

"NOT WANTED AT PACKSADDLE!" — POWERFUL YARN OF WESTERN SCHOOL ADVENTURE. By FRANK RICHARDS — INSIDE.

The GEM 2^d



How's That?

A Humorous Scene from "REDFERN'S RECORD RAG!" Great St. Jim's Yarn of Sport and Adventure WITHIN.

REDFERN'S RECORD RAG!



Redfern bowled with such shocking bad aim that the ball flew almost at right angles! It caught Tom Merry on the head as he came strolling over to see what was going on, and he gave a yell of pain as he staggered back. "Oh! Yarough!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers.

CHAPTER 1. King Cricket!

TOM MERRY ran in at the doorway of the little tuckshop where a group of St. Jim's juniors were refreshing themselves after morning lessons.

It was a bright May day, and the sun was streaming in at the tiny windows of Dame Taggles' little shop. The juniors were having a drink of ginger-beer when Tom Merry ran in and held up his hand.

"Attention!" he sang out.

"Oh, rats!" said Jack Blake of the Fourth Form cheerfully. "Go and eat coke, my son!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the same Form. "I must weally request you not to delay me, Tom Mewwy, as I have to pay a visit to my tailah as soon as I have finished this gingah-beer!"

"And I've got to go and feed my bulldog in a minute," said Herries.

Tom Merry's hand remained uplifted.

"Attention!"

"Rats!"

"Wats!"

"You fellows haven't looked at the notice-board," said Tom Merry. "Go and look at it, and don't jaw!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What's on the notice-board?" asked Blake. "Anything interesting?"

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"Yes, rather—a notice by me!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, what rot!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"It's about the cricket," Tom Merry explained. "Cricket practice for the junior Forms begins, and—"

"I'm afraid I shall have no time for cwicket just now, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of the head, as he put down his glass. "My tailah has sent home my waistcoat too tight at the waist, and I have to see him about it."

"Then you won't have any time to play in the junior eleven?" retorted Tom Merry.

"Oh, I will find time for that!"

"You'll find a thick ear if you're not careful," said Tom Merry. "Go and read the notice on the board, all of you."

Blake & Co. finished their ginger-beer and then went into the School House. A crowd was already gathering round the notice-board in the Hall.

Among the other papers pinned up there by masters and prefects—papers of lesser importance, of course—was one in the bold handwriting of Tom Merry, and signed with his name.

Tom Merry of the Shell was captain of the junior eleven. He had been junior football captain, and he was going to be junior cricket captain, without a dispute. There was no question

about that. But Tom Merry made a stern captain in some respects—he never allowed any playing member to slack, and cricket had to be taken seriously by any fellow who hoped to play for his House or for the school.

"NOTICE.

"All members of the Junior Cricket Club of St. Jim's are requested to turn up for first practice after morning lessons.

—(Signed) TOM MERRY,
"Captain."

Blake grunted.

"I suppose we'll go?" he remarked. "We've got a match with the Grammar School next Saturday, and we want to be in form."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins of the New House. "I'm keen to begin. Of course the New House will have to buck up things, as usual, if we're to make any show against the Gram-marians."

"Oh, tosh!" said Blake politely.

"But what about my tailah, deah boys?"

"Oh, hang your tailor!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I dare say some other chap would take your place in the eleven if you're very anxious about your tailor," said Tom Merry. "There are some new fellows in the New House—Redfern,

—BUT HE MADE A CENTURY! RIPPING YARN OF CRICKET AND ADVENTURE.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Lawrence, and Owen, you know—if you'd like to resign—”

“Weally, deah boy—”

“Oh, that's no good!” said Blake.

“Those County Council school chaps can't play cricket. Cricket is only played properly at Public schools. You all know that.”

“Yaas, wathah! I quite agree with my friend Blake—”

Tom Merry nodded.

“Yes, I must agree to that, too!” said Figgins thoughtfully. “Although Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence are New House chaps and very decent fellows, I shouldn't recommend trying them for the eleven. It wouldn't be any good.”

“Rather not!” said Kerr.

Tom Merry laughed.

“I wasn't speaking seriously,” he said. “That's all right. Redfern & Co. are decent chaps, and we all like them, but, of course, they take a back seat where cricket is concerned. But every fellow who wants a chance of being selected for the eleven must turn up to practice regularly, and begin now.”

“But my tailah—”

“Rats! Come on, you fellows!”

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, marched out together, Manners with a bat under his arm. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, the chums of the Fourth, followed them, D'Arcy deciding to leave the visit to his tailor over for a more opportune occasion.

Figgins & Co. were not left behind—and a crowd more of the juniors of both Houses streamed down to the cricket field after Tom Merry.

The newly rolled ground looked very cheerful and inviting. Quite a crowd gathered round the ropes to watch the practice begin.

Fatty Wynn of the New House soon showed that a season of footer had not robbed his hand of its cunning, when he began to bowl. Fatty Wynn was the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's, and although he was not quite in form now, he showed that he was “all there,” and that a little practice would soon make him as dangerous as of old.

The merry click of bat and ball rang over the junior cricket ground, and cheers from the onlookers greeted every good hit.

“Bravo, Tom Merry!”

“Well bowled, Fatty!”

Fatty Wynn captured Tom Merry's wicket, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took his bat in. The swell of St. Jim's adjusted his eyeglass, and glanced along the pitch at Fatty Wynn, who was grasping the ball again. D'Arcy's manner indicated that he was prepared to knock the Falstaff's bowling into the middle of next week, or still farther along the calendar. But it did not work out exactly like that.

Smack!

The middle stump was whipped out of the ground, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced down at it in surprise.

“Bai Jove!” he ejaculated.

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared Figgins.

“How's that?”

“Out!” grinned Tom Merry.

“Weally, you fellows, that was only a twial ball—”

“Rats! Get off the pitch!”

“I am wathah out of form just now, deah boys,” said Arthur Augustus, as he walked off, quite unperturbed. “But

I shall buck up all wight for the Gwammah School match, and I will undah-take to knock the Gwammawians into a cocked hat!”

“Yes, I dare say you'll undertake to do it!” Monty Lowther remarked sarcastically. “But what kind of an undertaker do you think you'll make?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Weally, Lowthah—”

“Next man in!” said Tom Merry.

And the remainder of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark was lost as the cricket practice continued.

CHAPTER 2. Three Left Out!

THREE juniors had strolled down to the cricket field and stood looking on at the junior practice. They were Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence of the Fourth and the New House.

The trio were the County Council schoolboys, who had come to St. Jim's upon County Council scholarships. Although there had been some prejudice upon this subject when the three chums had first arrived, Redfern & Co. had speedily made themselves respected. They were three fellows as thoroughly decent in every way as any others in the school; and they had shown, too, that they could stand up for themselves when necessary.

Although some of the more snobbish sort—like Levison and Mellish—affected to look down upon the County Council

Redfern & Co.'s cricket was the joke of St. Jim's. But when the New Firm “do their stuff” the joke's on St. Jim's!

“bounders,” Redfern & Co. were accepted upon equal terms by all St. Jim's. And Levison and Mellish did not venture to make their unpleasant remarks in the hearing of the New Firm.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence had been put in the New House, where they had shown no disposition to follow the lead of Figgins & Co. Indeed, it was generally supposed that sooner or later there would come a contest between Redfern and Figgins for the leadership of the New House juniors. Any hint of that kind of thing was enough to put the great Figgins' back up at once, and so there reigned a sort of suppressed warfare between Figgins & Co. and the New Firm.

But Figgins & Co. had concluded, quite innocently and cheerfully, that the new boys couldn't play cricket. Tom Merry and Blake and most of the fellows jumped to the same conclusion. It was really an assumption based upon ignorance, but they were quite in good faith about it.

Redfern, Owen and Lawrence stood looking on, with their hands in their pockets, while batsmen and bowlers practised.

“I think we ought to be on in this scene!” Redfern remarked.

Lawrence nodded.

“There's a notice on the board about cricket practice beginning,” he remarked. “I suppose it begins for us as well as the others?”

“Unless we're left out,” said Owen.

Redfern's eyes gleamed.

“They won't leave us out!” he said.

The New Firm strolled round the ropes to where Figgins, Kerr, Blake, and Arthur Augustus were looking out and chatting.

“Beginning cricket practice, I see,” Redfern remarked.

Arthur Augustus nodded.

“Yaas, wathah, deah boys! I have put off seein' my tailah specially for the purpose. A fellow must make some sacwifice for the team when he's a chap who can't be spared.”

“Where do we come in?” asked Redfern.

“Eh?”

“Getting deaf?” asked Redfern pleasantly. “We were thinking that we should like to become ornaments of the junior eleven.”

“My deah chap—”

“Anyway, suppose we turn up to practice?” said Lawrence.

“I suppose there's no objection to that,” said D'Arcy thoughtfully. “As for any chance of playing in the eleven, of course that's all bosh!”

“Oh, bosh!” agreed Blake.

“And why is it all bosh?” asked Redfern, his eyes beginning to glitter. “Because we came here on County Council scholarships! Is that it?”

“I twust, Wedfern, that you do not mean to insult us,” said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy very loftily. “If a chap insults me, I always give him a feahful thwashin'!”

“I asked you a question,” said Redfern.

“Your question implied that I might allow snobbish considerations to intahere in ewicket mattahs, Wedfern!”

Redfern laughed.

“Oh, I see!” he replied. “Then it isn't because we come from the County Council school?”

“Certainly not!”

“We're not snobs,” said Blake, reddening. “Of course, it's nothing of the sort!”

“Then what is it?”

“Because you can't play cricket.”

“But we think we can play cricket,” said Redfern.

“We've got a ridiculous little idea that we play the giddy game rather well,” Lawrence remarked.

Blake laughed indulgently.

“Yes, what you would call playing it!” he assented. “But, you see, we play Public school cricket—quite out of your line! We should play you fellows' heads off. It wouldn't be much good your practising with us, either. You'd better begin by practising with the fags, I think. Young Wally D'Arcy of the Third will give you some tips!”

“Practise with the fags!” said Redfern. “Why shouldn't we practise with the Fourth, our own Form, or the Shell, for that matter?”

“You're not up to their weight, you see.”

“How do you know?”

“Oh, we know, you know!”

“Yaas, wathah!”

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence looked at one another. They seemed to be meditating whether to commit instant assault and battery upon the St. Jim's fellows. But the Saints were evidently so innocent in their assumption, that it was really impossible to be angry with them. St. Jim's was not the only school that fancied that cricket was never really played outside its walls.

“I think Tom Merry's junior cricket captain,” Redfern remarked at last.

“Yes,” said Lowther.

“I'll speak to him.”

“He's batting now.”

Tom Merry was batting against Digby's bowling, and was making a very good show.

Redfern cocked his eye at him in a critical way.

"He bats fairly well," he said; "but I think I could knock spots off that bowling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha! Your blessed cheek! Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's fellows chuckled in a chorus. School House and New House juniors found a common ground for laughter in the cheek of the New Firm. They were not even curious to see Redfern & Co. at the wicket, so firmly convinced were they that the County Council trio could not play cricket.

Tom Merry, not out, gave up his bat to Kangaroo of the Shell, and strolled off the pitch and joined the group at the ropes. He nodded cheerfully to the New Firm.

"Jolly game!" he said. "I'm sorry to part with the footer, but we shall have some ripping cricket this summer."

"What-ho!" said Blake.

"Pity you chaps can't play!" said Tom Merry, sincerely enough, to Redfern & Co. "You ought to get a little practice at the nets, and Figgins would give you some tips, as you're in his House."

"Certainly!" said Figgins generously. "I'd always help a chap who's never had a chance of playing."

"Quite sure we can't play already?" asked Owen sarcastically.

Figgins smiled good-humouredly.

"Oh, what you'd call playing, I've no doubt!" he said. "Knocking a ball about anyhow. But we play cricket at St. Jim's," added Figgins, with stress upon the word "cricket."

Redfern laughed.

"Then you're not thinking of giving us a chance for the junior eleven, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, isn't it?" asked Redfern. "That's the cheek you'd naturally expect from us Council school chaps! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it is rather thick, you know!" said Reilly. "Faith, it's too thick entirely!"

"Yes, I suppose so. And you chaps don't even want to see us play, before setting us down as helpless duffers!" said Redfern.

Tom Merry hesitated.

"We'll see what you can do this evening," he said. "We haven't time now before dinner. But, of course, you see, the kind of cricket you've been used to isn't exactly what we play here—"

"But if you buck up, deah boys—"

"Next term, you know—"

"After lots of practice—"

Redfern yawned.

"No chance for us to play in the first match of the season, against the Grammarians?" he asked.

The juniors yelled.

"No, I think not," said Tom Merry, with tears of mirth in his eyes. "No, I don't think you're likely to be quite up to the form of Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School! Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern thrust his hands deep into his pockets.

"Right-ho!" he said. "But perhaps we'll play in the Grammar School match, all the same."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Stranger things have happened, you know," suggested Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New Firm strolled away, leaving the crowd of juniors still yelling.

CHAPTER 3.

Redfern Suggests a Rag!

TOM MERRY & CO. finished their practice and went in to dinner, feeling very well satisfied with themselves.

Figgins & Co. came into the New House to dinner, smiling. They smiled more broadly as they met Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence going into the dining-room.

"Any joke on?" asked Redfern.

"Three," said Kerr.

"Three! What are they?" asked Redfern, puzzled.

"Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence," Kerr explained.

And Figgins & Co. chuckled. The New Firm laughed, too.

"You are a funny merchant," Redfern remarked. "I suppose it is frightfully comic of us to think of playing in the eleven against the Grammar School, or, in fact, to think of playing cricket at all."

"Well, no," said Figgins, very considerably. "I approve of every chap trying to play cricket, whether he can or not. But for you chaps to think of playing in a match for the school—well, that is rather rich! You won't be up to the weight of a House match even for a long time to come."

"How do you know?"

"My dear chap, we do know. There's no need to argue about it," said Figgins, with condescension.

And they went in to dinner.

Redfern & Co. were rather silent during dinner. Perhaps they were a little annoyed at being set down as duffers at cricket without even being given a trial. But they had a sense of humour, which enabled them to take it cheerfully.

Redfern's suggestion that he might be played in the eleven against the Grammar School was soon known all over St. Jim's, and was taken as a great joke.

Even the fags of the Third and Second Forms permitted themselves the liberty of chuckling over it.

When Redfern & Co. turned up in the Fourth Form class-room that afternoon they were greeted with a general chuckle, which made Mr. Lathom, the Form-master, look round.

"Silence in the class-room!" he said severely.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence took their places imperturbably.

After school they had to run the gauntlet of many remarks as they came out of the Form-room.

Tom Merry stopped them in the quad.

"We're going to have some practice after tea," he said. "If you fellows specially want to show what you can do, we'll give you a chance."

Redfern smiled sweetly.

"Hadn't we better practise with the fags, as you suggested?" he questioned.

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"Well, yes—it would be more sensible," he agreed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Owen.

Redfern gave his chum a severe look.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Redfern, turning to Tom Merry again, when Owen was reduced to order. "Let's ask some of the Third Form

kids if they'll practise with us, and we will come out after tea, and you can look on."

"Good! I'll fix it for you with young D'Arcy m'nor."

"Thanks awfully!"

"Not at all!"

Redfern & Co. walked on towards the New House. Lawrence and Owen looked at their leader, and their eyes were beginning to gleam. As a rule, they were satisfied with Redfern's leadership, and had no faults to find with him. But on this occasion they showed unmistakable signs of restiveness.

"You crass, utter ass!" said Lawrence, in measured tones, as soon as Tom Merry was out of hearing. "You one-eyed cuckoo! What do you mean by it?"

"What do you mean?" said Owen. "You fathead! Putting us down to play cricket with the fags, you ass!"

"Patience, my sons—patience!" said Redfern. "It's a rag!"

"Nice kind of a rag, putting us to play with fags!"

"Wait till we get into the study, my sons, and I'll explain. You follow your uncle," said Redfern serenely.

Lawrence and Owen followed their leader into their study in the Fourth Form passage in the New House. They were looking very wrathful. They did not understand what sort of a rag could justify letting them down in the sight of the whole school in this way.

Redfern closed the door of the study and turned to his chums with a grin.

"You're a pair of goats!" he began. "You ought to have faith in your Uncle Reddy—what?"

"That's all very well—" began Owen.

"Of course it is," said Redfern, interrupting him. "Very well indeed! Now, I've got on to a big rag—a record rag! We're going to play cricket with the fags—"

"We know that. But—"

"And as all St. Jim's seem to have made up their minds that we can't play cricket for toffee, we're going to let them have their way."

"What?"

"We're going to play so rottenly that the fags will turn up their noses at it."

"You ass!" roared Owen.

"What?" yelled Lawrence. "Us—who could play their silly heads off if we liked! You chump! Why, Tom Merry and Blake couldn't stand up to us for a brace of shakes, and you propose—"

"That's why I propose it," said Redfern calmly.

"But why?"

"We're going to give St. Jim's the impression that we're a set of hopeless duffers and can't play cricket for monkeynuts!"

"They've got that impression already."

"Then we'll confirm it."

"But what for?" yelled Lawrence and Owen together.

"Because after that we're going, by hook or by crook, to make Tom Merry play us in the eleven against the Grammar School," said Redfern quietly.

"What?"

"My hat!"

"And then, when they think we're three awful mugs, they'll be on tenterhooks all the time, and that will be a jolly good punishment for having set us down as duffers without seeing us play."

The juniors chuckled.

"It would be a ripping rag!" Lawrence agreed. "But—"

"But what?" demanded Redfern.
 "But you can't get Tom Merry to put you and us into the junior eleven against the Grammar School. It stands to reason you can't."

"We've got to work it."
 "Do you mean to say you can find a way?"

"I mean to say that you've got to follow your uncle's lead, and not jaw at him like silly asses!" said Redfern severely. "Don't I always bring you up in the way that you should go? Don't I?"

"Well, yes; but—"
 "Nuff butts! Get some tea, and then get into your flannels, and we'll go down to the cricket ground and astonish the natives."

And Lawrence and Owen gave it up, only promising Redfern in the most earnest manner that if the rag were a failure, and he made them look asses before the whole school for nothing, they would give him a record bumping—a promise which Redfern received with unruffled serenity.

CHAPTER 4.

The New Firm Causes Some Fun!

WALLY—more formally known as D'Arcy minor of the Third Form—grunted.

Tom Merry was talking earnestly—like a Dutch uncle, as he expressed it—but Wally did not seem to be very much impressed.

"That's all well enough," said D'Arcy minor, "but we don't want a set of silly asses monkeying round on our ground."

"But to help you chaps on in cricket," Tom Merry urged.

"Why can't the Fourth do it?"
 "Fourth are busy," said Jack Blake.
 "We don't get much light after tea, and we've got to get in all the practice we can, with a match coming on Saturday."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, Wally, I must wequest you to oblige us by takin' Wedfern & Co. off our hands. I wequest it as your majah."

"Oh rats!" said Wally. "You go and eat coke, Gussy!"
 "Weally, Wally—"

"I don't feel inclined to waste time over the three asses," said Wally. "Of course, they can't play cricket."

"Look here, we'll stand you a feed in the study afterwards," said Tom Merry.

Wally's face cleared a little. Funds had been low for some time past, and provisions accordingly scarce out of regular meal hours.

"Can I bring Jameson, Gibson, and young Frayne?"
 "Oh, yes!"

"It's a go, then!" said Wally.
 "Good! I'll tell Redfern."

Tom Merry went out of the School House relieved in his mind. He was a kind-hearted fellow, and he wanted to help Redfern & Co. in every possible way with their cricket, but he really did not want to be bothered with duffers and beginners just then. He knew that Gordon Gay's team at the Grammar School were making strenuous efforts to get into form, and he did not want the St. Jim's juniors to be licked in the first game of the season.

He met Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen in the quadrangle; they were strolling down to the cricket ground.

"Hallo, you chaps! I've fixed it!" he exclaimed.

"Fixed what?" asked Redfern.
 "About the practice. Young Wally is going to take you on and give you some tips. The fags are ready for you on their ground."

"Thanks awfully!"
 "We shall give you a look-in to see how you're getting on," Tom Merry promised.

"You're too good!" said Owen.
 The New Firm walked away to the

section of the playing fields sacred to the efforts of the heroes of the Third.

Wally greeted them with a more or less friendly grin.

"I hear you chaps want instructions in playing cricket," he said.
 Redfern nodded.

"Yes," he replied cheerfully. "We've heard about the game, and we're feeling very curious to play it, you know."

Lawrence and Owen burst into an irrepressible chuckle. Wally stared.

"Do you mean to say that you've never played cricket before?" he shouted.

"Well, yes; but Tom Merry says it isn't what you'd call cricket here," said Redfern.

"I suppose it isn't," said Wally, with a grunt. "I'm not running you chaps down, but I don't see how you've had any chance to learn the game."

"Exactly!" said the chief of the New Firm. "You hit it off precisely. It shows there's a lot of truth in that old saying about wisdom emanating from the mouths of babes and sucklings!"

"Yes, rather!" assented Owen and Lawrence solemnly.

Wally began to look warlike.
 "If you're alluding to me as a babe and a suckling—" he said.

"My dear kid, you are practically our grandfather in these matters," said Redfern. "But let's get to work. What do we do first?"

"Oh, we bat," said Lawrence gravely. "I've always noticed that in cricket one chap bats, while another throws the ball."

"I've noticed it myself," said Owen.

"That's the best of you observant chaps," said Redfern admiringly. "You can pick up a lot of tips by keeping your eyes about you. Isn't that so, D'Arcy minor?"

Wally snorted. Such frightful depths of ignorance on the subject of cricket simply staggered him. He began to be sorry that he had taken on the task of



As Redfern struggled on through the swirling waters of the Pool, with Tom Merry's dead weight in his arms, he felt that his strength was going. He was aching with fatigue, and his feet seemed like lead. But the plucky junior fought on, drawing slowly nearer to the shore.

CHAPTER 5.

The "Rotters"!

instructing the New Firm, even with that tea in Tom Merry's study as a reward to come.

"Oh, you make me tired!" he said. "Have you brought your bats?"

"Bats!" said Redfern vaguely. "The things you hit the ball with, Reddy," Lawrence explained. "Come, old man, you know that much, if you think for a minute."

"Of course I do!" agreed Redfern, brightening up. "The bat is what the batsmen use. That's why they're called batsmen, in all probability."

"I shouldn't wonder," assented Owen. "And the ball is bowled by the bowler," said Redfern wisely. "That's why he's called a bowler. You can tell that by the resemblance between the two words. It's possible for a chap to learn a lot of cricket, simply by a little reflection. It's really quite obvious when you come to think of it."

Wally looked suspiciously at the New Firm. The suspicion came into his mind that they were pulling his leg, as he would have expressed it. But Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were as grave as judges. They evidently felt that they were in for a very serious thing.

"Oh, come on!" grunted Wally. "There are some old bats in the pavilion, and you can use them."

"Good egg!" Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen were provided with bats. Wally threw a cricket ball to Jameson. A crowd of Third Form fags had gathered in flannels for cricket practice, but most of them seemed quite willing to give the duffers of the Fourth a show. They anticipated fun, and truly enough, they were not disappointed.

"Give them a ball or two, Jamie!" said Wally.

Jameson grinned as he caught the ball.

"Right you are!" he replied. "Put a man at the wicket! They don't seem to have sense enough to get there by themselves!"

"Man in!" called out Wally.

The trio stared at him.

"What does that mean?" asked Lawrence, with an expression of wonder.

"Jameson is just going to bowl!" shouted Wally. "Go in, one of you!"

"Which one?"

"It doesn't matter which."

"Shall I go in?" asked Redfern.

"Yes, yes; you'll do!"

"Oh, very well!"

And Redfern tucked his bat under his arm, and walked towards the distant School House. The fags stared after him in bewilderment.

Wally put his hands to his mouth, and roared:

"Come back, you ass!"

Redfern turned round.

"Come back?" he repeated.

"Yes, idiot!"

"But you told me to go in!" said Redfern, with a puzzled look. "I don't see why I should go in, but you told me to, and I was going!"

The fags shrieked with laughter. Wally almost exploded.

"You frabjous idiot!" he shrieked. "I told you to go in and bat! Go to the wicket, you chump—go in and bat at the wicket, you frabjous bungler!"

"Oh, I see!" said Redfern.

And he returned serenely to the field, and took up his position at the wicket.

Wally wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he murmured. "This is the last time I'll undertake to teach a howling duffer cricket! Br-r-r-r!"

TOM MERRY & CO. were at practice on the junior ground, but the yells of laughter from the fags' section drew all their spectators away, and Tom Merry & Co. fell off one by one, too, to watch the display by Redfern & Co.

Even the cricket practice could not hold them back from the sight. And it was a sight that was worth seeing. It could not be denied that cricket was a funny game when the County Council trio played it.

Jameson bowled to Redfern, and Redfern promptly put out his foot and blocked the ball with his boot. Then he hit it with the bat, and sent it daisy cutting.

There was a terrific yell from the fags. Redfern looked round proudly. "How's that?" he asked. "Splendid!" exclaimed Lawrence and Owen together.

"Fathead!" raved Wally.

"Why, what's the matter now?"

"You have to hit the ball with the bat, idiot!"

"Well, so I did."

"Not stop it with your foot, idiot!"

"Oh, very well! I don't mind playing according to the rules, if you tell me what they are!" said Redfern. "Isn't it jolly hard, though, to stop it with the bat?"

"You have to learn to do it, ass! Give him another ball, Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha! All right!" The ball came down again. Redfern made a terrific swipe with his bat, missed the ball, sat down on the crease, and knocked the wicket to pieces.

"Ow!" gasped Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the scene. "Bai Jove! This is weally amazin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"What do you think of their cwicket, Blake, deah boy?"

"Oh, ripping! I think they ought to be played against the Grammar School—rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's weally weamarkable!"

"Am I out?" asked Redfern, getting up and rubbing his leg, with a very rueful expression.

"I should say you are, you silly ass!" growled Wally. "Let one of the other idiots go in!"

Lawrence went in to bat, taking the willow away from Redfern. Jameson sent down another ball, and Lawrence cut at it, hit his wicket, and scattered the bails.

"How's that?" shrieked Jameson.

"Out!" roared the fags. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ball didn't hit the wicket!" said Lawrence, with an injured expression.

"You didn't leave much wicket for it to hit!" grinned Jameson. "But you're out, my son, and you can walk your chalks!"

"Put Owen in, Wally!" yelled Blake.

"Let's see if he's as good as the others!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm ready!" said Owen modestly.

"I'm not really so good a bat as Reddy, but I'll do my best!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Owen took up his stand at the wicket. The first ball Jameson sent down knocked his leg stump out of the ground.

"Dear me!" said Owen.

"Dear me!" mimicked Wally. "Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"The wicket's down!" said Owen, apparently very much surprised.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go hon!" said Wally sarcastically.

"You'd better stand in front of it next time, and perhaps you'll be able to keep it up!"

"All right!" said Owen innocently.

Jameson took the ball again, and made a little run. Owen stepped directly in front of the wicket, with a very blissful smile. The ball came down and glanced on his leg, and he gave a terrific yell.

"Yaroo!"

"You—you ass!" roared Wally.

"What did you do that for?"

Owen roared. He danced on one leg, clasping the other with both hands.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, that chap does take the cake!"

"Look here, this isn't playing the game!" said Owen indignantly. "Jameson oughtn't to have pitched the ball at me! Ow, ow, ow!"

"What did you get in front of the wicket for?" howled Wally.

"Why, you told me to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you're too funny for anything!" gasped Wally. "Look here, you'd better see what you can do bowling! I'm fed-up with your batting!"

"I'm fed-up, too!" growled Owen. "I don't call it cricket, chucking a ball at a fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jameson tossed the ball to Redfern. Redfern made a clumsy catch at it and missed it, and it dropped in the grass.

"Yah! Butter fingers!" said Jameson, with a sniff.

Redfern picked up the ball.

"Where do I stand?" he asked.

"Go and stand where Jameson was standing!" said Wally.

Redfern went down the pitch. Wally picked up his bat, and took up his position at the wicket.

"Now, don't brain me with the ball!" he said, rather apprehensively. "Pitch it at the wicket, if you can!"

"Oh, that's easy enough!" said Redfern confidently.

He hurled the ball. Wally dropped the bat, and leaped into the air, with a wild howl.

"Yaroooooooop! Oh! Ooooooch!"

"What's the matter?" asked Redfern.

"You hit me!" yelled Wally.

"Did I? Well, never mind—"

"Never mind! I'll never mind you!" shouted Wally, grasping his bat and making a run down the pitch at Redfern.

Redfern dodged away.

"Is this part of the game?" he asked breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll game you!" yelled Wally.

"Hold on, Wally, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus pacifically. "Suppose you put them to bowl to one another?"

Wally stopped. He could not catch Redfern, and D'Arcy major's suggestion struck him as being a very good one. It did not matter how much the three duffers damaged one another—at all events, that was the way Wally looked at it.

"Get to the wicket, Lawrence!" he called out.

"Certainly!" said Lawrence.

"You can bowl again, Redfern!"

"I'm ready!"

Redfern took the ball and bowled again. The grinning onlookers stood well back from the pitch. But Redfern

was quite equal to that. He bowled with such a shocking bad aim that the ball flew almost at right angles, and caught Tom Merry on the side of the head as he came strolling over to see what was going on.

The blow was not a hard one, but it was startling, and Tom Merry gave a yell, and staggered.

"Oh! Yarough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who threw that ball at me?" shouted Tom Merry wrathfully.

"It's only Reddy bowling!" shrieked Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

"Where did that ball go?" asked Redfern, looking round.

"On my napper, you ass!" yelled Tom Merry. "You don't get me near you again when you're bowling! Is that how you wanted to play against the Grammarians! Yah!"

And Tom Merry strolled away, rubbing his head. Redfern took the ball again, and there was a general rush of the juniors to escape. There was no telling where the ball might come next.

Wally grasped his bat and flourished it wildly.

"Get off the ground, you dangerous asses!" he shouted. "I'm fed-up! Buzz off, or we'll lay the stumps about you! Do you hear?"

"But you were going to teach us cricket," said Redfern.

"We—we'll squash you if you don't go!" howled Wally.

"Oh, very well!" said Redfern, with an offended air. "We'll get off; and don't say we were not ready to practise and take any tips in cricket!"

And the New Firm walked off the cricket field.

They were quite solemn and serious until they were once more in their own study, with the door closed. Then they gave vent to their pent-up feelings.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Redfern, rolling in the armchair. "Did you ever see a set of mugs so thoroughly rotted before?"

"Never!" gasped Lawrence. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New Firm yelled in chorus.

CHAPTER 6.

Something Like Cricket!

TOM MERRY was standing in the gateway of St. Jim's after morning lessons the next day when Redfern & Co. came by.

The captain of the Shell glanced in surprise at the Fourth-Formers. Redfern and Lawrence carried their bats under their arms, and Owen had a large cricket bag. The three juniors of the New House looked as if they were going out to cricket practice, but why they should go beyond the walls of St. Jim's for that was a puzzle.

"Going out?" asked Tom Merry.

Redfern nodded.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" he said.

"What are you taking those things with you for?"

"Cricket practice."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, you're still sticking to the cricket, then?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! Do you know," said Redfern confidentially, "we think we shall take to the game in the long run."

"But why can't you practise on the ground here?" asked Tom Merry.

"There's plenty of room. I don't suppose somebody would come very close to you while you're playing."

"The fact is, we don't want the school to see our cricket."

"Well, it is a bit thick!" Tom Merry

agreed. "But the fellows would leave off laughing in the long run."

"We prefer to keep it quiet for a time," said Redfern. "As it's a half-holiday to-day, we thought we'd go out and practise a bit on the quiet. When we've improved, we'll let you chaps see us play."

"That's the wheeze!" said Lawrence, with a nod.

"By the way, the Grammar School match comes off on Saturday, doesn't it?" Redfern remarked.

"Yes."

"You haven't altered your mind about playing us?"

Tom Merry stared.

"I don't think I'm likely to alter my mind about that till you've picked up a little," he said sarcastically.

"We want to play!"

"You're likely to want for a long time, then."

"I'm going to try to persuade you," said Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry was still laughing as the New Firm walked out into the road. Redfern looked back and smiled sweetly. He chuckled as they went down the lane, and the gates of St. Jim's were lost to view.

"There's a surprise in store for that young merchant!" Redfern remarked.

"If he saw us at practice it might alter his opinion of our powers. We'll get out on the moor. There's a quiet spot there, where the village kids play sometimes, and it's pretty level, and will suit us very well. And none of the fellows will be likely to come that way."

"Good egg!"

And the three juniors sauntered on easily through the woodland footpath, and came out on the sunny stretches of Wayland Moor. There, in the quiet spot selected by Redfern, they set up their stumps and began practice. Redfern was fully determined that, by hook or by crook, he would play in the Grammar School match, and for that purpose it was necessary to get in all the practice that was possible. But to let the St. Jim's juniors see them at practice would be to give the whole show away and spoil the rag.

Had Tom Merry & Co. seen the three chums at practice now, they would have opened their eyes very wide.

Redfern batted to Lawrence and Owen alternatively, and both Lawrence and Owen showed a skill with the ball that would have drawn admiration from Fatty Wynn himself.

But they found it very hard to touch Redfern's wicket.

No matter what kind of ball they sent down Redfern was always ready for it, and he cut most of them away in a style that showed that boundaries would be frequent enough when he was playing upon a regular pitch.

The junior's face flushed and his eyes gleamed as he warmed to the work. Some fellows are born cricketers, and Redfern of the Fourth was one of them.

"My hat!" Lawrence exclaimed, as he came back panting with the ball. "My only summer hat! I wish those mugs could see you now, Reddy!"

Redfern chuckled.

"I'm jolly glad they can't!" he said. "It would spoil the jape."

"Yes. But if Tom Merry saw you now, he'd play you on your form."

"I suppose he would. But they've made up their little minds that we can't play cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we're not going to undecieve them," said Redfern, with a grin. "The

Grammar School match on Saturday will be time enough for that."

"If they let us play."

"They'll have to!"

"How are you going to make them?"

"Get them in a fix, and put 'em to ransom," grinned Redfern. "I'll work it, somehow, never fear, and make 'em agree. You leave that to your Uncle Reddy. Now, play up!"

And the merry click of bat and ball sounded over the moor again.

Four youths came strolling over the moor, and they paused as they saw the cricket practice going on in that retired spot.

They were Gordon Gay, Monk, Lane, and Wootton major, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, and the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co., but four of the best, as the St. Jim's juniors would freely have admitted.

They looked on with great interest at the practice, strolling nearer. And Redfern, as he sent the leather on its journey, suddenly observed them. Gordon Gay ran a little out of his way, and returned it to Lawrence, who was fielding. Lawrence caught the ball, though the Cornstalk junior gave him a very difficult catch.

"Good!" said Gordon Gay.

Redfern gave the Grammarians a rather grim look. He had taken his cricket practice out of the way of the St. Jim's fellows, and he was not pleased at being caught by the Grammarians in this way.

"Hallo!" said Redfern, rather gruffly. "What do you fellows want here?"

"Nothing," replied Gordon Gay cheerfully. "But what's the little game? What are you fellows practising out here on your lonesome for? You belong to St. Jim's."

"I remember that chap," said Monk. "He's a new kid there."

"We're playing you at cricket on Saturday, the first match of the season," said Redfern. "Look here, you fellows have found us out, and we want you to keep this dark!"

"Keep what dark?" asked Gay, puzzled.

"The St. Jim's chaps jumped to the conclusion that we couldn't play cricket because we were brought up at a County Council school," Redfern explained. "They set us down as duffers at the game, without waiting to see whether we could play. So we've rotted 'em that we can't play, and we're doing our practice out here so that they won't smell a rat—see? It's a jape, and you don't want to spoil it."

Gordon Gay laughed.

"Right-ho!" he said. "You're a cheeky young beggar, but I wouldn't spoil a jape for toffee! You bat rather well."

Redfern laid his hand upon his heart and bowed to the ground.

"Thanks, mighty lord!" he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look here, I'd like to bowl you!" said Gordon Gay eagerly.

"We pride ourselves on being able to play a bit, you know."

"Give him the ball, Owen!"

"Right you are!"

Owen tossed the ball to Gordon Gay, and the Cornstalk caught it. He went to the bowling end, and Redfern dropped the end of his bat on the crease.

"Out first shot!" said Wootton major, who knew the powers of his chum.

Redfern heard the words, and smiled serenely. The ball came down red-hot, but the bat was ready for it.

Click!

The round red ball sailed away, and if Redfern had taken the trouble to run it would have been a four.

Gordon Gay gave a soft whistle.

"My word. The County Council kid is hot stuff!" he remarked.

"Looks like it!" agreed Monk. "Try him again!"

Gordon Gay tried Redfern again and again, but the batsman was "there" every time. Gay gave it up at last, and took the bat, and Redfern took the ball to bowl. Gay was well on his guard, but a scorcher from the St. Jim's fellow whipped his middle stump out of the ground at the beginning of the over.

"My hat!"

"Have some more?" said Redfern sweetly.

"Yes, please!"

Redfern & Co were glad enough to get the Grammarian champion to join in their practice. It gave them a hint of what quality they were to meet on the following Saturday, if they succeeded in getting into the school eleven.

Gordon Gav & Co. were good. But they did not seem to be quite up to the weight of the three Saints. Gay remarked that it wasn't his day, and perhaps that was so. But Redfern & Co had reason to be satisfied with the result. When the Grammarians bade them good-bye, Gordon Gay's brow was thoughtful as he walked away with Monk, Lane, and Wootton.

"It's rather lucky that those chaps are rotting Tom Merry about the cricket," he remarked. "If they were put in the St. Jim's eleven we should have a hard nut to crack."

And Monk, Lane, and Wootton agreed with him.

Redfern & Co. packed up their stumps and bats as the sun went down. They were tired, but in high good humour with themselves, and they chatted cheerfully as they sauntered back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry is Missing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY met the New Firm as they came in, and he smiled as he saw the cricker bag and the bats.

The swell of St. Jim's was inclined to take Redfern & Co. under his wing. "Been pwaictising, deah boys?" he remarked.

"Yes; just knocking the leather about a bit," said Redfern. "Of course, we haven't been doing anything like you would do."

"I should hope not!" murmured Lawrence.

"Yaas, wathah! You can't expect to!" said D'Arcy, unconscious of Lawrence's remark. "I am wathah a brilliant bat myself! How do you fellows like the game?"

"I think it's all right when you get used to it."

"Yaas, wathah—you need expwience," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a nod. "I should be vewy pleased to give you fellows some tips. Young chaps beginnin' can't do bettah than take advice fvwom an old cwicketah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Owen and Lawrence.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them.

"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughah!" he said.

"Of course," said Redfern, with a severe look at his chums. "Don't take any notice of them; the silly asses go

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off like cheap American alarm clocks any minute! Come on, you chaps; I want my tea!"

"I should be vewy pleased if you would come and have tea in my study, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, in his graceful way. "As a mattah of fact, I have had a fivah fvwom my govannah, and I am standin' a little feed. Tom Mewwy is comin', you know—when he comes in."

"Pleased to come," said Redfern. "Never shall it be said that the New Firm of the New House refused a feed!"

"Never!" said Owen and Lawrence solemnly.

"Vewy good, deah boys! I suppose you haven't seen Tom Mewwy—the ass has not come in yet? He went out in his skiff—he's pwaictisin' for boatin', you know."

"Let's go and fetch him in," said Lawrence. "He's been out long enough, and I'm hungry."

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think that it is wotten to keep a good feed waitin' when fellows are hungwy!"

There were a good many St. Jim's fellows out on the river that afternoon, but as the sun went down they came in, and when D'Arcy and his companions reached the river bank the Rhyl seemed to be deserted.

There were fellows in the boathouse putting up their skiffs, but Tom Merry was not among them.

"Have you seen Tom Mewwy, Kangawoo, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"He was playing cricket with us this afternoon," said Kangaroo.

"Yaas; but he went out in his skiff aftah that!"

"Ther I dare say he's in it still; his boat isn't here."

Arthur Augustus went down to the towing-path and looked along the river. The shadows were beginning to creep over the waters of the Rhyl, and the wide surface of the river was deserted.

"I twust nothin' has happened to Tom Mewwy," D'Arcy remarked. "He went for a pull down past the bwidge. Suppose we walk in that diwectioh?"

"Right-ho!" said Redfern.

The towing-path ran under Rylcombe Bridge, an ancient stone structure that had spanned the stream for years. As far as the bridge nothing was seen of Tom Merry.

The juniors halted on the towing-path, looking up and down in puzzled wonder. They knew that Tom Merry was a keen carsman, and he might not have counted the time when he was pulling down the river—and the current would be against him in returning. But—

"Let's look on the other side of the bridge," said Redfern.

D'Arcy's face grew serious.

"It's the Pool there!" he said. "It's dangerous I twust—"

The swell of St. Jim's did not finish, but he hurried along the towing-path under the bridge.

Some little distanco beyond the bridge the stream spread out into a wider space, which was known locally as the Pool.

The shores here were thickly wooded, and the water in places was shallow, with ridges of mud showing above the surface, and in other places was very deep, and the whole Pool was a maze of tortuous currents.

In the gathering dusk of the night the river banks were deserted and

silent, and the whole scene was sombre and solitary.

The deepening gloom made it difficult for the juniors to see the wide river, and they strained their eyes across the dusky waters.

"Look!" said Redfern suddenly.

He dashed down to the water's edge. In the thick masses of reeds along the steep bank a boat was bumping. It had been caught in the reeds and rushes, as it drifted without guidance, and the current was seeking to tear it away.

Redfern caught the nose of the boat, his leg going to the knee in the water as he grasped at it.

"I know the boat!" said D'Arcy, in a strained voice. "It's Tom Mewwy's boat!"

Redfern felt in his pockets for matches and struck one, and held it to the name painted on the boat.

"Ethel!"

"That's the name!" said D'Arcy. "It's named aftah my Cousin Ethel, you know. What did Tom Mewwy leave his boat for, deah boys?"

"He didn't leave it here," said Redfern quietly; "it's drifted here!"

"Then where is Tom Mewwy?"

"Goodness knows!"

The boat swung round suddenly, swirling in the current, and Redfern was dragged into the water as he clung to it. Lawrence made a grasp at him and caught him by the leg, and held on fast.

Redfern's head went under water, and he had to let go the boat and strike out. He came up, sputtering wildly, and regained the bank with some difficulty, for the current was tearing and sucking at him. But for the steady grasp of Lawrence, Redfern would probably have been swept after the boat.

He scrambled out, drenched with water and smothered with mud, and rolled, gasping, in the grass on the bank.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Grooogh!"

The boat disappeared in the dusk, whirling out into the middle of the stream.

"Bai Jove! The boat's gone!"

"It will go ashore somewhere near the village," said Owen. "The boat will be all right. But where the dickens is Tom Merry?"

Redfern rose to his feet, still panting for breath.

"Tom Merry didn't let his boat go adrift on purpose!" he said. "Goodness knows where he is, or what has happened—but we must search for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We might be within a dozen yards of him, and we can't see him in the dusk," said Lawrence. "Suppose we shout?"

"Good egg!"

"All together!" said Redfern.

"Loud as you like!"

And the juniors shouted in unison.

"Hallo! Tom Merry! Hallo!"

Hallo-o-o-o!"

They paused to listen. From the wood the echo of their shout came clearly back. And then, faint and far, but audible to their ears in the stillness, came the cry:

"Help!"

CHAPTER 8.

Redfern to the Rescue!

WHERE was Tom Merry? In the deepening dusk of night a white face was glimmering above the curling waters. Out in the Pool, amid the swirling currents, the hero of the Shell was

clinging to a half-submerged tree, his strength almost exhausted, his senses swimming, only instinct keeping his grasp firm upon the swaying branch, while the waters strove to suck him away to doom.

Tom Merry had, as the juniors supposed, gone farther than he had intended, and he had found the current strong against him as he returned. In the gathering darkness, as he rowed singly against the powerful current, the boat had run upon a half-hidden tree that grew upon a low bank far out in the water. The mudbank amid the shallows and deeps of the Pool was below water, and the tree that grew upon it was sunken, and the branches swept the running river. The boat, colliding with the sunken branches, had reeled with the shock, and almost capsized, and Tom Merry, taken by surprise, had been pitched fairly into the water.

The boat had whirled away, but by good fortune he had caught hold of the tree, and he clung there. As he had fallen, he had struck his head, whether upon the boat or the branch he did not know. With his senses spinning, he had clung on, with the wild waters and the gathering darkness round him.

As his senses cleared, he had scanned the dusky river; but night had fallen upon the banks, and only the gleam of the water was round him.

He knew that he was in the midst of the dangerous Pool, but the shores had faded from sight, and at that hour the river was deserted.

To let go the bough and drift on the water, swimming as best he could, seemed his only chance; but his head was aching and spinning, and he felt that to trust himself to the treacherous current of the Pool was death.

He clung to the branch and shouted for help.

But on the lonely riverside there was none to hear; only the echo of his shouts came back to him. He had had a lingering hope that some boatman might have heard—that some belated rower from St. Jim's might be on the Rhyll. But the hope died in his breast.

There was no one—there was no help. As his strength was exhausted, his brain grew less clear, his shouts died away; in numb silence he clung to his hold, knowing full well that when he let it go, it was to let go of life as well.

He hardly realised his surroundings by this time.

His head was aching and unsteady, lights danced before his eyes, and the chill of the water was creeping into his very bones.

He knew that the end was near, but he was stupefied; his senses too dulled by exhaustion and cold to feel fear.

Ringling from the darkness of the distant bank came the shouts of the juniors who were seeking him, and it came through the mists that were clouding over his senses, and brought a gleam to his eyes, a fresh beat to his heart.

Exerting all his strength, he shouted in return:

"Help!"

Then, striving with all his power to keep his wandering faculties together, he listened. Again the shout from afar:

"Hallo-o-ooo!"

"Help!" cried Tom Merry.

"Where are you?"

It was Redfern's voice. Tom Merry knew it. Was there a chance of rescue yet?

"Here!" he shouted.

"In the Pool?" came Redfern's voice from the shadows.

"Yes."

"Swimming?"

"Holding on to a tree!"

"Where is the tree, then?"

"On a mud flat."

"Can you hold on longer?"

"I—I'll try!"

Redfern shouted again, but Tom Merry could not reply. He was exhausted, and only a dry rattle came from his throat.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with white lips. "Has he gone undah, deah boys?"

"If he hasn't, he will soon," said Redfern. "You can tell from his voice that he's almost at the last gasp."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"Poor old Tom Mewwy! He's got to be saved somehow." The swell of St. Jim's gazed wildly up and down the river. "If only we had a boat—"

"But we haven't!" said Redfern crisply.

"What is to be done?" said D'Arcy helplessly. "I know I can't swim that; but I'm goin' to twy, if we can't save him any othah way."

"You're not going to try," said Redfern quietly. "I'm going to try. I'm stronger than you are, Gussy, old man, and a better swimmer, if you don't mind my saying so."

Redfern was kicking off his boots already.

D'Arcy was turning pale.

"I—I know you're a bettah swimmah than I am, deah boy," he muttered; "but—but you can't swim the Pool, and aafh dark, too."

"I'm going to try."

"For goodness' sake, think what you're about, Reddy!" muttered Lawrence hoarsely. "You know you can't swim the Pool; it's impossible!"

"What will happen to Tom Merry if I don't?"

Lawrence groaned.

Tom Merry was doomed unless some strong, bold swimmer reached him; but it was a task from which the bravest swimmer might have shrunk. As the juniors stood on the bank, all they could see of the river was the swirling current, with its wickedly gleaming eddies in the darkness.

"It's tempting Fate!" muttered Lawrence, with dry lips.

"You can't do it, Reddy!" said Owen.

"It's imposs, deah boy!"

Redfern threw down his jacket and waistcoat beside his boots and his cap.

"I'm going in!" he said. "We should be a set of rotters to stand here while a chap drowned! I'm fittest to go, and I'm going! One of you cut off to the school for help, and the other two stay here to help me if I get back!"

"If!" said Lawrence, with a shudder.

Redfern stared into the darkness of the river, and shouted again:

"Tom Merry!"

A faint cry answered.

"Tom Merry, call out as often as you can to guide me! I'm coming for you!" shouted Redfern. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes!"

"Good!"

Redfern dived from the steep bank into the river.

Splash!

The three juniors on the bank watched him in horror-stricken silence.

Darkness swallowed up the gallant junior from their eyes; but for some minutes they could hear his steady strokes in the water.

Then that sound was merged in the rush and the swirl of the river, and they could hear him no more.

From the dim distance came a cry

(Continued on the next page.)



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CAN YOU BEAT IT?

Jinks (to American friend, at cricket match): "That chap Jones took six wickets for two yesterday."

American: "Fancy playing a short-sighted guy like that!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Hunt, 53, Green Lane, New Eltham, London, S.E. 9.

THE MOTHER TONGUE.

Teacher: "Why is our language known as the 'Mother Tongue'?"

Jonny: "Because father never gets a chance to use it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Allon, 172, Brinkburn Avenue, Gateshead.

CATCHING.

Judge: "What is the meaning of this expression, 'Sez you'?"

Counsel: "M'lord, it would appear that it is a slang phrase of American origin which has gained regrettable currency in the language of the people through the insidious agency of the cinema, and is, I am given to understand, employed to indicate a state of dubiety in the mind of the speaker as to the voracity or credibility of a statement made to him."

Judge: "Oh, yeah!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Parker, 116, Paxford Road, Sudbury Court, N. Wembley, Middlesex.

GOOD BUSINESS.

Father: "Vell, Ikey, my boy, vot vos you do vid your farder's best vatch?"

Ikey: "It's all right, farder. I only just pulled it to pieces, but it's mended now, and I have made a profit of three wheels!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Meade, St. David's, Station Road, Ash Vale, Surrey.

FAST TIME.

Jack: "In which country in the world does time travel faster than normal?"

John: "I don't know—which?"

Jack: "Mexico, because every few minutes you see a dago!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Jackson, 123, Patrick Street, Grimsby, Lincs.

HELPFUL.

Porter: "Hi, guv'nor, is your dog ferocious?"

Cockney: "Naw, he's fer Margit!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss K. Sellman, 26, Cranbury Road, Eastleigh, Hants.

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again from Tom Merry to guide the swimmer:

"Help!"
Redfern, as he gallantly breasted the current, heard it, and swerved a little, and kept right on for the sunken mud-bank.

"Cut off to the school, Owen!" muttered Lawrence. "I'll stay here with D'Arcy!"

Owen hesitated a moment; he did not want to leave the spot. But someone had to go, and he dashed off at top speed. Lawrence and D'Arcy, with faces white as chalk, gazed out upon the dark river, and strained their ears to listen.

"Help!"
It was a faint cry again.

Redfern heard it, and again he fought with the current to keep direct for Tom Merry. It seemed to the swimmer, strong as he was, that invisible forces were fighting against him, striving to drag him below the surface, to whirl him away into the vortex of the Pool. But he fought on.

A white face glimmered in the gloom, and Redfern gave a gasp. Tom Merry was before him, and in a few moments more Redfern had a grasp upon the swaying branch with one hand and upon Tom Merry's collar with the other.

"Got you!" he gasped.
Tom Merry struggled to speak.
"That you, Redfern?"

"Yes."
"You've done this for me?"
"You'd have done it for me."
"Yes, that's true. I hope—"

"It's all serene!" said Redfern, trying to speak cheerfully. "Owen and Lawrence and old Gussy are on the bank there, waiting to help. It's about a hundred yards from here, as near as I can guess; and if it wasn't for the current—"

"We shall never do it!" muttered Tom Merry.

"We've got to!"
"Save yourself, Reddy!"
"Rats!"

Tom Merry groaned. He had hardly strength enough left to hold on to the swaying branch, and he knew that he could not make a single stroke to save himself. He would be a dead weight upon Redfern.

"Can you swim a bit if I help you?" asked Redfern anxiously.

"I—I can't! When I let go, I shall go down like a stone!"

"You won't go down while I'm holding you."

"I—I believe the branch is going, too!" said Tom Merry. "I've felt it swaying; it won't hold the two of us, I know that!"

Redfern had already realised that.
"We've got to make the attempt," he said.

"I shall drag you down."

"We'll chance it. Hold on to me, give as little trouble as you can, and I'll pull you through!"

Tom Merry did not reply. His hand had slipped from the bough, and he hung, a dead weight, upon Redfern. He was insensible. The long struggle with the racing waters had worn him out at last.

Redfern set his teeth.

"The sooner the quicker!" he muttered. "I shan't be able to hang on long myself!"

And, with his grasp firm upon Tom Merry and his teeth set, Redfern quitted his hold on the bough, and plunged out into the swirling river.

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CHAPTER 9.

From the Jaws of Death!

TOM MERRY made no movement; he was insensible, like a log upon the arm of his rescuer. But it was better so; feeble movements would only have embarrassed the swimmer. Redfern, supporting the Shell fellow, swam out into the current, and in a moment was fighting for his life and Tom Merry's life in the swirling waters of the Pool.

From the distant bank a light gleamed for a moment and went out. Then it gleamed again.

Redfern understood.
His chums on the bank knew that he could see nothing in the darkness, and they were striking matches to guide him.

Match after match gleamed and expired.

It was quite enough to guide the swimmer.

Redfern fought on, feeling that his strength was going. Tom Merry's dead weight dragged him down, and once he went right under, but he struggled up again.

His feet seemed to be of lead, and he was aching with fatigue; but he fought on. But for the glimmering of the matches on the bank, he would probably have been lost. But the gleam of the lights guided him, and at last he fought his way close to the shore.

"Reddy!"
Redfern called back faintly:
"Here, you fellows!"
"Bai Jove!"

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Lawrence, plunging down the bank. "Thank goodness! Have you got him?"

"Yes."
"Oh, good!"

Redfern made a tremendous effort and plunged on. He grasped at the bank, but the reeds came away in his hands. There was a splash as Lawrence leaped into the water. It came up to his neck close to the bank; but he grasped Redfern and helped him, and the hero of the Fourth breathed again.

"Good old Reddy!"
D'Arcy scrambled down the bank.
"Can I help you, deah boys?"

"Give us a fist if you can!" gasped Redfern. "If you could take Tom Merry, we could manage for ourselves."
"All right."

Crouching on the steep bank, regardless for once of his clothes, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy clung to a root with one hand, and grasped Tom Merry's collar with the other, as Redfern pushed him ashore.

With a strength that few would have deemed the swell of St. Jim's capable of D'Arcy dragged the heavy weight up the bank.

"Got him?" spluttered Redfern.
"Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy dragged Tom Merry up through the reeds and laid him upon the grass. The Shell fellow lay like a log.

But D'Arcy had no more attention for him for the moment; he turned back to help Lawrence and Redfern.

They were striving to get a grip on the bank, but the reeds came out in their hands as they grasped them, the soft mud tore away at their touch. And all the time the current was sucking and plucking at them.

"Give us a hand, Gussy!" Redfern gasped.

"Here you are, deah boys!"
Redfern grasped the hand that was stretched down to him.

"All right, I can climb now."

He sprawled up the bank, his feet in the water, his hands grasping at the roots of grass on the level above.

"Catch hold of my legs, Lawrence, and climb over me!" he gasped.

"Good egg!"
Lawrence obeyed. Redfern's clothes offered him a good grasp, and he climbed over his chum to the firm earth.

Then Redfern was dragged up, and he sank down beside Tom Merry, his senses swimming in utter exhaustion.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. Redfern and Lawrence could not move. But the swell of St. Jim's knelt beside Tom Merry.

"He's fainted," he said, "but—but I think he will be all wight. I wish help would come."

"It's coming!" muttered Lawrence. Lights were gleaming across the dark fields, voices could be heard calling from the distance.

Five minutes later Owen dashed up, breathless with desperate running. A crowd of St. Jim's fellows were behind him.

"Reddy safe?" panted Owen.
"Safe as houses, my son," said Redfern, sitting up in the grass. "Rather wet, but otherwise right as rain."

"Oh, good! And Tom Merry?"
"Here he is."

Manners and Lowther ran up with white faces. Blake and Kangaroo and Kildare of the Sixth were the next to arrive. Tom Merry was raised up in the arms of two seniors and carried off at once in the direction of St. Jim's. Figgins tore off to the village to fetch the local doctor.

Kildare looked rather grimly at the muddy Fourth Formers.

"You kids all right?" he asked.
"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I'm afraid we've ruined our clothes, but othahwise ewewythim' in the garden is lovely."

"Who fetched Tom Merry out?"
"Weddy."

"Give us your fist, kid," said the captain of St. Jim's cordially.

Redfern flushed with pleasure.
"Sure you can walk all right?" Kildare asked.

"Oh, I'm all serene!"

And Redfern tramped off with the rest of St. Jim's. The story was over the whole school like wildfire; and Redfern, when he came out of the Fourth Form dormitory after changing his clothes, met with an ovation. Everybody knew how he had risked his life to save Tom Merry, and they cheered him till the old school rang with the sound of it.

Redfern flushed.

"Oh, cheese it!" he exclaimed.

"What's the blessed row about?"

"Hurrah!"

"Chuck it, I say!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Oh rats! Where's Tom Merry?"

"In the Shell dorm."

Redfern escaped to the Shell dormitory to get away from the cheering. Tom Merry was in bed, sitting propped up with pillows, and looking very white. Dr. Short, of Rylcombe, was in the room, and Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, and Manners and Lowther. Redfern looked in rather shyly.

"All right?" he asked.
"Come in, my lad!" said Mr. Railton kindly. "We have heard of your bravery, Redfern. Tom Merry has told us all."

Redfern coloured uncomfortably.

"Oh, it wasn't much, sir!" he stammered.

"I think it was very much," said Mr. Railton gravely. "And Merry thinks so, too."



"I ask Tom Merry to play us—Lawrence, Owen, and myself—in the junior team against the Grammar School on Saturday," said Redfern. Dead silence followed Redfern's words. The juniors had not expected that Tom would be under an obligation to play the worst three cricketers in the school in the first match of the season!

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Tom Merry. Mr. Railton left the room with the doctor. Redfern approached the bed with a grin.

"Well, I'm jolly glad you're all right, old son!" he said. "It was a bit of a near thing for both of us."

"You're a jolly good chap, Reddy!" "Oh rats! Chaps are bound to be able to do something, even if they can't play cricket," said Redfern, with a chuckle.

"I'll never say a word about your cricket again, Reddy." "Rot!" said Redfern. "Say as many words as you like. I say, I'm ready for tea."

Tom Merry laughed. "You're not going to get off the subject like that," he said. "Look here, Reddy, you've saved my life!"

"Yes. And now I want my tea." "I've only got one more thing to say," said Tom Merry earnestly. "I shan't forget this; and if ever I can do anything for you, Reddy, you've only got to say so."

Redfern started, and his eyes twinkled.

"Anything?" he asked. "You mean that?"

"Honour bright!"

"I may hold you to your word some time."

"You'll find it's all right if you do." "Good!" said Redfern, holding out his hand. "It's a bargain. Shake on it." And they shook on it.

CHAPTER 10.

The Hero of the Hour!

"WEDDY, old man—" Redfern was stopped in the passage as he came down by Arthur Augustus' hand upon his shoulder. The hero of the hour turned a somewhat hostile look upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Chuck it!" he exclaimed. "You'll make me wish that I had left Tom

Merry where he was. I've had enough of it!"

"Weally, Wedfern—" "Chuck it, I say!"

"But I wasn't goin' to speak about the swim this time," said D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "It's about the feed!"

"Oh!" said Redfern.

"You see, I had awwanged a nice feed, and it's jolly late now, but that only makes us all the hungwier," explained D'Arcy. "You must be wathah peckish."

"I could eat a rocking-horse!" said Redfern.

"But we can't leave Tom Mewwy out of it," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "How is he now?"

"He seems all right, but the doctor won't let him get up."

"Pewwaps we might have the feed in the Shell dorm, then," said Arthur Augustus, struck by a bright idea.

"That would be wippin'!"

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Redfern.

"I'll ask Mr. Wailton."

D'Arcy presented himself at Mr. Railton's study. Dr. Short had gone, after assuring the Housemaster that Tom Merry was all right and needed only rest and wrapping up to guard against taking cold after his immersion.

"If you please, sir," said D'Arcy, "we want Tom Mewwy to come to a little feed."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I am afraid that that is not possible, D'Arcy," he said. "Dr. Short has directed that Merry is not to leave his bed again till to-morrow morning."

"Yaas, sir. Of course, I should always respect a medical man's ordahs," said Arthur Augustus. "But I suppose there would be no harm in havin' the feed in the Shell dorm, sir, so that Tom Mewwy would not be left out? He hasn't had his tea, sir, and he must be f'wightfully hungwy!"

"Well, certainly there would be no harm in that, D'Arcy, but you must be careful not to make Merry excited."

"I will be vevy careful to keep the chaps in ordah, sir."

The Housemaster smiled again.

"Very well, D'Arcy; I see no objection to it."

"Thank you vevy much, sir!"

And Arthur Augustus quitted the study, very pleased. The other fellows joined in the prospects with great gusto. Figgins & Co. and Redfern and his friends were already in Study No. 6, and the provisions had been brought in from the tuckshop.

"You fellows cawwy up the gwub and the cwockawy and things," said Arthur Augustus. "As for the cookin', Fatty Wynn can do that at the study fire here."

"Quite ready!" said Fatty Wynn.

"And the tea can be made here," remarked Blake. "Well borrow some teapots along the passage, and take them up full."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll go and tell Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy. And he made his way to the Shell dormitory.

The light was on there, and Manners and Lowther were sitting on either side of the bed, talking to their chum. Tom Merry was sitting against a heap of pillows, with the bedclothes carefully jammed round him, and there was a little colour in his face now.

"Hungwy, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"What-ho!" said Manners feelingly.

"I dare say Tommy could take something, too."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I dare say I could," he said.

"I've got Mr. Wailton's permish to bwing tea up here," said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "The fellows will be up here with it in a few minutes."

"Ripping idea!" said Lowther.

"Fatty Wynn's cooking some special hewwings for you, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "We are goin' to look atfah you, you know."

"Oh rats!" replied Tom Merry.

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ungratefully. "If you try to make a giddy invalid of me there will be ructions."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hurry up with the grub, old son; I'm famishing!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby came in with parcels, and Figgins and Kerr followed them, laden with crockery. Kangaroo had knives, forks, and spoons in both hands. Lawrence and Owen had chairs under either arm. Reilly and Bernard Glyn followed with more chairs.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Quite a little party," he remarked.

"Reddy's helping Fatty Wynn," Lawrence explained. "How are you feeling, Merry, old man?"

"Hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

More chairs were found, and a table was dragged in and set beside Tom Merry's bed, and crockery was dragged out and bags and parcels opened. Certainly Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been expending his fiver in a princely manner.

Numerous as the guests were, there was likely to be much more than enough for all. Tom Merry did not look much like an invalid as he eyed the good things.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed.

There was a pleasant smell of herrings as Redfern and Fatty Wynn came in carrying a fresh burden on trays.

"Here you are!" Redfern exclaimed cheerfully. "Fatty Wynn has cooked them to a turn."

"Well, I think they're rather nicely done," said Fatty Wynn complacently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here you are, Tommy!"

A tray was set upon Tom Merry's bed, resting upon his knees, and he began. No one would have imagined that he had lately been in peril of his life to see the way he disposed of the herrings. Certainly they were very nice herrings, and very well cooked. Fatty Wynn was as great a chef as he was a bowler or a goalkeeper.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Jolly good!" said Jack Blake.

"What do you say, Figgy?"

"Prime!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Weddy is the guest of honah," went on Arthur Augustus. "I pwopose that we fill our glasses—I mean our teacups—and dwink to the hewo of the hour."

"Hear, hear!"

Redfern coloured.

"Oh, cheese it!" he exclaimed. "I told you that I'm fed-up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah for Reddy!"

And the toast was drunk in hot tea.

"Now leave it alone, for goodness' sake!" said Redfern.

"Modesty, thy name is Redfern!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwopose that some sort of a testimonial is pwesented to Weddy, in recognition of his hewoic conduct."

"Rot!" said Redfern.

"I second the motion!" said Figgins. "We're proud to have him in the New House! I second the motion with pleasure!"

"Hear, hear!" roared the juniors.

A gleam of fun came into Redfern's eyes.

He rose to his feet.

"Hear, hear!"

"Speech!"

"Gentlemen, I have but a few words
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to say. Tom Merry has sworn a solemn swear to do anything that I may ever ask him, no matter what it is, because I had the honour of fishing him out of the Rhyl."

"I mean it," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Am I to understand that all you fellows back him up, and will stand by him in what he says?" asked Redfern.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Very well, then," said Redfern composedly. "I've got something to ask, and I hold Tom Merry to his word, and you fellows to your word!"

"Go it!"

"Out with it, Reddy!"

"Good! I ask Tom Merry to play us—Lawrence, Owen, and myself, in the junior team against the Grammar School on Saturday."

CHAPTER 11.

Honour Bound!

DEAD silence followed Redfern's speech.

The juniors had not known what to expect when he began to speak; but certainly they had not expected that.

They looked at one another and did not speak.

Even Fatty Wynn ceased his attentions to the cold beef, and paused, with his fork half-way to his mouth.

Redfern looked round upon the silent, startled party.

A peculiar smile curved his lips.

"You seem to have gone dumb all of a sudden!" he remarked casually. "I didn't hear anybody say 'Hear, hear!'"

"Hear, hear!" said Lawrence and Owen.

But nobody else said it.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to be deprived of the power of speech.

Redfern glanced at the hero of the Shell. Tom Merry's face was dark and troubled. He had given his word, and certainly he would keep it. There could be no question about that. But he had never expected to be held to it in this way. It was hardly playing the game to transfer a private obligation into cricket matters. Tom Merry's duty as a cricket captain of the Lower School was a different matter from Tom Merry's business merely as Tom Merry of the Shell. Redfern ought to have known that. But Tom Merry's word was given, and Tom Merry's word was his bond.

"Well?" said Redfern. "Will anybody pass me the jam?"

Monty Lowther passed the jam without a word.

"May I trouble you for the toast, Blake?"

Blake passed the toast.

Still there was dead silence.

"I didn't know you fellows were Quakers," Redfern remarked. "I thought this was a dorm feed, not a Quaker meeting. My mistake!"

"Anyone got a pain?" asked Lawrence.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy broke the painful silence at last.

He broke it with that single remark. He seemed incapable of saying any more.

Redfern fixed his eyes on Tom Merry. "You heard what I said, Tom Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Got anything to say?"

"I shall keep my word."

"Good!"

"I shall play you fellows on Saturday, if you ask it. But—but I wish you had asked anything else, Redfern."

"I don't want anything else," Redfern explained, with an air of simplicity. "Ahem!"

"We want to play," said Redfern. "I rather think that we shall surprise you, you know, when you come to see us play."

"It will surprise the Grammarians!" groaned Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It means marking off the first match of the season as lost," said Kangaroo. "Look here, Reddy, do you call this playing the game?"

"Certainly!"

"You oughtn't to ask anything in cricket matters," Blake explained. "It isn't cricket, you know."

"If you don't want to keep your word—"

"Weally, Weddy—"

"I release Tom Merry from his promise, if he asks me," said Redfern.

Tom Merry flushed.

"I don't!" he said sharply.

"Then you'll keep your word?"

"I said so."

"Good! We play against the Grammarians on Saturday?"

"Yes."

"Oh, it's too rotten!" exclaimed Herries. "You might as well play my bulldog Towser—better, in fact! The Grammar School cads will laugh at us."

"They'll yell!" said Kangaroo dolorously.

"They'll shriek!"

"I don't know," said Redfern. "Of course, you must understand that we shouldn't want to play for St. Jim's if we weren't sure that we should do the side credit."

"Credit!" snorted Herries. "If you play, it simply means that we play three wickets short, and three men short on the field."

"Of course, we shall do our best."

"A pretty best, I expect."

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

"You seem to be getting ratty about something," sighed Redfern, "and only ten minutes ago I was the hero of the hour. Things change, don't they?"

"You—you're still the hero of the hour, Reddy," said Tom Merry heavily.

"You—you don't seem to understand cricket matters, and I suppose it's no good blaming you. You haven't had a chance to play cricket as we have."

"Yaas, wathah! How could we expect the poor chaps to compwehend?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be silly to be angwy with them; they simply don't know what they're doing."

"That's it," said Blake glumly. "But we know; and it's rotten."

"Yaas, wathah! It's wotten enough, deah boy."

Redfern grinned.

"Of course we don't know anything about the subject at all," he agreed. "You fellows made up your minds about that, without seeing us play. It would be disrespectful of a new chap like me to say that you might be mistaken."

"Oh, don't be funny," said Blake crossly. "Look here, Redfern, this looks to be very much like revenge on your part, and revenge is no class."

"Well, we're no class," said Redfern blandly. "What could you expect of three fellows brought up not to play cricket. We don't know any more about being class than we do of playing cricket, do we, you chaps?"

"Not a bit!" said Lawrence.

"It's not to be expected," said Owen.

"So you see, that's where it is," said Redfern. "We want to play in the match on Saturday; we want to win for St. Jim's, and we'll undertake to do our best."

"Your best!" snorted Digby. "Chap can't do more than his best," said Redfern philosophically. "That's what we're going to do. If we lose the match—"

"If!" growled Blake. "There's no 'if' about it!"

"Then we'll grin and bear it. I can answer for it that Owen and Lawrence and myself will bear it quite cheerfully."

"Most certainly!" said Owen and Lawrence.

"Oh, rats!" "They don't understand," said Tom Merry sadly. "They don't see any more in a game of cricket than in a game of marbles. It can't be helped."

"Well, it's rotten." "I've given my word, and you fellows have all promised to back me up. We can't get out of it now."

"Hang it!" "Rotten!" "It's not playing the game!" "Yah!"

Redfern rose to his feet again, and Lawrence and Owen followed his example.

"Thanks for the tea!" he said. "I think we'll be getting along, as we have our prep to do. You fellows would be relieved a bit if we went, I think. You are feeling inclined to say things, and it's rotten that you should have to hold them out of politeness. Good-bye, my sons!"

And the New Firm walked out of the dormitory, and Redfern closed the door. They walked down the stairs with grave and sedate demeanour. No one would have guessed from their demeanour that they were playing off one of the biggest rags ever played at St. Jim's. Not till they were in their study in the New House did their faces relax.

Then they chuckled. "What price that?" asked Redfern. "Oh, gorgeous!" gasped Lawrence and Owen breathlessly.

"I had an idea of ragging 'em into it," said Redfern reflectively. "I was going to get Tom Merry & Co. into a fix, and make 'em promise to play us as a condition for letting 'em out. I could have done it."

"Of course you could, Reddy!" said his admiring followers, readily enough.

"My hat! I believe you could do anything you jolly well chose!" added Owen.

Redfern nodded complacently.

"Well, at all events, I can rag those cheeky bounders," he remarked. "I'm sorry to be putting 'em through it like this, but it's their own fault. They've got to go through it. When they find that we can play cricket after all, they will be consoled."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It would serve them right if we mucked up the game, and played as they expect us to play," said Redfern. "But we won't do that! We will win the match for them—hear coals of fire on their heads!"

Redfern's face broke into a smile. "Good egg!" agreed his chums. "But I wish I could hear what they are saying at this moment!" he exclaimed.

And the three juniors roared.

Tom Merry & Co. were saying things. Perhaps Redfern would not have been gratified, after all, if he had heard them, for the juniors were very angry.

JUST MY FUN



Monty Lowther Calling

Hallo, everybody! "How would you make a bus go faster?" asks a reader. Just signal it to stop. History note: I understand that the fellow who "cheeked" the Iron Duke got a "steely" reply! It's 23,000 miles round the earth at the equator. All right—walk it yourself! As Joe Frayne wrote: "Columbus was looking in the North-West passage when a door opened, and there was America." And again: "Dick Turpin rode from London to New York in a day." How's that for speed? You know "Babe" Ruth was a great baseball player, but he has given it up. Too "big" for "base bawling" now! "Well, and how do you like my new house?" said Smifkins. "Queer name you've given it—Thistle-dome," remarked his friend. "That's not the way

Tom Merry was sitting very silent. He had even left his herrings unfinished. Fatty Wynn was at work again upon the spread; but the other fellows seemed to have lost their appetites. True, they had nearly finished their tea when Redfern had dropped his thunderbolt upon the meeting.

"It's not playing the game!" said Blake resolutely. "It's rotten! It's not what I should have expected of Redfern. He's no right to place us in an awful fix like this."

"I must say that I am wathah disappointed in Wedfern," D'Arcy remarked. "But I suppose he doesn't undahstand."

"That's it!" said Herries bitterly. "How is the boulder to understand how we look at cricket? It's the same as a game of hopscotch to him."

"Yaas, wathah!" "He doesn't care twopence if the Grammarians lick us in the first match of the season," said Kerr. "He doesn't understand. That's the only possible excuse for him. He doesn't understand how serious the matter is."

"It's his bringing up, of course," said Fatty Wynn, looking up from his tenth tart. "What should the poor chap know about cricket?"

"Quite twue!" "But it's rough on us!" "Howwibly wuff, deah boys!" "I—I suppose there's no getting out of it?" said Kerr hesitatingly.

Tom Merry frowned. "We've promised," he said. "I gave my word, and all you fellows said that you would back it up, whatever it was."

"But if we had known that he would ask an outrageous thing like this—" "We didn't," said Kangaroo. "Faith, and that makes no difference," said Reilly, with a shake of the head. "A fellow must keep his word entirely, even if he didn't foresee how it would work out."

"Yaas, wathah! It would be uttahly impos to bweak faith with Weddy." "Confound him!" said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah! Confound the twoublesome ass as much as you like, but there can't be any question about playing him if he sticks to it."

to pronounce it. It's 'This'll do me!' explained Smifkins. A ship in Norway is being used as a workhouse. A "tramp" steamer! "Waiter, there's a fly in my wine!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "Well, it's supposed to have body in it, sir!" remonstrated the waiter. "Not every criminal is caught, we read. No "arrest" for some of the wicked, anyway! As the all-in wrestler's manager said to him between rounds: "Of course he's killing you. He's got to make a living!" Then there was the chap who rang up the exchange to ask why his phone had been removed. Got it? He hadn't! Billiards demands the most expert touch of any sport, says an expert. Well, billiards and trying to borrow half-a-crown! You heard of the gangster whose room walls were riddled with shots? He'd been swatting a few flies. A local motorist left his car without making his will. He left it at eighty miles an hour. Like the business man, who, feeling run-down, applied for a "winding-up" order. Must tell you this: "Five pounds!" exclaimed the Rylcombe sexton. "Why, the squire ought to give us at least fifty pounds!" "Ah," sighed the vicar, "I expect he forgot the 'ought'!" Oh, Stop Press: Electrically mixed mineral waters are available at Dame Taggles. "Watts" yours?

Tom Merry's face brightened up a little.

"He might be persuaded out of it," he remarked. "I can't very well tackle him on the subject, seeing the obligation that I'm under to him. You New House chaps might have a jaw to him when you go back."

"We will!" said Figgins. "Pewwaps it had bettah be left to me," suggested D'Arcy thoughtfully. "In a case of this kind, what is weally wequiahed is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Oh, rats!" "Weally, Kerr—"

"I don't think they'll be talked out of it," said Kerr. "Redfern is as obstinate as a mule. Look here, suppose we postponed the match with the Grammarians, or cut it altogether?"

"I'm afraid that would be breaking faith with Reddy."

"Confound him!" "He's an ass!" said Monty Lowther.

"There's no doubt about that. He's every possible kind of an ass, but we can't wriggle out of playing him."

"Impos, deah boys." And the little party in the Shell dormitory broke up in a very discontented mood.

CHAPTER 12.

The Day of the Match!

REDFERN & CO. kindly consented to practise.

As they were to play in the Grammar School match on Saturday, Tom Merry, now fully recovered from the effects of his immersion in the Rhyl, made the best of a bad job, and took them in hand.

He had a faint hope that by coaching and constant practice they might learn at least not to get in the way, and make it no worse than playing three men short.

Redfern & Co. certainly improved a little.

When Redfern bowled on Friday after school he succeeded in sending the ball several times somewhere near the wicket, and fellows could look on without danger of being brained. And that,

as Jack Blake said, was an improvement.

But Tom Merry was content that they should leave bowling practice alone. He was bound to put them in to bat in the match, and they would have to field somewhere, but he would never give them a chance of bowling. Fatty Wynn, Blake and Monty Lowther would do all the bowling that was necessary.

But at batting the New Firm seemed hopeless.

Sometimes they stopped a ball when it was bowled at them, but more often they did not. And if they did, it was in the clumsiest possible way. Then they would take runs when there was not the slightest chance of a run coming off. In a word, three more utterly hopeless duffers had never been discovered on a cricket field before, and the general verdict was that they ought to be kicked off it, and never allowed within the ropes again.

But they were to play on Saturday! Sometimes it seemed like a bad dream to Tom Merry when he thought of it. But there the thing was, and it could not be altered.

Perhaps Redfern might have taken pity on the cricketers and relieved their minds by playing a little better at practice, but for the way the juniors looked at the matter. For they were not surprised at what they saw. They concluded in the most natural way in the world that Redfern & Co. were playing as might be expected of chaps brought up at a County Council school.

And that cool assumption on the part of Tom Merry & Co. kept Redfern's back up, as he expressed it to his chums, and he did not relent.

The St. Jim's fellows would find out their mistake on the playing field when they met the Grammarians, and that would be soon enough. The dismay they were now suffering from was a just punishment for their cheek.

And Tom Merry & Co. were indeed dismayed.

They heard accounts of the progress of the Grammar School eleven, and they heard that Gordon Gay & Co. were in wonderful form.

Gay himself, especially, was shining as a batsman, and Harry Wootton was famous for a certain dangerous ball he had been cultivating, and which he intended to put to a test upon the unfortunate Saints.

"And we've got to leave three good men out, and put in three awful rotters," groaned Tom Merry.

"It's simply awful!" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sadly. "I've always stood up for Weddy like anythin', but I must admit that he makes me tired now. I wegard him as an ass!"

"He's more than an ass!" growled Blake. "He's a dangerous lunatic!"

"If only he'd get crooked before the match!" sighed Lowther. "Somebody else would have to be played then. But he keeps in a most disgusting state of good health."

"Yaas; it's wotten!"

"We've simply got to grin and bear it," said Tom Merry. "I shall put them in last, and count as if we were only playing eight men. We shall have to make eight wickets do duty for eleven, that's all."

"Oh, it's beastly!"

But grumbling was useless, and persuasion had failed, and black looks only provoked genial smiles in return from the culprits. Tom Merry & Co. had to bear it, even if they could not grin.

On Saturday morning the cricketers were by no means in the merry mood

with which they had expected to greet the morning of the first match of the season.

Tom Merry was very thoughtful during morning lessons. When the Forms came out after lessons he met Redfern in the passage, and nodded to him in a friendly way. Perhaps he had a lingering hope that Redfern would relent at the last moment, and resign his place in the junior eleven.

After dinner the juniors got into their flannels, and Redfern & Co. followed the example of the rest. The New Firm certainly looked very fit and well in flannels, as the St. Jim's fellows had to admit. But it was all show, of course—or so they concluded. The fellows could look like cricketers, but they couldn't play cricket!

"Pewwaps if I wemonstwate with them, the uttah boundahs might change their minds at the last moment!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, while the cricketers were awaiting the arrival of the Grammar School team.

Jack Blake grunted.

"Might as well talk to a set of mules!" he said.

"I will twy!" said D'Arcy.

"No good if you do!"

But Arthur Augustus strolled over to the three, who were sunning themselves outside the pavilion. They looked at him.

"I'm goin' to say a last word to you fellows," said D'Arcy seriously.

Redfern shook his head.

"Impossible!" he declared.

"Eh? What do you mean by imposs, deah boys?"

"You couldn't possibly say a last word!" Redfern explained. "Some fellows leave off talking at times; but you're like the little brook—you go on for ever!"

Arthur Augustus turned red, as he heard a chuckle behind him. He turned round, and swept the group of cricketers with an icy glance.

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah in Wedfern's idiotic wemark, deah boys!" he said.

"Your own idiotic remarks are funny enough, though!" Redfern suggested.

"Weally, Wedfern—"

"Hallo! Here's the motor-coach!" called out Gore of the Shell.

"I was goin' to say, Weddy—"

"Rats, old son! We know what you are going to say, and you can save your breath!" said Redfern kindly. "You will need all your breath to field the leather when I'm batting!"

"Field when you're batting!" shrieked D'Arcy. "We're on the same side, you awful ass!"

"Well, what about it?" demanded Redfern.

D'Arcy looked at him weakly.

"It's—it's no good talking to you!" he gasped.

"Well, I told you that already, haven't I?"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave it up.

Gordon Gay & Co. had arrived, and



A roaring crowd met the two victorious batsmen as they came off shoulder-high from the field. Redfern, whose crick-

et the St. Jim's fellows greeted them warmly enough. The Grammarians were looking very fit. Redfern, Owen and Lawrence kept carefully in the background. They did not want to attract the eye of Gordon Gay & Co., and evoke any injudicious remark.

"We're going to beat you, Tommy, old son!" said Gordon Gay, as he shook hands with the junior captain of St. Jim's.

"I shouldn't wonder if you do," said Tom Merry.

Gay stared at him.

"Well, that doesn't sound like your usual opinion of yourselves, I must say," he replied. "Is there anything wrong with your team?"

"Only we're playing three rank duffers in it, owing to an idiotic promise I made!" said Tom Merry glumly.

"Who are the duffers?"

"They're in the pavilion—three new kids in the New House—Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen!"

Gordon Gay started.

"Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen?"

"Yes."

"You're playing them?"

"Yes!" grunted Tom Merry.

"And they're duffers, are they?"

"Unspeakeable duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay.

"What are you cackling at, Gay?"

"Oh, never mind!" said the Grammar School captain, still grinning. "Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, let us toss for innings! Ha, ha, ha!"



ft. The juniors rushed round Redfern, and he was carried
et was the joke of the school, had saved St. Jim's!

And they tossed for innings, with the cause of gay merriment still unexplained. Tom Merry won the toss, and elected to bat first, and he went in to open the innings with Jack Blake, and Gordon Gay placed his men to field.

CHAPTER 13.

Amazing!

REDFERN looked on from the pavilion, with a slight frown upon his face. He had played a great deal of cricket in his time, and in the teams he had played in he had not been accustomed to being last man in.

But it was inevitable in the present case; the rag had been only too successful in making Tom Merry believe that he was a hopeless duffer who ought not to have been played at all. Tom Merry intended to put off the inevitable loss of three wickets to a score of duck's eggs till the last possible moment. Redfern chafed a little as he watched the innings open, but it could not be helped, and he had to stand and watch.

It was all the harder, because fortune was going against St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. had had little practice at the summer game as yet, and there was no doubt that they were not in their best form. Perhaps the thought of the three dead wickets to come had had a bad effect on them, too. They could see that Gordon Gay & Co. were in fine fettle, and they felt that they

were playing eight men against eleven. Perhaps that had something to do with their failure, or perhaps it was because they were at the start of the season, and had not found their feet yet. Whatever the reason, certainly Tom Merry & Co. did not make a brilliant show in that innings.

Gordon Gay, in the second over, took Tom Merry's wicket, when the hero of the Shell had but 4 runs to his credit.

Tom Merry was a sportsman, and could take a hard knock as well as most fellows, but even his jaw dropped a little when his wicket went down.

Monty Lowther went in to take his place, giving him a rather glum look in passing.

The Grammarian fieldsmen grinned at one another. They had got rid of the most dangerous batsman on the St. Jim's side at a low figure. Gordon Gay & Co. were already anticipating a sweeping victory to start the cricket season.

Jack Blake piled up 20 before he was caught out by Wootton major, but the fall of his wicket was immediately followed by that of Lowther. Figgins and Kerr were at the wickets now, and Tom Merry looked on hopefully, for Figgins was a mighty hitter.

He almost groaned as Figgins, trying for a run too many, in his eagerness to make up lost ground, was stumped by the wicket-keeper.

"Four down for 29!"

"All up!" muttered Tom Merry to D'Arcy, who was drawing on his batting gloves to go in next. "It's a regular rot!"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Not all up yet, deah boy!" he said cheerfully. "I'm goin' in, you know."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Keep your eye on Gordon Gay, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah think I shall make the fur fly, you know!"

And Arthur Augustus went in to take the wicket that Figgins had vacated. He took up his stand there in his usual graceful attitude. There was a cheerful confidence in his face as he confronted the bowler. Perhaps he was a little too confident. At all events, his wicket went down to the first ball.

Tom Merry gave a grunt.

"Five down out of eight!" he muttered. "It's all over bar shouting—and the Grammar School bounders will do all the shouting this time!"

"Perhaps not," said a quiet voice at his elbow.

Tom Merry looked round, and saw Redfern.

"Oh rats!" he said irritably. "You fellows have mucked it up!"

Redfern flushed a little.

"Why, how's that?" he asked.

"It's got on the nerves of the other fellows, your playing at all," said Tom Merry, rather bitterly, "and we're practically playing only eight men! You

three are no good! When three more wickets go down, we are done!"

"Not quite!"

"Perhaps these chaps will pull the game out of the fire!" Monty Lowther suggested sarcastically.

"Perhaps!" said Redfern, with a nod.

"Oh rats!"

"A game isn't lost till it's won, you know!" remarked Lawrence.

"This game jolly well looks lost!" said Figgins. "It's like a rot setting in; when wickets go at that rate, they don't stop in a hurry. There goes Kerr's!"

Kerr was out. The score stood at 34, with six wickets down. It was nothing like the scoring that the St. Jim's juniors had been accustomed to. The Saints who clustered round the ropes were very silent; there was not much to cheer. But the crowd of Grammarians who had walked over to see the match were not silent.

They cheered, and the field rang with their cheering. The Saints could not blame them; Gordon Gay & Co. were doing excellently.

Fatty Wynn and Kangaroo were at the wickets now. The Cornstalk did some fine batting, Fatty Wynn sturdily stonewalling and leaving the hitting to the Shell fellow. The runs piled up a little; but when 50 had been passed, Kangaroo was cleaned bowled by Frank Monk.

Tom Merry turned to Redfern & Co. with a grim smile.

"Man in!" he said.

"Which man?" asked Redfern.

"I don't care twopence! I'm only sending you in as a matter of form."

Redfern turned pink.

"Shall I go in?" he said.

"If you like."

"Very well."

Redfern picked up his bat and walked out to the wicket, passing Kangaroo on his way back to the pavilion. The Cornstalk gave him a glum look.

"Don't make them laugh more than you can help," he said, as he passed Redfern.

Redfern grinned.

"I'll try not to," he said.

He took up his position at the wicket. The fellows were all watching him. Frank Monk, the second best bowler of the Grammarian team, was still bowling, and everybody expected to see Redfern's wicket fall to the first ball. Yet those who felt most certain of that could not help admitting that, as far as looks went, he shaped very well at the wicket. He made a fine figure of a young cricketer as he stood there—alert, ready, watchful—his hands steady and strong upon the cane handle of the bat.

Frank Monk knew more of Redfern's real form than the Saints did, and he sent down his best ball. Redfern seemed to flick at it carelessly, and the Saints looked for the wicket to fall. But it did not. The ball was whizzing away, far from the reach of the fieldsmen, and Fatty Wynn, at the other end, was starting to run, when Redfern called to him coolly:

"Stand where you are, Fatty; it's a boundary."

And a boundary it was!

"Four to the good!"

The St. Jim's fellows gasped.

"Who said the age of miracles was past?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

It was all he could say. He was too astonished for more. Was this the duffer at whose cricket the Third Form fags had howled with laughter? Tom

Merry felt as if his head was turning round.

"It's a fluke, of course!" said Kerr. Tom Merry nodded, but he felt that that did not explain it. There was something more in it than that, and he watched eagerly for more.

Monk sent down the last ball of the over, and Redfern cut it away through the slips; 2 runs—easily taken.

The field crossed over, and Fatty Wynn had the bowling. Alas for Fatty Wynn! He was a splendid bowler, and he could stonewall with great success, but he was not up to the weight of the bowling that was turned upon him now. The first ball from Gordon Gay sent his balls flying.

"Man in!" said Tom Merry. Lawrence went in to join Redfern at the wickets.

A few minutes before and all the St. Jim's fellows would have considered the innings practically at an end at this juncture. But now a strange hope was rising within them. Redfern was not the hopeless duffer they had imagined. It was not a case of flukes; in some mysterious way the fellow at whose cricket the whole school had laughed had developed in a few minutes into a youthful edition of Wally Hammond, of Gloucestershire.

"My hat!" Jack Blake muttered. "I can't understand it! I don't see it at all! But—but the game isn't over yet!"

"Wathah not!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wathah not! It's a most amazin' mystewy, but the fwab-jous ass can bat!"

He could! Frabjous ass or not, he could certainly bat! A single run by Lawrence gave Redfern the bowling again, and he proceeded to make hay of it. Three 2's and a boundary. And the St. Jim's fellows gaped.

"Bravo, Reddy!" shouted Owen.

And the cry was taken up.

"Hurrah, Redfern!"

"Get it!"

"Pile it on!"

Redfern grinned. He felt himself in splendid form. He knew that he was master of the bowling. Barring accidents, he would keep his wicket as long as he liked. He faced the bowling with cool confidence, but not a whit too much confidence.

The eyes of all the Lower School of St. Jim's were upon him, watching with wonder.

CHAPTER 14.

The Century Maker!

THE next half-dozen overs were happenings to be long remembered at St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay, Monk, and Wootton major exhausted their bowling upon Redfern's wicket, and they exhausted it in vain.

And the runs piled up.

Lawrence was backing up his leader well, and he had taken 15 to his own credit, when Gordon Gay caught him out.

"Last man in!"

Owen walked out to the wickets.

"Last man in!" murmured Blake. "Lawrence, you boulder, what does it mean? What do you mean by it? How did you learn to bat like that?"

Lawrence looked astonished.

"Bat!" he repeated. "I can't bat!"

"But you've been batting splendidly!" shouted Figgins. "You and Reddy!"

Lawrence shook his head.

"Quite a mistake," he said blandly.

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"We can't bat. We were brought up at a County Council school, you know, and cricket is never played well outside a Public school."

"Weally, Lawrence, that is quite cowwect, but—"

"But it doesn't square with the facts," said Figgins.

"Wathah not!"

"How did you do it, Lawrence?"

Lawrence shrugged his shoulders.

"Must have been a complete set of flukes," he said.

"Oh, look at Reddy!" roared Figgins.

Redfern had the bowling again, and he was giving the Grammarians enough leather-hunting to last them for weeks. Panting fieldsmen toiled after the elusive ball, and always got it in too late.

Gordon Gay prided himself upon the fielding of his team, but their fielding was not quite up to the mark this time. It was good, but the batting and the run-getting were better.

"My only hat! He's a giddy Hammond!" said Fatty Wynn. "Look at that swipe! That's a boundary!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They can't touch him!" said Tom Merry gleefully. "My hat! We've been deceived in that young boulder!"

"Hurrah, Reddy!"

"Well hit!"

"Bravo!"

Redfern grinned serenely at the wicket. He was getting comfortably set now, and he knew that he could do what he liked with the bowling. So long as Owen backed him up he was safe to pile up runs. And Owen was a cautious player. He loyally stonewalled for Reddy's benefit, and left most of the run-getting to his chief. And he had his reward in seeing the score go up by leaps and bounds.

The St. Jim's fellows raised a cheer when the score passed the level 100, but the innings was by no means finished yet. Redfern was batting again as if he had only just started, and almost before the juniors knew what was happening the board showed 150.

Gordon Gay made a grimace to Frank Monk as the field changed over again.

"Can't touch that young boulder!" he said. "Stick to the other chap—though he seems as firmly set as a giddy rock."

"I'll have him out, or bust!" said Monk.

Gay grinned ruefully.

"Well, do your best!" he said.

Frank Monk did his best. But Owen was not to be drawn. Not the most tempting ball could draw him into recklessness. He never gave the fieldsmen a chance.

Owen was sturdily and stolidly guarding his wicket so that the great bat could go on batting, for the life of the innings depended upon the last man in. And when Owen stole a run it was sure to be an odd run at the beginning of an over, so as to give Redfern the batting. And then Redfern would take even numbers, sometimes losing a good chance of a single so as to keep it.

They played into one another's hands like clockwork, and the St. Jim's juniors looked on and stared and were astonished. It was like a dream to them—but a very pleasant dream.

There was a sudden roar from the crowd. Redfern had topped his century—a century all on his own! A hundred runs to the duffer whose cricket had been a joke in the school! What did it mean?

And Redfern was still batting away as fresh as paint. Nearly two hundred runs to the credit of St. Jim's, and more than a hundred of them belonging to Redfern? And there he was at the wicket, cool, smiling, serene!

And the bowlers and the fieldsmen were looking warm—very warm and red—and some of them a little exasperated. They had not expected, as Gay remarked, to dig up a county batsman in a junior school match.

Jack Blake rushed up to Lawrence as he stood looking on and grinning, and grasped him by the shoulder and shook him.

Lawrence chuckled.

"What does it mean?" yelled Blake. "Explain it, you ass! Is Reddy mesmerised, or what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've been taking us in, you boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass severely upon Lawrence. "I couldn't bat like that myself!"

"Go hon!" grinned Lawrence.

"Reddy's going to keep it up all the giddy afternoon, unless you stop him, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "He's set for the day."

"He could keep it up for a giddy three days' match, if he liked!" said Lawrence. "You'll have to declare, of course!"

"Declare!"

Tom Merry simply gasped.

Until Redfern went to the wickets he had looked upon that innings as the rottenest in his experience. And as it was a single innings match, there would have been nothing for St. Jim's to do but to try to keep down the Grammar School score by hard bowling and fielding.

Even then Tom Merry had had no hope of winning the match. But a change had come over the spirit of his dream. Redfern's amazing batting had changed everything. For the score had gone up to an undreamt-of figure, and if the Grammarians were to have a chance of batting at all, it would be necessary for Tom Merry to declare the St. Jim's innings at an end.

And so Tom Merry declared. St. Jim's finished their innings for a total of 230 runs, Redfern and Owen not out. And glad enough were the Grammarians to rest their weary legs, and strive to get their wind back.

A roaring crowd met the two victorious batsmen as they came off. Redfern was flushed with exertion, and his eyes were twinkling.

The juniors rushed round him, and he was carried shoulder-high from the pitch.

"You boulder!" exclaimed Tom Merry, when Redfern was put down at the pavilion. "You horrid boulder!"

"Not satisfied?" asked Redfern.

"Satisfied!" roared Tom Merry. "Why, you've batted like Kildare of the Sixth! You've won the match! But what do you mean by it? You told us you couldn't play cricket!"

"That I jolly well didn't!" said Redfern promptly. "I told you I could play cricket, but you thought I couldn't, without seeing what I could do."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lawrence and Owen.

"Then," said Tom Merry, with a deep breath, but beginning to laugh—"then it was a rag!"

(Continued on page 23.)



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! You've heard of iron-nerved people, of course, but did you know that you are made of iron, too? At least, you're partly made of it. Some scientist Johnny has just finished calculating how much of the metal there is in our bodies, and he reckons that if all the people in the world pooled their share, there would be a pile of 5,000 tons—enough to build the Eiffel Tower, in Paris. Of course, the iron isn't floating about inside in little nobby lumps of metal; it's dissolved in the blood, and therefore quite invisible.

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

Talking about our bodies reminds me of another scientist's investigations. He carefully calculated all the different salts and so on that our flesh and blood and bones are composed of, and then worked out the value in pounds, shillings, and pence. It's not a very flattering figure—a few bob and some odd coppers, plus a bit extra if you are a girl with long hair that could be sold for wig-making. The bulk of us consists of water and carbon—and carbon is the same as soot. Still, if it's any consolation to you, diamonds are only a certain form of pure carbon.

WHAT CAR WAS THAT?

Out with some friends the other day, we thought up a new game—trying to identify cars from their back views only. Now, anyone can tell the make of a car by getting a good look at the radiator and name-badge, but it's tricky when you have only the back to look at. You will discover, however, that most makes have distinguishing points even when seen from the rear. Daimlers, for instance, have petrol tanks covered with rods set close together; Standards have a little trade mark painted on one of the mudguards; M. G.'s have squared-off bodies that are quite unmistakable. Try this little pastime next time you are out for a walk. It's good fun, believe me!

AVALANCHE.

A friend of mine has just returned from a mountaineering trip, and he told me of a most amazing experience he had on a snow-covered mountain peak. He and his party were making a difficult ascent, when suddenly one of them spotted a mountain ram leading a flock

of wild sheep across a snowy slope, and as the animals' feet cut through the snow it started to slip.

In a few seconds so much snow had slipped that an avalanche was starting—and if the sheep continued on their way, it was obvious that the avalanche would be extended till it reached right on top of the climbing party! Unable to do anything to save themselves, the climbers watched petrified, until one of them, with a flash of inspiration, pulled out a revolver and shot the old ram leading the flock. The ram fell in its tracks, and, rolling over, sent still more snow sliding down. But the rest of the sheep, thoroughly scared, turned and ran back the way they had come, and the climbers were saved. But what an escape!

JUBILEE JOY.

This year, as you all know, is the King's Silver Jubilee—the twenty-fifth year of his reign. My young nephew, hearing that he is to have a special day's holiday from school to celebrate the occasion, said: "What a jolly good idea! Why didn't they think of holding a Jubilee before?"

"JUBILEE DAY AT ST. JIM'S!"

Naturally the juniors of St. Jim's are also having a day's holiday, and in next week's special Jubilee yarn a record celebration is planned by Tom Merry & Co. At the same time, they hit on a ripping wheeze for making the Grammarians, their ancient rivals, sing small, and, in consequence, they crown a hectic Jubilee Day with a grand triumph. Look out for this sparkling long story of rollicking fun, schoolboy rivalry, and Jubilee excitement and celebration.

Together with "IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH!"—Frank Richards' next wonderful Wild West school yarn, another full-of-thrills instalment of our serial, "The Secret World," and our other popular features, next Wednesday's magnificent Jubilee number is complete. Give all your pals the tip—and don't forget to order early. Cheerio!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON

4-5-35



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.

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Neville Halse, 4, Savings Bank Building, Bondi, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants a pen pal interested in swimming, football, cricket.

Kenneth Smith, 10, Francis Street, Heckmondwike, Yorks, wants a correspondent in Mexico; age 12-14.

Terence Casey, 6, Riverside Mansions, Shadwell, London, E.1, wants to hear from stamp collectors who would join the Universe Stamp Club.

Miss Helen Waddell, 12, Balaclava Street, St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, wants girl correspondents; age 15-16.

Jack Brown, 73, Elm Grove Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants correspondents; age 14-16; sports, stamps.

Peter Atkinson, The Laurels, Weight Road, Chelmsford, Essex, wants a correspondent in New York; broadcasting, dance music, bands; age 14-16.

Raymond H. Williams, EA/A, B2 Class, Mess 21, Figgard Block, Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham, Kent, wants correspondents in British Empire, France, and Spain; age 15-18; aviation, films.

Seymour Miller, 871, Stuart Avenue Outremont, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wants correspondents; stamps, newspaper clippings.

G. Butler, 21, Quinn Buildings, London, N., wants pen pals; especially New York.

Andrew Illingworth, 7238, Outremont Avenue, Park Extension, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wants correspondents; stamps, photos, etc.

Robert Walsh, 2, Portland Place, Bullfields, Snodland, Kent, wants correspondents in Australia, South Africa, America; age 9-11; football, cricket, boxing.

T. Luther, Erin-Go-Bragh, 239, Ardleigh Green Road, Hornchurch, Essex, wants a correspondent in Africa, Canada, Ireland; age 13-16; chemistry, photography.

Miss Edna Brown, Teregah, Pulau Brani, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wants girl correspondents in France, preferably Marseilles; age 15-18.

Miss Dorothy Gatecombe, 7, Castle Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W.1, wants girl correspondents overseas; age 18 upwards; football, reading, swimming, cycling.

John Barter, 55, Shakespere Road, Hanwell, London, W.7, wants a correspondent; age 12-15, Australia, Canada, South America, Africa; acting, films, stamps.

Miss P. Edgar, 18, Esk Bank, Longtown, Cumberland, wants girl correspondents in Edinburgh or Shetland Isles; age 16-19.

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Not Wanted at PACKSADDLE!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The Cave on Squaw Mountain.

"YOU, Poindexter!" Slick started out of slumber, sat up, and rubbed his eyes.

For the moment he had forgotten what had happened and where he was, and he expected to find himself in the bunkhouse at Packsaddle School, with his pals, Dick Carr and Mick Kavanagh, in the next bunks.

But as he blinked round at the rugged rocky walls of the cavern in which he lay, he remembered.

He was far from the cow town school now.

He remembered the drive in the buckboard over miles and miles of rugged prairie. Then a long tramp on foot by the loneliest paths in the rocky wilderness of Squaw Mountain. Then the cave, in which he had fallen asleep, rolled in the buffalo robe, with the murmur of running water in his ears.

Bright sunlight gleamed in his eyes as he sat up and rubbed them. It streamed in through the narrow opening of the cave, hardly more than a yard wide.

Farther in, the cave extended wider, deep in the massive mountain. At the extremity flowed the underground stream, issuing from one side of the cave, disappearing again on the other.

Across the sunlit opening fell the shadow of a man in store clothes and a stetson hat. He grinned at the school-boy sitting up on the buffalo robe.

"Say, you sure been snoozing some!" said Hawk Walker.

Slick Poindexter rose slowly to his feet.

"You doggoned lobo-wolf!" he said between his teeth, his eyes gleaming at the kidnapper. "If I had a gat in my grip there'd sure be one less coyote in Texas—meaning you!"

"You said it!" grinned Hawk. Slick watched him, calculating his THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,420.

chances. The opening of the cave had been closed by a big rock, now rolled aside. Slick had tried his strength on that rock before going to sleep the previous night. But it had been securely wedged outside, and he had not shifted it an inch. Now the way was open—if he had a chance of handling the gangster.

Hawk, reading the thought in his face, chuckled.

"Forget it, big boy!" he said. "You'd sure get hurt! I ain't left you roped up—I'm a kind-hearted guy, I am—but I'll sure rope you up agin if you hand over trouble."

Slick did not answer. He stood breathing hard, watching the kidnapper. At Packsaddle School the bunch would be at breakfast now in the chuckhouse; but there was no sign of 'cats' for the prisoner in the cave high up the rugged slopes of Squaw Mountain.

"I guess you're safe here, big boy," went on Hawk. "I hid once in this hyer cave when the Rangers was on my trail. I'll say it's a safe spot. You figure that your schoolmaster, Bill Sampson, will trail you here?"

He chuckled again.

"I've sure put Mister Sampson wise," he went on. "He knows that it will cost five hundred dollars to get you back. I've mentioned to him that I ain't feedin' no boarders. You get me?"

"You doggoned picean!" said Slick. "If they get you they'll string you up on the nearest tree."

"Sure!" assented Hawk. "But they got a long row to hoe afore they put a cinch on this baby. Ain't I run this game for years, and ain't I always got by with it?"

Slick knew that only too well. As a professional kidnapper, Hawk Walker was a famous man. That strange trade, peculiar to the United States, had been carried on successfully for years by the

hard-faced man now lounging in the cave mouth and grinning at Slick.

In nearly every State of the Union, Hawk Walker was a hunted man, but he had never been roped in yet. He had kidnapped in every state from New York to California. It suited Hawk to change his scene of operations constantly. He had last been heard of in Nebraska. Now he was getting busy in Texas.

"I guess I got posted afore I cinched you, bo!" he went on. "Your popper ain't no doggoned millionaire, but I guess he can stand for five hundred bucks. I reckon your schoolmaster will put him wise, and he will sure pony up. I'll say I'm sorry for you if he burns time. You get plenty to drink." He waved a mocking hand towards the underground stream at the back of the cave. "But there ain't no cats in this hyer boarding-house. Nope!"

"If a guy had a gun!" sighed Slick.

"I guess your schoolmaster, Mister Sampson, has taught you to write?" asked Hawk.

"Bill Sampson don't teach us nothing, you geek! Mister Brown is the teacher at Packsaddle!" growled Slick.

"O.K. If you can put a fist to paper you want to write a note to your popper telling him to get a move on. I'll sure see that he gets it."

Slick set his teeth.

"Write nothing!" he snapped. "You don't get no chuck hyer!" said Hawk warningly. "I'll say you'll be ready to chew boots by sundown."

"I'll chew my boots before I'll let you touch my popper for five hundred bucks!" retorted Slick. "You pesky picean, you wouldn't have cinched me so easy if I'd knowed you was around. You gave Carr a message that Mustang Dave, from popper's ranch, was waiting on the trail to see me, you doggoned, lying, thieving lobo-wolf. If I'd knowed it was you I'd sure have borrowed Bill

—GRIPPING STORY OF THE PALS OF THE COW TOWN SCHOOL.

Sampson's gun when I came out of school. Now, get on with it, you geck! If I write a word to my popper it will be to tel' him not to pony up a single buck to a bulldozer of your heft."

"Chew it over!" grinned Hawk. "I reckon you'll sing a different tune next time I see you. You'll sure be wanting chuck! So-long, big boy, and chew it over."

The kidnapper stepped back from the narrow entrance of the cave, and laid his hands on the big rock to roll it into the opening.

Like an arrow from a bow Slick sprang.

He had little chance, and he knew it; but if he had a chance at all, it was before the heavy rock shut him in again. He came at the kidnapper like a panther.

Wary as he was, Hawk was startled by that sudden spring. He reeled back from the rock, with Slick's desperate grip on him, and sprawled on the rough ground. He gave a savage yelp as he struck the earth.

But at the same moment his fierce grasp closed on the schoolboy. Slick Poindexter wrenched desperately, but in vain.

For a long minute they rolled and struggled on the ground, Slick striving fiercely to break away, the kidnapper to hold him. But the man was stronger than the boy. He staggered to his feet at last, with Slick struggling savagely in his hands.

"Doggone you!" panted Hawk.

He swung the schoolboy in his arms and hurled him headlong into the cave. Slick Poindexter sprawled along the rugged rocky floor. As he lay dizzy, half-stunned by the crash, the panting gangster rolled the big rock into place, shutting out the sunlight. With a heavy thud it jammed home, and Slick heard the wedges of rock jammed under it without.

Slick staggered to his feet. He hurled himself at the rock, but it was immovable. Deep dusk was in the cave now, only a stray gleam or two of sunlight penetrating through crevices at the opening. On the rugged hillside sounded retreating footsteps, then the clatter of a horse's hoofs.

The kidnapper was gone.

"Gum!" gasped Slick Poindexter. "This sure cinches me!"

Ridden on a Rail.

BILL SAMPSON stared. The Packsaddle schoolmaster, with a black brow, came up the school trail from the cow town, clattering on his bronco.

Bill was in a savage mood that morning.

He had been down to Packsaddle to put Marshal Lick wise that Hawk Walker, the kidnapper, was getting busy in the Frio Valley, and had cinched a guy belonging to the Packsaddle bunch.

But he had little hope that the town marshal of Packsaddle would be able to help. Mr. Lick was ready to shoot Hawk Walker at sight, or to string him up on a limb of a cottonwood. But where was he going to look for the kidnapper? Bill knew only too well how little chance there was of Hawk being roped in by the marshal's outfit.

Riding back from the cow town, up the school trail, Bill scowled savagely at the sunlit prairie. Every now and then he gripped the butt of his six-gun. Bill would have given a year's salary as schoolmaster of Packsaddle to draw a bead on Hawk Walker.

In that frame of mind Bill was in

no mood for trouble from the bunch. But as he approached the school gate he heard a roar of excited voices from the playground.

Bill gave a snort of fury.

It was lesson-time, and the bunch should have been in the school-room with Small Brown, the teacher. Very often they kicked over the traces when Bill was absent. The Packsaddle bunch needed a strong hand. Now they seemed to be making whoopee on an unusual scale. With Slick Poindexter in the hands of a ruthless kidnapper, it was no time for whoopee. Bill's eyes blazed.

"Carry me home to die!" he ejaculated. "If I don't make them young gecks squirm a few, I've sure forgot how to handle a quirt."

There was a roar from the playground, and Bill stared blankly at a mob that came surging out of the gateway. He reined in his bronco.

"Jumping painters!" gasped Bill.

In the midst of the wild crowd was Dick Carr, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. He was sitting on a rail, clinging wildly to it to save a fall, and the bunch were pelting him with sticks and stones.

The long rail was supported on the shoulders of Poker Parker and Steve Carson, the biggest fellow at Packsaddle School.

Bill just blinked.

"Riding on a rail" was no new sight to his eyes. Guys who were not wanted

Falsely accused of betraying his chum to a kidnapper, Dick Carr, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle, runs away from school to prove his innocence!

in a town were often ridden on a rail out of town. Bill had more than once lent a hand himself at riding some bullwhacker or desert rat out of Packsaddle on a rail.

But no fellow in the Packsaddle bunch had ever been ridden on a rail—till now! Now Dick Carr was riding the rail!

"Howling coyotes!" stuttered Bill. He sat in the saddle and stared.

Nearly all the bunch were in the mob. Small Brown was not to be seen. He had no more chance of controlling the excited bunch than of herding a bunch of steers in a stampede. Round the tenderfoot of Packsaddle the mob of Texas schoolboys surged and shouted. Only Mick Kavanagh stood clear—but he was not lending his friend a hand.

Dick Carr's face was white with rage. He was shouting, but his voice was lost in the roar of the angry mob of schoolboys. He clung desperately to the rail, high in the air.

Utterly astounded at the sight, Bill Sampson stared. He was aware that Steve Carson was the tenderfoot's enemy, and Steve was generally backed up by his pals, Poker Parker and Slim Dixon. But the tenderfoot had been liked by most of the bunch—and Slick and Mick had been his firm friends. What had caused the whole bunch to turn on him like this was mystifying to the Packsaddle schoolmaster.

"Ride him out!" yelled Slim.

"Say, there's Bill!" exclaimed Pie Sanders, catching sight of the brawny

figure of the headmaster sitting his horse on the trail.

"Bill nothing!" snapped Steve. "Ride that pesky piecan out! He ain't wanted at Packsaddle nohow!"

"I tell you—" shrieked Dick Carr.

"Can it!" roared Poker Parker.

"Ride him out!"

The mob surged on, out on the trail. Bill Sampson was still staring blankly. Now, however, he woke up, as it were, and slid from his saddle, gripping his quirt hard in his hand.

"Say!" roared Bill. "What's this game?"

Without waiting for an answer to the question, Bill waded in with the quirt. Right and left he laid it on the Packsaddlers.

The rail slipped from Steve and his friends, as they dodged the lashes of the cow whip. It crashed on the earth, and Dick Carr crashed with it.

Breathless, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle sprawled, panting. Round him, the bunch roared and yelled as Bill got busy. There was a wild rush back into the playground.

After the scattering bunch rushed Bill, still laying it on.

"Beat it!" roared Bill. "You hit the school-room, and hit it quick! I'll say I'll herd you home, you pesky young gecks! Yep! You beat it pronto!"

The bunch were beating it as hard as they could. They headed for the porch of the schoolhouse in a wild rush, Bill behind lashing with the quirt, herding them in like steers.

Small Brown stood in the porch goggling out at the scene through his horn-rimmed spectacles. He jumped away as the bunch came streaming in—but he did not jump quick enough.

Steve Carson crashed into him, and he staggered—Slim Dixon and Poker Parker rushed him over, and he fell! Pie Sanders stepped on his chest, Domingo Duque on his neck, Mick Kavanagh on his legs. They had no time to go round Mr. Brown, with Bill behind.

Fearful howls and squeals came from the hapless Mr. Brown as he was trodden on.

The bunch passed over him and rushed into the school-room. Small Brown sat up, spluttering. He clutched his spectacles with one hand and dabbed a damaged nose with the other. He howled and squealed. Bill, halting in the porch as the bunch bolted into the school-room, roared to him:

"Say, you, Brown! You want to look after that bunch! I'm telling you!"

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Small Brown.

"Urrgh! I—I—ooogh—"

"Git on your hind laigs!" roared Bill.

"Urrgh! I—I have been tut-tut-trodden on! Urrrrgh!"

Bill stooped to give Mr. Brown a hand up. He grabbed him by his skinny neck, and set him up like a ninepin. Small Brown stood tottering.

Bill stepped out of the porch again and fixed a glare on Dick Carr. The tenderfoot had come back into the playground from the trail. But he did not seem to be intending to come in to school.

"Say, you!" roared Bill. "Hop it lively!"

"I'm not coming in!" panted Dick. "I—I—whooop!" he roared, and jumped as the quirt rang round his legs.

"Beat it!" roared Bill.

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And Dick Carr beat it, dodging into the school-room, with Bill tramping in after him.

Condemned by the Bunch!

DICK CARR stood by his desk, panting for breath. He had not sat down—neither had any other fellow in the bunch. Small Brown squealed breathlessly to the boys to take their places, but never had Small Brown been so totally disregarded.

Even Bill, as he stood surveying the bunch with grim brows and gleaming eyes, did not inspire the same awe as usual. The Packsaddle bunch were in an excited and wrathful temper, almost ready to turn even on the cowpuncher headmaster. It was easy for Bill to see that something unusual had happened in his absence that morning. The bunch were always rough and tough, but he had never known them in this mood before. Grimmer grew his rugged brow as he glared at the angry and rebellious faces before him.

"Now, I guess I want to know!" barked Bill. "Mr. Brown—"

Small Brown pointed to Dick Carr. "Carr—" he began.

"I guess I found them riding that young guy out of school on a rail. I want to know!" hooted Bill.

"And I'll sure tell you!" shouted Steve Carson. "That pesky coyote, Carr, put Slick into the hands of that lobo-wolf, Hawk Walker, yesterday, and we've sure got wise to it!"

"It's a lie!" panted Dick Carr.

"It's the frozen truth, and I guess the whole bunch knows it!" shouted Poker Parker. "We ain't standing for having that coyote in this bunch, Bill!"

"Not by a jugful!" yelled Pie Sanders. "We was riding him out on a rail when you horned in, Bill, and I'll tell a man we'll ride him out again."

"You said it, Pie!" shouted Slim Dixon.

Bill waved an angry hand for silence. "Pack it up!" he roared. "Ain't you young geeks letting your schoolmaster spill a pesky word? What you got agin young Carr? I know that he brought in a message from that lobo-wolf, Hawk, and young Slick went out thinking it was Mustang Dave from his popper's ranch. But he never knowed that—"

"That's all you savvy, Bill!" jeered Big Steve. "Didn't I say from the first that he knowed, and that Hawk paid him to put Slick into his hands?"

"You did, Steve!" shouted Poker.

"And you was right!" exclaimed Pie.

"Can it!" roared Bill. "It was jest the ornery thing that young Carson would say, and I don't give a continental red cent for it! Young Carr never knowed it was Hawk—"

"I'll say he did, and that Hawk paid him to work the rifle!" shouted Steve. "Mister Brown sure found the dust on him."

Bill jumped.

"What's that you're giving me?" he asked. It was clear to Bill Sampson that something must have transpired to turn the whole bunch against the tenderfoot. But he had never looked for this.

"It is true, Mr. Sampson, sir!" squeaked Small Brown. "In view of the suspicion on Carr, I searched him in this school-room, and found a ten-dollar bill on him! Here it is."

Small Brown held up a ten-dollar bill. The schoolmaster of Packsaddle stared at it stupefied.

He took it from the teacher's hand.

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He scanned it in a deep silence. The bunch were quiet now. They wanted Bill to see how matters stood. Slowly, the headmaster of Packsaddle turned the ten-dollar bill over in his hands, examining it. He fixed his eyes on Dick Carr at last, and his look was very grim.

"You ain't denying that this here bill was found on you, Carr?" he demanded.

"No!" panted Dick.

"I guess," said Bill, "that your popper, manager of the store at Hard Tack, ain't fixed up to throw ten-dollar bills about. But if you claim that this hyer ten bucks is yours, I guess I'll ride down to Hard Tack and put it to Mister Carr! Shoot!"

"I—I—" Dick stammered. "If it's mine, I must have forgotten that I had it!"

"Your popper never handed it out to you?"

"Not that I remember."

"Aw! Talk hoss-sense!" snorted Bill.

"You ain't full of dollars, like young Steve there! You'd know if you had ten bucks. Yes or no."

"No!" gasped Dick. "I—I don't know how it got in my pocket, but it can't be mine."

"You doggoned piecan, Hawk Walker gave it you yesterday for handing over Slick to him!" roared Poker Parker.

"Is that the how of it, young Carr?" demanded Bill.

"No!" panted Dick Carr. "Never! I believed that the man was a puncher from the Poindexter ranch, and he gave a name that Slick knew. Slick thought it was Mustang Dave when he went out to meet him. I thought so—"

"Pack it up!" sneered Steve. "You might have got away with it if Mister Brown hadn't found the money on you."

"Ride him out on the rail!" shouted Poker. "We ain't having him in this bunch, Bill Sampson, and you can chew on that."

Bill crumpled the ten-dollar note into his pocket. He was evidently puzzled and perturbed. On the face of it it looked as if the guilt of the tenderfoot had been proved up. Hardly a fellow in the bunch had heeded Steve's wild accusation till the money was found in Dick Carr's pocket. He was in possession of ten dollars for which he could not account. Not a fellow doubted that it was Hawk Walker's bribe for betraying Slick into his hands.

Bill Sampson simply did not know what to think. He had figured that the tenderfoot was a prize boob, made use of by the kidnapper. Now it looked black enough.

But Bill could not get it down. He had his own opinion of the tenderfoot of Packsaddle, and he was not in a hurry to change it. The whole bunch had followed Steve's lead, and turned against the tenderfoot—even Mick had turned him down. But Bill was not easily led.

"I guess," said Bill Sampson slowly, "that this has got me beat to a frazzle! I'll say I don't get the how of it! But I ain't believing that young guy Carr sold Slick to the kidnapper nohow! There ain't nary a guy in this bunch that would do it, not for ten bucks, nor for a hundred."

"Where'd he get the ten bucks, then?" demanded Steve.

"Let him put us wise to that!" jeered Poker Parker.

"You ain't got nothing to say about that, young Carr?" asked Bill. "You don't claim that the bucks is yours, and you allow you never cinched them from that pesky polecat Hawk Walker. How'd they get in your rags?"

"I—I don't know!"

A yell of derision came from the

bunch. Some of the fellows made a movement towards Dick Carr.

Bill gripped his quilt, and his eyes gleamed.

"Squat!" he roared.

The bunch eyed him mutinously. For once the roar of the Packsaddle schoolmaster failed to enforce obedience.

"We ain't standing for it, Bill!" shouted Steve. "I'll tell all Texas, we ain't standing for keeping that coyote in this bunch."

Bill fixed his eyes grimly on Big Steve. The son of Two-Gun Carson, the gunman, stared back at him defiantly. But the defiance faded out of his face as Bill made a stride towards him.

"Squat!" said Bill grimly.

For a second Steve hesitated. Then he sat down. And the rest of the bunch followed their leader's example. Dick Carr was the last.

"Now," said Bill quietly. "I've allowed I don't get the how of this hyer game! But I'm sure going to get the how of it! If I get it fixed that that young geek, Carr, sold Slick to the kidnapping guy, he sure will quit Packsaddle, with my quilt helping him to hit the trail. But I ain't got it fixed yet. And I'll tell a man that this hyer business is for your schoolmaster to settle! You get me? Don't you chew the rag no more! Mister Brown, you carry on."

And school was resumed, though even Bill's presence could not keep the bunch quiet that morning.

The Tenderfoot's Resolve.

"**M**ICK, old man!"

Dick Carr spoke in almost a pleading tone. The bunch were out of school. Only their knowledge that Bill's eyes were on them prevented them from collaring the unpopular tenderfoot, and riding him on a rail out of Packsaddle.

For the time, Bill held the angry bunch in check; but it was certain that the first time Bill left the school, they would break out again. Meanwhile, dark and scornful looks, sneers and jeers, were the lot of the outcast of Packsaddle.

He touched Mick on the arm as he came up to him in the playground. The Irish-Texan jerked his arm away as if a tarantula had touched it.

"Aw, keep clear!" he snapped. "You pizen polecat, leave me be."

"You can't believe that I'd take a bribe from a villain like Hawk Walker, to send Slick out to be kidnapped by him!" breathed Dick Carr.

But Mick's face was hard.

"I guess I'd never believed a word of it!" he answered. "Didn't I stand for you when Big Steve began to shoot off his mouth? But Mister Brown found the bucks on you, and it's sure a cinch. You never got them 'en bucks from nobody but Hawk Walker."

"It's a lie!" said Dick fiercely.

"A lie is it?" said Mick, his eyes flashing. "And Slick, that was raised with me, and has been my side-kicker ever since we could walk and talk, he's in that bulldozer's grip, and as like as not, we'll never see him alive agin. Hawk won't let him slide without the money paid—and they ain't paying it any. And you sold him—"

"And I say it's a lie, and I'll knock it back down your throat, as soon as down Steve's!" Dick flamed out.

"Sure, I'll give ye a chance, ye pizen polecat!" retorted Mick Kavanagh, and with his open hand he struck the tenderfoot of Packsaddle across the face.

The smack rang like a pistol-shot across the playground. Dick staggered



With Bill behind lashing with his quirt, the bunch headed for the schoolhouse in a wild rush. Small Brown stood in their path, but not for long! The bunch bumped into him and he fell to the ground, and next moment they were trampling over him in their desperate haste to get clear of Bill's quirt!

back, a scarlet mark showing on his cheek.

The next moment he was springing at Mick Kavanagh.

Mick met him with right and left. There was a roar from the bunch, and they came scampering up on all sides, as the two former friends closed in fierce and savage conflict.

Steve Carson grinned gleefully. His enemy was down now—as down as even the bitter and rancorous Steve could have wanted him to be. Every man in the bunch condemned him. He was not wanted in the school, and now his former friend was fighting him with savage animosity. It had been an ill day for the tenderfoot of Packsaddle when he made an enemy of the gambler's son.

The bunch surged round the combatants, and every voice shouted encouragement to Mick Kavanagh.

"Wade in, Mick!"

"Put it across the pesky polecat!"

"Chew him up, big boy!"

Mick was strong and sturdy, and full of pluck, but he had to give ground before Dick Carr. The tenderfoot, who had beaten Big Steve, the oldest and biggest fellow in the cow town school, in a stand-up fight, was more than a match for Mick.

But as the fellow he liked, the fellow who had been his friend, reeled under his furious blows, Dick suddenly dropped his hands and stepped back, panting. Mick leaned on Pie Sanders, gasping for breath, for a moment.

"Mick!" panted Dick Carr. "Believe me—try to believe me—"

"You pizen coyote!" panted Mick, and he leaped to the attack again, his eyes blazing.

Dick Carr set his teeth. He piled in again with all his strength, and the fight was fast and furious. Kavanagh

went down suddenly and heavily, crashing hard on the earth.

Dick stood panting.

Steve and Pie picked up the fallen schoolboy. Mick leaned on them heavily. He was done.

"I guess you put it over, you pizen skunk!" he muttered. "But you wait till Bill's gone. You'll be rid out on a rail, doggone you!"

Dick Carr stood unsteadily, wiping his face with his handkerchief. He looked round at the grim, hostile faces of the bunch. An idea that had been working in his mind ever since he had sat on the rail that morning became fixed and settled now. He had made up his mind.

Steve Carson, with a grin, pointed to Hank, the hired man, who was leading Bill Sampson's bronco from the corral to the schoolhouse.

"Pipe that, you doggone geck?" he jeered. "That means that Bill's hitting the trail soon, and when he's gone, you watch out!"

Dick gave no heed to the bully of Packsaddle.

"Mick, I've got a last word to say!" he said quietly. "I'm getting out of Packsaddle! You've turned me down. I don't care for the rest, and if you'd stood by me I could have stood it through. Now I'm going! I don't know what that villain Hawk has done with Click, but I'm going to hunt for him, and I shan't come back to Packsaddle without him. For the last time I tell you all that I don't know how that ten-dollar bill got in the pocket of my shirt, unless"—his eyes gleamed at Steve—"unless it was put in while I was asleep in the bunkhouse last night. Believe me or not, as you choose. I'm going, and I'm not coming back without Slick!"

An outburst of derisive jeers answered him. Taking no heed of them, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle turned away and walked to the bunkhouse. Mick Kavanagh went to the pump to bathe his burning face and streaming nose.

Ten minutes later, Dick Carr emerged from the bunkhouse with a bundle packed in a slicker roll. Curious glances were turned on him as he walked to the corral and called his horse.

Without a glance at the bunch, Dick Carr saddled and bridled his pinto, buckled on the slicker roll, and mounted. Without a backward look he rode out at the school gate.

"By the great horned toad, I guess he means it!" muttered Pie.

Steve Carson shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess the pizen skunk knows what is coming to him when Bill's gone!" he sneered. "He's sure hitting the trail while the going's good."

The clatter of the pinto's hoofs died away down the trail. The tenderfoot of Packsaddle was gone.

When the school bell summoned the bunch in again there were two vacant places in the school-room. Dick Carr was missing as well as Slick Poindexter.

A Show-down for Steve!

BILL SAMPSON dropped from his bronco outside the Red Dog Saloon on Main Street in Packsaddle. He hitched his horse to a post, and strode towards the saloon doorway. And a good many Packsaddle guys stared at him as he did so. The Red Dog was the wildest joint in Packsaddle, and the cow town schoolmaster had never been seen to enter it before—not, at least, since he had been a puncher on the Kicking Mule ranges. Bill, heedless of curious stares, strode

in stared round the long, low room where the gaming-tables stood, and stepped up to the bar. The bar-keeper spun a glass across—unheeded by Bill. He was not there for tanglefoot.

He bestowed a curt nod on a slim, lithe, carefully dressed man who was in talk with the bar-keeper—Two-Gun Carson, the gunman and gambler. And Two-Gun's cold, icy eyes turned very curiously on the schoolmaster.

"You looking for a poker game?" he asked.

"Forget it!" snapped Bill. "Ain't I a pesky schoolmaster? I guess I moseyed in to chew the rag with you a small piece, Two-Gun."

"Shoot!" said the gambler tersely.

"I'll say that that boy Steve of yourn packs more dollars than any other guy in my bunch," said Bill. "You sure ain't close with the dust you raise on poker games, Two-Gun. That young gink Steve packs more dollars than is good for him."

The gambler shrugged his shoulders.

"You been handing him ten-dollar bills?" demanded the headmaster of Packsaddle.

"Sure!" answered Two-Gun coolly. "And why not, if I choose?"

"I ain't saying nothin' agin it, if you darn well choose!" grunted Bill. "But I got a ten-dollar bill here, and I ain't wise to the owner. Mebbe you'd know whether you gave it to young Steve."

Bill laid a ten-dollar bill on the pine-wood bar. Two-Gun Carson glanced at it. He nodded.

"That's Steve's," he said. "I ain't never forgot the number of a bill, ol'-timer. If that young gink has been dropping it around the playground, I'll sure guess agin' before I give him another."

Bill Sampson's jaw shut like a vice.

A vague suspicion had been working in his mind. He had come to see Steve's father at the Red Dog to put it to the test. Now he knew.

"You sure figure that that's the bill you gave young Steve?" he asked.

"Ain't I shouting it?" said Two-Gun impatiently. "If that bill's been picked up at the school, I'm telling you it's

Steve's. Doggone you, I can tell you the guy I got it from in a poker game, if you want. It sure was Marshal Lick, and I guess he'd know it agin. You hand that bill to young Steve, ol'-timer."

"I'll sure hand it to him now I know!" answered Bill grimly, and he strode out of the Red Dog and returned to his horse.

Bill's face was set as he rode up the school trail. A vague suspicion was now a certainty.

He rode at a gallop and dashed in at the school gate. He jumped down at the porch and tramped into the school-room.

The bunch were there with Small Brown. Bill did not notice for the moment that Dick Carr was absent.

"You, Steve!" he barked. "Get up on your hind laigs, you young lobo-wolf!"

"Aw, what's biting you, Bill?" drawled Steve, as he lounged to his feet.

Bill held out the ten-dollar note.

"I'll sure spill what's biting me, Steve Carson!" he gritted. "That's the ten-dollar bill hooked out of young Carr's pocket this morning. Take it; it's yourn." He threw the bill in Steve's face.

"You planted that bill in young Carr's pocket while he was asleep in the bunkhouse, to be found on him to-day."

Steve's face whitened.

There was a buzz from the bunch. Mick Kavanagh leaped to his feet.

"It's a darned lie!" panted Steve hoarsely. "That bill ain't mine, and I never seen it afore." If young Carr's pitched that tale—

"Young Carr ain't wise to your doggoned game!" roared Bill. "But I jest seen your popper down to the Red Dog, and he allows that he gave you that bill, and it's yourn! What you got to say now, you doggoned young polecat?"

Steve Carson stood staring at him, his face like chalk.

"It's Steve's bill!" gasped Mick. "Say, if it's Steve's bill, sure that pizen bulldozer Hawk never gave it to Carr!"

"He sure never did!" snapped Bill. "It's sure Steve's. I kinder suspicioned

him. He was so keen to make out that Carr sold Slick to that lobo-wolf Hawk. Now I got it dead to rights."

Steve did not speak.

Not for a moment had it crossed his mind that the bill found on Dick Carr could or would be traced to him. He had not counted on the horse-sense of the Packsaddle schoolmaster. Bill might be no great shakes at schoolmastering, but when it came to solid horse-sense, no guy in Texas had anything on Bill. He had bowled out the plotting bully of Packsaddle as clean as a whistle.

"Spill it!" yapped Bill. "You planted them ten bucks on young Carr to make it look like he sold Slick to Hawk Walker. You sure did hope to get the bunch down on that tenderfoot guy, and that was the game you played, you ornery young pizen polecat! Spill it!"

Steve opened his dry lips, but no word came. He was utterly confounded by the sudden and unexpected discovery. He stood panting.

There was a yell from Mick Kavanagh.

"You pizen coyote! Dick sure allowed that that bill might have been planted on him, and I never believed him! You got the goods on him, you pie-faced polecat, and he's vamoosed the ranch, and sure I'll beat you up a few!"

And Mick rushed on the bully of Packsaddle, hitting out right and left. Steve went over among the desks with a crash.

Mick flung himself on him, still punching wildly.

"Aw, let up, you gink!" roared Bill.

He grabbed Mick by his neck-scarf, dragged him away from the yelling Steve, and tossed him aside. Mick sprawled on the floor, panting with rage.

"Sure, I tell ye I'll beat him up!" he yelled.

"I guess you'll leave that to this baby!" said Bill grimly. He grasped Steve with one hand, his quirt with the other. "Now, you young piecan, the whole bunch knows that you done fixed it on Carr. You sure are pizen, but I'll say I'm the guy to take the pizen out of you! Yep—and then some!"

And Bill started in with the quirt.

The bunch stood looking on with grim faces. They knew the truth now, and even Poker Parker and Slim looked the disgust they felt for the unscrupulous rascal. There was no pity in the looks of the Packsaddle bunch as Bill laid on the quirt. And he laid it on with terrific vim. Often had Bill Sampson handled the quirt at Packsaddle School, and handled it hard; but he had never handled it as he handled it now. The lashes came down like rain on the squirming, howling, yelling Steve.

Not till his sinewy arm was tired did Bill desist. Then the bully of Packsaddle was allowed to crawl away, groaning. Bill glared over the bunch.

"Where's young Carr?" he snapped.

"I guess he's hit the trail to look for Slick," answered Mick, "and me not believing him, like the bonehead I was, I let him hit it on his lonesome."

Bill gave a snort.

"It's the quirt for him when he horns in again!" he growled.

But Dick Carr did not horn into Packsaddle School. When the sun sank behind Squaw Mountain, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle was still missing.

(Next week: "IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH!" Don't miss the next stirring story of this great series.)

The Worst Boy in the School!

● A Newspaper arranged a general knowledge examination, for which all the boys of the district were invited to enter. The first prize was a week's holiday at the seaside.

Bill Ronald, of Ecclesfield Road School, entered for the exam. He wanted to win that prize, so he stole the question paper and learned all the answers off by heart! That's the sort of boy Bill Ronald is. Thoroughly bad. And yet you'll feel sorry for him. Read the stirring real-life story of Bill Ronald—



"THE BOY WHO WAS BORN TO BE BAD!"

which appears in to-day's issue of

The RANGER

Every Saturday, at all Newsagents

2D.

MORE EXCITING CHAPTERS FROM OUR POPULAR ST. FRANK'S SERIAL.

The SECRET WORLD!



Nipper stared in amazement as two faces suddenly appeared over the bulwark of the pirate galley. "Doris!" he breathed. "Winnie! But—how on earth—?" The two girls swung themselves over the side of the boat. For a moment there was an amazed hush among the schoolboy galley-slaves; then a clamour broke out.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Nipper & Co.'s Fair Rescuers!

WHEN, through their airship crashing, Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrmore, and a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls are stranded in a lost world in the Arctic, they discover, after several adventures, that war is imminent between Northestia and Gothland. The two countries, inhabited by English-speaking people of a medieval era, are separated from each other by a huge lake, and are shut in by a surrounding barrier of volcanoes, which supply the eternal light and heat of the land.

Nelson Lee & Co. become friendly with the Northestrians—a pleasant race compared with the fierce Gothlanders. When war breaks out they take command, and are chiefly responsible for the rout of the Gothland armada in the first battle. Before the war started, however, Nelson Lee sent Princess Mercia, the girl ruler of Northestia, and the Moor View girls to a place of safety, with the St. Frank's boys acting as their bodyguard. They are captured by pirates, and taken to an island in the middle of the lake. Siegan, the pirate leader, intends to hold them to ransom to Kassar, the ruler of Gothland. Princess Mercia and the girls are imprisoned in a cave, and the St. Frank's boys, who have been made galley-slaves, are left chained to the sweeps, while the pirates depart to make

terms with Guntha the Crafty, Kassar's lieutenant.

The Moor View girls decide to make a bid for liberty, and two of them are about to dive into the lake from a small opening in the cave, which is high up a cliffside.

Doris' heart was beating rapidly, and when she took a look down at the lake, it seemed a far greater drop than she had previously imagined. What if the water was shallow immediately beneath? What if there were hidden crags just beneath the surface? What if one of those monsters—

"Oh, it's no good imagining things!" muttered Doris pluckily. "The job's got to be done, so here goes!"

"Just a minute!" cried Winnie. "Isn't there room on that ledge for the two of us? Wait, Doris, and we'll both dive together!"

"All right, come along!" said Doris. She was glad. Somehow, it wouldn't seem such an ordeal if Winnie took the dive with her. And a minute later Reggie Pitt's sister was out on that narrow ledge of rock, too. The two girls stood with their backs to the cliff, and within the prison-cave the rest waited with bated breath.

"Cheerio!" sang out Doris. "Ready, Win!"

"Yes!" murmured Winnie.

"Right you are, then. Go!"

At the same second they both took off, lithe and graceful. Both were excellent divers, and never before had they shot downwards so cleanly and fearlessly. For it was a higher dive than they had ever attempted, and one that might lead to disaster.

They struck the water simultaneously, and vanished beneath the surface. Doris was up first, and, shaking the water out of her eyes, she struck out strongly, looking round for her companion.

"Oh, thank goodness!" she breathed, as Winnie appeared close to her. "All right, old girl?"

"Rather!" panted Winnie. "I say, what a lucky thing we're only wearing these light frocks."

Both girls, in fact, were thankful on this score. The climate in this oasis was so warm that heavy clothing was unnecessary. Of late, Irene & Co. had taken to wearing the flowing robes of Mercia's court—mainly out of courtesy to their royal host. But, since there had been such friendly feeling between the airship party and the Northestrians, Princess Mercia had suggested that the schoolgirls should revert back to their own neat frocks. For one thing, she had grown to like the novelty of them, but, more particularly, she had realised that the girls were uncomfortable in the long flowing skirts of Northestia.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,420.

So in this swimming venture Doris and Winnie were scarcely hampered.

"Come on!" said Doris cheerily. "Might as well go into the dark depths side by side. My hat! Doesn't it look eerie?"

They were far from the inlet, and the low, wide cave entrance was quite near at hand—a fact for which they were both grateful. For, as they swam, they could not help remembering that these waters were dangerous for swimmers.

Swimming strongly, the two girls passed within the cave, and they could dimly see the shape of the great galley farther down. There was very little movement, and no sign of an armed guard. The rock ledges in the depths of the grotto were dark and deserted.

"I—I believe we're going to do the trick!" murmured Doris.

"Oh," breathed Winnie, "we mustn't be too confident!"

In spite of their vague fears regarding the dangers of the water, both the girls swam slowly. Guards might be near at hand, although invisible, so it was necessary to exercise every precaution. It would be a sorry end to their adventure if they gave themselves away at the outset through carelessness.

By the time they reached the side of the big galley their eyes had grown accustomed to the dense gloom. Side by side they clung to the timbers of the craft and took breath. From above—from the body of the galley—came a continuous murmur of voices. But as yet there was no sound of alarm or surprise.

"We haven't been spotted yet," whispered Winnie breathlessly. "Who's going up first?"

"Better both go together, then there can't be any argument," replied Doris, with a smile. "Anyhow, I think we're safe from the creatures of the deep! But, somehow, I think I'd prefer them to these other creatures of the skull and crossbones brigade!"

It was a comparatively simple task to pull themselves out of the water. There was plenty of hand-grip, and foothold, too. Cautiously the two girls raised themselves to the top of the great bulwark and peered over.

Nipper got the surprise of his life.

He was leaning back, frowning, trying to puzzle out some desperate plan which might result in liberty. But it seemed to him that this was a case when nothing could be done. No amount of ingenuity could sever those iron bonds.

The others were conversing with the hapless slaves who were chained to the oars near by. And then, from nowhere, it seemed, two faces appeared over the bulwark, close against Nipper's face.

He stared, his heart leaping into his mouth.

"Doris!" he breathed. "Winnie!"

In spite of their wet hair, and in spite of the gloom, he recognised them in a flash.

"Hush!" urged Winnie. "The guard!"

"There's no guard!" shouted Nipper. "But how on earth—"

"No guard!" cried Doris. "Thank goodness!"

The two girls swung themselves over the side of the galley, and sat there, streaming with water, and for one moment there was a complete, amazed hush.

And then the clamour broke out.

"The girls!"

"Ods miracles and thunderbolts!"

"Winnie!" shouted Reggie Pitt, as he wrenched at his bonds. "What in the name of all that's mysterious—"

"Don't get so excited!" interrupted Winnie. "We've come along to lend

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you fellows a hand, but never dreamed that you wouldn't have any guard watching over you. Why, this is as easy as rolling off a log!"

"Hurrah!"

"The girls to the rescue!"

The clamour continued for a minute, for a great deal of the excitement spread to those other unfortunate galley-slaves. It seemed incredible that the two girls should have undertaken such a desperate mission.

"We saw the galley go out, and Winnie and I dived—just to see if we could be of any use," explained Doris. "Oh, you poor dears! No wonder you couldn't get free, with these awful shackles round your wrists and ankles."

"If I may say so, precisely!" said Browne gently. "I have no wish to discourage you, Sister Doris, and I need hardly add that my pleasure at seeing you thus dramatically is beyond all computation. At the same time, let me point out that your mission is even now doomed to failure."

"Why?" asked Doris. "There are no guards—"

"Agreed," said Browne. "And neither, I take it, are there files and drills, and such-like instruments essential to the breaking of such aforementioned awful shackles. I fully realise, sisters, that your powers are limited."

"Oh, my hat!" said Reggie. "Then we're no better off!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The girls have dived for nothing!"

Doris looked at the dismayed juniors with quiet amusement.

"Dry up!" she said coldly. "What do you take us for? Do you think we should come on a rescue stunt like this unless we had a fair probability of success? We don't want any files to get you free."

"But—but—"

"These things are locked to your wrists and ankles by clamps," went on Doris. "There's a key to unfasten them—and I happen to know where that key is!"

Preparing to Turn the Tables!

WINNIE PITT uttered a note of warning.

"We mustn't be too sure, Doris," she cried. "Perhaps that wretch Siegan took the key with him."

"We'll soon make sure," replied Doris quickly.

She reached the gangway, stepping across two or three of the juniors, and lightly along to the cabin, where she and the other girls had been held earlier. And now a fresh wave of excitement was breaking out.

"She knows where the key is!" muttered Nipper.

"It's too good to be true!" breathed Handforth. "Siegan's taken it with him, as sure as a gun!"

"Got it!" came a victorious cry from Doris, as she appeared again.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Doris!"

"Free! We're going to get free!"

"Brothers, this is a moment of gladness," said Browne, in his calm, placid way. "Let me urge you, therefore, to remain cool and sedate. At any moment the Black Gang may return, so it behoves us to remain as quiet as possible."

Doris tested the key on one of the juniors, and she gave a little gasp of relief when one of the heavy clamps fell loose. But it required a little tug before it came free.

"It's the right one!" she said gloatingly. "Oh, thank goodness! We've

done the trick, Winnie! We can release them all!"

Tommy Watson was the junior who was first freed, and he took the key from Doris.

"I'll do it now!" he panted. "You mustn't bother, Doris! You girls deserve the Victoria Cross!"

"Rats!" said Winnie. "We've done nothing to shout about."

And so, for the next ten minutes or so, the key went round—passing from one fellow to another as they were each released.

"By George!" shouted Handforth, as he arose and stretched himself. "Now I feel myself again! I'd just like to meet Siegan at this minute!"

"Well, I wouldn't!" said Nipper. "We've got a lot to do before we want to meet Siegan. Thanks to Doris and Winnie, we've got a chance of turning the tables."

"Turning the tables!" said Handforth, staring.

"Why not?" asked Nipper. "All you fellows had better remain where you are, in your places—and, if you take my advice, you'll clamp those irons round your wrists again, as though they're locked. It's quite safe to do so—they won't snap fastened. They'll only seem locked."

"But, ods mysteries and puzzles, what's the dashed idea, laddie?" asked Archie, in wonder. "I mean to say, we've only just stretched the good old limbs, and exercised the tissues! A bit murky, I mean, to suggest getting back into the old bracelets, what?"

"It may be murky, but the only thing to be done," replied Nipper grimly. "Don't you see? We'll release all these slaves—no need to ask if they'll be loyal! They're on our side against the pirates. And Siegan and his men may be back at any minute."

"When they come, we'll smash 'em!" roared Handforth.

"You hopeless ass, they'll escape unless we use some strategy!" retorted Nipper. "We've got to pretend to be all locked up—just the same as when they left us. And then, at a given signal, we can throw off our irons, and take the whole crowd by surprise."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the idea, Nipper!"

"Absolutely!"

"The scheme has my full approval," declared Browne, nodding. "In fact, brothers, as captain of this bodyguard, I now issue an order that nobody shall leave his place. Brother Handforth, be good enough to subside."

But Handforth was looking flushed and hot.

"A trap!" he gloated. "Turning the tables on the pirates, eh? That's what we'll do! We'll make out that we're scared into fits, and as meek and mild as Third Form kids!"

"Do I look meek and mild?" demanded Willy indignantly.

But Handforth waved aside the protest, and within a minute he was labouring under the fixed delusion that the idea was entirely his own. As nobody took much notice of him, it didn't matter.

The whole galley was throbbing with excitement and activity.

"Oh, I felt sure that we should do something pretty good," said Doris thankfully. "It's a wonderful idea, to spring on the pirates and overpower them! Perhaps we can get back to Northestia, and arrive at Westwold Castle, safe and sound, after all."

"That's exactly what we're planning," replied Reggie Pitt. "Doris, old girl, you've done marvels—and so has Sis!" Winnie smiled.

"Anyhow, we've done our part, and now it's up to you," she replied.

And while they continued their bustling activities, a motor-boat was proceeding up the rocky gorge on the Northestrian shore. It contained Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrmore, Ethelbert the Red, and two or three other high Northestrian nobles. All were filled with acute anxiety.

They had been making close inquiries all along the coast, and now they were penetrating that gorge, on the chance of learning something definite. So far, they had only heard rumours—and Nelson Lee knew enough about rumours to have little faith in them. Even now he was hoping that the royal barge would be safely found. It was possible that it had really been taken out upon the lake, captured by a pirate galley, but nothing certain could be ascertained—and it would take hours to make a thorough survey of that great stretch of water. Along this part of the Northestrian coast there were endless inlets and caves, and the barge might have been concealed in any one of them.

"It's no good being impatient, my lord," Leo was saying to Ethelbert. "The whole situation is serious, but before we commence an actual search, we must fully verify the report that the princess has not reached her destination."

"It'll be a bally shame if those rumours are true," said Lord Dorrmore, with a frown. "After all our high hopes, it won't be particularly cheerin' to have them all shattered."

Ethelbert the Red was clasping and unclasping his hands.

"I fear that Kassker has dealt a master blow!" he muttered. "We were too ready to celebrate our victory, it seemeth. While yet we were cheering and congratulating ourselves our fair young princess was in the enemy's vile hands!"

And so they went right up the river to Westwood Castle.

And here there was a turmoil, for everything had been in readiness for her Majesty's reception. Her non-arrival had thrown the entire establishment into dismay, and the continued lack of news was not only significant, but alarming.

"Well, it's got to be the lake," declared Nelson Lee.

"Why did we not search the lake earlier?" asked Ethelbert.

"My lord, I have little hope of achieving success by searching the lake," replied Lee quietly. "You must remember that it has recently been infested with enemy vessels. Providing the royal barge kept to your own coastline, all would have been well—or so we thought. But if the vessel fell into the hands of pirates, and was taken out upon the lake, by now it may be in the hands of the enemy fleet."

"By my soul!" moaned Ethelbert. "What will come of all this?"

"You're right, Lee, old man," agreed Dorrie, with a gloomy nod. "It'll be like searching for a needle in a haystack, I'm afraid. Still, the princess is missing—and so are all those boys and girls. We've just got to keep on until we learn somethin' regardin' their fate."

"Exactly," said Lee quietly. "We've just got to keep on."

Setting the Stage!

NIPPER stood on the gangway of the galley and looked about him.

"Nobody could tell that you weren't all chained up, just the same as before!" he said with satisfaction. "I'll

Eastwood League.

TOM MERRY ON THE TARGET.

Thrilling Final Match.

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone.

Everything depends on to-day's results. As I speak, St. Jim's are resting after a fierce first half against Gordon Gay & Co. at Rylcombe Grammar School. Score 2—2. Gay put the Grammarians ahead twice, but each time Merry equalised. As St. Jim's are one point behind St. Frank's in the League, only a victory for us and a defeat for St. Frank's—who are playing the River House—can give us the championship. Here's hoping! As Tom Merry re-starts the match, the phone buzzes to say St. Frank's are losing 0—2 against River House! The signalled news sends St. Jim's away with fresh fury. No holding them now! Carboy staves off shot after shot—he simply can't last much longer. Swish! Yes, that's one to us, the ball putting a bulge in the goal-net. Blake's shot. But Gay leads a strong counter attack—watch him, you men!—jumping catfish, he's through! Gay levels scores 3—3. But Merry isn't long showing us something good. A dazzling dribble—he eludes defenders like an eel—and there goes Carboy, full length, but in vain! It's a goal; we're leading 4—3. Now I think Gay & Co. have "cracked"—yes! Tom Merry smashes home the fifth and last goal. We've won, and if St. Frank's have lost, we're the League Champions!

THOUGH FIGHTING HARD TO FINISH FIRST

St. Frank's Meet Fortune of the Worst.

Special Running Commentary Phoned by Clarence Fellowe, the Rhyming Reporter.

To top the League St. Frank's but need to beat the River House. Agreed. But, with victory on their knees, the gods seem mighty hard to please—at least, St. Frank's last bid for fame seems fated in this final game! The River House, by Brewster led, in seven minutes go ahead. An equaliser shot by Pitt improves the

come back to my place in five minutes. Handy, you and the others go round among these poor beggars and finish unlocking the whole crowd of 'em."

"And what are you going to do?" asked Handforth.

"I'm going to escort the girls back to their prison."

"Thanks all the same, Nipper, but you needn't trouble," said Doris, smiling. "We know the way—it's along the ledge and then up a stone stairway. There's a great door, heavily bolted—"

"That's just the point," said Nipper. "I've got to go with you, so that I can bolt the door again."

"Why, yes, of course!" laughed Doris. "How silly!"

Handforth frowned.

"I don't approve of this," he said firmly. "There's a chance here of escape—to get clear away. I think we ought to get the princess down, and all the other girls, too. It seems dotty to take Doris and Winnie back and bolt them up again."

"Nipper knows best," said Winnie quietly.

outlook—Pitt has "it"! But River House come once again—see Handforth dive full length in vain as Brewster's shot comes whizzing home. Poor Handy's plastered thick with loam! The second half brings fierce attacks by Nipper's forwards—never lax. Tregellis-West shoots o'er the bar—then Travers centres, just too far. Their lines thus cleared, Hal Brewster's team go back to work with hungry gleam in every eye—bang! Handy's licked! The third of Brewster's shots has "clicked"! If Saints can win, they'll champions be—but they'll need luck, it seems to me! A desperate bid to grab the points—the ball now Nipper's head anoints. His "header" all but does the trick—no, goalie stops it in the nick! Now River House add number four. Though Nipper gets a goal, the war is definitely lost—hard luck! St. Frank's, though beaten, showed fine pluck!

ST. JIM'S CHAMPIONS.

By their brilliant win against Rylcombe Grammar School, St. Jim's add two points to their total, thus passing St. Frank's by one point. The Championship of the Eastwood League, 1934-35, is thus won by Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. The best tribute that can be paid to the runners-up, St. Frank's, is that of Tom Merry himself, who says Nipper and his men are the most tenacious adversaries St. Jim's have met—but withal sportsmen, every man of them!

FULL RESULTS.

RYLCOMBE G.S.	3	St. Jim's	...	5
Gay (3)		Merry (4)		
		Blake		
ST. FRANK'S	...	2	RIVER HOUSE	...
Pitt, Nipper			Brewster (4)	...
ABBOTSFORD	...	7	GREYFRIARS	...
HIGHLIFE	...	6	REDCLYFFE	...
CLAREMONT	...	2	ST. JUDE'S	...

FINAL LEAGUE TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.Pts.
St. Jim's	...	22	14	6	2	113 55 34
St. Frank's	...	22	15	3	4	100 47 33
Greyfriars	...	22	14	4	4	102 50 32
Rookwood	...	22	12	5	5	74 56 29
Highlife	...	22	11	6	5	62 34 28
River House	...	22	9	7	6	62 52 25
Rylcombe G.S.	...	22	10	5	7	59 51 25
Abbotsford	...	22	5	6	11	39 70 16
Claremont	...	22	4	5	13	44 86 13
Redclyffe	...	22	3	6	13	39 103 12
Bagshot	...	22	3	5	14	30 54 11
St. Jude's	...	22	1	4	17	24 85 6

"If I thought there was any possibility of failure I'd bolt at once with all of us," replied Nipper. "But we want to do better than just escape. We're going to grab these pirates and have them thrown into prison, where they belong. And unless Doris and Winnie are back in that cave Siegan will know that something rummy has been happening. So come along, girls."

A boat was floating at the stern of the galley, and in a moment the trio were in it, and they quickly reached the rock ledge at the base of the grotto. Then Doris led the way to the stone stairs and ascended them.

At last the heavy door was reached, although it was necessary to feel their way, since the darkness was pitchy, and they had no torches to guide them.

Nipper pulled the bolts back, and the door swung open.

"Doris!" shouted Irene joyously, as Doris walked in.

"Winnie—and Nipper!" shouted the others. "Oh, you did the trick, then!"

"Just luck," said Winnie modestly. "There's not a soul on guard, and it was child's play Everybody's released and—"

"Oh, and are we going to make a dash for freedom?" asked Mary breathlessly.

"Not just yet," replied Nipper. "Doris and Winnie will tell you all about it. Some of you girls had better help them with their wet clothing, too—they're soaked to the skin."

"It doesn't matter," said Doris. "The air's so warm that we shan't come to any harm. We've got nothing to change into, anyhow. We can only hope that the pirates won't notice our damp condition when they lug us out."

"But aren't we going to escape?" asked Irene in wonder.

"You bet we are!" replied Nipper.

Princess Mercia, who had been watching and listening in a kind of trance, now swept forward, her young face alight with wondering amazement.

"By my faith, 'tis almost too wondrous to be true!" she exclaimed. "Ye are still alive, sweet girls! And I thought ye went to your deaths! I am overwrought with anxiety and curiosity. What has happened? Tell me of this strange exploit. You are even as resourceful and courageous as the men."

Doris and Winnie laughed, and Nipper did not wait to hear the explanation. Besides, there was much to be done below, and there was no telling when the pirate galley would return.

So Nipper took his leave, and closed and bolted the door—exactly as he had found it. Then quickly he felt his way down the stairs and joined the others. Everything was going well. By the time Nipper reached the deck of the galley again the last of the eighty slaves had been released. Another twenty were found packed cruelly away down in a kind of noisome hold. They were the unfortunate wretches who had been unchained to make place for the juniors.

"There's no help for it, brothers, but I'm afraid you'll have to remain in this prison for a further period," said Browne. "You will be needed when the fighting starts, and so your door will be left unfastened. Come forth at the first sign of conflict."

All the slaves were pitifully eager to obey.

Most of them were Northestrians—harmless, simple enough fellows who had had a great deal of their manhood thrashed out of them by long months under the pirate's lash. But the prospect of early release—the thought of turning upon their tormentors—made new men of them.

Their gratitude towards the St. Frank's fellows was touching. One and all, they were like faithful dogs—loyal to a man, and ready to obey any command at the faintest whisper.

"We do thy bidding, good youths," said one of the slaves. "'Tis for thee to command, and we will heed."

"We desire nothing but a fight on level terms with these foul monsters who have tortured us," said another. "All hail to our rescuers!"

And from every part of the galley arose a throbbing cheer.

But the St. Frank's fellows soon put a stop to it. The time was getting on, and they were rather surprised that Siegan should still be absent. It was certain that he would return now at almost any minute.

Browne and Nipper took a last look round. Standing on the central gangway, they beheld the slaves—chained, as before, to their oars. All of them were

looking different now—cager-eyed, alert, and flushed.

"You'll have to seem a bit more downcast than this," said Nipper, addressing them all. "Try to be just as you were—dejected and miserable. We don't want the pirates to guess anything."

"I think it would be a lot better to smash 'em as soon as they turn up," sang out Handforth. "Something might go wrong if we keep up this game. In fact, we ought to go straight back to Northestria—"

"Don't start again, Handy!" muttered Church. "The whole thing's cut and dried, and we're going through with it. Besides if Nipper suggested going back to Northestria you'd be the first to jump on the idea."

This was true enough, and Handforth grunted.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I wash my hands of the whole affair."

A minute later Browne and Nipper were in their own places, and, to all intents and purposes, not a thing had happened.

And now commenced an anxious wait. Everybody was longing for the return of the pirates, for they were all keyed up to concert pitch.

The minutes passed and the grotto remained deserted.

And then at last came a word from one of the slaves at the far end of the galley—a man who could manage to see out through the cave entrance from his position.

"They come!" he murmured. "I see the galley even now!"

A kind of tremor passed through that craft, with its hundred odd souls. Not a word was spoken, and only the intense breathing of the slaves could be heard. But then came another sound—a steady falling of oars, and the splashing of water.

Thirty seconds later a shadow fell across the cave entrance, and then the pirate galley swept in, with oars uplifted, and with Siegan the Slim standing ready with his orders.

The pirates had returned, and the moment for action was near at hand!

The Surprise!

SIEGAN THE SLIM was in a gloating humour.

His bargain with Guntha the Crafty was a far better one than he had anticipated, and he had no fear of the Gothlander general going back on his written pledge. Guntha was one of Kassker's chief men, and, even though he was a savage enough brute, he would never dare to dishonour his sealed word.

Besides, for such prizes as these royal prisoners, and the British schoolboys and schoolgirls, Kassker the Grim would readily endorse Guntha's bargain. Siegan had no fear of the outcome.

And now he was all eagerness to deliver his victims over.

For he did not lose sight of the fact that victory might yet be wrested from his grasp. Valuable hours had gone by, and it was certain that the Northestrians had now become aware of the royal barge's disappearance.

That meant that a search was in progress.

Siegan knew of the aeroplane and the motor-boat, and the other wonders that were in the possession of these strangers from the outer world. He feared them. He feared that his plans would be wrecked before he could complete them. And now that he had returned to the cave he was eager to be off again.

The majority of his crew were grumbling—talking of penetrating their grottos, and preparing a meal. But Siegan would not hear of it. Food could wait until afterwards. At present there was only one thing to be done, and that was to speed back to Guntha's ship, and deliver over the hostages.

So now, in a moment, all was activity.

The pirates swarmed on board the big galley, and preparations for departure were made. Men with whips took up their positions on the gangway, and sharp orders were given for the slaves to get ready. More than one whip was cruelly lashed—and more than one slave nearly precipitated action by hurling himself upon his tormentor.

Never for a moment did Siegan suspect the truth.

Once or twice, on his homeward trip, he had called himself a fool for leaving no men on guard, but, in his eagerness, he had sped off with all his crew. And now he could see that his fears had been unfounded.

The slaves were exactly as he had left them, including these "stranger" schoolboys, of whom he had seen and heard so much. They were hardly behaving in keeping with their reputation.

For they cringed and whimpered as the pirates paced along the gangway with their whips. Siegan could not prevent himself from openly jeering.

"Your marrow has melted in your bones, I vow!" he sneered, as he stared down at the cowering St. Frank's fellows. "Fine, brave valiants when all is well, but curs when ye are aware of a master! Ye will soon learn the real meaning of fear!"

"Don't—don't hand us over to the Gothlanders!" begged Nipper, his voice breaking with terror.

Siegan laughed loudly.

"'Tis exactly my aim!" he retorted.

"Oh!"

A prolonged wail went up from the juniors.

"'Tis something which affrights ye, eh?" shouted Siegan gloatingly. "Within the hour ye will be in the hands of the enemy! Guntha the Crafty himself is now awaiting—and once in his hands—"

"Guntha the Crafty!" shouted Fullwood, horrified. "You're not going to deliver us into that brute's hands!"

"His vessel is lying some miles hence, waiting to receive ye," replied Siegan, with complete satisfaction. "A little voyage, my valiants! A pleasant little hour at the oars, and then ye will no longer be galley-slaves, but hostages in the hands of Kassker!"

"But he'll kill us!" shouted Nipper. "Mayhap!" replied Siegan. "But 'twill be none of my business. Ye will pass into his hands unharmed."

"But—but what about the princess?" demanded Handforth angrily.

Siegan turned and surveyed him with lowering eyes. Little did he guess that all this talk was deliberately planned, on purpose to draw him out, so that he would reveal his full programme! In his pride, Siegan had forsaken every vestige of caution.

"The princess!" he replied darkly. "The princess and her young cur of a brother are going with ye—ay, by my faith, and the other maidens, too!"

"You cur!" shouted Nipper. "You're going to send us all to our death! If you give us into the hands of the Gothlanders, we shall all be killed! It's all

a lie—and you are just trying to frighten us!”

“Thou shalt see, foolish youth!” retorted Siegan. “Guntha’s ship is but five miles distant, and there will soon be an end to this comedy!”

Siegan spoke more truly than he believed. But, at the moment, he was deceived by his own success. He took it for granted that there could be no possible mutiny among the slaves. His one and only fear was that Nelson Lee or Lord Dorrimore might appear on the scene.

So a quick departure was ordered.

By this time the princess, Prince Oswy, and all the girls were on the galley, having been brought down from the upper cave by a strong escort. They played their parts well, for they gave no sign of their real feelings. They were thrust into the galley’s cabin, and Siegan the Slim appeared in the doorway.

“Good ladies, I regret this further disturbance, but I find it necessary to place ye in fresh quarters,” he said glibly. “Have no fear—ye are passing into good hands—the hands of Guntha the Crafty.”

The princess gave a cry.

“A Gothlander!” she exclaimed timidly.

Siegan laughed harshly and bowed.

“And is not a Gothlander preferable to a pirate?” he jeered. “Be at ease, good princess—for this period of strife will soon be at an end. There will be no invasion of Northestria, methinks, but a triumphant entry of Kassker the Grim and his armies.”

He withdrew, still laughing, and Irene slammed the door.

“Oh, the awful brute!” she panted.

“Never mind!” whispered Doris. “The fellows will give the signal at any moment now, and then he’ll get a surprise-packet! Oh, I can hardly believe it! Everything’s going exactly as we planned.”

“Think ye it will go well?” asked the princess, with anxious eyes.

“It’s a certainty now!” replied Irene. “Oh, listen! Let’s just stand here and listen! They’re bound to give the signal in a minute.”

“Aren’t they going to wait until we get out into the open?” asked Mary.

“No—they mean to spring the surprise here.”

And so they waited, tense and expectant.

And, outside, Siegan was giving orders, and the slave-drivers were getting their whips ready.

A command rang out, and all the slaves dipped their oars in mechanical obedience, as they had done thousands of times before.

Siegan watched with satisfaction. The idea of unchaining his prisoners before Guntha’s eyes appealed to him. He would let the Gothlander general see them at the sweeps—for it occurred to him that Guntha would take pleasure at the sight.

And then came the order to start. It was followed, however, without an instant’s pause, by another order.

Edward Oswald Handforth was watching Nipper closely—and Nipper nodded. On the second, Handforth leapt to his feet, and his chains rattled loose.

“Now!” he thundered. “Up, everybody! Up!”

It had previously been arranged that Handforth should give the signal, his voice being the loudest. And he let out such a terrific bellow that every slave on board was electrified into instantaneous life.

Siegan started back at that shout, and he was scowling.

“By my bones!” he snarled. “What folly—” He broke off, his eyes goggling, for scores of the slaves were breaking free, as though their iron bonds were no stronger than cotton. “A murrain! Am I mad? The lash, fools! Make these curs obey—”

But the other pirates were equally startled—equally incapable of action. It seemed to them that a miracle had happened. As though actuated by a single spring, the hundred slaves had leapt to their feet, and every chain had been flung aside.

The slaves were free!

Little wonder that the pirates fell back, frightened and aghast. A moment before the prisoners had been helpless in their chains. And now they were an enraged, fierce, dangerous body of fighting enemies!

The Battle!

“HURRAH!”

“At ‘em, St. Frank’s!”

“Come on, everybody!”

The advantage was wholly with the boys and their slave supporters. Siegan’s men had been taken utterly off their guard, and before they had a chance to recover themselves, they were overwhelmingly attacked.

There was one particular object in this form of surprise.

The juniors did not want the pirates to have a chance of using their ugly weapons. The whole idea was to render them helpless at the outset, before they could cause any bloodshed. It was not to be a gory fight, but a swift, dramatic capture.

That was the main idea.

Altogether there were between fifty and sixty of the pirates, but quite a number had been left on the other galley, for Siegan did not see any reason to take all his supporters with him on this trip.

Thus, when the hundred arose, the odds were all with them.

“I’ll take Siegan!” roared Handforth.

“Hurrah!”

“Hold on, old man—we’ll help you!” gasped Church.

McClure was there, too. Handforth’s chums had no intention of letting him take Siegan on single-handed. For while the pirate chief was armed to the teeth, Edward Oswald was without any weapons.

Siegan swung round, and grabbed for his sword. His feelings were too confused for any expression. He was only aware of one appalling truth. His scheme had gone wrong, and he believed that death was upon him.

But before he could draw his sword, Handforth arrived in one tremendous leap, and his right fist smashed devastatingly into Siegan’s face.

Crash!

It was a terrific punch, and Siegan reeled over. The next second, Handforth was astride his prostrate body, and Church and McClure were holding down his lashing legs.

Up and down the galley, from stem to stern, there was one roar of noise, and a smother of confusion. The battle was at its height, and hardly anybody knew exactly what was happening.

From the other galley, the pirates were attempting to come to the aid of their fellows, but they only came to



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disaster. For as they swarmed over the bulwarks, they were seized, and sent reeling into the slave-pits.

Handforth glanced round, and his face was aflame.

"Good!" he panted. "Come on—drag him to the left here—we've got the chains ready for him!"

"He'll be the first to taste the whip, too!" growled Church. "My stars! I'm just longing to give him a few lashes, the brute!"

Swearing and blaspheming, the helpless Siegan was dragged off the gangway. And before he could recover from the effects of that blow, he found himself chained up—and Handforth himself had turned the key. The man sat

there at the oar, wrenching so madly at his iron bonds that he tore his flesh. He was literally foaming at the mouth with rage, and he was little better than a maniac.

In every other part of the galley the same story was told.

The pirates were swiftly overpowered. Indeed, only a very few of them put up any kind of fight. They were scum of the worst type. And when they found themselves face to face with real danger, they crumpled up.

The released slaves had many scores to wipe off, and but for continual curbing on the part of Browne, Nipper, and others, many of the frenzied wretches would have done their victims to death.

"I—I suppose we ought!" said Tom Merry, quite meekly.

"Of course you ought!" said Redfern. "And you oughtn't to have supposed we couldn't play cricket without seeing us try. That's why we ragged you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry laughed and held out his hand.

"Give us your fist, Reddy, old man! We've been a set of asses, and you've given us just what we deserved, and I own up for one."

"And I for another," said Jack Blake, slapping Redfern on the shoulder. "Good old Reddy! He's worth his weight in coppers! Three cheers for Reddy!"

And there was a roar of cheering.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Little need to tell further the story of the first junior match of the season at St. Jim's.

The Grammarians played their innings, and they struggled manfully against adversity. But they had no chance from the first of reaching the huge score piled up by the Saints.

As it was, the whole affair was over within ten minutes.

By then, the galley was in the hands of those who had engineered the surprise, and scarcely a pirate had escaped. Most of those who had not been on board at first had come later, only to share the fate of their fellows. Others were rounded up in the grottos. And all were held. Against such an enemy as this they were powerless. It was complete victory for the St. Frank's boys!

(More big thrills from this powerful serial next week. Order your GEM early. It's a special Jubilee number.)

When stumps were drawn, the Grammarians had knocked up a very respectable total, but it fell more than a hundred short of the St. Jim's score, and the defeat was complete.

But Gordon Gay & Co. took it in good-humour. As Gay remarked, they did not often come upon a batsman like Reddy—which was very true. And, as he added, they would have licked St. Jim's if Reddy hadn't batted—which was quite true also.

And St. Jim's had won, and Redfern was the hero of the hour—even more so than he had been after pulling Tom Merry out of the river. After the match Saints and Grammarians fraternised at a really splendid spread in the Hobby Club-room in the School House, and they parted on the best of terms. And afterwards Figgins & Co. marched the New Firm off to the New House with a proud air of proprietorship.

Outside the School House a crowd stood and cheered them as they went—a sufficient proof that Tom Merry & Co. had forgiven Redfern's record rag!

(Next Wednesday: "JUBILEE DAY AT ST. JIM'S!" Watch out for this lively yarn telling how Tom Merry & Co. celebrated the Jubilee!)

REDFERN'S RECORD RAG!

(Continued from page 16.)

"A wag, bai Jove!"

Redfern nodded cheerfully.

"Yes," he said serenely, "it was a rag. We three have played cricket since we were high enough to hold a bat, and we rather fancy ourselves as cricketers, you know. You chaps made up your minds that we couldn't play, so we made up our minds to rot you on the subject, and I think we've done it!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah, you have, Weddy!"

"I meant to get into the eleven by hook or by crook!" Redfern went on coolly. "I had a scheme in my head, but I didn't need to use it, owing to your little upset on the river. That was why I took you at your word, you see. If I couldn't have played up for the school, I shouldn't have been such a rotter, I hope, as to shove myself into the eleven. You ought to have known that."



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