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**SEXTON BLAKE,**  
the World-Famous  
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Bad Tidings.

**S**EXTON BLAKE was standing gazing out of the window in Baker Street. There was a look of brightness, almost of eagerness, in his eyes. Occasionally he glanced at his watch. After some minutes passed thus, he smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd no idea the time could pass so slowly without Tinker," he murmured. "The lad has been only a week away, and it seems like a month since we parted. The evenings have been dull without him, and I've missed him at every turn when I wanted papers or letters. The old place seems quite different since he left. Yes, I'll be jolly glad to have him back."

He began to put away a pile of records lying on the table, and while thus engaged, a taxi drew up against the kerb. Next moment a voice he recognised came floating through the open window.

"Glad to see you again, sir! How have you been getting on?"

"Oh, very well, all things considered! And how are you, Tinker? But I needn't ask that. The change has done you a world of good; you're looking ten times better than when you left!" Blake replied, shaking hands warmly. "And how is Hayford's?"

Tinker's face suddenly became grave.

"He's in no end of a fix, I think," he said thoughtfully. "Say, sir, didn't you tell him that there ought to be no difficulty about his getting a small holding under that new Act of Parliament?"

"Yes. I looked into the Act, and though in some ways it is very vague and loosely worded, yet the intention of the Legislature is quite clear. I hope Hayford hasn't taken a false step of any sort. I've been interested in him ever since—well, you know the story. What's his trouble, Tinker?"

"His landlord won't give him the small holding, sir. He's making all sorts of difficulties."

Blake frowned.

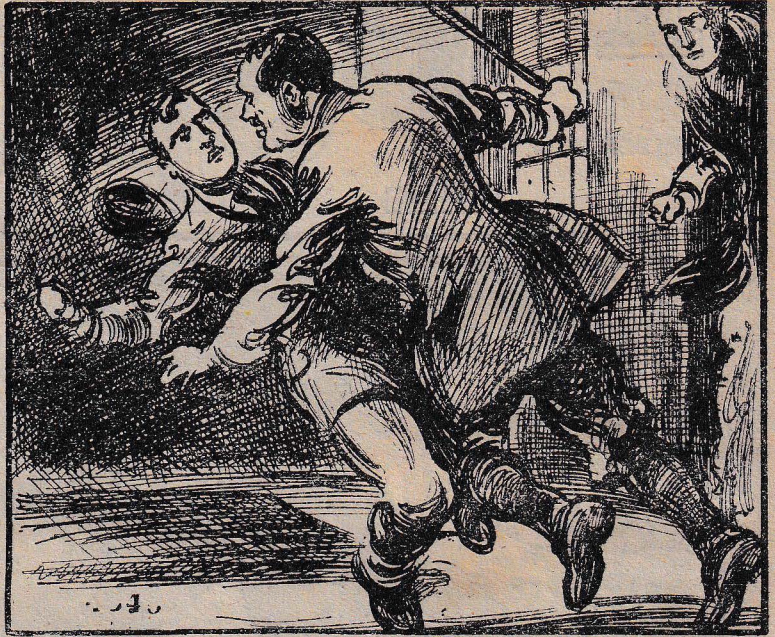
"His landlord? Why, I thought it was a young lady who owned the property!"

"Miss Mellson? Oh, yes, that's right enough, but it's her uncle I'm talking about. He manages everything for her now, and a cantankerous old customer he is, too!"

"Yet I don't understand how the difficulty can have arisen," Blake replied, still pondering deeply. "Under Section 19 of the Act a tenant can agree with his landlord for the purchase of his holding. And that is what Hayford did?"

"It was only a provisional agreement, with a clause in it that enables the landlord to back out. That's what Boxton says now."

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Next moment Twigg staggered desperately forward as Blake hurried him into the darkness. He collided with Tinker, returning from the stable, and they both fell.

"Boxton is the solicitor acting for Miss Mellson and her uncle, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"So I've thought from what you told me. Boxton evidently wants to keep Hayford at arm's length. And what is the uncle's name, Tinker?"

"Jonathan Twigg!"

"Humph! I remember the name now. Miss Mellson's mother was a Miss Twigg before she married. Hayford told me that when I last saw him. He seemed to think that Miss Mellson was a very nice young lady. Has he altered his opinion, do you know?"

Tinker drew his hand across his mouth to hide a grin.

"He calls her Millicent when he's talking about her," he said. "And he's doing that most times when he can get anyone to listen to him. The other day I heard him on the far side of a hedge telling his dog Toby that there was no one like her. I did yell laughing, and Hayford got fair wild. It was the only time I riled him, but I s'pose chaps are a bit dangerous when they go silly after a girl. I can't understand that sort of thing myself. 'Tain't in my line somehow."

Tinker picked up his bag to take it to his room, but to his surprise Blake stopped him.

"Leave that bag where it is for the present," he said. "I want to think, and I want you here. Sit down."

Tinker sank into a chair, and Blake began pacing up and down the room. Sometimes he stopped and looked down at the mantelpiece, loaded his pipe, and struck a match. After smoking for a minute he looked across the room at Tinker.

"If this fellow Jonathan Twigg refuses to sell the holding to Hayford, the game is not up yet. Does Hayford know that?" he asked.

"I don't know as he does," Tinker replied.

"Under the Act the County Council may provide small holdings for persons who desire to buy or lease them and will themselves cultivate the holdings," Blake said.

"Boxton is the solicitor to the County Council, and I was told down there that they did whatever he suggested," Tinker replied.

"Well, even so, Hayford isn't beaten yet," Blake went on. "If the County Council won't stir in the matter, he can appeal to the Small Holdings Commissioners appointed by the Act, and they will look into the matter. And if they report favourably, and present a scheme to the County Council, through the Board of Agriculture, the County Council must carry out the proposals of the Commissioners. If they fail to do so within six months, the Commissioners may prepare a scheme themselves."

"You seem to know the Act, sir!" Tinker said.

"Yes; I took a deep interest in this Act of Parliament from the start, and I welcomed it most heartily, and now at the very start obstacles are put in its way. This man Jonathan Twigg is no true Britisher."

"That's what they say down in Cazley, anyhow," Tinker remarked. "The labourers are more dead against him even than Hayford and some other chaps who want to buy their holdings."

"What! Does he refuse to give land for allotments to the tenants, too?" Blake cried wrathfully.

"Rather! He'll let anyone have anything if a man pays the price he asks, but that is always out of all reason. And everyone in Cazley says that the land there is suitable."

"And is there no one there who can tackle him?"

"There is no one to lead them," Tinker explained. "I wanted them to get up a public meeting out on the green by the village pump, and they all seemed willing to go to it, but none of them would speak; they were afraid of old Twigg. He got to hear of it, though, and came down blustering to Hayford's house, and wanted to see the London rascal who had dared to meddle between him and his tenants. Those were his words. I went out to see him, and he called me a young cub, and told me that if I didn't clear out sharp he'd make the place too hot to hold me. If it wasn't that he might have turned nasty with Hayford I'd have given as good as I got, you bet. All I did was to tell him not to squeal so loud, but to give the pigs a chance. That's all I said. He looked as if he was going to have a fit, but then the horse in his trap became restive, and he had to hurry out to the road. He sent a bobby up that night to scare me, just as if I was a kid, but I'd fun with him. I led him out the back way, and he fell over a tub I'd fixed up, and Toby started to bite his calves. You should have seen the way he sprinted out of the yard."

"Twigg dares anyone to interfere, does he?" Blake asked.

"He means to ride rough-shod over the people, does he? He threatens anyone who demands fair play? That's his sort—eh? Tinker, instead of unpacking your bag, just throw some things into mine. It was I who sent Hayford down to Cazley, and I'm going to see this thing through. The Act of Parliament is on our side, and we'll see what Mr. Jonathan Twigg has to say when he meets a man who knows as much as he does. By the way, you didn't say who you are, did you?"

"No, sir. You told me not to mention any names, because they might guess that Hayford had been indebted to your kindness for a start, if I did."

"Quite so! I remember that now. Well, order luncheon, and get ready for the journey. Meanwhile, I'll send a telegram to Hayford telling him we are running down, and to meet us at the station."

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Off to Cazley.

THE train ran into the small wayside station after dusk had fallen. Tinker jumped out to the platform, and Blake followed him.

They walked slowly out of the station, each carrying his bag, and the lad crossed over at once to a gig drawn up against a hedge on the far side of the road. A strapping young fellow was standing at the pony's head.

"Ah, Hayford, how are you? I thought I'd run down and spend some time here," Blake said cheerily. "Why, man, you're in the pink of condition! Your chest and shoulders have broadened out wonderfully, and you look as hard as nails. I'd scarcely recognise you!"

"I'm sorry I couldn't get round to the platform to meet you, Mr. Blake, but the pony is skittish," Hayford explained, as he cordially greeted his friend and benefactor. "I am jolly glad to see you I needn't say, and this is a big surprise. I felt quite lonely this morning when old Tinker left, and I could hardly believe my eyes when your telegram came. Now, jump up! Tinker, you can stow the bags under you at the back."

They rattled off, leaving the throng still flitting from trap to trap, and they plunged down the hill under the overhanging trees, the pony pulling for his head. Swinging out through the railway gates on to the broad road, they shot under an archway, and came out on a wide stretch of country.

Through the village half a mile away, past the dark cottages and the one brightly-lighted inn, the pony petulantly pounded the hard road, and, settling down into an even stride as they got into the country again, he breasted the rising ground steadily. They turned off the main road presently, and ten minutes later Hayford drew upon the rein.

"Steady, boy—steady!"

They were close to a two-storied farmhouse standing back thirty yards from the lane, with outhouses to one side, and a stretch of grass running down to the hedge. Hayford turned in through a wooden gateway, and the pony tried to break into a canter again as he drew near to his stable.

"Here we are!" Hayford cried, as Tinker jumped down and went to the pony's head. "Welcome to Ivy Cottage, Mr. Blake! It's only a bachelor's homestead, but I'll do all possible to make you comfortable. Come in—come in! Tinker will take the pony round to the yard. You've no idea what a farmer he's become in the last week! He talks of cattle and sheep, and the rust in wheat, and the rotation of crops as if he'd never been out of the country all his life!"

Flinging open the door, Hayford led the way into a square hall which served excellently as a sitting-room. A bright log fire was burning in the open hearth; a large lamp was suspended from a hook in the ceiling over the table in the centre of the room; sporting pictures were on the walls, a pair of comfortable armchairs flanked the hearth, a gun, a fishing-rod, a well-seasoned bat were piled together in one corner; in another was a large oak case; under the diamond-paned window was a settee, a bookcase faced the door, and four stout, old-fashioned chairs were drawn around the table, which, with its spotlessly white tablecloth, its bright glass and cutlery, its tempting joint and hot pastry pie, its big loaf of home-made bread on a brown platter, its cheese and cakes and jams, told better than words could how eager the young fellow had been to extend every hospitality to his illustrious guest. The bright scene pleased Blake at once.

"Why, Hayford, this is as snug a home as man need ever want!" he said cheerily. "You certainly have made the place comfortable and enticing! A log fire and a big copper kettle hissing over it! Ah! And photographs, too! What's that one in the centre in the particularly nice frame? A young lady—eh? Now, how did you come by that?"

There was a twinkle in his eyes as he asked the last question.

"That's Miss Millicent Mellson, who owns this estate," Hayford explained, as he helped Blake off with his overcoat.

"And is it a rule on the estate that the fair young lady must give her photograph to all her tenants?" Blake went on.

Hayford smiled.

"Miss Mellson has been very kind to me," he said. "But I see you are making fun at my expense, Mr. Blake," he remarked good-humouredly as Blake chuckled. "For goodness' sake, don't do that when Tinker is about! The young rascal delights in chaffing me. Besides, it's no laughing matter now! I'm rather knocked out of time."

He sighed as, bending down, he threw another log on the fire.

"That has happened since Miss Mellson's uncle came here, I suppose?" Blake suggested. "What sort of a man is he, Hayford? Tell me what you know about him."

"I don't know much in his favour; he has quarrelled with nearly everyone since he came here three months ago," Hayford explained. "He's a bully, for one thing, and he's so suspicious that I sometimes think he must have mixed in very queer company all the years he was abroad. And —"

"Oh, he has just returned from abroad, then! Where was he?"

"Nigger-driving in Cuba, and he wants to treat the folk around here the same way, Mr. Blake. He tells us all to our faces that we are an ignorant pack of yokels, but I wouldn't bother about what he says if only he'd leave us alone. That's just what he won't do. He meddles in everything! He has threatened to sack the schoolmaster, and to have the boys in the village whipped for playing on the road when his trap is coming along, and he wants the alterations in the institute stopped now, and he's trying to prevent one poor chap from getting any outdoor relief just because he spoke out his mind a few days ago. He's a tyrant, and worse, I think! Anyhow, he's made a dead set on me, and you know my tenancy here will have to be renewed in three weeks' time."

"But surely the young lady won't brook any interference with you if she likes you!" Blake urged.

"I've no claim on her affections," Hayford replied. "She is wealthy. If it wasn't for your kindness, Mr. Blake,

I wouldn't even be in the small, comfortable home I have now. You took me from abject poverty when my parents died, had me educated, helped me on every way, and—

"Oh, well, don't bother to talk about that, Hayford!" Blake interjected hastily. "You'd hold out your hand to anyone in need if the chance came your way. Forget all about that."

"No, I'll never forget about it; I'll thank you from my grave to the last day of my life!" Hayford replied fervently.

"Well, we're talking about Miss Mellson now, anyhow," Blake said.

"Yes. I think the world of her, Mr. Blake, but though she was always very nice to me, I never dared to tell her what I felt."

"You won't be able to keep your feelings bottled up always!" Blake chuckled. "Some day your heart will carry you away!"

"I never see her now," Hayford explained. "That's strange! Has her uncle stepped in between you?"

"I fancy so, but I have no proof. Hallo! Tinker is outside. Come in, Tinker! Supper is ready!"

The latch shot up, and the door slowly opened. "Come on, Tinker! None of your larks, my lad!" Blake cried. Then he stared in surprise.

For, instead of Tinker, a man was standing on the threshold, holding a legal-looking document in his hand, and scowling at Hayford. And when he saw Blake he favoured him, too, with the same insolent stare.

He was of medium height, very broad shouldered and deep chested, about fifty years of age, and his head seemed screwed on to his shoulders, so small was his neck. He was very fat, two big scars marked his features, one over the left eye, and the other down the right cheek, giving a droop to his left eye and a twist to his jaw, and adding to the ugliness of a face that had not even brightness nor good humour to redeem it.

He was dressed in a Norfolk tunic and knickerbockers, his stumpy calves bulging out through homespun stockings, and in his tie he wore a big, flat, quaintly-carved pin. Altogether he was a singular-looking object, out of place in peaceful rural life. Had Blake met him on the slopes of the Antilles with a couple of revolvers in his belt, he would have felt that he fitted in with his lawless surroundings. Here he looked like a stranded bandit. And his voice boomed like a foghorn as he raised his thick hand and shook the papers at Hayford.

"Entertaining company, my bankrupt tenant—eh?" he scoffed. "Imitating your betters! Getting your flash friends around to create discord on my property again! Well, here's something to go on with. It will serve as sauce for your supper. Just you start to pack your traps. Your days here are over!"

As he finished he stamped across the room and held the paper.

"What is this?" Hayford demanded.

"Notice to quit! I've had enough of you. Jonathan Twigg don't stand any cheek from upstarts. I've laid my stick about lots like you in my time, and if you turn nasty I'll know how to deal with you. Yes, and I'll send your meddling friends flying out of this pretty sharp, too, if they ain't careful," he went on, eyeing Blake. "Don't you try to get up the crowd here against me, same as a young

whelp as was here did the other day. Keep a civil tongue in your head, or Jonathan Twigg will start on you."

"Talking to me, sir?" Blake asked blandly, whilst Hayford flushed crimson with anger.

"Yes, sir, I am talking to you! Who else did you suppose I was talking to?" Twigg replied contemptuously. "And do you be warned in time, or—"

"You see that door?" Blake asked. Twigg stared.

"What about it?" he snarled. "Get the far side of it at once, or I'll flog you out neck and crop!" Blake said icily.

"Eh? What!" Twigg bellowed. "Will you go?"

"No! The impudent scoundrel! Do you know who I am? How dare you talk that way to me? I'm the landlord, and—"

"And you're a trespasser in this house at the present moment, and an ill-bred, insolent bully," Blake cut in.

"Leave him to me, Hayford. I know how to bring him to his senses. So you think that you can do as you like down in this part of the world, do you, Mr. Jonathan Twigg? You think there is no one who will dare to stand up against you? You'd browbeat the people here like the niggers on the Cuba plantations—eh? Well, that game is up. You dared to threaten me. Now I give you my answer. I defy you, and you can do your worst. And before I leave Cazley I'll make you rue the day that ever you came here. Now, you've had your say and I've had mine. That's enough in the way of words. Out you go at once!"

Twigg's fingers were moving tremulously around the knob of his big stick as Blake spoke; his eyes were dancing in his head with fury, the veins stood out on his purple face. He raised the stick.

"I'll thrash you within an inch of your life for this," he began. "I'll—"

The stick was snatched from his grasp. He was spun round and round, and rushed to the doorway. Before he could even try to shake himself free he was on the step outside. Next moment he staggered desperately forward to save himself from falling as Blake hurled him into the darkness.

He collided with Tinker returning from the stable, and they both fell. The lad gave a yell, and letting out with his fist he caught Twigg on the jaw. And as the bully rose to his feet, bawling with blind fury, Tinker, with a loud, merry laugh, dashed into the house and slammed the door. Twigg stood irresolutely for some moments. Then, muttering blood-curdling threats of vengeance, he limped away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tinker Gets a New Job.

TINKER, hurrying down to breakfast next morning, found the table laid but the room empty. Before long Hayford hurried in.

"Mr. Blake went out a couple of hours ago for a stroll, but he knows the breakfast-hour, and he's bound to be back in a few moments," he said. "Take your seat at the table, Tinker, old man. The rashers and eggs are piping hot if you care for them, and it would be a pity to let them get cold. Or there's that cold pie from last night if you prefer it, or some sausages under that dish.


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Please yourself. Ah, there's Mr. Blake! I knew he wouldn't be long."

Blake's tall, athletic figure had thrown a shadow across the window as he strode round from the side of the house. Tramping into the hall, he put his hat on a peg.

"Good-morning!" Hayford cried.

"Morning! Morning!" Blake cried back cheerily. "Is that lazy varlet Tinker downstairs yet? He went to bed early enough, anyhow, and—ah, there he is! Only just in time for breakfast, I'll lay a wager! Somehow, he never manages to be late for that, though. That's right, my lad; load up your plate. You've a hard day's work before you."

"What's on now?" Tinker asked, as he began to tackle the cold pie, and Blake pulled a seat to the table.

"Hayford said last night that you were a capital farmer, and you had the cheek to let the statement go uncontradicted, so I'm going to put your knowledge to the test," Blake said laughingly, as he sat down. "Coffee for me, thanks, Hayford. And, yes, rashers and eggs, please. And—"

"I'm a good hand at bossing a job, but I ain't strong," Tinker remarked, with a grin. "If there's hard work to be done, I'll be able to get a score of men in no time, and I'll undertake that they don't shirk work whilst my eye is on them. You can trust me for that! I could bustle them as well as Jonathan Twigg himself if I was given a free hand."

"I can trust you to dodge hard work if it's the sort you don't fancy," Blake replied genially; "but this time you won't be able to get out of it. We can't spend money on wages; that would swamp all the profits. See here, Hayford—and his tone changed—"I've been thinking a good deal over this business of Twigg, and it's not the sort of thing that can be settled in a day or two. When we start to fight him he can throw any amount of legal obstacles in our way one after the other, and that means our appealing to the Commissioners of the Board of Agriculture, and prolonged investigations and tardy reports, and all sorts of irritating delays. So I've made up my mind to settle down here for a while, and, of course, there must be some tangible reason for my residence beyond a visit to you, if I am to gain the confidence of the people and the goodwill of the authorities. Otherwise Twigg might represent me at the start as a meddling agitator who had no stake in Cazley."

"Then you are going to take a farm?"

"Oh, no! I doubt if I could get one near here even if I tried. Twigg would be able to baulk me in that. But I've been round the locality this morning, and it seems to me that there is a better opening here for market gardening than folks realise. And as we intend, in spite of Twigg, to enforce the Small Holdings Act here, and allotments for the labourers, I propose to give practical proof of the value of intensive gardening."

"You mean to adopt the French system?"

"Certainly. It has been tried in other parts of Britain already with complete success. Why shouldn't we adopt it in Cazley? Men are making five and six hundred pounds a year, and more, out of an acre of land in Britain this year. To old-fashioned people that seems incredible, but it is strictly true. Of course, the initial outlay is very heavy, but in every case so far where real hard work has been put into the undertaking, the money has come back fourfold."

"And where do you mean to get the acre of land, Mr. Blake?"

"You have a field at the back that just suits," Blake replied. "I will rent an acre of it from you, and start work at once."

"But I'm under notice to quit now! In three weeks' time Twigg can come down upon me, and all your money will be thrown away."

"No fear!" Blake said quietly. "Many unexpected things often happen in three weeks when a man puts up a good fight, Hayford, and I'm going to give Mr. Jonathan Twigg enough to think about from this on. Don't worry about him; get on with your work, and leave him to me. Well, can I have the acre I want?"

"Of course you can, Mr. Blake, and as much more as you care to take."

"Oh, one acre is quite enough, thanks, and we won't use all that at the start, either; but by degrees we'll extend our garden. Now, Tinker, there's your job for you, and either you'll be a benefactor to Cazley, or the laughing-stock of every farmer in the neighbourhood. That's a certainty; the garden must either be a success or a dead failure; there's no half-way between, so put your back into the undertaking."

Tinker had been listening to the foregoing conversation in silence.

"I never claimed to have much experience in this 'ere intensive gardening, sir," he said demurely, winking at Hayford.

"The first thing you'll have to buy is a proper rig-out," Blake remarked; "and as all the folks here are to be led to think that we have come down to start this garden, you'd better get me one, too. You can give out that we are a couple of market-gardeners who have rented the land from you on strictly business terms, Hayford, and you can explain our presence in the house by saying that we are your paying guests, as we want to be as near as possible to our work. We don't want our names mentioned. I'm Sexton from this on whilst I'm here, and Tinker's name is Tingley."

"And when I've got the togs, what am I to order next?" Tinker asked.

"Ah! You'd better jot it all down. Got a pencil? Good! Now, let's see! There are some things that are absolutely necessary before we order the seeds."

Blake had finished breakfast, and now, rising from the table, he crossed to the hearthrug and began to fill his pipe. Tinker had taken a pencil and an old envelope from his pocket, and he waited expectantly whilst Blake smoked.

"Ready?" Blake asked presently. "All right! Put down two hundred tons of manure first."

"What?" Tinker gasped.

"That will do for a start. We can't manage with less, though. If we intended to work on the whole acre we'd have to use six or seven hundred tons."

"But you'll smother the land!" Hayford said.

"My dear fellow, you can't get the land to give vegetables and fruit out of season," Blake reasoned. "And that is what intensive gardening does. We mean to supply the market with vegetables all the year round. So we don't bother about the soil at all. We make a moist soil ourselves, and a moist atmosphere. Now, Tinker, next item! Ready?"

"Yes."

"Two hundred frames, each about twelve feet long by four and a half feet wide, with straw mats to cover them when necessary."

Tinker scribbled for some moments.

"That's down," he said then.

"Six hundred cloches?"

"It sounds Frenchy, anyhow. But what are they?"

"Small frames made of glass and shaped like a bell. They are very handy, and better for cos lettuces than frames. Get the usual garden tools, too, and then you will be able to start work. Telegraph for the frames and cloches, and then see about the manure. That will occupy you fully to-day, and to-night you can tell us how far you have succeeded. You are going back to the fields, I suppose, Hayford? Well, I'll stroll round the neighbourhood. There are some things I want to think over."

"He's going to puzzle out how he'll tackle Mr. Twigg,"

Tinker whispered to Hayford, as Blake left the room. "But he won't be the only one to-day with a big nut to crack. How in thunder am I to get all these things? I don't know where to begin! I two hundred tons of manure—eh?"

Laughing heartily at the lad's discomfiture, Hayford went back to his work, and Tinker started on his mission. Meantime, Blake had left the house and passed out through the gateway into the lane. He sauntered on, down to the main road and towards the village, his stick hooked in his arm, his hands clasped behind his back, and his hat slightly tilted forward to keep the sun from his eyes. If asked, he could not have told at that moment the direction in which he was going, so deep was he in thought, and he started as a voice accosted him.

"Say! Can you direct me to Mr. Jonathan Twigg's house? They told me in the village to take this road."

Blake looked at the speaker. He had been sitting on a gate a few feet back from the road and hidden from view on either side of the one approached by a thick, high hedge. Now, as he addressed Blake he jumped down and advanced towards him. Blake was not favourably impressed either by the stranger's appearance or his manner. He was quietly dressed in plain tweeds and a bowler hat, it is true, and his figure and carriage were good. His face also was well-featured, but it was marred by a cynical expression, and his eyes had an insolent stare. He looked about thirty-five years of age, and a man who had seen a good deal of city life; and shrewd and experienced observer of mankind that he was, Blake at once came to the conclusion that his contact with the world had been mostly amongst demoralising surroundings. His manner was very off-hand as Blake answered him.

"I am a stranger here, and I can't exactly point out Mr. Twigg's house—or, rather, the residence of his niece where he is stopping," he explained; "but you are in the right direction, certainly."

"Oh! So there's a girl there—eh?"

"Yes, a young lady owns this estate," Blake replied, looking full at the other.

"Good old Twigg! He's feathered his nest well!" the young man remarked with a short laugh. "He's doing the

fairly uncle, I suppose. Advising the dear young thing, and—"

"Is there any other way in which I can be of service to you?" Blake interjected curtly.

"Oh, no! As you don't know the way you can't help me, of course. It's a nuisance, but I must ask someone else."

"Then I'll wish you good-morning!"

"Ta-ta!" said the young man, and swinging his cane he sauntered lazily on.

"A regular cub!" Blake murmured as he moved off. "Now, I'll be bound that that fellow never did a stroke of work in his life! He belongs to the class who always dress well, always are to be seen in expensive places, seldom have the price of a cab-fare about them, and are a mystery to their acquaintances. How they manage to get credit is one of those things no honest man can understand. A shirker and a fashionable loafer. That's what he is. A high-class tramp. And now I suppose he's come down here to sponge as long as he can on old Jonathan Twigg. Ah! Twigg is not the man to let anyone get the better of him, and I don't fancy that he is overflowing with the milk of human kindness either. What's the bond between them? Good idea! I'll turn back and keep an eye on my young friend yonder."

He wheeled round and looked after the other. He was just turning a bend in the road, and Blake proceeded to stalk him down. But no sooner had he got to the corner than he stopped and drew back. For the young man, waving his cane in salutation, had quickened his pace, and Jonathan Twigg, walking in the middle of the road, was advancing towards him. From the shelter of the hedge Blake watched them both.

Twigg looked up, and, seeing the young man, stopped suddenly, his head thrust forward from his big shoulders, as if undecided whether to retreat or proceed. The young man, in no way deterred by his unfriendly attitude, strode briskly towards him, and, with a laugh that Blake could hear, laid his hand on his shoulder. Twigg shook him off, and raised his big stick. Still laughing heartily, the other stood his ground, and a rapid exchange of words ensued, Twigg evidently becoming more wrathful every moment as his gestures testified to Blake. And the young man only kept on laughing, and finally drew a paper from his pocket, which he held forward.

For some seconds Twigg would not touch it, then he roughly snatched it. The young man calmly lit a cigarette whilst Twigg read the document, and folding it carefully when returned, he placed it in a pocket-book. They spoke again, this time long and earnestly, and Twigg no longer showed signs of indignation or wrath. But close together they walked the way that Twigg had come, now apparently on the best of terms.

"Ah! What does this mean?" Blake murmured. "Is this tragedy or comedy? I'll follow and see!"

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Sharp Tussle.

FOR about half a mile the road ran in winding lengths of a hundred yards or so, and Blake was able without difficulty, to follow the two men. Then came a long straight stretch, and, perforce, to avoid detection, he had to wait until at last they disappeared in the distance. Then, hurrying after them, he came, when he had turned this corner to another half-mile of road, along which he could see uninterruptedly for the whole distance. They were not on it. They must have turned off either to the right or left.

He pushed on rapidly, one side of the road being bounded by open fields, whilst the other side was thickly wooded. And presently amongst the trees he saw a fine old Elizabethan mansion built on a gentle eminence. A lane fringed the border of the demesne, and he turned up it without hesitation. He had only gone a couple of hundred yards when he heard a sharp cry, followed by a stentorian yell. He stopped at once and gazed across the hedge in the direction from which the sounds had come. Again the stentorian shout was repeated, and gazing keenly through the thick wood he saw figures flitting amongst the trees.

"Tinker!" he murmured. "Those scoundrels have attacked him, and he's dodging them for all he's worth! That friend of Twigg is running him down, and the old bully himself is following as fast as he can. Ah, the lad is too sharp for them! He has whisked round the tree, and is off again. He's coming this way, and he'll be safe if— No, he's down! The scoundrel is on to him! If Twigg gets up to him with that big stick he'll half-kill him before he stops!"

Without a moment's further delay Blake burst his way through the hedge, sprang across a deep ditch, and rushed to Tinker's assistance. The lad was rolling like a large mastiff on the ground. The young man had great difficulty in hold-

ing him down, and Twigg every moment was drawing nearer with stick upraised. Blake ran at full speed in the direction of the little group, and so intent were the two men on Tinker's capture that they didn't see him approaching.

"Hold on to him, Evans! Don't let him go till I get up! The trespassing young dog! I'll flay him for this!" Twigg bellowed. "That's right! Hammer him well if he tries to bolt!"

Tinker had nearly broken loose, and as he was rising to his feet the man called Evans felled him to the ground with a savage blow. Twigg was only a few yards away now. Puffing with the unaccustomed exertion, his face purple, his eyes sparkling with venom, the stick held high in his hand, he was only waiting for the moment when he could bring it down on Tinker. Now he was ten yards away, now only five! Now he was over the lad. But at that moment, as with a snarl he made ready to strike, there was the switch of swift feet through the rank grass, a rush like a cyclone, and, heavy as he was, he was hurled staggering and sprawling several feet away, till, tripping over a tree-root, he went his full length on the ground with a grunt as if the wind had been squeezed out of his body. A clap like a pistol-shot followed, and Evans, lifted up for a moment, went down like a stone.

"Well, what excuses have you to offer for this disgraceful attack on my young friend?" asked Blake.

He was gazing sternly at Evans as he asked the question, and the young man, having arisen with eyes blazing and face distorted with passion, was cowed at once. The vindictive light went out of his eyes, the colour crept from his cheeks, he stood irresolutely. Not one man in ten would have liked at any time to bandy words with Blake; in his present attitude to do so would be to court disaster.

And whilst he was still crestfallen and growing more uncomfortable every moment, and Blake was waiting for an answer, Twigg's voice came like a choked talking-machine ten yards away. He had managed by this time to get somewhat over the shock of his heavy fall, and had slowly risen, and with returning strength his bullying nature was rising in wrath, and as he stamped forward he looked as if some fight was in him still.

"Hold on, there! Just wait till I get up! Don't dare to run away!" he spluttered hoarsely. "I want your name! I'm going to land you in the lock-up at once! Six months' hard labour—that's what you'll get for this!"

Blake turned and squared his shoulders. He was in no humour to bandy words.

"Lower that stick!" he commanded.

"You've broken the law!" said Twigg. "I said I'd have you gaoled for this, and I mean it! And you took a cowardly advantage of me, too! You crept behind me, and—"

"A cowardly advantage!" Blake scoffed. "That comes well from you, Mr. Jonathan Twigg! You didn't take a cowardly advantage of your size and strength—eh?—when you set upon a lad not half your weight!"

"He had no business here! He was trespassing, the same as you are now! And he struck me last night after you had the impudence to turn me out of my own cottage! I don't forget that!"

"No. And it is because of that, that you wanted to vent your spite on him now. He has not been trespassing, and I am not trespassing. Look there! Do you see that path through the trees? That wasn't made in a month or a year! It is the right of way, open by law to anyone who cares to use it, and he was as much entitled to use it as to walk the highway down below. Don't threaten me with the police-court! You made an unprovoked assault upon him, and I only interfered to protect him!"

"Oh, so that's the line you're going to take?" Twigg rejoined.

"I'm going to take a line that will surprise you very much before I'm done," Blake answered quietly, but scornfully. "I'm not going to bandy words with you now, either—in fact, I don't intend to speak to you any more; there's no necessity. And don't you address me again!"

He turned away. Twigg stared open-mouthed. Ever since he had come to Cazley he had terrorised the folk there, and here was a man who had openly flouted him twice! An uneasy feeling crept over him. This athletic stranger had used a veiled threat again. He seemed, too, to be the sort who would do whatever he said. A man like that could be a very great nuisance in the district. He could incite the people to rebel against their conditions of life, and at present they seemed disposed that way. If this fellow should offer to lead them, he might prove rather a difficult customer to beat down. All this needed thinking over—and besides, there was nothing to be gained by prolonging this heated discussion. This stranger was not to be scared!

With a grunt, he turned on his heel.

"Come on, Evans, I know what I'll do," he said vaguely.

"I'll put a stop to this pretty quick! Ah, I'll teach him something he doesn't know! Come on! Look sharp!"

Nodding his head ominously at Blake he marched off, and the young man sauntered after him. Twice before they disappeared amongst the trees Twigg looked back and shook his stick at Blake. The latter was chuckling softly.

"How did all this begin, my lad?" he asked.

"I had been to a farmhouse this side of Cazley, and I was advised to go to a man called Spracton, who lives a mile away," Tinker replied. "And seeing that there was a path through these woods, I took it, of course. And whilst I was walking along I saw Twigg and that other fellow approaching. I didn't bother about them—I knew I had every right to be on the path. But when Twigg saw me he stopped for a moment, and began talking to his pal. Then they came on together towards me. I suspected that they might be up to mischief, but I wasn't going to run away like a scared kid. I had as much right here as they."

"Of course you had!"

"I was on my guard, though. And so when Evans made a spring on me when I was quite close to them, I dodged him and bolted. Twigg yelled to him to catch me, and I knew what I was in for if he succeeded. I held my own for a bit; then I stumbled and fell. Then you came up, and you know the rest. I don't mind old Twigg wanting to get a whack at me—that's right enough after last night; but I never saw Evans before to-day, and he must be a crawling sort of creature if he'll set on to a chap just at the bidding of anyone else. That's what made me so furious. He's no man, anyhow! That's a cert!"

"I agree with you there, and I think there's a good deal between him and Twigg that would be worth finding out," Blake agreed. "Hallo! What's this?"

He had glanced at the spot where he had knocked Evans down and Tinker subsequently had attacked him. A brown object in the green grass had now attracted his attention. Stepping forward, he stooped down and picked it up.

"A pocket-book! It must belong to Evans," he said. "But the initials are F.K. That's curious! Then either Evans is not this fellow's name, or he has a pocket-book belonging to some other man. From the little I've seen of him already that last would be quite possible. And he showed Twigg a document that effected a wonderful change in that bully's manner on the road half an hour ago, I remember now. I'll look into this."

He opened the pocket-book. Inside were a collection of visiting-cards with different names and addresses. Some of the addresses were in London, some in America, half a dozen of the names were evidently foreign. Further, there were some slips of paper which he did not open; also some receipts for small amounts, a soiled parchment with figures and hieroglyphics, three letters bound together by an elastic band, and one by itself. The last he opened and glanced at. At once his attention became riveted on the page. He read it over and over again, as if puzzling out some problem.

"Is Evans a wrong 'un?" Tinker asked, with suppressed eagerness.

"Ah! Are you there still, my lad?" Blake answered, as if suddenly aroused from a reverie. "I have something here that interests me deeply. You'd better cut along and leave me to think it out."



Tinker, swinging the spade above his head, was about to bring it down upon the bully, when a stentorian voice stopped him. "Tinker, leave him to me!" It was Blake, who, emerging from a field on the far side, had heard the clamour.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
Blake Meets Miss Mellson.

**A**FTER some more moments of deep reflection, Blake sat down under a tree, and taking out his note-book he copied the letter carefully. Also he took copious notes of the other memoranda in the pocket-book, and keeping three letters, he returned the rest, pulled the elastic band over the pocket-book again, and sauntered off in the opposite direction to the one taken by Tinker. He had a couple of hours still before early dinner, and plenty to think over in the meantime.

He came out through a path on the far side of the woods, and whilst standing undecided which of many turns to take, he became suddenly aware that a small, playful poodle was frisking about his feet and demanding friendly attention. As a lover of all animals, Blake bent down at once and patted it, to its intense delight. Then he looked around to find its owner. A lady's voice made him look to the left.

"Nap! Good dog! Come here!" she cried. "Nap—Nap!"

The poodle had backed a couple of yards, and was gazing eagerly at Blake.

"Pardon the question," he said, "but have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Millicent Mellson?"

She scanned his face before answering, and he noticed that her eyes were very thoughtful, and perhaps a trifle sad.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Because I am a very particular friend of Mr. Hayford," he replied promptly.

She started.

"I know Mr. Hayford," she said slowly. "He is a friend of mine, too."

"He is in trouble," Blake said. "I have come down here to help him out of it if I can, but you can do far more for him than me. Hayford is an honourable, industrious fellow. I have a very high opinion of him, and a very great regard for him. After years of self-denial he managed to save enough money to take a farm on this estate. He has paid his rent regularly, and has been an excellent tenant in every

may. Is it right, then, that he should be evicted and flung out on the world practically penniless again?"

Whilst putting the case straightforwardly he had spoken gently, and Millicent Mellson had listened in silence and with lips parted. A look of pain had slowly gathered in her face. Now for a moment she turned her shapely head away.

"I must leave everything to my uncle," she cried, with a ring of pain in her voice. "It was my mother's wish. I made her the promise, and I must keep it. I trust my uncle. He is a man, and understands these things, and I am only an inexperienced girl. I know nothing about business. It seems hard on Mr. Hayford, and you don't know how I feel about it. I wouldn't tell my feelings to anyone. But my uncle tells me that life is full of things like that—that often when we seem most cruel we are really doing the greatest kindness; that Mr. Hayford is only wasting his time here with his great ability and education; that if he goes back to London or to some big city he will make a name for himself, whilst here he has no future before him. I hope so. I try to look at things like that."

"Your uncle has told you all this?"

"Yes. He does not dislike Mr. Hayford; he assures me that he doesn't. He says he needs rousing; that he has not enough ambition; that some day he will be glad that he left."

"But you would be sorry if Mr. Hayford left?" Blake said pointedly. "You mentioned a few moments ago that you looked upon him as a friend."

Her pretty cheeks flushed a charming pink. She bent down and patted the poodle, which all this time had been struggling at the end of the lead.

"Nap—Nap! Don't be silly!" she cried. "Yes, we are going home soon. It is getting quite late, isn't it?"

Blake smiled. Her confusion could only be due to one cause. He would be able to cheer up Hayford very considerably on his return to Ivy Cottage. He had heard all he needed at the moment, and there was no necessity to detain the young lady, who seemed anxious to depart. But something fresh occurred to him as he was about to take his departure—a good stroke of business. Later on it might lead to something. He dived his hand into his pocket, and drew out the notebook Evans had dropped.

"I found this in the grass in yonder wood," he explained. "It belongs to Mr. Evans. Perhaps you would kindly take it and restore it to him?"

"Mr. Evans! I don't know anyone of that name!" she said.

"He is a friend of Mr. Twigg. Has he never spoken about him?"

"No. But how do you know that? I wasn't aware that you and my uncle were acquainted. In fact, I don't even know your name!"

And she smiled shyly.

"Oh, my name is Sexton! I have met both your uncle and Mr. Evans—in fact, I was talking to them this morning," Blake replied. "I hope, Miss Mellson, that you won't allow anything your uncle may say about me to prejudice you against me. He does not like me, because I am determined to support Hayford in his claim for a small allotment in every possible way."

"But why should you interfere?"

"Because I don't agree with you that the best thing Hayford could do would be to leave Cazley," Blake replied. "On the contrary, I believe he ought to marry and settle down here. Now I will go. I see you are anxious to leave!"

"But this pocket-book? I don't know where Mr. Evans lives, and, for that matter, you could give it to him just as well as I could."

"He has gone to your house with your uncle. You will find him there on your return," Blake explained.

A troubled look came into her eyes. She was about to speak, but she stopped. Blake raised his hat.

"Good-bye!" he said courteously.

She bowed.

"I will give the notebook to Mr. Evans," she said, as she turned away.

Blake walked off chuckling heartily.

"That's all right!" he said heartily, as he swung along the path on the way back to Ivy Cottage. "Hayford needn't have any fear; he is well in the running with that young lady, and when a woman's heart is stirred, she may be hoodwinked for a time, but in the end she's bound to see facts with a clear vision. When that day comes to her, what a change there will be, to be sure! Let her but see that old rascal Jonathan Twigg in his true colours, let her but realise the sinister plot he is hatching against her happiness and Hayford's, and my services won't be needed. She will bundle him out of the house in half an hour, and turn to Hayford as a matter of course. And now about those interesting items in Evans' notebook! Evans! Whew! There's a danger in him!"

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He stopped suddenly, as was his way when any startling thought sprang into his mind. His step hitherto had been brisk, now as he moved forward again he walked slowly, and his face was very grave, as he entered Ivy Cottage. Hayford was there awaiting him.

"Is there any town near here where there is a public library?" Blake asked.

"Oxtard is seven miles away, and there's an institute there which, they say, has a good selection of books," Hayford replied. "The nearest town with a public library is fifteen miles away. Why do you ask?"

"Let's have dinner, and I'll get off at once," Blake requested. "And I may not be back till late to-night, so don't wait up for me. There is some information I need badly. The fact is, I'm in a bit of a fix."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tinker Puts Up a Good Fight.

A WEEK had passed, a week during which Blake's movements had mystified both Hayford and Tinker. Twice he had paid short visits to London; during the other days he had seldom been seen; after early breakfast he always disappeared, and only returned to the cottage when dusk had fallen. Telegrams came for him constantly, but he did not divulge their contents; in the evenings he used to sit pre-occupied and silent, smoking his pipe.

During this week, too, the village had awakened from its accustomed lethargy. Tinker's doings had at first been received with scepticism, then with amazement, then with good-humoured ridicule.

Never in the memory of the oldest inhabitant had such a wild-cat scheme been attempted. As reports came to the village, as farmers driving through stopped to exchange snatches of gossip at the inn or with the family butcher, who was the leading man in Cazley, loud guffaws ran down the quiet street. That anyone in his senses should buy two hundred tons of manure for the use of an acre of ground denoted madness surely. It was impossible. The thing was too incredible for belief. But there was the proof. Thick rolls of Bank of England notes which farmer after farmer pulled out of his capacious pocket in payment for the manure. And if that was not enough, other indeed was soon to hand.

Team after team of horses dragging heavy lorries passed through the village from break of every day until an hour after darkness had set in. They blocked up the road, they hindered traffic so completely that motorists in the district began to grumble, and the village policeman in despair telephoned to his superiors for instructions. And still they came in an unending chain of vehicles, the drivers enjoying the joke as well as the rest.

And Tinker, with his coat off and the perspiration pouring down his face, kept working steadily all day long whilst the road bordering the land became the village rendezvous. At the dinner-hour the farm-hands tramped there in groups to look at him; the old men now past work carried stools from their cottages and sat down to watch him; the children after school hours ran shrieking and laughing to enjoy the fun, and overwhelm him with catcalls and ridicule. And when the stationmaster one day appeared there with scared face, and had a conversation with the lad, and when later on porters from the neighbouring stations were summoned to Cazley, and crate after crate of frames and cloches were dumped on the ground, till the acre of land looked like a huge timber-yard, then the greybeards in the village decided that the time had come when steps should be taken to put him under restraint.

He worked on, however, with complete indifference to the sensation he had created. At first, when questioned, he had tried to explain the scientific object he had in view, but as soon as he declared that he intended to grow all manner of fruit and vegetables out of season, his auditors declined to discuss the matter further with him. They withdrew in a body. Such nonsense might be accepted by other people; it would not go down in Cazley.

After that Tinker did not bother his head any more about them. He went on working hard, whistling cheerily, and every day advanced considerably in his effort to make order out of chaos. And at the end of a week he had most of the frames and cloches in position, the glass glittering in the sunlight till it looked like a silver lake from the hills for miles around.

It was drawing towards evening of this particular day, and though dog-tired the lad was still sticking to the job, having resolved that before night-time all the frames and cloches should be arranged and the ground clear of debris, so that in the morning he could begin to sow the seeds. And as it was the weekly half-holiday in the village, an even larger gathering of spectators was thick upon the road. He



was used to their voices, to hearing the shrill cries of the children, and the deep-throated laughter of the men. So when a stir ran through the villagers as a trap swung round the corner, the horse advancing at a sharp trot, he did not even look up.

He was unaware that anything exceptional had occurred, until the crash of glass made him turn and gaze in the direction of the noise with a frown on his face. For though he did not resent badinage, he was not prepared to tolerate damage to Blake's property. And he straightened his back and stepped forward resolutely at what he saw. For Jonathan Twigg and another man had crossed the fence, and were advancing towards him, and Twigg with his big stick was deliberately smashing the frames as he strode along.

"Hallo! Just you stop that!" Tinker began. "Get out of this, or I'll whack you over the head with this spade. None of your bullying here, Mr. Twigg. This is private property, and I'm here to protect it. If you smash any more of that glass, I'll bash you straight away, you impudent scoundrel!"

"What!" Twigg bellowed. "You hear the young cub, Boxton? Take a note of what he's said. He's using language calculated to lead to a breach of the peace. Take out a summons against him at once. And you, you puppy, clear off! It is you that is trespassing. I'll smash everything here and fling it out on the road. Hi, there, you men, why don't you follow me? Chuck out all this rubbish! If you don't obey me I'll make it hot for the lot of you!"

Some of the villagers began to cross the fence as Twigg called on them, but most held back. The bully was close to Tinker now, and the lad, his face scarlet with anger, stood holding the spade threateningly, ready to strike if Twigg came within reach. A great silence had fallen on all the rest. Hitherto there had been comedy from their point of view; now tragedy seemed near. Boxton, the attorney, stepped forward and pulled Twigg back.

"Mr. Twigg! Mr. Twigg!" he urged fawningly. "Don't go into danger, my dear sir! Your life is most precious. Remember how valuable it is to our community, even if you disregard danger on your own account. That young villain is a most desperate character, I can see. And there is no need to grapple with him. We can proceed by law. Verbum sat sapienti. Ahem! Be guided by me, my dear sir. His conduct just now only makes our case the stronger."

There was a look in Tinker's eyes that was far more convincing to Twigg than the attorney's remonstrances. The lad meant to use the spade if necessary, and Twigg's big stick for once was at a discount. He turned and called again to the villagers.

"Smash everything!" he yelled, beginning to break the frames again himself. "Come on! I'll know who hangs back. I see the lot of you. Stubbs, Bardler, Greening! If you don't obey me you'll never get another day's work from me!"

In Cazley, as everywhere, there were some mean-spirited fellows who did not dare to refuse the dictates of a tyrant, but most of the villagers stood their ground doggedly. The glass began to crash and the wood to splinter at a terrific rate, and Tinker, alone and singlehanded, stood for a moment aghast with horror. Then he sprang after Twigg with spade uplifted.

"Stop them! If you don't, the consequences be on your own head!" he shouted. "Stop them, else you'll have to be carried away!"

Twigg and Boxton turned again. The attorney went white to the lips, and staggered back, tumbling over a frame, and falling with a yell into the glass. Twigg, driven to bay, prepared to fight. And Tinker, swinging the spade around his head, was about to bring it down on the bully, when a stentorian voice stopped him.

"Tinker! Leave him to me!"

It was Blake, who, emerging from a field on the far side,

had seen and heard the clamour. Jumping across a hedge, he strode forward.

"Ha! There he is! There's the arch-villain, Boxton!" Twigg shouted. "Now we'll tackle him! Boxton! Boxton! Where are you?"

Except for the lower part of his long, thin legs, the attorney had disappeared. He was lying his length in the frame, wedged in by splintered wood, and cut in half a dozen places by broken glass. His feet kicked feebly, and discovering him at last, Twigg roughly pulled him out by the ankles, whilst Boxton yelled in terror.

"Take care! I'm cut to ribbons! Get a doctor! I'll bleed to death!" he bawled. "Why did I come here? Why was I such a fool as to risk my life in this way?"

Blake, hurrying forward, was at Twigg's side by this time. Without a word, with face pale with fury, with every muscle taut as a violin string, he seized the bully round the middle, and, heavy though he was, he lifted him as high as his shoulder. With quick strides he crossed the ground to the fence, whilst the villagers fell back in amazement. And then, with a last supreme effort of magnificent strength, he hurled Twigg on to the road. The scoundrel fell with a flop like a sack. It had all been done in ten seconds or less.

Blake vaulted over the fence.

"Men of Cazley," he cried, "how much longer are you going to stand this? Is this cur to bully you just as he likes? Have you no courage, no independence? Look what he has dared to do to me! And look at the answer I have given him! There he lies, as he deserves, knocked out of time; and though I am the man who has assaulted him, the law is on my side, and not on his. I care nothing for him, nor for that toadying attorney yonder. Will you follow me and defy them? If you do, I promise you security and liberty. Choose now, for the time has come!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Blake's Triumph—Jonathan Twigg Gets a Surprise.

WHEN Blake stopped, dead silence ensued for some seconds. Then one man pulled off his hat, flung it in the air, and gave a shout. That shout was taken up by a score or more. Intuitively the villagers felt that a man who could fight their battle was before them at last. As they looked at Blake's tall, athletic figure, his strong, intellectual face, now with dark, deep-set eyes flashing, and every feature rigid, they realised that his boast had been no idle one, that there was a man who would fight to the bitter end, who knew not defeat, and in whom their confidence could be well and wisely placed.

Twigg had slowly risen and still showed fight. He advanced shakily but grimly.

"Get home, the lot of you!" he thundered. "Or stay! Wait a few moments, and then clear off! Boxton, come here! I'll deal with this interloping stranger now. Here's Smigg, the village constable, coming! I'll have him locked up!"

Smigg, seated in his cottage after a weary tramp around the countryside all day, had heard the shouting, and had hurried to inquire what it might portend. Twigg yelled to him, and he broke into a run, and arrived panting.

"Arrest that fellow!" Twigg commanded, pointing at Blake.

"One moment, constable," Blake said. "I charge this man, Jonathan Twigg, with trespassing on my land, and willfully damaging my property. He has smashed about ten pounds' worth of glass belonging to me. The villagers here can confirm my statement. I have plenty of witnesses."

"Ay, ay!" one man shouted.

"Ay, ay!" a dozen assented.

Twigg faced them savagely.

"You're going to turn against me!" he cried, aghast.

"They're going to see fair play," Blake remarked. "Now, constable, take him away."

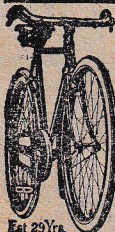
Smigg did nothing of the kind. He felt that the situation was exceedingly embarrassing for him. Twigg had a big position in the neighbourhood, and could mar his prospects of advancement. Blake was only a stranger. On the other hand, Blake had made a serious charge against Twigg, and apparently there were witnesses to support it, and, so far, Twigg had not explained in what manner Blake had violated the law. So Smigg adopted the usual official attitude. He looked as wise as he could, and drew out a thick notebook.

"I have the charge of this strange gentleman. What is yours, Mr. Twigg?" he asked, whilst he licked the point of a pencil.

"Assault and battery!" Twigg snapped. "But don't bother to write it down now. Just march him off."

"Grievous bodily assault!" Boxton said from behind. He was standing mopping his cut face, and looking a picture of misery.

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"You've been assaulted, too, Mr. Boxton!" Smigg cried. "Not directly assaulted, but those who take part in a riot are responsible for the consequences, whatever they may be. That is the law," Boxton replied, speaking with professional voice. "If I die of my wounds, that young villain in the shirtsleeves will swing for a certainty."

"What-ho!" Tinker remarked cheerily. "That's the law, is it? Well, there's just a bit I know too. A man can be accessory to a crime. Smigg, I charge this knock-kneed attorney with aiding and abetting Jonathan Twigg. Lug him away!"

Smigg sucked his pencil thoughtfully. "The evidence is contradictory," he began, "and in that case, it is always best to—"

"To hold your tongue!" Twigg growled. "Do as I tell you at once."

Boxton stepped forward. "The case is quite clear against these scoundrels, constable," he urged. "Acting on my advice, Mr. Twigg came here and entered that laird. He had a perfect right to do so. These men were engaged in an unlawful business."

Smigg looked very undecided. "You can take out summonses against one another," he said.

The crowd broke into a hearty laugh. Twigg glared. Blake smiled approvingly.

"All right. That will suit admirably," he assented. "And now that that matter is disposed of, we can let Mr. Jonathan Twigg and his attorney go home and hatch more plots. We don't want them here any more. I told you, men of Cazley, that I was going to stand by you, and now I will explain what I mean to do. I intend that every man who owns a small farm on this estate shall become the owner of it. He shall not be bothered ever again by such men as this bully Twigg, or his rapacious attorney. You have only to back me up and remain firm to win the day. Don't mind any threats. Since Twigg won't do the straight thing by you, we mean to defy him. We'll get the land in spite of him."

"Hurray! Hurray!"

The shout was whole-hearted. It testified to the hatred all Cazley had long felt secretly for Twigg. He and Boxton had started to walk off, but hearing Blake's voice they had stopped to listen. Now Twigg broke into a scornful laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! Listen to the fellow. So this is the man you think will beat me!" he scoffed. "Why, he'll lead you all into pretty trouble, and serve you right. I won't sell the estate, and that settles the matter. You fools, don't you know that?"

Blake ignored the interruption. "I've been to London and fixed up everything," he went on. "I've arranged with the Board of Agriculture that two Commissioners are to come down here shortly to value the land."

"What!" Boxton cried, aghast. "You know about that?"

"Ah! Look at the attorney's scared face; listen to his words," Blake went on triumphantly. "Yes, I do know about that. There is nothing about the Small Holders' Act that I don't know. I know, too, that it applies to allotments, and I have also arranged that the question of allotments is to be gone into, too, so that in future every labourer in Cazley will have his little plot of land as his right, and not at the mercy of this bully."

Again a rousing cheer broke forth. Every moment the villagers were becoming more and more convinced that in Blake they had a trusty ally. Twigg had turned to Boxton, and both were whispering eagerly. Now Boxton stepped forward.

"Before you believe this man, and go in the way of serious trouble and expense, just listen whilst I prove that his statements are false," he began. "He says that he knows this Act of Parliament. He is trying to convince you that he has done you a service. Who is he that the great officials in London should obey his commands? Is it likely that the Government would rob Mr. Twigg and his niece at his request? I ask him who is he?"

"I have no particular influence with the Board of Agriculture," Blake replied quietly.

"Ah, men, listen to him. He's trying to climb down now that I have tackled him!" Boxton cried triumphantly, whilst

Twigg broke into a roar of laughter. "Can't you see now that he's only a windbag? Only a mischievous, empty-headed agitator. If he has no particular interest with the Board of Agriculture, how did he persuade the Board to promise to send two Commissioners here?"

Murmurs of doubt and anxiety ran through the crowd. "I can tell you as a lawyer what he hasn't told you," Boxton went on eagerly. "The Board of Agriculture won't stir on the application of one man, even if that man is a celebrity instead of being a fellow like this whom nobody knows. The Board will only act upon the scheme of the County Council in the case of small holdings, and on the scheme of the rural authority in the case of allotments? Does he deny that?"

"No," Blake said firmly. "Then what did you mean by fooling these people?" Boxton demanded fiercely.

"It is for them to judge here and now if I fooled them," Blake replied. "I have not spent the last week in this neighbourhood altogether idly. I have been about a good deal, and I have seen a good many people. In point of fact, I had the honour to take a petition signed by many members of the County Council of this county to London the other day, and to lay it before the Board of Agriculture."

For some seconds Boxton was too amazed for speech. Then he turned contemptuously on Blake.

"You did that. You want us to believe that you were able to persuade the members of the County Council to sign such a petition! You! What next?"

"Why, nothing next, except that the Commissioners are coming down at once," Blake replied cheerily—"in fact, I think it will surprise you to know how soon they will be here. Make way at the back there. Some gentlemen want to speak to me."

Two well-dressed strangers advanced with hands outstretched, as the crowd moved to either side, forming a path through which they could proceed. Both were middle-aged, alert, and jovial-looking.

"Ah! How do?" one said, as he took Blake's hand. "We are the Commissioners sent down by the Board of Agriculture to inquire into the needs of this neighbourhood, and the authorities advised us to consult you first. We understand that there is a very disagreeable sort of man here who is agent over the estate, and that he is throwing all sorts of difficulties in the way of purchase of allotments and small holdings. Well, we'll deal with him. You can trust us for that."

The crowd listened in amazement. Boxton felt as if the ground was reeling under his feet. Twigg, trembling like a leaf, stepped forward and pulled the second Commissioner back.

"Who is that man?" he asked hoarsely, pointing his stick at Blake.

"Don't you know?" the Commissioner asked in surprise. "Why, that gentleman is one of our greatest British celebrities."

"Who is he?" Twigg rasped again.

"Mr. Sexton Blake!"

"Sexton Blake!" Twigg gasped, growing ashen pale. "Sexton Blake! Has he of all men crossed my path?" He moved back to hide himself. Blake was laughing and talking with the Commissioners.

"Yes, a great deal will have to be done, of course, before we will be able to send in our report," he was saying. "And then the law's delays are proverbial. It will be many months before everything is shipshape. So I am not leaving."

"Are you stopping on for long, Mr. Blake?"

"I have started a market-garden here on the intensive principle, as an object lesson for those who care to learn from it," Blake explained. "Besides, you said just now that I could leave this man Twigg to you. Well, I intend to settle a certain matter with him myself. Yes, I don't go till that is done."

THE END.

*(Readers of the above story should on no account miss the splendid sequel thereto—"Foiled at the Finish!"—which appears in next Friday's issue. It explains how the great detective carried out his resolve concerning the tyrant—Twigg. Order your copy early.)*

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# SPOOFING THE SIXTH!

A Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of TOM MERRY & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co. of the New House, leave St. Jim's on a mysterious expedition.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Juniors' Scheme.

**T**HERE was great excitement amongst the juniors of St. Jim's, and this excitement was concerned with a coming cricket match between St. Jim's First Eleven and a touring eleven of Indians captained by the Rajah of Jal.

The team of dusky cricketers had been touring the country with great success, beating several famous colleges, and even giving one or two of the minor county elevens a stern game.

Kildare had been successful in fixing up a match with the rajah's eleven, and all St. Jim's, from the highest senior to the lowest fag, was waiting in eager anticipation for the great match.

Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co., their rivals of the New House, were discussing the forthcoming attraction on the cricket-field.

"I reckon it will be a tussle!" said Tom Merry. "The Indians are hot stuff!"

"Just a bit!" remarked Blake. "But put your trust in Kildare and his merry men, old son! It'll be a fine game, and I guess St. Jim's will come out on top!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Figgins. "But I say, what's the matter with Kildare?"

"Looks a bit down in the mouth, doesn't he?"

Kildare, the captain of the school, passed within twenty yards of the juniors, and they had not failed to note the glum look on his face. Something had evidently happened to upset the captain of St. Jim's.

"What's up, Kildare?" sang out Tom Merry. And the captain swung round as if noticing their presence for the first time.

"Nothing," answered Kildare.

"You are looking pretty miserable!" said Jack Blake. "The captain of a cricket eleven should be in high feather the day before a big match, you know. If you are not careful, you'll have the Indians whacking you!"

"As it happens, the Indians will not whack us, and we shall not whack them," said Kildare. "The match is off."

"The match off!"

"Yes; it has been cancelled," replied Kildare gloomily.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Figgins. "That's rotten!"

"Anything else you kids want to know?" asked Kildare.

"No," said the juniors, somewhat taken aback at the news. They were keenly disappointed that the match was off, for

they had almost been as eager to watch the game as the seniors were to play in it.

Kildare walked off, and for a moment the juniors failed to speak. Suddenly a smile crossed Kerr's sunny face.

"Hallo! What are you cackling at?" demanded Figgins. "It's great!"

"What is, fathead?"

"The scheme I've thought of," explained Kerr. "I am sure it would work."

"Explain yourself!" exclaimed the juniors in chorus.

The juniors eagerly gathered round the Scots junior.

"Look here," said Kerr, "why shouldn't we disguise ourselves as the Indians and play the Sixth! We can send another telegram stating that the match is still on. There will be no difficulty in blacking our faces and making ourselves proper Indians."

The juniors roared.

The scheme was so utterly unheard-of that it took their fancy at once. Such a jape against the Sixth would make the whole school gasp when it came out. And if by some miracle the "spoofer" team should win—what glory for Tom Merry & Co.!

They yelled with delight at the mere thought of it.

"It's always old Kerr who thinks of these things," said Figgins admiringly. "He's got a head on him!"

"Well, I think it's a rather good dodge," said Kerr. "We can make up as easily as anything. We've done it before for the amateur theatricals, and we've got all the grease-paint and things we need. We only want the Indian costumes, and we can get those at the costumier's."

"Hurrah!"

"Hold on!" said Figgins. "Do the Indian cricketers travel in costume?"

"Blest if I know! But it would be more convincing. We should change into flannels for the match, anyway."

"Yes; that's all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kildare can get a wire saying it's all right, after all," said Kerr. "Of course, we couldn't send a wire in the rajah's name; that wouldn't do. But we can word it so as to make Kildare imagine it's all serene, without committing ourselves."

"Oh, yaas, that will be easy enough! I will draw up the telegwam with pleasuah."

"If the Indians came," resumed Kerr, thinking it out as

he spoke, "they'd have to come to Wayland Junction, and change there into the local train for Rylcombe. We can walk over to Wayland in the morning, make up there, and come over in the local."

"Good!"

"But the wire will have to come from London," said Monty Lowther.

"Exactly. We'll get some chap in London to send it."

"My bwotahh Conway is in town now," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I can write to him to-night and enclose the telegram for him to send. He will get the lettah first post in the morning."

"Yes, Conway will do it. You can explain it's a jape, and he'll know there's no harm in it," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's the rippingest jape of the term. There never was anything like it before."

"We can go down to Rylcombe at once and see about the costumes," grinned Kerr. "We can fix that quite easily. And we'll make up this evening, for practice, in the study, so as to be sure it will work all right."

"Oh, ripping!"

And the juniors started for the village at once. They were in the greatest of spirits. Even if the jape against the Sixth were not successful, it would be the biggest thing they had ever undertaken; but they were determined that it should be a grand success.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

All Serene!

**T**HE next morning dawned bright and sunny. The fellows at St. Jim's turned out cheerfully on that sunny morning. A whole day without lessons, with nothing to do but please themselves from morning prayers to evening prep. That was calculated to make them cheerful.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to be in extra high spirits. Not a word of the great scheme had been breathed outside the twelve, and nothing was known even to their most intimate friends.

A rehearsal in Figgins' study had gone off perfectly successfully, and the plotters, by this time, had not the slightest doubt of success.

They had packed the disguises and the costumes in bags, ready to convey to Wayland, and they only delayed starting while waiting for Kildare to receive the telegram from London. Unless that was safely delivered, of course, the whole thing would have to fall through.

And the chums of St. Jim's waited in a group at the school gates for the telegraph-boy. He seemed a long time coming, but he came at last. There was a general exclamation of satisfaction as he was seen coming up the road.

"Here he is!"

"Who's it for?" asked Tom Merry, as the lad came up.

"Master Kildare, sir."

"Good! Take it in!"

The boy went on. Kildare was in the quad, standing outside the School House, chatting with Darrel of the Sixth. The notice of the scratching of the match had come too late for the St. Jim's captain to be able to fix up another match, and the First Eleven were reduced to the necessity of not playing at all. That was what Kildare intended to do; but it was a come-down, after the match he had been anticipating.

"Hallo, here's a telegram!" exclaimed Darrel. "It's for you, too!"

Kildare took the wire.

"May have found it possible to come, after all," Darrel suggested.

Kildare brightened up.

"By Jove, I hope so!" he exclaimed.

He opened the envelope and read the message. It was brief, but it was to the point, and it brought a smile of satisfaction to the face of the captain of St. Jim's.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed.

"Good news?"

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"Yes; they're coming."

"Bravo!"

"Listen!" Kildare read out the message!

"Kildare, School House, St. James', Sussex.—Previous telegram cancelled. Arriving one-thirty."

"Good!" exclaimed Darrel. "I suppose they've got over it, or he's managed to rake in some substitutes. I rather wondered the rajah couldn't manage that. They're in London now, and there are plenty of Indian cricketers there."

Kildare nodded.

"He hasn't signed it," he remarked. "A bit excited, perhaps, and it makes just the twelve words. But it's clear enough."

"Oh, yes, he says plainly 'previous telegram cancelled.'"

Rushden and Monteith and Baker strolled up.

"Where are we playing?" asked Monteith.

"We're playing the Indians after all!" said Kildare.

"The Indians!"

"Yes. The rajah finds he can come."

"Good!" said Baker.

"Ripping!" said Rushden.

"Jolly uncertain sort of beggar, I should think," said Monteith. "Do you mind letting me see the wire?"

Kildare handed it to him. The New House prefect read it through, and uttered an exclamation:

"It's not signed!" he said.

"No. It makes just the twelve words, and, of course, he knew we should know whom it was from," said the captain of St. Jim's, with a smile. "Nobody but the Rajah of Jal would be likely to wire to me that the team was arriving at Rylcombe at one-thirty."

"No, I suppose not," said Monteith thoughtfully.

Kildare looked at him.

"Why, what are you thinking about, Monteith?" he exclaimed. "The telegram's all right, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

Monteith read it again. The New House prefect was of a keen and suspicious turn of mind.

"What could be wrong with it?" asked Kildare.

"Well, as it's not signed it crossed my mind that it might possibly be a jape of those young fags, to make us expect the Indian team for nothing," said Monteith. "If we expected them, and they didn't come, we should look a set of asses."

Kildare laughed.

"I don't think they'd go quite so far as that," he said.

"Hardly!" remarked Baker.

Rushden pointed to the telegram.

"Handed in in London," he said. "I suppose no one here could have gone up to London this morning to send that wire?"

Monteith grinned.

"Well, no, I suppose not," he said.

"Anyhow, we shall see at one-thirty whether they arrive or not," said Kildare. "We'd better have a brake at the station for them. It's all right!"

"Of course it is," said Baker. "Shall we meet them at the station?" asked the New House prefect.

"A couple of us might go in the brake. After all, they're foreigners, you know, and it would be only civil."

"Good!"

"We shall have to go down to Rylcombe to arrange about the brake, anyway, as I had cancelled it," said Kildare. "One of you chaps come with me."

Kildare and Darrel strolled down to the gates.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Quite a Change.

"**H**ERE we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry. The juniors stopped.

The bright morning sunlight was falling through the foliage in a deep glade of Rylcombe Wood, beside a rippling stream.

It was a quiet and secluded spot, just suited to what the

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juniors had to do. No one was likely to observe or interrupt them there.

The bags were opened, and the costumes and disguises taken out. Kerr's services were in general request at once. Kerr was the leading light of the Junior Amateur Society. What he did not know on the subject of making-up was not worth knowing.

And Kerr was very industrious and obliging. He superintended the dressing and the making-up with tireless patience.

The juniors discarded their Etons, which were rolled up carefully and placed in the bags. They donned the Indian costumes. Indian costumes, chiefly used for local fancy-dress functions, had been very easy to obtain, but they had mostly been many sizes too large. But in Figgins' study the previous evening the juniors had taken reefs in, so to speak, and the costumes were quite ready for wearing now.

The making-up was carefully done. Their skins had to be tinted a soft brown, and all Kerr's skill was required. But he excelled himself. Figgins was the first fellow finished. He stood with a brown face and hands, and arrayed in white garments and a turban gleaming with jewels—the jewels being made of coloured glass, of course. There was a tremendous diamond in his turban which would have been worth thousands of pounds if it had been worth anything at all.

The juniors could not help chucking as they looked at him. Figgins made a very imposing Rajah of Jal.

"It's ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Your mother wouldn't know you now, Figgy."

"Wathah not! I say, shall I look anything like that, Kerr, deah boy?"

"Yes, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I twust I shall not look like an old-clothes man who has not washed himself for weeks!"

"My dear chap, all Indian princes look like that," said Kerr. "You have to dress up to the character."

"Yaas, but—"

"Keep still, or this stuff will go into your eye," said Kerr.

"Yaas, but—groo!"

"What's the matter?"

"Yow! You've dabbed that howwid thing into my mouth."

"Well, you shouldn't talk while you're being operated on," said Kerr. "I can't do a lot of dodging round your mouth while you're talking. Ring off!"

"Weally, Kerr— Groo!"

"There you go again!"

"You uttah ass! Ow!"

"You'd better shut up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You'll get it in the mouth every time you talk!"

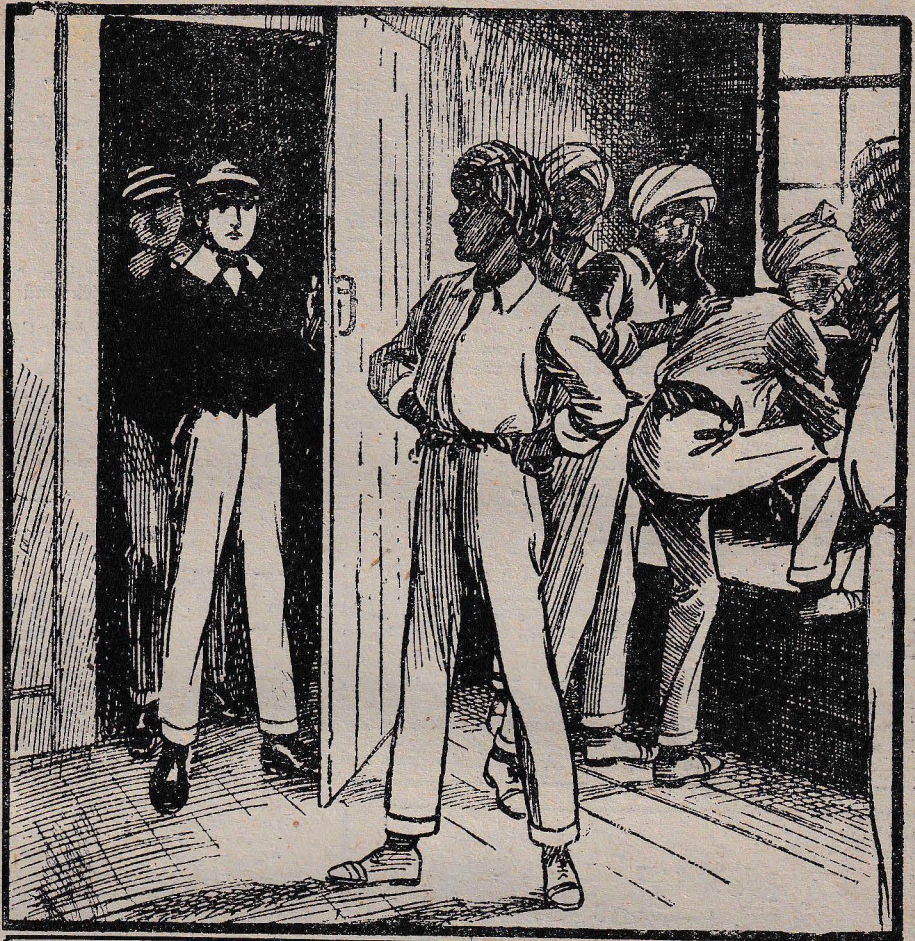
And D'Arcy thought so, too, and the rest of his thoughts remained unuttered.

The work was done at last, and the twelve juniors of St. Jim's stood stained and arrayed like natives of the Eastern Empire.

"Come on!" said Figgins. "We're ready!"

"March!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors, carrying their cricket-bags and also the other bags containing their usual clothes in the place of the disguises, left the glade in Rylcombe Wood.



Figgins opened the door. Clifton Dane and Lumley-Lumley were standing there with demure smiles upon their faces. "Bang-bang!" said Figgins. To which Lumley-Lumley answered in the same tongue: "Figgy wigg Merry perry Blakey chakey shaky Gussy wussy." "Monty many Diggy Herry Fatty Wynny," added Clifton Dane. And then the cricketers knew that they had been found out.

Their hearts were beating a little faster as they entered the footpath leading into Wayland town. However, they passed through the village without being recognised, and were in good time for the local to Rylcombe.

They crowded into first-class carriages, and the station-master himself closed Figgins' door, and stood hat in hand outside the carriage as the signal was given for the train to start.

After about ten minutes' journey, the train pulled up at Rylcombe station, and Kildare and Darrel stepped forward to open the carriage doors for their distinguished visitors.

A crowd of dusky cricketers poured out upon the platform. The St. Jim's seniors could not help staring a little.

They had expected to see small men, but they had supposed that the Jal cricketers were larger in size than the juniors of St. Jim's.

There was only one of the party who was anything like as tall as a man, and that was the dusky youth with the big diamond in his turban.

Kildare guessed that he was the skipper, and he advanced to him with outstretched hand.

"The Rajah of Jal?" he inquired.

"Bang-bang!"

And the rajah shook Kildare's hand heartily.

"I am very glad to see your Highness."

"Boggley!"

"We were very disappointed to get your telegram yesterday, but it's turned out all right," said Kildare. "You speak English, do you not?"

"Bang-bang! I speak your English so well," said the rajah. "It is not with difficulty that I speak him. Bang—"

"That's a blessed Hindustani word, I suppose?" murmured Kildare. "Blessed if I like the look of this lot! They're a shabby crew, anyway!"

But he did not say that aloud. "We've got a brake outside," he went on. "Will you come with me?"

"With great and venerable pleasure." And Kildare led the way from the station.

The Indians piled into the brake, amid loud and enthusiastic comments from the interested youth of Rylcombe village.

Kildare and Darrel mounted with them, and they rolled away on the road to St. Jim's. The two seniors of St. Jim's tried to enter into talk with the cricketers en route, but it was useless.

The Rajah of Jal was the only one who spoke English, and his English did not seem very good, either, and he did not appear inclined to use very much of it.

He had introduced Chandra Das and Numar Lal, two of his followers, to Kildare, but the two Indians had only bowed and salaamed respectfully, without speaking. If Kildare had heard Chandra Das speak, he might have been struck by a resemblance to the voice of Tom Merry of the Shell, while Kumar Lal's tones would have recalled those of Jack Blake.

Darrel addressed a few polite words to Chandra Das as St. Jim's came in sight. The old grey tower rose over the green trees.

"That's St. Jim's," he remarked.

Chandra Das bowed.

"We shall arrive in a few minutes now."

"Bang-bang!"

"You do not speak any English, sir?"

"Boggley!"

"I have read about the Jal team in the papers," Darrel said, with a perplexed look. "I understood that most of them spoke some English, some of them quite fluently. But perhaps some of you fellows are substitutes for those on the sick list."

"Cham-ram-tooral-kybosh-bang."

That was quite a long sentence, but Darrel could make nothing of it. He knew no Hindustani; but if he had known every word of it in the language, it would hardly have helped him in this instance.

The brake rolled up to St. Jim's. A crowd of fellows had

gathered round the gates to see whether the Indians really arrived. There was a loud cheer as the brake was seen with its crowd of dusky passengers.

"Hurrah!"

"Here they come!"

"Here's the giddy rajah!"

"Bravo!"

The brake rolled in amid cheers. Crowds of juniors waved their caps and shouted to welcome the Indians.

Tom Merry & Co. bowed on all sides as the brake rolled on.

They had never received such an ovation in their own proper persons, and it was very hard for them to keep grave.

But they managed it.

The Indians were taken to the pavilion, where they changed from their rich and rare costumes into ordinary cricketing-flannels.

When they came out with their dusky faces shining in the sun there was another cheer to greet them.

They salaamed in return, and said "Bang-bang!" with cheerful smiles.

Kildare tossed with the rajah for choice of innings, and the rajah won, and elected to go in first.

"Chandra Das and Kumar Lal," said the rajah.

And Tom Merry and Jack Blake went in to open the innings for Jal.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Indians' Innings.

KILDARE placed his men to field. He had heard that the Jal men were very hard hitters, and the seniors fielded deep.

Seniors and juniors crowded round to see the Indians play. Clifton Dane and Gore and Skimpole and Macdonald stood in a group to look on. There was a curious expression upon Dane's face. Dane was study-mate in the Shell to Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn; and Dane was gifted with very sharp vision. But if Clifton Dane saw anything unusual about the Indians, no one else did. They were taken at face value, so to speak, by the whole of St. Jim's.

"I guess they're a small size for grown-ups," Jerrold Lumley-Lumley remarked to Clifton Dane.

Dane nodded.

"Yes; they might be a set of boys," he said.

"Well, some of them have big whiskers, though," said Gore. "Look at that chap—Chandra Das, I hear his name is. He's got whiskers like a lion's mane."

"Curious, too," said Lumley-Lumley. "I've seen their portraits in the papers, and they were nearly all clean-shaven."

"I hear that the rajah is playing some substitutes to-day, though."

"The rajah looks full size," said Lumley-Lumley. "The others are jolly small. They can't really have much chance against Kildare's lot."

"I don't know; they've beaten University teams."

"I guess it's strange, then."

And that opinion was very common on the ground. It was very strange that the little Jal men had beaten Varsity players. All excepting the rajah were overtopped by the seniors of St. Jim's.

But the Jal batsmen showed that they could bat, at all events.

Monteith, the New House prefect, was put on to bowl the first over against the dusky youth known as Chandra Das.

Monteith was a good bowler, and very nearly the best in the St. Jim's First Eleven, but he could not touch Chandra Das' wicket.

Chandra Das knocked his bowling all over the field, and the dusky batsmen ran and ran, and the over gave them 8 runs to begin their score.

It was evident that, in spite of their diminutive size in comparison with the St. Jim's team, the Jal men knew how to play cricket.

Chandra Das had taken 20 runs "on his own" when he was finally dismissed by a catch in the slips.

A fat Indian came on to take his place. There were smiling comments from the onlookers as the fat cricketer rolled up to the wicket.

"My hat!" said Lumley-Lumley. "That chap's as fat as Fatty Wynn!"

"By Jove, he is!" said Clifton Dane. "By the way, speaking of Fatty Wynn, where are Figgins & Co.? They're not here!"

"Curious they should miss this match."

"And Tom Merry, too—where is he?"

"He's not here."

"And Blake, and Gussy?"

A Message from a famous Author.



Rickmansworth Herts

"There is only one story in the world, and it is this—once upon a time lived a man, and a woman loved him."

So wrote a famous story-teller. And he was right. Of every human story love must be the foundation and the theme. It is the greatest and the grandest theme of all. In my latest serial for "ANSWERS" I have tried to tell a love story, the story of an outcast woman's love for the daughter she is powerless to help in a supreme crisis of the young girl's life.

"GREAT POSSESSIONS" I have called this story. I hope you will like it. I think you will.

Mabel Shaw

"Great Possessions"

COMMENCES IN TO-DAY'S

ANSWERS - 1<sup>d</sup>.

"They all went out this morning," said Lumley-Lumley. "I remember now, they took a lot of bags with them, and I imagine they're going to make a day of it."

"It's very odd!" said Clifton Dane.

"Well, yes!"

"That fat chap can bat, though," said Gore, as Fatty Wynn drove the ball to the boundary from Rushden's bowling.

"He can! Bravo!"

The St. Jim's fellows were all sportsmen, and they cheered every success of the dusky visitors. And they had plenty to cheer. The St. Jim's bowling and fielding were both good, but the visitors scored very considerably.

Kumar Lal was out at last, and he joined the group of dusky batsmen outside the pavilion. Jal were six down for 70 runs.

When any St. Jim's fellow strolled near the group of Indian cricketers, he heard them talking among themselves in curious language; words like bang, and rang, and chang, and wallah, and boggley, and wogley continually recurring. But when there was no Saint within hearing, they contrived to talk in English.

"It's going on all right," grinned Figgins. "I wonder what Kildare would say if he knew that St. Jim's Juniors had knocked up seventy against the First Eleven for six wickets."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And wait till they get their innings, and Fatty begins to bowl," said Kerr. "I've always said that Fatty was fit to bowl for the County, and we'll see how he shapes against Kildare's lot!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It will be rather an eye-opener for them," grinned Tom Merry. "Of course, the real Jal team would have taken more than seventy in this time. But if Fatty takes their wickets, we shall keep their score down."

"And beat them," said Figgins hopefully.

"Wouldn't that be ripping?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hush!"

Some Saints were strolling by, and Figgins, without a change of countenance, went on in an unknown tongue—as unknown to himself as to everybody else.

"Boggley bang wallah sum sing chang hunkaback!"

"Oh, hunkaback—hunkaback!" said Tom Merry gravely.

"Sin ting ghaut gommy bong?"

"Ram bang!"

"Blessed if I can make out a word of it," Gore remarked, as he strolled on. "Blessed if it seems possible that they understand it themselves."

"It's rummy," said Clifton Dane.

"You're getting on famously, sir," said Lumley-Lumley, addressing the Rajah of Jal.

"Gommy bhong bang!" said the rajah politely.

"Eh?"

"Lummy, crikey, chuck, chuck!"

"My hat!"

"Gommy tong!"

"Oh, I give it up!" said Gore.

"What's the name of that fat chap who's batting?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Punar Singh is the name on the list," said Gore.

"Bravo, Punar Singh!" shouted Clifton Dane, as the fat batsman sent the ball to the boundary again.

"Hurrah!"

And there was a ripple of hand-clapping.

Punar Singh was going strong. But he was clean bowled by Kildare in the next over, and he came off the field perspiring. The Rajah of Jal locked at him, and an expression of alarm came over his Highness's face.

"Great Scott!" he whispered. "Get into the dressing-room, quick!"

"What's the matter?" muttered Punar Singh.

"Your complexion's running."

"My hat!"

"And you'd better run, too!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Fatty Wynn bolted into the pavilion. Kerr followed him, his artistic touch was required. Kerr, under the name of Bolar Das, was wanted next, but the rajah himself went in, to give Kerr time to restore Fatty Wynn's complexion.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Bowled Out.

THESE was a cheer as the Rajah of Jal came out to the wicket, with his bat under his arm. The hard-hitting of the rajah was well known, and the St. Jim's fellows expected to see a second Ranji. The rajah raised his cap gracefully to the cheering, and took his place at the wicket. Kildare tossed up the ball to Darrel.

"You'll have all your work cut out to shift that chap, from what I hear," he remarked.

Darrel laughed.

"I'll do my best!" he said.

Darrel did his best; but he could not shift the rajah. The rajah was very careful. He blocked every dangerous ball, and only hit out when it was quite secure to do so. But when he hit, he hit hard, and the Saints were given plenty of leather-hunting. He took 7 for the over, finishing with the odd run, which gave him still the bowling in the next. Monteith was put on against him, but could not get him out. The rajah piled up runs for his side; inwardly wondering what the prefect would think when he discovered that he had been bowling, in vain, against a junior of his own house.

The rajah piled up 30 runs, and he was loudly cheered, and his dusky comrades cheered as loudly as anybody, in their own peculiar language. At every big hit they clapped their dusky hands and shouted:

"Bang-bang!"

"I suppose that's a sort of Indian cheer," Lumley-Lumley remarked. "Something like the Japanese banzai, I guess."

"I suppose so," said Gore. "What are you looking so glum about, Dane?"

Clifton Dane started.

"Was I?" he exclaimed.

"Well, thoughtful, then. What are you mooning about?"

"I was just thinking."

"About the rajah?"

"Yes," said the Canadian junior, with a grim, "about the rajah."

He strolled away with his hands in his pockets, without saying anything further. Gore and Lumley-Lumley looked after him in some surprise. But they soon turned their attention to the match again.

The rajah was out at last, caught by Kildare, and as he joined the dusky team outside the pavilion, they cheered him loudly.

"Bang, bang, bang!"

"What does that mean in English?" Lumley-Lumley asked one of the Jal men.

"Boggley, deah boy!"

"Eh?"

"I mean—ahem!—bang—boggley—chunk—chunketty clack!"

"My hat!"

"Sang bang chang, tootle bunk!"

"I believe that boulder can speak English if he likes," Gore confided to Lumley-Lumley. "Did you notice how he dropped into English, and stopped himself?"

Lumley-Lumley had a very curious expression upon his face.

"I guess I did," he said.

He strolled away to join Clifton Dane, and the two were deep in discussion, in whispers, for some time afterwards. The Jal innings was drawing to its close now. The last wicket fell with the score at 129, and the field cleared.

The Jal men crowded to the dressing-room.

They did not admit anybody else with them, and the rajah was careful to close the door. Then the Indians permitted themselves a long chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's wippin'. The boundahs haven't a single suspish, you know."

"Not the slightest," said Blake.

"It's gorgeous."

"There never was a jape of this sort or size before," chuckled Tom Merry. "Of course, they couldn't possibly smell a mouse."

"I neahly put my foot in it once, deah boys!" chuckled D'Arcy.

"Oh, trust you to do that!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"If you give us away, we'll squash you!"

"I should uttably refuse to be squashed."

"What have you done?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, it was really nothin'! I used a few words of English when that chap Lumley-Lumley was askin' me a question. But it's all wight."

"Is it?" said Tom Merry anxiously. "Lumley-Lumley's jolly sharp."

"Sharp as a needle," said Digby.

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"But he wouldn't give us away, if he guessed," said Kangaroo. "He would play the game, you know. He used to be rather a worm, but he's decent enough now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a knock at the door, and the discussion suddenly ceased. It occurred to the Jal cricketers that the partitions in the cricket pavilion were somewhat thin.

"Hush!" murmured the rajah.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"I considah—"

Blake jammed his hand over Arthur Augustus' mouth, and the further considerations of the swell of St. Jim's were quite lost. Figgins opened the door.

Clifton Dane and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley were standing there, with demure smiles upon their faces.

"Bang-bang!" said Figgins.

To which Lumley-Lumley replied, in the same language:

"Chuck a luck, and ting a ling. Sam chang."

And Clifton Dane added:

"Snorey porey gorey bung."

The Jal men stared blankly at them. The two juniors looked very grave and serious, and evidently expected answers in the same tongue.

"Bang boggley wallah punkah koosh," said Figgins, at last.

"Hanky panky silly pranky chuckit," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Eh? I mean bhong song pinky."

"Figgly wiggy Merry perry Blakey Chakey shakey Gussy wussy," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Monty Manny Diggy Henry Fatty Wynny," said Clifton Dane.

And then the cricketers knew!

"Come in!" said Figgins hastily.

Lumley-Lumley and Clifton Dane grinned, and came in, and Figgins closed the door. The dusky heroes glared at the two juniors who had found them out.

"How did you know?" gasped Tom Merry.

They chuckled.

"It was Gussy's beautiful accent that put me on to it," said Lumley-Lumley. "Dane seems to have suspected something from the start. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Canadian.

"Hush!"

"You're bowled out, I guess!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "What a jape! So the real Indians are not coming at all?"

"No!" muttered Figgins.

"You sent a second telegram?"

"We had it sent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!" said the rajah. "Does anybody else know besides you two?"

Clifton Dane shook his head.

"Not a soul," he said. "I shouldn't have known, only old Kangy seemed rather familiar. You see, I have the duffer in my study every day. And then what Lumley told me made me quite certain about it."

"Nobody else knows?"

"So far as I know, nobody."

"I guess not!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"You haven't said anything?"

"Not a word, of course."

Figgins drew a breath of relief.

"That's all right, then," he said. "We don't mind you fellows knowing. Keep it dark—deadly dark, that's all. If any other chap suspects, get hold of him and make him shut up. The seniors are not likely to tumble."

"I guess not," chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "They're far too high and mighty to dream that the juniors would jape them like this! My hat! It's the biggest thing I've ever heard of. The cheek of it!"

"And we're going to beat them," grinned Figgins. "A hundred and twenty-nine for the first innings, eh? And wait till Fatty Wynn gets to work on their wickets!"

"Oh, good!"

"Only keep it dark!"

"You bet!"

"We'll back you up," said Clifton Dane, "only we couldn't help letting you know we knew. It's ripping! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time we got out, I think," said the rajah. "Tumble up!"

And the dusky cricketers left the dressing-room, leaving Clifton Dane and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley there, still laughing. They little thought, however, as they marched on to field, that Ernest Levison, the cad of the Fourth, had tumbled to the little scheme, and was preparing a wheeze for bowling out the bogus eleven.

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Victors.

**K**ILDARE opened the St. Jim's innings, with Monteith at the other end. He hoped to give the innings a good start, and put courage into his men.

But Kildare was doomed to disappointment. The bowling of the Indians was superb, and the St. Jim's eleven had great difficulty in mastering it.

The wickets fell at a steady rate, and when St. Jim's were six down for 80 runs—Kildare's wicket among them—the Saints looked very grave.

As for the Indians, they were jubilant.

Fatty Wynn looked the most pleased of all. It was not because he was taking wickets, or because his side was winning. It was because the sooner the innings was over, the sooner he would be able to sit at the hospitable board that was ready for the entertainment and refreshment of the distinguished visitors to St. Jim's. The feed was to be a ripping one, and mental pictures of it danced before Fatty Wynn's brain as he grew hungrier and hungrier.

Perhaps the thought of the feed to come bucked him up, for presently he bowled Rushden and Lefevre one after the other, the first for a 2, and the second for a duck's-egg.

Kildare looked blue as they came out.

Eight down for 82, out of the 130 that were wanted. Then Darrel went in, with Baker at the other end, and Darrel, who was a mighty hitter, retrieved matters a little.

Fatty Wynn, Blake, and Figgins himself pelted him in turn, without being able to move him, and the First Eleven score soared up.

It passed the 100—it reached the 110—20!

Figgins' eyes began to gleam.

The First Eleven wanted 9 more to tie—10 to win! And they had two wickets yet to fall! And Darrel was hitting away like a machine! Another boundary—that was 4 to Darrel!

A hundred and twenty-four! The Indians would have looked as blue as the seniors had been looking, if their dusky complexions had allowed them to look anything but brown.

Figgins tossed the ball to Fatty Wynn again.

"You've got to get him out, Fatty!" he said, in a whisper.

"I'm hungry."

"You fat boulder! Think of the feed we shall have if you take those wickets. The longer it lasts, the hungrier you will get."

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Yes, I'm thinking of that," he said.

"Do your best, Fatty, old man."

"Right-ho, Figg!"

And Fatty Wynn bowled with all his skill thrown into it. And for once Darrel was caught napping! His leg stump rolled over, and the bails were on the ground, and Darrel retired, amid a storm of cheering. He had scored well, and brought his side within easily measurable distance of victory. 5 wanted to tie, 6 to win! And nine wickets had fallen!

"Last man in!"

Fatty Wynn squared his shoulders, and his eyes gleamed. He had one more wicket to take to save his side. The first ball was swiped away for 3, and the score stood at 127.

"One more boundary!" murmured Kildare. "That will do it."

One more boundary would certainly have done it; but it was the tail of the St. Jim's side at the wickets now, not boundary-hitters! And their life was to be brief. Fatty Wynn sent down a ball that was his best, and it dodged in some mysterious way under a watchful bat, and there was the crash of a falling wicket.

There was a gasp from the crowd.

"How's that?"

"Out!" said the umpire grimly.

Last man was "not out." But the wickets were down, and St. Jim's First Eleven had been beaten by 2 runs!

Beaten!

Beaten, as they imagined, by the Indian team—beaten, as fifteen juniors knew, by the juniors of St. Jim's—the juniors of their own school!

The dusky cricketers yelled.

"Hurray! Hurray! Hurray! Bang! Bang! Bosh! Hurray!"

And St. Jim's generally gave them a cheer. They had fought well for their victory, and they had won it by a narrow margin. They deserved a cheer.

Kildare came up to the Rajah of Jal, with a pleasant smile on his handsome, sunburnt face.

"You've beaten us, sir," he said. "I suppose we couldn't really expect anything else, considering the reputation of your team. But it was a close thing at the finish."

"It was an honourable and splendid match, my young friend," said Figgins, inwardly quaking a little at his own audacity in calling the captain of the school his young friend.



"It reflects equal glory upon both sides, and it is the fortune of war that the victory rests with us."

And he shook hands with the captain of St. Jim's very heartily.

"Very decent chap," Kildare said to Darrel. "There's something about him that seems familiar to me, too—something in his voice that I think I have heard before somewhere."

Darrel nodded.

"The same thing occurred to me," he remarked. "I dare say it's through seeing their photographs in the papers some time or other."

"Yes, perhaps."

But Kildare still looked a little puzzled.

As for the Indians, they retired to their dressing-room to change, and in the room they chuckled loud and long.

"Beaten 'em!" said Figgins. "Beaten the seniors! Oh, my only hat! If that doesn't fairly take the cake!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And now for the feed!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Fatty Wynn Changes Colour.

THE sun was setting, and long shadows were stealing over the old quad. It had been a great day at St. Jim's; one of the best matches played by the First Eleven. And the margin of defeat had been so narrow, and their opponents were such a famous team, that the seniors did not feel much discomfited at losing. If they had known whom their opponents precisely were, their feelings would have been very different; but as yet they were in the state of ignorance which is bliss.

The two teams sat down to supper in the senior room.

The long table was crowded. In the place of honour sat the two captains—Kildare and the Rajah of Jal—on the best of terms. Tom Merry and Blake had D'Arcy between them, ready to put the stopper on if, in the enthusiasm of the moment, he should attempt to make a speech.

The dusky faces of the Indians gleamed round the festive board. There was a merry fire of chatter, most of the fellows talking at once; and the Indians, of course, talked in their own peculiar language, excepting when they forgot, and then they showed a curious knowledge of English, and even of English slang.

The St. Jim's fellows who noticed it were surprised. It was only natural that the Indians, touring in England, should pick up English; but to make so much progress in a single day was very astonishing.

Still, there was the fact, however surprising, and the Saints had to believe their own ears.

There was one cricketer who did not talk at all. That one was Punar Singh, alias Fatty Wynn. He was too busy to talk. Several fellows tried to compliment him on his wonderful bowling, but Wynn had little or nothing to say.

"You might pass the pie," he said, and his English was remarkably good for a native of Jal, who was supposed to speak only the Jal dialect.

Kerr pinched him.

"Bang-bang!" he whispered.

"Oh, I forgot! I mean bang-bang."

"You do speak English—eh?" asked Monteith, with a curious look at the Indian bowler.

"Bhong kosh," replied Fatty Wynn.

"Don't you understand me?"

"Muckey chucky walker."

"But you were speaking English just now," persisted the New House prefect. "You asked Rushton to pass the pie."

"Spooner schooner mop bang wallop."

Monteith looked very much puzzled.

Fatty Wynn buried himself in the pie, and was happy. He did not care whether his prefect was watching him suspiciously; all his thoughts then were of pie, and pie alone. Pie filled up the whole horizon for Fatty Wynn.

But when he had satisfied himself with pie, he wanted something to drink.

"Any lemonade going?" he asked, looking round.

Kerr pinched him again, and Fatty Wynn squeaked.

"What the—"

"Bhong clack bang?"

"Oh, yes! Wady halfa khalifa bosh kosh."

"Here's the lemonade!" exclaimed Levison, hurrying up with a syphon.

He rushed up to Fatty Wynn with the syphon of lemonade. He drew Wynn's glass towards him, and streamed the lemonade into it, and contrived to stumble and turn the jet of fizzing liquid upon Fatty Wynn's face.

There was a roar from the fat Fourth-Former.

"Yarooop! Ow! Yah!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed Levison.

"Yow! Ow!"

Fatty Wynn jumped up, choked and blinded, kicking his chair over backwards. He put up both hands to his face, wiping the foaming lemonade from his eyes and nose and mouth. His face was drenched, and as he wiped his fat hands over it the colour came off on his palms and his fingers.

There was a gasp from the fellows who saw him. Whitish streaks appeared all over the dusky complexion of Punar Singh, and a great deal of his complexion had been transferred to his serviette.

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

Kerr clutched Wynn by the shoulder. There was a chance left yet.

"Bolt!" he whispered fiercely.

"Right!" muttered the unfortunate Fatty.

He covered his face with his hands, and bolted.

The door banged after him.

Half the company were on their feet now, in alarm and surprise, and there were exclamations on all sides.

"What's the matter?"

"What's happened?"

"What's been done to him?"

"It was an accident," said Kildare, turning a rather worried face upon the Rajah of Jal. "A boy squirted lemonade in his face, I am sure by accident. It was an accident, was it not, Levison?"

"Of course!" said Levison. "My foot slipped, and—"

"You can get out now, Levison. We don't want any more accidents of that sort. Leave the room at once!"

"Very well, Kildare."

And Levison departed, hoping charitably that he had done sufficient mischief. Certainly, he had observed the change in Fatty Wynn's complexion; but the fat Fourth-Former's flight had been so prompt that Levison's plan had not been carried out. He had meant to show the junior up to the whole table as disguised, but he had not succeeded in that.

The Rajah of Jal looked perturbed.

"I hope Punar Singh is not offended?" said Kildare.

"Perhaps he is hurt," the rajah suggested. "After such an experience he may not care to return to the venerable feast. Will you follow him, Kumar Lal, and see whether he is damaged? Kong bong pushy tap sammy bang!"

"Osh kosh!" replied Kumar Lal.

And he followed in the footsteps of Punar Singh.

The incident somewhat upset the cheerfulness of the company. Indians were supposed to be touchy fellows, with all sorts of curious ideas about caste, and there was no telling what unknown offence Levison's action might have given. Besides that, quite half a dozen fellows declared, in mysterious whispers that soon ran round the table, that they had seen a change in Punar Singh's complexion when he wiped the lemonade off.

"He's not a nigger at all, that's what I say!" said Lefevre of the Fifth. "It's a little game!"

"I'm sure of it!" said Monteith. "I've suspected something all along—I couldn't quite make out what. I remember now that some of the Jal team were crooked; they were going to scratch the match because of that. They're playing substitutes—not Indians at all, but English chaps with their skin browned. That's my belief."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Rushton. "I was sitting just opposite him, and I'll swear I saw him change colour in streaks."

"So did I."

"It's not a fair game, then," said Monteith. "The rajah had a right to play substitutes, but he ought to have told us they were white men, and played them in their own colour."

"Yes, rather!"

"No good saying anything now," said Baker hastily. "The result would have been the same anyway, and we don't want to appear to be carping because we're licked!"

"No; but—"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to squirt some more lemonade, and see if any more of the complexions will come off," growled Lefevre. "That's what I say!"

Monteith grinned.

"I've a jolly good mind to," he said. "Only—Hallo, here comes the fat chap again! He's got his complexion touched up. That's what he bolted for!"

Blake led Fatty Wynn back to his seat. Kildare called across to the fat bowler:

"I'm sorry for that accident, Punar Singh. I hope you weren't hurt?"

"Not a bit—ahem!—ram sing push bang koosh!"

"It's all right, then?"

"Bang-bang!"

"Good!"

"Oh, boggley, boggley! Wallah!" said Punar Singh.

And the supper went on cheerfully enough.

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DELICIOUS FREE TUCK HAMPERS FOR READERS. SEE THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 1<sup>D</sup>. TO-DAY.

**THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**  
**Something Like a Triumph!**

**J**UST as Levison left the seniors' room, Mr. Railton came striding along the passage. He stopped the Fourth-Form junior.

"Have you seen anything of Merry, Blake, and Figgins and their friends?" he asked. "I have just discovered that they have been out all day, and no one seems to know where they are. Do you know where they went to?"

"I don't think you need feel anxious, sir," said Levison.

"But I am," said Mr. Railton. "Haven't you any idea where they went to?"

"I know they are quite safe, sir."

"How can you know that?"

"I know where they are, sir."

"Indeed! And where?"

"In the school."

Mr. Railton gave a start.

"In the school, Levison?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"In the seniors' room, sir. I—I can't say more, sir; it would be sneaking, and they would rag me afterwards," said Levison, hesitating. "I don't want to give them away."

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"I shall not mention your name as my informant," he said.

"You declare that the missing juniors are in the seniors' room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then they are present at the supper?"

"Exactly, sir."

"If you are playing a joke in telling me this, Levison, I need not tell you that I shall punish you severely. I shall now proceed to ascertain whether there is any truth in your amazing statement."

And Mr. Railton stepped into the seniors' room.

He glanced about the room. There was the long table crowded with feasters, white and brown, gay with lights and flowers, and there were a crowd of fags waiting on the cricketers, but not a sign could the Housemaster see of Tom Merry & Co.

But he was resolved to test the matter. Levison's manner had been convincing, though his statement was so peculiar.

The Housemaster called out Tom Merry's name in loud tones. If the hero of the Shell was there, it was his duty to answer to his name when the Housemaster called.

"Merry!"

Chandra Das rose in his place at the table instinctively.

"Adsum!"

And there was a general gasp.

Mr. Railton stared blankly at Chandra Das, and every eye was turned upon the Indian immediately.

"How the——"

"What the——"

"What does he mean?"

"Oh, you ass!" murmured Figgins. "Oh, you frabjous ass! You've given the show away now, and no mistake!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"The game's up," said Kerr calmly. "Never mind; it was a jolly good jape."

Monteith sprang to his feet.

"I understand now!" he exclaimed. "Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry stood dumb.

Mr. Railton advanced to the table. It was not only that Tom Merry had replied to his call, but he had recognised the familiar tones. In spite of the inky complexion, in spite of the name of Chandra Das, he knew that it was Tom Merry standing there. His face was a study as he looked at the pseudo Indian.

"Merry!" he exclaimed.

"Ye-es, sir?"

"What—what on earth does this mean?"

Kildare and Darrel and most of the others were on their feet now. Only one fellow was undisturbed. It was Fatty Wynn. He was wiring into jam-tarts at express speed. If the game was up, that was all the more reason why Fatty Wynn should make good time before he was kicked out with his comrades.

The room was in a roar. Mr. Railton held up his hand for silence, but it was some time before silence could be obtained.

Amazed exclamations, and some angry ones, were heard on all sides.

"The young bounders!"

"The spoofers!"

"Not Indians at all!"

"We've been done!"

"Make them explain!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Let me speak."

And the hubbub died down at last. The Housemaster looked at Tom Merry, who was crimson under his paint, although his blushes did not show. "Now, Merry, kindly explain!"

"Make the rajah explain," said Monteith sourly; "he's the leader."

"Yaas, wathah! Though, weally, I should have great pleasuah in explainin', and pewwaps you fellahs had bettah leave the talkin' to me. Undah the cirms, what is required is a fellah of tact and judgment, and——"

"Silence!"

Figgins stammered and explained.

"You see, sir, we heard that the match with the Indians had been scratched, and as we always said we could beat the Sixth if we had a match with them, we worked it to come down as the Indians."

"Bless my soul!"

"Of course, it was only a jape, sir, and Kildare will admit that it's been a jolly good match."

Kildare laughed a little awkwardly. To be beaten by a junior team was a bitter pill to swallow, even to the good-tempered captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes, it was a good match," he said; "but your cheek in playing such a jape on us——"

"Well, you see——"

"I—I never heard of such a thing," exclaimed Mr. Railton, in amazement—"never in my life! However, I shall leave the matter to you to settle, Kildare, as you are the victim of this extraordinary practical joke!"

The spoofed Sixth-Formers looked grimly at the disguised juniors. The Rajah of Jal and his team had drawn close together, Fatty Wynn with a jam-tart in either hand. They were rather expecting to leave the common-room on their backs.

Monteith and some more of the Sixth were looking angry. But the more sensible fellows realised that it would be much wiser to take the whole affair as a joke. It was a case of the least said the soonest mended.

Kildare pointed to the door.

"You had better go and get those complexions cleaned off, and get into some civilised clothes," he said. "And if you ever dare to jape the Sixth again——"

"Weally, Kildare——"

"Get out!"

The Rajah of Jal and his team got out. Outside juniors crowded round them in swarms to cheer them and laugh and laugh and cheer. It was a day of triumph for the juniors of St. Jim's. The juniors had beaten the seniors—had beaten Kildare and the First Eleven. It was incredible, but it was true. And the whole of the Lower School rejoiced greatly over the way the juniors had spoofed the Sixth!

THE END.

NEXT FRIDAY'S SPLENDID, COMPLETE TALE OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S IS ENTITLED

## THE BROKEN BARGAIN!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

PLEASE ORDER YOUR COPY OF THE "PENNY POPULAR" IN ADVANCE.

# THE HIDDEN FORTUNE!

A Magnificent Long, Complete Story dealing with the Great Adventures of

## JACK, SAM, & PETE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**  
Pete Receives a Letter—  
How He Went to His  
Doom — A Terrible  
Blow—Miles the  
Carrier.

**J**ACK, Sam, and Pete, the famous comrades, were staying at the Anchor Inn, on the north-west coast of Ireland. At the time our story opens, however, Pete was not at the inn. He had been out for a stroll on his own, and was just returning.

Suddenly he was accosted by a lad.

"There's a chap named Partridge who wants to see you in the hut along the shore," said the boy. "That is, he wants to see you if you are Pete, the nigger, and so he does."

"Dat so?" exclaimed Pete. "Do you know what he wants to see me about, my lad?"

"Sure, he said something about having been shamefully treated by two men, Jake and Silas, and that he wanted to give you some information concerning them. He seems a silly sort of spalpeen, but he gave me five shillings for taking the message, so it's not myself that will be miscalling him. He said he was hiding from them in the hut, and—"

"Where is de hut?"

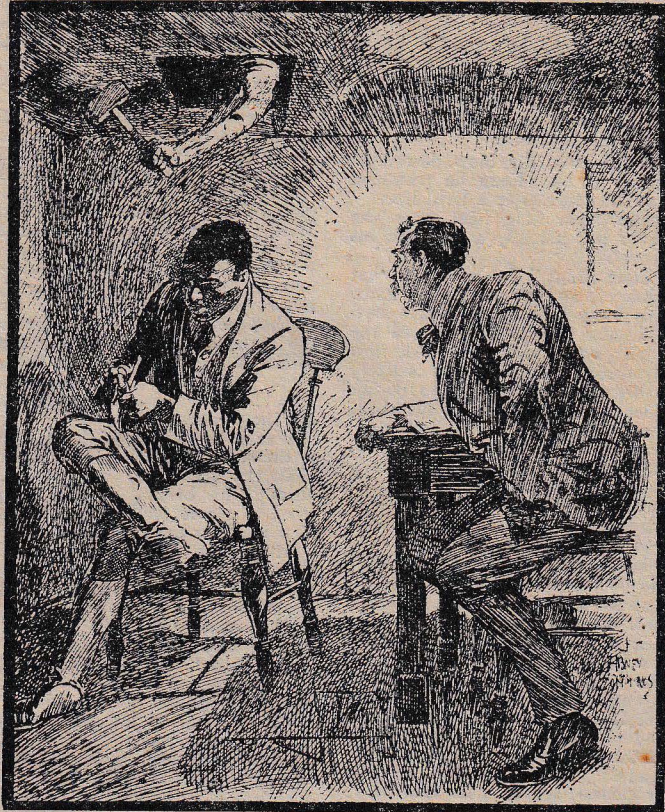
"Right along the shore. You can't miss it, 'cos it's in the water at high tides, and so it is. I've come miles out of my way to give the message, but I've got the five shillings in advance, and that's something. I must be off now, or I'll never get home to-night."

"Here's anoder five shillings for your trouble, my lad," exclaimed Pete, handing the delighted youth the coins. "I'll consider 'bout de oder matter; all de same, you hab faithfully delivered your message, so you deserve what you hab got."

"Good luck to you, and it's wishing that I had such a job every night of my life!" exclaimed the lad, hurrying off; though, had he known what would occur at the lonely hut, his pleasure would have been short-lived.

Pete was unarmed, and he knew from past experience that he might have some very desperate characters to deal with; but he was very anxious to discover whether Partridge was merely a dupe in the hands of Jake and Silas, or whether he was as bad as they. Thus he determined to rely on his great strength, and go to the lonely hut, even if he had to face the three men, as he fully believed they were.

Thus he strode along the shore, covering mile after mile



The heavy coke-hammer descended from the trap-door, and swung to one side; then, with tremendous force, the blow fell on the side of Pete's head.

at a good four miles an hour; but, although he kept up this pace, it was midnight before he came in sight of the light in the window of the shanty.

Now, although Pete was reckless, he was not so stupid as to enter into the presence of three enemies, who would undoubtedly be armed, and whom he believed to be quite capable of murder to gain their own ends; so he stepped noiselessly to the window, and looked into the little place.

Partridge was seated at the table, with another chair close to him. As far as Pete could see, no one else was in the hut, so he entered boldly.

"Well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I tink you want to see me."

"Wah-wooh! Gracious! How you made me start, my dear fellow!" cried Partridge, springing to his feet, and feigning surprise remarkably well. "I was reading, don't you know—and this place is beastly lonely—and— Well, this is awfully good of you to come, Pete. It is really, don't you know, I'm in a frightful hole, because Jake and Silas have sworn to do me an injury if they catch me.

What I mean to say is, that they know I am going to tell you all about them. I threatened to do so, not thinking they would mind, don't you know, and you never saw such an awful state of fury as they got into. Jake was the worst. Silas is more violent, but Jake's threats were awful. Now, I know you are a kind-hearted fellow, and remarkably strong. I want you to protect me from their vengeance."

"I see," growled Pete. "You want me to act something between a bodyguard and a nurse. Well, I ain't got de time, Partridge, and if you take my advice you will put de police on de job. You see, a bobby ain't got anything to do but dat, and I hab. Dis pipe wants filling eber so often; den I hab my meals to get, and oder tings like dat. Nunno! When I want a place as a constable I shall apply for it at headquarters, and I ain't at all sure dat dey will take a nigger for de job."

"But, my dear fellow, you would not like me to be robbed," murmured Partridge, refraining to offer Pete that fatal chair, because he felt sure that he would take it sooner or later.

"Well, I dunno dat I would mind dat much," observed Pete, seating himself and pulling out his pipe, which he

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commenced to fill. "You see, I hab de feeling dat you hab robbed de poor people."

"Ah, that's right! Sit down, my dear fellow; because, don't you know, I want a few minutes' private conversation with you. I can soon convince you that I have done nothing of the sort."

Although Partridge kept his eyes fixed on Pete, he also saw the trapdoor being slowly opened; but the miscreant went on talking with perfect calmness.

"Now, don't you know," observed Partridge, smiling in a most idiotic manner, "I am not at all satisfied with Jake's honour."

"Should say you would be de most easily satisfied man on de face ob dis earth if you were satisfied wid it," observed Pete. "All de same, I don't tink you need boder yourself 'bout Jake's honour, 'cos de man ain't got any."

"He, he, he! Very good that, don't you know. But what I mean to say is that I have been treated rather unkindly by Jake. Of course, I don't pretend to be clever—"

"It would not be any use, Partridge. You would only make men tink you were a liar."

Partridge's face twitched slightly as he saw the heavy coke-hammer descend from the trapdoor. It swung to one side; then, with murderous force, the blow fell on the side of Pete's head, and he fell sideways to the floor. There was one convulsive twitch of his body, and then he lay as motionless as death could have made him.

The assassin who had dealt the cowardly blow descended from the loft, and as he gazed at his victim he trembled in every limb, while his coarse face turned to a livid hue.

Partridge was perfectly calm now. He bent over the victim of their crime, and there was actually a smile on his face as he rose.

"That was very cleverly done, Silas," he said. "What you might call capital punishment, and as you and I know that he deserved it—why, we have nothing to blame ourselves with. All the same, I take it that we are not the sort of men to be troubled with consciences—eh? All men must die. Besides, he is only a nigger, and no one is likely to miss him. His comrades are not at all likely to bother about him, especially if his death will bring them his share of their fortune."

With perfect calmness, and with an evil smile still on his face, Partridge searched Pete's pockets.

"See, comrade!" he exclaimed, opening the pocket-book and carefully counting the notes. "We have eight hundred and fifty pounds here, which, you will admit, is a nice little sum. Here is also gold—to say nothing of silver and coppers. We will leave the latter, in case the body is ever discovered. Now bring the brute this way. Take the legs!"

They bore their burden across the rocks, then flung it into the sea. Partridge took off his false moustache and eyebrows, and washed his hair in the water until he got rid of the colouring matter; then he went back to the hut and concealed the hammer in the loft. After that the pair of miscreants hurried inland across the country, their object being to get as far as possible from the scene of their crime ere day dawned.

Now, the spot where the terrible crime had been committed was about as lonely as any in the country. It was the rarest thing possible for pedestrians to pass that way, for the hut had been deserted some time ago by reason of the encroachment of the sea, and the late occupant had not troubled to remove the few articles of furniture that were in it, probably because it would have cost him more to cart them away than they were worth.

For a vehicle to pass that way was an almost unknown thing, but it so happened that on that very night Miles, the carrier, had been compelled to leave some goods at the Anchor Inn. He should have reached there in the afternoon, but had the misfortune to have a breakdown, with the result that he did not reach the inn till very late, and Tim was so savage that he did not ask him to have so much as a glass of ale.

Miles had the choice of going back the way he came, which led him across a bog, or keeping along the shore until he struck a lane, which, although it would take him further, was quite safe travelling; and as he knew that he would be unable to reach his destination until the following morning, he chose the safer and longer route. Thus it was that he passed the lonely shanty on that very night, and not long after the crime had been committed.

The wind was now blowing from the sea with such fury that some of the gusts, as they caught the waggon-tilt, almost overturned the rickety vehicle. Suddenly Miles reined in his horse, which was only going at a walking pace by reason of the ruggedness of the road.

"Steady, there, Nora, mavourneen!" exclaimed Miles, who often carried on a one-sided conversation with his mare, by reason of having no one else to talk to. "Sure, that

looks like a human being; all the same, it can but be a clump of seaweed. It's rare strange forms it takes at times, and so it is. It's seaweed right enough; and if it were a living man it's not myself that could bring him back to life, for the waves have caught it back. And if it's a dead man, what use would my help be? Sure, the plaguery thing is coming up again amongst the foam, looking more like a corpse than ever I saw seaweed look. I can do it no good, and by that same token it can do me no harm, and it's cruel to lave a corpse in the cold waters a night like this. If it's a living man, it will not harm me for having saved its life, and by that same token seaweed won't harm me, either.

"So, Nora dear, just you wait where you are while I go and save the life of the corpse—unless it's seaweed, which I am inclined to think is the case. For a corpse will do me less harm than would my conscience if I had left a fellow-corpse to perish in the storm when an effort on my part might have saved its life, though I'll not be succeeding in doing that if the corpse is already dead, and I'm inclined to think that is the case, unless it's seaweed—which I am more inclined to think than anything else."

Having delivered himself of this mixed soliloquy, Miles clambered from his van in rather a leisurely manner, because he was not a man to hurry himself, and because he believed that the form was really seaweed.

He gained the water's edge, then saw that what he had come to rescue was in reality a human form.

The water was fearfully cold, and Miles was prone to rheumatism. He uttered something between a gasp and a yell as the waves came washing up to his breast. Now to plunge into the icy water, had never occurred to him. Within three minutes he had Pete beyond reach of the waves, and then Miles knelt beside him.

"Poor lad—poor lad!" murmured Miles, who was old enough to be Pete's father. "Sure, it will be a negro sailor, perchance from some wreck; or maybe he's been washed overboard. And what will I be doing next? 'Tis the strangest load I've ever taken, and the saddest—ay, sadder than the wreath of flowers! We've got to do it, Nora, lassie. We've got to do our duty this night. We can't lave the body here—and so we can't, in this perishing cold. By the powers!"

Was it a movement in that form that Miles felt, or was it the sigh of breath? He did not exactly know, but he felt that the form was not dead, and a sudden joy thrilled through his breast. It was the joy that man feels at doing good to others, and the joy that becomes a lasting one when that man has saved a life.

Miles was quite a steady fellow. He had never been drunk in his life—not even at a wake; but he always carried a flask of spirit-and-water with him, because he had so much night work. He also invariably carried food. Fortunately, he had consumed the last morsel on the present occasion, or the chances are he would have strived to thrust it down Pete's throat. He had some weak whisky-and-water left, and this he poured down the throat of the unconscious man. Miles understood nothing about first-aid, only he wanted to do something, so he did his best—which, to say the least, was rough-and-ready.

At any rate, the spirit quickened the action of Pete's heart, and a sigh escaped his lips. That was enough for Miles, who was wont to look on the bright side of things.

He was accustomed to lift heavy weights, and he got Pete on his shoulder, then bore him to the van.

It is true that Miles got his burden in something like he would have shifted a heavy case—that is to say, saved himself all unnecessary labour—but this was merely habit, and through no want of kindness. Well, where will you find the Irishman who is not kind to those in dire need? Where will you find a stauncher friend or a braver foe?

There was a good deal of straw at the bottom of the van, and Miles made a pillow with it for Pete's head. For some moments he listened to his breathing, which was just audible; then, springing up in front, whipped up Nora, and they went at a pace that she was neither accustomed to nor appreciated; while Miles' clothes stiffened on him as they went.

With the turn of the tide the wind dropped down, and the following morning was quite bright.

Jack and Sam were getting most concerned with regard to Pete's safety. They quite expected he would be in for breakfast, but they had finished their meal, and still there was no sign of their comrade.

They decided to call the landlord and question him. "When did Pete go out?" asked Jack, when Tim appeared. "Last night," grunted Tim, who was never a very amiable man.

"What time?"

The landlord scowled.

"How do you think I should know?" he said. "Do you think I watched the nigger's every action?"

"Did he leave any message?" asked Jack.

"Not a single word. It strikes me he meant to go away and leave you to settle his bill."

"You are talking like an utter idiot!" exclaimed Jack.

"He did not leave any letter for us?"

"Letter? No; but one has come for you. I was just going to give it to you when—"

"That will do. You forgot all about it. Bring the letter here immediately! Silly idiot!" murmured Jack, as Tim left the room to obey the order. "It may be from Pete himself. Ah, this looks something like his scrawl!" added Jack, as Tim returned with the letter, which had come by post.

Jack ripped open the envelope, and Tim got behind him to see what the letter contained.

"You can leave the room!" said Jack sharply.

"I suppose I can, seeing it is my own room!" snarled Tim.

"Very well," exclaimed Jack; bring me my change! We will leave your inn, seeing that you do not care for us to occupy a room. Add this meal to the bill and bring me the change."

"Oh, there's no call for you to—"

"Obey my orders, fellow!" cried Jack, in a voice that caused the innkeeper to beat a hasty retreat. "The fellow has annoyed me," added Jack. "Now, did you ever see— Look here!

"Dear Jack,—Hab gorn to Paris to meet Partridge. Meet me at de best hotel.—Your friend,  
PETE."

"I reckon that is a large order!" exclaimed Sam. "The best hotel! I wonder how many hotel-keepers would tell you theirs was the best hotel in Paris?"

"I don't know how many hotels there are in Paris," growled Jack; "otherwise I should be able to answer your question. Still, I suppose there is nothing else for it. We must go and find the owl. Suppose we start at once, Sam?"

"I'm ready this moment."

Jack rang the bell, and Tim brought up two-and-sixpence change out of the five pounds. He had been making a little profit on the way, and Jack was so disgusted with him that he put the two-and-sixpence into his own pocket.

"We are going," he said shortly.

"Now, there's no call for that, and—"

"Good-day!"

"See you here! You will have to pay for the bed-rooms!"

"We shall do nothing of the sort!" answered Jack. "We have engaged no bed-rooms, and shall certainly not pay for them. You have got quite enough profit out of our friend as it is. Come on, Sam! Come along, Rory! You have got a long journey before you!"

Late that night Jake called at the inn, and when he learnt that Jack and Sam had left for Paris, he grinned in a manner worthy of Partridge. It was he who had written that letter, and he had copied Pete's style and handwriting from some papers he found in his pocket. He only remained at the inn a few minutes, and then he went to report to Silas the success of his plot.

"You see, Silas," he exclaimed, "we are absolutely safe now. Even if the nigger's body is washed up, there is no one to attribute the incident to us. We will get to London and change those notes."

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Pete in London—The Ghostly Apparition.

**W**HEN Pete recovered consciousness the morning after he had been attacked by Silas and Jake, he had a terrible pain in his head. Nora and Miles begged him to lie still, but Pete refused. He said that Jack and Sam would be concerned about his absence, and therefore it was his duty to get back to the inn and allay their fears.

Just after breakfast he bid his rescuers good-bye, and made tracks for the Anchor Inn. Unfortunately for Pete, when he arrived there Jack and Sam had departed on their false errand.

"Where hab dey gone to?" he asked of the landlord.

"To Paris," replied Tim abruptly.

"Golly! What do dey want to go dere for?"

"How the dickens should I know?" stormed the landlord.

"Didn't they tell you?"

"Course they didn't!"

"Well, they ought to have done so," said Pete, gazing thoughtfully before him.

"Well," he said after a pause, "there's no help for it. If Jack and Sammy won't come to me, I must go to dem.

"Spect dey will go to London first, and perhaps stay dere for a little while. I wonder whatever de old hosses hab gone so far away for? Neber mind, I shall soon find out, 'cos I'm going to London in search ob dem. Good-day, old hoss!"

Tim said good-bye in a half-hearted fashion, and the next moment Pete was gone.

It took him the best part of two days to reach the great metropolis, and when he got there and saw the crowded streets and closely-packed buildings, he realised what a difficult task it would be to find his comrades.

He roamed about for several hours, and then suddenly pulled up in front of a rather cheap restaurant.

"I tink I will get a snack for myself, and dis coffee-house looks rader a nice, old-fashioned place."

It was divided off into little compartments, and Pete entered one of them.

"Free mutton chops and fried potatoes," ordered Pete of the waiter, whom the customers addressed as William, and whose one aim in life appeared to be to please everyone, with the result that he had to considerably divide his attentions. Pete was quick to notice this, and he at once got the lion's share of such attentions by tipping William five shillings.

Pete suddenly stopped eating, and commenced listening, as two men entered the compartment at his back, and commenced talking.

He knew the voices immediately, although it was the last place where he would have expected to meet the speakers. They were talking in lowered voices, but he caught most of the words, and guessed at most of the meaning.

"As you say, Silas, we have done well, but we shall yet do better. Mind, we should have done better on the island; but I take it we are not men who go through life working on one idea. There's not the slightest doubt that those three have money—"

"That's true enough, Jake. Two of 'em is away, and— Well, we don't want to talk about that. Pass me the sugar!"

"What's to prevent that money being drawn?"

"Ah, if we could only do that 'ere!"

"Not so loud. Leave it to me."

Pete had heard enough. He slipped out of his compartment, and got into the next one further away; then, when William came along to see if there were any more orders, he made a sign to him to remain silent, and slipped half-a-sovereign into his hand.

"Dere are two men in de box next de door," whispered Pete. "I don't want dem to know dat I am here, and I want to know when dey leave."

"If you watch in that looking-glass, you will see them go," murmured William, in a low voice.

"Bring my bill, den, so dat we may be all ready for de occurrence. You see, William, dese men ain't as honest as dey might be, and I want to find out where dey live."

"You watch in that glass, and when they go I will open the door for them and tell you which way they turn. There's the bill, and thank you kindly!"

"All right, old hoss, you can keep de change out ob dat sobereign. I hab an idea dat dese men hab robbed me ob 'bout eight hundred pounds, and dat dey are trying to get de rest ob my money; and de worst ob it is dat my noddle ain't in a fit condition to tink de matter out properly."

Jake and Silas left almost immediately they had finished their meal, and William pointed to the left as Pete followed them. By reason of their stature, he had little difficulty in keeping them in sight. They walked towards the City, and, turning once more to the left, made their way towards Bedford Square.

Here they entered a house, the front door of which was not latched, and presently Pete saw a light in the front room on the first floor.

"Should like to hear a little more ob deir conversation," mused Pete. "All de same, I ain't in a fit condition to tackle dese two. Shouldn't tink dey would care to make much noise, and if dey do, I can get a few bobbies to help me. Tink I'll risk it, 'cos I ain't habing Jack and Sammy robbed ob deir fortune. Dis way to London!"

Pete noiselessly turned the handle of the front door, and finding no one in the hall, crept upstairs. There were two rooms on that floor. He entered the back one, which was in darkness, save for the light which came through the partially-closed folding doors, which led into the front room.

The apartment in which he stood was a bed-room, and there were two beds in it. The other room was a well-furnished sitting-room, and through the partially open door he could see Jake seated in an easy-chair by the fire. The miscreant's back was towards Pete. Silas was at the other side of the room, and out of Pete's sight; but he could hear his voice, and presently he also moved nearer to the fire.

The two accomplices remained talking for some time, but their voices were so low that Pete could not catch the words. Once he heard Partridge's name mentioned, and it was then that Silas gave a hoarse laugh.

"Well, mate," he exclaimed at last, "suppose we have a drop of something before we turn in, and we will see what

we can bring off to-morrow. Mind you, I believe your scheme will work all right, and if we could only ruin those two demons I should be content."

"Especially if their fortune came to us—eh? Leave it to me, Silas. If I can't work it I shall be very much surprised. Yes, we will have a nightcap. Bring out the brandy-and-soda."

Now Pete would have been wise to have beaten a retreat, but he wanted to give the miscreants a little surprise. He had an idea that they knew of the attack that had been made upon him, and probably believed that he was dead, so he thought he would appear to them in ghostly form.

Dragging a sheet from one of the beds, he wrapped it round himself, then stepped towards the folding doors, and stood in full view.

Jake's back being towards him, he, of course, did not see the strange-looking form; neither did Silas, who was bending down by the sideboard.

Pete was rolling his eyes in a truly ghastly manner, while he held his left arm extended in the orthodox ghostly fashion.

At that moment the servant girl entered the sitting-room with the supper tray. For an instant her eyes were fixed on the ghost, then she dropped the tray with a crash, and, uttering a succession of piercing shrieks, fled wildly from the room, leaving Jake's supper on the floor in pieces.

Silas leapt to his feet, and as he gazed at his victim he uttered a wild howl, while even Jake gave a gasp of terror.

Now a wailing sound arose. It did not appear to come from Pete, neither did his lips move. The wail seemed to come from the ceiling, and it wandered all over the room. The effect was really extraordinary, and did great credit to Pete's ventriloquial powers.

He stood as motionless as a statue, except that his eyes rolled fearfully.

Jake was the first to recover his senses. He drew a revolver, but ere he could fire a shot the ghost was upon him, and he received a blow beneath the jaw that knocked him into the fireplace, while his revolver dropped into the fire.

In a second Jake was on his feet, for he found his position hotter than he could bear; then, with one accord, he and Silas went for the ghost for all they were worth.

Pete soon found that he had his hands full. He was in such poor condition that it seemed to him all his strength had gone. Jake and Silas knew that it had not. The blows they received were quite as heavy as they cared for, but they were not knocked out of time, as would have been the case had Pete been in his full strength.

Had it not been for his skill as a boxer, there is little doubt that he would have got the worst of it against two such powerful adversaries, for they were just as determined to get the best of it as he was.

Pete's deep chest was heaving painfully, but his will power lent him strength. Silas seized a chair, and smashed it over Pete's head; then the miscreant received one between the eyes that sent him to the floor, and at that moment the revolver commenced to fire on its own account, while Jake uttered a dismal howl as one of the balls struck him in the fleshy part of the leg. It was not much more than a graze, but it so frightened him that he bolted from the room, followed by Silas, for they did not know where the next shots were coming from the heated weapon.

Pete thought this an excellent opportunity to make his escape. He bolted down the stairs, and as he charged at the two ruffians he sent them head over heels to the bottom; then Pete leapt over their prostrate forms, and darted from the building.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Pete's Interview with Partridge—Searching for the Treasure—The Flood—Finding the Treasure—Pete Returns to London.

WHEN Pete was about a quarter of a mile from the house, a brilliant notion occurred to him for defeating the plans of Jake and Silas.

He immediately made tracks for his nearest bank, and after drawing out a large sum of money, he took a train to Edgware, and there his actions were peculiar in the extreme. He went to a place known as the Burnt Oak, and, digging a hole deep in the ground, he buried his treasure deep down.

Then he returned to London, and resolved to pay Jake and Silas another visit. The servant-girl opened the door, and immediately refused to take Pete's name up to her employers. Pete, however, was in no mood to be trifled with, and he at once bounded up the stairs, and entered Jake's sitting-room, where he found "Partridge" smoking a cigar.

For a few moments Partridge's smile vanished from his

face, but he played his part remarkably well, and Pete never imagined that smiling villain was Jake.

"Supprised to see me, ain't you, old hoss?" inquired Pete, seating himself on the table, and fixing his eyes on Partridge.

"Well, I am, but, don't you know, I'm awfully glad! I say, Pete, how could you have been so brutal as to strike me senseless on that night when we last met? You know, I was always friendly towards you. I wonder how I escaped with my life. What made you do it, and why did you rob me of the money that was in my possession?"

"You pretend to tink dat I did all dat?"

"Pretend! What else could I think? I received a blow on my head that rendered me unconscious, don't you know, and as you were the only person in the hut, I naturally thought it was you. When I regained my senses I found that I had been robbed."

"I see! You tought I had done it?"

"Naturally!"

"Den all I can say is dat it is mighty funny you should be awfully glad to see de man who had done all dat—er—what, dear boy? Don't you know!"

"Well, I wanted to ask for an explanation, because I had always believed you to be an honourable man."

"Do you suppose dat de explanation from a man who could do all dat would be ob much use to you? I'm inclined to tink dat de explanation wouldn't be so mighty trooful. I dunno weder you received a blow on your napper or not, but I'm mighty certain dat I received one on mine. I'm inclined to tink dat you neber received a blow at all. What's more, I rader tink dat you arranged de matter wid Jake and Silas, and dat after you had knocked me senseless, you robbed me ob my money, den frew me into de sea."

"Ob course, I may be wrong; at de same time, I'm inclined to tink dat I'm perfectly right, and dat de eight hundred odd pounds dat were in my possession are now in de possession ob you free scoundrels. However, I ain't come about a little matter like dat. Dere's a much more serious matter for me to attend to. You see, it's dis way, Partridge. After you struck me dat blow on my head—"

"My dear fellow, I know nothing about it. You remember, we were talking together, and—"

"I know all 'bout dat. We ain't arguing de point, 'cos I hab got de conviction dat if you didn't strike de blow, you know who did, and you also know who stole all de money dat was in my possession."

"My dear fellow, indeed you wrong me!"

"Yah, yah, yah! It would take a mighty lot to wrong you. But look here, Partridge, I happened to know dat Jake and Silas were trying to rob me, so I drew all de money out ob de bank and buried it. It amounts to a hundred thousand pounds, and I was tinking dat you might like to help me find it. You see, free heads are better dan one."

"I will certainly do so, my dear fellow. I don't think it would be wise to tell Jake anything about the matter. We might let Silas into the secret, if you like, because he is not a very brilliant man; but Jake is rather dangerous. Now, where is the money hidden?"

"At Edgware."

"Well, you let me know the exact spot, and I will make a thorough search."

"All right, old hoss; but I'm going to be dere while you make dat search, 'cos, don't you see, you might find it, and forget to mention de matter to me."

"I hope you don't think I am a thief?"

"Nunno, old hoss! I don't tink anything 'bout it. I'm mighty certain ob it!"

"Look here, Pete, that's beastly insulting, you know, and you cannot expect me to help you to find your money if you speak like that!"

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, getting off the table. "Den we won't boder furdur 'bout de matter. I ain't such a mighty liar as to tell you dat I tink you are not anything like honest, 'cos I'm mighty certain dat you are not anything ob de sort."

"Well, well, you and I won't quarrel. Now, when would you like to commence the search?"

"Should say to-day would be de best time, supposing you can get Silas."

"Wait here a few minutes!" exclaimed Partridge. "I think I know where to find him. He has gone round the corner to get something to drink."

Partridge closed the door, and Pete immediately tried the folding ones, but found them locked; then he listened intently, but if Silas were in the next room, as Pete suspected, he left it without a sound.

In about ten minutes Partridge returned with him; then he pretended to leave a note for Jake saying that he would not be back until late that night.

(Continued on Page 24.)

# SENSATIONAL SUCCESS OF WONDERFUL NEW BEAUTY CREAM.

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MISS YVONNE ARNAUD, of "The Girl in the Taxi" fame, says: "Your Cream is excellent; I want to use it always."

MISS ELLALINE TERRISS says: "I consider the Cream very excellent."

MISS ELSIE JANIS repeats the same opinion.

MISS ETHEL LEVEY, the "Queen of Revue," praises "Astine" Vanishing Cream in the same cordial terms.

Why not test "Astine" Vanishing Cream for yourself to-day free?

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Send for your Free Supply, filling in and posting the form below. Apply "Astine" Vanishing Cream night and morning to the skin according to the directions given, and you will enjoy a beauty course that might in the ordinary way cost you two or three guineas.

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Photo: Wrather & Buys

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PENNY POPULAR, May 13th, 1916.

At Pete's instigation they took a train to Edgware, and then he conducted them to Burnt Oak, pointing out the spot where he believed he had buried the treasure.

"You see, old hosses," he explained, "I know dat you are such mighty thieves dat I tink you will succeed in finding de gold, howeber securely it is hidden, and as I can't find it, I'm letting you hab a try. Dis is de plan, and dat line is de riber. Dese lumps are bushes; you can see dat, 'cos I hab marked B against dem. I had to draw dem widout deir leaves, and as I did it from memory, dey ain't as like bushes as might hab been de case. Now, mind you, dere are a hundred tousand pounds just about here."

"You are sure you are not fooling us, my dear fellow?" inquired Partridge, who could scarcely conceive that a man would be so simple as to conceal money like that.

"Nunno! It's here or hereabouts right enough, and it ain't buried so mighty deep. Golly! Here comes de rain, and den dis riber floods!"

Partridge lost his smile. It was not pleasant work, but he knew that if he could only locate the treasure he would be able to mark the spot, and come at another time to get it for himself, therefore he put up with the discomfort of the rain, and kept asking Pete questions as to the spot where he had concealed the box. Pete's ideas were very hazy on the point. He knew it was near a bush, but as there were a good many bushes, it became necessary to search every one of them, and this took many hours.

Meantime, the water in the river was rising with remarkable rapidity. The Brent had a knack of doing this at that part. Probably there is no river in England that rises so rapidly and floods such a vast track of country in such a short space of time.

Pete watched those rising waters with grave misgivings, and by three o'clock the stream became a rushing torrent, while they appeared to be no nearer finding the treasure than when they first started.

Silas began to lose his temper, especially when Pete chaffed him about getting wet. He declared that he did not believe any treasure was buried there; but Partridge continued his search, and at last he knelt beside a bush, and commenced to examine the ground with a care that convinced Pete he had hit on the right spot.

"Hellup!" yelled Pete, springing forward. "You come out ob it! I'm only using you and Silas as sorts ob blug-hounds. Here, what's de man trying to do?"

Pete rushed forward with such impetuosity that he charged against Partridge, who was on his knees, and he bowled over, then uttered a wild yell as he rolled down the steep bank and plunged into the river.

"Yah, yah, yah!" howled Pete. "De man is taking a sort ob barf! I say, Partridge, from what I hab heard ob dat riber, dere's too much drainage in it to make it suitable for bathing purposes. Got into your mouf, has it? Yah, yah, yah! It will make your whiskers grow. 'Seuse me laughing at you, but you seem to hab found de right spot. M'yes! I'm mighty certain dis earth has been disturbed lately. All right, Silas, you go and rescue him while I rescue de treasure. I don't want to lose a hundred thousand pounds if I can help it. Golly! Here's de box!"

"Now, all dat I hab got to do is to find Jack and Sam, wid Rory frown in. I'm much obliged to you, old hosses, for your assistance in dis matter, and you are welcome to keep de eight hundred pounds you robbed me of by way ob recom-

pense. I'm going to dat inn to dine, and if you like to follow me dere, dere ain't de slightest doubt in dis life dat you will find me dere. Yah, yah, yah! Golly! Ain't you got wet dis time, Partridge? Dat's right, old hoss, spit it out, 'cos de character ob dis riber ain't all you could wish for, and you don't want your whiskers to grow too long!"

It was a lucky thing for Partridge that, although his head went under water, his false moustache did not come off. Pete knew that he was not in a fit condition to face those two men; besides, he had an idea that they would be armed, and that they would not hesitate to use their weapons, in such a lonely spot, so he hurried along the river-bank, and, choosing the narrowest place, leapt to the opposite side; then he made his way to the inn with his box, and ordered the best dinner that could be served.

He felt absolutely certain that the miscreants had robbed him of eight hundred pounds, so he did not feel any compunction concerning the part he had made them play.

He was half-way through his dinner before they made their appearance, and Partridge was in a sorry plight. He was shivering in his wet clothes, and his smile was a thing of the past, but he still played his part to the best of his ability.

"Look here, Pete!" he exclaimed. "We have found that treasure for you, and you ought to give us some of it, don't you know. Silas will expect a reward, and I think, seeing that I actually found it, I am entitled to something handsome!"

"Well, you can take Silas' face, and if dat ain't handsome enough for you, you can keep de eight hundred pounds you robbed me ob. I'm letting you keep dat as a sort ob reward for finding dis money. Yah, yah, yah! You'm dripping on de carpet; still, it's all clean water out ob de brook!"

"Well, we will discuss the matter as we return to London together," said Partridge. "Just serve up something to eat, waiter! When is the next train? I shall catch my death of cold if it is long!"

"There's one in half an hour, sir," answered Charlie. "That will give you nearly twenty minutes for dinner."

"Then serve it up immediately."

"Dat's right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You will find food keeps out de wet. Just wait a moment!"

Pete dodged out of the room with his box, and whispered a few words to Charlie, who re-entered the room in about five minutes' time carrying the dinner-tray.

"Where is the nigger?" demanded Partridge, who had been ringing the bell violently.

"Gorn by that train, sir," answered Charlie, who was not absolutely truthful, for he knew perfectly well that Pete was in the upstairs room.

But, having received orders to get rid of them, Charlie went that way to work.

"Fury!" yelled Partridge. "Here, never mind the dinner! We are off! I must catch that train!"

And so they did, but they did not find Pete on it. That worthy returned to London the following morning, and, having deposited his money in the bank, turned his mind to discovering his comrades.

And here we must leave him until next week.

THE END.

A Grand Long, Complete Story of JACK, SAM, and PETE in  
Next Friday's Issue, entitled:

## FIGHTING THE FLAMES!

BY S. CLARKE HOOK.

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