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TOM MERRY.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD



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DOWNFALL!

NO. 28.

VOL. 2.

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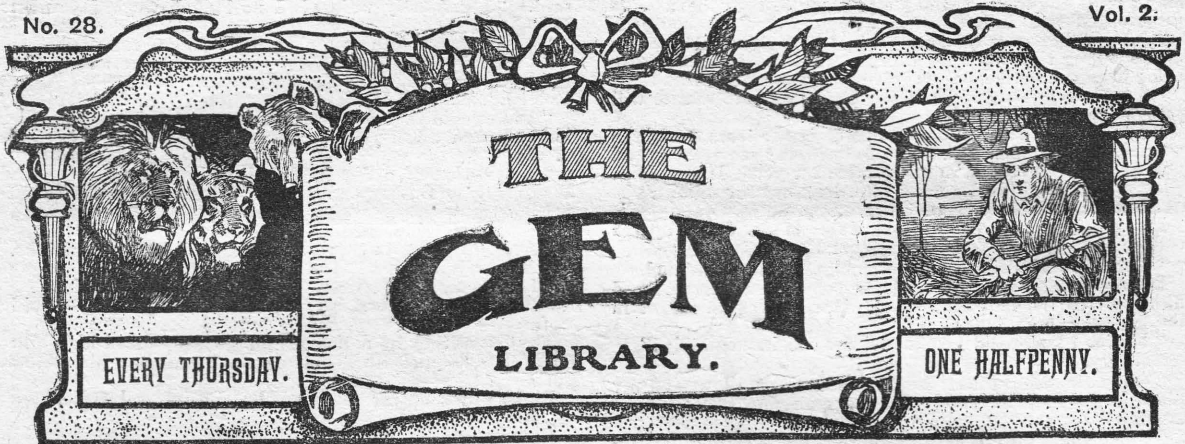
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PLAYING THE GAME.

A Tale of Tom Merry's Schooldays.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Junior Football Match.

"FOOTBALL!" said Tom Merry. "By Jove!"
"Yaas, bai Jove, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Fancy football in this weathah, deah boys! I am afwaid I shall wegard it as too much of an awfully beastly fag, don't you know."

It certainly did not seem exactly the weather for the winter game. The September sun was blazing down upon the quadrangle at St. Jim's—literally blazing. Hot and dusty was that Saturday afternoon, with hardly a breath of wind stirring. Half the school had gone down to the Ryll to bathe, the clear depths of the river being the only place where coolness was to be found.

The group of juniors standing on the steps of the School House at St. Jim's looked into the scorching quadrangle, and at each other, with dubious expressions.

On the junior football-ground the goalposts were erected, and the lines already marked out. Everything was in readiness for the game—everything except the weather, as Blake had remarked.

"Football!" repeated Tom Merry. "My only aunt! I rather wish we could make it a swimming match instead! But we can't let the Redclyffe fellows think we want to get out of it."

"Not much," said Jack Blake emphatically. "After all, who's afraid of a little warmth?"

"I'm not," said Tom Merry. "Anyway, the Redclyffe

chaps will be here in a few minutes now, and that settles it."

And Tom Merry descended the steps and walked through the blazing sunlight towards the ground where the first important match of the season was to be played.

It was an old fixture—Redclyffe Juniors against the juniors of St. Jim's—and Tom Merry was football captain on the Saints' side. And Tom Merry did not intend to funk the match if the heat were like that of an oven.

The St. Jim's junior team was composed of most of our old friends. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three, were all in it, and so were Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy. The New House at St. Jim's furnished five members, among whom Figgins & Co. were most prominent.

As a rule, the first junior match against a rival school attracted a big crowd to the ground, the Lower Forms being strongly represented, as well as some of the Upper Form fellows coming to look at the "kids" playing the game. But on this occasion the junior eleven and their opponents seemed likely to have the match-ground mainly to themselves. It was too hot even to look at football, the youngsters declared, and such as were not in the team had mostly sought out cooler spots than the football-ground.

Some were bathing, some were boating, some were stretched under the shady elms reading or chatting, and only a few very hardy enthusiasts turned up as spectators of the coming match. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only member of the eleven who thought that it would be a good idea to put off the match.

"I am afwaid I should find it a beastly fag," D'Arcy explained. "Of course, I am always weady to do anythin' for the side, as a sportsman and a footballah. But I weally think that on the pwesent occasion, deah boys, the weathah is weally too warm for such an extwemely wuff and weady game as football."

"Oh, rats!" said Jaek Blake.

"Wats or not, I think so," said the swell of the School House, with emphasis. "And undah the circumstances, I considah that Tom Mewwy should postpone the match till a more suitable occasion when the weathah is a little coldah."

"Oh, dry up!" said Herries.

"I wefuse to do so! I wefuse—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Blake, "the Redclyffe juniors

"may arrive any minute, and we're going to play them. I've pitchforked you into the team, though you're about the silliest ass that ever made a goat of himself, and I had to argue a long time with Tom Merry about it, and we nearly came to punching heads. Is this your gratitude, image?"

"I am gwateful enough, Blake, but I am sure that it will pprove too much of a beastly fag—"

"I thought Study No. 6 ought to be in the team, and here we are," said Blake. "I made Tom Merry see reason, and you're in the eleven. I'm answerable for you. If you don't play up like a giddy International, look out for squalls."

"But weally, Blake, I am quite ppared to weisgn—"

Blake seized the expostulating swell of St. Jim's by the collar, and ran him down the School House steps.

"Come on, kids, it's time we changed!" he exclaimed.

D'Arcy struggled in his leader's iron grip as Blake raced him towards the football-ground. But he was an infant in the grasp of Jack Blake.

"Blake, I command you to welease me immediately!"

"Go hon!"

"Our fwendship ceases fwom this moment. I wesign my place in the football team. I insist upon your weleasin' me at once!"

"Come on," said Blake, absolutely disregarding the indignation of D'Arcy. "This way to the dressing-tent! Come hon!"

"Blake, you wuff bwute, you are makin' me most uncomfortable!"

That was not at all surprising, for Blake was rushing the unfortunate swell along at a pace seldom seen off the cinder-path. D'Arcy wriggled and gasped, but, propelled from behind by that iron grip, he was simply helpless, and he had to run as if for a wager.

The rapid run in the blazing sunlight made D'Arcy gasp and pant. But there was no help for him. Blake was in deadly earnest.

Herries, who was laughing so much that he could hardly keep pace, followed fast, kindly assisting the swell of the School House at intervals with his boot from behind.

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed a well-known voice. "What's the game? Are you funny merchants trying to keep yourselves warm?"

It was the voice of Figgins.

Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House, and the deadly rivals of the School House juniors, were coming down to the ground, when they spotted the remarkable procession from the School House.

The house rivalry, of course, was in abeyance for the time, both houses being represented in the football eleven that was to meet the juniors from Redclyffe School.

The great Figgins stopped to look at the curious scene. Fatty Wynn, the Welsh partner in the firm of Figgins & Co., and Kerr, the member from Scotland, were at his side. They stared at Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy in wonder.

"Feel chilly?" went on Figgy. "Trying a little exercise to keep yourselves from freezing?"

Blake grinned.

"Not exactly," he answered, dashing away with one hand the perspiration that was pouring down his manly brow, and with the other keeping a tight grip on D'Arcy. "You see, this is the thushness of it. Gussy is so anxious to play, that there's no holding him in."

"Blake, I must chawacterwise that statement as entirely devoid of twuth!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "On the contwawy—"

"Come on!" said Blake hastily.

And he rushed his unfortunate captive on again to the home dressing-tent.

Figgins & Co., who had a pretty shrewd guess at the real state of affairs, followed, giggling. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy arrived at the tent. The Terrible Three were already there, and they stared at Blake in amazement as he arrived.

"What the— How the—"

"It's Gussy's giddy enthusiasm," explained Blake.

"He's so eager to play—"

"Blake, you bwute—"

"This way in," interrupted Blake.

He bundled D'Arcy into the tent.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Gussy thinks it would be a beastly fag," he murmured.

"Blake is keeping him up to time! Good old Blake!"

"Ha, ha!" giggled Manners. "I can hear them persuading him."

"They'll have to drag him on by main force, I fancy," remarked Monty Lowther. "Poor old Gussy! He was so ambitious to be a footballer once!"

Blake was indeed persuading the swell of the School House to get into his football things. D'Arcy was exhibiting the obstinacy usually ascribed to a mule.

"Once for all, Blake, I wefuse to change my clothes," he

said. "I distinctly wefuse! I no longah wegard you as a fwend."

"I still regard you as a silly ass," Blake remarked.

"I object—I stwongly object—to such expressions—"

"I strongly object to such silly asses, but I have to put up with 'em," said Blake. "Now, here's your duds, Gussy."

"I have said that I wefuse. The weathah is too warm for football, and aftah your extweme wuffness it is a question of dig."

"A question of a gig in the ribs, do you mean?" asked Blake, giving D'Arcy one that made him sit down with surprising suddenness. "That all right?"

"Blake, you howwid wuffian—"

"Are you going to change your togs?" demanded Blake.

"No, certainly not! I stwongly object—"

"Lend a hand, Herries. We'll change 'em for him."

"Blake! Hewwies! I wefuse—I object—I uttahly wefuse—"

The chums took no notice of him. They yanked his clothes off in double-quick time, and slammed him into his football garb.

Blake rolled up the removed clothing into a bundle.

"I say, Figgy!"

Figgins put his head into the tent.

"What's the trouble?"

"Will you stick this bundle somewhere—anywhere?"

"Certainly," grinned Figgins.

He took the clothing, and disappeared. Arthur Augustus made a frantic rush after him.

"Figgins! I insist upon your immediately weturnin' my clothin'!"

Blake caught the indignant swell of St. Jim's by the shoulders, and pulled him back.

"Dry up, Gussy! Now, you can either keep those togs on, or else do the other thing! But you won't see your other duds again till after the match."

"This is an outwage—"

"Hallo, here are the Redclyffe chaps!"

The juniors of Redclyffe had arrived in their brake. Tom Merry was welcoming them. They looked very hot and perspiring.

Green, their captain, was a big, muscular fellow, belonging to the Upper Fourth at Redclyffe. The rest of the team looked very fit, excepting for the signs of the heat. All were red as poppies. The absurd weather was rather taken as a joke by the fellows from Redclyffe, and, like good sportsmen, they could see the humorous side of the matter.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came down to the tent. Kildare was to referee the match, a kind action for which the juniors were duly grateful. The captain of St. Jim's took a deep interest in junior football, and did all that he could to help on the youngsters. Kildare spoke some kindly words to the visitors, and they were shown into their tent, to change. It was close upon time for the kick-off.

"Jolly weather for football, isn't it, Kildare?" Tom Merry remarked, with a grin. "I only hope we sha'n't melt away in the sun!"

Kildare laughed.

"Never mind, stick it out, like good sportsmen," he said.

"But I know you'll do that. The Redclyffe fellows are in good form, Merry. I hope you'll beat them, though, as we hope to do next week in the senior match."

"We'll do our best, Kildare. Anyway, they'll have a warm time."

On the following Saturday was to take place the senior match between Redclyffe and St. Jim's on the former's ground.

The senior match was considered the more important, of course, at all events by the seniors and the masters. The juniors were inclined to think that the junior match was really "the thing." They made it a point to see all the senior matches, and to cheer their side loudly; but their hearts were in the junior affairs. But the senior match the following week was destined to be unusually interesting to the juniors of St. Jim's. But we must not anticipate.

Kildare looked at his watch.

"Close on time, Merry."

"Righto, Kildare! We're all ready, I think."

Tom Merry looked into the tent.

"Hallo, you chaps! Ah, you look all right, D'Arcy. Glad to see you looking so fit."

"It was my intention to weisgn—"

Blake clapped his hand over the mouth of Arthur Augustus.

"What's that?" asked the junior captain.

"Nothing!" said Blake hastily. "Guss is in fine form, and is bound to distinguish himself. If he doesn't, we are going to slay him in the study afterwards."

"Blake—"

"Shut up! Time we were on the ground. Come on!"

Blake linked his arm in D'Arcy's, and they went on. The

Redclyffe juniors were in the field, and Green was holding the ball. In the sun-blaze they did not feel inclined to punt it about.

Fatty Wynn was goalkeeper for the Saints. He went to his station when the captains had tossed for choice of ends, the choice being a matter of very little moment, as there was no wind and a vertical sun-blaze. Blake looked anxiously at Fatty.

"He's a jolly good goalkeeper as a rule," he remarked. "There isn't much room for a ball to pass him. But suppose—"

"Suppose what?" said Fatty.

"Suppose you run into tallow, or something like that, in this heat?" said Blake, with an anxious look. "It's dangerous to be so fat in a sun like this. If you were to melt away—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Fatty.

"Line up!" said Tom Merry.

The side were soon in their places. Tom Merry was centre-forward, with Blake, Herries, Figgins, and Monty Lowther in the front line with him.

Manners, D'Arcy, and Kerr were the half-backs, and Pratt and French, two New House juniors, were the backs. Pratt belonged to the Fourth Form, and French to the Shell, the Form of which the Terrible Three were the shining ornaments.

Phip!

It was the clear, shrill blast of the whistle.

Tom Merry kicked off.

CHAPTER 2.

Playing the Game.

THE football match commenced.

Under a blazing sun, in more than midsummer heat, Tom Merry kicked off, and the kick-off was followed by a forward rush of the Saints.

Round the ground about a score of fellows looked on.

That was the largest number that could be prevailed upon to "stick out" the match besides those engaged in it.

Darrel, Rushden, Drake, and some other friends of Kildare's from the School House, and a couple of New House seniors were there, the rest being juniors.

They gave a feeble cheer as Tom Merry and the St. Jim's forwards got away.

It was too hot to shout, as Gore remarked.

But it was not too hot for the Saints to play a good game, and Tom Merry showed it by the way he streaked through the Redclyffe defence.

He came through the Redclyffians like a knife through cheese, and dribbled the ball right through the half-backs, and passed cleverly to Blake as the backs pounced upon him.

Blake sent the leather out to Herries as he was nailed, and Herries rushed it on and kicked for goal.

But the Redclyffe custodian was on the alert.

Out came the ball from his ready fist, to fall among the watchful halves; but ere they could clear the long-legged Figgins was on the ball like a shot.

Figgins did not try for goal; he knew there was no chance of that, but he sent the ball to Tom Merry at centre just before he was rolled over under the charge of a Redclyffian, and Tom Merry kicked for goal.

This time the goalkeeper was not so fortunate.

He clutched at the leather, but it shot past his head before he could touch it and landed in the net.

"Goal!"

Darrel and Rushden shouted out the word from the ropes—a very faint greeting for the feat performed by the junior Saints.

It was certainly a goal.

St. Jim's Juniors were one up!

The goalie tossed out the ball, and Green, the Redclyffe captain, punted it back to the centre of the field, where the teams lined up again.

Tom Merry was looking very pleased.

Not only because the goal had come from his foot—for it was as much due to Figgins as to himself, as he readily acknowledged—but because St. Jim's had started so well.

To win a football match in midsummer weather would be a record, and Tom Merry was determined that that record should be made.

And his perspiring but enthusiastic team were prepared to back him up to any extent.

Even the languid Arthur Augustus began to be imbued with the enthusiasm of the grand old game, and ceased to bother about the "beastly fag."

The whistle went, blown by the red-faced referee, and Redclyffe kicked off.

The teams were quickly at it again, hammer-and-tongs.

The visitors brought the ball with a rush into the home half, and dashed on towards goal, and Fatty Wynn, who had hitherto been leaning idly against a goal-post fanning himself with a leaf, woke up to business.

Fatty was a splendid goalkeeper. At home in Wales, on his native heath, he generally played the Rugby game, but Association was the game at St. Jim's, and Fatty played it as well as he played Rugger. He was an ideal goalkeeper; not merely on account of his width, as Blake playfully suggested, but because he was alert and cool and determined, and never let a chance escape him—or hardly ever.

The Redclyffians came on gallantly, and the ball whizzed in from the foot of Green, only to whiz out again from the foot of Fatty Wynn. It met a Redclyffe head, and came in again; but Fatty's chubby fist was ready, and he drove it out, and this time it dropped to the home backs, who cleared, and the game went towards the half-way line again.

"Bravo!" shouted Monteith, the head prefect of the New House.

"Bravo!" echoed Darrel and Rushden. "Well cleared!"

The tussle was on the half-way line now, and the juniors seemed to be mixing themselves up pretty well over the elusive leather.

Monteith's companion yawned.

"I say, ain't you coming along, Monteith?" he asked.

"Not yet, Sefton."

"What is this kid's game to you?" asked Sefton impatiently. "What rot!"

"The youngsters ought to be encouraged, you know. And Figgins & Co. are playing up well—equal to anything the School House is doing," Monteith said, without taking his gaze from the field.

Sefton looked at him curiously.

He had not been able to understand Monteith of late.

It was not so long since Monteith, Sefton, and Lucas Sleath had been three companions of the same kidney in the New House at St. Jim's. Sleath had been expelled some time ago for rascally conduct, and after that Monteith had seemed to set himself more than ever against good government in the school, cordially backed up by Sefton. But of late a change had come over the prefect.

His bitter animosity against Kildare seemed to have vanished, and in football matters and in other things he seemed to back up the captain of the school, and to wish to be his right-hand man. There were no more bickerings with Kildare on the football committee, no more attempts to make trouble between the houses, no more cigarette parties in the prefect's study, no more surreptitious visits to the Chequers Inn at Rylcombe.

Monteith seemed to have turned over a new leaf entirely, and if ever he dropped back into anything like the old ways it was due to Sefton's influence.

Sefton could not understand it.

He believed at first that the head prefect of the New House was simply playing a part, in order to win Kildare's confidence, and repay it with some piece of treachery; but as time passed on he could not help seeing that Monteith was in earnest, and that annoyed him extremely.

"Oh, hang this!" said Sefton irritably. "I can't see what you want to stay here for, Monteith. It's too hot to hang about a football field."

"Yes; by Jove, it is hot!" said Monteith. "But, as a matter of fact, Sefton, I promised Kildare. It would be too bad for the youngsters to play without a soul looking on. Don't you agree with me?"

"No; I don't!" snapped Sefton. "Confound the youngsters! And I don't see what you want to go out of your way to please Kildare for!"

"Well, I don't know about going out of my way. I like to see a good game, and these juniors are playing up in grand style, considering the weather. There goes Tom Merry with the ball." Monteith clapped his hands. "Bravo!"

Tom Merry was away with the ball, with the Redclyffians hanging upon his track like bloodhounds. Right at him three halves rushed, and right through them Tom Merry went before he could be touched, dribbling the ball in splendid style. The halves blundered into one another and went to the ground in a heap, and Tom Merry dashed on, with only the backs to stop him.

The backs were upon him, when the ball went from his foot out to Figgins. Figgins was bowled over on the turf by a charge from Green, but he managed to pass the ball to Monty Lowther at outside-left. Monty sent it whizzing

ANSWERS

in, beating the goalkeeper hollow, and St. Jim's Juniors were two up!

"Goal!"

Monteith shouted with Darrel and Rushden.

"Oh, hang it!" said Sefton. "Do come along! I want you to come down the river with me."

"Where to?"

"The same old place," said Sefton uneasily.

"Do you mean the Chequers?"

"Yes."

"I can't come."

"Why not?"

"Look here, Sefton," said Monteith, turning upon him, and looking him full in the face, "I've told you before that I've made up my mind, and that's enough. I don't want to preach to you, but I'm not going to the Chequers again. I've done with that sort of thing."

"Kildare been nagging you?" sneered Sefton.

"Kildare stood by me in a way I could never have expected, when I didn't deserve anything of the kind at his hands," said Monteith. "I needn't tell you the particulars, but I shall never forget that time. I was his enemy once; I'm his friend now. They used to call me Cad Monteith in the school." He flushed a little. "I'm going to see if I can't earn a rather pleasanter title than that. I've made up my mind. What do you want to keep on at it for? Let's have some peace!"

Sefton bit his lips hard.

"Then you won't come to the Chequers?"

"No; I won't!" Monteith's eyes flashed. "And you'd better not go, either!"

"I shall do as I please!"

"Look here, Sefton! You know jolly well that it's my duty as head prefect of the House to see that none of the fellows visit that place," exclaimed Monteith abruptly.

"Yes; I suppose it is. And I know how you've done that duty so far!"

"You're the last one who has a right to throw it in my teeth," said the prefect. "You've tried hard enough to keep me from doing the decent thing. It's time I put my foot down. I know I'm not the fellow to preach to anybody. But I'm not going to have this sort of thing going on under my nose. You're not to go to the Chequers, Sefton, and there's an end!"

Sefton gritted his teeth.

"I shall go if I choose!"

"Then I shall report you to the Head, as in duty bound!"

"You—you won't do that, Monteith?"

"By Jove, I will, if you go there after my plain warning!"

"Then you had better report yourself at the same time," said Sefton savagely. "For if you don't, I will! You've been there often enough, and the Head would like to hear of some of your proceedings there."

Monteith turned pale.

"So you mean that you will round on me, Sefton?"

"Yes, I will, if you do on me! I'm not going to be dictated to! So-long!"

And Sefton walked away, with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

Monteith remained silent and troubled in visage. The way of the transgressor is hard; but harder still seemed the way of the prefect, who, after many a lapse from the path of right, had turned over a new leaf, and honestly meant to do his duty in the future.

He had not wished to signalise his reformation by throwing over old friends. He had remained Sefton's chum, hoping to bring him round to the same way of thinking. He had used his influence with the captain to get Sefton into the St. Jim's first eleven. He knew that a healthy interest in a manly game was the best antidote to blackguardly pursuits such as his chum was addicted to.

Sefton had been glad enough to get his cap for the first eleven, but he had shown no sign of mending his ways. His open defiance of the prefect now placed Monteith in a difficult position. To keep order in his house was his first duty, but if Sefton betrayed his past faults to the Head, he would certainly not remain a prefect long, even if he were allowed to stay at St. Jim's at all.

The whistle blew for half-time. The footballers, red and perspiring, came off the field, to rub themselves dry and take light refreshment in the form of lemon-juice. They were glad of the rest. The score still stood at two goals for St. Jim's against nil for the visitors. Kildare strolled across to speak to Monteith.

"They're doing well!" he remarked. "Jolly hot, isn't it?"

"Rather!" said the prefect absently.

Kildare looked at him curiously. He saw that the prefect looked worried, but he did not ask questions. He guessed

that Sefton had something to do with it, and he had some idea of the difficulties of the prefect's position.

"The youngsters deserve credit for sticking it out like this," Kildare remarked. "We need only play as good a game next Saturday, Monteith."

"I hope we shall." The prefect pulled himself together. "I hope it won't be so awfully hot, though; or I expect we shall go over alone to the match. The fellows won't be inclined to travel ten miles to see us play football in a blaze like this."

Kildare laughed.

"Probably not; but so long as we keep our end up, old fellow, we can do without a crowd. And I think we shall do that. St. Jim's second eleven is strong, but the first eleven is just now about the strongest we have ever played. I think, with all the best men of both houses in it, pulling together like a good team."

"I hear the Redclyffe first is in fine fettle, though."

"All the better; it will make a better fight of it," Kildare glanced at his watch. "Hallo, time's up!"

He walked back into the field. The teams came tumbling out of the tents, looking a little cooler. The whistle went, and the second half of that curious game commenced.

CHAPTER 3.

The Penalty Goal.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, in the St. Jim's tent, had suggested postponing the second half of the match, a suggestion which had been somewhat rudely received by the other ten men of the side.

They had expressed themselves upon the matter in various ways. Tom Merry had thrown a wet sponge, which caught D'Arcy in the mouth and stopped his suggestion before it was fairly uttered, and Blake had hurled a lemon with deadly aim. Herries had contributed a flick with a wet towel, and Monty Lowther introduced his football boots into the discussion in a very effective way.

Thus remonstrated with, Arthur Augustus had withdrawn the suggestion, and the team turned out again to continue the tussle.

The heat, if anything, was greater now than before, and, in spite of their grit, something of slackness was perceptible in both teams. But the leaders were as determined as ever, and as Redclyffe were determined to make up their leeway, and the Saints were equally determined to prevent their doing so, both sides warmed up to the work.

Redclyffe, in the first ten minutes of the second half, worked their way well towards the home goal, and rained in shots upon Fatty Wynn. Fatty, who was perspiring at every pore, faced the music gallantly, and drove out the leather in fine style, till at last a low, whizzing shot from Green beat him, and Redclyffe had scored their first goal.

It never rains but it pours, the old saying has it; and certainly it seemed to be so in this case, for another ten minutes saw the visitors in possession of two more goals, one from a splendid kick from Green almost from mid-field, the other the result of a corner-kick, which gave one of the Redclyffe forwards an irresistible chance.

The visitors were now one to the good, and Tom Merry was more determined than ever to get level.

"Buck up, kids!" he said, as they were lining up again after Redclyffe's third goal. "We can't let them go on like this!"

"Who are you calling kids?" inquired Figgins.

"Just what I was going to ask," said Blake.

The hero of the Shell grinned.

"I mean honoured and respected comrades," he corrected.

"Anyway, buck up! The next goal has got to come to us. You halves, don't let them come through so easily next time!"

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

"Weally, we did our vewy best," said Arthur Augustus. "You must not expect too much of a fellow in this extremely twyng weathah, Tom Mewwy. As a mattah of fact, I feel too fagged already to—"

"Shut up!" growled Blake.

"I wufuse—"

Phip! The blast of the whistle interrupted the indignant D'Arcy. Tom Merry kicked off, and the juniors were quickly at it again. The Saints' forward followed up the kick-off with a rush, but the Redclyffians soon bore them back, and in a combined rush came through them goalward. The forwards were scattered for a moment, and Tom Merry and Blake were gasping on the ground, as the rush went on towards Fatty Wynn's citadel.

The halves and the backs were on the alert, but they could not stop the rush. Green, the Redclyffe skipper, did not stand on ceremony. He gave D'Arcy his shoulder as the

swell of St. Jim's got in the way, and the aristocratic Arthur Augustus went sprawling.

D'Arcy's patience had already been severely tried that day, and now it gave way. He jumped up and went for Green. "You wude person—you howwid boundah!" he exclaimed. "If you think you can treat a D'Arcy with such extweme diswespect—"

"Hands off!" yelled Green.

"I wefuse—"

Phip! The referee's whistle rang out shrilly. Play was stopped.

"Penalty—penalty!" yelled the Redclyffe boys, in chorus. The Saints looked daggers at D'Arcy. He had, in his indignation and excitement, clutched hold of Green, and the infraction of the rules had occurred within the dreaded penalty area. There was no doubt about it; the visitors were entitled to a penalty. Kildare strode forward, the whistle still in his lips.

"Penalty!" yelled the Redclyffians. "Referee—penalty!"

The Saints were glumly silent.

"Penalty is allowed," said Kildare quietly. "A penalty-kick is awarded to Redclyffe."

There was no gainsaying the referee's decision. Besides, it was obviously the fair thing. D'Arcy had lost his head, and the visitors were clearly entitled to the penalty-kick. Greene appointed one of his forwards to take the kick, the juniors standing round with eager, hungry eyes to watch.

Away went the ball. Fatty Wynn did his best; but fortune was fickle. Right into the net went the ball.

"Goal!" yelled Redclyffe as one man.

Goal it certainly was. Four up for Redclyffe!

"Oh, you unspeakable ass!" growled Blake to Arthur Augustus, as they went back to the centre of the field. "You—you—there isn't a word!"

"I wefuse to considah myself to blame," said D'Arcy frigidly. "The person acted in a most wude and wuff mannah!"

"You—you—you—"

"We'll give him a study licking for this!" murmured Herries. "You wait till presently, you horrid, unspeakable fat-head, and we'll put you to the torture!"

"I shall wefuse to submit to anythin' of the kind. I am in gweat doubt as to wethah to weward you as fwiends at all aftah all that has happened. I—"

"Oh, choose it!"

The whistle went, and the Saints had the kick-off again. Only twenty minutes of play remained, and the home team were two goals behind. Tom Merry worked like a giant to make up the leeway, and his men backed him up well. In the shimmering heat they played and slaved.

Suddenly Kildare's whistle sounded again. A form lay stretched on the ground without motion; it was that of Kerr. The Scottish lad had played hard—too hard, and between exertion and the heat he had fallen in a faint. Play ceased while he was carried off to the tent, and play was resumed without him.

St. Jim's were now a man short. Ten men against eleven, with two goals to make up! The situation was growing desperate.

Tom Merry was the only one on the home side who did not seem to be sinking with the fatigue of that terrible game. Most of the visitors were panting and exhausted. A little later one of them had to retire in an almost fainting state, and the numbers were again equal; but now there remained only ten minutes to play.

But Tom Merry seemed almost as fresh as paint. He led a gallant onslaught upon the visitors' half, and went right through the enemy almost alone, the ball at his feet. Forwards, halves, and backs were beaten, and there remained only the goalkeeper, and he seemed to be all eyes and hands; but Tom, with the foe closing in upon him and only time for a hurried kick, sent the leather in with a shot that beat the goalie all the way.

"Goal!"

It was a joyous shout from the Saints.

"Bravo!" shouted Monteith.

Kildare's eyes flashed. He patted Tom Merry on the shoulder, as the ball was thrown out by the glum goalie.

"Well done, Merry! I'm proud of you!"

And Tom' face glowed with pleasure. Praise from the captain of St. Jim's was praise worth having! Five minutes more.

"Buck up!" said Tom Merry. "Buck up, old sons! We've got to do it!"

The Saints did buck up. They backed their leader up well, and in the last minutes of the game there was a hard tussle, drawing closer and closer to the visitors' goal. Closer and closer, till one of the Redclyffe backs played the ball behind a corner flag, and Tom Merry instantly claimed the corner.

It was conceded, and Blake was given the kick. He sent

the ball in, and the Redclyffe forwards made a rush, but too late; the ball was off again from the foot of Tom Merry. In? Yes; but out again from the ready fist of the goalkeeper!

It was only a respite, for the ball met the hard head of Figgins, and bounded into the net again so swiftly that the custodian had no chance. The next moment it was climbing up the net, and St. Jim's had scored the equalising goal.

The whistle went. Four goals all, and the match had ended in a draw. But it had been a well-fought game, nevertheless, and each side had done well. Glad enough were both teams to get out of their football jerseys, and to sit and rest under the shady elms, after that terrible tussle on the football ground.

CHAPTER 4.

The Avengers.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was in a state of apprehension. There was not the slightest doubt in the minds of the St. Jim's juniors that the home team would have won that football match but for the penalty goal given against them on account of D'Arcy's little slip.

And ten footballers had sworn grim vengeance upon the delinquent. Rather an uncomfortable state of affairs for the eleventh member of the team.

Nothing, of course, could be done till after the departure of the visitors from Redclyffe School. During the respite, Arthur Augustus strove to ascertain precisely what the intentions of the team were towards him.

"I say, Hewwies, old man," the swell of St. Jim's remarked affably, "you were jokin', old fellah, about that study lickin', weren't you? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" said Herries. "You'll see when the Redclyffe chaps are gone."

"But, weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, get home!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus went his way disconsolate. The next fellow he tackled was Jack Blake. He screwed up his aristocratic features into an amiable smile as he addressed the chief of Study No. 6.

Blake's look was grim and uncompromising, however.

"Blake, deah boy, I withdwaw what I said about no longer wewardin' you as a fwiend," said Arthur Augustus. "I spoke hastily, and I did not mean it."

"Is that so?" said Blake frigidly. "Well, I don't withdraw what I said about giving you a study licking. You wait till the Redclyffe chaps are gone."

"But, weally, Blake—"

"Oh, travel!"

D'Arcy travelled. Figgins & Co. were sitting under an elm, discussing some bottles of ginger-pop, when the disconsolate swell of the School House joined them.

"How extwemely comfy you look, chappies," said D'Arcy, with his most insinuating smile. "I will join you in a glass of gingah-pop."

"That you won't," said Figgins.

"Kerr, deah boy, I hope you have wecovahed fwm your attack?" went on D'Arcy, addressing his next remark to the Scottish partner in the Co. "I weally hope—"

Kerr flushed red. He was rather sensitive about fainting from the heat on the football field, and any reminder of it was unpleasant.

"Oh, ring off!" he said rudely.

Wynn, deah boy, I hope you are not ovah-fatigued," said D'Arcy, determined to be agreeable. "You weally kept goal in an extwemely cweaditable mannah."

Fatty Wynn stared at him.

"What do you know about it?" he asked.

Figgins & Co. were evidently in a hostile mood. D'Arcy had nothing in the shape of kindness to expect from them. He wandered off again to where Tom Merry and his chums were entertaining some of the Redclyffe fellows to ginger-beer and cakes under the trees.

"Hallo! Here comes the penalty merochant!" said Monty Lowther.

"What does the object want?" questioned Manners.

D'Arcy smiled feebly.

"I weally don't want anythin'," he remarked. "I want nothin', deah boys, but—"

"Then you can take it and go," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hook it!"

"But—"

"Travel! Bunk! Hop it!"

D'Arcy hopped it.

"We're going to give that merchant beans presently," Tom Merry confided to Green. "We'll teach him to claw hold of chaps, and get penalties given against us."

D'Arcy overheard the words as he moved off. It was evident that a high old time was in store for him when the contingent from Redclyffe had departed from St. Jim's.

"This is wealy gwoin' alarmin'!" murmured the swell of the School House. "Yaas, watah!"

He went into the School House turning the matter over very seriously in his mind.

The time came at last for the Redclyffe fellows to take their leave. With many expressions of mutual goodwill they parted with the junior Saints.

"You'll see us again next Saturday, Green," said Tom Merry casually. "We're coming over, you know, to see our first eleven lick yours."

"Are you?" said Green. "I'm sorry for that, for you'll be disappointed. I know for a fact that our first eleven intends to wipe up the ground with yours."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Anyway, we're coming to see the game, and may the best side win," he said.

"Right-ho!" said Green heartily. "I'll look out for you; and I'll have some ice-creams and a sunshade ready, if the weather's anything like this."

"Thanks! That's really very thoughtful of you. Good-bye!"

The Redcliffe brake rolled off, to the accompaniment of a round of cheers from the Saints, and disappeared in the dusk of the autumn evening.

"And now," said Tom Merry, breathing hard through his nose—"now for the penalty merchant!"

"Just so!" said Blake.

"Rather!" exclaimed Figgins emphatically.

"Have you seen D'Arcy, people?"

"I saw him go into the house some time back," Monty Lowther remarked. "He looked as if he had something on his mind."

"Ha, ha! I dare say he had."

"What's the verdict?" asked Figgins. "Of course, he ought to be killed; but there's a law against that. It's rotten, but there you are. What's to be done?"

"Something with boiling oil in it, I should think," said Manners.

"If we made him run the gauntlet of the Lower Forms," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "A hundred or so fellows, each with a knotted towel or a belt, would be able to give him a really lively time."

"Well, that's a good idea. Let's go and have him out."

And the footballers hurried off in quest of the unlucky swell of the School House.

Their intentions were not quite so ferocious as their words, but they meant to give the swell of St. Jim's a lesson. D'Arcy was really to blame for that penalty goal, and ten footballers agreed unanimously that a lesson was what he really wanted and ought to have, and they were not the fellows to mind taking a little trouble in so good a cause.

Led by Tom Merry, ten wrathful juniors marched into the School House in quest of the swell of St. Jim's. He was not in the common-room, or visible in any of the passages.

"Think he's in Study No. 6?" asked Figgins.

"Better look," said Blake. "I shouldn't wonder if he's scuttled off somewhere till this has blown over. It won't blow over till he's had his licking."

"Rather not!"

The avengers looked into Study No. 6, but D'Arcy was not there. There was nothing for it but to commence a systematic search of the School House.

The Fourth Form studies yielded nothing to the searchers. Then they went on to the apartments devoted to the young gentlemen of the Shell.

"Hang it!" said Manners. "He wouldn't have the cheek to hide himself in a Shell study, I should think."

"Oh, I don't know," Monty Lowther remarked thoughtfully. "These kids have nerve enough for anything."

"These what?" demanded Blake, Herries, and Figgins & Co. in one voice.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, interrupting the discussion, which was approaching danger-point. "This door won't open!"

He was trying the door of Study X, his own quarters.

"He's never had the nerve——" began Manners.

"My hat, I believe he has!"

Tom Merry kicked at the door.

"Hallo, in there!"

"Yaas, deah boy," came a languid voice from the interior.

"He's there!"

Ten juniors collected round the door with businesslike looks. The quarry was run to earth, and it only remained to capture him and inflict the much-merited punishment.

Tom Merry knocked again.

"Open this door!"

"I am extwemely sowwy that I must wefuse your wequest, Tom Mewwy."

"You horrid image, this is our study!"

"Yaas, I am aware of that."

"How dare you stick yourself into it and lock the door?"

"I believe that you wuffians intend tweatin' me with disrespect."

"Ha, ha! We'll diswepsect you when we get hold of you."

"Then I am afwaid you will nevah get hold of me, Tom Mewwy."

"We'll bust in the door, if you don't open it."

"If you like to wuin your study door you are at liberty to do so, Tom Mewwy. But it will not be any use, for I have placed the table and the chest of dwawahs there."

"We'll soon knock 'em over."

"I don't think you will, because I have sewewed them to the floor and the door, Tom Mewwy."

"You horrid image!" roared Tom Merry. "You've sewered up our table?"

"Yaas, watah; and the chest of dwawahs, too."

"You—you—you——"

"I have also nailed a board acwoss the door," said the languid voice from within. "It was watah a beastly fag; but I felt sure that you boundahs meant to treat me with diswepsect. I will come out when you have all made it pax, honah bwight."

"I'll—I'll——"

"I am not at all in a huwwy. I have bwought some pwovisions here, and am pwepared to stay all night, if necessary. I am watah bored, but I can fill up the time by taking Mannah's camera to pieces."

"You let my camera alone!" roared Manners frantically.

Tom Merry kicked on the door.

"Come out, you beast!"

D'Arcy vouchsafed no reply.

The avengers looked at one another. The question was, what was to be done, and it was not an easy one to answer.

CHAPTER 5.

"Pax" After All.

F IGGINS was the first to make a suggestion.

"We can't be defied like this by a measly School House rotter," he remarked. "I vote that we bust the door down."

"By a what?" asked Blake, Herries, and the Terrible Three together.

"A measly School House bounder," said Figgins defiantly.

Tom Merry looked round for support.

"I think you'll agree," he remarked, "that the present proceedings will have to stop till Figgins has learned rather better manners."

"And if he doesn't do that pretty sharp," Blake remarked, in a casual way, "there are some of us who can give him a lesson."

"Like to see that some!" said Figgins. "I'm open to receiving instructions, if any of you School House wasters can give it me. As a matter of fact, what's the good of being down on Gussy? You School House chaps were bound to muck up the match, one way or another!"

"We were what?"

"I said all along, and Kerr and Wynn can bear me out," said Figgins, "that we should never beat the Redclyffe chaps unless we had a team composed wholly of New House fellows."

"You did," corroborated the loyal Co.

"And I was right," said Figgins.

"Well, of all the cheek!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "You New House animals take the bun! Go home, do; you make me tired!"

"I say——"

"Oh, don't say any more, Figgy!" implored Tom Merry.

"You say too much, you know. You've had a jolly good innings, and now you ought to stop."

"I tell you——"

"No, don't! I put it to the chaps. Hasn't Figgins done enough talking for one evening?"

"Yes; rather!" said Blake promptly.

"Too much—too much!" said Monty Lowther, shaking his head solemnly.

"I repeat——"

"Don't! Your remarks aren't worth saying once, let alone twice!"

"Look here——"

"Not unless you put a mask on!"

That was enough for Figgins. He went for Tom Merry, and the two went staggering along the passage, locked in a deadly embrace.

The Co. and Pratt and French were swift to follow up their leader. Equally swift were the School House juniors to encounter them. A terrific struggle raged for a few minutes in the passage, and Figgins and the New House party were gradually driven to the stairs. There they rallied, and came on again furiously; and there is no telling how the struggle might have ended had not a couple of Sixth-Formers, exasperated by the disturbance, come on the scene with canes in their hands.

The struggle ceased abruptly, as the seniors distributed cuts with strict impartiality on every junior within reach.

The School House juniors retreated into a study, and the New House party down the stairs, whence they fled into the quadrangle.

The Sixth-Formers, satisfied with their success, returned to their own quarters, and as soon as they were gone the School House juniors came into the passage again. Figgins & Co. had vanished, but the avengers still numbered five, and they were more in earnest than ever.

Tom Merry tapped at the door.

"I say, Gussy!"

"What do you want, Tom Mewwy?"

"I want to come into my study. Look here, you had better give in now, and save bother! You will have to come out at bed time!"

"I shall not come out till you fellahs have made it pax!"

"The masters will jolly soon interfere."

"I am afraid that I shall have to wisk it!"

"We're not going to stand this!" said Tom Merry determinedly. "It's a bit too thick to have such thundering cheek from a kid in a lower Form—"

"A what, in a what?" asked Blake.

"A kid in a lower Form," repeated Tom Merry. "I'm getting fed-up with the cheek of you Fourth Form infants! What you want is—"

"You'll get fed-up with something else if you don't look out!" said Blake darkly. "We're not going to stand any nonsense from you chaps in the Shell, so—"

"Oh, don't bother! I—"

"Kids," said Monty Lowther, with the air of an oracle, "should be seen and not heard!"

"Just so!" said Manners.

Blake looked at the Terrible Three in speechless wrath for a moment. Then he slipped his arm through Herries's, and marched off in a state of great indignation.

The Terrible Three were left to settle the matter as best they could.

"Bang on the blessed door!" growled Tom Merry. "We'll smash the lock, and—"

"Ach! Vat is all tat noise pefore?"

Tom groaned.

"My hat! There's old Schneider!"

The German master of St. Jim's was coming along the passage. He stopped and surveyed the chums of the Shell.

"Vat vas you poys making a noise mit yourselves after?" he demanded.

"Sorry, sir—"

"Von't tat door open mit itself after?"

"No, sir."

Herr Schneider tried the handle of the door.

"It is locked, hein!" he exclaimed.

"So I thought, sir," said Tom Merry, as grave as a judge.

"Somevun has locked it for ein shoke mit himself after," Herr Schneider remarked, shaking his head. "Tat is ein fery foolish shoke pefore!"

"It is, indeed, sir!"

"Nefer mind, mein poys," said Herr Schneider. "I will go mit meinself to te housemaster for te duplicate key after, and bring it to you."

Tom Merry concealed his dismay.

"You are very kind, sir," he said.

Herr Schneider walked away towards the housemaster's quarters.

He was under the natural impression that some joker had locked Tom Merry's door on the outside and hidden the key, and had no idea of the true state of affairs in Study No. X.

The Terrible Three looked at one another.

"He'll be back in a few minutes," groaned Tom Merry, "and then all the fat will be in the fire!" He tapped on the door. "Gussy!"

"What do you want, Tom Mewwy? I wish you would not keep on intewwupting me! I am afraid I shall damage Mannah's camewa if I am intewwupted while I am takin' it to pieces!"

"Let my camera alone!" roared Manners.

"Gussy, you ass, listen to me—"

"I wefuse to listen unless I am adressed in a more respectful mannah!"

"Oh, you blitherer! Listen to me! Schneider has gone

to get the housemaster's key, and he'll be back in a few minutes."

"Weally?"

"Open the door, ass, before he comes, or there will be a row if he finds a study barricaded up like this. Do you understand?"

"I undewstand, Tom Mewwy."

"Then open the door!"

"I wefuse to open the door unless you make it pax!"

"Oh, you horrid ass!"

No reply. There was a faint, cracking sound, which might have been caused by D'Arcy's operations upon Manners's camera.

"D'Arcy!"

"You need not take the twouble to adress me again, Tom Mewwy, unless you are weady to apologise for the oppwobwious epithets you have applied to me."

"Ass! We'll make it pax!"

"That is not sufficient now. I expect an apology!"

"Ass! Lunatic! Mug!"

D'Arcy made no reply. He was evidently standing upon his dignity—on his dig, as he would have called it—and when he was in that mood, a dozen German masters could not have made him budge.

"We make it pax," said Tom Merry, through the key-hole, "and—and I withdraw those expressions. Now open the door!"

"Your apology is accepted, Tom Mewwy!"

"Open the door!"

There was a sound of removing furniture—a sound of jerking and straining and cracking. D'Arcy had done his barricading very well, and it did not yield easily.

Then the door was unlocked and opened. The Terrible Three entered the study.

One leg of the table was still adhering to the floor just inside, held there by the screws, and the three-legged article of furniture was supported against the wall. The chest of drawers lay on its back. On a box lay Manners's camera, in several pieces.

D'Arcy greeted the chums of the Shell with a beaming smile.

"I am twuly sowwy that any damage has been done," he said. "It is weally the wesult of your own wuff ways, but I am twuly sowwy! I have not finished your camera, Mannahs, and I am weally vevy cwicious to see how it is put togethah!"

Manners picked up his camera, his feelings too deep for words. Had he not made it "pax," D'Arcy would have received a terrific onslaught on the spot. But schoolboy honour forbade.

"Mein Gott! Te door is open mit itself after!"

Herr Schneider looked in, the key in his hand.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry cheerfully; "D'Arcy opened it for us, sir. It's all right."

"H'm! Fery goot!" said Herr Schneider, turning away.

He was looking a little suspicious.

"We've made it pax with you, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with an effort. "You've got the best of us, you—you image! Now travel! There's the door and the window! Which way do you prefer to go out?"

D'Arcy chose the door.

CHAPTER 6.

A Parting of the Ways.

"WELL done, Monteith!"

It was Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, who uttered the words.

It was a few days after the "midsummer match," as the Saints called the football match on that blazing Saturday afternoon.

The St. Jim's First Eleven were at practice.

The weather was a little cooler now, but it was still very warm for football. That, however, made no more difference to the first team than it had made to the second.

On the coming Saturday St. Jim's First were to go over to Redlyffe to meet the senior team of that college, and they meant to be in good form for the match. And good form they certainly were in.

They were playing a scratch eleven, picked from the Sixth and Fifth Forms, and making hay of them, though there were some good players in the scratch team.

Monteith had just sent the ball into the net by a long, low shot from almost mid-field, and Kildare's words of hearty admiration followed.

Monteith flushed with pleasure.

Much changed now were the relations of the captain of St. Jim's and the head prefect of the New House. The old friction was conspicuous by its absence, and they seemed to have agreed to pull together for the good of the school.

That had always been Kildare's keen wish, but for long he had met with suspicion and jealousy on Monteith's part. Time had been when Kildare vowed that Monteith should never play for the school again; but that time was past, and seemed unlikely ever to recur.

Needless to say, with the two leaders in such friendly accord, the members of the team, recruited from both Houses, pulled together well. If there was one who would willingly have revived the old suspicious jealousy, it was Sefton. But he had little power to do so, and all his efforts to twit and taunt Monteith into the old attitude were in vain.

Sefton was playing his best in the practice match.

He was inside-right of the First Eleven, and made a really very good forward, being very quick on his feet, and an accurate kick. When he chose to keep himself fit, he was a good, and even a brilliant, forward. That was not always the case; but just at present he was careful to keep up to the mark. He had his own reasons for not wishing to be dropped from the First Eleven before the Redclyffe match.

"Well done, Monteith!"

That goal was the last of the practice match. Time was up, and the teams went off the field. Kildare walked some little way with Monteith.

"I think our prospects are pretty bright, Monteith," he remarked. "I hear that Redclyffe are unusually strong, but I think we shall beat them. Sefton played up well to-day. I was rather against him at first, but you were right."

Monteith winced.

"I don't know," he said. "Upon second thoughts, I'm rather sorry I proposed him for the First Eleven. Still, he seems to pan out all right."

Kildare looked surprised.

"I thought he was your friend," he remarked.

"So did I," said Monteith briefly.

Kildare understood vaguely. He had seen of late days signs of unusual worry in the face of the New House prefect.

They parted, Kildare going on to his own house, and Monteith into his quarters. He threw off his ulster and changed his clothes, and as he finished there came a tap at the door of his study.

"Come in!" said Monteith, who was brushing his hair, and did not cease as the door opened and Sefton came in.

"I want to speak to you, Monty."

"Go ahead!"

Sefton closed the door; then he stood looking at Monteith, who was still wielding the brushes before the looking-glass.

"Go ahead, Sefton!" repeated the prefect, without looking round.

"I'll wait till you can give me your attention, thank you. It's rather an important matter I've come to speak about."

"Is it about the football?"

"Yes."

The prefect laid down the brushes, and turned round. He stood in his shirt-sleeves, his hands in his pockets, facing Sefton. His look was somewhat sour.

"Well, what is it, Sefton? What are you so jolly mysterious about?"

Sefton sat on the corner of the table, swinging his legs.

"I don't mean to be mysterious, Monteith. I want to speak to you on an important matter, that's all. It's about the match on Saturday."

"Well, I'm listening," said Monteith. "Go ahead!"

"You've changed a good deal of late, Monty. I haven't been able to quite make out how much of it is genuine, and how much humbug," Sefton remarked.

The prefect coloured.

"I don't expect you to understand, Sefton," he said, "and I won't lose my temper with you. You used to be my chum, though you don't allow me to feel very chummy now. If you've got anything to say, go ahead, and get it off your chest."

"Look here, Monteith, it's no good beating about the bush. I've been to the Chequers, and I've seen Tadger there."

Monteith's eyes glittered.

"You've been there, Sefton, after what I have said on that point?"

"Yes, I have. I've seen Tadger, and had a talk with him about the Redclyffe match."

"The same old tale, I suppose—you are going to make a book on the match, with that scoundrel's assistance?"

Sefton nodded.

"Yes. A good many of the Upper Form fellows at Redclyffe are ready to back their school, and there are others who take a keen interest in the match. Redclyffe are the favourites. They are known to be a strong side."

"And you have been making bets?"

"As a matter of fact, I have; but that's not what I want to speak to you about. Our first team has looked up so much

lately that it seems quite likely that we shall win. I have told Tadger so, and it doesn't suit him a little bit."

"I'm glad of it," said Monteith savagely. "If he loses some of his money, it may teach him to keep clear of our business, the cad."

"That sounds well from you. He's had your name in his books a good many times, anyway. But to come to the point. Tadger has offered to put on ten pounds, at two to one, against St. Jim's, for each of us."

"What do you mean?"

"Then if our side is licked, each of us rakes in twenty pounds."

Monteith changed colour.

"Of course, it's strictly under the rose," said Sefton. "Nothing can possibly come out. It will be a windfall for both of us. A little slack play will be quite enough to turn the scale against St. Jim's."

"Yes, I suppose it would be."

"You agree, then?"

Monteith's eyes were burning, but he still controlled his temper.

"I suppose you have a right to consider me a rascal, in the light of the past," he said. "I would throw you out of the window if it were not for that."

Sefton started back.

"Monteith, take care!"

"Get out of my study!"

"What! I—"

"Get out of my study! Mind, to-morrow I am going to ask Kildare to cross your name off the list of the team for Redclyffe."

"You—you will not dare!"

"You shall see. Now get out of my room."

"I will not. I will—"

Monteith crossed to the door and threw it open.

"Get out!"

The prefect's eyes were glittering dangerously. But Sefton's temper was rising too, and he clenched his fists savagely and stood his ground.

"Will you go?"

"No, I won't."

Monteith said no more. He sprang towards Sefton, and, unheeding his blow, seized him by the shoulders and swung him to the door. Sefton went reeling out into the passage, and the door was slammed after him.

The discomfited rascal went staggering along the dusky passage, unable to regain his balance for a moment. There was a sharp exclamation as he staggered into a junior who was coming along quickly in the dusk.

"Hallo, fathead, where are you running to?"

It was the voice of Figgins.

Sefton was glad of someone upon whom to wreak the rage that consumed him. He grasped the chief of the New House juniors, and boxed his ears right and left.

"Hallo, hallo!" roared Figgins, struggling in his grip. "What's the row? Are you off your silly rocker? Lemme alone!"

Smack! smack!

Figgins struggled desperately. His temper was roused, and he did not care that his assailant was a senior. He yelled to the Co., and Kerr and Wynn came to the rescue. Sefton was seized and dragged off the long-legged chief of the New House juniors, and plumped down on his back in the passage.

Fatty Wynn plumped his ample person on the chest of the Sixth Former, pinning him down by sheer weight.

"Let me get up, you young scoundrels!" roared Sefton.

Figgins rubbed his reddened ears.

"No hurry," he observed. "I've got to put you up to a wrinkle first about banging at a chap's napper as if it were a giddy punching-ball."

"I'll be the death of you! Let me get up!"

Monteith's door opened. His light streamed out into the dusky corridor.

"Hallo, there! What are you doing?"

"We've captured a giddy lunatic," said Figgins, keeping a wary eye on the prefect, ready to bolt if necessary. "He ran into me in the passage, and started punching my head like a maniac. We're going to teach him a lesson."

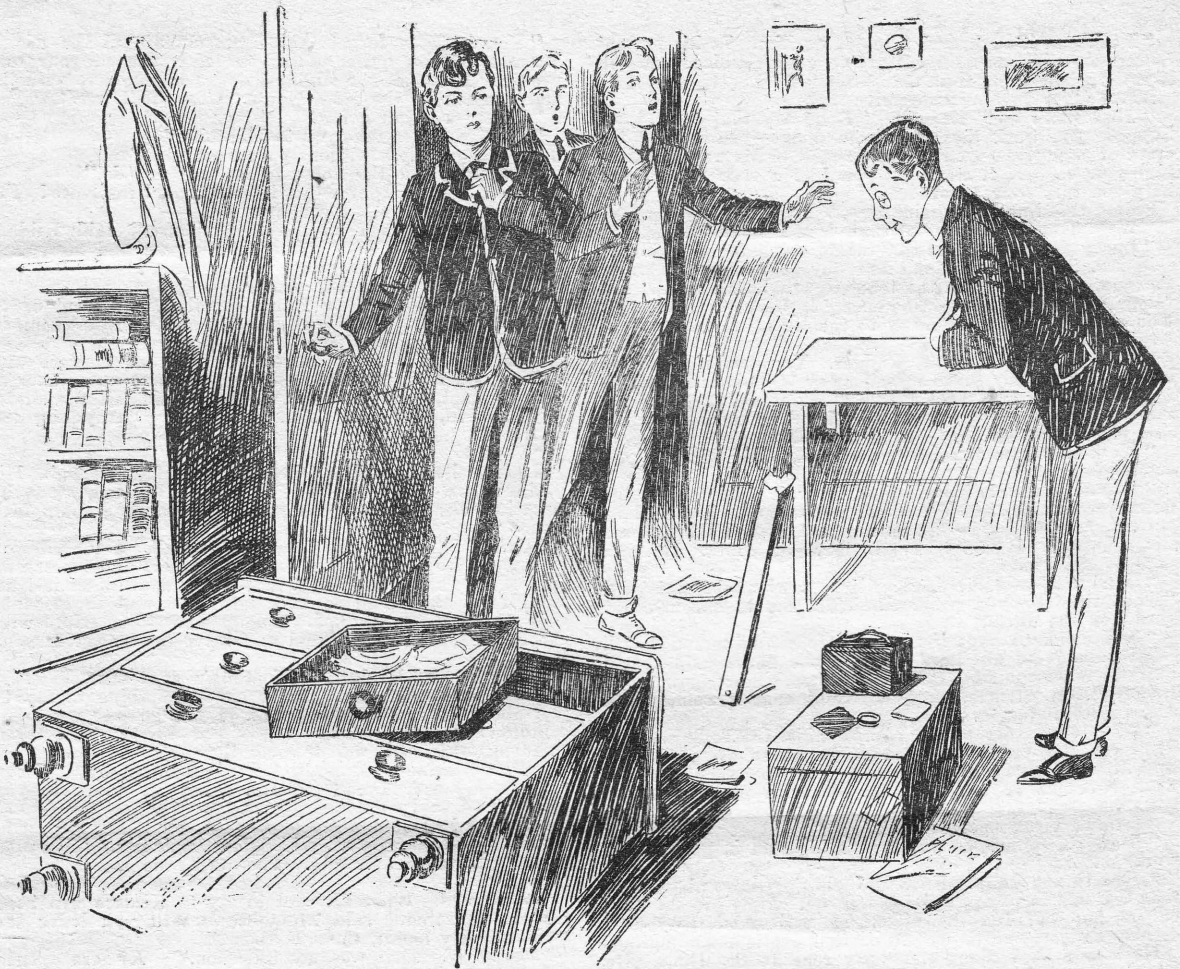
Monteith laughed, and withdrew into his study again, and closed the door. It was evidently not his intention to interfere in Sefton's favour.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "Looks as if there had been a row in that direction. Sefton, old buck, what kind of a punishment would you prefer?"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Rats! I think—Hallo, cave; here's old Ratty!"

Figgins & Co. bolted in a twinkling. Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster of the New House, was coming along the corridor. He almost stumbled over Sefton, and he stared



Arthur Augustus unlocked and opened the door, and The Terrible Three entered the study. D'Arcy greeted the chums of the Shell with a beaming smile. "I am twuly sowwy that any damage has been done," he said. "It is weally the result of your own wuff way; but I am twuly sowwy!"

at the Sixth Former in amazement as the latter picked himself up.

"Sefton! What do you mean by sprawling on the floor in that absurd manner?" he exclaimed.

"I couldn't—"

"Is it possible that you have been drinking?"

"I—"

"Enough! You nearly caused me a fall. You will write out two hundred lines, and bring them to me to-morrow. Not a word, sir—not a word!"

Mr. Ratcliff marched majestically on, leaving Sefton gritting his teeth with rage.

CHAPTER 7.

Caught in the Act.

"IT'S all up, Tadger!"

Sefton spoke the words in a low, dispirited tone. He was standing at the gate which led into the garden of the Chequers Inn in Rylcombe. Leaning on the gate was a copper-complexioned gentleman in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a fat cigar.

Mr. Tadger looked sharply at the Sixth Former from St. Jim's.

"What are you talking about?" he asked pleasantly. "What's all up?"

"That's what I've come to tell you. Monteith won't have anything to do with it."

"You've tried him?"

"Yes. He seems set on going his own way. I suppose he was in earnest all the time, though I couldn't quite swallow it."

"Well, maybe it could be managed without him," said Mr. Tadger. "Mind, St. Jim's have got to lose. There's

to be no doubt on that point. I've got near thirty pound on the matter, and I'm not going to lose it, or there will be a row."

Sefton shivered.

"It's not my fault, Tadger. I—"

"You're in the college team," said Tadger. "I dare say you can manage it without the help of the other fellow. Can't you?"

"You—you don't know all. I spoke to Monteith about it, and he flew into a temper and chucked me out of his study. Now he's going to ask the football captain to take my name off the list for Redclyffe."

Mr. Tadger measured the Sixth Former with his eye.

"Well," he said deliberately, "you have made a muck of it, and no mistake! What sort of a silly fool do you call yourself?"

"It's not my fault. I only did what you told me to do," said Sefton.

"Yes, because I took your belief that Monteith was only shamming. If he's in earnest, it makes all the difference. I wasn't to know, but you ought to have."

"It's no good blaming me. The harm's done now," Sefton said sullenly.

"Is it?" said Mr. Tadger emphatically. "Then it's got to be undone, or somebody will be made to squirm, Master Sefton. Do you think I am going to lose thirty quid and come up smiling? Tain't your fault? Blow whose fault it is! I'm not going to lose the money. That's the point you've got to bear in mind."

"I don't see what's to be done."

"No? Then I'll help you. In the first place, you've got to get round Monteith somehow—as you like, but you've got to do it—and get him to keep you in the team."

"He wouldn't—"

"Yes, he would, if you work it properly."

"I tell you it's no good threatening him. In his present temper he's just as likely as not to go to Kildare and tell him the whole thing from start to finish."

Mr. Tadger gave an expressive whistle.

"That won't do!" he said. "Don't try that tack, then. Suppose you work the repentance dodge—you've seen the error of your ways—you've come round in his way of thinking—you hope he'll stand by you like a true friend, and help you turn over a new leaf?"

Sefton could not help grinning.

"Well, I never thought of that, Mr. Tadger."

"Lucky for you you've got me to think for you, then," said Mr. Tadger. "I don't see why that shouldn't work. So long as you play in the team it will be all right. Let Monteith do as he likes. One enemy in the camp is enough. You can give the game away to the Redclyffe fellows."

Sefton shifted uneasily.

"I—I—I don't think so, Tadger. You see, if I played badly, I've already given myself away to Monteith, and he would know at once that I was doing it on purpose. He wouldn't shield me a minute. I should be mobbed by the side if he gave me away—as he would."

"Well, they wouldn't hurt you much," said Mr. Tadger, comfortably.

"Wouldn't they! Not if they knew I tried to lose the game for St. Jim's? You don't understand. I should be out by every fellow in the school, and ragged till I found life a burden. I should have to leave St. Jim's. It won't do! It can't be done!"

"Can't it?" said Mr. Tadger, in a very unpleasant tone. "Then what do you propose? Want me to chuck thirty quid into the ditch?"

"I—I—I think perhaps it could be done another way. I'll manage to get hurt early in the game, and they'll have to leave me out, and play a man short against the Redclyffe lot. Redclyffe are so strong, that it would mean certain defeat for St. Jim's."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Mr. Tadger. "I don't care how it's done, so long as it is done. Mind, if St. Jim's win, you'll get a showing up at the school. That's the fat! Now you've to get round Monteith to keep in the team."

"I think I can manage that."

"Right! Remember you'll be a big sum in pocket if it works out all right."

Sefton turned away. He would willingly have abandoned that big sum in prospect to be well out of his present difficulties, but that was impossible. He was under the thumb of Mr. Tadger, and he had to do that gentleman's bidding.

He strode back along the dusty road to St. Jim's. He had broken bounds after locking up to go and see Mr. Tadger at the Chequers, and that necessitated climbing in over the ivied wall like a mischievous junior. But Sefton had a very light sense of the dignity of the Sixth.

He climbed the wall and gripped the ivy, and lowered himself down inside—and uttered a sharp cry as a strong pair of hands closed upon him.

"Who—who—who's that?"

"It is I."

It was the clear, cool voice of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

Sefton shivered.

Kildare was about the last person he would have desired to spot him then. But there was no help for that, and he tried to brazen it out.

"Hallo, Kildare! You quite startled me."

"Yes, I've no doubt about that," the captain of St. Jim's assented drily.

"I had a beastly headache," said Sefton. "I've been for a little run to get some fresh air. I've no doubt you were surprised to see me come over the wall."

"No, not very much, knowing the kind of fellow you are," said Kildare, "and not much surprised, either, to hear you tell a lie about it."

"Kildare!"

"I don't intend to mince words with you, Sefton. You didn't go out for air. There's plenty of air in the quadrangle, I suppose?"

"If you doubt my word," said Sefton, with an attempt at dignity, "I've nothing more to say."

"I do doubt your word very much," said Kildare, "and I have something more to say. You are one of the blackguards who keep up what you are pleased to call the Smart Set in the Upper Forms. You had your imitators among the juniors, but Tom Merry and Figgins have put them down, and they've quite given in. I'm going to do as much for the Upper Forms. You have been to the Chequers or the Golden Pig, as I know very well."

"It's no business of yours. I belong to the New House, and am answerable to my own prefect, not to you," said Sefton sullenly.

"You seem to forget that I am captain of the school. However, I am quite willing to leave you to your own prefect. I haven't the slightest desire to interfere with the management of the New House. Come with me."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to take you to Monteith."

"I can get there without your assistance."

"Possibly; but I'm going to see that you do."

"Look here, Kildare, this is confounded insolence! I'm in the Sixth Form, as you are, and—"

"If you were not in the Sixth Form," said Kildare quietly, "I would give you a hiding here and now. For two pins I'd do it any way. Come along!"

Sefton made no further demur.

They entered the New House together, and went up to Monteith's study. Webb and Baker, two New House seniors, who were members of the first eleven, were there talking to the prefect. They looked curiously at Kildare and Sefton, and realising that their presence was superfluous at that moment, they excused themselves and left the study.

"Come in, Kildare," said Monteith. "Anything the matter?"

"Yes."

Kildare closed the door. Sefton stood sullenly silent. His brain was working rapidly, however. He knew that the situation was desperate, and that only cunning could save him.

"Sefton has just come in over the wall," said Kildare, "after a visit, as I believe, to the Chequers and the rascals there. You know, Monteith, that I have had direct instructions from the Head to look into this, and to see that such practices are stopped. I don't want to interfere with the New House, though, and so I leave the matter in your hands."

"Thank you, Kildare," Monteith's eyes were flashing. "That's decent of you. But I have something to say to you about Sefton, as it happens. Don't go—"

Sefton changed colour.

He made a quick step towards the prefect.

"Wait a minute, Monteith," he said hurriedly. "I can explain—I swear I can explain. Let me speak to you first."

Monteith hesitated.

"I only ask a minute," said Sefton anxiously. "We used to be good chums, Monty. You might do me that little favour."

"Very well. What I've got to say to Kildare will keep till the morning," said Monteith. "Will you leave the matter in my hands, then, Kildare?"

"Certainly. That was my intention." Kildare opened the door. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

The captain of the school went down the stairs and returned to his own house. In the prefect's study Sefton drew a deep breath of relief.

"Now, what have you to say?" asked Monteith coldly.

"Look here, Monty, it's true I went to the Chequers this evening." Sefton spoke quickly, eagerly. "But it wasn't for the old reason. It was to tell Tadger that I'd seen him for the last time, and that I never intended to see him again."

Monteith's face brightened.

"Honour bright, Sefton?"

"Yes." The lie stuck in the rascal's throat for a moment, but he brought it out. "Yes. I've done with the fellow and his set, and if you'll stand by me, Monty, I intend to run straight in the future."

"I'm jolly glad to hear you say so, Sefton." The prefect held out his hand. "There's my fist on it."

They shook hands.

Sefton had played his part well. Nothing more was said about removing his name from the list of footballers for the Redclyffe match.

CHAPTER 8.

The Match at Redclyffe.

"HOT, isn't it!"

It was Blake who made the remark, as he met Tom Merry after school on Saturday morning.

"Hot isn't the word!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's—it's blazing! Nice for the footballers to-day over at Redclyffe."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; "I should think they would find it a beastly fag, deah boys."

Tom Merry gave the swell of St. Jim's a peculiar glance. He had not forgotten Gussy's feat in the junior Redclyffe match yet, and he never saw D'Arcy in these days without feeling a strong inclination to dust up the ground with him.

"The weathah," said Arthur Augustus, "is simply schorchin'. I hear that most of the fellahs are goin' to

stay at home this afternoon. There's a lot of bathin' goin' on, and I'm on in that scene, deah boys. Too much of a jolly beasty fag to go twenty miles in this heat to see fellahs playin' football, don't you know."

"Think so?" said Blake pleasantly. "That's bad, because you're coming. You're coming on your bike."
"I shall wefuse to do anythin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wefuse to be ovahwuled in this way, Blake."

"You're coming on your bike," said Blake darkly, "or else tied up in a bundle on mine. You can take your choice."

"But weally——"

"Dry up! You're a disgrace to the study, and if you don't obey orders you'll get fired out. Dry up! Not a word! Of course, you're going over to see the match, Merry?"

"Rather!" said Tom cheerfully. "What Gussy says is correct, though. There's very few fellows going, besides the team. Redclyffe's such a jolly long way off, and the weather's so jolly hot, that there won't be any following."

"All the more reason why us juniors should come out strong. I'm pretty certain Figgins & Co. will turn up. Hallo, Figgy!"

The great Figgins was coming towards them from the direction of the New House.

"Hallo, Blake!" said Figgins. "Are you coming over to Redclyffe for the match?"

"That's just what I was going to ask you, Figgy."

"Good. I hear that very few are going. I was thinking that we might get up a bit of a party on bikes to follow the team. There ought to be some of us there to shout 'Goal!' you know, if only to encourage the fellows."

"My idea exactly," said Tom Merry. "I'm going, with Manners and Lowther. And Study No. 6 are coming, too."

"Exceptin' me," put in Arthur Augustus. "I'm goin' to bathe——"

"Gussy is only joking," explained Blake. "He's coming. He's really looking forward to it. He likes nothing so well as a hard ride on a hot afternoon."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dry up! I suppose the Co. are coming, Figgy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"That will make nine of us anyway. What time are you starting?"

"We thought of going directly after dinner. It's a long ride, you know."

"Rightho! We'll meet you at the gates."

"Weally, Blake, I wefuse——"

"Come on, Gussy, and have a look at your tyres," said Blake, and he passed his arm through D'Arcy's, and dragged him away.

At the appointed time the brake came round for the footballers for Redclyffe.

Very fit, in spite of the weather, the St. Jim's eleven looked as they got into the vehicle. Eleven good men and true, wearing the caps of their school, and bent upon obtaining a signal victory over the enemy—with one exception. That exception, of course, was Sefton, but his inner thoughts and plans were kept a dead secret.

Kildare, of course, was captain of the side, and the team was composed of five more School House fellows, and five from the New House. A better team St. Jim's had seldom or never sent forth to do battle with the school's rivals on the football field.

The brake drove off, followed by a loud cheer from the Saints who were not going, and who then dispersed to their various avocations as the vehicle disappeared down the long white road in a cloud of dust.

"Time we were off, too," said Tom Merry. "Lemme see—it takes twenty minutes to the station, half an hour in the train, and about twenty minutes at the other end. We shall have plenty of time to get on the ground if we buck up. All of you ready?"

"We are."

The Terrible Three had wheeled their bicycles down to the gate. Figgins & Co. were already there with their machines. Study No. 6 were coming. The voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could be heard raised in ineffectual protest.

"I tell you, Blake, that I weally would pwefer to wemain here and west undah the twees in the extwemely hot weathah."

"Go hon!" said Blake. "Have you pumped up your tyres?"

"Yass, but I insist——"

"We're ready, chaps. Let's get going. Gussy is so eager that I can hardly hold him in."

"That is an untwuth, Blake!"

"I know a short cut," went on Blake. "It's no more than fifteen miles the way we can go, and that's nothing. Gussy could do three times that, and come up grinning. Get on your jigger, Gussy!"

"I wefuse!"

"Lend a hand here, Herries!"

"Right-ho!"

"Hewwies, keep your beasty hands to yourself! I wefuse!"

Blake held D'Arcy's machine, while Herries slammed the swell of the School House upon the saddle. Then the chums mounted one on either side of him.

"Keep hold of him, Herries!"

"Right-ho!"

"I wefuse!"

"Off we go!"

Blake and Herries put their machines in motion, and as they both had a tight grip on Gussy, he had to go, too. They dashed on, but gradually a grin overspread the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus. He was free-wheeling all the time, and Blake and Herries were doing all the work.

Behind the three came Figgins & Co. abreast, and behind them again were the Terrible Three, all pedalling away bravely. Blake soon noticed that Arthur Augustus was shirking the work.

"You horrid, lazy tripehound!" exclaimed the chief of Study No. 6 indignantly. "Is that what you call riding? Do you think you're on a 'bus, or what?"

"I wefuse distinctly to exert myself in the beasty hot weathah!" said D'Arcy. "If you bwing me here in this wuff mannah you can pull me along, dear boys. I have no stwong objection to goin' to Wedclyffe if I fwee-wheel all the way."

"But I have a strong objection to free-wheeling you!" said Blake. "Pedal, you lazybones—pedal! Put your beef into it. Have you got a pin about you, Herries?"

"Certainly."

"Stick it into Gussy whenever you see him free-wheeling!"

"Right-ho!"

Herries let go Arthur Augustus, and took the pin from his jacket.

"Hewwies, if you commit such a beasty, bwutal action, I shall—ow!"

D'Arcy gave a yell, as the pin penetrated his calf. It was only a slight prick, but it was an earnest of what was to come. Gussy thought that he had better pedal.

"Here, buck up, you kids!" called out Tom Merry from behind. "You're crawling."

"All right!" called back Blake. "Gussy hasn't quite got into his stuide yet. Now we're getting along finely."

Arthur Augustus, seeing that there was no help for it, put his beef into it, as Blake advised, and they put on speed. The swell of St. Jim's, in spite of his languid ways, was really no weakling, and he could work hard when he liked. With the persuasive pin in the hand of Herries, ready to jab when required, he thought he had better "like" on this occasion.

The cyclists got over the ground very quickly. Several times the voice of Arthur Augustus was heard suggesting the propriety of halting under the trees and taking a "west," but he was not listened to.

Blake had determined that he should get to Redclyffe without getting out of the saddle, and he had his way. The heat was great, and the dust was thick, but the energy of the juniors was boundless, and in a remarkably short space of time they came in sight of Redclyffe School. At the gates of Redclyffe they clanged their bells and halted.

"Hallo, they've arrived!" exclaimed Tom Merry, pointing to the empty station brake, in which the footballers had undoubtedly come from the station in the village. "Thought we might be here first. Hallo, Green!"

"Hallo, kids!" exclaimed Green, the Redclyffe junior captain, recognising his opponents of the previous Saturday. "You've got across, then?"

"Yaas, wathah! We were not likely to stay away, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with really sublime nerve.

"Yes, here we are!" said Tom Merry. "Any more fellows from St. Jim's here?"

"No, only the team."

"When is the kick-off?"

Green looked at his watch.

"In ten minutes."

"Jolly good luck! Time to get something cool to drink. You'll show us where to stick our jiggers, won't you, Green? Nice weather for football—eh?"

"Yes, this beats our match last week."

Tom Merry looked towards the football ground. The white lines glimmered on the green turf, the goal-posts were

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up, the nets ready. The St. Jim's footballers, already changed into their playing garb, could mostly be seen near the pavilion. Tom Merry noted that they were discussing something with anxious looks.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" he said, glancing at Green. "Dunno!" said Green. "I heard that one of the chaps fainted in the brake coming from the station. Don't suppose it's anything serious. The beastly heat, you know."

"My hat!"
Tom Merry hurried towards the pavilion. The rest of the juniors followed him, looking very anxious. There was no reserve accompanying the St. Jim's team, and, in case of one of the members being incapacitated, they had no alternative but to play a man short; and against a team like the Redclyffes that meant certain defeat.

Kildare and Monteith were not to be seen, doubtless being within the pavilion; but Darrel was visible, talking to Webb. Tom Merry tapped the senior on the arm.

"I say, Darrel, anything wrong?"
Darrel nodded.

"Yes, Sefton fainted from the heat, in the brake."
"He's not laid up?"
"I don't know. Kildare is seeing to him in the pavilion."
At that moment Kildare appeared at the door of the pavilion. His face was very grave.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry to the Rescue.

SEFTON lay back in a chair in the pavilion of the Redclyffe ground, his eyes half closed, his whole attitude one of weakness and lassitude. Monteith was with him, and the prefect's eyes were gleaming with dark suspicion.

Kildare had just gone out of the room, and Monteith came quickly towards the supposed sufferer as soon as they were alone.

"Sefton!"
His voice was sharp and hard. Sefton's eyes opened a little wider.

"Yes, Monty! I say, I—I'm sorry for this."
Monteith's face did not soften.
"Look here, Sefton, if it's genuine, I'm sorry, too; but I believe you're malingering. You were all right up to half an hour ago. I don't see why the heat should overcome you all of a sudden, just at the time when it was too late to think of a substitute."

Sefton's eyes gleamed under his drooping lids.
"That's a very unkind opinion to have of a chap, Monty. I'd hold out if I could. I want to do my best for the school."

"And your best is to fail us, after making it impossible for us to obtain a substitute in time!" said Monteith bitterly. "I haven't forgotten what you said to me the other night, Sefton—that you had orders from Tadger to lose this match."

"I told you I had done with that fellow."
"Yes, and I believed you then, but now——"
"You have no right to doubt my word."

Monteith set his lips.
"I believe you are malingering!" he said savagely.
"Kildare believes it, too, as I can see, though he doesn't say so."

"You can believe it if you like!" snarled Sefton. "Do as you choose about it. I can't play for St. Jim's, that's all!"

Monteith clenched his hands. He understood clearly enough how he had been fooled; that Sefton had taken him in and hoodwinked him by a cunning lie, and he was furious.

But he could do nothing. It was useless to have a quarrel; and besides, it was necessary to keep up appearances before the Redclyffe fellows. They must not be allowed to suspect that one of the St. Jim's players was a traitor to his side.

Monteith strode from the room. Sefton grinned evilly as soon as he was alone. Whatever his companions suspected, they could prove nothing. If he were turned out of the First Eleven, he cared little for that, now that he had served his purpose.

He had gained his point. Playing a man short, St. Jim's were certain to be defeated, and that was what he had planned. As for Monteith's friendship, he would soon have lost that, in any case, for he had no intention of giving up the visits to the Chequers.

Monteith joined Kildare, who was talking to Darrel. The captain of St. Jim's looked at him inquiringly.

"You believe that Sefton is malingering?" asked Monteith abruptly.

Kildare started.

"Do you think so, Monteith?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Kildare, "it seemed strange to me that he should have seemed all right right up to the last moment, and then left us in the lurch like this. It seems rotten to suspect a fellow of deliberately failing his side, but I couldn't help thinking——"

"Well, you were right."

"But do you seriously think that he could be cad enough to play this trick on us because I brought him to book the other night for breaking bounds?"

Monteith shook his head.

"It isn't that. He has another motive—a more powerful one. I—I was going to advise you to turn him out of the eleven, but he deceived me. I am to blame——"

"Not at all!" said Kildare quickly. "It was quite impossible for anybody to foresee anything of this kind. But malingering or not, it's certain that he can't play, and the question is, what are we going to do? There's no time to get a substitute. Of course, we could take in a Redclyffe chap to make up the team, but if we did so there would be no honour in licking them. That's barred."

"We shall have to play them a man short, that's all," said Darrel. "After all, we may pull it off. Anyway, there's nothing else to be done."

Monteith gritted his teeth.

"We are in a cleft stick," he said. "There's no choice in the matter. If any of our fellows were here for the match, we might have picked up a substitute among them, but that isn't the case. Only some of the juniors have come over."

Kildare started.

"I wonder if Tom Merry is among them?"

"Yes, he is," said Darrel. "He spoke to me just now. But what about him, Kildare? You're not thinking——"

"Why not? You saw how splendidly he played in the junior match the other day, and he's head and shoulders above the rest at football."

"But a junior——"

"Of course, a junior won't count much in a senior match; but it's a question of that or nothing," said the captain of St. Jim's quickly.

"By Jove, you're right! And I dare say Tom Merry will be useful. Ask him, anyway."

"What do you think, Monteith?"

The prefect nodded.

"I think it's a good idea, and the only thing to be done under the circumstances. Better speak to Tom Merry at once."

"That's settled, then."

Tom Merry was standing at a little distance talking with the other juniors from St. Jim's. They were all looking concerned, for they took the success or failure of the college team very much to heart. Tom Merry looked round as Kildare came towards him.

"Merry, how would you like to play for us this afternoon?"

Tom Merry stared. If Kildare had asked him, "How would you like to be King of England?" he would hardly have been more amazed.

"Kildare! Play this afternoon!"

The captain of St. Jim's smiled.

"Yes! We're a man short—there's something wrong with Sefton. You played up splendidly in the junior match, Merry. Of course, I know a senior match is above your weight. But it's a question, you see, of playing you, or a man short."

"I see!"

"And I really think you could do very well for us," said Kildare seriously. "We shall want you at inside right."

"I've often played as inside right."

"Yes; I know you have. Would you like to play?"

"Would I like!" said Tom. "I'd give my little finger to play, of course."

Kildare laughed.

"That won't be necessary. But you've had a long ride here. If you're fagged——"

"Fagged! It was only a little spin! I'm as fresh as a daisy!"

"Then you'll play."

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom excitedly. "But I say, I've got no togs."

"I can lend you some football things, if you like," said Green.

"Thanks, old fellow!"

"I'll be back in a jiffy," said Green, darting off.

"Get ready as quickly as you can, Merry. It's almost time."

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's walked back to his comrades.

Tom Merry hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his heels, so delighted was he.

"Bravo!" cried Figgins, who, if he felt a momentary twinge of envy, was too generous-hearted to show it, or to feel it for more than a moment. "Bravo!"

"Huwwah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "This is weally wippin', and a leg-up for the Lowah Forms! Huwah! Bravo!"

Blake thumped Tom Merry heartily on the back. "This is jolly, old fellow," he said. "Mind you play up like a giddy International for St. Jim's, or we'll scalp you afterwards."

"I shall do my level best," said Tom seriously. "It seems too jolly good to be true! Fancy, playing for the First Eleven! My hat!"

"Here's Green!"

Green came rushing back with a bundle under his arm. He rushed Tom Merry into St. Jim's dressing-room in the pavilion.

"There you are," he gasped. "They're my things, but I think they'll fit you all right. We're much of a size. Buck up!"

Tom Merry did buck up. He changed into Green's football garb in record time, and hurried out of the pavilion.

"I'm ready, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's looked at him approvingly. "You look very fit, Merry. It's a pity we couldn't rig you out in the St. Jim's colours; but the Redclyffe fellows won't mind that. Come along!"

The situation had already been explained to the Redclyffe captain. It was time for the footballers to take the field, and Tom Merry, in white, walked on with the St. Jim's players in blue and white. The Redclyffe colours were red stripes.

"My hat!" said Manners. "He looks fit, doesn't he, kids? Mind you stand ready to cheer. That will make him buck up. Never mind the weather. You've got to shout for all you're worth."

"Rather!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah," chimed in Arthur Augustus. "Although I am opposed on pwinciple to ovah exertion in the hot weathah, I weally think that we ought to buck up Tom Mewwy. I intend to make a wow, and no mistake, dear boys."

Phip! went the whistle. The teams had lined up. Sefton, from the pavilion, watched them with anxious eyes. He had not thought of that!

Redclyffe had won the toss, and St. Jim's kicked off against what little wind there was. They would have been glad of some more. There were a good many Redclyffe spectators on the ground. In a compact body stood the eight juniors from St. Jim's, ready to "back up" Tom Merry, so far as shouting could do it.

CHAPTER 10.

The Winning Goal!

ST. JIM'S First were soon in the enemy's territory, pressing on in a determined attack upon the goal, and for some minutes they carried all before them.

But the Redclyffians showed the stuff they were made of. They had always been a tough nut for St. Jim's to crack, and on this occasion they seemed tougher than ever.

They rallied, and the ball came back over the half-way line, and the Redclyffe forwards followed it fast. Now it was the turn of the Saints to fall back, and fall back they did, and the Redclyffe rush brought the leather right up to the visitors' goal.

Thrice the ball was driven in, and thrice the custodian saved, and then the ball fell to a back, who sent it well out. Monteith was on it the next moment, and going up the field with it. Away went the field in pursuit, and the goalkeeper, so busy a few seconds previously, was left alone. Monteith was dribbling the ball in fine style, and the other forwards were backing him up well, and as he was tackled he swung it to Kildare, who dashed on with the ball at his foot. But Kildare was marked, and he got rid of the leather only just in time, letting the inside right have it.

Inside right, as our readers know, was the hero of the Shell—Tom Merry. Now was Tom's chance! He was off with the ball in a twinkling, and the home halves being nowhere, he had only the backs to fear, and one of them was too far off to be dangerous.

From eight youthful throats came a tremendous roar. "Hurrah!"

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"Tom Merry's got it!"
"Tom's off!"
"Kick, you beggar, kick!"

But Tom Merry did not kick. The back was rushing at him, and it seemed inevitable that he must be robbed of the ball, or else be sent flying. But Tom Merry was equal to the occasion.

He seemed to have eyes only for the goal, but at the same time he marked every movement of the back, and just as the defender was almost upon him, he dodged like lightning, and before the Redclyffian knew where he was, Tom was past him—the ball still at his feet—and dashing on goalward! Eight juniors roared again:

"Hurrah!"
"Go it, Tom Merry!"

Only the goalkeeper remained to be beaten, but he had no intention of being beaten by a Lower Form boy from St. Jim's.

There would certainly be no time for more than a kick, for the Redclyffians were running like maniacs upon Tom, and he had only a few seconds at his disposal.

Unless he beat the goalie at once, his chance was gone. Right on he dashed, and made a feint of kicking, and the goalkeeper, quite deceived, prepared to receive the ball; but at the same moment Tom Merry changed his feet, and sent the leather whizzing into the far-corner of the net.

The goalkeeper stood amazed. The ball was trying to climb up the back of the net, and the goalie was trying to understand how it got there, and eight juniors from St. Jim's were trying to make as much noise as eight dozen.

They succeeded.
"Hurrah!"

"Goal!"
"Good old Tommy!"

"Goal, goal!"

They shouted themselves hoarse. Tom Merry flushed with pleasure. It was very pleasant to hear himself cheered so heartily by his rivals at St. Jim's. Pleasant to see Figgins & Co. waving their caps, and stamping and yelling like lunatics.

"Goal, goal!"

It was an undeniable goal. Kildare's eyes flashed as he patted Tom Merry on the shoulder. Tom looked up with a smile.

"Splendid, Merry! Splendid!"

"I was lucky," said Tom.

"Yes; you were lucky; but it was first-class football, too! I'm jolly glad Sefton left us in the lurch, in one way. You've done more for us than he ever could."

"Oh, Kildare!"

"It's a fact!"

"Quite true!" said Monteith, as they walked back to the centre of the field. "True, every bit of it. You are not the kind of fellow to get a swelled-head, Merry, I think."

"I hope not!"

"So we can be candid about it. It was as fine a goal as I have ever seen, and we are jolly proud of you."

Phip! It was the whistle again. Tom Merry's chums had yelled themselves hoarse and husky, and they were perforce silent as the game resumed. But they watched Tom like hawks.

The junior recruit had scored the first goal in the match, and that wonderful fact was a source of endless satisfaction to the Eight. They wanted more; but Tom was only a human boy and not a prodigy, and he did not take any more goals in the first half.

He played up well, and did good work for his side, but, of course, older and bigger opponents had the advantage of him. When it came to sprinting, however, Tom usually did as well as anybody.

Upon the whole he did better than could have been expected of a junior recruit, without counting that goal—which was one that Sefton could never have taken. Sefton's feelings as he looked on may be better imagined than described. He had intended to ruin the chances of his side by standing out of the team at the last moment, when it was too late to fill his place. As a matter of fact he had strengthened the side by his action. For, junior as Tom Merry was, there was no doubt that he was a better footballer than the youthful friend of Mr. Tadger.

The whistle went for half-time, with the score still one to nil. The teams left the field for a brief rest, and Tom Merry found eight self-constituted valets all ready to assist him. They surrounded him in the dressing-room, careless of the fact that they were "not admitted" there, and ministered to his wants with anxious solicitude.

Figgins squeezed the lemon, Blake brandished a towel, Monty Lowther wielded the sponge. All of them found something to do, excepting Arthur Augustus, who stood surveying the scene through his eyeglass, with a smile of approval upon his aristocratic features.

"You have weally done extremewly well, Tom Mewwy,"

D'Arcy said, after some reflection. "I could not have done bethah myself."

"Go hon!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I am speakin' sewiously! I could not have kicked a goal bethah than that one, especially in this awfully beastly hot weathah. I congatulate you. You are a cweedit to the coll."

"Gussy, old chap, you'll make me blush if you keep on like that. Kildare has been saying some nice things, but praise from Arthur Adolphus Aubrey is praise indeed! It's so very gratifying to be commended by a real, ripping footballer like you, Algernon."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, my intention was to gwatify you, and make you buck up, you know," said D'Arcy. "Yaas, wathah."

"Time!" said Kildare.

The young footballers went out again into the brilliant sunshine. The afternoon was like July, and almost too warm for cricket. But they resumed the game with keen determination, and played up like heroes.

Both sides were on their mettle, and the exchanges were fast and hard, and they kept the game going at a very fast rate. Both goals had some narrow escapes, but for a long time neither citadel fell.

At length the St. Jim's goalkeeper was beaten by a fast shot from the Redclyffe captain, and the score stood equal. The ice being thus broken, as it were, goals came faster, and two fell to St. Jim's in quick succession, and two to their opponents.

Three all! And five minutes more to play!

The gruelling game had had its effect upon both teams, and many of them were almost spent; but it was noticeable that the youngest footballer there—Tom Merry—seemed almost as fresh as Kildare himself. He was in perfect condition, and full of keenness, and seemed impervious to fatigue.

Five minutes more!

Was it to be a draw?

Both sides were determined that it should not be so, and both sides played up with a new burst of energy.

"One more effort," muttered Kildare. "Buck up, St. Jim's!"

The Saints bucked up, and followed their leader well. By a combined effort they broke through Redclyffe, and rushed the ball goalward, the forwards passing in beautiful style.

Right on, through the home defence—right on to where the Redclyffe goalkeeper was standing alert, all eyes and hands and feet!

Kildare had the ball, but he was marked, and he gave it to Monteith, who slammed it in.

Out it came again from the goalie's foot.

But before the home backs had a chance, Kildare had headed it in.

Still the custodian was not beaten. He made a jump at the ball, and clutched it fast, and was in the act of hurling it forth amid the Redclyffes, when—

When fate was upon him in the shape of Tom Merry!

Tom had seen his chance! Ere the goalie could hurl the ball, Tom Merry charged him like lightning, and sent him right back into the goal, the ball still in his hands. The goalkeeper sprawled, and the ball banged into the net.

Phip!

It was the clear note of the whistle!

St. Jim's had won—won on the stroke of time! And Tom Merry had taken the winning goal!

"Goal!" shrieked Figgins. "Come on!"

Eight juniors dashed across the football-field like maniacs. They seized the panting hero of the game, and before he knew what was happening, he was hoisted high on the shoulders of Blake and Figgins.

"Here, chuck it, you giddy lunatics!" he exclaimed.

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" sang out Figgins. "Strike up, band!"

Manners, Kerr, Wynn, and Monty Lowther, with papered combs to their mouths, constituted the band. They were all ready. They struck up the old tune, marching on ahead, and so Tom Merry was carried in triumph from the scene of his success.

They bore him to the pavilion. There a white-faced, desperate-eyed fellow passed them; but they had no eyes for Sefton. He was gone, to face an extremely unpleasant interview with Mr. Tadger; but nobody had a thought for him.

St. Jim's had won, and Tom Merry was the hero of the day. And when the footballers were home at St. Jim's, and the story was told, he was made as much of there as he had been on the football-field, playing the game!

THE END.

(Next Thursday; another long complete tale dealing with Tom Merry's schooldays. Please order your "Gem" Library in advance.)



READ
THIS
FIRST

Stormpoint

A School Tale. By MAURICE MERRIMAN.

Rex Allingham, Jim Fisher, and Bob Bouncer are three well-known chums at Stormpoint College. Hal Trehearn, the captain of the school, favours them; but they are bullied by Jardon and Symes, two Fifth-Formers, who play many spiteful tricks upon them. A new boy named Alburton comes to Stormpoint, and the chums object to his swaggering disposition, so nickname him "Swipes." The Head punishes a boy named Perkins for playing with chemicals. Perkins writes home and tells his father to come to the school at once. He does so, and the son tells his father that Jardon has bullied him, and shows his parent some terrible marks on the back. Mr. Perkins, his son, and the three chums go up to the bullies' study. They find Jardon in, and Mr. Perkins says: "I am going to give you a severe thrashing. (Now go on with the story.)"

thrashing, my lad. Mind, I am not going to strike you in the

Mr. Perkins Gives Jardon a Thrashing.

Mr. Perkins bent the cane he carried, as though to make sure that it would do its duty.

"I am not going to point out the error of your ways until I have punished you for them, because I have the conviction that you are not a young man who would listen to reason until compelled to do so. After I have soundly flogged you, I shall have something to say. Ah! You wish to prove who is the master? Very well."

"Well, I'm blown!" gasped Tim, as the two squared up to each other. Jardon had the reputation of being an expert boxer, and he was certainly very good at it; but he had met a quiet man this time. The first blow in the chest convinced him that Tim's father was not a man to be despised. The second blow knocked him down, and when he got up he got knocked down again, because he got another blow in the chest which took all his wind away; then he tried to argue, but Mr. Perkins would not have it. He seized him by the collar, laid him across the table, and flogged him till he howled for mercy.

"That is all, my lad," said Mr. Perkins. "I have given you that thrashing because you so richly deserve it. Now, listen to me. If you ever strike my son in that brutal manner again, I shall make it my business to come to this college, and I will thrash you before every boy in it. Do you understand that? Come, I will have your answer, or I will flog you again now. Do you understand me?"

"I—I—ah—yes!"

"Oh, you do!" exclaimed Mr. Perkins. "Very well; I will not force you to say that you are sorry. I know you are, because you have had a severe flogging. Come, my lads! I will get permission for you to come to the station, and we will have dinner at the inn. You will not come, Tim, because I am very annoyed at your silly threat. I am also annoyed at your having frightened your mother."

"I shall consider it my duty to tell her how you have treated me," said Tim. "Of course, if you gave me a feed and a sovereign, I wouldn't tell."

Tim, however, did not go.

"Bob has got some scheme on!" exclaimed Rex, just as they were about to enter the class-room the following morning. "I can tell by his manner."

"Shouldn't wonder if he is going to take Swipes down a peg!" exclaimed Jim. "I saw the beauty catch him on the side of the head with a stone, and Bob generally gets his own back one way or another. Hallo, he's not here, and we are none too soon! He will be marked late."

Mr. Salmon was taking the class, and was at that moment calling over the names. He had passed Bob's, but that did not matter, because he was accustomed to call over the name of a late boy a second time. Alburton, or Swipes, as they always called him, came strolling in now, and took his seat, while he gazed at the master through his eyeglass, and stroked his upper lip. Mr. Salmon hated that ridiculous eyeglass, but he did not like interfering in a matter like that. He came to the end of his list. There were two who had not answered to their names—Alburton and Bob Bouncer.

"Alburton!" called Mr. Salmon again.

Swipes sat mum, with a contemptuous smile on his face. It was enough to anger any master, but Mr. Salmon kept calm.

"Why do you not answer to your name, Alburton?" he demanded.

"You knew I was here. I don't see the sense in my answering when you know I am here."

"But then a lad of your age is scarcely competent to judge. There are a lot of rules in which you may see no sense. Answer to your name!"

"I assure you that I am here. I am sitting on this form. If you look this way you will see me."

"Yes; I see you. Another time you will come in earlier, or I may mark you late, the penalty for which is a hundred lines. On this occasion I shall not mark you late. You will write five hundred lines for answering me in an impertinent manner. Bouncer—Boun—!"

"Adsum—adsum, sir!" bawled Bob, dashing into the room, and nearly bowling Alburton over as he plunged into his lap. "I'm quite here, sir," added Bob, dodging to his seat.

"Sorry; village clock wrong, sir, and—"

"You have no right to have gone into the village this morning!"

"Excited, sir—slip of the tongue!"

"Have you been into the village?"

"Am I compelled to incriminate myself, sir?"

"You are compelled to answer my question, yes or no!"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you softy!" murmured Perkins. "Why didn't you say no? He would never have asked you another question."

"I heard what you said, Perkins!" exclaimed Mr. Salmon. "Bouncer said yes, because he speaks the truth. Had he told me he had not been in the village, I should not have asked him another question, because I have never yet known him to speak falsely to me. You must ask permission if you wish to go into the village on another occasion—you must come to me, or some other master, and ask permission."

"He will never do it," said Alburton. "The little brute is always breaking bounds. Why, the fellows call it Bouncing!"

"I was quite aware of that fact before you came here, my lad."

"And they call you Seaslug and old Seaslug. I've heard them."

"I am quite aware of that fact, and I heard you refer to me this morning in that manner," said Mr. Salmon; "but I abominate sneaking, and I never take notice of what was not intended for my ears, unless, of course, a boy used bad language; then I might flog him. You will bear that in mind, Alburton. Bouncer, I shall take no notice of your having broken bounds on this occasion, because you have spoken the truth. Perkins, you will bear that in mind!"

"Thank you, sir!" cried the simple Tim. "I am going to break bounds to-night on a special enterprise!"

"You are likely to get flogged if you do!" gasped Mr. Salmon.

"I don't call that fair, sir. You have let Bouncer off for telling the truth, and now when I start telling the truth, you say you will whack me."

"Silence! Such simplicity is really lamentable. It shows an utter want of intellect. Now, attend to me! Tell me some of the features of Africa, Alburton."

"I have never been there, and—"

"I don't suppose you have, but you are expected to learn your lesson."

"If you were to ask me something about places I've been to, I—"

"Well, where have you been?"

"Paris, Brussels, Southend, Dover, and—"

"Well, tell me what you know about Brussels."
"It's a German town on the Rhine. I've been all up the Rhine. There's a castle there—"

"It is simply terrible!" gasped Mr. Salmon. "A lad of your age to tell me that you have been to Brussels, and that it is in Germany!"

"It's Belgium," murmured Perkins, who liked to keep in favour with Swipes, because he always had plenty of money, and was sometimes free with it.

"I said that Brussels was in Belgium!" declared Swipes.

"You said no such thing, and you know it. Write another hundred lines for telling me that falsehood! Perkins told you where it was. Now, what is Brussels famous for?"

"Cabbages!"

"Are you pretending to be an utter idiot, or are you really one, boy?"

"So it is. We've got thousands of Brussel sprouts in our garden; we've got enormous grounds, and—"

"It is my misfortune to instruct you," interposed Mr. Salmon. "It is not for you to inform me of the size of your mother's grounds. You tell—"

"Well, they've got some law courts in Brussels, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rex.

"Well, so they have, you little idiot! I've seen them, and been all over them!" snarled Alburton.

"Have they got an hotel there?" inquired Rex.

"Silence, Allingham!" commanded Mr. Salmon. "I have quite enough difficulty in trying to teach this simple lad without your assistance."

"Sorry, sir. I'm a bit thick-headed myself, and know you have a lot of trouble with me; but Swipes really takes the biscuit!"

"Write a— No; let it pass! Be careful how you speak in class on future occasions. Do you know what Brussels is famous for, Alburton? Come, my lad, we are not playing the fool! I wish to teach you."

"He, he, he! Oh, I say!" giggled Tim Perkins.

"What is the cause of that laughter, boy?" demanded Mr. Salmon.

"Only—he, he, he!—he says you ain't competent to teach him, sir!"

"I really believe the boy is right!" sighed Mr. Salmon. "Can you tell me anything about Brussels, Bouncer?"

A howl of laughter burst forth. Bob had got an eyeglass of abnormal diameter stuck in his eye. He must have fixed it by some means, for no one could have widened his eye sufficiently to take that glass.

"Smuggling lace, sir!" answered Bob. "I—er—have been there often. I—er—keep a yacht there, and a—er—motor-car. My racing stables are quite close, don't you know, and—er—money is no object to me! I—er—am a gentleman, and my mother is—er—frightfully rich! Although I'm not Alburton, like Swipes, I'm pretty stout, and I don't ail!"

"Bouncer," cried Mr. Salmon, when he had silenced the roars of laughter, for Bob had mimicked Alburton's voice very cleverly, "you will write me an essay of not less than two thousand words on manners! Take that ridiculous glass out of your eye!"

"I obey you, sir; but I cite a precedent."

"Yes," cried Mr. Salmon sternly; "I have allowed you to use the ridiculous thing, Alburton! I have on several occasions intimated to you that it annoys me, and that I strongly object to its use, but you have paid no heed to my request. If you are short-sighted—"

"I am; I can't see without this glass."

"Lend it to me," ordered Mr. Salmon. "If you are really short-sighted, you are going the surest way to ruin the sight of at least one eye. Hand me that glass!"

"It is fastened on the chain, which is of real gold. It's twenty-two carat gold, and—"

"Hand me that glass!" cried Mr. Salmon.

"It is my private property, and—"

Mr. Salmon's patience was exhausted. He stepped forward, and, seizing the offending eyeglass, gave it a wrench that effectually got it off the twenty-two carat chain; then he tried its magnifying powers. They were nil. The fact is, Swipes had compromised matters with his mother, and she had bought him a piece of patent plate glass, so that it should not injure his eyesight.

Mr. Salmon convinced himself that the glass was quite harmless; then he went up to the blackboard, and put down the following figures: 213.

"Read those figures, Alburton!" commanded Mr. Salmon.

"I cannot see them."

"Then take this glass and read them."

"213!"

"Ah, I am glad you see better with the glass! Come this way! Stand there! Now, lend me your glass! What figures are these?"

"Why, they are not figures at all!"

"Indeed! Take your glass and try to read them!"

"They are not figures; you have only made some crooked strokes. You can't fool me!"

"Yet you saw they were not figures without this glass! Now, my lad, I may inform you that this glass has no magnifying power! It is just a piece of ordinary glass, and you have tried to deceive me by pretending that you cannot see without it. I have requested you not to wear the ridiculous thing, but you have taken no heed of such request. Your stupid conduct has wasted the time of the class!"

"I don't care about that!"

"Perhaps not; but you must remember that if you waste your time in school you will regret it when you become a man, and it would not be my duty to allow you to do any such thing. You have wasted the time of these other lads, and I shall have to make it up. I shall be compelled to keep you back for one hour. You see, the innocent have to suffer for your stupid conduct, but you must suffer more. That is only justice. I shall stop your next half-holiday, and you will spend the afternoon in my study, when, perhaps, I shall be able to teach you something. You are sadly in need of it. For the rest, you shall never wear an eyeglass in a class of mine again! You have tried to deceive me, and tell me falsehoods; but I know the real truth of the matter. If ever you dare to come into my class with an eyeglass stuck in your eye, I shall publicly cane you for gross disobedience!"

Then Mr. Salmon dropped the offending glass to the floor, and ground it into splinters with his heel.

"That glass was of great value!" declared Alburton. "It cost me over twenty pounds, and—"

"Do you imagine, my poor lad, that everyone is as simple as yourself? Now, let me hear no more of this nonsense, and just you pay attention to what I am about to say, or you will find it will be the worse for you!"

"You had better shut up, Alburton!" whispered Perkins. "He's a coughdrop when he gets like that, and if you answer him, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he laid you

across the form, and gave you beans!"

"He sha'n't spoil my property!"

"Oh, I say, there wasn't much property about it! Glass is cheap enough. If it wasn't my father would have been ruined before this, for I've smashed every window in his house time after time. My mother gets them mended without letting him know, and the plumber sends in his bill for general repairs, or something like that. I can send you fifty thousand eyeglasses, only you will have to cut them round. They say you can do it if you hold it beneath a bucket of water, and use a pair of scissors, and—"

"Are you talking, Perkins?" demanded Mr. Salmon.

"No, sir; I never talk in class! I'd rather be shot dead than do a thing like that, because I know you don't like it!"

(To be continued in next Thursday's "Gem.")



How do you do?

WHO TO WRITE TO: The Editor, "GEM" Library, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

"TOM MERRY IN TROUBLE."

Tom does not have things all his own way, as you will discover when you read Martin Clifford's latest next Thursday. Don't miss it. If you do, you will—in more senses than one.

I, acknowledge with thanks the kindly notes of criticism that have reached me during the last few weeks, and am waiting for more.

THE EDITOR.



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We are anxious to get our Special 1907 Sale Price List of Jewellery, etc., into every home in the United Kingdom, and we make the following remarkable offer to all readers of this paper.



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You Can Choose from the following. A Ladies' or Gent's **REAL DIAMOND RING**, a Ladies' **FASHIONABLE BROOCH** set with a **REAL DIAMOND**, a Gent's **REAL DIAMOND PIN** (all as illustrated), or a Beautifully Carved **WALNUT** stained Wooden **CLOCK**, suitable for Dining Room, Drawing Room, or Hall, will be given **ABSOLUTELY FREE** to every **FIFTH** Person who sends for our Special Sale Price List, and to **EVERYONE** who sends for a Price List, but who is not entitled to a Clock, Brooch, Pin, or Ring, we will send with Price List, and **ABSOLUTELY FREE**, a beautiful Gold-cased Gem Set **BROOCH** if the applicant is a Lady, or a Handsome and Useful **FOUNTAIN PEN** if a Gentleman. If you are entitled to a **FREE DIAMOND RING, PIN, BROOCH, or CLOCK**, our only condition is that you purchase goods from our Price List (either for Cash or Weekly Payments of 6d. or upwards) to the value of not less than 4/6. **REMEMBER**, even if you do not get a Diamond Ring, Pin, Brooch, or a Clock you are sure of getting a Gem Set Brooch or Fountain Pen for your **Halfpenny** (the cost of sending) **Even if You Buy Nothing.**

We are making this remarkable offer, as we know once you have seen our Bargain List we shall sell you something, and secure your further orders.

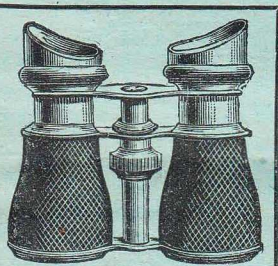
DON'T DELAY. SEND TO-DAY,

As this offer may not be repeated. Anyone sending more than **ONE** application will be disqualified.

The following are a few of the Wonderful Bargains contained in our List, and will be sent for Cash or **EASY PAYMENTS.**

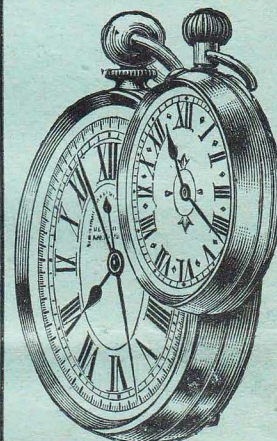
6D. DEPOSIT

AND UPWARDS.



Very powerful 30-mile range, covered with Imperial Russia Leather. Leather Sling Case to match. Our Sale Price, **8/6.**

- AIR RIFLES, 6/- BOOTS, 6/6. FOOTBALLS, 6/6.
- SILVER MOUNTED UMBRELLAS, 6/6.
- 18-ct. GOLD-CASED WATCHES, 6/3 & 7/9. REAL SILVER WATCHES, 6/6. GOLD COMPASS PENDANTS, 4/6. FIELD, RACE, or THEATRE GLASSES, 3/6. ELECTRO-SILVER CRUETS, 8/6. TEAPOTS, 8/6. GOLD GEM RINGS, 4/6. ACCORDEONS, 5/6. WEDDING RINGS, 8/3. KEEPERS, 8/6. STERLING SILVER LEVERS, 15/6. 18-ct. GOLD-FILLED DOUBLE ALBERTS, 7/-.
- Ditto Long GUARDS, 6/6. GOLD and DIAMOND RINGS, 7/-.
- CAMERAS and OUTFITS, 7/-.



18-ct. Gold-cased Ladies' or Gentlemen's Watches (as illustration), beautifully finished. Ten years' Warranty. Our Sale Price, **7/9.**



Hall-marked 18-ct. Gold set with Six Real Diamonds & Ruby. Our Sale Price, **15/6.**

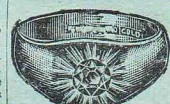
Lodge Farm, Chicheley, Newport Pagnell.
Dear Sir,—I received my Long Guard Chain, and am delighted with it. The Free Ring is lovely—such a good pattern. A gentleman friend has a ring like it which cost pounds. (Mrs.) A. CLARKE.

Cheshunt Locks, River Lee, Cheshunt, Herts, Jan. 3, 1905.
Dear Sir,—I received the Field Glasses, Clock, and Studs, for which I am pleased. They are good value for the money. I have shown them to several friends, who say they are good and cheap. You can make what use you like of this testimonial. I have had Glasses at sea, costing about £6, no better than the ones you sent me.—I remain, yours truly, THOMAS B. HOLDSWORTH.



Very Massive Real Gold (Stamped). Our Sale Price, **8/6.**

4, Kirk Gate Street, Old Walsoken, Wisbech, June 9, 1904.
Dear Sir,—I received the Watch and Clock in good order. I sold the Watch next day for 14—more than double I gave for it. I have bought a good many Watches in my time, both at wholesale and retail prices, but I have never received such astounding value as you have sent. I have shown the Free Clock to several people, and they say it is first-class. Hoping to send another order before long, I remain, yours truly, G. HILTON.



Real Gold (Stamped). Our Sale Price, **6/-.**

OVER 7,000 SIMILAR TESTIMONIALS have been received, and are open for inspection at our offices. Surely this is sufficient evidence of the wonderful value we offer. Please read the following extracts:—

Marine Station Hotel, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Gentlemen,—I received your parcel last night, and was delighted when I saw those articles. The Free Ring is very pretty. I have been offered 6/- for it already. The Watch is splendid, and I cannot make out how you can sell them for such a low price. I shall recommend you wherever I can. Wishing you every success. H. DISSE.

64, Bury Road, Wood Green, N.
Dear Sir,—I thank you for your prompt attention to my order for the three Brooches, which arrived safely, and are quite beyond my expectations. The Free Ring which you kindly sent me is a very handsome present, and my friends whom I have shown it to are as much surprised as I was when I first saw it myself. L. TURKINGTON.

FREE GIFT COUPON.

Please send me your Special Sale Price List as per offer above. It is understood that this application does not bind me to purchase from you either now or at any future date.

Name.....
Address

Write plainly, giving full name and address. Cut out and enclose Coupon in unsealed envelope and stamp with 1d. stamp. If envelope is sealed or anything besides your name and address is written, id. stamp must be used. **POST TO-NIGHT to KEW TRADING ASSOCIATION, LTD., Dept. A, KEW, LONDON.**

The Grammar School, Wortley, near Leeds.
[Dear Sir,—Thanks very much for Ring and Clock, which arrived quite safe. The present is splendid, and fit for any dining-room. Wishing you every success in your business. Yours truly, E. ARUNDEL.

12, School Street, Wattstown, near Perth, S. Wales, June 5th, 1904.
Sirs,—Having received six of your Watches previous to now, I wish you to forward me another Watch—one of the same description—as soon as possible. We will use our best endeavours to further the sale of your Watches. Yours truly, WILLIAM EVANS.

KEW TRADING ASSOCIATION, LTD.
(Dept. A),
KEW, LONDON.

NOW ON SALE!

No. 25.

**"THE STOLEN
SUBMARINE."**

A thrilling tale of Nelson Lee, Detective, and The Great Unknown.

By MAXWELL SCOTT.

&

No. 26.

"PETE, DETECTIVE."

A new, original, and laughable tale
of Jack, Sam, and Pete.



By S. CLARKE HOOK.

'THE BOYS' FRIEND' 3^D. LIBRARY.
