

"RIVALS AND CHUMS!" This Week's School and Sporting Story—Inside.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY

OF

SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 946.
Vol. XXIX,
March 27th,
1926.



"HEAVE—HEAVE—HEAVE!"

A long pull and a strong pull in the tug o' war between the rival Houses at St. Jim's! (See the grand school yarn inside.)



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

"THE SCARLET STREAK!"

FOR the benefit of Gemites who have missed my previous announcements concerning the wonderful story I have secured to follow the Gan Waga series, I must hasten to mention that the above title is the one to look out for in a fortnight's time. This new serial is something out of the way, for it deals with the remarkable invention known as the death ray. That alone is enough to ensure its being well received. But there's a bigger pull still, my chums, for simultaneous with the release of this grand yarn the cinemas all over the country will be showing the first instalment of THIS GEM STORY on the screen! Thus, Gemites will be able to avail themselves of the unique experience of reading "The Scarlet Streak!" in their favourite paper and of seeing it shown on the screen at their favourite cinema. Wait a moment—this pull I spoke of just now goes a bit further. It affects

A SIMPLE COMPETITION

which will be adapted from both the screen and printed version of "The Scarlet Streak!" There's nothing too difficult to be done to win a handsome prize; everybody will stand an excellent chance. And those who not only read the story of the "The Scarlet Streak!" in the GEM, but who also visit the cinema must—you can see that for yourselves—stand a double chance of bagging a topping prize. The Prize List I am keeping until next Wednesday, but you can take it from me, chums, it's a pretty formidable one and highly attractive. Therefore, you will need little encouragement from me to make certain of next week's GEM, for in that issue will be given full particulars of the prizes to be won. Just you watch out, boys!

HE WANTS TO GO ON THE STAGE!

A loyal chum from Northumberland writes and tells me that he is frightfully keen to take up a stage career. But in the next breath he tells me that he knows nothing about the stage, that he has never dabbled even in amateur theatrical work. How, then, does my chum know if he is suited to that very difficult and much overcrowded profession? I don't wish to pour cold water on my correspondent's enthusiasm, but he must be told that stage life is not by any manner of means a bed of roses. If my chum has a natural bent for theatrical work, surely he would know by now whether or not to develop it, but if it is only just the glamour of the footlights getting a hold of him, my earnest advice is for him to leave it alone. The money side of it—he refers to this in glowing terms—is no better, if as good as any other profession, except where the real stage genius is concerned. The average actor makes a living, but he rarely makes a fortune. Indeed, when age comes upon him he realises, in many cases, that it would have been better for him to have left the "profession" alone, for age is more of a handicap on the stage than in any other business. True, the "limelight" offers some compensation, but that doesn't last. A stage favourite of to-day is sometimes a failure to-morrow. How much worse then is the fellow who is not a favourite—a star, but just an ordinary performer! No, my chum, if you take my tip, you'll leave the stage alone, unless you have been told by someone in a position to know, and able to judge from every point of view, whether you are a Henry Irving or a Martin Harvey in the making.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

By Martin Clifford.

An amusing story written specially in honour of April 1st. Look out for it!

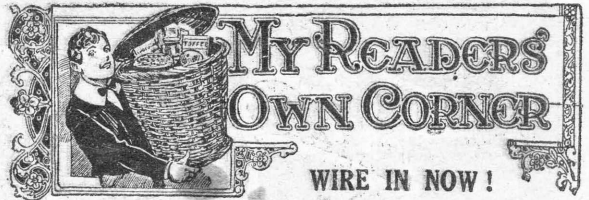
"THE WHEEZE THAT WOULDN'T WORK!"

By Sidney Drew.

The last of the Gan Waga stories—so don't miss it, chums. Also another Jingle from the pen of the St. Jim's Rhymester. Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

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TUCK HAMPERS AND MONEY PRIZES AWARDED FOR WIT

Delicious Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Pars.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4

BUCKS BUCKS UP! BUNKERED!

Long Hitter (to caddie, who has consistently failed to mark balls, and who has been reproved in chosen language): "Did you see where that one went?" Caddie: "Yus!" Long Hitter: "Where?" Caddie: "Out o' sight!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to George Stanley Allen, Licensed Victuallers' School, Mackenzie Park, Slough, Bucks.

TAKING NO CHANCES!

MacTavish had deposited his savings, which amounted to eleven pounds, in the bank. A few weeks later he approached the cashier and demanded his money. He was asked if he did not want to leave a small balance, just to keep the account open. "No," he persisted. "I want my money." The cashier counted out the necessary amount and handed it over. With great deliberation MacTavish counted it, then he handed the cash back again. "That's O.K.," he said to the astonished cashier. "I only wanted to see if it was all there!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to James Davidson, The Beeches, Houghton, Carlisle.

THE RIGHT WAY!

A smart young man, travelling on horseback in the Isle of Wight, suddenly drew rein to make inquiries of a country lad. "Is this the way to Ryde, my boy?" he asked. "No," replied the urchin. "Tuck in yer heels and stick yer knees out more!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ernest Cooper, 209, Oldham Road, Waterloo, Ashton-under-Lyne.

WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY!

"Is the manager in?" inquired a traveller in a big London firm. The office-boy, gloating over a penny dreadful, with his legs sprawled over a desk, made no reply. "I asked if the manager was in?" repeated the visitor. The lad raised his eyes for a moment, blew a cloud of smoke down his nostrils, and then resumed his reading. "Did you hear me?" snapped the irate visitor. "Of course I heard you," answered the office-boy scornfully. "Then why the dickens don't you tell me if the manager is in?" A sneering smile flickered over the lad's face as he crossed his legs and resumed his reading. "Now, does it look like it?" he asked, in a cool voice.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eric Edey, 101, Noel Street, Nottingham.

MONTY'S WIT!

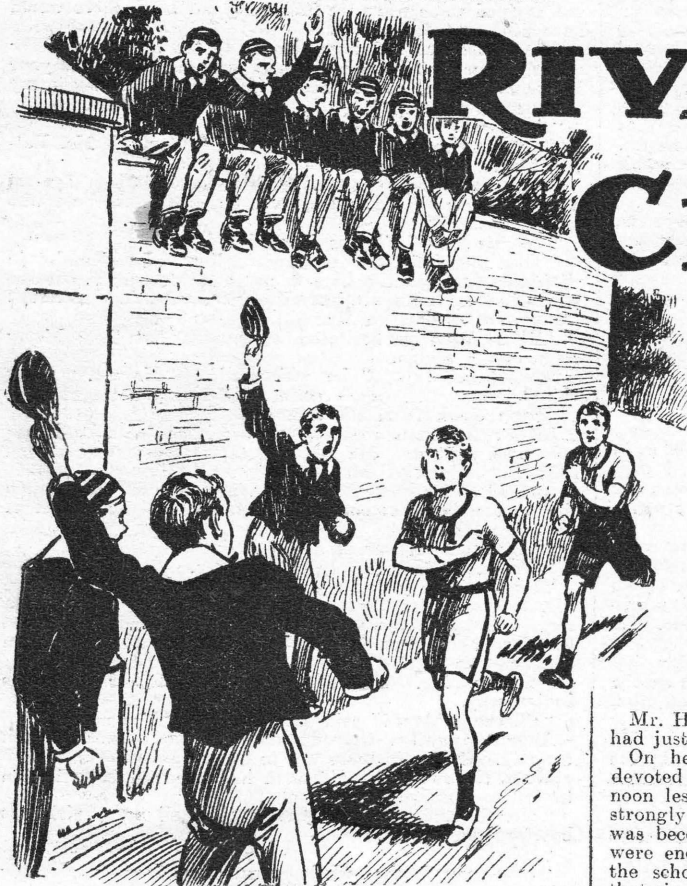
"The evening wore on," continued Monty Lowther, who was telling his jokes in the Common-room at St. Jim's. "Excuse me," interrupted the would-be wit, "but can you tell us what the evening wore on that occasion?" "I don't think it is very important," replied Lowther, "but if you must know, I believe it was the close of a summer's day!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Wragg, 172, Chapman Street, Gorton, Man.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

INTER-HOUSE SPORTS! Once a year the heroes of the School and New Houses at St. Jim's meet in friendly rivalry on the field of sport. But it's tough luck on the School House that, just before the tournament, one of their best all-round men should be transferred to the rival House!



RIVALRY AND CHUMS!

A Stirring Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co., of St. Jim's.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. On the Warpath!

"RIDICULOUS!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

The sour and ill-tempered master of the New House was standing at his study window, scowling across the sunny quadrangle.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the quad was alive with fellows. Their animated shouts reached Mr. Ratcliff's ears, and his scowl grew blacker.

The St. Jim's juniors, of both Houses, were getting into training for the Inter-House Sports, which were to commence on Monday. Very keen—almost deadly, in fact—was the rivalry between School House and New House, and the annual Sports Tournament always provided a rare series of tussles.

Tom Merry, the School House leader, had marshalled his men in the quad. Some of them—including Tom himself, and Manners and Lowther—were engaged in punting a football about. And Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth, were practising speed-tests on their bicycles. Mounted on racing machines, with low handlebars, they were whizzing round the quad side by side, while Dick Julian timed them with his stop-watch.

The New House fellows were equally active. Figgins and Kerr and Redfern, with Lawrence and Owen, were in their running-shorts, and they seemed to be trying to lower all previous records for the hundred yards. Fatty Wynn was engaged in "clocking them in." Fatty himself was not taking part in any of the running races. He carried too much overweight, so to speak. But he would be a very useful man in the boat's crew, and in the great footer match which was to round off the sports.

Seldom had the old quadrangle at St. Jim's presented such an animated appearance. With footer, and cycling, and sprinting in progress at one and the same time, and with a crowd of fifty fellows looking on, giving vociferous encouragement to the athletes, the scene was a very lively one.

"Ridiculous!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

The crusty old gentleman, who had never been a sportsman himself, not even in the days of his youth, surveyed the scene with a jaundiced eye.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff was in one of his blackest moods. He had just returned from a fruitless visit to the Head's study.

On hearing that six successive afternoons were to be devoted to the sports, and that there were to be no afternoon lessons for a whole week, Mr. Ratcliff had protested strongly to the Head. He had declared that the school was becoming sport mad, and that games and recreations were encroaching far too much upon the scholastic side of the school routine. It was ridiculous, said Mr. Ratcliff, that six consecutive afternoons should be devoted to "senseless and inane horseplay." In his view, the annual Sports Tournament was a nuisance. It ought to be abolished.

That was not the Head's view. Dr. Holmes, himself an old 'Varsity Blue, was a firm believer in healthy sport. Certainly he had no intention of cancelling the Sports Tournament, and he told Mr. Ratcliff so. He went further, and told the New House master that his protest was unreasonable and prejudiced.

Thus admonished, Mr. Ratcliff had stamped back to his own study in an evil temper. Could he have had his own way, he would have cleared the quadrangle, and curbed the activities of the junior athletes. But there was a higher power at St. Jim's than Horace Ratcliff. The Inter-House Sports had the complete sanction of the Head, and the New House master was powerless to interfere.

Mr. Ratcliff continued to stand at his study window, scowling at the scene below.

"Preposterous!" he snapped. "I cannot think what the school is coming to! This mania for sport is intolerable. Brawn is being developed at the expense of brain. No afternoon lessons for a whole week! Why, it is scandalous! Now, if I were headmaster—"

Fortunately for St. Jim's, however, Mr. Ratcliff was not headmaster, nor was there any immediate likelihood of his filling that exalted office.

A medley of shouts from below grated upon the housemaster's ears.

"Well run, Figgy!"

"Shoot, Manners!"

"Put the pace on, Gussy!"

Mr. Ratcliff gave a snort. He was about to step back from the window in disgust, when he caught sight of four juniors slinking out of gates.

Racke and Mellish of the School House, and Clampe and Chowle of the New House, were going out together. And the manner of their exit was stealthy and furtive. All four were slackers, and they shared Mr. Ratcliff's dislike of healthy sport.

When the excitement in the quad was at its height, Racke & Co. slipped unobtrusively out of gates. They were fearful that Tom Merry and Figgins might call them back and make them take part in the practices.

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But Tom Merry and Figgins were too engrossed with their football and sprinting to notice the sly departure of Racke & Co.

Mr. Ratcliff noticed it, however, and his eyes gleamed.

The Housemaster's suspicions were aroused. It occurred to him at once that Aubrey Racke and his companions were setting out upon some shady expedition. Possibly they were going to enjoy a secret smoke in some out-of-the-way spot. At all events, Mr. Ratcliff, who was at a loose end that afternoon, welcomed the opportunity of playing the sleuth. He decided to stalk the four juniors and keep them under observation. Clampe and Chowle belonging to his own House, Mr. Ratcliff felt quite justified in shadowing them.

The quartette had now disappeared out of gates, and the Housemaster would have to hurry. He whisked off his gown and removed his mortar-board; then he donned his hat, and a raincoat. It was a fine, sunny afternoon, but Mr. Ratcliff was one of those pessimistic gentlemen who always anticipate rain.

The Housemaster hurried down the stairs and emerged into the quadrangle. Then, with his thin lips compressed unpleasantly, he strode towards the school gates.

Suddenly there was a whirring of wheels behind him, and the warning clangs of four bicycle bells.

Clang! Clang, clang, clang!

Jack Blake and Herries and D'Arcy and Digby were riding abreast. It was one of their trial spins, and they were pedalling furiously. Mr. Ratcliff was walking in their path, and the four bells rang out simultaneously, as a warning to the Housemaster to jump clear.

Mr. Ratcliff did not jump clear. He did not even turn his head. He was aware, of course, that the cyclists were bearing down upon him, but he considered it was their duty to avoid him, not his duty to avoid them. Like a selfish pedestrian on the highway, Mr. Ratcliff refused to step aside. He stalked on towards the school gates.

Again the four bells clanged, and a couple of cyclists shot past Mr. Ratcliff in a flash. Jack Blake passed him on the right, and Herries on the left. Then Digby passed him, swerving just in time to avoid a collision.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not so fortunate. He swerved, too; but unfortunately, Mr. Ratcliff, startled by the narrow escape he had just had, jumped aside at the same instant.

Crash!

The bicycle cannoned into Mr. Ratcliff broadside on, so to speak, and the Housemaster sat down on the flagstones, with a yell of anguish.

"Yowp!"

As for Arthur Augustus, that noble youth turned a complete somersault over the handlebars, and he had a narrow escape from being precipitated into the wide bowl of the fountain. As it was, he just missed the edge of the basin, and landed on the flagstones with a terrific concussion.

"Yawoooooh!"

Mr. Ratcliff sat up dazedly, and glared at Arthur Augustus. And Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly and blinked at Mr. Ratcliff.

"Ow!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Wow!" rejoined Arthur Augustus.

Master and junior were surrounded by a startled throng of fellows. Mr. Ratcliff was entirely to blame for the catastrophe; but he was not likely to see the affair in that light himself. The juniors felt that there was going to be trouble, and that Arthur Augustus was "for it."

Willing hands assisted the Housemaster to his feet, while Tom Merry & Co. ran to the assistance of the swell of St. Jim's.

"You've done it now, Gussy!" breathed Manners.

"Did you think this was a skittle-alley, where Housemasters could be bowled over like giddy ninepins?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ow-ow-ow!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "I am severely bruised, dear boys! I considah that Mr. Watcliff should apologise for gettin' in my way like that!"

"Ass! He'll expect an apology from you!" muttered Tom Merry.

"But Mr. Watcliff was entially to blame—"

"Yes; but you can't tell a Housemaster that, fathead!"

"I wang my bell twice—" began Arthur Augustus, in a voice trembling with indignation.

"D'Arcy!"

The name rang out like a pistol-shot. Mr. Ratcliff had recovered, in some measure, from the collision, and he bore down upon Arthur Augustus, with a glare that was positively Hunnish.

"Do you realise, D'Arcy, the enormity of what you have done?" he demanded.

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff—"

"Riding your bicycle in an utterly reckless manner, you knocked me down!" fumed the Housemaster.

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"Pardon me, sir, but it was your own fault," said Arthur Augustus. "I gave you due warnin' of my appwoach. Had you stepped aside when we first wang our bells, there would have been no collision."

"Boy! Do not add impertinence to the injury you have already done me! You will accompany me at once to your Housemaster, and he will administer a severe caning in my presence!"

"Bai Jove!"

There was an indignant murmur of "Shame!" Mr. Ratcliff glared at the juniors standing around.

"How dare you launch a hostile demonstration against me!" he stormed. "Figgins, were you one of the boys who said 'Shame'?"

"Yes, sir!" said Figgins doggedly.

"Then you will take five hundred lines! I will maintain discipline amongst the boys of my own House, even if the School House boys are permitted to run wild! D'Arcy! Follow me at once to Mr. Railton's study!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated a moment, but Tom Merry gave him a nudge.

"Better go, Gussy," he whispered. "No use making things worse. If there's serious trouble, you might have to stand down from the sports."

Arthur Augustus realised the unwisdom of adopting a rebellious attitude. He adjusted his famous monocle, and followed the incensed Mr. Ratcliff into the House.

Arrived at his colleague's study, Mr. Ratcliff threw open the door without ceremony and stalked in. The swell of St. Jim's followed.

Mr. Railton was seated at his desk.

"Well, Mr. Ratcliff?" he said quietly.

"I desire this young rascal to be caned in my presence, Mr. Railton! He has been guilty of furious and reckless bicycle-riding in the quadrangle, and he actually knocked me down! It would not surprise me to know that the collision was premeditated—"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff—" began Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Silence, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton. "You may go!"

Arthur Augustus obeyed that welcome command with alacrity. Evidently there was to be no caning.

When the swell of the Fourth had departed Mr. Railton turned to his angry colleague.

"Mr. Ratcliff," he said quietly, "I shall not punish this boy, as you suggest."

"What!"

"I witnessed the whole occurrence from my study window, and I am satisfied that you were entirely to blame for the collision."

Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip.

"You were given due warning of the cyclists' approach," went on Mr. Railton; "and had you stepped aside in the first instance there would have been no accident."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glistened.

"Do you approve of reckless and intrepid riding in the school quadrangle, Mr. Railton?" he sneered.

"The boys were practising for the sports, and they have the sanction of Dr. Holmes, who considers that the quadrangle is a more appropriate place for trial spins than the public highway."

"These senseless sports—" began Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Railton raised his hand.

"That is enough, Mr. Ratcliff. I wish to hear no more! Kindly leave my study!"

The master of the New House turned, and fairly flounced out of the room.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff was having a far from enjoyable afternoon; and a few moments later he went striding out of gates—fairly on the warpath, as Monty Lowther expressed it—like a raging lion seeking what he may devour.

CHAPTER 2.

Ratty's Peril!

"TROT right in, dear men!"

Aubrey Racke spoke genially. Racke and his companions had made their way, at a leisurely saunter, to an old, disused barn on the banks of the river. It was a ramshackle old place, standing in solitary isolation.

Racke had often used the barn for the nefarious purposes of smoking and card-playing; and, by way of precaution, he had had a lock fitted to the door and a key made, the key being in Aubrey's own possession.

"Not a very palatial place," said Racke, holding open the door for his companions to enter. "Still, it's safe, an' that's all that matters."

"Rather!" said Mellish. "Nobody's likely to disturb us here. Isn't it jolly dark, though?" he added, as he stepped into the barn.



Mr. Ratcliff jumped right into the path of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Crash! The bicycle cannoned into the New House master and he sat down suddenly with a yell of anguish, what time Arthur Augustus was taking a header over the handle-bars. "Yowp!" "Yaooh!" (See Chapter 1.)

"Bit gloomy," assented Racke. "But our peepers will soon get used to it. All in? Good! I'll lock the door. Then we can settle down to enjoy ourselves!"

With the door shut, the interior of the barn was gloomier than ever. The dinginess contrasted strikingly with the bright spring sunshine without.

The four young rascals seated themselves on the floor, which was strewn with straw; and Racke handed round cigarettes.

"Light up!" he said cheerily. "It's a dashed good job we were able to slip out of gates without bein' spotted. I heard a rumour this mornin' that Tom Merry was goin' to round up all the slackers, for compulsory runnin' practice."

"Like his cheek!" growled Clampe. "I heard that Figgins was at the same game. Blow their silly old sports! There's much more fun in being here than in racing and chasing round the quad."

"Yes, rather!" said Chowle.

The cigarettes were lighted, and Racke and Mellish puffed at theirs complacently, as if they were old hands at that sort of thing. Clampe and Chowle, the two New House fellows, were not quite so comfortable. They coughed and spluttered a good deal, and grew very red in the face.

When their eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom Racke produced a pack of playing-cards from his pocket, and the quartette settled down to enjoy themselves. The enjoyment was rather unevenly distributed. Nap for penny points was played, and Racke at once started winning, and

embarked upon a long run of good luck. Racke was extremely wealthy, and he could well have afforded to lose. The other three were far from wealthy, and they wanted desperately to win. But that was one of the vagaries of gambling; it seemed to be governed by the principle of "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

Racke was enjoying himself thoroughly. Mellish, who experienced fluctuating spells of fortune, was cheery one moment and despondent the next. Clampe and Chowle, who lost all along the line, were beginning to wish that they had stayed behind at St. Jim's, even at the risk of being roped in by Figgins of the New House.

The atmosphere in the barn became smoke-laden and stifling. It was difficult to see the cards. Clampe and Chowle, who had smoked several cigarettes off the reel, were looking almost green. But they continued to puff at their weeds, knowing how Racke would taunt them if they failed to stay the pace.

At the end of half an hour's play Clampe was finished. His scanty supply of pocket-money had gradually travelled across to Racke, whose luck still held.

"Cleaned out, dear man?" inquired Racke sympathetically.

Clampe nodded.

"I'll take your I O U's, if you like."

"Thanks; but I've had enough."

"Same here," said Chowle, rising to his feet and

stretching himself. "The game's gone against me all along. I'm broke!"

"You goin' on, Mellish?" asked Racke.

"Rather!"

Racke was in the act of re-shuffling the cards, when he suddenly stopped and listened.

The sound of footsteps came to the juniors' ears. Somebody was coming along the towing-path.

"Better keep quiet for a bit," whispered Racke. "Don't suppose it's anybody after us; but you never know."

The juniors remained mute. Chowle, who was on his feet, peered through a chink in the wooden wall. Then he gave a violent start.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "It's Ratty! And he's heading straight for the barn!"

Racke turned quite pale, and Mellish and Clampe started to their feet in a panic.

It was, indeed, Mr. Ratcliff whose footsteps were heard without. The New House master, owing to the collision in the quad with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, had been delayed in his pursuit of Racke & Co., but he made sundry inquiries, which had brought him to the river.

He had explored the boathouses in vain, and then he had met a bargeman, who had seen the four juniors enter the barn, and who readily volunteered the information. And now, his quest at an end, Mr. Ratcliff swooped down upon the ramshackle little building like a wolf on the fold.

The Housemaster was in a savage and spiteful mood; and his eyes were gleaming as he strode towards the door of the barn. He pressed down the iron latch, and pushed; but the door refused to budge.

"Ah it is as I thought!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "The young rascals have locked themselves in, which is in itself an indication that they are up to some mischief!"

Crash!

Mr. Ratcliff smote the door with his clenched fist.

"Unlock the door at once!" he thundered. "Do you hear?"

Racke and his companions heard, but they made no movement.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard.

"Do not try to deceive me into thinking that this barn is unoccupied!" he shouted. "There are four of you inside, and I suspect that gambling and smoking have been going on. Unless this door is opened at once, I will take steps to have it broken in!"

Racke's companions glanced at him wildly in the gloom. Racke himself was more composed now. He had got over the shock of Mr. Ratcliff's surprise visit.

"Look here, you fellows!" he whispered softly. "I don't believe Ratty knows who we are. He saw the four of us come in here—from a distance, most likely—and he can't have recognised us, or he'd call us by our names."

"That's all very well," murmured Mellish. "But how are we to get out of this fix? If you refuse to unlock the door, Ratty will bring some bargees along to bash it in."

"Listen!" breathed Racke. "I'll tell you how we'll work the oracle. I'll unlock the door, an' throw it open suddenly, an' Ratty will come chargin' in. We'll be behind the door, an' he won't see us. Then, before he can get his bearings, we'll dart out like lightning, an' lock Ratty in the barn!"

It was a desperate ruse, but it seemed the only way in which the juniors could extricate themselves from their dilemma.

Mr. Ratcliff was still fuming and raging on the other side of the door.

"I will give you one more chance!" he exclaimed.

Racke moved towards the door, his companions keeping close behind him.

Swiftly and suddenly, Racke turned the key and withdrew it from the lock. Then he threw the door open wide, and the quartette squeezed themselves behind it.

Mr. Ratcliff came charging into the barn, just as Racke had predicted he would.

The sudden change from the bright sunlight to the gloomy interior of the barn was bewildering to the Housemaster. He paused in perplexity, and peered about him; and, while he paused, Racke & Co darted swiftly out of the barn. They almost fell over each other in their anxiety to get clear; and then Racke pulled the door shut, and locked it, leaving Mr. Ratcliff imprisoned in the barn like a rat in a trap!

"Good!" panted Mellish.

"Rippin' wheeze of yours, Racke!" gasped Chowle. "But—but are you sure Ratty doesn't know who we are?"

"Pretty certain," said Racke, with a grin. "But if we stand jawin' here, he might peep through one of the chinks, an' spot us. This way!"

Racke slipped the key of the barn into his pocket, and the juniors sprinted along the towing-path, halting eventually behind a clump of trees. From this spot they could see the

barn, but it was unlikely that the imprisoned Housemaster would be able to see them.

"Well, that's that!" said Racke, with a chuckle. "We've disposed of that pryin' beast, an' it serves him jolly well right!"

"Better cut back to the school," muttered Clampe uneasily. "If we're seen hangin' about here, we shall be suspected. Dash it all, it's a jolly serious thing to lock a Housemaster in a barn!"

"The question is, how are we going to let him out?" asked Mellish.

"That's simple enough," said Racke. "I'll give the key to one of the village kids, an' tip him to go an' release the prisoner. But we needn't hurry about that. A couple of hours' imprisonment will do that old tyrant good!"

"Come on! Let's get away!" insisted Clampe.

The juniors were about to decamp, when Mellish, taking a last look at the barn, gave a violent start.

"Great Scott!" he faltered, white to the lips. "Look, you fellows! The—the barn's on fire!"

"Eh? What rot!" said Racke. But his tone was startled, and his mind uneasy, as he recollected that he had dropped a lighted cigarette on the floor of the barn at the moment of Mr. Ratcliff's arrival. He had put his foot on the cigarette, believing he had extinguished it, but apparently he had not done so.

The cigarette must have lain smouldering for some moments, eventually firing the straw. And now the barn was on fire!

There could be no doubt on the matter. Looking back with terrified glances, the juniors could see smoke issuing from the crevices in the woodwork. There were no flames as yet; but it could only be a matter of moments before flames mingled with the smoke.

And Mr. Ratcliff was within the barn, powerless to free himself!

"Listen!" muttered Chowle, trembling violently. "He—he's shouting for help!"

A muffled cry emanated from the barn.

"Help, help!"

Racke and his companions stood rooted to the spot—almost paralysed with horror. Racke knew that all he had to do was to dash back to the barn and unlock the door; but his limbs refused to function. He could only stand and stare helplessly at the issuing smoke, which was presently followed by darting tongues of flame.

"It—it's fairly alight now!" Clampe's voice was hoarse. "It's only a wooden shanty. It will be burnt to the ground in no time! And—and Mr. Ratcliff—"

The wretched youth broke off with a shudder.

"The—the key!" muttered Mellish. "You've got it, Racke. Go and unlock the door!"

Racke fumbled in his pocket, and started forward a pace; but the sight of the smoke and flames, and the crackle of the burning woodwork, unnerved him.

The imprisoned Housemaster, in the blazing barn, must have been overpowered by the fumes, for no further cries for help were heard.

Racke could have unlocked the door of the barn without danger to his own worthless skin; but that would not be enough. Mr. Ratcliff, doubtless unconscious, would have to be extricated from that awful furnace; and that was where Racke's courage failed him. He wrung his hands helplessly.

"It's no use!" he muttered. "The fire has spread all round. Nothing can save him now!"

"Try—have a try!" panted Percy Mellish, though he would not have ventured within a dozen yards of that blazing building himself.

Racke looked around him wildly. Then he caught sight of a boat, coming rapidly downstream. Talbot of the Shell was in the boat, and he was pulling at the oars as if it was a matter of life and death—as, indeed, it was.

Talbot had been taking some sculling practice on the Rhyll, in order to get himself in trim for the forthcoming boat-race between the rival Houses. Chancing to turn his head, Talbot had seen smoke and flame issuing from the old barn. He had seen, also, the huddled, cowering figures of Racke & Co., and he had divined that a tragedy was imminent. He put on a spurt at once; the gleaming blades flashed through the air, and clove the water; the light craft fairly leapt along. Talbot was rowing as he had never rowed before.

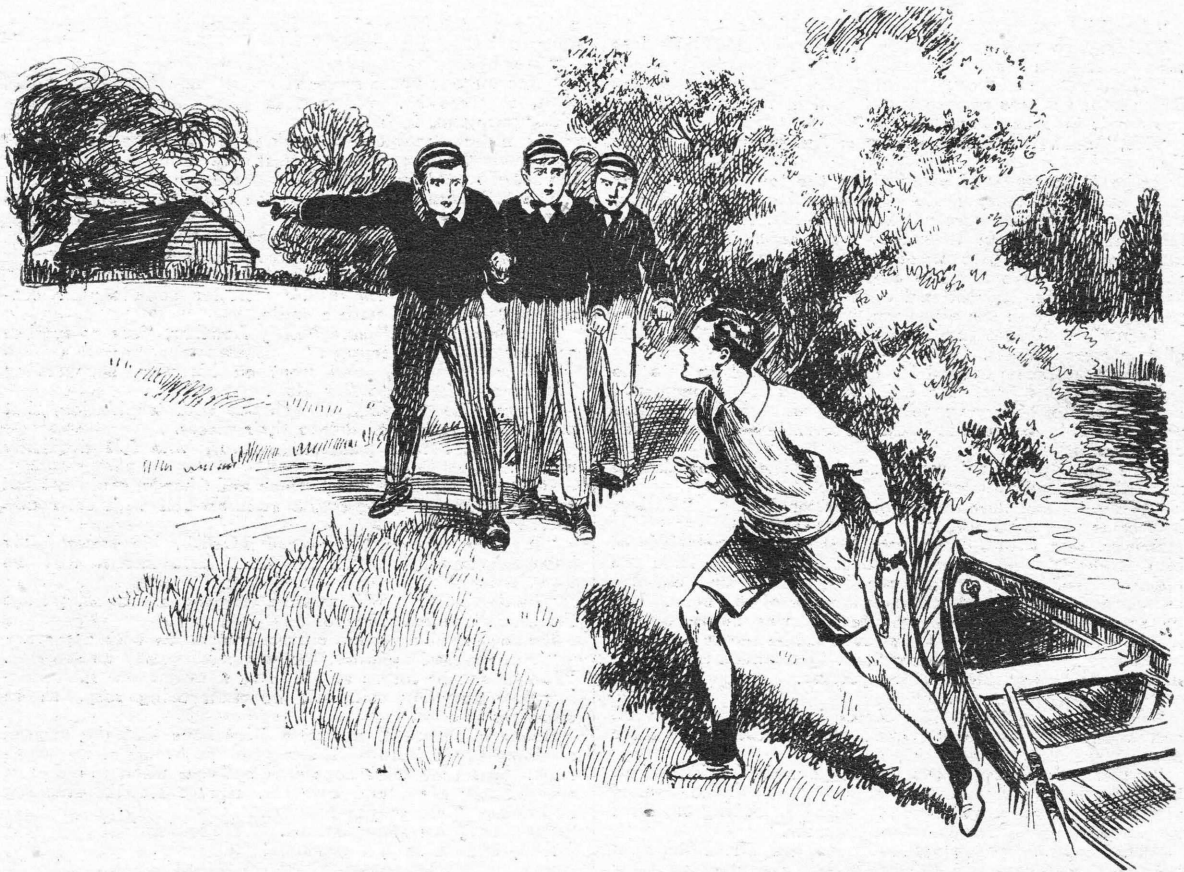
"Talbot!"

Four agitated voices called the name. And four white faces were turned upon the sturdy Shell fellow as he leapt out of the boat.

"Somebody's in the barn?" panted Talbot quickly.

"Yes. It's Ratty! Here's the key!"

Racke thrust the key into Talbot's hand. And Talbot, without a word—though the look he darted at his school-fellows was eloquent of his contempt for their cowardice—



"Talbot!" Four agitated voices hailed Talbot as he leapt out of the boat. "Somebody's in the barn?" panted the Shell fellow quickly. "Yes," said Racke. "It's—it's Ratty! Here's the key!" Talbot, without a word, dashed away in the direction of the blazing barn. (See Chapter 2.)

turned and dashed away in the direction of the blazing barn.

Racke licked his dry lips.

"Too late!" he muttered.

And Talbot himself, as he noted how great a mastery the flames had obtained over the ramshackle structure, believed that he would be too late to save Mr. Ratcliff. But he ran on.

CHAPTER 3.

"Bravo, Talbot!"

TALBOT thrust the key into the lock and turned it, and threw open the door of the barn.

The door had not yet been caught by the flames, though the woodwork was scorched and blistered.

Regardless of the extreme peril to himself, Talbot rushed into the barn.

It was like entering a fiery furnace. The atmosphere was thick and heavy with smoke; the devouring flames leapt and danced all around the wooden walls. The fumes were terrible, overpowering; and Talbot coughed and choked. A wet handkerchief tied round his mouth and nostrils would have been an excellent precaution, but there had been no time to think of that.

On the floor of the barn, a huddled and inert figure, lay Mr. Ratcliff. He had sunk down, overpowered. Fortunately the fire had not caught his clothing, though tongues of flame kept darting out at him from the near-by wall, and it could only have been a matter of moments before they reached their objective.

But the greatest peril came from the roof, where the fire was blazing furiously. A flaming rafter came crashing down even as Talbot rushed in. It missed Mr. Ratcliff's prostrate form by a couple of feet; no more.

The heat and fumes were almost unendurable; but Talbot had no thought of retreat. Stooping swiftly, he raised the unconscious form of the Housemaster into a sitting posture, and then, exerting all his strength, he dragged Mr. Ratcliff towards the doorway. He had only a few yards to go, but to the plucky junior it seemed an immeasurable space. His head was reeling; suffocation gripped him by the throat.

His strength, which, a few moments before on the river, had seemed like the strength of a giant, now seemed to have been suddenly sapped. He felt like a puny weakling tugging at a colossal burden that was far beyond his powers. But he made ground, slowly and painfully, winning nearer and yet nearer to the fresh, pure air.

Another flaming rafter crashed down from above. This time it was Talbot who had the miraculous escape. The rafter fell at his back, between him and the door, and it had missed him by inches. He had felt its hot breath as it fell.

He managed to kick the rafter aside, and then, with a prodigious effort, he heaved Mr. Ratcliff through the doorway, where there was now a barrier of flame, produced by the inrush of air.

Clear of the burning building at last, Talbot staggered a few more yards with his burden, and then sank down, utterly exhausted, on the river bank.

The rescue of Mr. Ratcliff had only been effected in the nick of time. Even as Talbot sprawled in the grass, his face fanned by the cool air, he saw the roof of the barn cave in with a loud crash and a shower of sparks.

The walls of the barn were being rapidly demolished by the flames, and it seemed incredible to Talbot that he had emerged from such a furnace practically unscathed.

But he was safe, and Mr. Ratcliff was safe, and St. Jim's had been spared a terrible tragedy.

Great was the relief of Aubrey Racke and his companions, who had watched the rescue from the clump of trees. They had watched hopelessly at first, fearing that Talbot had gone to his death. It had seemed an age before the gallant junior had emerged with the unconscious form of the Housemaster, and at that welcome sight Racke & Co. drew quick, sobbing breaths of relief.

"Saved!" panted Racke. "Talbot's saved him!"

Mellish glanced towards rescuer and rescued. Then he gave a shiver.

"Ratty looks as if—as if—"

"He's not dead," said Racke. "Unconscious, that's all. Overpowered by the smoke, I expect. Talbot's tryin' to bring him round."

"We'd better cut," muttered Chowle.

Racke hesitated a moment.

"Anythin' we can do, Talbot?" he called out.

Talbot, who was on his knees, leaving Mr. Ratcliff's face with water from the river, looked round and shook his head.

"Then we'll clear off," said Racke. "I don't believe Ratty knows it was us who locked him in the barn. You—you won't give us away, Talbot?"

"No," answered Talbot with a contemptuous curl of the lip.

Racke & Co. sprinted away along the towing-path. They were hoping, as they made their way back to St. Jim's, that their identities were not known to Mr. Ratcliff. They felt tolerably certain that they were safe. Talbot, they knew, would not give them away. The four precious rascals would have felt less easy in their minds had they known that Mr. Ratcliff had seen them leaving the school premises earlier in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, Talbot had succeeded in restoring Mr. Ratcliff to consciousness.

The Housemaster opened his eyes and looked up into the junior's anxious face. He did not speak for a moment; he seemed to be trying to recollect what had happened prior to his losing consciousness. Presently a spasm of fear came over his face.

"It's all right, sir," said Talbot. "There's no danger now. You're quite safe."

"I—I—" murmured the Housemaster faintly. "Talbot, how came you to be here?"

Briefly, and with the modesty that was characteristic of him, Talbot described the rescue of Mr. Ratcliff from the blazing barn. He did not mention Racke & Co., nor did he mention how he had obtained the key of the barn. But he soon discovered that Mr. Ratcliff was aware of the identities of the juniors who had locked him in the building.

"Where are Racke and the others?" demanded the Housemaster, struggling into a sitting posture.

Talbot did not answer.

"Is it possible," said Mr. Ratcliff, "that they ran off and abandoned me to my fate? They must surely have been aware that the barn was on fire?"

"I think they would have helped you, sir," said Talbot, "but they—they seemed sort of stupefied. Racke handed me the key at once, and they stayed here, looking on, until they were satisfied that you were safe, sir."

"The cowardly young rascals!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff in quite his old manner. "They shall pay dearly for their outrageous conduct in locking me in the barn. It was indeed providential, Talbot, that you happened along when you did. One of those wretched boys dropped a lighted cigarette in the straw; that was the origin of the fire. You have made light of your courageous action, Talbot. You spoke as if it was the simplest thing in the world to rescue me from that awful furnace. Yet I can see, from the fact that your hair and eyebrows are scorched, that your peril was extreme. You went through fire and flame for me, my boy, and I am grateful."

Seldom, indeed, had Mr. Ratcliff been known to express gratitude to anybody. It was not in his nature to be grateful for services rendered; yet he could not fail to be keenly sensible of Talbot's bravery. Very few fellows would have faced that fiery ordeal. It had called for heroism of a high order, and Mr. Ratcliff, realising this, was grateful, in so far as a person of his temperament was capable of feeling gratitude.

Talbot assisted the Housemaster to his feet.

"You will be able to walk back to St. Jim's, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, yes. I am anxious to return with all speed, in order that those young rascals may be adequately punished."

"Let me row you up to the boathouse, sir, then it won't be so far for you to walk."

"Thank you, Talbot."

The Housemaster, who presented a far from dignified spectacle, being hatless, with his hair and eyebrows singed, his face smoke-begrimed, despite the recent ablutions, and his raincoat scorched and blackened, clambered into the boat. And Talbot, whose strength had returned to him in some measure, rowed Mr. Ratcliff up-stream. They landed at the boathouse, and covered the remainder of the journey to St. Jim's on foot.

They crossed the playing-fields together, and then Mr. Ratcliff hurried into the House, in order to make himself presentable. Having done so, he hurried away to the Head's study, where he remained some time.

At five o'clock, when most of the St. Jim's fellows, weary from the athletic exertions of the afternoon, were thinking about tea, they were suddenly startled by the loud clanging of the assembly-bell.

Tom Merry & Co., with Jack Blake & Co., were trooping along to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, for tea, when the bell started to clang.

The juniors stopped short in amazement.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's

a jolly queeah time of day for the assembly-bell to wing. What's w'ong, I wondah?"

"Trouble for somebody," said Tom Merry sagely.

"Not for our noble selves, I hope," said Lowther. "But then, it can't be. We've been good little boys lately—giddy paragons, in fact."

"It means trouble—and serious trouble—for somebody," said Jack Blake gravely. "If it was some trifling matter the Head would let it wait till the morning."

The tall form of Kildare of the Sixth loomed up in the passage.

"Everybody in Hall!" he commanded. "Buck up!"

"What's the trouble, Kildare?" inquired Tom Merry.

The captain of St. Jim's shook his head.

"I've no idea," he said. "Better consult your consciences," he added with a smile.

"Our consciences," said Monty Lowther, "are as spotless as Gussy's Sunday topper!"

Kildare laughed, and went on his way, shepherding juniors and fags into Big Hall.

It was with curiosity, though not with trepidation, that most of the fellows filed into their places.

There were four juniors, however, who felt decidedly uneasy.

Racke and Mellish, and Clampe and Chowle, could not fail to connect the ringing of the assembly-bell with their own recent delinquencies.

"It's our funeral," muttered Mellish, his knees fairly knocking together. "Ratty must have known who we were, after all."

"In that case, it will mean a flogging all round, p'raps the sack!" wailed Clampe.

Racke turned upon his craven companion with a snarl.

"Pull yourself together, for goodness' sake!" he snapped.

"It may not be for us at all. But if we go into Hall looking like hangdog criminals we shall bring suspicion on ourselves at once."

Racke himself still nursed a faint hope that the general assembly might have no bearing on the events of the afternoon. But that faint hope was nullified when the juniors entered Big Hall, and saw Mr. Horace Ratcliff standing beside the Head on the platform.

"It's us!" breathed Mellish. "We're for it!"

And, undoubtedly, they were!

CHAPTER 4. A Bombshell!

"SILENCE in Hall!"

Mr. Ratcliff barked out the command, though there was no need for it. The St. Jim's fellows were all in their places, hushed and expectant.

The Head came to the front of the platform, and ran his eye over the assembly. His face was grave and stern.

"My boys," he began, "it is very unusual for a general assembly to be convened at this hour, though in this case the circumstances warrant it. I have to apprise you of a very serious event, which might easily have culminated in tragedy but for the bravery and promptitude displayed by one of your number."

The Head paused. To most of the fellows he seemed to have been speaking in riddles, but there were five fellows present who were able to interpret the doctor's remarks, and four of them shivered in their shoes.

"This afternoon," went on the Head, "four junior boys—whose names are in my possession—visited an old barn on the bank of the river, for the purpose of smoking, and possibly gambling. Mr. Ratcliff saw them leave the school premises, and, surmising that they were bent on mischief, he succeeded in tracing them to the barn. By means of a trick the young rascals contrived to escape, and they had the astounding effrontery to imprison Mr. Ratcliff in the barn."

A murmur of amazement went up from the crowded assembly.

"Apparently," the Head continued, "a lighted cigarette was dropped in the straw, prior to Mr. Ratcliff's imprisonment, with the result that the barn became ablaze, and the Housemaster was abandoned to the mercy of the flames!"

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

The whole school was considerably startled by the Head's disclosures. All eyes were turned upon Mr. Ratcliff, and it was observed that his hair and eyebrows had been singed. It was obvious that the New House master had passed through a very terrible ordeal.

"One would naturally suppose," went on the Head, "that Mr. Ratcliff's captors, on seeing that the barn had caught fire, would have hurried back to his assistance and liberated him. They did nothing of the kind. Although they had the key of the barn in their possession, they remained in-

active. Such a dastardly exhibition of cowardice has not been brought to my knowledge for many a long day."

The Head's voice and look were eloquent of the contempt he felt for Aubrey Rake & Co.

"Mr. Ratcliff would indubitably have met a terrible fate but for the timely arrival on the scene of Reginald Talbot of the Shell Form."

It was now Talbot's turn to be the cynosure of all eyes, and he flushed under the glances of the entire school. Talbot had not desired any publicity; he was no lover of the limelight. On his return to St. Jim's he had not mentioned the rescue of Mr. Ratcliff to anyone, and he had hoped that the Housemaster would be equally reticent. But the Head had been informed, and he was now about to broadcast the details of the junior's gallantry.

"Talbot saved Mr. Ratcliff's life, at imminent peril to his own," said Dr. Holmes. "He entered the blazing barn, where Mr. Ratcliff lay unconscious, and he succeeded—though it must have called for herculean efforts—in dragging the Housemaster through fire and flame to safety."

liked, so far as the school cared, for Mr. Ratcliff was not a popular personage. But when it came to a Housemaster being trapped by flames, and Rake & Co. declining to go to his rescue, it was another matter. The hissing grew in volume as the four wretched youths approached the platform.

The Head eyed them sternly.

"I propose to administer a severe flogging to each of you," he said. Then he motioned to Taggles, the porter. "You will take these boys upon your shoulders, Taggles, Rake first."

The flogging of Aubrey Rake and his companions was not an edifying spectacle. The Head wielded the birch-rod with unusual severity, and the yells and squeals of the victims fairly rang through Big Hall. Clampe, who came last, pleaded shrilly for mercy, saying that his constitution could not stand it. But his constitution had to stand it.

Everybody was glad when the grim business was over, but nobody was so glad as Rake & Co., who were twisting and contorting themselves in varying attitudes of anguish.



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 29—ERNEST LEVISON, OF THE FOURTH FORM.

THE leopard cannot change his spots,
But here is an exception;
For Levison has altered lots,

He's finished with deception.
He used to be, in days gone by,
A waster just like Mellish;
Crafty and cunning, mean and sly,
A fellow few could relish.

The Levison we knew of old
Has changed beyond all knowledge;
He's now a sportsman, keen and bold,
A credit to his college.
Expelled from Greyfriars in the past,
Ruined in reputation,
He has redeemed himself at last,
And earned our admiration.

Cardew and Clive, his chosen chums,
Both welcome his society;
The trio takes whatever comes,
Life in its rich variety,
With sunny smiles and dauntless hearts,

They always stand together,
And like true Britons play their parts
Through fair and cloudy weather.



ERNEST LEVISON,
A Popular Member of the Fourth.

He has a minor in the Third,
Gay-hearted and vivacious;
Of Sister Doris all have heard,
Charming, and slim, and gracious.
Her frequent visits to the school
To see her friends and brothers,
Give great enjoyment, as a rule,
To Gussy, Blake, and others.

When summer brings its magic spell,
And good King Willow's reigning,
Levison plays, and plays right well—
He's had a splendid training.
He is a bowler of the best,
A batsman fine and fearless;
In fact, in every sporting test
He proves himself quite peerless.

We wish him luck in all his ways,
We wish him fame and glory;
May Martin Clifford tell his praise
In many a stirring story.
He plays the game in every sense
With heart and nerve and sinew;
His popularity's immense,
And may it long continue.

NEXT WEEK:—HARRY NOBLE OF THE SHELL.

It was out now, and a loud murmur of admiration showed what St. Jim's thought of Talbot's heroism.

"Bwavo, Talbot!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy involuntarily.

And instantly a cheer rang out, which the Head made no attempt to suppress.

"I will not dwell upon Talbot's heroism, splendid though it was," said the Head, when the applause had died away.

"It is my duty to punish the four boys who were implicated in this affair with the utmost severity, and I shall now proceed to do so. I shall not punish them for their poltroonery in not going to Mr. Ratcliff's assistance. That must be left to their own consciences. But I shall punish them for frequenting the barn for an unlawful purpose, and also for daring to lock a Housemaster in the building."

The four delinquents were shivering with apprehension.

"Rake, Mellish, Chowle, and Clampe! You will stand forward," said the Head.

The unhappy quartette advanced from the centre gangway of Big Hall, and a hiss accompanied their progress. St. Jim's had no use for craven cowards. Rake & Co. could have locked Mr. Ratcliff in a barn as often as they

The Head laid aside the birch at last, and the school awaited his word of dismissal. But it never came.

Dr. Holmes called upon Talbot to stand forward, and that junior reluctantly obeyed.

"Talbot," said the Head, "I desire to congratulate you, in the presence of your schoolfellows, upon the very brave action which you have performed."

And Mr. Ratcliff nodded his head in vigorous approval.

"Thank you, sir," said Talbot quietly. "But it was nothing, really. Any other fellow would have done the same."

Talbot was now in the full glare of the limelight, as it were, and he was not enjoying the situation.

The Head had said that he would not dwell upon the subject of Talbot's heroism, yet he had now resurrected it, and there was a renewed outburst of applause from the assembly. If there was one thing that made Talbot uncomfortable, it was being lionised in this way.

Talbot was about to return to his seat when the Head called him back.

"Stay, Talbot. I have something more to mention. Mr. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 946.

Ratcliff has extolled your conduct to me in the warmest terms, and he is of the opinion that, quite apart from your heroic performance this afternoon, you are a boy of exemplary character. Mr. Ratcliff has asked me if it would be possible to arrange for you to be transferred from the School House to the New House, where your good influence and example would prove highly beneficial to the boys of that House, who have been rather unruly of late."

Talbot gave a startled gasp. And his many friends in the School House gasped, also.

It was some moments before Tom Merry & Co. could grasp the full significance of the Head's statements.

Talbot, one of their leading lights, one of the finest junior-sportsmen at St. Jim's, was to be transferred to the New House!

Figgins & Co. of that House, exchanged joyful glances. They felt that they were in clover. Talbot would be a tremendous acquisition to them, especially now that the inter-House Sports Tournament was about to take place. Even Figgins had to admit that the New House teams were weaker, collectively, than their School House rivals. This was naturally the case, because the School House had a bigger population to choose from.

But now, stiffened by the inclusion of Talbot, the New House would have a splendid chance of winning the Sports Tournament. Talbot's transfer would leave a great gap in the School House, but it would considerably enhance the prospects of the New House. Therefore, Figgins & Co., when they heard the Head's remarks, rejoiced with a great rejoicing.

As for Tom Merry & Co., and Talbot himself, they were nonplussed and dismayed. It would not be putting it too strongly to say that they were simply aghast.

Mr. Ratcliff probably thought he was doing Talbot a great honour in having him transferred from one House to the other. The New House master, being indifferent to sports, and contemptuous of them, could not see what a tragic disaster Talbot's change-over would be to the School House. That phase of the matter had not even crossed Mr. Ratcliff's mind. And, apparently, it had not crossed the mind of Doctor Holmes.

"I have decided to accede to Mr. Ratcliff's request," said the Head. "Talbot, you will be transferred to the New House forthwith."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Talbot.

"You will share the study which is at present occupied by Clampe and Chowle, and you will arrange to move your belongings this evening."

Talbot made a grimace. He felt far from grateful to Mr. Ratcliff for the dubious honour which that gentleman had conferred upon him.

The Head noted Talbot's wry look, and he frowned slightly.

"I trust you have no objection, Talbot, to this arrangement?" he said rather sharply.

"Well, sir, I—I—" Talbot floundered helplessly for a moment. "If you don't mind, sir, I would prefer that my transfer to the New House was postponed until after the sports."

"And why, pray?"

"Because the School House is counting upon my services, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!" came the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from the back of the Hall.

"Be silent, D'Arcy!" said the Head, frowning. "Now that you are a New House boy, Talbot, the School House will naturally be deprived of your services in the sports. But that is of no great importance."

Certainly, such a contingency was of no great importance in the eyes of so majestic a person as the Head. But in the eyes of Tom Merry & Co., and the School House generally, it was of colossal importance.

"I confess I am rather surprised by your attitude, Talbot," said Doctor Holmes. "Mr. Ratcliff has paid you a great compliment in having you transferred to his own House as a model and example to the other boys; yet you appear to accept his compliment churlishly."

Talbot was silent. It seemed quite useless to appeal to the Head to be allowed to remain in the School House, to which all his sympathies and loyalty bound him. The fiat had gone forth, and from this moment Talbot was to be a New House fellow—a comrade of Figgins & Co., and Dick Redfern & Co.

"Have you anything further to say, Talbot?" inquired the Head.

"No, sir."

"Very well. The school will now dismiss."

The assembly dispersed, and the St. Jim's fellows filed out of Big Hall, the juniors of both Houses being full of this latest sensation—the transfer of Talbot from School House to New House, at the behest of Mr. Horace Ratcliff.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 946.

CHAPTER 5.

Talbot of the New House!

"WORDS fail me!" said Tom Merry in deep disgust. "Same here!" growled Manners. "Talk about a giddy bombshell!" remarked Monty Lowther.

After their dismissal from Big Hall, the Terrible Three of the Shell had adjourned to their study for tea. Jack Blake & Co were with them.

The amazing announcement that Talbot was to change Houses had knocked the juniors all of a heap, as it were. They had not got over it yet. Indeed, it was a calamity that took some getting over.

Words failed Tom Merry and Manners; but they did not fail Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who proceeded to give his views on the subject with unusual warmth.

"I considah, deah boys, that Mr. Watcliff has acted in a vewy high-handed mannah!" he exclaimed. "On the eve of the Sports Tournament, he has awwanged to have old Talbot transferred to the New House. Watty has no wight whatevah to wob us of one of our best men. It's disgwacefuhl!"

"Scandalous!" agreed Jack Blake.

"Wonder what Talbot himself thinks about it?" murmured Herries.

"He's not happy about it," said Tom Merry. "You could see that by the way he spoke to the Head: Talbot's a School House fellow, heart and soul, and now he's got to tear himself up by the roots, so to speak, and be transplanted in the New House. We shall miss him—badly."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not more than I shall miss you fellows," came a quiet voice from the doorway.

It was Talbot himself. His handsome face was clouded over as he looked into Study No. 10.

"Hallo! Come right in, old chap," said Tom Merry. "You must have tea with us before you swop Houses."

Talbot came in. The accommodation in the study was rather cramped, but Digby promptly vacated his seat at the table, and took his tea over to the window-sill, thus making room for the newcomer.

"Talbot, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "we were just discussin' this wotten affair. We considah that Mr. Watcliff has no wight to interfeah in this way—no wight whatevah!"

Talbot smiled faintly.

"I suppose Ratty thought he was doing me a good turn, as a reward for lugging him out of the burning barn," he said. "The Head seemed to think that I ought to have gone down on my knees and sobbed out my gratitude to Ratty. Matter of fact, I don't feel at all grateful. I was happy here—we were all a very happy family, in fact. And now I've got to hump my belongings over to the New House, and become a New House fellow."

"It's rotten!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Why couldn't Ratty leave well alone?"

"And the Sports are just going to start, too," growled Blake. "That's where it hits us so jolly hard. We shall be weakened, and the New House strengthened, by Talbot's transfer. I suppose you'll turn out for the New House, Talbot?"

Talbot nodded.

"Now that I'm a New House fellow, I feel bound to give my support to Figgins—if he wants it," he said.

"Of course he wants it! You'll be the best man the New House has got—better than Figgy himself."

"Draw it mild, Blake!"

"Blake is statin' facts," said Arthur Augustus. "Com-pawisons are sometimes wathah odious, but there is no doubt that you are a bettah sportsman than Figgins, good man though he is."

"Hear, hear!"

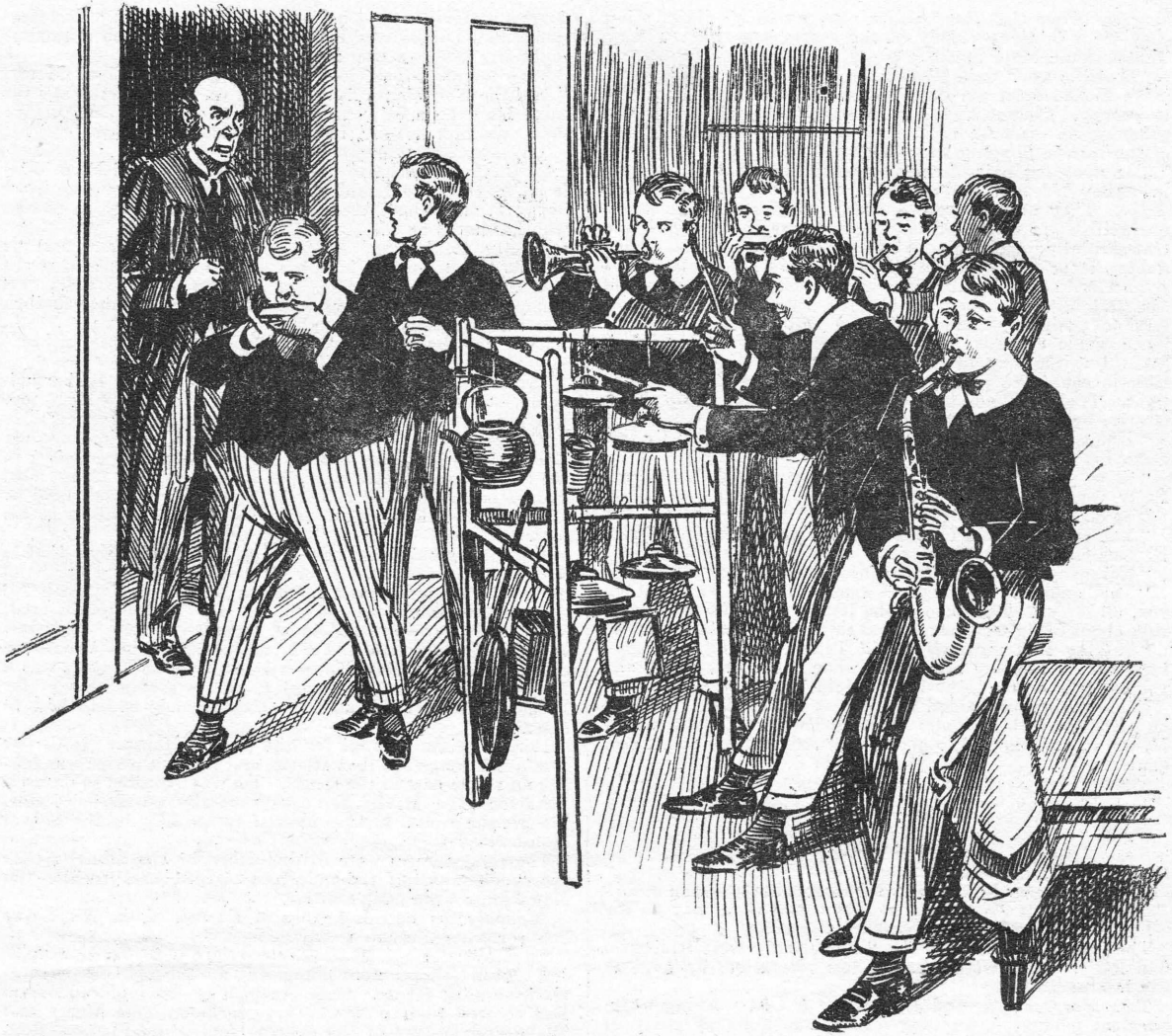
Now that Talbot was going, the School House fellows realised his worth to the full. They had always had a high opinion of him, as an all-round sportsman; but his value seemed greater than ever now that they were about to lose his services.

"I suppose," said Tom Merry slowly, "it would be no use appealing to Ratty to get the Head to change his decision, and let you stay here, Talbot?"

Talbot shook his head.

"I showed the Head quite plainly that I wasn't keen on the transfer," he said. "But he seems to have got the idea that I shall be a sort of moral uplift to the New House—a pattern and a shining example. Of course, that's all tommyrot. There's nothing goody-goody about me. But Ratty has persuaded the Head that I shall be an influence for good in the New House; and there you are."

"We shall miss you most awfully," said Manners. "Everybody's feeling down-in-the-mouth about it—except Figgins & Co., of course."



"Go it, you fellows!" roared Redfern. "We—oh!" Reddy broke off abruptly as he became aware that Mr. Ratcliff was standing in the doorway. "You young rascals!" thundered the master of the New House. "What is the meaning of this disgraceful disturbance?" The musicians blinked at one another sheepishly. (See Chapter 7.)

"Cheer up!" said Talbot with a smile. "I'm not going a hundred miles away, you know."

"You'll come ovah an' have tea with us sometimes, deah boy?" queried Arthur Augustus.

"Of course!"

In spite of this assurance on Talbot's part, it was a far from cheery tea-party in Tom Merry's study.

The meal was being concluded in silence, when there was a tramping of feet in the passage, and three smiling juniors looked in. They were Figgins and Kerr and Wynn of the New House.

"We've come to collect our new recruit," explained Figgins cheerfully.

"Lucky old New House!" said Monty Lowther.

Figgins grinned.

"It isn't often we have anything to thank old Ratty for," he said. "But now that he's arranged for Talbot to join us, we could fall on the old buffer's neck and embrace him."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "Talbot will be a rod in pickle for us, and no mistake. We shall lick you fellows to a frazzle in the sports!"

"Weally, Wynn! Even with Talbot's assistance, we shall make you fight evewy inch of the way!" declared D'Arcy.

And the School House fellows nodded grimly. They had lost a good man; but they were still as enthusiastic as ever to defeat their New House rivals.

"Ready, Talbot?" inquired Kerr.

Talbot rose to his feet.

"Suppose I'd better be going," he said. "I've packed my things. Will you fellows give me a hand with them?"

"Certainly!" grinned Figgins.

Talbot turned to his old chums of the School House.

"I won't say good-bye to you fellows," he said. "I'm hoping that I shall be able to get back to the School House, somehow. If I see half a chance, I shall jump at it. So I'll make it au revoir, and not good-bye!"

"Au wevoir, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, gripping Talbot warmly by the hand.

"So-long, old chap!" said Tom Merry, following suit.

Talbot shook hands all round, and then he left the study with Figgins & Co. In his own study his belongings were packed and ready for removal, and Gore and Skimpole, his studymates, were waiting to say good-bye to him. They did not relish the thought of losing Talbot, any more than Tom Merry & Co. did.

Figgins and Kerr shouldered Talbot's trunk between them, and Fatty Wynn carried his suit-case, and Talbot brought up the rear of the procession, carrying his treasured and intimate possessions.

The Shell passage was flanked with fellows, and they looked on in silent sympathy as the procession passed.

It was almost without precedent for a junior to be transferred from one House to the other; but such a transfer was now in progress, and the School House juniors felt it very keenly. Had the transferred fellow been Aubrey Racke, or Baggy Trimble, or one of the nonentities, they would have suffered it gladly; but it was Talbot who was going—a fellow to whom they were warmly attached, a fellow who shared with Tom Merry the topmost pinnacle of popularity. It was as big a blow to the Lower School as the sudden departure of Eric Kildare would have been to the Sixth Form.

There was gloom in the School House ranks; but Figgins & Co. were in high glee. They were sorry for Talbot, for

they could see that the transfer was not to his liking; but they were thinking chiefly of the sports, and what a boon Talbot would be to them.

"Here we are!" said Figgins.

He kicked open the door of the study which Talbot was to occupy. Clampe and Chowle were there, squirming and groaning on the sofa, and recovering slowly from the effects of the terrific flogging they had received.

The wretched pair of rascals glared at Talbot as he came in. They resented the fact that they were to share their study. They would have preferred a black sheep like Racke or Mellish for a study-mate. Talbot was too straight, too transparently honourable, to suit Clampe and Chowle. They did not seem to realise what they owed to Talbot. If he had not arrived at the blazing barn in the nick of time, and saved Mr. Ratcliff's life, they would have been placed in a most terrible position—branded for the rest of their lives as unspeakable cowards, who had abandoned a master to his fate. But the warped and crooked minds of Clampe and Chowle could not be expected to see matters in their true light. They said nothing to Talbot; but they showed him, clearly, by their looks, that he was not welcome.

"Thanks, you fellows!" said Talbot, as Figgins & Co. set down his belongings.

"Wish you were coming into our study, Talbot," said Fatty Wynn.

"So do I; but it can't be helped."

"You're turning out for the New House on Monday?" said Figgins eagerly.

"Naturally, now that I'm a New House fellow."

"That's good! I thought I should be able to count on you, all serene. But some of the fellows said that you would sulk about being transferred, and stand down for the sports."

"Sulking isn't my style," said Talbot, smiling. "I shall turn out on Monday afternoon, when the sports start, and you can rely on me to pull my weight."

George Figgins nodded with great satisfaction, and then he withdrew with his chums, leaving Talbot, now of the New House, to unpack, and to get himself acclimatised to his new quarters.

CHAPTER 6.

A Brilliant Start!

"ONCE more into the breach, dear friends, once more!" Monty Lowther hurled that Shakespearean quotation at his chums, as they made their way to the playing-fields on Monday afternoon.

The junior sportsmen of the School House were feeling in fine fettle. They were more or less reconciled, by now, to the loss of Talbot.

Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co., wearing warm sweaters over their running-vests, made a merry party as they trooped down to the playing-fields.

It was a perfect spring afternoon, and the wide expanse of greensward was bathed in sunshine.

A great crowd had turned out to witness the opening of the sports. Even the Head had deserted his beloved Thueydides for the afternoon, and he reclined in a deck-chair beside Mr. Railton, smiling and chatting.

Other distinguished visitors were Miss Marie Rivers, the charming school nurse; and D'Arcy's cousin Ethel, very winsome and winning in a neat tennis-frock; and Levison's sister Doris. The girls were together, being on the very best of terms, and they waved cheerily to the School House athletes as the latter came up.

"Top of the afternoon, deah gals!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, lifting his hand to remove his topper, and then suddenly remembering that he was hatless. "It's turned out wippin'ly for the sports, what?"

"Glorious!" said Cousin Ethel. "But I'm sorry to hear you have lost Talbot. Marie has been telling me about it."

"Yaas; it will be wathah a handicap for us," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But I fancy we shall win the wunnin' waces all wight. You see, I happen to be in extwa-special form this afternoon. I am hopin' to bag several of the events myself, an' then the loss of Talbot will hardly be noticed."

"Ass!" murmured Tom Merry, sotto voce.

And the three girls smiled. They had heard Arthur

Augustus talk like that before. Gussy was really a first-class sportsman, but he was inclined to be a trifle too optimistic regarding his own chances.

"It's frightful luck, losing old Talbot," said Tom Merry. "And the New House have got him on their side; that's the rub. He'll be a jolly valuable man to Figgins & Co. We shall miss him awfully, in spite of what Gussy says."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I think it's a shame that Mr. Ratcliff should have interfered in this way," said Marie Rivers. "Talbot was quite happy in the School House, and there was really no reason why he should be transferred."

"Ratty thinks that Talbot is a giddy paragon, and he expects him to give a high moral tone to the New House," said Lowther. "Of course, we all know that old Talbot's a trump; but it's expecting rather too much of him, to turn him into a blessed reformer!"

"It's not the sort of role that appeals to Talbot, either," said Miss Marie.

"Here come the New House fellows!" said Blake suddenly. "And Kildare and Darrell are coming along, too. Darrell's the official starter, and Kildare's the judge."

Figgins & Co. looked very fit and cheery as they came up. Talbot was with them, and he was as cheerful as possible, in the circumstances. He was installed in the New House now, and he had decided to make the best of it. There would be no sense in holding aloof and sulking, like Achilles in his tent.

The girls greeted the new arrivals very cordially. Cousin Ethel had a warm corner for George Figgins, and her hand nestled in his for quite a moment. In a way, Cousin Ethel wanted the School House to win the sports tournament, because her own illustrious cousin, Arthur Augustus, belonged to that house. And yet she would not have been disappointed at a New House victory, because Figgins was a fine sportsman, and it would be a refreshing change for Figgy's men to finish on top. Usually they had to bow to defeat.

Doris Levison was all for the School House. Both her brothers belonged to that House, and Levison major was taking an active part in the sports. He was expected to do well.

As for Miss Marie, she was naturally on Talbot's side, though she would have preferred to see him in the School House colours.

The rival Houses were distinguished by the School House sportsmen wearing red-and-white striped vests, while the New House wore plain white.

Suddenly the booming voice of Darrell of the Sixth was heard, calling through a megaphone:

"Entrants for the hundred yards race will now line up!"

A dozen fellows were competing in the opening event—six from each House. Only the pick of the junior sprinters had entered their names. These included Tom Merry and Blake and D'Arcy of the School House, and Figgins, Redfern, and Talbot of the New House.

There was a flutter of excitement as the competitors toed the line, and Darrell poised his starting-pistol.

"Go it, School House!"

"New House for ever!"

"Tom Merry's the man!"

"Rats! It's Figgy's race!"

There was a false start, Arthur Augustus, in his enthusiasm, anticipating the starter.

Darrell called him back, and there was a chuckle from the onlookers.

"Gussy believes in taking time by the forelock!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, who had galloped a dozen yards, came back to the mark with a burning face.

Crouching low, finger-tips lightly touching the turf, the runners awaited the pistol-shot.

Crack!

They were off. The clamour of voices had died away, and there was a breathless hush as the runners bounded forward, like greyhounds from the slips.

It was a short, sharp race, with a desperately close finish. It seemed, to the onlookers, that Tom Merry and Figgins and Talbot and D'Arcy all breasted the tape simultaneously. But Kildare of the Sixth, standing in line with the tape, was able to "place" the runners.

"Figgins wins!" he announced.

And there was a roar from the New House partisans.

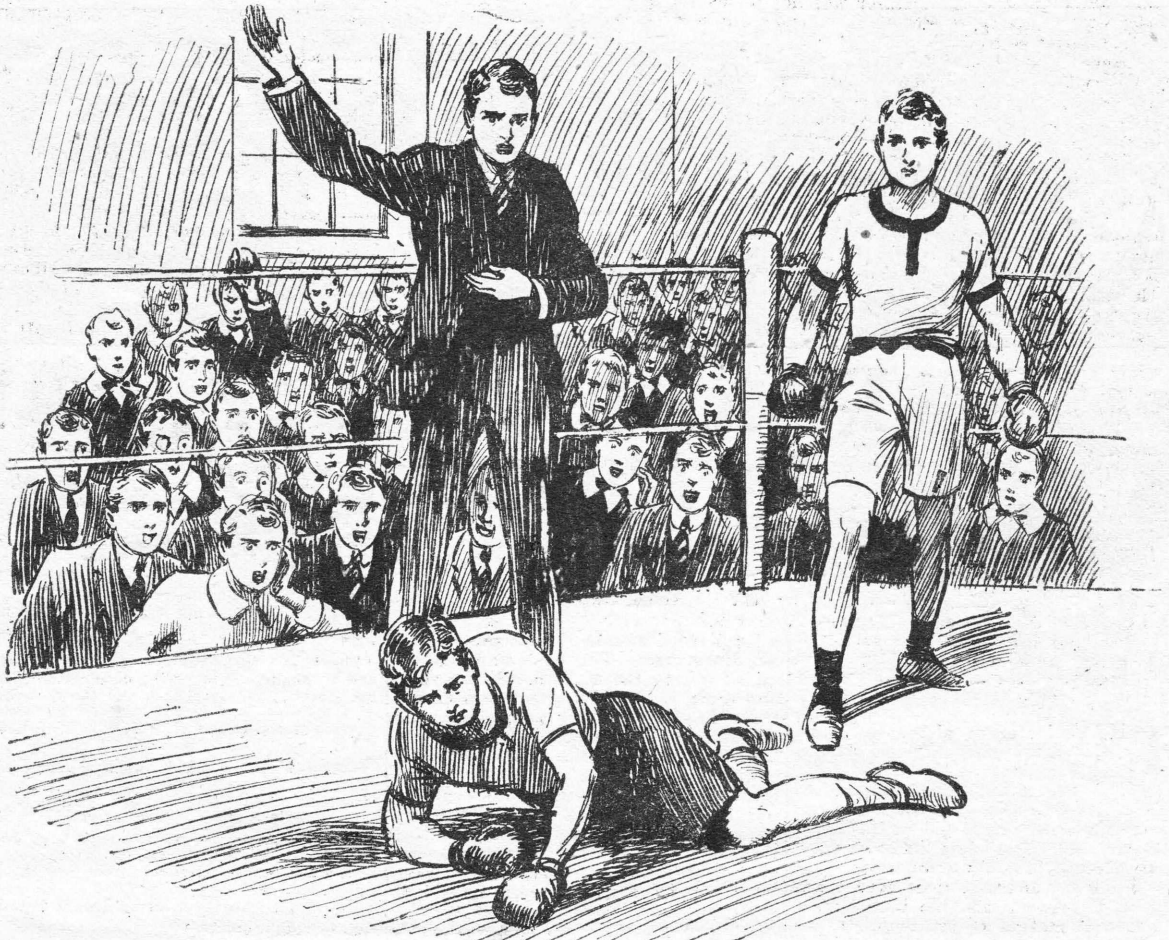
"Well, run, Figgy!"

It had been a near thing—a matter of inches only—but the long-legged Figgins had done the trick. Figgy flushed with pleasure as he recognised Cousin Ethel's voice among the applauders.

"First blood to the New House!" said Fatty Wynn, clapping his chum on the back. "I knew you'd work the oracle, Figgy; I felt it in my bones. Now for the quarter-mile!"

ANSWERS

Every Saturday.....PRICE 2:



The New House boxer tried gamely to struggle to his feet, and Tom Merry stepped back a pace. But Talbot's efforts were unavailing, and Kildare continued to count. "Seven—eight—nine—out! Merry wins!" "Hurrah!" yelled the juniors at the ringside. "School House for ever!" (See Chapter 8.)

This was a sterner affair, and Figgins had a harder row to hoe. After a "breather," the quarter-milers lined-up, and soon they were speeding round the running-track.

The favourite for this event was Tom Merry. It was Tom's distance, and the School House supporters expected great things of him.

The captain of the Shell ran a splendid race, and led the field for three parts of the distance. But he was unexpectedly challenged, in the last lap, by Dick Redfern. Reddy drew level, and there was a neck-and-neck struggle for supremacy. Tom Merry pelted furiously over the turf, but he had met his match—and his master. After a final burst, Redfern fairly hurled himself at the outstretched tape, to win a capital race by a yard.

It was a surprise result, for Tom Merry had often beaten Redfern over the same distance. But Reddy had been practising very hard of late. He had made up his mind to beat all opposition, and he had succeeded.

"New House again!" chortled Fatty Wynn. "This is great! Keep the pot a-boiling, you fellows!"

There were to be seven events in all, and the House which won the majority would be credited with one point. Later, there would come the cycle race, the boxing tournament, the water-polo match at Wayland Baths, the boat-race, the Marathon race, and, finally, the football match. In each of these events one point was to be awarded to the successful House; and the House which secured the greatest aggregate of points would, of course, win the Sports Tournament.

The next item on the programme was the hurdle-race. The hurdles had already been erected, and they were formidable obstacles to clear.

The School House sportsmen were in rather a desperate position, their rivals having bagged the first two events. Tom Merry's expression was unusually grim as he lined up for the hurdles.

The partisans of the School House were standing in glum groups. They were not at all satisfied with the way things were going.

But they brightened up considerably when Tom Merry, clearing the hurdles in great style, romped home a good winner, with Talbot taking second place. Tom had made amends for his failure in the quarter-mile.

Now came the long jump; and there were many brilliant performances. Levison of the School House crowned them all with a wonderful leap, and his sister Doris clapped her hands delightedly.

"That was splendid!" she exclaimed. "Well done, Ernest!"

Each House had won two events now, and matters were warming up.

In the high jump, which immediately followed, Talbot scored his success of the afternoon.

Kangaroo of the School House, whose nickname suggested that he was an adept at jumping, gave Talbot a deal of trouble. The bar was gradually placed higher and higher, until Talbot and the Australian were the only two left in. It was with a prodigious leap that Talbot finally claimed the honours.

New House were on top again, leading by three events to two.

Only a couple more events remained to be decided—the mile and the tug-of-war. But before the mile was run there was a welcome interval of half an hour, during which Tom Merry & Co. chatted with their girl chums.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy mopped his perspiring brow with a silk handkerchief.

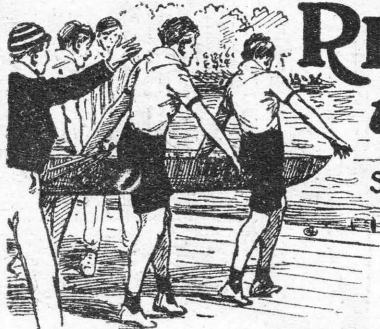
"We are in wathah a bad way, deah gals," he remarked. "Those New House beggahs are displayin' remarkable form. I fully intended to win the hundred yards myself, but that false start of mine put me in wathah a fluffah!"

"Quite so," said Cousin Ethel, smiling. "But what about the quarter-mile, Arthur? I expected to see you fighting out the finish in that."

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Ahem! I—I should certainly have bagged the quartah

(Continued on page 16.)



RIVALS of the RHYL!

Some Historic Tussles on the Rhyl.

BY ERIC KILDARE.

THE senior crews of St. Jim's and Greyfriars are very old rivals, having done battle on the river on over a hundred occasions.

The first boat-race on record, between the two schools, was rowed on the River Rhyl in 1322. The boats, in those days, were clumsy tubs by comparison with the light and graceful craft of modern times. Greyfriars won the race by the substantial margin of six lengths; but St. Jim's took ample revenge the following year, when they shot past the winning-post eight lengths ahead of their rivals.

IN 1840 the race provided an exciting finish, the crews dead-heating after a great struggle. It was claimed by a good many people that the St. Jim's boat just had its nose in front at the finish; but the umpire—an impartial gentleman who had no connection with either of the schools—gave the verdict as a dead-heat, and his decision, of course, had to be accepted.

IN 1877, the day of the annual boat-race was wild and blustering, and the Rhyl was swollen with recent rains. The authorities were dubious about permitting the race to be rowed; but the rival crews were so keen that it was eventually decided to hold the event. The Greyfriars boat came to grief at the first bend in the river. A powerful gust of wind smote it as the oarsmen were taking the turn. The boat heeled over, and the crew was precipitated into the water, from which they were rescued with ropes and boathooks. St. Jim's had only to finish the course, at their leisure, in order to win; but, twenty yards from the winning-post, the boat became water-logged, and the race was declared void. It was, however, re-rowed on the River Sark, near Greyfriars, and the Friars snatched a narrow victory.

THE race of 1901 will always be remembered, because of a diabolical

attempt to frustrate the chances of the St. Jim's crew. The boathouse was invaded during the night before the race, and some of the oars were sawn nearly through. This was the work of a shady character in Rylcombe, who had betted heavily against St. Jim's—the favourites—winning. The plot was not discovered until the race was actually in progress; but as soon as several of the St. Jim's oars snapped, the authorities realised that something was seriously wrong, and they abandoned the race. Inquiries were set on foot, and, by means of clever detective work, the rascal who had tampered with the oars was discovered and brought to book. He paid dearly for his dastardly offence.

THE most exciting race in which I have taken an active part was rowed last year. Greyfriars brought their strongest crew over, and we were also at full strength, and in great form. It was a curious race. Greyfriars went off with great dash, Wingate, their stroke, setting a terrific pace. We quickly found ourselves several lengths behind, but I refused to get flustered, and continued to maintain the same steady rate of progress. When Greyfriars reached the half-way mark, the margin between the two boats was considerable. The on-lookers seemed very glum, and considered the race to be "all over, bar shouting." But the Friars could not keep up that pace indefinitely. They slackened, and at least two members of their crew had rowed themselves out. It was then that I called upon my men for a great spurt. Our boat fairly leapt through the water in pursuit of our rivals, who were now struggling gamely towards the winning-post. Lots of people thought I had left our spurt till too late. But, rowing strongly, and in perfect unison, we drew abreast of our rivals, and then shot to the front in the nick of time, to win an intensely exciting race by barely a quarter of a length. May this year's race prove equally exciting!

SPECIAL

"EASTER HOLIDAY"

Supplement, The Week After Next!



By Tom Merry.

ROW, brothers—row!" That is our cheery slogan when we embark upon the silvery Rhyl for our annual boating practice. The boat-racing season is looming ahead, and we shall soon be trying conclusions with the stalwarts of Greyfriars and the oarsmen of Rookwood in order to see which school can claim the proud title of "head of the river."

Very few sports call for such a degree of strenuous muscular effort as rowing in a boat-race. Only the hardest fellows can take up this sport and excel at it.

It is one thing to take a boat out for pleasure and to glide smoothly downstream; it is quite another thing to row a mile at top speed, straining heart and nerve and sinew in the endeavour to be the first past the winning-post.

We have several boat-crews at St. Jim's. The senior crew, stroked by popular Eric Kildare, looks like being as strong as ever this year. Kildare seems to adapt himself quite naturally to every form of sport, and as a rowing-man he claims great respect. Darrell is good, too, and Monteith and Rusden and Langton are not far behind him. In fact, the senior crew, with young Wally D'Arcy as cox, will take some whacking.

The junior crew—of which I have the honour to be captain—will not be definitely selected until after the trials. Form varies a good deal, and there will be keen competition to get into the "eight." I should say that the "certainties" will be Talbot, Figgins, Blake, Redfern, and myself. The other three places in the boat will be strenuously worked for, and the choice will be made from Manners, Lowther, D'Arcy, Kerr, Wynn, Noble, Clive, and possibly Cardew—if the last-named chooses to take a serious interest in rowing this term.

There will be the usual outcry from fellows whose claims to be in the junior eight are ignored. George Alfred Grundy will have something to say, and his bellowing voice will demand to know why he has been overlooked. Grundy is a powerful and vigorous oarsman, but he has no idea of keeping time or rhythm, and sheer brute strength is not in itself sufficient to make a fellow a good oarsman.

Baggy Trimble will be among the wailers, but we should have to be in a very bad way before we called upon the services of that flabby Falstaff. His huge bulk would probably sink the boat! In any case, Baggy has no more idea of rowing than the man in the moon. A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, and Baggy would collapse in a heap at the bottom of the boat, with all the stuffing knocked out of him!

Here's to the boys of the river! And may both the St. Jim's Eights, senior and junior, cover themselves with glory during the boating season!

TOM MERRY.



BURNING HIS BOATS!

A Laughable Narrative of St Jim's.

By CLIFTON DANE.

"I've burnt my boats!" said Kildare.

"Not really, old man?" said Darrell.

"Yes, I've burnt my boats, and it's useless to discuss the matter any further."

Baggy Trimble, hovering outside Kildare's study, with his ear glued to the keyhole, gave a violent start. He was amazed—he was almost horrified.

What did Kildare mean by saying, so distinctly and deliberately, that he had burnt his boats?

There was only one interpretation which Baggy Trimble's obtuse mind could put upon that statement. Baggy took the words at their literal meaning. He assumed that Kildare, the captain of the senior crew at St. Jim's, had paid a visit to the boathouse and destroyed the boats by fire!

It was the eve of the annual boat-race between St. Jim's and Greyfriars. There was a good deal of apprehension in the ranks of the Sixth as to the probable outcome of that epic struggle. St. Jim's had a weakened crew, owing to the sudden illness of Monteith, and an unexpected summons home for Langton. Both Monteith and Langton were fine oarsmen, and they would be sorely missed. Greyfriars would be at full strength, so it looked like being a "walk-over" for them. This was the general opinion in the St. Jim's Sixth, and some of the seniors had the wind up pretty badly.

Baggy Trimble remained at the keyhole for another minute, but no further conversation passed between Kildare and Darrell.

The fat junior detached his ear from the aperture and rolled away down the passage. Kildare's words still rang in his ears.

"I've burnt my boats!"

The senior crew had two boats. One was for practice purposes, the other for the actual race. And Kildare was the custodian of the boats, and was responsible for their safety.

And he had burnt them! That was only too clear to Baggy Trimble.

Fearing defeat on the morrow, Kildare had taken the drastic step of destroying the boats, so that the boat-race between the two schools would be "off."

It was not the sort of action that a fellow like Kildare might be expected to commit; but he had confessed his guilt with his own lips to his friend Darrell. And Trimble had heard him.

Baggy felt that something would have to be done about it. Burning the school's boats was a serious matter. The fact that the outrage had been committed by the captain of St. Jim's only served to heighten the enormity.

Baggy Trimble pondered over the matter for some time; then he rolled along to Mr. Railton's study. The

Housemaster was just coming out as Baggy approached.

"If you please, sir—"

"Well, Trimble?"

"Something very serious has happened, sir, and I feel it my duty to bring it to your notice."

Mr. Railton looked grave.

"I will listen to no tale-bearing, Trimble," he said. "If you have some petty complaint to make against one of your schoolfellows I have no desire to hear it. But if something of really serious import has occurred—"

"It has, sir. Kildare has committed arsenic!"

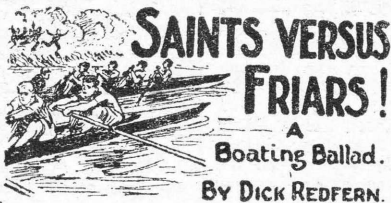
"W-w-what?" gasped the Housemaster.

"I heard him say so, sir, to Darrell. He said it twice, so there can't be a mistake. He's committed arsenic."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"There is no such thing as committing arsenic, you stupid boy! Do you mean to imply that Kildare has swallowed arsenic?"

"Nunno, sir; you can't swallow



SAINTS VERSUS FRIARS!

A Boating Ballad.

By DICK REDFERN.

THE rivals meet on the rippling Rhyl,
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Into the tussle with right good will!

Row up, you fellows—row up!
Merrily sweep the flashing blades,
Every fellow his pluck parades,
To the cheering throng of boys and maids—
Row up, you fellows—row up!

Merry and Manners, and Talbot, too—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Grimly resolved to dare and do—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Open your shoulders, heroes all,
Manfully strive, whatever befall
Hark to the clear and clarion call:
"Row up, you fellows—row up!"

The Friars are gaining, inch by inch—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Never a man will falter or finch—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Pull as you never pulled before!
Row as your fathers rowed of yore,
Some forty years ago or more—
Row up, you fellows—row up!

What if your heart seems like to burst?
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Self's a cipher, and school comes first—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Swiftly, surely, steady and strong,
See how the long boat leaps along!
Mid frantic shouts from the eager throng:
"Row up, you fellows—row up!"

Fast and fierce, and the goal's in sight!
Row up, you fellows—row up!
Victors now in that hard-fought fight—
Row up, you fellows—row up!
So on the wider stream of life,
Where the fight is fiercer and storms are rife,
Square your shoulders, nor shirk the strife—
Row up, you fellows—row up!

arsenic. You can only commit it with a lighted match, sir?"

"Bless my soul! Can it be possible, Trimble, that you mean arson—the wanton destruction of property by fire?"

"Yessir; that's it, sir! Kildare has burnt the school boats."

"What?"

"I suppose he was panicky about tomorrow's boat-race, sir."

Mr. Railton's frown deepened.

"I cannot credit your wild story, Trimble, for a single instant," he said sternly. "Kildare would never commit such an action—would never contemplate it, even!"

"Oh, really, sir, he told Darrell quite distinctly that he had burnt the boats—told him twice, sir—"

"Follow me, Trimble!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

And he led the way to Kildare's study. The captain of St. Jim's was there. He and Darrell were sitting moodily before the fire.

The seniors rose respectfully to their feet as Mr. Railton entered.

"Kildare," said the Housemaster, "Trimble has come to me with an incredible story that you have burnt the boats belonging to the school!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Kildare.

"It is scarcely necessary to ask you to refute Trimble's allegation," said Mr. Railton. "but in justice to him I will do so. Of course, his story is quite without foundation?"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

Baggy Trimble blinked at Kildare from the doorway.

"But—but you distinctly told Darrell, Kildare, that you had burnt your boats!" he stuttered. "I heard you."

Kildare looked bewildered for a moment. Then he burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! You silly fat cuckoo! I suppose you were listening at the keyhole?" Kildare turned to Mr. Railton.

"I certainly told Darrell that I had burnt my boats, sir—not in the literal sense, of course! Darrell was urging me to include a certain fellow in the crew, but I told him it couldn't be done. I had made my selections and pledged myself to abide by them. I had, in fact, burnt my boats, as the saying goes."

"Oh!"

Mr. Railton smiled—a smile of enlightenment. But the smile had vanished when he turned to the dismayed Baggy Trimble.

"Listening at keyholes, Trimble, is a sly and contemptible habit. You will take a hundred lines, and bring them to my study before calling over."

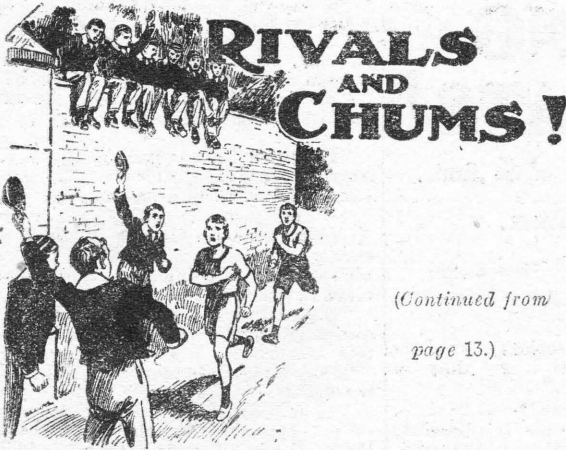
"Oh, crumbs!"

"That is all, Trimble!"

"Then—then Kildare hasn't actually burnt the boats, sir?"

"Of course not, you ridiculous boy! To burn one's boats is to make a decision from which there is no retracting, and to stake everything upon that decision. Kildare employed the phrase metaphorically, as anyone less stupid than yourself would have realised."

Mr. Railton made a gesture of dismissal, and Baggy Trimble rolled disconsolately away, to get busy with his impot. Baggy saw, next day, that the boats had not been burnt; in fact, one of them, ably stroked by Kildare, was the first to flash past the winning-post, a quarter of a length in front of the Greyfriars craft. Despite their weakened crew St. Jim's rowed a glorious race, adding yet another success to their brilliant record in the world of sport.



(Continued from
page 13.)

mile, only Wedfern an' some of the othals happened to win a bit fastah!" he explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't go in for the hurdles, or the long and high jumps," said Cousin Ethel.

"No, deah gal. You see, I am holdin' myself in weserve for the mile. I am fully wesolved to win the mile. The School House is in a tight cornah, an' it is up to me to extricate it!"

"You won't finish in the first three, you dummy!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"The mile's my own pet pigeon," said the Yorkshire junior. "I'm going all out to win, too."

"So long as a School House fellow wins it, all well and good!" said Tom Merry. "But if the New House bag the mile that will give them the majority of the events."

"Set your mind at west, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I have already won the wace in anticipation, an' pwesently I hope to win it in fact."

But Arthur Augustus did not get his heart's desire. He certainly ran a very gallant race; and had the distance been a trifle shorter nobody could have caught him. But Gussy tired in the last lap, and along came Blake and Talbot, running superbly, to fight out a keen finish. Both made a terrific final spurt, but Blake's dogged Yorkshire spirit stood him in good stead now, and he breasted the tape a second in advance of his New House rival. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy struggled gamely into third place.

The rival Houses were level now; and everything devolved upon the final event—the tug-of-war. Here the New House had a big advantage. That hefty and muscular junior, Fatty Wynn, was on their side; and Fatty was a tug-of-war team in himself—almost!

There were three pulls to decide the issue. New House won the first, with consummate ease, and their opponents came tumbling and stumbling over the line.

School House then rallied, to win the second pull after a desperate set-to.

The third pull was of longer duration, and far more thrilling than its predecessors. First one team gained the advantage, and then the other; and the rivals swayed and strained upon the rope, exerting every ounce of strength in that great struggle for supremacy.

A wildly excited crowd surrounded the grassy arena.

"Pull, you fellows—pull!"

"Stick it, School House! You've got 'em groggy!"

"Now, New House! Put your beef into it, Fatty Wynn! Heave—heave—heave!"

Three mighty heaves, three Herculean efforts, and the exhausted School House gave ground. Slowly, but none the less surely, they capitulated; and finally they toppled and sprawled over the line, and sank down gasping in the grass, outrivalled and beaten. And a mighty cheer acclaimed the New House victory.

The first stage of the Sports Tournament was over; and the New House had secured a point. Weary but cheery, Figgins & Co. wended their way into the House for tea. More weary, and a trifle less cheery, Tom Merry & Co. followed with their girl friends.

Naturally, the School House fellows were disappointed at having lost the first round. But there was a long way to go yet; and Tom Merry & Co. were hopeful that a bad beginning might mean a triumphant ending.

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CHAPTER 7.

A Certain Liveliness!

"WE'RE going strong!" Figgins of the New House smiled serenely at his study guests, as he made that observation.

It was Wednesday evening, and the Sports Tournament was swinging along merrily. Figgins had invited a whole crowd of New House fellows to high tea in his study, and quite a buzz of cheery voices proceeded from that famous apartment.

Figgins and Kerr and Wynn were seated at the table, with Talbot. Dick Redfern and Lawrence and Owen were perched on the window-sill, balancing cups and saucers on their knees. Koumi Rao, the Indian junior, was enthroned in state on the coal-scuttle. A cheery fire crackled and spurted in the grate; and all was merry and bright.

"Well, we're certainly holding our own," said Kerr. "We're level with the School House on points, and there are three events to come—the boxing, the Marathon, and the footer match. We've only got to bag two out of the three to win the tournament."

"We shall do it, too!" declared Fatty Wynn, his face beaming with confidence. "Pass the tarts, Figgy!"

"No more tarts, old fat man!" said Figgins firmly. "You've exceeded the feed limit already, Fatty. You've got to keep yourself as fit as a fiddle, remember."

"But I'm not taking part in the boxing or the Marathon——" protested Fatty.

"No; but there's the footer match on Saturday—the grand finale of the Sports. And we don't want you to have a bilious attack while you're keeping goal."

Fatty Wynn hungrily eyed the dish of tarts.

"Just one more, Figgy!" he pleaded.

But Figgins was adamant.

"You can have some more bread-and-butter, if you like," he said generously.

"Grooh!"

"Or you can go without. You're not having any more tarts."

And Fatty Wynn, his appetite keener than usual after a strenuous afternoon, had to solace himself with bread-and-butter.

Sports Week was now half-way through; and the various events had been very keenly contested. New House had claimed the honours on the opening day, having won the majority of the running contests. Next day, however, the School House had equalised, by winning the cycle race.

George Herries had been the hero of that event. Herries was a sturdy fellow, with heaps of stamina, and he had pedalled vigorously over the five-mile course, never slackening for an instant. Kerr of the New House had pressed him hotly, but unavailingly; and Herries had finished very strongly at the school gates, where he got a rousing reception.

Wednesday afternoon had been set apart for the boatrace and the water-polo match.

The boatrace was a thrilling affair, fought out at a fierce pace from start to finish. The New House crew, strengthened by the inclusion of Talbot, had rowed a great race, without, however, being able to overhaul their rivals. Tom Merry, the School House stroke, had set a terrific pace and maintained it; with the result that the School House got the better of an exciting finish by half a boat's length.

This win, of course, put the School House on top. But they did not long retain their lead. The rivals adjourned to the Public Baths at Wayland, where the water-polo match was contested. Here, the New House came into their own again. Magnificent goalkeeping by Fatty Wynn, and brilliant work by Talbot in the vanguard, had secured a rather easy victory for the New House.

So the two Houses were level again, having won a couple of events each; and it was to celebrate the water-polo victory that Figgins had invited his House-mates to high tea in his study.

The New House fellows were jubilant. In previous Sports Tournaments they had been out of the running before this stage. But on this occasion they had managed to hold their own; and if only they could win two events out of the remaining three, the ultimate honours would be theirs.

Presently Figgins started to clear the table; and Fatty Wynn followed with wistful gaze the removal of the dish of jam-tarts to the cupboard.

"Figgy, you're getting mean and stingy in your old age," he complained. "One more jam-tart wouldn't hurt me."

Figgins grinned.

"On Saturday night, when we've given the School House the once-over in the footer match, and won the Sports, you can scoff as many jam-tarts as you like, Fatty!" he promised. "Oh, good! I call you fellows to bear witness to that."

"We'll see that you get your just dues, Fatty," said Dick Redfern. "And now I vote we have a little music and some dancing."

"Dancing, in this study?" said Lawrence. "Why, there isn't room to swing a cat!"

"Rats! We can shift the table over against the wall, and clear quite a big space. Are you agreeable, Figgy? If so, we'll cut along and get our jazz-music and our instruments."

"I wasn't aware you had a jazz-band in the New House," said Talbot.

Dick Redfern chuckled.

"We've got a ripping band," he said, with enthusiasm. "I'm the jazz-drummer, and Lawrence and Owen have got saxophones. You fellows can join in with mouth-organs and tin-whistles, if you like. The more musicians we have, the merrier!"

"We shall make an awful shindy," said Kerr doubtfully.

"Who cares? We've won the water-polo match, and we're well on the way to winning the Sports; so why shouldn't we be happy about it?"

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Koumi Rao, from the coal-scuttle. "As your bard Shakespeare says, 'The night shall be filled with music, and the cares that infest the day, shall fold their tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away.'"

"Our dusky friend is a bit mixed," said Talbot, smiling. "It was Longfellow who said that. But no matter; let's have the music!"

Dick Redfern & Co. hurried along to their study. They were back in a few moments, Redfern carrying a towel-horse, on which a number of saucapan-lids, tins, and similar objects, were suspended on strings. Reddy also carried a kettle-drum; and Lawrence and Owen were armed with saxophones.

Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. had cleared a space in the study, and they entered heartily into the spirit of the thing.

Redfern started to beat a merry tattoo with the drumsticks, crashing and smashing at all the tinny objects in front of him.

The din was terrific. Redfern was not a master of melody exactly, and his music lacked those charms which are alleged to soothe the savage breast. But he knew how to make a noise, and his one aim and object seemed to be to make as loud and discordant a noise as possible.

Bang! Crash! Clank! Boom!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Talbot, stopping his ears. "Put on the soft pedal, Reddy! A fellow's ear-drums aren't proof against that awful row!"

Redfern did not hear, which was hardly surprising in the circumstances. He went merrily ahead with his jazz-drumming, while Lawrence and Owen brought their saxophones into play.

Figgins and Kerr promptly produced their mouth-organs, and proceeded to waltz and play at the same time. Fatty Wynn, who was slightly the worse for food, having bolted an enormous quantity of bread-and-butter, sat stolidly in his chair. But Koumi Rao did not mean to miss any of the fun. He went along to his study and fetched a couple of tin-whistles, one of which he handed to Talbot.

The musicians warmed to their work, and the pandemonium in Figgins' study was terrific. The jazz drummer alone made enough noise for six people, and the saxophones and mouth-organs and tin-whistles backed him up loyally.

Figgins and Kerr waltzed round and round, and Talbot and Koumi Rao joined them, and they danced and played until their faces were the colour of beetroot, and sheer lack of breath compelled them to desist. But Redfern and Lawrence and Owen went cheerfully on with their "music."

Undoubtedly, the heroes of the New House did not believe in celebrating their triumphs in silence!

Monteith of the Sixth heard the uproar from his study, and Monteith's study was a long way off. But the Sixth Former did not interfere. He surmised, and rightly, that a higher power than he would shortly swoop down upon the merry musicians.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff was at work in his study when the jazz band started. Mr. Ratcliff was not having a very enjoyable week. The "senseless and inane sports," of which he had complained so bitterly to the Head, had prevented him from seeing much of his pupils, except in the mornings, and his opportunities of doling out lines and lickings on a liberal scale had been very limited.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff had not seen any of the sports; he was not interested in them. He had sedulously avoided the playing-fields and the river. He did not know how the tournament was progressing, and whether or not his own House was in the ascendant, and he did not care. Mr. Ratcliff was no sportsman, and the prestige of his House on the playing-fields meant nothing to him.

The Housemaster was frowning over his papers in the study when Dick Redfern's jazz band started to perform.

Mr. Ratcliff's frown deepened as the din grew louder and more terrific; and presently, when the uproar was at its height, he jumped to his feet, and whisked out of his study, and swooped down upon the Fourth Form quarters.

Study doors had been opened up and down the passage,

and fellows were glancing out, some annoyed and others amused. It was time for evening preparation, but prep was out of the question with that appalling discord proceeding from Figgins' study.

Mr. Ratcliff stalked along the passage, majestic in gown and mortar-board, frowning in a manner that would have done credit to Jove of old. He bore down upon Figgins' study, and threw open the door, and glared at the extraordinary scene within.

Dick Redfern was still going strong with his jazz drumming, as were Lawrence and Owen with their saxophones. Figgins and Kerr and Talbot and Koumi Rao had got their second wind by this time, and their tin-whistles and mouth-organs blended in a dreadful discord as they danced and capered.

"Keep it up!" roared Redfern above the din. "We ought to have asked old Herries to come along with his cornet. Go along, you fellows! Oh!"

Reddy broke off suddenly as he became aware that Mr. Ratcliff was standing in the doorway. He promptly lowered the drumsticks, and the wail of the saxophones and the shrill screeching of the tin-whistles ceased abruptly. The dancers ceased their gyrations.

"You young rascals!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "What is the meaning of this disgraceful disturbance? How dare you? How dare you, I say?"

The musicians blinked sheepishly at the Housemaster. "Ahem! We—we were just having a little celebration, sir," explained Figgins. "Having licked the School House at water-polo, we thought there would be no harm in having a little music—"

"Music!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "Do you dare describe such an appalling concatenation of sounds as music, Figgins? You have thrown the House into an uproar! Every boy concerned in this outrage will write a thousand lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Mr. Ratcliff turned to Talbot. Like the Ancient Mariner, he held him with his glittering eye.

"Talbot, I am shocked and surprised to find you taking part in this hurly-burly! I arranged for you to be transferred to my House, because, I hoped you would set an example to unruly boys like Figgins and Redfern. Instead of which, I find you aiding and abetting them in causing a disturbance. I warn you, Talbot, to be very careful in future. In view of what occurred a few days ago, I am not anxious to punish you, but I must be just. If there is any repetition of this sort of conduct, I shall be compelled to punish you severely, in a way you will not relish!"

Talbot was silent.

"I will now confiscate these absurd instruments," said Mr. Ratcliff.

And he relieved Lawrence and Owen of their saxophones, and also collected the tin-whistles and mouth-organs.

"Redfern," he said, pointing to the towel-horse with its array of tinny accessories, "you will bring that ridiculous contrivance to my study!"

The jazz-drummer reluctantly obeyed. And silence took the place of discord in the New House for the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER 8.

Rivals of the Ring!

"TOM MEWWY, I wish to pwooffah some advice——"

"Keep it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave Tom Merry a reproving look. The captain of the Shell ought to have wilted under that stern glance, but he didn't. He chuckled instead.

It was Thursday afternoon, and the school gymnasium, the scene of so many hard-fought fights, was packed almost to suffocation.

Seniors and juniors and fags had swarmed into the gym after dinner for the inter-House boxing tournament.

Some capital contests had been witnessed, and the last stage of all had now been reached—the final.

The finalists were Tom Merry of the School House and Talbot of the New House. Both juniors had fought their way by sheer dogged determination to the final, and now they were taking a much-needed "breather" before meeting each other in the ring.

Tom Merry had been drawn against Edgar Lawrence in the first heat, and he had beaten Lawrence rather easily. In the second heat he had vanquished George Figgins, though Figgy had adopted whirlwind tactics, and had made the captain of the Shell go all the way.

The third heat had brought Tom Merry and Dick Redfern into opposition, and this proved to be one of the brightest displays of all. Both the juniors had given a fast and thrilling exhibition of boxing, and Tom Merry had narrowly scraped home on points. Kildare, the referee, had been obliged to consult Mr. Railton before giving his verdict.

Talbot's path to the final had been even more difficult than Tom Merry's. He had defeated George Herries and Harry Noble and Jack Blake in turn, and each of his former House-mates had given him a gruelling scrap. Talbot's facial appearance showed clearly that he had not had matters all his own way. Herries had given him a black eye—or, rather, an eye which threatened to become black in the near future. Harry Noble had landed a hefty punch on the nose, which had made that organ become somewhat bulbous, and Jack Blake had given Talbot the hardest fight of all. Yet Talbot had managed to overthrow all three of his opponents, and he had qualified to meet Tom Merry in the final.

It would be a case of Greek meeting Greek, for Tom Merry and Talbot were about as evenly matched as two boxers could be. Both needed the "breather" very badly, but they were quickly recovering from the effects of their previous bouts.

It was at this stage that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wished to proffer some advice to Tom Merry. But, instead of being eager for the advice of the swell of St. Jim's, Tom had calmly told Gussy to keep it.

Arthur Augustus was mightily indignant.

"Well, Tom Mewwy, I considah you are vewy wude! I was goin' to tell you what tactics to adopt in ordah to lick Talbot. If you want to win the boxin' tournament for the School House, you must lend me your eahs!"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I've got my plans cut and dried. And, anyway, I shouldn't be likely to take advice from a fellow who was knocked out in the first heat."

Arthur Augustus coloured painfully.

"That was a most remarkable fluke, the way Kerr knocked me out," he said. "I was astonished when it happened."

"I wasn't," said Tom Merry.

"Of course, even the best of boxahs have to take the knock-out sometimes," explained Arthur Augustus. "A fellow can't keep on winnin'. Besides, the New House wanted a little encouragement."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther, who were standing near.

Arthur Augustus glared at the hilarious juniors.

"This is not an occasion for wibald mewwiment," he said severely. "I wish to pwoffah some advice to Tom Mewwy, an' he wefuses to take me sewiously."

"Naturally!" grinned Lowther. "Nobody ever takes you seriously, old top."

"Weally, Lowthah—" The swell of St. Jim's turned again to Tom Merry. "Do you wish to win this fight, Tom Mewwy, or do you not?"

"I want to win," said Tom. "That's why I'm not taking any advice from you, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At this moment Kildare of the Sixth rang a handbell.

"Into the giddy fray, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther. "You'll have all your work cut out to lick old Talbot, but I fancy you will do it."

"Without Gussy's advice, too!" chuckled Manners.

Arthur Augustus looked very anxious as Tom Merry pushed his way towards the ring. He was fearful that Tom would make an awful hash of things now that he had disdained the advice of such a master of ringeraft as Arthur Augustus himself.

There was a cheer when Tom Merry and Talbot came face to face in the ring. This was the first time, of course, that they had ever met in fistic combat as representatives of rival Houses. Hitherto, they had been friends together in the School House. They were friends still, but they were deadly rivals in addition.

"Time!" rapped out Kildare.

And the great crowd looked on eagerly.

A hurried handshake, a swift patter of feet, and Tom Merry and Talbot were "going it" hammer and tongs.

It had been Tom's intention to force the fight at the outset in the hope of wearing down his man. Curiously enough, that had also been Talbot's intention. The result was that both attacked hotly, right from the word go, so to speak.

Good, hefty punches were given and taken; not wild punches, but scientific and purposeful, and therefore all the more effective.

A right swing sent Talbot reeling to the ropes; and Tom Merry, following up, seemed to have his opponent fairly cornered. But Talbot, with his back to the ropes, fell back on defensive measures, and he managed to stave off further punishment until the end of the round.

There was a cheer from the School House partisans as the boxers went to their corners. Tom Merry had had all the best of the first round.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not quite satisfied.

"You are wushin' things too much, Tom Mewwy!" he said. "I wish you had listened to the advice I was goin' to pwoffah you. I want you to hold your energies in weseve, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 946.

deah boy, an' not do any attackin' until I give the ordah. Then you can go in an' win. Tom Mewwy! I don't believe you are listenin' to what I am sayin'!"

Arthur Augustus was right. Tom Merry wasn't listening. He was receiving the ministrations of his second, Monty Lowther, who set quite a gale blowing with the towel.

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head sadly.

"You will wegwet latah that you did not act upon my advice, Tom Mewwy. You cannot keep up this huwicane pace. You will be exhausted by about the third wound."

But Arthur Augustus proved a poor prophet. When the third round came Tom Merry showed no sign of tiring. Neither did Talbot. Both seemed to be possessed of dynamic energy, and they fought with great dash and determination.

Talbot had recovered from his early lapse, and he was standing up to his man in splendid style. Figgins & Co. cheered him on, and their eyes were sparkling with anticipation of a New House victory.

But round succeeded round, and neither of the boxers was able to gain the mastery. It was give-and-take all the time, and Tom Merry and Talbot did an equal amount of giving and taking.

"They look like going all the way without a knock-out," muttered Manners.

"In that case it will be a pretty problem to decide who is the winner on points," said Lowther. "There's not a pin to choose between 'em so far."

In the seventh round, however, matters came to an unexpected climax.

Talbot opened with a fierce attack, and Tom Merry was forced to give ground. In rushed Talbot, more aggressive than ever, and he broke through his opponent's guard and beat a tattoo on Tom Merry's ribs. The captain of the Shell gasped and staggered, and then a half-arm jolt to the jaw, shooting up unexpectedly, caused him to rock on his feet. Half dazed, he could see Talbot following up grimly; but he side-stepped in the nick of time, and Talbot's left, weighted with all the strength required for a knock-out blow, saved the empty air.

Tom Merry pulled himself together and made a great rally. Catching Talbot off his guard, he sailed in, and his right and left shot out in swift succession.

Talbot failed to parry the blows, and they took their full toll. The first was a drive in the chest, which would have bowled over a less sturdy fellow like a skittle. The second, following instantaneously, was a hard and accurate punch between the eyes, and that punch settled the issue. It lifted Talbot clean off his feet, and he fell heavily.

There was a buzz of excitement as Kildare started to count.

"One, two, three—"

Talbot lay like a log.

"Four, five, six—"

"Talbot!" muttered Figgins anxiously. "Talbot, old chap!"

The New House boxer tried gamely to struggle to his feet, and Tom Merry stepped back a pace. But Talbot's efforts were unavailing, and Kildare continued to count.

"Seven, eight, nine—out! Merry wins!"

"Hurrah!"

"School House for ever!"

Tom Merry ran forward and assisted Talbot to his feet. Victor and vanquished regarded each other steadily for a moment.

"A great scrap!" said Tom Merry, smiling.

Talbot nodded.

"And the best man won!" he said, as they gripped.

The great crowd in the gym dispersed, humming with excited chatter.

Once again School House found themselves on top. They had three events to their credit, and the New House two.

Everything now hinged upon the Marathon Race on the morrow and the football match on the following day. And to these two events the juniors of both Houses looked forward with consuming eagerness.

CHAPTER 9.

The Marathon!

"THIS suspense is awful!"

George Figgins, perched on the school wall beside Fatty Wynn, made that remark.

It was Friday afternoon. The runners in the Marathon had started on their long and toilsome task some time previously, and the school wall was clustered with fellows waiting expectantly for the first man to come in sight.

Mr. Raiton was standing in the school gateway, chatting with Kildare and Darrell. Miss Marie and Doris Levison and Cousin Ethel were also there waiting and watching.

As Figgins had remarked, the suspense was awful. It was particularly awful to the New House fellows; for if they lost the Marathon they would lose the sports. Their great

hope was that a New House fellow would finish first, in which event the rival Houses would be level on points again, and the football match would decide the issue.

Figgins was standing down from the Marathon. He was a sprinter rather than a long-distance runner, and he was relying upon either Dick Redfern or Talbot to win the event for the New House. Both were good men, with plenty of pluck and stamina, and Talbot had quickly recovered from his gruelling scrap with Tom Merry on the previous day.

Figgins eagerly scanned the long stretch of white road, fervently hoping that the first man to appear would be carrying the New House colours.

"They ought to be along soon, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn. "Get ready to cheer! When old Talbot or Reddy, as the case may be, bobs into sight round the bend we'll give him three times three!"

Even as Fatty Wynn spoke a solitary figure came into view of the waiting crowd on the school wall.

But the solitary figure was not that of Talbot, nor of Dick Redfern.

"It's a School House fellow!" said Figgins, with a groan. "Oh, my hat! We're fairly in the soup now!"

From the School House partisans came a rousing, ringing cheer.

"Hurrah!"

"It's our man!"

And the solitary figure came on. It was noticed as he drew nearer that he was in great distress. He stumbled several times, and seemed on the verge of collapse.

The cheering was hushed now, and the onlookers fell to silence as they watched the gallant efforts of that solitary runner, who, if only he could keep on his feet, appeared to have the race in safe keeping.

The three girls in the gateway looked on anxiously, their eyes shining with sympathy.

"It—it isn't Tom Merry," murmured Marie Rivers. "But it's a School House boy. I wonder—"

"It's my brother!" exclaimed Doris Levison, with a catch in her voice. "It's Ernest!"

"Why, so it is!" said Cousin Ethel. "He seems dreadfully distressed. But he's nearly home, thank goodness!"

Now that the solitary runner was recognised by all, a murmur of surprise, as well as of admiration, passed through the onlookers.

There had been considerable speculation as to who was likely to be first man home. Tom Merry had been strongly fancied by the School House supporters; while the New House contingent had looked for Redfern or Talbot. Ernest Levison was a fine runner, but he had hardly been expected to shine in such company. Yet he had proved the "dark horse" of the race, and he seemed certain to win.

Levison's face was white as he came on, and his legs moved mechanically. It was apparent to everybody that he had run himself out. But, with only a matter of twenty yards to go, there seemed no reason why he should not walk the remaining distance.

But Levison knew what the onlookers did not know—as yet. He knew that behind him, screened from sight at present by a bend in the road, was a New House fellow. Levison could not afford to slacken down to a walk. He must keep going at a sustained jog-trot, if he hoped successfully to stall off that challenge from behind.

And now, as Levison staggered on painfully, whipping up his flagging energies, there came a great shout from the New House throng as Talbot came into sight round the bend.

"Oh, good!" Figgins' voice was tense. "Here's old Talbot! Can he do it, I wonder?"

"I doubt it," murmured Fatty Wynn. "He seems almost as whacked as Levison."

Certainly, Talbot was in nearly as bad a case as the fellow in front of him. It had been a strenuous and a gruelling race, and many of the competitors had fallen by the way. Those who had managed to stick it out to the last lap were naturally exhausted. Talbot could not have raised a gallop, if his life had depended upon it. He seemed, to the spellbound watchers, to be moving at a mere crawl; yet in reality he was travelling nearly twice as fast as Levison, who could scarcely drag one leg after the other.

"Talbot!" cried Marie Rivers, pressing her hands tightly together. "The New House still has a chance!"

Doris Levison called to her brother.

"Ernest! Stick it out, old fellow! Only a few more yards!"

Mr. Railton, strongly moved at the sight of that last desperate struggle, held one end of the tape, while Kildare of the Sixth held the other.

As the seconds passed the race seemed less and less a certainty for Levison. A few long strides, and he would have been home; but he was physically incapable of in-



Talbot gave a desperate heave, and then to his dismay the handle broke away from the body of the hamper, and came away in his hand. The hamper itself went bounding down the dark staircase. "Oh, my hat!" breathed Talbot. "That's done it!" (See Chapter 10.)

creasing his pace. And Talbot was gaining—gaining steadily but surely.

"He'll do it!" muttered Figgins. "He'll do it yet!"

Talbot braced himself for the final effort. His gaze was fixed steadily, beyond the hurrying figure in front, on the outstretched tape.

"Talbot!"

"Ernest!"

The voice of Miss Marie acted as a stimulus to Talbot. But Ernest Levison was too exhausted to respond to his sister's rallying cry.

It was Talbot who reached the tape first, and Mr. Railton's strong arm was stretched out to support him.

Levison finished almost immediately afterwards in a state of utter collapse. Doris Levison's eyes were glistening as she ran to her brother's side.

"Never mind, old boy!" she said. "You ran an awfully plucky race—in fact, you were just splendid!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Kildare heartily.

Talbot and Levison, the heroes of that sternly-contested Marathon, were assisted to their studies, where they gradually recovered from their trying ordeal.

Thanks to Talbot, the New House were once again on terms with their rivals; and Figgins & Co. were in high feather. They were confident of winning the last event of all—the football match—and they had good grounds for confidence. With Fatty Wynn guarding their goal, with Dick Redfern a tower of strength at centre-half, and with their new recruit, Talbot, in the forward line, they were a formidable side, as Tom Merry & Co. would doubtless discover.

Figgins & Co. were very keen to celebrate the Marathon victory; but they remembered what had happened on the occasion of their previous celebration. Mr. Ratcliff had come down like a wolf on the fold, and had doled out a thousand lines all round. That hefty impot had not yet been started upon; and the New House heroes were not

anxious to have it augmented by another thousand lines, or possibly a licking. So they spent a comparatively quiet evening.

But there was nothing to prevent them from holding a celebration at an hour when Mr. Horace Ratcliff might reasonably be expected to be asleep. Fatty Wynn proposed a midnight feast in the New House dormitory, a proposal which was seconded by Kerr, and carried unanimously by the New House sportsmen.

CHAPTER 10.

"Punishing" Talbot!

"A MIDNIGHT feast is the proper caper," said Figgins. "But the fellows who are playing in the eleven to-morrow will have to be strictly rationed."

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn, looking disappointed.

"The others can gorge to their hearts' content," said Figgins. "We'll get Dame Taggles, at the tuckshop, to make us up a really ripping hamper of tuck. Thank goodness the Co.'s in funds!"

The hamper was duly procured, and taken along to Figgins' study. It was not considered advisable to smuggle it into the dormitory, for Monteith was the prefect on duty that evening, and Monteith had the nose of a ferret for hampers smuggled under beds. It was arranged that somebody should be sent down to Figgy's study for the hamper when midnight came.

The New House juniors fully intended to stay awake until that hour; but with most of them it was a case of the spirit being willing, but the flesh weak. Long before the witching hour arrived, they sank into the arms of Morpheus.

Figgins, however, contrived to keep awake; and when the first stroke of twelve sounded from the old clock tower he got out of bed and roused his schoolfellows.

"Time for the jolly old spread!" he announced, amid a chorus of yawnings and gruntings.

"Good!" murmured Fatty Wynn, who would cheerfully have tackled a feed at any hour of the day or night. "Who's going to volunteer to go down and fetch the hamper?"

"I will," said Talbot, turning out.

"Can you manage it by yourself, Talbot?" asked Figgins. "It's rather a hefty hamper, you know."

"I shall manage it, all serene," said Talbot. And he slipped on a jacket over his pyjamas, and pulled on a pair of slippers, and went softly from the dormitory.

Talbot was a pastmaster at the art of groping his way down dark staircases and along gloomy corridors. He did not need an electric torch to light him on his way, and he reached Figgins' study without mishap.

The House was silent and still, and there appeared to be no master or prefect on the prowl; for which Talbot was duly thankful.

He found the hamper, and dragged it out into the passage. It was heavier than he had anticipated, and he began to wish he had brought somebody to help him. However, he succeeded in dragging the hamper as far as the foot of the staircase, where he paused for a breather. Now came the task of getting the hamper upstairs. Talbot went up backwards, gripping the hamper by one of the side-handles, and hauling it up after him. The operation was not a silent one, for the hamper bumped on every stair. But it could not be helped.

Talbot had almost reached the landing when he fancied

he heard footsteps in the corridor down below. He paused for a second and listened.

Yes; undoubtedly there were footsteps approaching the stairs.

Talbot was considerably startled, and he determined to get into the dormitory with the hamper before the unknown prowler "spotted" him.

The junior gave a desperate heave; and then, to his utter dismay, the handle broke away from the body of the hamper and came away in his hand. The hamper itself went bounding down the dark staircase.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Talbot.

Clatter, clatter! Crash!

The hamper bounded on its way, gathering momentum as it went. Suddenly there was a fiendish yell from below. "Yarooohh!"

Somebody had checked the downward career of the tuck-hamper; and that somebody was Mr. Horace Ratcliff!

The Housemaster had been in the act of ascending the stairs, when something big and bulky swooped down upon him in the darkness, bowling him over like a skittle. Fortunately, Mr. Ratcliff had only ascended three stairs when the collision came, so he had not far to fall. But it was quite far enough for Mr. Ratcliff. He alighted at the foot of the stairs with a dreadful concussion, and a yell that fairly echoed through the House.

"Ratty!" gasped Talbot. "I've fairly done it now!"

He could easily have bolted from the dormitory and scrambled into bed before Mr. Ratcliff recovered. But, for all he knew, the Housemaster might be badly hurt and in need of assistance.

Talbot hesitated a moment, then he hurried down the stairs.

"Are you all right, sir?" he called.

It was, perhaps, an unfortunate question. Mr. Ratcliff's infuriated voice answered Talbot through the darkness.

"No, Talbot, I am not all right!" roared the Housemaster. "I am very far from being all right. I have sustained severe bruises as a result of this unparalleled outrage. Was it you, Talbot, who hurled that hamper down at me from the top of the stairs?"

"It was a pure accident, sir," said Talbot hastily. "I was dragging the hamper upstairs, and the handle broke off in my hand."

Mr. Ratcliff gave an angry snort. He had staggered to his feet now, and was groping for the electric-light switch at the foot of the stairs. He found it, and switched it on, and Talbot stood blinking rather sheepishly in the sudden glare.

"So," said Mr. Ratcliff, eyeing the junior sternly, "you were about to hold a gluttonous and disgusting orgy in the dormitory?"

Talbot was silent.

"This is monstrous!" thundered the Housemaster. "Only a day or two ago, Talbot, I had occasion to admonish you, and to warn you that I should severely punish any further misdemeanour on your part. And now I find you absent from your dormitory, and intent upon midnight revelry. I accept your explanation that this assault on me was not premeditated; but, quite apart from that, your conduct is indefensible."

There was a pause.

"You rendered me a great service the other day, Talbot," went on Mr. Ratcliff, "but I must not be guided by sentiment in this matter. Your punishment shall be severe and effective."

Talbot looked rather startled. He had visions of being hauled up before the Head for a flogging, which, coming on the morning of the House-match, would not be a very palatable business. Or perhaps he would be detained for

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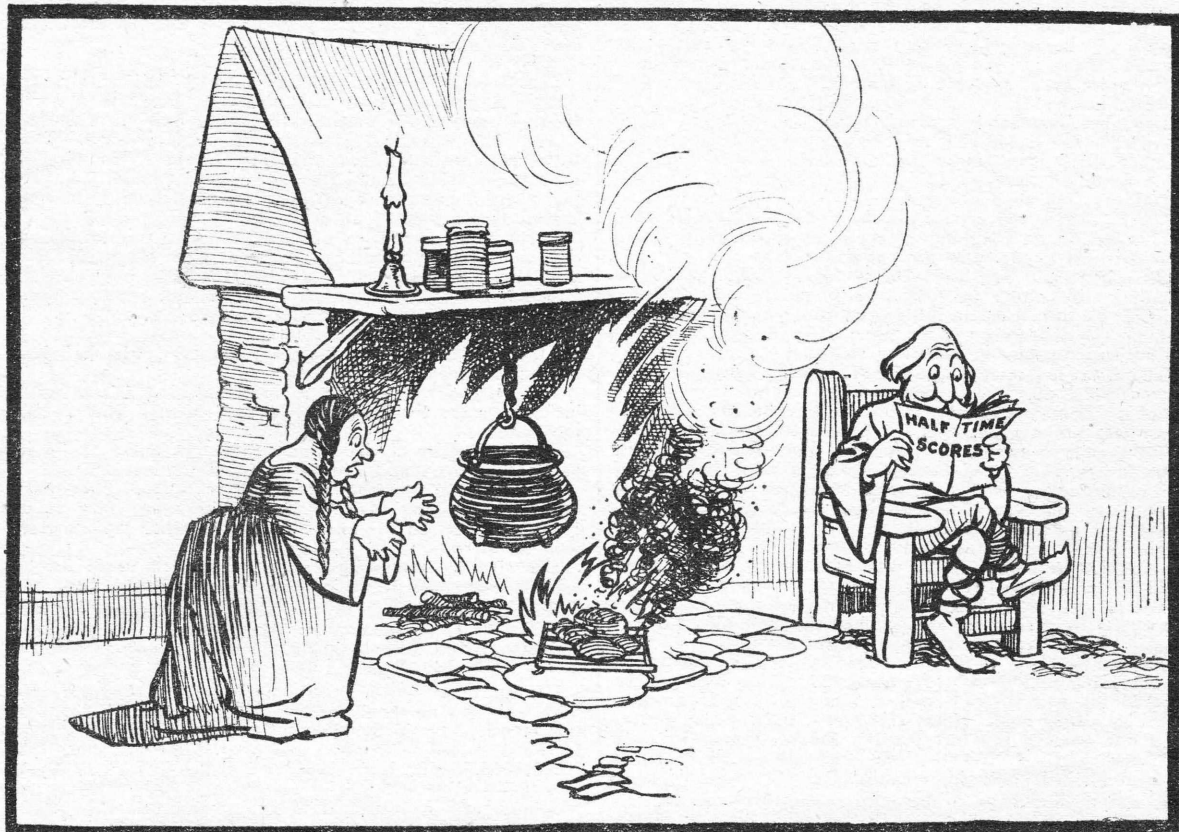
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THE INFLUENCE OF FOOTBALL IN THE YEAR 871 A.D.



Our artist rather thinks that this is how King Alfred came to let the cakes burn!

the afternoon, and therefore unable to take part in the match at all. That would indeed be a calamity.

Mr. Ratcliff noted the junior's discomfiture, and he looked very grim.

"Quite recently, Talbot," he went on, "I accorded you the high privilege of making you a member of my House, in which I hoped you would exercise an uplifting influence. You have betrayed the confidence and trust which I reposed in you, and there is only one adequate punishment. Tomorrow morning, subject to the Head's sanction, you will be sent back to your own House."

That was the dread penalty which Talbot had to pay for his shortcomings. At all events, Mr. Ratcliff seemed to regard it as a dread penalty. As for Talbot, he nearly laughed aloud.

So this was his punishment! He was to be banished from the New House, and sent back to his old House. It was the most welcome and desirable "punishment" that Talbot could possibly have received.

He had never been really happy in the New House. He had played the game, and turned out for the New House in the sports, but all the while his heart had been with his old House. He was inwardly delighted at the prospect of returning to his old quarters and associations. He would now be able to turn out for the School House team in tomorrow's House-match.

Mr. Ratcliff looked rather puzzled. He had expected Talbot to appeal against his punishment—to ask to be punished in some other way than being banished from the New House. But Talbot seemed to be accepting his fate with great resignation and fortitude.

Little did Mr. Ratcliff dream that Talbot was all eagerness to get back to his old House, amongst his old friends.

"I shall confiscate this hamper," said the Housemaster. "You will assist me to carry it to my study, Talbot. You will then return to your dormitory, and in the morning, unless you are instructed by me to the contrary, you will return to the School House."

It was a crushing blow to Figgins & Co., when they heard the news later. The loss of their tuck-hamper was nothing to the loss of Talbot. They were filled with consternation, and with consuming rage towards Mr. Ratcliff, and their bitter tirades against that gentleman would have astonished him could he have heard them.

Talbot sympathised with Figgins & Co. But he made no secret of the fact that he would be glad to get back to his old House, and he looked forward with pleasure to the morning, when "Talbot of the New House" would be no more.

CHAPTER 11.

A Great Finish!

"TALBOT, deah boy, I am delighted to see you back! Accept my hearty congwats, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was jubilant. So were Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co., and, indeed, all the School House crowd, when Talbot rejoined his old House-mates next morning.

"Old Ratty has turned up trumps, and no mistake!" said Monty Lowther. "We thought you were lost and gone for ever, Talbot, like darling Clementine in the song. It's ripping to see you back again."

"Rather!" said Tom Merry, his face beaming. "If we can't lick the New House, now we're at full strength again, we shall deserve to be kicked."

Talbot laughed happily.

"The scream of it is, you fellows," he said, "that Ratty thinks he's punishing me with the utmost severity."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was dying to get back to the School House, of course. Mind you, I didn't plan last night's affair with the deliberate intention of getting back. It was just an accident that I bowled the tuck-hamper at Ratty."

"Of course!" said Tom Merry. "A jolly lucky accident for the School House, as it happens. How do you feel, old chap, after your strenuous week? I wonder you've got a kick left, after the Marathon yesterday."

"Oh, I'm all right, Tom," answered Talbot. "I'm good for ninety minutes of strenuous footer, anyway."

"Ripping!"

"It is wathah wuff luck on the New House beggahs," observed Arthur Augustus. "Still, they ought not to gwumble. They wouldn't have done neahly so well in the sports if it wasn't for Talbot."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Figgins & Co. won't turn up their toes now that Talbot has gone," he said. "They'll play up like demons this afternoon. It's going to be a hard match."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But I feel in toppin' form, so you fellows needn't wowwy about the result. What are you gwinin' at, Lowthah?"

"A prize ass!" said Monty blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah! I wegard that as an insult. If it wasn't for the fact that it might pwevent you fwom turnin' out for the School House this aftahnoon, I should administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Mercy!" pleaded Lowther.

"Let's reserve our fearful thrashings for the New House," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We're all fighting fit, thank goodness. It ought to be a great game."

And it was. The inter-House footer match proved a thrilling climax to a thrilling week of sport.

St. Jim's turned out in full muster to see the all-important game. The girls were present, also; and they were as keenly enthusiastic as any of their boy chums.

There was a tremendous burst of cheering when the rival elevens lined up.

School House seemed to be slightly the stronger side, but there was not a great deal in it. School House certainly had the pull in attack, their forward line—D'Arcy, Talbot, Tom Merry, Blake and Levison—being a very dashing and skilful quintette. But this advantage was off-set by the strength of the New House defence; Fatty Wynn, in goal, being half a team in himself.

The first half was fast and exciting. The ball travelled from end to end of the field with bewildering rapidity, and both sets of players put heart and soul into the tussle.

Tom Merry fairly made the welkin ring when he picked up a pass from Levison, and crashed the ball into the net at point-blank range, with Fatty Wynn helpless.

It was first blood to the School House; but, almost before the cheering had died away, Lawrence of the New House worked his way through with a fine solo run, to score a great equalising goal. Harry Hammond, the Cockney junior, who was holding the fort for the School House, made a desperate attempt to save; but the ball passed over his head and sailed under the cross-bar.

It was a ding-dong struggle up to the interval, but no further goals were scored, and the half-time score of one-all was a fair reflex of the game.

"Those New House beggahs," panted Arthur Augustus as he joined his cousin Ethel on the touchline, "are playin' up bettah than I expected. Did you see Figgins wob me of the ball, deah gal, when I was within shootin' distance?"

"I did," said Cousin Ethel, smiling. "In fact, I saw the same thing happen on half a dozen occasions. But then, Figgins is a splendid back, isn't he?"

"Yaas," agreed the swelt of St. Jim's. "But I mean to get past him somehow, in the next half. I happened to heah Figgins say to Kerr, 'I've got Gussy in my pocket.'" Arthur Augustus fairly bristled with indignation. "I wefuse to be put into anybody's pocket, deah gal! An' if Figgins imagines he can get the bettah of ewevy tackle with me, he is under a delusion!"

Cousin Ethel hastened to soothe the ruffled feelings of Arthur Augustus.

"You are playing a splendid game, Arthur," she said. "Of course, Figgins is bound to rob you of the ball sometimes. That's what he's there for, isn't it? But I believe you will outwit him sooner or later."

Cousin Ethel's prophecy was fulfilled early in the second half.

Arthur Augustus made a dazzling run on the wing, and Figgins, smiling confidently, ran across to intercept him. Gussy feinted to pass to Talbot; instead of which he ran on, swerving past the surprised Figgins in a flash. Then, from an extremely awkward angle, Arthur Augustus screwed the ball into the goalmouth.

Fatty Wynn was quite unprepared for what followed. He fully expected the ball to go into the side-netting. But it swerved deceptively, and curled round the upright, and landed in the net, with Fatty Wynn standing transfixed with astonishment.

"Goal!"

The School House supporters cheered vociferously, and Arthur Augustus flushed with pleasure. Fatty Wynn, with feelings too deep for words, gathered the ball out of the net.

New House rallied strongly after this reverse. Their forwards launched attack after attack, the "live wire" in their ranks being Koumi Rao. The Indian junior was playing a great game on the wing, and he frequently had the School House defence in a tangle.

But it was not until a quarter of an hour from the end that the persistent onslaughts of the New House forwards met with tangible reward. Harry Hammond only partially stopped a terrific drive from Redfern, and Owen, running up, bundled ball and goalkeeper into the net.

"Two-all!" panted Tom Merry.

"It's anybody's game," gasped Manners, who had been playing a sterling game at half.

"It's anybody's game at the moment, but it's going to be ours before the finish!" said Tom Merry grimly. "On the ball!"

The final stage of the game was fought out at a terrific pace, amid roars and counter-roars of encouragement.

From end to end the frisky ball travelled. Now Fatty Wynn was leaping high in the air to save; now Harry Hammond was on his knees, fielding another "pile-driver" from Redfern.

The struggle was intense; the excitement never flagged for one moment of the remaining fifteen minutes.

With three minutes to go, Tom Merry bored his way towards the New House goal. Hard pressed, he transferred to Talbot; and Talbot, tackled in turn, swung the leather across to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Having outwitted Figgins before, Arthur Augustus saw no reason why he should not do so again, and he did! On this occasion, he coolly lobbed the ball over Figg's head, and then darted round him and fired in a great shot. The ball rushed in with the velocity of a bullet, but Fatty Wynn, fists together, punched it clear. Talbot was waiting and watching, and he drove it in again, and this time Fatty Wynn was powerless to save. The ball eluded his frantic clutch, and hurtled into the net.

From all around the touchline came a deep-throated roar:

"GOAL!"

It was the winning goal. For, although the New House played up desperately for the remaining two minutes, they failed to get on terms.

The field swarmed with excited juniors yelling and waving their caps. And the chief heroes of the match—Talbot, and Tom Merry, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—were borne shoulder-high to the dressing-room.

The great Sports Tournament was over, and the School House, with Talbot back in their ranks, had carried off the honours, after a series of struggles that would linger long in the memories of those who witnessed them.

After the match there was a bumper celebration in the Junior Common-room, and the rival sportsmen of School House and New House fought their battles over again. Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison and Miss Marie were at the festive board, of course, and they spent a really delightful evening in the society of the sportsmen of St. Jim's!

THE END.

(An extra-special treat for you, chums: "APRIL FOOLS ALL!" By Martin Clifford. Next week's topping yarn of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. Don't miss it, whatever you do!)



STRIKING OIL! Dave and Val, quite by accident, stumble across an ancient temple and then have the good fortune to discover a natural oil well!



The Well of Wealth

A Rousing Story of Adventure
in Foreign Parts, featuring
Gan Waga & Co.

BY
SIDNEY DREW.

CHAPTER I. Soapy!

"GOOD gracious indeed whateffer, look you," remarked Midshipman Valentine Hilton, "I almost wish I'd been born about a century ago!"

"If you had you'd be either dead or jolly near it by this time, so I'm inclined to share that wish," replied Master David Ap Rees. "What has given you the hump this time, my chicken? What's hurting you, and where do you feel it?"

Val put his sextant in its case and yawned.

"It was so much more exciting then," he said. "The giddy old map of the world wasn't half explored. If you trotted about a bit you were always up against something strange and new. Now there's nothing new. If you go to the North Pole or the South Pole, or Central Africa or Central Australia, people have been there before you, and have taken cinema pictures or written books about the places. I believe there are a few patches in South Africa and New Guinea where no white people have been yet. I've no knowledge of South America—I mean the interior—and from what I've seen of New Guinea anybody can do the exploring."

Val sat down with his notebook on his knee to work out the reckoning. When he had finished he climbed the bridge and submitted the result to Mr. Thomas Prout, pilot of the steam-yacht *Lord of the Deep*. The steersman gave a slight snort.

"Pretty close, sir, by honey," he said, "and quite good enough in broad daylight and open water, but your reckoning doesn't agree with mine. We can't both be right, though we might both be wrong. Do you mind having another try at it, sir?"

"All serene, sir," said Val.

He took out the sextant again, and "shot" the sun once more, a very clear and burning sun. At the second attempt he discovered his error, and Mr. Thomas Prout nodded his approval.

"On your course we'd as likely as not have run down some monster of the deep," he said, "for I've got wind that one is knocking round in these waters. There's no particular reward for spotting it, by honey, but you might mention it to Master Ap Rees."

"I didn't know you had whales in this warm water, Mr. Prout. I thought they kept well to the north or south."

"So they do mostly, but now and then you get one astray," said Prout. "This is a tin fellow."

"A submarine?" asked Val. "Gee! There she is! There's the tin whale!"

The submarine came about on the port side about half a mile ahead of the yacht and put out her boat. Val ran forward with extended hands to greet the big, bearded man who came aboard, for it was his old tutor Harold Honour, the engineer. Honour glanced at the youngster's bronzed face

and looked him up and down. The engineer was favourably impressed.

"Not dying of consumption," he said. "Good!"

"Dying of consumption," said Val. "I should say not, for I never felt so fit. I'm so tough, Mr. Honour, I could eat bricks and sleep on tin tacks. You don't know my chum Dave Ap Rees, do you? Hallo! He's hopped it. I suppose it's no use asking you what has brought you along, sir?"

Honour smiled and shrugged his shoulders; and, after waving his hand to Mr. Thomas Prout, he went below, pipe in mouth. Presently Dave, who had been down to the library for a book, came on deck again and sighted the submarine.

"What's that box of tricks, Val, and what's the stunt?" he asked.

"If you need to be told, that box of tricks is a super-submarine, the private property of Mr. Ferrers Lord; but what the stunt is I don't know, look you," said Val. "My notion is that it has something to do with oil or platinum, for that smudge you see over there is New Guinea. I wish it wasn't, for I'm a bit fed-up with New Guinea. I'm like Gan Waga, and icebergs would suit me for a change. I'm only guessing, but the engineer has arrived, and that looks more like big business than pleasure."

"Oh, New Guinea isn't so bad if it wasn't quite so warm," said Dave. "An ice-cream factory ought to pay there, so what about starting one? One slab of best vanilla-flavoured for two nose-rings or one necklace of dogs' teeth."

The boat had pulled back to the submarine, and both vessels headed at half-speed for the distant coastline. Suddenly the submarine wirelessly a message, and the message was brought up to Prout.

"She wants a pilot to take her inside the reef, Mr. Hilton," said Prout. "Those coral reefs are nasty things for submarines to get poking about in: I'll ease up, and will you please order them to swing out the launch. Send the Esquimo in it; he'll do."

Dave went in search of Gan Waga, and found him sleeping placidly in Prince Ching Lung's bath. Gan Waga was not overjoyed when Dave awakened him and told him what he had to do.

"Why yo' not send Maddock or Barry O'Rooney, or some other laziness chaps?" he grumbled. "What I done yo' sends me, hunk?"

"I'm not sending you, you fat monster," said Dave. "I've got nothing to do with it, have I? Val asked me to find you, and I found you. If you'd talked in your sleep, and said you didn't want to go, I might have looked into the bath with both eyes shut and missed you. Hustle, old son, and take that tin fish in, and then you can come back and sleep for a month of Sundays."

"Yo' go and tells them to jolly well boils their heads," said Gan Waga. "I fed-upness!"

Gan Waga lay down again, but he got out of the bath a

moment later and locked the door. Dave went up and reported.

"So he won't, won't he, by honey?" growled Prout. "More mutiny—eh? What did the fat ruffian say?"

"That you could all go and jolly well boil your heads," answered Dave gravely.

"The impudent haythen rogue!" said Barry O'Rooney. "The fat and frabjous mutineer! Phwat'll you do, Tom? Phwat'll you do at all wid the miscreant? Bedad, Oi'll have him out of ut! Boil our heads, is ut? Oi'll kill him stiff!"

"If he doesn't go, you'll have to go," said Prout. "Don't kill him too much, by honey, or he won't be fit for the job."

As Prout was practically in command of the yacht, only Gan Waga would have dared to send such a message, and if Dave had thought that any harm would come to the Eskimo he would have toned the message down a good deal before delivering it. Val and his chum followed Barry O'Rooney below to see how he would deal with the mutineer.

Gan Waga had not locked the door of the cabin, but only the door of Ching Lung's cabin. O'Rooney smote the door with his fist.

"Come out of ut, you fat rebel!" he cried. "Phwat d'ye mane sending insulting messages to your superior officers? You've got the ordher to pilot the submarine through the reef, so waddle out of that smarrt and do ut. Ut'll be the cowlid clink and bread and wather for you, bhoy, av you don't get a move on. Unlock this dure, and show a leg, you oily haythen blatherskite!"

There was no reply, and when Barry O'Rooney put his ear to the keyhole all he could hear was a buzzing noise as of snoring.

"I don't think you'll get much change unless you bash the door in," said Dave. "If he's dreaming of hot sausages, or something nice to eat, it will take a lot of noise to waken him, and then he won't budge if he doesn't feel like it."

Once again Barry O'Rooney pounded at the door and growled threats through the keyhole. Then he jumped back, dragged out his handkerchief, and pressed it over his mouth. Tears started from his eyes, and he danced about gurgling and coughing, with a very unpleasant flavour of carbolic soap in his mouth. Then, regardless of the fact that he would be making additional work for the carpenter and also be fined for doing damage, Barry O'Rooney hurled himself at the door.

With a crash lock and catch yielded, and Barry O'Rooney tumbled through into the bath-room. He nearly went into the bath headlong, but managed to pull himself up in time.

"Murder and gridrons!" he shouted. "Bedad, Oi've busted a good dure for nothing at all, at all, for the fat rogue isn't here."

"And here's the key on the dressing table," said Val, "so, if you'd have used your eyes, you needn't have forced the door."

The buzzing sound that had deceived Barry was caused by a trickle of water from one of the taps falling on an up-turned enamelled basin the wily Eskimo had placed in the bath. Barry O'Rooney rushed into the adjoining cabin, which was Rupert Thurston's. Here the bath-room was also locked, but Barry did not hurl himself at the door.

"Bedad, are you coming out, you weevil, or must Oi fetch a foile of men to you?" he shouted. "Spake up quick, Oi warnn you."

There was no doubt that the Eskimo was in the bath-room, for you could hear him splashing about. He had left the key in the lock, and even if Barry O'Rooney had risked an eye he could not have seen anything.

"All rightness," said Gan Waga in a curiously muffled voice. "Yo' not needs to call me any more names, old ugly faces."

Some instinct warned Val and Dave to get out of the way. "Bedad," muttered Barry O'Rooney, his big hands twitching eagerly. "Oi'll tache the haythen to squirt soapy wather at me."

The door opened, revealing an astonishing vision that looked like nothing on earth but a mass of white lather. To get himself into such a state Gan Waga had used up a couple of sticks of Rupert Thurston's expensive shaving soap. Through the white foam that lay inches thick on his face and hair his little black eyes sparkled from behind a pair of motoring-goggles. He was lather from ankles to the top of his head, and his hands were great bags of it.

Barry O'Rooney stood transfixed with amazement, glaring at the extraordinary apparition, and then he began to retreat backwards as Gan Waga, quite careless of Rupert Thurston's carpet, slowly advanced.

"Kisses me, Barry, old dears," he said in the same strangled tone. "Kisses yo' sweetness little Gan, yo' maffin."

"Hi, O'Rooney, where are you?" cried the gruff voice of

Mr. Benjamin Maddock, the bo'sun. "Ain't you got him yet?"

"No, bedad, and Oi don't want him," said Barry O'Rooney, still retreating. "Kape off. Don't come near me, you monsther!"

Val and Dave, grinning like two Cheshire cats, had got outside. Rupert Thurston's shaving soap was advertised as being long and lasting and delicately perfumed, and it seemed to last all right, for Gan Waga scarcely shed a flake of it as he followed Barry O'Rooney out. Barry held up his hands in appeal, for he was wearing a new uniform with silver-gilt buttons.

"Kamerad!" he said. "For the sake of Moike Casey, bhoy, don't touch me and Oi'll buy you barrels of oysters whin we're back in Porthampton. Wasn't Oi always swate and kind to you? Kape off, son. Ut wasn't my order to make you pilot the submarine, but Prout's."

The bo'sun was struck dumb when Gan Waga appeared in the alleyway, for in his long career he had never seen anything quite like it. As it was an undignified thing to turn and run, the bo'sun likewise raised his hands as a token of surrender. He was rather annoyed when Barry O'Rooney clutched his arm.

"Phwat a brain, Ben," said Barry hastily. "Bedad, an if the stuff would kape on long enough, Gan would win first prize at any fancy-dhrress in that costume—as a snow-man. Phwat is ut, Gan, flour or soap? Phwat a delicious perfume, Ben."

"Leggo my arm, souse me," growled the bo'sun. "Why are you hanging on to me? Leggo, or I'll paste you one, you idiot!"

"Sorry, sorry," said Barry O'Rooney, watching the Eskimo with glassy eyes.

And of course Gan Waga did just what Barry did not expect him to do. He gave a flick with his hands, and two great masses of lather detached themselves unexpectedly, shot upwards, and with great accuracy of aim they obliterated the faces of Mr. Barry O'Rooney and Mr. Benjamin Maddock. Val and Dave, who were standing behind Gan Waga, started to roar with mirth, but their joy came to a sudden end, for drawing his left hand down his right arm and his right hand down his left arm, the Eskimo suddenly swung round and presented each youngster full on the nose with the lather he had gathered.

Pulling the handkerchief away that had kept the soap out of his mouth, while the bo'sun, Barry O'Rooney and the two youngsters were coughing and snorting and scraping at their features, the Eskimo laughed one booming, gleeful laugh.

"Now p'raps when I taking a quietness baths yo' not interrupts me no morer," he said. "And that goodness stuff fo' dirty boys. Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, oo-oo! Good-byes!"

"Spa-a-ouch! Spa-ouch! Bedad, Oi'm blind in both oies and poisoned," said Barry O'Rooney.

"Ough! Ough! Ough!" coughed the bo'sun. "Souse me! Ough! Ough! I—I've—ough!—I've swallowed some of it!"

Val and Dave made similar noises as the door of Rupert Thurston's bath-room closed with a bang and the key was turned. In the Prince's bath-room, with towels and cold water, the victims rendered each other first-aid.

"Bad luck to him for a son of a gun, he's bate us again," said Barry O'Rooney when he felt better. "He's the limit."

"What had Dave and I done?" asked Midshipman Hilton, grinning in spite of himself. "We weren't in the row."

The bo'sun rubbed the last fleck of soap from under his ear, and shook his head gloomily.

"Why don't you go and ask him, souse me? What had I done, either? Nothing. I know what I'd like to do if I could, especially if I could have done it when he had that lather on. I'd shave the blubberster with a handsaw, and a sharp one at that. He's got no gratitude, souse me. No gratitude, and so mean he'd steal the sugar out of a canary's cage. You go and ask him why."

As it seemed such an outrage on the perfectly innocent, Val thought he would inquire.

"Hallo, old thing," gurgled the Eskimo in response to the knock.

"It's only little me, Fat," said Val. "Dave and I thought you were our pal. It was fair enough going for Mr. O'Rooney after he'd slanged you, but why did you plaster your beastly soap on us? Don't you think it was a rotten thing to do?"

The door opened. Gan Waga had risen clean and dripping from the bath, dressed only in a pair of shorts and the motoring-goggles.

"I so sorryfuls, old dears," he said repentantly, "but it nots my faults. Ho, ho, hoo! I asks yo' the merry old questions. Suppose yo' gotted a big handfuls of soapiness lathers and nowhere's to puts it and yo' saw two chaps holding their ribs and laughing like mads with their mouths wide opens would yo' have wasted it? I yo' pal all the times; but what would yo' have doned?"

It did not take Val and Dave long to ponder the question, for they both knew what they would have done with the lather in circumstances of such great temptation. They grinned and shook hands with Gan Waga, accepting his explanation as an excellent one.

"Dears, dears! I s'poses I better go and pilots that boats," said Gan Waga, "and tell old Tommy Prouts he needn't boil his heads if he not want to."

When Gan Waga did reach the deck he was too late, for Mr. Barry O'Rooney had gone off in the launch to pilot in the submarine. The Eskimo was seized by four brawny sailors, and confronted by Mr. Thomas Prout, and the steersman did not look friendly.

"Here, yo' get off's it!" said Gan Waga cheerfully. "Yo' not ables to touch me, I gotted my fingers crossed."

"Lock him up, by honey!" growled Prout. "Take him below and lock him up! Do you mind seeing that it's done, Mr. Hilton?"

"Ho, ho, hoo, hoo-oo-oo!" laughed Gan Waga. "That too funny. Dears, dears! Who say I gotted to be locked ups, Tommy? Yo' not dares!"

"Mr. Honour says you are to be locked up. That's good enough for you, isn't it? Take him below, sir!"

"All rightness," said Gan Waga. "If Hal say I gotted to be locked ups, I s'poses I musts. Dears, dears! Never minds, Tommy. I didn't really mean yo' to boil yo' face, though that wouldn't do it much harms. I don't want this merry old escort, Tom. If I gotted to be locked up, I go with Val all nice and quiet."

"Come along, then," said Val.

Thinking it must be a joke, Val took his prisoner into the saloon, where the engineer and the prince were sitting.

"Is it right that Gan Waga is to be locked up, Mr. Honour?" Val asked. "I took the order from Mr. Prout, but it seemed so unusual—"

The engineer made a gesture, and Val saluted and left the saloon without Gan Waga. Val was on the bridge with the steersman, and the land was looming closer when the Eskimo climbed up to them. He was smoking a cigar, and he offered the steersman one.

"I told Hal Honour I apologise to yo' fo' telling yo' to boil yo' heads," he said. "I gotted to be polite and take orders. Dears, dears! I had a most horribleness talking to, and even my butterfuls Chingy scowl at me and say I a most naughtiness boy. I very sorry, Mr. Prout."

"By honey, I don't think!" said the steersman.

"And I awfulness sorry I barge all that soaps in yo' mouths, Mr. Val," said Gan Waga. "Please forgive me for being so rudeness."

Val grinned as the Eskimo waddled down again to approach the bo'sun, whom he saluted. There was a suspicious gleam in the bo'sun's eye.

"I apologise fo' shoving soaps in yo' mouth, Mr. Maddocks," said Gan Waga. "I apologise most humbleness, and please forgive me."

"Souse me, you're the limit!" said the bo'sun. "I feel more inclined to knock your head sideways than forgive you. Who's been putting you up to this spoof? You're supposed to be in clink, and here you are swanking about with a five-shilling cigar in your mouth. I'll forgive you five or six times, but don't you try this guff on Barry O'Rooney, or you may get a thick ear. Barry isn't too fond of soap at any time, and he just hates eating it. If you knew the things he's going to do to you when he comes back, you'd tie the anchor round your neck and drop overboard. I don't like you when you're polite, for I'm jolly sure there's some twist in it."

Ten minutes later Gan Waga entered the saloon. Hal Honour, always at work, was making a plan, and the engineer did not raise his head. Gan Waga grinned a slow, wide grin.



The door opened and revealed the astonishing spectacle of Gan Waga covered from head to foot in lather from Rupert Thurston's best shaving soap. Through a pair of motoring goggles Gan Waga's eyes sparkled mischievously. (See page 24.)

"I think yo' better locks me ups, Chingy, old dear," he said. "I 'pologises to Prout and Maddock and Val, but I jolly surs I not think I meant it, and I didn't, only yo' told me I gotted to. Dears, dears! And they all forgave me!"

"I expected they would," said Ching Lung. "You know what Hal has said. If you get an order to do any duty about the ship, you're for it!"

"I not minds that, Chingy," said Gan Waga. "Only it not niceness to be waked out of a butterful dream to take orders. And, I say, Chingy, I hope you gotted some shaving-soaps to spare."

"What for? You're not going to start chin whiskers, are you?" asked the prince.

"I think whiskers grow soonerer on an egg than on my faces, Chingy," said the Eskimo. "I want it fo' Ruperts, Chingy. Ho, ho, hoo! There was a bit of an accident, Chingy, and Barry O'Rooney and Ben Maddock and Dave and Val eat most of Rupert's soap. I fedded them with it, old dear."

CHAPTER 2.

The Temple and its Fate!

"THERE'S something we've forgotten, look you, David, that we shall want, and that's a bunch of gas-masks," said Midshipman Hilton.

The aeroplane, guided by the engineer, had just alighted on the level ground near the Cavern of Ghosts, where the Teledi had held their feast of roast pork until the ghosts on the wireless had kicked up such a row that they had bolted.

"Wow! There'll be some niff in there," said Dave. "We'll never be able to face it unless the beggars recovered their courage and came back for the dead pigs they left behind them. If I can't borrow a clothes-peg or a hairpin, I'll stay outside and look at the scenery."

Val warned the engineer that they might expect a horrible stench in the cavern, for he was quite sure that after their scare all the pigs in New Guinea would not tempt the natives to revisit that haunted cave. Honour merely gave his head a shake.

"If it doesn't hum like a top, I shall be surprised," said Val, "for it isn't cold enough in the cave to keep that pork from going mouldy."

Val and Dave approached the entrance to the Cavern of Ghosts rather cautiously, for they were not fond of unpleasant odours; but Hal Honour walked in without the least hesi-

tion. There was no smell at all, except the usual musty odour that pervades all caverns. All that remained of the pigs consisted of bones, white and bare and very much gnawed.

"Dingoes!" said the engineer curtly.

The boys knew that there were wild dogs in the bush, though they had never sighted any of them.

"I'm much obliged to them for coming along and cleaning up for us," said Dave. "I say, chum," he added, in a whisper. "Doesn't Mr. Honour ever do any talking? I don't think I've heard him speak twenty words since he joined us."

"He used to talk to me at first, till I got used to gestures," said Val, "and now, except in the dark, of course, it's quite easy to understand him."

The engineer had gone out again. Barry O'Rooney climbed down from his seat in the aeroplane, carrying a twelve-bore shot-gun. Honour looked down at the sea, where, far below, yacht and submarine lay at anchor. He took out his handkerchief and waved it.

"Great Jupiter, we're losing the plane!" shouted Val, in dismay.

The propeller had started to spin and roar, and the next moment the plane was in the air. As Barry O'Rooney and the engineer gave no sign of surprise and alarm, Val and Dave realised that it was not an accident. The plane glided away seawards, and swung in between the two vessels. It came down on the surface of the water as neatly and gracefully as if it had a skilled pilot at the controls.

"Bedad, that's mate," said Barry O'Rooney. "There goes the launch to pick her up. Good old wireless. Wan day, perhaps, the wireless will get us out of bed in the morning, bath, dress, and shave us, and bring us our breakfasts. And there'll be nothing left to surprise anybody."

Hal Honour uttered one of his enigmatical grunts, and stood looking down at the sea with folded arms. Swinging round, he gazed down the mountain slopes to the jungle with his keen blue eyes.

"Not an aisy place to get at," said Barry. "And if the stuff is here, bhoj, it will be a costly job to get it away."

Hal Honour picked up his powerful electric lamp, and Dave asked Barry why he had brought the gun.

"Bedad, it's no great weight, and Oi thought ut moight come in usefule, sir," answered Barry O'Rooney. "Oi'm not expecting to shoot much game, for there's little of ut so hoigh up."

Once more the engineer strode into the cave. He smiled as he saw the discarded masks and pasteboard heads that had so terrified the Teledi feasters, and had been left behind. He walked quickly, as he always did. The lamp was a very brilliant one and penetrated far into the shadows of the great cavern. Dave and Val had brought flash-lamps, but as yet there was no need to use them.

At last the cavern ended, or seemed to end.

"Another way out," said the engineer.

"Oh, that's what's wanted, is it?" said Val. "Bustle round, Dave, whatever, and watch out for holes in the floor, or you may do the disappearing trick down one of them. I'm going along to the left."

The rugged wall looked utterly solid, and, taking good advice, Dave went cautiously; but in spite of his caution, he was taken by surprise. Suddenly the earth seemed to be falling away under his feet, though it happened to be sand not earth. He dropped his flash-lamp, and uttered a yell for help as he sank waist-deep. His frantic clutches found no hold, and he went slipping downwards in a blinding, choking smother of sand. Seeing the lamp, Val dashed towards it, but pulled up as both Hal Honour and Barry O'Rooney shouted a warning. Val threw himself flat on the edge of the hole.

"Dave, Dave!" he cried. "Are you safe, old man?"

There was no answer except the echo of his own anxious voice, and the faint rustling of the sand that was still trickling into the hole.

The next moment the engineer was lying beside Val, holding the powerful lamp into the cavity. It showed a heap of rubbish and some splintered timber, old and decayed, and almost as rotten as touchwood. The rubbish heaved up, and David Ap Rees struggled out of it, his face very dirty.

"All serene," he said. "I don't think I'm hurt, and I couldn't chi-ike sooner, for I'd got a mouthful of sand. If you'll drop my torch, I'll see where I am."

"Catch it, then," said Val, with intense relief. "My hat! That gave me a twist, for I thought you'd gone for keeps. Phew! This isn't good for nerves." He dropped the lamp, and Dave caught it.

"It's a wonder I didn't go for keeps," he said quietly

"I'm on a sort of stone ladder, and it's so steep on each side I can't see bottom. There has been a rail, but it has rotted away. Hold your breath and listen."

Dave pushed some of the rubbish and wood over the edge into the blackness, and a faint echo of its fall came back. Giving the lamp to Val, the engineer swung himself into the hole.

"Careful, sir," said Dave. "There's not too much room, and the steps may be rotten."

"Up," said the engineer. "Lamp, Val."

The engineer lifted Dave, and passed him up to Barry O'Rooney, and took his lamp. The steps were firm enough, for they had been cut in the solid rock. When he had descended eight or nine of them he discovered a stone banister on either side. He stopped and looked back.

"Careful," he said.

Val translated this as an invitation to follow. Barry O'Rooney, who came after him, gave Dave a helping hand down. Hal Honour waited until they were safely past the unprotected steps, and then continued to descend.

"Bedad, phwat are we going to strike now?" said Barry O'Rooney. "This is a mighty queer sort of cellar, and Oi'll wager there's no luxuries in ut. Ut looks as av the rail at the top was smashed on purpose to kape people out."

"It looks jolly like it," said Dave. "That hole I fell through was boarded up and sanded over. It was thick wood, too, but dead rotten, so it may have been there for ages."

"Perhaps we've found the tomb of the ancient kings of New Guinea, if it had any ancient kings," said Val. "I'm getting excited. Quite nice of you to fall in when you were passing, Dave, look you, for we might have missed it."

Hal Honour had reached the bottom of the steps. His lamp revealed rows of lofty columns, strangely and grotesquely carved. There was soft grey sand under his feet, and under the sand the solid rock.

"More like a temple than a tomb, old son," said Dave. "and I'll take my Sam the natives couldn't build a show like this."

"Hallo!" shouted a voice. "How did you get down there, and what are you doing?"

It was the voice of Prince Ching Lung, and, with his hand to his mouth, Barry O'Rooney bawled back a warning.

"For the sake of Moike, sir, come aisy, and tread like a cat. There's no rail at your end, and a thirty-fut dhrop on aich side. There's a rail lower down, and then ut's all safe. But take it aisy at the shart, or you'll be a mortuary specimen av you slip."

"I'll watch it," said the prince. "Wait till I get Rupert."

Presently they were standing together examining the carvings on one of the columns—weird faces, some human, and others of animals that could never have existed except in the imagination of the sculptor.

"Something absolutely fresh," said Rupert Thurston.

"Fresh to us, I mean, though the place must be ages old. I don't think anything of the kind has ever been found in New Guinea before. But don't expect any loot, for I'll wager the blacks looted it ages ago."

"But the hole was covered up, sir," said Val. "Dave happened to step on it and fell through."

Hal Honour had hurried on. He was not greatly interested in ancient temples, but he wanted to find a way out. The others wandered round. The place was oval shaped, and there were hundreds of columns, but no sign of a door or window. In the centre, surrounded by stone columns about eight feet high, was the great altar. Above, also in stone, and showing traces of having been richly gilded at one time, was an effigy of the sun with many rays, the oldest symbol of worship known to antiquarians. The shorter columns were hollowed at the top into cups to hold oil for the burning cressets, but there was no sign of either door or window.

Val and Dave roamed about, searching for loot.

"There must be a way out," said Ching Lung. "In spite of that big stone staircase, I can't believe that they fagged all the way up the mountain and through the cave."

"It looks as if Hal has chucked it up," said Rupert Thurston. "It seems to me—"

"Chi-ike!" shouted Val.

"Halves, if you've found any giddy treasure, old bean," cried Dave.

"I haven't found any treasure, only a hole," said Val. "It's like a big crack in the wall, but I can squeeze through."

"Hold hard, for I don't trust you," laughed Dave. "You might find a ton of diamond tararas, and pocket them on the quiet."

Dave squeezed through after his chum. The air felt decidedly fresher. Val flashed his lamp round him and then upward. Against the darkness he saw a faint patch of green. It was an opening, but he did not think it was the sort of opening that would please the engineer, for it was barely three feet wide and less than two feet high, and a creeper grew over it. Much higher up was a second opening, even smaller, through which the bats made their way in and out. Val pulled the creeper aside, and saw below him the sea and the two vessels.

"Drawn blank, Dave," he said. "What's it like your side?"

"All rock, old son."

Ching Lung managed to wriggle in, but it was hopeless for Rupert Thurston, Barry O'Rooney, and the burly engineer to try.

"Well, Ching?" asked Harold Honour.

"There's a sort of window, and less than a square yard of it, I guess," answered Ching Lung.

"Yes?"

"It's facing the sea, and right opposite our anchorage."

"Good!" said Harold Honour.

He put away a little ivory rule after he had measured the thickness of rock at the fissure. He slowly paced the whole width of the temple. Then he took out his pocket-book and pencil and looked up at the roof. Hal Honour was not thinking of the strange beauty of the temple or of the long-dead people who had dug it out of the rock and carved its columns, for such things did not trouble him at all; but he was very pleased about something. Closing the book, he swept his arm round him.

"My reservoir, gentlemen," he said.

And he said no more; but, picking up his lamp, he mounted the steps and vanished through the hole in the roof.

"What a man!" said the prince, with a laugh.

"But what on earth does he mean?" asked Dave, bewildered. "What sort of a reservoir?"

"He means that if you're going to get any loot out of this old temple you'd better get it quickly, my son," said the prince; "for Mr. Harold Honour is the biggest hustler on earth. He's come here for oil, and I'll bet he'll start boring for it before the day is out. But what a notion! I suppose he'll concrete up that hole and bore through the temple wall for his pipe, and then take the pipes down the cliff to the tankers. And won't this old temple hold a few gallons! I don't think the idea would have come into my head in forty years, but Hal got it in once. And he'll get the oil. He says there are lakes of it under the cave, and if Hal is after the oil hasn't got an earthly."

"That's true, sir, bedad!" said Barry O'Rooney. "And Oi reckon this ould temple having gone out of business, so to spake, ut won't suffer by becoming an oil-can on a large scale. But av Oi was Misther Hal Honour Oi'd kape ut jolly quiet. Some of those ould fossils who dig round in tombs and are able to read live letters and laundry bills written on Babylonian bricks would shoot him on sight av they knew he'd turned this ancient show into a paraffin-bottle."

"It does seem a shame, though," said Val. "We'll get some flashlight photographs of it before he starts squirting his smelly petrol into it, anyhow, Dave. There's a sort of writing on the pillars, and it would be jolly interesting to know what it's all about."

"Take my advice and don't, sir," said Barry O'Rooney. "Hal wants this place for his oil-tank, so let him kape ut. Pretend you never saw ut, or put foot in ut. Ut isn't aisy to be sentimental and thrade in oil at the same toime, and oil is powerful useful sthuff. And, besides, when the well runs droy they can have the temple back almost as good as new, barring the smell. Ut's loikely, bedad, that av the Government knew we'd found this show they'd jump on Hal's notion. Ignorance is bliss, sor; and, never having heard about ut, they'll never miss it. As the poet said, petrol has a nasty smell, but ut's the sthuff to own and the sthuff to sell."

The engineer was not alone, for the aeroplane had winged its way back to the yacht under wireless control and returned with four passengers from the submarine. The men had gathered round the engineer to examine a plan he had drawn. They followed him down into the temple. When they came back one of them, who was Ferrers Lord's oil expert, was chuckling and rubbing his hands.

"A great idea of Honour's—a marvellous idea, Mr. Thurston!" he said. "When we've mended up that flaw you can fill her chock-full, with no more risk of leaking or bursting than the moon has. No pumping needed, either. We'll put the refinery at the bottom of the cliff, and run the stuff straight into the tankers. But it's a grand idea, for it

means we've got a thumping great reservoir almost ready made and free of cost. And the oil's here—and not far down, either. This is a scoop!"

"Did you hear anything about the platinum, Mr. Myders?" asked Ching Lung.

"Yes; Coston got the samples, but they're not good," answered the oil expert. "He thinks they're a bit of a wash-out, and that it wouldn't pay for the working. The oil's the stuff. We can do with lots more British oil, and we shall get it here; though it's queer to have to come so high up for it. Amazing what a lot of cash and labour Honour's idea will save. We thought at first of building a reservoir up here, but a fortune would have gone getting the materials up. This is as simple as eating pie."

After hearing this statement Val decided to have no further regrets as to the fate of the mysterious temple.

CHAPTER 3.

The Shareholders!

DURING the next few days Val and Dave had proof that Mr. Harold Honour was the biggest hustler on earth. A big tramp steamer from London had come in behind the shelter of the reef. She was packed with goods and crowded with skilled workmen. A line of iron pipes appeared on the cliff face as if by magic, and buildings and great steel tanks seemed to spring up at the base of the cliff like mushrooms in a single night. And then in came another boat filled with coolies.

Boring went on night and day beside the entrance to the Cavern of Ghosts, and the tireless engineer actually took his meals standing, and seldom returned to the yacht to sleep. At five o'clock in the morning Val was roused by a knocking at his cabin door.

"Tumble up, sir, and show a leg!" said the bo'sun's voice. "If you want to see the gush, show a leg!"

Maddock passed on to Dave's door and roused that drowsy young gentleman.

"I wish you'd let the rotter gush at a decent hour, Mr. Maddock!" he said.

"It ain't my gusher, sir," said the bo'sun; "and I only wish it was, souise me! Stay in bed if you don't want to see it!"

Dave did want to see it. He hurried into the galley with Val and obtained a cup of hot coffee. Barry O'Rooney, only half awake and grumbling, was piloting the plane.

"A noise toime to be hauled out of bed just to see some dirty, black paraffin and mud squirt out of a poipe!" he growled.

"If you like to go back I'll take the bus along," said Val. "You weren't dug out to punt us over."

"Sure Oi was that same; but, bedad, Oi don't moind a bit," said Barry, with a yawn. "They've had to shove the landing-place back, and ut's a bit thricky till you know ut. And here comes the morning, and another red-hot day to follow and bake us harrd."

As the sun came up Barry O'Rooney headed for the peaks. If Dave and Val thought it early to leave their beds, others had left theirs a good deal earlier. There was a crowd round the steel derricks that did not add to the beauty of the scenery—the derricks, that is, not the crowd; though that was composed chiefly of men with dirty clothes and dirtier faces. Ching Lung and Rupert Thurston were there, and so, too, was the oil expert, who was probably the dirtiest of them all.

"Stand back, please!" he shouted.

He darted in, and then darted back again. The boys did not see what he actually did; but there was a sudden, rushing noise, and a huge jet of dark-coloured liquid gushed into the air and fell back to earth in a great, bubbling pool, and a ghastly smell; and the spectators cheered, except the oil expert, who dipped his hand into the black, greasy stuff and inhaled its fragrance with as much apparent pleasure as if he was smelling a bunch of violets.

"Fine stuff!" he said. "Beautiful stuff! Now she's feeling it! Some gusher, what? Oil, oil, nothing like oil! That's the finest fountain that ever squirted, Mr. Thurston. Mr. Honour, you've struck rich and good, so let me shake your hand."

"No, thanks!" said the engineer.

Hal Honour climbed into the aeroplane, and went home to bed, which made it necessary for the bo'sun to bring the machine back.

"A gusher isn't very exciting, chum," said Val; "but, of course, its gushing money all the time, and that temple filled with oil right up to the neck will be worth more than eighteenpence, I guess. I'm going back next trip, if there's room for me."

As Hal Honour had scarcely slept for days, Dave was surprised to see him at the breakfast table looking spruce and fit and the least tired person on board the yacht.

"Your gusher is still giving strong umpteen gallons to the second, Hal, and if you can trust the expert it will keep up the pace for umpteen years without getting out of breath," said Ching Lung. "Well, you've struck it. I don't think anything like it ever happened so quickly."

"I can smell it from here," said Val.
The engineer laughed, pushed back his cup and plate, and stretched out his hand to Rupert Thurston.

"Why, you lump of perpetual motion, you're not clearing out, are you?" cried Thurston.

"At once," answered the engineer. "Job's finished, so why not?"

"Greased lightning is a huge snail compared with you," said Ching Lung. "Good-bye, Hal, old chap, and we're jolly sorry to lose you."

Honour shook hands with the two boys, and then pulled a couple of long envelopes out of the breast-pocket of his reefers jacket.

"I nearly forgot," he said smiling. "So long!"
Val whistled when he opened the envelope and saw what it contained, and Dave's face was a study.

"What's the matter?" asked the prince. "You look as if you'd got a couple of death-warrants. Has the chief ordered you home?"

"Something lots more cheerful!" grinned Val. "I don't know what Dave has got, but I've got script for five hundred shares in the New Guinea Oil and Development Syndicate, all paid up."

"Mine's the same," said Dave. "A present from Mr. Ferrers Lord, of course, though there's no note or anything to say so. How brickish!"

"Lucky barges," said Ching Lung. "And the old

gusher is gushing for you all the time till it peters out. Perhaps you won't object to the smell of it so much, Val, especially when the dividends come rolling in."

After saying good-bye to the saloon people, the big engineer strode down the alleyway to the gluepot. The yacht being at anchor, Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and Joe Toggle, the carpenter, were breakfasting together, a thing that could seldom take place when the Lord of the Deep was at sea.

Harold Honour dumped a bunch of envelopes down beside Prout's plate.

"Sort them out," he said. "I'm leaving."
"What's all this about, by honey?" said Prout as the door closed. "One for you, Barry, one for you, Joe, one for me, and one for Ben! I don't like the look of this."

"Perhaps we've all got the sack, bedad," said Barry O'Rooney; "but O'm going to change wan oie. Phwat the—Thunder and gridirons! Poive hundred pounds—Barry O'Rooney—New Guinea Oil and Development Company! Whoosh! Hooray!"

They had all been treated alike, and they beamed at one another.

"And, bedad, the oil expert chap is talking about hundred-per-cent dividends!" said Barry. "He says it really cost so little, ut can't pay loss, for there's oceans of oil. Hurroo! Barry, me bould bhoiv, you'll be able to retire to ould Ballybumion yet, and live loike a millionaire in a brand-new castle!"

"If you'd like to go now, souse me," scowled the boss. "You can have the lot! We'd hand over the shares joyfully to get rid of you!"

THE END.

(Another of these amusing yarns next week, entitled: "THE WHEEZE THAT WOULDN'T WORK!" By Sidney Drew. Don't miss it.)

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