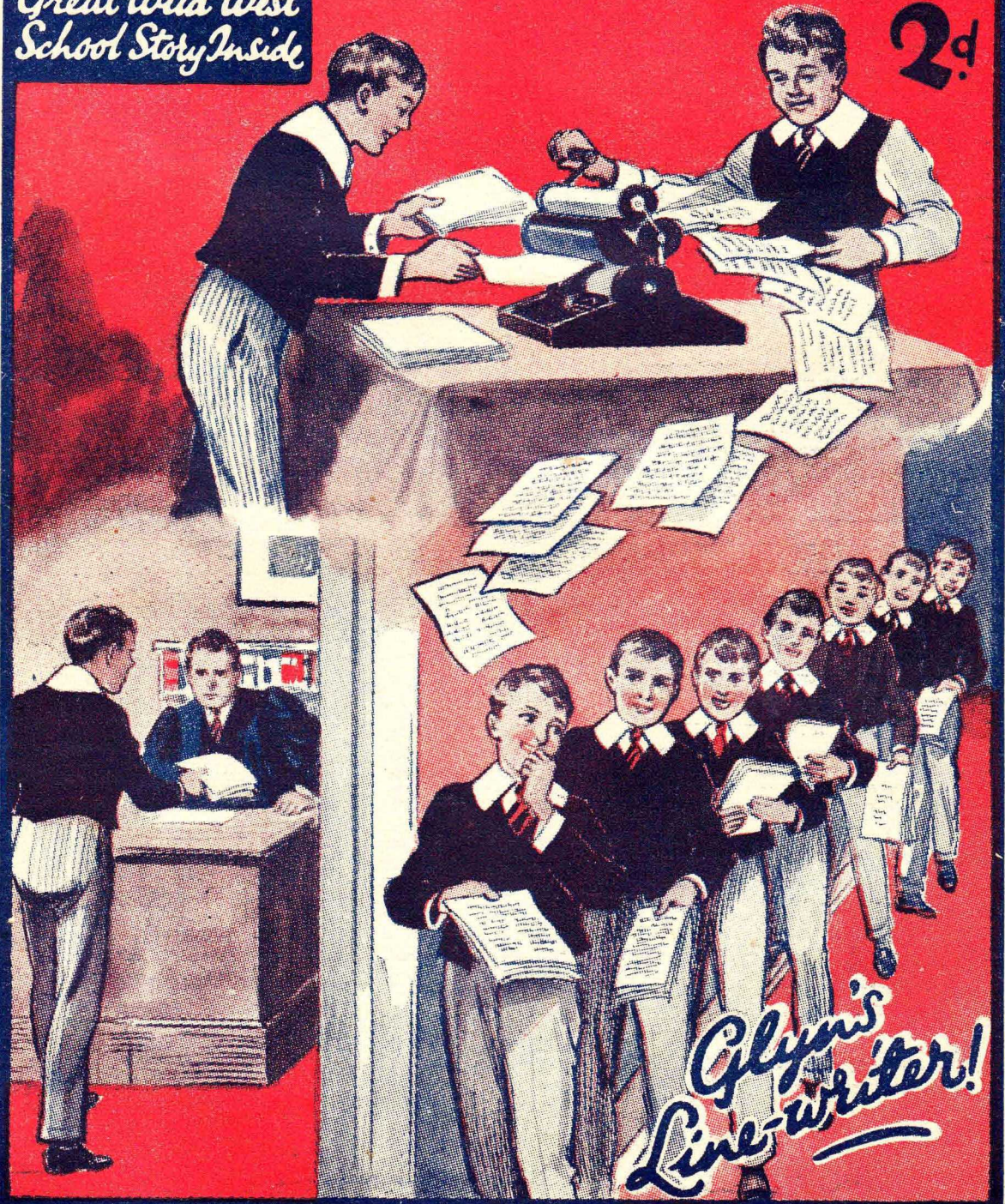


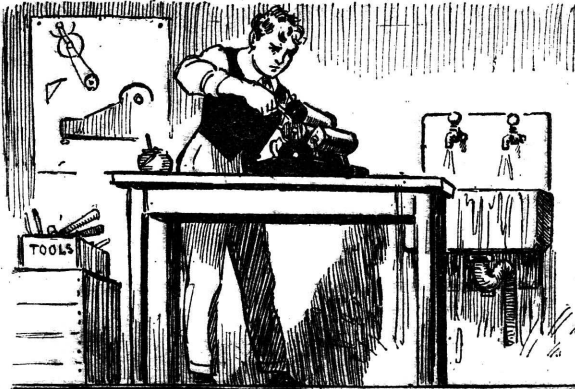
*"The
Packsaddle
Bunch!"*
By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**
*Great Wild West
School Story Inside*

The **GEM**

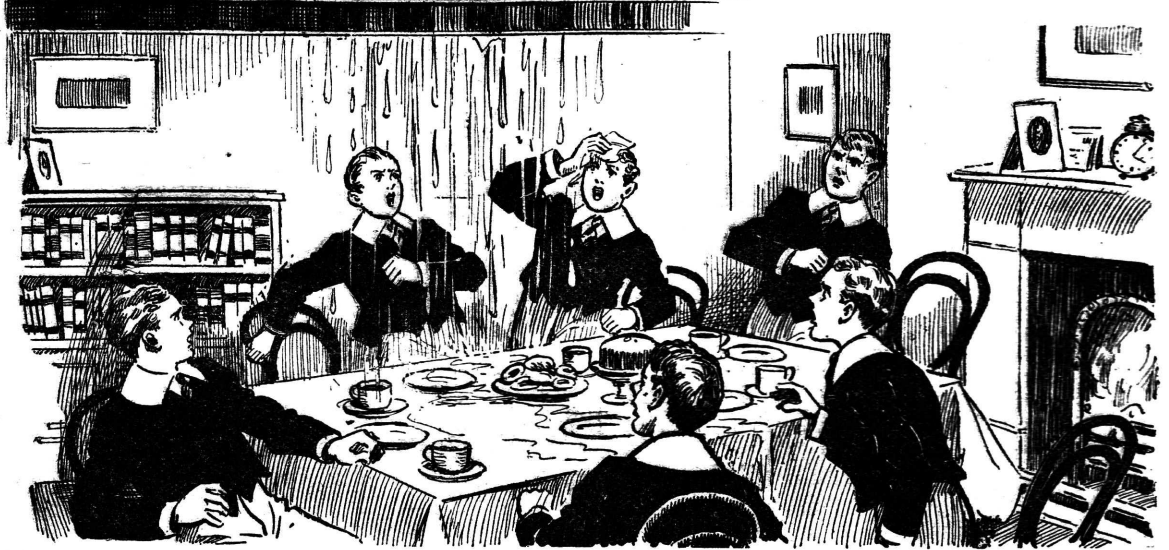
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*Glyn's
Line-writer!*



GLYN'S LINE- WRITER!



There was a sudden splashing of water on the table in Study No. 6 and the tea-things were swamped. Blake & Co. gazed upward in dismay and amazement. "Great Scott! What the—who the——" Bernard Glyn, busy on his invention in the room above, was quite unaware that he had left the taps running, and the sink was overflowing!

CHAPTER 1. Mysterious!

"OH!" "What's the mattah, deah boy?" "Who did that?" demanded Herries fiercely.

And Herries of the Fourth Form glared round the table in Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's.

There were six juniors at the table, and the table was laid for tea—quite a generous tea, too. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had lately expended one of his celebrated fivers, and Study No. 6 was in clover.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy—the four chums who shared that famous study—were all there, and so were Tom Merry and Monty Lowther of the Shell. Manners would have been there, too, but Manners was developing films in some mysterious recess of the School House.

Tea had been progressing quite cheerfully and amicably. Then came the trouble. Herries had been raising a cup of tea to his lips when he suddenly set it down and snorted. What was the matter the others could not see.

"Who did that?" repeated Herries. "That depends," said Jack Blake thoughtfully. "What do you mean by 'that'?"

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"If it's a joke, I don't like it!" growled Herries.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind explaining what you are talking about," said Tom Merry blandly.

Herries grunted.

"Somebody chucked a splash of water in my eye," he said.

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as a widiculous twick!" said D'Arcy.

Many are the weird and wonderful inventions Bernard Glyn has turned out, but never has one caused so much fun and excitement as his amazing line-writer.

"Well, don't do it again, Gussy," said Blake. "Pass the jam, Tom Merry."

"Weally, Blake," said D'Arcy, with dignity, "I trust you do not think that I could be guilty of playin' such a widiculous twick!"

"Well, I didn't do it," said Blake.

"Did you, Dig?" Digby grinned.

"No!"

"And I didn't," said Monty Lowther. "Did you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry shook his head. "Must have been imagination," said Lowther; "or perhaps Herries was shedding a tear of sensibility without noticing it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Herries. "Some silly ass buzzed a drop of water in my eye, and I don't like it!"

Herries went on with his tea, looking a little disturbed. The other juniors looked puzzled. All of them might certainly have played that little joke on Herries, but none of them would have told an untruth about it. They had all denied knowing anything of it, and yet it seemed unlikely that Herries was mistaken. It was a very curious thing.

Herries refilled his cup, milked it and sugared it and stirred it up, and then raised it to his lips.

Then there was a clatter! His arm jerked, and half the tea swamped out over his wrist, and he dropped the cup into the saucer with a crash, and jumped up.

"You ass!" he roared.

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

Herries glared round the table at the astonished juniors.

"Who did that?" he roared.

LIVELY LONG YARN OF THE ST. JIM'S CHUMS.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Eh?"
 "Some silly ass buzzed a spot of water on my nose while I was drinking!" yelled Herries. "Look here, I'm not going to stand it!"
 "But I say—"
 "Weally, Hewwies—"
 "Who was it?" yelled Herries. Jack Blake looked bewildered. "It wasn't anybody here," he said. "There can't be anybody hidden in the study playing tricks on us, surely?"
 He stared round the study in amazement.

"Bai Jove," exclaimed D'Arcy, "it's quite poss!"
 Blake jumped up from the table and looked round the study. He dragged out the screen, and looked behind the bookcase, and even under the table. But there was no one to be found. Study No 6 contained the four chums of the Fourth and their two guests from the Shell, and no one else.

The juniors stared at one another blankly. Unless Herries was the victim of a most peculiar hallucination, it was a very strange case. Herries was mopping his drenched cuff and sleeve with his handkerchief, and grunting. He was in a bad temper, not unnaturally, and he was not at all disposed to believe that he was the victim of a hallucination.

"It is vewy wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at last.
 "Jolly queer!" said Tom Merry. "Sure you didn't fancy it, Herries?"
 Herries snorted.
 "Fancy it, you ass! Could I fancy getting a dot of water in the eye and another on the nose?"
 "Pway wemembah that Tom Mewwy is a guest in this study, Hewwies, deah boy!"

"Oh rats!"
 "Weally, Hewwies—"
 Herries plumped down again into his chair. He cast a glance round the table that was a warning of trouble to come.
 "It is weally vewy cuvius—"
 "Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
 "What's the mattah, deah boy?"
 Tom Merry rubbed his nose in amazement.

"I've just got a dot of water on the nose!" he gasped.
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Look out!" roared Blake, jumping up.
 There was a sudden splashing of water on the table. It came down in a rush, and the tea-things were swamped, and the juniors were splashed right and left in the twinkling of an eye.

Tom Merry gave a roar.
 "Groogh! Oh, it's coming through the ceiling! Oh!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 Splash, splash, splash!
 Water came sweeping down upon the study table, and fragments of plaster came with it. And jam, cake, and doughnuts swam in a flood of plaster water! And the juniors, dodging the showers, gazed upward in dismay and amazement.

CHAPTER 2.

The Cause of the Flood!

"GREAT Scott!"
 "What the—"
 "Who the—"
 Splash, splash, splash!
 Water was pouring through the ceiling of Study No. 6, and fragments of

plaster fell with it upon the unfortunate tea-table.

"The juniors gazed upwards.
 "What on earth can it be?" said Blake, in amazement.
 "Somebody's upsetting water up there," said Tom Merry, "and it's coming through!"
 "Blessed if I can understand it!" said Blake. "It's a box-room over this study, and there's a tap and a sink in it."

"Bai Jove! Somebody's left the tap wunnin!"
 "Let's go and see who the ass is!" exclaimed Herries.
 "We can't finish tea now, anyway!" ejaculated Tom Merry, with a glance at the table. "Looks to me as if the tea's mucked up!"
 "Yaas, wathah! It's wotten!"

The juniors left the study in great wrath. Blake picked up a cricket stump before he started. If he found a practical joker in the box-room over the study it was likely to go hard with that practical joker.

They ran up the stairs to the upper passage, and Blake kicked at the door of the box-room over Study No. 6. There was a yell from within.

"Oh!"
 Blake tried the door. It was locked. He hammered upon the upper panels with his cricket stump.

"Open this blessed door!" he roared.
 "Yaas, wathah! Open it, you ass!"
 "You chumps!" came a voice from within, which the juniors recognised as that of Bernard Glyn, the inventor of the Shell. "You frabjous fatheads! You've made me muck the thing up now!"

"You've mucked up our tea!" roared Blake. "The water's coming through the ceiling!"
 "Phew!"

"Have you left the tap running, you chump?"
 "By George! Yes!"
 "Turn it off, then, you dangerous ass!"

"All right!"
 "Now open the door."
 "Can't be done, I'm busy."
 "We're going to bump you!" shouted Tom Merry.

The schoolboy inventor chuckled within the locked box-room.
 "You're jolly well not!" he replied.
 "Buzz off! I'm busy!"
 "I insist upon you opening the beastly door at once, Glyn, you fwightful ass!"

"Rats!"
 "What are you doing in there, you chump?" shouted Tom Merry, through the keyhole.
 "Working at my invention," replied Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

"Oh, he's making another rotten invention!" grunted Monty Lowther. "He won't open the door till he's finished. I know him."
 "Open the door!" roared Herries.
 "Rats!"

There was evidently no chance of getting in. The excited juniors bestowed a succession of terrific kicks upon the door, and retired. Within the box-room a chuckle was heard again, and the schoolboy inventor went on with his work, whatever it was, as if there had been no interruptions.

Bernard Glyn did not allow small things to disturb him when he was at work carrying out his wonderful ideas.

A voice upon the stairs greeted the juniors as they descended to the Fourth Form passage. It was the acid, unpleasant voice of Knox, the prefect.

"What's that row up there?"

"What row?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

Knox scowled.
 "You've been hammering and banging up there," he said. "Take a hundred lines each."

"Weally, Knox—"
 "Buzz off or I'll double it!" said the prefect sharply.

The juniors went down the passage. Knox could impose lines if he liked, and he had a special fancy for imposing them on Tom Merry & Co.

"The wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "All Glyn's fault!" growled Monty Lowther. "We'll scrag the bounder when he comes out of his blessed den!"
 "Hallo! What's that about Glyn?"

Kangaroo—otherwise known as Harry Noble—asked the question. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell were Bernard Glyn's study-mates. They were coming along the passage, and had overheard Monty Lowther's remark.

Lowther snorted.
 "It's that blessed ass Glyn again!" he growled. "He's got us a hundred lines each!"

"And he's left the tap turned on over our study and flooded us out!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if it seems funny to me!" said Blake, glowering at Kangaroo and Dane, who had burst into a roar of laughter. "We'll bump him when he comes out! Why couldn't you keep him in your study to work on his rotten inventions?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You cackling asses!"
 "We're fed up with his inventions there!" grinned Clifton Dane. "We made him take the blessed machine up into the box-room."

"You ass! He's flooded us out!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There's nothin' whatever too cackle at, deah boys!"

"You asses!" shouted Blake. "I say, we can't get at Glyn; let's bump these two silly chumps instead. They're his chums, and it's the next best thing, anyway."

"Good egg!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as the chums of the School House rushed upon him. "Hands off! I say! Ow!"

"Hands off!" roared Clifton Dane.
 "Oh!"
 Bump, bump!

The exasperated juniors bumped the two Shell fellows, and bumped them hard. It was some compensation for being flooded out of their study and getting a hundred lines each from Knox.

"Ow!"
 "Yaroooh! Hold on!"
 "Give 'em another!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 Bump, bump!

Kangaroo and Dane struggled furiously. They dragged Tom Merry, Blake, and Lowther over on the floor, and the juniors rolled in a tangled heap, struggling fiercely. A voice came along the passage from the head of the stairs. It belonged to Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Stop that row, you young rascals!" shouted Kildare angrily.

But the juniors were too excited to hear.

"Go it, Tom Mewwy! Go it, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bump the wottahs!"

Bump, bump!
Kildare came striding along the passage, his brows wrinkled in an angry frown.

"Stop it!" he shouted.
"Bai Jove! Kildare!"
Tom Merry jumped up, red and panting.

"You young ruffians!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain. "Stop that row at once! I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking all round!"

"Weally, Kildare—"
"Take two hundred lines each, the lot of you, and bring them to my study at bed-time!" said the captain of St. Jim's.
"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare—"
But Kildare was striding away, and he did not listen. The juniors, somewhat dusty and dishevelled, looked at one another in dismay.

"I say, that's too jolly thick!" growled Blake. "That makes three hundred lines each for us!"
"It's wotten!"

"Wait till we see Glyn again!" growled Tom Merry.

And the other fellows shared his sentiments. There was a warm time awaiting the schoolboy inventor when he showed himself in public again.

CHAPTER 3.

Glyn's Great Wheeze!

BERNARD GLYN was not seen again that day until late in the evening.

He came down from the box-room at last, after locking the door and carefully placing the key in his pocket. It was evident that he did not mean to run any risk of his invention being disturbed in his absence.

The schoolboy inventor was looking somewhat fatigued, but very satisfied with himself. When he came into the Junior Common-room there was a general exclamation.

"There he is!"
"There's the bounder!"
"Collar him!"

Bernard Glyn looked surprised. The Liverpool lad had almost forgotten the accident of the flooding of Study No. 6 in the engrossing interest of his invention.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" he asked, as Tom Merry & Co. crowded towards him.

"You flooded our study!" roared Blake.

"You've got us a heap of lines each!"

"Oh, I'm sorry about the flood!" said Glyn, with a grin. "It was an accident. About the lines, they don't matter!"

"Don't matter?" repeated Tom Merry. "We've got three hundred each!"

"That's all right!"

"Is it all right?" grunted Herries. "We haven't written them, and we shall most likely have them doubled in the morning!"

"Never mind; I'll do them for you," said Bernard Glyn. "It's all serene—honest Injun!"

"But you can't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Six of us have got three hundred each, and that's a total of eighteen hundred."

"I can do them. You fellows can do one each, and I'll do the rest."

"To-night?" demanded Blake.

"No; I'm not quite ready yet. To-morrow."

"They'll be doubled by then."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,409.

"Never mind."
"Do you mean to say that you can write out three thousand six hundred lines for us to-morrow?" demanded Digby.

Bernard Glyn nodded coolly.
"Yes," he answered.

"Rats! You can't do it!"
"I can do it easily."

"How?" demanded a dozen voices.
"I've got an invention—"

Tom Merry started.
"An invention for writing lines?"

"Yes."
"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, it's all rot!" growled Herries.
"It won't work!"

Bernard Glyn laughed.
"You'll see!" he replied.

"It's all serene!" grinned Kangaroo.
"I'll leave my lines for him. Glyn's inventions generally do work, you know. You remember the dummy he made like Skimpole—it walked, and everybody took it for Skimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaas, wathah! That's quite twue. But—"

"Suppose we let the lines go on accumulating, and the blessed invention doesn't work?" said Monty Lowther suspiciously.

"It will work!" said Glyn.
"Have you finished it?"

"Not quite. I'll give it the finishing touches to-morrow. I give you my word it will be all serene."

"That's all very well!" growled Blake. "But if the lines are doubled we shan't be able to do them all to-morrow, and that means staying in on Wednesday afternoon to do them. And we've got a footer match with the Grammar School for the half."

"I tell you it's all right."
"We'll give him a chance," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "If the invention works all right, well and good. If it doesn't, we'll give the silly ass the bumping of his life!"

"Good egg!"
"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight!"

And the matter was allowed to rest at that. Upon Bernard Glyn's success as an inventor depended whether he received a record ragging. But the schoolboy inventor's confidence in his powers was evidently strong. He was not in the least disturbed at the prospect.

Kildare looked into the Junior Common-room in the School House at bed-time. There was a grim expression on his face.

"Bed-time, you kids!" he said.
"Right-ho, Kildare!"

"I gave lines to eight of you," said Kildare. "You were to show them to me at bed-time. Have you done them?"

"No!" answered eight voices together.

"Very well; they are doubled!" said Kildare grimly. "I shall expect them before afternoon school to-morrow! If they're not done by then, you will have them doubled again, and will be detained all Wednesday afternoon to write them!"

"Oh!"
"Now go to bed!"

And the juniors went up to bed. Knox met them in the dormitory passage.

"Have you kids done your lines?" he asked.

"Wathah not!"

"They are doubled," said Knox. "If they are not handed in before afternoon school to-morrow I shall report your names to the Form-master for punishment."

"My dear Knox," said Skimpole of

the Shell, blinking through his big spectacles at the prefect, "I must regard that as somewhat excessive, as Kildare has already doubled the lines he imposed. Consider—"

"Hold your tongue, Skimpole!"
Skimpole shook his head. Skimpole was a youth who had studied many things. He could babble for hours about geology and evolution and Determinism, but he had never learned to hold his tongue. He blinked at Knox.

"My dear Knox, allow me to point out—"

"Shut up!" shouted the prefect.
"That in the circumstances—"

"Take a hundred lines!"
"Indeed, my dear Knox—"

"Two hundred lines!"
"You cannot be serious. You see—"

"Five hundred lines! And show them to me before afternoon school to-morrow, or I will come you!" exclaimed Knox.

And he strode away before Skimpole could speak again.

Skimpole blinked round at the chums of the Shell, who were grinning.

"I cannot help regarding that as almost rude of Knox!" he exclaimed.

"Besides, five hundred lines is a very large imposition, and, deeply engaged as I am in the study of the most important subject of the evolution of the human race, I cannot possibly find the time to do them."

"Then Knox will find the time to lick you!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Under the circumstances, my dear fellow—"

"Unless Glyn comes to the rescue with his patent line-writer," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Dear me! That is an excellent idea!" exclaimed Skimpole. "My dear Glyn, I will help you to-morrow to finish your invention."

"That you jolly well won't!" said Glyn emphatically. "I don't want the whole blessed thing mucked up."

"My dear Glyn—"

"Br-r-r!" said the Lancashire junior. And he went to bed, leaving Skimpole blinking.

When Kildare came back to the Shell dormitory to see lights out Skimpole received another hundred lines for not being in bed, and an additional hundred for trying to argue with Kildare. Then even Skimpole gave it up and turned in.

CHAPTER 4.

Lines Galore!

FIGGINS of the New House tramped in the quadrangle with a moody brow the next morning.

Kerr and Wynn, who were with him, looked equally moody. The three Fourth Formers evidently had something on their minds. As a rule Figgins looked cheerful enough; and as for Fatty Wynn, he was always sunny, unless something had gone wrong with the commissariat. Kerr was a cheerful fellow, too, as a rule. But the faces of the chums of the New House were deeply clouded now as they tramped in the quadrangle that bright, keen morning.

"It's rotten!" said Figgins, breaking a long silence.

"Beastly!" agreed Kerr.

"It may muck up the footer match to-morrow with the Grammar School cads," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins snorted in an exasperated way.

"Between Monteith and old Ratty life isn't worth living in the New House!" he exclaimed. "We shall have to slog

every spare minute to-morrow over those blessed lines, or we shall be done in for the footer."

"Hallo!" exclaimed the cheery voice of Jack Blake, as he came by, on the track of an elusive footer. "Wherefore those worried looks, my sons?"

"Oh, it's Ratty!" said Kerr. "He's been at it again! We're swamped in lines."

"And Monteith," said Figgins. "He's laded out lines in chunks!"

"Lines!" said Blake.

"Yes; we've got a thousand each all together," said Figgins dolorously. "What do you think of that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Figgins & Co. stared at Blake wrathfully.

"What are you cackling at, you bouncer?" asked Figgins angrily. "There's nothing funny in getting a thousand lines each, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Kerr. Blake backed away, holding up his hand.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "It's all right! Look here, I couldn't help laughing. I know how you can do the bouncers in the eye."

"Going to offer to write the lines out for us?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"Exactly!" said Blake coolly.

"What!"
"It's all serene. Glyn's made an invention," Blake explained. "He's invented a dodge for writing out lines by the hundred. It doesn't matter how many, he can do them."

"Seen it at work?" asked Kerr dubiously.

"Not yet. But I'm sure it's all right. You know his wheezes always work," Blake said. "We've promised him a big bumping if it doesn't. But he generally does the things he begins on, you know. I'm feeling pretty certain that it's all right, and we've all got a heap of lines piled up for Glyn to grind off on his machine."

"My hat, it would be ripping if it worked," said Figgins.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, I think it will work," said Blake. "We shall all look pretty blue if it doesn't, when the Grammarians come over to-morrow afternoon. Gordon Gay's coming over on his bike to-day to fix up about the match, too."

The breakfast bell rang, and Blake nodded to the New House juniors, and scudded back to the School House.

Figgins & Co. returned to their own House for breakfast, looking considerably less clouded. They, too, had great faith in the genius of the Lancashire junior, and they hoped for the best.

Bernard Glyn had just come down from his laboratory when the juniors of the School House came in to breakfast. Blake tapped him on the shoulder.

"Finished it?" he asked.

"Yes, it's done!"

"Oh, good!"

"I shall want a specimen line of the handwriting, you know, for each imposition," the Lancashire lad explained, "that's all. Then the machine reproduces it ad-lib. It writes Latin up to Cicero's mark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

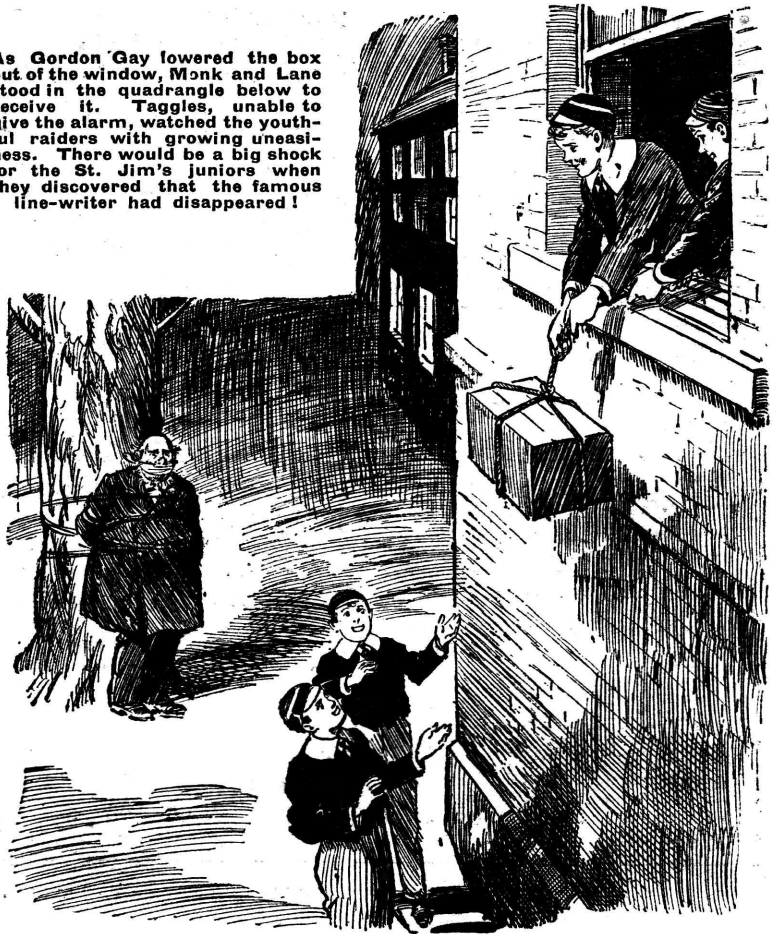
"It's a jolly wonderful thing, if it works!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, it will work all right!" said Glyn confidently. "I simply have to turn the handle and the lines roll out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins & Co. have a thousand each," said Blake. "I've told them you'll see them through."

As Gordon Gay lowered the box out of the window, Monk and Lane stood in the quadrangle below to receive it. Taggles, unable to give the alarm, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness. There would be a big shock for the St. Jim's juniors when they discovered that the famous line-writer had disappeared!



Bernard Glyn laughed. "The more the merrier!" he said. "I suppose it's quick work?" asked Manners. "Oh, yes; I shall get the whole lot done in half an hour!" "Phew!"

The juniors went in to breakfast, feeling very excited and considerably elated. Most of them by this time had complete faith in Glyn's invention. And a blissful prospect was opening before them. With such a machine at their command they would have hitherto undreamt-of liberties.

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, glanced severely at Bernard Glyn, as the schoolboy inventor sat down at the breakfast-table.

"Glyn, your hands are not clean!"

Glyn glanced at his hands. He had come down in a hurry from his laboratory, and there were many stains on his hands from his latest labours in the manufacture of a suitable ink for the line-writing machine.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he said. "I've been making ink."

"Go and wash them immediately, Glyn, and take a hundred lines!" said Mr. Railton.

"Certainly, sir!"

And Glyn left the table quite cheerfully. If Mr. Railton had said one thousand lines it would not have troubled him very much.

The juniors were still in a state of excitement in morning school. Figgins whispered to Blake in the Fourth Form, asking further particulars of Glyn's "latest." Blake whispered back, and both of them received impositions from

Mr. Lathom, the Form-master. But they did not mind.

In their present mood the juniors were likely to reap quite a harvest of lines—and they did! Fellows in the Fourth Form and the Shell were heavily visited with impots that morning, and they took them with unusual placidity.

Neither Mr. Lathom nor Mr. Linton could quite understand it.

After morning school the "lined" juniors gathered round Bernard Glyn in the passage. The Lancashire junior was serenely confident.

"Get a line each of your fist and come up to the box-room," he said.

And the juniors responded enthusiastically:

"What-ho!"

Ten minutes later there was a crowd in the box-room, and anybody passing outside the door might have heard a faint whirring sound, punctuated with subdued chuckles.

CHAPTER 5.

Puzzling!

KILDARE was in his study after dinner that day, with a slight frown upon his brow. He was waiting for the juniors to come in with their impositions.

As a matter of fact, the St. Jim's captain was feeling that he had been a little too severe, and he did not want to run any risk of spoiling the junior footer match the next afternoon. But, like a celebrated statesman, what he had said he had said, and there was

no getting away from it. He hoped that Tom Merry & Co. would show up the lines by the time they had been ordered to do so, and save further trouble.

The lines had to be shown up before afternoon school, or it would be too late. It wanted twenty minutes to the hour when there was a tramp of feet in the passage. Kildare smiled slightly as a knock came at his door.

"Come in!" he called out.

The door opened. Tom Merry and Lowther, Blake and Digby, Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in in a crowd. Each of them had a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Please we've brought the lines, Kildare," said the six juniors together, in a sing-song voice.

"Put them on the table," said Kildare.

The juniors laid them down.

"All here?" asked Kildare suspiciously.

"Yes; you can count 'em if you like!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

Kildare smiled slightly. He was not likely to count up eighteen hundred lines. He knew how many each page should contain, and he counted the pages.

The number was correct. He glanced over the handwriting. It was much neater and cleaner than was usually the case with junior impositions.

"All right?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Kildare. "You can go!"

"Oh, good!"

The juniors walked out of the study and Tom Merry drew the door shut.

In the passage the juniors grinned at one another.

"My hat," said Blake, with a deep breath. "it's worked like a charm!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear us grin!" said Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Kildare's door reopened. The captain of St. Jim's looked out suddenly into the passage. The laughter of the juniors died suddenly away.

"Well," said Kildare grimly, "what's the joke?"

The juniors looked at him very sheepishly.

"J-joke!" repeated Blake.

Kildare looked at them very suspiciously.

"Clear off!" he said abruptly.

"Certainly, deah boy."

Kildare went back into the study, and the juniors hurried out of the Sixth Form passage. Kildare picked up the imposts on the table, and looked at them again. He had not been taken in. The lines were all there.

There was a knock at the door, and he rapped out:

"Come in!"

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell entered with lines in their hands.

"Here's our lines, Kildare!"

Kildare took them.

"Very well!" he said shortly.

The two Shell fellows turned to the door.

"I suppose you've bucked up to get these lines done so as not to be detained to-morrow afternoon?" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Well, we were feeling a bit nervous about the footer match with the Grammar School," said Kangaroo. "You see—"

"I see. Get 'out!"

The chums of the Shell got out.

Five minutes later there was a timid tap at the door, and Skimpole of the Shell came in. He had quite a sheaf of papers in his hand.

He blinked at Kildare through his big spectacles, and laid the papers on the table. The St. Jim's captain glanced at them in surprise.

"I gave you only two hundred lines, Skimpole," he said. "How many have you got there?"

"Seven hundred, Kildare. Knox gave me five hundred last night."

"What rot!" muttered Kildare.

"He told me the lines were to be brought to you, as he was going out!" Skimpole exclaimed. "You will find seven hundred lines there, Kildare."

"Very well"

"In the circumstances—"

"You can go!"

"Certainly, Kildare; but I consider that—"

"Get out!" rapped the captain of St. Jim's crossly. And Skimpole got out.

Kildare looked very much puzzled. After a little reflection, he picked up some of the manuscripts, and walked along to Mr. Railton's study with them.

The School House master greeted him with a cheery nod.

"What have you got there, Kildare?"

"Lines, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton, looking somewhat surprised.

"Yes, sir. The juniors have been getting an extraordinary number of lines lately," said Kildare. "and, what is more extraordinary still, they have written them out and brought them in to time. I suppose they're all right?"

Mr. Railton glanced at the lines.

"Certainly," he said. "They seem to be written even more carefully than usual, too."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Railton.

Bernard Glyn entered the study.

"Please, I've done my lines, sir," he said, starting a little at the sight of the captain of St. Jim's.

"Very well, give them to me," said Mr. Railton.

He glanced at the lines.

"Very good, Glyn," he said. "You may go!"

"Thank you, sir," said Glyn demurely, and quitted the study. Both the Housemaster and the school captain looked curiously at the lines he had brought in.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kildare. "I—I mean, it's jolly surprising, sir. I never knew the juniors turn up with their lines in time like this before!"

"I suppose they are afraid of being detained for the holiday to-morrow," said Mr. Railton. "I believe the junior eleven is playing the Grammar School team?"

"Yes, I suppose that's it," said Kildare.

"The lines are certainly genuine," said Mr. Railton. "I know it is a common practice for boys to help one another with their lines; but that has certainly not been done in this case. You see, here is Blake's handwriting—it is the same all through—his hand exactly. Here is D'Arcy's—it is the same from beginning to end. Each junior has evidently written out his own lines without assistance."

"Yes; but it seems queer," said Kildare.

And he retired from the study. He passed outside Mr. Lathom's room. Five or six juniors were inside the study, and Kildare recognised Blake



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and Digby through the half-open doorway. He could not help hearing what they were saying.

"Please, we've brought our lines, sir."

"Very well," said little Mr. Lathom, in his kind way. "Pray lay them on my desk. You may go."

Kildare walked on, feeling very much puzzled. There had been more lines in the Fourth Form evidently, and they had been faithfully written out, in addition to the many lines he had already seen. Struck by the sudden thought, the captain of St. Jim's turned in the direction of Mr. Linton's study. He was not surprised to see Tom Merry, Manners, Glyn, and two or three more Shell fellows inside the study, with papers in their hands. He heard Monty Lowther's bland tones:

"Please we've brought our lines, sir!" Kildare almost gasped.

"Well, this beats me!" he muttered.

He walked away very much puzzled. He did not return to his study, but went out into the quadrangle. It was close upon time for afternoon school, and he met Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, as the latter came over for afternoon classes when the bell rang.

"Just a minute, Monteith!" said Kildare.

Monteith nodded and paused. "I believe some of the juniors in your House had rather heavy impots?" said Kildare.

Monteith frowned. "I don't see what that has to do—" he began.

"With me?" said Kildare, with a nod. "Quite so. I was only asking out of curiosity, not because it's my business."

"Oh!" said Monteith. "Yes, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had a thousand lines each to-day—half from me, and half from Mr. Ratcliff. Why?"

"Have they done them?"

"Yes."

"That's all!" said Kildare. "I just wondered!" And he nodded and walked away, leaving Monteith considerably perplexed. But Monteith was not so perplexed as Kildare himself was. The captain of St. Jim's was amazed. It had been the same in both Houses, then. It was not only Tom Merry & Co. who had been seized with that wonderful fit of industry.

Kildare simply could not understand it!

**CHAPTER 6.
Triumphant!**

TOM MERRY grinned a cheerful grin as he came out of the Shell Form Room after lessons that afternoon.

He had earned a hundred lines during lessons. But they did not weigh upon his mind. With the aid of Glyn's new invention, they would be knocked off in the course of five minutes or so. Monty Lowther and Manners had a hundred each, and Kangaroo had fifty. Never had Mr. Linton known his pupils to accept impositions with such equanimity, and he was puzzled.

The Fourth Form were out of their class-room, and Blake greeted the Terrible Three in the passage with a cheerful grin.

"Lines?" he asked.

"Yes, rather, a hundred each," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I've got fifty!" said Blake. "Gussy has scored a hundred!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Herries and Dig fifty each, and Reilly a hundred," grinned Blake.

"Where's Glyn?"

"Here I am!" said Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

"Good! We've got to show up the lines by eight!"

"Show them up before six, if you like," grinned the Lancashire lad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and see 'em ground out!" said Herries.

And all the juniors who had lines—including Figgins & Co. of the New House—flocked up to the box-room.

Bernard Glyn's machine was ready for use.

It was a curious-looking contrivance, and the juniors, though they had already seen it at work, watched it with much interest as Glyn fed in the paper and turned the handle at the side.

It was certainly a marvellous contrivance. It required only a line done by the supposed writer of the lines, and the machine reproduced ad lib.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and watched the machine at work, with the steady hand of the inventor on the handle.

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'!" the swell of St. Jim's ejaculated. "I should weally nevah have thought of anything of that sort myself, you know."

"Go hon!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's splendid!" said Kerr. "It will be a lot of use to us, now that Monteith has taken to lading out lines so liberally. You should have seen his chivvy when we took in our lines this afternoon. He was hoping to have an excuse for detaining us to-morrow afternoon."

"The wottah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"There's your lot, Gussy," said Bernard Glyn. "You will notice that I've improved upon the writing with the machine."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Kildare was like a chap in a dream when he got our lines," said Jack Blake, laughing. "He couldn't make it out."

"He never can make out your lines," said Monty Lowther.

"Rats! We might get a few hundred lines done to keep in stock on this blessed machine, in case it busts," said Blake thoughtfully.

"It won't bust," said Bernard Glyn confidently. "It's all right. All wool, and a yard wide. Only we shall have to keep the secret. Mellish or Levison would give the game away to the prefects, if they knew."

"Better lock the machine up in the study when we go to bed," said Tom Merry. "It won't be safe up here."

Anybody has a right to enter the box-room."

"What-ho!" said Kangaroo

And when the lines were finished the machine was enclosed in its cover, and the juniors carried it down to Bernard Glyn's study, the end study in the Shell passage. And when it was deposited there the door was locked on the outside, and Glyn deposited the key safely in his pocket.

The juniors had

been ordered to show up their lines before eight o'clock. Quite early they brought them in to their Form-masters.

Mr. Lathom and Mr. Linton were surprised. But the lines were excellently written, and they could not complain. The juniors departed in triumph, and in the passage they hugged themselves with glee. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther celebrated with an extra special tea in the study, to which five or six of the other fellows came.

They were in the midst of it when Gordon Gay, the captain of the Grammar School Junior Eleven, arrived, with a couple of other Grammarians, to settle the final details of the football match fixed for the following afternoon.

Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy were heartily greeted as they came into Tom Merry's study. The two schools—the junior portions of them, at all events—were generally at war. But on the occasion of football matches they sometimes suspended warfare.

But Glyn's invention had thrown Tom Merry & Co. into such high good humour that they could cheerfully have hugged the Grammarians.

"You fellows seem to be specially jolly just now," Gordon Gay remarked, as he accepted a place at the tea-table, and a cup of tea.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We've got good reason," he replied. "I think we've got a peg or two ahead of the Grammar School this time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "What have you done? Got a new dodge to save yourselves from being licked in the match to-morrow?"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Oh, we shall win the match as usual," said Tom Merry airily. "It's not that. But we've got a big score over masters and prefects."

The Grammarians were interested at once.

"Go ahead!" said Frank Monk.

"What's the wheeze?"

"A new invention of Glyn's," said Tom Merry. "A patent line-writer."

"Patent which?" ejaculated Carboy.


"Well, it isn't exactly patent, but it ought to be," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You see, the invention is the sort of thing that requires to be kept secret. But it could be patented and sold cheap; it would come as a boon and a blessing to thousands of school-boys. There's nothing like it."

"Nothin', deah boys."

"Let's have a look at it," said Monk. "Come into my study after tea, and

(Continued on the next page.)

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"I'll show you the thing at work," said Bernard Glyn.

"What-ho!" said Gordon Gay. Over tea the details of the footer match were settled. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay promised the Saints the licking of their lives, and Tom Merry promised them a record walloping, and both sides intended to do the best they could to keep their word.

But keen as the Grammarians undoubtedly were over the footer match fixed for the morrow afternoon, it was evident that just at present the patent line-writer was occupying most of their thoughts. As soon as tea was over they accompanied the juniors to Bernard Glyn's study. The Lancashire junior lifted the cover of the line-writing machine with a very impressive air.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. The chums of the Grammar School looked at the wonderful machine with great interest.

"And does it really write out lines?" asked Carboy, with a slight touch of doubt in his tones.

"Write a line on a sheet and give it to me, and I'll show you," said Glyn.

"Good!" Carboy wrote a line and handed the sheet to Bernard Glyn.

The Lancashire lad inserted it into the machine, and then manipulated the handle. The Grammarians watched him in amazement.

In a minute Glyn handed Carboy a page neatly written out.

"There you are!" "My hat!" ejaculated Gordon Gay.

"What do you think of it, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I regard it as amazin' myself."

"Wonderful!" said Frank Monk. "Yes, rather."

"We've turned in thousands of lines, and we're going to turn in a few thousand more," grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Gordon Gay's eyes twinkled.

"I guess we should like a machine like that at the Grammar School," he remarked. "When Hake, our prefect, hands out lines—which he's always doing—it would be ripping to be able to rip them off in a few minutes on a machine."

After another demonstration of the line-writer the Grammarians took their leave. Gordon Gay's eyes were twinkling as he mounted his bicycle. The sight of the patent line-writer seemed to have put a new idea into the head of the Grammarian.

CHAPTER 7.

The Grammarians Raid!

THAT night more lines were handed in by Tom Merry & Co. Never had they had so many lines imposed, and never had they handed them in with such promptness. By the time they went to bed the juniors, in spite of the frequency of the impositions, had cleared them off; and they went to bed, as Blake expressed it, with a clean bill of health.

They were anticipating fun on the morrow.

Masters and prefects could impose as many lines as they liked, but it would make little difference to the juniors who were in the secret.

As fast as the lines were imposed they could be written out upon Bernard Glyn's patent line-writer, and everything would be well.

The juniors chuckled themselves to sleep at the prospect.

They would not have felt so secure about the morrow if they had known

what was happening in the darkness after they had gone to bed.

When ten o'clock chimed out from the old tower of St. Jim's, four shadowy cyclists stopped their machines in the road near the wall of St. Jim's and dismounted.

Had they been seen by anyone at St. Jim's they would have been recognised as Gordon Gay, Lane, Monk, and Carboy, of the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Lights were out—for the juniors, at all events—at the Grammar School, as well as at St. Jim's, and Gordon Gay & Co. had evidently broken bounds.

They had hidden the bicycles out of doors in the early evening, after riding back from St. Jim's; and it was an easy task for the enterprising juniors to slip out of their dormitory after lights out.

But what they wanted at St. Jim's was another matter. It would have been difficult for Tom Merry & Co. to guess that.

"Quiet!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"What are we going to do with the bikes?" asked Carboy.

"Shove them in the hedge."

"Good!"

"I know where to get over the wall," said Gordon Gay; "I've been over it before. Only don't make a row. Taggles is sure to be up; and he looks round the quad every night before going to bed."

Frank Monk chuckled. "We can handle Taggles if he turns up," he said. "I've brought a rope with me."

"Quiet!"

The four Grammarians halted under the slanting oak that grew over the school wall. Gordon Gay helped up Monk, Lane, and Carboy, and then was helped up himself from above. The four Grammarians dropped inside the school wall.

"Here we are!" breathed Frank Monk.

Their hearts were beating fast now.

Their expedition was only a raid, such as was continually occurring between the juniors of the two schools; but at such an hour they ran a risk of being treated as burglars if they were discovered. It would be no joke for them if Taggles, the school porter of St. Jim's, should hear them.

The juniors trod cautiously across the dusky quadrangle.

"Here's the place!" said Carboy.

He stopped under a row of windows belonging to the Shell passage. He knew very well which was the window of Bernard Glyn's study.

"That's the place," said Lane. "You're sure the thing is there, Gay?"

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Yes, rather! I made a special note of exactly where it was. Glyn locked his study on the outside, and took away the key, to keep the machine safe."

"So we shan't be in any danger of being interrupted!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Now, I'm going up the rain-pipe and along the ledge to the window."

"It's jolly risky!" said Monk.

"Oh, that's easy enough! I've seen Blake do it; and what Blake can do I can do, I suppose," said Gordon Gay.

Lane gave a sudden start.

"Hark!"

There was a footstep in the gloom, and a grumbling voice was heard.

"Now, then, I'll report yer! You're out of your dormitory, I know that! I've 'eard yer speakin', so you may as well show yourselves!"

It was the voice of Taggles, the porter.

"My hat!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Done!" muttered Lane.

"Quiet! He takes us for St. Jim's kids," whispered Gordon Gay. "Keep in the shadow of the wall and collar him as he comes up!"

"He'll yell!"

"No, he won't; I'll take care of that." The portly form of Taggles loomed up dimly in the gloom.

"I'll report yer!" he said, as he caught sight of the dusky forms. "I'll report yer! I'll—Ow! Oh!"

Taggles broke off suddenly as the four juniors seized him. He made a wild attempt to yell; but as he did so Gordon Gay jammed a handkerchief in his mouth, and he gurgled instead.

"It's all right!" said Gordon Gay, in a whisper. "We're not going to hurt you."

"Groogh!"

"We're only going to make you prisoner for a bit," said Gordon Gay. "I suppose you know who we are."

"Yowp!"

"I am Captain Red Hand, the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, and these are my trusty braves!" whispered Gordon Gay, in a thrilling voice. "A word, a movement, and you are a dead school porter! Catch on!"

"Oh!"

"Bind him, my men!"

The "men" chuckled, and bound Taggles. He was jammed against the nearest tree, and the rope was wound round him, and the handkerchief tied across his mouth.

Taggles' brain was in a whirl. He did not believe that he had been captured by the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, but he was very much alarmed. It was clear to him now that the juniors did not belong to St. Jim's, and he wondered whether they might possibly be some youthful gang of burglars.

Whether they were or not, they were free to do as they liked; and the unfortunate school porter had no power to interfere with them.

Gordon Gay and Carboy climbed the rain-pipe like monkeys, and they worked their way along the stone ledge till they could reach the window of Glyn's study.

It was the work of ten minutes.

Then there was a click, and the Grammarian juniors disappeared in at the window.

Gay struck a match in the study.

There was the line-writing machine standing upon a table in a corner, in its zinc cover just as Glyn had left it.

Gordon Gay grinned.

He lifted the cover and took the machine out. It did not weigh very much. Then he replaced the cover upon the baseboard of the machine and fastened it down. Unless the cover was lifted no one could see that the machine had been removed.

An old box that had contained some of Bernard Glyn's supplies was dragged out from under the table, and the line-writer was jammed into it, and Gordon Gay tied it up securely.

Then he attached a rope round the box and lowered it out of the window.

Monk and Lane stood in the quadrangle below to receive it.

Taggles, with the gag in his mouth, unable to give the alarm, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness.

"All serene!" whispered Carboy.

"Right-ho! We've got it!"

Gay tossed the rope down after the box, and then the two climbed out of the window and closed it behind them.

Two minutes later they stood beside the juniors in the quad.

"Here we are again!" chuckled Carboy softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it out into the road, and I'll look after Taggy."
And the line-writer was borne away in triumph.

As soon as it was safely over the school wall Gordon Gay returned to the bound school porter.

"Still comfy?" he asked.
"Groogn!"
"Taggy, old man—"
Gordon Gay removed the gag.
"Master Gay!" whispered Taggy, spluttering.

Gay grinned.
"Yes, you've got it!"
"I'll report yer! I'll—"
"Pax!" grinned Gay. "Look here, this is only a jape on Tom Merry & Co.—no harm in it. I'll tip you half-a-crown if you'll say nothing about it. If you don't promise I'll leave you tied up."

"Oh! Groogh!"
"It's only a jape!"
"Wot 'ave you took away?" demanded Taggles.

"One of Glyn's inventions, that's all! And we're going to return it later, of course. It's only a jape on them."

"Hall right!" said Taggles. "It's a go, Master Gay. I take your word!"

"Good!"
Gordon Gay released the school porter, pressed half-a-crown into his hand, and ran after his chums.

Taggles returned, grunting, to his lodge. He knew that he could take Gordon Gay's word, and he was satisfied.

Four triumphant cyclists, bearing the captured machine, among them, rode away in high glee towards the Grammar School. There was a surprise awaiting Tom Merry & Co. on the morrow.

CHAPTER 8.

The Missing Machine!

JACK BLAKE greeted the chums of the Shell with a cheerful grin as they came down.

"You're just in time for brekker," he remarked. "How many lines have you got?"

"None!"
"We're going to collect as many as we can!" grinned Digby. "It will be ripping fun to work them all in. Knox is going about like a bear with a sore head. He can't catch on to it at all."

"Bai Jove! No!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. came across to see the Terrible Three before breakfast. They were in high spirits.

"We've dropped a cushion on Monteith over the banisters," Figgins explained. "It was an accident, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"But he was very ratty!" grinned Kerr. "He's given us a thousand lines. It's pretty thick, but it really doesn't matter, does it?"

"Not a bit!" grinned Glyn. "I'll grind 'em out for you!"

"Monteith says they're to be shown up by three o'clock," said Kerr. "That's especially to muck up the Grammar School match, of course."

"Nice fellow!" muttered Monty Lowther. "How pleased he will be when you take the lines in prompt to time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The breakfast-bell rang, and the juniors went in to their own Houses to breakfast. Jack Blake bumped into Knox in the doorway of the School House dining-room, and made a wild grab at the prefect to save himself.

Whether by accident or design, he

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! I know a man who spends a week cutting down trees. Yes, and then he spends a week cutting them up. Do you know the three ages of a car? Breaking records, breaking down, and broken up! "What should I take when run down?" asked Skimpole. The number of the car! A Wayland footer report reads: "D'Arcy put in some fin work." The ground being under water, we presume! The Wayland police are now using X-rays. They should be able to "see through" anything. And I hear convicts are allowed to make all sorts of things in gaol. Except their escape. Gore tells this one innocently against himself. He went to a phrenologist to have his bumps read to see what he is fitted for. The phrenologist felt Gore's bumps—and gave him his money back! "Any big men born in your village?" asked the successful man condescendingly. "No, sir," answered the youth, "only babies!"

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caught the senior by an ear and dragged him over, Knox, in his surprise, going down on the floor with a heavy bump.

"Yaroo!" he roared.  
Blake gazed at him with an expression of astonishment.

"I'm sorry!" he ejaculated.  
Knox jumped up in a rage.  
"You clumsy young cad!" he roared.

"I'll—"  
"Calm yourself, Knox!" said Mr. Lathom, coming into the room. "This is not the way for a prefect to speak!"

"Did you see what he did, sir?" roared Knox.  
"Yes. Take a hundred lines for your carelessness, Blake."

"Yes, sir."  
Blake did not mind at all.

He grinned as he sat down at the Fourth Form table. As a rule, the juniors were considerably circumspect at table. But this morning they allowed themselves unusual freedom.

Blake rolled up pellets of bread and jerked them across to the Shell table, catching Skimpole behind his large ears.

Skimpole, in a state of great surprise, looked round so often that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, rapped out at him at last:

"Skimpole!"  
The genius of the Shell blinked at his Form-master through his big spectacles.

"Yes, sir."  
"Cannot you keep still?"  
"Certainly, sir! But— Ow!"

Another pellet caught Skimpole behind the right ear as he spoke, and he clapped his hand to the auricular appendage.

"Skimpole!" thundered Mr. Linton angrily.  
"Yes, sir."  
"Take a hundred lines, and be quiet!"

"Oh, sir— Ow!"  
"Skimpole!"  
"Something keeps striking me behind the ears, sir. This is most remarkable, sir!" said Skimpole, blinking round with a very astonished expression.

Mr. Linton thought it was very

Kerr says he has three cousins, and half of them are boys. Three—and half of them are boys. Yes, and so are the other half! "You can train yourself to awaken at any desired hour," says the school doctor. The triumph of mind over mattress! A postcard posted in Rylcombe in 1912 has just been delivered in Wayland. Still, the journey is uphill. Lefevre, of the Fifth, tried learning to ride a horse during the vac. He had a "bumper" time! Gussy's elder brother, Lord Conway, says he is as happy as a king when flying his private plane. He is, of course, really an ace. Now, you knaves, see the "trick"? Gore says he succeeded in cycling at 40 miles per hour. What is more remarkable is that he succeeded in stopping. Then there was the Loamshire recruit who was given leave for seven clear days, and stayed away ten. He explained that three of them were foggy. A Wayland paper advertised: "For sale—5,000-year-old hens." Apparently they have been "pecking around" for some time! As the fag remarked, surveying the elephant doubtfully: "Do you mean to tell me he washes behind the ears, too?" Oh, Kerr objects to foreign countries manufacturing tartan. He thinks it ought to be "checked." Reminds me of the gamekeeper who was so fastidious about his food that he wouldn't have his eggs "poached." Well, as the debt collector remarked, my day's work is dun. I'll give you a ring, fellows!

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remarkable, too. He looked round with his sharp, keen eyes, and discovered Blake in the act of jerking another pellet.

"Blake!" he exclaimed.
"Yes, sir!" said Blake meekly.
"You were throwing something at Skimpole!"

"Was I, sir?"
"Do you deny it?"
"No, sir."

"Mr. Lathom, I appeal to you—"
"Quite right, sir!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Blake, you will take two hundred lines for your conduct, and I shall expect them before tea!"

"Yes, sir!" said Blake.
"Ow!" ejaculated Skimpole.

He rubbed his ear again. Mr. Linton swung round with a furious face.

"Was that you again, Blake?"
"No, sir," said Blake.
"It was Digby," said Mr. Lathom.

"I saw him. I am very sorry for this, Mr. Linton. I cannot understand the behaviour of my boys this morning. Digby, you will take two hundred lines, and stay in this afternoon until they are written."

"Yes, sir!" said Digby meekly.
"And if there is any more of this, the next offender will be caned!" said Mr. Lathom.

There was no next offender. The juniors did not want to be caned. Bernard Glyn had not, so far, made any invention to deal with the punishment of that sort.

The juniors trooped out after breakfast. Things were going well. Half an hour's work by the line-writing machine after dinner, and the impositions would be disposed of, and everything in the garden, as Blake put it, would be lovely.

During morning lessons, Tom Merry & Co. were remiss.

Like the savage in the story who went to war with another savage, not because there was any quarrel, but because he had a new club, the juniors raked in impositions, not because they had any

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"Thanks, Toby!"
Tom Merry glanced carelessly at the postmark. Then he gave a shout.
The postcard bore the local postmark of Rylcombe. And on the back was a simple line:

"Many thanks! Works beautifully!"
"GORDON GAY."

"What is it?" asked Blake.
"Look!" yelled Tom Merry.
He held up the card. The juniors read the message, and they understood. There was a shout of wrath.
"The Grammarians!"

"Shows what it is to have an inventive genius!" grinned Frank Monk.
"Tom Merry has got our postcard by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I wonder what they'll do when they miss the machine?" Lane remarked meditatively. "I shouldn't wonder if we see them over here before the match!"

And the Grammarians laughed loud and long.

"If they've got lines to do, we may lend them the machine, if they're good boys!" Gordon Gay remarked.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me see it!"
"Look here, Hake——"

But Hake pushed his way to the table and dragged the jersey off the line-writing machine. He was very suspicious; but he might not even have guessed what it was but for the fact that Gordon Gay was half-way through a page of Latin prose. The prefect stared at the machine and at the unfinished impot in amazement.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.
The juniors were silent with dismay.
"So that's how you were going to get your lines done, is it?" said Hake, with an unpleasant smile. "That's how you



Jack Blake bumped into Knox and made a wild grab at the prefect to save himself. Whether by accident or design, he caught the senior by an ear and dragged him over. "Yaroooh!" roared Knox. "You clumsy young cad!"

CHAPTER 10.

Gay & Co. Lose the Line-Writer!

"THIS is where we score!"
It was Gordon Gay who made the remark.

The Grammarian juniors gathered in Gay's study in the Grammar School, chuckled in chorus:

"What-ho!"
Gordon Gay stood at his table. Morning school was over at the Grammar School, and five juniors were gathered in Gay's study. Upon the table stood the line-writing machine. Gordon Gay had been testing it, and it worked well. The Australian junior had soon fallen into the way of working it with success and dispatch.

And Monk and Lane and Carboy and Wootton major and Tadpole stood round, watching him with great admiration.

Hake, the prefect, had given them a hundred lines each that morning, and Gordon Gay was churning the lines off in fine style. He had already written out several impositions long overdue to Mr. Adams, their Form-master, and Mr. Adams had received them without a suspicion.

"Of course, they will have to promise to take care of it and bring it back!"

The Grammar School juniors roared.
"Hark!" exclaimed Wootton major suddenly. "That sounds like Hake!"

There was a heavy step in the passage.
"Cover the machine up—quick!"
gapped Carboy.

Gordon Gay threw a footer jersey over the line-writing machine. It was all he could do in the hurry of the moment, but the machine was by no means wholly hidden from view. The Grammarians grouped themselves round the table to hide it as much as possible as the door opened.

Hake, the prefect, came into the study.

He was looking very suspicious. He fixed his eyes upon the juniors in a very searching way.

"What are you young beggars up to?" he demanded. "Mind, no footer this afternoon till you've written out your lines?"

"That's all right, Hakey!"
"What have you got there? What's the machine?"

"Private property!" said Gordon Gay. "Let it alone!"

did the lines you handed in to Mr. Adams this morning, I suppose?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Gordon Gay.

"I shall confiscate this machine!" said Hake. "It's a jolly ingenious thing, I must say! But you won't get any more lines done on it, I imagine!"

"Look here, Hake, it isn't ours!" said Gay desperately. "It belongs to Bernard Glyn at St. Jim's!"

Hake sneered.
"I suppose he made it for you?" he said sarcastically. "It must have cost pounds, I should think."

"We raided it!"
"Well, it's going to be confiscated, all the same!" said Hake. "Of course, I don't believe a word you've said! You made this thing here!"

"We didn't! We——"

"Oh rot!" said Hake.
He picked up the line-writing machine and carried it out of the study. The juniors watched him, in utter dismay. They could not resist a prefect. Hake had only to call upon their Form-master if they did.

The prefect tramped out of the study with the machine.

There was a long, painful silence in Gordon Gay's study.

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Monk at last. "This beats everything!" "The beast will never let us have it again!" said Gay. "Poor old Glyn! He won't see his giddy invention any more!"

"Of course, we couldn't foresee this," said Lane. "I wonder if we could get it back from Hake if we appealed to the Head."

"No fear! We can't go to the Head and tell him that we've been writing out impots on a giddy machine!"

"And we can't own up to raiding the Saints after lights out!" said Monk gloomily.

"By Jove, no!"

"It's rotten!"

"All these blessed impositions to write out by hand now!" groaned Gordon Gay. "No good taking in the machine-done lines now!"

"Oh blow!"

The triumph of the Grammarian juniors was over. They settled down, with gloomy faces, to write out their lines. They had plenty to do if they were to be finished in time to play the footer match with St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay glanced out of the window when he had finished, and uttered an exclamation.

"Tom Merry!"

"He's come in answer to the post-card!" grinned Frank Monk.

"I wonder what he'll say when he knows that the machine has gone?"

"Well, it can't be helped."

Gordon Gay watched the junior in the quad. Tom Merry had just ridden in on his bicycle, and his looks showed that he had scorched all the way from St. Jim's. He was evidently in a very great hurry.

The Grammarians were feeling considerably "rotten" as they waited for Tom Merry to come in. They had raided the line-writing machine for a jape, but they had not, of course, intended to keep permanent possession of it. But now it was extremely doubtful if the St. Jim's juniors would ever see it again.

Gordon Gay was looking miserably enough as Tom Merry came into the study.

The Shell junior had ridden hard from St. Jim's after receiving the post-card from the Grammar School, and he was flushed and breathless.

The other fellows had deputed him to cycle over and explain how matters stood to Gordon Gay & Co., and ask for the restitution of the machine in time to get the lines done before the football match.

"You bounders!" gasped Tom Merry, as he came in.

"Hallo!" said Gay.

"You blessed burglars!"

Tom Merry had expected to find the Grammarians in high feather. He was surprised by the gloomy looks with which he was greeted. He glanced round the study, and the Grammarian juniors knew that he was looking for the line-writing machine. It was not, of course, to be seen.

"Where is it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Where is what?" said Gordon Gay.

"You know what I mean. The line-writer—Glyn's invention," said Tom Merry wrathfully. "I never guessed what had become of it till I had your card. Where is it?"

The Grammarians were silent.

"You raided it last night from Glyn's study?" demanded Tom Merry.

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Gordon Gay nodded.

"Well, that's all right," said Tom Merry; "a jape's a jape, and we're willing to admit that you've done us. But we want the machine."

"You see—" began Gordon Gay hesitatingly.

"We give you best, as far as the raid's concerned," said Tom Merry. "We'll take it out of you at footer this afternoon. But we simply must have the machine. We've been ragging this morning, and we've got over a thousand lines each to do."

"Phew!"

"Now, let's have the machine like a good fellow!" said Tom Merry. "We shall have to miss the match and stay in all the afternoon and most of the evening, too, grinding out lines by hand if you don't give it up."

"But we can't!" said Gordon Gay miserably enough. "It's been confiscated. Hake, the prefect, found us writing lines with it, and he's taken it away."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry sank into a chair in utter dismay.

"We're frightfully sorry," said Frank Monk. "Of course, we didn't mean to keep the machine; it was only a jape. But now Hake's got it."

"But—but if you explain to him that it wasn't yours!" gasped Tom Merry.

"We've done so, but it doesn't make any difference. He doesn't believe us, or he doesn't choose to. You know what a cad he is!"

"What are we going to do, then?"

"Blessed if I know," said Gordon Gay. "We're awfully sorry about this."

"Well, it was a jape, and you couldn't know how it was going to turn out," said Tom Merry. "It's beastly for us. If we don't get the machine we can't come over for the footer match this afternoon."

"Yes, I know it's rotten."

"But we'll get it back somehow!" said Tom Merry between his teeth. "I'll buzz back now and tell the fellows how it is. You can expect us for the match."

Gordon Gay nodded. In two minutes more Tom Merry was on his bicycle, riding back to St. Jim's at a scorching rate with very bad news for his chums.

CHAPTER 11.

Kerr's Brain-wave!

THE St. Jim's juniors, in a state of great anxiety, were waiting for Tom Merry at the gates of the old school.

They watched the road for the Shell fellow, and Arthur Augustus, who was the first to sight the figure of a scorching cyclist, uttered an exclamation at last.

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry raced up to the school gates and dismounted.

"Have you got it, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"You ass!" hooted Blake. "Can't you see that he hasn't got it? Do you think he'd have it in his waistcoat pocket?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Won't they give it up?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"They can't!" he replied.

"Why not?"

"It's been confiscated by a prefect. Hake found them working it, and he's taken it away."

There was a general exclamation of dismay:

"Rotten!"

"But it's my machine!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn excitedly. "The cad has

no right to keep my property! Why, it's worth more than ten pounds!"

"That doesn't matter to Hake," said Tom Merry. "He means to keep it. I suspect that he's got some dodge in his mind for making use of the machine—either to write out lines for himself and his friends or to sell them to the other chaps at so much a page. I dare say Hake could do a good trade among the juniors that way."

"Bai Jove! What an uttah wottah!"

"At all events, he's keeping the machine, though he knows it's your property, Glyn," said Tom Merry, wheeling his bicycle into the quad. "He knows you can't appeal to the Head without giving yourself away, and you can't appeal to his headmaster, either, without giving Gordon Gay away, and he knows we won't do that."

Bernard Glyn looked very gloomy. "It's rotten to lose the machine," he said. "And that isn't all. I could make another, but what about this afternoon? We're all piled up with lines, and we can't go over to the Grammar School to play until they're done."

"Which means that we can't go over at all," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got to get hold of the machine again somehow," said Tom Merry.

"How? We can't raid the Grammar School in broad daylight and yank the thing out of a prefect's study."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, we could hardly do that."

"Then what's to be done, deah boy?"

"We must think of something."

"That rotter Hake has got his back specially up against us, too," said Fatty Wynn. "It's no good making an appeal to him to be decent. You remember the time Kerr impersonated the House-master of the Grammar School—he made Hake look a silly ass? Hake isn't likely to forget that."

"No; it's rotten!"

"Can't you think of something, Kerr?" asked Figgins, turning to his Scots chum.

Kerr was an extremely keen and sagacious junior, and Figgins had great faith in his judgment.

Kerr had a very thoughtful expression upon his face now. He was evidently thinking things out very carefully.

"Good! Let Kerr give his opinion!" said Tom Merry hopefully. "What do you think about the matter, Kerr, old son?"

"I suppose it's settled that we shall have to try something?" said Kerr. "We must have the machine back."

"Yes, rather!"

"Quite wight, Kerr, deah boy! But the question is, how are we to get it back, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a wise shake of the head.

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Suppose our Form-master went over to the Grammar School and saw Hake and demanded the machine?" said Kerr. "He would have to give it up then."

The juniors stared blankly at Kerr.

"You ass!" said Blake. "If we say a word to Lathom on the subject he will know all about how we did the lines we've handed in. It would give the whole show away, and we should be detained for the afternoon for a dead cert, and most likely licked into the bargain. If you can't suggest anything more sensible than that——"

"Why don't you suggest sending the Head?" asked Kangaroo sarcastically. "That would be, even better."

"The Head's too tall."
 "Too what?"
 "Too tall," said Kerr calmly.
 "Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Blake, in exasperation. "Right off his silly rocker, that's what's the matter with him! What's tallness and shortness got to do with it, you frabjous ass?"
 "Lots!" said Kerr cheerfully. "The question is, would Lathom be able to do it if we could send him over?"
 "Yaas, wathah! But—"
 "But we can't!" howled Blake.
 "I know that!"
 "Then what are you talking out of your silly hat for?"
 "It's all right!" said Kerr, laughing. "I'm not talking out of my hat. You remember that I once got myself up as Lathom, and it was a great success—"
 "My hat!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "I could do it again, and I'm willing to try if you fellows think it would be any good," said Kerr modestly.
 "Hake knows Lathom, you know," said Herries.
 But Blake gave a shout of glee.
 "Ripping! But there's no time to lose. Let's get to it at once!"
 "Just one other thing," said Kerr. "Glyn had better come with me to identify the machine. We'll get the line-writer back, and Glyn can be grinding out our lines at the Grammar School while the match is being played."
 "That's the idea!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"
 Kerr's suggestion came like a ray of sunshine in a dark place. The juniors jumped at the idea at once. And no time was lost in carrying it out.

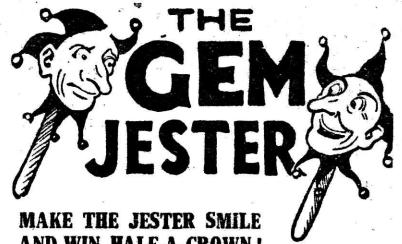
CHAPTER 12.

Hoodwinking Hake!

HAKE of the Sixth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School was in high feather. Hake was a cool and unscrupulous fellow, and Tom Merry's suspicions as to what he intended to do with the line-writing machine were only too well-founded. Hake had tested the machine very carefully, and he was delighted with it.
 He had called his chum, Finn of the Sixth, into his study to show him his prize, and Finn was equally delighted.
 "It's ripping!" Finn remarked, when Hake had turned out a dozen specimens on the line-writer. "I shouldn't wonder if that machine's worth money, you know, in the market."
 Hake nodded.
 "I'm going to look into that part of it, of course," he said. "The machine's mine now, to do as I like with. I shouldn't wonder if I'm able to sell it for a good sum. But at present I can make a good deal out of it. I shall have to do it through my fag, you know—selling lines to chaps who get impositions. You're a prefect, and we can work the game between us. You can keep on imposing lines, and making the juniors bring them in promptly. My fag will supply them with lines at three-pence a sheet."
 Finn roared.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Of course, we shall have to be careful not to be bowled out, that's all!" he said. "But it will work easily enough. I don't see why we shouldn't net quite a neat little income that way."
 "Good egg!" said Finn. "Some of the kids have plenty of cash, and would rather be boiled than write out impositions. It will work like a charm."

"You can make a list out of the kids with most cash to spare, and always hand out lines, too, just after they get their pocket-money," said Hake thoughtfully. "There ought to be a lot in it."
 Tap!
 Hake hastily threw a cloth over the line-writing machine on the table.
 "Come in!" he called out.
 The door opened, and a little gentleman in whiskers and glasses presented himself. Behind him came Bernard Glyn.
 Hake stared at his visitors in astonishment.
 "Mr. Lathom!" he exclaimed.
 The little gentleman bowed.
 "Ah! You are Hake of the Sixth Form here, I think?" he said. "This lad has told me that this is Hake's study."
 And he nodded towards Carboy, who stood in the passage. Carboy had shown the visitors to the study, little guessing that the little gentleman he thought was the St. Jim's Form-master was Kerr in disguise.
 "Yes, this is my study, sir," said Hake, somewhat surlily. "I'm Hake!"
 "Very good! Thank you, my boy!"
 "Not at all, sir," said Carboy.
 And he walked away.
 He was looking perplexed. He hurried up to Gordon Gay's study with the news that Bernard Glyn had come over with a St. Jim's Form-master. News which Gordon Gay & Co. received with amazement.
 "I have called to see you, Hake," said Mr. Lathom II, "at the request of this youth—Glyn."
 Hake frowned.
 "Oh!" he said. He did not ask either of the visitors to sit down.
 "It appears, Hake," said Mr. Lathom, resting his hand upon the table, and regarding the prefect through his spectacles, "that you are in possession of a machine which belongs to this lad."
 Hake looked astonished.
 "What an idea!" he exclaimed. "I don't know who can have told you such a yarn as that, sir."
 "Is it not the fact?"
 "Certainly not, sir!"
 "I am very much surprised," said Mr. Lathom. "You still adhere to that statement, Glyn?"
 "Yes, sir," said Glyn.
 "Do you see the machine in this study?"
 Glyn jerked the cloth off the line-writer.
 "That is it, sir," he said.
 Hake gritted his teeth.
 "Let my property alone, you young hound!" he exclaimed furiously.
 Glyn looked at him with a flash in his eyes.
 "It's not your property," he replied.
 "It's my property, and you know it perfectly well. If you try to keep it you are no better than a thief."
 Hake clenched his fist and made a step towards the Lancashire lad. Mr. Lathom interposed, raising his hand deprecatingly.
 "I trust there is going to be no violence, Hake," he said mildly.
 "Make that young cad hold his tongue, then!" growled the prefect.
 "You should—er—moderate your expressions in speaking to an elder boy, Glyn," said the little Form-master. "I am sure that Hake does not mean to act dishonestly. Besides, he will not be allowed to keep the machine if it doesn't belong to him."
 "It does belong to me!" growled Hake.

(Continued on next page.)



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THE FIRST SHAVE.

Gerald was carefully having his first shave, watched by his father, who seemed amused. Gerald scraped and scratched with the safety razor, and when he had finished he caressed his chin in the usual way, saying:
 "That's better."
 "But," said his father, picking up a blade, "you've forgotten to use this!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to O. Coppen, 720, Burnley Lane, Oldham, Lancs.

THE CURE.

A rather agitated-looking tramp knocked at the door of a country cottage.
 "Can you let me have a bar of soap, ma'am?" she asked the lady of the house.
 "Do you really mean to tell me that you want some soap to wash with?" she asked.
 "Not for me, ma'am," replied the tramp. "But my mate's got 'iccups, and I want to give 'im a shock to cure 'im by showing 'im the soap."
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Dewell, 28A, Pycroft Road, Chertsey, Surrey.

AWKWARD.

The sergeant was drilling the awkward squad and was feeling very sore. "Attention!" he bellowed.
 There was a lazy shuffle.
 "As you were!" he roared; and all shuffled back, except Private Smith.
 "Smith," said the sergeant, dangerously calm, "I said 'As you were!'"
 "I know, sir," said Smith meekly. "But how was I? I forget."
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Cox, 41, Westover Road, St. Peter's, Broadstairs, Kent.

AN ILL OMEN.

Nervous Wayfarer: "Er—nice n-new moon to-night."
 Footpad: "Yus, guv'nor—turn yer money over!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Clayton, 50, Francis Road, West Hounslow.

SUBTRACTION.

Teacher: "Now, in order to subtract things have always to be of the same denomination. For instance, we couldn't take three apples from four pears, nor six dogs from nine horses."
 Tommy: "But, sir, you can take four quarts of milk from five cows!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Waugh, Lagos, Haig Avenue, Monkseaton, Northumberland.
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"Will you explain where you obtained it?" asked Mr. Lathom.

"That's my business!"

"You did not make it yourself?"

"I decline to be questioned," said Hake loftily. "Let this young rascal prove that it is his. In the first place, he can explain what sort of a machine his was, if he's lost one. What was it used for?"

"I'd rather not explain that, sir," said Glyn, with a well-acted confusion, as the Form-master looked at him.

Mr. Lathom coughed.

"Ahem! I am afraid it will be necessary for you to explain, Glyn," he said. "I must have all the facts."

"Well, sir, it was a—line-writing machine. And, besides, it has got my name on it."

"There are more Glyns than one in the world—" began Hake.

"Ah, I see! A machine to enable you to write out lines, so as to fix the conjugation of verbs upon your memory," interrupted the little gentleman.

Hake laughed.

"More likely a machine to write out lines for imposts," he said.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Is it possible, Glyn, that you have invented a machine for doing anything of that sort?"

Glyn was silent.

"This is very—er—wrong, and I shall, of course, confiscate the machine if it is taken back to the school," said Mr. Lathom. "You surely could not expect anything else, Glyn, when you have called me into the matter."

"Anyhow, sir, I don't think Hake ought to have it," said Glyn. "It's my property."

"Yes, certainly—certainly!"

Hake bit his lip.

He had not thought that the St. Jim's junior would dare to own up to a master that he was in possession of a line-writing machine.

But it was evident that Glyn was prepared to go even to that length to get the line-writer out of the hands of the Grammar School senior.

"Well, this machine doesn't belong to Glyn, Mr. Lathom!" said Hake angrily. "Let him explain how it came over here."

"It was raided last night from my study," said Glyn.

"By whom?" sneered Hake.

"You, I suppose, as I find it in your study!" said Glyn cheerfully.

Hake started.

"You young rascal—"

"Ahem! Calm yourself, I beg," said Mr. Lathom mildly.

"I confiscated this machine, which was made by some juniors belonging to this school," said Hake. "I refuse to give it to any St. Jim's boy. The matter is now ended. I wish you a very good afternoon, Mr. Lathom."

"Ahem!"

"I have no more to say, sir."

"You can prove that the machine is yours, Glyn?" said the little gentleman.

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" said Hake.

"I can show receipts from the people I bought the parts of, sir," said Bernard Glyn, "and my name is engraved on the lever there, sir."

Mr. Lathom II stepped towards the machine. Hake, his face flushing savagely, interposed.

"I forbid you to touch my property!" he exclaimed.

"Really, Hake—"

"You will oblige me, sir, by leaving my study, and taking this impudent young rascal with you!" exclaimed Hake.

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The little gentleman looked at him steadily through his spectacles.

"It appears to me that you are acting dishonestly, Hake," he said.

"Mr. Lathom!" roared Hake.

"I have used the right word, Hake. You are acting dishonestly in attempting to detain a machine which can be proved to belong to this lad. I shall now proceed at once to your headmaster, Dr. Monk, and appeal to him for the restoration of the machine."

Hake started.

"To Dr. Monk?" he ejaculated.

"Certainly!"

"But I—I say—"

"Well?" said Mr. Lathom

sternly.

"I—I—I—"

Hake broke off in dismay. He dared not have Dr. Monk brought into the matter. Glyn's name was on the machine, and it would be easy for the Liverpool lad to prove his ownership of it. Hake's whole case had rested upon his belief that the St. Jim's juniors would never dare to bring a master into the matter and thus convict themselves of owning a line-writing machine.

As a matter of fact, they had not done so, but Hake could not know that. If he had guessed for an instant the real identity of the little gentleman in glasses all would have been different. But he did not guess.

"Well, Hake," said Mr. Lathom sternly, "are you going to give Glyn his property, or shall I proceed to ask Mr. Monk's assistance in the matter?"

Hake ground his teeth savagely.

"The young cad can have it!" he snarled.

"Take it, Glyn."

"Yes, sir."

"And take it, first, to Gordon Gay's study," said Mr. Lathom. "In order to make sure, I will question him as to whether this machine is actually the one which you tell me he raided from your study at the school."

"Very well, sir."

Glyn picked up the patent line-writer and bore it in triumph out of the study.

Hake watched him with savage eyes. Mr. Lathom, shaking his head over the depravity of the prefect, followed Glyn from the study. Hake closed the door after him with a slam that rang from one end of the corridor to the other.

CHAPTER 13.

A Shock for the Grammarians!

GORDON GAY & CO. were waiting in their study. They had no doubt that Bernard Glyn had brought the Form-master over from St. Jim's to help him regain possession of the machine, but they could not understand. They expected to hear something from Glyn before they left the Grammar School, however, and they waited for him to come. There was a tap at the door at last, and Bernard Glyn looked into the study with a grin.

"Can I come in?" he asked.

"Yes, you ass!" said Gordon Gay.

"Have you got the machine?"

"Yes, rather. Here it is!"

"What on earth did you bring old Lathom over for?" demanded Monk. "It was giving the whole show away. Old Lathom will— Oh! I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

Frank Monk broke off in great confusion as the little gentleman followed Bernard Glyn into the study.

"Ahem!" Mr. Lathom blinked at Monk through his glasses. "Were you alluding to me in those disrespectful terms, Monk?"



The Grammarians watched Mr. Lathom in amazement as he held me, somebody!" gasped Gordon Gay. It was Kerr, the Grammarian, who exclaimed the Grammarians

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Monk, his cheeks scarlet. "I—I had no idea you were there, sir."

"I strongly disapprove of your alluding to Form-masters in this way, Monk, even if you do not know they can hear you."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn.

The Grammarians stared at him.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This unseemly mirth is quite out of place, Glyn," said Mr. Lathom severely. "Pray be silent. I understand that you can write out impositions in a very quick way with that machine?"

"Yes, sir," grinned Glyn.

"Very well, let me see you do so."

"Certainly, sir."

Bernard Glyn had come provided with

the necessary specimen lines for the impositions. He borrowed Gordon Gay's impot paper and started.

The Grammarians stood looking on in wonder.

Glyn turned out a page in Tom Merry's hand, and Mr. Lathom blinked at it through his glasses.

"My hat!" he said. "That will take in old Linton a treat!"

The Grammarian juniors almost fell down.

To hear the grave, quiet, middle-aged Form-master speak in that way was a most amazing experience.

"All serene!" said Mr. Lathom. Gordon Gay gasped.

"What the—what—"
Figgins gave Mr. Lathom a sounding slap on the shoulder.

"Bravo, old boy!" he shouted.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

Gordon Gay staggered back.

Mr. Lathom, instead of being angered by the familiarity of the juniors, grinned.

"Yes, I think I've worked it pretty well, old son!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry. "How many lines have you turned out, Glyn?"

"Nearly a thousand already."

"Good! Skimmy's come over with us, and he's going to take the lines back," said Tom Merry. "He will give them up to the masters and prefects while we're playing footer, and everything in the garden will be lovely."

"Oh, ripping!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Is this a—a dream?" gasped Gordon Gay. "Have I gone dotty, or have you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't understand it," said Frank Monk dazedly. "This—this is really Mr. Lathom, I suppose, and not his ghost?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does it mean?" roared Gordon Gay.

Mr. Lathom took off his spectacles. The Grammarians watched him curiously. Then he took off his whiskers, and the Grammarians gasped.

"Oh, hold me, somebody!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom's wig came off next, revealing his closely cropped brown hair. Then Gordon Gay & Co. understood.

"Kerr!"

"Oh, you bounder!"

"You fraud!"

"You impostor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr chuckled.

He wetted his handkerchief and wiped the wrinkles off his face.

The Grammar School junior slapped him on the back and roared with laughter and relief.

"I began to think I was dreaming!" Gordon Gay gasped. "So it was Kerr all the time. And you've got the machine out of Hake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get down to the footer, and Glyn can write out the lines," said Tom Merry. "Join us when you've finished, Glyn. Skimpole's going to take the lines back to St. Jim's."

"Certainly!" said Skimpole. "I shall be very pleased. You will not forget to do my five hundred lines, will you, Glyn? In the time thus saved, I shall be able to devote some extra time to the study of Professor Balmcrumpet's wonderful book, the—"

"Oh, come on!" said Gordon Gay.

"Really, Gay—"

The juniors trooped out of the study. Bernard Glyn and Skimpole remained alone there. Glyn locked the door in case of interruption—though

Hake was not likely to interfere any further, with the fear of a visit from Mr. Lathom to Dr. Monk in his mind. Skimpole sat down with his book, and Glyn ground out the lines. Down in the playing fields the St. Jim's v. Grammar School match was commencing.

Bernard Glyn worked industriously. The lines ran off the machine at great speed, and Glyn had them done in a wonderfully short space of time.

When they were finished, he put them into a packet and tied it up with string.

"Here you are, Skimpole!"

"Eh?"

"Here's the lines!" said Glyn. "Chuck that idiotic book away! Don't let on that you've brought the lines from here, though. Just walk into Mr. Raiton's study in the ordinary way. Say that you've brought in the whole lot because the other fellows are playing footer, but they're all done. See?"

"Certainly, Glyn." And Skimpole left the study with the bundle of papers under one arm and his famous volume under the other. Bernard Glyn saw him safely out of the gates of the Grammar School, and then hurried to the footer field. The Lancashire junior did not mean to miss seeing the match.

CHAPTER 14.

The Match—and After!

"GOAL!"

"Hurrah for St. Jim's!" It was a loud shout, ringing over the Grammar School

football ground. The first half of the match was at its end. It had been vigorously contested, and just before the whistle had blown Tom Merry had scored.

Quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had come over to see the match, most of them marvelling at the appearance of Tom Merry & Co. on the football field at all, for they knew of the number of lines that had been handed out to the chums of St. Jim's. But there they were, and they were playing up well for the school.

The first half ended with the visitors one up. Tom Merry & Co. were in fine form. The recovery of the line-writing machine had taken a big anxiety off their minds, and they trusted all to Bernard Glyn. And they were determined to make the Grammarians pay for the trouble they had given them. There could be no better way than by giving Gordon Gay & Co. a thorough licking on the footer field, and that was what the Saints were determined to do.

"One up!" grinned Blake, giving Bernard Glyn a slap on the shoulder as he came up. "We're beating them!"

"Yaas, wathah! The fellows are backin' me up like anythin', Glyn, and I weally think we shall beat them hollow!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You done the lines, Glyn?" he asked.

"Yes, rather! Skimpole's gone off with them," said Glyn cheerily.

"Thanks for taking so much trouble!" "Not at all. It's all right, so long as I see you lick the Grammarians!"

"Oh, you'll see that!" said Figgins confidently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Time!" said Kerr.

And the teams lined up for the second half.

Gordon Gay & Co. were in good form, and, as a rule, they could keep their end up pretty well on the footer



took off his spectacles, his whiskers, and then his wig. "Oh, St. Jim's junior, who stood revealed! "You bounder!" "You impostor!"

They stared at Mr. Lathom, doubting their ears.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Gordon Gay. "W-what did you say, sir?"

"I said that it would take old Linton in a treat."

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Gordon Gay. "What does it mean? Is he tipsy?"

"Must be, I should think!" muttered Carboy. "I'm blessed if I've ever heard a Form-master talk like that before."

"Hallo!" said Gordon Gay, glancing from the window. "Here comes the St. Jim's team."

Two minutes later Tom Merry opened the study door. The passage behind him was crowded with St. Jim's juniors. Tom Merry burst excitedly into the study.

"Is it all right?" he gasped.

field. But undoubtedly they were out-
 claimed by St. Jim's that day.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to carry
 all before them, and from a masterly
 centre by D'Arcy, Tom Merry scored
 another goal. The Saints shouted them-
 selves hoarse.

Gordon Gay & Co. were looking grim
 by this time. They were two behind,
 and it looked as if they would be more
 behind soon.

"Play up, my sons!" said Tom Merry.
 "Wipe up the field with them! We'll
 teach them to raid our blessed line-
 writing machine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Buck up, deah
 boys!"

Down the field went the St. Jim's for-
 wards once more. The Grammarian
 defence was nowhere; and Lowther,
 bringing the ball along the touchline,
 sent it to Blake, who passed to Tom
 Merry, who again shot it neatly into
 the net.

"Three up!" roared Bernard Glyn.
 "Hurrah for St. Jim's!"
 "Bravo, Tom Merry!"

And now Gordon Gay and his men
 made a terrific effort, and the Saints
 were hard pressed for a time. The
 Grammarian attack came sweeping up
 to the Saints goal, and Fatty Wynn
 was called upon to save four times in
 rapid succession. But Fatty Wynn was
 "all there"

No matter what kind of a shot was
 sent in he cleared the ball every time,
 and nothing seemed able to pass him.
 He dropped the ball to Herries at last,
 who cleared with a long kick to mid-
 field, and then the game swayed again
 towards the home goal.

Time was getting close now, and the
 Grammarians fought hard.

But they fought in vain.
 Harder and harder the Saints pressed
 them, and once more the ball went in,
 this time from the foot of Arthur
 Augustus D'Arcy.

The Grammarians knew that they
 were beaten now. There were ten
 minutes to go, and the visitors were
 four up. But Gordon Gay & Co. died
 hard. Right up to the finish they fought
 manfully, and St. Jim's were not able
 to score again.

But neither were the Grammarians.
 When the final whistle blew, the score
 was four-nil for the Saints. A hand-
 some enough margin to justify the wild
 exhilaration of the visiting team and
 their friends.

"Hurrah!" roared Bernard Glyn.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Bravo, us!" yelled Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay looked a little grim, but
 he took it as cheerfully as he could.
 "Well, you've beaten us," he said.
 "Never mind, we'll beat you next
 time!"

To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy
 replied:

"Wats!"

And after having tea with the van-
 quished Grammarians, the St. Jim's
 team took the homeward route, Bernard
 Glyn carrying his precious invention in
 a bag

The juniors discussed the footer
 victory on the way home through the
 evening dusk, and chuckled as they laid
 plans for new japes at the expense of
 masters and prefects with the line-
 writing machine.

But a change came over the spirit of
 their dreams when they reached St.
 Jim's. Skimpole met them at the gate,
 and his look was dolorous.

"I'm so sorry—" he began.

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Tom Merry felt a sudden alarm.
 "You handed in the lines, you ass!"
 he exclaimed.

"I'm sincerely sorry—"
 "Have you handed in the lines?" ex-
 claimed Figgins.

"You see—"
 "The lines, ass!" shrieked Blake.
 "Really, Blake—"

The footballers laid violent hands
 upon Skimpole and shook him. Skim-
 pole's spectacles slid down his nose, and
 he blinked helplessly at the excited
 juniors.

"I'm really sorry!" he gasped. "You
 see, I—I stopped for a little while on
 the road to read my book."

"The lines!" roared Tom Merry,
 shaking him.

"I'm coming to that. I met Mr.
 Linton on the road, unfortunately—"
 "Bai Jove!"

"He asked me if I had done my
 lines," said Skimpole. "Of course, I
 told him I had the lines ready, and that
 you fellows wanted me to hand in yours,
 as you were playing cricket."

"Cricket!" yelled the juniors.
 "I mean football!" said the absent-
 minded genius of the Shell.

"Oh, you frabjous ass! Go on!"
 "Really, Merry—"

"Got on with the washing, you
 cuckoo!"

"Certainly. Mr. Linton seemed some-
 how suspicious. I'm sure I don't know
 why. And he seemed to think it odd
 that the lines should be written out at
 the Grammar School."

"How queer!" snorted Blake. "You
 gave the whole game away, you ass!"

"I am sure I did not," said Skimpole.
 "But Mr. Linton is very sharp. When
 he found that I had all the impositions
 in my bundle, it seemed to make him
 very suspicious."

"Go hon!"
 "It did really. And he made me go
 into Mr. Railton's, and then somehow
 it all came out. I'm sure I didn't
 mean—"

"You haven't mentioned the line-
 writing machine?" yelled Glyn.

"Oh, no! In fact, I did not explain
 at all. I simply said that the lines were
 done, but—but I think perhaps Mr.
 Railton has guessed something. I gather
 that, you know, from the fact that he
 wants to see you immediately you come
 in. You are all to go to his study—all
 excepting Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. I
 took their lines to Mr. Ratcliff, and he
 was quite satisfied, as Mr. Linton had
 said nothing to him."

"Well, that's one good thing," said
 Figgins. "I'm sorry for you chaps. I
 should advise you to suffocate
 Skimpole."

"Indeed, it was not my fault," said
 Skimpole. "In the circumstances, I—
 Oh! Ow!"

Bump!
 The School House juniors marched on
 wrathfully, leaving Skimpole sitting,
 dazed and breathless, in the quadrangle.
 It was quite five minutes before Skim-
 pole recovered from the shock. By that
 time Tom Merry & Co. had presented
 themselves in Mr. Railton's study, with
 many inward misgivings.

Mr. Railton was there, and so were
 the impositions—in a heap on the
 Housemaster's table. The School House
 master looked very severe at the meek
 juniors.

"I have all your impositions here,"
 he said. "Will you kindly explain to
 me how you came to do them at Ryl-
 combe Grammar School?"

The juniors were silent for a moment.
 "We've been over there playing

footer, sir," Tom Merry ventured to
 explain.

Mr. Railton's lips twitched slightly.
 "Will you give me your words, boys,
 that you wrote these impositions out
 yourselves, and that there is no trick
 in the matter?" he asked

Dead silence.
 A jape was a jape, but there was not
 one of the chums who would have told a
 deliberate lie to save himself from a
 flogging.

Mr. Railton waited for an answer.
 But none came. The silence grew
 painful.

"Well?" said the Housemaster grimly.
 "You—you see, sir—" stammered
 Tom Merry.

"Well?"
 "Ahem!"

"Did you write these impositions out
 yourselves?" said Mr. Railton. "Yes or
 no?"

"No!" said Tom Merry desperately.
 "Ah, now we are getting at the facts!"

said Mr. Railton. "It is a very serious
 matter—though you do not appear to
 understand it—to hand in impositions
 which you have not written out your-
 selves. I admit that in the writing there
 is nothing to convict you, and as it
 would be scarcely fair to make you
 answer questions for your own condem-
 nation, I shall pardon you this time if
 you explain frankly what you have
 done."

"Bai Jove, sir!" said D'Arcy. "I
 say that I regard you as a weal sports-
 man, sir!"

Mr. Railton could not help smiling.
 "Thank you, D'Arcy. Now kindly
 explain."

There was no help for it. It had to
 come out, and it came out. Mr. Railton
 listened with considerable astonishment.

"I should be glad to see that machine,
 Glyn," he said.

"I'll fetch it, sir."

And he did. Mr. Railton, with a grim
 face, watched him work it. Whether he
 was angry or not, the juniors could not
 tell from his expression.

"Very ingenious!" said the House-
 master at last. "Very ingenious, indeed,
 Glyn. I have told you that you shall
 not be punished, and I shall keep my
 word. But I expect you all to promise
 me, upon your honour, not to use this
 machine again, or anything of the sort.
 I shall not confiscate it, because I know
 Glyn could easily make another, and
 because I know I can take your word."

"That you can, sir," said Tom Merry.

"We promise."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Very well, you may go."

And the juniors went, glad to escape
 so easily.

"Well," said Blake, in the passage,
 "it was a jolly good thing while it
 lasted; but I suppose it was bound to
 end some time. And Railton is a real
 sport."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co., upon the
 whole, were pleased with themselves,
 and with their Housemaster. But from
 that day forth impositions were written
 out in the old-fashioned way, by hand;
 and no more was heard in the School
 House of Glyn's Line-Writer!

(Next Wednesday: "CAPTAIN
 GUSSY!"—another lively long com-
 plete yarn of the St. Jim's chums,
 starring Gussy as the captain of the
 school! Look out for this story, and
 order your GEM early.)



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! Another wonderful number of the Old Paper has been prepared for you for next Wednesday. It contains the best school and adventure stories of the week, bar none. Martin Clifford kicks off the programme with another lively long complete yarn of the St. Jim's chums, entitled:

"CAPTAIN GUSSY!"

Yes, the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy actually becomes captain of St. Jim's! His standing as a candidate for the position, in the absence of Eric Kildare, the present popular captain, is considered a big joke, but it's not such a joke for the seniors, at least, when Gussy surprises the school by getting in! It sets up an unprecedented position, for the St. Jim's captain has as much authority almost as a master. Being a fellow of tact and judgment, Gussy thinks he's the right man in the right place, and promptly proceeds to put prefects in their places. This sparkling story will be long remembered as one of our author's best efforts. Watch out for it, chums!

"THE FIGHTING SCHOOLMASTER!"

Frank Richards keeps the ball rolling in great style with his latest thrilling yarn of "The Packsaddle Bunch." When Dick Carr saves the life of an Indian outcast he lands himself in trouble with a cowpuncher. But Dick is fortunate in having a headmaster who can use his fists as well as he can use a six-gun and a quirt! You'll greatly enjoy the further adventures of the cow town schoolboys.

Edwy Searles Brooks scores again with the next gripping chapters of "The Secret World!" This serial is proving more popular than any we have had before, and the biggest thrills of it have yet to come. So don't miss one instalment of it.

The Jester's prize jokes, Monty Lowther's fun, and our other usual features are all extra good again, putting the finishing touches to this unbeatable number. Don't forget to give your pals the tip about the GEM; or, better still, lend them copies of the Old Paper, and they will see for themselves what they have been missing.

THE FIGHT FOR THE CUP!

On Saturday another step in the long trail to Wembley is reached, for the Fifth Round ties of the F.A. Challenge Cup are to be played. No competition or sporting event creates such widespread interest and enthusiasm as does the eight months' knock-out battle for this coveted trophy. The keenness of the competition seems to increase with every season.

For sixty-four years the struggle for the Cup has been staged, though this season's competition is the sixtieth, as there were no F.A. Cup-ties during the four years of the War. The competition started in 1871 and only fifteen teams competed. The Wanderers won the Cup that year. From then on entries grew and grew, until now every prominent

PEN PALS COUPON

16-2-35



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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

T. L. Pickersgill, 35, Sunroyd Hill, Horbury, near Wakefield, Yorks, wants correspondents; age 17-18; music.

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Teddy Waks, 20, Du Plooy Street, Potchefstroom, Transvaal, South Africa, wants pen pals; stamps, athletics, Rugby.

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Tony Richardson, 36, Maple Road, Horfield, Bristol 7, wants correspondents.

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Cyril H. Downs, 9, Claybourne Street, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, wants correspondents; snaps.

Edwin J. Briggs, Gatberg, P.O. Sterkspruit, Herschel Dist., Cape Colony, South Africa, wants correspondents; age 17-21; the East, Canada or Scandinavia.

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amateur and professional club in the country takes part in it.

Only two teams have won the Cup outright by winning it three years in succession—the Wanderers and Blackburn Rovers, and both returned it to the F.A. to be fought for again. The present trophy is the third to be provided. The first, worth £25, was stolen from a shop window in Birmingham in 1895, when Aston Villa were the holders. The second cup, a replica of the first, was presented to Lord Kinnaid, after twenty-one years' service as president of the F.A., when a new one was provided in 1910-11.

LOST AND FOUND!

Many stories have been told of someone losing something of value and finding it again in amazingly lucky circumstances, but here's one that will take some beating. A Mrs. Feiger, of Brillion, Winconsin, mislaid a valuable diamond ring. She and her husband searched everywhere about their farm for it, but eventually they had to give it up for lost. But it was not lost, and Mrs. Feiger had a pleasant surprise when it was returned to her some months later by her sister. She had found it inside a chicken which Mrs. Feiger had given to her!

THE MONEY-SELLER!

Five-dollar notes for three dollars thirty-nine cents! If you had been on the Los Angeles Broadway recently that is the price for which you could have bought five-dollar notes. There was no catch in it; they were genuine notes. Yet Mr. Mel Smith, the man who was making the offer, only succeeded in selling two! But why was he doing it? Well, it happened like this. Mr. Smith met a man who gave it as his opinion that you could sell the public anything, but Mr. Smith, being a circus official and having a good knowledge of the eccentricity of the public, strongly disagreed. A bet of twenty pounds was made, and Mr. Smith thereupon proved he was right, and won the bet, in only selling two of the five-dollar notes.

TAILPIECE.

Hostess: "Mr. Jones will now sing a comic song."

Guest: "I knew something like that would happen. I upset the salt at the dinner-table!"

THE EDITOR.

The PACKSADDLE BUNCH!



The Buck-Jumper!

"GUM!" exclaimed Slick Poindexter. "That's a hoss!"

"And so it is, entoiroy!" said Mick Kavanagh.

Dick Carr, the new boy at Packsaddle School, looked round.

Dick was interested in horses. He was a good rider, and could back any "critter" in the school corral. But, so far, he did not possess one of his own—the only fellow at the cow town school who didn't.

The Packsaddle bunch were in the playground, after chuck, when Steve Carson came riding in at the gate from the prairie trail. He came in with a gallop and a flourish, a clatter of hoofs and jingling of bridle. Steve liked showing off his horsemanship. And he was riding a new horse! He had gone out on his cow-pony, but he had come back mounted on the handsomest pinto in Texas.

As he drew rein in the playground there was a rush of the Packsaddle fellows to gather round him and admire his horse. Packsaddle guys knew all about horseflesh. Dick Carr, tenderfoot as he was, knew quite as much as the rest, and he looked at Steve's handsome pony with a keenly appreciative eye. It was exactly the cayuse he wanted.

"Say, where'd you cinch him, Steve?" exclaimed Poindexter.

"Been hoss stealing?" asked Mick; and there was a laugh.

"Where's your own critter?" asked Poker Parker.

"Made a trade?" inquired Slim Dixon.

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Questions rained on Steve. He grinned down at the Packsaddle fellows as he sat at ease in the saddle. The pinto pony stood quite still, with almost a sleepy look, as quiet a cayuse as had ever been seen in the Frio valley. But Dick Carr, watching the pony's eyes, detected a gleam in them which gave him the impression that the pinto was not so quiet as he looked. Had he been in the saddle he would not have sat him

of Packsaddle and burst into a roar of laughter. It was echoed by the rest of the bunch. They did not want telling about horses by a tenderfoot who had been only a few weeks in Texas.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Steve. "That tenderfoot figures that he knows something about a cayuse. Say, did you ever sit a critter before you hit Texas?"

Dick Carr coloured.

"I've ridden ever since I was old enough to sit a horse," he snapped. "And I tell you that that pony is full of mischief."

"He sure knows a whole lot!" chuckled Poindexter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bill Sampson, the headmaster of Packsaddle, came striding down from the school-house. The bunch opened, to make way for the cow town schoolmaster, in his red shirt and ten-gallon hat.

"Say, that's a cayuse!" said Bill admiringly. "But don't you sit him like you was sitting on a sofa, you Carson! He's sure full of pep!"

"I got him all right, Bill," said Steve, while the bunch stared a little.

Bill knew more about horses than any other man in Texas, and his words rather unexpectedly bore out what the tenderfoot had just said.

"I'll say that critter set you back a hundred dollars," said Bill, scanning the pinto.

"Guess again!" grinned Carson. "I traded him off Snort Jenkins for my old pony and ten bucks, Bill."

"Snort," said Bill, "is the sharpest, durndest horse-dealer in Texas. I guess this is the first time he ever came out

THE SCHOOLBOY BRONCO-BUSTER!

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

so carelessly as Carson was doing now. But Big Steve was quite at his ease.

"I guess I've made a trade, you 'uns," said Steve. "I met up with Snort Jenkins on the prairie, and he had this cayuse to sell. I traded my cow-pony and ten dollars for him, and I guess I got the goods."

"You sure did!" exclaimed Poindexter. "Say, does he buck?"

"I guess he won't buck me," said Steve. "I'll say I'll ride any cayuse between the Staked Plain and the Rio Grande."

"You'd better keep a tight hand on the rein," said Dick Carr. "I don't like the look in his eyes."

Steve Carson stared at the tenderfoot

—WONDERFUL YARN OF WILD WEST SCHOOL ADVENTURE.

of the little end of the horn in selling a horse. I'll say—"

Bill was suddenly interrupted.

From somewhere out on the prairie came a shrill whistle, followed sharply by another.

Evidently, it was a signal of some sort, and for a second the Packsaddle bunch wondered what it meant. But the next second they had something else to think about.

The quiet pinto pony woke suddenly to life. The second blast of the distant whistle had hardly sounded when the pinto leaped clear into the air, all four feet off the ground, and arched his back.

"Look out, Steve!"

"Jump for it, you 'uns! Look out!"

"Great gophers!"

Crash! came the hoofs on the ground. Crash! Crash! Clatter! Clatter!

The Packsaddle bunch jumped away in hot haste. Bill Sampson tripped and fell backwards, and narrowly escaped a kick from a lashing hoof. He scrambled up hastily and leaped to safety.

Steve Carson gripped the reins and dug his knees into the pinto's flanks. Steve was a good horseman, and, taken by surprise as he was by the sudden outbreak of that quiet pony, he clung to his seat. His face was savage, his teeth gritting, and his eyes glittering. Crowding back, the bunch watched from a safe distance, such an exhibition of buck-jumping as had never been seen at Packsaddle before, though there were plenty of buck-jumpers there.

Clatter! Crash! Clatter! Up went the forefeet of the pinto high in the air and Steve seemed like sliding over the tail. Down came the forefeet like thunder, and Steve nearly shot over the pony's head. Still he held on fiercely, determined not to be beaten by his new acquisition.

Crash! Crash! Clatter!

"Jumping painters!" gasped Bill. "I'll say that cayuse is some buck-jumper! Stick to him, Steve!"

The pinto suddenly broke into a gallop across the playground. With a yell the bunch scattered out of his way.

Steve's hat was gone. His hair blew out in the wind from the prairie. His face was white now. He knew now that he could not handle that horse, and he would have given a whole herd of ponies to be safe on solid earth. He dragged fiercely at the reins, in vain. The pinto shot across the playground like a bullet.

"Look out, Brown!" yelled Dick Carr.

Small Brown, the Packsaddle teacher, gave one horrified blink through his horn-rimmed spectacles, and bounded round the bunkhouse like a startled prairie rabbit. Never had Small Brown displayed such activity.

Clatter! Clatter! The pinto was making for the school fence. It seemed that he would crash. Steve could not stop him—he had no more chance of stopping that pony than of stopping an express train.

But the pinto swerved a yard from the fence and rushed round the playground towards the gateway, at terrific speed.

"Stick on, Steve!" yelled Slick Poindexter.

Close by the gateway the pinto leaped into the air and came down on his hind legs, his forefeet high. Steve Carson shot over the lashing tail and landed like a sack of alfalfa. The pinto shot out of the gateway like a bullet from a rifle and vanished down the prairie trail.

Steve Carson lay gasping on his back with an ache in every bone of his body.

Round him the bunch gathered, laughing now that the alarm was over. Steve did not laugh; he gasped and groaned. But the rest of the bunch roared. Bill Sampson roared.

"Haw, haw, haw! You want to watch out, you Carson, when you buy a horse from Snort. I'll say he fooled you a few! Say, you figure that you'll ever see that pinto agin? Haw, haw, haw!"

Poker Parker and Slim Dixon helped Steve to his feet. They helped him away to the bunkhouse, grinning as they did so. He was too sore and aching to walk without assistance. A howl of laughter followed him. "Swank" did not make the bully of Packsaddle popular in the cow town school.

Dick Carr looked out of the gateway. The pinto had vanished. Steve had lost saddle and outfit, as well as his new cayuse. He had fancied that he had got the best of a bargain with the sharpest and most unscrupulous horse-dealer in Texas. Evidently, he hadn't!

"Won't Carson get that horse back, Poindexter?" asked Dick Carr. Slick chortled.

"I guess not. Didn't you hear that whistle? I guess that was Snort's signal to the cayuse. That started him buck-

HOW A SCHOOLBOY BOUGHT THE BEST BRONCO IN TEXAS FOR TWENTY DOLLARS!

jumping." Slick roared. "I'll say that cayuse won't never be seen near Packsaddle agin!"

"You mean that he's robbed Carson of the horse he sold him?" asked Dick.

"I mean jest that!" grinned Slick. "Why, I guess Snort's sold that cayuse to a dozen jays, one after another, and he'll sell him to a dozen more! Ha, ha, ha! Steve was sure a boob to be fooled that-a-way! Say, you guy, when you go to buy a hoss, don't you trade with Snort Jenkins!"

Dick laughed.

"Hardly!" he said—not guessing what the near future had in store.

Tamed!

"BOTHER!" grunted Dick Carr. For nearly half an hour Dick had been walking to and fro in the main street of Hard Tack waiting for the hack. Dick's father was manager of the store at Hard Tack, and as the day was a holiday at Packsaddle School, Dick had run across to see him.

It was a trip of over twenty miles down the valley of the Rio Frio. As Dick had no horse and the distance was not to be walked, he had been glad of a lift in Ezra Lick's buckboard coming over that morning. But the marshal of Packsaddle was not going back that day, so Dick had to rely on Andy Butt's hack. And the little one-horse hack that made the trip up the Frio was far from reliable.

Dick waited, and groused. He had left his father at the store because the hack was booked to start at five. Now it was half-past five, and the hack was not yet visible on the street. Dick felt sorely the lack of a cayuse. But Mr. Carr was far from wealthy and had indeed been lucky to get his present post at Hard Tack Store; and horses cost

money. Ever since he had been at the cow town school, Dick had been looking for a chance to buy a horse—but he had only twenty dollars to devote to that purpose, and he did not want to buy a crock. He had to wait till he could pick up a bargain—and he was still waiting! So he had to take the one-horse hack back to school—and Andy Butt was later than even usual.

Loafing about with his hands in his pockets, Dick watched cowpunchers riding into town and riding out. Presently his attention was drawn to a man leading a handsome pony with the reins over his arm. The man was a bony, sharp-featured fellow with cunning-looking eyes set close together; but the horse he was leading was a beauty.

It was a pinto—a "painted" horse, as the cowmen called it. Grey, with patches and spots of a deep rich brown, it had a painted look, hence the name. But it was not only the good looks of the horse that drew Dick's attention. He had seen that cayuse before—twenty miles away, at Packsaddle School! It was the pinto that Steve Carson had ridden in the playground a few days ago—and never seen since.

"By Jove!" murmured Dick, with a gleam in his eyes.

It was Steve Carson's horse; there was no doubt about that. Dick could guess that the sly-eyed man with it was Snort Jenkins, the astute horse-dealer.

Snort was taking an interest in the boy who was loafing up and down aimlessly. He came over the street to him, leading the pony.

"Say, big boy! You lost your critter?" asked the horse-dealer. Nobody in the Frio country went on foot.

"I haven't one!" answered Dick.

He was breathing rather hard. He was on the worst of terms with Steve Carson, the bully of Packsaddle, and had earned his undying enmity by knocking him out in a scrap. All the same, he wanted, if he could, to get Steve's horse back for him from the rascal who had cheated him. He wondered whether he would have a chance. Snort was twice Dick's weight, so he was not easy to handle.

"You ain't got a cayuse?" exclaimed the dealer. "I'll tell a man! Say, you looking for a horse to buy—cheap?"

Dick grinned.

Quite unaware that he belonged to Packsaddle, unaware that he knew anything about Steve's disastrous purchase, the rogue was going to try to sell him the same horse!

Dick knew the programme. When the money was paid over and the buyer rode the horse away the signal whistle would follow—the buck-jumping act, and the vanishing of the pinto—for Snort to sell again to some other unwary boob.

Dick was a tenderfoot in Texas, but he was not tender enough to fall for that!

But it was not his game to give away what he knew! He saw here a chance of getting Steve's horse back for him!

"How much?" he asked.

"I'd take fifty dollars," answered Snort.

"I've only got twenty!" answered Dick innocently.

"Kid," said Snort, laying a hand almost affectionately on his arm, "the cayuse is yours! Snort Jenkins ain't the guy to say nope to a trade. No, sir! Twenty bucks, and the critter's yours."

"Let me try him!" said Dick.

"Try him all you like!" said Snort. The pinto was saddled and bridled.

Dick knew to whom that saddle and bridle belonged! But he was not telling Mr. Jenkins all he knew!

He put his foot in the stirrup and mounted easily and quickly. Snort let go the reins.

"Ride him up the street and back again," he said. "I'll say that pinto's as quiet as a lamb! Yes, sir! Quiet as a l'il woolly lamb, sir!"

"Looks it!" agreed Dick, as he gathered up the reins. He was aware that the pinto was a quiet animal until Mr. Jenkins gave the signal whistle he had been trained to obey. Then he was all fireworks! But Dick was ready for the fireworks!

With a shake of the reins he started. But he did not ride up the street. He whirled round the pinto and rode out on the prairie outside Hard Tack. Snort trotted after him, with the bow-legged trot of a man used to riding.

"Hyer, you guy, don't you burn the wind at that rate!" yelled Snort. "You ain't paid for that critter!"

Snort had no fear of losing the pinto. He had his signal-whistle in reserve. But it was not time to play that card yet.

Dick drew in on the prairie trail and Mr. Jenkins came panting up. Dick Carr looked at him with a smile.

"Like that critter, hey?" asked Snort. "Yes, rather! I'd buy him off you, and glad, if he was yours to sell, Mr. Jenkins," answered Dick cheerfully. "As you've already sold him to Steve Carson at Packsaddle, I'm taking him back to his owner. Good-bye!"

"What?" gasped Snort.

Dick shook the reins, and dashed away on the Packsaddle trail. He did not need to wait for the hack now that he was mounted on the finest pony he had seen in Texas.

Snort Jenkins stood for some moments transfixed. But his way of life made him quick on the uptake. He swiftly realised how matters stood. He was not going to sell that pinto to the tender-looking guy! That tender guy figured that he was walking off the cayuse to Packsaddle! Snort put his fingers in his mouth and whistled two loud, sharp blasts.

"I guess that'll fix him, some!" growled the horse-dealer.

The pinto pricked up his ears at the well-known signal. Up to that moment he had been all that a rider could wish—as in Steve's case! Now he suddenly turned himself into a bundle of fireworks.

Clatter! Crash! Clatter! Snort stared on from a distance, with a derisive grin. The pinto was leaping, cavorting, buck-jumping, rearing, and tumbling like a mad thing. The horse-dealer had no doubt whatever that in a few moments the rider would be violently thrown, and the pony would come trotting back, as he had been taught to do.

But Dick Carr could ride. In his own country Dick had an uncle who was a farmer in Wales, and Dick had been accustomed to spend holidays with him, riding fierce little Welsh ponies that wanted some riding! The tenderfoot of Packsaddle had nothing to learn about backing a horse!

To Snort's amazement, and probably to that of the pinto, Dick did not pitch off, as Steve had done in the Packsaddle playground. He stuck to the horse like a limpet to a rock.

Up went the forefeet of the pinto, and he stood on his hind legs, threatening to fall backwards on his rider. Dick leaned to the glossy neck and held on fast. Down came the forefeet with a

thunderous crash, and up went the hind legs till it seemed as if the rider must be hurled over the lowered neck. But he seemed glued to his saddle.

See-saw went the buck-jumper for five or six long minutes. Dick was still in the saddle—breathing hard through shut teeth.

Then, suddenly, the pinto rolled over in the tough grass, his heels lashing in the air.

Snort Jenkins grinned savagely. He figured that the boy would be brushed off like a fly, probably with a cracked bone.

But like lightning Dick leaped clear, still grasping the reins. And as the pinto gathered his legs under him and scrambled up, Dick was in the saddle once more with a swift leap. He was sitting the pony when it was on its hoofs again, much to its astonishment—and Snort's.

"Blue blazes!" gasped Mr. Jenkins.

"That kid can ride!"

And he whistled again the signal to the pinto. He was getting anxious.

He had reason to be! For Dick Carr was riding the pony now, up the prairie trail, with a hand of steel on the reins, and the pinto was obeying his hand!

The fireworks were over; the buck-jumper knew that he had felt a master's hand, and he was allowing himself to be ridden. Many times came Snort's whistles, unheeded now. Dick rode the pinto at a gallop, and the lashing heels sent back a cloud of dust.

Snort rushed in frantic pursuit. But he might as well have pursued a streak of lightning!

He halted, panting for breath, shaking bony fists, and almost turning the atmosphere blue with a stream of profanity. Up the trail went the pony and its rider at a terrific gallop. Snort was left standing in the grass, yelling with rage. From a far distance Dick Carr turned his head and waved his hat. Then he vanished in nodding grass towards Packsaddle.

Snort snorted with fury. That handsome pinto was worth two hundred dollars of any guy's money, and Snort had sold him a dozen times at various prices, in various districts. It looked as if he had sold him now for the last time—unless he could sneak him from the school corral later. Which, as it seemed to be his only resource, Snort resolved to do that very night!

Dick Makes a Bargain!

STEVE CARSON looked round as Dick Carr came into the chuckhouse. He winked at his friends, Poker Parker and Slim Dixon, who grinned.

Dick did not heed the bully of Packsaddle and his pals. He was tired and hungry, and he dropped on the bench at the supper-table in the place Slick Poindexter and Mick Kavanagh made for him between them.

He had got in rather late from Hard Tack. The sun was sinking behind the Staked Plain, and shadows lengthening along the Rio Frio, when Dick reached the school. All the bunch had gone into the chuckhouse for supper, and there was nobody about when Dick arrived and turned the pinto into the corral. He intended to tell Steve that he had recovered his new horse for him, but that could come after supper. "Say, tenderfoot!" called Steve across the table, after another wink to his pals. "I guess I got to chew the rag with you a piece!"

Dick looked at him, with his mouth full of bacon and beans.

"Aw, can it, Steve!" said Slick Poindexter. "You sure don't want to put it over on the tenderfoot."

"And himself the world's prize boob!" said Mick.

"I guess nobody asked you guys to horn in!" snapped Steve, with a scowl at Slick and Mick. "Don't you uncork any more! Look here, young Carr, I guess you want a horse."

Dick nodded. His mouth was too well laden for speech. He had come in from the prairie hungry, and Tin Tung's cooking was appetising.

There was a chuckle along the trestle-table. All the Packsaddle bunch knew that Dick wanted to buy a horse, and that he had the moderate sum of twenty dollars to spend on it. In a few weeks at the cow town school the tenderfoot had been offered at least a dozen crocks, one after another; but he had not proved tender enough to buy any of them. He wondered whether Steve was going to try that game again.

But Big Steve had quite other ideas in his mind.

"I'll say you know a cayuse when you see one, young Carr!" he said. "You sure liked the look of that spotted pinto I bought the other day."

Dick nodded again, wondering what on earth was coming.

"Waal, how'd you like that cayuse?" asked Steve.

"Fine!" answered Dick.

"He's yours for twenty dollars," said Carson. "All you got to do is to get him back. I guess a hoss-thief like that pesky Snort Jenkins won't be able to get away with a swindle like that! Nope! He'll sure be run in by the marshal's men afore he's many days older! I'm telling you!"

Dick masticated beans and bacon, and looked steadily across the table at the bully of Packsaddle.

Ever since the episode of the buck-jumper, Steve had been like a bear with a sore head.

He had traded his own horse and ten dollars for the pinto, and had lost the pinto—cheated like the greenest tenderfoot, and laughed at by all Packsaddle into the bargain. He had been unpleasant all round, and most of all to Dick Carr. Now, all of a sudden, he was as sweet as molasses!

Dick did not need the grins up and down the long table to enlighten him as to the reason. The bully of Packsaddle, as unscrupulous as the rogue who had swindled him, was aiming to swindle the tenderfoot in his turn. He had not the remotest hope of getting that pinto back again, or of ever seeing Snort Jenkins anywhere near Packsaddle. He was offering to sell the tenderfoot the horse because he believed that the horse was gone beyond possible recovery!

Dick was a tenderfoot in Texas, but Steve made the mistake of guessing that he was a boob as well!

"I'll say that's a good offer, Carr!" said Poker Parker, backing up his leader. "I'll tell a man I heard Ezra Lick saying that he figured on roping in that hoss-thief Jenkins by the end of the week."

"They'll get him O.K., and the hoss, too!" said Slim Dixon, with a nod. "You're giving that cayuse away at the price, Steve."

"I guess I mean what I say," said Steve. "Twenty dollars, and that cayuse is yours, Carr, as soon as he's got back from that hoss-thief."

Dick Carr looked thoughtful. What

had happened at Hard Tack that afternoon put a complexion on this matter of which Steve was quite unaware!

Slick Poindexter opened his mouth—and closed it again! After all, it was the tenderfoot's own business; a greenhorn had to learn by experience.

"Let's have this clear, Carson!" said Dick at last. "If that pinto's got back from Snort Jenkins, he's mine for twenty dollars. Is that it?"

"You said it!" assented Carson. "You fellows are all witnesses," said Dick, looking round.

"They sure are!" said Steve. "And

"I'm standing by it!" said Dick Carr cheerfully. "Twenty dollars for the pinto, if I get him. There's your dollars!"

From an inner pocket Dick sorted out two ten-dollar bills, and pitched them across the trestle-table to Carson. Big Steve grabbed them up, and shoved them away in a twinkling.

"Waal, if you ain't the boob from Boobsville!" growled Poindexter, in disgust. "I'll say you're the softest guy that ever struck Packsaddle! Say, you big stiff, you figure you'll ever cinch that pinto?"

the playground was almost as light as day. Dick went to the door.

"Going after the cayuse?" roared Steve.

"Just that!" answered Dick, glancing round.

And he walked out of the chuckhouse, leaving the bunch staring blankly.

"Say, is he loco?" asked Mick. "Does he figure that he's got a dog's chance of cinching that cayuse from Snort?"

"Looks like he does!" chuckled Steve Carson. "He's sure welcome to try. I'll say it'll be a long time afore



As a distant whistle sounded the quiet pinto suddenly woke to life. It leaped clear into the air and arched its back. "Great gophers!" yelled the Packsaddle bunch. "Look out, Steve!" Bill Sampson jumped back in hot haste and promptly came a cropper. Steve's new horse was "some" buck-jumper!

I'll say I ain't the galoot to go back on a trade! Is it a cinch?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"Faith, and it's the world's boob ye are, and so ye are entorely!" yelled Mick. "You peecan! That hoss'll never be got back, and Steve knows it, and—"

"Can it, you!" roared Steve, and he hurled a cracker loaf across the table, catching the Irish Texan on the chin.

"Wurrgh!" spluttered Mick, as he went backwards over the bench.

There was a crash as he landed on the earthen floor.

"Look here, Steve," exclaimed Poindexter, "give the tenderfoot a fair deal! You're wise to it that Snort's got that cayuse for keeps!"

"Ain't I telling you to can it?" snarled Steve. "Carr's said yes, and I sure hold him to it!"

"I think so!" answered Dick Carr. "He's mine now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Carson. "You'n if you can catch him! I wish you luck in getting after Snort, big boy!"

"I guess Bill wouldn't stand for this if he knew!" growled Mick. "It ain't a square deal on the tenderfoot."

"I'm satisfied!" said Dick Carr.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar all through the chuckhouse. The Packsaddle bunch were almost doubled up with merriment at the simplicity of the tenderfoot.

Dick laughed, too. As the pinto was, all that while, safe in the school corral, he considered that the laugh was on his side.

His supper finished, he rose. The moon had risen over the Rio Frio, and

Snort is ever seen near Packsaddle agin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Carr walked over to the corral. He took saddle and bridle from the harness hut, and went after the pinto. He had left him with a running rope, so he was easy enough to catch. Snort's buck-jumper was quiet as a lamb again now, and Dick saddled and bridled him, and rode him out into the playground, cracking a quirt as he rode.

At the clatter of hoofs there was a rush of the bunch from the chuckhouse, and Bill Sampson looked out of the porch of the school-house at the rider in the moonlight.

"Say, what's that critter you got, young Carr?" shouted the Packsaddle schoolmaster.

Dick reined in, with a thunder of hoofs, in front of the porch.

"My new horse, sir!" he answered. "Carson's sold him to me for twenty dollars!"

"I'll tell a man!" gasped Bill, staring at the horse. "Say, that's the buck-jumper Snort sold to young Carson—and cinched again—"

"I got him back at Hard Tack this afternoon and rode him home!" said Dick cheerfully. "Now I've bought him!"

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Bill.

There was a roar from the bunch. They surrounded the tenderfoot, staring blankly at the horse. Steve Carson's face was a picture.

"I—I—I'll say it's the cayuse!" he gasped. "My pinto!"

"Mine!" said Dick Carr, looking at him. "You've sold him to me for twenty dollars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Slick Poindexter. "There's a boob here, Steve, but I guess the boob ain't that tenderfoot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Steve Carson strode forward with a knitted brow and gleaming eyes. He grabbed at the pinto's bridle.

"That's my hoss!" he said, between his teeth. "The bargain's off, doggone you! I'll give you back your dollars!"

"You won't!" said Dick Carr coolly. "You sold him to me believing that I'd never get him! I've got him! Take your paw off my horse."

"I'm saying—" yelled Steve. He clutched the bridle.

He broke off with a yell as Dick's quirt came down sharply on his arm. He dropped the bridle and howled.

"Say, what's this game?" demanded Bill Sampson.

A dozen voices told him. The cow town schoolmaster glared at the enraged Steve.

"Say, you pesky piccan!" roared Bill. "Say, you figured you could put it across the tenderfoot, and you want to go back on it, because you ain't got by with it? Say, you figure that sort of game is good enough for Packsaddle? Forget it! You sold that cayuse, and you gotter stand for it! And I'm the guy that's telling you so, and I guess I got a quirt to back it up."

Bill's quirt was under his arm, its usual place. He slipped it down into his hand and grabbed Steve by the back of his neck.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

With a roar, Steve jerked himself away and bolted across the playground. Bill shook the quirt after him.

"Say, you want some more, you jest come and whisper that that cayuse is yours!" he roared.

But Big Steve did not come back. He did not want any more of Bill's quirt. Dick Carr rode to the corral and turned his horse into it—indisputably his horse, and the best cayuse in Packsaddle!

Alarm in the Night!

DICK CARR lifted his head in his bunk in the school bunkhouse and listened. Outside, the soft, bright moonlight of Texas glimmered. But within the bunkhouse all was dark. The score or so boarders at Packsaddle School were—or should have been—all in their bunks and fast asleep at midnight. But Dick Carr was wide awake—with a strong suspicion that others were, also. He had hardly

closed his eyes since he turned in with the bunch.

He did not trust Steve Carson—not an inch! The outcome of that bargain in horseflesh had enraged the bully of Packsaddle to a deadly pitch. He would have gone back on his bargain without scruple; but Bill Sampson's word was law on that subject, and the whole bunch were against him. The pinto was Dick Carr's, bought and paid for. But Dick did not believe that Steve would let it go at that. It was easy for any malicious fellow to get at the horses in the corral, if he wanted to. The pinto was not yet used to his new home, and if he was let out he would run. Dick had resolved to sleep that night with one eye open. He was glad of it, as he heard a sound of movement in the darkness.

A chill draught of air blew, for a moment, through the sleeping bunkhouse. The door had been opened and shut again.

Dick Carr whipped out of his bunk and hurried on his clothes and boots in the dark. He picked up a quirt and stepped silently to the door. Someone had left the bunkhouse, and he hardly needed telling who it was. Outside, in the bright moonlight, he had a glimpse of a figure running, with head bent low, towards the corral. Steve Carson was the biggest fellow at Packsaddle School, and Dick knew him by his size.

He cut across the playground in pursuit. Steve reached the corral bar, lifted it, and disappeared inside. There was a sound of stirring among the horses. Dick Carr, gripping his quirt, waited by the corral gate with a grim expression on his face. He blotted himself against the fence, waiting for Steve to emerge.

The pinto had been left with a running trail-rope, and it was easy for Steve to catch him. In little more than five minutes he appeared at the corral gate, leading the horse. In the moonlight his face showed black and bitter. He jerked savagely at the rope, and the pinto whinnied as it followed.

"Git up, doggone you!" snarled Steve. "I guess you're going back to Snort, you goldarned brute, or you can beat it for Mexico, for all I care! I guess you're beating it, pronto, as soon as I get you out on the prairie. I guess—"

Slash!

The quirt in Dick Carr's hand rose and fell fairly across the back of the bully of Packsaddle.

Steve staggered with a yell of surprise and pain, and dropped the trail-rope. The pinto, startled, whirled back into the corral. Steve's hand flew to his back.

For a second he did not know what had struck him. Then his eyes blazed at Dick Carr, standing before him in the moonlight. He glared at the tenderfoot in amazement and rage.

"You!" he panted. He leaped at Dick with clenched fists.

The quirt lashed and lashed again. Dick put all his beef into it. The bully of Packsaddle staggered back, howling. Dick followed him up, still lashing with the quirt, and Steve fairly took to his heels, running for the shelter of the bunkhouse.

After him ran Dick Carr, laying on the whip as he pursued. Had he not remained on the watch that night he would have lost his horse—with his twenty dollars gone! His idea was that Steve Carson wanted a lesson, and that he was going to have one!

Steve was getting one—and getting it hard! Whack, whack, whack, came the quirt over his shoulders, as he dodged

and ran and twisted. His frantic yell rang far and wide.

A window slammed open in the timber schoolhouse. A head was put out, and a deep voice roared.

"Say, what's that rookus?"

Bill Sampson had been awakened! Steve, more scared of Bill's wrath than of the lashing quirt behind him, bolted into the bunkhouse.

A door was heard to open in the distance; Bill was coming out to investigate the cause of the disturbance.

Dick Carr breathlessly followed the bully of Packsaddle in. A dozen voices were heard along the row of bunks inquiring what was the matter.

"Shut that door!" hissed Steve. "Bill's up!"

Dick shut the door.

"But what's the row intoirly?" exclaimed Mick Kavanagh.

"I caught that rotter trying to turn my horse loose on the prairie!" answered Dick Carr. "He won't try again in a hurry, I think."

"I guess that's playing it low down, Steve," said Slick Poindexter, in disgust.

"Can it!" hissed Steve. "Bill's coming!"

There was silence in the bunkhouse, as the heavy tread of Bill Sampson was heard outside. The door opened, and a stream of bright moonlight shot in, barred by the brawny figure of the cow town schoolmaster. But Steve and Dick were already back in their bunks, and all was quiet.

"Say, you guys all snoozing?" growled Bill.

Silence!

Puzzled, Bill closed the door. He strode away from the bunkhouse. Somebody—and something—had been up; he did not know who or what! But he meant to know before he went back to bed.

He tramped round with watchful eyes. The corral gateway was open; neither Steve nor Dick had lingered to replace the bar. Bill gave a grunt as he jammed it back into place.

"Some guy after the critters!" breathed Bill.

Somebody had been at the corral, that was clear. Horse-thieves were many in the valley of the Frio. Bill's jaws set grimly.

If horse-thieves were about, Bill was the man to deal with them. He stepped into the corral and looked and listened.

All was quiet there. Somebody had been there, though whether that somebody was connected with the row he had heard, Bill did not know. He moved through the corral, looking at the horses. It was easy to count them in the bright moonlight. None was missing.

Quite perplexed, Bill returned to the corral gateway and leaned on the wall there, blotted in the shadow, puzzling it out. And as he stood he became aware of a dark head that rose over the corral fence where it bordered the open prairie.

The fence was ten feet high, of solid pine—not easy to climb. Bill, as he spotted that rising head in the clear light of the moon, guessed that its owner was standing on the back of a horse outside, to clamber up.

Quietly, grimly, he loosened the revolver in the holster at his belt.

"Snort!" breathed Bill.

He was in dark shadow himself, but the head over the corral fence, twenty feet away, was clear in the moonlight. He recognised the foxy face and cunning eyes of Snorty Jenkins. His jaw jutted as he pulled his gun.

(Continued on page 23.)

SCHOOLBOY VERSUS NORTHESTRIAN SOLDIER IN A FIGHT TO THE DEATH!

The SECRET WORLD!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

On Trial!

ACCOMPANIED by a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls, Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee fly by airship to the Arctic to search for a lost explorer. The airship, however, is caught in a violent storm, and eventually crashes in an unknown land called Northestia. No one is injured, but the whole party are made prisoners by the Northestrians, a medieval race of people. They are taken before Princess Mercia to be tried, and accused of coming from Gothland, the enemy country of Northestia.

"We are from England," said Nelson Lee. "From the country of your ancestors. In England we have castles similar to this noble building, but times have changed greatly during—"

"Enough!" interrupted Ethelbert the Red. "Thinkest thou to befool us? In faith, sirrah, thou speakest wondrous nonsense! Are thy brains so paltry that thou knowest not that there is no outer world, as thou sayest? Why talk thou of these fables and legends? I grant that thou art all of a different type to Kassker's blood, but that he sent thee hither is clear. Ay, and ye camest in a monstrous vehicle which seemeth to defy the law of the earth itself."

A great laugh had gone up at Nelson

Lee's words—an expression of derision. Even the princess was smiling in a scornful sort of way, although it was rather difficult for her to look anything but sweet. Amazing though it seemed, these people of Northestia believed that there was no outer world.

"I can only repeat, your Majesty, that we came from the lands beyond the ice," said Nelson Lee, looking at the princess. "We came in the craft which you have seen, which we brought to earth after being nearly killed in the great blizzards which raged around this fair country of yours."

The princess lifted her hand. "Thou speakest wildly, stranger," she said, with a shake of her head. "It hath been said that our forbears entered this country from the great outer world. We have it in legend and in story. But is there one who dares to say that these stories are aught but fanciful fables? The lands of Northestia and Gothland are the sole inhabitable regions of the earth."

"I beg your pardon, but you are wrong," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Knaves, dost dare to contradict?" demanded Ethelbert.

"Nay, let him speak, my Ethelbert," said the princess. "My faith, but I like it! The manner in which these strangers do talk. It is neither similar to the Gothlander speech nor to our own. List to me, stranger. Do we not know that for centuries past daring explorers have attempted to emerge from

our fair valley? They have been lost, or have returned with wondrous stories of endless snows and cruel blizzards. Life beyond is impossible. This we know—so thou must moderate thy story if thou art desirous of being credited."

Nelson Lee hardly knew what to say. He was staggered—as, indeed, were all the other members of the party. These people actually believed that they and the Gothlanders were the whole inhabitants of the world—that this great valley, indeed, was the world.

The Death Arrow!

IT was a startling fact to digest. And, of course, it made all the difference to their position. They were now able to tell their story. But nobody would believe it. That was the uncomfortable position to be faced. Perhaps the general belief of these people was justifiable. Neither they nor their forefathers had ever heard of anybody from beyond the snows. For long centuries this remnant of European civilisation had been cut off—had been left here in utter isolation.

Was it very surprising, therefore, that they should discredit these strangers when they spoke of the "outer world"? The Northestrians knew of the absolutely impassable snows and blizzards beyond the fertile basin. It was more than they could imagine, to picture the passage of the great airship over the

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glacier tops. So their only resource was to believe that these newcomers arrived from Gothland.

Nelson Lee looked at the princess earnestly.

"At the risk of incurring your disfavour, your Majesty, I must repeat my former statement," he declared. "We are not from Gothland, but from far, far beyond. We are of your own blood, and we desire to be nothing but friendly."

Ethelbert the Red glanced at the princess, and she nodded.

"By the bones of Offa!" said Ethelbert angrily. "So thou art foolish enough to repeat these lies? Thou art from Gothland—"

"Are these Gothlanders, then, such wonderful people that they can build ships that fly over the lake, and over your city?" asked Lee sharply.

"A point, good Ethelbert!" said the princess. "We know of Kassker's treacherous nature, and we know that he is preparing many warlike inventions. But we have never given him credit for such a wonder vehicle as our prisoners came in."

"And do we look like warriors?" went on Lee, turning round and indicating the schoolboys and schoolgirls. "Would Kassker send mere boys and harmless girls? If we were from beyond the lake, as you imagine, should we come in such company? Once again I urge you to believe that we are friends, and not enemies."

The princess looked at her chief adviser rather helplessly.

"Perchance I shock thee, my Ethelbert, but I like the manner of these people," she said. "Truly, thou canst not set them in the same class as Kassker and his Gothland brutes? See! The fair skins, the beardless faces, the straight, noble carriages! These are not of Gothland, even though they may come from that accursed land!"

Ethelbert the Red tugged at his beard.

"I beseech thee, Majesty, to harden thy heart," he said. "Let not Kassker's trick deceive thee. There is some treachery behind this, by my faith! Mark my words—"

"Why can't you understand a thing when it's staring you in the face," demanded Handforth, losing all patience, and running up. "You dry up, Walter Church!" he added, as Church tried to call him back. "I'm going to have my say!"

Nelson Lee turned, and found Handforth, hot and flushed, by his side.

"You had better go back, Handforth," he said quietly.

"But it makes me wild, sir!" snorted Edward Oswald. "The thing's as clear as daylight, and yet they won't see it. Look here, Ethelred, or whatever your name is, I'll tell you something!"

The princess' adviser was frowning.

"Hey, knaves!" he shouted, beckoning to some soldiers. "Remove this young hothead! Is her Majesty to be flouted and—"

"Nay, good Ethelbert; but stay!" interrupted the princess, looking at Handforth with great interest. "He seemeth a comely youth."

"A which?" asked Handforth, starting.

"If unhandsome, at least he seemeth to be strong, determined, and of a fiery eye," continued the princess. "I like his looks, my Ethelbert. He is no Gothlander."

"I will grant thee that, fair Majesty," agreed Ethelbert the Red. "Not one of these invaders is of Gothlander blood. Yet whence came they,

if not from Gothland? We have none such in our own glorious Northestia. Kassker thinketh to entrap us—"

"You've got Kassker on the brain!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "My hat! Can't you see that we're your pals? If it comes to that, we can give you a warning about Gothland! We saw hundreds and thousands of soldiers over there—and ships lined up on the beach—endless numbers of them! Those Gothland chaps are getting a move on, and if we were your enemies, we shouldn't warn you, should we?"

Ethelbert the Red frowned—particularly because the Princess Mercia was already showing signs of sympathy and understanding. But her chief adviser was made of sterner stuff, it seemed.

"A plausible story, but—" he began.

"It is true!" interrupted Nelson Lee quickly. "If we can do anything to help—if we can serve your Majesty by any means, we are yours to command."

"Absolutely!" agreed Dorrie. "Say the word, and we're at your service. If you really want to hurt us, just look upon us as enemies. We're not—an' we don't like bein' suspected."

A murmur went up from many of the surrounding courtiers and soldiers. At first they had found some difficulty in understanding the speech of these newcomers, but they were now better able to do so. And it was evident that they discredited Lord Dorrimore's words. They were deeply suspicious. They still had it fixed in their minds that Kassker the Grim was responsible for the airship's advent.

"You had better go back, Handforth," said Nelson Lee softly. "You can do no good by arguing here."

"But it makes me wild, sir—" began Handforth.

"Yes—yes; but go!"

Handforth nodded, and glanced at the princess. He was somewhat embarrassed to find that she was watching him closely, and her blue eyes were even more devastating than Irene's. At such close quarters as this Handforth was startled by the fair Mercia's dazzling beauty. To a susceptible fellow like Edward Oswald it was bewildering.

"Oh, corks!" he murmured breathlessly.

He turned away, confused and red. And then, in the next second, an expression of alarm leapt into his eyes. He gave a great shout, and seized a shield from the nearest soldier. In practically one movement he snatched it away, and hurled himself in front of the princess.

Crash!

There was a roar from the assembly as Handforth rolled over backwards, almost upsetting her Majesty as he did so. The shield lay upon the wide steps, and close to it was a great arrow, smashed and splintered.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Lord Dorrimore blankly.

"Splendid, Handforth!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "That was a quick piece of work."

Ethelbert the Red strode forward. "By St. Attalus!" he shouted. "What is this melee? Remove this presumptuous youth—"

"Wait—oh, wait!" cried the princess, with one hand over her heart. "Art blind, Ethelbert? This youth protected me from the death arrow! But for him, I should now be lifeless, and Northestia would be without a ruler."

A great roar went up from the St. Frank's fellows, and from the girls, and from the officers and crew of the airship.

"Hurrah! Bravo, Handy!"

"Well done!"

And the natives themselves caught some of the excitement and shouted, too. But it had all happened so quickly that Ethelbert the Red was still half-confused. Handforth was just beginning to pick himself up.

"My hat!" he gasped. "That arrow came with some force, didn't it? I thought it was going to be easy, but I nearly broke my back—"

"Where stood the would-be murderer?" demanded Ethelbert sharply.

"Over there!" replied Handforth, pointing. "I only saw him by accident. He was on the battlements—on the top of that wall—and he had a whacking great bow, and the arrow was pointing straight at the princess. So I just butted in."

"'Twas a noble act," said the princess softly. "Hither, good youth! Kneel before me, and let me take good stock of thy looks."

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "You— you mean—"

"Her Majesty hath commanded thee to kneel!" said Ethelbert the Red. "'Twas a swift and goodly deed, forsooth. Gramercy, but I wonder if thou art enemy or friend? By my faith, I know not!"

The chief adviser was obviously puzzled. Handforth knelt down before the princess, and felt very quaky. He didn't altogether care for this kneeling business.

He knew that Irene Manners was looking at him, for one thing, and all the Remove chaps were probably grinning like Cheshire cats, too. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were exchanging glances of immense satisfaction. That unforeseen little incident was liable to put a completely different complexion on their position.

"I—I say, don't make a fuss, you know!" muttered Handforth in distress. "I just saw that arrow coming, so I grabbed at something to protect you. That's all, your—your Majesty."

The princess was looking at him rather wonderingly.

"'Twas a brave deed," she murmured. "And so quick—so wondrous quick! Never have I seen the like. I am pleased with thee, my youth."

She reached forward and gently stroked his hair.

Siegan the Slim!

THE whole assembly watched with bated breath.

To kneel before the princess was in itself a great honour, but for the princess to act as she was now acting rendered the honour doubly precious. That she had taken a fancy to the embarrassed Edward Oswald was as clear as daylight. If Handforth could only succeed in maintaining the princess' favour everything might be well.

But would he utilise this golden opportunity?

The St. Frank's party all knew him—they were fully aware of his aggressive methods, and his rough-and-ready manner. At any moment he was liable to do something rash—some thoughtless act which would alienate the princess again. They fervently hoped that Edward Oswald would be tactful.

"I am pleased with this youth, my Ethelbert," said the princess softly. "Perchance we have suspected the strangers wrongly. Would this brave boy have risked his life to save mine if he were an enemy? Thy name, bold one?" she added, looking at Handforth. "Tell me thy name."

"Handforth," said Edward Oswald uncomfortably.



Before Siegan could recover his balance, Handforth's club swept down. Crash! It battered against his opponent's shield with terrific force, and knocked it out of the man's hand. Handy was putting up a brave show against odds in his battle of death!

"Hand-forth," said the princess slowly. "'Tis a quaint enough name, in all truth. Thou art quick of eye, and quick of movement, brave Handforth. Thou hast pleased me well."

Again she stroked his hair and smiled into his face. The unfortunate Handforth was hoping against hope that the stone steps would open and swallow him. He wasn't usually very nervous in the presence of a girl, but there was something about the Princess Mercia which rendered him as limp as a jelly. He was so close to her, too—and her fair hand was still caressing his hair. When he looked up, her blue eyes were upon him in frank admiration. At such close quarters he could see that her beauty was even more startling than he had imagined. There was something almost fairy-like in her actions. And she wasn't much older than he was—perhaps no older at all. She looked ridiculously young now that he was quite near to her.

"Can—can I get up?" he asked helplessly.

"Arise, good youth, and stand by my side," replied the princess tenderly. "Thou shalt be rewarded for thy wondrous prowess. What suggesteth thou, my Ethelbert?"

Ethelbert the Red was tugging at his ruddy beard again.

"I think not of the youth, but of thy safety," he replied anxiously. "'Twas against my wishes that these strangers were brought before thee in the open courtyard. 'Tis ever a risk for thee to be out here, where the populace can have access to thy precious person."

The princess laughed merrily. "Marry, but thou art nervous, Ethelbert!" she cried in a mocking voice.

"Ay, 'tis but the truth!" agreed Ethelbert promptly. "Do we not know that many spies are in the land—Kassker's spies? Have we not had warnings enough? Repeatedly have I

beseeked thee to remain closeted behind the castle walls—"

"And repeatedly will I refuse such attempts to make me a prisoner!" interrupted the princess, her eyes flashing. "'Twas my dear father's wish that I should sit upon the throne of Northestria until the coming of age of my brother, young Prince Oswy. And I will not fear my own people, good Ethelbert. If death is to be mine, then will I face it as becometh a princess."

"I have learned to expect such a spirit from thee, fair Majesty," replied the chief adviser with pride. "But hast thou not just witnessed another of these murderous attempts? The death arrow! But for the swiftness of this youth's eye and arm, all Northestria would now be mourning thy death. Thou spake of Prince Oswy, and I would remind thee that our noble prince is even now a captive in Gothland—hidden away in some dismal dungeon by Kassker the Grim."

"Alas, yes," said the princess sadly. "'Tis long since my brother dwelt with us. Kassker hath sworn to kill him, and why is it that poor Oswy still liveth?"

"By my sword," cried Ethelbert, "is't not clear that those Gothlander dogs are keeping his Highness for the torture? I entreat thee, Majesty, to retire at once, ere another arrow can be—"

"Nay, I stay!" interrupted the princess firmly. "Kassker may have set his heart upon being the supreme ruler of our world, but I fear him not. I beg of thee, Ethelbert, to speak no more on this subject. Let us decide upon some more suitable reward for our brave Handforth."

"I—I don't want any reward!" muttered Handforth uncomfortably. "I'd do just the same again if I'd the chance, your Majesty! We're all friends—we're not—"

"Wait!" interrupted the princess. "I have an idea."

She sat thinking a moment, and her eyes were still upon the embarrassed Edward Oswald. It was apparent to all that she looked upon him with an eye that was more than kindly.

A good deal of the anxiety was passing, for Handforth hadn't "put his foot in it" yet, and the princess was still in the best of humours. Nelson Lee and Dorrie had wisely remained silent, realising that this impulsive Remove junior might unconsciously accomplish far more than they could hope to do.

"Thou spake of an idea?" said Ethelbert questioningly.

"Some hours ago a report reached me concerning Siegan the Slim," said the princess, glancing at her chief adviser. "Let him be brought hither, good Ethelbert. He hath been guilty of unseemly conduct, I learn—a grave offence for the captain of my bodyguard."

Ethelbert the Red frowned.

"Siegan the Slim shall be brought to book," he said angrily. "Long have I questioned his honour and his fitness to hold such a position. 'Twas my intention to bring him to trial, your Majesty, but these strangers have put aught else from mine head."

"And well can I believe it," said the princess, nodding. "This youth hath saved my life, and he hath won my esteem. Let him be arrayed in costly garments, let him wear the uniform and chainmail of my bodyguard. Let him take his place as—captain!"

"Thou art in earnest, Majesty?" gaped Ethelbert, amazed.

"'Tis my wish," said the princess.

Edward Oswald looked at her rather dazedly.

"The—the captain of your bodyguard," he repeated in a feeble voice. "Oh, I say! I mean— Yes, but—"

"Thou hast saved my life once, and thou hast proven thyself fitted for such a trust," interrupted the princess. "Thou hast pleased me, noble Handforth, and my reward is but trivial compared to what thou dost deserve."

"Let me beseech thee to reconsider this decision, good Majesty," said Ethelbert the Red. "By the soul of Sarus, meanest thou this appointment? Thou art intent upon making this youth the captain of thy bodyguard?"

"It is done, my Ethelbert," smiled the princess. "I have given thee my orders! Let them be obeyed."

At this moment a new development arose. A tall man came forward, his face working with anger. He was gorgeously attired in rich clothing, and the chainmail was glittering and jingling. This new arrival was slim, his face was rather vicious, and he was probably forty years of age.

"Majesty," he shouted, "I protest against this indignity!"

"Beshrew thee for a knave!" thundered Ethelbert the Red. "Away, Siegan the Slim! Dost thou dare to address thy princess in such uncouth terms?"

Siegan the Slim scowled.

"And have I not got good reason to protest?" he demanded hotly. "Am I to be deposed in favour of this upstart? 'Tis becoming to my dignity that I should protest!"

He gave a leap forward, glared into Handforth's face, and then struck Edward Oswald a sharp, vicious blow across the cheek with the back of his hand.

A great cry arose from hundreds of throats.

"A combat—a combat!" went up the shout. "Clear a ring for the combat!"

Deadly Danger!

HANDFORTH was bewildered for a moment, but only for a moment.

"You—you rotter!" he gasped, with burning indignation. "I'll punch your head for—"

"Thou art pledged to a combat, rash youth!" interrupted Ethelbert the Red sharply. "Stand aside! Siegan the Slim hath issued the challenge, and if thou art to retain thy prestige, thou must engage. 'Tis a law of North-estria."

Handforth snorted.

"I'm ready for him!" he shouted. "A combat, eh? Nothing I'd like better! The boulder sloshed me across the face, and I'll slaughter him for it!"

Not many understood his words, but there could be no mistaking his fiery attitude. A great shout went up from every throat.

"He accepteth the challenge!" The princess was looking very pale now, and a light of alarm and anxiety dwelt in her lovely eyes.

"Nay, nay!" she protested. "By my soul, good Ethelbert, this cannot be! 'Twill be nought else but murder itself! The fair youth cannot hope to live in combat against such a man as Siegan the Slim!"

"Art serious, Majesty?" asked Ethelbert, aghast. "A challenge hath been issued! The captain of thy bodyguard must defend himself, or everlasting disgrace will be upon his head."

The princess rose to her feet.

"'Tis different!" she declared hotly. "The brave Handforth is so much younger—and he knoweth not the ways of our national combats. I urge thee, my Ethelbert, to stay this terrible thing—"

"By my soul, Majesty, it cannot be!" interrupted her chief adviser grimly.

"It shall be!" she cried. "Let Siegan the Slim be banished forthwith."

But Ethelbert the Red was looking very determined.

"'Twas the wish of thy father, his late Majesty, that I should advise thee well and truly," he said firmly. "A challenge hath been issued, and 'twere a blot upon his noble court if the captain of thy bodyguard ignored it. Nay, Majesty, thou didst precipitate this combat, and, in faith, thou must be the judge. 'Tis my wish."

The attitude of Ethelbert the Red

was more masterful now. Apparently he was more or less the real ruler. The Princess Mercia sat upon the throne, but it was her chief adviser who did most of the ruling.

She gave him a hopeless look. Probably she realised the truth of what he had said—that she herself had precipitated this combat. Consequently she could do nothing now but stand by and watch it.

Handforth was in no way alarmed. The prospect of a fight with Siegan the Slim had the effect of bringing him back to his normal self. He found that he could look at the princess with greater confidence now.

"Thou wilt forgive me, brave youth," murmured Mercia. "I did not imagine that Siegan, the knave, would challenge thee."

"That's all right," said Handforth, freshly alarmed by the look of concern in her eyes. "I'm ready for him. By George, rather! I'm not afraid of the beggar!"

"Thou knowest the nature of this combat?" she asked timidly.

"Why, a fight, isn't it?"

"Ay, a fight—thou hast spoken truly," agreed the princess. "Ethelbert, I would that it were possible to delay—"

"Nay, 'tis too late," replied Ethelbert the Red.

He pointed. Active preparations were already afoot. A great ring was being formed in the courtyard, with soldiers all round it.

A man appeared with two identical shields, and two murderous-looking clubs. In the business ends of these clubs were ugly, glittering spikes. Handforth stared in astonishment.

"Not—not with those things?" he shouted, suddenly aghast.

"Ay, bold youth!" said Ethelbert. "'Tis to be a combat with clubs—a battle to the death, as thou shouldst surely know."

A shout went up from the Remove fellows, and from the others.

"He'll be killed!"

"Stop the fight!"

"It isn't fair; Handy doesn't fight with clubs!"

Nelson Lee turned to Lord Dorrmore, and both advanced towards Ethelbert the Red. The princess was not available, for she was surrounded by many of her ladies in waiting.

"This cannot be, Ethelbert!" said Nelson Lee quickly. "Siegan may be an expert fighter with the spiked club, but this youth is but a schoolboy. He knows nothing of such bloodshed."

Handforth interrupted.

"It's all right, sir," he said hoarsely.

"I'm game!"

"Good lad!" nodded Lee. "But we are not doubting your gameness, Handforth. This will be no fight at all—but a murder. Don't you understand that you cannot possibly hope to defend yourself against a man nearly double your height—and a man, moreover, who is experienced in this type of combat?"

"Ay, experienced enough," said Ethelbert the Red, turning. "Siegan the Slim hath slayed no less than seven men in combat."

"Oh corks!" said Handforth blankly.

"It just can't go on, that's all!" snapped Lord Dorrmore. "Why, hang it, the infernal brute gave the challenge on purpose to destroy the poor kid, because he was angry at being deposed. Can't you see it was just a trick? You're not going to let this slaughter go on?"

"I am helpless—" began Ethelbert.



Scene: The masters' corridor at Dreardene, that amazing school where the pupils are taught all branches of crime by masked masters who are crooks.

Time: Early morning, before rising bell.

A group of boys suddenly enter the corridor, on tiptoe, and talking in whispers; one by one they go into the masters' rooms; one by one they emerge—carrying pairs of trousers and masks.

The Jape that wasn't a Jape!

The jape of the term—the Dreardene boys have pinched their masters' trousers! But really it's more than a jape; it's a plan to keep the masters out of the way while Ray Barry and Don Warren set out to discover the secrets of

"CROOKS' ACADEMY"

that will eventually lead to its exposure. It's the most amazing school story ever written! Read the sensational yarn in to-day's issue of

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Unhappily, Handforth butted in just then.

"Don't worry about me!" he said gruffly. "I'll fight!"

Ethelbert the Red looked relieved. "Tis well!" he growled. "The youth accepteth the challenge, and naught can be done to avert combat."

He went off to attend to some of the details, and Handforth was about to follow when Nelson Lee pulled him back.

"You mustn't attempt it, Handforth!" he said urgently. "My boy, do you realise that it will mean certain death? You've never fought with anything else but your fists in all your life!"

"This man will crack your skull in during the first second!" urged Lord Dorrimore. "Stay with us, Handy; we'll put everythin' right!"

Edward Oswald's jaw set squarely. "I've got to go, sir!" he said, with a stubborn note in his voice. "They're all expecting me to, and they'll think I'm a coward if I refuse. By George, the princess has appointed me captain of her bodyguard, and I'm not going to be labelled a funk during the first ten minutes!"

"But listen—" "Sorry, sir," interrupted Handforth. "What's the difference, anyhow? I'm in for it now, so I might as well make a decent scrap of it. If I refuse to fight, they'll probably chuck me to the crowd, and then I shall be lynched. Either that, or they'll chop my head off! So what's the difference?"

"Gad, the boy's probably right!" muttered Dorrie miserably.

"But while there is a chance, we must grasp it!" said Nelson Lee. "I shall do everything in my power to stop this murderous combat!"

He hurried off, and tried to reach Ethelbert the Red. But soldiers in armour, with long lances, barred the way. Nelson Lee was forced back.

Other soldiers came forward and seized the unfortunate Handforth. He shook them off, and glared.

"Keep your hands away!" he roared. "I'm the captain of the bodyguard, and I'm not going to be mauled about by any of you! Stand back! I'll show Siegan the Slim how to fight!"

A cry came from the princess. "Bravely spoken!" she exclaimed joyously. "My blessing go with thee, fair Handforth!"

The soldiers fell back, rather non-plussed by Handforth's attitude, and they suddenly remembered that he was, indeed, the captain of the bodyguard, appointed to that exalted position by the princess herself.

In strict truth, Edward Oswald's heart was beating with much greater rapidity than usual, and he was aware of a sense of apprehension. He had expected a combat as he understood the word—a mere bloodless fight.

But now he knew that this battle was to be a ghastly affair with spiked clubs—a fight to the death!

The Combat!

BUT it was not like Edward Oswald Handforth to show the white feather.

He was irrevocably committed to this battle now, and it is possible that he had entertained a hope of winning, for his supreme optimism was as celebrated as his aggressiveness.

But even the thought of victory appalled him, for victory would mean that the blood of Siegan the Slim would

Glyn Challenge Cup—Third Round.

SAINTS' BATTLE WITH ROOKWOOD.

Game to the Third—and Last!

By Patrick Reilly.

Sure, what games they were entirety! They said Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, St. Jim's Third Round opponents, had been undergoing special training at the hands of a "red hot" footer coach. Sure, Rookwood went away at the start just like madmen, begorra! Two goals—by Silver and Lovell—against St. Jim's in the first ten minutes! That was the strength of it! I'll say this, though—Tom Merry and his men fought back in great style. Sure, a whole team of Irishmen couldn't have fought better. Tom Merry reduced the lead, and D'Arcy levelled the scores. Rookwood dashed ahead again—a grand goal by Tommy Dodd. But just on time, Blake "noddled" in the equaliser. The replay took place at St. Jim's, and went strongly in our favour from the start. We led 2-0 when Kerr was hurt. While he was off the field, Rookwood snapped two goals, and this match, too, ended in a draw. The third game, played at Greyfriars, was a "thriller." Bedad, we went off like madmen ourselves, entirety, and piled on seven goals before the "cease fire" sounded. I have never enjoyed a game so much, sure I haven't! Final tally: Saints 7, Rookwood 2.

be on his hands—it would mean that he had killed a man! But, at least, whatever he did, he would only do in self-defence. There was that consolation.

He swept the soldiers aside and marched boldly down the steps towards the combat arena. The whole assembly was talking excitedly, and from every window of the castle there were eager faces looking down.

"Ted!" came a shout from Ena Handforth, as he passed the guarded girls. "Oh, Ted, don't try it! You'll be killed!"

Handforth paused. "That's all right, sis!" he said gruffly. "Don't worry about me! I shall be safe enough."

"But it's not fair!" cried Irene, in agony. "Oh, it's cruel—it's murderous!"

Willy Handforth of the Third gave his major a hand-wave.

"Good luck, Ted, old son!" he said cheerily.

"Thanks!" muttered Handforth.

He didn't realise how much effort it had cost Willy to appear so carelessly—for Willy was in a mortal funk for the safety of his brother. But the shrewd youngster knew better than to show any sign of it. He knew that it would be utterly useless. This combat was now inevitable.

Handforth went within the circle of soldiers, and they closed up.

Curiously enough, the one member of the airship party who was quite at his ease was Handforth. Now that he was well within the combat ground, the rapid beating of his heart moderated. He was only aware of a fierce excitement—a grim desire to acquit himself well before the princess and before the whole assemblage.

Not for a minute would he admit that he had no hope.

There was something rather fine in Edward Oswald's contemptuous refusal of a coat-of-mail, which two members

ST. FRANK'S FIGHT BACK.

By Clarence Fellowe (the Rhyming Reporter).

Against the Cinque Port half-back line, St. Frank's simply could not combine. A smashing shot soon found the net—two more came swift, to our regret! At this point Nipper roused his men—each battled with the strength of ten. At half-time, three to nil, the score soon changed when they came out once more. First Nipper beat the goalie fair—then Watson put a second "there." Tregellis-West the totals matched—and Nipper three goals quickly snatched. Two more Pitt added ere Cinque Port scored through a slip—their last retort.

FULL RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S .. 7	ROOKWOOD .. 2
Merry (4), D'Arcy, Blake Lowther	Lovell, Dodd
CINQUE PORT .. 4	ST. FRANK'S .. 8
Dallas (2) Troop (2)	Nipper (4) Watson, Tregellis-West Pitt (2)
BAGSHOT .. 2	GREYFRIARS ..
RIPPINGHAM .. 5	RYLO'BE GRAM. 3
ABBOTSFORD .. 6	COLDWYN BAY 3
Mel Tor .. 3	DOONE HILL .. 2
Thamington .. 1	LYN GORGE .. 2
Taddestock .. 1	CHESTER LE .. 2
	Grand 0

of the bodyguard urged upon him. He brushed them aside.

"No fear!" he said. "I don't want that stuff! The lighter I am the better! By what I can see, I shall have to do a lot of dodging, so you can clear off!"

The majority of his words were double Dutch to the soldiers, but they could easily understand their meaning. And a moment later a great shout went up from the whole concourse.

The combat was about to commence. Handforth was now holding the heavy, spiked club in his right hand. In his left hand he held the shield, a massive affair of glittering metal. He was looking at it doubtfully, and Siegan the Slim, some yards away, was waiting. Ethelbert the Red stood ready, his hand upraised.

"Prepare, combaters!" he exclaimed grimly.

"I'm ready for the beggar!" roared Handforth aggressively. "And I don't want this giddy shield, either! It's no good to me!"

He threw it aside, and advanced, unprotected.

A fresh shout went up from the crowds. This was a strange "combaters" indeed! Not only had he refused chainmail, but even his shield was discarded. To the Northestrians it seemed a sign of amazing valour. Even Siegan the Slim stared, and an uneasy qualm smote him. Had he made a mistake? Was this opponent so greatly beneath his contempt, after all?

Ethelbert the Red dropped his hand as a sign for the combat to start, and at the same moment Siegan the Slim came rushing forward, his heavy club whirling viciously. Clearly he meant to settle this combat during the first few moments—as a proof of his prowess. He believed, too, that victory might restore him to his appointment. For a victory

would mean the downfall of his successor.

"That's all right!" roared Handforth contemptuously. "You can't fool me with that sort of stuff, you rotter!"

He side-stepped like lightning, although he left it dangerously late. Siegan's club came within an inch of his shoulder as it swept down, and that blow alone would have been sufficient to smash his bones and sinews to pulp.

The boys and girls watched with a kind of sick horror. Some of them were trying to close their eyes, but couldn't do so. They were fascinated by this spectacle, watching their chum fight his battle of death.

Handforth's training in the boxing-ring stood him in excellent stead. Edward Oswald had always been a good boxer, but never in his life before had he used his feet so adroitly as he used them now.

For he knew that it was a question of life or death.

Siegan the Slim meant to kill him. This would be no combat of wounds, so far as Siegan was concerned. If he happened to strike his youthful opponent down, he would finish the job with some more deadly blows. The expression on the man's face was more than sufficient to tell Handforth the truth.

"Fight, bold Handforth—fight well!" came a cry from the balcony.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "The princess!"

He was also aware of a roar from the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls. And, although he needed no encouragement, he became imbued with a fierce determination to win this combat.

Siegan the Slim meant to kill him; but he had no such deadly intentions regarding Siegan the Slim. Another idea had struck him, and he was concentrating all his attention upon keeping himself intact. No matter which way Siegan leapt at him, he was always just missing when the club swung down.

The Schoolboy Bronco-Buster!

(Continued from page 22.)

Snort stared over the wall from the prairie, and his sharp eyes picked out the pinto among the other animals. He rose astride of the pine wall, and put a leg over. He was going to jump into the corral and lead the pony out by the gate. Undoubtedly Snort would have got by with it, had not Bill been there. But Bill was there!

His activity was already beginning to delight the great audience.

And then came the crucial moment.

Siegan was confident now, and his eyes were glittering evilly. Not once had Handforth attempted to strike a blow, and, to Siegan's mind, this seemed to be a certain indication of timidity.

This boy was afraid of him.

Again he swung in with his club, but this time Handforth leaped high, and the spiked head of the deadly weapon swished under him, where his legs had just been. Before Siegan could recover, Handforth's own club came hurtling down.

Crash!

With a shower of sparks, the head of Handforth's club battered against his opponent's shield, and the latter was wrenched out of Siegan's hand by the very force of the impact.

"Come on, you rotter!" panted Edward Oswald fiercely.

Not for one second did he wait.

He flung his club down. But the man still held his club, and it was already hissing round for another terrible thrust.

"Die!" he snarled.

But Handforth didn't die; he moved so quickly that Ena and the other girls, closing their eyes to escape the awful sight, nearly missed the real cream of the encounter. As Siegan's club cleft the air, Handforth's famous right swung round.

Biff!

It was a glorious upper-cut—a fierce, terrific swipe on the point of Siegan's jaw, and it had all Handforth's weight behind it.

As the man staggered back, dazed and agonised by that upper-cut, Handforth followed up his advantage. Left-right! A tremendous full-fisted blow on Siegan's ear, and another on the point of his nose.

With a lurching, crumpling movement, the man sagged over sideways, his club dropping from his nerveless grasp. And the next moment he rolled

There was a glint of moonlight on a barrel as Bill threw up his gun.

Bang!

Snort gave a fearful yell as half his right ear was torn away by the bullet. He clapped his hand to his head and yelled wildly as he tumbled back over the fence to the prairie outside.

Bang! Bill's Colt roared again, but Snort was gone! A crash and another fearful yell told that he had landed on the hard prairie. There was a squeal from a startled bronco.

Bill rushed across to the corral wall. He bounded up, caught the top, and leaned over. With his brawny chest leaning on the top of the fence, he swung his gun-arm over and glared

over, and lay perfectly still—knocked out utterly and completely.

"Good old Ted!" yelled Willy, his voice cracking with relief and excitement. "Look, you chaps! Ted's won! Ted's the victor!"

"Hurrah!"

Handforth, flushed and excited, melodramatically stepped up to the vanquished, and placed one foot upon his senseless body. Then he faced round to the balcony of the castle, and threw up his hand. It was an eloquent sign—that salute.

He was the victor!

"Hurrah! Good old Handy!"

"Bravo!"

The shouts from the airship party were certainly echoed and re-echoed by all the Northerstrians. For a moment the latter had been amazed—bewildered by the fact that this boy had beaten his opponent with bare fists alone!

"Thank Heaven, Dorrie!" muttered Nelson Lee fervently.

"The boy's a marvel!" declared Lord Dorrimore. "Good glory, I've seen a few knock-outs, but that upper-cut was a real beauty!"

The air was now filled with continuous cheering.

Without any question, Handforth had gained the favour of the people, and that was an extraordinary lucky circumstance. That which had seemed so tragic had turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Edward Oswald Handforth, at least, was a popular hero in the eyes of the Northerstrians.

"Hold!" shouted Ethelbert the Red. "Hither, men, and remove this carrion! The victor standeth here!"

He raised Handforth's arm, and the people cheered afresh.

"The Bold!" they cried in loud voices. "He is the Bold!"

(Good old Handforth! Read in next week's gripping chapters how he makes things hum when he goes after spies!)

round for Snort. There was a crash of hoof-beats! Snort was already burning the wind.

Bill threw lead after him till he vanished into the prairie. The cow town schoolmaster dropped back from the fence, grinning.

"I guess that's enough for Snort!" chuckled Bill. "I'll surely say that that hoss-thief won't mosey round this corral any more!"

And Bill went back contentedly to bed. Bill was right; Snort Jenkins was never seen near Packsaddle again.

(Next week: "THE FIGHTING SCHOOLMASTER!" More big thrills at the cow town school—don't miss 'em, chums!)



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