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By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the famous Rookwood school stories appearing weekly in the Boys' Friend)

CHAPTER I.

The Distinguished Visitor:

"HERE comes Cazalet!" Lessons had finished on board the Benbow, and Jack Drake and Rodney were lounging under the awnings on the deck of the school ship as she rode at anchor in the spacious harbour of Port of Spain.

From among the shipping of the busy Trinidad port a shore boat came into view, manned by two black oarsmen, with a white youth sitting in the stern.

He waved his hand in the distance to the two juniors looking over the ship's side, and Drake and Rodney waved back.

"All ready in the cabin, Toodles?" asked Drake.

Tuckey Toodles nodded and grinned. "You bet!" he answered. "The best spread I've seen since we sailed. Just like you chaps, to stand a first-class spread for a stranger. You never do it for me, an old pal."

"Well, I expect you'll bag the lion's share, as usual," said Roaney, laughing. "Besides, Cazalet isn't a stranger; we chummed with him ashore. Is Tin Tacks in the cabin?"

"Yes, rather; he's going to be waiter, he says," answered Tuckey Toodles. "He's got himself up no end of a swell for the occasion. You needn't mention to Cazalet that the darkey is on the ship's books as one of the crew, Drake."

"Why not?" demanded Drake. "Well, it will look better if he's taken for your personal attendant, you know," explained Toodles. "May as well let Cazalet see that we live in style on the Benbow."

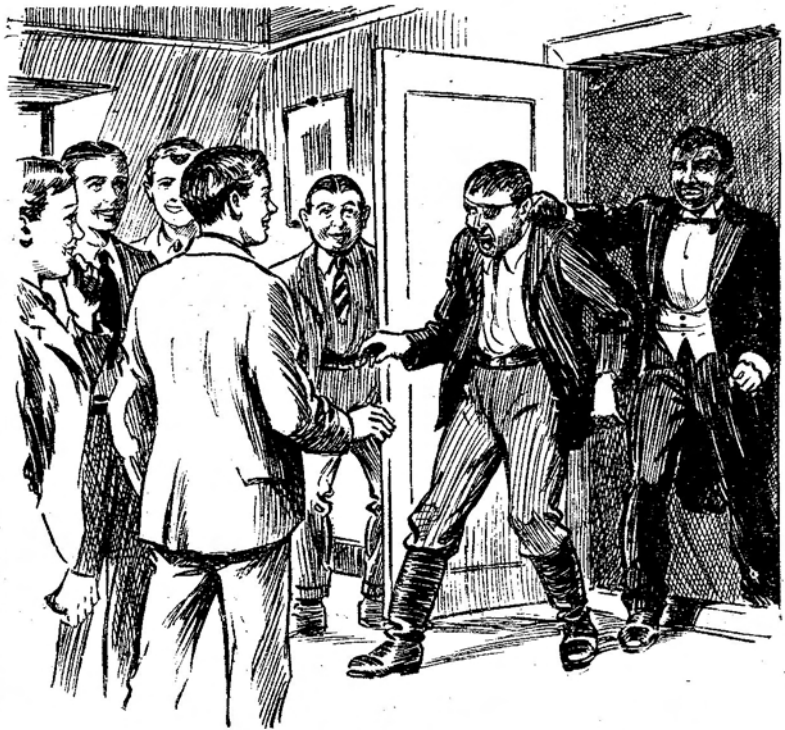
"Fathead!" "They've got no end of black servants at their house," argued Tuckey. "Cazalet won't guess if you don't tell him. There's such a thing as keeping up appearances, Jack Drake. We have to rough it on the Benbow, but when I'm at home, at Toodles Towers—"

"My dear chap, don't spring Toodles Towers on us now!" implored Rodney. "It's too hot! Run down and see that all's ready for tea."

And Tuckey Toodles hurried down to No. 8 cabin, to perform that neglected duty.

Daubeny of the Shell strolled up while Drake and Rodney were watching the approaching boat. He glanced rather curiously at Arthur Cazalet.

"Know that chap?" he asked. "It's the chap who put us up when we got lost wandering round in Trinidad," said Drake. "Awfully decent chap. We've asked him to tea on the Benbow. Like to come, Daub? It's quite a record spread; Tin Tacks has been shopping for us ashore."



Tin Tacks reappeared in the doorway, with the one-eyed seaman marching helplessly before him.

Vernon Daubeny hesitated a moment.

His old enmity towards Jack Drake had quite blown over, but he was not quite so friendly with Rodney.

"Do come," said Rodney. "Right-ho, I will, thanks!" said Daubeny. "I'll tell Egan—I was going with him to Selwyn's."

He joined Egan of the Shell, on the other side of the deck. The boat was close now, and the black oarsmen fended off from the hull of the Benbow.

Jack Drake threw Cazalet a line, and the planter's son came lightly on board.

"Jolly glad to see you," said Drake, as he shook hands with the young West Indian, Rodney following suit. "Like to look round the Benbow before we go down to tea?"

"Yes, rather!" said Arthur. "This way, then—I'm cicerone," said Drake, with a smile. "It's a jolly old ship; it sailed under Nelson's flag in the old days. It's seen service, too. You'd hardly think so, to look at it now. Hallo, here's Toodles!"

"How do you do, dear boy?" said Tuckey Toodles, in rather a lofty way. "Tea's ready, and our black servant is waiting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake. "Dry up, you silly ass!" whispered Toodles. "I say, Cazalet, I dare say you didn't know we had a black servant in our study?"

"Toodles is keeping up appearances," explained Drake ruthlessly, while the fat junior looked daggers at him.

"You—you thumping ass!" gasped Toodles.

"So that you will understand that we live in style on the Benbow," added Rodney, with a grin.

"You see, you're not supposed to guess that Tin Tacks is one of the crew," went on Drake. "That would give the game away."

"You—you burbling idiot!" spluttered Toodles, his fat face crimson. "At home, at Toodles Towers, I—"

Arthur Cazalet laughed. Toodles, with an angry snort, left the juniors to make their round of the ship without his company. It was evidently useless to attempt to keep up appearances for Drake and Rodney.

They passed Daubeny and Egan on the deck, and the latter gave Drake and his companions a bitter look. There seemed to be a rather warm argument proceeding between the two Shell fellows, but it was stopped by Daubeny detaching himself from Egan and joining Drake. He was introduced to Arthur Cazalet, while Egan, with a black frown upon his face, lounged away to the Shell quarters.

After an inspection of the ship the juniors and their guest repaired to No. 8 cabin.

"Jolly, isn't it?" said Drake. "Topping!" said Arthur heartily.

"Rather close quarters, of course," said Tuckey Toodles. "Not what we're accustomed to at St. Winifred's on shore—"

"Cheese it, Tuckey!" said Drake. "Hallo, here's Tin Tacks! My only hat! Is it Tin Tacks, or the port admiral?"

Tin Tacks came into the study, grinning all over his black face.

He had, as Tuckey Toodles had said, dressed for the occasion.

His appearance was really impressive.

Tin Tacks had apparently modelled himself on the waiters in the Grand Hotel ashore. He was in evening clothes, and his spotless white shirt contrasted beautifully with the ebony of his complexion. A huge diamond blazed in his shirt-front—a "precious stone," manufactured by a coolie jeweller of Port of Spain.

"Me wait at table, Mass' Jack," he said. "You find ole Tin Tacks bery handy—me wait on big grand gentleman once. You sit down; you no do anything while ole Tin Tacks 'bout."

It was a merry tea-party in No. 8, and there was a buzz of cheery talk, and it was not till tea was over that Dick Rodney asked:

"What about Slaney?"

The Benefit of the Doubt!

"SLANEY?" repeated Arthur Cazalet.

"That's a chap we want you to see while you're on board," said Jack Drake.

"One of your schoolfellows?"

Drake laughed.

"No; he's a steward's mate. He's a rather queer fish, with only one eye and a terrific squint in the other. I believe he's a bad egg—"

"No doubt about that!" grunted Daubeny.

"Awful rotter!" said Tuckey Toodles. "He shoved a tar-bucket against my trousers once because I called him a clumsy beast, you know."

"Serve you right," remarked Rodney.

"Look here, Rodney—"

"Shut up, Toodles! You see, this is how the matter stands, Cazalet," Drake explained. "One of the rotters who tried to rob your father was a man with one eye—you saw him—"

"I just caught sight of his face as he cleared out of the window," said Arthur.

"Would you know him again?"

"I'm not sure. I think so."

"Well, we've an idea that Peg Slaney may be the man. He was ashore at the time, and we believe he's none too good for that kind of thing. We want you to see him, and spot him, if he's the man. If he's a beastly thief and housebreaker he's not wanted on the Benbow."

Cazalet nodded.

"Trot him out," he said.

Tin Tacks broke in.

"You want see dat trash Slaney here, Mass' Jack?" he asked.

"Yes; but—"

"Me bring him."

The Barbadian coloured gentleman left the cabin. Drake half rose from his chair.

"My hat! What the thump is Tin Tacks going to do?"

"Fetch Slaney!" said Rodney, laughing. "Let him alone. He can handle the fellow all right if he won't come."

"Well, I suppose he can," said Drake, sitting down again. "If he's not the right man we'll tip him, to make up for it."

A few minutes later there was a sound of scuffling in the passage without, and Peg Slaney's hoarse voice was heard, raised in furious expostulation.

"You durned nigger, leggo! Take your black paws off me, you black lubber! By hokey, I'll—"

"Here they come!" chuckled Rodney.

Tin Tacks reappeared in the doorway, with Peg Slaney under his convey. His powerful black hand was fastened on the back of Slaney's collar, and the one-eyed seaman was marching helplessly before him.

Slaney was resisting, but his resistance did not serve him much in the grasp of the Barbadian coloured gentleman.

"Here de white trash, Mass' Jack!" panted Tin Tacks.

"Let me go!" roared Slaney. "By gum, if I had a marline-spike to hand I'd crack your nigger's skull for you!"

"Order!" said Drake. "Slaney, we want this gentleman to look at you. You know we suspect you, and what we suspect you of, as you listened at this door yesterday."

"You ain't no call to set a durned nigger to 'andle a man," growled Slaney. "I ain't afeared to look any man in the face, nor boy neither!"

He bestowed a defiant glare upon the planter's son.

Arthur fixed his eyes upon the hard, mahogany face of the one-eyed seaman. The juniors watched him.

If Arthur Cazalet recognised the man as the robber at Cazalet Villa, it only remained to call Captain Popcastle on the scene, and hand the ruffian over to his tender mercies.

There was certainly recognition in Arthur's look, but there was doubt also.

"Well?" said Drake.

Arthur seemed to hesitate.

"I think it's the man," he said at last. "But—"

"But you're not sure?" asked Rodney.

"Well, I feel pretty sure," said Arthur slowly. "But I shouldn't care to swear to it. I caught only a glimpse of him as he went, and saw that he had only one eye. But—"

"A feller with a patch on his eye," said Peg Slaney defiantly, "looks jest like another feller with a patch on his eye. There ain't nothing in that to swear away a man's liberty on."

Arthur nodded slowly.

"That's it," he said. "As a matter of opinion, I believe that's the man, but I don't feel certain enough to give evidence against him in a court of law. Sorry."

Peg Slaney cast another defiant look round.

"Will you tell this nigger to take his 'ands off'n me?" he demanded savagely. "I'll complain about this to the old man."

"You can go to the captain, if you like," said Drake curtly. "Let him go, Tin Tacks."

"I teach him not to call free Barbadian coloured gentleman a nigger!"

Tin Tacks swung the one-eyed seaman round in his powerful grasp, into the doorway.

Slaney, aware of what was coming, made a rush into the passage. But he was not quite quick enough.

Tin Tacks' boot caught him astern as he went, and Slaney was propelled into the passage at a great rate, landing there on his hands and knees.

There was a wild yell from the ruffian as he landed, followed by a torrent of savage threats.

"You sheer off, you white trash!" said Tin Tacks disdainfully. "If I come out to you, me gib you something to remember!"

And Peg Slaney sheered off, muttering savagely to himself as he went.

"He's the man, right enough," said Drake. "I suppose he's got to have the benefit of the doubt, but there really isn't much doubt on the subject. We shall keep an eye open for the rascal in the future. Now there's another matter, Cazalet—"

"Go ahead," said Arthur, with a smile.

"Cricket!" said Drake.

"Oh! You fellows play cricket?" asked Arthur, with interest.

"I should jolly well think we do!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles. "If you'd seen me get my century at St. Winifred's—"

"It would have taken him more than a century to see you do it," said Drake. "Dry up, Toodles!"

"Look here, you ass, you're always telling me to dry up!" exclaimed Toodles indignantly.

"That's because you're like the little brook—you'd go on for ever. When we were ashore we saw some cricket going on, in that quarter you call, I believe, the Savannah," said Drake. "While we're at Trinidad we'd like no end to get some cricket, if it could be fixed."

"Nothing easier," answered Arthur, smiling. "If you can put a fairly good eleven in the field—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then play us."

"Us?" repeated Drake. "Who's 'us'?"

"The Savannah Junior club," explained Arthur. "I'm the skipper."

"Oh, good egg!" exclaimed Drake, in great satisfaction. "If you've got a date open fairly soon—I don't know how long we're staying in Port of Spain. You see, we're going on up the Orinoco next—"

"We'll make a date to suit you," said Arthur cheerily. "Let me know what date you can come, and we'll fix it up. Nothing easier."

"We shall have to ask our Form-master, of course. But he will give us a whole day, like a shot, for a cricket-match ashore," said Drake brightly. "I say, this is really good luck!"

And the talk ran on cricket till it was time for Arthur Cazalet to step into his boat to go ashore.

A Burning Question!

JACK DRAKE came back to his study, after seeing Cazalet off in his boat, looking very thoughtful. Dick Rodney seemed unusually reflective, also. They found Tuckey Toodles in the cabin, busy in finishing up the remnants of the spread.

"I'm glad we're going to get some cricket here," Drake remarked, as he sat down on a locker. "But—"

"But—" said Rodney.

"I say, who's going to be captain?"

inquired Tuckey Toodles, with his mouth full of the last meringue.

"That's what I was thinking, Drake," said Rodney. "Daubeny is junior captain of St. Winifred's. But—"

Drake looked rather perplexed.

"But things have altered a bit since we put to sea," said Rodney. "Daub was elected, but—most of his old team are on the Benbow, but—" He paused.

"Daub's captain," said Drake slowly.

"Look here, Drake," said Rodney, "if we're going to play a decent team ashore, the thing simply can't be left in Daub's hands. He mucked up enough matches at home, and we don't want our cricket to turn out like a comic cinema show in Trinidad."

"I know," said Drake. "But—Daub's a good cricketer himself."

"His set are rotten players, and he always played his own set before. Look here, if you don't want to disturb Daub in the captaincy, let's get up an independent team of our own. It's our fixture with Cazalet, and we can do as we like about it."

Drake was silent.

Had he been on his old bitter terms with Vernon Daubeny he would not have hesitated to act on Rodney's suggestion. There were enough of the St. Winifred's Fourth on board the Benbow to make up a good cricket eleven. But—there was a "but" now.

Dick Rodney regarded his chum anxiously. He was keen on the match, and he wanted the Benbow contingent to put up a good show on the Savannah ground. He was willing enough to be friendly with Daubeny, but cricket came first.

"Suppose you speak to Daub, and put it to him plainly?" he asked.

"I can't ask the chap to hand over the captaincy to me."

"You can't hand over our match to him, to be mucked up in his old style."

Drake rose from the locker.

"Blessed if I know what about it," he said. "I've made it up with Daub, and so I can't go against him. Our sec. will have to fix it up with Cazalet's lot, too, and Torrence is secretary."

"Not if we raise a Fourth-form team of our own."

Drake bit his lip.

"That would be rather a hard knock at Daub," he said.

"I don't see it," said Rodney, rather sharply. "Daub's got nothing to do with this; he didn't even know Cazalet. Look here, Drake, we can't hand this match over to those slacking asses in the Shell, to be made a mess of."

"I—I dare say Daub will put some good men in, if we give him the chance," said Drake slowly. "After all, we're friends now, and—"

"Daub will play his own pals if we hand the match over to him," said Dick Rodney scornfully. "You know him of old."

"He's seemed a bit changed lately, old fellow."

"In some things, yes, but if he's changed in that I'll eat my Latin grammar!" grunted Rodney.

"Why not back me up?" recommenced Toodles.

"Shut up, you silly ass!" roared Drake, in great exasperation.

"Daub didn't say much while Cazalet was here," said Rodney. "I could see he was thinking, though. You, like a silly ass, had to mention that Daub was cricket captain—"

"Well, he is," said Drake.

"Oh, rot!" said Rodney, with as near an approach to anger as he had ever shown to his chum. "A captain that plays silly slackers, and mucks up every match he takes in hand, isn't my captain, at any rate."

"Keep your wool on, old son. It's understood that we play Cazalet's lot, and it's understood that Daub is skipper. But I think he'll do the right thing."

"I don't!" grunted Rodney.

"Well, I can't act against Daub," said Drake at last. "I've made friends with him, and he's not really a bad sort. You can speak to him, if you like, and ask him whom he's going to play."

"I will!" said Rodney.

He left the cabin, leaving Drake with a rather restless look.

Rodney found Daubeny in his study

the cricket, Daub," the Fourth-former said, curtly enough.

Egan's lip curled.

"No business of yours, is it, Rodney?" he inquired.

"Certainly it is," said Rodney, flushing angrily.

"I don't see it. You're not on the committee, or in the team. In fact, so far as St. Winifred's cricket is concerned, you're nobody at all," said Egan insolently.

Dick Rodney's eyes glittered.

"We're not at St. Winifred's now," he said. "It's a bit different on the Benbow."

"I don't see that, either."

"We're not going ashore in Trinidad to give an exhibition of rotten cricket, in your old style!" retorted Rodney.

"You won't be allowed a voice in the matter, at any rate," sneered Egan. "I suppose you've come along here to bag a place in the eleven? You won't get it."

"If we play the Trinidad team I shall certainly be in the eleven."

"Isn't that for the cricket captain to decide?" drawled Vernon Daubeny. Rodney turned on him.

"Yes—and we're going to have a captain who'll decide to play cricketers that can play cricket," he exclaimed. "If Drake won't take it up, we'll make him, somehow."

"Oh! Drake won't?" said Daubeny, with a rather curious look.

"Have you asked him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And he refused?"

"He won't act against you, because you've made friends," said Rodney savagely. "He's willing to let you fool over this match, as you used to fool over the matches at home. But we'll bring him up to the mark somehow. If necessary, I'll call a meeting of the fellows and demand a new election, whether Drake agrees or not."

"You won't get a majority," said Egan.

"Then we'll make up a new eleven from the Fourth, and leave the Stell right outside!" snapped Rodney.

"And Drake will captain you, in that case?" asked Daubeny.

"We'll make him, somehow."

"I don't think he would do it," said Daub, with a shake of the head. "It wouldn't be quite playing the game, you know, to step over his captain in that way."

"Oh, rats!"

"If that's all you've got to say, Rodney, you may as well clear," said Torrence.

Dick Rodney clenched his hands.

"You'll fix this up with Cazalet, Torrence, as secretary," said Vernon Daubeny quietly. "You'll accept the match for St. Winifred's juniors."

"Right-ho!" said Torrence.

"And what men are you going to play?" demanded Rodney.

"That's already settled," said Egan, with a sneer. "The members of St. Winifred's junior eleven are fairly well-known."

"That means that there's going to be no change, then?"

"It's for the cricket captain to decide," said Daubeny lazily.

"Well, you won't be allowed to play a set of fumbling slackers, as you

with Torrence and Egan. Egan was speaking eagerly.

"Of course, it's our match," he was saying, as Rodney came along to the open door of the cabin. "It's a fixture for St. Winifred's, of course. Torrence will have to write and accept, and make arrangements. The fellows will be no end pleased at a match in Trinidad."

"It was Drake who got the match—"

—began Daubeny.

"That doesn't matter; you're captain. We'll play just the old team, and bring off a win," said Egan.

"Here's Rodney," said Daub hastily.

Dick Rodney frowned as he stepped into the study. Whatever view Vernon Daubeny took of the matter, there was no doubt about the view taken by his friends.

"I've come to speak to you about

used to!" snapped Rodney. "You can take that from me."

"Thanks."

"As for you, Egan—"

"Oh, get out!" exclaimed Egan, jumping up. "I'm fed with your Fourth-form cheek. Get out of this cabin!"

He advanced on Rodney with clenched hands. Egan was not a fighting-man, as a rule, but he was well aware that a conflict would help in making a breach between Daubeny and his new friends in the Fourth. Rodney, for once, was far from pacific. He met Egan half-way, knocking his hands aside, and seizing him by the collar.

With a twist of his strong arm he jerked the Shell fellow over, and spun him along the floor of the cabin.

Egan gave a yell as he bumped under the table.

Rodney, with a disdainful look, stepped out of the cabin.

"You know where to find me, if you want me," he said. And he walked away.

But apparently Egan of the Shell did not want him, for he did not follow to find him.

The New Captain!

YOU fellows—

"Dry up, Toodles!"

Drake and Rodney were at prep. in No. 8 when Tuckey Toodles put his head in, looking excited.

The chums of the Fourth were working in silence; there was rather a cloud in the study.

Rodney had explained the hapless result of his visit to Vernon Daubeny's quarters, and Drake had frowned over the explanation. He did not utter a word of blame, but he was displeased, and a rather grim silence had followed. Rodney, although he admitted that Daub was not such a "rotter" as he had always supposed, could not banish a lingering suspicion of the Buck of the Shell. He felt that his chum's unsuspecting good nature was being taken advantage of, and that made him angry. And the affair of the cricket-match ashore was irritating. There seemed little use in fixing up a match with Cazalet's club if the match was to be handed over to the dandy of the Shell.

"There's a meeting in the common-room," said Toodles, unheeding the injunction to dry up. "It's about the cricket. You fellows had better come."

"About the cricket?" said Rodney, looking up.

"Yes; Daub's called it."

"We'd better go, then," said Drake.

"You're going to back up Daubeny?" asked Rodney grimly.

Drake looked rather uneasy.

"Well, what can I do?" he asked.

"You can do the sensible thing, and make a success of the match, and let Daubeny go and eat coke."

"H'm! Let's get along to the common-room."

Rodney frowned as he followed his chum from the study.

There was a crowd in the common-room; nearly all the Fourth and the

Shell who were on board the school ship had turned up for the meeting. Vernon Daubeny was there, with Egan and Torrence, and Chilcot, and Seeley, and Selwyn, and the rest of the Bucks.

The Bucks had satisfied and triumphant looks. They had all been talking to Daubeny on the subject, and impressing upon him that it was absolutely necessary that he should play the old team in the Trinidad match. Daubeny had been allowed to say hardly a word, and Egan was quite satisfied that the public opinion of the Shell would be too strong for any doubts Daub might have had.

Daubeny nodded to Drake, with a genial grin, as the Fourth-former came in, and Drake smiled back. Rodney's frown deepened. Of the old divisions in the Lower School of St. Winifred's there were more of Drake's party than of Daub's on board the Benbow, and in the case of a new election there was no doubt about Drake's majority. Rodney was keenly irritated with his easy-going chum for refusing to take any advantage of the fact. And he bitterly suspected Daub of adopting a conciliatory manner, in order to ward off Drake's competition, which would have been irresistible.

"Now we're all here, I think," said Daubeny of the Shell, mounting on a chair.

"Nearly all," said Sawyer major.

"Go ahead!"

"One day this week we're playing a cricket-match ashore," said Daubeny. "The matter's in my hands, as cricket captain. But the last election we had is a bit out of date. I want to know what fellows back me up."

"No need to go into that!" muttered Egan hurriedly, catching at Vernon Daubeny's sleeve.

Daub smiled down at him from the chair.

"But I want to go into it," he answered.

"Look here, what are you drivin' at?" asked Egan, in a fierce whisper. "I thought this meetin' was just to announce the match—"

"You'll see soon."

"I tell you, Daub—"

"Who's backin' me up?" continued Daubeny, paying no further heed to Egan. "Are you, Drake?"

"Yes," answered Drake immediately.

Rodney bit his lip.

"Mind, you're not bound to, Drake," continued Daubeny. "Somebody suggests that you should raise an independent team, and leave me out in the cold."

"Well, I'm not going to, anyhow."

"Decided on that?"

"Quite."

"Good; I thought you'd play up," said Daubeny. "Now, gentlemen, I wanted to be satisfied on that point, because some dear friends of mine have been pointin' out, in the most eloquent way, that Drake was only lookin' for a chance of downin' me."

"You silly chump!" breathed Egan.

"Now I have an announcement to make," resumed Daubeny calmly. "It's this—I hereby resign the junior captaincy of St. Winifred's."

"What!"

"Phew!"

"I resign the captaincy," continued Daubeny quietly. "When I'm captain my dear old pals shove themselves into the eleven, and play the goat, and I'm too good-natured to shove them out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I resign, and I'm not puttin' up again! This meetin' is called to elect a new cricket captain, and I'm goin' to vote for Drake."

"Bravo, Daub!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Drake, in astonishment. "Look here, Daub—"

"It's done, my dear fellow," yawned Daubeny, stepping down from the chair. "Now for the votin'."

Egan gave his chum a furious look, and quitted the common-room, scarcely able to control his rage. There was a chorus of expostulation from the surprised Bucks, but it was drowned by the cheers of the rival party. Dick Rodney came across to Daubeny.

"I'm sorry, Daub," he said in a low voice. "I—I was wrong. I'm afraid I never did you justice. I'm sorry."

Daub nodded.

"All serene," he said. "Whom are you votin' for?"

Rodney laughed merrily.

"Drake, rather!" he said.

The election was brief, for there was no rival candidate. Daubeny proposed Jack Drake, and called for a show of hands. And nearly every hand went up, most of the Bucks following their leader's example.

"Drake's elected junior captain of St. Winifred's," said Daubeny. "I congratulate you, Drake. I won't ask you to remember me when you're makin' up your eleven—"

"You needn't, old top!" answered Drake, laughing. "Your name goes down first of all."

"What about mine?" asked Tuckey Toodles. "Remember, I'm in your study—"

"You can stay there while we play cricket, Tuckey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the meeting broke up, and Jack Drake slipped his arm through Daub's as they left the common-room.

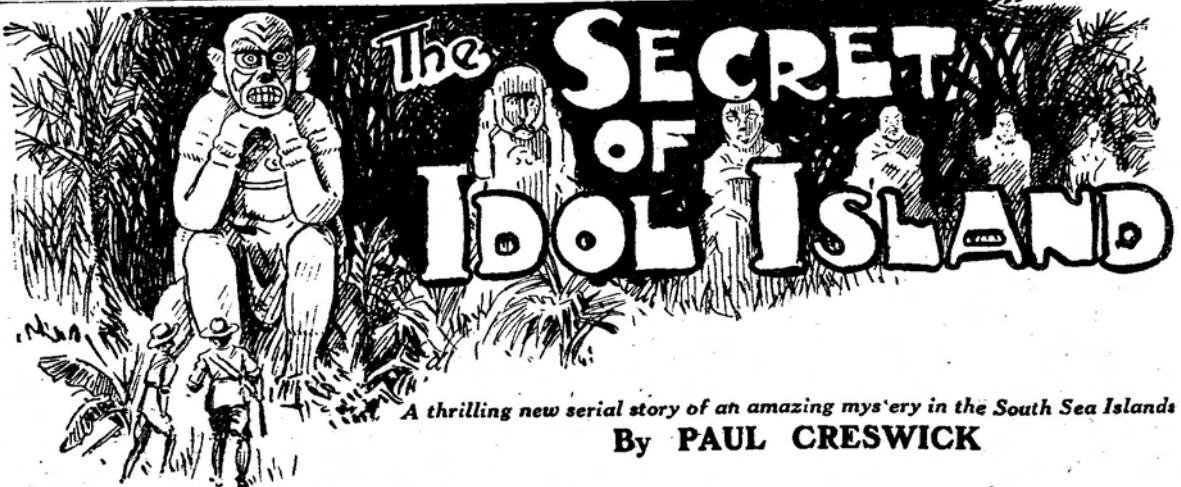
THE END.

Next week's rattling yarn of Jack Drake and Co. will be called "The Benbow Cricketers!"

A WORD FROM WHARTON

My Dear Chums.—I have managed to squeeze myself in here to tell you how sorry I am that pressure of space this week has forced me to forego my usual chat with you. However, I hope to find room for my Editorial next week as I have several things to chat about then. So cheerio till next Tuesday!

HARRY.



A thrilling new serial story of an amazing mys'ery in the South Sea Islands
By PAUL CRESWICK

The Mysterious Man in Black!
"The idols are a bit uncanny," said the boy. "They say that they move at certain times."
Curly shook his bare head, showing that he was aptly named. His curly hair stood upright in the breeze, his dark eyes were frank and bright.
Jack Armstrong laughed merrily.
"Old Curly's a dreamer of dreams, Miss Cordwell. They're nothing, these idols—at least, nothing that can't be explained."

"I'm not so sure," said the professor, who had got out his field-glasses, and was regarding the nearing platform on which the idols were ranged at all angles. "But, tell me, how did you know my name?"
"Nothing odd in that, sir. It was flashed us late last night from the port of Valparaiso. I had to signal to them about something. We watched you put off from the steamer. We have a good glass, and Curly sent along the native girls to help you. He had them fetched from the cattle-run on the other side."
"I wondered where they came from," said the professor.

The swift, small launch sped under the shadow of the huge cliff, cleverly steered by Curly into a natural dock at the base. There was an opening just wide enough, between two high scarred strangely scarlet rocks, to permit of the boat's entrance.

They passed through the dock, grey-blue with its depth, into still, silent waters. Curly steered the launch to the dock side, where a few rough stairs led upward from a little rocky landing-stage.

High up above could be seen the peering, grinning, monstrous face of one of the idols, fallen flat towards the sea and partly over the edge of the platform. He seemed to be watching them all, with unsleeping hate and brooding intent, as the party clambered up towards him.

Cordelia shuddered as she passed him; and as her little foot slipped over the slimy rock she fell against Jack Armstrong with a cry. She righted herself in an instant, but could not bear to look back at the recumbent, almost crouching figure.

Armstrong led the party to where the platform shelved away brokenly towards the causeway leading to the base of the Bluff

"By the way, professor," he said, "do you know that we had made up our minds that you were up to no good yesterday?"

Then Curly related their mysterious adventure, when the masked man had leaped on him, and how for the moment the boys had thought it was the professor, for they had never thought there were any other inhabitants on the island except themselves and the natives.

Even as he spoke Curly called out sharply—pointing seawards. Upright upon a small strange raft, flat upon the azure sea, scarce a hundred yards from the coast, stood a mysterious figure clothed in black. It was the man who had appeared to the boys in Idol Grove!

Even as they stood gazing in astonishment at him, he was gone, raft and all.

A Visit to the Wireless Station!

THE professor recovered from his first shock of surprise.

"That fellow was on the deck of a submarine," he said. "He is now inside the submarine."

"We saw him on the beach, and he disappeared in just the same way," argued Curly.

"The professor is right," Armstrong said. "We thought he was on the beach because the submarine was so near in. And the heat mist deceived us. He was on the sea all the while—what can they be wanting here?"

"And where is their base?" asked Professor Cordwell. "No under-sea

boat can travel far from its base. Here we are nigh on three thousand miles from the land."

"There is another island to the north-east, sir," said Armstrong. "A little place, but quite a useful spot —"

"That's Sala-y-Gomez," interrupted Cordelia. "The boat that brought us was going on there—before sailing for the Hawaiian Isles."

"We are being watched," said Curly, with excitement in his voice. "Now, perhaps, you'll believe in my fireworks of the night before last."

Jack Armstrong made no reply. He wanted to think it all out quietly.

"I expect you're pretty hungry. Let's get in to tiffin." He guided them across the causeway over which the tide was beginning to wash. "We go into this tunnel, please—to reach our station. It's not dark all the way."

Cordelia asked him, with all a girl's directness.

"Are you in charge here, Mr. Armstrong?"

"In charge jointly with my friend. You think we're rather young for the job? Well, I'm turned sixteen—and Curly is quite a patriarch. He's seventeen—nearly."

"Next month," put in Curly. "John has got his first-class certificate—mine's only a second. We have been in charge for a month. First of all we were under Senor Gonzalez, who's boss of this area, but has gone back to Valparaiso, for his health. It was too rough for him here—he got nery."

"Over the idols?" inquired the girl inquisitively.

"Oh, well, I wouldn't say that. He wasn't very strong, but he's a nipe chap and frightfully clever at wireless. He taught us what we know."

The party entered the dark, narrow tunnel, or cleft in the rugged bluff. They had to pass through in single-file—Curly taking the rear. Jack Armstrong led the way. "There are no steps yet," he called back to them, "only a slope. You'll find a rail at the left side; it will guide you."

Almost as soon as her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, Cordelia found them contracting again under a shaft of light streaming down a chimney arrangement into a small circular chamber.

"It's just the sun flashed down by a mirror," explained Armstrong.

READ THIS FIRST.

Jack Armstrong and Curly Walker are two wireless operators stationed on the Easter Islands in the South Pacific. They are attacked by a mysterious man in black, but after a fight he makes off. Jack and Curly meet Professor Cordwell and his charming daughter, Cordelia, who have journeyed to the island to study the extraordinary stone idols. Jack and Curly take the Cordwells for a trip round the island in a wireless motor-boat invented by the former, and later on they go into the mysterious grove to examine the idols.

"The steps begin here. There are a hundred of them—they do things in hundreds in this part of the world. There are a hundred of your Stone Houses, a hundred of the idols."

The party mounted the rough winding steps. These branched away from the small central "hall," and darkness came again. Cordelia slipped once or twice, and Armstrong put out his hand.

"Catch hold, will you, Miss Cordwell? My chum will look after the professor. These stairs are a trifle awkward—"

She felt his strong fingers grasp hers, and a sense of relief came to her. Easter Island had already impressed her more than she cared to admit.

Very soon they reached daylight. They were at the side of a deep, saucer-like depression, a round basin cut in the rock, with a tangled, overgrown tuft of bushes masking a pool of stagnant water at the bottom of the saucer.

"Very curious," said the professor, gazing about him.

"Looks like a crater—a crater extinct for centuries. But one knows this is a volcanic island."

"It is still volcanic, sir," said Armstrong. "We hear strange noises, often enough. And Curly has seen strange lights, so he says. Out on the northern part of the island—where we fancied we had first seen you."

"The natives making fires—eh?"

"They're away to the south-west, the natives. A feckless lot, just tending their sheep and cows, and dying off every winter. That's all they do. The lights were— Tell the professor, Curly."

"Breakfast first," said Curly. He glanced towards his chum, who suddenly perceived he was still holding Cordelia's left hand. With a laugh he released her.

"Sorry, Miss Cordwell."

She made no reply, but didn't appear offended.

They reached the top of the crater by a path which wound round inside it. At the top was a strongly built log-cabin—or rather, series of cabins. From one of these rose the tall, graceful masts of the station, with its cross-stays and wire-jibs. A native, clad in dungarees, came to the door. Armstrong spoke to him in pidgin-English—queer, laughable words they seemed to Cordelia. But the man understood, and answered promptly. "Him tiffin much ready, him waiting cold." He signalled to other natives inside the buildings, and they came out and salaamed to the professor and his daughter in turn.

"Come on, sir."

And Curly took Professor Cordwell's quite willing arm and led him inside, where an excellent aroma of hot coffee filled the air. Curly made the professor unbuckle his amazing Sam Browne belt, and take it off, with all its collection of pouches and trappings. Soon, the four of them were seated like old friends round the rock table in the middle of the hut. The natives waited on them, and fanned them between whiles.

It was not so warm at this altitude, and Cordelia settled down to her homemade bread and delicious butter, and enjoyed the lightly boiled eggs which

her hosts set before her. The professor was soon in a great humour, cracking the shells of his eggs with his spoon.

"It's as good as being at home," he declared. "Ducks' eggs, eh? What kind of ducks?"

"A small sort, sir—fly like the dickens. These birds had to make the most of the few islands and pools. There's a lagoon out there where Curly thinks he saw lights the other evening—"

"I saw them all right," interposed Curly. He brought out of his pocket the coil of copper wire. "Here's proof positive."

"Where Curly saw the lights, then. Well, that's a mysterious place, too—that lagoon." Jack Armstrong glanced towards his chum, with meaning. "It's a desolate spot—makes you shiver even on a hot day."

The professor was closely regarding the coil of copper wire which Curly had handed to him.

"Binding from a Verey light, sir, don't you think?"

"Beyond doubt. You can see the fusing—where the wire has been burst apart. John and Curly, we have to thank you for a real English tiffin, and I'll come again, please. Cordy and her old dad will make you welcome at No. 1, Stone Houses this evening. We can't promise you much—but we'll do our best. Now, if you'll help me on with my patent belt, we will get down to work. I don't expect our submarine friend will worry about us. He has had a good look, and sees we are quite respectable."

"Use our boat, sir, when you wish to return to Stone Houses. Good-bye, professor, good-bye, Miss Cordwell!"

"I think I'll have to be Cordelia, if you're going to be Jack and Curly."

"Hurrah!" cried Curly Walker. "That's the stuff! I say, we'll make this old island a jolly place!"

They descended to the causeway, now flooded by the tide. The wireless boat was waiting for them, and the boys put their guests across to the mainland. Armstrong decided to show the way to the Gully, in case the professor should prefer to walk inland. Curly went back to the station, rather disconsolately; but Jack Armstrong was in charge, after all.

Curly's Close Shave!

THE professor, having tapped two or three of the idols very learnedly with his long-handled hammer, came to the conclusion that they were of rather odd formation. They were hewn out of solid rock, but had two or three sorts of rock in their composition. Their gowns were dark red tufa, beyond doubt, their heads and bodies were fashioned from something quite different.

"It seems as though they're carved out of a mush of volcanic stuff," said he. "One would think they were chopped out of a lot of mixed up rock, cold, after having been white with heat. Have you explored many of the caves behind the idols?"

"Some of the near caves are pretty well known to us," Armstrong replied.

"There's one out yonder that goes right into the island. Curly and I have walked nearly a mile into it. Hallo, what's the matter now? Here comes Mambese, our man, with the two others. What on earth's up?"

The three saw the three natives urgently getting into the wireless boat. They pushed off from the Bluff, using the oars. No sooner were they clear of the Bluff than Curly appeared at the mouth of the tunnel. Rushing down to the ledge wherefrom Mambese had just escaped, Curly fired at the brown men furiously.

They crouched down in the boat, and hid while he fired all six chambers of his revolver. Then they showed themselves, and paddled swiftly round the Bluff out to sea.

"They're done for, that way!" said Armstrong.

He ran back to the point opposite the Bluff. Curly was shouting something, but his voice wouldn't carry. Professor Cordwell and his daughter followed Armstrong wonderingly.

It took some ten minutes or more to get back to the submerged end of the causeway, but at last they were able to distinguish something of the trouble.

"Mambese's gone!" shouted Curly. "He has smashed the wireless!"

Armstrong turned a rather blank face to the professor.

"Do you hear that, sir? What's best to be done?"

"I can help you re-set the transmitter," answered Professor Cordwell. "At the worst we can set up the small transmitter which I have brought with me. It is high-powered, and, in this atmosphere, we might get the waves audible at Salay-Gomez."

Curly was already wading along the causeway. In the small tides of the tropic, not much more than four feet of water would be registered at the most. There was a nasty swirling current, however, tailing round the Bluff—part of that much swifter and dangerous current which had already seized the badly handled boat—wireless no more, now that all power had gone from Station Double-O-Seven.

Curly was caught by the flow when about three parts across. He was forced off his feet at once, and had to swim with desperation. He knew enough of the coast to let himself go with the tide, and the three on shore hastened along the beach to the spot where he must eventually land.

The young fellow was carried outwards, despite all efforts.

"There's nothing to fear, you know," said Jack Armstrong, more to cheer himself than his hearers. "Curly's a top-hole swimmer. Of course, he has his clothes on, and the current's a bit strong at the top of a spring tide. Just look where it has shot the boat!"

Mambese and his mates were in difficulties, evidently unforeseen by them. The rather stoutly built boat was made for screw propulsion and the natives were clumsy with the paddles, which were only intended for pulling the boat in and out of the little dock.

Cordelia was longing to ask a question. She was almost sick with dread that the answer might be yes. Jack Armstrong guessed what was in her mind.

"There are no sharks so near to land," he told her, and noted her little sob of relief.

"I bathed this morning," said the professor.

"Not very wise of you, sir, as you

can see. Curly has all his work to do—and he knows this coast."

Armstrong saw his chum gradually shaping a course for the beach. The three on land watched him very anxiously, forgetful of the treacherous Polynesians. Cordelia glanced once or twice to where the boat was rapidly disappearing in the haze; then, like the others, gave her whole thought to the straggling swimmer.

They saw him turn suddenly on his back and begin a frantic splashing with his feet. Then he rolled back on to his breast and shouted to them.

"Get stones, quick!" called Armstrong. "Aim at that beast there just beyond him!"

He ran into the sea to get a better aim.

The professor and Cordelia understood in an instant. There were sharks, and one was following Curly—intent on a kill. A volley of small rocks and stones went into the sea, just clear of the swimmer.

It was all over in another moment. Curly had found his feet and was in the shallows. A diabolical, dead-white face lifted itself half clear of the waves immediately behind him—a face, all mouth and needle teeth. A huge fin cut the water; there was an angry splash of the tail, as a well-directed shot from the professor landed on the back of the great fish.

Curly staggered up through the surf. "Good shot, sir!" he panted.

He was glad to sit down for a while and get his breath.

"Near thing—wonder what brought the brute so close in?"

"Been following our submarine friend, I expect," said the professor, "or our steamer. They say that sharks will follow big vessels. They eat the refuse from the galleys, as it's flung out."

Curly told his news.

"I got back to the station and thought it all seemed rather quiet. There was our breakfast—just as we had left it. I was going to call Mambese after I had been into the signalling-room. When I got to the door I saw Mambese going down to the tunnel. He called out something about the boat and I didn't worry—"

"Where is the boat, by the way?" inquired the professor.

They scanned the blue, restless sea in vain.

Mambese, his companions—and their boat had gone without leaving a trace, in the same mysterious way as the fellow on the submarine.

But the wireless boat could scarcely have sunk. Jack Armstrong and Curly knew that it was unsinkable.

Trapped in the Cave!

"ANYWAY, the installation is done for," Curly told them. "Mambese knew just what to do to render it useless, and he has done it."

"We will go back to No. 1, Stone Houses," decided the professor. "We will have a good square dinner, and we will return to Bluff Point when the tide is down. Cheerio, Cordy, all is not yet lost!"

They caught the infection of his good spirits and set off without wasting another moment. Curly was wet, but not downhearted, and Armstrong

saw no use of repining. That some foul play was going on all round about Station Double-O-Seven was evident; but the professor and his daughter were quite making up for the defection of the three natives.

The quartette entered the gully, then the professor decided that it would be better to keep in view of the sea. They turned back, almost as soon as they had commenced the inland route to Stone Houses, and so once more walked along the platform, "Idols Parade," as Curly styled it. The professor was really aching to investigate them more closely, and Jack Armstrong was not surprised to find the journey to Stone Houses becoming a lengthy one.

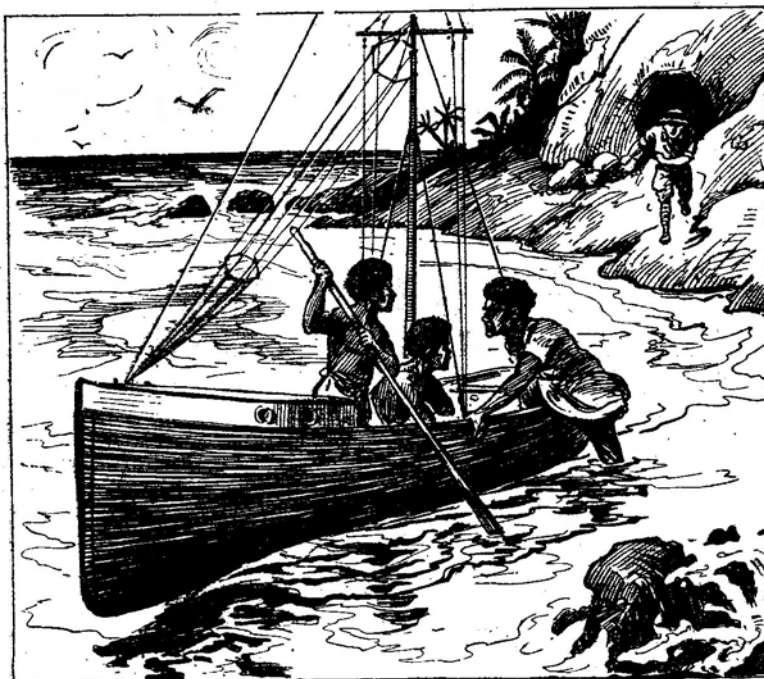
So continually did the professor stop and tap with his hammer, that it was well on midday before they had gained the end of the strange natural altar

The two of them entered the round cave. It was cool and sandy, and so circular that one might have thought it bored into the cliff by some huge drill. They pushed along to the end, and Cordelia sat down on a big stone, lying loosely at the side. She could see, through the round entrance, how her father was busily pointing out to Curly something which had specially interested him in the idol.

Jack Armstrong stood by her side. Cordelia found that the stone was balanced on another, and so she rocked herself gently to and fro as she sat.

"It's a queer part of the world, and one can't help wondering who put all these great figures here."

"And what they mean," added Armstrong. "Curly is a bit in love with them—or afraid of them. Mind you don't slip off that stone."



Curly rushed down to the ledge as the three natives made frantic efforts to push the wireless boat off.

on which the idols were placed. Just here was a specially interesting figure, quite the largest of all. It might have been a female goddess, judging from the length of rocky red "hair" which crowned it. The features were less repellent than the rest—there was more of a roundness about the figure, which stood nearly upright—and the hands, tightly pressed against the sides, were smaller and unclenched.

Like most of the idols, this one was part-buried in the rock, and horribly flat at the back. The lips were thin, but smiling. The body of the great image was of a whitey-grey stone.

Immediately behind it was a circular cave into which Cordelia was bound to have a peep.

"That's her home, I guess," said Armstrong. "It's just a tunnel, and quite dry."

"Does it go far?" asked the girl.

"It's quite short. Come and have a look. Your father is busy with the Queen of the Idols."

Even as he spoke Cordelia did slip. She had tilted the stone too far back, and it rolled over against the side of the cave. Cordelia laughingly rolled with it. Then her laughter changed to a cry. The great image outside had instantly fallen backward against the mouth of the cave, blocking the entrance.

There were glimpses of daylight either side of the figure, and the two inside the cave did not realise at first that there was any danger. But the idol seemed bent on coming right into the cave, or so it seemed.

With a cry of horror, Jack grasped the girl's arm.

"Great Scott! We must get out of this, quick!" he exclaimed. "If that image settles down any more we shall be caught like rats in a trap!"

Another long, thrilling instalment of this great story of the South Seas will appear next Tuesday.

THE GREYFRIARS POLICE COURT

A vivid account of the latest charges and convictions

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST TOM DUTTON!

Prisoner Protected By His Friends!

Thomas Dutton, a stolid-looking youth, who was described on the charge-sheet as being slightly hard of hearing, was bounced into the dock.

Magistrate: Is your name Dutton?

Prisoner: Look here, if you start calling me a glutton, I—I'll burst you!

Magistrate (exasperated): Are you Thomas Dutton, of No. 7 Study?

Prisoner: So would you be if you'd been playing footer in the pelting rain!

Magistrate: Eh?

Prisoner: You wouldn't be able to help getting muddy!

Magistrate: It appears that I have a deaf-mute to deal with. I should advise prisoner to emulate the well-known song, and "Come Back to Erin." (Laughter.)

Detective-Inspector Penfold, of Jotland Yard, then gave evidence.

"I happened to be in No. 1 Study, your worship, the other afternoon, when prisoner sneaked in and raided the cupboard. He pilfered a pot of plum-and-apple jam, and a number of sardines that were in their dotage." (Laughter.)

Magistrate: What were you doing in the study at the time?

Witness: I was about to raid the cupboard myself, of course, but prisoner forestalled me! (Renewed laughter.)

Magistrate (to prisoner): What did you do with the jam?

Prisoner: Shush! You mustn't swear here!

Magistrate: I wasn't swearing, you champion chump! I said "jam," not —er—the other thing! J-A-M! Plum-and-apple, to be precise—the stuff they had in the Army!

Prisoner (excitedly): Balmy, am I? My hat! I'll teach you to swear at me, and say I'm balmy! Rally round, you fellows!

A large number of prisoner's friends, who were seated in the gallery, opened fire with their pea-shooters. His worship was soon compelled to put up half a dozen wound stripes, having been struck in several parts of his anatomy.

The police retaliated hotly with their truncheons (cricket-stumps), but the pea-shooting brigade had the better of the argument, and during the commotion which ensued the prisoner escaped through the ventilator.

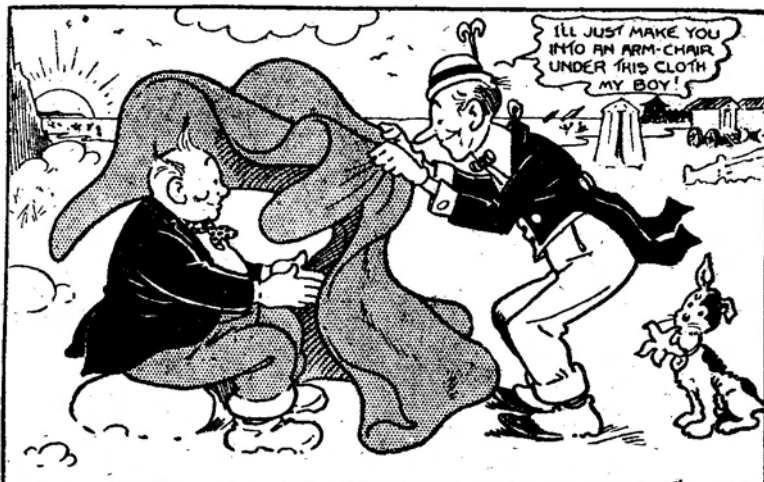
REPORT IN BRIEF.

Richard Russell, Montague Newland and Robert Donald Ogilvy were charged with causing grievous bodily harm to Horace Coker by ducking him in the fountain in the Close.

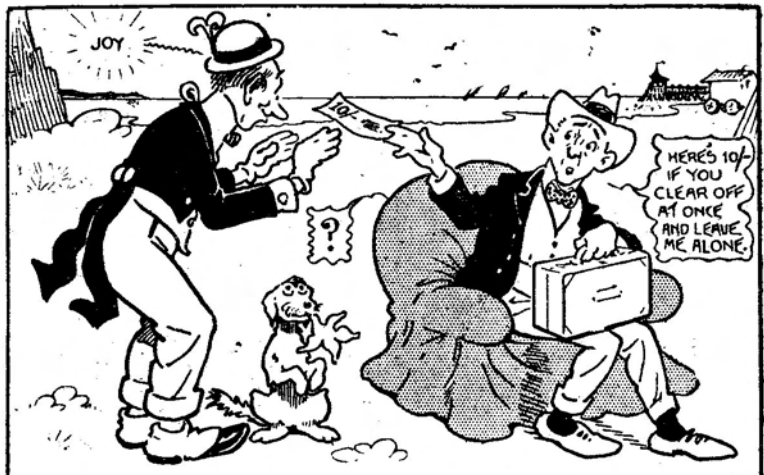
His worship remarked that Coker had been making himself objectionable for a long time, and he warmly commended the prisoners for their action, bidding them help themselves liberally from the poor-box.

CHEERFUL CLARENCE AND FAT FRED THE FAME

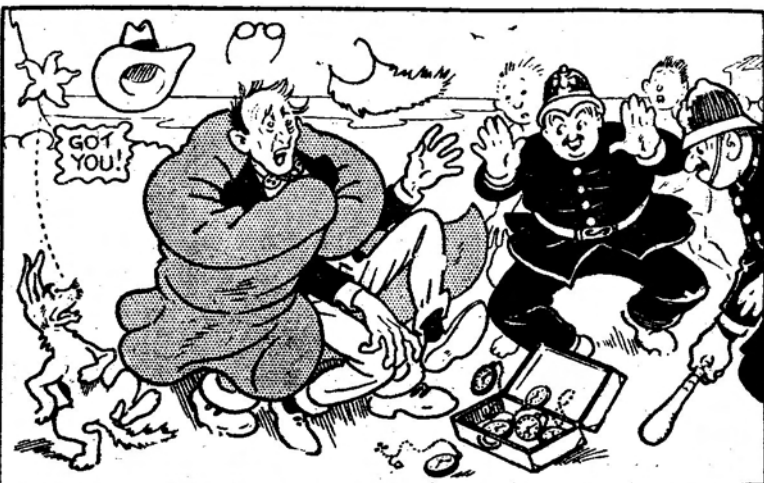
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1. Having found two excursion tickets in the pocket of an overcoat they had taken by mistake, our two cheery chumps blew down to the merry old briny, and it wasn't long before Clarence's faithful film-brain was smitten with a wheeze for raising the wind.



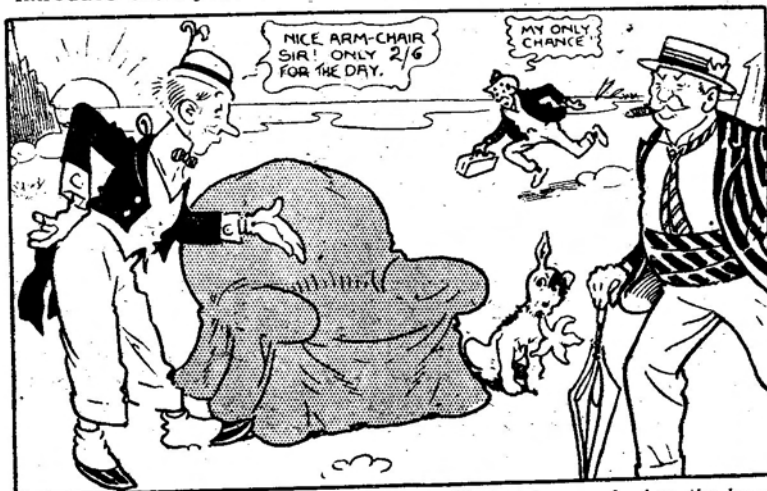
3. And, as it happened, everything went as briskly as Bunter to brekker. The gent with the kind chivvy whom you saw hustling across the background of etching No. 2, planked down on the chair and gave Clarence half a quidlet.



5. Then, just as P.c.s. Triplite and Pounce arrived on the scene with the two bathers who had mislaid their 18-carrot turnips, Fat Fred gave a mighty shout, "Got you!" Oh, three chairs!

HEROES OF THE BLITTERGRAPH FILM COMPANY

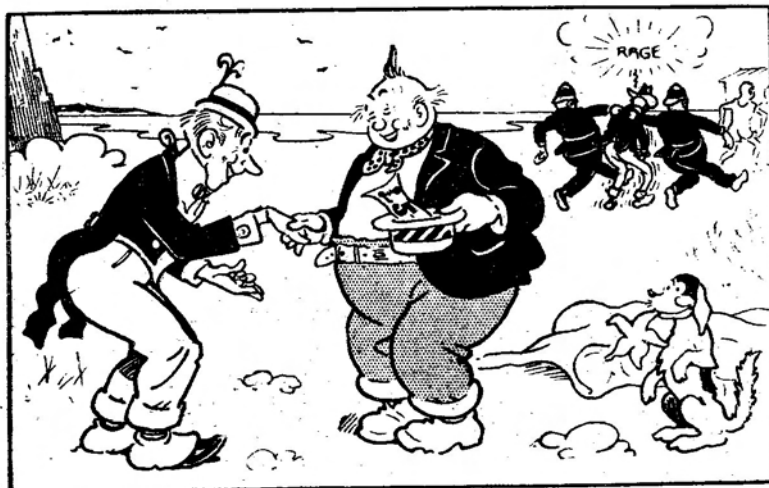
Introduce 'em to your chums and earn their life-long gratitude!



2. With the aid of a rare and valuable horse-blanket borrowed when the horse wasn't looking, the cheerful one transformed Fred's fat proportions into the handsome armchair depicted. "Now let's hope business is brisk," muttered Horatio Hippocrytes the hound. "I'm fed-up with a starfish diet!"



4. But what's this? No sooner did the generous and gentle stranger find himself alone than he disguised himself as merry old Methusaleh, the gent who lived for three hundred years without paying his income tax.



6. And while the picket-pocker—er—pocket-picker—was being taken to acquire skill at skilly scoffing, our two heroes rejoiced over the reward for valour. Oh, joy! Oh, happiness! (Look out for our film-fun merchants next week!)

My Weekly Interview

By the Special Representative of "The Greyfriars Herald."

This week:
DICK PENFOLD

PEN, as his name suggests, is a scribe. He dabbles in verse. There hasn't been much of his poetry in "The Greyfriars Herald" of late, because a little of it goes a long way, as the giraffe said when he sat down to dinner.

But Pen's a good poet, for all that. Not quite so good as Shakespeare, perhaps, but several streets ahead of Wordsworth and those other johnnies who wrote about babbling brooks and primroses by the river's brim.

When I stepped into Pen's study, in order to interview him for the "Herald," I salaamed to him with the respect due to a great master.

"I say, Pen, you're quite a genius at verse-making, and I want to know your methods, so that I can communicate them to our readers, gentle and otherwise."

"Right you are!" said Pen, producing a sheet of impot. paper and a pencil. "Now, the great thing in poetry-writing is originality. Always avoid the beaten track. Now, s'posing I'm going to write an ode to Miss Phyllis Howell, of Cliff House. How do I begin?"

"Your charms, dear Phyllis, are divine;
And for your hand and heart I pine!"

I suggested.

"Rats!" growled Pen. "That style of poetry has been done to death. Sickly, sentimental stuff is no use nowadays. You want to be breezy and cheerful. Something like this."

And he started to write:

"What-ho, my merry 'fairy queen!
How are you getting on, old bean?
How does the present weather suit
Your health and appetite, old fruit?"

"That's topping!" I interjected.

"Go on!"

And Pen continued:

"Just half a tick, and I will sing
Your praises like a bird, old thing.
Your eyes are 'IT'; your cheeks so nice
Remind me of a strawberry-ice."

Penfold paused.

"Go ahead!" I said. "Finish it!"

And Pen did. And he let me have the manuscript as soon as it was completed.

Of course, it didn't occur to me that Pen had been pulling my leg. And what do you think I did? Why, I sent that precious ode to Miss Phyllis, and pretended that I had composed it!

Was she bucked about it? Did she speak of me as a budding Byron? Not a bit of it, dear reader!

Miss Phyllis went right up in the air about that poem, and whenever we meet in the village street—more poetry!—she cuts me dead!

THE END.



FOR CLUB AND THE CUP!

Our splendid new sporting serial of trials and triumphs on the tooter field

By **WALTER EDWARDS**

READ THIS FIRST.

Jack Denyer is left the chief interest in a professional football team called Norchester United, which is being managed by an uncle. Jack obtains proof of a great slackness among the players, and he wires to his uncle, stating that a new manager is coming to the club to take charge. On the following day he arrives on the scene while the Norchester players are slacking by the pavilion instead of practising, and astounds them by the announcement: "I am the new manager!"

The New Broom.

MARTIN DENYER, the swarthy manager of Norchester United F.C., stood as a man turned to stone, his small, close-set eyes staring fixedly at the calm, pale-faced youngster standing upon the steps of the club-house.

The players appeared to be equally overcome by the stranger's startling declaration of the fact that he was the new manager, and they gazed at him dully, with a mixture of amazement, doubt and incredulity upon their faces.

Jack Denyer, for his part, remained perfectly self-possessed; he just stood there quietly, waiting for Martin Denyer to break the silence.

The youngster, in his own mind, had decided that Denyer must go. No team could succeed with a manager who encouraged the players to slack, which this fellow obviously did. Even now, when they should have been upon the field, he had interrupted a game of cards, and those of them who were not playing had been lounging about the verandah, and showing not the slightest inclination to work.

It was not good enough, and Jack Denyer meant to put his foot down.

The continued silence was becoming almost oppressive; yet not a man could find his tongue. Jack's declaration had stunned them.

The players were still gazing at the youngster, obviously unable to believe the evidence of their own ears.

He had declared himself to be Jack Denyer, the new manager!

The whole thing was absurd, ludicrous! Here was a youngster, a mere schoolboy, coolly telling Martin Denyer that he was sacked, and that he,

the schoolboy, was going to take control of one of the biggest professional clubs in the kingdom!

The absurdity of the whole thing struck Jerry Paton, the centre-forward, and he gave an audible snigger.

"The kid seems to be pulling your leg all right, Martin!" he laughed derisively; and, the silence having been broken, a roar of laughter went up at the manager's expense.

Martin Denyer's unhealthy, fleshy face flushed with rage, and an ugly light leapt into his eyes. Furthermore, his big hands closed involuntarily, and he took a menacing step towards Jack Denyer, who, however, stood his ground unflinchingly. Instead of retreating before the big man, the youngster mounted the remaining stairs and stepped on to the floor of the verandah. Once there, he strode forward, and came to a halt in front of the enraged manager.

"Well?" he asked quietly. "Did you hear what I said?"

Martin Denyer positively foamed at the mouth, and his bloated features flushed angrily as he strove to articulate. But the youngster's self-possession took his breath away, and robbed him of the power of speech for a moment. Yet no sooner did he find his tongue than he broke into a tirade of abuse and bloodcurdling threats.

He stepped a little nearer to Jack, and thrust his face into that of the youngster.

"You!" he fumed. "You—you impudent young toad! You—you dare to play this joke upon me, the manager of the club! You have the nerve to come here and tell me that I'm sacked, and that you—a callow, cheeky schoolboy, who should be with your nurse—that you are the new manager—" His hoarse voice trailed away, as his red anger got the better of him. "Let me tell you this, you puppy!" he continued, a moment or so later. "If you came here to-day for a trial game, you're going to be unlucky! Why, for two pins I'd get hold of you and sling you out of the ground, neck and crop! But I can't trust myself to put my hands on you!"

The manager was in a blind, tower-

ing rage, and he pointed a trembling finger towards the gate.

"Make yourself scarce whilst you're safe!" he ground out, his voice taking a shrill note. "Don't stand there looking at me like a fool! Get out—beat it—clear! Do you hear what I say?"

Seeing that Martin Denyer's voice was little less than a bellow the question was superfluous, to say the least of it. Yet, whether he heard or not, the threatening words made no visible impression upon the youngster. He merely gazed into the man's flushed face, and then met one question with another.

"Have you quite finished?" he asked quietly.

And the words were as a red rag to a bull.

The veins upon the manager's forehead threatened to burst, and, with a wild cry of uncontrollable rage, his great hands flew to the youngster's throat. Had those strong fingers fastened upon Jack's neck, Martin Denyer would not have relaxed his murderous grip until the boy had been choked into insensibility.

But it was not to be, and in that moment the players became aware of the phenomenal strength which Jack Denyer harboured in his slim body.

Moving like a flash of light, he evaded the manager's clutching fingers; and then, before the big man realised what was happening, the youngster gripped him round his thick waist, and, with a deft, easy movement, sent him flying over the railings of the verandah.

Shooting through the air like a stone from a catapult, the manager dropped like a stone, to crash to the turf, ten feet below. And there he remained, bruised and breathless, his senses reeling, wondering what had happened to him.

He remained where he had fallen for fully a couple of minutes, and then, with a groan upon his lips, he sat up—painfully. And the wry, bewildered expression upon his fleshy features caused the players to go off into a roar of uncontrollable laughter.

Martin Denyer still looked dazed, but the shouts of mirth brought him to earth, as it were and in a less

painful method than the one Jack Denyer had employed.

The manager's small, blazing eyes travelled from one face to another, and ultimately settled upon the youngster's grim features. And Jack, looking into the eyes, read something very like murder in their depths.

But he did not flinch; rather did he want to fight—and win—and so establish his position at once. So, watching the big man scramble clumsily to his feet, he waited for the attack which he knew was coming.

And he was right, for no sooner did Martin Denyer gain the verandah than he made a blind rush at the youngster, meaning to bear him down by sheer weight and strength. But he reckoned without his man.

Jack had represented Rundle's at the Public Schools' Championships, and had carried off the middle-weight honours.

Now, calm and collected, he stood his ground until the charging figure was within striking distance; then, with a seemingly effortless movement, he stepped aside but a matter of inches, and ripped home a right which, catching Martin on the side of the head, sent the big fellow reeling.

And before he could regain his balance the youngster was attacking him, following up his advantage. The boy was giving stones away in weight, but this fact did not worry him, for he could see at a glance that his uncle was in anything but condition.

So he played to the man's big body, and it seemed to the onlookers that his hard fists literally bit into the other's flesh. The blows flashed home with the speed of lightning, and every one was aimed at a vulnerable spot.

Martin Denyer, the first shock over, tried to pull himself together and bear down upon the youngster; but it was all in vain. It was like hitting at a shadow. Jack dodged round the fellow like a phantom, placing stinging blows just when and where he liked, and very soon Martin was gasping for breath.

But the youngster would not hear of a "breather." He was out to establish his supremacy—to prove to the players that, schoolboy in years though he might be, he could hold his own against grown men.

So, working his way round the limited space, he hustled Martin Denyer into a corner, and, having managed this, he tore into him like a fury.

The manager essayed a number of clumsy; swinging blows, but the youngster brushed them aside with an ease which positively amazed the players.

And then came the end.

Jack Denyer sent a terrible pile-driver to the region of his opponent's solar plexus, with the result that the big trunk came forward, bringing with it the bloated features. And it was as they neared him that Jack measured the chin with his left, and then flashed home a blow which threatened to shatter the jaw.

There came the unmistakable click, and, scarcely without a sound, the big form slithered to the floor of the verandah—"out" for the count!

Jack Denyer gave one glance at the

inanimate body, and then turned to a man in a grey sweater.

"Are you the trainer?" he asked crisply; and such was the authoritative note in his voice that the fellow found himself answering with obvious respect, and much against his will.

"Yes, sir," he replied at once.

"Has this man got a bag, containing his personal belongings—an overcoat, another hat, or anything like that?"

"Yes, sir," answered the trainer, wondering what exactly this curious youngster was driving at.

"Then fetch them at once, and bring them across to the players' gate."

Having given his instructions, the youngster bent down and hoisted the heavy figure upon his shoulders. He then walked slowly down the steps, and made his way across the ground.

Looking very bewildered, the trainer

gutter with a nice dexterity and precision.

He eyed his handiwork for a moment, and then turned to the youngster with a grin.

"How's that?" he asked.

"That's all right," answered Jack, with a smile. He now turned to Martin Denyer, who had managed to rouse himself and watch the flight of his personal belongings into the mud.

"You will find your clothes in the gutter," Jack remarked suavely. "Will you follow them of your own accord, or shall I help you out?"

The youngster accompanied the polite words with a cherubic smile which brought a flush of red anger to the man's bloated features. Mouthing threats, he rose to his feet and stood glaring at the youngster before him. It seemed that he was debating within himself whether he should make another attack. His hands clenched



A gasp of surprise escaped each player present, for standing at the door was Jack Denyer, the schoolboy manager.

left the verandah, and when he arrived at the players' gate—which led to the street outside the ground—he found Jack Denyer waiting for him, and with him Martin Denyer, who, looking pale and much the worse for wear, was lying on the turf in a state of semicomatose.

The trainer, looking like a species of Christmas-tree, was laden with a miscellaneous collection of coats and hats, and was balancing a leather suit-case precariously upon one shoulder.

He was hot and tired, and turned a perspiring face to the youngster.

"What shall I do with these things?" he asked. "Shove 'em down here?"

"No," returned Jack Denyer. "I'll open the gate, and then you can fling them into the road."

"But—but somebody'll come along and nick 'em!" protested the trainer.

"I don't think so," said Jack quietly. "Their owner will follow them in a moment or so."

The trainer said no more, and, being anxious to relieve himself of his burden, he threw the clothes into the

convulsively, and the big knuckles bunched together. Then he remembered how he had already suffered at the capable hands of the youngster, and with a black scowl he slunk towards the gate, passed through it, and gained the street.

Once there he paused, and shot a hate-laden glance at his tormentor.

"I did my best to ruin your father, you brat," he hissed, his rage getting the better of his discretion, "and I all but succeeded! And now I take a solemn vow that I will not rest until I bring you to the gutter! Mark my words! Martin Denyer never makes an idle boast, and you shall live to regret the day you dared lay your filthy paws on me! You wait and—"

Jack Denyer, smiling quietly, took a step towards the quivering figure of the raving ex-manager, and there was a look in his eye which the fellow did not like. So, picking up his belongings, he commenced to move off down the street. And as he retreated he left a trail of threats and abuse in his wake. Such was his valediction.

Jack Denyer shrugged his shoulders.

"That's settled him," he murmured, as he locked the gate. "Now to tackle the players!"

An Unexpected Interruption:

ARE we all here?" Jerry Paton, the Norchester United centre-forward, peered through the smoke-laden atmosphere of the small committee-room of the White Hart hotel. There were about thirty young men present, all of them members of the local football club. They were there at Paton's invitation, that worthy having declared that he had something of importance to put to them.

He had promised to "do them proud," and a glance at the table, laden with bottles of spirits, and the array of cigars and cigarettes, left no doubt as to what he had meant by the remark.

The fact that professional footballers cannot hope to thrive upon alcohol and tobacco did not seem to strike either Jerry or the other players, for none of them lost any time in helping themselves to a drink and a cigar.

Seeing that his guests had settled down to a comfortable smoke, Paton, who occupied a chair at the end of the room, rose to his feet and asked if everyone was there.

"The whole bunch is here, Jerry," answered Mills, the goalkeeper. "Fire ahead, old man!"

The centre-forward took a drink from the glass at his elbow, and then went straight to the point.

"As you chaps can probably guess, I've asked you to come along this evening to talk about the kid that's turned up and got rid of old Martin, who was one of the best."

"Hear, hear!" came from all sides of the room.

"Old Martin," continted Paton, "didn't worry us, and so long as we turned out and played some sort of game he didn't worry. What's more, he didn't make us fool around with a ball every day, like this kid does. Old Martin was always willing to join in a game of cards, and to prove himself a real sportsman."

"Hear, hear!"

"As you know, this kid, being manager, has got the whip-hand, and when he turned up the other morning, after putting poor old Martin out on his neck, he talked to us like a Dutch uncle, and made us skip round like a pack of schoolboys, dribbling, and passing, and running, and all the other fool stuff, just as though we were playing in a match. Well, chaps, that ain't good enough. We've had an easy time all along, and I reckon we ain't going to change our habits!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What I suggest is this," continued the centre-forward, warming to his subject. "We're playing Clapton Cent, at Homerton, next Saturday. Well, this kid, Jack Denyer, is sure to travel with us, and it's ten to one that he'll look into the dressing-room whilst we're dressing. Few words of fatherly advice, and all that junk, y'know. Well, when he turns up we'll arrange a little surprise for him."

"Instead of finding us lookin' pretty in our footer rig, he'll see us sitting down, having a quiet smoke."

Paton grinned round at the players, who were listening to him with bated breath.

"Go on, Jerry!" cried a voice. "Let's hear the rest!"

"Mr. Blessed Jack Denyer's bound to want to know what's up—and it's then that we tell him that we're fed-up with him, and that he's got to run the club on old Martin's lines."

"And what if he says he won't?" asked Giles, the outside-right.

"Why, we just won't turn out!" declared Paton triumphantly. "We shall have him just where we want him, lads, and so long as we stick together we shall win. Now, what do you think of that for an idea?"

Murmurs of approval came from all sides, and Paton beamed round at his guests.

"That's the style!" he declared approvingly. "We shall be as right as rain so long as we stand together. Now, let anyone who ain't in favour of the scheme say so at once."

And a voice, clear and distinct, rang from the further end of the room:

"I'm not in favour, Paton!"

Every head in the room swung round towards the door. And then a gasp of surprise escaped each player present, for there, standing on the threshold, was the upright form of Jack Denyer, the schoolboy manager!

Dead silence reigned for fully half a minute, and then the youngster, calm and self-possessed as usual, threaded his way through the assembly and joined Paton at the table.

"I don't want you to think I was spying on you, Paton," said Jack, looking into the other's shifty eyes.

"As a matter of fact, I was on my way to the billiard-room when I saw a notice on the door of this room stating that the United was holding a meeting to-night. Even so, I should not have intruded but for the fact that I heard you refer to me as 'Mr. Blessed Jack Denyer.' I pushed the door open, and so engrossed were you all in your little scheme that you failed to notice my entrance."

"Well, gentlemen," continued the youngster, with a shade of sarcasm in his tone, "I fear that I have rather damped the ingenious little surprise that Paton has suggested. I am sorry, of course, but there it is. Furthermore, Paton being the ringleader, I shall stand him down in the match against the Orient, and in future he will play in the second eleven."

Paton gave a sharp intake of breath when he heard this, for, despite his slack methods, he was tricky with the ball, and was well-liked by the crowd, although his methods were at times somewhat questionable.

"Oh," he snarled, flushing, "so you're going to stand me down, are you? And who the deuce can you put in my place? Salmon, of the second eleven, I suppose, who's about as useful as a curry-comb in a garage!"

A heated protest came from Salmon, who was sitting but a yard or so from the speaker. Paton took no notice of him, however, but glared at Jack Denyer, waiting for an answer to his question.

"Well, if you must know," said Jack quietly. "I am now a playing member of the club, and I shall take

your place at centre-forward on Saturday!"

Yet again had Jack succeeded in stupefying the members of the United, and it was whilst they were grasping the full meaning of his quietly spoken words that he made his way to the door and opened it.

He looked back.

"Ten o'clock, sharp, in the morning, boys!" he said, and closed the door, leaving behind him a crowd of men who were gasping like fish out of water.

As Jack had said, Paton did not travel with the United from Norchester to London, and the crowd which gathered at Homerton to see the Orient do battle wondered who the visiting centre was, and where he had come from in the first place.

Jack had made no mention of the affair at the White Hart hotel, but an hour or so before the kick-off he wondered if the players had given up all idea of mutiny. Kowing that every man-jack of the team disliked him, the youngster did not force his company upon them except during the hours of training, when he saw there was no slacking.

He had already had a long chat with the trainer, and when that worthy left the managerial office he knew within himself that if he did not keep his men up to the scratch the youngster would have no mercy on him. Jack Denyer had told him as much.

Jakes, the trainer, was a married man, and he had no intention of losing his job. Card-playing and slacking generally soon became a thing of the past, therefore, and Jack Denyer smiled.

Twenty minutes before the kick-off Jack Denyer joined the other players in the dressing-room, and one glance round at the sullen faces proved beyond all doubt that his men meant to defy him.

Hardly one of them would meet his searching glance, however, and the low conversation which had hummed through the room died down.

Jack Denyer came to a halt in the doorway, and looked at each player in turn.

The air seemed to be charged with sensation—expectancy. Not a word had been spoken, yet Jack knew within himself that the players had declared war. Very well; he would accept the challenge—and he meant to win!

"Well, boys," he said cheerily, "it's time you were dressing, you know."

He walked across the room, and opened his bag, taking from it his shirt and knickers. But the others made no movement. One or two coughed nervously; others shifted in their chairs and made uneasy, shuffling movements with their feet.

Jack looked round again, as though in surprise. It was evident the players were going to carry out their plan.

Then his jaw set, and he prepared to play his last card.

Another fine, long instalment of this great footer serial will be given in next week's "Greyfriars Herald."



Our magnificent racing serial specially written by

MAJOR CHERRY

Tony's Hard Luck!

TONY landed on the soft ground with a severe bump, but hastily clambered to his feet, to see, with indescribable chagrin, The Rocking Horse receding at top speed down the course. He gave a shrill whistle, and the dappled grey slowed up, then stopped and came trotting back in answer to the signal of his young master.

Tony swung round, to see the cause of his unfortunate fall making off across the Heath, but his only thought concerned itself with mounting The Rocking Horse again, and finishing the course in the best time possible in the circumstances.

The grey came trotting up whinnying as though in sympathy with his young rider, and thrust his soft muzzle affectionately into Tony's hand. Hastily the youngster threw himself into the saddle again, and urged his mount at full speed down the course. All chance of making a good race of the trial was gone now, but he determined at least to exhibit the paces of The Rocking Horse before the waiting watchers near the finishing-post.

With his whole heart and soul set on the task in hand, he bore rapidly down to that point of the course where he knew that Lord Estor, Dorothy and Barney were waiting, taking each obstacle in his path like a swallow in full flight. From the corner of his eye he saw the two men and the girl to his left, and almost simultaneously Danny Wade right ahead, swinging round Buckshot, who had completed the full course.

The course completed, he rode slowly back to where the Estors and the trainer were standing, feeling not a little annoyed with himself for allowing the sudden appearance of the racecourse tout to so effect his riding.

Although his explanations were received with nothing but sympathy, he still felt considerably upset about the occurrence, and, seizing an opportunity of buttonholing Barney, begged the trainer to allow him to go the distance again at some other time, against the stop-watch.

The genial trainer patted the discomfited youngster on the back.

"Don't take the matter to heart, sonny," he urged. "Worse troubles than that occur at sea—and on race-courses. I'm going up to Grange Hall later, to have a chat with the Owner.

I'll see you again at lunch-time, and then, maybe, I shall have some important news to tell you."

Hard Pressed!

SHORTLY after the trial between Buckshot and The Rocking Horse had been run on the Heath, Lord Estor returned to the Grange Hall with his daughter, Dorothy, having first made arrangements to grant his trainer, Barney Bulfin, an interview later in the morning.

Having breakfasted, he changed into riding attire and joined the girl in the porch of the Hall with the idea of accompanying her on a short canter across country.

Tony had brought Ladybird, Dorothy's favourite chestnut mare, and his lordship's hunter from the stables, and was about to give the Owner a leg into the saddle when a horseman swung into view, trotting up the wide gravel drive towards the mansion. It was Sir Digby Garston, and the young aristocrat wore a smug smile of perfect satisfaction on his lean, cruel face.

Tony heard Lord Estor give a little murmur of annoyance as he noticed the young sprig of aristocracy riding so confidently towards them, and the boy silently echoed the expression in

his heart for he had little love for Sir Digby, like most other people who had been brought into contact with the man.

The lad strongly suspected that Garston was concerned in the blow-pipe incident, for which his head-lad, Shorty Dunn, was serving a sentence of hard labour, although that young miscreant had denied in court that anyone had influenced him in tampering with the Estor horses.

Lady Dorothy, as Tony well knew, had little liking for the rival Newmarket owner, and now it was apparent that Lord Estor himself was not so fond of Garston as his close acquaintance with the man might have led folk to suppose. Sir Digby raised his hat and inclined his head towards the girl and the sportsman peer as he drew rein near the wide flight of steps at the main entrance to the Hall.

Then he dismounted and threw the reins over the stone knob at the foot of the balustrade that bordered the marble flight of steps before the ancestral home of the Estors.

For a few moments he exchanged pleasantries with Dorothy and her father, totally ignoring the stable-boy, as was his usual practice, and then he casually drew Lord Estor aside.

The two racehorse owners talked together in low tones, and it was evident that Sir Digby was persuading Lord Estor to some course of action to which the latter was not at all inclined. At last, however, the Owner appeared to relent, and a smug smile of triumph lighted Garston's face.

"My dear," said the Owner, walking across and laying his hand on his daughter's arm, "Sir Digby has some business to discuss with me. You must excuse me from accompanying you this morning. Tony, here, will go with you for a canter instead."

A frown clouded the pretty face of the girl, and her eyes flashed angrily in the direction of the smirking Sir Digby.

"I'll go to the conservatories and wait there for you, daddy," she said. "Please don't be too long."

And with a curt "Good-morning" to Sir Digby, she tripped quickly down the drive and round the side of the great ivy-clad mansion, but not before Tony had detected the tears start from her eyes.

The Owner shrugged his shoulders and turned to the stable-boy.

READ THIS FIRST.

Lord Estor, a grand old British sportsman, is attending Epsom with his daughter, the Hon. Dorothy Cavanagh, a charming girl of sixteen. The bad luck which has dogged the Estors reaches a climax, for Sunfire, the Derby favourite, with Danny Wade up, loses the great race. Afterwards a vet. gives the startling verdict, "The mare has been doped!" Arriving back at Newmarket, Tony Draycott and Dick Selby, two stable-boys, set out to solve the mystery. Barney Bulfin, Lord Estor's trainer, develops a great steeplechaser in a horse called Buckshot, and a trial race is arranged between that colt and Tony's favourite mount, known as The Rocking Horse. While taking a big hurdle the boy sees a spy called Ginger Hales dashing from beneath the horse, and Tony is thrown from his saddle.

"Tether the horses to the balustrade, Tony," he said, "and return here at noon to take them back to the stable."

Tony touched his hat, and Lord Estor ascended the steps of his home, followed by Sir Digby Garston through the magnificent hall, where hung armour, pictures, and other relics of his ancestors, and into the large smoking-room.

Sir Digby at once sought the most comfortable armchair, helped himself to a Havana cigar from a box on a small table near-by, and mixed himself a drink.

Once alone with the man, a startling change was apparent in the appearance of Lord Estor. Standing with his back to the door, the mantle of another ten years seemed to have descended upon his shoulders. His face appeared haggard and lined, and his hands nervously sought the lapels of his jacket as he regarded the younger man who was engaged in making himself at home so confidently.

For perhaps half a minute there was silence between the two men, broken only by a sigh of satisfaction from Sir Digby as having lighted the choice Havana, he puffed away contentedly.

"Well, Sir Digby," said Lord Estor, at last, "perhaps you will now explain your anxious desire for a private interview with me this morning. I will ask you to be as brief as possible, as I do not wish to disappoint Dorothy in respect to the ride I promised to undertake with her."

"Quite so, quite so, Estor," murmured Garston, with a disarming smile. "Of course, only dire necessity compels me to take up your valuable time this morning. As a matter of fact I have suffered some financial reverses lately, and am in need of some money to tide me over."

Lord Estor looked in astonishment at the younger man.

"You in need of money?" he muttered. "Why, it is a well-known fact that your father, when he died two years ago, left you rolling in wealth. You can't have run through your legacy, for you haven't been doing so badly on the Turf."

"True," said Garston, "and had my luck been as good at the card-tables I should not have been reduced to seeking an interview this morning with you on a subject which is a very painful one for me to broach."

The rival Newmarket owner paused, and Lord Estor sought a seat near him, revealing his apprehension of what was coming by a slight twitching of the lip.

"Some months ago, Estor," continued Sir Digby, "you were passing through a very critical financial period yourself. Then you were badly in need of a few thousands to tide you over. You had a natural repugnance to disposing of your racing-stable, and a quite understandable dislike to mortgaging your home for the purpose of raising the necessary amount to meet your obligations, so I came to your rescue with a loan of ten thousand pounds on your note of hand at a very moderate interest."

"Fifteen per cent.—a very moderate interest!" muttered Lord Estor bitterly. "Still you obliged me when I was hard pressed, and I am grateful for your assistance."

"That loan, you will remember,

Estor, was for a year only," said Garston. "The year is nearly up, and —"

"You—you don't mean to say you want me to repay the whole of the amount and the interest in a couple of months' time, Sir Digby?"

"Necessity compels me to that course, Estor."

"But—but—the Owner's voice quavered slightly—"you told me that if I wished to renew the loan you would meet my wishes."

Sir Digby Garston flicked the ash from his cigar with an impatient little gesture.

"I may have said so some months ago," he replied, "but circumstances alter cases, you know. I need the money myself and I shall have to ask you to repay your debt, unless—"

"What?"

Like a drowning man the Owner clutched at the straw of hope contained in the last word of the other's remark.

"Unless you transfer the mare, Sunfire, and your chaser, Buckshot, to my ownership."

Lord Estor rose from his chair and paced the room. He could, he knew, dispose of both of these crack race-horses for infinitely more than the amount which would soon be due to the rival owner, but the possibility of having to sell the pick of his diminished string of thoroughbreds filled him with dismay. Already he had sold several horses under the hammer, but the proceeds had been swallowed up in meeting other obligations. The disposal of Sunfire and Buckshot would foreshadow the end of his long and honourable sporting career on the Turf.

"Really, Estor," said Garston, leaning back in his armchair and emitting clouds of blue tobacco smoke, "I can't understand your unfortunate predicament. You didn't do so badly in the latter portion of the flat-racing season. You picked up a fine plum when young Selby won the St. Leger. Then, earlier on that other young brat—er—stable-lad of yours—Draycott, isn't his name?—brought home a forty-to-one chance in the Apprentices' Handicap."

"They were about the only bright patches in a ruinous season, though, Sir Digby," said the Owner, sadly. "I have been retaining Danny Wade at a tremendous fee without any result at all commensurate with the outlay, and my other expenses have been enormous this year. Several times I have seriously thought of selling the Grange Hall, but this mansion has been the home of the Estors for centuries, and Dorothy loves every stone and crannie of the old place. And it has been chiefly for Dorothy's sake that I have held on, hoping against hope for better things."

The eyes of the grand old sportsman were moist. He had put up a game fight against adverse conditions, and the thought of defeat was as gall to his proud spirit.

Sir Digby Garston strove to assume an expression of sympathy, but there remained a trace of gloating triumph in his eyes, that ill-matched the rest of his solemn countenance.

He laid his half-smoked cigar on a silver ash-tray, and rose from his seat.

"I, too, had hoped you'd be able to save your ancestral home from the wreckage of your fortunes, Estor," he said. And then he added quietly, but clearly—"for Dorothy's sake."

Lord Estor was half-turned from Garston, but he swung round swiftly as the other made the remark.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" he demanded hoarsely.

"I mean," replied Sir Digby, "that I have the greatest respect for your daughter, and I have hopes, my dear Estor, that you will not regard me unfavourably as a suitor for her hand."

Lord Estor looked into the lean, calm face of the rival racehorse owner in amazement.

"You astound me, Sir Digby," he said, drawing himself up. "Why, the girl is but a child compared to you. When she becomes of age she shall decide her future for herself."

Garston thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and his face lighted with a smile which revealed an even set of white teeth below his short, black moustache.

"I can wait," he murmured; "meanwhile I presume you have no objections to my aspiring to make your daughter Lady Garston when she becomes of age?"

"I have a very strong objection to discussing the matter now, Sir Digby," said Lord Estor shortly. "My daughter is waiting for me and so—"

"Come, don't take offence, Estor," said Garston, laying a restraining hand on the peer's arm. "But I wish to enlist your aid." He lowered his voice slightly. "Dorothy will do anything for you, and if you'll do your best to advance my cause with her I will renew your note of hand for the ten thousand pounds next March and find other means of raising the wind."

The old sportsman flushed with anger, his whole being revolted at the suggestion of the unscrupulous man before him.

"How dare you make such a proposal?" he thundered. "I shall do nothing of the kind, and I forbid you to pay your attentions to Dorothy until she becomes of age. At the end of March you shall have your money, even if I have to sell the whole stable!"

"And I shall keep you to the bargain," hissed Garston, a sneer curling his thin lips. "On the thirty-first of March I shall demand the repayment of the loan and interest—ay, every penny of it!"

Lord Estor crossed the smoking-room and pressed an electric bell. The butler appeared.

"Show Sir Digby Garston out, James," said the Owner evenly. "Good-morning, Sir Digby!"

For a moment Garston gazed at the old sportsman, his black eyes flashing with rage. Then he gave a short laugh, turned on his heels, and swaggered out of the smoking-room.

As the butler withdrew and shut the door, Lord Estor sank into an armchair and buried his head in his hands.

Garston Asks For Trouble!

IN the hall Sir Digby secured the hat and short hunting-crop he had brought with him; then he stepped outside on to the wide porch.

As he did so he gave a sneer, for

standing half-way down the drive, were Lady Dorothy and Tony.

Tired of watching the gardeners at work in the conservatory, the girl had returned to the entrance to the Hall where the horses were tethered, and there had met the boy who had been sent by Perkins to return to Lord Estor a silver stop-watch which the Owner had loaned for the purposes of the trial race that morning between Bucksot and The Rocking Horse.

Tony had just handed over the watch to the girl, and was about to take his departure when the young people saw for the first time the form of Sir Digby Garston looming above them at the head of the steps.

"Go and stand by those horses, boy," he said brusquely to the stable-lad. "What the blazes do you mean by hanging about here?"

Then, ignoring Tony, who did not budge, he turned to the girl, and his teeth showed in an ingratiating smile.

"You father wishes to be excused from accompanying you on your ride, Dorothy," he murmured smoothly, "just a slight touch of his old complaint, the gout, I believe. Perhaps you will allow me the honour of riding with you?"

Dorothy recoiled slightly as the man descended the steps.

"It's very kindly of you, Sir Digby," she answered coldly, "but—"

She paused, and Garston, apparently not noticing the chilly reception of his offer, laid his hand on her arm.

"Come along, my dear," he said persuasively.

A deep flush suffused Dorothy's face at this familiar form of address, and with a gesture of annoyance she shook Garston's hand from her arm.

"I do not intend riding this morning now that father has decided not to go," she said. "Thank you all the same, for your kind offer, Sir Digby."

The light of comprehension dawned on Garston's sallow face.

"Perhaps you don't care for my company?" he suggested. "Maybe you find the society of a stable-brat more to your taste?"

Dorothy clenched her slim, white hands and her blue eyes flashed with anger.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she cried, stamping her dainty foot.

Sir Digby gave a short ironical laugh.

"No offence meant, Dorothy," he remarked. "Only a good many people have been remarking how infra dig. it seems for a peer's daughter to be so pally with a common lad from the stable."

"Let them remark," said the girl angrily. "Tony's a jolly sight better fellow than many of the young snobs in our set, so there!"

"Indeed?" sneered Garston. "Still for your own sake you would be well advised not to show such a marked fondness—"

"Stop, you cad!"

Garston felt a strong hand laid upon his shoulder, and he swung round to face the stern countenance and blazing eyes of Tony Draycott.

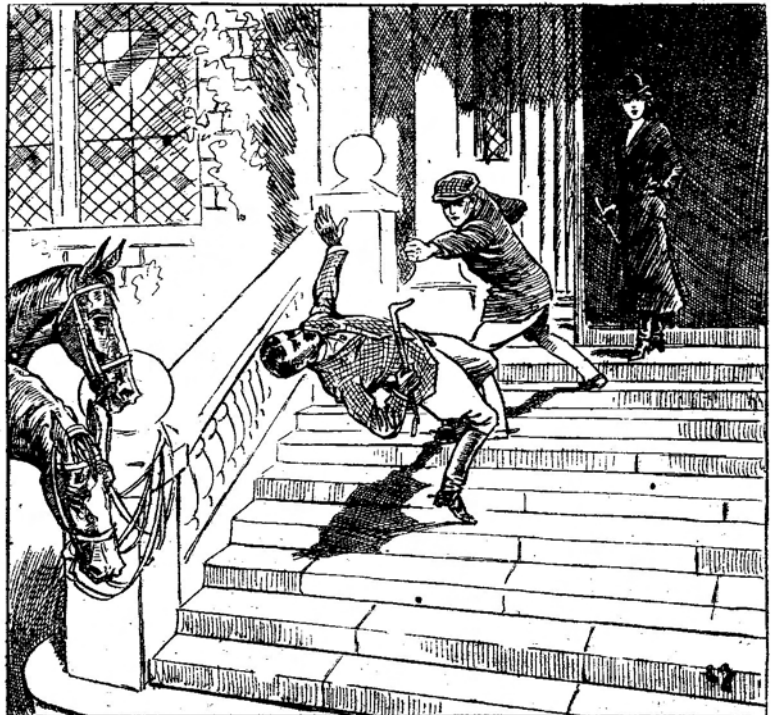
"You insolent puppy!" flashed the racehorse owner. "How dare you lay your grubby paws upon me? Take that."

And Garston struck the boy a smart blow across the cheek with the butt of his hunting-crop. Next moment Tony's fist shot out like a piston-rod. The blow caught the cad of the Turf full between the eyes and sent him reeling backwards down the steps.

Bruised and dusty and muttering savagely beneath his breath, Garston picked himself up from the gravel drive on which he had fallen and dashed up the steps at Tony; but, like a flash, Dorothy stepped in between him and the boy.

"You'd better make yourself scarce, she warned him, "before you let yourself in for further trouble."

For the moment Sir Digby gazed at the girl with something akin to hatred in his deep-set eyes, and then, with a fierce exclamation, he turned away.



Tony's fist shot out like a piston-rod, and the cad of the Turf reeled backwards down the steps.

untethered his horse, and rode off rapidly.

As Garston departed a step sounded on the porch behind the two young people, who stood together gazing after the discomfited aristocrat. It was Lord Estor who had put in an appearance just in time to discern that something untoward had taken place.

It was Dorothy who had noticed him first, and, leaving Tony, with a low cry, she ran up the steps to her father. In a few words she explained what had taken place, and when she had finished the furrows in the Owner's brow were deeper than before.

"We will forego our ride for this morning, my dear," he said to the girl, in a strained, unnatural voice. "I—I hardly feel in the mood for a jaunt. Take the horses back to the stable, Tony."

Touching his cap, the boy turned to do as he was bade while Lord Estor passed through the massive portals of his house, leaning heavily on his daughter's arm.

Barney's Great Tidings!

"HALLO, guv'nor, what's the news?"

The question was asked by Tony as his foster-parent, Barney Bulfin, entered the dining-room of their home at lunch-time that day.

The trainer had just returned from Grange Hall and his ruddy face wore a jovial look quite unlike the expression the boy had expected to see, considering that Lord Estor had been so obviously worried that morning. Apparently, therefore, the interview between the Owner and his trainer had been of a more cheerful nature than had seemed probable in the light of Tony's knowledge that Garston had been making himself objectionable at the Hall.

"What's the news, I say, guv'nor?"

repeated the boy. "You told me after the trial spin this morning that you'd probably have some for me, following your interview with the Owner. Now fire away and let's hear what it is."

Barney sank into a chair before the white-spread table, and touched a bell as a signal for the housekeeper to bring in the lunch.

"Well," he said, adopting the majestic tone of a headmaster at a prize-giving, "it gives me great pleasure to announce, Master Draycott, that you will shortly be awarded the license of a riding jockey."

"Oh, three cheers!"

Tony sprang from his seat and executed a wild war-dance round the table, almost upsetting the housekeeper and a large tureen of soup in the exuberance of his spirits.

"And what else, guv'nor?"

"The Owner has decided to enter both Bucksot and The Rocking Horse for the Grand National Steeplechase!"

Look out for the thrilling, long instalment next Tuesday!

THE CRIMSON ARROW

A Thrilling Serial Story of Buffalo Bill and the Redskins

By Mr. PAUL PONTIFEX PROUT

(Master of the Fifth Form.)

READ THIS FIRST.

Into Fort Madison, the headquarters of the 5th United States Cavalry—the famous "Dandy Fifth"—rides a little group of horsemen, bringing news of an uprising of the Redskins. The leader of the party is Buffalo Bill, and other members are Buck Dixie, Deadwood Dick, and Kit and Joe Desmond, two British boys whose father is a prisoner in the hands of the Indians. An attack of the Redskins is beaten off with heavy loss. Afterwards some mysterious crimson-coloured arrows are found sewn into the quivers of the fallen braves. Later the whole Apache host attacks the fort. It is announced that a party of a hundred men are to leave the fort and pass through the Redskin host.

The Secret Cavern!

THE boys' eyes rounded with astonishment. They, like Uncle Baldy, could not see how a hundred men were to pass out of that beleaguered fortress without getting wiped out by the surrounding horde.

But they kept their counsel.

All through that baking day they stayed at their posts, watching the distant lodges and the crowds of Indians who were squatting along the ridges like a pack of hungry wolves.

Through the afternoon and evening the Redskins made no move. The lesson they had learned was plainly written in those tumbled groups of feathered corpses that lay before the fortifications.

The broken palisades had been repaired by the engineers, and all was in readiness once more to give the enemy a hot reception.

It was after sunset that the boys were awakened by Uncle Baldy who shook them by the shoulder. Teekoopi had brought a savoury supper of buffalo marrowbones and tongue from the cookhouse.

"Wake up, boys!" said Uncle Baldy. "It's all been as quiet as a Quakers' meetin'. Here's supper, and you may as well make a good one, for there will be hard riding to-night. We

are relieved at eight o'clock. Then we can look to our horses."

The boys ate their supper, and Prairie Wolf joined them. Prairie Wolf was quietly elated. It was plain that he had been selected as one of the mysterious hundred horsemen.

They went to the horse-lines, where Moonlight greeted his young master with a low whinny of welcome as though he, too, knew that he was going out of this beleaguered fortress.

It was past ten o'clock before the boys were summoned to fall in for their mysterious excursion, and they went to the big No. 1 storehouse.

Here a full kit of Apache war-dress was served out to them. Scouts had gone out directly after sunset, and had stripped the gaudy raiment from many of the dead warriors outside the palisades, and Major Lincoln had likewise a full store of disguises.

Then the mystery of No. 2 storehouse was revealed. The great doors were swung open. The engineers had been hard at work lifting its stone-flagged floor, exposing one of the secrets of Fort Madison.

Fort Madison was planted on an outcrop of limestone rock that was riddled through and through by caverns and passages which led far out over the prairie.

Buffalo Bill himself had caused the military authorities to open up a series of caves so that men and horses could pass through an underground passage that was over two miles in length.

And it was into this passage that the hundred men who were being sent out that night, passed with their horses.

One by one, the long file of horses and men stepped into the doorway of storehouse No. 2.

Every other horseman as he led his steed carried a lamp and the boys soon found themselves following in with a long procession of lights traversing a long series of caverns whose walls showed rough hewn and white in the lamplight.

Then they entered the largest

cavern they had yet seen in the string of caves. It was a natural cavern formed by the dripping of water and huge stalactites hung from its roof in pendant crystals like the drops of some colossal chandelier.

In the middle of this cave rose a large mass of crystal rock which made a sort of natural throne, and on the summit of the huge mass of rock was a man dressed in the full war-paint of an Apache war chief.

"Who's this feller?" cried Uncle Baldy.

And he raised his gun as though to level it at this strange enthroned figure.

But the Apache chief rose, lifting his hand.

"Put up that gun, Uncle!" he called.

The voice was that of Buffalo Bill, but the disguise was perfect.

The scout stepped down from the pile of crystalline rock, looking every inch a chief in the imposing head-dress of eagles feathers.

"You are on time, Uncle Baldy," said he. "I have supped, and Buck Dixie is waiting for us up above. The Redskins are not going to attack the fort again to-night, and he will be back again before they make up their minds. Their medicine-men have found out that the night is unpropitious."

Buffalo Bill laughed happily. All that day he had moved amongst the Redskin host in his disguise, unrecognised and unsuspected. He had sat in the lodge of council with the chiefs and had heard every word of their deliberations.

Now he was off to raid their own stronghold in the mountains. This was the reason for this sudden demand for the hundred best men and horses of Fort Madison.

And Buffalo Bill had another errand than striking at the hold of the Apaches.

He turned to the boys, smiling kindly.

"You will ride hard and fast to-night, boys," said he. "And you will ride all the more easily, because we are going to deliver your father from captivity!"

Kit and Joe turned quite pale under the Apache war-paint of their disguises.

It seemed too good to be true!

To be continued next Tuesday.

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When answering advertisements will our readers kindly mention this paper.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOTTLE!

Our Great New Series dealing with the amazing adventures of

HERLOCK SHOLMES
DETECTIVE

Written by

PETER TODD

I.

HERLOCK SHOLMES had already been engaged upon a case of spiritualism—the well-known case of the Cottonshire vicar, who, seated in his vestry, was accustomed to hear mysterious voices from the worlds to which we pass at death. It was Sholmes who demonstrated that it was simply a case of bats in the belfry.

The case of Mr. Soker, however, presented greater difficulties.

Mr. Soker, it appeared, from a very early age had been subject to the influence of spirits.

This occult influence was at times so strong as to cause him actually to lose all sense of his own identity. On one occasion, arriving on his doorstep simultaneously with the morning milkman, he had announced in a loud voice that Champagne Charlie was his name. His name was, however, Joseph.

In his younger days he had been accustomed to attend spirited meetings at a resort known as the Peal of Beils, where there was a great deal of table-rapping, followed by the apparition of a waiter with a tray.

After these sittings Mr. Soker would return home completely overcome.

These seances, however, he no longer attended—Mrs. Soker having, with the aid of the family rolling-pin, persuaded him to give them up.

In spite of his wife's affectionate care and watchfulness, however, the poor gentleman was still subject to spiritualistic influences.

It was for this reason that the services of my amazing friend, Mr. Herlock Sholmes, were called upon.

"A peculiar case, my dear Jotson," remarked Sholmes, after Mrs. Soker had left our rooms in Shaker Street. "I am not sorry to have it brought to my notice. Spiritualism, is the latest fashionable imbecility, and this case is—"

"Rum!" I remarked.

"Very rum, my dear fellow," assented Sholmes. "That is, I think, the right word. Pass me the looking-glass."

"What are you going to do with the looking-glass, Sholmes?" I asked, in surprise.

"Reflection is necessary before we act in this case, Jotson."

"True!"

A little later we started for Mr. Soker's residence.

My amazing friend was in a thoughtful mood, but he did not explain to me the result of his mental aberrations.

Mrs. Soker received us in the drawing-room, and as we entered the sound

of falling furniture was heard above. "It is Mr. Soker!" explained the lady. "He is now under the influence of—"

"Spirits!" exclaimed Sholmes.

Crash!

"My dear Jotson," said Sholmes, "we must do our best to rescue the unfortunate man from this malign and occult influence. Does it always make him like this, madam?"

"Frequently," said Mrs. Soker tearfully. "It is inexplicable. He no longer attends the seances at which he used to be so overcome. I have dissuaded him—effectually. After that he used to fall under the mysterious influence through the medium of a friend who visited him, who was also a spiritualist. These visits are no longer allowed. How this occult influence reaches him is, therefore, a mystery."

"Which I will solve!" said Sholmes. We ascended the stairs.

Outside Mr. Soker's door we paused to listen.

A voice within was singing a snatch of a song, and this was followed by the sound of wild and erratic jazzing.



A wild-looking figure was jazzing about the room.

Sholmes smiled, his inscrutable smile.

"You have a theory, Sholmes?" I remarked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not deal in theories, Jotson, but in facts. You have, no doubt, in earlier days, read the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"Certainly."

"No doubt you remember the story of the fisherman who discovered the spirit confined in a bottle—"

"True."

"'Tis but an Eastern tale, Jotson, but it has, I think, a bearing upon this case."

He opened the door.

A wild-looking figure in a dressing-gown was jazzing about the room—no other than the unhappy Mr. Soker, evidently deeply under the occult influence.

He caught his foot in the gown, and sat on the floor, as we entered.

"Hic!" he remarked.

That was his only observation, and I confess that I did not understand what it implied. The word, if word it was, was strange to me. Doubtless it had some connection with his spiritualistic practices.

Sholmes glanced round the room.

Upon a table stood a bottle, half-full of a mysterious-looking pale liquid.

Sholmes picked it up. He placed the bottle to his nose, sniffed, and shook his head thoughtfully.

"Sholmes," I exclaimed breathlessly, "is it—is it—"

Sholmes corked the bottle without replying, and placed it in his pocket.

Then we descended the stairs.

"Madam," said Sholmes, "I regret to say that Mr. Soker is still under spiritualistic influence, but he will recover shortly. The mysterious Presence that haunts him is conveyed into the house confined in a bottle, like the genie in the 'Arabian Nights.' I had guessed as much before I came here. Take care that no bottle of any kind is conveyed to Mr. Soker, and you will find that he will become quite free of these distressing occult influences."

And we took our leave.

II.

AT Shaker Street Sholmes shut himself up in the laboratory with the bottle he had taken from Mr. Soker's room. I was very anxious to be present when he investigated the contents, but this Sholmes would not permit. Outside the door, I heard a sound of gurgling, and a little later, to my surprise, Sholmes's voice raised in song. My anxiety for my amazing friend was very keen. Was it possible that, in rescuing Mr. Soker from the occult spiritualistic influence, he had fallen under that terrible influence himself?

"Sholmes!" I called through the keyhole.

"Hic!" was the reply from within. I trembled.

It was the same mysterious monosyllable that I had heard upon the lips of Mr. Soker!

I hesitated no longer.

Pushing open the door, I strode in. Herlock Sholmes was sitting on the floor, the bottle empty at his feet, and a smile of happy imbecility upon his inscrutable features.

"Goo'-nigh', Jotty!" he murmured; and, to my consternation, he rolled over, and fell into a deep sleep.

The following day Herlock Sholmes made no reference to what strange experiences had passed in the laboratory, neither did I learn anything further of the mysterious contents of the bottle. Sholmes had a headache that morning, and his temper was slightly irritable. I did not venture to question my amazing friend, and so some of the details of this very strange affair still remain a mystery to me.

THE END.

Next week's laughable adventure will be "The Case of the Mysterious Patient!"

OUR TUCK HAMPER

AND Silver Shilling Feature

Prizes for all Contributions printed on this page.



For the best storyette printed on this page a hamper crammed full of delicious tuck will be awarded. Money prizes will be given for all other contributions used. When more than one reader sends in the same acceptable storyette, the prize is awarded to the first read. Remember, your joke should be written plainly on a postcard, and addressed to "The Greyfriars Herald," The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., E.C. 4.—Editor.

Bare Facts!

An angler, hailing from London, thinking that his boatman was not treating him with the respect due to his station, said:

"Do you know, my man, that my family have been entitled to bear arms for the last two hundred years?"

"Hoos, that's nothing, mon!" was the reply. "My ancestors have been entitled to bare legs for the last two thousand years!"—Sent in by Chris. Gregson, 22, Garnett Street, Netherfield, near Nottingham.

Nought to Define!

A Scottish farmer, on being elected to the Board of the local school, paid a visit there to test the intelligence of the scholars.

His first question was: "Now, boys, can any o' ye define what naething is?"

There was silence for a few moments, and then a small boy in the back seat rose to his feet.

"Please, sir," he said, "it's what ye gie me t'other day for haudin' yer horse!"—Sent in by Miss Lucy Hook, 8, Ambersley Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

OUR TUCK-HAMPER PRIZE STORYETTE

HIGH TIME, TOO!

A man had just bought a big, handsome grandfather clock. While carrying it home he stopped to look into the window of a shop and as he turned round, he struck an unfortunate pedestrian a terrific smash in the face with the hefty timepiece.

The victim tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hey, mister," he said: "I wish to goodness you'd get a wristlet watch!"—Sent in by E. Jefferson, 19, Clementina Terrace, Carlisle, to whom a hamper crammed full of delicious tuck has been despatched.

Very Helpful!

A youngster, who entertained high hopes of winning a "Greyfriars Herald" Tuck Hamper, could not find any address to which to send his storyette. When his chum came to the house he asked him if he could tell him the address.

"Isn't it announced in the Competition?" asked his chum.

"No."

"Well," murmured the friend, "I should write and ask 'em."—Sent in by John Jones, 6, Railway-View, Llwynpia, Glamorgan, South Wales.

Sounded Fishy!

While Miss Phyllis Snub was entertaining her latest admirer, Bertie Oof-bird, in the parlour, her little brother Bobby entered, and politely handed a glass of water to the visitor.

To humour the youngster Bertie Oof-bird drank the water, a proceeding which the boy watched with the greatest of interest.

"H'm! He doesn't," murmured the lad, in disappointed tones.

"Doesn't what?" asked his sister, in surprise.

"Why," replied Bobby, "he drinks just the same as other people, and yet I heard pa say only last night that he drank like a fish!"—Sent in by Miss Nancy Sutherland, 47, West Cumberland Street, Glasgow.

His Bad Memory!

The couple had many children, and the father was very absent-minded. One day the whole family went for a picnic on the river. Suddenly a small boy ran up and called out:

"Papa—papa! Archibald has fallen into the water!"

"Archibald? Archibald?" repeated the father. Then, turning to his wife, he inquired anxiously: "Alice, have we an Archibald?"—Sent in by H. Sell, 405, East India Dock Road, Poplar, E.14.

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