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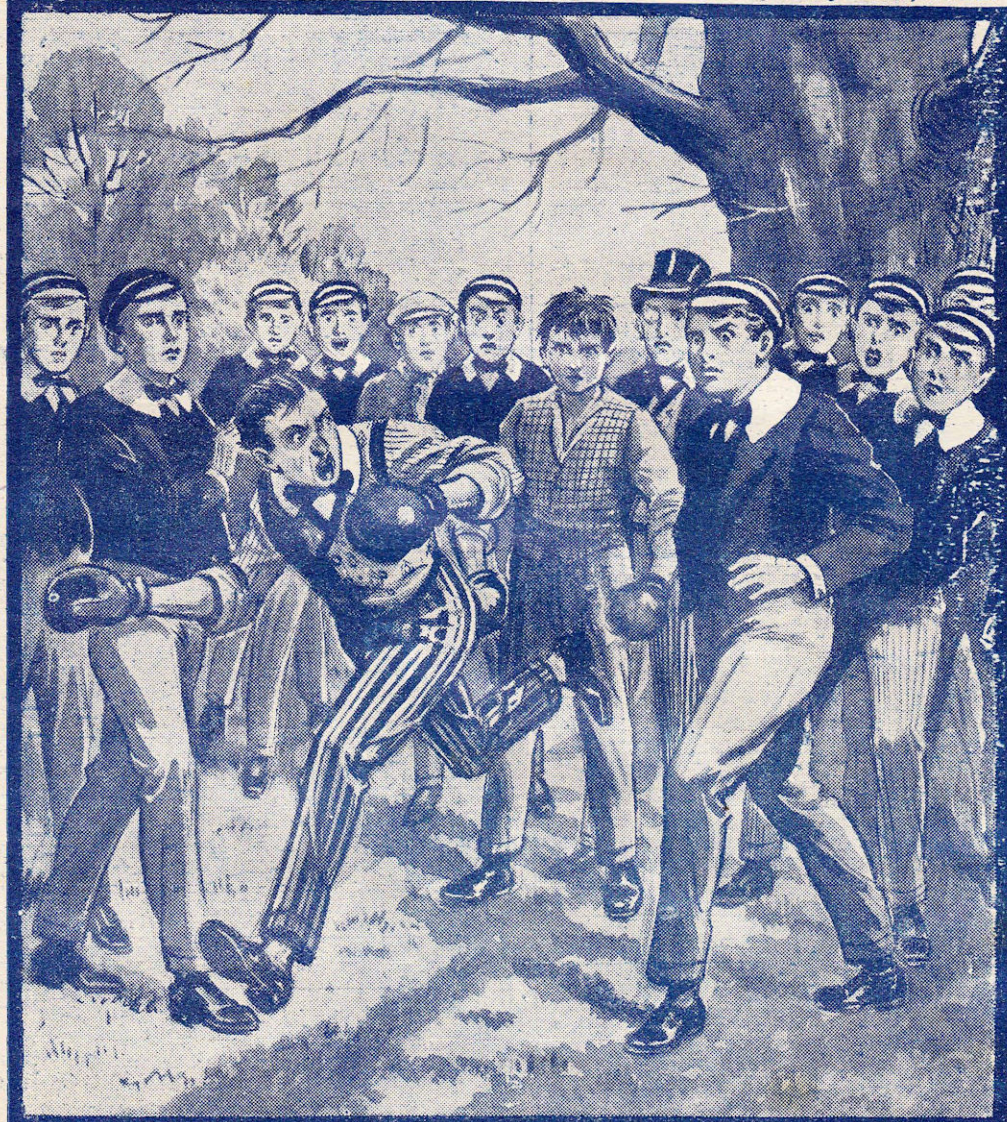
The GEM 1^D₂ LIBRARY

No. 733.
Vol. XXI.

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

February 25th, 1922.



ONE TOO MANY FOR RACKE!

(An Amusing Incident from the Grand Long Complete School Story Inside.)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

Everybody says the "Gem" is getting better and better. I am always hearing of the popularity of the portrait gallery, and I am sure this week's picture of Mr. Martin Clifford will delight you all.

I am not going to say much about future arrangements just now, but the weeks ahead are full of gay surprises for "Gem" readers. The new serial, "The Island of Pleasure," is doing just what I knew it would, winning heaps of popularity.

A chum of mine at Kensal Rise says: "Give us more of the Toff." What do other readers think? Would you like more stories of Talbot?

Naturally the "big men" of the school have to figure most of the time. But Talbot is always cropping up, and showing the sterling stuff of which he is made.

The latest move of the "Popular" is to give away a magnificent series of coloured plates showing the many different types of railway engines. The series started in the "Popular" on February 17th, and I advise you all to see that you get the complete set. You will be sorry if you fail.

I have not as yet said a word about the "Boys' Herald," and the fact is you against me, for if ever there happened to be a paper worthy of praise, it is the

"Boys' Herald." The new detective yarn, which brings in Greyfriars, surpasses anything we have had yet dealing with Ferrers Locke and Drake.

Then "Teddy Heron's School days" is proving a big draw. I am still arranging for Gordon Gay, the Gramarian. This very popular character will be turning up shortly. We have never heard enough of him. He has popped in and out of some of the yarns like a sprightly jack-in-the-box, but this time he will come to stay. Other features in the "Boys' Herald" can hold their own anywhere. You ought to get this week's number and read the particulars about "The Round-Up Club." There are 30,000 free gifts for members. Make up your mind to get one.

YOUR EDITOR.



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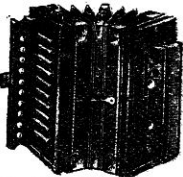
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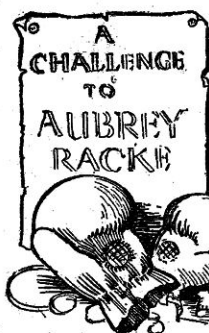
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Taking Down Aubrey Racke

A Grand Long Complete Story of the Boys of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Aubrey Apologises.

AUBREY RACKE sniffed. Racke of the Shell was coming out of the school gates when he sighted Tom Merry and Grimes by the roadside.

Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe, was standing beside his bike, which was well loaded with goods that Grimes had to deliver. Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, stood with his hands in the pockets of his overcoat, chatting with Grimes.

There they stood, by the roadside, in full view of anybody coming out of St. Jim's, chatting in the most amicable manner. Hence the scornful sniff from Aubrey Racke.

Racke's contemptuous sniff was audible. It was meant to be audible. It was intended to convey Aubrey's lofty contempt for grocer boys in general, and Grimes in particular; likewise his scorn for a Shell fellow of St. Jim's who saw nothing infra dig, in chatting with grocer boys on the public highway.

Tom Merry glanced round at him. Grimes reddened; but he affected not to see or hear Racke.

Racke did not quite like the look on Tom Merry's handsome face at that moment, and he would have walked on. But the captain of the Shell stepped in his way.

"Hold on a minute, Racke!" he said quietly. Racke held on. He had no choice about that, with the sturdy figure of Tom Merry barring the way.

"Well," he snapped, "what do you want?"

"Have you a cold?" asked Tom.

Aubrey Racke stared.

"A cold? No!"

"What were you sniffing about, then?"

"I suppose I can sniff if I like!" remarked Racke.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That's where you make a mistake; you can't," he said.

"There is a time for all things; for sniffing the same as for everything else."

"Let me pass, you silly fool!"

"Not just yet. I want to know what you were sniffing about," said Tom Merry placidly. "I think I shall have to pull your nose, Racke!"

Grimes grinned.

"I'm not going to rag with you," growled Racke, backing away a pace. "But if you want to know what I think, I think you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself. I don't talk to grocer boys just outside the school gates."

"You see, I'm fixing up with Grimes about the football match next week," said Tom.

Another sniff from Racke.

"Football—with a scraggy team of shop boys in the village!" he sneered. "Just your style, of course! I think the Head ought to stop it. What is St. Jim's coming to, I wonder?"

"My dear chap, the St. Jim's-Rylcombe match was an old fixture, before your pater made a fortune out of the war," answered Tom Merry. "Doesn't it occur to you, Racke, that you are a silly snob, and that your present manners and customs are offensive to my friend Grimes?"

"Your friend Grimes!" jeered Racke. "Nice sort of a friend for a St. Jim's fellow!"

"I suppose that's meant to be sarc," said Tom Merry. "But you're right, Racke. Grimey is a nice sort of a chap. You're a nice chap, aren't you, Grimey?"

"I 'ope so, Master Merry," said Grimes, with a chuckle.

"If you were half as decent as Grimey, Racke, you wouldn't be such a disgrace to your school," continued Tom Merry.

"Oh, cheese it!"

"If you were a quarter as decent, in fact——"

"I've got to get to the village," growled Racke. "Will you let me pass, you silly ass?"

"Not yet. I'm going to pull your nose first," answered the captain of the Shell. "You can't insult a friend of mine without having your nose pulled. I don't like touching you, Racke. I wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole if I could help it. But this is a matter of duty." And Tom Merry stretched out his hand.

Racke jumped back.

"Look here——" he roared.

"It's all right, Master Merry," said Grimes. "Don't you worry! I'm used to that sort of thing from fellers like Master Racke."

"Very likely," said Tom. "But that doesn't alter the facts of the case. Racke is letting down St. Jim's by acting like a cad in public, and I'm captain of the Form he belongs to. I think it's up to me to pull his nose. Don't you, Racke?"

"You fool!"

Racke backed away farther as Tom Merry advanced. He clenched his fists savagely, but he did not want to use them. Racke was not a fighting-man when he could help it—not when his adversary was anything like Tom Merry in prowess.

"Look here, chuck it, you ass!" exclaimed Racke. "I've had enough of this, Tom Merry. Let me pass!"

"If you don't want your nose pulled, you can apologise to Grimes," suggested Tom.

Racke burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Apologise to a grocery cad! I don't think! Yaroooh! Hands off, you rotter!"

Tom Merry was upon him now, and Racke spun helplessly in his grasp. Tom gripped the back of his collar.

Racke struggled, but he struggled in vain. With a grip like iron on the back of his collar, he was propelled towards Grimes.

"There's his nose, Grimey," said Tom. "Pull it!"

Grimes shook his head.

"I don't care to touch 'im, Master Merry," he said. "Bless your 'eart, I don't mind his nonsense."

"Well, I do," said Tom.

"Let go!" roared Racke. "I'll hack your shins, you rotter!"

"You'll get damaged if you do, dear man," said Tom.

"Now, then, is it going to be an apology? Sharp!"

Tom's finger and thumb closed on Racke's prominent, fleshy nose. The cad of the Shell raised his clenched hand, but dropped it again.

"Let go! I—I'm sorry!" he mumbled.

"That's better!" said Tom. "You'll learn manners in the long run if you were stude at St. Jim's long enough, Racke. You're sorry you were rude to Grimes?"

"Yes!" hissed Racke.

"Awfully sorry?"

"Ye-es-es!"

"Awfully, fearfully sorry?"

Racke ground his teeth. This humiliation, under the eyes of the grinning grocer boy, was almost too much for him.

"Yes!" he managed to gasp.

"That will do," said Tom, releasing Aubrey Racke. "Now you can get on. Be a bit more careful in the future, Racke. We expect rather decent manners of fellows who come to St. Jim's, you know!"

Aubrey Racke, with feelings too deep for words, tramped on towards the village, his face black with rage. Tom Merry turned back to Grimes with a smile, and the little talk was finished, and the arrangements made for the football match. Then Tom went in at the gates, and Grimes mounted his laden bike and pedalled away.

CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Grimes!

RACKE stopped suddenly.

He was half-way to Rylcombe, on the slope of the hill, when he heard Grimes' bike behind him.

He looked back.

At that point the hill was rather steep, and there was snow on the road from a late fall. Grimes was giving all his attention to his machine as he came down the hill, and he did not even see Racke standing in the road some distance ahead.

Racke's eyes glittered.

He stepped out of the lane, through a gap in the hedge. A minute more, and a heavy stone was in his grasp.

Crouching in the gap, Racke waited and watched for Grimes to pass.

The expression on his face was bitter and vengeful. Racke was not of a forgiving nature. Tom Merry was out of the reach of his vengeance—nothing would have induced him to tackle the sturdy captain of the Shell. But with Grimes it was a different matter. Racke was not particular in his methods of vengeance, and he was yearning for vengeance upon somebody. He watched with glinting eyes as the laden bike came creaking down the hill, Grimes keeping the brake on, and threading his way through deep ruts and patches of half-frozen snow.

Quite unconscious of the ambush ahead, Grimes came on, and arrived just opposite the gap.

Whiz!

The stone flew from Racke's hand, and there was a sudden alarmed yell from Grimes, as it struck him in the ribs.

Crash!

Over went Grimes, and over went the bike.

The grocer boy sprawled on the hard road, and the bike went clattering down the hill, to curl up crashing against the bank. The basket on the carrier crashed on the ground, and burst open, and its contents streamed out into the mud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke.

He was delighted with the havoc he had wrought.

Grimes sat up dazedly.

He was rather severely shaken by his fall on the frosty ground, and he blinked about him in a dizzy way.

"Oh, lor!" groaned Grimes.

Racke grinned at him from the hedge. Grimes staggered to his feet. His face was utterly dismayed, as he saw the wreck of his bike and the goods it carried. A packet of tea had burst open, and several eggs lay squashed in the mud. Butter and bacon sprawled among the eggs. Grimes could almost have cried as he saw the havoc.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter!" roared Grimes, and he made a stride towards Aubrey Racke, his fists clenched.

"You won't be so cheeky another time, my fine fellow!" chuckled Racke.

And he turned and cut across the field.

Grimes stopped. He would have liked to pursue Racke but he could not abandon his master's property. And Grimes was not so fortunate as the St. Jim's fellow; his time was not his own.

He turned back to the wrecked bike, and dragged it up. One of the pedals was badly twisted, and the rear wheel was out of gear. The machine had to be wheeled home. With a set face, the hapless Grimes picked up the scattered goods, and packed them into the basket again. But some of them were past picking up; he could not rescue the spilt tea or the broken eggs.

Grimes' face was not happy as he wheeled his bike into the village. He could not finish his round; and he dreaded the interview with Mr. Sands, the grocer. Certainly he was not to blame for the disaster that had happened; but he knew that it would not be much use to explain that to Mr. Sands. He had several aches and pains in his limbs from his bump on the hard road, and he was feeling anything but cheery as he tamped up to Mr. Sands' shop with his bike. Mr. Sands looked out of the shop door, and raised his eyebrows.

"You ain't finished your round yet?" he said.

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"Ad a tumble on the 'ill, sir," said Grimes.

"You clumsy young ass!"

"A chap chucked a stone at me from the 'edge, sir!"

Mr. Sands grunted.

"You shouldn't get into rows with other boys when you're taking out goods."

"It wasn't a Rylcombe chap, sir—"

"I don't care who it was! I've warned you not to quarrel with the young gentlemen at the school, haven't I?" snapped Mr. Sands.

"Yessir. But—"

"Don't waste time talking. Those goods have got to be delivered," interrupted Mr. Sands. "Eggs broken—pah! That will be deducted from your wages, Grimes."

"Oh dear!" said the hapless Grimes. "I really couldn't 'elp it, Mr. Sands—"

"Don't argue!"

That was not a happy afternoon for Grimes. His wages were not magnificent, and a deduction from them was a serious matter to him. And the bike had to be repaired before he could go on his delivery round—and the grocer's bike was rather an ancient affair, which had been repaired many times, and was never much better for the repairs. Grimes was rather late in knocking off work that day.

His feelings towards Aubrey Racke were bitter enough. When he was free at last, Grimes related his wrongs to his chums Pilcher and Craggs. Pilcher the chemist's boy, and Craggs, the youth who honoured the local butcher with his services, were sympathetic and wrathful.

"You'll 'ave to fight 'im!" said Craggs.

"That's it!" said Pilcher. "Give him a jolly good hiding, Grimey!"

Grimes looked doubtful.

"I'd like to," he said. "He's asked for it. But—"

"You could do it!" said Pilcher.

"I'd try!" said Grimes. "But a chap at the big school wouldn't fight with me. I fancy he'll keep out of my way a bit—that's all!"

"You ain't taking this lying down," said Pilcher decidedly.

"You're going to thrash him, Grimey. He can't refuse if you challenge him."

"But I can't!" said Grimes. "When I go to the school I 'ave to go to the back door; I sha'n't even see 'im—"

"Send him a letter."

"He wouldn't take any notice of that."

"Try 'im!" said Pilcher. "And if he don't answer, we'll think of another way."

Grimes nodded.

"Well, I'd like to wallop the brute, if only as a warning," he said. "I'll get him to put his 'ands up if I can."

"That's right!" said Craggs approvingly.

And three heads were bent together over the concoction of a letter which was to convey Grimes' challenge to Aubrey Racke, of the Shell at St. Jim's. And it was with considerable satisfaction that Grimes & Co., having stamped the letter and addressed it, dropped it into the box at the post-office.

CHAPTER 3.

The Letter for Racke.

"ANY lettahs, deah boys?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, sauntered along the corridor, and joined the crowd of School House fellows who were looking over the letter-rack the following day.

Some of the juniors were grinning.

"Nothing for you, old top!" said Jack Blake. "There's a letter here for Racke."

"Ho, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Trimble, in surprise.

"Where does the joke come in, Twimble?" he asked.

"Nothin' funny in a lettah for Racke, is there?"

"Look at it!" grinned Trimble.

D'Arcy glanced at the letter in the rack, but he did not smile as a good many of the juniors did. It was rather a curious-looking letter. The envelope was of the cheapest variety, and there was a large thumb-mark on it. The address, in a scrawling hand, ran:

"Master Racke,
School-Ouse,
St. James's School."

"Some of Racke's poor relations writing to him—what?" chuckled Baggy Trimble. "Racke will be wild when he sees it."

"Racke's never mentioned his poor relations," grinned Mellish. "But we know they made their fortune in the war—the Rackets. I dare say he's got all sorts of blighters tacked on to him."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Reilly.

"He, he, he!"

Arthur Augustus frowned. He turned his eyeglass upon the thoughtless youths in a disapproving manner.

“Weally, Twimble—” he began.

“Hallo! Gussy’s going to preach!” remarked Digby.

“Weally, Dig—”

“Go it, Gussy!” said Herries.

“Chuck it at seventhly, old bean,” suggested Jack Blake.

“We want to get along to tea, you know.”

“Weally, Blake—”

“He, he, he!”

“I am surprised at you fellows,” said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. “If Wacke is keepin’ up friently communications with his poor wrelations, it is vewy much to his cwedit. I have always wegarded Wacke as a wotten snob, but this impoves my opinion of him vewy much. I see nothin’ whatevah to gwim at in that lettah.”

“Look at the spelling!” chortled Trimble.

“I have heard Mr. Lathom make remarks on your spellin’, Twimble, that were not complimentawy.”

“Oh, rats!” said Trimble. “I say, you chaps, it would be a lark to see what’s in that lettah.”

“Bai Jove!”

“Oh, hook it!”

Arthur Augustus turned the handle of the door, but it was locked on the inside. He tapped again.

“Wacke!”

“Cut off, I tell you!” shouted Racke. “You’re not wanted in this study, D’Arcy.”

“I have no desiah whatevah to entah your studay, Wacke,” answered the swell of St. Jim’s, with dignity. “But I have bwrought a lettah for you.”

“Oh, why couldn’t you say so at first, you ass?” growled Aubrey Racke.

The study door was unlocked and opened.

There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the room. Arthur Augustus sniffed as he observed it.

“Well, hand over the lettah,” granted Racke.

“Weally, you know—”

“Sharp!”

Arthur Augustus handed over the lettah. Racke’s manner rather made him regret that he had taken the trouble to bring it to the study.

“As a mattah of fact, Wacke—” he began warmly.

Slam!

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“I knew Racke before he came here,” continued Trimble. “His name ain’t really Aubrey at all, it’s Peter. He put on the Aubrey when his pater made his money. I believe they used to keep a fried-fish shop.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Let’s see if the lettah’s fastened,” said Trimble. “Perhaps it isn’t. It would be no end of a lark— Yarooooooop!”

Trimble was stretching out his fat hand to the lettah when Arthur Augustus gave the fat wrist a rap, and Trimble yelled.

“You fat boundah!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. “I am shocked at you, Twimble!”

“Yow-ow!”

“I shall take this lettah to Wacke,” said D’Arcy, taking it down. “I am not weally on speakin’ terms with Wacke, but I shall certainly take this lettah to him.”

And the swell of St. Jim’s marched off with the lettah in his noble hand. He ascended the staircase, and on the landing came on the Terrible Three of the Shell.

“You fellows know where Wacke is?” he asked. “Is he in his studay?”

Tom Merry shook his head.

“He’s in his study,” said Monty Lowther. “I passed it a few minutes ago, and I heard Crooke tell him it was his deal.”

“Bai Jove! Are those wottahs playin’ cards?” said Arthur Augustus. “It is weally time that the pwefects came down on that studay.”

“High time,” remarked Manners. “Go and give them the benefit of a little fatherly advice, Gussy.”

“What have you got in your fist?” asked Tom.

“It’s a lettah for Wacke,” said Arthur Augustus. “I am bwingin’ it up to him. The fellahs think it is fwom one of Wacke’s poor wrelations, and, if that is the case, it is vewy cweditable to Wacke, isn’t it? He can’t be such a silly snob as we have always supposed, if he is keepin’ on friently terms with his poor wrelations.”

“Not likely!” said Lowther.

“Not in this case anyhow,” said Tom Merry. “I know the fist on that lettah.”

“Bai Jove! Do you, weally?”

“It’s Grimey’s,” said Tom.

“Gwimes! Bai Jove! It is wathah remarkable for Gwimes to be w’itin’ to Wacke! They’re not fwends, are they?”

“Ha, ha! Not quite.”

“Well, I will take the lettah on to Wacke, anyhow,” said Arthur Augustus. And he marched on up the Shell passage, and tapped at the door of Study No. 7, which was shared by Racke and Crooke. There was a sound of a hurried movement in the study.

“Who’s there?” called out Racke.

“It is I, deah boy.”

“D’Arcy?”

“Yaas, wathah!”

“Go and eat coke!”

“Weally, Wacke—”

The study door closed almost on Gussy’s noble nose, and the swell of St. Jim’s jumped back.

“Bai Jove! You wude wottah!” he exclaimed. “I have a great mind to give you a feahful thwashin’, Wacke!”

“Go and eat coke!”

“You uttah wuffian—”

“Oh, scat!”

Arthur Augustus, breathing wrath, turned the handle of the door. But it was already locked again.

The swell of St. Jim’s walked away with a frowning brow. Blake and Herries and Digby grinned as he came into Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

“Did Racke thank you nicely for bringing up his lettah?” asked Blake.

“He did not, Blake. I wegard Wacke as a howwrid, wude animal!”

“Go hon!” murmured Dig.

“Well, what did you expect?” asked Blake. “You see, you will be an ass, Gussy!”

“Oh, wats!”

“If you will be a frabjous chump—” continued Blake.



With a grip like iron on the back of his collar, Racke was propelled towards Grimes. “There’s his nose, Grimey,” said Tom. “Pull it!” “Let go!” roared Racke. “I’ll kick your shins, you rotter!” “You’ll get damaged if you do, dear man,” said Tom. “Now then, is it going to be an apology? Sharp!”

"Dwy up, deah boy."

The Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble countenance was much less serene than usual as he sat down to tea in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 4.

Racke's Reply.

"TIP from home?" asked Crooke.

Aubrey Racke stood with the letter in his hand, staring at it, and Crooke regarded him rather curiously. Racke's expression was quite peculiar as he stared at the letter.

"No!" he snapped. "This certainly isn't from home. Blessed if I can make it out!"

Crooke glanced over his shoulder at the letter, and grinned.

"My hat! Some of your people want lessons in spelling, Racke," he remarked.

"This can't be from any of my people!" snapped Racke.

"Some begging letter, I suppose."

"I've heard Trimble say—"

"Hang Trimble!"

Racke opened the letter angrily. He stared at a rather soiled sheet of cheap notepaper that was disclosed. Crooke looked at it, and chuckled again.

"Don't worry, old chap!" he said amiably. "Everybody knows you've got poor relations." Dash it all, a whole family couldn't make their fortune out of the war! I suppose your pater was a lucky exception."

Racke scowled fiercely.

"Cut that out, Crooke!" he said, between his teeth. "If you want me to punch your nose—"

"Don't get stuffy, dear boy," grinned Crooke. "Read your letter from your aristocratic correspondent, and let's get on with the game. It's nearly tea-time."

Racke unfolded the letter, and uttered an exclamation of angry astonishment.

"It's from that cad Grimes!" he exclaimed.

"The grocer's boy?"

"Yes."

"You're not so chummy with him, as a rule, as Tom Merry and D'Arcy and that lot!" grinned Crooke.

"Look at it!" snarled Racke.

George Gerald Crooke glanced at the letter with some interest. He stared, then burst into a chuckle. It was rather a surprising letter for a Shell fellow at St. Jim's to receive.

"Master racke, dear sir,—You nocked me off my bike chucking a stone at me this afternoon. You are a Rotter and a coward, and so I tell you strate. If you've got any pluck, you meet me on Rylcombe Green any time you like, after I've done work, and I'll nock the stuffing out of you.

"Yours sincerely, and with scorn,

"H. GRIMES."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crooke.

Racke grinned faintly.

"Precious letter, ain't it?" he said. "My only hat! The cheekey cad! Does he think I'll fight with a grocer's boy on the village green?"

"Not if he knows you!" grinned Crooke. "You're too jolly aristocratic to fight with a grocer's boy—unless he was a very small one. Ha, ha!"

"I'm certainly not going to fight with that rotten outsider," said Racke. "But I don't want any cheek from you, Crooke. I'm not going to fight Grimes, but I'll fight you fast enough if you're looking for trouble!"

"Keep your wool on, old bean!" said Crooke pacifically. "Of course, you can't take any notice of this cheek. What's the world coming to, I wonder—a dashed grocer's boy sending a challenge to a public school chap! Dashed Bolshevism, and no mistake!"

"The cheekey cad!" growled Racke.

"Chuck it into the fire, and don't answer it," suggested Crooke.

"Oh, I'll answer it," said Racke. "I'll see if I can get through the ruffian's thick hide a bit."

He sat down at the table, and dipped a pen into the ink. On the back of Grimes' letter he wrote his reply.

He thought a few minutes, and then produced an effusion that was quite worthy of Aubrey Racke.

"Master Racke requests H. Grimes not to write to him again, as he does not keep disinfected in his study, which would be needed for dealing with correspondence from the lower classes."

"What do you think of that?" asked Racke.

"Topping!" said Crooke. "The grammar's a bit shaky, but I don't suppose Grimes will notice that."

"What does that cad know about grammar?" sneered Racke.

He enclosed the letter in an envelope, addressed it to Mr.

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Sands' shop in the village, and put on a stamp. He glanced at the clock.

"Post goes at six!" said Crooke. "Looks as if we sha'n't get our game before tea."

"I'll send a fag to post it," said Racke arrogantly.

He threw open the study door, and looked into the passage. Baggly Trimble was hovering about the study—attracted partly by curiosity with regard to the letter, and partly by the fact that it was tea-time. Baggly gave Racke an affectionate grin.

"Looking for me, old fellow?" he asked. "As a matter of fact, I haven't had my tea—"

"Cut down to the letter-box with this, Trimble," said Racke.

"Certainly, old chap!"

Trimble was always willing to fag for the wealthy son of the wealthy profiteer. He took the letter and rolled away with it. Racke turned back into the study and locked the door. Grimes and his challenge were dismissed from Racke's mind, as he plunged once more into the joys of banker.

But Racke would probably have given less complete attention to his cards and his cigarettes if he had been aware of Baggly Trimble's proceedings.

The fat Fourth-Former stopped on the staircase to glance at the address on the letter. That was curiosity on Baggly's part—he never could mind his own business. He gave quite a jump as he read Grimes' name and address.

"My hat!"

He was astonished, and he was interested. Correspondence between the lofty Racke and the village grocer's boy excited all Baggly's inquisitiveness. He could guess now that the peculiar letter Racke had received was from Grimes.

Trimble felt a deep yearning to know what was in the letter. He was not accustomed to resisting such yearnings.

He glanced quickly over his shoulder to make sure that Aubrey Racke was not in sight. Then he whipped into his own study with the letter. Percy Mellish was there, but Trimble was relieved to see that Wildrake, his other study-mate, was not present. He closed the door, and grinned at Mellish.

"What do you think?" he whispered.

"What's on?" asked Mellish curiously.

"Look at that! Racke asked me to post it for him."

"My hat!"

"It's only just stuck," said Trimble. "Of course, I wouldn't open a fellow's letter. But—but if it came open—"

"Cut it out!" said Mellish. "Hold it over the spout of the kettle. I'd like to know what's up between Racke and Grimes, Jolly queer, anyhow."

Trimble held the envelope over the steaming kettle.

"Racke's jolly careless, the way he sticks an envelope," he remarked. "Look, it's actually coming open! See?"

A minute or two more, and Grimes' letter, with Racke's reply, was in the possession of the two young rascals. They read both, and chuckled over them.

"Racke's an awful funk!" remarked Mellish. "I say, fatty, you'd better cut down and post this before he finds you out. He won't fight Grimes, but he would take it out of you."

Trimble nodded, and left the study, with the letter freshly fastened in the envelope. He dropped it into the school letter-box, and then made his way to Racke's study. The door was locked.

"I say, Racke—" called Trimble through the keyhole.

"Hallo!"

"I've posted the letter."

"Right-ho!"

"I say, are you having tea?"

"No."

"When shall I come?"

"Not at all!" answered Racke coolly. "I haven't asked you to tea, that I know of."

"Oh, I say! I've posted the letter, you know—"

"Well, that's all you're good for, to make yourself useful to your betters, isn't it, Trimble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Crooke.

"Why, you cheekey rotter!" shouted Trimble. "Look here, Racke, you beast—"

"Oh, hook it!"

"Ain't I coming to tea?" howled Trimble.

"Nix. And if you don't clear off sharp, I'll come out to you with a fives-bat!"

"Yah!"

Baggy Trimble cleared off. There was no tea going, and certainly he did not want a fives-bat. But he departed in a state of great wrath and indignation. He looked into No. 10 in the Shell with a faint hope.

"I say, Tom, old fellow—"

Tom Merry pointed to the dogway.

"Cut!" he said briefly.

"I say, it's rather funky of Racke to refuse to fight Grimes, ain't it?" said Trimble.

The Terrible Three looked up at that.

"What's that?" asked Lowther.

"Grimes has challenged him," said Trimble confidentially.

"Racke's refused to meet him. Funky, ain't it?"

"And how do you know?" asked Manners.

"I—I happened—"

"Oh, buzz off!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Take your dashed tattle to some other study."

"Yah!"

Trimble rolled away, and he did take his tattle to another study—and a good many other studies! When Aubrey Racke came down to the Common-room after prep, he was rather surprised at the grinning glances that were turned on him. And he was enraged when he made the unpleasant discovery that every fellow in the School House was in possession of the story of Grimes' challenge and his—Aubrey's—lofty refusal, which they were far from attributing to aristocratic prejudice. They found a much shorter word to describe it—funk!

CHAPTER 5. Racke's Second.

"YOU wouldn't 'ave the nerve!" said Grimes.

"Wouldn't I?" said Pilcher.

"Think you would?" asked Craggs.

"Course I would!"

Sidney Pilcher looked valiant and determined. The three chums of Rylcombe were gathered in Grimes' little room at Mr. Sands' establishment, after working hours. Three heads were bent together over a letter—Grimes' letter, returned to him with Racke's answer scribbled on the back. Grimes & Co. had read Racke's reply with deep indignation. But they came to one conclusion on the subject—Racke might affect lofty snobbishness, but what was the matter with him was funk! He did not want to face the fists of the grocer's boy—that was the real trouble with Racke. And Grimes & Co. agreed that such was the case.

Grimes, who was a good-natured fellow, was rather willing to let the matter go at that. The injury he had received at Racke's hands was already fading from his mind. But Pilcher was a more determined fellow—Pilcher was resolved to see it through. Racke's snobbish pretensions had an irritating effect on Pilcher—which was perhaps not surprising.

"Cheeky rotter!" said Pilcher. "Who the thump is he, anyhow? There's Tom Merry, he's always got a civil word for a fellow—and D'Arcy—he's the son of a lord, but he never looks down on a chap! They play football with us, and don't make out that we ain't fit to touch. And this here Racke—who's he—what?"

"Nobody!" said Craggs.

"Rotten outsider!" said Pilcher. "Knocks a chap over and smashes up his goods, and then pretends he's too 'igh-class to put up his 'ands. You're going to lick that rotter, Grimey!"

"Can't get at him," said Grimes. "No good writing to him again, and I can't afford tuppenny stamps."

"Send your challenge, then!"

"Who's goin' to take it?"

"Little me!" said Pilcher.

It was then that Pilcher's admiring chums remarked that they doubted whether Sidney Pilcher would have the nerve.

It required a certain amount of nerve for the chemist's boy to walk in at the big gates of St. Jim's.

But Pilcher, as a matter of fact, seemed rather to be looking forward to it.

"Chap shouldn't chuck stones, if he don't want to put up his 'ands," said Pilcher. "Say the word, Grimey, and I'll walk in and put it to him straight—before the other fellows, too, so that he can't crawl out of it."

"Go it, Sid!" said Grimes.

And Sidney Pilcher "went it." With his best collar and tie on, and his clothes nicely brushed, and his cap set straight on his curly head for once, Master Pilcher walked to St. Jim's, and presented himself at the gates. The gates stood open, and several St. Jim's fellows were passing in and out, and some of them glanced rather curiously at Pilcher.

Taggles looked out of his lodge and beckoned to Pilcher.

"Other door!" said Taggles briefly.

"Wot?" asked Pilcher.

"Go round to the other gate, and knock at the tradesmen's door!" said Taggles. "You can't come in this way, young shaver!"

"I ain't calling with goods," said Pilcher. "I've come 'ere to call on Master Racke."

"Rubbish!" said Taggles.

"Rubbish, be blowed!" said Pilcher independently; and, disregarding Taggles, he walked on.

Baggy Trimble sighted him in the quadrangle, and grinned as he sighted him. Baggy thought he could guess Pilcher's mission at the school. Racke and Crooke were strolling under the elms, and Baggy cut across to them at once, his fat face wreathed in grins.

"Racke, old chap—"

"Cut off!" growled Racke.

"There's a giddy visitor for you!" chuckled Trimble.

"Grimes' pal from the village! He, he, he!"

Aubrey Racke looked startled.

"My hat!" murmured Crooke. "The cad wouldn't have the cheek to come here, surely!"

"Looks as if he would!" chuckled Trimble. "There he is—going across to the School House!"

Sidney Pilcher was in full view. In the old quad, among the ancient buildings, looked on by innumerable windows, Master Pilcher felt his nerve diminish a little. There were dozens of well-dressed fellows in sight, and somehow they made Pilcher realise that he wasn't well-dressed, and that made him feel a little uncomfortable. A very elegant senior—Cutts of the Fifth—passed him, and glanced at him; and the cool, ironical smile that crossed Cutts' face for a second made Pilcher flush crimson. He would have liked to punch Cutts, big as the Fifth-Former was. He kept on his way doggedly. Racke, from the path under the elms, eyed him, with glinting eyes.

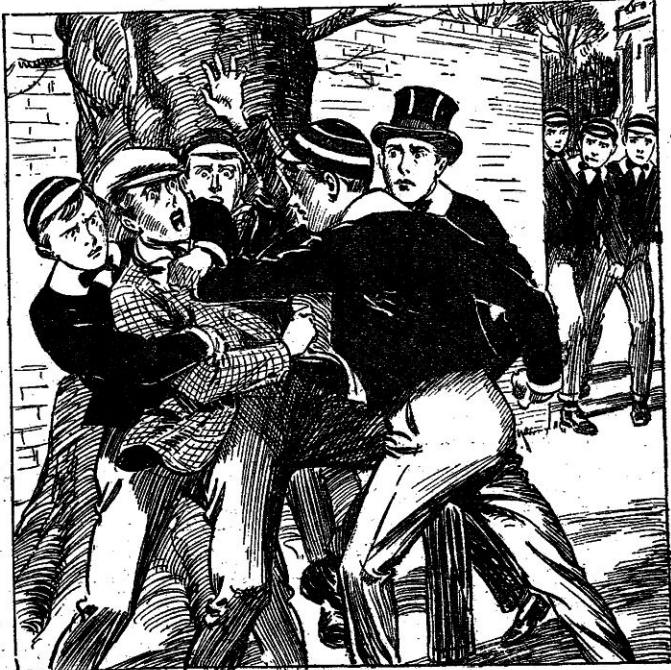
"The cheeky rotter!" he muttered. "Fancy his having the nerve to come here! Trimble, go and ask him what he wants, and tell him if he wants me, I'm here."

"Right-ho!" said Trimble. The fat junior cut off at once to intercept Pilcher's progress towards the School House.

Crooke looked curiously at his chum.

"What's the game, Racke?" he asked.

"We'll give the cad a ragging, for his cheek in coming here. If we get him back here behind the trees, we sha'n't



"'Ere, fair play!" exclaimed Pilcher. "Not 'arf a dozen to one. One at a time, if you please, and I don't mind!" But Racke & Co. did not come one at a time, they came all together with a rush. Sidney Pilcher was swept off his feet. "Ow—ow! Wow! 'Eip!" he spluttered. There was a sound of footsteps, and the Terrible Three came upon the scene.

be seen from the windows," said Racke. "Call Mellish and Chowle and Clampe—quick!"

"Oh, all serene!"

Crooke hurried off to summon those worthy members of Racke's select set. Meanwhile, Trimble was piloting Sidney Pilcher towards Racke. Aubrey Racke strolled away, to get well out of sight of the School House windows, and it was in quite a secluded spot that Trimble and Pilcher ran him down.

"Old on, young Racke!" said Pilcher.

Racke swung round.

"You address me as Master Racke!" he said haughtily.

"No, I don't!" said Pilcher coolly. "Master Merry, or Master D'Arcy, if you like—but you're young Racke, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, young Racke!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble.

"Well, what do you want here, you low ruffian?" snapped Aubrey.

"My pal Grimes sent you a challenge," said Pilcher.

"You ain't answered it. I've come for your answer!"

"I have nothing to do with village loafers!" said Racke loftily.

"You mean, you're afraid to put up your hands, after knocking Grimey off his bike with chucking a stone!" said Pilcher.

Racke glanced round. Crooke was coming up, with Clampe, Chowle, and Mellish. The juniors were all grinning. Pilcher glanced at them without alarm; he was, in fact, glad to see some St. Jim's fellows gathering round. He wanted to deliver Grimes' challenge in public.

"If you funk it, say so plain!" said Pilcher loudly.

Racke set his teeth.

"Collar that cad, you fellows!" he said.

"You bet!" grinned Clampe.

"Ere, fair play!" exclaimed Pilcher, alarmed now. "Not a farf a dozen to one! One at a time, if you please, and I don't mind!"

But Racke & Co. did not come one at a time; they came all together, with a rush. Sidney Pilcher was swept off his feet, and he came to the ground with a heavy bump. His yell rang far and wide as he bumped.

"Now, rag the cad!" snarled Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow—ow! Wow! 'Eip!" spluttered Pilcher, repenting him that he had ventured into the lions' den in that reckless way.

"Rag him!"

"Rag the cad!" chortled Trimble. "He, he, he!"

Pilcher struggled desperately. There was a sound of footsteps on the path under the elms, and three juniors came trotting up. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stared at the scene before them.

"Hallo! Fair play here!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Pile in!" said Lowther.

The Terrible Three of the Shell piled in at once. They rushed into the fray, and Racke & Co. were knocked right and left.

Racke and Crooke and Clampe went sprawling, and Chowle backed off, and Trimble and Mellish incontinently took to their heels. They were not seeking trouble with Tom Merry & Co.

Pilcher sat up breathlessly.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!" he spluttered.

"Now, what's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry genially.

"Mind your own business, you cad!" roared Racke.

"Ow! Wow!" gasped Pilcher, staggering to his feet.

"Thank you, Master Merry! Oh, my nose! Ow!"

"Keep out of this, Tom Merry!" hissed Racke. "It's nothing to do with you if we rag a village cad for having the cheek to butt into our quad!"

"Lots to do with me!" said Tom cheerily. "Rag him one at a time, and I'll look on and see fair play! Not in a crowd!"

Pilcher dabbed his nose with his handkerchief.

Racke and Crooke and Clampe drew back, scowling sulkily. The Terrible Three were prepared to knock them down again if they restarted the ragging, and Racke & Co. decided that it was not good enough.

"Now, what's the merry trouble?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I come 'ere to bring young Racke a challenge from Grimey!" said Pilcher.

The Terrible Three grinned.

"We've heard about that!" said Manners.

"Racke isn't looking for scraps!" said Monty Lowther gravely.

"Grimey will have to apply elsewhere. Racke is a pacifist. And he has aristocratic prejudices. Racke refuses to fight a village kid—unless you can produce a champion about twelve years old, not more than four feet nine—then Racke would waste in like a Trojan!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He chuck'd a stone at Grimes, and knocked him over

with his bike," said Pilcher. "Grimes has had three-and-six took off his wages to pay for the damages."

Tom Merry frowned.

"Just like Racke!" he said. "Racke will pay the damages!"

"I certainly won't!" snapped Racke.

"You will!" said Tom Merry tersely. "Grimes can't afford to lose part of his wages because of your dirty tricks! And chucking stones is barred—it's a mean, cowardly trick! You're getting over the limit, Racke! You've been ragging Pilcher because he's brought you a challenge from Grimey. Are you accepting the challenge?"

"I don't fight with low cads!" said Racke.

"Grimes is a better chap than you, any day, young Racke!" said Pilcher disdainfully.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry considered.

"You started the trouble, Racke!" he said at last. "You insulted Grimes the other day when I was speaking to him! You've attacked him, and now it's too late to say you won't fight him! You should have thought of that before you pitched into him. You can't let down St. Jim's like this! You've got to fight Grimes!"

"Ear, ear!" said Pilcher.

Racke gritted his teeth.

"Well, I won't!" he said.

"You will," said Tom quietly, "and you'll pay for the damage you've done! What time will suit Grimes, Pilcher?"

"What about Saturday afternoon?" asked Pilcher.

"Good! Say the lower end of the village green, at three—that's a quiet spot," said Tom.

"Done!"

"I sha'n't be there!" roared Racke savagely.

"You will!" Tom Merry assured him. "I'm making the arrangements as your second, Racke!"

"You're not my second!"

"I am!" said Tom cheerily. "Self-appointed, and I'm going to see you through! I shall expect my principal to put up a good fight. If he doesn't, I shall most likely lather him myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You interferin' cad!" hissed Racke.

"Mustn't talk to your second like that!" said Tom Merry chidingly. "That's settled, Pilcher! Rely on Racke being there!"

"Right-ho!" said Pilcher.

"We'll walk with you to the gates, old infant, in case there's any more trouble!" added Tom Merry.

And the Terrible Three escorted Sidney Pilcher safely off the premises. Master Pilcher returned to Rylcombe with satisfactory news for Grimes.

CHAPTER 6.

Racke Cuts Up Rusty.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY nodded cheerily to Aubrey Racke when he met that youth on the stairs later on.

"Congratulations, Wacke!" he remarked.

Racke stared at him.

"What the thump are you drivin' at?" he asked ungraciously.

"I am vewy glad to heah that you have decided to do the decent thing!" explained Arthur Augustus. "It was vewy wotten of you, Wacke, to thwow a stone at Gwimes! A wolly wotten dirty twick, you know! It was still more wotten to wufuse his challenge! I am vewy glad indeed that you have thought bettah of it, and decided to meet him!"

"I haven't, you silly jay!"

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"Wolly, Wacke, I undahstand that the sewap is fixed up for Saturday aftahnoon, at thwee?"

"It isn't!"

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

"There seems to be a misundahstandin' somewhah," he remarked. "Tom Mewwy is goin' to act as your second, isn't he?"

"No."

"He told us in the study that he was."

"He's lying!"

"I wathah think that it is you who are lyin', Wacke! You see, Tom Mewwy is not a Bah, and you are one, you know!" observed Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Is it possible, Wacke, that you are welfutnant to give Gwimes satisfaction aftah knockin' him off his bike with a stone?"

"Oh, rats!"

Aubrey Racke tramped on up the stairs with a knitted brow. He tramped into his study, where George Gerald Crooke greeted him with a grin.

"So it's fixed up, Racke?" he remarked.

"What's fixed up?"

"Your fight with Grimes."

"No!" howled Racke.

"I've just heard from Kangaroo that he's going to be present," said Crooke. "Dane and Glyn are going."

"It's all rot!"

Crooke smiled.

"The fellows seem to be taking it seriously," he said. "Looks to me as if you'll find it rather hard to get out of it now!"

"Tom Merry's trying to fix it on me—you know that!" said Racke, between his teeth. "He'd like to see me knocked out by that grocer cad! Not that the hooligan could hurt me!"

"Then why not meet him, if he can't hurt you?" inquired Crooke.

"I don't choose to!"

Crooke winked into space.

There was a heavy tramp at the door, and Grundy, of the Shell, looked in.

"Racke here?" asked Grundy. "Oh, here you are, Racke! I'm going to be present on Saturday."

"Present at what?" hissed Racke.

"Your-fight with Grimes."

"I'm not fighting Grimes on Saturday!" shrieked Racke. Grundy's brow darkened.

"I've heard all about it," he said. "Tom Merry's your second."

"He's not!"

"He's arranged it all with Grimes' second."

"He hasn't!"

"And the fight's coming off," said Grundy. "I had an idea that you might try to sneak out of it, Racke. I know you're a funk!"

"You cheeky rotter!"

"I want to give you a tip," said Grundy calmly. "You're going to fight Grimes on Saturday! You played a dirty cowardly trick on him! You're a disgrace to the school! If there's any dodging on Saturday, Racke—if you don't turn up for the scrap—look out for squalls! I'm going to keep an eye on you! That's all!"

Grundy of the Shell tramped heavily away, and Racke savagely flung the door shut after him. It opened a few minutes later to disclose the grinning fat face of Baggy Trimble.

"You're booked, Racke!" he remarked pleasantly.

Aubrey Racke gave him a malevolent look.

"You opened my letter yesterday, Trimble," he said.

"Nothing of the sort," said Trimble. "The flap may have come open by accident. I may have held it near the spout of the kettle by sheer chance. I'm not the kind of fellow to open another fellow's letter, I hope."

"You jawed it all over the house—"

"I may have seen a few words by chance—"

"You spying worm!"

"You needn't blame me because you've got to fight Grimes," said Trimble. "You shouldn't have stoned him, you know. I say, it's rather an honour to have the captain of the Form for your second, isn't it? You don't seem to be very bucked. He, he, he!"

Racke made a sudden rush at the fat Fourth-Former. Trimble dodged back into the passage, but a little too late. Racke's grasp was upon him.

Trimble yelled as he was dragged headlong into the study.

"Give me that fives-bat, Crooke!" said Racke, between his teeth.

"Yaroorh!" roared Trimble. "Help! Rescues!"

Crooke grinned, and handed over the bat. Racke, with a savage face, dumped Trimble on the carpet, and started operations with the fives-bat. The hapless Baggy's yells rang along the Shell passage.

Racke could not venture to deal with Tom Merry, or Grundy, as he would have desired. But Trimble was a different matter. And Trimble had to pay for the sins of all the rest.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yoop! Help! Murder!" roared Trimble.

Whack, whack!

"Yarooooop!"

"Hallo! What on earth's the row?" asked Talbot of the Shell, looking in at the doorway.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" yelled Trimble.

Whack, whack, whack!

Talbot stepped into the study and gripped Racke's arm.

"Drop that bat!" he said curtly.

Racke dropped the bat.

"Now out, Trimble!"

Baggy Trimble was only too glad to cut. He rolled out of Racke's study in great haste.

"You interferin' rotter!" hissed Racke.

Talbot released his arm, and left the study, without troubling to speak. Racke flung himself savagely into a chair.

"Why didn't you punch his head, old fellow?" asked Crooke, with a grin.

"Talbot's?"

"Yes," grinned Crooke.

Racke gave his study-mate a bitter look. He was Crooke's pal—but friendship between fellows like Racke and Crooke was not very deep or very cordial. Undoubtedly Crooke derived a very considerable amount of entertainment from the scrape in which Aubrey Racke found himself now.

"Keep your pecker up," continued Crooke. "You're bigger than Grimes; you've got nothing to be afraid of, if you put your beef into it!"

"So you think I'm afraid?"

"Not at all!" he said politely. "But I rather fancy most of the fellows will think so, if you go on as you've been doing. Of course, personally, I know you're as brave as a lion."

"You find all this dashed amusing, don't you?" said Racke.

"Well, it's got its funny side," said Crooke. "Of course, I'm as down on these cheeky shop cads as you are. But your reasons for not fighting Grimes are rather—well, thin. They won't wash, you know. You don't mind my mentionin' it?"

"I'm not going to fight Grimes!" said Racke. "I'm not going to allow Tom Merry to dictate to me! That's my chief reason."

"Ahem!"

"You don't believe me?"

"Well, it wants some believin', doesn't it?" smiled Crooke.

"I've stood a lot of cheek from Tom Merry and Grundy, and some others," said Racke. "But there's some fellows who can't cheek me just as they like, Crooke. You're one of them!"

Racke jumped up from his chair. "Put up your hands, you cad!"

Crooke backed away promptly.

"Here, keep your wool on!" he exclaimed. "I don't want any trouble with you, Racke!"

"I know you don't!" said Racke, with a savage grin. "That's why you're goin' to get it, old top!"

And he rushed at his study-mate, hitting out. Crooke's hands came up in defence, but Racke's savage attack drove him to the doorway.

"Stop it, you fool!" howled Crooke, as Racke's knuckles lauded on his chin.

Racke did not heed. Crooke's taunts had infuriated him, and he wanted to wreak vengeance upon somebody. Crooke was the unhappy victim. Under a shower of blows, Crooke was driven into the passage.

The gasping and trampling drew a dozen fellows out of the other studies to see what was going on.

"Hallo! Trouble in the happy family!" said Gore of the Shell. "Go it, ye cripples!"

"Racke's getting his hand in for Saturday!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Crooke went heavily to the floor, with crimson streaming from his nose.

"Man down!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Up with you, Crooke—you're not half licked yet!"

Crooke lay and gasped.

"Bai Jove! Crooke appears to be undah the impression that he is quite licked!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

(Continued on page 14.)

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THE ISLAND



Our Gripping Yarn Which Tells of a Party of Chums Read How They Set to Work to Make Their

READ THIS FIRST.

Donald Gordon and his brother Val, together with Tommy Binks and Septimus Todd, the junior master, commonly known as Scat, leave St. Christopher's School on a journey to the Solomon Islands to join Hector Gordon, an uncle of the two brothers, who is on a big plantation.

Captain Farge, skipper in charge of the schooner Wittywake, and a scoundrel at heart, learning of their visit to the rich plantation, plans to abandon the boat and leave the party to their fate. This is in order that he can more easily carry out his plan to overthrow the wealthy plantation owner and obtain hold of his land. Toga, the black cabin-boy, learns of the scoundrel's intentions, and warns the party. Unknown to the villainous captain, he places the boys in one of the ship's small boats, and they are about to make their escape from the doomed vessel, when Anna, the captain's daughter, joins them. The young, pretty girl is glad of this opportunity of getting away from the harsh treatment of her father. Not long after they have started on their perilous sea journey a storm arises, and in a short time the boat and its occupants are at the mercy of the waves. Suddenly a ten-foot breaker surges into the boat, and its occupants, with Don clasping Anna in a strong embrace, are thrown to the angry waves.

(Now read on and see how the plucky youngsters land on "The Island of Pleasure.")

Cast on an Island.

DONALD GORDON rose up with an effort, his eyes half closed, his brain unable to gather up the threads.

Suddenly there came to him a low, melodious murmur, a vibrating sound, a sound that increased and fell in a steady cadence, and presently a glance seaward told him what it was.

There was a blue lagoon stretching away as far as the eye could see from the edge of the beach, and about a mile from the shore there arose a white reef that ran the whole length of the lagoon. It was on that fairylike barrier that the sea was breaking.

That awful whirlpool of surging, rushing waters into which he had gone headlong had carried him far up this white, sandy beach. Then, like a quick stab, another question rose in his heart.

What had happened to Anna?

He remembered that his last desperate thought had been how to save the slender, plucky girl who had cast in her lot with Don and his companions.

He rose to his feet, brushing his hair from his eyes, and at his movement the chattering parrot swept up into the air, with another squawk, and headed away towards the thick mass of trees that grew like a huge bank on the edge behind the beach.

"Anna! Anna!"

Gordon's voice was hoarse as he raised it, and he listened eagerly. There was no reply. He began to move along the beach then, watching for some sign of the boat and his companions; but the white stretch of sands lay unbroken in front of him, and gradually a haunting fear began to grip at his heart.

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Where some out-jutting rocks made a break in the shimmering sand he halted for a moment; then suddenly his eyes fixed on an object on the sand some distance away, and with a cry, he ran forward. There was a clear impression of a small foot—a footprint that had been recently made.

He picked out another and yet another, and a keen surge of joy came to his heart as he began to follow the track.

It led towards a group of palm-trees that stood like tall sentinels on a mound on the right. He lost the tracks at last when they vanished on the luscious grass below the trees; but he hurried on into the slender growth, and again he shouted.

This time an answering cry came to him, and Donald went forward at a run.

A screen of tall leaves parted suddenly in front of him, and he saw Anna come hurrying through them, bearing a great bunch of yellow fruit. As she caught sight of Donald she dropped her burden and darted forward. "I—I heard your voice!" she cried. "I was so glad—so glad! I thought I was the only one saved!"

A flood of tears came into her eyes, and she clung to the youngster for a moment. Then Don patted her on her slender shoulder. "That's all right, brave girl," he said. "I dare say we'll find the others in a moment. What have you been up to—fording?"

"Yes," said Anna. "I felt so hungry." She caught Don by the hand, and led him back eagerly to where she had dropped her heavy burden, and Donald nodded his head in approval.

"Bananas!" he said. "Splendid! By Jove, I feel peckish, too!"

He knew then it was up to him to pretend a contentment that he hardly felt, and although his heart was heavy enough, the plucky youngster did his best to make light of their terrible situation.

"I have found a spring," said Anna, "and a little shelter. Come, and I'll show you."

She led the way down the beach, and over another rocky portion where the ground rose sharply, forming a low cliff. The cliff was obviously of volcanic origin, for it was pitted and marked with small cavities and ledges, from one of these, about four or five feet above the level of the path, a clear stream of water was trickling down into a narrow, cuplike declivity that had been worn out of the stone.

Donald placed his mouth to the stream and drank. The water was icy cold, and tasted good to his parched lips.

"By Jove, you've found a top-hole spot, Anna," he said. "It would not take us long to rig up a shelter here, I know. Come on—let's have breakfast."

He sat down, and the girl followed his example.

"Where did you get the bananas?" Don asked.

"Oh, there are heaps of banana-trees in there," said Anna. "You mustn't forget that I have been in the South Seas for some time, and I know what's good to eat and what isn't. Take those yellow ones first; they're ripest. We'll have to get a store of them if we can. I don't care now that I have someone, but I really didn't feel inclined to look for any fruit by myself. It would have been dreadful if I'd been left alone!"

Indeed, it seemed that the companionship of the sturdy youngster had caused Anna

to forget her troubles, and they made a good meal of the excellent fruit, washed down by a plentiful supply of water from the cold, crystal-like stream, and Donald Gordon felt a different man when the meal was over.

"Now, then, Anna," he said, "this is where we have got to start work. You have found a jolly fine place, and I'm going to see what I can do to fix up a shelter."

"It'll have to be a native one," said Anna—"a sort of sun-screen. I've seen them built in Papua, and I think I can help you."

And so the two castaways began the first of what proved to be many long, weary labours.

"If I had only a knife, or anything of that kind," Donald declared, "we'd get on better; but I haven't a single thing."

They had visited the grove of palm-trees, and at the end of two or three hours had collected a great heap of material under the lee of the cliff. Then they began to erect the leafy bower.

Two strong branches were stripped of their leaves and thrust into the soil, where they were held tight in position by running stones and earth round them. Then Don had chosen branches the ends of which were forked, and into these forked ends he placed another branch, which was held in place by five or six strips of tough palm-fibre woven under and over it by Anna's skilful fingers.

Two other poles were then placed on the cross-support, and their ends were arranged on a low ledge of the cliff.

On this framework the broad palm-leaves were spread, each palm-leaf being carefully laid on the top of its fellow, so that, in the event of rain, the water would run down from the cliff and drop clear of the shelter.

"No good to make it slope towards the cliff," Donald said to Anna, "or the water would simply pour down inside the place, and we would be better out than in, in that case."

The broad, tough leaves of the palm, some of them three to four feet in length and two feet wide, made an excellent material for the roof of the hut; and Anna, who had busied herself by tearing several fibrous leaves into strips and plaiting them, was able to make the roof fairly secure by twisting the fibres in and out of each broad leaf and tying it into position on the support.

They had not completed their task when day ended, and again they had a meal, and sat for a long time whispering together. Then Anna slipped away to the shelter, while Don, who felt much too restless and anxious to sleep, paced across to the outcrop of volcanic rock and seated himself there, listening to the low moan of the breakers on the reef.

He had selected a tough piece of wood which might be useful to him as a weapon for defence, and it was with this somewhat unreliable weapon that he took up guard. For, with the coming of the night, it seemed to him as though the jungle life beyond the cliff had stirred itself.

During the day, save for the occasional shriek of a parrot and the calls of other birds, there had been no sound; but now, as he sat there on the rocks, a hundred different noises seemed to fill the night—rustlings as though for the passage of some soft, padded foot, cracks and jars of branches, whispers, clattering and chattering, all faint,



s Who Were Stranded on an Uninhabited Island. Strange Home into "The Island of Pleasure!"

half definite, making a chorus of sounds that kept him on the alert.
Once something broke from a bush with a cracking sound, and the youngster leapt to his feet, swinging his club aloft. It was pitch-dark under the trees, and, although he watched for a moment, he could not see anything.

"I believe I would go barney if I had to stand a lot of this!" Donald said to himself, after a moment of tense, rigid watching.

He resumed his seat, and took up his task again. Just when it was dropped off to sleep he was never able to say. Tired nature must have intervened at last, for the next thing he remembered was finding himself lying full length along the warm rocks, with his club by his side, and the hot sun pouring down on him.

He arose swiftly to his feet, glancing towards the shelter. Anna was still fast asleep in the little heap of sand that she had formed for herself.

"No good of disturbing you, Some Girl," Don thought. "I'll have a look round."

He had noted that, large as the bunch of bananas was which Ann had brought, they had played havoc with it, and, picking up his club, the youngster started for the palm-grove again.

He had a rough idea of the route, and presently he found the screen of leaves through which Anna had peered. Don pressed himself through this screen, then came out into a small clear space. In front of him he saw the banana trees, with their heavy hanging fruit, and he was about to head direct for them, when caution hinted that it would be wiser to keep round the edge of the cleared space.

After all, he had no idea what terrors and dangers might be waiting for him there, and caution was necessary, so, instead of heading out into the open, Don began to work his way round amidst the tangle of bushes and trees. Suddenly he came to a halt, every nerve on the alert, for from somewhere in front of him was coming a mysterious sound—a grunting, throaty breathing, as though some animal of the forest was enjoying its prey after the kill.

Don dropped on his hands and knees, and, slipping the club in front of him, he crept round the edge of a bush, and, ahead of him, he saw a thick clump of reeds—reeds that were shaking, although there was no wind. The creature, whatever it was, was behind these reeds, and Don, moving onward, gained the reeds at last, then, parting them carefully, he peered through.

Squatting on his knees, with a great slab-like wedge of wild honeycomb held in his two hands, out of which he was just in the act of taking another enormous bite, when Don's eyes fell on him, was Tommy Binks. So far as Don could see, Tommy's sole garment consisted of a ragged pair of shorts, and his fat back was glistening with sweat; but if ever the soul of youth was thoroughly enjoying itself it was that of Tommy, as he feasted on the luscious, golden nectar.

"Tommy, you old skunk!"
There was a howl and a scramble, and Tommy dropped the wedge of honey, rolling over on his back, as Donald Gordon came crashing through the bushes, flourishing the heavy club he carried.

"Wow! Spare me—spare me!"
Perhaps there was something that was

ferocious in Donald's appearance as he leapt about bush; in any case, the honey-crowded intelligence of Tommy decided that the apparition was distinctly menacing.

"Shut up, you ass! Don't you know who it is?"

There was a gasp and a gurgle, and Tommy rose to his feet, stared for a moment, then a whoop of sheer joy broke from his lips.

"Don! Don, by jiminy!"

He reached out, and gripped at Don with a sticky hand, then a torrent of excited words came from the boy.

"Steady on, old chap!" said Don laughingly, as he released himself. "Let's have one bit of news at a time. Where are the others?"

"All safe!" said Tommy. "We were chucked up, like a lot of nippins, on to a beastly, rocky beach! We've had no end of a rough time of it, Don, and we're looking for food now."

Don cast a significant glance at the great wedge of honeycomb that lay under the bush.

"Seems to me that you've struck something, too," he commented dryly. "What were you doing—having a bit of lunch on your own?"

Tommy's fat face flushed. His appetite was proverbial among the chums, and Don could understand how the luscious lump of sweetness had made an irresistible appeal to the stout youngster.

"There's tons of it, old chap," Tommy explained. "I was only having a couple of mouthfuls of it before I called the others. It's all stowed away in a rotten, great tree over there. I was going to tell them about it."

"That's all right, Tommy!" said Don. "I don't blame you, but, by James, the noises you made were like that of a wild beast! Good job for you I didn't strike first, and look afterwards! I thought you were an old bear looking for truffles!"



"If someone collects some dry brushwood," said Don, "I'll make a fire. Come here, Scot!" Scot came forward slowly, and Don, reaching out, took the glasses from Scot's long nose. "I'll use these as a burning-glass!" he said.



The broad, tough leaves of the palm made an excellent material for the roof of the hut, and Anna, who busied herself by tearing several fibrous leaves into small strips and plaiting them, was able to make the roof fairly secure by twisting the fibres in and out of each broad leaf and tying it into position on the support.

He stooped to pick up the wedge of comb, then turned, and nodded to Tommy Binks. "Get hold, old chap!" Don went on. "We're going to find the others! Lead on!" They started off across the jungle. Tommy raising a wild whoop now and again, and presently it was answered. Don found himself walking down through grass and tall coconut palms that sloped down to the very verge of the sea. Here he found Val, Scat, and Taga.

It was a real joyous reunion, and when the others heard that Some Girl had also been saved, their satisfaction was complete. Taga, a wide grin on his brown face, performed a kind of war-dance out of sheer joy, and Val, who had linked his arm under his brother's, gave Donald a brief account of how their party had been rescued.

"We've got Taga to thank, old chap!" he declared. "He steered that boat like a good 'un. I don't know how he managed to get it over the reef out there, but he did. We were driven right on to this rocky spit here, and the boat simply went to pieces under our feet; but we managed to get away, and that's the main thing!"

Donald made a swift tour of inspection, and came to the conclusion that the part of the island he had landed on was more suited for a permanent camp, a fact which he communicated to the others.

One or two small articles had been rescued, and Don made a rapid list of them. There was a small boat axe, a long knife, a coil of rope, with a lantern and small metal dipper.

"That's the lot," said Tommy, with a shake of his head, as he glanced at the heap of articles; "and I'm hanged if I know how they got here, for none of us thought of saving anything, except old Taga. It was he who found the axe and the knife."

"Fella no good without knife," Taga explained. "I he queer island English. 'Fella need knife for his grub."

"We'll need more than a knife, old man," Don returned. "Still, we must not grumble."

The articles were collected, together with a ragged sheet of tarpaulin that had been used as a rough shelter, then the party set off to return to Cliff Bay, as Don had already christened the place where he and Anna had landed. Instead of heading through the jungle, the party got along the shore, and at the end of an hour's trudge they found themselves on the long, sandy beach of Cliff Bay.

"This is better!" Tommy declared, with an approving glance at the dark mass of jungle and the shimmering sand. "A fellow doesn't

and being surprised on a beach like this," but our linking part was all rough coral, and darned hard I found it."

Anna's delight when the group of youngsters came over the boulders was good to see. She had been rather frightened at Don's long absence; but now, amidst the little circle, she chatted and laughed as though she had not a care in the world.

Taga slipped off into the jungle, and returned presently with the tarpaulin full of golden-rinded fruit, and on these, with the bananas, the honey, and the clear water from the spring, the party made a meal.

"That golden-rinded fruit was a revelation to them; and Scat, the scientist of the party, finally gave judgment on them.

"It is a kind of mango," he said; "or it might be a sapodilla plum, otherwise known as the achras sapota." Tommy cast a piece of the skin at the owl-like countenance of Scat.

"Shut up, you ass," he said, "with your sapidilla or achras! Never mind what blinking stuff it is, it tastes delicious!"

"My dear Tommy," Scat returned, "one has to be careful. This fruit happens to be edible, but there may be others less so. A little scientific knowledge will not hurt any of us!"

Don nodded.

"Quite right, Scat," he said; "and, by Jove, this is where your science will come in handy! I have got a suggestion to make to you fellows. If you like, I'll get it off my chest now."

They were lying in a circle under the shadow of the cliff, where the clear, silvery fall murmured a soft song; on the right was the blue sea, with the reef shimmering in the distance as the waves surged and fell over it.

"Go ahead, Don!" said Tommy, stretching himself luxuriously.

Don rose to his feet. He made a manly figure in his ragged shirt and shorts. His tanned young face was a trifle thoughtful as he looked at the group in silence.

The truth of the matter was that Donald was a born leader of men, and Gordon was already he trying to shape the destinies of the unfortunate little band of youngsters of the island. Scat, it is true, was under several years older than Don, but he was of the dreamy, student type of youth, and under no possible conditions could be regarded as a trustworthy leader.

"Look here, chaps," Don began at last, "I hope you all realise that we're on a desert island, and it was only by a wonderful stroke of Providence that we were not all drowned. We ought to be thankful for that, and now it is up to us to make the best of our lot."

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy.

"What I propose is that we vote one of us into the position of leader," Donald went on. "We'll have to obey him in everything he suggests, and each of us will have to take on a distinct task to be responsible for all the time we're here. How does that idea suit you?"

"Tophole!" said Tommy. "And, as far as the leader is concerned—well, it's the gentleman who is standing up who'll get my vote."

"And mine," said Anna.

"And mine," drawled Scat.

Val nodded across to his brother.

"Not much doubt as to who is going to be leader," he commented. "We've voted you into the chair right off. So that's settled."

Don squared his sturdy shoulders.

"Right you are!" he returned. "I accept the job; and now we've all got to fix up our various duties."

He turned and pointed towards the leafy bower.

"I shall make myself responsible for the building of a decent shelter," he said. "Of course, you'll all have to lend a hand at first to get the material, and perhaps Anna here will help me, but I think myself that our very first thing is to get some sort of home."

"Hear, hear, to that!" said Tommy. "You build a nice bungalow, and a nice veranda and a nice chest, and I'll love you for ever, Don."

A chuckle ran round the group at this modest demand; then Don turned to Val.

"I know what you're best at, old chap," he said, "and I think I'll give you the job of supplying us with fish. There ought to be heaps of fish out there in the bay, and I dare say that Taga could help you to pick out the good 'uns from the bad 'uns."

Val's eyes glimmered. He was really an enthusiastic fisherman, and the job that Don had allotted to him was just the one he would have chosen.

"Right-ho, Don!" he said. "I'll be fisherman of the party."

Tommy scribbled to his feet.

"I think I'll make myself responsible for the water supply," he declared.

"You lazy owl, that's just the sort of job you would pick!" Don remarked, pointing towards the spring that gushed from the cliff. "But Nature has done that for us without being helped, and you'll have to make another choice."

He turned to Scat.

"I'm going to make you responsible for the fruit supply, Scat," Don said; "for after your learned talk about mangoes and sapodillas, you have practically put yourself into the job!"

Scat's eyes blinked from behind his horn spectacles, for, as though it may seem, Tommy's tutor had come through that awful storm without losing his lenses.

"All right, Don," said Scat quietly. "I think I can promise to carry out that job. From what I could see of it, this island is simply teeming with fruit-trees and palms."

Don turned to Tommy.

"There's only one job left, Tommy. You'll have to be hunter of the party. I don't know if there is any fresh meat to be had, but you'll have to search for it. After all, if you can grunt so artistically you ought to be able to find the real grunters if there are any."

Tommy shook his head solemnly.

"I don't like the job, Don," he said; "but I'll do my best. It seems to me I'm going to do all the searching for it. After all, I look up to run through the forest after a thing with four feet. But I suppose if I get a bird or two, or a few eggs now and again, it'll do."

"Oh, yes, anything of that sort will suit the larder!" said Don.

Taga—who, by the way, could understand English as well as better than he could speak it—had been the silent listener, and only then he lifted his slim, brown shape from the sands and stood up.

"You fella all got job. What about this fella? You think I am no good for fella job?"

"Don't worry, Taga," Don said. "The reason why I haven't selected you for any particular job is because I want you to help us all. You know more about this part of the world than all of us put together, and I rely upon you to lend a hand where it is most required."

"I think it is a shame," said Anna. "You have given everyone a job to do but me!"

A laugh went round at this complaint.

Don smiled.

"You are going to be housekeeper. Some Girl," he said. "It'll be your job to sweep up and cook and keep watch over the larder."

He pointed to Tommy.

"And don't forget we're all to get an equal share. And you had better keep your eye on this fellow, especially where honeycomb is concerned."

And so it was arranged that each of the little party should have set task to do. Don, with wisdom beyond his years, had taken the first great step forward; for the mere fact of them having something to do prevented them from thinking of their terrible position—cast away, a handful of youngsters on a desert island, helpless almost. For surely a small axe, a knife, and a coil of rope are but poor implements with which to toil!

"Now then," said Don, "we're going to tackle the big real job—the island."

He nodded to Val and Tommy. "You fellows go off and try to find some dried brushwood. I'm going to make a fire. Come here, Scat."

Scat came forward slowly, and Don, reaching out, took the glasses from Scat's long nose.

It had always been a jest among the friends, these glasses of Scat's, for the truth of the matter was that his eyesight was almost as good as any of theirs, and it was vanity and a desire to appear wiser than he was—though he was wise enough—that made the tutor adopt the tortoiseshell-ringed spectacles.

"Hang it all! I say, Don—"

A quick twist saw Don remove the two crystals, then he calmly handed back to Scat the spectacles minus the glasses.

"There you are, Scat, you can put those on. It won't make any difference so far as your sight is concerned, and these lenses will be very useful."

Scat looked as if he were half-inclined to argue the point; but, finally, he slipped the nose completely ornamental glasses on his nose again.

Val and Tommy hurried off, returning soon with great armfuls of brushwood—brushwood as dry as tinder. After piling a few sticks in a heap, Don set the lenses together, and, using them as a burning-glass, focussed the golden rays of the sun on the centre of the heap. In a few seconds a thin trail of smoke began to rise, and presently the heap was burning brightly.

While Val and Tommy attended to the fire, Don and Taga and Anna set about arranging a fireplace nearer to the cliff.

It was a rude affair, composed of stone and beaten earth, but it served its purpose, and soon the fire was transferred to its new home, and Don turned to Anna and smiled.

"This is one of your jobs, Some Girl," he said. "We'll supply you with fuel, but you'll have to keep the fire burning. A fruit diet is all very well in its way, but we hope to have something more substantial sometimes."

The dusk found the little party gathered round a blazing fire, and another fruit meal was consumed.

A visit into the jungle had provided the party with another store of bananas and the famous sapodilla plum.

It was agreed that the shelter should be used as a larder, and sleeping-quarters for Anna, the rest of the youngsters making themselves comfortable under the shadow of the cliff on heaps of dried leaves.

The night was warm and balmy, and long after the others had gone to sleep Don and Taga sat beside the fire talking together.

Don realised that Taga would be the real mainstay of the party, for, as a native of the islands, he would know all that this island could offer for their maintenance and comfort.

It was a big job that Donald Gordon had taken on his shoulders, but his stout young heart never faltered; he felt himself responsible for his group of chums, and he registered a vow that he would see things through.

Missing!

A HALF-HOUR'S swim on the lagoon was brought to an end by Anna's clear voice sounding in the distance: "Breakfast! Breakfast!"

And the group of hungry youths, with Taga leading the way, tore back to the cliffs.

Some Girl was taking her position very seriously. She had arranged six small boulders in a circle under the lee of the cliff, and on each boulder was a large leaf; each leaf was laden with a portion of honey, three or four bananas, and a couple of the luscious plums.

"It is the best I could do," Anna said, "but I want some of you to get some coconuts. There are heaps and heaps about, and as soon as you'll get them I can make cups for you; then we won't keep having to use the dipper."

"That's all right, Some Girl," Tommy said, as he seated himself at one of the small boulders. "We'll get the coconuts for you; as long as you don't ask for deer-steak or pig's trotters, I don't mind."

Anna laughed, waving her fingers at the stout youngster.

"I don't want deer-steaks, Tommy," she said, "but I shall expect a goat presently, for there are goats here."

"No—where?"

Anna wrinkled her black brows together

and pointed to the left, where the smooth shoulder of a hill was revealed beyond the jungle.

"I saw a little flock of goats come out there while I was getting breakfast ready," she declared. "There must be splendid pasture for them up on that hill, for, of course, they never come into the jungle."

Tommy shaded his eyes and glanced in the direction indicated by Anna.

"Great Scott!" he said. "That's miles and miles away. I'd die before I got there."

"Oh, no, you won't!" Val put in with a chuckle. "You can start as soon as you like. Your job is to supply us with meat; and Anna has seen goats, so you must get one!"

"But, hang it, how can I? I haven't a blinking gun or even a bow and arrow. How am I to get them—lasso the dashed things, or what?"

Scat thrust his owl-like face forward.

"If I might proffer a suggestion, Tommy," he said, "I should say that you—you might put some—some salt—salt on their tails! That's a good way!"

Tommy flung a banana-peel at his tutor, who ducked just in time.

"You've done something for me, Some Girl," Tommy wept on, with a shake of his head towards the smiling girl. "These fellows won't be satisfied until I come back humping a great, fat billy-goat on my shoulder!"

"Oh, we'll give you plenty of time!" said Don. "You can go and have a look round and see what the ground's like. Perhaps Taga'll lend you a hand for the first time."

Taga rose to his feet with his good-humoured smile.

"Me go along with Tommy fella. Get goat fella bi'mby," he declared.

After breakfast a start was made, and a suitable clearing prepared for the hut that Don had decided to build.

It was then that, with the coming of the rainy season they would have to have a shelter, and it might be several months before the building was completed.

Tommy and Taga, therefore, started off on their first hunting trip while the others worked under Don's quiet instructions.

First a search was made in the jungle, and several trees were chosen as corner-posts for the structure. Then, taking turn about with the small axe, the little party managed to bring down a couple of slender trees, which, deprived of their leaves, were carried laboriously over the sandy beach and deposited under the cliff.

It was going to be a long job, and one they could not be hurried. During the hot

hours of the afternoon, between two and four, Don wisely brought the labours to a close, and another foraging party into the jungle was carried out.

This time they located a number of coconut-palms, but, after several attempts to climb the slender trunks, they had to give up the task. Don had managed to get half-way up one, but he had slid down again.

"We'll have to wait for Taga," he declared. "Those fellows have the knack of climbing."

Their visit, however, was not altogether fruitless, for they found five or six great, knobby husks which had fallen from the tree on the previous year, and, after removing the fibre, they carried away the hard shell.

The interior fruit and juice had long since dried up, but Anna was quite content with the treasure trove. Under her instructions Scat set about to saw the coconut-shells in half with the knife, a task that took him the

best part of a couple of hours. At the end of that period he was able to lay before Anna six cups, which the girl carefully arranged along a ledge of the cliff that she already called her "dresser."

Somewhere about dusk, Val, who had scrambled off along the rocky stretch of ground beyond the bay, suddenly raised a whoop; and Don and Scat, hurrying down to where the excited youngster stood, found Val up to his knees in a small pool. In the pool were three or four plump, greyish blue-headed fish, rather like a mullet in appearance.

"They were left by the tide," Val shouted. "Quick! Come here and give me a hand!"

Don and Scat came to assistance, and, after rather a tussle, the fish were hooked out of their trap on to the rocks.

"It's all right," Scat declared. "They are mullet—sea mullet—and I bet they make very good eating, too!"

With their treasure trove the trio returned to the cliff, and Anna hailed them with delight.

The fish weighed about three pounds, and Anna commenced cooking them in native fashion. They were wrapped in several folds of banana and palm leaves; then, after the fire had been allowed to turn into embers, the leaves were covered with sand and placed on the embers.

"I've seen the Queensland natives cook the fish this way," Anna declared, "and I think you'll find them delicious."

Half an hour later, when the fish were removed from their protective casing and placed on other leaves, Don, Val, and Scat tasted them and verified Anna's statement.

One of the fish was set aside for the absent hunters, and as the dusk began to settle over the island, Don started to grow anxious.

"I know Taga is all right," he said to Val, "but Tommy's such an obstinate ass, and Taga's a good sort. I hope that nothing has happened to them."

But something had happened to Tommy and his brown-skinned companion—and, as Don had feared, it was all Tommy's fault.

In the first place, they had lost their way owing to Tommy's obstinacy. As Chief Hunter of the island, he had insisted on Taga keeping one pace behind him when they had entered the jungle, and as Tommy's idea of shaping a course was extremely vague, and consisted chiefly of taking the easiest path that came in front of him, no matter what direction it took, the result was that somewhere about

(Continued on page 18.)



"Look here, chaps," said Don, "I hope you all realise that we're on a desert island, and it was only by a wonderful stroke of luck that we were not all drowned. Now it is up to us to make the best of our lot, so I propose we vote one of us as leader."

"TAKING DOWN AUBREY RACKE."

(Continued from page 9.)

"He do—he does!" said Cardew of the Fourth. "Can I give you a hand up, Crooke?"

"Mind your own business, confound you!" gasped Crooke. Racks glared down savagely at Crooke. He had had the best of that scrap, at all events, whatever was to happen to him on Saturday. With a sneer on his face, Racke turned back into the study, and slammed the door. He felt somewhat solaced now.

Crooke staggered to his feet, but he did not approach the study. He limped away, dabbing his nose, followed by chortles and sarcastic remarks from the crowd of juniors.

At prep that evening in Study No. 7, there was silence, and black looks were exchanged. Racke and Crooke did not linger for the usual little game of nap or banker after prep. Crooke tramped out of the study and slammed the door—and Racke, who did not care to go down to the Common-room and face the mocking eyes there, remained alone in the study smoking cigarettes. There was some satisfaction in licking Crooke and putting a stop to his veiled taunts; but Racke was not in a happy mood that evening. He wished sincerely that he had let Grimes severely alone. But it was rather too late to think of that now.

CHAPTER 7.

To Fight, or Not to Fight!

TOM MERRY joined Racke as the Shell came out after lessons on Saturday morning. He did not heed the black scowl on Aubrey's face.

"Start about two, Racke!" he said.

"Go and eat coke!"

"We've got to drop into 'Sands' shop, you know," said Tom, unheeding. "You've got a little account to pay there."

"I shall pay nothing!"

"Then it's a bit of a walk to the green," said Tom. "Nothing like starting in time!"

"As a matter of fact, I'm going home to see my people this afternoon," said Racke.

The captain of the Shell shook his head.

"You're not!" he said tersely.

"Do you think you are going to dictate to me, Tom Merry?" asked Racke, between his teeth.

"In this matter—yes! You've disgraced the school by making a dirty hooligan attack on a village kid," said Tom. "Now you want to disgrace it further by refusing to answer for what you've done. You won't be allowed. Be ready at two!"

"Well, I sha'n't!"

"We shall see!" said Tom, with a shrug of the shoulders, and he turned his back on Aubrey.

Aubrey Racke tramped out into the quadrangle with a moody brow. He was quite determined not to meet Grimes—if he could help it. But it was beginning to look very doubtful whether he would be able to help it. He had determined to visit his home that afternoon, to get clear of the whole affair. But getting away from St. Jim's was likely to be a matter of some difficulty, on this occasion. After dinner he knew that a good many eyes would be upon him.

After some thought, Racke decided to cut dinner, and walk down to Wayland. He strolled in a careless sort of way towards the gates. A group of juniors were standing there.

Tom Merry detached himself from the group as Racke came sauntering by.

"Going out?" he asked.

"Yes!" snapped Racke.

"Can't be did!"

"Let me pass!" hissed Racke: "I'm going to take a stroll before dinner."

"Take it in the quad."

"I'll do as I choose."

"I rather think not," said the captain of the Shell coolly.

"You'll have to walk over me, anyhow."

"You see, dear man," remarked Monty Lowther, "your stroll before dinner might be a prolonged one. It might last over tea-time, in the circles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Wacke, you give a chap the impression that you are twyin' to dodge, you know. I should be vevy sowwy to think that

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that was the case, but it weally looks vevy much like it, bai Joye!"

"It really does!" chortled Blake.

Racke clenched his hands hard. But there was no possibility of forcing his way out, and he unclenched his hands again, and walked away. He took the path under the ancient elms, close to the school wall, and stopped where the slanting oak grew. Climbing the wall at that point was not difficult—in ordinary circumstances. But the circumstances now were extraordinary! As Racke stopped at the oak, a cheery voice called out behind him:

"Chuck it, Racke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three were strolling along the path towards him. Racke muttered a curse, and grasped the oak to climb.

Monty Lowther quickly ran forward, and laid hold of his leg.

"Come down, dear boy!" said Lowther.

"Let go, you rotter!"

"Kim on, old bean!"

Racke came down from the slanting trunk with a bump. He sat on the ground and howled, and the Terrible Three smiled at him.

"N. G., old top!" said Manners. "You're not going out until you start to meet Grimey!"

"You rotters!" gasped Racke.

He rose and stalked away, and the chums of the Shell strolled after him. Racke comprehended that they did not intend to lose sight of him until dinner, and he gave it up. He went savagely into the School House. His face was grim when he appeared at the dinner-table—a contrast to the smiling faces round him. Everybody but Racke seemed to be looking forward to the afternoon's entertainment.

After dinner Racke had no chance of dodging. Quite a little army of juniors gathered round him as they left the dining-hall. Racke went to his study, and the army camped in the corridor, keeping up a cheery conversation there. Racke made the interesting discovery that his key had been removed from his study door, so it was not possible for him to lock himself in. And when there was a sound of furniture moving in the study, the door was pushed open. Racke, in the act of wheeling a heavy desk towards the door, stopped, and glared at the Terrible Three.

"Get out of my study!" he hissed.

"My hat! A merry barring-out!" chuckled Lowther.

"Do you mind if we keep the door open, Racke?"

"Yes, I do!"

"That's unfortunate—because we're going to keep it open!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Racke glared furiously at the grinning crowd outside the doorway.

"I'm fed up with this!" he said, between his teeth. "I'm not going out at two o'clock! You'll let me alone, or I'll speak to the Housemaster."

It was Racke's last card.

But it was not a trump, as he hoped. It did not seem to affect Tom Merry & Co. when he played it.

"You can speak to Mr. Raitton as soon as you like," said Tom Merry. "But if you do, Mr. Raitton will hear the whole story. I warn you of that. I fancy you'd find it better to meet Grimes. But please yourself."

And Racke, on reflection, decided that he would not care to take his chance with the Housemaster. Mr. Raitton's opinion of his attack on Grimes he could guess in advance.

When two o'clock rang out from the clock-tower, Tom Merry slid off his seat on the corner of Racke's study table.

"Time!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! Come along, Wacke!"

"I won't!"

Tom slipped his arm through Racke's. Manners took possession of Racke's other arm.

"March!" chortled Blake.

In the midst of a grinning crowd, Racke was marched out of the study. He was marched down the corridor, and down the staircase. Blake dodged into Study No. 6 for a bag containing the boxing-gloves, and hurried after the party, and rejoined them in the quad. Half-way to the gates Racke made a last effort.

"Let me go, you rotters—"

"Come on!"

"I'll shout to Kildare!"

Kildare of the Sixth was walking at a little distance with Darrel. The two prefects took to heed of the merry crowd of juniors; but a yell for help from Racke would certainly have drawn their attention.

"Shout away!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

Racke opened his mouth—and closed it again. The story of his cowardly attack on Grimes was not one that could be told to a prefect. The hapless cad of the Shell realised that there was no help for him; he had to answer for his sins. With a black brow, he tramped out at the gates of St. Jim's in the midst of a cheery crowd of more than twenty fellows.

CHAPTER 8.

Brought up to the Scratch.

AUBREY RACKE walked down Rylcombe Lane with glinting eyes and a scowling brow. From the gates, Crooke and Mellish, and two or three more of Racke's set, watched him start. It did not seem to occur to them to lend their pal a helping hand in his extremity; in fact, they seemed to derive considerable amusement from the scene.

"Poor old Racke!" remarked Mellish. "He's fairly booked this time—what?"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Crooke, rubbing his nose. Crooke's nose still showed signs of the rift in the lute in Study No. 7.

"Dashed fun!" said Clampe of the Shell. "Why the deuce can't he go in and lick the village cad—what!—without all this fuss? I would!"

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. "Racke would land on the job to you, if you offered, Clampe!"

Whereupon Clampe bestowed a kick upon Baggy Trimble as a reward for his untimely remark.

Racke gave a bitter look back at his friends as he went. But he was soon out of their sight.

It was a fine, frosty afternoon, and all the juniors enjoyed the walk down the lane—with the exception of Aubrey Racke. Aubrey was not in a mood just then for enjoying anything.

"Halt!" sang out Tom Merry, as the party came up to Mr. Sands' grocery shop in the village High Street.

"Halt it is!" said Blake.

"Now, Racke—"

"Go to the dickens!" growled Racke.

"You've got some business to settle with Mr. Sands!"

"I haven't, confound you!"

"Three-and-sixpence—"

"Rot!"

"Are you going to pay up?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No."

"Grimes has had three-and-six deducted from his screw for the damage you did, Racke. It's up to you to square."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am weally surprised at you, Wacke; for twyin' to crawl out of your just responsibilities in this wotten mannah!"

"I won't pay a penny!" said Racke, breathing hard. "I wish I'd damaged the low ruffian a little more. Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Wacke—"

"You refuse to pay?" asked Tom.

"Yes, hang you!" said Racke. "And you can't make me!"

"I think we can try!" smiled Tom Merry. "My idea is that you ought to walk in and tell Mr. Sands it was all your fault, and hand over the money, so that he can refund it to Grimes. See?"

"Rats!"

"Then we shall have to walk on as far as the Red Cow," said Tom. "There's a horse-trough there."

"What the thump do you want with a horse-trough?" asked Racke uneasily.

"You are going to have your head put in it, dear man, and held there until you decide to do the decent thing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March!" said Blake.

"Come on, Racke!"

"Look here, I—I—I don't mind squaring the three-and-six!" gasped Racke. "I—I'll do it. What's three-and-six to me, anyhow?"

"Quite so! It's a little enough to you," agreed Tom Merry, "but it's a lot to Grimes. If you've made up your mind, come in, and no more palaver."

Aubrey Racke had made up his mind. The horse-trough in prospect had helped him to make it up quite suddenly.

He entered the grocery shop with half a dozen of the juniors, the rest remaining outside.

Mr. Sands glanced inquiringly at the little crowd as they came in. Tom Merry gave Racke a significant look.

"Go it!" he said.

Racke fumbled in his pockets for loose cash. He laid three shillings and sixpence on the counter.

"What's this?" asked the surprised grocer.

"What is this?" asked the surprised grocer.

"I—I upset Grimes on his bike the other day!" stammered Racke. "I—I caused the damage, Mr. Sands."

"Oh, did you?" grunted Mr. Sands. "Yes, I hear you've stopped three-and-sixpence for the damage, so I—I want to pay it!"

"I—I want to pay it!"

"I—I want to pay it!"

"I—I want to pay it!"

"I—I want to pay it!"

"The—the fact is—" stammered Racke.

"Racke's got an explanation to make, Mr. Sands," said Monty Lowther. "Give him time. He's rather bashful!"

"I—I upset Grimes on his bike the other day," stammered Racke, as there was no help for it. "I—I caused the damage, Mr. Sands."

"Oh, did you?" grunted Mr. Sands.

"Yes, I hear you've stopped three-and-six for the damage, so I—I want to pay it."

Mr. Sands smiled genially.

"That's very honourable and straightforward of you, Master Racke," he said. "I quite understand. I'll see that Grimes has the money."

Racke swung away savagely. The sum of three-and-sixpence was a matter of no moment at all to the wealthy profiteer's son, but parting with it in these circumstances went very much against the grain. But Aubrey Racke was in the hands of the Amalekites, and there was no help for him. He would have been glad enough if the affair had ended there. But it was by no means at an end yet.

As he stalked out of the grocer's shop, the merry crowd of juniors closed round him again.

"This way for the stricken field of battle!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Don't be impatient, Racke! You'll be there soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke looked anything but impatient for the field of battle. He cast a longing look in the opposite direction.

"March!" chortled Blake.

The juniors marched again. Down the High Street went the merry crowd, with the scowling Racke in their midst.

They turned off at the village green. At the upper end of the green, close to the village, a football match was going on. The lower end was well away from the houses, and quite secluded enough for the purposes of the party from St. Jim's. As they walked across the green they sighted three youths waiting in the distance under the old oaks.

"They're there!" remarked Jack Blake. "Look at Racke's fery eye gleaming at sight of the foe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters," began Racke desperately. "I'm not going to fight a village cad here!"

"You are, dear boy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am shocked at you, Wacke! Pway



Racke laid three shillings and sixpence on the counter. "What is this?" asked the surprised grocer. "I—I upset Grimes on his bike the other day!" stammered Racke. "I—I caused the damage, Mr. Sands." "Oh, did you?" grunted Mr. Sands. "Yes, I hear you've stopped three-and-sixpence for the damage, so I—I want to pay it!"

scrowed up your couwage to the stickin' point, and wemembah that you belong to St. Jim's!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severly. "You have the bonah of the school in your hands at the present moment, Wacke."

"You silly idiot!" snarled Racker.
 "Bai Jove! If you chawactewise me as a silly idiot, Wacke—"

"You dummy!"
 "I wufese to be called a dummay. Pway stop a few minutes, deah boys, while I give Wacke a feahful thwashin'."
 "Back-pedal, old top," said Blake. "Racker's going to get a thrashing from Grimes, and one's enough. Stow it!"
 "Weally, Blake—"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry, as the St. Jim's party came up to the quiet spot where Grimes, Pilcher, and Crages were waiting. "Top of the afternoon, old scouts! We've brought our man. He's raging for gore!"
 "Yearning for combat!" said Blake. "Look at him, Grimy! If you feel nervous—"

Grimes chuckled.
 "I'm ready!" he said.
 "We can hardly hold Racker back, so buckle to," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You rotters!" said Racker, gritting his teeth. "If you think I'm afraid of a grocery cad—"

"Well, appearances may be deceptive," remarked Manners. "But it certainly looks like it."
 "I don't choose to fight a low hound," said Racker, with a sneer, "and I won't!"

"You can't back out at this stage," said Monty Lowther. "Tommy, your principal's got the wind up!"

"Remember, I'm your second, Racker," urged Tom Merry. "Try to do your Form captain a little credit."
 "I never asked you to be my second, you rotter!"

"Are you ready?"
 "No, hang you!"
 "Look 'ere," said Grimes, "if the feller's funky, I'm not going to 'it' im. Let 'im sneak orf!"

"That's not good enough," said Tom Merry.
 "I should rather think not!" roared Grundy of the Shell, in great wrath. "If Racker don't fight Grimes, he's going to fight me!"

"What a merry alternative!" smiled Monty Lowther. "I should advise you, as a friend, to take on Grimes, Racker."
 "Bai, Jove! Of all the wotten funks—"

Racker breathed hard. There was no help for him. And even Racker was sensitive to the scorn in all the faces round him. He did not want to have the finger of scorn pointed at him as a hopeless funk. He scrowed up his courage to the sticking-point, as Arthur Augustus had advised, and fastened on the gloves.

"I'm ready!" he snarled.
 "Bravo!"
 "The blood of all the Rackes is boiling in his veins now!" said Monty Lowther. "Think of the record of the Racke family in the war, old scout, and live up to it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.
 "I'm ready, I tell you!" howled Racker. "Not so much jaw! Let the rotten cad come on!"

"Trot out your ticker, Gussy, and keep time," said Tom.
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy produced his handsome gold watch. The St. Jim's juniors formed a ring round the battleground. And Racker—not at all eagerly, but with a sort of desperate determination—stepped up and toed the line.

**CHAPTER 9.
 Racker's Way.**

"TIME!"
 "Go it!"
 Grimes started the first round with a grin on his rugged face. Racker's expression was bitter and malevolent.

The cad of the Shell was in for it now; and he had savagely resolved to do his best. Indeed, as he was a bigger fellow than Grimes, and had had more opportunity for boxing practice, the advantage ought to have been with him. He rushed in desperately, and forced the fighting from the start.

The grin died off Grimes' face as he received Racker's right fairly on his nose, and Racker's left following it up on his chin. Grimes gasped and staggered back.

Racker followed him up savagely, hitting out, and Grimes went to grass with a crash.
 "Ow!" spluttered Grimes. "Ow!"

"Bai Jove!"
 "Count!" shouted Racker, as Grimes sprawled in the grass.

"Yaas, bai Jove! One—two—three—four—five—"

Grimes was up again before Arthur Augustus reached six. Racker was watching him, and he piled in furiously before the grocer's boy was fairly on his feet. Grimes stalled him off as well as he could; but Grimes was not well-versed in the boxer's art. Racker's heavy blows came home again and again, and Grimes was knocked all round the ring, gasping and spluttering, and he went down again at last, with a crash.

"Time!"
 Arthur Augustus rapped out the word.
 Racker stepped back, grinning breathlessly. Grimes lay sprawling and gasping, looking quite dizzy. Pilcher picked him up and made a knee for him.

"You'll have to pull yourself together, old sport!" murmured Pilcher. "Don't let 'im get at you like that ag'in!"
 "Ow!" murmured Grimes. "Wow!"

Racker's face was savagely triumphant now. He felt that he had the advantage, and that Grimes would not get over the punishment of the first round very easily. The cad of the Shell no longer regretted that Tom Merry & Co. had brought him up to the scratch. An easy victory, without damage to himself, was just what Racker wanted. And, feeling that he was going to be victorious, he inwardly resolved to give Grimes the thrashing of his life. After the scrap, Grimes should be just able to crawl away—that was Racker's intention now.

When Arthur Augustus called "Time!" for the second round, Aubrey Racker stepped up quite briskly.

But he was rather mistaken in Grimes. The hard punishment he had received did not make Grimes falter. It hardened him, and he came up to the scratch in a grim and determined mood.

Racker tried his rushing tactics again, and Grimes received several hefty punches. But he returned them with interest, and he did not go to grass again. That round was hard-fought on both sides, and when it ended, Racker's nose was streaming red, and he was feeling far from triumphant. He had received less punishment than Grimes, but he was feeling its effects much more.

"Not so bad for you, Racker," said his second cheerily, as he sponged Aubrey's crimson nose. "You're backing up rippingly!"

"Yaas, wathah! I weally nevah thought that Wacke had so much beef in him!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

Racker only scowled by way of reply.
 "Time!"

In the third round, Grimes had the advantage. A rather painful jab on the chin sickened Racker; he could not face punishment. He backed away, and defended himself in a hurried way, and Grimes mowed him all round the ring, grinding again now.

"Is this a walking match?" inquired Blake.
 "Looks as if it's going to be a running match soon!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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But taunts could not move Racke now. He was showing the white feather with a vengeance.

He squirmed and dodged and backed, and was quite breathless with his exertions to escape close quarters when D'Arcy called "Time!"

"Buck up, for goodness' sake, Racke!" Tom Merry murmured to him. "You're simply asking for a licking, dodging around like that!"

"Mind your own business!" hissed Racke.

"Time!"

"Go it, Racke!" howled the St. Jim's juniors, in great wrath and indignation at Racke's tactics in the fourth round.

The cad of the Shell was bent on dodging blows, and he seemed to have forgotten attack altogether. His nerve, such as it was, had petered out. He yelled when Grimes' knuckles came home on his already swollen nose—and then, at a tap on the chest, he fell to the grass.

"You needn't count, Gussy!" said Blake. "Racke's malingering! You could count a hundred before he'd get up!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "I refuse to count you out, you wotten funk!"

"Get up, Racke!"

"Funk!"

"Get up, you malingerer!"

"My eye!" said Pilcher to Craggs. "Jever see such a rotten funk?"

Racke staggered up, his face black with rage. Malingering did not serve his turn; the fight had to go on to a finish. Grimes, with a cheery grin on his battered face, came out, punching hard. Racke backed and dodged, and wound and turned, gasping and panting.

Suddenly he made a spring to escape.

He dodged through a gap in the ring, and fled across the green, so quickly that not a hand could be raised to stop him.

"My word!" gasped Grimes.

The St. Jim's juniors stood petrified for a moment. They stared blankly after the fleeing figure of Aubrey Racke.

"Come back, you funk!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! Come back, Wacke, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I told you-it would turn into a running match!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Ten to one on Racke!"

"The awful rotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in disgust.

"Racke—do you hear, Racke? Come back, you funk!"

Racke barged on at top-speed. Wild horses would not have dragged him back to face Grimes' hammering fists again. In that moment of panic he was impervious to scorn.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slipped his watch back into his pocket.

"Grimes wins!" he said.

"What a win!" murmured Blake.

"Look here, I'm going to fetch that rotten coward back!" roared Grundy. And Grundy of the Shell started in pursuit.

"Your win, Grimes, old man," said Tom Merry, laughing, "such as it is!"

"My word!" was all Grimes could say.

Grimes put on his jacket, with Pilcher's help, and walked away to the fountain on the green to bathe his face, with Pilcher and Craggs. The three Rycombe lads were chuckling.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"What a sell!" said Blake. "We ought to have watched him better! This affair is a credit to St. Jim's—I don't think!"

"We'll send the rotten funk to Coventry!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pick up Racke's jacket, Tommy—you're his second!" grinned Manners. "He's forgotten his jacket; he was in such a hurry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry threw Aubrey Racke's elegant jacket over his arm. The St. Jim's party walked off the green, in a wrathful and indignant mood. Racke, in his shirtsleeves, had already disappeared in the distance, with George Alfred Grundy going strong on his track. But Grundy was not likely to overtake the fugitive before he reached St. Jim's. Aubrey Racke had never distinguished himself on the cinder-path—but he was distinguishing himself now, and displaying hitherto unsuspected running powers.

Grundy of the Shell met Tom Merry & Co. when they arrived at the school.

"Catch him?" asked Blake.

"Not before he got into his study!" said Grundy, with a snort. "He wouldn't come out, so I laid into him with a five-bat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think he's sorry by this time that he bolted," said Grundy; "I broke the thing on him. Luckily, it was Racke's!"

That evening was not a happy one for Aubrey Racke. He was feeling the effects of the fight with Grimes, and still more severely the effects of his subsequent interview with George Alfred Grundy. And during the evening nearly every junior in the School House looked into Study No. 7 in the Shell, to tell Racke what he thought of him. Even Baggy Trimble looked in, with lofty scorn in his fat face, and talked to him—and Racke lacked even sufficient energy to kick Trimble out. And Aubrey Racke derived no consolation whatever from the knowledge that he had only himself to thank.

THE END.

AUBREY RACKE figures largely in next week's splendid yarn called

"RACKE TO THE RESCUE."

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"THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE."

(Continued from page 13.)



The three chums hooked the fish from out of their trap on the rocks. "They're mullet!" cried Scat. "Sea mullet, and I bet they make very good eating!" With their treasure trove the trio returned to the cliff, and Anna hailed them with delight.

noon they found themselves in the heart of an almost impenetrable stretch of creeper-entwined trees.

A hot vapour seemed to rise from the ground, and after struggling on under these conditions for a mile or so, Tommy gave it up.

"This is a blinking tricky path we're in," he remarked to Taga, mopping the sweat from his brow. "For goodness sake, let's get out of it! Not even a goat would be fool enough to come in here, I know."

Taga grinned; in fact, Taga always grinned. He had an undercurrent of irresistible humour that no sort of circumstance could efface.

"Am pretty bad path," he admitted; "but I think this fella know the way."

Taga set to work then, and Tommy, who was by this time an animated sweat-drop, toiled laboriously in the wake of the brown-skinned native.

Just how Taga managed to get through that awful tangle of vines and creepers and thorn-bushes without getting so much as a scrape on his body was a constant source of amazement and annoyance to his stout companion.

Tommy's attire was rather sketchy, for it consisted of a pair of ragged shorts and a shirt that did not boast of sleeves, and that fragile covering seemed to be constantly getting hung

up with the thorns and creeper. Long before they cleared the mass of jungle Tommy had collected a very splendid assortment of various spikes and thorns in the more fleshy parts of his anatomy.

When they reached the clear ground Tommy saw a long stretch of verdant turf running away ahead, broken here and there by patches of scrub.

Taga, the indefatigable, was still striding onward in his light, buoyant way, and Tommy hailed him.

"Look here, old chap," he said. "You seem to be made of steel and catgut, but I'm hanged if I can go any farther. You can follow the blinking goats if you like, but I'll wait here. I don't care tuppence if we never get meat. I'm finished."

Tommy struggled on to the shadow of a friendly bush, and seated himself down heavily. Taga came back, and nodded his head sympathetically at the sweating, exhausted youngster.

"All right, Master Tommy," he said; "I go off after dem fella goats, and mebbe bring one along bi'a-bl. You wait here, eh?" Tommy was gingerly removing several of the more barbarous thorns from his body, and he gave Taga a grin.

"Right-ho! I'll wait for you," he said. Taga went off, and Tommy continued his painful surgical operations; then, when most of the thorns had been removed, he lay flat on his back, staring up at the blue sky, until at last fatigue claimed him, and Tommy fell fast asleep.

When one goes to sleep with one's mouth open, flat on one's back, there's a musical accompaniment that follows that procedure, and Tommy, unknown to himself, was snoring like a pig.

How long he remained in slumber he did not know. He was aroused suddenly by a hot, wet breath on his face, and opening his eyes, he found himself looking straight into another pair of orbs—a long face, with a grey patch of whisker, and above it two terrifying horns.

"Wow! Please, I—I—" "Phoo!"

(Next week there will be another Splendid Long Instalment of this fine Serial. Don't miss it!)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Half-a-crown is paid for each contribution printed on this page.

If your name is not here this week it may be next.

THESE DANGEROUS DAYS.

Buzz, buzz! The pedestrian paused at the intersection of two busy cross-streets, and nervously looked about him. A motor-car was rushing straight at him from one direction, a motor-bike from another, a steam-truck was approaching from behind, and a taxi was racing forward. He looked up, and saw an aeroplane directly above him. It was descending rapidly. There was but one chance. Luckily, he was standing on a manhole cover. He lifted the lid and dropped into cover—just in time to be run over by an underground train.—Donald Cottee, 55, Spofforth Street, Cremorne, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

WORSE THAN THAT.

The worried countenance of the bridegroom disturbed the best man. Tiptoeing up the aisle, he whispered: "What's the matter, Sandy? Have ye lost the ring?" "No," replied the unhappy man, "the ring's safe, but, mon, I've lost my enthusiasm!"—John F. Little, High Street, Ararat, Victoria, Australia.

THE FUSS.

"What's all that fuss over in that corner?" "That's Mrs. Naggs sending a telegram to her husband!" "Yes, I know; but why all the fuss?" "Oh, she's trying to tell him exactly what she thinks of him in twelve words!"—H. Eastlake, 151, Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

THE CAUSE OF CHARITY.

Jacky: "Please mum, let me have sixpence for a poor lam's man." Mum: "Who is the poor lame man?" Jacky: "Er—well, he's the ticket seller at the circus."—Glyn Dummer, 6, Maes-y-Cwrt, Port Talbot, South Wales.

COGENT REASONS.

"I am here, gentlemen," explained the pickpocket to his fellow prisoners, "as the result of a moment of abstraction." "And I," said the incendiary, "because of an unfortunate habit of mine of making light of things." "And I," said the forger, "on account of a simple desire to make a name for myself." "And I," added the burglar, "through nothing but taking advantage of an opening which was offered in a large mercantile establishment."—Miss H. Reid, Dovecote Cottages, Morpeth.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.

The human liver weighs four pounds. Mustard was first made in France. A hundred and ten sugar canes would make ten pounds of sugar. The Severn Tunnel is 22,992 feet long. Nothing can decay if kept perfectly dry. Canada was formerly called Hochelaga. In South Africa goats are employed to drive sheep. A shark can keep up a speed of from 17.20 miles per hour. The balance-wheel of a watch travels close on 3,550 miles a year. Forty-eight different materials are used in the construction of a piano. Some varieties of earthworms in South Africa attain the length of sixty feet. A British 10d. stamp of 1865 (brown) was recently sold in London for £240.—N. Kelly, Danesfort, Donoghadee, co. Down, Ireland.

HONG KONG'S SHIPPING.

In the possession of Great Britain, Hong Kong has become a thriving centre of industry and commerce. Shipping is, of course, vital to the welfare of the district. The harbour is famous for its accommodation of vessels of all types. To Hong Kong comes the shipping of the whole world. No primary products come from the island. There are many factories and prosperous business establishments, but practically all the shipping trade has to do with China itself. Hong Kong is the depot and the entrepot for a vast carrying trade, and its tonnage statistics rival any port in the world.—Hugh Lim, 41, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:



RAM DARRY

The Mystery Man

Written by Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.

Last week's instalment told how Madeleine Stanton was captured by Ram Darry, the leader of a strange secret society, who is trying to obtain a wonderful diamond, known as the Sun of Siva. This jewel is in the possession of the millionaire's daughter.

Nearing the End.

BRUTELL was pretty sure that he would be able to recognise the men who had captured Madeleine if he saw them.

There was plenty of information to work upon.

At length Mrs. Browning neared the end of her story. Her voice was beginning to falter, and presently she stopped speaking altogether.

"Is there anything more you have to say?" asked Brutell, in a kindly voice.

"There is nothing," was the reply. "My mind is now a complete blank."

Dr. Brutell came to the conclusion that this was the point where Ram Darry had seized hold of Mrs. Browning, and hypnotised her. She had told all she knew, so he broke the spell, and a moment or two later the housekeeper was her normal self again.

The experiment had been an undoubted success, and there was every hope that Madeleine would soon be found, and her freedom regained once more.

Dr. Brutell and the detective discussed the matter for a few moments, and then they decided upon a plan of campaign.

"I know where there is a curio shop which is much frequented by Orientals," remarked the detective. "It is just possible that we shall find the people we want there. Anyway, the place is something of a mystery, and it may be worth investigating."

The doctor agreed that this was so, and the two men set out upon their search.

Meanwhile, Ram Darry and his assistants had already returned to their headquarters behind the old curio shop in the city.

Madeleine, who was by now almost exhausted, was taken into the room which served as a temple for this strange Eastern society. She was now completely in their power, and the poor girl had no idea at all what her ultimate fate would be.

Ram Darry pointed to a chair, and told the girl to be seated.

"We shall treat you with all the honours of a princess, and no harm will come to you if you will obey our will!"

The leader glanced at Madeleine, and waited for her reply.

"And what is it you want me to do?" she asked.

"You must reveal to us without delay where the great jewel known as the Sun of Siva is," muttered Ram Darry, his eyes glinting.

Madeleine gave a start when she heard the name of the jewel mentioned. The Sun of Siva was the name of the wonderful diamond presented to her by her father some years ago.

This was the reason, then, for the queer behaviour of these men. Now she knew why they desired to make her a prisoner.

It was plain that they were very eager indeed to obtain the Sun of Siva, and

Madeleine wondered why this should be so. She was quite unaware of the strange legend which was attached to it, and of its remarkable history.

It also puzzled her to know how they gained the information that it was in her keeping.

Mr. Robert Stanton's plucky daughter obstinately refused to give her questioner any information at all about the diamond. He repeated his questions concerning it, and was growing very angry indeed, but Madeleine would not give way.

Finding that a grueling cross-examination was of no use, Ram Darry resorted to threats in an effort to force the girl to give him the information he desired.

"Where is the Sun of Siva hidden?" demanded the leader, in angry tones.

Although almost paralysed by the dreadful threats he made, Madeleine courageously refused to give in.

"Nothing will make me answer you," she replied simply.

Ram Darry began to realise that mere words were of no avail, so far as this fearless girl was concerned, and he prepared to take other steps to gain the required information.

But Madeleine had a friend much nearer to hand than she knew in that dreadful moment.

While she had been undergoing her cross-examination, Dr. Brutell, accompanied by the detective, had been making his way towards the place of her imprisonment.

It was an easy matter for them to make their way to the Oriental section of the city in their car, but, once having crossed the border-line, they needed to go very carefully, so that no suspicions were aroused.

The residents of this somewhat unsavoury section of the city resented strangers coming amongst them. They were all of a suspicious nature, and if they caught sight of anyone who looked like a detective, they would immediately flash the news around from one to another, so that all should be on their guard.

Many of these yellow men were engaged upon work that was not looked upon favourably by the eyes of the law.

Brutell and the detective succeeded in reaching their destination without mishap, and they hoped that they had hit upon the right spot.

They considered it more than likely that they would eventually find Madeleine hidden away in one of these sinister-looking buildings.

Here was the curio shop that they were in search of, and their task now was to gain admittance to the rooms beyond, which the detective knew were frequented by men such as those described by the housekeeper, Mrs. Browning.

Dr. Brutell glanced through the window of the shop, and he saw that it was occupied by an Oriental attendant.

This man apparently served the double purpose of attending to customers, if any, and acting as a guard to prevent people gaining access to the "temple" beyond the shop.

Judging by the very dusty nature of the contents, it looked very doubtful if the man behind the counter was ever worried very much with people desirous of purchasing goods from him.

Dr. Brutell and the detective pretended to be looking at some old antiques in the shop window; in reality, however, they were debating what would be the best plan for them to adopt to gain the end in view.

They could rush in and make an assault upon the unfortunate attendant, but they decided against this course for the following reason:

In order to put him completely out of action it would be necessary to strike him with considerable force, and this did not appeal at all to their sense of honour.

It might turn out that they had come upon a false errand and that Madeleine was miles away from this particular place.

If that proved to be the case, then a terrible injustice would have been committed upon the unsuspecting attendant.

Another plan would be to endeavour to take the fellow by surprise and tie him up and gag him. The two thought over this scheme, but they finally dismissed it, because in the event of their strategy failing, the attendant would be certain to cry out, or in some other way raise the alarm.

In the end they decided that the best way of all would be to try to win the confidence of the man, then suddenly take him by surprise, and work a bluff.

The scientist glanced through the window once more, and assured himself that the man within was not aware of their presence.

Then together they entered the shop, pretending that they were collectors of antiques, and that they desired to have a look round the shop in case there was something that they would like to buy.

The Oriental was delighted to let them do this. There could be no harm in it; it so far as he could see, and if they were foolish enough to spend money on these worthless things in the shop, well, that was their own look-out.

On the other side of the road, hidden in a convenient doorway, there were three policemen waiting. They could easily see into the shop from that position, and on receiving a certain signal from Dr. Brutell, they were to leave their hiding-place and rush in. All this had been arranged before the two men had entered.

Brutell and the detective were carefully examining a large china ornament, and the yellow man was cunningly watching them through a mirror hanging on the wall.

Brutell was not aware of this fact, and he raised his hand in order to signal to his men who were waiting. At that moment, too, the yellow man pressed a small button which was hidden under the counter. He was sending a signal to Ram Darry and the others who were in the room beyond.

The attendant grinned as he thought of his cleverness in trapping these two spies. They had thought to deceive him, but he had beaten them. The yellow man's pleased look, however, quickly turned to one of fear when he heard the sound of heavy footsteps approaching the shop.

The three policemen had lost no time in answering Brutell's signal, and with their revolvers drawn, they bounded through the doorway. By sheer force the men swept the astonished attendant out of the way, and proceeded to the rear of the shop.

A bullet from the detective's revolver quickly shattered the lock of the door in front of them, and the whole party swept hurriedly into the next room.

Brutell felt convinced that he would find Madeleine here, and his belief proved to be correct, for his eyes immediately rested upon the pale, tired face of Robert Stanton's daughter.

The girl recognised her friend at once, but by a great effort she refrained from crying out, for she deemed it wise not to give any indication that she knew the newcomer. Words could not express her great joy at seeing Dr. Brutell once more. Although things looked very black for her, she had never despaired of him coming to her assistance again.

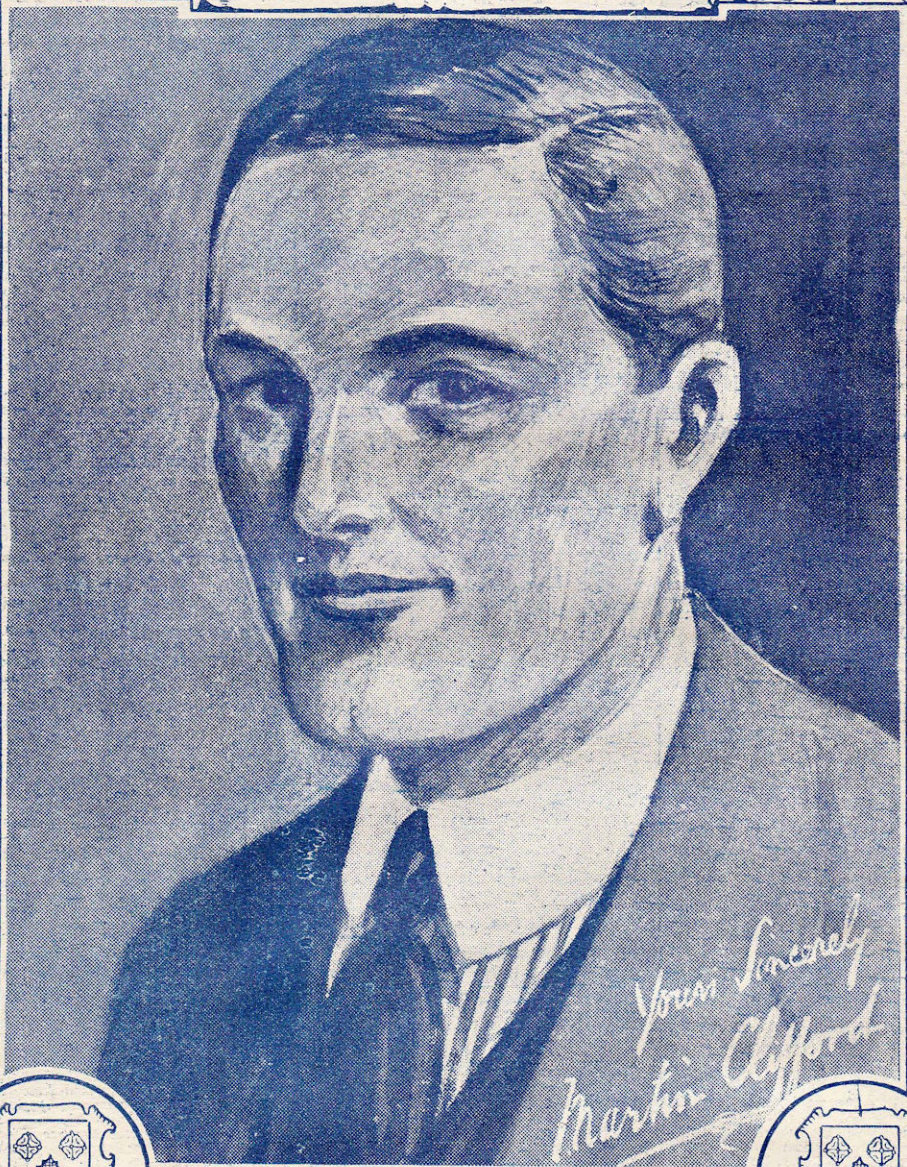
Madeleine wanted to spring up at once and help in the fight; she had suffered a good deal at the hands of these people, and it would please her very much if she could now help in their overthrow.

(To be continued next week.)

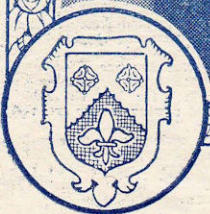
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