

Long School Tale by Chas. Hamilton.

PLUCK

MUTINY AT ST. JIM'S.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.

STOLEN GOLD.

An Adventure Tale. By H. CLARKE HOOK.

101



DONE! FOUR PAIRS OF EYES GAZED VACANTLY ON THE CONTENTS OF THE BOX. FOUR GASPS OF UTTER DISMAY FLOATED THROUGH NO. 6 STUDY, THEIR TUCK HAD VANISHED! (See page 12.)

EVERY SATURDAY.

DETECTIVE

ONE PENNY.

[VOL. 5, No. 120, NEW SERIES.]

The First Long, Complete School Story.

MUTINY AT ST. JIM'S

The Adventures of Jack Blake and Figgins & Co.

A Splendid SCHOOL TALE,

By

CHAS. HAMILTON.



CHAPTER I.

The Captain's Offer.

ERIC KILDARE, captain of St. Jim's, came down the steps of the School House with a shade upon his usually sunny face. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then, with his quick, springy stride, crossed the quadrangle towards the New House.

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

"Oh, he's going over to the New House!" said Herries, looking out. "Going over to see cad Monteith about the footer, I suppose. Enough to make him look worried, going to interview that pig in his den."

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

"Oh, what rot!" said Blake emphatically. "What do we want with the New House bouncers in the first eleven for? They chose to stick out of their own accord. We can do without 'em. Haven't we won a big match with a wholly School House side, without a solitary New House chum in it at all?"

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

"Still—"
 "If I were captain of St. Jim's," said Blake, thumping the table to lend additional emphasis

to his statement, "I'd never let the bouncer play for the school again."

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

And the indignant chief of the School House juniors subsided.

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

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

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

"Come in!" called out the prefect, as Kildare knocked. And the captain of St. Jim's entered James Monteith's study.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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"We needn't go into that—"

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

Monteith's manner was the reverse of conciliatory. But here Baker, one of the New House seniors, and formerly outside-right in the first eleven, chimed in quickly.

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

Monteith bit his lip. He never could depend upon Baker to back him up in all his measures. Baker was loyal to his house, but he did not forget, like Monteith, that the New House was only a part of St. Jim's, and that to the school as a whole his loyalty was also due.

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

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

"Hear, hear!" said Webb, the treasurer of the school clubs. "I'm sure you agree with that, Monty."

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

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Kildare. "I never agree that or waited it. In turning out of the team players I considered not up to the mark, I only exercised my unquestioned right as captain of the eleven. It is unfortunate that they happened to be all New House chaps—"

"Very unfortunate!" sneered Monteith.

"But I found no fault with you or Baker. You resigned of your own accord."

"Yes, as a protest."

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

"That's a matter of opinion."

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

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

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

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

"I have discussed the matter with my own side," said the captain of St. Jim's, "and we've made up our mind to make as big a concession as can be made without endangering the matches."

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

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

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

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

But Kildare shook his head.

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

"Then—" began Monteith hotly.

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

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

"Yourself, Baker, Webb, and Gray."

Monteith was about to reply with a refusal, but he paused. He saw by the faces of his companions that they were willing to accept the compromise offered by the captain of

all St. Jim's, and he was himself surprised by the extent of Kildare's concession.

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

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

Kildare rose.

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

"Very well."

And Kildare, with a pleasant nod, quitted the study. The New House seniors looked at one another.

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

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

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

"My sentiments exactly," agreed Webb.

"As I mine," added Gray.

Monteith nodded shortly.

"Very well as you seem to be agreed, we'll take the offer," he said. "But you know, I don't trust Kildare, and I don't suppose this will last matters right."

"Well, you know, I always said you did Kildare injustice," remarked Baker. "His position isn't an easy one, and—"

"Well, we accept the offer," interrupted Monteith. "That's settled. I'll send him a note over by Figgins this evening."

The seniors, greatly pleased with the turn affairs had taken, quitted the room, discussing the Headland match, which was coming off next day. Only Sefton remained, with Monteith. Sefton had been Monteith's special club, since Lucas Sleath had been expelled from St. Jim's. He looked inquiringly at the prefect.

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

Monteith smiled in his sour way.

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

By which the reader will see that Kildare had very little cause for the satisfaction he felt as he went back to the School House.

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins Makes Discoveries.

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

They had a grievance. It was not often that the rival houses of St. Jim's agreed upon anything, seldom, indeed, that they saw eye to eye in any matter whatsoever. But upon this point the juniors of the School House were quite in accordance with the New House youngsters, and the New House youngsters admitted that, for once in their lives, the School House chaps had taken a proper stand.

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

"The School shop will, in future, only be open between the hours of 11 and 12 a.m. and 4.30 and 5 p.m.—By order."
Now, a disinterested outsider might have imagined that any average schoolboy could have managed to "blow" a sufficient quantity of pocket-money in the school tuck-shop, if he devoted an hour in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon, to that object. And that between eleven and twelve in the morning and half past four and six in the afternoon, he could have done enough damage to his digestion by cramming unnecessary fats, and consuming unnecessary ginger-pop, to satisfy any ordinary mortal.

But these views were scouted by the youngsters concerned. It was all very well to say that the new regulations were made by the Head for their good, and that they would be all

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A Tale of Spies, the Turko & Co.,
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"THE RED RIVER MYSTERY,"
A Tale of Captain Frank
Ferry, Detective.

IN "PLUCK" 12



Baker slowly and methodically tore the document through from end to end, while looks of amazement came over the faces of the boys standing round.

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the better for getting out of the habit of indiscriminate stuffing at all odd moments. It was a question of liberty, of immemorial privilege, and the juniors felt the restriction very keenly.

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

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

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

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

It was proposed to send a round-rob to the doctor, signed by all the names in the Lower Forms of both houses. A meeting of School House and New House was called to discuss the project. The meeting unfortunately ended in a fight, and nothing came of it; but a varied crop of swollen noses, black eyes, and thick ears.

Then a genius proposed that the juniors should show their indignation by boycotting the tuck-shop altogether, and confining themselves strictly to the fare provided by the school—a proposition that was greeted with howls of derision. Still, it was agreed that something ought to be done, though nobody was quite clear as to what form that "something" should take.

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

"You see," said the great Figgins, to the dutiful Co., "we've got to do something. We are cocks of the walk in the New House, and the chaps naturally look to us to lead

them. It's a question of the honour and dignity of the Lower Forms, you know."

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

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

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

"Well, he is a pig!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Right!" assented Figg. "There are pigs, and pigs, but of all the pigs I ever knew, Monteith is about the—Hallo, Monteith!"

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

"What were you saying, Figgins?"

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

Kerr and Wynn giggled, and Monteith scowled. "I want you, Figgins," said Monteith. "Take this note over to Kildare, in the School House. There is no reply."

"Right you are!" said Figgins cheerfully.

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

And he walked away.

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

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IN "PLUCK" 1st

"That won't take long."

And Figgins put on his cap and left the New House. It did not take him long to reach Kildare's study in the School House, and deliver Monteith's note.

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

Figgins went out of the study and closed the door. Then he did not immediately quit the School House. There seemed to be no one about, as he glanced up and down the corridor and up the stairs. He remembered a certain visit which Jack Blake had paid to his study once upon a time, and the thought came into his head that now was a rare opportunity of returning the compliment.

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

"Mind Figgins doesn't get on the scent, Blake, that's all," said the voice of Herries.

Figgins grinned. Under ordinary circumstances Figgins would no more have listened to a private conversation than he would have picked a pocket, but now he regarded himself as a scout in the enemy's camp, and fully entitled to learn all he could of their plans. So he halted outside the door of Study No. 6, and stood there quietly.

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

Again the unseen Figgys grinned.

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

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

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

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

"Bwavo!" said Herries.

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

Figgins breathed hard.

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

"Yes; it's really a nobby ideah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally nobby."

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

"I should feel honoured to stand twat," interposed D'Arcy.

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

"Agreed."

"But the difficult question is, to get the hamper to the school. You know hampers ain't allowed, except on the first day of terms. It would have to be delivered in the usual way, and the authorities would confiscate it at once. That's no good. We don't want to blow three quid and not get a single tartlet for the money."

"Crums, no!"

"That's where the wisdom of your uncle comes out strong," said Blake, with a superior smile. "Your Uncle Blake is a big chief. I've thought of a plan for getting the hamper to the School House, and delivered in this very study, without any soul within the walls of St. Jim's being the wiser."

"Bravo!"

"The first step," said Blake, "was to take a deep interest

in the school workshop, and in Mr. Merton's carpenter class."

The chums stared at him.

"Off your rooker?" asked Dig politely.

"Just you listen, my son, and don't pass any rude remarks. In the short space of a quarter of an hour, I succeeded in impressing Mr. Merton with the belief that I was the most enthusiastic amateur carpenter that ever chipped a plank in the school workshop."

"What's the good of that?"

"Only this, that I've got a permit to leave the school at five to Jones's, in Rylcombe, the shop that supplies the carpentry things, and look over his tool-chests, and buy one I decide that I'd like to."

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

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

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

"Ripping!" cried Herries.

"Spring!" gasped Dig.

"Bwavo!" chortled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, moderate your giddy transports!" exclaimed Blake.

"Of course the idea's a good one, or I shouldn't have thought of it."

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

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

"Ripping!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Co. listened eagerly as he related what he had discovered. Then three heads were put earnestly together, and the New House juniors plotted a plot.

CHAPTER 3:

The Headland Match

"MY aunt Georgiana," exclaimed Blake, stopping before the notice-board in the hall the next morning, "here's news!"

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

"Read for yourself, my son."

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

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

But an alteration had now been made. The eleven to meet Headland contained four names from the New House. The list read off as follows:

Rushden; Gray, Knox, Webb, Darrell, Berry, Drake, Morgan, Kildare, Monteith, Baker.

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

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

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

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

"If Kildare had taken my advice—" went on Blake.

"What a pity he didn't!" sniggered Percy Mellish.

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

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

Whereupon Percy said no more, and the chums of No. 6

quietly continued to discuss the situation with indignant emphasis until a senior appeared on the scene, when they all scuttled away.

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

Kildare's position was a difficult one, and few of the fellows made full allowance for its difficulty.

The dream of the captain was to get the two houses to pull heartily together for the good of the school; but it was a dream difficult of realisation. He kept steadily at it, but he found it a very uphill task.

He saw very clearly that it was not satisfactory for only one house to be represented in the college eleven, even if they could win a fixture and have no success at all. They had certainly pulled off some very creditable successes, but fortune had favoured them so far. Kildare had thought a great deal about the matter, and the olive-branch to the New House had been the result. In this the more thoughtful of the School House seniors were with him.

But the majority were not thoughtful, and though they did not dispute the will of their captain, who was indeed the idol of the School House, they shook their heads solemnly over his new decision, and predicted that it would lead to a defeat.

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

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

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

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

Study No. 6 marched down arm-in-arm, prepared to do battle with Figgins & Co. for the best place at the races; but the lanky form of Figgins was conspicuous by its absence. Nor was the sturdy form of Kerr, nor the Falstaffian figure of Paddy Wynn to be seen.

"Can't understand this," said Blake. "Where are Figgins & Co.? Thought they'd be on the ground pretty early."

"I've explained, perhaps," hazarded Herries.

"But it's more likely up to some game!"

"I say, they can't be on the track of the grub, can they?" Blake shook his head.

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

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

Well, the thought crossed my mind," said Herries.

"Figgys is such an artful dodger, and the box is due this afternoon, you know. But I suppose it's all right."

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

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

Blake's grand idea had been carried out without a hitch so far. He had visited Jones's in the village, and effected the purchase of a great box, with the name, trade, and address of Jones's full as inscribed in big, black stencilled letters on the outside. He had taken that box to the confectioner's, and laid in a supply of all kinds of edibles, sufficient to fill the box to the brim, and to account for the whole of the three sovereigns devoted to the purpose.

That box the confectioner had agreed to send by the local

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, they gave their attention to the football field.

Headland arrived in their brake, and were accorded a warm welcome by the Saints. Headland were not by any means the most formidable opponents St. Jim's met, and Kildare had been wise to try the new team with them, before committing the fate of the Mexborough Town match to it.

There was a hoarse cheer as the visitors streamed into the field. They looked very fit, but the Saints had little doubt that the home team would come out victorious, if they pulled together. That was the question. Could the New House fellows be relied upon to back up the captain like his own side?

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

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

The visitors won the toss, and it fell to the Saints to kick off, which they did against a keen wind. The afternoon was fine, though cold. Kildare kicked off, and the game commenced.

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

What they saw first was the visitors coming down with the wind, in a fine rush for the home goal. Then Blake and Study No. 6 shouted:

"Back up, Saint!"

"Play up!"

"Play up!"

Whether encouraged by the attention of Study No. 6 or not, the Saints certainly did play up, and the Headland rush was stopped, and the ball went to midfield from Gray's foot. It came down right to Monteith, who was on it like lightning. The New House prefect went through the Headlanders like a shot.

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

"Good old New House!"

Blake snuffed.

"If Monteith takes that goal," he said, "I'll say, 'Good old New House!' but he won't, my sons—he won't! Why doesn't he pass?"

Even as Blake spoke Monteith was checked by a Headland back; but he passed the ball to Kildare in time, and the captain of St. Jim's slammed it home.

There was a roar.

"Goal!"

Things were looking well for St. Jim's. With the wind in their faces they had scored a goal in the first ten minutes. But that success acted as a spur to the Headland team, and when they kicked off again they followed it up with a desperate attack. The tussle was hard and sharp.

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

Two home forwards were on the ball in a moment, while Darrel was running up. It was a moment of tussle and wild excitement, and what followed happened like a flash. Darrel, sheltered by a Headland forward, roared and fell against Monteith, who went staggering. But for that unfortunate chance Monteith would have got the ball away. As it was, Kildare, who was a second behind him, captured it and took it up the field. Monteith, before he could regain his balance, went over in the rush that followed, and it swept past him, and left him gasping on the grass.

No one was looking at him as he slowly rose, his face white with fury. Every glance was following the game, sweeping on roislessly towards the Headland goal. Kildare had the ball, and the other forwards were backing him up well. With a beautiful exhibition of passing they bore it through the Headland defence, and then Drake, contriving to Kildare at the psychological moment, the Saint's skipper sent the ball in with a shot that gave the goalie not the ghost of a chance.

St. Jim's roared over the second goal. "But look at Monteith!" muttered Blake. The New House prefect was white with rage, and his eyes were burning. Darrel, glancing at him, remembered the tumble in the struggle for the ball, which had slipped his memory in the excitement of what followed.

"Sorry, Monteith!" he said, as the players came back to the centre of the field—"sorry I was shoved against you!" "It's a lie!" said Monteith thickly—"it's a lie, and you know it! You did it on purpose!"

Darrel stared at him. "Don't be a fool!" he said shortly. "Do you know what you're talking about?" "Yes, I do; and I know that it wasn't an accident made you shove me off the ball and give it to Kildare!" Kildare caught those words, and his eyes flashed.

"Monteith!" The prefect glared at him. "Well, what have you got to say?" "I've got this to say, that you'd better hold your tongue!" "I shall say what I think, and—"

"Line up! Silence there!" The prefect lined up with the rest, but his face was very black. To his mean, suspicious mind it appeared very probable. To his mean, suspicious mind it appeared very probable events, it suited him to believe it. His heart was burning with passionate anger as the game resumed, and he was in a mood for anything—anything but good play and backing up Kildare.

Kildare noticed that he was playing slackly now, and his eye flashed, but he said nothing. But presently a Headland rush came right through the Saints, and Monteith, who had a chance to get the ball, let it pass him.

"Play up, Monteith!" cried Kildare. The prefect gave him a savage look. Kildare gritted his teeth; it came into his mind that the prefect was slacking on purpose, that this was Monteith's revenge for his supposed injury.

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

The enemy were rushing upon him; Kildare stood ready to receive the pass, and for a moment it seemed that the prefect would send him the ball as he expected.

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

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

For a moment Kildare quivered with anger. But it was no time for recrimination then.

The game had to be saved; Monteith's bad play, or rather treachery, to be retrieved. But that was impossible, as it proved; the advantage given to the Headlanders was well improved by them, and a couple of minutes later the ball was in the home net.

Then the whistle went for half-time, and both teams trooped off for a much-needed rest. In the home dressing-room in the pavilion Kildare strode up to Monteith.

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

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

Monteith sneered. "What fault do you find with my play?" "You deliberately gave the ball to the Headlanders and threw away that goal."

"It's a lie!" "The veins stood out on Kildare's forehead, but with a mighty effort he controlled himself. "I appeal to the team," he cried, looking round.

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

The New House fellows were silent. They were not inclined to think badly of their chief, nor to bear witness against him.

But the School House players backed up Darrel's words. "We all saw it," cried Rushton.

"Did you all see Darrel trip me up, too, so as to let Kildare get the ball?" sneered the New House prefect.

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

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

Gray hesitated.

"Well, it looked like it," he said. "But I don't think Darrel would do that, Monty."

"Only a rotten cad would bring such an accusation!" exclaimed Kildare. "There's not a word of truth in it. Darrel had no intention of doing anything of the kind."

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

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

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

Gray, Webb, and Baker looked at each other dubiously. To desert their chief at such a moment was difficult, but to desert the school eleven in the middle of a hard fought match appeared harder.

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

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

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

There was no time for further discussion. The matter dropped just where it was, and the whole team turned out for the second half. But if ever a football team was in a state of mind unfit for winning a victory, it was the St. Jim's first eleven at that moment.

CHAPTER 4.

A Capture from the Enemy.

WHILE the first half of the Headland match was being fought on the football ground at St. Jim's, Figgins & Co. were not idle. Blake had remarked the absence of the boys, but he little dreamed that they were so engaged while he and his chums were watching the football. And as Figgins & Co. were busy at this time, we will now, with their permission, leave the football-field for a while and follow their adventures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The wheeze can't fail," said Figgins seriously. "Old Crabbe the carrier always comes along at the same time in the afternoon. He always stops at the Jolly Farmer for his ale as regularly as clock-work, and stays in there at least half an hour. He leaves his cart in the lane, and old Bones, his boss, wouldn't move for anything short of an earthquake. What's to prevent us from scooping the loot?"

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

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

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

The Jolly Farmer was an alehouse at the cross-roads half-way between the school and the village. The boys soon came in sight of it.

"Whoa! Whoa! I say, drat 'e!" It was a well-known voice.

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

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

Old Crabb the carrier was a well-known character in those parts. He was a short-tempered old fellow, and had an especial dislike for boys of all sorts and kinds, he hated all boys in general, and the St. Jim's boys in particular. His private opinion, which he expressed frequently in the parlour of the Jolly Farmer, was that all boys ought to be partially extinguished at an early age. And, indeed, Crabb had had more than one skirmish with the boys of St. Jim's, and had come off second best.

"There he is," said Figgins, "as large as life, and twice as natural. Don't let him see you, chaps, or he'll smell a mouse. He's always ratty when a St. Jim's chap is around." The trio lay close, watching the carrier through the hedge. Crabb drew his ancient horse to a halt, and stopped down, leaving the reins carelessly aside. The old horse could be ridden. Crabb had stopped in the same place, at the same time in the afternoon, for many a year now, and if he had not stopped there, the horse would have been astonished.

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

"Quiet does it!" whispered Figgins.

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

Figgins's eyes glistened as he saw it.

"The loot was at his feet."

"Got it!" muttered Kerr.

"Yes, stand ready to take it. It's beastly heavy."

"All the better," murmured Fatty Wynn. "All the more grab in."

Figgins let down the tail-board and shoved the box over. Kerr and Wynn received it, and, carrying it between them, rushed it away from the spot.

Figgins glanced at the tail-board and jumped out of the cart.

Wynn followed his comrades.

Kerr and Wynn had the box on the other side of the hedge and were unloading.

There Figgins joined them.

There was no sign of the carrier.

He was safe for half an hour inside the hospitable doors of the Jolly Farmer.

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

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

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

"I say, the sooner we're off the scene the better," said

Kerr. "This is where we do the vanishing trick. We don't want to be spotted with the plunder."

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

Kerr and Wynn stared.

"What are you driving at, Figg?"

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

"Oh, I see!"

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

"There is."

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

"Of course it may."

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

"They is—I mean they are."

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

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

"Come along, then."

They carried the box, on the inner side of the hedge, to some distance, and then set it down again. The weight was considerable and the size awkward.

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

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

"Yes, here they are."

"Hand them over."

Figgins soon had the box open. The eyes of the Co. glistened at the sight of the array of paper bags crammed with edibles within.

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

"But—"

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

"But—"

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

They set to work without further questions. Figg was chief, and Figg knew best. At all events, he had his way.

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He had set down the box close to a huge hollow tree, a well-known spot to the boys of St. Jim's. The contents of the box were transferred to the space inside the big trunk, which was large enough to hold twice as much. The box was soon empty.

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

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

"Now, give me a hand."

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

Even if he had not missed the box, he could not fail to recognise it when he stopped. The trio took cover behind a hedge close at hand, and watched and waited. The crack of the carrier's whip came along the road.

"He's coming!" whispered Figgins.

The carrier's cart came into view. The old horse was plodding steadily on, and Crabb was cracking his whip to induce it to "buck up" a little. The chums watched the carrier breathlessly.

"Whoa! Whoa there, I tell 'e!"

Willingly enough the old horse came to a halt. Crabb had caught sight of the box in the road. He stared at it over his horse's ears in blank amazement. It was certainly a peculiar place for such a box to be in, and at the second glance Crabb recognised it as the one he had supposed to be in the cart behind him. He turned his head, and looked into the covered cart.

On coming out of the Jolly Farmer he had mounted to his seat and driven off without thinking of looking among the contents of the cart. Now, for the first time, he saw that the box was missing. His gaze returned to the box in the road. The absolutely idiotic bewilderment depicted upon his face made the hidden boys choke with suppressed laughter.

For some minutes the old carrier sat there, his head turning slowly, from the interior of the cart to the box in the road, and back again from the box to the cart. Figgins nearly shrieked; Kerr had buried his face in the grass, and Fatty Wynn stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth. The three were convulsed.

"It's ghostes, that's what it ez!" murmured Crabb.

"Ghostes, in broad daylight!"

Figgins could contain himself no longer. He let out a yell that rang over the fields, and Crabb gave a jump. Figgins, having thus given himself away, the chums no longer restrained their mirth, and a shout went up which soon enlightened Crabb as to the real nature of the "ghostes" which had shifted the box.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crabb scowled blackly at the three figures that emerged from the hedge, almost doubled up with laughter.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you took that theer box out'er my cart while I was at the Jolly Farmer, did you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

Crabb jumped down into the road, his long whip whirling in a businesslike way, and Figgins & Co. promptly bolted.

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

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he trilled. "How did you like the ale at the Jolly Farmer?"

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

Figgins had closed it tightly, and restored the lock to its former appearance, and, as the nails held the lid firmly in place, the carrier could not see that it had been tampered with. His only idea was that the juniors had been having a "lark" with him, but he was greatly relieved at regaining possession of the box. He reflected that they might have left him to go on to the school without it, and then he would have been in trouble. This reflection calmed him somewhat, and his face relaxed as he drove on.

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

"That's all right!" exclaimed Figgins. "Blake will get

the box, but he won't get the grub. They're expecting a big feed in Study 6, but if they eat what's inside that box—well, I hope they'll enjoy it."

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

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

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

"Hallo, listen!"

It was a clear whistle from the direction of St. Jim's. Figgins looked at his watch.

"That's for the second half!" he exclaimed. "Come on, we shan't lose the match, after all."

They raced on, and a few minutes later were mingling with the crowd on the football ground. The second half of the eventful match between St. Jim's and Headland College had just commenced, and Figgins & Co. were glad to be in time for it.

CHAPTER 5.

The Second Half—Ordered Off the Field.

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

Kildare, though he tried to recover his usual calmness, could not quite banish the cloud from his brow, while Monteith made no effort to hide his temper. The others were looking more or less disturbed and anxious, too. Blake at once spotted the looks of the team and commented upon it.

"Something wrong there, is it?" he supposed. "Blake is down on Monteith for chucking that goal-away; and he did chuck it away, my sons, as plain as anything."

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

Blake turned his head and saw Figgins. The Co., as usual, were at their leader's heels.

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

Figgins grinned.

"We've been out on business," he said. "Sorter speculation, and it's turned out well."

Blake looked at him suspiciously.

"What tricks have you been up to?"

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

"Honest Injun?"

"Of course; we're going to bar the tuck-shop, since their new giddy regulations, and we have laid in a supply of tummy. See? We're going to have a big feed in the common-room in the New House—all our juniors and you four, if you'll come."

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

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

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

"You bet!" said Herries and Digby together.

"Wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Weally honahed, deah boys!"

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

"Where did you get it?"

"It comes from Blycombe."

"But suppose they spot it coming in—"

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

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

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

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

"Right, you are. I really think you'll like the feed. Just the things you like, you know; you might have selected them yourself," said Figgins.

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

All eyes immediately turned to the field again. The St. Jim's forwards were getting away finely, and the visitors' goal was besieged.

The wind was now in favour of the Saints, and as they had taken two goals to one with it against them, they were naturally expected to walk over the Headlanders now. But the crowd soon perceived that the second half was to be far from a walk-over.

The St. Jim's attack was a fine one, but there was a weak spot in the line, and that was at inside-right. Monteith was in too savage a temper to play up well. One weak spot was enough for the Headlanders, and soon the backs succeeded in clearing, and the tussle went to mid-field again.

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

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

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

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

"What you don't know about footer, Blake, would fill an encyclopedia," replied Figgins. "Monteith's all right if they give him a chance."

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

"You go and eat coke!"

Figgins & Co. naturally stood up for their house-prefect against School House criticism, but as the game wore on they themselves began to look serious. Either Monteith was deliberately slacking, or his bad temper spoiled his form. At all events, he was of very little use to his side. The Headland attack swept up to the home goal, against the wind, and the St. Jim's players had to fall back to defend their citadel. But the backs put their "beef" into it, and the Headlanders did not succeed in scoring, and the ball went on being passed from players, and dropped just at Monteith's feet. The prefect snatched it up, and in a few seconds a Headlander would have had it; but in the nick of time Darrel rushed up, and, showing Monteith unceremoniously aside, sent the ball up the field with a powerful kick.

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

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

The unexpected blow made Darrel reel.

Phip! went the referee's whistle. The game stopped.

Kildare strode towards Monteith, his eyes on fire.

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

Keeney made an imperious gesture to the prefect.

"Get off the field, Monteith!"

"What?"

"Get off the field!"

"I shall not go alone!"

"Get off the field, I tell you!"

Monteith cast a glance at the other New House players.

"Come!" he said. "I told you we should get no fair play here! Come!"

He strode away towards the pavilion. There was a momentary hesitation among the others.

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

Monteith strode away without looking back. Then Gray turned and walked after him. Gray's example was all the others wanted. Baker and Webb followed him with downcast faces.

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

Kildare was pale but calm. He had hardly expected this wholesale desertion by the New House fellows; but, even if he had expected it, he could not have acted otherwise than as he had done. After Monteith's outrageous conduct, it was impossible to allow him to remain on the field.

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

The atmosphere grew silent. What was to become of this extremely peculiar situation they could not guess. No other could the Headland fellows.

It was for Kildare to decide.

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

The referee looked at him inquiringly. Kildare gave a short nod, and the whistle went, and the game continued.

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

Attack, under the circumstances, would have been folly, but there was a chance that, by a careful defence, the home team might keep their goal intact during the remaining twenty minutes of the second half. If so, St. Jim's would win by the goals taken before half-time.

"But they would not do it if Headland could help it."

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

But, great as was the disparity of numbers, the Saints put up a really splendid fight. Kildare, at least, had now only men he could fully rely upon, and who were devoted to him. The wind, too, was now very keen, and it was in the faces of the Headlanders. And Rusden in goal was a mighty keeper.

And so, for a time at least, the rushes of the visitors were checked, and though the struggle was now wholly in the home half, the goal long remained intact.

At last, however, a lightning shot from the Headland skipper found the net, and the teams had equalised. There were five minutes more to play. And the St. Jim's boys longed for Father Time to hurry up a little and end their suspense. For it seemed impossible for Kildare and his men to hold the Headlanders so long.

In the excitement of the moment the deserters were forgotten.

Monteith had walked away straight to the New House, and Gray, after a few minutes, had followed him.

Webb and Baker remained, looking on, and looking about the most woebegone fellows at St. Jim's. They had not had time to think before acting, and had followed their accustomed leader. But their feelings were not to be envied as they stood by and watched their comrades gallantly fighting a losing battle.

The Headland attack was growing desperate. But still Kildare and his men held their ground, and Rusden, between the posts, was a marvel. He seemed to be all head, hands, or feet, just as the occasion required, and loudly the crowd cheered their splendid goalkeeper at every escape of the home citadel.

Phip!

It was the whistle. The keen suspense was ended. The strain was removed.

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

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

But the New House fellows were mostly silent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Nunno," said Figgins, who had had seen the carrier's cart stop at the gates, and did not wish Blake to make the discovery of what the box contained till after the feed; "but that's all right. We want you to help us get ready for the feed, if you will. It's going to be a big affair, you see, in the common-room, and—"

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

And Study No. 6 marched into the New House with Figgins & Co. in the most amicable way in the world.

CHAPTER 6.

After the Match.

THERE was a gloomy meeting in Kildare's study after the Headland fellows were gone. The captain of St. Jim's was looking and feeling extremely depressed.

His friends were none too cheerful, either, for though what had happened had not more than borne out their anticipations, they realised what a blow it was for

NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE LYNCHCROFT HOUSEKEEPER."
A Tale of Spain, the Twins & Co.,
By H. Clarke Rank.

"THE RED RIVER MYSTERY,"
A Tale of Captain Frank
Berrett, Detective.

IN "PLUCK" ID.

Kildare, and for the fortunes of the college in the football field.

Kildare had gone very far—too far, most of his house thought—to conciliate the other house, and this was the result. Four players had walked off the field in the middle of a game, leaving their side to win or lose as it chanced.

Such a desertion was unpardonable.

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

The school had cut a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the visitors, and that was what worried Kildare as much as anything. He was very sensitive for the honour of St. Jim's. Then there was the Mexborough Town match to be considered. Was it to be played by a wholly School House side?

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

Kildare coloured.

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

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

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

The School House seniors exchanged glances of satisfaction. This was the stand they had long wanted Kildare to take, and now that he had been driven to take it, they knew that he would be firm.

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

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

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

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

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

Kildare looked worried.

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

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

They followed Monteith's lead, as I said, and we ought not to be hard on them. If they stick to Monteith, and stay out of the team of their own accord, we shall have to try and fill their places somehow, though, in that case, I tell you plainly, I don't believe we shall be able to stand up to Mexborough."

"We stood up to Milverton, and they were tough."

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

The others were silent.

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

"But will they?"

"I don't know; but for the sake of the school I hope so." "But, hang it all, you can't make any advances to them!" said Darrel. "There can't be any question of asking them to play."

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

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

"Well, they might do worse than that."

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

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

And so the discussion ended. Meanwhile, Monteith's study over in the New House was the scene of a meeting equally gloomy and a good deal more bitter. After his conduct at the match, the prefect was a little dubious as to the results, but he tried to carry off the matter with a high hand.

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

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

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

Gray, Webb, and Baker looked at one another.

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

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

"Yes, I suppose so."

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

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

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

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

"You speak as if you side with him."

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

Monteith's eyes glittered.

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

Baker shifted uneasily.

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

"But if he does?"

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

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

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

"Will you refuse to play?"

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

"But if you are?"

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

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

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

Monteith looked at Baker.

"And what do you say?"

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

And he quitted the study to avoid further argument.

Monteith scowled darkly.

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

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

CHAPTER 7.
The Feast—And After.

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

The junior common-room presented an unusual aspect. Figgins's study, of course, was not nearly large enough for the purpose, and as all the juniors of the New House were to participate, the common-room was just the place. Blake and his chums had willingly lent a hand in getting the room ready. Tables were arranged in a row, with desks and some boards to take them out, and forms placed in order for the fasteners.

Then the unpacking of the estates had followed. They had been brought into the common-room in a big clothes-basket, having been taken out of the various bags in which they had been brought into the school, in Figgins's study. Figgy did not wish Blake to recognise any of the packages; the School House fellows were to know nothing of the truth until they got home to Study No. 6.

Blake's eyes opened as he surveyed the heaps of edibles produced from the basket and piled on the table. There was enough to feed a small army there. And the things were first-class, too. The puddings and pies were fresh, the tarts new and good, the cakes and biscuits excellent, the mince-tarts luscious. There were bottles of all kinds of harmless wine in goodly array to wash down the solids. There was mince and ginger-pop galore.

Study No. 6 exchanged glances of satisfaction. "I say, Figgy, you're doing this thing in style!" exclaimed Blake. "You are really."

Figgins smiled. "Hope you'll enjoy the feed," he said hospitably. "Oh, no, no, no, that!" answered Blake. "It makes me want I had an appetite like Wynne's."

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

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

"Have you really?" asked Figgins innocently. "How did you get it in?" "Crabb the carrier brought it."

"Not really?" "Yes," said Blake, rather puzzled by the general grin that went round the room. "There's nothing funny in that, is there?"

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House juniors. Blake looked gratified; the greatest of men is not above daffety, and is pleased him to see how his "wheezes" took the New House by storm. But gradually his look changed. It was all very well to laugh, and to laugh again, but surely the joke was not so howlingly comic as it seemed to the New House juniors. They seemed simply unable to leave off laughing. They yelled, they roared, they gurgled, till the tears ran down their cheeks.

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

"Crabb the carrier brought it!" gasped Kerr. "Nobody knows what's inside!" screamed Fatty Wynne. A fresh whoop of laughter went up at that.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Nobody knows what's inside?" "That's the funny part of the wheeze! Nobody knows what's inside!"

And the New House juniors roared, till some of them seemed likely to faint with excess of merriment.

Study No. 6 looked at one another. Their opinion was that they were being "rotted." And they were beginning to look extremely dignified. Figgins saw it, and hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

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

He cast threatening looks on all sides, and gradually the

laughter died away. Yet still, from time to time, some spasm of mirth would pass through the room, and hardly a moment passed without a chuckle being heard.

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

"Opposite to it, you mean," said Fatty W. This hint that the School House might be considered a lunatic asylum nearly led to war on the spot, but Figgins promptly sat on Wynne, and pinned him down till he apologized, which he did very handsomely, so harmony was restored.

When the table was laid, the place of honour at either side of the great Figgins was given to Blake and D'Arcy, and next them sat Dig and Herries.

"And now wire in," said the hospitable Figgins. The juniors were not long in wiring in. They were all hungry after an afternoon in the keen February air, and the feast was really a tempting one. Cold meats of all kinds, fowls, and rabbits, disappeared as if by magic. Pies and puddings galore followed them. Jams and jellies, pastry of all descriptions, filled up any crevices left by what had gone before. The whole was washed down by draughts of lomonade, ginger-beer, red-currant wine, and other innocuous beverages.

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

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

"Same to you, and may you enjoy your feed when you open that box of yours," replied Figgy cordially. This friendly wish made those who heard it nearly ch themselves.

But all good things have an end at last. And so did that royal feed in the New House. There was really no reason, as far as Study No. 6 could see, why the New House juniors should burst out laughing at intervals, without apparent cause, all the time.

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

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

"Wah!h!" said Arthur Augustus. "A1!" chimed in Herries and Digby.

"The pleasure's quite on our side," said the polite Figgins. "It wouldn't have been half so enjoyable if you hadn't been here. Do stop that giggling, Fatty! We'll see you home, you chaps, and you can tell us if that box has come in safely."

"Right-ho!" And arm-in-arm with their ancient enemies, Study No. 6 marched across the quadrangle to the School House.

At the door they parted quite affectionately with Figgins & Co., and went up to their study. Figgins and his followers waited till the window of Study No. 6 opened.

"It's all right!" called out Figgy. "Right as rain!" called out Blake in return. "It's here as large as life, and it hasn't been opened."

"Oh, hasn't it!" muttered Figgins. "What did you say?"

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

"We do, we do!" said the Co. solemnly. And Figgins & Co. marched off, leaving Blake vaguely uneasy.

He turned back from the window into the study. Herries had lighted the gas. There was the big box, and it looked all right.

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

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

"Of course they didn't."

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

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

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

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

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

"My hat! It's been busted!"

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

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

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

"Or our Figgins. Get the brute open, for mercy's sake."

They wrenched open the lid of the box.

Four pairs of eyes gazed vacantly on the contents.

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

Blake rose to his feet.

"Figgins!" he said faintly.

"But how?"

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

"Our grub!" said Herries wildly.

"Our grub!" groaned Digby.

"No wonder the horrid bonder was so free with it!"

"No-wonder they grinned when we told them about the box."

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

Blake sat down.

The blow was too much even for him.

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

The silence of dismay filled the study.

Never since Study No. 6 had had a local habitation and a name, had it been so thoroughly, so scientifically, so helplessly "done!"

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

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

"Who bought the grub?"

"Blake did!"

"Who paid for it?"

"Study No. 6 did!"

"Who collared it?"

"We did!"

"Who ate it?"

"We did!"

"Who takes the biscuit? Who collars the Huntley & Palmer? Who prances off with the giddy Peck Fren?"

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

"Then let us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us smile again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake slammed down the window.

"Done," he said—"clean done!"

But the chums of Study No. 6 were wrathful.

"Scrag him!" said Herries. "He's a giddy chief, he is, and 'tis this what comes of it."

"Your uncle Blake is a big chief," said Digby, mimicking Blake's tones. "A big blooming ass would be nearer the mark!"

"A weally idiotic and unwellable leedah," said D'Arcy.

And with one accord they fell upon Blake.

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

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

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

"Let us smile once more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Split in the New House.

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

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

The general opinion was that too much had been conceded to the New House, and that after this it was impossible for even the peace-loving captain to extend the olive-branch any more. The School House took it for granted that he would form a team to meet Mexborough wholly from his own side.

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

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

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

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

The only name missing was Monteith's.

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

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

And in that idea Kildare's followers found comfort.

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

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

Baker said nothing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monteith set his thin lips hard.

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

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

"Well, something like that."

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

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

"Yes."

So the conversation ended, very unsatisfactorily for both.

Monteith realized keenly enough how shaky his position was, and it seemed to him a time for bold measures.

If Baker refused to come into line with the rest of the house, he must be coerced, and if he refused to be coerced, he must be cut. A few days in Coventry would probably bring him to reason. But would the New House back the prefect up in such a drastic measure? Monteith was determined that they should; yet in his inmost heart he felt a chill of doubt.

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

Kildare was icily polite; a very different Kildare from the one Monteith was accustomed to.

The prefect realized that he had got the captain's back up at last. The cheery, good-natured Irish lad had shown an almost endless patience, which Monteith had mistaken for weakness.

Now his patience was exhausted, and Monteith found him as hard and cold as steel.

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

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

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

"What is it about?"

"The footer."

"I don't see what you can have to say about that, as

you are not in the team, but whatever it is, you need not say it in private. Don't go, you chaps. Monteith won't be staying long."

Monteith breathed hard.

It was borne in upon his mind then that all the cunning tactics he had been so self-satisfied about amounted, in effect, to a twisting of the lion's tail—the lion being asleep. Now he had waked the lion.

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

"Yes."

"You have left mine out."

"Naturally, as you do not belong to the eleven."

"Is that a definite decision, then?"

"Quite."

"And you think our fellows will play if their prefect is barred like this?"

"I hope so."

"Well, they won't," said Monteith savagely. "Gray and Webb refuse."

"I shall be sorry to hear that they do."

"Well, you do hear it now."

"I shall not take of their names unless I hear from them personally. I must decline to accept any interference in the matter."

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

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

Darrel and Rushton looked at each other with grim satisfaction. They had expressed their opinion in this mood before.

It was always been so conditioned that they had been hardly able to imagine him going on the warpath in earnest. It had taken a great deal of provocation to rouse him; but now that Monteith had succeeded in provoking him to a conflict, he was hard as a flint. Monteith himself was surprised and considerably dismayed.

"Very well, you can try and ride the high horse if you like," he sneered savagely.

"But I tell you that if any New House chap played for you after this he would be sent to Coventry by the house. Not a man of our side will meet the Mexborough fellows!"

Kildare shrugged his shoulders.

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

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

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

"Thanks very much."

Monteith strode from the study and slammed the door. Ten minutes later, a fag from the New House brought a note to Kildare. He opened it and frowned as he read it. It was brief, but very much to the point:

"Unless Monteith is included in the team, we are sorry we cannot undertake to play for the school against Mexborough."
"GEORGE WEBB."
"ALBERT GRAY."

Kildare tossed the note to his companions.

"That's Monteith's reply," said Darrel, looking at it.

"How will you answer?"

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

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

"Any member of the school eleven who fails to play on Saturday against Mexborough, except through illness or

other similar adequate reason, will never be allowed to play for St. Jim's again as long as E. Kildare is captain."

The fag carried that note back to the New House.

"Baker has sent no word," remarked Darrel thoughtfully.

"It looks as if he is standing out against Monteith."

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

"Then that means—"

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

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

"So we're out of it," said Gray.

"It's a rotten business!" muttered Webb.

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

"It looks as if he's going to be obstinate."

"He'll smart for it if he is," said the prefect savagely. And he went at once to Baker's study, where he found the fellow he sought, standing with his hands in his pockets, staring gloomily out of the window.

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

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

The prefect scowled.

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

"No!"

"You will play for Kildare?"

"I shall play for the school!"

"It's the same thing. You've made up your mind?"

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

"Then you'll be sent to Coventry by the whole school!" Baker's eyes glittered.

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

"Where are you going?"

"To the School House!"

"What for?"

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

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

CHAPTER 8.

The Testimonial.

"HEARD the news, kids!" exclaimed Blake breathlessly.

"No. What is it?"

"There's a split in the New House."

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

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

"But is it a fact?"



NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE LYNCROFT HOUSEKEEPER,"
A Tale of Space-the Twiss & Co.,
By H. Clarke Hook.

"THE RED RIVER MYSTERY,"
A Tale of Captain Frank
Herries, Detective.

IN "PLUCK," 1st

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

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

Dig shook his head.
 "I'll bet Monteith will look out for himself," he said confidently. "You'll never get a chap like that in a corner. He'll make things as warm for Baker as he can, but if the house sided with Baker, Monteith would turn round and pretend that that was what he wanted all along."

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

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

"A testimonial or something," hazarded D'Arcy. "Something to show him our appreciation of his patriotic conduct."

"That's it," said Blake. "We must think it over."
 The famous four took a great deal of interest in the question, naturally, not only because of their strong regard for the honour of St. Jim's in the footer field, but also because Monteith was their special enemy, and they would have been exceedingly pleased to see him fall from his high estate as captain of the New House. And, as Blake eloquently put it, it was very likely that he would have to come off his perch this time.

It was easy enough to get news of the state of affairs in the New House. Baker had defied his chief, and he was taking the consequences. The edict had gone forth from Monteith's study that he was to be sent to Coventry by the house, and all the prefect's loyal backers cut him dead.

But the Coventry was by no means so complete as Monteith desired. Many fellows persisted in speaking to Baker, in spite of the sentence, and when Monteith called them to account, gave unsatisfactory answers. Still, Baker's position was extremely uncomfortable. He had to smart for the position he had taken up, as Monteith declared that he should. But he did not waver. He was an obstinate fellow, easy to lead, but hard to drive, and Monteith had succeeded in rousing all the obstinacy in his nature.

To all the condemnation of his house, he opposed a stubborn silence, and went on his way without a sign of surrender. While most of the seniors were down upon him, he found support in the junior section. The split in the house extended down, even to the fags, and Figgins & Co. plumped for Baker, while a crowd of others, headed by Pratt, stood by Monteith.

Many were the arguments, often concluding in fistiffs, among the New House juniors, and studies and corridors were frequently in an uproar, and angry seniors stuffed cotton-wool in their ears, or called forth with canes, according to their humour, when the disputes waxed high.

Baker was satisfied in his mind that his action was right and justifiable, but it was far from pleasant to be cut, and to hear himself alluded to as a traitor in the camp, and that week was certainly the most uncomfortable one of his life.

Monteith was all the more spiteful, because he had a secret feeling that Webb and Gray were wavering inwardly, and half inclined to throw in their lot with the delinquent. If they should do so, they would certainly have a good following in the house, and the sentence of "Coventry" would become a mere farce.

So Monteith looked anxiously forward to Saturday, when the Leicestershire team were to arrive at St. Jim's to play the Saints on their own ground. For, what appeared an ominous circumstance to Monteith, the vacant places in the school eleven had not been filled up.

The list was left on the notice-board, with no alteration, except that a pen had been drawn through the names of Webb and Gray.

As Kildare, of course, could not be intending to play two men short against the visiting team, it was a matter of conjecture where he would play in the place of the deserters.

Many School House seniors were practising hard, putting all they knew into it, in the hope of being selected by the captain. But, whatever Kildare's intention was, he said nothing about it, unless it was to his immediate confidants.

Monteith was both puzzled and worried. It looked as if

the captain still thought that Webb and Gray might play in the match, in spite of their resignation. And the prefect ground his teeth at the thought.

"If such a thing happened there was an inglorious end to his campaign against Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's would win all along the line."

Had the prefect in provoking this conflict taken too big a task upon his hands—"bitten off more than he could chew," in vulgar phrase?

Monteith himself began to think so. But he stuck to his guns obstinately. There was nothing else for him to do, in point of fact, unless he chose to surrender. This was difficult—more difficult than it would have been earlier, for now he would have to tamely accept his exclusion from the team. So that, during these days, Monteith was quite as much worried as Baker.

Meanwhile, the idea of backing up the rebel was taking more definite form in Study No. 6 in the School House.

"You see, kids," said Blake, "Baker is standing by the team in a really decent way, and those cads are making him sit up. I know from Figgy that he's cut by nearly all the house, and you can see for yourselves that he usually looks in doleful dumps. This is the time for us to show that we appreciate his actions. If he can't get the credit he deserves in the New House, he ought to get it from us."

"Hear, hear," said Herries.
 "Vow'y twue," said Arthur Augustus.
 "But what are we to do?" asked Dig.

"Well, I was thinking of a sort of testimonial, signed by everybody in the house, to be presented to Baker, testifying how much we approve of the line he's taken."

The chums looked doubtful.

"A testimonial!" said Herries. "But—"

"It would look all right with Kildare's name at the top."

"But would Kildare have a hand in it?"

"Well, I should think so. Then the other seniors would sign, and finally the juniors—everybody in the School House, in fact."

"It seems a good idea."

"I don't know whether we ought to put our names at the top as the idea's ours," said Blake thoughtfully. "By perhaps it's better to be modest and take a back seat."

"The captain's name at the top will be imposing."

"Who's going to suggest it to Kildare?"

"I will!"

"Well, let's draw up the giddy document," said Dig, producing foolscap. And the four juniors set to work.

"How do you begin?" murmured Blake, biting his pen.

"I imagine so. 'Herby' is a good word, and has a sort of official sound; we'll shove that in. How does this sound?"

"The inmates of the School House do hereby—"

"Oh, I say," struck in Dig, "that sounds as if you were speaking of an asylum!"

"H'm! So it does a little. 'The denizens of the School House—' No; that won't do! The chaps? That's better. Now—The chaps of the School House hereby desire to express their unanimous opinion—' How many U's are there in unanimous?"

"Three, I think," said Dig doubtfully.

"Right! Their unanimous opinion that Baker has deserved well of his country—' No—'deserved well of the school, in sticking out against Cad Monteith, and hereunder—"

"Here-in-what?"

"Hereunder, then," corrected Blake. "'Hereunder they sign their names in justification of—'"

"In wh-what?"

"Justification!" said Blake obstinately. "When you testify, that's justification, ain't it? It's a jolly long word, too, and will impress Baker."

"I've never heard it before," said Herries.

"There's heaps of things you haven't heard. If it isn't a word it ought to be; but I'm sure it's all right, and it sounds imposing."

"Well, read out the whole thing now, and let's see."

Blake read out his composition, not without an air of pride.

"The chaps of the School House hereby desire to express their unanimous opinion that George Baker, Esq., has deserved well of the school in sticking out against Cad Monteith, and in justification of this, their aforesaid opinion, they sign their names hereunder."

"Sounds all right, doesn't it?" asked Blake.
 The chums admitted that it sounded all right.
 "There goes Kildare," said Dig, nodding towards the open door. "Suppose you ask him now, and get his signature!"
 "Right-ho!"
 Blake ran to the door.
 "I say, Kildare, ahoy!"
 The captain of St. Jim's turned his head.
 "Can you spare a minute, Kildare—just a minute?"

"Certainly!" said the captain, entering the study. "What is it?"

"We're getting up a petition—I mean an address—that is to say, a testimonial," Blake explained lucidly. "We want your signature at the top."

The captain smiled.

"Better let me see the document first."

"Here it is."

Kildare read it through, and burst out laughing. The juniors looked at one another.

"I say, is there anything wrong with it?" asked Blake anxiously.

"Well, I know you fellows in this study have invented a new and entirely original system of orthography," said Kildare, becoming grave again, and speaking quite seriously, "still, it is not the common or garden custom to spell unanimous with more than two U's."

"Oh, that's all right! I was a bit doubtful myself about that last U, but I can easily scratch it out. Anything else?"

"Well, testification is an excellent word, a very excellent word, but—"

"I didn't quite know whether it was testification or testification," said Blake glibly. "If you think it's too long I'll make it testification."

Kildare grinned.

"You're so obliging, Blake, that I hate to have to refuse my name to this beautiful document," he said. "I'm afraid I can't sign it, though."

"Oh, I say, Kildare, don't be mean!"

"I'm sorry; but you will really have to excuse me. Better ask Darrel to head the list." And the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Well, I never thought that of Kildare!" said Blake. "But it's as clear as daylight!"

"What is?" asked Herries.

"He's annoyed that he didn't think of this idea himself, and won't back us up."

"I suppose that's it."

"We'll take his advice, and ask Darrel. Come on!"

The chums found Darrel in the seniors' room. They produced the petition and looked for his autograph.

"Darrel read the precious document and gasped."

"I don't think I don't appreciate this honour," he said; "I do. But Kildare's captain, you know, and his name ought to come first. Ask him. If he signs, I will."

"But we're already asked him."

"What did he say?"

"Sent us to you."

"Ha, ha! Well, suppose you try Rushden? I'm too modest to put my name at the head of a list."

So they gave up Darrel, and marched off to Rushden's study. Rushden looked at the document, and stared.

"Is this a joke?" he asked.

"A joke?" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "It's a testimonial. We want your signature shored at the top. Here's a fountain-pen."

"Have you asked Kildare?"

"Yes, but—was he was—was busy."

"Better ask Darrel, then."

"No; he says he doesn't want to head the list."

"Well, I don't, either. Ask Drake."

They left Rushden's study.

In the corridor they stood and looked at one another.

"Well, are you going to ask Drake?" said Herries at last.

"I don't think so," replied Blake uncomfortably. "The seniors don't want a hand in it. I suppose it's envy because we're getting it up."

"Perhaps they think—"

"Perhaps they think what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Anyway, we'll get the juniors' names down," said Blake more cheerfully. "That will make a pretty long list, and I don't suppose Baker will really read them all, you know. Nobody ever does. It's just the look of the thing."

It was easy enough to get the juniors' signatures. The mere fact that Monteith was alluded to in the document as Cad Monteith was quite sufficient to gather in every junior signature in the School House.

And when all the names were signed the look of the document was certainly imposing. It filled several sheets of foolscap, and though the array of blots and scratches rather detracted from the neatness of it, there were names enough to satisfy anybody.

Then the question arose as to the manner in which the testimonial was to be presented to George Baker, Esq.

"If we take it to him in the New House, Figgins & Co. may go for us and spoil the effect," said Blake thoughtfully.

"You can't present an address with one hand, and bash the House aside with the other."

This was undeniable.

It was finally decided to corner Baker in the quad or the

gymnasium one day, and take him by surprise with the precious document.

And so the chums of Study No. 6 kept a sharp look-out for the New House senior, and ran him to earth in the gym.

Baker looked rather astonished when a dozen or more School House youngsters, with Study No. 6 at their head, marched up to him in the gym, and his expression became absolutely astounded when Blake placed the testimonial in his hands. He took it mechanically, staring at the junior.

"What is this?"

"Read it," said Blake mysteriously.

The gym was pretty well crowded just then, and the actions of the juniors had drawn every eye in their direction. Twenty pairs of eyes stared at Baker as Blake made his

reply.

The School House juniors formed an admiring circle round Baker as he let his astonished gaze fall upon the blotched, smeared document in his hands.

Blake, with a confident smile, waited for the expected words of gratification from Baker. They didn't come.

Baker slowly and methodically tore the document through from end to end, and then placed the pieces together, and tore them through from side to side.

Blake watched this proceeding in amazement.

"I say, what are you up to?" he exclaimed. "Don't you understand? That's a—"

"A piece of impudence!" said Baker, growing purple.

"You confounded, cheeky young rascal, I've a good mind to—"

"You don't understand," said Blake feebly. "It's a—"

"Clear—"

"But let me explain. It's a testimonial that—"

"Get out!"

"It's a testi—"

"Be off!"

"It's a—"

Blake left the sentence unfinished, and bolted. Baker was making a rush at him. The juniors tumbled over each other out of the gym. A disconsolate quartette gathered again in Study No. 6.

"What a giddy sell!" was all Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy could find to say.

Blake realized that the testimonial was a ghastly failure. But he had to save his prestige somehow. His look was very severe.

"The next time you want to get up a silly testimonial," he said, "you can leave me out of it. Nice asses you've made of yourselves."

And he marched out of the study. And the other three could only look at one another, and gasp feebly.

"Well, I'm blowed!"

CHAPTER 10. Kildare Wins.

SATURDAY! The excitement was keen in the school that morning. The notice on the board in the hall remained unchanged, as Blake ascertained as soon as he came down. The vacant places were not filled yet. Was Kildare bent, then, on giving the deserters a last chance?

"That's the idea," said Blake confidently. "And if they don't come into line, Kildare's got his eye on the substitutes. Only he won't mention any names, you see, until he's sure about Webb and Gray, so as to save causing disappointment."

Which was doubtless the true explanation. The afternoon, to the relief of all, turned out fine. The weather was propitious, the ground in excellent condition. After school Blake took another look at the notice in the hall. It was still unchanged. Kildare passed him, and he scanned the captain's face. But Kildare's face, except that it was calm and cheerful, expressed nothing.

The captain went down to the football ground. Study No. 6 marched down together, and arrived at the same time as Figgins & Co. It was a rare opportunity for a row, but both parties were thinking too much about the coming match for that. They joined in cheering Baker when he went into the pavilion with Kildare. They joined even more heartily in hissing when Monteith appeared in sight. Monteith came down with Webb and Gray. The two latter were looking decidedly glum. They started at the sound of hissing, and Monteith looked round in search of the hissers, but the juniors left off in time.

"The cad has got those two silly duffers under his wing," said Blake. "He's afraid they'll change their minds at the last moment."

"I believe they would if Kildare said a word," said Figgins. "I jolly well wish they'd play. The New House has suffered too much on account of Monteith already."

"You're right. Hallo! There's Mexborough!"

"My hat! They look a tough lot!"

"They are."

"A bit over our weight, eh?" said Figgins dubiously. "It will be a fight."

The Mexborough men were certainly tough-looking customers. They were, as a team, older than the St. Jim's fellows, and mostly larger and heavier. Kildare had said that it was a bit of cheek on the part of St. Jim's to tackle them at all, and really it looked as if the captain was right.

The visitors, to judge by their looks and their remarks among themselves, had come to St. Jim's in the full expectation of wiping up the ground with the home team. Blake looked at his watch. It was getting near time for the kick-off.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Herries suddenly.

"What's the matter, image?"

"Look at old Kildare!"

Every eye was turned at once upon the captain of St. Jim's. He had come out of the pavilion, and was walking directly towards the spot where Gray and Webb stood with Monteith. The latter scowled blackly at him; his two companions looked awkward and uneasy. Blake gripped Figgins by the arm.

"He's going to get them in, you see."

"Bravo! Hope he does," said Figgins.

Kildare stopped before the trio of New House juniors.

"Are you going to play, you chaps?" he said without taking any notice of Monteith. "The places are still open to you if you like."

Webb turned red, and looked at Gray. Gray turned red, too. The prefect snapped his teeth.

"They are not going to play, Kildare," he said savagely.

Kildare took not the slightest notice of him. His gaze was fixed upon the two deserters, and he appeared to be unaware of the existence of Monteith.

"We've got a hard fight before us," he said. "If we win, we shall only do it by the skin of our teeth. I appeal to you in the name of the school to play up for St. Jim's. Will you do it?"

Webb came to a sudden determination.

"You really want us?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm your man."

"If I Webb plays, I play," said Gray.

Monteith opened his mouth to speak. But before he could say a word Kildare linked his arms in those of Gray and Webb and marched them off to the pavilion. Monteith sprang after them.

"Webb! Gray! Are you going to—"

"We're going to play. We can't let the school lose for the sake of spite, Monteith," said Gray, without turning his head.

The prefect was left standing alone, grinding his teeth. The two reclaimed deserters disappeared into the pavilion with Kildare. The captain had judged them rightly. They had been extremely dissatisfied with their position all along, doubtful as to the justice of their cause, uneasy as to the result of their action. The captain's appeal had been made in the right way, and at the right time. And it had not been made in vain.

The juniors had not heard what was said, but when Gray and Webb walked off with Kildare and left Monteith standing alone, they knew, of course, what had happened. Blake threw his cap into the air.

"Hurrah!" he yelled.

And Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. joined him with all the force of their lungs.

The news spread round the field like wildfire. The School House welcomed it, the New House did not know how to take it, but upon the whole they were glad to have three men in the team for the big match.

When the eleven came out into the field, with Baker, Gray, and Webb in the school colours, the New House cheered them heartily. Monteith stood alone. He knew what this meant. The sentence of Coventry upon Baker had been rescinded by tacit consent. It had never been rigidly enforced, in spite of his efforts. Now it was over.

The action of Webb and Gray had decided the New House. If Monteith kept on in the path he had marked out for himself, he would follow it alone. With a heart burning with rage, he realised it. A complete change of tactics, a complete surrender, was his only alternative to falling from the position he had abused, as captain of his house.

His face was white with rage and chagrin, but no one was looking at Monteith just then. The two teams were in the field, and Mr. Kidd, of the School House, the referee, was looking at his watch. The Mexborough skipper had tossed with Kildare and won the choice of goals. "Phip!"

"Now we shall see something," said Blake. "Go it, ye cripples!"

The Mexborough skipper kicked-off. The match con-

mented. Kildare's prediction as to the tussle the school had before them was verified. The men from Mexborough were decidedly the strongest opponents the Saints had ever had to face. Their rushes were deadly, and difficult to stem; their combination was good, and their passing very accurate.

The wind was against the visitors, but they came off splendidly, and the Saints fell back to defend their goal. But their defence availed them not. Right into the net went a whizzing shot from the foot of the Mexborough skipper and even Rudden could not save that shot. It was a goal! A goal to the visitors in six minutes.

"Buck up, Saints!" called out Blake, as the sides lined up again. "Play up! You ain't playing dominoes, you know!"

But the Saints needed no urging to buck up. Kildare puttered a few words of encouragement to his men, and they faced the enemy again with a dogged determination. Again the Mexborough men came sweeping on. But this time a St. Jim's back cleared with a kick that sent the ball over the half-way line, and relieved the pressure when it looked deadly dangerous.

"Good old Gray!" shouted Blake.

"Good old New House!" roared Figgins.

And Gray was loudly cheered. Monteith was the only one of his house-fellows who was silent. And the cheers redoubled when it was seen that Baker had captured the ball and was away with it, taking it down the field with a lightning-like dribble.

"Baker! Baker!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The excitement grew delirious. The Mexborough defence seemed nowhere; Baker went through them like a shot, and kicked for goal amid a tremendous roar. And when the Mexborough goalie was seen to grab at the ball, and miss, and the leather reposed in the net—then St. Jim's let itself go. The last vestige of Baker's unpopularity in his own house vanished in a storm of cheers. And right heartily the School House joined in that cheering.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Baker!"

"Hurrah!"

The sides had equalised. Kildare's face was glowing, they lined up again. The fight was hard and fast, but a good hope of victory was in the captain's heart. But what pleased him best was the knowledge that his New House recruits were playing up so grandly for the school. With the team-nulling together so splendidly, they might accomplish anything.

The game restarted. That goal had been rather an eye-opener for the Mexborough men, showing them that they were not to have things entirely their own way.

And now they put their "beef" into it, and played up for all they were worth.

And ere long a second goal rewarded their efforts.

Two to one against St. Jim's.

But the faces round the ropes were quite confident.

And their full faith in their champions.

They, their faith was justified. Just before half-time Kildare led a gallant attack upon the visitors' goal, and the ball went in from the foot of St. Jim's skipper.

"Goal!" yelled Blake. "Give us another, Kildare, old chap!"

But no more was taken by either side before the interval. The first half ended with the score equal.

"Jolly good game, ain't it, Monteith?" asked Figgins, with a grin.

He was prepared to dodge a cuff from the prefect in reply to his remark.

But, to his surprise, the usually sour face of Monteith was quite genial in its expression, and he nodded.

"Jolly good, Figgins! You're right!"

Figgins started.

"Old Monteith ain't such a bad sportsman after all," he confided to Kerr and Wynn. "You see, he's as pleased as anybody at our keeping our end up."

Jack Blake heard the remark, and winked at his companions.

Blake was under no delusion as to Monteith's change of front.

The prefect knew that he was in a corner, and meant to wriggle out of it, and that, to Blake's mind, accounted for his changed expression.

The players came into the field again.

The change of ends brought the wind behind St. Jim's, and from the kick-off they showed their determination to make the most of their advantage.

Mexborough, who had expected to do most of the attacking, found themselves attacked, and, more than that, they had to fall back from the onslaught of the Saints.

Kildare kicked a third goal for the school early in the second half, amid a roar of cheering from two hundred throats.



The two set to work, and the contents of their enemies' box was transferred to the space inside the big trunk of the tree.
(See page 8.)

The Mexborough men fought hard to equalise. But the second half wore on, and the school remained one goal ahead.

At last, however, with a mighty effort, and favoured by a brief smile of Fortune, Mexborough equalised.

Three goals all!

And ten minutes more to play.

"We shall do it," said Blake, with a nod of the head—"we shall do it, kids!"

Hard and incessant, the game rushed and swayed and struggled on.

Both sides were fighting hard for the winning goal, but it seemed to the spectators that St. Jim's were getting the better of the protracted tussle.

Five minutes more!

St. Jim's came down the field with a fine rush. Hard and fast, harder and faster, waxed the attack, till a Mexborough sack played the ball behind the flag.

Instantly Kildare claimed the sack.

Darrel took it, and dropped the ball at Kildare's feet. There was a wild rush of the Mexborough men.

In vain!

The ball soared goalward.

The goalie made a frantic clutch at it.

Missed!

"By an inch or less. But a miss was as good as a mile!

"Goal!"

"Goal!"

Loud rang the cheers; in the midst of them sounded the sharp note of the whistle.

St. Jim's had won!

Won the hardest match of the season!

The cheering was frantic.

As loud as any rang the voice of Monteith.

Probably the prefect had really caught the prevailing enthusiasm; even his cold heart could not have been wholly untouched by this triumph of the school.

As Kildare came off the field, Monteith met him with outstretched hand.

"I congratulate you, Kildare!" he exclaimed. And for the time, at least, he was sincere. "I'm glad the New House has had a share in this."

It was not in Kildare's nature to bear malice.

He took Monteith's hand cordially enough.

"Thanks!" he said. "And I'm as glad as you are. Your fellows have played up splendidly."

And so, for the time, the hatchet was buried.

St. Jim's, indeed, had something better to think of than old grudges. It was the victory of the season, and all rejoiced. And even Study No. 6 surpassed itself that evening in the noise with which it celebrated the occasion.

THE END.

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By Charles Hamilton

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS:

This story opens at a football match at St. Kit's. The captaincy for the season of the first team practically rests between Eldred Lacy and Arthur Talbot, the respective captains of the two teams. Talbot wins the match.

Pat Nugent, an Irish and a new boy, arrives at the school just after the match. He is at once "collared" by the juniors, who try to exact a promise from him that he'll vote for Arthur Talbot as captain. He won't promise, so they bind him up and shut him in a cupboard in Lacy's study.

He goes to sleep, and on waking up, he hears voices—the voices of Eldred Lacy and his brother, Rupert Lacy, the squire of Lynwood. "You must ruin and disgrace Arthur Talbot, and drive him from the school. He is a menace to me—to both of us. But, ruined, disgraced, driven forth into poverty and obscurity, I shall no longer fear him!" Pat is released from the cupboard, and after the election, which is decided in favour of Talbot, becomes great chums with Blagden and Greene. There is also great trouble over the sharing of a study; but Pat solves the difficulty by ousting a boy named Cleeve. He then makes his way to Trimble's study, having heard that the latter has been trying to persuade Cleeve to complain to a master. Now go on with the tale:



Trimble Has Terms Forced Upon Him.

"Get out!" roared Trimble.

"You're trying to persuade that beautiful specimen to complain to Mr. Slaney because I've changed studies with him," answered Pat.

"None of your business!" snapped Trimble uneasily. "Your mistake; it is my business. This is where I come out strong. Cleeve, I want you to go to Mr. Slaney and ask his permission to change into No. 9. He's sure to agree if you ask him nicely."

Cleeve looked dubiously at Trimble. "You'd better not," said the latter. "Oh, yes, he had better," said Pat. "And you're going to ask him to do it, Trimble. I'm going to persuade you to persuade him!"

And Pat seized Trimble by the collar. In a moment he had twisted him round and flung him face downward across the table, sending ink and pens and papers flying in all directions.

Trimble struggled furiously, but Pat's grip was like iron. "You're not wanted here, Cobb!" he exclaimed. "Get out! You're dead in this act. Chuck him out, chaps."

Blagden and Greene promptly hurried themselves upon Cobb.

He dodged round the table and escaped from the study, slamming the door after him.

"Now, Trimble," exclaimed Pat, pinning the bully down in spite of his frantic efforts to tear himself loose, "you're going to persuade Cleeve to do as I asked him."

"I'll see you hanged first!"

"Do you decline?"

"Yes, hang you! I'll pulverise you for this!"

"There's a stick in that corner, Blaggy. Hand it over."

Blagden, grinning, handed the stick to Pat.

"Now hold his legs, one each. Cleeve, stay here. If you leave the room I'll scalp you. Hold the brute tight, kids; he's wriggling like a beastly eel. Now, Trimble, are you going to do that persuading?"

"No!" yelled Trimble.

He made a desperate effort to get loose as the stick whicked in the air.

But it was in vain.

Blagden and Greene held a leg each, and Pat had a grip of iron on the back of his collar, and he was sprawled helplessly upon the table.

Down came the stick with a sounding thwack, and the dust arose from Trimble's garments, and from Trimble himself across a terrific whop.

Thwack again, and again!

"Leave off!" roared Trimble. "Leggo! Lemme alone!"

"Are you in a more sweet and reasonable frame of mind?"

"Leggo!"

Thwack!

"Will you do what I want?"

"No. Yes. Leggo. What do you want?"

"You've got to persuade Cleeve to visit our kind teacher, and ask him for permission to change into No. 9, and let me have the end study."

"I won't!"

Thwack!

"Yes, I will!" yelled Trimble. "Oh, won't I pay you out for this! Yes, I will!"

"Very good. Sure, I thought I should be able to bring you to reason in time, Trimble dear. Now, ask Cleeve very nicely, and I dare say he'll oblige you."

Cleeve was grinning now.

"I'll do whatever you want, Trimble," he said.

"You little beast! I'll—"

Thwack!

And the bully yelled again.

"I'm waiting for you, Trimble," said Pat, with the stick in the air.

"Cleeve, will you go to Mr. Slaney?" gasped Trimble, "and ask him—ask him—"

"Certainly," said Cleeve. "Ask him what?"

"Ask him— Oh, won't I make you sit up for this, you beast!"

Thwack!

"Leave off! I'm asking him, ain't I? Ask Mr. Slaney, if he'll let you—"

"If he'll kindly let you," corrected Pat.

"If he'll kindly let you change into No. 9, because—"

"Because you'll be more comfy there, and Blaggy and Greene would rather have me," said Pat.

"Because you'll be more comfortable there," gasped Trimble, "and Blaggy and Greene would rather have me—I mean Nugent."

"Certainly," grinned Cleeve.

"Mind you ask him nicely," said Pat. "If he refuses, I shall take it for granted that you didn't ask him nicely, and I shall have to give you some instruction."

"I'll do my best," said Cleeve, very sincerely.

He guessed what the instruction would be like, and he didn't want any.

"Well, buzz along."

Cleeve left the study.

"Now let me go," growled Trimble.

Pat jerked him off the table.

"Sure, and I hope this lesson will do you good, Trimble," he remarked. "If it doesn't, I'll give you another any time you like. You'll find me a very obliging chap when you know me better."

"You—you beast!" hissed Trimble, tenderly rubbing the injured portions of himself where the stick had fallen heaviest.

"Now, that's ungrateful. I shouldn't wonder, Trimble, if you have some idea in your head of thumping Cleeve, although he's only doing what you persuaded him to do. Just remember that if you touch him, I shall be on your

NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE LYNOCROFT HOUSEKEEPER,"
A Tale of Spec, the Trains & Co.,
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"THE RED RIVER MYSTERY,"
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IN "PLUCK," P.

track. I take him under my wing over this affair, you see, and I'm bound to protect him."

Trumble only snarled.

In a few minutes Cleeve came back into the study.

"Well, what says the oracle?" asked Pat.

"Mr. Slaney says we can change if we like, and don't bother him," replied Cleeve.

Pat grinned.

"Well, that's satisfactory, if not exactly polite. Trumble, I'm much obliged to you for persuading Cleeve to do me this little favour. It was kind of you."

"You beast!"

"I'm afraid you're in a bad temper, Trumble. Never mind, I shan't forget your kindness. Come on, chaps!"

The three quitted the study. Cleeve scuttled away first to get out of Trumble's reach. Pat, Blaggy, and Greene returned to the cad study.

"Well, that worked all right," said Blaggy, with much satisfaction. "It's settled now. After asking Mr. Slaney, Cleeve can't back out of it, whatever Trumble says or does. It's settled, and I'm jolly glad!"

"It all shows what can be done by persuasion," said Pat. "You should never go in for violence when persuasion will serve your purpose. It ought to be a great satisfaction to Trumble to reflect that he's done a kind action."

In Ambush.

"Hallo!" said Pat. "Snow!"

It was morning, and Pat was first out of bed in the Fourth Form dormitory. The gleam of white through the high window had caught his eye, and he went to it and looked out. The close and the school buildings were glimmering with spotless white.

"Snow," yawned Blagden; and he sat up in bed. "That's a bit of all right, as it's a half-holiday this afternoon! We shall be able to have snowballing in the close."

"Good idea!" said Greene. "We'll go for Trumble and his set, and give 'em a warm time. I wish I could get a chance of giving Lacy one in the back of the neck without being caught."

"We'll keep our eyes open," said Blagden thoughtfully.

The snowfall came as a boon and a blessing to the youngsters of St. Kit's.

It happened to be a Wednesday, which was always a half-holiday at St. Kit's, and when morning school was over the boys turned out joyously into the close.

The paths had been cleared, but the ground was still mostly thick with snow, as well as roofs and walls. There was ammunition in plenty for a general engagement, and a battle was not long in starting.

The juniors pelted each other with high good-humour, amid rallying cries and shouts of laughter, and the fun was waxing fast and furious when Eldred Lacy came out.

Lacy had on his hat and overcoat, and he strode directly towards the big gates, frowning at the youngsters, who, however, were too excited with the game to take much note of the senior just then.

A band of the Upper Fourth, headed by Trumble and Cobb, were charging the three chums, who, backed up by a dozen others, offered a desperate resistance.

The fight was furious, and as Lacy came along, a rush of the juniors surrounded him, and the air round him was thick with flying snowballs. He gave a yell as one smashed into his face, and another broke in the back of his neck, and a third knocked his hat off.

Who had thrown the balls it was impossible to discover. They might have come from any of the combatants. But it was upon Pat Nugent that the prefect's vengeful eye fixed. He made a rush for the junior, his face inflamed with rage.

Pat, who was busy repelling an attack by superior odds, did not see him coming. But, fortunately, Blagden did, and he hurled a snowball just in time.

The missile caught the prefect on the side of the head, and he staggered, and lost his footing in the slippery snow, and sat down suddenly.

Pat turned his head then and saw him.

"Hallo, Lacy!" he exclaimed. "Don't you find it cold taking a rest there?"

It was, perhaps, an injudicious question.

Lacy jumped up, and went for Pat with a howl of rage. Pat promptly dodged, and Lacy blundered into Trumble, whom he sent spinning with a tremendous box on the ear.

"What's that for?" roared Trumble.

"Get out of my way!"

And Lacy continued his pursuit of the elusive junior. Biff, biff! came snowballs from Blagden and Greene, one on either side of his head.

But Lacy ground his teeth, and kept on.

He ran Pat to earth in an angle of the schoolhouse wall and seized him.

"Now, you little beast!"

And he began to thump the junior with all his force.

Pat kicked out, and Lacy got some stingers; but the junior certainly suffered most, and his punishment would have been extremely severe if the others had not come to the rescue.

"We can't stand this, prefect or not!" exclaimed Blagden. "Come on—all together!"

And a dozen juniors closed in on Lacy, pelting him with snowballs.

Lacy at last released Pat, as the missiles smashed and broke all over him, and the juniors fell back as he charged at them.

With a savage scowl, Lacy passed on to the gates, and went out. Blagden and Greene joined Pat. He was white and gasping.

"My hat!" he panted. "How that beast can thump! I believe I've got bruises all over me. He's knocked all the breath out of my body!"

Blagden was bursting with indignation.

"I wish old Talbot had seen him pitching into a kid like that!" he exclaimed. "You must be black and blue. Let's tell him. Come on! That brute ought to be exposed!"

"No, no, we won't," said Pat.

"He's no right to knock a kid about like that. He wouldn't be a prefect long if the doctor knew it."

"Well, he won't know it."

"But—"

"Faith," said Pat, his eyes sparkling, "we can fight our own battles, kids. Lacy's gone out. Let's follow his giddy trail, and—"

"Right-ho! Come on!"

Leaving the crowd still snowballing one another, the three hurried out after Lacy. All three were in a mood for vengeance, and they wanted it hot and strong. It was easy enough to follow Lacy's track in the deep, soft snow.

"He's not gone to the village," said Blagden. "The way he's gone leads to Lynwood."

"Lynwood?" asked Pat.

"Yes. That's his brother's place, you know. His brother, Rupert, is Squire of Lynwood."

"Oh, yes, I know, I remember."

Back to Pat's memory came that strange adventure in Lacy's study, when, fastened up in the cupboard by the mischievous juniors, he had been compelled to hear the talk between the brothers.

Not a word of it had passed his lips since that day, though more than once he had thought of taking Blagden and Greene into his confidence.

Blagden looked at him curiously.

"You remember?" he said. "Have you seen the squire?"

"He was here on the day of the election," said Pat. "Oh, yes, so he was! He was rotten about Eldred Lacy, losing, too, I hear. He wanted Lacy to get in as captain of St. Kit's. He must be awfully strong on brotherly love, to have any for that wretched, thumping you."

"There's Lacy," said Greene, pointing along the lane.

The figure of the prefect could be seen ahead, tramping along in the direction of Lynwood.

Blagden grinned as a thought came into his mind. "Let's cut across the fields, and I know a lovely spot where we can ambush him," he said. "We can make the bounder hop, and he won't be able to get at us."

"Lead on, Macduff!"

Blagden led on. They crossed a couple of fields, skirted another, and sprinted along a snowy path under leafless trees. They came out upon a high bank sloping steeply down to a lane. In summer the bank was easy of access, but now it was thick with snow, and anyone attempting to climb it would have risked going down again in the midst of an avalanche.

There was a ragged fence along the top of the bank, coated with snow, with here and there rusty, leafless bushes. Pat looked down into the lane.

"Sure he'll pass this way, Blaggy!"

"Of course. This is the lane to Lynwood."

"Good enough. Let's make some snowballs."

They set to work, and soon had a heap of missiles ready. A footstep was heard crunching the snow in the lane below. Pat looked through the low fence.

"It isn't Lacy," he said.

A man in a dirty ragged coat, with a fur cap on his head, was slouching along the lane. He had his hands in his pockets, and a short black pipe in his mouth. His face was almost the hue of copper from continued use of strong drink. The chums looked at him with considerable disgust.

"Nice-looking porter bounder," remarked Blagden. "A wash would do him good. Shall we liven him up with a ball or two?"

"Nunno! There comes Lacy, and we don't want to put him on his guard."

Lacy, who was striding rapidly along, soon overtook the tramp. The latter stopped him to speak to him.

"I've got nothing to give away," said Lacy shortly.

force. "Who's asking for?" said the man, with an unpleasant
 the junior.
 have been? Well, what do you want?"
 rescue. "I want to ask yer a civil question," said the ruffian, "and
 Blagden yer can't be civil, too, I might knock yer head off as like
 him wis' not."
 "Well, well, what is it?"
 "Is this 'ere the way to Lynwood?"
 Lacy stared at his questioner.
 the charge. "What do you want to know that for? What business
 in you possibly have at Lynwood? If you take a word of
 rates, an'vice, you won't go."
 The man leered again, in an indescribably cunning and
 unpleasant way.
 "Why shouldn't I go if I want to?"
 "Because your sort are not wanted there," said Lacy.
 I happen to be the squire's brother, you see, and so I
 kid liknow what I'm talking about. The squire sets his dogs on
 me. Lo'ramps. That's all. So you'd better keep off the grass."
 And he swung round and strode on again. The man
 uickened his pace and overtook him.
 "All right, young mister, I'll come with you, if you're the
 squire's brother. He'll be glad to see me, I'm certain."
 Lacy stopped, staring at him in blank amazement.
 "Are you mad," he asked, "or drunk?"
 "Do I look either? I'm an old friend of the squire's, I
 ough he hasn't seen me for a long time. He'll be ever
 equired to know you the name of Black—Seth Black!"
 "Of course not. You must be drunk!"
 The three Black grinned.
 "He'll know me—you see," he replied. "The squire's
 was cast as come back from abroad, ain't he?"
 "Yes."
 The way "Well, that's where I knew him—abroad. Never mind
 here. Mebbe he'd rather you didn't know. But, you'll
 ee, he knows me—you'll see, my pippin! I'm coming to
 a brother-in-law of you."
 "You're going to do nothing of the kind."
 "Ain't I? Who's going to stop me?"
 Lacy did not answer that question. He started off again
 a quicker pace; but the ruffian, grinning evilly, kept pace
 with him. And so they came abreast of the waiting chums,
 who had heard the foregoing colloquy with astonishment.
 "Let her ficker!" exclaimed Pat.
 Three snowballs flew with unerring aim. Each of them
 iced Lacy in the countenance, and he sat down in the snow.
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pat. "Let him have some more!"
 As fast as they could hurl them, the chums pelted Lacy
 with the snowballs as he tried to rise. Seth Black stood with
 his hands in his pockets, looking on with loud guffaws. But
 to this amusement ceased suddenly when a ball, missing its
 target, plumped upon his coppery nose and broke in his
 nose.
 He broke into a stream of savage imprecations.
 "Crumbs!" ejaculated Blagden, in disgust. "Hark at the
 east!"
 "We shall have to stop that, or he'll shock us if he goes
 on long enough," said Pat; and he cent the next ball full
 into the tramp's face.
 Seth Black staggered. Lacy scrambled to his feet, and
 skirted his fist at the boys on the top of the high bank. He
 looked as wild with rage, but it looked too risky to climb.
 "I'll—Oh, oooh!"
 His threats were cut short by a smashing snowball.
 He spat the snow out of his mouth, and, forgetting all
 evidence in his rage, essayed to clamber up the bank to get
 at the junior.
 "Hold hard!" whispered Pat. "Let him get half-way up,
 and then give him a volley."
 Lacy scrambled up fiercely, and Black, equally enraged,
 followed him. Had either of them got hold of the boys, the
 ater would certainly have been hurt. But long ere they
 ready, were within reach Pat gave the word, and the snowballs
 below, rained down.
 Lacy gave a yell, and lost his footing as the missiles crashed
 upon him, and throwing his arms out wildly, caught hold of
 a head, he tramp.
 "Leggo!" yelled Black.
 But Lacy, who felt himself going, was not likely to let go.
 For a moment they swayed, and then down they went to-
 gether. A huge mass of snow, displaced from the steep bank
 with a struggle, went with them. They rolled into the lane
 in the midst of a veritable avalanche.
 to put The chums yelled with laughter.
 "Oh dear!" said Pat, wiping his eyes. "I shouldn't have
 book thosken Lacy for such a giddy acrobat! But come on, kids;
 his is where we do a guy!"
 And the trio were soon far from the scene.

A Strange Meeting.

"Eldred! What on earth have you been doing with
 yourself?"
 Squire Lacy stared at his brother in astonishment as he
 asked the question.
 He came striding along the lane from Lynwood as Eldred
 Lacy dragged himself from the mass of snow which had
 rolled down the steep bank with him.
 Eldred rubbed the snow out of his eyes, and looked at his
 brother.
 "I've had a tumble," he said sulkily.
 "Been trying to climb the bank? What on earth for?"
 "Some kids up there were snowballing me."
 "Ha, ha! You would have been wiser to let them alone."
 "There's nothing to laugh at that I can see."
 "You can't see yourself, my dear boy. You look comical
 extremely so. You seem to have had a companion in mis-
 fortune. Who's your friend?" asked the squire, with a grin,
 as he glanced at the disreputable tramp.
 "No friend of mine, but according to his own account,"
 said Eldred maliciously, "he's one of yours."
 "Eh? What do you mean?"
 "Eh him."
 Seth Black was on his feet now. He was rubbing the snow
 from his coppery face. He caught Eldred's words, and looked
 at the squire with an evil grin.
 "Don't you know an old pal, Lacy?" he said coolly.
 The squire started violently.

FIVE MINUTES WITH SANDOW.

III.

THE VALUE OF LEARNING TO BOX.

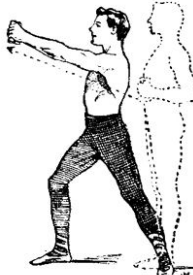
The noble art of self-defence, as boxing is termed—for remember,
 the aim of boxing is to enable a man to defend himself, not to give
 offence to others—has a hardening effect on the body of anyone who
 takes part in it, and accustoms him to take the rough with the smooth
 throughout life.
 Boxing tends to quicken a man's powers of perception, to make up
 his mind and act quickly, and encourage him to grow into a thorough
 Englishman. In boxing agility counts for almost as much as strength,
 quickness in delivering a blow and getting out of reach of a sharp
 return, knowing immediately what to do and the most rapid way of
 doing it.
 It is not the object of these articles to teach a youth how to box—
 that must be learnt under a professional master and by actual practice—
 but to teach him how to make his body physically fit, and how to
 increase his strength so that he may make the greatest use of the skill
 which he will acquire under proper tuition.
 The exercises which will be given in these pages will develop the
 strength to a remarkable degree, will give agility to the limbs, and thus
 enable the pupil to deliver a blow with the greatest effect in the least
 possible space of time.

Boxing calls for speed, strength
 and endurance, and these qualities
 are only to be found in a man who
 has trained his body systemati-
 cally by proper exercise. Big men
 often possess strength and endur-
 ance, but are too much like cart-
 horses to be quick, and smaller
 men who possess speed and endur-
 ance are often at a loss for the
 necessary strength.
 By performing the exercises
 shown each week everyone will be
 able to obtain these three principal
 qualities in boxing, and thus gain
 more proficiency in the art.

EX. I.—READY POSITION.
 Stand with left toe pointing to
 left, and right foot to the right,
 the left arm flexed, forearm hori-
 zontal, elbows close to sides, eyes
 front.

Movement.
 Lunge three feet to front with
 right foot, right knee bent, left leg
 straight, and at the same time strike vigorously forward with left
 bell, stretching forward the shoulders as far as possible. Do not
 allow the heels to leave the ground. Smartly recover to position,
 bringing the right heel close to left. In lunging with the bell the arm
 should be straightened just before the right foot touches the ground—
 i.e., the movement of the arm should slightly antedate the move-
 ment of the foot. Muscles: Serratus, Pectorals, Deltoid, Latissimus
 Dorsi, and Quadriceps.

EX. 2.—READY POSITION.
 As in Exercise 1. Movement.
 Exactly the reverse of Exercise 1. Muscles same as in Exercise 1.
 Any reader writing to No. 1, Sandow Hall, Victoria Embankment,
 London, W.C., will be supplied with a free copy of the "Lookiet,
 "Sandow's Way to Strength," which shows how Sandow obtained his
 magnificent strength, and gives full instructions how readers may obtain
 similar muscular development and robust health.



10. NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE LYNGROFT HOUSEKEEPER,"
 A Tale of Bessie, the Twaice & Co.,
 By H. Clarke Black.

"THE RED RIVER MYSTERY,"
 A Tale of Captain Frank
 Ferret, Detective.

IN "PLUCK," 10.

He came a pace or two nearer the man in the fur cap, staring at him as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

Eldred Lacy looked from one to the other in amazement. He had regarded the tramp's statement as an impudent invention, but it was pretty clear now that the squire did know Seth Black; and to judge by the wavering colour in his bronzed face, he stood in some kind of fear of him.

He stared at Black as a man might stare at a ghost. "You!" he ejaculated, at last. "Surprised to see me—hey?" said Black, leering. "I thought you would be. I was coming to call on you when I met this young gentleman. Nice young gentleman he is, too. Said you'd set the dogs on me if I came to Lynwood."

Squire Lacy was silent. He was evidently suffering from a strange shock, and hardly heard what the man said.

"If I ain't welcome," continued Black, "I won't come. I'll go to the police instead."

A look of terror leaped into the squire's face.

"What do you mean?"

"I dare say they would be glad to see me."

"You are mad!"

"Oh, no, I ain't! I could tell 'em something that would open their eyes—something about Rupert Lacy of Lynwood when he wasn't called Rupert Lacy—"

"Silence!" "What's the matter? We're all friends here," grinned the ruffian. "Master Eldred won't split—ch? He's got nearly as much at stake as you have. H—"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Certainly, I'll keep. But, you know, they say silence is golden—squire, I'm afeared you'll find it expensive. I reckon it will be worth a big price to you, Mr. Lacy."

The squire, with a face as white as chalk, turned to his brother.

"You'd better defer your visit a bit, Eldred. Come to-morrow, or the next day, I shall be occupied just now."

"With me," said Black.

"But you said you had an important matter to speak about, Rupert!" exclaimed Lacy.

"Yes, yes; but I will see you again."

"I came over from the school on purpose to see you," said Lacy sulkily. "I've cut the half-holiday to waste just to come."

The squire made an irritable gesture. "It can't be helped. I can't attend to you now. Good-bye!"

But Eldred lingered. He was intensely curious to know the meaning of this strange encounter.

He had expected his brother to reply to the tramp's familiarity with a blow, and the evident fear Black inspired in the squire's breast amazed him.

(This grand story will be continued in next Saturday's PLUCK.)

Your Editor's Corner.

All letters should be addressed, "The Editor, PLUCK, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London."

"THE LYNCROFT HOUSEKEEPER."

The extra long, complete school tale appearing in our next Saturday's issue of PLUCK will be written by H. Clarke Hook, and will deal with some very funny adventures of Specs, the Twins, & Co., Specs for the time assuming one of his marvellous disguises, and masquerading as the new housekeeper. At times the fun is fast and furious; at others—well, Specs gets into dire trouble, which is funnier still.

"THE RED-RIVER MYSTERY,"

our second long, complete tale, is a thrilling account of the experiences of Captain Frank Ferret, detective. In "The Red-River Mystery" his wonderful quickness and nerve, under the most trying of circumstances, are well displayed, and, needless to say, form most interesting reading.

Now, I want to draw your attention to the two new additions to "The Boys' Friend" Library—Nos. 11 and 12. "The Pride of the School," by Henry St. John; and "Guy Prescott's Trust," by Craven Gower.

This latter is a very fine tale of adventure; and Guy Prescott's journey to Yokohama, where he has to deliver a certain packet in a hundred days, will be followed with absorbing interest.

Should either of those books be sold out, your newsagent can obtain them for you by special order.

For threepence you can get as good, and more interesting, reading matter than is often contained in the 3s. 6d. novel.

NEXT
SATURDAY'S
COVER.

Has any reader No. 88 of PLUCK (new series) for sale? If so, will he let me know by postcard? The copy must be clean.

YOUR EDITOR.



This picture depicts an incident from "The Lyncroft Housekeeper," by H. Clarke Hook, one of the two complete tales for next Saturday's PLUCK. 32 pages. Price 1d.