

"THE CAPTAIN'S RIVAL!" GRAND SCHOOL YARN OF FOOTER, FUN, AND ADVENTURE **INSIDE.**

# The GEM

2<sup>d</sup>



*Leaving their  
Team in  
the Lurch!*

FOUR SENIORS DESERT ST. JIM'S IN A MATCH!—A Sensational Incident from this Week's Best School Story.

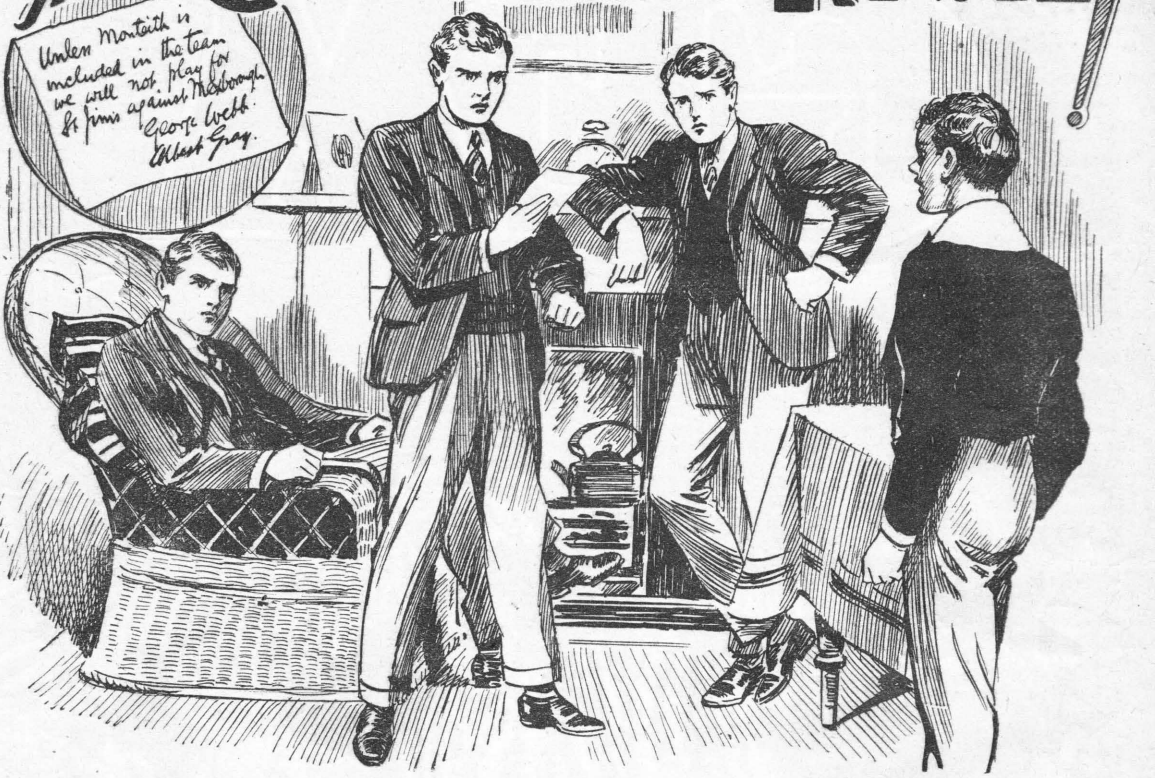
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# The CAPTAIN'S RIVAL!



Kildare frowned as he read the letter. It was brief, but very much to the point. "Unless Monteith is included in the team, we will not play for St. Jim's against Mexborough.—George Webb, Albert Gray." It was the New House seniors' reply to the dropping of Monteith!

**CHAPTER 1.**  
**Too Emphatic!**

**T**OM MERRY of the Shell Form at St. Jim's thumped on the table in his study.

Thump!  
 Manners and Lowther looked up. Manners was cutting films—an occupation that seemed to take up a great deal of Manners' spare time—and Monty Lowther was grinding out an imposition that Mr. Railton, the School House master, had kindly given him.

Tom Merry's emphatic thump upon the table interrupted the proceedings. Manners' scissors went jabbing through a most valuable film, which gave a view of the School House seen from the south, and Monty Lowther's pen jerked and scattered a variety of blots of all shapes and sizes over his paper.

There was a simultaneous yell from Manners and Lowther.

"Fathead!"  
 "Chump!"  
 "Sorry," said Tom Merry; "but—"  
 "Look at my film!"  
 "Look at my impot!"

Tom Merry glanced at them.  
 "Look rather rotten, don't they?" he asked affably.

Manners and Lowther rose to their feet. There was vengeance in their looks. The Terrible Three were the closest chums of St. Jim's, but there

was a time when friendship did not count, and this was evidently the time.

Manners and Lowther advanced upon Tom Merry with warlike looks.

"You'll look rotten, too, when we've finished with you, you burbling ass!" Monty Lowther shouted.

"Collar him!"  
 Tom Merry waved his hand.

"Hold on!"  
 "That's what we're going to do!" said the chums of the Shell together, as they laid hands upon the leader of the study.

"I—I mean, leggo! Oh—oh!"  
 Bump!

"Ow!"  
 "Give him another!"

"Stop it!" roared Tom Merry. "I've got something jolly important to say—something about the Mexborough match—"

"Blow the Mexborough match!"  
 "And Kildare—"  
 "Blow Kildare!"  
 "And Monteith—"  
 "Blow Monteith!"

"Look here!" roared Tom Merry, struggling. "I tell you—"

Bump!  
 "Yaroooh!"

"Give him another!" gasped Lowther, flushed with the exertion. "Give him one for his Aunt Adeline, and one for his Uncle Jim!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Bai Jove!" The study door opened, and an elegant junior looked in, through an eyeglass that was jammed in his eye.

"Ow! Ow!"  
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth jammed the monocle a little tighter in his eye, and regarded the scene with great interest.

Blake, Herries, and Digby, also of the Fourth, looked in with equal interest.

Monty Lowther and Manners were bumping their leader as if they meant to bump him through into Knox's study underneath.

"Drag 'em off!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"  
 "Give him one more!" panted Lowther. "One for his nob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Rescue!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"  
 "Right-ho!" said Jack Blake.

And the chums of the Fourth rushed to the rescue, and Manners and Lowther were dragged off their victim.

Tom Merry sat upon the carpet, gasping.

His jacket was split up the back, and his collar was hanging by a single stud, and his head looked like a mop.

The juniors grinned as they looked at him.

"Bai Jove! You do look a weck, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "If he's a wreck now, it's through being reckless a few minutes ago," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



# —CRIPPING LONG COMPLETE YARN OF SPORT, FUN, AND ADVENTURE.

## By Martin Clifford

Tom Merry staggered to his feet. He bestowed a wrathful glare upon his chums as he grappled with his collar.

"You silly asses—"

"Next time you won't thump the table when I'm doing an impot," said Lowther, grinning.

"And when I'm cutting films," said Manners.

"Blow your films and your impot," grunted Tom Merry. "I was going to say something jolly important!"

"Leave it till I've done my impot," said Monty Lowther. "I can't write out Virgil while you're saying something important."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've come—" began Jack Blake.

"Yes; we can see that!" said Lowther.

"Now, are you going again?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Sit down, you chaps, if you can find anything to sit on!" said Tom Merry hospitably. "I think Lowther wants sitting on more than anything else in the study!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I was going to tell you silly chumps," said Tom Merry, glaring at Manners and Lowther, "that these chaps were coming here to consult about an important matter!"

"No need to thump the table—"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Look here—"

"Pway make it pax, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus pacifically. "Pway don't wag one anothah at a time like this!"

"A time like this?" demanded Manners.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Blessed if I can see anything wrong with the time!" said Manners. "It's not bed-time!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "we've met in this study to discuss an important matter affecting the honour of St. Jim's. I'm expecting Figgins & Co., too; but before they come, we'd better settle what the meeting is going to decide. Then we can tell it to those New House bounders as a fait accompli."

"A which?"

"A fait accompli," said Tom Merry sturdily.

"Is that Dutch?"

"No, it isn't!" said Tom Merry. "It's French, and it means an accomplished fact!"

"Never come across an accomplished fact," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "I've heard of an accomplished young lady, but—"

"If Lowthah is goin' to be funnay I beg to wethah from this meetin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

Tom Merry thumped on the table again. Fortunately Lowther was not writing his impot yet, and Manners had left off cutting films.

"Order!" he exclaimed. "We've got to settle this bisney before the New House kids come. Order, and listen to your uncle!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We're listenin', deah boy! Go ahead!"

And Tom Merry went ahead, and the juniors listened with expressions of almost owl-like gravity.

### CHAPTER 2.

#### Nothing Doing!

TOM MERRY raised his hand dramatically.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Adsum!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, the school is going to the giddy dogs. There was a time when the School House was universally acknowledged to be the Cock House of St. Jim's. We've kept our end up, I think—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., representing the junior element in the New House, have been kept in their places—"

"Bwavo!"

"So far as the juniors are concerned, the School House has been top dog!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But"—and Tom Merry shook his head seriously—"while we juniors have been standing up for the honour of the House, and keeping the old flag flying, what have the seniors been doing?"

"Echo answers what?" said Blake enthusiastically.

Arthur Augustus shook his head, with a puzzled look.

"Imposs, deah boy!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Echo would natuwally answah

### *When Monteith, head prefect of the New House, causes friction in the St. Jim's Football Eleven it has disastrous results—for Monteith!*

'doin,' as that was the last word Tom Mewwy uttached," the swell of St. Jim's explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" said Herries. "This isn't a time to be funny—"

"But I wasn't bein' funnay, deah boy!"

"Order!"

"I wefuse to ordah—I mean—"

"Shut up!"

"Silence!"

"Go ahead, Tom Merry."

The captain of the Shell went ahead.

"Gentlemen, while we've been keeping the junior flag flying the seniors have been resting on their laurels. Now, Kildare, our respected captain, is a brick. Although his front name is Eric, he's all right."

"Good old Kildare!"

"But Kildare has his weak points, and—"

"Go hon!"

"He gives way too much to the New House—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's putting too many New House seniors into the school team to play the Mexborough eleven."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If he's short of men on this side of the school," went on Tom Merry, waxing eloquent, "let him call on the juniors! We're all willing to play in the First Eleven—"

"Yaas, wathah! I should be vewy pleased to play centah-forward in the First Eleven," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a nod.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at in that wemark, and—"

"Gentlemen, you are aware that Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, has been on bad terms with Kildare—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They've made it up, and for a long time matters went smoothly; but over this giddy football bisney the old bad blood has broken out. Now, you'll agree with me that the fault is on the side of the New House."

"Hear, hear!"

"Kildare, if anything, is too meek and mild—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He gives way too much to Monteith and lets him have a place in the team, as well as Gray and Webb and Baker—all New House chaps."

"Jolly good players!" remarked Jack Blake.

"Yes; but there ought to be a bigger School House element in the team. But, passing that over, there's no doubt that Monteith isn't satisfied with four men in the eleven. He wants to make trouble."

"Lots of the fellows are saying so, anyway," said Digby, with a nod.

"Quite twue."

"He's bothering Kildare bald-headed," said Tom Merry indignantly. "I shouldn't be surprised to see Kildare's hair grey one morning, like that giddy chap who was a prisoner somewhere and grew grey in a single day—"

"Grew white in a single night, you ass!" said Blake.

"Grew pink in a single wink!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, I've called you together to hear my ideas on the subject—"

"Cut 'em short!" said Manners.

"Look here—"

"Order!"

"Pile in, Tommy!"

"It's up to us, as juniors, to back up Kildare and make him stand up against New House encroachments," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to Figgins & Co., as juniors of the New House, to help bring pressure to bear on Monteith to make him behave himself."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ergo—that's Latin—therefore, we're going to call on Kildare, and tell him that we back him up through thick and thin—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And we're going to persuade Figgins & Co. to put it plainly to Monteith and keep him in order."

"But wil' they?" said Blake doubtfully. "As New House chaps, they may not see the matter in a reasonable light."

"Then we'll point it out to them carefully."

"And if they won't listen—"

"Oh, in that case we'll bump them!"

"Hear, hear!"

Knock!

"Order! Here they are!"

The study door opened, and three juniors presented themselves. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House, generally known as Figgins & Co.



"Please we've come!" said Figgins. Fatty Wynn looked round the study. He seemed to be surprised to see a sheet of imput paper, a piece of blotting paper, and a roll of films on the table.

"You asked us over for a special occasion," he said.

"Yes, that's right," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"You said it was something very special."

"So it is."

"Then where is it?"

"Where's what?"

"The feed."

"What feed?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Isn't it a feed?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Well, of all the asses!" said Fatty Wynn, in great disgust. "You said it was something very special, so, of course, I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh rats!" growled Fatty Wynn.

And the subsequent proceedings seemed to interest him no more.

"Well, what's the trouble with you fellows?" asked Figgins genially. "Got into some trouble, and called on the New House to help you out? That's only right and proper."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"It's about the senior footer," Tom Merry explained.

"What's that got to do with the juniors?" asked Figgins, naturally enough.

Tom Merry coughed.

"Ahem! You see, we think it's up to us to make matters go better—"

"My hat!"

"There's disputes between the members of the team—School House and New House. Some of the New House rotters—"

"The what?" demanded Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, all together.

"Ahem! I should say fellows—"

"I should thank you would!" said Figgins wrathfully.

"Well, some of the New House fellows have been turned out of the team because they were no class—"

"Oh rats!"

"And Monteith and Baker, the only chaps who can play, have resigned—"

"Ancient history, my son!"

"Kildare's been trying to make it up, but your rotten prefect gives him the cold shoulder every time—"

"Our what?"

"Ahem! Your respected prefect—"

"Well, we know all this," said Kerr.

"We didn't come here for a lesson in ancient history. You'll be telling us next that all Gaul was divided into three parts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom Merry.

"Now, we've got an idea—"

"Whose?" asked Figgins.

Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

"Oh, don't be funny! We've got an idea. The School House being in the right, and the New House in the wrong—"

"Eh?"

"It's up to us to back up Kildare, and up to you fellows to put your House captain in his place—"

"What!"

"And we call upon you to do it," said Tom Merry firmly.

And all the School House fellows in the study chimed in enthusiastically:

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins & Co. simply glared.

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"Do you want me to say what I think?" demanded Figgins.

"Go ahead!"

"Well, I think we've got into a private lunatic asylum by mistake."

And Figgins & Co. marched out of the study and slammed the door behind them with a slam that rang the whole length of the Shell passage.

The School House fellows looked at one another.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Figgys seems to be ratty about something!"

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake rose.

"Doesn't seem to be much of a giddy success, does it?" he remarked. "You Shell fellows had better leave it to us. We are the leaders of the School House, as a matter of fact. We downed the New House time and again before you bouncers came to St. Jim's at all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rot!" said the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"Look here—"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I weward you as thwee asses! I shall wettiah ffrom this studay in disgust!"

And he did, and Blake, Herries, and Digby followed him.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Captain's Offer!

ERIC KILDARE, captain of St. Jim's, came down the steps of the School House with a frown upon his brow.

He seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then, with his quick, springy strides, crossed the quadrangle towards the New House.

"Hallo, there goes Kildare!" exclaimed Blake, who was looking out of the window of Study No. 6, that famous apartment shared by the chums of the School House. "I wonder what's up? He wears a worried look."

"Oh, he's going over to the New House!" said Herries, looking out.

"Going over to see that cad Monteith about the footer, I suppose. Enough to make him look-worried."

"That's it," chimed in Digby.

"There's been a meeting in Kildare's study, and I hear they've decided to give the New House a chance to come into line again."

"Oh, what rot!" said Blake emphatically.

"We can do without New House bouncers in the First Eleven. Haven't we won matches with a whole School House side, without a solitary New House chap in it at all?"

"Yes; but—"

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Blake, in disgust. "It's Kildare's old idea—fair play all round, and peace at any price. He can't, or won't, understand that what Monteith wants isn't fair play at all. He wants to score off the School House. His last move, sticking out of the eleven, has got him into a hole. It's just like Kildare to go and pull him out of it. Small thanks he'll get."

"Still—"

"If I were captain of St. Jim's," said Blake, thumping the table to lend additional emphasis to his statement, "I'd never let the bouncer play for the school again!"

"But as you're not captain of St. Jim's," remarked Digby, "and ain't likely to be yet awhile, come and help me do this beastly exercise, and leave off thumping the table."

And the indignant chief of the School House juniors subsided.

Meanwhile, Kildare, quite unconscious of the comment of the juniors, had crossed the quad, and entered the porch of the New House. He made his way directly to Monteith's study.

There was an unpalatable task before him, but the captain of St. Jim's was not the fellow to shrink from it. Matters at the old school were getting into a most unsatisfactory state, so far as the sports were concerned, and Kildare, as captain, was finding his responsibility heavy.

It was not his fault that Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, and the second best footballer at St. Jim's, had chosen to act in an obstinate and unreasonable manner. But he had to deal somehow with the result of it.

"Come in!" called out the prefect, as Kildare knocked.

And the captain of St. Jim's entered James Monteith's study.

Monteith was not alone. There were three or four seniors of the New House with him, and they all turned and looked at Kildare, as if wondering what was implied by his visit to the enemy's camp.

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Monteith, not very genially.

"I've come over for a chat about the footer, Monteith," said the captain quietly, "if you have a few minutes to spare. If you're busy—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Monteith carelessly. "Sit down!"

Kildare sat down.

"I want to speak about it in a friendly spirit," he said. "There's been friction enough already, goodness knows!"

"Well, whose fault was it?" said Monteith tartly.

"We needn't go into that."

"I'm afraid we can't help going into it. You turned all the New House members of the team out, with two exceptions, and the others resigned as a protest. You couldn't expect them to do anything else."

Monteith's manner was the reverse of conciliatory. But here, Baker, one of the New House seniors, and former outside-right in the First Eleven, chimed in quickly:

"Let's hear what Kildare has to say, Monteith. I'm sure we all want to come to an understanding, and end the present state of affairs."

Monteith bit his lip. He never could depend upon Baker to back him up in all his measures.

Baker was loyal to his House, but he did not forget, like Monteith, that the New House was only part of St. Jim's, and that to the school as a whole his loyalty was also due.

And as Baker was a prefect, and had a great deal of influence in the New House, Monteith was compelled to pay some regard to his opinions.

"We're at an impasse now," continued Baker. "The New House is out of it, so far as sports are concerned, and I, for one, don't believe in standing on our dignity, and letting the reputation of the college go to the dogs."

"Hear, hear!" said Webb. "I'm sure you agree with that, Monty."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Monteith savagely. "I agree with that. If Kildare's got any reasonable offer to make, I'll jump at it. But I fancy it's only the same old tale—the New House has got to knuckle under to the School House."

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Kildare. "I never asked that or wanted it. In turning out of the team players I considered not up to the mark, I only exercised my unquestionable right as



captain of the eleven. It is unfortunate that they happened to be all New House chaps—

"Very unfortunate," sneered Monteith. "But I found no fault with you or Baker. You resigned of your own accord."

"Yes, as a protest."

"We have played matches with a wholly School House side; but that isn't satisfactory. We have managed to keep our end up, so far. But a wholly School House team doesn't represent all St. Jim's, and two of our best players belong to this House. I'd gladly take five or six players from the New House, if I could, but you haven't the men."

"That's a matter of opinion."

"Well, I don't know," broke in Baker again. Baker had a most uncomfortable way of stating plain facts at the most awkward moments. "It isn't a pleasant confession to make, but, as a matter of fact, we have very few men up to the First Eleven form."

Kildare brightened a good deal. He could see from the start that he had only hostility to look for from Monteith, but that others of the New House seniors were quite ready to accept the olive branch.

As a matter of fact, the New House felt their exclusion from first team matches very keenly, and Monteith, though as obstinate as ever, was threatened with something like a mutiny in his own House if the present state of affairs continued.

"Well," he said snappishly, "have you come to make an offer, Kildare? We took up the position that, if we were allowed to play only two men in the eleven, we wouldn't play at all. We haven't altered our minds about that."

"I have discussed the matter with my own side," said the captain of St. Jim's, "and we've made up our minds

to make as big a concession as can be made without endangering the matches."

"You can leave all that out and come down to facts."

Kildare's eyes flashed, but he went on quietly.

"We want to meet you in every way. As captain, I cannot forgo the duty of selecting the team. It would be better for me to resign than that. But I am willing to take four New House men into the First Eleven on trial."

"You're going to reinstate the men turned out?" asked Monteith, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes. This would indeed be a triumph for the New House, and for the policy pursued by the prefect.

But Kildare shook his head.

"No. Rake, Sefton, and Jones are barred! They are no good!"

"Then—" began Monteith hotly.

"Let me finish. I am willing to take in four New House men, but I must select them myself, with a view solely to their qualities as players."

"Oh, let's hear the names, by all means!"

"Yourself, Baker, Webb, and Gray."

Monteith was about to reply with a refusal, but he paused. He saw by the faces of his companions that they were willing to accept the compromise offered by the captain of St. Jim's, and he was himself surprised by the extent of Kildare's concessions.

The seniors named were all present, and they looked very expressively at Monteith. If he refused Kildare's offer the danger of a split in the side, a dispute of his authority in his own House, was imminent. And so the prefect paused.

"Would you mind giving us a bit of time to think it over?" he suggested at last.

Kildare rose.

"Certainly! I'm now making up the

eleven for the Headland match to-morrow. If you send me over a note presently, it will do, so that I can put the names on the notice-board for to-morrow morning."

"Very well."

And Kildare, with a pleasant nod, quitted the study.

The New House seniors looked at one another.

"I can see you're inclined to accept the offer," said Monteith coldly.

"I'm not!" said Sefton promptly. "I'd stick out for half the team if I were you."

"Rats!" said Baker. "The offer is a jolly good one, and we ought to take it. The position was getting simply intolerable, and this is a way out of it without any loss of dignity, as the proposal comes from the School House."

"My sentiments exactly," agreed Webb.

"And mine," added Gray.

Monteith nodded shortly.

"Very well, as you seem to be agreed, we'll take the offer," he said. "I'll send Kildare a note over by Figgins this evening."

The seniors, greatly pleased with the turn affairs had taken, quitted the room, discussing the Headland match, which was coming off the next day.

Only Sefton remained with Monteith. He looked inquiringly at the prefect.

"You don't think this will end the rows, do you, Monteith?" he asked.

Monteith smiled in his sour way.

"No; I don't. I'd have flung Kildare's offer back in his face, but I don't want a split in the New House; and those fellows believe in Kildare, and in his talk about standing together for the School, and that rot. Kildare will think he has scored when he gets my note. But let him wait a little. This won't be the end of it!"



Thump! There was a simultaneous yell from Manners and Lowther as Tom Merry brought his fist down emphatically upon the table. Manners' scissors went jabbing through a film, and Lowther's pen scattered a variety of blots over his paper. "Fathead! Chump!" they exclaimed. "Look at my films! Look at my impot!"



## CHAPTER 4.

## What Figgins Found Out!

WHILE the question of football occupied the seniors, a matter of equal, if not of even greater importance was exercising the minds of most of the juniors of St. Jim's.

They had a grievance. It was not often that the rival Houses of St. Jim's agreed upon anything; seldom, indeed, that they saw eye to eye in any matters whatsoever.

But upon this point the juniors of the School House were quite in accordance with the New House youngsters, and the New House youngsters admitted that, for once in their lives, the School House chaps had taken a proper stand.

The question was, indeed, one of vast importance to the juniors. The situation was strained, exceedingly strained, and the cause of it was the following order which had appeared upon the notice-boards in both Houses one morning:

"The School shop will, in future, only be opened between the hours of 11 and 12 a.m., and 4.30 and 6 p.m.  
"By order."

Now, a disinterested outsider might have imagined that any average school-boy could have managed to "blow" a sufficient quantity of pocket-money in the school tuckshop if he devoted an hour in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon to that subject. Also, that between eleven and twelve in the morning, and half-past four and six in the afternoon, he could have done enough damage to his digestion by cramming unnecessary tarts, and consuming unnecessary ginger-pop, to satisfy any ordinary mortal.

But these views were scouted by the youngsters concerned. It was all very well to say that the new regulations were made by the Head for their good, and that they would be all the better for getting out of the habits of indiscriminate stuffing at all odd moments.

It was a question of liberty, of immemorial privilege, and the juniors felt the restriction very keenly.

"Just as if we couldn't be trusted not to make beasts of ourselves!" exclaimed Figgins of the New House to a crowd in the quadrangle after the notice appeared.

"Well, that shows the Head knows you New House chaps," Blake remarked. "If the order applied only to the New House, I could understand it; but—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Figgins crossly. "This is a serious matter. Something ought to be done."

And indeed, the juniors of both Houses agreed that it was a howling shame, and that something certainly ought to be done.

It was proposed to send a round-robin to the Head, signed by all the names in the Lower Forms of both Houses.

A meeting of School House and New House was called to discuss the project.

The meeting, unfortunately, ended in a fight, and nothing came of it but a varied crop of swollen noses, black eyes, and thick ears.

Then a genius proposed that the juniors should show their indignation by boycotting the tuckshop altogether, and confining themselves strictly to the fare provided by the school—a proposition that was greeted with howls of derision.

Still, it was agreed that something ought to be done, though nobody was

quite clear as to what form that "something" should take.

Figgins & Co. were discussing the matter in their study in the New House about the time that Kildare came over to make his offer to the New House seniors.

"You see," said the great Figgins to the dutiful Co., "we've got to do something. We are cocks of the walk in the New House, and the chaps naturally look to us to lead them. It's a question of the honour and dignity of the Lower Forms, you know."

"Of course it is," said Kerr. "The Head acts as if we didn't have any opinions at all, or it didn't matter if we had. Cheek!"

"Shocking!" agreed Fatty Wynn. Fatty felt the new order more keenly than anybody else—he had always been the best customer at the tuckshop. "Suppose we ask our prefect to put the matter before the Head?"

"A fat lot of good that would do!" said Figgins scornfully. "Monteith thinks that the tuckshop ought to be closed altogether. I've heard him say so."

"Well, he is a pig!" exclaimed Kerr. "Right!" assented Figgins. "There are pigs, and pigs; but of all the pigs I ever knew, Monteith is about the—Hallo, Monteith!"

The prefect put his head into the study. The surly look on his face was a pretty plain indication that he had heard Figgins' complimentary reference to himself.

"What were you saying, Figgins?" "Saying?" repeated Figgins reflectively. "Oh, I was saying, Monteith, what an honourable chap you were; the kind of fellow who wouldn't think of coming quietly into a chap's study and hearing what—"

Kerr and Wynn giggled, and Monteith scowled.

"I want you, Figgins," said Monteith. "Take this note over to Kildare. There is no reply."

"Right you are!" said Figgins cheerfully.

"And you had better take care how you speak of your seniors in future," added the prefect, "or you may get a hiding!"

And he walked away. "My hat!" said Kerr. "I thought he was going for you, Figgy. Now, buzz off with that note, and get it over."

"That won't take long."

And Figgins put on his cap and left the New House.

It did not take him long to reach Kildare's study in the School House and deliver Monteith's note.

"Thank you!" said the captain of St. Jim's, taking it. "No answer, Figgins!"

Figgins went out of the study and closed the door. But he did not immediately quit the School House. There seemed to be no one about as he glanced up and down the corridor and up the stairs.

He remembered a certain visit which Jack Blake had paid to his study once upon a time, and the thought came into his head that now was a rare opportunity of returning the compliment.

The thought was immediately followed by action.

Figgins went up the stairs, his long legs taking them three at a time, and reached the famous apartment known as Study No. 6. But he had evidently come at the wrong time, for the door was half-open, and from within could be heard the voices of Blake & Co., all eagerly discussing some topic which seemed of unusual interest to them.

"Mind Figgins doesn't get on the

scent, Blake, that's all," said the voice of Herries.

Figgins grinned. In ordinary circumstances, Figgins would no more have listened to a private conversation than he would have picked a pocket; but now he regarded himself as a scout in the enemy's camp, and fully entitled to learn all he could of their plans.

So he halted outside the door of Study No. 6, and stood there quietly.

"Oh, I don't see how Figgy could get on to the wheeze!" replied Jack Blake. "A good many chaps in our House will have to know, but it won't be given away to the New House. I admit Figgy is keen, but he can't get on to this."

Again the unseen Figgins grinned. "What I mean is," said Herries, "that if the New House found anything out they might get up to some game to collar the grub."

"I know they might, so we're going to be very careful."

"Well, let's hear the plan," said Digby.

"In the first place," said Blake, "we're all agreed that we've got to buck up, and show that we aren't going to knuckle under to any giddy tyranny. Down with the tyrants, and long live the tuckshop and free grub!"

"Bravo!" said Herries.

"To limit the hours of feeding at the tuckshop is an insult to the intelligence and the—the— In short, it's one in the eye to all the Lower Form. I know some sort of restraint is needed in the case of those giddy wasters in the New House. There's that porker, Fatty Wynn, always gorging like some blessed boa-constrictor. I've told him myself that it's dangerous, but he wouldn't take any notice. As for Figgins, it would do him good to eat some more. I should think, and then he mightn't be such a long, skinny, herring-bone specimen as he is."

Figgins breathed hard.

"We're going to stand up for our rights," continued Blake, "like true patriots, and fight for freedom and independence, and grub, and so on. And the best way seems to me to be the plan I've hit upon. By getting a hamper from Rylcombe we shall be supplied with all we want, and can bar the tuckshop altogether, and have a supply all the time in our own quarters."

"Yaas; it's weally a good ideal," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"My dear kid, did your uncle ever have an idea that wasn't really good?" demanded Blake. "Now, as to details. D'Arcy will advance three pounds, which we'll make up to him from our pocket-money in time."

"I should feel honahed to stand tweit," interposed D'Arcy.

"That's very good of you, Adolphus, but we can't sponge on you," said Blake. "We'll stand in equally all round; that's fair. Now, one of us must get to Rylcombe and buy the grub, and select what we're going to get for the tin. I think I could do that best, as I've had a good deal of experience in that line."

"Agreed!"

"But the difficult question is, to get the hamper to the school. Since the new regulation, we shouldn't be allowed to have it. It would have to be delivered in the usual way, and the authorities would confiscate it at once. That's no good. We don't want to blow three quid and not get a single tartlet for the money."

"Crumbs, no!"

"That's where the wisdom of your uncle comes out strong," said Blake, with a superior smile. "Your Uncle



Blake is a big chief. I've thought of a plan for getting the hamper to the School House, and delivered in this very study, without any soul within the walls of St. Jim's being the wiser."

"Bravo!"  
"The first step," said Blake, "was to take a deep interest in the school workshop, and in Mr. Merton's carpentry class."

The chums stared at him.  
"Off your rocker?" asked Dig politely.  
"Just you listen, my son, and don't pass any rude remarks. In the short space of a quarter of an hour, I succeeded in impressing Mr. Merton with the belief that I was the most enthusiastic amateur carpenter that ever chipped a plank in the school workshop."

"What's the good of that?"  
"Only this, that I've got a permit to leave the school and go to Jones', in Rylcombe, the shop that supplies the carpentry things, and look over his tool chests, and buy one if I decide that I'd like to."

"You might have got to the village without a permit."

"Yes, ass; but that wasn't all. I couldn't have brought the hamper home in my waistcoat pocket, or in my watch-case. And, as I've told you, it can't be delivered by carrier. But when it's sent to St. Jim's inside a box with Mr. Jones' name on the outside, it will be brought up to this study without a question being asked by anybody."

For a moment there was a breathless silence. Then the chums of Study No. 6 fell upon Blake and hugged him.

"Ripping!" cried Herries.  
"Spiffing!" gasped Digby.  
"Bwavo!" chortled Arthur Augustus.  
"Oh, moderate your giddy transports!" exclaimed Blake. "Of course the idea's a good one, or I shouldn't have thought of it. Beats any of Tom Merry's wheezes, I think."

"You think you can get a box at Jones'?" asked Dig.

"Certain. He's often got odd empty boxes to sell, with his name and address on the outside as large as life. All I've got to do is to buy one for a bob, and carry it to the confectioner's, and there the things will be packed into it instead of into a common or garden hamper."

"Ripping!"  
"Then the confectioner will send it on by the carrier, old Crabb, and he'll deliver it at the porter's lodge, and even Taggles, suspicious old bouncer as he is, will never have any suspicion that it doesn't contain hardware and things."

"Of course he won't. The idea's simply great."

"So he'll trot it up here," continued Blake, "and there we are! We'll have enough tommy for ourselves for weeks, and we can sell it at cost price to the other chaps, too, if they like, so that they can bar the tuckshop."

"Blake, old chap, you're a great man. The only thing is, not to let those New House cads get the faintest glimmer of a suspicion of the scheme, or Figgins will get up to some trick to loot the grub as sure as eggs," said Herries.

"Right-ho! Not a whisper outside the House," agreed Blake. "Figgins mustn't get the least idea. I'll go down to Rylcombe this evening, and we'll have the box up here to-morrow."

Figgins, outside the study door, grinned hugely, and went with a silent step down the stairs. His visit had panned out better than he had hoped. Five minutes later he burst into his own room in the New House upon the startled Co.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" demanded Kerr and Wynn together, as they stared at the excited countenance of their leader.

"Trouble for the School House, my sons!" said Figgins. "Listen, and I will a tale unfold. This is where we go on the giddy warpath."

The Co. listened eagerly as he related what he had discovered. Then three heads were put earnestly together, and the New House juniors plotted a plot, which was destined to have very successful results for the plotters.

CHAPTER 5.

The Absent Rivals!

"MY Aunt Georgina!" exclaimed Blake, stopping before the notice-board in the Hall the next morning. "Here's some special news!"

"What's up?" asked Herries, stopping also.

"Read for yourself, my son."

There was very soon a crowd round the notice-board. Every eye was glued upon a sheet of paper pinned there, in the well-known handwriting of the captain of St. Jim's. It contained the list of names in the school eleven for the football match of the afternoon, when Headland College were to visit St. Jim's.

The last time the list had appeared the names had all belonged to boys of the School House, and this, in the eyes of most of the School House fellows, was exactly as it should have been.

But an alteration had now been made. The eleven to meet Headland contained four names from the New House.

The list ran as follows:

Rushden; Gray, Lefevre; Webb, Darrell, Berry; Drake, Langton, Kildare, Monteith, Baker.

Four of these belonged to the New House — Monteith, Baker, Gray, and Webb.

It was evident to all that a compromise had been arrived at, and that Kildare had made a great concession in order to bring the New House into line with the rest of the school.

"Well, I call that rot," said Blake. "As if we couldn't have licked Headland without any of those New House bouncers in the team!"

"Peace at any

price," sniffed Dig. "You see how it'll turn out. They'll give the game away to Headland."

"If Kildare would take my advice —" went on Blake.

"Why don't you go to his study and offer it to him, Blake?" sniggered Mellish. "He'd be grateful."

"I'll offer you something if you snigger at me," said Blake, "and you'll get it on the nose!"

Whereupon Mellish said no more, and the chums of Study No. 6 continued to discuss the situation with indignant emphasis until a senior appeared on the scene, when they all scuttled away.

But it was not only by the juniors that Kildare's action was criticised.

Kildare's position was a difficult one, and few of the fellows made full allowance for its difficulty. The dream of the captain was to get the two Houses to pull heartily together for the good of the school; but it was a dream difficult of realisation.

He kept steadily at it, but he found it a very uphill task.

He saw very clearly that it was not satisfactory for only one House to be represented in the college eleven, even

(Continued on the next page.)

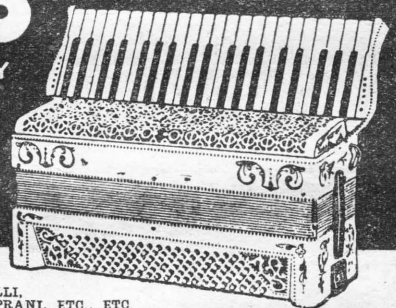
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if they could win matches, and that was by no means certain.

They had certainly pulled off some very creditable successes, but fortune had favoured them so far. Kildare had thought a great deal about the matter, and the olive branch to the New House had been the result.

In this the more thoughtful of the School House seniors were with him.

But the majority were not thoughtful, and, though they did not dispute the will of their captain, who was indeed the idol of the School House, they shook their heads solemnly over this new decision, and predicted that Kildare would be sorry for it.

Still, it could not be denied that of the New House recruits Monteith and Baker, at least, were first-class players, and Gray and Webb were fellows certain to do their best.

The Headland match was eagerly looked forward to. When the new eleven took the field, it would be seen how the experiment was to turn out.

If the team pulled well together, and the visitors were beaten, it would be a triumph for Kildare's policy of conciliation, and it would settle a knotty point—the formation of the college team to meet Mexborough, a neighbouring town, with whom a fixture had long been arranged, and who were known to be extremely dangerous opponents.

So when the afternoon came there was a crowd round the football ground, both Houses being strongly represented.

Study No. 6 marched down to the playing fields, prepared to do battle with Figgins & Co. for the best place at the ropes; but the lanky form of Figgins was conspicuous by its absence. Nor was the sturdy form of Kerr, nor the fat figure of Fatty Wynn to be seen.

"Can't understand this," said Blake.

"Where are Figgins & Co.? Thought they'd be on the ground pretty early."

"Detained, perhaps," hazarded Herries.

"H'm! More likely up to some game!"

Herries looked alarmed.

"I say, they can't have got on the track of the grub, can they?"

Blake shook his head.

"Of course not! There hasn't been a whisper outside the House. As we've decided, after all, not to tell even School House fellows until the grub was actually here, the secret is only between us four. None of us have blabbed."

"No; that's a cert!" said Digby. "Figgy is sharp, but he can't be on the scent this time. I dare say he's up to some game, but it isn't that."

"Well, the thought crossed my mind," said Herries. "Figgy is such an artful dodger, and the box is due this afternoon, you know. But I suppose it's all right."

"Of course it is!" said Blake. "Hallo, there's Monteith walking with Kildare. Don't hiss him; see how he plays up first."

And the chums began to discuss the coming match, and forgot about Figgins & Co.

Blake's grand idea had been carried out without a hitch so far. He had visited Jones' in the village, and effected the purchase of a great box, with the name, trade, and address of Jones' fully inscribed in big, black stencilled letters on the outside.

He had taken that box to the confectioner's, and laid in a supply of all kinds of edibles, sufficient to fill the box to the brim, and to account for the whole of the three pounds devoted to the purpose.

That box the confectioner had agreed to send by the local carrier, addressed

to Master Blake at the School House, the following day.

No one at St. Jim's who was not in the secret could guess that the box came from any establishment other than Jones', and it would pass under the eyes of the most conspicuous prefect without question.

Blake's keen interest in carpentry was a sufficient explanation of the box coming to him. It was not too large to hold only what was supposed to be inside it—a tool-chest, and various materials for making all sorts of articles. Who was to guess the nature of its contents?

So Blake and his chums waited, easy in their minds, in the full assurance that the box would arrive quite safely in charge of old Crabb, the carrier, in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, they gave their attention to the football field.

Headland arrived in their motor-coach, and were accorded a warm welcome by the Saints.

Headland, were not by any means the most formidable opponents St. Jim's met, and Kildare had been wise to try the new team with them before playing the eleven in the match with Mexborough Town.

There was a hearty cheer as the visitors streamed into the field. They looked very fit, but the Saints had little doubt that the home team would come out victorious, if they pulled together. That was the question.

Could the New House fellows be relied upon to back up the captain?

Kildare did not permit himself to doubt it for a moment. And, indeed, three, at least, of the New House members meant to do their best. If a lingering doubt lurked in Kildare's mind, it was on Monteith.

But the New House prefect looked very fit as he lined up with his side, and he certainly looked as if he meant business.

The visitors won the toss, and it fell to the Saints to kick off, which they did against a keen wind.

The afternoon was fine, though cold. Kildare kicked off and the game commenced.

"Now," said Blake, "we shall see what we shall see."

## CHAPTER 6.

### Trouble in the Team!

WHAT they saw first was the visitors coming down with the wind in a fine rush for the home goal. Then Blake and

Study No. 6 shouted:

"Buck up, Saints!"

"Play up!" shouted Kangaroo of the Shell.

Whether encouraged by the attention of Study No. 6 or not, the Saints certainly did play up, and the Headland rush was stopped, and the ball went to midfield from Gray's foot.

It came down right to Monteith, who was on it like lightning.

The New House prefect went through the Headlanders like a shot.

The spectators watched eagerly. Loud rang the cheers of the New House as Monteith covered the ground like a deer.

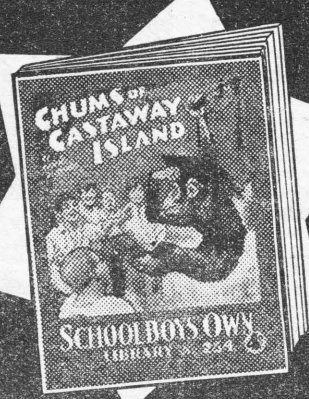
"Bravo, Monteith!"

Blake sniffed.

"If Monteith scores a goal," he said, "I'll say 'Good old New House!' But he won't, my sons—he won't! Why doesn't he pass!"

Even as Blake spoke, Monteith was checked by a Headland back; but he passed the ball to Kildare in time, and

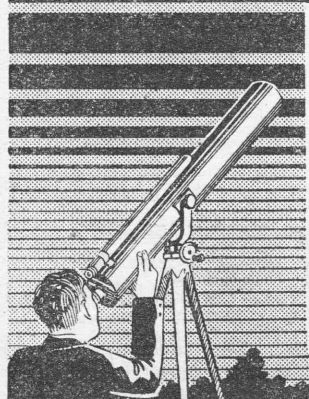
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the captain of St. Jim's slammed it home.

"Goal!"  
Things were looking well for St. Jim's.

With the wind in their faces they had scored a goal in the first ten minutes.

But that success acted as a spur to the Headland team, and when they kicked off again they followed it up with a desperate attack.

The tussle was hard and fast. Again Gray, at back, sent the ball to midfield when the visitors looked dangerous, and the New House cheered their man to the echo.

Two home forwards were on the ball in a moment, while Darrell was running up. It was a moment of tussle and wild excitement, and what followed happened like a flash.

Darrell, shouldered by a Headland forward, reeled and fell against Monteith, who went staggering. But for that unfortunate chance, Monteith would have got the ball away. As it was, Kildare, who was a second behind him, captured it, and took it up the field.

Monteith, before he could regain his balance, went over in the rush that followed, and he was left gasping on the grass.

No one was looking at him as he slowly rose, his face white with fury.

Every glance was following the game, sweeping on resistlessly towards the Headland goal.

Kildare had the ball, and the other forwards were backing him up well. With a beautiful exhibition of passing, they bore it through the Headland defence, and then Drake centred to Kildare at the psychological moment, and the Saints' skipper sent the ball in with a shot that gave the goalie not the ghost of a chance.

St. Jim's roared over the second goal.

"But look at Monteith!" muttered Blake.

The New House prefect was white with rage, and his eyes were burning.

Darrell, glancing at him, remembered the tumble in the struggle for the ball, which had slipped his memory in the excitement of what followed.

"Sorry, Monteith," he said, as the players came back to the centre of the field—"sorry I was shoved against you!"

"It's a lie," said Monteith thickly. "It's a lie—and you know it! You did it on purpose!"

Darrell stared at him.

"Don't be a fool!" he said shortly. "Do you know what you're talking about?"

"Yes, I do, and I know that it wasn't an accident made you shove me off the ball and give it to Kildare!"

Kildare caught those words, and his eyes flashed.

"Monteith!"

The prefect glared at him.

"Well, what have you got to say?"

"I've got this to say—that you'd better hold your tongue!"

"I shall say what I like, and—"

"Line up! Silence there!"

The prefect lined up with the rest, but his face was very black.

His heart was burning with anger as the game restarted, and he was in a mood for anything—anything but good play and backing up Kildare.

Kildare noticed that he was playing slackly now, and his eyes flashed, but he said nothing. But presently a Headland attack came right through

the Saints, and Monteith, who had a chance to get the ball, let it pass him.

"Play up, Monteith!" cried Kildare. The prefect gave him a savage look.

Kildare gritted his teeth. It came into his mind that the prefect was slacking on purpose—that this was Monteith's revenge for his supposed injury.

The backs succeeded in clearing, and a fine opening came to the home forwards. Monteith was on the ball quickly this time.

A half-back was rushing upon him; Kildare stood ready to receive the pass, and for a moment it seemed that the prefect would send him the ball as he expected.

But as he caught the captain's look, there seemed to Monteith's distorted imagination something threatening in it, and he set his lips spitefully.

Kildare uttered a sharp exclamation as Monteith mis-kicked, and the ball dropped just before the Headland half-back, who sent it right up the field in a twinkling.

For a moment Kildare quivered with anger.

But it was no time for recrimination then.

The situation had to be saved. But that was impossible, as it proved; the advantage given to the Headlanders was well improved by them, and in a couple of minutes the ball was in the home net.

Then the whistle went for half-time, and both teams trooped off for a much-needed rest.

In the home dressing-room in the pavilion Kildare approached Monteith.

His eyes were blazing, and even the prefect, though he had provoked the conflict, shrank for a moment from his look.

"Monteith, I want to know your intentions!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain. "Are you going to play up like a decent fellow, or aren't you?"

Monteith scowled.

"What fault do you find with my play?"

"You were directly the cause of giving away that goal."

"It's a lie!"

The veins stood out on Kildare's forehead, but with an effort he controlled himself.

"I appeal to the team!" he cried, looking round.

"We all saw it!" exclaimed Darrell. "It was plain enough!"

The New House fellows were silent. They were not inclined to bear witness against their chief prefect.

But the School House players backed up Darrell's words.

"We all saw it," said Rushden.

"Did you all see Darrell barge me over, too, so as to let Kildare get the ball?" sneered the New House prefect.

"That's a lie!" said Darrell unceremoniously. "You know I did nothing of the kind, Monteith! I was shoved over myself, and couldn't help it."

"Well, I say you could help it, and that you did it on purpose. You saw it, Gray. What did you think?"

Gray hesitated.

"Well, it looked like it," he said.

"But I don't think Darrell would do that, Monteith."

"Only a rotten cad would bring such an accusation!" exclaimed Kildare.

"There's not a word of truth in it! Darrell had no intention of doing anything of the kind."

Monteith snapped his teeth.

(Continued on the next page.)



**MAKE THE JESTER SMILE AND WIN HALF-A-CROWN!**

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**IN A HURRY.**

Pat: "Go easy, Mike—go easy! We've got another seven miles to walk."

Mike: "Shure, and that's why I'm hurrying; I want to get there before I'm tired out!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Cameron, 9, Union Street West, Arbroath.

\* \* \*

**A BALD STORY.**

Bill: "My father once faced a lion without turning a hair."

Tom: "Coo, he must have been brave!"

Bill: "No; just bald!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Marville, 35, Lime-Tree Avenue, Coventry.

\* \* \*

**INCURABLE.**

The professor decided to cure himself of being absent-minded.

In the morning he squeezed the toothpaste on to his shaving brush and was about to clean his teeth with it, when he recovered himself.

"Ha, caught myself just in time!" he muttered triumphantly, lathering his face with the toothpaste!

Half-a-crown has been awarded to O. Chandler, 22, High Street, Harborne, Birmingham.

\* \* \*

**THAT TORE IT!**

Irate Customer: "Here, look what your laundry have done."

Laundryman: "I can't see anything wrong with the lace."

Irate Customer: "Lace! That was a sheet!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss S. Harrison, Corner House Filling Station, Crick, near Chepstow.

\* \* \*

**"FORESEAIING" THINGS.**

Insurance Agent: "But surely you agree that you ought to take out a policy to cover your burial expenses?"

Scot: "Na, na, mon—I might be lost at sea!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Proctor, 5, Estcourt Grove, Spencer Road, Bradford, Yorks.

\* \* \*

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT.**

Yankee Sailor: "Our naval flagship is so big that the captain has to ride round in his motor-car to give the ratings orders."

English Sailor: "That's nothing. Our flagship is so big that the cook has to go through the stew in a submarine to see if the spuds are done!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Petty, 27, Home View, Murston, Sittingbourne, Kent.



"I say he did do it, and that it was done on purpose!" he cried. "I don't expect fair play from you, Kildare!"

"You mean," said Kildare quietly, "that you are looking for trouble. In that case, you had better get out of the team."

"I'm quite willing to go, but I shall not go alone. There are three here who will stand by me."

Gray, Webb, and Baker looked at each other dubiously.

To desert their chief at such a moment was difficult, but to desert the school eleven in the middle of a hard-fought match would not be playing the game.

"I say, don't let us go any further!" exclaimed Baker anxiously. "Let us all play up for the school. The whistle goes in a minute. For goodness' sake let's stop rowing in the middle of a match! We can quarrel after we've licked Headland!"

"I don't want to quarrel," said Monteith. "But Kildare has accused me of deliberately playing into the enemy's hands."

"He didn't mean that, I'm sure," said the pacific Baker. "We all know you wouldn't do such a thing. There goes the whistle! Come on, let's play up!"

There was no time for further discussion.

The matter dropped just where it was, and the whole team turned out for the second half. But if ever a football team was in a state of mind unfit for winning a match, it was the St. Jim's First Eleven at that moment.

## CHAPTER 7.

### A Capture from the Enemy!

**W**HILE the first half of the Headland match was being fought on the football ground at St. Jim's, Figgins & Co. were not idle.

Blake had remarked upon the absence of the trio, but he little dreamed how they were engaged while he and his chums were watching the footer.

Figgins & Co. were on the warpath. "I'm sorry to have to cut the match," said Figgins, as they went down the lane towards Rylcombe, "but it can't be helped. Perhaps we shall be back in time for the second half. I hope so."

"Well, it's worth it, if we can get this wheeze off on the School House cads," remarked Kerr; "and I really think it will work."

"Worth it!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I should say so! Think of the feast we'll have when we've got the loot safe in the New House!"

"Yes, that's just like you, Fatty—always thinking of the grub!"

"Well, I dare say you'll do your whack when it comes to putting it away," said Fatty. "But, I say, why not invite Study No. 6 to the feed; it would be no end of a lark to have 'em to a feed on their own tommy."

Figgins grinned. "Yes, that's a good idea. We'll do it."

"Only we haven't got the grub yet," said the matter-of-fact Kerr.

"The wheeze can't fail," said Figgins seriously. "Old Crabb, the carrier, always comes along at the same time in the afternoon. He always stops at the Green Man for a refresher as regularly as clockwork. He leaves his cart in the lane, and his horse wouldn't move for anything short of an earthquake. What's to prevent us from scoffing the loot?"

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"Nothing," said Fatty Wynn, smacking his lips. "My hat! What a glorious feed we'll have when we've got it."

"The feed won't be so glorious as scoring off the School House," grinned Fatty. "Blake will want to kick himself hard this time."

And, grinning hugely at the anticipation, the New House juniors hurried along the lane.

The Green Man was an inn between the school and the village.

The boys soon came in sight of it.

"Whoa, there! Whoa, I say!"

It was a well-known voice.

Figgins shoved his companions into the cover of a hedge, and they watched.

A covered cart was coming up from the direction of Rylcombe, with an ancient horse between the shafts and an ancient man holding the reins.

Old Crabb, the carrier, was a well-known character in those parts. His private opinion, which he frequently expressed in the parlour of the Green Man, was that all boys should be painlessly extinguished at an early age.

And, indeed, Crabb had had more than one skirmish with the boys of St. Jim's, and had come off second best.

"There he is," said Figgins, "as large as life, and twice as natural. Don't let him see you, chaps, or he'll smell a mouse. He's always ratty when a St. Jim's chap is around."

The trio lay close, watching the carrier through the hedge.

Crabb drew his ancient horse to a halt and stepped down, throwing the reins on the horse's back.

Without a suspicion that foes were in ambush, Crabb left his cart and disappeared through the gate in the fence. He had barely passed into the Green Man when Figgins & Co. came out of their cover.

"Quiet does it!" whispered Figgins.

In a few seconds he was in the cart.

The biggest object it contained was a wooden box bearing the name, style, and title of Jones & Co., of Rylcombe, in black stencilled letters, and addressed on the label to Master Blake, The School House, St. James' College.

Figgins' eyes glistened as he saw it.

The loot was at his feet.

"Got it?" muttered Kerr.

"Yes. Stand ready to take it. It's beastly heavy!"

"All the better," murmured Fatty Wynn. "All the more grub in it."

Figgins let down the tailboard and shoved the box over.

Kerr and Wynn received it, and, carrying it between them, rushed it away from the spot.

Figgins refastened the tailboard and jumped out of the carrier's cart.

Quickly he followed his comrades.

Kerr and Wynn had the box on the other side of the hedge in a twinkling.

There Figgins joined them.

There was no sign of the carrier.

He was safe for a quarter of an hour inside the hospitable doors of the Green Man.

The three chums sat down on the box and howled with mirth.

"We've done the trick!" gasped Figgins. "Hear me smile!"

And he smiled in a way that made the rooks rise from the tree overhead.

"I say, the sooner we're off the scene the better," said Kerr. "This is where we do the vanishing trick. We don't want to be spotted with the plunder."

"No," agreed Figgins; "let's be off. This is the first time I've ever turned highwayman, but it seems to be an easy job. Only, of course, we mustn't stick to Blake's box. That would be naughty."

Kerr and Wynn stared.

"What are you driving at, Figgy?"

"Why, we must let Blake have his box. We're only going to stick to the grub."

"Oh, I see!"

"This seizure of supplies," said Figgy, "is exactly in accordance with international law. There's a state of war at St. Jim's, isn't there?"

"There is."

"Therefore the School House may be considered to be in a state of siege."

"Of course it may."

"Therefore supplies going into the garrison are contraband of war, and liable to seizure by the beleaguering forces."

"They is—I mean they are."

"Ergo—that's Latin—we, the enemy, seize them, and so that they shan't be wasted, we're going to eat them. I was brought up to be economical. Which is all in accordance with the laws of war, though if old Crabb had seen us collaring the contraband, he might not have seen reason. He might even have called a policeman."

"Figgy, you're quite right, and you speak like a giddy oracle; but it's time we were shifting."

"Come on, then."

They carried the box, on the inner side of the hedge, to some distance, and then set it down again.

The weight was considerable and the size awkward.

"We can't carry it to the school," said Kerr.

"If we could, we wouldn't pass the gates with it," replied Figgins. "Did you put that hammer and chisel in your pocket as I told you, Kerr?"

"Yes; here they are."

"Hand them over."

Figgins soon had the box open, untying the rope and forcing the lock which secured it. The eyes of the Co. glistened at the sight of the array of paper bags crammed with edibles within.

"Out with 'em!" said Figgins. "They've got to be packed into the hollow tree, to wait till called for. Buck up!"

"But—"

"No time for 'buts,' Fatty. Do as I tell you."

"But—"

"Do you want me to lam you? Buck up!"

They set to work without further argument. Figgy was chief, and Fatty knew best. At all events, he had his way. He had set down the box close to a huge hollow tree, a well-known spot to the boys of St. Jim's.

The contents of the box were transferred to the inside of the big trunk, which was large enough to hold twice as much.

The box was soon empty.

"Now shove stones and stuff into it," commanded Figgins.

The Co. dutifully obeyed. The box was filled to the brim with stones, turf, and rubbish of all kinds. Then Figgy closed the lid, and as the lock was hopelessly broken, he fastened it with a couple of nails.

Then it was corded again.

"Now give me a hand."

They carried the box into the lane and set it down in the middle. Then Figgy's plan dawned upon his companions. In a few minutes the carrier's cart would be along, and Crabb would have to stop, for the box lay directly in his path.

Even if he had not missed the box, he could not fail to recognise it when he stopped.



Barely had Darrell cleared the ball than Montsith, white with rage, swung round on him and hit him full in the face. With a cry Darrell reeled backwards from the unexpected blow.

The trio took cover behind a hedge close at hand, and watched and waited. The crack of the carrier's whip came along the road.

"Whoa! Whoa, there, I tell 'ee!" The carrier's cart came into view. The old horse was plodding steadily on, and Crabb was cracking his whip to induce it to "buck up" a little.

The chums watched the carrier breathlessly.

"He's coming!" whispered Figgins. Willingly enough the old horse came to a halt. Crabb had caught sight of the box in the road. He stared at it over his horse's ears in blank amazement.

It was certainly a peculiar place for such a box to be in, and at the second glance Crabb recognised it as the one he had supposed to be in the cart behind him.

He turned his head and looked into the covered cart.

On coming out of the Green Man he had mounted to his seat, and driven off without thinking of looking among the contents of the cart. Now, for the first time, he saw that the box was missing. His gaze returned to the box in the road.

The idiotic bewilderment depicted upon his face made the hidden boys choke with suppressed laughter.

For some minutes the old carrier sat there, his head turning slowly from the interior of the cart to the box in the road, and back again from the box to the cart.

Figgins nearly shrieked; Kerr had buried his face in the grass, and Fatty Wynn stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth.

The three were convulsed. "It's ghostses, that's what it is!" murmured Crabb. "Ghostses in broad daylight!"

Figgins could contain himself no longer. He let out a yell that rang over the fields, and Crabb gave a jump.

Figgins having thus given himself away, the chums no longer restrained their mirth, and a shout went up which soon enlightened Crabb as to the real nature of the "ghostses" which had shifted the box.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Crabb scowled at the three figures that emerged from the trees, almost doubled up with laughter.

"You dratted himps!" he said. "Wot game 'ave you been playin'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "So you took that there box outer my cart while I was at the Green Man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And carried it 'ere, did you, you dratted himps!"

"Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!" Crabb jumped down into the road, his long whip whisking in a very businesslike way, and Figgins & Co. promptly bolted.

The carrier knew that it was useless to pursue the elusive three, and he stood in the road brandishing his whip and hurling forth threats of what he would do when the mischievous youngsters came within his reach.

Figgins kissed his hand to the almost frantic carrier.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he trilled. "How did you like your ale at the Green Man?"

Crabb did not answer that question. He lifted the box back into the cart and drove on.

Figgins had secured it tightly, and restored the lock to its former appearance, and, as the nails held the lid firmly, the carrier could not see that it had been tampered with. His only

idea was that the juniors had been having a "lark" with him, but he was greatly relieved at regaining possession of the box.

He reflected that they might have left him to go on to the school without it, and then he would have been in trouble. This reflection calmed him somewhat, and his face relaxed as he drove on.

Figgins & Co. cut across the field to St. Jim's.

"That's all right," said Figgins. "Blake will get the box, but he won't get the grub. They're expecting a big feed in Study No. 6, but if they eat what's inside that box—well, I hope they'll enjoy it."

And at the thought of the surprise that was in store for the chums of the School House, the trio had to stop and yell again.

"But how are we going to get the stuff to the New House, Figgy?" asked Kerr. "You haven't told us yet."

"Easy enough. We'll let a dozen chaps we can trust into the secret, and they can go out with cricket bags, and come back one at a time with the bags full of 'loot. That won't be noticed. We shall get it all into the New House that way. The hollow tree is near enough to the school, you know. That's why I selected it."

"Hallo, listen!" It was a clear whistle from the direction of St. Jim's.

Figgins looked at his watch. "That's for the second half!" he exclaimed. "Come on, we shan't miss all the match, after all."

They raced on, and a few minutes later were mingling with the crowd on the football ground.

The second half of the eventful match THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,444.



between St. Jim's and Headland College had just commenced, and Figgins & Co. were glad to be in time.

### CHAPTER 8. Ordered Off!

THE spectators crowded round the football field knew nothing of what had passed in the home dressing-room; but the more observant of them saw that something was amiss as the "Saints" turned into the field for the second half.

Kildare, though he tried to recover his usual calmness, could not quite banish the cloud from his brow, while Monteith made no effort to hide his temper.

The others were looking more or less disturbed and anxious, too.

Blake at once spotted the looks of the team, and commented upon it.

"Something wrong there," he said. "I suppose Kildare is down on Monteith for chucking that goal away; and he did chuck it away, my sons."

"Oh, rats!" broke in a voice at his elbow. "What do you know about it?"

Blake turned his head, and saw Figgins & Co.

"More than you do, as you weren't on the ground!" replied Blake. "Where have you been? Detained in your class-room like naughty boys?"

Figgins grinned. "We've been out on business," he said. "Sort of speculation, and its turned out well."

Blake looked at him suspiciously. "What tricks have you been up to?"

"Fact is," said Figgy, with an appearance of great candour, "we've been laying in a stock of provisions for a feed in the New House, and we want you to come."

"Honest Injun!"

"Of course, we're going to bar the tuckshop, since their new giddy regulation, and we have laid in a supply of tommy. See? We're going to have a big feed in the Common-room in the New House—all our juniors and you four, if you'll come, and Tom Merry & Co."

"Well, that's decent of you, Figgy," said Blake. "When does the feed come off?"

"This evening; as soon as the match is over, in fact."

"Good enough! We'll be there, won't we, chaps?"

"You bet!" said Herries and Digby together.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Weally honahed, deah boys!"

"Glad to have you," said Figgins. "I think you'll like the spread. The grub is first-class, though I say it."

"Where did you get it?"

"It comes from Rylcombe."

"But suppose they spot it coming in—"

"There's a dozen of our chaps going to fetch it in, one at a time," explained Figgins. "It will be slow work, and a long job, and I dare say a few bags will be confiscated by some beastly, interfering prefect. But that won't hurt; there's plenty, and we've got it cheap."

The Co. nearly exploded at this. Figgins gave them a warning glance.

"So make it pax till after the feast, Blake," went on Figgins. "Don't let any of your cads—your chaps, I mean—raid our kids while the grub's coming in."

"Certainly not," said Blake. "I'll scalp them if they do. It's peace till we've feasted together. It's a go."

"Right you are! I really think you'll

like the feed. Just the things you like, you know; you might have selected them yourself," said Figgins.

There was a shout just then, which interrupted the talk.

All eyes immediately turned to the field again. The St. Jim's forwards were getting away finely, and a hot attack was set up on the visitors' goal.

The wind was now in favour of the Saints, and as they had taken two goals to one with it against them, they were naturally expected to walk over the Headlanders now.

But the crowd soon perceived that the second half was to be far from a walk-over.

The St. Jim's attack was a clever one, but there was a weak spot in the line, and that was at inside-left.

Monteith was in too savage a temper to play well. One weak spot was enough for the Headlanders, and soon the backs succeeded in clearing, and the tussle went to midfield again.

Whether Monteith was doing his best or not, there was no doubt that the prefect had become rather a hindrance than a help to his side.

"If I was Kildare," said Blake impressively, "I'd take that rotter by the scruff of the neck and chuck him over the ropes."

"Oh, you shut up!" said Figgins. "Monteith is all right."

"Do you call that football he's playing, Figgy?"

"What you don't know about footer, Blake, would fill an encyclopedia," replied Figgins. "Monteith's all right if he's left alone."

"I'd leave him alone!" muttered Blake. "I'd give him a chance to get off the field, with a football boot behind him to help him off!"

"You go and eat coke!"

Figgins & Co. naturally stood up for their House prefect against the School House criticism, but as the game wore on they themselves began to look serious.

Either Monteith was deliberately slacking, or his bad temper spoiled his form.

At all events, he was of very little use to his side.

The Headland attack swept up to the home goal, against the wind, and the St. Jim's players had to fall back to defend their citadel. But the backs put their "beef" into it, and the Headlanders did not succeed in scoring, and the ball went out again from a press of players, and dropped fairly at Monteith's feet.

The prefect fumbled with it, and in a few seconds a Headlander would have had it; but in the nick of time Darrell rushed up, and, shoving Monteith unceremoniously aside, sent the ball up the field with a powerful kick.

Had Monteith been playing the game as he should have done, the action of the centre-half would have been inexcusable; but in point of fact, it was only Darrell's prompt action that saved the situation, and relieved the home goal from heavy pressure.

But Monteith thought little of that. Darrell had barely taken the kick, when the prefect swung round on him, perfectly white with rage, and struck him in the face.

With a cry Darrell reeled backwards. Pheep! went the referee's whistle. The game stopped.

Kildare strode towards Monteith, his eyes on fire.

Darrell had seemed to be about to hurl himself upon the prefect; but he remembered in time where he was, and his hands dropped to his sides, and he stood quivering with passion.

Kildare made an imperious gesture to the prefect.

"Get off the field, Monteith!"

"What?"

"Get off the field."

"I shall not go alone!"

"Get off the field, I tell you!"

Monteith cast a glance at the other

New House players.

"Come!" he said. "I told you we

should not get fair play here! Come!"

He strode away towards the pavilion.

There was a momentary hesitation

among the others.

All were strung to a pitch of high excitement, and only one or two had a clear idea of what had happened, it had passed so quickly.

Monteith strode away without looking back. Then Gray turned and walked after him. Gray's example was all the others wanted.

Baker and Webb followed him with downcast faces. That was the signal for a storm of boing and hissing from the School House juniors, and some of them rushed on the field and yelled uncomplimentary epithets at the New House seniors as they marched off.

The Headland fellows looked at one another in amazement. Such a sight as this they had never seen on a football field before.

Kildare was pale but calm. He had hardly expected this wholesale desertion by the New House fellows; but, even if he had expected it, he could not have acted otherwise than as he had done.

After Monteith's outrageous conduct, it was impossible to allow him to remain on the field.

Blushing under the shame of leaving the St. Jim's team in the lurch, Baker, Webb, and Gray were glad to reach the pavilion.

But the most sanguine of the Saints looked downhearted at finding their ranks thus reduced to the hopeless number of seven players.

After the storm of derisive yells which followed the action of the New House seniors, the crowd were silent. What was to come of this extremely peculiar situation they could not guess.

It was for Kildare to decide.

The captain of St. Jim's took about two seconds to decide. There was no time to think about the matter, and Kildare was not the kind of fellow to give in while a chance was left.

The referee looked at him inquiringly.

Kildare gave a short nod. The whistle went, and the game continued.

St. Jim's had closed their ranks, and, of course, all their efforts were now devoted to defence.

Attack, in the circumstances, would have been folly, but there was a chance that, by a careful defence, the home team might keep their goal intact during the remaining twenty minutes of the second half.

If so, St. Jim's would win by the odd goal of three. But they would not do it if Headland could help it.

"Buck up, you chaps!" muttered the Headland skipper. "We're not going to let seven players walk off the field winners!"

And Headland bucked up.

But, great as was the disparity of numbers, the Saints put up a really splendid fight.

Kildare, at least, had now only men he could fully rely upon, and who were devoted to him. The wind, too, was now very keen, and it was in the faces of the Headlanders. And Rushden in goal was a mighty keeper.

And so for a time, at least, the rushes of the visitors were checked, and though

the struggle was now wholly near the home goal, the goal long remained intact.

At last, however, a lightning shot from the Headland skipper found the net, and the score was equal.

There were five more minutes to play, and the St. Jim's boys longed for Father Time to hurry up a little and end their suspense.

For it seemed impossible for Kildare and his men to hold the Headlanders so long.

In the excitement of the moment the deserters were forgotten.

Monteith left the pavilion and went to the New House, and Gray, after a few minutes, followed him.

Webb and Baker remained, watching the match, and looking about the most woebegone fellows at St. Jim's. They had not had time to think before acting, and had followed their accustomed leader.

But their unsportsmanlike action was brought home to them more fully as they stood by and watched their comrades gallantly fighting a losing battle.

The Headland attack was growing desperate. But still Kildare and his men held their ground, and Rushden, between the posts, was a marvel.

Loudly the crowd cheered their goalkeeper at every save he made.

Peep!

It was the whistle.

The keen suspense was ended. The strain was removed.

The game was over, and it had ended in a draw, two goals to two, and in the circumstances such a draw was more honourable to the gallant seven than an ordinary eleven.

Fagged out by that last gruelling twenty minutes, the Saints left the field, while deafening cheers rang far over the ground.

But the New House fellows were mostly silent.

The School House had covered itself with glory that day, but the New House colours had never been brought so low.

Even Figgins & Co. had nothing to say. But Study No. 6 were the last fellows in the world to "chip" their rivals in the face of a real misfortune like this.

"Never mind, Figgy!" said Blake, slapping his rival on the shoulder. "Thank goodness we weren't beaten, that's all! What price that feed?"

Figgins, who had been looking rather down in the mouth, brightened up.

"Right-ho!" he exclaimed. "Come along with me, you bouncers!"

"But you haven't got the tommy in yet!"

"N-no," said Figgins, who had seen the carrier's cart stop at the gates, and did not wish Blake to make the discovery of what the box contained till after the feed; "but that's all right. We want you to help us get ready for the feed, if you will. It's going to be a big affair, you see, in the Common-room, and—"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "We'll come! Buzz along, kids!"

And Study No. 6, who were joined by Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, marched into the New House with Figgins & Co. in the most amicable way in the world.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Serious Meetings!

THESE was a gloomy meeting in Kildare's study after the Headland fellows were gone.

The captain of St. Jim's was looking and feeling extremely depressed. His friends were none too cheerful, either, for though what had happened

## JUST MY FUN

### Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody! What's nicer than a big, sugary doughnut? Two doughnuts.

A convict was caught dropping from a wall. A "big drop" in his hopes!

It breaks without falling. What does? The dawn.

A drone has more eyes than a worker bee. To enable him to dodge work?

**A Persian baker is a hundred and eleven years old. A Wise Old Man of the Yeast.**

Skimpole still remembers his sunbathing blisters. Nature in the raw!

"It is the lower part of a person's face that gives him away," says a psychologist. Unless he is prudent enough to keep it closed.

Mr. Railton is very fond of shooting. He "grouses" for pleasure.

**A manufacturer wants to know if there is an opening for a new light drink. Oh, yes—just above the chin.**

They say Skimpole is so afraid of draughts that he has stopped up all the holes in his bath sponge!

Well, what made the milk turn? When it heard the ice (s)cream.

had not more than borne out their anticipations, they realised what a blow it was for Kildare, and for the fortune of the college in the football field.

Kildare had gone very far—too far, most of his House thought—to conciliate the other House, and this was the result.

Four players had walked off the field in the middle of a game, leaving their side to win or lose, as it chanced.

Such a desertion was unpardonable.

The state of affairs was much worse than it had been before the captain's well-meant efforts to bring the two Houses into line.

The school had cut a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the visitors, and that was what worried Kildare as much as anything. He was very sensitive for the honour of St. Jim's.

Then there was the Mexborough Town match to be considered. Was it to be played by a wholly School House side?

"There's no question about that, I think," said Darrell, when Rushden made the remark. "Even Kildare won't think of playing those rotters again after this, I suppose?"

Kildare coloured.

"You needn't reproach me," he said, in a low voice. "I can see that I have made a hash of the whole thing."

"I didn't mean to reproach you, old fellow," said Darrell quickly. "And you haven't made a hash of it. You've done your best. But an angel from heaven couldn't get on with Monteith."

"I'm afraid that's the case," said the captain slowly. "I've made my last concession. He isn't fit to go on a footer field. He'll never play for St. Jim's again, as far as I'm concerned."

The School House seniors exchanged glances of satisfaction.

This was the stand they had long wanted Kildare to take, and now that he had been driven to take it, they knew that he would be firm.

"Can you tell me, sir," said Gore to Mr. Linton, "how long a donkey can live without brains?" "Wait and see!" snapped Mr. Linton.

I hear an American scientist has tamed a fish. His devoted dogfish?

"Herbs should be carefully planted now," says the Head's gardener. Won't any old thyme do?

**"Prisons get more like schools," says an authority. But convicts feel the "terms" are too long!**

A St. Jim's fellow is learning six languages. He isn't "tongue-tied"—just "tied" to his "tongues."

Specialist: "Yours is a case that will enrich medical science." "Fraid not," said the patient. "I've only got a fiver in the world!"

It is better to give than to lend, we read. It means the same, anyway.

"Rubber soon gets tired," says an expert. You've probably noticed it stretching!

"A boy's conscience will tell him when he is wrong," says an authority. And so will his Form-master.

**The Bank of England says a bank-note lasts two years. But they don't say how it's done!**

Then there was the railway porter who became a bridge player, because he delighted in a "grand slam."

"I can tell you the secret of cooking potatoes in a nutshell," says Fatty Wynn. Wouldn't a saucapan be better, Fatty?

To finish: "Have you a lawyer?" demanded the judge. "No, sah," replied the nigger. "Don't you think you ought to have one?" "No, sah! I don't need one. I 'se goin' to tell de truth!"

Here's luck, boys!

"It's impossible to play him, of course," went on Kildare. "I'm sorry it's happened, but it's no good blinking facts. He deliberately slackened down in the game, and his going for Darrell was the climax. He's out of the eleven, for good and all."

"And a jolly good thing, too, for the eleven!" said Darrell. "Now the air's clear. But the New House are certain to get their backs up over it. Yet I don't see how even they can defend what Monteith did."

"And the others, too!" exclaimed Rushden. "Fancy walking off the field like that, and leaving us to be licked, for all they cared!"

"Well, do you know, I don't blame them very much," said Kildare slowly. "They had no time to think; it all happened so quickly, and they're used to following Monteith's lead. He called on them to back him up, and they obeyed. I believe they were more than half sorry for it afterwards."

"Possibly. But you don't mean to say that you'll let them stop in the team after what they did?" asked Rushden.

Kildare looked worried.

"It's no good closing our eyes to the state of affairs," he said. "We've got a big match on next week, and we want every ounce of talent we can find. Monteith is barred, but Baker is one of the best wingers we've got, and Webb shows up first-rate to-day, while Gray was a giant at back, and, I believe, saved us more than once."

"Oh, I don't find fault with their play! But what's the good of a player you can't depend upon for five minutes together?"

"They followed Monteith's lead, as I said, and we ought not to be hard on them. If they stick to Monteith, and



stay out of the team of their own accord, we shall have to try to fill their places somehow, though, in that case, I tell you plainly, I don't believe we shall be able to stand up to Mexborough."

"By all accounts, Mexborough have been pulling ahead lately; and, to tell the exact truth, they're above the weight of an ordinary school team, and it's a bit of cheek on our part to tackle them at all."

The others were silent.

"As I said," the captain went on, "if they stick by Monteith, we've done with them, for he shan't play again as long as I'm captain. But if they choose to play without him their places will still be open to them."

"But will they?"

"I don't know; but for the sake of the school I hope so."

"But, hang it all, you can't make any advances to them!" said Darrell. "There can't be any question of asking them to play."

"No need. I shall post up their names in the list for the Mexborough match, and if they don't intend to play they will say so."

"They can't very well leave Monteith out in the cold, unless they make up their mind to throw him over."

"Well, they might do worse than that."

"True enough. I don't see how they can stand for their captain such a howling cad as that fellow. Still—"

"Well, we'll give them the chance to stick to their colours," said Kildare. "I'll put up the list on Monday, so as to give them time to think it over."

And so the discussion ended.

Meanwhile, Monteith's study over in the New House was the scene of a meeting equally gloomy and a good deal more bitter.

After his conduct at the match, the prefect was a little dubious as to the results, but he tried to carry off the matter with a high hand.

"You all saw," he said. "Kildare was seeking trouble. He never meant to give us a fair show in the team."

His words were received in a grim silence. For a moment the head prefect of the New House looked uneasy. In that moment he seemed to see the leadership he had so long abused slipping from his fingers. The mutiny in his own House, the split in the New House side which he had dreaded before, seemed to be at hand at last.

"I admit," went on Monteith, "that I was wrong to lose my temper and slog Darrell. But what fellow present could have stood being shoved out of the way by a half? I was on the ball when he shoved me off."

Gray, Webb, and Baker looked at one another.

"Well, the School House fellows seemed to have an idea that you were slacking on purpose, Monty," said Webb at last.

"That's sheer nonsense, of course," said the prefect.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"It suited them to make that out," continued Monteith. "The fact is, Kildare was looking for an excuse to get rid of me. He wants me out of the team, but he doesn't want to part with you fellows; at least, till after the match with Mexborough."

"Of course, you won't be asked to play again," said Baker.

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"Of course not," said the prefect tartly. "I don't expect to."

"And we shan't, either. I expect Kildare's had enough of us."

"You speak as if you side with him."

"Well, there's no getting out of it, Monty; you've always been unjust to Kildare, and never given him proper credit," said Baker. "You acted badly to-day, and if he wiped all our names off the list it's only what we ought to expect."

Monteith's eyes glittered.

"So you are going to desert your House and go over to the enemy?"

Baker shifted uneasily.

"No," he said. "I don't suppose Kildare will give any of us a chance of playing for the school again, and that settles it."

"But if he does?"

None of the three replied. Monteith's lip curled bitterly.

"You may as well speak out!" he exclaimed. "I'm kicked out of the team, and I tell you that's what Kildare has been aiming at all along. Now you're going to desert your captain and make his triumph complete. You're going to play for a captain who has insulted your House right and left, and—"

"We're not," said Gray shortly. "At least, I'm not."

"Will you refuse to play?"

"I'm not likely to be asked again."

"But if you are?"

"Yes," said Gray slowly; "I shall refuse."

"That's better. I wish I could make you fellows realise that we've got to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, if we're to get justice for our House."

"Well, we're doing it," said Webb. "I agree with what Gray says."

Monteith looked at Baker.

"And what do you say?"

"I shall think it out," said Baker. "I'm not likely to be asked to play for St. Jim's after to-day's exhibition; but if I am—well, I shall think it out."

And he quitted the study to avoid further argument.

Monteith scowled darkly.

"Any chap who plays for Kildare against the decision of his House will have to be sent to Coventry," he said. "It's hard enough to keep our end up, without having traitors in the camp."

The others nodded a dubious assent.

Monteith's face, when he was left alone, was black with gloom and chagrin. He was obstinately determined to persist in the course he had marked out for himself, but at the same time he felt that his position was tottering; the power was departing from his hands. Unless he was very careful indeed, there would be a split in the New House, the result of which he could not foresee, except that it would probably end in his downfall.

## CHAPTER 10.

### The Feast and After!

"RIPPING!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

Whatever problems might be troubling the seniors, the juniors of St. Jim's were not in the habit of allowing anything to trouble them for long, and the unpleasant incident on the football field had been quite banished from the thoughts of Figgins & Co. and their guests by the preparations for the feast in the New House.

The Junior Common-room presented an unusual aspect. Figgins' study, of course, was not nearly large enough for the purpose, and as all the juniors of the New House were to participate, the Common-room was just the place.

Blake and his chums had willingly lent a hand in getting the room ready. Tables were arranged in rows, with desks and some boards to eke them out, and forms placed in order for the feasters.

Then the unpacking of the eatables had followed.

They had been brought into the Common-room in a big clothes-basket, having been taken out of the various bags in which they had been brought into the school.



When Figgins stood up and toasted the founders of the juniors. Blake & Co., the guests, could not understand had been eaten

Figgy did not wish Blake to recognise any of the packages. The School House fellows were to know nothing of the truth till they got home to Study No. 6.

Blake's eyes opened as he surveyed the heaps of edibles produced from the basket and piled on the table. There was enough to feed a small army there. And the things were first-class, too.

The puddings and pies were fresh, the tarts new and good, the cakes and biscuits excellent. There were bottles of lemonade and ginger-beer to wash down the solids.

Study No. 6 exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"I say, Figgy, you're doing this in style!" exclaimed Blake. "You are, really!"

Figgins smiled.

"Hope you'll enjoy the feed," he said hospitably.

"Oh, no doubt about that!" answered Blake. "It makes me wish I had an appetite like Wynn's."

"You let my appetite alone, Blake."

"I'm not going to interfere with it, Fatty. I'm going to attend to my own. I'll tell you what, Figgy. This is decent of you. You must come to a feed in Study No. 6 to-morrow."

"What! Are you going in for feeds, too?"

"Yes, rather! There's no harm now in telling you that we've dodged the beaks, and got a big box full of tommy into the School House."

"Have you, really?" asked Figgins innocently. "How did you get it in?"

"Crabb, the carrier, brought it."

"Not really?"

"Yes," said Blake, rather puzzled by the general grin that went round the room. "There's nothing funny in that, is there?"

"Certainly not," said Figgins. "I was only wondering how it would pass the prefects."

"It's supposed to be a box of carpentry things from Rylcombe. Nobody knows what's inside."

"Well, that's a giddy wheeze!" exclaimed Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Blake looked gratified. The greatest of men is not above flattery, and it pleased him to see how his "wheeze" took the New House by storm. But gradually his look changed. It was all very well to laugh, and to laugh again, but surely the joke was not so howlingly comic as it seemed to the New House juniors. They seemed simply unable to leave off laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "That takes the cake! A box of carpentry things!"

"Crabb, the carrier, brought it!" gasped Kerr.

"Nobody knows what's inside!" screamed Fatty Wynn.

A fresh whoop of laughter went up at that.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nobody knows what's inside. That's the funny part of the wheeze."

And the New House juniors roared again.

Study No. 6 looked at one another. Their opinion was that they were being "rotted," and they were beginning to look extremely undignified.

Figgins saw it, and hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Excuse us, you chaps," he gasped, "but the thing's so funny we simply can't help it. Now, you silly bounders, 'nuff's as good as a feast! Shut up!"

He cast warning looks on all sides, and gradually the laughter died away. Yet still, from time to time, some spasm of mirth would pass through the room, and hardly a moment passed without a chuckle being heard.

"Oh, let 'em cackle!" said Blake. "Let 'em amuse their little selves. They ought to be in a lunatic asylum, but the New House is next door to it."

"Opposite to it, you mean," said Fatty Wynn.

This hint that the School House might be considered a lunatic asylum nearly led to war on the spot, but Figgins promptly sat on Wynn, and pinned him down till he apologised, which he did very handsomely, so harmony was restored.

When the table was laid,

the place of honour at the head of the table was taken by Figgins, and Blake & Co. and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat along one side of the table, and opposite them were seated Kerr, Fatty Wynn, and other New House fellows.

"And now wire in," said the hospitable Figgins.

The juniors were not long in wiring in. They were all hungry after an afternoon in the keen air, and the feast was really a tempting one. Cold meats of all kinds, fowls, and rabbits disappeared as if by magic. Pies and puddings galore followed them. Jams and jellies, pastries of all descriptions, filled up any crevices left by what had gone before.

The whole was washed down by draughts of lemonade and ginger-beer.

Truly, it was a feast for the gods. Seldom had the New House at St. Jim's seen the like of it. Under the genial influence of the feast, all faces were happy and comfortable, all beamed with smiles. No one, looking into the room just then, would have dreamed that the seven School House guests were the deadly foes of Figgins & Co.

The hatchet was buried deep.

"Well, this is all right," said Jack Blake presently. "Figgy, you're a great man. Here's to you, old chap, and may your shadow never grow whiskers."

"Same to you, and may you enjoy your feed, when you open that box of yours," replied Figgy cordially.

This friendly wish made those who heard it nearly choke themselves.

But all good things have an end at last.

And so did that royal feed in the New House.

There was really no reason, as far as the School House juniors could see, why their hosts should burst out laughing at intervals, without apparent cause, all the time.

Nor could they understand the meaning of the yell of merriment which greeted Figgins' toast to the founders of the feast.

"Well, we've had a ripping good time," said Blake, when the chums of the School House rose at last to go. "You've done us well, Figgy, hasn't he, chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"A!" chimed in Tom Merry & Co.

"The pleasure's quite on our side," said the polite Figgins. "It wouldn't have been half so enjoyable if you hadn't been here."

And accompanied by their ancient enemies, Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. marched across the quadrangle to the School House.

At the door they parted quite affectionately with Figgins & Co., and went up to their respective studies.

Figgins and his followers waited till the window of Study No. 6 opened.

"Is it all right?" called out Figgy.

"Right as rain!" replied Blake. "It's here, as large as life, and it hasn't been opened."

"Oh, hasn't it!" muttered Figgins.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing; only I really hope you will enjoy your feed after you've opened the box. We all say the same, don't we, chaps?"

"We do, we does!"

And Figgins & Co. marched off, leaving Blake vaguely uneasy.

He turned back from the window into the study. Herries switched on the light. There was the big box, and it looked all right.

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there was a yell of merriment from the New House they little knew then that it was their own tuck that royal feed!



"I don't see quite what Figgy was getting at," Blake remarked. "He seems to have something funny on his brain. There's nothing wrong with the box."

"If it wasn't impossible, I should think they had been up to something," remarked Herries. "But they didn't know anything about the box till we told them."

"Of course they didn't."

"Are you going to open it to-night?" asked Dig, as Blake cut the rope.

"Well, it won't do any harm to take a peep inside," said Blake, whose uneasiness was growing. "Come to think of it, it's rather queer Figgy having such a spread this very day, and then—well, we'll see."

He tried to insert the key in the lock, but it would not enter.

"Hallo, something wrong here! The key won't go in!"

"Won't it? Something the matter with the lock?"

"My hat! It's been busted!"

"That careless ass of a Crabb! He's dropped the box, I suppose. Perhaps Taggles did it, getting it upstairs. It's heavy."

"A fall wouldn't do that," said Blake, with growing apprehension. "Besides, why doesn't the beastly lid come open? The cord's off and the lock's broken. Scissors! It's nailed down!"

"Crabb must have done it after busting the lock."

"Or—or Figgins. Get the brute open, for mercy's sake!"

Blake wrenched open the lid of the box.

Four pairs of eyes gazed vacantly at the contents.

Four gasps of utter dismay floated through Study No. 6.

Blake rose to his feet.

"Figgins!" he said faintly.

"But how?"

"Don't ask me! That's where their feed came from!"

"Our grub!" groaned Digby.

"No wonder the horrid bounder was so free with it! No wonder they grinned when we told them about the box."

"No wonder they cheered the founders of the feast—us!"

Blake sat down.

The blow was too much even for him.

"Take me away and bury me," he said weakly. "They've done us. Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! Oh crumbs!"

The silence of dismay filled the study. Never had Study No. 6 been so thoroughly and so helplessly "done"!

And in the silence a sort of triumphant chant floated in at the window.

Figgins & Co. were still in the quad, and now they were, like the conquerors of old, chanting their psalm of triumph.

"Who bought the grub?"

"Blake did!"

"Who paid for it?"

"Study No. 6 did!"

"Who collared it?"

"We did!"

"Who ate it?"

"We did!"

"Who takes the biscuit?"

"We do! We does! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then let us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us smile again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake slammed down the window.

"Done, cleaned done!"

But the chums of Study No. 6 were wrothy.

"Scrag him!" said Herries. "He's

a giddy chief, he is, and that is what comes of it."

"Your Uncle Blake is a big chief," said Digby, mimicking Blake's voice. "A big, blessed ass would be nearer the mark!"

"A weally idiotic and unwealiab leadah!" said D'Arcy.

And with one accord they fell upon Blake.

They fell upon him and smote him hip and thigh, and smote him again till he yelled for quarter. Blake dragged himself from underneath his indignant followers in a decidedly rumped condition. He was in a chastened mood.

"I deserve it," he said. "How Figgins worked the wheeze I don't know, but I ought to have guessed when he cut the first half of the footer match. I ought to have guessed when they cackled so much over in the New House. I deserve it. But I give you free leave, kids, to jump on my neck as hard as you like if I don't make Figgins & Co. sit up in return for this jape!"

Faintly, through the closed window, came the chant of Figgins & Co.:

"Let us smile once more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## CHAPTER 11.

### Baker Means Business!

**K**ILDARE'S decision as to the list for the Mexborough match was awaited at St. Jim's, and when it was put up on the notice-board it was anxiously scanned at once.

The Headland match had ended with the most unpleasant incident that had ever happened on the St. Jim's football ground, and feeling ran very high in the School House.

The general opinion was that too much had been conceded to the New House, and that after this it was impossible for even a peace-loving captain to extend the olive branch any more.

The School House took it for granted that he would form a team to meet Mexborough wholly from his own side.

The New House had little to say for themselves in the matter.

The keenest and most loyal supporter of Monteith could not deny that the New House players had gone too far, and that no captain could possibly tolerate such conduct in his team.

At the same time they were feeling very sore, and the fact that they had not a leg to stand on only added to their irritation.

When the list was put up, therefore, there was a general gasp of astonishment in both Houses.

The only name missing was Monteith's.

The head prefect of the New House was barred. Even Kildare could not overlook what he had done. But Gray, Webb, and Baker were down to play.

"They won't play without Monteith," was the verdict of the School House.

And in that idea Kildare's followers found comfort.

That they should not play without him was Monteith's own determination, but he found that he would have difficulty in getting his own way.

Webb and Gray adhered, though reluctantly, to their declared intention, and sent word to Monteith that they would stand by him.

Baker said nothing.

As Baker, with the exception of Monteith himself, was the best player in the New House, the prefect was very anxious about him.

But in reply to a direct question, Baker only said that he was thinking it over.

"Webb and Gray are standing by

their House," said Monteith hotly. "Do you mean to say that you are going to desert your side, and let the School House triumph?"

"It isn't a question of New House or School House," replied Baker. "It's a question of St. Jim's winning or losing the match against Mexborough."

"Yes, that's how Kildare puts it, but you know that's all humbug."

"I don't know anything of the kind," replied Baker obstinately. "I know that if we don't stand in with Kildare over this match, St. Jim's will very likely get licked."

"And if you do, the School House will crow over us all along the line. That's what Kildare has planned all along."

"I don't believe it. I always said you didn't do him justice."

Monteith set his thin lips hard.

"You'd better take a friendly word of warning, Baker. Any New House chap who sides against his own House will be cut by everybody here."

"Do you mean to say that I shall be sent to Coventry if I play?" asked Baker in his direct way.

"Well, something like that."

"That won't make any difference to me," said Baker, after a pause. "It's a knotty problem to decide, and if I play I dare say you can make things uncomfortable for me. But I'm going to think it over, and decide what I believe to be right."

"And, meanwhile, your name will remain on the notice-board?"

"Yes."

And the conversation ended, very unsatisfactorily for both.

Monteith realised keenly enough how shaky his position was, and it seemed to him a time for bold measures. If Baker refused to come into line with the rest of the House, he must be coaxed, and if he refused to be coaxed, he must be cut. A few days in Coventry would probably bring him to reason. But would the New House back the prefect up in such a drastic measure?

Monteith was determined that they should; yet in his inmost heart he felt a chill of doubt.

He called on Kildare the same day. He found him with Darrell and Rushden, both of whom gave the prefect decidedly hostile looks.

Kildare was icily polite; a very different Kildare from the one Monteith was accustomed to. The prefect realised that he had got the captain's back up at last. The cheery, good-natured captain had shown an almost endless patience, which Monteith had mistaken for weakness. Now his patience was exhausted, and Monteith found him as hard and cold as steel.

"I want to speak to you, Kildare," said the prefect, with a meaning glance at the other two School House seniors.

"Quite at your service," replied Kildare. "Don't go, you fellows; Monteith has nothing private to say to me."

"As a matter of fact, I'd rather see you alone, Kildare."

"What is it about?"

"The footer."

"I don't see what you can have to say about that, as you are not in the team, but whatever it is, you need not say it in private. Don't go, you chaps. Monteith won't be staying long."

Monteith breathed hard.

"Well, I suppose it doesn't matter if Darrell and Rushden hear what I've got to say," he remarked, as indifferently as he could. "It's about the football, as I said. I see that you've got three New House names in the list for next Saturday."

(Continued on page 18.)



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.

**H**ALLO, chums! For next Wednesday's splendid number Martin Clifford has written another grand St. Jim's story of sport and adventure—a story in which Tom Merry & Co. greatly distinguish themselves on the football field when they play as

#### “THE WRONG TEAM!”

It causes a big stir at St. Jim's when Tom Merry receives a letter from the secretary of the Thebans, a famous amateur football club, arranging a match. That such a first-class team should send a challenge to the junior captain of St. Jim's is rather astounding. Even the St. Jim's First Eleven would consider it a distinction to play the Thebans. But to challenge a junior schoolboy team! Tom Merry & Co. simply cannot understand it.

Nevertheless, the heroes of the Lower School, in spite of their formidable opponents and the probable heavy defeat they will sustain, promptly accept the challenge. The resultant fun and excitement over the selection of the team—everybody who can kick a ball wants to play!—and then the thrilling match itself, followed by the explanation of the mystery of the challenge, makes a story that will hold your unflagging interest throughout. Whatever you do, chums, don't miss this great treat.

#### “THE BLACK HAND AT ST. FRANK'S!”

Of all the St. Frank's serials that have appeared in the GEM, none has brought in so many letters of praise as the gripping mystery thriller now running. Mr. Brooks has certainly “made the bell ring” with this masterpiece.

In next Wednesday's breath-taking chapters you will read how the eight boys of St. Frank's make a daring escape from the disused convict prison in which Zangari's men have incarcerated them. Then it is that they form themselves into the “Fighting Eight,” no longer dodging the vengeance of Zangari, but determined to fight him

and reveal his mysterious activity at Gallows Mere. Look out for further big thrills from this fine serial.

#### DO YOU LIKE PUZZLE GAMES?

Have you played Mappa-Mundi yet? Everybody's playing it, for it's an excellent puzzle game. What you have to do is to place the capital cities of the world in their right countries on a huge jig-saw puzzle map. The player who gets the most cities in their correct places wins.

Now that the long winter nights are here, it is as well to have a new indoor game which will afford you and your friends endless entertainment, instructive as well as amusing.

The set costs 3s. 6d., and can be bought at any bookshop, stationer's, or toyshop. Quite apart from the game, the jig-saw is worth the money by itself.

#### THE FIRE-WALKER!

Once more Mr. Kuda Bux, the Indian, has astonished people with his power to perform the most impossible feats. Some while ago he demonstrated his ability to read when completely blindfolded, passages in a closed book. Now he has proved again that one can, by complete faith and intensive will-power, overcome physical and mental impossibilities.

Before a gathering of spectators Mr. Bux recently walked with bare feet through fire, and was unharmed. Before he did his fire-walking act he bathed his feet in water, and afterwards had them carefully examined to show that there was no chemical preparation on them to resist the heat. Then, after a few moments' pause, during which he seemed to be willing himself to resist the heat, he walked towards a fifteen-foot-long trench filled with glowing embers.

Unhurriedly he stepped on to the path

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of fire, the heat from which could be felt twenty yards away. In tense silence the gathering watched the amazing performance. It took about five seconds for Kuda Bux to walk along the trench, and then he stepped out calmly at the other end. His feet were examined again, but they were unharmed, and the soles were not even hot.

After a few minutes he repeated the fire-walk, and, as on the first occasion, his feet showed no effects at all from the burning ash on which he stepped. One of the spectators then bravely attempted to do it, but after taking two paces he quickly hopped out in pain, with smoke round his feet.

#### THE RICH BEGGAR!

Beggars, it is said, cannot be choosers; but one who was recently taken into custody in New York could afford to choose more than you or I. A policeman saw the beggar crying and holding out his hand for coppers to passers-by, and when he spoke to the man he threatened to commit suicide. So the policeman took him to the police station, and there he was searched. On him was found £75! Further, it was discovered that the “beggar” had £1,344 in the bank!

#### CYCLING ROUND THE WORLD!

Five years have passed since a young Australian named Malpas began cycling round the world, and into that time have been crowded more thrills and adventure than ordinarily he could have experienced in a lifetime.

Malpas is a singer, and it was with his voice that he earned his living as he travelled. But his performances had a mixed reception, for while in some countries his singing was well applauded, in others he was “given the bird,” and was once thrown into prison.

It is curious, however, that, after travelling right round the world, the young cyclist should experience his most dangerous adventure in his own country. This was after he had left Darwin, and was passing through a desert. He lost his way, and, to make matters worse, he ran out of water. For hours he struggled on in the heat, gasping for water and almost delirious. At last he lay down, with his face to the ground to protect his eyes from hungry crows. It was then that a railwayman found him, fifty-three hours after he had run out of water.

However, all's well that ends well, for Malpas has now arrived home again, after cycling 100,000 miles and passing through thirty countries!

#### TAILPIECE.

First Author: “I'm writing for magazines now.”

Second Author: “Don't you find it a thankless task?”

F.A.: “Not at all. Almost everything I write is returned with thanks!”

#### THE EDITOR.



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.

D. Crawford, 36, Tennyson Avenue, Bridlington, Yorks; British Empire; stamp sports.

Miss Irene Case, c.o. The Butts, Oughterside, Maryport, Cumberland; age 17 up; music, sports; girl correspondents.

Miss Iris Haigh, 22, Haslington Street, Moss Side, Manchester, 14; girl correspondents; postcards, films; India, Canada, etc.

Miss Daphne Weir, Cosgrove House, Lane 1220, House 50, Avenue Road, Shanghai, China; girl correspondents; age 15-19; sports, stamps, photography.

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"Yes."  
 "You have left mine out."  
 "Naturally, as you do not belong to the eleven."  
 "Is that a definite decision, then?"  
 "Quite."  
 "And you think our fellows will play if their prefect is barred like this?"  
 "I hope so."  
 "Well, they won't!" said Monteith savagely. "Gray and Webb refuse."  
 "I shall be sorry to hear that they do."

"Well, you do hear it now."  
 "I shall not take off their names unless I hear from them personally. I must decline to accept any interference in the matter."

"Do you forget that I am head prefect of my House?"

"Certainly not; but that has nothing to do with the footer. The men are responsible to me, as their captain, and a House prefect has nothing whatever to do with it."

Darrell and Rushden looked at each other with grim satisfaction. They had never seen Kildare in this mood before; he had always been so good-natured that they had been hardly able to imagine him going on the warpath in earnest. It had taken a great deal of provocation to rouse him; but now that Monteith had roused him, he was hard as a flint.

Monteith himself was surprised and considerably dismayed.

"Very well, you can try to ride the high horse if you like," he sneered. "But I tell you that if any New House chap played for you after this, he would be sent to Coventry by his House. Not a man on our side will play against the Mexborough fellows."

Kildare shrugged his shoulders. "I have said that I shall accept no statement from an outsider as to the intentions of my team," he said. "It seems to me useless to prolong this discussion."

The prefect glared at him. He was puzzled and dismayed by this new development of Kildare's character, and at a loss what to do and say. He had a curious feeling of helplessness in the presence of the captain in this unexpected mood.

"Very well," he said. "I've warned you!"

"Thanks very much."  
 Monteith strode from the study and slammed the door. Ten minutes later a fag from the New House brought a note to Kildare.

He opened it and frowned as he read it. It was brief, but very much to the point:

"Unless Monteith is included in the team, we will not play for St. Jim's."

"GEORGE WEBB,  
 "ALBERT GRAY."

Kildare tossed the note to his companions.

"That's Monteith's reply," said Darrell, looking at it. "How will you answer?"

"That won't take long," replied Kildare grimly.

He wrote on the back of the note with a pencil:

"Any member of the school eleven who fails to play on Saturday against Mexborough, except through illness or other similar adequate reason, will never be allowed to play for St. Jim's again as long as E. Kildare is captain."

The fag carried that note back to the New House.

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"Baker has sent no word," remarked Darrell thoughtfully. "It looks as if he is standing out against Monteith."

"Yes," said Kildare, with a nod, "and that was probably what Monteith meant by his allusion to sending to Coventry any of his fellows who played for the school. I've no doubt he tried to get Baker to sign that note along with Webb and Gray."

"Then that means—"  
 "A disagreement in the New House. From what I know of Baker, I fancy he'll stand by the eleven, in spite of Monteith. It will be a split in the New House, and Monteith will have only himself to thank for it."

Kildare was right; the threatened split in the New House side had come at last! Baker had refused to sign the joint note of Webb and Gray. The latter two looked far from cheerful when the fag brought back Kildare's reply.

"So we're out of it," said Gray.  
 "It's a rotten business!" muttered Webb.

"We must stand together for the House," said Monteith, with an appearance of cheerfulness which he was far from feeling. "Kildare will have to be brought to his senses. And Baker must come in line with us."

"It looks as if he is going to be obstinate."

"He'll smart for it if he is," said the prefect savagely.

And he went at once to Baker's study, where he found the fellow he sought, standing with his hands in his pockets, staring gloomily out of the window.

Baker turned at his entrance with a not very cordial expression.

"Hallo! Don't start on that same old topic again, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed, before Monteith could speak. "I'm sick of it!"

The prefect scowled.  
 "I want to know what you're going to do!" he snapped. "Gray and Webb have resigned from the team. Are you going to do the same?"

"No!"  
 "You will play for Kildare?"  
 "I shall play for the school!"  
 "It's the same thing. You've made up your mind?"

"Well, I hadn't quite, but now I will do it, as you're so pressing. Yes, I'm going to play for St. Jim's!"

"Then you'll be sent to Coventry by the whole House!"

Baker's eyes glittered.  
 "I'm an easy-going chap," he remarked, "and you've found it pretty easy to lead me, Monteith. You won't find it so easy to drive me. You threaten me, if I stick to the team." He picked up his cap. "You shall see how much I care for that!"

"Where are you going?"  
 "To the School House!"  
 "What for?"

"To tell Kildare that he can rely upon me for Saturday!"

And Baker walked out of the room, leaving the prefect speechless with rage.

## CHAPTER 12.

### No Thanks!

"HEARD the news, kids?" asked Blake breathlessly.

"No. What is it?"  
 "There's a split in the New House," replied Blake.

"So it's come at last," said Herries, with a wise shake of the head. "How they could have stood Monteith so long, I can't understand."

"There are lots and lots of things you can't understand," said Blake; "but I agree with you. Monteith is a bit too steep."

"But is it a fact?" asked Kangaroo.

"Solid fact. Webb and Gray are scratched off the list. They've resigned, but Baker's name is still there as large as life. I saw him come out of Kildare's study last night, but I didn't guess what he had come over for. But it's plain enough now. He's going to stick to the side and let Monteith rip!"

"Good old Baker!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"But it will mean a row in the New House," continued Blake seriously. "Monteith will be like a bear with a sore head. I wonder if any of the others will back up Baker? I hope so. I should like to see Monteith take a giddy tumble."

Digby shook his head.  
 "I'll bet Monteith will look out for himself," he said confidently. "You'll never get a chap like that in a corner. He'll make things as warm for Baker as he can."

Blake laughed.  
 "Shouldn't wonder. But to my mind it looks a good deal as if Baker will be cut by his House. Monteith will manage it if he can; and we School House chaps ought to back up Baker somehow."

"I don't see what we can do."

"Well, I don't, either, as a matter of fact; but we ought to back him up."

"A testimonial, or somethin'," hazarded D'Arcy. "Somethin' to show our appreciation of his patwiotic conduct."

"That's it," said Blake. "We must think it over."

Blake & Co. took a great deal of interest in the question, naturally, not only because of their strong regard for the honour of St. Jim's in the footer field, but also because Monteith was their special enemy, and they would have been exceedingly pleased to see him fall from his high estate as captain of the New House.

And, as Blake elegantly put it, it was very likely that he would have to come off his perch this time.

It was easy enough to get news of the state of affairs in the New House. Baker had defied his chief, and he was taking the consequences. The edict had gone forth from Monteith's study that he was to be sent to Coventry by the House, and all the prefect's loyal backers cut Baker dead.

But the Coventry was by no means so complete as Monteith desired. Many fellows persisted in speaking to Baker, in spite of the sentence, and when Monteith called them to account, they were openly defiant.

Still, Baker's position was extremely uncomfortable. He had to smart for the position he had taken up, as Monteith declared that he should. But he did not waver. He was an obstinate fellow, easy to lead, but hard to drive, and Monteith had succeeded in rousing all the obstinacy in his nature.

To all the condemnation of his House he maintained a stubborn silence, and went on his way without a sign of surrender.

While most of the seniors were down upon him, he found support in the junior section. The split in the House extended down even to the fags, and Figgins & Co. plumped for Baker, while a crowd of others, headed by Pratt, stood for Monteith.

Many were the arguments, often concluding in free fights, among the New House juniors, and studies and corridors were frequently in an uproar, and angry seniors sallied forth with canes when the disputes waxed too high.

Baker was satisfied in his mind that his action was right and justifiable, but it was far from pleasant to be cut, and

to hear himself alluded to as a traitor in the camp, and that week was certainly the most uncomfortable one of his life.

Monteith was all the more spiteful, because he had a secret feeling that Webb and Gray were wavering inwardly, and half inclined to throw in their lot with the delinquent.

If they should do so, they would certainly have a good following in the House, and the sentence of "Coventry" would become a mere farce.

So Monteith looked anxiously forward to Saturday, when the Mexborough team were to arrive at St. Jim's to play the Saints on their own ground. For, what appeared an ominous circumstance to Monteith, the vacant places in the school eleven had not been filled up.

The list was left on the notice-board, with no alteration, except that a pen had been drawn through the names of Webb and Gray.

As Kildare, of course, could not be intending to play two men short against the visiting team, it was a matter of conjecture whom he would play in the places of the deserters.

Many School House seniors were practising hard, putting all they knew into it, in the hopes of being selected by the captain. But, whatever Kildare's intention was, he said nothing about it, unless it was to his immediate confidants.

Monteith was both puzzled and worried. It looked as if the captain still thought that Webb and Gray might play in the match, in spite of their resignation. And the prefect ground his teeth at the thought.

If such a thing happened, there was an inglorious end to his campaign against Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's would win all along the line.

Had the prefect, in provoking this conflict, taken too big a task upon his hands?

Monteith himself began to think so. But he stuck to his guns obstinately. There was nothing else for him to do, in point of fact, unless he chose to surrender.

This was difficult—more difficult than it would have been earlier, for now he would have to tamely accept his exclusion from the team. So that, during these days, Monteith was quite as much worried as Baker.

Meanwhile, the idea of backing up the rebel was taking more definite form among Tom Merry & Co. and Study No. 6.

"You see," said Blake, "Baker is standing by the team in a really decent way, and those cads are making him sit up. I know from Figgy that he's cut by nearly all the House, and you can

see for yourselves that he usually looks in doleful dumps. This is the time for us to show that we appreciate his action. If he can't get the credit he deserves in the New House, he ought to get it from us."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"Vewy twue," said Arthur Augustus.

"But what are we to do?" asked Dig.

"Well, I was thinking of a sort of testimonial signed by everybody in the House, to be presented to Baker, testifying how much we approve of the line he's taken."

The chums looked doubtful.

"A testimonial!" said Herries.

"But—"

"It would look all right with Kildare's name on the top."

"But would Kildare have a hand in it?"

"Well, I should think so. Then the other seniors would sign, and finally the juniors—everybody in the School House, in fact."

"It seems a good idea."

"I don't know whether we ought to put our names at the top as the idea's ours," said Blake thoughtfully. "But perhaps it's better to be modest and take a back seat. And the captain's name at the top will be imposing."

"Who's going to suggest it to Kildare?"

"I will."

"Well, let's draw up the giddy document," said Digby, producing foolscap. And the four juniors set to work.

"How do you begin?" murmured Blake, biting his pen-holder.

"Lemme see. 'Hereby' is a good word, and has a sort of official sound; we'll shove that in. How does this sound? 'The inmates of the School House do hereby—'"

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Dig, "that sounds as if you were speaking of an asylum!"

"H'm! So it does a little. 'The denizens of the School House—' No; that won't do! The chaps? That's better. Now—'The chaps of the School House hereby desire to express their unanimous opinion—' How many 'u's are there in unanimous?"

"Three, I think," said Dig, doubtfully.

"Right! 'Their unanimous opinion that Baker has deserved well of his country'—no—'deserved well of the school in sticking out against Cad Monteith, and herinunder—'"

"Here-in-what?"

"Hereunder, then," corrected Blake.

"Hereunder they sign their names in testification of—"

"In w-what?"

"Testification!" said Blake obstinately.

"When you testify, that's testification,

ain't it? It's a jolly long word, too, and will impress Baker."

"I've never heard of it before," said Herries.

"There's heaps of things you haven't heard. If it isn't a word, it ought to be; but I'm sure it's all right, and it sounds imposing."

"Well, read out the whole thing now, and let's see."

Blake read out his composition, not without an air of pride:

"The chaps of the School House hereby desire to express their unanimous opinion that George Baker, Esq., has deserved well of the school in sticking out against Cad Monteith, and in testification of this, their aforesaid opinion, they sign their names hereunder."

"Sounds all right, doesn't it?" said Blake.

The chums admitted that it sounded all right.

"There goes Kildare," said Dig, nodding towards the open door. "Suppose you ask him, and get his signature?"

"Right-ho!"

Blake ran to the door.

"I say, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's turned his head.

"Can you spare a minute, Kildare—just a minute?"

"Certainly!" said the captain, entering the study. "What is it?"

"We're getting up a petition—I mean an address—that is to say, a testimonial," Blake explained lucidly. "We want your signature at the top."

The captain smiled.

"Better let me see the document first."

"Here it is."

Kildare read it through, and burst out laughing. The juniors looked at one another.

"I say, is there anything wrong with it?" asked Blake anxiously.

"Well, I must say you fellows in this study have invented a new and entirely original system of orthography," said Kildare. "It is not the common or garden custom to spell 'unanimous' with more than two 'u's.'"

"Oh, that's all right! I was a bit doubtful myself about the last 'u.' But I can easily scratch it out. Anything else?"

"Well, testification is an excellent word—"

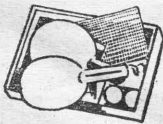
"I didn't quite know whether it was testification or testification," said Blake glibly. "If you think it's too long I'll make it testification."

Kildare grinned.

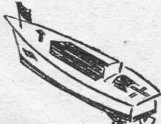
"You're so obliging, Blake, that I hate to have to refuse my name to this

(Continued on the next page.)

# Which do you want - They're FREE!



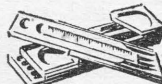
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beautiful document," he said. "I'm afraid I can't sign it, though."

"Oh, I say, Kildare!"  
"I'm sorry; but you will really have to excuse me. Better ask Darrell to head the list."

And the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Well, I never thought that of Kildare," said Blake. "But it's as clear as daylight!"

"What is?" asked Herries.  
"He's annoyed that he didn't think of this idea himself, and won't back us up."

"I suppose that's it."  
"We'll take his advice, and ask Darrell. Come on!"

The chums found Darrell in the seniors' room. They presented the testimonial, and asked for his autograph.

Darrell read the precious document and grinned.

"Don't think I don't appreciate this honour," he said; "I do. But Kildare's captain, you know, and his name ought to come first. Ask him. If he signs, I will."

"But we've already asked him."  
"What did he say?"  
"Sent us to you."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, suppose you try Rushden? I'm too modest to put my name at the head of a list."

So they gave up Darrell, and marched off to Rushden's study.

Rushden looked at the document and stared.

"Is this a joke?" he asked.  
"A joke!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "It's a testimonial. We want your signature shoved at the top. Here's a fountain-pen."

"Have you asked Kildare?"  
"Yes; but—but he was—was too busy."

"Better ask Darrell, then."  
"No; he says he doesn't want to head the list."

"Well, I don't, either. Ask Drake."  
They left Rushden's study.

In the corridor they stood and looked at one another.

"Well, are you going to ask Drake?" said Herries at last.

"I don't think so," replied Blake uncomfortably. "The seniors don't want a hand in it. I suppose it's envy because we're getting it up?"

"Perhaps they think—"  
"Perhaps they think what?"  
"Oh, nothing!"

"Anyway, we'll get the juniors' names down," said Blake, more cheerfully. "That will make a pretty long list, and I don't suppose Baker will really read them all, you know. Nobody ever does. It's just the look of the thing."

It was easy enough to get the juniors' signatures. The mere fact that Monteith was alluded to in the document as Cad Monteith was quite sufficient to gather in every junior signature in the School House.

And when all the names were signed the look of the document was certainly imposing. It filled several sheets of foolscap, and though the array of blots and scratches rather detracted from the neatness of it, there were names enough to satisfy anybody.

Then the question arose as to the manner in which the testimonial was to be presented to George Baker, Esq.

"If we take it to him in the New House, Figgins & Co. may go for us, and spoil the effect," said Blake thoughtfully. "You can't present an address with one hand and bash New House cads with the other."

That was undeniable.  
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It was finally decided to corner Baker in the quad or the gymnasium one day, and take him by surprise with the precious document.

And so the chums of Study No. 6 kept a sharp look-out for the New House senior, and ran him to earth in the gym.

Baker looked rather astonished when a dozen or more School House youngsters, with Study No. 6 and Tom Merry & Co. at their head, marched up to him in the gym, and his expression became absolutely astounded when Blake placed the testimonial in his hand. He took it mechanically, staring at the junior.

"What is this?"  
"Read it," said Blake mysteriously.

The gym was pretty well crowded just then, and the actions of the juniors had drawn every eye in their direction. Twenty pairs of eyes stared at Baker as Blake made his reply.

The School House juniors formed an admiring circle round Baker as he let his astonished gaze fall upon the blotched, smeared document in his hand.

Blake, with a confident smile, waited for the expected words of gratification from Baker. They didn't come. Baker slowly and methodically tore the document through from end to end, and then placed the pieces together, and tore them through from side to side.

Blake watched this proceeding in amazement.

"I say, what are you up to?" he asked. "Don't you understand? That's a—"

"A piece of impudence!" said Baker. "You cheeky young rascals, I've a good mind to—"

"You don't understand," said Blake feebly. "It's a—"  
"Clear off!"

"But let me explain. It's a testimonial that—"

"Get out!"  
"It's a testi—"

"Be off!"  
"It's a—"

Blake left the sentence unfinished and bolted. Baker was making a rush at him. The juniors tumbled over each other out of the gym. A disconsolate quartet gathered again in Study No. 6.

"What a giddy sell!" was all Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy could find to say.

Blake realised that the testimonial was a ghastly failure. But he had to save his prestige somehow. His look was very severe.

"The next time you want to get up a silly testimonial," he said, "you can leave me out of it. Nice asses you have made of yourselves!"

And he marched out of the study. And the other three could only look at each other and gasp feebly:

"Well, I'm blowed!"

## CHAPTER 13.

### The Mexborough Match!

**S**ATURDAY! The excitement was keen in the school that morning. The notice on the board in the Hall remained unchanged, as Blake ascertained as soon as he came down.

The vacant places were not filled yet. Was Kildare bent, then, on giving the deserters a last chance?

"That's the idea," said Blake confidently. "And if they don't come into line, Kildare's got his eye on the substitutes. Only he won't mention any names, you see, until he's sure about Webb and Gray, so as to save causing disappointment."

Which was doubtless the true explanation.

The afternoon, to the relief of all, turned out fine. The weather was propitious, the ground in excellent condition. After school Blake took another look at the notice in the Hall. It was still unchanged.

Kildare passed him, and he scanned the captain's face. But Kildare's face, except that it was calm and cheerful, expressed nothing.

The captain went down to the football ground. Study No. 6 and Tom Merry & Co. marched down together, and arrived at the same time as Figgins & Co. House rows were off for the present; both parties were thinking too much about the coming match for that. They joined in cheering Baker when he went into the pavilion with Kildare. They joined even more heartily in hissing when Monteith appeared in sight.

Monteith came down with Webb and Gray. The two latter were looking decidedly glum. They started at the sound of hissing, and Monteith looked round in search of the hissers, but the juniors left off in time.

"The cad has got those two silly duffers under his wing," said Blake. "He's afraid they'll change their minds at the last moment."

"I believe they would if Kildare said a word," said Figgins. "I jolly well wish they'd play. The New House has suffered too much on account of Monteith already."

"You're right. Hallo! There's Mexborough!"

"My hat! They look a tough lot!"

"They are!"

"A bit over our weight—eh?" said Figgins dubiously. "It will be a fight!"

The Mexborough men were certainly tough-looking customers. They were, as a team, older than the St. Jim's fellows, and mostly larger and heavier. Kildare had said that it was a bit of cheek on the part of St. Jim's to tackle them at all, and, really, it looked as if the captain was right.

The visitors, to judge by their looks and their remarks among themselves, had come to St. Jim's in the full expectation of wiping up the ground with the home team.

Blake looked at his watch. It was getting near time for the kick-off.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly.

"What's the matter?"  
"Look at old Kildare!"

Every eye was turned at once upon the captain of St. Jim's. He had come out of the pavilion, and was walking directly towards the spot where Gray and Webb stood with Monteith. The latter scowled blackly at him; his two companions looked awkward and uneasy.

Blake gripped Figgins by the arm.

"He's going to get them in, you see."

"Bravo! Hope he does," said Figgins.

Kildare stopped before the trio of New House seniors.

"Are you going to play, you chaps?" he said, without taking any notice of Monteith. "The places are still open to you, if you like."

Webb turned red and looked at Gray. Gray turned red, too.

"They are not going to play, Kildare!" Monteith said savagely.

Kildare took not the slightest notice of him. His gaze was fixed upon the two deserters, and he appeared to be unaware of the existence of Monteith.

"We've got a hard fight before us," he said. "If we win, we shall only do it by the skin of our teeth. I appeal to you in the name of the school

to play up for St. Jim's. Will you do it?"

Webb stiffened and came to a sudden determination.

"You really want us?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm your man!"

"If Webb plays, I play!" said Gray.

Monteith opened his mouth to speak. But before he could say a word Kildare marched Gray and Webb off to the pavilion. Monteith sprang after them.

"Webb! Gray! Are you going to—"

"We're going to play. We can't let the school lose for the sake of spite, Monteith," said Gray, without turning his head.

The prefect was standing alone,

glad to have three men in the team for the big match.

When the eleven came out into the field, with Baker, Gray, and Webb in the school colours, the New House cheered them heartily. Monteith stood alone. He knew what this meant. The sentence of Coventry upon Baker had been rescinded by tacit consent. It had never been rigidly enforced, in spite of his efforts. Now it was over.

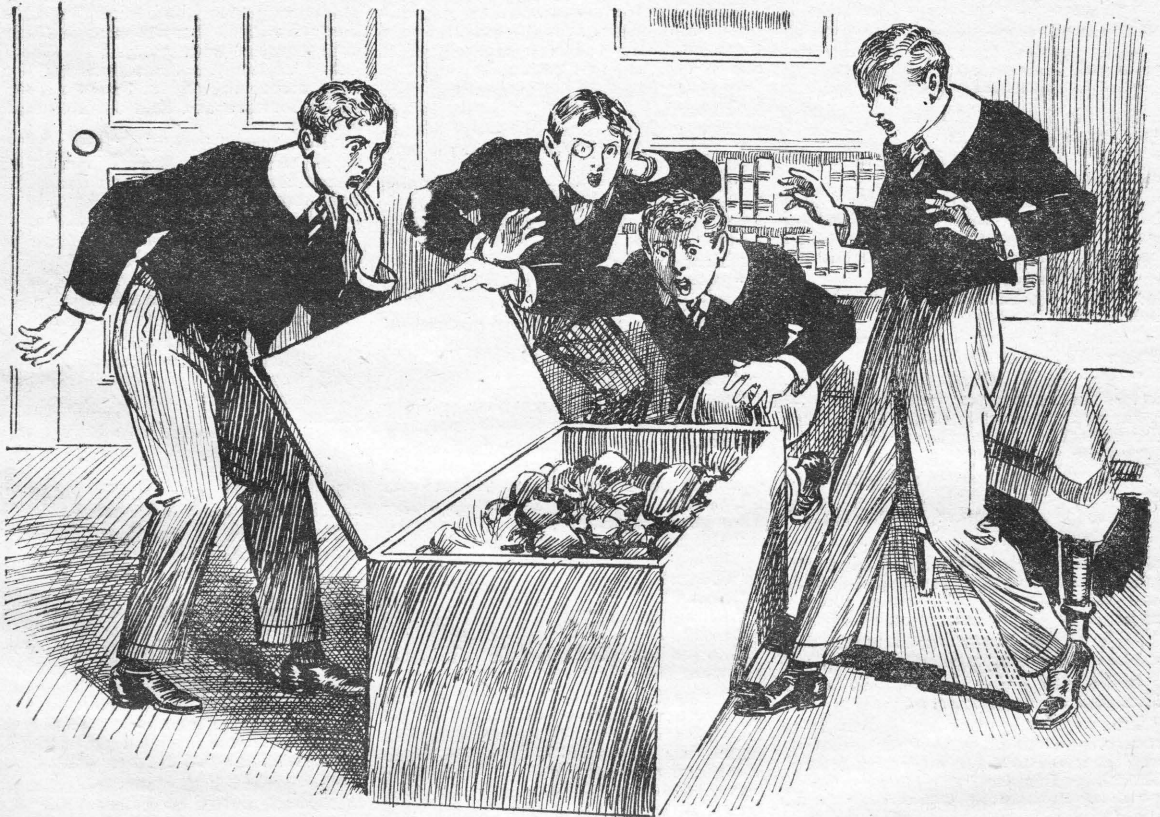
The action of Webb and Gray had decided the New House. If Monteith kept on in the path he had marked out for himself he would follow it alone. With a heart burning with rage, he realised it. A complete change of tactics, a complete surrender, was his only alternative to falling from the

Saints fell back to defend their goal. But their defence availed them not. Right into the net went a whizzing shot from the foot of the Mexborough centre-forward, and even Rushden could not save that shot. It was a goal! A goal to the visitors in six minutes.

"Buck up, Saints!" called out Blake, as the sides lined up again.

But the Saints needed no urging to buck up. Kildare muttered a few words of encouragement to his men, and they faced the enemy again with a dogged determination.

Again the Mexborough forward line attacked. But this time a St. Jim's back cleared with a kick that sent the ball over the half-way line and relieved the pressure when it looked dangerous.



Blake wrenched open the lid of the box, and four pairs of eyes gazed in astonishment at the contents. Gasps of utter dismay floated through Study No. 6. Instead of being full of tuck, the box contained earth, stones, and turf! "Figgins!" gasped Blake faintly. "That's where their feed came from!"

grinding his teeth. The two reclaimed deserters disappeared into the pavilion with Kildare. The captain had judged them rightly. They had been extremely dissatisfied with their position all along, doubtful as to the justice of their cause, uneasy as to the results of their actions. The captain's appeal had been made in the right way, and at the right time. And it had not been made in vain.

The juniors had not heard what was said, but when Gray and Webb walked off with Kildare and left Monteith standing alone, they knew, of course, what had happened.

"Hurrah!" yelled Blake.

And Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. joined him with all the force of their lungs.

The news spread round the field like wildfire. The School House welcomed it, the New House did not know how to take it, but upon the whole they were

position he had abused as captain of his House.

His face was white with rage and chagrin, but no one was looking at Monteith just then. The two teams were in the field, and the referee was looking at his watch.

The Mexborough skipper had tossed with Kildare and won the choice of goals.

"Pheep!" "Now we shall see something," said Blake. "Go it, ye cripples!"

Mexborough kicked off. The match commenced. Kildare's prediction as to the tussle the school had before them was verified. The men from Mexborough were decidedly the strongest opponents the Saints had ever had to face. Their rushes were deadly and difficult to stem, their combination was good, and their passing very accurate.

The wind was against the visitors, but they attacked from the start, and the

"Good old Gray!" shouted Blake. "Good old New House!" roared Figgins.

And Gray was loudly cheered. Monteith was the only one of his House-fellows who was silent. And the cheers redoubled when it was seen that Baker had captured the ball and was away with it, taking it down the field with a lightning-like dribble.

"Baker! Baker!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The excitement grew delirious. The Mexborough defence were left standing; Baker went through them like a shot and kicked for goal amid a tremendous roar. And when the Mexborough goalie dived full length for the ball, missed it with his finger-tips, and the leather reposed in the net, then St. Jim's let itself go. The last vestige of Baker's unpopularity in his own House vanished in a storm of cheers. And right heartily



the School House joined in that cheering.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Baker!"

"Hurrah!"

St. Jim's had equalised. Kildare's face was glowing as they lined up again. The fight was hard and fast, but a good hope of victory was in the captain's heart. But what pleased him best was the knowledge that his New House recruits were playing up so grandly for the school. With the team pulling together so splendidly they might accomplish anything.

The game restarted. That goal had been rather an eye-opener for the Mexborough men, showing them that they were not to have things entirely their own way.

And now they put their beef into it and played up for all they were worth.

And before long a second goal rewarded their efforts.

Two to one against St. Jim's.

But the faces round the ropes were quite confident.

They had full faith in their champions.

And their faith was justified. Just before half-time Kildare led a gallant attack upon the visitors' goal, and the ball went in from the foot of the St. Jim's skipper.

"Goal!" yelled Blake. "Give us another, Kildare, old chap!"

But no more goals were scored by either side before the interval.

"Jolly good game, ain't it, Monteith?" asked Figgins, with a grin. He was prepared to dodge a cuff from the prefect in reply to his remark.

But, to his surprise, the usually sour face of Monteith was quite genial in its expression, and he nodded.

"Jolly good, Figgins! You're right!"

Figgins stared.

"Old Monteith isn't such a bad sportsman, after all," he confided to Kerr and Wynn. "You see, he's as pleased as anybody at our keeping our end up."

Jack Blake heard the remark and winked at his companions.

Blake was under no delusion as to Monteith's change of front.

The prefect knew that he was in a corner, and meant to wriggle out of it, and that, to Blake's mind, accounted for his changed expression.

But Blake and his comrades had no time to think about Monteith at that moment.

Just then the whistle went for half-time.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Bravo, St. Jim's!

THE second half started fast and furious, and the swell of St. Jim's remarked that it was very nearly as exciting as one of the junior matches with Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School, and the other fellows agreed that it was.

A plump-faced youth, who had come round to the tradesmen's entrance with a basket on his arm, edged round the House to get a distant view of the match, and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth gave him a yell:

"Hallo, Grimes! Come here!"

And Grimes, the grocer's boy from Rylcombe, who for a brief space had been a Fourth Former at St. Jim's, joined the crowd of juniors, grinning.

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"Yaas, wathah! Come here, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I got ten minutes to spare," said Grimes. "I've 'urried up 'cause I 'eard this 'ere match was on, Master Lumley, and I wanted to see it."

"And you're in good time, Master Grimes," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And then Grimes gave a roar:

"Go it, Master Kildare! On the ball! Go it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Make 'em wun, Kildare!"

"My 'at!" said Grimes. "That was a corker!"

And the general opinion seemed to be that it was a "corker." St. Jim's cheered itself almost hoarse over that goal. St. Jim's were one up now.

Even Monteith was seen to clap his hands and cheer, though exactly how much cordiality the New House prefect felt at that moment cannot be said.

But if Monteith did not feel enthusiastic, he found it necessary to assume a virtue. And if he was assuming it, he certainly was assuming it very well.

"One ahead for us!" said Monty Lowther, quite as if he were a member of the First Eleven. "We're getting on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Beating them hollow!" said Manners jubilantly.

"I'm going to have some pictures of this," said Manners. "Mind my place while I get my camera!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The amateur photographer of the Shell was back in five minutes with his camera.

But by the time he returned, however, his place near the ropes had been filled by a New House junior—Thompson of the Shell.

"My place!" said Manners.

"Rats!" said Thompson politely.

"Clear!"

"Bosh!"

"I'll shift you!"

"Do!"

And, after that laconic dialogue, Manners did.

Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., as in duty bound, rushed to the aid of the New House fellow. There was a terrific scuffle till a couple of prefects came along and restored order. But Manners was victoriously in his place, and after that the snapping of his camera was incessant.

Mexborough were playing up desperately now. The walk-over they had anticipated had not come off, and the St. Jim's eleven did not seem to be suffering much from leaving Monteith out. The visitors played their hardest, and they succeeded in putting the ball in once more; and within ten minutes of time the score was equal again—three to three.

"They wouldn't have got that with Fatty Wynn in goal!" declared Figgins.

"No fear!" said Kerr.

"What do you think of that, Fatty?"

"I think there ought to be plenty of butter," said Fatty Wynn, who had been buried in a deep, deep reverie.

"Eh?"

"And a few onions would give them a flavour."

"What are you talking about?" roared Figgins.

"Frying chips!" said Fatty Wynn innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then there was a roar.

"Go it, Kildare!"

"Buck up, there!"

The St. Jim's forwards, passing like clockwork, were fairly away. They brought the leather up to the Mexborough goal with a terrific burst, passing and repassing in wonderful style, and the Mexborough men seemed hopelessly beaten. Only the goalie remained to be beaten as Baker centred to Kildare, and Kildare slammed the ball in, beating the defender all the way. And St. Jim's roared:

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"St. Jim's wins!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

Mr. Raiton blew the whistle. The match was over, and it had ended in a glorious victory for the school. The Mexborough men had fought hard, but they had been beaten, and St. Jim's were covered with glory.

And as the victorious team came off, amid a cheering crowd, James Monteith strode forward and held out his hand to Kildare.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I'm glad you won—jolly glad! And I could kick myself for not having had a hand in it! Will you take my hand?"

Kildare gave him a keen glance.

Then he grasped the New House prefect's hand in his old frank way.

"Yes; and glad to!" he said.

"Hear, hear!" shouted Figgins.

"Bravo! Hear, hear!"

And Kildare went off the field, his face glowing as the deafening cheers rang over the wide quadrangle and echoed round the old buildings of St. Jim's.

In Tom Merry's study, after the match, there was a large party.

Fatty Wynn of the New House was called upon for his services as cook—services that he was only too willing to render. And the study was crammed with fellows till there was not even standing room; and some fellows fed in the passage, and some went away with tarts and cakes in their hands to feed in their own studies. It was a glorious celebration—to celebrate the victory over the men from Mexborough and the renewed friendship between the captains of the two Houses at St. Jim's.

The juniors had plenty of reason to celebrate, and they celebrated! And when Tom Merry gave a toast amid the crowd, it was warmly applauded:

"Gentlemen, here's to us!"

"Hear, hear!"

"May the School House and the New House be united, and may their shadows never grow less! And may we always be here to stand up for our Houses, and give each other the giddy kybosh to keep our hand in, and stand shoulder to shoulder for St. Jim's against all outsiders!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

The cheering was deafening. And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm, lemonade, and ginger-beer. And while Tom Merry & Co. were celebrating in the Shell passage, there was a little tea-party in Kildare's study, and among the guests was Monteith of the New House. And there was great cordiality between the captain of St. Jim's and the captain's rival.

(Next Wednesday: "THE WRONG TEAM!"—a wonderful St. Jim's yarn of footer, fun, and mystery. Order your GEM early.)

## EIGHT ST. FRANK'S BOYS AT THE MERCY OF THE BLACK HAND!

*The* **BLACK HAND** at **ST. FRANK'S!**

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

**In the Enemy's Hands!**

**W**HEN Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster - detective of St. Frank's School, and eight juniors become involved in a mystery connected with Dr. Zangari, their lives thereafter are in constant danger from masked men in black. It is clear to Lee that something sinister and lawless is going on at Gallows Mere, the residence of Dr. Zangari, and that the latter fears the interference of the detective and the schoolboys.

Several times the St. Frank's juniors come near to death, and eventually, Nelson Lee, fearing for their safety, secretly sends them away in a closed lorry to some destination known only to the driver. But the detective little knows that Zangari has learned about his carefully laid plans. One of his men had previously hidden a microphone in Lee's study at St. Frank's, and a spy, listening in on a small receiver, had overheard Lee making his arrangements.

So it happens that the lorry is held up on the road by a sham accident. The driver and his companion, who are police officers, are quickly and quietly rendered senseless, and two of Zangari's men take their places. Then the lorry drives on, with the St. Frank's boys none the wiser that they are now prisoners!

The lorry drove on through the hissing rain and darkness.

Inside, eight St. Frank's boys secure in the belief that they were being driven to a safe destination by armed police officers; outside, two of their grim enemies, taking them—where?

The seizure of the lorry had been so swift, the stoppage so brief, that Nipper and his companions had no suspicion that their fortunes had undergone a complete reverse. Nelson Lee, they believed, had taken such precautions that a hitch was impossible. Yet, within fifteen minutes of leaving St. Frank's, they were in the hands of the enemy.

On went the lorry, steadily, unhurriedly, splashing through puddles,

the rain driving violently against the windscreen.

"What a frightfully awful night," commented Archie Glenthorpe, in the darkness of the lorry's interior.

"All the better for us, perhaps," said Nipper. "Anyhow, there's nothing for us to worry about, my sons."

"Wonder where we're going?" said Tommy Watson. "I think Mr. Lee might have given us a hint, don't you?"

"What's the difference?" growled Handforth despondently. "We're being taken away so that we can be shoved in a safe place. We're out of all the excitement! Think of it! Just when Mr. Lee and the police are getting ready to round up the whole gang, we're packed off like this! It's—it's outrageous!"

"Anyway, we shall be safe," said Church.

"Who wants to be safe, fathead?"

"I do, for one."

"You miserable quitter!" said Handforth scathingly.

"The conversation appears to be degenerating into a dog-fight," interrupted the imperturbable voice of William Napoleon Browne, from the darkness. "Your words are unduly harsh, Brother Handforth."

"Who asked you to butt in?"

"Nobody; but I'm butting in, all the same," replied Browne calmly. "I do not claim to possess the courage of a Clive or a Nelson, but we Brownes have never been known to flinch in the face of danger. Yet I must approve of Brother Lee's decision. Place a gun in my hand, and allow me to go after the enemy, and I will whoop like a Red Indian. But the fight, as we have so far fought it, has been too unequal. We on our side are weaponless, and the enemy, on the other hand, is equipped with automatics; machine-guns, poison gas, and bombs. So far we have been lucky, but it could not last."

The others, with the exception of Handforth, voice their agreement.

"All right! You're all against me!" grunted Handforth. "Think I care? I

still think it's a beastly shame we can't have another smack at the rotters."

As the lorry drove on, the boys could hear the rain lashing against the covered sides, and the wind was roaring and howling. As a matter of fact, the vehicle had now left the country lanes and was proceeding across the bleak, exposed wilderness of Bannington Moor. Impenetrable darkness on every side—rain—mud. The two men in the driver's cabin were peering anxiously and searchingly through the rain-swamped glass of the windscreen. They could see nothing but the section of road illuminated by the headlamps. Suddenly the man beside the driver uttered an exclamation.

"Go steadily; we approach," he said, in Italian.

A point of light had appeared in the darkness ahead, flashing intermittently. It was the signal for which they had been watching—the signal which told them that the moorland road, in both directions, was empty. If any other vehicle had been approaching, the men in the lorry would have driven straight on, turning about later. But luck favoured the criminals. There were no other travellers on this lonely road across the moor on such a wild night.

The lorry turned sharply, leaving the road and plunging through a formidable gateway, with massive stone pillars on either side. It rumbled and jolted, for there were ruts and potholes. Soon it passed into a stone archway, and heavy doors closed behind it. There was darkness everywhere. At last the vehicle came to a halt, after manoeuvring and backing. It now stood in a walled courtyard—the walls, old and crumbling, being of immense height. Opposite the back of the van was a doorway, and men stood lined up on either side, forming a kind of human passage between the lorry and the doorway.

The engine stopped; the lights were switched off. Torchlights in the hands of the mystery men were flashed on.

Inside the lorry, the boys were eager and curious.

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"Must be the end of the journey," said Nipper. "We've stopped, and they've switched off the engine, anyhow. Wonder where the dickens we are?"

"Can't be a great many miles from St. Frank's, old boy," said Tregellis-West. "We haven't been goin' more than an hour."

"Well, we shall soon know," grunted Handforth. "They're opening the doors. Wonder if Mr. Lee will be here?"

"Sure to be, I should think," said Nipper.

The doors at the back of the lorry swung open, and the schoolboys blinked. Outside, the rain was driving furiously, and they could see nothing but the points of light from many electric torches; they themselves were bathed in the white rays.

They tumbled out without a suspicion of the truth—until it was too late.

The surprise was complete. During the first moments, the boys could see nothing of the men behind the points of light—and for a very excellent reason. Every man was clothed from head to foot in black.

"Well, isn't anybody going to say anything?" asked Handforth, looking round. "Are you here, Mr. Lee? What is this place, anyhow? Where are we?"

There was no answer.

Handforth strode forward, shielding his eyes from the direct rays of one of the electric torches. He caught a glimpse of a black, shadowy shape, and he drew his breath in with a gulp. He was familiar enough with those black, shadowy shapes!

"Hey!" he gasped, in alarm. "We've been tricked, you chaps! It's Zangari's crowd!"

With characteristic impulsiveness, Handforth waited to ask no questions. He attacked with whirling fists, punching to right and left with tremendous ferocity. The others, confused, unable to believe the truth which stared them in the face, were a shade later in showing fight.

"Accursed boys!" snapped a voice in Italian. "Seize them! There must be no fighting."

The language alone was sufficient to tell the startled schoolboys that Handforth had jumped to the truth. They fought madly, desperately, but it was too late. The black figures moved upon them relentlessly. Each boy was seized by two strong antagonists and held. Even Handforth, after those first whirling punches, had received a violent blow on the head which knocked him half-silly. He was grabbed by two powerful men and held prisoner.

"But it's impossible!" panted Church. "We were driven away from St. Frank's by armed police officers, and we've never stopped until now!"

"Yes; we stopped once—for about a couple of seconds," said Nipper. "That's when it must have happened. But we didn't hear a sound—not a cry or a shot."

"Silence, British dogs!" said a voice in English. "If you give us no trouble, you will not be harmed; struggle, and we shall hurt you!"

"I'm already hurt, brother," said Browne. "Is it really necessary to hold my arms in this vice-like grip? Be reasonable!"

"Better take it on the chin, you chaps," said Nipper. "No good fighting. They'll only get rough. I suppose you know where we are?"

The others had not given the matter a thought, for they had been too overwhelmed by their capture. Even when

they looked about them and glimpsed the frowning walls in the rain, they were still unenlightened.

"Looks like a prison," said Tommy Watson.

"Just what it is," said Nipper. "The old abandoned convict prison on Bannington Moor."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Good gad!"

They were filled with consternation. They all knew of the bleak, desolate convict prison on the moor, which for some years had been empty and deserted, gradually going to rack and ruin. Even in broad daylight, under blue skies, it was a forbidding and sinister place. At night—and on such a night as this—it assumed new terrors. Incarcerated in these grim walls, the boys might remain lost to the world for weeks—months.

Nipper almost admired Dr. Zangari's cunning. He had been too clever to take his young prisoners to Gallows Mere. There was always the chance that Gallows Mere would be raided. But here, in this old prison, where nobody ever came, they would be beyond help.

There was no further delay.

Indeed, the boys had not been standing in the rain for more than a minute; the fight had lasted a few seconds only. They were now forced to march, each boy in the hands of two men. They went through the grim stone doorway into a stone-flagged passage which gave forth a hollow echo as they walked. They went across a vast hall, where the torchlights illuminated only the floor at their feet. The wind howled and moaned, and many drops of rain, driving in through the shattered windows, struck their faces.

This part of the old prison was in a state of semi-ruin. At times they were obliged to stumble over masses of fallen stonework and rubbish; they plunged through mud and pools of water. Then on again, down another long, stone-flagged corridor.

Their feelings during this march were more than bitter. What fate awaited them?

Were they to be done to death at once?

They could not forget the previous attempts on their lives—how they would have been machine-gunned to death but for the swift activity of Nelson Lee; how they would have fallen victims on another occasion to poison gas. Why should they expect different treatment now?

They were plucky enough, these St. Frank's fellows, but the utter helplessness of their position daunted them. They could not even put up a fight and go under gamely. Not one of them doubted that, within the next few minutes, they would be faced with some terrible end. Perhaps they were being taken to a remote part of the prison building, to be placed against a wall and machine-gunned; perhaps they were to be crowded into a cell and gassed. After their previous experiences in the hands of these relentless enemies, they expected no mercy.

Their fears were increased when presently they were marched in single file, with a guardian on either hand, down a long flight of crumbling stone steps. It was a circular descent, and it seemed endless. Down—down—down! The light from the torches played upon damp and slimy walls; the very steps they trod were crumbling to decay.

They knew the truth at last.

The prison was hundreds of years old, and in the "bad old days" there had

been noisome cells far below the earth—cells which were little better than dungeons; the cells into which violent prisoners were thrust to undergo sentences of solitary confinement. For a period of sixty years prior to the closing of the prison, these terrible cells had not been used.

"They're taking us to the dungeons—to lock us in where we'll never be found!" muttered Watson. "They're going to starve us to death! We shall be left down here, abandoned, left to die of slow torture!"

"Don't, old man!" said Nipper steadily. "It might not be as bad as that!"

"They're going to murder us, anyway!" shouted Handforth. "The devils! Why can't we fight for it?"

He commenced struggling violently, but the two men who held him did not even pause; they tightened their grip until Handforth's muscular arms were racked with pain. Struggling, he found, was futile.

Down—down!

The dank stairway seemed never-ending. By now all sounds of the wind and rain had passed out of hearing. They were in a world of terrible silence, broken only by the sound of their own footsteps. The very air was foul in their nostrils, full of an earthy reek which nauseated them.

At last they reached their journey's end.

They were on a level floor, stumbling down a tunnel-like passage. There was a halt. A massive door, still in a fair state of preservation, creaked open. Beyond there was a side passage, short and narrow. A wall of stone, comparatively dry, stretched along one side. In the other side of the passage were a number of stout doors. Cells! A row of solitary-confinement cells!

Four of the doors were opened, and two boys were thrust into each cell. Handforth made a last desperate struggle, but it was in vain. He was forced into a cell. Then the doors were closed, heavy keys were turned, and rusty bolts were shot. Death, at all events, was not coming yet.

Not a word had been spoken. The captors, having made certain that all was secure, departed, taking their electric torches with them. But outside in the passage, hanging from a hook in the roof, a powerful paraffin lamp was burning, shedding a yellowish glow up and down. At the end of the passage stood a large oil-stove, giving out warmth. It had been alight for some time, apparently, for the temperature in the passage and in the cells was fairly comfortable.

The cell doors, each of solid oak and eight inches in thickness, were black with age, but almost as stout as ever. There was a six-inch square grating in the upper part of each, heavily barred, for ventilation. Through this grating sufficient light filtered to the prisoners to see about them.

And in each cell they found a number of dry blankets; each cell, too, contained a bottle of water, a loaf of bread, and a hunk of cheese.

Warmth, food, and drink!

No sooner had the young prisoners made these discoveries than their spirits revived. They were so intensely relieved, in fact, that they became almost cheerful. Five minutes ago they had expected death. But these preparations for their reception—the light, the oil-stove, the food—proved that Dr. Zangari had no intention at present of taking their lives.

"I say, you chaps!"

It was Nipper's voice. He shared one of the end cells with Tommy Watson. He had gone to the grating, and his voice was heard by all.

"Hallo!" went up a chorus. "Tommy and I have got blankets and food in here," called Nipper. "How about you chaps?"

Their answers proved that they were all similarly provided.

"Well, anyway, we're not dead," said Handforth. "Huh! The blighters are scared. They wouldn't dare to kill us."

"We might even be rescued," said McClure. "Mr. Lee's jolly clever, and he may pick up a clue or two."

"Better not count on it," said Nipper. "My guv'nor's as keen as mustard, but I doubt if even he will find us. Why, a search party of a hundred might go all through the prison and would never know we were here. You can bet the

necessity to protect the "doomed eight." He had been forced to spend his time guarding them and rescuing them, instead of getting on with the job. Well, now it was different.

"They'll be well out of reach," he told himself, as he sat in his study in the Ancient House. "They must have arrived at North End Cove by this time, and I ought to be getting a telephone message any minute."

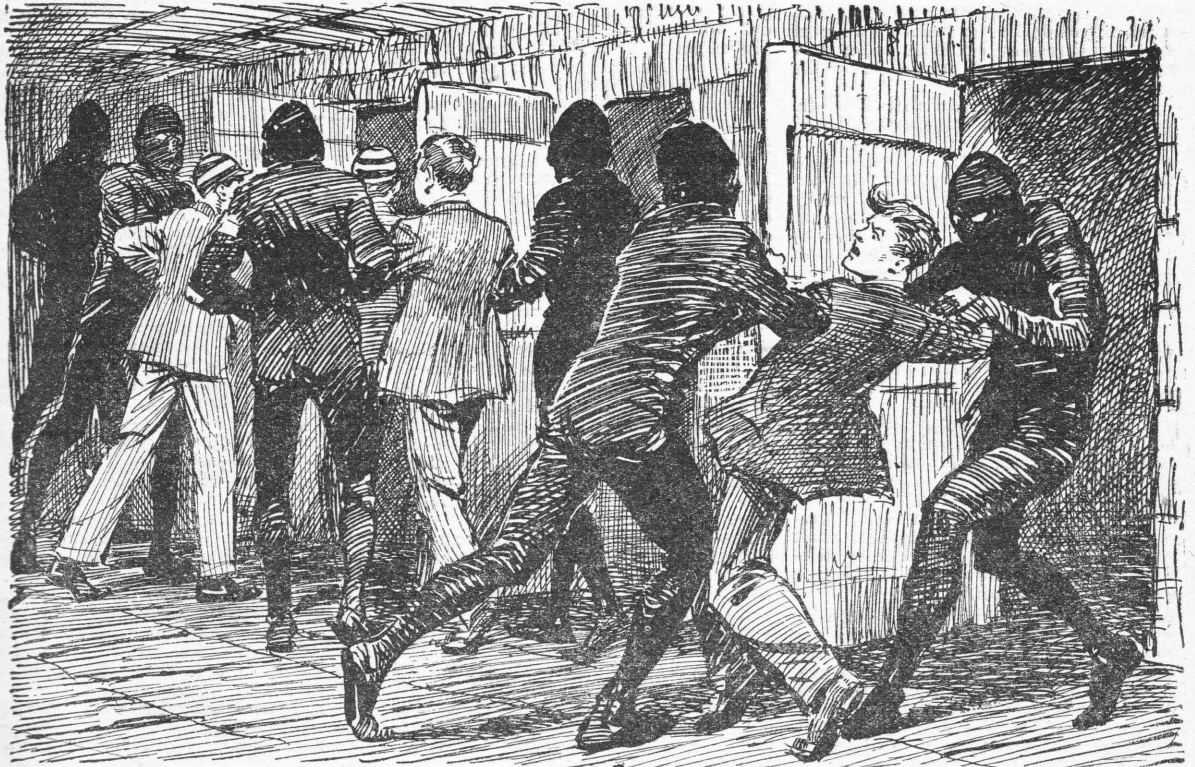
He had half expected to hear before this that the decoy motor-coach had been held up on its journey, but nothing had come through.

Nipper's guess had been right. Nelson Lee's plan was to have the boys taken in the lorry to a quiet cove on the South Coast beyond Caistowe. There a boat was awaiting them, and it would convey them to a small private yacht owned by Lord Dorrimore, who was a

beyond the town of Helfford, had rather a nasty experience. He was alone, and he was driving into the town to pick up his wife, who had gone to the cinema with some friends.

Rounding a curve in the road, he dimly saw, through the rain, the red tail-light of a vehicle just ahead, which was either stationary or moving very slowly. The motorist commenced drawing out to overtake, hooting as he did so. At that same moment, however, another car came into view round a bend ahead. The motorist braked quickly, realising that he hadn't sufficient time to overtake the stationary vehicle. Unfortunately, he braked too hard, and his small car went into a long and alarming skid.

Crash!  
It was bad luck. The little car had almost skidded to a standstill when the



As the St. Frank's juniors, in the grip of their captors, were thrust into the solitary confinement cells, Handforth made a last desperate effort to break free. But it was of no avail, and he was forced into a cell. The eight boys who knew too much for Zangari's safety were now at his mercy!

enemy will block up the stairway with old stones and rubbish to give it the appearance of being choked. No, my sons, we can't count on any rescue. Let's be jolly thankful we're alive."

They were all trembling from the effects of the reaction; they dropped upon their blankets, and some of them slept.

**The Warning!**

**N**ELSON LEE, at St. Frank's, was easy in mind for the first time for several days.

The eight boys, he told himself, were now definitely safe.

Through no fault of their own they had been drawn into the vortex of mystery and danger which had followed the murder of the unknown airman. Many times they had escaped death by inches, and Nelson Lee's own investigations had been greatly hampered by the

great friend of Lee's—and the boys, too. The sporting "Dorrie," who was abroad, had cabled his instructions; he was willing enough to lend the yacht to Nelson Lee for as long as the latter liked. It was a comfortable boat, and, once aboard, the eight boys would be safely out of harm's way, beyond all reach of the enemy.

The great detective was eager to be "up and doing." In spite of the rough weather, he meant to start active operations against the enemy at once. Inspector Lennard, in Bannington, was making preparations now. Nelson Lee was only waiting at the school until the news came through that the boys were safely aboard the yacht.

He did not know it, but he was waiting in vain.

A man in a small saloon car, driving along the rain-lashed road eight miles

near-side wing struck the rear of the lorry. The wing crumpled up like cardboard, but there was no other damage, except the buckling of the rear mud-guard of the stationary vehicle, which proved to be a closed lorry.

Considerably shaken, the motorist got out of his car. The approaching car stopped, too; it was a milk van, with two men in charge.

"It wasn't my fault," said the motorist, who looked pale. "I tried to pull up."

"Yes, we saw it," said one of the other men. "Where's the driver of this lorry? Of all the fool places to park! Bang between two curves! Is your car damaged much?"

"I don't know—I don't think so," said the motorist. "Just the wing crumpled, I believe."

They peered into the cab of the lorry and found it empty. Curiously enough,  
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the lorry's headlights were full on, yet the radiator was cool.

"Must have been standing here some time," said one of the men from the milk van. "But if the driver had engine trouble and had to go for help, why did he leave the headlights full on? Nobody but a fool would do that. Well, we can't do anything—"

"What about my insurance?" asked the motorist anxiously. "The accident wasn't my fault. My name's Rawlinson, of Little Headfield—"

"Why, of course, sir!" interrupted one of the other men. "I thought I knew your face. Are you going into Helford? I think you'd better go and report this to the police. If there are any inquiries about the accident, we'll say that we saw it, and give you a clean sheet."

There was a further exchange of names, and the incident—quite trivial in itself—seemed to be over. Mr. Rawlinson, finding that his car was driveable, went into Helford and made his report at the police station. The police promised to send down at once and have the lorry shifted.

It was almost casually that Chief-Inspector Lennard, in Bannington, heard somebody saying something about an abandoned lorry found on the road beyond Helford—a lorry with a curious hole cut in the floor. Lennard, vastly perturbed, made some quick and urgent inquiries by telephone. By the time he had finished there was no shadow of doubt that the vehicle was the one which had left St. Frank's with the eight schoolboys.

"Gone!" ejaculated Lennard, staring at Inspector Jameson with something very like dismay. "Great Scott! Those devils have beaten us, after all!"

"You think the boys—"

"Think! There's no thinking about it!" interrupted the Yard man. "The boys have been grabbed! In spite of all our precautions, too! Lee will be furious when he hears this."

"I don't see that it's our fault," protested Jameson. "Mr. Lee made most of the arrangements. You'd better telephone to him, hadn't you? I'd rather you tell him than me."

Before Lennard could get to the instrument a call came through; it was from the Caistowe police. Two plain-clothes officers, dressed like workmen, had been found unconscious behind the hedge on the Bellton-Caistowe road. If Inspector Lennard had needed any corroboration, here it was. Very grave, very perturbed, he rang St. Frank's.

Nelson Lee, in his study, getting the call, believed it to be from North End Cove, with the information that the boys were safely aboard the yacht. He knew he was wrong when he heard Lennard's voice.

"Anything amiss, Lennard?" he asked. "You sound pretty frantic."

"There's plenty amiss, and you'll be frantic when you've heard what I've got to tell you," came Lennard's voice over the wires. "They've got the eight boys, Lee."

"What!"

"It's a fact."

"I think you must be wrong," said Lee steadily. "After all the safety measures we took—"

"There's no room for doubt," broke in the inspector. "The lorry has been found, abandoned, some miles beyond Helford, on the London road. The men who were in charge of it have been found, too, behind a hedge near Caistowe. The lorry must have been stopped soon after it got out of Bellton. What happened after that we can only

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guess. It's perfectly certain that the boys were taken somewhere, unloaded, and the lorry was then driven towards London and abandoned."

"I'll be with you within twenty minutes," said Lee grimly. "We've got to have a look at that lorry, Lennard. Good heavens! This is bad news!"

"You're telling me!"

"Just when we thought we should be at liberty to go ahead, we shall be more hampered than ever," continued the detective. "However, I don't think the boys will be harmed—yet. The very fact they have been spirited away indicates that they are prisoners. If their enemies intended killing them, they would have killed them on the spot."

"It's awkward, talking over the telephone."

"Risky, too," said Lee. "It's quite possible the wires are being tapped at this very moment, and every word of our conversation is being overheard. We've got to be careful, Lennard. Be ready to join me as soon as I arrive in Bannington with the car."

He hung up the receiver and paced up and down his study, his face grave, his eyes troubled.

How could the enemy have known? The boys would not have told. They had had no opportunity of talking, in any case. The plan had not been discussed outside the study.

The study!

Lee looked about him with sudden suspicion. A possible solution had occurred to him. Zangari's spies had overheard the detective, earlier, telling the boys to descend through the floor of the motor-coach into the pit—to await the lorry. Yes, that was it. The enemy had some method of listening. He went to the window, and suddenly flung the curtains aside and opened the casement. His powerful electric torch blazed out. Not a soul was in sight. The rain and the wind beat into his face.

He closed the window and drew the curtains. There must be some other method. He examined the chimney, but there was nothing there.

He gave a sudden start. He had been telling himself that no enemy spies could have had an opportunity of getting into his room to conceal mechanism. Then he remembered that there had been one opportunity. The occasion when the whole of St. Frank's had "slept" under the influence of the invisible gas. Lee himself, at that time, had been obliged to remain at the top of the West Tower, helpless. The black-garbed raiders had swarmed all over the school, and they had had every chance of entering this study. Lee looked about him. But where could any mechanism be concealed?

He sat down at his desk, grim and angry. He was angry with himself for not having thought of this possibility earlier. He set himself the task of reasoning out the problem. In these days of highly sensitive instruments, and with all the wonders of modern radio, a microphone without wires might be possible. It would be limited in its scope, but it would serve. The point was—where would the microphone be placed.

Lee thought it out. Not near the window, for that was too far off; not on the floor, even under the desk, for it might be easily discovered. Yet it must be somewhere near the desk, for that was where Lee generally sat; it was where he talked. It was where he used his telephone. Yes, it must be somewhere beneath the desk.

He moved the desk bodily, but there was nothing under it except the carpet. Then a hard light entered his eyes. Even the floor was too far off. The microphone, if one really existed, must be nearer—hidden, perhaps, in a top drawer.

Lee was "getting warm."

He took the drawer out, and examined the contents. Nothing. Then he removed the drawer altogether, and flashed his electric torch into the cavity.

"Don't come and bother me now, Wilson!" he said testily. "Can't you see I'm busy? Come back in ten minutes."

His eyes were gleaming. There was no Wilson in the room. There was nobody in the room except himself. But he had seen, attached to the interior of the desk, at the back, a little object of metal. A microphone. If anybody was listening at the other instrument he had heard an ordinary scrap of conversation, as though Lee had been interrupted at his work.

The detective replaced the drawer, sat down, and thought hard. He now knew exactly how the enemy had learned of his plans. It was practically certain that a spy was on duty at that very moment, listening.

Well, he should have something to listen to.

He remembered his arrangement with Lennard. Lennard was to meet him outside the police station in Bannington, and they would then go along to examine the abandoned lorry. Lee smiled grimly. The enemy, having overheard that, had probably arranged an ambush on the Bannington-Helford road. They were desperate now, as their activities of this evening had proved, and they were not likely to waste a chance of wiping out both Nelson Lee and Chief-Inspector Lennard, their principal enemies.

"Bannington 2002," said Lee, in a normal voice.

He had not touched the telephone, but was leaning on his desk in the attitude he generally adopted when phoning. He even removed the receiver, after a moment, and placed it to his mouth, so that his voice should be partially muffled as in ordinary telephoning. With the other hand he held the rest down, so that the instrument remained dead.

"That you, Jameson?" he said, after a short pause. "Lee speaking. Is Lennard there? Good! Ask him to come to the phone, will you?"

He waited another few moments.

"Listen, Lennard!" he went on. "I've been thinking. We won't go and examine that lorry. There's not a chance in a thousand that we shall get a clue from it—what? No, of course not."

It was like a scene from a play when an actor is telephoning, and when the audience knows that there is nobody at the other end of the wire.

"This is more of a job for the police than for me," continued Nelson Lee. "Have every police station warned; get every man you can on the job. Scour the entire country. I don't think it'll be any good, but we've got to try it. In my opinion the boys were transferred from the lorry into another vehicle, and taken right away—perhaps hundreds of miles. Before the night is over they might be in Wales or Cornwall. I'm afraid we can do nothing. In any case, I have decided to remain here. It's a filthy night, and I don't want to give the enemy the chance of 'bumping' me. I'm terribly worried about the boys, and if you have news

of any kind, phone me at once. Right, Lennard! Thanks!"

He carefully replaced the receiver. The instrument had been dead all the time, of course, and Inspector Lennard, in Bannington, was preparing to go to Helmford with Lee. Lee smiled grimly. There would be no ambush now; for if one had been arranged, it would be abandoned.

"This is only a test," he told himself. "I have an idea that before long we may use this concealed microphone against the enemy with devastating effect. A little thought, and we can lure them to their own destruction."

The knowledge that the microphone was there made all the difference. For now, instead of being a disadvantage to Nelson Lee, it was an inestimable boon. For he could delude the secretly listening enemy whenever he wished.

Later on this evening, he decided, he would bring Lennard into this room; they would talk. They would make plans. Not real plans, but plans intended only for the wily Dr. Zangari. The greatest handicap Lee and Lennard had suffered was their lack of direct evidence. They could not apply for any warrant, either to arrest Zangari or to search his premises. For no magistrate would have granted the warrant. A raid on Gallows Mere was equally out of the question.

But through the medium of that hidden microphone Lee could easily delude Zangari. Five minutes earlier Lee had been despondent; now he was exultant. He believed he could see his way to bring crushing defeat upon Zangari and his men, and through the very instrument Zangari had had installed for his own benefit.

"I must think it over," Lee told himself, rising to his feet and pacing up and down. "It ought not to be difficult—"

Craaash!  
Something had broken the window to smithereens, and Nelson Lee caught a glimpse of a flashing object which shot across the room, just over the top of the desk. Thud! It struck against the opposite wall. It was a wicked-looking dagger, and it stuck in the wall, still quivering.

Lee leapt to the window, taking out his gun as he did so. Fearlessly he flung open the casement and went outside. But there was no earthly chance of catching the culprit. The night was as black as pitch, and the rain was pouring down as heavily as ever. Lee did not switch on his electric torch, for by doing so he would have made himself a certain mark.

He was cautious as he re-entered the study, but no second knife came out of the darkness, no bullet. He closed the window and drew the curtains tightly. He regarded the dagger grimly. In its flight from the window to the wall it had passed over the exact spot where Lee had been sitting a few seconds earlier. If he had not risen to his feet—

He grasped the dagger and pulled it out of the wall. He had believed that an attempt had been made on his life, but he now saw that such a theory was wrong. The dagger carried a message! Wrapped round the upper part of the blade was a sheet of paper, secured by strong elastic bands. Lee removed it. The message was short, and written in crude capital letters, in blue pencil:

"Take warning. Drop all inquiries into murders, and tell police to do the same, or eight lives will be sacrificed. The eight are safe—and will remain safe if you obey."

And beneath the message, intended evidently as a signature, was a crude representation, in dense black, of a human hand.

**The Figure in Black!**

**I**N selecting the old, underground cells of the abandoned convict prison as a safe hiding-place for the schoolboy prisoners, Zangari's agents had apparently done well. The boys, after they had somewhat recovered, had lost no time in making a careful examination of their new quarters. They found nothing to give them the slightest hope.

The great doors were as solid as when they had been first fitted; the bars of the gratings were rusty, and perhaps weak, but it would be a waste of time to attempt to loosen them. For the holes in the doors were only six inches square.

The floor of each cell, as the boys soon found, was of solid stone, and the walls were composed of great stone blocks. There was not a trace of weakness anywhere.

"No good, Churchy," grunted Handforth, after he had made an inspection of the cell he shared with Church. "Even if we had crowbars a yard long we couldn't get out of here!" He spoke despondently. "Nothing short of a blast of dynamite would shift this door."

"To say nothing of killing us," said Church. "Better get to sleep, old man. The others are settling down for the night. No good brooding. We've got to take this calmly."

It was true the others were settling down. Some, indeed, were already sound asleep. They were satisfied there was no escape, and they resigned themselves to the inevitable.

Archie Glenthorne, who lived in a world of perpetual luxury, was the most philosophical of all, perhaps. For Archie, when the occasion demanded, could accept hardships without flinching. He rolled himself in his blanket, made himself as comfortable as possible on the hard floor, and calmly went to sleep. McClure, who shared the cell with him, marvelled at the aristocratic

junior's calmness and tranquillity of mind.

"Sleeping like a giddy baby, as though he hadn't a care in the world!" mused Mac. "Good old Archie! He's all right!"

But although Archie may have been all right in himself, the conditions of his slumber were not all right. From somewhere overhead, unseen in the gloom, moisture was forming, probably on account of the unaccustomed warmth from the oil stove. Presently a large drop detached itself from the ceiling and descended, with a splash, in the middle of Archie's face.

He stirred, but did not awaken. Then came another drop, bigger than the first. And even Archie couldn't sleep through it.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated, sitting up. "Hi, help! Dash it! The bally place is flooded!"

McClure sat up. "Cheese it, Archie!" he said. "You're dreaming. There's no water in here."

"No water!" retorted Archie. "Ods swamps and oceans! The clear-cut features of the last of the Glenthornes are positively drenched. There's a dashed leak up there somewhere!"

He rose to his feet, and McClure joined him. They were nearly opposite the hanging lamp outside, and quite a good deal of light streamed in through the hole in the door. The cell roof was of stone, like the walls, and slightly arched. The two juniors, peering up, could see the drops of moisture forming on the edge of a crevice, which bit deeply between two of the stones. The roof was low, and they could reach it quite easily.

"Well, I mean this is a bit thick—what?" complained Archie. "I haven't grumbled much, old dear, but how can a chappie sleep in a place like this? This frightful water will be coming down in a stream pretty soon."

"Easy enough," said Mac. "You brought a scarf with you, didn't you? We'll push the scarf into this crevice, and that'll stop the leak."

"A sound enough idea, dash you, but what about my scarf?"

He was a Savage—a white Boy—he was

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"We won't argue," said McClure. "Use mine."  
"Absolutely!"

But no sooner had McClure started stuffing the scarf into the crevice than a startling thing happened. One of the blocks of stone, of which the roof was formed, felt loose as Mac pushed on it. Next moment, McClure's face was smothered with a mass of dirt and stone-dust, which fell in a flood.

"Look out!" he gasped, springing aside.

Thud!

The block of stone had detached itself completely, falling heavily to the floor, the sound of its fall, however, being muffled by the blankets. Luckily, Archie and McClure had got out of the way in the nick of time, or their feet would have been crushed.

"What's that?" came Nipper's voice from the adjoining cell.

"Absolutely nothing, old boy," replied Archie promptly. "I slipped, that's all."

He had got hold of his monocle, and was staring upwards intently. McClure could see nothing, for he still had dirt and dust in his eyes. When at length he managed to clear them he blinked at Archie in wonder.

"What did you say that for?" he whispered.

"No need to get the chappies excited; they'll have no sleep at all if we do that," replied Archie. "Supposing we tell them there's a loose stone in this cell? Good gad! Can't you hear Handy shouting? Ten-to-one the blighting guards will hear, too, and come along to have a look."

"Yes, that's true," muttered Mac. "Better keep it to ourselves, eh? I say, Archie, you don't think—"

"Well, I mean to say, this stone roof doesn't seem any too strong, what?" breathed Archie. "The enemy chappies who examined the cells before we were shoved into them made frightfully certain that the floor and walls were sound, but I don't suppose they gave so much attention to the roof. If we do a bit of careful stone masonry we might loosen another chunk. I mean, the first one is the difficulty—and that's already out."

"Yes, and unless we're careful we'll have the whole roof on top of us," murmured McClure. "It looks horribly unsafe, Archie. I don't think we'd better touch it. It's dangerous."

"The question is, old scout, what is there above?" whispered Archie Glen-thorne. "Just solid earth, or— Good gad! Remember when we were coming down the stairs? Just before we got to this level, we passed a sort of tunnel—a bit higher up. Let's have a look in this hole."

He mounted himself on McClure's shoulders, and, reaching up, felt his hand waving about in a clear cavity. At least, there was no earth immediately over the arched ceiling. The very arching should have kept the stones in position, but years of decay had worn them at the edges, until that particular stone had been free to slip down at the first touch.

Together the two juniors seized one of the other great stones, their arms extended above their heads. With very little exertion it shifted, and then, all of a sudden came free, allowing a shower of rubbish to fall. Somehow they managed to keep the great block in their hands. They lowered it to the floor.

There was space enough now for one of the boys to climb through—for the stones were big. Archie insisted upon doing the job; he made Mac bend double, and Archie then stood on his back. Thus, when he raised himself to his full height, his head and shoulders were through the opening in the roof. He gently placed some of his weight on the stones nearest the wall—for they were less likely to break adrift. There was no sign of collapse.

"Ods shocks and discoveries!" he muttered suddenly.

There was a cavity up here, yes, but until now he had not raised his eyes. When he did so he stared in wonder. For in the stygian darkness about him he saw, not far away, an arched opening! He could see it because there was a faint glow of light beyond.

"What's up?" whispered McClure.

"I am, old asparagus," replied Archie calmly.

He risked everything. With a sudden effort he raised himself up and found he

could stand. The rest of the cell roof showed no sign of weakening—at least, not along this edge. Archie went on his knees, bent down, and in a further minute McClure had scrambled through and was beside him.

"Look!" whispered Archie, pointing.

"But—but I don't understand!"  
"This is another cell, what?" explained Archie. "Or a store-room, or something. What does it matter? Dash it, why worry? There's a doorway, isn't there, and the door's standing open! Outside there, laddie, there must be a passage, and it'll lead to the stair-way."

"Let's see," said Mac breathlessly.

Even now he had not realised the full possibilities. Very gingerly, they edged their way along, keeping their backs close to the wall. At last they reached the doorway, and, passing through, found themselves in a short, narrow, arched passage. As Archie had said, it opened upon the stairway, and there was another paraffin lamp burning here, which explained the light.

"We're as good as free," gloated Archie. "Remember the door at the end of the cell passage? It's bound to be locked on the outside—and we're on the outside of it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"All we've got to do, old pat of butter," is to creep down, shove the bolts back, go into the passage, and open up the cells. We can do it from the outside. We've only got to pull the bolts. The blighters have locked us in and gone away. I don't suppose there'll be a soul here until the morning."

"And by that time we'll be gone," said Mac tensely. "Archie, this is marvellous. Come on!"

McClure could barely contain his joy. Carefully, silently, they descended the ancient, crumbling stairs, bearing round until they came within sight of the great door which stood at the entrance of the cell passage. They did not know that a black figure, like a ghoul of the night, was just behind them, with arms outstretched ready to pounce!

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