

KILDARE'S ENEMY!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



THE TABLES TURNED ON GORDON GAY & CO.

(An Exciting Scene in the Splendid Long, Complete Tale of School Life in this issue.)

THIS WEEK'S CHAT

Whom to Write to
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.
 OUR .. THREE .. COMPANION .. PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.
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 EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

"HOLIDAY CAMP!"

By Martin Clifford.

The fine, long, complete story which appears next week is a holiday one. Sixteen of the St. Jim's juniors, including the Terrible Three, the chums of Study No. 6, Figgins & Co., Talbot, and the learned Skimpole, go into camp, intending to put in a good deal of time on the river flowing hard by. But circumstances upset their plans for a time. A farmer in the neighbourhood, whom they have found the best of good fellows, is in difficulties owing to a strike among the harvest labourers. The St. Jim's juniors volunteer to help him; and this brings them into collision with the strikers. They have other enemies, for Cutts and his two chums, St. Leger and Gilmore, as well as Crooke of the Shell, are spending part of the holidays near by; and these fellows not only give trouble of their own account, but also stir up the country lads to worse things. Riuctions result; but the plucky band of juniors stick to their guns. Cutts and his followers and the strikers alike suffer defeat; and in the event Tom Merry and the rest are by no means dissatisfied with their experiences at

"HOLIDAY CAMP!"

USING THE BOOT.

An Australian reader writes from the Gippsland district of Victoria to voice a complaint that I think is a new one. He says: "Many Australian readers think that Mr. Clifford pictures the boys as kicking and using the boot to one another altogether too frequently. Even the really nice, manly boys seem to indulge in this practice. The using of the foot to man or beast is abhorrent to every true Australian, and we think that such passages are bad training for the boys."

But the kind of kicking that Mr. Clifford allows his decent fellows to indulge in is not the kind that needs to be objected to very strongly, I think. Kicking a worm of Trimble's type out of a study into which he has intruded is a very different thing from the use of the boot in a fight—a device which every boy of right instincts here at home objects to fully as much as do his brothers in Australia. It is rather as an expression of contempt; than as a method of inflicting bodily pain that the boot is used to Levison or Crooke or Trimble; and in many other cases—such as those in which the great Grundy is a receiver of attentions of this sort—no more than a rough joke is meant. Nevertheless, I think our Australian friend's comment worth printing, for there is the right feeling behind it.

NOTICES.

Leagues, Correspondence, etc.

Will Amy Stewart, of Melbourne, write again to J. K. Hoch, with whom she got into touch through the "Gem" Correspondence Exchange?

Private A. Hodson, 12417, 3rd King's Royal Rifles, Machine Gun Section, Headquarters Coy, Salonika Forces, Greece, would be glad to correspond with boy readers.

Bert Haines, c/o Mr. F. Chedgy, 8A, Lawford Street, St. Phillips, Bristol, wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League (correspondence only), open to all readers in the U.K.

Miss Kitty Mullins, c/o Mrs. Hampton, 131, Prescot Street, Brookfields, would like to correspond with one or two girl readers.

J. C. Oliphant, 5, Walter Street, Nottingham, will be glad to send particulars of a first-class correspondence club on receipt of a stamped and addressed envelope.

C. W. Tait, jun., 48, Roker Avenue, Sunderland, would be glad to correspond with other boy readers.

W. Freear, 20, Canal Street, Skipton, and F. Hebdon, 4, Cumberland Street, Skipton, Yorks., would like to correspond with other boy readers.

Victor J. Hall, 15, Coronation Row, West Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, would be glad to correspond with boy readers of about 14 in any part of the British Empire.

Roy Goodall, Westroyd Cottages, Mirfield, Yorks., wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for readers anywhere. Chief object to send back numbers to soldiers and sailors. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

To Sheffielders.—Members wanted for the "Magnet" and "Gem" League (Sheffield district), for sending books to soldiers. Stamped addressed envelope for particulars, please.

R. C. Higgs, North View House, Summerland Street, Barnstable, would be glad to correspond with any readers in Pittman's Northland for practice.

C. W. Young, 14, Logan Terrace, South Shields, wants more members for his correspondence club.

Contributors and readers wanted for amateur magazine. Copy sent for 2d. Editor, "Busy Bee," 41, Rupert Street, Birmingham.

N. B. Wood, 190, Manchester Street, Werneth, Oldham, and C. Kenyon have started an amateur magazine, and will like to hear from possible contributors, artists included.

Back Numbers, &c., Wanted.

Private W. Dalton, 66667, R.A.M.C., No. 5, Barrack Road, Bullard General Hospital, Salisbury Plain, would be glad of back numbers or other good reading matter for himself and his comrades.

By T. Gee, Glen House, Foresttown, Cattigtwohill, Co. Cork.—"Tom Merry & Co."

By G. F. Roe, 2541, Western Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada.—"The St. Jim's Volunteers," and the "Magnet" of same number and date.

By Wm. Wood, the Green, Bandon, Co. Cork.—The numbers of the "Penny Popular" for September and October, 1915—eight numbers.

By F. McFadden, jun., Dublin Street, Monaghan—"Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Under a Cloud," also the "Magnets" "Fishy's Fag Agency," and the Christmas Double Number, 1910.

By S. Glendinning, 56, Elm Street, Belfast—Christmas No. of "Gem," 1915. Offers double price.

By Duncan Cellars, Unicorn Road, Landport, Portsmouth—First six numbers of "Gem" issued (the 2d. series). Or he would pay sixpence for the loan of the first twelve numbers.

By E. S. Watkins, 34, Croxteth Grove, Liverpool—"Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, issued by John Tregellis.

By L. Poole, 55, Grafton Street, Coventry—No. 219 of the "Gem."

By C. Dee, 82, Gassett Road, Tooting, S.W.—Back numbers of "Magnet" before 400. of "Gem" before 421.

By A. Stoneham, 110, Stoughton Street, Leicester, who is crippled—Back numbers of the companion papers.

By Harry Rosner, 18, Pimblett Street, Cheetham, Manchester—Volumes 1-6 of both "Gem" and "Magnet."

By T. Satchell, 31, Rendel Road, Tidal Basin, Victoria Docks, E.—Any numbers of "Gem" between 29 and 30.

By Victor Hurley, Clifton Place, Bourne End, Bucks.—Back numbers "Gem" and "Magnet," especially "Gem" Christmas Double Number, 1910.

By G. Bristol, 11, Hanbury Road, Queen's Road, S.W.—"Figgins' Folly."

By W. Davborn, 5, Alexandra Terrace, High Street, Guildford—Nos. 1300 of both "Gem" and "Magnet."

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

KILDARE'S ENEMY!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"Wesue! Yawooooop!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gordon Gay rushed to the rescue. He reached over and grasped D'Arcy's hands, and yanked him out of the ditch. (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER 1. Backed Up!

"UNDAH the cires—"
"Where's my bat?"
"I wepat, Blake, undah the cires—"
"Don't repeat it, old chap," said Blake appealingly. "Just tell me where my bat is, and that will do!"
"I refuse to take the slightest interest in your bat,

Blake!" said D'Arcy of the Fourth frigidly. "Undah the cires, we are not goin' to play cwicket this aftahnoon!"
"Not going to play cwicket?" repeated Blake.
Blake and Herries and Digby stared at Arthur Augustus.
"Certainly not!"
"Fathead!"
"There's somethin' watah more important than cwicket this aftahnoon!"
"Are we wanted at the Front?" asked Herries sarcastically.

Next Wednesday,
"HOLIDAY CAMP!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Hewwies!"
 "Are you going to buy a new topper?" asked Dig.
 "Weally, Digby—"
 "Or is it new neckties?" inquired Blake. "If it is, we're sorry—awfully, fearfully sorry—but you'll have to do it on your lonely own! We're going down to cricket practice!"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Haven't we got to beat Figgins & Co. in the House match next week?" demanded Blake. "Do you want the New House to walk over the School House? And what will become of the side if this studdy chucks cricket practice—what?"
 "That is verry true. But—"
 "Never mind butting! Come along!"
 "I wufuse to come along! Undah the cires—"
 "Oh, here's my bat!" said Blake. "What silly ass has been poking the fire with my bat?"
 "Will you listen to me, Blake?"
 "No fear! Tom Merry's waiting for us on Little Side!"
 "Tom Mewwy can wait!"

"And after practice we're going to rag the New House bouncers," said Blake. "Figgins & Co. have been getting the ears up. It's time they were put in their place."
 "Yaas, wathah! But—"
 "Are you coming, fathad? I'm going!"
 "I am not comin', and you are not goin', Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "There is something much more important than cwicket practice for this aftnoon! A new fellah is comin'—"

"Let him come!"
 "I have just heard it f'rom Kildare!"
 "Never mind Kildare now! Are you fellows coming?"
 "The new chap is awvwin' this aftnoon at eithah Wylcombe or Wayland, I weally do not know which—"
 "Let him arrive!" said Blake. "It doesn't matter twopence where he arrives, when he arrives, or whether he arrives at all!"
 "Pway don't be an ass, Blake, if you can weally help it! I weapat that it is an important mattah. I suppose you are awah that the South Africans have bucked up wippin'ly in the war!"

Blake jumped. Herries and Digby stared. This sudden change of the subject took them by surprise.
 "The South Africans?" repeated Blake.
 "Yaas."
 "In the war?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "And what the merry thunder have the South Africans and the war to do with the cricket practice this aftnoon?" demanded Blake.
 "Nothin' at all."

"Then what are you burbling about?"
 "I am not burblin'. The Afwicandahs havin' bucked up in the war, and scored well successes, and upheld the honah of the Bwritish flag, it is up to us to show some appweciation of their loyalty and great cowage!"
 "By missing cricket practice?" ejaculated Herries. "I don't quite see the connection!"

"You will see it fast enough when I explain it to you, Hewwies, if you will only give a chap time to explain!"
 "Life's too short," said Blake decidedly. "Besides, Tom Merry's waiting."
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Got your bat, Dig?"
 "Yes; I'm coming!"
 "You uttah duffahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, planting himself before the study door, and barring egress to his chums. "I insist upon your listenin' to me! This new chap—"

"Bothah the new chap!"
 "His name is Sidney Clive."
 "I don't care a Continental red cent whether his name is Smith or Jones or Robinson."
 "His name is not Smith or Jones or Wobinson. It is Sidney Clive. And he is comin'—"
 "Get out of the way, Gussy!"
 "I wufuse to get out of the way!"
 "You can go on talking after we've gone out," urged Herries. "There's nothing to stop you doing that!"
 "I wufuse to go on talkin' aftah you're gone out, Hewwies!"

"I wish to goodness you'd refuse to do it while we're here!" sighed Blake. "Do you want me to walk over you, Gussy? Mind, it will spoil your waistcoat!"
 "I wufuse to be walked ovah! This new chap—"
 "Blow the new chap!" shrieked Blake. "I'm fed up on the new chap! I'll jolly well dot him on the nose when he comes if he bothers us like this!"
 "He is comin' this aftnoon f'rom South Afwica—"
 "Rats! He couldn't do it in one aftnoon!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

"You uttah ass! I mean, he awwives this aftnoon, aftah comin' f'rom South Afwica. He is an Afwicandah. Kildare says he was met in London, and will be put in the twain for St. Jim's by a lawyah chap, and he will awwive heah alone. Undah the cires, as he is a Colonial, and a chap f'rom a great colony which has bucked up wemarkably well in the war, it is up to us to give him wathah a weception!"

"Oh, I see!"
 "I am weally glad that you see at last, Blake! You are wathah obtuse. Undah the cires, we are goin' to miss cwicket practice, and go to the station in a body—"

"Whose body?"
 "In a party, I mean, and greet him. As pawtiotic chaps, we are bound to give an Afwicandah a hearty weception!"

"Hear, hear! Ask him to tea from me," said Blake. "Tell him we've got a sardine left from the day before yesterday, and he can have it. Good-bye!"

"Weally, Blake—"
 Jack Blake took his elegant chum by the shoulders, and twisted him gently to one side. Then he hurried out of the study.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wuffian!" gasped D'Arcy. "I say, Dig—"

But Digby had followed Blake.
 "Hewwies, deah boy, I suppose you are goin' to back me up in greetin' the new kid f'rom South Afwica in pwopah style!"

"Tell him I'm glad to see him, happy to make his acquaintance, and I'll love him like a brother!" said Herries. "Good-bye!"

"Weally, Hewwies, I wufuse to let you pass until you pwomise to back me up!"
 Herries chuckled.

"Right-ho! I'll back you up!"
 "Verry good! Gwoogh! You uttah ass, leggo!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as the burly Herries seized him, and backed him up against the wall of the study with a tremendous bump.

"Gwest Scott! Gwoogh! Welase me! Wow-wow!"
 Herries released his noble chum suddenly, and Arthur Augustus sat down on the floor. Herries ran out of the study, laughing, leaving Arthur Augustus to pick himself up at his leisure.

D'Arcy scrambled to his feet.
 "Gwoogh! You uttah wathah! Gwoogh! Come back, you feahful boundah, and I will give you a feahful thwashin'! Gwoogh!"

But Herries was gone.

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy Does Not Meet the New Boy.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a frown upon his noble face when he came out of the School House a little later. Otherwise, everything he wore was in a state of perfection.

Arthur Augustus felt that it was up to him to greet the new boy from South Africa in proper style, and the swell of St. Jim's had dressed for the occasion. From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet he was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon, and most of the St. Jim's fellows were enjoying the half-holiday.

Big and Little Side were crowded, and there were swarms of fellows along the towing-path and out on the river.

Nobody seemed inclined to accompany Arthur Augustus, however, upon his mission of politeness. Julian of the Fourth, Kerruish, and Reilly were starting on a boating excursion, and couldn't go. Kangaroo of the Shell agreed that St. Jim's ought to feel considerably "bucked" at getting another Colonial within its ancient walls, but he himself was busy with the cricket, and couldn't go. Talbot excused himself, as he had to visit his uncle, Colonel Lyndon, at Abbotford Camp. In fact, excellent as Gussy's idea undoubtedly was, there seemed to be no backers.

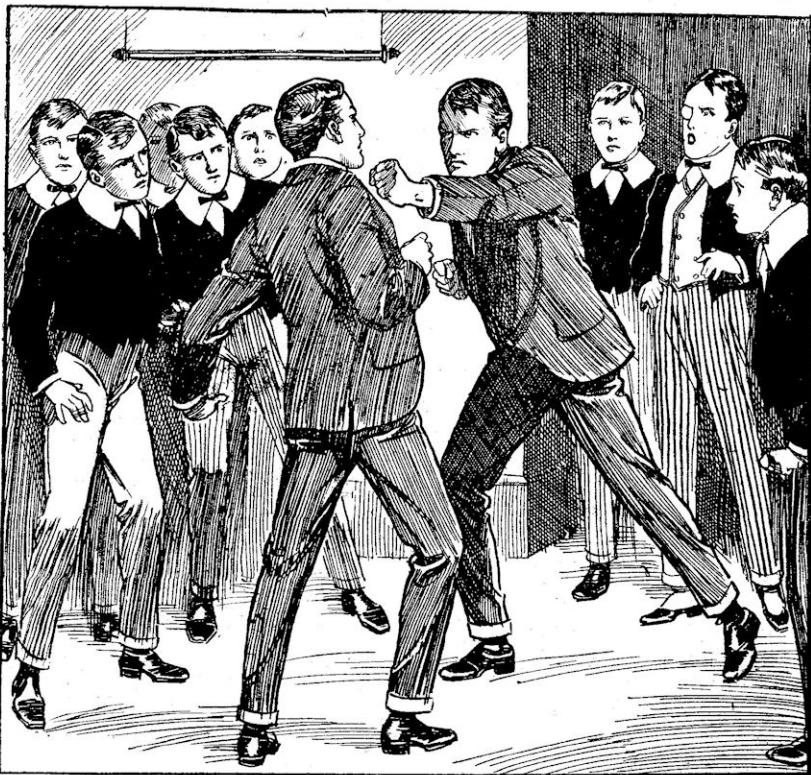
But the swell of St. Jim's was not easily beaten. He walked elegantly down to the cricket-field, his silk topper gleaming in the sun.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell were looking on at the cricket practice, resting from their own labours in that line, and refreshing themselves with ginger-pop.

"I trust you fellows are comin' with me," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I suppose you have heard about the South African chap comin'?"

"First I've heard of it," said Tom Merry cheerily. "He's welcome."

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 10.



"Let go! Take that, then!" said Setton viciously. And the prefect's clenched fist was dashed full into the Captain's face. (See Chapter 8.)

"My ideah is to go and give him a hearty welcome at the station."

"Good egg!" said Monty. "You're just the chap to do it."

"Of course, I ought to take some representatives of the School House with me, as Kildare says he is comin' into the School House."

"Go it, then!"

"Well, are you fellahs comin'?"

"Cricket!" said Tom Merry solemnly. "I've got to look after these Fourth-Form kids at practice. We've got to beat Figgins & Co. next week, you know."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, andah the cires—"

"Right-ho! I'm coming!" called out the captain of the Shell, and he walked away to the field.

"I trust you will come, Lowthah?"

"Coming!" called out Louthar, and he followed Tom Merry.

"Undah the cires, Mannahs, I trust you will come."

Manners looked sorrowful.

"I've got to look after my minor, young Reggie," he said.

"Otherwise, I should be—ahem!—delighted. But a chap must look after his minor, you know."

"Yas, that is vewy true. I make it a point to look aftah my minor, young Wally, though he is not vewy gwatefuhl for bein' looked aftah. But where is your minah, Mannahs?"

"Going out on the river."

"Are you goin' with him?"

"No: I'm going to bowl."

"Then how are you goin' to look aftah him?"

"Easy enough," said Manners affably. "I shall simply fix my eyes on the back of his head as he goes out. No difficulty in looking after a chap, that I know of."

And Manners walked away, leaving Arthur Augustus to think out his little joke.

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and walked away with a dignified walk, his noble nose high in the air. He felt that he was not getting the support he merited. Under the cires, he felt that a large party to meet Sidney Clive, of South Africa, would have been the proper "capor." But he was prepared to "go it" alone if necessary. But he made one more attempt, bearing down on Figgins & Co. of the New House.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn shaded their eyes as he came up, as if the sight of Arthur Augustus, in all his glory, dazzled them.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Pway don't play the giddy ox, deah boys!" he said. "I am goin' to meet a new chap fvwom South Africah. Pewwaps you would care to come?"

"New House chap?" asked Figgins.

"Certainly not! He is comin' into the School House."

"Then he can go and eat coke!" said Kerr.

"Catch us going to meet a School House bounder!" said Fatty Wynn.

"But I'll tell you what I will do, Gussy."

"What is that, Wynn?"

"I'll knock your topper off, old chap!"

Fatty Wynn suited the action to the word, and Figgins & Co. walked away, chuckling, leaving Arthur Augustus plunging wildly after his topper.

The swell of St. Jim's recovered his silk hat, dusted it

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 445

carefully with his handkerchief, and replaced it. Vengeance gleamed behind his eyeglass, but vengeance had to be postponed. His elegant attire would have suffered too severely in a rough-and-tumble encounter with Figgins & Co.

With a sniff of disdain, Arthur Augustus walked down to the gates, and started down the lane to Rycombe, alone in his glory.

After all, he felt that if the reception of the South African was to be a solo performance, he was the fellow best fitted to carry it out.

Three youths in mortar-board caps were seated on the stile in the lane, and they grinned at the sight of the resplendent Gussy. Arthur Augustus paused in alarm, as he recognised Gordon Gay and Monk and Wootton major of Rycombe Grammar School. He knew the humorous proclivities of the cheerful Grammarians. Gordon Gay & Co. slipped off the stile at once.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Those howwid bandouls are lookin' for a wag!"

The three Grammarians bore down upon him merrily. The ditch at the side of the lane was spanned by a plank bridge.

Arthur Augustus felt that it was time for a strategic retreat. He jumped on the plank, to cut away across the field.

"Look out!" yelled Gordon Gay. "That plank ain't safe!"

But the warning came too late. Arthur Augustus was on the plank, but he was only on it for a second. The next moment it slipped, and there was a yell.

"Yawooh!"
Splash!

The ditch was deep, and flowing full. Arthur Augustus disappeared for a moment. His head came up, spluttering and gasping.

"Gwoogh! Help!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Wescue! Yawoooop!"

The Grammarians rushed to the rescue. They reached over, and grasped D'Arcy's hands, and yanked him out of the ditch.

Arthur Augustus sprawled in the road, spluttering. He was drenched to the skin, smothered with mud, and in a terrific state of dilapidation from head to foot.

The Grammarians tried to look sympathetic, but they couldn't. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Gwoooogh!"
"You uttah asses!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Sorry!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "I told you the plank wasn't safe."
"Gwoogh! It was all your fault! Gweat Scott! Look at me!"

"We're looking! Ha, ha, ha!"
"How can I go and meet a new chap in this state?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha! It would surprise him," yelled Wootton.
"Ripping!" chuckled Monk. "Go just as you are, Gussy. It will give the new chap an idea of what St. Jim's fellows are like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, deah! I shall catch cold! Atchoo-choo!" Arthur Augustus began to sneeze.

"You'd better cut off home, or you'll catch cold, and no mistake," said Gordon Gay. "Were you going to meet a new chap?"

"Gwoogh! Yaas."
"We'll meet him for you if you like, and tell him you've had an accident," said Gay, with a wink at his chums.

"Bai Jove! Will you, weally?"
"Certainly! What's his name?"
"Sidney Clive. He's comin' to Wylcombe Station, I undahstand."

"Rely on us," said Gordon Gay. "We'll meet him, and give him a splendid reception. You cut off and get a change. You need it."

"Thank you very much, Gay."
"Oh, don't mention it!"

The unhappy swell of St. Jim's started at a run for the school. He was already sneezing, and looked as if he were booked for a severe cold. Wootton major and Monk looked curiously at Gordon Gay.

"Well, what's the little game?" asked Monk.
Gay chuckled.

"We're going to meet the St. Jim's chap. We were going to have a trap out this afternoon, anyway. We'll take him in it—to the Grammar School."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Then we'll dress him up, and paint his chivvy, and send THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

him home," said Gordon Gay. "It will amuse the Saints to see a new chap arrive like that—and please 'em; I don't think I'll show 'em that the Grammar School's on the warpath. Come on, my infants!"

The three grinning Grammarians started for the station. Sidney Clive, of South Africa, was sure of a "reception" now, but it was not to be exactly the kind of reception the Honourable Arthur Augustus had planned.

CHAPTER 3.

The Junior from South Africa.

SIDNEY CLIVE stepped from the train in the little station of Rycombe.

A handsome, sunburnt lad of about fifteen, of sturdy build, with a pair of very keen but very pleasant and good-humoured blue eyes.

He glanced about him, and gave the porter directions to take his box, apparently feeling quite at home in his new surroundings.

Three smiling youths bore down on him on the platform. They raised their caps as if moved by the same spring.

"Your name Clive?"
"New chap for St. Jim's?"
Clive nodded.

"Yes," he said.
"We've come to meet you," said Gordon Gay agreeably. "D'Arcy of the Fourth was coming, but he's met with an accident—caught a cold, I fancy. Jolly glad to make your acquaintance, Clive!"

"You're very good," said the South African. "I didn't expect anybody to meet me here."
"We're nuts on new boys," explained Wootton major solemnly. "It's a real pleasure to us, Hive—did you say your name was Hive?"

"Clive."
"Oh, yes! My mistake. We've got a trap outside to take you to the school. Tell the porter to put your box in it."

"Thank you very much!"
"Not at all."

Sidney Clive ran after the porter, who was trundling the box away on a trolley. The three Grammarians grinned at one another.

"The giddy fish is in the net!" murmured Gay.
"Dropped like a ripe apple!" chuckled Monk.

"Not a word, mind, till we get him to the Grammar School!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Clive joined old Trumble, the porter.

"Put the box in the trap outside," he said. "These chaps have brought a trap to meet me."
Old Trumble looked at him.

"You goin' to St. Jim's, sir?" he asked.
"Yes."

Trumble grinned. He liked the handsome, frank face of the new boy for St. Jim's, and he resolved to give him a "tip."

"Don't say I told you, sir. Them young gents belongs to the Grammar School," he whispered.
Clive looked surprised.

"Not to my school?" he asked.
"No."
"Then it's jolly decent of them to come and meet me."

Trumble chuckled.
"Yes—if it ain't a lark," he said. "You look out, sir, and if the trap don't go straight down the road to St. Jim's, you'll know it's a lark."

"Oh!" said Clive.
He looked very thoughtful.

Sidney Clive was new to the place, quite new to school ways, but he was no fool. He glanced back along the platform, and noted that the three Grammarians were grinning together. A twinkle came into his own clear, pleasant eyes. He was on his guard.

"Thank you," he said.
Trumble bundled the box into the trap, and Clive slipped a shilling into his horny hand.

Gordon Gay & Co. sauntered out of the station.
"Here we are again!" said Gay. "Tumble in! We'll have you at the school in two jiffies, Clive!"

"At St. Jim's, you mean?" asked Clive.
"Jump in!" said Gay, apparently not hearing the question—a fact that Clive noticed at once.

He did not repeat it, however.
It was quite plain to him by this time that he was to be the victim of some sort of practical joke by these three cheery youths.

But he made no sign.
The four juniors entered the trap, Gay taking the reins, and the vehicle bowled out of the village into the lane.

At the cross-roads, where the turning lay to the Grammar School, there was a signpost: "To Rylcombe Grammar School."

Gay turned the corner.

"Is this the right road?" asked Clive.

"Right as rain!"

"But isn't the straight road to St. Jim's?"

"New kids you leave it to us," said Wootton major. "New kids shouldn't ask questions. You'll get to St. Jim's all right to-day."

Clive smiled.

He was seated at the back of the trap. As the vehicle bumped over the rough and rutty road, he made a sudden lurch, and dropped out. He landed on his feet, and rolled over at once.

"Hallo! Stop!" shouted Monk. "The young ass has fallen out!"

Gordon Gay pulled in the horse.

"Come on, Clive!" shouted Monk.

Clive did not move.

He lay stretched in the road, without motion.

"My hat!" said Wootton major, in alarm. "The young duffer's hurt himself!"

The three Grammarians, alarmed, jumped down from the trap.

They hurried back along the road to the fallen junior, leaving the horse cropping the grass by the roadside.

Clive did not move.

"Hurt, old chap?" exclaimed Gay anxiously.

Growl!

"Where's the pain?"

Growl!

"My hat!" said Monk. "I—I wish we hadn't collared him now! But who'd have thought he would be ass enough to fall out of the trap?"

Growl!

"What a rotten ending to a jape!" said Gordon Gay, looking blue. "Help him up, you fellows. We'd better take him straight to St. Jim's now."

"Yes, rather!"

The Grammarians helped the new junior to his feet. His white weight hung upon them.

"Is it your leg?" asked Gay anxiously.

Growl!

"Buck up, old son! We'll take you straight to St. Jim's."

Growl!

"Must be badly hurt," said Wootton major. "The next time you talk about kidnapping a St. Jim's chap, Gay, I'll punch your silly nose!"

"How was I to know the howling ass would fall out of the trap?" grunted Gordon Gay.

Growl!

"Help him along— Oh, yarcon! My hat!"

The helpless junior had suddenly come to life, as it were. With a violent shove, he sent Wootton major rolling into the ditch, and Frank Monk reeling in after him. Gordon Gay jumped back, but the South African jumped after him. Before Gay knew what was happening he was grasped in a pair of strong arms and fairly hurled into the ditch after his comrades. Fortunately for the Grammarians, that ditch was a dry one, but they rolled and yelled in a bed of nettles.

Sidney Clive gave them one grin, and then raced up the road after the trap.

He reached the halted vehicle almost in a twinkling, and leaped into it and gathered up the reins. The whip cracked, and the trap bowled off.

The Grammarians staggered out of the ferns and nettles, dusty, straggled, breathless, and furious. They gazed speechlessly after the trap, and broke into a run, in pursuit. But they had no chance.

"Great Scoot!" panted Gordon Gay. "Great pip! The— the awful spoof! He—he wasn't hurt; he was shamming!"

"Spoofed!" howled Monk.

"Done to the wide!" groaned Wootton major. "And that's a new kid—a blessed new kid fresh from home! My hat!"

"And he's gone off with our trap!" hooted Monk.

"He—he must have fallen out on purpose, to spoof us!" gasped Gay. "And you silly asses were taken in!"

"Oh dear!"

The trap had vanished. Sidney Clive was driving away cheerily. By side lanes he drove, inquiring his way now and then, and soon regained the high-road for St. Jim's, and drove on to the school.

"This St. Jim's?" he called out to Taggles, the porter, who was looking out into the road.

Taggles touched his hat.

"Yessir!"

The South African junior jumped down.

"I'm the new boy," he explained affably. "Are you the porter?"

"Yessir!"

"Take my box in, please—School House." Clive slipped a half-crown into Taggles' hand, and the old porter beamed with civility. "Will you take charge of the trap, too? It was lent to me by some chaps belonging to a Grammar School hereabouts. They'll call for it, I expect."

"Yessir!"

Sidney Clive walked in cheerfully at the gates of St. Jim's. Half an hour later Gordon Gay looked in to inquire after the trap, and drove it away—with feelings too deep for words.

CHAPTER 4.

Sidney Clive's First Day at St. Jim's.

"NEW boy?"

"Yes."

"Which House?"

Sidney Clive looked puzzled at the question. It was his first day at St. Jim's. He had just put his head into the gymnasium when half a dozen fellows spotted him and surrounded him at once.

The one who addressed him was a lad of about his own age, long-legged and lithe, with a freckled face. It was Figgins of the Fourth.

The group of boys seemed to wait for Clive's answer to Figgins' question with a great deal of interest.

"I don't understand—" began Clive.

"I mean, which House are you going to enter? I s'pose you know there are two Houses—School and New?"

Clive's expression brightened.

"Oh, I see! I am going into School House."

Instantly the half-dozen groaned in chorus.

Clive looked at them in amazement. He knew nothing of the manners and customs at St. Jim's, and he was totally at a loss to account for his strange reception.

"Better teach him manners to begin with, Figgy!" exclaimed Kerr of the Fourth. "I vote that we frog-march him round the gym."

Figgins nodded cheerfully.

"That's a jolly good idea, Kerr. Collar him, chaps!"

And the boys rushed to seize the unlucky new-comer. Clive had not the faintest idea to what this sudden hostility was due, but he was by no means disposed to submit to the proposed infliction.

He made a desperate attempt to break away from his tormentors, but he was surrounded, and the odds were too great. But as half a dozen hands were laid upon him he struck out right and left, and Figgins went down in a heap, and Kerr went sprawling across him. But then five or six fellows had hold of him, and he was helpless.

Figgins got up rather slowly. A thin stream of crimson was flowing from his nose.

"Crums!" he ejaculated, as he mopped the injured organ with a handkerchief. "A regular firebrand! What's your name, you little boulder?"

"My name's Sidney Clive."

"Well, you must be taught to treat the young gentlemen of New House with a proper and becoming respect, and your first lesson shall be a frog's-march round the gym. Now, chaps! March!"

And they marched. Clive, in spite of his struggles, was powerless. But the march had not proceeded far when a tall young fellow stepped into the gym.

"Hallo, there, you kids! What are you up to now?" he exclaimed, as he perceived what was going on.

"Oh, crums, it's Kildare!" exclaimed Figgins, in dismay.

"I say, it's all right; we're only showing the new fellow round the gym, you know."

The captain of St. Jim's suppressed a smile.

"Do you usually show new-comers round in that way?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Figgy unblushingly, "when they belong to the School House."

"Oh, I see, you young rascal! Let him go! Do you hear? Let him go instantly!"

The New House juniors reluctantly released their victim. Clive escaped from their hands a good deal crumpled, but otherwise not much the worse for his rough experience.

Kildare beckoned to a junior who was looking curiously in at the door.

"Here, Blake! The new boy belongs to your House. You'd better show him round and explain things to him."

"All right!" cheerfully replied Blake. "Come along, you new chap. Don't mind those duffers—they're only duffers, and they can't help it! We're going to teach 'em manners this term, though, for a measly crowd like that are a disgrace to the school!"

This was said loud enough for the New House juniors to hear, and it is probable that further hostilities would have resulted but for the restraining presence of the captain of St. Jim's.

"Be off with you!" exclaimed Kildare, laughing.
 And Blake and the new boy walked out of the gym.
 "I should like to know what all this means," exclaimed Clive. "Why the dickens did they go for me like a lot of lunatics?"

Blake grinned.
 "Of course, you're new to St. Jim's," he said, a little patronisingly. "You don't know the ropes."

"No, I certainly don't."
 "You see," explained Blake, "there's always been a keen rivalry between the two Houses. Each is always trying to out the other out. The New House chaps hate us, but we only treat 'em with contempt. We always lick 'em at cricket and football, and it makes 'em wild. We have lots of rows, and it's jolly fun. We mean to give 'em the kybosh this term, and no mistake!"

Clive began to understand. And it occurred to him that there would be a good deal of fun in the contests between the rival houses of St. Jim's, and he felt himself already eager for the fray.

"Figgins is leader of the New House," said Blake. "By the by, was it you who tapped his claret?"

"Tapped his what?"
 "Damaged his boko."
 "Oh, I punched his nose!"
 "You must have punched it hard, too, to judge by the look of it," chuckled Blake. "Scott! The chaps on our side will be glad to hear about that! But here we are—this is the School House—the top house of St. Jim's."

And they entered, and Blake showed his protegee over to the building with a great deal of pride, and introduced him to a number of fellows who had the honour to belong to the School House, and the South African junior received a hearty welcome from Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 5.

The New Boy.

CLIVE quickly fell into the ways of St. Jim's. Before he had been there twenty-four hours he felt himself heart and soul as keen a partisan of the School House as the "oldest inhabitant."

The feud between the two houses at St. Jim's was an affair of long standing. New-comers usually entered into the spirit of the thing, and took up the cause of one side or the other with ardour.

Jack Blake had taken rather a liking to the junior from South Africa, and he showed him round the School House in great good-humour.

Cricket practice being over, the juniors had come in to tea, and the Terrible Three turned up in Study No. 6, and Herries and Digby were there, getting tea, and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther cheerfully lent a hand. They were busy when Blake came in with the new boy.

They nodded to him cheerfully, having already made his acquaintance downstairs.

"Gussy come in?" asked Blake.
 "Haven't seen him," said Dig. "Didn't he meet you at the station, Clive?"

Clive shook his head.
 "Some fellows met me," he said. "They said a fellow named D'Arcy was coming, but he had met with an accident. They were Grammar School chaps."

"Then I suppose they know all about Gussy's accident," grinned Monty Lowther. "Poor old Gussy—born to trouble!"

"How did you get away from that?" asked Blake.
 Clive grinned, and related the adventure of the trap. There was a roar of laughter in Study No. 6.

"Early done in the eye!" chuckled Blake. "This new kid is really hot stuff; quite ginger, in fact. Dished the Grammarians, and already dotted Figgins on the boko. Hallo, here's Gussy!"

"Great pip!"
 "Gussy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus had arrived.
 He had got off a good deal of the mud, but he was still in a terrible state. He sneezed his way into the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! There is nothin' to laugh at, you chaps—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have caught a fearful cold—atchoo! I fell into a beastly ditch—atchoo!—gwoogh! Is that the new chap?"
 "Yes," said Clive. "I'm sorry you've had an accident."

THE GEN LIBRARY—No. 446.

"Yaas, it's howwid! I've just met Waitton, and he says I've got a cold, and I'm to go into the sanatorium at once," groaned Arthur Augustus. "I suppose I've got vatah a cold, but it is really not bad enough for the sanatorium."

"Never mind. Miss Marie will look after you," said Blake. "That is all vewy well, but I do not want to be shut up in the beastly sanatorium."

"Didn't you tell Raitton so?" grinned Tom Merry.
 "It was useless to tell Waitton so, Tom Merry. Now I suppose I shall be laid up for a beastly week. Howvah, I am glad to welcome you to St. Jim's, Clive."

"Thank you," said Clive.
 "Undah the cires, as South Afwican has played up so wippin' in the war, we veward it as an honah to have a South Afwican in our—atchoo!—midst," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose Waitton hasn't given you a study yet."

"Not yet."
 "Then I twust you will take my place in this study till I come out of sanny."

Blake nodded at once.
 "Good idea!" he said. "You'll have to get another study later, Clive—we can't have five here—but for the present we'll take you in and look after you. We are used to having fun."

"I shall be glad," said Clive.
 "Gwoogh! I think I had bettah go, or Waitton will be aftah me. Gwoogh! Atchoo!"

Arthur Augustus sorrowfully departed.
 Grundy of the Shell met him in the passage.
 "Raitton's calling you," said Grundy. "My hat! What a sight! Where did you dig up that chivvy? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"D'Arcy" came Mr. Raitton's voice from the stairs.
 Arthur Augustus, with a muddy glare of wrath at the hilarious Grundy, hurried away. The Housemaster's word was law.

A quarter of an hour later, Arthur Augustus, still sneezing and grunting, was tucked up in the sanatorium, with a serious cold. And not even the kind ministrations of Miss Marie could quite reconcile him to it. He had serious doubts as to how the School House cricket would get on in his absence.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "It's hard cheese; and all through his giddy politeness in going to welcome Clive!"

"I'm sorry," said Clive. "He seems a jolly good sort."
 "One of the best, with all his funny ways," said Blake.
 "Never mind; we'll visit him in the sanatorium, and smuggle in things for him when Miss Marie isn't looking."

"To which suggestion the Co. responded heartily;
 "Hear, hear!"

The juniors felt really concerned about their noble chum, but they made a hearty tea; youthful appetites were healthy. Sidney Clive was feeling quite at home in Study No. 6.

It was a great change for him, from his home on the far-away veldt, to the School House at St. Jim's. But he seemed to drop into his place without an effort. The juniors eyed him curiously once or twice. There was none of the nervousness or sheepishness of a new boy about Clive. It was evident that the boy from South Africa knew how to take care of himself wherever he found himself.

"Decent chap," said Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three left the study after tea. "I rather like him."
 "Same here," agreed Manners.

"But he's booked for a row with Figgins," remarked Monty Lowther. "He's got to be careful. Figgys won't let a new kid punch his nose, and do nothing."

"He looks as if he could take care of Number One," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'm glad he's come into our House."

"Hallo! Here's a New House cad!" said Lowther, as Kerr of the Fourth came along the passage. "Roll him downstairs!"

Kerr grinned, and held up his hand in sign of peace.
 "Pax!" he said.

"That's all vewy well—"
 "Exactly! I've brought a challenge. Is that new kid hanging about?"

"He's in Study No. 6. From Figgys?" grinned Tom Merry.
 "Yes, No malice, you know; but Figgys is going to lick him, on general principles," explained Kerr.

"Perhaps Figgys may be waking up the wrong passenger," suggested the captain of the Shell. "Clive looks rather hefty."

"Oh, rats! Figgys's nose is double the usual size, and he's going to mop up Clive, just as a lesson to him. He's been ragged by Sifton, too."

"What's the matter with your prefect?"

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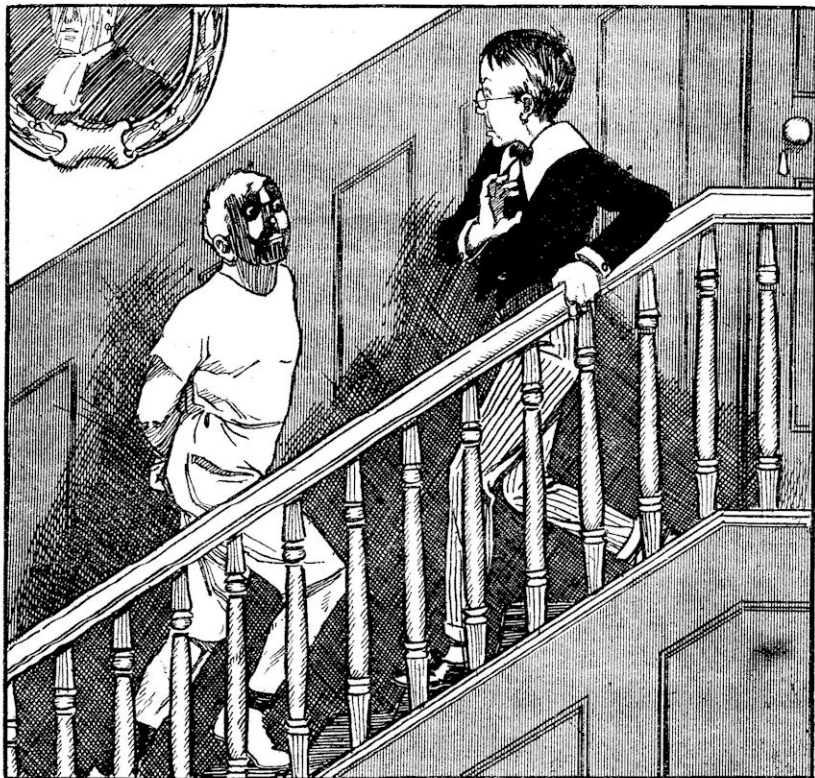
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Skimpole of the Shell was coming downstairs as Clive rushed up. Skimpole stopped dead, blinking at the South African junior, with his eyes nearly bulging through his big spectacles. "Good—goodness gracious!" gasped Skimpole. "What—what—" (See Chapter 11.)

"Sefton gave him a hundred lines for fighting," growled Kerr. "Not that Sefton cares twopence whether he fights or not, but he's down on our study. Now Monteith's away—he's gone to see a sick uncle—Sefton is head prefect of the New House, and he's a ten times bigger beast than Monteith ever was. He's Ratty's favourite, you know, or he wouldn't be head prefect. He just jumped at the chance of ragging poor old Figgy. Figgy can't lick a prefect, so he's going to lick Clive—see?"

"Exactly! Quite logical," said Tom, laughing.

Kerr went on to Study No. 6, and the Terrible Three went their way, grinning. Figgins of the New House was a mighty man of war; but Tom Merry & Co. had an idea that the boy from South Africa would be able to give a good account of himself even against the mighty Figgins.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgy's Challenge.

STUDY No. 6 had cleared away the tea-things, and were settling down to prep, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Blake.

Kerr of the Fourth entered.

Blake & Co. grinned, as they noted a darkening circle round his left eye. Kerr gave them a cheerful nod.

"Hallo! I see you've got that new merchant here," he remarked.

"Clive's sharing our study while Gussy's laid up," explained Blake. "We're rather busy just now, you New House bouncer, but we've got time to roll you along the passage! Lend a hand, Clive; you've got to learn how to handle New House bouncers!"

Clive grinned. He had already fallen into the lively manners and customs of the juniors of St. Jim's.

"I'm on!" he said.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Kerr, jerking out his handkerchief and waving it in the air.

"Eh! What are you up to?"

"That's a white flag!"

"Is it?" said Blake, eyeing the flag of truce doubtfully. "It doesn't look so jolly white, as far as I can see."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly ass!" began Kerr warmly. "As a matter of absolute fact, the handkerchief was not so white as when it had left the wash. 'Don't play the giddy ox! I've come here on business; important business in connection with this cheeky new kid.'"

"With me?" said Clive, in surprise.

"Yes, you, you cheeky young bouncer from Borribooly-Gah!"

Each House claimed to be top House of St. Jim's, and each fiercely disputed the other's claim.

"What do you want?" Blake inquired politely. "Don't you know that you measly New House chaps ain't allowed on this side?"

"I'm a flag of truce," explained Kerr. "I've come to bring a challenge."

"Oh! What sort of a challenge?"

"The new kid had the cheek to dot old Figgins on the boko—"

"And you in the eye," Clive remarked cheerfully.

"Never mind my eye," said Kerr hastily. "It's Figgins' nose I'm talking about."

"What! Does he want it punched again?"

"He's going to give you a jolly good hiding for your cheek," exclaimed Kerr; "and that's what I'm here for. Will you meet him this evening behind the boathouse, with two witnesses? That's what I want to know."

Blake looked at Clive a little dismayed, though he tried not to show it. Clive was perfectly cool.

"So Figgins wants to fight me?"

"Yes, if you don't back out."

"Oh, there won't be any backing out as far as I am concerned!" said Clive cheerfully. "I'll meet Figgins when and where he likes, with a great deal of pleasure."

Kerr grinned. It was evident that he hadn't the least doubt as to the result of the contest.

"All right! Shall we say in half an hour?"

"That will suit me."

"All serene!"

And Kerr went off, grinning.

"Here, I say, Clive," said Blake. "I don't half like this. You'll be licked."

Clive smiled quietly.

"So you think Figgins will lick me?"

"Of course. Why, he licked a Fifth Form fellow once. Tom Merry is the only chap in the Shell who can stand up to him. You can't."

"We shall see."

"I like your pluck, and I hope you'll put up a good fight. But I tell you Figgins is a corker."

"There's some gloves here," said Clive. "Just you shove 'em on for a few seconds, and we'll have a mill or two, to see whether I'm in form."

"All right! No harm in that."

They took off their jackets and donned the gloves. Blake rather prided himself upon his boxing, though he admitted he wasn't up to Figgins' form. He wasn't prepared for what happened now. The new boy, quiet as he looked, was "all there." He simply played with Blake, keeping so perfect a guard that his opponent could not touch him, and giving Jack playful taps upon the chest, the chin, or the nose. At length Blake, amazed and breathless, called halt.

"That'll do!" he exclaimed. "If you box, old Figgie like that he'll find you a tough customer, Clive."

Clive laughed.

"Do you still think he'll lick me?"

"Well, I think you have a chance now."

"So do I!" exclaimed Herries. "My belief is that Clive will come out best, my boy!"

"I hope so. Dig and I will go with you, Clive. I suppose Figgins will bring a couple of fellows, too. It won't do to have a crowd, you know, or some of the masters or prefects are pretty sure to spot what's going on."

The three boys left the study, and crossed the old elm-shaded quadrangle, and sauntered towards the rippling Rill, where the boathouse stood. Near this was a space, shaded by a big oak, and almost hidden by other trees, which was an old battleground of the St. Jim's boys, when a dispute had to be settled by fist-fights.

As ill-luck would have it, Sefton spotted the three as they crossed the playing-field.

"Cut along!" said Blake, in an undertone. "That's Sefton. He likes to fag on our side whenever he can, and I can see he's got his eye upon us."

"Are the seniors of New House allowed to fag us?" asked Clive.

"Well, they ain't supposed to, but they do sometimes, especially Sefton. He's a beastly bully."

"Hallo, there, you kids!" exclaimed Sefton, coming towards them. "One of you go up to the school and ask Baker for my Euclid, and bring it here to me. Cut off!"

"Can't," said Clive, before either of the others could reply. "We've got an appointment, Sefton."

The coolness of this reply from a junior fairly took the prefect's breath away. He glared at Clive speechlessly.

"You are a new boy?" he said, at length.

Clive gave a nod.

"Then, perhaps you don't know whom you are addressing?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

"Oh, yes! You're Sefton, ain't you—cock of the walk in the New House?"

"Ah, you know all about it, I see! And I suppose you are in the School House?"

"Well, rather!"

"Well, then, you little hound, I'll teach you to pay proper respect to a prefect!"

And he made a grab at the new boy. Clive promptly dodged and eluded him.

"Now, keep your wool on, old boy!" he exclaimed, in a tone of mild remonstrance.

To be addressed as "old boy!" by a junior was a new experience to Sefton. He made a rush at Clive.

"Keep off!" exclaimed Clive, dodging round Blake and Digby. "You know you ain't allowed to fag us chaps, and I'm going to stick up for my rights, so I warn you! Oh, crickey!"

The last exclamation was uttered as Sefton caught him, and seized his ear, and gave it a vicious twist. But in a moment Clive wriggled himself loose. Sefton's grasp relaxing as he received a kick on the shins from the youngster in the struggle. The pain made him howl out, and Clive got away.

"Sorry to hurt you," said Clive, rubbing his ear, now fiery in hue, "but you mustn't take liberties with my ears, you know. I bar that. Ah, would you!"

He broke into a run as the infuriated prefect made a spring at him. Sefton of the Sixth gave chase. Right across the field they went, Clive, who was a good runner, keeping the lead. But he was running directly towards the river, and it looked as if Sefton was certain to have him.

Blake and Digby, dismayed and anxious, followed the chase. Clive was close to the water's edge now, and Sefton was only a few paces behind. The prefect, wild with rage, was running his hardest.

On the very edge of the water Clive halted and flung himself down. Unable to stop himself in time, Sefton went stumbling over him, and plunged headlong into the water. With a mighty splash, he disappeared, and a simultaneous yell of joyous laughter burst from Blake and Digby.

Clive picked himself up in a flash and joined his two friends, bursting with merriment.

"Scott! I ejaculated Blake. "You'd better give Sefton a wide berth after that. Come on!"

They scudded away, turning their backs on the boathouse. When Sefton, panting and puffing, scrambled out of the river, they were vanishing through a hedge.

He ground his teeth, and, muttering threats of vengeance, made his way to St. Jim's for a change of clothing. And when he was gone and the coast was clear Clive and his friends hurried to the boathouse, where Figgins and two other fellows impatiently awaited them.

CHAPTER 7.

The Fight.

"HERE he is!" exclaimed Kerr, as Clive and his two friends came under the trees behind the boathouse. "We've been waiting for you, slow-coach!"

"You must thank your no-class prefect for that," the new boy answered cheerfully.

"What, has Sefton got wind of it?" exclaimed Kerr.

"What if he has?" said Figgins. "He wouldn't interfere to prevent a cad getting thumped."

"Oh, no, he doesn't know anything about this!" said Clive coolly. "He was cheezy, that's all, and I had to give him a ducking!"

The three looked at each other. What kind of a new boy was this who talked of ducking Sefton, the prefect of the New House, second only to Kildare at St. Jim's, now Monteth was away?

"I say, you're talking rot, you know!" said Figgins uneasily. "And, look here, if you're ready, I am!"

"I'm ready and willing!"

And, without more ado, they "pceled," and faced one another.

When they stood face to face the advantage seemed to be with Figgie. He was quite six months older than Clive, and a couple of inches taller. He was well known at St. Jim's as a boxer.

But Clive's manner expressed a cool indifference which was encouraging to his friends, though there was nothing of "bounce" in his manner.

"Buck up!" said Kerr. "Get through with it before some beastly prefect is down on us."

And the adversaries set to with a will.

Figgins, labouring under the delusion that he had only just to "wade in" to knock the new boy into the middle of next week, or still farther along the calendar, led off with a smart attack.

CHAPTER 8.

Sefton Seeks Vengeance.

Clive gave a little ground at first, and then suddenly making a feint with his left, put his right fairly on Figgins' nose, and the leader the New House juniors went to grass in a startlingly abrupt fashion.

Kerr picked him up. A stream of red was flowing from his nose, and he looked dazed.

"Say, old man, what did you let him do that for?" was Kerr's consoling inquiry.

Figgins looked vicious.

"Do you think I let him do it on purpose?" he demanded.

"Well—"

"Don't be an ass!"

"That was nobby!" exclaimed Blake, patting his principal on the back. "Keep that up, and you'll knock Figgins out in no time."

"By gum, he will!" said Digby. "Didn't I say so, now?"

"Will he?" ejaculated Figgins, who overheard the remark.

"We'll see about that, you bouncers! Come on!"

They began the second round. Figgins' overweening confidence was gone now. He fought with care and all the skill he was capable of. And this time it was Clive who went to grass, though not before he had severely punished his adversary.

"Good!" was Blake's verdict, as he sponged his principal's face after the round. "I can see you're a game 'un. Keep it up!"

"I did him that time," said Figgins to his second.

Kerr nodded, but did not reply. He looked as he felt—very dubious. The round had been fiercely contested.

"Well, be careful!"

"Rats!"

And at it the combatants went again. Figgins had been rendered angry instead of cautious by his second's advice, and he forced the fighting hard. Clive received two or three heavy drives, which made him stagger. But, watching his opportunity, he planted his right fist in Figgins' eye, and as the junior reeled, followed it up with his left on the jaw, and Figgins went down with a thump on the grass.

"Bravo!" shouted Blake, in delight.

"How do you feel, Clive?"

"Fit as a fiddle!"

"I'll bet Fizzy doesn't!"

Figgins had been picked up by Kerr and Wynn, and he was sitting on the latter's knee, while Kerr sponged his bruised face. He looked decidedly groggy.

"Time!" called out Digby.

Kerr looked anxiously at his chief.

"Going on, old man?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"My advice is—"

"Blow your advice!"

"Oh, all right! Get on, then!"

He had no more hope of seeing his chief lick the terrible new boy. But Figgins would not admit to himself what all the others could see.

The fourth round was rather tame, both of them being a little breathless and the worse for wear. But the fifth round was a fierce one.

Figgins stood on the defensive at first; but the new boy attacked fiercely, and twice his fists reached Figgins' face. Then Figgins fought his hardest, and terrific blows were given and received. Figgins was game to the last, but the lookers-on could see that the new boy was steadily getting the better of him. And at last, with a terrible right-hander, straight from the shoulder, Clive laid his adversary upon the ground, from which he was unable to rise without Kerr's assistance.

"I—I'm done!" he gasped. "I can't go on!"

Clive wasn't in much better condition, but he was ready to toe the mark again, if necessary.

"We give in!" said Kerr glumly.

And he chuckled up the sponge.

Clive walked across to his late adversary, and held out his hand.

"Shako, old chap!" he said. "We've had a good tussle, but I hope there's no malice on either side!"

Figgins grinned faintly, and put out his hand, and shook Clive's cordially enough.

"All right, old man," he said. "I don't care. We don't bear malice, but we're going to give you chaps a high old time this term, and don't you forget it!"

"We'll try and give you as good as you send!" laughed Clive.

And so they separated.

IN the juniors' Common-room of the School House there was only one topic that evening—the fight behind the bathhouse, and Clive's victory over the chief of the New House juniors.

The victory caused great excitement, and the new boy had jumped into popularity at a bound. He received quite an ovation from the jubilant juniors, but he bore his blushing honours with becoming modesty. He also bore a black eye and a fine assortment of cuts and bruises, which considerably impaired his beauty.

These traces of the combat caught the eye of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" he asked severely stopping Clive as he walked into the quad on his return.

"You have been fighting?"

"Yes, sir," assented Clive.

"With whom?"

"One of the New House fellows, sir."

"Ah, some more of this absurd disputing between the two Houses, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. We're going to knock 'em sick this term!" said Clive cheerfully.

"You must not speak like that," said Mr. Railton, trying hard not to smile. "You will write fifty lines for fighting; or, stay, as you are new here I shall overlook your offence. But take care, sir—take care!"

And Mr. Railton, looking very severe, marched off, only to burst into a laugh as soon as the boys were out of hearing.

"He seems a decent sort, Blake," Clive remarked.

"So he is. Of course, he's bound to take notice of fighting; but I knew he'd let you off. I wish I felt as easy about Sefton."

"Why, what do you think he'll do?"

"He'll never forgive that tumble in the river. You'll hear from him soon, I expect."

"Well, I shall have to stand it, I suppose," said Clive carelessly. "I'm not sorry I did it."

Later in the evening Blake's prediction was verified. The Common-room was in a full buzz of talk about the fight and the downfall of Figgins, when a head was put in at the door, and a pair of spiteful eyes looked over the groups of youngsters in search of Clive.

"Hallo," exclaimed Talbot, "there's Sefton!"

It was Sefton. Seeing Clive, he advanced into the room, an evil expression upon his face.

Every eye was upon him at once. It was unusual for a boy belonging to one House to venture into the sacred precincts of the other; but, the visitor being a Sixth Form senior, they did not quite know how to resent the intrusion.

"Ah, you rat! I've caught you, have I?"

And Sefton made a dash towards Clive. Clive promptly dodged round a table.

"Now, don't lose your temper," he admonished. "Just be calm, and tell us what you want."

"I'm going to give you the biggest hiding you ever had in your life!" snarled Sefton, glaring at him across the table.

"Rats!" answered Clive. "You've no business here. Chaps, are we going to stand this cheek? This is a respectable House; no dogs admitted. Now, off with you before we chuck you out!"

Sefton panted with rage. He made a rush round the table, but the new boy, wisely declining to come to close quarters with the big bully, dodged him nimbly, and twice round the table they went, till Sefton stopped, panting and furious. The boys around were shouting with laughter, and he realised that he was making an exhibition of himself.

Blake had quietly slipped out to fetch Kildare. For a senior of the New House to invade School House to punish a boy belonging to it was a breach of all the laws written and unwritten at St. Jim's, and he knew that the captain of the school would have something to say about it.

"You young cub!" hissed Sefton. "I'll break your neck as soon as I get hold of you!"

"First catch your hare," said Clive coolly. "It's no good. Better chuck it, old boy."

"Oh, you little bound!"

And Sefton, giving up in despair the idea of catching the lively junior, tried to scramble over the table. As he did so somebody threw a dictionary, which caught him on the side of the head with a fearful clump. He flashed round, glaring with rage—just in time to catch an inkpot on the bridge of his nose. The fluid ran down his face and shirt-front, and a good deal of it into his mouth, and he splattered and swore at a fearful rate.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 146.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ANSWERS

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"HOLIDAY CAMP!"

Just as he seemed about to "run amuck" amongst the laughing juniors, Kildare came in with Blake.

"Hallo, hallo, there!" exclaimed the captain, in his cheery way. "What's the row here? What's up, Sefton?"

"Look at my face!" howled Sefton. "Is that how you teach your brats to treat a senior?"

"Ha, ha! I'm sorry. You do look a sight, certainly. But what's the matter?"

"I came here to thrash Clive!"

"You had no right to do that," said Kildare quietly. "You know perfectly well that I keep order in my own House, and that the prefects of one House are not allowed to interfere with what goes on in the other. You know that as well as I do. I've had complaints a good many times about you and your set fagging the youngsters on this side. It's not playing the game, and I tell you plainly it's got to be stopped."

"Who's going to stop it?" asked Sefton, with a sneer.

"I am!" said Kildare, still quietly.

"Do you know what that brat has done to me?" broke out Sefton, changing the subject.

"I didn't know he had done anything."

"He shoved me into the river."

"Is this true?" said Kildare.

"Does that mean that you doubt my word?" cried Sefton passionately.

"I must hear what the youngster has to say."

"He will tell lies, of course!"

"You've no right to suppose so. Answer me, Clive."

The South African junior nodded.

"I tripped him up, and he went in," confessed Clive frankly. "He was chasing me. He wanted to fag me, and I wasn't taking any. Perhaps I checked him a bit—but then, he bullied us."

"I see how it is," said Kildare. "You were interfering with the youngsters. I don't approve of the young 'uns checking the seniors, but I can't blame the kids for standing up for their rights. I used to when I was in the Fourth. Why can't you be satisfied to fag your own juniors, and let our side alone?"

"Of course, I knew that you'd back the whelp up in his insubordination," said Sefton. "You'd stand up for anything that was done against our House, and you set the kids on to check the Sixth Form."

"That's not true, and you know it!"

"It's true, but it won't be stood long. You've given yourself too many airs—"

"I think you've said quite enough, Sefton," interrupted Kildare. "Don't you think that you'd better be getting back to your own quarters?"

"I shall not go until I have thrashed that cheeky young scoundrel—"

"Nonsense!"

"Nonsense—ch? I'll show you!"

Sefton had completely lost his temper now, and he had thrown discretion to the winds. He made a rush towards Clive. Kildare's brow flushed up at this defiance of his authority on his own ground. He made a rapid stride forward and laid a heavy hand upon Sefton's shoulder.

"Sefton, please understand—"

"Hands off!"

"You shall not touch that boy!" said the captain, tightening his grip.

"Let go! Take that, then!"

And the prefect's clenched fist was dashed full into the captain's face.

A thrill almost of horror ran through the eager crowd of juniors. He had struck Kildare, the captain of the school!

Kildare's face turned scarlet, then deadly pale. With one twist of his arm he sent Sefton reeling and stumbling through the doorway, to fall in a heap on the corridor outside.

He was up again in a moment. Kildare sprang towards him with blazing eyes.

"Get out! Do you hear? Get out, or, prefect as you are, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!"

And Sefton thought it better to go. He slunk away, muttering vengeance.

The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

CHAPTER 9. A House Raid.

THE scene between the captain of the school and the head prefect of the New House, of course, became the talk of St. Jim's. Most of those who discussed it expected the affair to go further, but, by the efforts of some of the Sixth Form of both Houses, peace was patched up. A "row" between the captain and the prefect was, of course, a serious matter, which the masters would have had to take notice of, and when Sefton calmed down he saw that he had gone too far, and that he was too hopelessly in the wrong to risk an inquiry by the Head. So he sent an apology finally to Kildare, and the two shook hands in public.

But the reconciliation, though it tidied over an awkward situation, left them no better friends than before. Honest, frank Kildare had an instinctive contempt for the bullying prefect, and he knew that Sefton hated him, and would never forgive him. And in Sefton's heart, envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness rankled more bitterly than ever.

He hated Kildare because he was frank and brave and true, as reptiles hate the light; because he was captain of St. Jim's—because he was popular—almost as popular in the New House as his own. He hated him for these reasons, and for a score of others; and since the altercation in the juniors' room that night his hatred had grown more deadly.

How to revenge himself upon the one he chose to consider his enemy—how to hurl Kildare from his position in the school—that was the problem which he set himself to solve, and which he discussed with his chums—two fellows like himself, given to bullying and petty tyranny.

It was a few days after the "row" that Blake and Clive, coming up the lane from the school towards the village, spied Sefton and his cronies, Gibbs, waiting towards them. Although the prefect had not taken notice of Clive since the "row," the boy felt pretty sure that he would not let slip this opportunity, so, as soon as he caught sight of Sefton, he jerked Blake aside, and bundled him through the hedge. There they took cover, and waited for the two seniors to pass.

"I don't think they've seen us," said Clive. "No; I'm sure they haven't. They're talking mighty solemnly over something, and they haven't looked up!"

The two seniors, apparently deeply interested in their talk, were walking slowly, and they came on without the least suspicion that the two juniors had taken cover behind the hedge. And as they came nearer the two boys could not help hearing what they said. The first words they distinguished were spoken by Gibbs:

"I don't care!" burst out Sefton fiercely. "I don't care! I tell you; I'll set him down! I hate him more now than ever I did before, the consequential prig! I'll bring him down, if I get expelled from St. Jim's in doing it!"

"I don't like him any more than you do. I'd rather have almost any other chap for captain. But he's there now, and he's safe enough. We could get up a movement, or something, if he wasn't so confoundedly popular! But he is. He's liked by both Houses. It's only our set that's against

him, and—"

"I know all that as well as you do, and I know we can't settle his hash by fair means. Well, then, we'll do it by foul. I'll crush him! I'll disgrace him! And I can do it—"

They passed out of earshot. The juniors looked at each other, each with a rather scared expression.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Blake at length.

"A precious pair of rascals!" exclaimed Clive. "It was Kildare they were talking about, of course?"

"Of course!"

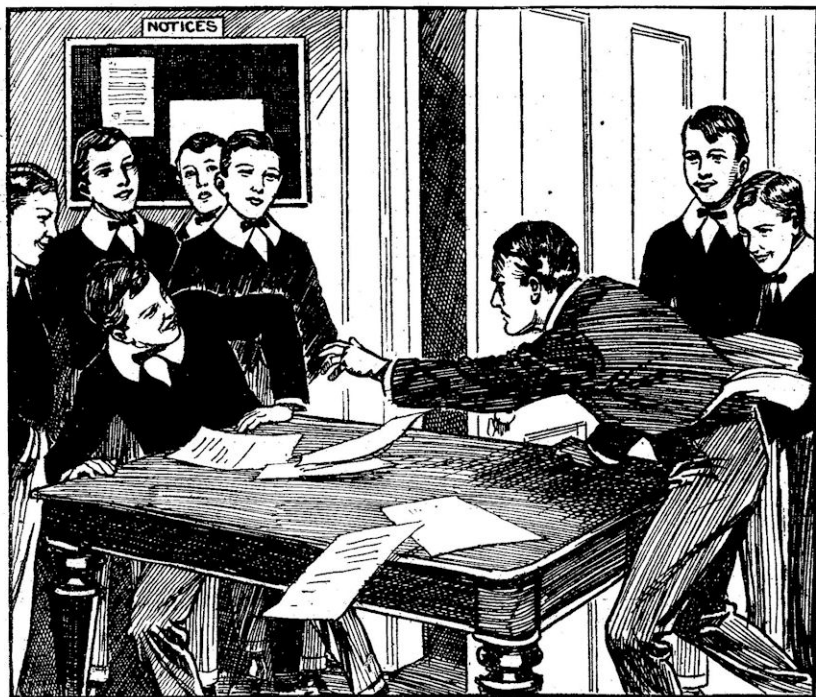
"I wonder what plot they've got afoot? I wish we had heard more. We really ought to put Kildare on his guard!"

Blake shook his head.

"No good. He wouldn't listen to us, and it would look like telling tales. But we can keep our eyes open!"

"Yes, I suppose so. Well, come on, or we shan't be at the tuckshop before Mrs. Murphy has sold out all her fresh tarts!"

TUCK HAMPERS
FOR READERS OF
THE
BOYS' FRIEND
OUT TO-DAY!
ONE PENNY.



Selfton made a dash towards Clive, who promptly dodged round the table. "Now, don't lose your temper," he admonished. "Just be calm, and tell us what you want." (See Chapter 8.)

And they hurried on up the lane to the old village of Ryelombe, which, as it was a half-holiday, was within bounds to-day.

The tuckshop was pretty full of boys from St. Jim's, and two or three were lounging in the doorway. Clive recognised Kerr among them. A trap, with a sleepy-looking old horse, was standing in front of the shop, evidently waiting for someone who had gone inside.

"That's old Souther's trap and geegee," Blake remarked. "Somebody's got it out for the afternoon. Dig and I had it once last term, and Figgins ambushed us with pea-shooters, and gave us a hot time up the lane. Scott! We were glad to get out of it, I tell you!"

While Blake was speaking, Figgins came out of the tuckshop carrying a basket, which he placed in the trap, and then went back.

A flash of mischief darted into Clive's eyes.

"Come on! That's our game!"

"Who—what?"

"Don't you see? The New House juniors have got the trap. Old Figgins has shoved in it the tummy for a picnic!"

"What about it?"

"Why, we're going to raid it, that's all. Come on! I tell you, we're going to collar the trap!"

"All right! I'm game!"

Blake was heart and soul in the enterprise at once. If it succeeded, it would be about the biggest "rise" they had ever succeeded in taking out of the New House.

They ran towards the trap. Figgins and Kerr were coming out of the tuckshop, each carrying a bag of oranges in his hand.

"I say, what are you up to?" shouted Figgins, as Clive put his foot on the step and sprang into the trap, while Blake scrambled up behind.

Clive did not take the trouble to answer. He snatched up the reins and the whip, and gave the horse a flick. Old Tom started out of his daydreams, and began to trot off.

Figgins & Co. seemed for a moment or two quite petrified by this daring raid. But as the trap moved off they rushed desperately forward, howling out terrific threats. Clive whipped up the horse, and old Tom went down the village street at a pace he had seldom shown before, with the three junior in hot pursuit, and innumerable village boys and dogs joining in the chase.

Blake sat facing the rear, and making grimaces at the pursuers. The juniors made tremendous efforts to overtake the trap; but in vain!

"Pelt 'em—pelt the cads!" panted Figgins.

He grabbed an orange out of his bag, and hurled it with deadly aim. It was a bullseye. Squash it went into Blake's grinning face, and bowled him out. He collapsed. Then one from Kerr's hand—Kerr was a good over-arm bowler—caught Clive on the back of the head, pitching him forward. He saved himself, unavoidably jerking upon the reins, and old Tom at once slowed down.

"Now's the time!" yelled Figgins.

And, putting on a spurt, he and Kerr reached the trap and hung on behind, trying to climb in.

"Keep her going!" shouted Blake. "I'll manage these rotters!"

"All right, old son!" answered Clive cheerfully; and he drove on at a spanking rate.

With their boots scraping and clattering on the ground, the two juniors clung on desperately.

"Yah! Trying to collar our grub!" gasped Figgins. "Just like you rotters!"

"Do you want the tommy?"

"Yes; and we're going to have it!"

"Here's some of it, then!"

And Blake, having picked a nice plump jam-tart out of the basket, slammed the same down upon Figgins' upturned face as he hung on behind.

"Och! Ah! Och!"

Poor Figgins let go his hold and went down into the dust, blinded by jam.

"Will you have one?" asked Blake politely. "Or perhaps you'd like some lemonade?"

And he proceeded to pour a bottle of that refreshing beverage over the head of Kerr.

"I'll pay you out for this!" howled Kerr as he dropped into the road.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Who scores this time—eh? Go home, duffers! Ha, ha!"

And the trap rattled on, soon disappearing from the sight of Figgins & Co. They picked themselves up, looking decidedly sheepish. Figgins' face was caked with jam and dust, and Kerr's hair was like a wet mop with lemonade. They looked so utterly funny that the village boys, forming an admiring circle round them, howled with laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw! Doan't uns look a soight, Jarge? Haw, haw, haw!"

"Get out of the way, you yokels!" exclaimed Figgins, and he strode off. But the crowd followed.

The village of Rylcombe had never seen a sight like that before, and naturally they wanted to make the most of it. Not until the boys had gained the shelter of the tuckshop, where they implored Mrs. Murphy to let them clean themselves, did the village tag-rag and bobtail leave them in peace.

Meanwhile, the raiders were enjoying themselves. A drive through the pleasant lanes, a feast upon the contents of the basket, and the consciousness of a triumph over the rival House at St. Jim's made them naturally jubilant. They had "done" the New House fellows—completely done them—and they were determined never to let Figgins hear the end of it.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Enemy's Hands.

WHEN Blake and Clive entered the quadrangle at St. Jim's just before calling-over, Figgins & Co. were ready for them. Clive saw the enemy as he passed the gates.

"Scott! We shall have to run the gauntlet!" he said. "Old Figgins and his lot are there in force waiting for us! Come on!"

"I'm ready."

And they made a rush for the entrance of the Schoop House, across the old elm-shaded quadrangle.

"There they are!" shouted Figgins. "Rats! Sneaks! Sock it into 'em!"

The two juniors, with a desperate charge, broke through the swarming foe, though not without a good many thumps. The enemy pursued them up to the very doorstep. Clive and his chum bolted in blindly, and the next moment there was a yell and a fall.

"Oh, scissors!" gasped Clive, horrified.

Mr. Railton had been coming out of his study, and Clive had butted right into him, sending him sprawling. But with great presence of mind he rushed to the fallen master to assist him to rise.

"I hope you're not hurt, sir," he said meekly. "I'm very sorry I cannoned you, sir."

"Oh—ah—er!" gasped Mr. Railton, as he stood up rather unsteadily. "What do you mean, sir, by bolting into the house in that reckless manner?"

The juniors outside heard the master's voice, and melted away into thin air.

"I'm very sorry, sir," stammered Clive. "I—I was in a great hurry, sir!"

"And why were you in a great hurry?"

"It's time for calling-over, sir," Clive said diplomatically. "He didn't want to betray Figgins & Co., or to tell a lie, and that reply seemed to hit the happy medium."

"Ah, you were in a hurry not to be late for calling-over? Under the circumstances I will excuse you, but please be more careful in the future."

And Mr. Railton was turning away, when Clive blurted out:

"No, sir; I'd—I'd rather not deceive you, sir. I had forgotten all about calling-over when I bolted in."

Mr. Railton stared at him, while Blake gave a little gasp of dismay.

"Why—what—Clive! I certainly congratulate you upon your frankness. Will you have the kindness, then, to tell me why you came in like a wild Indian?"

Clive was silent.

A slight smile broke over the Housemaster's face. He had heard shouting in the quad, and he guessed the truth.

"Never mind, Clive. I am very pleased to see that you scorn a lie. You may go."

And Clive, somewhat surprised at escaping so easily, hastened away with his chum.

"Oh, you little George Washington! Where's your little hatchet?" gurgled Blake.

But Clive's face was serious.

"I couldn't take him in when I saw that he trusted to my word. It went against the grain somehow."

Blake slapped him on the back.

"Of course it did, old chap! I was only joking. But come on, or we shall be late!"

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As it was, they were just in time to answer "Adsum!" when Darrel, the prefect, called their names.

The next morning there were some gloomy faces over in New House. The story of how the School House had "dished" the New House chief was all over St. Jim's.

And Figgins' temper wasn't improved by a letter which he received by the morning's post. It contained a postal order to pay for the pecuniary loss he had been put to, and an extremely laconic note in Clive's handwriting—"Many thanks!"

"Hang him!" growled Figgins. "I'd have given twice the amount for it not to have happened. We shall never hear the last of it until we've done something to take those rotters down a peg."

"We must do something!" he exclaimed resolutely. "We must get our own back somehow!"

And they put their heads together and plotted a plot. Clive, who intended to come out strong at a paper-chase which was to come off the following Saturday, having been selected as one of the hares, went out every evening for a run to keep himself fit. After a good spell, he turned back towards the school by a footpath across the fields. He had slackened a bit, having easy time to get in before call-over, and he was thinking of anything but danger, when suddenly three figures burst from a hedge and pitched themselves upon him.

In a twinkling he lay upon his back, with Kerr sitting upon his chest and Wynn upon his legs.

"Got him!" said the voice of Figgins, in tones of the most supreme satisfaction.

Clive stared up at his assailants, powerless to move, but still unconscious.

"Yes, you've got me," he said pleasantly. "And now the question arises, what are you going to do with me?"

"You'll see in a minute!" Figgins produced a small coil of rope. "Turn him over, chaps!"

"I say, chuck it!" protested Clive. "This is just like you rotters—three to one!"

"Too bad, ain't it?" grinned Figgins. "Almost as bad as collaring a chap's go-cart when he wasn't looking, and wolfing his grub! Over with him!"

And over Clive went on his chest in the dust, and in spite of his struggles, his wrists were pulled behind him and knotted together with the rope. Then he ceased to struggle, making up his mind to take it philosophically. They jerked him to his feet.

"Promise you won't kick, and we'll leave your little tootees loose," said Figgins.

"All right!"

"Hold him, you two, in case he bolts, while I get out the colours," continued Figgins.

Clive wondered what that meant. But he soon saw. His heart sank a little when Figgins drew out a small tin box of painters' colours and a brush, and commenced operations.

First, he drew a broad line of the deepest red down Clive's face, from forehead to chin, putting on the paint with a liberal hand.

"Here, I say, hold on!" said Clive, in vain protest. "I ain't a blooming Red Indian, you know!"

Figgins grinned.

"Don't be so impatient; if you move your head you'll spoil the effect. You ought to make quite a sensation when you return to St. Jim's," he said.

"Do you mean to send me back to school in this state?" asked Clive, aghast.

"Of course; it's to celebrate your arrival."

"Look here—"

"Keep your noddle still!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Naughty! Kerr, pull his ears whenever he shifts his wooden head," said Figgins imperturbably.

"Right-ho!"

So Clive perforce kept his head still. Figgins calmly proceeded with his work. On either side of the red streak he painted a streak of Chinese white. Then he filled up the space between that and the ears with a bright sky-line. By this time the unfortunate Clive's appearance was, to say the least of it, unique. But his tormentor was not finished yet. He proceeded to draw thick black circles round his eyes, and to place a big dot of black on the tip of his nose. Then he blacked in an enormous moustache. And then the three juniors howled with laughter as they looked upon their victim.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "This beats jam-tarts slammed on a fellow's phiz!"

"And bottles of lemonade poured over his cocoanut!" grinned Kerr.

"I think he'll do," said Fatty. "Crumbs! Won't some of the rotters stare when they see him!"

Figgins looked at his watch.

"We shall have to buzz off," he said. "I'll just stick the placard on."

And he flattened out a large piece of thin cardboard upon Clive's chest and pinned it there. Upon it were written the words, in Roman capitals:

"I am a silly ass, and the chief of the silly asses of the School House."

Clive ground his teeth. But his anger only amused his tormentors.

"That'll do," said Figgins. "Now, come on, chaps! Good-evening, ass!"

"Are you going to leave me with my hands tied?"

"Must, or you'll get your placard and your war-paint off. I've heard you say that you're going to wake things up at St. Jim's. You look fit to wake up a dead donkey, and no mistake! That get-up will make a sensation. So long!"

And off went the triumphant Co. at a run, leaving poor Clive in about the worst fix of his life. What was best to be done he knew not.

He cast a despairing glance up and down the lane. No one was in sight. It occurred to him that if he hurried he might be in time to clean himself up before calling-over. At all events, it was useless to linger there. He started walking as quickly as he could towards the school.

The gates were yet open when he reached them, but Taggles, the porter, had come out of his lodge. He fairly jumped at the sight of the fearful countenance of the hapless South African, which gave him what he afterwards described to the cook as a 'horrid turn.'

"Why—what the—" he gasped.

Then he read the placard and chuckled. Clive, with his face flaming under the paint, dashed past him into the quadrangle.

It was swarming with boys. The whole of the junior portion of the New House had gathered to see the joke, and to greet the advent of the war-painted South African. And a number of the School House, scenting "something on," were there, too, wondering what was up and what caused the grins and chuckles and general merriment of their rivals.

Clive's appearance explained it. His red-white-and-blue countenance, with black-ringed eyes, caused, as Figgins had predicted, a sensation. The juniors howled with laughter, and even Tom Merry & Co. could not help joining in it. But the placard soon roused the latter to indignation.

Blake rushed to help his chum. But Kerr tripped him up. Figgins & Co. were determined to see the joke through, and being in greater force, they were able to stop interference.

CHAPTER 11.

To the Rescue!

"RESCUE! Rescue!" shouted Clive.

And his friends made a rush.
"Line up!" yelled Figgins. "Keep those cads off! A guard of honour for the chief of the asses!"

And the laughing juniors closed round Clive and drove back Tom Merry & Co. by superior numbers.

And so Clive was paraded in state across the quadrangle, amidst the howling merriment of the juniors and the laughter of a good number of seniors, who had put their heads out of their study windows. Clive's blood was boiling, but he couldn't help himself.

But just then a brilliant idea occurred to Tom Merry. Taggles had been using the garden-hose, and he had not yet put it away. It was in the hands of Tom in a moment. As the crowd surged towards the School House, he turned the nozzle upon Figgins & Co.

"Make way for the chief of the asses!" Figgins was shouting. "Clear the way, there! Oh—oh! Ouch!"

A jet of cold water caught him full in the mouth. Then swish it went over the rest, drenching them and putting a sudden stop to their merriment.

Some of them made a dash at Tom, but his chums gathered round him to defend the possession of the hose, and the stream of water drove the boldest back.

Swish! Swooosh! Swooosh!

"Yaroooh! Collar that School House bouncer!" yelled Figgins, as the stream of water caught him under the chin.

"Groooah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rush him!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Go it, Tommy!" roared Monty Lowther. "Give 'em a wash! The New House bouncers need it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Tom Merry did not need telling to "go it!" He was already going it, with the full force of the hose.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swamp!

Figgins & Co. made a desperate rush at the captain of the Shell, amid yells of laughter from the School House juniors, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

even Sidney Clive joining in the howl of merriment. But Tom Merry held steadily on to the hose, and the stream of water held the enemy back.

Kangaroo of the Shell jerked out his penknife and cut the South African junior loose.

"Cut!" said the Cornstalk junior. "You don't want Railton to see you with a chivy like that. You look more like a Central African cannibal than a Cape Colonist!"

Clive grinned under the paint, made a dive for the School House, and vanished. Skimpole of the Shell was coming down stairs as Clive rushed up.

Skimpole stopped dead, blinking at the South African junior, with his eyes nearly bulging through his spectacles.

"Good—goodness gracious!" gasped Skimpole. "What—what—"

Then he collapsed on the stairs.

Clive had no time to waste on Skimpole. He did not want Mr. Railton or Mr. Lathom to see him in his weird war-paint. He shoved the amazed Skimmy aside, and Skimpole sat down on the stairs. Clive rushed on to the Fourth Form dormitory, and was quickly splashing away with soap and water.

Skimpole of the Shell sat on the stairs in a state of great amazement. Skimpole was a scientific youth, with a wonderful brain, but his mighty brain powers were quite at a loss now. How that war-painted savage had come into the School House of St. Jim's was a hopeless puzzle to Skimmy. He sat and gaped, thankful that he had not been scalped.

Meanwhile the battle in the quadrangle was over. The hose was a little too much for Figgins & Co. They fled from the stream of water, leaving the School House in victorious possession of the field.

"Groo!" said Figgins, as he rubbed himself down in the dormitory in the New House. "I'm wet!"

"Look at me!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Atchoo! I shall catch a cold, and be laid up along with Gussy! Groooh!"

There were doleful exclamations from the crowd of New House juniors as they towelled themselves down in the dormitory. The door opened, and Sefton of the Sixth looked in, unpleasantly.

"Raging in the door again?" said Sefton.

"Ahem! Only—only a little scrap with the School House bouncers, Sefton!" said Figgins.

"Take a hundred lines all round!" said Sefton.

And he strode away.

Figgins looked after him with burning eyes. Sefton was head prefect in Monteith's absence, and his word was law. Figgins & Co. had never supposed that they would miss Monteith of the Sixth so much while he was away from St. Jim's.

"The rotter!" muttered Figgins. "Hundred lines all round! Monteith wouldn't have noticed us! He's decent! I shall scrag Sefton some day! I know the rotter hopes that Monteith will stay away for good, and that he'll be head prefect all the time!"

"The rotter thinks he's got a chance of getting in as captain of St. Jim's!" growled Redfern. "Some of the chaps have heard him talking with Gibbs about it. The silly ass! I wish Monteith were back! Groooh! I'm wet!"

"Yow-ow! So am I!" mumbled Fatty Wynn.

"Still, it was a good jape on that African bouncer!" said Figgins.

"M'yes! But I'm wet!"

And it was a considerable time before the heroes of the New House were dry.

Meanwhile Sidney Clive had cleaned himself and dressed, and came down to call-over. He passed Skimpole on the stairs, still in a state of great astonishment.

"Have you seen a dreadful-looking painted savage, Clive?" gasped Skimpole. "He passed me like a flash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was really very alarmed!"

"Never mind! Come in to call-over!" chuckled Clive. "The savage has gone—quite gone. Your scalp is quite safe, Skimmy!"

And the junior from South Africa rushed into Big Hall, just in time to answer "Adsum" to his name when it was called by Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 12.

A Sad Surrender.

EXASPERATED as the School House boys were by the indignity to which their chum had been subjected, few of them could help laughing at the ridiculous figure he had cut as he marched across the quadrangle painted and placarded. All through the evening they talked about it, with many a grin and chuckle, and Clive was chaffed without mercy. It was the biggest bit Figgins had ever made.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 446.

Figgins & Co., of course, made the most of the affair. But Clive's opportunity came at last.

One day after afternoon school he was strolling with Tom Merry along the river, when he suddenly stopped and drew looked at him inquiringly.

"What's up, Clive?"

"Just look!" And Clive pointed.

Some distance out in the river was a little island, where the boys of St. Jim's were fond of fishing. Clive had caught sight of Figgins and Kerr and Wynn sitting there with their rods. Under the willows a few yards from the anglers a boat was tied to a stump.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Tom Merry.

Clive grinned.

"Well, where would they be if somebody collared their boat?"

"On the island."

"Yes, and of course they'd be on the island—with no chance of getting off it!"

"But how can you get hold of the boat?"

"I can swim like a fish."

"If they saw you coming—"

"They won't."

And Clive began to strip under the willows. He stepped into the water some distance above the island and let the current carry him down to it, a few strokes carrying him far enough out. Tom Merry watched him anxiously as he disappeared into the bushes on the island. The fishermen evidently had no suspicion of the invasion. But to get to the boat Clive would have to pass very near them. Tom Merry watched the willows where the boat was moored. He soon saw a head appear amongst them. Then, with a sudden bound, a figure sprang out into the boat, a knife flashed on the painter, and a vigorous push sent the boat out from the shore. The deed was done! Figgins & Co. started up in amazement. But the boat was beyond their reach. Clive had got hold of the oars, and was vigorously pulling towards the bank, where Tom awaited him.

"Hi, there! What are you up to? Bring back that boat!" shouted Figgins.

Clive didn't take the trouble to reply. He ran the boat on the bank, and Tom seized the painter. Then Clive sprang ashore, and began to rub himself dry, as far as it could be done with a couple of pocket-handkerchiefs, and then donned his clothes.

All the while, Figgins on the island kept up a volleying of threats, entreaties and abuse, none of which had the slightest effect. At length Figgins gave it up in despair.

"What the dickens are we to do?" he exclaimed. "We're prisoners here unless they send us back the boat. We can't swim and leave our clothes here."

"And they won't do that," said Kerr.

"No, I say, they've got us this time."

"Try and make terms with them," suggested Kerr. "I s'pose there's nothing else to be done."

The chief of the Co. raised his voice again.

"Hallo, there!"

"Hallo!" called back Clive, who had by this time finished dressing. "Hallo, you asses!"

"We want that boat."

"Really?"

"We must have it."

"Rats!"

"Will you come to terms? We'll own ourselves done."

"Not good enough," said Clive decisively.

"What do you want, then?" asked Figgins, looking uneasy.

"You're licked, ain't you?"

"Ye—es."

"Well, you must sign a document to that effect—all three of you—something in this style. 'We three stupid asses confess ourselves licked, and we beg the pardon of the gentlemen of the School House for having been impertinent to them upon various occasions.' And you must all sign it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom. But it did not seem a laughing matter to the unfortunate Co.

"I'll see you hanged first!" roared Figgins, in a rage.

"All right. I won't persuade you. Come on, Tom. We'll have a row up the river."

"Stop a bit!" called out Figgins. "You've got us at a disadvantage. If we stay here we sha'n't be able to do our prep, and we shall get into a row to-morrow."

"Thank your own obstinacy for that."

"Let us have the boat, and—"

"On the condition I've named; no other."

"We've no pen or ink here, or paper."

"I've a fountain-pen and a pocket-book."

"But—"

"No more buts. Do you agree?"

Figgins looked dismally at his chums.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^d

"You can't do anything else," said Kerr.

"We can't stay here all night," declared Fatty Wynn.

"We shall have to give in, then. We'll give him the paper, but we'll raid the School House some time and get it back."

He called out:

"We'll do it, Clive!"

"That's sensible. I'll chuck the pocket-book and the pen across to you. You'll write it plainly, and put your usual signatures, or the bargain's off. And no tricks when I bring you the boat, you know. It's a truce back to St. Jim's. Promise?"

"We promise."

"All serene!"

And Clive wrapped up the pocket-book and the fountain-pen in his cap, tied it up with string, and pitched the bundle across to the island. Figgins picked it up.

It was a bitter pill for the Co. to swallow, but there was no help for it. The words dictated by Clive were written out upon a blank sheet, and signed by the three juniors. Then the pen and the pocket-book were returned in the same manner.

Clive opened it, and read out the confession of surrender:

"We three stupid asses confess ourselves licked, and we beg the pardon of the gentlemen of School House for having been impertinent to them upon various occasions.

"GEORGE FIGGINS.

"G. F. KERR.

"D. WYNN."

Tom Merry and Clive laughed loud and long.

"Take it, and cut off to the school," said Clive. "The bonders have given their word, but I don't want to tempt them."

And off went Tom Merry.

"Thank you," said Clive politely. "That will do nicely. Now you can have your boat. I shall have that valuable document framed and hung up in my study."

"He'll do it, too," muttered Figgins to his chums. "But it won't hang there long. But mum's the word about that." Clive punted across to the island, and took the three and their tackle aboard.

"Had much sport?" he asked pleasantly.

"No," was the short reply.

The truce was observed—by the credit of the Co. he it said, for the temptation was strong to pitch the grinning Clive into the river. And it was with doleful faces that the three fishers returned to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

A Bold Venture—And a Big Mystery.

CLIVE kept his word. The document signed by Figgins & Co. was padded upon a sheet of cardboard, and placed in a gorgeous gilt frame, from which a portrait of Lord Kitchener had been ejected for the purpose. It hung in Study No. 6, and every junior in the House grinned and chuckled before it time and again.

It was regarded as an irreclaimable confession of inferiority by the New House—a proof in black and white that the School House was the top house at St. Jim's.

The juniors of New House were, of course, about as wild as they could be. That confession of defeat in their leader's handwriting was a standing humiliation to them, and the jokes of their rivals about it goaded them to fury. Figgins' position was shaken, and he knew that he either had to get that document back or resign leadership. But to penetrate the enemy's fortress was no easy task.

He talked it over with his chums. A night attack could scarcely be carried out without interference by either prefect or masters. And in the daylight it would be impossible to penetrate to No. 6 study unobserved. At length Figgins decided to go alone upon the enterprise at a late hour, and effect by stratagem what could not be done by force.

And a few nights later a golden opportunity occurred. To reach No. 6 Study he would have to pass Kildare's door, and the captain of the school naturally kept his door open after the juniors had gone to bed, to see that none of the youngsters came down on surreptitious errands. It was this circumstance which had made Figgins long hesitate. But upon this particular night the captain was absent, having been allowed to visit an uncle who was ill. He was to return the following morning. Evidently this was Figgins' opportunity. He was in luck.

As Sefton was just as watchful for delinquent juniors as Kildare, Figgins had decided to leave the dormitory by a rope from the window. Late that night, when only the elders were supposed to be awake, he slid down the rope and reached the ground.

"All right?" whispered Kerr from above.

"All right. Watch for me!"

"You bet."

And Kerr cautiously pulled in the rope. Figgins, keeping close to the buildings, reached the School House, and in a few moments was ascending the dim staircase with cautious steps, the juniors' studies being on the first floor. No one was about, and he gained the upper corridor unobserved.

He paused and looked along it. No light came from Kildare's door; but he looked again—yes, it was open! Why was the door open when Kildare was away? The boy wondered, puzzled. Was anybody there? It was not likely.

At any rate, he was in for it now. With beating heart he stole along the corridor upon tiptoe.

Then his heart gave a great leap as he drew nearer to Kildare's door. For a sound came from the dark room, which told him that somebody was there. He stopped, and, acting upon the first impulse that came to him, silently opened one of the study doors on his left, and stepped quickly inside. He partly closed the door, keeping it about an inch ajar, and watched the dimly-lit corridor.

He wanted to see when the coast was clear, so that he could safely proceed. Besides that, his curiosity was aroused, and he was vaguely uneasy. The captain's bed-room and study adjoined. But what could anybody want in either while Kildare was away, and without a light, too? Could it be a burglar?

He had waited nearly five minutes before a figure emerged from Kildare's room and came silently down the corridor towards the stairs. As he passed under a gas-burner, the startled Figgins obtained a clear view of his features. It was Sefton—as white as death!

He passed on quickly and disappeared down the stairs. Figgins came out into the corridor, trembling a little. The look upon Sefton's face had frightened him. What had the prefect been doing in Kildare's study? What was he doing in the House at all? Why did he look like that!

Figgins was deeply disturbed. He knew how Sefton hated Kildare, and he had not too high an opinion of the prefect. He felt that there was something mysterious afoot, though he could not guess in the least what it was.

As he passed Kildare's bed-room he opened the door and glanced in. The blind was up, and the pale moonlight streamed into the room. He could see nothing unusual in its aspect.

He hurried on. Whatever the mystery was he felt that he could not fathom it.

A few minutes later he was in No. 6 Study. He struck a match, and as once his eyes fell upon the trophy of victory. He took down the frame and carried it to the window, where in the starlight, which was sufficient for his purpose, he scraped the paper off the cardboard with his penknife, destroying almost every vestige of the document of surrender. This done, he took a brush from his pocket, and, dipping it into an inkpot, wrote one word across the scraped board, in large capitals:

"RATS!"

He chuckled as he thought of the feelings of Study No. 6 when they viewed it upon the following morning. He restored the frame to its place on the wall, and left the study. Five minutes later he had quitted the House as cautiously as he entered it.

His chums were on the watch at the dormitory window. The rope came sliding down, and Figgins knotted it under his arms, and, with a dead lift effort, his chums got him back into the dormitory.

"All right?" asked Kerr.

"All!" And Figgins gave a description of his proceedings in No. 6 Study. A chorus of chuckles answered him, as the Co. thought of the discomfiture of Clive and his friends on the morrow.

But of the encounter with Sefton Figgins did not say a word. It was not till the next day, when he was alone with his two friends, that he confided the strange circumstance to Kerr and Wynn. Both were equally amazed.

"It looks awfully queer," Kerr said slowly. "You chose last night to visit No. 6 Study because Kildare was away, and it looks as if Sefton chose it for the same reason."

"Yes, it does. But what could he want there?"

"That's too deep for me," said Fatty Wynn.

"Better keep mum," suggested Kerr. "Sefton didn't want to be seen, and he's likely to cut up rusty if he finds out that you spotted him."

"Yes, that's true enough; but I wish I knew what it all meant. I can't help thinking that there's something underhand in it. Sefton's just the chap to bring discredit upon our House, and give those fellows something to crow over us about. Hang it! What did the fellow want in Kildare's quarters?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 446.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"You're sure he was in Kildare's room?" asked Kerr slowly.

"I tell you I bunked into the study opposite, and watched him," said Figgins. "He looked as white as a ghost as he came out—like a fellow who's had an awful fright."

"There couldn't have been anything in Kildare's study to scare him, if Kildare wasn't there," said Fatty Wynn.

"He was up to something—I know that."

"But what?" said Kerr. "Sefton couldn't have gone there to play a joke, like a junior. He's head prefect of the New House—while Monteith's away, anyhow. He couldn't have gone for a fag jape."

Figgins nodded.

"I know that. But what was he there at all for, in that secret way, and why did he look scared to death as he came sneaking out?" He was there without a light, too."

"Blessed if I can see why," said Kerr. "Better say nothing about it, though. Sefton's down on us enough already."

Fatty Wynn's plump brows were knitted very thoughtfully. He seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Well, what do you think, Fatty?" asked Figgins, clapping him on the shoulder and startling him out of his reverie.

"Sausages," said Fatty Wynn.

"What?"

"Sosses, I think, Figgy. We've only got a tanner for tea, and I think it had better go in sosses. You can get a square meal for a tanner in sosses."

"You silly ass!" said Figgins. "Who's talking about tea?"

"I am—it's teatime."

"Fathod! I was talking about Sefton sneaking into Kildare's study last night."

"Oh, blow Sefton! I'm talking about tea. And I think we can't do better than have sosses, considering how low funds are."

"Bow-wow!" growled Figgins.

But the mystery was too deep for Figgins to guess. He had to give it up; and the chums of the New House proceeded to discuss the sausages instead.

CHAPTER 14.

The Missing Banknote.

KILDARE of the Sixth came across the quadrangle, and nodded cheerily to Figgins & Co. as he stepped into the New House.

Kildare was not a frequent visitor in that House, while Monteith was away. He was on the worst of terms with Sefton.

Time had been when Kildare and Monteith were rivals and foes; but that time was past. The two house-captains pulled well together now. But in Monteith's absence Sefton took his place, and it had become only too clear that Sefton had the intention of reviving the old bitter rivalry if he could. Sefton seemed to take it for granted that he was the head of the New House for good, Monteith's return having been so long delayed; and it was whispered that he had an ambitious eye on the captaincy of the school. So long as Kildare was at St. Jim's, however, Sefton had as much chance of getting to the captaincy as the Kaiser's Army has of getting to London.

Since the scene in the common-room in the School House, Kildare had exchanged few words with Sefton. He had, indeed, almost forgotten the occurrence. Sefton had not forgotten it, though it suited him to throw a veil over his bitter animosity in public.

Kildare walked along the passage to Sefton's study, his brows a little grim. All the old trouble he had had with Monteith seemed to be reviving, and more bitterly, now that Sefton had taken Monteith's place. Kildare wished heartily that Monteith would return to St. Jim's. Kildare was not the only fellow who was "fed up" with Sefton and the airs and graces he adopted during his spell of "brief authority."

The captain of St. Jim's tapped at Sefton's door. He had received a message by a fag, asking him to come, and, surprised as he was, he had to come over, quite prepared to be as friendly as it was possible to be with a fellow like Sefton of the Sixth.

"Come in!" called out Sefton.

Kildare entered the study.

"You wanted to see me, Sefton?" he said.

The New House prefect nodded, his eyes fixing upon Kildare's frank face with a peculiar expression.

"Yes. Sit down, will you?" The prefect's manner was unusually cordial. "I want to speak to you about—"

"I say, Sefton"—Gibbs put in his head at the door—"can you come here a minute? Oh, you're engaged, I see! Excuse me!"

"Don't mind me," said Kildare.

"Well, just pardon me a minute, then," said Sefton. And he went out of the study.

In a few minutes he returned.

"Sorry I've kept you waiting!" he said.

"That's all right. You were saying—"

"Ah, yes! It strikes me that that ridiculous rivalry between the two Houses is getting out of hand," Sefton went on. "It gets worse every term. It seems to me that it's time the seniors of both Houses put their heads together in a friendly spirit to do something to put a stop to it. Don't you think so?"

"Well," said Kildare slowly, "I don't wholly disapprove of that rivalry, for it keeps the youngsters up to the mark in many respects. Still, I admit that it's carried too far sometimes. I'm glad, I'm sure, to hear you speak like this, and, in the way of friendly co-operation, you won't find me backward."

"I don't deny that we have had our rubs," said Sefton, with a great air of frankness. "But if you're willing to work with me to put the two Houses upon a friendlier footing—why, there's my hand!"

Kildare grasped it warmly.

"You give me a great deal of pleasure by this, Sefton," he said. "I've had some hard thoughts of you at times, but you've set them all at rest now. We'll work together, as you say, and remember only that we belong to good old St. Jim's."

And, after a little more friendly talk, the captain of the school took his leave.

When he was gone, Sefton's expression changed. A sneering smile dawned upon his face.

"Yes; how nice we can be when we've got the captainship we want!" he muttered. "Perhaps we won't be so nice when we're kicked out of it."

A little later Baker, one of the New House seniors, strolled in. He found Sefton looking over the table among the papers and books, with a puzzled and anxious expression upon his face.

"Gibbs asked me to ask you— But what are you looking for, old man?"

"A five-pound note."

"You don't mean to say you've lost one?"

"Well, I laid it on the table half an hour ago, and it's gone."

"Wind blown it about somewhere!"

"I've hunted round the room."

"Anybody been in the study?"

"Only Kildare."

"Kildare? What did he want in the New House?" asked Baker, in surprise.

"He came to have a talk with me about keeping the juniors in order; but, of course, he couldn't have taken it!"

"Of course not!" agreed Baker, with a heartiness which made Sefton bite his lip.

"Still," the senior continued, "you'd better have a jolly good look for it. It's beastly unpleasant for money to get lost, to say the least."

"It would be thundering unpleasant to me!" growled Sefton. "I received it only two days ago, and I shall have no more this term, so, if it's gone, I shall be broke for weeks."

"But it can't be gone."

But a diligent search of the study failed to reveal the missing note. At length the two stopped and stood looking at each other.

"Hang it, Baker, this looks ugly!" said Sefton seriously.

"You're sure you laid it on the table?"

"Yes; I was going to ask Ratty to change it for me, and I put it out ready. Then Kildare came in, and—"

"It's madness!" said Baker uneasily.

"I know, and yet—"

"Yet what?"

"The note was lying there when Gibbs called me out of the study for a minute. I remember now that I didn't notice it when I came back."

"You mean that Kildare—"

"What does it look like? He was alone here, and when I came back the note was gone."

"But it's incredible!" Sefton shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you know the number of the note?"

"No; but it could be ascertained."

"It's—it's horrible!"

"Horrible or not, the note's gone, and there's only one way of accounting for it," said the prefect obstinately. "You can see that for yourself."

Baker made no reply.

"However, don't say anything about it yet. I must think

what's to be done. I don't want a scandal if it can be helped, but I can't afford to lose five pounds."

"For heaven's sake, don't be hasty!"

"I won't take any steps at all until this evening. That'll give us time to think it out."

Sefton kept his word. That evening he confided the circumstances to a number of seniors of his own House, and asked their counsel. Almost everyone declared his belief in Kildare's innocence, and advised Sefton to avoid being hasty. It was finally decided that he should go over to the School House and have a quiet talk with Kildare.

"If he gives it back, we'll let the matter drop," said Sefton, "although I despise the thief. Yet the poor devil may be hard up. It may have been a sudden temptation to him which he couldn't resist; and we don't want a scandal."

"I don't know," observed Baker. "If he took it, he ought to be shown up. We don't want a thief for captain of St. Jim's. But I don't believe that he took it."

"It looks suspicious," Gibbs remarked, with a shake of the head.

"The difficulty is this," Sefton went on, "that a banknote is so easily destroyed. If I speak to Kildare, and he denies that he has it, what am I to do? For then he won't try to pass the note. He'll just burn it to save himself from danger."

There was a long silence. The seniors looked at each other without knowing what to suggest.

"You'll have to speak to the Head," said Gibbs at last. "If he won't give it up, he'll have to be searched before he can make away with it. If he's innocent, that's the only thing that will clear him, and so he can't object."

"Then I won't speak to him in his study. He would call it an insult, and chuck me out, and then burn the note. I'll tackle him in a place where he'll be under a good many eyes. Some of you fellows ought to be at hand to see fair play. He's bound to be in the gym now. I'll speak to him there."

And Sefton went to seek Kildare, followed at an interval by the others.

CHAPTER 15.

A Terrible Accusation.

THE gym was pretty full. Clive and his chums were there, and so were a good many juniors, but the presence of the captain and a number of seniors of both Houses kept the rival juniors quiet. The School House were exasperated by the change which had come over their trophy the previous night, and once again they had had to confess themselves "done" by the daring Eggrins. They were in the right humour for a scrimmage, and there would probably have been a tussle in the gym but for the presence of the elders.

When Sefton entered he walked straight up to Kildare, who was chatting with two or three other fellows.

"Can you spare me a few minutes in private?" he asked, coldly and formally.

Kildare looked surprised.

"It is a matter of importance," added Sefton.

"All right, then."

Kildare nodded to his companions, and stepped aside with Sefton. A good many curious glances were directed towards them.

"I dare say you can guess what I want to speak to you about, Kildare?"

"Not in the least."

"It's about the five-pound note."

"The—what?"

"You don't understand?"

"I haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about!"

said Kildare, with a touch of impatience.

"H'm! When I left you alone in my study this morning, I left a five-pound note lying on the table."

"Well?"

"When I came back it was gone."

There was no mistaking his tone. Kildare turned crimson, and then deadly pale.

"Do you dare to accuse me?"

"I don't accuse anybody. I want the money back, that's all. If it's given back to me, no more need be said about the matter."

"And you think I took it?"

"Do you want me to speak plainly?"

"Yes."

"Well, I know you took it, then!"

Kildare clenched his hand and half-raised it. Sefton started back, changing colour perceptibly.

"Take care! Violence won't improve your case."

Kildare's hand fell to his side.

"I know it. I shall not use violence—yet. So you're willing to hush the matter up? That's generous of you. I'll show

you how much I appreciate your generosity." He turned away, and spoke in a loud, clear voice: "Listen, here, you fellows. Sefton says that he has lost a five-pound note, and he accuses me of stealing it when I was in his study this morning."

There was a buzz of indignant amazement.

Sefton looked pale and fidgety. Kildare brave and resolute. More than one onlooker remarked that Sefton looked a good deal more like the accused than the accuser at that moment.

"What do you mean?" demanded several fellows hotly. "Are you off your dot?"

"I mean what I say," replied Sefton, with some firmness. "I didn't want to make the thing public, but since Kildare has chosen to do so, I shall speak out. There was a five-pound note upon my table when I left him alone in my study this morning. When I came back a few minutes later it was gone. I didn't like to believe that he took it, but there's no other way of accounting for it. I demand an investigation, anyway."

"I have no wish to deny you that," said Kildare. "The suspicion is an insult, for which I shall call you to account later. I do not believe that you really believe that I am guilty."

"He doesn't." It was Clive's voice that spoke. "He doesn't believe it! He lies, and he knows it, and I can prove it!"

Kildare looked at the excited junior in amazement. Sefton ground his teeth.

"What do you know about it, youngster?" asked Kildare. "I know that Sefton hates you, because he couldn't get in as captain, and I know that he has plotted to get you into disgrace."

"You infernally cheeky brat—" began Sefton.

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare fiercely. "Now, Clive, just explain how you know all this."

"I heard Sefton plotting with Gibbs," answered Clive unhesitatingly.

Instantly every eye turned upon Gibbs. He had turned a sickly white.

"Look at him!" cried Clive triumphantly. "Do you want any more proof than his face?"

"You cheeky brat!" hissed Gibbs. "You started me with your lies, but—"

"I'll startle you a bit more before I'm done!"

"Go on, Clive," said Kildare.

And Clive went on to tell all that he had heard that day behind the hedge. There was a loud murmur when he had finished.

"What have you to say to that, Sefton?"

"Lies!" answered the prefect. "You all know that there's never been any love lost between Kildare and me, and I may have run him down in speaking of him, and possibly have said I'd like to get rid of him from St. Jim's, but certainly I never said any more than that. I suppose that little hound caught a few words and misunderstood them, and imagination supplied the rest."

It was a good defence, well and coolly spoken. The listeners exchanged doubtful glances.

"I wasn't alone," said Clive quickly. "Blake was with me; he heard all that I heard."

"Do you corroborate his statement, Blake?"

"Every word of it!" Blake answered promptly.

"Of course he does!" sneered Sefton.

Kildare reflected for a few minutes. Then he spoke in manly, ringing tones:

"You fellows, I hope there's nobody here believes me guilty. I am absolutely innocent. And I may say that I believe every word Clive has spoken. But the matter has got to be thoroughly sifted out. I am going straight to the Head. Sefton, you will kindly come and repeat your accusation in his presence. Clive and Blake had better come too."

And as Kildare walked towards the door a loud cheer burst forth, testifying to the trust the boys of St. Jim's reposed in their captain.

CHAPTER 16.

Innocent or Guilty?

THERE was a deep and painful silence in the study of the kind old Head. The Head of St. Jim's looked from one to the other of the boys before him, almost doubting his ears.

Had he heard aright? Eric Kildare accused of theft—Kildare, the brave and generous captain of the school, the best liked fellow at St. Jim's, and the one for whom the Head felt the most esteem.

"It is a horrible mistake, I am convinced of that," the Head said at length, in a low, pained voice. Then he looked doubtfully at Clive. "Clive, are you quite sure that you have

correctly reported the words used by Sefton and Gibbs; that you have not allowed your dislike of Sefton to—to lead you to imagine—"

He paused, his kindly but keen, grey eyes reading the face of the junior. Clive's reply was respectful, but very firm.

"I am quite sure, sir."

"And you deny it all, Sefton?"

"Absolutely, sir," Sefton had gone too far now to recede, and he had no choice but to brazen it out. "Clive perhaps caught a few careless words, and his imagination did the rest, if he is not wholly lying. Most of the School House fellows take it for granted that I am jealous of Kildare about the captainship, and Clive in particular hates me bitterly."

The Head coughed uneasily. He could not but recognise that there was more than a "mistake" here, and that one side or the other was deliberately lying.

"Blake, kindly inform Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Railton that I wish to see them in my study."

The two Housemasters, considerably surprised and wondering, came in answer to the summons.

"Kindly step into the next room for a few minutes, boys. Don't go away. Wait till I call you."

They obeyed. The door closed.

"Please sit down, gentlemen," said the Head. "I want to consult you upon a very painful subject."

And he informed them of what had taken place. They listened in amazement.

"This is terrible!" said Mr. Railton. "It is impossible that Kildare can be a thief!"

"And yet," said Mr. Ratcliff, "it is surely impossible that any boy could be wicked enough to bring such an accusation without grounds. Sefton must, at least, believe what he says; he cannot be actuated simply by dislike and jealousy of Kildare."

"But what of Clive's story?"

"Sefton's explanation is reasonable."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Railton. "I can speak upon that point. I can vouch for Clive's habitual truthfulness. Upon at least one occasion I know he risked punishment rather than tell a lie."

The Head passed his hand across his brow.

"What is to be done?" he asked.

"It was a difficult question."

"The only course to be taken, it seems to me," said Mr. Railton slowly, "is to search Kildare and his belongings."

"Horrible!"

"Yes, no doubt; but it is the only way to prove either his innocence or his guilt. I understand that since the accusation he has had no opportunity of disposing of the stolen note, if it is in his possession; therefore, if he has it, a search will reveal it. For his own sake, I advocate this painful course."

"My opinion exactly," agreed Mr. Ratcliff.

"I suppose you are right," the Head said slowly. "Call the boys in, please."

The boys came back into the study. The Head was very pale and perturbed. He wiped his puce-nose and put them on.

"Kildare," he said, with an effort, "have you any objection to a—a search being made?"

Kildare coloured deeply.

"I have no objection to anything that you consider advisable, sir," he answered quietly.

"My desire is, of course, to prove your innocence. I cannot—I cannot believe that you are guilty!"

"Thank you, sir," said Kildare gratefully, while Clive whispered to Blake that the Head was an old trump.

"That shall be done, then."

The Head looked at the two Housemasters. Both drew back from the unpleasant task. Finally the Head rang for Taggles.

The porter looked astonished when he learned what he was required for. But under the Head's orders he searched Kildare thoroughly. The captain submitted with quiet calmness. But no banknote was forthcoming.

"We shall now proceed to Kildare's rooms," said the Head.

"Taggles, kindly precede us and light the gas!"

As they went upstairs, the eyes of almost the whole school were upon them. All St. Jim's were scarce discussing the scene in the gym. A crowd followed the doctor, and waited in painful silence in the long, wide corridor, to hear the result of the search. Clive, Blake, and Sefton remained in the corridor with the rest, only the masters entering the room with Kildare. The door was left open, however, so Clive could see Taggles making the search.

A quarter of an hour passed painfully slowly. Desk and drawers and papers were gone through without result. Kildare stood calmly proud and confident. The masters' looks were more anxious than his.

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The search, at a sign from the Head, was extended to the bookcase. Hatelaf as the whole affair was, the Head considered it best to be thorough. If the stolen note were concealed anywhere in Kildare's room it was best to bring it to light. Taggles took down the books one by one and shook them, so that any paper between the leaves would fall out. He came to a huge "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," a present to Kildare from an aunt, and which Kildare had probably never once looked into. As Taggles shook this volume, something white fell out and fluttered to the floor. A tremor ran over everyone present. Was it a bookmark, or—a banknote?

It was a banknote! Taggles picked it up in silence and handed it to the doctor. Dr. Holmes took it with fingers that visibly trembled. He wiped his glasses; perhaps his kind eyes were rather dim just then.

"Sefton!"

The prefect stepped into the room.

"What was the number of the note you lost?"

"I did not observe it, sir; but it can easily be ascertained."

I can write home—"

"It is not necessary," said Kildare, in a strange, dry voice.

"That banknote is not mine, Dr. Holmes!"

"You admit it is not yours?"

"I state that it is not."

"You confess—"

"I confess nothing. I swear that I never saw that note before; that I do not know who placed it in my book!"

Kildare's look was dazed, almost wild. He seemed utterly shaken by the finding of the note. Was this a sign of conscious guilt?

He collected himself with an effort.

"Sir! Dr. Holmes! You don't believe this! You don't believe me a thief!"

The tears started to the good old Head's eyes.

"Heaven knows I am sorry, Kildare, to—how came Sefton's banknote in your room—and hidden away so carefully? Explain that if you can!"

Kildare pressed his hand to his throbbing forehead. What could he answer? He felt as if he were going mad.

The silence was terrible. At last he spoke.

"I—I cannot explain. I—I did not put it there. Heaven knows I did not!"

The Head shook his head sadly, and made a movement to turn away.

"Stop, sir! I—I believe I can tell you who put it there. It is a plot; it is done to ruin me!"

"I should counsel you not to make so serious an accusation hastily, Kildare. You allude to Sefton?"

Sefton sneered.

"It is easy to say that!" he exclaimed. "You know very well, sir, that if anybody belonging to the New House came rummaging round the School House he would be spotted at once."

"Yes, that certainly seems to me to be the case," said Mr. Railton. The point was well taken.

Kildare had now recovered his calmness.

"I am innocent," he said firmly. "No doubt Sefton chose his moment for coming here. Probably last night, when I was away from St. Jim's."

The Head turned a troubled look upon Sefton. He did not know what to believe.

"What were you doing last evening, Sefton?"

The prefect appeared to consider.

"I was in the gym up to nine o'clock," he said. "After that I talked awhile with Baker; then I played chess in my study till bed-time with Gibbs."

Kildare's eyes flashed.

"Gibbs!" he exclaimed. "You hear that, sir? That is no alibi. It was Gibbs whom Clive heard him plotting with! Gibbs is his accomplice!"

"It's a lie!" growled Sefton.

"What am I to believe?" exclaimed the Head. "Go now—leave me! I must think!"

And he went back to his study, accompanied by the Housemasters, his brow deeply lined.

The result of the search sent a shudder through St. Jim's. In most minds the finding of the note seemed to clinch the matter. Even Clive was staggered for a moment. But his faith in Kildare held true. It was a conspiracy, and he and his chums felt sure of it.

Sefton went back to the New House looking grave and concerned, taking care to let no sign of triumph appear in his face. But in truth his triumph was mingled with deep uneasiness, and he was far from being satisfied. Gibbs was waiting for him in his study.

"This is a rotten business!" Gibbs said, in a low voice. "I wish we hadn't begun it!"

Sefton shrugged his shoulders scowlingly.

"It's too late to think of that now. We planned it carefully

enough; there could have been no hitch but for that infernal junior. What horrible ill-luck that Clive should have got wind of our little game! But for him there could have been no talk of conspiracy. The finding of the note would have convicted Kildare, and all his denials would have gone for nothing. Now all is uncertain. Still," he continued thoughtfully, "so long as we stick to our story and don't give ourselves away, I don't see how we can possibly be bowled out. Keep a stiff upper-lip, and we shall come out all right!"

But even while the prefect was speaking, the truth was being brought to light, and by an agency he had never dreamed of.

CHAPTER 17.

Brought to Light.

WHILE the boys of St. Jim's were discussing the discovery of the banknote in Kildare's study, and arguing for or against his innocence or his guilt with an excitement which knew no abatement, there was one boy who kept apart from the rest, his mind in a tumult of doubt and fear and horror.

It was George Figgins.

Back to his memory had come vividly the scene of the previous night—of Sefton coming out of Kildare's study, with white face and stealthy footsteps, and creeping away down the corridor like a thief in fear of detection.

What had he been doing in Kildare's rooms?

Figgins had asked himself the question the night before without being able to find an answer. But now, what a flood of ghastly light was thrown upon it!

What had Sefton been doing there? Was it not only too evident what he had been doing? He had been placing the banknote in Kildare's book—a book which he knew the captain was not likely to open—and the next day he had asked Kildare over to his quarters, and pretended to miss the note when he was gone! Was it not all clear, with a horrible clearness?

Figgins, with his pride in the House he belonged to, would naturally have been very slow to believe the accusations Tom Merry & Co. were freely making against his prefect—only firmly fixed in his mind was the picture of Sefton slinking out of Kildare's study like a thief in the night. And that picture seemed to be burnt into his brain.

What should he do? What could he do? Doubt and horror struggled in his mind. If he spoke out, if he denounced Sefton, it was black shame for his House. He shuddered at the thought of it. And then—to testify against his own prefect, the chief of his House!

He was very pale and perturbed when he called his two chums aside to tell them his decision. Both Kerr and Wynn were looking disturbed. They had not forgotten what Figg had told them, and he saw that their conclusions were the same as his own.

"We must speak out," Figgins said, in a hurried and agitated voice. "You know very well what Sefton was doing when I saw him last night!"

Kerr nodded.

"It looks like it."

"It will be a horrible disgrace to the New House!" said Fatty Wynn. "It will give those rotters a fearful pull over us!"

"That can't be helped. We should be cads to be silent and let Kildare suffer!"

"Sefton's our prefect!"

"Yes, but he's guilty!"

"Who's guilty, you rotters?"

It was Tom Merry's voice. He passed the Co. as they stood in conclave, and he had caught the last words. He stopped, and looked at them with flashing eyes.

"Look here, Merry."

"Tom clenched his fists.

"Not a word against Kildare! Do you hear? I'll—"

"Don't be an ass, Merry! I tell you Kildare's innocent; we know it! I'm going to the Head!"

"What!"

Figgins poured out what he knew. Tom listened open-mouthed, and grasped Figgins' arm.

"Come on! Come to the Head! Don't lose a second!"

He hurried Figgins away breathlessly, unconsciously keeping the grip on his arm, as if afraid that he might disappear into the earth if he let him go for a moment. Kerr and Wynn followed.

Dr. Holmes started as a loud knock came at his door. Tom rushed in, almost dragging the breathless and panting Figgins. The Head adjusted his pince-nez, and stared at them in an amazement that was shared by Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff.

"What does this mean, Merry?"

"Kildare's innocent, sir, and Figgins can prove it!" panted Tom Merry.

"What do you say?"

"Tell him, Figg!"

And Figgins told his story. The Head's troubled face grew darker and darker as he listened.

"Did you tell this to anyone at the time, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir—to Kerr and Wynn!"

"He did, sir," said both the boys at once.

The doctor passed his hand across his brow.

"I believe you, my boys. Thank Heaven that this revelation has come before any greater wrong than suspicion was done to poor Kildare! I must see him at once, and—and also Sefton. Good heavens, of what a depth of duplicity and wickedness that unhappy lad has been guilty! Merry, tell Kildare I wish to see him!"

The boys left the study. Outside, Tom turned to Figgins and gripped his hand.

"I say, old man, this is ripping of you, old fellow! And—and I'll tell you what—if you like to call the New House the top House of St. Jim's for the rest of the term, you can do it, and I'll see that nobody on this side has anything to say!"

And then Tom tore off to seek Kildare. The captain was in his study in a mood of the deepest dejection. He had made up his mind, sadly enough, that he must leave St. Jim's. Tom burst in upon him like a whirlwind.

"Kildare, old chap, you're innocent—I mean, your innocence is proved, and the doctor wants to see you!"

Eric Kildare started up.

"Who's proved it—how?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Figgins—Figg of the New House! Hooraay!" shouted Tom. "It's cleared up now! It was Sefton did the trick; it's proved! You're to go to the Head at once! The Head and Railton are waiting for you! Buzz off, Kildare! Hooraay!"

Kildare's handsome face lighted up.

He gave Tom an expressive look, and hurried from the study.

There was a crowd in the passage. Tom Merry's excited voice had been heard far and wide, and Figgins & Co. had told their story to a swarm of curious ears. All the School House knew now that Kildare was innocent—that his innocence had been proved. There was a roar as he came out of his study!

"Hooraay!"

"Good old Kildare!"

An elegant figure with a gleaming eyeglass came speeding along the passage.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of the Fourth was just out of the sanatorium, and that was the first news he had heard—that Kildare had been accused of theft, and that his innocence was already proved. Arthur Augustus clapped the captain of St. Jim's on the back—a great liberty for a junior to take, but excusable under the circumstances.

"Buck up, Kildare, dear boy! We're all backin' you up!" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't be downhearted, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wcally, you fellahs—"

"Bravo, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's hurried on to the Head's study.

"Thank goodness it's all come out!" exclaimed Sidney Clive, with a deep breath. "Of course, I never doubted! Kildare for one moment!"

Kildare's interview in the Head's study was brief, and he came away with a cheerful face. Sefton's interview, which followed, was longer, and not so agreeable. An hour later Sefton of the Sixth left St. Jim's, and Gibbs went with him. The bully of the New House had looked his last on the old school.

When Monteith returned to St. Jim's and resumed his place as head prefect of the New House, he found Sefton gone, and when he heard the reason, he was not sorry. Both Houses fully agreed that St. Jim's was better off without Sefton.

The clearing of Kildare's name caused immense rejoicing in the School House. Tom Merry & Co. held a great celebration in the study, at which there were two guests of honour—Figgins of the New House, and Sidney Clive, the boy from South Africa!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"HOLIDAY CAMP!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Old TOM HILDER, a cattle-farmer of Kattarit, Australia, is faced with ruin for the want of £1,000. He goes to a friend in Sydney, HENRY NORMAN, from whom he obtains the money, but is afterwards robbed, and, in recovering the notes, becomes mixed up, in the eyes of the police, with a gang of scoundrels.

His son BOB receives the money from his father, and takes it to SUMMERS, the bank manager, who is in league with BOARDMAN, a scoundrel who has plotted to ruin old Hilder.

Bob is afterwards arrested and charged with passing false notes at the bank, but is liberated from his prison-cell by CAPTAIN DASHWOOD, a notorious outlaw.

Later, he comes upon Dashwood again, who has been wounded by a member of another gang of outlaws, led by a man named SUTHERLAND. Bob learns that Sutherland is the man who robbed his father, and sets out in pursuit of him.

He arrives, after dark, at Mossfred, and makes for the hotel. There, through a window from the veranda, he sees Sutherland in company with a man named BENNETT, whom he had met on the road, and who had directed him wrongly on his journey.

While he is watching he is amazed to see his father enter the room. He rushes forward as the old man is struck down, the lamp is upset by Sutherland, and Bob receives a blow which knocks him senseless.

The hotel is burnt down, and Bob narrowly escapes with his life, behoving his father to be dead. Eventually he meets KERR, a bullock-driver who was on old Hilder's farm, and learns that his father is still alive. Later, Bob is sent for by the owner of the station where he has obtained work.

(Now read on.)

Sutherland Again!

Busy with his accounts, the storekeeper bent over his desk again as Bob left the building. The storekeeper's last words had been ominous. Two men had been dismissed! Was he to be the third? What could have happened? Had Mr. Coulter, the squatter, discovered his true name and the fact that the police were looking for him?

The lad set out across the paddock for the house with anxious thoughts. All he had suffered so unjustly in the last few months weighed upon his mind at this moment with particular bitterness. It would be just his luck, he mused, if once again he was thrown out of employment. Prepared for the worst, he rang the bell, and was at once conducted to the squatter's study.

Mr. Coulter was a man of about fifty years of age, well set up, brisk, and thoroughly businesslike. By hard work and force of character he had built up his fortune; he was stern and reserved, but just; more respected than liked; slow of speech, and brusque in manner.

Bob found him setting his study to rights—tearing up papers, sorting out documents, and filing receipts. He gave

one glance at the lad, and went on with his work for some time in silence. At last he spoke.

"I've sent for you, Tracey—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Because I'm going on a holiday with Mrs. Coulter and the children."

He began to read a document, muttering as he read, and then carefully tied it up with some other papers.

"Now that the shearing is over and all the wool on the way to the city, there's no reason why I shouldn't have a change," he continued. "By the way, did you see that man I took on to-day?"

"I haven't seen any new-comer, sir," Bob replied.

"I'm giving him your job."

Bob's face grew fixed; the squatter was now sorting out a drawer.

"He'll do for eight, I think," he went on. "He's been boundary-riding for years, he tells me. And old Brand, my factotum, is coming with us. He's been twenty-five years in my service, always in the house, and I've never had to find fault with him. More than one can say of most folk—eh? A change will do old Brand good, and he's earned a rest. So there will be no one in the house, whilst we're away."

"Yes, sir?" Bob stammered, at a loss for words.

"So you're to live here and sleep here," the squatter explained at last. "Park, the storekeeper, has given me good accounts of you. Park, too, is taking a holiday, or I'd have him in the house. He'll be away ten days, and he'll give you the key of the store. Brand will take you round the house, and show you everything. And just this, Tracey. You're never to leave here—there are a lot of things I value—and you're not to have any friends coming in here. Carry out my instructions whilst I'm away, and I'll reward you! Now go to Brand! I've told you what I've awarded you, that is all!"

Much relieved in mind, Bob sought out Brand. The latter was in the pantry, packing the silver into strong boxes. He was a wizened old man, honest as the day, shrewd, but suspicious, and with a very high opinion of his own importance. Bob explained the errand on which he had come. Brand snorted.

"Mebbe you'll do all right," he said reluctantly. "But I wish the squatter had left me in charge! It's a big responsibility looking after a fine place like this, and there's no one I know of as can manage it proper except myself! Still, you'll do your best, I suppose, and I'll not find everything topsy-turvy on my return—leastways, I hope not!"

"If you tell me what you want, I'll manage," Bob replied. "Mebbe you will, and mebbe you won't!" the old man grunted. "There are them cases of silver; they're to go to the bank in three days. The bank will send for them. There's the bunch of keys, and I'll show you how to lock each room. Some of the rooms you're to leave locked all the time; but there are others the squatter will have open in the day-time to let in fresh air. He has his notions, like most of us. You're to sleep in the room next the kitchen, and have your

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from page 20.)

...in the kitchen. And the hall door is not to be opened if we leave. And there's a lot more I'll tell you as we go out of the house."

Bob followed the old man, and took note of all his instructions, not without some amusement—Brand was so insistent on trifles.

"There's a gun or a revolver I can have, I suppose, in case of necessity?" Bob asked.

Brand looked horrified.

"Why, do you think the house will be attacked?" he demanded. "What reason have you to think that? The matter went against my judgment in putting you in charge, but I told him we knew nothing about you, and that you might be a shady lot, mixed up with all sorts, so I did. And if you ask for firearms, if anything happens in my absence, I'm gone, I'll know where to lay the blame!"

Bob began to get indignant.

"A man wants a gun to keep off scoundrels, not to join in them!" he said. "And I'm much obliged for your good opinion!"

"Don't mention it!" the old fellow replied tartly. "I talk that I think, and you nor no one else won't stop me! That's good enough, though, what you said. I'll get you a revolver. We had it for forty-five years, and I've never used it."

That afternoon the squatter and his party drove away, and Bob entered the lonely house. There were books to read, and after the hard work of the last few weeks in the woolshed he was glad of a spell of ease. He spent the rest of the day comfortably, and in the evening went round the house and secured it. Then he turned into bed.

He awoke in the middle of the night. It was very hot in the room after the cool breezes that used to blow through the pinks in his hut. He sat up, and was about to light a candle and start reading when he paused.

Was it fancy, or had he heard a footstep outside? He listened intently. In the distance he heard a noise as if a gate had clicked. He jumped out of bed, hurried to the stairs, and looked out of a window. He could not discern anyone.

Thinking his hearing had played him a trick, he went back to his bed, and soon was sound asleep again.

The next day he saw a man in the town, only going a few yards from the door occasionally for a breath of air. He was cooking his midday meal when he heard the door-catch rattled. Unlocking the door, he saw a man standing on the threshold. Bob stared. He recognised him vaguely. Where had he seen him?

"What do you want?" asked Bob.

"I'm the new boundary-riider, and I'm in need of rations," he replied.

"The storekeeper will give them to you," Bob replied.

"Hasn't he gone yet?" the other asked quickly. "I heard he was going on his holiday, so I thought you might come down there with me."

"He's off to Melbourne this afternoon, but you'll catch him at the stores now. In any case, I can't leave this house; I have my orders to stay here."

The man turned on his heel and strode away. As he went out through the gateway Bob remembered his name and the previous occasion on which he had met him.

It was the man who had travelled with him on the road to Melbourne. He recalled that the man who had said his name was Bennett, who had shared his meal, who had put him on the wrong road for the town, and whom he had subsequently seen in the town with Sutherland.

A Tight Corner.

The lad closed and locked the door quickly, and sat down, as usual in a whirl. Once more, through Bennett, he would get in touch with Sutherland. He could watch Bennett, and, sooner or later, he would thus meet the greater villain. Kerr had been right in his view; the gang had escaped from the burning hotel. Ay, and that being so, it was quite likely that his father had escaped, too, as Kerr so firmly believed. Bob's heart began to thrill with joy.

But, on the other hand, there was cause for uneasiness. Bennett was no man to have around the place, even as a boundary-riider. Bob thought of writing at once to Mr. Coulter, and warning him. But the squatter had left no address. He had gone to Sydney; that was all the lad knew. Besides, what could Bob say against Bennett without divulging much about himself?

Had Bennett recognised him? The man had shown no sign that he had. That, at least, was all to the good; he had to wait. For the present Bob was tied to the house, and on the squatter's return he would get to work. Having thus thought matters over, he cooked his supper, and turned

in early, taking care, as on the night before, to put old Brand's revolver under his pillow.

He slept soundly, and was only awakened by a heavy crash close at hand. Startled out of his sleep, he sat up. He could hear nothing further. The noise might have been a clap of thunder, he thought. Anxiously he listened, looking out of the window. The night was dark as pitch, and he half-expected to hear the splashing of rain against the window-pane in one of the semi-tropical storms that always come so suddenly in Australia.

But no! All was still. Then he heard a bump against his door.

In an instant he was out of bed, and groping under the pillow for the revolver. Swiftly he crossed to the door, and turned the handle. The kitchen was empty, but the back door had been burst open.

Now he knew. Thieves had broken in. The noise that in his sleep he had taken for a thunderclap had been caused by the sharp snapping of the lock, and the banging of the door against the wall. He did not hesitate; he guessed that some scoundrels were after the silver in the pantry. He had the revolver, and he meant to use it.

He did not ask himself how they could possibly know about the silver and the absence of the family; he had no time to think. Intent only on being true to his trust, with a complete disregard for his own safety, he crossed the kitchen and went down the passage. The pantry door was half open, and a light shone through.

Two men appeared, carrying a heavy box. Bob's voice rang out clear and bold.

"Hands up, or I fire!" he shouted.

The villains stopped, but did not drop the box.

"Hands up!" Bob yelled again.

From an angle in the wall, between him and the pantry, a man dashed forward. Bob saw and recognised him.

"Sutherland, surrender!" he shouted. "You cur! I've got you now!"

Only a couple of yards separated them, and the villain was coming on. There was no time to lose. Bob pulled the trigger.

The charge did not explode.

Sutherland flung himself on the lad. At the same moment he was seized from behind. He went down with a crash, Sutherland's hands on his throat, and his eyes gleaming.

"We'll finish your hash while we're about it, you young cub!" the scoundrel snarled. "You know too much! But dead men tell no tales!"

As Bob was thrown to the floor and saw the gleaming eyes of Sutherland, the villain who had robbed his father and brought ruin on himself as well, he knew that only a desperate chance could save his life. He was alone in the large house, except for the four scoundrels seeking to steal the silver.

Sutherland was clutching his throat; but the lad yet had his arms and legs free, and with a tremendous push from his freedom he twisted around and got away. He was almost on his feet again when he was arrested. Still he managed to rise, and staggered back against a wall.

The two scoundrels in the pantry had laid down the box of silver and hurried to the assistance of their confederates. All rushed at the lad together and showered blows upon him.

For some seconds he held his ground, but the fight was hopeless and unequal. Thumped in the face and on the body, half-dazed and blinded, he was tripped up, amidst a loud guffaw voice rang out "Boy. And as he lay on his side, Sutherland's voice rang out harsh and vindictive.

"Drag him outside and vindictive. "Haul the silver to the buggy, and I'll put a bullet in the cub before we scot! Look sharp! He's made enough row to arouse folk a quarter of a mile around."

Gripped by the shoulders, and with his arms twisted behind his back, Bob was run out of the house and up against a tree. His legs and arms were bound, and his body strapped to the trunk. The ruffians carried out the boxes of silver, and dumped them in a buggy fifty yards away. Then Sutherland came back, walking deliberately, a revolver in his hand.

Bob did not flinch. In fact, his head was thumping with fury and his eyes flashed scorn as Sutherland drew near. The latter's thin lips parted in a malicious grin. He stood three paces away, balancing the revolver in the palm of his hand and watching for some sign of fear on the brave young face before him.

"You're a good hand at bluffing," he jeered.

The lad did not answer.

"You ain't afraid to die—eh?" he went on.

Bob still stood silent.

"If I spare your life, will you take the blame of this on yourself?" the villain continued.

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Fire, and have the guilt of murder on your conscience as well as your other crimes, if you like," he replied. "But if you kill me, your day of reckoning will come."

(Another grand instalment next week.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

ROUGH ON THE DOG.

Smith met Brown one day, strolling along with a very fine-looking dog on a lead.

"That's a fine dog you've got there," said Smith. "Do you want to sell him?"

"Well," said Brown, "I'm not particularly anxious to part with him; but I'd sell him for five pounds!"

Smith studied the animal very carefully for some time, and criticised him thoroughly, and finished up by asking Brown if the dog was intelligent.

"Intelligent!" said Brown. "Why, that dog knows as much as I do!"

"You don't say so!" said Smith. "Well, I'll give you half-a-crown for him!"—Sent in by Miss M. Bradshaw, Ashton-under-Lyne.

A SLIGHT ERROR.

The inspector was conducting the examination of a class of boys at the school, but was making very slow progress with his work, owing to a very annoying and incessant clatter of voices proceeding from an adjoining class-room. This had been going on for some time, and the turmoil had gradually increased in violence. At length, exasperated, the inspector rushed into the next room to investigate the cause of the noise.

Seeing one boy, apparently much older than the rest, talking very loudly, he caught him by the back of the neck, and rushed him into the room where he was at work. Bumping him down into a chair, he exclaimed:

"Now perhaps you'll learn to sit quietly!"

For some little time things proceeded more smoothly, and with less noise; but the inspector was suddenly startled to hear the voice of a small boy exclaim from the door:

"Please, sir, you've got our teacher!"—Sent in by T. Kerr, Scotland.

EX-SACK-LY.

The honest old farmer was very troubled to discover that one of his farm-hands was stealing his wheat. He thought the matter over very carefully, but was quite at a loss to decide on a way in which to deal with the thief. Finally he made up his mind to consult the minister on the question, who reminded him of the injunction: "If any man take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

"Thank you, sir," said the farmer. "That has given me the correct solution of the difficulty. He stole my wheat, so I will give him the sack!"—Sent in by J. C. Reynolds, Manchester.

SUITABLE MATERIAL.

Two young men were spending their summer holidays camping out in the country. One day one of them set out to the village to procure a fresh stock of provisions, leaving his friend in charge of the camp. On his return he found the young man struggling to rekindle the fire, which he had allowed to burn out.

"I have been trying hard to get this fire to burn," he grumbled. "Do you think it wants some more wood?"

"Of course it does!" exclaimed his friend. "Why don't you use your head, you chump!"—Sent in by D. Pelling, Brighton.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes. If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.

HAIR-RAISING.

A Scotchman was staying in London on holiday, and, walking along the street one day, he noticed a bald-headed chemist standing at the door of his shop. Approaching him, he asked whether he had any hair-restorer.

"Yes, sir," replied the chemist. "Step inside, please! There's an article I can highly recommend. Testimonials from great men who have used it. It makes the hair grow in twenty-four hours!"

"Aweel," said the Scot, "ye can gie the ton of your head a bit rub wi't, and I'll look back in the morn and see if you're telling the truth!"—Sent in by C. M. Jones, Rhondda.

DID HE GO BACK?

Employer: "Well, what did Jones say when you called to collect that bill?"

Clerk: "He said that he would break every bone in my body, and pitch me out of the window, if I showed my face there again!"

Employer: "Then go back at once, and tell him he can't frighten me by his violence!"—Sent in by Duncan Mackay, Kirkcaldy.

AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE.

A man, much given to using big words, was walking down a steep hill, when, through some unknown cause, he was pitched head foremost, finally landing in a ditch. Two tramps rushed to his aid, and asked him how it had happened. The cyclist replied:

"I was proceeding along the declivity at such a remarkable velocity that my machine collided with some unseen object, and I was precipitated therefrom, my head coming into violent contact with the macadamised highway prior to fathoming the depths of this filthy chasm!"

"Bill," said one of the tramps, "if I'd known he was a foreigner, I wouldn't have picked him up!"—Sent in by W. B. Finlay, Glasgow.

AN UNSPEAKABLE TAIL.

The children were having a nature lesson on the heron. The master called attention to its small tail, saying:

"The bird has no tail to speak of." The next day the children were asked to write a description of the bird, many of the results proving most amusing. But the master was quite overcome on reading one youngster's effort, which wound up by saying:

"The heron has a tail, but it must not be talked about."—Sent in by N. Dick, Belfast.

BOTH EXPERIMENTING.

The old lady had never had a ride in a taxi-cab, but one day decided to try the experiment. The vehicle rushed madly along, narrowly missing lamp-posts, tramcars, policemen, etc., and she became extremely nervous. She vowed that she would never step inside a taxi-cab again, and at last, becoming almost frantic, cried out to the driver:

"Please be careful! This is the first time I have ever ridden in a taxi!"

"That's quite all right, ma'am!" the man shouted cheerily. "This is the first time I've ever driven one!"—Sent in by H. Eyre, Sheffield.