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My Readers' Own Corner!

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All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

This Wins Our Tuck Hamper!— LIKE FATHER LIKE SON!

"You look like a fool!" thundered the disgusted man to his swell son, who had just returned from college. "More and more like a conceited, hair-brained, helpless fool every year!" Just then an acquaintance of the old gentleman entered the room and saw the youth. "Hallo, Charlie!" he exclaimed. "You're back, then? You're looking more and more like your father every year." "Yass," answered Charlie; "that's what the governor's just been telling me!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to G. W. Waltons, 15, Twyford Street, Derby, England.

A BARE FACT!

A London sportsman, thinking his Highland gillie was not treating him with due respect, said: "Look here, my man, you don't seem to grasp who I am! Do you know that my family has been entitled to bear arms for the last two years?" "Hoots, that's nothin'!" was the calm reply of the attendant. "My ancestors ha'e been entitled to bare legs since th' time of William th' Conqueror!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Janie Hill, Deneholme, Horsforth Road, Greenfield, near Oldham.

SUCCESS AT LAST!

There's a sound like the roar of a cannon, A crack of falling stones, A fearful discordant bellow, Accompanied by grunts and groans. What causes this ear-splitting clatter, Like a pig which is very tear death? 'Tis our worthy young tenor, named "Gussy."

Who at last has managed the "F." Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. C. Mansfield, 62, Hargwynne Street, Stockwell, S.W. 9.

THE WRONG REPLY!

A lady entered a shop and addressed a well-dressed man. "Do you by any chance keep stationery?" she asked demurely. "No, madam," was the reply. "You see, I'm the shop-walker!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Elsie Christie, 79, Peckery Road, Beckley, E.S.E. 4.

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OVERLOOKED THE FACT!

"What brought you here, my poor man!" asked the prison visitor. "Just a little absent-mindedness," replied the prisoner. "How was that?" "I forgot to scratch the monogram off a watch before I pawned it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. E. Branwell, 7, Payton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.

PROOF OF INTEGRITY!

A tramp knocked at a farmhouse door and asked for the farmer. To that worthy he recited a tale of woe, and then

IMPROVED TIMES!

"My son," said a retired merchant, "when I was your age, instead of idling and smoking cigarettes, I was labouring twelve hours a day, doing all kinds of odd jobs." "I'm proud of you, dad," said the youth. "Had it not been for your pluck and perseverance I might be forced to do that same sort of work to-day!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Walter Webster, Cunliffe Street, Coal Aston, Dronfield.

THE BIRD OF PARADISE!

The name Bird of Paradise has for most people a peculiar fascination. The bird itself is about as big as a crow, but, of course, the profusion of its plumage makes it appear much larger. The male bird measures about seventeen inches from the tip of the beak to the end of the tail.—The colour of the body, wings, and beak is a rich brown. The head and neck are clothed with feathers of a delicate yellow, while those of the lower part of the throat are emerald green. The beak is lead blue. The feet are large and strong, and of a pale ash pink.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alex Gray, 1, Carr Cottage, Langer Road, Felixstowe.

IN PYGMY LANDS!

Right in the middle of the Congo there exists a little colony of pygmies, of whom the tallest is four feet. They dwell in the forest in little houses of twigs and leaves, generally built underneath the shelter of a bushy tree, and so cunningly designed that they are generally invisible to the naked eye. The pygmies are a squat, hairy little people who have a great fear of all other races. The approach of an intruder is generally greeted with an arrow dipped in some deadly poison, though an explorer who was able to make friends with them was received with the greatest kindness.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Len Austin, 89, Carter Lane, Mansfield, Notts.

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asked for a job. "Yes, you can have a job," said the farmer. "You can gather eggs for me if you promise that you won't steal any." "Sir," said the tramp, his eyes sparkling, "you can trust me with anything on earth. For twenty years I was manager of the public baths, and I never once took a single bath!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. N. Evans-Jones, N. P. Bank, Denbigh, N. Wales.

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The CUP WINNERS!

Tom Merry's Team Run Out Winners in the Thrilling Final for the Coveted Cardew Cup.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Cardew's Surprise Party!

TRICKLE in, old beans!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth issued that invitation, as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther appeared at the doorway of Study No. 9.

The Terrible Three of the Shell entered.

Cardew had risen politely from the armchair. He sank back into it with a tired look.

"Mind shuttin' the door!" he asked.

Tom Merry shut the door.

"Thanks! Sit down, dear men, if you can find anythin' to sit on. I suppose you're frightfully fagged?"

"Not at all," said Tom.

"Why should we be?" asked Manners.

"Haven't you been at footer practice?"

"Yes."

"So have I," said Cardew. "Levison and Clive are keepin' me up to the mark. I'm in a pathetic and touchin' state of exhaustion. That's why I've asked you fellows here."

"You want us to administer first aid?" asked Monty Lowther, picking up a cushion.

"No larks!" said Cardew hastily. "Chuck it—"

Whiz!

"You silly ass!" howled Cardew, as the cushion flew. "You frabjous, silly, burblin' dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You asked me to chuck it."

"For goodness' sake, don't play the goat!" snapped Cardew. "Keep your funny wheezes for the 'news.'"

"Well, what's on?" demanded Tom Merry. "You asked us to come in here at five o'clock. It's five now. What's the game?"

"I'm expectin' callers after five," explained Cardew.

"Is it a feed?"

"Not in the least."

"What is it, then?"

"A rag!"

The Terrible Three stared at Cardew.

"I don't catch on," said Manners, rather impatiently. "Look here, our time is of some value, if yours isn't. What are we here for, I'd like to know?"

"Because Racke's comin' to see me."

"What the dickens—" said Tom Merry.

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Cardew. "You've heard of the Cardew Football Cup—"

"Fatehead! As we're playing in the final on Wednesday, I suppose we have," said Tom.

"Exactly. I'm in the final, too. Levison insists upon my playin' in his team," said Cardew, with a sigh. "Of course, my natural inclination is to cut the show, and have an engagement out of gates when the final is played. I'm sure you fellows understand my feelin's, an' sympathise."

"Can it!" said Monty Lowther tersely. "Do you want another cushion, you slacking ass?"

"Thanks, no! I'm playin', when the final comes off, much against the grain; but when duty calls, you know! You fellows know what a slave I am to my sense of duty. Well, playin' in the semi-final the other day, I had to throw over Racke & Co., and they're annoyed. I don't know why, but they are."

"Well!" said Tom.

"They're comin' here to see me," yawned Cardew. "Levison and Clive have gone over to Wyland, so I'm on my lonely own. Racke wants me to join up for a little excursion on Wednesday, the day of the final. I'd like to oblige him—it would be obligin' myself, also. You fellows realise how much merrier it would be to go out blaggin' with Racke & Co., instead of sloggin' in a football-match."

"I don't think so—quite," said Tom. "Is that all?"

"Oh, no! I'm goin' to play, because Levison insists upon it, and life wouldn't be worth livin' in the study afterwards if I cut the final. It's one of the penalties of friendship that one's friends always make one's life not worth livin', in one way or another. The fault is in human nature, I suppose, an' can't be helped. So I'm not grumblin'. But my idea is that Racke & Co. are goin' to cut up rusty. Now, you three fellows are no end hefty when it comes to a scrap."

"Thanks!"

"You are, you know. I should have to go all out, myself, to lick any one of you," said Cardew amiably.

"And a bit over," remarked Manners.

"You can try, if you like," suggested Monty Lowther. "There would be a dead slacker lying about this study afterwards!"

"My dear men, that isn't my object at all. Bein' such hefty men in a scrap, you are the fellows I want at the present moment," explained Cardew. "My idea is that you should stand behind that screen for a bit, and keep out of sight—"

"What?"

"Like Lady Teazle in the play, or giddy old Polonius behind the arras," said Cardew. "Then, when the rag begins, you rush in, and mop up the study with Racke & Co. I look on and cheer! See!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Does the programme strike you as interestin'?" asked Cardew anxiously.

"Hardly."

"Anythin' I can do to make it more attractive? I'm really quite gone on it myself. Imagine the jolly surprise of Racke & Co. when they think they've got everythin' goin' as they want it, my pals bein' away, and you fellows rushin' in from behind the screen, like the first, second, and third murderers in a drama—what?"

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Well, if it's a rag, we don't mind lendin' a hand," said Tom. "But—"

"Cut the buts," suggested Cardew. "It strikes me, you know, as a specially good wheeze, and such a jolly surprise for Racke when he gets goin'. I've arranged the screen specially, an' put three chairs behind it for you to sit on, an' light refreshments—"

"What?"

"Cakes and drinks, you know," said Cardew. "At least, a handsome box of chocolates, a present from one of my dear assets. Racke & Co. will be here soon; you won't have long to wait. Sit down to the choos, old beans, and play up, like good little men!"

"After all, it will be a lark," said Monty Lowther. Cardew looked at his watch.

"They'll be here soon," he said. "Won't you retire behind the screen, dear men, and prepare the little surprise for them! I assure you that it will be no end of a scream!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom, laughing.

The Terrible Three walked round the screen in the corner of the study, and sat on the chairs Cardew had ranged there. The screen quite shut them off from view. They proceeded to sample the chocolates, which were distinctly good, while they waited. They had not long to wait. A few minutes later there were footsteps in the passage, and the door of Study No. 9 opened. Then they heard Cardew's voice.

"Trickle in, old beans!"

And Racke & Co. trickled in.

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CHAPTER 2.

A Change in the Programme!

AUBREY RACKE of the Shell had rather a grim expression on his face. His companions—Crooke and Scrope of the Shell and Mellish of the Fourth—were grinning. Cardew did not trouble to rise as they came in, neither did he ask them to be seated. Racke closed the door.

"Gentlemen, it's a pleasure to see you," said Cardew gracefully. "May I inquire to what I owe the honour of this esteemed visit?"

"Cut the cackle," said Racke. "I told you I was comin' to see you."

"And now you're here—"

"It's about Wednesday," said Racke, eyeing the dandy of the Fourth as he reclined in the armchair. "Are you comin'?"

"I'd like to, old bean."

"Well, if you'd like to come, come," said Crooke.

Cardew shook his head.

"Levison—" he began.

"Hang Levison!"

"Hang him if you like, and if he'll let you," said Cardew amiably. "But the dear man insists upon my playin' in the final."

"Why should you play, if you don't want to?" demanded Scrope.

"Echo answers why."

"Enough foolin'!" snapped Aubrey Racke. "The other day, Cardew, you fixed it up with us to go over to the Woodend races, and you threw us over at the last minute because Levison wanted you for a football match."

"Guilty!"

"Do you think you can treat fellows like that?"

"Yes."

"You cheeky cad!" roared Racke.

"Softly, old bean," urged Cardew. "Don't yell! You were sent to St. Jim's to pick up public school polish. I understand. Are you doin' it? Do you feel justified in lettin' your pater expend his war profits without gettin' the stipulated result? Think of it, Aubrey!"

Racke's companions chuckled, and Racke scowled blackly. Racke did not like mention of the war profits.

"Well, you can't pick a fellow up and throw him over when you like," he said, between his teeth. "I'm willin' to be friendly. We've fixed up a jolly party for Wednesday—the day of the final. Come along with us and have a good time, and we'll overlook the trick you played us the other day."

"And leave Levison in the lurch?" asked Cardew reflectively.

"Levison can go and eat coke!"

"I'd like to come, po end," said Cardew regretfully. "But old Ernest is a sticker, you know. Even if I made the arrangement, he would come down heavy, an' I'm too feeble to resist. So I should have to throw you over again, Racke! Would you find that grateful and comfortin'?"

"You'll give me your word, honest Injun," said Racke.

"I'll arrange to come, if you like—"

"Good!"

"On the understandin' that I throw you over, same as before—"

"You silly owl!"

"But I can't give you my word, because my word is my bond. Catch on! That's really the best I can do for you."

Racke nodded, his eyes gleaming.

"That's that, then," he said. "And you really think, Cardew, that you can play fast and loose with fellows like this, and take them up and throw them over, just because you're a lord's grandson?"

"Not for that reason," said Cardew. "Just because it's my word—pretty Fanny's way, you know."

"Well, I expected this," said Racke grimly. "I've made you a friendly offer, and you've refused it. Now I'm goin' to pay you for your cheek!"

"That's the programme!" grinned Crooke. "Lock the door, Mellish!"

"You bet!" chuckled Mellish.

Behind the screen in the corner the Terrible Three grinned. But for Ralph Reckness Cardew's sage precaution in having help at hand, there was no doubt whatever that he would have been booked for a savage ragging. He was locked in the study with four fellows, all of them bitterly incensed against the dandy of the Fourth for what they called his airs and graces.

Racke & Co. were prepared to eat dirt, for the sake of "getting in" with the aristocratic grandson of Lord Reckness. But to have eaten dirt, and then to have been thrown over at the last moment, was most exasperating for Racke & Co.

"Now you're for it, you cheeky cad!" said Aubrey Racke, setting his teeth. "I suppose you understand that."

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"You're lookin' for a scrap?" asked Cardew mildly. "One at a time—an' the others seein' fair play—what?"

Racke laughed savagely.

"It's not a scrap," he said. "It's a raggin'! And you're goin' through it, till you'll hardly know yourself when you look in the glass again. Have him out of that chair, you fellows!"

Cardew jumped to his feet as the four juniors rushed on him.

In a moment he was struggling in the grasp of four pairs of hands.

"Blow in, old bean!" he shouted.

And the Terrible Three "blew in."

The screen went over with a crash, and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther rushed into the fray.

There was a howl of alarm from Racke & Co.

They had not had the faintest suspicion that there was anyone concealed in the study; the sudden appearance of the Terrible Three took them completely by surprise.

They released Cardew as if he had suddenly become red-hot, and jumped back.

But they did not jump in time.

The rush of the three Shell fellows sent them spinning, and Racke & Co. sprawled, yelling, on Cardew's expensive study carpet.

"Ow, ow, yow, woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew seated himself in the armchair again, resettled his tie, and smiled.

"Quite a surprise—what?" he yawned. "Now, you chaps, oblige me by kickin' them out of the study."

Racke staggered to his feet.

"I'm goin'!" he gasped. "Keep off, Tom Merry, you rotter!"

Mellish grabbed at the key in the door. Tom Merry caught his wrist, and jerked his hand away.

"Not yet!" he said cheerily.

"Lemme get out!" gasped Mellish. "It—it was only a lark—"

"But the lark isn't finished yet," said Tom.

"Look here—"

Tom Merry put his back to the door. Racke & Co. gathered in a savage and sullen group, with scowling faces. Cardew regarded them from the armchair with a benevolent smile.

"There's many a slip twixt cup and lip, old tops," he said gently. "You picked a judicious moment when my pals were out; but, bless you, I saw the whole game, Racke—an' asked these chaps to drop in. You're really not clever enough to pull my leg, Aubrey. But I'm tired of your society, old bean, an' you can go. Let 'em run!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not yet," he answered. "So far, the matter has gone according to your programme, Cardew—"

"Yes; many thanks!"

"Now it's going according to mine," said Tom coolly.

"Oh?"

"Racke & Co. are a set of rotters and blackguards!" said the captain of the Shell; "and at times I'm afraid you're not much better, Cardew."

"Lots of times," agreed Cardew.

"If Levison hadn't stopped you the other day, you'd have gone to the races with this dingy crew—"

"Yes; wish I had!"

"Birds of a feather!" granted Manners.

"And now," said Tom Merry, "now we're here, we'll see fair play."

"But the matter's finished," urged Cardew.

"Not at all; it's just beginning," said Tom coolly. "We're going to see fair play. You're going to fight Racke."

"Dear man, I wouldn't hurt Racke for worlds!" said Cardew. "Too much exertion."

"Take your choice," said Tom. "Fight Racke—or take what they came here to give you. And we'll look on."

"Look here—" began Racke.

Cardew considered. He cocked his eye whimsically at Tom Merry; and read that the captain of the Shell was quite in earnest. He yawned deeply, and rose to his feet.

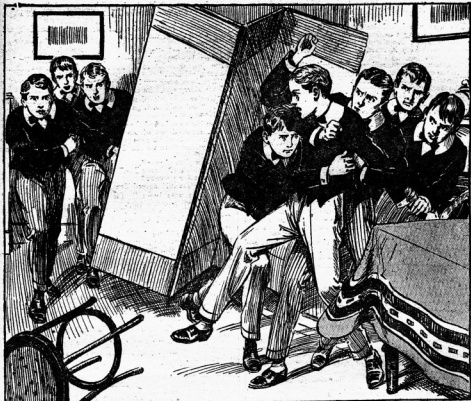
"Anythin' to oblige!" he said. "Come on, Racke!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Fight in Study No. 9!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW made his preparations for the combat coolly and methodically. He did not want to fight Racke, that was certain; his objection was on the score of the exertion involved. Racke objected for quite other reasons.

Manners and Lowther grinned as they looked on. Cardew deserved punishment, and Racke deserved punishment; and they were going to get what they deserved—at one another's hands. It really was a great idea, from the point of view of the Terrible Three.



Ralph Rockness Cardew jumped to his feet, as the four juniors rushed on him. In a moment he was struggling in the grasp of four pairs of hands. "Blow in, old beans!" he shouted. The screen went over with a crash, revealing Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. There was a howl of alarm from Racke & Co., as they were taken unawares. (See page 4.)

The final match for the Cardew cup was a very important affair in the eyes of the St. Jim's junior footballers. Cardew, when he liked, was a brilliant forward, and he had helped Levison to win his tie in the semi-finals.

He was wanted in the final—in fact, he could not be spared from Ernest Levison's team. But it was only too probable that he would prove, as he had often proved, unreliable just when he was wanted.

His inclinations led him towards Racke & Co., his duty as a pal towards Levison and the final—and Ralph Rockness Cardew was only too apt to follow his inclinations, to the exclusion of all other considerations whatsoever.

But after a fight between Cardew and Racke it was extremely unlikely that Racke's society would tempt him away from his duty. So Tom Merry considered, at all events.

So far, Cardew was holding to the side of duty; and Tom Merry's idea was to help him hold to it.

Which was really very kind of Tom, for it was Tom Merry's team that was to meet Levison & Co. in the final; and Cardew, at his best, would be a dangerous opponent. But Tom, though very keen to capture the cup, was thinking more of playing the game than of winning the cup.

"Ready, Racke, old man?" asked Cardew.

"I'm not fightin' you, you fool!" said Racke, between his teeth.

Cardew made a gesture towards Tom Merry.

"The excellent Thomas says so," he answered. "Argue it out with Thomas, dear man. I'm dead in this act."

"Let me out of this study, Tom Merry!" shouted Racke.

"You can try to get out, if you like," said Tom contemptuously. "You'll get hurt, though."

"You rotter—"

"You came here to rag a chap four to one," said the captain of the Shell. "You want a lesson, and you're going to

get it. Cardew wants one, too, and he's going to get it. Now get going!"

"I won't!" roared Racke.

And he put his hands behind him and backed away.

"Good man!" said Cardew approvingly. "Don't! Thomas, old man, Racke may be considered as havin' thrown up the sponge, and the fight's over, and I'm the jolly old victor. The proceedings will now terminate."

"They won't!" said Tom Merry grimly. "There's a five-bat yonder, Monty. Will you take it and lay into Racke till he begins on Cardew?"

"Yes, rather!" assented Lowther. "Pleasure!"

Lowther picked up the bat.

"Keep off, you cad!" hissed Racke. "I'll fight the rotter, and lick him, too."

Tom glanced at the other ragers, who were making themselves as small as possible, and casting longing glances at the door.

"If any of you fellows are spoiling for a fight, and feeling left out in the cold, count on us," he said.

"Not at all!" gasped Crooke.

"I'm not fightin' you, you beast!" muttered Scrope.

"Keep off!" mumbled Mellish.

"What a warlike gang!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Only Racke is keen on a scrap, and even Racke doesn't seem very keen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ready?" asked Tom Merry. "We're waiting for you two."

"No help for it, Racke," said Cardew, with a smile. "Screw up your courage to the stickin' point, old top, and wade in."

He advanced towards the cad of the Shell, who met him

very unwillingly. Tom Merry took out his watch to keep time.

"Time!"

The first round had lasted about three seconds, when Aubrey Racke went to the floor. He did not rise, and Tom began to count. He stopped at eight, as it was clear that the festive Aubrey intended to lie on the carpet till he was counted out.

"Manners, old man, will you kick Racke till he gets up?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"Certainly," grinned Manners.

"Yaroooh!"

Racke was on his feet in record time.

The black sheep of the Shell realised that there was no help for it now, and he threw himself into the fight desperately.

Cardew was a good boxer, and strong and sturdy enough in spite of his dandified way; but he despised Racke too much to take trouble with him—with the result that he was knocked spinning by a lucky drive, with all Racke's heavy weight behind it.

Crash!

"Oh gad!"

Cardew landed on his back, and lay dazed and gasping. There was a trickle of red from his nose.

"Well hit!" sang out Monty Lowther.

"Time!"

Racke's eyes glittered savagely, and his unwillingness for the combat left him. His feelings against the dandy of the Fourth were bitter enough, and he would have been glad to lick the junior, whose bitter, ironical tongue had made him writhe often enough.

Now it looked as if he had a good chance of success, and Racke became quite keen on the combat.

Cardew staggered to his feet. The call of time saved him, for certainly he would have been knocked out had he gone on from that knock-down blow.

"Time!"

There was a gleam in Cardew's eyes as he toed the line again, and he was very careful now. He was not giving Racke any more chances. But he was groggy in the second round, and Racke had the best of it.

In the third round, however, Cardew came into his own again, as it were. This time it was Racke who went down, and he went down hard.

"Fourth round!" said Monty Lowther. "Shouldn't have thought Racke had four rounds in him. Go it, Aubrey!"

"Time!"

The fighting was hard and fast in the fourth round. Cardew was cool, determined, implacable now; and Racke was making a desperate effort for victory. But fortune smiled on Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Racke never could stand punishment, and he weakened more and more as he realised that Cardew was out for a fight to a finish.

In the fifth round Racke was knocked right and left, and he finished up on the carpet.

"Time!"

Racke did not stir.

"You haven't had enough, old bean," urged Cardew, "I'm just warmen' to it now. Put in one more round, Aubrey, old bird."

"I'm done, hang you!" gasped Racke.

Tom Merry eyed him critically.

"You've a couple of rounds left in you yet, Racke," he said. "But we'll let it go at that. You've had a lesson."

"Hang you!"

Tom Merry unlocked the study door. Gladly enough Racke & Co. crowded out of the study. Cardew looked into the glass, and rubbed his nose painfully.

"Anything more we can do for you, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry politely.

Cardew glanced round.

"Thanks, no! Sorry I called you in now! I shall have a prize now for a week!"

"Looks like it!" agreed Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Racke's nose beats it, for shape and size!" remarked Monty Lowther consoling.

"Bother Racke's nose! I'm thinkin' of mine!" groaned Cardew. "Bother you, too! A pretty sight for Doris to see! Blow you!"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Don't forget to call us in next time there's a ragging on in this study," said Tom Merry. "We'll see you through—in the same way."

"Go and eat coke!"

The Terrible Three, with smiling faces, retired from the study, leaving Cardew attending to his handsome nose—which was not quite so handsome now. He was still attending to it when Levison and Clive came in, and they stared at him. And when Cardew explained what had happened there was a roar of laughter from his study-mates.

"Funny, isn't it?" sniggered Cardew. "Look at my nose!"

"What does that matter?" said Levison, laughing. "It will get well."

"It won't be well by Wednesday, for the final."

"Well, you don't play football with your nose, do you?" asked Clive.

To which question Ralph Reckness Cardew replied only with a grunt.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison's Eleven!

TOM MERRY & CO.—and, indeed, all the Lower School of St. Jim's—were looking forward keenly to the approaching Wednesday. The day of the cup final was a great day in the history of the old school.

Since the cup had been founded by Cardew—or, rather, by his grandfather, Lord Reckness—it had been the one great topic at St. Jim's. The handsome silver cup, at present reposing in Mr. Raitlon's study in the School House, had been viewed and re-viewed by all the fellows, who agreed that it was a trophy well worth winning. Even Racke, the slacker of the Shell, had "put in" for the cup, and tried his luck with a team as slack as himself. Eight teams had competed, and had been knocked out one after another, till only Tom Merry & Co. and Levison & Co. were left for the final struggle. And that struggle was going to be a record one.

Each of the rival captains had gone over his team with a microscope, as it were, making little changes for its improvement. And now that the earlier tries were over, they had plenty of material to draw upon. Fellows who had played for Figgins, or Redfern, or Blake, in the earlier tries, volunteered for service with the finalists, so both the rival skippers made changes for the better in the personnel of their teams.

And every fellow who could not be taken on as a player intended to be a spectator, so there was likely to be a record crowd on the occasion. Dr. Holmes, the revered Head of St. Jim's, himself was to present the cup to the winning team, in the presence of a distinguished assembly, for the sisters and the cousins and the aunts of many of the players were coming down to the school for the great occasion.

Among the more distinguished visitors, Levison's sister Doris was expected, and D'Arcy's cousin Ethel.

"It's wathah wotten," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked to his study-mates, Blake and Herries and Digby. "I wanted Ethel to see us win the cup, you know—that was really why I insisted upon her agreein' to come down with Dows Levison—and owin' to wotten circumstances we are knocked out of the competeh, and Study No. 6 will not bag the cup."

"Awfully rotten!" agreed Jack Blake.

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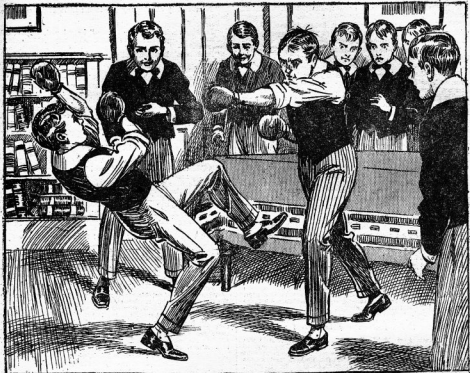
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It was a lucky drive, but it had all Racker's weight behind it. Cardew landed on his back with a thud, where he lay dazed and gasping. There was a trickle of red from his nose. "Well hit!" sang out Monty Lowther. (See page 6.)

"Yaas, wathah! Howevah, Levison has accepted my services for the final, so probably Ethel will have the pleasah of seein' me kick the winnin' goal." Arthur Augustus remarked thoughtfully. "The twouble is, that I shall be kickin' it for Study No. 9, not for Study No. 6. Isn't that a wotten reflection, deah boys?"

"You haven't kicked it yet," remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—
Dig. "And it's barely possible that you won't kick it," suggested Dig. "Not likely, of course; but barely possible."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Levison's asked me to play," remarked Blake. "It's a bit of a come-down for me, captain of a team that ought to have won the cup, to play for Study No. 9—a set of nobodies. But I rather think I'd like to be in the match, all the same."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Levison knows his way about," remarked Herries. "He's asked Fatty Wynn, of the New House, to keep goal for him. Fatty kept goal for Figgins in the semi-final, and if Levison bags him, Tom Merry will find him hard to beat."

"Yaas, wathah! Levison will have bagged the best goal-keeper and the best forward in the Fourth Form," said Arthur Augustus. "With Wynn and myself playin' for him, he has a wrippin' chance of baggin' the cup."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet," observed Dig.

"I am simply statin' facts, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I wathah think the cup is goin' to Study No. 9. All that wowwies me is that I shall be winnin' it for a wival study. I wogard, that as wotten. But, after all, it will all be in the Fourth. Never mind, so long as the Shell bondadahs are beaten."

To which Blak & Co. heartily agreed.

There was no doubt that Ernest Levison knew his way about, as George Herries put it. He had succeeded in making up a first-class team some days before the date of the final, and when they turned out for practice together on Saturday

afternoon, Tom Merry & Co. walked down to Little Side to give them a look in.

Tom had made up what he considered a winning team, but he was very interested in Levison's crowd.

Kangaroo of the Shell, one of Tom's men, was captaining a scratch side to give Levison's crowd some practice. Tom Merry watched the latter as they lined up. Cardew arrived on the ground a few minutes late; but he arrived, and the Terrible Three grinned as they noted the blossom, as Lowther called it, on his handsome Greek nose. Cardew was still showing signs of the scrap in the study.

"Fatty Wynn in goal!" said Tom Merry. "Good! Reilly and Roylance, back—pretty good! Wildrake, Clive, Julian, halves—all right! D'Arcy, Blake, Levison, Cardew, and Levison minor, in the front line—a jolly strong front line! I don't know about Levison minor, but the rest are first-class—if Cardew plays up."

"Bit of an ass to play a Third Form fag in the final," remarked Manners.

"Well, young Levison is good, as quick as lightning," said Tom. "I dare say he will be worth his salt. And he will play up like thunder to help his beloved major win the cup."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silly as, I think!" said Grundy of the Shell, over Tom Merry's shoulder. "Playing a fag, and I offered! Levison could have had me in the front line if he'd liked."

"Did he refuse?" exclaimed Monty Lowther, with an air of great astonishment.

"He did, actually," Grundy assured him. "In fact, he refused quite rudely. Put it very plain, the cheeky cad!"

"Now, I wonder why!" said Lowther reflectively. "Oh, I've got it! I know why Levison didn't put you in, Grundy. He didn't want to make us a present of the match. Catch on!"

Grundy snorted.

"Risky bizney, playing a fag in the final, all the same."

said Manners. "That will be a weak spot for us to get through."

"Not in your lifetime!" said the cheery voice of D'Arcy minor, at his elbow. "Frank will give you old fogies plenty to think about on Wednesday, you take my tip!"

"We had a big job beating your lot, didn't we, old bean?" asked Monty Lowther. "We had to go all out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally of the Third granted. It had fallen to Wally & Co. to meet Tom Merry's team in the semi-finals, and the result had not been glorious for the Third. But D'Arcy minor was greatly pleased to see a Third-Former in Levison's crowd. It was a leg-up for the Third, as he expressed it, to be represented in the Final at all.

Tom Merry & Co. watched the scratch match with keen interest.

Ernest Levison had his men well in hand, and they worked together well, and there was no doubt that they were a powerful team. Levison of the Fourth had a good many gifts, but he had hardly been expected to shine as a football captain; but there was no doubt that he was turning out well. Levison & Co. walked all over the scratch team, though it included a good many good players, and Tom Merry realised that the final was going to be a struggle. Cardew especially seemed to have thrown aside his lazy slackness, and to be as keen as mustard; and at his best the dandy of the Fourth was very good indeed.

Racke & Co. had come down to see the scratch match, and

"What's jolly old Aubrey got in his little brain now?" he asked.

Scrope shrugged his shoulders.

"He's up against the lot of them," he grinned. "Dear old Aubrey hasn't quite recovered from bein' knocked out in the first round."

"And bein' knocked out in Cardew's study!" chuckled Crooke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got some scheme in his mind," said Crooke. "I don't know what it is, an' I don't want to know; but I know this—I'm jolly well not takin' a hand in it!"

"Same here!" said Scrope emphatically.

On that point Racke's chums were quite in agreement. But if Aubrey Racke had any scheme in his scheming mind, he did not confide it to his associates.

CHAPTER 5.

Where is the Cup?

"SOMETHING'S up, dear boys!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark on Tuesday morning before lessons.

Blake looked at his noble chum admiringly.

"You think so?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And why?" inquired Blake, with a wink at Herries and Digby, who grinned.

ALAN MORTON,

Scottish International and
Glasgow Rangers Outside-Left

READ ALL ABOUT HIM!

ONE of the most popular and most famous players in Scottish football to-day is the Glasgow Rangers outside-left—Alan L. Morton. Since the war was over he has played in that position for Scotland in practically every representative game—in Victory International matches, in Internationals proper, and for the Scottish League. Indeed, it would not be going much too far to suggest that in these days, whenever the people who choose Scotland's representative sides gather together, Morton's name is passed along as the outside-left without any question. He is as easy first—the others may be referred to as "also-rans."

Morton comes from Airdrie, and his first big club of note was that famous amateur organisation, Queen's Park. From 1913 to 1920—the years of war excepted—Morton was a brilliant exponent of the outside-left game on behalf of the Rangers, and it was thought that he would finish his career as an amateur. However, he was responsible for creating something like a sensation when, in the summer of 1920, he listened to the voice of the tempters from the Glasgow Rangers club and became a professional player.

In Scotland, of course, the financial arrangements allowed between club and player are very different from those obtaining in England, and it was said that at the time Morton signed for the Rangers he was promised something like three thousand pounds in addition to his wages. Rumour also said that these wages amounted to something like fifty pounds per week, and, even if we allow something for exaggeration, it is quite certain that Morton received a very big salary when he joined the Rangers, and might with

justice be referred to as the best paid footballer the world has ever known. And when you see him on the football-field, you realise that he is a master of the game, for he has the real footballing brain.

Several things about his play inevitably strike the onlooker. In the first place, he has mastered completely the art of ball control, so that it seems just dead easy for him to bring the most awkward ball down to his feet on the instant. Then he is also wonderfully clever in a close dribble, but he has the footballing brain which tells him that unnecessary dribbling is merely a waste of good time. So he swings the ball into the middle with fine judgment, and at the right pace and height. As he is only five feet five inches, it may be said of him:

"He's little, but he's wise."

"He's a terror for his size."

With Cunningham as his inside partner, he has tied up many opposing defenders, and in recent seasons has done his share to help Scotland to beat England in International contests. At times he can get goals, too, and he obtained a very good one in the International match against England in 1921. In addition to the qualities mentioned above, it should also be stated that Morton is very fast—much quicker than the average Scottish player, for in that country speed is not considered so absolutely essential as it is in England. It will be an unhappy day for the Glasgow Rangers club and their-supporters when the highest paid player in modern football ceases to flash when the wing.

The Subject of Next Week's FREE AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOGRAPH—J. SEED (Spurs F.C.).

Aubrey Racke watched it with a scowling brow. Crooke observed the expression on his companion's face, and grinned. He was Aubrey's pal, but he found some sort of pleasure in "rabbling in" unpleasant facts.

"Looks like the cup for Study No. 9, Racke," he remarked.

Racke granted.

"Cardew's playing up like a giddy International," observed Scrope, taking his cue from Crooke.

Another grant.

"They're a strong team," said Crooke. "Fancy Cardew turnin' out a merry footballer like this! Looks like winnin' his own cup, by gad!"

"Perhaps somebody will put a spoke in their wheel yet," said Racke savagely, crossing his prominent nose, which was in a much more serious state than Cardew's.

"Eh! I don't see how," grinned Crooke. "Thinkin' of nobblin' some of the players before the match, Aubrey? Nothin' in it, dear boy!"

"They haven't got the cup yet!" granted Racke. "Lots of things may happen before Wednesday."

"Goin' to offer to play for Wednesday," and knock 'em out with your tremendous form as a footballer!" asked Crooke pleasantly. And his companions chuckled.

Racke did not reply. There was a glitter in his eyes that showed that his scheming brain was at work. A loud shout rang out as Cardew put the ball in, and Racke scowled and turned away, and tramped off the field with his hands driven deep into his pockets. Crooke glanced after him rather curiously, and then looked at Scrope.

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Arthur Augustus did not observe either the wink or the grins. He was too busy with the thoughts that were passing through his powerful and aristocratic brain.

"You see," he explained, "Mr. Wainton was lookin' vevy wowwided when we came down. All the prefects are lookin' extremely serious about somethin'. Now there's an order for the whole House to assemble in Hall to be addressed by the Head. Puttin' one thing togethah with another, dear boys, I feel sure that there is somethin' up."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Blake. "Gussy, old man, you'll make 'em sit in the House of Lords, when you get there, if your intellect works at this amazing rate."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Beats Sherlock Holmes hollow!" said Dig, in great admiration. "Fancy Gussy working it out like this that there's something up! Of course, every fellow in the school has known for an hour past that there's something up! But fancy it dawnin' on Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Had you fellows guessed that there was somethin' up!" asked Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Just a few!" said Blake sarcastically. "Still, we're glad to have accurate information, straight from the horse's mouth."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And now you've worked that out so splendidly, old chap, suppose you tell us just what's up?" continued Blake.

"I weally do not know, dear boy!"

"You fellows know what's on?" asked Tom Merry, coming along with Manners and Lowther.

"Only that there's something up," grinned Blake. "Gussy has just told us so. He's deduced it like Sherlock Holmes."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Has there been a giddy burglary, or what?" asked Cardew of the Fourth, joining the group of juniors near the doorway of Big Hall. "Or is it an expulsion?"

"Bai Jove, I trust not!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great concern. "Is it possible that the Head has found you out, Cardew?"

"What?" yelled Cardew.

"Pway don't take offence at a friendly remark, Cardew! If there is goin' to be an expulsion, I cannot help wegardin' it as wprob. that you may be the victim."

"Oh gad!"

"As you are a distant relation of mine, Cardew, I should be vevy sowvy," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Of course, a boundah who goes to woces secwetly, and does bettin' and smokin', and other wotten things, ought to be kicked out. I quite see that. Howevah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on Cardew's face.

"Weally, it is not a laughin' mattah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "If Cardew is goin' to be expelled—"

"You frabjous ass!" gasped Cardew.

"Weally, you know—"

"You larbbling jabberwock—"

"I do not wegard that as gwateful, Cardew, when I am sympathizin' with you—"

"Time!" chuckled Blake, as Kildare of the Sixth came along and opened the big door.

And the juniors streamed into Hall.

There was curiosity on all sides as to what was up, every other fellow in the School House having noted the fact long before it had dawned upon the powerful brain of Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry & Co. noted that there were no New House fellows in the assembly. The matter, whatever it was, evidently concerned the School House only.

But to judge by the expressions of the masters and prefects, all of whom were present, something very serious indeed had happened in the School House.

There was a pause. For a moment the doctor's jaws set grimly, indicating that the punishment of the delinquent, if discovered, would undoubtedly be adequate.

"If the cup is not returned," added Dr. Holmes, "I shall conclude that it is a case of theft, and take measures accordingly. That is all."

He made a sign to dismiss.

The School House fellows streamed out of Hall, and once outside there was a buzz of excited comment. The news had astounded the whole House.

"I told you fellows there was somethin' up!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think I was wight, deah boys!"

"The football cup bagged!" said Tom Merry blankly.

"What awful rotter can have pinched the cup?"

"Must have been a burglar," said Herries. "As if a St. Jim's fellow would pinch a football cup! Rot!"

"Yass, wathah!"

"The Head thinks it may be a practical joke," said Talbot of the Shell. "I'm sorry for the joker, in that case."

"Bai Jove! Was it you, Lowthah?"

"I!" yelled Monty Lowthah, glaring at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he pronounced that surprising query.

"Yass, Lowthah. Was it you? You know what a practical jokin' ass you are!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You put ink in my best toppah on one occasion. You cannot deny it. If you have hidden the football cup somewhah, Lowthah—"

"You frabjous dummy!" roared Monty, greatly incensed.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What do you fellows let him out without a muzzle for!" demanded Lowther. "It's up to D'Arcy's study-mates to keep him muzzled."

"Bai Jove! I considah—"

"He, he, he!" That cackination came from Baggy Trimble. "I say, what has Cardew done with the cup, you fellows!"

"Cardew!" shouted Levison.

Baggy grinned knowingly.

"It was Cardew, of course," he said. "Didn't I tell you fellows that Cardew had to borrow the money to pay for

WRONGFULLY ACCUSED!

(See Next Week's Story of Tom Merry & Co.)

There was a buzz of speculation on the subject, which died away as Dr. Holmes entered by the upper door.

In the midst of a dead silence the Head addressed the School House.

"My boys, you are probably aware, by this time, that something has occurred in this House over-night."

"Right on the wicket!" murmured Monty Lowthah, not aloud.

"What has occurred can, I fear, only be described as a theft!" said the Head.

A thrill ran through the assembly. Evidently the matter was a serious one.

"You are all aware that a football challenge cup, known as the Cardew Cup, founded by Lord Reckness in the name of his grandson in the Fourth Form here, was placed for safety in Mr. Railton's study, where it could be viewed at any time by any boy in the school. That cup has been abstracted."

"Bai Jove!"

"The cup!" gasped Levison.

"Someone entered Mr. Railton's study during the night," continued the Head. "It was for the purpose of abstracting the football cup. It was not a bargiar, as is quite clear. There are many other articles in the room of more value than the football cup, and they were untouched. Moreover, the study was entered by the door from within the house. No trace has been found of any entrance having been effected from outside the House. Some member of the School House has done this."

"Oh gad!" murmured Cardew.

"I hope," said Dr. Holmes, his voice deepening, "that it may prove to be only a foolish practical joke. I am loth to believe that there can be a thief in this House. The cup, however, is of considerable value. I understand that the cost of it was twenty-five guineas. I shall take the most lenient view possible of the matter, if it is cleared up at once. The cup is to be competed for to-morrow, Wednesday. It must be returned to Mr. Railton to-day. If it is returned, with a confession from the culprit, I shall take the view that only a foolish practical joke was intended. In that case, the delinquent will be adequately punished."

the cup? Well, now he's bagged it—see? Ten to one he's going to pawn it and pay the money. Catch on! Clear as daylight to me."

"We shall get a jolly lot of theories about the cup, at this rate, if it doesn't turn up soon!" said Tom Merry.

"You'll find I'm right," said Baggy Trimble. "What do you think, Levison?"

"I won't tell you what I think, Trimble!" gasped Levison of the Fourth. "I'll show you!"

He proceeded to show Baggy what he thought. His method was simple. He took the fat junior by the collar, swung him round, and applied his boot forcibly to Baggy's fat person. There was a terrific yell from Baggy Trimble.

"Yoop! Leggo! Oh crumbs! I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's what I think!" said Levison. "Is it plain enough?"

"Yoooop!"

Apparently it was plain enough for Baggy Trimble. He tore himself away and fled, without waiting for any further demonstration of what Ernest Levison thought.

It was difficult for the St. Jim's juniors to settle down to lessons that morning. There was one thought in every mind—the cup, and the mystery of what had become of it. And that morning, in the Form-rooms of St. Jim's, lises fell as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy Takes the Cals!

THE disappearance of the football cup was the one topic at St. Jim's that day.

On the morrow it was to be fought for, and if it was not found—

There was excitement and anger on all sides.

That the cup would be returned was not believed for a moment. The practical joker, if such he was, was sure of a record licking if he owned up to his joke. He was not likely to own up, and it took a Head's Boggling.

But four of the fellows believed that it was a practical joke. The silver cup was worth twenty-five guineas, and the

most reckless and foolish practical joker would not be likely to "fool around" with articles of such value merely from a misdirected sense of humour.

The fellows who had taken the cup had taken it "for keeps," as Jack Blake expressed it.

The question was—who had taken it?
All kinds of theories and rumours were flying about St. Jim's that day. Baggy Trimble's valuable theory concerning Cardew was made widely known. Racker of the Shell started a suggestion that one of the defeated football captains had taken it as a trick on the winning team, and there was even a rumour in the afternoon that the cup had been found hidden in Study No. 6, in the Fourth.

That rumour was proved unfounded, after exciting Blake & Co. to a state of terrific exasperation.

"It's simply wotter!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy told his chums, after lessons. "That cup's got to be found, you know. I've had a hundred lines in class to-day because I wasn't listenin' to Lathom. How could I listen to Lathom's wot when I was thinkin' about the cup?"

"I've had the pointer!" growled Herries.

"Vewy hard cheese, deah boy! I weally considah that at a time like this the mastahs might draw in their horns a little, and not expect to take up so much of a fellah's time. We give them their head, as a wale; but they weally ought to take a back seat on an occasion like this."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Dig.

"Fancy hev'in' to wowwy ovah an old boundah like Turnus when the football cup is missin'!" continued Arthur Augustus warmly. "I weally do not care a button whethah Aeneas killed Turnus, or whethah Turnus knocked Aeneas on the head, you know. They seem to me to have been a pair of bloodthirsty wuffians, anyhow. And Lathom had no right to jump on me ovah 'vitacue cupu gemuta fugit indignata sub umbras.' It is quite true that I did not make it out, but what does that mattah when the Cardew Cup is missin'?"

"Nothing at all!" agreed Blake.

"Of course, if I had wellefected, I should have known that there could be no mention of an umbrellah in Virgil!" confessed Arthur Augustus. "But, you see, all my wellefactions were on the subject of the cup."

There was a chortle in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus had construed that celebrated verse to the effect that "he fled indignantly under an umbrella." It was really not surprising that Mr. Lathom had come down heavy.

"Weally, you fellahs, it is not a laughin' mattah!" said D'Arcy.

"You construe was!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was on the point of explainin' to Mr. Lathom that I had no time for Virgil to-day," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "But I decided that he would not unshaband, so I did not mention it."

"Wish you had," grinned Herries. "You'd have got the pointer instead of little me."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"The cup's got to be found," said Jack Blake abruptly. "It's all not about a practical joke. Somebody's hegered it. I don't see it's made out that it was a St. Jim's chap, as the Head thinks. More likely a burglar."

"But there was no entrance made into the House from outside, Blake."

"So the Head thinks. But very likely he doesn't know what he is talking about," grunted Blake. "He's not a detective."

"Somebodin' in that," agreed Arthur Augustus. "But if there was a burglawy, the police ought to be called in."

"They ought!" grunted Blake.

"Howevah, the Head has decided, and I suppose we must let him have his way!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"I think so, especially as we've got no choice in the matter!" said Blake sarcastically.

"Pwaw, don't give me any sarc, Blake! I have been thinkin' ovah this mattah vewy vewily. That is weally why I mucked up my construe this mornin'. You fellahs are avah that I have wathah a gift as an amateur detective."

"Oh, my Aunt Christina!"

"Pwaw what do you mean by that ejaculacion, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass with cold inquiry upon his chum.

"I mean, can it!" said Blake. "Boil it! Take it away and bury it!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"This isn't a time, really, for one of your funny turns, Gussy!" said Dig, shaking his head.

"Wats! I repeat that I have wathah a gift as an amateur detective, and I am goin' to find the cup," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Nobody else can do the trick, and it is up to me. You see, the final is fought out to-morrow, and it will be wathah widiculous for a team to win the cup

without any cup to be awarded to the winnah. It will thro' widiculous on the whole affair, you know."

"And how are you going to find it?" asked Blake. "Pickin' up a trail in Bailton's study?"

"I trust so!" said Arthur Augustus coolly.

"Oh, my hat!" and by the finger-prints on Bailton's ink-pot, you're going to detect the thief!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And you'll deduce where he's hidden the cup from the way he does his back hair?" asked Blake. "Good old Sherlock Holmes!"

"Wats! The House has been searched, and the cup has not been found," said Arthur Augustus. "It is wathah a big article, and not easy to hide. Chap couldn't put it in his waistcoat-pocket."

"Go hon!"

"If it was bagged by a School House chap he could hardly have got out of the House with it last night," continued Arthur Augustus sapiently. "And first thing this mornin' the thief was known, and everybody was wide awake on the subject. A fellow carryin' a parcel big enough to hold the Cardew Cup would certainly have been noticed."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Blake.

"And what do you deduce from that, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?" inquired Dig.

"That the cup is still in the House," said Arthur Augustus triumphantly. "It is poked away somewah vewy safely; but it is still in the School House."

"Bravo!" said Blake.

"You agree with me, deah boy?"

"Certainly! As it's perfectly plain to everybody that the cup is hidden in the House somewah, I agree!" assented Blake. "What surprises me is that you have not got on to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" Arthur Augustus rose from the tea-table. "I am now goin' to begin my investigations, and I trust I shall soon have news."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired from Study No. 6, leaving his comrades chucking. Apparently Blake & Co. lacked faith in their noble chum's powers as a Sherlock Holmes.

It was soon known in the School House that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on the track; indeed, he told every fellow he met that he had taken up the case.

Monty Lowther remarked that Gussy was giving a little much-needed comic relief to the situation.

At bed-time all the Fourth wanted to know what progress had been made by the Sherlock Holmes of St. Jim's.

But apparently Arthur Augustus had no news to impart.

At all events, he did not produce the cup.

The Cardew Cup was still missing when St. Jim's went to bed that night, and the St. Jim's fellows could only wonder what the result would be. According to what the Head had stated in Hall, he would now take the view that it was a case of theft, and would "take measures." What measures the Head intended to take was unknown so far; but all the juniors agreed that they wouldn't care to be in the shoes of the fellow who had "pinched" the cup.

CHAPTER 7.

A Clue at Last!

TOM MERRY & CO. were looking grave enough the next morning. Even Cardew of the Fourth was serious for once.

The purloining of the Cardew Cup cast a shadow over the school.

Suspicion rested on all the School House, to some extent, until the culprit was discovered. And that was an unpleasant state of affairs. New House fellows made quite unpleasant remarks about it.

But that was not the worst. The final was to take place that day, and the cup was to be won either by Tom Merry & Co. or Levison & Co. And there was no cup to be awarded to the winning team.

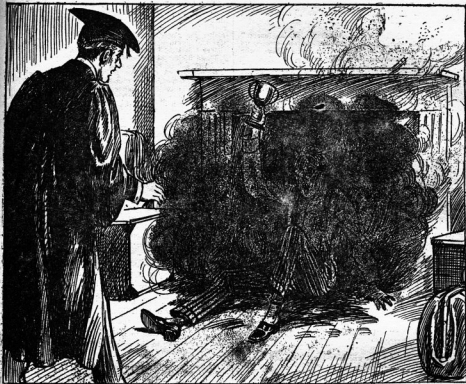
Sisters and cousins and aunts were coming down in great force to see the final, and the imposing ceremony of the presentation of the cup. And there could be no presentation.

All the visitors would hear of the celebrated cup was that it had been stolen. A most unpleasant thing for a crowd of distinguished visitors to hear.

The cup competition, which had opened so brightly, and had been carried on with such keenness, bade fair to close in the shadow of shame and disgrace and general disappointment.

Arthur Augustus realised that very clearly, and realised that it was up to him to discover the cup. Unfortunately, the cup did not seem discoverable.

It was one thing to make up one's mind to find the cup, and quite another to find it! Arthur Augustus found that



There was a slipping sound, followed by a terrific shower of soot, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out of the chimney with a plunge, landing on the floor amid dense clouds of soot. In his dusky hands he held the Gardaw Cup. "It's all wight!" he gasped. "Gwoogh! Atchoo—choo—chooooo! I've got it!" (See page 16.)

he had set himself an exceedingly difficult task, and that was all he found.

But he did not give up hope.

He argued that the missing cup was "somewhah," and if it was somewhere it could be found by a fellow of tact and judgment, who had rather a gift for amateur detective work. Gussy was first down of the Fourth that morning, pursuing his investigations zealously. But at breakfast-time he did not seem to have had any luck.

"Got it?" asked Monty Lowther, as D'Arcy came in from the quad when the breakfast-bell rang.

"Not yet, deah boy."

"Kick-off at two-thirty, you know," said Lowther seriously.

"We shall want the cup before then."

"We're relying on you, Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry.

"I am doin' my best, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"The weal twouble is that there does not seem to be a clue."

"Go hon!" murmured Manners.

"That is how it is, Mannahs. If there were a clue I should follow it up at once, and lay my fingah on the thief. Once the cup is found I shall find the thief by the fingah-marks on it, you know. That is how they do it at Scotland Yard. But a chap must find the cup first. I have been making exhaustive investigations, but there is nothin' doin' so far."

"Have you searched the box-rooms?" asked Monty Lowther.

"They have been thowghly searched, Lowthah."

"I wonder—" began Monty, and then paused.

Arthur Augustus looked at him.

"If you have any suggestion to make, Lowthah, I shall be glad to heah it. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' you know—"

"Oh, my hat! I was thinking whether I ought to mention a little circumstance I noticed last evening," said Lowther.

"Pway de!"

"A fellow was sneaking into the top box-room with something under his arm wrapped in brown paper."

Arthur Augustus' noble eye gleamed behind his eyeglass. "Bai Jove! That is vwy important. Who was the fellah? If it was some wottah like Twimble—"

"It wazn't," said Lowther. "At the present stage of the proceedings I hardly feel justified in mentioning names. But what I state is quite correct. A fellow was sneaking into the top box-room about eight o'clock last night with a brown-paper bundle under his arm, and my belief is that it contained something in the shape of a cup!"

"Gweat Scott! You are suah, Lowthah!"

"Perfectly certain!"

"Did you entah the box-room, Lowthah?"

"Yes, and looked round. But not being a detective, of course, I didn't discover anything. Mind, I'm not saying there's anything in it," added Lowther. "I'm simply giving you this information for what it's worth, for you to act upon if you choose."

"Thank you vwy much, deah boy! I wottah think you have given me a vvy valuable clue."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Lowther modestly.

And the Terrible Three went in to breakfast. Tom Merry and Manners eyed Lowther rather curiously.

"Palling Gussy's leg?" asked Tom.

"Stating facts!" answered Lowther. "A fellow certainly went into the top box-room with a cup wrapped in brown paper, and hid it there. I was bound to mention it to the detective on the case."

"But, you ass," exclaimed Tom, puzzled, "if that's the case you ought to tell the Housemaster at once."

"I hardly think so," said Lowther, shaking his head.

"Why not?" demanded Manners warmly. "If what you say is correct, the football cup is found."

"The football cup?" repeated Lowther.

"Yes, H—"

"I didn't mention a football cup to Gussy," said Lowther, in surprise. "I said a cup."

"What?"

"My belief is that it was a common or garden teacup," continued Lowther. "And I have a certain amount of grounds for supposing so, because I was the fellow who sneaked into the box-room with it."

"Wha-a-ah!"

"So you see," said Lowther calmly, "it would be no use mentioning it to the Housemaster. Mr. Railton doesn't want to go rooting round a dusty old box-room looking for a teacup wrapped in brown paper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's different with Gussy. Gussy's a detective, and, naturally, he wants a clue. I've given him one. He's got it, and he's happy now. Look at him!"

The Terrible Three glanced round at the Fourth Form table. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had sat down there with a bright and beaming face. The St. Jim's detective was in possession of a clue at last, and he fairly shone with satisfaction.

"You awful ass!" said Tom Merry, chuckling.

Arthur Augustus' bright and beaming look drew many glances upon him from the Fourth-Formers at his table.

"What's up?" asked Blake, in a whisper. "Has the jolly old pater sent you a fever by this morning's post?"

"Better than that, dear boy!"

"A tanner!" asked Dig.

"Better than that!"

"Great Scott! What's happened?" asked Herria.

"I happen to have found a clue to the missin' cup, that's all," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"What?" yelled Blake.

Mr. Lathom glanced along the table reprovingly.

"Silence, please!"

And Study No. 6 were unable to inquire further. They sat on terebunks during breakfast, while Arthur Augustus sat, calm, sedate, satisfied, with the superior smile of the fellow who knew.

CHAPTER 8.

Unexpected!

"MR. LATHOM!"

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"I trust you will excuse me from lessons this mornin', sir."

"Eh! What?"

Mr. Lathom had risen from his seat at the breakfast-table, the signal for the juniors to rise. He blinked along the table at Arthur Augustus, over his glasses, in astonishment. Gussy's clear voice was heard through the dining-hall, and fellows looked round from other tables.

"I trust, sir—"

"Are you ill, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not, sir! Nevah bettah!"

"Then why do you make such an extraordinary request?" snapped the master of the Fourth.

"Pway allow me to explain, sir! I expect to be vevy busy this mornin' with my detective work."

"Wha-a-ah?"

"I have some gifts, sir, as an amateur detective," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "I have taken up the case of the missin' football cup, sir."

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! D'Arcy, you absurd boy—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake. "Gussy's in for it now."

"Pway give me your attention, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with superb calmness. "I have been investigatin' the mystery of the missin' football cup—"

"Nonsense!"

"And I have discovered a clue, sir—"

"What?"

"With a little further investigation, sir, I hope to put my fingh on the missin' cup this mornin', and to hand the thief ovah to justice," said the swell of St. Jim's calmly. "I trust, sir, that at such a time you will not regard it as essential for me to attend lessons."

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

"I could pursue my investigations this afternoon, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "But that would be too late. The final takes place this afternoon, and there will be a great many vevyish beah. It is wathab important for the cup to be found in time, to save a great deal of unpleasantness."

Mr. Lathom stared at the swell of St. Jim's over his glasses. There was a silence.

Arthur Augustus' words had created a sensation. All the School House had chuckled over Gussy's efforts as THE GEN LIBRARY—No. 72.

a detective. But his calm announcement that he had succeeded staggered them. It was impossible to suppose that he was making such a statement to such an august person as a Form master without something to "go" upon. Either the amateur detective had made a discovery, or he was making the biggest "blosser" of his life. The latter theory was most favoured by the juniors.

Three juniors at the Shell table fairly gasped.

Monty Lowther's face was a study.

In getting up that clue for the amateur detective, the humorous Monty had, of course, never dreamed of this. That Arthur Augustus would pursue his investigations in the box-room and discover a teacup wrapped up in brown paper, was what Monty had expected. But, as a matter of fact, there never was any telling what to expect where the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was concerned. His aristocratic brain moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

There was another fellow at the Shell table who looked startled, too. It was Racke of the Shell, though no one noticed it for the moment. Aubrey Racke's eyes were fixed, or rather glued, upon Arthur Augustus, and he seemed scarcely to breathe as he listened.

The silence was broken by Mr. Railton. The Housemaster came across from the Sixth Form table, amid a wondering silence.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, Mr. Wailton?"

"Are you speaking seriously?"

Arthur Augustus turned a glance of lofty surprise, mingled with reproach, upon his Housemaster.

"Wreally, Mr. Wailton, I trust you do not think me capable of speakin' feivolisously upon such a vevy sewious subject."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"If you know anything of the missing football cup, D'Arcy, it is your duty to tell me at once!" he said.

"I am avah of that, sir. I am prepared to take you into my confidence, Mr. Wailton," said the St. Jim's detective, who almost seemed to think by this time that his name was Sherlock Holmes, that he dwelt in Baker Street, and that he was speaking to his faithful Watson.

Mr. Railton coughed again. His expression was most peculiar.

"Very well, D'Arcy!" he said at last. "You state that you have a clue to the missing football cup!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You know where it is to be found?"

"I have every reason to believe so, sir."

"Oh, my only Aunt Matilda!" groaned Monty Lowther, who was watching the swell of St. Jim's as though fascinated.

"This is extraordinary, D'Arcy," said the Housemaster, in perplexity. "If you have indeed made such a discovery every credit is certainly due to you, and you deserve the thanks of the whole House. But I can scarcely believe—"

"Scarcely!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth.

"Kindly tell me at once what you have found out, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton tersely.

"Certainly, sir! Pursuin' my investigations into the mystery of the missin' cup—"

"Please come to the point at once!"

"I am comin' to it, sir, as fast as I can," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Pursuin' my investigations into the mystery of the missin' cup—"

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Yaas, sir, wreally! Pursuin' my investigations into the mystery of the missin' cup," repeated D'Arcy, with undiminished calmness, "I succeeded in discoverin' a clue at last."

"What is the clue?"

"I can produce, at the pwoopath time, an eye-witness, who saw the thief in possession of the cup," said Arthur Augustus. "The wascal was sneakin' into the top box-woom with the stolen cup in his possession!"

There was a buzz.

Talbot of the Shell touched Tom Merry lightly on the arm, and Tom looked round at him.

"Look at Racke!" said Talbot quietly.

Tom glanced across the table at Aubrey Racke.

Racke's face was ghastly.

Every vestige of colour had deserted it, and the beads of perspiration were thick and clammy on his brow.

Tom Merry's glance was wondering at first, then it grew dark and grim. Utter fear and dismay and guilt were imprinted on Aubrey Racke's face. The wretched cad of the Shell could hardly suppress the groan that rose to his lips.

As he caught Tom's eyes fixed upon him, Racke started, and his colourless face was flooded with crimson.

"You!" exclaimed Tom.

"It's a lie!" said Racke huskily. "A lie!"

"What's a lie?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell. "Nobody's accused you of anything yet, Racke!"



Fatty Wynns jumped at the ball and captured it, then he staggered out of goal with it. In an instant Tom Merry was upon him, and Wynns was charged right back into goal, ball and all. There was a terrific roar. "Goal!" "Well done, Tom Merry!" It was the winning goal! (See page 17)

"I—I—"

All the Shell fellows were staring at Racke now. The look on his ghastly, terrified face was enough for them. It was clear enough that they had no further to look for the guilty party. Racke was trembling, and his teeth were almost chattering. There was an angry buzz among the juniors, and Mr. Railton glanced round sternly.

"Silence, please!" he said.

There was silence, though expressive looks were still cast at Aubrey Racke, and the Housemaster turned to D'Arcy again.

"What you state, D'Arcy, is extraordinary; but I am bound to act upon it. I shall myself undertake a thorough search in the top box-room."

"I twust, sir, that I may be allowed to be present," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "It is owin' to me—"

"You may accompany me, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. And he followed the Housemaster as Mr. Railton strode away.

CHAPTER 9. D'Arcy Does It!

TOM MERRY & Co. streamed out in a state of great excitement. Mr. Railton had called Kildare, Darrell and Langton, three prefects of the Sixth Form, and they followed him to help in the search, as well as D'Arcy of the Fourth. Quite a little army of fellows followed the Housemaster's party up the stairs. The rest gathered in amazed groups, discussing the matter.

"Is there anything in it?" asked Jack Blake, in wonder. "His poor old Gussy landed on a mare's-nest!"

"Of course!" said Herries.

"Is there any doubt about that?" yawned Cardew.

"Precious little!" said Levison of the Fourth. "If his eye-witness exists, it's jolly odd that he hasn't spoken out before."

"Who was it?" demanded Grundy of the Shell. "Who saw Racke sneaking into the box-room with the football cup?"

"Racke!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"It was Racke!" said Tom Merry. "His face gave him away!"

"Racke! Where's Racke?"

Aubrey Racke had tried to get clear, but half a dozen Shell fellows saw to it that he did not succeed. Kangaroo was holding him by one arm, and Gore by the other. Racke's knees were knocking together. It was D'Arcy's mention of an eye-witness that had knocked out the hapless cad of the Shell. Lies would have cost Racke little; but lying was of no use if he had actually been seen with the stolen cup. The consciousness that his guilt was discovered, and that it could be proved, had deprived the cad of the Shell of every rag of nerve.

"Let me go!" he muttered huskily. "I—I know nothing about it! I—I swear—"

"Where's the cup?" snapped Kangaroo.

"What have you done with the cup, you rotter!"

"It's pretty plain where the cup is," said Tom Merry. "It's hidden in the top box-room. Racke wouldn't have been scared out of his wits if D'Arcy had not been right in that."

"That's so," said Blake. "But where's the fellow who saw Racke taking the cup there?"

Monty Lowther grinned, but he did not speak. His little jape on the St. Jim's detective had had an unlooked for and amazing outcome, and Monty did not mean to explain yet.

"Well, Railton will get the cup if it's there," remarked Blake. "But what beats me is how Gussy got on to it."

"Perhaps Crooke can tell us something about it," suggested Cardew pleasantly. "He's hand-in-glove with dear old Racke."

Gerald Crooks started back in alarm.

"Nothing of the kind!" he exclaimed. "I knew nothing at all about it! I know Racke had something in his mind—some trick he was thinking of—but he never told me—"

"Or me!" said Scrope. "I thought it was Racke, but I wasn't going to say anything. But I never knew a word about it."

"So jolly old Aubrey acted entirely on his lonesome own," said Cardew. "And just where did you put the cup, Racke?"

(Continued on page 16.)

Our Special Short Complete Detective Story!

THE CLUE OF THE CHANGED TUNE!

By Edmund Barton.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER I.

What Happened at Allington Mansions!

THE weird strains of a barrel-organ floated up from the street below. It was playing the waltz from one of the latest musical comedies, and the occupant of No. 10, Allington Mansions, lay back in his chair as he whistled a soft accompaniment. He had seen the piece only the previous evening, and had specially enjoyed its many already-popular numbers.

Though his busy life was wholly devoted to the eradication of crime and the vicissitudes of the criminal, Anthony Sharpe, the famous investigator, could never resist a little relaxation in the way of music, and so mean musician himself, he keenly relished that catchy tune, even though it was produced by a squealing barrel-organ, manipulated by a swarthy son of the South.

Presently a sudden tap-tap came on the window-pane behind him, and he swung swiftly round. A diminutive specimen of the simian species was perched on the sill outside, three stories from the pavement, grinning and gibbering at him through the glass.

"Impudent little beggar!" laughed Sharpe, crossing over and raising the ash. "Here, Pongo—or whatever your name is—give those to your father down below!"

He handed a couple of coppers to the monkey, which snatching at them in that half-ferocious manner peculiar to such animals, slipped them into the pocket of its little red coat, and then continued its way, via the rainpipe, to the sill above.

Sharpe closed the window, and went back to his desk. Suddenly the strains of the organ ceased abruptly in the middle of the waltz, and started on an old, well-known Italian melody.

"Hang the chap!" muttered the detective irritably. "What's the meaning of that? Why the deuce couldn't he finish the other thing?"

He rose from his chair, and, going to the window with the intention of asking the fellow to switch the waltz on again, was just in time to catch a fleeting glimpse of a small ball of red and brown sliding down the rainpipe at incredible speed.

The monkey reached the ground, hopped on the organ, and the Italian walked off rapidly down the street.

"Well, that was a brief entertainment!" Sharpe muttered. "I scarcely got my tuppence worth. I wonder why—Hullo!"

A swift pattering of feet sounded from the stairs outside, and a violent pounding came on the panels of his door.

"Come in! Come in, hang you, and don't split the woodwork!"

The caretaker of the flats entered hurriedly, agitatedly. His face was white as paper, and his eyes were staring wildly, as he grasped a chair-back for support.

"Well, what is it?" snapped Sharpe, swinging round towards the other, then added in a different tone, as he noticed the caretaker's apparently fear-stricken attitude: "What's wrong with you, Jackson?"

The man pointed towards the ceiling, indicating the room overhead.

"Mr. Saunders, sir!" he gasped. "He's—

"Well, what's the matter with Saunders? Pull yourself together, do, like a good fellow!"

With an effort the caretaker complied, speaking more calmly.

"I went up with a letter just now, sir," he explained, "and got no answer when I knocked. I looked in, and I'm afraid he's took bad, or—dead. Will you come up with me, sir?"

"Dead! Rubbish, Jackson! Why, I passed him in the hall not twenty minutes ago, and he seemed as fit as a fiddle!" said Sharpe.

But, nevertheless, he accompanied the caretaker upstairs.

Mr. Job Saunders, as the white lettering on his door stated, was the London representative of a big foreign manufacturing firm, and his offices were immediately over the investigator's.

Sharpe pushed open the door and strode in. Saunders was there, right enough, lying in a bedded heap across his desk, his arms outstretched and his hands tightly clenched. The detective felt for his heart, but to beat was noticeable, nor did any moisture appear on the surface of a pocket-mirror he held to the ashen lips. Job Saunders had by some mysterious means passed in his cheeks—mysterious, that is, on account of his always seeming in the best of health, and not at all like a man who would cause anxiety to his medical adviser. But, then, one never knows.

"A doctor quickly, Jackson!" Sharpe rapped out. "Hurry!"

When the caretaker had gone the detective stood staring down at the crumpled body, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

"Curious!" he muttered. "The poor chap was so spry on his feet, and invariably looked in the pink, yet—Hullo! What on earth's this?"

He whipped out his pocket-lens, and, bending lower, gazed intently at the back of the dead man's neck, where a slight, very slight, mark was visible.

"Good heavens!" Sharpe barely breathed the exclamation as, with his tweezers, he next extracted what appeared to be a small thorn from the flesh immediately beneath the base of the skull, a thorn which he gingerly wrapped in a piece of tissue-paper and placed in his pocket-book. Then he glanced at the open window behind him.

The entry of the doctor scattered his thoughts for the moment, and, bending down, the medico made a swift examination.

"Heart failure!" he said abruptly. Sharpe nodded briefly. He had expected that verdict, or something like it. Any other could scarcely be given under the circumstances.

Then, slipping downstairs, he hailed a taxi, which presently set him down outside a house in a quiet-looking street. The detective sprang up the steps and rang the bell. A trim, white-capped maid answered his summons.

"Doctor Stevens is!" Sharpe queried, and the girl nodded.

"Yes, sir; just disengaged. Will you come this way, please?"

"Hullo, Sharpe!" came a voice from the back of the hall, as the investigator stepped towards the waiting-room. "What's wrong with you? Liver or gut, or—what?"



"I want you to tell me what that stuff is," said Anthony Sharpe, holding up the thorn with his tweezers; "But for Heaven's sake, don't touch it!"

A gruff-looking little wisp of a man hurried forward and greeted his caller with an inquiring smile lighting up his keen, sandy eyes.

"No, I'm all right," replied Sharpe; "but I want to see you at once, Stevens, all the same. It's rather important, I fancy."

He followed the medico into the consulting-room, and, taking out his pocket-book, withdrew the flask-contents.

"I want you to tell me what that stuff is," he said, holding up the thorn with the tweezers. "You're rather an expert in 'esser things. No, no, man; don't touch it, for Heaven's sake! Take it by this!"

Dr. Stevens nodded silently, and left the room. In a short time he returned, looking tired.

"Well?" asked Sharpe. "Located it?"

The other's lips tightened.

"Curari!" was his curt response.

"I thought it might be something like that," remarked the investigator. "It's what the South American natives poison their arrows with, isn't it?"

The doctor inclined his head.

"Yes," he agreed. "This thorn is thickly coated with it, very thickly coated, and even a small wound from it would prove fatal in a few minutes. A mere scratch, indeed—"

He broke off expressively. "Is that what you wanted to know, old man?"

Sharpe nodded.

"Yes, thanks; that's exactly what I wanted—expert confirmation of my own theory."

"A fresh case—eh?"

The other hesitated, but only momentarily.

"Yes," he presently smiled. "But I've no time to go into details. Ta-ta, old chap, and the usual thanks!"

CHAPTER 2.

"A Son of the South"—Touch and Go!

SHARPE left the doctor's house, and re-entering his waiting cab, lay back against the cushions, thinking hard. Saunders must have been killed very shortly after he—Sharpe—had been killed in the hall as he mounted the stairs to his rooms. Saunders was then passing out towards the street, but must have returned almost immediately, as witness the fact that he had been found dead at his desk. Now, what—

Somewhere along the street an organ was peeping out the same waltz as Sharpe had heard earlier in the day, and he suddenly sat bolt upright, every fibre of his being on the alert. Then he seized the speaking-tube, and ordered the driver to stop.

"You needn't wait," he said, handing the man his fare, plus a little extra. "I don't expect to be going back for a little while."

Outside a small shop across the way the same Italian was leisurely turning the handle of his organ, whilst the same monkey was squatting on the pavement, its paw eagerly outstretched to take the chance donations of the passers-by.

Sharpe slipped a false moustache on his upper lip, and crossed the street. He dropped sixpence into the monkey's paw, and turned to the alien with a grin.

"Funny little beggar!" he remarked. Then: "By the way, would you like to earn some money—I mean, more money than what you usually get at this game—eh?"

Sharpe displayed a five-pound note, and the musical crackle of the paper seemed to fascinate the swarthy one. He gave a smile that bid fair to split his face in twain.

"Now, look here," Sharpe pursued. "I'm a journalist—nowadays, you see. If you can understand—and I'm at present writing up a few articles on the foreigners in London. You might be able to help me. Where can we talk?"

For perhaps a brief moment the son of the South hesitated, looking his interrogator up and down through his cunning, half-closed eyes; then, evidently reassured that this was a genuine offer of a substantial sum for little or no work on his part, he shipped up his monkey, and led the way down a side-street. Presently pushing open a door, he ascended to a mean attic at the end of the house. Sharpe followed closely on his heels, and not by any means charmed with his surroundings.

"Now, signor," said the organ-grinder, squatting down on a low stool, and indicating another—which the detective did not take the least notice of.

Sharpe did not reply at once. His eyes had been darting keenly about the wretched

rooms; then suddenly he made a spring, and snatched up something from the top of a wooden box in the corner.

"What'd you call this," he said—"a peashooter?"

The Italian gasped, and made a frantic effort to snatch the object from the detective's hand, but found himself gazing down the black barrel of a wicked-looking revolver instead. His jaw dropped foolishly.

"Now what is this for?" Sharpe continued, indicating the blowpipe, for such the article was—a short, hollow tube, some twelve inches in length.

"Zaf, signor? Nozing!"

"Nothing—eh?" Sharpe repeated harshly. "Then why were you so thundering anxious to grab it from me, if it's of no value—eh? Tell me that! People don't make a dash to recover useless property, as a rule!"

"Signor, I—I—"

"Look here," the investigator cut in sternly, "suppose you drop the bluff stink, friend? You may as well be open with me. Why did you kill Joe Saunders?"

The alien's mouth gaped, and a few beads of sweat formed on his swarthy brow.

"I, signor—I?" he murmured thickly.

"Yes, yes!" The detective plucked off his false moustache. "Do you recognise me now? You played the 'Derby Girl' waltz outside my window to-day, but suddenly 'changed your tune,' so to speak. Then your infernal monkey climbed the rattlepipe, and shot a poisoned dart at Saunders through the—"

formed, and possessing agents everywhere, discovered the ruse, and they had instructed Saunders' fellow-member to follow and remove him.

The monkey, which the Italian had already taught to perform several clever tricks, had been trained to use the blowpipe at the moment the organ started to play a certain tune—that old melody—and to aim it at the nearest individual.

"A pretty yarn!" commented Sharpe, when the other had finished. "A very pretty yarn! By James, but some of you foreigners are a bloodthirsty crowd! So the monkey was the real assassin, was it?"

He opened the window and put a police-whistle in his lips; then suddenly he was startled to hear a wild burst of music behind him. Swinging round, he saw that the Italian had seized the handle of the barrel-organ in his manacled hands, and was grinding out the same old melody for all he was worth, whilst the sweat poured down his face in little trickling streams.

The monkey had found the blowpipe, and was even now sitting on its haunches, with one end pressed to its mouth, whilst the other was aimed straight at Sharpe's face. The Italian evidently kept the weapon loaded, in case of sudden emergency.

With a muttered exclamation, Sharpe instantly dropped flat, bearing a faint hiss as something whizzed past his head, almost brushing his hair. Then—

A scream of utter terror drowned the wild music, which stopped short as the organ-



Swinging round, Sharpe saw the Italian seize the handle of the organ. The monkey, with the blowpipe, was aiming straight for the detective's head.

With a snarl of rage, the organ-grinder leaped at Sharpe, quite regardless of the menacing revolver. The detective did not want to shoot, and, during the hand-to-hand scuffle that ensued, he dropped the blowpipe, which rolled unnoticed into a dark corner.

A moment later a sound could have been heard above the shuffle of their stumbling feet—the sharp click of a handcuff-clasp as Sharpe deftly managed to slip the brackets on his prisoner's wrists.

The Italian dropped limply back, his face working and his breath coming gaspingly.

"Now," repeated the investigator, "out with it! Why did you kill Saunders? Was he your enemy?"

The organ-grinder, evidently coming to the conclusion that nothing could be gained by further denial, admitted himself beaten, and made a clean breast of the whole matter.

It appeared that both he and the dead man belonged to a powerful secret society. Saunders had been ordered to perform a certain delicate job, in which a crossed head came in for special attention, but had shown the white feather at the last moment.

He had fled to England, taken out his naturalisation papers, and had settled down under an assumed name as a respectable citizen; but the society, always well in-

formed, and possessing agents everywhere, discovered the ruse, and they had instructed Saunders' fellow-member to follow and remove him.

Sharpe sprang across the street at a bound, but could do nothing. He saw at a glance that the Italian would never face a human judge and jury. Well, it was merely one way out instead of the other.

The detective blew a shrill blast, and in a few moments two constables came clattering up the stairs, recognizing Sharpe and saluting as the latter pointed to the huddled body of the Italian.

"You might take charge here," he said. "That's the man who planned the murder at Allington Mansions to-day!"

"Murder!" echoed the first officer. "We ain't heard of any; but believe a man died suddenly there a few hours ago. Are you sure, sir?"

"Yes, quite sure," smiled Sharpe. "Saunders did die rather suddenly. But, as I say, he was murdered, and there's the actual perpetrator of the crime, though I don't suppose it will do any good to arrest him!"

And he indicated the gibbering monkey in the corner.

(Look out for "The House on the Moor," another short detective story.)

"THE CUP WINNERS!"

(Continued from Page 13.)

"Out with it, you rotter!" growled Clive. Racker tried to pull himself together.

"I—I did not!" he breathed hoarsely.

"Nuff said!" interrupted Blake. "Let's take him to the Head. That box-room has been searched once, and it may take a jolly long time to dig up the cup. The Head will get it out of Racker fast enough."

"Good egg!"

"Yank the rotter along!"

"Hold on!" panted Racker. "I—I— Keep the Head out of it! I—I say, it means being expelled!" His voice rose to a scream. "Hold on! Keep the Head out of it, and I'll own up."

"We don't want to bring the Head into it," said Tom Merry. "We can deal with you ourselves, you cur! But where's the cup?"

"It—it was only a lark—"

"Cheese that!"

"I—I never meant to keep the cup—you know that—"

"Only to leave it hidden, so that nobody could have it!" said Tom Merry. "We know that, you rotter! But where is it?"

"I—I thought the top box-room would be a safe place!" growled Racker.

"So did I!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"I—I got out of the dorm, you know!" stammered Racker.

"I—I hadn't any idea that a—rotter was watching me. I—I just bagged the cup out of Raiton's study, and hiked up to the top box-room with it, and—and shoved it up the chimney."

"Blow!"

"The chimney's bees looked into," said Levison.

"Yes; but there's a gap in the bricks, a little way up. I—I felt it with a stick!" gasped Racker. "I—I pushed the cup up with a walking-stick, and—and shoved it into the hole. It's there now."

"Oh, good!" said Monty Lowther. "Gentlemen, isn't it lucky that I thought of the top box-room as a place to hide a teacup for Gussy to find? But for that circumstance, Racker would never have given himself away in this handsome and obliging manner."

"What!" yelled Blake.

Aubrey Racker fairly staggered.

"One of your rotten jokes!" howled Kangaroo.

Monty Lowther looked pained.

"Not a rotten joke!" he remonstrated. "Not one of my best, but quite a good joke. From sheer kindness of heart I provided our giddy detective with a clue. I admit I never guessed he would be howling as enough to tell the masters about it. I thought he would be happily occupied till lessons, rooting about the box-room, and discovering a teacup there. When he took Latham into his confidence you could have knocked me down with a German indemnity."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There was a roar of laughter. Racker did not join in it. His face was white with fury, as he realised the truth. Nothing had been known of his guilt, until his own cowardly terror had betrayed it. Racker gritted his teeth with helpless rage as he thought of it.

Tom Merry ran lightly up the stairs to the top box-room, and looked in at the open door. The searchers were busily engaged, rooting in dusty corners, examining empty boxes and trunks and lumber. On the floor lay a crumpled sheet of brown paper and a teacup. The floor had been turned out of a trunk regardlessly. Monty Lowther's cup had been found, and utterly disregarded. Never had a joke fallen so flat!

Mr. Raiton and his companions were still searching for the football cup, in happy ignorance of the real nature of Gussy's valuable clue!

"Have you looked in the chimney, sir?" asked Tom Merry demurely.

Mr. Raiton glanced round.

"Yes, Merry; nothing appears to be there."

"I've heard a fellow say that there's a hole in the bricks in that chimney, a little way up," said Tom, still demure. "Is it possible the cup might have been pushed up into it, sir?"

"It is certainly possible, if such an opening exists," said Mr. Raiton. "In that case it is out of reach."

He paused, and glanced at Arthur Augustus.

"The chimney is broad enough to admit a slim person," he said. "No doubt a junior could climb in and see. D'Arcy, as you are responsible for this search, you may do so."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the chimney, and hesitated. But Mr. Raiton's manner was very firm. Evidently he expected the amateur detective to follow up his own clue, whithersoever they might lead him. Arthur Augustus turned to the captain of the Shell.

"Perwaps you would like to try, Tom Mewwy!"

But Tom Merry was already scudding down the stairs. Apparently he was not keen on investigating the interiors of ancient sooty chimneys. He was willing to leave such investigations to the St. Jim's detective.

"D'Arcy!" said Mr. Raiton.

"Yaas, sir!"

Arthur Augustus resigned himself to his fate. He removed his natty jacket and his spotless collar and tie, and approached the chimney in a very gingerly manner.

"Oh crumbs!" he murmured, as he put his head into the wide, gaped orifice, and a little shower of soot fell upon his well-brushed hair.

"Please lose no time, D'Arcy!"

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And he made the plunge.

A thick shower of soot fell as the slim figure of the swell of St. Jim's was insinuated into the old chimney. There was a round of coughing and sneezing from the interior of the chimney. The Sixth Form prefects, ceasing their search, stood and smiled. Even Mr. Raiton's severe face relaxed, as a weird and wonderful sounds proceeded from the chimney.

"Gwooooh!"

"Have you found anything, D'Arcy!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

Showers of soot came pelting down, and the Housemaster and the prefects backed away hurriedly from the old grate. Then there was a sudden yell of triumph from the unseen junior in the chimney.

"Bai Jove!"

"D'Arcy, have you—"

"I've got it!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Raiton.

There was a slipping sound and a terrific shower of soot, and Arthur Augustus came out of the chimney with a plunge, landing on the floor amid dense clouds of soot. He coughed and sneezed, and sneezed and coughed as he sat, black as a chimney-sweep or the ace of spades. But in his dusky hands he held aloft the prize—the Cardew Cup—its brightness dimmed, but undoubtedly the Cardew Cup!

"It's in my right!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Gwoogh! Atooh-choo-choooh! I've got it, sir! Wwooooop! Gwooooghghhoooh!"

CHAPTER 10.

Not Quite Sherlock Holmes!

"FOUND!"

The news spread over St. Jim's like wildfire. The Cardew Cup was found! The missing trophy was recovered! And, most amazing of all, it had been found by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form!

That, as Figgins of the New House remarked, beat it! And everybody else agreed that it did beat it—how!

Both Houses had chortled over D'Arcy, the amateur detective. And, lo and behold, as Figgie put it dramatically, the amateur detective had scored. He had found the missing cup. He had, so to speak, delivered the goods!

Arthur Augustus, sooty but triumphant, was seen descending from the box-room, cup in hand. He was greatly in want of a wash. But, for once, the swell of St. Jim's was regardless even of his clothes. He was justified in the role he had adopted. Sherlock Holmes himself, with the assistance of Dr. Watson, could have done no better. Sexton Blake, with Tinker and the bloodhound thrown in, could have done nothing more. Even Ferrers Locke, the greatest of all, could scarcely have exceeded Gussy's exploit—Gussy having delivered the goods. It was a joyful moment for Gussy, as the cheering St. Jim's fellows surrounded him, taking care, however, not to come too closely in contact with the sooty hero.

"Hurrah!" roared Blake & Co. as Gussy held up the cup, blackened with soot and grime, but glimmering through its coatings.

"Then Cardew never bagged it and pawed it, after all!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Bravo, Adolphus!"

"Weally, you fellahs—" said Arthur Augustus modestly. "I'm not the fellah to bwag, you know, and I trust I am not given to swank, but I must remark that I expected to discover this cup. Some fellahs have wathah a gift as amateur detectives, you know. A fellah of tact and judgment—"

"Mr. Ha, ha, ha! Good old Gussy!"

Mr. Raiton broke in.

"D'Arcy should be congratulated on his success," he said. "But the matter does not end here. Now that the cup is found I must hear the rest. You stated, D'Arcy, that you could call an eye-witness who saw the purloiner of the cup take it to the box-room."

"Yaaa, wathah, sir!"

"His name!"

"Lowthah of the Shell, sir."

"Lowther, come forward, please!"

Monty Lowther came forward, rather reluctantly, but with a twinkle in his eyes. Mr. Railton fixed his eyes on the Shell fellow.

"You informed D'Arcy that you had seen a School House boy taking the Cardew Cup to the box-room?" asked the Housemaster.

"Hem! Not exactly, sir."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Them what—" began Mr. Railton.

"I told D'Arcy that I knew a fellow had sneaked into the top box-room last evening with a cup under his arm wrapped in brown paper, sir," said Monty Lowther demurely.

"That amounts to the same thing, Lowther."

"Not at all, sir. I never knew anything about the football cup being hidden in the box-room."

"What?"

"Bai Jove! Lowthah—"

"It was a jape on D'Arcy, sir," said Lowther, with humility. "Just pulling old Gussy's leg, sir, because he fancied himself as a detective. The fellow I alluded to was myself, and the cup was a teacup. Only—only a lark, sir."

"Great Scott!"

For a moment there was silence. Mr. Railton's expression was really extraordinary. Then there was a roar of laughter that rang far and wide.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton joined in the laugh; he could not help it. Arthur Augustus stood rooted to the floor.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "You— you were playing a foolish joke on D'Arcy—and this has led to the missing cup being discovered by sheer accident!"

"That's it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The matter has, then, turned out very fortunately," said Mr. Railton. "It leaves us, however, in ignorance of the identity of the unscrupulous person who purloined the cup and gave us all this trouble." He turned to D'Arcy with a slight smile. "You can't enlighten us upon that point, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! N-n-n-no."

"Further inquiry will be made, and the truth brought to light, I hope," said Mr. Railton. "Meanwhile, you had better go and change your clothes, D'Arcy. It is very nearly time for lessons."

Mr. Railton carried off the Cardew Cup, and the crowd broke up, chuckling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the triumphant detective, was glad to hide his blushes in a bath-room.

He was rather late for lessons that morning, but Mr. Lathom, smiling, excused him. There were many grinning faces in the Fourth Form, and Arthur Augustus sedulously avoided meeting the other fellows' eyes. Lowther's revelation had been a blow for the amateur detective; but by the time lessons were over Arthur Augustus had recovered.

"I regard Lowthah as a wotten practical jokin' beast!" he told Tom Merry & Co. "It appears that he was pullin' my leg—"

"Off with his head!" said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! The fact that Lowthah was playin' the ox does not alter the fact that my takin' up the case led to the discovery of the missin' cup," said Arthur Augustus. "The fact remains that the cup has been found, and that I have found it! I leave it at that!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And Tom Merry & Co. kindly left it at that, also. Besides, they had other matters to attend to just then. There was Rake of the Shell to be dealt with. Arthur Augustus was surprised to find that the purloiner of the cup was known—though really it ought not to have come as a surprise to the detective on the case. But he joined heartily in dealing out to Aubrey Rake the punishment that fitted the crime.

Rake was not given away to the powers. The identity of the culprit remained unknown to the Head and the Housemaster. But he was dealt with quite effectively by the juniors.

Rake was tracked to his study, and a committee of juniors proceeded to deal with him. His offence was serious, and the punishment was in proportion. The black sheep of the Shell had been ragged before for his sins; but previous raggings, compared with the present ragging, were as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

And he was left to groan!

CHAPTER 11.

The Winner of the Cup!

"ETHEL, dear gal—"

"Hallo, Doris!"

"Here we are again!" said Levison minor joyfully.

It was a great occasion. Both teams for the final were on the ground. Kildare of the Sixth, who was referee, was there. Mr. Railton and the Head, who had come to see the kick-off, and a crowd of distinguished visitors had gathered. Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison were among the most distinguished—from the point of view of the juniors, at least. And Miss Priscilla Fawcett was conducted to a seat beside Ethel by Tom Merry, with tender care.

There was a thick crowd packed round the ropes when the coin was tossed, and the rival teams lined up for the final.

Both elevens were in great form, and it was, as Figgins remarked to cousin Ethel, anybody's game. Figgins, standing beside Ethel's chair, seemed content, somehow, not to be in the final. He had only one eye on the field, though the game was exciting from the start.

It was close on half-time before a goal was taken; and then it came to Levison of the Fourth, who secured a pass from Frank, and put the leather in before Kangaroo could stop him. Doris clapped her hands joyfully.

"Good man!" said Figgins. "Shouldn't wonder if your brother pulls it off, Miss Doris. If he does he will have a good chance for putting up for junior football captain."

But just before the whistle there was another goal, and this time Talbot of the Shell scored for Tom Merry. Honours were easy at half-time.

"Not a bad game," said Wally of the Third patronisingly. "Young Frank isn't bad. He's put in some neat passing. Jolly sensible of your brother to put a Third Form chap in, Miss Doris!"

And Doris smiled.

From the whistle the play was hard and fast, and luck came along to Study No. 9. This time it was Ralph Reckness Cardew who put in the ball, from a clever pass by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and there were loud cheers for the dandy of the Fourth.

Tom Merry equalised a few minutes later, however.

Hammer and tongs the game went on, and many eyes turned towards the clock-tower over the leafless elms. Time was drawing near, and it was still, as Figgins said, anybody's game.

"Go it, Tom Merry!"

"Play up, Levison!"

"On the ball!"

Levison & Co. came down on a sweeping charge, and there was a hot attack on the Shell goal. But Kangaroo cleared, and the backs drove the ball out, and then Tom Merry, Talbot, and Lowther carried it up the field, passing beautifully. Talbot sent it to Tom as he was rushed over. Tom let Lowther have it in the nick of time, and Monty rushed it goalward. But Tom was up and ready to take a pass when Lowther was dealt with by the backs, and Monty centred well, and Tom drove for goal. There was a breathless hush.

Fatty Wynn jumped at the ball and captured it, and staggered out of goal with it. In an instant—he had only an instant—Tom Merry was upon him, and Fatty Wynn, out of his chicken run, was charged right back into goal, ball and all. There was a terrific roar.

"Goal!"

"Well done, Tom Merry!"

Pheep! Loud and clear rang Kildare's whistle.

"Tom Merry wins!"

"Hurrah!"

Almost on the stroke of time, Tom Merry had taken the winning goal. There was a roar of cheering, and Miss Priscilla clapped her kind old hands. Levison of the Fourth clapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he said. "You've got the cup! Congratulations!"

"It was touch and go!" said Tom breathlessly. "Thanks, old chap!"

Afterwards there was a great scene, with roars of cheering for the winning captain, when the Head, in the midst of the distinguished gathering, presented Tom Merry with the Cardew Cup. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—forgetful of the winning goals he had intended to kick for Levison—waved his eyeglass enthusiastically. And in the cheers for the winner of the cup, no voice was louder than that of Ernest Levison of the Fourth.

THE END.

Next week's rousing long complete school story is entitled: "TRIMBLE IN TRADE," by Martia Cufford. Order it EARLY.

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JIM HARTLEY'S LUCK!

By STANLEY AUSTIN.

A Thrilling New Story of Football Adventure!

CHAPTER 1.

The Runaway!

JIM HARTLEY paused at the bottom of the hill to take a last look at the square school buildings that loomed blackly through the darkness and hissing squalls of rain. For three years and more those ugly buildings, with their rows of windows, had sheltered him; but never, he thought, had they looked so dismal and barrack-like as now.

"Like a blessed prison or a workhouse!" he told himself miserably. "How I hate the place, and always have hated it! And yet—"

He paused suddenly, his eyes misty. A queer lump was in his throat and a stinging sensation in his eyes. After all, the school had been home to him for three long years, and, though the place held few happy memories, it seemed hard to leave it, as he was doing, an outcast—a runaway. Besides, there were his chances of the Sixth—Ferraris and Mason and Turner—though even they had turned against him at the last. Then there was Andrews, the best master and footer coach the school ever had, or ever was likely to have—

"There he goes!" mused Jim miserably, gazing at the single spotlight that glimmered from the dark buildings. "Working late as usual! Ah, well, I've seen the last of the old show now! No more footer or anything else! It's got to be work and a living for me now!"

A sudden gust of wind and stinging lash of rain swept blindingly from nowhere, and with a gulp Jim Hartley turned and plodded on into the unknown.

"What a night!" gasped the runaway, staggering before the howling, buffeting wind. "Just my luck to hit a night like this! But I won't going to wait to be expelled. Anyway, I'll soon be at the station now, and then—" He broke off suddenly as a terrific, rending crash came from the thick woods to his left. "That's a tree down, and there'll be more before this is over!"

The thought of the deadly menace to traffic the fallen tree presented flashed instantly into Jim's mind, and with it the need of instant action. He glanced swiftly around him. The sight of a feeble glimmer of light through the trees on his right brought swift remembrance and a solution. "Old Job's cottage! He'll have a lantern—sure to. Better root him out, or—"

He broke off abruptly and started as his glance went hillwards. Above the skyline topping the hill, and visible against the storm-lift clouds, was a shadow, moving glow of light. It came nearer, and the next instant a twin pair of brilliant white lights swept into view round the dimly seen school buildings, while his ears caught the dull roar of a motor-engine's open exhaust.

For one breathless instant Jim stood stock still, and then he awoke to the oncoming motorist's terrible danger.

"Stop—stop! For Heaven's sake, stop!" With all the force of his youthful lungs Jim yelled the warning, but it was useless. Before the boy had time for another shout the car was on him.

But in that instant a desperate, mad plan to warn the unconscious motorist—his danger flashed into Jim's mind, and he acted upon it without a second's hesitation.

Even as the powerful car swept past, he summoned all his nerve and strength in one wild leap towards it.

One outstretched foot alighted on the narrow foot-board, his grating hands took grip on something—the framework of the hood—and next second he was clinging desperately with tooth and nail, and shouting breathlessly and incoherently.

But his shouts were unnecessary. In that moment of stunning impact as he struck the car, Jim caught a swift glimpse of a white, startled face turned towards him, heard his alarmed exclamation, followed almost instantly by the harsh grinding of brakes.

But Jim hardly realized he had won, even when the car stopped and its startled occupant leapt out. The shock had been considerable, and he felt dazed and sick as he still clung, bruised and shaken, on the foot-board. He stepped down, however, as the motorist—a tall, bearded man—reached him and gripped his arm fiercely.

"You reckless madman!" he said in a deep, angry voice. "What on earth—"

He broke off suddenly as he caught sight of the huge, ominous shape of the fallen tree, just within the arc of white light from the powerful headlights.

"So that explains your mad act!" he said grimly. "An exceedingly narrow escape! Another few yards—"

Again he broke off as voices reached them, and two men, carrying lanterns, came hurrying along the road.

Without finishing his sentence, the tall, trim-bearded motorist strode to meet them. Jim was about to follow, when he suddenly remembered that he was a runaway.

He had just decided that it was as well to make himself scarce while the three were talking together, when the motorist came striding back to him.

"All right!" he said crisply. "We can leave this business to those fellows. One is going to stand by while the other gets help. Lucky for me, as I want to be home. Well, I suppose I've got you to thank for saving me from an unshy smash-up—er—"

With a sudden movement the stranger took Jim by the shoulders, and drew him into the light from one of the headlights.

"Why, you're only a youngster!" he exclaimed. "Then he gave it a start as he stared sharply into the boy's white face. "What is your name, boy?"

"Jim Hartley," was the reply, after a moment's hesitation.

Again the stranger started. But as he noted the boy's curious glance he laughed.

"Curious! But that happens to be my name, too!" he explained. "Still, it's not an uncommon name, after all. You're from the school, aren't you? Was it you who rescued me now? You're the outside-right who played such a brilliant game in the match against the local grammar school the other day. Yes, I saw it. But"—his voice took on a sterner note—"what are you doing out here so late—a night like this, boy?"

Under the grave, penetrating glance Jim's eyes fell, and he remained silent, the stranger laid a gentle, kindly hand on his shoulder.

"I think I can guess the answer—you are running away," he said quietly. "Now, listen, boy! Years—a good many years ago—I, too, ran away from trouble, and I've regretted it ever since. If you're a reader, you may stay and face it—fight it out! Now, come! Let me see you safely back to your school!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir, but I cannot take your advice. It's awfully good of you, but—"

Jim's teeth set—"I won't go back!"

"What about your people—your mother?"

Jim turned his head away to hide his misty eyes.

"My mother died years ago, and—my father was killed in the war," he said huskily. "My only living relatives, so far as I know, are my uncle and cousin, and—"

and—well, they'll be glad to see the last of me!" he ended bitterly.

"Go on," said the stranger quietly.

Jim hesitated. But the man's kindly interest invited confidence, and he went on impulsively.

"I'm—I'm dependent on my uncle for everything, and he never loses an opportunity to remind me of it! Nor does my cousin, who hates me! He's with me at Barton School yonder, and there isn't a fellow there who doesn't know I'm dependent on their charity, I—I can't stand it any longer! It's not my own way—no, I can't earn my own living! You—you don't understand, sir!"

"Yes! I think I do understand," said the stranger gently, after a moment's silence, "and I fancy you are right, after all. But tell me, how do you propose to earn your living?"

"I—I was thinking of football!" stammered Jim. "Did Andrews, your sports master—has told me often that I'm well up to professional standard, and I was hoping that—"

"Well, you might do worse," interrupted the stranger musingly. He eyed the boy in silence for a few moments, and then, as if he suddenly realized they were still standing in the falling rain, he came to a swift decision. "And I think I can help you there. You shall come with me. I suppose I ought not to aid your escape, but— Jump in!"

"But—but—"

Jim gasped. And even as he hesitated, the stranger gripped him and dropped him into a seat. For a few seconds the boy's sports master—unusually strong and well-built, but the big man handled him as if he were a child. Before he had realized quite what had happened, the big car had been turned, and was roaring up the hill.

"Can't wait while that tree's shifted," explained the motorist, as the road swept past the dark school buildings. "We'll have to get on to the moor road. It joins the Barple Road lower down, doesn't it?"

Jim nodded, still too bewildered by the swift turn of events to answer. But it was soon evident that the stranger knew the district inside the moor, as he had the road roads a few minutes later, he turned the car at right angles into the moor road.

Not once again during that wild night ride did the stranger speak to Jim. He sat crouched over the wheel, his keen, grey eyes fixed on the glistering road ahead. Several times Jim tried to speak to the stranger's face, and wondered what he was thinking of.

When the car was taking him Jim did not know nor care. But it was taking him far from the fear of capture, and this knowledge was comforting. As the miles sped by the runaway, an silent and motionless, too silent, Jim felt as if he were in a strange, feeling of comfort and security by the ceaseless roar of the engine and the storm.

CHAPTER 2.

A Strange Compact!

THE strange notes of a Hoxan horn roused Jim with a start from the heavy dose into which he had fallen. A glance round showed him that the car had slowed down, and was moving up a gravel drive fringed with trees, through which came a glimpse of large house. Presently the car turned gently to a halt before the entrance-steps of a lighted hall.

"Well, here we are at last!" said the stranger, jumping out and helping Jim to alight. "Soon be all right now. After a hot bath, a change of-clothing, and something to eat you'll take no harm, I'll warrant. Luckily, the servants are still up, so I'll put you in the butler's charge until I've parked the car."

A fat, pompous-looking butler came hurrying across the hall as they entered the house, and soon Jim found himself following the servant upstairs. When he came down again ten minutes later, in a suit several sizes too large for him, all his weariness and stiffness had vanished; he felt fit as a fiddle as he seated himself opposite his host at the dining-table.

As they ate Mr. Hartley chatted cheerfully on general topics, and it was not until the meal was over, and the two had drawn up their chairs to the fire, that the talk became personal.

"And now to business!" exclaimed Mr. Hartley, as he lit a cigar. "But, first of all—just to satisfy my curiosity—I should like to hear something of your story—about your school-days and—family matters. Who did you say your uncle was?"

"There was something curiously eager in the question, and Jim felt certain it was more than curiosity that had prompted it.

"He—he is a solicitor in Benchester, sir, and Len, his son, is about my own age. You must have seen him if you saw the match on Wednesday. He—"

"Not the tall, dark youth who played centre-forward?"

"Yes, sir. He's a splendid player, but he hates me. We've always been rivals in sport and everything else. He's—he's made my life miserable at Barton."

"And Jim went on to tell of his cousin's sports and supercilious patronage, and of his life in general at Barton up to the last few days.

His host listened quietly and without comment; then he changed the conversation abruptly to the subject nearest to Jim's heart—football.

"As I told you, I think I can help you to realise your ambition," he said. "As it happens, I am on the board of directors—the chairman, in fact—of the Marlow United Football Club. You've heard of them, of course?"

"Why, yes!" said Jim. "Top of the Second Division, aren't they?"

"They were," corrected Mr. Hartley grimly, "but they're not now. To be brief, we are in need of fresh blood. My proposition is this: If you will sign amateur forms for my club, you shall live with me—be treated as my own son. Now, what do you say?"

"But—but how do you know I can play—that I'm up to standard, sir?" gasped Jim, overwhelmed.

"You forget that I have seen you play, and I flatter myself that I am a good judge of a player. Is it a compact, boy?"

Jim was silent for a moment, then suddenly the blood rushed to his face.

"It—it's awfully good of you, sir," he stammered, "but I can't do it! I'm determined never again—to be dependent upon anyone! I must forgive me, but I'm determined to earn my own living!"

For a brief moment Mr. Hartley eyed the boy keenly, then his eyes twinkled.

"That is the answer I half-expected from you, my boy," he said. "Well, I admire you for it. As you have refused that offer, however, I will give you another. Will you sign on as a professional? You can then earn your own living, and live with me as a boarder—here his eyes twinkled—"and can hand me your pay each week, keeping only a pound yourself as pocket-money. I am a lonely old man, and shall be glad to have you. Come! You cannot object to that!"

Could he? Jim's gleaming eyes were sufficient answer to that.

"I will certainly do so if—I prove to be good enough," he answered eagerly.

"And thanks ever so much! I—I—"

"You've nothing to thank me for, my boy,

and I have you to thank for everything. I have said little as yet in regard to your luck and resource in saving me from certain death to-night. But I shall not prove ungrateful. And now to bed!"

The days which followed were happy days for Jim Hartley. His new-found benefactor had lost no time in taking him down to the Marlow ground, and there, under the critical eyes of the manager and selection committee, he had soon proved his mettle. He took part in the reserve attack against the club's first defence in such spirited style that more than justified Mr. Hartley's judgment, and before he left the ground that morning he had signed professional forms.

At the end of two months he had established himself as an outside-right of brilliant gifts, and had replaced Stokes in that position in the first team. Mr. Hartley was more than delighted with him.

Yet, despite all this, there were times when Jim felt miserable and ashamed of himself, for he had deceived his kindly benefactor, and he knew it. That night, when he had first entered the Grange, he had told part of the truth—that he had run away from school to earn his own living. But there was something else he had not told, and that was that he had been under sentence of expulsion for alleged theft when he had run away.

To do him justice, he fully intended to tell the truth, though he knew what that would probably mean. But he had put off the evil moment again and again.

In any case, the knowledge that he was innocent of the charge of theft had made Jim feel that he was justified in withholding the truth.

And now, at the end of the two months, came the bombshell.

Marlow United were down to play Benchester Rovers at home on that particular Saturday, and, though the thought of coming face to face with people from his home town gave Jim a queer thrill, he realised there was little danger of any of the visiting team knowing him.

But when the two teams lined up on the field for the kick-off, Jim Hartley got the shock of his life. For the Benchester centre-

forward proved to be none other than his cousin, Len Hartley.

Jim stared at him as though he were a ghost, and, while he was staring, Len suddenly caught sight of him. He gave a violent start, and paled visibly. Like Jim, he had seen the name, "Hartley," on the opposing team's list, but he had thought nothing of it.

If anything, Jim was the more astounded of the two, however; but he had little time for wonderment, for just then the whistle blew, and the ball was set in motion.

Right from the word "Go!" the home team led the pace with rare dash and fire, as though they meant to win. Pointing a pass to the inside-left, Trent, the home skipper disconnected Len Hartley, and, still retaining the ball, went down the field like a flash.

Cunningly drawing the defence, he swung across to the right, and then sent the leather soaring across to Jim. Jim was prepared. He trapped the ball in his stride, and next moment was sailing down the touchline with the confidence and precision of a Meredith.

A burly full-back tackled him desperately; but, relying on his speed, Jim tipped the ball to his left, swerved, and flaked on again, the ball like a living thing at his toes.

The full-back had been beaten was thudding after him now, and, when within twenty yards of the corner-flag, Jim waited for the back to near him. Then he heeled the ball skilfully, jumped back swiftly, and, before the back could recover himself, had swung the leather in a beautiful dropping centre to Trent, who had followed him up.

Trent was ready for him, and he had an open goal before him.

He met the ball with his chest, and then, with a low, swift drive that would have beaten any living goalie, he sent the leather climbing the rigging.

Goal!

It was first blood to the United in the first half-minute of the game, and their delighted supporters went wild with joy.

"Good old United! That's the game!"

"Let's have another, lads!"

From the packed stands came a perfect hurricane of shouts and cheers; but if the home supporters had hopes of another goal, they were grievously disappointed, for



As the powerful car swept past Jim summoned all his nerve and strength in one wild leap towards it. One outstretched foot alighted on the narrow footboard, whilst his hands gripped the framework of the hood. He hung on desperately, shouting breathlessly and incoherently.

Immediately after the ball was set in motion again the Rovers took a hand in the game in real earnest.

From a centre Len Hartley neatly trapped the ball, and then he proceeded to show the home team that Benchester could play football, too. The home centre-half was tricked by the slippery forward in a way that made even his home supporters roar with laughter. And then Len led the red-and-white shirts of Benchester, in a pretty, concerted movement, down the field towards the United goal, and only by a brilliant effort did the home goalie clear a long shot that dropped under the crossbar, and all but scored.

It was a warning to the home team, and they played carefully after that. A stirring tussle in midfield followed for ten minutes, and then came disaster for the home team. The Rovers forwards got possession, and Len Hartley led them in a brilliant short-passing run. Gallantly the home defence strove to stem the tide, but Len was too good for them. He went through the defence like a knife through cheese, and found the net with a very taking shot that fairly made the ringing dance.

It was a splendid effort, and it brought roars of applause from both visitors and home supporters alike. And the sudden success was just the stimulus the Rovers require. From the centre they fought the tigers to further augment their score. But so also did the home team.

The play which followed was brilliant on both sides, and the spectators were kept in one continual pitch of breathless excitement. The ball flashed from wing to wing, and from end to end of the field of play, the goalkeepers awaying and rocking as they eagerly followed its course. But neither side were taking any chances, and half-time came without further score.

During the excitement and flurry of the game Jim had had no time for thought on outside matters; but now, as he followed his skipper off the field, his brow was puckered in anxious thought.

What did it mean? What was Len Hartley doing playing as professional in the Benchester club? And why was not be at school?

It was a bewildering problem; but, whatever the solution was, Jim had an uneasy feeling that Len's appearance would result in no good to himself. Several times during that strenuous half he had caught his cousin's glance fixed upon him in mingled puzzlement and hatred.

The second half opened with a rush, and several thrilling minutes of extra play once more raised the spectators excitement to fever pitch. Then quite suddenly Trent secured the ball, and by means of a vigorous run extricated it from the crowd, and slung it out to Jim Hartley on the right.

Jim slipped away with it like a shot, but before he could centre he was blocked over, and the leather skimmed back to midfield.

Again Trent secured it neatly, tricked the Benchester centre-half, and tried Jim Hartley again.

At the time Jim made no mistake. He took the ball in his stride, and flashed down the wing like a hare, and then, like a machine, the home quintette swung into action.

The leather was swung from man to man with bewildering rapidity, and then, with a beautiful daisy-cutter, Trent shot at short range.

The breathless onlookers had a brief vision of the long figure of the Rovers' goalie spreading across the goalmouth with arms outstretched, and then a great roar of applause went up as the ball, just escaping the goalie's grasp, whipped into the net.

"Two-one!"

The Rovers played like demons after that. Again and again, led by the savage and determined Len Hartley, the visiting forwards rushed and assaulted the home citadel with a perfect hurricane of shots. But not once was Trent, the United goalie, found wanting. Then when the game looked like becoming a mere scramble, the United inside-left came in, and sent it like a flash out to his outside man.

Gourley was on it like a flash, and went speeding up the line. Steadying himself, he banged it in to Trent. With a pretty bit of dribbling, that worthy took it up the field, and then, seeing Jim unmarked, he banged it across to him.

Right up to the corner flag almost Jim tore on, with the crowd roaring in excitement. The flying figure of a sprinting half-back was thudding behind him, and Jim acted at once as though he had no time for thought—no time to see how his centre men were fixed. Steadying himself with wonderful abruptness, Jim shot for goal.

Smack! Like a hurtling shell the ball came towards the goalie, and he leaped side-ways to meet it, but he seemed to have it. Then, spinning, it whanged into a corner of the net.

"Goal!"

A thunderous roar of cheering went up, and Jim Hartley's name rang in delighted yells round the ground.

After that the whole game changed—for the worse. Benchester Rovers were well known as poor losers, and they showed it now. They adopted shady tactics, and from that time on the ground resounded with angry yells of execration. The Rovers simply went to pieces. Only Len Hartley seemed to keep up to his form; but even his efforts proved unavailing, and when the whistle went at last for time the victorious United had notched another couple of goals.

"What a game!" laughed Trent, as he accompanied Jim off the ground. "That's another leg up the League ladder for us! But what's the trouble, Jim? You look like a mouling owl!"

Jim laughed, but did not reply. The burly, scowling skipper of the United and his youthful outside-right had become firm friends by now. But Jim did not dream of explaining his fears and gloom to his chum.

Unfortunately, Len saw that laugh on Jim's face, and he at once misconstrued it. His face flushed red, and he crossed to the two. In a flash Jim saw that the trouble he had anticipated was forthcoming.

"You sneering cad!" cried Len furiously. "I've been wanting to have a word with you all through the match! So in return you're hiding away. What are you doing here?"

"Come to that," said Jim quietly, "what are you doing here?"

They were passing through the narrow opening between the stands at the moment, and, seeing a disturbance, many of the players stopped. As he noted this, Len Hartley grinned with satisfaction.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do here!" he retorted, with a sneer. "I'm going to expose you, you rotten thief!" He pointed an accusing finger at Jim, and raised his voice.

"That cad," he shouted, "is not fit to be in a decent team! He's a beastly thief! He was expelled from school for stealing money—the school football club's funds—and he can't deny it!"

CHAPTER 3.

Gathering Clouds!

THERE was a simultaneous gasp of astonishment. The startled onlookers of both teams did not know what to make of the affair. Jim raised his head, his eyes were steady as he looked his old enemy in the face.

"I do deny it," he said quietly. "I am

not a thief, and I was not expelled either—I didn't want to be expelled, at all events! And if you call me a thief again, Len, I'll give you what I've already given you more than once—a hiding!"

"And I will!" snarled Len, reckless in his rage. "You are a thief—a dirty thief!"

Jim heaped at his cousin a curse as the word "thief" slipped. And then, that thought into Len's mouth bringing a trickle of blood from his lips. Next second they were at it hammer and tongs.

Several of the bystanders stepped forward to interfere, but it was the sound of a deep, commanding voice that stopped the fight. "Jim, stop!" cried the voice of one, and drew back. At the same moment the Rovers' trainer collared the fuming Len and held him fast just as the tall, imposing figure of Mr. Hartley came hurrying up.

"What is the meaning of this! Hartley!" The director broke off abruptly as his eyes fell upon Len. It was obvious he recognised him, though he had only seen him once, and that months ago. "You will follow me at once—both of you!" he ordered abruptly.

As they came to Len's lips, but he realised suddenly that the tall stranger must be a man of importance. The sneer faded, and he decided to obey. As he followed the two to the chief director's private room, Jim's heart sank. The likelihood of a fall, and he felt more certain that it would mean the end of his hopes for him.

"Now," said Mr. Hartley, when the door of the luxuriously appointed room had been closed upon them, "I am waiting for an explanation of that disgraceful scene just now!"

Jim was silent, but Len had no intention of being silent.

"I will explain it quickly enough, sir!" he said venefully. "I was struck by Hartley because I exposed him as the thief he is. He was sentenced to expulsion from Barton School for stealing the football funds which were in my charge! I don't know how he comes to be here, but he ran away from school to avoid expulsion! That's the truth, sir!"

The director's face set sternly.

"Is that the truth?" he asked, turning abruptly to Jim.

"It—it's true I was about to be expelled," stammered Jim miserably. "But I mean that it isn't true I stole the money. I—I—"

"Then you have deceived me! You told me you were running away because—"

"I know, sir! It was partly true; I always intended to go. I've always regretted not telling you the full truth that night. Afterwards I could not tell the money I—I—"

"I thought you would upset you so much." For a full minute Mr. Hartley was silent, his eyes fixed keenly on Jim's face. But Jim faced him proudly, and his eyes were steady. Then the director turned abruptly to Len.

"The director's face set sternly. 'Is that the truth?' he asked sharply. 'Oh, yes, sir! His pocket-knife was found near the desk which had been broken open. And everyone knew how poor he was.'

"If Jim," Mr. Hartley gave a grunt of disgust. "Then that's all the money I—I—"

"There was," he exclaimed, "I, for one, will not accept it for one instant. I prefer to believe your own word, Jim. But while I am disappointed and sorry that you did not explain fully to me, I will accept your explanation of this. But it ends the matter as far as I am concerned."

Jim was staggered. A flood of relief swept over him. But before he could stammer his thanks, Mr. Hartley turned to Len.

"And now I should like to know how you come to be a professional footballer!" he said quietly. "Why are you not at school? And does your father know you are doing this?"

Len eyed his questioner curiously. Beyond the obvious fact that the old gentleman was an official of the club, he had no idea who he could be. Yet while he resented the questions, he decided it policy to reply.

"My father died a month ago," he said sullenly. "He—he left me practically penniless, and—and I had to earn my own living somehow."

Jim was astounded at the news. Mr. Hartley half-rose from his seat as though he had received a shock. Then he sank back again, and sat silent, his fingers drumming nervously on the roll-top desk before him. At last he spoke.

"Then in that case the time has come for me to reveal my secret," he said. "Now



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idea, boys! You, Jim, will understand nearly all I have to say." He paused and went on quickly: "Years ago, as a young man, I was wild and reckless, and after quarrelling violently with my father and two younger brothers, I ran away from home, vowing never to return. Then I went abroad, and after wandering about the world, I settled down at last in South America. There I stayed for the biggest part of my life, and managed to make quite a lot of money. I then, less than six months ago, came to England, finally to settle down."

"As a boy," he went on calmly, "I was passionately fond of football, and it has been the ambition of my life to own and run a first-class team of my own. Therefore, when I came here and bought Marlow Grange, I also purchased the majority of the shares in this club. That, however, is by the way. The point is, that quite by chance I happened to be in Barton and saw you two boys play in the match with the grammar school. At the time, though I admired your play, I hadn't the faintest idea that you were my nephews. Yes," he went on, smiling at the astounded looks on the boys' faces, "I am your Uncle John. You won't remember me, but you will have heard of me!"

"Of course!" stammered Jim. "But—"

"Let me proceed," said the old gentleman. "You, Jim, will realise now that I found out the truth that night of the storm, when you saved my life. I found out also, then, that I was a lonely old man, that I wanted someone to live with me—to take my place when I am gone. So I persuaded you to live with me. But even after all those years I still cherished a bitterness against my people. And I did not reveal myself because I did not want Len's father to get to know I was alive and in England."

"Now, however, I realised that the feud is dead, and that you are both alone in the world; and I feel responsible for you. There is room for both of you at the Grange, and if you will join us, Len, I will treat you both as my sons, and later on you shall both go up to Oxford to complete your education. Well?"

"Of course I will come!" gasped Len Hartley, his eyes gleaming. "I—I don't know!"

"But there is one condition," continued the old gentleman, with twinkling eyes. "And that is that you immediately transfer to the United, and help Jim to put the club at the top of the league. And now shake hands, you two, and let this stupid rivalry end. From now on you must be friends!"

Leonard Hartley held out his hand promptly and frankly. Jim grasped it, his mind in a whirl.

But could he have seen into his cousin's heart just then, he would have seen little friendship there.

CHAPTER 4.

In His True Colours!

FROM that day on things seemed to change completely for Jim Hartley, both on the football field and at the Grange. What was the matter he could not have told, but he suspected that his cousin was at the bottom of the mischief.

And he was right. Though on the surface he appeared to have buried the past and pretended to be friendly with Jim, Len Hartley had by no means forgotten, and he hated his cousin more than ever. With growing jealousy, he noted the affection between Jim and his uncle, and understood at once he was an awkward and underhanded campaigner to blacken Jim's character in his uncle's eyes.

For Len had no desire to share the heirship to his uncle's wealth with Jim or anyone else; he wanted it all for himself, and with crafty cunning he began to sow the seeds of distrust and suspicion in his uncle's mind.

And in this Jim himself helped him unconsciously. It so happened that on the Saturday following that eventful match with Brenchester, Trent, the Marlow centre-forward, was badly injured in an away game, and abruptly ended his football career—for that season, at least.

When fit to be moved, he was brought back to his rooms, which were at a rather respectable local hotel, and there Jim visited him almost every night in the week, staying with him late to keep him company. The crafty Len made the most of this.



Len Hartley pointed an accusing finger at Jim, and raised his voice. "That cad," he shouted, "is not fit to be in a decent team. He's a beastly thief! He was expelled from school for stealing money—the school's football club funds. And he can't deny it!"

He dropped cautious and delicate hints as to the questionable character of Jim's visits to the hotel, and as the old gentleman was well aware that Jim returned home at a late hour every night, and had himself seen him leave the hotel more than once, the seeds of suspicion fell on fertile ground.

And to make matters worse, Jim himself began to borrow money from his uncle. The latter could not bring himself to ask what he required the money for, and Jim did not dream of explaining that he wanted it in order to help him chum, Trent, who was in financial straits.

That was not all. Len carried his campaign on to the football field, and here he found a willing helper in Stokes, whose piece Jim had taken in the first team, and who still nursed a hatred of the youthful professional in consequence.

The transfer of Len to the Marlow club had been accomplished without much difficulty, and naturally he took the injured Trent's position as skipper and centre-forward. And forthwith the crafty Len proceeded systematically to starve Jim in every match. Never a pass would he send him if he could help it, and the policy of repression soon began to have a marked effect on Jim's play.

But Len did it all so skilfully that even Mr. Hartley did not suspect what was going on. But he noted the deterioration in Jim's play, and he also noted the ominous fact that Jim's popularity was waning among the public.

One night he called Jim into the library. "I've noticed for some time now," he said gravely, "that your play has been steadily growing worse. Other people have noticed it, too, my boy. Can you explain it?"

Jim flushed and was silent. He hated to whine, and he had no intention of sneaking about his cousin. His uncle misconstrued his silence.

"I have also noticed something else," he went on sternly. "For some time your conduct and habits have been, so to say the least of it, questionable, and have worried me considerably. You are keeping late hours, and are too fond of haunting a certain shady inn. What is the meaning of it?"

Jim was staggered. But he was more hurt than amazed. The thought that his uncle

should imagine that his innocent visits to Trent's abode should be for the purpose of betting, and worse, hurt his pride, and made him bitterly angry. Without a word, or an attempt to defend himself, he turned and left the room.

Thereafter a marked coolness sprang up between Jim and his uncle. Jim never went out in the car with him, while Len took every opportunity of doing so and of ingratiating himself with the old gentleman. And at last, when he considered the breach was wide enough, Jim's rascally cousin decided the time was ripe for the final move in his campaign of disgracing his cousin.

It was about six o'clock one Saturday evening, and Len had locked into the library, to find his uncle seated at his desk. The old man looked up as Len entered, and, after locking his desk, rose to his feet.

"I'm going to the club for an hour now, Leonard," he remarked casually. "If you've any shopping to do, perhaps you'd like to come in with me."

"Certainly, uncle!" was the ready answer. "Just what I wanted!"

"Good! Then, if you'll give the car keys, I'll go and change. You can drop me off at the club, and call for me there at about seven."

The old gentleman left the room, and Len followed him, closing the door. Half-way across the hall, however, he stopped dead, as a sudden daring idea occurred to him.

"Jove! I wonder— Yes, I'll do it! Just the very thing!"

He grinned wickedly, and left the house swiftly, hurrying round to the garage, he started the engine of the car, and as the rhythmic humming sounded on the night air, he dashed through the bushes to the opened French windows of the library.

The room was lit only by the flickering firelight, but it was enough for his purpose. He moved swiftly to the desk, then took from his pocket a large clasp-knife. The knife was Jim's property, and he had found it in the garage only that morning. Opening the blade, he began to hack and pry at the top right-hand drawer. There came a sudden snap as the blade broke, and, flinging the haft down beneath the

desk where it would easily be seen, he picked up the poker from the fender. Then he set to in earnest to break open the drawer.

The lock gave at last with a soft snap, and, dropping the poker, the rascally schemer look from the open drawer a sudden burst of banknotes, and crammed them into his pocket. Then he partially closed the drawer, and softly left the room by the way he had entered it.

"And that's that!" he chuckled, as he dashed back to the waiting car. "If the chief doesn't accept the evidence of the broken knife this time, I fancy he will before I'm through with this job to-night. I'll make for that brute Stokes directly I can get rid of the old man, and get him cooked this time, Jimmy, my pippin'!"

Meanwhile, up in his room, Jim Hartley was lazily reading a magazine story, all unconscious of the little scheme his cousin was arranging for his benefit.

But on hearing the car move away along the drive, he got to his feet and consulted his watch.

"Jove! After six, and I promised to be in town by this!" he muttered. "Better make a move."

He glanced into the library as he arrived downstairs, and, seeing the French windows opened, he closed and locked them. Then, after getting his cap, he left the house.

It was past nine when he arrived back from his walk, and as he walked up the dark drive he whistled cheerily. But his whistling ended in a startled gasp as a dark figure leaped suddenly out at him from the bushes lining the drive. Then something—a dull, heavy something—fell with terrific force on his head, and he dropped without a sound.

How long he lay there he did not know, but when he came to himself at last, his head ached violently, and he felt sick and dizzy with pain. He sat up painfully, and staggered to his feet. What had happened he could not imagine, and, hardly knowing what he did, he lurched rather than walked towards the lighted hall-doorway. He staggered inside, and there a flood of weakness swept over him, and he clung limply to the hall-stand for support.

As he did so, the library door opened, and his uncle, followed by his cousin,

emerged. The old man's face was grave, but this changed to a look of concern as he realised something was wrong. He stepped swiftly forward; but, even as he did so, something fell from Jim's pocket.

It was a packet of banknotes, and as his eyes fell upon them the old gentleman groaned. Stooping, he picked them up, gave one glance at them, and turned upon the astounded Jim.

"So this is how you repay my kindness—you would steal from me!" he said, with bitter anger. "You were charged with theft before, and I believed you innocent! I was wrong! But that is not all. I thought just now that your condition was due to an accident. But now I realise it is due to the worst of crimes! I am disgusted and more disappointed with you than I can say!"

"I—!" began Jim; but his uncle cut him short.

"I will hear your excuses—if you have any in the morning, when you will be in a condition to defend yourself."

With that, he turned and, with head bowed, he entered the library again, and Len, striving to hide his delight, followed him. As the door closed upon them, Jim gasped like a stranded fish. He was more bewildered than ever he had been in his life. But gradually, as his brain cleared, he began to realise what it all meant.

"That cad Len is at the bottom of this!" he vowed fiercely. "But—but uncle ought to have listened to me! It's unjust—awful that unjust. But I'm hanged if I'll wait until morning—to be kicked out!"

And with that sudden resolve, Jim grasped his hat and went out into the darkness.

"I'll make for Trent's place," he mused.

"He'll get me up, I'm—! Ho!"

He awoke abruptly as a loud, discordant clanging struck upon his ears. Next moment, from a side-street near him, a motor fire-engine swept and came rushing towards him. And then it happened.

From the pavement near him, a child, attracted by a sweetshop across the way, ran out into the street—full into the path of the advancing fire-engine.

Several people saw the danger and shrieked in horror; but only Jim Hartley acted. Like a flash of light he swept to

the child, and fairly flung it out of danger. Even as he did so, the engine, happily slowed by hastily-applied brakes, was upon him. Then something struck him with terrific violence, and the world seemed to end for Jim Hartley.

When Jim recovered consciousness he found himself in bed, and bending over him was his uncle. As he opened his eyes, the old man gave a deep breath of relief.

"What—what has happened?" muttered Jim, starting about him. "Oh, I remember now. Is—the middle all right?"

"Quite all right!" smiled the old gentleman. "And you're all right when you've got that broken rib better. Anyway, I fancy you'll think the broken rib was worth it when I tell you the news I have for you. By a miracle, it seems, the child you saved was the little daughter of Stokes, our late winger. And out of gratitude, Stokes had made a confession to me. It was he, at the instigation of that scoundrelly cousin of yours, who served you that dastardly trick to-night. He was assisted by the little daughter of Stokes, in your pocket. He is not wholly bad, and it was your cousin Leonard's influence and money that tempted him. Leonard, I may say, has left Marlow Orange—for ever. Anyhow, you shall hear of him as late as I can. I have just gripped Jim's hand—"will you ever forgive an old man, Jim? Will you come back to me?"

"Of course I will!" said Jim simply.

There was only one thing needed to complete Jim's happiness for that, and it came to pass some weeks later, quite accidentally. Jim bumped into Mr. Andrews, his old sports master, in Marlow. And from him Jim learned a bit of news that astounded him. Two days after he had read away from Barton School, Leonard Hartley had been proved guilty of having stolen the football funds, and his own innocence had been established.

And as the master and his uncle congratulated him, Jim Hartley felt that his luck had indeed changed—for good.

THE END.

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My Dear Chums,—
The GEM is going ahead like a house afire. Those coloured covers have won hands down. I never remember such enthusiasm. This is all good, but there is better to come. The GEM has more friends now than ever it had, and still they come.

NEW CON.

That's just how it stands. No discontents. Monty Lowther may make ponderous jokes about declining the article, and so forth, but there is nobody who would decline to credit the statement that the GEM has hit the target plump in the bulseye. I am intensely gratified with the enthusiastic reception accorded the new Bumper Numbers of the favourite stary weekly.

MANY A TIME AND OFT.

How often we heard such questions as, "Why don't you have coloured covers?" Queries like that have poured in on me for years. Well, now you have got it, and I think everyone will acknowledge that a coloured cover with a dramatic setting does give prestige to a paper.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

What about next week's bill? It is as full of good things as Mrs. Partington's celebrated map of feathers!

A SPLENDID GLOSSY PHOTO:

You will find an addition to the GEM Portrait Gallery of Footballers in next week's number, and you will be saying it is the best yet.

JIMMY SEED OF THE SPURS F.C.

This famous player needs no words from me. You will find his likeness admirable—and it is autographed like all the other portraits in this magnificent series.

MR. MARTIN CLIFFORD.

He's the author with a name for the finest stories. I have never known him fail. Always up to concert-pitch. Always there. It is Adsum all the time with this master of imagination and fertile resource. Mr. Martin Clifford gives us tales of human character. He has the deepest insight of any writer of the day, and he is natural, and gets his wonderful yarns to run with magic ease.

ANOTHER WINNER!

That's next week's tale. It is distinguished by atmosphere, and deftly-turned situations, and it keeps you on the tenterhooks of expectation from the first chapter to the ringing-down of the curtain.

SUGGESTIONS WELCOME.

I am always eager for suggestions. Come to think of it, a notion sent in to me to the effect that we could do with a bit more of the Noble Art in the GEM, set me on the track of a certain character you will like. This is

GINGER DAN—OF NOWHERE.

Ginger makes his bow next Wednesday in a really rousing, rollicking boxing yarn. Lots of famous chaps have come out of the mysterious land of Nowhere.

It is a jolly big country—but, enough you are safe to like Ginger Dan!

SPECIAL ITEMS.

There is a lot more I should like to say about our next week's splendid number, for there will be an extra good edition of that sparkling little supplement, the "St. Jim's News"—the official organ of St. Jim's, and doing its work in tapping style.

Then there will be another stirring instalment of "The Wolves of St. Beowulf's!" just the most brilliant serial the GEM has ever given.

THE VERY THING!

Christmas is coming. This is the season when a cheery evening before the fire with a book, offers attractions. It is just this point which makes me introduce a word about that magnificent fireside companion, the "Holiday Annual." You can't beat it for bright and lively stories, fascinating articles about scores of subjects which appeal to anybody, and an array of pictures second to none.

If there are any uncles, or such-like useful aunts, looking round for the best present to make a young chum—well, the choice to hit on is the famous "Annual." It is a book which holds between its handsome covers the go and dash and meriment of the Companion Papers. Just get it and see for yourselves.

EASY WINNERS.

You will be disappointed if you miss the beautiful portraits the "Magnat," "Boys' Friend," and "Popular" are giving away each week. In the special circumstances make a push and secure this admirable series of photographs. The "Boys' Friend" magnificent gallery of footballers shows the players in vivid colours. Our Companion Papers are offering an unrivalled opportunity to all sport-lovers who like to have a permanent reminder of front-line champions.

YOUR EDITOR.

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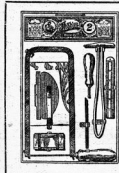
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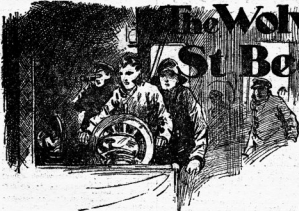
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THRILL IN EVERY LINE!



Wolves of Beowulf's!

Our Grand New
Serial of Thrilling
:: Adventure ::

By
DUNCAN STORM.

Introduction.

JACK WABBY, JAMES ERADY, 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 WASHINGTON, 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 think only of the treasure, 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 Erady and Washington, who had been talking together, overboard into the sea.

Later, opening the bags, the robbers discover that they have been deceived. They prepare to attack the Englishmen, only to find that they were locked in the cabin and made prisoners. They manage to gain an exit from the engine-room, however. A fierce fight then ensues, but the robbers are soon overcome.

Later, the vessel encounters a very rough sea, and with a loud crash, gets slammed down on the Columbian Sand.

"The tide's making," said Stubbs; "so with a bit of luck we may get bumped on the Two Fathom Drain and get carried off safely."

(Now read on.)

All Hands to the Pumps.

THE boys could not understand how Stubbs could talk of where the ship was on a night as black as the inside of a cupboard, and with mist and spray whirling round the ship like smoke. But the stout old Trois Freres did three bumps more. Then of a sudden she rolled and floated.

Stubbs ran to the side. "Let her drift, sir!" he shouted. "Let her drift! She's in the Two Fathom Drain. She'll come clear!"

The little gang of scared, sea-sick ruffians made a rush for the boat that was stowed on deck.

"Well, get out! We go in so boat!" screamed one Italian gentleman.

"No, you don't, my dazio friend!" answered Stubbs. "You gotta stop to pump out the ship. Man the pumps, you scoundrels, and pump for your lives!" he added, hitting out right and left amongst the panic-stricken faces.

Though they were in the full rush of THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 772.

panic, there was that in Stubbs which made them more afraid of him than of being drowned.

He kicked them forward to the pumps, and set them pumping. The clear streams of water that came rushing from the pumps showed that the Trois Freres was making water fast.

Stubbs watched the broken water in the darkness.

"Jib away there, boys!" he yelled. "We are clear of the sea!"

The boys leaped to the jib-sheets, and hauled the weather-sheet with all their strength. The Trois Freres paid off almost on the broken whiteness of the tail-end of the Columbian Sand.

Then her shallop sails filled, and away she went, roaring through the smaller channel which led up towards the mouth of Barham Harbour.

The gang at the pumps were pumping like mad. The boys wanted to go and assist them, for they could feel that the ship was heavy and sluggish with the water that was running into her. But Stubbs stayed there.

"Don't you worry about pumping, young gent!" he said. "You keep your breath for swimming, for you may want it yet. If she keeps afloat as far as the harbour, that's about all she will do, for all their pumping, and there's one thing about a gang like that, if they've got their hands on the pumps, they ain't got 'em on respectable people's throats! Now I'll go and prop up old Van Dusk in a lifebuoy, so's he'll have a chance if we go down. It was one of his own pals that dropped him with a shot through the shoulder. That's the worst of these dagos, and adoo stubbs, they always lose their heads when they are out on the toot!"

He got the one lifebuoy in the ship, and lashed it round Captain Dunk, who grunted dolefully.

"You cheer up, old chap!" replied Mr. Stubbs calmly. "If you ain't drowned in the next ten minutes, we'll have you nice and comfortable in the hospital in half an hour, with a man in blue sitting each side of the bed to hold you 'and 'em!"

He returned to the boys. Stubbs was quite unmoved, although their situation was one of extreme peril.

"Pretty the harbour lights look from here, young gentlemen!" he said, as the foundering Trois Freres rolled towards the harbour mouth.

Staggeringly and more staggeringly she rolled. "Are we going down-a?" cried an agitated Italian at the pumps.

"Well, we ain't going up, foot!" said Stubbs. "In the shelter of the first arm of the harbour the wind began to die away.

There were shouts amongst the harbour-watchmen as they saw this strange, foreign-fishing craft, with her torn sails and crowded decks, rolling heavily in from the sea, at her hands at the pumps.

There was a warning blast from a siren, which was answered by the deep roar of a steam whistle farther up the harbour.

"Keep her going, sir—keep her going!" cried Stubbs to John Lincoln. "Here comes the John Lincoln, sir!"

A spangle of lights was on the more farther up the harbour. It was the powerful tug which bore John Lincoln's name which was coming to their assistance.

Down she bore upon them. Hopes were thrown to the sinking Trois Freres, however, were made fast, and the John Lincoln, like a huge ambulance attendant supporting a sick man, gently shoved the Trois Freres across the harbour, and dumped her on to a submerged sandbank with her decks awash.

Then a crowd of men streamed aboard her, eagerly demanding what had happened. "Got a dry fagarette about you, old chap?" asked Stubbs to the first of these. "Thankee! That's Mr. Lincoln, same as your craft is named after, standing by the wheel with his boots full of water. You go and ask him, and mind that none of this crowd here escapes. They are all wrong 'uns except us!"

An Interview with Mr. Lincoln!

NEVER had there been such a buzz of excitement in Barham Harbour as when the harbour and salvage tug, John Lincoln, got alongside the foundering Trois Freres, and slowly and gently pushed her on to the sandbank.

John Lincoln himself was well-known to the harbour officials, since he was one of the harbour trustees, and, when these found him standing knee-deep in water at the helm of the strange fishing-boat, surrounded by a dishevelled and frightened crowd of men who looked like foreign anarchists, they could hardly believe their eyes.

Nor did John Lincoln explain to them the adventures which had befallen him on this stormy night.

He shouted to the captain of the tug to signal for the harbour police, and soon a launch came dashing along under the white glare of the arc lamps, crowded not only with the harbour police, but with the town police as well.

John Lincoln hoisted up Captain Dunk on to the skylight, where that worthy was wet above the submerged deck.

Captain Dunk eyed his benefactor sourly. He was a dour man, and a bullet through his shoulder had not improved his temper.

"If I'd known what I know now," he said grumpily to John Lincoln. "I would have chucked you into der sea!"

"I dare say you would," replied John Lincoln, with a smile. "Have a cigarette, captain! Here is a dry one in my case—about the only dry thing aboard. It's fortune of war, captain—fortune of war!"

The police launch steamed alongside, and soon the deck was filled with bewigged policemen, hardly knowing who was to be arrested.

The sergeant-in-charge started as he was just about to claim Mr. Travers of Scotland Yard.

"Not me, sergeant!" replied Mr. Travers coolly, with his pleasant smile. "It's a nice

ills land for you. Most of these men are voted on this side of the Channel, and some if they hadn't, I'll separate the sheep from the goats for you."

He set to work picking out his men from the packed crew.

"I don't see an atom of fight left in the lifeless crowd. Their battering at sea had nerved them, and they were glad enough to cope with their lives; but now, just at that moment, to worry about their liberty, Captain Dunk was the last to be helped into the police launch.

Then Mr. Travers shook hands all round with the boys.

"A very smart capture, young gentlemen," he said. "I am glad now that I let you have your own way in this affair. I will see that my conduct is reported as a noble deed, and I don't think you need be worried any more in the affair at all."

Then off he went with what Wobby called his "cage of lovebirds."

"That's a regular policeman all over, and I don't think Wobby, waking at his dinner."

"We take most of the risk and he takes most of the blame."

Then Wobby yawned.

Up at the top of the harbour the illuminated dial of the townhall clock was pointing to the hour of 11 a.m.

"That's all right," said Wobby, "there's one thing about it, we haven't raised any scandal. Everyone's in bed, and we've had a proper old Saturday-night out!"

Wally laughed.

"I hope my aunt won't hear about it, that's all," said Wobby. "She'll put me to bed in the nursery, and I shan't be allowed out for a month of Sundays."

Mr. Stubbs came splashing along the deck to the boys.

"Governor's compliments, young gent's," he said. "You've done a very nice thing, and you're so kind of this old hunk looking that you want to stay knee-deep in water aboard her all night. The tug'll be moving off in a minute."

The laughing boys climbed aboard the tug, which soon set her powerful paddles in action and sheered across the harbour to the railway quay, where they found John Lincoln's big car waiting for them.

"You go home, boys!" said John Lincoln, leading them into the car. "Stubbs will get after you. It's a very nice set of your wet clothes. I'm staying in town to-night to settle up this business with the police. Good-night, boys—or rather, good-morning!"

"Good-night, sir!" the boys called in chorus as they buzzed off.

"Isn't he a lad?" said Wobby with admiration. "Provides for everything. There was his car waiting for us on the quay, just as if we had been out for a steamer excursion at two shillings return fare. Instead of risking our precious lives, he had tucked a load of bad men. My word, but I am hungry! I hope Stubbs will have some supper for us when we get home!"

"Don't you be afraid of that, young gentleman," said Stubbs, with his grim smile. "You see that you are soaked up all right. But you'll all change your clothes before you get down to it."

Mr. Stubbs was as good as his word. In half an hour the car had brought them back to the stately entrance of High March Castle. In forty minutes, dry, sleepy, and cheerful, they were seated in the snug little run-down with a spread before them that beat the most luxurious dormitory spread that St. Beowulf's had ever seen.

There was York ham and game pie, cold chickens in jelly, and the boys discovered that they had such appetites as they had never known before.

Stubbs carved for them.

"I reckon some of you young gent's will be o' nightmare, eatin' at this time of night," he said, with a slight note of warning in his voice.

"Don't you be afraid of that, Stubbs," replied Wobby placidly. "The only nightmare we'll get is dreaming that we've not had enough. We often have a tuck-out at 2 a.m. at St. B's. There's nothing like a bit of good dormitory feed to bring you up with an appetite for breakfast."

"What does your master say about it?" asked Mr. Stubbs, as he carved the hungry Wobby a breast of chicken.

"He doesn't say anything, because he doesn't know. If he did know, he'd say a good deal. But what the eye don't see, the heart don't grieve after," answered Wobby.

"Well, I don't suppose some of you young

gent's will be troubling your headmaster much longer," said Stubbs. "You'll be troubling me instead!"

"What's the game?" asked Wobby eagerly at this hint.

"The governor will tell you in his own time. I haven't said anything," replied Mr. Stubbs mysteriously. "Now, Master Wobby, if you've finished eating, you can get to bed, and I shan't call any of you young gent's till ten o'clock to-morrow mornin'. I suppose that will be about the time you want your shaving water," added Mr. Stubbs, with a wink.

The boys went off yawning to their rooms, tired out by the glorious day of adventure, and Jim Ready dreamed all night that he was sailing the Great Frigate upside down, with all the anarchists in Europe sitting on her upturned keel.

It was about noon the next day when Wobby was trying to teach them to throw his boomerang, that John Lincoln appeared on the terrace of the castle, looking down on the boys.

Wobby did not notice the great man. He was trying to teach Jim the mysteries of this strange aboriginal weapon.

"Pick me, Jimmy!" he exclaimed. "You are fair silly! Your flick is a clump o' mudlock. Don't you see? It's as simple as pie. You just hold the thing like this, and you give a little run and a twist and a jerk, and there you are!"

The boomerang flitted from Wobby's skilled hand, and flying like a great bird, rose over a great clump of trees, scaring a sentinel rook so badly that he tumbled off his perch. Then it came flickering back, falling close by Wobby's feet.

"It looks easy enough!" said Jim.

"It is easy!" urged Wobby. "Now you try it, Jimmie! Just sling it as you saw me sling it!"

Jim took a run and a throw. The boomerang travelled, but not in the way he expected. It flew off at an angle and crashed through the roof of an adjacent conservatory.

Wobby looked at his chum reproachfully.

"That's about put the lid on us!" he said.

"You are asked out to a gentleman's house, fed like a king, and all you can do is to break up his tomato ranch for him, and—My hat, there is the governor himself! He'll send us all back to school, for sure!"

But John Lincoln was only laughing over this little mishap.

"Here, boys!" he called. "Before you smash up the rest of my glass, perhaps you will come and see me in the library. I want to have a little talk with you."

"Of course he wants to have a little talk with us," muttered Wobby. "He's going to tell us to take a brass ring and skidoo for a gang of no-class tuns!"

But John Lincoln had nothing to say about the broken game of glass as he seated himself at the big library table.

"Sit down, boys, and make yourselves comfortable," he said. "I am going to have a little talk with you."

The boys sat down, but they did not make themselves comfortable. No boy can make himself comfortable when he hears that someone in high authority wants to have a little talk with him.

Only Lang appeared at ease. He smiled blandly. But you can never tell what a Chinese is thinking by his face, and Wobby, taking a side-squint at Lang, decided that Lang's grin was on the wrong side of his face.

Lal Singh also looked a bit anxious. This great man had asked them to his palace, and they had smashed up his glass pavilion. That was what Lal Singh thought about it.

But John Lincoln's first words put all of the juniors at their ease.

"I am very pleased with the way you fellows behaved last night," he said.

"Indeed, I am more than pleased. I am delighted!"

He leaned forward with his elbows on the leather-covered table, and the tips of his fingers brought together, which, Stubbs could have told the boys, was a sure sign that the governor was making up his mind to an important course of action.

"It showed me, boys," continued John Lincoln, "that I was on the right line when I founded the Lincoln Scholarships at St. Beowulf's School, and that I am getting the right boys into those scholarships. I wanted boys who would grow up to take the greatest responsibilities which are upon the shoulders of the British Empire. I dare say you have heard a lot of talk about Empire, haven't you?"

"I should smile, sir," replied Wobby.

"We hear nothing else but Empire in Australia!"

"And I suppose you are taught that Empire means riches and power and grandeur!" pursued John Lincoln.

"That is about it, sir," replied the ready Wobby; "but more often it means hard yucker and one in the neck when you aren't looking for it."

John Lincoln smiled.

"That's just what I was going to remind you," he said. "Riches is only another name for responsibility, power is fighting



Viscount Waffington, wearing his oldest suit, looked round at the group of St. Beowulf's boys. Then he went up to Jim Ready and shook hands with him. "Hallo, Jim!" he said. "Where's the rest of the lads?" Blurb, who was standing near by, stared at the plainly-dressed fellow. "What's that kid doing here?" he cried.

in the hand of a wise man and a live wire in the hand of a fool, and grandeur—what is grandeur, boys?"

"Swank!" replied Wobby.

John Lincoln shook his head.

"Real grandeur is the humility which gives credit to the great," he said. "And it is on these lines that I want to bring up all the Lincoln Scholars at St. Bewulf's, to handle riches with prudence, and power without pride!"

Wobby looked rather doubtful of himself. He was thinking of the ready way in which they had "snaked" him, and sovereignty at the backshop. That was not handling riches with prudence. That was burning a good pound on a toot that might have been spread over two or three nights.

The governor was right, Wobby decided. "Well, boys," continued John Lincoln, "as you know, I dare say, I have a good deal to do with this Empire of ours, having great interests in Africa, the Eastern Seas, and also outside the Empire in South America."

He passed, and the boys thrilled with excitement.

What was coming?

"I have been at home some time now, boys," pursued John Lincoln, in his levity tones.

"It was the Government who brought me home to ask my advice on certain matters in which I have expert knowledge. And, in the meantime, I have some what neglected my own affairs and undertakings. I am thinking of returning to a world tour of my estates, and am thinking of taking six boys with me partly to educate them, and partly that they may educate me. I don't know—great deal about boys," said John Lincoln modestly. "I am an old bachelor, and I have no nephews or belongings in the world. No I thought that I would look for a ready-made family amongst my Lincoln Scholars. Last night I tested and tried your fellows in as tight a place as an, boys ought to be in their way, and you approved the right stuff. And, as for you, young Waffington—"

John Lincoln turned to Waff, who was sitting in an agony of fear lest he should be left out of this.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Waff.

"I went and saw your stunt this morning," said John Lincoln, "and I told her everything that happened last night. Made a clean breast of it, and told her how you behaved. And she is so proud of you that she is going to let me take you with your own party."

Waff was speechless with delight. It seemed too good to be true.

"Now, boys," continued John Lincoln, "this tour sounds a nice, easy trip. But it is not going to be that. A man like myself not only has many servants, but he has likewise many enemies. And his servants have their enemies because of his. We shall start on my yacht, and our departure will be witnessed everywhere with a flourish of trumpets. But we shall not remain long on the yacht, for there are places I want to go to where I am not expected, and that is where you are going to see me. You will go back to school this afternoon, and you will keep a close tongue on what I have told you. Waffington won't want to lose sight of you, so he'll visit you at the school on the pretence of seeing the Wednesday football match. I cannot tell when I shall be able to send for you. It may be in a week, or it may be in a month's time."

"But aren't we going to have any school, sir?" gasped Wobby.

"Of course you will have school," replied John Lincoln, laughing. "Well, I dare say you will all do a bit of piracy on the trip. It's pirate cut pirate in some corners where

"Blackhead!" exclaimed Wobby, with delight.

"Is that what you call him?" asked John Lincoln, laughing. "Well, I dare say you will all do a bit of piracy on the trip. It's pirate cut pirate in some corners where

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we are going. Now, off to the gun-room with you, and Stubbs will measure you for the weapons you may care to select for the trip. He will know what you want."

The boys were dazzled with delight at the prospect before them. This was the right sort of education with a vengeance.

They shook hands with their hosts, and trooped off to the gun-room, where they found Stubbs making all sorts of entries in books, and carefully weighing up packets of ammunition in rolls of cloth which looked like cotton print.

One Too Many for Slurk!

STUBBS looked up from his task as the boys entered. "So the governor's been talking to you, has he?" he asked, reading the delight in their faces.

"Rather!" replied Jim. "And he's sent us to you to find us some guns for the trip."

"Wait a minute, Master Ready," replied Stubbs. "One thing at a time. Lemme see. One dot of merikani, six pieces of kanli, four pieces of merikani, six pieces of kanli, four pieces of merikani. That makes a pagazi load of seventy-two pound, or a bit more than two frashahi!"

Stubbs folded up cloth after cloth of the cotton stuff which in Africa is called merikani, and of the light blue jean stuff which is "kanli."

"What's that you are making up, stubbo?" asked Wobby.

"That's an exact load for a pagazi, or a native porter in Africa, my son," replied Mr. Stubbs. "It'll make a bale three or a half feet long, a foot deep, and a foot wide, that a nigger can carry on his head day after day through forests and swamps, without it taking any harm."

"That's the stuff that you've got to pay your way with, where you are going," added Mr. Stubbs. "Money isn't any good up here. That stuff and beads and wire is what we take for money. Look here!"

Stubbs pulled out a box of beads—brown, yellow, red, green, and white.

"The red go in different parts of the country," he said. "In one part the niggers don't want these kami-kanli or red beads. They are all for the bugs or black beads. In other parts they won't look at bugs, they are all for these sun-gomax or egg-shaped beads. It's no good giving 'em what they don't want. You might as well try to pass a foreign coin on to the post-office under the village. Now, young gent, I'll attend to your guns!"

Stubbs then measured them carefully for slurk and rifles.

"Going to take your kangaroo with you, Master Wobby?" he asked.

"Rather!" replied Wobby. "If the governor will let me."

"I guess that if that beast can live in a boys' school, poor thing, he can live anywhere," said Stubbs, with his grim smile. "Yes, the governor will let you take him. He'll scare some of those niggers who have never seen a kangaroo before. They'll be more afraid of him than of a wild elephant or a lion. Now, young gent, it's time you were getting back to school. The wire will take you over, and you'll find your kangaroo, Master Wobby, in the second loose-box in the stables."

They hurried off to the stables to rescue their pet, and found Nobby sitting in the straw.

Nobby was put on the chain and dragged to the waiting car. Then off they went to the school, the wire with delight.

"It's Africa, boys!" exclaimed Wobby. "Lions, elephants, tigers, koodoo, hippo!"

"There aren't any tigers in Africa, ya juggins!" said Stikewick.

"You wait a bit, and we'll see," replied Wobby.

For the next two days the librarian of the school library was driven nearly off his head by Wobby's constant change of book about Africa.

"What do you want to know so much about Africa for, young Wobby?" at last demanded the librarian.

"A friend of mine is going there soon," replied the ingenious Wobby—"a very old friend of mine," he added. "I've known him ever since he was born."

The five got together whenever they could to talk of their plans, and they could hardly sleep at nights for wondering whether John Lincoln would send for them that day.

Wobby, who had read that a conqueror is taken amongst some African tribes to be a magician of great power, strove to learn conjuring. He tried to take a half-crown out of his neighbour's ear in class, and dropped the half-crown, which was promptly snatched up by Blackboard Teach and put in the school mission-box. By way of change for his half-crown, Wobby got a hiding.

Slurk, with his coteries, were delighted when Wobby got into trouble. They little dreamed that in a short time Wobby and his chums would be far removed from their envy and hatred.

"See that tug Slurk grinning at me when I copped the barbed wire!" exclaimed Wobby to Jim. "He wouldn't look so jolly glad in the eye if he knew of our luck; and he and his crew are all pop-eyed because he's heard that the counters are going to bring Viscount Waffington to the footer match on Wednesday. They want to suck up to Waffington because he's a viscount. Ugh! I know that rotten lot! I've a mind to tell you 'em. You had to watch out. But I won't. He'll find 'em out all right!"

Wobby's remarks were only too true. Slurk and Sponge and the rest of the bullies were all agog when it was known that Viscount Waffington would attend the Wednesday football match.

When his people, Slurk was heard to remark bitterly.

"Wobby winked at Jim.

"Do you mark that, Jim, my buck?" he asked. "Slurk knows Waff's people. I wonder if he'll know Waff when he sees him at my rate, Waff. He'd be would come into the quad at two o'clock. You had better go and meet him and show him the way to the kangaroo stable."

Jim nodded. Punctually at two o'clock he made his way down to the entrance of the quad by the porter's lodge, where the usual crowd of boys were hanging about, reading up the notice-board.

The bullies were all grouped there on the look-out for the swell motor-car which was to bring the young viscount to the school. Slurk was swift to notice Jim Ready.

"What's that rotten little towny cad doing at this end of the school?" he asked in snide tones.

"At this remark all his satellites sniggered as though he said something that was wonderfully smart and witty.

Jim flushed and sheered away from the jeering group.

Then he heard a friendly voice asking his name from Jerrocks, the school porter.

"Master Ready!" said Jerrocks, who prided himself on knowing every boy in the school by his Christian and surname. "Master Jim Ready! There he is, my son!"

Quite a shabby-looking boy slipped in at the back doorway. It was Viscount Waffington, who had sternly refused to let his loving aunt dress him up for the occasion. He was wearing his oldest suit, and he looked round at the group of boys in timid delight at finding himself amongst the lions of St. Bewulf's.

Then his eyes fell on Jim, and he went up and shook hands with him.

"Hallo, Jim!" he said. "Where's the rest of the lads? Auntie has gone to see Dr. Brickensbury, and I've slipped off on my own. I want to see your study, and perhaps we can have a chew about your new what."

And Waff winked mysteriously.

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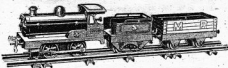
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