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No. 826.
Vol. XXIV.
December 8th, 1923.



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Keen and clever as he may be, Cardew has shouldered a big responsibility.

Will he justify his position?

CAPTAIN CARDEW!



CHAPTER 1. Trimble Has to Go!

T RIMBLE!"

"Hullo!"

"Turn out!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Wha-a-t!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Trimble of the Fourth grinned. He stretched himself a little more at ease in the armchair in his study, and repeated, with relish:

"Sha'n't!"

Tom Merry looked at him expressively. He was standing in the doorway of Study No. 2, in the Fourth, with a coat on over his football clothes. He had dropped in for Trimble on his way down to Little Side.

"I thought you'd be frowsting here, Trimble," said Tom mildly. "I'm bound to rout you out. Come on!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Don't you know you mustn't say 'sha'n't' to the junior captain of St. Jim's?" asked Tom.

"Rats!"

Baggy Trimble seemed to be enjoying himself. It was the first time he had ventured to "cheek" Tom Merry, and apparently he felt quite safe in doing so on this occasion.

Tom stepped into the study.

He did not understand in the least upon what Baggy Trimble's amazingly bold defiance was founded. But he knew that he was due upon Little Side, and that Baggy had to turn up there for games practice. Tom Merry had been called over the coals more than once by Kildare of the Sixth for going too easy with the slackers. And although Baggy Trimble was as clumsy and useless at football as at everything else, it was certainly for Baggy's good that he should go down to footer practice, instead of "frowsting" in the study on a keen, frosty afternoon.

"Get a move on!" said Tom.

"Sha'n't!"

"Do you want me to roll you out of that chair?"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Trimble—"

"Mind your own business!"

"But this is my business," urged Tom good-naturedly;

"and it's ever so much better for you, Trimble."

"Yah!"

Tom Merry felt that he had exhausted his patience.

"Are you coming?" he demanded.

"No."

Tom Merry took a grip on the back of the chair, to tilt the fat Fourth-Former out. Trimble gave a yell.

"Look here, you rotter— Yaroooh!"

The armchair was tilted up, and Baggy Trimble was shot out on to the hearthrug with a heavy bump.

He sat there and roared.

"Now come on!" said Tom sharply. "I've got no time to waste on a lazy, fat slacker."

"I won't!" roared Trimble.

A Splendid, New, Extra-Long Complete School Story of St. Jim's, featuring Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth Form, in a new light.

BY

Martin Clifford.

"Look here, do you want me to boot you down the stairs?" demanded Tom angrily.

"I'm not coming!" howled Trimble, glaring up at the junior captain of St. Jim's from the hearthrug. "I'm let off this afternoon."

"Who's let you off—Kildare?"

"Blow Kildare! No."

"The Housemaster?"

"Blow Railton! No."

"Well, nobody else can let you off," said Tom. "I suppose the Head hasn't specially chipped in to let you slack?"

"Blow the Head! Cardew's let me off."

"Cardew!" exclaimed Tom.

Trimble sneered.

"You seem to have forgotten that Cardew of the Fourth is junior House captain now," he said. "Wasn't he elected the other day—junior captain of the School House? House captain has power to let any fellow off games practice if he chooses."

Tom Merry paused.

More than once, since Ralph Reckness Cardew had been elected junior House captain in the School House of St. Jim's, Tom Merry had found that Cardew's new powers interfered with his own.

The dividing line, indeed, was not clearly marked.

Certainly it was Tom Merry's duty, as junior captain of the school, to round up the slackers on the days when games practice was compulsory. He was answerable to Kildare, senior captain, for that, and Kildare expected him to do his duty.

Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly within the power of junior House captain to let a fellow off, subject to the approval of the captain of the school—Kildare, of the Sixth.

In the New House Figgins was House captain of the juniors, and Tom Merry never, as a matter of fact, intervened in that House. Figgy could be relied upon to do his duty.

With Cardew it was a different matter.

There was a pause, and Baggy Trimble, still sitting on the hearthrug, blinked triumphantly at Tom Merry.

"Cardew can let any fellow off that he chooses," he went on. "Only Kildare of the Sixth can stop him. And Kildare never interferes, as you know jolly well, Cardew's given me leave to cut football practice this afternoon."

"Has he?" said Tom slowly. "For what reason?"

"I'm not bound to tell you that," jeered Trimble. "Still, I don't mind mentioning that I've got a pain."

"Where have you got the pain?" asked Tom.

"In my—my—my back."

"Do you want another in your ear?"

"Eh?"

"Because if you don't you'd better get a move on," said Tom. "You're coming down to footer practice, Trimble."

"Cardew says—"

"Never mind what Cardew says," said Tom Merry quietly.

"It's what I say that matters just now. Get a move on!"

"Look here—"

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"Are you coming?"

"No!" yelled Trimble desperately.

Tom Merry stooped and took the fat junior by the collar. With a swing of his powerful arm, he rolled Paggy out into the passage. Then, with the help of his football boots, he dribbled Baggy along to the stairs, to the accompaniment of a series of hendiish yells from Baggy Trimble.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out of Study No. 6. "What's the feahful wow, deah boy?"

"Help!" roared Trimble.

"Baggy thinks he going to frowst, and I think he isn't!" explained Tom Merry.

"Yaroo!" roared Trimble. "I've got leave from the junior House captain, D'Arcy. Honour bright. I'm ill, you know. Tom Merry's got no right to interfere with me. He can ask Cardew, Yaroooh!"

"I'm not likely to ask Cardew anything," said Tom. "Roll on, or I'll roll you!"

"Bai Jove! I really think, Tom Mewwy, that you had better go slow, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Cardew is only actin' within his powahs in lettin' Twimble off."

"Rot!"

"You can report the mattah to the captain of the school, and head of the games, if you are not satisfied, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I believe that is the wule."

"No time to bother," said Tom. "Get on, Trimble!"

"I weally considah, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

Tom Merry's boot came into contact with Baggy Trimble's fat person again, and Baggy roared and bolted down the stairs. Tom Merry followed him grimly.

"I give you two minutes to change," he said.

Baggy changed in a very few minutes. He had had enough of football boots applied to his person. He had relied upon the protection of the junior House captain, but Ralph Reckness Cardew was not there to protect him now. Baggy rolled out of the School House with a furious fat face, and Tom Merry walked after him, to see him safely down to Little Side.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed on, shaking his noble head seriously. Arthur Augustus, who was a fellow of tact and judgment, had foreseen trouble when Cardew "wedged" in as junior House captain in the House; and the trouble, which had already threatened more than once, was evidently at hand now. And Arthur Augustus wondered what would come of it.

CHAPTER 2.

Face to Face!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW smiled.

It was not a pleasant smile.

He looked very handsome, and very fit, as he stood on the junior football ground in shorts and jersey. Certainly, since Cardew of the Fourth had thrown himself keenly into St. Jim's junior football, he looked a good deal changed from his old lazy, loafing self. Since he had been elected House captain nobody could have complained of Cardew as a slacker.

Indeed, many fellows suspected that he regarded the House captaincy as only a step, and that his real aim was the junior captaincy of the School, now held by Tom Merry. Tom had held both posts, and filled them well, and it was very probable that Cardew aimed at following in his footsteps in that direction. And Tom, excellent footballer and excellent skipper as he was, was not exactly the fellow to hold his own against the wiles of an insidious enemy.

Levison and Clive, Cardew's chums, had not backed him in his campaign against Tom Merry. But now he was junior House captain they gave him their support. They were not insensible to the honour of having the House captain chosen from their study and from their Form. And indeed, most of the Fourth had veered round to the side of Cardew now that he had proved himself keen and dutiful. Jack Blake had long maintained that the Fourth ought to have a better show in things generally. Herries and Dig and D'Arcy agreed with him, and as Cardew was in the Fourth, they felt that he was entitled to their support so long as he played up for the House. Had Cardew kept up his old slacking ways they would have been down on him fast enough. But Cardew seemed to have turned over a new leaf in that respect, and Study No. 6 was not disposed to hunt for faults.

Levison and Clive were on Little Side with their chum. They noted that peculiar smile on Cardew's face, and followed his glance, to discover the cause. And they sighted Baggy Trimble, rolling unwillingly down to the football ground with Tom Merry walking after him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bringing up the rear.

"That fat slacker's boon routed out," said Clive with a laugh. "You ought to have done that, Cardew."

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"I!" repeated Cardew.

"Certainly! It's compulsory games practice to-day. Now you're junior House captain you mustn't overlook these things, you know."

"Or leave them to Tom Merry," added Levison. "Of course, he has to see to it if you don't, but it's really up to you now."

Cardew looked whimsically at his chums.

"You see, I'd let Trimble off," he said.

"Let him off?"

"Yes. The poor fellow had a pain, and wasn't fit for footer to-day. So I excused him from games practice."

Ernest Levison looked very grave.

"Did you mention that to Tom Merry?" he asked.

"Why should I?"

"Trimble was pulling your leg," said Sidney Clive abruptly. "He's always got some sneaking excuse for cutting games."

Cardew laughed.

"I'm bound to take a fellow's word," he answered.

"Not Trimble's."

"Well, even Trimble is entitled to be believed, unless he's proved to be a liar," said Cardew. "I took his word."

Sidney Clive looked hard at him. The quiet, straightforward South African junior was unlike Cardew in most ways, and he did not always find it easy to understand his chum.

"I suppose you knew Tom Merry would make the rounds and rout him out?" he remarked.

"Thomas is so dutiful!" sighed Cardew.

"Dash it all, Cardew! A suspicious fellow might think that you'd wangled this with Trimble, for the sake of picking trouble with Tom Merry!" exclaimed Clive.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Cardew. "Surely there aren't any fellows at St. Jim's so suspicious as that?"

"Well, I must say it might look like it."

"I hope not," said Cardew gravely.

Levison looked troubled. He was far keener than the straightforward, unsuspecting Clive, and he was perfectly well aware, on the spot, that Cardew was seeking trouble with the junior captain, on a matter where it was possible to place Tom in the wrong.

"Cardew!" yelled Trimble, as he came breathlessly up.

"Hallo, fat old bean! Is your pain any better?" asked Cardew.

"Ow! No."

"But you've come down to footer," said Cardew. "I suppose you feel fit, or you wouldn't have come?"

"I didn't want to come!" shrieked Trimble. "Look here, Cardew, I've been kicked—"

"Hard, I hope!" interjected Monty Lowther.

"You're likely to be kicked again if you don't stop yowling like a tom cat on the tiles," exclaimed Manners.

"Yah! I say, Cardew, I'm let off, ain't I?"

"Certainly!"

"You hear that, Tom Merry?" yelled Trimble.

"You're not let off," said Tom Merry decidedly. "I've told you that, Trimble. You've got to play up!"

"I won't!"

"You will!"

"Excuse me," interrupted Cardew in his silkiest tone. "Trimble informed me that he wasn't fit for footer to-day, and I let him off, Merry."

Tom looked at Cardew steadily.

"Trimble should have told you that," added Cardew.

"But it's all right, now I've mentioned it, isn't it? You can cut off, Trimble."

"Stay where you are, Trimble!" said Tom Merry.

Trimble blinked from one to the other. His terror of Tom Merry was great, and he was not quite sure of Cardew's power to protect him. He stood irresolute.

The junior footballers gathered round, some of them with very serious faces. The tug-of-war between the rivals of the School House was evidently beginning.

"I don't want a row about this, Merry," said Cardew, urbane as ever. "But I'm afraid I must insist upon Trimble goin'."

"I insist upon his staying!"

"Let it drop, Cardew!" muttered Levison.

"Can't be done; it's a matter of principle," said Cardew calmly. "You know how hefty you are on principle, Ernest, old bean. Don't advise me to go back on my principles."

Levison shrugged his shoulders helplessly. He was aware that Ralph Reckness Cardew was out for mischief, and that there was no stopping him.

"Trimble will leave the field," went on Cardew. "As junior House captain, I have accepted his word that he is seedy to-day, and unfit for games practice."

"You know that that is only a lying excuse," said Tom Merry contemptuously.

"I don't know anythin' of the kind," said Cardew coolly.

"Last practice Blake told me his ankle was crocked, and



"Pick up for sides, you fellows!" said Tom Merry. "Trimble, you are to line up with the rest." "I say he is not to!" said Cardew, and he slipped his arm through the fat junior's. "I will see you safe off the field!" Tom Merry stepped in the way. "Stand away from Trimble, Cardew," he said between his teeth, "or I shall knock you away!" (See this page.)

he never turned up. Ought I to have told Blake he was a liar?"

"That's quite a different matter. Blake isn't a slacker, like Trimble, and can be trusted."

"Perhaps I'm of so trustin' a nature that I feel I can trust Trimble," smiled Cardew. "Anyhow, I have the authority, as junior House captain, to accept his excuse. If you are not satisfied, you have to report the matter to the head of the games. That's Kildare of the Sixth."

Tom Merry breathed hard.

Cardew was right, technically; but in actual practice it was quite impossible for every trifling dispute to be reported to the captain of the school for judgment. To avoid endless disputes and recriminations, it was necessary for House captain and school captain to pull together in trifling matters at least; and Cardew made it quite plain that he did not intend to pull with Tom Merry. Certainly the senior captain would soon have become "fed-up" if two junior captains had incessantly brought trifles light us air before his judgment-seat. The fellows looked on silently.

Even Manners and Lowther had nothing to say; they felt that Cardew had succeeded in placing Tom in a false position. He could scarcely give way; and yet Cardew was technically right in standing to his point.

"I'm perfectly willin' to refer the matter to Kildare," said Cardew blandly. "In the meantime, Trimble clears off."

"Trimble does not clear off," said Tom.

"My dear fellow—" urged Cardew.

"We'd better have this out plain, Cardew," said Tom Merry quietly. "I haven't your way of beating about the bush, and laying little traps for more straightforward fellows to fall into. Let's put it into plain English. You know that Trimble is slacking, and you pretend to believe his excuses, simply to take a rise out of me. Isn't that it?"

"You can tell Kildare you think so, if you choose," yawned Cardew. "I hope I may be able to make my case good."

"The matter is not going before Kildare. I've brought Trimble down here for games practice, and that ends it."

"It doesn't end it. I say he's excused."

"I say he is not."

"Weally, you fellows—" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in distress.

The rivals of the School House were facing one another now, both of them looking rather grim, though Cardew still kept a smile on his face. Trimble edged nearer and nearer to his protector.

Cardew raised his hand.

"Cut off, Trimble."

"Pick up sides, you fellows," said Tom Merry. "Trimble, you are to line up with the rest."

"I will see you safe off the field, Trimble," said Cardew, and he slipped his arm through the fat junior's.

Tom Merry stepped in the way.

"Stand away from Trimble, Cardew," he said, between his teeth.

"Sorry, can't be done."

"I shall knock you away, if you don't!"

"Dear me!"

"Tom—" murmured Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry did not heed. It was not often that he was angry; but he was angry now, and his blue eyes were blazing.

"You hear me, Cardew?"

"I'm not deaf, dear man."

"Stand aside."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders, and did not move. Tom Merry advanced on him, and there was a buzz among the footballers.

"Tom!" called out Talbot of the Shell.

Cardew stood like a rock, and Tom Merry came at him. The dandy of the Fourth put his hands up just in time.

"You will have it, then," said Tom.

The next moment they were fighting. Games practice was quite forgotten now, as the junior footballers gathered round eagerly to stare at the fight.

CHAPTER 3.

Tom Merry Resigns!

"**B**AI Jove! This is weally wotten!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
Tramp, tramp, tramp!
Crash!

Cardew of the Fourth went heavily to the ground. There was a crimson stream from his nose, as he lay there. He lay panting for some moments.

Tom Merry stood and looked at him grimly, waiting for him to rise. Blake of the Fourth called out suddenly:

"Here comes Kildare!"

Kildare of the Sixth was on Big Side with a number of seniors at football practice. Evidently he had seen the startling occurrence on Little Side, for he had left his companions, and he came striding over to the junior ground with a deep frown on his brow.

Cardew staggered to his feet and dabbed his streaming nose. He gave Tom Merry a bitter, evil look.

It was a galling reflection to Cardew that it was only in cunning and clever trickery that he was the master of his rival. When it came to blows, he had to take the second place.

The crowd of juniors opened for Kildare to reach the spot.

Kildare gave the combatants a grim look.

"Is this games practice?" he demanded.

"Yaas, Kildare!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Who's in charge here?"

"I am," said Tom.

"And you are fighting with Cardew?"

"Yes."

"Very well! I want to know what the trouble is," said the captain of St. Jim's. "This won't do, Tom Merry."

Tom was silent.

"It's a dispute between House captain and junior captain," said Talbot of the Shell. "It's really nothing, Kildare."

"House captain and junior captain can't fight out their disputes on the football field," said Kildare. "The point in dispute should have been referred to me as head of the games. You know that, I suppose, Cardew?"

"Of course, Kildare."

"Then why didn't you—"

"Merry refused."

"Oh!" said Kildare, rather taken aback. "And what was the point in dispute?"

Tom Merry did not speak. He was deeply incensed, and he disdained to enter into a wrangle, justifying himself. But Ralph Reckness Cardew had no such objection. Tom Merry had, in fact, played into his hands by the line he had taken, and Cardew intended to take full advantage of the fact.

"Trimble informed me that he was seedy and unable to join in games practice to-day, Kildare. As junior House captain, I let him off."

"The slacker was very likely pulling your leg," said Kildare, with a glance of strong disfavour at Baggy.

"Well, I felt bound to take his word," said Cardew.

"He looked rather seedy, I thought."

"And then Tom Merry kicked me out and bundled me down here, and I've got an awful pain!" said Trimble pathetically.

"You should have told Merry you were let off."

"I did!"

"Oh!" said Kildare, again taken aback. "And why did you bundle him down here, then, Merry?"

"I know he was lying," said Tom scornfully. "I knew, too, that Cardew knew he was lying."

"I don't think you have a right to assume that," said Kildare tartly. "But any dispute between junior captains has to be referred to the head of the games for decision. You know that?"

"Yes."

"Well, then—"

"Oh, I'm in the wrong!" said Tom bitterly. "I'm in the wrong for not referring the matter to you, and I should have been in the wrong if I'd let Trimble frowst in his study all the afternoon, and I should be in the wrong if I came to you every half-hour with a complaint about Cardew interfering with me. I don't claim to be able to keep my end up against a treacherous cad who is trying to trip me."

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"Hear, hear!" murmured Kangaroo.

Cardew crimsoned.

To do him justice, he did not realise how his line of action must look to a plain, direct fellow like Tom Merry; and Tom's description of it startled him a little.

Kildare knitted his brows.

"That's not the way to talk, Merry!" he rapped out. "It seems to me that you are stepping over into Cardew's province, and taking his duties on your own shoulders."

"I suppose you think so," said Tom. "I know I'm no going to argue about it."

"What?"

"This isn't the beginning, and it won't be the end!" said Tom Merry. "If Cardew remains junior House captain, and I remain junior school captain, something like this will happen every day. I shall be in the right, and Cardew will make it appear that I am in the wrong. It will be rotten thing for the House. The two jobs ought to be held by the same man."

"I don't see that. Figgins is junior House captain in the New House, and no trouble has come of it."

"Cardew's rather different from Figgins. I have had plenty of rows with Figgins, but he's an honourable chap and would be ashamed to take mean advantages."

"And I'm not?" exclaimed Cardew.

Tom looked at him steadily.

"No; you're not," he answered. "You don't care what happens to the House, or to the school, so long as you score a point over a fellow you've made your enemy. You'd be willing to see St. Jim's lose every match this season to gain some mean little advantage for yourself!"

Cardew winced.

"Dash it all, that's a bit too strong!" exclaimed Clive angrily. "That sort of talk won't do any good, Tom Merry."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you know—"

"That's enough!" rapped out Kildare. "I think I had better warn you, Merry—"

"No need," said Tom coolly. "I can see as well as you that this won't do. The next trouble will be about the House matches, with Cardew pulling one way and myself pulling another. Then the school matches and the rest of it. The sooner it stops the better, and there's only one way. I resign the junior captaincy!"

"Tom!" shouted Lowther.

"If you mean that, Merry—"

"I do mean it, and I shan't stand for re-election. The fellows have chosen Cardew for House captain, and we can't pull together. They can elect him junior captain of the school, and things can't go much worse. Anyhow, I stand out."

If you are determined not to pull with Cardew, perhaps that's about the best thing you can do," said Kildare rather gruffly. "Anyhow, I'll leave it till this evening before I accept your resignation and put up the notice."

"No need to leave it a minute; I mean what I say."

"Very well."

With that Kildare turned and walked away, leaving the juniors in a buzz of excitement.

Tom Merry's friends gathered round him in great dismay. His resolve had come as a surprise and a shock to all of them.

"You ass, Tom!" muttered Manners. "You've played right into Cardew's hands now."

"It was the best thing to do," said Tom briefly. "Let's get on with the footer!"

Cardew smiled.

"Trimble!" he called out.

"Yes, Cardew?"

"Cut off!"

Baggy Trimble gladly rolled off the field. There was no one now to say him nay.

Ralph Reckness Cardew assumed the direction of the football practice. When Darrell of the Sixth came on to Little Side to take charge, he found more talking than football going on, however. After it was over Cardew walked back to the School House with Levison and Clive, with a smile on his face.

His victory had come suddenly, unexpectedly.

He had looked for a long struggle that would have called for all his cleverness, all his cunning, all his artifice. And, instead of that, his rival had thrown the victory into his hands.

Cardew could scarcely understand it.

But he rejoiced in his success, and he intended to push it on to the limit. He was House captain already, and if Tom Merry kept his word and stood out of the election, Cardew had no doubt whatever that he would be elected junior captain. It was all that he had aimed at—all that he had dreamed of—to drive out Tom Merry and take his place, and attain the highest position that a Lower boy could obtain in the school.

"Dear old Thomas!" he remarked. "He's disappointed me



"You know, Tom Merry," said Kildars tartly, "that any dispute between junior captains has to be referred to the head of the games for decision. I think I had better warn you that—" "No need," said Tom Merry coolly. "There's only one thing I can do, and that is to resign the junior captaincy, and you can accept my resignation now!" (See page 6.)

a little. I never thought he would give in so easily. A victory is better than a fight, I suppose, but it's not so excitin'."

"You'll be putting up for the place?" asked Clive.

"Well, just a few."

"I dare say you'll get in," said Levison.

"You're backin' me?"

"Not if Tom Merry puts up again," said Levison.

"He says he won't!"

"If he doesn't I shall back you. I believe you'd make a good junior captain—if you tried!"

"Oh, I'll try!" said Cardew.

"It's not an easy job. There's not much room for slackin' in a man taking Tom Merry's place."

"Have I been slackin' lately?"

"Well, not lately," admitted Levison, "but a fellow never knows how long you will stick to a thing, Cardew. You'll simply have to live and breathe football this season. I suppose you know that the junior captain is always junior football captain. We shall have you captaining the team in House and School matches; the football committee are bound to follow the usual rule."

"Then there'll always be two places in the team for you and Clive," said Cardew.

"Only on our form, I hope," said Sidney Clive quietly.

"How jolly particular we are!" smiled Cardew. "Now, I believe with jolly old Themistocles—was it Themistocles?—that a man in power ought always to remember his friends."

"Rot!" broke in the voice of Grundy of the Shell, who was following the three into the changing-room. "You ought to play a man on his form, Cardew, or not at all."

Cardew glanced round.

"You'd like to be played on your form, and nothin' else, Grundy?" he asked, smiling.

"Yes, rather!" answered George Alfred Grundy emphatically.

"I'll remember that when it comes to handing out places in the eleven."

"Do!" said Grundy.

Cardew laughed, and went in to change. The room was in a buzz of discussion, and the one topic was Tom Merry's resignation, and the possibilities it opened to his ambitious rival.

CHAPTER 4. Victory!

"TOM, old man—"

Monty Lowther spoke in a tone more of sorrow than of anger. Tom looked up with a smile as Monty came into Study No. 10 with Manners.

"I must say you're an awful ass, Tom," said Lowther.

"Frightful!" assented Manners.

"How do you make that out?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"You've played into Cardew's hands."

"I know."

"Oh, you know!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Yes," Tom Merry spoke quietly. "I know what Cardew was playing for, and I've let the thing go. It was for the best. When he got in as House captain he got enough power in his hands to muck up everything for the House, and he would have stopped at nothing. He will do less harm as junior captain than as House captain trying all the time to muck things up and make trouble. I suppose even Cardew will have the decency to do his best for the House, when he's got what he wants."

"So you chucked in your resignation for the sake of the House!" said Manners.

"Yes."

"Well, you're an old ass, Tom," said Lowther. "I'd have fought Cardew tooth and nail, and if the House went to pot in the process, the House could thank itself."

"You wouldn't, old fellow," said Tom, with a smile. "The House comes first; and Cardew mayn't make a bad captain of the House and the school. Luckily, there will

always be the senior captain over him. But he's a good footballer when he chooses, and he's got an eye for a fellow's form. He ought to be able to win matches."

"But if you don't play in his team—"

"I hardly think Cardew will carry the feud as far as that. Besides, the football committee would have something to say to leaving me out."

"I don't mean that! I—I thought that you wouldn't care to play under Cardew's captaincy."

"Rot!" said Tom. "I shall play if I am asked. My personal feelings towards Cardew haven't anything to do with the footer, I suppose?"

"Well, no; but—"

Monty Lowther paused, and gave his chum rather a queer look.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he asked. "If you play up and get your friends to play up, you'll make Cardew's captaincy a success, after he's ousted you."

"Well, I want to make it a success."

"You want to?" yelled Lowther.

"Of course," said Tom, "if Cardew fails to pull the fellows together, we shall have a pretty rotten season. We don't want to lose House matches to the New House, and, above all, we don't want to lose School matches to the Grammarians, and Rookwood, and Highcliff, and the rest. And we don't want the fellows at loggerheads, do we?"

"If Cardew were in your place he would think of nothing but mucking up things for the fellow who ousted him."

"Possibly. But I hope I shan't think of anything of the kind. If Cardew makes a good captain, he can rely on me to play up."

"Tommy, old man, you're a bit too good for this world," said Manners. "I shall expect to see you sprouting wings shortly."

"Fathead!" said Tom, laughing.

And the subject dropped in Study No. 10, and the Terrible Three of the Shell gave their attention to prep. Prep was interrupted a little later, however, by the arrival of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. His noble face looked in at the doorway.

"You fellows know?" he asked.

"Who, what, and which?" inquired Lowther.

"The notice is up on the board. Election for juniah captain on Wednesday," said Arthur Augustus. "I hear that there is fearful excitement in the New House."

"There would be!" agreed Lowther.

"The New House boundahs are goin' in for it—they hope to get in Figgins as juniah captain of St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, we can't have that. It would be a fearful disastah to have a New House wotah oval us."

"Figgins would make a good captain," said Tom Merry.

"I twust you have some House patwiotism, Tom Mewwy," said the swell of the School House, with dignity.

"Figgins won't get in," said Manners. "As soon as there's a New House candidate in the field, the School House will stand together as one man, to make sure of the House candidate."

"Yaas, wathah! Are you puttin' up again, Tom Mewwy?"

"No."

"Suah of that, deah boy?"

"Quite sure."

"Cardew is up, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "I was thinkin' of puttin' up myself; but Cardew wefuses to with-draw in my favah. I think it is wathah selfish of him, but there you are! As he will not back me up, I shall back him up, to make suah of keepin' the New House man out."

"Good man!" said Lowther. "I'd rather vote even for Cardew than for a New House outsider. After all, he's a School House chap."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus retired, to give as much of his time to prep as he could spare for such trifles, in the present exciting state of affairs.

Levison of the Fourth looked in after prep.

"You're standing down in the election, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes."

"If you put up, I'm backing you."

"Thanks; I'm not putting up."

"Then I'm for Cardew. We've got to keep out the New House man."

After Levison had gone, Tom Merry went into Talbot's study, where he found Talbot and Gore and Skimpole. Gore was talking—in a loud and positive voice, as usual.

"You've got to back up Cardew, Talbot! I tell you you've got to. Do you want to risk a New House man getting in?"

"I'm not backing Cardew," said Talbot quietly. He nodded to Tom Merry in the doorway. "I wish you'd put up again, Tom."

"I came here to say the same to you," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"To me!" exclaimed Talbot.

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"That's it! I'm conceited enough to think that I made a fairly good captain—"

"The best," said Talbot.

"But I think you're as good a man, and I'd like to see you get in, Talbot. You might be able to pull with Cardew better than I did—you've got a lot more tact than I have," said Tom, rather ruefully, "and Cardew isn't up against you personally, as he is against me."

Talbot shook his head.

"It's a good idea, Talbot!" exclaimed George Gore eagerly. "I'll back you. You'd knock Cardew out—you're awfully popular, even in the New House."

"I'm not going to stand," said Talbot briefly, "and if Tom does not put up, I shall not vote."

"Then it's Cardew," said Gore. "We've got to keep the New House out."

"There is one solution of this somewhat abstruse problem that does not seem to have occurred to you, my friends," said Skimpole, blinking at the juniors through his spectacles.

"And what's that?" snapped Gore.

"Too much attention, I think, is bestowed upon mere trifling games such as football and cricket, and so forth," said the learned Skimpole seriously. "A fellow of a more scientific turn of mind would, in my estimation, make a superior junior captain. I was reflecting upon the possibility of offering myself as a candidate."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

"My dear Gore, I see no occasion for that outbreak of risibility in my observation," said Skimpole, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry smiled as he left the study. Herbert Skimpole was not likely to be taken seriously as a candidate. As Tom walked down the passage, several voices hailed him, to inquire whether he was, after all, putting up for re-election on Wednesday. The reply being in the negative, there was an evidently unanimous decision to vote for Cardew. On one point, at least, the School House fellows were united—a New House bouncer wasn't going to get in as junior captain of St. Jim's if they could help it. As the School House was, numerically, by far the larger House, there was no doubt that they could help it if they stood together.

So willy-nilly, as it were, all the Lower School boys in the School House were turned into Cardewites. A rival School House candidate would simply have split the House vote, and given the New House man a chance of slipping in. So the bare idea of a rival candidate was frowned upon on all sides; and even Tom Merry, after reflection, decided to vote for Cardew when the poll was taken.

Over in the New House, Figgins & Co. were hoping to hear of division in the opposite camp. But they did not hear of it; the School House stood together.

The result was a foregone conclusion.

On Wednesday, when the election was held, there were only two candidates for the junior captaincy—Cardew, School House, and George Figgins, New House. It was turned into a purely House contest; every School House voter rolled up for Cardew, and every New House man held up his hand for Figgins. After which, it only remained for Kildare to announce that Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the Fourth Form, was elected junior captain of St. Jim's by a bumping majority.

CHAPTER 5.

Not G. A. Grundy!

"GOOD!" said Grundy of the Shell.

Grundy of the Shell was satisfied.

He looked satisfied.

Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, glanced at him and smiled. They were wondering just how long Grundy's satisfaction would last.

Grundy of the Shell, the worst footballer that ever was, had had a perennial source of complaint in the circumstance that Tom Merry never would play him either for House or School—not even in a Form match.

Grundy's complaints had reached all ears, and caused laughter on many an occasion. In football matters at St. Jim's it was Grundy who furnished the comic relief.

Grundy had backed up Cardew of the Fourth through thick and thin, first in the election for House captain, secondly in the election of junior captain of the school. He had voted for Cardew; he had threatened his pals with the direst penalties if they did not vote for Cardew; he had left no stone unturned to get Cardew in.

Now Cardew was in, and Grundy was satisfied. Now that there was a new junior captain, Grundy's claims were going to be recognised at last—according to Grundy.

"It's good!" said Grundy. "Jolly good! Last Wednesday's election was the best thing that ever happened at St. Jim's."

"Was it?" murmured Wilkins.

"Yes. Now, to-day's Friday," said Grundy. "The list

will be up for the match with the Grammar School soon. It's to-morrow, you know."

"We know," assented Gunn.
 "For the first time, St. Jim's will see the name of its really finest footballer in the list!" said Grundy impressively.

"Tom Merry generally plays, doesn't he?" murmured Wilkins.

"I'm not alluding to Tom Merry."
 "Oh! You mean Talbot—"

"I don't mean Talbot!" roared Grundy.
 "Blake?" said Wilkins, persisting in misunderstanding.

"Well, Blake's a good man for the Fourth, but I should hardly call him the finest footballer at St. Jim's."

"Not Blake, you thundering ass!"
 "Figgins?" asked Wilkins. Wilkins' misunderstanding was really inexcusable.

"Well, I think Figgins—"
 "You're a crass ass, Wilkins. If you know anything about football, you'd know that the finest footballer at St. Jim's is to be found in this study!" snorted Grundy.

"You flatter me, old chap!" murmured Wilkins modestly.
 "You!" yelled Grundy.

"Don't you mean me?"
 "Of course I don't!"

"Oh! Gunn? Well, Gunn's not bad, but to call him the finest footballer at St. Jim's is rather thick."

"I mean me!" shrieked Grundy.
 "Oh, my hat! Do you?"

"Yes, I do!" roared Grundy. "And if I have any more funny back-chat, George Wilkins, I'm prepared to mop up the carpet with your face!"

Grundy jumped to his feet in great excitement. Wilkins soothed him with a gesture, as if he were a baby.

"All serene, old man! All right. You're the finest footballer at St. Jim's, not excepting any of the Fifth or Sixth."

"I suppose you mean that to be funny; but, as a matter of fact, you've got it," said Grundy. "I should like to see the fellow in the Fifth or Sixth who plays football as I do."

"There isn't one!" said Gunn, with a private wink at Wilkins.

"I know there isn't," said Grundy. "I'm not a fellow, I hope, to brag—"

"Oh gum!" ejaculated Wilkins involuntarily.

"Bragging isn't in my line," said Grundy, with a ferocious glare at his chums. "But I don't believe in false modesty. I state the facts. I happen to be the finest footballer that St. Jim's ever turned out, and I see no harm in saying so. And now Tom Merry's laid on the shelf, where he ought to have been long ago. I'm coming into my right—like the king in the song, you know, coming into his own."

"Oh, yes! Oh—hem!" gasped Wilkins. "Just like that. I see!"

"Cardew's a cheeky sort of cad and a dashed slacker, and I don't say that I approve of him," went on Grundy. "But Cardew's got this quality, he's got an eye to a fellow's form at games. Now that Cardew is junior captain, I shall be down to play in matches."

"Oh, will you?"
 "That's arranged."

"Phew! Better not say so outside this study," said Gunn. "It would look a good bit like bribery and corruption at elections."

"Don't be a silly owl, Gunn! I don't mean that Cardew has offered me a place in the eleven as the price of my support. I should punch any fellow's head who made such an offer, as you know jolly well. What I mean to say is, that at last we've got a junior captain who knows a fellow's form. That's all that's needed."

"Oh! So you think Cardew will play you, Grundy?"
 "Naturally! In fact, he's as good as said so. He said distinctly that when it came to handing out places in the eleven he would remember a hint I gave him, that a fellow ought to be played on his form, and nothing else. See?"

Wilkins and Gunn gazed at Grundy. It could hardly be

said that Cardew had deceived him, to obtain his support in the election. Grundy had been so ready to deceive himself that there was no need for Cardew to deceive. Certainly, Cardew had allowed him to deceive himself to the top of his bent. No doubt he had been laughing in his sleeve all the time at the egregious Grundy. Grundy's belief that he could play football, and that he was certain of a place in the eleven if only he got justice, was really almost pathetic. Cardew had undertaken to give him justice; that was all. Grundy did not yet know the kind of justice he was going to get.

Wilkins and Gunn could guess. They knew that a football captain who began by playing fellows like Grundy would not keep his post long. In fact, it was absolutely certain that Cardew had no more idea of putting Grundy into the team than of putting in Baggy Tribble or Taggles the porter.

Grundy's chums wondered what would happen when this knowledge dawned upon the powerful brain of George Alfred.

Grundy strolled to the door of the study. He was in an eminently satisfied mood. Already, in his mind's eye, he saw the name of G. A. Grundy figuring in the football-list. It really was unfortunate that he was never likely to see it with any other eye.

"I—I say, old chap," murmured Wilkins, "I—I wouldn't make too sure of it, if I were you."

Wilkins really felt a touch of compassion in advance for Grundy's inevitable disappointment.

"Oh, you're an ass, Wilkins, old man! Come along and see the list, and you'll see my name there," said Grundy.

And he walked out of the study.

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged glances and followed him. They did not expect in the least to find Grundy's name in the list, but they were curious to know what would happen when Grundy failed to find it there.

Quite a little crowd was gathered before the notice-board when the three Shell fellows arrived there.

The list for the Grammar School match was Cardew's first official step since he had taken over Tom Merry's post. Naturally, it created a great deal of interest.

Many fellows who would have expected to play under Tom's leadership were doubtful whether Cardew would acknowledge their claims. It was not likely that the new captain would see eye to eye with the old. And it was certain that all Cardew's backers would feel that they had a claim on him, and it was difficult to see how Cardew could elude them.

The list came rather as a surprise, and as a relief to most of the junior footballers. Cardew was beginning cautiously. If he meant to make changes, he was in no hurry to make them. Tom Merry's name was conspicuous in the list as centre-forward. Some of the fellows wondered that Tom consented to play under his supplanter—others wondered that Cardew was willing to play him. But there was the name, and all the footballers were glad to see it there. A St. Jim's junior team with Tom Merry missing would have been a good deal like "Hamlet" with the Prince of Denmark left out.

The noble name of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there. Blake's name was there. Talbot, of course, was there, and Figgins of the New House. Fatty Wynn was down to keep goal. Ernest Levison was there, and Sidney Clive as centre-half. They were Cardew's chums, but Tom Merry had played Levison often enough, and Clive had figured several times in matches, so there could be no suspicion of favouritism. Lowther, Kangaroo, and Cardew himself made up the rest.

Only two of the men belonged to the New House—a circumstance that might cause a little soreness "over the way." But that circumstance rather won approval in the School House. One or two of the men were given changes in position, but really that was all there was to distinguish the team from a team picked out by Tom Merry himself.

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Wilkins and Gunn gazed at Grundy. It could hardly be

Certainly the name of G. A. Grundy was nowhere to be found.

Grundy read the list twice carefully, with puckered brows and a very puzzled expression. Wilkins and Gunn smiled at one another. The crowd of fellows before the board commented freely on the list, and generally the comments were favourable.

"Might have put Herries in goal," remarked Jack Blake. "But Fatty Wynn is all right, though he's a New House bouncer."

"Yaas, wathah!" concurred Arthur Augustus. "It weally would not do to make it wholly a House team to play a School match."

"They'll be grousing in the New House," remarked Digby. "They think Redfern ought to have a show."

"Well, Reddy's a good man," said Blake. "Might have given him Clive's place; but, after all, Clive's all right."

"Fellow must stand by his friends!" remarked Racke of the Shell.

"Oh, rot! Not in footer!" said Blake.

"Wathah not! I weally should have liked to see one or two more New House men in the eleven."

"Easy enough!" sneered Racke. "Get out of it, and let Kerr or Reddy have your place."

"I wegard that suggestion, Wacke, as uttah wot, and only displayin' your uttah ignowance of football!"

"This is jolly queer!" said Grundy.

"I don't see that!" said Talbot of the Shell. "I must say it's a good list, and better than I looked for."

"My name isn't there."

"Your name!" ejaculated Talbot.

"Yes, mine!"

Talbot smiled, and some of the fellows chuckled.

"You see, Grundy, this is a football match!" said Kangaroo. "I'm sure Cardew would have put your name down if it had been marbles or hopscotch! But it's footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to see Cardew about this," said Grundy, unheeding. "I suppose it's only a mistake, but it's a mistake that's got to be set right!"

And George Alfred Grundy, with a knitted brow, started for Study No. 9 in the Fourth to have that mistake set right, leaving the crowd of juniors chortling.

CHAPTER 6.

Alas for Grundy!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW was toying with prep in Study No. 9, while Clive and Levison were working. Prep always bored Cardew more or less; of late it bored him more than ever. Undoubtedly since Cardew had entered upon his contest with Tom Merry, he had given up slacking at games. He had compensated himself, as it were, by slacking at work. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was growing to regard him with a severe eye, and he was beginning to reap a harvest of lines and detentions. It was Cardew's way never to be keen on more than one thing at a time; he followed his latest wayward fancy where ever it led him, and let other matters "slide."

As a matter of fact, he was booked for detention on Saturday afternoon, when the Grammar School match was due to be played. That circumstance did not seem to worry Cardew in the least. Mr. Lathom was a kind gentleman, who could generally be relied upon not to let fixtures be interfered with if it could be helped. Cardew had little doubt that he would get leave on acquainting Mr. Lathom with the circumstances of the case. The doubt would certainly have worried Tom Merry, in Cardew's place. It did not worry Cardew.

There was a heavy tramp in the passage, and the door of Study No. 9 opened to admit George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy's rugged face was flushed, and his eyes were sparkling. But he was trying to keep his temper. If the new captain had made a mistake, Grundy was willing to give him a chance to set it right.

"Trot in, old bean!" said Cardew cordially. "Awfully glad to see you, Grundy!"

"That's all very well!" grunted Clive. "But we're trying to work."

Grundy's face cleared.

"I won't keep you a minute," he said. "It's only about a mistake in the football list, Cardew."

Levison and Clive smiled. Cardew assumed an expression of interest.

"My little list—my first humble essay as junior captain!" he said. "I hoped you'd approve of it, Grundy."

Grundy looked quite genial. It was always easy to pull Grundy's egregious leg.

"Well, it's a good list," he said, "but there's one name left out, you know."

"Oh gad! I'm really new to the business, you know,"

said Cardew. "Give a chap time to settle down. Have I really put up a list with only ten names in it?"

"I don't mean that. There's eleven names, right enough."

Cardew looked perplexed.

"Didn't you say there was a name left out?"

"Yes, I did."

"I admit I'm a child in these matters," said Cardew blandly. "Is there a new rule in Association football that I haven't heard of? Are they playing twelve men a side this season, Levison?"

Levison laughed.

"If they are, St. Jim's will have to come into line, I suppose," continued Cardew gravely. "I must look out for a twelfth man."

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Grundy. "That isn't what I mean. You really seem awfully ignorant of football, Cardew."

"I'm willin' to learn!" said Cardew meekly.

"What I mean is you've made up a list without putting my name in it," explained Grundy.

"Yes, that's right!"

"Right!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Yes; you remember you asked me to leave you out."

"Asked you!" yelled Grundy.

"Just so. These fellows were witnesses."

"Well, I'm blessed if I remember asking you to leave me out!" said Grundy blankly. "You must have misunderstood me, Cardew!"

"I think not. I believe I remember your exact words," said Cardew, with great gravity. "You said that I ought to play a man on his form, or not at all. I said I'd remember that when it came to handing out places in the junior eleven. Isn't that clear?"

Levison and Clive chuckled, and Grundy stared uncomprehendingly at the new captain. The powerful brain of George Alfred worked slowly.

"Well, I want you to play me on my form," said Grundy at last.

"But you haven't any football form, old chap!"

"What!"

"You see, you can't play footer!"

"Wha-a-a-t!"

"I'd play you on your form like a shot, if you had any," explained Cardew. "But as you haven't—"

"Look here—" bawled Grundy.

"How can I play you on my form you haven't got?" asked Cardew, in a tone of patient remonstrance.

George Alfred Grundy breathed hard.

"I feel bound to keep my word to you," went on Cardew.

"I said I'd only play a fellow on his form. I'm sticking to that. If I played a fellow for his good looks or his nice manners or his gentle voice, of course, I should slam you in at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Levison and Clive.

"But on your football form I couldn't play you," said Cardew. "Some day, when we play the Third, I might shove you in as back, if you'd make a solemn promise to stand quite still and not move all through the game. We'll think that over later."

"You cheeky ass!" yelled Grundy.

Cardew looked pained.

"I don't think you ought to slang a man for keepin' his plighted word to you," he said reproachfully.

"What do you think I've been backing you for in the elections?" demanded Grundy.

"Because I'm so nice, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought you had sense enough to improve on that dummy Tom Merry, and put me in the team."

"I should have to get insured first," said Cardew thoughtfully.

"Insured!"

"Yes. The fellows would lynch me, you know."

"I've had enough of your funny talk!" roared Grundy.

"What I want to know is, am I playing against the Grammar School to-morrow?"

"As they say in the House of Chinwag, the answer is in the negative."

"Not?" exclaimed Grundy.

"Not!" assented Cardew.

"You've taken me in."

"Well, if I've taken you in I'm prepared to put you out!" yawned Cardew. "Will that set it right?"

Grundy did not answer that question. Whether Cardew had taken him in, or whether the egregious Grundy had taken himself in, did not really matter very much. It was clear that he was to be no better off under the new regime than under the old regime. All his herculean efforts to get Cardew elected had left him precisely where he was.

That was such an exasperating reflection to Grundy that it was not surprising that he lost his temper—never very reliable.



Tom Merry's quick eye saw where his best chance lay. He passed the ball back to Cardew at the psychological moment, and it was Cardew who drove it true and hard into the goal. The Grammarian custodian, whose eyes had been glued on Tom Merry, clutched at it too late, and there was a roar as the leather entered the net. (See page 10.)

He rushed at the new captain with his hands up. Cardew whipped out of his chair in a twinkling, and stepped round the table.

"Dear man—" he began.

"Let me get at you!" roared Grundy.

Levison and Clive jumped up. Grundy had his own lofty ideas on the subject; but it was obvious to everyone else that a football captain could not be expected to fight every fellow he failed to select for a football team. Grundy was collared at once.

"Let me go!" roared Grundy. "I'm going to smash him!"

Cardew eyed him coolly.

"Let him go, you fellows," he said. "He's a bit hefty for me, but I think I can manage him."

"Don't be an ass!" retorted Levison. "Lend us a hand to bump him down the passage."

"Anythin' to oblige."

Three pairs of hands propelled Grundy from the study. Hefty as he was, Grundy had no chance against the three.

In the passage he smote the floor with a loud concussion.

Bump!

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Blake, coming along.

"Grundy wants to pitch into Cardew for leaving him out of the eleven," explained Clive.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Lend a hand!"

"Yes, rather!"

Several more fellows came along to lend a hand. It was felt that George Alfred Grundy required to learn that his high-handed methods were off-side, as it were. The hapless Grundy was bumped along the Fourth Form passage, bumped along the Shell passage, and bumped into his own study, where he was deposited in a breathless and dusty

heap. And for quite a long time afterwards Grundy had no leisure to think of his wrongs and grievances. He was too busy thinking of his damages. And the name of G. A. Grundy did not appear in the football list.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry to the Rescue!

"CERTAINLY not!"

Mr. Lathom spoke very sharply.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Cardew of the Fourth had presented himself in his Form master's study, to beg off detention for the afternoon. Cardew was looking as meek as possible, but Mr. Lathom looked cross, and not without reason.

"You see, sir—" murmured Cardew.

"For some time past, Cardew, you have been the very worst boy in my Form," said Mr. Lathom. "You have consistently neglected your preparation, your construc has been as bad as Trimble's, and you have been careless and inattentive, and you have failed to hand in your impositions."

"I've been working very hard—"

"Nonsense!"

"At football, sir."

"Indeed! I believe that a short time ago there was some trouble because you attempted to elude the compulsory games practice."

"That was some time ago, sir. Since then—"

"Nonsense!"

"The fellows want me this afternoon, sir."

"You may explain to them that your detention is due to your own idleness and carelessness and disrespect."

Cardew's eyes glittered. Mr. Lathom's statement was perfectly correct. Cardew had absolutely no claim what

ever to be let off. It looked now as if he had counted too much on the easy-going good nature of his Form master.

But to be detained on the occasion of the first match since the election was not to be thought of. It would be a blow from which he could scarcely recover.

If the match took place without Cardew, and his absence was due to his own idle recklessness, it would be about as bad a start as he could possibly have made as junior captain of St. Jim's. He realised, too, that he would have to ask Tom Merry to captain the side. He would prefer, no doubt, to ask Levison or Clive, but public opinion would be too strong for that. He would have to ask Tom.

It was not as if Mr. Lathom was a hard master, like Mr. Ratcliff, for instance, who might detain a fellow from sheer crossness of temper. It was well known that no fellow need ever be detained by Mr. Lathom unless he fairly asked for it.

The Fourth Form master made a gesture of dismissal. He regarded the matter as closed.

"You may go, Cardew!" he said, in a tone of finality.

"But, sir—"

"I have no more to say."

"It's an important football match, sir."

"Possibly, I should be the last man to interfere with a match which the boys regard as important," said Mr. Lathom. "If it were Blake or D'Arcy or Levison— But I cannot believe, Cardew, that your presence is very important, since only a few weeks ago you were in trouble for slacking at games. You may go."

"I assure you, sir—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Lathom waved his hand to the door, and Cardew understood that it was useless to say anything further. He left the study, his eyes gleaming and his teeth set.

It was a heavy blow. Cardew would not have hesitated for a second about "cutting" detention had the match been at the Grammar School. But the game was to be played on the St. Jim's ground, almost in sight of Mr. Lathom's study window. Obviously he could not play in those circumstances. Before the game had been ten minutes old he would have been called off the field.

Cardew went slowly down the passage, his handsome face almost white with rage. This was how he was starting his captaincy—writing out an imposition in the Form-room, while his supplanted rival captained the side! At the corner of the passage he came on the Terrible Three of the Shell, chatting at the big window. Cardew gave them an evil look. He could imagine how Tom Merry and his friends would smile when they learned how he was starting his new career as junior captain.

"About time you got changed, Merry, if you're playin'!" snapped Cardew, in a mood to say something unpleasant.

Tom looked at him.

"The match isn't till half-past two," he answered. "It's barely two now."

Monty Lowther chimed in:

"What I like about Shakespeare," he said, "is the way he hits off a chap. Remember the lines:

"Man, vain man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep!"

Manners chuckled, and Tom Merry smiled. Cardew grew crimson. To do him justice, he was not a fellow to use a "little brief authority" in such a manner as to make the angels weep. It was his anger and annoyance after the interview with Mr. Lathom that had led him to speak to Tom as he had.

He strode on, leaving the Terrible Three smiling; but he turned back again.

"The laugh's on your side!" he said bitterly. "I may as well tell you now. I'm detained this afternoon."

Tom Merry whistled.

"Won't Lathom let you off?"

"I've asked him. No."

"And that's how you start?" exclaimed Manners indignantly. "You've played no end of tricks to bag the captaincy, and that's how you handle it when you've got it!"

"I'm goin' to ask Levison to captain the side!" said Cardew savagely.

"You're jolly well not!" bawled Lowther. "If you're detained, and can't show up, it's up to Tom Merry!"

"Who's captain?" sneered Cardew.

"You are, at present; but I can jolly well tell you that you won't keep it long at this rate!"

"And I can tell you that Levison will refuse," said Manners. "All the fellows will expect Tom to act, and Levison isn't fool enough to set himself up against the whole lot of us just to please your malice."

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Cardew bit his lips hard. It dawned upon him that Manners was right, and that Ernest Levison certainly would refuse to be used in such a way.

"Why not ask Grundy?" said Monty Lowther satirically. "You seem to have led Grundy to believe that you'd play him. Ask him to skipper the team."

"I would if I dashed well chose!" snapped Cardew. "By gad, I've a jolly good mind to, to show you your place!"

Tom Merry laughed contemptuously.

"I believe you're reckless fool enough," he said. "But if you play Grundy there will be no match. Every other fellow will resign from the team, and I shall be the first!"

"And I the second!" said Monty Lowther.

Cardew looked at them evilly. He knew that if he was kept off the field, Tom Merry had to take his place. It would be an utterly ridiculous climax to his campaign against Tom Merry; but there seemed no help for it.

"You ought never to have got detained," went on Tom coldly, "and Mr. Lathom would let you off for a match if you hadn't put his back up by lazy slacking. That's clear enough."

"When I want a sermon I'll ask for one!" snapped Cardew.

"Well, I won't give you one now," said Tom. "The question, what's going to be done?"

"I suppose I'm goin' to be done," said Cardew, with a gleam of his old sardonic humour. "It's a regular catch for you, Tom Merry, and you can make the most of it."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I don't suppose you'll understand it, Cardew, but I'm not keen on making the most of it, or in making you look like a slacking fool before all the fellows. Have you put it to Lathom—"

"Oh, I've tried that. Nothin' doin'!"

"Would you like me to try?"

Cardew stared at him.

"You! Do you think Lathom would listen to you?"

"He might."

"Oh gad!" said Cardew. "You're a queer customer, Tom Merry. Go and beard the lion in his den, if you like."

Tom Merry walked along the passage to Mr. Lathom's study, and tapped at the door. The Fourth Form master gave him a genial nod as he entered.

"Well, Merry?"

"May I speak about Cardew, sir?" asked Tom respectfully.

"He's detained this afternoon, and he's wanted for a school match."

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"Cardew should have thought of that earlier, Merry."

"I know, sir. But he's been elected captain, and it's awkward if the match has to be played without him. We should all feel it a favour, sir, if you—"

Mr. Lathom blinked at Tom rather curiously over his glasses.

"I understood that you were junior captain, Merry."

Tom smiled faintly. The exciting affairs of the Lower School evidently had had no echo in the scholastic quiet of Mr. Lathom's study. He had not even noticed the election.

"Cardew is captain now, sir. There has been a new election. I—I know it's rather a cheek to ask you to let him off, but as there's an important match on, and Cardew is captain, I thought you wouldn't mind Cardew being detained Wednesday instead of to-day."

The Form master gave Tom a very benevolent blink.

"I understand, Merry! If you, whom I certainly trust, assure me that Cardew's presence is necessary, I shall accede to your request."

"It is necessary from our point of view, sir," said Tom.

"Of course, the match could be played without him; but that's very awkward, as he is captain. It's his first match, too, since he got the captaincy."

"Very well, Merry; you may tell Cardew that his detention may stand over till Wednesday afternoon."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

"Not at all, my boy," said the Fourth Form master very kindly. And Tom left the study.

"Bitten your napper off?" asked Cardew, as Tom Merry rejoined the juniors at the corner of the corridor.

"No," said Tom, with a smile; "your detention's off till Wednesday, and you can play in the match to-day, Cardew."

"My only hat!" Cardew stared at Tom. "You mean that?"

"Yes. It's a message from Lathom. Official," said Tom.

"Thanks!" said Cardew, and he walked away.

Monty Lowther and Manners looked at their chum with somewhat uncertain expressions.

"Well, you're the limit, Tom!" said Manners at last.

"How's that?"

"You'd have captained the team if Cardew hadn't played, and he'd have looked the biggest ass at St. Jim's, in the circumstances."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm not out to score over Cardew," he said. "I'm thinking chiefly of beating the Grammarians."

"We could have beaten them without Cardew."
 "Very likely; but now Cardew's got the job, I don't want to butt into it. I'd much rather not, in fact! Besides, why shouldn't he have a chance of showing what he can do?"
 "Well, I've heard of turning the other cheek to the smiter," said Monty Lowther, "but you're the first chap I've ever heard of putting that jolly old maxim into practice."

Tom Merry flushed a little.
 "I'm bound to back up my captain or get out of the team," he said. "That's how I look at it."

"Is that how Cardew looked at it when you were captain?"
 "Well, no. But I suppose I'm not called on to follow a rotten bad example?"

"All serene, old bean," said Lowther. "You're right, Tom, of course, only precious few fellows would look at it as you do. Let's go and get changed."

When the St. Jim's footballers gathered on Little Side for the match with the Grammarians, Cardew was in his place, looking very fit and cheerful. He gave Tom Merry a pleasant nod. Cardew did not wholly understand Tom's nature, any more than Tom understood Cardew's. As a matter of fact, their ways were as far as the poles asunder. But Cardew could, at least, respect a high principle which he hardly understood and did not share.

That Tom Merry, after being supplanted, was willing to back him up loyally, was a puzzle to Cardew. Yet he could see that it was the case. Tom had simply put his personal feelings aside for the sake of the House and the game. It would have been easy for him to make a division, and to form an opposition party to give Cardew trouble. And the thought of it never even crossed his mind.

Cardew of the Fourth was one person; Cardew, the junior captain of St. Jim's, was another. In the former person, Tom Merry did not care to speak to him if he could help it; in the latter capacity, he was prepared to back him up with steady loyalty. And that was the distinction which Ralph Reckness Cardew was perplexed to comprehend.

However, there it was, and Cardew was glad of it. Without Tom Merry to head it, there was no opposition for him to look for, and his captaincy started under the very best auspices. And Cardew quite realised how much that meant in the first school match in which he was to figure as captain.

CHAPTER 8. The Winning Goal!

"GOAL!"

The ball went into the net from the foot of Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School. And fifty Grammarians who had followed their team over to St. Jim's burst into a roar.

"Goal!"
 It was first blood to the Grammarians. For twenty minutes of the first half the game had been ding-dong, and Gay was the first to break the ice.

Cardew's face was a little set as he lined up his men after the goal.

He wanted to win—almost passionately he wanted to win that match. He wanted his rule to start with a football victory; in fact, a victory was needed to clinch the matter. Only too well Cardew knew the talk that would go on in the studies and the changing-room if the first match after the ousting of Tom Merry was lost to the old rivals of St. Jim's.

He had picked out a winning team, and Tom Merry's loyalty enabled him to play the best junior footballer in the school. If he had made a mistake in giving Clive the place many of the fellows thought should have gone to Redfern of the New House, it was a slight one. Clive was certainly good at centre-half. In order to place himself, with Levison, in the front line, Cardew had had to make some changes in position, but every man was good in the place that was given him.

Nevertheless, the team did not seem to be pulling together so well as of old. Cardew, at inside right, did not seem to hold it together as Tom Merry had been used to holding it. It was a team that was, at least, equal to the Grammarian crowd, and if defeat came, it was pretty certain that the defeat would be attributed to the change in the captaincy, and the other changes caused by it. That verdict might be unjust; but it was fairly certain to be given.

Cardew played up, personally, at his very best; he was playing the game of his life. No one who saw him now would have dreamed of calling him a slacker. Fellows who were looking on found it hard to remember that only a few weeks before Cardew had been given a beating by the games committee for slacking at footer.

But fortune did not smile on Cardew. Half-time came with the score unchanged, the Grammarians one up.

"May as well call it a goner," said Grundy of the Shell, behind the goal to Wilkins and Gunn. "That is what comes of leaving out good men."

Wilkins, for once, was disposed to agree with his great chief. On this occasion Wilkins had been left out.

But the game was not a "goner" yet. Early in the second half Levison gave Tom Merry a pass, from which the former captain scored, and the goal was greeted with deafening cheers by the St. Jim's crowd.

It was a relief to Cardew, yet he was not wholly pleased. It was his old rival who had taken the goal. Cardew had not even helped; he had been laid on his back by a Grammarian charge just before Tom Merry found the net.

"Goal! Goal! Good old Tommy! Goal!" roared the St. Jim's crowd; and that roar was not music to Cardew's ears.

"Good old Tommy!" murmured Monty Lowther, as they walked back to the centre of the field. "I suppose you know what the fellows would say about Cardew, Tom, if he lost this match."

"Haven't thought about it," answered Tom.
 "You wouldn't, old buck! But you're going to save his bacon for him if you can—what?"

"I'm going to beat the Grammarians if I can."
 "Right-ho! In your place, Cardew would be thinking of beating his own captain."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom.
 "If he begins with a victory over the jolly old Grammarians he will be pretty firmly seated in the saddle," said Lowther.

"Nothing could be much more popular than that."
 "And we're going to beat them," said Tom cheerily.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Lowther.
 The sides lined up, and the Grammarians started in with a hot attack. Again and again they came down on the St. Jim's goal. But Fatty Wynn, between the posts, was in great form, and he drove the leather out again and again.

Kangaroo cleared to midfield, and the game swayed away towards the Grammar School end.

"On the ball!" roared Grundy, "Can't you get hold of the ball? My hat! What a game!"

"Dey up, you ass!" said Wilkins. "Cardew's got the ball."

Snort from Grundy.
 "How long will he keep it? Look at him making a present of it to that back—that ass Carboy."

But the great Grundy was mistaken—as he so frequently was in football matters. So far from making Carboy of the Grammar School a present of the ball, Cardew wound round Carboy and ran for goal. There was no St. Jim's forward up to take a pass, and Cardew ran for goal and kicked.

The Grammarian goalkeeper swung to face him, and slipped and sat down. There was a buzz of excitement as Cardew kicked, over a sitting goalkeeper.

Perhaps Cardew was a fraction too hasty. The ball struck the crossbar and bounced back. The next second Frank Monk was on it, and had cleared it, and Lane sent it past the half-way line with a mighty kick.

Cardew gritted his teeth. His face was almost white with disappointment and suppressed rage. It had been a glorious chance, and it had failed. The chance was utterly gone now, play and players swayed away into the home half.

"What a kick!" said Grundy derisively. "Some captain—I don't think."

"Might happen to anybody!" said Gunn tolerantly.
 "It wouldn't have happen if I'd been there," said Grundy.
 "You've never seen me hit the crossbar."

"Never seen you hit anything within a mile of it," assured Gunn; and even then Grundy did not seem satisfied. Indeed, Gunn strolled away to a different part of the field to escape Grundy's further observations, which were entirely of a personal nature.

"Hard luck, old chap," said Levison, as Cardew passed him, and the new captain nodded without speaking; his feelings were too bitter just then for speech.

"Ten minutes to play," remarked Wally of the Third, laying down the law to a group of fags. "Looks to me like a draw."

"Well, my brother's there!" observed Levison minor.
 "So's mine," said Wally. "But I think it will be a draw all the same. Your major doesn't seem to be setting the Thames on fire, young Levison."

"Bow-wow!" said Frank Levison cheerily. His eyes were on Levison of the Fourth; evidently in his opinion Ernest Levison was the principal person concerned in the Grammarian match.

"Five minutes to play!" said Reggie Manners. "What they really want is some of the Third in the team."

"Now you're talking sense!" said Wally approvingly.
 "There's your major on his back, Frank. Is that how you generally play football in the Levison family?"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank quite crossly. "He's up again!"

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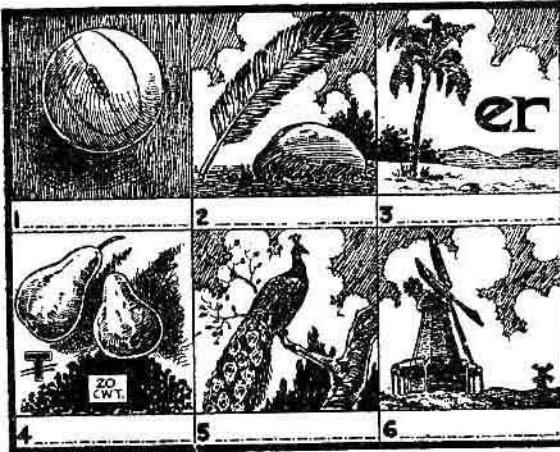
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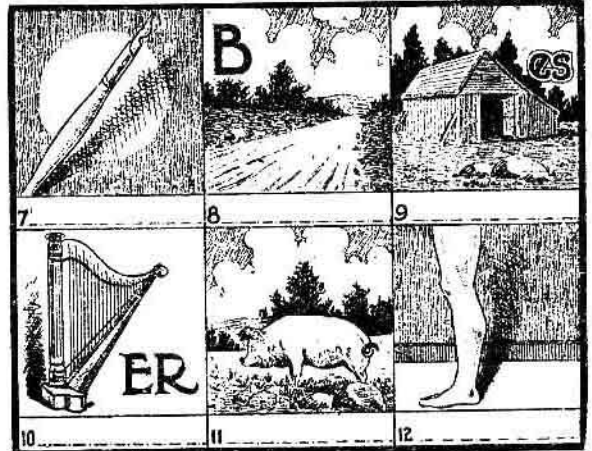
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(Continued on page 25.)

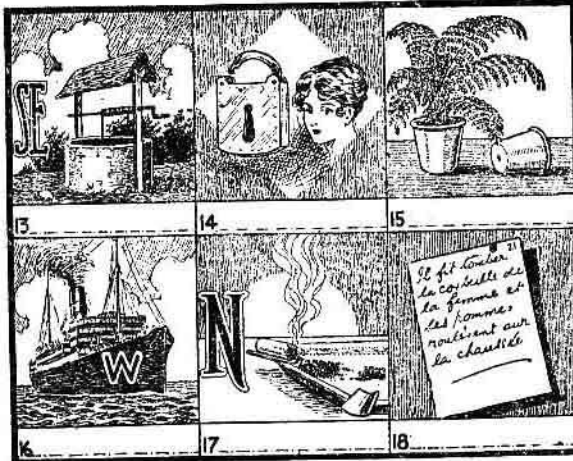
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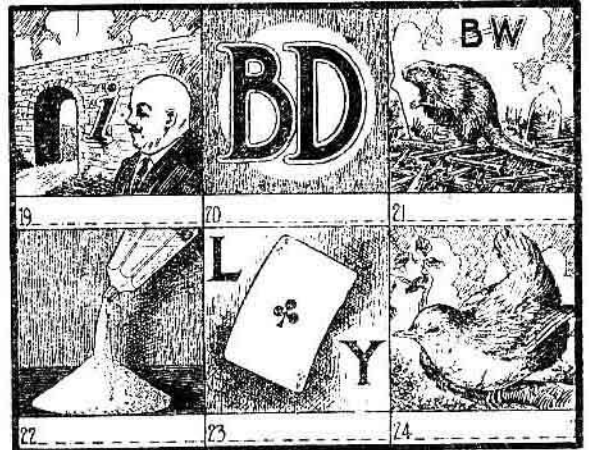
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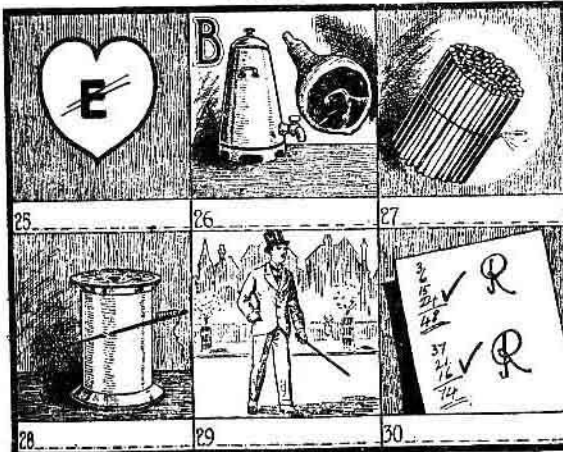
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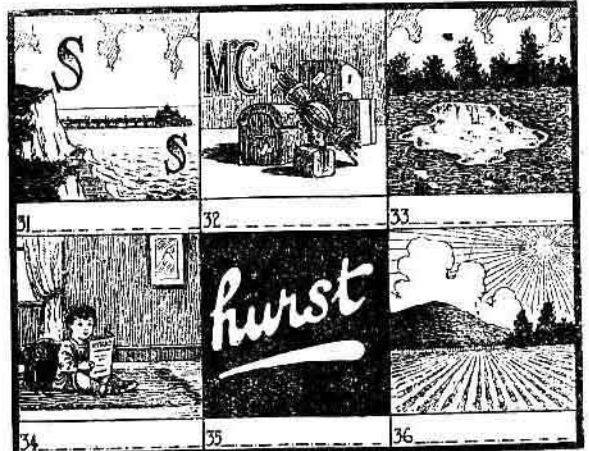
No. 4 SET.



No. 5 SET.



No. 6 SET.



YOU WILL FIND No. 7 SET ON PAGE 25, BOYS!



"CAPTAIN CARDEW!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"Looks rather at sea, doesn't he?" remarked Wally. "Sort of sleepy, what?"

"No!" roared Frank.

Wally chuckled.

"He's got the ball!" exclaimed Levison minor a minute later. "Hurrah! Go it, Ernie!"

"Too late for Ernie to do anything!" grinned Wally of the Third. "Even jolly old Ernie—Hallo, he's down again! You Levisons seem fond of taking little naps on the football-field."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, young Levison—"

"Cardew's got it!" shouted Frank. "Ernie gave him the ball! You don't often see a chap pass like that!"

"Go it, Cardew!"

"Hurrah!"

Levison of the Fourth had been charged over, but Cardew had trapped the ball. Four of the St. Jim's forwards were rushing up the field. Cardew was stopped, but he centred to Tom Merry, though even in the rush and excitement of the moment he felt a pang at parting with the ball to his rival. Tom had the ball, and drew the defence—but he did not kick for goal. His quick eye saw where the best chance lay, and he was not thinking of kudos for himself. He sent the ball back to Cardew at the psychological moment, and it was Cardew who drove it into goal.

The Grammarian custodian, whose eyes were glued on Tom Merry, clutched at it too late. There was a roar from the St. Jim's crowd as it landed in the net.

"Goal!"

"Cardew—Cardew!"

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

The Grammarian goalkeeper grunted and tossed out the ball. It had been a near thing—a very near thing for the first match Cardew played as junior captain of St. Jim's. But it was a win—on the very stroke of time the winning goal had been captured—and captured by Ralph Rockness Cardew.

"Goal—goal!" the St. Jim's crowd were shouting.

"Hurrah! St. Jim's wins! Goal!"

"Oh gad!" murmured Cardew. "It's a win after all!"

He walked over to Tom Merry. "Your goal, Merry!"

"Yours," said Tom, with a smile.

Cardew's features seemed to twitch for a moment. It was this fellow whom he had supplanted—whom he had "downed" by the use of every trick his clever brain could think of; and this was the fellow who had made him a present of the winning goal. Cardew could not help thinking of what his own action would have been in Tom Merry's place, and the colour came into his cheeks.

"Well, we've won!" he said. "We've beaten them! I—I say, Tom Merry—I'm sorry—for a lot of things—"

He broke off abruptly, and walked off the field with Levison and Clive. Tom Merry looked after him, a rather curious expression on his face.

"Bai Jove! We've beaten the boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great satisfaction. "I weally thought it was goin' to be a drow, you know—but a miss is as good as a mile. Cardew makes a pweetly good captain. I think I could name a fellow in the Fourth who would do bettah, pewwaps; but weally I must say that Cardew is quite good."

"Good enough!" agreed Blake.

"Certainly that was a wippin' goal!" continued Arthur Augustus. "Cardew was on if like a flash when you gave him the chance, Tom Mewwy!"

SPECIAL NOTE.

Any reader of the GEM who has a love for amateur theatricals cannot do better than secure a copy of "Marionettes and How to Make them." This stunning little book, besides explaining in minute detail how to make Marionettes, a stage on which to work them, and giving two jolly plays, which can be acted with simplicity by the aid of the dolls, offers five hundred magnificent prizes in a very simple competition. The book can be obtained from any bookseller or newsagent, or direct from the publisher, Stanley Paul & Co., Ltd. (Dept. P), 31, Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C. 2, for 2s. 6d., and is well worth the money.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 826.

"He was!" agreed Tom.

"But in your place, deah boy, I think I should have kicked," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "In my opinion, you should have kicked for goal then instead of passin'!"

"My faulty judgment, perhaps?" said Tom, with a laugh. "Yaas; howevah, it turned out all right," said Arthur Augustus. "I am glad you agree with me."

"But I don't," answered Tom cheerfully. "I thought Cardew had a better chance of putting the ball in, you see—and it seems to have worked!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"In your place I should have kicked myself," he said.

"You would have kicked yourself!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Well, old bean, if I kick you instead, will that make it right?"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! If you think that funnay, Lowthah—"

"Good game—what?" said Figgins, interrupting Arthur Augustus. "Cardew's not a bad skipper. He made a mistake in putting so many School House chaps into the team, but, on the whole, I must say that he's started well."

It was the general opinion that Cardew had started well. His team had beaten the Grammarians, and it was Cardew himself who had kicked the winning goal. Much more than that could scarcely have been expected of the new captain. Ralph Rockness Cardew left the football ground with his blushing honours thick upon him.

That evening Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, as they sat in Study No. 10, preparing Milton and eating baked chestnuts, were rather surprised to receive a visit from Cardew of the Fourth.

Cardew strolled into the study, his manner quite as easy as if he supposed himself to be a specially welcome guest there.

Tom gave him a nod; Manners and Lowther regarded him rather grimly. Tom Merry's chums, at least, could not forget that Cardew had supplanted Tom Merry, and that he had succeeded in doing so by methods that Tom would have disdained to use either in attack or in defence. Manners and Lowther were ready to follow Tom's lead in giving Cardew the support he was entitled to as junior captain; but they were not ready to give him any cordiality over and above.

Cardew seemed unaware of the freezing atmosphere of the study. He sat on a corner of the table, swung his elegant legs, and regarded the Terrible Three with a smiling face.

"Mugging up jolly old Milton?" he asked.

"Yes; Sunday prep," said Manners very briefly.

"Interestin' old johnny, what?"

"More or less."

"But I haven't come here to discuss the beauties of Milton," added Cardew.

"No," said Tom.

"What have you come for?" asked Monty Lowther blundly. "You're no fool, Cardew, and you know jolly well what we think of you in this study."

"Quite! Just a word with Thomas."

"Well, what is it?" asked Tom, rather restively. "The fact is, Cardew, the less we see of one another the better."

"Candid, at least," said Cardew cheerily. "I downed you, Tom Merry, just as I said I would. I bagged the post of House captain, and then that of junior captain, by a series of knavish tricks, which you look upon with just disdain. Am I right?"

"Not far from it," assented Tom.

"And I'm unrepentant," said Cardew. "That's my way—pretty Fanny's way, you know. But, instead of yearnin' for revenge, and goin' for me hot and strong, as I should in your place, you heap giddy coals of fire on my unfortunate head. You won my first match for me to-day. I don't know why you did it, but you did."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom.

"I've come to make you an offer."

"You needn't."

"I'll make it, all the same. If you want the captaincy back, you can have it."

"What!"

"Surprised you?" smiled Cardew. "Well, I mean it! What do you say?"

"Rot!"

"Better catch me while I'm in the mood. It's an offer that we can't afford to repeat, as they say at the shop sales."

"Rubbish!" said Tom.

Cardew slipped from the table.

"Well, I've made the offer," he said; and he sauntered out of the study, leaving the chums of the Shell staring.

THE END.

(Look out for another ripping yarn of Tom Merry & Co. next week, in "SKIPPER AND SLACKER." You will vote it as being one of the finest yarns you have ever read.)

Plucky Paul Mannering's adventure in the
mystic shades of the Temple of Delhi—

—leads to an amazing
discovery!



THE RED IMAGE

A Topping Tale of Indian Adventure.

By
CECIL FANSHAW.

CHAPTER 1.

A Villainous Plot Afoot!

"INDIA'S supposed to be a land of adventure and romance! But I'm hanged if I can see anything romantic in sitting on an office stool all day totting up figures in a book! Well, I'll go and have a good look round that quaint old temple I discovered last week."

Thus spoke Paul Mannering, who had only been in India six months, as he ran down the steps from the veranda of his bungalow and seized the bicycle he had flung against the trunk of a tall mango-tree on his return from the bank where he worked. The next moment Paul shot out of the dusty little compound, or garden, that surrounded the old mud-walled, thatched bungalow he shared with a couple of office chums, and pedalled away as hard as possible to get clear of the precincts of Delhi city while there yet remained a few hours of daylight.

Frequently, in the cool, dry evenings that are experienced in Northern India, an autumn draws on, Paul used to ride out to the ancient tombs and temples that abound round Delhi, India's capital, and spend the few hours of daylight available wandering amongst the ruins, whose history so deeply interested him, and in which he was fairly well versed.

Paul was rather a solitary youth of an inquiring nature, and he had the lean, dark face of a deep thinker; but he was no book-worm for all that. On the contrary, he was a very active young fellow who would have given anything to be in the Indian Police. But financial difficulties at home had prevented the lad from getting into the police—every white man in the Indian Service being a commissioned officer—so he had had, perforce, to be content to come out to the romantic East as a junior clerk in a branch of one of the biggest European banks in India. But the confined life far from satisfied Paul's adventurous character.

For about half an hour the lad pedalled along a white, dusty road, flanked on each side by tall mango and peepul trees, and the low mud walls that encircled the gardens and bungalows of English residents. Then he reached the native bazaar, and was forced to slacken speed,

for his way now led through narrow, twisting, evil-smelling streets, shut in on either side by overhanging, picturesque white buildings—a rather dirty white in most cases.

A few of these buildings were gaudy, modern temples, plastered with queer images of Hindu gods; but most were shops owned by native merchants, who sat cross-legged all day amongst the wares heaped up in the open shop-fronts.

Until he was clear of the restless, shifting natives who thronged the bazaar streets, their bright-hued raiments lending vivid splashes of colour to the otherwise dingy scene, Paul was obliged to proceed slowly, ringing his bell incessantly. But once he was out on the open road again, he hit up a good speed.

Now the scene was flat and monotonous, mile after mile of black cotton soil, studded with the stunted cotton bushes themselves, stretched away into the distance on either hand, broken only by occasional groves of mango-trees. A marauding kite swooped down within a few inches of Paul's face, and a "brain-fever" bird piped harshly in one of the tall groves as the lad sped by.

But Paul was not interested in the scenery; he was thinking of the ancient temple he was heading for, and which he had only recently discovered about five miles out of Delhi. The place was in a remarkably good state of preservation, and he was anxious to explore it thoroughly.

As the young fellow pedalled onwards, the wheels of his machine making a faint swish and raising little spurts of dust, he reflected on the wonderful history of India and also the present condition of the country—the general unrest, principally fostered by paid agitators. There was even a rumour, Paul remembered, of a plot afoot to murder the Viceroy, who had just come down from the Himalayan heights with his staff, to spend the winter in Delhi. But this rumour Paul rather scoffed at, for the plot seemed so pointless and absurd—a new Viceroy would be appointed immediately, while, in any case, the assassination would be a very difficult matter. But Paul had not had much experience of India, or Indian fanatics.

Anyway, the lad reflected, it was none of his business, and he had no intention

of poking his nose into other people's affairs—he was not in the Indian Police, however greatly he wished he was!

An hour after leaving his bungalow Paul found himself nearing the small tract of jungle, mostly palm-trees, that surrounded the temple he wished to explore. Dismounting, and leaving the road, he pushed his bicycle, the wheels of which moved heavily in the deep sand, between the trunks of the tall, nodding palm-trees. On his right there suddenly appeared a sheet of water, an artificial pond, whose banks were formed of ancient, crumbling brick-work. Numerous small monkeys scampered away at the lad's approach and fled, shrieking and chattering, to the tops of the palm-trees.

Taking no notice of these sole inhabitants of the vicinity of the temple, Paul continued to trundle his machine forward in the direction of a square, stone gateway that lay in front of him, a couple of small shrines on its left.

Passing through the archway, the lad found himself in a large, derelict courtyard, flagged with great stones, encircled by a high wall. Directly in front of him was the temple he had come to explore, a large square building with a queer conical roof and a grim, dark, open portal, about eight feet high. Paul had been into the courtyard before, but he had never entered the temple, and this he proposed to do now.

The mouldering old place seemed entirely deserted, and a dead silence reigned, broken only by the whisper of gently-stirring palm-leaves or the scamper of a squirrel across the cracked flags as the youthful explorer stowed his bicycle away behind some enormous tombstones, and crossed over to the temple entrance. There was very little risk of the bicycle being stolen in such a lonely spot, but Paul thought it as well to be careful.

Without hesitation the lad mounted the crumbling steps that led up to the gloomy doorway, and his footfalls rang out harshly in the brooding silence. At the top of the little flight of steps he paused, weighted down by the solitude and uncanny atmosphere of the place, then he pulled himself together and entered the temple.

At first the air within struck cold, and Paul could scarcely see anything by the dim light of the setting sun whose slanting rays filtered down through tiny apertures high up in the walls. Then, his eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom, the lad recognised that he was standing in a bare, vaulted chamber, the

walls of which were of pure white marble. On the farther side of this first chamber was a narrow, arched doorway, and to this he crossed over, his footsteps echoing eerily.

Beyond lay another high-roofed room, and yet another doorway, but everywhere was cold, white marble and grim silence. The dust of ages lay thick upon the flagged floor.

Paul wandered on, finding nothing but a series of desolate, gloomy vaults, then, somewhat disgusted, he returned to the outer chamber.

"I must be getting back soon," he muttered to himself. "It's jolly nearly pitch dark. But I guess I'll rest a bit first."

So saying, the lad seated himself on a marble ledge in a corner and closed his eyes.

"It's a disappointing hole," he thought. "Must be centuries old, but for all that there is to see I might as well have stayed away."

These were Paul's last thoughts, for, thoroughly tired out after a long day, he quickly dropped off to sleep.

How long the young fellow slept he was unaware; but he woke up suddenly, stiff and cold, and with a chilly sensation of fear trickling down his spine. And at the same time the hair on his scalp rose, for he sensed that he was no longer alone. It was dark, quite dark, but not quite silent. Something warned Paul to keep still, and, scarcely daring to breathe, he listened with straining ears.

Surely he had heard a sound! No, it was the heavy pounding of his own heart, or else nothing but overwrought imagination. Yet he felt that he was not alone!

Yes, there it was again—a soft, sliding

footfall that had just paused on the steps outside. Now it was coming nearer. Now a dim figure was standing in the temple doorway, blocking out the faint light of the twinkling stars. It was a shapeless figure, about the height of a man, and Paul caught his breath.

No one had entered the abandoned temple for centuries, the age-old dust on the temple floor had borne no footprints when Paul had entered. Yet there was someone or something coming silently.

While Paul clutched at the cold edge of the marble ledge on which he sat, staring intently and aghast, the shapeless figure suddenly moved forward. It crossed the chamber swiftly and noiselessly, then vanished through the black archway in the farther wall.

Beads of cold sweat stood out on Paul's forehead. He was in Asia, not in Europe, seated at night in a long-abandoned Hindu temple which might once have been the scene of unheard-of orgies. Local natives shunned the place by day and night; the weird visitor could scarcely have been human. What could a man have come for? The inner chambers were all bare and empty, as Paul knew for a fact.

Shaking off the unreasoning dread that gripped him in the foreboding silence, the youngster half rose to his feet; then he sank down again. A second figure stood in the doorway! After an instant's seeming hesitation it vanished noiselessly in the direction taken by the first.

Paul strained his ears to catch any sound of a voice, but there was nothing, no sound at all. The strange figures had appeared, crossed the outer chamber, and the blackness had swallowed them up. The lad made up his mind to leave the

haunted place without delay. There was nothing to be gained by staying. But before he could get to his feet the pale glimmer of the stars was once again blotted out by a shrouded figure in the outer archway. Then, at short intervals, came a fourth and a fifth apparition, and all disappeared in the same direction.

Five awesome beings had appeared and vanished, and Paul, stupefied, sat still, with eyes glued on the shadowy outline of the entrance wondering how many more would come. But none came; instead, a sound broke on the lad's ear which was such a relief to his tense nerves that he could scarcely choke back a cry of joy.

From one of the tomb-like inner chambers had come the sound of a human voice; and though the voice spoke in Hindustani the youngster understood. If Paul had been still before, he was now absolutely rigid as he strained his ears to catch what was said.

"Brothers," said the voice. "Children of Vishnu! The hour has come to strike a deadly blow at the hated white race who oppress our land of Ind! Out of many faithful I have chosen you four to assist me in this deed; for, though unknown to each other, ye are each known to me. And since ye have each answered my summons to meet me in this ancient temple of Vishnu, where there is no danger of prying eyes, ye are all, therefore, pledged and bound to carry out my bidding. Is that so?"

"Ay, High Priest of Vishnu! It is so, Command us!" came a low murmur of voices in Hindustani.

Paul gasped, wondering what villainous plot he had stumbled across. He was soon to learn.

"Brothers," droned on the voice, "tomorrow is the feast day of our god, as is well known, and, according to custom, all Hindus in the city of Delhi will parade the streets, some bearing images. Shortly after noon the chief of the oppressors, he who is called the Viceroy, and who represents the white King across the Black Water, will ride down the street of the silver merchants, the Chandni Chowk. That much is certain. But you and I, my brothers, will also be amongst the joyful crowd, and we also will bear our image of Vishnu; but it shall be a red image, not white like the others. And the red image of Vishnu will contain a bomb—it is even now prepared. You, my most trusted followers, shall assist me to approach this Viceroy. Then shall I launch our image at him and hasten both him and his chief men to perdition. The death of the tyrant will be the signal for general rebellion throughout the whole land of Ind, nor will it be long before we return to our ancient greatness and once more have our own kings."

The speaker hissed out his last words with vehement energy, and with all the concentrated hatred of a fanatic.

Paul instantly grasped the situation. The ancient, unused temple of Vishnu that he had come to explore, had been selected by the high priest of the god as a safe place in which to meet his most trusted followers and unfold his villainous design.

Each man had evidently received instructions to arrive at the temple at a slightly different time, and each had covered his head and turban with a sort of hood, in order, doubtless, to scare off any superstitious native villagers who might be lurking around. Not that the plotters were likely to be disturbed—the local natives shunned the old temple like the plague. But what Paul realised was that the plot to murder the Viceroy, at the rumour of which he had scoffed, was no fiction. The assassination was to be



With slow, noiseless footsteps the Hindu ruffians came creeping across the dark chamber. Paul Mannering stood stock-still, trying to locate the position of the conspirators by the sound of their breathing.

attempted the very next day, and he alone knew of it. Holding his breath, the youngster sat still, determined to slip away at the first opportunity, but anxious to learn all that was possible before leaving.

However, suddenly the voices, which had sunk to a whisper, ceased altogether. Then one by one the conspirators filed out of the inner vault, passed through the pitch-dark chamber in which sat the English lad, then shuffled down the broken steps outside. Paul breathed more easily. In a couple of minutes he would be scorching away to hand his vital information to the nearest white police officer.

Then, out in the courtyard, the stillness of the Indian night was suddenly broken by a loud metallic crash. And instantly, in Hindustani, arose a cry of "Spy!" followed by a rush of feet up the temple steps. One of the plotters, searching the courtyard to make sure they had not been observed, had stumbled over Paul's bicycle.

With a gasp of dismay, the English lad sprang to his feet. Then, within the darkness of the temple, awaited the coming attack with clenched fists. The next instant the furious Hindus, snarling out the most blood-curdling threats, stormed in through the entrance.

CHAPTER 2.

A Race Against Time I

ON the threshold of the temple entrance the scoundrels halted, unable to see. Then the leader of the gang, he who had been doing all the talking, rapped out swift commands in Hindustani.

"Stay by the entrance, Franji!" he barked. "Let none pass. You others join me in a thorough search within. Would that we had a light!"

Paul was unarmed, but had no doubt that the conspirators bore knives. And he knew his one chance of escape was to break through forward. There was no way out of the back of the temple, and ultimate discovery was inevitable.

It was a ghastly situation. With slow, noiseless footsteps the Hindu ruffians came creeping across the dark chamber, determined to discover the owner of the bicycle and kill him on the spot. Paul stood stock still, not daring to move, trying to locate the position of his opponents in the Stygian darkness by the sound of their breathing.

Seconds passed—tense seconds fraught with destiny. Paul wondered how long his keyed-up nerves would stand the racking strain. A slight shuffle sounded a foot away from him, and a hissing breath came almost direct in his face, accompanied by a strong odour of garlic and betel-nut. Paul sank his nails deep into his palms in his violent effort to repress a sudden cry. Then, a moment later, the lad realised that he had been missed by a miracle—the Hindus had passed on in their search into the inner chamber!

A sigh of intense relief escaped Paul's lips, then he sprang like a tiger at the fellow on guard in the doorway. As he sprang, the young Englishman let drive with his right fist, putting all his weight behind the blow. He could just make out the figure of the Hindu, but the latter had no notion of the coming attack from the dark till struck. Then, caught full on the jaw, without time to cry out, the ruffian reeled over backwards, landing on his head with a crash.

Paul lost not a second in following up his advantage, and dashed down the broken steps of the temple in great bounds. The pale glimmer of the tropical stars barely illuminated the



Suddenly the scarlet image, already swaying dangerously, toppled off its pedestal and crashed to the ground, landing right in the midst of its raging supporters. There was a deafening explosion, accompanied by a blinding, vivid flash.

walled-in courtyard, but this meagre light was sufficient for the English lad to discern the tomb by which he had left his bicycle. Racing over, the youngster grasped the machine which had betrayed him, then thrust it before him in a headlong dash for the outer gate.

Panting for breath, Paul gained the stone archway, placed one foot on the near pedal of his bicycle, and was about to leap on, when he felt a man's arms close about him. Twisting round, the lad gazed into the evil face of yet another scoundrel, a man left to guard the exit from the courtyard itself. Truly the conspirators were leaving no loophole of escape.

It was Paul's dread that his new assailant would cry out and give the alarm, for evidently the men within the temple had not heard the knock-out blow which had been delivered to the guardian of the steps. Therefore the lad released his machine, and fought with desperate fury to escape from the iron bands which pinioned him.

The struggle was fought in grim silence, the Hindu seeming unwilling to risk attracting a chance passer-by; and therein lay Paul's hope of escape. His arms secured, the young fellow could only employ his legs, but these he used to great advantage. Bending his right knee, he drove upwards with a swift, sudden blow, planting his kneecap in the pit of his assailant's stomach, wringing forth a deep groan. But the man was powerful, and held on. Moreover, he drove his hard head into Paul's face.

Half dazed, the youngster thrust up mightily again with his bended knee, and this time the other's hold was loosened.

Following up the second blow with a twisting wrench, Paul sent the ruffian staggering back to the archway; but at that instant came a sudden cry from the top of the temple steps. Dismayed, Paul spun round, only to see the remainder of the conspirators come charging down the crumbling stairway. They had found nothing inside the old building, but without they had discovered the prone body of their comrade.

A swift glance at the gateway told Paul his retreat was cut off. The fellow he had flung aside had recovered, and was about to make another spring. But to escape with his news was of vital import, so the lad swung round and dashed away across the dim courtyard, seeking another way out. Hot on his heels came the fanatical pursuers, now—with their quarry in sight—grimly intent on slaughter.

Leaping over broken masonry, dodging round tree trunks, Paul ran a race for his life in the semi-darkness. He could hear the swift patter of feet close behind him. They were catching him up—and men pledged to kill a Viceroy would not hesitate to slay an unknown lad who had discovered their plans.

At the high wall Paul shot a glance of despair, but there was no escape that way. The thing was unclimbable. So, flashing off at a tangent, Paul raced round to the back of the temple; but he was like a rat in a trap—the courtyard wall penned him in all round.

With a sudden sprint one tall man burst forth from amongst the pursuers, closed up to the youngster, and laid a hand on his shoulder. Paul swung

round, dashed his fist into the fellow's face, then turned and ran on again, his breath coming in deep sobs.

At top speed Paul rounded one corner of the temple, then hope almost left him. He was running full-tilt into a ruffian coming round in the opposite direction! A hoarse chuckle, the first human sound in all that grim race, broke from a man at the lad's heels; then Paul lowered his head and charged straight into the new opponent in front.

Then something descended with fearful force on to the youngster's head, a red mist swam before his eyes, and he plunged headlong into black oblivion.

For hours Paul must have laid senseless, being restored to consciousness by the grilling rays of the sun. His head was racked with agony, and a feeling of impending calamity numbed his brain.

"Where am I?" he gasped, sitting up. "How did I get into this place?"

The lad's gaze wandered round the ancient courtyard, which was bathed in sunshine, but he could remember nothing.

The wind rustled gently in the palm leaves, and a bird piped harshly on the temple's queer dome, but Paul stared at the unwonted scene with vacant eyes. Presently, to ease the pain, he clapped a hand to his tortured forehead, and drew it away again stiff with congealed blood. Then he stared at his fingers in horror, and slowly memory returned.

Little by little, striving to collect his wits, Paul began to piece together the previous day's happenings. First he had left his bungalow on his bicycle, meaning to explore an ancient temple. Yes, here was the temple all right, but why had he not returned home?

Then he recollected that he had gone into the temple, had found nothing in the echoing chambers, and had returned to the outer one to rest. He had fallen asleep, and had been awakened by strange figures that entered mysteriously. And—yes, the apparitions had proved to be men! What had they talked about? Hadn't they hunted him through a dim courtyard, in silence, lit only by stars? Why had he been hunted?

Then suddenly full realisation beat in upon the lad's brain.

"Great Scott!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "How could I have forgotten? Those blackguards in the temple were Hindus, plotting to murder the Viceroy! And they were to do it at the feast of Vishnu! To-day, by heck! A bomb was to be in a red image—and no one knows of it but me! What's the time? Heavens, my watch has stopped! I suppose I was left for dead. Well, I'm very much alive, and half an hour will see me in Delhi. Guess I'll frustrate those plans!"

Paul clenched his teeth with sudden determination, snatched up his smashed hat, which lay on the ground beside him, then dashed across the sun-steeped courtyard, one side of which lay in black shadow, making for the great archway where he remembered dropping his machine in the struggle.

In the shadow of the court entrance the lad halted abruptly, and the chill hand of fear clutched at his heart, for the bicycle had gone!

"Ten miles from Delhi!" he gasped. "And the outrage will be attempted at mid-day! How the deuce can I get there in time?"

Utterly dismayed, Paul spun round and commenced a frenzied search throughout the ruinous precincts of the temple. But he found nothing. The invaluable machine had completely

vanished, removed, doubtless, by the men who had struck him down.

Here and there the young fellow hunted, high and low, searching every nook and cranny in which the bicycle might have been hidden. Finally, wet with perspiration, he gave up his useless quest and tore out of the desolate courtyard.

Once again in the sparse jungle, Paul glanced hastily around under the nodding palm-trees, but there was no sign of what he sought; then, with blazing eyes and clenched jaws, he dashed down towards the main road.

Past the ancient artificial pond he sped as fast as he could put one foot in front of the other, sending shrieking monkeys fleeing before his wild approach. But Paul no longer had eyes for anything. He was determined to run the whole way to Delhi, and that in a desperate race against time. And every moment the scorching rays of the tropical sun were growing stronger and stronger.

Out of the jungle on to the white, glaring ribbon of road that stretched straight to Delhi the distraught youngster shot at his best speed.

Paul had no clear plan in his mind. There would be no time now to discover and warn a white police officer. There remained only a vague idea of dashing into the city and intercepting the Viceroy as he rode through. Could the lad be in time to reach the fatal spot in the Silver Bazaar before India's ruler was blown to pieces? For on the speed of Paul's legs depended whether the Festival of Vishnu would be remembered in history as the day of a black, outrageous crime. Nay, more—the assassination of the Viceroy would be the signal for a rebellion and bloodthirsty mutiny throughout the Indian Empire. Thus one English lad, perhaps, carried the fate of millions in his hand.

Very soon Paul realised that he could not last long at such a speed, and he settled down to a steady run, blinded by the sun's glare and half choked by the rising columns of white dust, for the unmetalled road was soft, and every puff of hot wind was dust-laden and stifling.

The lad's long, wiry legs did him good service, but he gradually tired, though he forced himself onward with aching calves and bursting lungs. The issue at stake was far too great to permit of any rest or much slackening of speed.

Native peasants and chance wayfarers, clad in the brightest colours, gaped amazed at the dishevelled white lad who raced past. Then, thinking that the Englishman must be mad, they shouldered their burdens and trudged forward again. But Paul took no notice of foot passengers or slow-moving ox-carts; he was straining his eyes in vain for a glimpse of some Englishman's motor-car. And how he wished that he had told his chums about the temple he had been making for.

Paul reeled as he topped a last rise, and his breath sobbed in his labouring lungs; but the sight that he saw spurred him on again. Not a mile ahead, at the end of the white ribbon of road, lay the glittering roofs of Delhi city, shimmering in the fierce noon-day sun. Then, borne on the breeze came a sound that struck chill into the lad's heart; the rising and falling clamour of a vast crowd of natives. The festival of Vishnu had begun! Tomtoms throbbed and drummed, and the people howled in religious frenzy. The narrow streets of Delhi must be thronged with

humanity, packed with wandering beggars, vagabonds, and priests gathered in from miles around. Had they come to honour Vishnu or to witness a fearsome tragedy?

Paul redoubled his efforts, and raced on; but he was racing against time, and Heaven alone knew how much time!

CHAPTER 3.

A Close Shave!

EXHAUSTED by his punishing run and want of food, suffering tortures from the blow he had received on his head, Paul at length reeled into the hot, shut-in, narrow streets of Delhi bazaar. The back ways of the city were packed with natives in gorgeous gala dress, all pressing forward in the direction of the Chandni Chowk, the place of the Silver Merchants. The bright-hued crowd was yelling in honour of their god Vishnu, and some bore strange banners, and others white images of their heathen deity.

The air was thick and heavy, and the smell of the Indian crowd was mingled with the odour of incense and spices. Drums throbbed, cymbals clashed, and trumpets blared; a perfect pandemonium of discord—the vast throng of Asiatics was delirious with religious frenzy.

Well-nigh finished, Paul was swept forward by the surging multitude, and a great dread seized him that he might be too late.

"Has the Viceroy yet entered the Chandni Chowk?" the lad bawled out in Hindustani to a grey-bearded old native who was pressed up against him.

"Nay, sahib," was the reply; "I think not. But what manner of sahib art thou to mingle thus in a native crowd? And why art thou so dishevelled?"

Gasping out a sigh of relief, not stopping to give explanations, Paul struggled mightily to get forward. But as he neared the centre of the city the crush grew denser and denser and the din more intense.

Up the packed back streets the lad gradually fought his way, and his look was wild and his clothes were all torn. Fifty more yards, and he would strike into the centre of the Silver Bazaar.

Finally, almost at his last gasp, Paul broke through into the middle of the Chandni Chowk. Already native policemen, under their white officers, were clearing the centre of the famous street to make a way for the Viceroy who was about to pass by. The English lad thrust forward. He had but a few seconds in which to avert an unparalleled catastrophe. Could he reach one of those white officers? Could he, moreover, convince him before it was too late after all?

The yelling but good-tempered crowd, bearing aloft their white images of Vishnu, were giving way before the police on each side of the street. But Paul felt as if in a nightmare; his feet were clogged, and his bursting lungs refused to let him speak.

Then the lad reached the side of a mounted British officer, and, clutching the horse's bridle, he shrieked out:

"Send word to stop the Viceroy! And look out for a red image! There's a desperate plot to assassinate—"

Angrily the harassed officer reined his horse back, and looked down at Paul's white face and dishevelled appearance.

"What do you mean?" he barked. "Let go my horse at once! Are you



Reaching the side of the mounted British officer, Paul clutched at his horse's bridle. "Send word to the Viceroy! And look out for the red image! There's a desperate plot afoot to assassinate him!"

raving mad? There are no red images in this mob!"

Paul opened his mouth to explain, but the words died in his throat, for, at that instant, with a jingle of bridles and clattering of horses' hoofs, the Viceroy and all his staff came riding up the famous street.

Tragedy was imminent!
"Stop him!" yelled Paul.

But the officer wheeled his horse to one side, shouting to the lad to get out of the way, almost dragging him off his feet.

Then, above the already terrific din, rose a new shrieking note. Paul glanced in its direction, and quailed, for from the top end of the Chandni Chowk came surging down a fresh crowd of fanatics, who had just swung in, and they were blowing wind instruments and howling like Dervishes. High up above their midst, on a little platform, they bore an image of Vishnu—and this image was flaming scarlet!

"There you are!" shrieked Paul. "Oh, it'll be too late!"

And, indeed, it seemed as though the lad's words must prove right.

With a searing oath, the officer plunged spurs into his horse and darted forward, intending to turn aside these latest arrivals. But as though forced on with irresistible might, the bearers of the red image surged round and past him.

Paul had not waited. As the mounted officer, shouting to his men, dashed forward, the lad, passing between the ranks of bewildered native policemen, raced headlong down the street. But the Hindus with the red image, more than

one of whom recognised Paul, surged forward again with angry cries. Before them ran the English lad whom they thought lay dead in the temple courtyard, and they understood his intention and bellowed with rage.

But Paul had a good start, and he dashed on, blindly intent on stopping the approaching cavalcade.

The Viceroy, clad in ordinary civilian attire, was riding steadily up the street at the head of his staff. Nor did he heed the uproar farther up the Chandni Chowk, deeming it to be part of the usual demonstration always made by an Indian crowd on a feast day—a mere ebullition of fanaticism. The distraught white youth, who was racing down towards him, he regarded curiously, but did not draw rein.

Summoning up his last energies, Paul dashed up to the ruler of British India, and he halted with hands outstretched. A hundred yards behind him roared the bearers of the Red Image, and that idol rocked above the heads of its supporters like a small boat in an angry sea.

"Stop, sir!" shouted the exhausted lad. "The red image contains a bomb! Turn—"

The Viceroy reined up, but Paul got no further, he had expended all his strength; a mist swam before the lad's eyes, and he pitched forward into the white dust. One of the Viceroy's staff, utterly perplexed, rode forward to pick him up. But at that moment events happening at the top of the street drew all eyes in that direction.

Shouted at by the mounted officer, who had grasped Paul's meaning when it was too late, the native constables on each

side of the road hurled themselves forward in a converging wave. Then they drew their truncheons, and shouted out to the oncoming gang who bore the scarlet Vishnu, ordering them to halt.

Police and conspirators, the latter seeming now to number about fifty, met with a violent impact, and yells of warning and shrieks of dismay rose high above the indescribable clamour and confusion.

Bamboo sticks and truncheons rose and fell, and members of the hemmed-in crowd fought madly to get clear of the scrimmage. Then suddenly the scarlet image, already swaying dangerously, toppled off its pedestal and crashed to the ground, landing right in the midst of its raving supporters.

Followed instantly a deafening explosion, accompanied by a blinding, vivid flash. And dismembered bodies, torn clothes, and smashed flagstones shot up heavenwards. If the scene before had been wild, it was now appalling, and the groans and cries of the wounded added to the general din.

The shock of the explosion stove in the front of the nearest flimsy houses, and they came crashing down with a roar like thunder, sending up clouds of red-brown dust. The affrighted horses of the Viceroy's party reared and plunged in their terror.

Then gradually the dust-clouds began to clear, and the police, those that were uninjured, began to push the mob back, warily skirting a great hole blown in the road. The surviving conspirators fled, yelling, leaving their dead and dying to take care of themselves.

Very shortly the street was cleared, and the Viceroy's party began to move forward again, but at the yawning gap the horses shied, leaping away from other bloodstained things.

"That was a close shave!" exclaimed one of the Viceroy's staff, mopping his brow; and the Viceroy himself nodded. Then he turned in his saddle, and ordered that the young Englishman, who had rushed down with the warning, should be brought before him as soon as he had recovered.

Some hours later, Paul came to his senses in the hospital to which he had been immediately taken. And the Viceroy's summons surprised as well as delighted him, but he lost no time in obeying.

Arrived at the Viceregal Lodge, the lad found himself in the presence of a tall, distinguished-looking Englishman, who questioned him carefully as to how he had stumbled on the plot.

Briefly Paul related his experiences, laying stress on the fact that he had had no intention of prying into matters that did not concern him. Nevertheless, the lad gave voice to his desire to enter the Indian Police Service. Ultimately he was dismissed, but first received a firm handshake from the Viceroy and a promise that his wishes would not be forgotten.

So Paul returned to his clerking. But a week later, to his unbounded delight, he was appointed to the Indian Police, a career after his own heart, which offered to give him all the romance and adventure he could wish for.

However, whatever the future might hold, it was very unlikely that Paul would ever forget his grim experiences in a certain temple, one dreadful night before the annual festival of Vishnu.

THE END.

(Another exciting yarn of River-ice Ned and his staunch chums of the London barge, Estuary Belle, in next week's GEM, entitled: "THE COINERS!" Look out for it.)

Jack Morton springs a big surprise on George Clifton—

—who is besieged by the angry football crowd.



THE TRIERS

BY
JACK CRICHTON

Jack Morton, with the assistance of his faithful band of stalwart sportsmen, strives hard to checkmate his rascally cousin and win the rights which are his due.



A Strange Game!

THERE was no possible question as to the rivalry between Boltwich and Crewbridge, and the two towns were so close to one another that whenever the two teams met in League or Cup games thousands merely tramped from Boltwich to Crewbridge, or vice versa.

This Saturday it was a question of the good folks of Boltwich making the journey to Crewbridge, and this they were doing with somewhat mixed feelings.

Boltwich was beginning to get annoyed.

Things were not right with the team, and the news that three more of the old players had been placed on the transfer list did not do anything to improve the ruffled feelings, coming so quickly after the news that their new idol, Jack Morton, had been arrested, and would be unable to turn out for the team.

And, strangely enough, the feeling of the crowd was all with Jack and the new directors. Indeed, things were blamed at the door of George Clifton which were not his fault, and there was no question that the thousands of sturdy fans who made the journey this Saturday afternoon to Crewbridge were ready for anything—the more exciting the better.

"If young Jack Morton could turn out," was the feeling, "we'd show them!"

"George Clifton's put him away!"

"Yes, and now the lad's escaped!"

"Good luck to him!"

"I'd like to see him turn up."

"Ay, lad; and if he does he shall have a fair chance to play!"

Such were the expressions of opinion which could have been heard on every side of the road as the crowd made its way to the ground.

In the meantime Jack Morton had entered the ground very quietly, with Laurie Robson, who had acquired a moustache and a large pair of horn-rimmed spectacles during the night, and

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was changing in a quiet shed far from the madding crowd and the police.

After Jack had escaped from the Babe he had been taken by remorse as soon as he realised that the Babe had turned back and was not following him. The last he had seen of Laurie was on the ground, unconscious, and now he was suddenly afraid to leave him to the tender mercies of that brute.

So he hurried back, throwing his own safety to the winds, and had the satisfaction, from behind a hedge, of seeing Laurie and the Babe parting. Five minutes later the youngsters were together again and discussing a plan of campaign.

Laurie thought he had frightened the Babe, but he was not certain.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

For the sake of his invalid mother, Jack Morton, a lad of seventeen, calls upon his grandfather, Sir Jasper Clifton, for aid. It was by no means a pleasant undertaking for Jack, for his mother, much against her father's wishes, had married a worker in Sir Jasper's mill, who was now dead. Sir Jasper, however, is taken up with the lad straight away, saying that he will alter his will and make him co-heir with George Clifton, another grandson, and Jack's cousin, and whose great interest in life is the Boltwich Football Club. In high spirits, Jack gives up his old job to take up work at Clifton's. But Sir Jasper dies that night. Thinking only of his mother, Jack goes to George Clifton, but his appeal proves futile, Clifton telling him that the will is unaltered, and that he is not wanted. Jack's anger is aroused, and, meeting Ronnie Stevens, whom George Clifton had deemed it wise to sack, the two lads, former players of Boltwich F.C., determine to fight Clifton.

"We'll get a team that won't be beat," said Stevens, "and call them the Triers."

The team shows great promise, much to the annoyance of Clifton, who, scheming to get Morton hounded out of Boltwich, makes a poor appointment with the lad. Unsuspectingly Jack falls into the trap when calling upon Clifton, who denies knowledge of the letter. Later, to Jack's surprise, he is arrested and accused of the theft of fifty pounds. However, through Laurie Robson, holder of the bulk of the Boltwich F.C. share, Jack is able to effect an escape on the eve of the great match with Crewbridge.

"Can't ever tell with a customer like that," he said.

"No, by Jove!"

"But, at the same time," Laurie went on, "I think he will keep his tongue between his teeth. But we will hide you more carefully."

So Jack had spent a night in a very secret cellar in Laurie's domain, and when the morning came he was glad to hear that so far no word had come to Laurie from the police.

Now the question was to get him on to the pitch and to let him play undisturbed.

Laurie had done his work well.

Dressed with a long overcoat and a pair of greasy flannel bags over his soccer gear, the lad strolled with Laurie towards the dressing-room.

On the ground the excitement was intense. There was something electric in the air, as though everyone expected something amazing to happen. Slowly the clock crept round towards the time appointed for the kick-off. The two sets of supporters yelled furiously at one another, and, curiously enough, Boltwich seemed every bit as confident as the home team.

At last!

Here they come!

A shout went up, and suddenly Jack, handing his coat to Laurie, and slipping out of his flannel bags, bounded on to the pitch after his own team.

What a roar went to the skies! It was a splendid moment and an amazing one. First that roar, then suddenly a sob of silence.

What would happen?

Some fool yelled at the top of his voice:

"It's Jack Morton! Our Jack turned out, after all!"

"Jack, Jack, Jack, boy!" yelled the mob.

Even as the roar of the multitude died away into a murmur a shrill, piercing cry rang out from the direction of the grand-stand. It came from George Clifton.

"It's Jack Morton! It's the boy who escaped from prison yesterday. They want him! Arrest him! Arrest him—"

He got no further, for at that moment a couple of policemen had

started towards the pitch. It was an amazing sight.

Within a second twenty stalwart Boltwich fans pounced on them, and they were gently but firmly forced back to their former positions on the ring-side.

"Arrest him!" shouted George Clifton wildly.

"Shut up, you!" cried a Crewbridge fan, knocking Clifton's hat over his eyes. "Haven't you got any sport in you? Let the lad play, anyhow!"

"But he's a thief!"

"So are you probably!" cried someone else, and the crowd began to laugh.

Meanwhile, on the pitch, an extraordinary state of affairs had taken place. A pompous inspector of police had gathered together his men and had started again towards the lad; but in a second they were surrounded by a thousand Boltwich fans and gently but firmly pushed back.

"Let him play! Sport's sport! Give Jack a chance!"

And so the crowd took charge of the game.

The Crewbridge fans were with the Boltwich lads, too. And suddenly the referee, who was very much in the dark about it all, blew his whistle, and the game started, with a dozen stalwart Crewbridge policemen very closely guarded.

Never in his life had Jack felt so keen to do his best; never had he felt so inspired, so capable.

The ground was a bit heavy, but he seemed to get through it like a fish in water.

Within the first few seconds of the game he was away. He simply trifled with opponents. He dashed right down the field, tricking men right and left, and then sent in a long, low, ground-shot, which the opposing goalie only just managed to save by conceding a corner.

It was a brilliant start, and it put the crowd on very good terms with Jack.

"Good old Jack! Give it 'em, boy! We'll look after you, lad!"

And they did, while the lad played the game of his life.

Nothing could stop him. He had confidence to-day in the men

about him. New blood had been imported, but he had old friends behind him. There was Ronnie, Steve, and Harry Turner in goal. He felt that he could take risks with those three behind him; they would never concede a single point.

And so it happened.

He had no fear, and, fearing nothing, he did things which he would not have dared to do ordinarily, and within ten minutes he had scored a brilliant opening goal and had the Crewbridge team obviously rattled.

It was a long time since such a brilliant display as this had been seen on the Crewbridge ground, and the dramatic nature of the game had fairly taken the crowd's imagination.

After that first goal all was plain sailing.

The Crewbridge team played hard, but they simply could not cope with Jack in this mood.

He marshalled his men cleverly; he was not selfish, and yet he was obviously the predominating figure in the field.

Once, indeed, the Crewbridge forward-line attacked. It came from a miskick by Steve Logan—a thing that happened about once a year, and which invariably sent up a groan of horror from his host of faithful admirers.

Still, the greatest of players have moments of fallibility, and within a flash the home line were swarming about the Boltwich goal, and Harry Turner was performing every sort of wonder and miracle.

Again and again the ball missed the goal by inches. Once it hit the cross-bar and rebounded into play, was sent back flashing against the right-hand post, back to the cross-bar again, and then into a mob of players.

Then suddenly Jack arrived on the scene.

He could mix it when needed. Not roughly or unfairly, after the Bill Atkins fashion; but he could give and take a hearty charge when there was need. And now, indeed, there was need. As he barged into that surging mass of players and insisted, as it were, on relieving the situation.

And he did!

He got the ball, cleverly tricked his opponent, and then suddenly was away.

A shout went up:

"Come on, Jack!"

A back and a goalkeeper were in front of him.

He started off like lightning. He did not even try to dodge the back, simply depending on his speed. He came up to him, punted, and raced after the leather, leaving the other simply standing.

And now for goal. He swerved right in. The goalie came out to meet him. He had already seen too much of Jack's shooting to wish to stand and suffer. He rushed out, and as he reached Jack the lad side-stepped, and a moment later had scored a second brilliant goal.

A mighty yell went up, and Crewbridge itself congratulated him. This was brilliant stuff, and no real man who liked to see a good sporting effort could do otherwise than admire it.

So half-time came, and with it the strangest sight surely ever seen on a football-field. A crowd surged out and surrounded Jack, while the police were kept very much to their own quarters.

In the stand George Clifton was expressing his feelings somewhat freely.

"A nice state of things, I must say!" he said to a man close to him.

"You haven't enough police in Crewbridge to stop a goalbird playing like this! You ought to see if there are any ex-convicts who want a game in your side!"

The man stared at him.

"You're George Clifton, aren't you?" he said.

"I am!"

"Well, we've heard about you in Crewbridge!" said the man. "If you don't want a thick ear you had better keep your mouth shut! You ought to be pleased to see the lad play like that for you!"

Clifton said no more, but moved away. He was white with anger, and already he was cursing himself for having wasted so much time. He went quickly from the stand. He would soon put a spoke in the wheel of his cousin, he thought.

But even as he went to telephone the



Radcliffe Wilson

Immediately the whistle sounded for half-time the crowd surged upon the playing field and surrounded Jack Morton, at the same time keeping the police well out of the lad's reach.

amazing news to the police in Boltwich he was seen, and Laurie Robson followed him.

The End and After!

FOUR goals did Boltwich score against Crewbridge, and each one of them came from the toe of Jack Morton, the centre-forward. It is doubtful whether there were enough police in the country to have arrested Jack after the game; it is certain there were not enough on the ground or even in Boltwich. Military would have been needed on that amazing occasion to have arrested the youngster.

Even as the final whistle went Laurie Robson rushed on to the pitch, followed by an enormous crowd.

"The police from Boltwich are outside!" he cried excitedly. "Give him a chance to get away, boys!"

The boys needed no second bidding.

A battle royal ensued. The police were now reinforced by men from Boltwich, and they surged towards the players. But a coat was flung about Jack, he was pushed from hand to hand, and within a few minutes he was indeed lost by himself—while the battle still raged within—in Crewbridge.

Laurie Robson had prepared for all this, and within a few more minutes Jack saw a car waiting for him at the end of a quiet street. He bounded towards it.

Laurie was waiting for him.

"Jump in, lad!" he said.

Jack wasted no time.

It wasn't safe for them to return to Boltwich that night, so they drove in the opposite direction, and before long had come to a neighbouring town, where they felt they would be safe for some days, at any rate.

"And now," said Laurie, as they sat down to a very welcome supper, "we have got to review the situation, my lad! I don't really know if I have done you a lot of good! You certainly can't go back to Boltwich for a bit!"

Jack smiled.

"Nor can you, can you, Laurie?"

Laurie laughed.

"I guess not!" he answered. "Well, then, what are we to do? It's this fellow Clifton every time! My word, Jack, I would like to down him! I tell you what. You stay here, hiding, a few days, and I will go back. I think I shall be able to keep out of their touch. After all, they can't very well do anything to me. If they try to they must arrest all the directors; no one can actually prove that I had anything more to do with you playing than anyone else. It simply looked as though the crowd took the matter into their own hands. I'm going back, and, now we have a few days to spare I am going to find out if I can whether we cannot discover what is at the bottom of this charge of stealing fifty quid!"

Jack put a hand out.

"You are a real pal, Laurie!" he said.

"Oh, I'm just a Trier!" Laurie laughed. "And I shall never quit trying until I have downed that brute Clifton! You ought to have seen him

to-day! I'll slip back to-morrow morning!"

Gripping Jack's hand, Laurie hurried away.

Those were hard days for Jack Morton.

He felt that he could have endured anything better than simply sitting still and doing nothing. But that was what he had to do.

He saw by the papers that there was a hue-and-cry all over the place for him.

His game at Crewbridge had done the trick.

There was real trouble now for the directors, and there was no knowing where it was going to end. The police were angry.

Happily, Boltwich was behind the directors to a man, and that made all the difference; but Jack realised that he must lay very low indeed, and that it would be simply madness for him to attempt to go back to the old town.

Still, it was hard.

Nothing was being done about the will, nothing was being done to exonerate him from the charge of being a thief, and he did not know how his old mother was getting along.

At last he could stand it no longer. He must return.

He knew that to a certain extent he was letting Laurie down, but he had to see his mother. The police would probably be watching the cottage night and day.

He travelled by night, and it was after midnight when at last he carefully approached the little home.

So far he had not seen a single sign of anyone hanging about, but he knew that the police would probably not be hanging about with a brass band in attendance.

He did not, of course, approach by the front. Instead, as soon as he entered the street he slipped into another gateway, round to the back of the cottage, and then he started a long, crawling, climbing journey over fences.

On and on he went until at last he found himself in his own back garden. No one was about; a deathly silence prevailed, broken only after a little while by the sudden clanging of the church clock.

He tiptoed up to the back door and idly tried the handle. To his surprise, it came open, and he went in. Already he had a feeling within him that all was not well, but he could not turn back now. On and on he went—up into his mother's room, breathing softly, and hoping against hope that everything was all right.

Then he spoke:

"Mother!"

There came no answer.

"Mother!"

Causing caution to the winds, he turned on the light. The room was empty. His mother was not here. Suddenly his heart seemed to stand cold within him, and he turned quickly away.

What had happened to his mother? He tried to think.

Supposing she was ill? Supposing she was dead? He felt his heart stop beating for one second. If she had died wanting him—then Heaven help George Clifton!

He had grown careless now, and he moved downstairs as though there was no danger at all. And even as he entered the little kitchen again the light from a policeman's lantern was flashed into his startled face, and a harsh voice cried:

"Hands up, Jack Morton! It's a fair cop!"

In the Nick of Time!

JACK had grown used by this time to acting on the spur of the moment.

As he recognised the voice of the detective who had originally arrested him his hand came into contact with the top of a chair.

With one swift movement he picked it up and let fly.

A cry followed as the chair found a billet, and the light crashed to the ground. The man made a dive for Jack, but missed him by inches. In another moment the lad was out in the night again.

Pandemonium was let loose in the quiet street then.

The detective rushed after Jack, blowing his whistle for all he was worth and yelling like a maniac, and as the lad dashed up the street, windows were thrown open and shouts followed him.

But Jack had a good start, and he was in the pink of condition. The detective really had no more chance of catching him than Babe Bolton had had a week before, and within a few minutes the lad had stopped to take a breather, safe behind a hedge, with the dark mantle of the night to hide him.

But there was no time to waste.

He must get back again. But could he? Suddenly he paused, and asked himself a question. What had happened to his old mother? Would it not be better to go and give himself up to the police, so that he might have the answer to that question?

Still, the instinct of freedom is, perhaps, the strongest in the world, and the lad moved on and on into the night, back in the direction of the town he had left earlier in the evening. There would be no train until the early morning, and it would not do for him to board one anywhere near Boltwich.

He had just reached a small wooden bridge over the River Bolt, from which the town took its name, when suddenly the sound of a motor approaching made him dive down quickly into the ditch which ran at the side of the road.

"That was a narrow squeak!" he muttered to himself.

But even as he spoke he jumped to his feet, with a shout, for the car had suddenly skidded on the sticky surface of the road, and even as it was about to cross the bridge had plunged into the wooden railing which protected the path at the side of it.

There was a crash, a roaring of the engine, and in another moment, above it all, there came the sound of a woman's scream.

"Great Scott!" muttered Jack, dashing forward.

His natural thought had been that the car belonged to the police, and that this was the beginning of his pursuit in earnest. But now he knew otherwise.

He dashed down the side of the river bank, and in another moment was up to his waist in the rather swift-running water. The car had turned a complete somersault, and he could tell at a glance that it was touch and go. Pinned in the car were some people, doubtless. At any rate, not a sign of life came to greet him in that weird moment.

It needed terrific strength, but he had it—inspired, too, as he was, by the horror of it all—and in a few moments he had opened the door of the car beneath the water. He thrust a hand in, and a moment later a hand had caught his wrist. It was rather a ghastly feeling. There was madness about that

(Continued on page 25.)

FOOTBALLERS' NAMES.

(Continued from page 15)

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennell, Cameron, Chedgzoy, Cock, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crookford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Clunas, Connolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

Dunn, Dickson, Dorrell, Dawson, Davies, Donaldson, Dunsdale, Dimmock, Duckett, Duncan, Domyi, Davison, Duckworth, Dockray, Danskin, Dreyer, Denoon, Denyer, Duffus, Dunlop, Dixon, Doyle, Doran, Dale.

Emerson, Evans, Ellerington, England, Ellis, Edelman, Edgley, Eggo, Elliott, Edge, Edwards, Emmett, Ewart.

French, Ferguson, Ford, Forshaw, Fletcher, Flood, Flint, Feebury, Fleming, Fleetwood, Flynn, Fox, Foxall, Fort, Forbes, Fowler, Fazackerley, Findlay, Featherstone, Forsythe, Frame, Fyfe, Finney, Forster, Fitton, Fairclough, Fern.

Grimshaw, Gill, Gilchrist, Gough, Gillespie, Grimsdell, Gittins, Gibson, Graham, Goldthorpe, Grundy, Gallogley, Gibbon, Gomm, Gregory, George, Getwood, Groves, Greig, Gardner, Gallagher, Glancy, Greenshields, Gourlay, Goodchild.

Howarth, Haworth, Hampton, Harrow, Harland, Hopkin, Hudspeth, Harris, Ramill, Hill, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hutton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higginbotham, Hoddinott, Hebden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hannaford, Harrold, Bowie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Huggall, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart, Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin.

Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson.

Kliron, Kelly, Kneeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenleyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Keane.

Linfot, Longworth, Low, Lindsay, Little, Lonsdale, Lockhead, Longmuir, Lea, Lievealey, Lane, Lockett, Legge, Lofthouse, Lenny, Lyner, Lawson, Lambie, Lacey.

Moss, Mort, Mossop, Mechan, Maitland, Mitchell, Murphy, Morgan, Milton, Mercer, Marshall, Magee, Moore, Martin, Mills, Mason, Mew, Matthews, Moule, Myers, Marsden, Middleton, Maidment, Mebaffy, Mee, Moody, Musgrove, Malcolm, Morton, Manderson, Meiklejohn, Muirhead, Moffat, Match, Meredith, Marriott, Mackie, Menlove, Mitton, Marks, Marsh, McIntyre, McNeil, McKinlay, McNabb, McIntosh, McDonald, McCall, McGrory, McCluggage, McLean, McCandless, McColl, McLacklan, McStey, McAlpine, McKenna, McInally, McNair, McMinn, McBain, McCracken.

Nuttall, Neesam, Neil, Needham, Nash, Nisbet, Nelson.

Osborne, Ormston, Orr, O'Hare.

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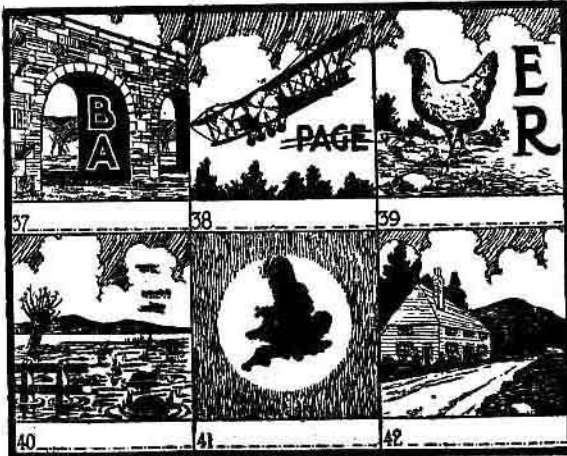
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York.

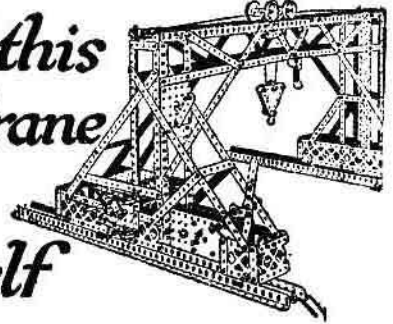
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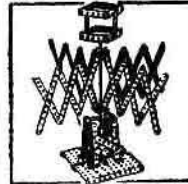


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these Letter Scales for Father



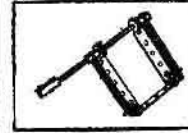
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this Dolls Pram for Sister



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MECCANO LTD : BINNS ROAD LIVERPOOL

"THE TRIERS!"

(Continued from page 24.)

hand which clutched at him. He could imagine it dragging him down and down to death. But it did not do so, and a minute later he sank exhausted to the dark side of the river with a young lady in his arms.

He made a great effort, and, bending over her, tried to get her to speak.

"Anyone else?" he roared.

She shook her head, then again closed her eyes.

And so they rested for, perhaps, five minutes.

At last the girl sat up.

"You saved my life!" she said.

Jack gave a grunt.

"Well, I dare say I did!" he exclaimed. "But I always said that that bridge is a scandal, and so it jolly well is! There ought to be a row about it! And your car—look at it!"

The girl gave a nod. In the darkness Jack could not see her face, but she had a pleasant voice.

"Yes—and my father only gave it to me a little while ago for my birthday! It's a shame—"

Jack started.

"I say, do I know you?" he asked, forgetting that it was not very wise for Jack Morton to know anyone at this moment.

"I am Gracie Graves."

"What?" exclaimed Jack. "You are the daughter of old Graves, up at the Old Hall?"

"Yes."

"I'm Jack Morton!"

It was the girl's turn to start now, and a moment or so later, while she sat and stared at him, the lad realised what had happened.

"Jack Morton!" she murmured.

"Oh, you poor soul! You must have been having an awful time lately! I have been hoping and praying they would never get you! I never believed you stole that fifty pounds! I always believed that it was a wicked plot—"

"It was!"

"I know! And here you are still!"

I hoped you were miles away, and now you have saved my life, and I shall not be able to tell all the world!"

Jack started violently.

"No, for goodness' sake, Miss Graves, don't say anything about me! But perhaps you can do me one good turn?"

"Anything!" said the girl. "You saved my life!"

"Oh, I simply did what anyone would have done! Do you know what has happened to my mother?"

The girl nodded in the dark.

"Yes. I heard that she had gone to live with some friends," she said. "But, if you like, to-morrow I will go and see her, and give her your love and any message you like."

Jack breathed hard.

"Would you?"

"Of course I would!"

"It would make me your slave for life!" he said.

"It would be a very slight way of repaying all you have done for me," the girl went on.

Jack smiled.

"Well, would you just tell her that I am all right, and that I am going to prove that I am innocent, and that I am still going to get our rights out of George Clifton?"

The girl bent her head.

"Very well," she said. "And please believe, Mr. Morton, that there is one more person in Boltwich who believes in you. I think nearly all Boltwich does believe in you, and it will not be long before you are free to do what you want!"

She rose.

"Hurt anywhere?" asked Jack.

The girl smiled and shook her head.

"No—except I am horribly wet!"

"I know! You'd better hurry back to Boltwich and get help!" he smiled, as he held out a hand. "You will not think it feeble of me to desert you now?"

"I think you have been splendid!" said the girl, as they parted.

A Bad Business!

THERE was, of course, no possible question now of Jack turning out for Boltwich again.

There had been too much trouble about the game against Crewbridge, and the directors had received a very sharp message from the F.A. that the lad was not to appear again.

Besides, the police had no intention of being caught napping a second time.

A large force had been drafted into the town, for all sorts of rumours had been put about to the effect that Jack was going to play, that a thousand fans were going to march to the ground with him, and that the military were going to be called out.

Actually, nothing of the sort was even in contemplation.

The only person besides Jack himself who had even dreamed of such madness was Laurie Robson, and he had soon given way to calmer reason.

No; Jack was safely in-hiding fifty miles from the old town, and the team turned out without him.

However, the result of it all was quite electric.

The gate was a record one, and the number of police on the ground was enormous. Indeed, until the game started the crowd amused itself by counting them and gibing at them; but

serious trouble did not arise, and the game started without undue incident.

The change in the Boltwich team was apparent at once, and was quite remarkable.

They seemed like a team without a leader—as, indeed, they were. A very decent player had taken Jack's place, but he was not able to do much.

Again and again Ronnie would give him his chance; but he was overawed, it would seem, by the occasion, and he never got his forward-line properly under control. Before half-time the home team was two goals to the bad.

This would have been serious enough, but the crowd had suddenly taken it nastily.

"It's George Clifton's doing!" someone shouted; and the cry was taken up until it went round and round the ground like a song.

"We want George Clifton! We want Clifton!"

Actually, Clifton was seated in the stand, looking on at the game with a grim, set look.

He had not been very happy lately. Things simply did not go right for him. Long before this he had expected that Jack would be safe under lock and key. And he was still free. Also, old Graves, the butler, Babe Bolton, Bill Atkins, and others of his hirelings were demanding more and more money as the price of their silence.

That would not have mattered so much, for Clifton was very rich, but the wretched will was being held up in the most ridiculous way. He could almost have sworn that old Brown, the solicitor, was doing this on purpose, although young Clifford, the other partner, declared that this was not so.

Still, it was terribly annoying. And now suddenly, as he listened and his ears caught the refrain which was going round and round the ground: "We want George Clifton!" his heart stood still.

Was this a sign of the beginning of the end?

"Of course not!"

Laurie came suddenly towards him.

"Hallo, Clifton!" he said.

"What do you want?"

Laurie regarded his enemy with a sort of benign friendliness and superiority.

"Well, I only wanted to say," he began, "if you would give a chap a chance to speak to you civilly, that you are a bit foolish to be here."

Clifton started.

"Indeed?" he said.

Laurie yawned.

"Of course," he said, "there are some people who cannot see in front of them, but if the crowd gets to know you are here it might go badly for you."

Clifton sneered.

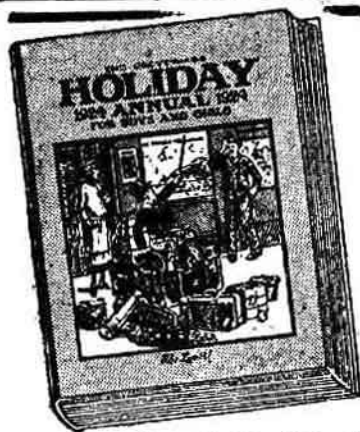
"Oh, I know that some of your geol-birds don't care for me, Robson, but I do not happen to care a hang! In fact, I should be much obliged if you would mind your own business and would leave me to mind mine!"

Laurie flushed. He had really spoken out of decent feeling. He hated Clifton heartily enough, but he realised that there was actual danger for him here, and he didn't want to see the fellow made a mess of.

"All right!" he said, turning away. "Go your own way, then!"

It was not long before George Clifton was bitterly regretting that he had ignored Laurie's warning!

(Look out for another full-of-thrill instalment of this powerful serial next week, boys.)



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GLOUCESTER TAKES THE TUCK HAMPER. NO SUCH THING!

An enthusiastic grocer had, the other day, printed in large letters on a board placed over the shop door the following words: "Mr. Gladstone said jam is a good substitute for butter. Try our home-made jam." A woman entered his shop, bought two pots of jam and carried them off. In a few days she returned, laid one pot of jam on the counter, and with an indignant air, exclaimed: "I've been brought up to believe that everything Mr. Gladstone spoke was truth. I'll never believe another word!" "Indeed, madam, why not?" inquired the bewildered grocer. "Why," said the indignant woman, "because he said jam was the best substitute for butter. It is not. It won't fry my fish."—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to Frampton E. H. Stake, 21, All Saints Road, Gloucester.

NOT QUITE KINDNESS!

Tony was a boy Scout, and one night he awoke full of terrible remorse, for he had not performed his two acts of kindness. Suddenly he heard the click of the mouse-trap. He got up and let the mouse away—that was one act of kindness. In the morning he told his father about it. "Yes, my boy, but what was your second act of kindness after liberating the mouse?" "Oh, I gave it to the cat," answered Tony quite unconcerned.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Hare, 3, Clifton Terrace, Portobello, Scotland.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT, EXACTLY!

The "Reds" goalkeeper and centre-forward were discussing the manners of their corpulent left-back, and from high words they got to blows, and were both engaged in a hot fight when the left-back appeared on the scene. "What's the meaning of all this?" he said. "Oh," said the goalie, "I was only sticking up for you." "Sticking up for me!" "What do you mean?" asked the corpulent back. "Well, Brown said you were not fit to live with a pig." "Oh, did he! And what did you say?" "I said you were!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Velland, 69, Broadfield Road, Sheffield.

WRONG END UP!

A construction gang were working on a section of the railroad, where the mud was excessively deep. The foreman was resting in a shanty nearby, when suddenly he heard a workman—a foreigner—shout: "Queek, queek, bringa da peek, bringa da shovel! Antonio stuck in da mud!" The boss, making a megaphone of his hands, shouted back: "How far in?" "Up to hees knees!" was the excited reply. "Well, then, let him walk out!" the boss replied disgustedly. Back came the unexpected answer. "Oh, but he canna no walk, he wronga end up!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. May, 36, St. John's Road, Balby, Doncaster.

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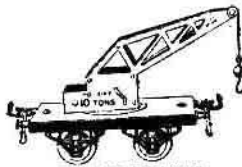
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