Handforth.

"Yes—and swiftly!"

"Hurrah!"

During the trip over the lake, Nelson Lee had provided every member of the party with a length of rope, and this had been worn round the waist. Lee was not certain that the rope would be of any use—but the wisdom of bringing it was now obvious. Rope is very handy stuff when one is engaged on a reckless mission of this type.

In less than three minutes the work was half over. All the members of the raiding party worked with a will. The helpless soldiers were bound hand and foot—and bound so securely that there was no possibility of them getting free.

Attawulf was treated in exactly the same fashion as the others. Kassker received the attention of Nelson Lee, and it was Lee who secured the overlord's special armour, which was of a totally different type from any of the other. It was gleaming and blatantly ornamental.

"Now!" ordered Lee. "Get into this armour as quickly as you can!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah!"

"We've got the idea, sir."

"By George!" yelled Handforth.

"We'll show these giddy Goths!"

"Northeastria for us!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was no light job, getting into that armour, but there was little fear of being attacked now—for every man within that courtyard, hidden from all outside eyes, was a roped-up prisoner. The tables had been completely turned. Even Kassker himself was bound as tightly as any of his men.

And soon the twelve visitors were looking very different.

They had donned the armour of their hosts, and the disguise proved to be completely effective. For all the helmets were provided with visors, and when these were pulled down every face was completely hidden.

"What's to be done now, sir?" asked Handforth. "I'll tell you what. I've got some pocket scissors here. Why not cut off old Kassker's beard?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a somewhat high-pitched laugh from the juniors, but even Handforth was surprised when Nelson Lee nodded.

"An excellent suggestion, Handforth," he said. "Yes, and we'll do it! A trophy to lay at the feet of the Princess Mercia. Kassker's famous beard! I'll warrant there can be no other beard like it in the whole of Gothland."

"By glory!" grinned Dorrie. "You're right! And what a trophy! Proof that we've clipped the beggar's wings—eh?"

"I have another reason for this action," said Lee, as he took Handforth's scissors. "But there is no time to talk now. Kassker, I must ask you to hold quite still, or these scissors might cut something more than your beard."

"Thou reptile!" hissed Kassker, as his beard was neatly snipped off—that beard which was his proudest possession. "A plague upon thee, thou rat! A terrible revenge will I have for this deed!"

Nelson Lee took no notice.

"By all the saints, I swear that I will invade Northeastria forthwith!" snarled Kassker the Grim. "I'll be an invasion of revenge! Tell the Princess Mercia that her towns will be burned, her people put to the torture, her country destroyed from end to end!"

A Desperate Venture!

THESE was something utterly deadly in Kassker's tones.

He meant every word that he said—and Nelson Lee, although he triumphed at the moment, was full of grave doubts for the immediate future. Kassker the Grim was in a position to invade Northeastria—and Princess Mercia was utterly helpless, for her own armies were unprepared.

But this was not the moment to think ahead.

The immediate peril was quite sufficient. Nelson Lee pocketed most of Kassker's enormous beard. But one or two wisps of that bluey-black hair he tucked into his helmet. The wisps looked natural enough, and they added to the impression that the living man within this famous armour was Kassker himself.

"Two must remain on guard here," said Nelson Lee briskly. "You, Browne, and one other—let it be young Willy, for his ears are extra keen. Stay here, and guard these prisoners. But at the slightest sign of real danger, bolt—and make all speed to the waiting boat."

"And you, sir?" asked Browne.

"The rest of us go to Gunmaro Fortress," replied Lee. "We have an opportunity to effect Prince Oswy's rescue, and we must seize it. Somehow, I have a feeling that luck will be with us. Come! Let us go at once!"

"Hurrah!"

While Browne and Willy remained on guard, Lee flung open the enormous doors, and swung through, clattering noisily in his armour. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction behind the

helmet as he noted that the only soldiers in sight were some considerable distance away, near the great grille which had descended to protect the drawbridge. The doings within that hidden courtyard were unknown to all outside.

"Horses!" thundered Lee. "Knaves—fools! Death to the man who is responsible for this delay! Horses! Bestir yourselves, ye slugs!"

"Good gad!" muttered Lord Dorrimore.

That voice, coming from behind Lee's visor, was so like the voice of Kassker the Grim, that Dorrie could scarcely believe his ears.

But now he saw the cleverness of Lee's dodge.

The soldiers outside were so flustered by the harsh command that they had no time to examine the armoured knights. Horses were brought with frantic speed, and the ten adventurers mounted them, and prepared to depart.

"The drawbridge!" raved Lee. "Up with the gate, accursed blunderers!"

The grille was raised by frightened serfs, and a minute later the ten daring raiders thundered out over the drawbridge. And then they set off inland—with only Nelson Lee's sense of direction to guide them.

He knew where the village of Vertilla lay, and from this, and from the woods, he was equally certain that he was making in the direction of the fortress. Once there, much would depend upon the swiftness of action.

Indeed, unless the whole thing went forward without a hitch, there might be a very tragic end to this exploit. The lives of the entire party depended upon this mission being carried out in one wild dash.

And the thrill of it was exhilarating—the excitement had got into their blood. This trip into Gothland was proving a hundredfold more breathless than any of them had ever dreamed possible.

On—on!

They galloped their horses hard, and the ground was covered rapidly. Thundering over the turf, they pressed on towards their goal.

"Good man!" exclaimed Dorrie thickly, through his helmet. "The fortress!"

"Yes!" said Lee. "The Fortress of Gunmarc, without a doubt!"

"Now for the final test!" breathed Handforth.

With a great clatter of armour they pulled up their steeds in front of the forbidding-looking building. It was not surrounded by a moat, but the walls were of a great height, and the only gateway was guarded by soldiers.

"Make way there, scullions!" thundered Nelson Lee. "Make way for thy overlord, Kassker the Grim."

Without lessening his speed in the slightest degree, he went charging forward, and the others followed in a body. And the soldiers, thoroughly scared by this abrupt surprise, scuttled out of the way like rabbits.

Never for a moment did they doubt that this figure in the gleaming armour was that of Kassker the Grim. They knew his arrogant methods, but this exploit rather surprised them. Even Kassker was not accustomed to behave with such madness.

At the actual door of the fortress, Lee flung himself from his horse. Dorrie and Umlosi did the same. And Lee turned to the rest.

"Remain mounted!" he shouted. "I will return apace!"

With his sword he hammered wildly upon the great door. It was opened almost at once, and two or three

startled-looking men stood there. They were not soldiers in uniform, but keepers, apparently.

"Why this delay?" snarled Lee. "Thou carrion—"

"We knew not of thy coming, my lord!" quavered one of the men.

"Then thou knowest now!" shouted Lee. "What of the brat? What of Prince Oswy? Is the young reptile still living?"

"He's within, my lord, in the dungeon, as thou didst order—"

"Then fetch the cur forthwith!" commanded Lee. "Bring him hither, fools! 'Tis my desire that he should be put to the torture! Make thee haste, or thou wilt suffer the torture, too! I am in no mood for dalliance!"

The keepers scurried away in a fever of anxiety. And Lee stamped into the stone-paved hall, followed by Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi. This was almost too good to be true.

Success had crowned their efforts, so far, and the rescue of Prince Oswy was almost an accomplished fact. But it had only been made possible by these daring, dashing actions.

Would the luck last?

"Come thou, sluggards!" roared Lee. "Thinkest thou I can stay thy pleasure? Bring the young prince— Ah, 'tis well!" he added curtly.

But he had caught his breath in. The keepers had returned, and between them they were leading the frail figure of a young boy. His age was not more than eleven or twelve, but he looked even younger, by reason of his small stature and his delicate state of health. He was quailing with fear, for he probably had every reason to guess what ghastly fate awaited him.

"Give the boy to me!" rasped Lee harshly.

He half-expected to hear Prince Oswy cry aloud, but this did not happen. The youngster just looked at him, but made no sound. He was apparently past visible fear.

In another minute Lee was on his horse again, and Prince Oswy was

sitting astride, immediately in front of him.

"Away!" shouted Lee.

And away they all galloped. Out through the great gates—and so on to the road again. Prince Oswy was with them. Through sheer nerve they had accomplished the rescue.

The Escape!

NELSON LEE bent over the young prince as they galloped.

"Fear naught!" he said soothingly. "I am not Kassker, as you have been thinking. I come from Northestria—to restore you to your home."

Prince Oswy turned a frightened face half round.

"Thou art befooling me!" he shouted bitterly.

"Nay, 'tis true!" insisted Lee. "See!" He raised his visor, and the young prince looked upon a face that he had never expected to see—a face that certainly belonged to no Gothlander. And for the first time the unhappy boy flushed with excitement.

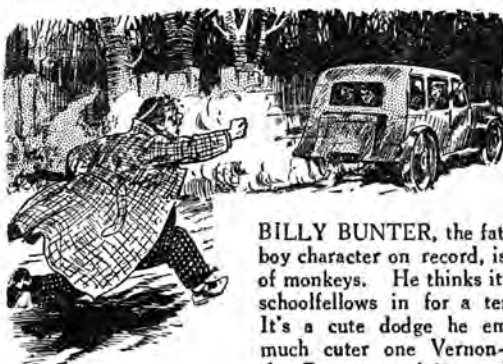
But before he could make any further remark a shout went up. Two horsemen in armour were dashing towards them at the gallop. And as they came closer it could be seen that the armour of one was so big that it was only worn with difficulty.

"Browne and Willy!" roared Nipper. And so it proved. They came up, but did not rein in their horses. Instead, they swung round and galloped with the rest.

"We only just got away in time!" shouted Browne. "On, brothers! An army is on its way to cut us off! They have discovered our little game, and unless we're quick we shall be fairly splashing in the oxtail!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Willy. "They've got the prince!"

This was no time or place to ask questions. It was a matter of seconds now. Kassker's armies had got wind of the affair, and Browne and Willy had only just escaped in time. Perhaps it would



**FRANK
RICHARDS**
to the fore!

BILLY BUNTER, the fattest and funniest school-boy character on record, is as artful as a wagonload of monkeys. He thinks it no end funny to let his schoolfellows in for a ten-mile walk in the rain. It's a cute dodge he employs, too. But it's a much cuter one Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Remove, springs on Bunter, with what result you'll learn in

"HONOURS EVEN!"

By Frank Richards

—a tip-top tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the world-famous chums of Greyfriars, in to-day's issue of

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be impossible to reach the shore of the lake.

For Kassker was now free again, and if he had any wits he would send his men to that spot on the lake where the motor-boat was hovering. It seemed that it was a question of touch and go.

And as the armour was now no longer necessary, many of the galloping riders shed their helmets and breastplates as they thundered on. It was not well to be encumbered at a time like this.

"There they are!"

"By George! Hundreds of the beggars!"

"Keep behind, boys!" shouted Lee.

"Now, Dorrie, be ready!"

"You bet!" said his lordship happily.

They were only a few hundred yards from the lake shore now, but there was only one way to reach it—through a little gully, where the hills rose up steeply on either side. And the entrance to this gully was swarming with mounted troops! There were scores of them.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore rose up without attempting to slacken speed. And as they galloped they hurled some small objects, which they had managed to wrench from their pockets. And immediately a number of blinding explosions occurred.

Bang! Crash! Bang!

The effect was staggering.

Those explosions were comparatively harmless, for they were caused by "grenades" made from signal rockets. Nelson Lee himself had manufactured them on the way across the lake.

The native horses were unfamiliar with such explosions, and a stampede took place.

"Follow me!" shouted Lee. "There's a chance!"

In every direction the Gothlanders were fleeing. Many of them were carried on by the panic-stricken plunging of their mounts. Over half the horses had bolted, utterly uncontrollable, and the rest were being spurred away from this spot by their awe-stricken riders.

"We're through!" yelled Handforth, in triumph.

"Hurrah!"

They were practically by the side of the lake, and only a few of the Gothlanders were visible. And out there lay the motor-boat, its crew of four watching and waiting.

They heard that rousing cheer, and acted instantly. The engine roared and the boat swept in towards the beach. Within three minutes the adventurous twelve were on board, and Prince Oswy was in their midst.

"Good gad!" shouted Archie. "Then you've got him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bravo!"

And with a united roar of defiance the juniors glared at the Gothlanders, who were now on the beach. A shower of arrows came hissing outwards, but most of them fell short. And the powerful motor-boat purred straight out upon the vast stretch of water, her bows turned towards Northestria.

And what a victorious return it was!

The city of Dunstane was stunned at first, and then went mad with joy. Within three hours of departure these amazing strangers had returned, and they had brought the beloved Prince Oswy with them!

"Hail to the brave rescuers!"

That was the cry which went up from hundreds and thousands of throats. Princess Mercia was almost overwhelmed, and even Ethelbert the Red was in danger of breaking down when he saw the young prince, safe and sound.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,414.

His antagonism had gone for ever. Every member of the adventure party was hailed as a hero.

But in the midst of all this joyous celebration there was a hint of warning. Kassker the Grim had sworn upon an invasion of revenge! And the shadow of that coming invasion was already beginning to spread over the fair face of peaceful Northestria!

The Heroes of the Hour!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE looked round despairingly.

"I hate to grumble, laddies, but there's something lacking!" he said, in a sad voice. "I mean to say, how can a chappie look his best when there's absolutely no dashed mirror in the place? I've a haunting feeling that the jolly old necktie is twisted, dash it!"

"That's nothing to worry about, Archie," grinned Reggie Pitt. "A necktie always looks better if it's just a bit careless."

The genial ass of the St. Frank's Remove gave a start.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "Then the old fear is absolutely justified? I mean to say, the Pride of the Glenthornes is little better than a tramp, as it were?"

"What's the trouble now, Archie?"

asked Nipper briskly, as he bustled by.

"Only five minutes left, you know—we're due at the levee in another ten. Can't keep the Court waiting, you know."

"We're all ready," said Tommy Watson.

"Absolutely not!" protested Archie Glenthorne, in alarm. "Ods tragedies and disasters! Five minutes, Nipper, old cheese? Imposs! I hate to say it, laddie, but the thing is absolutely out of the question!"

"That's a pity," said Pitt solemnly. "I suppose you know what happens to people who don't turn up on time?"

"Well, laddie, you see—"

"The chopper!" said Pitt.

"Eh?"

"The axe!"

"Oh, but dash it!" protested Archie.

"I mean—"

"These Northestrians are slow enough in most things, but when it comes to lopping off a fellow's head, they're wonderfully snappy," continued Reggie Pitt, with a sombre shake of his head.

"And a Royal command, after all, is a Royal command. You can't afford to ignore the Princess Mercia's regal summons, Archie."

The elegant Removite looked more distressed than ever.

"Absolutely not," he agreed. "An invitation from a lady is something to be respected. But what can a chappie do, I mean, when there aren't any mirrors about? And there's Phipps, too. Or, to be more exact, there isn't Phipps. Why didn't the blighter come on this trip, dash him?"

Archie's fears, of course, were quite groundless. He had an idea that he was unrepresentable—whereas, he was the most scrupulously attired of all the St. Frank's fellows. The lack of a mirror was a great handicap, but, on the whole, he had wrestled very successfully with the difficulty. From the top of his gleaming hair to the toes of his glittering shoes, he was immaculate.

For the occasion was an important one.

There was a great levee in the Royal Court, and honours were to be bestowed upon the brave strangers within the gates. The St. Frank's party, in

short, were about to receive recognition for their deeds of derring do.

There was a great bustle from without, a clanking of spurs, and a jingling of chainmail. The next moment a glittering figure appeared in the quaint old apartment of the Royal castle in which the juniors were preparing.

"Hallo!" said Pitt, glancing round.

"It's here!"

"What's here?" asked Jack Grey.

"Trouble!" sighed Pitt. "Look at it!"

The new arrival gave a snort.

"If you're referring to me, you West House rotter, it'll only take me two shakes to biff you on the nose!" he roared. "I'm the captain of the Royal Bodyguard, and you'd better not forget—"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Nipper, with a grin. "All that's over now."

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What's over?"

"Why, all that rot about your being captain of the bodyguard," replied the Remove skipper. "It may amuse you to kid yourself, but nobody else is deceived. In other words, old chap, your reign of power is over."

Edward Oswald Handforth drew himself up to his full height.

"I don't suppose you know it, Nipper, but you're a blithering far head!" he said witheringly. "I've got just as much power as ever I had! One word from me, and I can have you chaps thrown into the dungeons!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you'd better obey orders, too!" yelled Handforth. "The Court is sitting, and you're all wanted."

"Anybody might think we were prisoners at the Bar!" grinned Fullwood. "Sorry, Handy, but we can't come. We're not ready. Look at Archie, for example. Did you ever see such a wreck?"

Handforth gave Archie a cold look.

"The poor chap can't help it—he was born that way!" he said curtly. "His clothes are all right, but nothing can alter his face. That sloppy look is one of his misfortunes."

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye. "I mean, dash it, I say!" He inspected Handforth with cold disfavour. "Good gad! The jolly old kettle calling the frying-pan sooty, what? I mean, when it comes to a question of faces, dash you, what about yours?"

"What about it?" said Handforth aggressively.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "If it wasn't for your dashed eyes, and your frightful mouth, we wouldn't know it was a face at all. I mean to say, I've seen a few ghastly accidents in my time, but for a sheer catastrophe, let me gaze upon this rugged scene of horror!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you calling my face a scene of horror?" hooted Handforth.

"A catastrophe, laddie!" said Archie coldly. "A sordid disaster!"

"Why, you insulting fathead—"

"Peace, infants, peace!" interrupted Nipper soothingly. "Enough of this squabbling. It's quite bad enough for us to see your faces in the ordinary way, without being especially reminded of them."

The other juniors yelled, and Handforth's heated retort was drowned. Church and McClure managed to grasp him and pull him aside, to grasp him and pull him aside.

"Chuck it, Handy," murmured Church. "They're only pulling your leg."

"As captain of the bodyguard—"

"Leave it alone for a bit, old man," urged McClure. "You can fool these

Northestrians with that bluff, but our own chaps are different—"

"Bluff?" repeated Handforth, in a terrible voice.

"Well, I mean—"

"Are you telling me, Arnold McClure, that my position as captain of the body-guard is a joke?" demanded Handforth.

"Are you trying to hint—"

"I—I didn't mean bluff exactly," said McClure hastily. "But the chaps won't give you your due. They just look upon you as a Removite."

"The chaps have gone now, anyhow," grinned Church, looking round.

Handforth started and whirled about.

"By George!" he roared. "We came up here to hustle the fatheads down to the levee, and they've all gone! Come on! We shall be late!"

And the chums of Study D hustled out of the apartment, and went down the great stone staircase to the main hall of the castle.

Arriving, they beheld a scene of splendour which was amazingly reminiscent of the Middle Ages.

Lee the Lionheart!

THE Princess Mercia was radiant and happy. She looked over the great assembly with eyes that sparkled with quiet joy.

By her side sat Prince Oswy, her young brother of thirteen. He looked even younger, being a frail boy, with pale, thin cheeks and hollow eyes. No doubt his long imprisonment among the Gothlanders had lowered his vitality.

But that nightmare was over now, thanks to the St. Frank's rescue party.

And this levee was in honour of the prince's joyous release. It was a triumph for his daring rescuers, and it meant a lot to them.

Instead of being held prisoners, they were granted the freedom of the entire country. Indeed, Nelson Lee was invited to accept the position of commander-in-chief of the Northestrian army, and he was already known as Lee the Lionheart. The Moor View girls, instead of being serving-maids to the princess, were now ladies-in-waiting at the Court.

No honours were too great for these daring strangers.

And Ethelbert the Red, who had previously been so obstinate, was handsome in his acknowledgments of his mistake.

"'Twas her Majesty's desire that ye should all be welcomed as guests within our borders," said the chief adviser, as he addressed them all, amid a deep hush. "Make no mistake, good friends. Our fair Mercia knew ye at your true worth. 'Twas I who harboured unjustified suspicions."

"We bear you no grudge on that account, old man," smiled Lord Dorrimore.

"Thou art ever generous, Dorrimore the Brave," replied Ethelbert quietly. "And the same may be said of Lee the Lionheart. In my folly, I suspected ye all of treachery to Northestria. By my soul, I have been enlightened! 'Tis now my desire to make what amends I can. All of ye are acclaimed by our people, and no honours are too great. I faith, methinks 'twill be for the good of Northestria if ye do organise the defences of our beloved land."

A great shout went up from the assembly.

"Ay! Let Lee the Lionheart take command!"

Eastwood League.

WHEN BAGSHOT "SHOT THEIR BOLT" THE SAINTS OPENED UP!

By Wally D'Arcy.

Hallo, folk! Visiting St. Jim's, Cecil Pankley & Co., of Bagshot, shaped dangerously at the start, but by the finish they were out of shape. The long-legged Pankley trapped a centre which Kerr just missed intercepting, and banged the pill into the net before Wynn could wink an eye. From that point the game was ding-dong. Tom Merry slid through, pushing the ball in while lying on the ground—level. But Pankley, Putter and Poole swept up the field and Putter or Poole popped the pill home again—couldn't see which. Leading at half-time, Bagshot were crowing! However, the restart saw a "crack-up" in the Bag-shot defence, and only the heroic goal-keeping of Glibbey kept St. Jim's from adding ten. As it was, Blake netted the equaliser, Gussy put us ahead, and Tom Merry scored the 99th goal for St. Jim's this season. A perfect fury of shots descended on Glibbey in the last few minutes, but he gamely held the fort—so Saints will have to take the field again to get that 100th goal.

ST. FRANK'S SNATCH VICTORY WHEN DEFEAT SEEMED CERTAIN.

St. Frank's, playing at home, received an early setback in their game against Highcliffe. Kicking against a strong wind, they were a goal down in the first minute, De Courcy heading a great goal from a pass by Courtenay. Thereafter St. Frank's had to fight hard to prevent their opponents from adding to their score, for, aided by the wind, Highcliffe attacked

"Hurrah!" yelled the St. Frank's fellows loyally.

"'Tis to be feared that we are in danger from Kassker and his savage hordes," continued Ethelbert gravely. "And 'tis only just and meet that I should confess myself bewildered and distraught. I am a man of peace. All we Northestrians are peace-loving folk. But we now perceive that danger is nigh, and we are powerless to grapple with it. 'Tis for thee, Lee the Lionheart, to organise the defences of our threatened land, for thou hast proven thy prowess and courage."

Nelson Lee bowed.

"You are unduly flattering, my lord," he said, smiling. "If it is her Majesty's wish, I will do what I can—"

"'Tis my one desire," put in the princess simply.

"Then I will use every means in my power to organise your people without delay," replied Lee. "I take it that I shall have a free hand—that I shall be in a position of supreme control, so far as the army is concerned?"

"'Tis agreed," said Ethelbert promptly.

"With our resources, it is possible that we shall be able to give these Gothlanders more than one surprise," said Nelson Lee. "But we must act swiftly, and the whole nation must be aroused. Kassker the Grim means to

almost continuously, and only a wonderful display by Handforth in goal kept their score down to one. After the interval, it was expected that St. Frank's would soon put on a few goals, but as frequently happens when a team kicks against the wind in the first half, the players had tired themselves. The Highcliffe defence defended stubbornly, and kept out the St. Frank's forwards until five minutes from the end. Then Nipper, having changed places with Reggie Pitt, closed in from the wing and met a centre on the full volley. The goalkeeper never saw the ball go in. Flushed with their long-strived-for success, the St. Frank's forwards attacked immediately from the restart, and a minute from the end Pitt's head bobbed up from a crowd of players in the goalmouth and nodded in the winning goal. Well played, St. Frank's and Highcliffe!

FULL RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S .. 4	BAGSHOT .. 2
Merry (2), Blake, D'Arcy	Pankley, Putter
ST. FRANK'S 2	HIGHCLIFFE 1
Nipper, Pitt	De Courcy
GREYFRIARS 6	ST. JUDE'S .. 0
REDCLYFFE 0	ABBOTSFORD 0
RIVER HOUSE 7	CLAREMONT.. 1
RYLCOMBE	
GRAM SCHOOL 1	ROOKWOOD .. 2

LEAGUE TABLE TO DATE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.	Goals
St. Jim's	18	13	3	2	99	43	29	
St. Frank's	18	13	2	3	74	40	28	
Greyfriars	18	12	3	3	83	36	27	
Rookwood	19	11	4	4	66	50	26	
Highcliffe	19	10	4	5	53	31	24	
Rylecombe								
Gram	18	10	3	5	48	37	23	
River House	18	8	4	6	53	45	20	
Abbotsford	18	4	3	11	26	61	11	
Redclyffe	18	3	5	10	33	73	11	
Claremont	18	3	3	12	34	72	9	
Bagshot	19	2	4	13	25	49	8	
St. Jude's	19	0	4	15	19	76	4	

strike, and at present we are unprepared. Not a moment must be lost."

"I agree with that," said Dorrie, nodding. "There's big trouble brewin', or I'm a Dutchman! After the way we pinched Prince Oswy, an' snipped off Kassker's beard, he'll be on the war-path like a Red Indian chief!"

"After the great feast, thou shalt prepare thy plans—" began Ethelbert.

"Let there be no feast," interrupted Lee quickly. "There will be occasion for rejoicing after the victory has been won. But not one moment must be lost now. I desire a council of army chiefs within the hour, if such a thing is possible."

The princess looked at him with wide eyes.

"Thou art indeed a man of swift action, brave stranger," she said softly.

"Swift action is necessary, your Majesty!" replied Lee, with conviction.

"By St. Attalus!" said Ethelbert the Red. "I like not the implication, good Lee. Thinkest thou that danger is so nigh then?"

"It is my last wish to alarm you unnecessarily, my lord, but in the circumstances I feel compelled to speak plainly—bluntly. Northestria is absolutely unprepared for war, and Gothland may attack at any moment!"

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the exciting developments in next week's chapters.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1414.

His Convict Brother!

(Continued from page 16.)

"That ain't likely to 'appen! I've kep' 'em all right so far."

"Oh, you're enough to drive a man crazy!" said Lanbury, controlling his rage with an evident effort. "The bonds are useless to you, and you will not give them to me!"

"Arves," said Adolphus—"arves; that's fair! We did the work in 'arven. You knew the bonds were there, and that they was a sort to be got rid of easily. I knew 'ow to crack a safe, and I did that part of the bisney. You wanted me to 'and you over the bonds next day. You might 'ave 'ad your fingers on them, if you'd had the pluck to be on the spot when I cracked the crib."

"I had to show myself in public somewhere to prove an alibi in case of necessity," said the cashier. "As it happened, it was very needful."

"I've given you some of the paper," said Adolphus—"enough to plant in young Lynn's room, to make us both safe."

"Some—some were overlooked when the police searched."

"You may as well go," said Adolphus. "I'm going to stay 'ere for a while to give you a chance, and you can call again when you've changed your mind, Mr. Brown. If you ain't come to your senses in a week, I shall go over to Amsterdam to try my luck with the bonds there, on my own account. They won't skin me of more'n half, and that's what I'm offering you."

"I'll make it three thousand."

"Rats!"

"That's the last offer," said Mr. Lanbury.

"You can take it away with you, then."

"Very well." Mr. Lanbury moved from the mantelpiece and approached Adolphus. "Good-night, I am going!"

He held out his hand. Adolphus grinned, and took it, and at the same moment Mr. Lanbury's other hand came out of his pocket, with something heavy in it, and a swift blow was struck.

"Oh!"

Adolphus saw the blow coming, but he had no time to guard it. The short, heavy life-preserver crashed upon his head, and the young rascal fell to the

floor, stunned. A trickle of blood ran down his forehead.

A savage grin came over the cashier's colourless face.

"Now for the bonds!"

CHAPTER 14.

Brought to Book!

THE unseen watcher at the excavation in the wall had given a start as the savage blow fell. Even he, keen as he was, had not foreseen the action of the cashier. Had Mr. Lanbury shown a sign of repeating the blow, he would have had no time to interfere. But the cashier did not do that.

He gave Adolphus one glance to make sure that he was insensible, and then returned the life-preserver to his pocket, and bent over the unconscious bank robber.

His quick, nimble hands searched through Adolphus' clothing, and he uttered an exclamation of relief and delight as something crumpled in his fingers in the lining in the back of the waistcoat.

In that safe place Adolphus had deposited the plunder, sewing it up in a bulky mass in the back of his waistcoat, flattened out as much as possible. There was no danger of the papers being discovered there, excepting by a systematic search. Mr. Lanbury opened a pen-knife, and slit up the waistcoat.

In the next room, the unseen watcher quietly stepped from the chair and unlocked the door, and stepped out upon the dark landing. His hand felt in his pocket for a moment; it reappeared with a pair of handcuffs in it. There was not a sound. In the black darkness of the landing the unknown waited, handcuffs in hand, for the cashier to emerge from Adolphus' room with the stolen bonds in his possession.

Mr. Lanbury was not occupied many minutes. He was naturally anxious to get away as quickly as possible from the scene of his criminal action. The disappearance of the light under the door warned the unseen watcher on the landing that he was about to quit the room. The man drew a deep breath.

Adolphus' door opened, and a black shadow loomed in the darkness. A step—a breathless exclamation—a click! Then a yell of rage!

"My Heaven! What—who is that? Take them off!"

"Not yet, Mr. Lanbury!"

"Who—who are you?"

"I am Ferrers Locke, detective, and you are my prisoner!"

The cashier groaned.

"Ferrers Locke! I am lost!"

"Yes; you are lost, and Gerald Lynn is saved!" said the detective quietly. "You will come with me, Mr. Lanbury, and I will have your latest victim attended to! Come!"

And the cashier—bowed, broken, crushed—went, with the handcuffs on his wrists and the detective's iron grasp on his arm.

Tom Merry looked out of the School House on the bright, frosty day, after morning lessons, and gave a shout:

"Mr. Locke!"

The detective was crossing the old quadrangle towards the School House. In a moment he was surrounded by juniors; Tom Merry & Co. were all there, and Lynn was the most eager.

"Mr. Locke"—the junior's voice was heard—"my brother has been taken! We have just heard! He was arrested last night in Wayland Lane!"

The detective nodded.

"I know it, lad. But all is well."

"You—you have discovered—" gasped Blake.

"Yes. Mr. Lanbury, the cashier of the City Central Bank, was arrested last night in Rylcombe, with the stolen bonds in his possession," said Ferrers Locke. "His accomplice, Adolphus Wegg, is now in the prison infirmary, recovering from a savage attack made upon him by Mr. Lanbury."

Adolphus Wegg!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Yes; that was the explanation of the visit of 'Mr. Brown' to the tailor's nephew," he replied. "Wegg committed the robbery at Mr. Lanbury's instigation, but did not keep to the bargain of handing the loot over to the cashier—hence Mr. Brown's visits, and finally his attack upon the young rascal. Adolphus Wegg made a full confession as soon as he recovered consciousness and found that he was in prison, and it is clear now, Lynn, that the bonds found in your brother's room were placed there by Lanbury. Your brother's name is cleared."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Lynn.

"Three cheers for Ferrers Locke!" shouted Figgins.

And they were given with a will for the detective who had cleared Lynn's convict brother.

(Next week: "GUSST'S GREAT IDEA!" Watch out for this full-of-fun, All-Fools'-Day story.)

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