

"THE BOY WHO BROKE BOUNDS!" ANOTHER GREAT
ROOKWOOD YARN **INSIDE!**

The **GEM** ^{2d}



Run to Earth!
See
"THE CONVICT-HUNTERS!"
—Inside

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A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE, WITH A HUNDRED POUNDS ON HIS HEAD—

The CONVICT-HUNTERS!



"That you, Master Cutts?" Kangaroo felt a sudden thrill as he saw a thick-set, powerful man in prison garb in the monks' cell. It was the convict! Next moment the hunted man, realising his mistake, leaped at the Cornstalk, bludgeon upraised.

CHAPTER 1.

One Hundred Quid!

"BWOKE?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's asked the question.

And Blake, Herries, and Digby replied sadly and solemnly: "Stony."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy received that reply with unexpected satisfaction. He nodded quite cheerfully, and, in fact, smiled.

"Vewy good!"

"Good, you ass?" said Jack Blake. "I don't see anything good about it! I've just asked Tom Merry for a loan to tide us over till Saturday, and I find that he's stony, too. So is Manners; so is Lowther; so is Kangaroo. All on the rocks."

"I am stony, thou art stony, he is stony," said Herries lugubriously.

"Yaas, it's wathah wotten," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, as you are all stony, without any pwospect of waisin' the wind, pewwaps you'll be willin' to back me up in waisin' a weally considerable sum of money."

"Like a bird!" said Blake immediately.

"Like a whole nest of birds. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,462.

What's the little game? Do you know a millionaire who's going home to-night down a dark lane?"

"Pway be sewious!"

"Or has Cutts of the Fifth put you on to a dead cert for the Swindleton Handicap?"

"Pway listen to me, deah boys. In the first place, we are all stony bwoke. My patah has somehow failed to weply to the urgent telegwam I sent him, and that telegwam wan away with my last shillin'. We are all bwoke to the wide, and it is necessary to waise some money. I've hit on the ideah."

"Well, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," said Blake thoughtfully. "If you can raise enough for tea, it will be a giddy blessing. Whom are you going to borrow it of? I've tried nearly all the Fourth and the Shell."

"I'm not goin' to bowwow it."

"Can't steal it: it's against the rules," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake! We are goin' to earn the money."

"My hat! How much?"

"A hundwed pounds."

Blake, Herries, and Digby staggered against the wall of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage in the School House. They seemed overcome.

"A hundred pounds?" said Blake faintly.

"Yaas."

"And we are going to earn it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He'll wake up presently," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I am not dweamin'. We can earn a hundwed pounds quite easily, in fact; and the only difficulty is—"

"Oh, there's a difficulty?" asked Jack Blake sarcastically. "I was beginning to hope we should have the hundred pounds in time for tea. We'd have an extra pot of jam. It would run to it out of a hundred pounds."

"Yaas, there's a difficulty. The question awises," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, polishing his eyeglass, "whethah we should be justified in takin' the money affah we have earned it. That is the point I am wathah doubtful about."

"Oh, that's all right! We are justified in taking anything we can get when it's tea-time, and there isn't a shot in the locker," said Blake. "I can settle all your doubts on that point at once. Just point out the chap who's got the hundred pounds, and we'll take our cricket stumps and start on him."

—AND ST. JIM'S JUNIORS AT HIS HEELS! POWERFUL COMPLETE YARN.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Hear, hear!" said Digby and Herries heartily.

"Will you be sewious?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "We can get that hundred pounds quite simply, with a chap of my bwain powah to diwect the opowations. But I am not certain that we should be justified in takin' it. What we've got to do is to assist justice, and back up law and ordah."

Blake wrinkled his brow in reflection.

"Well, I don't approve of law and order, as a rule," he said; "but I'd back up law and order at a hundred quid a time any day! One could stretch a point."

"In a sense, it is our duty as citizens to do the best we can in the mattah," Arthur Augustus remarked. "I suppose you agree with me there?"

"Certainly," said Blake. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I agree with you. I always was an agreeable chap."

"But whethah we could take the money aftah wunnin' the chap down, that's what I'm wathah doubtful about."

"Who's the chap?" asked Blake, beginning seriously to wonder whether his aristocratic chum was a little bit off his "rocker." "And where is he?"

"He's hidin' in the wood."

"Oh, he's hiding in the woods, is he?" said Blake. "And he's got the hundred quid on him?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what's the good of running him down if he's not got the hundred quid?"

"We should get the hundred pounds if we wan him down," explained Arthur Augustus. "It is quite certain that a despwate chawactah ought to be seized, isn't it?"

"Eh?"

"He ought to be locked up and put out of harm's way," argued D'Arcy.

"I think there cannot be any dispute about that, deah boys."

"What the dickens—"

"But whethah we can take the money—h'm! Of course, it could not be called blood-money, because it's only a question of collahwin' the chap; he isn't goin' to be hung, or anythin' like that. Aftah all, if the Government are justified in offewin' us a hundred pounds for doin' it, we must be justified in takin' the hundred pounds. The Government ought to know best. They are oldah than we are—considerably."

"If we were in funds," said Blake, "I'd buy you a strait-waistcoat. Does this kind of thing run in your family, or are you the only dotty one?"

"You uttah ass!"

"Let's go over to the New House," said Herries. "We may be able to raise something out of Figgins & Co., or Redfern."

Arthur Augustus planted himself before the open doorway of the study and raised his hand.

"I insist upon your listenin' to my wippin' scheme, you uttah asses! I tell you there is a hundred pounds pwactically goin' beggin'."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "We'll go over and see Figgins. Are you going

to get out of the doorway, Gussy, or are we to walk over you?"

"I wefuse to get out of the doorway, and I wefuse distinctly to be walked ovah! I am goin' to explain to you silly chumps— Oh! Ow! Bai Jove!"

There were hurried footsteps in the passage, and three juniors ran into the doorway—and into Arthur Augustus as he stood with his back to the doorway. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus staggered forward as the Shell fellows crashed into him from behind, and bumped into Blake, his arms whirling round Blake's neck.

Blake grinned cheerfully, and hugged his aristocratic chum so hard that D'Arcy gave a howl of anguish.

"Ow, ow! You ass! Wefuse me!"

"Certainly!" said Blake.

He released Arthur Augustus so suddenly that the swell of the Fourth sat down on the study carpet. A little cloud of dust rose from the carpet, and a roar from Arthur Augustus.

"Yawoooh!"

CHAPTER 2.

Convict 101!

"HAVE you chaps heard?"

Tom Merry asked the question breathlessly.

The Terrible Three had evidently rushed into Study No. 6 with news.

"That depends," said Blake. "We've

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*When Jonas Racke, an escaped convict, went into hiding near St. Jim's, all boys were forbidden to leave the school precincts. But that didn't prevent Tom Merry & Co. from joining in the convict-hunt—which had results that were as surprising as they were thrilling.*

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heard Gussy talking like an ass for the last ten minutes. Nothing else!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up, and searched about the study for a clothes-brush. He was very dusty.

"Gussy has been dreaming dreams of hundreds of quids," said Digby. "We were talking to him gently and humouring him. I've read, somewhere, that that's the best way with lunatics!"

"You frightful ass, Dig—"

"But what's the news?" asked Blake.

"New House been ragging you?"

"Oh, no!" said Tom Merry. "More serious than that! There's a notice on the board—"

"I've seen notices on the board before," yawned Blake; "in fact, quite a lot."

"Ass! This is from the Head. Bounds are drawn in. Nobody to go out of gates until further orders, excepting in company with a master."

"Wh-what!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Rotten!"

"What on earth for?" asked Blake indignantly. "I'm jolly well not going to stand it, for one!"

"Wathah not!"

"The convict," Tom Merry explained.

"Eh? What convict?"

"There's a convict escaped from Blackmoor Prison. Frightfully desperate character! He half-killed a warden in getting away, and he's hiding now somewhere in the woods or on the moor. And the Head is afraid he may go for us if he drops on us. Awful rot, of course; but just like these blessed headmasters!" said Tom Merry disparagingly.

"By Jove!" said Blake. "What's his name—or, rather, his number?"

"His name is Racke, and his number's 101," said Tom Merry. "There's a full description of him in the Rylcombe paper—a thick-set man, on the small side, with a bulldog jaw, and very strong. In prison garb, of course. He hasn't been able to get a change of clothes, so far as anybody knows. That's what he'll be looking for, of course—a change of clothes, and some change in the way of cash. I suppose it would be rather dangerous to run into him."

Blake chuckled.

"I don't suppose he'd want to change into Etons," he remarked; "and, even if he is a small man, he would be too big for our clobber. I don't see the danger, and I don't see keeping inside gates till the bobbies run him down."

"He's a dangerous character," said Tom Merry. "The papers say that when he was arrested he nearly killed two policemen, and he's expected to put up a fight when they collar him. You can guess how anxious they are to get hold of him—there's a reward of a hundred pounds offered for him!"

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Blake, Herries, and Digby together.

"Yes; a hundred pounds reward!"

"Is that what you were blabbing about, Gussy?" asked Blake, a light breaking upon his mind.

"I was not blabbing, deah boy!"

"Is that the hundred quid?" shouted Blake.

"That's the hundred pounds."

"My hat! So Gussy was thinking of trailing down the giddy convict to his lair, and collaring the hundred quid!"

chuckled Herries. "Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as a wippin' ideah!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "We should be backin' up law and ordah, and welievin' the countwy of a vewy despwate chawactah. And a hundred pounds would come in vewy useful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"I fail to see anythin' whatevah to cackle at. You chaps know that I've got a gift as an amateur detective. With me as the leadah, there is no reason why we shouldn't wope him in."

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"Fancy Gussy as a convict-hunter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust you fellows are goin' to back me up. You Shell chaps can come into it if you like; only, of course, it is undahstood that I am leadah. I don't want to put myself forward in any way; but a mattah like this wequahs a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

The idea of the swell of St. Jim's tracking down the desperate Convict No. 101, and capturing him, threw the juniors almost into hysterics. They roared, while Arthur Augustus glowered at them indignantly through his eyeglass. The swell of St. Jim's was in deadly earnest, and he did not see anything funny in his scheme.

"If you wottahs cannot be scowious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall cress ovah to the New House, and take Figgins & Co. into the ideah," said Arthur Augustus. "I gave you chaps first chance, as you are my friends—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh wats!"

Arthur Augustus stalked out of Study No. 6, and closed the door after him with unnecessary force.

Blake sank into the armchair and gasped.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! If that doesn't take the cake—fairly put the lid on! Imagine Gussy hunting the giddy convict! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors roared again at the idea.

"I wonder what Figgins & Co. will say to this suggestion?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors waited with much curiosity for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's return from the New House. He came in about ten minutes later, and they stared. There was a change in the appearance of the swell of St. Jim's. He was hatless. There was dust on his elegant trousers and his handsome jacket, and his collar was torn, and his necktie had vanished.

It looked as if the swell of the School House had been discovering trouble on the other side of the quadrangle.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Have you met No. 101 already, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you ass!" gasped D'Arcy. "I have been treated with gwoos disrespect! I wegard Figgins as a wottah, and Kerr as a wottah, and Fatty Wynn as a wottah! Ow!"

"Didn't they cotton to the idea?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah! Figgins had the awful cheek to say that he had already thought of it himself, and they were goin' to wun down the desprawado," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Of course, I remarked that I couldn't possibly allow that and refused to give up the ideah. I then a feahful thwashin'—"

"Well, you look as if somebody's been getting a fearful thrashing!" grinned Blake. "Did you leave them dead or dying?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They had the frightful impertinence to chuck me out," confessed Arthur Augustus. "I had not finished thwashin' them when they chucked me out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not wegard it as a laughin' mattah. Look at my clobber! I wegard the beasts. Of course, I am not goin' to allow them to hunt for my convict, if I have to thwash the whole of the New House."

"You don't mean to say that Figgins & Co. are going to look for that hundred quid?" asked Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!"

"And they had the cheek to say that it would be one up for the New House, and they couldn't wisk spoilin' the whole thing by lettin' School House duffahs into it," said Arthur Augustus, with deep indignation.

"The cheek!" said Blake warmly. "Look here you chaps, if the New House is going for the hundred quid, it's up to the School House to do the same."

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They're not going to go one better than us."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"It's our idea," said Blake. "Gussy thought of it first. We'll look for the giddy convict; and if we find Figgins & Co. looking for him, too, we'll jolly well bump them, and rag them, and teach them not to poach on our ground!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction. "Of course, it's undahstood that I am leedah."

To which six voices replied at once, and with cheerful unanimity:

"Rats!"

CHAPTER 3.

Rival Convict-Hunters!

"ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!"

Those words, in large letters, were to be read on most of the hoardings and dead walls in Wayland and Rycombe.

There was unusual excitement in the quiet countryside.

Jonas Racke—Convict No. 101—had broken out of Blackmoor Prison, and warders and constables were seeking him far and wide.

But in the deep woods and the wild moor that lay around St. Jim's there were many nooks and recesses where a desperate man could hide, and several days had passed without the track of the escaped convict being found.

That he was still in the vicinity was pretty certain, but his hiding-place remained to be discovered.

And the Head of St. Jim's, in the circumstances, deemed it wise to draw the school bounds as close as the school gates.

There was certainly danger in meeting the hunted man—hungry, desperate, and reckless as he was. So, at all events, it seemed to the Head. But the St. Jim's fellows did not take the same view.

In spite of the new order about the school bounds, a good many fellows had made up their minds in private that they were not going to be left out of the fun.

Figgins of the Fourth was quite eloquent on the subject in his study in the New House.

"It isn't the hundred quid," said Figgins. "Of course, a hundred quid would come in handy."

Fatty Wynn rubbed his well-filled waistcoat and sighed.

"Yes, wouldn't it?" he said dreamily.

"But the beastly convict is keeping us penned in the school," went on Figgins.

"The police won't be able to find him. He may be hanging around for weeks. We can't stay within gates for weeks while they're looking in the wrong direction for Convict 101."

"Of course we can't," agreed Kerr.

"If he didn't want us to collar him, he should have chosen some other place to hide in," said Figgins. "He's no right to lurk about here, keeping us penned up. It's up to us to clear him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Besides, the School House duffers have made up their minds to do it—at least, D'Arcy has, and the others won't let him run into danger alone. Now, it's up to us, as Cock House of St. Jim's, to give them the kybosh!"

"Yes, rather!"

"So we're going to track down the

giddy convict, and catch him," said Figgins. "It's his own fault for coming round here. We didn't ask him to come."

"How are we going to catch him?" asked Kerr. Kerr was a Scots youth, and eminently practical.

"Oh, that's a detail!" said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "There are lots of ways of catching him. We've got to find him where he is, you know, and collar him, and—then he will be caught, of course."

"Quite simple," said Kerr blandly.

"It's a half-holiday to-morrow," said Figgins. "I suggest that we spend it in hunting for the giddy convict. The gate will be closed, but there's a wall."

"What about the footer?"

"We can cut the footer for once."

"But it's a House match!"

"I know it is; but I've been thinking. Let the other fellows have a show in the House match," said Figgins generously. "Reddy talks a lot about being able to captain a footer team. Well, Reddy can be skipper to-morrow. After all, we've only got the School House to beat."

"There'll be a row if we're caught out of bounds."

"Let there be. Besides, we shan't be caught!"

"Oh, all right!" said Kerr. "I'm game, if you are. Anyway, it will be a run, and as for staying within gates until the convict's caught, that's all rot!"

"Utter rot!" said Figgins.

And the next afternoon, instead of changing for the junior football match, Figgins & Co. prepared for their expedition.

Over in the School House, another party was preparing for the same business. Tom Merry was captain of the junior eleven in the School House, but Tom Merry, like Figgins, was feeling generously disposed to let another fellow have the honour that afternoon.

"I'm going to rely on you this afternoon, Blake," he said, meeting the Fourth Former in the passage, and speaking very seriously.

"Are you?" said Blake agreeably.

"Yes. You're going to captain the team against the New House."

Blake shook his head.

"Can't be did," he replied tersely.

"Oh, come! You're up to it, for once!" Tom Merry urged.

"I'm up to it all the time, as far as that goes," said Blake. "But I've got something else on this afternoon, and I'm going to ask you to fill my place in the team."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, Kangaroo can captain the team," he said. "I'm going to put in Reilly, and Hammond, and Vavasour, instead of Lowther, Manners, and myself. It's only fair to give them a look in in a House match."

"And you can find four more instead of us!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm sowwy to leave the team in the lurch, deah boys, but when duty calls, you know."

"I hear that Figgins & Co. aren't playing this afternoon," grinned Digby.

"They're going on the same game."

"Well, if Figgins & Co. are out of the New House team, our side needn't be up to concert pitch," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'll give Gore a chance, and Kerruish and Smith minor. They're all pretty good."

There was good news that afternoon for fellows who were keen to get into the House junior team. Kangaroo, the Cornstalk fellow in the Shell, was glad



Leaving Figgins & Co. helpless, Tom Merry & Co. climbed over the wall and dropped into the lane outside. Monty Lowther paused on the wall for a moment to kiss his hand to the infuriated New House juniors. "Good-bye, kids! Think of us collaring the convict!"

to relieve Tom Merry of his duties as skipper—and, indeed, he remarked that he looked upon that arrangement as a decided improvement in the team. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were at liberty to take the trail of the hidden convict. Arthur Augustus was thinking out very seriously the question of equipment. That was certainly an important matter. The convict might have a bludgeon—and, anyway, he was a muscular fellow, and very dangerous at close quarters.

Arthur Augustus' opinion was that it was necessary to go armed.

"No good twyin' to tackle a wuffian with our fists, deah boys," he remarked wisely. "You see, this man, Wacke, is a vewy wuff beast. He might give one of us a feahful cwack on the nappah with a stick, and where should we be then?"

"In hospital, very likely," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas; so I think we had bettah take arms with us."

"Legs will be more useful, if we meet the convict," suggested Lowther.

"Pway be sewious, deah boy! We ought to go armed. I think I had bettah take a wevovlah, and then there will be no dangah."

"Not to the convict," agreed Lowther. "But what about us?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You're not going to play with fire-arms, my son," said Blake. "Besides, where are you going to get a revolver? We don't keep one in the study."

"Mr. Wailton keeps one in his study evah since the time there was a burglawy here," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm goin' to bowwow it."

"Yes; I can see him lending it to you," grinned Tim Merry. "Now, if you fellows are ready, and we can get out now without being seen."

"I must weally have a wevovlah."

"Come on!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Take his other arm, Herries."

"You uttah asses! Welease me! I insist! Yawwooh!"

With his affectionate chums grasping him by either arm, Arthur Augustus was walked rapidly away, and Mr. Railton's revolver was left undisturbed. On the playing fields there were two football matches going on, and it was a good opportunity for the juniors to escape unobserved. There was a corner of the quadrangle where the trees shaded the wall from view, and towards that spot Tom Merry & Co. directed their steps.

As they came through the trees the sound of a voice fell upon their ears.

"Give me a bunk up, Kerr!"

It was the voice of Figgins of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The New House boundahs! The uttah wascals, they are goin' to look for the convict!"

"Shush!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Weally, you know—"

"They're going to be stopped," said Tom Merry, peering through the clump

of old elms. "There are only three of them, and we're going to stop them."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"But they'll follow us when we've gone out," said Manners.

"No, they won't. Cut off to the House and get a rope while we collar them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners dashed away towards the School House. Figgins & Co. had heard the chuckle, and they looked round quickly, on their guard at once.

Tom Merry waved his hand.

"Charge!"

And the School House juniors charged.

CHAPTER 4.

Held by the Enemy!

"BACK up, New House!" shouted Figgins.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn lined up at once. They had hoped to get out of the school unseem and unsuspected by their rivals of the School House. But they had chosen an unlucky moment. They were discovered, and the odds were against them.

Tom Merry & Co. charged, and the New House trio were driven back to the wall, resisting manfully. Tom Merry and Lowther rolled over, roaring. But then Figgins went down, with Herries and Digby clinging to him, and Kerr sprawled on the ground under Blake, and Fatty Wynn was collared by D'Arcy.

Tom Merry was up in a moment, and rushed to the aid of Arthur Augustus, and Fatty Wynn was brought down with a bump.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Done 'em!" grinned Blake.

"Rescue, New House!" bawled Figgins.

But there was little chance of that shout being heard. All the fellows were on the playing fields. But Herries jammed Figgins' handkerchief into Figgins' mouth, and effectually silenced him in case some stray New House fellow should be within hearing.

Figgins gurgled into silence.

"Look here!" gasped Kerr. "Chuck it! We're going out!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Your mistake—you're not going out. Don't you know that it's wrong for juniors to go out of bounds?" he asked severely.

"Why, you rotter, you're going out yourself!" howled Kerr.

"Quite a different matter, my son. You New House kids have got to be kept in order. We can't allow you to break bounds in this reckless way. It's up to us, as Cock House of St. Jim's, to look after you."

"You—you—you—" stuttered Kerr furiously.

"Besides, you're goin' to look for my convict," said Arthur Augustus, with great indignation. "I wegard Convict No. 101 as pwactically my pwivate pwperty. Those hundred pounds and that convict belong to me. I'm whackin' them out with these fellows, but you New House boundahs are barred."

"We'll jolly well come, all the same, you beasts!" spluttered Fatty Wynn.

"Can't let you out of bounds," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "You might run into danger, you know. Besides, the School House is going to rope in that giddy convict. You've got to give us your word, honour bright, not to break bounds to-day."

"Rats!"

"Here's the rope," said Manners, coming through the trees.

"Good egg! Tie all their wrists together."

Figgins & Co. recommenced to struggle, but they were pinned down by the School House juniors, and they had no chance. Manners calmly proceeded to knot the rope round their wrists, and six wrists were tied in a bunch together. Manners did not spare the knots. He used up a good deal of rope, too. When he had finished the three heroes of the New House were helpless prisoners. Then they were allowed to rise to their feet, and they stood looking at one another with infuriated looks.

"Put the end of the rope round this tree and tie it," directed Tom Merry.

"What-ho!"

The rope was securely bound to the tree. Figgins & Co. stood with their hands tied, the rope being passed round the tree. Figgins' gag was removed, and then Tom Merry & Co. surveyed them with much satisfaction.

"Now, we'll let you loose if you'll give your word to leave our convict alone," said Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Thus Figgins & Co.

"Right-ho! Then we'll be off. Come on, you chaps!"

And the School House juniors climbed the wall one by one and dropped into the lane outside.

Monty Lowther was the last to go, and he paused on the wall for a moment to kiss his hand to the infuriated New House juniors.

"Good-bye, kids! Think of us collar-ing the convict!" Then Lowther disappeared.

A chuckle was heard floating back from the lane, and the School House party were gone.

Figgins & Co. looked at one another with feelings too deep for words. It was a sudden and inglorious end to their expedition before it had fairly started.

"Oh, the rotters!" murmured Figgins wildly. "We're fairly dished. And if we're found tied up like this the whole school will simply howl over it."

"We've got to be found, or we shall have to stay here all the afternoon,"

growled Fatty Wynn. "Better yell for help."

"Shurrup! We can work this blessed rope loose in time. Don't bring a gang of grinning duffers round us by yelping," said Figgins crossly. "Gnaw this rotten rope."

And the three juniors started on the rope. But Manners had tied those knots scientifically, and they were not easy to negotiate. Half an hour passed, and the New House trio were still prisoners.

"And those rotters are hunting our convict all the time," said Figgins sulphurously. "They'll collar him and get our hundred quid."

"Let's yell," said Fatty Wynn desperately.

"Hallo! Here's somebody coming!" Footsteps approached the spot. Figgins' clouded face broke into a grin.

"Some more bounders coming here to break bounds," he murmured. "I suppose there'll be a regular procession this way since the Head's order?"

"My hat! It's Cutts!" said Kerr.

Cutts of the Fifth came through the trees towards the wall. He caught sight of the three juniors, and stopped and stared at them in amazement.

"You young asses! What are you up to?" he demanded.

"Let us loose, Cutts," said Figgins.

Cutts grinned as he saw how the New House trio were tied. Cutts was a School House fellow, but the Fifth Form were far too lofty to take part in the House rags with which the juniors made things lively at St. Jim's.

"Who tied you up there?" asked Cutts.

"A rotten gang of School House rotters!" grunted Figgins. "I say, cut this rope, will you, Cutts?"

"No, I won't!" said Cutts. "I suppose you came here to break bounds—eh? I don't see what else you'd be in this corner for."

"Ahem!"

"You know the Head's orders, I suppose?" said Cutts.

"Mind your own business!" said Figgins independently. "You're not a prefect, and you're not in our House, anyway. If you won't let us loose, you can go and eat coke!"

"Have any other juniors gone out?" asked Cutts.

"Find out!"

"Don't you know it's dangerous, with an escaped convict lurking about the place?" said Cutts. "Whoever tied you up there, did you a good turn, and I'll leave you there!"

And Gerald Cutts went towards the wall.

"Why, you rotter," howled Figgins, "you're going to break bounds yourself!"

Cutts made no reply, but drew himself up on the wall. He had evidently come there with the intention of breaking bounds.

"Give my kind regards to the sportsmen at the Green Man," said Kerr sarcastically. "And don't forget to remember me to Griggs, the bookie."

"And put on a bob each way for me!" said Fatty Wynn.

Cutts made no reply to those remarks. Cutts was the black sheep of the School House, and Figgins & Co. had little doubt that he was bound upon one of his little excursions which were whispered of among the juniors.

The Fifth Former glanced back at the tied-up juniors, and grinned, and then dropped from the wall into the road.

Figgins grunted.

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"No luck—the beast might have untied us!"

"Let's yell for some of the fellows," mumbled Fatty Wynn.

"Rats! We're not going to get a grinning crowd round us!" growled Figgins. "Wait till we get loose!"

"Look here—"
"Shurrup!"

And Figgins & Co. worked away more or less patiently at the rope. They were released at last, and Fatty Wynn made a beeline for the school shop. His exertions had made him hungry. Kerr regarded Figgins doubtfully.

"Are we going now?" he asked.

"Of course we are!" growled Figgins. "Do you think we're going to let ourselves be done in the eye by those School House bounders? Come on! Blow Fatty! He can gorge himself on jam-tarts while we're roping in the giddy convict!"

And Figgins and Kerr dropped from the school wall—rather late for their expedition—but, as Figgins said, better late than never!

CHAPTER 5.

A Great Catch!

TOM MERRY & CO. halted in the wood, somewhat at a loss.

They had started out on the expedition chiefly with the intention of going one better than Figgins & Co. of the New House, and without any very clear idea of how they were to run down the hidden convict.

But that problem faced them now that they had arrived upon the scene of operations.

Somewhere in the dark woods that stretched for miles and miles, somewhere, perhaps, on the wide moor towards Wayland, the hunted man was lying concealed.

But where?

A dozen warders and policemen had hunted for him for days, and they had found no trace of the man; only traces here and there where he had tried to purloin food.

Tom Merry & Co. realised that they had taken on a task of an unusually large size, and they stood on the footpath and gazed at one another dubiously.

After some moments of silence, Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"We might as well have left this to Figgins & Co.," he remarked. "I admit that I don't know just where to jump on No. 101."

"Gussy's leader," said Monty Lowther. "Let's see where he'll lead us!"

"Good!" said Blake. "Let him run on ahead like a dog, and follow his instinct!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That will lead him to a tailor's shop," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. The convict may be just behind, for all you know. We don't want to alarm him; my ideah is to take the wottah by surprise."

"Oh, lead on, Macduff!" said Lowther. "If we're going on a wild-goose chase, we may as well be led by one duffer as another. Pile in!"

"I shall have to think it out a bit."

"With what?" asked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus did not reply to that impertinent question. He wrinkled

his noble brows in deep thought, and pursed his lips, and a far-away look came into his eyes. He was evidently thinking hard.

The juniors stood and looked at him, with grinning faces. Monty Lowther drew a little behind the swell of St. Jim's, and made a motion with his hand in the small of D'Arcy's back, as if winding him up.

D'Arcy was so deep in thought that he was quite unconscious of it. A roar of laughter from the juniors woke him out of his reverie.

"Weally, you fellows! Lowthah, you ass, this is too bad. I have to do all the thinkin', and, weally, you shouldn't intewwupt; I've thought of a plan."

"Pile in!"

"The convict is most likely to be found in the place where he is most likely to hide, deah boys!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Lowther, in astonishment. "Did you work that out in your head, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, I did, you duffah! Now, when a chap's hid'ng himself, natu'ally he looks for the place where he can find the best hidin'-place. So I should think, deah boys, at all events. Suppose we twy the wuined castle first? A chap might hide there in the wuins, you know, and skulk away into the vaults if he was spotted there. We'll make for the old castle first, and have a look wound."

"The police have searched it," said Blake.

"Yaas, but I twust we have more bwa'ns than the police."

"Yes, I forgot that. Come on!"

And the convict-hunters marched through the wood towards the old castle. It was a mere shell of a building—a ruin perched on the side of Wayland Hill. In the summer it was much frequented by picnickers, but in the winter it was quite deserted save by an occasional tourist. The juniors came through the shattered gateway, picking their way among fallen blocks of masonry, towards the castle. There was no sign of anyone in the ruins—but Arthur Augustus halted suddenly, and pointed to the ground.

"Look here, deah boys!"

Recent rains had softened the soil, and in the muddy earth there was the print of a foot. D'Arcy's eyes gleamed with excitement as he pointed it out.

The juniors gathered round and looked at it, grinning. It was the print of an elegant boot, such as a very well-dressed fellow would wear, and was not likely to belong to the escaped convict. But it certainly proved that someone had recently been in the ruins.

"There is the wascal's footprints, deah boys."

"Do they have fashionable boot-makers at Blackmoor Prison?" asked Lowther innocently.

"Ahem! The man may have changed his boots since he escaped. Natu'ally he would do so if he got a chance, in case his twacks should be discovahed," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "This twack is vewy wecent."

"How do you know?"

Arthur Augustus smiled with the superiority of a Boy Scout who knew his business thoroughly.

"Wegard it!" he said. "The impression of the boot

is bein' filled up by the watah from the puddle, but it is not quite filled yet. It is only a mattah of minutes, howevah. My deah fellows, it is not five minutes since that footpint was made."

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy's right. Of course, it wasn't the convict; but where is the chap? We can't see him here, and if he'd left the ruins while we were coming up, we should have seen him."

"He must be in the vaults," said Blake.

"Then he has gone down without a light," remarked Digby, gazing into the gloomy opening. "If he had a light we should see some reflection of it. It's dark as pitch down there."

The juniors began to feel a little excited. Who could possibly have gone down into those gloomy vaults without a light, unless, indeed, he was a fugitive from justice who dared not make his presence known?

"Bai Jove! We're on the twack already, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus, greatly excited. "Don't make a wov; we don't want to alarm him. Listen! We may heah the wottah movin' about if he is there."

The juniors listened intently. From the silence of the vaults there came a sudden sound—the sound of a foot clinking against a stone—someone was moving there!

"We've got him, deah boys! He's comin' up, and we'll nab him as he comes out," Arthur Augustus whispered excitedly.

"Get into cover there—quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

The juniors backed away from the opening, and hurriedly crouched behind masses of masonry close at hand. If the man came up from below to leave the place, he would have to pass close by them, and he would be within reach. Before he could even see them, they could spring upon him.

"Jump the instant you see him!" muttered Blake. "He's a desperate chap, and we don't want to get our nappers cracked with a bludgeon."

"Wathah not!"

"Listen! He's coming!"

The juniors crouched in cover, their hearts beating faster. Who could it be but the convict, lurking in those dismal and chilly recesses without a light? Anyone who had a fancy for exploring the vaults would certainly have taken a light. It was impossible to move about in safety without one. Undoubtedly it was Jonas Racke—Convict No. 101—and he was about to fall into their hands.

They could hear the footsteps clearly on the shaky old stone steps. Closer, closer; the unseen individual was out of the vaults now; in a moment more he would pass the mass of masonry that hid the juniors, and he would see them.

A figure in overcoat and cap came past the edge of the masonry, and the juniors leaped at once. There was a loud yell from their victim as he went crashing down, with half a dozen juniors sprawling over him, clutching at him. And the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose in a chirrup of triumph.

"Huwwah! We've got him!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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CHAPTER 6.

Caught!

"Ow! Oh! Groogh!"
 "Hold him tight!"
 "Ow! Ah! Help! You young scoundrels! Let me gerrup!"

The prisoner was sprawling face downwards under the heap of juniors; but there seemed to them to be something familiar in the muffled voice that came from him, in accents of fury.

"I—I say, this ain't a convict!" gasped Blake.

"Gerroff! You young scoundrels, I'll lick you to death for this!"

"My hat! That's Cutts' voice!"
 "Great Scott!"

The juniors released their prisoner as suddenly as if he had become red-hot all at once. They gazed at Cutts of the Fifth in dismay as he staggered to his feet, his face convulsed with rage.

The Fifth Former was in an unenviable state. The convict-hunters, under the impression that he was Convict No. 101, had not handled him gently. He had rolled in puddles and mud, and he was smothered from head to foot, and his collar was torn out.

He shook his fists furiously at the dismayed juniors.

"You young villains! I—I'll smash you! I—I'll—"

"Bai Jove, it's weally Cutts, you know!"

"Awfully sorry, Cutts," said Tom Merry. "We didn't know it was you. We took you for somebody else—honour bright!"

"You young liar!" howled Cutts.

"We took you for somebody else of the same kidney," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Another chap of your kind, Cutts—chap who very likely started as you've started—sixpenny nap, and pubs of a night—and he's finished in prison. I hope you won't, but I have my doubts. Take warning by Convict No. 101, Cutts, old man. Turn over a new leaf, and become a good boy like us!"

The infuriated Fifth Former made a rush at Lowther; but the Co. lined up at once, and Cutts, realising that he had seven sturdy juniors to deal with, if he tackled one, paused. The big senior could probably have handled two of them, but the seven would have made short work of him. And they were quite prepared to do it. They were sorry for the mistake they had made; but they did not like Cutts. He was a bully and a blackguard, and they would have handled him with pleasure.

"It was weally a mistake, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus. "We apologise for the mistake pwofoundly. Fvoni one gentleman to another an apology should be quite suffish."

"Of course it should," said Blake. "If you apologise hard enough, it will get the mud off his clobber—perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are out of bounds, you young rascals!" said Cutts. "I'll report this to your Housemaster."

"Better report yourself at the same time," grinned Blake. "You're out of bounds, too, Cutts. Same order applies to the Fifth, you know."

Cutts bit his lip. That was quite true—indeed, he was more likely to get into trouble for breaking bounds than the juniors if it were known, for as a senior he should have known better. A certain amount of irresponsibility was allowable in a thoughtless junior, but a Fifth Former was a senior, and a sense of responsibility expected of him.

"Better agree to keep one another's little secrets," smiled Tom Merry. "We

won't give you away, Cutts, if you're a good boy."

"You young scoundrel!"

"Better language, please! If you don't want to roll in the mud again, you had better take care how you talk to us."

"What were you doing here?" said Cutts between his teeth.

"That's our business."

"You said you mistook me for someone else, and you mentioned the convict. Are you silly asses enough to be hunting for the convict?"

"Yaas, wathah—I—I mean, we're not silly asses, but we're hunting for the convict."

"You'd better clear off," said Cutts.

"Why should we clear off?" asked Tom Merry. "You know now what we're here for, and we're going on. My belief is that you're on the same track."

"What rot!" said Cutts. "Do you think I've got time to waste hunting for a convict. That's for the police to do!"

"There's a hundred quid reward."

"Rubbish!"

"Then what were you doing in the vaults?"

"Exploring them, that's all. I've a taste for—for archeology," said Cutts—"in fact, I'm taking it up as a study."

The juniors grinned. They knew that Cutts was not a truthful person when it suited him to be otherwise; and the explanation was decidedly lame.

"Well, we'll study archeology, too," said Tom Merry. "If you've got a torch, we can all study by the same light."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you clear off?" shouted Cutts angrily.

"No, we won't!"

Cutts glared at the juniors furiously; but they faced him with cool independence. They had as much right there as the Fifth Former had, and they were not to be bullied. Force was out of the question against such odds, and Gerald Cutts had to make the best of it. He strode away and disappeared among the masonry.

"He's afaht our convict," said Arthur Augustus. "I feel quite sure of that. The awful wottah! That convict's ours, and it's practically burglary on Cutts' part to think of collahin' him."

"Did our respected leader think of bringing a torch with him to search the vaults?" Monty Lowther wanted to know.

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of it, deah boys! But that's all wright. It's only a quartah of an hour to Wayland, if you wun hard. Tom Mewwy can wun there and buy a flash-lamp."

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry.

"Pway don't be a slacker, deah boy. We'll hunt woun for twaces of the convict while you are gone, and keep an eye open for Cutts. It would be just like that wottah to come sneakin' back twyin' to collah our convict."

"Look here—"

"Who's leadah of this party?" demanded Arthur Augustus loftily. "As comandah, I command you to wun to Wayland and get a flash-lamp. Buzz off!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Blake.

"Obey orders!"

"No mutiny on this craft," chuckled Digby. "Buck up, Tommy!"

"I'm jolly well not going to run about all the afternoon," said Tom Merry. "I came out for a convict, not for a torch."

"Obey ordahs, deah boy. You call yourself a Boy Scout, and you back up against the ordahs of your comandah," said Arthur Augustus

severely. "I'm surprised at you, Tom Mewwy. Wun off at once, and wun like anythin'."

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose.

"Well, I'll go," he said. "But if I ever undertake to follow your lead again, you frabjous, burbling jabberwock—"

"I wefuse to be called a jabberwock! Cleah off at once!" said D'Arcy commandingly. "Here's a ten-shillin' note. Jolly lucky I had a wemittance this mornin'!"

Tom Merry took the ten shillings and started off for Wayland. Then the other fellows began to explore the ruins for traces of the convict. Convict No. 101 was certainly concealed somewhere, and the ruined castle was as likely a place as any other, and Cutts evidently thought so, too. But hard as they hunted, no traces were to be found.

Cutts' track was found again, but that was all. If Jonas Racke had been there, he had been careful to leave no tell-tale footprints.

The juniors gathered again round the stairs leading into the vaults.

Tom Merry was not in sight yet.

"Let's get down," said Blake; "we're wasting time. We've got lots of matches, and we can twist up Gussy's collar and tie to make a torch."

"Wats!"

"Well, the matches will do. I'm going," said Blake.

There were several boxes of matches among the juniors. After some hesitation they decided to start. Blake led the way with a match flickering in his hand. They descended into the vaults, the glimmering matches casting a dim and uncertain light round them. Dark and gloomy, damp and chill, were the deep vaults stretching apparently endlessly under the old castle. The building above was in ruins, but those strong old stone arches had stood for centuries unchanged.

"Bai Jove! What's that?" asked D'Arcy suddenly.

It was a crash from above. The juniors rushed back to the stairs and looked up.

Above them was pitchy darkness instead of the glimmer of daylight.

"Gweat Scott! The stone is closed!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in alarm.

"The convict has shut us in."

"More likely Cutts, you ass!"

"Oh, the wottah!"

The juniors rushed up the steps. The heavy oblong stone that closed the opening had been lying beside the aperture when they descended. It had evidently been rolled into its place by hands from above. But it was not quite closed. There was a streak of light to be seen. And through that narrow opening they spotted a well-known face.

"Caught!"

And the convict-hunters yelled in chorus.

"Figgins!"

— —

CHAPTER 7.

Right on the Track!

Figgins and Kerr chuckled. They had the same idea—of searching first the ruined castle. They had arrived late on the scene—certainly. But they had arrived in time to see the last of the School House fellows disappear down the steps to the vaults. And then to close the stone upon them had been very quick work.

The tables were turned—it was Figgins who had the upper hand. He

had wedged in a chunk of brick to keep the flat stone from completely closing, so that he could speak to the juniors below. But there was no chance of the Co. raising the stone from underneath. It was too heavy—especially with the weight of the New House juniors upon it.

"Figgins, you wottah," shouted Arthur Augustus, "waise that stone at once!"

"Rats!"

"You feahful outsiders!"

"Rather glad to be an outsider just now!" chuckled Figgins. "Better than being an insider, in the circs. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "This is where we smile."

"Have you found our convict?" continued Figgins. "If you have, you can hand him over to us. He's our property."

"You wottah! He's ours!" shouted D'Arcy.

"Have you found him?"

"Not yet," said Blake; "but we're going to. This is a School House job. Look here, get that stone up!"

"No fear!"

"I ordah you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I shall give you a feahful thwashin' when I get out, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard.

"You've got to get out first," said Figgins cheerfully. "This is where we gloat. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a wotten twick—"

"Nearly as rotten as tying fellows to a tree," chuckled Figgins.

"You wanted to hunt for our convict, so—"

"You mean you wanted to hunt for ours."

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I wegard Jonas Wacke as our pwivate pwperty. If you don't waise that stone—"

"No fear! You're going to stay there till you promise to let our convict alone," said Figgins. "My dear chaps, this job is above the weight of the School House. We're the chaps to tackle it. But I'll tell you what, when we get the hundred quid, we'll stand a feed and let you come."

"Wats!"

"Well, you'll stay there till you give your giddy parole to let our convict alone," said Figgins. "We're going to close the stone right down, and pile rocks on it. If you find the convict, you can keep him there. We'll come again this evening, and ask you whether you've changed your minds. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared another voice. "This is where I come in!"

And the School House juniors on the stair yelled with delight:

"Tom Merry!"

The captain of the Shell had returned from Wayland, to find Figgins and Kerr sitting on the stone, and his clauins imprisoned below. Tom Merry did not waste time. He rushed upon the New House juniors and snote them hip and thigh.

Figgins and Kerr had not been expecting that attack. They had supposed Tom Merry to be below in the vault with the rest of the School House party. His sudden arrival took them completely by surprise.

Figgins went rolling over, and Kerr went rolling across him, as Tom Merry charged; and before they could rise, the Shell fellow gripped the stone and rolled it back with a terrific effort.

The stone crashed back, and the

entrance was clear. In another second Figgins and Kerr were up again, and piling on Tom Merry—but too late! From below the School House fellows came up with a rush.

Figgins and Kerr were seized by many hands, and bumped over and sat upon. And the School House fellows chortled with glee.

"Tables turned once more," grinned Blake. "This is where the New House gets it in the neck."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly lucky I sent Tom Mewwy to Wayland for the flash-lamp. You see the advantage of having a fellow of tact and judgment for your leadah, deah boys."

"Of course, you know the New House boundahs were comin' here," Monty Lowther remarked sarcastically.

"You must judge by results, deah boy, and my awwagements have turned out a gweat success," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Some chaps are born to command, you know. Now we've got to get wid of these boundahs, and look for our convict before that wottah Cutts collahs him and wobs us of our weward."

"Cutts?" gasped Figgins. "Is he on the track, too?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly lot of nerve, to look for a convict by himself," said Kerr. "I don't think I should care to meet No. 101 alone."

"Three giddy parties searching for No. 101—to say nothing of the warders," grinned Tom Merry. "We can't stop Cutts, but we can bottle up the New House. Figgins, old man, you've got to chuck it."

"Rats!" said Figgins politely.

"Then I'll tell you what," said Tom Merry. "We'll go co.—us up against Cutts of the Fifth. Lower School stick together against seniors."

"Good egg!" said Figgins. "I'm on!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you forget that I'm leadah, and that all suggestions of that kind must pwoceed ffrom the leadah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "Figgins, deah boy, I shall be vowy pleased if you will go co. with us in lookin' for the convict."

Figgins grinned.

"Delighted, Gussy."

"Done!" said Kerr.

"Vewy well," said the swell of St. Jim's, "it's a go. You can get off their necks, deah boys. Now if you've bwrought that electwic lamp, Tom Mewwy, we'll search the vaults and collah the convict if he is there without givin' Cutts a chance to step in and wob us."

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins and Kerr joined the search-party cheerfully. The juniors descended into the vaults, Tom Merry leading the way with the torch.

"Pway be on your guard, deah boys, and don't talk, in case the wottah heahs our voices," said Arthur Augustus. "Bettah keep silent."

"Shurrup!"

"Don't be checkay to your leadah, Blake."

"Don't jaw, old chap," said Figgins.

"Weally Figgins—"

"He must be wound up," said Monty Lowther. "I vote that we wait here till he runs down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are makin' a feahful wov with that cacklin', deah boys," said D'Arcy. "The wottah will take the alarm, and cleah off, if he is heah."

(Continued on next page.)



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OPTIMISTIC.

Heavy-weight Boxer: "It's a long way from the dressing-room to the ring."

Opponent: "Don't worry—you won't have to walk back!"

A football has been awarded to L. Ellerington, 9, Greenwood Avenue, Cherry Tree Estate, Beverley, Yorks.

THE EDITOR REGRETS.

Editor: "That fellow Inkwell sent in an article called 'Why Do I Live?'"

Sub-editor: "What have you done with it?"

Editor: "Returned it with a slip saying: 'Because you posted this instead of bringing it!'"

A football has been awarded to A. Reader, 13, Ripley Grove, Brookvale Park Road, Erdington, Birmingham.

ENTERPRISING.

Foreman: "Now, then, Jake, how is it that these men are taking two planks of wood at a time, and you only one? Are you lazy?"

Jake: "No, boss. They're too lazy to go twice!"

A football has been awarded to A. Bird, 23, Norbury Cross, Norbury, London, S.W.16.

THE NEW CHAMP.

"What, no tip!" said the indignant waiter. "Why, the champion miser of the town sometimes gives me a penny."

"Does he?" replied the Scotsman. "Weel, just take a look at the new champion!"

A football has been awarded to R. Snaith, 169, Burnt Ash Hill, Lee, London, S.E.12.

POINTS FOR THE VILLA.

Monty Lowther: "Do you know, Tom, that at Aston the tramlines are being pulled up?"

Tom Merry: "No. What for?" Lowther: "To give Aston Villa the points!"

A football has been awarded to O. Jackson, 67, Kington Green Road, Olton, Birmingham.

CLEVER.

Father: "Well, Reggie, what results have we this term?"

Reggie: "Not so bad, father. I'm next to the top boy—when we stand round in a circle"

A football has been awarded to V. Fielder, 5, South Crescent, Finchley, London, N.3.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,462.

"No way out," said Herries. "Yes, there is, though," said Tom Merry. "Some old scientific johnny who was exploring here last term discovered a bricked-up passage, and it was opened to see what was on the other side. I remember seeing it in the local paper at the time. They found a brick passage under the ground, leading away somewhere—to the monks' cell in Rylcombe."

"Yaas, I wemembah now. If the wottah takes the alarm, he can cleah out and escape to the woods. Pway be quiet!"

"We'll look for the passage first, and see if there's any sign of him," said Tom Merry.

He led the way, flashing the torch before him in advance.

The juniors were very much on their guard. They hardly thought that the convict was there—but it was possible. It was a likely enough place to hide. And if he was there, and they discovered him, he would certainly be a rough customer to tackle.

"Here's the passage," said Blake. The juniors halted.

The dark opening showed in the stone wall of the vault. Masses of brick lay about, as they had been left by the workmen months before, when the bricked-up passage was opened under the direction of a distinguished archaeologist. Beyond the opening the passage was dark and gloomy. The juniors shivered a little as they looked into it, and smelt the strong, earthy odour that came from it.

"Not a giddy cheerful spot," murmured Monty Lowther.

"My hat! Look here!"

Tom Merry stopped suddenly.

On the jagged point of the broken brickwork was a fragment of cloth, evidently torn from the clothing of someone who had passed in a hurry in the darkness, and probably stumbled there.

And the fragment of cloth, as Tom Merry held it up in the light of the torch, was of a coarse material, greyish in colour.

The juniors gazed at it with bated breath. All of them realised that it had been torn from a convict's tunic. They had seen such material once before.

There was no doubt now. The convict had been there.

The juniors looked at the tell-tale fragment as if they could hardly believe their eyes. They had entered upon the convict hunt in a half-humorous spirit, and with very little real expectation of coming upon No. 101. It gave them a thrill to learn that they were close upon him, after all—that he was probably at that moment within sound of their voices.

They drew closer together, casting quick and uneasy glances round them in the darkness.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We're weally on the track!"

Most of the juniors had brought sticks with them, in case they should be wanted. They grasped their weapons a little more tightly now. If they came upon the hunted, desperate man, there was little doubt that their weapons would be wanted.

"He's been here," said Tom Merry, flashing the light round. "He may have heard us, or more likely heard Cutts, when he was here, and bolted by this passage. If that's the case, he's got to the wood long ago. And Cutts—"

"And Cutts may have gone to head him off!" Blake exclaimed excitedly. "I was surprised that he cleared off so easily, and left us in possession. He's finished here, and he's gone to lay for the convict at the monks' cell. He could cover the distance in half the time above ground, and he'd get there first."

"Gweat Scott! The deep wottah!" "Let's get after him," said Figgins. Tom Merry shook his head.

"He's more than half an hour ahead, and it's not so long as that to the cell in the wood. If he headed No. 101 off, the rotter may have dodged back this way. We'll go through the passage."

"It's jolly risky!" said Kerr. "Oh, rats!"

"Pity I didn't bring Towser," said Herries regretfully. "Towser would smell him out like a shot."

"Never seen a shot smell anything out," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ass! I mean—"

"I repeat that it's jolly risky," said Kerr. "I'm game, if you fellows want to go, but it's a mug's idea. Let's get on."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Oh, we're not going to chuck it up now!" said Tom Merry. "There are nine of us, anyway."

"Time to run when we see the convict, too," Monty Lowther suggested cheerfully.

"Suppose you fellows wait here while I go for Towser?" said Herries.

"Rats! Come on!"

And, led by Tom Merry with the torch, the adventurers plunged into the noisome darkness of the underground passage.

CHAPTER 8.

The Capture of No. 101!

CUTTS of the Fifth stopped. He had hurried down the hill from the old castle, and had taken a short cut through the wood, at a good speed. He had reached a deep glade, surrounded by trees stripped of their foliage.

In the midst of bushes stood a little building of stone. It was the cell of a recluse, inhabited by monks during penance, in the old days when St. Jim's was a monastery, and the ruined castle was a great and imposing building garrisoned by Norman soldiers. Now the monks' cell had fallen to decay—the roof was gone, and creeping plants grew inside and out, and moss patched the cracked stones of the floor.

There were two apartments in the old stone cell—the cell itself above the ground, and a deep, dark cellar below. Into that hidden cellar opened the passage from the vaults of the old castle—a secret means of escape and communication with the outside world in time of siege, such as most strongholds were provided with in those stormy days of old.

For many centuries it had lain hidden, till it was explored by an enterprising archaeologist.

Cutts of the Fifth stopped outside the stone cell and peered in at the shattered doorway. Cutts was breathing hard from his haste. There was a glitter in his hard eyes, and his teeth were firmly set.

There were few fellows at St. Jim's who would have cared to encounter Jonas Racke, Convict No. 101, alone and unaided. But Cutts was one of the few. Cutts was a blackguard of the first water, but it could not be denied that he had one redeeming quality, at

least—a cool and determined courage, an iron nerve that nothing could shake.

Cutts knew his danger, but it did not cause him to hesitate for a moment.

It was the hundred pounds reward that he was thinking of.

His latest plunge upon the "geegies" had left Cutts in difficulties for money; his dead certs had turned out to be certs only for the bookmakers, and Cutts was badly in want of money.

He did not care a rap for the convict, or for the damage the man might do him if he retained his liberty. All he cared for was the fact that if he succeeded in laying the fugitive by the heels, or in bringing the police to his hiding-place, he would win the reward of a hundred pounds. And that handsome sum of money would relieve Cutts of all his little financial difficulties, and leave him a considerable margin to tempt fortune anew.

Cutts was ready to run risks for that. He had boundless pluck and an iron determination. He had thought the matter out coolly, and determined to run the risk. He had investigated the deep vaults under the ruined castle, and he had seen the fragment of cloth from a convict's tunic.

It was easy for him to guess the rest. The escaped convict had been there, the sound of Cutts coming into the vault had given him the alarm, and he had fled by the underground passage to gain the woods, probably supposing that the police were on his track. And Cutts had hurried to the outer end of the secret passage to bar off his retreat.

He knew that he could cover the distance above the ground in half the time of the convict, stumbling and groping along in the darkness of the passage.

Cutts drew a life-preserver from his pocket as he peered into the stone cell. All was quiet and still there. If the man was coming along the underground passage he had not yet arrived at the outlet.

If the ruffian attempted to escape that way Cutts intended to tackle him. If he remained lurking in the underground recesses, the Fifth Former, as soon as he was satisfied upon that point, would hurry off to Rylcombe Police Station for aid, and bring a party to run the convict down in his hidden recess.

Cutts waited and watched.

If the man did not appear in half an hour at the outside, Cutts would feel pretty certain that he intended to remain below ground. But until he was sure he did not dare to leave for help. He did not want No. 101 to dodge away and escape.

He waited patiently, his eyes on the interior of the cell, his life-preserver gripped in his hand. In the centre of the moss-grown cell was a square opening, giving admittance to the cellar below. By that opening the convict must come, if he was coming at all.

Clunk! Cutts started, and his blood thrilled as he heard that slight sound in the stillness. It was the sound of a stone slipping under a stumbling foot.

His eyes gleamed as he watched.

Suddenly from the opening in the floor of the cellar a head and shoulders rose into view. The close-cropped bullet-head; the dirty, savage face, with four day's stubble of beard on the chin; the gleaming, desperate eyes; the torn and muddy tunic, betrayed the convict.

It was Jonas Racke, No. 101.

The savage eyes glared round in search of a foe. Cutts kept well out of sight, peering at the man from behind the doorway.

The convict came higher, still glaring about him like a savage animal. A heavy bludgeon was gripped in his right hand; his grasp upon it was tight and tense. There was no doubt that he would use it, even to the extent of murder, rather than be captured. Yet Cutts did not falter, his nerve did not fail for an instant. He waited.

The man drew himself up, and stepped from the stone stair into the cell. He was a short and powerfully built man, full of muscular strength. In a struggle with him, Cutts, strong as he was, would have had no chance. But Cutts did not intend to tackle the ruffian hand-to-hand.

He scarcely breathed as the convict

Cutts was upon him in a second. His right knee was planted upon the convict's chest, pinning him down, and the life-preserver whirled in the air.

"Resist, and I'll brain you!" said Cutts coolly, without a shake in his voice.

The man glared up at him dizzily.

Dazed as he was he was about to struggle; but the weapon raised above his head was ready to descend, and he shrank convulsively from the threatened blow. It would have stunned him, if it had not fractured the skull.

"Don't, gov'nor!" panted the ruffian. "I give in!"

"You'd better!" said Cutts grimly.

The man blinked at him wretchedly.

one of the convict's wrists, and tightened it. He had come prepared. The hunted look deepened in the ruffian's eyes. He made a motion as if to resist, but stopped. For the moment Cutts, gentleman as he would have called himself, was as ruthless and unscrupulous a ruffian as Jonas Racke himself. The man quailed under his steady, remorseless eyes, and he allowed his wrists to be drawn together, and bound with cord.

Cutts worked quickly with his left hand. The two strong, hairy wrists were bound together, the cord knotted securely, and Jonas Racke was a prisoner.

Then Cutts rose to his feet,



A figure in overcoat and cap came past the edge of the masonry, and the concealed juniors leaped out upon him at once. There was a loud yell as the victim went crashing down under the weight of Tom Merry & Co. "Huwway!" chirruped Arthur Augustus. "We've got him!"

came crouching towards the doorway of the cell, evidently with the intention of peering out and scanning the wood for enemies.

Cutts drew silently a little farther back.

The bullet head, the hand gripping the bludgeon, came into sight. And then Cutts, with instant precision, struck with the life-preserver.

Crash!

The man, quick as a hunted animal, started back, and saved his head as the vicious blow descended. But the life-preserver crashed upon his shoulder, and his right arm hung paralysed by his side, his bludgeon crashing down on the stones. The convict reeled back, with a hoarse, savage cry. He was helpless for the moment, and Cutts did not give him an instant to recover.

He leaped forward, and his left fist, clenched, hard as iron, caught the convict on the point of the jaw.

The man went down heavily, dazed by the blow

"Lemme off, gov'nor! You're a young gentleman. Watcher want goin' for a poor cove? S'elp me, I've had a 'ard time of it in the cells, I 'ave! Let me off, gov'nor. Wot does it matter to you if I go?"

"It matter exactly one hundred pounds," said Cutts coolly. "If you've got that sum about you, I'll take it, and you can go to Jericho, for all I care."

"Blood money," said Jonas Racke hoarsely. "You want the price of a cove's life. That's wot you're arter, and you a gentleman."

"Don't struggle," said Cutts. "I shouldn't have the slightest compunction about braining you. You are a dangerous wild beast, and if your stupid skull was cracked, it would be no loss to anybody. If you make any attempt to resist down comes this life-preserver, and you won't know what happens next."

With his left hand he drew a loop of cord from his pocket, and passed it over

The convict lay at his feet, panting. He was helpless now—his hands bound—and Cutts' weapon ready to strike. The desperate ruffian who had baffled the police for three or four days had been captured by Cutts, single-handed.

Cutts looked down on him, a grim smile of triumph on his face. There was, perhaps, a gleam of something like compassion in Cutts' look. The lawless blackguard of St. Jim's had something in common with the ruffian who lived by breaking the law. But if he pitied the hurt, dirty, miserable wretch at his feet, it did not make any difference to Cutts' intentions. Jonas Racke was worth exactly a hundred pounds to him.

But suddenly a change came over the convict's sullen, desperate face. As Cutts stood looking down upon him, the light through the doorway gleamed on Cutts' hard, clear-cut face. And a sudden flash of recognition came into the convict's eyes. He panted breathlessly.

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"Master Cutts!"

Cutts started.

"You know my name?"

"Know your name!" The convict hissed out the words between his teeth. "S'elp me! Know your name, and know you, too, Master Cutts, though you don't know me—yet. Go to the police—fetch 'em here—and me over to 'em—tell 'em you've caught Jonas Racke—and I'll 'ave somethin' to tell 'em at the same time!"

Cutts compressed his lips, and stooped over the man, scanning his dirty, stubbly face. And then Cutts' face grew pale.

CHAPTER 9.

Catching a Tartar!

THE fear, the desperation, were gone from the face of the convict now.

He dragged himself to his feet, and stood facing Cutts, his bound hands hanging before him. There was a mocking grin on his stubbly, savage face.

"Fancy meeting an old friend like you 'ere! You didn't know it was an old pal you were arter, I'll be bound. You didn't lay for to 'ave me tellin' tales about you, did you, Master Cutts?"

"You are Peter Dunn," said Cutts, in a low voice. "You've changed—I didn't know you. I understood your name was Jonas Racke."

Racke grinned.

"That's my name—as good as any other," he said. "Coves in my line of business 'ave more'n one name, Master Cutts. The perlice were arter Jonas Racke at the time I knew you, and I was called by another name. But I've got a long memory for old friends, Master Cutts. I ain't forgotten you!"

Cutts bit his lips hard.

"If I'd known it was you I should not have started after you," he said.

"Of course, you know that, Racke?"

The convict nodded.

"I know you wouldn't 'ave dared," he said. "I don't know that you wouldn't sell an old pal for a 'undred quid. You was always 'ard, Master Cutts."

"I shan't be hard on an old friend," said Cutts quietly. "I shan't take you to the station now. I'm sorry I hit you. This is a disappointment to me. I wanted the money!"

"Orses again—or cards?" grinned Racke.

"Both," said Cutts coolly. "But that doesn't matter now. I'm going to let you loose, of course. You'll take your chance. If you're caught—I suppose you will be, in the long run—you'll hold your tongue about me? It won't do you any good to give me away."

"Cert'nly!" said Racke, with another grin. "I've 'eld my tongue so far, ain't I?"

"It was decent of you, but you were always a sportsman," said Cutts. "I'm sorry you should be in a hole like this. I'd help you if I could. Anyway, I shall let you go. Put out your paws!"

The convict held out his bound hands and Cutts untied the cord he had knotted carefully on the sinewy wrists.

"You got something to smoke about yer, Master Cutts?" said the convict hungrily. "I ain't tasted terbacco fur—it seems years on end."

Cutts drew a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and passed them silently to his peculiar friend.

Cutts was perfectly cool and calm, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,462.

though there was bitter rage in his heart. His scheme for making a hundred pounds had succeeded, only to be swept away like a house of cards at the last moment. He did not dare to provoke the enmity of Jonas Racke by handing him over to the police—that was all there was about it. He had to bear his bitter disappointment the best he could.

Racke lighted a cigarette with the matches Cutts handed him, and grinned with enjoyment.

"Rather a change in the programme, this, ain't it, Master Cutts?" he said.

"A great change," said Cutts.

"And you're goin' to 'elp me," said Racke. "I'm in a bad way. Was it you who scared me out the vaults? I thought it was the perlice."

"It was I. I should advise you not to return there, either. There are a gang of kids from my school searching for you there."

"I'm in a bad way," repeated the convict. "I'm 'ungry—ain't tasted nothin' fur two days. I must 'ave clothes to get away in, Master Cutts."

Cutts drew a deep breath.

"I can't do that for you," he said.

"It means imprisonment to help a convict to escape the police. I'm sailing pretty near the wind in letting you loose now—you know that—and in holding my tongue about having seen you. I can't do more."

The bulldog jaw of Jonas Racke seemed to become squarer, and the grin faded from his face. He stared savagely and threateningly at the schoolboy through the blue haze of the cigarette smoke.

"You're goin' to 'elp an old pal," he said. "You 'elp me, and I'll 'old my tongue, whether I'm caught or get away. But if you don't 'elp me, Master Cutts, I opens my mouth the minute the perlice lays 'ands on me!"

"Be reasonable," said Cutts, inwardly cursing the greed of money that had led him to engage in the pursuit of the hunted man. "I've done all I can."

"You're going to do more, or—"

"Or what?" said Cutts, with a steely glitter in his eyes.

"Or you'll be shown up," said Racke savagely. "They can't send you to prison, I s'pose, as they can send me. But for a young gentleman in your position it would be as bad, I reckon, to be disgraced and kicked out of school."

"I don't deny that."

"You remember the time you had a big sum laid on a certain Peter Dunn, wot was fightin' the Bermondsey Bantam, Master Cutts?" pursued Racke. "And it turned out that the Bantam was in wonderful form, and your money was goin' to be lost. You know what happened to the Bantam. The police are still looking for the two individoos unknown wot lambasted the Bantam in a dark lane, and left 'im lyin' with a cracked 'ead. That was violent assault, Master Cutts; and if it was known that them two was you and me—"

"You could not betray me without betraying yourself in that matter."

Racke chuckled.

"A little more won't 'urt a fellow who's doin' a ten-year stretch," he said. "I ain't got nothin' to risk. Three months 'ard won't come 'eavy arter ten years' penal. But a month would settle you for life!"

"You wouldn't be believed. You couldn't prove it," said Cutts, pale to the lips now.

It was the most reckless piece of blackguardism that Cutts had ever engaged in, and he had believed that it was buried out of sight for ever.

"Prove it!" said Racke reflectively. "I think I could. The Bantam caught sight of one of them as knocked 'im down. He'd know him again, too, though he wouldn't think of looking for him in a big Public school—not unless he'd got a hint. P'raps my word alone wouldn't be taken. P'raps the Bantam's alone wouldn't convict you. But the two together would settle your hash, I reckon. Taken along with the fact that you 'ad big money laid agin him—and that could be proved. And I tell you the Bantam is mighty spiteful about it, and ain't forgotten it. You can't afford to quarrel with me, Master Cutts."

Cutts knew that.

His heart was sinking. His greed for the blood-money had landed him in a fearful position. Hitherto he had had no fear of this man betraying that past-buried episode—the man, ruffian as he was, had his own sense of honour, in his own way, and he stood to be imprisoned if the facts came to light. But now circumstances were altered.

Racke had nothing to lose now by betraying him, but Cutts had everything to lose by being betrayed. In spite of his coolness his brain almost reeled as he thought of it. The whole of his secret career as a blackguard laid bare, his reckless gambling, and that crowning act of ruffianism by which he had risked not only his good name, but his liberty. Whether he would be punished for that mattered little. If it came to light he would be utterly ruined, and that was enough.

Agitated as he was, he did not allow his face to betray his thoughts. Jonas Racke watched him keenly, but Cutts' hard, clear face remained unchanged.

"You're a good sort!" said Racke at last. "But you've got to toe the line, Master Cutts! I'm sorry for it, but there you are. I've got to keep away from the police. I ain't got anybody to 'elp me, only you. You can do it, and you must."

"I will do it," said Cutts, with a reckless laugh. "I'm under your thumb, and it will be an adventure, anyway. What do you want—clothes, food, money?"

"That's it," said Racke eagerly. "And I tell you, Master Cutts, you stand by me, and I'm as mum as an oyster, caught or not. You ain't nothin' to fear from me, if you don't go back on me. S'elp me, I wouldn't ask you to run the risk; only wot's a cove to do?"

Cutts nodded.

"I'll help you," he said. "You'd better clear out of this. You left a rag behind you in the vaults, and if those kids find it they may come along here. I'll get you some things at the school, and bring them to you after dark. You'll have to wait for me somewhere—in the wood will be the safest. Take the rest of the cigarettes; and here's a quid, in case you have to bolt without seeing me. Mind, I'm going to do my level best for you, and I rely on your acting like a sport if you're caught, after all."

"S'elp me!" said Jonas Racke. "I never was a nark! Mum's the word!"

"Right-ho! Get into the wood now, and lie low. You'll hear the church clock strike at midnight, and I'll be ready for you. Come back here then, and I'll be here. Don't fail."

"You bet!"

"And now, hark!"

From below came the sound of a voice. It came from the cellar underneath the mossy stone floor upon which they were standing.

"Here we are, deah boys, and the wottah's not here!"

Cutts gritted his teeth. Jonas Racke made a spring for his bludgeon, a desperate look on his face.

"I'll run for the woods?" he muttered, with a quick, inquiring glance at Cutts.

The Fifth Former nodded quickly, and the convict disappeared from the cell.

Cutts stepped quickly towards the opening in the floor.

There were only four steps from the cellar to where he stood, and if the juniors came out now they would see the convict as he ran for the wood. He was clearly visible through the gap in the shadowed walls of the old cell.

They had to be kept below until Convict No. 101 was clear, and that was Cutts' business now. He stepped to the opening, with his fists clenched and a savage gleam in his eyes.

CHAPTER 10.

Very Suspicious!

TOM MERRY & CO. had followed the passage to its end. They crowded now in the cellar underneath the old stone cell, and Tom Merry flashed the light of the torch round him.

"Nobody here," he remarked.

"Oh, he's got clear, unless Cutts has headed him off," said Jack Blake. "And I don't think Cutts would do it on his lonesome. Anyway, let's get out of this! I want to breathe!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry came first up the steps. The other fellows were crowding behind him. Tom started, and halted suddenly as he caught sight of a figure bending over the opening above.

"Look out!"

"Bai Jove! Is it the convict?"

"Ahem! No, it's Cutts," said Tom Merry, recognising the Fifth Former. "You ass, Cutts, you gave me a jump! I thought it was the giddy convict for a minute!"

"Keep where you are!" said Cutts grimly.

Tom Merry stared.

"Why shouldn't we come up?" he demanded. "We're jolly well not going to stop in this cellar! We've had enough underground to last us for a long time!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Cutts!"

"If you come up, I shall knock you down!" said Cutts coolly.

"Why, you rotter!"

"You feahful outsidah!"

"I believe he's caught our convict, and he wants to keep him to himself!" said Figgins excitedly.

"Have you got our convict, Cutts, you ead?"

"If you have got him, Cutts, you wottah, I insist upon your handin' him ovah at once! I warged him as our pwivate pwoperty."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here, I'm coming up!" said Tom Merry. "If you play the giddy goat, Cutts, you'll get hurt! Here goes!"

Tom Merry ran up the steps.

Cutts struck out without hesitation.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody!

"What is your favourite pet?" asks Blake. A crumpet.

Seriously, though, Manners ought to be a pretty strong chap. He's always "developing."

You heard about the conscientious railwayman who was given a can of oil and told to go ahead and oil the points? Three weeks later the company received a postcard from him from Aberdeen: "Please send more oil."

Glyn is a clever chap. The only thing he can't invent is a good excuse for not having done his prep.

Then there was the electrician who pressed the doorbell for some time, and then exclaimed: "I wish these fat-heads who want their doorbells fixed would stay at home!"

A fire occurred at the Wayland Public Library. The smoke poured out in volumes.

In reply to Figgins, the way to prevent a tablecloth getting spoilt

Jonas Racke had disappeared into the trees now, but Cutts dared not let the juniors emerge until the man was at safe distance. The blow would have sent Tom Merry rolling down the steps, but he dodged back and avoided it, and Cutts almost overbalanced himself as his fist met with no resistance. As he lurched forward over the steps, Tom Merry sprang up again, and butted right into him bodily, and Cutts went reeling backwards.

Bump!

Tom Merry leaped out from the stair as the Fifth Former fell, and the other juniors came swarming up after him.

Cutts sprang to his feet. But it was too late; the juniors were pouring out, and there were too many for him to tackle.

"Now, what's the little game?" demanded Figgins indignantly. "Why don't you want us here? Have you found our convict?"

"You cheeky young scoundrels—"

"Pway modewave your language, Cutts, othahwise we shall pitch you down into the cellah!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

Cutts gritted his teeth. He was inclined to run "amuck" among the juniors, hitting out right and left. But there was no doubt that if he had, he would have got very much the worst of it. The juniors looked suspiciously about the stone cell. Cutts' conduct was inexplicable unless he had made some discovery he wished to keep from their knowledge.

Convict No. 101 was certainly not in the cell. The little place was crowded by the juniors, and there was no hiding-place in it large enough for a rabbit. Nor was there any sign of the convict having been there.

by tea stains is to newspaper instead.

"Think of the plight of a centipede with corns," says Skimpole. But what about a giraffe with a sore throat?

Remember, the only way to keep a friend is to be one.

Everybody was shouting at once at the big Wayland cup-tie. 30,000 hoarse power!

As the perfect butler said when the mansion was ablaze: "Excuse me, sir, but you are wanted at once on the fire escape."

The "Wayland Courier" reports that a man has been admitted to hospital suffering from a painful melody. Crooning on the brain!

Must quote Tom Merry. "I suppose Lowther is sometimes hard up?" wrote a reader. "Yes," replied Tom, "but he's always 'rich' in humour."

They say taxi-drivers don't mind traffic blocks. It's money for jam.

American prison warders have gone on strike. Prisoners are eager to "come out" in sympathy.

"Suffering brings out the best in us," said the Head. Yet Mr. Selby was quite wrathful when Wally D'Arcy stepped on his pet corn!

Fish Story: "Is this river good for fish?" asked the onlooker. "It must be," replied the angler; "they won't be caught!"

Never give up hope, chaps!

"Have you seen him, Cutts?" Tom Merry asked.

"Seen whom?"

"The convict."

"What rot! Of course I haven't."

"Didn't he come out this way?" asked Blake.

"If he had, I should certainly have seen him, I suppose," said Cutts, lying with the ease and facility that comes of long practice.

"I cannot undahstand it," said Arthur Augustus. "I feel sure he came this way. I think I heard him ahead of us in the passage once or twice—somebody, at all events, and that somebody must have come out. Hasn't anybody at all come out here, Cutts, deah boy?"

"Nobody, of course," said Cutts.

"Then it is vewy wemarkable."

"Very remarkable, if true," said Kerr dryly.

Cutts gave the Scots junior a fierce look.

"Don't you believe me?"

"No. I don't," said Kerr coolly. "Why were you trying to keep us down here? There was somebody here you didn't want us to see. What are you here at all for? You're looking for Jonas Racke, same as we are. My belief is that you've watched him come out, and perhaps you know where to find him at this minute."

Cutts laughed.

"You're welcome to think so," he said. "I've got no more time to waste on you."

And Cutts left the monks' cell.

The juniors looked at one another. Cutts' actions certainly required

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explaining, and they could only be explained, on Kerr's theory. That Cutts had found an old acquaintance in No. 101, and had let him go, of course, the juniors had no means of guessing. That did not occur to their minds for a moment. It was more probable that Cutts had seen which way the fugitive went, and intended to track him down, and wished to keep Tom Merry & Co. off the scent.

"We'll keep Cutts in sight," said Tom Merry. "I suppose he has as much right to look for No. 101 as we have, but he has no right to try to stop us. If he knows which way the giddy convict is gone, and is following him, we'll follow Cutts, and he'll lead us on the track. I can't quite make Cutts out, but it's very suspicious."

"I wogard it as vewy suspicious indeed. We'll keep an eye on that wottah," said D'Arcy. "He's not goin' to twack down our convict."

And the juniors quitted the monks' cell, and followed on the track of Gerald Cutts.

Cutts glanced back and saw them, and smiled grimly. He had guessed that they might follow him, and he had taken a direction opposite to that taken by Jonas Racke. He walked on quickly, the Co. shadowing him, and by a roundabout course reached Rylcombe Lane. Then he walked straight on to the school.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "The wottah's goin' home, deah boys!"

"Looks like it!" grunted Blake.

"Pewwaps he is twyin' to deceive us—to throw us off the twack," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "We'll keep him in sight."

They kept Cutts in sight all the way down the lane to St. Jim's.

To their surprise, Cutts stopped at the gates of the school and rang the bell. The juniors watched him from some distance down the lane.

"He's giving away that he's been out of bounds," said Tom Merry. "Taggles will report him when he lets him in."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blessed if I understand it. He'll get into a row for breaking bounds. The gates have been shut all day on purpose to keep the fellows in. Cutts will have to confess that he cleared out over the wall."

"It is vewy odd."

Taggles, the porter, opened the gate. He was surprised to see Cutts. The Fifth Former went in, and the gate was closed and locked again.

"We're not going to trouble Taggles," said Figgins. "We get in as we got out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors climbed the school wall in the dusk, and dropped within, one after another. They came out from behind the trees, and strolled towards the School House.

Gerald Cutts was just going into the School House as they caught sight of him again.

"Blessed if I understand this!" said Blake. "What did Cutts want to keep us out of the monks' cell for, if he wasn't on the track of our convict?"

"I suppose he can't be off his wockah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"I can't make it out," Tom Merry confessed. "He may have watched No. 101, and seen where he's hidden him-

self; and he may mean to get out again after dark and spot him and hand him over to the police. But it doesn't seem quite clear. And now he's given away the fact that he was out of bounds, and that's simply looking for trouble. Taggles will be sure to report him."

The juniors were puzzled. Cutts' conduct was extraordinary, and only of one thing could they be sure—that the cool and unscrupulous Fifth Former had some very good reason for all that he did.

The juniors entered the School House and found Kangaroo full of news.

"We've beaten them!" was the Cornstalk's first remark.

"Eh! What?"

In the intense interest of tracking down No. 101, Tom Merry & Co. had forgotten all about the junior House match.

"Two goals to one!" said Kangaroo.

"Oh, the House match! Good!"

"I wondah where that wottah is now?" D'Arcy remarked.

"Kangawoo, deah boy, did you see which way Cutts went?"

"He's just gone into the Head's study."

"Bai Jove!"

That was the climax. Cutts had gone directly to the Head of St. Jim's. For what? The juniors could only wonder—but they were soon to know.

CHAPTER 11.

Dished!

"MASTER MERRY!"

Toby, the page of the School House, put his head into Tom Merry's study after a tap at the door. The Terrible Three were getting tea in their study.

Their long outing in the afternoon had made them very hungry.

Tom Merry gave Toby a nod and a cheery smile.

"Hallo, kid! What's wanted?"

"I'm afraid you're wanted, Master Merry," said Toby ruefully. "You and Master Manners and Lowther, sir, in the Head's study."

"My hat!" said Lowther. "What's the row now?"

"Some beast knows we've been out of bounds and has reported us," groaned Manners. "More trouble!"

"Cutts," said Tom Merry abruptly.

"Cutts? He couldn't report us without reporting himself."

"He's worked it somehow—the rotten sneak. He's not a prefect, and he's no right to report us; it's sneaking, like a fag telling tales!" Tom Merry exclaimed indignantly. "By Jove, we'll let the rotter know what we think of him! Has anybody else been sent for, Toby?"

"Yes, sir; all the young gentlemen in Study No. 6," said Toby. "And Master Figgins and Master Kerr."

"The whole giddy family," grunted Lowther. "Lucky for Fatty Wynn he stayed behind to feed. Go and tell the



As Blake & Co. reached the steps, they saw that the place, leaving only a narrow space. But through it the hunters. "Caught!" exclaimed

Head we're busy, Toby, but as soon as we've had tea we'll give his order our best attention."

Toby grinned. He was not likely to take that message to the Head of St. Jim's.

The Terrible Three left their tea untasted, and descended, overtaking Blake & Co. on the stairs.

Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby were looking lugubrious. Figgins and Kerr came in, having been fetched over from their own House. They were not looking cheerful.

"I say, this is jolly rotten, isn't it?" said Figgins. "That awful beast Cutts must have given us away."

"But he'll get it in the neck himself, too, I suppose," Herries remarked.

"No fear!" said Kerr. "He's got some scheme on—one of his blessed deep schemes. You can bet your Sunday socks that Cutts won't get into trouble. The trouble's for us."

"Yaas, I feah that is the case, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I shall put it to the Head, as an old sport—"

"Bow-wow!" growled Blake.

And the glum juniors made their way to the Head's study.

Breaking bounds after the special order issued by Dr. Holmes was a serious matter—as they realised now for the first time. They had not given the matter much thought before—not expecting to be reported to the Head. But they were obliged to think of it now, and they realised that it was serious.



long stone that closed the opening had been pushed into a well-known face. "Figgins!" gasped the convict-junior. "Ha, ha, ha!"

one or more of you might actually have been killed in such a struggle?"

"We weren't afraid, sir," murmured Blake.

"Apparently you were not. But what should I have said to your parents in such a case? Do you think I restricted the school bounds for nothing, or for the purpose of curtailing your liberty? Did you not understand that I had good reason for my action and that it was your duty to obey me?"

The juniors looked very shamefaced. The Head's tone was grieved rather than angry, and they realised more clearly than ever that they had done wrong. Punishment they were not afraid of; but it was decidedly unpleasant to feel that they had done wrong, and had caused concern and anxiety to the kind old headmaster whom they all liked and respected.

"I—I say, sir, we—we're sorry!" stammered Tom Merry. "I'm afraid we didn't think very much before we went out, sir. It was just a lark."

"Yaas, sir; and I am afraid I'm most to blame, as I was leadah and got the othah chaps into it," said Arthur Augustus penitently.

The Head smiled a little.

"I am glad you understand that you have done wrong, at all events," he said. Then his face became stern again. "There is still a more serious side to the matter. I understand that

you were actuated by a desire to obtain the reward offered for the arrest of that wretched man."

"Ye-es, sir."

"I know that a hundred pounds is a large and tempting sum of money," said the Head. "But, not to mention that you had no chance of winning it, can you not see that it was utterly unworthy of you to think of doing so? That money is the price of a man's liberty—a man, certainly, who ought to be in prison—but it is not your duty to take on the work of detectives and policemen. You should be ashamed to touch such money if you had succeeded in winning it."

The juniors were crimson now.

They wished inwardly that the Head had caned them all round instead of talking to them; it would have cut much less deeply.

"The money is, in fact, blood money," said the Head very severely. "For the police it is a different matter—they have their duty to do. But it would be disgraceful for you boys to touch such money."

"I—I suppose it would, sir," said Tom Merry.

"I had my doubts about it from the first," said Arthur Augustus dolefully. "I remarked to Blake that I didn't weally know whethah we were justified in taking it. But we were hard up, you see, and a hundwed pounds meant tea in the study for the west of the term."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"I'm willing to believe that you acted

without thinking," he said, "and I hope you realise now that it was unworthy of you to think of taking the money, even if you had had an opportunity of doing so."

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

"I don't think we should really have taken it, sir, if it had come to that," said Tom Merry honestly. "We didn't think very much about it; but if it had actually come to taking the money, I think we should have left it alone when we'd thought it out."

"I hope so," said the Head.

"You see, sir, we had to catch the convict first. That was the most pwess-in' bisney," said Arthur Augustus. "We could leave thinkin' about the weward till aftahwards."

"You had not the slightest prospect either of finding him or capturing him," said the Head. "The police have been searching for him in vain. You were not likely to succeed where they had failed. It was a very foolish enterprise, as well as being very wrong."

"But we got on the track, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Nonsense. You may have fancied so, but you were really mistaken. Now, I shall not punish you, my boys, if you will give me your word not to leave the school again till the restriction upon bounds has been removed."

The juniors looked dismayed.

The Head was kindness itself—and they could not refuse such kindness—to say nothing of the severity of the punishment which would have followed such a refusal. But if they gave their word they had to keep it. There was no question about that. And so they saw, in their mind's eye, the prospect of success fade away like a mirage.

They looked at Gerald Cutts, and their looks were not loving. The Fifth Former had brought all this upon them, after he had been engaged in exactly the same enterprise himself. Their feelings towards the black sheep of the Fifth were very bitter that moment.

"I suppose Cutts reported us to you, sir?" said Tom Merry at last.

"Yes."

"Did he report himself as well? If it's wrong of us to hunt the convict, I suppose it's just as wrong for Cutts, sir?"

"What nonsense are you talking, Merry?" said the Head sharply. "You do not suppose that a senior boy would enter upon such a ridiculous expedition, surely?"

"But he was on the same tack, sir—I mean, he was doing the same as we were—looking for the convict!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Nonsense!"

"I have already informed the Head why I left the school this afternoon," said Cutts calmly. "You can hardly make Dr. Holmes believe any nonsense of that kind, Merry."

"Cutts has told me all," said the Head.

"But—but—"

"Repeat what you have said to me, Cutts," said the Head. "The juniors seem to be under some misapprehension as to your motives."

"Certainly, sir. I heard by chance some foolish chatter among the juniors, which made me aware that they intended to search for the convict. I found that some of them had broken bounds. I should have informed Kildare, as head prefect; but he was playing in a football match, and most of the prefects were playing, too, so I decided to act myself. Although not a prefect, I felt that it was my duty as a

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Arthur Augustus remarked lugubriously that the Head was certain to be "watty." And there was no doubt that the swell of St. Jim's was right there.

Dr. Holmes was looking decidedly stern when the juniors came in. Gerald Cutts was still in the study.

"My boys, a very serious matter has been brought to my notice," said the Head. "It seems that in spite of my notice that bounds were to stop at the school gates until further notice from me you have left the school this afternoon."

The juniors hung their heads.

There was no defence to make.

"More than this," continued the Head. "As you are aware, the school bounds were drawn in owing to the danger of the escaped convict being met by any boys who went out. Such an encounter might prove very dangerous. I hear now that you have not only broken bounds, but you have actually been in search of the escaped convict—a very dangerous and desperate man, who might have done you serious bodily harm if he had been found by you."

"There were nine of us, sir," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah, sir; we could have handled him very easily."

"I doubt that," said the Head. "A strong man, probably armed, would not allow himself to be overpowered by boys. In any event, some of you would certainly have been seriously injured in the struggle with such a man. You foolish boys! Do you not realise that

senior to look after the silly young duffers."

"Ahem! Your view was quite right, Cutts."

"I was afraid they might get into some danger, sir, and I left the school to look after them. I found them at the ruined castle, and they confessed that they were looking for the convict. I ordered them to return to the school, but they refused to obey as I was not a prefect. I returned to the school myself with the intention of reporting them to you, at the risk of being regarded as a tale-bearer. As a senior boy, I felt it was my duty to do so. If they had by any chance come upon the convict, some of them might have been seriously injured, perhaps murdered. I felt that for no consideration ought I to allow them to run such risks, and as they refused to listen to me, I had no recourse but to place the matter into your hands, sir!"

"You acted quite rightly, Cutts. I hope you understand now, Merry, that Cutts has acted in the matter for the best motives."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

He knew that Cutts was lying, of course; but it was useless to say so to the Head. The Fifth Former's explanation was perfectly plausible, and the juniors could not prove it to be untrue. And Tom Merry, too, disdained to be drawn into a squabble and mutual recrimination with the unscrupulous rascal of the Fifth. He made no reply to the Head's question, and the other juniors were equally silent. It was useless as well as humiliating to bandy words with a liar.

"And now," said the Head, "upon receiving your promise not to repeat your conduct, I shall pass over what you have done. Of course, you will give your promise? I insist upon it."

"We promise, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "We won't break bounds until the notice is withdrawn, and we won't try to track the convict down again."

"Very well. I have your word," said the Head, glancing over the troubled faces of the juniors.

"Yes, sir!" said all of them at once.

"Then you may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And they went.

CHAPTER 12.

Kerr Thinks It Out.

"WOTTEN!"

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's verdict as the dismayed juniors gathered in Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage. Tom Merry & Co. were decidedly glum.

They had been on the track of the convict. Although the Head smiled at the idea, it was the fact, all the same; and they had had hopes of success on a second attempt.

That, as Blake remarked, was knocked on the head now.

They had given their word, and their word was sacred. Not in any circumstances could they go outside the walls of St. Jim's until the Head's notice was withdrawn.

And that left the field clear for Gerald Cutts.

They realised that only too clearly. The cad of the Fifth, with his usual cunning, had cut the ground away from under their feet.

He had left the matter open to himself: he had closed it to Tom Merry & Co. Cutts had been one too many for them.

"It's quite wight about the reward,"

said D'Arcy. "When I come to think of it, you know, I wouldn't have touched it."

"We could have given it to the poor," said Herries. "I don't think I'd like to keep that kind of money, when I come to think of it; but we could have given it to the vicar for the poor in Rylcombe. They need it badly enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And that awful ruffian ought to be laid by the heels," said Manners. "He was put in prison for half killing an old man, and he nearly murdered a warden in escaping. He ought to be shut up like a wild beast. I think we're justified in helping to get him collared, so long as we don't touch the reward."

"Quite wight, deah boy."

"But it's all up now, old man," grunted Blake. "Cutts has done us in the eye. He's simply cleared us out of the way because we're his rivals, and he's going on with the little game himself."

"No doubt about that," said Kerr quietly. "He knows we were on the right track, and he may think that we know more than we do. Why was he so keen to keep us within bounds? Depend upon it, the convict is hidden somewhere near that old cell which he tried to keep us out of, and Cutts knows it."

"And Cutts wouldn't have any scruples about collaring the reward," said Figgins. "The Head might talk to him till he was black in the face, but Cutts would collar the cash, all the same, if he could do it."

"The rotter!"

"The beastly spoofer!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And we can't stop him," said Monty Bowther. "He's dished us. We know now that he knows a lot, and if we followed him next time he goes on the warpath, we could find out what he knows. Very likely he suspected that we would, and that's why he's dished us with the Head. He's too deep for us."

"Perhaps we're not quite so dished as Cutts supposes," said Kerr, in his quiet way.

The juniors all looked at Kerr with new hope in their faces. For the reward they cared nothing, and for the convict very little. But they were very keen to get even with Cutts, if they could, and to prevent the cad of the Fifth from "dishing" them. They would have given a very great deal for a chance of defeating the astute schemer who had played this treacherous trick upon them.

And Kerr, as all the juniors knew, was the fellow to think of a way out of the difficulty, if a way could be thought of at all. Kerr was as keen as a knife, and the canny Scots junior was very often equal to problems that baffled his comrades.

Figgins made no secret of the fact that Kerr furnished the brains of the Co. Indeed, it was pretty certain that Kerr could have made himself leader of the New House juniors, if he had ever wanted to supplant Figgins, an idea which certainly never had entered his mind.

"Go it, Kerr, old man," said Figgins encouragingly. "I can see you've got some idea."

"Yaas, pile in, old chap," said D'Arcy. "As leadah, I am willin' to considah any suggestions frow my followahs."

Kerr grinned.

"Look at the facts," he said. "Cutts

has dished us like this because he knows where the convict is. That seems plain enough to me. So far as I can see, Cutts' intention is to get the man collared and claim the reward, though he's so jolly deep that you never know what he really is up to. Well, Cutts wanted to keep us away from the monks' cell. I take that to mean that No. 101 is there, or near there, somewhere. Cutts can't afford to let the grass grow under his feet. The man may be run down any minute. My idea is that he won't waste time. Now he's got rid of us, he'll be on the track again once more. It may not be safe for him to break bounds again before dark. He knows we shall keep an eye on him. I think he'll get out when we're in the dormitory."

"Quite likely."

"Yaas, but what's the good of knowin' that, deah boy? The trouble is that we can't follow the wottah when he does get out."

"We can't," agreed Kerr. "We've promised to keep inside bounds, and we've got to do it. But we've only promised for ourselves."

"Ah!"

"We've promised, too, to give up looking for the convict. Well, we'll give it up. No. 101 can go and eat coke! But it's up to Cutts to give it up, too. We're going to make him. We've got pals who will help us—who haven't made any giddy promises."

"Bai Jove!"

"Fatty Wynn, Redfern, Kangaroo, and Reilly, for instance," said Kerr. "They haven't made any promises about bounds."

D'Arcy looked very solemn.

"But we can't let our friends look for the convict, Kerr. Our promise implies that we give that up altogether."

"I know that, fathead!" said Kerr pleasantly. "I'm not suggesting that our friends shall look for the convict. That idea is chucked up for good. We've given our word, and we can't either break it or sneak round it. Putting up the other fellows to look for the convict would be practically breaking our promise. Our business is with Cutts."

"That's it."

"Cutts has dished us, and we're going to dish Cutts. He's prevented us from looking for the convict. We're going to prevent him. That's my idea."

"Hear, hear!"

"My idea is to keep Cutts under our eye—after lights out, as well as before," said Kerr. "If he goes out—as I believe he will—he's got to be shadowed. We can't shadow him, but the other fellows can. They're not going to look for the convict—they're going to look for Cutts. Cutts is going to be stopped. Of course, if they came on the convict by accident, it would be their duty to collar him if they could. But the business is with Cutts. If he breaks bounds to-night, he's going to be shown up. He's shown us up, and lied to the Head about us. We're entitled to show him up in his turn. If he goes out, I suggest that our chaps collar him outside the school walls, and ring up Taggles, and bring Cutts in by force."

"My hat!"

"Then he can invent some more lies for the Head," said Kerr. "We've got it in the neck through his giving us away. He's going to be bottled up in the same way."

(Continued on page 18.)



**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! Continuing our long run of school yarns, we come to a specially good one for next week. Martin Clifford has "hit the high spots" again with his latest effort of the chums of St. Jim's.

The story is called :

"THE BOY FROM THE EAST!"

All sorts of new boys have arrived at St. Jim's from time to time, but the newcomer who makes his advent next Wednesday is the most amazing boy the old school has ever had. He is the Jam of Bundelpore, an Indian state. Full of princely dignity, he comes to St. Jim's with all the quaint manners and customs of the East. He puts on side and talks to his school-fellows as if they were slaves in his native state.

That cuts no ice with the free-and-easy St. Jim's juniors. But it's quite another matter when the boy from the East insults Tom Merry and shows a deadly hatred towards him. It is a legacy of hate handed down from the Indian's father, whose savage activities in Bundelpore had to be suppressed by Tom's uncle General Merry. But it comes as a big shock to Tom to discover that there is murder in the heart of the boy from the East!

This is the sort of yarn that you cannot put down once you start reading it. You can take my word for it, you are booked for a grand treat next Wednesday.

"THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDER!"

Then, of course, there's another gripping Rookwood yarn from the pen of popular Owen Conquest. The Head's missing notecase is leading to all kinds of excitement, the centre of which is Mr. Manders, who little dreams that the wallet is concealed in his overcoat.

In the next story Slog Poggers, the sneak-thief who stole the notecase, and who is trying to get his hands on it again, becomes desperate and breaks into Rookwood. But unfortunately for the midnight marauder, his visit coincides with Valentine Mornington's attempt to 'ape Mr. Manders—with astonishing and humorous results.

Next on our programme comes the humorous section of the paper, which is full of laughs, as usual. Monty Lowther is in fine form again, and the GEM Jester awards six more match footballs for readers' jokes which have made him smile. If you have sent in a joke you may be a winner.

SMUGGLERS' CUNNING!

Smugglers are always trying out new tricks for getting their contraband past eagle-eyed Customs officers, but the most cunning dodge I have heard of was worked very successfully off the Turkish coast. Under cover of darkness, the smugglers' vessel creeps silently close in to the coast at a pre-arranged point. Then the contraband, loaded in airtight and watertight drums, is dropped over the side of the ship into the water. The weight of the goods is sufficient to take the drums to the bottom of the sea, after which the smugglers steal away.

A day or so later an innocent-looking boat puts out from the coast and anchors by the spot where the drums were dropped into the sea. Over goes a diver, and one by one the drums are brought to the surface, opened, and the contraband removed. Thereafter it is a simple matter to get the stuff ashore.

PEN PALS COUPON
22-2-36

The smugglers carried on this racket for some time at different parts of the coast, and no one would have been any the wiser if they hadn't made a slip. One of the sealed drums was not heavy enough to sink. It was discovered by the Customs authorities and opened, and the smugglers' scheme was revealed to them. Now the Customs people are employing divers to defeat the smugglers, and the latter will have to think up a new dodge for carrying on their nefarious game.

"EGGSTRADINARY!"

In Natal, South Africa, there are three chicks which, before they were born, once made a meal for a cobra! No, I'm not trying to pull your legs. This is how it happened: A hen was sitting on four eggs one day when the reptile appeared on the scene. The hen, scared out of her life, scuttled away from the nest, squawking. The owner of the chicken came out and spotted the reptile in the nest. Three of the eggs had already been swallowed by the cobra, but before it could start on the fourth it was killed. The snake was opened, and the three eggs, still whole, were removed. They were put back in the nest, and, in due course, hatched out. To-day they are healthy chicks; yet, but for the cobra's habit of not masticating its food until it passes into its stomach, they would never have seen the light of day.

THE DETECTIVE'S DILEMMA.

While I'm on the subject of eating, here's the story of a doggy meal that gave a Denver police-detective a lot of worry. The dogs belonging to the detective took it into their heads one day to eat up fifty of his traffic tags. They are slips of paper which a speed-cop fills in and hands to motorists guilty of breaking the law. Duplicates of the tags are retained by the speed-cop, and it is a rule that for each one he loses he forfeits a day off. So you can imagine the detective's plight when his dogs ate up fifty of his tags. It meant that he would lose over seven weeks' holiday! But fortunately for the tec, his chief took compassion on him when he explained what had happened, and he was let off with a caution. He'll take good care his dogs don't get at his traffic tags again!

TAILPIECE.

New Player: "Playing football is in my blood, you know."

Manager: "Then you must have a poor circulation. It hasn't reached your feet yet!"

THE EDITOR.



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

British and Dominion Film Club want girl members. Write: Miss Noel Dean, 7, Glenlake Avenue, Toronto, Canada. Miss Jean Spaven, 8, Priory Crescent, Southsea, Hants.

Ronald Whyte, 67, Roe Street, Mayfield, N.S.W., Australia; age 13-15; stamps, codes.

Henry Allen G. Duckworth, 14, Levelle Road, Bangalore, South India; age 17-20; films, swimming, sports, aeronautics.

Walter N. Barker, 90, Park Street, Hull, Yorks; age 10-20; overseas; especially Hollywood.

Rene Gibbs, Elcantra, 6, Haralal Das Street, Entally, Calcutta, India; books, films, stamps.

N. F. Nanporia, Kitanocho, 2, Chome, 16-23, Kobe, Japan; age 10-11.

Max D. Jenkins, P.O. Box 136, Napier, H.B., New Zealand; age 15-17; stamps; Newfoundland, New Guinea, Gibraltar.

Hector F. J. Willoughby, Domett House, 2, Domett Avenue, Epsom, S.E.1, Auckland, New Zealand; age 15-17; sports, aviation.

Miss Doris Willoughby, 2, Domett Avenue, Epsom, S.E.1, Auckland, New Zealand; stamps, films, sports; girl correspondents.

Clifford Brown, 54, Synagogue Street, Kimberley, South Africa; age 14-19; stamps.

Miss Lilian Davies, c/o Mrs. W. Booth, Barrow Lane Farm, Dunham Hill, near Warrington; girl correspondents; age 13-14; cigarette cards.

R. Sheppard, 73, The Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham; age 13-14; stamps.

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"Good egg!"
 "If he goes out—" said Tom Merry.
 "I believe he will go out. He can't let the time pass. The convict may clear out at any minute."
 "Quite so."

"Better still, the fellows can collar him and tie him up to the school gates, and then ring for Taggles," said Kerr, with a grin. "He's going to have tit for tat. What he's done for us, we'll do for him."

"Yaas, wathah. I wegard it as bein' perfectly justifiable to show Cutts up, as he's shown us up."

"Hear, hear!"
 "I'll cut over to the New House, and fetch Reddy and Fatty," said Figgins. "You chaps get Kangaroo and Reilly here, and we'll put it to them."
 "Right-ho!"

Ten minutes later the four juniors were in the study. Fatty Wynn and Redfern of the New House, and Kangaroo and Reilly of the School House, were fellows who could be relied upon to any extent. And when the details of the matter were explained to them, they were quite keen to render aid in punishing the cad of the Fifth.

"We'll collar the cad," said Kangaroo confidently. "We'll take a rope and tie him up to the school gates. And after that he can worry out what lies he likes; but he'll have to own up that he was out of bounds, and that he was telling lies this afternoon. That would follow, of course."

"Faith, and we won't miss him!" said Reilly. "It was a dirty trick—telling the Head about you, and we'll make him sorry for it entirely."

"What-ho!" said Redfern emphatically.

"We'll watch the beast!" said Fatty Wynn. "We'll keep an eye on him all the evening. I'll station myself in the tuckshop, in case he comes there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Wynn—"

"We'll all keep an eye upon him till bed-time," said Tom Merry. "But if he goes, I fancy he will go after dark. But there are enough of us to keep the cad shadowed, and we'll make him sorry he told lies to the Head about us."

"Yaas, wathah! He ought to be wagged as a sneak."

"Can't rag the Fifth," said Blake. "But we can show him up, and prove that he was lying this afternoon, and that will be better than a ragging."

And the juniors agreed that it would. And then the meeting broke up, with the understanding that Cutts of the Fifth was to be watched, and not lost sight of for a moment, by someone or other of the Co.

CHAPTER 13.

Kangaroo Makes Discoveries!

GERALD CUTTS was very busy that evening.

He knew that he was doing a very risky thing, but there was no help for it, and he set about it with his usual coolness and quiet determination.

If he performed his part of the agreement, he knew that he could rely upon Jonas Racke to hold his tongue; but he had to pay the price for the secret.

He did not waste time in useless regrets for the greed that had led him, **THE GEM LIBRARY.**—No. 1,462.

in the first place, to take up the hunting of the convict. It had landed him in his present difficulty; but it could not be helped now, and it was futile to cry over spilt milk.

As a matter of fact, there was something in the adventure that appealed to Cutts' reckless nature. It gratified him to think that while the rest of the school was fast asleep, he would be stealing through the dark woods, to meet the desperate man whom all the others would have avoided as they would have avoided a wild beast. And, so far as he cared about the matter at all, his sympathies were with Racke. The man was up against all law and order—and so was the blackguard of St. Jim's, in his part. There were few things that Cutts respected.

In his study, which he had to himself, he prepared the bag he was to take to the cell in the wood. He had to obtain clothes for the convict, and that was his most difficult task. Money he was able to borrow in the Fifth; food he obtained in the school tuckshop. But a change of clothes for Convict No. 101 was a difficult matter. He might have obtained old clothes from Taggles, or the gardener, but he dared not take anything that could possibly be identified as belonging to St. Jim's. In the event of the convict's capture, the police would inquire very strictly into where he had obtained a change of clothes. And if they were traced to the school there would be very serious danger for the fellow who had supplied them.

There was nothing for it but to buy clothes, and that Cutts decided to do. He could get ready-made clothes at a shop in Wayland, where he was not known, and could give a false name there. Indeed, he could make some slight change in his appearance so as to avoid the possibility of identification afterwards.

He could think of no safer plan. To carry out that scheme, he had to visit Wayland before the shops were closed.

The Head's order made it impossible for him to leave the school in the ordinary way, and he had no choice but to break bounds secretly.

His plan was to take the bag with him, with the articles it already contained, and put the new-bought clothes into it, and conceal it in the wood, and at midnight return to it, to carry it to the place of appointment.

The plan was simple enough, and he did not see that he was likely to run any risk, so far—especially as he had warned off the danger from the juniors.

He knew that Tom Merry & Co. could not quit the school after their promise to the Head. Even if they had been capable of breaking their word, they would not have risked a flogging.

He did not fear them now. Cutts waited till the dusk was thickening in the quadrangle. He had told his chums, Prye and Gilmore, that he was going to "swot" that evening, so no one would be surprised to find his study door locked, and his absence would not be suspected in the Fifth.

And nobody outside the Fifth, of course, was likely to visit his study.

As the dusk thickened over the quad Cutts slipped out of the House by a side door, with the bag in his hand.

The thick dusk concealed him from observation by chance passers; and it also concealed from him the fact that a keen-eyed junior tracked him across the quadrangle to the school wall.

It was Kangaroo of the Shell.

Cutts went through the trees, pitched the bag over the wall, and climbed over it, and the Cornstalk junior stood for some moments in hesitation.

The juniors were scattered—some of them in their studies, and those who were keeping watch for Cutts were at different points, looking out for him. Only Kangaroo had seen him slip out of the House by the servants' door.

If the Cornstalk went to warn his comrades, he would lose track of Cutts. And, on the other hand, if he followed him, he certainly could not think of tackling Cutts single-handed. It was a difficult matter to decide, but Kangaroo decided it by slipping over the school wall and shadowing Cutts. The sight of the bag in the Fifth Former's hand had aroused his curiosity. What Cutts could be taking a bag out for was a mystery the Cornstalk could not fathom.

Cutts walked rapidly down the road and took the footpath through the wood. Kangaroo followed him at a distance, catching shadowy glimpses of him every now and then. Cutts did not once look behind. Kangaroo expected him to leave the path and plunge into the wood in the direction of the monks' cell, but he did not. He strode right on to the Wayland Road, and strode along it to the town. Kangaroo was amazed.

"The rotter isn't after the giddy convict at all," muttered the Cornstalk. "It's something else—one of his rotten games, I suppose."

But he kept Cutts in sight in the street.

Cutts turned into an alley, dark and shadowy, and Kangaroo paused. For a moment he fancied that Cutts guessed that he was followed, and was dodging. But as he hesitated, Cutts emerged into sight again, his appearance so changed that Kangaroo barely recognised him. His school cap had disappeared, and he was wearing a large tweed cap, pulled well down over his face, and had a thick muffer round his neck, with his overcoat buttoned up to the chin round it. And a moustache was sticking upon his upper lip.

Kangaroo whistled softly.
 "Ten to one he's going to a rotten gambling club!" he murmured. "I know his little games. But why hasn't he left it till after calling-over? He will have to turn up at call-over with the rest of us, or he'll be missed."

Cutts went on down the street.

Kangaroo watched him enter a shop, over which appeared in large letters:

"Jo. Moses, Outfitters."
 And a large placard in the window announced that Mr. Moses' two-guinea suits were a marvel of quality and cheapness.

That was the climax.
 That Cutts, the dandy of the Fifth, could be there to buy cheap, ready-made clothes was impossible. Not for himself, at all events. And if not for himself, for whom?

Kangaroo waited, in such a state of astonishment that he pinched himself to make sure that he was awake. Was it possible that Cutts knew that he was on the track and was leading him on a wild-goose chase? It was not likely. He would have been more likely to turn on the Shell fellow and lick him.

In ten minutes Cutts came out of the shop. He had no purchases visible about him, but if he made any they were doubtless disposed of in the bag he carried.

He strode away down the street in a hurry.

Kangaroo hesitated a moment, and then boldly entered the shop.

Mr. Moses, the dealer in reach-me-downs of great quality, was making an entry in a book.

"My friend gone?" asked Kangaroo coolly.

"A young gentleman has just been here," said Mr. Moses, rubbing his hands. "He has only just gone."

"Did he get the clothes?" asked Kangaroo, with an inward feeling that he had missed his vocation, and ought to have been a detective instead of grinding Latin in the Shell at St. Jim's.

"Yeth, certainly," said Mr. Moses. "My two-guinea serge suit, medium sized, with cap to match."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Kangaroo.

"Vat can I do for you, young shentleman?" asked Mr. Moses. "My suits—"

"Thanks. I'm not buying anything," said Kangaroo. "By the way, that was my friend, and I've missed him. You know his name?"

"Yeth—Mr. Jones," said Mr. Moses.

"Thanks! I shall catch him if I hurry," said Kangaroo.

He hurried out of the shop.

Cutts had bought a ready-made suit of clothes and a cap, and perhaps other articles; Kangaroo had not stopped to ascertain. And he had given a false name. Why?

Cutts had disappeared when Kangaroo came out of the shop.

From the direction he had taken, Kangaroo guessed that he was returning to the school; and it was hardly likely that he was going convict-hunting with a bag of clothes in his hand, anyway.

The Cornstalk ran all the way back to St. Jim's.

In Rylcombe Lane he caught sight of Cutts again, striding at a good pace towards the school, and without a bag. Somewhere or other en route the Fifth Former had disposed of it.

Kangaroo dodged through the hedge and ran along in the fields for some distance, till Cutts was left well behind. Then he came out in the road again and dashed on to the school. He climbed the school wall, and dropped into the quad, and uttered a yell as several pairs of hands grasped him in the darkness.

"Got the wottah!"

"Fairly caught, breaking bounds!"

"Leggo, you asses!" said Kangaroo.

And there was a gasp of surprise from the juniors who collared him.

"Kangy!"

CHAPTER 14.

Cutts' Secret!

TOM MERRY & CO. released the Cornstalk and stood round him, peering at him in the gloom.

Kangaroo, out of breath after his rapid run, gasped and panted.

"Kangaroo!" repeated Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Did you go after the spalpeen,

Kangy darling?" asked Reilly.

"Yes."

"We found he was gone," said Tom Merry. "His study door's locked; but I climbed the ivy to his window and looked in, and found he wasn't there. Then we knew he had skipped, and we thought he had dodged out without being seen."

"Rats!" said Kangaroo. "He wasn't likely to dodge me. We learn to keep our eyes open in Australia."

"Wats! I considah—"

"He's coming back," said Kangaroo.

"Come away! He may be here any minute now."

"We thought we had him when you dropped in!" chuckled Figgins. "Let's stay here and wait for him, and collar him. We can prove that he was out of bounds, and report him, the same as he did us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's the little game," said Blake.

"No, I tell you," breathed Kangaroo.

"I've found something out. I've got something to tell you. I don't know what it means, but it's frightfully fishy. Come into the House. Never mind Cutts now."

Greatly impressed, the juniors gave up the idea of capturing Cutts as he came in, and they hurried into the House. Kangaroo did not speak again until they were gathered in Tom Merry's study, with the door closed.

Then he related his adventures.

The juniors listened with blank amazement.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Cutts must be frightfully hard up if he is weduced to buyin' weady-made clobber. I suppose that is the reason why he's so keen aftah the hundred pounds weward. Poor beast! I can feel for a chap who has to weah cheap clothes!"

"Ass! The clobber wasn't for himself."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Cutts has been buying clothes, has he?" said Kerr thoughtfully. "And he took out a bag, and didn't bring it back? And Fatty knows something about what was in that bag."

"Fatty does?" said Kangaroo.

The fat Fourth Former grinned.

"Didn't I tell you I was going to keep watch in the tuckshop?" he said.

"Keep watch on the tarts, you mean," said Kangaroo.

"Well, perhaps I had some tarts while I was there," said Fatty Wynn. "You see, Dame Taggles had a fresh lot of tarts in to-day, and they're simply ripping. I had only eighteen, as well as the doughnuts, and the pineapple—"

"Blow what you ate!" growled Kangaroo. "What have you found out?"

"Cutts has been buying grub," said Fatty Wynn. "He bought three dozen sandwiches and a pie, and some cheese and biscuits. He didn't want that kind of grub for a feed for himself. He has better things than sandwiches for his tea. He put them into a bag he had with him. I was thinking at the time that we might raid that bag—"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Figgins.

"This looks jolly queer," said Kerr.

"What do you make out of it?" asked Tom Merry. "Go it! It's your bisney as a Scotsman to think it out."

Kerr grinned.

"It alters the case," he said. "We were pretty certain already that Cutts knows where to look for the convict. We made up our minds about that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, when he clears out of the school, instead of hunting for the convict, he buys clothes, which he certainly doesn't intend to wear himself. I suppose he isn't dotty enough to buy clothes for nothing?"

"He couldn't," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "Clothes have to be paid for, you know. And Cutts must have paid cash at Mr. Moses' shop."

"Ass!" said Kerr politely. "I mean he wouldn't buy clothes without a reason. He wants them—not for himself, we know that. Cutts wouldn't be found dead in a suit of reach-me-downs."

"I must we remark that Cutts is quite wight there."

"They're not for Cutts, so they're for somebody else," said Kerr, whose keen brain had grasped all the facts in their true perspective. "At the same time, he has been buying grub, which pretty certainly isn't for himself. He wouldn't buy three dozen sandwiches for a feed in his study."

"Well?" said the juniors together.

Some of them guessed what Kerr was coming to now, and they were keenly interested.

"Who is it that's in need of grub and clothes more than anybody else?" said Kerr quietly.

"Convict No. 101, of course!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath.

"Bai Jove!"

"And Kangaroo says he hasn't brought either the bag or the clothes back with him."

"That's so," said Kangaroo. "He got rid of them somewhere between Wayland and Rylcombe Lane."

"Then who's got them?" said Kerr grimly. "Kids, chaps, and fellows, we haven't quite tumbled to Cutts' little game till now. I believe he was after the convict when we spotted him in the

(Continued on the next page.)

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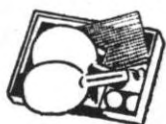


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ruined castle. But something has happened to change his plan, or else we were mistaken then. Cutts isn't after No. 101, to capture him now. He's helping him to escape!"

A breathless hush followed Kerr's announcement.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy at last.

"My hat!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I believe Kerr's hit on it," said Figgins excitedly. "There's no other way of explaining what Cutts has done. But why should he do it?"

"Yaas, explain that, Kerr, deah boy."

Kerr laughed.

"I can't explain that," he said. "I don't know. But in the newspaper reports about Jonas Racke, it's mentioned that he used to be a boxer. We know that Cutts had been mixed up in betting on fights. Racke may be an old acquaintance of his, and he may be helping for for old times' sake."

"Cutts of the Fifth isn't that sort," said Blake promptly.

"Well, no, he isn't," admitted Kerr. "Then I can't say. Perhaps the man knows something about him. Cutts has all sorts of secrets to keep, as we know, and this man Racke may know something that puts Cutts under his thumb. Cutts is just the chap to get into a fix like that, with all his blessed foxy cunning. But whatever his reason is, it's pretty clear what he's doing. He's helping the convict to get clear, and my opinion is that he met him at the monks' cell, and fixed it up with him."

"And that's why he was trying to keep us out."

"Yes."

"My hat! Cutts is sailing pretty close to the wind this time," said Tom Merry. "It means imprisonment to help a convict to escape."

"But we can't give Cutts away," said Blake.

"Wathah not! He is an awful wascal, but we couldn't wisk disgwain' St. Jim's like that," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We shall have to keep mum."

"Seems to me ye're done, then," said Digby. "If Cutts has handed the clothes to No. 101 he won't be going to see him any more."

"Perhaps the man was waiting for him in the wood, and he handed him the bag as he came back from Wayland," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

Kangaroo shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said. "I was pretty close behind him, and he must have been quick about it. More likely shoved the bag somewhere for the convict to find."

"The question is, deah boys, what ought we to do?" said Arthur Augustus. "Cutts ought not to be allowed to help a despewate cwiminal to escape."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Reilly. "But what are we going to do, entirely?"

"I can't understand it," said Tom Merry slowly. "Kerr seems to have worked it out all right, but why should Cutts do it? Is it possible—"

He paused.

"Go on, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "As leadah, I am quite willin' to heah your opinion on the mattah."

"I was thinking he might be laying some trap for the convict, in some way. Cutts is so jolly deep, you never know what to make of him," said Tom. "He may have shoved the clothes there for Racke to find, to tempt him to make

a break and try to get away, and then he could give his description to the police. I don't say it's probable, but I'm certain that Cutts was after Racke, the same as we were, in the first place, and I don't see why he should change his intentions. Anyway, whether he's helping the convict, or whether he's trying to entrap him, we're up against Cutts all the time—we're agreed upon that."

"Hear, hear!"

"Whatever little game Cutts is playing, we're going to stop it and frustrate his giddy tricks."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He played a dirty trick on us, and lied to the Head—and it's up to us to make him sorry," said Jack Blake; "but if he's finished with the convict, he won't break bounds again, and we're dished once more."

"Looks to me as if he's going to dish us all the time," remarked Redfern.

"We don't know that he's finished with the convict yet, whether he's for him or against him," said Tom Merry.

"He may be laying a trap for him, in some way we don't catch on to, or he may be helping him. He may have hidden those clothes somewhere, intending to take them to him later. Anyway, I suggest keeping the watch on Cutts all the same, and spotting him if he breaks bounds."

"Yaas; as leadah, I considah that is best," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Cutts is so fighbtfully deep that we can't tell what he is up to; but if we catch him out of bounds, we can make him sowwy for tellin' the Head about us. Cutts is goin' to be watched, and soonah or latah we shall catch him nappin'!"

Cutts was not feeling particularly easy in his mind just then; but he would have felt still less easy if he had known the decision that Tom Merry & Co. had come to.

CHAPTER 15.

An Unexpected Capture!

HALF-PAST ELEVEN chimed out from the clock-tower of St. Jim's.

The old school was wrapped in slumber.

The last light in the last window had been extinguished, and all the fellows were—or should have been—fast asleep in the dormitories.

But, as a matter of fact, there were several wakeful fellows in the School House just then.

Tom Merry & Co. had not relaxed in their purpose.

They had to admit that, as a matter of fact, they could not quite fathom what Cutts of the Fifth was "up to." But whatever it was, one thing was certain—it was something rascally. And whatever it was, they meant to balk it, in retaliation for his betrayal of them to the Head.

Cutts had stopped that promising convict-hunt, just when the juniors felt themselves to be on the high road to success, and they wanted very much to make Cutts sorry for his interference. And if the rascal of the Fifth was planning to help the criminal Racke to escape the officers of the law, it was very much "up" to them to chip in. While if on the other hand he was scheming to entrap the convict and finger the reward, they were still more determined to stop him. They did not intend to let him reap the reward of his act of treachery if they could help it.

After lights out, Fatty Wynn and Redfern had slipped out of the dormitory in the New House, and stole quietly over to the School House. They were joined in the shadowy quadrangle by Kangaroo and Reilly, and Tom Merry and Blake.

The latter two could not leave the precincts of St. Jim's, but they could help in keeping watch for Cutts. If the Fifth Former came out of the House, they knew the way he must come—by means of the box-room window and the outhouse below. And, in the shadow of the outhouse, they kept watch for him.

It was a weary vigil—the night was cold and chilly—but they did not give in. And as half-past eleven sounded from the clock-tower, they were rewarded.

There was a slight sound in the darkness, and they crouched back in the shadows as a dark figure dropped from the outhouse within a few yards of them.

The juniors scarcely breathed.

They could not recognise Cutts in the darkness, but they knew by the size of the figure that it was not that of a junior, and they had no doubt whatever that it was the rascal they were waiting for.

His shadowy form stole away silently round the School House, and equally silently the juniors followed.

A gleam of starlight fell for a moment on his face as he turned back to glance towards the House. Then the juniors recognised him. It was Cutts of the Fifth.

His face was very pale—deadly pale it looked in the starlight, and there was a drawn and tense look upon it.

Cutts did not see them in the shadows, and after one hurried look back, he ran on towards the school wall, and climbed it and dropped into the road.

The juniors were only a few seconds behind him.

"Out you go!" whispered Tom Merry. "We've got to stay here; but you four—"

"Right-ho!"

Kangaroo & Co. climbed the wall and dropped into the road.

Tom Merry and Blake remained behind. The temptation to follow the others, and see the end of the adventure, was strong. But their promise to the Head held them fast. They were bound in honour to remain within the school walls.

The Cornstalk and his companions knew what to do. Cutts had gone outside the school walls—he had broken bounds. And Kangaroo had a cord in his pocket, and they intended to collar Gerald Cutts by force and tie him to the outside of the school gates.

When he was found there, it would be interesting, as Lowther had observed, to hear what reason he would give for being out of bounds. It was very improbable that he would be able to lie himself out of the scrape, and he would be sorry that he had betrayed Tom Merry & Co. to the Head. It would be tit for tat.

But it was easier to lay that excellent plan than to carry it out.

When the four juniors dropped into the road, and looked round for Gerald Cutts, he had vanished from sight.

There was a mist on the road, and it had swallowed up the cad of the Fifth from sight.

The juniors scanned the road and listened intently; but there was no sign and no sound of Cutts.



As Gerald Cutts stood looking down at him, a sudden flash of recognition came into the convict's eyes. "Master Cutts!" he exclaimed. Cutts started. "You know my name?" "Know your name and you, too," said Convict 101. "You didn't know it was an old pal you was arter, I'll be bound!"

"Dished again!" groaned Redfern. "Sure, he's one too many for us," said Reilly. "What are we going to do now, entirely? You're leader, Kangy."

"We'll make for the monks' cell," said Kangaroo. "If he's going to see the convict there, we'll head for it. We can nab up and get there before him, and nab him when he comes."

"Suppose he doesn't go there?" suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, rats! We'll suppose we've missed him when we do miss him," said Kangaroo. "It's only a chance, anyway."

"Oh, I'm game! I've got some sandwiches, anyway," said Fatty Wynn, beginning to munch as he spoke. "Have one?"

"Oh, blow your sandwiches!" said Kangaroo crossly. "Come on. If you'd been thinking a bit more about business and a bit less about grub, he mightn't have given us the slip!"

"Well, he gave you the slip, too."

"Oh, don't jaw! Come on!"

The four juniors hurried away. It was useless to wait there for Cutts' return. He might be cautious and get into the school at some other point. Kangaroo & Co. hurried down the lane, and plunged into the wood, Kangaroo leading the way by a short cut. He knew the wood well, and even at night he was in no danger of missing the track. They heard three-quarters chime out from Rylcombe, and a few minutes later they came in sight of the old stone cell, glimmering in the dark wood.

Through the opening in the trees overhead the starlight glimmered down, pale and ghostly, on the ragged grass and drifting, dead leaves.

The place was still and silent.

"Not here yet, anyway!" muttered Kangaroo.

"Let's get into the cell and wait for him there," suggested Redfern. "We shall be out of sight there. If he spots us, he won't show up."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors cut quickly across the glade, and ran into the ruined stone building.

It was very dark inside, though there was a glimmering of starlight through the gaps in the shattered roof.

Kangaroo ran in first, and as he did so there was a hoarse exclamation from the darkness within.

"That you, Master Cutts?"

Kangaroo felt a sudden thrill.

A man loomed up before him, a thick-set, powerful man, and the glimmer of starlight showed up the prison garb he was wearing.

It was the convict!

It had not occurred to the juniors, in their haste, that the man might be actually concealed in the cell itself, if he was waiting there for Cutts.

But he was there, and the questioning words had scarcely passed his lips when he realised that it was not Cutts that he had to deal with.

"Selp me!"

He leaped straight at the Cornstalk, his right hand in the air, with the bludgeon in it.

If the Cornstalk had lost his nerve at that moment he would have fallen at the ruffian's feet, stunned, or worse, under the crashing blow.

But Kangaroo, surprised as he was, did not lose his courage. It was too late to back out; the ruffian was upon him. He did not even stop to think. By instinct he lowered his head, and rushed at the ruffian under the upraised arm, and evaded the blow, at the same

time throwing his arms round the burly form, and grasping desperately.

"Help, you fellows!" he panted.

"My hat!"

"It's the convict!"

Kangaroo was strong and sturdy, and he was fighting for his life now. In a very few moments the muscular ruffian would have finished with him if there had not been help at hand. But Redfern, Reilly, and Fatty Wynn grasped the situation in a moment, and they piled in to back up the Cornstalk.

Four sturdy juniors were grasping the ruffian now, and he could not use his bludgeon. Reilly dragged it away, and it crashed to the floor. The man fought like a wild animal, kicking, struggling, tearing.

But he went down with a crash, and the four juniors were on top of him.

They had not come there to meddle with the convict. They would gladly have avoided that fearful encounter. But there was no help for it now. They had to overcome the ruffian, or take the consequences. And they fought for the mastery as fiercely as the ruffian himself fought.

In silence, broken only by shuffling feet and gasping breath, the fearful struggle went on in the dimness of the old stone cell.

Reilly and Redfern had hold of the man's thick, powerful wrists, and in spite of his efforts he could not free them. Kangaroo was on his chest, and Fatty Wynn's arms were wound round his neck in a deadly grip, almost choking him. Strong and savage as he was, the ruffian's struggles weakened at last.

Kangaroo dragged the cord from his pocket, which had been intended for quite a different person.

Redfern and Reilly dragged together THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,462.

the wrists of the exhausted ruffian, and the Cornstalk looped the rope round them, and knotted it.

Then the panting juniors were able to relax their efforts.

They held the convict, however, while the Cornstalk bound his feet with the remainder of the cord.

Jonas Racke lay helpless on the floor as they rose from the desperate struggle. They were breathless, dishevelled, and badly bruised, but they had won! The odds had been too much for Convict No. 101.

The man lay bound, and from his lips poured a torrent of curses and foul epithets, which effectually banished any compassion the juniors might have felt for him.

"Shut up, you brute!" said Kangaroo, in disgust. "Shove something into his mouth. I can't stand that."

Redfern jammed his handkerchief into Racke's open mouth, and the convict was perforce silenced.

"My hat!" gasped Redfern, mopping his brow. "We've caught him. We've woke up the wrong passenger, but we've caught him."

"Hurrah for us entoiely!"

Kangaroo grinned breathlessly.

"We came here to catch Cutts, and we've caught the giddy convict instead," he remarked. "We were blessed asses to run into him like that, but it's turned out all right. My hat, it gave me a jump when he came for me!"

"Sure, and it's worth a hundred quid, too!"

Kangaroo whistled. He had forgotten the hundred pounds reward offered for the apprehension of Convict No. 101.

But he shook his head.

"That belongs to the whole Co., if it belongs to anybody," he said. "But I shouldn't care to touch it for one, and I don't suppose the Head would let us, either. If we hand this brute over to the police, we shall have to confess that we were out of bounds to-night."

"But we must," said Redfern.

"I suppose so."

"Hush!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "Here comes somebody, and I'll bet you a dozen jam tarts to a doughnut it's Cutts of the Fifth."

It was Cutts of the Fifth. He had a bag in his hand, and he came quickly up to the doorway of the stone cell as midnight chimed out from Rylcombe church.

CHAPTER 16.

The Triumph of the Co.!

CUTTS hurried towards the stone cell, little dreaming of what was to greet him there.

The sounds of the desperate combat had died away before the Fifth Former reached the glade, and he had not the faintest suspicion that there was anyone in the cell with the exception of the convict.

He stepped into the doorway, and peered into the gloom of the interior.

"Are you there?" he muttered.

Kangaroo chuckled.

"Yes, we're here," he said.

Cutts started back.

"Noble! You—you—What—what the—"

"Sure, and we're all here!" grinned Reilly. "It's plazed we are to meet ye, Cutts darling! Have you got the reach-me-downs for your friend Racke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the sandwiches?" said Fatty Wynn, grinning. "Racke won't want them now. They'll give him some skilly in the police station, you know. I'll have those sandwiches, if you don't mind. I've finished mine."

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Cutts gazed at the juniors in blank amazement and terror.

"What are you doing here?" he gasped at last.

"Waiting for you!" chuckled Redfern.

"For me! What—"

"And just to fill in the time, you know, we've captured your friend Racke," said Kangaroo coolly. "You're a bit too late with the grub and the clobber. We're going to take your friend to the police station."

Cutts, with a white face, stared down at the bound form of the convict.

Jonas Racke glared up at him. He could not speak with the handkerchief stuffed in his mouth, but his look was most expressive.

"You've—you've caught him?" stammered Cutts.

"Looks like it."

Cutts made a movement towards the convict. Kangaroo sprang into his way, his eyes gleaming.

"No, you don't!" said the Cornstalk grimly. "We didn't come here for him, but now we've got him he's ours, and you're not going to help him, Cutts!"

"I—I—Why should I help him?"

"Blessed if I know! But I know you came here to give him clothes and things, and help him to get away from the police."

"I—I didn't! I—"

"Rats!"

"Let—let me speak to him," stammered Cutts. "I—I won't try to let him loose."

"You can speak to him; but if you try to touch him, we shall pile on you!" said Kangaroo warningly.

"You're jolly lucky not to be denounced to the police for helping an escaped convict! And we'd denounce you, too, only we don't want to disgrace the school."

"Yes, rather!"

Cutts had dropped his bag, and Fatty Wynn had already opened it, and found the sandwiches and started upon them. The cad of the Fifth cast a desperate glance at the juniors. The expression of his glance showed that he was calculating the chances of a struggle, and Kangaroo & Co. were ready for him. But the Fifth Former knew that he had no chance against the four of them, and the thought left his mind almost as soon as it had entered it.

He bent over Racke, and jerked the handkerchief from his mouth. A curse burst from the lips of the captured convict.

"You've given me away!" he muttered.

"I haven't, Racke!" Cutts muttered hoarsely. "You've heard what these brats were saying. I didn't know they were here."

"Make them let me go!" said the convict hoarsely.

Cutts rose, his face white and desperate.

"Let him go, you kids! You don't want the reward. It's blood-money, anyway. What do you want with collaring him?"

"Duty," said Kangaroo calmly. "This will be a giddy triumph for the School House. We're going to take him to the station."

"The New House, you mean!" said Redfern warmly.

"Oh rats! Why—"

"Bosh! I tell you—"

"Will you let him go?" muttered Cutts.

"No, we won't!" said the four juniors together. They might differ as to which House the credit of the capture belonged to, but they were quite agreed on that point. They had made the capture, and they meant to keep their prisoner.

"You don't understand," said Cutts hoarsely. "I—he—"

"No, I don't understand, and I don't want to!" said the Cornstalk. "All I understand is that we're going to get this rotter to the station and hand him over to the police!"

Cutts gave a hopeless look at the convict and passed out of the cell without another word. He could not help him now. Even if he had been able to get him out of the hands of the juniors by force, he could not expect them to be silent with regard to his action; and that would be as bad for him as anything Jonas Racke could say.

The Fifth Former tramped away with misery and fear in his breast.

Kangaroo & Co. did not waste a thought upon Cutts. They knew he was a rascal, though they did not know the motive of this latest example of his rascality. Their business now was with the convict, and for the sake of securing the valuable capture they could afford to let Cutts go. And the fear they read in his white, drawn face made them willing to let him off any punishment, as far as they were concerned. He was paying dearly enough for his treachery towards Tom Merry & Co.

"Now for the station," said Kangaroo. "Hallo! He's beginning his picture-language again. Shove that hanky into his mouth, Reddy!"

And the convict's feet being loosened just sufficiently to allow him to walk, he was marched away by the triumphant juniors of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. were awake in the Shell dormitory when Kangaroo came quietly in. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, and the chums of the Shell were getting anxious. Kangaroo came in alone; Reilly had gone to the Fourth Form dorm, and Fatty Wynn and Redfern to their own House. Tom Merry was sitting on his bed dressed; he uttered an exclamation of relief as the door quietly opened, and the Cornstalk stepped in and closed the door behind him.

"You've come back at last, Kangy."

"Here we are again!" said the Cornstalk cheerily. "I've got a swelled nose, but otherwise no damage done, though it was a tussle with the rotter."

"Who—Cutts?"

"No; the convict."

"What!" A dozen voices gasped out the word.

Kangaroo explained.

"Well, my only hat!" said Tom Merry. "You've captured the giddy convict?"

"Exactly!"

"And he's in the station now?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes; safe as houses."

"Great Scott!"

"And there'll be a licking to-morrow for breaking bounds," said Kangaroo. "It must come out now. But it was worth it."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"And Cutts—what about him?"

"We let him alone. I think we can afford to let the poor blighter alone, too. It looks as if that man Racke knows some secret of his, and Cutts is in a mortal funk that he'll let it out now he's caught. He looked simply sick," said Kangaroo. "Cutts gets it in the neck this time, and we rope in all the glory. Now I'm going to bed."

And in three minutes the Cornstalk was fast asleep, but for some time after that there was a buzz of excited talk in the Shell dormitory.

(Continued on page 28.)

The Boy who Broke Bounds!



With Jimmy Silver & Co. and Mr. Manders in pursuit, Slog Poggers came down on Lovell with a bull-like rush. Many fellows would have side-stepped that savage rush of the thief, but Arthur Edward braced himself to meet it.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Caught Bending!

"WHO'S scoring this goal?" asked Tommy Dodd. Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle chuckled.

The three Tommies of the Modern Fourth Form at Rookwood were nowhere near the football field, as might have been inferred from Tommy Dodd's question.

They were walking in the quadrangle, after dinner, in Manders' House. And in the shrubbery at the side of that building they spotted Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth.

At Rookwood School a fellow from the Classical side who ventured into Modern territory did so at the risk of a booting. The same rule applied to Moderns who injudiciously wandered into Classical regions.

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed at the moment to be not only risking it, but asking for it. For he was bent double, groping in muddy shrubs, with his back to the three Modern fellows, and they could see little of him but an expanse of trousering.

That was the "goal" alluded to by Tommy Dodd!

"Come on!" murmured Tommy. "When a fellow begs for it like that, it would be bad manners to refuse."

He went along the shrubbery path towards Lovell. Cook and Doyle, grinning, followed him.

Unfortunately for Tommy Dodd—though no doubt fortunately for Lovell—the bending junior rose to his feet just as they reached him. He glanced round and frowned at the three Moderns.

Tommy Dodd, lifting his foot, dropped it just in time. He had no doubt that Lovell would give him another opportunity soon. For he knew, of course, what Lovell was after.

For several days after the Head's notecase had been lost, Rookwood fellows had hunted for it, up and down and round about. Failing to find it, they had given it up as a bad job—excepting Lovell.

Lovell was a stickler. He had reasons for sticking. Lovell was "gated" for every half-holiday that term. But if

Arthur Edward Lovell was born to find trouble, but for once in a way he comes out strong—luckily for himself!

he had succeeded in finding that lost notecase, with forty-five pounds ten shillings in it, surely the Head would let him off that severe sentence.

Lovell thought it likely. Jimmy Silver & Co., his pals in the Classical Fourth, agreed that it was likely. Only they did not think it likely that Lovell would spot the lost wallet. Indeed, they did not think Lovell would have found it if it had been right under his nose. They did not in the least share Lovell's belief in his own sagacity.

Days and days after everybody else had "chucked" it, Arthur Edward Lovell might have been seen, as a

novelist would say, rooting about in likely and unlikely spots for that lost wallet. In the course of his search he found a good deal of mud. So far, he had found nothing else.

"Got it?" asked Tommy Dodd blandly.

Lovell shook his head gloomily. "It's somewhere about," he said. "You see, that pickpocket who pinched it off the Head owned up that he chucked it away when he was being hunted up and down the quad that night. It wasn't found on him, so that was true enough. Well, it must be somewhere."

"Well, unless the blighter pitched it over the edge of the solar system, I suppose it must be somewhere," agreed Tommy Dodd. "Lovell's the man to work these things out, you chaps. It shows what a Classical education will do for a fellow."

Whereat Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle chortled. Lovell frowned.

"I'd have spotted it the same night," he said, "if I'd had any luck. I went to the room where they'd locked him in to wait for a bobby, to make him tell me where he'd chucked it—"

"You didn't go there to let him out?" grinned Tommy.

"No," roared Lovell, "I didn't! I was taken quite by surprise when he collared me and got out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Lovell. "It might have happened to any chap—"

"Any chap named Lovell," agreed Tommy Dodd.

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"And I don't think the Head ought to have been so jolly shirty about it, either," said Lovell warmly. "Gating a fellow for the rest of the term—"

"I think you got off jolly easy," said Tommy Dodd. "If that man Poggers had been handed over to the police, the Head might have got his wallet back. You let him loose—"

"I didn't!" roared Lovell. "He bagged me and got loose. I never expected anything of the kind. Anyhow, he never got away with the wallet. That's still in Rookwood somewhere."

"There's about a million places where it might be," remarked Tommy Dodd, "and if you looked into nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine of them, you'd overlook in the right spot."

Lovell gave him a glare. "If I had time," he said, "I'd shove your silly head into that puddle, and your pals' silly heads after it! But I've got to find that wallet if I can."

And Arthur Edward Lovell turned away, having wasted too much time already on Modern ticks, and resumed his search.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and Lovell wanted to go out of gates with Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome. The sentence of "gating" stood in the way—only to be washed out by such an eminent service as would make Dr. Chisholm relent.

The Head seemed to think that Lovell was to blame in the matter of the pick-pocket's escape. Lovell could not see it himself, but he knew that the Head thought so. As he had told his chums in the end study, with bitter sarcasm, it wasn't much use expecting a head-master to be reasonable. But if Lovell got back that lost wallet for the Head, it would be all right. He was convinced of that. But that exasperating wallet persisted in staying lost.

Turning away from the three grinning Moderns, Arthur Edward Lovell bent down again and resumed rooting. Tommy Dodd winked at Cook and Doyle.

Concentrated on his self-imposed task, it did not occur to Lovell that he was asking for it. He groped in muddy shrubs.

Bending over a puddle on the well trodden gravel path, Lovell scanned it. The notecase might have dropped in that very puddle—it might be right under his nose! Lovell started groping in the rain-water with his fingers, bent double with his back to the Moderns.

The temptation would have been too strong for Tommy Dodd to resist—if he had thought of resisting it—which he didn't!

He stepped after Lovell and lifted his boot.

Thud!

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Cook and Doyle.

"Urrgh!" came from Lovell.

He was fairly caught bending. The thud of the Modern junior's boot sent him sprawling forward. He splashed headlong into the puddle.

Splash!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell sprawled, apparently trying to explore the depths of that muddy puddle with his features. The three Moderns shrieked.

"Groooooogh!"

Arthur Edward Lovell raised a face streaming with water and mud. He dabbed mud and water away with both hands.

"Urrgh! Gurrgh!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tommy Dodd & Co.

"Groogh! You Modern—groogh!—tick, I'll—urrgh!—smash you! I'll—oooooh—ooooooh—"

"Hook it!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "That Classical tick's a bit too dirty to touch. Better go and get a wash, Lovell!"

The three Tommies scuttled off, chortling. After them sped Arthur Edward Lovell, forgetful of the lost notecase, and thinking only of vengeance. With vengeful eyes gleaming from a muddy face, Lovell dashed in pursuit of the three Moderns, muddy water trickling down his collar as he went.

Fed-up!

R. MANDERS sniffed.

Dr. Chisholm raised his eyebrows.

Mr. Dalton looked vexed.

Arthur Edward Lovell was the cause of it. Dr. Chisholm was taking a little walk in the quad before lunch, honouring the Fourth Form master with his majestic company, when Mr. Manders came whisking up, to inquire whether the Head had heard anything of his lost notecase. And as the three masters stood together, Lovell dawned on them.

Tommy Dodd & Co., sighting the beaks, ceased to sprint, and dropped into an orderly walk. They passed the majestic group with the quiet meekness of lambs. Lovell, blinded by wrath and mud, charged on, and did not sight the beaks till he almost charged into them. Fortunately he stopped in time, and gave them a muddy blink. He would have backed away, but the Head held up a detaining hand.

"Is that a boy of your Form, Mr. Dalton?" he asked icily.

"I—I think so, sir," stammered Richard Dalton. "I—I think it is Lovell of my Form."

"It is scarcely possible to recognise the boy in that disgusting state," said Dr. Chisholm. "Lovell—if you are Lovell—how dare you appear in public, not merely with a dirty face, but with a face so disgustingly dirty?"

"Oh, sir," gasped Lovell, "I—I did—"

"It is singular," said the Head, "that this boy of your Form appears totally unable to behave himself, Mr. Dalton."

Mr. Manders weighed in. He did not like Richard Dalton, and he did not like those cheery members of his Form, the Fistical Four.

"That is the boy who released the pickpocket last week—is it not?" he asked.

"I didn't!" gasped Lovell. "I never—"

"That is the boy," said Dr. Chisholm. "A far from creditable member of your Form, Mr. Dalton."

Dicky Dalton's cheeks were pink. No beak liked a "slating" from his chief—especially in the presence of another beak. But the headmaster of Rookwood was deeply displeased with Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell, certainly, had never intended to let Slog Poggers loose—never dreamed of it. His intentions had been good. Only he had, unfortunately, fozzled it. And the Head had taken note of what he had done, not of what he had intended to do, which, as Lovell bitterly reflected, was just like a beak.

"Lovell," said Mr. Dalton, "go into the House and wash yourself at once!"

Lovell's face was crimson under the sticky mud.

"I—I—I fell over," he stuttered.

"Go into the House at once! Take a hundred lines."

Lovell, suppressing his words and his feelings, marched away. Dr. Chisholm cast a glance of deep disapproval after him. Mr. Manders curled his lip, and Richard Dalton frowned. Lovell tramped into the House, boiling. He was not to blame, surely, because a cheeky Modern tick had up-ended him with a boot, catching him bending over a puddle. But he was sent into the House to wash, like some grubby fag of the Second Form, and given an imput.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome met him as he came in. They stared at their discoloured chum.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Jimmy.

Lovell gurgled with wrath.

"That ass Dicky's sent me in for a wash!" he gasped.

"Well, you look as if you want one," remarked Raby.

"You jolly well do!" agreed Newcome.

Lovell gave them a look. If he had expected indignant sympathy, he was disappointed. His chums seemed to agree with Dicky Dalton that he needed a wash. In a silence that was more expressive than words, Arthur Edward Lovell tramped away to get that wash.

In a newly swept and garnished state, with a clean collar, he looked more like his usual self when he rejoined his chums a little later. But there was wrath in his brow.

"You fellows going out?" he asked.

"Didn't we arrange to go over to Latcham, fathead?" demanded Raby. "As you're gated, you said you were going to put in the afternoon hunting for that dashed wallet—if you didn't find it sooner. And I suppose you haven't."

"Blow the wallet!" said Lovell forcibly.

"Aren't you going after it?" asked Newcome.

"No," said Lovell; "I'm jolly well not! I'm fed-up with it—see? If a fellow goes rooting after a dashed wallet, and a Modern tick shoves him into a puddle, and the beak glares at a fellow as if he was a dirty little fag, and a fellow gets an imput, then I can jolly well tell you that if the Head wants his notecase back, he can jolly well root after it himself, and be blowed to him!"

Lovell evidently was shirty.

"I'm going out," he added. "I did nothing to be gated for, and I'm going out. I'm coming over to Latcham!"

"But you can't, old chap," urged Jimmy Silver. "The Head's awfully ratty with you now over your letting that man Poggers loose—"

"Who let him loose?" hooted Lovell. "I mean, through your letting him get away—"

"Who let him get away?"

"Well, he got away," said Raby.

"And whose fault was that?" demanded Lovell. "If you'd backed me up, as I asked you, he'd never have got away."

"If you hadn't butted in at all—" said Newcome.

"Oh, don't jaw! If you don't want my company, and it seems you don't, I'll go out on my own. I'll—"

"Lovell!" It was Mr. Dalton's voice. "Have you written your lines?"

Lovell spun round.

"My—my lines," he stammered. "No, sir."

"Go to your study and write them at once!" said the master of the Fourth. "I shall expect them from you by four o'clock, Lovell."

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged glances as Lovell left them, and headed for the end study. They were sorry for poor old Lovell. It was rotten to be gated for half-holidays, and the fact that he had asked for it made it no nicer. Still, it was lucky that Mr. Dalton had barged in at that moment. It had prevented Lovell from making a reckless ass of himself. Disregarding the sentence of gating would have had very serious consequences for Arthur Edward in his present state of general disfavour.

scrawled; but Dicky Dalton could be considerate, and he affected to be satisfied.

Lovell went out of the House.

"Gating" confined him to the precincts of the school. He could wander about the quad as much as he liked.

But he did not find much pleasure in doing so. His comrades had gone out of gates, and so had plenty of other fellows. When he bore down on Oswald and Putty of the Fourth for a little conversation, they turned the conversation to the subject of washing; and Lovell marched off again, and left them grinning.

Lovell, shoving his hands deep into his pockets, tramped down to the gates. He was fed-up with this. He was going out. Hunting for that lost

for Lovell, he had stopped to speak to old Mack as he went.

"You are gated, Lovell," said Mr. Manders sternly. "Am I to understand, Lovell, that it was your intention to go out, regardless of your headmaster's order and authority?"

Grunt from Lovell.

"Go back at once, Lovell!"

Arthur Edward turned, and tramped back into the quad. Mr. Manders watched him, frowning, till he disappeared, and then went out of gates.

Lovell did not approach the gates again. He sauntered away to a certain corner in Little Quad, where there was a tree that gave aid in clambering over a wall. Lovell's mind was made up.

Having negotiated the wall, Arthur Edward dropped outside. Then he ran.



Lovell was fairly caught bending. The thud of Tommy Dodd's boot sent him sprawling into the puddle. Splash! "Groooogh!" spluttered Arthur Edward, as his features explored the muddy depths of that puddle. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Modern juniors.

"Poor old Lovell!" said Jimmy. "If only the old chap wasn't such an ass—"

"If!" sighed Newcome.

"He might have been sacked, or flogged, for letting that pickpocket get away," said Raby. "The fact is, the Head knows he's an ass, and must have made allowances for it, or he'd never have let him off with a gating."

"No good explaining that to Lovell," said Jimmy.

And Arthur Edward being safe in his study, the three juniors walked out of gates, glad that the headstrong fellow had been saved from himself, as it were, but still rather worried about him.

They had reason to be. Arthur Edward, in a state of deep wrath and grievance, sat in the end study and wrote Latin lines, and then took them down to Mr. Dalton's study. They were hastily written, not to say

wallet, as an occupation, no longer appealed to him. In his present resentful mood, he felt as if he would not have taken the trouble to pick up that wallet had it lain at his feet.

He was jolly well going out, and chance it.

But alas for Lovell. Mr. Manders was standing at the door of the porter's lodge, speaking to old Mack. He glanced round.

"Lovell!" he rapped.

The Classical junior breathed hard as he halted. A master on the Modern side at Rookwood had no right to give orders to a Classical man. Still, Manders knew that he was gated, and could see that he was going out. Lovell had no choice but to stop.

Mr. Manders, it seemed, was going out that afternoon. He was warmly wrapped in a thick, heavy grey overcoat against the cold weather. Unluckily

Outside the school walls he did not want to be spotted by master or prefect. He covered a quarter of a mile at a trot, and did not stop till he suddenly sighted a long, lean, angular figure in a long, thick grey overcoat in the lane ahead of him.

That back view of Mr. Roger Manders caused Lovell to stop quite suddenly. Had Manders looked round, he would have seen him.

Fortunately, Manders did not look round. And Arthur Edward Lovell blotted himself out of view in a gap of the hedge, to give the Modern master time to get clear.

The Man With the Blue Chin!

"SPOT that sportsman!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Eh? Who?" asked Raby.

"Sitting on the stile."

The chums of the Fourth were walking
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down Coombe-Lane towards the village. They were not hurrying. It was their intention to get over to Latcham that afternoon, but they were worried about Lovell. His lines would, no doubt, keep him busy for an hour at least, but after that there was no telling what the hot-headed Arthur Edward might or might not do.

Jimmy's eyes fell on a man who was sitting on the stile by the side of the lane, chewing an unlighted cigarette. The man on the stile looked up quickly at the sound of footsteps, and looked down again when he saw the Rookwood juniors. It seemed as if he was waiting, or watching, for somebody. And there was something in his aspect that struck Jimmy Silver as familiar.

He was a man of rather burly build, with a spotted muffler round his neck, a dingy bowler hat on the side of his head, and little piggy eyes that had a very sharp gleam in them. His face was clean-shaven, the chin blue, as if recently relieved of hirsute adornment. That he had seen the man before, Jimmy Silver felt certain, and as his eyes fixed on him, the man, as if by casual chance, turned his head and looked away into the field behind the stile.

"What about him?" asked Newcome. "Only some tramp, or something."

"You haven't seen him before?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, I think I have," said Jimmy Silver. "Unless I'm jolly well mistaken, we saw him last week, when he had a beard like a doormat."

"Oh crickey! Not Poggers?" exclaimed Raby.

"I'd know that beaky nose and those little piggy eyes anywhere," said Jimmy, with conviction.

His chums looked doubtful. The pick-pocket who had been caught at Rookwood, and who had escaped owing to Lovell's hapless intervention, had been bearded. This man was shaven clean—though certainly he looked as if that was a recent innovation, judging by the blue tint of cheeks and chin.

"But, my dear chap," said Newcome, "that man Poggers wouldn't come back to this quarter with the police looking for him. Why should he?"

"Asking to be run in," said Raby, shaking his head.

"The Head's wallet was never found," answered Jimmy quietly. "They searched the man when they got him. They found out his name from something on him—but they never found the wallet!"

"He owned up that he chucked it away."

"He may have remembered where he chucked it—and come back to look for it."

"But he isn't Poggers, old man."

"I feel pretty sure he is," said Jimmy, pausing in the lane, his eyes on the man on the stile, who still had his head turned.

"Oh, rot, old chap!" said Raby. "If he is, we can't prove it, and we haven't come out for a row with a tramp. Look here, come on!"

Jimmy Silver rather reluctantly went on his way with his chums. At a little distance he glanced back.

The man on the stile had turned his head again as soon as the Rookwood juniors were past. Chewing his limp rag of a cigarette, he was watching the lane once more in the direction of the school.

The chums of the Fourth walked on to Coombe, through which their way ran to Latcham. But when they had walked through the village to the

country road beyond, Jimmy slowed down.

"You chaps keen on getting on to Latcham?" he asked.

"Well, we shan't see Latcham Ramblers play if we don't," said Raby. "Tired?"

"No, ass! I was thinking about—"

"About that sportsman on the stile?" grinned Newcome.

"No, fathead! About old Lovell," said Jimmy. "If the silly ass is asking for trouble again this afternoon—"

"If you want to go back and dry-nurse Lovell—"

"Well, look here, you men go on and see the Ramblers, and I'll go back," said Jimmy. "I'm pretty certain that Lovell's going to make a fool of himself, and I don't want him to get a Head's flogging."

Raby and Newcome grunted in concert. But, as a matter of fact, both of them shared Jimmy's uneasiness with regard to the hot-headed Arthur Edward.

"When father says turn, we all turn," said Raby. "Let's all go back. We'll jolly well boot Lovell for spoiling our half-holiday."

"Nice walk through the fields," said Jimmy.

"We didn't come out for a nice walk through the fields," grunted Newcome.

"But let's go back—anything for a quiet life. I can see you're going to worry all the way to Latcham if we don't."

Jimmy Silver laughed, and the three juniors turned off the road, taking a footpath across the fields in the direction of Coombe Lane. It was quite a pleasant walk, on a fine afternoon, with an early breath of spring in the air. Still, they had set out to see a football match at Latcham, and they were feeling a little disgruntled. There was no doubt that Arthur Edward Lovell was rather a trial to his friends at times.

They strolled by one footpath after another, till they came in sight of the stile that gave on Coombe Lane. This time they approached that stile from the field side, and had a back view of the man sitting there. He was still there, though it was an hour since the juniors had passed him in the lane. If he had stopped on the stile for a rest, he was making a long rest of it.

"There's that sportsman again," grinned Newcome. "Ask him if he's Poggers as we get over the stile, Jimmy."

"Guard with your left," chuckled Raby. "He looked rather a tough customer."

Jimmy Silver looked at the man on the stile as they came up the footpath across the field. His glance, passing that squat figure, fell on a pedestrian in the lane, coming from the direction of the school.

"Lucky Lovell isn't with us," he remarked. "That's Manders."

"Well, if Lovell had come we should be at Latcham by now, and Manders wouldn't spot him," said Newcome. "I say, what's that nan up to?"

"Great pip!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The three juniors stared in utter amazement. Mr. Manders, coming along from Rookwood, was passing the stile, when the blue-chinned man jumped down from it, leaped at him, seized him with both hands, and bore him to the ground.

The sight was so utterly unexpected, so utterly startling and amazing, that Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome stared, spellbound, for a long moment; then Jimmy Silver gasped:

"Come on!"

And they raced down the footpath

towards the stile. They were too far off to help Roger Manders for two or three minutes, at least, but they put on steam, and their feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as they flew.

The Stolen Overcoat!

"GURRRRRGH!" That was what Mr. Manders said.

Never had a man been taken so utterly by surprise.

Walking down the lane to the village, Mr. Manders had not the remotest idea of danger. He noticed the man with the blue chin sitting on the stile as he came along; he even noticed that he looked rather a rough customer, whom he would not have cared to meet in a lonely place on a dark night, but it never crossed his mind for a moment that the man—even if a lawless character—would venture upon anything like this. Manders could, indeed, hardly believe that it was happening.

Roger Manders was no athlete. He crumpled up in the grasp of the muscular man; in a dazed and dizzy state he sprawled in the muddy lane where the ruffian hurled him.

"Gurrgrgh!" he gurgled. "Ooogh! Help! Police! Help!"

The blue-chinned man cast a swift glance up and down the lane. Anyone might have come along at any moment. Indeed, on a half-holiday at Rookwood it was fairly certain that Rookwooders would be coming up and down that lane. But there was, for the moment, no one in sight.

He stooped over Mr. Manders and grabbed him.

The Modern master struggled feebly. "Ow! Help! Release me! If you dare to rob me—Gurrgrgh!"

"Off with that there coat!" hissed Slog Poggers—for the blue-chinned man was he, minus his shaggy beard. "Off with it, afore I knock your teeth through the back of your 'ead!"

"Mum-mum-my — my kik-kik-kik-coat!" stuttered Mr. Manders.

His first natural impression was that this was a desperate attempt at robbery in broad daylight. He supposed that the man wanted his money. It was amazing to find that the man wanted his coat.

Slog was already wrenching at it. Two or three buttons came off the thick grey overcoat as he wrenched.

"Urrgh! You—you—" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Gimme that coat afore I out yer!" hissed Slog. He brandished a big, knuckly fist over Mr. Manders' terrified face.

"You—you—you may have the coat," gasped Mr. Manders. "Hold your hand—Ow! I—I—I will certainly give you the coat."

He sat up dizzily and fumbled with buttons. Slog wrenched at the overcoat and dragged it off, Mr. Manders feeling as if his bony arms were being dragged off in the process.

He gasped and squeaked breathlessly. At the same time he was relieved. His money was in his trousers pocket, and this amazing ruffian seemed only to want his coat. Manders certainly did not want to lose his overcoat, but it was by no means a new coat, and if he escaped with no further loss he was getting off rather cheaply in the circumstances.

He sat and squeaked as the coat was torn off. Three running figures loomed up in the adjoining field—Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome—going all out.

"Hold him, sir!" yelled Jimmy.

"We're coming!"

"Stick to him!" panted Raby.

Slog Poggers, with the overcoat in his grasp, stared savagely round. He glared at the three schoolboys tearing across the field to the stile.

"Blow me pink!" he gasped.

"Ow! Help! Ow!" spluttered Mr. Manders.

Slog Poggers spun round to run. From the direction of the village a cart came in sight, and the driver was staring blankly at the scene by the stile. Mr. Poggers turned in the other direction and ran.

With Mr. Manders' overcoat bundled under his arm, he ran like the wind up the lane in the direction of distant Rookwood.

Mr. Manders staggered to his feet.

He was winded, breathless, gasping, and very badly shaken. He stood unsteadily on his long, thin legs as the three juniors came panting to the stile. Jimmy reached it first.

"Mr. Manders—" gasped Jimmy.

"He has stolen my coat!" gasped the Modern master. "You saw him! A—a—footpad!"

He had seen Mr. Manders lose his coat. But it was simply amazing that a footpad had knocked him over in the lane with the object of stealing nothing but his overcoat.

The juniors were not likely to guess that Slog, when he had been cornered in Manders' House a week ago, had hidden the Head's notecase in the lining of that grey overcoat hanging up in Mr. Manders' room.

"Follow him!" panted Mr. Manders. "Keep him in sight if you can! Obtain help! He has stolen my coat—"

"After him!" exclaimed Newcome. "Come on!" gasped Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had no great liking for Roger Manders—few fellows at Rookwood had—but that made no difference now. The Modern master had been robbed, though only of an overcoat that had seen its best days. They were more than willing to get it back for him if they could.

They rushed in pursuit of the thief. After them panted Mr. Manders, shrieking:

"Stop thief!"

"Put it on!" gasped Jimmy. "Stop thief! Hi! Stop thief!"

They flew, panting. Mr. Manders panted behind; Slog Poggers panted ahead, watching the hedge for an opening to escape into the fields. On his right hand was a fence; on his left a hawthorn hedge, with gaps in it at intervals. Mr. Poggers intended to plunge through the first gap he came to, and, once loose in the fields, he fancied that it would be all right.

He had taken a desperate chance, but he had got away with it. Once he had a few minutes to himself he would grope in the lining of that coat for what was hidden there, but he had to have a few minutes to himself.

With the overcoat crunched under his arm, his battered bowler on the back of his head, the ends of his spotted muffler flying in the wind, Slog Poggers flew, heading for a gap in the hedge he could see a little distance ahead of him. And he was still a dozen yards from that gap when a junior in a Rookwood cap stepped out of it.

Mr. Manders was a fairly quick walker, and by that time Lovell had no doubt that he was at a safe distance ahead. He was, of course, entirely unaware of the extraordinary happening that had stopped Mr. Manders at the stile.

Stepping cheerfully into the lane again from the gap in the hedge, Lovell stared at the flying figure coming towards him.

He did not recognise Mr. Poggers in his beaverless state and had no idea that he had ever seen the man before. But he saw a man evidently in frantic flight, with an overcoat crunched under his arm—obviously not his own, for he was wearing one. Then over the hedges floated a yell:

"Stop thief!"

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

"Hi! Stop thief!"

Lovell jumped into the middle of the road. Arthur Edward Lovell was not, perhaps, particularly brilliant in the intellectual line. But nobody had ever doubted that he had plenty of pluck.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Poggers came down on Lovell with a bull-like rush, his piggy eyes glittering, his blue jaw set square. Plenty of fellows would have side-stepped that savage rush. Lovell braced himself to meet it.

Crash!

Slog Poggers rushed him down. The impact was terrific. Lovell was hurled over as if a traction-engine had hit him.

But Lovell, if not a brilliant man with his brains, was a good man with his hands. He spun over from the shock, but he grasped at the enemy as he spun, and grabbed hold; and Mr. Poggers, rather winded himself, went down with Lovell, sprawling.

The grey overcoat dropped to the ground. Beside it sprawled Mr. Poggers and Arthur Edward Lovell, both feeling as if a sledgehammer had hit them.

Lovell was holding on, but a jolt on the jaw from a knuckly fist, that seemed for the moment to loosen every tooth in his head, made him let go.

"Urrrh!" gasped Lovell.

He rolled over. His impression was that his chin had been knocked through the back of his neck. Lovell rolled and gurgled.

Slog Poggers staggered to his feet. One swift glance he shot backward. Three schoolboys came sweeping round a curve of the lane. Slog gave only that one swift look, then he stooped and grabbed at the fallen overcoat.

Grabbing it up by the collar, he started running again. But as he went a sudden jerk tore it from his hand.

Lovell, not beaten yet in spite of that terrific jolt on the jaw, grabbed at the tail of the coat and caught it as it went. That sudden jerk dragged it from Slog's grasp.

It fell to the ground again, and Slog, unable to stop, ran three or four paces before he turned.

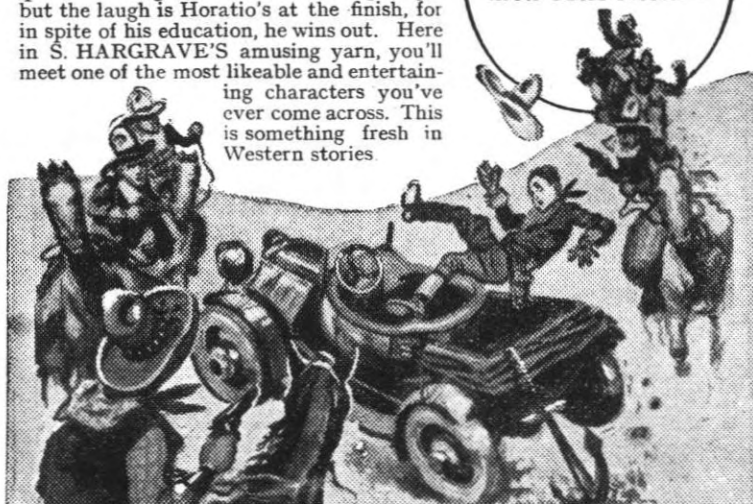
Then, with a snarl of rage, he came whirling back. With one hand he grasped the disputed coat, with the other he gave Lovell a crack on the side of the head that sent him rolling.

He had lost only a few moments. But those few moments were his undoing. For Jimmy Silver, putting on a desperate spurt, reached him as Lovell went rolling under the savage blow. The sight of that blow, landing on his chum, spurred Jimmy on. He flung himself headlong at the footpad, hitting

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Lovell's Luck!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL just stared.

He had remained five or six minutes on the safe side of the hedge to give Mr. Manders plenty of time to get clear.

out with both fists, and both fists landed in Slog's ribs.

Mr. Poggers staggered, tangled his feet in the trailing overcoat, and stumbled over. In a twinkling Jimmy grabbed at the coat and tore it away from him.

Slog, with a howl of rage, scrambled up. Lovell had lifted himself on an elbow, too dazed to get on his feet. It would have gone hard with Jimmy Silver had not his comrades been at hand.

But Raby and Newcome came up with a rush. Mr. Manders, in sight now, was waving and shouting. He was too far off to lend aid—if he could have lent any. But Raby and Newcome charged at the ruffian headlong, and sent Mr. Poggers staggering again.

"Collar him!" panted Jimmy.

Lovell heaved himself to his feet. The grey overcoat lay on the ground in a sadly muddled state. The Fistical Four were between it and Mr. Poggers. And they advanced in a body on Mr. Poggers—and he backed away from the combined attack.

"Get hold of him!" gasped Lovell.

Slog Poggers backed towards the gap in the hedge. Even with four to one against him he hesitated to take to his heels and lose his prey. He backed away, with glinting eyes and snarling mouth. But the game was up, and he realised it. As Jimmy Silver & Co. made a determined rush Slog turned, leaped through the gap in the hedge, and started to run across the field.

"After him!" panted Lovell.

"Hold on—we've got the coat!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Manders' coat—"

It would not have been much use to get after Mr. Poggers. He was crossing

the field like a hare. He vanished beyond a belt of willows, still running.

"Ooogh!" said Lovell. He had his hand to his jaw where a bruise was forming, and which ached horribly. "Ow! He gave me an awful punch—Ooogh!"

"Here comes Manders."

Mr. Manders, gasping, winded almost to the wide, came tottering up. Jimmy Silver picked up the grey overcoat.

"Here's your coat, sir," he said politely.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Oh dear! I—I'm quite bub-bub-breathless."

He took the coat. Three or four buttons were gone from it and it was smothered with mud. But Manders had got his coat back.

"The—the rascal!" he gasped. "Stealing my coat—in broad daylight! The scoundrel!"

"I believe it's the same man who robbed the Head last week, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"Goodness gracious! The police must be informed at once. Help me on with this coat, Silver; I will return to the school immediately and telephone—Goodness gracious!"

Jimmy helped Mr. Manders on with his coat. Lovell, rubbing his damaged chin, wondered whether the agitated Modern master had noticed him. For several minutes Mr. Manders did not appear to be aware of the presence of the junior who was gated.

But that was too good to last. Having encased himself in the overcoat again, Mr. Manders was about to whisk away towards the school when he stopped and fixed his eyes on Arthur Edward.

"Is that you, Lovell? You are gated. What are you doing here, out of gates?"

"Stopping the thief getting away with your overcoat, sir," answered Lovell.

"It was Lovell stopped him, sir," said Jimmy Silver lastly. "We should never have caught him if Lovell hadn't got in his way—"

"If that is the case, Lovell, I am obliged to you, but that does not in any way excuse your disobeying your headmaster!" snapped Mr. Manders. "I have no choice but to report you to Dr. Chisholm. Now go in at once!"

With that Mr. Manders whisked away towards the school.

Lovell gazed after him, and then gazed at his chums.

"Nice old bean, ain't he?" he remarked. "It was worth while getting this slog on the jaw to save his rotten old overcoat wasn't it? Ow! I'll tell you what, you fellows—if Manders reports me I'm going to tell Manders what I think of him, and chance it!"

"Let's get in," said Jimmy Silver.

And the Fistical Four went in. At tea, in the end study, Lovell entertained his chums—and rather alarmed them—by a description of the things he was going to say to Manders for reporting him. Lovell was exactly the felicitous to be as good as his word, and his comrades argued in vain as they waited for Arthur Edward to be summoned to the Head's study.

But that summons never came.

Even Manders, it seemed, was not without a spot of the milk of human kindness in his acid nature. Perhaps he forgot. At all events, Lovell was not reported—and so Mr. Manders never had the advantage of learning what Arthur Edward really thought of him!

(Next week: "THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDER!"—another exciting yarn from this ripping Rookwood series. Don't miss it.)

THE CONVICT-HUNTERS!

(Continued from page 27.)

St. Jim's woke up to a sensation in the morning.

The whole school buzzed with the news.

Of Cutis' share in the matter nothing was said. Unless the convict betrayed him, his secret would be kept. Tom Merry & Co. had no desire to see him expelled from the school, enemy as he was to them. But all the school knew that four juniors had captured the escaped convict and handed him over to the police. Kangaroo, Redfern, Fatty Wynn, and Reilly were the heroes of the hour.

But their renown did not bring un-mixed satisfaction. The Head sent for them and canded them for having broken bounds, and as they rubbed their smarting hands he complimented them on their courage. Kangaroo & Co. would willingly have dispensed with the compliments if they could have dispensed with the licking, too. But the smart of the cane faded away, and the glory of that great capture remained and lasted much longer.

There was no doubt that they were entitled to the hundred pounds reward, but the Head expressed his opinion very plainly on that subject, and the juniors willingly agreed that it should be handed over to the cottage hospital in Rylcombe.

As for Cutis, he spent a good many days of racking anxiety, and the effect

of it could be read in his pale and harassed face.

But Jonas Racke did not betray him, and at last the rascal of the Fifth was able to breathe freely. He had had a narrow escape, and he knew it, but whether it was a lesson to him was another matter.

Jonas Racke went back to his well-deserved punishment, and the convict-hunters of St. Jim's had the pleasure of endowing a bed in the cottage hospital with the reward.

(Next Wednesday: "THE BOY FROM THE EAST!"—a great story starring an amazing newcomer to St. Jim's—an Indian prince with snobbish ideas and a bitter hatred towards Tom Merry. Look out for this yarn.)

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