

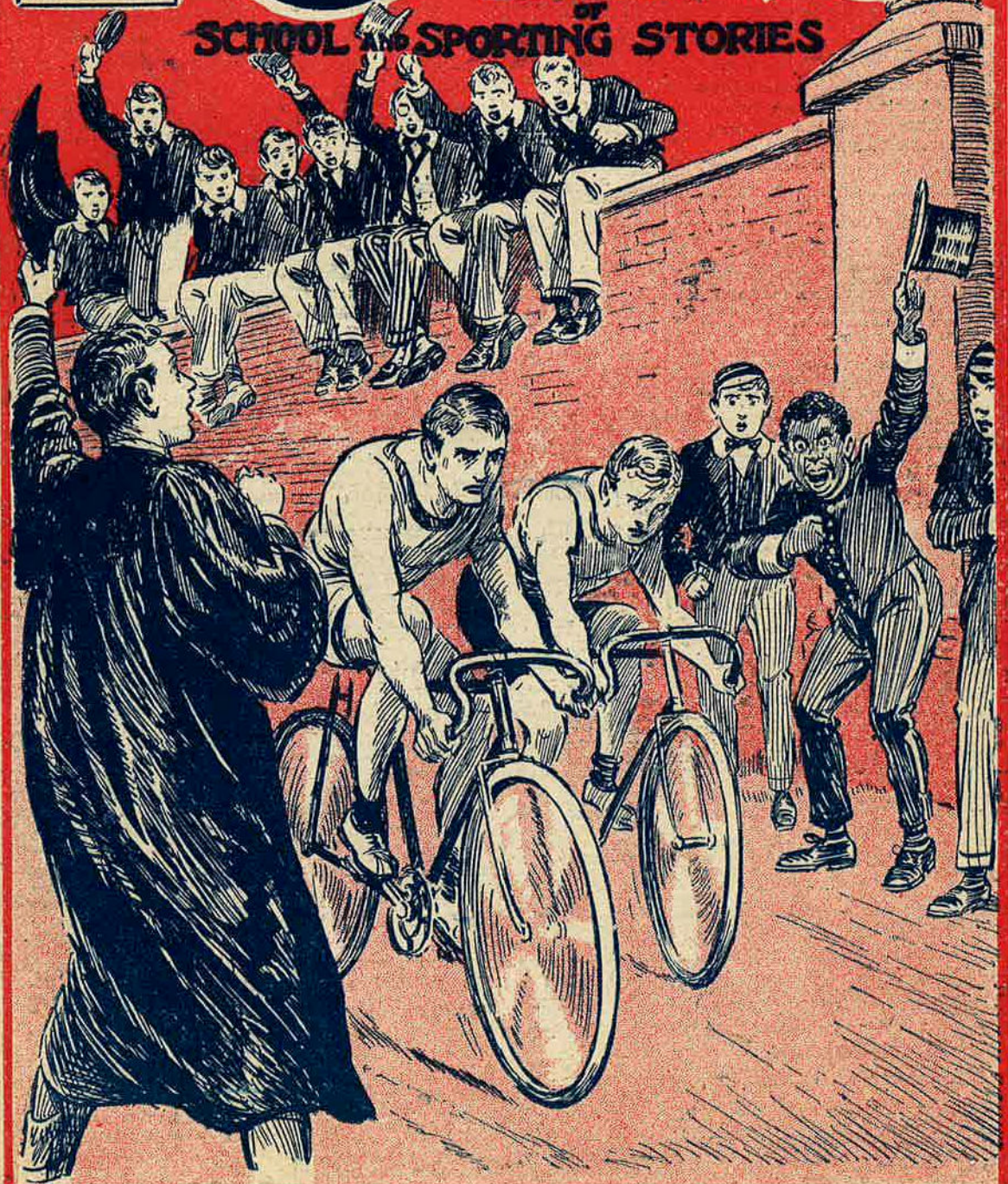
Great £300 Cricket Competition—Special 25,000-word Holiday Story
IN THIS ISSUE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

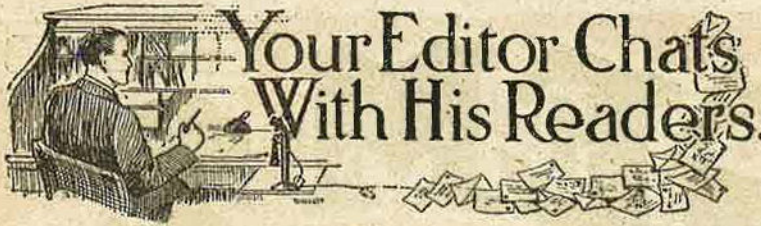
No. 809. Vol. XXIV.
August 11th, 1923.

LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



A TIGHT FINISH!

(The Sportsmen of St. Jim's find worthy opponents in the Overseas Athletes. A Thrilling Incident from the Grand 25,000-word School and Sporting Story, entitled: "SPORTSMEN ALL!" contained in this issue.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every
Monday
"THE MAGNET" Every Monday
"THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
"CHUCKLES" Every Thursday
"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL"
Published Yearly

My Dear Chums,—Be prepared for a treat when you get your copy of the "Gem" next Wednesday. There's nothing fresh about that, of course. Each issue of the "Gem" is very special, and offers every attraction to its supporters. But there is something quite unusual in the coming yarn of St. Jim's. To begin with, it introduces several characters of whom nothing like half enough has been heard of late. I was told the other day that Kildare had been on the shelf too long. For that matter, I do not consider the cheery captain of St. Jim's has been at all shabbily dealt with in this respect. He is sure to be on the spot when wanted, and he figured in really great style in the barring-out last winter. But we can let all that pass. Kildare shows up next week, and carries on just as we expect of that right excellent fellow, who is so much liked by everybody. Now to get down to facts. The prime yarn for next week deals with a circus, and brings in a lot of those touches of circus life which are always welcomed. For, say what anybody may, a circus entertainment remains, as always, just the kind of performance to which one and all are no end glad to come back, after getting fed up with other amusements.

"FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!"

That is the title Martin Clifford has selected for this truly great and dramatic tale. There is a big mystery underlying it all, but I am not going into details. Let it suffice to point out that after paying a visit to Stubbs' Grand Circus, and having a somewhat unpleasant experience to face, Tom Merry & Co. find themselves in difficulties at the school. They are accused of smoking, and they run away to escape punishment. The subsequent events are as thrilling as any to be found in the chronicles of St. Jim's. Of course, we find Racke & Co. busy, doing their best to cause trouble. Racke & Co. have managed to contribute not a little gloom to St. Jim's. They have a large measure of success in the present case, but, luckily, they do not have matters all their own way. The wind up is intensely powerful, and it brings into play some of that sympathy which we want in a story, for life is not all comedy,

and in the instance under consideration we find more than one thread of grim tragedy running through. What is more, you have the perfectly natural, though sudden swinging round of feeling on the part of a master who is not noted for hasty judgments, but who had certainly made up his mind here. I think that Stubbs and his circus, as well as everybody else who comes on the scene in this admirable yarn, will long be remembered for what they did—some for what they ingloriously failed to do. That's all! See the "Gem" next week.

"THE BRONZE STATUETTE!"

Our new programme contains another winner in this entrancing story of the doings of Anthony Sharpe. You are bound to be interested in the Black Grange. It is a wonderful old mansion; but the heir, a certain Geoffrey Temple, has much reason to be disappointed in his legacy. Nobody wants merely bricks and mortar. He is merely run into useless expense, unless something else goes with the windfall. Did something lie behind? What about the mysterious bronze statuette? This apparently trivial work of art turns out to be the real pivot of a captivating romance. The detective is puzzled, and well he may be; but when a testator runs to eccentricity, you may look out for trouble. There is plenty of the latter, and Anthony Sharpe has a good share all to himself. In affairs of this sort it is of common usage to speak of a story having a more than ordinarily direct appeal to the thoughtful reader—just as there were always two distinct brands of reader, those who thought, and the others who never troubled to do so. It seems to me there is an error here, for the right sort of yarn compels a reader to think, and think hard. Anybody who picks up this new stirring record of Anthony Sharpe will be cudgelling his brains concerning what possible denouement there can be.

"AT FREEDOM'S CALL!"

There is a very pleasant duty before me here—namely, to announce a story of life in Tasmania, by Cecil Fanshaw, a writer whose name you will remember, for he has done some rattling line work for the companion papers. I asked Mr. Fanshaw to write this special tale concerning the experiences of a fellow who goes out to the wonderful land in the Far South, principally because he is a master of the subject. Moreover, I am well aware that many of my readers are looking across the seas to the possibilities offered by the great Dominion in the Antipodes. I should not dream of giving away a well-knit yarn, nor of anticipating by a single word the sensational adventures which await Jake and Carey and Peter, and the others. But, apart even from a gripping plot, this story has a big claim to attention.

We are confronted with some of the things which face a fellow who finds that opportunity is denied to him here at home, or, at least, that he can have something bigger by pulling up stakes and taking the plunge into the unknown. It is what all pioneers have done. There is sentiment here, of course. It is not an easy thing to cut oneself free of the old life, but the reward is to the plucky ones who venture all, and, venturing, reap the rich reward. The numerous readers of the old paper domiciled in Tasmania will welcome this story, I know.

"HIS HIGHNESS OF MOROVANIA!"

Those readers who are extra fond of real good school stories will find an extra-special treat in next week's bumper number of the "Gem." This magnificent yarn will take you by storm. Space will not permit me to say too much about the plot. I must say that it tells of one of the biggest japes ever played at St. Mary's College. The Prince of Morovania comes to the school, and the rascally Dunster & Co. try to pal on to the new arrival. His Highness is wise to their game, however, and the way he rings the changes on this "sporty" coterie makes excellent reading.

YOUR LAST CHANCE!

Make sure you send in your coupons in our great £800 Cricket Competition now. It has such an immense appeal to all cricketers, as well as to others—those who may not have time to play the great game often, but who watch events very closely right through the season. This is the finest test of its kind ever offered by the "Gem." You will not have the chance of entering for the big money prize after this week, so set to work on your attempt now, and send it along.

IMPORTANT NEWS!

Look out for our thrilling new serial! I shall have much more to say about this brilliant story directly. It is of gripping interest, and characterised by just those features which make a "Gem" serial an event of extra-special significance.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A DETECTIVE?

If you cherish this ambition, and imagine that a detective's life is one of romance and freedom, you should read "Detectives' Daily Dangers" in the current issue of the "Detective Magazine." In this article Ex-Chief Detective-Inspector E. Haigh gives a powerful description of the continual perils which beset a detective in the course of his duties. The "Detective Magazine," price 7d., on sale everywhere, is full of top-notch stories and articles dealing with the secrets and mysteries of the underworld and the thrills of crime detection.

Your Editor.

FOOTBALL!



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RESULT OF OUR GREAT "ESSEX" CRICKET COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

ALICE PACE,
73, Grove Street,

Leek, Staffs.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors:
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petitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

H. G. Jeffrey, 14, Park Street, Southend-on-Sea.
Alex. Shaw, 61, Pontypridd Road, Porth, Glam.

Twenty-nine competitors, with two errors each, divide the ten prizes of 5s. each. The names and addresses of these prizewinners can be obtained on application at this office.

SOLUTION.

The Essex club is at present having a stiff job to keep its head above water, owing to the sale of the Leyton ground, and the loss of numerous members. Essex was promoted to first-class rank nearly 20 years ago. Its defeats outnumber its triumphs, but the club has a fine history. Russell, the South African test match hero, is the leading batsman.

SPORTSMEN ALL!



CHAPTER I. Glorious News!

YOU seem to be simply burstin' with excitement, dear man!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's made that remark to his chum Clive. He had reason to make it. For Clive, who had just come out of the Head's study, was doing a sort of Highland fling in the corridor. He danced blithely in the air; his arms were revolving like the sails of a windmill, and his face was radiant.

Clive continued to dance. And Cardew stared at him curiously.

It was not unusual for a fellow to dance on emerging from the Head's study. But he generally danced with anguish—not with jubilation.

Obviously Clive had not been "licked," or he would be groaning as well as dancing.

"Why are you skippin' about like a two-year-old, Sidney?" asked Cardew. "Has the Head invited you to dinner this evenin'?"

"Better than that!" panted Clive. "When I tell you the news, you'll dance, too—in fact, we shall waltz through the quad together! They're coming! They're coming to St. Jim's! Hurrah!"

Cardew stared more curiously than ever at the wildly excited Clive.

"Dashed if I can fathom your meanin', dear man," he said. "Who is comin'?"

"My chums from South Africa!"

"Oh!"

"They're coming to England for a month's holiday!" exclaimed Clive, simmering down a little. "And the first week of their holiday is going to be spent at St. Jim's! A dozen of them are coming over, from one of the big schools in Cape Town. My cousin will be the leader of the party—fellow called Jack Hardy. You'll like him awfully!"

Cardew was still a little mystified.

"They—they're comin' to spend a week at St. Jim's?" he stammered.

"Yes, rather!"

"But what are they goin' to do with themselves?"

"Engage us in sports, my son!" said Clive, clapping his chum on the back. "There's going to be a bumper sports tournament—the greatest ever! It will put all previous sports meetings in the shade. Talk about a sensation! We're in for a high old time. There will be running races, and cycling, and swimming, and boxing, and so forth, and a cricket match to round off the proceedings."

A Grand 25,000-word School and Sporting Story of the World-Famous Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, introducing Clive's South African Chums—Sportsmen to the Core.

By

Martin Clifford.

"How rippin'!" said Cardew. And his handsome face lighted up at the prospect.

"Our Head has been in communication with their Head," Clive went on, "and everything has been arranged and agreed upon. When the Head told me the news just now, I felt like doing a jig on his study carpet. There's going to be a whole week's holiday for the Shell and the Fourth. Just think of it, old man!"

And Clive gave a whoop of delight which might have been heard all over St. Jim's.

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth had been lurking at the end of the corridor listening to the conversation. Eaves-dropping was Baggy's speciality. He liked to know what was going on, and to get advance information, so that he could spread it through the school.

The fat junior had not heard the whole of the conversation between Cardew and Clive. He had merely picked up fragments of it. But he had quite enough material to make a good story out of.

Baggy scuttled away to broadcast the good tidings. In the Fourth Form passage he ran into Jack Blake & Co., who had just come in from cricket.

"I say, you fellows—" began Baggy breathlessly.

The juniors halted.

"You appeal to be labouvin' undah gweat excitement, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I've news!" said Baggy Trimble. "Great news! Glorious news! There's a whole crowd of South African kids coming to St. Jim's! I'm not sure whether they are white fellows or savages. But they're coming here. They're going to play St. Jim's at all sorts of games; and we're going to have a month's holiday. Hip, hip, hip—"

Nobody chimed in with "Hurrah!" Jack Blake & Co. stared at Baggy Trimble in blank amazement.

"South Africans coming here?" echoed Jack Blake.

"Yes. Painted savages, I expect they'll be—or niggers, perhaps!"

Baggy Trimble had a very vague idea of the sort of people who lived in South Africa. He was not aware that it was peopled mainly by white settlers. Baggy imagined that South Africa was a wild and primitive land to which civilisation had not yet penetrated.

"Who's been putting this silly rot into your head, Trimble?" asked Herries.

"It isn't silly rot—it's a fact. I was on my way to the Head's study, to have a chat with him—we always have an afternoon pow-wow, you know—when I heard Clive and Cardew jawing outside the Head's door. I didn't deliberately listen to what they were saying, of course; but I couldn't help hearing a few things. I heard Clive telling Cardew that these South African jounies were coming over—"

"You fat chump!" growled Blake. "They knew you were listening, and they made up this yarn about the South Africans, just to pull your leg."

"Oh, really, Blake—"

"I considah, Twimble, that you are a disgustin' eaves-dwoppah, an' that you are talkin' out of your bat!" said Arthur Augustus. "Come along, deah boys! We don't want to stay an' listen to Twimble's fairy-tales!"

The Fourth-Formers passed on. Baggy Trimble glared after them for a moment. Then he went in search of more sympathetic listeners.

By the time Baggy's story had gone the rounds of the junior studies, it had assumed startling proportions.

Tom Merry & Co. were the last to hear it, and Trimble calmly informed them that a tribe of Red Indians, several hundreds strong, was coming to St. Jim's, in order to teach the fellows how to stalk animals, paddle canoes, and hurl boomerangs. Baggy added that the St. Jim's fellows were to be given six months' holiday, and that the Red Indians were to be accommodated in tents on the school cricket-ground.

Naturally, the Terrible Three did not believe Baggy's story, or even a tithe of it. But they gathered that there was something in the wind. Trimble would not have invented such a story out of nothing.

Tom Merry happened to glance out of his study window, and he saw Clive and Cardew waltzing gaily across the quad.

"Hallo! Clive and Cardew are jolly excited about something!" said the captain of the Shell. "Let's go down and see what it's all about."

The Terrible Three hurried down into the quad. The two Fourth-Formers were gliding gaily along, face to face. Clive was holding his chum by the waist, and Cardew's hands were resting on Clive's shoulders. In this manner they waltzed joyously to and fro.

Tom Merry hailed the happy pair.

"You fellows seem jolly bucked with life," he said. "What's happened?"

The waltzers ceased to waltz. They faced round upon the Terrible Three.

"We're in clover, you fellows!" said Clive, with a gay laugh. "A dozen of my old pals in South Africa are coming to stay at St. Jim's for a week. There's going to be a big tournament, and the Fourth and the Shell are to have a week's holiday!"

The Terrible Three looked incredulous.

"It's a fact, dear men!" drawled Cardew. "When Sidney first trotted out the joyful tidings, I thought he must be spoofin'. But, as I say, it's a fact. So let's sing with loud tra-la!"

Whereupon, Ralph Reekness, usually so calm and unemotional, promptly burst into song, and Clive joined in.

It took some little time for Tom Merry & Co. to absorb the good news.

"Seems too good to be true!" said Monty Lowther. "If our illustrious legs are being pulled—"

"My dear fellow," said Clive, "it's perfectly true! Honest Injun! The Head sent for me just now, and told me all about the arrangements. My South African pals are already on the way. They're due to arrive at Plymouth on Sunday. That means they will be at St. Jim's on Monday morning."

"Hurrah!"

There was no longer any room for doubt, and the Terrible Three cheered in hearty chorus. The sound of their cheering attracted others to the spot; and the story of the coming of the South Africans spread through the crowd with the rapidity of a fire through gorse.

To say that the St. Jim's fellows were excited was to put it very mildly indeed. They were almost giddy with joy.

A week's holiday would be a most welcome break—all the more enjoyable because of its utter unexpectedness.

There was joy, too, in the prospect of meeting a dozen youthful sportsmen from South Africa, and engaging in Spartan tussles with them on running-track and cricket-field.

A wave of jubilation swept through the junior sections of the School House and the New House.

That evening Mr. Railton sent for Tom Merry, and instructed him to select twelve good men and true to do battle with the South Africans.

It was no easy task to select the twelve finest all-round sportsmen in the Shell and the Fourth. There were so many claims to be considered. But Tom Merry tackled the task with his customary thoroughness, and the names of the chosen twelve were posted on the school notice-board next morning.

Tom Merry himself was to act as captain, and from the ranks of the School House he had selected Monty Lowther, Manners, Blake, D'Arcy, Talbot, Cardew, and Clive. The dozen was completed by four New House stalwarts—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern.

Harry Noble would have been one of the twelve, but he was confined to the sanny with a severe chill, and it was doubtful whether he would be fit in time for sports week. So Cardew had been selected in his stead. Ralph Reekness was a rare good sportsman, when he chose to exert himself. And he faithfully promised Tom Merry that he would exert himself to the uttermost against the sportsmen from South Africa.

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CHAPTER 2.

A Strange Visitor!

"HERE they come!" said Clive.

His voice thrilled a little.

There was a rumbling of wheels on the road, and a charabanc came into view.

It was Monday morning, and crowds of St. Jim's fellows thronged the old gateway.

The week's holiday had started for the Fourth and the Shell. In the case of the other Forms, there were to be lessons each morning, but every afternoon would be free.

Sports Week could not have opened under more favourable conditions. The sun shone brilliantly, and there was a refreshing breeze which tempered the August heat.

Clive, on seeing the approaching charabanc, ran out into the roadway. He singled out his cousin, Jack Hardy, in an instant, and waved to him.

What puzzled Clive, however, was the presence of a young nigger-boy, who was perched in the front seat, next to the driver. It puzzled the rest of the St. Jim's fellows, too. Was it possible that this dark-skinned native was a member of the South African team?

He was a queer little chap, dressed in a suit of clothes several sizes too big for him. He seemed to be quite swallowed up in them.

The nigger-boy's lips were parted in a broad smile, and two rows of glistening white teeth were revealed.

"Great Scott!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Why have they brought that funny-looking curiosity with them, I wonder?"

The charabanc rumbled to a halt, and the South Africans sprang nimbly into the roadway. They were fellows of about the same size and age as the St. Jim's juniors, and their faces were deeply tanned by exposure to wind and sun. They were pleasant, smiling faces—in fact, the visitors seemed a thoroughly cheery crowd.

Jack Hardy, their leader, advanced to greet his cousin. He took Clive's hand in a tight grip.

"It's good to see you again, Sidney!" he said heartily.

"And it's a real treat to gaze once more on your sunburnt chivvy, Jack!" replied Clive. "It seems an age since I saw you last. What sort of a voyage did you have?"

"Topping! Smooth seas and bright sunshine. Couldn't have been better. We landed at Plymouth at noon yesterday, and slept for the rest of the day at an hotel. We hired a charabanc to bring us to St. Jim's, and we made a start in the small hours of this morning. It was a glorious run, and—well, here we are!"

During this conversation between the two cousins, Tom Merry & Co. had mingled with the South Africans, and introduced themselves. And hosts and guests stood chatting merrily in the school gateway.

The nigger-boy stood apart from all the rest. He was gazing, with an awestruck expression on his dusky face, at the stately and magnificent edifice of St. Jim's. This was the first time that he had seen an English public school, and he was visibly moved at the sight. His mouth was agape, his eyes wide with wonder.

"Dis is bery handsome place!" he murmured, as his gaze travelled from the base of the building right up to the lofty spire.

"I say, Jack," said Clive, "who's the chocolate-coloured coon?"

"Eh? Oh, that's Bonzo! At least, we christened him Bonzo. His real name's Obadiah something-or-other."

"But—but he's not a member of your sports team, surely?"

"Great Scott, no!" said Jack Hardy, with a laugh. "He's a servant in our house at Cape Town—sort of boy-of-all-work. He's a quaint little chap. As full of mischief as a monkey, but as true as steel. He's simply devoted to me. Hangs on my lightest word."

"Did you invite him to England?"

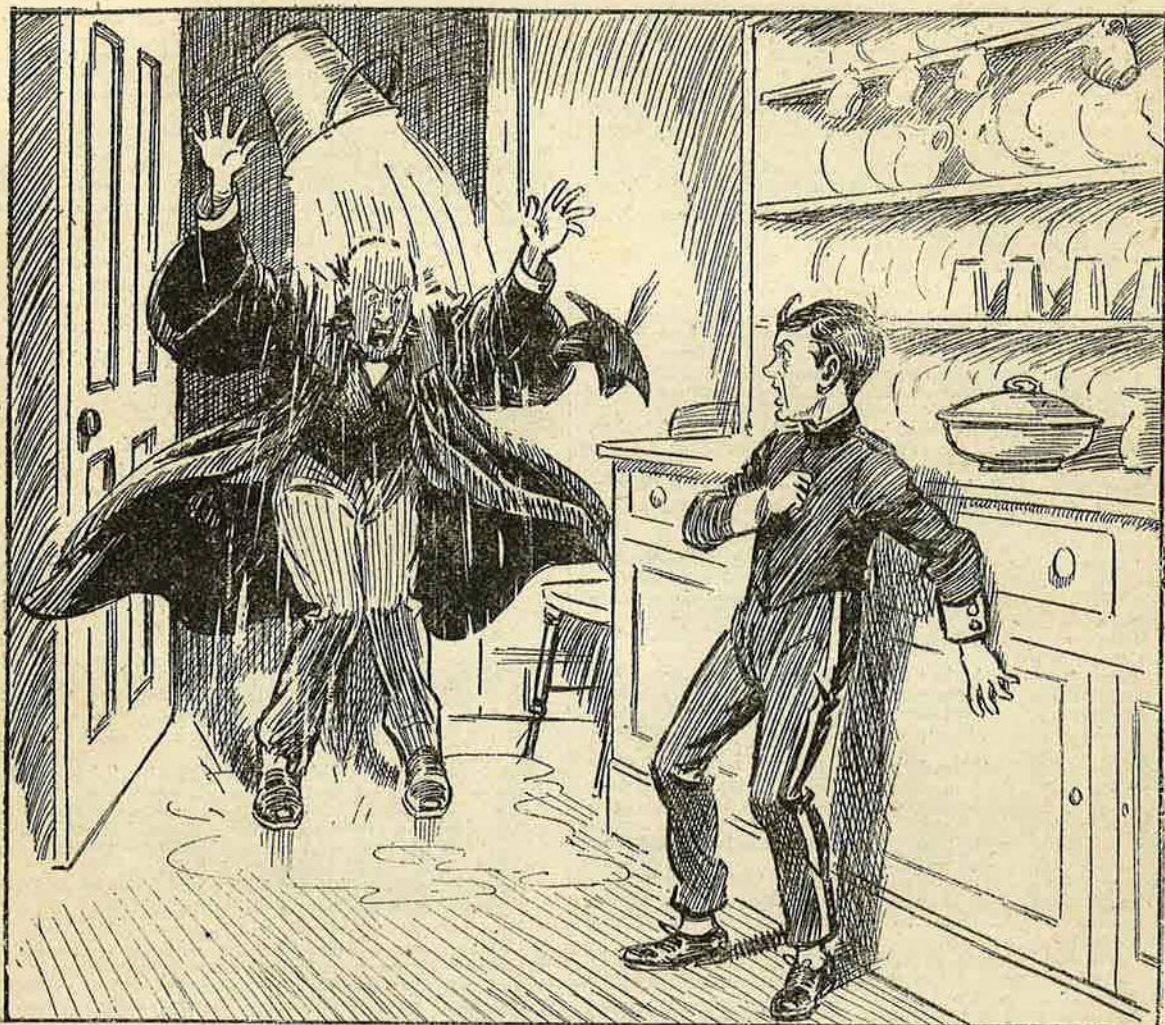
"No. Bonzo took French leave, and followed us over. He stowed himself away on board the liner, and we discovered him on the second day out. I told him he would get into a fearful row with my pater, for coming away without permission. But he didn't seem to mind that. He insisted on coming with us for the holiday. Strictly speaking, I ought to have sent him back when we reached the first port of call. But it would have broken the little beggar's heart, so I simply had to let him come. I'm glad I did, too, for he made himself jolly useful to us on the voyage. He slogs and slaves on my behalf, and takes a positive pleasure in it."

"But what's going to happen to him now?" asked Clive.

"I'm going to ask your Head if Bonzo can stay with us at St. Jim's for the week. If that's impossible, I'll fix him up in the village somewhere. Hi, Bonzo! Come and be introduced to my cousin."

Bonzo turned, and trotted obediently up to his master.

Clive burst out laughing when he saw the nigger-boy at close quarters. Bonzo's weird and wonderful attire would have made a cat laugh. He was small of stature, yet he wore



Mr. Ratcliff stepped at the kitchen door, which stood slightly ajar, and pushed it open. And then—Swish! Swoooosh! The pail overturned at precisely the right moment, and it disgorged a deluge of flour and water full upon the head of the sour, ill-tempered master of the New House. Toby, the page, drew back in terror. (See page 6).

the clothes of a full-grown man. His trousers were turned up several inches at the bottom, or he would have tripped up.

"How do you do, Bonzo?" said Clive, when he had recovered from his merriment.

"Dis child bery well, t'anks!" said Bonzo. "Me bery honoured to meet Massa Jack's cousin."

Clive shook hands with the little fellow, and then briefly explained to Tom Merry & Co. who he was, and how he came to be with the party.

"What an extraordinary little beggah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "His togs are—well, hardly what you might call a Bond Street cut!"

"Bonzo bought them at a second-hand shop in Cape Town," explained Jack Hardy. "He was in a desperate hurry, and he couldn't stop to pick and choose. So this is the result."

"What does he wear when he's at home?" asked Tom Merry.

"A pageboy's uniform. I shall have to try and get him another."

"Toby, our school page, is sure to have a spare uniform," said Jack Blake. "I've no doubt he'll lend it to Bonzo while he's here."

"I suppose we'd better go and interview your Head," said Jack Hardy. "I'll ask him if Bonzo can stay."

The luggage of the South Africans had already been placed on a hand-cart by Taggles, the porter, who proceeded to wheel it away towards the building.

Tom Merry & Co. escorted their guests to the Head's study. The kindly old gentleman received the South Africans very cordially. He fairly beamed upon them, in fact, as they swarmed into his study.

"I am delighted to meet you, my dear boys!" said Dr. Holmes, shaking hands with each of his guests in turn. "I trust your stay here will prove most enjoyable in every way.

An attractive programme of sports has been drawn up, and if this grand weather continues everything should go without a hitch."

Jack Hardy thanked the Head for his warm reception. Then he mooted the matter of Bonzo.

"I hate to trespass on your kindness, sir," he said, "but we have a nigger-boy with us—a servant from my home in Cape Town. He insisted upon coming to England with us. I was wondering if he could possibly be accommodated at the school? He would give no trouble, and he would act as our servant while we are here."

"I have not the slightest objection," said the Head. "The boy can share the quarters of Toby, the page, and have his meals in the kitchen."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

"Your own sleeping quarters," the Head went on, "will be in the school sanatorium. A number of rooms have been prepared for you, and I feel sure you will find them very comfortable. You may have your meals there or in the dining-hall with the boys, whichever you prefer."

"I think we'd rather feed in Hall, sir," said Jack Hardy. "I'm sure it would be more convenient for the kitchen staff, and we don't want to give more bother than we can help."

The Head nodded his appreciation.

"Now, with regard to the sports," he said. "We had arranged for them to commence this afternoon. But perhaps you are tired with travelling and would like a day's rest first?"

"Not at all, sir!" exclaimed the South Africans in chorus.

"We're jolly keen on getting to grips with the St. Jim's fellows, sir," said Jack Hardy. "The sooner the sports start the better we shall like it."

"Yes, rather!"

The Head smiled.
 "I can clearly see there is no lack of keenness on your part," he said. "Moreover, you appear to be in splendid condition. I shall follow the progress of the sports with great interest. But there! Do not let me detain you any longer. You will be wanting to make a tour of the school. Merry and his friends will be delighted to show you round, I am sure."

As the South African party trooped out of the study they unanimously voted the Head a real brick.

The St. Jim's juniors were waiting in the quad.
 "Fixed up about Bonzo?" asked Clive.

Jack Hardy nodded.

"The Head says he can stay and share Toby's quarters," he said.

"Oh, good!"

Bonzo gave a whoop of delight on hearing this information.

"Dis child boy glad he'm goin' to stay near Massa Jack!"

he exclaimed. "Me do anyting for handsome Massa Jack."

"I'm sure you would, Bonzo," said Jack Hardy gravely.

"Me like to go an' tank de Head," said Bonzo, "for having me here."

"Not in those trousers!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"The Head would have several sorts of a fit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bonzo, however, insisted upon expressing his thanks personally to Dr. Holmes. So Clive took him along to the Head's study.

The nigger-boy applied his dusky knuckles to the door.

"Come in!" called the Head. He supposed that his visitor was Mr. Railton, whom he was expecting at any moment.

The door opened, and the Head did not look up from his papers.

"One moment, Railton," he said. And he finished what he was writing.

When at length he looked up the Head gave a convulsive start. Before him stood a woolly-headed nigger-boy, bowing and scraping and salaaming.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Holmes. "Who—who are you?"

"Me Massa Jack Hardy's serbant, sah!" said Bonzo.

"Ah, yes! Your master told me all about you. I have arranged for you to stay at the school for the week—er—Bonzo?"

"Dis child come to tank you very much, sah," said Bonzo.

"Me like to gib you de kiss ob gratitude," he added, advancing towards the Head's desk.

Dr. Holmes moved back his chair very hastily. The worthy gentleman shrank from the prospect of being kissed by a thick-lipped nigger-boy.

"I—I would much prefer that you did nothing of the sort," he muttered. "I appreciate that you are grateful, and I desire no kisses in proof of it."

Bonzo stepped back and the Head drew a quick breath of relief.

"Dis little niggah-boy going to hab a good time here, sah," said Bonzo.

The Head smiled.

"I sincerely hope you will, Bonzo," he said. "I feel sure that the majority of the boys will treat you kindly. But there are a few boys of whom you will have to beware. They will probably take exception to you on account of your colour. If they persecute you or make things unpleasant for you in any way, you must mention the matter to me."

Bonzo shook his head vigorously.

"Dis child no sneak, sah," he said. "If nasty boys make t'ings unpleasant for me, me make t'ings mighty more unpleasant for dem! Bonzo know how to take care ob himself, sah."

"I do not doubt it," said the Head, with a smile. "At the same time, I trust there will be no trouble, and that you will be quite happy here."

Bonzo bowed gracefully, and then he departed, backing out

of the study with his face towards the Head, as if he was withdrawing from the presence of Royalty.

The art of walking backwards out of a room is not an easy one, and when Bonzo reached the doorway he tripped up over the mat and shot backwards into the passage, alighting with a terrific concussion upon the linoleum.

Bonzo's mode of exit was so extraordinary that the Head could scarcely refrain from laughing outright. He rose to his feet and walked to the door to see if the nigger-boy was hurt. On glancing out into the passage, however, he saw that Bonzo had disappeared, so he was obviously little the worse for the concussion.

"A most remarkable person!" murmured the Head, as he turned back into his study. "I sincerely hope that none of the meaner spirits will launch a persecution against him. But I have fears. However, the boy assures me that he knows how to look after himself, in which case he will give as good as he receives."

And the Head, dismissing Bonzo from his mind, returned to his papers.

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Ratcliff Loses His Dinner!

"HIMPERENCE, I calls it—downright himperence!"

Toby, the page-boy of St. Jim's, was annoyed. Not mildly annoyed, but very considerably annoyed. He had just been informed by the cook that a nigger-boy was coming into the kitchen for his meals, and that the said nigger-boy was to share Toby's sleeping quarters.

"It fair gets my goat," said Toby. "I never could stand niggers at no price. An' to think that one of the black warmints is goin' to ave 'is grub in the kitchen an' share my bed-room! Wat's the 'Ead thinkin' about to allow such a thing?"

The cook, busy with a rolling-pin, shook her head. "I feel a bit vexed about it myself, Toby," she said. "But what the 'Ead says is law, an' it ain't no use kickin' against it."

"But a nigger!" cried Toby in disgust. "Jest think of it, ma'am! Fancy me havin' to rub shoulders with a common nigger! 'Ere am I, fairly 'igh up in the social scale, so to speak, whereas a nigger ain't got no standin' at all. An' yet I've got to feed with 'im at table, an' share the same bed-room with 'im! It's enough to break a feller's 'eart!"

The cook murmured words of sympathy, but they did not have the effect of lessening Toby's wrath.

Toby had not yet seen Bonzo, but he could picture him in his mind's eye. And he felt that he hated the nigger-boy already, even though he had never set eyes on him.

Toby felt that it was very high-handed of the Head to foist a black boy upon him in this way, without even consulting him beforehand.

"Which I've a jolly good mind to go an' tell the 'Ead exactly wot I thinks about it!" said Toby wrathfully. But it was a good thing for him that he didn't, or a month's notice would probably have been the upshot.

Toby, perched on the kitchen-table with his legs swinging to and fro like pendulums began to think of ways and means whereby he could make Bonzo sit up. The sight of a bowl of flour and water on the table gave him an inspiration.

At one o'clock precisely Bonzo would be coming into the kitchen for dinner. It was now five minutes to one.

"I've jest got time to rig up a nice little booby-trap," murmured Toby. "That black nigger will look as white as snow when I've drenched 'im with flour an' water!"

The cook had bustled away into the scullery, and Toby was free to carry out his designs.

The pageboy fetched a pail, and proceeded to fill it with flour and water. Then, clambering on to a chair, he tied the handle of the pail to a stout nail above the door. When the door was pushed from without the pail would automatically overturn, and its contents would shoot down upon the head of the unfortunate entrant.

Toby chuckled as he jumped down from the chair. "That'll do the trick!" he muttered.

There was a quick footstep outside, and Toby's heart beat faster than usual.

Bonzo was about to walk into the trap, all unwittingly. He would receive a baptism of flour and water which would drench him from head to foot!

But was it Bonzo who was approaching the kitchen? Toby could not be certain. There was something familiar about that quick footstep, and Toby's heart thumped harder than ever, and he looked uneasy.

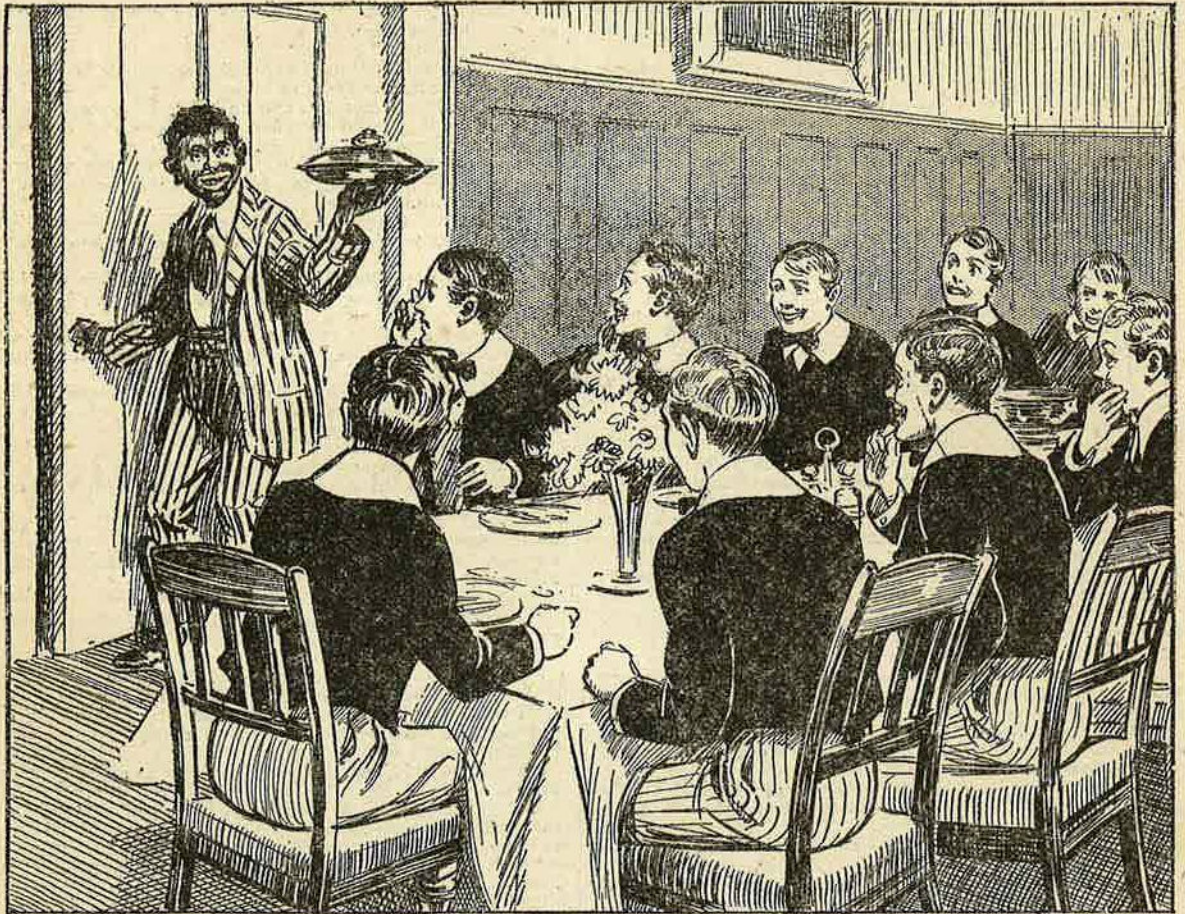
The door, which stood slightly ajar, was pushed right open. And then—

Swish! Swoooooosh!

The pail overturned at precisely the right moment, and it discharged a deluge of flour and water.

But it was not Bonzo who received the shower-bath.

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There was a titter from the St. Jim's fellows when the queerly-dressed Bonzo entered the dining-hall balancing a large silver dish on one hand. Catching sight of the table at which the South Africans were seated, he hurried towards it. "Your dinnah, Massa Jack!" he said, dumping the silver dish on to the table in front of Jack Hardy. (See page 8.)

Horror of horrors! It was Mr. Ratcliff, the sour, ill-tempered master of the New House!

Toby drew back against the dresser, pale with alarm.

As for Mr. Ratcliff, he emitted a fiendish yell which rang through the kitchen.

In one eventful moment Mr. Ratcliff had been completely transformed. He looked like a snowman. The floury water swamped upon his head, and ran down his gown. He was covered with the white, clinging substance as with a garment.

The Housemaster, spluttering and choking with fury, pranced about like a cat on hot bricks. Gouging the liquid out of his eyes, he glared at the covering Toby.

"Boy! Insolent menial!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "Are you responsible for this outrage?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Toby.

"Did you have the brazen effrontery to poise a pail of flour and water above the door?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

Toby gave a faint and reluctant answer in the affirmative. "I am drenched!" hooted the Housemaster. "I am swamped from head to foot! I will see that you are given a month's notice for this abominable conduct!"

Toby blurted out an apology, and he explained, in hurried sentences, that the booby-trap had been intended for Bonzo, the nigger-boy. As a matter of fact, Bonzo appeared in the doorway at that moment, and saw what a narrow escape he had had.

Mr. Ratcliff was in a towering rage, which was hardly surprising, in the circumstances. And when Mr. Ratcliff was in a rage, towering or otherwise, somebody suffered.

With a snarl of fury, the infuriated master strode towards Toby, and proceeded to cuff him with floury hands.

Whack! Smack! Thwack!

Toby was sent reeling from side to side. They were not gentle cuffs which Mr. Ratcliff administered; they were fierce and brutal. Toby yelled with anguish as he was knocked first one way and then the other.

Bonzo stepped into the kitchen. His eyes were blazing. Brutality, in any shape or form, always got Bonzo's back up.

"Stop hittin' de boy like dat, sah!" he cried sharply. "It's not playin' de game!"

Mr. Ratcliff spun round with a snort.

"How dare you interfere, you coloured rascal?" he shouted.

"As soon as I have finished chastising this boy I will turn my attention to you!"

But before the irate Housemaster could deal Toby another cuff, Bonzo snatched up the rolling-pin, and sprang between master and pageboy.

"You keep off!" he said fiercely.

Mr. Ratcliff noted the gleam in Bonzo's eyes, and he noted the upraised rolling-pin. It went against the grain for him to knuckle under to a nigger-boy, but Bonzo was master of the situation.

"I will deal with you later, you young hooligan!" hissed Mr. Ratcliff. "Meantime, cook, kindly send my dinner to me in my study in the New House, when it is ready." And he strode out of the kitchen, a weird figure, caked from head to foot with flour.

In his red-hot rage, Mr. Ratcliff's first intention was to report Bonzo to the Head. But he thought better of it. After all, Bonzo was quite right in defending Toby from the Housemaster's brutal attack. If Mr. Ratcliff went to the Head, there would be an inquiry, and the marks on Toby's cheeks and ears would be ample proof that Mr. Ratcliff had overstepped the mark.

The Housemaster hurried away to his own quarters. He had to run the gauntlet of a crowd of grinning juniors.

Not only did the St. Jim's fellows see him in his floury condition, but the South Africans saw him as well, and they could not help smiling. Mr. Ratcliff hurried past them with his hands fiercely clenched. He liked to appear a dignified personage in the eyes of the South Africans; but he looked anything but dignified now.

The dinner-bell was sounding, and the St. Jim's fellows swarmed into Hall. Meanwhile, Mr. Ratcliff went to get a bath and a change of clothing.

In the kitchen a pleasant little scene had been enacted.

Toby had thanked Bonzo profusely for saving him from heavier punishment. All Toby's animosity towards the nigger-boy had vanished completely.

"The way you stood up to the old tyrant was simply fine!" said Toby admiringly. "It was jolly decent of you, too, considerin' that I intended that booby-trap for you. I think we're goin' to be jolly good pals, Bonzo. Let's shake!" Bonzo's dusky hand gripped that of the pageboy.

"Dis child bery pleased to make friends wid Massa Toby!" he said. "Me like to help you wid your work."

"Oh, good!" said Toby.

Being of a lazy disposition, the pageboy was delighted at the prospect of receiving a helping hand from Bonzo.

"Is dere any'ing I can do now?" asked the latter.

Toby nodded. The cook had just handed him a silver dish, which contained Mr. Ratcliff's dinner.

In one compartment of the dish was a portion of roast chicken. The other two compartments contained baked potatoes and green peas.

"What's dis?" asked Bonzo.

"It's the master's dinner," said Toby. "Will you take it along to him?"

"Sure t'ing!"

Bonzo took the silver dish, and trotted out of the kitchen. Instead of proceeding to Mr. Ratcliff's study, he made his way to the dining-hall. He had no idea that it was the New House master's dinner he was carrying. When Toby had said "the master," Bonzo thought he was referring to Jack Hardy, his own master. And he knew that Jack Hardy was in the dining-hall.

The South Africans had a special table to themselves in Hall. As it happened, they had all been served with their dinner, with the exception of Jack Hardy, who was patiently waiting for his to arrive.

Suddenly the door of the dining-hall was opened very gingerly, and Bonzo entered, balancing the silver dish on one hand, while he closed the door behind him with the other.

There was a titter from the St. Jim's fellows when Bonzo came in. The novelty of the nigger-boy's queer clothes had not yet worn off.

Bonzo paused, glancing round the crowded Hall. Then he caught sight of the table at which the South Africans were seated, and he hurried towards it.

"Your dinnah, Massa Jack!" he said, dumping the silver dish on to the table in front of Jack Hardy.

The leader of the South Africans removed the cover of the dish, and stared in some surprise at the roast chicken.

"Why am I specially favoured?" he asked. "The other fellows are having roast beef and Yorkshire pudding."

Bonzo shook his head.

"Dunno why Massa Jack's dinnah should be different from

de others," he said. "But de pageboy said it was for de master, so dere can't be any mistake. I will bring in de pudding by'm-bye."

So saying, Bonzo trotted cheerfully out of the dining-hall. A fresh titter followed him as he went.

Jack Hardy was hungry, and he tackled the roast chicken with avidity. He did not like to be specially privileged above the others. Still, the dinner was there, and it would have been folly not to eat it. The roast chicken was most enjoyable, and so was the jam-omelette which Bonzo brought into the dining-hall shortly afterwards.

The rest of the fellows had no such luxuries as jam-omelettes. They had to content themselves with stewed prunes and custard.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ratcliff, having had a much-needed bath and a change of attire, was fuming and chafing in his study, waiting for his dinner to arrive.

There was a bell in the Housemaster's study, which connected with the kitchen. Mr. Ratcliff rang the bell viciously and repeatedly, but he could get no answer.

At last, having reached the limit of his patience, Mr. Ratcliff strode away to the kitchen. Toby and Bonzo were there, having their own dinner.

"Where is my dinner?" hooted Mr. Ratcliff. "I have been waiting an unconscionable time!"

"Why, you've 'ad it, sir!" mumbled Toby, with his mouth full.

"Indeed, I have not!" sported Mr. Ratcliff. "I gave instructions that it was to be sent to my study. It has not arrived! Where is the cook? I will demand an immediate explanation!"

Toby glanced at Bonzo.

"You've already took Mr. Ratcliff's dinner along, 'aren't you?" he asked.

Bonzo shook his woolly pate.

"But—but wot did you do with that silver dish I 'anded to you, and the jam-homelette?" gasped Toby.

"I took it to de master," said Bonzo. "Not dis master, but my own master—Massa Jack. I t'ought it was meant for him."

"Oh, my 'at! You've fairly done it now!" murmured Toby.

Mr. Ratcliff glared at Bonzo. If looks could have killed, the nigger-boy would have expired straight away on the floor of the kitchen.

"How dare you dispose of my dinner to someone else, you black rascal!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"It was a disfortunate mistake, sah!" said Bonzo.

"I believe you did it on purpose!" shouted the furious Housemaster.

"Not'ing ob de sort," replied Bonzo. "It was what you call a misundersitting."

At this stage the cook came into the kitchen. Mr. Ratcliff fairly hurled himself at the good dame—metaphorically speaking, of course.

"My dinner!" he hooted. "This coloured scamp has had the audacity to give it to someone else! I insist upon another meal being prepared immediately!"

"Which I'm main sorry, Mr. Ratcliff," said the cook, "but there's no more chicking. And the roast beef's all gone, into the bargain. I could get you some bread-and-butter, and some Gorgonzola."

One of Mr. Ratcliff's pet aversions was Gorgonzola. He could not stand it at any price. And he had no desire to make a frugal meal of bread-and-butter.

There was nothing for it but to go dinnerless. The chicken had gone, the roast beef had gone, and bread-and-butter was unthinkable.

Mr. Ratcliff longed to seize Bonzo by the scruff of the neck and shake him. But there was something in the nigger boy's manner which kept him at bay.

Breathing threatenings and slaughter, Mr. Horace Ratcliff stamped out of the kitchen, with the conviction that this was his unlucky day.

CHAPTER 4.

The Tournament Opens!

BONZO blossomed forth in a new outfit after dinner. Toby willingly lent the nigger-boy a page's uniform.

It fitted Bonzo perfectly, and suited him down to the ground. He looked very smart in his new attire.

"Dis clobber suit me a treat!" said Bonzo, surveying himself in the mirror in Toby's bed-room.

"Well, it's a jolly sight smarter than the togs you turned up in!" said Toby.

There were two beds in the page's room. They stood side by side. Toby pointed to the larger of the two.

"You can 'ave the best bed, Bonzo," he said generously.

"You saved me from bein' 'alf-killed by old Ratty, so it's only right that I should do you any little favours I can."

"Dat's bery handsome ob you, Massa Toby!" said Bonzo.

"By de way, is dere any work to do dis afternoon?" Toby shook his head.

"Work's finished for the day," he said. "I'm goin' to

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see the sports. They're startin' at two o'clock. Comin' along?"

"Golly! You bet Bonzo will be on de spot! Me want to see Massa Jack win ebry single event."

"Then I reckon you'll be unlucky!" said Toby, with a grin. "We've got some 'ot-stuff sportsmen at St. Jim's! You've never seen Figgins run a 'undred yards, I suppose?"

"No."
"Well, he's like a flash of greased lightnin'. If there's a man that can beat 'im among the South Africans, I'll swallow my buttons! Come along, Bonzo!"

White boy and black boy presented a striking contrast as they trotted off, arm-in-arm, to the cricket ground. Toby's face was pale, due to an occasional cigarette smoked in secret. Bonzo's complexion was as black as the ace of spades. The uniforms of the pair were identical.

On reaching the cricket ground, they found a vast multitude assembled to witness the opening of the Great Sports Tournament.

The Head was there, and most of the masters, and several young ladies were present in their dainty summer dresses.

Marie Rivers, the charming school nurse, was reclining in a deck-chair, with a parasol shielding her from the sun. Talbot of the Shell, clad in running-shorts and vest, stood beside her, chatting gaily.

Ethel Cleveland, the winsome cousin of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was also among the spectators. And so was Doris Levison.

Doris was rather disappointed to find that her brother, Levison of the Fourth, was not one of the twelve who had been chosen to represent St. Jim's. But he was "spare man," so that if one of the others happened to break down, Levison would take his place.

Mr. Railton was in charge of the sports, and Kildare and Monteith, of the Sixth, were his first-lieutenants.

There were to be seven events that afternoon, and the team which won the greatest number would be awarded one point.

The various courses had been marked out by means of whitewashed lines, and everything was in readiness for the tournament to commence.

Mr. Railton carried a megaphone. He put it to his lips, and his stentorian shout was heard all over the ground.

"Entrants for the hundred yards' race, line up!"

Talbot left his girl chum's side, and sprinted on to the field. A cheery "Good luck!" from Marie Rivers followed him.

St. Jim's was putting six fellows into the field for the hundred yards' race. The South Africans also had six representatives.

The runners toed the mark, and crouched in readiness. Their faces were tense and set.

Mr. Railton's eye roved along the line of athletes. Then he fired the pistol, and they were off in a flash.

To those who viewed the event from a distance, the race appeared to be a wild scramble.

A bunch of fast-moving figures shot towards the tape, and it came whirling down. But it was impossible, except for the judges, to say who had won.

Kildare of the Sixth raised a flag aloft, bearing the St. Jim's colours. And a mighty cheer rang out.

The school had drawn first blood. And Mr. Railton, through his megaphone, announced that Figgins was the winner.

It had been a very close thing, for two of the South African runners had been hard on Figgins's heels. But the long-legged New House junior had breasted the tape a fraction of a second before them, and first honours went to St. Jim's.

Undaunted by this early reverse, the South Africans quickly took their revenge.

The next event was the quarter-mile—an affair which called for much more stamina than the hundred yards.

Talbot, who had not got off the mark quickly enough in the first race, was very prominent now. He tore along in great style, and led the field for a considerable distance.

But Talbot was not destined to have matters all his own way.

A tall, raven-haired fellow named Drysdale—one of the best runners the South Africans had brought over—rushed full-pelt in Talbot's wake, desperately determined to overhaul him.

Drysdale's turn of speed was amazing. It made the on-lookers gasp. It seemed marvellous that a fellow could tear along at such a pace; and Monty Lowther, who was not taking part in this event, suggested that Drysdale had a motor-engine inside him.

"Look out, Talbot!"

"Man behind you!"

"Put the pace on, old chap!"

Talbot was only too well aware of the danger, for the patter of running feet behind him drew closer and closer.

With only ten yards to go, Talbot put on the best spurt of

which he was capable. But Drysdale had spurred, too, and he fairly seemed to fly over the remaining distance. He shot ahead of Talbot like a flash, and had the St. Jim's fellow beaten by a yard.

"Oh, well run, sir!"

"Bravo, South Africa!"

Cheering and handclapping were heard all over the ground. Disappointed though they were at seeing one of their favourites beaten, the St. Jim's fellows were true sportsmen, and they did not stint their applause.

After Drysdale's dramatic victory, St. Jim's had a bad time.

The high jump and the long jump came next, and the school was beaten on each occasion.

It seemed that the South Africans had specialised in jumping. They had a slim, nimble fellow called Clare, who cleared the bar at a dizzy height which none of the St. Jim's fellows could approach.

Not content with carrying off the honours in the high jump, Clare won the long jump also, with a glorious leap which earned him salvoes of applause.

"The situation, Sidney," said Cardew to Clive, "is becoming serious. In fact, it is serious already. Your South African pals have won three events to our one. In all my fifteen years on this planet I've never seen such wonderful jumpin', begad! That fellow Clare will be breakin' world's records when he's a few years older. What's the next item on the programme?"

"The hurdle race," said Clive.

"Oh, help! Clare will win that as well."

"If we choose to let him. But it's up to us to make a big effort. I reckon you can win the hurdles, Cardew, if you put some vim into it."

"You flatter me, Sidney. I shall be about as clumsy as the cow that jumped over the moon. However, I'll do my best."

Cardew's best was very good indeed. He surprised his schoolfellows, and himself into the bargain, by winning the hurdle race in great style. Clare was second, Tom Merry third, and Jack Hardy fourth.

Ralph Reckness, flushed and radiant, acknowledged the cheers of the multitude with a graceful bow.

The tug-of-war came next. There was to be three pulls to decide the issue.

The South Africans lay back on the rope and heaved like giants. They won the first pull, but the herculean effort had exhausted them, and St. Jim's won the next two pulls with comparative ease.

And now there was a flutter of excitement all over the ground. For the honours were evenly divided, St. Jim's and the South Africans having won three events each.

The last event of the day—the mile—would be the decider.

There was an interval of half an hour before the race, so that the competitors could have a much-needed rest. They threw themselves down in the cool grass in various attitudes of restful repose.

It was rather curious that neither Tom Merry nor Jack Hardy, the rival leaders, had yet won an event. At least, the crowd thought it curious. But they did not know that Tom Merry and his rival had been specially saving themselves for the mile.

There was a thrill when Mr. Railton called upon the entrants for the mile to line up.

The route was flanked with spectators, prominent among whom were Toby, the page, and Bonzo.

"Massa Jack will win dis race!" said Bonzo confidently.

"Dis child will cheer him all de way."

"You've done quite enough yellin' already," said Toby. "I wonder you ain't got a sore throat. If you do any more cheerin', you'll break a blood-vessel!"

Bonzo, however, cheered frantically as the runners lined up.

"Go it, Massa Jack! Run like Billy-o! Keep de flag ob South Africa flyin'. Hooray!"

Jack Hardy turned his head and smiled at his faithful follower.

Crack! went the pistol. And the runners were off like the wind.

The course was a long one—six times round the cricket ground.

Figgins of St. Jim's made the running. He forged ahead in fine style, but after a couple of laps he slowed down badly. Figgys was a sprinter rather than a long-distance runner, and he had expended too much energy at the start.

Tom Merry was going great guns, and so was Jack Hardy. They ran together, side by side, neither being able to claim the advantage. They swept past the slowly-travelling Figgins like a human avalanche; and on they went, neck and neck, engaged in a desperate tussle for supremacy.

The two rivals had quite different styles of running. Jack Hardy made progress by means of long, sweeping strides, which seemed to call for very little effort on his part. Tom Merry's stride was shorter, but quicker. He was pounding

along at a great pace, but, try as he would, he could not shake off the South African.

These two led the field. The others were far behind. Figgins was out of the running, and Drysdale and Talbot had come up in front of him. They were watching for a breakdown on the part of the leaders. But neither Tom Merry nor Jack Hardy showed any sign of breaking down. Still maintaining their fast pace, they flashed along side by side.

"Go it, Massa Jack! Shake him off! Run like anyting!"

Bonzo's arms were going like windmills, and he was dancing to and fro in a state of the wildest excitement.

It was the last lap.

Tom Merry, straining every nerve and sinew, felt that his heart was bursting. His hands clutched the corks, his face was streaming with perspiration.

Jack Hardy seemed as fit and fresh as when he had started. He seemed to fairly eat up the yards with his long stride. But he could not get the lead.

"I really believe," said Mr. Railton, who stood near the tape, "that it will be a dead-heat!"

"Looks very much like it, sir," agreed Kildare. "Run up, Merry! Only twenty yards now! Fifteen! Ten! Now for it! Oh, well run, kid!"

Summoning all his energy for a last desperate burst, Tom Merry fairly leapt at the outstretched tape. He breasted it in the nick of time, and tumbled head-over-heels at the feet of the spectators. He had beaten Jack Hardy by inches!

Cheer upon cheer rang out from hundreds of throats. Cheer upon cheer! And the applause was renewed when Jack Hardy, who had made such a gallant fight, ran towards the fellow who had vanquished him, and helped him to his feet and shook hands with him.

"The best man wins!" panted Jack Hardy. "Jove, what a finish!"

"It was the hardest race of my life!" gasped Tom Merry, with a smile.

Thus ended the first day of the sports. By winning four events out of seven, St. Jim's had scored one point.

It was a good start. But there was a long, long way to go. A whole crowd of contests remained to be fought out. The boxing and swimming contests, the cycling race, the Marathon race, the boatrace—to be crowned by a cricket match that would probably live in history.

It would be a wonderful week—a week of "routs and dis-comfortures, rushes and rallies"—a week of efforts and achievements, triumphs and disasters—a period packed with thrills and surprises.

Who would carry off the honours? Nobody could tell.

Only one thing was certain—that every contest would be fought out in the true sporting spirit, and that the side which was eventually defeated would go down fighting.

CHAPTER 5.

Bonzo Makes an Enemy.

"HI, you brat of a nigger! Come here!"

Aubrey Racke of the Shell stood in the doorway of his study and rapped out that command in tones of authority.

Bonzo happened to be passing along the passage looking for his master. He heard Racke's command—he could hardly help doing so, for it rang the length of the passage—but he did not heed. He did not even turn his head.

Racke frowned darkly.

"Come here, I tell you!" he shouted.

Bonzo walked on. Had Racke addressed him properly in the first place he would have obeyed the summons. But he resented being called a brat of a nigger.

"Well, of all the cheek!" muttered Racke angrily. "Fancy that young whelp defyin' me like this!"

Again he called, but Bonzo was almost out of sight by this time.

Racke realised that if he wanted Bonzo he would have to go and fetch him. Since the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet would have to go to the mountain.

The cad of the Shell sprinted down the passage. He was wearing rubber-soled shoes, and Bonzo did not hear him coming.

Racke reached the end of the passage, and darted round the corner, and seized the nigger-boy by the collar.

"Got you!" he panted.

Bonzo struggled to free himself, but in vain.

"What you want wid dis child?" he asked.

"I want you to do a little faggin' for me," said Racke grimly. "I'm havin' some fellows to tea, an' I want you to boil the kettle an' lay the table. I hear you're rather useful as a menial."

It had occurred to Racke that Bonzo would make an excellent fag, and he meant to commandeer the nigger-boy before anyone else got hold of him.

Of course, Racke was not entitled to a fag, and he had

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no claim whatever on Bonzo's services. But he didn't worry about that.

"Come along!" he said sharply.

Bonzo still struggled.

"Me no work for anybody 'cept Massa Jack and his friends," he said. "Let me go!"

"Not likely!" scoffed Racke. And he proceeded to frog-march Bonzo to his study.

Save for those two, the passage was deserted, for the other fellows had not yet come in from the sports.

Bonzo had his hands free, and he felt like dashing his fist into Racke's face. But he hesitated to commit assault and battery upon such an elegant person as Aubrey Racke. He did not want to cause any trouble at St. Jim's, and possibly make things awkward for the South Africans. He was determined, however, not to do Racke's bidding.

Racke hustled the nigger-boy into his study and kicked the door shut.

"Now, you young cub," he said fiercely, "you'd better make up your mind to obey my orders."

He released Bonzo, and stood with his back to the door, shutting off the way of escape.

Bonzo put his hands in his pockets, and assumed an obstinate expression.

Racke waved his hands towards the fireplace.

"Lay the fire, an' light it!" he commanded.

"Sha'n't!"

"Do as I tell you, you coloured ape!"

"Sha'n't!" repeated Bonzo.

"Then I'll jolly well make you!" said Racke, breathing hard.

He picked up a cricket-stump and took a quick stride towards Bonzo.

Again the nigger-boy was tempted to hurl himself at the elegant Aubrey. But once more he refrained. If he attacked the St. Jim's junior, he reflected, he would only get himself into disgrace, and perhaps be turned out of the school. That was unthinkable. He wanted to stay, so as to serve his young master from South Africa.

Racke seized Bonzo by the collar and heaved him face downwards across the table. He was in a royal rage. Bonzo's defiance had goaded him into a state of ungovernable fury.

Pinning his victim down with one hand, Racke started to belabour him with the cricket-stump.

Whack, whack, whack!

The blows were delivered with the full force of Racke's right arm.

Bonzo was not thin-skinned. Like most negroes, he had a leather hide. But even the toughest of hides would have suffered under that avalanche of cruel blows. Bonzo had to bite his lip to keep from crying aloud.

Presently Racke paused, with the stump poised in the air.

"Promise to fag for me," he panted, "an' I'll give over."

Bonzo was determined not to yield. If he promised to fag for Racke he would find no time to look after Jack Hardy. And he was resolved to remain loyal to his master.

"Promise!" repeated Racke.

"Sha'n't!" came the defiant reply.

Racke's thin lips were set in a cruel line.

"In that case," he said, "you shall have another dose, harder than before!"

The cricket-stump was again brought into play. And Bonzo, little Spartan though he was, could not help yelling now, for the cruel castigation caused him extreme anguish.

"Yow-ow-wow! Oh, you brute! You'm half killing dis child!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"I'll give over as soon as you've promised to fag for me," panted Racke.

It was doubtful if Bonzo would have been able to hold out much longer. He was, as a matter of fact, beginning to waver when there was a tramping of feet in the passage.

The door of Racke's study was thrown open without ceremony, and the Terrible Three of the Shell rushed in.

The juniors took in the situation at a glance.

"You cowardly cur!" exclaimed Tom Merry in ringing tones. And he wrested the cricket-stump from Racke's grasp.

Bonzo slid down from the table and rolled over on the floor, groaning pitifully.

Tom Merry's eyes were blazing. Any act of cruelty, whether to humans or to animals, made Tom's blood boil. And his two chums were not less indignant.

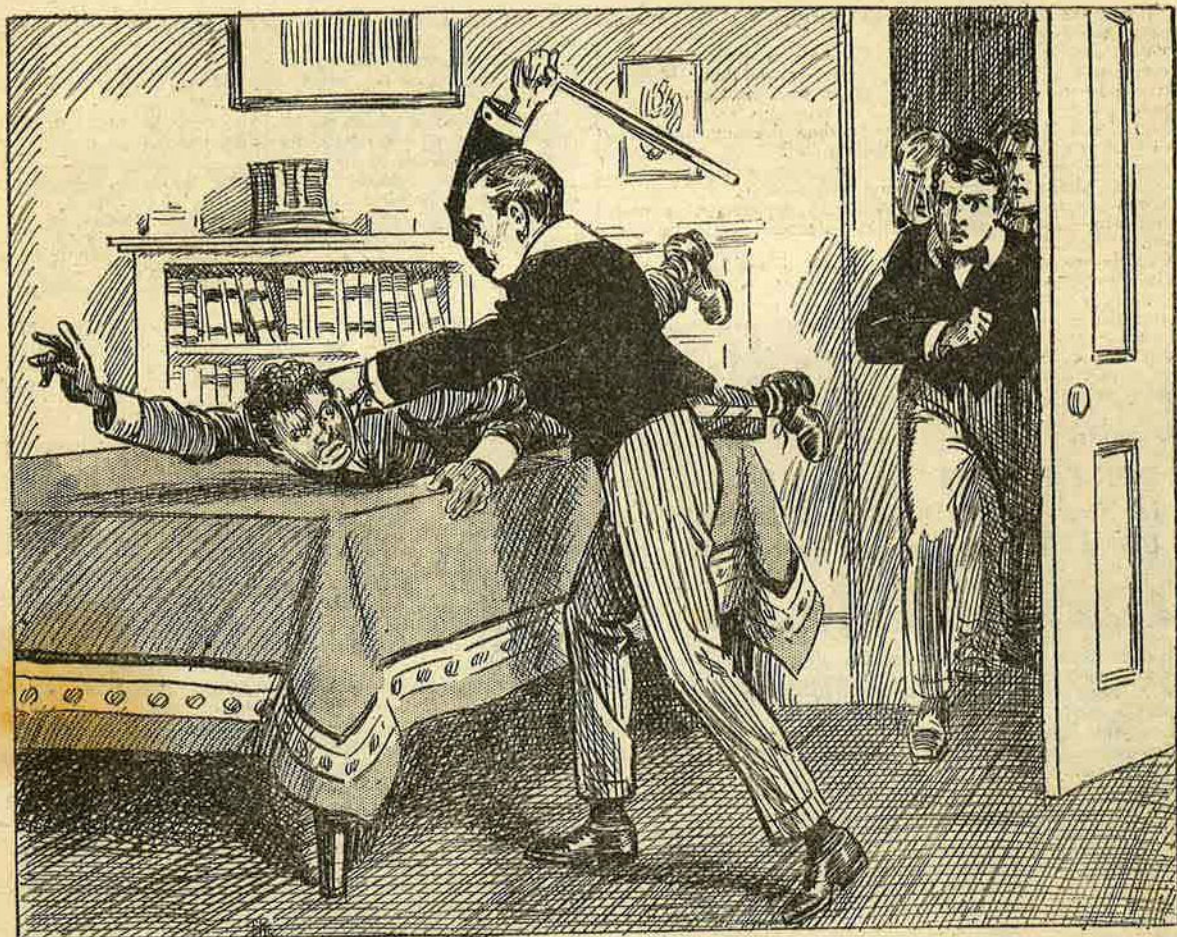
Racke's face was pale, and he started back, trembling a little. His fury was spent now, and he realised that he had gone too far—much too far.

"I wouldn't have touched the little brat," he began, "only he defied me; and I'm not used to bein' defied by my inferiors."

"Inferiors!" echoed Manners scornfully. "I like that! Why, you're not fit to black Bonzo's boots! He may be only a nigger, but he's worth ten of you."

Tom Merry assisted Bonzo to his feet.

"Buck up, kid!" he said kindly.



"Yow-ow-ow! Oh, you brute!" wailed Bonzo. "You'm half killing dis child!" "I'll give over as soon as you've promised to fag for me!" panted Racke. There was a tramping of feet in the passage, then the door of Racke's study opened and the Terrible Three rushed in. "You cowardly cur!" cried Tom Merry. (See page 10.)

Bonzo's large eyes glowed with gratitude. "T'ank you, Massa Merry!" he said. "Dis child quite all right now."

"Do you feel equal to taking a little exercise?" asked Monty Lowther.

Bonzo nodded. "Then you can get hold of this cricket-stump, and give Racke the same as he gave you!"

"Dat's all right," said Bonzo. "Me no want revenge." "It's not a question of revenge; it's a question of justice," said Tom Merry. He swung round upon Aubrey Racke. "Now, you bullying cad, you're going through the hoop!" "Stand back!" muttered Racke in alarm, as Tom Merry and Manners strode towards him.

But there was no escape for the elegant Aubrey. He was slung across the table, face downwards, and Monty Lowther handed the cricket-stump to Bonzo.

"Pile in!" he said. Tom Merry and Manners pinioned Racke to the table, while Bonzo got busy with the stump.

"Why, you're only tapping him!" said Tom Merry. "Lay it on good and hard! You needn't have any qualms, Bonzo. It's poetic justice, you know!"

Bonzo took Tom Merry at his word, and he wielded the cricket-stump with all the vim and vigour of which he was capable.

Racke yelled and squirmed under the castigation. "Ow! Yow! Yowp! Chuck it, you black beast!" "Give him an extra hard one for being rude," said Lowther. Bonzo obeyed. And it was not until his arm ached that the Terrible Three allowed him to desist.

Moaning and groaning, the wretched Racke slithered down from the table and grovelled on the carpet. His face was contorted with anguish, and there was a menacing gleam in his eyes which boded ill for Bonzo.

"Come along, kid!" said Tom Merry. And, without a word to the squirming Racke, the avengers withdrew.

"You'll have to keep your eyes open in future, Bonzo,"

said Manners, when they were out in the passage. "Give Racke a wide berth, or he'll be doing you an injury."

"Dis child know how to look after himself," said Bonzo. "I hope you do," said Tom Merry gravely, "because you happen to have made a bad enemy. Racke is an outsider and a schemer of the worst type. Keep clear of him while you're here. If you fall into his clutches again, we may not be at hand to help you."

Bonzo promised to steer clear of the fellow who had persecuted him. He did not anticipate any further trouble with Racke.

But the nigger-boy would have been very uneasy had he known the thoughts that were passing through Racke's mind at that moment—base thoughts of revenge, such as only a mean-spirited and contemptible cad could have harboured.

CHAPTER 6.

A Double Victory!

JACK HARDY and his overseas chums turned in early that night, and slept the clock round.

It had been a most strenuous day for them, but they felt no ill-effects when they awoke next morning. After their long sleep they were like giants refreshed.

Clive and Cardew gave them a look in while they were dressing.

"Top of the mornin', dear men!" said Cardew. "I trust you are all feelin' in the pink?"

"Absolutely!" said Jack Hardy. "We're simply bursting with energy. Personally, I feel that I could push a house over."

"That's good," said Clive. "You'll need every ounce of energy to-day, Jack."

"What's on?"

"Cycling race at eleven, Marathon this afternoon," was the reply.

"Good! I feel quite equal to both."

"But what about bikes?" asked Drysdale. "We've left our gear on the Cape."

"We can fix you up," said Clive. "There's a choice assortment of racing jiggers in the cycle-shed. Hallo! There goes the brekker gong. You fellows will have to put a jerk in it!"

The South Africans hurriedly finished dressing, and followed Clive and Cardew to the dining-hall.

Breakfast was a merry meal. The hum of happy voices made the dining-hall appear like a human hive.

When the meal was over, the South Africans were provided with bicycles, and they put in some practice in the quad.

Cardew watched them with an appraising eye.

"Sidney," he drawled, "we shall have to pull up our socks an' gird up our loins, in a manner of speakin', if we hope to beat these fellows at bikin'. They seem to have been born on bikes. Just look at 'em!"

Jack Hardy & Co. went whizzing round the quad at a rare turn of speed. They were skilled cyclists, every one of them, capable of getting every ounce out of a machine.


DON'T FORGET! The Last Coupon
for Our GRAND £300 CRICKET
COMPETITION appears on page 20
of this issue.

But St. Jim's had its cycling champions as well. Over a five-mile course Jack Blake was a genius. And Tom Merry and Talbot, to say nothing of Figgins and Redfern, were expert cyclists.

Everything pointed to a great race at eleven o'clock. The course to be taken was a circular one, starting and finishing in the school gateway.

A few minutes before the appointed time the competitors lined up with their machines.

Bonzo, who had been very busy that morning, blacking numerous pairs of boots, and helping Toby the page with his duties, came out into the quad to wish his master luck.

"Dis is your race, Massa Jack!" he said. "I sort ob feel it in my bones. You will bike de five miles in about two-free minutes."

"I shall be the world's champion if I do!" said Jack Hardy, laughing.

Bonzo felt his master's back tyre.

"I guess dis tyre could do wid a bit more pumping up," he said. And he got busy with the pump. "You want it as hard as a bullet, Massa Jack."

Bonzo pumped the tyre almost to bursting point. Then the school clock started to strike eleven, and Mr. Railton came hurrying on the scene.

"Are you all ready, my boys?" he asked.

The cyclists nodded.

"Then I will explain the route to you, so that you cannot possibly go wrong," said the Housemaster. And he described the route in detail.

There were fourteen competitors—seven South Africans, and seven St. Jim's fellows. They stood beside their machines, gripping the handlebars, and waiting for the pistol to be fired, so that they could take a running start.

Crack!

The pistol rang out, and there was quite a stampede in the school gateway, so eager were the cyclists to get off the mark.

Jack Blake was the first to get away. He swung himself astride the saddle, and went pedalling down the road for dear life.

Scores of fellows were perched on the school wall, and they yelled their encouragement.

"Go along, Blake!"

"Put your beef into it!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

In less than half a minute Jack Blake was lost to sight. He whizzed round the bend in the road, hotly pursued by a swartly South African named Wallace. Not far behind was a whole bunch of cyclists.

Jack Blake had quite made up his mind to win this event. Unfortunately for Blake, thirteen others had made up their minds to win it also.

Bending his head over the handlebars, Blake flashed along as if impelled by some unseen force.

A charabanc came thundering past, and he had to draw into the hedge. But he did not slacken his speed.

With half the distance completed, Jack Blake was still leading. But he was beginning to feel the strain now.

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There was a steep hill to climb, and he changed his gear and went for it baldheaded. When half-way up it, however, a sense of weakness came over him. His strength was failing, and he began to wish he had started off less madly on this stern race.

Wallace, who had been sticking to the leader like a limpet, also began to crack up. He found the hill too much for him, and he was obliged to dismount before he reached the top.

Three cyclists, however, pedalled up the steep ascent as if it were level ground.

The three were Tom Merry, Jack Hardy, and Dick Redfern. They were riding abreast, and were in fine fettle.

Jack Blake, though he struggled on gamely, with undaunted spirit, was soon overtaken. And Wallace was also left far behind.

With one mile to go, Tom Merry developed tyre trouble. His back tyre was bumping badly, and Tom realised, with a groan of dismay, that he must have picked up a puncture on the road. He was obliged to get off and investigate; and Jack Hardy and Dick Redfern drew ahead, engaged in a fierce and valiant struggle for supremacy.

And now the school gates came in sight, and the long line of cheering fellows on the wall.

With a superhuman effort, Dick Redfern forced his way to the front. A gust of wind carried away his school cap, but he naturally didn't stop to retrieve it at such a moment. He pedalled away as if his life depended upon it. And his eyes were fixed upon the thick chalk-line across the road.

"Good old Reddy!"

"Stick it out, old man!"

"You're nearly home!"

The fellows on the school wall craned their heads forward to see the finish. And then the shrill, excited voice of Bonzo made itself heard.

"Come on, Massa Jack! You'm got him beat, sure! Spurt—spurt! Dat's de style! Hooroo!"

Bonzo broke off with a frenzied cheer as Jack Hardy, overhauling his man with a supreme effort, crossed the chalk-line. He had beaten Dick Redfern by a foot!

There were cheers for the winner, and cheers for the loser; and a fresh volley of cheers for plucky Jack Blake, who came in third.

It had been a glorious race, with the issue in doubt up to the finish.

The South Africans had gained a point, so that the rival teams now had one point each.

"I felt sure you'd do de trick, Massa Jack!" said Bonzo, who was fairly crowing with delight. "And if you win de Marathon race dis afternoon, eberyting in de garden will be lubly!"

"I shall do my best, Bonzo, of course," said Jack Hardy, as he wheeled his machine through the quad. "But I reckon St. Jim's have got some fine long-distance runners."

"Dat's true 'nuff," said Bonzo. "But none ob dem will come up to you, Massa Jack," he added loyally.

The Marathon was to be a very stern affair. Strictly speaking, the distance for this event should have been twenty-


DON'T MISS THIS OPPOR-
TUNITY of Reaping a Golden
Harvest!

six miles, with a few hundred yards tacked on, this being the distance which the famous Greek runner had covered when he took the tidings of battle to Athens. But fellows of fourteen and fifteen could scarcely have been expected to run such a terrific distance, though many of them would have tackled the task courageously enough.

Ten miles was the distance agreed upon. And a run of ten miles on a scorching summer day would be no picnic.

Only the cream of the St. Jim's runners were taking part—Tom Merry, Talbot, Redfern, and Figgins.

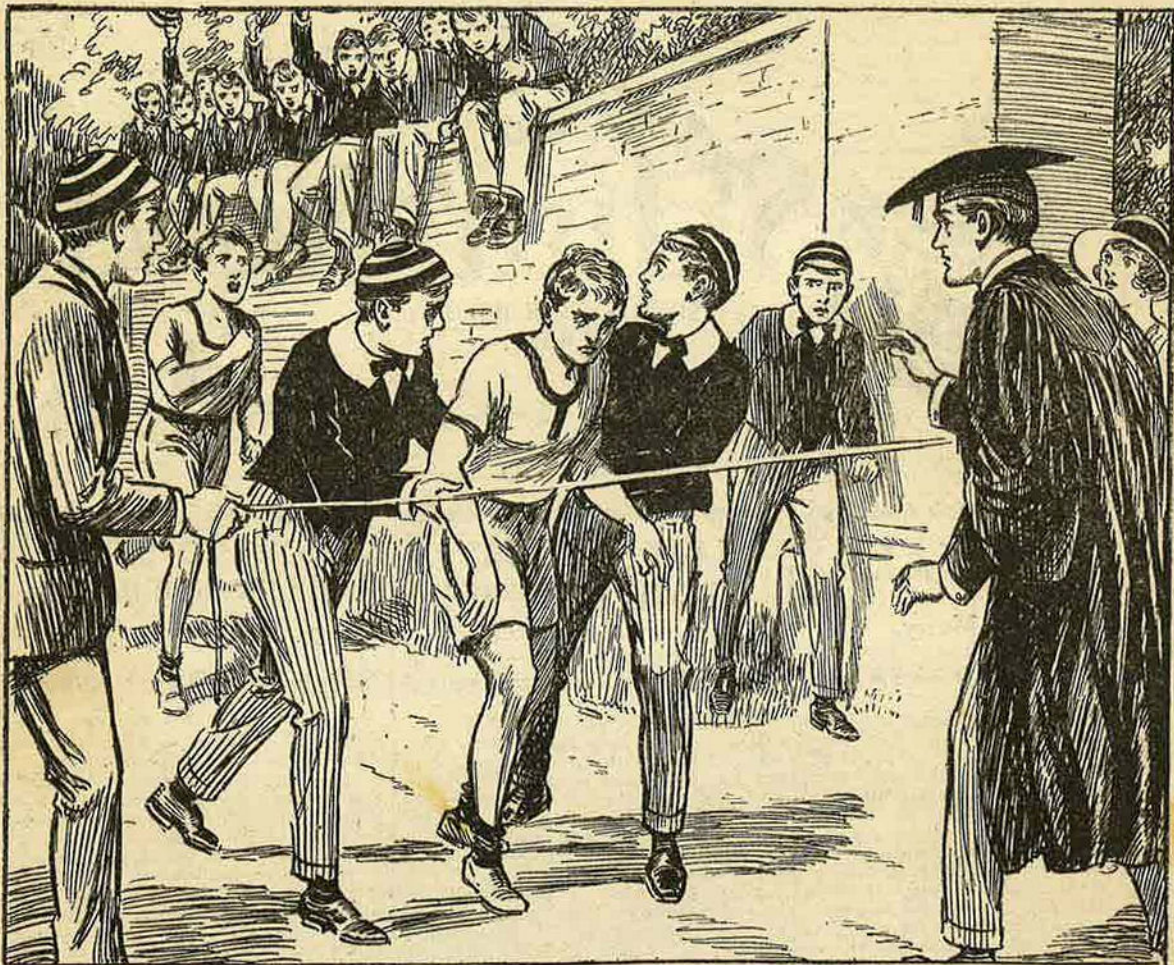
The South Africans, in their zeal to win this event, put no less than ten runners into the field.

The great race started about an hour after dinner.

As in the case of the cycling race, the course was a circular one, starting and finishing at St. Jim's. But it was twice the distance.

Mr. Railton started the runners on their long journey, and the cheers of the multitude rang in their ears as they pattered away down the dusty road.

Tom Merry made the running, with Talbot hard at his heels. The two chums had made an arrangement, whereby Tom Merry should make the pace for Talbot.



Talbot was ahead of Jack Hardy and nearing the school gates, when he suddenly reeled and pitched forward. Cardew slipped down from the school wall, and Olive followed. Together they went towards Talbot, raised him to his feet, and assisted him to the tape. In that tense moment, they did not realise that they were acting unwisely and that Talbot would be disqualified for receiving assistance. (See page 16.)

The faithful Bonzo had borrowed a bicycle, and he pedalled along beside Jack Hardy, giving him plenty of encouragement.

"Take your time about it, Massa Jack. No need to put de pace on just yet. Wait till de fellows in front begin to go groggy, an' den run like billy-ho!"

This advice, though crudely given, was excellent in its way. The only drawback was that the fellows in front showed no sign of "going groggy."

Tom Merry was running at the top of his form, and Talbot kept close on his heels all the time.

The South Africans had spread themselves out. Some were running so fast that it was obvious they would tire themselves. Others, including Jack Hardy, were content to take things easily. They were keeping their energies in reserve—a very wise policy.

At the end of the first mile Tom Merry and Talbot were slightly ahead. At the second mile they had increased their lead. At the third and fourth they were still running strongly, and at the half-way mark, when they wheeled round in the direction of St. Jim's, they were still well in front. Tom Merry was panting rather heavily, but Talbot was as fresh as paint.

On the homeward journey there were numerous hills to be climbed, steep gradients which were guaranteed to take the heart out of the strongest.

Three miles from home Tom Merry collapsed completely. He tottered towards the narrow carpet of grass by the wayside, and flung himself down upon it, utterly "whacked."

But Tom had accomplished what he had set out to do. He had made the pace for Talbot, and the latter was still going grandly.

"Go ahead, old man!" panted Tom Merry. "It's your race."

"Is anybody coming up behind?"

"Not a soul," said Tom, scanning the long stretch of roadway. "You'll win in a canter!"

Heartened by this cheering remark, Talbot ran on.

The sun beat down upon his unprotected head, and he felt half-baked. But he had the satisfaction of knowing that only three miles remained, and that the rest of the runners were far behind.

Talbot covered the next mile in splendid style. And then, all of a sudden, his energy seemed to peter out.

Whether it was the heat of the sun, or whether he had over-run himself, he hardly knew. But his knees seemed to wobble, and he found himself lurching sideways as he ran.

"I must pull myself together," he muttered. "There's still two miles to go."

He stumbled on for another mile, a mile of hard going on a rutty road, a mile that seemed like three to the exhausted junior.

He came to a steep hill, and was obliged to walk up it. His strength was failing fast now.

It was a worn and leg-weary junior who drew himself up over the crest of the hill.

Before him, in the distance, rose the lofty spire of St. Jim's. He could see the picturesque, ivy-clad tower, which had weathered the storms of centuries.

Behind him, as he glanced half-fearfully over his shoulder, he discerned the figure of a runner. It was a fellow in a brown vest.

The South Africans sported brown vests, and Talbot uttered a groan, for he realised that the oncoming runner was an opponent. Whether it was Jack Hardy or Drysdale or Claro he could not tell. But it was certainly a South African.

Talbot clenched his hands tightly, and staggered on. It was by sheer will-power that he made progress along that

(Continued on page 16.)



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

A RIGHT hearty welcome to August Bank Holiday, and so say all of us! No lessons for a day! No grinding in a dusty Form-room! No restrictions for having a good time! Our August Bank Holiday motto at St. Jim's is: "Come, let us be joyful!" That, of course, is as it should be.

Who will deny that August Bank Holiday is the jolliest and most popular holiday of the year, with the exception of, perhaps, Christmas? It comes in midsummer, when the weather is, or ought to be, at its best. On August Bank Holiday a schoolboy's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of ice-creams, ginger-pop, cricket, summer breezes, scorching sun, topping rambles, and sea bathing.

We make the most of August Bank Holiday at St. Jim's, and dun our paters and pet uncles for extra tips to blue on holiday making.

Bank Holiday is here, boys! Give your grumbles the go-by and grin! Set sadness aside and smile! Chuck chin-wagging and chortle!

The holiday spirit moves me to rhyme, so fetch the office harp, and here goes:

Hurrah for August Bank Holiday!
From swotting we are free.
Ratty can rave, and so can Knox,
See Gussy's bright new fancy socks,
And Baggy, as usual, is on the rocks.
But we'll have a jolly spree!

Hurrah for August Bank Holiday!
We cheer with might and main.
'Tis a welcome break from the daily grind,
Get rid of the dibs, but we don't mind!
Long be the day, joy unconfined,
And long may it NEVER rain!

Monty Lowther has just hauled a dictionary through the office harp and broken the strings, so to the great relief of my readers I must give up my Holiday Ode.

Here's wishing you all a rollicking good time.

Tom Merry

BANK HOLIDAY RECOLLECTIONS!

(Contributed by St. Jim's Celebrities and Notorieties.)

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

It puts me all in a fluttah, deah boys, when I think of the August Bank Holiday I spent on Hampstead Heath, a few yeahs ago. First of all I patwonised the coconut shies, and aftah hittin' a gentleman on the nappah with one of the balls, and hurlin' anoathah ball through a cavavan window, I knocked down a cocoonut and bore it pwoudly away. Then I twied the swings, but my toppah and I fell through into the menagewie, wooo. As nobody would offah to wecovah my headgeah, I clambered up myself on to the top of the marquee. The canvas must have been pwetty wooten, for all of a sudden it gave way, and I fell through into the menagewie, wight into the monkey house, the wooo of which was bein' wopaided. Oh deah! The monkeys wan all ovah me as I lay on the floor, and ewybody in the menagewie woared. I managed to escape at last. Dashing out of the circus, I ran off as hard as I could for St. Jim's. I sha'n't go to Hampstead Heath on Bank Holiday again in a hawwy, deah boys,

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

Bank Holiday's all rite if you've got plenty of munney to spend. One August Bank Holiday I found a tikket for a charyrbang trip, so I terned up at Rylcombe Market Place and took mi sect. I had a fine ryde into the hart of the country, but while I was in an orchard piking appels, a horrid dog sprang at me, and in skrambling over a fense I lost mi way, and when I found it again, to mi horror I diskuvered that the charyrbang had started back to Rylcombe. I had no munney. Wot was I to do? I hid on a farm kart going in the direkshon of home, but was diskuvered and kicked off. I borroed a bike from a farmyard (without the owner's permission), but after grinding up hill for 5 myles I ran down hill into a duckpond. Then the owner of the byke kame along and wanted to kill me. He chased me along the mane rode for anuthher 7 myles, and then gave up. I krawled the rest of the way to St. Jim's, and arrived there, just at locking-up time, a fizzikal reek. Mi werd, wot a holiday!"

HOW TO SPEND BANK HOLIDAY!

By Monty Lowther.

If August Bank Holiday comes, and you are at a loss as to what to do, the following tips may be useful:

The Zoo.—A lot of people go to the Zoo on August Bank Holiday, and a lot of fun may be had there. The animals, both in and out of the cages, are very interesting. In the monkey house is to be seen an animal bearing a remarkable likeness to George Alfred Grundy. There is also a giraffe that reminds one very forcibly of Piggins, and a laughing hyena closely resembling our own Gussy.

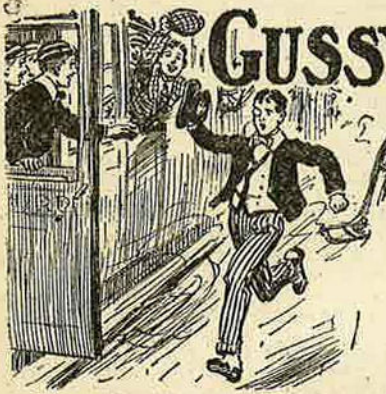
Fishing.—A rod, pole, or perch (from a large bird cage preferably), a length of string, and a hook are all that are required for a Bank Holiday fishing. If you can't get on the bank, a bridge will do, or you can fish from the branches of a tree. Worms for bait can easily be got by going down on all fours and scratching in the ground like a terrier when you say "rats" to him.

Hide and Seek.—This is somewhat of a juvenile proceeding, but can be rendered more exciting if, early in the morning of Bank Holiday, you smash a shop window, tip over a policeman, or do some similar rash act, and spend the rest of the day in hiding and dodging from those who are seeking your blood.

On the River.—A Bank Holiday on the river is most enjoyable, especially if a crowd of you go and fall in together. A Bank Holiday in the river is not so enjoyable if the crowd of you have a row while rowing and happen to fall in together.

All the Fun of the Fair.—Fairs are all the rage at Bank Holiday time. You can get quite giddy on the roundabouts and have a high old time on the swings. Many valuable prizes may be obtained at a fair. With what feelings of pride might you afterwards say, when visitors come, pointing to the glittering trophies on the study mantelshelf, "Look, uncle, there is the china cup I won at hoop-la!" or, "That milk-jug, pater, I won on the Aunt Sally shy!"

Madame Taussauds.—A very interesting place to spend a Bank Holiday, too. Shall never forget the last time I went there. It took me just under an hour to get in. But it was worth waiting for.



GUSSY'S HOLIDAY EXCURSION!

By Robert Arthur Digby.

"I SAY, deah boys," said D'Arcy, whilst at tea with the Terrible Three in Study No. 10 on the Saturday before August Bank Holiday, "the pwsent conditions call for economy. It's up to us to save as much money as we can, bai Jove! Now, we have decided to take a day's twip to Mersea on Bank Holiday Monday—"

"Well, ass," said Jack Blake, "what's that got to do with it?"

"Weally, Blake, I wufese to be called an ass!" said Arthur Augustus, glaring through his monocle. "I pwopose that in the intewests of economy we twavel down to Mersea by excursion twain!"

"Great pip!" we all gasped, quite taken aback.

"The ordinawy twain fare to Mersea is fifteen-and-fourpence," said Gussy. "But the waylay company are issuin' Bank Holiday excursion tickets at seven-and-six. It will be cheapah for us to twavel by the excursion twain, and we shall get to Mersea just the same."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "That's a good idea, Gussy. There's nothing degrading in travelling by excursion train. We shall save seven-and-tenpence each. That will be extra to spend at the seaside. Chaps, shall us adopt Gussy's wheeze?"

"Let's!" we all cried heartily.

Thus it was that on August Bank Holiday Monday we turned up in force at Wayland Station and took excursion tickets to Mersea. The station was crowded with excursionists, and when the excursion train came in it was already well-filled.

There was a terrific scum to get into the train. Even some of the ladies fought with their umbrellas and bags. We got caught in the midst of a crowd of rough fellows who seemed determined to get into the train by force.

"Bai Jove! You wuff wottah," gasped Gussy, whose topper was bashed in by the hefty fist of a big, beefy man, "you've wuined my toppah, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Wot are you doin', anyway, on an excursion train rigged up in them swell duds?" roared the beefy individual. "Go and get your topper, young Lord Muck!"

With which he gave a sweep and sent Gussy's damaged topper bowling along the platform. Arthur Augustus gave a roar and dived after it.

Meanwhile, the fight to get in the train went on. This was our first experience of an excursion train, and we didn't like it a bit. It was more like a Rugby footer match.

At last we jammed ourselves into a carriage with the beefy man and a few of his rough friends. The wind had taken Gussy's topper far up the platform. That topper had also been trampled on by the excursion crowd and booted from place to place. Gussy

scrambled after it wherever it went, and at last he retrieved it.

"Urry up, there!" roared the guard. The train was jammed with people. Every compartment was like a tin of sardines. And there was poor Gussy standing on the platform, with his battered topper in his hand.

"Bai Jove!" gurgled Gussy. "I—I weally—"

"Come on, Gussy!" shouted Jack Blake, leaning out of the carriage door. "We'll try and squeeze you in. Train's starting!"

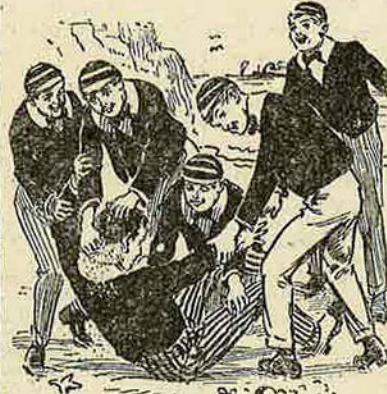
The train started, and Gussy made a wild bolt for the carriage door. The other excursionists leaned out of the windows and urged him on with much laughter. It was a race between Gussy and the train. Gussy caught it up, and then Blake and Tom Merry, reaching down, grabbed him.

"In with the chump!" said Blake.

Bump!

Gussy was dumped on the floor.

"Yawoooooogh!" he roared.



We rubbed sand into Gussy's hair, and shoved handfuls of it down his back.

The carriage was full to overflowing, and the rough fellows in there with us took great pains to wipe their boots on our noble Gussy before he was permitted to rise.

Tom Merry shut the door, and the train rattled onward towards Mersea.

It was a horrible journey. The fellows in that carriage got so rude that at the next stop, to save a row, we got out and crowded into another carriage.

Never shall we forget that ride! The excursion train fairly crawled along.

By the time we reached Mersea we were fed-up. We scrambled out of the carriage and mingled with the jostling throng that was making its way to the barrier.

"No more excursion trains for me!" growled Jack Blake. "It may be cheaper, but—"

"All tickets, please!" shouted the porter on the gate.

Gussy fumbled in his pocket. Gussy had paid for the excursion tickets, and had kept them in his pocket. A blank look crossed his aristocratic face.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "I—I've lost the beastly tickets, deah boys!"

He searched vainly in his pockets. The tickets were gone, so were his

wallet, watch, and fountain-pen. Gussy's pocket had been picked!

We had to stand by, looking fearful asses, while the rest of the excursion train passengers crowded out. The remarks some of them passed were by no means complimentary.

"No tickets!" moaned Blake. "Gussy, you burbling blitherer! We shall have to pay again!"

"Full fare, please!" said the gateman, with a relentless grin. "That will be eight shillings each!"

"Oh crumbs!"

We had to cash out. There was no help for it. We walked out of the station with feelings that were unutterable.

"This is how Gussy's wheeze for economy turns out!" growled Tom Merry. "It will cost us another eight bob each for the return journey, too! Oh, bump the silly jossler!"

"Weally, deah boys, I— Yait! Yawwoogh! Hands off! Help!"

Gussy ran, and we ran after him. Holiday-makers in the street stopped and laughed. Gussy dashed down to the sea-shore and scrambled on to the sands, upsetting a camera-stand and trampling on various sand castles made by children.

"Got him!" roared Manners, jumping on Gussy.

We all followed suit, and sat on him, and rolled him in the sand, and rubbed sand into his hair, and shoved handfuls of it down his back.

Gussy howled at the top of his voice and struggled wildly.

"There!" said Tom Merry, after we had finished with the luckless swell.

"That's for your carelessness, Gussy. I— My hat! There are those roiters who came up in the train with us. I reckon it was one of them who picked Gussy's pocket. Pile on 'em, kids!"

The three rough fellows saw us coming, and made a dive for a boat that was just being put out from the shingle. They scrambled in it, but just as the boatman gave it a shove, we arrived and pulled the boat over.

Splash! Splash! Splash!

"Yerrrrroogh!"

The trio of toughs went into the sea, and the waves burst over them merrily. We got bathooks and hauled them out. Then we began a systematic search of their pockets. Gussy's wallet came to light, also his fountain-pen and watch. The railway tickets the men had thrown away.

"Chuck 'em in the sea!" ordered Tom Merry grimly. "If it wasn't for mucking up our Bank Holiday we'd give 'em in charge!"

The three rough fellows were raised on high and hurled one by one into the briny, much to the delight of the crowd of sightseers who gathered round.

Feeling somewhat cheered, we went back to where Gussy was grovelling in the sand. He threatened to give us all "feahful thwashin's," but his anger melted when we handed him his wallet, pen, and watch.

"Thanks vewy much, deah boys!" he said. "I was wathah suspicious of those wuffians, you know!"

We all had to laugh, of course. Then, leaving D'Arcy to go and get a much-needed wash and brush-up, we strolled along to listen to the band.

It must have been a good hour before our tame friend returned, looking spick-and-span again.

We spent a rollicking August Bank Holiday at Mersea, and when we returned to the station for a train back we did not begrudge paying the fare again.

The only thing that had not turned out a success was Gussy's excursion trip idea!



winding, never-ending stretch of road. It seemed to him that he was merely crawling along.

How much farther? Surely the school gates must come into sight soon?

On and on went Talbot, like a fellow in a dream. And at last he saw the sight he had hungered to see—the school wall, surmounted with spectators, the school gateway, across which stretched the welcome tape.

Behind him he could hear the patter of running feet and the clang of a bicycle bell. And then he heard the familiar voice of Bonzo, the nigger boy.

"Now's your chance, Massa Jack! De fellow in front, he'm crackin' up. He rare plucky fellow. He can hardly drag himself along. But you must beat him, Massa Jack."

The crowd on the school wall had started to cheer on seeing that the first runner was a St. Jim's fellow.

But when Talbot got to close quarters, and they saw his pale, strained face, and saw how wearily he dragged himself along, the cheering was hushed, and several eyes grew misty at the spectacle of Talbot flogging his way along that last stretch of dusty road.

Clive and Cardew were among the spectators. They gazed at their plucky schoolfellow without speaking. They saw him stagger and drop on all fours. They saw him scramble to his feet again, and plunge blindly forward. And they saw Jack Hardy—also in the throes of exhaustion, but fresher than Talbot—gaining hand-over-fist.

The school gates were very near now. But Talbot seemed physically incapable of reaching them. Again he reeled and pitched forward in the roadway.

"I—I can't bear it!" muttered Cardew, with a catch in his voice. "Poor old Talbot!"

He slipped down from the school wall, and Clive followed. Together they went towards Talbot and raised him to his feet, and assisted him to the tape. In that tense moment they did not realise that they were acting unwisely, that Talbot would be disqualified for receiving assistance, just as Dorando, that brave son of Italy, had been disqualified fifteen years before.

And yet it was doubtful if Talbot would ever have reached the tape alone and unaided. When he had fallen the second time he had been in the final stage of exhaustion.

Jack Hardy reached the tape a moment later, and he was declared the winner. He was a deserving winner, too, for he had run a well-judged race, and had saved his strength for the final rally.

Mr. Railton congratulated the South African. Then he turned to Talbot, who stood in the gateway, supported by Cardew and Clive.

"It is my reluctant duty to disqualify you, Talbot, since you received assistance from others," said the Housemaster. "But you have given us this day an exhibition of pluck which will long be remembered. I doubt, my boy, if you would have reached the tape unaided."

"I shouldn't have done, sir," muttered Talbot, with a faint smile. "I was utterly whacked. Where's Jack Hardy? Oh, there you are! I should like to congratulate you. It was a fine win."

And the hands of victor and vanquished met in a tight grip.

CHAPTER 7.

Rivals of the River!

WEDNESDAY morning dawned bright and clear like its predecessors.

The warm sunshine came streaming down, bathing the countryside with its splendour.

Those three staunch chums—Cardew, Clive, and Levison of the Fourth—were sauntering arm-in-arm through the sunny quadrangle.

"It's a very pleasant thing to behold the sun, an' hear the twitterin' of the birds," drawled Cardew.

"Turned poetical all of a sudden?" asked Clive.

Cardew nodded.

"Who wouldn't be poetical on a mornin' like this?" he said. "It must have been just such a mornin' as this when Shelley wrote his 'Ode to a Cock Sparrow.'"

"Skylark, you ass!" corrected Levison.

"Oh, was it? I've got a shockin' memory. I say, what a toppin' day for a picnic on the river! I'd simply love to

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lay back in a punt an' watch the clouds go sailin' by overhead!"

"Lazy slacker!" grunted Clive.

"Reproach me not, Sidney. A fellow can't help bein' born tired. I don't slack for sheer love of slackin'. It's because I can't help it. I simply can't leap out of bed every mornin' an' sing in my bath an' jump over stiles, like the old gent in the advertisement."

"Rats! You can be as energetic as the rest of us when you choose," said Clive.

Cardew sighed.

"The strenuous life don't suit me," he murmured. "These sports are fearfully exhaustin' an' fatiguin', begad!"

"You ought to think yourself jolly lucky to be a member of the St. Jim's team," said Levison warmly. "I'd give anything to be in your shoes. I had big hopes of being picked, but I suppose Tom Merry thought I wasn't quite up to form."

"Talk of angels," said Cardew, "an' you're bound to hear the flappin' of their giddy wings! Here's Merry himself. Top of the mornin', Tommy!"

Tom Merry bore down upon the trio.

"I shall want your services, Levison," he said, coming to the point at once. "Poor old Talbot hasn't recovered from the effects of the Marathon. He's not actually ill, but he's not fit enough to take any further part in the sports until the cricket match."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Levison. "But I'm jolly glad to have the chance of doing something. It was decent of you to bear me in mind, Merry."

"What for! You're our spare man, so it's only right that you should fill the vacancy."

Levison's face was radiant. He was very happy at the prospect of taking an active part in the sports, and he knew that his sister Doris would be equally delighted.

"What's the programme for to-day?" he asked.

"Swimming races at eleven," replied Tom Merry. "Boat-race this afternoon; and we shall have to go all out. The South Africans are leading by two points to one. If they win more swimming events than we do they'll bag another point, and if they win the boatrace as well they'll have won the sports tournament."

"There are too many 'ifs' about that," said Clive. "Our South African friends will be up against it to-day. We've got some jolly fine swimmers, and our boatrace crew will take some beating."

"I agree," said Tom Merry. "All the same, we must put our backs into it, and leave nothing to chance."

Shortly before eleven that morning all St. Jim's swarmed down to the river.

It was an ideal day for aquatic sports. The sun was hotter and stronger than ever, and it would have been too hot even for cricket.

The rival swimmers went into the dressing-rooms to change into their costumes.

There was plenty of excitement on the river banks. The South Africans were an unknown quantity so far as swimming was concerned, and everybody was eager to see how they would fare against the swift and strong swimmers of St. Jim's.

Five races had been arranged, and a diving-raft had been moored near the boathouse. That was to be the starting-point for each event.

The first race was a short and sharp affair of thirty yards. It was a thrilling contest, and Clive of St. Jim's carried off the honours.

This was Clive's first victory, and it earned him a rousing cheer.

The second race was over the same course, but the competitors had to swim on their backs.

Clare, of South Africa, who had a powerful leg action, shot ahead of the others and finished an easy first.

The excitement on the banks was intense. Each side had won one event, and everything pointed to a close finish.

The third race fell to St. Jim's, and the fourth to South Africa. And now the excitement was at fever heat, for everything hinged upon the last race of all—the half-mile.

Only the strongest and sturdiest swimmers entered for this event. The course was a quarter of a mile downstream, and then back again to the starting-point.

Six fellows stood on the diving-raft waiting for the word of command.

Tom Merry, Dick Redfern, and Fatty Wynn were going to try to win the laurels for St. Jim's, and South Africa was represented by Jack Hardy, Drysdale, and a rather plump fellow who was known by the nickname of "Pooden." His real name was Van Lynder.

There was a mighty roar as the swimmers took the plunge.

"Come along, St. Jim's!"

"You've simply got to win!"

"Put some pep into it!"

Bonzo was present, of course, and the woolly-headed nigger-boy ran along the bank, keeping pace with the swimmers.

"Dat's fine, Massa Jack!" he shouted. "You'm goin' along like a house on fire! But you'll hab to watch de fat fellow. Him goin' great guns!"

Fatty Wynn happened to be "de fat fellow" in question, and he was certainly cutting out the pace.

Fatty had done very little in the sports so far. He was not a great runner, and he had been selected solely on account of his swimming and cricketing abilities. As a swimmer he was in a class by himself. And when it came to cricket—well, the South Africans would taste Fatty's bowling later on.

The Falstaff of the New House, however, was not destined to have matters all his own way in the swimming race. Jack Hardy, who had already performed prodigies of valour in the sports, was swimming strongly and keeping abreast of his plump opponent. They reached the half-distance together and turned round for the homeward journey.

Fatty Wynn employed the trudgeon stroke, and Jack Hardy a swift overarm stroke, and together they battled their way along through the sparkling waters of the Rhyll.

Twenty yards from home they were still level. And then a startling thing happened.

Jack Hardy, who found the water considerably colder than he had been accustomed to in South Africa, was seized with sudden and severe cramp. He was suddenly seen to throw up his arms, and, without a cry, disappear beneath the surface.

It all happened so unexpectedly that no one was prepared for it. The crowd on the bank stood as if petrified.

The first person to grasp the situation was Bonzo.

Without stopping to remove any of his clothing, the nigger-boy took a running dive into the river and swam swiftly to the rescue of his master.

Jack Hardy's head bobbed up above the surface, and Bonzo caught him under the arms and supported him in the water.

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn, conscious that something was

"Same here!" said Levison. "I say, there's strawberries-and-cream to follow. Fatty Wynn will be in the seventh heaven!"

Fatty, who had been the first to enter the boathouse, was already half-way through a ham-and-beef pie. Fatty always declared that it was all rot to say that pastry was a bad thing to train on.

"I ate six sausage-rolls before we played the last cricket match," said Fatty, "and I took eight wickets for 16 runs."

Tom Merry pointed out that that wonderful analysis was not due to the sausage-rolls. But Fatty wouldn't hear of it.

The boatrace was not due to be rowed until three o'clock, so the rival athletes were able to enjoy a good long rest. After dinner they disported themselves on the river-bank, in various attitudes of repose.

Tom Merry had chosen eight good men and true to represent St. Jim's. And he was confident of victory, without being cocksure.

At a quarter to three a bell rang—a signal to the rival crews to make ready for the fray.

The South Africans' boat was the first to be launched, and the bronzed sportsmen looked very fit and businesslike. They cleverly manoeuvred their boat into position, and the St. Jim's fellows could see that another hard struggle confronted them, and that they would have to fight every inch of the way.

Jack Hardy and his merry men were cheered to the echo. And so was the St. Jim's crew, when it rowed out into mid-stream a moment later.

There was a brief pause, during which the excitement could almost be felt. And then Mr. Ruliton fired the fateful pistol.

"St. Jim's! St. Jim's!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Stwong and steady does it, deah boys!" sang out Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was not a member of the crew.

The two boats had shot off the mark as one. And the

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wrong, turned his head to see what was happening. He promptly turned back to assist Bonzo, and between them they got Jack Hardy to the bank. Willing hands hauled the South African leader out of the water.

Bonzo scrambled on to the bank and knelt beside his master.

"Are you all right, Massa Jack?" he asked anxiously.

"Thanks to you, Bonzo—yes," was the muttered reply.

"The beastly cramp got hold of me. It took me all of a sudden, and I began to think I was a goner. I couldn't even tread water. I went down like a stone. But what's happened to Wynn? I don't want him to lose the race on my account."

Although he had sacrificed precious time in turning back to give Bonzo a hand, Fatty Wynn still had a good lead. He completed the course in great style, and won easily from Van Lynder, who came in second.

Loud cheers greeted the St. Jim's victory, and everybody condoled with Jack Hardy on his cruel misfortune.

St. Jim's were now level with the South Africans on points, and they had high hopes of winning the boatrace. They would be without Talbot, but Levison was a powerful oarsman.

Dinner was the next item on the programme. It was quite a novel affair, being served in marquees and in the boathouse. A firm of caterers from Wayland had charge of the arrangements.

"This is a jolly cute idea of the Head's," said Cardew. "Saves us troopin' back to St. Jim's for dinner. Let's stagger into the boathouse, dear men, an' see what's on the menu."

Clive and Levison accompanied their chum to the boathouse, where a long table had been laid.

The diners could choose between ham-and-beef pies and salmon mayonnaise.

"Better give the pies a miss," said Clive, "or we shall be doubled up with indigestion this afternoon, and unable to heave the blessed boat along. Salmon mayonnaise for dis child, as Bonzo would say."

crowd surged along the river-bank, giving lusty shouts of encouragement.

Tom Merry, the St. Jim's stroke, did not set too fast a pace at the outset. He was content to bide his time.

The South African boat fought its way to the fore, the rhetorical plash of the oars making merry music.

"Dat's de style, Massa Jack. You'm sure got dem beat!" came the shrill voice of Bonzo.

"Rats!" said Toby, the page. "You wait till St. Jim's start spurtin'! Greased lightnin' won't be in it when they once get goin'!"

At the first bend of the river the South African boat was a length in front. At the half-way mark it had increased the lead to two lengths, and the spectators were beginning to grow anxious. Was Tom Merry making the fatal mistake of delaying his spurt too long?

The South Africans had been going at top speed throughout. But they showed no sign of cracking up. They pulled on their oars with the strength of giants.

And now the winning-post came into sight, and Tom Merry quickened his stroke at last.

The St. Jim's boat fairly leapt through the water, in hot pursuit of the rival craft.

Jack Hardy saw the danger, and he and his men rowed desperately. They opened their shoulders and rowed their very hardest. But they were gradually losing their lead. It was reduced from two lengths to one—from one to a half-length—from a half-length to a quarter. And the onlookers were cheering wildly.

Tom Merry & Co. strained heart and nerve and sinew for a final burst. Had the course been a little longer they would have done the trick.

As it was, the rival boat shot past the winning-post in the nick of time, to win a magnificent race by barely a foot!

The cheering swelled into a mighty roar—a thunderous tribute to the South Africans' splendid victory.

Both crews were exhausted. The heads of the oarsmen

sank forward on to their knees, and it was some time before they were able to come ashore.

"The most thrillin' boatwace I have evah seen, bai Jove!" was the verdict of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I shall nevah see such a fine finish again, if I live to be as old as Methuselah!"

And thus the curtain was rung down upon a contest that would live for ever in the annals of St. Jim's sport.

CHAPTER 8.

The Boxing Final!

ST. JIM'S were up against it.

They were fighting with their backs to the wall.

Of the five big events which had taken place, the South Africans had won three.

Only two events remained—the boxing contests and the cricket match.

If St. Jim's failed in the boxing, they would lose the sports tournament. For the South Africans needed only one more point to give them the honours.

"We shall have to fight tooth and nail," said Tom Merry. "We've simply got to win the boxing, whatever happens."

And the St. Jim's sportsmen nodded their heads grimly. They were determined to fight as they had never fought before.

Thursday dawned with overcast skies, and a steady drizzle was falling. It was the first wet day of the week.

"The Clerk of the Weather couldn't have arranged things better," said Cardew. "If he had turned on the tap yesterday it would have been simply awful! But it can rain in bucketfuls to-day, an' it won't interfere with the boxin'."

"Hope it gives over by to-morrow, though," said Clive. "The cricket match starts in the morning, and we don't want to play on a ground that's like a quagmire."

"Take not thought for the morrow, Sidney," said Cardew cheerfully. "Sufficient unto the day is the dampness thereof. What time does the boxin' begin?"

"Eleven. Aren't you taking part?"

Cardew shook his head.

"I'm takin' a back seat," he explained. "Eight of our fellows are up to meet eight of the South Africans, on the knock-out principle. An' Tom Merry's passed me over. He doesn't seem to realise that I'm a youthful counterpart of Billy Wells. But I'm not sorry. I'd rather be a spectator, an' watch the sparks fly at a safe distance."

"Are the names of the St. Jim's eight on the notice-board?" inquired Leyson.

"Yes. You're one, an' so is Sidney. I expect you'll both be boasting a beautiful pair of black eyes by this evenin'."

"That won't matter a straw, so long as we lick our opponents," said Clive.

Long before the appointed time the historic gymnasium was packed. The only space that was left clear was the ring itself.

The draw for the first round proved most interesting, for Tom Merry was paired with Jack Hardy. And it was the first bout on the list.

It was a ding-dong tussle from start to finish. Tom Merry was always slightly superior, and the gym rang with cheering when Tom was awarded the verdict on points.

Other St. Jim's winners were Dick Redfern, Jack Blake, and Clive.

The onlookers had plenty to enthuse over. And the excitement increased as the tournament proceeded.

"I wathah fancy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that Tom Mewwy will weach the final. He shaped awfully well against Hardy."

But Jack Hardy was not the best boxer the South Africans had brought over. This honour fell to Drysdale—tall and slim and wiry, but a terrifically hard hitter.

Drysdale was drawn against Tom Merry in the semi-final, and he staggered the St. Jim's fellows by his masterly display.

Tom Merry fought with characteristic pluck, but in the fifth round he was laid low by a powerful straight left. And Drysdale passed into the final.

The other finalist was a St. Jim's fellow—Dick Redfern, to wit.

Reddy had been rather lucky. The draw had favoured him, and he had been pitted against the less formidable of the South African boxers. He had won his way through to the final with comparative ease. But he was now up against a first-class man in Drysdale, and the St. Jim's fellows looked anxious, and not a little glum. They were afraid that Dick Redfern would meet his Waterloo.

The final was to be staged later in the day, and both Redfern and Drysdale longed for the hours to pass. The suspense was well-nigh unbearable.

A tremendous responsibility rested upon Redfern's shoulders. If he was defeated by Drysdale, all would be lost. St. Jim's would have to admit that they had met their masters, and the honours of the sports tournament would be carried off by the South Africans.

Dick Redfern carried the fate of his school in his hands, so to speak. If he failed, the forthcoming cricket match would be shorn of all its interest, for the South Africans would already have won the tournament.

But no thought of failure entered Reddy's mind. He was out to win. The fact that his opponent happened to be a first-class fighting-man only stimulated Reddy to put up the fight of his life. Drysdale had built up a big reputation, but Redfern was not afraid of reputations. He would cheerfully have faced a Carpenter or a Beckett, so eager was he to win laurels for his school.

The gym was again crowded to overflowing when the great moment arrived.

Fellows were perched on the box-horse, and on the parallel-bars; and one daring spirit was poised on the top trapeze, from which dizzy height he intended to get a bird's-eye view of the all-important fight.

Little Bonzo was there, of course, urging "Massa Drysdale" to go in and win.

It had been a great blow to Bonzo to see Jack Hardy beaten by Tom Merry. Still, the leader of the South Africans had done more than his share in the sports. His glorious double event—the cycle race and the Marathon—was still fresh in the public memory. It was not to be expected that he should win triumphs all along the line.

A rousing cheer rang out as the two finalists stepped into the ring. The South Africans cheered Drysdale, and the St. Jim's fellows cheered Redfern, until a perfect pandemonium prevailed.

Kildare of the Sixth, who was to referee the fight, raised his hand for silence.

The thunders of applause gradually diminished, and the great crowd lapsed into complete silence.

"Time!" rapped out Kildare.

And Dick Redfern was upon his opponent like a tiger. His fists beat a tattoo on Drysdale's ribs, but a jab under the chin from the South African quickly sent him back.

Nothing daunted, Reddy returned to the attack. He relied upon dash rather than science. His plan of campaign was to worry his opponent for all he was worth, and give him no peace. "Thrice is he armed who gets his blow in first" was Redfern's maxim. He hoped to wear his man down in the early stages.

But Drysdale was as elusive as an eel. His footwork was delightful, and he dodged and darted this way and that way with amazing speed and skill.

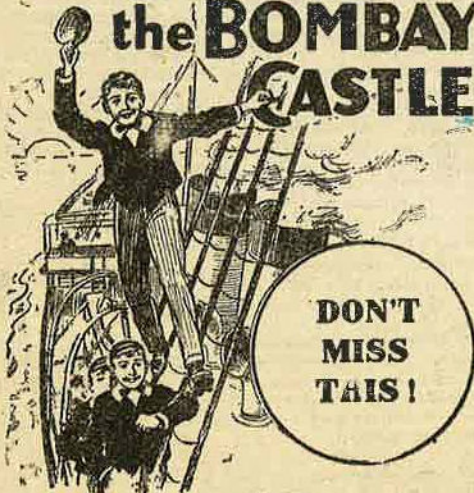
Dick Redfern was wasting most of his energy on the desert air, as it were. Only one in four of his blows reached the mark; and when the bell rang at the end of the first round Reddy went to his corner with the feeling that Drysdale had made him look rather a fool.

Tom Merry was acting as Redfern's second, and he applied a sponge to the junior's heated face.

"Shouldn't try to force the pace too much, if I were you," whispered Tom. "Those tactics don't pay against a fellow like Drysdale. Keep on the defensive until you see a really

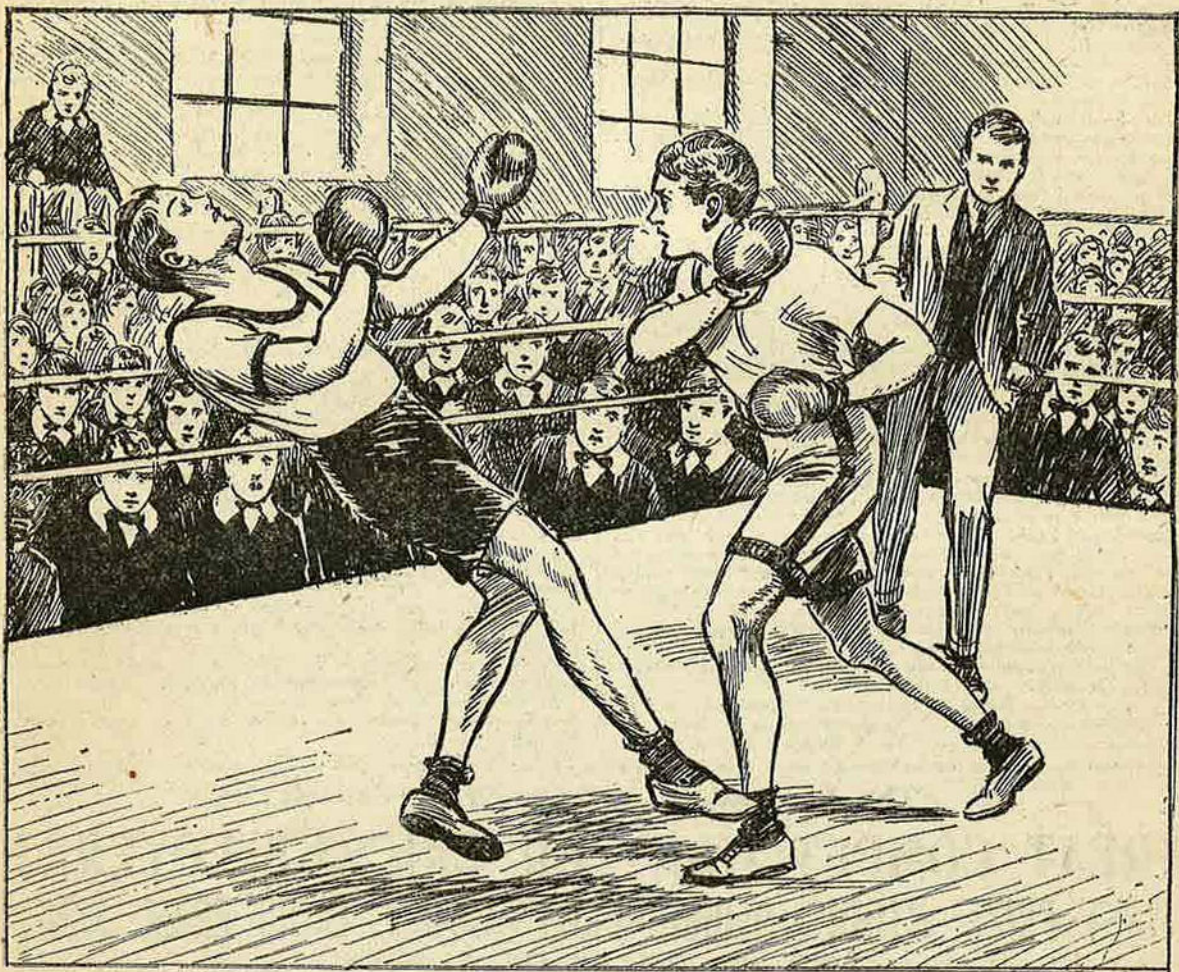
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Redfern's opportunity came at last. Drysdale was utterly unprepared for the blow, which took him in the chest, knocking him backwards and sending him with a crash to the boards. The South African lay flat on his back, his legs apart, and his arms spreadeagled, whilst Kildare proceeded to count him out. (See this page.)

good opportunity; then sail in and hit him for all you're worth!"

Redfern nodded.

"He's a hard nut to crack," he muttered. "Every time I hit him I miss him. That's rather Irish, I know, but you can see what I mean."

Acting upon Tom Merry's counsel, Reddy took things more quietly in the second round. He allowed Drysdale to be the aggressor, but he took good care that the South African's blows were promptly parried.

Matters went on like this for quite a long time.

One round was just like another, with Drysdale attacking, and Redfern defending, and no serious damage being done.

At the end of the fifth round Cardew yawned.

"They talk of brightenin' cricket," he murmured. "Personally, I should like to see some brighter boxin'. This is a wearisome business. Reddy seems to have forgotten that he possesses a punch."

"He's lying doggo," said Clive. "He hasn't had a real chance, as yet, of bringing his punch into action. But you'll see some fireworks presently."

"Perhaps," said Cardew, "an' perhaps not. I don't like to see a chap defendin' all the time. That sort of thing's awfully feeble. Attack, my dear Sidney, is the very best form of defence."

"Sometimes," Clive agreed. "But if Reddy had attacked all the time, he'd have boxed himself to a standstill by now. Hallo! They're squaring up for the next round. I rather think things are going to happen now."

Drysdale led off with a rush. He was tired of hammering away at a fellow whose defence was rock-like. And he resolved to make one last, fierce attack, which would cause that defence to crumple up. The fight had lasted quite long enough, in Drysdale's opinion, and he was eager to finish it off.

Dick Redfern stood his ground before a bombardment of

blows. He parried most of them, but some were so swift and deadly that they got right home.

A smashing "pile-driver" between the eyes almost sent Reddy down for the count. And the South Africans cheered Drysdale to the echo.

The South African was surprised and disappointed to see opponent remain on his feet. He had hoped that his hurricane blow would prove a knock-out. It had certainly caused Redfern to rock on his feet; but it hadn't felled him.

Drysdale, painfully conscious of the fact that he was weakening, summoned all his remaining strength for another powerful blow, which he hoped would finish the fight. But Redfern could read of his opponent's intentions, and he ducked his head in the nick of time. Drysdale's fist sailed harmlessly into space, and he lurched forward.

Reddy's opportunity had come at last! He sprang nimbly to one side, and then let drive with all his force.

Drysdale was utterly unprepared for the blow, which took him in the chest, and knocked him backwards.

In a flash, Redfern followed up, and sent in a powerful upper-cut, of the type which might have felled an ox. It certainly felled Drysdale. He went crashing to the boards, with all the fight knocked out of him.

The South African lay flat on his back, his legs apart, his arms spreadeagled. And Kildare proceeded to count him out.

Drysdale was not wanting in pluck. Had it been humanly possible, he would have risen and gone on fighting. But he felt as if an earthquake had struck him, and he lay there, half dazed, and past the power of movement.

Kildare finished counting.

"Redfern wins!" he announced.

And the gym was converted into a modern Tower of Babel. So great was the hubbub and the excitement that the reckless youngster who was perched on the top trapeze very nearly lost his balance.

Dick Redfern, after having all the worst of the encounter,

up to the sixth round, had triumphed gloriously. He had snatched victory from the very jaws of defeat.

Once again St. Jim's had drawn level with their formidable opponents from South Africa.

Each side had scored three points. And the cricket match would decide the issue.

Dick Redfern had got his school out of a very tight corner, and he was naturally the hero of the hour. His exuberant schoolfellows bore him shoulder-high from the scene of his triumph—but not before Roddy had ascertained that Drysdale had recovered from the blow which had given St. Jim's the victory in the boxing tournament.

CHAPTER 9. Racke's Revenge!

"BONZO!"

The little nigger-boy was in the quad, performing daring "stunts" on Toby's boneshaker of a bicycle, when Tom Merry hailed him.

Bonzo slipped out of the saddle and ran towards Tom Merry.

"Will you do me a favour, kid?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"Sure! Me your bery obedient and humble serbent, Massa Merry!"

"I want you to go over to Wayland to do some shopping," said Tom Merry. "It's a very important errand, but I know you can be trusted. The cricket match starts tomorrow, and I find that we want a lot of new gear from the sports outfitters. We've just had an emergency meeting of the junior cricket club, and it was agreed that twelve pounds should be taken from the funds for the purpose of buying bats, stumps, batting-gloves, and pads."

Bonzo, listening attentively, punctuated Tom Merry's remarks with nods of his woolly pate.

"Me bery pleased to do do shoppin' for handsome Massa Merry," he said.

"That's good. We're all feeling too fagged to go and do it ourselves. Here's the twelve pounds, and here's the list of things that are wanted. You'll find the sports shop on

the right-hand side of the High Street, opposite the public-hall. The name is Tate."

"Berry good, Massa Merry."

"While you're in Wayland," Tom Merry went on, "you can call at the tailor's—next door to the sports outfitters—and collect a blazer for D'Arcy. He's just had it made. He doesn't know how much it will be, but he wants to pay for it on the nail, and he's given me a ten-pound note to hand to you. Here it is. Tuck it away in your pocket, and don't lose it, whatever you do."

Bonzo handled the banknote as if it were a piece of sacred parchment. He tucked it into his pocket, together with the twelve pounds in Treasury-notes which Tom Merry had previously given him.

"You'll find yourself heavily laden, I expect, when you've done the shopping," said Tom, "so you can take a taxi back to St. Jim's and pay for it out of the change. I hope I've made everything clear, Bonzo."

"Eberyting puffedly clear, Massa Merry."

"Off you go, then."

Bonzo returned Toby's bicycle to the shed, and then trotted away on his errand.

He felt a highly important person as he set off along the road to Wayland. And he appreciated the trust which Tom Merry had placed in him.

In his pocket Bonzo carried the princely sum of twenty-two pounds. It was a big responsibility, but the nigger-boy enjoyed it. He idolised Tom Merry almost as much as his master, and he was only too eager to be of service.

The walk to Wayland was very pleasant. The rain, which had been falling all day seemed to have washed the world clean.

The weather was clearing now, and everything augured well for the great cricket match which was to commence on the morrow.

Bonzo was half-way to his destination, when he caught sight of an elegantly-dressed youth who was approaching.

As the youth drew closer Bonzo saw, to his dismay, that it was Aubrey Racke, the fellow he had been specially warned to avoid.

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2. Nottinghamshire. 10. Somerset.
3. Surrey. 11. Derbyshire.
4. Kent. 12. Warwickshire.
5. Lancashire. 13. Gloucestershire.
6. Hampshire. 14. Leicestershire.
7. Middlesex. 15. Northamptonshire.
8. Essex. 16. Glamorgan.
17. Worcestershire.

What you have to do is to fill in on the coupon on this page your forecast of the order in which the counties will finish up. To the reader who does this correctly we shall award a prize of £100, and the other prizes in the order of the correctness of the forecasts.

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The decision of the Editor in all matters concerning this competition must be accepted as final and binding, and entries will only be admitted on that understanding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete. This competition is run in conjunction with "Football Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Magnet," "Young Britain," "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Friend," "Pluck," "Union Jack," "Rocket," "Nelson Lee Library," "Boys' Cinema," and "Popular," and readers of these journals are invited to compete.

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GEM.

Bonzo paused. Racke was the last person in the world that he wished to meet just then. He was half-inclined to turn and retrace his steps.

Whilst Bonzo hesitated Racke came on. And the nigger-boy noticed, with relief, that he looked quite amiable. He was actually smiling.

"You needn't look so jolly scared, kid," said Racke as he came up. "I'm not goin' to eat you. If you're thinkin' about that little incident of the other day, let me assure you that I bear no malice."

Bonzo breathed more freely.

"Goin' to buy the cricket gear?" asked Racke.

"Yes, Massa Racke. How did you know?"

"I was at the meetin' this afternoon," answered Racke carelessly. "It was arranged that you should be given the money an' sent over to Wayland to buy the stuff. By the way, how are you goin' to get it all back to St. Jim's?"

"Massa Merry tell me to take a taxi."

"A jolly sensible plan," said Racke. "Taxis aren't very plentiful in Wayland, though. You'll have to hunt high an' low for one. Half a jiffy, though. I dare say you'll be able to pick one up at a little garage in River Street. If I were you, kid, I'd get the taxi first, before doin' the shoppin'. You'll make sure of it that way."

Bonzo thanked Racke for his apparently friendly advice and trotted on his way.

Racke also passed on, with a malicious grin.

"The young whelp will walk right into the trap without a suspicion," he murmured. "It will work like a charm!"

From which it will be deduced that Aubrey Racke had already planned his revenge on the nigger-boy.

As a shady schemer Racke had no equal at St. Jim's, and on this occasion he had surpassed himself. He had hatched a cunning plot against Bonzo—a plot which he would not have dared to launch against a white boy. But then, Racke was one of those people who argued that a nigger didn't count. Racke considered that a black boy was fair game.

"Good-bye, my friend!" he said, waving his hand towards Bonzo's back. "You'll never turn up at St. Jim's again, an' jolly good riddance!"

Blissfully unconscious of the fact that he was walking into a trap, Bonzo went on his way.

On reaching Wayland he asked a passer-by to direct him to River Street. It was his intention to charter the taxi and to keep it waiting outside the sports outfitters while he did the shopping.

River Street was not a choice thoroughfare, and there was no sign of a river in the vicinity. The street was misnamed, as were most of the other streets in Wayland. Broad Street, for instance, was so narrow that it was difficult for two cars to pass. Cheap Street was the most expensive street in the town. Market Street had no market. And there was no place of worship within a mile of Church Street.

At one end of River Street was a dirty little garage. A taxicab stood outside, as if expecting a fare.

Bonzo didn't like the look of the driver. He was a man with a foxy face. He peered at Bonzo from beneath the long peak of his hat.

"Lookin' for a taxi, kid?" he asked.

Bonzo nodded.

"I want you to take me to de sports outfitters in de High Street," he said.

"Tate's?"

"Yes; dat is de name."

"Hop in, then!"

Bonzo obeyed, and the man started up his vehicle.

The interior of the taxi was very stuffy. The hood was closed, and when Bonzo tried to lower the windows he found they were obstinately stuck.

The taxi was soon speeding through the High Street, and the driver showed no sign of slowing up. Bonzo tapped the glass partition and shouted to him.

"You'm going too fast! I believe you'm gone past de place!"

The driver did not answer; did not even turn his head.

Bonzo began to feel seriously alarmed. A dark suspicion came into his mind. He applied his knuckles to the glass partition and rapped loudly. But the driver was conveniently deaf.

The High Street, with its slowly-moving throng of shoppers, was soon left far behind. The taxi sped on into the open country beyond Wayland.

Bonzo would have jumped out of the vehicle, but it was travelling too fast to allow of such a gymnastic feat. He could only sit tight and hope for the best, though he feared the worst.

At length the taxi swung sharply round into a deserted lane. Then it came to a sudden halt, and the driver jumped down from his seat and opened the door.

"Hi! What sort ob game do you t'ink you'm playin'?" demanded Bonzo, his voice shrill with anger.

For answer, the man whipped out a short length of rope from his pocket and proceeded to tie Bonzo's ankles. And with another piece of rope he tied the boy's hands.

The nigger-boy struggled desperately, but the foxy-faced man was possessed of great strength, and was easily master of the situation.

Having trussed Bonzo's legs and hands, he produced a gag, which he thrust into his victim's mouth.

"Guess that'll keep you quiet, you brat of a nigger!" he said, with a harsh chuckle.

Then the door was slammed, the driver resumed his seat at the wheel, and the taxi turned back into the high road and sped swiftly on its way.

Bonzo, a helpless prisoner, sat chafing inside the vehicle. He could clearly see, now, that he was the victim of a conspiracy, and that Aubrey Racke was at the bottom of it.

Where was he being taken? He had no idea.

Green hedges seemed to rush past on either side, and the taxi rattled and swayed as it sped along.

Bonzo made frantic efforts to get rid of the gag which had been placed in his mouth. He made all manner of weird facial contortions as he sat back in the cab.

His hands had been secured behind his back, and he could not move them. Even if he succeeded in getting rid of the gag, how was he to free himself from his bonds?

Around his waist, outside his page's uniform, Bonzo wore a native belt, which he had brought over from South Africa. It was a chain belt. Bonzo started to rub the rope against it, hoping, by constant friction, to sever his bonds.

It was a painfully slow task. For nearly half an hour Bonzo rubbed and rubbed, until at last he could feel the rope weakening.

The taxi was going more slowly now. Bonzo paused and looked about him. On either side of him stretched a vast desert of bricks and mortar, and he could guess, though he did not know for certain, that they were entering London.

Bonzo resumed his task, and at length his energies were rewarded. The rope snapped, and his hands were free!

It was now a simple matter to remove the gag from his mouth, and to untie the rope which fastened his ankles.

Bonzo was terribly afraid that the driver might look round and see what had happened. The driver, however, had all his work cut out to steer his way through the traffic.

Through miles of sordid streets the taxi rumbled on. And then Bonzo saw a sight which almost unnerved him. He saw that they were approaching some big docks, and for the first time he began to realise the fate that was in store for him. His captor, by some means or other, intended to put him aboard some outward-bound vessel. Doubtless, the man had a friend at the docks, some unscrupulous seaman, who would be willing, for a suitable bribe, to take Bonzo out to sea and employ him as a cabin-boy or a deck-hand.

Exactly how it was going to be done Bonzo did not know. And he did not care to know. His one thought, at that moment, was to make his escape.

His chance came sooner than he expected.

The taxi became mixed up in a congestion of traffic, and the driver was engaged in a fierce argument with the driver of a big van. There had evidently been a narrow shave from a collision.

Bonzo seized his opportunity, and the handle of the door at the same time.

At first he feared that the door was locked, for it obstinately refused to budge. But Bonzo heaved himself bodily against it, and, to his delight, it shot open.

Bonzo was propelled into the street like a stone from a catapult. He had a narrow escape of being run down. But he sprang nimbly to his feet, and took to his heels, threading his way through the traffic.

Instantly the driver of the taxi started a hue-and-cry. He declared that his fare had bolted without paying.

But nobody heeded the baffled and furious driver, and the fleet-footed Bonzo made his escape with ease.

Now came the task of getting back to St. Jim's.

The nigger-boy was a stranger in a strange land. London, with its teeming millions, almost terrified him.

He felt in his pocket, to make sure that the money was safe, the money with which Tom Merry had entrusted him. It was intact, and Bonzo meant to hang on to it like grim death. For he knew that every great city had its army of tramps & pickpockets.

Suddenly a hand fell upon Bonzo's shoulder, and he spun round with a start. His startled eyes looked up into the face of a tall police-inspector.

"Why are you wandering about like a lost sheep?" demanded the inspector.

"Me want to get back to St. Jim's," said Bonzo.

"St. Jim's! What's that?"

"A big school, near to de town ob Wayland."

The inspector stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"I fancy I've heard of it," he said. "But it isn't a school for black boys, is it?"

"No; but me stayin' dere wid my massa from South Africa."

"How did you come to be stranded in London?"

Bonzo explained to the best of his ability. Fortunately for Aubrey Racke, he did not incriminate that shady plotter.

The inspector, who was a shrewd judge of human nature, could tell that Bonzo's story, amazing though it was, happened to be true.

"Got enough money to take you back, kid?" he asked.

Bonzo nodded.

"Then I'll take you along to Victoria Station, and put you on the train."

"Dat's bery handsome ob you," said Bonzo gratefully.

The inspector grinned, and hailed a passing bus. He took Bonzo to the big terminus, and stood by him while he bought his ticket, and then saw him safely on the train. Bonzo thanked his benefactor profusely, to the amusement of the people on the platform.

The little nigger-boy was smiling happily now. His grim adventure was over, and Aubrey Racke's cunning plans had failed, thereby proving the truth of the adage concerning the best-laid schemes of mice and men.

Within a few hours of his capture Bonzo was speeding back to St. Jim's. He would be there by nightfall, and his unexpected appearance would be a big bombshell to Aubrey Racke.

CHAPTER 10. Punishing a Plotter!

TOM MERRY stepped into the junior Common-room. His handsome face was clouded over.

"Bonzo isn't back yet," he said. "I can't make out what's happened to him."

"Oh, he'll roll up presently!" said Jack Blake. "Give the kid a chance. He's got all that cricket gear to carry."

"But he's never been to the shop."

"What?"

"I got through to the sports outfitters on the telephone," said Tom Merry, "and they've seen no sign of Bonzo, not even his shadow!"

"My hat!"

Aubrey Racke, who was present, laughed somewhat scornfully.

"It's easy to see what's happened," he said. "How much money did the kid have on him?"

"Twenty-two pounds," said Tom Merry. "But surely you don't suggest—"

"The young brat has bolted with the money!" said Racke. "That ought to be quite obvious even to a fellow of the meanest intelligence."

"I don't believe it!" said Jack Blake hotly. "Bonzo isn't that sort."

"Well, why isn't he back with his purchases?" demanded Racke.

That was a question to which Blake could give no answer. Neither could the others. They looked very anxious and uneasy.

"It is vewy wemarkable," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bonzo should have been back ages ago. I cannot subscribe

to Wacke's view that he has bolted with the money. He is twanspawently honest."

"Honest?" sneered Racke. "You may think so, Gussy, but I'm dashed if I do. I wouldn't trust a nigger farther than I could see him. The young boulder has stuck to the twenty-two quids, an' bolted. You were fools to trust him with the money!"

"I refuse to believe that Bonzo's a thief," said Tom Merry. "He's as straight as a die, as 'white' as any Englishman, in my opinion."

"And so say all of us," said Monty Lowther.

"Well, it's a jolly strange thing," said Racke, "but I missed my gold watch this afternoon. I left it on my study table, an' it disappeared. Curiously enough, Bonzo disappeared shortly afterwards. A novelist might call it the long arm of coincidence, but I choose to think it's a case of deliberate theft."

The juniors began to look very worried. Their faith in Bonzo was beginning to waver. They had placed implicit trust in the nigger-boy, but dark doubts were beginning to creep into their minds. And Aubrey Racke was doing his level best to turn those doubts into certainty, the certainty that Bonzo was a thief.

"It's good-bye to your tenner, Gussy, an' to the money from the cricket funds!" he said. "We shall never set eyes on that young cub again!"

The door of the Common-room opened, and the South Africans trooped in. They were looking no less worried than the St. Jim's juniors.

"You fellows seen anything of Bonzo?" inquired Jack Hardy.

"I sent him over to Wayland to buy some cricket gear," explained Tom Merry, "and he hasn't come back. He's been gone the dickens of a time! Racke, here, seems to think that he's bolted with the money."

There was a loud murmur of indignation from the South Africans.

Jack Hardy took a quick step towards Racke, and he looked grim.

"Are you implying that Bonzo is a thief?" he demanded.

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"The facts speak for themselves," he said. "If Bonzo had faithfully performed the errand, he'd have been back long before this. But he hasn't been to the shop, accordin' to Merry. What are you to deduce from that, I should like to know?"

"I don't know what you deduce from it," said Jack Hardy, "but I'll tell you this. Bonzo's the straightest little fellow alive, and I'm not going to hear him slandered. If you dare to say another word against him, I'll knock you down!"

"Bwavo! That's the way to talk!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Racke was careful to preserve a still tongue after that. He knew Jack Hardy for a hard hitter, and he had no desire to face the sturdy South African just at that moment in fistie combat.

The evening dragged out its slow length, and Bonzo failed to put in an appearance.

Shortly before bedtime the Terrible Three strolled down to the school gates, in the faint hope that Bonzo might turn up at the eleventh hour.

"If he doesn't show up to-night, it will look as if Racke's theory is correct!" said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther passed through the gateway, and anxiously scanned the long stretch of road in the gathering dusk.

"No sign of him, I suppose?" said Manners.

"Yes!" said Lowther excitedly. "Here he comes. Running at top speed, too!"

There was a swift patter of feet, and the panting figure of Bonzo came into view.

"Where on earth have you been, kid?" demanded Tom Merry. "We've been getting fearfully anxious about you!"

"Me bery sorry, Massa Merry!" panted Bonzo. "Dis child was kidnapped by bad man!"

"What!" shouted the juniors, in chorus, as they heard the words.

Bonzo told his story to the Terrible Three, and they listened in amazement.

"Sounds like a chapter out of a sensational novelette!" was Tom Merry's comment, when Bonzo had concluded his narrative. "We must go along and interview that taxidriver."

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"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "We shall find him at the garage in River Street, I suppose?"

"Bery likely!" said Bonzo. "I membered de number ob do taxi, tinkin' it might come in useful. It was X Y 9234."

"Good!" said Monty Lowther. "We'll pop over to Wayland first thing in the morning, and have a few words with that skunk of a driver, and find out who put him up to it. For I'm certain it was a put-up job. Aren't you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Have you got the money safe, Bonzo?" he asked.

"Yes, Massa Merry."

"Hand it over, then. We'll get the sports gear ourselves to-morrow morning, and kill two birds with one stone."

Bonzo handed over the money, and the juniors accompanied him towards the building.

Aubrey Racke was lounging on the steps of the School House. He gave a violent start on catching sight of Bonzo. His naturally pallid face went paler still, and he stared at the nigger-boy with eyes that seemed to start from their sockets.

Had some fearsome apparition suddenly appeared before him, Racke could not have looked more startled.

"You were quite wrong about Bonzo, you see," said Tom Merry. "He didn't make off with the money, as you suggested."

Racke was quite unable to reply. He seemed to have been suddenly deprived of the power of speech. The Terrible Three and Bonzo brushed past him as they mounted the steps, and Racke stared nervously after them as they vanished into the building.

Aubrey Racke passed a sleepless night. He seemed to apprehend that there would be trouble for him on the morrow; and his apprehensions were well founded.

The morning brought sensational developments.

Tom Merry & Co. went over to Wayland before breakfast, in quest of the driver with the foxy face. They failed to find him at the garage in River Street; but they remembered the number of the taxicab, and, by a stroke of good-fortune, they saw the identical vehicle, crawling along the High Street. They promptly stopped it, and accosted the driver.

The man became very uneasy when he discovered that the St. Jim's juniors knew all about the kidnapping of Bonzo. At first he tried to bluff; but when Tom Merry & Co. threatened to go straight to the police-station, the man's manner changed completely.

Gradually Tom Merry & Co. wrested from him the true facts of the case. The man admitted that he had been bribed by Racke to take Bonzo to London, and arrange for him to be taken on board a foreign vessel.

The juniors were appalled to learn the truth. They knew Racke for a schemer and a shady plotter, but they had little dreamed that he would go to such lengths as these.

The taxi-driver was summarily punished by being bumped with great vigour and heartiness on the solid pavement of the High Street.

It was a light enough punishment, considering what might have happened to him had the police been called in.

As for Aubrey Racke, Tom Merry & Co. felt that the matter was too serious to be handled by them. The Head was the proper person to deal with Racke; and to the Head they would certainly have gone, had not Bonzo pleaded with them not to take that step.

"If you tell de Head, Racke will be dispelled from de school," said Bonzo, "and dis child don't want dat to happen. He'm an out-and-out bad fellow, but me don't want him to be dispelled."

So the St. Jim's juniors took the law into their own hands.

That morning, before the cricket match started, Aubrey Racke was court-martialled by his schoolfellows, and was sentenced to run the gauntlet.

It was a severe punishment; as befitted the crime.

Two rows of fellows, armed with knotted towels, belaboured the wretched Racke until he lay grovelling on the floor, whining and pleading for mercy. But he had shown no mercy to Bonzo, and he received none himself.

It was the sternest punishment which Racke had ever received. And it would be a lesson to him—at any rate, for a time.

But the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. And it was more than probable that Aubrey Racke would remain a cad and a rank outsider to the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 11.

"It Was a Famous Victory!"

"I SAY, you fellows! What do you think? Bonzo's playing for the South Africans!"

It was Baggy Trimble who imparted that amazing information.

The fat junior buttonholed Tom Merry & Co. as they came

out of the Common-room, after sitting in judgment on Aubrey Racke.

"Bonzo playing!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "What rot! You'll be telling us next, Baggy, that Taggles, the porter, is playing for Sussex!"

"It's a fact!" said Trimble. "Jack Hardy told me. I had it straight from the horse's mouth."

"First time I knew Jack Hardy was a horse!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment the leader of the South Africans came along the passage. He was a handsome figure in his spotless cricket flannels.

"I say, Hardy," said Tom Merry, "Trimble's been trying to stagger humanity by saying that Bonzo's a member of your team."

"That's quite correct," said Jack Hardy. "The fact is, two of our fellows—Drysdale and Challoner—are not quite fit. Drysdale hasn't got over the boxing final yet, and Challoner strained a shoulder muscle in the boatrace. That reduces us to ten, so I've had to requisition the services of Bonzo to complete the team."

"How vevy unfortunate!" said D'Arcy.

"Not at all," said Jack Hardy. "Bonzo's a topping little player. He's a solid bat, and as keen as mustard in the field. I'm not a bit dismayed at the prospect of playing him."

Neither was Bonzo dismayed. On the contrary, he was very elated. He was always eager to serve "Massa Jack" in any capacity; and nothing would please him better than to pile up runs for the South Africans.

The visitors had already put in some practice at the nets, and Tom Merry & Co., who were shrewd judges of cricket form, could see what they were up against.

"We get plenty of cricket in South Africa," said Jack Hardy. "We've got an English coach at our school. He plays for Hampshire in the summer, and comes over to us every winter."

The party wended its way to the cricket ground.

It was a radiant morning. The sun shone brightly upon a playing-pitch which was as smooth as the surface of a billiards-table.

The crowd was a record one. For the cricket match was the last event of all. The great charm about it was that it was to be played to a finish. There were two whole days available—Friday and Saturday—so that there would be no possibility of a draw.

St. Jim's were at full strength. Talbot had recovered from the effects of that gruelling Marathon race in which he had played such an heroic part.

Tom Merry won the toss, and decided to bat first on a rapidly-drying wicket.

The umpires drifted on to the field in their white coats. They were followed by the South African fieldsmen, who were given a rousing cheer.

Bonzo brought up the rear of the procession. His dusky skin contrasted strangely with his snow-white flannels.

Padded and gloved and looking very determined, Tom Merry and Talbot came down the pavilion steps. And there was a roar which boomed across the green playing-fields.

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"We want a century each from you fellows!"

"Pile up the merry runs!"

The South African bowlers were 'Care, slow left hand; and Hart, fast and deadly and a shatterer of stumps.

The batsmen found Clare almost unplayable. The turf had not yet dried, and the ball came quickly off the pitch.

Runs came readily off Hart, however. He could not get his length, and he sent down some very erratic stuff. Tom Merry and Talbot opened their shoulders to the loose balls, and despatched them without ceremony to the boundary.

It was a good partnership, and 40 runs appeared on the board before disaster came.

Tom Merry was the first to leave. He failed to get the full face of the bat to a ball from Clare. The leather shot off at a tangent, and Bonzo, fielding at point, brought off a magnificent right-handed catch. He leapt into the air, and the ball found a resting-place in his dusky palm.

"Oh, well held, sir!"

Tom Merry had made 24—quite a useful contribution.

St. Jim's continued to pile up the runs, and the crowd went into ecstasies.

Figgins and Redfern, Cardew and Clive, Blake and D'Arcy, all succeeded in reaching double figures.

The innings lasted right up to the tea interval, and the grand total was 240.

"Sidney," drawled Cardew as he threw himself down on the grass near the tea-tables and signalled for a strawberry-ice, "we have made a promisin' start. Distinctly promisin', dear man. It is quite on the cards that we shall win by an innin's."

Clive shook his head.

"Make no mistake," he said. "The South Africans are hot-stuff at batting."

"An' Fatty Wynn's equally hot-stuff at bowlin'. Hence my cheery optimism."

The majority of the St. Jim's fellows shared Cardew's optimism.

When the game was resumed after tea the South Africans fared badly. Fatty Wynn bowled with such deadly effect and tenacity of purpose that six wickets were down for only 40 runs when the time came to draw stumps for the day.

Jack Hardy, however, had 20, not out, to his credit, and he was likely to prove troublesome next morning.

There was joy in the St. Jim's camp that night. Tom Merry & Co. were in great spirits, for victory seemed to be already within their grasp.

And yet the only certain thing about cricket was its uncertainty. Anything might happen on the morrow. And the South Africans were resolved to fight their very hardest to pull the game round.

A very early start was made in the morning, the game being resumed directly after breakfast.

Jack Hardy gave a hurricane display of hitting, and he received valuable assistance from Bonzo.

The nigger-boy did not attempt to do any run-getting. He simply kept his end up while Hardy hit. And Hardy hit too hard and too often for the liking of the St. Jim's fellows. Even Fatty Wynn could not keep down the rate of scoring.

But the South Africans were all out at last, for a score of 140. They were exactly 100 behind on the first innings.

St. Jim's fared badly in their second venture. Hart, the fast bowler, was bang on top of his form. He took Tom Merry's middle stump clean out of the ground before Tom had got set; and he also clean bowled three other St. Jim's batsmen before they had scored.

Cardew and Clive came together, and stopped the rot. They batted brilliantly at a critical period.

Clive was the sounder of the two. He played fine, forceful cricket, but he never attempted to take liberties with a good length ball.

Cardew, on the other hand, was reckless and daring. He hit out at everything, and fortune favoured him. Twice he had been missed in the deep-field, and on one occasion, when stealing a single, he narrowly escaped being run out by Bonzo, who aimed the ball hard and true.

Cardew's merry innings came to an end at last. Ralph Reckness ran forward to chastise one of Clive's slows; but he missed completely, and was smartly stumped. He had made 50, and was cheered to the echo.

Fatty Wynn joined Clive, and there was a further display of fireworks.

St. Jim's, who at one time had looked like getting out very cheaply, compiled 149 in their second innings. And then came the lunch interval.

Jack Hardy's jaw was firmly set as he came off the field.

"We've got to get exactly 250 to win," he said. "It's a tall order, but we'll go all out."

"Yes, rather!"

"South Africa for ever!"

After lunch the visitors started on their uphill task.

Jack Hardy played himself in, and then he laid about the bowling with great vigour. He collected runs at a rapid rate, and even Fatty Wynn's bowling was made to look quite ordinary stuff.

Batsmen came and batsmen went, but Jack Hardy remained. He was a tower of strength, a giant in the fray, and nothing could shift him.

Tom Merry, beginning to grow anxious, tried five bowlers in succession.

"If we can only get rid of Hardy," he said. "it will be plain sailing."

But Jack Hardy refused to be got rid of. He continued to pile up the runs, keeping the ball "on the carpet," and never giving the suspicion of a chance.

At the tea interval the score stood at 150 for six wickets. Jack Hardy had 77 to his credit, and he was not out.

"Cricket's a funny game," said Cardew as he came off the field with Clive. "A dooidid funny game, Sidney. 'This time yesterday I was sayin' that we should win by an innin's. An' now it looks as if we shall have all our work cut out to win at all!'"

Clive nodded.

"My cousin is playing the game of his life," he said. "It won't be his fault if the South Africans lose. They want exactly a hundred runs, and they'll go very close, even if they don't actually get them. It looks like being an exciting finish."

The tea interval was short and sweet. With the game in such an exciting state, tea was regarded as a nuisance.

On the resumption Jack Hardy continued to rattle up the runs. He kept the bowling to himself as much as possible, and presently he reached his century.

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Loud and prolonged cheers heralded Jack Hardy's wonderful feat.

Tom Merry, in desperation, went on to bowl himself. He could make no impression on Jack Hardy; but he captured three other wickets at intervals.

"Last man in!" said Monty Lowther, glancing towards the pavilion. "And they still want forty to win. Capture this last wicket, Tommy, and half my kingdom is thine!"

The last man in was Bonzo. He came trotting on to the pitch, a quaint little figure in his pads and batting-gloves.

Jack Hardy walked out to meet Bonzo.

"Put a straight bat in front of everything," he said. "Don't worry about making runs. Leave that part of the business to me."

Bonzo nodded his woolly pate.

"Dey sha'n't get my wicket, Massa Jack, not if I know it!" he said.

And he went to take his stand against Tom Merry. Tom sent down the best ball he knew. It broke in sharply from the off; but Bonzo's bat was there.

The nigger-boy presented a stolid front to the bowling, stopping the ball dead every time.

And now it was Jack Hardy's turn. He had to face Fatty Wynn, and Fatty was a spent force.

Three boundaries fell to Hardy in quick succession. And he scored a single off the last ball of the over, so that he would still have the bowling.

The St. Jim's fieldsmen were on tiptoe, waiting in vain for a catch.

So rapid was the rate of scoring that in a very short time only seven runs were wanted. Only seven! And Jack Hardy still had the bowling.

"It's all over bar shoutin'!" murmured Cardew, under his breath. "A couple of boundary hits and the match will be won!"

The first boundary hit came immediately. Jack Hardy opened his shoulders, and drove with all his power. Clive, fielding on the boundary line, made a desperate attempt to stop the ball, but it shot past him and rolled under the railings.

Only three wanted!

Jack Hardy was smiling now. One more hit like the last and he would have won the match for his side.

Again he drove with all his power. At first glance it looked as if the ball would go clean out of the ground. But its flight was deceptive.

The ball seemed to hang in the air, and Clive was pelting towards it at top speed.

"He'll never do it!" was the remark that came from a score of lips.

But the miracle happened. Down came the ball, and Clive could only get one hand to it. But with that hand he knocked it up again, and then, leaping into position, he caught the ball grandly as it descended once more, and hugged it triumphantly to his chest.

The spectators were on their feet, cheering madly.

St. Jim's had beaten the South Africans by three runs!

Ralph Reckness Cardew raced across the field to his chum, and joyously thumped Clive's back.

"A wonderful effort, Sidney!" he panted. "My heart was in my mouth when I saw you goin' for that catch. An' somethin' seemed to say to me, 'He'll do it—he'll do it!' An', by gad, you've done it! We've won the match an' we've won the Sports' Tournament! Hurrah!"

And Cardew sent his cap flying into the air.

A moment later Sidney Clive, perched on the shoulders of his schoolfellows, was borne triumphantly to the pavilion.

In their joy and jubilation the St. Jim's fellows did not forget to cheer the plucky South Africans. Jack Hardy's innings had been a masterpiece of pluck and resource. And little Bonzo, who had kept his end up while his master hit, was not forgotten.

That evening there was a bumper banquet in the junior Common-room—such a banquet as had never been held before in the history of the old school.

Next morning the South Africans bade good-bye to their hosts and set off on their travels.

"It has been a glorious week!" said Jack Hardy. "You've beaten us fairly and squarely, but we're hoping to get our revenge next year. I say, won't it be ripping if your Head gives you permission to bring a team over to South Africa?"

"Ripping won't be the word for it," said Tom Merry. "It will be just glorious!"

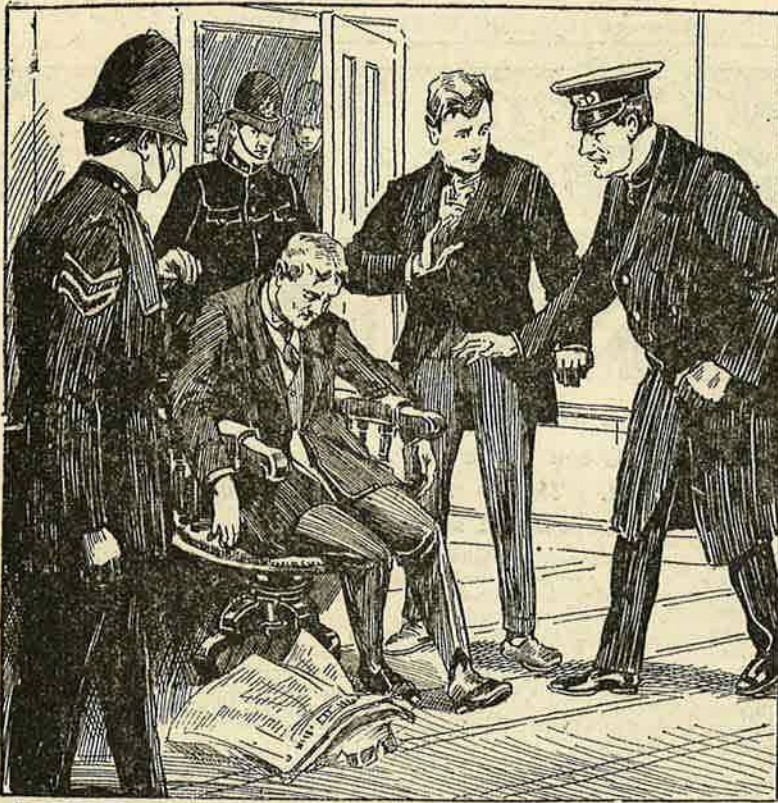
"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "Good-bye, deah boys! Good-bye, Bonzo! May you all have a toppin' holiday, an' enjoy your stay in England up to the hilt!"

"Rely on us!" said Jack Hardy, laughing.

There were hearty handshakes all round, and the South Africans, after a last rousing cheer, took their departure.

THE END.

(Another record-breaking story next week, boys. Note the title: "FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!" By Martin Clifford. You will vote it grand!)



"Hans Schneider," said the inspector, "alias Morton Kane, alias the Spider, I arrest you on the charge of murder—" Tom Compton took a quick step forward. "Not that," he said, in a low voice. "Can't you see. The man's dead!"

"The morning paper," said the Spider tenderly, leaving it where it lay. "Would you like to amuse yourself with it for a few minutes? It is the last you will ever see."

"I have heard much the same from you before," said Tom; "but I escaped from under your guns, and I may do so again. By the way, is it necessary to wear those pantomime clothes? You look better, I think, as Morton Kane."

"They are useful in view of other people beside yourself," said the Spider. "You exaggerate your importance. For the rest—"

He broke off for a moment. A distant murmur, like the sound of the sea on a far-off beach, reached the room from the streets. Tom heard it, and pricked his ears, but remained still, watching his enemy.

"For the rest," continued the Spider, "The lift-shaft is blocked, the window is barred, and there is a drop of sixty feet sheer to the street. There is only one door. Through that door, by pressing this button, I can summon six men in as many seconds. These men are armed, and just the men for my purpose. I may add that I shall press the button exactly two minutes from now. Observe, my finger is on the button. Not even Death himself could claim me before I pressed it!"

"Don't be too sure!" said Tom, in a low, clear voice. "He is closer to you than you think!"

The Spider leaped up from his chair. The burning eyes glared behind the dark goggles; the arch-criminal's face grew livid with pent-up fury.

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"Beware!" he cried, his voice quavering. "Beware how you taunt me, you whelp, or you will earn a worse death than that I have in store for you! You have troubled and balked me for a long time now, but my time has come at last! Your body goes back to the dust to-day, and the power and victory are left with me! The strong hand has triumphed, and Dunchester is in my grip at last! Ah! What noise is that?"

The strange, distant murmur had grown and grown slowly as the Spider spoke. From a confused hum it became the sound of a great shouting, and the tramping of a myriad feet. Up from the street below it came in one vast, swelling chorus, and above the medley rang louder cries—hoarse, passionate cries of rage, and clamourings for vengeance. It sounded as though all Dunchester were brewing into one gigantic riot, breaking like the waves of the sea round Hargreave Buildings.

The Spider listened a moment, and his face changed. He glanced at the window, and then turned his head slowly towards Tom Compton. A look of strange, unnameable fear crept over the arch-criminal's countenance as he saw the boy standing there—erect, immovable, silent. Tom gave no sign that he heard the tumult.

"What is it?" muttered the Spider. "It is the voice of Dunchester," said Tom quietly. "Go to the window."

The Spider went. He looked down, and saw below him, as far as the streets could be seen, a sea of faces, upturned and fierce with the terrible rage of the mob, and every face was set towards the great block of buildings and the Spider's

window. A louder crash of vengeful voices broke out as his cloaked form showed itself.

The moment the Spider left his desk Tom took up the electric jerk-button that lay on it, and with one jerk tore away the wire from it. The Spider came slowly back from the window, and bent his glittering eyes on the boy.

"Do you understand now?" said Tom. "Which of your exits will save you from that mob? For you have but to fall into their hands, and they will tear you limb from limb. They know all there is to know; the 'Clarion' has done its work well."

The Spider started violently, his face grey as ashes. He sank into his seat.

"Give me that paper," he said. Tom handed it to him.

The Spider read, slowly, line by line, and his face turned from ashen-grey to a deathly white. He made no sound, but read. And as he read he saw his empire drop away from him piece by piece, and crumble into ruins. Every master-stroke of crime, every splendid, ruthless coup, every skilful barrier of defence, was laid bare for all the world to see, and all by the hand of the resolute, cool-headed lad who stood before him and looked at him with such unflinching eyes. Power, wealth, vengeance—all were swept away at one blow.

"You have done this," he said, in a hoarse, tense whisper—"you!"

He stretched out his hand and pressed the button. It was useless; but of that he had no knowledge. Then, plucking the goggles from his face, he sank suddenly back in his chair and lay still, staring at Tom with glassy eyes.

Outside, the roar of the mob grew more appalling yet. Then came a sound of tramping feet upon the stairs. But it was a steady, ordered sound, not the rush of a frenzied crowd. The sound of voices and a scuffle on the landing followed; but that was soon subdued. Then came a sharp, loud knock at the door.

Open it swung, and in strode a grim-faced inspector of police and four constables.

There was the sound of more persons without.

The inspector glanced at Tom, nodded, and walked up to the huddled figure in the chair. Tom had never taken his eyes from the Spider, and his own face altered strangely.

"Hans Schneider," said the inspector, "alias Morton Kane, alias the Spider, I arrest you on a charge of murder—"

Tom saw the gleam of the handcuffs, but before they could be snicked to their place he took a quick stride forward and intervened.

"Not that!" he said, in a low voice. "Don't you see?"

He pointed to the glassy eyes and fallen jaw of the man in the chair. The inspector saw, and gasped.

"What! Is he—"

"Dead!" replied Tom, and his voice fell to a whisper.

The Spider had atoned.

"The shadow is lifted," said Mr. Peter Grant, as he and Tom Compton sat in the offices of the mill Tom had saved a month before. "Dunchester is a free city once more, and she owes it to you, my boy. Crime and treachery and darkness are no longer masters, and the greatest criminal of the century is dead."

"Of the dead say no evil," put in Tom. "What a thousand pities a mighty brain

(Concluded on page 28.)

THIS POWERFUL YARN OF DARING AND ADVENTURE IS FULL OF THRILLS!

THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!



A plucky Lancashire boy sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire. This is famous David Goodwin's most powerful story.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

TOM COMPTON, a young piecer, formerly of Barton's Mills, sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire.

Mill after mill has suffered at the hands of this treacherous foe. At last Tom, by chance, actually catches the Spider in Barton's Mill. He gives chase, but the Spider, a sinister figure in blue goggles, makes good his escape.

Later, another mill is threatened, and Peter Grant, the manager, calls for Compton's assistance. Tom hurries to the scene, and is just in time to avert disaster. After this Tom receives a strange message—a call for help from Mr. Kane, who is made prisoner by the Spider in an old hulk out at sea. Tom effects a rescue, and a fierce fight with the Spider's men ensues. Tom makes good his escape, however, only to find that Kane has mysteriously disappeared again.

Reaching Hargreave Buildings in safety, he rushes noiselessly up to Kane's private office, and is just in time to see a picture slide back into position, covering a secret exit from the room.

Very shortly afterwards, Tom discovers that there is a secret lift, and that pictures conceal doors giving on to the lift. He enters the Spider's office through one of these doors, and then makes the startling discovery that Morton Kane and the Spider are one and the same man. The Spider is furious.

A fierce fight ensues, but Tom escapes unhurt. Walking along the street, a shadowy figure, whom Tom believes to be Gale, hands him a note purporting to have come from Dick Stearns, informing him that the Spider is sailing for America.

This proves to be another trap of the Spider's, however. Tom then prepares his final blow. With the assistance of an expert foreman-printer, he prepares to publish the history of the Spider's crimes.

(Now read on.)

The Cry of the Mob!

"At last!" muttered Tom, as he watched the plates fixed to the great hungry machines. "Please Heaven, nothing can stop it now! The blow is struck!"

For some moments he watched, flat against the wall beside the machine-room door. He did not wish to be seen by any more of the men. The printing department was a workaday place, and had no intimate connection with the great criminal's affairs. Yet there might be spies among the men, and to be discovered too early might even yet wreck Tom Compton's master-stroke.

Then, as the buzzing of the machines began, he crept away to the head of the back staircase. He had little fear now of the result. In the Spider's own newspaper—the famous sheet that was read

by half a million people throughout Lancashire every morning, under the assumed guidance of Morton Kane—Tom had set forth the whole wonderful story of its owner's guilt and the brilliantly-guarded network of crime he had woven—the blood, and the misery, and the wealth of profit. In a few hours all Lancashire, and by midday all England, would be ringing with the tale, and vengeance would fall swift and sure.

"I must get away till then," thought Tom. "Wait—no, I won't. I'll stick it out here. None can know till the paper comes out. The foreman is disposed of—poor old Macleod!—and the editorial staff don't get their copies now. News used to leak out, and all advance copies have been stopped. I've got it! I'll wait in my own office—no one will see me go there. I must be here, whatever the risk, when the bomb bursts!"

Quickly and silently he made his way to his own office, and passed no one on the way. He had not entered the room since the fateful afternoon when he discovered the lift-shaft and laid bare the secret—that the Spider and his pretended rival, Kane, were one.

Tom sank down in a chair by his desk, and sat motionless as a statue, as hour after hour crawled by. Now that the strain was over, he felt worn out and strange. He took no heed of the time. The dawn crept in through the window, but, as though in a dream, all the incidents of the struggle, all the stress, and treachery, and pitting of brain against brain, seemed to pass before him in review. Tom wondered idly where the Spider was.

"Chasing me, as likely as not," he thought; "off on the wrong track, and little thinking what awaits him here at home."

Tom felt almost a touch of pity for his mighty enemy, so soon to be dragged from his seat of power and humbled in the dust, unconscious of the blow until it fell and crushed him. Then, breaking in upon the boy's thoughts, came a light tap at the door.

In an instant Tom pulled his wits together, and was on the alert again. He bade the tapper enter. It was one of Kane's messenger-boys.

"Please, sir, Mr. Richard Stearns

would like to see you at once. He is in Mr. Schneider's room, next door."

"Dick in the Spider's room?" thought Tom. "Impossible! It's a trap!"

He glanced at the clock. It was nearly eight—he had not even noticed how the time went. For a moment he thought rapidly, and then turned to the boy.

"Very well," he said, "I will go."

He went downstairs, out of the door, and into the Spider's side of the building. The working day was just commencing. There were early people at Hargreave Buildings.

A devil of recklessness possessed Tom. He strode in through the door, looking neither to right nor left, entered the lift, and was whisked up to the second floor. Through the ante-rooms he walked, and straight into the Spider's room.

"Good-morning!" said a silky voice.

"So it's you," replied Tom coolly. "I had no doubt of it. I merely came to make sure."

Dick was not there. Tom had not expected to see him. But the evil genius himself, calm, steady-voiced, deadly-looking as ever, sat huddled in the writing-chair as Tom had once seen him, long before. The black cloak, the blue goggles, the hunched shoulders, all were there.

"I did not really expect to lure you here by such a simple device," said the Spider, fixing his half-hidden eyes on Tom. "It comes to the same thing, however. Had you refused, my men would have brought you—by way of the lift-shaft."

"He knows nothing," thought Tom, watching him keenly—"not even what brought me to the building."

"It was good of you to come," continued the Spider, almost tenderly—"a little foolhardy, perhaps, but good. I have long promised myself the luxury of personally superintending your exit from this wicked world. My arrangements, I am thankful to say, are now complete."

"Mine are complete, too," said Tom quietly.

"I think not," murmured the Spider softly—"I think not. Yes? Come in!"

A messenger rapped, and entered at the Spider's command. He brought the morning copy of the "Clarion," and Tom's heart leaped at the sight of it. The messenger laid it on the table and withdrew.



THE ONLY MAGAZINE OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD



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THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER!

"Sitha, Bill!" exclaimed the miner's wife reproachfully. "Ah think tha wor very mean to go to t' theatre an' noan tek me withee." "Eh, lass," replied her husband casually. "It's just t' sa-ame as if we boath went. Thee an' me's one, tha knows." A day or two later it was Bill's turn to complain. "Didsta order t' coal, lass?" he asked. "Ah'm as cold as ice." "Nay," replied the good woman blithely. "Ah bowt a sealskin mull w' t' cash. But Ah'm quite warm, an' thee an' me's one, lad, tha knows!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Miss E. Giffillan, 2, Mark Street, Portrush, Co. Antrim, Ireland.

A FEARFUL FAGER!

Little Eleanor gazed long and thoughtfully at the foppish youth with the short moustache and eyeglass who was calling on her big sister Ethel. "Well, my little dear," said the young man with a smile, anxious to make a hit with the family, "is it my moncle you are so interested in?" "No," replied little Eleanor. "I was looking for the word." "The word! What word?" inquired the puzzled visitor. "Why," answered Eleanor, "I heard Ethel say this morning that if any man had the word 'idiot' written all over his face, it was you!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Mitchell, 5, North Shore Street, Campbelltown, N.B.

HIS EXCUSE!

Seroggins was getting into hot water on parade for his untidy appearance. "And look at your face, man!" snapped the officer. "Why, haven't you shaved?" "Yes, sir; I shaved this morning, sir," replied Seroggins. "Rubbish! You've a growth of about three days!" Seroggins thought hard, and then said: "All I know, sir, is that I lathered myself this morning, but there were six of us using the same glass, and perhaps it was some other man's face I shaved!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Mae Weir, Dundonald, Belfast.

IT MOVED HIM!

Mike got on the end of a crowded tram-car and was obliged to steady himself

against the door. "Move up!" shouted the conductor at every street, as more passengers were taken on. Mike moved up a step each time, but at last he got quite vexed, and he yelled back at the conductor: "Bedad, I paid to ride. Do you expect me to walk all the way home?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Hunter, 8, Kingsley Street, Pleck, Walsall.

SPARKLING!

The humorist contributor looked in upon the Editor on his busy day. The humorist contributor should not have looked in upon the Editor on his busy day, the Editor can't feel humorous and busy at the same time. What was more, the humorist contributor would not go. At last the Editor decided to stop being busy for a moment and be sarcastic. "That was a real gem, that joke you sent me," he said, in his usual dry tone. The contributor drew himself up with pride. "Sir," he said, "you flatter me." "Not at all," replied the Editor. "You should have seen it sparkle when I put it on the fire!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.

'FRAD!

Two tramps, Smite and Cite, stopped outside a likely-looking house, and stood debating whether they should enter or not. "Not there," said Smite, with an expressive shudder. "An' why not?" asked Cite a trifle sneeringly. "'Fraid, on account of the dog, I suppose?" "Me trousers are." "Yer trousers are what?" "Prayed on account of the dog!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Feldman, 198, Brooke Road, Upper Clapton, N.E.

A REMINDER!

"Why so downhearted, Flipp?" asked Flopp. "Well, Flopp," said Flipp, "my wife told me to get her something for dinner, and for the life of me I can't remember what it is." "Oh, cheer up!" said Flopp. "Here, have a cigar, maybe you'll remember it while you're smoking." Flipp lit the cigar and puffed away. After a few whiffs he brightened up, and said: "You are right, Flopp. That cigar made me think what the wife wanted. It was a cabbage!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Cecil Howes, 112, Park Place, Gilfach, Bargoed, S. Wales.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

IT'S ONLY RIGHT!

Two men, one of them renowned for his meanness, went into an inn for some refreshments. The drink was about to be paid for when the mean man spoke out: "Look here," he said, "I've been staying at your place for two months. You've looked after me splendidly. You've taken me to theatres, and you've always paid for everything. Fair's fair! You mustn't pay for this drink." "But—" began the other. "No, no," said the mean man, "we'll toss for it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Hall, 132, Wharton Street, South Shields.

ONLY HALF-MEASURES!

Everybody in the works knows Jimmy. He's the "odd man," and keeps things lively. The other day he came into the office with blood streaming from the first finger of his left hand. "Will ye tie my finger up, please?" he asked a workmate. "Certainly, Jimmy," answered his pal. "How was it done?" "I was chopping some wood for the furnace fire," answered Jim, "and the axe slipped." "Why, you've cut it to the bone!" continued his friend. "Yes, indeed," responded Jimmy; "and if I'd struck with both hands I'd have cut it off!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Bert Phillips, 5, Victoria Terrace, Kingsbridge, Gorseinon, Swansea.

CORN-ERED!

The old gentleman hobbled up the steps of the Corn Exchange. "Is this the Corn Exchange?" he asked. "It is," replied the commissioner. "Then can you do anything with this corn on my foot?" asked the old man. "I want to get rid of it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ian Wight, 11, Inchaffray Street, Perth, N.B.

HOLD THE FORT!

The sergeant-major's patience was almost exhausted in his examination of the recruit squad. "For the last time," he yelled, going almost puffed in the face. "I ask you this simple question: 'What is a fortification?'" Shoulders drooped, and, with faces void of intelligence, just as a group of lunatics, the recruits stood absolutely still. No one answered. Rushing up to the most intelligent-looking man, the irate N.C.O. bawled: "Tell me, my man, what is a fortification?" The answer came like the pop of a cork from a bottle: "Two twentifications, sir!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Yelland, 69, Broadfield Road, Sheffield.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

The brave ship was wallowing on the waves that threatened to engulf her at any moment. Hastily the captain ordered a box of rockets and flares to be brought to the rail, and with his own hands ignited a number of them, in the hope that they would be seen, and the passengers and crew be rescued. 'Midst the rockets' red glare, a tall, thin man found his way with difficulty to the rail, and spoke to the captain. "Captain," he cried, "I must protest against this dare-devilishness! We are now facing death, and it is not the time for celebration!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Hume, 118, Grange Road, Ramsgate, Kent.

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"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!"

(Continued from page 26.)

like his should be turned the wrong way! There was a kink in him that made him a devil when he might have been an angel—a useful angel, I mean. I felt there was one of the biggest powers in the world wasted when I saw him sitting there dead. He was great even in death—there was nothing small about the Spider."

"As to his great brain," granted Peter Grant, "there was one that was more than a match for it."

"No, sir," said Tom hastily, "not that. I had luck, and Heaven favours the right, you know. His schemes were perfect. It was only by quick moving and great luck that I slipped through his fingers so often."

"I have my own opinion about that,"

said Grant, "so, I may say, has my partner, Mr. Dulton. We have come to an agreement, amalgamating together the chief great cotton businesses of Dunchester, to better the trade, defeat the foreigners, and treat operatives fairly."

"A good scheme, I think," said Tom. "It is," said Peter Grant. "We are keen, hard business men, but you have shown us you can do what we all failed in. So we offer you the post of manager."

"What!" cried Tom.

"For one year at a salary of £500," continued Mr. Peter Grant, "to give you time to master the details of the work. You will do it in less than that. Then you take the reins, as manager-in-chief, at £3,000 per annum. Say no more, Tom. We know what we are doing. We are buying the best article in the market."

"I agree," said Tom, his eyes sparkling, "on one condition."

"It is yours. What?"

"That Dennis Gale shall be my assistant, at a commencing salary of

£250. You will find him quite as good value as I."

"Done!" said Peter Grant.

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