

THE GEM 2d

"COCK O' THE WALK!"

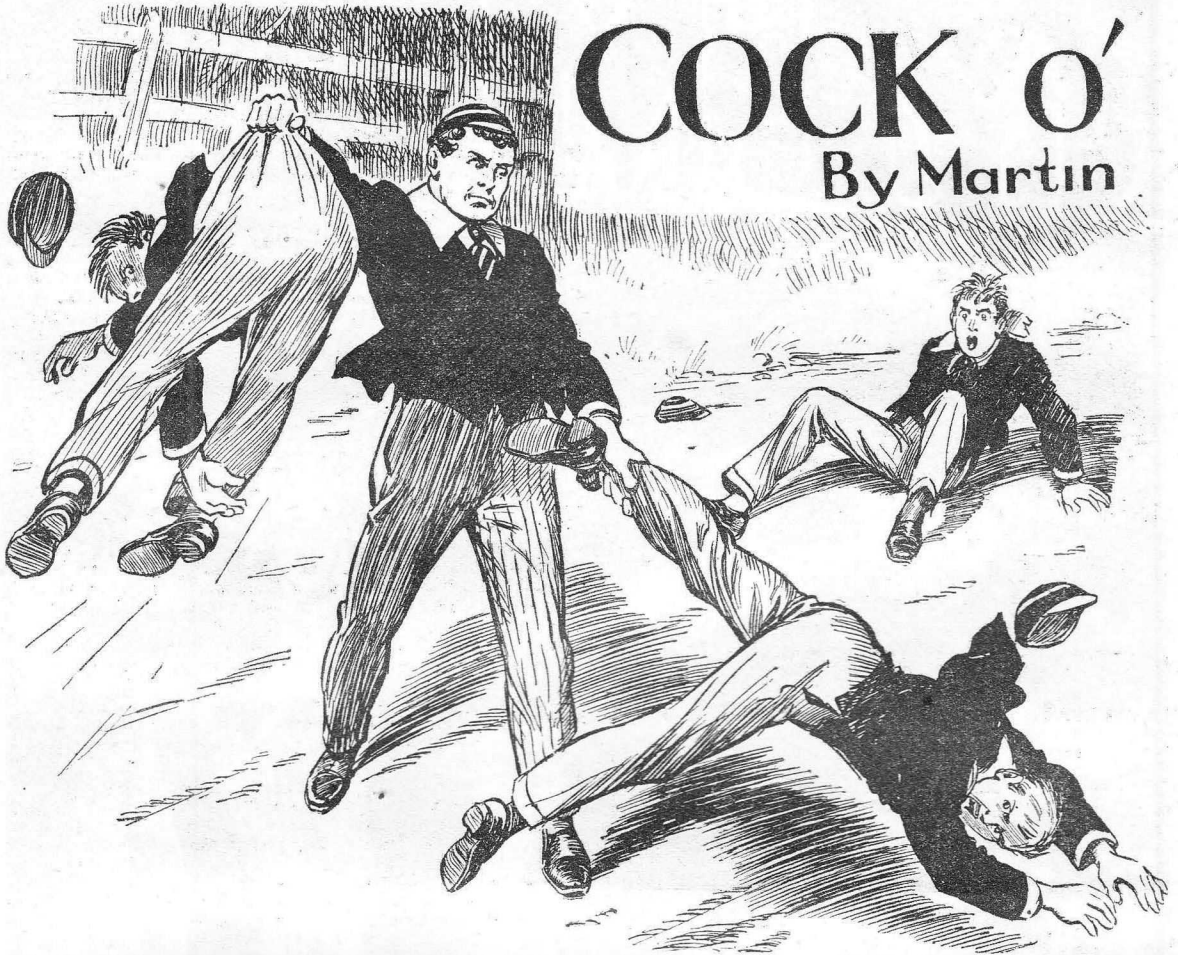
This week's full-o'-punch
story of Tom Merry & Co.,
at St. Jim's.



A REIGN OF TERROR AT ST. JIM'S. AMAZING NEW BOY ARRIVES—

COCK O'

By Martin



Biff! Wallop! Crash! That's the way "Bully" Burkett talks to 'em when he arrives at St. Jim's—with his leg-o'-mutton fists. The reign of terror has begun!

CHAPTER 1.

A Request from Mr. Railton.

"CARDEW!"

Cardew of the Fourth turned.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's, had called his name.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, the dandy and slacker of the Fourth, had been standing at the top of the School House steps, his hands thrust into his pockets as he lounged elegantly in the doorway, and stared out into the quad. It was after tea, a Tuesday evening, and most of the juniors were beginning to think about prep.

Not so Ralph Reckness Cardew!

Cardew, with his lazy nature, never worried much about prep. He was a clever fellow, and a very cursory attention to his evening's prep as a rule enabled him to "get away with it" in the Fourth Form room next morning.

"Sir?" murmured Cardew.

He turned towards the Housemaster.

There had been a dark cloud on Cardew's face as he had been standing at the top of the steps. His thoughts, whatever they were, did not seem to have been particularly pleasant ones. But as he turned to Mr. Railton he banished the frown from his handsome face, and took his hands from his pockets.

Even Cardew, whose reckless, wayward nature provided him with a bigger store of coolness and "cheek" than any other junior at St. Jim's, dared not act with his usual easy nonchalance in the presence of Mr. Railton, the popular young Housemaster of the School House.

"I have been looking for Merry, Cardew," said Mr. Railton. "Will you please find him for me, and send him to my study?"

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton rustled away.

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Cardew stood with rather a queer expression on his face. A twisted smile appeared on his lips for a moment, then he shrugged and turned towards the stairs.

"He, he, he!"

A sudden snigger came to Cardew's ears. The fat figure of Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, rolled into sight from round the corner.

"He, he, he!"

Baggy had evidently overheard Mr. Railton's request to Cardew, to find Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell. And for some reason Baggy seemed very tickled.

"He, he, he!" Baggy sniggered explosively. "You don't look too jolly pleased, Cardew! He, he, he!"

Cardew surveyed Baggy Trimble as though he were a freak at a circus.

"Gad!" murmured Cardew, apparently to himself. "It speaks! It must be human." He let his eyes rest critically on Baggy's fat figure. "Some kind of intelligent baboon, perhaps. Its keepers seem to have been over-feeding it, too."

"Oh, really, Cardew—"

Baggy blinked at Cardew indignantly. Then he broke into another snigger. It was a malicious snigger this time.

"Look out that Tom Merry doesn't give you another hiding when you find him, Cardew!" giped Baggy. "He he, he! If you aren't jolly careful— Oh! Yow!"

Baggy gave a yell as Cardew reached out and took hold of his fat ears between a vice-like finger and thumb.

"Oh! Leggo, you beast!"

Cardew swung Baggy round by the ear, and raised an elegant boot.

"Yarooooooop!"

Baggy shot forward like an arrow from a bow, as Cardew's boot landed on the seat of his tight trousers. He

—AND KNOCKS OUT ALL THE CHAMPION FIGHTERS!

THE WALK!

Clifford



Complete School Story of St. Jim's.

collapsed in a fat heap on the floor, and Cardew sauntered away.

Baggy scrambled up, gasping.

"Oh! Groooh! I'm hurt!" He glared after Cardew as the dandy of the Fourth strolled up the stairs. "Yah! Beast! I hope Tom Merry jolly well gives you another licking, so there!"

And, with a wrathful growl, Baggy rolled out into the quad.

There was a queer glitter in Cardew's eyes as he went up the stairs and turned into the Shell passage.

Though he had taken care not to betray the fact to Baggy Trimble by his expression, Baggy's taunt had touched Cardew on the raw!

Cardew had never been very friendly with Tom Merry. One of his favourite amusements in the past had been to make Tom the butt of his quick and sometimes malicious wit—Tom Merry, with his blunt, straightforward nature being an ideal foil for Cardew's biting tongue.

Tom was a good-tempered, patient fellow if ever there was one. As a rule, he took little notice of Cardew, even under provocation. But lately, thanks to Cardew, there had been trouble between the slacker of the Fourth and the captain of the Shell—and the climax had been a fight between the two, in which Cardew had been badly thrashed.

Since then Tom Merry and Ralph Reckness Cardew had not exchanged a word. Tom was anxious to let the matter drop now, and Cardew for his part seemed content to ignore Tom.

No one at St. Jim's, least of all Tom Merry himself, realised the bitterness that still reigned in Cardew's heart—little dreamed of the savage determination with which Cardew had resolved to avenge himself for his thrashing at Tom Merry's hands.

Cardew stopped outside the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage and knocked upon it.

Had his proud nature allowed him to do so, he would have asked some other junior to find Tom Merry for Mr. Railton. But he knew that had he done so the fellows would have said that he was evidently afraid of the interview with the captain of the Shell.

His pride would never allow that to be said.

"Come in!"

The cheery voice of Monty Lowther, who shared Study No. 10 with Tom Merry and Harry Manners, answered Cardew's knock. The slacker of the Fourth pushed open the door and strolled coolly into the study.

Manners and Lowther were alone.

At sight of their visitor they stared in astonishment. A frown came into Manners' face.

"Well?" he said curtly.

A few days before Manners would not even have addressed that icy monosyllable to Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Cardew had been sent to Coventry by the whole Junior School for the same reason that had caused the trouble between Cardew and Tom Merry. The slacker of the Fourth had been picked to play in the recent footer match against Tom Merry & Co.'s old rivals, Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. But he had failed to arrive at Greyfriars for the match—and the Saints' depleted team had been defeated by Harry Wharton & Co. by the smashing margin of 4 goals to 1.

It had been discovered that Cardew had spent the afternoon of the Greyfriars match playing billiards at the Duke of Bedford Hotel in Wayland.

It was known that Cardew, before consenting to play in the match at all, had declared his intention of playing billiards that afternoon. Only the fact that his chum, Ernest Levison of the Fourth, had been badly injured in a railway accident near Wayland, had induced Cardew, for his chum's sake, to seek a place in the team. And the facts seemed clear enough when he had failed to turn up at Greyfriars!

It was generally accepted among the juniors that Cardew once he had been able to tell his injured chum that he was playing in the match, had deliberately let the team down in order to keep his shady appointment at the Duke of Bedford. Levison himself believed that, and Cardew had not denied it.

Not only had the affair resulted in his licking at the hands of Tom Merry, and his being sent to Coventry by the juniors; Cardew had quarrelled bitterly with Levison and Clive, and left the study he had previously shared with them.

He was now in solitary possession of Study No. 12, his rankling bitterness concealed beneath a mask of cool nonchalance.

Levison, after a week in the sanatorium, had gone away to a nursing home near his own home. And Sidney Clive, Cardew's other chum, was no longer on speaking terms with him.

Cardew nodded coolly to Manners and Lowther.

"I was lookin' for Tom Merry!" he drawled. "Railton wants him."

"Well, he's not here!" snapped Manners.

Though Cardew had been in Coventry for a while, a pariah among his fellows, it had been impossible to ostracise him for ever, and at last the strict "Coventry" order had been dropped. The juniors were talking to Cardew again to some extent, and it was Cardew himself who was maintaining a certain degree of aloofness.

"You'll probably find him in the Common-room, Cardew," said Monty Lowther curtly, surveying Cardew with anything but a friendly glance.

"Thanks!" grinned Cardew. "Y'know, it's so nice to have all you fellows deignin' to talk to me again—what?"

There was an almost savage irony in his voice, though he was smiling coolly.

"Shut the door behind you!" snapped Manners.

"How polite you are, dear man!" yawned Cardew. "I s'pose talkin' to me at all is such a strain that there's nothin' left to be polite with!"

"Do you think you've earned politeness?" answered Manners contemptuously.

Cardew's eyes glinted. But he continued to smile. With a shrug, he turned and sauntered from the study.

Tom Merry was playing chess with Reginald Talbot of the Shell, when Cardew entered the junior Common-room.

Several fellows were watching the game. Among them was Sidney Clive.

Clive glanced up as Cardew entered, and instantly turned his attention to the game again. Cardew smiled ironically, and crossed towards the group.

Tom Merry looked up. Then he, like Clive, returned his attention to the chessboard.

It was the first time that Cardew had spoken to Tom Merry since their fight in Rylcombe Wood. His tone was laconic.

"Railton would like the pleasure of seein' you in his study, Thomas."

"Thank you," said Tom quietly, without glancing up.

For a moment Cardew's eyes gleamed. He seemed about to speak again. But his lips closed. He swung on his heel and left the Common-room. Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"Sorry, Talbot, but I must buzz along, I suppose. I'll be back in a jiff I expect."

"Right-ho, old hoss!"

Tom hurried out.

He was not away long. When he returned, it was with interesting news for the other juniors.



"There's a new chap coming into the Shell!" announced Tom Merry, glancing round at the assembled juniors. "A chap named Burkett. He comes to-morrow afternoon, and Railton has asked me to go and meet him at the station."

The arrival of a new fellow was always a matter of interest, and there was a quick buzz of talk.

"A new chap?" echoed Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth. "What study is he going in?"

"Study No. 7," answered Tom. "With Crooke."

"Let's hope he'll be a better specimen than Racke, then!" grinned Kerruish of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

Racke, who had shared Study No. 7 in the Shell passage with Gerald Crooke, the cad of the Shell, had been an out-and-out blackguard, who had been expelled some time ago. Since then, Crooke had been alone in his glory, so to speak, in Study No. 7.

Tom sat down to resume his game with Talbot.

He had already dismissed thoughts of the new fellow from his mind.

But, had he only known it, the arrival at St. Jim's of Frederick Burkett was to provide the junior school with some exciting times, and was to play a big part in the trouble between Tom Merry and Ralph Reckness Cardew, the dandy and slacker of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 2.

A Ragging for Five!

"READY, you chaps?"

The door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage had opened to reveal the cheery faces of Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Harry Manners grinning in.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, who shared the study with Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, turned from the mirror where he had been adjusting his elegant tie, and beamed upon the Terrible Three through his famous monocle.

Herries and Digby were not at home. Herries had had to go into Wayland that afternoon to see the dentist, and Dig had agreed to accompany him. But Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus had promised to go with the Terrible Three to meet the new fellow at the station.

"All weady, deah boys!"

"Good! Come on, then!"

Accompanied by Blake and the swell of St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. marched towards the stairs.

As they emerged into the sunny quad, Tom glanced at his watch.

"Have to buck up!" he exclaimed. "We're a bit late."

With swinging strides, the five School House juniors crossed the quad and passed out through the big gateway into the road.

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"We'll just about do it, I think," said Tom confidently. "The train gets in at two-thirty."

It was a crisp, dry afternoon, and there was nothing that the athletic five would have enjoyed more than their brisk walk to the station.

But their enjoyment was doomed to be considerably spoilt.

"Grammar School cads!"

The sudden ejaculation broke from Blake as the St. Jim's juniors turned a corner in Rylcombe Lane, not far from the village.

Eight figures wearing the Rylcombe Grammar School cap were strolling down the lane towards them.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Monty Lowther in dismay.

Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School were cheery fellows; but there was perpetual rivalry between them and the Saints. They seldom met, except on the footer field, without trouble resulting.

At any other time Tom Merry & Co. would have been more than ready for a brush with the Grammar School. But on this occasion they were decidedly short of time, if they were to meet the new fellow arriving by the two-thirty train.

Badly outnumbered as they were, Blake, Arthur Augustus, and the Terrible Three realised that if Gordon Gay & Co. were disposed for a little fun at their expense they would not stand much chance of reaching Rylcombe Station in time.

Already Gordon Gay and his seven companions had seen them.

The Grammarians came to a sudden halt, grinning at one another. Tom Merry's face went grim.

"Come on!" he muttered. "We've got to risk it!"

There was no help for it. Tom Merry & Co. moved forward warily towards the Grammarians.

But if they hoped they would be allowed to pass unmolested, their hopes were soon shattered!

As they approached, at a word from Gordon Gay, the Grammarians coolly spread out in a line across the lane, completely barring their way.

Tom Merry and his companions halted.

"Hallo!" sang out Gordon Gay. "Charmed to meet you!"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Frank Monk, of the Grammar School.

"All looking so nice and neat and clean, too!" chuckled Wootton major.

"Yes, they seem to have washed their faces for once!" nodded Wootton minor gravely. "Amazing!"

The St. Jim's party glared at the chuckling Grammarians.

It was quite clear that their rivals had not the slightest intention of allowing them to pass. There was only one thing for it.

"Come on!" breathed Tom. "We've got to rush 'em!" It was their one hope of getting through, and at a word from Tom the five Saints made a desperate rush.

"Look out!" yelled Frank Monk. "Stop 'em!" The Grammarians closed in hastily, and the next moment a wild and whirling struggle was in progress in the lane!

Tom Merry was at grips with Gordon Gay, and the two leaders were executing what looked like a Red Indian war-dance together, locked in each other's arms. Manners was struggling with Frank Monk, and Monty Lowther was trying to avoid the clutches of the two Woottons. Blake had just knocked another Grammarian flying—but the Grammarian, in falling, had caught hold of Arthur Augustus, and dragged the swell of St. Jim's down with him.

Gasping and dazed, the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus had ceased abruptly to look elegant. He sat with his topper over one eye, looking more like a concertina than an article of headgear, while the breathless Grammarian sprawled over him.

"Ow! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Back up, Saints!" panted Monty Lowther, as he threw Wootton major off, and struggled with Wootton minor.

"Grammar School for ever!" yelled Gordon Gay, still locked in Tom Merry's energetic embrace.

"Yow! Oh, my hat!"

Manners gave a gasp as Frank Monk's leg twisted between his own, upsetting him beside Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the hard unsympathetic road.

Then there was a yell from Gordon Gay, as Tom Merry upset him on the grass at the roadside. Tom turned to lend a hand to his chums. But Mason and Price of the Grammar School closed on him.

"On the ball, Grammar School!"

"Go it, Saints!"

Despite the terrific odds, Gordon Gay & Co. were finding the five St. Jim's fellows anything but easy game.

But in the end odds were bound to tell. Once their first rush had failed to enable them to break through, Tom Merry and his chums were doomed.

A minute later, the five of them were lying pinned to the ground by their rivals, breathless and gasping.

"Got 'em!" panted Gordon Gay triumphantly, dabbing at a damaged nose. "Hold the bounders!"

Tom Merry, in the grip of Frank Monk and Mason, was still struggling with each of his assailants pinning an arm to the road, but he was helpless. Manners was being held down by the two Woottons, and Blake, with Price's knee on his chest, was almost equally helpless. The others were looking after Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! Welease me at once, you wottahs!" panted Arthur Augustus, struggling frantically.

"I don't think!" grinned Pearson.

"I shall administrah feahful thwashin's—"

"Go hon!" chuckled Croft of the Grammar School.



With the chuckling Grammarians prodding them with their sticks from behind, Tom Merry & Co. hopped frantically along the lane.

He picked up a handful of dust, and scattered it cheerfully over the swell of St Jim's wrathful countenance. Arthur Augustus, happening to have his mouth open at the moment, choked and spluttered wildly.

"Oh! Gwoooogh! Oh, you uttah boundah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you going to do with them?" grinned Gordon Gay, adding his weight to the task of holding Monty Lowther down.

Tom Merry gave up struggling. He saw that it was useless.

"Pax, you chaps!" he exclaimed, with a rueful grin. "We give you best—"

"I should jolly well think you do!" chuckled Frank Monk. "What about letting us get along now?" suggested Tom.

"You seem in a hurry, old chap!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"We are!" confessed Tom. "As a matter of fact, we've got to hop along to the station to meet somebody. We—"

Gordon Gay gave a sudden chuckle. "Oh! So you want to hop along to the station, eh? Right-ho! You can."

"Oh, wippin'!" mumbled Arthur Augustus. "That is vewy thoughtful of you, Gay, deah boy! I considah—"

"Half a minute," went on Gordon Gay blandly. "We'll have to make quite sure, of course, that you do hop along to the station. Got that cord on you, Mason?"

The St. Jim's fellows watched with fresh uneasiness as the grinning Mason produced a long length of cord.

They realised that Gordon Gay had some idea up his sleeve. Apparently, they were not to be allowed to go free, after all.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Blake. "You said we could get on!"

"Rats!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "You said you wanted to hop along—and I said you might! Well, you will hop along!"

He cut a length of cord from Mason's supply, and with the aid of another Grammarian Monty Lowther's hands were tied behind his back, despite his struggles. Another length of cord was fastened between his wrists and his left ankle, drawing his leg up behind him.

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Monty Lowther in consternation, as he realised Gordon Gay's humorous little wheeze.

"Now for the others!" chuckled the leader of the Grammarians. "There'll be just enough cord to go round, I fancy!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

It did not take long for Tom Merry, Manners, Blake, and Arthur Augustus to be treated similarly to Monty Lowther, despite their vain struggling. Then, with their left legs tied up and their hands fastened helplessly behind them, their captors stood them up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a great roar of laughter from Gordon Gay & Co., as they stepped back to survey their victims.

Hopping desperately on one foot, to keep his balance, each of the St. Jim's juniors presented what was evidently an amusing spectacle so far as the Grammarians were concerned.

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Blake.

"You—you uttah boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, hopping wildly on one foot, with his concertina-like topper jammed on his head and his eyeglass gleaming in his eye, was a sight for the gods—judging from the yells of laughter.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" howled Gordon Gay, almost doubled up with mirth. "Look at Gussy!"

"Hopping like a cat on hot bricks!" gurgled Frank Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bai Jove! I ordah you to wesease me fwom this wicidulous position!" gasped Arthur Augustus, crimson in the face.

Gordon Gay waved his hand airily.

"Cheerio, you men!" he chuckled. "Off you go! You said you wanted to hop along to the station, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the St. Jim's fellows hopped—whether they wanted to or not. With their hands behind them and their legs tied up, it was impossible to keep their balance without hopping. So they hopped, crimson with rage—and the Grammarians yelled and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gay, you bounder—" panted Tom Merry.

"Hop along, old chap!" urged Gay. "You'll be late for meeting that giddy train if you don't hop along quick!"

"You—you—"

"Buck up!"

"I wefuse to buck up!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "I

uttahly wefuse to budge an inch until I have been weseased! I will not leave this spot, you wottahs—"

"Now, Gussy," said Gay solemnly, shaking his head. "I can't let you be late for that train you want to meet."

He took a stick from the hedge, and with it prodded the swell of St. Jim's in the back.

"Hop along, Gussy!"

"Oh! Yow! Oh, bai Jove—"

But with that stick prodding him in the back, Arthur Augustus hopped along. He had no choice. The other Grammarians followed their leader's example, and half a minute later the five furious victims were being made to hop briskly along towards the village, despite their threats and pleas.

"Look at old Gussy, hopping along like a performing flea!" chuckled Wootton major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Wootton, you uttah cad—"

"Keep going, Gussy," urged Gordon Gay cheerfully, as the swell of St. Jim's attempted to stop. "Mustn't let you be late for the train on any account, you know! If you haven't missed it already, that is!"

Gordon Gay's words were prophetic.

A few moments later, as the Grammarians' victims hopped, with helpless, seething fury round the bend, followed by the merrily chuckling Grammar School juniors, they sighted a figure in an Eton jacket, carrying a portmanteau, coming down the lane towards them.

The initials on the portmanteau were enough to tell the unhappy St. Jim's juniors who the approaching figure must be. F. B.—the initials of Frederick Burkett, the new Shell fellow!

Burkett had evidently arrived at Rylcombe to find no one there to meet him, and was setting off for the school on his own.

And his first sight of Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus, was that of five dismal, hopping figures in Rylcombe Lane!

CHAPTER 3.

Something New in New Boys!

"OH deah!" panted Arthur Augustus miserably. His face was scarlet. The swell of St. Jim's felt his undignified position very keenly. But, with Gordon Gay prodding him from behind, he had to keep going.

So he kept on, with the others, towards the astonished figure with the portmanteau.

The new boy was staring at the strange procession in amazement.

Frederick Burkett was quite unlike anything that Tom Merry & Co. had expected. He was not a handsome individual by any means. His face was rugged and scowling, and he had a thick bull-neck. But his figure was astonishing.

He was a huge fellow, a head taller than Tom Merry at least. His gigantic frame fairly swelled with muscle, and looked somewhat incongruous encased in Etons. Figgins of the New House was noted for the size of his feet—so was Herries of the Fourth. But neither Figgins nor Herries could have matched Burkett in that direction—just as no other junior would have matched Burkett remotely for muscle or width of shoulder!

Among his future schoolfellows, Frederick Burkett looked like being a Camera among light-weights!

He was a regular Samson, without a doubt.

Even Tom Merry looked slightly built beside the powerful figure of the new junior!

Burkett set down his bag in the road, and stared at the approaching procession with a look of wonderment on his square, rather surly face, with its beetling brows.

"My hat!" he grinned.

He gave a sudden guffaw.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sight of Tom Merry & Co.'s plight evidently tickled him considerably. He roared.

Tom Merry, red and perspiring, glared at him.

"Oh! Puffffffff!" Monty Lowther gave a gasp. "Are you Burkett?"

"Yes!" growled the new fellow, in evident surprise. "How did you know?"

"We—puffffffff!—were coming to meet you!" panted Lowther. "We're St. Jim's chaps! Back up, for goodness' sake! These rotters are from the Grammar School!"

Burkett stared at him. He evidently did not understand. It was clear that Burkett, though a hefty individual, if ever there was one, was not exactly quick-witted.

"Pway lend a hand, deah boy!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Burkett burst into another great guffaw.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

His brawny, powerful, clumsy frame fairly shook with laughter. "Oh crumbs! This is better than a circus!"

"You—you wude wottah!" panted Arthur Augustus.
"Eh?" Burkett's merriment ceased abruptly. He glared at Arthur Augustus with a scowling visage. "Why, you blessed tailor's dummy—"

Then he broke off.
Gordon Gay & Co. had tumbled to the situation quickly enough. They realised that Burkett was a new St. Jim's junior, and, despite his gigantic frame, they intended to treat him as they had treated their other victims.

"Come on!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Collar the great ass!"

"What?" bellowed Burkett. "I'm a great ass, am I? Why, I—I'll smash you!"

He met the rush of the Grammarians with a rush of his own, hitting out right and left with giant fists.

There was a fence at the side of the road, and, freed at last of the prodding sticks of their captors, the five gasping victims of the Grammarians hopped breathlessly to the fence and supported themselves against it, watching the whirling struggle in the lane.

"Great pip!" breathed Blake, with gleaming eyes. "Look at him!"

"Bai Jove!"

Despite his terrifically muscular frame, Burkett amazed Tom Merry & Co. now.

Though no less than eight Grammarians were tackling him, the brawny new fellow was more than holding his own!

Frank Monk went down like a ninepin before one of those gigantic fists, and so did Wootton major. Mason, in an attempt to collar Burkett round the knees and bring him down, felt a huge hand close upon his collar, and, to his astonishment and dismay, felt himself lifted clean into the air, kicking and struggling, and thrown aside as though he had been of no more consequence than a child of four.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Tom Merry wonderingly.

"He's a blessed Samson!" panted Manners.

"My hat, yes!"

Eight to one—yet Burkett was already getting the upper hand of the Grammarians!

Six of them were sprawling in the road now, with closing eyes or swelling noses or thickening ears! Then a seventh went spinning, though Burkett had merely pushed him aside in order to throw himself at Gordon Gay.

"So I'm a great ass, am I?" thundered Burkett ferociously, as he closed with Gordon Gay.

He seized the leader of the Grammarians and lifted him, dropping him into the road. Gordon Gay tried to struggle dazedly to his feet, but Burkett was kneeling on his chest in another moment.

"Yaroooh!"

Gordon Gay howled, as Burkett grasped him by the nose and pulled it.

"Oh! Yow! Leggo, you great lout!" panted Gay.

"What?" roared Burkett. "A great lout am I? Take that!"

He dealt Gordon Gay a box on the ear that seemed almost to knock the Grammarian senseless.

Tom Merry's brow darkened in a moment.

Delighted—and amazed—as he had been at seeing Burkett account for eight Grammarians single-handed, he cried out angrily now. To hit a fellow when he was down was a thing that Tom Merry barred utterly!

"Chuck that, Burkett!"

Burkett glared at him.

"What's that?" he roared.

"Hang it, don't hit a chap when he's down!" snapped Tom indignantly.

An unpleasant grin appeared on Burkett's scowling features.

"I'll teach him to call me a great lout!" he declared savagely.

But strong though Burkett was—amazingly strong—Gordon Gay was no weakling. Taking Burkett by surprise, the Grammarian twisted free a moment later and sprang to his feet.

"Come on, you chaps!" he gasped. "We're not going to let this big lout lick us all!"

The dazed ring of Grammarians, sitting round them in the road in various limp attitudes, gasped and groaned.

"Oh, my aunt!" panted Frank Monk. "I'm done!"

"He's broken my blessed jaw!" groaned Pearson.

"Grooooh!"

It was evident that the Grammarians were feeling anything but anxious to tackle the new St. Jim's junior again, despite the odds being apparently so overwhelmingly in their favour.

They had caught a tartar in Burkett with a vengeance. The amazing new St. Jim's fellow was no ordinary fighting-man.

There was a sudden gasp from Monty Lowther.

He had found a jagged nail in the fence, and with it had managed to cut through the cord binding his wrists; a few moments later he was free and hastily untying his chums.

Gordon Gay was urging his followers to tackle Burkett, though even Gay—plucky as he was—did not seem prepared to go for Burkett single-handed again. But at sight of the five other St. Jim's juniors being rapidly freed Gordon Gay realised that the game was up.

Burkett was rushing at him again as the seven battered Grammarians in the road scrambled painfully to their feet. For a moment their leader hesitated.

"I'll smash you!" roared Burkett.

Gordon Gay turned and fled.

With Burkett thundering at their heels in a bull-like rush, the eight Grammarians bolted through a gap in the fence and away across the fields towards the Grammar school.

"Funks!" bellowed Burkett, halting by the fence and waving a great fist after the rapidly retreating eight. "Yah! Funks!"

Then he turned and lurched towards Tom Merry & Co.

The five School House juniors surveyed the new fellow with very curious looks, as he came up to them with an unpleasant grin on his anything but handsome features.

Burkett had staggered them.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, staring at the other's powerful build with an admiring eye. "You're wathah a sowappah!"

"A giddy terror, I should say," muttered Monty Lowther under his breath.

"Phew!" grinned Blake. "The way you settled those Grammar school chaps was pretty good!"

Burkett grinned and picked up his portmanteau.

"Let's get along to St. Jim's," he suggested in his growling voice.

And, still looking rather dazed, the Terrible Three, Blake, and Arthur Augustus turned towards the school, accompanied by the muscular and amazing new boy.

(Continued on next page.)

The Victim of the Gang!



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CHAPTER 4.

The Samson of the Shell!

A GROUP of juniors was standing near the gates as Tom Merry & Co. strode into the quad with Frederick Burkett.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Burkett glanced round with evident interest. His eyes alighted on the group of fellows, who were staring at him in astonishment.

Burkett's mighty frame was certainly surprising at first sight. He looked more like a Fifth-Former than a junior in the Shell.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Roylance. "Who's the bruiser?"

Burkett caught the words and he glared at Roylance.

"Are you talking about me?" he demanded in a bellowing tone.

Roylance went rather pink; he coughed.

"Ahem—"

"Are you Burkett?" broke in Figgins of the New House, staring at the new junior.

"Yes," scowled Burkett. "I don't know if it's anything to do with you, though!"

Figgins went red. He was not accustomed to being addressed in those truculent tones by new boys.

"Well, you'll about suit the School House," he observed warmly. "They're a cheeky lot of asses!"

"Yes, he'll suit the School House down to the ground," grinned Redfern, another of the group.

Burkett put down his bag in a businesslike way.

"For two pins I'd knock your heads together!" he roared. Tom Merry took his arm.

"Oh, come on!" he urged. "Don't worry about those asses. They're New House bounders. Come and have some tea."

"Rats!" snorted Burkett. "For two pins—"

But already Figgins was feeling behind the lapel of his jacket. He produced two pins and gravely handed them to the surprised new fellow.

"Two pins!" he grinned.

"Eh?" Burkett stared at him.

"You said you'd knock our heads together for two pins," explained Figgins coolly. "Here they are."

There were chuckles from the onlookers. Burkett went a fiery red.

"Trying to be funny, are you?" he roared. "All right; you've asked for it!"

He stepped forward and grasped Figgins and Redfern by their collars. The next moment there was a resounding crack.

"Yaroooop!"

Figgins and Redfern yelled in unison as their heads cracked together.

"There!" gasped Burkett.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter rang out from the watching juniors. They had never expected, any more than Figgins and Redfern had, that the new boy would actually have the nerve to carry out his threat—let alone the strength.

Despite his giant frame, in tackling Figgins and Redfern, Burkett had chosen, perhaps, the two strongest fellows in the New House, and no one would have imagined for a moment that he could have banged their heads together like a couple of fags.

But he had done it with evident ease; and Figgins and Redfern were now sitting dazedly on the ground, rubbing their tingling heads.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Figgins.

"Yow!" moaned Redfern. "Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House fellows yelled.

"Come on, Burkett!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "That's the way to treat the New House! But come along and have some tea!"

"Good!" grinned Burkett.

He picked up his bag and followed Tom Merry & Co. across towards the School House, leaving Figgins and Redfern to rise dazedly to their feet, still rubbing their heads, as they stared after him in utter astonishment.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Figgins. "Who'd have thought it?"

"He's as strong as a giddy horse!" groaned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But, despite their laughter, the other juniors were watching the retreating figure of Frederick Burkett with a good deal of astonishment themselves.

A new boy who could knock together the heads of George Figgins and Dick Redfern with apparent ease was more than a surprise. He was a sensation!

Tom Merry & Co. were chuckling as they entered the School House.

Burkett's strength, as exhibited in Rylcombe Lane that

afternoon in the scrap with Gordon Gay & Co., had staggered them considerably.

It looked as though they were in for some fun, as Burkett's strength was exhibited to other fellows.

There were grins on their faces as they took him upstairs to Study No. 10.

Monty Lowther pushed open the door and strode in. A sudden exclamation escaped him.

The study was not empty!

A fat figure was standing by the open cupboard, busily devouring buns and pastries as fast as his fat jaws would work.

Baggy Trimble, knowing that the Terrible Three had laid in a spread in honour of the arrival of the new fellow, had decided to sample the good things in the absence of the occupants of Study No. 10. He had not realised how soon they would be back, however.

"You—you fat thief!" gasped Manners.

"Oh lor'!"

Baggy gave a startled squeak as he turned a jammy face towards the door, and saw the Terrible Three, Blake, D'Arcy, and the massive new boy in the doorway.

He jumped away from the cupboard, a large slice of cake still clutched in his fat fingers. But the next moment his greasy countenance went purple.

In his alarm, Baggy had attempted to swallow too large a chunk of cake. It stuck half-way, and Baggy choked wildly.

"Grooooooooooh!"

"You fat pirate!" roared Tom Merry.

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"You—you blessed porpoise!"

"Urrrghh!"

Tom Merry seized Baggy by the collar and jerked him towards the door. The jerk had, at any rate, the effect of ending Baggy's choking fit. He gave a howl as Tom's boot landed on the seat of his fat trousers, shooting him out into the passage.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Baggy yelled, and a moment later there was a yell from someone else, as Baggy collided with a passing figure.

It was Grundy of the Shell.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy, as Baggy dragged him down and sat on him. "Yooooooh! Groooooh! Oh, my hat!"

Baggy scrambled up, and scuttled away as fast as his fat little legs could carry him. But Grundy glared into the study with a wrathful countenance, when at last he had risen painfully to his feet.

"What did you want to chuck that fat toad at me for?" he boomed truculently.

"Sorry, Grundy!" chuckled Tom. "Quite an accident!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy, pushing his way into the study.

"Oh, buzz off, Gwunday!" snapped Arthur Augustus.

"I jolly well won't! I'm har! I've a good mind to wallop the lot of you!" hooted George Alfred.

Burkett had been watching the scene with a grin on his face. But at Grundy's words he frowned.

"What's that?" he demanded warmly.

Grundy stared at him. He had not noticed Burkett, but now, as his eyes fell on the new boy's muscular frame, he stared in astonishment.

"Who the dickens are you?" he inquired, not very politely.

Burkett scowled at him.

"You'd better be civil, you ugly lump!" he said, in a threatening tone.

George Alfred Grundy jumped.

Grundy was a hefty fellow, and he was not used to being spoken to in that tone. Most of the other juniors would not have cared at all to risk calling Grundy's wrath upon their heads. The Terrible Three and Blake and Talbot were a match for Grundy; but most of the fellows, whatever they thought of George Alfred Grundy, preferred to keep on the right side of him, for safety's sake!

To be called an ugly lump by a new boy was certainly not a usual experience for the great George Alfred!

He goggled at Burkett.

"W-what?" he gasped.

The Terrible Three, Blake, and Arthur Augustus, watching the indignant Grundy with grinning faces, winked at one another.

If Grundy tackled Burkett, there looked like being a big surprise for the great George Alfred!

Burkett scowled at Grundy.

"I called you an ugly lump," he growled. "And so you are. I've never seen a face like that before, thank goodness!"

It was certainly a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Grundy might not be a beauty; he definitely was not. But to have his features criticised by a fellow of Burkett's rugged visage was a little too much!

The muscular new fellow stepped forward and grasped Figgins and Redfern by their collars. The next moment he brought their heads together with a resounding crack! "Yaroooop!"



"Why, you—you—you——"
 Words failed Grundy.
 He rushed at Burkett with clenched fists.
 He intended to give the new fellow a lesson.
 Crash!
 Burkett had reached out a hand, and placed the palm of it anything but gently against Grundy's face. He pushed, and Grundy went over like a ninepin.
 "Yaroooogh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry & Co. shrieked.
 Grundy sat up, looking as though he wondered what had pushed him over—whether it could be an earthquake or only a horse's hoof.
 "M-my hat!" he gasped.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The great man of the Shell scrambled up, bursting with wrath and mortification.
 "You cackling dummies!" he hooted, glaring at Tom Merry & Co. "That was an accident. I'll wallop this ugly lout!"
 He hurled himself at Burkett again, with wildly brandished fists.
 One of them caught Burkett on the latter's pugnacious jaw. The new fellow gave a bellow of rage.
 "Come on!" yelled Grundy. "I'll wallop you!"
 Burkett raised a great fist and smote.
 The great George Alfred sailed backwards through the air as though he had been shot from a cannon. He landed out in the passage in a heap, blinking.
 "Oh!" gasped Grundy. "M-m-my hat!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The chums of the Shell and Fourth roared.
 They were sorry for Grundy, but the look of blank astonishment on his rugged countenance, as he blinked in through the open doorway at Frederick Burkett, was too much for them.
 "Ha, ha, ha! Hard luck, Grundy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "When are you going to start the walloping?"
 "M-my giddy aunt!" gasped Grundy. "What—what was it?"
 "Just one of Burkett's playful little taps!" grinned Tom Merry, controlling his merriment with an effort. "Allow me to introduce Frederick Burkett. He's the new chap, Grundy, old hoss!"

"Is-s-s he?" mumbled Grundy, rising dazedly. "Oh crumbs! Yow!"
 Still looking dazed, Grundy turned and staggered away along the passage, blinking. Tom Merry closed the door with a chuckle.
 "Poor old Grundy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Burkett gave a scowling grin.
 "What's his blessed name? Grundy? The silly idiot knows better than to check me again, anyway!"
 "I expect he does!" chuckled Blake.
 "Yaas, bai Jove!"
 But, despite their laughter, Burkett's hosts were beginning to wonder whether this muscular individual who had come into the Shell were not too tough a proposition altogether for the comfort of themselves and the rest of the junior school.

CHAPTER 5.
 Trouble with Talbot!

TAPI
 Tom Merry tapped on the door of Study No. 7 in the Shell passage, and the growling voice of the new boy answered from within.
 Tom entered.
 "Hallo, Burkett! Crooke not turned up yet?"
 Burkett was unpacking. He shook his rather untidy head.
 "No," he growled.
 After tea in Study No. 10 Burkett had visited Mr. Railton, and then Tom Merry had shown him his study.
 Crooke, with whom Burkett would be sharing Study No. 7, was out, and had evidently not yet returned.
 "Well, if you care to come down to the Common-room I'll introduce you to some of the chaps," said Tom Merry good-naturedly.
 He did not particularly like Burkett. Burkett's rough, ungainly manners did not appeal to Tom at all. But, as the captain of the Shell, he felt that it was up to him to show a new fellow in the Form his way about.
 "Oh, all right!" said Burkett, not very graciously.
 He accompanied Tom from the study and down the stairs.

There was a buzz of talk in the junior Common-room as Tom entered, with Burkett at his heels. It ceased abruptly at their appearance.

There was a big crowd of fellows there, and they all stared at Burkett with rather odd expressions.

All the juniors had heard by now of Grundy's fate at the hands of the new boy, and of the painful experience of Figgins and Redfern, and of the amazing way in which he had routed Gordon Gay & Co. single-handed.

That Burkett must be a regular terror, all were agreed.

At sight of him now, following Tom Merry into the Common-room, some of the fellows gasped.

Burkett's tremendously powerful figure was certainly something to gasp at in the Shell! Had Burkett been a Fifth-Former he could scarcely have appeared more brawny.

"Great Scott!" muttered Bernard Glyn. "Talk about a giddy Goliath!"

"Great pip!" Clifton Dane, the Canadian junior, was surveying Burkett's muscular figure wonderingly. "Blessed if I don't think he could lick even Tom Merry!"

"Oh, rot!" grinned Kangaroo, the Australian youngster. "Not quite that! But I'll bet he could lick anyone else in the Shell or Fourth—even old Talbot!"

Tom Merry led Burkett across to the big fireplace, where most of the fellows were gathered. Burkett grinned round at them, his rugged face, with its beetling brows, looking rather pleasanter than usual.

He seemed to realise that he had caused something of a sensation, and he was by no means displeased with the knowledge.

Tom Merry glanced round at the others.

"This is Burkett, you chaps!" he announced. "Burkett, all these chaps are in the Fourth or Shell."

Burkett nodded to the juniors. Some of them held out their hands, and he shook them with a grip that caused most of them to wince and gasp.

Then, in turning to the fire again, Burkett's ungainly frame brushed against a small table at which Reginald Talbot of the Shell and Kerruish of the Fourth had been having a game of chess.

Crash!

The table went over, and the board and the chessmen went flying.

"You clumsy ass!" gasped Talbot involuntarily.

He glared at Burkett.

Talbot of the Shell was one of the most good-natured chaps at St. Jim's. But his game with Kerruish had been at an exciting stage, and it was impossible to replace the chessmen in their right positions now.

It was natural enough that Talbot felt annoyed!

Had Burkett apologised Talbot would not have glared at him so. As it was, a very ugly light came into Burkett's eyes.

"Who are you calling a clumsy ass?" he roared.

There was a breathless hush.

Knowing, as they did, what a terrific fighting-man Frederick Burkett had already shown himself to be, by his treatment of the unhappy Grammarians that afternoon, the juniors watched excitedly as Talbot jumped up and faced the new boy.

"I called you a clumsy ass, Burkett," said Talbot quietly.

"Anyway, most fellows would have apologised!"

He turned away abruptly, righting the upset table and beginning to gather up the scattered chess pieces. The fact that Burkett was a new boy kept Talbot from saying a good deal more than he had.

The next moment Burkett had reached out a foot and pushed Talbot's stooping figure over with a shove of his boot.

There were quick gasps, then a tense silence, as Talbot jumped up.

He was breathing hard, and his face was flushed with anger. His fists were clenched.

"You cad!" he said hotly. "If you weren't a new chap I'd give you the thrashing of your life for that!"

A sneering grin appeared on Burkett's face. He gave a guffaw of laughter.

"You would—ah? I don't think! It makes a good excuse, I suppose, about me being a new chap here?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Talbot angrily.

"Why, you funk me, of course!" grinned Burkett. "That's the truth of it!"

He spoke in a boasting tone, and swelled out his big chest. Talbot laughed.

"I certainly don't funk you!" he said calmly. "But I don't much fancy fighting a new chap, I must say. However, if you're keen—"

Burkett began to push back his cuffs instantly, with a grinning countenance. Tom Merry, his face dark, stopped quickly between the two.

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"Half a minute!" he exclaimed. "You can't scrap here! If you two want to fight you'd better go to the gym!"

"Certainly—if Burkett wishes it," nodded Talbot.

"If you don't funk it, you mean!" jeered Burkett.

Talbot's eyes gleamed.

"Come on, then! This way!"

The juniors followed in an excited crowd, as Reginald Talbot and Frederick Burkett went together from the room.

CHAPTER 6.

Licked!

THE news that Talbot of the Shell was going to fight the Herculean new boy, whose fame had already spread through the whole junior school, sent nearly all the Shell and the Fourth heading hot-foot for the gym.

The crowd following Talbot and Burkett grew bigger every moment, like a rolling snowball!

Talbot himself was a strongly-built fellow and a fine boxer. In the whole junior school Tom Merry alone was more than Talbot's match.

Talbot, it was generally felt, would show Burkett a thing or two!

After all, the juniors were telling themselves, though terrifically muscular, Frederick Burkett was a clumsy, ungainly individual. In a real fight, against a first-rate boxer such as Reginald Talbot, he would need more than mere brute strength to win.

"Talbot'll lick him—and a jolly good job, too!" declared Kit Wildrake of the Fourth as he crowded into the gym with the rest.

"Rats!" sneered Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth.

"The new chap will smash Talbot!"

He sniggered gleefully. Percy Mellish was always up against Tom Merry & Co. and their friends—and Talbot was a great pal of the Terrible Three.

"If you ask me, it's a toss up between them," put in Dick Julian, the Jewish boy, sagely. "Talbot's a ripping boxer, we know; but a chap of Burkett's weight needs some licking!"

Talbot's face was rather grim as he drew on the boxing-gloves.

He had taken a hearty dislike to Burkett, as had most of the decent fellows by now.

Burkett's truculent manner and his surly, rough ways had already been displayed sufficiently during his brief period at St. Jim's for the majority of the juniors to have turned against him quite decidedly.

There was a scowling grin on the new fellow's rugged countenance as he threw off his jacket and put on the gloves.

Burkett was tremendously proud of his brawn, and he meant to show his new schoolfellows his terrific strength right away.

But he did not know—yet—what he was up against in Talbot of the Shell!

It was with a very confident grin on his face that he stepped forward and faced the fellow whom he had provoked into a fight on his very first evening at St. Jim's.

Talbot had been reluctant to fight a new boy, as he had admitted. Burkett had taken that reluctance for funk.

He did not dream how very much mistaken he was in his supposition. He had picked on one of the last fellows in the school to fear him because of his size.

"Ready?" grinned Burkett.

Talbot nodded, and Burkett chuckled.

"Like to make your will first?" he inquired, with a sneer. "I'm going to smash you!"

"Don't talk so much," suggested Talbot—"till afterwards!"

Burkett's beetling brows went dark, as some of the fellows forming the rough ring around them chuckled.

He sprang forward in an ungainly way, and aimed a sweeping blow at Talbot's head.

Had that blow landed, it would have felled Talbot there and then. But it did not land! Talbot side-stepped neatly, and drove in a smashing blow to Burkett's ribs.

There was a gasp of surprise and wrath from Frederick Burkett.

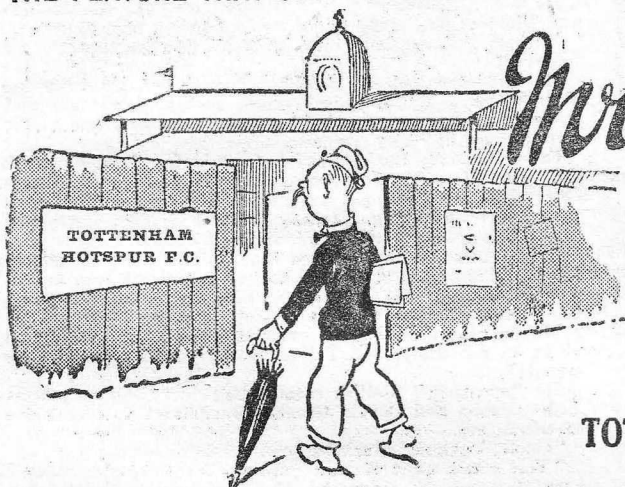
He hit out savagely. But Talbot never seemed to be quite where Burkett's fists were! The blows were wasted on the empty air, and again Talbot smashed home on the other's ribs.

It looked as though Burkett had met more than his match. But if the fellows imagined that it was going to be an easy win for Talbot, they were mistaken.

Those two powerful blows had surprised and staggered

(Continued on page 12.)

THE FEATURE THAT SCORES EVERY WEEK!



Football news and history piping hot from the pen of the One and Only Mr. "Nosey" Parker, football representative. "Nosey" guarantees to get in anywhere on his face value—his nose being his passport!

The Bronze Cockerel!

HIGH up—indeed, right on the roof of the stand at White Hart Lane—there is a big bronze cockerel. This cockerel, with very sharp spurs, is, of course, a sort of "trade mark" of the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. Indeed the cockerel also appears on the jerseys of the men who play in the team.

The trouble with this cockerel on top of the stand, however—according to the supporters of the club—is that it has been going through its moulting season. The feathers have been falling out, as it were, and this Tottenham Hotspur club, proud possessors of a record in that they are the only London professional side which has won the Cup, has been passing through a bad time.

They dropped into the Second Division of the League by a most unfortunate series of coincidences, and since their drop they haven't even seemed like making an effort to get back. But when I called in at White Hart Lane the other day I found that the dear old cockerel was recovering from his moulting period, coming back to life in no uncertain fashion. New blood has been put into him, and one of these days his spurs will be just as sharp as ever, and he will be crowing in the good old way which befits the richest club in the country. This Tottenham club, as you ought to know, has more money in the bank and in sound investments than I hope to get for writing these notes about them. The amount "put away" for a rainy day is something in the region of a hundred thousand pounds.

Club Training.

OF course, the first thing I did when I called at Tottenham was to look for the new manager, Mr. Percy Smith, who recently arrived from Bury. Mr. Arthur Turner, the secretary, who was smoking the same old pipe which has stood him in good stead for so many years, told me that I should find Percy somewhere about the premises, but he didn't exactly know where.

Well, in due course I found Percy. He was out on the football pitch with the lads, training apparently as hard as any of them.

I like to see that sort of thing, the manager of a club training with the players of the club, because that suggests to the players that their manager is heart and soul in with them. And it is my firm conviction that the old cockerel, up on the roof of the stand, is going to do some hefty crowing within the next season or two, and that we shall find Tottenham Hotspur back in the First Division in due

course. That is where we want to see them, because the Spurs have a reputation to maintain: a reputation for good football.

There is another reason for thinking that the Spurs should have some luck in the near future. The manager's family has recently moved from Lancashire, and they have brought with them a fine black cat. This black cat is not content to stay in its home but must follow the manager to the club offices every morning.

New life, new enthusiasm is taking hold of the Tottenham Hotspur players and including George Hardy the trainer, everybody is full of optimism. Hardy in fact, is a confirmed optimist, but he gets very excited when his lads are playing a game, and I have seen him dashing down the touch-line—outside the field of play like a fourteen-year-old youngster.

Inferiority Complex!

AT one time these Tottenham Hotspur players had a very bad attack of what we learned folk—you and me, for instance—call the "inferiority complex." They thought anybody could beat them, and to be quite candid, almost anybody could. But a new spirit, a new hope, and a new enthusiasm are in evidence at Tottenham now as I found on talking with the lads.

Let me confess, however, that there was one of the lads I had to talk to instead of talking with. This is Harry Skitt. He doesn't talk at all, but he is a very fine listener, and at right half is a very fine footballer, too. He reminded me most forcibly of that famous poem—I forget who wrote it—which has this fine sentiment: "Theirs not to reason why: theirs but to do and die." Harry will do or die in the interests of Tottenham Hotspur but he won't talk about it.

The quick way in which the make-up of football teams changes is shown by the fact that there is only one man in the regular first team of the Spurs to-day who was in the side which won the Cup in 1921. This is Jimmy Dimmock, but seeing that Jimmy scored the goal by which the final tie was won, he is really quite important.

Leg-pulling is Jimmy's particular fancy now that Jack Elkes has left the club, and in a way I am rather sorry that he has been made captain of the side, because that position tempts him to take himself very seriously.

Taffy O'Callaghan!

THERE are other players still on the staff who had something to do with the Spurs winning the Cup. Bert Smith, for instance, who takes just as much interest in pigeons

as he always did. But of the old stalwarts like Tom Clay, Arthur Grimsdell, and Jimmy Seed, have gone. You may remember that the Spurs parted with Seed, who now captains Sheffield Wednesday for Arthur Lowdell, and the exchange might not have been so bad if Lowdell had not been laid low for some time with cartilage trouble. His bosom pal is Eugene O'Callaghan, and their friendship was cemented by the fact that they were both in hospital together suffering from the same complaint. O'Callaghan is a Welshman, which is a very good reason for giving him the nickname of Taffy. He has played for Wales, but his connection with the Spurs is really due to the

same sort of characteristic as the lad who bore the banner with this strange device—Excelsior. Taffy once called at the Spurs offices wanting a trial, but was told that he was too small and too young. He said he wasn't, and refusing to go back home, was eventually given a trial, and signed on in due course.

Until the arrival of the new manager Frank Osborne was able to take on all comers at the royal and ancient game of golf, but I now understand that there is some question as to who is the Spurs' golf champion Andy Thompson who plays at inside-right from time to time, would like to be as good as either of the others, but this I am told, is a dream which is not likely to be fulfilled.

Possibly the new man, Willie Davies, a Welshman recently arrived from Notts County, will settle the question by proving that he himself is the best golfer of the lot.

Centre-forward Eddie Harper has, like Osborne and Dimmock, played for England, and you may remember him as a lad raised suddenly from the comparative obscurity of Kent League football to the limelight of First Division play as a member of the Blackburn Rovers team.

The Defence!

GOALKEEPER CYRIL SPIERS has played for Aston Villa, and they gave him a free transfer, thinking he was finished. Yet he is one of the best and certainly the cheapest, bargain the Spurs have picked up for a long time. He cost them exactly nothing, but has been most valuable.

Cecil Poynton is another player with Welsh connection, and is called the rufus-haired one. He told me that he doesn't think anything of golf, and that he is not yet old enough to stop running after a ball.

His full-back partner has the unusual Christian name of Baden, and his other name is Herod. He is a very fine all-round cricketer, and has had trials with the Essex County side. There are two Tommies in the half-back line—Cable, whom the Spurs persuaded to turn "pro" after distinguished service with amateur clubs, and Meads. There was a special reason why Meads was signed on by the Spurs—he helped to knock them out of the Cup last season when he was a biscuit man with Reading.

George Cook frequently the partner of Dimmock was with Huddersfield Town in the years when they won the championship of the First Division three times in succession.

"NOSEY."

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"Cock o' the Walk!"

(Continued from page 10.)

Burkett—but they had made him realise that he must look after his guard; that he was up against a boxer!

He snorted, and did not rush wildly on again, but waited for Talbot to attack. As Talbot drove at his face, he swept aside Talbot's arm, and landed a terrible blow above his antagonist's heart. Talbot reeled, his face suddenly white, and with a triumphant grin on his lips, Burkett followed up his advantage.

Another terrific blow smashed through Talbot's guard. He staggered, but did not fall.

Round and round the improvised ring Burkett drove him. He kept driving for Talbot's face, but he failed to get home. And after a while Talbot recovered, and stood his ground.

But the raining blows of Burkett's giant fists were irresistible!

He beat down Talbot's guard at last, and a sweeping blow caught Talbot on the side of the head. Talbot went down.

There was a breathless hush in the gym as the watching ring of juniors saw Talbot struggle to his feet gamely.

There was a triumphant grin on Burkett's face now.

He imagined that Talbot was finished.

But there was an unpleasant surprise waiting for the gigantic new boy!

"Come on, Talbot!" muttered Tom Merry, and the words seemed to revive Reginald Talbot.

With a grim, set face, he attacked Burkett with all his remaining strength, and the astonished new fellow found himself being driven back. A blow from Talbot's left crashed on to his jaw, jerking back his head.

There was an excited cheer from Talbot's friends.

Whether it was the blow, or the cheer from the onlookers, that infuriated Burkett, no one but himself knew. But suddenly the triumphant grin that had adorned his countenance was replaced by a snarling rage.

He hurled himself at Talbot. His great fists smashed down his opponent's guard, and Talbot went staggering before a punch on the jaw that was more like the kick of a mule than anything, as Monty Lowther muttered to Tom Merry. Another and another smashing blow, till Talbot was reeling blindly about, dazed and helpless before that terrible attack.

A final mighty punch lifted him off his feet. He crashed to the floor, and lay writhing at Burkett's feet.

There was not a sound in the gym, but for Talbot's dazed panting.

He tried to rise, but sank down again.

From Frederick Burkett there broke a guffaw of laughter.

"Had enough?" he jeered.

Talbot did not speak. He could not. Battered and beaten, he lay there—defeated.

Burkett grinned round at the silent juniors.

There was dismay on the faces of the majority.

Reginald Talbot, one of the finest fighting men in the junior school, had been licked utterly by the new fellow! After the first few moments, Talbot had never stood a chance.

It was staggering!

If Burkett could lick Talbot of the Shell, it meant that he could lick anybody, with the sole possible exception of Tom Merry.

And there were very peculiar expressions on the faces of the juniors, at that thought, as they stared at Burkett in dumb consternation.

"Great pip!" muttered Herries.

"Oh deah!" breathed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This wotten bwuisah! I wish he had nevah come to St. Jim's, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry and Clifton Dane had raised Talbot, and were carrying him to the bath-room attached to the gym, to bathe his battered face.

"He, he, he!"

There was a sudden snigger. It came from Percy Mellish. Mellish pushed his way through the crowd, and went up to Burkett with a grin on his face, and his hand outstretched.

"Good!" he said, in an oily tone. "My name's Mellish. I'm glad you licked him. It's about time some of those chaps were put in their place, I think!"

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He shot a malicious grin at Monty Lowther and Manners and Blake & Co., standing in a silent group near them.

Burkett grinned, and took Mellish's fish-like hand in his huge fist.

He liked the look of Mellish. Though the sneak of the Fourth was a sly-faced individual, with a pasty face and a weedy frame, he appealed to Burkett as being one of his own kidney in many respects.

From the first, Burkett had not cared for Tom Merry & Co. Tom Merry's angry protest when he had struck Gordon Gay while the Grammarian leader was down, had rankled with Burkett all along. He had summed up Tom Merry and his friends as being milk-sops, for that reason.

It had been obvious to him that Talbot was a friend of theirs. The fact that Mellish had congratulated him on his victory showed that Mellish, on the other hand, was not! Wherefore, Burkett took to Mellish at once.

"Come along, old chap," grinned Mellish soapily. "Come along to my study, and I'll introduce you to the sporting crowd!"

By "sporting" Mellish meant such dingy individuals as Luke Scrope and Gerald Crooke, Burkett's own studymate in the future.

"Good!" grinned Burkett, tossing off his boxing gloves.

"You won't want to mix with the namby-pamby crowd here, I suppose!" sniggered Mellish, with another glance at Blake & Co. and Manners and Lowther.

"I've seen enough of them already," grinned Burkett. "I'm glad to find there are some sports at St. Jim's, after all!"

"Oh, rather!" sniggered Mellish.

He led Burkett from the gymnasium, followed by the peculiar looks of the others. Scrope and Chowle, of the New House, quickly followed Burkett and Mellish, with grins on their faces.

It was clear that the dingy section of the junior school, who had lost their acknowledged leader at the expulsion of Aubrey Racke, had found a new leader after their own heart!

The burly Burkett would be a wonderful acquisition, they felt! His tremendous strength would enable them to behave very much as they liked, if they could win him over to their side. Under the guardian wing of Burkett's giant fists, Mellish & Co. would be able to treat the other fellows very much as they liked!

"Gweat Scott!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The beastly bwuisah has found his own level pweetty soon! He'll suit Mellish & Co. down to the g'round!"

"And look out for squalls!" grunted Wilkins of the Shell. "If he can lick Talbot—"

He broke off with a shrug.

The fellows crowded out of the gym in a disconsolate silence.

Talbot's defeat had been an unpleasant shock.

But on the face of one of the juniors there was an ironical smile.

Ralph Rockness Cardew had entered the gym just in time to see Talbot's smashing defeat.

There was a queer gleam in Cardew's eyes as he strolled out of the gym.

He had taken no liking to Burkett. But he had realised that in the big-fisted new fellow, he might find the tool to use for his promised revenge upon Tom Merry.

Burkett could lick Talbot. What if he could lick Tom Merry as well?

Cardew believed he could!

There was a twisted smile on the handsome face of the slacker of the Fourth as he sauntered across the quad towards the School House steps.

CHAPTER 7.

At a Bully's Mercy

"ANYBODY seen my minah?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked that question in Common-room.

"No, thank goodness!" grinned Roylance.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Woylance—"

"I saw him going upstairs a little while ago, Gussy," said Tom Merry, glancing across at the swell of St. Jim's. Tom was playing chess with Reginald Talbot by the fire.

Talbot's face still bore plentiful signs of his disastrous fight with Burkett, though it was three days later.

"I fancy he was taking some lines to Kildare's study," added Tom with a smile. "Perhaps Kildare has kept him there to fag for him."

"Thanks, Tom Mewwy."

Arthur Augustus left the Common-room and turned towards the Sixth Form passage.

The evening post had brought a letter for the swell of

St. Jim's from home, and it contained a handsome tip for Wally, which Arthur Augustus was bent on delivering to his cheery minor.

But he drew blank in Kildare's study. Wally had been there a quarter of an hour before, but he had gone.

"I wondah where the young wascal is?" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, as he left the Sixth Form passage and ascended the stairs.

It was as he was passing the end of the Shell passage that a sudden sound from one of the studies caused Arthur Augustus to halt abruptly.

It had been a yelp of pain—and in a voice that Arthur Augustus recognised at once. It was Wally's!

"Gweat Scott!"
The passage was deserted. Most of the Shell fellows were downstairs in the Common-room, having finished their prep, and there had evidently been no one but Arthur Augustus to hear Wally's piercing cry.

In a moment the swell of St. Jim's was hurrying along the passage.

Wally's cry seemed to have come from Study No. 7. Arthur Augustus flung open the door without the ceremony of a knock, and stared in.

Wally was there.

The youngster was standing with his arms tied above his head to a nail in the wall. A gag was fastened over his mouth—though evidently he had succeeded in displacing it a few moments before, since he had been able to cry out. But now the gag had been replaced, and Wally was writhing helplessly, dumbly against the wall.

Seated in a chair near him was the muscular figure of Burkett.

There was a grin on Burkett's unpleasant countenance. In his hand he held a leather belt, and he was apparently amusing himself by using it on the helpless fag.

His back was to the door, and he had not heard it open. Ignorant of the fact that Arthur Augustus was glaring into the study, Burkett flicked the belt with stinging force across his defenceless victim.

Wally writhed, and a muffled cry came from behind his gag. Burkett chuckled evilly as he lounged in the chair. "So you won't fag for me, eh?" he growled. "I fancy you'll change your mind before I've finished with you, you little beast!"

Again he raised the belt.

But he had no chance to use it again. To his utter astonishment, a hand gripped the back of his chair. Arthur lurched backwards, and the chair went over with a crash, depositing him on the floor with a yell.

Arthur Augustus was livid with anger. Though at times the swell of St. Jim's considered it his grave duty to administer rebukes and even chastisement to his cheeky minor, there was a strong bond of affection between the two D'Arcys.

The sight of Wally at the mercy of Burkett, and the memory of that cry of pain, maddened Arthur Augustus.

He snatched out a knife and slashed through the cord that bound his brother's wrists. Wally staggered away from the wall, white-faced.

Wally was a plucky youngster. But he had suffered. He leant weakly against the table, as he tore the gag from his mouth.

"Oh!" he panted. "The brute—"

Burkett scrambled up.

His face was blazing, his great fists clenched. But Arthur Augustus faced him without a tremor.

"You cad!" shouted the swell of St. Jim's. "You gweat bwute!"

He flung himself at Burkett with such violence that, for the moment, Burkett was taken utterly off his guard.

Arthur Augustus' fist landed on his chin, and he reeled back with a roar of pain and rage.

"Come on, you wottah!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I'm not afraid of you, you hulkin' bully!"

Burkett rushed at him.

Arthur Augustus was a useful man with his fists. But he could not stand that attack. He landed one blow on Burkett's brawny chest, then he was knocked flying by a savage punch that sent him crashing against the wall.

The swell of St. Jim's, his face bruised, and utterly dazed, sank to the floor. Burkett stooped above him, and raised a clenched fist, as if to bring down a smashing blow upon the white upturned face.

There was a sobbing cry from Wally D'Arcy.

He snatched up the poker from the grate beside him, and jumped forward with blazing eyes.

"Oh! Yooow!"

Burkett gave a yell of pain, and danced madly, holding his wrist. Wally had brought the poker crashing down upon it—just in time to save his brother from that intended cowardly blow.

"You brute!" panted Wally. Blindly he flung himself at Burkett. It was like a terrier attacking a mastiff. Burkett seized Wally by the collar and flung him off.

"You little hound—"
Arthur Augustus was staggering to his feet, looking weak and ill. But he clenched his fists, and took a reeling step towards Frederick Burkett.

"Come on, you bwute!" said Arthur Augustus thickly. "I'm not afraid of you!"

Burkett's face was working with ugly fury. He raised a clenched fist to strike Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but at that moment there was a step in the passage outside.

"What's all this?"

Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was staring into the study with a frown on his good-looking face.

The captain stepped quickly into the study. Burkett dropped his fist hastily.

Kildare's face set

He had summed up Burkett well enough, at his first sight of the new boy, as a bullying lout. The presence of Wally D'Arcy in the study, looking pale and desperate, was sufficient clue for Kildare to guess what had been happening.

He surveyed Burkett grimly.

"What's been happening here?" he rapped angrily.

Burkett did not answer. Arthur Augustus turned a pale face to the captain.

"What's the trouble, D'Arcy major?"

"Nothin', Kildare," muttered the swell of St. Jim's.

Even in these circumstances Arthur Augustus felt that he could not sneak.

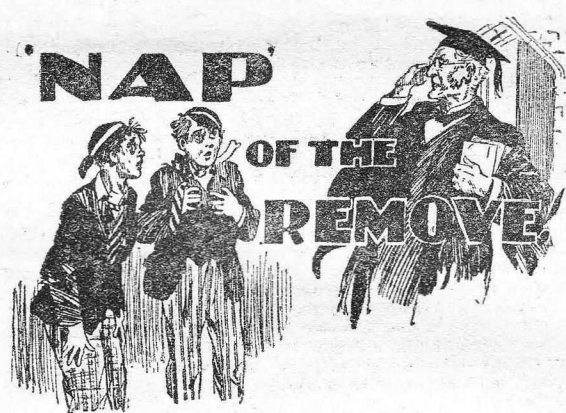
"Nonsense!" snapped Kildare. "Tell me what the trouble is!" Then, as Arthur Augustus was silent, he turned to Wally. "Has Burkett been bullying you, kid?"

Wally shook his head. Wally, however much he hated Burkett, would not sneak either.

Kildare bit his lip.

Though he felt very sure that Burkett had been bullying the fag, and that the swell of St. Jim's had interfered on his minor's behalf, he had seen nothing of it himself. He

(Continued on next page.)



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could not deal with Burkett as he deserved unless the latter were accused of his misdeed. He was powerless.

"You two had better clear out!" he said curtly.

Arthur Augustus and his minor left the study. The captain turned to Burkett.

"I fancy you are lucky to have been dealing with fellows who wouldn't sneak!" he said contemptuously.

"I don't know what you mean!" muttered Burkett sullenly.

"I think you do," said the captain grimly. "Let me warn you that any bullying, or anything of that kind, if it comes to my ears, will be dropped on heavily."

Burkett scowled, but said nothing. Kildare swung on his heel and left the study, with frowning brow.

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew's Suggestion!

"IT'S rotten!"

George Herries spoke in a gloomy tone.

He was referring to Frederick Burkett!

"Bully" Burkett, as he was already being called, had been at St. Jim's almost a week—and his arrival had been like that of a wolf in a sheep-fold!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had pluckily wanted to fight Burkett for his treatment of his minor; but Gussy's friends had fortunately been able to dissuade the swell of St. Jim's from that mad proceeding, which could only have resulted in a terrible thrashing for Arthur Augustus.

But though Arthur Augustus had not entered the list, Clifton Dane, the stalwart Canadian junior, had fallen foul of Burkett. There had been a fight in the gym, and at the end of it Clifton Dane had been hopelessly thrashed, and so battered that even his friends had scarcely been able to recognise him for the rest of the day.

Burkett had, in addition, knocked Reilly and Hammond's heads together in the Common-room, when he had happened to overhear a tactless remark of theirs concerning "bruisers!" Neither Reilly nor Hammond was a weakling by any means, but Burkett had banged their heads with ridiculous ease—and neither of the luckless pair had dared to resent openly their treatment at his hands.

Tom Merry was the sole remaining hope of the juniors!

Tom, though a peaceful individual, was the finest fighting man in the Lower School, by far, and it seemed just possible that he would be able to lick Burkett where even Talbot had failed.

But so far Tom Merry had not happened to fall foul of Frederick Burkett, so that their respective prowess had not as yet been put to the test.

"It's rotten!"

George Herries repeated his remark.

Herries was standing by the fire in the Common-room, with Blake, Digby, and Arthur Augustus. Clive and Kangaroo, and several others. It was the following Tuesday evening, and Frederick Burkett was the subject under discussion in the Common-room.

"It's not only this beastly bruiser being at the school," growled Blake, "it's the way Mellish and Crooke & Co. are putting on airs! They're as thick as thieves with Burkett already—and they know that most of the chaps daren't touch them in consequence."

"Yaas!" Arthur Augustus nodded disconsolately. "I heard Mellish cheek Lennox in the Hall this mornin', and Lennox took it like a lamb!"

"Didn't dare go for Mellish, because of Burkett, I suppose," said Clive, with a shrug.

"Yaas."

There was no doubt that Burkett had taken to the company of Mellish, Crooke, and the other dingy "sports" of the Lower School, like a duck to water!

They flattered Burkett and "soaped" him, and Burkett strutted round in their company looking very pleased with himself.

Once again Study No. 7 in the Shell passage had become the headquarters of the "blades" of the School House.

And Burkett's toadies were "throwing their weight about" in a way that exasperated the other juniors beyond measure.

The door of the Common-room opened. Blake gave a muttered exclamation:

"Look!"

The big figure of Burkett had come swaggering into the room, with Mellish, Crooke, and Scrope at his heels.

The four crossed straight to the fire. Blake & Co. did not move. But several of the fellows fell back hastily to make way for Burkett & Co., with nervous faces.

Alan Lorne of the Fourth seemed about to give up his place by the fire, but he caught Blake's eye. He coloured, and stayed where he was. But Mellish pushed rudely between Alan Lorne and the fire, with a grin on his face.

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For a moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood glaring in at the so-called new boy.

Lorne seemed about to speak. But he thought better of it, apparently, as his eyes fell on Burkett. Without a word he moved away, with flushed face.

Mellish sniggered.

Clive glanced at Blake and shrugged his shoulders. Burkett looked round in a lordly way. His eyes fell on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He grinned.

"Hallo!" he growled. "How's the swell to-day?" He gave a loud guffaw. "Lucky for you Kildare turned up the other night! I'd have slaughtered you, you dummy!"

Arthur Augustus went crimson and clenched his fists. But Blake pushed him back.

He knew that Burkett's boast was true enough, and he certainly did not wish to see it happen now.

"If Gussy had cared to split to Kildare you'd have had the licking of your life!" he said hotly.

Burkett glared at him but did not reply.

Four juniors were seated at a small table near the fire playing halma. Bates, Tompkins, Boulton, and Herbert Skimpole—a mild quartette if ever there was one! Crooke glanced towards them and grinned.

"What about a game of halma, Burkett, old chap?" he suggested.

"Good scheme!" nodded Burkett. "Got a halma set?"

"Oh, they'll lend us theirs!" chuckled Crooke.

He strode towards the four. They glanced at him very nervously.

"I want to borrow that board," said Crooke, in a truculent tone.



Burkett's study. Then, livid with anger, he strode in and dragged his chair.

Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, blinked at Gerald Crooke with mild reproof through his gleaming spectacles.

"But really, my dear Crooke, it is surely quite patent that we are in the middle of a contest!"

"Never mind that!" grinned Burkett, who had swaggered up. "I tell you, we want to borrow it!"

"It—it's Tompkins' board!" stammered Boulton hastily, as he met Burkett's scowling glance.

"What about it, Tompkins?" demanded Burkett, frowning.

Tompkins went pink. He looked at Burkett as though he would have given a good deal to see the burly bully felled to the floor; but Clarence York Tompkins was the last fellow at St. Jim's even to attempt the feat!

"Oh, very well," he said, after only a moment's hesitation. "I—I say, you chaps, we'd better let them have it, you know!"

"My dear Tompkins—" began Skimpole in surprise.

"Shut up, giglamps!" roared Burkett.

"My—my dear Burkett—"

Blake had stepped forward with angry face, as if to interfere. But then he realised how utterly useless interference would be. Unless Tompkins supported him in sticking up for himself—and he certainly would never dare to do so—Blake could not very well take a hand.

Tompkins, Skimpole, Boulton, and Harold Bates rose reluctantly to their feet, and Burkett, Crooke, Mellish, and Scrope, grinning, took their places.

Blake & Co. surveyed one another grimly. Though interference was useless, they were hotly indignant. But it was really none of their business, in any case, as they realised.

"Oh let's get out of here!" grunted Herries.

Blake nodded, and the four chums of Study No. 6 left the Common room. In the passage Blake glanced at his chums very grimly.

"This is getting a bit too thick!" he said abruptly.

"Yaas, bai Jove! Wathah!"

"Something's got to be done to stop Burkett and his blessed cronies from lording it all over the place!" said Blake in grim tones. "Hang it, half the fellows daren't call their souls their own with Burkett about!"

"But what can be done?" asked Digby gloomily.

"Our only chance is to see him licked—"

"Who's going to do it?" grinned Herries wryly.

"Tom Merry! I believe he could lick Burkett."

The others looked doubtful; but Blake nodded with confidence.

"I'm sure he could!"

There was a sudden step behind them. Ralph Reckness Cardew had strolled up unnoticed and had heard their words. He halted, with a dry smile on his face.

"Excuse my buttin' in!"

"Well, what do you want?" growled Blake.

"I couldn't help overhearin' what you were sayin'," went on Cardew. "If I might offer a suggestion, it seems to me that the best thing for you to do would be to get our friend Thomas to challenge Burkett to a little scrap!"

There was a queer gleam in Cardew's eyes. But Blake nodded eagerly.

"You're jolly well right, Cardew!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you chaps, let's go and see Tom Merry, and see if he'll take Burkett on!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake & Co. crossed towards the stairs. Cardew watched them go with an ironical grin on his lips.

Cardew would have given a great deal to see Tom Merry thrashed—and Burkett was the only fellow, he knew, who stood any chance of doing it.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry Declines!

"NO!" Tom Merry's tone was quite decided.

"But—"

"No!"

"But, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, just considah for a moment—"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry's voice was final.

Blake & Co. surveyed him gloomily.

Tom Merry was standing by the fireplace in Study No. 10, with Manners and Lowther on either side of him. Blake & Co. and several other fellows in whom the chums of the Fourth had confided their scheme were gathered in the study. They had entered it with high hopes; but now their faces were very disconsolate.

"Look here—" said Roylance.

"Rats!" Tom Merry shook his head in a determined way. "I don't like Burkett any more than you chaps do. But I've no personal quarrel with him. And I'm hanged if I'll trail my coat for any fellow to tread on! I'm not going to fight Burkett for the sake of fighting him!"

"But this is wathah diffeent deah boy!" pleaded Arthur Augustus. "I considah—"

"Rats! If chaps get across Burkett, you can't blame me if he happens to be strong enough to lick them. It's nothing to do with me. The chaps must look after themselves. I've no personal quarrel with him—at present, anyway."

"If you ask me," growled Roylance angrily, "you jolly well funk Burkett!"

Tom's eyes gleamed; then he laughed.

"Rot! If you think you can persuade me to pick a quarrel with Burkett that way you're very much mistaken, Roylance!"

"Then you won't fight him?" demanded Dick Julian.

"No! Not until I have cause, anyway. I have none at present."

Tom Merry's tone was quite final.

A good-natured fellow, Tom Merry was the last chap in the world to seek a quarrel with anyone deliberately—even with Frederick Burkett. The whole idea of doing such a thing went against the grain with him.

Whether or not he would be able to lick Burkett was a matter that he had not even considered. That did not enter into it. The idea that he funked Burkett seemed so ridiculous to Tom that Roylance's taunt had faded even to anger him.

"And I want to finish my prep now," went on Tom quietly; "so I'll be glad if you'll all buzz off."

The impromptu deputation saw that further argument was useless. They filed disconsolately from the study.

"Blow!" said Horries.

"It's a great pity that Tom Mewwy is a fellow of such high principles," sighed Arthur Augustus regretfully.

"High principles be blowed!" snapped Roylance. "He funks Burkett—that's what it is!"

"Welly, Woylance! I considah you are uttably w'ong in supposin' that Tom Mewwy funks Burkett! I considah—"

"Well, what's the verdict?" broke in a murmuring voice behind the swell of St. Jim's.

Cardew had come strolling along the passage from the stairs. He surveyed the group of juniors inquiringly.

Blake shook his head.

"He won't fight Burkett," he said shortly—"not till he has cause, he says."

"He funks him, I tell you!" grunted Roylance, and strode away.

Cardew smiled and shrugged, and also walked away.

There was a thoughtful frown on the face of the slacker of the Fourth.

Not for a moment did Cardew believe that Tom Merry funked Burkett. He understood Tom Merry better than Roylance, and he realised that it would be repugnant to Tom's nature deliberately to seek a fight.

"Well, if dear Thomas won't fight otherwise, we'll have to give him cause," Cardew told himself, with a twisted grin, as he entered Study No. 12 in the Fourth Form passage, closing the door behind him.

He crossed to the window and stood staring out.

There was a dark frown on his handsome face; his eyes were gleaming.

That Burkett could defeat Tom Merry in a fight he honestly believed. In any case, there was no harm done in causing a fight between the two. And if Tom were licked Cardew would have had vengeance for his own recent licking at Tom's hands.

"I'll do it!" he breathed.

It ought not to be very difficult, he told himself, to cause a fight between the two.

He turned and dropped into the chair by the fire, deep in thought. How best could he bring the fight about?

A sudden idea came to him.

"Gad!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew smiled and rose to his feet and left the study. He strolled back to the Shell passage and halted outside the door of Study No. 7 and knocked.

"Come in!"

It was the growling voice of Frederick Burkett. Cardew pushed open the door and strolled in.

CHAPTER 10.

Cardew's Cat's Paw!

BURKETT and Crooke were doing their prep. They glanced up in surprise as Cardew sauntered into the study with a friendly smile on his face.

"Hallo, Cardew!" said Crooke.

Cardew nodded to the pair and closed the door.

Gerald Crooke, the cad of the Shell, had rather an admiration for Ralph Reckness Cardew. He considered himself a bit of a "gay dog"—but he knew that he simply was not in it with the slacker of the Fourth when Cardew, breaking loose from the restraining influence of Levison and Clive, chose to "go the pace."

Of late, Crooke had not seen much of him. But now that Cardew had quarrelled with his chums, and had moved into Study No. 12 by himself, the dingy brigade had high hopes of welcoming him once more into their midst.

"Sit down, Cardew!" grinned Crooke. He glanced at Burkett. "Do you know Cardew? He's a gay dog when he likes!"

Cardew smiled.

He secretly despised Crooke, as he did the rest of that set. But it did not suit his purpose always to betray the fact.

Burkett's face lit up with a grin. He held out a great hand to Cardew, and shook hands. Cardew dropped into a chair, and pulled out a cigarette-case.

"Have a smoke?" he inquired coolly.

Burkett stared at him admiringly.

The slim, elegant Fourth Former impressed him considerably—particularly after what Crooke had told him about Cardew. He took a cigarette, and so did Crooke, who locked the door.

"How's Clive?" grinned Crooke waggishly.

Cardew shrugged. Inwardly he keenly resented Crooke's air of familiarity, and the reference to the quarrel between himself and Clive. But he concealed the fact.

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"How do you like St. Jim's, Burkett?" he asked.

"Fine!" grinned Burkett. "I mean to be cook of the walk here, too, I can tell you!"

"Seems to me you are already!" smiled Cardew.

Burkett grinned, very flattered.

"I fancy I've licked a few!"

"Yes," nodded Cardew, blowing a smoke ring. "But there's one chap you haven't licked yet. In fact, I rather doubt if you could lick him."

Burkett scowled.

"Rot! Who do you mean?"

"Tom Merry!"

A sneer appeared on Burkett's face.

"I could lick Tom Merry with one hand tied behind me!"

Cardew shrugged and smiled. Burkett glared at him.

"Do you mean I couldn't?" he roared.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that!" murmured Cardew carelessly, as though the subject did not interest him particularly. He smiled again. "But if you think you could, I can put you on to a good jape!"

"What do you mean?" asked Burkett curiously.

"Blake and his pals are standin' a feed in Study No. 6, after footer-to-morrow afternoon," explained Cardew. "I heard them talkin' about it this mornin'. It's somebody's birthday, I think. Digby's or somebody's. Tom Merry & Co. are sure to be there."

"What about it?" grunted Burkett.

"I was only thinkin' it would be rather amusin' if you and your pals raided their feed!" drawled Cardew. "The only trouble is Tom Merry. But if you think you could lick him—"

"Of course I could lick him!" grinned Burkett. His eyes gleamed, as he glanced at Crooke. "It would be a ripping jape, wouldn't it?"

"Rather!" chuckled Gerald Crooke.

With Burkett on his side, Crooke would have felt safe in raiding anybody's feed. And the prospect of raiding a spread of Blake & Co.'s appealed to him particularly.

"We'll show those swanking asses who's who at St. Jim's now!" he grinned maliciously. "Is it a go?"

"Yes!" nodded Burkett. He smacked his lips. "I can always do with a good spread!"

Cardew smiled, and rose to his feet.

"I must be gettin' along," he murmured.

"Will you join in the jape to-morrow?" asked Burkett. "The more the merrier!"

Cardew shook his head rather hastily.

"No! Sorry, but I'm havin' tea in Wayland to-morrow." He laughed. "I was only puttin' you on to the wheeze. You can keep my name out of it!"

He tossed his cigarette into the fire, and, with a friendly nod, strolled from the study.

He was smiling to himself as he returned to Study No. 12 in the other passage.

In Frederick Burkett he had found just the tool he wanted for the carrying out of his plan for revenge against Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 11.

Raided!

THAT toast ready, Horries, old chap?"

"All ready!"

"Fried the eggs all right, Gussy?"

"Wathah, deah boy! They are just pwime!"

"Good!"

Jack Blake glanced over the table in Study No. 6 with a well-satisfied eye.

It was tea-time, and the spread was just about ready.

The table was fairly groaning under the good things that Blake & Co. had provided for their guests.

There was a large birthday cake—a special order for Mrs. Taggles, which that dear old dame had exercised all her skill upon, with the result that the big cake, with its pink-and-white icing, was one to make any mouth water. There were big plates of cakes and pastries besides, and plenty of biscuits, sardines, and a tongue. There were stacks of toast being kept hot in front of the fire, and Arthur Augustus had just fried the eggs to a turn. Digby was putting out some meringues on to a plate, and altogether it was a feast that even Fatty Wynn of the New House famous caterer thought he was, could not have improved upon.

"Chaps are a bit late!" exclaimed Blake, glancing at his watch.

But even as he spoke there was a tap on the door, and the grinning face of Reginald Talbot appeared.

"Come in, old boss!"

Talbot came in, and his eyes lit up with great satisfaction at sight of the laden table.

A few moments later Sidney Clive arrived. He was followed by Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane. The third occupant of Study No. 11 of the Shell, Kangaroo, the

Australian junior, was not coming; he was having tea in Wayland with an uncle who was visiting the neighbourhood.

"All here!" grinned Blake. "Good!"
 "What about Tom Merry & Co.?" asked Glyn.
 "They couldn't come," explained Blake. "Can't be helped. They were invited to tea with the Head, and, of course, they couldn't refuse. It was too late to put the giddy feed off then. They'll be looking in later, anyway."

"Good!"
 "Sit down, you bounders!" grinned Digby. "Buzz those eggs along, Gussy!"
 "All weady, deah boy!"
 "Ripping!"

The cheery party in Study No. 6 sat down to the table, and the feast began.
 "Ham and eggs for you, Talbot, deah boy?"
 "What-ho!" grinned Talbot.
 "And you, Clivey, deah boy?"
 "Rather, Gussy!"
 "Pickles, Glyn, old man?"
 "Thanks, Herries! After you!"

With a cheerful clatter of knives and forks, the chums of Study No. 6 and their guests got to work with a will!
 Crash!
 "What the dickens—"
 "What the thump—"

The door of the study had crashed violently open. Blake & Co. and their guests turned their heads in astonishment—to find a dozen grinning figures marching into the room.

They were headed by the brawny figure of Frederick Burkett. Croke and Mellish and Scrope were with him, and so was Chowle of the New House. Behind them all could be seen the sniggering face of Baggy Trimble.

"B-ba Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "W-w-what on earth—"

"Lock that door, Mellish!" chuckled Burkett. Mellish locked the door.

Blake & Co. had started to their feet, and so had their guests. They realised in a flash what they were up against.

"My hat!" panted Blake. "Chuck 'em out!"
 "Come on!" gasped Clifton Dane. "Out with 'em!"

Crash!
 Burkett had hit out, and Blake went spinning backwards against the table.

The next moment a desperate struggle was in progress in Study No. 6.

As a rule, Mellish and Scrope and Chowle were not much use in a scrap. But, with Burkett to back them up, they rushed into the fray with a willingness that was amazing. And with the giant figure of Frederick Burkett hitting out right and left, Blake & Co. and their four guests stood no chance.

Arthur Augustus and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn went down one after another before Burkett's smashing fists. They were promptly pounced upon by Croke and Mellish and Chowle, and before they had time to recover from their dazed condition their hands had been tied behind them with cords.

Blake and Herries and Digby soon suffered a like fate, and so did Clive and Reginald Talbot. By that time Mellish's nose was considerably swollen, and Chowle's features were equally battered. But Frederick Burkett, whose giant strength had brought such a decisive victory to his side, was grinning cheerfully, quite unhurt.

Baggy Trimble, too, was quite unhurt; but then Baggy had been very careful to take no part in the proceedings!

The eight wriggling, furious captives were dragged to one end of the room. Their ankles, too, were tied up now, and they were utterly helpless.

"You cads!" gasped Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Burkett & Co roared.

"Come on, you chaps!" grinned Burkett. "Make yourselves at home! Pile in! My hat! What a ripping spread! This'll suit us down to the ground!"

"Rather!" chuckled Mellish. "He, he, he!"
 "You—you—you uttah wottahs!" panted Arthur Augustus, struggling wildly in his bonds.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With fuming, helpless fury, the eight would-be feasters watched Burkett & Co. draw up chairs to the table.

To have yelled for help would have been more or less useless. With the exception of themselves, who had stayed in for the feast, and Tom Merry & Co who were having tea with Dr. and Mrs. Holmes, nearly all the School House juniors had taken advantage of the half-holiday to go into Rylcombe or Wayland as soon as footer was over.

Herbert Skimpole, perhaps, would be at home, in the Shell passage, browsing over his collection of fossils, or his defunct insects; but no one else was likely to be about.

In any case, Blake & Co. and their unhappy guests did not feel very inclined to attempt to draw the attention of the outside world to their humiliation!

They knew that if they did they would be the laughing-stock of the rest of the juniors for a long time to come!

In helpless rage, they watched with glaring eyes as Burkett, Croke, Mellish, Scrope, Chowle, and Baggy Trimble helped themselves lavishly to the good things on the study table.

"These eggs are primo!" sniggered Baggy.
 "You—you fat wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I didn't cook 'em for you, you howwible fat boundah!"

"He, he, he!"
 "The sardines are good, too!" grinned Mellish. "Try some, Burkett!"

"Ham and eggs for me first!" chuckled Burkett. "Pass that toast, Baggy, you blessed gorgor!"

"Sorry, Burkett, old chap!"
 The good things began to disappear rapidly.

"Just wait till I get you afterwards, Baggy!" gasped Blake, as he saw the Falstaff of the Fourth shovelling toast and sardines into his mouth. "I'll flay you for this!"

Trimble glanced round, with a grin on his greasy countenance.

Baggy hadn't troubled to consider the consequences of his act. He was safe for the present, and so he was making the most of it.

He picked up a tin of sardines, almost full, and rose from his chair, crossing towards the line of helpless, raging juniors.

"I don't want any cheek from you, Blake!" said Baggy loftily.

"Why, you—you—you—"
 "That'll do!" said Baggy severely, wagging a fat forefinger in Blake's crimson face. "No cheek! But in case you're feeling peckish, here are some sardines for you, old chap!"

And, with a gleeful snigger, Baggy upturned the tin over Blake's head.

"Yarcoop!"
 Blake gave a yell as the sardines slid down his face and head. One of them dropped down the back of his

(Continued on next page.)

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collar, and slid down his back. Oil streamed over his face.

"Ugh!" spluttered the hapless Blake. "Groogh! You fat toad! I'll smash you!"

"He, he, he!"

Baggy sniggered delightedly.

From Burkett there burst a guffaw of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you——"

Baggy returned to the table to continue the feast, while Blake writhed and panted and struggled for words.

"You ought to try these tarts, Burkett!" grinned Chowle. "They're first-rate!"

"No, I think I'll try this cake!"

Burkett grasped a large knife and stood up to cut the handsome birthday cake. There was a furious yell from Digby.

"You rotter! Let that cake alone!"

"I don't think!" chuckled Burkett.

He divided the cake into a dozen big slices.

He and his cronies proceeded to help themselves, and the eyes of the captives fairly bulged from their sockets at sight of Mrs. Taggles' masterpiece vanishing before their eyes.

"Prime!" gasped Baggy Trimble, smacking his fat lips.

"Yes, pretty good!" nodded Burkett, grinning across at Blake & Co. "Just look at D'Arcy's dial! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Like a bit of cake, Gussy?" queried Mellish, with a snigger.

"I—I'll thwash you——" began Arthur Augustus.

For a moment Mellish looked a trifle uneasy. Unlike Baggy, Mellish realised that a time would come when the swell of St. Jim's would be in a position to carry out his threat, unless he were very careful.

Mellish inwardly resolved to stick very close to Burkett for the next few days.

"Rats!" he taunted. "I say, you chaps," he went on, with a snigger. "I think Gussy would like some cake! I'll give him some!"

Mellish selected one of the few remaining slices left, and rose to his feet.

From the top of the bookcase the sneak of the Fourth took down a bottle of red ink, with which he soaked the slice of cake thoroughly, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy watched the proceeding with horror and consternation.

From the coal-scuttle Mellish took a shovel of black dust, with which he plentifully besprinkled the "delicacy" in his hand. He added a few wet tea-leaves, then crossed, with malicious amusement in his face, towards the livid swell of St. Jim's.

"G-gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy, his eyes fastened on the doctored slice of cake with utter dismay. "Mellish, you howwible cad——"

"Open your mouth, Gussy!" grinned Mellish, while the rest of the unwelcome visitors watched with broad smiles. "Here's a nice piece of cake for you!"

"You—you— Oh!"

Mellish had seized the swell of St. Jim's aristocratic nose between his finger and thumb. Arthur Augustus went purple in the face; but he was forced to open his mouth.

"He, he, he! Here you are, Gussy!"

Mellish jammed the nauseating slice into Gussy's open mouth, and the swell of St. Jim's choked and gurgled.

"Groooh! Woogh! Urrrrghh! Mum-mmmmm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Burkett & Co.

Arthur Augustus gave a gulp, and, despite all his efforts he swallowed a large chunk of the doctored cake. The rest he succeeded in ejecting; but most of the crumbs and ink and coal-dust and tea-leaves remained in his mouth.

"Grooooooh! Oh, bai Jove! Mellish, you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Burkett rose to his feet, with a guffaw.

"Time we got along, you chaps!" He grinned across at the fuming captives. "Thanks awfully for the tea. It was a ripping spread! We've enjoyed your hospitality no end!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Burkett picked up a knife from the table and slashed through the cords binding Bernard Glyn's wrists. Chuckling, he and his cronies unlocked the door and crowded out into the passage, slamming the door behind them.

There was a groan from Herries.

"Oh, the cads!" he groaned. "Wait till I get my hands on 'em!"

"I'll spifficate Baggy!" gasped Blake, wriggling miserably, the sardine still sliding about down his back.

"I'll slaughtah Mellish!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

Glyn rubbed his aching wrists, and proceeded to unfasten his ankles. He staggered to his feet, stiff and aching, and

began to unfasten Blake's bonds. One by one the raging victims of Burkett & Co., who had seen their gorgeous spread devoured to the last crumb before their eyes, staggered up, rubbing their cramped limbs.

"Come on!" panted Blake. "After them! We'll slay the rotters!"

He rushed to the door, the others at his heels.

But when they arrived, raging and breathless, at the door of Study No. 7 in the Shell passage, the door was locked. From within came the sniggers of Burkett's cronies and the guffaw of the bully of the Shell.

Baffled and beaten, the raging juniors retreated at last—Blake to the bath-room to clean himself of the sardine oil with which his hair and collar were saturated.

For nearly an hour the hapless Fourth-Formers and their guests made wild and bloodcurdling threats of vengeance. But as they cooled down at last, Blake & Co. realised that vengeance was impossible.

Burkett was too powerful for them to tackle with the remotest hope of success, and it would be a poor satisfaction to vent their wrath upon his cronies, when all was said and done. Burkett was the fellow they wanted to deal with. But it would certainly be far wiser to let him alone, and swallow their humiliation.

Burkett could have licked any three of them at once, and they had to admit as much. And it was not really much use to ask him to do it!

The only thing to do was to accept the fact that they had been hopelessly ragged by Burkett Co., and grin and bear it!

But Blake & Co. and their unfortunate guests were not the only ones to feel thoroughly dissatisfied over the jape that had been perpetrated upon them.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, when he heard that Tom Merry, after all, had not been ragged with the others, suffered a bitter blow.

"Hang the luck!" muttered Cardew, later that evening, seated alone in Study No. 12.

Then he shrugged. His plan had failed to bring Tom Merry "up against" Frederick Burkett, but he could think out another scheme in its place.

There was a thoughtful frown on the face of Tom Merry's foe, as he sat in the silent study at the end of the Fourth Form passage, scheming.

CHAPTER 12.

Tom Merry's Resolve!

"**B**LOW the silly asses!"

There was a frown on Tom Merry's face as he came out with that sudden ejaculation.

It was the following evening, and the Terrible Three were in their study. Manners and Lowther were still finishing off their evening's prep, but Tom Merry had finished his and was standing by the fire. That thoughtful frown had been on his face for several minutes before his thoughts finally produced his sudden exasperated exclamation.

Manners and Lowther glanced up.

"What do you mean, Tommy?" asked Manners.

"Why, that blessed deputation this evening!" snorted Tom.

"Oh!"

Manners and Lowther understood.

The story of the raided feast in Study No. 6 had amused the other juniors considerably, but it had also spread a good deal of consternation.

With Burkett swaggering round, evidently considering himself cock of the walk, and with no one, seemingly, capable of putting him in his place, things were reaching such a pitch that the juniors, at a disconsolate meeting in the Common-room before tea, had decided unanimously that "something" must be done.

That "something" took the shape of a deputation to Study No. 10, repeating the request that Blake & Co. and a few others had put to Tom Merry before, but this time the request was backed by almost the whole Shell and Fourth.

The juniors demanded that Tom Merry should tackle Burkett, and thrash him, if possible.

But Tom Merry had resolutely declined, to the wrath of the deputation.

Tom's reason for declining was definite. He had no personal quarrel with Burkett, and he did not intend to fight a fellow for the sake of fighting, even in the present circumstances. Tom considered that it was up to the fellows to look after themselves. He did not intend to be made a tool of by the other juniors, in order to give them the pleasure of seeing Burkett discomfited.

There had been plenty of fellows ready to declare that Tom evidently funk'd meeting Burkett in a fight. But that statement, since it was utterly untrue, failed to move Tom an inch from his resolve.

The deputation had left the study in indignation and something like despair.

Unless Tom Merry thrashed Burkett, it looked as though they were in for a reign of terror at the hands of the bully of the Shell!

But, despite his definite answer in the negative, Tom Merry was decidedly worried.

Though it had not altered his resolve, he naturally resented the imputation that he funk'd Burkett, and the gibe rankled.

He was anxious to do the right thing, and he felt sure that the right thing was not to seek out a deliberate quarrel with anybody, not even Burkett. But—

He, too, had finished his prep now. He closed his books and rose to his feet.

"Let's buzz out for a breath of air!" suggested Lowther. The Terrible Three left their study, Tom Merry still with a faint frown on his usually sunny countenance.

But Study No. 10 was not empty for long. A minute or two later the door was pushed softly open, and Ralph Reckness Cardew stepped into the room. He evidently knew that it was empty.

With gleaming eyes he glanced round. His gaze fell upon a small pocket-book lying on the table—a pocket-book with Tom Merry's initials upon it.

"Gad!" breathed Cardew "That's just the thing!"

"G-great Scott!" "M-mum-my hat!" The scene of ruin that confronted Burkett and Croke left them almost speechless.



There was undoubtedly a "but"! There was no doubt that Burkett needed a thrashing. And he alone stood any chance of administering one.

"But I'm blessed if I like the idea of picking a quarrel with the chap," said Tom, in a worried tone.

"You mean with Burkett?" inquired Manners quietly.

"Yes. Why can't the chaps look after themselves, without trying to lug me into it?"

Manners smiled.

"Well, Burkett is a pretty tough customer, you know!"

"Yes; but that's not my fault! I've no quarrel with him."

"You could soon find a cause for one," suggested Manners.

"I know; but why should I?" exclaimed Tom, in an exasperated voice. "Hang it all, that would be a bit too thick!"

Manners shrugged and rose to his feet. His prep was finished.

"It's up to you to decide, Tom."

"Well, I've said I won't, and I'm blowed if I will, just to please the chaps!"

"Some of them say it's your duty, as captain of the junior school, to thrash a bully, you know," put in Manners quietly. "I don't say they're right, of course. But that's what they're saying. Some of 'em say if you won't, you ought to chuck the captaincy, and hand it over to somebody who'll fix Burkett."

Tom coloured.

"They're a lot of asses!" he exclaimed. "You don't think I funk Burkett, I suppose?" he added abruptly.

Manners and Lowther laughed.

"Of course not, you ass!" grinned Lowther.

He picked up the pocket-book and thrust it into his pocket, with a cool smile. Then he left the study as quickly as he had entered it.

The first detail of Cardew's unscrupulous scheme for bringing about a fight between Tom Merry and Frederick Burkett had been safely accomplished!

CHAPTER 13.

A Study-Wrecking!

"GOIN' out?" Ralph Reckness Cardew, lounging at the top of the School House steps, asked that drawling question.

It was Saturday afternoon. From Little Side came the excited shouts of the onlookers watching a match between School House and New House. In the quad a number of fellows were walking, though most of the juniors who were not playing in or watching the House match had already gone out of gates.

Cardew alone seemed to have nothing particular to do that afternoon as he lounged in the School House doorway, with a languid expression on his handsome face, and his hands thrust carelessly into his pockets.

"Goin' out, Burkett?" repeated Cardew, as the big figure of the bully of the Shell appeared from the stairs, in company with Croke and Mellish.

"Yes!" nodded Burkett, pausing. "We're going into Wayland. Care to come, old man?"

Burkett liked Cardew. The slim, elegant slesker of the

Fourth impressed him, as did Cardew's quick wits, in which he himself was sadly lacking!

But Cardew shook his head, with a grin.

"Thanks, no! Walkin' is too much of a fag, dear man. I was thinkin' of havin' a little nap before tea."

Burkett gave a guffaw.

"You are a chap!" he grinned, and went on, down the steps into the quad.

Cardew watched Burkett and his two cronies vanish through the gates with a half-smile on his lips. Then he turned and sauntered up the stairs.

But he did not go to the Fourth Form passage.

It was the Shell passage that attracted him. He halted outside Burkett's study, and entered quickly, after a hasty glance round to make sure that he was unobserved.

All the studies were empty, he knew. Even Skimpole had gone out that afternoon—fungus-hunting in Rylcombe Wood!

In Study No. 7 Cardew carefully locked the door. Then, without hesitation, he set to work.

First, he upset the bookcase, shooting all the books on the floor. He turned the table upside down, and piled the chairs on it in a heap, scattering the contents of the waste-paper basket over the lot. He swept the ornaments off the chimney-piece, and most of them broke in the fender. He piled the pictures in the hearth with the broken ornaments, smashing the glass of one of them accidentally; but it was an accident that did not seem to worry Cardew in the slightest.

The contents of the coal-scuttle he scattered over the floor, and he cheerfully proceeded to spill the contents of a large bottle of ink over everything.

When he had finished his outrageous work the slacker of the Fourth glanced round the study with a satisfied look.

From his jacket he took the pocket-book with Tom Merry's initials upon it which he had taken from Tom's study in readiness for his scheme, and tossed it among the scattered books on the floor.

For a moment a hard smile appeared on his face.

With a cool shrug he turned to the door, unlocked it softly, and left the study, strolling away towards the stairs along the deserted passage.

When Frederick Burkett returned to his study there would be an unpleasant surprise awaiting the bully of the Shell.

"O-great Scott!"

"M-mum-my hat!"

It was three hours later, and Frederick Burkett and Gerald Crooke were staring into their study with goggling eyes.

The scene of ruin that confronted them had left them, for the moment, almost speechless.

"Look!" howled Burkett. "Who—who's done it?"

"M-my giddy aunt!" gasped Crooke dazedly.

"I'll slaughter somebody for this!" thundered Burkett, beside himself with rage. "Oh, my hat! Just look at it!"

But there was really very little need to urge Crooke to look.

Crooke was looking!

Burkett strode into the study with a face that was almost purple. Crooke followed him. The pair stood gazing round their wrecked study and gasped.

It was certainly an amazing change that had come over study No. 7 during their absence!

"Who's done it?" bellowed Burkett, in a ferocious voice.

"Goodness knows!" groaned Crooke. "Oh crumbs!"

There were plenty of fellows in the Shell and Fourth who had plenty of cause to wish Burkett harm. They were so numerous that it was impossible to guess which of them had been most likely to have perpetrated the deed.

"The hounds!" panted Burkett.

He fished a picture from the mess in the hearth.

"My favourite picture!" he roared. "Look at it!"

Burkett's favourite picture no longer looked its best! The glass was smashed and the frame was broken, and the picture itself had a boot-mark in the middle of it.

Burkett choked.

"I—I—I'll smash him, if I find out who's done it!" he roared.

"How can you find out who's done it?" growled Crooke.

"I jolly well will!" bellowed Burkett. "And I'll slaughter the rotter!"

Crooke grunted. He realised how difficult it would be to discover the culprit, even if Burkett did not.

But the next moment Burkett gave a sudden, excited gasp. He strode quickly across the room, and snatched up an object lying amid the debris.

"Look!" he yelled. "Whoever it was, he dropped this!"

His eyes were gleaming malignantly.

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"It's got his initials on it! 'T. M.' Who's that?"

Crooke jumped.

"My giddy aunt!" he breathed. "Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 14.

Fixing a Fight!

CRASH!

The door of the junior Common-room flew open with a bang.

"What the dickens——"

"Bai Jove! What on earth——"

The crowd of juniors in the Common-room turned and stared.

The massive figure of Frederick Burkett came striding in, with beetling brows. Crooke was at his heels.

"Where's Tom Merry?" bellowed Burkett.

Tom Merry was reading by the fire. He turned his head in astonishment.

"Here I am. What——"

Burkett caught sight of him, and a ferocious glare appeared on his rugged visage. He strode across towards Tom's chair, and halted in front of the captain of the Shell, and shook a huge fist in Tom's amazed face.

"You—you—you——"

Burkett struggled for words.

"What the dickens is the matter?" ejaculated Tom.

"You know jolly well what's the matter!" yelled Burkett.

"Blessed if I do!" answered Tom calmly.

The other fellows were gathering round swiftly, surprised and excited.

"What on earth's up?" muttered Kit Wildrake.

"Burkett seems rather annoyed about somethin'," murmured Cardew, with a shrug.

"But what's he got his rag out about?" muttered Clifton Dane in astonishment.

Burkett plunged a hand into his pocket and took out Tom Merry's pocket-book. He waved it furiously.

"This is yours, isn't it?" he thundered.

"Yes," nodded Tom. "I'd lost it. How did you get hold of it, Burkett?"

"Lost it, did you?" roared Burkett. "I'll say you jolly well did lose it!"

Tom Merry was beginning to look exasperated. He rose to his feet, facing Burkett with an impatient frown.

"What on earth are you talking about, Burkett?"

"You rotter!"

"Eh?"

"You rotter!" howled the bully of the Shell, "I'll smash you!"

Tom's face set.

"I wish you'd explain what you are getting at, instead of burbling like a blessed lunatic!" he exclaimed angrily.

Burkett calmed down a little. An ugly sneer appeared on his face.

"I see! Of course you're pretending you know nothing about it, eh? I suppose you'll deny that you went to my study this afternoon while Crooke and I were out——"

"I do deny it," nodded Tom curtly. "And I still don't know what you mean!"

Burkett laughed harshly.

"And I suppose it wasn't you that smashed up my study?" he jeered.

Tom jumped.

"Smashed up your—your study?" he echoed in amazement.

"Yes," roared Burkett. "You know jolly well it's been smashed up—because you're the chap who did it! It's no good denying it, because I found this blessed pocket-book lying there! You didn't know you'd dropped it, did you? Well, you did—and it shows up your little game, you cad!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"If what you say is true, Burkett, all I can say is I haven't the faintest notion how my pocket-book came to be in your study, smashed up or not!"

"Expect me to believe that?" grinned Burkett savagely.

Tom shrugged.

"I don't know whether you believe it or not—and I don't happen to care."

Burkett choked.

"Why, you blessed funk!" he bawled. "You thought you'd serve me a dirty trick behind my back, didn't you? Didn't think I could find out who it was? Well, I have—and you can deny it till you're blue in the face, but it won't make any difference!"

There was a hush of breathless excitement in the Common-room.

Ralph Reckness Cardew alone seemed merely coolly amused over the affair. There was a smile on his face

As he leant against the corner of the chimney-piece in a careless attitude and watched Burkett and Tom Merry.

"My hat!" muttered Roylance.

"Phew!" breathed Bernard Glyn.

Manners and Lowther, Blake & Co., and Reginald Talbot were staring at Tom in amazement.

"They could not believe that Tom was lying when he denied that it was he who had wrecked Burkett's study during the bully's absence. But the evidence certainly seemed black against him!

"Blessed funk!" repeated Burkett, with a snarl. "Try to get at me behind my back, then tell a pack of lies to try and get out of being licked—"

Frederick Burkett did not finish his words.

Tom Merry's fist had shot out straight from the shoulder. It crashed on to Burkett's big jaw, and the bully of the Shell went over on to the floor with a roar of pain and rage.

Tom Merry stood over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"That's for calling me a liar, Burkett!" he said in a quiet, steely tone. "You'll apologise for that!"

Burkett staggered up.

"You—you—"

Burkett, in his towering rage, seemed to be at a loss for words. He hurled himself at Tom Merry. But half a

dozen fellows seized him and held him back. It was a difficult task, but they managed it.

"Chuck it, old chap, muttered Crooke. "Can't scrap in here! The prefects will come along!"

"Lemme get at him!" bellowed Burkett. "He's a liar and a funk—"

"Bai Jove!"

Excited faces surrounded Burkett and Tom Merry.

Most of the juniors were looking decidedly pleased with the way things were going.

They had made big efforts to induce Tom Merry to fight Burkett, without avail. But now, it seemed, Tom Merry would have to fight whether he liked it or not.

Tom Merry's face was set in grim lines.

He had not sought a quarrel with Burkett—he had a clear conscience in that respect. But the quarrel had arisen nevertheless, and he was ready enough now to meet Burkett in the fighting-ring.

"You're quite mistaken, Burkett." Tom's voice was quiet and cool. "I did not wreck your study, and I have no idea how my pocket-book came to be there. But I certainly don't funk fighting you! And since you've called me a liar I'll have pleasure in challenging you."

An electric silence ensued. Burkett ceased to struggle in the grip of the fellows who were holding him.

(Continued on next page.)

was put there by the pie-merchant and is quite dead.

Q.—What is a cassowary like?

A.—Thomas Capps, who lives at Patcham, says accounts of this bird vary. How, he asks, do people catch 'em? Will I draw a cassowary? Tom, this bird is shy and frightened in its native isle of Ceram, and its habits unenlightened, so you have no need to fear 'em. On its head's a shell-like helmet, from its neck hang two bright wattles; it will live on cans and cat's-meat, beans and boots and broken, bottles. Though its wings are short and stunted, and no use at all for flying, it can run so fast when hunted, people often give up trying. It's been said the cassowary, on the plains of Timbuku, eats the harmless missionary, hymn-book, prayer-book, Bible, too. This, my friend, is all a fable, for his manner's mild and bland; put some tin-tacks on the table, and he'll eat them from your hand.

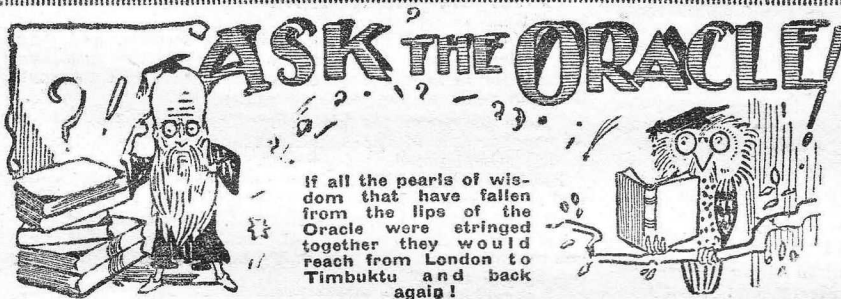
Q.—How old is an oyster?

A.—I have received this brainy conundrum from a very friendly reader, who starts his letter with "Dear Or," and ends with "Yours till centipedes wear spats, Young Oracle." I suppose he imagines he'll bowl me out with this brilliant poser, then come in and get my job. Nothing doing. "Y. O." You're no doubt a very bright lad, but you can't grow whiskers on eggshells, and my office-boy says he's got no idea of retiring, in fact, he hasn't started yet. (That is perfectly true.) Furthermore, my aspiring friend, I have just signed a new contract with the Editor, in which I promise to answer all intelligent queries sent in by GEM readers, regularly, until the Sphinx winks.



Sir Walter Raleigh, the famous adventurer and "sea-dog," who, like so many others, failed to find El Dorado.

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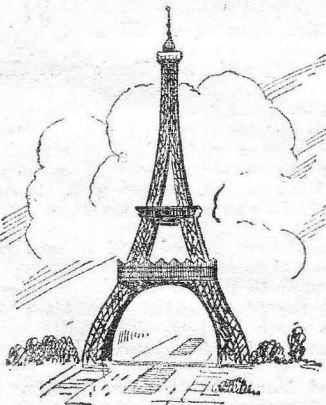
If all the pearls of wisdom that have fallen from the lips of the Oracle were strung together they would reach from London to Timbuku and back again!

Q.—Why was the Eiffel Tower pulled down?

A.—"Thoughtful Gemite" asks me this and many other questions concerning the famous tower. Well, to start with, "Thoughtful," it wasn't. The Eiffel Tower was erected in 1889 in Paris by an engineer named Gustave Eiffel, and it is still standing where he left it. It's 984 feet high (580 feet higher than St. Paul's in London) and on a clear day visitors go to the top to see the view. The tower is also used for making weather reports from. It's built of iron lattice-work, supported on huge piers of masonry. Glad you're getting your friends to read the GEM, "Thoughtful." Read my page every week and in time you'll be as clever as our office-boy.

Q.—Have I a poet's licence?

A.—Syd Williams, of Croydon says he notices I'm breaking out into rhyme nowadays, and wants to know how much I have to pay a year to be allowed to do



A feat of engineering wonder: the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

that sort of thing. You may not believe it, Syd, but the police have only stopped me once, and that was in the reign of George the Third. I was stopped for furious rhyming with a broken metre.

Q.—Where was El Dorado?

A.—William Lloyd, who lives at Hartlepool, has come across this name, he tells me, many times in books of travel and adventure. Quite right, William. All the old sea-dogs of Sir Walter Raleigh's day, and Raleigh himself, went off in search of El Dorado, a country where gold and precious stones were said to be found in great abundance. They never found the place, for the simple reason that it wasn't there to be found; but it gave rise to a lot of exciting stories and yarns, well worth reading. The words are Spanish and mean "the gilded one." They originally were used to describe the king of a South American tribe who covered himself with gold-dust every year. Now we use the expression to describe any place where money can be made easily. The office-boy is interrupting again, William. He says "Why is our Editor's sanctum like El Dorado?" Answer: "It's full of GEMS!" Wait till I get hold of him!

Q.—What is a King George the Third penny worth?

A.—Nothing, S. J., of Enfield, and neither is the Jubilee half-farthing. When I was a boy my uncle used to give me new King George the Third pennies, dated 1775. I think he must have known they were going out of circulation, the old skinfint!

Q.—Can eels live on land?

A.—Yes, "Young Naturalist," of High Barnet, eels are able to live for a long time out of water, and they will travel at night over wet grass. That is how they come to be found in ponds miles away from a river or the sea. If you find an eel in a pie, however, you may assume that it

"Good!" he growled, with a scowling grin. "I'll fight you, Tom Merry—and smash you!"

Tom Merry shrugged.

"Better keep this quiet from the seniors," he said coolly. "What about Wednesday afternoon, in Rylcombe Wood?"

"Good!" grinned Burkett. "You'll need an ambulance to bring you home!"

"Pistols for two, coffee for one!" grinned Herries.

Crooke touched Burkett on the arm. He was looking very pleased. Crooke felt sure that Burkett would be able to vanquish Tom Merry, champion boxer of the junior school though Tom was.

"Come on, old chap!" grinned Gerald Crooke. "We'll leave Tom Merry to make his giddy will."

"He, he, he!" sniggered Mellish delightedly.

Burkett turned and swaggered from the room, his cronies following him. Tom Merry sat down without a word and resumed the book he had been reading.

The juniors stared at him curiously.

What they had wanted had happened. Tom Merry—the last line of defence, so to speak, against Burkett's bullying reign—had been brought to battle at last.

Whether or no he would be able to lick Burkett was a matter of opinion. Some of the fellows thought he could, others that he could not. If he failed, it would be a dismal prospect for the Shell and the Fourth, with Burkett undisputed cock of the walk!

But there was one fellow still left in the Common-room who hoped keenly that Tom would be defeated.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, as he sauntered from the room a few minutes later, had a dark smile on his face.

His plan had succeeded. And with all the bitterness in his heart against Tom Merry he was longing to see the fellow who had licked him, in Rylcombe Wood, lying battered and defeated at the feet of the bully of the Shell.

CHAPTER 15.

The Last Hope!

DURING the few days that had to elapse before the great fight between Tom Merry and Frederick Burkett, the sole topic among the juniors seemed to be the question as to what the result of the fight would be.

It certainly seemed a very doubtful problem.

Burkett himself, it was clear from the way he swaggered round with an insolent grin on his face, never doubted the result for a moment.

It evidently did not occur to Burkett that there was any chance of his meeting his match in Tom Merry.

He knew that he was up against a stiffer proposition than any he had yet tackled at St. Jim's. But his conceit never allowed him to consider even remotely the possibility of his giant strength failing against the supreme boxing skill of the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry himself declined to offer any opinion as to his chances.

Tom knew that he was up against a very stiff proposition. But it did not seem to worry him. He coolly ignored Burkett's boasting talk in the Common-room as to what the bully intended to do to him—though he knew very well that Burkett's words were generally intended for his ears.

The mystery of the wrecking of Burkett's study puzzled him, but he soon gave up trying to solve it.

It certainly never occurred to Tom that his pocket-book had been deliberately dropped in the smashed up study in order to make it seem as though he were responsible.

Such an action would have seemed so utterly despicable to Tom Merry, that it did not enter his head that anyone could have done it.

There was an air of simmering excitement in the Shell and Fourth on Wednesday morning that Mr. Linton and Mr. Latham did not fail to notice.

Very little of the juniors' attention seemed to be on work that morning, and lines fell thicker than leaves in Vallambrosa upon their heads in consequence.

After dinner, Tom Merry went up to his study, with Manners and Lowther, followed by the curious glances of his fellow juniors. But Tom appeared calm enough—almost disinterested, even when Arthur Augustus stopped him on the stairs to ask how he felt.

"Fine, thanks, Gussy!" smiled Tom.

"Feel'n' weady to thwash that wotten bwuisah?" inquired Arthur Augustus anxiously.

"I'll do my best, Gussy!"

"Well, good luck, deah boy!"

The fight was timed for half-past two, and at two o'clock Tom Merry, in Study No. 10, glanced at his watch.

"Time we buzzed along, I suppose."

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Manners nodded.

There were curious bulges under the coats of Manners and Lowther as the Terrible Three left the School House and crossed towards the gates five minutes later.

They were smuggling out a sponge and a towel and a couple of large bottles of water—objects which would have excited the suspicion of the prefects had they been seen!

Fights were strictly forbidden in Rylcombe Wood.

Other juniors, singly and in groups, were strolling out of gates as the Terrible Three crossed the quad.

There was going to be a big crowd to witness the fight between Tom Merry and the bully of the Shell!

Blake & Co. joined the Terrible Three in Rylcombe Lane, and together the chums of the Fourth and Shell turned aside from the road after a while, and entered the woods.

The fight was to take place in the same big clearing as that which had seen the fight between Tom Merry and Cardew not long before.

As on that occasion, a roughly roped ring had been erected, on account of the crowd. It was surrounded by excitedly-talking fellows as Tom Merry & Co. entered the clearing; but the noise died away abruptly at sight of Tom.

There was a breathless hush. Someone gave a cheer, and some of the others took it up. But it died away.

The juniors were too excited to cheer.

Burkett had already arrived in company with his cronies.

Crooke and Mellish were to be his seconds, and they, like Manners and Lowther, had brought the necessary utensils for their job, despite Burkett's boast that he would have no need of any such paraphernalia.

"Here he comes for his licking!" grinned Burkett, as he caught sight of the Terrible Three.

Mellish sniggered.

Talbot of the Shell had been asked to act as timekeeper, and had agreed to do so. He nodded to Tom as the captain of the Shell stepped into the ring and took off his coat.

"It's not quite two-thirty yet," said Talbot. "But since you're both here, will you carry on at once, or wait for the agreed time?"

"I should think we might carry on at once," said Tom, with a glance across the ring at Burkett.

"Good!" grinned Burkett.

"Right-ho," nodded Talbot. "Let me know as soon as you're both ready, then."

Burkett had already peeled off his coat and rolled up his sleeves, revealing the tremendous muscles of his forearms. Compared with him, Tom Merry looked almost slight, as he prepared himself for his great task.

"I'm ready!" said Tom quietly.

"Same here," grinned Burkett, with a scowl.

"Two-minute rounds," said Talbot. "Seconds out!"

Manners and Lowther, Crooke and Mellish, climbed out of the ropes, and Tom Merry stepped forward into the centre of the ring.

As he did so, he caught sight of a face amid the crowd that seemed to stand out from all the others.

The face of Cardew.

And from the look on Cardew's face, Tom Merry realised in a flash how bitterly Cardew remembered that other fight in this same clearing!

He understood, with a sense of sudden shock, that Cardew had not let himself forget—that Cardew had treasured up in his embittered heart the memory of his defeat!

And though he never dreamed that Cardew was the hidden cause of his present meeting with Frederick Burkett, Tom knew well enough, in that moment, how desperately Cardew longed to see him defeated at the hands of the bully of the Shell.

Cardew looked away quickly as he met Tom's eyes. Tom smiled grimly.

What did Cardew matter?

"Time!" called Talbot.

Burkett came at Tom with a rush, his eyes gleaming, his great fists hitting out with smashing force. Tom ducked to avoid a tremendous left-arm jab, feinted with his own left, then stepped quickly in and crashed his right on to Burkett's jaw.

It was a blow that would have felled most fellows. But Burkett did not seem to notice it very much. He rushed again, and Tom was forced to fall back.

Again the captain of the Shell landed with his right. But it utterly failed to check Burkett. The bully came on, and only Tom's magic footwork saved him from disaster.

"Go it, Tom!" shouted Monty Lowther breathlessly.

"Smash him, Burkett!" sniggered Mellish.

Still retreating coolly before Burkett's smashing attack, Tom was content for the while to defend himself only,

and to allow Burkett to tire himself out if possible. He ducked and side-stepped and blocked skilfully.

But suddenly his foot slipped on the grass. Burkett saw his opportunity, and took it. He sprang in, delivering a left-hook to Tom's chin with all his giant strength.

Tom staggered and fell.

There was a breathless hush.

Tom rose dizzily.

There was a malignant grin on Burkett's face as he rushed at Tom again. Tom hit out and landed with his left on Burkett's jaw. But the next moment another sweeping blow had knocked Tom flying against the ropes, where he clung, panting.

"Now you've got him!" whooped Mellish joyfully.

Burkett rushed again to follow up his advantage. But Talbot's sharp voice cut the silence.

"Time!" Burkett grunted and turned reluctantly to his corner, while Manners and Lowther leapt into the ring and carried Tom to his.

"Hard luck, old chap!" muttered Manners, as he bathed his chum's face. There was an ugly mark where Burkett's last blow had landed.

Tom grinned faintly.

His head was singing, and he was realising as he had never before realised just what he was up against.

"He's tough!" he muttered. "Great Scott, he is!"

gave a gasp, and there was an excited cheer from Tom Merry's supporters.

But his success was short-lived.

Burkett rushed at him like a furious bull, and all Tom's skill failed to ward off the attack. Staggering and reeling before the terrible blows of Burkett's tremendous arms, the captain of the Shell struggled gamely to defend himself, but in vain. Twenty seconds later he was down again, in a corner of the ropes, gasping painfully as he lay at the feet of the juniors pressed to the ringside.

There was dismay in Blake's voice as he stared across from the opposite side at Tom's battered face.



The crowd of onlookers dispersed, leaving Tom Merry lying on the grass with his chums by his side. Only Cardow lingered—a smile of triumph on his face!

"You'll lick him all right, though," grinned Monty Lowther reassuringly.

But it was with gloomy faces that Tom Merry's chums watched him step forward for the second round.

Burkett would take a lot of beating—even at the hands of the champion boxer of the junior school.

CHAPTER 16.

A Fight to a Finish!

"Oh, wotten!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave an exclamation of dismay.

Tom Merry was down!

At the very opening of the round he had been swept off his feet by a terrific upper-cut; and now he lay panting on the grass, while Talbot began the count.

"One, two, three—"

At "six" Tom staggered up.

His lip was cut and bleeding, and he was evidently dazed. But he came forward grimly, a new light in his eyes—a light of resolute determination.

He staggered Burkett with his left, and brought his right crashing into his antagonist's ribs with a thud that could have been heard far among the surrounding trees. Burkett

"He's done!" breathed Kangaroo.

"Rats!" snapped Blake.

Blake was right. Tom Merry was anything but done!

He rose, panting, and faced Burkett again, attacking strongly in a way that amazed the onlookers. Burkett was forced back several paces before he stood his ground.

"Time!" called Talbot.

Tom went to his corner with unsteady steps. But Burkett, too, was beginning to show signs of punishment. The grin had left his face; to be replaced by a dark scowl.

"Wade into him this round," muttered Mellish, as he fanned his leader with a towel. "You've got—"

Burkett glared at him.

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it!" he growled. Mellish shut up hastily.

That third round was one that lived long in the memory of the fellows who witnessed it.

Despite his skill and indomitable pluck, Tom Merry was clearly getting the worst of it by now. Burkett's giant frame and tremendous strength were apparently more than even Tom Merry could prevail against. And in the third round Burkett had things almost entirely his own way.

Round and round the ring Tom Merry was driven. He

(Continued on page 23.)

A BRITISH BOY'S PLUCK IS TESTED TO THE FULL!



Trapped!

"HAVE you any idea how we should begin?" asked Trent.

"I've got a hazy notion it would be better if one could do the job. But I'm afraid it will have to be two. They must disguise as natives, and the rest must be left to their imagination. That will depend on the circumstances in which they find themselves."

"I'm game," Trent declared. "And if Chica—"

"Chica will certainly be on this job. He doesn't need much disguising. I think we should leave him to select his companion."

"Do you hear, Chica?" said Trent. "Which of us will you take?"

The Indian hesitated. The moment had a curious quality of suspense. Suddenly Dick felt his arm grasped.

"I have decided, seniors."

Dick felt a thrill of excitement. He was proud that Chica had chosen him. It was Trent who spoke next.

"Then we can take that as settled. There's nothing more to be done to-night. We'd better have some sleep while we can."

Sleep! But Dick had never felt less like sleeping. He did his best, curling himself up in a corner, and using a smooth branch as a pillow. His brain, however, refused to stop working.

To-morrow, he and Chica would steal forth and mingle with this strange tribe of savages. Discovery would mean instant death. They might not be dressed correctly, for example. Even if he dyed his skin his eyes would remain blue, and wouldn't that attract attention? Moreover, if he were spoken to in a language he did not understand, he would be unable to answer back.

Finally, if over he reached Lopez, it would be a tense moment when they came face to face. Dick had felt before the concentrated hatred of this man, whose plans he had wrecked, whose life's ambition he had thwarted.

"Still, it'll be worth something to see his face when he recognises me," he chuckled to himself.

He closed his eyes. At last sleep came intermittently. He would doze and suddenly wake up, startled by some sound. This was his first experience of the real jungle, and it was disturbing.

No wonder, he thought, the natives who dwelt in it developed such fantastic and even horrible ideas. It wasn't the kind of place in which you wanted to stop and admire the scenery. It was a riot of baleful life, one thing preying on another. Trees throttled by parasites; death lurking in every leaf.

Once when he woke he saw in the darkness two green, straining eyes. It was like an enormous, bodiless cat

THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!

By
JOHN SYLVESTER.

With the end of the journey almost in sight, Dick Blackwood, youngest member of the radium-seekers, again falls unexpectedly into the hands of his implacable enemy, Dom Lopez!



watching him. His heart drummed against his ribs. When he told himself there was nothing spectral about it, merely an inquisitive jaguar, that didn't improve matters. The jaguar, he had been warned, was one of the most ferocious and dangerous animals in the jungle.

But the eyes disappeared. It was as though twin lamps had been switched off. A slight crash, and the slither of a lithe body through the foliage, told him that the beast had decided not to attack.

He dozed again, out of sheer exhaustion. The next time he awoke he had a queer sensation, rather like trying to struggle to consciousness after chloroform. His brain was dizzy, and he felt enervated. Gradually he became aware that something soft and furry was resting on his bare chest.

He kept very still. Whatever it was, it was not big. It was odd he should get such a feeling of nausea. Still more peculiar he should lack the energy to brush the thing away. He had difficulty in making the mental effort, as though he were half-stupefied.

Minutes passed, and still the soft pressure was maintained, soft, warm, revolting. Then, in a flash of alarm, he summoned all his will-power. He raised one hand and touched—what? There was a whirring of wings. He felt a tiny pain, as though the flesh of his chest had been caught in a pair of pincers and pulled. Then he realised that this soft, venomous thing had been stuck to him with an intense power of suction.

"Why it was a bat—a vampire bat!" he cried to himself. It was gone now, heavy and bloated with the blood it had been drinking. That was why he felt sickened and weak.

There was no more sleep for him that night. With a feeling of relief he heard a screech of birds heralding the dawn. Not the lovely bird song to which he had been accustomed, but a mechanical series of discords.

Pale lights gleamed between the trees. They took immediate shape as the darkness faded.

"Awake?" called a yawning voice.

"Yes, I'm awake," Trent said feelingly.

He was sitting up, stretching.

"Fine morning! But the place is a bit over-populated. Nature works overtime out here. Look at these beggars!"

And he began pulling the leaches from his leg.

The transformation was a slower affair than they had suspected, owing to Chica's insistence on pounding a certain kind of berry for the dye. Having made a paste, he diluted it with water, and proceeded to sponge Dick from head to foot.

"It's on the dark side," Trent observed critically. "However, no doubt it will do. Now, what about these togs?" They had stripped two of the dead natives, and, with a grimace, Dick fastened a kind of saron around his waist. "Don't forget the feathers!"

A barbaric head-dress, consisting of white and black eagle plumes joined to a kind of crown, was placed on his head. "Wish they ran to pockets!" he grumbled. "Still, I suppose—"

"Stick this under your loin-cloth," said Trent, handing him a revolver. "But don't use it if you can possibly help." "There will be no need," said Chica, his eyes glittering.

There was little more to be said. The farewells were brief and unemotional. Dick was now beginning to look upon adventure as part of the day's routine. It had seemed different, lying in that tree in tropical darkness.

Outwardly, as he walked through the bush with Chica, the pair of them were indistinguishable from true members of the tribe. The excellence of their disguise gave them a feeling of confidence.

They descended, without hurrying, into the ravine, where the procession had passed the night before. It was deserted, save for a few native women, gathering roots.

"The village should be around the bend," remarked Chica.

He was right. Wisps of smoke ascended into the sky, and the sunlight glinted on the thatched roofs of huts which stood on upright piles driven into the ground.

So far everything seemed straightforward. They managed to pass two natives without attracting attention. Emboldened, they went towards the centre of the village.

"There's a woman staring at us darned hard!" whispered Dick, without moving his lips.

"She's coming towards us, too," replied Chica, looking perplexed.

The old hag approached cautiously, and about two yards away she halted; and suddenly pointing a skinny finger, gave vent to a piercing scream.

"Gosh! She can't have spotted us!" cried Dick, in alarm.

"No; but look what is happening!" exclaimed Chica anxiously.

The scream brought other natives running from their huts. In a matter of seconds they were surrounded. The woman was still screaming, and others joined her, and also began to point.

"Aren't we properly dressed?" Dick complained. "I'm hanged if I can see—"

It was a bewildering situation. It was alarming. They had expected to be quite inconspicuous. Instead they drew just as excited a crowd as if they had walked down Piccadilly in the same garb.

The entire village seemed to be crowding around them, shouting and waving their arms. To make matters even more puzzling, they began to hammer tin cans and beat drums; their shouts and yells turning into a kind of wolfish howling.

"Think we ought to bolt, Chica?"

"No; they might shoot if we did that."

"But why don't they shoot now?"

"Because we are not running. Or because, any minute, they expect us to vanish."

"I wish I knew how to!"

"I'm beginning to understand," Chica muttered.

The crowd had now parted in front of them, but they pressed forward from behind and at the sides, forcing them to walk towards the gap.

"What's that chappie doing with the fireworks?" asked Dick, glancing over his shoulder as he moved slowly forwards.

Behind them was a man in a horned mask, a flaming torch in each hand; and he kept making lunges in their direction with the torches, stamping his feet, and advancing.

They were forced to advance with that shrieking mob, although no one ever came within striking distance, nor was any attempt made to use blow-pipes. But the beating of tin cans and drums became deafening.

"We've made some ghastly bloomer!" Dick exclaimed. "They've discovered who we are."

"No, senor, they haven't," said Chica emphatically. "Then why are they carrying on like this?"

"I'm afraid they recognise our clothes. They think we are the spirits of the men we shot, come back in a different form to haunt them."

"Spooks!" Dick's jaw dropped. "So that explains—" "It explains why they don't shoot, and why they are making such a noise. They are trying to drive us out of the village."

"Well, it might be worse, I suppose! Let's walk a bit faster to encourage 'em."

"They'll force us back to the jungle. But we shall be able to return at night."

"So long as we don't meet Lopez," said Dick, quickening his step, "we shall be all right. But he won't think we are ghosts!"

"No," agreed Chica, baring his teeth at the mere name.

As they hurried the crowd lost some of their fear. They pressed closer, still keeping their courage up by yelling and drumming. Dick was about to speak again, when something unexpected happened. As he put his right foot forward the ground gave way.

Chica tried to save him, but too late. They both lost their balance, and the straw covering the ground parted, disclosing a black pit. With cries of triumph, the natives rushed up.

But neither Dick nor Chica could see them any longer. They were hurtling through space, in pitch darkness!

Prisoners Again!

A SICKENING thought occurred to Dick as he plunged downward. If this were one of the pits designed to trap a puma, there would be sharpened sticks of bamboo at the bottom, and they would be impaled on the spikes.

It was extraordinary how rapidly Dick's brain worked. The interval in which he fell was a matter of seconds, yet every incident of their adventures, beginning in London, unrolled in his mind like a spool of cinematograph film. Every nerve in his body tensed to receive the shock of impact. And at last it came.

But there were no spikes. In fact, he struck something soft and yielding. Instantly he felt the weight of Chica's body smothering him. He struggled to free himself.

"You might stop gnawing my arm, Chica!" the boy sang out.

"Senor," gasped the native, "I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought. Can you tell me where we are?"

"It's a net, senor," replied the other, recovering himself.

"Caramba, this is unlucky!"

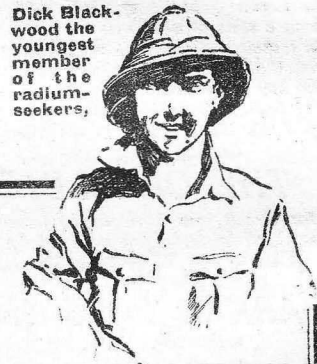
"Cheer up, old scout! It might have been a lot worse. We haven't broken any bones—and that would have been confoundedly awkward."

As he spoke Dick stretched out his hands and felt the meshes. They were very close, made of strong rope. But an idea struck him.

"I suppose the darned thing isn't suspended in mid-air. I mean, there must be ropes leading to the top, otherwise they wouldn't be able to haul it up. A puma couldn't climb a rope, but a man could. Do you get that, Chica?"

"We might climb to the top," agreed the Indian dubiously. "But what should we find there? It will be closely guarded."

"Then we should be pushed back. But we shouldn't be any worse off than we are now. I'm game to try."



Dick Blackwood the youngest member of the radium-seekers.

HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED.

Knowing that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, has stolen their map which holds the key to the whereabouts of a fortune in radium, Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. On reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, Dick is captured by Lopez, but is saved from a terrible death by the timely intervention of Chica, a faithful Indian. Later, the radium-seekers fall foul of a Huascan tribe of head-hunters as does Lopez himself. Having no other alternative, the Brazilian calls a truce and fights side by side with his old enemies against the savages who are eventually beaten off. Releasing Lopez in exchange for the precious map, the adventurers continue their journey as directed by the plan though the snake-infested forest until they reach the jungle. Here, to their amazement, they meet a party of Indians walking in ritualistic procession and bearing in their midst a litter on which is seated none other than Lopez who is receiving the homage of a god. Realising they will never gain their ends as long as their enemy remains in that unique position, West points out the necessity of capturing the Brazilian at all costs.

(Now read on.)

"No; you must let me go first," insisted Chica. "There is no telling—"

"Which is exactly why I am going first. Don't argue; it's mutiny. You must obey orders, Chica."

Chica protested. It was evident that he thought no good could come of the scheme. There were some most unpleasant methods, he pointed out, of telling the difference between a human being and a demon. A favourite way was the ordeal by fire, since it was believed that a demon was insensible to burning.

Dick, however, was not to be dissuaded. However desperate the chance, it was better than doing nothing. He began to move slowly, hauling himself by inserting his fingers through the meshes.

At last he came to the end of the net and gripped a taut rope. To his dismay, however, it was coated with grease, either to prevent such an escape as he contemplated or to make it weatherproof. He groaned in disappointment, but he refused to abandon the attempt. Whipping out his knife, he scraped off sufficient grease to give him a reliable handgrip. Once lying across the rope, he clung with one hand and repeated the scraping process higher up, laying the fibre of the rope bare.

The distance between the two grips represented his power of reach, and it was not more than twelve or thirteen inches. So he began the climb, working in this way, roughly a foot, then a pause to scrape, while he supported himself with one hand, then another foot.

It was slow, arduous progress. The strain on the

muscles of his left hand was very great, and he had to pause half-way up to rest. He could see the opening plainly, but there was no sign of anyone watching him. It would be heartbreaking to be thrust back after all this labour.

He went doggedly on. Once his hand was so weary that it slipped, and he slid back at an alarming pace. He managed to check himself, however, on one of the notches he had cut, recovered the lost ground painfully, and at last came to the mouth of the well. Here the rope bent over the edge, to be secured by a wooden pin driven into the ground.

Through wear and exposure, the surface was less greasy. But Dick paused, with his head on a level with the ground, realising that if he raised it he would become visible to any watchers; and even though, for superstitious reasons, they might not come too close, there would certainly be a crowd attracted by curiosity.

Perhaps the best plan, after all, would be to slip back and wait until nightfall to take advantage of the work he had expended on the rope. On the other hand, they might be hauled up in the net before nightfall. He decided the risk was too great. He would trust to the natives' superstitious terror. If that failed he had a revolver, and if only he could gain the forest he would stand a fair chance of getting away.

There was Chica, of course. Dick had no intention of abandoning the faithful Indian to his fate. But single-handed he could do very little. Whereas if he rejoined the others and warned them, they might make a concerted effort to rescue Chica.

"Now for it!" he muttered.

He raised his head recklessly. As he scrambled out of the well on to firm ground—he had never moved so quickly—he straightened, his hand flying to his revolver. In front of him, as the youngster half expected, stood a startled crowd of natives. They were staring at him open-mouthed, wondering, perhaps by what magic he had come to the surface. It seemed to him that at the least hostile sign they would scatter. Instead of firing, he made a trumpet of his hands and sent forth a terrifying howl.

There was a hubbub among the natives, and Dick was so engrossed in what was happening that he did not notice the danger from behind. Two powerful natives, bolder than their companions—and for a very good reason, as he learnt later—were creeping stealthily towards him. They suddenly sprang.

One arm was crooked around Dick's throat. Before he had a chance to recover, a lariat was drawn around his legs. As the noose was pulled tight he was thrown off his balance. He struggled frantically, and to his further dismay his revolver fell beyond his reach. Another jerk on the lariat sent him crashing forwards.

Dick hit the ground with a thud that shook every bone in its socket. Dazedly he looked up and saw two powerful, bronze-skinned men looking down on him with fierce satisfaction. Then they parted, and Dick's heart raced like a runaway train.

Coming towards him was a tall, lean figure in white. Once more he found himself looking into the evil, saturnine face of Lopez.

"That's torn it!" gasped Dick inwardly.

But he was determined not to look as though he thought so.

A CHAT WITH YOUR EDITOR

ABOUT NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

FOLLOWING up this week's splendid story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's comes another Martin Clifford masterpiece!

"THE BULLY OF THE SHELL!"

is the title of next Wednesday's grand long school yarn, featuring "Bully" Burkett, the terror of the Lower School. It deals with some unlooked-for developments that bring about a state of affairs at St. Jim's that is as startling as it is dismaying. I won't spoil a good thing by telling you what happens, but you can take it from me that this story will hold you from first to last.

Going all out with his 100 h.p. brain-box, our whiskery old wonder, the Oracle contributes another batch of highly interesting and amusing pars in answer to readers' queries. You'll find his latest efforts in his usual corner under the heading of

"ASK THE ORACLE!"

Not to be outdone by the Oracle, our other trusty friend, Mr. "Nosey" Parker, comes in with his notebook fairly bulging with notes made on the ground of the Notts Forest F.C. What he has to say about this famous football club you will read in

"MR. PARKER POPS IN!"

next week.

Although I hate to say it, for certainly we have grown very much attached to the radium seekers, our grand serial is drawing to a conclusion. I shall have a great deal to say about the follow-up of this story in my next chat. Believe me, you'll be pleasantly surprised with our NEW SERIAL. But in next week's issue there will be the usual thrilling instalment of

"THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!"

YOUR EDITOR.

ORDER NEXT WEEK'S

"GEM" TO-DAY!

"I rather suspected," murmured an ironical voice, "that the demons I was told about were flesh and blood. In fact, I have been expecting a visit from you."

"You'll get a visit you won't like before long!" Dick retorted.

"You will be a useful bait," Lopez replied, looking so pleased with himself that Dick cursed his helplessness. It wasn't easy to keep up a convincing air of defiance lying flat on his back.

"I compliment you on your disguise," Lopez continued, deliberately rolling a cigarette. "Although what you expected to gain, I don't know. I suppose you realise I am looked upon as a god?"

"That disguise," said Dick scornfully, "isn't going to last."

"Long enough, amigo — long enough," said Lopez amiably. "The most troublesome thing about being a god is that you are constantly having sacrifices made in your honour. So far they have contented themselves with wild pig. But I am very much afraid that you and your friends will be victims of a much more regrettable superstition."

"That remains to be seen!" flashed Dick.

"And unfortunately you will be debarred from witnessing the most picturesque part of it. These Indians are shocking ritualists. I will tell you the details later. Meanwhile, where is your companion?"

"You won't find him!" Dick retorted. "It's useless to try."

"Come, come! It's the sign of an amateur to bluff when it can be called. I am afraid you have never played poker."

It was a desperate, possibly stupid effort to save Chica. Lopez was not deceived by it. He gave an order to the men beside him, and they crossed to the well. The crowd, who had recovered from their fear, pressed forward eagerly, and there was no shortage of willing hands. The ropes were untied and they commenced to pull. With many shouts the net was drawn to the surface, and inside the meshes Dick could see the unfortunate Chica.

At first Chica appeared to be rolled into a kind of ball, and he did not see Lopez, but as he struggled to untwist himself and turned his head Dick thought he would never forget the look that crossed the Indian's face. It was inhuman in its fury. His single eye seemed to be lit up by a terrible flame. This was not the daring, generous companion Dick had known; Chica had slipped back into stark savagery.

He lived only for revenge on this white man who had deliberately tortured him, after murdering his father. Now he was in the power of his arch enemy.

"You accursed gringo!" he shouted hoarsely. "I ought to have killed you when I had you at my mercy!"

"It was certainly an error of judgment," agreed Lopez, showing his teeth in a smile.

Dick couldn't stand that smile. He felt almost like Chica. He nearly choked with anger and mortification.

"We spared your life, Lopez, but I don't suppose that will make any difference."

"Not in the least," said Lopez, turning to him. "But we can't continue this conversation here. You shall be taken to the quarters reserved for very special guests, and meanwhile I must explain to my devoted worshippers what you are doing here."

He made a sign with his hand. The net, in which Chica struggled with the fury of a trapped beast, was slung on bamboo-poles, and he was carried away. Dick was treated less ceremoniously; he was merely dragged along the ground by the lasso in which his legs were caught.



Suddenly two powerful natives sprang forward and in a moment had pinned Dick's arms helpless to his sides.

Missing!

LOPEZ was in high spirits. Before an assembly of all the warriors and elders of the tribe he delivered a long harangue. Before setting out on this expedition he had made an intensive study of all known dialects used by the Indians west of the Andes. The result was that, although this tribe differed in some respects from any of the others, he could make himself understood.

There had been war among the gods, he declared. The rebels had been defeated and turned into demons. By means of spells he could subjugate them; not only that, he could make them share the disadvantages of ordinary mortals.

They could actually be put to death. In fact, if they were made into a sacrifice, crops would be plentiful and hunting good. There were still two other "demons" lurking in the forest. They must be captured, and the benefits would be doubled.

It was a clever speech. It appealed to the superstitions of these credulous savages. And it also appealed to their blood lust. Lopez knew that if the whole counter-expedition could be put to death with pomp and ceremony, his own conquest and supremacy would be assured.

"Trent and West will attempt a rescue," he argued. "They will walk straight into the trap I have prepared for them."

Having dispersed the crowd, he entered a hut and consulted with three witch-doctors. Here he had to adopt different tactics. He was dealing with shrewd, hard-headed men who were not in the least deceived by his claim to be a god. Exactly what they thought of him he wasn't sure, but he guessed that they supported him because he would permit them more personal power than they possessed under the king who had been deposed on his arrival.

"Cock o' the Walk!"

(Continued from page 23.)

went down half a dozen times; and at the end of the round, dazed and battered, half blinded, he had to be helped into his corner.

It looked as though the fight was more or less over, in the opinion of most of the onlookers, and there was utter consternation on the faces of the majority.

Burkett was winning.

The result of a victory for the bully of the Shell would be utter disaster in the opinion of the dismayed juniors.

But on the face of Ralph Reckness Cardew there was a flickering smile.

Crash!

A terrific right hook from Burkett had toppled Tom Merry against the ropes.

Limp and battered, his eyes almost closed, the captain of the Shell seemed to sag at the knees.

He reeled forward with indomitable pluck, his fists raised, to the astonishment of the spectators, and hurled himself at Burkett with a gameness that brought a lump to the throat of Harry Manners, as he watched his bruised and battered chum.

And then there was a wild, excited shout from round the ropes.

"As if by some miracle, Tom's left had landed on Burkett's jaw—with such force that Burkett crashed over backwards and lay writhing on the grass.

"Tom!" yelled Monty Lowther. "Oh, well done!"

Burkett, dazed and bewildered, was still lying where he had fallen. Tom stood over him, reeling and swaying.

Talbot commenced the count.

"Burkett, you ass!" shrieked Crooke. "Get up!"

But that unexpected blow had made Burkett's head dizzy. He seemed incapable of rising.

"Five, six, seven—"

Talbot's voice continued the count in a monotonous tone.

"Eight—"

Suddenly Burkett seemed to realise what was happening. He scrambled to his feet, and, with blazing eyes, rushed at the reeling figure of Tom Merry.

The Valley of Fortune!

(Continued from previous page.)

There was a crude kind of politics within the tribe. The ex-king, he gathered, was more enlightened than his followers. He had attempted several reforms. He had tried to abolish the privileges of the witch-doctors. That was why they welcomed the chance of getting rid of him by supporting Lopez.

They were fairly old men, but they possessed astonishing virility. Their faces were made hideous by scars, and each had a ring of solid gold through his nostrils. The trio were squatting on the floor, and as Lopez entered he got an impression they were looking uncommonly serious.

"What's wrong?" he demanded, puzzled by this gravity. "Is there anything more I can do? Have you ever had a white victim before? Isn't it what the people desire? Can't you hear the sound of their rejoicings?"

"You have done well," admitted the spokesman—a terrible-looking blackguard with a necklace of finger-bones. "But the people cry this way one day, and another the next. Their voices are like smoke blown by the wind."

A pretty sound observation, Lopez reflected. But where did it lead?

"Well?" he queried. "Is the wind likely to change?"

"There is always that danger," came the reply, "while the king is alive."

"But we agreed he was to be poisoned. It was admittedly dangerous to kill him outright, since he had a strong following. Only a god," added Lopez, with a touch of grim humour, "could have dethroned him."

The three malefic old men exchanged glances. There was a brief silence. Then:

"The king has escaped!"

(It looks as if Lopez's cunning is going to let him in for a bunch of trouble, doesn't it, chums? Look out for further thrills in this exciting serial next week!)

Tom put up his fists to guard himself; but he was all but helpless.

Blow after blow rained upon his face. It seemed a sheer miracle that he kept his feet for a moment. But at last he went down, with a little groan, and lay with outflung arms—motionless, inert.

He lay with closed eyes as Talbot counted him out.

But not till Manners and Lowther had rushed to him did they realise that Tom was senseless.

They raised his bruised face and tenderly bathed his temples. The crowds round the ropes watched in utter silence.

Tom opened his eyes after a few minutes, to find his chums bending over him.

"He—he licked me," he breathed. "He—he was too much for me, you know."

Manners nodded sympathetically.

"Never mind, old chap! You put up a great fight!"

Tom closed his eyes again wearily.

Burkett had already left the clearing with a swagger and a grinning face. The onlookers began to disperse in dismayed groups, leaving Tom Merry lying on the grass, with his chums kneeling at his side.

But there was one fellow who lingered.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was smiling.

His heart was singing with triumph!

Though no one knew it but himself, it was through him that Tom Merry had met Burkett in the ring for his defeat. Cardew's vengeance!

With a shrug, Cardew turned at last and sauntered from the clearing.

He cared nothing for the fact that Tom Merry's defeat at the hands of the bully of the Shell meant that Frederick Burkett was undisputed cock of the walk in the junior school from that moment, and that what would almost amount to a reign of terror would exist, with Burkett & Co. able to do what ever they liked.

All that Cardew cared for was the fact that he had witnessed Tom Merry lying battered and beaten at Burkett's feet, licked by the bully of the Shell!

THE END.

(Next week's GEM will contain another ripping long yarn of St. Jim's, featuring "Bully" Burkett, the terror of the Lower School, entitled: "THE BULLY OF THE SHELL!" Don't miss this story, whatever you do, chums!)

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