

"THE ST. JIM'S JOCKEYS!" THRILLING STORY OF SCHOOL ADVENTURE AND HORSE RACING WITHIN!



The

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**GUSSY'S
WINNING
RIDE!**

AN EXCITING INCIDENT FROM THE GRAND LONG YARN INSIDE.



Time and again the Outsider of St. Jim's has shown that he will go to any lengths to gain his own ends. But the shady tactics he adopts when he turns amateur jockey avail him nothing against the superb horsemanship of the one and only Gussy!

CHAPTER 1. The Invitations!

BAI Jove, deah boys!"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"Dry up, ass!" grinned Jack Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Why don't you huff yourself, Skimmy?"

"My hat, he's left about six on this time!"

And Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, of Study No. 6 of the School House at St. Jim's, chuckled loudly.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and viewed the proceedings with disapproval.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Skimmy will have himself mated in three moves if he doesn't get off-side!" yelled Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell. "Pass out to your wing, Skimmy."

"Jack Blake, deah boy!"

But no one was paying the slightest attention to Arthur Augustus. They were all crowding round Skimpole, roaring with laughter instead.

Herbert Skimpole was the brainy man of the Shell, and he was now grappling with an absorbing problem. He was trying to play the game of solitaire.

Once he had removed all the marbles except three from the little round board, and that had spurred him on to fresh endeavours. He had already been quite half an hour seated at the table in the Fourth Form Common-room.

"You'll do it in time, Skimmy," grinned Lowther, "say, fifty years."

Skimpole looked up in surprise, blinking through his glasses.

THE GEM LIBRARY No. 1,370

"Dear me, Lowther, what really ridiculous remarks you make!" he remarked. "To a fellow of my ability—I believe I have done it this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about the marble up in the corner?"

"Dear me!"

Skimpole sighed and started again.

It was really very creditable the manner in which he was always ready to start again. He must have made a good many fresh starts by now.

Arthur Augustus raised his voice.

"Weally, deah boys, I wegwet to say there is no othah resource for me but to considah you in the light of waggin' wottahs!" he cried. "I came here with some wippin' news and—"

"Bury it, then!"

"Weally, Lowthah. Howevah, it will be too late before long," added Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I can apologise to Cousin Ethel by wiah."

Jack Blake started.

"Eh, Gussy?"

All eyes were directed towards Arthur Augustus. Skimpole was forgotten.

"Weally, deah boys," he said frigidly, "you have placed me in wathah an awkward posish, as wefusin' an invitation fvwom Cousin Ethel—"

"Eh?"

"I said, wefusin' an invitation fvwom Cousin Ethel!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "They are givin' a wathah wippin At-home at Cleveland Lodge, deah boys!"

Jack Blake & Co. started.

They had been to one or two of the At-homes at Cleveland Lodge, and they were something more than rather ripping.

—STARRING GUSSY AND THE "OUTSIDER" AS RIVAL JOCKEYS!

JOCKEYS!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"My hat!"
 "And Cousin Ethel has witten to me—"
 "Hurrah!"
 "And asked us all?" exclaimed Lowther. "Tom Merry, Cousin Ethel has asked us all to an At-home."
 A handsome, curly-haired junior had come into the room at that moment. At Lowther's words, he came hurrying up.
 "My hat, is that so, Gussy?"
 "Weally, not quite that, but—"
 "What's she say, then?"
 "Cousin Ethel has given me a fwee hand as to whom I take to Cleveland Lodge."
 "Hurrah!"
 "When do we start, Gussy?"
 Arthur Augustus stared, then pulled out a slip of paper. "I have the names witten down, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I pwopose to take Jack Blake, Hewwies, and Digby of the Fourth—"
 "Of course."
 "Weally Hewwies—and Tom Mewwy, Lowthah, and Mannahs of the Shell—"
 "The pick of the bunch," said Tom Merry.
 "Wats—uttah wats—and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn of the New House—"
 "Rather!" chuckled Kerr, coming in at that moment. "You'd wreck the At-home if you left out Figgins & Co."
 "Wats, Kerr—and Kangawoo, Cornstalk & Co.—"
 "Rather!" said Kangaroo himself heartily. "Cousin Ethel would be awfully hurt if you left out the best company of St. Jim's."
 Jack Blake laughed.
 "Quite a little family gathering, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "May as well say everyone in the room and done with it."
 "Wight-ho, deah boy! All in the woom will have to dwess hawwiedly, though, because— Bai Jove!"
 Someone had stepped forward who had been farthest from Arthur Augustus' mind when he had used the general term, the whole room.
 That someone was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire's son of the Fourth.
 "Thank you, D'Arcy," he said quietly. "I—I don't like asking, but what are the correct clothes to wear at an English At-home?"
 Arthur Augustus fidgeted with his monocle, and stared blankly through it.

CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy's Difficulty!

"YOU don't mind my asking about the clothes, D'Arcy, but I have never been to an English At-home, you know."
 Jerrold Lumley gave his explanation with absolute calmness
 He was clever, everyone admitted that, and he knew a good deal of human nature. It was impossible that he could have missed seeing the blank look of the swell of St. Jim's.
 "Weally, Lumley—"
 "I suppose our best Etons will be all right?"
 "As a mattah of fact, Lumley—"
 "And would you accept an offer from me to drive you over in a motor-coach?" added the millionaire's son.
 Tom Merry answered that question.
 "We are going to walk over," he said shortly.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Oh, just as you like!" answered Lumley. "Rather a fag, though."
 Arthur Augustus gasped again.
 Jack Blake, Tom Merry, and Manners longed to go to his rescue, and they would have made short work of the difficulty. They would simply have told the millionaire's son he was not wanted.
 And they would have had good cause for their bluntness.
 Jerrold Lumley was an outsider, and the fact could not be ignored.
 And to take him to Cleveland Lodge, the home of

Cousin Ethel, the girl chum of the juniors of both Houses of St. Jim's, was unthinkable.
 Arthur Augustus saw that as quickly as any of them.
 "I wegwet to say, Lumley, that we are wathah a big party as it is—"
 "Yes, that is what I was thinking of when I suggested the motor-coach—"
 "Weally, but—"
 "When do we start, D'Arcy?"
 Arthur Augustus became flustered.
 "We are leavin' at once, as a mattah of fact, but—"
 "I'll hurry along and change my things," answered Jerrold Lumley. "I expect some of you others will want to do the same, so we shall probably meet at the gates. Thanks awfully for the invitation, D'Arcy."
 And the millionaire's son hurried away.
 Arthur Augustus was staring after him in bewilderment.
 "Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, I am all in a fluttah—"
 "You aren't going to let Lumley come, are you?" exclaimed Figgins, in amazement. "You don't mean to say you would take the utter bounder to Cousin Ethel's house?"
 "Gweat Scott! The ideah is uttably imposs—"
 "Why didn't you tell him so, then, ass?"
 "I hinted, deah boy—"
 Jack Blake snorted.
 "You have to do more than hint to Jerrold Lumley!" he said tensely. "You have to tell him things outright. You must make it clear to him he isn't coming, Gussy!"
 "Rather!"
 "Fancy a bounder like that talking to—to Cousin Ethel!" exclaimed Figgins.
 "Rotten!"
 "Yaas, I must admit I considah it wotten myself!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "The ideah is imposs, but I was all in a fluttah at the time. I pwopose we wait at the gates for the wottah! I shall be vewy firm!"
 "Right-ho!"
 Tom Merry and Jack Blake nodded, but they did not look unduly impressed.
 The sort of firmness needed in dealing with Jerrold Lumley had to be of a very pronounced type.
 Figgins had already slipped away to change his clothes, but he did not keep the juniors waiting for him at the gates. He was one of the first to make his appearance.
 "Has the cad turned up, Gussy?"
 "Not yet, deah boy! I wathah fancy he has thought bettah of it, and seen my hint—"
 "I don't think! Here come the others!"
 "Cheer-ho, Glyn, deah boy!"
 "Isn't it ripping—"
 "Rather! Gussy's a brick!"
 Jerrold Lumley came out just then, also, and walked towards the juniors at the gate. He came up quite calmly.
 "I haven't kept you chaps waiting, have I?" he asked. The juniors did not answer.
 They were all waiting for Arthur Augustus to show his firmness.
 He might have commened in rather a more impressive manner.
 "Weally, Lumley—"
 "I'm sorry if I have."
 Jack Blake nudged Arthur Augustus in the ribs.
 "Get on with the washing, ass!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Weally, Lumley—"
 "Oh, change the blessed record!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Here, I'll do the talking! You've made a mistake, Lumley!"
 Jerrold Lumley wheeled round and faced the chief of Study No. 6.
 "What do you mean, Blake?"
 "You've made a mistake about coming with us," answered Jack Blake openly. "As a matter of fact, Gussy didn't mean to include you in the invitation, and you jolly well know it!"
 Jerrold Lumley tried to look amazed.
 He succeeded as far as Arthur Augustus was concerned, and made the generous Fourth Former feel a good deal uncomfortable.
 Jack Blake merely grinned.
 He saw through that pose as he had seen through a good many others of Jerrold Lumley's.
 "You might as well drop that," he said. "You know all the time you weren't invited. You were merely bluffing Gussy!"
 Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle into his eye.

"Weally, Blake, deah boy——"
 "Rats!" said Jack Blake. "Lumley understands now. We can get on with the washing."
 "No, I don't understand!" flashed the millionaire's son.
 "Hang it all, D'Arcy, you give a fellow an invitation, then take it back again. If you call that good form, I don't want to know what you call the outside edge!"
 "Bai Jove! Pway stop, deah boys, while I explain to Lumley——"
 "Rats!"
 "Lumley understands all right!"
 Arthur Augustus became flustered.
 "On the contwawy, Figgy! Pway wclease me—wclease me instantly!"

But the four or five sturdy juniors who were now dragging Arthur Augustus along, took no notice. And all the time they were drawing rapidly away from Jerrold Lumley.

Arthur Augustus suddenly stopped struggling.
 "Bai Jove! The wottah has accepted the posish, deah boys!"

Tom Merry looked back at that. The millionaire's son was walking away from the gates.

But, although he had turned his back on the other juniors, Jerrold Lumley had not accepted his position as Arthur Augustus supposed. Like Mr. Lasceles Lumley-Lumley, his father, Jerrold was not good at accepting positions unless they were the ones he wished to accept. And he did not wish to accept this one.

One of the last things his father had said to him was to give instructions that he should mix with the juniors of the best families at St. Jim's Arthur Augustus was the son of Lord Eastwood, and to gain an introduction to Cleveland Lodge would be something that would please his father immensely. That had been Jerrold Lumley's first motive in seeking an invitation. Now he had another motive.

With all his faults, which were countless, Jerrold Lumley never admitted defeat. He had more than his share of pluck.

"I'll go to Cleveland Lodge, whatever happens!" he muttered.

He hesitated a moment or two, then he hurried to the bicycle-shed. The door was open, and there was no one there.

Jerrold Lumley hesitated again.
 He had two machines in the building, an ordinary bicycle and a motor-cycle, a magnificent machine of four-and-a-quarter horse-power.

The doubt cleared from his face rather suddenly, and he wheeled the motor-cycle from the cycle-house.

But he did not hurry. There was plenty of time. The walk to Cleveland Lodge was a short cut compared with the road, certainly, but Jerrold Lumley had touched sixty miles an hour on his machine.

"So I am to be barred Cleveland Lodge, am I?" he muttered, his teeth together. "We'll see about that!"

And he started up the engine of his machine.

CHAPTER 3. The Road-Hog!

TOOT-TOOT!

The millionaire's son sounded his horn loudly. He was careering along at a reckless pace considering the number of children playing at the sides of the road, but he drove well.

Toot-toot!

He sounded his horn still louder.

There was a trap in the centre of the narrow road, and the horse was prancing a good deal. Lumley came on. He hated slowing down, just as he hated being impeded in anything else.

He moved a small lever with his hand, and the "cut-out" was brought into operation. Each explosion in the cylinder cut through the air like the report of a pistol now. The horse in front of him was rearing dangerously.

Still the millionaire's son came on.
 The occupants of the trap were a groom, and the pretty, graceful figure of a girl of about his own age, who had the reins.

The noise of Lumley's machine had almost driven the horse mad.

The strain on the girl's wrists must have been very great. Her face was very white, although there was little fear there.

Lumley rather enjoyed the situation. It fitted in with the mood Jack Blake's words had brought to the surface.

He had slowed his machine down, certainly; but only because he had to, and he was causing his machine to

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make as much noise as possible. Probably, if he had silenced his explosions, the horse would have been all right.

But the millionaire's son was in an unpleasant state of mind.

The groom spun round in his seat.

"You young scoundrel, you'll have us in the ditch in a minute—steady, Robin!"

But the horse was almost beyond control.

Lumley realised that, but he saw there was a chance to flash past on the wrong side, and he opened the throttle.

There was one last "toot" from the horn, and he was past.

What happened to the trap he did not know, and he did not very much care. It was unlikely the animal would bolt; but it was also still more unlikely he would get under control easily.

Still, the millionaire's son considered that was the driver's look out, not his. He had not seen the girl's face, and little did he realise that he had met her and that she knew him.

Lumley dashed on, beginning to slow down after a time. He was looking for a house he knew only by name.

"Cleveland Lodge," he muttered. "That was the name."

He never forgot anything he wished to remember, and he wished to remember that name particularly.

Presently he came in sight of a fine country mansion. Cleveland Lodge was painted across the carriage gates.

Jerrold Lumley jammed on his brakes and jumped from his machine. Then he acted in a very curious manner.

He took a small pair of wire nippers from his saddle-bag and deliberately severed the electrical wiring which was the life and soul of his machine.

He cut the wires in a place where the break would not be easily seen, then he slipped the pliers into the toolbag.

After that he coolly opened the gates and wheeled his machine down the carriage drive.

It was a long walk, and the millionaire's son was beginning to wonder whether he had taken the right path, when he caught sight of a tall, finely built man.

He raised his cap with a politeness which was a great contrast to his rudeness to the girl driving the trap.

"Excuse me, sir, but my machine has broken down," he exclaimed. "I thought perhaps the owner of this house might allow me the use of a garage in which to set it to rights. I have scarcely any tools with me——"

The gentleman came up quickly.

"Hallo! What cap is that you have on, by Jove?"

"A St. Jim's cap, sir——"

"So it is, by Jove!" exclaimed the gentleman. "My name's Cleveland—Captain Cleveland. I have a cousin at St. Jim's, by Jove!"

Jerrold Lumley looked up in pretended surprise.

"I have heard a Fourth Former speak of you, sir—D'Arcy, of Study No. 6——"

"Yes, that's the young rascal's name, by Jove! He's coming here this afternoon with some friends."

"So he said, sir," exclaimed Jerrold Lumley. "I had forgotten all about it. Really, sir, perhaps I ought to push the machine on until I come to a repairer's——"

Captain Cleveland waved his riding-crop.

"Nonsense, my lad! Wheel the machine into the garage, and I will send my chauffeur out to examine it."

"But——"

Jerrold Lumley looked uncomfortable for a moment, then he remembered that the electrical wiring on motor-cycles have a habit of breaking in the most inexplicable manner.

Probably it would be all right.

"It's awfully good of you, sir."

"You come inside with me, now," said Captain Cleveland. "Friends of yours from St. Jim's are almost due, and I insist upon your staying with us, by Jove!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!" said Jerrold Lumley, with a smile flickering across his face.

Everything had worked out just as he had hoped. There had not been a single hitch, so far as he knew.

Even Tom Merry & Co. could scarcely be more than suspicious in their own minds when they arrived, Lumley thought, and he began to chat with Captain Cleveland as easily as if he had known him for years.

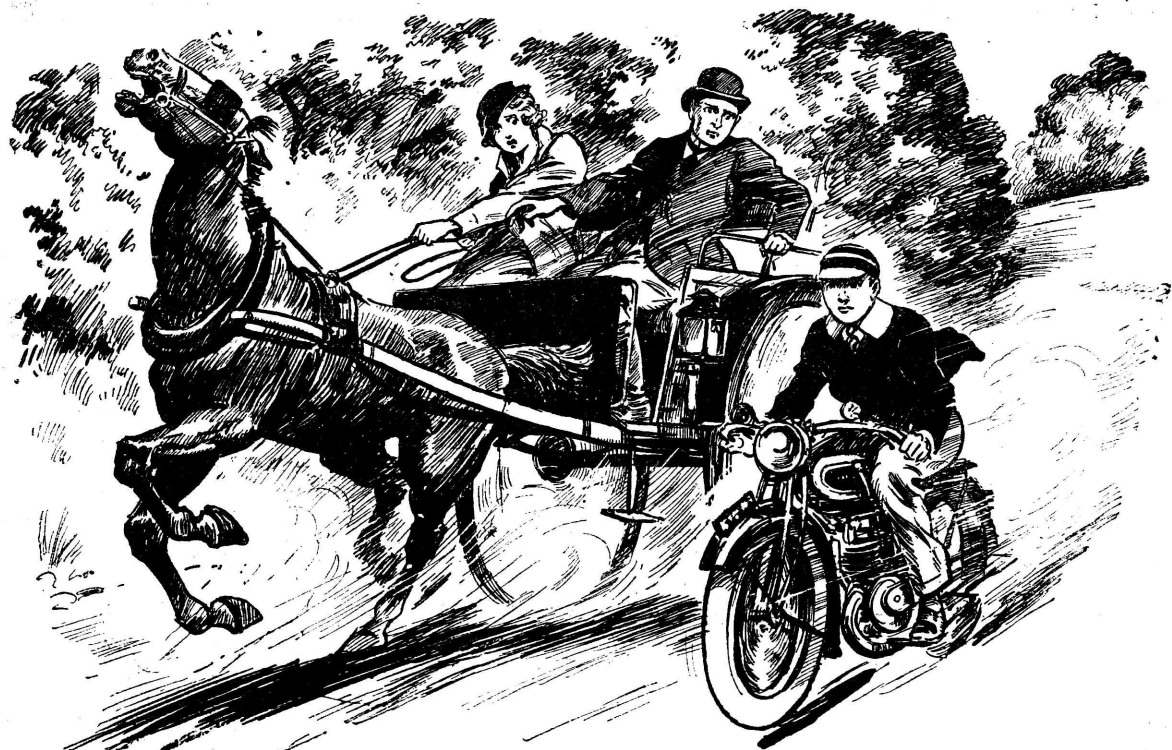
The captain took him into the library, found him a chair, then began to fidget.

Captain Cleveland had met many people in many parts of the globe, and he went a good deal by first impressions. Jerrold Lumley had been in the room for less than five minutes before the captain looked at his guest curiously.

The junior was trying to impress him, and Captain Cleveland hated anything like that. As was usual with him when in company with anyone in whom there was something he did not quite like, the captain spoke less and less.

He had just reached the stage of saying nothing at all when the door was pushed open.

"Here we are, captain, and I twust we aren't late——"



The horse reared dangerously as Lumley, causing his machine to make as much noise as possible, sped past on the wrong side of the road. The pretty girl driver was hard put to it to control the frightened animal. “You young scoundrel!” shouted the groom. “You’ll have us in the ditch in a minute!”

“I am afraid there is rather a crowd of us, sir,” exclaimed Tom Merry. “I hope—”

The crowd of juniors started and stared. Jerrold Lumley was leaning back in the most comfortable easy-chair in the room, a smile on his face. He looked as cool as if he had been in his own study at St. Jim’s.

CHAPTER 4.
Cousin Ethel!

“**B**AI—bai Jove!” Arthur Augustus stared at Jerrold Lumley in utter amazement.

He screwed his monocle in his eye and stared again. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes.

“Gweat—gweat Scott!” For an instant Tom Merry was as surprised as the swell of St. Jim’s, then the Shell junior turned his back on the millionaire’s son.

Captain Cleveland looked from one junior to another. “What’s the matter, Arthur, by Jove!” “I—I am all in a fluttah, deah boy—I mean, gweat Scott, it is Lumley—”

The captain burst into a hearty roar of laughter. “Of course it’s Lumley!” he exclaimed. “Think it was a ghost, by Jove! Lumley’s machine broke down, and so he’s staying the afternoon with us.”

Jack Blake gritted his teeth. Other guests were beginning to arrive, and it was impossible to make a scene.

He looked Jerrold Lumley straight in the eyes, and for a moment or two the millionaire’s son met his gaze. Then Jerrold lowered his gaze.

“Yes; my machine broke down just outside these gates,” he explained. “I had no idea this was where you chaps were bound for.”

It was so obviously a falsehood that Jack Blake did not answer. He joined a circle which had formed round a Major Holbrook, who was holding forth about the forthcoming steeplechases.

But Jerrold Lumley was satisfied. For an instant he had thought Arthur Augustus might have spoken about the invitation affair in his amazement, but the swell of St. Jim’s had not done so. It was all right now, and Lumley-Lumley prepared to spend an enjoyable afternoon.

“What were you saying about the steeplechase, sir?” he

asked Major Holbrook. “I am awfully interested in horses.”

“Then you’d be interested in Guardsman,” said the major loudly, glancing at Captain Cleveland. “The best horse in Sussex, both for fences and on the flat—”

“With the exception of Madam Madcap, by Jove!” said Captain Cleveland, smiling. “Madcap can give your horse ten pounds, major, and then show him a clean pair of heels.”

Several other guests had entered the room by now, keen sporting men who were to be found at every hunt meeting, and there was a general laugh.

It was a long-standing contention in Sussex hunt circles as to which was the better animal, the major’s or Captain Cleveland’s.

Arthur Augustus’ eyes sparkled with interest. “Bai Jove, are the horses goin’ to be widden by their ownahs at the waces?” he exclaimed.

“Of course, by Jove! Point-to-point steeplechasing, you know. No professionals.”

“Bai Jove! How wippin’!” “When are the races to take place?” exclaimed Tom Merry.

“Next Saturday, and you’ll see Madcap run away from the field, by Jove! There isn’t a horse that can touch the mare—”

There was a laugh in Captain Cleveland’s voice as he spoke the words, but Major Holbrook did not appear to notice it.

“That remains to be seen!” he exclaimed, flushing. “I’m ready to back my horse against yours for a level five hundred, Cleveland.”

“I don’t bet, by Jove—” The major laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh, as Captain Cleveland’s had been, and it threw a momentary restraint over the party.

“No, I shouldn’t bet, if I were you, with Guardsman in the field,” the major said. “I have won more than one steeplechase with worse horses than Guardsman and better fields to beat.”

“Wathah wotten form!” whispered Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry nodded.

“Which is the best horse, Gussy?” Arthur Augustus shook his head.

“They are both wippin’ animals, and there isn’t a gweat deal in it. Pwopahly widden, I should say my cousin’s would win.”

There was still a flush on Major Holbrook’s face. He

figdgeted for a moment or two, then faced Captain Cleveland again.

"I wanted to speak to you about this race!" he exclaimed. "Cleveland, isn't it rather unnecessary for us to ride our own horses?"

"Unnecessary, by Jove?"

"Yes. I have no objection to your putting another jockey in the saddle, if—"

"Thanks, major; but I ride Madam Madcap," said Captain Cleveland. "Put whom you like in the saddle!"

Major Holbrook's eyes flashed. He saw—or thought he saw—smiles on the faces of the gentlemen riders in the room, and it angered him.

Arthur Augustus glanced from him to Jack Blake, and chuckled.

"The majah's funkin' the wace, deah boy."

"That's what I was thinking. Fancy funking riding your own horse!"

"Yaas, wathah! And it is weally quiet compared with Madcap, bai Jove!"

Jack Blake glanced at the major.

He was a trifle stout now, although he was very little older than Captain Cleveland. But there was not the same hard, athletic look about him there was about the owner of Madam Madcap.

And Jerrold Lumley noted the same thing.

Major Holbrook was looking for a chance of avoiding riding in the race. That fact had a great interest for the millionaire's son. He lay back in his chair, slightly in the recess, and listened to the buzz of conversation.

Hardly anything was mentioned except the forthcoming race, and Tom Merry & Co. were as enthusiastic as any of them.

There only appeared to be one of the party who was thinking of other matters, and that was Figgins, the long-limbed leader of the New House juniors.

Figgins' eyes were constantly straying towards the door, as though he were expecting someone else, and presently his face lighted up.

A faint voice could be heard in the passage outside.

"Bai Jove, here comes Cousin Ethel, deah boys! How do you do, deah gal? Bai Jove!"

The juniors had risen to their feet, Arthur Augustus a

little in front, but Figgins not far behind. Both juniors had stopped dead.

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah, Ethel?"

"Has anything happened, Cousin Ethel?"

Arthur Augustus and Figgins spoke together. The white face of the girl had startled them.

It also startled Cousin Ethel's brother, Captain Cleveland. "Where's James? Anything happened? Where's James, by Jove?"

"Here, sir!" exclaimed the anxious voice of a groom, who had been standing outside the door. "I'm awfully sorry, sir, but—"

"Robin bolted! Don't tell me Robin bolted!"

"Bolted!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, smiling in spite of the pallor in her face. "How could he bolt when I had the reins?"

"What have you done to your wrists, Cousin Ethel?"

Figgins spoke quickly, and Cousin Ethel frowned. She pulled the cuffs of her blouse down; but it was too late.

Captain Cleveland caught her hand, which was trembling a little, and turned the cuff back again.

There were large, dark bruises on the white skin.

"By Jove, the reins did that, I suppose?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "I had to bind them round my wrists, and that was why James couldn't take them from me. It is nothing."

"Isn't it, by Jove!"

"It was a motor-cycle that did it, sir," said the groom. "Miss Ethel asked me not to tell. The horse was a little nervous, sir, and then a motor-cycle came along, and that was the cause of the trouble. The driver made a terrific noise out of sheer recklessness, and then passed us on the wrong side of the road."

"What an utter cad!"

James looked at Tom Merry, nodding his head.

"That's the word, sir, if you'll excuse my saying it!" he exclaimed. "He was the worst road-hog I've ever seen, sir!"

"Bai Jove, did you see his numbah, James?"

"I didn't look, Master D'Arcy; I was helping Miss Ethel to steady Robin. It was a mercy, sir, Miss Ethel wasn't thrown out!"

"Good gvacious!"

"If you had seen his number, I'd have made it hot for him, by Jove!" exclaimed Captain Cleveland. "Just look at Ethel's hands, Whitfield!"

Captain Whitfield was a white-haired old cavalryman, with a good deal of active service behind him. He took Cousin Ethel's hands in his and looked at the bruises.

"I should like to meet the cad who was the cause of this, Cleveland!"

"Yes, and so should I, by Jove!"

"Oh, it is nothing!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, snatching her hands away. "It's all over now."

For some unknown reason she wanted the matter forgotten. But it is probable that she had recognised Lumley, whom she had met before, and didn't wish to make a scene.

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah, James?"

"I—I—"

James, the groom, started violently. He was staring across the room in blank amazement.

Tom Merry & Co. followed his gaze towards the recess.

Jerrold Lumley was still lying back in his chair, but his face had gone deathly white.

CHAPTER 5.

Turned Out!

JAMES stepped forward.

He was looking Jerrold Lumley full in the eyes, and Lumley was trying to return the gaze. He was scarcely succeeding.

But, in spite of that, there was very little but blank amazement in the groom's face.

Everyone was looking at the millionaire's son now. Lumley was conscious of the fact that he must do something, and he was glad of that. The last few minutes had seemed hours to him.

He sprang to his feet.

"Do—do you want anything?"

"No; I—"

The young groom seemed staggered. He looked from Jerrold Lumley to Captain Cleveland, and then back again, and in the journey his eyes encountered Cousin Ethel's. There was a frown on the girl's pretty face.

"You can go, James," she said.

"Yes, Miss—"

Captain Cleveland put out his hand.

"A moment, James, by Jove!" he said sharply. "What is the matter with you, man?"

"Nothing, sir. I— May I ask if this young gentleman has been here long?"

"No, by Jove! He arrived on a motor-cycle half an hour ago."



THE SCHOOLBOY CRUSOES!

"Look! There's a boat coming into the bay!" "Streaky" Bacon, looking out to sea from Castaway Island, shouted the news to Dick Danson and Sandy Bean. And well they might be excited, for they thought that Jim Dainty & Co., blown away to sea in a gale, were returning safe and sound to their cruise home in the tropics.

But there's a great shock in store for the schoolboy castaways. That boat does not contain Jim Dainty & Co. It contains five men—five desperate convicts escaped from Devil's Island!

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James flushed quickly. He had forgotten the warning frown on Cousin Ethel's face.

He had forgotten everything except the bruises on the wrists of his dainty charge.

"Then that's the young—that's the boy who nearly caused Robin to bolt, sir!" he said, pointing to Lumley-Lumley.

The words seemed to cut through the air of the room, and all eyes turned towards the Outsider.

Cousin Ethel was still frowning. Jerrold Lumley was the only one who had anything to say for the moment.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he exclaimed.

"I—I did not pass a trap on the road!"

"That isn't true. You passed us."

"Look here, my man—"

"I am looking!" flashed James. "And I see a lad who nearly caused Miss Ethel to be thrown from the trap!"

Captain Cleveland crossed the room in a couple of strides, and was standing before Jerrold Lumley now.

"Is that true, my lad?"

"No, sir; of course it isn't!"

"Do you mean to say that you didn't pass us on the Rylcombe Road?" cried James.

"I didn't come along the Rylcombe Road; I came the other way!"

Captain Cleveland turned to his sister:

"Is this the little cad, Ethel, by Jove?"

Cousin Ethel looked troubled.

"I am not going to tell you," she answered, and that was all the answer the captain needed.

He knew his sister, and he knew which way she would have answered if there had been the slightest doubt.

Captain Cleveland caught Jerrold Lumley by the coat collar.

"Come along!" he said. "I think we can do without your company, by Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. stood where they were, their faces a deep red.

Jerrold Lumley was a St. Jim's junior, and he was being turned out of Cleveland Lodge for caddishness to Cousin Ethel. The thing was hardly believable.

Arthur Augustus was staring at the millionaire's son in horror.

"Bai—bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's could not think beyond that simple exclamation. Then Jerrold Lumley began to struggle, and it was all over.

Captain Cleveland had him out of the room in a flash.

The juniors from St. Jim's did not know what to do. None of them had ever found himself in such an unpleasant position.

"My—my hat, isn't it awful?" Tom Merry gasped, under his breath.

Jack Blake looked wrathful.

"Of all the howling outsiders! My aunt, Merry, we will make him sit up for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors were looking out of the window, and they could see Captain Cleveland and Jerrold Lumley walking up the carriage drive.

The captain still had the millionaire's son by the coat collar.

James, the groom, was pushing the motor-cycle along behind them. They all three vanished through the gateway.

A moment or two later Captain Cleveland came striding down the drive with James again, and at the instant a pretty, girlish voice greeted Tom Merry & Co. from behind.

"I don't think any of you are very nice," smiled Ethel; "even my cousin has forgotten to speak to me."

"Bai Jove!"

"And I think Tom Merry is just as bad."

"But—"

"And as for Figgins and Jack Blake— Here is my brother again. Don't you think it is very unkind of all these St. Jim's juniors to forget to speak to me, captain?"

Cousin Ethel usually addressed her brother as "captain," principally because he did not quite like it. He came into the room with his hands in his pockets.

"There's to be some music in the next room, you fellows," he said. "Better come and help with the programme, by Jove!"

That was the captain's way of making it understood that he wished the unpleasant incident forgotten. But it would not do for Tom Merry & Co.

The hero of the Shell glanced once at Jack Blake and Figgins, and received hasty nods in exchange. Then he faced Captain Cleveland.

"We are awfully sorry for what has happened, sir!" he said, loudly enough for all the other guests to hear. "I don't think we have many fellows at St. Jim's like Lumley."

"No, and I don't think you have, either, by Jove!"

Tom Merry hesitated. He felt, somehow, he wanted to apologise for St. Jim's.

But Captain Cleveland understood. He dropped his hand on Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Not another word, youngster," he said quietly. "A thrashing wouldn't hurt the little outsider, though. Come in to the music, by Jove!"

And the juniors went.

A splendid programme had been arranged; but through it all there was a cloud for the juniors.

Every time Figgins looked at Cousin Ethel he thought of the bruises on her wrists, and that made the New House junior grit his teeth.

He, at any rate, had made up his mind about Lumley, and what was deserving to him.

But Jack Blake and Tom Merry also looked as if their minds were made up on the same point, for both of them were thinking of Captain Cleveland's words.

"A thrashing wouldn't hurt the little outsider!"

To judge by the expressions on the faces of Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins, there was to be a day of reckoning in the very near future indeed for Jerrold Lumley.

CHAPTER 6.

The Challenge!

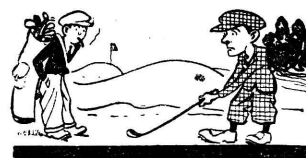
"W EALLY, deah boys, I feah you will have to excuse me—"

"We are going to hold a meeting in Tom Merry's study, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, wathah, Figgay, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus languidly. "Howevah, I shall not keep you long."

BUNKERED!



Novice: "What do I do now? My ball's rolled down a rabbit-hole."

Overloaded Caddie: "My, my! Fancy forgetting to get yourself a ferret!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to O. Trought, 76, Welholme Avenue, Grimsby, Lincs.

And Arthur Augustus flashed away with quite unusual speed.

Tom Merry growled.

"No; he won't keep us waiting long. He won't keep us waiting at all, as it happens."

"Let's get on with the washing!" said Figgins grimly.

"I—"

"Mum's the word until we get into our den!" said Tom Merry quietly.

And there was silence again.

Cousin Ethel had come all the way to St. Jim's with them after the party, James taking her two-seater car round by the road to pick her up. He was to drive her back again.

Tom Merry & Co. could guess why their girl chum had insisted upon the walk.

She had wanted to show them that she was not so very much upset, after all.

Each of the juniors, in his different way, had appreciated the action, but it had completely prevented the slightest discussion on the Lumley affair. Hence the meeting which was now called in Tom Merry's study.

None of the juniors spoke now as they made their way there.

Tom Merry dropped into a chair.

"Shall I take the chair, chaps?"

"Yes, you take it, Tom Merry."

There was nothing like the usual discussion about the place of honour. This was a very serious matter to Tom Merry & Co.

St. Jim's had been badly "let down" by Jerrold Lumley.

The only points upon which there could be any discussion were—how Jerrold Lumley was to be punished, and who was to punish him.

Figgins was the only one of them who did not sit down.

"I don't see there is any use in holding a meeting," said the New House junior. "I—"

"What do you mean, Figgy?"

"I mean, you chaps can do as you like about the matter. I'm going to give Lumley the thrashing of his life."

"My hat!"

Jack Blake jumped to his feet.

"That's where you are wrong, Figgins. It is I who am going to fight him."

Tom Merry was on his feet, too. "This affects the School House more than the New House, Figgins, old chap," he said quietly. "If Lumley won't fight me I shall yank him along to the gym, and give him the hiding of his life with a cane or something. But I think he will fight me."

"Rats, Merry! He's a Fourth Former——"

"He's a St. Jim's chap, worse luck, Blake, old chap!" said the hero of the Shell. "I tell you I am going to fight him."

"No, you are not!"

"Aren't I?"

"Look here!"

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins had had a good many tussles in the past, but none of them were quite like this.

The discussion was becoming fast and furious. Everyone was speaking at once, so that all failed to notice the door was being pushed open.

They also failed to notice that Arthur Augustus was entering the study.

"Pway don't make such a wow, deah boys——"

No one took the slightest notice of him.

"Pway don't get in a fluttah, deah boys!"

The discussion became more heated. Tom Merry was moving towards the door.

Figgins was trying to edge past him.

"Why not draw lots?" suggested Lowther.

It was certainly a way out of the difficulty.

"I'm willing, Figgins."

"I'll agree, Blake."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, sitting down elegantly. "Pway listen to me for a minute, deah boys!"

"Ring off, Gussy! Odd man has it, chaps?"

"Yes; that's the quickest way."

"Weally, Figgay, if you will only pay attention to me for a moment——"

"Rats!"

"Toss up together!"

"Right-ho!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and viewed the proceedings in surprise.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, when I address you——"

"Oh, do ring off! I'm heads!"

"Bother! Tails!"

"And I'm tails, too!" growled Figgins.

Tom Merry grinned quietly.

"Then I have the pleasure of standing up to Lumley?" he said grimly. "Will you two chaps second me?"

"Rather!"

"Of course!"

Arthur Augustus got up.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," he said, "I wegwet to say that it is imposs for Jack Blake to second you, deah boy——"

"Who says so?"

"And it is uttably imposs for Tom Mewwy to fight Lumley-Lumley!" added Arthur Augustus. "That mattah is already awwanged."

"Yes; we know it is!" said Tom Merry sharply.

The swell of St. Jim's stared.

"Bai Jove! I fail to see how you can know that, deah boy, as I have only just challenged the uttah wottah!"

Every junior in the room stared at him.

Tom Merry stepped forward.

"What! What did you say, Gussy?"

"I remarked that I have already challenged Lumley-Lumley, deah boys!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "I have also passed my word of honah that when he has stood up to me in a pwopah mannah he will not have to weceive thwashings ffrom any of you othahs. I thought that was only weasonable, deah boys!"

The juniors gasped.

"The affair is to take place behind the gym in a few minutes, bai Jove!" he went on. "I wathah think I shall change into shorts, deah boys!"

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins were still gasping.

CHAPTER 7.

Lumley's Opponent!

"OF all the utter cheek!"

"Weally, Figgay——"

"Fancy stealing a march on us like that, Gussy!" cried Tom Merry. "There'll have to be an alteration, I'll go and tell Lumley——"

"Wats, deah boy! I have passed my word of honah."

"But——"

The juniors looked from one to another in dismay.

"I don't think you ought to have done it, Gussy," Tom Merry exclaimed. "You ought to have joined in when we tossed up."

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"Weally, deah boy——"

"Yes, you ought."

"Weally, deah boy, it is a family mattah with me. Ethel is my cousin, you know."

Tom Merry & Co. started. Arthur Augustus had spoken the words very quietly, and there was a great deal in them. After all, it really was Arthur Augustus' affair more than theirs, in a way.

Tom Merry had not thought of that.

Still, there was the other side of the question.

Would Arthur Augustus be able to thrash the millionaire's son as he deserved to be thrashed? Tom Merry and Figgins could not help feeling doubtful on that point.

All St. Jim's knew that Arthur Augustus had pluck enough for anything, but pluck is not all that was needed against Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry & Co. felt very uncomfortable about the whole thing.

"If you lose, Gussy, you'll be flayed in boiling oil!"

"If I—— Weally, Tom Mewwy, you don't think Lumley will have a chance against me, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in amazement. "I shall simply walk wound him, bai Jove!"

"Humph!"

"Don't you be too sure of that, ass!"

"Gweat Scott! But even Jack Blake thwashed him!"

Jack Blake started.

"Here, what's that?"

"So you did, deah boy, although the wottah scwatched like a w'etched mousah."

Jack Blake looked wrathful. Tom Merry was still thinking of the awful position they would be in if Lumley did win.

"And, mind you, he's been learning to box, Gussy!" he exclaimed anxiously.

Arthur Augustus waved his arms loftily.

"I do not care whethah he has been undahstudyin' Jack Petersen, deah boy!"

"Ass!"

"If you do lose——" began Figgins wrathfully.

"Wats—uttah wats! As a mattah of fact, it would be uttably imposs for me to lose, as the affair is simply one of personal dig. My cousin was wottenly insulted by a w'etched outsiders—it is my duty to thwash the outsiders. I considah the mattah entirely settled."

Tom Merry listened quietly enough, but he looked very worried. However, there was no time to answer, because Mellish, the junior who was known as the cad of the Fourth, came into the room at that moment.

"Lumley is ready," said Mellish, his little eyes sparkling.

"Bai Jove!"

"He's already changed and down at the gym."

"Gweat Scott!"

"And he has sent me to say that if you apologise for the slap across the face he'll let you off," finished Mellish gleefully.

Arthur Augustus sprang to his feet with a gasp.

"The uttah wottah! Apologise! Gweat Scott!"

Tom Merry & Co. were conscious of a thrill. The swell of St. Jim's had said nothing about smacking Lumley across the face.

They were glad he had done that, anyway.

Arthur Augustus was slipping off his coat and waistcoat.

"Pway apologise to the uttah cad for my bein' late!" he said loftily. "I will huvwy like anythin' with changin'."

"Then you aren't going to apologise, D'Arcy?"

"No, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to give the wottah a feahful thwashin' instead."

There was almost a dead silence in Study No. 1 as Arthur Augustus changed into football shorts and a white vest, but when he insisted upon carefully reparting his hair in the exact centre, Jack Blake boiled over.

"You utter, shrieking ass!"

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Oh, yank him along!" yelled the chief of Study No. 6.

"Yank the tailor's dummy along!"

"Bai Jove! Welease me, Digby—welease me instantly, as I have decided to change my vest aftah all, as this one does not fit across the shouldahs."

"Altogether, chaps!"

"You wuffians! Hewwies, I considah you an uttah wuffian! Mannahs I look upon you as anothah——"

"Get the door open!"

"Right-ho!"

And the swell of St. Jim's was rushed out into the passage. Then they ran him down to the grounds, and dragged him across the quadrangle towards the gymnasium.

The first sight Jerrold Lumley caught of his opponent in the forthcoming fight was the spectacle of him being

forced along against his will by the combined efforts of twelve excited and wrathful juniors.

The millionaire's son stared in blank amazement. Mellish blinked unbelievably.

"My—my hat! He's in a funk, and no mistake!"

And Jerrold Lumley grinned, with his teeth clenched.

There was a red mark on his rather pasty face where Arthur Augustus' open palm had struck him.

CHAPTER 8.

The Fight!

"YOU howwid wuffians! I wefuse to be dwagged—"

"Come on, Gussy!"

"You are going to see this through."

"I wefuse! Wefuse me instantly!"

But Tom Merry & Co. took no notice of Arthur Augustus' requests, although perhaps they might have been less

"All right!" said French curtly.

"What about a referee?"

"Oh, we shan't want a ref, Dig!" said Tom Merry. "If either of the principals doesn't play the game, he'll be jumped on soon enough."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I should uttably wefuse to be jumped on, but as I should also uttably wefuse to play anythin' but the game—"

"Ring off!"

"A bit bigger ring, chaps!"

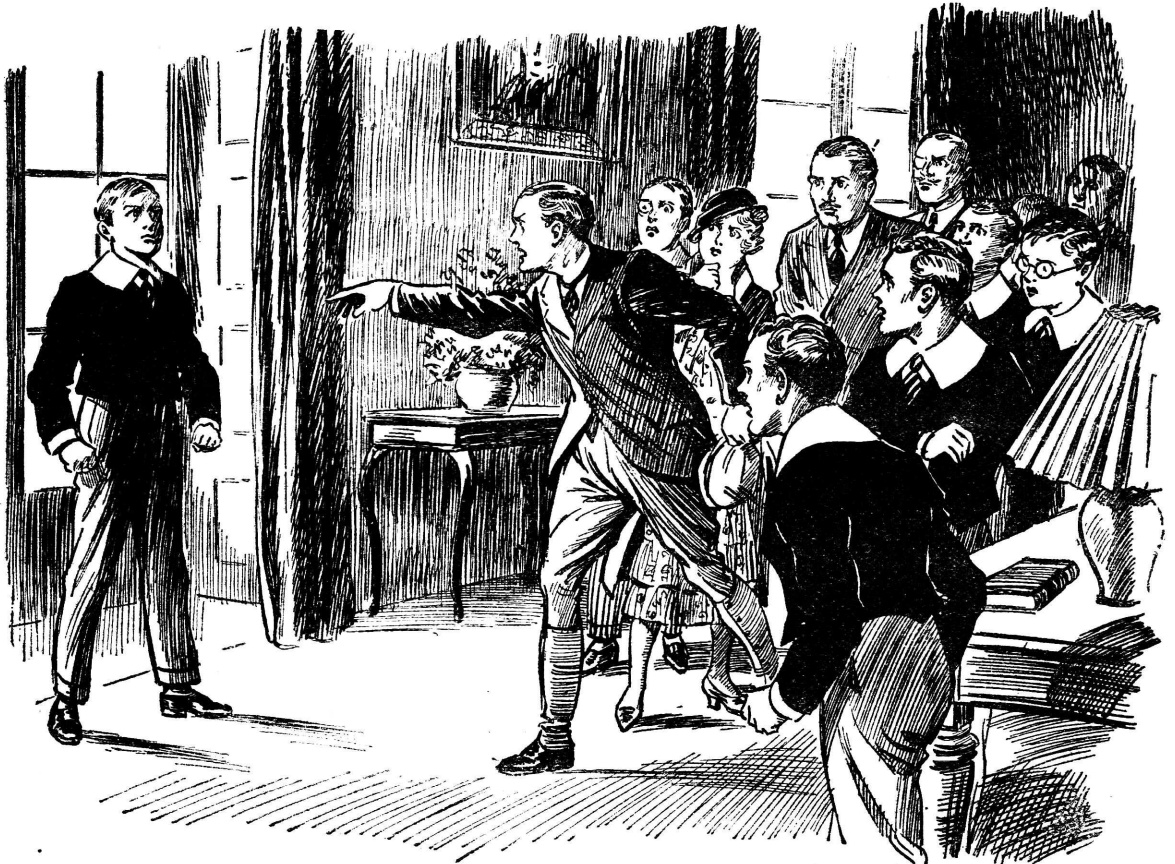
The ring was hastily formed, the juniors standing round in a large circle answering the purpose, then French took out his watch.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready"

"Yaas wathah! So am I, bai Jove!" And Arthur Augustus stepped forward.

He looked very slim in his boxing clothes, but it was a



"That's the boy who nearly caused Robin to bolt!" said the groom, pointing to Lumley-Lumley. The words seemed to cut through the air of the room, and all eyes turned towards the Outsider. "What on earth are you talking about?" said Lumley. "I did not pass a trap on the road."

anxious in dragging him along if they had known Jerrold Lumley was watching.

But Jerrold Lumley meant that they should know.

He stepped round the corner of the gymnasium quickly.

"You're principal doesn't seem in a great hurry, Blake," he said coolly. "Perhaps you are trying to prevent him rushing to attack me, though."

Tom Merry and Jack Blake released Arthur Augustus at the same moment. Figgins was glaring at the millionaire's son.

"You'll see whether he's keen in a minute or two, you cad!"

"I saw just now—thanks!"

"Bai Jove, I am all in a fluttah!"

Jerrold Lumley laughed loudly.

"Yes; you look it!" he sneered. "I'm still ready to accept an apology, D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott! Wats!"

"Well, I am ready when you are then, D'Arcy," said Lumley calmly. "Two minute rounds and one minute rests, I suppose? Perhaps French will take the time?"

wiry sort of slimness. He had a slight advantage in height, but there was very little in it in reach.

Tom Merry and Figgins exchanged glances.

Either of them would have given a good deal to be facing the grinning Lumley now. Jack Blake, curiously enough, seemed satisfied.

"Oh, we can leave it to Gussy!" he whispered. "The one and only won't let us down."

"Oh, I know he'll do his best, old chap, but—"

"And his best will be yards better than Lumley's. Trust Study No. 6."

"When is that ass French going to start them?" exclaimed Figgins

"Time!"

French rapped out the word, and the two principals came together. Jerrold Lumley held out his hand.

Arthur Augustus stared at it loftily.

"When I thave thwashed you, and when you have apologized to my cousin, I may considah shakin' hands with you," he said coolly. "For the pwesent I look upon you as a wotten outsidah."

Lumley went a deep red.

Very few juniors in St. Jim's could have said the words in quite the contemptuous tone Arthur Augustus used, and Lumley's coolness deserted him for a moment.

He lashed out furiously.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was driven back. He never said anything afterwards, but the suddenness of the blow had taken him by surprise.

To Tom Merry and Figgins he seemed to be losing ground in the most feeble manner.

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Wade into the cad! My hat!"

Arthur Augustus had been driven almost into the "ring." Then suddenly his left streaked out.

It was a beautiful counter, and it got home on Lumley's chest, staggering him.

"My hat, he's boxing now!"

"Yes, but why doesn't he wade into the cad? I want to see him thrashed—not beaten at boxing!" Figgins spoke shortly. He was still looking rather savage. Then his face lighted up.

Arthur Augustus had sent a crashing right-hand blow between Lumley's eyes, and had stepped back nimbly. He looked perfectly calm.

But the millionaire's son did not mean Arthur Augustus to have all his own way.

He dashed in and struck Arthur Augustus in the mouth. Blood trickled down the Fourth Former's face, but he was ready with the counter. Then the fight started in real earnest.

Blow after blow they struck at one another, the grimness of the swell of St. Jim's staggering Figgins & Co.

Arthur Augustus was fighting furiously.

"My hat, isn't he a brick!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"I told you he wouldn't let us down," breathed Jack Blake, his voice thrilling. "He'll thrash the Outsider, or he will be absolutely knocked out. Oh, well hit!"

"Time!" cried French.

The two juniors stopped. Then Lumley wheeled round to French.

"Hang rounds!" he snapped. "Let's fight it out!"

"Bai Jove, I was about to suggest that myself!"

This was not an ordinary affair of a dispute being settled by three rounds. A cad had to be thrashed. It was much better to get the thrashing over as soon as possible.

And what a thrashing it was, too!

Looking at Arthur Augustus as the minutes flew by, the juniors could scarcely believe it was the swell of St. Jim's they saw.

Jerrold Lumley was losing. There could be no doubt about that. His punishment was very severe, although he got home a good many blows himself.

But they did not even ruffle Arthur Augustus. He had taken this duty upon himself. Later on the disfigurement of a black eye would trouble him a great deal, no doubt, but for the present he cared nothing for Jerrold Lumley's fists.

Once, when they had been fighting for about five minutes, he got home with an uppercut that sent the millionaire's son to the grass. But the millionaire's son scrambled to his feet, and came on with a rush. He was met by a perfectly straight fist, and he was down again.

But Lumley showed his pluck that evening.

He got up and faced the swell of St. Jim's again, although his face was badly swollen.

Another crashing blow staggered him, then Arthur Augustus began to fight at a much greater pace. He meant to finish the affair now.

In a manner which completely amazed all but Jack Blake & Co., he drove the Outsider round the ring by the sheer weight of his blows. Time after time his fists pounded upon Lumley.

He thrashed Jerrold Lumley as he had never been thrashed before, and sent him to the grass again. This time there would be no more fighting.

Jerrold Lumley was done.

Arthur Augustus waited.

"When you have recovahed enough, Lumley, we will listen to what you have to say," he said quietly. "There is no gweat huwvy."

Lumley's face was very black.

"What do you want me to say?"

"That you are sowwy you bwrought disgwace upon St. Jim's this aftahnnoon."

There was a pause. Lumley-Lumley had risen to his feet, but he was far too unsteady to think of continuing the fight.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Arthur Augustus turned away.

"That's all wight. Now for the othah mattah. Pwady hand ovah my coat, Figgay, deah boy."

The coat was handed over.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,370.

Everyone felt that there was something else to come. Arthur Augustus fumbled in his pocket.

He drew out a sheet of St. Jim's notepaper.

"Just wite these words, Lumley," he said. "I have a pen here."

Lumley took the pen and paper.

"Wite: 'I apologise for what I did this afternoon,' and sign your name underneath. I have already addressed the envelope to Cousin Ethel."

There was another pause.

Tom Merry & Co. stared with bated breath. They had had a good many dealings with Lumley-Lumley, and they could scarcely believe that he would write the words.

They stood and stared at the two principals.

Lumley and Arthur Augustus were looking in each other's eyes, then the millionaire's son suddenly lowered his.

The next moment he was writing the words.

He handed the sheet of notepaper back and strode away.

CHAPTER 9.

On the Moors!

JERROLD LUMLEY awoke with a start the following morning.

He had been dreaming of the Rylcombe Steeple-chases, and his dream had startled him.

He sat up in bed, still feeling sore from his licking the previous evening.

"Is anyone awake?"

"Dear me! Yes, I am. Pray do not talk to me, though; I am busy."

Lumley-Lumley peered across the room and shrugged his shoulders.

The junior who had answered him was Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell.

"What are you doing in our dormitory, anyway?" growled Lumley.

"Dear me! I have only come for the solitaire board which Digby borrowed last night. I—I believe I have solved the problem."

Jerrold Lumley did not show any great enthusiasm. He jumped out of bed and looked at his face in the glass.

It was very puffed and discoloured.

Then he went across to Arthur Augustus' bed and looked down at the sleeping junior.

Arthur Augustus also showed signs of the fight, but his bruises were fewer and less pronounced. The millionaire's son stood looking at the sleeping junior for quite a long time.

There was not a very pleasant expression on his face as the early morning sun caught it.

He turned away at last and commenced to dress.

Skimpole looked up from the solitaire board in surprise.

"Dear me! You aren't going out, are you?"

"It almost looks as if I am, doesn't it?" snapped Lumley-Lumley. "Now dry up!"

Lumley hurried into his things, then left the dormitory. He made his way out of the School House and across the quadrangle. He stopped at the cycle-house again.

"I may as well take the ordinary grid this time," he muttered; "it isn't far."

He was soon in the saddle and speeding down the road towards the moors. Once there, he skirted past the quarry and began to slow down before a country house with large stables at the back.

It was towards the stables that Lumley was heading.

"He said he was going to take Guardsman for a run this morning," he mused. "I—I wonder if that row at Cleveland Lodge will have barred me here?"

It was certainly a point, and one a good many juniors would not have cared to put to the test. But Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley's son and heir had few nerves.

He peered over the wall, then propped his machine against it.

There was someone in the stable-yard.

"Holbrook, too!" muttered the junior. "Good!"

And he walked boldly through the gates. He raised his cap, and Major Holbrook turned.

"I hope I am not intruding, sir," he began, "but I caught sight of you as I was cycling past. I—I should very much like to see Guardsman have his gallop, sir."

Major Holbrook nodded.

"He's just going out. Jackson, how much longer are you going to be?"

"I can't get the saddle on him, sir; he's in a nasty mood."

"Nonsense!" snapped the major, peering through the upper half of the stable door. "The fact is you don't know an atom about horses!"

It was an unmerited rebuke, for the stable-lad understood and loved the animals. But he did not answer; his back was turned to the door, so he grimed a little.

He noticed the major did not offer to enter the loose-box.

Jerrold Lumley also noticed the same thing and peered in over the half-door as well.

The beautiful lines of Guardsman made his eyes sparkle with enthusiasm. He, like Arthur Augustus, loved horses.

"By Jove! He is a beauty, sir!"

The major grunted.

"The finest fencer in Sussex, if Madcap has a dozen equals," he growled. "Put the saddle on him, man!"

Jackson went red. He was doing his best, but the hunter was rearing all over the place.

The stable-boy had anything but an easy job.

"I think it would be better to give him half an hour to himself, sir," he ventured. "If you are going to ride him, sir—"

"Put the saddle on!"

Jackson bit his lip and made another effort to saddle the horse.

Guardsman sent him staggering across the loose-box.

Jerrold Lumley was watching keenly. Presently he turned to the major.

"Would you object to my trying to saddle him, sir?" he asked politely. "My father has a good many horses."

"You can try if you like!" snapped the major. "Don't blame me if the brute kicks you, though."

Lumley-Lumley did not wait for a second invitation. He opened the door and slipped into the loose-box.

"Does he kick, Jackson?" he whispered.

"Something awful, sir, when he's in the mood"

"Lend me the saddle, then. You want to go for him like this."

And the junior stepped up to the beautiful hunter and struck it across the mouth. The animal plunged furiously, and Lumley struck it again; then, to Jackson's amazement, he got the saddle on.

Guardsman was trembling as if from a shock.

"My hat, sir! I've never seen anyone master Guardsman like that since the major had him."

The millionaire's son shrugged his shoulders.

"He's frightened of me, that's all," he said. "Look how he's trembling!"

"Yes, sir. Mind as you get the bit in his mouth."

Lumley laughed. The bit was soon in its place. Then he coolly patted the hunter—who was as quiet as a livery stable hack, but for the trembling muscles.

"Oh, he's nothing to some horses I've had to handle in America!" exclaimed the junior.

"Well, he's nothing to Madcap, if it comes to that, I suppose, sir," admitted the stable-boy. "Captain Cleveland has to saddle her every time he wants to go out; the stable hands stand and look on."

Jerrold Lumley glanced up.

"That's the horse who'll be the chief rival to Guardsman in the big steeplechase, isn't it?"

"The only rival, sir. The rest of the field won't have a look in, and Guardsman will win if the major rides her."

"If?" queried Lumley, his eyes sparkling.

The stable-boy lowered his voice.

"Between ourselves, sir, the major's funking it," he whispered. "He's mortal afraid of being thrown. Perhaps I shall get my chance when the time comes."

A shadow of a smile flickered across Lumley-Lumley's face. He turned to Major Holbrook without answering.

"Shall I bring the horse out, sir?"

"Yes. You know a good deal about horses, don't you, my lad?"

"Well, perhaps I do a bit, sir. I've done a good deal of steeplechasing."

That was untrue. Jerrold Lumley had never ridden in a steeplechase in his life, but he had hunted a fair amount, and ridden to please himself anywhere and everywhere a good deal more.

The truth did not trouble the millionaire's son when he had an end to gain.

He led Guardsman out to the major.

"Are you going to ride as you are, sir?"

The major frowned.

"No; I have just lighted a cigar. Get into the saddle, Jackson."

"Yes, sir!"

Jerrold Lumley still led the horse, and for a fraction of a moment he hesitated. He was in the presence of men who understood horses better than he did, in a way. Still, he was always ready to take risks when there was something to be gained. He waited until Jackson got round to the side, then he wrenched the horse's mouth.

Guardsman plunged wildly. Jackson reeled backwards.

"You clumsy rascal!" fumed the major, storming at the stable-boy. "Anyone would think you'd never been in a stable! You let a schoolboy bridle him, and then—you'd better go and get one of the other men to ride him."

(Continued on next page.)



MAKE THE JESTER SMILE

AND WIN HALF-A-CROWN!

Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

REFLECTION.

Short-sighted Old Lady (in antique shop): "And here, I suppose, is another of those horrible portraits you call 'art'?"
Assistant: "Excuse me, madam, but that's a mirror!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Dean, 7, Westminster Avenue, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

SAVING TIME!

Bill: "Do you know that fellow Jones?"
 Alf: "Sure."
 Bill: "Well, he isn't half tight-fisted. He even stops his watch to save time!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Lowe, 39, Farnan Avenue, Walthamstow, London, E.17.

NO ARGUMENT.

Teacher: "Now, what shape is the earth?"
 Tommy: "Round, sir."
 Teacher: "How do you know?"
 Tommy: "Oh, all right, then it's square—we won't argue!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Gibson, 110, Hamilton Road, Liverpool 5.

BEEN SOUP!

Diner (indignantly): "What's this, waiter?"
 Waiter: "Bean soup, sir."
 Diner: "Since when?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Williams, 1, Kilmuir Street, Glasgow, N.W.

NO DREAM.

Night Watchman: "I dreamt last night that the works was on fire."
 Boss: "Did you? Well, you're fired now—and that's not a dream!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Shaw, 13, Palatine Street, Harpurhey, Manchester 9.

SCHOOLBOY HOWLER.

Teacher: "From twelve o'clock at night till noon is called 'ante meridiem.' Now, Jones, tell me what noon till twelve o'clock is called."
 Jones: "Uncle Meridiem, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Barratt, 1, West Park Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds 8.

A LONG JOB.

Golfer (angrily): "I'll stay here till I've hit this ball!"
 Caddie: "Then you'll have to get a new caddie, sir. I'm on holiday next week!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Watkins, 12, Tredegar Road, Ebbw Vale, Mon.

AN EARLY RISE.

"I want a boy like you," said the butcher, "to work for me at ten shillings a week."
 "Shall I have a chance to rise, sir?" asked the boy.
 "You will," said the butcher. "I want you here at six in the morning!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Tomkinson, 20, Rosebery Avenue, New Malden, Surrey.

That was the opening Jerrold Lumley had been longing for.

He seized it as his father had seized openings on the Stock Exchange.

"Would you object to my giving him a gallop, sir?" The millionaire's son asked the question coolly. The answer meant a lot to him.

"Are you sure you can?" growled the major.

"May I try?"

Major Holbrook hesitated, then he nodded.

"Only don't you let him stumble, and look out for a trick he has of stopping dead."

Jerrold Lumley did not answer. He sprang lightly into the saddle before either the major or his horse had any idea of his intention.

Guardsmen were rearing on his hind legs at once, but Lumley-Lumley was ready for that.

He got him down again, and then they circled round and round.

In that instant he caught sight of a small party of St. Jim's juniors.

They were Tom Merry & Co.

A smile of triumph flashed across Jerrold Lumley's face. He wondered what could have brought the rival Co.'s to the moor at that hour, but he was intensely glad they were there.

He would show the juniors that there were some things he could do better than they.

He brought Guardsman to a standstill in masterly fashion.

CHAPTER 10.

Thrown!

"**B**AI Jove, it's Lumley, deah boys!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake stared across the moor in amazement.

"My hat, so it is! And he's on Guardsman, Madcap's rival!"

Arthur Augustus nodded vigorously.

"Wathah! Bai Jove, the wottah can wide, deah boys!"

The St. Jim's juniors looked across the moor in silence. They had made the journey from St. Jim's at Arthur Augustus' suggestion, to see Captain Cleveland's horse, Madcap. Arthur Augustus was positive the captain would be on the moors that morning, and the interest at St. Jim's was becoming acute over the big steeplechase.

The spectacle of Lumley-Lumley mounted on Madcap's rival came as a great surprise.

"I suppose the wottah asked for a wide, deah boys."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's my opinion that Major Holbrook isn't so jolly keen on mounting Guardsman," he said thoughtfully. "It's a lovely horse, kids."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Doesn't come up to Madcap, though," said Figgins.

Arthur Augustus cast a critical glance over Guardsman's points as he galloped by, and shook his head.

"I wathah fancy you are wight, Figgy, although there is vewy little in it eithah way. If I had to wide the pick of the two I should choose Madcap."

"Of course you would!"

"So would anyone else who knew a horse from a donkey," declared Figgins. "My hat! I believe that is the captain."

"Bai Jove! On Madcap, too!"

"They are coming past here, chaps. We shall see both together."

"Rather!"

The juniors peered over the hedge excitedly.

Major Holbrook was some distance away, watching Lumley-Lumley circle the hunter round. The millionaire's son suddenly headed towards him.

"Isn't that Madcap, sir?"

"Yes, and Cleveland up."

Jerrold Lumley looked uncomfortable for a moment, bringing Guardsman round so that he backed the approaching captain.

"Will—will he stop, do you think, sir?"

Major Holbrook shrugged his shoulders.

"Not he!" he growled. "He'll be too afraid of his precious horse taking a chill. You see, he'll flash past us. Look here, youngster, don't let him pass you."

Jerrold Lumley looked surprised for a moment or two.

"I mean, race him for the stables. Do you hear me? I've a particular reason for wishing to see how the horses compare."

Lumley nodded. He understood, and he thought he understood the major's "special reason." It might be useful for betting purposes to gain an inkling of the horses' respective merits.

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Captain Cleveland was not a betting man. He could be relied upon not to make a dark horse affair of it.

The thought flashed through Jerrold Lumley's brain like lightning, and another one followed just as quickly.

Suppose he succeeded in preventing the captain passing him? That would mean a lot to the vague plan which was at the back of his early morning visit to the moors.

"I'll do my best, sir," he breathed, and glanced over his shoulder.

Captain Cleveland was coming on at a steady gallop. Lumley-Lumley got Guardsman into his stride, but he did not extend him for a moment or two.

He was listening for the growing noise of Madcap's hoofs on the hard ground.

The captain could not be far behind now. The millionaire's son urged his horse on.

A laugh rang out behind him. Captain Cleveland had accepted the challenge.

With scarcely a length between them the two horses thudded along towards where Tom Merry & Co. were standing.

"Bai Jove, they are wacin', deah boys!"

Figgins' eyes sparkled.

"Trust the captain."

"Rather! Here they come!"

The horses were coming on at a splendid pace. The gap between them was lessening. Madcap was more than holding her own.

Jerrold Lumley knew that. He could tell by the thud behind him, and a keen, hard expression flashed across his face.

If Captain Cleveland got past him it was good-bye to the plan the millionaire's son was dreaming of.

But the captain should not pass him.

Jerrold Lumley had made up his mind upon that point. He would do almost anything to prevent a sight of Madcap's heels.

"Look out there, by Jove!"

Captain Cleveland gave a warning shout, with a sharp note in it. Jerrold Lumley was bringing his horse in a little.

It was a very little indeed, but there was not much to spare between Madcap and the hedge, as it was. The millionaire's son made a clever pretence of pulling his horse round. Arthur Augustus was watching, with absorbing interest.

"The wotten cad!"

"Why?"

"What's he doing?"

Figgins and Digby spoke together. They could see that Captain Cleveland had very little room to get past the rival horse without touching the hedge; still, they thought that was due to chance.

But Arthur Augustus knew too much about riding to think that for an instant.

"The uttah wottah is borin' my cousin into the hedge—"

"No, he's passed!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Hurrah!"

But the cheer came too early.

Madcap had made a splendid effort to get past her rival, and she had almost succeeded. Jerrold Lumley knew that. Then he did something that has ended many a professional jockey's career on the English turf. He brought his horse across so that it was impossible for Madcap to pass.

"Gweat Scott!"

"He'll be thrown!"

"Bai Jove!"

A loud thud rang out. The horses had come together, but Guardsman was all right. He had miles of moors on his left flank.

And all Madcap had on her right was the hedge which grew in front of a stout fence. It was a moment Tom Merry & Co. were long in forgetting.

They saw Captain Cleveland make a great effort to pull up, and they saw that Madcap did her best to obey, but the little mare could not do impossibilities.

She crashed into the hedge, and a gasp of horror rang out from Tom Merry.

Captain Cleveland was thrown.

The whole thing had only occupied a few seconds, and Jerrold Lumley had brought it about so cleverly that even Arthur Augustus could not be certain.

But none of the juniors were thinking of the cause of the accident now; there was the results to be thought of. They forced their way through the fence and rushed to Captain Cleveland's side.

"Madcap!" cried the captain. "Catch hold of Madcap, by Jove!"

The captain's first thought was for his horse, although his own head was bleeding a good deal.

"Steady, deah gal!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Steady!"

(Continued on page 14.)



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! Here we are again with the details of another ripping programme of fun and fiction for next week. Firstly, there is a grand long school story by popular Martin Clifford, entitled:

"TOWSER'S RIVALS!"

Towser, as you all know, is George Herries' pet bulldog—and a nuisance he is at times—or rather, Herries makes him a nuisance. In next Wednesday's lively and humorous story there is no little bother over Towser. Having entered the animal in a dog show, Herries only wants to keep him in Study No. 6 to prepare him for the show! That causes fun and trouble, but nothing to the fun and trouble that a new St. Jim's rival of Towser's causes! He's an amazing mastiff whose antics will amuse you immensely—especially when he runs wild at the dog show! Fun, frolic, and adventure guaranteed with this tip-top yarn, chums!

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

Next, there is another powerful instalment of this popular Wild West serial. In these chapters Nipper and Willy find the cavern prison of Captain Merton, but before they can get him out they are attacked by Black Riders! There follows a terrific scrap, which you will thoroughly enjoy reading all about.

After this fiction treat comes our other popular features, which include another full-o'-pep number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," all the laughs of the week in a column of readers' prize-winning jokes, Mr. Brooks' chat, and finally, your Editor's usual notes and news. Don't forget to give that order for the GEM early—if you haven't done so already.

ONCE A BLACK SHEEP—

always a black sheep—at least, it seems to be so with Vernon-Smith, the

"Bounder" of Greyfriars. For even with the eagle eye of his rascally Form-master for ever on him, he cannot resist breaking bounds. Fortunately, however, the Bounder has staunch friends in Harry Wharton & Co., who, whether he likes it or not, are determined to save the Bounder from himself.

All of you, chums, should read "SAVING A SCAPEGRACE!"—this week's thrilling story of the boys of Greyfriars by Frank Richards—in the "MAGNET," on sale everywhere, price 2d. Get a copy to-day.

THE PERFORMING PARROT.

Let me introduce you to Polly, of Chester. Polly is a twelve-year-old parrot, and she's worth her weight in gold to her owner, for she is the cleverest parrot in England. Polly can perform all sorts of tricks, and she is a popular turn at local functions, where she is in great demand. Already this knowing parrot has made over £100 for charity by her performances.

Among her many tricks Polly can tell the time, whistle a dance tune, and answer the phone, while her imitations of the meow of a cat and the bark of a dog are exceedingly clever. Polly can also act in the capacity of a valet to her master, for she can take off his hat and tie and unbutton his waistcoat. Then again, Polly believes in keeping fit. She can do her physical jerks and salute like a Boy Scout. So clever is this parrot that her master has insured her for £100.

£50 PLANES!

Who wants to buy an aeroplane? The Air Ministry have some for sale—price £50! These machines, which are fully airworthy and capable of a speed of 120 miles per hour, were built as fighters; but they are now too heavy and out-of-date. They originally cost £4,000 each to build! But the drawback about this type of plane, even though it is as cheap

as a secondhand car, is that it costs too much to fly. Petrol and oil consumption would be very heavy, and one must have a convenient landing-ground, with a hangar. Nevertheless, it is a very tempting offer. The Air Ministry have also some aero engines to sell, and they are going for the knock-out price of £10 each!

BOY RECORD-BREAKER.

Another world speed record has been broken—and by a boy of fourteen! The previous record for soleing and heeling a pair of shoes was held by an American, who did the job in thirteen minutes. But an English boy named Sidney Burton has now done it in eleven minutes! Sidney has a gift for handling the machinery of his trade, and he can control four machines where it is usual for an expert to handle only two. Good work, Sidney! Speed is the essence of a contract.

A NEW DIET.

If you want to live to 200 years eat seaweed! Such is briefly the prescription in the report of an American doctor which he has submitted to the League of Nations for investigation. The doctor advises the eating of certain seaweeds, and the sea-fish that feed off them. He points to the Japanese who, he says, have the finest hair and teeth in the world, and they eat seaweed and sea-fish. If the eating of seaweed is the secret of long life, it only remains for us to change our diet right away to increase our span of years. But what a monotonous diet! I'd rather forgo a few years by eating a nice juicy steak now and again!

By the way, seaweed has many other uses besides being eaten as a food. It is used for insulating walls and making them sound-proof. Iodine is also extracted from it, and it can be used as a fertiliser after being burned.

A LUCKY FIND.

Some time back a long-deserted mine in Australia was being searched by "muckers"—men who delve into mine workings in the hope of making a lucky find. One of them by accident knocked against a strut, dislodging it and bringing down a fall of rock. Amongst the debris was discovered a piece of rock which contained a large black opal! That opal, which is 2½ in. by 1½ in. in size, is the largest in the world. It is now known as the Harlequin Opal, and is valued at £1,300!

TAILPIECE.

"In your last school report," said the father sternly to the son, "it stated that you are bottom of the class."
"That's all right, dad," returned the boy cheerfully. "They teach the same both ends!"

THE EDITOR.

C. A. Whelan, 123, The Grove, Stratford, London, E.15, wants to hear from readers.

Count Bjarne Kirchoff, Woodbine Camp, Nanoose Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors who are collectors of the "Nelson Lee."

Sydney Groom, 34, Ingleton Road, Edgeley, Stockport, Ches., wants a pen pal who is interested in films and dogs; age 12-14.

E. Stephenson, 132, Peel Street, Gisborne, New Zealand, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Robin L. Dunlop, Cleasby Grange, Boscombe, Bournemouth, wants pen pals interested in shipping, in U.S.A. and Canada; ages 11-13.

Miss J. Froom, 11, Francis Avenue, Brighton-le-Sands, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants a girl pen pal in Canada; age 14-16; sports, film stars, etc.

Arnold V. G. Springates, 2550, Coursol Street, Montreal, Pro. Quebec, Canada, wants to correspond with anyone interested in stamps and descriptive geography; interested in all countries; British Empire especially; a Scout; age 16-17.

(Continued on page 28.)

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A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Miss Jean McKenzie, 4, Rose Street, Timaru, New Zealand, wants to hear from girl readers in London.

L. A. Wharidall, 46, North Parade, Torrensfield, Adelaide, South Australia, wants to hear from readers who are keen on the old stories.

Ernest Villars, 5, Kemshead Road, Albany Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.5, wants a pen pal in France or Belgium interested in chemistry and mechanical engineering.

G. Searsbrook, 37, Driffield Road, Roman Road, Bow, London, E.3, wants a pen pal in France interested in stamps; age 13-14.

The St. Jim's Jockeys!

(Continued from page 12.)

He had Madcap by the bridle now, and, like Jerrold Lumley, he had a way with horses, but it was a very different way.

What the millionaire's son did with a blow the swell of St. Jim's brought about by a pat.

Madcap stood still, trembling and frightened.

Captain Cleveland struggled to his feet. "By Jove!"

His face was distorted with pain. He was grasping his right wrist with his left hand.

"Not broken, by Jove, but badly twisted."

"And your head's bleeding, sir."

"Never mind my head, Merry!" exclaimed the captain. "I don't hold the reins with my head, by Jove! Phew!"

He held out his wrist. It was already beginning to swell badly.

Tom Merry looked at it closely. It was a bad sprain.

The same thought flashed through Tom Merry's brain which was troubling Captain Cleveland—would he be able to ride Madcap in the steeplechase, now?

"And if I don't," muttered the captain, "there's no one else who will be able to, by Jove!"

Major Holbrook came hurrying up at that moment, a good deal of concern in his face. Jerrold Lumley looked for condemnation there, but he could see none.

Perhaps his despicable action of "boring" his rival's horse had passed notice, after all.

The millionaire's son brought Guardsman round, and looked Captain Cleveland straight in the face.

"I am awfully sorry! I trust the accident was not my fault."

Captain Cleveland looked up then, and started. He recognised Jerrold Lumley for the first time.

"I didn't know it was you I was riding against, by Jove!"

"I don't think it was the lad's fault, Cleveland," said Major Holbrook. "It was reckless work trying to get past Guardsman."

"It was reckless work this young cub coming across!" said the captain shortly.

"Really, Cleveland—"

"He pulled right across me, by Jove!"

"Yes, I know. I did!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley quickly. "I thought you were on the other side, and I tried to give you more room."

It was a clever answer, because it could not be proved to be untrue. Captain Cleveland had to accept the explanation outwardly, but he was assured in his own heart the accident was not so much of an accident as Jerrold Lumley would have them believe.

Arthur Augustus had no doubt on the matter now.

"I vegwet to say that I cannot believe you, Lumley," he said coolly. "I considah you delibevately bored my cousin."

"And I don't care an atom what you believe!" flashed the millionaire's son.

"Major Holbrook knows whether it was an accident or not."

"Yes, of course," said the major. "Guardsman is too good for your horse."

"There isn't a horse in Sussex too good for her, by Jove! Hold her while I get up, Arthur."

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No. 14. Vol. 1 (New Series).

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

MR. RATCLIFF SPEAKING



When Figgins asked me to make an appearance before the televisor, I refused. Merry has repeated the request, and in order to settle the matter I am complying. Merry asks me to deliver a cheerful message suitable for the Whitsun holiday.

Let me say at once that this preoccupation with holidays gives me intense annoyance. There are far too many holidays. When I was a boy, schools were run on much stricter lines than to-day. Not long ago it was usual to have only two vacations, winter and summer, with none of the privileges which boys enjoy at St. Jim's. Hours in class were longer, and sport was not encouraged to the ridiculous extent that it is now. I myself am a fair product of a sterner age, and I am a kind and good-tempered mentor. If I frequently have recourse to severe canings, the victims should remember that it does them good!

Merry asks me to suggest what you should do this Whitsun. You should study. Get hold of Livy, and enjoy his classic style. For a change, brush up your French, and then go on to Maths, pitting your wits against the Binomial Theorem, if you want a stiff task. I am aware that after reading this you will probably go out and engage in a foolish game of cricket, or a hike, or something equally aimless. It is just this very attitude of yours to my advice which annoys me and makes me feel that all boys should be caned to start the day, caned after lunch, and caned before dormitory. I should be pleased to do the caning myself, but the Head does not see eye to eye with me.

For some unknown reason Dr. Holmes seems to see some good in cricket, and hiking and kindred sports, and actually urges you to go out and forget your studies at Whitsun. Such a policy is quite incomprehensible to me, and if I ever take over the reins of St. Jim's, there will be a change.

Dr. Holmes and myself have had many brushes. Only the other day I caned Figgins severely for smashing my window with a cricket ball. Dr. Holmes said that as Figgins was on the cricket field, batting or butting, or something, he could not have actually aimed the ball at my window! That shows you the sort of atmosphere in which boys are bred to-day. It disgusts me. I have no more to say!

We never refuse to redress a wrong; we have accordingly redressed a letter wrongly addressed to us and demanding the immediate settlement of Crooke's account at the village tuckshop. Crooke had better redress the matter before he gets a dressing-down from the Head!

Flying Squad Reports

SQUAD'S WHITSUN "HOP"

Lord Conway, D'Arcy's elder brother, wired inviting Flying Squad on Whitsun flight over Channel. Permission obtained, Squad paraded to greet Lord Conway as he alighted on Little Side in giant new luxury plane. Flying Squad embarked. Machine took off, and Conway nosed plane above clouds and sped across Sussex Downs. Out over the sea, the Channel looked unbelievably narrow. Ships appeared like toys. After short flight over French coast, Conway intended to turn back, but French plane ahead attracted attention. Out of control, it swerved, rocked, and struck a radio pylon hurtling earthwards. Conway circled and landed. Flying Squad raced to spot and lent assistance. Pilot and passengers of French plane fortunately not seriously injured. French authorities arriving on scene, Conway and St. Jim's Flying Squad re-embarked and headed for home—reaching Little Side after dark, to make perfect landing by light of flares! Whitsun "hop" voted huge success!

FAGS' FOOLISH VENTURE

Rumours of monks' treasure hidden in ruined vaults in Rylcombe Wood drew numbers of fags in hope of uncovering untold wealth. Tom Merry & Co., warned by Head that vaults were unsafe, refrained from joining rush. Wally D'Arcy, Gussy's minor, quite undismayed by Head's veto, led party of fags on first opportunity. Gussy asked Chief Air Marshal Merry what could be done. Merry mustered Flying Squad detachment and reconnoitred Rylcombe Woods. Surprised to find no sign of Wally & Co. Fags had completely disappeared! Muffled shout came to Tom Merry's keen ears. Flying Squad descended cautiously into vaults—found Wally & Co. barred from exit by heap of freshly-fallen masonry. Flying Squad set to work carefully to remove obstruction. Wally & Co. thankful for release, and escape from even worse fate—even Gussy's dressing-down listened to seriously! Wally & Co. returned to St. Jim's safe and sound—thanks to intrepid work by Flying Squad!

ST. JIM'S NEWS REEL

Buck Finn says that in America he has met any amount of two-gun men. Lowther observes that Buck is more of a two-tongue man himself!

We have regretfully refused Skimpole's offer of a 50,000 word Treatise on Theoretical Impetus and Direct Propulsion as applied to the Seat of the Trousers—a learned dissertation on how many foot-pounds Knox used up when he kicks a hapless fag!

Knox threatens us with lickings all round if we do not state in print that Knox is a model prefect. O.K.—he is! But you know what a model is, don't you? A small imitation of the real thing!

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Merry's Weekly



Week Ending May 19th, 1934.

WHITSUN CRICKET

SAINTS FACE "HEADLINE BOWLING"

The Whitsun fixture with Redclyffe was productive of more thrills than even Tom Merry & Co. bargained for. Judd brought over what he claimed to be a strong team. He was particularly hopeful of a new man whom he had introduced at the last moment—George Alfred Grundy. Grundy, a very shifty fellow, had just come to Redclyffe, and had promised mighty deeds on the cricket field!

Winning the toss, Judd took Grundy in to open the innings. Grundy received Fatty Wynn's first ball, and swiped ferociously at it. He failed to touch the leather, but yelled to Judd to run. Judd, having no choice, tried to make the crease—and was run out by yards, owing to Grundy's fatuousness! Numerous other Redclyffe batsmen fared similarly. Grundy swiped at every delivery, but seemed to bear a charmed life. He survived a series of astounding flukes—but succeeded in running out partner after partner by calling when there was no possible chance of a run! When the last Redclyffe wicket fell with only 17 runs on the board, Judd was almost foaming at the mouth with rage!

The Saints were grinning, and doing their best not to laugh outright before the visitors. They grinned still more when Grundy took the field with the rest against Tom Merry and Blake. Grundy was put on to bowl—but the grins of the Saints turned rapidly to looks of anxiety. The first ball whizzed perilously close to Tom Merry's head! The second grazed his hip, and the third swept his cap clean off—only by ducking like lightning did Merry avoid decapitation! Merry hit the fourth ball for a single, and Blake faced the last two balls. The first caught him on the chin, and made him hop frantically. As the last ball flew from Grundy's menacing hand, Blake opened his shoulders, and drove it clear away for a six!

Judd apologised to Merry and Blake, and took Grundy off! Grundy had not intended any harm—he thought he was bowling dead on the mark! St. Jim's won easily—but realising that Judd's men had been hopelessly handicapped by Grundy, Merry offered to play the match over again. Judd gladly accepted. The first game had only taken an hour, and in the second Redclyffe had the services of Pratt in lieu of Grundy! Redclyffe made 40 and 49. St. Jim's scored 56 and 44 for seven wickets, thus winning deservedly!



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! Gore complains that the B.B.C. time signal irritates him. It gives us the "pip," too! The other day one of Grimes' pals in the village was telling me about his new job. "Why did you leave the last one?" I asked. "The boss did something I didn't like—he fired me!" Funny thing, have you ever thought that it really isn't a bit chilly in Chile? Write to me if you don't like this one: When did the lamp stand? When it heard the gas pipe! "Tell me the closest race you ever saw," demands a reader. The Scots! No insult intended to old Kerr, who is really quite generous. When I tried to pull his leg the other day, he gave me the air! The sky is the highway of the future, says a contemporary. Municipal authorities are now wondering how they are going to dig it up and repair it! "I wonder what will come after this?" asked Webb of the Sixth, admiring his ultra-modern motor-bike. "A traffic-cop, probably!" said Figgins—correctly, as it happened! Webb ran over a duck and found himself "in the soup"! Crooke was malingering in the school sanny. "And how is Crooke?" asked the doctor. "He isn't so cheerful, sir," answered the nurse. "Doesn't he know he'll be back in class to-morrow?" asked the medico. "Yes, sir. I fancy that's why he isn't so cheerful!" Mr. Ratcliff is never happy unless venting his wit on somebody. In a Wayland café he sent for the leader of the orchestra. "You lead the orchestra?" he inquired. "Yes, sir." "Well, would you mind leading them out for a little air?" suggested Ratty blandly. Lefevre of the Fifth "kids" himself that he needs to shave, and he goes to a local barber on half holidays. The barber rather overdid it last time. "Would you like anything on your face when I've finished, sir?" he asked. "You might leave my nose!" rejoined Lefevre. It goes without saying—like the fag whom Knox hooded out of his study!

Chin, chin—see you later!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER



Here is a drawing of Jack, of Beanstalk fame, shinning up his beanstalk in search of an adventure. The drawing is by Robert Digby, who has, however, made a slight error in his work. Can you spot Digby's blunder?

"Shall I wide her back for you, deah boy?"
"No, I can get along. Steady, by Jove!"
Captain Cleveland got into the saddle. His wrist was so swollen now that his hand was useless.
He turned for a moment in the saddle.
"Will you fellows send a doctor along to Cleveland Lodge?" he said coolly.
"We must see if this twist can't be put right in time for Saturday."
"Yaas, wathah!"

And the captain cantered away. The juniors watched anxiously as he did so, but Madcap was so quiet that there was no need for alarm. The beautiful hunter seemed to know that something was the matter with her master.

"The captain won't be able to touch a rein with Saturday," said Tom Merry.

"No; someone else will have to ride Madcap."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.
"No, Digbay, deah boy, there is no one else who can wide her. As a mattah of fact, there's no one else who can saddle her."

"How rotten!"
The St. Jim's juniors looked at one another in dismay.

Without Madcap taking part in the steeplechase, the race lost all interest for them. Figgins looked wrathful.

"Won't Cousin Ethel be disappointed, chaps?"

"She will wawe, deah boys! She has been simply livin' for this wace!"

"Lumley wants another thrashing, the cad!"
They turned to look at the millionaire's son.

He was some little distance away, now, talking in a lowered tone to Major Holbrook. He seemed to be watching every expression on the major's face.

Then he suddenly wheeled round and cantered Guardsman across the moors.

Major Holbrook was watching his management of the horse with a critical eye.

Tom Merry & Co. stood where they were for a few minutes longer, then turned back towards St. Jim's. Jerrold Lumley had given them another problem to think over.

None of them had any doubt that the accident was the result of Lumley's grim determination to prevent Madcap passing him at any cost, and most of them were confident Captain Cleveland would find it impossible to ride in the steeplechase.

Arthur Augustus had said there was no one else who could ride Madcap.

It was really a big problem, and for a time Tom Merry & Co. did not know how to solve it.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy Disappears!

"B AI Jove, what wotten luck!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Absolutely wotten in the extreme!"

The swell of St. Jim's was by himself, but he spoke the words aloud. He repeated them.

"What absolutely wretched luck! Ow! Yah!"

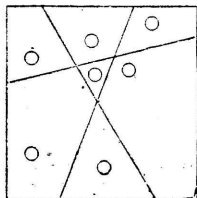
The observation concluded with a wild yell. Someone had banged him on the shoulder.

"Hear, hear!"
Arthur Augustus gasped.

"You uttah wuffian, Tom Mewwy!"
"What's rotten luck, Gussy?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,370.

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle



"You wuff wottah! I am all in a fluttah!"
 Tom Merry grinned.
 "Good!" he said. "Now let's hear what's the matter with the luck, ass."
 Arthur Augustus glared a little, then, somewhat to Tom Merry's surprise, passed the matter over.
 "I was wefewwin' to my cousin Captain Cleveland's wist, deah boy."
 Tom Merry at once looked concerned.
 "Have you been speaking on the telephone, then, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, wathah, and I wegwet to say that Captain Cleveland's wist is much worse than was expected. The doctah has forbidden him to think of widin' on Saturday."
 "My hat! That's rotten enough, and no mistake."
 "But the captain says he will ride," added Arthur

HIS ANNUAL HAIRCUT!



Professor: "Didn't I get my last haircut in this shop?"
 Barber: "I think not, sir. We've only been in business one year!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. King, 13, Park Ridings, Hornsey, London, N.8.

Augustus. "He says Madcap is to have her chance of beating Guardsman, and he's going to give it, too, if he has to have one arm in a sling."
 "My aunt, that's great of him!"
 "Yaas, wathah, Mannahs, in a way; but it's scarcely fair on Madcap, deah boy."
 Tom Merry looked up with a nod.
 "You mean it will be a handicap for the little mare, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, wathah, and with such a little between the two huntahs it will make all the diffewence. The captain pwactically admits that himself."
 "Yes, I suppose it will."
 "How beastly—"
 "Won't one of the captain's friends ride her, old chap?"
 Arthur Augustus shook his head.
 "One or two have offahed, but it would be a worse handicap than evah, Tom Mewwy," he said thoughtfully.
 "There are only a vewy few who can wide Madcap. Bai Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus had given vent to the exclamation in a gasp.
 Tom Merry started.
 "What's the matter, Gussy?"
 "Gweat Scott—"
 "Ass!"
 "Weally, Mannahs— Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"
 And, to the astonishment of the Terrible Three, the swell of St. Jim's turned and hurried away.
 It was surprising that Arthur Augustus should break off in the middle of a sentence, but that he should leave them as he did for no apparent reason was staggering.
 Tom Merry & Co. went in search of him.
 He was not to be found. Then Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr came up.
 "My aunt, what's the matter with Gussy, chaps?"
 "He's rushing through the coll like a giddy tornado."
 "He wouldn't even stop to speak to us!"
 Tom Merry looked more puzzled than ever, and shook his head.
 "He seemed to be suddenly taken like it!" he exclaimed.
 "I suppose he will come back all right in time? It must be getting on for dinner-time, I should say."
 The gong rang almost at that minute. The six juniors hurried downstairs and into the large dining-room.
 Here another surprise awaited them.
 Jack Blake was standing near the door.
 "Have you asses seen Gussy?" he asked anxiously. "The young duffer hasn't commenced his lines yet for Linton."
 "My hat!"
 "He's gone mad, Blake," said Lowther pleasantly.
 "Rushing all over the place for exercise or something."
 Jack Blake did not laugh. He was really concerned about the swell of St. Jim's, for only that morning Mr. Linton had given him lines, and there would be trouble if they were not done.
 "And he's late for dinner, too," muttered Herries.
 Jack Blake & Co. took their places, anxious glances still directed towards the doorway.

The swell of St. Jim's did not appear.
 Then Toby, the school page, came into the room.
 "Please, sir, may I speak to Master Blake?"
 Mr. Lathom nodded his assent, and Toby hurried up.
 "A message for you, Master Blake," he whispered.
 It was a note written in Arthur Augustus' elegant, stylish hand:

"Dear Blake,—Awfully sorry, but quite impos for me to do my lines. In case it becomes necessary for me not to return to St. Jim's this afternoon, pray do the lines for me. I ask you as one gentleman to another, as I am in an awkward posish."

That was all, with the signature "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy," at the bottom of the page.
 Jack Blake handed the note to Digby.
 "Of all the young asses—"
 "My hat, he hasn't retired from St. Jim's like he did once before, has he?" exclaimed Herries.
 "Show it to Tom Merry, Blake."
 The note was passed to the hero of the Shell, then to Figgins & Co. All six of them gasped a little.
 "Quite off his rocker at last!"
 "What does he mean by not being able to get back to St. Jim's—"
 "Where is the young ass going?"
 No one knew; and everyone had to give it up. Each moment Jack Blake expected to hear Mr. Lathom comment upon the fact that the swell of St. Jim's was absent from the table.

They spread their chairs out so that no gap should be visible at the table, and Tom Merry & Co. and Kangaroo did their best to help. Mr. Lathom did not say anything, but Arthur Augustus' chums breathed a sigh of relief when the meal came to an end.
 Then another search commenced for the missing junior.
 He was nowhere to be found, and none of the juniors they asked had seen him. They even went to Skimpole's study and surprised him deep in the mysteries of solitaire.
 The genius of St. Jim's held up a warning hand.
 "Do not interrupt me, Merry; I am firmly of the opinion that I'm on the verge of solving this problem—"
 "Have you seen Gussy, ass?"
 "Who is Gussyass, Merry? I do not think I know him. Is he a New House junior?"
 "Cackling burlber!" fumed Jack Blake. "Have you seen D'Arcy major, Skimmey?"
 "Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I was in this position last night, I remember, and that left seven marbles on the board. This is very exasperating, but— Did you speak, Blake?"
 "Yes, I did, you shrieking duffer!"
 "Dear me! Who has hold of my hair?"
 But no one had. Jack Blake had hold of his coat-collar. He shook him.
 "Wake up, you raving lunatic!" the Fourth Former shouted. "Have you seen Gussy?"
 "Dear me! How you startle one, Blake? No—yes—no. I am not quite certain whether I have seen D'Arcy or not."
 "Frabjous lunatic!"
 "Have you seen Gussy since dismissal-bell, ass?"
 "Dear me, no, I have been endeavouring to solve this problem since dismissal-bell, except at dinner, and I saw no one then; at least, I saw a good many juniors, but I did not notice D'Arcy—"
 "You utter ass!"
 "Really, Blake— Let me see, if I remove that marble and leave the other in the corner—"
 Tom Merry & Co. retired at that point.
 They did not want to stay, because everyone liked Skimpole, and they did not want to bump him. Jack Blake led the way to the gymnasium.
 The swell of St. Jim's was not there, either, nor had anyone seen him. Then afternoon school started. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby made their way to the Fourth Form class-room excitedly.
 What they dreaded happened.
 Arthur Augustus did not put in an appearance.
 "Change places, chaps," exclaimed Jack Blake hastily; "everybody change places!"
 Desks were hastily changed, and the unusual appearance of his class struck Mr. Lathom directly he came into the room. Not a single junior was sitting where he usually sat.
 Mr. Lathom looked surprised, but he said nothing, and by sheer good luck it was not his duty to mark the register that afternoon.
 But, in spite of that, it seemed almost impossible to Jack Blake that Mr. Lathom would miss noticing the absence of Arthur Augustus.
 "It isn't as if Gussy was an ordinary-looking junior," whispered Herries. "The tailor's dummy stands out in a class-room."

"We'll half slay the ass for this!"
The class seemed an unduly long one to the three chums from Study No. 6, but the hour wore on somehow, and nothing happened.

Mr. Lathom appeared not to have noticed the absence of the swell of St. Jim's.

Then the dismissal-bell sounded.

Jack Blake gasped.

"Hurrah! I thought it was never going to be over!"

"Gussy ought to be bumped!" exclaimed Digby. "He's kept me in a beastly fever ever since he disappeared."

"He will be bumped," said Jack Blake briefly. "I say, let's go and see if his bicycle has gone."

"Yes, and let's pump Taggles."

"Good wheeze! Only don't give the show away. Here come the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co."

The other six juniors came up at a run.

"Gussy turned up yet, kids?"

"No, he wasn't in class."

"My hat!"

"We shall have to offer a reward," said Lowther. "Affectionate; answers to the name of Gussy; and—"

"Perhaps he went for a walk, and—"

Figgins also broke off in the middle of his remark with a violent start.

Someone was coming across the quadrangle towards them, and in the distance it looked as if the someone was wearing a yellow waistcoat. There was only one yellow waistcoat in St. Jim's, as far as Jack Blake knew, and Arthur Augustus owned that.

"And—and it's wearing a green hat," said Digby feebly. "Gussy is rather keen on green hats just now."

"It's Gussy!" yelled Figgins. "It is the ass!"

And there was a wild rush for the approaching form.

"Bai Jove! Hallo, deah boys!"

"Hallo, dear ass!" shouted Jack Blake. "Bump him, chaps—bump him for about a week!"

Arthur Augustus started, and rammed his monocle in his eye.

"Weally, deah boys, I must uttahnly wufuse to be bumped for a week or any othah wotten pewiod!"

Jack Blake was facing the swell of St. Jim's indignantly now.

"You uttahnly young ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you know we've been having the rottenest possible time over you, you young rotter!" went on the chief of Study No. 6. "It was only by chance we succeeded in preventing Lathom noticing you were playing the fool—"

"I wufuse to admit that I evahn play the fool, deah boy—"

"We had to change places in class, we had to do all sorts of things—"

"Bai Jove! What for, deah boy?"

"To prevent Lathom seeing you weren't present, ass!"

"You ought to be boiled in oil, Gussy!" cried Digby.

Arthur Augustus waved his hand loftily.

"I ignore Digby's wemark, which is both fwivolous and wudicrous!" he said frigidly. "To weturn to Jack Blake's observation, there was no need to hude my absence from Mr. Lathom, as I had his permish to be away, deah boys!"

"What?" yelled Jack Blake.

"I had his permish, and the Head's permish—"

"Oh, bump him, someone!" shouted Herries. "Do bump him!"

But Jack Blake and the others were looking at the swell of St. Jim's in blank amazement.

"Where—where have you been, Gussy?"

"Engaged in vevy pwessin' bizney, Tom Mewwy."

"But—"

"You othahs will know all about it latah on, Figgy," answered Arthur Augustus, linking his arm in Jack Blake's. "For the pwesent—I have a vevy important announcement to make to you, Jack Blake, deah boy!"

Jack Blake allowed himself to be led away, and Digby and Herries followed.

The Terrible Three and Figgins & Co. stood looking after them in silence.

CHAPTER 12.

Blake & Co. Also Disappear!

"BLESSED if I can make it out!" muttered Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther looked equally puzzled.

Since their brief interview with Arthur Augustus upon his return, Tom Merry & Co. had not been able to

(Continued on the next page.)

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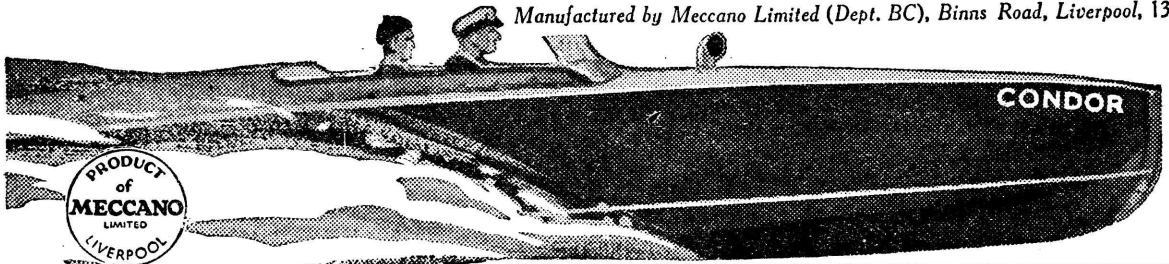
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and any of the members of the chums from Study No. 6.

It was after lock-up time, and they were hanging about waiting for bed-time, keeping a keen watch on the Fourth Form dormitory.

"They haven't come in yet, anyway."

"Perhaps— Hallo, here they come!"

"My hat! They must have got special leave to be out until this time!"

"Rather!"

Tom Merry watched the four rival juniors of the Fourth Form approach. They were whispering excitedly amongst themselves until they caught sight of the Shell juniors.

They walked on in silence then.

"Hallo, Blake!"

"Hallo!" answered Jack Blake, without stopping.

"Bell hasn't gone yet, has it?"

"No—"

"Won't be long, though. I say, Blake—"

"Good-night, you chaps!" answered the chief of Study No. 6 hastily.

"Yaas, wathah! Good-night, deah boys!"

And the chums of the Fourth hurried on.

At the foot of the stairs they were stopped again, by Figgins & Co. this time.

"Hallo, Blake!"

"Hallo! We can't stop, Figgy! It's awfully late!"

"The bell hasn't gone yet," said Figgins suspiciously.

"How is Captain Cleveland, Gussy?"

"Wathah wotter, I wegwet to say!"

"I am sorry for that. Will he be able to ride Madcap?"

"I feah not, deah boy! Howevah, we must pwess on,

as—"

"Yes?"

"Well, as it is gettin' wathah late, Figgy," said Arthur Augustus desperately. "See you to-morrow, pwobably, deah boy!"

And the four hurried on.

Figgins & Co. looked blank. Jack Blake and Herries and Digby did not look back. Arthur Augustus was leading the pace at a good rate.

"Bai Jove! Thank goodness we shan't meet any of the othahs!" he exclaimed. "Not a word, deah boys!"

"Of course not."

"Trust us!"

The four gained the dormitory just after the bell, and found most of the fellows were already there. A large crowd of them were surrounding Lumley-Lumley.

"Sure, and it's all rot, me bhoy!" exclaimed Reilly, the junior from Belfast, disbelievingly. "They'd never let a junior ride in a steeplechase."

"You'll see on Saturday, anyway!" grinned Lumley.

"Blake, sure and Lumley says he's ridin' Guardsman—"

"And he's ready to back the horse for five pounds," put in Lumley. "The mare's your cousin's animal; you ought to back her, D'Arcy."

"I wefuse to admit that you can possibly know what I ought to do, Lumley."

"Well, if you haven't got the money," sneered the millionaire's son, "I don't mind taking an IOU—"

"You'll take a thick ear in a 'minute," said Jack Blake shortly.

"I wasn't talking to you, Blake. What do you say, D'Arcy? Five pounds won't hurt you?"

Arthur Augustus began to undress.

"I weward you as a cad for wantin' to bet," he said coolly.

"Frightened of losing, eh?"

"No, Lumley. I object to winnin' your wotten money, as I weally shouldn't know what to do with it!"

The juniors grinned, and a scowl passed across Jerrold Lumley's face.

"We'll see about that on Saturday!" he sneered. "I am ready to back Guardsman for any amount—"

"I feah you would lose, then, Lumley."

"You'll see. Mellish, I shan't be at St. Jim's all to-morrow, as I'm going to stay the day with Major Holbrook."

"My hat! What will the Head say, Lumley?"

"Oh, that's all right! I've been excused," answered the millionaire's son. "I shall spend the best part of the day getting my hand in with taking Guardsman over the fences."

And the millionaire's son glanced towards Arthur Augustus. If he had expected the words to raise envy in Arthur Augustus, he was disappointed.

The swell of St. Jim's was continuing his undressing, chatting to Jack Blake.

Lumley thought of the fight he had had to take part in

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,370.

with Arthur Augustus, and bit his lip. He knew the St. Jim's junior had set his heart on Madcap winning the steeplechase.

Madcap was known as "Cousin Ethel's horse," and St. Jim's were solidly on the mare's side.

To beat Madcap would be the best revenge possible for the millionaire's son.

But would he beat Madcap on Saturday? Jerrold Lumley went to bed wondering.

He awoke the following morning with the same question troubling him; then he noticed that the beds of Jack Blake & Co. were empty. The millionaire's son became suspicious.

He looked about for any signs of a trick to be played upon him, but could find none. He shrugged his shoulders, dressed hurriedly, and hurried out towards the bicycle-shed.

He met Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

The passed him without a word.

"I suppose the cad's going out to Major Holbrook's place!" muttered Manners as they passed. "Fancy his being keen to beat Cousin Ethel's horse!"

"Oh, Lumley doesn't care about anything except himself!"

"That's so—"

"I wonder if Blake's up yet?"

"We'll jolly well see!" said Tom Merry grumpy. "We've had enough of this goating! Those kids have something up their sleeves, and as School House fellows we have a right to know!"

"Rather!"

"Like Jack Blake's cheek trying to keep it from us!"

"We'll bump the rotter if he won't explain," said Lowther.

And the Terrible Three hurried on.

They arrived at the School House Fourth Form dormitory just as three other juniors did so. The other three were Figgins & Co.

The rival juniors stared at one another. Tom Merry and Figgins grasped the door-knob at the same moment.

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

The two rivals pushed the door open, and then they gasped.

Jack Blake & Co. were not in the room.

It was very early, and Jack Blake had said nothing about getting up at an unusual hour. Tom Merry and Figgins could not make it out.

"Reilly—"

"Go away, me bhoy!" said the junior from Belfast sleepily. "If the bell's ringing, shure ye tell Taggles to stop it—"

"Ass!"

"Where have Jack Blake & Co. gone, Reilly?"

"Begorra, an' I don't know, ye spalpeen! Grrr-rr!"

Reilly was snoring peacefully again.

Tom Merry & Co. left the room more surprised than ever.

CHAPTER 13.

Wanted on the Phone!

THE surprise of the juniors of St. Jim's was to grow during the day, for Jack Blake & Co. did not appear at any of the classes.

The four were not even in the school, and a night visit to their dormitory showed Tom Merry that their beds had not been touched.

The Study No. 6 chums were spending a day and a night away from St. Jim's.

Tom Merry looked very blank as he made his way back to the Shell dormitory with Manners and Lowther.

"Of all the beastly puzzles—"

"Rotters not to have let us into it!" muttered Manners. "I've been working rather hard lately, and a day's rest—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"It's some rotten wheeze Gussy has up his sleeve," said Tom Merry.

"They'll be back to-morrow in time for the hunt steeplechases, anyway."

"Rather!"

"They wouldn't miss them!"

"Not much!" said Tom Merry.

It had been a trying day for the Terrible Three, because thoughts of the steeplechases to take place the following afternoon had taken their minds away from their work.

Mr. Linton had not been affected, apparently.

His mind was very much on his work, and so his class had to suffer. Tom Merry & Co. had quite a fair stock of returned lessons to attend to before the Monday.

Tom Merry rammed his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown.



In a manner which excited the onlookers, Arthur Augustus began to fight as they had never seen him fight before. He drove Lumley round the ring by the sheer weight of his blows, and time after time his fists pounded upon the gasping Outsider.

"Oh, bother the asses!" he exclaimed. "It's no good trying to guess where they are. They'll turn up to-morrow morning all right."

But Jack Blake & Co. did not turn up the following morning.

When Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther gained the breakfast-room, their places were as empty as they had been the previous evening.

Tom Merry sat down wearily.

"Those Fourth Form kids will turn my hair grey," he said.

Toby, the school page, had come into the room at that moment. He stepped up to Tom Merry.

"Someone wishes to speak with you, Master Merry," he said.

"Where is he?"

"It's on the telephone."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry hurried away, and Manners and Lowther were not far behind him. All three pelted along the corridor, and sprinted round the corner.

Their run stopped for a moment or two, then.

Three other juniors had been running in the opposite direction. There were a series of thuds; then Manners sat down, and Fatty Wynn sat on him.

"You New House rotters!"

"School House duffers!"

"Oh!" yelled Manners. "O-oh!"

"The telephone!" gasped Figgins. "Someone wants to speak to me on the telephone, Taggles says."

"Toby says—"

"Oh!" moaned Manners. "O-oh!"

Fatty Wynn got up then.

"Good gracious! Have I hurt you, Manners?"

Manners did not answer in words. There really was no need to, and he could not think of any words. He was groaning loudly to himself.

Tom Merry pushed Kerr out of the way.

"I tell you, someone wants to speak to me on the telephone!"

"Me, you mean!"

"Rats, Figgins!"

"Piffle, Merry!"

Then Tom Merry dashed away, and Figgins pelted after him. The New House junior was the crack sprinter of the New House, and he just caught Tom Merry up as the Shell junior reached the telephone in the prefects'-room.

Both of them seized the receiver at once.

"Let go, you duffer!"

"Give it to me, you ass!"

But Tom Merry had the firmer grip on the receiver, and he jammed it to his ear. Figgins glared at him, then placed his ear as near the instrument as possible.

He could hear a very faint voice, which he recognised at once. Figgins started violently.

Tom Merry could hear quite a loud voice, but he also started.

"My hat, it's Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" came the answer along the wire. "Is it Tom Mewwy who is speakin'?"

"Of course it is, ass!"

"Weally, I must wequest you not to address me in that wude mannah, deah boy, as the gal at the exchange may be listening."

"Where are you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Where are you, ass?"

"Here, deah boy; but what I want to say is, be sure and turn up at the steeplechases this aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "It's goin' to be a gweat wace in the big event."

"Of course, we are going to turn up! All St. Jim's is coming!"

"Wathah!"

"Where are you speaking from?"

"A telephone-box, deah boy."

"Shrieking duffer!" cried Tom Merry. "I didn't think you were talking from a coal-cellar! Where is the telephone-box, ass?"

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You've nearly deafened me, you uttah wottah!" came an indignant answer along the wire. "I have a vevy good mind to wing off!"

"But where are you speaking from, Gussy? Where's the telephone-box? Are you in Rylcombe?"

"Bai Jove, no!"

"Well, where are you?"

There was a pause of a moment or two, then Arthur Augustus' voice was audible again.

"Are you there, deah boy?"

"Of course I am!"

"Well, good-bye for the pwsent, as I am goin' to wing off."

"Rats! Where are you?"

"See you at the steeplechases, and all the others."

D'Arcy put the receiver down and the two rivals of St. Jim's stepped out into the passage, their hands in their pockets.

There was nothing for it but to wait until the steeplechases that afternoon.

CHAPTER 14.

Lumley-Lumley's Rival!

THE huge field in which the Rylcombe steeplechases were to be held was a pleasing spectacle that Saturday afternoon.

Flags of all sorts, gaily coloured bunting, and tents of all possible shapes seemed to surround the whole course, although the gayest stretch was near a neat little grand stand, where a crowd of sportsmen and their friends had already gathered.

Cousin Ethel was in front of the Cleveland tent, her brother with her. Captain Cleveland's arm was in a sling. He was watching the main entrance.

"I suppose the youngsters will get here in time, Ethel, begad?"

"Oh, yes!"

The captain fumbled with his glasses with one hand.

"There's some motor-buses coming up the road now, begad!"

"Let me see. Yes, that's Tom Merry sitting next the driver!"

She handed the glasses back to her brother, and went to meet the juniors from St. Jim's. Figgins was the first to spring out of the bus.

He looked very neat and fit as he raised his cap to the girl chum.

His colour was a little deeper than usual, perhaps; but as he would have explained, he had hurried.

"I hope you are all here, Figgins?"

"Rather!"

"All of us except Jack Blake & Co.," said Tom Merry. "I—"

Cousin Ethel looked up with a sparkle in her pretty eyes. "Isn't Jack Blake with you, then?"

"N-no."

"How strange!"

And she laughed delightedly.

"Perhaps you will see him later on," she exclaimed, shaking hands with all her chums from St. Jim's.

Every junior was wearing a piece of red-and-white ribbon, the Cleveland colours, and the fact did not escape Cousin Ethel's notice.

"You all want my horse to win, then?" she smiled. "I'm glad of that."

"Rather!"

"Of course we want your horse to win!" said Figgins indignantly.

Cousin Ethel laughed again.

"It isn't really my horse, of course; but I call it mine. You know Jerrold Lumley is riding Guardsman?"

Figgins went red.

"Lumley is a fearful cad, Cousin Ethel," he exclaimed.

"I—every decent fellow at St. Jim's rather bars him."

"I should think so. Who is riding Madcap, Cousin Ethel?"

Their girl chum did not answer Tom Merry's question. She was looking towards a coach which was just coming through the gates, decorated with pink bunting.

Pink was Major Holbrook's colour.

"There's Lumley!"

Kangaroo muttered the words, staring indignantly at the millionaire's son.

Jerrold Lumley had a macintosh on. He was evidently already changed for the race.

Tom Merry glanced at the programme.

The big steeplechase started the afternoon, with several other races to follow.

"I say, we haven't any too much time to spare, Cousin Ethel!" exclaimed the hero of the Shell. "Where are the horses?"

"In the paddock over there."

"And do tell us who is riding Madcap," said Clifton Dane. "Is it Colonel Whitfield?"

"No, Dane, it is not Colonel Whitfield."

"Then—"

"Look," said Cousin Ethel, "then you will see who is riding my horse!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked towards the paddock. The hero of the Shell gasped loudly.

"No; it can't be!"

"That's Gussy!"

"But—"

"My only Aunt Jane!" muttered Tom Merry, just low enough for Cousin Ethel not to hear.

Arthur Augustus was standing by Madcap, and he had a macintosh on just as Jerrold Lumley had. Before any of the juniors could speak again, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby came rushing up.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

"Blake, is Gussy riding Madcap?" gasped Tom Merry.

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Rather!" he said coolly. "What do you chaps think we've been doing away from St. Jim's if we weren't getting Gussy fit, and making him jump fences all day long?"

"By Jove!"

Jack Blake laughed again.

"It was his own idea," he exclaimed. "When he disappeared that afternoon, he had been to Cleveland Lodge to suggest he should ride Madcap, and it had all been practically settled."

"Rather! Then we three went to the Head with him, and got permission to stay at Cleveland Lodge for the day and night," grinned Digby. "We've had a ripping time, haven't we, Cousin Ethel?"

"Splendid!"

Figgins looked hurt.

"You might have told some of us, Blake!" he said indignantly.

"Really—"

"Well, Gussy couldn't very well ask all St. Jim's to stay the night at Cleveland Lodge, could he?" said Jack Blake serenely.

Figgins went red.

"I didn't mean that, of course—"

"You might have let us into the wheeze, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Well, we couldn't very well, old chap," returned Jack Blake. "Of course, it wasn't really settled until Captain Cleveland had seen how Gussy took the fences—and Gussy wouldn't tell you on the telephone; he was frightened Lumley might get to hear of it."

Carr. Paid.



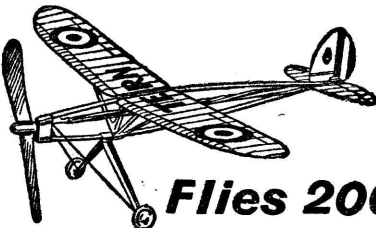
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“You don't think we would have told?”
 Figgins' voice was indignant again.
 “No, of course not; but you know how things get about when you are speaking on the telephone. We hadn't the slightest idea how many of you were round the telephone-box, or whether Lumley was near.”
 Tom Merry thought for a moment or two, then nodded.
 “I see. Doesn't Lumley know who is riding Madcap yet, then?”
 “Rather not!”
 “It's going to come as a surprise to him. You watch!”
 Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and joined Cousin Ethel, who was explaining to Kangaroo.
 Jerrold Lumley was already mounted on Guardsman. Madcap was standing by Captain Cleveland.
 There seemed to be no rider near her.

CHAPTER 15.
 The Race!

“WHO is riding Madcap, sir?”
 Jerrold Lumley asked the question in a low voice, and Major Holbrook answered it in the same tone.
 “I don't know—Whitfield, I should think.”
 “Was that Whitfield I saw this morning on the grey hunter?”
 “Yes; he is nothing very great.”
 Jerrold Lumley smiled.
 “No; I think I can beat him all right. I—”
 The bell was ringing loudly. It was time for the horses to take the field for the big race, which was open to members of the local hunt.
 Half a dozen hunters were taken to the starting-flag. Madcap was being led by her master.
 All the gentlemen riders turned to the captain.
 “Madcap ready, Cleveland?”
 “She won't be a minute, begad! Ready, Arthur?”
 “Wight-ho, deah boy!” said the swell of St. Jim's; and he coolly slipped off his macintosh.
 The next instant he was in the saddle.
 Jerrold Lumley was staggered for a moment; then a gleam of pleasure flashed across his face.
 “Are you riding her, D'Arcy?”
 “Yes, I am widin' Madcap.”
 Lumley-Lumley felt a thrill of triumph. All along, ever since Arthur Augustus had given the invitation to the Athome at Cleveland Lodge, he and the millionaire's son had been at loggerheads.

There was a splendid chance to settle matters now.
 All St. Jim's would be shouting for Madcap. To make those shouts become groans of dismay was the one thing Lumley-Lumley longed for.
 He would have made almost any sacrifice to be certain of getting Guardsman past the winning-post in front.
 “Nothing will stop me winning now,” he muttered, with his teeth clenched. “I'll win, whatever happens!”
 His face was white with excitement.
 Of the two, Arthur Augustus looked far the cooler; but Lumley's nerves were steady now.
 The hunters were got in line, and the usual fuss at getting a good start occupied the next few minutes. Then a splendid start was made.
 The horses were away in almost a dead straight line.
 It was a punishing course, being a straight run through several fields, whose dividing hedges had been trimmed and banked to form the jumps, a big swerve, then another straight bit to the water-jump.
 The water-jump was really rather stiff—a tributary of the Rhyl, whose breadth, however, was counteracted to some extent by an excellent take-off.
 After the water-jump there was another swerve, then jumps all the way to the paddock-field again, where a fine flat piece of ground formed the finishing straight. This finish, after the last fence, must have been nearly a quarter of a mile—so the hunters would be tested on the flat just as severely as over hedges.
 Barring accidents, the horse best ridden would win on such a carefully planned course.
 And the going was splendid. Arthur Augustus knew that the moment they were off.
 He could feel that the turf was exactly to the liking of the mare under him.
 Right up to the first fence there was nothing in it, but the jump showed the strength of the field to some extent. A mare came down, but there was no damage done, and the pick of the bunch were well over. Guardsman was leading a little—a matter of a couple of lengths, perhaps.
 Standing in the pavilion, Cousin Ethel watched every stride through her glasses. Her face was very pale.
 Guardsman had a bigger lead now.

“And he's riding magnificently!” she exclaimed.
 “Lumley is a splendid horseman!”
 Tom Merry nodded.
 He disliked the millionaire's son as much as anyone at St. Jim's did, but he was the type of junior who could not help awarding praise where praise was due.
 Lumley-Lumley was riding splendidly.
 “And Gussy isn't letting us down!” muttered Figgins.
 The swell of St. Jim's was also riding splendidly, but he was not forging ahead as Guardsman was. At the second jump Lumley had his horse well in the air before Madcap left the ground. Once on the flat again, Guardsman was seen to have maintained his lead.
 But there was heaps of time yet.
 Guardsman was the stronger hunter, but whether he had quite the pluck of the mare just behind him was a point that had to be settled before the winning-post was gained.
 At the third fence—a very stiff jump—the rest of the field fell to pieces a little.
 One horse muffed the jump, and it was not much to the liking of any of the others, except Guardsman and Madcap.
 They were both over all right, and, without a fall spoiling it, the race would be between them, and them alone.
 Both Arthur Augustus and Jerrold Lumley knew that.
 They were very tense, crouching down on the horses' necks. It was thrilling to be running almost neck and neck as they were.
 And at any jump the race might be over.
 A steeplechase is not like a flat race. One slip at a jump, and it is all over. Both riders knew they might find themselves thrown almost any moment.
 But both riders had their share of pluck.
 No one could doubt that.
 Cousin Ethel's face was becoming whiter with excitement.



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"Oh, isn't it magnificent?" she gasped. "Will Arthur win, captain?"

Captain Cleveland was standing on a chair, even more excited than his sister.

"Win or not, he's riding splendidly, begad! Blake, your chum is riding splendidly!"

The chief of Study No. 6 could not help a thrill.

Everyone japed Arthur Augustus at St. Jim's, but everyone liked him, and he had done his share of big things for the honour of the old school.

He was doing a big thing now.

Cousin Ethel's voice rang out again:

"Lumley is pressing Guardsman!"

The girl was correct. Jerrold Lumley had commenced to use both spur and whip.

He increased the gap between the rival horses, but he was unwise to keep the spur going. Guardsman was a good horse, but his temper was unreliable.

Madcap, too, had moods, and the spur at the wrong moment would probably have upset her for good. But Arthur Augustus knew that.

Besides, he was one of those riders who enjoy a race immensely himself and have a liking for allowing the horse under him to enjoy it, too.

And Madcap was enjoying herself every bit as much as her rider.

Madcap repaid Arthur Augustus' consideration, for she was running better than she had ever run before. It was only at the stiffer jumps she did not quite hold her own.

She was smaller than Guardsman, and she was not quite as powerful, but her heart was stout.

And the heart of her rider was better than Lumley-Lumley's. But Lumley had one advantage.

D'Arcy was riding straight as a die. What was happening to Guardsman did not trouble him.

Nothing could have been further from his mind than to try to give his rival the worst of positions.

That was Lumley's advantage. He had no such sporting scruples. And he saw a chance before him of putting the advantage to the test.

The horses were almost level again—a short head being Guardsman's only lead. That was not a great deal in a cross-country run.

But there was a chance of making it much more, if not of putting an end to the race as a race.

The water-jump was being approached.

It was a curious jump, of equal breadth across the course, except at one point, where it widened sharply.

Jerrold Lumley began to pull a little to the left.

He knew his horse was the stronger at the jumps, and he was ready to take risks. He meant to make Madcap take the water-jump at its widest point, even if it meant his doing so as well. But carefully worked, it need not come to that.

The widening was very sudden. It might be possible for Guardsman to have a three-foot advantage if his rider planned it carefully.

And Lumley would do that.

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He had walked over the course time after time, and he knew every inch of it.

He was still pulling on his left rein.

Arthur Augustus had to do the same. He saw his rival's plan, but there was no help for it. He also saw that Lumley was still using the spur.

Madcap was more fortunate. Her rider was not touching her.

And they were almost upon the water-jump now, with the widest point dead in front of the mare. She tossed her head slightly. Arthur Augustus knew what that meant.

The little mare did not like the jump.

It made the swell of St. Jim's clench his teeth. If they had been on the ground he would have knocked Lumley down. He tried to soothe Madcap, but she was very uneasy.

There was a gleam of triumph in Jerrold Lumley's eyes. Another ten yards, and the jump would have to be taken.

"Steady, deah girl!"

Arthur Augustus panted the words out.

He saw Guardsman leap in the air, and Madcap had tossed her head again.

"Ovah!"

And, for the first time since the last jump, Arthur Augustus touched the mare with the spur. It was the lightest possible touch, but it steadied her, and she attempted the huge jump in a manner that thrilled the swell of St. Jim's.

Madcap had had her doubts whether she could do it or not, but she had tried. Arthur Augustus was trembling with excitement.

They were in the air, and the mare was gasping. Then down they came, a perfect jump—quite three feet longer than Guardsman's.

That moment was one of the moments the swell of St. Jim's liked to think of afterwards.

"She's level, begad!"

Captain Cleveland shouted the words wildly. Arthur Augustus had got the little mare on level terms at last by some splendid riding.

The horses rose in the air together at the last jump, and their fore-feet took the ground on the other side at exactly the same moment. Then the most thrilling part of the race commenced.

There was a quarter of a mile of flat, and the horse which did it in the best time would win.

Jerrold Lumley's face wore an unpleasant expression. There was something in his eyes which could scarcely have been there if he had not begun life in the Bowery, New York, as he had.

His whip was spinning round. He was not sparing Guardsman. But Arthur Augustus was watching that whip.

That had to be watched. The millionaire's son was swinging round in a disgraceful manner, missing his rival's horse by inches.

They were almost there now, and Madcap was in front.

Then what the swell of St. Jim's had dreaded happened. Lumley-Lumley struck at Madcap's neck.

It was the worst action Arthur Augustus had ever seen on horseback, and his face went white.

But he did not forget to act.

He leant forward and took the swishing stroke across his own arm and wrist. The flesh was cut deeply where the whip had struck him, but he never felt the pain. Madcap was all right, and her rider gave a cry:

"Now, deah gal!"

And with a frantic burst the mare increased her head-lead to a quarter of a length.

The next instant the two horses flashed past the winning-post, and such a cheer went up that the mare would never have forgotten if she could have understood.

Lumley-Lumley's rival had won by half a length!

A crowd surged round the panting horses, and Arthur Augustus sprang down. He looked the millionaire's son full in the eyes, then turned his back on him.

Lumley was very white and a trifle frightened, but he need not have been. Arthur Augustus never even explained to Jack Blake how he came by his cut wrist.

Then Cousin Ethel came running up.

She patted Madcap's streaming neck, and held out her hand to Arthur Augustus.

"It was splendid, Arthur," she exclaimed—"splendid!"

"Yaas, wathah! The deah old mare went wippingly, bai Jove!"

Others had come up by now, Tom Merry & Co. leading the way. Not a word was said, but the swell of St. Jim's was seized by a dozen excited hands.

The last Jerrold Lumley saw of his rival that afternoon was his being shouldered into the paddock, the cheers of the crowd rising to a deafening point.

No one came near Lumley—not even Major Holbrook, to thank him for riding his horse.

THE END.

ANOTHER THRILL-PACKED INSTALMENT OF WILD WEST ADVENTURE!

# GHOST RIVER RANCH!



By E. S. BROOKS

## THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Justin B. Farman, of St. Frank's, learns that strange things are happening on the ranch he has inherited, he goes out to Arizona to investigate, taking with him Nipper, Handforth & Co., Willy and Archie Glen-thorne. No sooner do the seven schoolboys arrive by plane than they are attacked by mysterious horsemen known as the Black Riders, who are terrorising Ghost River Valley. The St. Frank's chums are unharmed, however, but the pilot, Captain Merton, falls into the hands of the Black Riders, and he is imprisoned in a secret cavern. He fires a distress signal through a crack in the roof, and Nipper and Farman spot it.

## Diamond Eye Strikes!

A DISTRESS signal!

Nipper and Farman, as they stood staring across the darkness of Ghost River Valley, were filled with a tense excitement. Only that evening they had learned that Captain Merton, the airman, had vanished on the stage-coach journey from Fortune City to Crag Junction, and now this signal rocket blazed mysteriously in the sky—a desperate appeal for help.

"What do you make of it, you chaps?" asked a soft, calm voice.

Nipper and Farman jumped. They had believed themselves to be alone on the veranda, but looking round in the gloom, they saw a small, slim figure. Willy Handforth of the Third had joined them.

"Did you see?" asked Nipper.

"I was at one of the upper windows," replied the fag.

"I heard you chaps down here, so I—"

"Did you tell the others?"

"What do you take me for?" retorted Willy. "Do you think we want Ted dashing off on an impossible rescue stint? Better let him go to bed. It's about the only place where he can't get himself into trouble."

"Willy, my son, you're a wise bird," said Nipper approvingly. "We'd better keep this thing to ourselves. Later, perhaps, when everything's quiet, we might do something."

"I like the idea," said Willy, nodding.

"Gee! Right over there," muttered Farman, staring. "Don't forget Skull Rock, fellers. You can't mistake it, because it juts out clear of the hills. The rocket went up just to the left of Skull Rock—in a straight line from here."

"That signal was meant for us," said Willy. "Captain

Merton is in the hands of the crooks, and he's looking to us for help."

"It's the first real clue we've had," said Nipper, his eyes shining. "Somewhere in those hills, near Skull Rock, is the Black Riders' hide-out."

Black, shadowy figures moved in one of the rocky passes of the foothills. They were all mounted, and as they moved out into the open the leader wheeled his coal-black horse.

"All set, boys?" he asked, in a thick, guttural voice.

"Jest waitin' fer you to say the word, chief," replied one of the others.

The Black Riders were out. The man on the coal black horse was Diamond Eye himself—the grim, mysterious unknown who led the desperadoes. So carefully did he conceal his identity that not even his own followers knew who he was.

But he, on the other hand, knew every one of his own men, and, scoundrels though they were, their loyalty to their leader was solid. For he had an uncanny way of scenting the first hint of treachery; and those who tried to double-cross the gang came face to face with sudden, violent death.

"Heard anything of the two men who went into town?" asked Diamond Eye abruptly.

"Sure, chief!" said another Rider. "They grabbed what they went after, and the gas truck is on the trail."

"O.K.!" said Diamond Eye. "We'll be going, then. Listen, boys! This thing has got to be done right. We'll grab the whole bunch, remember. We mustn't let one of them make a getaway. The seven kids, old man Farman, and all the ranch hands. Just one clean sweep."

"Them kids kinder rattle you, chief," said one of the men, with a hint of a sneer.

Diamond Eye turned in his saddle.

"Did I ask you for an opinion?" he demanded savagely. "The kids are new out here, and they're more dangerous than the men. We've got to finish them—once and for all."

He gave an order, and a moment later the Black Riders, twenty strong, went galloping across the valley. Meanwhile, two other Black Riders, on a very different mount, were approaching the ranch-house by another trail.

There was no secrecy about the approach of the horse-riding band. Openly, brazenly, the desperadoes galloped up to their objective, their horses' hoofs thudding on the night air. As they bore down upon the lonely ranch-house,

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their guns sent forth a challenging volley of staccato reports. Crack, crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack!

Big Jim Farman and the schoolboys, on the point of going to bed, knew at once what the ominous sounds meant. The Black Riders were on them.

Doors were closed, special barricades were shifted into place over every window, and in a flash the lights were switched off.

"Looks like trouble, boss," said Square-Deal Reeve, fingering his big revolver.

He and the other cowboys were no longer living in the bunkhouse. They had shifted their quarters—at Justin B. Farman's suggestion—and were now within the great log-built ranch-house itself.

"If the Black Riders want trouble," said the schoolboy ranch owner, "I guess we'll give 'em plenty!"

"By George! Rather!" said Handforth, breathless with excitement.

Gazing through the barricades they saw the dim, shadowy figures of the Black Riders. Diamond Eye, with upraised hand, was advancing in front of his companions.

"Take it easy, there!" shouted Big Jim Farman from an upper window. "If you come any nearer, my gun is liable to emit lead."

Diamond Eye laughed.

"You ain't the kind to shoot in cold blood, Big Jim Farman!" he shouted boldly. "Think I'd take this chance, else? Me and the boys ain't hankerin' after bloodshed. We don't make war on schoolkids. So we're calling on you to throw your guns down and surrender."

"Thinking, maybe, we're yellow?" retorted Big Jim.

"Thinking you're sensible," said Diamond Eye grimly. "I'm giving you a chance, Big Jim. Come right out with them kids and all your ranch-hands, and there'll be no shootin'."

"And if we refuse?"

"Waal, it'll be just too bad," said the bandit chief. "This swell joint will be destroyed, and you and the kids will be shot up. But I ain't figgerin' on going to extremes."

"And we're not figuring on any surrender!" yelled Justin B. Farman, before his father could reply. "If you crooks start shooting, we'll shoot back. But we're not going to fire the first shot—leastways, not to kill. But I guess you need to know that we're ready for any kind of trouble that's going."

Even as he spoke an astonishing thing happened. Searchlights blazed out from every corner of the ranch-house—searchlights with wide beams which illuminated every inch of ground for hundreds of yards in all directions. They were floodlights, fitted up by Farman and his schoolboy friends. In that glare the Black Riders stood out with startling distinctness, and they were taken utterly by surprise. Their horses moved uneasily, and some of the Riders moved hastily away.

A curse came from Diamond Eye. He had expected no such resistance as this. He found himself glaring into a blaze of white light; the ranch-house had vanished as though by magic. He could see nothing because of that glare. Yet, on the other hand, the defenders had a great advantage, for the attacking force was vividly visible.

Crack-crack-crack-crack! came a volley of rifle shots, and bullets whined above the heads of the Black Riders.

"Just a sample of what we can do!" yelled Nipper.

"You said it!" roared Justin B. Farman. "Listen, Diamond Eye! I'll give you thirty seconds to get your men out of range."

Diamond Eye sat motionless on his horse—an imposing figure of grimness. He knew, in that moment, that he had been right in his estimation; these schoolboys were far more "alive" than the ordinary run of men in Ghost River Valley.

The "tenderfeet" schoolboys were ready for any attack—ready to resist grimly. Their precautionary measures, indeed, seemed to be as perfect as they could be. For any attempt to charge down on the ranch-house would inevitably be foredoomed to failure. A hundred men could not have succeeded. In the glare of those floodlights they could be picked off and shot with impunity.

"Darned smart!" said the voice of Diamond Eye at length. "I'm handing it to you kids that you put one over on me."

"You said it!" shouted Farman. "This ranch-house is like a fortress—"

"Sure!" interrupted Diamond Eye. "But I'm figgerin' that it's made of wood—pine logs. Mebbe you don't know, kid, that pine logs blaze good and plenty when they get afire?" He laughed harshly. "Quit foolin'! These magic lanterns of yours hand me a big laugh. Say, do you think I'd come here to get you unless I was sure of my ground?"

"What do you mean, you scoundrel?" demanded Mr. Farman, with sudden suspicion.

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"Sort of changed your tone, ain't you, Big Jim?" sneered Diamond Eye. "I'll say you have! Listen, big mutt! I've given you one chance—and I'll give you another. Come right out and surrender and there'll be no blood spilt. Refuse, and not a doggone one of you will be left alive!"

"We refuse!" shouted the schoolboys and the other defenders in chorus.

And they let off another volley of rifle shots over the heads of the Black Riders. Diamond Eye, cursing, wheeled his horse about. He and his men galloped away into the black shadows beyond the range of the floodlights. Their retreat was accompanied by a rousing, triumphant cheer from the ranch-house defenders.

"Fools!" snarled Diamond Eye. "Waal, they've asked for this, boys! Let 'em have it!"

"The whole works, chief?" asked one of the men.

"What else?" grated Diamond Eye. "Get to it!"

The defenders believed, at first, that they had called Diamond Eye's bluff. On every side the ranch-house was protected. Men and boys, grimly armed, stood behind the loopholes in the barricades. The floodlights clearly illuminated the enemy. Any attackers could be shot down with ease. So what danger was there? For days, the schoolboys, anticipating some such night attack as this, had been making their preparations.

"They're licked, you chaps," yelled Handforth gleefully.

"Sure they're licked," agreed Justin B. Farman, with a grin. "These prairie snakes are all washed up when you take a strong stand against them. That's just the trouble around this valley; folks allow themselves to be terrorised. Most gummen are yellow when they're put to the test."

"Listen!" interrupted Nipper sharply. "What's that noise?"

They were straining their eyes into the gloom beyond the radius of the floodlights. They could see nothing, for the Black Riders had retreated beyond range of vision. But a sound was coming out of the night—a loud, throbbing, roaring, rhythmic din.

"Sounds like a truck engine racing at full throttle," said Slick Ed gloomily. "Reckon it ain't healthy."

The defenders were startled. There was something unexpected here—something they had not bargained for.

And how right they were!

Out there, in the darkness, stood a great six-wheeled tank-truck—and that tank was filled with petrol. It had been stolen from Mr. Elmer C. Kyle's yards on the outskirts of Fortune City, and driven away openly by Diamond Eye's orders and been brought here.

"All set?" asked the desperado chief. "Let her go, boys!"

His tone was one of gloating triumph. The lorry was headed straight for the sprawling bulk of the ranch-house; the steering was locked, and in the driver's cabin there was a "pineapple"—in other words, a high-explosive bomb.

The engine was racing at full throttle—the throttle itself being jammed wide open. At the last moment the man in charge allowed the clutch to go home. The truck lurched madly forward, and the man leapt to the ground for safety. Driverless, gathering speed at every moment, a veritable engine of death and destruction, the gasolene truck went hurtling on towards the ranch-house.

Upon impact the bomb would explode, and the thousand gallons of gasolene would fire—

Diamond Eye sat his horse calmly—watching with devilish expectancy. No imagination was needed here. Only one thing could happen!

### By a Hairsbreadth!

**B**IG JIM FARMAN was as pale as chalk; his kindly face was wrinkled with lines of horrified concern.

"A gas truck!" he gasped. "By Heaven! The fiends—the destructive devils! Boys—boys! We've got to quit!"

"Not yet, dad," said Justin, as he stared at the oncoming juggernaut. "Isn't there something we can do?"

The truck had just come into sight—into the range of the floodlights. It was charging with great speed, lurching, swaying—but never deviating from its course.

They were tense seconds—

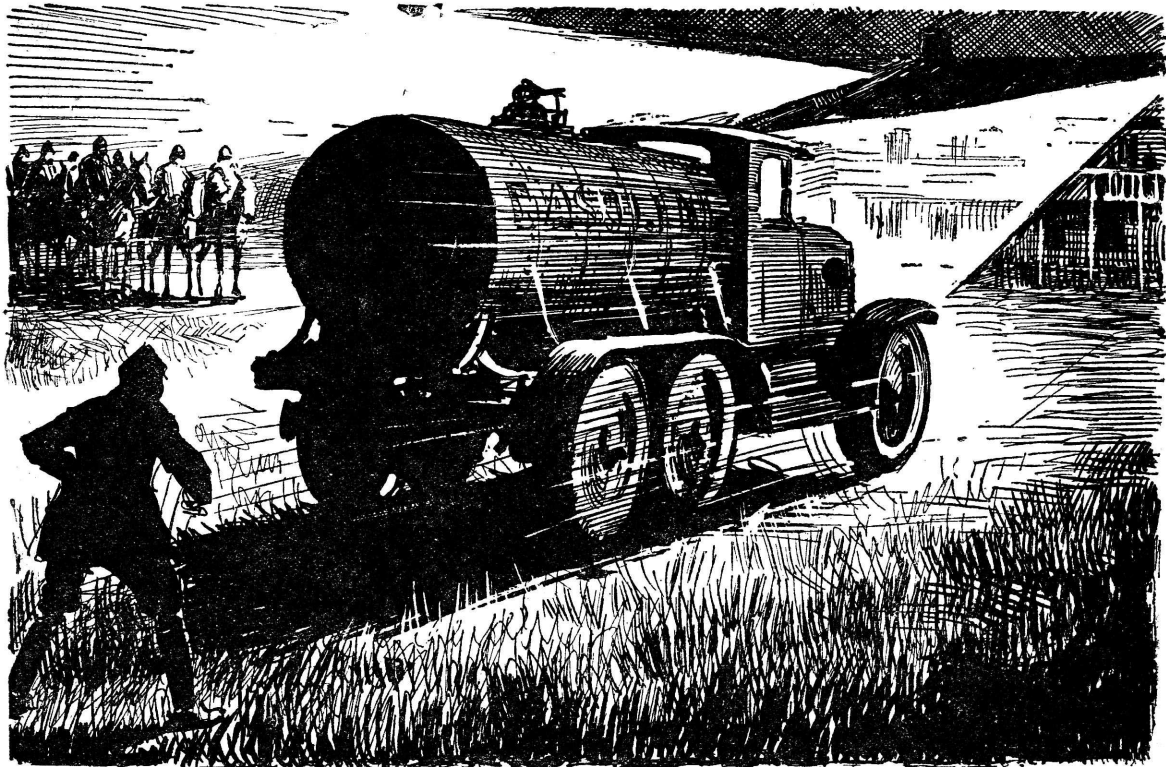
Mr. Farman knew just what would happen. This fine house was built entirely of pine logs; the heavy truck would plunge right through the wall, the bomb would explode. No power on earth could save the splendid building from complete destruction.

The blazing spirit would spread like wildfire; within a few seconds the house would be ablaze and the flames would spread. It was more than likely that many of the boys would be killed in the initial explosion.

"Boys!" shouted the ranch-owner. "We've got to escape—quick! Run out by the rear doors. It's our only chance."

"It's a trap, sir!" yelled Nipper. "The Black Riders are





Driverless, gathering speed at every moment, and with a high-explosive bomb in the driver's cabin, the big gasolene lorry hurtled towards the ranch-house! There could be only one result if it continued on its course—complete destruction of the ranch-house, and death to the St. Frank's boys and the Double Z cowboys!

out there in the rear—waiting to shoot us down or capture us.”

“Crumbs!” gasped Handforth. “Then—then we’re trapped properly!”

Nipper’s eyes suddenly blazed.

“Quick! There’s a chance!” he shouted, his voice cracking in his sudden excitement. “Where are your guns, you chaps? Fire! Fire at the lorry.”

“No good,” replied Justin, thinking that he had read Nipper’s thoughts. “Our bullets won’t penetrate the tank—”

“But they’ll penetrate the front tyre!” interrupted Nipper shrewdly. “Don’t you see? They are enormous pneumatic tyres. Fire at the offside one, and burst it. It’ll cause the truck to sag, and perhaps swerve. It’s our only chance!”

Crack! Crack!

As Nipper spoke, he pulled trigger. The great truck was now perilously near, and coming on with a fearful roar. Not only the boys, but the ranch hands, too, caught on to Nipper’s idea. Perhaps they would be too late, but there was nothing else to be done.

Crack, crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack!

A dozen revolvers and rifles spoke—and every bullet was concentrated upon the offside front tyre of the hurtling petrol truck. The vehicle lurched madly, sagging down with a sudden jolt on the offside. The tyre, penetrated by a dozen bullets, burst and literally tore itself to shreds.

And the lorry itself, its equilibrium upset by the sudden drop—for the great pneumatic tyre was of an enormous size—went swerving and skidding off its original course. In spite of the locked steering, the truck was no longer heading straight for the ranch-house; it was making an extraordinary crab-like progress, the bare rim shrieking and screaming on the hard ground.

There was nothing else to be done; the defenders watched with bated breath—with their hearts almost stopped. It was just a question of seconds now.

The whole air was filled with the terrific commotion. There seemed to be no possibility of averting the terrible catastrophe. The truck was still making for the ranch-house—not direct, but more or less sideways on. It would hit almost at the corner. But what difference would it make? The explosion would take place just the same.

“Look!” screamed Church.

The nearside front wheel of the lorry—with the unpunctured tyre—had suddenly struck against a heavy slab of rock used for mounting horses. The truck seemed to leap

into the air, and swung round with a dreadful slewing slither, still charging on, leaving clouds of dust in its rear. Almost in the same second, the juggernaut struck against the corner wall of the ranch-house. There was an earthquake of rending timbers, and the boys at the windows felt the floor shaking beneath their feet.

Then, in a second, the noise lessened. Nipper was the first to understand what had happened.

“It worked, you chaps—it worked!” he shouted triumphantly.

“What?” gurgled Handforth. “I—I thought—”

“The truck struck the corner of the house, but it tore its way clean through,” went on Nipper, dashing across the room to another window. “Don’t you see? The truck didn’t break through into the house, but only just shaved the corner.”

Rousing cheers sounded from some of the cowboys at other windows. They had seen what had happened. The truck, like some drunken thing, was careering away from the ranch-house now—straight towards the empty corrals. On it went, a terrifying sight. It struck against an inequality of the ground, smashing through the fences of the corral; then, unexpectedly, its mad career came to an end. Swerving, lurching, it overturned with a devastating crash. Then—

Bocooooom-ooooooooom!

The explosion was utterly appalling. Nipper and Handforth, at the window, saw it, but only for a flash. A blinding, dazzling blaze of flame, shooting skywards for hundreds of feet. Then the two boys, deafened, were sent hurtling, to crash to the floor. The sturdily built ranch-house shook to its very rafters, quivering and groaning as though in the throes of an earthquake. With it came the shattering of glass, for every pane of window had been broken.

When at length the defenders picked themselves up, they could not hear themselves speak. They were deafened, and as they staggered to the windows they saw that the whole night was filled with a fearful, dazzling glare.

In only one vital detail had Diamond Eye’s plan failed; the explosion had taken place, just as he had arranged—but it had occurred some hundreds of yards from the ranch-house, on the open plain, where there was nothing to destroy except the fencing of the corrals.

The petrol, spreading like a fan in every direction, was burning with a grim, devastating roar. Clouds of black, inky smoke were ascending to the night skies. But the area

of destruction was well clear of the ranch-house and out-buildings; and there was such little wind that there was no danger of the fire spreading far.

The Black Riders themselves were galloping hard across the valley, their horses terrified. Many, indeed, had bolted, and the men in the saddles were unable to control them. Diamond Eye was cursing like a madman. He had failed—when he had expected certain success! Once again these infernal schoolboys had balked him!

Far away, in Fortune City, men and women ran out of their houses in sudden terror.

For the whole of that "Ghost" city had been shaken. Some of the half-ruined buildings had crumbled, adding to the confusion. Everybody was convinced that an earthquake had visited Ghost River Valley.

Mr. Elmer C. Kyle was one of the first out.

"Gee, Mr. Mayor, the folks are skeered!" panted an elderly man, meeting him in the street. "Guess it was a 'quake; the first I've known in this valley, and I've been here for over thirty years!"

"It was no earthquake," snapped Mr. Kyle. "It was an explosion."

Without another word he ran towards the centre of the town—for his fine house was situated in the residential section of Fortune City—a section which had a modern, "live" look, in great contrast to the ruinous state of other parts of the town.

Main Street was flocked with people, and most of them were staring down the valley into the darkness. Far away, glimmering ominously, filling the sky, was a lurid glare.

"Darn glad you've come, Mr. Mayor!" shouted a prominent ranchman, running up to Kyle. "This thing looks almighty ugly."

"Gosh! You said it!" muttered Kyle, staring. "That's some fire!"

"Big Jim's place," went on the other. "Guess there's no other ranch-house in that direction. What'd we better do?"

"Ride out there pronto," replied Mr. Kyle, without hesitation. "Say, Judson, get the boys together, will you?"

"The Vigilantes?" asked the other sharply.

"Why not?" snapped Kyle. "This looks like the work of those infernal Black Riders. Gosh! If any of those kids are hurt— Make it snappy, Judson. We've got to ride out and see what's happened."

The Vigilantes were well organised. Word went round rapidly, and within ten minutes a strong body of men, well mounted, stood ready. Many ranch hands who happened to be in the city saddled their horses, too. It was a strong force which rode out into the darkness of the valley.

The glare in the sky seemed to cover the whole heavens; and Mr. Kyle and his Vigilantes, as they rode hard, were filled with the deepest misgivings.

Diamond Eye was silent as he and his villainous Black Riders, now re-formed, made for the Western hills. They knew how important it was to make themselves scarce, for they guessed that a strong body of men would ride out from Fortune City to investigate.

Diamond Eye was in a towering rage. He had planned this thing carefully; if the boys resisted he had meant to drive them from the ranch-house by fire, and then seize them and carry them off.

But the boys had been too clever for him. By the simple expedient of bursting that off-side front tyre of the charging truck they had saved the ranch-house from destruction.

The Black Riders went by way of Whispering Canyon, and as they galloped into the rocky defile a splash of lurid fire split the darkness and a shot rang out.

"Whoever ye are, keep away from my line!" came a threatening voice. "I'll shoot the fust galoot that crosses it!"

Old Mesa Matt was on guard. He had, in fact, been awakened by the explosion, and now he was on the alert.

Diamond Eye reined in his horse.

"Get back to your kennel, Matt!" he snarled thickly.

"Gosh dang my hide!" said the old prospector. "So it's the Black Riders, is it? I ain't surprisid. More mischief—huh? It's gettin' around time you fellers quit this part of the country. I reckon the valley will be too hot to hold ye soon."

He was contemptuous of them; they could have shot him down as he stood, but they did not fire. At a word from their chief they rode on, passing into the black depths of the canyon.

"Say, what was that firework which went up in the hills awhile back?" yelled Mesa Matt. "It kinder puzzled me some. Mebbe you can put me wise?"

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"You're dreaming, old-timer," said one of the Black Riders. "That wasn't no firework; it was an explosion."

"Think I'm crazy?" jeered Matt. "I mean the firework that went off over an hour ago, way up in the hills. More of your blamed tricks, I guess! Honest folks can't even get sleep these days."

He went grumbling back to his shack; and the Black Riders went on their way, making for their mysterious hide-out in the hills.

And now Diamond Eye had become suddenly calm—icily, deadly calm. He was thinking of Mesa Matt's reference to a firework, and he was thinking of the hills and the prisoner in the cavern.

Mesa Matt had seen something—and perhaps the watchers of the ranch-house had seen it, too. A firework in the sky—a rocket!

Diamond Eye rode on with suspicion in his mind—and murder in his heart.

### The Lone Rescuers!

THE Mayor of Fortune City wiped the dusty perspiration from his brow.

"Waal, gee-whiz!" he exclaimed with infinite relief. "You've sure lifted a load off my mind, Jim. I'll allow I was plumb afraid of the worst."

"With blamed good reason, Elmer," said Big Jim Farman grimly. "It was only by a hairsbreadth that the ranch-house escaped destruction—and it's odds that some of us would have been killed in the explosion."

A big crowd of men stood in front of the ranch-house, and idle horses, uneasy, were illuminated by the glare from the big fire.

"I just can't figure how you escaped," said Mr. Kyle. "The crooks sent that truck—my truck, blister their hides!—straight into the wall of the house. How come it swerved, seeing that the steering was locked?"

Mr. Farman told him.

"Waal, say, that was good and dandy!" declared the mayor. "I guess these kids are all right, Jim. Full of cute ideas—huh?"

"Shooting that tyre was a swell notion, anyways," said one of the Vigilantes. "Any chance of us hitting the trail, mayor?"

"If I thought I could get on the track of the Black Riders I'd go right out," replied Elmer C. Kyle, squaring his jaw. "But I guess we're up against a blank wall, boys. Which way did the Riders go? Nobody can tell us. The skunks are somewhere in the hills by now—and the hills around this valley are like a wilderness. We'd be wasting our time."

"Guess you're right at that," said another man. "Waal, it's sure good to know that the ranch-house is safe, and that nobody ain't hurt. Seems like these young tenderfeet Britishers are smarter than us old-timers. It kinder hurts to say it; but I'm a plain-speaking man, and truth is truth."

"You're right, Sam," agreed Mr. Kyle. "If these dog-gone crooks are to be rounded up the boys will do it. I take off my hat to 'em. They're plumb smart."

The Vigilantes and the other men who had ridden out from Fortune City found that they had nothing to do. A few, perhaps, were disappointed to find the ranch-house intact and everybody safe. They had been expecting some big excitement. But the fire was confined to wide area of bare ground; there was not even any grass to catch fire and spread. By now, too, the fire itself was rapidly petering out.

So the Vigilantes, with Mr. Kyle at their head, rode back into Fortune City. Within an hour Ghost River Ranch was quiet. The excitement was all over, and the boys went to bed. Only one or two guards were left on duty. There was little or no likelihood of the Black Riders returning to the attack to-night.

The boys felt that they could not sleep, and they had only gone to bed because Mr. Farman had urged them to do so. As a matter of fact, they slept soundly soon after their heads had touched the pillows, for they had had a trying adventure, and Nature was ready enough with her restorative—sleep.

Nipper remained wakeful, however. He was thinking. He was remembering the startling thing which had happened before the coming of the Black Riders. And somehow he felt that he should not be in bed like this. Out there in the hills—

"What about it, Nipper?" whispered a soft voice.

Nipper started, sat up, and blinked into the darkness.

"Willy!" he breathed. "You're fully dressed!"

"Why not?" retorted Willy coolly. "You ought to be fully dressed, too. Have you forgotten that rocket?"

"I was just thinking about it," murmured Nipper.

"What's the idea, you young ass?"

"I'm thinking that you and I should do some investigating," replied Willy. "No need to tell the others. Ted



Gather round, chums, for a cheery chat with your author, Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks.

At the invitation of our mutual pal, the Editor, I'm going to chat to you every week on topics which will appeal to readers of my St. Frank's stories. I think it's a jolly good idea, as it will enable me to get in closer touch with all my readers, especially those "Nelson Lee" chums who have been so truly loyal. I have had many letters, and I propose to answer some of them in this feature; although I doubt if I shall have any room for such answers in this particular chat.

For the past few weeks I have been tremendously busy, not only on "Ghost River Ranch," but on a special long St. Frank's story which is shortly to be published in "The Boys' Friend 4d.

would want to come, and he'd spoil everything. Let 'em sleep. You and I are the smartest of the gang, so it's our job."

"You don't think much of yourself, do you?" Nipper mocked.

"Well, I'm including you, too," said Willy. "It's the truth, isn't it? Why shouldn't we slip off? Two of us could get into the hills without being noticed, perhaps, but a crowd would be twigg'd."

"Something in that," admitted Nipper. "But we need horses—"

"That's all right; they're ready."

"What!"

"I saddled 'em during the excitement," explained Willy calmly. "I left 'em tethered at the back of the bunkhouse. You're game, aren't you?"

For answer Nipper slipped out of bed, and a few minutes later he was dressed. Like shadows they crept out into the dark gloom of the big landing; in silence they made their way downstairs.

"Twirly Sam is keeping guard on this side," whispered Willy. "Slick Ed is dozing on the veranda. If we nip out of the end window we can get clear without being twigg'd, and then we can ride out beyond the bunkhouse without being seen. I'm rather keen on doing this job alone, so that we can get back and give the chaps a surprise in the morning."

"Willy, my son, you've got brains!" said Nipper admiringly.

They each had plenty of confidence, and they went out on this adventure without a qualm. Once Nipper hesitated, and that was when he and Willy were about to mount their horses.

"Forgotten something?" asked the practical Willy. "I've got a gun; and if we need rope, there's plenty here, tied to my saddle."

"I've a gun, too," said Nipper. "But it's not that. I'm wondering if we ought to leave word with someone. You know, just to be on the safe side."

"In case we fall into the hands of the enemy?" asked Willy. "Well, that's a fine spirit to start off with!"

But Nipper was cautious by nature—or, perhaps, by training.

"My gov'nor always told me to take nothing for granted," he muttered. "We ought to let somebody know where we're going—"

"And if we do, what then?" interrupted Willy impatiently.

"My only hat! You Removites are a lot!"

"Look here—"

"Go and tell Twirly Sam, or Slick Ed!" said Willy.

"They'll loose off their guns and arouse the whole household. They won't let us go off on our own. Then Ted and all the rest will want to come. And, instead of us going on a nice quiet private little investigation, the thing will be as good as the Charge of the Light Brigade!"

Nipper grinned.

"I dare say you're right," he admitted. "O.K., then." They rode away slowly, so that they went in silence. Not until they were some distance from the ranch-house did they allow their horses to trot. The last flicker of the fire had

Library." I dare say this will interest the St. Frank's enthusiasts, so I should advise you to keep your eyes open for the announcements when they come along. I have thoroughly enjoyed writing this yarn, as it is all about cricket, and it is, in fact, a real school story, centred at St. Frank's itself. I have been writing about all the characters we know so well—chaps like Bernard Forrest and William Napoleon Browne and Vivian Travers—to say nothing of our favourite chump, Handforth. You'll find Irene Max, Mrs. of the Moor View School, in this story, too—and Hal Brewster and his merry men of the River House. From this you can imagine how I have revelled in writing the story. I have half an idea, too, that the Editor rather liked it. He takes such jolly good care that his readers are supplied with the right stuff that if an author can please HIM—well, it's a sign that he has delivered the goods.

I'd like to know what you all think of the present serial, and how it compares with the previous ones. Have I hit the mark this time? If any of you have grumbles to make, trot them right out, and make them to me direct. All you have to do is to address your letters to me as follows: "Mr. E. S. Brooks, c/o The Editor, The GEM LIBRARY, The Fleetway House Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4." I shall then be able to let you have your replies in this column. Don't forget that the Editor is a mighty busy man, so if you have any questions to ask about St. Frank's and its characters, I'm ready to answer them. That's what this little chat is for—just a corner for all of us to talk it over.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

died out, and the night was as black as pitch. It was only just possible to see the outline of the rocky hills against the sky.

Nipper was content enough to have Willy Handforth as a companion, for Willy was cool, resourceful, and plucky. In any emergency he could be trusted to keep his head.

"We're as safe as houses," he said, as he and Nipper cantered along. "There's not a chance in a thousand that the Black Riders are out now; they've had enough of us for to-night. That's why it's such a good opportunity for us to get busy."

"Yes," agreed Nipper.

"We're both light, and these horses are the two fastest on the ranch," continued Willy. "I made it my business to ask Square-Deal Reeve about the fast horses yest'ery, and he pointed 'em out to me. So if we come across any of the bandits we can easily show 'em a clean set of heels."

"For a mere fag," said Nipper, "you have your good points."

He was exhilarated by the ride—and by the thought of what it might lead to. As they rode, they kept the curiously shaped Skull Rock dead ahead of them. The distress signal had been sent skywards from the hills in that locality.

"Later on, I expect, we shall have to abandon our horses," said Nipper. "Then we must advance with care, Willy. And you mustn't take anything for granted. It's very doubtful if we shall be able to locate the Black Riders' camp."

In his mind's eye he pictured a steep-sided pass, or gully, hidden in the folds of the hills—a place where Diamond Eye and his men lurked unseen. If such a camp really existed, it might be "spotable" by night.

The brooding loneliness of the valley gripped the two boys more and more as they advanced towards their objective. Presently they left the grass and the sagebrush behind; ahead of them lay nothing but desolate, arid wastes, with grotesque cactus dotted here and there, and rock formations rising from the desert, forming phantom shapes.

Here it was a land of emptiness—of mysterious silence. They were miles from the nearest human habitations, beyond the limits of Justin B. Farman's range.

It seemed to them that they were the only human beings left upon the face of the earth, and now, as they advanced, they no longer spoke. The mystery of the valley had gripped them and silenced them. For some time past the ground had been rising, and already they were in amongst the lower foothills.

There were no trees here, not even firs. Rocks of all formations frowned to right and to left; they picked their way in amongst these confusing masses, and felt they were in the wilderness.

But never once had Nipper lost sight of Skull Rock. It towered high above now—fairly close at hand. They were getting near to the spot which must be their destination. Somewhere close at hand the signal rocket had been sent upwards.

"Better leave the horses here," murmured Nipper at last. Riding was no longer possible, so the two boys dismounted, tethered their steeds, and advanced on foot.

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