

EVERY INCH A HERO!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



ST. JIM'S TO THE RESCUE!

(An Exciting Incident in the Grand, Long, Complete Tale in this issue.)

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to
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OUR · · THREE · · COMPANION · · PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" - CHUCKLES.
 - LIBRARY - ; - POPULAR - ; - 1/2" -
 EVERY MONDAY ; EVERY FRIDAY ; EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday :

"THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!"

By Martin Clifford.

In the grand, long, complete story which appears next week, the inimitable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy develops another of his many great ideas, and the result is screamingly funny. Not that Gussy is japing—on the contrary, he is very much in earnest. His notion is one of a colossal type—no less than the conscription of wealth for the purposes of the war. He can offer quite sound arguments; for instance, if one man can be compelled to serve in the Army and give his life for his country, he says, why should not another man, too old, or a boy too young, for service of this kind part with his money? It is sad to report that Gussy does not make one real convert. The patriotism of the school is sound enough, but the other fellows doubt, and with good reason, whether it is quite so certain as D'Arcy fancies that Britain will follow the lead of St. Jim's. Gussy's chums consent to form a tribunal; but the proceedings before that tribunal are of rather a farcical kind, and in the long run the promoter of the scheme is forced to confess that there are flaws in it, and so an end comes to it, and as far as the scheme is concerned, to

"THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!"

MORE PEEVISHNESS.

A few weeks ago I printed a letter from a reader who had worked himself into a state of tremendous indignation because a query he had put—one no less important than "How old are Tom Merry and Kildare?" was not answered in the next number. This letter has brought me a number of others, the majority of which take A. B. C., the complainant, to task in a very drastic way. But three of four readers say that they agree with him. They cannot see, it would appear, why impossibilities should not be accomplished when a reader asks for them.

And one of the grumblers goes farther still. He asks that his letter shall be published, and I am publishing it accordingly, though I don't feel sure that he will be as greatly pleased to see it in print as, at the time of writing, he fancied he would. Here it is:

"Stanhope Villa,
 "94, Loughboro' Road, Brixton, S.W.

"12th July, 1916.

"Dear Sir,—About nine weeks ago I had a letter from you in reference to an advertisement that you were going to 'kindly' insert for me. The ad. was in reference to joining a cricket club. Do you think I play cricket in the snow? The summer is practically over. Last week I saw a letter which had come from someone who was disgusted. I think I have waited long enough to know that my ad. has been forgotten. Are you going to publish this letter? I guess not. Well, anyhow, I hope you do, and all the good I wish you is that you go smash, because I think it's disgraceful. Anyway, I hope to see my letter in print next week. Ha, ha, ha!

"My name is Edward Vening.

"P.S.—I am not afraid to give the address. And why don't you get somebody smart in your ragtime office?"

I am afraid we could not do with anyone as smart as my correspondent here. It would show the rest of us up so terribly.

Now, I am willing to admit that the writer of this letter has a small grievance. But to me it really seems a very small one indeed, and I think in more reasonable mood he would admit its smallness.

He was promised an insertion of his notice. (By the way, I should not call it an advertisement. The distinction may be a little one; but advertisements are paid for, and I have never asked or received a penny from any of my readers for

putting in their notices, although the trouble in connection with them has been a considerable addition to the work of my staff, who already have enough to do.) The notice was duly printed, and appears in this number, by the way. That it has been delayed is really nobody's fault.

Every week notices are held over for want of room, and it will happen at times that the printers—they are working pretty hard, too, you know—hold over older instead of newer notices, thus delaying a few for rather a long time. This appears to have been the case as regards the notice sent by the writer of the foregoing letter. Others have complained of delay, but they have complained civilly, having some understanding, perhaps, of what the work of even such a "rag-time" office as ours may mean in this period of stress.

Next week I shall have something more to say on the subject of these notices; and meanwhile I shall be glad if readers will refrain from sending any more along, so that I may have a fair chance to get up to date with those which have already been put through.

NOTICES.

Cricket and Football.

Walter Tyson (aged 14), 23, Kipling Street, Long Lane, Borough, S.E., wants to join a footer club in his neighbourhood for the coming season.

Bromley United F.C. (Poplar), average age 15, want home and away matches for coming season within three-mile radius of Poplar. Hon. Sec., W. Claus, 64, Wyvis Street, Poplar E. H. G. Catterall, 6, Brewery Street, Preston, Lancs., is Hon. Sec. of the Frenchwood Villa F.C., and would be glad to hear from other secretaries in his neighbourhood with a view to arranging matches.

Westbourne Park Juniors F.C. want home and away matches for next season.—Hon. Sec., R. French, 9, Sherland Mews, Sherland Road, Paddington, London. W.

W. Biggs, 31, Borwick Avenue, Forest Road, Walthamstow, wants to form a footer club (age 14-15) for his locality, and will be glad to hear from readers interested. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

West Kensington Park F.C. (average age 16-17) want home and away matches within easy distance of Hammersmith for the coming season.—Hon. Sec., W.K.P.F.C., 13, Talgarth Road, West Kensington, W.

Victoria C.C. want matches within seven-mile radius of Olton.—H. Gough (capt.), Somerset Villa, Warwick Road, Olton, Birmingham.

All Saints' Boys' F.C. (average age 13-14) want matches for the coming season within eight-mile radius of Wokingham.—Hon. Sec., G. Ballard, 5, Gipsy Lane, Wokingham.

Sandbeds C.C. (average age 14) want home and away matches for Saturdays within four-mile radius of Queensbury.—Hon. Sec., Albert Crabtree, Sandbeds, Queensbury, near Bradford.

Tottenham Juniors C.C. (average age 13) want matches within three-mile radius during summer holidays.—Hon. Sec., T. Harvey, 33, Foyle Road, Tottenham, N.

Back Numbers, &c., Wanted.

Private A. Oxenham, 9465, Stretcher Bearer, 2nd Battalion Gloucester Regiment, Salonika Forces, would be glad of back numbers of companion papers.

Private G. James; 19253, C Company 13th (S) Battalion, Welsh Regiment, would be glad to receive reading matter.

By G. R. Summers, Challow Dene, Woodthorpe, Wakefield, Nos. 1-250 of both "Gem" and "Magnet," clean. Will pay full price.

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

EVERY INCH A HERO!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



While Kildare glanced at his watch to see if the three minutes were up, Dick Brooks sailed in, and, putting every ounce of strength into one mighty blow, sent his opponent spinning to the floor. (See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Loops the Loop!

"Wed, white, an' blue!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant aristocrat of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered that familiar phrase as he hovered over a box of neckties, the dazzling hues of which were reminiscent of Joseph's celebrated coat of many colours. D'Arcy was dressing. At least, he had entered the Fourth Form dormitory with that object an hour before, and was now nearly half-way through. He had washed his noble face with the most exquisite toilet soap; he had devoted the manicure process to his graceful fingers; and his attire at the

moment consisted of grey striped trousers, a spotlessly white shirt with a stiff front, and socks which bore a distinct resemblance to the rainbow in the sky without. In his hand he held a soft silk collar, and his eye had been roving over the motley assortment of neckties for nearly ten minutes when he came to a decision.

"Wed, white, an' blue!" he repeated. "That will be patwiotic, an' gals like a fellah to be patwiotic. Yaas, I think I'll sport this one. What a pity a chap's confined to one necktie! That yellah one with the pink bars looks most attractive!"

And Gussy cast a longing, lingering look at the yellow-and-pink tie, which, as Loyther of the Shell had remarked when

Next Wednesday,

"THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

D'Arcy had last worn it, was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

For five more minutes D'Arcy debated the point; but his patriotic principles turned the scale in favour of the red, white, and blue necktie, which, with the silk collar, he proceeded to don.

There was a sound of footsteps without; but the swell of St. Jim's neither heard nor heeded. He was far too busy dressing to pay any attention to little things of that kind.

The footsteps came to a halt outside the dormitory door, and three grinning faces—the faces of Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, of the Fourth—peeped in.

"Hallo!" murmured Jack Blake softly. "Gussy's at it again! A regular masher, by Jove! Wonder who it is this time? Miss Bunn, of Rylcombe, p'r'aps."

"Or Cousin Ethel," suggested Herries, in an undertone.

Blake shook his head.

"He doesn't go to these extremes even for Cousin Ethel," he said. "Figgy's the one to do that. P'r'aps it's some dameel we're in the dark about."

"What a tie!" gasped Digby. "Sort of hits you in the face, doesn't it?"

"Rather! And the socks!" grinned Herries. "Regular dazzlers, aren't they?"

"Shush!" whispered Jack Blake. "Let's lie low till he's finished. This is only the first innings, and we don't want to throw him into a flutter."

So D'Arcy's study-mates, who had come to the dormitory with the object of getting into their cricket flannels, remained in the doorway, unseen and unheard by the worthy disciple of Vere de Vere, who was adjusting his necktie in such a manner that equal proportions of red, white, and blue would be presented to the public gaze.

"What a pity the weathah's so uncertain, an' I've got to wear a toppah instead of my stwaw hat with a wed, white, an' blue band wound it, to match my tie!" sighed D'Arcy. "Nevah mind! P'w'aps she won't expect me to touch the highest stage of perfection. This isn't New Bond Street."

"It is a she, then?" murmured Herries, in the doorway.

"Rather!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Feast your eyes on the stage now, kids! Gussy's going to do his hair."

That part of the performance was always treated with scrupulous seriousness by the swell of St. Jim's. He hated having a hair out of place, and if his parting wasn't dead central, he would make a few furious passes with the brush, and begin all over again.

First of all, he raised a bottle of brillianine aloft, and let the oily drops trickle on to his head, taking care that they did not overflow and drip down on to his snow-white shirt.

Then the brush and comb came into play, and in ten minutes Gussy's parting was complete.

"What's the next item, I wonder?" whispered Digby.

"Fancy waistcoat, you bet!" said Herries.

He was right. After a good deal of deliberation, Arthur Augustus selected one which was to his liking.

"She'll like that," he reflected. "Wich, but not gaudy, as Shakespeah wemarks. Now for my mornin' coat."

"The entertainment's nearly over," muttered Jack Blake. "Look here, you fellows, I don't think we ought to let our tame aristocrat go gadding about with girls."

"Certainly not!" said Digby.

"Most improper," said Herries piously.

"Then we'll work off a little jape at Gussy's expense," said Blake. "Come back right out of earshot, and I'll put you up to your parts."

Digby and Herries at once assented. They were not in the least averse from seeing the great Gussy robbed of some of his superfluous splendour.

Just as Arthur Augustus was putting the finishing touches to his exhaustive toilet, he lifted his nose in the air, and sniffed.

"Bai Jove! What a wummy smell!" he exclaimed. "Like somethin' burnin'!"

At the same instant three panic-stricken juniors dashed into the dormitory, the last of them taking care to close and lock the door.

"Weally, you fellahs! What evah is the mattah?"

"Fire!" gasped Jack Blake, seizing his elegant chum by the shoulders.

"Fire!" repeated Digby hysterically. "Get a move on, quick! In another two minutes we shall all be burnt out!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Jack Blake rushed towards the box-like arrangement which concealed a canvas chute, to be used in cases of emergency. With hasty fingers he lowered the chute through the opening to the ground below. It did not quite reach, but there was only a matter of a few feet to fall at the end.

"Down you go, Gussy!" panted Blake.

"But my togs, deah boy!" protested the swell of St. Jim's helplessly.

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"Blow your togs! Is that how you reward my self-sacrifice in letting you go first? I'm saving your skin, and then you start mumbling about togs. Buck up!"

And he jostled the faultlessly dressed Arthur Augustus to the entrance to the chute.

Very gingerly Gussy put his legs through.

"You fellahs will follow on?" he asked.

"Never mind us now," said Digby. "We're three parts suffocated, but that's a detail."

With a despairing cry at the thought that his clothes might be ruined, D'Arcy got in.

Swish!

At record speed the swell of St. Jim's shot down the fire-chute.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" gurgled Jack Blake. "We've done it now, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three practical jokers clambered up to one of the windows to see the result of their jape. Its success was beyond their wildest expectations.

Down in the quadrangle was a fairly deep puddle, which had come into being through the recent rain. And that puddle was situated in the precise spot where D'Arcy would fall!

"Oh, my stars!" gasped Herries. "Hold me up, someone!"

The juniors watched breathlessly. Then out shot Gussy like a pea from a catapult. With a wild whoop of anguish he pitched fairly and squarely in the centre of the puddle!

"The mighty fallen!" spluttered Digby. "My hat! Just look at him!"

The swell of St. Jim's was floundering on his back in the slush. His attire, which had looked so graceful and becoming five minutes earlier, was now ruined. The muddy water had splashed everywhere, reducing the "clobber" of the ill-fated Arthur Augustus to a complete wreck. Then, happening to glance up past the dangling chute to the grinning faces at the window, Gussy went into convulsions of fury. He shook his fist vigorously at his humorous chums, and struggled to his feet.

"You feahful wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My clothes are iwwetwievably wuined—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' I'm comin' up to admimistah a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

And with that dire threat the indignant swell of St. Jim's sped into the building and up the stairs.

He tugged vigorously at the handle of the dormitory door, but it didn't budge. On the floor outside lay some smoldering brown-paper—the "fire"!

"Open the door, you wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Not this evening!" came Digby's calm reply through the keyhole. "Some other evening!"

"But my clothes!" howled Arthur Augustus. "I have to meet a young lady at the railway-station."

"Meet her as you are!" chuckled Herries. "She'll appreciate your modern taste in dress. It's bearing out what the war-poster says: 'Don't be ashamed to wear deah-rags in war time.'"

"Will you let me in, you cacklin' hyenas?"

"Can't be did, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "We're determined to bring you up in the way you should go. Chap like you ought to be playing cricket instead of going lady-killing."

"Hear, hear!"

Almost gnashing his teeth with rage and vexation, Arthur Augustus turned and tramped away down the stairs. A moment later his study-mates saw him crossing the quadrangle.

"He's going as he is!" gasped Herries. "Oh, my hat! The girl, whoever she is, will think he's just come out of a mud-bath. I say, hadn't we better let him change his togs?"

"Rats!" said Jack Blake promptly. "You know what Gussy is when he falls in love. He moons about, and won't play games, and all that sort of thing. Let him go his own way and get jilted. It'll serve him jolly well right!"

And the three chums proceeded to get into their cricket flannels, chuckling intermittently over the latest misfortune which had befallen Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 2.

The Heart-Bowed Down.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS passed along the road which led to Rylcombe with long, squelching strides. Never before had he looked such an utter wreck, and had he glanced in the glass before setting out from St. Jim's, he would certainly have brought about certain improvements in his appearance. His clothes



Out shot Gussy like a pea from a catapult. With a wild whoop of anguish he pitched fairly and squarely in the centre of the puddle! "The mighty fallen!" spluttered Digby. "My hat! Just look at him!" (See Chapter 1.)

were limp and muddy, his shoes and spats were simply disgraceful, and from underneath a half-flattened topper several straggling wisps of hair stood out on his forehead.

"The beasts!" he muttered to himself. "I shall have to give them a tewwible thwashin' for playin' that twick on me! But nothing shall pwevent me fwom meetin' Sylvia. I pwomised her faithfully I would, an' a D'Arcy nevah bweaks his promise!"

So saying, Arthur Augustus drew out a letter from his pocket and conned it for the fiftieth time:

"Dear Arthur,—I wonder if you remember me? I was staying at Lord Conway's last year, when you and your friends were there. What do you think? I am coming to Rylcombe to be governess to a couple of dear little kiddies at Lady Langham's. It is just possible, therefore, that we may see something of each other. I arrive at Rylcombe on Wednesday at two-twenty, and shall be happy if you will show me the way to Lady Langham's, as I do not know the district. But, of course, if you have a cricket match on, or anything like that, please don't trouble.—Yours sincerely,
"SYLVIA CARR."

"Sylvia!"

The swell of St. Jim's repeated the name softly to himself. Right well did he remember the merry week he and his chums had spent in the heart of rural Hampshire, when Lord Conway was on leave from the Front. What a ripping time it had been, and what a charming girl Miss Sylvia Carr was! The news that she was coming to Rylcombe thrilled the romantic soul of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with the wildest delight.

Gussy had known many girls in the course of his school career, but none had appealed to him with half as much force as Sylvia, who was certainly a magnetic sort of creature, and, what mattered more, a skilled athlete. She played cricket beautifully, and carried all before her on the tennis-court.

And D'Arcy was to meet her! He had written her to this effect, and felt that, even in the present state of his attire, he must fulfil his promise. If he failed, Miss Sylvia might think that he wasn't keen on her society, and that would never do!

A loud peal of merriment awakened Gussy from his reverie. Looking up, he saw Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—strolling along the road in his direction.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

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"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Monty Lowther. "What mangle did you emerge from, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or have you been patriotic, and released the dustman for the Army, so that you could take over his job?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus coloured through the grime on his face.

"There is no cause whatever for wibald mewviment!" he expostulated. "I have been the victim of a wotten, caddish twick, an' you fellahs ought to sympathise, instead of sniggewin' like a lot of village idiots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let me pass!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have to meet a young lady at Wylcombe Station in ten minutes. Do you want me to commit a bweach of etiquette, you boundahs, an' be late?"

"You—you're meeting a young lady?" stammered Tom Merry.

"Yaas!"

"Dressed as you are?"

"Yaas, deah boy: I may be a trifle wumped, but—"

"Oh, my hat! A trifle rumped! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Manners and Lowther. They would fain have accompanied Arthur Augustus to the station, to witness the shock the unknown damsel would receive; but they were due at the nets in half-an-hour.

"Look heah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to tolewat such vulgah conduct a moment longah! Put up your hands, you beasts!"

The Terrible Three obeyed. They put up their hands, but not with the intention of fighting. Arthur Augustus found himself whirled round and round in the roadway, in the centre of which he finally alighted with a bump. Then the Terrible Three, having carefully and scrupulously wiped their muddy boots on him, went on their way, still gurgling with laughter.

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He was torn between a desire to hurl himself neck-and-crop upon his recent assailants, and to reach the railway-station in time. Ultimately, he decided that the latter was the wiser course.

The journey through Rylcombe was like a nightmare. The village urchins at once made Gussy a target for various missiles, and the adults, after gazing speechlessly at the strange apparition for a moment, became doubled up with laughter. Miss Bunn, the pastrycook's daughter, with whom Gussy had once been on terms of romantic friendship, was heard to remark, "What a disgusting wreck!" and at the same time pushed her bicycle as far away from Arthur Augustus as possible.

"Oh, cwumbs!" groaned Gussy dismally. "P'waps—p'waps I ought nevah to have come, aftah all! If Miss Bunn thinks I'm disgustin', Sylvia might do the same."

But, having come so far, Arthur Augustus reflected that he might as well see the thing through. To turn back and run the gauntlet of the rude youths of Rylcombe would call for more pluck than even the swell of St. Jim's possessed.

He took out his watch. The glass had been smashed in his scuffle with the Terrible Three, but there was no further damage.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The twain was in five minutes ago! I shall miss Sylvia if I don't huvw'y!"

He hastened down the little village street, and then saw a sight which rooted him to the pavement with dismay.

Coming towards him, with an amused smile on her pretty face, was Sylvia Carr.

Gussy bit his lip with profound vexation. For Sylvia was not alone. She had an escort—a fellow carrying her box—and it was Dick Brooke, the day-boarder at St. Jim's.

"What wotten luck!" murmured D'Arcy. "Still, I'll soon send Bwooke about his business. He's got no wight to thwast himself upon Miss Carr like this."

Then, raising his battered topper, he exclaimed:

"Good-afthnoon, Miss Sylvia!"

Sylvia Carr seemed to be devoting all her attention to keeping her face straight. As for Dick Brooke, he laughed outright. The swell of St. Jim's looked such a forlorn, mud-bedraggled wreck that he would have sent a cat into hysterics.

"Who are you, pray?" asked Miss Sylvia, after struggling for some moments with a pocket-handkerchief.

"Weally, deah girl! Don't you wemembah me? I'm D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—an' I pwomised to meet you at the station."

"Is this how you fulfil your promises?"

"Pway allow me to explain, Miss Sylvia. I am in a wathah untidday condish just at pwsent, I know, but you will undahstand when I tell you that sewveral wottahs—"

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The swell of St. Jim's broke off suddenly.

"I say, Bwooke, you beast, why are you movin' off when I'm speakin' to a young lady?"

"Miss Carr hardly cares to be seen in your company at the moment," responded Brooke, with a genial smile. "If you'll excuse my saying so, you look like a chap who's been refused admission to the workhouse. Better trot off to the school and get into some decent togs."

"But I insist upon conductin' Miss Sylvia to Lady Langham's!"

"You can insist till you're blue in the face. By a stroke of good fortune, I happened to be on the station platform just now, or Miss Carr would have been stranded. And as I've already taken her half-way home, I'd better finish the job. Anyway, it's for her to decide."

"I quite agree with you—er—Dick," said Miss Carr.

Arthur Augustus felt a sudden wave of anger surging up in his breast. Not only was he deprived of a pleasure to which he had looked forward for days—the pleasure of escorting Miss Carr to her new home—but he had the extreme mortification of hearing that young lady address Brooke—a mere scholarship boy—by his Christian name. D'Arcy wasn't a snob, but he considered this was the limit.

"I'll deal with you latah, Bwooke!" he said darkly. "Good-afthnoon, Miss Sylvia!"

And, raising his battered headgear once again, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked slowly and painfully back to St. Jim's, feeling sick at heart, and mentally resolving that the next time Dick Brooke showed his face within the school precincts he would find he had walked into a hornets' nest.

CHAPTER 3.

An Affair of Honour.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY made tracks for the Fourth Form dormitory in a decidedly wrathful mood. The occasions on which the swell of St. Jim's was really angry were few and far between; but this was one of them. He was mad with everything and everybody, and determined to exact a terrible revenge for the wrongs to which he had been subjected.

"It's been the wottenest afthnoon I've evah known!" he muttered, wrenching out and surveying his red-white-and-blue tie, which now bore the additional colours of black and brown. "An' all through Blake, an' Hewwies, an' Digby! If they hadn't played that wotten twick on me I should have got to the station in time, lookin' respectable, an' all the west of it, an' Bwooke would have had to leave me in charge of Sylvia. Bai Jove, somebody's goin' to suffah for this!"

So saying, Arthur Augustus hastily discarded his drenched and muddy garments, treated himself to a good wash, and finally left the dormitory, clad, but scarcely in his right mind.

He went straight to Study No. 6. The table was laden with good things, and round it sat Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, piling in energetically after a hard game of cricket.

"Hallo!" said Jack Blake, looking up from his plate. "Here's that ungrateful beast Gussy! He never so much as thanked us for saving his life this afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful wottahs!" raved Arthur Augustus, glowering through his monocle. "I—I'll jollay well wipe up the ground with every one of you!"

And, pushing back his cuffs, the indignant victim of the practical joke rushed upon his chums.

Blake, and Herries, and Digby sprang to their feet, and put the table between themselves and the irate Gussy.

"Come on, you funks!" exclaimed the latter. "There's thwee to one, so you needn't skulk behind a table!"

"Pax!" pleaded Jack Blake.

"Mercy!" howled Herries.

"Spare us!" shrieked Digby.

"We'll never, never, never do it again!" sobbed Blake.

Arthur Augustus lowered his hands.

"On second thoughts, I won't thrash you," he said. "You're not worth the fag. Besides, I owe somebody else a thunderin' good hidin'!"

"Hallo! What merry joker has been ruffling your feathers now?" asked Digby.

"That beast Bwooke!"

"Brooke's not a beast. He's one of the best."

The swell of St. Jim's flung himself into a chair.

"I wegahd Bwooke as a wank outsiders!" he said. "I had pwomised to meet Miss Carr—"

"Ha! The secret's out!" said Blake. "So the dear, delightful damsel you were mumbling about in the dormitory was Miss Carr?"

"Yaas. She has obtained a post as govahness to Lady Langham's kids. I was to have taken her theah, but you wottahs wumped my clothes up, an' Tom Mewwy, an'

Mannahs, and' Lowthah met me in the woadway an' had the bwazen cheek to wipe their boots on me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatevah for hilawity! Pass the sardines, Hewwies, please!"

Herries obeyed—or, to be more precise, he passed the sardine, for there was only one left in the tin, and a midget fish at that.

D'Arcy solemnly devoured it, drank a copious draught of tea, and paced up and down the study, waiting, as he explained to his chums, for Dick Brooke to return from Rylocombe.

The scholarship boy had promised to bowl to Jack Blake at the nets after tea, and had arranged to call at Study No. 6, it appeared.

There was a sudden tramp of footsteps without, a cheery whistle which echoed the length of the Fourth Form passage, and then the study door opened, and Dick Brooke and D'Arcy stood face to face.

"Now for the fireworks!" grinned Digby. "Look at Gussy's face! He's like a broody hen with the tantrums!"

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" hissed Jack Blake dramatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Brooke stood in the doorway, his handsome face framed in a smile.

"Stand clear, Gussy!" he said pleasantly.

"I wufeso!" D'Arcy's face was flushed and his eyes glinting. "I weward you as a downwight wottah, Bwooke!"

"Me!" gasped Brooke. "My hat! What have I done?"

"You wufused to hand Miss Carr ovah to my escort!"

"Miss Carr pleased herself. It's not my fault that she preferred me to a chap who looked as if he'd just crawled out of a coal-hole!"

"You took her home?"

"Certainly!"

"And you've awwanged to meet her again?"

"I have!"

"Then—then you're a biggah wascal than I imagined!"

"Oh, come, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "You can't always have the monopoly of the girls, you know. Give somebody else a look-in!"

"But Bwooke has nevah met Miss Carr befoah, whereas I spent a whole week in her society—when we went to Conway's to play cwicket, if you wemembah."

"Then it's only right that you should give somebody else a turn."

But D'Arcy did not feel disposed to view the matter in that light at all. Brooke had come between him and his heart's desire, and Brooke should suffer.

"I'm going to make it my duty to see that Miss Carr is no longah pestayh with the attentions of a beastly scholarship boundah!" he said.

Then the thunderstorm broke forth in all its fury. Dick Brooke had been genial and good-humoured hitherto; but remarks of that sort he could not, and would not, tolerate. His hands clenched involuntarily, and his eyes blazed.

"You're a cad to speak like that, D'Arcy!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries. "It's not like you, Gussy, to be such a beastly snob! Withdraw that remark before Brooke wades in and slaughters you!"

"I wufuse to withdraw a wemark which I uttald in all sewiousness!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "An' as for Bwooke slaughtewin' me, he's welcome to go ahead!"

"Half a jiffy!" interposed Jack Blake. "We're not going to have you smashing up the happy home. If it's to be a scrap, let it be done decently and in order. Blessed if I know what's come over the tame lunatic to-day. He's like a bear with a sore head!"

"Be careful, Blake, or I shall be welytantly compelled to deal with you when I've finished with Bwooke!"

"Great Scott, Gussy! You're getting as bloodthirsty as Nero and the Kaiser rolled into one!"

"You're still at liberty to take back that remark you made, D'Arcy," said Dick Brooke quietly.

His anger had abated now, but the determination in his set face was unmistakable.

"So you're twyin' to back out—" began Arthur Augustus.

The scholarship boy shrugged his shoulders.

"That settles it!" he said. "You've called me a rotten name simply because I showed a girl the way, as any other fellow would have done. Either you're eaten up with jealousy or you've turned cad yourself, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Don't stop here jawing!" said Digby impatiently. "Come along to the gym, and have it out in the good old British style. The cricket can wait."

Accordingly, the little party proceeded, with grim faces, to the gym. They were speedily reinforced as the news of the

forthcoming fight began to spread. The Terrible Three, with a perfect horde of Shell fellows, came along to see the fun; and Figgins & Co. of the New House, hearing what was on, sped hotfoot to the scene of the combat.

That it would be scrap of more than ordinary interest everybody knew. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with all his foppishness, knew how to hit straight from the shoulder; while Dick Brooke, who figured in few fights, had the reputation of being a dark horse, who could do wonders when he was roused.

Very few fellows knew what the fight was about; fewer still cared. All they knew was that D'Arcy and Brooke were going to slog at each other, and that was sufficient incentive for them to roll up in their thousands, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

"And the burning question on the lips of the crowd was:

"Who will win?"

CHAPTER 4.

Bad Blood!

"Gussy's the man!"

"Rats! Brooke will make a table-jelly of him!"

"Piffle! Gussy's coming out topdog! Six to one on Gussy!"

The gymnasium buzzed with voices. A tremendous crowd was by this time assembled, and the box-horse, the parallel-bars, and other impedimenta were booked up. The fellows who had not been fortunate enough to find places there had to crowd in where they could.

In the centre of the gym a mat had been placed, and Jack Blake and Tom Merry were affixing the gloves to the respective hands of D'Arcy and Dick Brooke. D'Arcy's face was flushed and excited, Brooke's calm and impassive.

"What's the trouble?"

A tall form loomed up in the gym, and Kildare of the Sixth elbowed his way to the centre of the scene.

"It's an affair of honour, Kildare," explained Jack Blake.

"Gussy and Brooke are going to try and wipe each other off the face of the earth. Will you see fair play?"

Kildare nodded. He was never averse from a fight, provided it was fought fairly and cleanly; so he took out his watch and beckoned to the combatants.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite ready!" said Dick Brooke grimly.

"Time!"

The fight began without any of those dramatic thrills which so often characterise the commencement of a contest. D'Arcy knew that he would have all his work cut out to beat Brooke, and Brooke knew that he must bide his time and play his cards carefully if he wished to win; so both settled down to a steady, cautious style. Although steady and cautious, however, it was anything but tame.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Use your left, Brooke!"

Public opinion was pretty evenly balanced. The fellows who knew D'Arcy's form shouted their loyal support; those who respected Dick Brooke, on account of the fine fight he had made in the past in order to get a permanent footing at St. Jim's, backed him up right royally. The air rang with shouts and cheers.

When Kildare called "Time!" at the end of the first round neither of the boxers seemed to have turned a hair. But each knew that there was no lack of hard fighting to come.

"Keep it up, Gussy!" said Jack Blake, who, although he did not feel his chum was wholly in the right, felt constrained to act as his second. "I'd land out once or twice in the second round, if I were you, to let him see you're in earnest."

D'Arcy nodded.

"I know exactly what I'm doin', Blake!" he said, rather huffily.

"Time!"

Oh this occasion Arthur Augustus sought for an opening, and found it. He found his way through Brooke's defence, and the scholarship boy reeled from a resounding thud in the ribs. But before the end of the round he recovered himself, and returned the blow with interest, his left smashing full in the face of the swell of St. Jim's.

The shouts from the crowd continued. Things were waking up, and there was likely to be some hard, relentless hitting before long.

The third round was D'Arcy's, the fourth Brooke's; the fifth left honours easy. Then came the sixth, which was one perpetual thrill.

Dick Brooke had had enough of boxing on the defensive. He began to fight like a tiger, letting himself go again and again, and exerting his strength to the utmost. Had D'Arcy

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once wavered before that slashing attack his number would have been up; but he stuck to his guns, and, although badly battered, managed to survive until the welcome call of "Time!"

"How d'you feel?" asked Tom Merry of Brooke, as the latter plumped down heavily on his second's knee.

Dick Brooke smiled.

"I've got him," he said, but without the least touch of arrogance. "Next time he goes down he'll stay down. I think this coming round will finish it."

Brooke was right. Arthur Augustus tottered rather than walked into the ring for the seventh round, and was soon leaning against the ropes, pumping-in breath, for his opponent was giving him a gruelling time.

"Buck up, Gussy!" arose a frenzied shout from a party of loyal Fourth-Formers seated astride the parallel bars.

"Never say die, you know!"

D'Arcy didn't say die; but he said "Ow!" in no uncertain tone when Brooke's right thudded with an ominous jolt against his jaw.

And Dick Brooke wasn't content with that, either. He was beginning to feel fagged and dizzy, and knew that the sooner he put paid to the account of his obstinate opponent the better it would be for him. So he followed up his attack with fierce determination, planting blow after blow on the face and chest of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Good-bye to Gussy's chances!" said Talbot of the Shell.

"He's put up a game fight, but Brooke's the better man."

Then, while Kildare glanced at his watch to see if the three minutes were up, Dick Brooke sailed in, and, putting every ounce of strength into one mighty blow, sent his opponent spinning to the floor, baffled, broken in spirit, and beaten.

"That's the finish, I'm thinking," said Kildare grimly.

He stood over the prostrate Arthur Augustus, and counted. But it would have taken a good deal of counting to bring the swell of St. Jim's back to action. He still lay lying on the mat when Kildare reached ten.

"Hurrah!" came in a resounding chorus from the partisans of the victor. "Bravo, Brooke!"

Dick Brooke smiled as Tom Merry peeled off his gloves. He was glad in his heart that the distasteful business was over, for D'Arcy had never been numbered among his enemies. He had been driven to fight against his wish, and now it was over he wanted to forgive and forget.

But a surprise awaited the good-natured scholarship boy, for when he approached Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a few moments later and frankly put out his hand, the swell of St. Jim's declined to take it.

"Come, D'Arcy," urged Kildare, "be a sportsman!"

D'Arcy put his hands in his pockets. Then he looked straight at his conqueror.

"You've won the first wound, Bwooke," he said. "But this ain't the end of the fight, by any mannah of means."

"Very well," said Dick Brooke. "If you like to nurse an imaginary grievance, that's your bizney. Don't say I haven't offered to do the decent thing."

And with that the victor of the hard-fought fight got into his jacket and strode out of the gym.

CHAPTER 5.

Rivals!

"BLAKE, deah boy!"

"Hallo!" grunted Jack Blake.

"Do you think I look presentable enough to—ahem!—to see a young lady?"

Jack Blake regarded the speaker, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy critically.

"All depends whether the young lady's particular," he said. "Personally, if I was a girl, I shouldn't want any truck with a fellow with a face like a landslide and one eye as black as the ace of spades! Besides, you're coming down to cricket this afternoon, my son. We're playing the Gram-marians next Saturday, and St. Jim's expects that every man will do his duty. Slackers are barred."

"Cwicket!" said Arthur Augustus, with profound disdain.

"I've got no use for cwicket just now. I promised I'd go down an' see how Miss Carr was gettin' on."

"Whom did you promise?"

"Myself."

"Eh?"

"I told myself it was a duty," explained the swell of St. Jim's. "Besides, I want to apologise for my disgustin' condish yestahday."

"You put girls before cricket?" said Jack Blake sternly.

"When it's a gal like Miss Carr, certainly."

Blake gave a sort of growl.

"We shall have to keep a tight rein on you, Gussy, I can

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see," he said. "You're getting led astray in your old age. Do you want Gordon Gay & Co. to walk over us, fathead?"

"Blow Gordon Gay, an' blow cricket! I'm goin' to see Miss Sylvia."

And D'Arcy went.

He was aware, as he crossed the quadrangle, that his face was anything but presentable. It bore vivid traces of the blows which Dick Brooke had rained upon it the day before; and certainly Miss Sylvia Carr would see nothing in it which called for admiration.

But Gussy had patched himself up as best he could, and he was immaculately attired. The suit he wore was new and stainless, and he considered that what he lost on the swings he would make up on the roundabouts; in other words, that his resplendent attire would atone for his facial deficiencies.

With stately strides the swell of St. Jim's made his way along the road which led to Rylcombe. A St. Jim's fellow was walking a few hundred yards ahead of him, but Gussy took no particular heed of this circumstance. Afternoon lessons were over, and it was perfectly natural for another junior to be wending his way to the village.

But when Arthur Augustus recognised the elastic stride of Dick Brooke, his heart became disquieted within him. Where was Brooke going? Was it possible—

D'Arcy stopped short, his mind filled with a sudden fear. It was quite on the cards that Sylvia Carr would have more than one visitor that afternoon.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "I must find out if the boundah is weally goin' to Lady Langham's aftah Sylvia. He may be booked for home, as he's a day boardah. I sinceahly hope he is. If he cwooses my path again there'll be twouble! Bwooke isn't a bad fellah in a way, but he ought to keep off the gwass where Sylvia's concerned."

D'Arcy put on speed and caught up with Dick Brooke after five minutes' hard walking.

"Hallo!" said Brooke, obviously thrown off his balance.

"I didn't think you wanted to speak to me any more, Gussy."

"On this occasion," said the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity, "it is necessary. Where are you going?"

"Is that any concern of yours?"

"Yaas. I have weason to believe that you are contem-
platin' a visit to Miss Carr."

"Right on the wicket first time!" chuckled Brooke.

"You—you wottah!"

"Oh, ring off!" said Dick Brooke impatiently. "Why a chap's a rotter because he chooses to go and see a girl chum beats me altogether. You seem to have gone off your chump these days, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus caught the speaker by the arm.

"You're not goin' to see Miss Carr!" he said angrily.

"I am, or I'll know the reason why!"

"But don't you know that it's wank bad form to thrust your society on a gal like this?"

Brooke laughed.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," he said. "You're going to Lady Langham's, so it's just as much bad form on your part as on mine. More so, in fact. I've had a definite invitation."

Arthur Augustus stroked his chin reflectively. Then he tried a sudden change of tactics.

"Look heah, Bwooke!" he said. "Be a good chap, an' leave Miss Carr to herself this aftahnoon."

"Leave her to you, you mean," laughed Brooke. "No jolly fear! Miss Carr asked me to go and see her, for certain reasons you know nothing about, and I'm pretty certain she won't want you hanging around. Here, where are you going!"

For Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had gone on at a canter, leaving Brooke standing in the roadway.

Gussy was seldom backward in coming forward, and he realised that if he was first on the spot it would be half the battle.

That Dick Brooke was in love with the charming Miss Sylvia he did not for one moment doubt. The swell of St. Jim's did not realise that other fellows were not so readily pierced by Cupid's darts as was he.

He strode on, never pausing until he reached the gravelled drive which led to Lady Langham's house—a stately old place with fine mullioned windows.

There was no need to ring the bell, for the object of Gussy's adoration was standing on the front steps. An expression of annoyance passed over Sylvia's face as the swell of St. Jim's paused and gracefully raised his hat.

ANSWERS

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^o.



"Tell your fortune, pretty lady!" A slovenly, slatternly gipsy woman approached Miss Sylvia, eyeing the girl's smart attire and pretty face with more than ordinary interest. (See Chapter 6.)

"Good-afternoon, Miss Sylvia!"

"Good-afternoon! Have you called to see Lady Langham?"

"Of course not, deah gal! No, Sylvia; it's you I came to see."

"Well, now that your curiosity is gratified, perhaps you'll go away!"

"But—but I wanted to take you for a stwoll, don't you know!" protested Gussy.

"That is quite impossible—just now, at any rate. Do go away; there's a good fellow! I am expecting a visitor shortly."

D'Arcy frowned in spite of himself.

"Is it Bwooke you're expectin'—that fellah who met you at the station yestaday?"

"It is!"

"And you pfer his company to mine?"

"Don't be so horribly melodramatic!" said Sylvia, with a laugh. "Brooke is not going to elope with me, or anything of that sort."

"Then why are you lettin' him come?"

"It's on another matter—totally removed from affairs of the heart!" smiled Sylvia. "Why, here's Brooke himself! Now do go away, please—for my sake!"

D'Arcy could not resist that appeal. His face fell, and he looked positively wretched as he raised his hat and turned on his heel. Sylvia relented a little.

"Come in an hour, if you like!" she called after him.

"Wight you are, deah gal!" said Arthur Augustus, a trifle mollified.

But the look he bestowed upon his rival as Dick Brooke came swinging up the drive with his athletic stride, was anything but amiable. The storm-clouds on the horizon were not dispersed yet—not by a long way.

Between the two fellows who had fought existed a coldness which might speedily develop into a hatred. And all on account of Sylvia!

CHAPTER 6.

For One Who Wronged Him.

WHILST Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was kicking his heels on the familiar pavement of Rylcombe High Street, glancing very often at his watch and grunting at the slow progress of time, Dick Brooke was enjoying a very pleasant hour in the society of Miss Sylvia Carr.

Dick was not in love with Sylvia. He was a sensible, level-headed sort of fellow, who realised that fifteen was hardly the age to follow in the footsteps of Romeo of immortal memory. But he liked Sylvia Carr very much, and the fact that he had comparatively few friends at St. Jim's, being a day-boy, made him all the more pleased that he had got into the good graces of the young governess.

The hour which Dick Brooke and Sylvia Carr spent in each other's company was not, as the jealous Gussy might have supposed, occupied in "spooning" or in whispering words of fond endearment. Dick and Sylvia were working—working upon a dearly-cherished scheme which lay very near to their hearts, but which no one else must know about, for fear of failure.

Several minutes before the appointed time Arthur Augustus, having had a somewhat painful face massage at the local barber's, made his appearance.

Lady Langham was out in her car, and had taken her children with her, so that Sylvia was free for the afternoon to do as she willed.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!" A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN OLIFFORD.

"Weady for a wamble, deah gal?" asked Arthur Augustus, when Sylvia appeared at the door.

The girl nodded.

"I'm coming along too," said Dick Brooke pleasantly, peeping over Sylvia's shoulder.

Arthur Augustus strove hard to fight down his anger.

"You've had your turn, Bwooke!" he said. "I've waited for about an hour so that you could have a chat with Miss Carr, an' now you can go home!"

"Thanks! It's a free country!" replied Dick. "I guess I'm coming—if Miss Carr agrees, that is?"

"Of course, I agree!" said Sylvia. "But"—and she fixed her dark eyes warningly on the swell of St. Jim's—"I will have no quarrelling, mind!"

So Gussy, with a very bad grace, gave in. He could not have the privilege of Sylvia's charming company all to himself, so the next best thing was to share it with Brooke, though it went against the grain to have to eat humble pie to a scholarship boy.

Sylvia Carr walked in the centre, and the two St. Jim's fellows escorted her through the sleepy little village and along by the rippling waters of the Ryll.

The contrast between the behaviour of Brooke and D'Arcy was striking. The former was talkative and agreeable, the latter sullen and morose. Never had Gussy's heart been so much embittered against anybody as it was against Dick Brooke that afternoon.

Cricket was discussed, and boating and swimming; and Miss Sylvia entered into the conversation wholeheartedly, for she was an athlete every inch of her, and ought to have been born a boy. Arthur Augustus made civil replies to the questions she put to him, but the girl could see that he was spending three-parts of the time in scowling at Brooke.

"Let us turn off through the woods," she said at length. "Really, the country is remarkably pretty round here."

"I must be getting home to tea soon," said Dick Brooke, "so would you mind if we worked our way back towards the village, Miss Sylvia?"

"Not a bit!" returned the girl pleasantly.

Arthur Augustus was not consulted at all, and so another black mark went down against Dick Brooke.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Sylvia suddenly, as the trio stepped into a shady coppice. "What's all this?"

"Gipsies," said Brooke tersely.

A couple of caravans were resting a few yards away, and a huge peat-fire was merrily blazing. Around it sat a dozen men and women of the Romany breed, and some scraggy-looking ponies were grazing not far off.

"Better dodge 'em!" whispered Brooke. "They—they're not exactly civilised, you know!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm not afraid! Are you, Miss Sylvia?"

"Is that a hint that I'm afraid?" demanded Dick Brooke, with flashing eyes.

"If the cap fits, wear it!"

"You cad!" whispered Brooke in D'Arcy's ear.

The situation was just working up to a climax, and matters would have become unpleasantly warm had not a diversion occurred just then.

"Tell your fortune, pretty lady?"

A slovenly, slatternly gipsy woman approached Miss Sylvia, eyeing the girl's smart attire and pretty face with more than ordinary interest.

Sylvia smiled.

"No, thank you!" she said. "I don't want to be told that I was born under a lucky star, that I shall marry a peer, and live in breathless splendour all my life! No," she added, as the gipsy woman made a grab at her hand; "I don't want any of your soothsaying! Leave me alone, please!"

"Bravo!" said Dick Brooke. "It's always wise to give a wide berth to people like this!"

The woman turned upon him fiercely.

"Hold your tongue!" she rapped out, in a rough voice.

"I'll hold it when I choose," answered Brooke coolly.

"Come away, Miss Sylvia!"

The ragged-looking men, with unshaven cheeks and menacing attitudes, had begun to crowd round; and Brooke was anxious to avoid a scene.

Suddenly a cry of dismay broke from the lips of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been surveying the proceedings a few yards distant.

"My watch!" he exclaimed. "My gold tickah! It's gone!"

"I'm not surprised," said Dick Brooke. "This class of people stops at nothing!"

Gussy's eye roved round the assembled throng of gipsies. He noticed that one man—a big, swarthy fellow with arms like the village blacksmith in the poem—was chuckling, and displaying something to the view of his companions. That

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"something" was his gold watch Gussy did not for one instant doubt.

He strode up to the dark-faced Romany.

"You scoundwel!" he exclaimed. "You've stolen my watch! Hand it back to me at once, or——"

"Or what?"

"I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The man laughed long and loud, and his associates chimed in. The idea of the slim, aristocratic schoolboy thrashing big, brawny Jake, the leader of the tribe, struck them as being decidedly comical.

But Arthur Augustus was every bit in earnest. He pushed back his cuffs, and advanced with a warlike air towards the throng of gipsies.

The latter simply stood and sniggered at him. Wound up to a state of fury, the swell of St. Jim's landed out with his left and caught Jake on the nose.

"The fool!" muttered Dick Brooke. "The mad fool! He's got us mixed up in a desperate business now!"

Brooke was right. The gipsies did not accept D'Arcy's hot-headed attack lying down. They swarmed upon him like hornets, and things would have gone very badly indeed for Arthur Augustus had not Dick Brooke leapt into the breach.

"Go and see to Sylvia!" he hissed in D'Arcy's ear. "That woman was talking to her—she's got some scheme on! Buzz off—quick!"

D'Arcy went, leaving Brooke to face the menacing mob of Romanies singlehanded.

But Dick Brooke had any amount of pluck. That he would go under he knew; but he was determined that, what ever the cost, he would go under fighting.

Arthur Augustus ran with all speed to Sylvia's side. The girl was pale, but far from terrified. Close by hovered the slatternly woman who had offered to tell her fortune.

"It's all wight, deah gal!" said D'Arcy, with the air of a gallant cavalier. "Pway thwow yourself upon my pwotection!"

"But Brooke——"

"It is most unforch," said Gussy, in genuine distress. "If I go an' help him, this woman will start molestin' you. It is necessary that I should remain with you, Sylvia!"

Meanwhile, Dick Brooke was going great guns. He hit out forcefully and fearlessly, and the gipsies got more than they bargained for.

But it was not likely that the roving, wandering tribe which had had so many skirmishes in the past with police and land-owners, would allow themselves to be kept at bay by a mere schoolboy.

Brooke had his back to one of the caravans, and his blows rained thick and fast upon the faces and bodies of his half-dozen assailants. Big Jake was disagreeably surprised to find the claret streaming from his nose; and two of the other men also had casualties.

In spite of the grimness of the situation, Sylvia Carr could not refrain from admiring the plucky stand put up by the scholarship boy.

With his head thrown back, his chest heaving, his fists shooting out hard and quickly, Dick Brooke looked all over the British boy.

But the toils were closing in upon him now. His strength was becoming spent, and his head swam from a smashing blow on the temple.

Yet he fought on, waiting—waiting grimly—for the end. It would not be long now, he reflected, as the leering face of Big Jake loomed up before him.

But he would stick it out. Yes! He would face that raging horde of Romanies, if need be, till not a breath remained in his body, and he was trampled helpless, insensible, into the brushwood.

CHAPTER 7.

None But the Brave Deserve the Fair!

BIG JAKE had Dick Brooke at his mercy, but he hesitated before dealing the final blow; and during his hesitation a sudden shout rang through the woods, and a band of juniors, wearing the familiar caps with the St. Jim's colours, rushed to the rescue.

"Sock it into 'em!" came Tom Merry's voice.

Big Jake swung round, startled. The next moment Manners and Monty Lowther were upon him like tigers, and he was borne to the ground, swearing hard.

The place seemed to swarm with fellows. Tom Merry & Co., after a game of cricket in the scorching sun, had repaired to the river for a dip, and, hearing the sounds of strife, had hastened to the spot.

They were just in time. That plucky junior had sank to the ground from sheer exhaustion; but he realised that the

arrival of the rescue-party had saved him from serious injury. Big Jake was not a man who drew the line at violence, even of the most ferocious kind.

Fast and furious raged the fight. The gipsy women looked on anxiously, fearing lest their men-folk should lose the day. And their fears were well-founded, for Tom Merry & Co. proved much too hot a handful for the Romanies, strong men though the latter were.

"Bwavo, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaving Sylvia's side, and plunging into the fray. "Give it to 'em hot an' stwong!"

"This is a game after my own heart," murmured Monty Lowther, seating himself on Big Jake's chest. "Polish 'em off, you fellows!"

The polishing-off process was soon accomplished. With howls of rage the gipsies went down one after another, and the St. Jim's juniors were left masters of the situation.

Tom Merry restored Gussy's watch to him, and then turned to Big Jake, who was breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and vowing dire vengeance upon his conquerors.

"Look here," he said sternly. "If you and your beastly caravans and things aren't gone by to-morrow, I'll put the police on your track! You've no right on this land, and you jolly well know it!"

Big Jake's reply was one which could hardly be set down in print.

"You understand?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Hang you!"

"Tweak his nose a bit, Monty, and get some civility out of him!"

"Right-ho!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

And he gave Big Jake's nose such a crushing squeeze between finger and thumb that the man's yells of pain and fury awakened the echoes.

"Now," said Tom Merry grimly. "Are you going to sheer off?"

"Yes! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think that's good enough!" said the captain of the Shell. "We'll leave the rotters to pack up their traps and get clear of the district. How are you feeling, Brooke, old man?"

"Pretty groggy!" said Dick Brooke, with a faint smile. "I've never had such a hammering in my life!"

"But you held out like a giddy hero!" said Manners admiringly.

Even Arthur Augustus conceded this point.

"Yaas, it was splendid!" he said. "My only wegwet was that I couldn't wendah him any assistance. I had to keep an eye on that woman who was molestin' Miss Carr, you know."

Sylvia came forward at this juncture, and gave Brooke her hand. She said nothing, but the look of gratitude which shone in her eyes was quite good enough for the scholarship boy. He would cheerfully have faced fifty tribes of gipsies to win another such look.

"We'll be getting along now, I think," said Talbot. "I don't imagine these gipsies will trouble us again."

"May I see you home, deah gal?" asked Arthur Augustus, stepping close to Miss Carr.

"Yes, if you like."

"It will be a gweat pleastuah!"

And the swell of St. Jim's strolled off by Sylvia's side.

Dick Brooke was out of the running this time. He was so badly shaken up that it would have been impossible for him to accompany Sylvia. As it was, Tom Merry & Co. had to give him a helping hand to the school.

"Look here, Brooke," said Tom Merry, "you're not going unrewarded for what you did this afternoon."

"Oh, give it a rest!" laughed Dick. "You'll give me swelled head if you go on like that. Any other fellow would have done the same, so there's nothing to make a song about."

"Isn't there, by Jove? You were great — simply stunning!"

"Hear, hear!" came in a chorus from the rest of the juniors.

"And I'm going to see that you meet with your reward," Tom Merry went on. "How would you like to play against the Grammar School on Saturday?"

Brooke's eyes sparkled.

"I should jump at the chance," he said. "I've wanted to play ever so much in the past, though I know I'm not up to the form of you fellows."

"Then your chance has come. Kangaroo's in the sanny with a sprained wrist, and his place has got to be filled. I was thinking of Julian, but you're as good as Julian, any day of the week. Will you be the eleventh man?"

"Rather!"

Dick Brooke was in raptures. He was a cricketer of no mean ability, but there was such a glut of good players in

the ranks of the Shell and the Fourth that he had hitherto been given few opportunities of displaying his prowess. Now, however, he had attained his heart's desire, and was glad.

The afternoon adventure had its bright side, after all!

Tea in Tom Merry's study, served up by the experienced hands of Fatty Wynn, who came over from the New House, restored Dick Brooke to a normal condition of physical fitness. He had been weak and exhausted before, but the pleasant, wholesome fare, and the refreshing tea changed all that.

When the last bun had disappeared from the dish, and the final scone had been annexed by Fatty Wynn, conversation turned on the subject of the forthcoming cricket-match.

"Gay's bringing over some hot stuff," said Tom Merry. "The Grammarians haven't licked us for ages, but they're going to have a jolly good shot this time. Every man jack will have to play up all he knows."

"Leave the bowling to me," said Fatty Wynn, who had masticated the last scone with genuine regret that there were no more to follow. "The wickets will go down like skittles when I get my hand in."

Tom Merry nodded.

"We know you're a Trojan, Fatty, old dear," he said. "But the match won't be won on the strength of bowling alone. We shall need to be well served in batting."

He broke off, and turned to Brooke.

"You're sure you can put up a good game, Brooke?"

The scholarship boy smiled.

"I can't guarantee anything great," he said. "Cricket's an uncertain game, you know. But I'll do my best. No fellow can do more."

"Bravo!"

Tom Merry ran his eye down the list of players—all good men and true. Besides the Terrible Three and Talbot, there was Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the New House trio, D'Arcy and Jack Blake from Study No. 6, and Redfern and Brooke, Dick Julian, the Jewish junior, was down as first reserve.

"I'll pin the list up, then," said the captain of the Shell. "There's bound to be some grumbling at the selection. Grundy won't like it, for one."

"The great George Alfred will have to lump it," remarked Monty Lowther. "If it was hopscotch, or shove-ha'penny, we might bring him in as a last resource; but as far as cricket's concerned he's as helpless as a rhinoceros on roller skates!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I'll be going," said Dick Brooke, rising to his feet. "So-long, you fellows!"

"Can you manage the walk home?" asked Talbot.

"My hat, yes! I'm not a confounded invalid! That feed's put new life into me."

He walked to the door.

"Put in some practice at the nets when you can," Tom Merry called after him.

"All serene! Rely on me to play the game of my life!"

CHAPTER 8.

Up a Tree!

DICK BROOKE was in high feather as he strode across the old quadrangle. He was a fellow who had known much trouble and vicissitude in the past.

The son of a humble tradesman, he had come to St. Jim's, to find himself despised and rejected by many; but his courage had stood him in good stead, and he could now hold up his head with the best.

At the gate he encountered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had returned from accompanying Sylvia Carr to Lady Langham's.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said cheerily. Then, sweeping aside all convention, he added: "Look here, won't you be pals? You refused my hand the other day, after our little scrimmage with the gloves, but I'm not a chap to bear malice. Shake!"

D'Arcy looked grimly at the outstretched hand of his rival. "I'll be fiends with you, Bwooke, on one condish," he said.

"And that is?"

"That you give me your solemn pwomise nevali to speak to Sylvia Carr again!"

"Oh, come off it! That's most unreasonable, Gussy!"

"Those are my terms," said Arthur Augustus, with an air of finality. "You can take them or leave them!"

"Then I'll leave them. Why the dickens shouldn't I speak to Miss Carr if I want to?"

"Because you're steppin' between us and our future happiness."

"Rats! You talk like the hero of a penny novelette. Not thinking of marrying, Sylvia, are you? If so, give it another

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ten years, for goodness' sake! By that time, old Herries might possibly have managed to mug up Mendelsohn's Wedding March on his cornet!"

"This is not a mattah for fwivolyty," said the swell of St. Jim's stiffly. "I don't like bein' bad fwiends with you aftah what you did to-day, but if you intend to pestah Miss Carr with your attentions, I feah there is no othah course open to me."

Dick Brooke laughed.

"Good-night, Gussy! You'll get tired of doing the heavy villain before long. This isn't a love tragedy, you thundering idiot!"

And Brooke passed on down the road, still laughing.

He struck off through the woods, for although the afternoon was merging into evening the weather was still hot, and the big trees would ensure a shady walk.

Anyone who had been close on Brooke's heels just then would have thought him mad, for he kept muttering to himself in a most mysterious way.

It was not a habit of Brooke's to chatter to himself as he walked along, but he was doing it now.

"Lemme see," he said to himself. "King, ring, home, loam, roar, shore, glory, story, French, trench."

Having delivered himself of this wild jargon of phrases, Dick Brooke relapsed into silence, though he wore a thoughtful expression on his face. Then he drew a sheet of paper from his pocket, groped for a pencil, and proceeded to write.

He stood beneath the shade of a giant oak-tree, whose presence seemed to give him an idea.

"Yes," he murmured. "I'll hop up in this tree, and get through some work. No need for me to turn up at home just yet."

With this, the junior commenced to clamber up the tree. He was a skilful climber, and soon reached a wide, out-spreading branch, which answered his purpose well. Seated astride it, he commenced to write. Four lines were scribbled on the sheet of paper in his hand—only that, and nothing more. Then he fell into a deep reverie.

Half an hour passed. Then the sound of voices on the footpath below caused Dick Brooke to be on the alert at once.

"I tell you it'll be dead easy, Jess."

The voice was familiar to the listening junior. It belonged to Big Jake, the swarthy-skinned Romany.

Peering down through the branches, Dick Brooke could distinguish the leader of the gipsies. With him was a woman.

"We shall have to be very careful how we go to work," she said, in reply to Big Jake's observation. "But once we have the girl in our hands, all will be plain sailing. Her father—Major Carr—is fighting in France. He is rolling in money, and is bound to offer a handsome reward for his pretty pearl of a daughter.

Big Jake chuckled.

"And we sha'n't give her up, he said, "till the reward reaches a very high figure."

"No fear!" said the woman.

Dick Brooke was so astonished at what he heard that he nearly fell out of the tree. It all seemed so unreal and melodramatic—the sort of thing one read in far-fetched fiction.

Could it be possible that Big Jake and his accomplice actually intended to capture and carry off Sylvia?

It was more than possible. There they were, down below, forming their plans with unscrupulous cunning.

Hark! They were talking again.

"Lady Langham is going motor-ing on Saturday," Big Jake was saying. "The girl will then be alone in the house. That's where we come in!"

"Where shall we hide her?"

Brooke strained his ears for the man's answer, but it was uttered in so low a tone that he could not catch what was said. Then followed a sound of retreating footsteps, and the Romanies were gone.

The scholarship boy waited a full five minutes; then, his face very grim and set, he clambered down from the tree.

"I wonder," he muttered—"I wonder what I'd better do?"

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To have the gipsies arrested was his first thought. But he dismissed the idea as impracticable. Big Jake would deny ever having planned to kidnap Sylvia, and the local police would treat Brooke's statements as a mere cock-and-bull story.

No, that wouldn't do! He must try some other plan.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, at length. "I'll warn Sylvia. Then she'll be on her guard, and will be able to take precautions on Saturday. What's more, those confounded gipsies will walk into a trap when they go into Lady Langham's place. My hat! What a stroke of luck that I was up in that tree!"

The junior swung through the woods at a quick pace, and struck out in the direction of Lady Langham's.

Arrived at the house, he went to the side door and rang the bell. A miserable-looking servant, who was to be sacked next day for smashing a Japanese vase in her ladyship's bedroom, answered the ring.

"Is Miss Carr in?" asked Brooke respectfully.

"Yes, she is!" said the girl, with insolent defiance. "What does the likes o' you want wi' Lady Langham's guv'ness?"

The junior shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Tell her Dick Brooke's here!" he said, and there was a note of authority in his tone that made the servant-girl think twice about disobeying.

A minute elapsed. Then came the rustle of a skirt, and Sylvia appeared on the scene.

"Can I speak to you for a moment, Sylvia?" asked Brooke. "It's frightfully important."

"I am supposed to be looking after the children while they are at dinner."

"Blow the children!"

"Dick!"

"I—I'm sorry!" stammered Brooke. "But it's a terribly important bizney."

"Go ahead, then!" said Sylvia, with a curious glance at the junior's flushed face and glittering eyes.

"It's this," said Brooke, unable to repress his excitement. "You know those gipsies we had a brush with a short time back?"

"Yes."

"Well, two of them—there might be more—are coming here on Saturday, in Lady Langham's absence, with the intention of carrying you off!"

"What!" gasped Sylvia.

"They—they're going to try and take you away, and hold you to ransom."

Sylvia Carr was certainly much impressed by this dramatic statement, but not in the way that Dick Brooke had anticipated. Instead of flinging up her arms in horror or sinking to the hall floor in a swoon, she gave vent to a peal of laughter.

"Really," said Dick Brooke, a little reproachfully, "it's far from being a laughing matter, Sylvia!"

"Oh, dear!" gurgled Sylvia, laughing until she could laugh no more. "Dick, you funny fellow, what ever made you come here romancing like this?"

"I am not romancing. I was never more serious in my life. You are in danger, Sylvia—danger of the grimmest and gravest kind! I overheard a conversation just now between Big Jake and a woman he calls Jess, and they're quite determined to make off with you on Saturday."

But Sylvia Carr was not in the least impressed by Brooke's earnestness of tone and manner. She was amused and incredulous, and the junior's words carried no weight with her. She scouted the idea of kidnapers in the twentieth century, and thought that her informant must be suffering from a temporary mental lapse.

"I know what it is, Dick," she said at length. "You've been trying to compose, and the effort has caused you to wander a bit, and start imagining things."

Dick Brooke became really angry.

"Look at me, Sylvia!" he exclaimed. "Do I seem as if I'm mad? I'm not the sort of fellow to play an idiotic practical joke, or to give way to ridiculous fancies. I tell you I overheard the precious plot of those Romanies, and came

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Turning, Brooke saw half a dozen St. Jim's fellows, in their flannels. "Here he is!" growled Manners. "Bump him!" roared Figgins. (See Chapter 10.)

round here to warn you at once. Won't you heed my warning?"

"Of course not, you silly boy! There is nothing to be warned against. Your imagination has been playing you tricks."

"Then you are going to take no precautions?"

"None whatever!"

"Sylvia! Listen to me! I tell you——"

"Good-night!" said Sylvia, somewhat abruptly.

And the next instant Dick Brooke found himself gazing at a closed, forbidding door.

His mission had failed. Sylvia had doubted his word—which was, perhaps, only natural in the circumstances—and she refused to give credence to his story.

And if Sylvia doubted him, then so would anyone else whom he told. They would regard his statements as wild and improbable, and allow the gipsies to put their rascally scheme into effect.

There was only one thing to be done. He must tackle the situation himself, and save Sylvia Carr from the catastrophe with which she was threatened. Nothing else mattered now. Cricket, lessons, recreation must go by the board for the time being.

One thought was predominant in Dick Brooke's mind as he tramped home in the gathering dusk—one all-absorbing thought, to which all others yielded.

Sylvia must be saved! And he—Brooke—must save her!

CHAPTER 9.

The Renegade!

"WELCOME, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, resplendent in his flannels, and with a radiant smile on his aristocratic countenance, extended that cheery greeting to Gordon Gay & Co. as they entered the old gateway of St. Jim's, armed with their cricket-bags.

Very fit and sturdy and confident the Grammarians looked as they trooped in. They had many defeats to avenge, and it was agreed on all sides that Tom Merry & Co. would have all their work cut out to score a victory.

It was to be a single-innings match, and a huge crowd, comprised mainly of juniors, had foregathered on the ground.

"It's a licking for you this journey, my sons," said Gordon Gay blandly. "We're going to smite and spare not, aren't we, you fellows?"

The fellows nodded assent.

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, "you talk like a German Press Bureau! You know jolly well you haven't an earthly. Still, we won't argue. Call to this!"

And he spun a sixpence in the air.

"Heads!" said Gordon Gay.

"No such luck! It's tails. What shall we do, kids?"

"Put 'em in first," said Jack Blake sagely. "Nothing like knowing how many runs you've got to get."

"Right you are, then."

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk went first to the wickets.
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Kildare, and Rushden of the Sixth, strolled out in their white coats to umpire.

"Are we all here?" asked Tom Merry. Figgins ran his keen eye round the fieldsmen. "Two, four, six, eight, ten!" he counted. "Somebody's missing."

"Oh, hang!" "It's Brooke, too, of all people!" said Jack Blake. "This is what comes of bringing a new man into the team, Tommy. He turns tail at the first opportunity."

"Has anybody here seen Brooke?" sang Monty Lowther. Nobody had—at least, he had not been seen recently. Neither had he turned up to practice, in accordance with his promise. Several black marks went down against Dick Brooke's name that afternoon.

"We'll get on with the game," said Tom Merry, "and have a substitute later on if he doesn't turn up. Beastly nuisance, a chap letting us down like this! I shall tell him a few home truths next time I see him!"

In hardly an amiable frame of mind, the St. Jim's juniors took the field. They were annoyed and exasperated. Brooke was a plucky chap, and all that. Nobody denied it. But this was altogether too thick. Tom Merry had accorded him one of the greatest favours it was possible for one fellow to grant another, and he had, to all intents and purposes, turned and thrown it in Tom's face. Perhaps the limelight Brooke had been enjoying of late had turned his head, and made him careless and independent. Anyway, the match must be started without the scholarship boy.

Fatty Wynn took a tight grip of the ball. Gordon Gay made ready.

Whizz! The ball sped down. The Grammar School captain was quite prepared for it. There was a sharp click, and away the leather flew. Redfern raced it to the boundary, and it beat him by a short neck.

After this somewhat lively opening, Gordon Gay and Frank Monk settled down to a display of good, sound cricket. They were in fine form, and Tom Merry & Co. had all the leather-chasing they wanted.

With the score at 30, Frank Monk was cleverly caught by Talbot at cover-point, and retired to the pavilion with the happy knowledge that he had knocked up a spirited 14. If every subsequent Grammarian succeeded in getting into double figures, it would mean that St. Jim's was beaten to a frazzle.

The absence of Brooke was weighing upon the minds of the fieldsmen. They had the uncomfortable feeling that there was a loophole somewhere, and that while that loophole continued things would go wrong.

"Confound Brooke!" snapped Monty Lowther. "Where the dickens has he got to?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was not as a rule given to saying nasty things, could not help remarking:

"I expect he prefers the company of Miss Carr to playin' in a common or garden cricket-match."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If that's the case,

he'll catch it pretty hot when we see him again. It's a shabby trick to let the side down like this!"

"Man in!" said Talbot. Wootton major came in to join Gordon Gay, and he started off in great style, flogging Fatty Wynn's next ball to the boundary.

"Good man!" chortled Gordon Gay. "We've got 'em in a cleft-stick this time. Keep it up, my son, and we'll finish up handsome winners!"

Such conversation was not at all to the liking of the already jaded fieldsmen. They renewed their efforts, and Gordon Gay was smartly run out a few minutes later.

But the tide had by no means turned. Wootton minor came in at this juncture, and he and his brother put up a capital display. The score had leapt up to 70 before Tom Merry, taking a turn with the ball, dislodged Wootton major's bails.

The excellence of the Grammarians' batting continued, and the side was finally dismissed for the formidable total of 140. "Rotten!" said Tom Merry, as he accompanied his comrades to the tea-tables which were set out in the shade.

It was a captain's duty to inspire the members of his team with optimism; but Tom Merry felt anything but optimistic just then. He said things which would have made Dick Brooke's ears burn had he been present to hear them.

"That bouncer doesn't look like turning up," said Redfern, grabbing somewhat savagely at a cream-bun. "Better get a substitute, Tommy."

Tom Merry spoke across the table to Gordon Gay.

"One of our men has let us down," he said. "May we play a sub?"

"With pleasure, dear boy! You can play fifty subs if you like. The issue will be all the same."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry, a little nettled by the Grammarians' laughter, signalled to Dick Julian, who was hovering near the pavilion.

"Brooke hasn't turned up," he said, when the Jewish junior sprinted on the scene. "Will you take his place?"

"Like a shot!" answered Julian briskly.

And he went off to change into his flannels.

Rain began to fall in a thin, dreary drizzle when the game was resumed, and the prospect—so far as the home side was concerned—was anything but inviting. The crowd which watched Tom Merry and Talbot step out to the wickets was a silent and gloomy one.

And all through Dick Brooke!

Tom Merry and his partner batted doggedly and undauntedly, but runs were hard to get.

Nevertheless, 25 runs were registered when Tom Merry left, caught by mid-on.

"Play up!" he said to Jack Blake, as he passed. "There's a chance yet, in spite of everything."

Blake nodded, and helped Talbot to take the score to 50 before Gordon Gay wrecked his wicket.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming in next, put up a good fight. D'Arcy, though a skilful player, was not in the nature of things a hard hitter, but on this occasion he

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surprised the crowd and himself as well by his Jessopian smites.

"Good old Gussy!" came in a roar from the onlookers. "Strong and steady does it, old man!"

From 50 the score leapt to 60, then to 70, and at 77 Talbot mis-timed a fierce delivery of Monk's, and retired to the pavilion, with a sound 30 to his credit. He was loudly cheered.

The hundred was passed before the next wicket fell, and the spectators rejoiced with an exceeding joy. The outlook was not so terrible, after all. If only Arthur Augustus kept his end up a little longer.

But at that moment the swell of St. Jim's spooned the ball behind the wicket, and Carboy, in the slips, brought off a magnificent single-handed catch. Gussy's bolt was shot!

Redfern woke things up again, his batting being brilliant. When he retired with the score at 125, the crowd realised that it would be a case of touch-and-go, and sat, hushed, silent, and expectant.

The long-legged Figgins was at the wicket when the ninth wicket fell, and St. Jim's needed six runs for victory. The tension was almost unendurable.

"This is where Brooke ought to come in," said Tom Merry. "He's more reliable than Julian. Ye gods! If we get licked now, our next meeting with Brooke won't be a merry one!"

Dick Julian fastened his pads with fingers which fumbled in spite of himself. He had heaps of nerve as a rule, but a crisis of this kind unbalanced him a little. He realised how much was at stake; and the more he dwelt upon the situation the more flustered and uneasy he became.

Gordon Gay was bowling, and he watched Julian's approach to the wickets in much the same way as a spider watches a fly enter his domain. He meant to settle Julian's hash quickly.

"Play up, Julian!"

"Leave the hitting to Figgy!"

"Keep your end up, old chap!"

This babel of advice served to confuse rather than encourage the batsman. He took his guard, and Gordon Gay, plunging his hands into the sawdust, started to run.

It was a deadly delivery, and only by a miracle did Dick Julian manage to stop it. He just covered it with his bat, and that was all.

The second ball missed the off-stump by the merest fraction of an inch. Only one more ball now remained to complete the over.

Whizz!

Down the pitch it flew, and Julian knew he was beaten.

There was an ominous smashing sound, and down went the stumps in an inglorious heap!

Rylcombe Grammar School had defeated St. Jim's by six runs!

CHAPTER 10.

Stole Away!

MEANWHILE, what of Dick Brooke? Why had he let his side down at such a critical period, when his presence would probably have made all the difference between a victory and a defeat?

It was the peril that menaced Sylvia Carr which had kept Brooke from taking any part in the cricket-match. Ever since that sinister conversation he had overheard in the branches of the oak-tree, he had been occupied in his mind concerning Sylvia. So absorbed had he become in the matter that he had clean forgotten the Grammar School match, and so had failed to notify Tom Merry that he would be absent.

He had not gone near the nets; he had evinced no interest whatever in the grand summer game, but had spent his time mooning about, wondering how he could nip the plans of the would-be kidnappers in the bud.

The gipsies had moved from their temporary resting-place in the woods. Their present whereabouts was a mystery to Dick Brooke. All he knew was that two of them—Big Jake and the woman called Jess—were planning to carry off Sylvia Carr on Saturday afternoon.

When morning lessons were over, Brooke, as was his custom, went home to dinner. Then, arming himself with a stout stick, he strode off in the direction of Lady Langham's.

He had no intention of letting Sylvia know he was on the premises. That young lady would only laugh at him and tell him, as she had told him before, that his imagination was running riot. So Brooke plunged into the shrubbery which skirted the lawn, and from this spot he had a clear view of the drive and the front of the house.

Lying low among the twigs and fallen leaves, he watched and listened intently.

He had been in hiding fully half an hour when Lady Langham's car came out.

It was as the gipsies had said. Her ladyship was going for a drive, and Sylvia would be alone in the house.

Dick Brooke took a tighter grip on his stick.

"They'll be here soon," he muttered to himself. "Then Sylvia will see that I wasn't rotting! I shall have to tackle 'em single-handed, but it's the only way. If I'd asked some of the fellows to come and help me, they'd have shrieked at me like Sylvia did, and said I was wanting on top."

But, though he lay in his ambush for over two hours, there was no sign of the kidnappers. Occasionally he could see Sylvia flitting to and fro in one of the front rooms. She was safe up to the present, at all events.

The junior waited another hour, and then, feeling cramped in all his limbs, he rose to his feet and went out into the roadway to stretch his legs, keeping an eye on the house all the time.

Then, while he was pacing backwards and forwards, wondering if the gipsies had abandoned their project, there was a sudden shout behind him.

Turning, he saw half a dozen St. Jim's fellows in their flannels.

"Here he is!" growled Manners. "Here's the rotten renegade!"

"Bump him!" roared Figgins. "This is the chap we've got to thank for our licking this afternoon!"

"Here, I say! Hands off!" panted Brooke.

But the cricketers were furious. Brooke's heroism of a few days before was forgotten now. They saw him only in the light of a traitor and a rank outsider.

"Yank him up to the school, kids!" ordered Tom Merry, whose usually sunny face was now dark with anger. "So you choose to let the team down for the sake of an afternoon's flirting, you cad?"

"I've not been flirting!" panted Brooke. "Leggo, you silly asses!"

But the juniors had him in the grip of a vice, and all his struggles proved unavailing.

"You might at least have had the decency to tell me you weren't going to turn up," Tom Merry went on. "As it is, the Grammarians have licked us, and they'll crow about it for whole terms!"

"Let me go!" exclaimed Brooke savagely. "I've had something ten times more important than cricket to think about!"

"If you call making eyes at a girl ten times more important than cricket, then you're a bigger rotter than ever!"

"Won't you let me explain?" fumed the captive junior.

"We don't care tuppence for your explanations!" said Jack Blake crossly. "You've let us down, and now you're jolly well going to suffer for it!"

"Hear, hear!"

Brooke broke away after a desperate struggle, but his assailants closed in upon him in record time, and although he fought tenaciously, he was speedily overpowered. Then, despite his repeated protests, he was hustled off in the direction of St. Jim's.

Brooke's mind was in an agony. Supposing, during his enforced absence from Lady Langham's, Big Jake and his accomplice carried out their unscrupulous designs? Such a prospect would scarcely bear thinking of.

But Tom Merry was not in the humour for explanations of any sort just then. Brooke had failed them, and Brooke must pay the penalty. They would regard his story of the kidnappers, even if he were given a chance to tell it, as a fable.

At length the gates of St. Jim's came in sight. The prisoner was hustled through into the quad, and from thence to the junior common-room, where a furious crowd of fellows was assembled.

Brooke's appearance was greeted with hooting and groaning. His popularity had fallen from him like a cloak. The junior section of St. Jim's set much store by its cricket, and a fellow who had played the part of deserter was certain of severe punishment.

Tom Merry mounted a form, and, after having reduced the turbulent mob to a state approaching order, he said:

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows,—You all know why we lost the match this afternoon. It was because Brooke, after I had gone out of my way to give him a place in the team, left us in the lurch and went off to spend the afternoon in flirting."

"Lies!" flashed Brooke angrily.

"Clump him on the napper every time he makes a remark of that sort, Monty!" said Tom Merry.

"All serene!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I'll give him one now, by way of a warning."

And he did.

"Now, gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "you can all see for yourselves what a shabby trick this rotter has played us. What shall we do with him?"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!" A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Flay him alive!"

"Boil him in oil!"

"Make him run the gauntlet!"

The last suggestion being the only practicable one, the captain of the Shell assented to it.

"Form up in two rows," he said, "and get some weapons. We'll teach our friend Brooke that it doesn't pay to shirk his obligations!"

Readily the fellows responded to Tom Merry's commands. Their blood was up, and they felt as mad with Brooke as if he were a cad of the Levison type; maddened, in fact, because he was a fellow of whom they had expected better things.

"Now, run!" said Tom Merry, when the avengers were in position, wielding rulers, pointers, and knotted dusters in their hands.

Brooke had no recourse but to obey. He was given a violent push, and the next moment the lashing blows rained in upon him, causing him to reel dizzily long before he reached the end of the lines.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Biff, thud! Biff, thud!

It was indeed a severe punishment. Nobody seemed in the least inclined to err on the side of mercy. A flogging at the hands of the Head would have been far less painful than facing that hailstorm of well-directed blows.

"Make him run back!" roared somebody.

"Yes, rather!"

"You—you cads!" gasped Brooke. He was staggering giddily, with his hand pressed to his forehead.

"I think he's had enough," said Tom Merry.

But the others were not to be denied. Figgins started the victim off, and he was compelled to run through the lines again, the blows still descending upon him with relentless vigour.

"There!" said Tom Merry, when the ordeal was over. "I won't say don't let us down again, because you won't be given the chance. I sha'n't ask you to play in the eleven again."

Dick Brooke said nothing for some moments. He was badly shaken, and felt sick and faint with the terrific castigation he had received.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had the good grace to assist him to the door. There he paused, and, turning to his tormentors, said, in a quiet voice:

"Some day you'll be sorry for this."

"Rats!"

"Get out!"

White-faced, but with his head held erect, Dick Brooke crossed the quadrangle as quickly as possible, and made his way towards Rycombe. He was aching all over, and his legs seemed like leaden weights; but in his heart still remained that one all-powerful resolve.

He must save Sylvia!

When, half an hour later, he reached Lady Langham's house, he did not go into the shrubbery as before, but walked boldly up to the front door, and rang the bell.

There was no response.

A cold fear gripping at his heart, Brooke rang again.

The peal died away inside the house, and all was silent.

The scholarship boy waited a few moments, then he tried the door. It was unlocked.

Entering the house, he looked about him.

There were unmistakable signs of a recent scuffle in the hall, for the umbrella-stand was over on its side, and a handkerchief, bearing the initials "S. C.," lay on the floor.

"Sylvia!" called Brooke, in great agitation.

Silence—silence as of the grave.

For one more moment Brooke lingered in the hall, straining his ears to listen.

His worst fears were confirmed.

"They've taken her!" he exclaimed wildly. "I knew it would happen! I warned her, and she laughed at me. Oh, heavens! What in the world am I to do now?"

CHAPTER 11.

Out Into the Night!

PREP in the Terrible Three's study that evening was not a very cheerful function. Even Monty Lowther, who was usually bubbling over with chaff and good-humour, wore a face as long as a fiddle.

The juniors had been licked by their old and keen rivals of Rycombe Grammar School, and the licking rankled. Tom Merry & Co. could take a defeat as well as anybody at most times; but on this occasion, knowing that they had lost simply because the eleventh man failed to turn up, they felt the position acutely.

Tom Merry's face was troubled as he laid down his pen

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and looked up at his chums. Something besides the licking troubled Tom.

"I can't help thinking," he said, "that we went a bit too far with Brooke. After all, he's been a decent enough fellow up to to-day. I can't think what made him show up so caddishly."

"He's spooning after Sylvia, you bet," said Monty Lowther. "When a fellow's in love, he's blind to everything else. Cuts his brekker, studies the stars at night, and makes a drivelling idiot of himself generally. Not that I've ever been in love," added Lowther hastily.

"The fellow got his deserts, so it's no good jawing about it any more," said Manners. "What's done can't be undone."

"Blessed if I can understand Brooke!" said Tom Merry, passing his fingers perplexedly through his brown hair. "He's shown up well all through the piece, and now he goes and spoils himself."

"Talk of angels!" said Monty Lowther suddenly.

The door opened, and the subject of the Terrible Three's conversation tottered, rather than walked, into the study. His face was running with perspiration, and his hands were trembling.

"Brooke!" exclaimed Tom Merry, starting to his feet.

"What's the matter?"

"Matter enough!" replied Brooke, in a hard, strained voice. "If only you fellows had left me to myself this afternoon I might have prevented it."

"Prevented what?" asked Manners.

"The kidnapping of Miss Carr!"

The Terrible Three exchanged significant glances.

"Potty!" said Monty Lowther, tapping his forehead.

"Or else in love," said Manners.

"Which amounts to the same thing," added Tom Merry.

Dick Brooke caught the captain of the Shell by the shoulder, and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Won't you believe me?" he said fiercely. "I'm as sane as you are. Have you ever known me to go round inventing idiotic yarns? My hat! I wish this was only a yarn, instead of being true!"

The Terrible Three no longer remained Doubting Thomases. They saw now that Dick Brooke was in sober earnest.

"Miss Carr kidnapped!" said Manners. "But how—when—where?"

Dick Brooke explained all that he had seen and heard since the encounter with the gipsies, and Tom Merry & Co. listened with breathless interest.

"I cut the cricket this afternoon simply because I couldn't help it," said Brooke. "How on earth could I think of cricket, with this wretched business on my mind? It's been worrying me for days."

And the scholarship boy, his face haggard, sank heavily into a chair. The Terrible Three regarded him with looks of concern.

"Poor chap!" said Tom Merry. "We wouldn't have lammed you this afternoon if only we'd known. Why didn't you tell us what you were up to at Lady Langham's?"

"Because you wouldn't have believed me!" said Brooke bitterly. "And now Sylvia's gone. It's rotten!"

He buried his face in his hands, and an awkward silence ensued.

"But it all seems so strange and impossible!" said Tom Merry, at length. "What was the object of those brutes in making off with Sylvia?"

"Because, as I told you just now, her father's rich, and they think they'll get a ransom," said Dick Brooke. "That's their little game. But are we going to leave that girl at the mercy of those rotters, who will ill-treat her, no doubt, and perhaps starve her?"

"Never!" said Tom Merry.

"We'll rout out Miss Sylvia in next to no time," said Manners.

"But how do you know where the gipsies are?" asked Brooke helplessly. "They've probably left this district now, and might be in the next county, for all we know."

"Great Scott!"

The door opened, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking decidedly glummer than usual, strolled into the study.

"Hallo, deah boys!" he exclaimed. Then he gave a start.

"So that boundah Bwooke's heah?"

"Brooke's not such a bounder as we've made him out to be," said Tom Merry. "He's not a bounder at all, for that matter."

And he proceeded to explain the situation to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, when Tom Merry had finished. "What beastly wotten news!"

He sat down at the table. The knowledge that Sylvia Carr had fallen into the hands of kidnapers seemed fairly to knock

him out. He even forgot his enmity towards Brooke in the face of this grave crisis.

"Buck up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry kindly. "We all feel it, you know. What asses we were, not to let Brooke explain when we nailed him this afternoon! But it's no use whining about that now. What we've got to do is to find Miss Carr, if we have to tramp from John o' Groats to Land's End to do it."

"Bravo!" said Monty Lowther. "But half a jiffy! I don't quite see how we're going to wangle things. The Head wouldn't let us form a search-party. He might if Miss Carr was somebody closely connected with the school; but she's practically a stranger. I'm afraid it's N. G."

Tom Merry looked grim.

"It means," he said, "that we shall have to take the law into our own hands."

"You mean break bounds after lights out?" asked Dick Brooke eagerly.

"Yes. There'll be no difficulty for you, as you live at home. Manners and Monty and Gussy and myself will meet you outside the school wall at ten. Is that all right?"

"Yes."

"And we'll bring Blake and Talbot along. They're useful sort of fellows to have in an emergency."

Brooke nodded.

"You'll turn out, no matter what the weather's like?" he said. "It won't do to let the grass grow under our feet. A night wasted might smash all our chances."

"That's all right," said the captain of the Shell. "Rely on us. We all feel jolly anxious about this business, I can assure you. Miss Carr's going to be found, or we'll know the reason why!"

"To-night at ten, then," said Dick Brooke.

He went home, but could settle down to nothing that evening. Thunderclouds rolled ominously up the sky, heralding the approach of a storm.

But, though the elements raged with fiercest violence, Dick Brooke was determined that the night should not pass by without a big effort being made to discover the whereabouts of the missing girl.

He made inquiries in the village concerning the gipsies, but could learn nothing. Big Jake and the members of his gang had not been seen in the neighbourhood that day.

At half-past nine, when the scholarship boy buttoned up his mackintosh and set out for St. Jim's, the storm burst forth in all its fury. Thunder rolled, and vivid flashes of lightning lit up the surrounding countryside.

Brooke recked little of thunderstorms; but even he was awed and impressed by the present one, which seemed to be fiercer, wilder, and more awful than any he had yet known.

"Will those fellows fail me?" he wondered.

But he dismissed the idea almost at once. Tom Merry could always be relied upon to keep his word. He had said that he and his chums would be outside the school wall at ten, no matter what the conditions.

"Is that you, Brooke?"

A voice hailed Dick from the shadow of the wall as he came up.

"Yes. Who's that?"

"Tom Merry! We're all here! I say, what a night!"

Peering through the gloom, Brooke discerned half a dozen figures, clad in raincoats. They were the Terrible Three, with Blake and D'Arcy and Talbot.

"It seems a pretty thankless job," said Tom Merry. "But we'll see it through, anyway. Where shall we begin?"

"There's been no trace of the gipsies in Rylcombe," said Brooke, "so p'raps we'd better strike out in the opposite direction."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors, casting anxious eyes at the heavens, in spite of themselves, stepped out into the storm.

CHAPTER 12.

In Search of Sylvia.

"I VOTE we chuck it!"

Monty Lowther made that remark in a melancholy tone, shaking himself like a drenched terrier as he did so.

The searchers had covered mile after mile, and had not picked up a solitary clue likely to help them in tracing the gipsies.

The thunder and lightning had abated somewhat, and in their place came a tropical deluge of rain, which soaked the little search-party to the skin.

"It's a forlorn hope," said Tom Merry. "I think even Brooke will admit that."

But Brooke was far from doing anything of the sort. The light of battle had not yet faded from his eye, and the storm could not quiet his iron determination.

He laughed bitterly.

"I thought you fellows would soon get fed-up!" he said. "And I s'pose I can hardly blame you, in the circumstances."

"My dear chap," said Talbot, "it's sheer lunacy to continue the search at this time of night, and without a single clue to guide us. It's past twelve o'clock, and we might be dozens of miles away from the gipsies. I'm not the fellow to give up while there's a glimmer of hope left, but in this case there isn't."

"I agree with you, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "we can gain nothin' by standin' about in this fearful wain. Let's get back to St. Jim's. We shall have to weep Sylvia's disappearance to the Head in the mornin', an' see if he'll let us make a search in the daylight. It's like huntin' for a needle in a haystack now."

Dick Brooke faced round upon the speaker.

"If you were so keen on Miss Carr as you made yourself out to be," he said, "you wouldn't leave a single stone unturned until you'd found her."

"Oh, rats!" said Jack Blake crossly. "You're unreasonable, Brooke! We've done our best, and everybody agrees that it's useless to go further."

"Everybody except me," said Brooke doggedly. "Even if it means staying out all night, I'm going to see the thing through. Nobody's going to be given an opportunity of saying I'm chicken-hearted."

"Does that imply that we are?" demanded Tom Merry warmly.

Brooke looked remorseful.

"I hang it all, I'm sorry!" he said. "I'm upset over this wretched bizney. It's got right on my nerves. Don't take any notice of me."

"Poor kid!" said Tom Merry, with genuine concern. "You'd better cut off home and get to bed."

"Home! I sha'n't know the meaning of the word until Sylvia Carr's found. Those gipsies are fiends incarnate! They may starve her nearly to death."

"Yes, it's rotten—it's beastly; but we can do nothing until we've got the daylight to guide us. And I don't feel disposed to hang about here waiting for dawn."

"Neither do I," said Manners, with a shiver. "Let's get a move on."

Tom Merry & Co. turned their faces homewards. They left Dick Brooke standing in the roadway.

"Aren't you coming along?" Jack Blake called back.

"No. Good-night, you fellows!"

"Don't be a mad fool, Brooke!" shouted Tom Merry. "You'll get your death of cold if you stay out in this down-pour! Come on!"

"No," said Brooke again. "I'm going after Sylvia!"

And before anyone could detain him he moved away, and was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

The scholarship boy tried to collect his wits—to think clearly and coherently.

Where were the gipsies likely to be encamped for the night? They would be in shelter, certainly, and there were few sheltered places in the direction Brooke was now taking.

Wait a moment, though! What about the old stone quarry a couple of miles further on? Was it not possible that Big Jake and his companions had sought refuge from the storm there?

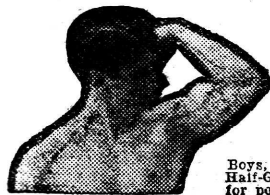
It was a chance, of course, and a hundred-to-one chance at that. But Brooke had said that he would leave no stone unturned in his efforts to trace Sylvia, and he was a fellow of his word.

Bracing himself together, he set his teeth and tramped on, his face buffeted by the lashing rain.

Was the night going to be wasted? Was the labour to be in vain? he asked himself. No! A thousand times, no!

Brooke had proceeded barely a hundred yards along the rain-sodden road, when an object lying near the ditch caught his eye. Mechanically he crossed over and picked it up.

It was a scarf—a red knitted scarf—and it carried no meaning to him for the moment.



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He was about to throw it down again, when a sudden thought occurred to him, and a cry of joy escaped his lips.

That scarf was the property of a gipsy woman! Without doubt, then, the Romanies had passed that way.

The discovery gave Brooke fresh heart. Should he go back, he wondered, and tell Tom Merry & Co. what he had found?

Perhaps they would not be much impressed; and, anyway, it would be a loss of time. No; he would pursue his quest unaided.

With his heart lighter than it had been for hours, Brooke trudged on.

He was tired, and soaked to the skin, but his resolution to find Sylvia was rocklike. How he was going to rescue her single-handed from her captors he had not taken into account. He would do it somehow, though, whatever might chance.

Was he never going to reach the old stone quarry? Those two miles seemed endless.

Brooke was fast becoming weak and exhausted, for it was a long time since he had tasted food. Soon every step he took became a torture.

At last, after what seemed an eternity, he came to the track which led over the fields to the quarry.

"Good!" he muttered to himself. "I hope I shall have some luck now!"

When he reached the quarry he found everything dark and still. For a moment it seemed that the place was deserted, but closer investigation revealed otherwise.

Seated close to the entrance, just out of shelter of the rain, were a man and a woman.

Brooke was on all-fours now, and thinking furiously. He had no doubt as to the identity of the couple. They were Big Jake and Jess.

But what of the rest of the gipsies? Had they decamped, or were they also in or around the quarry?

In the latter event, the rescue of Sylvia—presuming the girl was there—would be a sheer impossibility.

For over half an hour the watching junior remained motionless.

Occasionally he caught snatches of the gipsies' conversation. They were very elated, evidently, at the ease with which they had made their capture.

Brooke had taken the precaution of bringing a cudgel, and now a desperate plan occurred to him. He would approach the entrance to the quarry, and take Big Jake by surprise.

How he was to deal with the woman he didn't know. Britons did not war with women, even with such vixens as Jess.

But there was no need for Brooke to pursue the problem, for at that moment the gipsies rose and moved off in an opposite direction, leaving the entrance clear.

"Now for it!" muttered Brooke grimly.

Still on all-fours, he worked his way towards the heart of the quarry.

The voices of the man and woman were no longer audible, and the coast was clear.

Brooke's heart was thumping wildly as he plunged into the pitchy-black cavity.

Was his mission destined to succeed? Would he find Sylvia unguarded? These and a thousand other thoughts flashed through his brain as he crept swiftly and silently along.

Presently the glimmer of a lantern was discernible a few yards ahead, and on the floor of the interior of the cavern was a rough mattress.

When he drew nearer Brooke saw, to his intense joy and relief, that on the mattress lay a slumbering figure.

It was Sylvia!

"At last!" muttered Brooke. "Heaven be praised! I've found her!"

But this was no time for thanksgiving. Sylvia must be got away with all speed before Big Jake and the woman returned.

Brooke promptly roused the slumbering girl.

Sylvia Carr opened her eyes, blinked about her in a frightened sort of way, and then, catching sight of Dick Brooke's face bending over her, she murmured:

"This—this must be a dream!"

"It is no dream, Sylvia," the junior hastened to assure her. "I've had the great good fortune to find you, and now we must get away from this place without delay. If we are spotted—"

Sylvia sat bolt upright. A look of inexpressible gratitude shone in her lustrous eyes.

"Dick, you have dared all this for me? You know what a terrible risk you are running?"

Brooke did not reply. The strain and tension of the last few hours were beginning to tell upon his overwrought frame.

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He pressed his hand to his forehead, and the pallor of his face was almost deathly.

"Why, Dick, my poor boy, you are ill!"

Brooke braced himself up with an effort.

"Come, Sylvia!" he said.

He took her hand, and together they passed out of the gloomy place—out into the storm, which was now at its zenith.

There was no sign of the gipsies. Big Jake and Jess were likely to have the surprise of their lives when they returned and found that their captive, by means of whom they had hoped to amass a small fortune, had vanished.

Rescuer and rescued made their way on to the main road without mishap. They were out of the danger-zone now, and both breathed freely.

But a terrible walk confronted them. The old quarry was many miles from Rylcombe, and Dick Brooke was already done up.

"Dick," said Sylvia, as they paused for a moment in the roadway, "you warned me of those gipsy brutes, and I laughed at you. I thought you were romancing, and was cruelly sarcastic at your expense. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Of course! It was only natural, Sylvia, that you should scout the idea of being kidnapped. That sort of thing's not much done these days. Have those scoundrels ill-treated you?"

"N-not exactly. I've had coarse food, and they have been surly to me. The man would have struck me on one occasion, but the woman intervened."

"We'll walk on," said Brooke. "P'r'aps this confounded storm will tire itself out soon. Let's hope so!"

They tramped on side by side. Presently a familiar, throbbing sound was heard behind them.

"A car!"

Brooke's face lit up with exuberation. He drew Sylvia to the side of the road, and when the vehicle, travelling slowly, came abreast of them, shouted with the full force of his lungs:

"Help! Help!"

The car came to a standstill, and a deep voice exclaimed:

"Who in thunder's that?"

"Lady Langham's governess," Brooke shouted back, "and a St. Jim's fellow! Is that Dr. Hammond, of Wayland?"

"It is."

"Then p'r'aps, sir, you'd be good enough to give us a lift as far as Rylcombe? I'll explain as we go along!"

The doctor was not a man who fussed in an emergency.

"Hop in!" he said.

Gladly enough, Dick and Sylvia obeyed.

Dr. Hammond listened to Dick's recital in silence, though he shot many sidelong glances of approval at the speaker.

"Leave the matter to me," he said, when Brooke had concluded. "I'll send an inspector and a couple of constables along to the quarry in the morning. There'll be short shrift for those infamous scoundrels. As for you, my boy, you're the pluckiest youngster it's ever been my pleasure to meet! You must be feeling pretty groggy after your long exposure. Better come into the surgery with me, and I'll set you to rights."

"Thank you, doctor! You're a brick!"

In less than half an hour the car drew up at Lady Langham's. Sylvia Carr gave Dick Brooke's hand a tight squeeze.

"I owe you so great a debt, Dick," she said, "that I can't put my gratitude into words. You're one of the very best—a real hero, so there!"

"Draw it mild, Sylvia!" said Brooke, with a smile. "I shall begin to think I've captured a German trench in a minute! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Dick!"

Sylvia stepped out, and the car leapt forward once more.

The great adventure was over. The cloud which hung over the devoted head of Dick Brooke would shortly be lifted, and St. Jim's would know him for what he was—not a scholarship cad, not a rank outsider, but a true hero—one who had never turned his back, but marched breast forward.

CHAPTER 13.

Not Love, but Art!

IT was a nine days' wonder at St. Jim's. Dick Brooke's gallant rescue of Sylvia was common knowledge next day, for Dr. Hammond made a point of coming to the school and acquainting the Head with full details of the exciting affair.

Dick Brooke, as became a modest hero, kept out of the way, as much as possible, but he could not dodge the

insistent crowd that surged around him after morning lessons.

The fellows could not make enough of him. Everybody was attempting to shake his hand at once, and the corridors echoed and re-echoed with the cheers raised in his honour.

Tom Merry cornered Brooke alone when the enthusiastic demonstration was over.

"I told you the other day, Brooke," he said, "that you wouldn't be given a chance of playing in the eleven again. I take those words back. There aren't many more matches this season, but I'm hanged if you sha'n't have a show in every one!"

"I—I say, that's awfully ripping of you, Tom Merry!"

"Ripping be blowed! We've got a good deal to make up to you, my son, and we're going to do it!"

They shook hands, and Dick Brooke went home to dinner feeling, like the warrior portrayed on the war poster, very happy and satisfied.

Shortly before tea that afternoon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cycled in at the school gates, looking considerably excited. His monocle was streaming in the wind, and his lips were articulating something long before he came up to the crowd of juniors in the quadrangle.

"What the merry dickens—" began Jack Blake.

"I say, deah boys," panted Arthur Augustus breathlessly, "I've just made a most remarkable discovevwy!"

"Trot it out!" said Talbot.

"As you know, I've been to the music-shop in Wayland to buy some patwiotic songs, and among the west I managed to get a new one—out to-day!"

"Don't see anything very wonderful or dramatic in that," remarked Digby. "It only means untold agony for us, if you're going to try and sing it! We can't stick your singing at any price, Gussy—even tenor!"

"I'll bet an even tenner Gussy won't sing it in our study!" said Monty Lowther, unable to resist the pun.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus drew a sheet of music from his pocket, and handed it to his comrades with an air of profound impressiveness.

"Now you'll see whethah it's anythin' excitin' or not," he said.

For a moment there was silence. Then the assembled juniors uttered simultaneous exclamations of astonishment.

"The Khaki King," read Tom Merry. "A new song of the Empire."

Then he paused, scarcely able to believe the evidence of his eyes, for beneath the title appeared, in prominent type:

"WORDS BY RICHARD BROOKE. MUSIC BY SYLVIA CARR."

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped the captain of the Shell. "So this is what they've been up to between 'em? Song-writing, by jiminy!"

"And a rattling good song it is, too," said Herries. "I can read the music, you see, as well as the words."

And he hummed the last verse:

"Wrongs are righted,
Peace is sighted;
Everywhere the joy-bells clash and ring!
Be it written
How, for Britain,
Foes were smitten,

Brought to heel, and vanquished by our merry Khaki King!"

"No wonder Brooke was always round at Lady Langham's," said Manners. "He and Sylvia had their heads together over this song, and all the time we thought they were making love!"

"Gussy thought so, anyway!" laughed Tom Merry.

"I know I did," said the swell of St. Jim's remorsefully. "I jumped to conclusions, don't you know, an' did Bwooke a gwiewous w'ong! I wondah if he'll evah speak to me again aftah this?"

"Go and tell him you're awfully, fearfully sorry," advised Monty Lowther. "Then he'll take you to his bosom, and the curtain will go down on the last act to thunderous applause!"

"Don't wot!" said Gussy. "Does anybody know where Bwooke is?"

"Practising at the nets," said somebody.

Arthur Augustus flew round to the cricket-field like a flash.

Dick Brooke was batting. The clouds had been chased from his brow, and his countenance was sunny and serene. He looked up with a radiant smile at D'Arcy's approach.

"Bwooke, old man," said the swell of St. Jim's, "I know it all now! I know why you were with Sylvia so much. It was this!"

He held up the song.

Brooke smiled.

"You thought we were doing the Romeo and Juliet bizney—what?" he said.

"I was a jealous wotah!"

"Rats! Don't reproach yourself, Gussy! Everything's worked out like a charm, as it happens, and there's no reason why we shouldn't be good chums, you and I. Put it there!"

Arthur Augustus, with a curious sensation in his throat, grasped the hand extended to him, and held it tight.

He could not trust himself to say at that moment how highly he cherished the friendship of the fellow who, though beset by countless rebuffs and discouragements, had proved himself every inch a hero!

THE END.

(Do not miss next Wednesday's Grand, Long Complete Yarn of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled "THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!" by Martin Clifford.)

BRIEF REPLIES & NOTICES

To Readers of THE "GEM" LIBRARY.

Leagues and Correspondence.

Edward Venning, Stanhope Villa, 94, Loughborough Road, Brixton, S.W., wants to join a cricket club (average age 17—18) anywhere in London.

G. Mitchell, 3, Neely Street, Belfast, wants more members for his "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be especially glad to see Belfast readers joining.

The "Magnet" and "Gem" Social Club, 163, Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield, would welcome new members. Magazine and Correspondence Exchange run. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

C. H. Noyce, 18, Corunna Road, New Road, Battersea, S.W., is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to boys and girls all over the United Kingdom. He would be particularly glad to welcome Battersea readers.

L. C. Paganelli, 3, St. Martin's Place, Camden Town, N.W., is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" Philatelic Club. Will anyone interested please send stamped and addressed envelope for particulars?

David Smith, 684, Govan Road, Govan, Glasgow, would welcome more members to his "Gem" and "Magnet" Social League. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

C. S. Strachan, 4, Baltic Street, Montrose, is forming a Correspondence Club, open to readers in any part of the British Empire. Soldiers and sailors specially invited to join. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Will girls wishing to become members of D. M. Collins' Correspondence Club write to the M.E. and C.C. Girls' Representative Office, 94, Kendall Road, Colchester?

Cyril Lowe, 344, City Road, Park, Sheffield, is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" Social League, open to readers between twelve and eighteen anywhere in the United Kingdom. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

L. Simpson, 27, Norton Lees Road, Sheffield, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League. Will anyone interested please send stamped and addressed envelope?

E. W. Smallwood, 317, Rotherhithe New Road, S.E., would be glad to correspond with any lonely boy-readers of 15-16.

Miss Freda Leal, 93, Willow Bank Road, Devonshire Park, Prenton, Birkenhead, would like to correspond with girl-readers of 14-17.

Will Theo. Hook again communicate with S. W., Wigan, and give address?

John West and S. Symonds, 21, Glycena Road, Lavender Hill, Battersea, S.W., are forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for readers not over 12. Stamped and addressed envelope to address given, please.

Clifford Dixon, 25, Victoria Street, St. Annes-on-the-Sea, Lancs., wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to anyone in the British Empire. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please.

E. W. Titcomb, 15, Dover Street, New Swindon, is starting a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and will be pleased to send particulars to any reader who will send a stamped and addressed envelope.

Norman Harle, 25, Wolseley Street, Ferryhill Station, co. Durham, is forming a local league for sending papers to the Front, and will be glad to hear from anyone interested.

G. Corse, 4, The Bund, Shanghai, would like to correspond with readers in the U.K.

(Readers will find a further List of Notices on cover page ii.)

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!" A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Opening Chapters of a Great New Story!



The Previous Instalments Told How

Old TOM HILDER, a cattle farmer of Katfarit, Australia, is faced with ruin for the want of £1,000. He goes to a friend in Sydney, named HENRY NORMAN, for assistance, leaving his son Bob at home.

The latter, receiving no news of his father, and hearing that a scoundrel, BOARDMAN, who has plotted to ruin him has gone to Sydney, sets off in search of him, and finds that he has obtained the money from Henry Norman some days previously. He succeeds in tracing his father, who hands him the notes for £1,000, and immediately leaves him. He had previously been robbed of the money, and in recovering it had become mixed up, in the eyes of the police, with a gang of scoundrels.

Bob sets off at once to see SUMMERS, the bank manager, and hands over the notes to him; but Bob gathers from his attitude, that he is in league with Boardman.

Later, he is pursued and captured by the police, who charge him with passing bad notes at the bank.

He is liberated from his prison cell by CAPTAIN DASHWOOD, a notorious outlaw. He sets off in the direction of the mountains for safety, and succeeds in obtaining a job on a railway track several miles from his home. Bob has not been there long when the police ride up, and a bully, GELL, with whom he has just been fighting, points him out to them.

(Now read on.)

Bob's New Friend.

As Bob realised that the bully, Gell, was about to denounce him to the troopers, he sank back on the ground. Now, all was lost. He had escaped from the lock-up only to be flung back into it. Gell, furious that he had failed to thrash the lad, and knowing that all the bushmen held him in contempt, continued laughing, overjoyed that this unexpected revenge had come his way. He coughed and spluttered, his hand to his mouth, and his gimlet eyes gleaming.

"Hi, there!" one of the troopers protested at last. "You've been taken mortal funny, suddenly. Cut your cackling, and tell us what you mean. You said we hadn't far to go to nab Hilder. Then where is he?"

"Where is he?" Gell croaked. "Oh, gemini, where is he? Are you so blind that you don't see him?"

"Not so blind as you, anyhow, with your peepers disappearing altogether after the way the lad's handled you," the trooper replied sharply. "If it's a game you're having, it's the toe of my boot you'll feel next! Where's Hilder?"

Gell dropped his hand and scowled.

"Tain't my business to help you!" he snarled.

"It ain't your business to fool me!" the trooper retorted significantly. "Perhaps it's a lesson in manners you're asking for?"

He moved towards Gell with an easy stride, and the bush-

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men watched in merriment. The bully took another tone, in order to hide a sudden pang of terror in his craven heart.

"There he is!" he said, and pointed to Bob.

The trooper glared.

"Chuck it!" he said sternly. "Where's Hilder?"

"I tell you, that's him!" Gell snarled.

"And I tell you, you're a liar! And for two pins I'd lay my whip about you!" the trooper thundered. "So you have been trying to fool me? All right! I'll look up your record, my son. If it's as criminal as your face, it won't be long until I'm after you!"

"But it is Hilder! He can't deny it!" Gell raved. "I recognised him as soon as I saw him, though I couldn't put a name on him at once. If you search his pockets—"

"That's enough!" the trooper cut in. "I'm not having any more. The man we're after is nearer sixty than fifty years of age; he has a grey beard, and he's dressed in city togs. And just because that lad gave you a hiding, you want to get him into trouble. Your mates will know how to deal with you, I reckon; I needn't waste time. Come, boys, we'll get off. Old Hilder can't have come this road; he must have gone by the Tableland Pass."

Bob could hardly trust his hearing as he listened. The troopers were searching for his father. He heard them galloping away, and still he lay, without moving, his mind in a whirl. He had escaped, himself, at the moment he thought his capture was certain. But his father! What could have happened in his case? Only a few days before, he had left him in Sydney. Had he been so hard pressed that to save himself he had made a dash for the bush?

A kindly voice brought his mind back to his immediate surroundings.

"Hallo, lad! Aren't you fit to rise yet? I'll give you a hand."

It was the big bushman, Josh, who spoke, and he bent down. Bob struggled to his feet. He was feeling very shaken, and a haze was before his eyes. Dimly he looked around, and through a mist he saw the other workmen grouped together, and Gell, some distance apart, scowling and uneasy.

"That's right! Now come along; you'll be quite fit soon," Josh said, as he linked his arm in Bob's and led him towards the group. "You put up a great fight, and we're all proud of you."

"Had enough?" Gell rasped out, glaring at the lad.

Josh turned on him.

"Hi! You scoot out of this!" he thundered. "You're not wanted any more in this camp. Eh, boys, what do you say?"

"Right, Josh!" another bushman agreed, and all showed their assent by a hearty chorus of cheers. "A cove as will try to get another into trouble out of spite ain't a white man. Clear off, Gell, whilst you have the chance. If you're seen hanging round here in an hour's time, you'll get the hiding of your life."

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D.

The bully stood his ground; he was trembling with fury.

"I say again that the cub's name is Hilder. He can't deny it!" he snarled.

"And what if it is!" Josh retorted. "It's a common enough name in Australia, ain't it? And, anyhow, the police are not looking for him; that's a cert. We've had enough of this. It's time to turn in. Don't let me see your face again, Gell, that's all. You know what you'll be up against if you don't take a straight hint."

With his arm still in Bob's, he walked on.

"There's plenty of room for you in my tent," he said. "And you needn't worry about Gell any more. He'll pack his traps and slink away whilst it's dark."

Josh chuckled as he spoke, and Bob, looking at him, saw that his eyes were twinkling with veiled amusement. The lad's mind was wracked with anguish, and something in the bushman's face made him doubly apprehensive. No sooner were they in the tent than Josh made his heart jump by his next remark.

"You're safe now," he said. "But you had a narrow shave."

"What do you know?" Bob gasped.

"Nothing, in a manner of speaking, and a good deal in another way," Josh replied, as he lit his pipe. "Your name, of course, is Hilder; anyone could see that Gell wasn't lying when he said that. And the old man the police are after is named Hilder, too. And you didn't stir, nor say a word, all the time the jawing was going on."

"I'll tell you everything!" Bob cried. "And when you know all—"

"I don't want to hear anything that you'd like to keep to yourself."

"But I'd sooner tell you," Bob urged.

"Very well, my lad; fire away!" Josh replied good-humouredly, as he sat down.

"The troopers are after my father," Bob began.

Josh nodded, puffing steadily at his pipe.

"I guessed they were after a relative," he remarked. "Well, go on."

"My father owns a section at Katfarit," Bob continued. "It's mortgaged to the bank, and they have come down for the money. Father went to Sydney to look up an old friend named Norman, and Norman gave him a thousand pounds. Norman was starting on a long voyage."

"I understand."

"Father didn't come back to Katfarit, and I got anxious and went to Sydney to look for him. I met him, and he was being chased by the police. He hadn't time to tell me much. But he gave me notes for a thousand pounds, and told me to lodge them in the bank at Birchquill. The notes were false ones. A gang of thieves had stolen father's notes, and exchanged them for false ones. The bank put the police on me; I bolted, but was arrested, and next morning Captain Dashwood, the outlaw, let me free. I came on here, and you know the rest."

Josh whistled.

"Dashwood!" he ejaculated. "He's around here, then?"

"Do you know him?" Bob asked.

"Ay, lad, I knew him when he was one of the best," Josh replied, a ring of sadness in his voice. "He made a slip, and got into trouble. He took to the bush, and the police chased him. Every man's hand turned against him, and he began to go from bad to worse. The old story, you know. Once a chap turns crook he goes down fast. I'm sorry for Dashwood; there's a lot of good in him. But about yourself! That fellow Gell must have worked around Katfarit at some time to have seen you. He's a spiteful dog, and he'll lay you out if he can. Is there anyone in Katfarit to whom he could go?"

Bob's face grew hard.

"There's a man called Boardman who's at the back of all this trouble, though I can't prove that for certain," he explained. "He brought along the police to catch me. He's after the farm, I think; and if he could knock out father he would get it cheap."

Josh thought for some moments.

"I think you had better clear out of this," he said; "though, of course, you can stay on in safety till the morning. Go right up country, and get work on a station till all this blows over."

"If father has come this way I should like to find him and warn him of his danger."

"And run into it yourself, maybe," Josh suggested, shaking his head. "Think twice before you do that. But, anyhow, start to-morrow, and may the best of luck go with you! Now we'll turn in, and have another chat to-morrow morning."

Meantime, Gell, his bitter heart full of fury, had packed his belongings, swung them across his shoulder and left the camp. He struck out for the nearest town, about four miles

away, where he intended to stop the night, and then start in search of another job. He knew there would not be any difficulty in getting one; labour in Australia is scarce, and in a few days at the latest he was certain to be at work again.

Muttering imprecations, he left the camp behind, and, guided by the stars, he set out for the town. Before long he found the roughly-made road leading to it, and tramped along. He had been kicked out of the camp; that made him savage. To add to that, it had been owing to a lad whom he had not even been able to thrash. And, most bitter thought of all, he had been right about the lad's name, and neither the police nor his mates would believe him.

In time he came to the outskirts of the town. Here and there he found a small homestead, and finally he arrived at a spot where a score of houses were clustered together on either side of the road. This was the bush town of Gootava, consisting of a couple of general stores, a doctor's residence, the houses of those who in one way or another catered for the needs of the farmers for twenty miles around, and a couple of hotels, with wide verandas, which at this hour were crowded.

Gell strode up the steps of the nearest, and, crossing the veranda, he walked into the bar and dropped his pack in a corner. The air was thick with tobacco-smoke; men were laughing or wrangling, according to the humour they were in. Gell looked around in search of the landlord, and his gaze fell on a sturdily-built, black-bearded man, sitting moodily alone. At once an evil look of surprise and elation flashed into his eyes. He crossed the bar.

"Say," he said, "isn't your name Boardman?"

"Yes."

"And don't you come from Katfarit?"

"Yes."

"Thought so! I often saw you when I worked there a while back. Now, that's a curious thing! It's only to-day I met another man from there."

"What's his name?"

"Hilder!"

The villain Boardman jumped up.

"Hilder!" he gasped.

"Ay, a youngster called Hilder. And the police were after someone of his name."

Boardman looked swiftly to either side. He clutched Gell, and his voice was strained.

"Come out of this!" he whispered. "I want to talk to you on the quiet. If what you say is true, there is money in it for you!"

Dashwood Again.

Early on the following morning Bob parted, with regret, from the good-hearted Bushman Josh, and, mounting Brave Bess, rode away. To travel long distances through the bush alone had no terror for him, and through its deep solitudes he could find his way in any direction by the sun or stars. He jogged on, deep in thought, keeping north.

His father, of course, was making north, for thus would he get farthest from civilisation, and shake off his pursuers the quicker. Josh and the camp were forty miles behind before the lad rode into a town, as evening was closing in.

There he had a meal, made some cautious inquiries, and ascertained that no one of his father's appearance had come that way. Afraid that the troopers might turn up at any moment, he rode some miles beyond the town, off-saddled, and lay down. Quickly he fell asleep. At dawn he arose, lit a fire, boiled some water, and made tea. He took a hearty breakfast of the bread and meat he had bought overnight, and, vaulting into the saddle, continued on his way.

Sometimes he rode through forests that had seldom or never been entered by man before; sometimes he came to one of the great stations of thousands of acres owned by a wealthy squatter. He had passed the boundary fence of one of these, and had gone a mile into the thick scrub again, when suddenly he reined up and stared fixedly around.

Men had been here, and within the last twenty-four hours!

To the untutored eye there was no evidence of this; but Bob, trained from childhood in bush lore, saw ample confirmation of the fact. Nothing could escape his keen eyesight; a broken twig, a scrape on a tree, a small impression on the grass, each told a tale. And here was much greater proof. There had been stamping and pawing by two horses, and for a long time. He saw where the riders had laid their saddles on the ground, and farther on where they had themselves rested. Jumping down, he walked around. He saw some crumbs of bread, and noticed some tobacco shavings. Presently he picked up a cartridge. Civilians don't carry rifles or revolvers in the Australian bush. Had the troopers come this way?

For some moments he hesitated. Then he mounted and went on. If the troopers were ahead they were still following

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his father. Brave Bess was fleet, and he was forewarned. He would take care not to rush into them, and if he followed them he might be able to come to his father's assistance. Very cautiously he rode.

For a couple of miles he followed the horses' hoof-prints without any sign of the men ahead. Then a shot rang out, sharp and sinister, on the clear air. With heart beating fast he reined up. Another shot followed, and a third. Then all was stillness again. Had they caught his father? Had they shot him? The blood surged to his heart. Without thought of self, he touched Brave Bess with the spurs, and the noble animal, startled and stung, sprang forward at full gallop.

Through the scrub she raced at a terrific pace downhill, Bob bending low over the saddle to save himself from the branches under which they swept. Through the brambles, and over the fallen logs she went, and swung round at a sharp turn where the scrub was six feet high. And when least he expected it, she swerved to one side, and only his splendid horsemanship saved him from a fall.

He heard a cry, he saw a figure lying prostrate on the ground; then he pulled hard on the reins. He had gone another fifty yards before the mare could stop. Turning, he rode back, his eyes round with astonishment.

For, as Brave Bess had swerved he had recognised Bogong, the black boy. One glance as he rode up, and he saw that the man who had been lying on the ground was Captain Dashwood, the daring outlaw! Bogong was helping him to his feet. Bob looked down.

"Help me!" Bogong cried. "Massa is hurt! Bad man shoot, and massa wounded!"

Dashwood's face was pallid, and his lips were twitching with pain. Bob jumped down and gripped his arm, and together he and the black boy raised him and kept him steady. Presently Bogong ran to a creek and returned with some water. Dashwood drank it eagerly, and spoke for the first time.

"We must get on," he said. "It's not safe to hang round here."

Bogong ran to fetch the horses, and returned very downcast.

"One horse shot!" he said. "He is dead!"

Dashwood groaned. His wound was painning him severely.

"You take massa on big black mare," Bogong suggested to Bob.

"We go ten miles, then are safe."

Bob realised the risk he was running. But his kind heart was stirred. Dashwood was weak, almost to faintness, and also Bob remembered that it was the outlaw who had gained him his freedom from the prison-cell. He could not refuse; every instinct prompted him to succour one so much in need. He helped Dashwood on to Brave Bess, mounted Bogong's pony, and they rode slowly on, Bogong, on foot, keeping up with them easily.

On through the trackless bush they went, and Dashwood did not speak during the journey. Often he swayed in the saddle, but with iron courage he kept his seat. The sun was beating down with terrific heat; the outlaw was badly shaken as Brave Bess jumped over fallen logs, or scrambled down the gulleys in their way, but not another groan escaped his lips. And all the time Bob looked anxiously ahead, in dread lest the troopers might return.

Presently Bogong ran ahead, and waved his arm to Bob. The lad followed, and the black boy pushed some brambles aside, and beckoned to him to follow. Bob came up against a huge cliff, and followed Bogong, who kept by its side. Again Bogong stopped, and Bob drew a deep breath in complete amazement.

For there was a small gap in the cliff through which he could look, and far down below was a small but charming valley, lit up by the sunlight, and beautifully wooded. Never, in all his experience of the bush, had Bob come across the like. No one passing, even only forty yards away, could possibly suspect that it existed. It must have been by the merest chance that it had ever been discovered. And, to Bob's still greater surprise, Bogong told him to follow; for to descend into the valley seemed impossible.

But the black boy's cheerful grin reassured him. The pony, too, seemed to have no fear; it followed Bogong as if it knew the way well. Along a ledge and then down a narrow path it scrambled. Brave Bess, after some hesitation, went after the pony. In ten minutes they were in the valley.

Now Bob understood how Dashwood had always managed to elude the police. This was his hiding-place. So long as he could get here after one of his daring exploits, all trace of him was lost. Often hundreds of troopers had traversed the bush in search of him, often his escape had been said to be impossible, but never once had he been caught. Here, then, was the explanation. This valley, never before trodden by man, was his mysterious lair.

Bogong crossed the valley, and came to a roughly-made hut, hidden amidst the dense foliage of a score of trees. He and Bob helped the outlaw, who was still ashen pale, out of the saddle, and led him into the hut. He sank down on a bunk, and the black boy began to examine his wound, whilst Bob led the horses into a shed, and stabled them. Brave Bess had gone a long journey that day; she needed rest badly. Though anxious to leave at once, the lad realised that he would be obliged to wait till morning.

When he returned to the hut, Bogong had bound up the wound, and Dashwood looked much better already. Bob wanted to ask a good many questions, but he did not like to begin. He sat down, and held his tongue. Presently Dashwood looked across the hut at him.

"Well, young fellow, I owe you a good deal," he said, "and I'm not one to forget. If it wasn't for you, the police might have nabbed me."

"I can't make out why they didn't, after they winged you," Bob replied.

Dashwood and Bogong looked at one another. The outlaw chuckled, and the black burst into a loud guffaw.

"Bless your life!" Dashwood remarked. "It wasn't with the police I had that scrap."

"No!" faltered Bob, utterly amazed.

"No. I was after big game, but I couldn't get it. Have you ever heard of the Sutherland gang?"

"I never have."

"Well, I knew they were coming this way, and that they had plenty of swag, so I lay in wait for them. Fair game, that, I reckon, for a fellow like me. They bagged the money from others, and why shouldn't I take it from them. But they have a new partner, a crack-shot, and I didn't reckon on him. That's how I got left."

He smiled grimly.

"Who are they?" Bob asked.

"A lot of city sharpers," Dashwood explained. "Sutherland is the leader. He's a fellow who's been used to city life; he dresses well, can talk like a book, and is fit to go into any company. They hear of something in one of the cities; they spend perhaps a couple of months there before they pull off the job, and then they clear out sharp, and make for the bush. Their last lay was in Sydney."

"In Sydney?" Bob gasped, his face flushing in his excitement.

"Why, that was where my father was robbed!"

"And by Sutherland and his gang," Dashwood replied. "The place got too hot to hold them. They cleared out, the police got on the scent, and if you hadn't helped me along, the police would have overtaken me following them up."

Bob put his hand to his head, for his brain was throbbing madly. His father also had left Sydney, and was somewhere hereabouts. Had he followed Sutherland, too? The old man was not one to suffer a wrong without a fight; he meant getting back the thousand pounds, if he could. Bob felt certain of that.

"Where do you think Sutherland will make for?" he asked.

"He'll keep on the move for a couple of hundred miles until he has shaken off the pursuit," Dashwood replied. "Then he'll lie low until this excitement blows over. After that, he'll go to Melbourne or Brisbane, most likely, to have a flutter with the money. That's the sort of game he always plays."

"I'm sure my father is after him," Bob said.

"Plucky old sarter, and I wish him the best of luck," Dashwood remarked. "But Sutherland is a hard nut to crack."

"And because my father went about Sydney with Sutherland, the police think he is one of the gang," Bob went on.

"Sutherland took in your father as he can anyone," Dashwood explained. "Why, over in Melbourne, he was asked to all the big houses; that's the way he gets his victims. Your father is running a big risk. It's more likely that the police will catch him than Sutherland."

"I must go after him!" Bob cried. "Whatever happens—"

"Well, well! Your mare is dead-beat, and you must put up with my company to-night, and very welcome you are," the outlaw interjected. "Don't you go working yourself into a fever; there's nothing to be gained by that. I like your spirit, my lad; you're doing the right thing, though it's I as say it, whom everyone looks upon as a rogue. But if I am one, I wasn't always so, and what's done can't be undone. Yes, you're right to go, and— But here's Bogong with some grub. Have a good feed, and then turn in. You'll need all your strength if you mean to tackle that crowd."

(Another grand instalment next week.)

MISS SHIRLEY KELLOGG'S ADVICE ON HAIR BEAUTY.

Beautiful Exponent of Revue says "Harlene Hair-Drill" is Ideal.

1,000,000 FOUR-FOLD HAIR-BEAUTY GIFT OUTFITS TO BE DISTRIBUTED GRATIS.

EVERY READER MAY RECEIVE FREE OF CHARGE:

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|--|---|

Of all the beautiful and talented exponents of Revue, perhaps none have made their mark so indelibly on the British public as charming Miss Shirley Kellogg.

Thousands upon thousands of people have thronged to pay their tribute to her charming winsomeness, and it is this talented actress who to-day gives a delightful lesson to all who desire Beautiful Hair.

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To Messrs. Edwards' Harlene Company.

"Dear Sirs,—I feel it is only right that I should acquaint you with my very satisfactory experience of your 'Hair-Drill.' Although I have tried many other hair preparations, until I was persuaded to try 'Harlene Hair-Drill' I was never satisfied with the results I obtained.

"Now, after a quite prolonged trial, I am pleased to say that 'Hair-Drill' more than exceeds my expectations. I am indeed gratified for the always immediate good that 'Hair-Drill' produces, and am quite certain that your principle not only maintains hair in vigour, beauty, and abundance, but that it will restore weak and deficient hair to fulness and strength.

"Without any hesitation I most heartily recommend 'Harlene Hair-Drill' to all ladies.

"Yours sincerely,

"(Signed)

"SHIRLEY KELLOGG."



(Photo) **MISS SHIRLEY KELLOGG,** *(Arbuthnot.)*

whose success in Revue has been perhaps the most remarkable feature in theatrical news, advises everybody who desires Hair Beauty to follow her example by adopting "Harlene Hair-Drill." Fill in and post the form given below, and you receive a Four-fold Hair Beautifying Outfit Free.

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4. THE SECRET "HAIR-DRILL" MANUAL, giving complete instructions for carrying out this two-minutes-a-day Scientific Hair-Growing Exercise.

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LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

A GOOD REFERENCE.

An Irish gentleman, on parting with a lazy servant, was asked, with respect to her industry, whether she was what is termed "afraid of work."

"Oh, not at all," said he—"not at all! She'll frequently lie down and fall asleep by the very side of it!"—Sent in by E. Evans, Glamorgan.

PEACE AT ANY PRICE.

Two old ladies were seated next to each other in the train. The journey was being made very tiresome to the rest of the occupants of the carriage in which they were travelling, by the fact that one of the old ladies wished the window open, and the other wanted it shut. They had been arguing and quarrelling for about half an hour, and had arrived at no satisfactory solution of the question.

The discussion became so heated that when next the train stopped at a station the guard was called to settle the matter.

One said that if the window was open she would catch cold and die. The other said that if it was shut she would die of apoplexy.

The guard was quite unable to decide how to act, and was about to leave them to it, when an old gent, sitting in the corner, having been bored to death by the proceedings, offered the following advice:

"Open the window, friend; that will kill one of them. Then shut it, and we shall get rid of the other. Then we shall have peace."—Sent in by E. R. Haskett, Somerset.

NEATLY CAUGHT.

Although the notice plainly stated that fishing was prohibited, the angler sat placidly angling his line over the stream. The irate keeper who approached him was surprised to notice that the line was baited with a potato. In amused tones, he asked the trespasser what he was doing.

"Fishing," was the reply. "You see," he continued, "my health has been upset by financial worries, and I came down here to try the effects of fresh air."

Thinking the poor chap to be mentally afflicted, the keeper refrained from denouncing him, and walked away. That evening he was telling his friends in the local tavern about the potato-baited line, when in walked the angler.

"Any luck?" asked the innkeeper kindly.

"Oh, fair," was the reply, as the fisherman opened his basket and displayed a fine catch.

"Look here!" stormed the infuriated keeper. "You didn't catch that lot with a potato!"

"Oh, no," said the angler coolly. "That was what I caught you with!"—Sent in by W. McNally, Wigtown-shire.

"SOME" FACE.

Two small boys, who had grown weary of their game, were arguing rather heatedly regarding a new form of amusement.

At last one of them was struck with a sudden inspiration, and said to the other:

"I know! Let's see who can make the ugliest face."

"Garn!" replied his chum.

"What 'yer mean by it? Look what a start you've got!"—Sent in by Miss F. M. Griffin, Leyton.

MEASLY.

Little Johnny Jones had the measles, but, unfortunately, his sister Mary caught the disease. One day the children's aunt came to the house, and, in addition to bestowing most of her sympathy and affection upon Mary, gave her a cake.

Johnny, who had recovered by this time, was feeling very much neglected, and his aunt later found him crying.

"What's the matter, Johnny?" she asked.

"Why," tearfully replied the little boy, "Mary won't give me a piece of cake, and I gave her the measles!"—Sent in by T. Davies, Liverpool.

THE TALE OF A HAT.

Things seemed to be going against Mike. A mountain of circumstantial evidence had been brought up to prove him guilty of an awful crime. Then a hat was produced in court, found at the scene of the tragedy. It had been bought at a shop which Mike was known to patronise, and fitted him exactly.

Still, Mike swore that he had not been within five miles of the place on the night in question, and so strong were his protestations that, contrary to the evidence, the jury acquitted him. But Mike still lingered in the dock.

"Why don't you go, my man?" asked the judge. "You need stay no longer."

"I am wishful for to go, your honour," replied Mike; "but before I do, I will be troubling you for my hat, if yer please."—Sent in by A. Griffiths, Neath.

VERY RUDE.

The political orator had been airing his grievances for some time. His audience increased in numbers, inspiring him to still greater efforts against the powers that be. He finally wound up by shouting:

"Are we going to take all this lying down?"

"The reporters can do that!" cried a voice from the back, to the amusement of the audience, and the confusion of the orator. Sent in by S. Beardmore, Birmingham.

HARD LINES.

The prisoner, charged with begging, stepped up into the dock.

Magistrate: "Why, you are the very man who was begging outside my door yesterday!"

Prisoner (with a smile): "Yes, sir; and you didn't give me anything."

Magistrate: "Well, I will now. Seven days' hard labour!"—Sent in by Private B. Pilling, Manchester Military Hospital.

A CATCHING IDEA.

A college professor, always ready for a joke, was asked by a student one day if he would like to know of a good dodge for catching rabbits.

"Why, yes," replied the professor. "What is it?"

"Well," said the student, "you crouch down behind a thick stone wall, and make a noise like a turnip."

"That may be," said the professor, with a twinkle in his eye; "but an easier way than that, I think, would be for you to sit down in a bed of cabbage-heads and look natural."—Sent in by A. Rich, Stoke-on-Trent.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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