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This Wins Our Tuck Hamper!—AND SO WELL MANNERED!

"Did you go out last night?" asked a girl of her chum. "Yes," answered the other, "and I met such a nice, sweet boy—a regular toff, too!" "You don't say so?" asked the first girl. "Yes," replied the other, "he is real refined. He took me to a restaurant. It was so jolly, too. He poured his tea into the saucer to cool it, but he didn't blow it like common people do. He fanned it with his hat!" A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to M. Egan, 17, Wellington Terrace, Redan Hill, Aldershot, Hants.

SHE HAD HER DOUBTS!

The plumber had been hard at work for several days. At length he announced that his task was finished. "Are you sure that you understand your work properly?" asked the lady of the house suspiciously. "I should hope so, madam!" was the indignant reply. "Why?" "Oh, nothing" was the weary answer. "Only the dining-room chandelier is playing like a fountain, and both the bath-room taps are on fire!"—Morris Croft, Ayton House, Brougham Street, Hartlepool.

SARCASTIC!

The motor-car had broken down. A pair of legs protruded from the works, and occasionally noises and muttered imprecations were heard. "Break-down!" asked a passer-by. "Oh, no! Only playing hide-and-seek among the works," came the muffled but sarcastic reply. But the questioner was not easily driven away. "What horse-power car is she?" "Thirty," came the terse reply. "What appears to be the matter?" "Well, you see," said the owner of the car, crawling from underneath, red in the face, "twenty-nine of the horses have bolted, and the remaining one is too upset to answer futile and assinine questions!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Samuel Orden, 26, Slater Street, Pendleton, Manchester.

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"CANNY!"

Brown, a manufacturer's agent, and Binks, a fruit farmer, were talking shop together. "I can never understand," said Brown, "how you manage to use such an enormous quantity of pears and peaches." "Well," Binks answered, "we sell what we can, and can what we can't." "Ah," replied the other, "that's about what we do." "What's that?" "We sell an order when we can sell it, and when we can't we cancel it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. May, 36, St. John's Road, Balby, Doncaster.

FOR SALE!

The girl had jilted her sweetheart, and as he slipped the ring she had returned to him into his waistcoat-pocket, he said, "Who has supplanted me?" "I don't like to tell you," said the maiden. "Oh, do tell me! Give me his name and address." "But you want to kill him, Harold!" panted the girl. "Nothing of the kind! I am only going to sell him this ring!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Lillywhite, 73, Hargwyne, Stockwell, S.W. 9.

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A BUSINESS WOMAN!

"Look at her!" gumbled the iron-monger, indicating a departing customer. "She sent her wringer to me to be repaired, and I promised it for this week, provided that I could get a certain new part in time from the makers. I couldn't get it. Now she wants me to pay for the charwoman who came unnecessarily—half-a-crown and twopence from fare. Then she wants me to pay the laundry bill for the clothes. But that's not all. She says her husband dines out on a wash-day, and as he dined out on a wash-day that was not a wash-day—you understand!—she says I ought to pay for his dinner. No, she didn't ask anything else. And they call them the weaker sex!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. R. Penney, 25, Rosobery Gardens, Harringay, London, N. 4.

THE SPECIMEN!

The local ladies of a small town were holding an exhibition of women's work, when just before closing-time in came a terribly bedraggled specimen of a man. His face was badly scratched, his collar torn, and his clothes were in rags. "Please, I've come!" he said weakly. "But—but I really don't understand!" stammered the secretary. "This is a display of women's work!" "That's right," replied the ragamuffin: "I am a specimen of women's work!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Lee, 68, High Lea Road, New Mills, near Stockport.

SMART REPARTEE!

A young lady whilst playing tennis was the object of much laughter on account of her unusual size. On one occasion when jumping to hit a ball, a young man standing by laughed, and said: "Do you know, that reminds me of the cow jumping over the moon!" The young lady instantly replied, "But you know who laughed, don't you?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. C. George, 79, Yegol Street, Danygraig, Swansea.

ANSWERS

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PLAYING the GAME!

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Read this rollicking fine football story.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I. The Semi-Finals!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW of the Fourth looked up lazily from the depths of the armchair in Study No. 9, as Levison and Clive came into the study. Ernest Levison was looking rather grave and thoughtful; Clive as cheery as usual.

"Waitin' for you fellows!" remarked Cardew. "Where on earth have you been, all this time?" Levison looked at him. "I've been in Tom Merry's study," he answered. "Clive was waiting for me to come out."

"Tom Merry's study?" yawned Cardew. "Rather you than I, old bean. The worthy Thomas is an excellent fellow—some better—but rather a bore. Don't you think so?"

"No."

"H'm! What I like about you, Ernest, is the way you give a fellow the straight tip," said Cardew admiringly.

"No beatin' about the bush, what? No wastin' of politeness on an old pal."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Cardew," exclaimed Levison. "You know, or ought to know, why I've been in Tom Merry's quarters this evening."

Cardew looked puzzled.

"Tea-fight?" he asked.

"No, you ass!"

"Meetin' of the junior debatin' society?"

"Cheese it!"

"Politer and politer!" murmured Cardew. "If you keep on like this, Levison, you'll have jolly old Chesterfield beaten to a frazzle. Has Manners been showing you his photographs?"

"Ass!"

"Or Lowther readin' out somethin' specially good from his comic column for the 'News'?"

"Fatshead!"

"Then I give it up," said Cardew. "Can't you enlighten a fellow? You can see that I'm barein' with curiosity."

Levison gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders. Certainly Ralph Reckness Cardew did not look as if he were burning with curiosity. He looked the picture of bored laziness.

"What an ass you are, Cardew!" said Sidney Clive. "Do you mean to say you'd forgotten that it was the draw for the second round of the cup this evening?"

Cardew started.

"Blessed if I hadn't!" he said. "Sorry! I know it's a jolly important matter. You mean the Cardew Cup, I suppose? The jolly old challenge cup, founded by me, on cash supplies drawn from my respected grandfather. Really, I ought to have remembered that. How many teams left in the competition now?"

Levison did not answer. Sometimes his thoughtless and voluble study-mate tried his temper a little, and apparently he was trying it now. But Clive answered good-humouredly.

"Four! It's the semi-finals this week."

"I remember now," said Cardew, wrinkling his forehead as if in a great mental effort. "Don't scowl at a chap, Ernest, old nut, little things like this slip the memory sometimes. I assure you I've got it all at my finger-tips. Lemme see, there were eight teams in the competition, as Gussy calls it—Tom Merry's lot beat Redfern's—what?"

"Yes," said Clive.

"The merry fags of the Third beat jolly old Grundy," continued Cardew, with a look that implied that he was feeling proud of his remarkable memory in recalling these circumstances. "This study beat Recke's lot, and Figgins & Co. of the New House beat Blake's crowd. There! What a memory! Have I got them mixed?"

"No, that's all right, fatshead!" said Clive, laughing.

"So there's four crowds left," said Cardew thoughtfully,

"that makes two matches left, doesn't it? The jolly old semi-finals. And the draw has taken place? Who's this study up against?"

"Figgins & Co.," answered Clive.

"That leaves Tom Merry to deal with Wally & Co. of the Third!" said Cardew with a grin. "Rather rough luck on the fags. When are these events of transcendent importance transpirin'?"

Levison, still frowning, did not speak. But Clive gave the required information, not that Cardew was really interested. Cardew was the founder of the cup and the whole business, but he had found the whole business a bore, glad only that, as founder of the cup, he had an excuse for not joining in the fight for it.

"Levison's team plays Figgins & Co. on Wednesday," said Clive. "Tom Merry's lot meet the fags on Saturday. No accommodation for the matches to take place on the same day—ground required for other affairs."

"I hope you'll beat the New House bouncers," said Cardew. "I hope you've got no end of a team, Levison. No end of glory if you brought the cup home to this study. I'll tell you what! If you'll leave off soowin' at an old pal, I'll hire a brass band to play it home!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Levison crossly. "We've got all our work cut out to beat Figgins & Co., and get into the final. Figgins will have Fatty Wynn in goal, and Reddy is playing for him, and Piggy is a terror in the front line. It will be a hard fight."

"Like me to advise you?" asked Cardew.

Levison granted.

"Lot of good your advice would be!" he snapped. "But if you've got any advice to give, get it off your chest."

"I'll go ahead, as you're so encouragin'," said Cardew imperturbably. "Accordin' to the rules of the contest, if a team doesn't turn up for a match it's awarded to the other party."

"What about that?"

"Well, as it happens, I'm goin' out for a motor run on Wednesday afternoon," explained Cardew.

"You fellows come with me."

"What?"

"Then the game will be awarded to Figgins & Co."

"You silly ass!"

"Let a chap finish, old bean, before you slang him," said Cardew imploringly. "By this masterly arrangement you will be saved all the trouble of playing out the match—"

"You dummy!"

"To say nothin' of escapin' the risk of gettin' into the final, and havin' another strenuous match to play," urged Cardew. "Doesn't that tempt you?"

Levison turned away without answering, and sat down to his prep.

"Don't be such a silly ass, Cardew!" said Clive.

Cardew sighed.

"Only givin' good advice, as a chap ought to do when a pal's in difficulties," he said. "Anythin' else I can do, Levison?"

"Yes," said Levison, turning his head, "there's something else."

"Give it a name, old bean."

"I've got to make up a team to beat Figgins & Co.," said Levison. "I've got some good men, but not enough. I'm borrowin' D'Arcy from Study, No. 6, as they're out of the competition now. But I can't borrow more than one from that study. I want it to be a Study No. 9 team. I'm in want of help, and if you were anything but a slacking lazy ass, you'd help. Chuck up slacking, and play in the tie!"

"Oh dear!"

"You're a good footballer when you choose," said Levison,

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"With you in the front line, at the top of your form, I should feel pretty confident."

"You flatter me, old nut," murmured Cardew. "You do, really."

"Oh, I know you won't do it," growled Levison. "So dry up and don't worry."

"Dear old man, as founder of the cup, I can't very well play for it," urged Cardew.

"Not as a football captain, perhaps," said Levison.

"Chap can't very well go out to win his own cup, you know."

"But you could play as a member of a competing team—that would be all right," said Levison. "You know it as well as I do."

"Sure it would be in good taste!" murmured Cardew.

"Quite!"

"But my own jolly old cup, you know—"

"The team is known as Levison's eleven. No reason why you shouldn't play for Levison's eleven," said Clive.

"Perhaps it would hardly have done to put up a Cardew eleven for the competition—though I don't know! But there's certainly no reason why you shouldn't play as a member of Levison's eleven."

"There's lots of reasons," said Cardew warmly.

"What are they?" asked Levison.

"Football's a lag—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"And I've got an engagement for Wednesday."

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"The car's ordered," pleaded Cardew. "I shall have to pay the giddy hire of it in any case."

"Rata!"

"I'd have urged you fellows to come, only I knew you wouldn't," said Cardew. "Change your minds, and come; can't say fairer than that."

"Will you play in the match?"

"Don't I keep an explainin' that I can't?"

"Then give us a rest," said Levison crossly.

He turned to his work with a frowning brow. Ralph Reckness Cardew sighed and dragged himself out of the armchair.

"Waxy!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"That is an answer in the affirmative, as the chin-waggers say in the House of Commons," sighed Cardew. "What a howlin' ass I was to found a cup! Might have known it would turn out a worry. I suppose it's not likely that a giddy barglar will break into Mr. Railton's study and steal the cup—no such luck as that? What a life!"

And Cardew, to avoid further argument, sauntered out of Study No. 9, leaving Levison & Co. to their prep—and his own prep untouched.

CHAPTER 2.

No Luck!

"PULL up your socks, Tommy, old scout!"

Thus D'Arcy minor—otherwise Wally of the Third. Tom Merry smiled.

Wally of the Third seemed quite undismayed by the fact that his Third Form team had been drawn to play against Tom Merry's eleven in the semi-finals for the Cardew Cup.

Wally was popularly supposed to have cheek enough for anything. Apparently he was quite prepared to face the mighty men of the Shell in the fight for the cup.

Wally & Co. had about as much chance against Tom Merry's team as Tom Merry would have had against a Sixth Form eleven captained by Kildare. But the cheeky leader of the Third was not dismayed.

Perhaps he hoped that some wonderful turn of luck would give him the victory and land him in the final. At all events, he was not going to yell before he was hurt, as he confided to Reggie Manners and Levison minor. Football, after all, was an uncertain game; and a team wasn't licked till it was beaten. Which certainly was an indubitable fact.

"Get out your best shooting-boots for Saturday, old scout," went on Wally. "You're up against something this time!"

"We shall take the greatest care, of course," said Tom Merry gravely. "We shall do our very best to keep our end up against the Third."

"You never know what you can do till you try," assented Wally.

"But you kids had better be careful, too," suggested Tom Merry. "We shall do our best, but if we happen to tread on you—"

"What?" roared Wally.

"We might tread on you without noticing it," said the captain of the Shell blandly. "In that case, you mustn't blame us if you are squashed."

"You cheeky ass!"

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"I'll see whether we can manage to take some microscopes on the field with us," said Tom thoughtfully.

"Microscopes!" gasped Wally.

"Yes; so that we can see your team and avoid treading on them!"

Wally of the Third seemed unable to think of any adequate reply to that. He stalked out of Study No. 10 in the Shell, and slammed the door after him with a terrific slam, which rang the length of the Shell passage.

Tom Merry laughed.

The draw for the semi-finals had taken place in Tom Merry's study, under the supervision of Kildare of the Sixth. Kildare had gone when the draw was over, followed by Figgins and Levison of the Fourth. Wally was the last of the football captains to depart. And Wally had seemingly departed in a state of wrath.

The door reopened, and Manners and Lowther came into the study.

"What's up with Gassy's minor?" asked Manners. "He seemed in a terrific fix when we passed him in the passage."

"His lot are drawn against us," explained Tom. "I offered to find some microscopes for our lot to see them with."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove! I'll put that in the comic column in the 'News,'" said Monty Lowther.

"It's a bit infra dig for us to meet those young duffers," said Manners. "They beat Grundy—but a babe in arms could beat Grundy at footer. It will make us look rather asses to play a gang of inky fags."

"It's the luck of the draw," said Tom. "Can't be helped! I don't think they'll get into the final."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I fancy it will be us against Figgins in the final," said Manners thoughtfully. "Levison will put up a good fight, but I fancy he won't beat Figgins' lot; he hasn't got the men!"

"Grundy's offered to play for him," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hear he's borrowing D'Arcy from Study No. 6," said Tom. "He's got Julian and Hammond, both good men. Clive's a splendid half; and Levison himself is top-hole in the front line. But—"

"I suppose Cardew isn't playing?"

"To much of a slacker!" said Lowther.

"It's a pity, too," said Tom Merry, reflectively.

"Cardew's uncertain and unreliable; but when he's at his best, he's a ripping winger. I've seen him play a wonderful game at times. But, of course, that's no good when he hasn't the grit to keep it up."

"Thanks!" said a cool voice in the doorway.

The Terrible Three looked round, to see the handsome, mocking face of Ralph Reckness Cardew in the doorway.

"Just in time to hear you payin' me compliments!" drawled Cardew, with a cheery nod to the Shell fellows.

"You're welcome!" said Tom Merry, unmoved. "I was saying that you can play a great game when you like, but you haven't the grit to keep it up. You're welcome to hear my opinion."

"Exactly!" assented Cardew. "You're an observant fellow, Thomas; you seem to know me quite well. But I didn't drop in to listen to this fulsome flattery. I want to ask you something."

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"Try Racker's study," he said gravely; "we don't know anything about horses in this study, Cardew. We haven't the faintest idea whether Welcher or Swindler will win the Mug's Handicap!"

Cardew chuckled.

"A hit—a very palpable hit!" he remarked. "But, as it happens, I haven't come for a tip of that kind. I shouldn't dare to mention the existence of gee-goes in this study. In this highly moral atmosphere, I do my best to forget that there are such things in the wide world. I was goin' to ask you something in connection with the cuplets."

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry.

"I understand that your lot are playing on Saturday, and Levison's lot on Wednesday," said Cardew. "You're free on Wednesday?"

"Quite so!"

"Fellows are open to play for any team they like, when they're not engaged otherwise? That's in the rules."

"Yes; what about it?"

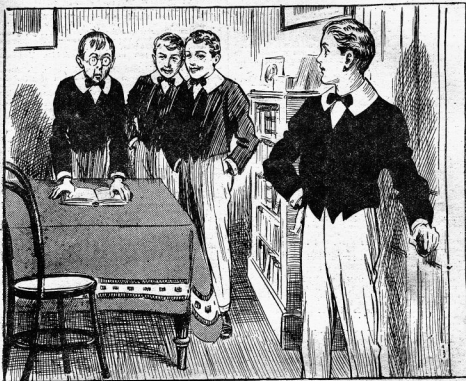
"Levison is looking for a top-hole forward," said Cardew. "I was thinking that it would be a chance for you, Tom Merry. Why not weigh in on Wednesday as a member of Levison's team?"

"Oh, you're recruiting!" exclaimed Manners.

"In a way, yes!" assented Cardew. "What do you say, Merry? Nothing against your playing for Levison on Wednesday if you choose."

Tom shook his head.

"Nothing against it in the rules," he said. "But, as captain of a competing team, it's better for me to keep out."



Skimpole rose from the table and turned his glimmering spectacles benevolently on Cardew. "My dear fellow," he said, "if Levison is short of players I shall be quite prepared to offer my services. It is true that I know little about football, and seldom attend practice, but I should be willing to do my very best!" (See this page.)

"And it would be hardly fair on Figgins & Co.," remarked Manners.

Cardew pursed his lips. "The same objection doesn't apply to Talbot of the Shell," he remarked. "Talbot's open to play."

"If he likes," assented Tom. "Right-ho!" Cardew left Study No. 10 and strolled along to the next study, where he found Talbot of the Shell, with Gore and Skimpole. The three were at prep, and did not look pleased at being interrupted.

"You engaged for Wednesday afternoon, Talbot?" asked Cardew.

"Yes," answered Talbot. "Oh gad! Important engagement!" "I'm going to visit my uncle, Colonel Lyndon," said Talbot, in some surprise. "Why?"

"Couldn't put off the old bean, and join up for a football match, instead?" "I couldn't!" said Talbot briefly. And he turned to his work again.

Cardew glanced at Gore. The burly George Gore was a good back, and he was worth something in a football team when better men were not available.

"Thinkin' of offering your services to Levison for Wednesday, Gore?" asked Cardew.

Gore gave a snort. "Catch me playing under a Fourth Form captain!" he said. "I'll skipper the team, if Levison asks me very civilly."

"Fraid that wouldn't do," smiled Cardew. "Levison's object, as I understand, is to win the match, not to make a present of it to Figgins & Co."

And Cardew turned to the door. Skimpole rose from the table and turned his glimmering spectacles benevolently on Cardew.

"My dear fellow," he said, "if Levison is short of players I shall be quite prepared to offer my services. It is true that

I know little about football, and seldom attend practice. But I should be willing to do my very best."

There was a chuckle from Gore, and a smile from Talbot. Cardew looked gravely at the egotistic Skimpy.

"Thanks no end, Skimpy!" he said. "But that wouldn't be quite fair on Figgins & Co. Couldn't spring such a terrific man on them—not unless they had a giddy International to play for them to balance the account. Thanks all the same!"

And Cardew strolled out of the study. He stood for some moments in the passage thinking, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"I've done my jolly old best," he murmured. "Recruitin' doesn't really seem to be in my line. Blow!"

And Cardew strolled away to Aubrey Racke's study, where he found Aubrey Racke and George Gerald Crooke in an atmosphere of cigarette-smoke. And whatever Cardew was looking for in Racke's study, certainly it was not likely to be football recruits.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally's Wheeze—and How it Worked!

"OF course, we can play anybody we like." Thus Wally of the Third after lessons on Tuesday. Wally of the Third, to judge by the unusually thoughtful expression on his cheeky, chubby face, had been doing an unusual amount of thinking.

"Anybody we like—and who likes!" said Frank Levison, with a smile. "What, about it, Wally?"

"What price Cutts?" "Levison minor, Reggie Manners, and Curly Gibson stared blankly at D'Arcy minor as he propounded that query. Wally, who apparently had expected to surprise his comrades, grinned complacently.

"Cutts!" repeated Levison minor. "Cutts of the Fifth!" said Curly.

"Cutts—a senior!" howled Reggie.

"Just Cutts!" assured Wally. "Of course, we're making up a Third Form team. The cup's coming to the Third, if we win it. But there's no rule against anybody who likes playing for any team he likes. For instance, in the first round Redfern borrowed Fatty Wynn to keep goal, and Wynn is one of Figg's men, only Figg wasn't playing the same day with his lot. See? Likewise my major, old Gussy, is playing for Levison on Wednesday—though he was a member of Blake's team last week. Any St. Jim's fellow is eligible for any eleven in the competition."

"Yes, but—" stammered Frank.

"There's no denying that Tom Merry's team will be a big order for us on Saturday," said Wally.

"That's a cert!" grinned Manners minor. "They'll beat us. But we never expected to get farther than the semi-finals."

"Didn't we?" said Wally.

"Why, you said yourself—"

"Never mind what I said!" retorted Wally hastily. "It's what I'm saying now that matters. We're good footballers, and—"

"Hear, hear!"

"For our age and size, we can't be beaten at St. Jim's, or anywhere in the giddy kingdom—"

"Right as rain!"

"But the Shell fellows have the advantage in size and weight," said Wally. "No denying that. Our football's better—"

"Hem!"

"But they're bigger and older. Now, if we could stiffen up the team with a really hefty fellow or two, it would level up things a bit. Cutts of the Fifth has a down on Tom Merry—he's a bit of a cad, you know, and never likes decent chaps—"

"Better tell him so when you ask him to play for us!" grinned Reggie Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I shall be tactful with Cutts," said Wally impatiently. "But it comes to this—having a down on Tom Merry, Cutts will very likely be keen on keeping him out of the cup. If he helps us to win, he'll do that. Cutts being a cad has nothing to do with football. If we can get him to play for us—"

"If!" hooted Curly.

"I don't see why not. I'm going to ask him, anyhow."

"But it's a junior competition," said Levison minor.

"Seniors are barred. Cutts of the Fifth wanted to put in a team to play for the cup, but it wasn't allowed."

"That's all right. Seniors are barred as competitors for the cup," explained Wally. "But they can enter an eleven to play for a junior captain. I think so, at least."

Levison minor looked very doubtful.

"But—"

"Leave it to me, Franky," said D'Arcy minor. "I know

my way about. I'm going to ask Cutts of the Fifth—and St. Leger, too."

"They wouldn't play for a fag team!" said Reggie.

"Ours isn't exactly a fag team," said Wally loftily. "It's a Form team—representing the Third. If you're going to run down your own crowd, young Manners—"

"Well, Cutts won't play, anyhow."

"He's not asked yet. I'm going to ask him. You fellows come with me."

"Catch me!" said Manners minor derisively. "Cutts will jolly well kick you out of his study if you have the cheek to ask him!"

"I'd jolly well like to see any Fifth Form cad kick me out of his study!" exclaimed Wally, with a war-like look.

"Well, you'll see it if you ask Cutts—and feel it, too!"

"Look here, young Manners—"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"I say, Wally, old chap—" murmured Frank Levison.

"Are you fellows coming with me to ask Cutts?" demanded Wally.

"No jolly far!" said Reggie emphatically. "But I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll wait in the passage to carry away what's left of you after you've asked Cutts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally's remark to the kind offer of Manners minor was not in words. He rushed on Manners minor and smote him hip and thigh. And for some minutes there was liveliness in the Third Form room.

When they were separated by their pals, Wally and Reggie exchanged a mutual glare of defiance and scorn, and Wally stalked out of the Form-room in high dudgeon, leaving Reggie to dab his nose with his handkerchief—producing a set of beautiful crimson spots on the handkerchief.

D'Arcy minor, having set his collar and tie to rights and smoothed down his ruffled hair, proceeded to the Fifth Form passage.

Possibly Wally had some inward doubts as to the success of his embassy; certainly it would have been rather a "come-down" for Cutts, the great man of the Fifth, to play football in a Third Form team. But Wally opined that there was nothing to be lost by asking.

Assuredly, a couple of Fifth-Formers in the fag team would strengthen it enormously, and then the match would not be such a walk-over for Tom Merry & Co.

Besides, why shouldn't Cutts of the Fifth accept? Wally & Co. were first-rate footballers—every member of the fag down agreed upon that. They were diminutive, perhaps, though not to such an extent as to necessitate the use of microscopes by Tom Merry & Co., as Tom had playfully suggested.

And Cutts, though a dandy, and often a slacker, was a good footballer—there was no doubt about his value to the team, if Wally could secure him.

So the great chief of the Third presented himself hopefully in Cutts's study in the Fifth.

Cutts and St. Leger were there, just sitting down to tea. Both of them started at the fag.

"What is it—a message?" asked Cutts.

"Not exactly," said Wally. "I dare say you know we're playing a cup tie on Saturday, Cutts?"

Gerald Cutts stared.

"Are you?" he asked.

"That's it."

"Well, if you're looking for a referee, you can look somewhere else," said Cutts ungraciously. "I've no time to waste on fags."

"Hem!"

"Ask Lefevre," said St. Leger kindly. "Lefevre takes a lot of interest in fag football, kid."

"I'm not looking for a referee," said Wally.

"Then what the thump do you want?" snapped Cutts.

"I'm recruiting for my eleven."

"Eh?"

"What?" gasped St. Leger.

"We're playing a team a bit over our weight," explained Wally boldly, "and I've thought of putting in a couple of the Fifth."

Cutts stared at him blankly.

"You—you—you've thought of putting in a couple of the Fifth—in a Third Form fag team!" he stammered.

"Just that!" said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared St. Leger.

"Nothing to chuckle at, that I can see," said D'Arcy minor warmly. "We're a jolly good team—real scientific football—not so much of your Fifth Form kick and rush, you know. Care to play for us, Cutts?"

"K-k-k-k-care to play for you?" stammered Cutts.

"Yes; and we'll find room for you, too, St. Leger, if you're keen on a really good game," said the captain of the mighty Third.

St. Leger grinned. But Cutts did not grin. Cutts was not a good-tempered fellow, and he had no politeness to waste on fags. D'Arcy minor's request seemed pure, unadulterated

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"Leggo my collar, Cutts," roared Wally D'Arcy, "or I'll jolly well hack your shins!" "I'll give you a lesson first!" snapped the Fifth-Former. And he boxed Wally's hapless ears right and left. There was a terrific yell from the hero of the Third. (See this page.)

cheek—as perhaps it was! Cutts jumped up from the tea-table, came round the table with another jump, and seized the hapless hero of the Third by the collar.

"Here! Hands off!" roared Wally, in alarm.

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Cutts.

"You cheeky old sweep!" retorted Wally undauntedly.

"What?"

"Leggo my collar, or I'll jolly well hack your shins!" said Wally independently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared St. Leger.

"Give me that dog-whip, St. Leger!" exclaimed Cutts.

"I'll teach the cheeky young rascal to come here with his insolence!"

"Oh, let him go!" said St. Leger good-naturedly. "You're such a dashed bully, Cutts! Kick him out, and let him go!"

"I'll give him a lesson first!" snapped Cutts.

And Cutts of the Fifth boxed Wally's hapless ears right and left. There was a terrific yell from the hero of the Third; and he hacked furiously at Cutts' shins as he had promised.

And then there was a yell of anguish from Gerald Cutts.

"Ow, ow, wow! I—I—I'll smash you!" roared Cutts.

"Yaroorh! Leggo!"

By that time, Wally of the Third repented him that he had thought of the great wheeze of playing Fifth-Formers in his team in the cupbie. But repentance came too late.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Bump!

Wally of the Third landed in the passage, hardly knowing how he had got there; and Cutts' door slammed after him.

"Ow, wow! My only Aunt Jane! Wow!" gasped Wally.

He picked himself up dazedly. A sadder and a wiser fag, he made his way back to the Third-Form-quarters. His ears were very red when he entered the Form-room.

"Asked Cutts?" sang out Levison minor.

"What luck?" yelled Jameson.

"Cutts playing for us on Saturday?" hooted Reggie Manners.

"What's happened to your ears, D'Arcy minor?"

Wally of the Third drew a deep breath. "I've seen Cutts!" he said calmly. "But I'm not playing him! On second thoughts, it would be a disgrace to have a rotten bully like Cutts on our eleven."

"Ha, ha! What about St. Leger?"

"St. Leger's a cackling slacker. I wouldn't be found dead in a team that had St. Leger in it."

"Did they decline?" chortled Frayne.

"Don't ask silly questions!" said Wally crossly. "It's enough that I refuse to play Fifth-Formers in the eleven."

"I'll tell you what," said Manners minor. "There's another chap you could ask, Wally, while you're on the job. Ask Kildare of the Sixth. And if he declines, ask Mr. Railton."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fags.

And again Wally's reply was not in words. Mr. Selby, coming in to take the Third Form in preparation, found two dusty and breathless fags rolling on the floor in the middle of the room, engaged in terrific combat.

"D'Arcy minor! Manners minor!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Phew!"

"Take two hundred lines each!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"And if there is any more of this—"

He left the rest to the imagination of the fags. But there was no more of it! And when Wally of the Third posted up the list of his eleven for Saturday, there were no names of Fifth-Formers in it.

CHAPTER 4.

An Important Engagement!

"AFTER dinner!" said Racke of the Shell.

Cardew nodded.

Racke had stopped to speak to Ralph Rockness Cardew, when the juniors came out after morning lessons on Wednesday. Cardew did not seem anxious to

speak to him—his chums were waiting for him. But Aubrey Racke was looking in his most friendly and genial mood.

"I'll tell Crooke," he said. "Bringin' anybody else?"

Cardew shook his head.

"Your pals wouldn't care for it?" asked Racke, with a grin.

"Your pals are neck-deep in footer to-day," said Cardew gravely. "Otherwise, I'm sure that they would jump at the chance of enjoyin' your fascinatin' society for the afternoon, Racke."

Aubrey Racke laughed.

"It would have suited Levison at one time," he remarked. "Not Clive—he always was spongy. Well, you won't miss them. We're goin' to have a high old time, old bean."

"The highest of high old times," said Cardew. "No end of a beano, in fact, with the jolly old possibility of bein' sacked from the school if the Head finds anythin' out. Top-hole, what?"

"Shush!" muttered Racke, looking round uneasily. "Don't shout!"

"Why not?" yawned Cardew.

"You ass!" breathed Racke. "If it got out that we're havin' a car to the Woodend races—"

"But a little risk adds a jolly old excitement to a beano," argued Cardew. "Think of the merry excitement if we were suspected, and a dautful prefect come buzzin' on our track."

"Blessed if I see it—a shady, fishy slacker!"

"True, O king! But there's a lot of interest in speculatin' just how long it will be before dear old Aubrey gets sacked from the school."

"Mind you're not sacked with him, when that happens?"

grunted Clive.

"I will, dear boy!" said Cardew gravely.

Levison gave the dandy of the Fourth a sharp, penetrating look.

"Cardew, are you taking up that shady rot again, after the lessons you're had?"

"Is it likely?" said Cardew. "Ernest, old man, you're growing suspicious in your giddy old age."

"If I thought—," Levison drew a deep breath. He checked himself. "You wouldn't leave us in the lurch for the sake of rot like that, Cardew—you couldn't!"

Cardew was silent.

"I understand that you were going home to see your grand-

father, Lord Reckness," said Levison. "Isn't that the case?"

"That could be put off," said Clive.

"Dear man," said Cardew, "granddad has been ill, and durin' his illness his son and heir, my giddy Uncle Lilburn, has been stayin' with him, an' borin' him to extinction. How can I refuse to comfort him in his jolly old affliction, after that?"

All About A. E. QUANTRILL.

THIS season it has been a great source of satisfaction to the supporters of the Preston North End club to find Albert E. Levison, the outside-left and English International player, showing signs of returning to his very best form. Previously, the North End had been very unlucky with Quantrill. During the summer before last they paid something like four thousand pounds to obtain his services from Derby County, but he had no sooner arrived at Deepdale than he met with a serious injury, and during last winter went through more than one operation. Hence his appearances with the North End team during his first season on their books were extremely limited, and, naturally, there was some doubt as to whether, after the long spell of inactivity, he would show his old form and his old confidence.

To-day the people at Preston are saying that he will get some more International caps before he is very much older, and, as a matter of fact, he has already four of these decorations in his wardrobe, having played against Scotland in 1920, against Ireland in 1921, and against Wales in 1922 and 1923.

In regard to the last-mentioned honour, an interesting story might be told. Quantrill, who was then a Derby County player, had not been chosen, but on the Sunday night the people in charge of the England team, then at Penarth, heard that Dinmoke would not be able to play. Their first idea was to get hold of Quantrill, but nobody knew where he lived. However, the man in charge of the England side, the President, had a brain wave. He got in communication with the Chief Constable of Derby, asked him to find

The Subject of this Week's FREE Photo.

Quantrill, and to get him to hurry to Wales in time to play in the International match. The Chief Constable carried out his duty, but it must surely have been the first occasion on record when the police force had been used to help the English International selectors out of a difficulty.

Quantrill was born in India, but came to England at an early age, and he first came to the notice of the Derby officials when he was only seventeen years of age. He was then playing for Boston Swifts, but he quickly got a chance to show what he could do with the Derby first team, for he turned out for them in 1914-15, when he was still only eighteen years of age. The war came to interrupt his career, and in the course of it he had one spell in hospital suffering from malaria, but he recovered in time to be a part of the Army of Occupation when the conflict was over. Quantrill was actually on his honeymoon when Preston North End came to terms with the Derby County club in regard to his transfer, and it is also interesting to note that he is married to the eldest daughter of that world-famous player of other days—Steve Bloomer.

If you ask Steve to-day who is the best outside-left in the world, he will point to his son-in-law, while Quantrill himself declares that he owes much of his success to the tips which Steve has given him from time to time. He is one of the fastest wing men playing at the present time, but he does not rely solely on his speed. On occasion arises. Apart from football, he is quite an expert with the gloves, and is one of those footballers who follow an occupation during the week. 5 ft. 10 ins.; 11 st. 2 lbs.

Another AUTOGRAPHED Photograph FREE Next Week. ALAN MORTON (Glasgow Rangers F.C.)

"Dry up, for goodness sake!" muttered Racke.

Cardew, with utter recklessness, had spoken in his ordinary tones; any fellow in the corridor might have heard him. Racke prided himself upon being a "goer" and a "hard case," but he lacked the nerve of Lord Reckness' grandson.

He moved away rather hastily, and Cardew, with a scornful smile on his well-cut lips, followed his chums into the quadrangle. He found Levison and Clive rather silent and serious.

"How's the jolly old eleven getting on?" asked Cardew lightly.

It was upon the conscience of the scapegrace of the Fourth that he had refused to play in the captain, though Cardew's conscience, as a rule, did not trouble him very much.

"Fairly," said Levison, rather shortly. "I've got some jolly good men. But I wish you could play, Cardew."

"I wish I could!" murmured Cardew.

"Dash it all, this isn't a time for slacking!" said Sidney Clive. "You ought to play up for the study, Cardew."

"Don't I wish it could be done!" said Cardew, wondering what his chums would have thought if they could have guessed that his "engagement" for the afternoon was a reckless, shady escapade with Racke and Crooke, the black sheep of the Shell.

"Well, can't it be done?" demanded Clive.

"Impossible!"

"Cardew's got an engagement," said Levison. "He's told us so. It must be a very important one, I suppose."

"Very important," said Cardew.

"Then I don't see why he can't tell us what it is," grunted Clive. "He stopped to speak to Racke as we came out. Is it one of Racke's precious excursions?"

"Racke's an interestin' chap," said Cardew.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 771.

"Well, I suppose you know best," said Clive.

"Right on the wicket, I do," assented Cardew.

And he strolled away from his chums, to speak to Figgins of the New House—not that he had any desire whatever for Figg's conversation, but he wanted very much to avoid further questioning by his chums.

"It's a bit rotten!" muttered Clive. "Cardew's in good form now, and he would be jolly useful in the team."

Levison nodded.

"Can't be helped," he said. "There's no getting at what Cardew really has had to; but I'm sure he wouldn't leave us in the lurch unless he had to. Still, we've got a pretty good team. You and I—"

"Good for a start!" grinned Clive.

"Yes—and Hammond, D'Arcy, Reilly, Durrance, Lumley, Lumley, Wildrake, Roylance, Jones minor," Levison ticked off the names from a crumpled list he took from his pocket.

"It's the eleventh man I'm bothered about. Tompkins is willing, but—"

"Not much good."

"Or Kerruish," said Levison thoughtfully. "It's rotten that we can't have Cardew! But it's no good grumbling over what can't be helped. But I wish he could play for us."

Levison of the Fourth was looking thoughtful, perhaps a little worried, when he came in to dinner in the School House. He was very keen on getting into the final, and bagging the cup, if he could. True, he had never expected Cardew to undertake the exertion of backing up his study.

But it was rather hard lines not to be able to depend on the support of his own chum at a critical time. Cardew might really have fixed his important engagement for some other date; but it was just like the unthinking scapegrace of the Fourth to fix it for the date of the captin. It was just as well

that Ernest Levison did not know the nature of Cardew's important engagement.

Cardew glanced at him at the dinner-table with a curiously whimsical expression.

To Cardew's careless mind it was simply a mystery how fellows could be so keen on football matches and a dashed old challenge cup. Cardew had founded the cup, but he gave the matter less thought than any other fellow at St. Jim's. When the spirit moved him Cardew could be a keen footballer—for a space. When he tired of it, nothing would induce him to play. How any fellow could keep the same tastes and proclivities all the time was a puzzle to him. His own tastes constantly changed. Deep and sincere as was the friendship that bound the three chums of Study No. 9, there were times when Cardew deserted his friends, to seek the shady society of Racke & Co., bored by his chums as he was bored by everything else, sooner or later.

On the present occasion Cardew's volatile mind was set on the reckless escapade with Racke & Co., and he fairly shuddered at the thought of being tied down to a strenuous football-match in its place. But his conscience was not wholly easy.

After dinner he found an opportunity of speaking to Racke and Crooke.

"You fellows get out first," he murmured. "I'll follow you. You'll find the car waitin' along the road."

Racke grinned.

"Afraid that your pals will spot you?" he asked.

"Exactly," assented Cardew.

"Can't you do as you like?" demanded Crooke.

Cardew shook his head.

"No," he answered. "You see, we're a happy united family in Study No. 9—so long as we don't know one another too well! Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise—some giddy poet has told us that. So I'm goin' to snark out surreptitiously, an' leave my pals to enjoy themselves at football without knowin' how the matter stands."

"What rot!" said Racke.

"Piffle!" said Crooke.

"Most things are rot and piffle, old beans," said Cardew. "But do as I ask, won't you?"

"Oh, all right!"

And Racke and Crooke walked down to the gates together. And Sidney Clive—who was not without some suspicion—glanced after them, and was relieved to see that Ralph Reckness Cardew was not in their company.

CHAPTER 5.

Trimble Too!

BAGGY TRIMBLE of the Fourth Form grinned a fat grin. He was waiting in the quadrangle, apparently on the watch, and as Racke and Crooke walked down to the gates Baggy joined them. The black sheep of the Shell gave him anything but welcoming looks.

"Roll away, barred!" snapped Racke.

"I'm coming, you know," said Trimble airily.

"Cardew's asked you?" exclaimed Crooke, in astonishment. "Well, he may have forgotten to ask me exactly," admitted Trimble cautiously; "but I'm sure he wants me to come. You see, I'm going to have a little flutter on the races, too."

"Races!" said Racke.

"Just that, old fellow," said Baggy, with a fat chuckle. "Count me in! I'm no end of a goer, you know."

"Cardew's goin' home to see his people," said Racke.

"He's asked us to go with him. Nothin' about races."

"Nothin' at all," said Crooke.

Baggy chuckled again. Sometimes the fat and fatuous Baggy was admitted to the shady circle of Racke & Co., but on an occasion like the present they had no intention of confiding to Baggy Trimble. There was too much risk attached to the excursion for the tattling Baggy to be allowed to know anything about it. But Baggy had his own sources of information. He was really never likely to be left in the dark so long as keyholes were made in doors.

"Goin' home to Reckness Towers—what?" chuckled Baggy.

"Yes; to see his grandfather. 'Old Lord Reckness has been ill, you know," explained Racke.

"I know. And he's taking you fellows with him to see Lord Reckness!"

"Yes, that's it."

"He, he, he!" chortled Baggy. "I say, look at my eye, Racke."

"Your eye! What for?"

"See any green in it?" chortled Baggy.

Racke compressed his lips, and walked on with Crooke. The fat Fourth-Former followed them out of the gates.

In the road Racke stopped, and turned on Baggy Trimble with dark and lowering brows.

"Clear off, you fat toad!" he snapped.

Trimble backed away a pace, eyeing the cad of the Shell warily.

"Oh, come off!" he said. "I know where you're going. Think you can make me believe that Cardew would take you

two fellows home to see his people? Draw it mild, you know! Besides, I heard you talking it over—about the steeplechase at Woodend. I'm fly, you know."

Aubrey Racke clenched his hands.

"You're quite mistaken, Trimble."

"He, he, he!"

"Anyhow, if you don't cut off I'll jolly well knock you spinning!" exclaimed Racke, his savage temper breaking out.

"Look here, you know—"

Racke made a rush at the fat junior. Trimble promptly fled, but he was not quite prompt enough. Aubrey Racke's boot smote him as he fled, and he plunged forward, and fell on his hands and knees with a roar.

"Yoooooop!"

"Give him another!" grinned Crooke.

Baggy Trimble did not wait for another. He scrambled up in great haste, and fled for his life.

Racke and Crooke walked on down the road. The latter was looking a little uneasy.

"I say, it's risky if Trimble should blow the gaff," he remarked.

Racke laughed scornfully.

"Ho won't! The fat rotter will take what he can get, whether it's kicks or hapence! He wouldn't dare sneeze about us! That's all right."

And the two young rascals walked on to the obscure corner in the lane, where the car was waiting, and entered it, and sat down to wait for Ralph Reckness Cardew to join them. Meanwhile, Baggy Trimble rolled in at the gates of the school in a state of great wrath and exasperation. He was keeping a secret, a shady secret, for Racke & Co., and his opinion was that he was worth placating. A kick from Aubrey's heavy boot was not at all what he had been looking for. But that, apparently, was all he had to expect from Racke of the Shell. He proceeded to look for Cardew of the Fourth, in the hope of better luck.

He found Cardew in the quad, with Levison and Clive and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and several other members of the Study No. 9 team. It was getting near time now for the kick-off in the cup. Cardew had his coat on, ready to start on his excursion. Baggy Trimble rolled up and joined the group, with a fat smirk on his unprepossessing countenance.

"Just starting, Cardew?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Cardew curtly, without turning his head.

"Right-ho! I'm ready."

Cardew turned his head at that.

"You!" he said.

"Little me," assented Trimble. "You want me to come, don't you? Your jolly old grandfather will be pleased to see me—if you see him."

There was a deep significance in Trimble's tone and in his look. And Ralph Reckness Cardew understood. Trimble's look and tone implied that if he was not a member of the party he had a secret to give away, and that he would proceed at once to give it away, in the quarter where Cardew least desired it to be known.

For a moment the dandy of the Fourth compressed his lips with anger. It was clear that Trimble knew all about the planned excursion to Woodend Races that afternoon.

"Time we got along to the field, dear boys—what?" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus had no love for Trimble's company, and as soon as Baggy arrived Gussy felt a desire to depart.

"Yes, let's!" said Sidney Clive.

"Lots of time, though," remarked Dick Julian. "The kicks off isn't till half-past two."

"Have you time to see the kick-off before you start, Cardew?" asked Levison, with an odd look at his chum.

"I'd like to," said Cardew regretfully. "But—"

"Well, cut off, then!" said Levison good-humouredly.

"Think of us kicking for goal while you're scooting along in a Rolls-Royce car for Reckness Towers. Ta-ta!"

Trimble edged more closely to Cardew. The footballers walked down towards Little Side, and Cardew turned slowly away. His conscience troubled him somehow, which was quite unexpected. After all, why should he fag at football if he didn't care to—and they knew he didn't care to? Why should he make a rotten secret of the fact that he was going "on the razzie," and allow Levison to believe a lie? Levison believed that he was going home for the afternoon. Cardew had not said so, but he had allowed his chum to believe so. Why couldn't his pals let him go his own way unquestioned, without all this fuss? Cardew felt vaguely resentful, probably owing to the unexpected pricking of his conscience.

He walked slowly towards the gates, almost forgetful of the existence of Baggy Trimble, in his troubled mind. A fat paw catching at his arm reminded him that Trimble was there.

"Cardew, old fellow—"

Cardew shook Trimble's hand off as if it had been an adder.

"We're going to have a ripping time, old boy!" said Trimble. "You want me to come—what?"

Cardew looked at him steadily.

"No!" he answered. "Certainly not!"

Baggy Trimble coughed.

"If you mean that, Cardew—"

"I do!"

"You'd like Levison to know why you've cut the footer?"

asked Baggy Trimble, with a fat grin.

Smack!

Cardew's open hand struck the fat junior across his podgy face with a crack like a pistol-shot. Baggy Trimble, with a yell of surprise and wrath, sat down in the quad, with a bump that seemed almost to shake the solid earth.

Without a glance at him Cardew walked away. Baggy sat and blinked after him in spluttering rage and fury. There never was any telling what Ralph Reckness Cardew might or might not do in any given circumstances. But Baggy Trimble, whatever he had expected, hadn't expected this. Cardew's answer to his threat had been short and sharp.

And the dandy of the Fourth sauntered on to the gates, apparently forgetful, the next moment, of the unimportant existence of Baggy Trimble, which was adding insult to injury. Baggy staggered to his feet, breathing vengeance.

CHAPTER 6.

Bitter Blood!

TOM MERRY & CO. arrived on Little Side to watch the tie in good time. Tom's match with the fags not being due till Saturday, the Terrible Three were not playing to-day, and they had resolved to honour the Levison-Figgins match with their distinguished presence. Wally & Co. of the Third turned up also. Nothing would have kept Frank Levison away when his major was playing, and Wally, Reggie, Joe Frayne, and Jameson came with Frank, to look on with critical eyes, and judge the play from the lofty standpoint of the Third Form.

There was quite a good audience for the couple, and opinion was divided as to the probable result. Figgins & Co. of the New House were known to be in great form. Fatty Wynn, in goal, was a giant of strength. Levison certainly had no goalie to equal Fatty, though Roylance was good. In the front line Levison had three good men—himself, D'Arcy, and Dick Julian—the other two were stop-gaps. He could not help thinking how much better his chances would have been if Ralph Reckness Cardew had been able to play.

As a last resource, Levison had fallen back on Tompkins. Clarence York Tompkins, a mild and obliging youth, was willing to play if he was wanted—and to stand out if he wasn't wanted. Almost up to the last moment Ernest Levison had hoped that, somehow, Cardew would play; but that hope was quite gone now, and it was Tompkins or nothing.

It was not yet time for the kick-off, and Langton of the Sixth, who was to referee the match, had not yet arrived on the ground. Levison & Co. were chatting in a group when Baggy Trimble came up. Trimble's fat face was red and wrathful. That fat face had been smacked, and even Baggy did not like having his fat face smacked. He pulled Levison by the elbow.

Levison shook off his fat paw impatiently.

"Don't bother now, Trimble!" he snapped.

"Oh, all right," said Trimble. "If you want your pal to be sacked from the school, I don't mind."

Levison spun round.

"What do you mean, you fat idiot!"

"Well, my idea is that Kildare of the Sixth has got an eye on Cardew," said Trimble. "Suppose he spots him this afternoon?"

Levison stared at him.

"What does it matter if he does? Cardew's allowed to go home and see his grandfather, I suppose."

"He, he, he!"

"What do you mean, Trimble?" asked Levison, in a low voice, his eyes glimmering under his bent brows.

"Is Lord Reckness going to be at Woodend Races this afternoon?" grinned Trimble.

"Eh? Not that I know of."

"Well, if he isn't, Cardew won't see him."

Levison gave a start.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in wrathfully. "Trimble, you uttah wotah, how dare you insinuate that Cardew is doin' anythin' of the sort! I regard you as a slanderin' wotah!"

"They've got a'car waiting on the road," grinned Trimble. "Racke and Crooke are going with him. They wouldn't have me—I mean, I refused to take part in shady proceedings of this kind, of course. Some fellows, are decent, you know. Suppose the Head—"

"I refuse to credit your insinuations for one moment, Trimble!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"You see—"

"I refuse to listen to you. I am goin' to pull your yabs, Twimble, for utterin' these wotten insinuations!"

"Here, keep off, you silly ass!" roared Trimble, as the swell of St. Jim's started towards him.

Baggy Trimble ran for it. Arthur Augustus rushed in wrathful pursuit. And there was a yell of laughter as the swell of St. Jim's dribbled Trimble off the field.

Meanwhile, Levison of the Fourth had quietly left the group of footballers. With his coat on over his football rig, Levison hurried away, his face pale and set. He knew why Trimble had spoken to him. Baggy evidently had been rejected as a member of the excursion party, and this was Baggy's way of getting his own back. Under other circumstances, Ernest Levison would have paid no heed to Baggy's tale-bearing; but on this occasion he felt, he knew, that the story was true. And the thought that Cardew was leaving him in the lurch for such a reason roused a deep anger in his breast. He had felt that Cardew might, at a pinch, put off the visit to his grandfather for the sake of the couple, and now it turned out that he was not visiting his sick relative at all, but going out on a shady and disgraceful escapade with the two blackest sheep in the school. Ernest Levison hurried down to the gates, looking for Cardew.

As it happened, he had not very far to look.

Cardew was in no hurry to join his associates in the waiting car. He was lounging by the gateway, his hands in his pockets, and an uncertain expression on his handsome face, when Levison came breathlessly up. He started at the sight of Levison.

"Hallo, old bean! Won't you be late for the kick-off?" he asked.

"Never mind that—"

"Never mind it!" asked Cardew, raising his eyebrows. "My dear old nut, do you forget that this is a couple—most important affair—erent of transcendental importance, in fact—enough to give the whole solar system a nasty jolt if anything went wrong with it?"

"Don't talk rot, Cardew!" said Levison, compressing his lips. "I've asked you to play for the study team, and you've refused."

"Ancient history now, old scunt!" murmured Cardew.

"Important engagement, an' all that—"

"At Woodend Races!" said Levison bitterly.

Cardew started.

"You led me to believe that you had to go home to see your grandfather, who's been ill—"

"Denied!" said Cardew softly. "You led yourself to believe that, old top. I simply didn't say you nay. Why argue?"

"You knew I thought so; but it isn't true."

No reply.

"Will you give me your word, Cardew, that you are going to see Lord Reckness this afternoon?"

An obstinate look came over Cardew's face.

"I'm not going to be catechised," he said. "Isn't a fellow his own dashed master?"

"Oh, quite!" said Levison, with a bitter curl of the lip. "Your friends are in need of you, and you're too slack to play up—on just one occasion that will never recur. You'll let us be beaten in this match, while you play the shady backguard with a pair of rotters like Racke and Crooke. Do you call that decent?"

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Trimble's told me," said Levison. "But I should have known. Racke or Crooke would have let it out afterwards, when you drop them again. You couldn't have kept it dark."

"Why should I keep it dark?" said Cardew irritably. "I told you from the beginnin' that I wouldn't take any part in the dashed competition! Let a fellow have his own way!"

"Go ahead, and have it!" said Levison. And he turned on his heel and walked away.

Cardew whistled softly.

"Levison!" he called out.

Levison of the Fourth did not answer or turn his head. Cardew hesitated a moment or two, and then ran after his cham, caught him by the shoulder, and stopped him forcibly.

"Look here, Levison—"

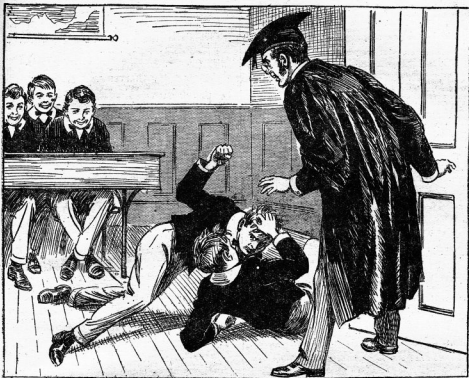
"That's enough! I've got no time to waste!"

"What's the good of cuttin' up rusty?" urged Cardew. "You knew I was out of the football all the time. I told you so at the start. You've got nothin' to complain of. As for what I'm goin' after this afternoon, that would have suited you, in your old days, from what I've heard."

Levison gave him a bitter look.

"Quite true!" he said. "I was a rotter then, as you are now! That's what you are, Cardew, a rotter—a rank rotter! Now let me go!"

Levison jerked himself free from the retaining grasp, and hurried away, leaving Cardew staring after him, rather blankly.



Mr. Selby, as he entered the Third Form room for preparation, found two dusty and breathless lads rolling on the floor in the middle of the room, engaged in terrific combat. "D'Arcy minor! Manners minor! What does this mean?" he thundered. "Take two hundred lines each!" (See page 7.)

CHAPTER 7.

At the Eleventh Hour!

LANGTON of the Sixth came on Little Side, in Norfolk, with whistle complete, ready to referee. Figgins & Co. were in the field, punting an old ball about. Levison, a little red and breathless, arrived on the ground, and his followers gave him rather curious looks. Sidney Clive looked a little disappointed. Perhaps he had hoped to see Cardew return with Levison.

"Ready, you fellows?" asked Levison quietly.
 "All ready, old bean," said Dick Julian, "excepting Gussy. Gussy's not here."

"D'Arcy!" shouted Levison.
 "He's tracking down Trimble!" grinned Lunley-Lunley. "Trimble was in rather a hurry, and Gussy seemed in a hurry, too!"

"I guess I can see him!" said Wildrake. "He's coming back! This way, D'Arcy! Buck up!"
 "Get a move on, Gus!" roared Wally of the Third. "You're keeping us waiting, old man!"

Arthur Augustus came round the elms in the distance, and trotted back to the football ground. He was a little breathless, but there was an expression of satisfaction on his aristocratic face.

"All sewene, Levison!" he said, as he came up. "I have kicked that fat boundsh wathah severely for his wotten insinuations!"

Levison smiled grimly.
 "Well, the more Trimble's kicked the better for him!" he said. "Now we'd better get on to the field."
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Can't you spare another minute?" asked a bland voice behind Ernest Levison; and he turned, with a start, to see Ralph Reckness Cardew. While all eyes were upon Arthur Augustus in one direction, Cardew had quietly approached from the other.

Levison stared at Cardew.

"What do you mean?" he snapped. "What are you doing here?"

"Joinin' up, old bean!"

"Rot!"

"If you'll only give a fellow time to change!" urged Cardew.

"Rubbish!"

Cardew sighed, and glanced pathetically at the other footballers, who looked puzzled and perplexed.

"Is that a really enthusiastic reception for a repentant and returnin' prodgal?" he asked. "I appeal to you fellows! Here am I, rushin' up at the last moment to beg for a place in the team, and my old pal won't let me in! I call that hard cheese!"

"Do you really want to play, you ass?" asked Sidney Clive.

"Yearnin' to!"

"What about your grandfather?"

"I have the best of hopes that my grandfather will survive without seein' me," said Cardew gravely. "I really do not think that my stayin' in this afternoon will cause any casualties in the peerage. Am I goin' to play, Levison?"

"What about Backe and Crooke?" asked Levison grimly.

"Are you leaving them in the lurch?"

Cardew started.

"Thank you for remindin' me!" he said. "Blessed if I hadn't forgotten them!"

"Bai Jove! What on earth have Wacke and Crooke to do with the match?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, greatly mystified.

"Nothin'!" said Cardew. "Their impression is that they have. But it's a mistake—they haven't anythin' to do with it."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Look here, Cardew, is this serious?" snapped Levison, by no means placated by this eleventh-hour repentance.

"Serious as a judge, your boy—much more serious than some judges!" answered Cardew.

"Then get into your things."

"Oh dear!"

"You uttah as, what are you gwoanin' about?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Merely by way of expressin' joyful satisfaction at the prospect of a really tough match," answered Cardew.

"Bai Jove!"

Cardew hurried away to change. Now that he had made up his wayward mind he was brisk enough. Levison called out to George Figgins on the field.

"Give us a minute or two, Figgins! Man hasn't changed yet!"

"Right-ho!" called back Figgins.

"Tompkins!" Levison turned to Clarence York Tompkins.

"I—I say, old chap, do you mind standing out, after all!"

"Certainly, if you like!" said the obliging Tompkins.

"Thanks!" said Levison.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as the obliging Tompkins walked away. "I weared old Tompkins as a vey good-temperad chap! I wathah think that if you drowped me at the last moment like this, Levison, I should punch your nose!"

"Punch Cardew's, then!" growled Levison. "It's all his fault! Tompkins can punch his nose as hard as he likes, and you can punch it, too—the harder the better!"

"Bai Jove! That wealdy doesn't sound vey grateful to Cardew for givin' up his visit to his gwandfathah at the last moment to oblige you!"

To which Levison's reply was only a grant.

Ralph Reckness, Cardew changed quickly enough, and came out to join the footballers. Arthur Augustus called to him.

"Cardew, dear boy, you've forgotten somethin'!"

"What's that, old bean?"

"Hadh't you bettah get a telegwam sent to Lord Weakness?"

"Oh god! Why!"

"So that he won't be expectin' you this aftnoon, Cardew, of course, it is wathah wrotten to bweak an engagement without givin' a chap the tip, especially as the chap is your respected gwandfathah."

"That's all right!" said Cardew affably. "The dear old gent won't really be expectin' me. But I've got to send a message, all the same. Two ticks, Levison!"

Cardew hurried over to where the Terrible Three were standing.

"I haven't a second to spare," he said. "Would one of you fellows run on a message for me? Chaps waitin' for me, and I can't go. Seems a pity to keep 'em hangin' up for ninety minutes, doesn't it?"

"I should jolly well say so!" said Tom Merry. "I'll go and tell them. Who are they, and where?"

Racke and Crooke—

"Oh! said Tom.

"You'll find them sittin' in a car about a furlong down the lane towards Rylcombe," said Cardew. "If you'll be so kind and oblige!"

"What's the message?" asked Tom rather curtly.

"Tell 'em the excursion is off, and there won't be any races for me this afternoon—"

"Races?" ejaculated the captain of the Shell.

"Yes—races. I won't explain to you what races are; it would be a shock to your innocent mind," said Cardew imperturbably. "But Racke and Crooke know the word. They'll understand."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom gruffly, while Manners and Lowther grinned. "If that's the message—"

"That's it, old bean! Tell 'em I'm sorry—No; on the other hand, don't let 'em that. Why not stick to the truth, when it costs nothing? Tell 'em I'm not sorry. But tell 'em I strongly advise them to give up this shady and disreputable excursion, and to stick to manly and healthy games on a half-holiday, followin' my example!"

"You silly owl!"

"And you might tip the chauffeur ten bob—I'll settle after the match—and tell him to go home to the bosom of his family!"

"Is that all!"

"That's all—unless you feel inclined to weigh in with a little moral advice, and counsel the chauffeur not to spend the money in drink!"

With that, Cardew turned and cut back to the footballers, who were waiting for him impatiently.

"Of all the silly asses—" grunted Tom Merry.

"There goes the whistle!"

"I—I suppose I'd better take the message, as I said I would!" growled Tom Merry, and he quitted the field to look for Racke and Crooke and the waiting car in THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 77.

Rylcombe Lane, not in the least pleased or gratified by his mission.

Meanwhile, the game started, and Figgins & Co. and Levison & Co. were closing in strife on the football-field. And before Tom Merry was out of hearing there came a shout behind him.

"Bravo, Cardew! On the ball!"

Apparently the repentant prodigal was going strong.

CHAPTER 8. Cardew's Luck!

ABREY RACKE was growing impatient.

The car was backed into a quiet turning off Rylcombe Lane, and Racke and Crooke were sitting in it, waiting for Cardew. The chauffeur "mooched" about the hedges while he waited. He did not mind; he was paid for waiting as well as for driving. But Aubrey Racke and his shady comrade minded very much as the minutes ticked away and Cardew did not appear.

"Dash it all, we shall be late for the first race, at this rate!" growled Crooke.

"We've missed the first race already!" said Racke savagely.

"We shall be late for the second!"

"Why doesn't that rotter come!"

"Blow him!"

Crooke lighted a cigarette to while away the time. Both the black sheep were angry and annoyed.

Before this they should have been speeding away at a great rate on their happy excursion. And here they still were, kicking their heels in Rylcombe Lane, and waiting for that extremely unreliable youth Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth. But for the fact that this was Cardew's car, Racke and Crooke would have started, and left him behind. But the chauffeur was waiting for orders from his employer.

"Hallo! Here's somebody at last," said Crooke, as footsteps sounded at the turning from the lane.

Racke peered out.

"That rotter Tom Merry!" he muttered. "Keep back! No need to let him see us in a car here. 'Least said, soonest mended."

But Tom Merry turned from Rylcombe Lane, as soon as he spotted the waiting car, and came directly up to it. Racke and Crooke kept back out of sight, till Tom's cheery face looked in at the window.

Then Racke scowled at him.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Nothing!"

"Take it and go!" said Crooke.

"I've got a message from Cardew," said Tom. "He's playing in the cup tie this afternoon—"

"What?" roared Racke and Crooke simultaneously.

"So the excursion's off," said Tom. "Cardew sends you advice to do as he's done—chuck up your dirty, sneaking blackguardism, and find something better to do."

"You cheeky rotter!"

Tom Merry stepped back and spoke to the chauffeur, and handed over the tip as requested by Cardew. Racke and Crooke left the car, trembling with rage. They were not thin-skinned; but being treated in this cavalier way was a little too much for them. Cardew, with utter disregard for their feelings, had thrown them over at the last moment. It was no more than they deserved, considering the object of the excursion; but it was a bitter pill for the sportsmen of St. Jim's to swallow.

Tom Merry started back to the school, followed more slowly by Racke and Crooke, while the chauffeur toiled the car away. Woodend races, that afternoon, were not to be honoured by the presence of the black sheep of St. Jim's.

Racke and Crooke consoled themselves with banker, in Clampo's study in the New House; while Tom Merry lost no time in getting back to the football-field. He was rather curious to see how Ralph Reckness Cardew would shape in the match.

"How's it going?" he asked, as he rejoined Manners and Lowther in the crowd.

"One up for Levison's lot," answered Lowther.

"Gussy, what?"

"No; Cardew!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

He looked on at the match keenly. Ralph Reckness Cardew had scored for his side—the only goal taken so far, beating over Fatty Wynn in goal. Evidently the dandy of the Fourth was in great form.

Now that he was fairly landed in the football-match, which he had been so keen to escape, Cardew seemed to have thrown himself into the spirit of the thing. No one, looking at him now, would have taken him for a slacker. Keen and quick, lithe and active, he was playing up as well as any fellow on the field; even the great Figgins found him a "handful" to tackle. To all appearance, Cardew was enjoying the game as keenly as any player there.

Probably his keenness was simulated to begin with, but in the stress and excitement of the game it soon changed to the



Cardew hurried over to where the Terrible Three were standing. "I haven't a second to spare," he said. "Would one of you fellows run and tell Racke and Crooke that the excursion's off, and that there won't be any races for me this afternoon? You'll find them sitting in a car about a furlong down the lane." (See page 12.)

real thing. Certainly he was doing remarkably well for his side.

Figgins & Co. were making heroic efforts to equalise, and two or three times they looked like succeeding; but it did not quite come off. When the whistle went for half-time the score was unchanged—one up for Levison & Co.

"Jolly good!" said Tom-Merry, as the play ceased. "If Cardew always played up like that, he wouldn't have to ask for a place in the junior eleven."

"To-morrow he'll be slacking around as usual, and making out that he's too tired to live!" granted Manners. "Still, Levison was lucky to bag him for the cuptie. Looks like a win for Stady No. 9, so far."

In the interval, Cardew came over to the ropes to speak to the captain of the Shell.

"You gave the dear men my message?" he asked.

"Yes, answered Tom.

"No end obliged," said Cardew. "I suppose they were rather ratty!"

"More than rather," said Tom Merry dryly.

Cardew laughed.

"I really owe them an apology," he remarked. "But apologising is a fag, like everythin' else. Hallo! There goes the jolly old whistle! More giddy exertion! What a life!"

And Cardew went back to the footballers. Whether the game bored him or not, he played up in great style from the whistle, and Tom Merry watched him with interest and curiosity. The second half of the cuptie was well under way, when Tom felt a tap on his shoulder, and looked round to see Kildare of the Sixth. The captain of St. Jim's was looking unusually grave and stern.

"Anything up, Kildare?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm afraid so. Do you know anything about the movements of Racke or Crooke of your Form, and Cardew of the Fourth, this afternoon?"

Tom started.

"I'm asking you, as junior captain," said Kildare. "I've received certain information that I'm bound to put to the test, though I don't trust its source."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Dear old Trimble!" murmured Monty Lowther. "If you want to know where Cardew is, Kildare—"

"I do!" said the prefect.

Lowther pointed to the field.

"There he is!"

"Cardew—in the match!" exclaimed Kildare, in astonishment. He stared at the elegant figure of Ralph Reckness Cardew in the football crowd.

"He's taken a goal for his side!" said Manners.

Kildare knitted his brows.

"That's good," he said. "I'm glad to see Cardew playing up; and certainly if he's here at footer, he's not at Wooden! races, as I've been told. About Racke and Crooke—"

"They're both within gates, I believe," said Monty Lowther.

"Hunt them up for me, then," said Kildare; "or—no, as you're watching the game, I'll send a fag."

And Kildare walked away.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. They did not speak; but they realised how well it had been for Ralph Reckness Cardew that he had played the man that afternoon, instead of playing the reckless fool, Baggie Trimble, in his wrath, had "sneaked"; and the head prefect, while despising the fat Baggie for his false-bearing, had had no choice about looking into the matter—that was his duty. Cardew had played football, after all, and by that act he had saved himself—from what? Certainly discovery and a flogging—

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 771.

The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited by TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL.

By TOM MERRY.

Quite a lot of people have remarked that somehow lately Herbert Skimpole has been given a rest, so I have decided to devote the whole of the "St. Jim's News" this week to a special Skimpole number. The silly things he does in a week would probably fill several volumes of the "News," so, of course, they cannot all be chronicled. The few which are here set in print are the pick of this week's bunch of humorsities.

Herbert Skimpole, or Skimmy, as he is affectionately called by the other members of the Shell, is not at all a bad fellow at heart.

Unfortunately, Nature endowed him with a passion for research work into "isms" of every description. He spends hours and hours nugging up his favourite, Professor Balmycrumpt, and Talbot tells me he can find nothing in his study but that celebrated author's works in twenty-seven volumes and large ones at that.

Skimmy has written, or rather, attempted to write, several treatises himself. Of course, they're jolly useful when somebody has forgotten to write his lines. Otherwise, they are of no value at all.

Skimpole is as loyal as they make them in his own peculiar way. He has a great affection for his study-mate, Talbot, whom he looks up to with something approaching adoration. Upon one occasion, when Talbot was falsely accused of stealing money, Skimpole stood by him through thick and thin, refusing to believe in his hero's guilt, in spite of almost overwhelming evidence.

It is this trait in his character that saves him from leading a cheer for St. Jim's, as he is very trying at times.

As things are he is ragged by most of the fellows, but Talbot prevents them from getting too fresh.

Taking Skimpole all round, he is a good little ass. He's a worry, he's a duffer, in fact, at times he's a nuisance, but really he's quite harmless.

He is open and truthful himself, and he respects nobody. He does the most absurd things if directed to do so by anyone with a serious face.

Anyhow, he's worth a special number all to himself, and all I can hope is that he won't get a swelled head after reading this little introduction. But Skimmy won't—not he. He's too modest—or too simple!

We're all got a soft spot in our affections for Skimmy, and we wouldn't be without him for worlds!

TOM MERRY.

BEAR IN MIND!

"THE CLUE OF THE CHANGED TUNE!"

Another Episode in the Career of the Famous Investigator—**ANTHONY SHARPE**—will appear in Next Week's GEM.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 771.



The other day it struck me rather forcibly what a terrible row there would be if Skimmy was only allowed to carry out a few of his scatter-brained schemes.

Only yesterday he hit upon a novel system for teaching schoolboys—mesmeric tuition he called it.

Apparently his scheme was to trot out a jolly old memorized to teach us. This Johnny would send us all to sleep, or in a trance, and then impress us with the necessary facts or figures, as the case might be.

Well, I've only one remark to make upon this method of doing things, and that is, "It sounds jolly simple." Why, even Baggy Trimble might learn a few things like that. Mr. Ralton, however, had a few choice and well-chosen remarks to pass upon the subject when poor old Skimmy approached him, with the result that the poor fellow can't sit down now with any degree of comfort.

Another idea he had was to start a Communist establishment at St. Jim's. He held a meeting in the Common-room after prep, and quite a crowd of fellows turned

Another EXTRA-SPECIAL

Edition of the "St. Jim's News" will appear in the GEM the week after next.

DON'T MISS IT!

up. He gave a fiery speech, something after the style of a Trotsky, or Taggies, or some other human monster of that description. He urged all of us to break the bonds under which we had laboured so long. Everybody, he declared, was equal. If masters or prefects gave us lines we weren't to do them. If they tried to flog us we were to dot them in the eye!

Of course, this, too, went "plum," for the simple reason that nobody would undertake to start the ball rolling. Grundy would have been the man, but, unfortunately, or for him fortunately, he didn't see eye to eye with Skimmy about all people being equal. He couldn't quite see how the reformer could consider himself on a level with him—the great George Alfred.

Anyhow, the meeting finished with a free fight.

But perhaps the funniest of Skimpole's ideas was conceived when Cousin Tom was so much in vogue. Skimmy had a severe throat, and insisted upon attempting to cure it by saying, "Every day and in every way I am getting better and better." Of course, it didn't. In fact, after about three days of this treatment, he had to go into the hospital with a throat like a piece of coarse sandpaper.

And still he kept muttering, "Every day—"

WHAT I THINK OF SKIMPOLE.

(Several fellows were asked to contribute to this feature, and the following is the result.)

THE HON. ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY: I am inclined to think Skimpole is really quite a harmless lunatic, but Jove! A fellow who spends whole "halfs" chasting butterflies and things, regardless of the damage done to his clobber in crawling through ditches, is wrong somewhere.

MONTY LOWTHER: What do I think of Skimmy? Why, whole volumes wouldn't express my true feelings. Skimmy causes more roars of laughter by his little absurdities than my column in the "News," and that's saying something—Long life to the Dan Leno of St. Jim's!

G. A. GRUNDY: That chap Skimpole's a bit of a silly ass. He can't play football, he can't run, and he can't box, and a fellow who can't do any of these is a silly ass. Why doesn't he buck up, and pick up a few tips from an athlete like me?

BAGGY TRIMBLE: Oh, really, you know, Skimmy's got no sand. There's no go in him. He's a rotten scarecrow of a chap, too—got no finger, you understand, like I have. He's never got any munny, either, to lend a pal. He always spends his crumblance on books and stuff like that.

AUBREY RACKE: Skimpole's a fool! He's a cranky Socialist. What a pity he's always broke, otherwise we could make quids out of him. As it is, he pulls his leg by sewing up the sleeves of his jacket and putting gits in his cap, and—

(That's quite enough.—Ed.)

GEORGE FRANCIS KERRE: In my opinion Skimpole is a shining example of the sort of fellows in the School House. He may be an ass, but he's no bigger ass than any other fellow in the HOUSE FOR BORN CRUMPS! That's flat! (So will you be soon!—Ed.)



Skimpole—as others see him.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE!

By Monty Lowther.

Mr. Herbert Skimpole, the Socialist M.P. for Puddleton, nervously clutched a paper-life as he noticed the postmark upon the letter that was lying on his desk.

"Dear me!" he murmured, as he slit the envelope. "Dear me!"
At that moment there came a discordant jangle, as the alarm-bell of his wireless rang.

"Hallo! Yes, this is Skimpole— Eh! Dropped again! Oh, my hat! He banged the receiver down with a groan.
"Oh dear!" he sighed. "My life is scarcely worth a moment's purchase now!"
Once again he turned his attention to the letter, and as he read his jaw dropped. This is how the epistle read:

"Look here, Skimmy! I've had enough of this rot about Socialism. Parlyment's a gag to the bow-woos. I'm coming round to punch your nose until you see sum sense."
—GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY.

The M.P. for Puddleton sat as one paralysed. He remembered the previous occasions upon which he had been assaulted by his old schoolfellow. They said that Grundy was still in prison for the last assault, but the news had just come through that he had escaped. And now he was coming again to instil a glimmering of reason into the mighty brain of Skimpole. Poor fellow! Skimmy had only been out of hospital a week, too.

There came a scratching at the door. Herbert Skimpole jumped almost out of his seat.

"Come in!" he stammered hastily. The door was slowly pushed open, and a



"See my fist, Skimmy," said the stranger, "well, you'll feel it if you don't stop this rot!"

large, sandy cat entered. The M.P. breathed again as he drove the intruder out.

"Oh dear!" he murmured. "I wonder how Grundy can venture to display such audacity towards me!"

Then to his ears came a sound he knew of yore. The rush of noisy waters—the roar of a salute of artillery, all flashed through his mind, but he knew it was merely the great George Alfred arriving. Skimpole stood calmly waiting his fate. All the crew had gone from his soul. He was ready to die—if necessary—for the cause.

Grundy entered the study like a whirlwind.

"Look here, Skimpole!" he bawled. "Are you going to stop spouting this rot in Parliament?"

"My dear Grundy," replied Skimpole, "I can conceive no reason—"

"Oh, stop it!" shouted the visitor. "Do you see that?" he demanded, flourishing an enormous hat under the M.P.'s nose.

"Ahem!" replied Skimpole, blinking at the object in question. "I am a little short-sighted, but I can see that quite plain."

"Well," bawled Grundy. "I am going to dot you in the eye with it—like that!"
Crash!

With that crash I awoke with a start. Yes, there was Grundy, arguing as usual, and poor old Skimmy endeavouring to explain. Hence my dream. Ah me, what a funny, funny world this is!

WHERE SKIMPOLE FAILED



By G. FIGGINS

"H, yes, my dear Merry," declared Herbert Skimpole emphatically. "Socialism is a necessity. Socialism merely needs a few enthusiastic protagonists to give it an initial start. You, for example—"

"Leave me out of it, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry laughingly.

"And cut off that supply of gas at the main!" advised Monty Lowther solemnly.

Skimpole stared at him with wide-open eyes behind his large spectacles.

"Really, my dear Lowther, I fail to grasp your meaning. I was merely remarking that Socialism would be adopted by the masses if only the middle classes would go down to explain it to them, and you, Lowther, as well as Tom Merry, might render enormous services to the cause by doing this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Skimpole had taken the trouble of visiting the end study to air his views, and looked pained at the Terrible Three's hilarity.

"I am holding a meeting in the Kylescombe Village Hall to-night at seven sharp," he told them, "and I trust you will be present."

"My hat!"
"Holding a meeting!"

"Phew!"
"Certainly!" replied Skimmy mildly. "A Socialist meeting!"

He ambled away, leaving the chums of the Shell starting after him in astonishment.

"I crumple!" Skimmy's holding a Socialist meeting," said Tom Merry. "Oh, yes; we shall be there!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Monty.
"And a few of the others!" chorried Managers. "Not forgetting a few gifts in the way of—"

"Overripe eggs!" flushed Lowther.

It was soon arranged that a party of us should go to Skimmy's meeting, and at half-past six the crowd set out. Our pockets bulged conspicuously, but Skimpole failed to notice that as he passed upon his rickety old bicycle. He gaily waved his hand to us, and Monty Lowther blew him a kiss in reply.

When we got to the village hall, we found, to our surprise, quite a number of the villagers had arrived. Conspicuous in the front row were Gordon Gay & Co., from the Kylescombe Grammar School. They had apparently turned up to see the fun.

Several burly labourers were sitting stolidly crooking, and waiting for the speaker to get upon his hind legs.

Upon the platform Skimmy had assembled a formidable array of Socialists. Most of them were very capable-looking ladies, and we felt quite sorry for Skimmy as we took their measure. We felt he was in for trouble.

Skimmy entered. His bulgy forehead gleamed in the gaslight, and his spectacles shone with the lustre of oil.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, grasping a huge stack of papers in his right hand, "we are gathered here to-night to—"

Here he paused to study his notes, and a look of pained astonishment came into his face.

"Dear me!" he murmured mildly. "I appear to have brought the wrong papers with me. This is my lecture upon entomology."

Ironic cheers came from the Grammarian benches, and Skimmy looked pained beyond description.

"Really!" he murmured. "Do I see Gay and Monk! And—yes, indeed, I can even see Monty Blane!"

"Out, out!" shrieked the French Junior. "Zat is so. It is I, soon ami!"

"Skurrrup, you ass!" muttered Frank Monk. Once again Skimmy got going. Blinking short-sightedly at the audience, he enlarged upon his theme. He described the joys of his socialistic scheme. He was just urging his audience to arise, when a stentorian voice bawled:

"What about free beer?"
"My good man," said Skimmy, "did you say free—"

"It's my belief," came the interferer again, "that he intends to stop our beer!"

"Sime!"
"Turn him out!"

The rowdy element of the audience was shouting its loudest at poor old Skimmy, who did not seem to know which way to turn.

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "Did you see who that heckler was who started this shindy?"

"No!"
"Who was it, Tummy?"

"Gay!"
"That Grammarian rotter!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.
"Shall we go for them?" asked Manners.

"No," said Tom. "I've got a better plan than that. Have you got all that stuff we brought along for Skimmy's benefit?"

"Rather!"
"Well, use it carefully, and smother Gay!"

skid Tom tersely.
Once again the hoarse bellow broke out:

"Are you going to stop our— Ow! Ow!"
The heckler stopped suddenly as he accepted an overripe tomato from the back of his neck.

"St. Jim's—rotters!" howled Carboy. "Slaughter 'em!"

The Grammarians made a rush for our party, and were met with a perfect fusillade of good 'n' things, which had been brought along.

Soon a pitched battle was in progress, and the ladies made themselves scarce. Skimpole attempted the role of peacemaker, but failed, not in between the combatants, with dire results for himself.

When Gordon Gay & Co. were finally driven out from the hall, Skimmy poked himself from the floor, and began to grope for his spectacles.

Socialism had received another check, and poor Skimmy had advanced the cause of it not an atom.



Skimpole attempted the role of peacemaker, but suffered in consequence.

"PLAYING THE GAME!"

(Continued from page 13.)

possibly the "sack!" The dandy of the Fourth had had one more of his narrow escapes.

Kildare went back to the School House, and Hobbs of the Third was despatched in search of Crooke and Racke. Hobbs found them in the New House, in Clump's study, and handed out the message; and the two young rascals carefully cleaned cigarette-stains off their fingers, and put aniseed-balls into their mouths to obliterate the lingering aroma of tobacco, before they presented themselves in Kildare's study. They came there in some trepidation; but as it happened, they had nothing to dread. Kildare only wanted to be satisfied that they were within the walls of the school.

The St. Jim's captain dismissed them, and despatched a fag for Baggy Trimble. That fat and fatuous youth came grinning to his study. Baggy had avenged his many wrongs and injuries; at least, he supposed that he had. Three sportive youths would be hauled over the coals for going to the races, and then Baggy's well-deserved kicking would be avenged—so he supposed. He knew nothing yet of Cardew's change of mind, and the consequent abandonment of the excursion to Woodend.

"I say, Kildare—" he began.
 "Well!" said the prefect grimly.
 "I—I felt it my duty to speak to you," said Baggy virtuously. "But—but I hope you won't mention it to the chaps. They—they would misunderstand. They might—might call it sneaking."

"They might even call it lying," said Kildare.
 "Eh!"
 "Racke and Crooke and Cardew have not gone out at all this afternoon," said Kildare.

"Eh, what?" gasped Baggy. "I say—"
 "Cardew is playing football—"
 "Rot! I—I mean—"
 "Racke and Crooke are both within gates."
 "They ain't! I—I swear—"
 "Hold out your hand, Trimble!"
 "Oh, I say! Look here, you know—"
 "Do you hear me, Trimble?"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Swish, swish!"
 "Wow-wow!"

Baggy Trimble limped out of Kildare's study, feeling that life was hardly worth living for a really dutiful and virtuous youth.

CHAPTER 9. Levison's Win!

"GOAL!"
 "Good old Figgins!"
 "Bravo!"
 George Figgins, of the New House, looked extremely pleased. The leather was in the net, and the crowd shouted and cheered. With only ten minutes to go, Figgins & Co. had equalised.
 "Anybody's game now!" remarked Monty Lowther, as the footballers went back to the centre of the field.
 "Looks like a draw!" remarked Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.
 "Good teams, both," he said. "I hope it won't be a draw, though. Ten minutes to go yet. Now's the time for Gussy to pile in with one of his wonderful goals!"
 "Cardew's going strong," remarked Digby.

"Go it! On the ball!" roared the crowd.
 Levison & Co. were getting away in great style. Cardew had the ball, and he seemed to move like lightning. All eyes round the field were upon Ralph Reckness Cardew. It seemed incredible that that lithe, active figure was that of the slacker of the Fourth Form. Cardew was not slacking now!

"Bravo! Kick! Kick!" roared Wally of the Third. But Cardew did not kick for goal, though he was past the halves, and for once Figgy's backs seemed nowhere. Levison was coming up ready to take a pass, and Cardew centred to him with a neat centre that was just what his skipper wanted. In goal, Fatty Wynn's eyes were on Cardew; but he was all there. As the ball came in from Levison a fat fist drove it out again.

It was a near thing. But a miss was as good as a mile, and Figgins, racing up, gasped with relief. But he gasped no soon. For an elegant figure leaped to meet the ball, and the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drove it in again; and for a second it seemed that Fatty Wynn was beaten to the wide. But Fatty leaped to the leather, and headed it out miraculously. The leather flew, only to be driven back like a bullet from Levison's foot. And this time Fatty Wynn was a second too late.

"Goal!"
 "Goal!"
 "Goal! Levison! Bravo!"

It was a roar round the field. The last few minutes had been packed with breathless excitement, and the crowd let themselves go as the ball landed in the net.

"Goal! Goal! Levison! Bravo!"
 Figgins looked grim. Figgy was a good sportsman, and could take a beating; but this was a cue—the Cardew Cup was at stake! Figgins would have given anything for ten minutes more to play; and there were only three to go! Figgins desperately resolved to equalise in three minutes, somehow, and make it a draw.

But there was no equalising for Figgins that day. The last minutes of the match saw a fierce attack on Levison & Co.'s goal; but there was no time for the enemy to get through. Langton blew a sharp blast on the whistle.
 "Levison's game!" said Tom Merry.

He smacked Figgins on the shoulder as the breathless players came off.

"Hard luck, old chap!"
 "Well, it was a good game," said Figgins, with heroic philosophy. "We're out of the final; but it was a jolly good game!"

Levison & Co. looked very cheery as they marched off. Study No. 9 had pulled off the match, and they were booked for the final, with Tom Merry & Co. as their opponents, there not being much doubt—if any—that Tom would beat the fags on Saturday.

During the match Levison had spoken hardly a word to Cardew, but when the three chums came into Study No. 9 after changing, Levison turned to the dandy of the Fourth.

"I'm glad you played after all, Ralph!" he said quietly.
 "Are you?" murmured Cardew, sinking into the armchair.
 "I'm not certain that I am. I feel awfully fagged!"
 "You're going to play in the final."

Cardew groaned.
 "Have I let myself in for that?" he asked dolorously.
 "Can't spare you, after your show to-day," said Clive, laughing. "You're booked, old man!"

"Why did I bag that goal?" groaned Cardew. "If I'd muffed it you wouldn't want me in the final!"

"I—I'm sorry I spoke to you as I did at the gates, Cardew," said Ernest Levison, after a pause, colouring a little. "I was wild."
 "You looked it!" agreed Cardew.

"I might have known you wouldn't leave us in the lurch—that it was only your rot," said Levison.

"But it wasn't!" murmured Cardew. "And I'm really goin' to leave you in the lurch over the final. My engagement to-day is only postponed till next week. Savvy!"
 Tom Merry looked in at the doorway of Study No. 9.

"Something I think I'd better tell you, Cardew," said the captain of the Shell.

"Is it a way to dodge the final?" asked Cardew. "If so, go ahead, and take my blessing!"

"It's a way to dodge the sack!" said Tom grimly. "If you'd gone off to the races to-day as you intended it would have been you for the long jump. So you'd better chuck it!"

"How's that?" yawned Cardew.
 "Kildare was on to it, and he came inquiring after you. Luckily, you were on the footer field."
 Cardew whistled.

"Dear old Baggy! So he gave me away to the jolly old heaks!" he said. "By gad! Kildare would have thought nothin' of followin' on to Woodend, and bringin' back three reckless youths by the scruff of their necks! Levison, Clive, my young friends, I hope you will take warnin' by this!"

"What!" ejaculated Clive.

"In this incident," said Cardew gravely, "you behold the reward of virtue. Not only have I saved a match for my excellent friend Ernest, and got jolly tired—a healthy fatigue, my young friends—but I've saved my own jolly old neck from the chopper! I trust, Tom Merry, that this will be a warning to you, too, to keep steadily on the straight and narrow path, even if you find it rather a bore!"

"Fathead!" said Tom. And he turned and walked away down the passage.

Cardew sighed.

"You've had a jolly narrow escape, Cardew," said Levison gravely. "You mayn't get off so well next time. The best you can do is—"

"To play in the final!" groaned Cardew.
 "That's it!" said Levison, laughing.

"And you've got to do it!" said Clive decidedly.
 And Cardew, apparently realising that there was no help for it, gave up the point; and the name of Ralph Reckness Cardew was included in Ernest Levison's team for the final in the following week.

CHAPTER 10.

Funny!

"I've got it!"

Monty Lowther made that announcement. Tom Merry and Manners did not "enthus." By the glimmer in Monty's eye they knew that some humorous scheme had dawned on Monty's mind. And there was so much humour in Monty Lowther that sometimes it was, so to speak, a drug in the market.

So Tom and Manners went on with their prep regardless.

"I've got it!" repeated Lowther.

"Keep it, old man," said Manners, without looking up.

"Can it!" suggested Tom Merry.

"It's the jape of the term," said Lowther indignantly.

"Like all your japes," said Tom, with a smile. "Get it off your chest, old man! I can see it's got to come."

"Cut it short!" suggested Manners.

"Fathead! Those cheeky fags of the Third have been sitting on a lot of swank about playing a Shell team," said Lowther. "It's too thick! Of course, it was the luck of the draw—we've got to play over the scrubby little beggars."

"It will be a walk-over for us," said Tom.

"True, O King! All the same, Wally & Co. can swank about playing a Shell team, and fags have to be kept in their places. I've got an idea."

"Buck up!" said Manners, dipping his pen into the ink.

"We've got to play them, but it's beneath our dignity as Shell fellows to take the game seriously," said Lowther. "My idea is to guy the cheeky little beggars."

"I don't quite see—"

"Naturally you don't, till I've explained. Who's got all the brains and sense of humour in this study?" demanded Monty. "Now, lend me your ears, and I'll explain how we can play the fag team without loss of dignity—a most important consideration for the Middle School."

Tom and Manners listened while Lowther proceeded to explain. They stared at first, and then chuckled.

"Is it a go?" concluded Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a go!" he said.

Outside Study No. 10 in the Shell, nothing was said of Monty Lowther's wheeze—whatever it was—till Saturday, the day of the cup tie. Then the rest of Tom Merry's eleven were taken into the scheme, and there was much chortling among the Shell footballers.

Meanwhile Wally & Co. of the Third were in great spirits. D'Arcy minor kept his team hard at practice, doubtless nourishing a faint hope that somehow, by some miracle or another, he would succeed in beating Tom Merry and squeeze into the final. The fags were in great form—especially Levison minor and the great Wally himself—but their hope of a win really was slight.

But victorious or beaten, nothing would alter the fact that they had met a Shell team on equal terms—and that was a great deal for the heroes of the Third. Fag footballers, who ought really to have trembled at the frown of Shell fellows, assumed an air of equality with them, which was not in the least according to the fitness of things—according to the view of the Shell, at least.

After dinner on Saturday Wally of the Third tapped Tom Merry carelessly on the arm as the juniors came out of the dining-hall.

"Kick off at two!" he said.

"Right-ho!" agreed Tom.

"Don't be late," said Wally. "None of your Shell slacking and dawdling!"

And Wally of the Third marched off before the captain of the Shell could think of a sufficiently crushing reply.

Wally & Co. were the first in the field. If they felt at all nervous, they did not look it. Their looks were all "cheek." Jones major of the Fifth was referee, and he arrived on the ground before the Shell team had put in an appearance.

"Slackers!" snapped Wally. "They call themselves footballers, you know! Better send somebody to wake them up!"

"Here they come!" said Reggie Manners.

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally.

Tom Merry and Co. were coming! Wally & Co. stared at them blankly as they walked down to the field. The Shell eleven did not look as if they were clad for football. They looked as if they had dressed very carefully for a "walk" out with their Form master.

Every member of the eleven was in Etons and shoes, with a shining silk topper and a clean white collar and a very neat tie.

They looked quite a nice and well-dressed crowd of school-boys; but certainly they did not look anything like footballers. The Third Form heroes stared at them as they came on the field. Jones major blinked.

"Haven't you fellows changed yet?" he asked.

"Certainly," answered Tom Merry blandly. "We're ready."

"Quite ready!" said Monty Lowther.

"Waiting, in fact!" said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not playing in that clobber!" exclaimed the referee.

"Certainly."

"Well, my hat!" said Jones major, laughing.

There was a roar of wrath from Wally of the Third. His face was crimson.

"You cheeky asses!"

"Ready, old top!" said Talbot, with a smile. "What are you worrying about?"

"Call yourselves footballers!" shrieked Wally.

"What's the matter?" asked Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter round the field. Fellows gathered from far and near to see that peculiar match. Certainly it was not so serious an affair as Wednesday's cup tie between Levison & Co. and Figgins & Co. But it looked like being much more entertaining.

Wally suppressed his wrath with difficulty.

"The awful beasts are guying us!" he said to his followers.

"Guying us, you know—us! They think it's beneath their precious dignity to play the Third! Cheeky cads! We've got to beat them!"

"We'll try!" said Frank Levison.

"Anyhow, we'll jolly well spoil their clobber!" said Wally.

"Fear, fear!"

And in a gasp, determined mood the fags lined up, kick-off falling to the Third. The ball rolled, and the game started amid a ripple of laughter.

Wally & Co. did their best, and their best was very good for their age and size. But the Shell team, though clad in Etons and toppers, and having left their football boots at home, walked over the hapless fags in great style.

If Wally had hoped by some miraculous chance to prove the victor, he realised only too clearly that the age of miracles was past!

The fags attacked desperately, and certainly they succeeded in getting a considerable quantity of mud upon the "clobber" of the fellows who were guying them. But there their success stopped.

A line of gleaming toppers came up the field, amid roars of laughter from the crowd. Quite an elegant show kicked the ball in, and Hobbs of the Third grimly slated it out.

Tom Merry swept off his topper gracefully and headed the ball into the net, and then replaced his silk hat.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oib, the rotters!" gasped Wally.

Five minutes later Talbot put the ball in; three minutes more, and Lowther handed it. To their surprise and wrath, Wally & Co. found themselves confined to their own side of the halfway line. With the toppers they had some success—two, three of the shining silk hats were captured and crunched. But with goals the hapless Third were nowhere.

At half-time seven goals were up to the credit of the Shell, and the fags were in a rather pumped state. But "no surrender" was Wally's motto. Right to a finish the breathless fags played out the game, hoping wildly to score one goal and break their duck. But that consolation was denied them. Seven more goals were added to the Shell score, amid shrieks of laughter; and then the final whistle went—though Jones major was laughing almost too much to blow it.

Then Tom Merry & Co., with sad faces, walked off the field, raising their silk hats gracefully to the chortling crowd as they passed. And Wally & Co.—sadder and wiser fags—crawled away to hide their diminished heads.

The semi-finals were over. The last struggle was to come—between Tom Merry & Co. and Levison & Co. And all St. Jim's looked forward with keen interest to the following week and the fight in the final.

THE END.

WHO WILL WIN THE CUP?

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CHAPTER I. The Amateur!

BARRY ESMOND was, as worldly riches are reckoned, a fortunate fellow. Not yet quite twenty, his father had recently died, leaving him the full control of some immensely valuable property in California—a silver mine, to be exact—the profits of which, if all went well, would place Barry beyond reach of pecuniary embarrassment for the remainder of his life.

It may be argued that sudden wealth is bad for a young man, but that altogether depends upon the composition of the young man concerned. If a fellow has always been clean-minded, clean-living, and athletic, a newly acquired pile may do him all the good in the world. He can enjoy the best of life without sampling the worst, and if he has a particular leaning in any direction, he can develop his tastes that way much better with the aid of money than without it.

That was exactly Barry Esmond's case, and his special interests lay in Ring matters—not the common or garden kind of professional pugilism, but in the ultra-scientific school where the brain is even more important than the glove. He liked the boxer of the best type—clean, well-favoured, manly, with the grace of a gazelle camouflageing the driving-force of a battering-ram, and, since he had found himself some eight months before in a position to travel and attend to training in its form, he had studiously laid himself out to do it as his already considerable knowledge of the *Box* art.

He had already left college with the middle-weight championship to his credit, and had been coached by far the prettiest boxer St. Cyrilan's gym had ever honoured. After his father's death he had gone to Spain, where he spent some weeks studying side-sweeping with the masters of the bull-ring—the best side-sweeping tuition in the world, yet one which few fighting men of the modern school seem to have recognised. Then he put in a large amount of practice at cake-walking, skipping, and more especially foining dancing, in addition to which he became proficient in the "numbered-square" method of training. That is to say, a twenty-four foot ring is divided into twelve sections, each containing a number, the task of the boxer being to slip instantly from square to square as his trainer rapidly calls out one number or another—a system which develops brain, footwork, and rhythm all at the same time, and makes a man an adept at getting to any desired point at a moment's notice.

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From this it will be seen that Barry took to boxing as a duck takes to water; indeed, it may be said that he had studied the game in all its phases, from the ancient thought-gauntlet system of the Roman arena to the most modern of styles.

And for what? you may ask. Not for money, since he was already wealthy. Quite true, Barry had had no need to take up Ring professionally, but his pure love of the thing was second nature to him. His greatest ambition was to become the world's amateur champion, and he had already met, and soundly trounced, some of the choicest titulls in the non-professional category—men who had buckled up like needs before his unfamiliar tactics, and had lain flat on their backs, and count on all their eyes slowly opened, gradually travelling in a semi-stupor, wandering gaze over the silky abrasion. They had not even brushed him, let alone got a simple punch home.

But lately Barry's weight had been piling up, and now he tipped the scale at twelve and a half stone; therefore, in heavy-weights. And it was about this time, while more or less at a standstill for need of a suitable opponent, that the turning-point in his career arrived.

Circumstances connected with his Californian property compelled him to pay a sudden personal visit to that country, and on the boat he ran up against "Rick" Watson, one of the best-known figures in boxing circles. Watson, it was said, had arranged more important bouts than anyone, and considered the last word in anything connected with glove matters. He spotted Barry first, and clapped him heartily on the shoulder.

"Hallo, young 'un!" he greeted. "Going to see the fight, I suppose? I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

But Esmond shook his head. "I'm afraid not," he laughed, "though I had intended running across, as it should be worth watching; but business clashes, and I don't see how I'll get the time."

"Where are you going, then?"

"California."

"Why, man, that's the next State!" he exclaimed. "Surely you'll go on and see one of the biggest matches ever staged? If you don't, you're not the Barry Esmond I knew one!"

The promoter was referring to the world's heavy-weight championship, due to be contested at Carson City, Nevada, less than three weeks hence. Barry laughed again; he and Watson were old friends.

"I'll see it if can be managed," he replied; "but it's scarcely likely—business is needed, as you'll understand. The people in charge of

my property seem to have messed things up badly, and I may be there for a couple of months without a break—Eh?"

He broke off questioningly as he noticed his companion's eyes travelling over his well-knit body, and instinctively side-stepped as Watson's bony fist made playfully for his ribs.

"My stars!" the promoter exclaimed, almost sorrowfully. "What a loss to the profess! Trained to a hair, and—Why the deuce were you ever born to be rich, boy? I could have made you—literally made you, if you hear?"

"No doubt," agreed the other. "I suppose it was just Fate!" Then added, with a laugh: "Find me a few amateur heavies when you get back, and I'll knock 'em about for you, but I'm touching nothing professionally."

Watson sighed, and looked reflectively over the rail at the white wake of water streaming beneath the liner's stern. Then he turned.

"All right, lad; I quite understand," he said. "And I hope to see you as Carson, if that Fate of yours permits. Here's my address until after the fight. I intend trying to fix up a match with the winner in London, if he'll come—and if we've got a man on our side good enough to meet him, which I must doubt!" the promoter added under his breath.

He scribbled something on a slip of paper, and handed it to Barry, who placed it in his pocket-book; then both turned towards the saloon, where the luncheon gang had just sounded.

Fate! Had young Esmond been given the power to look ahead at that moment he would have seen what a curious thing Fate can be at times. For the next couple of weeks were destined completely to alter his whole life's outlook.

CHAPTER 2.

Chaos!

"R OUSE out, boys! Rouse out, an' show a leg! Sure 'tis ruined we are!"

Francis Maguire, head overseer of the Esmond Silvermine Company, bawled the summons in a rich brogue, and the workers came crowding round him in the half-light of an early dawn. Like his employer, Terry was a Celt, and had been prospecting in the silver lodes which the latter discovered the first traces of silver which eventually led to the establishment of the present high-paying concern. Consequently, no one was more fitted to control the many operations which had been set on foot by the late owner's trusted colleague.

Barry, who was sharing quarters with the overseer, stirred sleepily, then sat up with a half-stiff yawn.

"What's wrong, Terry?" he asked.

"Why—Huh! What the deuce is that?"

He broke off as a sound like the rattle of a million rifle bullets pattered on the corrugated iron roof above his head—a sound which steadily increased until it became almost deafening.

"What is it, sorr?" bellowed Maguire, turning from the door where he had been issuing rapid instructions. "It's rain—Californian rain! We don't get much of it in these parts, but when it comes, well, it comes! An' the roof's rotten, so 't's strengthened yer!"

"The dam?" Barry echoed. "What dam?"

He had been at the silver mine for a few days, doing his utmost to straighten matters and re-establish some sort of order in the works; but, so far, things still remained in a pretty state of chaos. The former manager and sub-manager, working together, had been lining their pockets comfortably for some considerable time past, and had retired from the scene only after they were suspected, through a chance discovery on the part of their successor, who had sent that urgent cablegram to the young owner in England—the summons which had brought him post-haste to California.

Maguire's eyes opened wide.

"What dam, sorr?" he repeated. "Why, the one beyond the ridge road, o' course! 'Twas built three months ago, 't'was the best ever an' best made workin' ever there. I thought 'ye'd probably noticed it!"

Esmond shook his head.

"I'd little time to notice anything much except cooked figures," Terry, he sighed. "But all's the danger, anyway!"

The overseer's lips tightened.

"The danger's purty big, sorr," he replied.

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gently. "The dam was difficult to build, as it was never properly reinforced, since we shouldn't by rights have heavy rain here for months yet. But something's happened—some trick of Nature—and well, I've sent the boys to do what they can—"

"Terry!" Barry was struggling into his coat by now, his face reflecting the anxiety already shown in that of his companion. "It's in the district you've got to be afraid of something, I can see. Out with it, son!"

Maguire's big shoulders heaved.

"If the river swells an' breaches the dam, it means the finish of the Esmond Silver Mine," he said harshly. "It'll turn this district into a lake that'll reach to the Sacramento, an' all the pumps in Christendom won't dry it again!"

"Great Heaven!" Barry's face grew as white as chalk, but whatever else he would have said was never uttered, for at that moment a hoarse cry from the distance came. Maguire to spring out again through the doorway. In the grey twilight was seen first by a vivid violet flash, whilst a thunderous peal drowned even the loud pattering of the raindrops overhead. The overseer came back, white-faced, and gripped the young mineowner's wrist like a vice.

"It's happened, sorr!" he breathed. "The boys are all like sheep, an' there's a regular Niagara burstin' through the dam. We've got to cut; it'll be here in a few seconds!"

Together they dashed from the low iron-roofed building, sprinting madly for some rising ground away beyond the concession's boundaries; and there they passed, gazing in stupefied horror at the cataclysm which was even then taking place.

A huge wall of foaming water rolled down the opposite slope from the shattered dam, bearing down relentlessly on the little settlement of iron-roofed buildings, and leveling them like some mighty scythe. A few black dots—the remnants of the workers who had not yet reached safety on the far side of the valley—were still visible as they strained every effort to outdistance the flood; but the merciless tide rolled on, sweeping them out of existence, and continued its destructive course towards the Sacramento River, a few miles away. Less than ten minutes later what had been the site of the Esmond Silver-mining Company was nothing but a vast lake, with only the tops of a few trees sprouting oddly from its surface, as though planted there by some strange freak of Nature. At one swoop Barry Esmond had lost everything he possessed, even as Georges Carpentier lost his life's savings when the German hordes overran Lens and destroyed the mines there. Well, Carpentier had recovered mainly by means of his wonderful fists, so why shouldn't Barry?

"What are ye goin' to do, sorr?" Terry Maguire's voice was shaking badly, and he snipped his steaming brow as he ventured the question.

Esmond, white and drawn, but really the more collected of the two, turned swiftly.

"What am I going to do, Terry?" he repeated. "Ye mean about the future, of course!"

"Yes, sorr. Ye—ye see, there's—there's no chance of gettin' anythin' more out of this!" The other swung his arms around expressively, and his companion nodded.

"I know that!" snapped Barry. "So the future must wait a bit. Meanwhile, I'm going on to Carson City to see the big fight. Will you come?"

Under less serious circumstances, Maguire's reception of this news would have been humorous. His mouth opened wide, his eyes narrowed like those of a codfish, and for a full half-minute he could only stare stupidly at his late employer.

"Sufferin' Mike!" he presently managed to gasp. "D'ye mean to say, sorr, that ye want to see a boxer' match after losin' every cent ye've got in the world? Well, ye're a cool hand—as cool as your father was, rest his soul! I wonder if he can see ye now, lad? If so, I guess he'll be pleased at the way ye're takin' it. All right, sorr; I'll come. I've nothin' to keep me here."

Maguire took one long look at the wild waste of waters that marked the place where he and his late master had first discovered the road to wealth; then he turned with a half-stiffed groan and followed the present penniless heir whose fortitude in the face of each disaster seemed almost uncanny.

The Fight at Carson City—And a Dramatic Challenge!

PROMOTER Rick Watson's face betrayed his pleased surprise when Barry Esmond suddenly walked into his hotel in Carson City, and introduced Terry Maguire, who followed like a dog at his master's heels. Late in the day though it was, Watson's great influence enabled him to secure a couple of extra ringside seats for the newcomers, and the hour of the important fight saw the three of them sitting together just below the ropes. What a wonderful sight it was! The box seat streaming down upon a vast amphitheatre spotted by thousands of faces—white, tanned, red, yellow, and even copper, for many Red Indians were also present to see this strange kind of warfare which pleased the "palace." The purse was a pretty large one, and had drawn spectators from all parts of the world—men, and also women, who would follow a big glove contest to the Arctic regions. Fate should decree that it be fought out there, or into the heart of the Sahara, if necessary. Such is the amazing outstanding feature of boxing, which places it upon a pedestal of its own in sporting circles—its never-failing magnetism.

The present champion, Jake Grobler, was a deceiving man to look at. A product of the Rio Grande—dark-skinned, beetle-browed, and with a body covered with hair—he stood quite six feet in stature, yet his habitual crouching attitude suggested that he was much shorter. As he stepped from his corner now, head slightly thrust forward, and long, heavy arms swinging, his appearance reminded one vaguely of a lumbering bear. Yet, as past experience had proved to the discomfort of his opponents, this man could move quickly enough when occasion demanded, and had more than a measure of first-class science to support his vast amount of pure brute strength. Truly a foe to make his challengers think twice before they spoke!

Grobler's adversary on this occasion was a tried heavy-weight from Frisco—a finely-built, not unhandsome lad, who had already

engaged several of the world's most promising future champions and put the majority "down for ten." Wilton's name was, and there were many present who rather fancied his chances—even against the redoubtable Grobler.

The gong sounded for round one. Wilton instantly opened the attack, following his brain-like opponent round the ring, and giving him no rest—perhaps a foolish thing to do; yet possibly the Frisco man's inward belief was that it would be the best plan to adopt, considering that Grobler was a full stone heavier and also had the advantage of a longer reach, which might play havoc once he had accurately sized up his opponent.

Wilton's object was, plainly, to rush the fight to a finish before the other could get into his stride; but in this he failed, for the first two rounds passed without either man going down. Grobler, for all his lumbering appearance at the outset, bounded round the ring like a huge rubber ball, his footwork and side-stepping being as neat as his opponent's.

Round three saw Wilton go back to the ropes from a heavy blow just under the heart, but he recovered quickly and bored in. It was apparent, however, that his movements had lost some of their former speed, and that he was pondering whether a change of tactics would not be advisable. And at this moment Grobler seemed suddenly to adopt similar measures, for his semi-defence became a steady attack as he sent in several terrific "pile-drivers" which gave Wilton all he could do to smother or avoid; and round three ended with the Frisco "hope" decidedly the more uncomfortable of the pair.

The fourth round was practically a repetition of this, and the fifth saw the finish. Grobler now advanced like a whirlwind, his forbidding face wreathed in a confident grin—a grin made even less holy by a trickle of blood from his lips, where a party-parried blow of Wilton's had found them. There was a shuffle amongst the spectators—a craning of necks, as though each one felt that this must be the end—then came a sound like the bursting of a drum. Grobler's mighty left had got home with terrific force on his opponent's ribs, and the Frisco man sagged



Barry and Maguire dashed from the low iron-roofed building, sprinting madly for some rising ground. There they passed, gazing in stupefied horror at the huge wall of foaming water which swept down upon the little settlement of iron-roofed buildings, leveling them down like a mighty scythe.

like a sack. Then another sound—the sharp, unmistakable crack of glove on jawbone—came across the hushed stillness, causing something like a great sigh to escape from the packed throng. Wilton's knees swayed beneath him, and he rolled over inert as the dead, taking the count calmly—for the simple reason that he never heard it.

Neither Rick Watson nor Barry Emmond took much notice of the commotion which immediately followed; for since the opening of the last round both had been engaged in a most animated conversation, though carried on in an undertone—and that same conversation must have been extremely pleasing to the boxing promoter, for Watson's face was glowing as he presently crossed the ropes, followed by Barry, and approached Grobler's manager.

The latter stared at them stupidly for a moment, but listened attentively as Rick said something to him; then the Yankee's eyes travelled back to Emmond, and he gave a sceptical smile. And Grobler, who was still seated in his corner enjoying the town's fascinating second, was giving him evidently overheard some of the words, for he suddenly jerked up his heavy head, also smiling indulgently.

"Guess, if I didn't know you as a big gun in these matters, Mister Watson, I'd say you'd pose clean crazy," drawled the champion's manager. "Sure the usa hasn't struck you in a nasty place—eh?"

The promoter shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I was never cooler or more in earnest in my life," he replied. "I've made the offer; it's for you to take it or leave it!"

The other turned to Grobler, who was looking with interest in their direction.

"I've heard that Jake's suppose you'll go, for it's a sure walk-over for you, an' the purse is big?"

Grobler grinned, showing a row of yellowish teeth.

"Guess so," he nodded. "I'd rather fight in the States, but it's easy money an' I'd be a darned boob to refuse a present like that! But, say," he added doubtfully, as a sudden afterthought seemed to strike him, "who guarantees the purse?"

Watson stepped forward.

"I do, personally," he replied frankly. "It's a large one, but I promise it definitely—and I think you know I'm a man of my word."

"But how are you goin' to raise such a purse on"—the champion glanced inquiringly and somewhat sarcastically in Barry's direction—"on a chicken like that?"

Rick smiled.

"Look here, my friend," he tapped out, "leave me and my method alone; they don't concern you! All you require is a binding guarantee of your share, whatever the result may be, and this I faithfully promise you, even if it has to come out of my own pocket. The point is—do you accept, or do you not?"

Jake's big head dipped. Everyone knew Rick Watson as a man to be trusted—as one of the straightest figures in the boxing world. And Grobler was satisfied, so far, the promoter turned to the already-departing crowd, bringing them to a standstill as his voice boomed through the megaphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen, on this moment, please!" he called. "On behalf of my friend, Barry Emmond, whom none of you, so far, know anything about, I have challenged the

winner of this fight—the present world's heavy-weight champion, Jake Grobler—and the challenge has been accepted. I may mention that Emmond has never yet appeared in the professional ring, though he is well known as an amateur across the Herring Pond, and had intended always remaining an amateur, only for unfortunate circumstances, which I need not go into here. There are one or two other outstanding points about this proposed contest. Firstly, it is to be fought in London; secondly, the purse is one of a hundred thousand pounds, half of which will go to the winner, a quarter to the loser, and the remaining quarter to charity. Those points have already been agreed upon, and the match will take place as soon as details can be definitely arranged!"

Watson's words were at first received in stony silence; then a regular guffaw, in which both Grobler and his manager joined, ran round the assembly. But, for all that, there were many who did not laugh—many who eyed Rick Watson with suspicion, and guessed he would not embark upon such a mad venture as this seemed to be without some good reason underlying it. And those calmer spirits thereupon centred their attention on Barry Emmond, with extreme interest. He was a well-built, well-proportioned man, with a powerful physique, and graceful carriage as he left the ring just then. Several of them had seen Carpenter, and, somehow, this new fellow seemed to possess many of the attributes of which the world-famous George, so they held their peace, preferring to let results govern their criticism. It is a sensible plan, and often prevents faulty judgment.

CHAPTER 4.

A Fight for Fortune—Fate's White Hope.

THE time passed swiftly enough. There was so much to do, so much to be arranged, that the most practical of the proposed date of the fight was almost upon them before anyone concerned noticed it. The very unusual circumstances connected with the affair were in themselves a mighty draw, as the astute Rick Watson prophesied they would be, and he was not far wrong.

Barry Emmond, though well known in Britain as a wonderful amateur, had never touched boxing professionally, and this alone made thousands of eyes, who otherwise might not be more than ordinarily interested, most anxious to see how he would fare against a man who was already a seasoned pro. Also, the mere fact that Rick Watson, that prince of promoters, was plainly behind Barry, heart and soul, made people talk; for anyone who closely followed the game knew perfectly well that Watson never bothered his head over "duds."

The result was that not only was the promised purse raised, but so many tickets were sold—some at fabulous figures—that no hall or public building in London was deemed capable of accommodating the enormous crowd which would clamour for admission on the evening day.

This was, perhaps, the greatest set back yet, but it was eventually overcome by someone suggesting that the fight should take place in the open air. The early spring weather was mild and sunny—quite ideal for the purpose—and the matter being carried, one of the biggest football grounds in South

London was finally chosen. Here there was ample room, without cramped quarters, and it proved to be much better than a packed, stuffy hall, however large.

Jake Grobler, it was known, had arrived in England some weeks before, and was completing his training somewhere in the country; but little was heard of Barry Emmond, though it was of course presumed that he would be ready to take the ring in excellent trim, as usual, when the time came.

As a matter of fact, Barry, fully realising the quality of the man he was up against, had left no stone unturned to whip himself into such a condition of fitness as was had never attained before. A Terry Maguire, himself a boxer of no mean prowess, had stuck like a leech to his young master ever since that unfortunate affair out in California, and seemed to have taken him under his wing altogether. It was impossible to get near Barry when Terry was about, which explained why so little was known of what went on behind the scenes. For, though Emmond had said nothing definitely one way or the other, the shrewd Maguire clearly realised how much the winning of this fight would mean to the lad personally, quite apart from the fame which it would carry by bringing the coveted World's Heavy-weight Championship back to Britain.

Long before the match was timed to start, an exciting scramble took place for the few remaining unreserved seats, and when the fateful hour arrived it is safe to say that never had the big football ground held a greater concourse—even during the most important football matches or games. A vast sea of faces spread round the roped-in square in the centre, making it resemble a tiny island set in a mighty, ever-stirring ocean, and when the combatants entered the ring, going to their respective corners, the tide of speculation ran high.

Barry Emmond's keenest followers scrutinised him anxiously, then with relief, for if ever a man looked fit to fight for a kingdom, Barry did it at that moment.

But, on the other hand, Grobler's supporters, also felt satisfied with their man, for, despite the fact that he was a novice, it was plain he had accepted that dramatic challenge in Carson City, it was quite apparent to the expert eye that Jake had not neglected his training, either. The champion was plainly in the very peak of condition, cool, and confident.

Yet it was really impossible to compare men of such different appearance and calibre. Emmond's white, anti-like skin formed a direct contrast to Grobler's bearded, hairy body; and whereas Jake's countenance was rugged and heavy to point of ugliness—his face like a granite rock, and brows so bushy that they almost concealed the little black eyes beneath—Barry's face was good-looking in the extreme, his grey-blue Celtic eyes open and frank, and his chin, if square, lacking all the ponderous heaviness which marks the stereotyped bruiser. His nose was just sufficiently protected by the frontal bone to still remain handsome, yet, at the same time, adequately guarded against any serious injury to that organ, which his usual lack of interest was warranted upon a pair of broad shoulders, held gracefully erect in direct opposition to his rival's crouch.

"Seconds out!"

There was a stir in the crowd, each one present settling down in his, or her, seat in order to enjoy what, at present, they hoped would be the most momentous championship since "Time!"

As the men left their corners, the great contrast between them again became marked. Barry moved forward with the graceful, lithe lines of a Hermes, scarcely seeming to touch the floor as he walked, or, rather, glided. Grobler's advance towards the centre of the ring suggested that of a human gorilla, or grizzly—lumbering, yet speedily determined.

He led the attack with a heavy right to the body, as though trying to feel what his adversary's form was made of. Barry countered this easily, and replied with a lead-drive to the chest, which also was smothered by the watchful Jake.

At the very outset it became quite plain to Emmond that the ordinary blow would be wasted on such a target. The man from the Rio-Grande was so tough and literally

"Hi! hi! what's the rush?"
"We're hurrying along to avoid the crush!"



breathed with heavy muscle that in no places let the solar plexus, round the heart, or on the point of the jaw was likely to feel even the most powerful punches. Anywhere else it would merely be like pummeling a leather bag stuffed with sand rubber, as he mentally resolved to remember this for as many rounds as the fight lasted.

After that first exchange they broke away; then Jake flung himself forward like a heavy bear, to receive one of the most staggering, body-punches he had ever experienced in his life. It caught him clean on the ribs, just under the heart, even as his own vicious left half-hook missed Esmond's chin by the fraction of an inch.

That blow almost lifted Grobler off his feet, proving to him, even at the early stage, that Rick Watson knew more than he did when he issued that dramatic challenge; and Jake went back to his corner as the pug went forward with a good deal of his former sarcasm knocked out of him. Another thought he might have been with the white-skinned fellow could hit as well as any “pro,” there was not a shadow of doubt about that.

The brief rest enabled Grobler to restore some of his mental calm, and he entered upon round two with full knowledge of what he was up against. His eyes glittered venomously, and his lips were drawn back, revealing his yellow teeth; yet he was too old a hand at the game not to realize the certain penalty of a lost uppercut. He looked vicious, but kept his head cool; in fact, he succeeded in touching his agile opponent twice ere the latter could prevent him, and though the blows were half-soft before they landed, they served to show Esmond the speed of which this heavy, lumbering fellow was capable when necessary. Grobler followed up these dives like a human tornado, and many of those who made up that sea of faces around the arena glimpsed the evidence of a wicked fight to come. There would likely be much of the gruelling, blended with science, so that the merely morbid as well as the purely sporting portions of the crowd would be proportionately gratified.

Barry dodged a third blow, and retaliated with a tantalizing rap on the summit of his opponent's nose. He had aimed for the jaw, but the watchful Jake raised his glove just in time, deflecting the blow upwards. Grobler drew back, allowing Esmond to follow him, then suddenly lurching forward, driving straight for the belt with that massive right—drive with the weight of his whole body behind it.

It was then that those present saw what was seldom, if ever, seen before in a boxing-ring—namely, a man who had especially studied the methods of the Spanish matadors could have performed the feat, for it was a trick peculiar to the bullfighter alone.

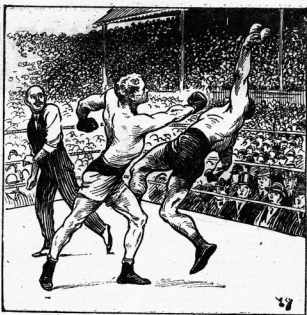
As Jake's mighty arm stiffened and shot towards him, Barry stepped a little to the right, on the ball of his right foot, his body curving over backwards and slightly sideways. He knew he could not entirely smother that punch in the ordinary way, so he resolved to take the power out of it instead, and the result was astounding to those who had never witnessed such a maneuver.

Grobler's glove landed, and Barry's body bent upright, it could not have failed to do extensive damage—indeed, it might easily have meant the finish of the contest. As it was, however, the punch meeting with so little resistance, he had the time to slip his man's glove to shoot upwards along his opponent's chest, leaving a long red mark from its friction ere it passed harmlessly over Esmond's shoulder.

A storm of applause at the extraordinary neatness of the white glove tactics followed that round, and Jake Grobler went to his corner vaguely wondering whether he was fighting a boxer or an acrobat.

Rounds three and four were unproductive of any decided results. The contest fought well and hard, but could do little to break through his adversary's defence; whilst, on his part, Barry completely failed to touch any of those points which he had resolved to reach at the first opportunity. Grobler, with a greater horn of hoar experience, kept his chest and jaw well protected, shaking off sundry body blows as a big dog shakes water from its coat.

But the fifth round was more eventful—in fact, it proved the turning-point of the whole match. Grobler, who had hitherto met this super-scientific opposition to pugilistic proficiency at its best, commenced rushing tactics—not the lumbering attacks of before,



An axe shot by Barry's right flashed out, crashing on the point of the bullock. Every ounce of Esmond's twelve and a half stone was behind that blow, and it landed where it was most needed.

but marvellously swift work considering the build of the man. It, however, had little effect. Esmond either side-stepped gracefully or ripped him with a left body uppercut, only receiving a half-blow in return. Even in the clinches Jake's mighty strength could not wear down the seasoned physical development of his rival, who could yield and place pressure to counter any tricky strain Grobler employed.

Jake was breathing a little heavily, and looked more than a trifle anxious as his seconds crowded about him after that round. Once he was seen to shake his head in reply to some question, but next moment his lips curled back venomously over his teeth—in a kind of half-smile, as though he knew that the next round must decide matters one way or the other.

It did. Grobler advanced like a human avalanche, delivering a succession of punches that for the moment made Barry reel. He retreated to the ropes, Jake following without a pause, but Esmond managed to slip past him, and the fight approached the centre of the ring again. Here they stood up to it, exchanging blow for blow that sounded across the aerial ranks of spectators like the hurrying of drums. They came what looked like catastrophe. Barry stumbled badly when trying to side-step, and Grobler was quick to take advantage of the slip. His glove landed on his rival's frontal bone, and amid shouts of annoyance, Esmond sprang on his back; but he quickly regained his feet, and, measuring his man, sent his left smashing between Grobler's eyes.

Jake staggered a little, then came on again, determined, though dazed and momentarily blinded. He tried a heavy left to the other's chin, but Barry's head twisted sideways, and the glove barely grazed him. Grobler, carried forward by his own impetus, swayed past, receiving another terrific blow just under the heart—a blow exactly like that which had so surprised him at the commencement of the battle.

Esmond was just hoping for this, and lost no further time. As Jake shot by, Barry's right flashed out, crashing on the point of the other's jaw, and the man from the Rio Grande went down like a prostrated bullock. Every ounce of Esmond's twelve and a half stone had been behind that blow, and every

ounce of it had landed with concentrated force exactly where it was most needed.

The timekeeper started to count slowly. At “seven” Grobler stirred, but failed to rally, and “nine” saw him still huddled up on the ring floor.

Then a burst of cheering literally made the heavens resound. Rick Watson, flushed and triumphant, broke through the ropes, grasping his protesting protégé's hand and absolutely stammering with uncontrolled enthusiasm. “You've brought the championship back, lad—you've brought it back to us!” he blabbered. “That's even more valuable than the money! Bless you, boy! You're even better than I thought you were!”

But Barry Esmond's good fortune did not end with the result of that momentous battle, for blessings, like troubles, seldom come singly.

Some weeks later, certain news from California caused him and Terry Maguire to make a sudden departure for that country, both hurried up with a hope they scarcely dared trust—yet a hope which was speedily realized when they got there. For though the greater portion of the silver-mine was still deep under water, at several places the ground sloped considerably, allowing the flood to drain off, and here there was every promise of new workings being opened up, since a large part of the surrounding district was rich in silver ore as yet untapped.

When the dry season came round again the shattered dam was rebuilt, new housing accommodations erected, and fresh machinery installed not far from the borders of the big lake which marks the site of the former concern.

To-day, then, the Esmond Silvermining Company has reconstructed like a phoenix from its own ashes, extended concessions have been obtained, and Terence Maguire is in full command—a manager who is not likely to “slay ducks and drakes with his master's interests.”

THE END.

Read of the Fortunes of Jim Hartley in a Thrilling New Football Story, entitled: “JIM HARTLEY'S LUCK!” NEXT WEEK.

This Week's Rippling Instalment will make you sit up and take notice!



Wolves of St Beowulf's!

Our Grand New
Serial of Thrilling
:: Adventure ::

By
DUNCAN STORM.

Introduction.

JACK WABBY, JAMES READY, SWEET, and a Chinese named LUNG, chums together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, in company with JOHN LINCOLN, one of the governors of the school, and VISCOUNT WAFFINGTON, a relation of the Countess of Castlewood, are instrumental in capturing a gang of international burglars. At a private landing-stage, with a number of bags containing the supposed treasure, the little party await the arrival of the Trois Freres, a small craft which has been chartered to smuggle the ill-gotten gains out of the country. The crew aboard the vessel consist only of the treasurer, and pay little attention to the party as they board ship.

Safely aboard, Lincoln offers to pilot the vessel, whilst the crew go down in the cabin to make merry.

The vessel encounters a very rough sea, and a sudden wave, dashing across the Trois Freres' decks, sweeps Ready and Waffington, who had been talking together, overboard into the sea.

Now Read On.

Tricked!

JIM had a very mixed notion as to his whereabouts after that great thundering sea of the Smugglers' Race came toppling over the bows of the Trois Freres.

All that he knew was that he had Waff tight by the collar of his coat, and that sometimes Waff was underneath him and sometimes on top of him, and that they were mostly head downwards in the raging surf.

As a matter of fact, the whole affair did not last more than a few seconds, but to Jim it seemed like hours. He thought that they were overboard because there was no apparent ship under them. But the Trois Freres bobbed up like a cork from the sea which had overwhelmed her, and Jim found himself, much to his surprise, bumped down heavily on her deck as she rolled herself free of the water and shot the rest from her snappers.

He still had Waff tight by the neck, and as he staggered to his feet, dripping and running with water, he called out:

"Hallo, Waff! Are you drowned?"

"No," answered Waff, in stifled tones; "but you are jolly near strangling me, old chap! Crumba, if my aunt could only see me now!"

Jim dragged him across the deck through a blinder of spray, and, taking a loose rope-end, lashed both himself and his chum in the rigging.

"I say," shouted Waff, in his ear, "were we overboard?"

"You were washed in and washed back!" shouted Wabby. "My hat, aren't we having a night out?"

They expected another tumbling sea. But the worst of the Smugglers' Race was past.

They were close by the Shutter Lightship now. Once round that, and they would

change course, and go running up Channel with the sea.

Down below they could hear strangled yells from the seacraft gang who were not cutting much of a figure in this sort of adventure.

"Listen to those yells!" said Wabby. "They don't like this sort of beamo. They are thinking the old ship's taken the knock-out punch. Calling cabs and picking pockets is more in their line than the breezy sea. How are you feeling now, Waff?"

"I don't feel gammy inside any longer!" replied Waff cheerfully. "It must have been the shock of thinking that we were overboard stopped me feeling seacraft."

They were close up to the Shutter Lightship now, and her great lantern bobbed up and down, staining the waters red and white with blood, swirling reflections as the lantern flashed his message.

Round they went, driving the waves right and left of them as the sheets were eased off. The great lights filled to the following breeze, and at once the motion of the boat became easier.

"That's better!" said Wabby, with a sigh of relief. "If she'd kept up that jazz step much longer, I think I should have been feeling sore before long. I felt a sort of stranglehold on my little Mary. But now we go all Ste Gunney-o, and there will be something doing!"

Wabby was not far out. Captain Dunk, who had been clinging by the wheel as Mr. Travers, Stubbs, and John Lincoln had steered his ship through the dangerous race, grunted his satisfaction that they had come through safely, and were now howling up channel in a big, but clean and unbroken sea.

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"I think I will have a liddle Scheidam to stop out de wet," he said. "Then we will go into de cabin to see dis so great treasure dot vos locked in my bunk. Will you come, gentlemen?"

John Lincoln shook his head. He had no great desire to be down in the cabin when those sacks of old anacrapans and bricks were opened. He wanted, if possible, to get the whole crew of the Trois Freres down below.

"The crew are soaked," he said. "Take them down, captain, and give them a drink first. Then they can relieve us at the wheel, and we will come below and go through the stuff with the list."

The two sailors on deck were very glad to get down below, and they slipped down into the cabin with alacrity, where they were received with cheers by the cigarette-smoking gang, who were recovering their spirits now that the wild motion of their craft had eased off and the insipient pangs of seasickness were subsiding.

There were yells for Captain Dunk, headed by the Barcelona anarchists with the red beard, who was very anxious to have a glimpse of the treasure.

Captain Dunk slipped below, for he had the keys of the little berth in which the sacks were locked up.

The boys peered through a rift in the tarpaulin which they had dragged over the skylight. They saw Captain Dunk received with cheers, and watched the bottles circulating freely amongst the gang of desperadoes.

Toasts were drunk, speeches were made, and excited hands were flourished in wild gestures.

It was for all the world like a pirates' Saturday night at sea.

At a sign from John Lincoln, Stubbs had moved like a shadow to the companion, which was furnished with two stout doors and a thick sliding hatch of teak.

In Stubbs' pocket was a well-oiled bit, a screwdriver, and four long screws. Whilst the gang of pirates were shouting and drinking toasts down below, the keys let drilled into the cross brace of the sliding hatch, whilst four screws found their way through the woodwork of the skylight, through the tarpaulin, and into the coamings, so that the lights could not be lifted.

John Lincoln, at the helm, kept the Trois Freres close on her course. Far away to port, through the driving of the spray, he could see the light on Marberry Head, which was the leading light for Barham Harbour. But he would not change the course of the Trois Freres till the gang were secured safe down below.

The boys at their perch in the tarpaulin saw Captain Dunk push his way through the crowded cabin, keys in hand, and through the closed skylights heard the muffled cheer that greeted him as he turned the keys in the lock and dragged out the first of the sealed treasure-sacks, shoving it on to the table, and sending glasses and bottles flying in all directions.

The eyes of the gang were gleaming now with joy and greed.

Here, in that shabby old sack of thick tripple-sewn canvas, were the first fruits of a

seen burglaries, in which they all had a share.

Captain Dunk had, apparently, asked for a knife to cut the lashings of the bag, for knives fashed out in all directions, with dagger-shaped knives that Wobby remarked, made for something besides peeling fruit.

The cord at the neck of the bag was slashed through. The neck was untied, and a dozen dirty hands were thrust into the sack to bring out the gold plate of Lord Bradbury and the treasure of Lord Tavny.

The first object that came out was sewn up in wash-leather, just as gold-plate is kept in a sack to keep it from being rubbed.

It was greeted with cheers and yells, and the eager knives ripped away the wash-leathers.

Then a sudden silence fell upon the gang. Their eyes were averted from the objects. Their hands, for as the wash-leather was torn away, it revealed not a heavy bit of gold-plate such as they expected, but the body of an old and rusty iron safe.

Wobby made a signal to Stubbs, and four stout screws went home swiftly, screwing down the sliding hatch of the companion to the thick doors in which Stubbs had quietly turned the key.

Their angry yell greeted the sight of the safe. The ruffians below evidently thought that it was some ill-timed jest on the part of these English burglars who had come aboard, but Captain Dunk had put his finger to his lips for the reason.

Swiftly the contents of the sack were turned out on the table. Wash-leathers were eagerly torn away from the objects, revealing only old pots and pans and vases hastily and roughly twisted out of shape of sheet lead.

Another sack was brought out and revealed the same.

Then the box which was supposed to hold the coveted jewels of the Countess of Cadock was dragged forth, placed upon the table, and burst open.

Wobby chuckled under his breath as he peered through the skylight, for from the box were dragged forth not the *Quatre-vingts* pearls and pearls, but a string of those cheap bead necklaces which are sold at drapers' shops for less than two shillings each.

"Sold!" muttered Wobby. "Now get your heads back, boys. There's going to be trouble in this skylight in a jiff! Those boys will be red-hot, snipe-headed from now onwards. They'll pass us one, if we don't watch it!"

There was a rush for the steps of the companion and wild yells sounded from below as the ruffians found that they were batted down.

Raging Seas!

BANG! The glass in the skylight was shattered, and a round speck of light shined in through the tarpaulin, as a bullet whistled up very close to Jim's head.

"Keep back, boys!" called John Lincoln from the helm.

A perfect fusillade of shots tore through the tarpaulin, shivering the glass of the skylight in a thousand fragments.

"Crumbs!" chuckled Wobby. "They are stirred up like a wasp's nest!"

Jumping on to the table, half a dozen of the imprisoned ruffians, waving all sorts of death and destruction, were wrestling with the quadrant braces, trying to force up the hatches. But when they discovered that these were firmly screwed home they adopted other tactics.

A dozen men leaped on to the table, and, getting their backs under the skylight, heaved at it, endeavouring to tear the screws from the woodwork of the coaming by sheer force.

To prevent any of the party on deck from coming too near the skylight, hands were thrust up and revolvers were fired in all directions, the bullets whistling close to the boys.

"Down on your faces, pebs!" cried Wobby. "They are getting lively. I told you they'd be snipe-headed about this—stands to reason!"

He crawled up the slope of the deck with a croak, and watched his opportunity as a hand was thrust through the tattered tarpaulin, holding a revolver, which waggled

about in an endeavour to get off a shot that might hit John Lincoln at the helm.

Wobby watched that hand. Before the trigger was pulled, crack came the mopsicle on the quondam beam and there was a yell of agony as the revolver dropped on to the steaming deck.

"I thought that would tickle up his funny-bone!" said Wobby complacently. "If they get much more precise on that old light they will bust it. Then we shall be busy!"

But John Lincoln had already foreseen this. He gave a short order to Stubbs.

"Stand by the sheets, boys!" called Stubbs. "The governor's going to change course and steer in for the land. That will lay her over on her ear, and those chaps won't be able to stand on the table."

"The boys ran to the sheets of the straining sail.

Running before the wind, the *Trois Freres* had been keeping on a fairly even keel, but John Lincoln, putting up his helm, altered the course to bring the wind abeam.

"In with her!" yelled Stubbs. "The boys laid on the sheet, flattening the great mainsail, and the *Trois Freres* responded to the measure by laying down till her scuppers were awash."

There was a crash and a yell down in the cabin as the sudden lurch of the ship shot the table-load of ruffians on to the floor of the cabin below.

"In with the foresheet and the jib-sheets, young gentlemen!" said Stubbs, grimacing. "If those chaps have to stand on the walls of the cabin, they can't stand on the table!"

The boys sweated in the foresheet and the jibsheet, and the *Trois Freres* laid down to the pressure of the freshening gale till her lee decks were awash with the water that poured through the scuppers.

"Will she stand her topsails, Stubbs?" called John Lincoln from the helm.

"Her sticks look pretty sound, sir," replied Stubbs, "and we'll be getting the lee

of the land in half an hour. She'll carry them away before she turns over."

"Then set the topsails," replied his master. Stubbs rummaged out the great tan topsails from the dunnage that was strapped on deck. These were big sails which were only used in calm weather, and it was blowing hard now.

He bent on the halliards, and the boys stood by for the signal to hoist.

"Away with her!" ordered Mr. Stubbs.

Up went the maintop, flapping and thundering in the wind. She filled out, and the *Trois Freres* nearly lifted her keel from the dark sea as she heeled to the protest.

The boys shot in a heap into the lee scuppers.

As they were wet through already they did not mind the ducking.

"Take your foot out of my mouth, Lung!" spluttered Wobby. "Up you come, Jim! Who's that you are sitting on? Why, it's the young viscount! Stand up, Waff, dear boy! There's the other sail to set yet, and, crumbs! she's going like a train!"

The *Trois Freres* was roaring through the dark sea now like a racing yacht, lurching and staggering.

Yells from below told them what the gang of burglars thought of their seamanship. It was plain that they all expected to be drowned, for the spray, bursting along the decks, were finding their way down through the broken skylight of the cabin.

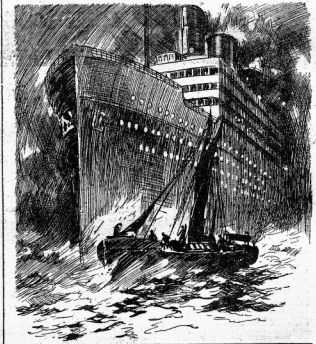
"That's the stuff to give 'em!" grinned Wobby.

"What about the other sail, Stubbs?" demanded Sticklav.

"She's ready, young gent," grinned Stubbs. "A very fine topsail, this! You see, when we get her set, this odd jacket'll move like the King's yacht!"

"She'll be sailing wrong side up if we don't watch it," answered Wobby. "Never mind, Stubbs; if she turns turtle we can sit on the keel till the clouds roll by. I wouldn't miss this bar for anything!"

The light on Malberry Head was now



Above the roar of the seas came the thud of racing propellers, then the rattle of lights rowed close above the *Trois Freres*. There was a faint yell as the hull of the great liner buzzed past, missing the small craft by a hairbreadth.



Waff looked up and saw Jim hard pressed by a burly ruffian who, grabbing him about the waist, was trying to get him to the bulwarks to throw him overboard. "Excuse me, sir," he said politely, "but that young man is a friend of mine. If you don't drop him I shall hit you!"

bearing on the port bow. The *Trois Freres* was racing in for the land like a greyhound.

Her sidelights were out, smashed by the wind which had so nearly taken Jim and Waff overboard.

Through the sprays John Lincoln was watching a spangle of lights that was coming up rapidly through the sprays to leeward. It was a large steamer—to judge by her lights, a liner—heading down Channel, and he was crossing her.

He called to Jim, who crawled along the deck to him, and then pointed to the cupboard at the side of the binnacle.

"There's a steamer coming down on us, Jim!" he shouted, to make himself heard above the roaring of the wind. "See if you can light a flare to show her where we are. She won't pick up the light from our skylight."

Jim opened the cupboard and found the flares.

John Lincoln passed him a box of matches, and he managed to strike one; but the flying sprays and the water which had poured along the decks had found its way to the cupboard. The touch of the flare was damp, and the match fizzled out.

"Try again!" ordered John Lincoln, looking back over his shoulder.

The liner was travelling fast, and overhauling them rapidly.

Again and again Jim tried to light the flare, but the sprays either got at his matches or the wind put them out.

"Crums!" exclaimed Wobby, looking under the sail. "Here's a whole town right stop of us! My hat! What a steamer! She looks like a High Street goner!"

Above the roar of the seas they could hear the thud of racing propellers as tier after tier of lights ran close above them.

Then Jim's flare suddenly caught, flared, and broke into a white light.

There was a faint yell above them from some astonished look-out, and they saw the lighted portholes fly past them in a whirl of spray, whilst the *Trois Freres*, tossing on a great bow wave, had all the wind taken out of her sails by the great hull that buzzed past her within a few feet.

A hissing jet of steam played along the decks, and a tumbling mass of water from the chiverton roared along the rail, washing the boys' heads overboard.

The liner had changed course in the nick of time, missing them by a hairbreadth.

They heard her propellers roar past them, beating the seas into a half acre of spuming foam. The *Trois Freres* heeled to the wind again as the lights of the ship drew down in the darkness, and desperate yells for mercy from below showed them that their unwilling passengers knew something of the close shave they had encountered.

John Lincoln gave a deep sigh of relief.

Stubbie grianed.

"Come on, young genis!" he said. "You was near your Saturday night bath as ever was that time. But a miss is as good as a mile. Now we'll set the foretopsail! Away with her!"

There was a rush in the companion and a smashing on the inside of the doors.

The burglars down below, maddened with fear of being drowned like rats, were trying to burst their way through the companion.

Up went the foretopsail, and down went the *Trois Freres*, hurrying herself in the seas.

The banging in the companion ceased.

"That's the sicked, boys!" called Mr. Travers, who was helping with setting sail.

"They can't do any of that rough carpentering when she's standing on her ear like this. We are nearing the harbour now. I can see the outer lightship."

"She'll be standing on her head directly, I'm thinking," said Mr. Stubbie, as he hung on to the weather bulwarks, looking up the graining masts, which were bending like whips.

"It's blowing half a gale now, and she's carrying all her light weather rig. But it keeps those lads stirred up below."

They came racing up to the outer lightship of Barham Harbour, then whirled past her in a cloud of spray.

Bag!

There was a report like a cannon, and the mainstaysail, rent into ribands, thrashed in the wind.

Bag!

Away went the foretopsail, and the *Trois Freres*, eased of her burden of sail, righted.

The face of the red-bearded anarchist showed in the skylight.

"Hallo!" he called.

"What do you want, Percy?" demanded Wobby cheerfully.

"We wants get outta dis," said the scoundrel bercefully.

"You'll get out of it soon," replied Wobby.

"We are making for port now, and the *Black Maria* will be waiting on the quay for you lads."

"You come 'ere!" called the anarchist. "I come to make you good offer. Square deal!"

A Fierce Combat!

"STAND back, Wobby!" shouted John Lincoln, for Wobby was inclined to go forward to continue an interesting conversation.

It was just as well that Wobby did this himself back at that moment, for there was a sudden shot from the skylight which raked through the cloth of his cap, tore it from his head, and sent it spinning into the sea.

"You snake-headed lug!" said Wobby wrathfully. "Wait till we get ashore, and they've taken your guns! I'll teach you to make a shooting gallery of my head!"

There was a piercing cry from Waff.

"Look out!" he cried. "Look out, sir!"

A pile of tarpauns astern, close behind the wheel, suddenly lifted, and a figure rose in the darkness close behind John Lincoln.

Waff did not stop to think. With a roar and a bound he hurled himself upon the man who had risen as if by magic from the deck.

"Ouch!" grunted the man, as Waff buffed heavily into his stomach, and the two went rolling and struggling to the deck together.

The two were evenly matched, sometimes Waff was on top, and sometimes the tall man writhed over him as they rolled in the scuppern blow together.

"Quick, chaps!" yelled Wobby. "They're breaking out!"

The gang of desperadoes were indeed breaking out.

Whilst the man with the red beard had been engaging Wobby in talk, his companions were just smashing sawing through the bulkhead of the cabin into the little engine-room, which the *Trois Freres*, like most vessels of her class, had set apart stern for the engine-room.

It was from the engine-room they came pouring out on deck.

A second man had attacked John Lincoln at the helm, but was sent spinning with a tremendous blow from Waff.

Wobby saw a third man rise up to take his place.

That was Wobby's chance. During it their journey he had carried his beloved boomcrang strapped down to his side by his waistcord.

A swift movement brought out the weapon, and Wobby, with a curious backward twist of his body, let it fly through the darkness.

It was no easy shot, even for such a consummate artist of the boomcrang as Wobby, for the *Trois Freres* was rolling and pitching wildly still, although she was in the more sheltered waters under Marberry Head.

The man's hand was upraised to strike at the boomcrang arrived.

There was a sharp snapping sound in the darkness, and the man's hand had rattled to the deck, whilst the man's arm dropped paralysed at his side.

In the meantime, the big man who had tackled Waff began to wish he had left this interesting blow alone.

He and Waff were in the lee scupper together, half awash with water, the man desperately trying to find an opening in Waff with a long and ugly dagger-knife.

At last Waff managed to get him by the wrist, and the knife dropped from his grasp, and was lost in the rush of the water.

Then he tried to get Waff down and held his head under water. There was quite enough water rushing through the scupper to do this.

"I wish my auntie could see me now!" muttered Waff to himself, as he remembered a little trick which had been taught to him by his friend the stableman.

Suddenly, with a twist and a turn, Waff was on top of his adversary.

"I don't want to be nasty," he said politely, "but we seem to be in too tight a place to exactly play the game according to the rules. Take that!"

"That" brought the big man's nose down against the deck, with a thump that flattened his face and made him see more stars than there are in the sky on a frosty night.

"And also that!" cried Waff, holding his adversary's head down in the water till he bubbled like a bath-plug.

Presently he stopped bubbling and went limp.

"If I keep on with him," said Waff to himself, "he will drown, and that would be rather awkward. I don't know how I should explain matters to a judge if I come straight out of the nursery and did in a man. That would be very awkward!"

He dragged his man out of the water on the lee side.

The Trois Freres was tossing about wildly as the light raged over her decks.

Waff leaned over his man, who sighed and groaned.

"He's all right," he muttered, with great relief.

"Snack!"

A buffet whizzed over his head and vanished into the deck planks.

Waff looked up, and saw Jim hard-pressed by a hairy ruffian, who, grabbing him about the waist, was trying to get him to the bulwarks and to throw him overboard.

"Excuse me, sir," said Waff politely, "but that young gentleman you want to throw overboard is a friend of mine. If you don't drop him, I shall hit you!"

The man stared round openmouthed at this polite but firm address, and Waff, setting his face into a suitable position for the knock-out blow, snote him on the chin with such force that he dropped like an ox.

"Thanks, old chap!" gasped Jim.

"What's doing?" asked Waff.

"I don't know," replied the bewildered Jim, who had been hitting right and left in the wild fury which had been taking place afeather. "It is an awful scream. They've shot one of their own men by accident. Here they come!"

There was a rush along the decks forward.

"Hock, 'em, boys!" shouted Wobby's voice in the darkness. "Drive 'em!"

Crack went his boomerang on the head of one of the fugitives, felling him to the deck.

Waff and Jim were knocked over in the rush.

The desperadoes had had enough of the fight. The little party which had rushed forward were seeking refuge down in the fore'side head.

It was the boomerang, which had scared them.

They heard the whistle of something that passed in the dark, and the smack as it went home. And every time it hit, a man dropped senseless.

By the wheel Captain Dink lay in a heap, having been shot through the shoulder whilst butting in between one of the gunmen and Mr. Travers.

Four dark shapes lay in the stern, and handcuffs were on their wrists. These were what Mr. Travers pleasantly termed his little collection. Waff's two prizes lay in the waist of the ship with all the length out of them. In the rush of the fight the Trois Freres had taken charge, shooting up into the wind and drifting to leeward towards the dangerous Columbine Sand.

Bump!

"Crums! What's that?" demanded Wobby.

"We are on the sands—that's what, young gent!" replied the voice of Stabbs from the darkness. "It's the tail end of the Columbine Sand."

Bump, went the Trois Freres again, her timbers creaking the whole of her length.

"It's going to be the tail end of us, if she don't bump off or hump over!" added Mr. Stabbs gloomily.

The sprays were flying from end to end of the Trois Freres as she bumped heavily again and again.

Yells of dismay went up from the cabin where the discomfited ruffians had sought

refuge, and from the little den forward where the other fugitives had stowed themselves.

Stabbs calmly drew his screwdriver out of his pocket, and drew the screws from the floorboards.

"You chaps had better come up out of that," he said, calling down the companion. "I'll trouble you first, though, for your guns and knives. I'm not going to be in a shipwreck with a gang of Barredorey nuts like you. And it is a shipwreck, too!"

There was no light in the scared men who came up from the cabin.

They handed over their weapons lamely to Stabbs as he stood at the companion, and Stabbs calmly pitched them into the raging surf outside.

"Make yourselves as comfortable as you can, gents!" he said cheerfully. "She'll be in pieces in about ten minutes of this. Stoutest ship ever built couldn't stand her. And this comes of shooting at the men at the wheel!"

Crash!

The Trois Freres lifted on a big sea and slammed down on the Columbine Sand with a jar that nearly slung the boys from their feet.

They hung to the rigging of the mainmast. "She may bump over, young gentlemen!" said Stabbs cheerfully. "She's a well-built ship; and that's the land a mile under our lee and the harbour lights two mile ahead. Mind you, I wouldn't say for certain, but the tide's making, and somewhere here, where we are, there's a swatchway called the Two Fathom Drain, that runs through the straits, and if she bumps into that we may get off with her."

(Will the Trois Freres get clear of its perilous position? You will see how prospering when you read next week's thrilling instalment.)

OUR EASY "ONE WEEK" COMPETITION!

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Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Notts Forest Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears beside the puzzle, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Notts Forest" Competition, GKN Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, November 23rd.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Boys' Friend," "Maguet," and "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

I enter "NOTTS FOREST" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

Name.....

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(Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his Reader Chums.)

Address your letters to The Editor, The GEM Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Chums,—

For next week I have a big bunch of surprises for you. I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that Mr. Martin Clifford has beaten all records with his grand new story of St. Jim's.

UNBEATABLE!

That's the plain truth about the GEM. I want to ask you to hear this fact in mind that in the Companion Papers you have the best there is. Papers come and go. Stories of all sorts may be offered to you, but take my tip—keep on standing by the Companion Papers, and you will have the finest yarns that the most famous authors can produce.

OUR SPLENDID COVER.

First and foremost, I want very specially to thank my chums for the enthusiastic letters which have poured in on me with compliments about our splendid coloured cover. I wanted to see the good old GEM distinguished in this way. Well, we have secured just what is desired at last, and nothing could be finer than the hearty reception the magnificent front page has evoked. "It's just tip-top!" "Nothing could be better!" "Hurrah for the GEM!"—that is what I read in the numerous congratulatory notes to hand. I tender thanks to the writers. It all goes to show we are on the right track. The popularity of the GEM, as ever, is increasing by gigantic leaps and bounds.

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY.

Besides the stirring yarn of St. Jim's in next week's GEM, a rattling story in which we get the Final in the famous football struggle for the Cardew Cup, entitled,

"THE CUP WINNERS!"

we have a host of other wonderful attractions.

ALAN MORTON.

We all know who Alan Morton is, and of his place in that crack team, the Glasgow Rangers. You will find his portrait in the GEM next Wednesday. It is no ordinary photograph this, but a REAL GLOSSY AUTOGRAPHED THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 771.

ACTION PORTRAIT of this prominent player.

The splendid "GEM" PHOTOGRAPHS OF FOOTBALLERS are being talked about all over the country. They are the most interesting and the finest ever offered.

TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES!

Next week the greatly enlarged GEM will contain a brilliant football story called "Jim Hartley's Luck!"

Then we have another long instalment of the magnificent serial, and another of the immensely popular, snappy, fascinating detective yarns about Anthony Sharpe, the resourceful crime investigator.

OUR GREAT COMPETITION.

There is increasing interest in these competitions. They are complete each week, and you will find an A 1 test of ingenuity in next Wednesday's GEM.

And what about our Tuck Hampsters? Well, they are still going as strong as ever!

WORTH DOING!

Frankly you cannot find better fare than that given in the Companion Papers. I am going to advise you to tell your newsgate to keep them for you each week. It's the only way to be sure of your copies. Just make a note of it! The GEM, the "Magnet," the "Popular," and the "Boys' Friend," and for your young brothers and sisters—our wonderful coloured comic—"Chuckles."

IN CASE YOU FORGET!

You are not likely to do it, but I think it well to remind you that the Companion Papers are all offering you the BEST VALUE ON THE MARKET!

The "Magnet" next week—the world famous "Magnet" in its splendid orange-coloured cover, is giving away another FREE REAL PHOTO. Make sure of your copy. There is a bigger run than ever on the Companion Papers these days, and no wonder at that!

Remember, too, that the "Boys' Friend" has the grandest treat the old Green 'Un ever put forward. Every Monday, besides a topping budget of high-class stories, the "Boys' Friend" is presenting SPLENDID HAND-

COLOURED PHOTOS OF CELEBRATED FOOTBALLERS.

Look out for these. Tell your newsgate you must have the Companion Papers, for no others are a patch on them.

A READER'S GOOD WORD!

A reader signing himself "Pal," writes from St. Albans: "I have another word to say about the GEM, and its gripping stories about St. Jim's. These have been read up and down the world for years, and they get more and more popular. Everybody has heard of Gussy, Tom Murry, Monty Lowther, and the magnificent Ricks and Crooks. Banny Trimble gets fatter and more amusing. Dear old Tompkins with his wealthy uncle from the land of the kangaroo, will be appreciated as never before. So with the rest of them—the jolliest group of characters to be met anywhere!" Thanks, "Pal," the chums of St. Jim's were never more popular than now, and you can find them every Wednesday in the GEM—the paper which, as I have indicated, is the cheeriest, most interesting paper. Keep your eye on the GEM, and you will never be disappointed.

"HOW TO START PLATE PHOTOGRAPHY AND WIN A BIG CASH PRIZE."

Any of my readers who are interested in Photography would do well to obtain a copy of the Booklet named above. This has been issued by the promoters of the £3,000 All-British Photographic Competition, and in addition of giving some exceedingly useful information on how to start Real Photography, it also contains an Entry Form for this Competition, together with particulars of how to obtain, free of charge, the 32-page Photographic Book of "Prize-Winning Photographs" containing beautiful photographic reproductions of the 28 photographs that won big prizes in the first Competition.

To those readers who send their names and addresses to the Secretary, £3,000 All-British Photographic Competition, 4, Oxford Street, London, W. 1, mentioning the GEM Library, and enclosing a halfpenny stamp for postage, a copy of "How to start Plate Photography" will be sent by return.

THE EDITOR.

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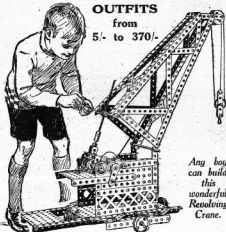
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Mr. Florent Fissore, the well-known Anglo-Indian Correspondent, writes:

"Barnet Square, London.

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