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## HEROES OF SPORT!



**WHO WILL WIN THE BOATRACE?**

19-4-19.

*(One of the Many Exciting Scenes in the Splendid Story of School and Sport in this Issue.)*

# HEROES OF SPORT.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story of TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



## CHAPTER I. In Clover.

"KEEP a stiff upper lip!" said Tom Merry.

Figgins granted.  
"We'll need to, I'm thinking," he said. "The Head doesn't spare the rod. I've been licked by him before, so I know what I'm talking about."

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther, in surprise. "Wonders will never cease! A New House boulder actually knows what he's talking about!"

"He, ha, ha!"  
The Terrible Three of St. Jim's were in the quadrangle, and Figgins had joined them there.

The Head had summoned Tom Merry and Figgins to his study, and the rival leaders were quite in the dark as to why they were wanted.

"Must have been that jape we played on the Grammar School," said Tom Merry.

Figgins shook his head.  
"I wasn't in that," he said. "But this morning I stuck some secotine on Ratty's armchair, and I suppose he twigged it, and told the Head."

"But I had no hand in that, fathead!" said Tom Merry.

"Fact" is," said Monty Lowther. "You're both off the wicket. If you ask me why the Head sent for you, I should say that he intends sending Figgys to a lunatic asylum, and you're to act as escort, Tommy."

Figgins glared at the humorist of the Shell.

"Do you want me to wipe up the ground with you?" he growled.

"Shouldn't try it on, if I were you," said Lowther blandly. "If you took a swollen nose and a couple of thick ears into the Head's study he'd be slightly annoyed."

"Whey, you—you—" stammered Figgins.

"Buck up and see the Head, you two," said Manners. "I want to know what all the rumpus is about."

"We'll stay here," said Monty Lowther. "If you start reciting that famous little ditty, 'Right on our Flank the Crimson Cane Came Down,' we shall know it's a licking."

"Dry up, you funny ass!" growled Figgins. "Ready for the slaughter, Tom Merry!"

The captain of the Shell nodded, and the two rivals went along to the Head's study.

Figgins pulled himself together, and tapped on the door.

"Come in!"  
The juniors obeyed.

The sight of Mr. Railton in the Head's study confirmed their worst fears. The Housemaster had probably discovered some breach of the school rules, and had made a report to the Head.

Figgins was wondering which hand to hold out first, and Tom Merry glanced apprehensively at the cane standing in the corner.

"I sent for you, Merry and Figgins," began Dr. Holmes, "in connection with a little scheme which was planned—"

"Yes, sir," said Figgins desperately; "but Tom Merry had nothing to do with it. Honour bright, sir!"

"Figgins!"  
"It was I who put the secotine on Ratty's—I mean, Mr. Ratcliff's chair, sir. I did it off my own bat."

"Upon my soul!" murmured the Head. "What is the boy saying, Mr. Railton?"

Figgins gave a gasp. He realized that he had put his foot in it.

"It would appear," said Mr. Railton, "that Figgins played a joke on his Housemaster, and thought you were about to punish him for it."

"Is that so, Figgins?" asked the Head.  
"Did you have the effrontery to place a quantity of secotine on Mr. Ratcliff's chair?"

Figgins turned crimson.  
"Yes, sir. That was what you meant when you mentioned a little scheme, wasn't it, sir?"

"Certainly not! I knew nothing whatever about the matter. But you must understand, Figgins, that practical jokes such as you have described to me are not encouraged. You will write a hundred lines!"

"Oh!"  
"You had better remain silent until I have finished what I have to say," the Head went on; "otherwise I shall be making all sorts of discoveries."

Mr. Railton smiled, and Figgins bit his lip.

"The scheme I was referring to, my boys," said Dr. Holmes, "was as follows: Mr. Railton has been discussing with me the keen rivalry which exists between the juniors of the School House and the New House. I understand that inter-House contests, in all manner of sports, are immensely popular."

"That's so, sir," said Tom Merry.  
"I am glad to observe this spirit of

healthy rivalry between the two Houses," continued Dr. Holmes. "It keeps alive the fine traditions of our school. In order to still further encourage this sportsmanlike spirit, I propose to present a Silver Cup to the House which acquires itself best in a series of sporting contests."

"Oh, ripping!" said Figgins involuntarily.

"It will be simply great, sir!" said Tom Merry.

The Head smiled.  
"I am glad the scheme appeals to you," he said. "I sent for you two boys because I understand you are the respective leaders of the School House and New House juniors. I might add that the events will consist of running races, a boatrace, a boxing match, and a football match; and the cup will remain the property of the victorious House for one year. I leave it to you to make all arrangements with regard to the composition of teams, and so on."

"Excuse me, sir," said Tom Merry, "but these contests will take up a good deal of time. It will be rather a tight squeeze to fit them into the school routine."

"For that reason," said Dr. Holmes, "I have decided to grant three half-holidays next week."

"Hurrah!"  
The exclamation burst unchecked from Figgins' lips.

"Mr. Railton has kindly consented to act as judge in the various events," said the Head, "and I myself hope to be present at some of them. I think that is all. I shall expect your lines to be handed in to me to-morrow, Figgins," added Dr. Holmes, as the juniors turned to go.

"Very good, sir," said Figgins. He felt that he would make short work of those lines, with the prospect of the glorious times to follow.  
"How many?" asked Monty Lowther, as Tom Merry and Figgins came out into the quad.

"Six!" grinned Tom Merry.  
"The chopper didn't come down, after all!" said Manners.

"No. Figgys put his foot in it, as usual, and got a hundred lines; but that's neither here nor there. What do you think? The Head's presenting a silver cup to the School House—"

"To the New House, you mean?" said Figgins warmly.

"Piffle! We're going to receive a handsome silver cup, stamped in every

link, jewelled in every movement—on condition that we wipe up the New House in a sports tournament."

"That's topping!" said Monty Lowther. "The cup's ours in advance. We'll prepare a place for it on the study mantelpiece."

"Why, you conceited asses!" snorted Figgins. "You've about as much chance of bagging that cup as the man in the moon! The New House will simply take rings round you!"

"So which the Terrible Three replied with the ancient and classic monosyllable:—  
"Rats!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### Champions not Allowed.

"I SAY, you fellows—"  
The high-pitched voice of William Gregory Bunter broke in upon the animated chatter in the Fourth Form dormitory.

The news that the Head was presenting a House Cup had spread through the school like wildfire, and great excitement prevailed everywhere.

Even Bunter was excited, though why the forthcoming sports should excite him was a puzzle.

Unknown to the other fellows, Billy Bunter, who rightly belonged to Greyfriars, had swapped places with his cousin Wally. Wally had been destined for St. Jim's, but he had gone to Greyfriars instead, to shoulder the crowd of troubles which Billy had left behind.

The St. Jim's fellows knew nothing, as yet, of the deception. They were certainly very disappointed with the fat youth whom they supposed to be Wally Bunter, but not for a moment did they dream that he sailed under false colours.

"Dry up, Bunter!"  
"Go to sleep!"

"How can I, when you fellows are kicking up such a shindy? You're all gassing about the sports, and I can't get a word in edgeways!"

"I'll get a boot in edgeways if you don't shut up!" growled Herries.

"Oh really you know!" said Bunter, sitting up in bed and blinking at the Fourth-Formers in the rays of the moonlight. "I was going to offer you my services in the sports. I'm a pretty hefty sort of fellow in a glove-fight, and I'm a topping footballer. Some of you may have noticed my form—"

"His fragile form!" murmured Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Not many fellows are up to my weight—"

"I should hope not!" said Jack Blake.

"Listen to your prize porker. If there's a wheelbarrow race we'll employ you as one of the wheelbarrows!"

"Yas watah! That would suit you down to the ground, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Too great, Gussy!"

"Too great a strain on the eyesight, dear boy! I pray ask me to look as something a little moah upliftin' than your face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Bunter received no encouragement from his schoolfellows. They had seen him play factor and prize porker. If for gods and men and little fishes, they had seen him fight—against Baggy Trimble—and Baggy had emerged topdog.

After these exhibitions it was not likely that Bunter would be given a trial in any sporting contest—unless, as Digby remarked, the School House were had occasion to play a Hemo for Incubables.

"What I want to know is," said Bunter, "are you going to let me take a hand in the sports, or are you not?"

"Not!" said Jack Blake emphatically. "You can take a boot, if you like!"

And Blake sent a boot hurtling across the dormitory. It caught Bunter full in the chest, and knocked him backwards.

"Every time a coocooant!" chuckled Digby. "My turn next, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" came in smothered tones from Bunter, who had buried himself beneath the clothes. "You think you're going to cut me out of the sports, but you're not!"

"No, by all the blood of the Bunters, begorrah!" said Reilly.

"What the School House wants," said Bunter, bobbing up again now that he thought he was safe from further attack, "is a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Hold on!" said Herries. "That's Gussy's expression. It's copyright!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You want a born-leader!" continued Bunter, waxing eloquent. "A fellow who doesn't hesitate to kick boundaries when he's playing footer!"

"My hat!"

"And a chap who can outrun anything on two legs! That's me! You fellows are jealous of me, and that's why you're trying to leave me out in the cold."

"Kai Jove!"

"You should try and be good sportsmen, like me!" said Bunter. "Keen as mustard, and able to give and take—"

"No, no, no!" cried Jack Blake. "We'll give, and you can do the taking! Where's my other boot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake groped for his boot, and several other fellows groaned for theirs.

Before Bunter had time to dodge, however, the bedclothes again a regular avalanche of boots whirled in upon him.

"Owi, Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter went down like a ninopin before that bombardment. He disappeared beneath the bedclothes, and was careful not to expose himself again.

Neither did he take any further part in the coming election.

"Until a late hour that night ominous groans could be heard from the fat junior's bed. Eventually the groaning ceased, and a trumpet-like snore took its place—a snore which seemed to shake the dormitory."

"Time for another night-attack!"

Yawned Levison.

"No!" said Jack Blake. "Let sleeping boys lie! I'll settle Bunter's hash in the morning."

When the rising-bell clanged out its shrill summons Billy Bunter—in accordance with his usual custom—turned over with a grunt and went to sleep again.

But not for long.

Jack Blake soaked a sponge in water and approached the sleeping beauty.

"What's the little game?" asked Herries.

"Bunter's going into training!" explained Blake. "I'm the trainer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jack Blake," squeaked the sponge, and Bunter received a miniature shower-bath. His hair and face were swamped, and he started up, spluttering.

"Gug-gug-gug! Gerraway, Levison, you beast!"

"It's not Levison, ass—it's me!" said Blake. "I'mumble out!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Who ever heard of a born leader of boys wallowing in aloth after rising-bell!" said Blake. "Buck up, my pippin! I'm going to work off some of that blubber of yours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter tumbled out. He had no choice in the matter, for Jack Blake was about to give the sponge another squeeze, —

"I'll give you ten minutes to get

ready," said Blake. "Then you shall come for a gentle sprint."

"I—I can't run!" stammered Bunter. "I've got such an awfully frail constitution, you know!"

"You should have thought of that last night, when you were swanking so much," said Blake grimly. "Get a move on!"

Bunter scrambled into his clothes, and started to wash. He hated soap and water, and seldom used a liberal application of either. He usually mopped his face once or twice with a sponge, and was satisfied.

On this occasion Jack Blake gave him a helping hand. He seized the fat junior by the scruff of the neck and ducked his head in the bowl, at the same time bringing a scrubbing-brush into play. It was a hard brush, and Jack Blake was not a fellow who did things by halves. By the time he had finished Bunter's complexion was an art-shade in pink.

"Owi! I won't be bullied like this, you rotter! I'll tell Railton! I'll tell the Head—"

"Cut it short!" said Blake. "The ten minutes are up. Give me a hand with the sponge, Herries."

"Certainly!" grinned Herries.

"I'm coming along, too!" said Digby, pulling on his coat.

Billy Bunter, feeling that life at St. Jim's was anything but a bed of roses, was whisked out of the dormitory and down stairs.

He protested volubly; but his captors turned a deaf ear.

When they came out into the quad, Jack Blake took one of Bunter's fat arms, and Herries took the other.

"Now, my cherub," said Blake, "you're going to do the world's record for sprinting. One, to the ready—two, to be steady—three, to be—"

"Off!" chuckled Digby.

Blake and Herries went away like the wind, and Bunter, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, accompanied them.

Digby brought up the rear, giving helpful advice.

"Stick it, Bunter! Strong and steady does it! Put your beef into it!"

Bunter's fat little legs were going like clockwork. He was not an athlete, and thin strain was terrific. The perspiration stood out in beads on his brow, and he felt as if he were being whirled along by a cyclone.

"About turn!" panted Jack Blake.

"Owi! Yah! Chuck it, you beasts!" gasped Bunter.

But there was no rest for the wicked. Blake and Herries covered the hundred yards in record style before they allowed the fat junior to collapse to the ground like a punctured football.

"There!" said Blake. "If you go on like that you'll simply make hay of the New House fellows. You've got a topping turn of speed, Bunter!"

"First-rate!" chuckled Digby. "You'll be worth your weight in doughnuts on the footer-field. I can see you going through the New House defence like a knife through butter!"

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter struggled into a sitting posture, and shook his fat at the grinning juniors.

"You rotters!" he groaned. "I won't take part in your mouldy sports after this—not if you offer me free feeds for a month! I hope the New House makes shavings of you. Yah!"

Jack Blake & Co. strolled away, chuckling.

Curiously enough, the fact that they would embark upon the great sports tournament without the services of Bunter didn't seem to worry them in the least!

CHAPTER 3.

Minds of the Chase!

"O NCE more unto the breach, dear friends!"

Thus Monty Lowther, as he lined up with the rest of the School House fellows.

The sports were about to commence. For the past few days the New House and New House had been in strict training. Footie practice and sprinting had been the order of the day.

Figgins, the long-limbed, capable leader of the New House, had realized that only by hard practice could his men hope to overcome the School House.

On the other hand, Tom Merry, in spite of his easy-going declaration that the New House would be licked to a frazzle, knew in his heart that the School House were up against a very stiff proposition.

The juniors of both Houses had made good use of the time. Their leaders had kept them up to the mark; and Figgins had withheld Fatty Wynn from the tuckshop by main force. Fatty had demurred, of course; but, as Figgins pointed out, the road to victory was not comprised of jam-puffs and doughnuts.

"Before we commence," said Mr. Railton, addressing the eager throng of juniors, "I should like to explain how the race will be decided. This afternoon six contests will be held. The winning competitor in each case will score three points for his House."

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"Hurrah!"

"These contests for the hundred yards race will now line up," said Mr. Railton.

Quite a crowd of fellows ranged themselves at the starting point. The hundred yards contest was a popular one;

Figgins was running, of course, and so were Kerr and Reffers, and Lawrence and Owen.

In line with them crouched the Terrible Three—Talbot, Jack Blake, Clive—and Dick Jiffin.

"Crack!"

Mr. Railton discharged his pistol, and the runners shot forward.

To the spectators the first race seemed a walk-over, as such a short-lived event often do.

It was impossible to tell from a distance who had won. Half a dozen runners seemed to have breached the tape simultaneously.

A period of breathless suspense followed, and then the Home-guard announced the result through his megaphone.

"First—Talbot of the School House!" he exclaimed.

"Hurrah!"

"Next blind to us" chirped Monty Lowther. "That's these paries, anyway. If we heard 'em up, and cheer 'em, they may blunder into a whole giddy fagot of points!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hurdle race came next. This called for more skill and agility than a straightforward race, and so the leading lights on each side competed.

Again the School House seemed to be in the ascendant, for Tom Merry led for the greater part of the course. Figgins, however, overhauled him at the finish when he had only a few yards to go.

The New House supporters could be heard all over the ground.

"Tag-of-war next," said Mr. Railton.

The crowd swarmed on to the pitch. A tag-of-war between the rival Houses was undoubtedly a sight to be witnessed at all other sports.

The New House looked the better. The Old House—No. 382.

side. They had Fatty Wynn. The pump jucker, in addition to his bulk, possessed plenty of muscle.

There were to be three pulls to decide the issue.

"Now, School House!"

"File in, Fatty!"

Mr. Railton rapped out a sharp command, and the grim tussle began.

Slowly—inch by inch—the New House team made good.

Tom Merry & Co. held on like grim death every man tagging his hardest; but at length they came sprawling over the fatal line—beaten!

That was pull number one, and Figgins & Co. were flushed and radiant.

They lost some of their cheery optimism a few moments later, however, for the School House, working together with might and main, won the second pull.

The crowd fairly danced with excitement.

"Third pull does it," said Montebich, who had come out to cheer the New House on to victory. "Keep your end—F. Wynn!"

The third pull was the most sensational of all.

First one side, then the other, gained the advantage, only to be robbed of it by the opponent.

Strainer and gasping with their exertions, the School House pulled together manfully. What they lacked in weight they atoned for by sheer pluck.

Once, twice, they were nearly over the line; but Tom Merry rallied his men at the moment.

And now the excitement was such that the shouting gave place to breathless silence.

How would it go? Surely the School House must yield sooner or later to the grip and sustained efforts of their opponents.

And yield they did; but not before every man jerked at them was too exhausted to hold on any longer.

"My only aunt!" gasped Figgins, sinking into the grass. "That was hot, what a finish!"

"Bliss we were!" panted Fatty Wynn.

"Jove, I'm thirsty! I could drink a gallon of ginger-pop without any effort!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A long interval followed. Then came the quarter-mile, which proved a series of thrills from start to finish.

Tom Merry led for three parts of the distance; then Reffers passed him, after which the long-legged Figgins overhauled them both.

But Tom Merry had a trifle more in him than the two New House fellows, and great was the applause when the sputter of the Shell escaped final spurt and crossed the finish line barely a yard. Figgins coming in second.

"All square!" said Jack Blake.

"That's six points for the New House and six for us. This is a neck-and-neck affair, and no mistake!"

"In my younger days," said Monty Lowther confidentially, "I could easily be at odds with the natives by hitting a cricket ball so far that it could never be found again. Wonder if I can repeat the performance?"

Lowther certainly made a very fine throw, but it was succeeded by Reffers, of the School House, who eventually landed his ball home.

"Now for the mile," said Tom Merry.

"It's up to the School House to pull it off, by hook or crook. Mustn't be behind on the first day's sport."

"No, wadn't no?" said Arthur Augustus. "I've been with him, I could tell you. I've had a situation, I could tell you."

"Oh, don't worry," said Monty Lowther. "You're back here that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowther! I shall be compelled to—administrah a feabful thrashin'—"

"Fairness for the mile, line up!" said Mr. Railton.

If the other events had been exciting, the mile proved truly so.

The swell of St. Jim's, who had held himself in reserve for this race, established a fine lead. Next to him came Figgins and Blake and Tom Merry in order.

So fine a turn of speed did Arthur Augustus produce, that when the last lap arrived Tom Merry satisfied himself that Gussy would win, and he himself slowed up in consequence.

Tom had forgotten to make allowance for any accidents which might occur. Fortunately for the School House, Jack Blake had it. He maintained his pace, and kept level with Figgins.

When Arthur Augustus was but a few yards from the tape he was seen to trip and pitch forward on his face.

A gasp of dismay burst from the School House supporters.

"Gussy's crashed!"

"Out of the running, by Jove!"

Gussy was not much hurt, but he could not recover in time to finish fast.

A couple of figures flashed past him. Blake and Figgins were straining every nerve to reach the tape first.

The School House contingent noted Figg's long stride, and gasped audibly.

But, to counterbalance the New House leader's length of limb, Jack Blake possessed superb pluck.

He had not exerted heart and muscle and sinew for nothing. He was fagged—deplorably fagged—but he meant to win.

And win he did. As the post remarked in connection with a battle of long ago, "it was a famous victory." For Blake, fairly leaping the last few yards, breached the outstretched tape a fraction of a second earlier than his rival.

"Hurrah!"

"Well, yes, Blake—well run, indeed!" said Mr. Railton heartily.

And so, at the conclusion of the first batch of contests, School House and New House were level, with nine points each.

Not one of the tussles had proved a walk-over. Each event had been fought to the finish and each finished fairly.

Glad enough were the competitors to retire to the restful comfort of their studies. They had deserved well of their country, every one of them; and, exhausted though they were by their strenuous endeavours, happiness and high good humour prevailed on every side.

But there was one fellow whose supreme effort to win had left a deeper mark than that of exhaustion.

Jack Blake, unsmiling by his chums, went early to his dormitory.

Not only was he feeling fagged, but he was aching all over, especially in his arms and his legs were like leaden weights as he dragged himself up the stairs.

"I shall be all right to-morrow," he muttered to himself. "It won't do to make the other fellows anxious by telling them I'm off-colour. A good night's sleep, and I'll be up with them to-morrow."

When the rest of the Fourth Formers came up to bed, they saw that Blake was sleeping soundly. But they did not notice that his face was paler than usual, and that his breathing was heavy and laboured.

That they noticed those things, their chums would have been spared much misery and misunderstanding during the days that were to follow.

"No, wadn't no?" said Arthur Augustus. "I've been with him, I could tell you. I've had a situation, I could tell you."

"Oh, don't worry," said Monty Lowther. "You're back here that!"

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## CHAPTER 4.

## The Weak Spot.

**S**T. JIM'S resumed its normal routine for the next two days.

During this period Jack Blake recovered a good deal. But he was still feeling far from fit when Tom Merry led the School House Eleven on to the football field.

Blake wondered whether he ought to report to Tom Merry that he was not feeling up to the mark. But he reflected that such a course would cause him to be dropped from the School House. Blake was one of the most dashing forwards; and, although a reserve, could easily be called in, the side would undoubtedly be disorganised.

So Blake said nothing, hoping against hope that his form would not suffer to any great extent.

Tom Merry won the toss, and the School House started off with the wind in their favour. The weather was crisp and clear—ideal for football.

The touchline was thronged with the supporters of both sides. Even the slackers—the fellows who, in the ordinary way, seldom played, watched, nor liked football—had turned up, realising that the name and fame of their House were involved.

"Play up, you fellows!"

"On the ball!"

"School House for ever!"

"Rats! Keep 'em out, Fatty!"

In the New House goal Fatty Wynn stood erect and watchful. Figgins and Kerr, at back, looked grim and resourceful; and in the forward line Redfern's sunny face seemed to herald goals galore. The opening was dramatic.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went away on the wing, and, before Kerr could tackle him, he swung the ball across to Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell sent in a drive which not many goalkeepers, junior or otherwise, would have stopped. But Fatty Wynn stopped it. It brought him to his knees, but he was unbeaten, and the ball was sent soaring into midfield.

Nothing daunted, the School House came on again.

Talbot raced away with the ball at his feet; and after he had outwitted the opposing backs a goal seemed certain.

Out of the corner of his eye Talbot saw Jack Blake standing unmarked in the goalmouth. He executed a beautiful pass, and the crowd waited expectantly for Blake to convert it into a goal.

But, to the chagrin of the School House followers, Jack Blake shot wide and high, and Fatty Wynn, who had been expecting fireworks, was not called upon to save.

Tom Merry looked annoyed.

"You had a gilt-edged chance of scoring that time, Blake!" he said. "Pull yourself together, for goodness' sake!"

Jack Blake flushed, but said nothing.

The New House noise came into the picture. Their forward line, with a very brisk, go-ahead concern, led with admirable skill by Redfern.

Reddy himself fired in a shot which was promptly fisted out by the goalie; but Lawrence clinched with the ball, and drove it into an unguarded corner of the net.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, New House!"

"Keep the pot boiling!"

Stimulated by their early success, the New House attacked strongly. Their forwards swarmed like ants round the School House goal, and twice Redfern hit the bar.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed all at sea. They could do nothing right. The backs played heroically, and so did the halves;

but in the forward line something was amiss.

Even the most casual spectator could see that. There was, beyond question, a weak link in the chain.

And the weak link was Jack Blake.

On two occasions Blake was given an opportunity of breaking away. And he bungled badly each time.

"Weeily, Blake! What evah is the mattah!" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are playin' wotferly!"

"I know I am," said Blake wretchedly. "I can't think what's come over me. P'raps I shall do better as the game goes on."

"If you don't," said Monty Lowther emphatically, "we shall be in the soup!"

Play continued fast and keen until the interval, when the New House led by one goal to nil.

Had Jack Blake made good use of his

and Tom Merry fastened on to the ball and put in a magnificent run.

"Pass, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry whipped the ball across, and the swell of St. Jim's, meeting it fairly and squarely with his right foot, drove it into the net with such force that even Fatty Wynn was unable to save.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Gussy!"

The School House seemed to be waking up at last.

Their supporters were smiling now. The tide had turned, and the New House had to concentrate on defensive work for the next twenty minutes.

Even so, there was still something radically wrong with the School House attack. Everybody noticed it.

Talbot and Tom Merry were splendid. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Monty



Blake and Herries went away like the wind, and Bunter, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, accompanied them. "Put your best into it, Bunter!" shuckled Digby, from the rear. (See Chapter 2.)

changes there would have been quite a different tale to tell.

Figgins & Co. were in high spirits. They had not expected to be on top at the interval, and the fact that they were a goal to the good cheered them immensely.

The School House fellows, on the other hand, were looking glum. They had played hard, and but for the weak spot in the forward line they would certainly have been ahead by this time.

Pheep!

Mr. Railton blew his whistle, and the teams lined up for the resumption.

Once again a chorus of shouts went up from the touchline.

"Stick to it, New House!"

"You've got 'em whacked already!"

"Back up, School House!"

"Let's hear from you, Blake!"

The New House, heartened by their success, warmed to the work. They attacked strongly, and Redfern sent in a rasping shot, which the goalie just managed to turn round the post.

Then the School House backs cleared,

Lowther were active as squirrels. But Jack Blake was having an "off" day. He should have put his side ahead on at least two occasions, but he dallied with the ball, and a New House back robbed him each time.

Still the School House pressed, and Talbot hit the crossbar with a great shot. But from the rebound Kerr gained possession, and volleyed the ball up the field to Redfern.

"Now's your chance, New House!"

"Pile in, Reddy!"

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen were away like a pack of wolves. The School House backs were left standing, and Redfern completed a fine run by passing to Lawrence, who scored with an unstoppable shot.

"Hurrah!"

The faces of the New House supporters were jubilant.

The School House fellows, realising that only another ten minutes remained for play, relapsing into their former state of glumness.

"This is where we put our sackcloth and ashes!" said Monty Lewther. "Awful isn't the word for it! Carry me home to die, somebody!"

"There's still time to make a draw of it, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry looked grim as he kicked off.

To lose the football match would place the School House in a very precarious position. They would be six points to the bad; and six points was a margin that took a good deal of making up.

During the closing stages of the game Fatty Wynn was kept very busy. He saved on his knees from Tom Merry, and then Talbot sent in a real gem.

Fatty Wynn sprang up like a jack-in-the-box, and just got his fingers to it in time.

"Well saved, Fatty!" panted Figgins breathlessly. "Keep 'em out!"

Driven to desperation, the School House continued to attack.

Monty Lewther got his head to a pass from the wing, and the ball whizzed in to a nip from an orange.

But Fatty Wynn's ready fist met the incoming leather, and it was punched out again—to alight at the feet of Jack Blake.

"Now, Blake!"

Everyone knew—and none knew better than Blake himself—that here was a golden opportunity to save the game for the School House.

Fatty Wynn crouched low, his head thrusting against his ribs.

The spectators craned forward eagerly, and then Blake shot.

A gasp of relief from the New House! A gleam of dismay from the School House!

The ball had ballooned the ball high over the bar.

"Missed, by Jove!"

Tom Merry had seldom been known to lose his temper on the football-field; but he came very near to losing it now.

It almost looked as if Jack Blake had deliberately let his side down.

There were still a few minutes to go, but the School House had no more golden opportunities to draw level. Figgins and Kerr set up a second and sustained defence—a defence which held good until Mr. Railton, with a final blurt on his whistle, sounded the death-knell of the School House.

Figgins & Co. fairly romped off the field, cheered to the echo by their loyal army of supporters.

The New House had won by two goals to one.

Tom Merry gave Jack Blake a grim look as the defeated players came off the field.

"You let us down that time, with a vengeance!" he said. "Do you want us to lose the Head's Cup, you duffer!"

"I—I'm sorry!" faltered Blake. "I struck a bad patch, I suppose!"

"Better the sooner you buck up the better!" growled the captain of the Shell.

And he walked away with Manners and Lewther, leaving Jack Blake alone with his thoughts.

Needless to say, they were far from pleasant ones.

CHAPTER 5.

A Startling Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER advanced cautiously along the Fourth Form passage.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man.

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From Little Sise came the shouting of the crowd and the thudding of the football.

The stadium were deserted. The St. Jim's fellows—with the exception of William George Bunter—were out of doors.

Billy Bunter chuckled. He turned the handle of Study No. 6, and walked in.

Although only an hour had elapsed since dinner in Hall, Bunter was hungry. He had not been allowed to exceed two helpings of pudding, and with the result that he felt extremely peckish.

As the fellows trooped out of Hall, Bunter had heard D'Arcy tell Jack Blake that he had purchased a cake—a gilt-edged, first-rate cake—for consumption in Study No. 6 after the match.

Bunter was after that cake like a bloodhound in full cry. He meant to polish it at one sitting, leaving not a crumb behind to tell the tale.

"Jolly thoughtful of those fellows to clear off to the footer," chuckled Bunter. "Ha, ha, ha! Gussy will have several sets of a fit when he finds his cake's walked off."

The fat junior rolled towards the cupboard, and pulled it open. Then he started back with an exclamation of dismay.

The cupboard was empty!

Billy Bunter had followed in the footsteps of the celebrated Member Hubbard.

There was no cake—not a sign or a shadow of one—and there was nothing whatever to eat.

"M-m-m-m!" murmured Bunter. "Blessed if I don't understand this! I distinctly heard Gussy say he had bought a cake. Wonder where the silly ass put it! I suppose he's hidden it somewhere."

Bunter had no intention of abandoning his quest. He meant to ransack the study for that cake until he found it.

He let his eyes wander about the study, and unhappily. He looked in the wastebasket, and drew blank; he looked underneath Gussy's Sunday paper, and there was nothing doing. Neither did the bookcase nor the window-sill disclose anything in the nature of a cake.

Bunter's jaw dropped. The prospect of fine orange, to which he had looked forward so eagerly, seemed to be melting away.

"No go!" he muttered.

Then it occurred to him that he had not looked in Jack Blake's desk.

Ah, that was it! The chums of No. 6, anticipating a raid on their cupboard, had stowed the cake away in a safer place.

Bunter raised the lid of the desk. He prepared to pounce upon the cake with a fat chuckle.

But once again he was too premature. The cake was not there!

The fat junior was about to abandon his search, when a typewritten sheet of paper, lying amongst other things in Blake's desk, caught his eye.

Ever inquisitive, Billy Bunter drew it forth and perused it.

It was a letter; and as Bunter read it he sat rapt and fairly quivered with excitement.

He had forgotten all about the cake now. He had even forgotten he was hungry. His little round eyes were gleaming, and he had no thoughts for anything save the letter in his hand.

"Well—I'm—jiggered!" gasped Bunter, shyly. "So this is the little game that Blake's been receiving letters from shady pals outside the school."

And he tried to pretend he's a very virtuous sort of chap. Ha, ha, ha!

Bunter had certainly made a capture—a capture even more absorbing than the cake.

The letter was worded as follows:

"Dear Jack,—I am writing to tell you that I have made a little wager with one of my pals that the New House wins the footer match. It's up to you, as an old pal of mine, to see that this comes off. You are playing for the School House, and if you can manage to let them down by means of a few bad blunders I shall be in clever."

"I rely upon you to do your best for me. It means a great deal to me."

"Your old pal,"

Bunter, hugged the letter with delight. On the strength of it he hoped to extort quite a nice little sum from Jack Blake.

The letter, if exposed, would ruin forever Jack Blake's reputation as an honourable fellow—unless, of course, he had refused to act upon it. But Bunter had no doubt whatever that Blake had acted upon it—that he had let the School House down so that his shabby pal might win by a big bet.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and Bunter gave a guilty start. But when he saw that the intruder was Jack Blake his fears vanished.

Blake glared at the fat junior.

"What are you doing there, you worm! Be ashamed of your ways!"

"Oh, really, you know!" said Bunter. "I shall have to teach you to speak more civilly to an old pal."

"Wha-a-t?"

"You're about the last fellow who's got the right to call me names," Bunter went on, "because who else lives in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake clenched his hands hard.

"What do you mean, you barbling great bladder of hard?"

"You needn't try to brazen it out, Blake. The game's up!"

"What game, you fat lunatic?"

"Billy Bunter gave a chuckle.

"Did the New House win the footer match?" he asked.

"Yes!" growled Blake.

"Ah! Then you let the School House down—that? Well, it don't blame you. I always believe in standing by an old pal. Steve will be awfully bucked to know that he's won his bet."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Blake.

"Of course," said Bunter, "I'm not going to keep your guilty secret for nothing. You can hardly expect that. But I won't be hard on you. Make a quick now, and a quick neat week—"

"You—"

"Oh, come!" said Bunter. "I'm letting you down jolly lightly. Hand over a quid now, and I'll keep mum about this letter of mine."

"What letter, you fat freak? Have you suddenly gone nuts?"

Billy Bunter drew his hand from behind his back and held up the letter.

Blake glared at the fat junior as if he would eat him.

"Give me that letter!" he said sharply.

"No jolly fear! You should be more careful with your property, Blake. This letter's enough to get you fired out of St. Jim's on your neck. I've only got to show it to Railton, or the Head, and you'd be sacked!"

Jack Blake fairly lost his temper. He made a sudden stride in Bunter's direction.

"Hand over that letter!" he said, fiercely.

"Get away!" said Bunter, in alarm. "Keep your distance! If you try to take this letter away from me I'll yell! I'll yell! I'll yell! You know what a hoarse, low-down cad you are! Yaroooop!"

Bunter's remarks trailed off in a yell of wild anguish as Blake gripped him by the shoulders and fairly hurled him across the study.

The letter fell to the floor, and Blake was about to pick it up, when there was a rush of feet in the passage. The Terrible Three, with D'Arcy and Herries and Digby hard on their heels, burst into the study.

## CHAPTER 6.

## When a Boy's Down.

WHAT'S all the merry rumpus about!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Billy Bunter, who had landed with a terrific impact against the cool-sculpted, struggled into a sitting posture. He was so furious and indignant that his one thought was to expose Jack Blake.

He pointed his fat forefinger at the letter.

"Pick it up!" he panted. "Quick! Don't let him get hold of it! He'll tear it up, he does!"

Greatly wondering, Tom Merry picked up the letter.

Jack Blake made no effort to stop him. He gave a short laugh, and stood aside. "Is this your letter, Blake?" asked the captain of the School.

Blake nodded.

"In that case," said Tom, "you'd better take it. I've no wish to pry into other fellows' correspondence." "Oh, it isn't private," said Blake; "you can all read it. You would all have read it, sooner or later, anyway."

Tom Merry turned the letter round. The rest of the fellows stood spell-bound.

They remembered Blake's poor display in the recent match with the New House, and they jumped to the conclusion—quite naturally, perhaps—that Blake had deliberately let the team down in order that his pal Steve—however he might be—should win the bet.

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle. "My hat!" he said. "It's not difficult to understand, now, why we lost!"

"There—there must be some mistake!" said Herries, who looked genuinely distressed. "Blake would never stoop to such a dirty trick!"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"This letter speaks for itself," he said. "You all saw what a rotten show Blake put up this afternoon."

"He's had you on toast for a long time!" said Bunter. "You all thought he was a straightforward sort of chap, like me, and now you can see for yourselves that he's as sly as they make 'em! He deserves to be kicked out!"

"Dry up, you worm!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

Then he turned to Blake.

"Hear you anything to say?"

Jack Blake had grown suddenly pale.

"You—you don't seriously mean to tell me that you think I acted on this letter?" he said breathlessly.

"What else are we to think?" said Tom Merry coolly. "It's a surprise to us—a shock, in fact, but we can see we doubt it in the light of what's happened!"

"My hat! You could knock me down with a feather!" gasped Blake. "Why, you're putting me on a par—with Rocks and McElish! He you believe that I played such a cadish trick, Gossy?"

Arthur Augustus looked uncomfortable.

"I'm afraid it's impos to think othawise," he said.

"The evidence is so jolly clear," said Herries awkwardly.

Jack Blake glanced at the accusing faces behind him, but he never backed his head and laughed. But it was not the ringing laugh that the juniors were accustomed to hear. During the last few

moments Jack Blake seemed to have grown years older.

"I could easily explain matters and clear myself if I wanted to," he said at length. "But as you had you think me such a low-down rotter, I sha'n't attempt it."

Tom Merry folded up the incriminating document which Bunter had discovered, and put it in his pocket.

"After this," he said, "I must ask you to stand a bit from the spot, please. We shall miss you in some of the events—that goes without saying. But it's impossible to include you after you've deliberately betrayed the side."

"Quite impossible!" said Manners gravely.

Jack Blake stepped forward. His eyes were gleaming.

"Don't you think you'd better clear out!" he said quietly.

"Oh, we'll clear all right!" said Tom Merry. "We're not exactly pining for your company after this."

And the Terrible Three quitted the study.

After a moment's hesitation, Herries and Digby and D'Arcy followed. They had every right to remain in the study if they chose, but they evidently didn't choose.

Jack Blake flung himself into a chair.

He was given time for some thoughts as a rule, but how could he help being a prey to them now?

They all believed him guilty—even his own chums, who, in spite of the evidence being black against him, ought to have known better.

"He, he, he!"

He took credit of Blake's otherwise caged him to look up. He saw that Bunter was still in the study.

"You're fairly bowled out at last!" said the fat junior. "Even your old pals have turned their backs on you, and I don't wonder at it! Rotters like you ought to be kicked out!"

"So you think I ought to be booted out—what?" said Blake.

"Yes, ratler!"

"Then we'll just reverse the order of things."

With an expression on his face which even Bunter could not understand, Jack Blake sprang to his feet.

Billy Bunter promptly fell from the study. Jack Blake's back—it was a football boot, hard and heavy and muddy—accompanied the fat junior's exit.

With a final wall of anguish Bunter slighted on his knees.

The booting-out process was of a rather different nature than Bunter had expected.

## CHAPTER 7.

## The Boastings.

JACK BLAKE was under a cloud. His study-mates had kept their own counsel regarding the recent scene in Study No. 6, and so had the Terrible Three!

But the juniors spread the news far and wide of Blake's alleged treachery. With glowing satisfaction he described how he had brought about Blake's undoing.

"Blake was a wrong 'un," said Bunter, "and I've bowled him out at last! He ought to be sacked on the spot."

Most of the fellows feebly refused to believe Bunter's story, and they went to Tom Merry for corroboration. Tom could only tell them the facts.

Feeling can high against Jack Blake, and he was cut down by hoaps of fellows with whom he had previously glozed on the best of terms. Everyone agreed that his conduct had been altogether "too thick."

But in the mind of one fellow existed a doubt. He could not be convinced of Blake's guilt. That fellow was Reginald Talbot.

Talbot had an older head on his shoulders than most. He did not yield tamely to public opinion. He was no mean judge of character, either; and from what he knew of Blake the latter would be the very last fellow to stoop to dishonesty.

Talbot paid a visit to Study No. 6 next day. He was in his boating flannels, for the boating was shortly due to take place.

He found Jack Blake alone.

"May I have a word with you, Blake?"

"Fifty, if you like," said Blake. "I suppose you've come along to pile on the agony!"

Talbot flushed.

"Anything but that," he said. "As a matter of fact, I can't bring myself to believe that you let the side down yesterday. The evidence seems pretty strong against you, but you're not that sort of a cad."

"Thanks," said Blake quietly.

Talbot glanced keenly at his school-fellow.

"I believe you could clear yourself with a word, if you choose," he said.

"Perhaps. But I don't choose!" said Blake.

"Don't be an ass! If you can explain away that letter which Bunter found, it's up to you to do so."

Blake's jaw set obstinately.

"I won't!" he said. "If they choose to think me a beastly outsider, they can go ahead!"

"Be the sports!"

"Blow the sports!" growled Blake.

Then, meeting Talbot's reproachful glance, he added:

"This affair's hit me jolly hard, Talbot. It's put my back up, and can you wonder at it? I've always played with a straight bat, and now, just because of a bit of paper that Bunter happens to find, the whole school turns against me—bar you!"

"It's rough, I know," said Talbot sadly. "But you can hardly blame the fellows, in a way. They saw you put up a putrid game against the New House; then they saw the letter asking you to let the team down. So they put two and two together, and as you didn't give any explanation they think you're guilty. Take my tip and put things right, before they get from bad to worse."

But Blake remained firm.

"You're an awfully decent sort, Talbot," he said, "but I'm not going to offer any sort of defence. There should have been no need."

"What shall you do with yourself during the next few days?" asked Talbot. "Moop?"

"No jolly fear! I'm going to finish a year. I was writing for 'Tom Merry's Weekly' and Tom Merry will take it after what's happened."

Talbot looked at his watch.

"I must be getting down to the river," he said. "You've quite made up your mind not to clear yourself?"

"Quite!"

"Then I sha'n't press you any further. So-long! And keep a stiff upper lip."

Talbot had been so kind as to be joined the other members of the School House crew in the quad.

"Wherefore that worried brow!" asked Monty Lowther. "There's quite enough worry floating around, Talbot, without you adding to it."

"Wasn't he mean, Tom?" said Talbot.

"Go hon! Well, thinking won't win."

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us the boatace. We want action this afternoon—and plenty of it!"

"I've brought in Julian in place of Blake," explained Tom Merry. "He's hardly up to Blake's weight, of course, but he's no dud at rowing. We shall have to put our backs into it, though."

Figgins of the New House came on the scene at the head of his men. They all looked very fit and very confident.

"Still thinking of clearing a space on your mantelpiece for the Head's Cup, Tom Merry?" grinned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're six points behind, you know," Figgins went on, "and when the boatace is over you'll be a dozen to the bad. Perhaps you'd like to consider the sports closed—with the New House on top?"

Mentz Lowther held up a reproving forefinger.

"No insults, Figgz," he said, "or we'll introduce a jolly good bumping into the list of events. Hallo! Here comes Railton! Better be on the move!"

The banks of the Ryll were crowded with spectators. The Head himself stood by the boatace, chatting with Mr. Linton.

The excitement was intense as the rival crews pulled into midstream.

"Buck up, School House!"

"It's all up if you lose the boatace!"

Tom Merry, the School House stroke, roared this fact, and his lips set in a hard line.

Crack!

Mr. Railton fired the pistol, and the two boats leapt off the mark.

From the outset it was obvious that the race would be hard and keen. There was nothing to suggest a walk-over win for either side. At the end of a dozen strokes the two boats were dead level.

"School House! School House!"

"Pick it up, there!"

And then, as if in mockery of the frenzied, eager shouts of the School House supporters, came the confident outburst of their rivals:

"Good old Figgz!"

"Strong and steady does it!"

Presently the New House bow began to creep ahead in little jerks. Figgins was keeping his men up to the mark, and there was not a weak spot in the New House crew.

The same could not be said of their opponents.

Tom Merry set a vigorous stroke, and behind him Manners and Lowther, Talbot and Harry Noble, were rowing strongly. But Dick Julian, who had been called in at the last moment, and who had had less practice than his fellows, was a shade too slow.

The School House supporters noted the fact with dismay. Julian possessed plenty of pluck, coupled with the ability to hold on and hold out. He was a sportsman through and through; but he was not Jack Blake!

At the end of two hundred yards the New House were leading by a quarter of a length. Their supporters set up a ringing cheer.

"Bravo, Figgz!"

"Stick it out, you fellows!"

But a brooding silence had settled upon the School House followers.

At the head in the river Tom Merry quickened his stroke. He knew that by doing so he was taxing the energies of his men to the uttermost. But desperate situations require desperate remedies.

On and on the boats flashed, and from the banks the banks fluttered, and there was an incessant hurra voices.

"School House are gaining!" came the cry at last.

"Well rowed, Tom Merry!"

"That's the style!"

Yes! The School House were putting their backs into it now! The splash of their oars was like music to the ears of their anxious supporters.

Even Dick Julian, sick and spent though he was, struggled on gallantly.

Twenty yards from the post the New House still led.

The School House battled on with the strength of despair. They went up a yard—two yards. They were level!

Figgins saw the danger, and he rallied his men for a final burst.

The New House boat shot ahead once more, the crew working like niggers.

The end was very near.

"Now, School House!"

"Never say die!"

Tom Merry's dripping face twitched a little.

"Pick it up!" he jerked out over his shoulder.

The School House concentrated mind and muscle on a final sprint.

They crept up by inches, whilst the crowd watched breathlessly; but just as victory seemed possible for them, Figgins made yet another burst.

The New House boat shot past the post a bare yard to the good!

So ended the boatace, and so ended the hopes of the School House supporters that their heroes would win the Head's Cup. Defeat now seemed almost certain for Tom Merry & Co. They were twelve points in arrears, and only two more events—the boxing-match and the Marathon race—remained to be contested.

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One thought hammered at Tom Merry's brain as he dragged his aching limbs from the boat.

With Jack Blake in the crew the School House might have won the day!

#### CHAPTER 8.

#### Gussy Makes up his Mind.

"WHILE there's life, there's hope, dear boys!"

A grin on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that rousing encouragement to the Terrible Three on the morning after the boatace.

"Hallo!" said Manners. "What's the matter with Gussy?"

"Wandering in his mind, as usual," said Mentz Lowther. "It's the weather, I expect."

"Really, Lowthab—"

"If you can see a spark of hope for the School House, Gussy," said Tom Merry, "you're a giddy marvel!"

Arthur Augustus smiled. The Terrible Three were not smiling. They found the world anything but a pleasant place to live in just then.

"I've been javin' to Walton," said Arthur Augustus. "I made a proposal to him, and, recognisn' in me a fellow of tact an' judgment, Walton agreed."

"What was the proposal?" asked Manners.

"I pointed out that we were twelve points behind the New House—"

"Everybody knows that, fathead!" snapped Tom Merry.

"An' I went on to say that the sports would end in a dead-heat—"

"What!"

"You see, dear boys," explained Arthur Augustus, "supposin' we win the boxin'—"

"Well!"

"That will give us six points. An' if we win the Mawthson, that will be another six. That will bring us level with the New House at the finish."

"Granted!" said the captain of the Shell. "But that's no reason why you should look so jolly pleased with yourself."

"I am pleased, Tom Mewwy, at the prospect of the School House winnin' the Cup!"

The Terrible Three turned upon the swell of St. Jim's as one man.

"As!" growled Tom Merry.

"Dolt!" snapped Manners.

"Hopeless imbecile!" grunted Mentz Lowther.

"I refuse to be addressed in that repulsive mannah!"

"Why, you burbling chump," said Tom Merry, "you know jolly well we haven't a dog's chance!"

"Wait! I understand you are repwostatin' the case at boxin'?"

"That's so."

"Well, you'll make wings wound Figgins."

"I'm not so sure of it," said Tom Merry. "But supposin' I do—what then?"

"An' you are a remarkably fino wannah!" said Arthur Augustus. "If you say hard, you'll finish second in the Mawthson wack, an' thus get the extra point for the School House."

"But what about the fellow who finishes first?" howled Manners.

"Eh!"

"Supposin' a New House boulder romps home?"

"Really, Mawthnah! What oval put such an absurd notion into your head? Tom Mewwy will come in second—"

"Perhaps!"

"An' that's all that mattab."

"Why, you duffer!"

"Because I shall finish first."

"My hat!"



The Terrible Three stared at Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Shades of Dorando!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Of all the cool chaps—"

"Do you think you are a better runner than Tommy?" demanded Manners warmly.

"Not quite, dear boy! But Tom Mewwy will be fagged out with the boxin, an' he won't have the necessary strength an' speed to finish first."

"But what about Figgins?" roared Tom Merry.

"And Redfern!"

"And Kerr!"

"To say nothing of Lawrence and Owen."

Arthur Augustus smiled as the names of those respectable New House runners were fired at him.

"I feel quite confident that I can outstrip the lot," he said modestly. "I am keepin' myself in strict twainin', an' there's no need whatever for you to worry. If Tom Mewwy can manage to struggle into the second place, the School House will win the Cup. I'm not beatin', dear boys!"

"But merely cocksure!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's interesting to know that there's a point going begging for the fellow who comes in second," said Manners. "It gives us just a faint chance of bagging the Cup after all."

"I think the prospect looks remarkably woezy," said Arthur Augustus. "I have quite made up my mind to win the Marathon. Excuse me now, dear boys, I'm goin' to get into my wummin' slobbath, an' have a sprinck as fah as Wayland."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked off. "Well, I'm blessed!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy's several sorts of an ass, an' he's talking sheer rot when he says he'll win the Marathon; but, for all that, he's made me feel that the School House isn't whacked yet. The luck's been dead against us so far, but it may change."

Manners sighed.

"If only Blake hadn't played the siddy part," he said. "I should still be hopeful of pulling it off. Blake's a top-ping long-distance runner. He'd give Figg a good run for his money in the Marathon, anyway."

"We can't possibly take him to our bosoms, after what's happened," said Monty Lowther. "It's unthinkable. What an ass the fellow was to play such a low-down trick!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"It beats me," he said. "I would have backed Blake for a white man against almost anything. But that letter—"

"It doesn't leave a shadow of doubt," said Manners gloomily. "Who is Blake's pal Steve, by the way?"

"Never heard of him," said Tom Merry. "It's a puzzle from beginning to end. But the fact remains that Blake let us down badly. And even if he were the finest runner at St. Jim's we couldn't allow him to take a hand in the Marathon."

"True, O King!" said Monty Lowther. "We shall have to carry on without him, even if it costs us the Cup. If you can only succeed in making shavings of Figg in the ring to-morrow, the position won't seem so jolly desperate for the School House, after all."

"Anyway," said Manners, "if we go under, we'll go under fighting."

And the Terrible Three, infected by the cheery optimism of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, went in to tea.

## CHAPTER 9.

## In the Ring.

ST. JIM'S turned up to a man to witness the boxing contest.

The gym was packed.

Fellows who had lined up early were able to get good seats; but, as there were not nearly enough chairs to go round, the rest of the spectators had to disport themselves on the parallel-bars, and the box-horse, or join in the struggle for standing room. Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third had barged the window-walls.

In the ring itself were Tom Merry and Figgins; Kerr and Monty Lowther, their seconds; and Mr. Railton.

The past records of the two combatants pointed in favour of Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell had proved on numerous occasions his ability to hit straight from the shoulder. He

came on again, and the captain of the Shell found himself against the ropes, blinking from a smashing blow between the eyes.

"Great, Figg—great!"

The delighted voice of Fatty Wynn rose above the uproar.

Tom Merry pulked himself together, and counter-attacked. Figgins, almost ignoring his defence, continued to hit out vigorously, and there was a good deal of give and take.

On the whole, the first round proved to be a most punishing one.

Even at that early stage of the fight both juniors showed signs of wear and tear when Mr. Railton called "Time."

"Finding the pace a little too hot, Tommy?" murmured Monty Lowther, as he sponged his chum's face.

"I can hold out, if that's what you mean," said Tom Merry.



Tom Merry whipped the ball across, and the swell of St. Jim's, meeting it fairly and squarely with his right foot, drove it into the net with such force that even Fatty Wynn was unable to save. "GOAL!" (See Chapter 4.)

had unlimited pluck, and he never knew when he was beaten.

But George Figgins was far from being a dud, either. He could hold his own in fistic combat with almost any junior in the New House—over Redfern, who was a fine boxer.

Figg was going strong just lately. He had achieved distinction in the opening events, and his tail struck his crew to victory on the river. His New House chums confidently expected him to score yet another triumph.

"Seconds out of the ring!" rapped out Mr. Railton.

Kerr and Monty Lowther sprang clear; and Tom Merry and Figgins, both looking cheerful but determined, advanced into the centre.

"Time!"

On the word, Figgins rushed to the attack. It was easy to see that he had been advised—probably by Kerr—to force the pace at the outset.

Tom Merry warded off several blows, but Figgins was not to be denied. He

"Good! Our friend Figgins's trying to rush matters. Draw him on, and let him tire himself out. Then you sail in and win."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Not quite so simple as it sounds, Monty," he said. "Still, you can rely on your uncle to keep his end up."

Figgins continued his sledge-hammer tactics, and Tom Merry gave him plenty of rope—too much rope, it seemed to the School House supporters, who were beginning to wonder whether, after all, the New House were not their equals in sport.

But Tom Merry, although he did not appear to be going all out, was certainly looking after himself. Figgins got home with several blows, but they were not the sort of blows that mattered. Tom Merry kept his feet and—what was just as important—he kept his head. Many fellows would have been tempted to pay Figgins in his own coin, but Tom Merry

kept himself under restraint. He had a long way to go yet.

In the third round Figgins still assumed the mastery. He seemed to be sure of victory.

The New House fellows judged each other excitedly, and cheered whenever Fygy's gloved fist thudded against his opponent's chest or ribs.

"He's winning," said Fatty Wynn gaily. "Winning all along the line!"

"Don't crow too soon, my cherub," said Rodden quietly. "Fygy's certainly going great guns—but will he last?"

Rodden had good grounds for his fears.

When Figgins came up for the fourth round he looked staid and fagged. He had the look of a man who has been fighting, but the strain had told upon him.

Tom Merry, on the other hand, was comparatively fresh.

"That round was the turn of the tide. It was Tom Merry now who forced the fighting."

He came on again and again, with a fury of purpose there was no mistaking. Twice he drove his man to the ropes, and on each occasion Fygy was hard put to it to extricate himself.

"Slipping!" checked Monty Lowther, whom the round was over. "You've got him now, Tom Merry. Kerr's trying to punch him, and when he does he gets a counter-punch to him, but nothing he's wanting his breath. Fygy's shot his bolt!"

And so it seemed.

In the next round Tom Merry pressed home his advantage, hitting out hard and recklessly, sparing no effort to win.

It was now the turn of the School House supporters to give a demonstration of imp-power.

"Hurava, Mowray, death boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arry. "You've got him tied up in knots, that Jore!"

"Back up, Fygy!" came an anxious cry from Fatty Wynn.

No one could say that Figgins wasn't game. His head was ringing, and the sea of faces in the gym seemed blurred and dizzy; but he kept on. Fygy when Tom Merry's left cuff touched his face against his shoulder and sent him spinning he managed to keep his feet.

But not for long.

Tom Merry sailed in, and his left and right thudded against Fygy's chest. The New House fellow awayed, and as he did so Tom Merry drove in a powerful right-hander.

The blow caught Figgins fairly and squarely between the eyes, and lifted him clear off his feet.

"Hurrah!"

"School House wins!"

"Rats!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Fygy's not played out yet. Look at him!"

Figgins made a desperate effort to rise, and for a moment it looked as if he would succeed.

But that last blow, delivered with Tom Merry's full strength, had proved too much for him.

He sank heavily back again, and Mr. Rodden continued the count.

"Four—five—six—"

"He's not done! I tell you he's not!" came Fatty Wynn's voice, amid the excitement.

"Seven—eight—nine—"

"Oh, my kid!" gasped Fatty. "Fygy, you differ!"

"Fygy! Tom Merry wins!"

"Hurrah!"

The School House had at last come into its own, and their heroes were still in the winner's list of the Gym. Figgins had been beaten in fair fight.

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and the Marathon race alone remained to decide the issue.

Arthur Augustus D'Arry, although not good at cracking jokes, was confident that he would head the field; but his House fellows failed to see eye to eye with him on the matter. Gussy was a good runner, but the New House could produce at least half a dozen men superior to him.

Whether Tom Merry saw Figgins would be in good condition to win the race. The hopes of the School House fellows centred upon Talbot—always a good man in an emergency.

But a victory by Talbot would not in itself be sufficient. It would be necessary for a School House representative to finish second also.

"Once again the School House fellows asked each other the conundrum:

Why had Jack Blake played the fool?"

CHAPTER 10.

Light at Last!

THE Terrible Three were very merry that bright that evening, partly because of Tom Merry's triumph in the ring, and partly because there was no prep.

Prep was always voted a bore and a nuisance, and on this particular evening Mr. Rodden had cancelled it.

"This gives us a chance to get out the good news of the 'Weeky,'" said Tom Merry.

"It do-it does!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm going to devote my Comic Column to a description of Gussy winning the Marathon—and then waking up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, ha, ha!" can be written the editorial," growled Tom Merry. "My right eye has put up the shutters, thanks to Elery!"

"You gave as good as you got," said Manners. "Fygy's nose is somewhere in the vicinity of his left ear. You put back your head, Tom Merry!"

"Never mind prep, get on," said Monty Lowther. "Leave him to finish his injuries in peace."

"We've got to get our rag out!"

"Gussy will get his rag out, son, when he reads my article," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For the next half-hour no sound was heard in Study No. 23 save the industrious scribbling of pens and the laboured grunting of Tom Merry as he pointed at his editorial notes.

At last the students finished his Comic Column, and Manners concluded a laudatory chess problem.

Tom Merry, after a good deal of criticism and the reluctant use of a blue pencil, passed both days for prep.

"That's topping!" said the youthful editor at length. "Gussy's out in a South African war, and Horrie has written a farcical opera or an operatic farce. I forget which he called it. Anyway, it will be a new departure, having music in the 'Weeky.'"

"What about the serial?" asked Manners suddenly.

"I've almost forgotten that!" said Tom Merry. "I asked Blake to write a school serial, and he gave me the first instalment before the sports started. I haven't had time to read it yet."

"Can we publish it under the cica?" asked Rodden, and nearly forgotten that!" said Tom Merry.

"I suppose we'd better," he said. "After all, it was written before we had that rumour with Blake."

"Tom fished the first instalment out of his desk, and read it through.

"First-oh!" said Manners.

"First-oh!" said Tom Merry, with

enthusiasm. "There's hardly a dull line."

"What's it about?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"The school in Surrey, something like St. Jims. Fellow called Jack Graham, of the School House, is the chief character. He's a bit of a scapegrace. He's got a lot of shady pals in the neighbourhood of the school—particularly a fellow named Steve Hackley."

"I suppose he breaks bounds, gambles, and drinks something rather stronger than ginger-pop—what?"

"Not quite," said Tom Merry. "The end of the first instalment describes how this chap Graham gets a letter from Steve."

"What!" shrieked Manners, leaping suddenly to his feet.

"I'm yourself, my dear fellow," said Monty Lowther. "Nothing very dramatic in a chap getting a note from a gal, is there?"

"But Manners seemed to think otherwise. He turned to Tom Merry.

"That's not all," he said critically. "That letter you took from Blake the other day!"

"What on earth—" began Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"Don't you see the connection?" beamed Manners. "Why, that wasn't a letter at all! It was part and parcel of this story!"

"Oh!"

"My sainted nunt!" gasped Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry groped in his pocket for the document which Bunter had found in Blake's desk.

He unfolded it, and the truth dawned upon him like a flash.

That letter was the opening of Jack Blake's second instalment.

For a moment the study seemed to swim round Tom Merry's eyes.

Why had this not occurred to him before?

Why had he been so ready to jump at Jack Blake's throat, as it were, and denounce him as a rotter?

Blake had played a straight game, after all!

He had played poor football, certainly; but something always the cause of that. Anyway, he had not deliberately betrayed the side, as the juniors had imagined.

"We've done it now!" growled Tom Merry. "We've told Blake to his face that he's a rank outsider, and we've cut him out of the sports!"

"I'm glad all the time he was innocent," said Manners, who had a kick at him.

The Terrible Three realized that they had been far too hasty in jumping to conclusions.

"We must go along and apologise to Blake right away," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, but the blundering asses, we fairly take the least!"

The juniors hurried along to Study No. 5.

They found Jack Blake alone, writing industriously.

He looked up in some surprise as the Terrible Three entered. Visitors to Study No. 5 were few and far between these days.

"Blake, old man—" began Tom Merry.

"Blake, old fellow—" said Manners. "Blake, old top—" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Is this a cherub?" asked Jack Blake, in astonishment.

"Ahem! I—"

"We—"

"That is to say—"

"Go ahead!" said Jack Blake cheerfully. "Never mind now!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, desperately, "we've made a mistake!"

## CHAPTER 11.

## To the Victors the Spoils I

**N**O less than twenty runners—ten from each House—lined up for the Marathon Race on the following afternoon.

Twenty good men and true; twenty whose names stood high in the annals of school and sport.

But not twenty would finish!

The course was a severe one, calling for endurance, pluck and iron resolution. The wind shook mightily on a cloudless sky. The weather was like a tonic; and the roads were in excellent trim.

School House and New House competitors—rivals, but staunch chums, too—stood intermingled at the starting-point.

Figgins, despite a slightly damaged ankle, looked remarkably fit; and Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, the standard-bearers, all looked as if they would have to stay in the final verdict.

Jack Blake, the dark cloud lifted, stood chatting merrily with Talbot and Clive; whilst Monty Lowther improved the tempo by a couple of detailed criticisms of Gussy's running attire.

Mr. Ralston came to the fore.

"You are all familiar with the route to be taken," he said, "but I will repeat it now, in order that there shall be no mistake."

Mr. Ralston did so; and whilst he was speaking Blake and Duffell and Redden of the Sixth pushed their bicycles through the school gateway. They were to accompany the runners.

"Are you ready?" said the Housemaster at length.

"Ready, ay, ready!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The pistol went off, and likewise the runners.

There was no straining at the outset. The runners were too wise in their old age, as Lowther expressed it, to puff themselves out at the start.

A couple of miles had been covered before the competitors sorted themselves out, as it were. Their Figgins went ahead, in company with Kerr; and not far behind came the Terrible Three. Behind them, in turn, Jack Blake and Talbot swung along side by side.

Pedestrians paused to stare in surprise—not unmixed with admiration—at the white clad figure as they sped past.

On and on they went, each fellow determined to do his utmost for the honour of his House.

Gradually, however, the distance began to tell. It told upon fellows who, at the start, had entertained no doubts as to their ability to complete the course. It told upon George Alfred Grundy of the Sixth, who on one memorable occasion had actually finished first in a race of this description.

It told, also, upon Grundy's two study-mates, Wilkins and Gunn.

These three plodded on gamely for another mile or so, and then dropped out of the running.

They were not the only failures. Several of the New House runners began to show signs of distress. It went against the grain for them to have to throw up the sponge; but sheer physical exhaustion left them no alternative.

Midway through the course, Figgins still led, but Kerr had fallen hopelessly behind.

Next to Figgins came Tom Merry, still going strong; but Manners and Lowther had dropped back with Kerr.

Within a stone's throw of Tom Merry were Talbot and Jack Blake, running as well as ever; and behind these two came Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, level with Redfern, who was yielding ground a little.

The race was grueling enough in all conscience; but the worst stage yet remained to be contested. Hills had to be surmounted—net tiny crests, but imposing summits, consuming the energies of the strongest.

A mile or so from the finish Figgins broke down.

With magnificent fortitude, and despite bodily aches and pains as a result of his recent encounter with Tom Merry, he had kept going. But he seemed beaten now.

Yet Figgins did not retire from the race. He meant to cover that remaining mile somehow, even if he did it on his hands and knees.

His shouler, reaching the brow of a stiff hill, and he looked back over his shoulder, taking stock of the runners as they came wearily up the steep slope.

The School House fellows were easily in the majority.

Tom Merry had a slight advantage, and Talbot, Jack Blake, and Gussy led on.

The only other New House fellow in the running was Redfern, who had re-mastered his failing energies, and was climbing the hill with dogged determination.

"Looks black for us!" murmured Figgins.

He tried to pull himself together—tried to summon his former speed—but it was useless. He had run himself practically to a standstill.

The School House had only one fellow to fear now. That was Redfern.

If Reddy finished either first or second the Head's Cup would go to the New House. And Reddy was running so well that he would take some beating.

That last mile was a nightmare.

The runners were stale and spent. Even Redfern, who seemed to be in better trim than the others, had become to spend, and was wondering if the old school wall of St. Jim's would ever come in sight.

Tom Merry held on gamely—the leader by a dozen yards. The others were in a cluster. Their legs were like leaden weights, and they felt an overwhelming desire to throw themselves down on the grassy bank and rest.

Figgins was hopelessly left now.

He still made progress, but it was the progress of the tortoise.

He knew now that was for Redfern to make or mar the issue.

At last, after what seemed an age, the school wall, clustered with spectators, came into view.

Tom Merry glumped it first.

The sight might have been expected to put fresh heart into the captain of the Sixth; but it didn't. For Tom Merry was about to crack up in the same way as Figgins. Those punishing rounds in the ring on the previous day had their effect.

Tom was beaten in everything but spirit.

He still thought he would be able to struggle on to the end.

Although his strength was failing fast, he would get the consolation.

There was a patting of feet behind him, and a voice—the familiar voice of Reginald Talbot—jerked out:

"You're done, old man! It's no use overstraining! Leave it to me!"

Glancing back over his shoulder, Tom Merry saw Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were still well in the running. He stumbled to the bank, and rolled over in a semi-conscious heap.

Talbot went ahead. How the School House supporters on the wall cheered when they saw him coming!

The fellow was made of iron. He must

"A beastly idiotic, unpardonable mistake!" said Manners.

"And was I want you to dribble me round the study in turn?" said Monty Lowther. Jack Blake flushed. He guessed what was coming.

"So you've found out at last," he said, "that my name isn't Knox, or Racker, or Mellish—or Blake?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"We were prize idiots, all of us," he said. "We ought to have known better. I discovered the real facts of the case just now, on looking through the first instalment of your serial. Why didn't you strike me earlier, when we taxed you with treachery?"

"Thought I'd leave you to seem to your sexes," said Blake.

There was a long pause.

"I suppose," said Tom Merry miserably, "you can never forgive us for this?"

"Rate!"

Blake was smiling now.

"Put it there!" he said. "You were a silly set of chumps, but I suppose you could hardly help thinking as you did."

Tom Merry took Blake's extended hand and gripped it warmly.

"You're a brash, Blake!" he said.

"A gutted, eighteen-carat brash!" retorted Monty Lowther. "Not many fellows would have overlooked this."

"No jolly fear!" said Manners. "But—but why did you put up such a patried game the other day, Blake?"

"I was feeling greeny. I didn't say anything at the time, because I thought it might put you fellows off your game. But I'm as fit as a fiddle now."

"Fit for the Marathon Race to-morrow?" exclaimed Tom Merry eagerly.

"Faster!"

The Terrible Three almost begged themselves with joy.

Their chances of winning the Cup, at one time very remote, were revived considerably now.

With Jack Blake taking part in the Marathon there was no reason why the School House shouldn't secure the honours.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I feel positively young again! I've forgotten my goat, and all the other inconveniences of a ripe old age!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study door opened at that moment, and D'Arcy and Herries and Digby came in, fresh from a sprint in the quad.

They gazed in wonder at the radiant faces of the Terrible Three.

"What does all this extraordinary movement mean?" inquired Arthur Augustus. "We could hear you fellows whimper down the passage!"

Tom Merry described the events of the evening.

"So you see," he concluded, "we were right off the wicket in accusing Blake of letting the School House down."

"He's given us a free pardon, but I still think we ought to be kicked!" said Monty Lowther.

"And he's running in the Marathon to-morrow!" said Manners joyously.

"But Jove! Blake, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus, in great distress, "I feel as usual, but I don't think you should receive a good many visitors that evening. He seemed them, one and all, that he bore no malice; and when the School House fellows at length retired to their dormitories, they sneered with their high hopes of success on the morrow."

have been tempted many times to give up; yet he had forced heart and nerve and sinew to reach the goal first.

And it looked as if he would succeed, for the other fellows were bogging their way painfully along that last stretch of road.

"Back up, Talbot!" came the cry.

"Only a few more yards!"

"Stick it out, old fellow!"

Talbot never wavered.

With a clear lead, he won a well-judged race in splendid style.

Cheer upon cheer rang out from the fellows on the school wall.

The two Houses were level now in the matter of points, and the final issue lay in the hands of Jack Blake and Gussy, of the School House, and Redfern of the New House.

Those three came on wearily.

All of them were in difficulties. Blake was limping, and his eyes were aching and bloodshot.

Redfern was in little better case. His dark hair was awry and dank with perspiration, and his lips were twitching.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in even a worse plight than the other two.

None too sturdily built, and less famous in the athletic world than Blake and Talbot, Gussy had yet managed to be in at the death.

He could scarcely drag one leg after the other. He was sobbing for breath. His running-togs, neat and immaculate when he had started out, were rumpled and soot-stained. But his pluck was inexhaustible.

And now the cheering was hushed, and a strange silence fell upon the onlookers as they watched the dying efforts of that trio.

"Who would reach the tape first?"

Jack Blake seemed to have a trifle more in him than the others. He gained a yard or a couple of yards. But Redfern and D'Arcy were up with him again the next moment.

The suspense was almost intolerable.

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Even Mr. Railton, who held the out-stretched tape, was watching the three runners with something like fascination.

Redfern, when but a few yards from the goal, gathered up all his energy, and fairly threw himself at the tape.

But D'Arcy and Blake did the same. They reached it a fraction of a second earlier than the New House fellow, and made a dead-heat for second place.

Then was the silence broken! Then did the onlookers—fellows of all forms and of all ages—send up a tremendous cheer which proclaimed to those runners who were coming along behind that the race was over.

In spite of early failures and bitter disappointments, the School House had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, and won the Head's Cup by one point.

Talbot and Blake and D'Arcy! Those names would ever be associated with the sporting record of the School House.

Where others had failed those three had plodded on, forging the way to victory.

But the New House had put up a great fight. Redfern had battled gamely to the end. He had borne, with Spartan courage, the heat and burden of the day, and it was not his fault that victory had been wrested from him at the last moment.

The next man to finish was Figgins. He came stumbling past a forlorn and drooping figure. But Figgie had made up his mind to finish the course, and finish it he did, amid a storm of cheering from the partisans of both Houses.

Harry Noble came in next, followed at varying intervals by Kerr and Lawrence of the New House, and Mannus and Lowther of the School House.

Tom Merry turned up in due course, on the step of Kildare's bike.

He had heard the burst of cheering which heralded the finish; but not until he reached the gates did he know how it had gone. And then he seized the respective hands of Talbot, Blake, and Gussy, and shook them as if they were pump-handles.

"Jolly well run," he said. "You didn't finish first, Gussy, old man, but you did the next best thing. I can't think how you managed to stick it out—"

"Well, you see," explained Arthur Augustus, "I couldn't verry well leave it to Blake. He might have bungled, an' then Redfern would have wumped home second."

"Why, you dummy!" began Blake, laughing.

"I realised that a flash of tact an' judgment was required, so I went all out. Fortunately, Jackie went all out as well. So we made assurance doubly sure, dear boys."

"Well, you deserve well of your country, anyway," said Tom Merry. "Hallo! Here come the halt, maimed, and blind!"

A taxi rolled up at the gates. It had been chartered from Wayland, to pick up those who had fallen by the wayside.

Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn, Owen and Thompson and French, and one or two others, tumbled out of the taxi. They listened breathlessly to the exciting details of the finish as supplied by eyewitnesses.

"Hi hat!" exclaimed George Alfred Grundy. "I failed to finish, and yet—"

"The School House won!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "What fathead said the age of miracles was past!"  
"But Jerry's dear boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My wintin's clubb is hopelessly wintin, an' I feel a positive w'eck! Who says a bath!"

"A bath!" echoed a dozen voices. And as the runners crossed the quadrangle, a weary but valiant procession, cheer upon cheer rang out from two hundred coats on behalf of victors and vanquished.

#### CHAPTER 12.

Well Played, Everybody!

"GENTLEMEN—" began Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"On the ball!"

"We are met together on this—"

"Suspicious occasion," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't interrupt, Monty!" said Tom Merry, sternly. "We are met together to celebrate, in the usual manner, the triumph of the School House."

"Hurrah!"

"Remembered at the outset by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune—"

"Good old Shakespeare!"

"Buffeted by the stormy winds of Fate—"

"You ribbed that from the paper!" said Manner warmly. "Some chin-wag in Parliament said it—"

"Silence! Buffeted, I repeat, by the—"

"Study cushions!" grinned Lowther, hurling one at his leader.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A volley of cushions sailed in upon the orator, and Tom Merry sat down with a bump.

"Yooooop! You silly asses—"

"No speeches allowed!" said Jack Blake. "We're not here to jaw, but to get things done."

"Exactly," said Horries, turning a sly glance from the fire-grate. "These so-called are done to a turn. File in, everybody!"

Tom Merry granted, and squeezed into his place of honour, at the head of the table.

"Study No. 10 was packed. Within its narrow confines the whole of the School House seemed to have assembled."

Jack Blake & Co. were present, of course, likewise Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn and Talbot and Lewison, Cardew and Olive, Julian, and Lumbey-Lumbey had come along to join in the festivities.

There were not enough chairs to go round, but there were ample supplies of tuck; and that, after all, was the main thing.

It was an animated scene, and the faces of the feasters glowed in the ruddy light.

In the centre of the mantelpiece, dominating everything else, stood the Head's Cup. In a few well-chosen words the kindly old Head had presented it to Tom Merry at the conclusion of the sports.

That Cup meant much to the School House.

It was their property for a year—the symbol of a great triumph over their rivals of the New House.

It had not been won without a close and exciting struggle; but that only served to enhance its value.

"The School House backed up wonderfully at the finish!" said Manners.

"After we lost the footer match and the boozage, I thought it was all up."

"Same 'ere," said Monty Lowther.

"I was just thinking of buying some black-edged notepaper—"

"Wot!" said Arthur Augustus. "I know from the beginning that we should win. Twus, I made a slight slip in the Matthew on my comin' in second last year."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Talbot very kindly stepped into the breach."

"Hear, hear!"  
 "I say, you fellows—"  
 The words came out of Bunter's mouth as he stepped into the doorway.  
 "Stay on, ah! hear!" drawled Carew.  
 "But kindly finish your observations in the passage!"  
 "Look here," said Bunter, blinking at the array of good things on this table, "I'm going—"  
 "Good!" said Monty Lowther.  
 "I'm going to lend you fellows a hand."  
 "In that case we'll lend you a boot!" growled Manners. "Travel!"  
 Bunter travelled—but not in the direction Manners intended. Instead, he insinuated his fat form into the study.  
 "Do you admire unselfish fellows, Tom Merry?" he asked.  
 "Yes. That's why I don't admire you!" said the captain of the Shell.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "What are you driving at, porpoise?" said Jack Blinks. "Are you trying to suggest that you are unselfish?"  
 "Certainly!"  
 "My hat!"  
 "I've been a real brick to you fellows!" said Bunter modestly. "I let you go ahead with the sports without any interference from me. Although I'm a brilliant footballer, a first-rate oarsman, a stylish boxer, a magnificent runner—"  
 "Oh, my aunt! Anguish! cheer!" gasped Carew.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Although I'm a wonderful all-round sportsman, I stood aside. If that isn't being unselfish, I should like to know what is! And the less you can do for

me, in return, is to let me have a share of the feed!"  
 "Oh, certainly!" said Monty Lowther, with a wink at his comrades. "Anything to oblige. Shall we say jam-puffs for a start, eh?"  
 "Well, I don't mind!" said the fat junior, calmly seating himself in the chair which Herries had temporarily vacated. "I really wanted some of those scones, you know, but I'll polish those off afterwards. Shy over the jam-puffs!"  
 Monty Lowther obeyed.  
 He selected a jam-puff from the dish and shied it with unerring aim at Bunter.  
 "Yaroooooh!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 The jam-puff caught Bunter full in the face, and he yelled and spluttered.  
 "Monty knew where that came from!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Try another!"  
 A second missile squelched upon Bunter's face. He sprang to his feet with a wild yell and backed away.  
 "Lowther, you beast—"  
 "Try some of these chocolate macaroons!" urged Monty Lowther. "I believe in plenty of variety, you know!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Bunter did not remain to sample the chocolate macaroons. He bolted from the study, and streaked away down the passage. Bunter's unselfish mood had been completely misunderstood in Study No. 13.  
 The fencers went merrily ahead with their celebration without further interruption from Bunter.  
 Happiness and high good humour prevailed on every side, and toasts were

proposed, in tea and in foaming ginger-pop, on behalf of those who had been mainly responsible for the presence of the Head's Cup on the study mantelpiece.  
 Kildare of the Sixth looked in a little later.  
 "Bad-time, you kids!" he said. "Congratulations on winning the Cup, Merry. It was a great performance!"  
 "Thanks, Kildare!"  
 "I hope the School House will always remain at the top of the tree," said the captain of St. Jim's.  
 "Hear hear!"

It was a very merry procession of juniors that trooped up to bed shortly afterwards.  
 The Head's Cup had been fought for and won, and the School House fellows intended to take for their motto: "What we have we'll hold!"  
 Over in the New House things were not quite so joyous. But Figgins & Co. retired to their dormitory happy in the knowledge that they had fought a good fight, and hoping that they would one day succeed in turning the tables.  
 Defeated though they were, they had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that they had stood together shoulder to shoulder in a good cause, and had played the game throughout, courting triumph and disaster like true Heroes of Sport!

THE END.

Next Wednesday's Grand Easter Number of THE GEM LIBRARY will contain a magnificent, large, Complete Story of ST. JIM'S, entitled "BUNTER AND BUNTER!"—by Martin Clifford. Order Now.



## PETER TODD—REBEL - - By H. Vernon-Smith.

"Now, who will stand at my right hand, and lick the Fourth with me?"  
 It was Peter Todd of the Rammer who paraded the immortal words of Hercules.  
 Peter stood upon his bed in his pyjamas, after lights out, and addressed the Remore in general.  
 "Him whom?" asked Harry Wharton, "have you been sniggering at the Remore, Todd?"  
 Peter Todd clinched.  
 "I don't see why I shouldn't set the ball rolling for once, he said.  
 "But I do! One skipper is quite enough for a Fossa. When I'm top up with my job I'll bear you in mind, but until then you've got to understand that I'm the lawful leader of the Rammer."  
 "Hear, hear!" exclaimed the other members of the Fossans Biv Jollys.  
 "Ah, the same," said Peter Todd, "Temple & Co. have got to be squashed. They've been walking about lately with their noses in the air, and sneering at me. They look upon us with derision—oh! I mean—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Array," said Todd, "I'm resolved to put an end to the Fossas. A pillow fight's just the thing. I'll teach 'em that they've

not cocked the walk by any means. Now, who'll volunteer to come with me?"  
 "Could me, har?" said Skinner, who was always big against Harry Wharton's activities.  
 "Likewise me!" said Stact and Bobover major together.  
 "Is that all?" asked Peter Todd, somewhat. "Have I got to supervise a miserable party of three? For shame! Rally round, the Remore!"  
 "Oh, I'll come along!" said Dick Rake good-humouredly.  
 "Well, I be not any one, my dear Peter!" faltered Skasso.  
 "No. He does, there's a good fellow! I'll let you know when I want a regular comedian. Come!"  
 "Is there no one else?"  
 "Well, begad," jawped Lamb Mulveyer, "I wouldn't mind turning out, only—"  
 "Only what?"  
 "Well, me, meek!" sighed Mealy. "I believe in the Remore, but I'm sure. It's nice to get up in the morning, but not to get up in the night!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "So I've got to field an army of four—what?" said Peter Todd. "Bless our little party here when he likes, and Skasso's a little bit of a sort, when he has one of his fighting excursions, but what are we excited

so many? Aren't you going to lend a hand, Wharton?"  
 "Only on condition that I take the lead," said Wharton.  
 "Then I'm afraid there's nothing doing! What about you, Nugent?"  
 "I'm standing by Wharton," said Nugent.  
 "And Cherry and Bell?"  
 "We're doing ditto," said Bob Cherry. "You're going the right way to be scalped, Todd!"  
 "Come along, Inky!" said Peter. "Show your fighting spirit!"  
 "I am standing in supportfully with my enclosed shawl," said Inky, lazily.  
 "Oh, all serene!" said Peter Todd, in tones of resignation. "We'll do our best without you. We shall be outnumbered, of course, but we'll go under fighting."  
 At these spirited words two more fellows leapt out of bed and joined the little party. They were Kassel and Pelly.  
 "Good!" said Peter Todd, in satisfaction.  
 "Get your pillows, my merry men, and follow me!"  
 "Look here, Todd," said Harry Wharton. "I don't want to preerb, but if you try to tackle the Fossas with a handful like that you'll get it in the neck!"  
 "Rats!"

Ignoring Wharton's well-meant warning, Peter Todd left the dormitory at the head of his little band.

Toddy had any amount of pick. He would have tackled the Fourth single-handed if he had no one to back him up.

Fortunately the dorms were small, the invading party had the advantage of being able to take their foe by surprise.

They stole cautiously into the Fourth Form dormitory, where Cecil Reginald Temple and his companions were sleeping soundly.

"When I give the order," muttered Toddy, "smite the boudoirs big and thigh!"

For a moment there was no sound save for the restless movements of the sleepers.

Then Toddy gave the word of command, and instantly all was confusion.

The Fourth-Formers rubbed their eyes and sat up, only to fall back again as heavy blows were rained upon them by the attacking party.

Mr. Capper and Dabney and Fry managed to struggle out of bed, only to find themselves in the centre of a fierce melee on the floor.

"Keep 'em on the move!" sang out Peter Todd. "Don't give 'em a chance to master their forces, or it will be all up with us!"

"Back up, Fourth!" shouted Temple.

And then a stinging blow from Rake's pillow stifled him into silence.

Fast and furious raged the fight, and so far it was all in favour of the Remover.

But the one-sidedness could not go on indefinitely.

After a time Fourth-Formers sprang out of the darkness on all sides, and Peter Todd and his little band were hard pressed.

"I will give you the victor's oar," said Dick Rake. "Don't wait till they overwhelm us."

It was sound doctrine, and Peter Todd prepared to act upon it.

But when the Remover's fellows reached the door they found their exit barred by a group of attacking Fourth-Formers, who stood there with upraised pillows to prevent any escape.

"We must light our way through, that's all!" panted Toddy. "Back up!"

A fierce affray followed.

Friend and foe became mixed up in a wild and whirling scrap on the threshold of the dormitory.

Nor did they desist when Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, appeared on the scene—for the simple reason that they didn't know Mr. Capper was there.

"Steal my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Capper. "Get back to bed, all of you, or—"

He got no further.

A pillow sailed through the air at great speed, caught the Form-master in the chest, and bowled him over on his back.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Peter Todd.

There was considerable confusion and dismay written on every face now.

Fierce fighting in detail was being done, but to knock a master down in the process was beyond a joke.

Not only that, but whoever threw that pillow had done so with malice aforethought. It was by design, not by accident.

With exclaiming hearts the members of the rival Forms waited for Mr. Capper to rise.

But he did not rise. His wealth was equal to the wrath of Jove of old.

"Who threw that pillow?" he thundered. "Was it you, Todd?"

"Was it certainly not you?"

Mr. Capper advanced sternly into the dormitory.

"I demand the name of the boy who played such a foolish trick!" he exclaimed.

But no one spoke.

Fellows peered at each other through the gloom, and there was a good deal of nudging and muttering; but the perpetrator of the outrage remained silent.

Mr. Capper turned to Peter Todd. Not often had anyone seen the master of the Upper Fourth so ratty as he was now.

"I am convinced it was you, Todd!" he said grimly.

Peter Todd became hotly indignant.

"I told you I wasn't the culprit, sir!" he said. "You've no reason to doubt my word! I've never yet been found out in a lie!"

"Good old George Washington!" chuckled Skinner.

But Dick Rake allowed the cad of the Remover with his boot.

"You will come to my study in the morning, Todd!" said Mr. Capper. "I will endeavour to make you understand that such jokes are not to be tolerated!"

And Mr. Capper, having delivered himself thus, rustled out of the dormitory and was swallowed up in the darkness.

II.

WHEN the ringing rang out next morning all eyes were turned upon Peter Todd.

"You're in for a warm time, Todd, old son!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Go on!"

"Fancy flooring old Capper like that!" said Niggen.

"I didn't floor him, father! It wasn't I who threw the pillow."

"But Capper said it was—"

"Capper was mistaken. How could he tell who bowled him over when it was dark at the time? I think it's a beastly unfair of Capper to fasten the blame on to me, and to doubt my word into the bargain."

"You'll get a fearful licking when you go along to Capper's study," said Johnny Bull comradely.

"Oh, no, I shan't!"

"Why not?"

"Because," said Peter Todd, with slow

deliberation. "I don't intend to go along to Capper's study at all."

"We started at the speaker in amazement.

"Oh, come off it, Toddy!" said Wharton. "You don't mean to say you're going to defy Capper?"

Toddy's jaw wobbled shudderingly.

"I'm not budging from this dormitory until Capper chooses to believe my word!" he said.

"In other words," said Fry, "you're going to hold a giddy barring-out on a small scale!"

"Exactly! And I'm relying on the fellows who took part in the pillow fight last night to back me up."

"I'm game!" said Dick Rake.

"Name here!" said Russell and Ogilvy together.

After some hesitation Skinner and Stott and Solovser major agreed to stand in with Toddy, too.

It was a serious breach of discipline, but there would be safety in numbers.

The rest of us washed and dressed as usual, and went down into the spring sunbath.

In a few moments the fellows were left in sole occupation of the dormitory.

"The first item on the programme," said Peter Todd, "is to lay in plenty of provisions."

We may be here a jolly long time. You and I, Rake, will go and talk snugly to the cook, and see what she can let us have in the way of tack. Meanwhile, the rest of you will stay here and refuse to budge for anything."

"All agreed," said Russell. "Eh, on us!"

After a short interval Toddy and Rake returned in the dormitory armed with plenty of provisions.

There were four loaves, a couple of pigs, and some butter and milk and coffee, to say nothing of a large kettle.

"This will keep us going for some time, I guess," said Toddy. "And now let's do the water-jugs, get a good fire going, and then barricade the door."

Many hands made light work. In a short space of time the preparations for the barring-out were complete.

The fellows piled beds as usual, various articles of furniture against the door, and they had barely completed their task when a loud knocking sounded with-

"Open this door, you young rascals!"

"My hat!" muttered the little group. "That's old 'Wingate'!"

"And he seems to be rather rilly!" chuckled Cherry.

The captain of Geographers wrenched violently at the door-handle, but finding that his efforts met with no response, he grew extremely angry.

"What's the little game you kids! Why aren't you at breakfast?"

Peter Todd thrust his way forward, and his eyes were direct and fearless.

"Capper's his, does he?"

"Capper's objection!" he exclaimed. "He's going to punish me for something I never did."

"Wingate, and we're holding this barring-out as a protest!"

"Silly young and! How long do you suppose you will be able to keep up this foolishness?"

"Until Capper chooses to accept my word," answered Toddy.

"But don't you realize what you're letting yourselves in for? If this barring-out does the ears of the Head you'll be flogged—perhaps flogged! Can't you see the other side of it?"

"We're not giving in," Wingate said. "We're not giving in," Wingate said. Toddy reactively.

TUBBY & LANKY, THE TERRIBLE TWINS.



Drawn by JACK BLAKE.

"Very well! If you won't yield to persuasion we shall have to try force. I shall at once inform Mr. Quelch of this impertinence!"

And Wingle of the Sixth, "having failed to bring the rebels to reason, went along to the Remove-master's study.

"Things are warming up," said Skinner underly.

"Good!" said Toddy. "Let 'em all come! The Head himself won't make us case in! And now for some breaker!"

The juniors were hungry, and they did fall justly to the meal.

Peter Todd and Dick Rake treated the rebellion seriously; Rowell and Ogilvy regarded it as the joke of the term; and Skinner and Stott—who were, at best, not very reliable fellows—were already beginning to waver.

When breakfast was over there was a further burst of knocking on the door of the dormitory, and the angry voice of Mr. Quelch exclaimed:

"Todd, cease this absurd behaviour at once!"

Toddy rejoined calmly but severely:

"We don't mean to be disrespectful, sir,—we do, but I refuse to be punished for an offence I didn't commit! If any Mr. Capper will take my word we'll check this game at once and come down to lessons!"

"It is not my business," said Todd!

Mr. Quelch. "You have only yourself to blame if you are expelled from Greyfriars!"

Mr. Quelch wasted no more words, with the result that presently the door opened to commence morning lessons. He was determined that the action of a few fellows should make no difference to the usual routine.

He was to be glad Skinner turned rather a scared face to Peter Todd.

"The Head's going to be dragged into it," he said. "I don't like the sound of that! It'll cost a terrible lotting for all of us."

"Are you beginning to show the white feather already?" asked Toddy scornfully.

"Not exactly! But you know what the Head is when he gets on the war-path. He'll come down on us like a thousand of bricks!"

"Yes, rather," said Stott and Rowell.

"Look here!" said Todd. "Let us stand together in this. We shall come a cropper. We don't want any weak-kneed wavers. Either you're for us or against us, and the more you're for us, the better you've got the chance!"

But Skinner and Stott and Rowell stood fast. They didn't fancy going down to face the wrath of a Quack like Todd.

The little Garrison was left in peace until midday, when Dick Rake suddenly spotted a ladder being hoisted from the Close.

"What's that?" he asked.

"They're going to try to make us surrender!"

Instantly the juniors clambered up to the various window-sills.

They were now looking, the school porter, together with Loder and Carno of the Sixth.

The porter was already in the act of mounting the ladder.

"Keep down, Gooey!" shouted Peter Todd.

"If you come another step we shall open fire with our revolvers!"

Going hesitated for a moment, and then came on.

Immediately the rebels opened fire.

A lot of lead was sent down upon Gooey, and he promptly slid down the ladder.

Peep—small and hard and round—had peered his face and person, and he had no time to continue gazing under such heavy fire.

"Go along man!" growled Loder impudently. "You'll let the young bronzards see all the tricks you're up to!"

"Go along yourself!" grunted Gooey, exposing his smarting face. "I've 'ad enough of you!"

"Up you go, Carno!" said Loder.

"No jolly fool! Why don't you go? You're the senior prefect!"

And while the two seniors stood and wrangled the rebels opened fire once more, and Loder and Carno fled from that deadly rain of peas.

For did either of these ventures to climb the ladder knowing the reception they would meet if they did.

Toddy turned back into the dormitory. He was a smiling and smiling.

"I guess they'll never get us down with force!" he said. "We'll take it in turns keeping watch at the window, for an hour at a time. Who's the first?"

"I will!" said Ogilvy.

"All serene!"

Ogilvy had been at his post barely half an hour when he was alarmed.

"Here comes the Head!" he exclaimed.

# The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Powers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOY'S FRIEND. THE GEM. THE PERRY POPULAR. CHUCKLES. Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

## GRAND ESTER HOLIDAY NUMBER NEXT WEEK!

Next Wednesday's issue of the Gem Library has been specially prepared for the happy festival of Easter—the first peace-time Easter—and I have felt no slow retarding in my endeavour to provide the finest holiday fare for my chums. The grand long complete school story of St. Jim's will be entitled

### "BUNTER—AND BUNTER!"

—By Martin Clifford.

In this story the change of identity between the two Bunters comes to a startling climax. Circumstances which render it imperative for Billy Bunter to shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet with all speed; and the crafty and cunning manner in which he contrives to make his exit from the school is described with a touch of humour which is irresistible, and which has seldom been surpassed even by Martin Clifford.

This story marks the finish of the "Bunter" series, so that every Gemite should make himself or herself acquainted with the parts played at the conclusion of this amusing comedy by

### "BUNTER—AND BUNTER!"

## MANCHESTER AND THE MUD-BLINGERS!

From the many hundreds of messages recently to hand, backing up the letter from a Manchester girl reader who deprecated the grumbling and "mud-blinging," I am reproducing the following:

"Dear Editor,—I wish to take the liberty of thanking 'A Loyal Girl Reader' for voicing the thoughts of all Manchester."

—C. BASKET.

Another Manchester correspondent writes in the same strain:

"Dear Editor,—As a Manchester reader, I should like to say how very much I agree with the letter from 'A Loyal Girl Reader' of Manchester, published in this week's Gem. It is on the spot, forcible, and gives the facts, which are really highly amusing and interesting; and I am sure great praise is due to Mr. Clifford for his extremely good work."

"The readers—or idiots who call themselves readers—who persist in grumbling at tales like we have had lately are not worth wasting time and paper upon. True they say the world like to be within hitting distance of a few of them. And I, too, would like to be there to do my bit towards knocking some sense into the heads."

"All friends of mine who are readers speak very highly of the Gem and its companion papers—the Gem in particular.

"I wish to say to you, I close, that I am a boy reader, and have read the Gem for well over four years now, and I shall always be ready to back it up."

"Wishes you and your papers every success.—Yours very sincerely, Mac."

## "DIGNITY AND IMPUNITY" FROM BOURNEMOUTH!

Just I should be accused of giving publicity to the letters of approval, and ignoring the letters expressing disapproval, I am publishing opposite to some Bourne-mouth reader, which runs thus:

"Bournemouth.

"To the Editor of the Gem.  
"I wish to thank 'A Loyal Girl Reader's' letter in this week's Gem has some queer expressions in it for a dignified British girl. It has a very good sense of humour in all, she would not be dignified in a dreadful expression as 'mud-blinging.' I regard this as exceptionally rude and vulgar.

"As for her expressed desire to get within hitting distance of the grumblers, it is altogether better beyond me that a dignified girl could

wish to chastise or reprimand a grumbler. This would be altogether beneath the dignity of a Bournemouth girl. The bare suggestion is revolting in the extreme. Manchester girls—if your loyal readers apply criticism—must be a very wild and disorderly rabble.—Yours, CATHIE."

I blush for Bournemouth if it harbours many such high-spirited persons like "Cathie." My Manchester girl chum spoke her mind, and her slang—if such it can be called—only served to make her letter more expressive.

Bournemouth is certainly a very charming seaside resort, but if "Cathie" is trying to pretend that its inhabitants are more refined and cultured than the girls and boys of Manchester, I can only request my distinguished correspondent to go and masticate that desirable commodity known to the civilized world as coke—but probably called by a much more genteel name in Bournemouth!

## CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

H. Dawson, 259, Broad Street, Frinton, Manchester-Girl readers everywhere, 15-16.  
E. Johnson, Page's Close, Hinton, Cambs.—with readers anywhere, especially in the Colonies, 16-16.

W. J. Gardner, 28, Kathleen Road, South Yards, Birmingham—with readers anywhere interested in stamp-collecting.

G. Dudley, Port Pirie, South Australia—with readers in England.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR).

## PETER TODD—REBEL!

(Continued from vol. 1.)

"Oh, my hat!"

The next moment the stern voice of Dr. Locke boomed up from below:

"At once! You should have yourself at once! I wish to speak to you!"

Promptly Peter Todd clambered up to the window-sill.

"The next was not disposed to heat about the book.

His next words made even Toddy blush a little.

"Unless this stupid rebellion is ended within the next half-hour," he said, "every boy concerned will be expelled from Greyfriars!"

"That was too much for Skinner.

"He clambered up on to the window-sill beside Toddy, his face very pale.

"It is—It was I who threw the pillow at Mr. Capper," he said.

"Yes, sir," explained the Head.

"Yes, sir, I—I didn't stop to think. I just chucked the pillow, and—"

"Enough," said the Head grimly. "Yes, Skinner, are the cause of all this trouble! You should have confessed to Mr. Capper in the first instance. I can quite understand now why you should have taken this measure. He was being blamed for your own miserable offence! Come to me in my study as soon as this rebellion is over—"

"Very well, in view of the fact that you have been misunderstood, Todd, I shall not punish you so severely as I should otherwise have done. You are concerned in this affair will forfeit a half-holiday and write Ben hundred lines! As for you, Skinner, I shall seriously consider your expulsion from Greyfriars. You are an utterly worthless and unprincipled boy!"

And the Head went back to his study.

The barraging, firing, and the banging, rattle of the barrels, and with the exception of Skinner, came down to the Forecourt.

For the end of the Remove, he went with faltering steps to the Head's study, where, in a few moments, came dire pills of anguish, which showed that the Head had decided not to inflict any further penalty, but to let a Soggy live the case.

And when, some time later, Harold Skinner limped out into the Close, he vowed that never again so long as he lived that procession would be so Mr. Capper as a target for his pillow!

THE END.

# THE CASE OF THE AIRMAN'S MEDAL!

Another Amazing Exploit of Herlock Sholmes. By PETER TODD.

**H**ERLOCK SHOLMES emptied the cocaine-cask at a gulp, and assumed his favourite attitude by dangling his feet over the mantelpiece.

"Life is tame, Jotson!" he observed. "Since the signing of the Armistice I have found the tasks suited to my peculiar powers. I have successfully solved the Mystery of the Stolen Ration-book, and have smoothed out the complicated affairs of Professor Gotschakoff. My room here in Shaker Street are not, unfortunately, rent free. Unless wealthy clients continue to solicit my assistance, I fear Mrs. Spaulson will resort to forcible ejection."

"Hush!" I interrupted. "Someone is coming!"

Herlock Sholmes sprang to his feet.

"If the brokers are here, Jotson," said he, "they shall only enter this room over my dead body!"

Our visitor, however, was nothing more harmful than a young flying officer who, having made a forced landing on the upturned carpet, addressed himself to Sholmes in tones of great agitation.

"You are Mr. Herlock Sholmes?" he cried.

"The same!" said Sholmes. "Pray be seated!"

Our visitor sank limply on to the coal-scuttle. Sholmes, drumming his fingers on the cocaine-cask, eyed him keenly.

"You are Second Lieutenant Flawping, of the Air Force?" he said.

The visitor started.

"Really, Mr. Sholmes! Is it possible that my identity is already an open book to you?"

Sholmes nodded.

"I remember to have seen your photograph in the 'Daily Monocle' at the time of your marriage," he said. "Features like yours are not easily forgotten. In what way can I be of service to you? You may speak quite freely before my friend Dr. Jotson!"

"Mr. Sholmes," said the young officer, "mine is a tragic story. My Distinguished Stunting Medal—which was presented to me at Buckingham Palace for killing two

cows during a forced landing—has disappeared!"

"Ah!"

"Unless it is found, Mr. Sholmes, I am a ruined man! Now that the war is over, I intend to become the pilot of a passenger-airship plying between London and Colney Hatch. If I were my medal, would be passengers would at once realize that they were in safe and experienced hands. If I wear no medal, they will say, 'Ah, he is not a qualified pilot! He will end us crashing to destruction from ten thousand feet!' Such a prospect, Mr. Sholmes, is distracting!"

"Set your mind at rest, my dear fellow!" said Sholmes. "This case presents few difficulties to a master-mind, though it would undoubtedly baffle the obtuse brains of Scotland Yard. What is your address, Mr. Flawping?"

"The Fledglings Club, Piccadilly."

"Very good! Your medal shall be restored to you this evening at seven o'clock!"

"But how on earth—"

Sholmes raised his hand.

"My methods are not to be made the subject of vulgar curiosity!" he said. "I wish you a good morning, Mr. Flawping!"

With that our visitor was ushered out. A subsequent crash from the hall below showed that he had taken the line of least resistance with regard to the stairs.

Accustomed as I was to the marvellous ingenuity of my friend, I must confess that I was surprised at the ease with which he confronted this colossal task. He had promised to bring the Distinguished Stunting Medal back to its owner at a specified hour—and he had not even a clue!

"I know what you are thinking, Jotson!" said Sholmes. "You imagine I have bitten off more than I can conveniently manage. If your faith in my powers is shaken, you had better go and attend to your patients!"

"They are all dead, Sholmes!" I said sadly. "Whilst I have been engaged with your exploits, I fear they have gone untimely to their graves. But that is neither here nor there. I am curious to

see if you will prove successful in the present enterprise."

"In that case, Jotson, you had better be outside the Fledglings Club at seven o'clock precisely!"

And my companion, having assured himself that the landlady was nowhere in sight, slipped out by the back door.

**W**HEN I arrived at the Fledglings Club shortly before seven I found Second Lieutenant Flawping seated without.

"I fear, Dr. Jotson," said he, "that your friend's investigations will, for once, end in smoke!"

"Nonsense!" I retorted. "Your medal will be restored to you at the stipulated time."

"If not," said the distracted airman, "I shall be compelled to suffocate myself in the rear of the car!"

At that instant the neighbouring clocks began to chime seven, and simultaneously came the purr of an automobile.

I turned to my companion with a smile of triumph.

"Sholmes has once more stepped in where Scotland Yard would fear to tread!" I observed. "And he has been, as usual, successful!"

Even as I spoke the great detective alighted from the car. He gripped a hard and heavy piece of metal in his hand.

"His, Mr. Flawping!" said Sholmes, with one of his usual saws. "My guest was not in vain. Here is the medal which you wore under such noble and destructive circumstances!"

"Mr. Sholmes! How can I ever thank you?"

"Don't try, my dear fellow!" said Sholmes, graciously. "Then, turning to me, he muttered: 'I will repay you, Jotson, as soon as I have drawn my commission!'"

Sholmes followed the delighted airman up the steps, and a moment later I distinctly heard the rattle of a shilling postal-order.

"This evening, Jotson," he said, as we drove off to his rooms in Shaker Street, "we shall not only be able to indulge in the unusual luxury of fried fish for supper, but funds will probably run to a strong lemonade in addition."

"Really, Sholmes!" I exclaimed. "I can scarcely contain myself. I am bursting to learn some facts from you."

"You know my methods in these cases, Jotson. From the first I was able to account for the disappearance of the medal. It appears that only yesterday a collector of old iron called at the Fledglings Club."

"Sholmes!"

"The Bunkey who opened the door to him," continued Sholmes, "ransacked all the trunks in quest of old iron. Seeing Mr. Flawping's medal on the mantelpiece he gathored it up with the rest, and handed it to the old-iron merchant."

"The rest was easy, Jotson! I tricked the itinerant vendor of ancient iron to his lair in Peckham. When I explained to him the value of the medal—at the same time covering him with two of my revolvers—he promptly handed it over."

"Marvelous!" I exclaimed.

"Not at all," said Sholmes as we re-entered his room. "To a man of my unlimited deductive powers such work is child's play!"

And he buried his head in the coaling can.

THE END.

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