

PLUCK

Jack Blake of St. Jim's,

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

AND

Phantom Gold,

A TALE OF DR. NEVADA.

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PREFECT MONTEITH CAME OUT OF THE DOORWAY JUST AS THE BALL FLEW IN! BIFFI AND A FEARFUL YELL. "MY!" MURMURED FIGGINS. "YOU'VE DONE IT NOW!"

Our Second Long, Complete Story.



Jack Blake of St. Jim's

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

NOTE BY YOUR EDITOR.—This is the opening story of a series which will, without doubt, become most popular. The central character is Jack Blake, a typical British school athlete, whose exploits, failures, and successes are related in a most natural and convincing manner. A real live straightforward lad is Jack Blake.

CHAPTER 1.

Jack Blake Comes to St. Jim's.

JACK BLAKE stopped at the big, bronze gates, and looked within.

"This must be the place," he said to himself.

It seemed superfluous to ring, as the gates stood half open. He stood looking in at the grey mass of the school buildings, the old elms, and the wide quadrangle, in which a dozen boys were punting about a football.

A fine lad he looked as he stood there. Well-made, rather tall for his age—which was between fourteen and fifteen—clean-limbed, and clear-eyed; a face, if not exactly handsome, pleasant and frank, and good to look upon.

He did not stand there for many seconds unnoticed. Three boys of about his own age were looking on at the punt about, and for some reason of their own hooting at the young gentlemen engaged with the football; but as soon as they spotted the stranger at the gate they transferred their attentions to him.

"Hallo!" said one of them, a fair-complexioned youth, half a head taller than Blake, and somewhat lanky in form. "Who are you, young shaver?"

This was rather cool, as the speaker was certainly not more than a month or two older than the person addressed. However, Jack Blake replied politely enough:

"My name's Blake—Jack Blake."

"How interesting!" said the tall youth, looking at his companions. "His name's Blake—Jack Blake. Mind, Blake—Jack Blake!"

"I've got it, Figgins!" said one of them, a short, thick-set boy, with a fat face. "Blake—Jack Blake."

"Charming name!" chimed in the third, a freckled youth, with red hair. "How are you, Mr. Blake—Jack Blake?"

The new boy reddened slightly. He could see that these humorous young gentlemen were making fun of him.

"Will you tell me if this is St. James's College?" he asked, changing the subject.

The three youths gasped.

"Is it what?"

"St. James's College. You see," explained Blake, "it was a fine afternoon, so I walked from the station, and—"

"Exactly! And you are looking for St. James's College?"

"Yes."

"Keep straight on up the road," said Figgins, "turn to the right when you reach the cross-roads, and then bear to the left, cross the stile, and you're there."

Blake was no fool, and he had more than a suspicion that the lanky youth was "rotting."

"Oh, I see! I'm going into the School House."

Quite a mistake," said the fat boy. "This is St. Jim's, and we've never heard of St. James's College, have we, Figgins?"

"Certainly not!" replied Figgins. "The young shaver's come to the wrong shop."

"Well," said Blake coolly, "I shouldn't be surprised to find that I've run into a lunatic asylum by mistake. It looks like it."

Figgins smiled in rather a sickly way.

"Now, none of your cheek, Blake—Jack Blake!" he said, wagging a long, thin forefinger at the new boy in an admonitory way. "Stand where you are till we're satisfied about you. He looks an awful bounder, doesn't he, Wynn?"

"He does," said the fat boy. "Shocking, ain't he, Kerr?"

"A regular tramp!" said the freckled youth, nodding his head solemnly.

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Let me pass, will you?"

"No hurry, young shaver! Look here, are you going to be one of us, or are you going to join the rotters?"

Blake looked puzzled.

"I don't quite catch on," he said.

"I mean, are you coming into the New House—that's our show, and the decent one, you understand—or are you going to join the measly tramps in the School House?"

"Oh, I see, I'm going into the School House."

The expressions of the three boys became alarming at once.

"He's a cad!" exclaimed Figgins. "I guessed he was by the look of him."

"Who are you calling a cad?" demanded Blake.

"They're all cads in the School House. If it wasn't for the New House the old school would be going to the dogs," said Figgins. "I ought to know, as I'm captain of the juniors in our house. We keep the place from going mouldy."

"Do you?" said Blake doubtfully. "A pity you can't keep your collar clean at the same time, and get some of the ink off your fingers!"

Figgins turned red. He was not particularly careful in his personal appearance, but any allusion to that fact touched him on the raw, and he became cross.

"This is a cheeky kid, chaps!" he said. "He'll be as bad as any in the School House if we don't put him in his place at once. We don't want any of his class here, anyway. Shove him out!"

And like one man the three juniors of the New House hurled themselves upon Jack Blake, and he was sent staggering into the road. The great gate closed with a clang.

The sudden attack had taken Blake rather by surprise, or he would not have been disposed of so easily, even by three assailants. He recovered himself in a moment, and ran at the gate and caught at the bars.

The three juniors kept it shut, and grinned at him from the inside.

"I say, open the gate, you cads!" said Blake hotly. "I'm coming in."

"You don't look like it!" jeered Figgins. "Yah! School House cad!"

"Open the gate, you idiot!"

"Don't you wish we would? Here, tatty, put your weight against it, and then an elephant couldn't get in. That's right!"

The altercation at the gate had attracted the attention of the footballers in the quadrangle. Several of them were staring towards the spot, and immediately it occurred to Blake that they were boys of his own house—that is, the house he was going into.

It was evident that feeling ran high between the two houses at St. Jim's—a state of things not at all uncommon at public schools—and that accounted for the hooting he had noticed when his three enemies were watching the punt-about. The boys with the football were evidently denizens of the School House, Blake thought, and he acted upon the thought instantly.

"Help here!" he shouted. "I'm a School House chap, and these cads are trying to keep me out!"

The call had an electrical effect. In a moment the party in the quad were sweeping down upon Figgins & Co., and from their looks they evidently meant business.

CHAPTER 2.

Not to be Sat Upon.

FIGGINS did not look pleased. He had not expected the "new kid" to get the hang of things so quickly, and to fall in with the ways of St. Jim's as if he had been born there. The odds were a dozen to three, and the plight of the New House lads was worse than Jack Blake's had been.

"Here, I say, you chaps, cut it!" muttered Figgins.

And the trio attempted to make off ingloriously; but it was not to be. The School House lads surrounded them, and hemmed them in against the gate; and, their retreat being cut off, the New House boys assumed an air of bravado, and tried to look as if running away was the very last thing in their thoughts.

"Hallo! What's wrong here?" exclaimed a ruddy-complexioned youth, with a masterful manner. "What are you cads up to?"

"What's that got to do with you, Herries?" demanded Figgins defiantly.

"I'll show you! Let that kid in!"

"Sha'n't!"

Herries addressed Blake through the gate:

"You're a new kid coming here, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Blake.

And Kerr chimed in:

"His name's Blake—Jack Blake."

"Blake—Jack Blake!" repeated Wynne solemnly.

"Oh, shut up!" said Jack, reddening. "You talk too much, you New House cads!"

"You're coming into the School House, Blake?" pursued Herries.

"Rather! You don't think I'd make one of that measly crew, do you?"

Herries grinned.

"Right-ho! That's the way to talk! That's why these Rats were keeping you out, of course. Wipe up the ground with the Rats, you fellows!"

Figgins & Co. made a desperate burst to get through the enemy, and they succeeded, but not scatheless. They had to run the gauntlet, and they were winded and considerably the worse for wear when they escaped across the quadrangle; Figgins's collar hung by one end, Wynn had lost his cap, and Kerr's nose was bleeding.

The School House party remained victorious, and they sent a howl of jeering laughter after the flying enemy. The gate swung open, and Jack Blake entered.

"You can come in," said Herries, with a wave of the hand. "We're bound to stick up for you, as you are going to join our house. You'll soon get to learn how things are at St. Jim's. We are the School House, you understand, and that's the old original house, and it stood for hundreds of years before any New House was thought of here. Then the other day they thought there wasn't accommodation enough for the increasing number of Kidlets, and so they ran up that place."

And he jerked his thumb towards the red-brick front of the New House, showing through the elm-trees across the quad. Blake looked at the house, and at Herries, considerably puzzled.

"Only the other day?" he exclaimed. "Why, I thought

Herries grinned.

"Well, you are a green one! I mean the other day, compared with the School House—see? The New House is about a hundred years old, I suppose. The School House has been standing there ever since Henry XV dissolved the monasteries."

"Henry the what?"

"The Fifth!" said Herries, hastily correcting himself.

Blake smiled.

"What are you grinning at, you new Kid?" exclaimed Herries, considerably ruffled.

Herries was junior captain of the School House, and strong in sports, but he was weak in scholarship, and he knew it, but he did not like being reminded of it.

"Well, I always thought it was Henry VIII," said Blake. "Oh, did you, Mr. Clever? And what right has a beastly new Kid to be thinking about the matter at all?" demanded Herries. "Do you know I'm captain of the school juniors?"

"No, I didn't know it, but that doesn't make any difference. It was Henry VIII who dissolved the monasteries when I heard about it last."

"Oh, was it? A lot you know about it. You're too beastly clever by half. Now, I tell you, it was Henry VI!" exclaimed Herries.

"And I tell you it wasn't!" Herries looked round on his supporters. "No wonder those Rats were chipping him," he said, "if that's the sort of worm he is. Cheeking his captain the first ten minutes he's at St. Jim's! What shall we do with the mongrel?"

"Skin him!" said Digby. "Boil him in oil!"

"Pull his ears!"

"Frog's-march him!"

"Give him to the Rats!"

"That's right; let the New House have him."

"You'd better let me alone," said Blake truculently. "I can hit, I tell you, and I'm not going to stand any nonsense."

"Bravo!" cried Herries mockingly. "I think pulling his ears will be best. We must give him a lesson, for his own sake, or he'll get so cheeky that he'll have to be thrashed, and we don't want to hurt him. Get hold of him, Digby and Walsh; and you, Wilson, twist his ears till I tell you to stop!"

Blake was promptly collared, and, with a junior clinging to each arm, he was unable to escape. Wilson took a firm grip on his ear. Herries stood before him, like judge and executioner rolled into one.

"Now, then, we'll see," said Herries, with a superior smile. "Who was it that dissipated the monasteries—I mean—er—dissipated them, young Blake?"

"Henry VIII."

Herries made a sign to Wilson, who twisted the ear he had hold of till Blake gasped again.

"Now, who was it?"

"Henry VIII."

"Give him another dose, Wilson."

Blake gasped.

"Now, who was it?"

"Henry VIII."

"My hat!" said Digby. "What an obstinate little pig!"

"He'll learn his lesson yet," said Herries.

"I'll teach you one as soon as I get at you!" exclaimed Blake. "Why don't you fight a chap fairly—eh?"

"Do you mean that, you silly Kid? If it comes to fighting I could knock spots off you with only one hand!"

"I'd like to see you do it!" said Blake defiantly.

"Then you shall have a chance!" said Herries wrathfully.

"Let him go, Kids. My only aunt, I'll knock some of the cheek out of him!"

Blake's captors released him, and he flew at the chief of the School juniors. Herries, by no means loth, closed with him. And both were just getting down to business, when a sharp, unpleasant voice broke in.

"What does this mean? How dare you fight in the quadrangle?"

The combatants separated by instinct. Blake looked round, expecting to see a master from the tone, but he only saw a youth of seventeen or eighteen, with a sharp, sour face and little grey eyes. It was evident, though, from the manner of the juniors, that he was a person of considerable importance in the world of St. Jim's.

"That's all right, Monteith," said Herries humbly. "I was only showing the new fellow a—trick that—"

"You were fighting," said Monteith. "You School House boys are a disgrace to the school! No more of this, or you'll hear of it sharp!" And he stalked away.

Herries shook his fist after him, and, the senior happening to glance back, the junior stood overwhelmed with confusion, his hand still in the air.

"What are you doing, Herries?"

"Nothing."

"Take fifty lines!"

Herries looked rebellious.

"Look here, Monteith, you ain't our prefect, and—"

"Do you want me to come to you?"

"N.no, thank you, Monteith!"

"You'll take those lines to your housemaster to-night. I shall mention the matter to him." And the prefect stalked off without looking back this time.

"Oh, won't I pay you for this?" said Herries in an undertone to Blake. And he took himself off before the new boy could reply.

And so commenced Jack Blake's career at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.
The Junior's Little Joke.

THERE was a good deal in the late happenings that puzzled Blake; but he was a cool lad, with plenty of courage and nerve, and content to find out things as he went along. Thus suddenly left alone by the School House boys, he walked across the quadrangle alone. As Herries had pointed out the New House to him, he had little doubt that the great building on the other side of the quadrangle, which was larger and evidently more ancient, was the famous School House, and so he bent his steps in that direction. To make sure, he asked a boy who passed him, who looked at him suspiciously.

"Is that the School House?"
"What do you want with the School House?"
"I'm going to join it."

"Yah! School House Kid!" said the other; and he knocked Blake's cap over his eyes and took to his heels. "My aunt!" ejaculated Blake, looking after the retreating youth. "I'll remember that chap's face, and I'll alter the shape of it for him as soon as I get a chance. But I suppose that must be the School House."

He went up the steps and entered the open hall. Fortunately, he found a maid in the passage, who confirmed him in his assumption that he was in the right quarters, and pointed out the study of the house-master, Mr. Kidd. Blake afterwards learned that it was from the house-master's name that the School House boys derived their appellation of the "Kids," while the New House fellows were designated the "Rats" because their housemaster rejoiced in the name of Ratcliffe.

Blake knew that he had to report his arrival to his house-master, and there was no shyness about him. He tapped at the door pointed out to him, and entered in response to the "Come in!" in the master's deep, pleasant voice.

Mr. Kidd looked at him. The housemaster was a big, athletic man, and Blake liked him at once.

"If you please, sir, I am a new boy. My name is Blake," said Jack demurely.

The housemaster's keen grey eyes were lingering upon him.

"Very good," said Mr. Kidd, rather drily. "Have you had any accident on your way here?"

"No, sir."

"You have not, by any chance, fallen into a ditch, or rolled over in the road?" asked Mr. Kidd, as grave as a judge.

"No, sir," said Blake, bewildered.

"Then what do you mean by presenting yourself before me in that state?"

Blake started, and looked at his reflection in a glass opposite, and coloured up. His scuffle with the Rats, and his subsequent tussle with Herries, had not improved his personal appearance, though he had not noticed it before. His collar was crumpled and dirty, his jacket was torn, and his face was smudged, and his clothes were pretty dusty all over.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he stammered. "The fact is—"

He paused. He had been just going to say what had happened, but it struck him in time that that might get the juniors into hot water, and would come under the head of sneaking. And so he stopped with his sentence half uttered, and turned redder than before.

Mr. Kidd looked at him curiously.

"Well?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir!"

"I cannot congratulate you upon your lucidity, Blake, any more than upon your personal appearance," said Mr. Kidd. "I shall overlook this, as it is your first day at St. James's, but it must not occur again. I do not wish the boys of my house to go about looking like ragamuffins. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You may now go and make some improvement. Let me see. Ah, Herries will show you!" Herries was just passing the open window, and Mr. Kidd called to him: "Herries!" The junior looked in. "You will kindly show this new boy—Blake—to the dormitory, where he can make himself look a little less disreputable."

Herries grinned.

"Yes, sir. He looks as dirty as one of the New House cads; doesn't he, sir?"

"That will do, Herries. You may go for the present, Blake."

Blake retired, and Herries joined him in the corridor. The latter grinned at him.

"Come along, smudgy face!"

"I'll smudge your face, if you don't look out!" said Blake wrathfully. "It was your fault I just got a wiggling."

"Well, why don't you keep yourself clean? Soap and

water ain't expensive. But perhaps they don't wash themselves where you come from. But, come on; there's no time to waste, if you're going to get clean in time for tea."

"Is this the dormitory?" asked Blake, as Herries stopped at a door and opened it.

"No, you silly Kid! Can't you see that there's only one bed in it. You can't go into the dormitory; it's always kept locked during the day. Old Kidlet must have forgotten that. You can wash in this room. It belongs to the porter, you know, and we always run in here when we like."

"Thanks!" said Jack. "When is tea?"

"In a quarter of an hour; so buck up, if you're going to get all that dirt off your face." And Herries vanished before Jack could reply.

The new boy lost no time. It certainly struck him that the room was cosily furnished for a school porter, and he was a little surprised to see books, and boxing-gloves, and foils, and a football lying about it. But as he had never been at a public school before he did not know exactly what to expect, and Herries's manner had been too off-hand and indifferent to excite suspicion.

Blake washed himself, and restored his collar to as much of its original shape as he could, and brushed and dusted his clothes. He would have liked to put on a clean collar, but he had no idea where his box was, or whether it had yet arrived from the station. Still he was pretty well satisfied with the improvement in his appearance when he had finished, and surveyed himself in the glass.

"I think that will do," he said.

As he spoke, the door opened suddenly, and a big, powerfully-built fellow burst into the room, evidently in a hurry. He came right in without seeing Blake, and then stopped in amazement and stared at him.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" replied Blake cheerfully.

"What are you doing here?"

"Cleaning up a bit," said Blake. "You can do the same if you like!" The new-comer looked hot and dusty, and seemed to have just come in from the playing-fields. "I don't mind. Anybody can use this room!"

The big fellow stared harder at him.

"Can they?" he said.

"Oh, yes! I'm finished. I was just going, so there you are."

"Oh, you were just going, were you?"

"Yes."

"Then it's unfortunate for you that you didn't go a little earlier, before I arrived."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I'm going to thrash you for your confounded cheek—that's why!"

Blake jumped back.

"Here, I say, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"My name is Kildare, and I am captain of St. Jim's, if you wish to know."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance!" said Blake, with his best bow. "But I really don't see what you want to get your wool off for."

"No; I suppose I ought to take it as a compliment that you should deign to make use of my room," said Kildare grimly, taking a cane from the table. "The unfortunate part of the business for you is that I don't."

"Your room?" ejaculated Blake. "Herries said—"

He broke off, realising in an instant that he had been fooled by the playful Herries.

Kildare looked at him.

"Well, what did Herries say?" he asked.

"Never mind," said Jack, confused. "I—I thought this was the porter's room, and that anybody could come here."

Kildare laid down the cane, a smile coming over his face.

"You're a new boy, of course?"

"I haven't been at the school an hour."

"That accounts for it. You have been made a fool of. It was a practical joke. Cut!"

And Kildare threw open the door.

"You're not going to lick me?" inquired Blake.

"Not unless I find you here again. Get out!"

"Thanks! You're a decent sort," said Blake, crossing to the door. "I'm sorry—"

"That's all right. Clear!"

And the door closed.

Blake walked away, feeling that he had got off cheaply. A bell was ringing, and, remembering what Herries had said, Blake guessed that it was the tea-bell. A tide of juniors was setting in one direction, and Blake joined it, and arrived at the great dining-hall, and secured a place at one of the tables. His adventures at St. Jim's had not impaired his appetite, and he made an excellent tea.

CHAPTER 4.

With the Gloves On.

"WELL, old Kidlets might have had a bit more consideration!" exclaimed Herries.

Blake looked at him.

He had just come into Study No. 6, and such was the polite remark that greeted him.

"Hallo! What's wrong with you, old son?" asked Blake cheerfully. "Got the collywobbles?"

"I said that Kidlets might have had some more consideration for me!" snapped Herries.

"He doesn't know what an awfully important person you are, I suppose," said Blake sweetly.

"Why don't you explain it all to him?"

"Look here, he oughtn't to have shoved you in here on my hands."

"I ain't on your hands; but I shall be on your neck if you don't learn some better manners!" declared Blake.

"They've stuck you in the Lower Fourth along with us," went on Herries.

"Yes, it was a bit neglectful of Mr. Kidd not to consult you about that, I admit," said Blake, with heavy sarcasm.

"And you know you ought to be down in the Third among the infants! But the worst of it is, to stick you in my study, where there's none too much room for me and Dig."

Blake wagged his forefinger at the speaker.

"You should say Dig and me," he replied. "Your grammar, Herries, is as knock-kneed as your history. Do you still think it was Henry IV. who dissolved the monasteries?"

"Oh, shut up about that! I don't want you in here!"

"I'm in the same fix. I don't want you. And you must admit that it's harder on me than on you, now."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, you've only got to put up with me," said Blake, "and I, on the other hand, have got to put up with both of you."

This little witticism was too much for Herries. He rose in his wrath, and was just going for the new boy, when the door opened again, and Digby came in.

"Hallo! Squabbling again?" said Digby. "For goodness' sake, you fellows, let's have a little peace! If you want to row, why don't you go into the gym, and put on the gloves, and have it out like Britons?"

"I am afraid I should kill the new Kid."

"You needn't be," remarked Blake. "I don't want to boast, but I fancy I could knock you into a cocked hat! I know I could if you know as much about boxing as you do about Henry VIII.!"

"All right; come on, then!" shouted Herries. "We'll see. Come on, you oad!"

"That's right!" chimed in Digby. "He'll be all the better for a hiding, I'll bring the fellows along."

And it was quite a party of the Lower Fourth that accompanied the new boy and his adversary into the gymnasium.

There were a good many boys there, of all Forms, and, of course, a crowd of juniors belonging to the New House, who immediately began to gibe at the Kids. The latter took no notice of them, however, but marched straight in, their heads in the air. They had a more important matter in hand now, and were content to forgo their usual row with the juniors of the rival house at St. Jim's.

"Form a circle here," said Herries. "Keep those Ratcliffe oads out of it. We don't want them looking on."

"Right-ho!" said Digby. "Gather round, School House!"

But the New House boys were evidently disposed not to be left "out of it." Figgins & Co. soon spotted what was toward, and called up their followers.

The School House ring was broken by a rush of Ratcliffe boys.

"Keep off, you beasts!" exclaimed Digby. "What do you

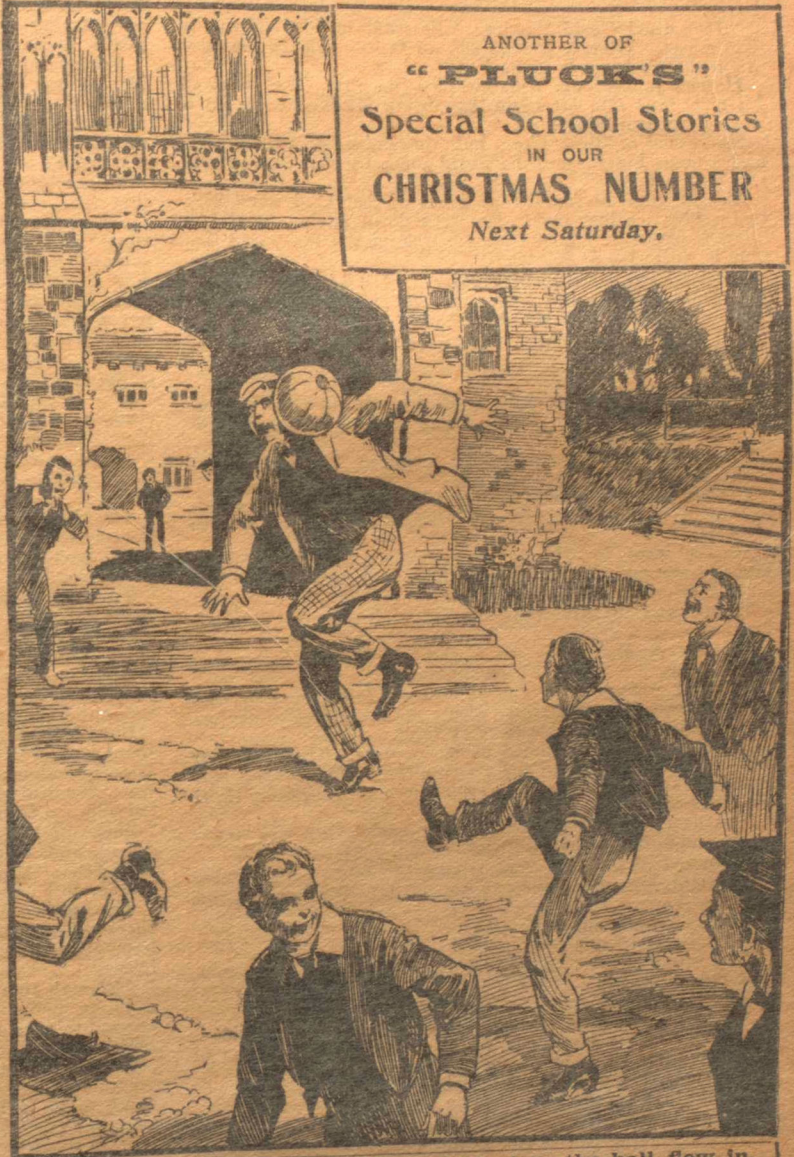
want here? Go back to the New House and wash your faces!"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" said Figgins, shoving forward. "Mustn't we see the little ones amusing their 'ickle selves? Haven't the little dears put on the gloves in case they should hurt their 'ickle selves? Dear Kiddies!"

"Look here," said Blake, turning red, "you shut up. Figs or pigs, or whatever you name is! You can look on if you like, but you mustn't make yourself objectionable, or you'll be turned out!"

"Who'll turn me out?" said Figgins truculently.

"I will!"



Monteith came out of the doorway just as the ball flew in. Biff! and a fearful yell. "My!" murmured Figgins, "you've done it now, Jack Blake."

"I'd like to see you try it!"

"Order!" said Digby. "Can't you shut up, and let us have our mill? You can fight afterwards if you want to; but shut up now!"

"Let the dear Kids alone," said Figgins patronisingly. "Let them amuse themselves. We only want to see them do it, that's all!"

It was evidently impossible to drive the Ratcliffites away, for there were quite as many of them present as School House boys, so they were allowed to look on. They evidently did not intend to be silent spectators, either.

Blake and Herries faced each other, in their shirt-sleeves, with the gloves on. Herries was taller than Blake, and stouter built, and he fancied himself at boxing. He intended

to walk over the new boy, and put him in his place without delay.

It did not work out exactly like that, however. He sailed in with a will; but his blows did not get home, and he was both astonished and pained to feel a blow crashing upon his nose, followed up by Blake's left on his chin. He reeled back and gasped, and if Blake had followed up the attack he would have gone down to a certainty. But the new boy did not do so; he lowered his hands and waited for Herries to come up to time.

Herries quickly recovered, and he attacked again with more caution, and this time he got a smart tap home on Blake's face; but it was immediately avenged by a right-hander which made him stagger back and sit down in a great hurry.

"He's tired," said Figgins; "he wants a rest. Give the Kid a rest. What a strange sort of taste to sit on the floor when there's benches to be had!"

Herries jumped up, with his face like fire. The taunt of his rival hurt him far more than being knocked down by a boy of his own house.

He rushed at Blake like a bull, determined to punish him, and to show Figgins and the world generally that that tumble was only a fluke.

Alas for him, he found that flukes of that kind were thick as blackberries just now! He went down again; he didn't know how—the only knew that he was on the floor, and this time he sprawled at full length.

"He's sleepy now," said Figgins. "Let him have a nap. do! He thinks he's in bed, and the rising-bell not gone. Don't disturb his baby slumbers!"

And all the New House boys gave a loud whisper in concert.

"Hush!"

Poor Herries was picked up by Digby, who was red as fire, too, at the fun of the Rats. The captain of the School House juniors was simply wild.

"Feel better for your sleep?" inquired Figgins sympathetically—"Oh, ow, you cad!"

For Herries had caught him a biff with his boxing-glove full on his prominent nose, and brought a rush of water to his eyes.

Figgins went for Herries immediately, and the School House boys rallied round their chief, and as promptly the Ratcliffites rushed to help Figgins.

"Back up, School House!" shouted Blake, rushing into the fray.

"Sock 'em, Ratcliffe!" yelled the New House juniors. And there was a general scrimmage.

In their mutual heat the youngsters had forgotten that they were in the gymnasium, with a score or more of seniors and two or three prefects close at hand.

They were soon reminded of it, however. Three or four big Sixth Formers came wading into the scuffle, boxing ears right and left, and the riot was quelled in a remarkably short space of time.

The combatants separated, eyeing each other like angry dogs, and rubbing their injuries.

"Get out of the gym," exclaimed Monteith in his sharp, unpleasant voice, "you noisy little beasts! Who started this row?"

Dead silence from the juniors.

"Who started this row?"

Still stony silence, Kids and Rats looked at each other, but did not speak.

The New House prefect's face clouded with anger.

"I say, that's hardly a fair question," interposed Kildare mildly. "I dare say it was six of one and half a dozen of the other side. Get off the earth, you youngsters!"

The juniors speedily made themselves scarce. Monteith scowled at the captain of the school.

"I don't see what you wanted to interfere for," he said.

"I was speaking to the kids of my house, and they're under my control, not yours, Kildare!"

"I didn't want to interfere with you," said the captain of St. Jim's; "but in a row like that it would be hardly fair to pick upon one or two. They're always rowing about that absurd old rivalry between the two houses. Come, Monteith, don't get huffy about nothing."

Monteith's only reply was a grunt, as he turned away. There was no love lost between the captain of St. Jim's and the head prefect of the New House, and though Kildare tried his best to keep on good terms with Monteith, he had a hard task to do it, which sometimes taxed even his cheery Irish good-nature.

THE manner of Herries, chief of the School House juniors, was considerably subdued the day after the affair in the gymnasium. He had come to realise that he was no match for the new boy at the noble science of fist-cuffs, and he did not exactly know how to take the new situation that had arisen.

If the fight had continued, he would have been hopelessly licked; he knew that. He really had to thank Figgins & Co. for saving him from a defeat. If he should renew the combat, he knew that it would end disastrously for him; and so he did not intend to renew it if he could help it.

But to be chief of the juniors, and to give orders to the boy who could lick him if he liked, was a peculiar and a very trying position. Had there been any "side" about Blake, it would have become an impossible one.

Fortunately, the new-comer was a wholesome, hearty British boy, without any trace of "side" or bounce of any description. His private opinion was that he would make a far better chief of the juniors than Herries made; but he was content to take things as he found them, and his coolness was not at all tainted with forwardness. He was willing to take a second place, unless he should be asked to take the first one.

Yet it was pretty certain that in the "alarms and excursions" of the School House juniors the boldest spirit and the coolest head would insensibly take the lead, and so Jack Blake was certain to come to the front.

He appeared to regard the fight as a thing of the past, and never raised the question as to which had been licked, much to Herries's relief; and he was so frank and cheerful that Herries, sore as he was at first, soon began to take quite a liking to him.

The powers that were had ordained that they should be study mates, and they were soon on the way to becoming chums as well, in spite of their recent fistic encounter. Schoolboys are too healthy as a rule to be abnormally sensitive, and these little things do not count very much with them.

The rivalry with the New House, of course, helped to keep the peace within the walls of Kidd's. That rivalry, which dated from the erection of the New House a century before, had never been more flourishing.

To a great extent it was a healthy feeling, and so was approved of by the masters, but on occasions some bitterness crept in. The house matches, at which the sportsmen on both sides strove to excel each other in the cricket or football fields, kept the whole of St. Jim's up to a high pitch of excellence, and generally made them victorious when they sent out a united team to face another school.

But since Monteith's influence had grown in the New House there had been more bad blood than of old. Monteith was bitterly jealous of Kildare, and many of Mr. Ratcliffe's boys were resentful of the fact that the captain of the school had been chosen from the ranks of the School House.

Jack Blake soon understood how matters were at the school, and, of course, entered heart and soul into the feud. The School House, both seniors and juniors, were in high feather just now.

The big house match was coming off in a week or two, and there wasn't a boy, big or little, on either side who wouldn't have given a term's pocket-money to assure the victory of his house.

Although there was not, of course, the remotest chance of a junior being included in the teams, the Fourth Form seemed to take an even keener interest in the match than the seniors did.

This was not to be wondered at, for these enthusiastic young gentlemen never did anything by halves; and they had cause to be in high feather just now, for the School House side was especially strong, and, barring accidents, it seemed certain that they would pull off the victory when they met their rivals in the field.

Kildare, captain of the school, captained his side, and the skipper of St. Jim's was a host in himself upon the football field.

Monteith, the New House skipper, was certainly a brilliant player, but it had to be acknowledged even by his own side that he was not in the same street with Kildare. His side, too, were not by any means of the best material that St. Jim's afforded.

The discipline of the New House, under the Monteith regime, was not so well kept as that of the School House, and it was an open secret that cigarette-smoking went on in the senior studies, unchecked by the head prefect.

Nothing of that kind was permitted where the eye of Kildare fell, and consequently the School House lads were in far better condition.

"Of course, we shall lick them," Herries said, laying down the law in the study shared by the three. "The fact is, it

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will be a walk-over for us; and I know that Monteith has set his heart upon winning the match, too. He hates Kildare like poison, and wants to take our side down, but he won't be able to do it for toffee."

"Not much," said Digby; "though if something I've heard is correct, he wouldn't stick at much in getting the best of the match."

"Hallo! What have you heard?" asked Blake. "That's rather a serious thing to say about a fellow, you know, though I own I don't like Monteith."

"I heard it with my own ears."

"You wouldn't be expected to hear it with anybody else's," agreed Blake. "But what did you hear? That's the point."

"Of course, you mustn't think I listened purposely," said Digby. "I was going past the pavilion, you know, and Monteith and his chum Sleath were talking inside."

"Get on!"

"I only heard a few words, for I didn't stop to listen. Of course, I wouldn't do such a thing."

"You said that before."

"Look here, who's telling the story—you or me?"

"Neither of us, it seems. Anyway, we're not getting much forrarder with it," replied Blake cheerfully.

"Yes, out with it, Dig!" said Herries.

"Give a fellow a chance to speak, then! This is what I heard. It was Sleath who was speaking, and he said that if Kildare didn't play, the New House would be able to count on pulling off the match."

"Very likely," grinned Herries; "but he will play."

"Well, it seemed to me funny that they should discuss such a thing," said Digby, "so I just went a bit slower, perhaps—only a little bit, you know—to hear what Monteith said. And what do you think he said?"

"Don't ask conundrums; get on with the washing."

"Well, he said that if he could help it, Kildare shouldn't play." Digby looked triumphantly at his comrades. "Now then!"

"You didn't hear any more?"

"No; of course, I couldn't stop to listen."

"Well, for a chap who couldn't stop to listen, you seem to have heard a good deal," remarked Blake. "But I wonder what Monteith meant? He must be off his rocker if he thinks he can keep Kildare out of the football field on the day of the house match."

"Maybe he has some idea of foul play. Some of those New House cads are mean enough for anything."

"We'll keep an eye on him," said Blake impressively. "If he gets up to any tricks, we'll come down on him heavy, I can promise him. We won't stand any of his nonsense."

And with this threat, which would no doubt have made the New House captain shake in his shoes if he had heard it, the matter dropped for the time; but it was destined to be recalled later in a way none of the juniors foresaw.

Digby went to the window and looked out.

"Hallo! Those Rats are sporting a new footer!" he exclaimed. "Ha, ha! There's old Figgins over on his nose!"

The other two joined in. Eight or nine youngsters of the New House were, indeed, disporting themselves in the quadrangle with a brand-new football, upon the purchase of which Figgins had lately expended the whole of a generous tip from a kind uncle.

From the study window the trio looked out, and an idea came into the brain of the new boy, and he grinned.

"I say, suppose we call up our forces and collar their footer?"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Digby. "Look at them! They're our side of the fountain."

"My hat, so they are!" said Herries. "If we allow them to punt about their dirty football in our half, we may as well shut up shop at once."

The other two quite agreed with this. The honour of the house was at stake, evidently; and there still were twenty minutes before the bell would go for afternoon class.

"Buck up, Herries!" said Digby.

They hurried from the room, and a word or two sufficed to call together fifteen or sixteen of the juniors of the School House.

Led by the three, they poured into the quadrangle. The New House juniors were too excited with their play to notice them till they came with a swoop upon the scene of action.

"Yah, Rats! Keep on your own ground!"

With that war-cry the School House lads charged. Right through the unprepared Ratchiffites they went, and in a moment Jack Blake was "on the ball."

Jack was a splendid footballer for his age, and having once captured the leather, he was not to be robbed of it. Away he went, dribbling in fine style right across the quadrangle, with the juniors of the New House howling vengeance on his track.

"Buck up, School House!" roared Herries.

And the Kids backed up Blake for all they were worth

The New House partisans were shouldered and hustled off. Away went the School House with the ball, with many a taunt and gibe, which roused the fury of the Rats to white heat.

"Rescue!" yelled Figgins. "They're sneaking our ball! Yah, thieves—cheats! Give us our ball! Go for them!"

"Rescue, New House!" bawled Kerr and Wynn together.

New House boys from all quarters came crowding up at the familiar call, and joined in the fray; but there was no getting into the wedged ranks of the School House, who kept possession of the ball, and rushed it round the quad with yells of laughter.

Finally, Blake, who was dribbling the ball in a really fine style, headed for the open door of the School House. He intended to use that doorway as a goal, and send the ball in, when it would be effectually captured, and without "handing."

The New House boys saw his intention, and made an effort to stop him; but he was unstoppable. Still on the run, he took a fine kick, and the leather shot into the doorway, and the next moment there was a terrific yell.

Monteith had been across to the School House to speak to Kildare about some matter connected with the coming house match, and he was just leaving the house, when the juniors rushed the football up to the door.

He came out of the doorway just as the ball flew in. Biff! And a fearful yell.

"My only Aunt Euphonia!" murmured Figgins. "You've done it now, Jack Blake!"

Blake evidently had done it. The unexpected shock of the whizzing football in his face sent Monteith reeling back as if he had been shot, and he went down on his back with a thump.

For a single instant he lay there dazed, wondering whether an earthquake had occurred, but only for an instant. Up he jumped like a jack-in-the-box, and bounced down the School House steps, his sour face smudged with mud and ablaze with wrath.

The juniors, stricken with dismay, had stopped their wild career, and stood silent and dismayed. Some of them were sneaking quietly off, showing great presence of mind. Monteith's look of fury fairly startled those who stood their ground.

"Who kicked that ball at me?" he raved.

"I kicked it," said Blake. "I didn't know you were there. I say, I'm awfully sorry—"

"You lying little whelp! You did it on purpose. You knew I was just coming out."

Blake's face set obstinately. Nothing angered him more than to be suspected of any meanness, and the especial meanness of lying was his pet abomination.

"You can believe me or not, as you like!" he said shortly.

"You're a beastly, mean cad to call a chap a liar for nothing, anyway!"

Monteith nearly choked. To be floored by a football was bad enough, but to be slanged by a junior who hadn't been a week at St. Jim's was a little more than he was disposed to stand.

He didn't stop to reflect that he was in the wrong, nor would such a reflection, if he had stopped for it, have prevented him from wreaking his rage upon the junior. He simply jumped at Blake and clawed hold of him, and commenced to box his ears with a brutality worthy of a hooligan.

Blake was not the kind of boy to take that kind of treatment patiently, and he struggled fiercely for his liberty, and as he could not get free he began to hit out. Monteith gave a yell, as he got one on a tender spot, and released Blake for a moment.

Blake, white and dazed, staggered away from him. Monteith, setting his teeth, struck out at him as he would have struck at a fellow his own size, and the junior went with a crash to the ground.

"Shame!"

It was a shout from every boy there—New House and School House alike.

And as the cry burst forth, a heavy hand upon Monteith's shoulder swung him round, and he turned, with a snarl of rage, to look into the incensed face of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

The Plot.

"HOW dare you?" Kildare's voice was tense with anger. "How dare you use a boy like that, Monteith?" Monteith shook himself free from the captain's hand. Dearly he would have liked to plant his clenched fist full in Kildare's handsome face; but he had sense enough left not to do it.

For a moment the two seniors looked at each other fiercely, and the youngsters standing round held their breath.

Was it possible that there was to be a row—a fight between the captain of the school and the head prefect of the New House? It looked like it for the moment.

"Did you see what he did to me?" hissed Monteith. "He floored me with a football—kicked it right in my face as I was coming out!"

"I don't care what he did; you had no right to hit a mere kid like that! I tell you, it was a cowardly blow, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Monteith's features worked convulsively. To be thus publicly rebuked by the rival he hated was maddening. He flung up his clenched fist and aimed a savage blow at Kildare's face.

There was a gasp all round.

But the blow did not reach home. The captain of St. Jim's put up his hand and struck it aside with a sharp tap that made the prefect's wrist tingle.

"Don't be a fool, Monteith!" he said sternly. "Have you lost your senses?"

Monteith stood quivering with passion. He did not attempt to repeat the blow. Even in his rage he realised that he had gone too far.

Meanwhile Herries had helped Jack Blake to his feet. Blake was white and dizzy, and a dark lump was forming over his eye. He stood unsteadily upon his feet with the help of Herries.

His pluck, however, was not all diminished by his treatment, as he showed the next moment, as quickly as he found his voice. He fixed his blazing eyes on Monteith.

"You coward!" he said. "You beastly coward!"

The New House skipper started, and ground his teeth.

"You hear that, Kildare? Do you expect me to stand that sort of thing?"

"Serve you right!" said Kildare coldly. "You had no right to strike him like that. It would have been a brutal blow even to a chap your own size!"

"So I'm not to be allowed to keep the fags in order?" sneered Monteith, who was calming down a little now. "Is that a new rule?"

"I won't argue with you. You'd better get off to your own quarters."

Monteith turned away, and then looked back.

"Now I know how much your humbug about wanting to make peace between the two houses is worth, Kildare. I dare say all this was planned, and that you had that little cad all ready to insult me when I called upon you. I sha'n't forget it!"

And he strode away.

Kildare looked troubled for a moment. It was his dearest wish to get the rival houses of St. Jim's to pull together; but Monteith made it uphill work for him. And this occurrence was likely to make the breach wider than ever.

Yet as he looked at the bruise on the junior's forehead he could not be sorry that he had spoken plainly to the bullying prefect.

"You'd better go and bathe that lump, Blake," he said shortly. "And just be a bit more careful in the future. I suppose that football affair was an accident?"

"Of course it was, Kildare," said Blake earnestly. "I had no idea that Monteith was in the School House at all, and certainly not that he was just coming out. How should I?"

"That's all very well; but you might have caught anybody in the same way—myself, for instance, if I had been coming out, or the doctor!" said Kildare sternly.

"I didn't think of that."

"No, I suppose you didn't; and I should give you a hundred lines to fix it on your memory, but I think you have been punished enough. Be off with you!"

And the captain, still with a clouded brow, re-entered the School House.

Blake and his friends turned away, and Figgins came hastily up to the new boy. He was very red, but much in earnest.

"I say, Blake, I'm sorry that happened. Monteith was a beast to you. I say that though he is our captain. I'm jolly glad you slanged him!"

"So he is—a beastly beast!" said Wynn and Kerr together.

"I hope you're not much hurt," went on Figgins sympathetically.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Blake, in his cheerful way. "I don't mind. Thanks very much! You are good sorts, you chaps, and we mean to give you socks! Anyway, there's your footer, and you can take it!"

So Rats and Kids parted on better terms than usual. The New House juniors punted their ball away to their own side of the quad, and Blake and his chums went off to attend to the unlucky hero's injury.

In spite of their efforts, a big blue bruise adorned the junior's brow, and it was very much in evidence in class that

afternoon—so much so that Mr. Phipps, the master of the Fourth, had his attention drawn to it.

"Blake," he exclaimed, looking at the new boy, "what ever have you been doing to your forehead?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Then what is the cause of that terrible bruise?"

"Oh, I knocked my head against something, sir."

"Indeed! And how?"

"We were playing footer, sir, in the quad."

"Ah, very well," said Mr. Phipps, to whom the word "footer" explained everything. "You should be more careful, Blake."

"Yes, sir."

And so, without any untruth, but by not stating the whole of the truth, Blake escaped having to give away Monteith over the matter—a piece of loyalty which strongly appealed to the New House members of his Form.

Figgins leaned over from the desk behind Blake.

"Bravo, Kid! That's decent of you, not to show Monteith up," he whispered.

"Right-ho!" whispered Blake. "I don't want to sneak, you know. But, my hat, I'll make the boulder sit up, somehow, for what he did to me! You see!"

Whereat Figgins grinned. He did not think it likely that the junior would be able to make the head prefect of the New House "sit up" very easily. But he did not yet know Jack Blake.

In Study No. 6 that evening Blake further announced his intentions. Herries and Digby were sympathetic, admiring, but extremely doubtful.

"You see, what can you do?" said Herries. "A kid like you can't do anything against a senior. If it was one of our own side we could play a trick on him, and make him sorry for himself. But boys of one side ain't even allowed in the other house, you know."

"That's where it is!" chimed in Digby. "You couldn't even go into the New House, Blake. Besides, it's rot to think of getting even with a prefect. The best thing to do is to grin and bear it."

"Rats!" replied Blake. "I've noticed that a chap who grins and bears things generally gets a lot of things to grin and bear."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to make that beastly bully sorry for himself."

"How?"

"Oh, be quiet a bit, and let me think a think!"

So Blake thought a think, as he termed it, while the other two went on with their preparation for the next day. And presently Blake's face lighted up, and he brought down his fist upon the table with a crash that made the ink jump from the inkpot and distribute itself in a shower of blots over Herries's paper.

"Oh, you silly cuckoo!" said Herries. "See what you've done?"

"Sorry; but I've got an idea."

"Blow your ideas! Give us some blotting paper!"

The blotting-paper was supplied, and Herries used it while Blake explained.

"I believe I can cut into the New House easily enough," he said; "and, if I'm lucky, I can get into Monteith's study. I know the room, because the other day I had to take a message over to Sleath from the football club treasurer, and I went into Monteith's quarters by mistake. Now, when I get there—"

"Monteith will skin you!"

"Ass! I sha'n't go while he's there!"

"Oh, I see! What will you do when you get there, then?"

"Whatever my hand findeth to do," quoted Blake.

"And I shall do it well, too. I think I can do damage enough to make the brute wish he had let me alone. What do you say to pouring some water in his clock, and some boot-polish over his Sunday topper, and putting some nice sharp tacks in his boots?"

Herries and Digby chuckled.

"A jolly good jape, if you can do it! But—"

"Well, I'm going to have a try."

Blake was determined, and his friends were interested, and eager to see how the venture would turn out. It was the first time the School House had tried to carry the war into the enemy's camp in this manner. But Blake was nothing if not original.

Blake watched his opportunity. In the dark, early evenings of November it was not, after all, difficult to slip across into the New House; and, as he knew his way to Monteith's study, that part was easier than his chums had deemed it. He had caught a glimpse of Monteith and Sleath walking together in the hall, and so the coast seemed clear.

His heart was beating as he turned the handle of the prefect's door and entered the dark room. The gas was not lighted, but there was a glimmer of light from the window. He closed the door silently, and stood for a moment looking

about him. And as he stood he heard steps in the corridor without, coming towards the study.

He gave a start. Of course, it might be only some fellows passing along; but it was quite possibly Monteith himself coming back to his room. And Blake, cool and "nervy" as he was, shivered at the idea of the bullying prefect finding him alone in the room. He had thrust himself into the lion's den with a vengeance by venturing alone into the New House, and he knew that Monteith, with so fair an excuse for chastisement, would not spare him.

Blake was accustomed to thinking quickly, and to acting quickly upon his thoughts. He dived under the bed in a twinkling, determined to run no risks.

The bed was in a recess let into the wall of the study, and Monteith, who was in the way of being fastidious, had a big-flowered screen which barred it off mostly from view; and so Blake could not have chosen a more secure hiding-place.

Well for the venturesome junior was it that he had acted so promptly. For the footsteps halted at the door, and it opened, and he heard the voices of Monteith and his chum Sleath. They came in together, and the prefect struck a match and lighted the gas. Sleath threw the door shut.

Blake groaned inwardly as he heard them sit down. Monteith had lowered the blind, and so it looked as if they were going to settle down in the study. He heard them rummaging about, and had no doubt that they were getting out their books to begin work.

Was ever an unfortunate junior in such a situation? He had chosen the unluckiest possible moment for his raid. He could not remain there indefinitely, that was certain, for search would be made for him if he was not back in time for bed. But to reveal his presence now would be worse than ever.

"My hat!" he murmured suddenly. "What's that?"

A familiar odour had assailed his nostrils.

It was the smell of tobacco!

Blake grinned to himself.

The seniors had not come there to work, but to enjoy (?) a surreptitious smoke. They had been getting out cigarettes and matches and ash-trays from their place of concealment, not books. Blake ventured a peep, and saw Sleath with his chair tilted back, and a cigarette between his lips. Monteith was sitting on the table smoking.

"This is all right," said Sleath. "Make Kildare get his wool off if he could see us."

Monteith scowled.

"I won't have Kildare bossing this house, at all events," he said. "He's not my master. How I hate him!"

"I hear you had a row with him to-day. I haven't heard the rights of it."

"Oh, it was only his usual cheek! I floored one of his juniors for kicking a football at me, and he slanged me before a crowd of them. I'll make him sorry for it yet."

"He puts on a lot of side," said Sleath. "I don't like his style. Hang it, why can't he let a fellow alone? Still, we shall put a spoke in his wheel over the match, Monteith."

And he chuckled.

"Yes," said the prefect viciously, "the School House are already crowing as if the match was theirs, confound them!"

"So it would be if Kildare played."

"Oh, I don't know so much about that! They ain't so far ahead of us as to make it a cert. Our team is up to theirs, in my opinion."

"Without Kildare, you mean? Yes, I fancy we can pull it off if he's absent. But to be frank, Monty, we've not a ghost of a chance if Kildare plays for the School House."

"I don't think we're so badly off as that, Sleath. Still, I'm going to take no chances. I'd run a few risks rather than allow the School House to triumph over us."

"Yes, and there's really no risk at all in the matter—that is, if you are sure you can trust Pedlar Peter."

"I can trust him if I square him properly. He's done a good many things for me, and he wouldn't be fool enough to give me away, and spoil future business."

"I suppose not."

"I'm sure of it."

"But how much is it going to cost you for the telegram?"

"There's his fare to Duncombe, the cost of the telegram, and a sov. for himself. It will come to under thirty bob."

"Dirt cheap, too, considering how it will take the School House down," agreed Sleath. "I wish I could help you with it, Monty, but I'm horribly stony just now."

Monteith's lip curled.

"Oh, you needn't worry about that!" he said. "I can manage it. I'd give as many pounds if I had them, to disappoint Kildare and lower the colours of the School House."

"Well, it's settled, then. I've no doubt it will work."

"No doubt about that at all. I know Kildare."

"There's pretty certain to be an inquiry afterwards."

"Let them inquire. It will be set down as a hoax, of

course, but people will be trying to think who it was at Duncombe that did it. Nobody will dream of suspecting someone at St. Jim's. How could they?"

"That seems right enough."

"Finish your fag, and I'll open the window. It won't do to have any smell of smoke left in the room, in case old Ratcliffe pokes his head in."

"Right you are!"

Not a word of the foregoing had been lost upon Jack-Blake.

He felt extremely uncomfortable at being obliged thus unwillingly to play the eavesdropper, and his ears tingled as he listened. The keen interest excited by the conversation did not remove that feeling. He knew that no excuse could justify wilful listening to talk not intended for his ears. But he was not a free agent. He could not escape from his present position without revealing himself to the New House seniors, and that meant a severe and brutal thrashing. He could not be expected to stand that.

So he lay quiet, and did not move.

His amazement and concern were great as he began to understand the drift of the seniors' conversation. That there was some plot afoot to keep Kildare away from the house match, was pretty evident, though what it was, and what Pedlar Peter and a telegram had to do with it, he could not make out.

Monteith and Sleath sat there till the cigarettes were finished, solemnly keeping up the farce of enjoying them, and then the prefect opened the window, and waved a book about to help to dissipate the smoke. To Blake's relief he then turned the gas low, and the precious pair left the room.

Blake waited till their steps were inaudible, and then he crept out of his hiding-place. The gas being still alight showed that Monteith was likely to return, so he had no time to waste. The purpose for which he had come to the study was abandoned. He did not wish to leave a trace to show that a School House boy had been in the room that evening. He wanted to keep his discoveries secret; at least, until he had consulted Herries and Digby.

He looked out into the corridor. To his dismay Monteith was standing there a dozen paces away, talking to a couple of prefects. Blake quietly closed the door again. There was nothing for it but the window, unless he was to remain where he was.

He looked out. He knew there was a rain-pipe near the window, but it was risky work getting out to it in the dark, and he was not at all certain that it would bear his weight. But something had to be done, and Blake was not accustomed to counting risks. He got out on the sill, and

Sandow Anecdotes.

Incidents from the Eventful Life of Mr. Sandow.

No. 2.

For a short time Sandow was assisted in one of his performances by a modern Goliath named Karl Westphal, whom he found loading stones at Aachen, in Germany. This man was about 5 feet 3 inches high, weighed 400 lb., and had a chest measurement of nearly eighty inches. His hands were three times as large as an ordinary man's, and the ball of his finger would cover a five-shilling piece. His boots were so large that Sandow could put both his feet into one, and turn entirely round inside.

Sandow offered him an engagement, and brought him to England. When they arrived in England no cab would hold "Goliath," so they had to walk to Mr. Sandow's chambers in Rupert Street, being followed by hundreds of people the whole of the way.

For close on two months Sandow tried to train him, but he was very idle, and nothing much could be done with him. The "turn" consisted of a wrestling match, in which Sandow was the winner; after which he took a cannon, weighing 400 lb., and, placing it on his huge shoulders, prepared to fire. Sandow then advanced with a club, and the giant backed into a frame of refuge, carrying the cannon.

Sandow then climbed above the frame and lifted Goliath, the cannon, and refuge off the ground with one finger. During this the cannon was fired, and Sandow then carried Goliath off the stage at arm's length. This performance did not run for very long, and Goliath disappeared, and Sandow never heard any more of him.

Any reader writing to No. 1, Sandow Hall, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C., will be forwarded a free copy of the booklet, "Sandow's Way to Strength," which shows how Sandow obtained his magnificent strength, and tells how readers may obtain splendid muscular development and robust health, and gives lots of little incidents about Sandow and his system.

Grand Christmas Double No. "PLUCK" Next Saturday, 2d.

obtained a grip on the grimy pipe, and resolutely swung himself down. With scraped hands and barked knees, and quite breathless, he stood in the quadrangle a couple of minutes later.

The rest was easy. He was quickly in his own house again, where he found Herries and Digby in the juniors' common-room. At a sign they followed him to Study Six, eager to hear the outcome of his raid into the enemy's stronghold.

CHAPTER 7.

And the Counter-plot.

"MY hat!" said Herries.

"My giddy Aunt Matilda!" said Digby. Such were the comments of Jack Blake's study-mates when he unfolded his tale.

Then the three looked at each other in silence for awhile. "You're sure you're not making any mistake?" said Herries, at last.

"But if there's a plot we can't let it go on," said Herries.

"As sure as I am that you're an ass, Herries!"

"Don't get ratty. But this is a serious business."

"I know it is, and it wants looking into."

"Let's go to Kildare," suggested Dig.

Blake shook his head.

"Can't be done. I heard it because I was forced to, but it wouldn't be the thing to tell about it, except you two, of course, in confidence. Besides, it would be sneaking."

"Not much! But my idea is that we should let Monteith show his hand. Then we shall be justified in coming down on him like a hundred of bricks."

"But he may do the trick in some way that we can't nail him upon," objected Digby.

"Not likely! I don't quite make out the game, but it has something to do with a telegram, which is to prevent Kildare from playing on the match day."

"That seems certain."

"Well, we shall know when the telegram comes, and then we can come out strong. If we told Kildare now, he would simply laugh at the thing. He's a jolly nice chap, but as unsuspecting as a baby. He can't suspect anybody of foul play. I like him the better for it, but it makes it impossible to put him on his guard."

"That's so," Herries agreed, with a nod. "He'd laugh at the story, and might even think you had made it up to get even with that brute Monteith for knocking you about."

"Better keep mum," went on Blake decidedly, "till the time comes to speak. But there's a point or two you chaps can enlighten me upon, as I'm a new-comer. Who is Pedlar Peter?"

"Oh, he's a pedlar, you know, at Rylcombe, down the road. He hawks things, and sometimes sells us sweets and things. He travels all over the country peddling with his pack, and he hasn't got the best of reputations, either. There was a yarn some time ago about his being the go-between for some of the fast set at St. Jim's and a certain bookmaker in Rylcombe, but I don't know whether there was anything in it."

"Just the kind of man Monteith could bribe for a dirty bit of work?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And then Duncombe?" said Blake. "That's about sixty miles from here, I believe. Why on earth should the telegram be sent from there?"

"I know!" exclaimed Digby excitedly. "I can tell you that! Don't you remember, Herries? It's Kildare's place, where his people live, at Duncombe."

Blake gave a jump.

"By Julius Caesar's whiskers, that's it!" he exclaimed. "The scoundrels are going to send a telegram as if it came from Kildare's people. See? That's about the only thing that would fetch him away from the school on the day of the match."

The three looked seriously at one another.

There could be little doubt that Blake had hit upon the true solution of the mystery, and unearthed the whole plot of the treacherous prefect.

"That's it!" exclaimed Blake, thoroughly convinced. "Perhaps the wire will make out that somebody's ill; Kildare's pater, perhaps. Oh, I say, what a pair of thundering villains! They ought to be shown up over the whole school!"

"It's a rotten serious business," said Herries gravely. "It's no good going to Kildare now, for he wouldn't listen to any accusation against the rascals, and you've got no evidence but your bare word, against Monteith's and Sleath's."

"But if we gave them away, it might frighten them off the game," suggested Digby.

"Yes," said Blake, "and then they'd get up to a new

dodge, that we know nothing at all about, and we shouldn't be able to circumvent them at all."

This was obviously true.

"Only," said Herries uneasily, "if Kildare gets that wire on the day of the match, and it's like you say, he'll be too upset to listen to anything we've got to tell him. He'd think it a cock-and-bull story, and it certainly wouldn't keep him at St. Jim's if he thought his governor was seriously ill, for instance."

Again there was a silence.

The combined intellects of the three juniors seemed unable to cope with the problem.

Blake thought hard, and presently his face lighted up, as if always did when a new idea flashed into his mind.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed.

"Roll it out, then."

"We'll draw up a document, setting forth all that we have discovered, and the conclusions we draw from it. We'll all three sign it, and then I'll seal it up in an envelope and take it to Kildare, and ask him to mind it for me. Then, when that beastly telegram comes, I'll just get him to open the envelope, and read the document. That will convince him that it's a humbug, I should think."

Herries and Digby thumped Blake on the back with such enthusiastic admiration that he roared with pain.

"Here, chuck it, you giddy lunatics! That's my back you're dislocating!"

"Blow your back!" said Herries. "It's a spiffing idea!"

"Ripping!" cried Digby.

"Then let's draw up the paper."

Blake took pen and paper, and drew the inkpot towards him. After nibbling at the handle of the pen for a couple of minutes, a process which seemed to spur the sluggish genius of composition, he began to write. Herries and Digby hung over him, one at each shoulder, correcting and advising. The combined efforts of the three finally produced the following document.

"The undersigned, John Blake, of the School House, St. Jim's College, having been in the study of Cad Monteith in the New House on Friday evening, the 22nd, for the purpose of ragging the brute, accidentally overheard him talking to his other beast Sleath. They were talking about getting Pedlar Peter for thirty bob to send a telegram from Duncombe calling Kildare away from St. Jim's on the day of the house match, the Saturday week following, so that the New House cads could win the match, which they could not do by fair play, as all St. Jim's knows perfectly well. So if a telegram comes from Duncombe on the day of the above-mentioned house match calling Kildare away, he will know by these presents that it is a hoax, and a humbug, and a swindle of the New House cads.

(Signed), JACK BLAKE.

Witnesses: GEORGE HERRIES.

ARTHUR DIGBY.

("Of the School House.")

This document, with a variety of blots and some little weaknesses of orthography, was finished at last, to the satisfaction of the three juniors, who surveyed it with no small amount of pride.

"Now to take it to Kildare," said Blake. "I'll seal it up. That's right. Now, who shall take it?"

"Let's all go together," said Herries; "that will impress him."

"All right. Come on!"

And the trio proceeded at once to Kildare's study.

Blake knocked at the door, and the captain's voice bade him enter. The skipper of St. Jim's was at home, and he had him company, which the juniors had not bargained for. There were two School House seniors, Drake and Rusden, having tea with the captain. They turned to look at the new-comers, and Herries and Digby hung back bashfully. Blake, however, who was not much troubled with bashfulness, came up to the scratch coolly enough.

"Excuse us bothering you, Kildare," he said. "I didn't know you had a tea-party on, or I'd have chosen another time. But the matter's awfully important."

"Oh, you can go ahead!" said the captain good-humouredly. "Thanks! Look here, you see this envelope? Would you mind minding it for us as a great favour? It contains a document that is very valuable, and if you wouldn't mind locking it up in your desk—"

"A secret drawer would be best," ventured Digby.

Kildare looked at the juniors in amazement.

"I'll mind the thing, if you like," he said, in his good-natured way. "Shove it in my desk there."

Blake hesitated.

"The fact is," he said, "I want you to lock it up, if you don't mind, Kildare. I know it's an awful cheek, but, really, if you knew how important—"

Kildare, with a smile, rose and took the envelope in his hand. He opened a drawer in his desk, put the valuable document into it, and locked the drawer.

"There, are you satisfied now?" he asked.
 "Yes," said Blake. "Thanks awfully, Kildare! You're a jolly good sort!"
 "I am much beholden to you for your good opinion," said Kildare gravely. "Good-evening!"
 And the three juniors retired.
 Drake and Rushden grinned.

"Something mighty mysterious there," Rushden said. "I wonder what the blooming document is? Some terrific conspiracy being hatched by the kids for the discomfiture of the rival house, I dare say."

And the seniors went on with their tea and talk, and soon forgot all about the important document from Study No. 6.

The juniors retired extremely satisfied with themselves.
 "I'm glad Drake and Rushden were there," Blake declared. "They will be witnesses that the document was locked up in Kildare's desk over a week before the day of the match. My hat! I think we've put a spoke in Master Cad Monteith's wheel with a vengeance this time! It is better than putting tin-tacks in his boots, or blacking on his Sunday topper. Eh—what?"

And his chums agreed that it was.

CHAPTER 8.

The Day of the Match—The Telegram from Duncombe.

BLAKE and his chums kept their own counsel. Not a word passed their lips as to the knowledge they possessed of the treachery of Monteith. The prefect of the New House had not the faintest hint that anything was known. The trio of No. 6 Study chuckled in their sleeves.

"It will be a facer for him," Blake remarked. "But I fancy Kildare will want to keep the thing dark, for the credit of the school, so we shall have to hold our tongues."

The other two cordially agreed to that.
 "It wouldn't be fair on the New House to tell," said Herries. "I'm quite sure that only Monteith and Sleath are in the game, and the others would skin them if they knew it. We'll just leave it to Kildare to do as he thinks best."

"Right-ho!" said Digby. "We have our rows with the New House, but we don't want to bring up anything of that kind against them; it wouldn't be cricket."

And so it was decided.
 Needless to say, the juniors waited anxiously for the day of the house match to come round, not so much because of the match itself as to see what would transpire.

But all St. Jim's was looking forward to the great day. Every day without fail the rival teams were at practice, and the conditions of both elevens was improving. The School House men were first-class, and their captain was far and away the best of the bunch. Kildare was a born footballer, and worth any two on either side. He was always a host in himself on the football field, and just now he was in especially good condition, and wonderfully fit.

Some of the New House men showed a lack of staying power, the reason of which could probably have been furnished by the tobacconists in Rylcombe. Still, they were upon the whole a fine team, and the match was certain to be a hard-contested one.

But for Kildare the New House would have had at least an equal chance of victory; but the New House boys themselves were despondent when they thought of the School House captain's form. Still, they hoped, and they meant to do their best.

Monteith, who had no idea of giving himself away, did not betray his secret intentions by any appearance of over-confidence. He affected to regard the task before the New House as a herculean one, and kept his men hard at training. In the last days before the match he even put his foot down upon secret cigarette-smoking. All the time he had no expectation of seeing the School House captain in the field on Saturday.

The great day arrived.
 Morning lessons were simply a farce, but masters were lenient. It was a glad hour when school was dismissed, and the boys crowded out into the open air. It was a cold but fine day, the air keen and bracing, and all St. Jim's congratulated itself upon its good luck.

After dinner there was a rush of the juniors to secure good places, for the kick-off was timed early. That gave the Rats and the Kids an opportunity for disorder, of which they were not slow to avail themselves.

"Here, get out of the way, you Rats!" said Blake, as, followed by his friends, he pushed his way to the ground.
 "There's nothing for you to see except your men being licked, so you needn't be so jolly eager."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Figgins. "Who stole a football? Yah?"

"And who couldn't get it back again?" demanded Blake.
 "Whose captain got a goal on his boko—eh? Who's going to be licked to-day?"

"Yah! New House cads!" yelled Herries. "Shove 'em along, chaps!"

The appearance of the housemasters on the scene stopped the scuffling, and the juniors took their places round the ropes. There was plenty of room for everybody, and they had only disputed for the love of the thing.

Blake remained close to the pavilion with his chums. He wanted to be near Kildare when the expected happened.

Nothing had come yet, and he was beginning to wonder if it was a "sell," after all. He was glad he had said nothing to anybody. If it turned out that Monteith's heart had failed him, or anything of that kind, and nothing happened, it would be easy to reclaim his document from the captain and burn it, with no questions asked. A still tongue undoubtedly showed a wise head on this occasion. Words once spoken could not have been recalled.

Still, Blake felt pretty certain that the telegram was coming. Of course, the plotters would defer it till just before the match, in order to make it impossible for Kildare to wire home for confirmation, and get a reply before the kick-off.

"Hallo! Half-past two!" said Blake, looking at his silver watch; "and the ball's to be kicked off at three. Only half an hour!"

"Look there!" said Digby, in a whisper.
 A boy in the well-known uniform was making his way across the quadrangle, looking about him. He held a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

Blake drew a quick breath. He had been expecting it, and yet somehow it seemed to startle him. Was the telegram for Kildare?

The boy was looking about him, as if uncertain of his bearings. Blake made a sign to his chums, and bore down upon the youth.

"Hallo! Telegram?" he said, in a friendly way. "Who's it for?"

"Mr. Kildare, School House, St. James's College."
 "That's the School House, but Kildare's over at the pavilion there. That's him, with the fair hair—the big chap."

"Thanks, sir!" said the telegraph-boy; and he hurried over to Kildare, who looked at him in surprise.

"Mr. Kildare?"
 "That's my name."
 "Telegram for you, sir."
 "Thank you, my lad!"

Kildare took the envelope with a look of wonder. He had not the faintest idea of who could have wired to him. He opened it, and glanced over the black lettering within, and his face went deadly white.

"Hallo!" cried Drake. "What's the matter, old chap! Bad news?"

"Read it!" muttered Kildare.
 The senior picked it up, and read it aloud, at a sign from Kildare. Blake and a dozen more juniors crowded round to hear. The message was brief but terrible:

"Kildare, School House, St. James's College, Rylcombe.—Come instantly. Father dangerously ill.—HARRY KILDARE."

"That's my young brother!" groaned Kildare. "He wouldn't wire like that unless—unless—!" He broke off, and the tears started to his eyes. "The dear old governor! I never knew he was a bit ill. They haven't told me a word. I must fly!"

Then, as he saw the grave faces round him, he remembered.
 "The match! What's to be done?"

There was no reply.
 To put the match off was impossible. The day was fixed, and many of the relations of both teams were at the school to see it. The ground was already enlivened with the bright hats and dresses of the sisters and the cousins and the aunts of the house champions. Besides, the New House would think they had funk'd it.

But for Kildare to play was impossible. The only thing was to play a substitute in his place, and that meant little better than giving the match away to the New House. It was a terrible blow to the boys, who had looked forward so confidently to victory, but even in their chagrin they could think of Kildare.

"I'm awfully sorry, old chap!" said Drake. "You must cut off at once, of course. Never mind the match. We must do the best we can; and we'll give the New House a tussle, at all events. Send a line to say you're coming, and buzz off."

Kildare nodded. There was nothing else to be done.

ANSWERS
 ONE PENNY.
 Every Tuesday.

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He borrowed a pencil and wrote a brief message on the back of the telegram, and gave it to the boy with half-a-crown. Off went the lad, and Kildare walked to the School House, to prepare for his hasty journey, and with him went Drake. The news soon flew over St. Jim's. In five minutes or less every boy in the two houses knew that Kildare had been called away, and that the School House would have to play a reserve in his place.

Dismay fell upon the School House. The Kids looked at each other with long faces, and wondered what was going to become of the match to which all had looked forward so eagerly. Some of the New House fellows were relieved and jubilant, but they were in the minority.

In both houses at St. Jim's there was a strong sporting spirit, and most of the New House men agreed that it was very unfortunate. Even those who were pleased found it best to conceal their satisfaction, and among these were Monteith and Sleath. The latter had an ill-natured remark to make which a good many listened to, and which was planned to help to throw dust in the school's eyes when the truth as to the telegram should come out.

"It's very queer Kildare being called away like this on the eve of the match," said Sleath. "I suppose it's all right?"

"All right! How do you mean?" asked Webb, of the New House.

"It looks to me as if he is funking the match."

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Webb incredulously.

"Well, that's my opinion," said Sleath obstinately. "He could easily get his young brother to send that wire."

"Rot!" said Webb again.

But it was possible that his opinion would change when the telegram turned out to be a hoax. The plotters would thus score doubly, if the suspicion gained ground.

But there was one factor in the problem which the plotters had overlooked, simply because they were unaware of its existence.

Jack Blake was on the track of the captain of St. Jim's, and when Kildare and Drake entered the captain's room, the junior boldly followed them in.

CHAPTER 9.

The Scheme that Failed—The House Match—A Glorious Victory.

"KILDARE, I want to speak to you—I must speak to you."

"Another time, youngster," said Kildare, still good-tempered, in spite of his worry and grief. "Be off with you now."

"Cut, can't you?" said Drake, more impatiently.

But Blake stood his ground.

"I must speak, Kildare. It's about that telegram you've just had. It's a hoax."

Jack blurted out the words hurriedly.

Kildare gave a jump.

Drake gripped the boy by the shoulder.

"What are you saying, you little fool?" he said harshly.

"What do you know about it?"

"Let him explain himself, Drake," said Kildare quietly. "He'd hardly play the fool now, I think, over a matter like this."

"Of course I wouldn't!" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

"It was a hoax, and I can prove it!"

"How so?"

"The wire was sent by Pedlar Peter, and not by your young brother at all."

"Are you dreaming?"

"No." He was bribed to go and send it, by Monteith and Sleath."

Kildare's brow grew very stern.

"It cannot be!" he exclaimed. "It is impossible! And if it was, how could you possibly know anything about it?"

"Because I heard them plotting it."

"I don't know what to make of this, Blake; but tell me this—have you anything but your bare word for all this? Quick, now!"

"Yes!" cried Blake triumphantly. "Look here, if I prove to you that I knew eight days ago that this telegram was coming, will that prove to you that it is a hoax, and that I really heard those beasts planning it?"

"Yes, of course; but you cannot do it."

"Yes, I can. That paper I gave you yesterday week—just you read it, and then you'll see."

Kildare, looking dazed, mechanically unlocked the drawer in his desk, and took out the sealed envelope.

"Open it," said Blake. "I won't touch it. See for yourself."

Kildare tore the envelope open, and drew out the paper, and unfolded it. His expression was strange as he read the document, the joint production of the three denizens of

Study No. 6. He finished reading it, and passed it silently to Drake.

Drake read it, and handed it back to him.

"This hasn't been out of your hands, Kildare?"

"No. The drawer hasn't been unlocked since I put it in there."

"Then that's proof positive that what the youngster says is true, and that he knew last Friday that this telegram was coming to-day. That proves that the telegram is not from your young brother, but is a hoax."

Kildare bowed his head.

"It seems certain."

"It is certain," said Drake warmly. "By Jove, the rascals ought to be shown up! Let's go and read this paper to everyone on the ground."

"No, no."

"But you know now that the wire was a hoax?"

"Yes," said Kildare, "and a cruel hoax. I hope Monteith will never feel as I felt when I read it." His eyes were dim for a moment. "But the relief is like new life to me, Drake. The dad isn't ill at all. It's a humbug. And I'm going to stay for the match, of course. I've already wired in reply to this, but that can't be helped. I'll send another explaining that there has been a mistake."

"But Monteith," exclaimed Drake hotly—"isn't he to be shown up?"

"It would be a horrible disgrace," said the captain quietly. "It's better not, Drake. Feeling between the two houses is bad enough now, and we don't want to do anything to make it worse. Besides, how could we prove it? I dare say he would have a good defence to make, and there's no way of actually proving his guilt."

"But isn't he to be punished at all?"

"Yes," said Kildare tranquilly. "He will be disappointed by the failure of his plot, and he's going to have the biggest licking at footer that he ever dreamed about."

"By Jove, Kildare, that's the tune! We'll whip them out of their boots at footer, and that will be revenge enough, after he had counted upon a certain victory."

"That's the idea, Drake."

"But what about the secret? How can it be kept with three youngsters knowing it?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "Haven't we kept it for eight days, and can't we go on keeping it? Eh, what?"

Kildare smiled.

"I trust to your discretion, Blake," he said, "and to that of your friends. Tell them so. Nothing must be said."

"If they say a word," said Blake, "I'll knock their nappers together. But they won't."

And he left the study, to tell the good news far and wide that Kildare was not going after all—news which was received with incredulity at first.

"Oh, all right, wait and see!" said Blake, with a superior smile. "The wire was a mistake, and I've given Kildare my advice about it, and he's going to stay."

"Rats!" said Figgins & Co., together. "Stuff! Bosh!"

"Wait and see!"

The sight of Kildare walking down to the field with Drake, confirmed Blake's news. The captain of St. Jim's wore his old cheerful air, and he was heard to explain that the wire was a mistake. Monteith, hardly able to believe his eyes, came over to ascertain, trying not very successfully to conceal his rage and uneasiness.

"So you're not going, Kildare?" he said casually.

Kildare fixed his eyes upon the prefect with a glance that made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

"No," said the captain. "I find that the telegram was a mistake."

Monteith asked no further questions.

How Kildare could have discovered that the telegram was a "mistake," passed his power of comprehension; but he dared not inquire further. Something in Kildare's look seemed to hint that the captain knew the truth, and Monteith's glance dropped before those clear, steady blue eyes. He went back to his own men with the news.

It was close upon the time for the kick-off now. Dr. Holmes, with a bevy of fair visitors, had taken up his place, and the ropes were lined all round two or three deep.

The two teams turned out in their house colours, and Blake and his comrades cheered the scarlet of the School House, while the Rats yelled themselves hoarse in favour of the New House blue.

Monteith and his men looked very fit, but the New House captain's heart was burning with fury and chagrin.

His scheme had somehow gone wrong, and the foe he had counted upon tricking away from the field was there at the head of his men, with a more than usually determined expression upon his frank, handsome face.

The match upon which the prefect had counted as a certain

victory, was likely to be a hard tussle, with at least two chances to one of a crushing defeat.

That was the end of his hopes of making the New House sock-house at St. Jim's, and that was the net result of his treachery and plotting.

And the consciousness that he more than deserved the worst that could befall him was far from consoling to the disappointed and enraged rascal.

The two captains tossed for goals, and Monteith named the coin. The School House kicked off, and the great game commenced.

Needless to say, it was watched with breathless interest by the partisans of both sides. Every run, every kick, every bit of good play, and a good many bits of bad play, were cheered to the echo by the spectators, especially the juniors.

And what a roar went up from the youthful section of the School House when Kildare going through the New House defence like a knife through cheese, scored the first goal for his side!

The cheering was terrific!

Likewise terrific was the shouting when Monteith brought the leather up to the School House goal, and slammed it some.

It was the New House turn to roar, and they did it with right goodwill.

"We'll lick you yet, School House!" yelled Figgins.

"Rats!" retorted Blake. "We are going to walk over you! That's right, Kildare, go for 'em! Now, then, play the game, New House!"

"Sock 'em, New House!"

"Sock into 'em, New House!"

"Well played! Well played!"

"Kicked, sir, kicked!"

"Goal!"

"Goal!"

The frenzied roar greeted the second goal by the School House.

The whistle went for half-time with the School House two to one.

The brief interval was spent by Rats and Kids in hurling taunts and defiance and chaff at one another, and those who had brought their pea-shooters on the ground had a busy time. Then the teams came up to time again, greeted by ringing cheers.

The ball was kicked off by the New House, and at it the rivals went with a will.

But as the second half progressed, the New House side could be seen to be much more winded and fatigued than their opponents.

And the School House, when they perceived that their adversaries were weakening, pressed the fighting harder than ever, and soon the tussle was wholly in the New House half.

And again the School House roared as Kildare kicked his second goal, the third taken by the side, and the chums of Study No. 6 grew almost black in the face with shouting.

"Three to one!" yelled Blake, "Buck up, School House!"

And they did buck up!

They fairly rushed their opponents off the ground, and seemed to have taken possession of the ball for good.

Again it went into the goal, from Drake's foot, and the School House were four up.

It was getting towards time now, but the victorious side were not done. Almost on the stroke, Kildare sent the ball in again, and a frenzied roar greeted the "hat trick," performed by the popular captain of St. Jim's.

Then the whistle went, and the spectators swarmed over the field.

And now the voices of the New House were silent, while the stentorian tones of Blake and his house-fellows acclaimed the victory of the School House by five goals to one.

It was indeed, a glorious victory, and Kildare deserved the guard of honour, composed of all the boys of his house, which marched him back to the School House in triumph.

So ended the great house match.

Of the bogus telegram nothing more was heard. Kildare was determined that nothing should be said, and Monteith was left to his conscience. The juniors kept the secret well. The victory at the house match decided the supremacy of the School House—at least, in the opinion of Study No. 6; but that conclusion was vigorously disputed by Figgins & Co.

But of the rival houses, and of their fun, feuds, and frolics, we hope to say more when we write of the further adventures of Jack Blake, of St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Another story of Jack Blake, by Charles Hamilton, the week after next. A splendid school tale, "Step by Step," next Saturday in our Christmas Number.)



Or, The Unteds of Kingswood College.

By H. CLARKE HOOK.

Senator K. Connell

As usual, the boys crowded out into the grounds directly, dinner was over, and stood in little groups, discussing the hundred-and-one things that go to make up life at a great college like Kingswood. The breeze was chilly, but the sun was warm, and the boys glanced at the discoloured old hands of the tower clock, a hundred feet and more above them, with unfriendly glances. It seemed much too fine an afternoon to spend in class-rooms, however light and lofty.

They will tell you at Kingswood that it is always much finer on school afternoons than on half-holidays. They will not attempt to explain why it is, but Aristotle himself would not be able to convince them that it is not so. He or anyone else might as well have tried to convince Kingswood chaps that Kingswood is not the best college in Britain.

"More slogging!" muttered Fred, watching the hands of the clock gradually approach the hour at which the college bell would ring once again. "Hate slogging when I don't want to, and I dislike it when I do."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Vic, in his easy, happy-go-lucky way. "Swot has its drawbacks. What say you, Smythe?"

"Telegram for you, Master Connell," cut in Watson's cheerful voice. "Ope it's good luck, sir; I does, really!"

"Thanks, Cauliflower!" replied Chris, tearing open the little buff-coloured envelope a trifle nervously. "Hallo!"

"From some beastly Yankee howler friend of Connell's, I expect," said Smythe in a loud aside. "Americans always telegraph, because they write such beastly common hands! Has your father stolen any more millions of dollars, Connell?"

"Don't know, partner. Doesn't say anything about it here."

"Much too frightened of quod, I suppose. If my father had made his millions and millions like yours has made his miserable few dollars, I wouldn't spend a halfpenny of it! I'd—"

"Oh, dry up!" exclaimed Vic. "You are too clever for this world. Anything the matter, Yank!"

"No, partner; only it seems the gov'nor is coming to Kingswood. The wire runs: 'Shall arrive by the three train. Meet me. Friend friends. CONNELL.'"

"Good!" exclaimed Vic. "You remember Mr. Connell, Fred? Scissors! But you haven't asked us to come with you yet. Sorry, old man!"

"Guess there's no need to ask. Such things are fairish well settled where the Unteds are concerned. Say, Croft, we three are going to meet my gov'nor this afternoon—at once, in fact, if we can get leave. Care to come? There's bound to be a slap-up dinner, and I shouldn't be surprised if he took us over to Molton Theatre afterwards. Not a bad sort, the gov'nor."

"Thanks, Connell!" said Croft, flushing slightly. "I'd like to come. What's the matter, Smythe?"

The aristocratic youngster, whose father had once risen to the admiration-compelling heights of a successful pawnbroker, gazed at the senior in open-mouthed amazement. Having a well-spread mouth, Smythe presented a peculiar appearance, and the little group of youngsters laughed. Smythe pulled himself together. One of his greatest ambitions in life was to be seen lolling out of a box at a theatre, gazing in kindly contempt at the poor wretches in the stalls and pit below him. It was a spectacle he was in the habit of dreaming about.

"If—if your father takes you to Molton Theatre, will he have a box, Connell?" he asked.

"I guess so!"

It was then that the unhappy Smythe looked the picture