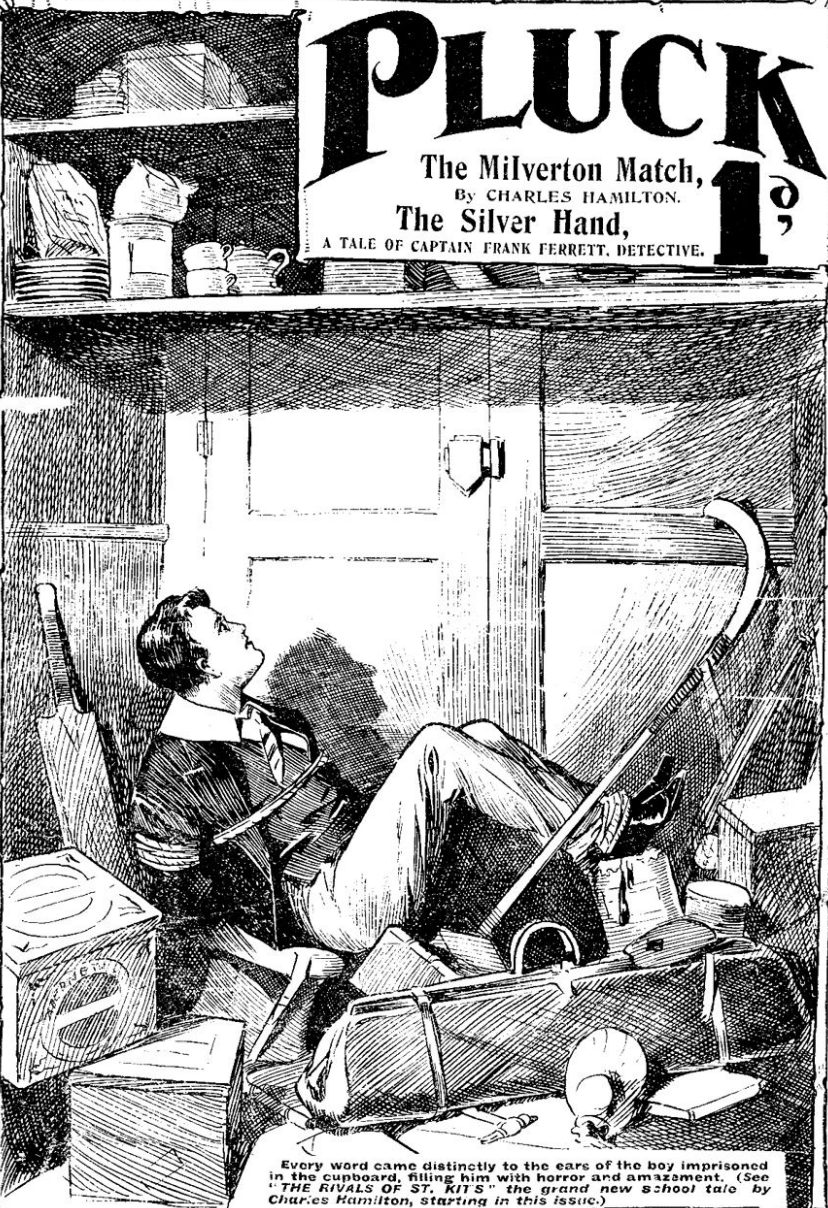


Grand School Tale by Charles Hamilton.

PLUCK

The Milverton Match,
By CHARLES HAMILTON.
The Silver Hand,
A TALE OF CAPTAIN FRANK FERRETT, DETECTIVE.



Every word came distinctly to the ears of the boy imprisoned in the cupboard, filling him with horror and amazement. (See "THE RIVALS OF ST. KITS" the grand new school tale by Charles Hamilton, starting in this issue.)



[VOL. 5, No. 116, NEW SERIES.]

THE FIRST LONG, COMPLETE STORY.

The Milverton Match.

A School Tale
dealing with Jack Blake, Augustus,
and Figgins & Co.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.



CHAPTER I.

On the Football Field.

"THAT'S done!" exclaimed Jack Blake, of St. Jim's, flinging down his pen with a sigh of relief. "Nearly finished, Herries? Buck up, old son, or the Rats will have bagged all the front seats for the match!"

He jumped up, kicking his chair backwards, with a crash, in his relief at having finished his lines.

Herries was still scribbling away industriously. Digby and D'Arcy were looking out of the window. It was a cold, bright, winter afternoon.

"What an utter beast Lathom was to detain us to-day," continued Blake, "when the Milverton fellows are coming to play the school. But it's just like him. Figgins & Co. will have been on the ground long ago. Aren't you nearly finished, Herries?"

"Nearly," said Herries absently. "Shut up a minute! Exanimique auro corpus vendebat Achilles. Hurrah! That's the last! I've done the beastly thing. Now, let's be off, and if the Rats have collared the front seats, we shall have to shift them, that's all. It's still half an hour to the kick-off."

Jack Blake stuck his cap on the back of his curly head.

"Right you are!" he exclaimed. "Come on, my infants. Follow your uncle!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 hurried out of that famous apartment, and left the School House, and raced each other down to the football ground, which was already crowded.

It was an important day at St. Jim's. Milverton College were coming to play the school, and the Milverton match was one of the most important of the football season to the Saints.

Milverton were a very strong side, and St. Jim's generally had all their work cut out to hold their own against their rivals in the Soccer field. And on the present occasion the home side were not up to their usual quality. Even the

most sanguine of the Saints had lurking doubts about victory in the coming match.

The old rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's was really the cause of it. Kildare, head of the School House and captain of St. Jim's, had thrown himself heart and soul into the task of making up an eleven that would do the school credit. But Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was far from backing him up as he ought to have done.

The first eleven was composed of six School House fellows and five belonging to the New House, and of late the friction between the two Houses had made itself felt in football matters. Kildare, who knew that in football, as in everything else, a house divided against itself was not likely to stand, did his best to smooth things over, but he awaited the Milverton match with a good deal of anxiety.

All St. Jim's was turning out for the match, both Houses being on the ground in full force. Long before the time assigned for the kick-off, the juniors thronged the field, and Figgins & Co. had ensconced themselves in the front seats in the pavilion. Figgins & Co. were the leaders of the New House juniors, deadly rivals of Blake and his chums, and they had arrived on the ground first. Blake and Herries had had the misfortune to be detained by their Form-master, and Dig and D'Arcy had remained in with them while they

struggled through their lines, and so Study No. 6 were very late in turning up.

"Hallo! There's the bounders!" exclaimed Figgins suddenly. The long-legged chief of the New House juniors stood up and pointed towards the School House chums, who were coming up, red and puffing. "Look out, you chaps! I shouldn't wonder if the cads try to get these seats. We're going to stop here!"

"What-ho!" said the Co. together. And Kerr and Fatty Wynn prepared for war.

Figgins was not mistaken as to the intentions of Study No. 6.

"They've bagged the seats," said Blake. "I thought they would! We're going to shift them."

The
First and
Opening Chapters
of a Splendid
New School Tale
starts on
Page 30.

"They'll be turned out, I expect, before the match, when the doctor comes," remarked Digby.

"Perhaps. Figgy doesn't seem to think so. Anyway, we're going to shove them out now, just to show that we're cock House at St. Jim's," declared Blake.

"Buck up, School House!" shouted Herries.
And a crowd of juniors rushed to oust Figgins & Co.
Bravely the New House juniors stood to their guns.
"Rescue, New House!" yelled Figgins, hitting out right and left.

But the School House were in greater force, and they rushed the mighty Figgins out, and hurled him ignominiously forth, and hurled the Co. after him.

Figgins & Co. rolled out on the grass, and the chums of Study No. 6 took their places, with a crowd of School House juniors round them to guard the position so gallantly won.

Figgins picked himself up, looking considerably ruffled, and glared wrathfully at the intruders who had ejected him. Blake kissed his hand to the New House leader.

"Thanks for keeping our places warm," he called out.
"Sorry we can't have you in here, Figgy. We ain't particular, but we bar you New House wasters. There's some things we can't stand, you know."

"I'll have you out of that before long," declared Figgy. And he busied himself with gathering the New House juniors for a grand attack.

But Figgy's luck was out, for as he returned, fairly on the war-path, a cheer announced the arrival of the captain of the school, and hostilities had necessarily to be postponed.

Figgins shook his fist at Blake, who replied with a smile of exasperating sweetness. The chums were loudly cheering Kildare, captain of St. Jim's. Very handsome and fit the Irish lad looked, tall and strong and steady, a host in himself on the football field. There were cheers, too, for Monteith, who was with him, but much fainter.

The feeling between Kildare and the head prefect of the New House was one of deep dislike. Kildare had tried many times to get on better terms with the prefect, but he had never succeeded. There was too much envy and malice in Monteith's heart for friendship between them to be possible. And a late occurrence at St. Jim's had intensified the bitterness. Monteith's chum, Sleath, had been treasurer of the school club, and had used the football subscriptions to pay a gambling debt. He had attempted to throw his own guilt upon Jack Blake, and had been found out and expelled from the school. This was a heavy blow to the New House, and to Monteith in particular, for he had backed up Sleath through thick and thin. Kildare had helped to get at the truth, and Monteith never forgave it.

"Monteith looks sour, doesn't he?" said Blake. "He hasn't got over the Sleath business yet. He's been hunting for trouble lately. I wonder Kildare stands him. I wouldn't."

Monteith glanced towards the chums.
"What are you youngsters doing there?" he exclaimed. There was a glint in his eyes; he was always glad of a chance to come down upon Study No. 6. "Get out, at once!" Blake's face fell.

It was impossible to defy the order of a prefect, even of the rival House, but it went sorely against the grain to give up the position won by force of arms against the enemy. He ventured to protest.

"I say, Monteith, we ain't doing any harm here," he exclaimed.

"Get out!"
"Oh, rats! Why can't you ever let us alone? You're like a giddy old hen, always pecking at somebody."

Monteith turned to Kildare with a sneer on his sour face.
"Are you going to let those kids remain there, Kildare?" The captain of the school signed to Blake to get out.

"Oh, all right!" said Blake. "Anything to oblige you, Kildare. You're a good boy, and I like to make you happy."

"Scout!" said the captain laconically.
"That's all right. I suppose I may stop to tie my shoelace? I don't see where the giddy hurry comes in. Oh, all right, kid, I'm going!"

And Study No. 6 beat a retreat.
"Yah!" hooted the New House juniors. "Had to come out, hadn't you? Serve you right for shoving yourselves in! Yah!"

"Oh, we've got to shut those cackling geese up!" said Blake. "Sock into them, and show Monteith we don't care a rap for him."

And with a good deal of struggling and scuffling the School House juniors hustled their foes further off, and packed themselves close to the ropes to get a good view of the ground.

"Keep quiet there, you youngsters!" called out Kildare, looking out of the pavilion. And again Figgins had to abandon a counter-attack and give the School House rest.

"Hallo, here's Kidd!" exclaimed Blake. "Cheer him!" They cheered Mr. Kidd heartily. He was the master of

the School House, and a great athlete. He was to referee the coming match, and the boys gave him a ringing welcome. Mr. Kidd, from whom the School House juniors derived their appellation of the "Kids," smiled and nodded cheerily to the youngsters.

Blake looked at his big silver watch.
"Time the Milvertons were here," he exclaimed. "Hallo, that must be their brake! Hurray! They look a fine lot, don't they?"

"I hope we shall like them," said Digby.
"So do I, but I have my doubts, as Kildare has let so many of these New House wasters into the team. I ask you plainly, how can we expect to win with five of those horrid bouncers in the eleven?"

Blake propounded this poser with due seriousness; chiefly, it must be confessed, for the benefit of Figgins & Co., who were close at hand. Figgy, of course, fired up at once at the aspersion cast upon his House.

"Oh, shut up!" he exclaimed. "If we pull off the match, it will be our fellows that do it. What do you School House kids know about football?"

"More than you could teach us, my son," said Blake scornfully. "Look at Monteith. I suppose you call him a footballer?"

"Better than any on your measly side."
"I believe," said Blake, with an air of reflection—"I believe he did kick a goal once."

"Once!" howled Figgins. "You—you mongrel! I'll give you one!"

"Order! Order there!"
"Chuck it! Here's the Head!"

Dr. Holmes, Head of St. Jim's, was coming down to the pavilion. Mr. Ratcliff of the New House was with him. But the Rats did not cheer their housemaster, as the Kids had done. Mr. Ratcliff was a solemn gentleman, with a detestation of sports, and the New House juniors were not in the least proud of him.

And now the time for the kick-off was drawing nigh. Loud cheers greeted the appearance of the teams in the field; St. Jim's in red and white, and Milverton in black stripes. Every eye was upon the two captains as they tossed for choice of goal, and the crowd cheered as Kildare was seen pointing to the end from which the wind was blowing.

York, the Milverton skipper, kicked off, and the game commenced.

CHAPTER 2.

The Match with Milverton.

MILVERTON were out for scalps, as they soon showed. The kick-off was followed by a rush into the home half, before which the red and white fell back.

York, manfully backed up by his followers, brought the leather right up to the home goal, and the Milvertons were quickly besieging the St. Jim's citadel.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "That looks lively. Why don't they clear—oh? Oh, my only Aunt Matilda, they're never going to let them score!"

It looked like it.
The Milverton attack was hard and incessant, and several times Rushton, in goal, had his hands full to save.

Rushton was a School House fellow, and so Blake and his chums cheered him vociferously; as, indeed, he deserved, for he was playing up nobly against great difficulties.

It was in backs that the Saints were weakest, as could be easily seen. But presently a full-back managed to send the ball out and give the forwards a chance. Figgins & Co. roared as Monteith was seen to take the leather up the field.

The whole forward line broke away, and, passing the ball skilfully one to another, brought it over the half-way line. Kildare was at centre-forward, and, receiving the ball, he made a fine run, and returned it to Monteith at inside-right as he was attacked. Monteith sent it out to Baker, who was speedily charged down, but not before he had got rid of the ball. Again Monteith had the leather at his feet, and he raced it goalward.

The Milverton backs had marked him, and Kildare's brow was for a moment anxious.

"To me, Monteith—to me!" he cried.
The prefect took no notice.

Kildare had a good opening, and the ball should have been passed to him as a matter of course, but Monteith was rather bent upon making a coup himself than upon playing the game. He believed he could take the goal, and he rushed on, risking the backs, who were closing in upon him, and Kildare gritted his teeth.

The chance was gone. But, no! Before he could be tackled, Monteith, with a low, fast shot, sent the ball whizzing in, and it just beat the Milverton goalie.

"Goal!"

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
A Splendid Tale of the "Red and White"
By Jack North.

AND
"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventures
By Max Barratt.

IN "PLUCK" P.

The leather was in the net, and the Saints round the ropes roared themselves hoarse.

"Goal!"

In spite of the inauspicious opening of the game, it was first blood to St. Jim's.

"Hurrah—hurrah!"

Loudest of all rang the stentorian tones of the lanky Figgins.

But Kildare's face was grim as he walked back to the centre of the field. Monteith's attempt had materialised, but it was only a fluke, and his success did not excuse the prefect for throwing away a certainty for a chance. But, in view of the goal that had been taken, Kildare could not very well say anything. Nothing succeeds like success, and the captain was almost certain to be misunderstood if he was down on Monteith just after the latter had sent St. Jim's one up.

But Monteith's example was not without result. His play had been purely selfish, and he was thinking a good deal more of getting credit for himself than of winning a victory for the school.

The others understood it, too; and, while Kildare's friends resented it, the New House members of the team were inclined to back up their chief through everything.

Milverton kicked off again, and showed that they were determined to avenge their check. They attacked vigorously, and, as before, the home goal was quickly besieged. Again the failure of the home backs was apparent. The Milvertons went through them easily, and this time Rusden in goal was not so successful. A whizzing shot from York found the net, and the score was level.

Jack Blake shook his head solemnly.

"The defence is no good," he exclaimed; "it's rotten! What did I tell you? It comes through sticking those New House wasters in!"

And this was, in fact, accurate. Three of the backs were New House fellows, and they were the three most conspicuous failures in the team.

Monteith and Baker, in the forward line, were splendid, and that could not be denied. But the three New House backs were utterly outclassed by the Milverton men.

"They can't play football for toffee," went on Blake.

"Kildare will kick them out after this, you'll see. If I'd been captain I'd have fired them long ago. But Kildare's so afraid of being thought to favour his own House."

"All the same, I fancy this is the last time they'll play for the school," said Herries sagely. "They can't hold the Milvertons. The match is a goner."

Kildare in his heart thought pretty much the same. But it is no business of a football captain to show discouragement, and the captain of St. Jim's played up with a determined cheerful face.

And, indeed, so far as forward play was concerned the Saints shone in the match. Whenever the forwards had a chance they made the most of it; but as the Milverton defence was sound the result came to little.

And towards half-time, in spite of all Kildare's efforts, the visitors put the ball into the home goal again, and Milverton were two up.

The score was still two to one when the whistle went for the interval.

The game had been a hard one, and both sides were in need of a rest. During the interval Kildare arranged a slight change in the team. If the home defence was no better in the second half than in the first, the captain knew that the match might as well be given away.

Baker and Drake were put into the half-back line, and Jones and Rake, of the New House, put forward. Monteith snuffed impatiently at the change.

"This is a nice time of day to be making alterations," he said, with a sneer.

"If we don't strengthen the backs we are done for," said Kildare. "I had no idea that Jones and Rake and Sefton were in such bad form."

"I don't see that they are in such bad form. The Milvertons are the toughest team we ever tackled; that's why we don't make a better show."

"There's something in that; but—well, it's no good talking now."

Monteith's eyes glistened.

"You mean, I suppose, that if it wasn't too late you'd leave out some of the present members of the team."

"Of course I should."

"Belonging to my House, of course!" added Monteith, with another sneer.

Kildare looked him in the eyes.

"That's got nothing to do with it," he said. "Anyway, we needn't discuss it now. You are not going to draw me into a dispute in the middle of a game, if that's what you want."

Monteith bit his lip; but just then the teams had to go on again, and he had no time to make a rejoinder.

The whistle went for the resumption of hostilities, and Kildare kicked off. The Saints "bucked up" now for all they were worth. The wind was against them after the change of ends, and the enemy were already one up, so the home players had all their work out to hold their own. And it became gradually evident that the task was too big for them.

The changes made by Kildare had improved the team, and the defence was sounder, but the Milverton men were fairly on the warpath. They had most of the play, and were always continually in possession of the ball, and their attacks were hot and heavy and incessant.

Bravely the Saints played up against them; but, though there were brilliant flashes of play on the home side, it was evident that on the whole they were outclassed. Even on the rare occasions when the home forwards got away with the ball, the Milverton defence was sound, and refused to give way. And presently the ball went into the home goal again, making the visitors three up.

Faces were lengthening round the field. That St. Jim's would be licked seemed almost certain now, and that they would be licked with a wide margin of goals was very probable.

"Oh, it's all over bar shouting!" said Blake desperately. "I never saw such a rotten show. Monteith don't back Kildare up a little bit." He doesn't care if we lose the match. He's a howling rotter!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Figgins. "What do you know about it? Who kicked the goal, eh—the only one we've taken?"

Figgins disliked Monteith cordially enough, but he felt bound to stand up for his House captain against his detractors in the rival House.

"A blooming fluke!" said Blake.

"The only goal," taunted Figgins—"the only goal! You talk when your captain takes one, Mr. Blooming Clever Blake! Shut up till then!"

Blake opened his mouth to reply, but instead of doing so he yelled "Hurrah!" And the whole school was yelling, too. Kildare had penetrated the obstinate defence of the Milvertons at last, and sent the ball whizzing in, beating the goalkeeper all the way.

"Goal!" yelled all St. Jim's, in relief and delight.

There was a chance yet. But the Milvertons were still a goal ahead, and seemed determined to remain so.

The game wore on with varying aspect, full of liveliness and excitement nearly all the time, but the score remained unaltered. And when at last it was altered it was by the Milverton men. With a fast, combined attack they wedged their way goalward, and rained in shots upon Rusden, who let one pass him at last.

Milverton were four up! After that St. Jim's gave up hope of either winning or equalising, and they were right. When the whistle finally blew the score was still four for the visitors, and two for the Saints, and Milverton had beaten the home team hollow.

CHAPTER 3.

Jack Blake has an idea.

STUDY No. 6 were busy. The four chums were roasting chestnuts and eating them, a very pleasant occupation on a cold winter's day. Their talk ran on the match and the defeat of St. Jim's by the visiting team from Milverton. They were agreed that the loss of the match was due to the presence of New House players in the team, and that something must be done. Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy discussed the subject at length. Blake was unusually silent.

"What are you thinking about, you old image?" asked Herries at last, giving Blake a thump on the shoulder which effectually roused him from his reverie.

Blake gave a yell.

"Ass! You've dislocated my scapula!"

"Never mind. It'll grow again. What are you puzzling your poor little brain about? You haven't spoken for nearly five minutes, and that's a sure sign that there's something wrong. Get it off your chest, my son!"

"Look here," said Jack Blake seriously, "the school's getting in a bad state."

"Right-ho!"

"The School House is cock house at St. Jim's, and it's us—we—who have made it so, when the seniors would simply have let our side down."

"Rather!"

"The New House is altogether too cheery, and they put on as many airs as—as D'Arcy does fancy waistcoats."

"Oh, woe! I say, don't you know!" protested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Worst of all, old Kildare has let the New House rotters

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
A Splendid School Tale (Herts Lond),
By Jack North.

AND

"HOLD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Turpin.

IN "PLUCK" I!

into the first eleven, and we've been licked on the football field."

"We have."
 "Something's got to be done."
 "It has—I mean, it has."
 "And we've got to do it."
 "Hear, hear!"

"Where," said Blake, getting warm—"where, I'd like to know, is there a bigger ass, a more absolutely howling cad and a faster, than Monteith, of the New House?"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

Dig and D'Arcy giggled.

"What are you silly geese cackling at?" demanded Herries.

"Oh, nothing!" said Dig. "Go on, Blake! Herries has answered your question."

"Look here," said Herries wrathfully, "what are you getting at? I said, 'Hear, hear!' not 'Here, here!' If I had said 'Here—'"

"Here," said Blake, "chuck it! How dare you wrangle when your Uncle Blake is talking? Kids, your uncle is a great man, and he has an idea!"

"Spout it out, then," said Herries crossly. "You're so beastly long-winded. Cut the cackle and come to the horses."

"Well, here it is," said Blake. "St. Jim's is getting into a general state of dry rot. We've got to do something, and I know how to do it. The juniors are altogether too much sat upon in this school. Our opinions ain't treated with the respectful attention they deserve. The doctor sometimes consults Kildare about things, and even Monteith. He never consults us."

"Nevah," said D'Arcy. "Weally inconsiderate of him, don't you know."

"We are passed over," said Blake. "We think a good deal more about the honour of the school than our elders, who are mostly asses. Yet we are never listened to. We shall be consulted about the football. If we went into Herries's study to give him some advice, what would he do?"

"Chuck us out," said Herries.

"Exactly! We are only juniors, liable to be chucked out. It's scandalous! But, as somebody said once—I forget whether it was Solomon or Julius Cæsar—the pen is mightier than the sword."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," remarked Herries.

"You never do see anything, my son, until it's pointed out to you," said Blake politely. "What is it that has always stood against tyranny, and voiced the rights of oppressed minorities? What is it that makes its voice heard in every house, in every street?"

"The phonograph?" hazarded Herries.

"The Press," he said, with dignity.

The chums looked decidedly puzzled.

"The press?" repeated Herries. "What press are you talking about? If you mean a clothes-press—"

"Ass! To put it in plain and simple language, suitable to your intellect, we are going to start a newspaper."

They stared at him for a minute in amazement.

"A newspaper!" gasped Herries.

"Yes; a newspaper. Why not?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "The ideah is weally stummin'. Blake, you are a clevah chap."

Blake put his hand upon his heart and bowed.

"D'Arcy," he said, "is a clew he proud. To be pronounced clevah by a young gentleman of your intellectual attainments is an honour I keenly appreciate."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said D'Arcy.

"Well, it does seem a good idea," said Herries thoughtfully. "But newspapers are generally printed, ain't they?"

How are we going to get it printed?"

"Herries, old man, your brain-box wants oiling, or something. We're not going to print it. It will be written, of course, by hand."

"Oh, I see!"

"Glad you do. We need only have one copy, which will be passed around to readers. Then it will come home to roost in the editorial office—otherwise known as Study No. 6."

"But lots of school newspapers are printed," said Digby.

"I don't see—"

"Let me explain, my gentle youth. Those things cost money, and are run by the seniors. They contain all kinds of silly rot, as you'd know if you'd ever looked into 'em. The big chaps mander on, soft-soaping one another, and the juniors don't get the shadow of a ghost of a look-in."

"Yes, that's so," said Herries, with a nod. "School magazines are usually awful pilles."

"Well, ours is going to be a corker," declared Blake.

"Nothing dull or heavy; no giddy reports of dull twaddle from the school debating society, and that rot. A really

first-class production, you know. And we shall go specially strong on football, and slating the New House cads."

"That sounds all right," said Herries. "Who's to be editor?"

Blake gave him a smile of condescension.

"I suppose there's not much doubt about that," he said.

"Who's idea is it?"

"Well, that's all very well; but you're the youngest kid here."

"Well, I've got most brains; you must admit that."

"Rats!"

"Oh, Blake's editor," said Digby; "that's only fair. But we shall all contribute."

"Of course," said Blake graciously. "And I shall appoint all of you sub-editors. I don't know exactly how many sub-editors a paper has, but three won't be too many."

"All right," said Herries; "I'm agreeable. When shall we bring the first number out?"

"We'll start on it at once. There's no time like the present."

"What about letting the others into it?"

"We'll tell the House about it, but it's to be kept a dead secret from the Gov. House, of course. Figgins & Co. would think nothing of boning the idea."

"But we shall have to let them see it, or they won't know how we've run them down."

"Yes; but not till we spring it on them suddenly. Now, here's plenty of foolscap, so let's make a start."

Blake drew the paper towards him, and picked up a pen. He gnawed the handle for some moments thoughtfully.

"I say, what shall we call it?" he asked.

The chums hadn't thought of that. They wrinkled their brows in deep reflection.

"The 'Anti-New House,'" suggested Herries.

"Too clumsy."

"The 'Rough on Rats,'" suggested Digby.

"That's better, but it won't do. We don't want it to appear too partisan. We're going to represent the whole of St. Jim's, of course."

"Call it 'The Saint,' then," said D'Arcy.

"Ah, you've got it! 'The Saint' will do all."

There was agreed upon, and Blake proceeded to draw up the full title.

"The Saint," the Official School Magazine of St. Jim's, Edited by Jack Blake, Esq., S.S., and published in the cork house at St. Jim's."

"Good!" said Herries. "But what does S.S. stand for?"

"Study Six, of course. Must have some initials after the name; makes it look more imposing, you know. Now for the contents."

And Study No. 6 were soon hard at work, with a deep thoughtfulness and attention which, we regret to say, they seldom bestowed upon their lessons. And they remained at work, quite contented with their new occupation, for a long time; till, missing them from their usual haunts, other juniors of their House came to look for them. Percy Mellish put in his head at the door.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Swotting? What's come over you?"

"Git!" said Blake laconically.

"What?"

"Clear!"

"But—"

"Bunk!"

"Sha'n't! I—"

"Mizzle!"

"I—"

Biff! A cushion, deftly hurled, smote the intrusive Percy upon the chest, and sent him out into the passage again in a heap.

"We must teach these disrespectful youths not to interrupt the editorial labours," said Blake. "How are we to write if we— Crumbs!"

The sudden ejaculation was caused by the return of the cushion with a whizz. It caught Blake fairly in the neck, and he went over backwards with his chair, followed by the inkpot and most of the first number of "The Saint." Percy looked in, and gave a yell of laughter.

"How's that, umpire?"

And then he bolted, before the chums could get at him.

Blake picked himself up. There was ink upon his face, and his collar, and wrath in his eye.

"I'll lay him when I get hold of him!" he exclaimed.

"There's a bump the size of an apple on the back of my head. The howling rotter! Never mind, get to work."

But the editorial duties were doomed to more interruptions. Percy Mellish had spread the astounding news of having seen all four occupants of Study No. 6 hard at work all at once, and other juniors came to see the phenomenon. They looked into the study as they might have looked into

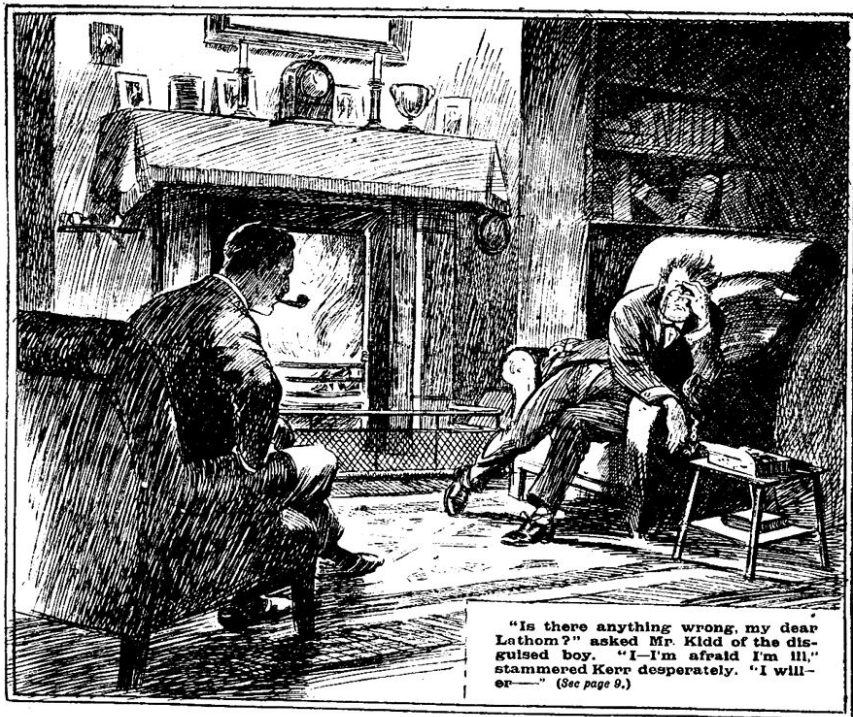
NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
 A Splendid & Cool Tale (22111 Long),
 By Jack Northcote.

AND

"HELD IN CHECK,"
 A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
 By Shack Durrant.

IN **"PLUCK,"** 1d.



"Is there anything wrong, my dear Lathom?" asked Mr. Kidd of the disguised boy. "I—I'm afraid I'm ill," stammered Kerr desperately. "I will—er—" (See page 9.)

a monkey-cage at the Zoo, and many were the questions showered upon the unhappy editor:

"Hallo! They're really working!"

"All of them, by George!"

"They must be ill."

"Blake is—he's got black spots on his face."

"Tell us what the matter is, Blake, there's a good chap."

"Is it an extra long impo.?"

"No; he's off his rocker, that's what's the matter."

"Look here," said Blake, exasperated, "if I come to you, there will be weeping and wailing in the School House, I can tell you."

"Well, why can't you tell us what the game is?" said Percy Mellish. "What's the giddy secret, anyhow?"

"Well, it's up against the New House; and do you think you'd have sense enough not to let Figgins & Co. on to it if I told you?"

"Rather!" was the general exclamation.

"Rather come in, and I'll explain."

The juniors crowded into the study. They were curious to hear the explanation of the unwanted industry of Study No. 6. As Percy Mellish said, it wanted some explaining.

And Blake, who was really proud of his brilliant idea, was not upon the whole loth to enlighten the curious youths of the School House. So he explained, and the news that a newspaper was being started was received with many exclamations of wonder and admiration. But Blake began to experience upon the spot some of the worries of an editor.

All the juniors offered to contribute, and they took it for granted that their effusions would all be accorded prominent places in the first number of "The Saint." One had a long poem in his desk; another had a story that was half finished, and offered to finish it that very evening. Walsh had an essay upon "Kindness to Animals," which alone would have filled three numbers of the paper, and he wanted it all to

go in. Percy Mellish was ready to do the literary and dramatic criticisms. Blake did not show a very deep gratitude for all these generous offers.

"Sorry," he said; "but space is limited. Poetry is barred, and so is 'Kindness to Animals.' There won't be any literary or dramatic criticisms, Mellish. The editor is willing to consider contributions, which must be short and crisp and up-to-date."

"Hark at the rotter," said Mellish. "Where did you get that from, Blake? He's spouting some blooming advertisement at us."

Blake blushed.

"And it's a rule in this editorial office," he said severely, "that dogs and outsiders are not admitted; so travel, all of you!"

There was a chorus of grumbling.

"Well, I wouldn't have my poem stuck in your rotten paper, anyway," said Jones, the poet. "Lot of rot, I call it."

"I say, Blake, you might find room for my essay," said Walsh. "It's an important subject, you know, and—"

"What about cruelty to readers?" demanded Blake. "There's that to be considered."

"Oh, rats!" said Walsh crossly; and he marched off with the poet.

At last the chums of Study No. 6 were left to their editorial duties in peace.

"Some of them seem to be cross," remarked Herries, grinning.

"Yes; they want to dump down all their rubbish upon a long-suffering editor," said Blake. "We shall have to draw the line very tight. Now to work again."

And then the only sound that broke the silence of the usually noisy study was the scratch-scratch of four industrious pens travelling at a great rate over the paper.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"**TRUE CHUMS.**"
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long),
By Jack South.

AND

"**HELD IN CHECK.**"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Darian.

IN "PLUCK." 1st

CHAPTER 4. A Stormy Meeting.

WHILE Study No. 6 were engaged upon the highly important business of producing the first number of "The Saint," a meeting was being held in Kildare's study. After the match with the Milverton men, the captain of St. Jim's had made up his mind to take a decided step.

Kildare, as captain of the school, had a very delicate task to hold the balance even between the rival Houses at St. Jim's.

Being a School House fellow himself, he was easily suspected by the New House of wanting to favour his own side, and he was himself nervously afraid that he might unconsciously do so. This led to a scrupulous care on his part not to put the School House forward on any occasion, a far too scrupulous care in the opinion of many of his House-fellows.

As a matter of fact, in his zeal to be fair all round, Kildare was inclined to be a little too considerate towards the New House, and not to insist strongly enough upon the claims of his own.

Thus it came about that the New House members of the college team had been retained in spite of the captain's doubts.

Under the rule of Monteith, the head prefect, the New House discipline was not nearly so well maintained as that of the School House. It was well known that secret smoking, and even drinking, went on in some of the Upper Form studies there, and it was whispered that the head prefect himself was one of the delinquents.

Kildare never interfered with the other House, but he heard the rumours, as a matter of course, and he knew that there was something in them. The poor form shown by the New House players of late was proof enough that something was wrong somewhere.

But the captain's position was a difficult one.

The New House took it for granted that they should be represented in the school team, and grumbled a little because they now had only five players while the School House had six. To make the eleven really efficient it was necessary to "chuck" at least two, if not three, of the New House members, and the School House fellows in their places. But it was no wonder that Kildare hesitated to take such a step. He knew that it would be taken by the New House as an open declaration of war, and that trouble would immediately follow. Kildare had hesitated, and the Milverton match had been lost.

Now the captain bitterly blamed himself for not taking a more decided stand.

Had he done so, it was possible that the match might have been saved. He had hoped against hope, and had been bitterly disappointed.

He had made up his mind now, however. Some of the School House fellows who came to him to express strong views on the subject, found him in the mood they wished to find him in. He was as annoyed and determined as any of them.

"You know why we were licked to-day, Kildare?" said Drake.

"Yes."

"Well, are you going to fire out those broken-winded rotters?"

"Yes."

"You've made up your mind?"

"Yes," said Kildare, again.

The others exchanged looks of satisfaction.

"It's got to be done," said Kildare. "The team as at present constituted will never pull off a match. Jones may improve in form, and I might give him another chance, but Rake and Sefton will have to go. It will mean a row in committee."

"It's bound to, for Monteith is sure to make a fuss: but that's got to be faced!" exclaimed Rushden. "We are not going to settle down to be licked in every match to please Monteith. It's a pity the New House was ever built at St. Jim's."

"If they want war," said Drake, "let them have it. We could make up a better team by ourselves than we could with their help."

"I'm afraid that isn't quite correct," said Kildare. "Monteith himself is the best winger we have in the whole school, or would be if he wasn't so selfish in his play. And Baker is a first-rate man."

"Well, they're only two," said Drake. "They're not worth the trouble they give. If we play the return match with Milverton with the same team, we are as good as licked to start with."

"I know that, and there's got to be a change. When we visit Milverton we're going to pull off a victory, if we've got

it in us," said Kildare, with a gleam in his blue eyes. "I hope Monteith will take it sensibly, but if he makes a fuss, I suppose we can stand it."

"Of course we can. He's been looking for trouble lately, and he won't be happy till he gets it."

"Well, I depend upon you fellows to back me up."
"Right-ho! You can depend upon the School House to stick to you!" exclaimed Drake. "And if it came to a row, we'd back you up through thick and thin. We're glad to see that you're going on the war-path at last. It's time."

It must be admitted that most of the School House seniors looked forward with lively anticipation to the row with Monteith and the New House. Monteith had taken unscrupulous advantage of Kildare's anxiety to keep the peace, and his encroachments had been unending. They were glad of a chance to take him down a peg.

But Kildare looked towards the committee meeting with anxiety.

He knew what harm might be done to the school by an irreparable breach between the two Houses. The juniors were always at war, but that was mostly fun, and there was a right good feeling at the bottom of it. But if the seniors took it up, the matter would be a great deal more serious.

But Kildare was not one to shrink from duty, when he saw it clearly, and he went to the committee meeting with his resolve firmly fixed.

Monteith was the treasurer, of course, with Baker and Webb. Webb was the new treasurer elected in the place of Sleath, who had been expelled.

The New House members of the committee were evidently on their guard.

Webb and Baker were two very decent fellows, but they were under the influence of Monteith, and suspicious of the School House, and inclined to back up their leader blindly.

And so when the question of a change in the constitution of the team was introduced, the backs of the New House men stiffened perceptibly.

"I think it will be admitted," Kildare remarked, "that the team is in need of changes. We made a rotten show against the Milvertons."

"They are a tough lot," replied Monteith. "They out-classed us."

"We must not be outclassed next time. When we visit Milverton for the return match, we have got to beat them."

"We shall do it if we can, of course."

"And to do it we shall want a stronger team."

"I don't see that the school can provide a stronger one."

"Let us see what forwards are concerned, they can stand," said the captain. "But there must be a change in the backs. At least two will have to go."

Monteith smiled unpleasantly.

"Let us know whom you mean to fire out, by all means, Kildare."

"Rake and Sefton."

"Yes, I guessed it; two of our side."

"Sides have nothing to do with it. If they could play up I shouldn't ask which side they belonged to. But they can't."

"I don't see it."

"Well, I do. I'm willing to give Jones another chance. But Sefton and Rake must make room for better men, and that's all there is about it."

"And which of the New House fellows?" asked Monteith, "do you want to take in their places?"

"I'd take in any that could fill them, but you haven't the men on your side, Monteith. The places will have to be filled by School House fellows."

The cat was out of the bag now.

Monteith's eyes began to glitter.

"Now we've got it!" he exclaimed scornfully. "It's the old story, the New House are to give way to the School House. Our men are to go, and yours are to come in. You might as well have said so at first, without beating about the bush."

Kildare's eyes flashed.

"Well, I've said so now," he exclaimed. "If you choose to misunderstand me, you must, that's all. I've got to think of the school as a whole, and not of this or that House. We must have a team that can win matches, and to get that I'd take all the players from one House, if necessary. The question of this House or that ought never to enter into the matter at all."

"It is you who bring it in. We were willing to allow you the odd man in the team, for the sake of peace, but now you want the whole thing to yourself."

"I want to get the best team possible."

"Yes, so you say, but you can't expect the New House to believe that all the good material at St. Jim's happens to be collected in the School House," exclaimed Monteith. "In my opinion the New House ought to be more represented than it is, not less."

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS."
A Splendid School Tale Extra Long,
By Jack North;

AND

"HELD IN CHECK."
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure
By Mack Duffan.

IN "PLUCK"!

"You are determined not to see reason, and so it's no good arguing. I am willing to put it to the vote."

Monteith laughed contemptuously.
"Because your side has the majority on the committee. If you are resolved to have your way, of course you can have it. But as head of the New House I protest against favouritism."

"Do you accuse me of favouritism?"
"Of favouring your own house, certainly."
"That's what you get for giving way to the brutes," said Darrel. "Never mind, let Monteith keep his opinion, and much good may it do him. Put it to the vote."

Monteith rose to his feet.
"Wait a minute. I do not intend to remain on a committee that refuses my side fair play."
"Withdraw, then, and be hanged to you!" broke out Rusden hotly.

"I'm going to. If we're to be bullied and outvoted every time, our coming here is only a farce. We may as well go."

He looked at Webb and Baker, who rose also.
"Better think it over," said Kildare quietly. "There's the Milverton match in a fortnight, and next Saturday there's the match with the Clifden fellows. If we are not to be licked we had better pull together."

"I am quite willing if you are. What do you suggest?"
"I will give Jones another chance in the Clifden match. Thus you will have three men in the team."

"And Sefton and Rake?"
"They must go in any case. They're hardly fit to play a junior team."

"Three New House men, and eight of the School House," said Monteith, with a sneer. "Not good enough, thank you."

"What are you going to do, then?"
"I shall consult with the fellows on my side, but one thing you may be sure of, we shan't submit to be dictated to and over-ridden by the School House!" exclaimed the prefect.

And the three New House members walked out of the room.
"Good riddance to bad rubbish," said Darrel. "Now let's get to business."

But Kildare was looking worried.
"Monteith has a card up his sleeve," he said.
"I don't see what he can do, Kildare. He may object and protest as much as he likes, and so can his friends, but, after all, they're in a minority, and they will have to knuckle under. You are captain, and you can give orders. It rests with you to say who shall play."

"I know that; but suppose Monteith refuses to play unless the others are in the team."
The committee looked at each other dubiously, startled by the suggestion.

"He couldn't," said Darrel, at last. "Even Monteith couldn't be such a cad as to refuse to play for the school."

"I don't know."
"His House wouldn't back him up in that."

"They might."
"If you won't give way?" asked several voices anxiously. Kildare shook his head.

"No. I've given way too much already. Whatever happens, I intend to stand by my decision."
And there was an unanimous murmur of approval.

CHAPTER 5. Kerr Makes Discoveries.

"THERE'S something up over the way," said Figgins.
The chief of the New House juniors was looking thoughtful. There was evidently something upon his mind.

Kerr and Wynn looked at him inquiringly.
"Well, what is it, Figg?"

"I don't know. But Blake and his friends are up to something, that much I am certain of. You know how quiet they've been lately. We haven't been able to worry them into a row for days. They stick close to their House, and only come out for footer practice. They hardly ever turn up in the gym. They are awfully mysterious over something. Now, what are the bounders hatching?"

The Co. put their heads together and thought it out, and finally said that they gave it up.

"So do I," said Figgins. "But one thing's certain, and that is that it's something up against us. Blake is preparing some sort of a giddy surprise for us, and if we don't get on to it, he's bound to score. We've got to find out what's on the carpet."

Fatty Wynn looked down in a puzzled way at the shabby square of carpet which adorned the study. Figgins called him an ass, and proceeded:

"I mean, we've got to find out what they're up to. It's something deep, and if we ain't careful, they'll get the better of us. Now, how are we going to find out?"

And the Co. gave it up.

"Well, we've got to," said Figgins decidedly. "I've noticed that there's no light in their study window just now. Now's the time. Whatever it is they're getting up, it keeps them awfully busy in their study, and so I suppose there will be signs of it there. One of us has got to go and scout."

"Jolly good idea," said Fatty Wynn. "You're the very chap, Figg."

"I didn't say I was going. I said one of us."
"You could do it best, Figg," said Kerr.

"Rats! The chap who goes may get caught by those bounders."

"That's what I was thinking."
"Oh, were you? Well, we'll toss up for it. But I say, you're the man, Kerr. You make up so beautifully, that you could easily pass yourself off for one of those Kids."

"Oh, I say!" said Kerr. He was flattered, but doubtful.
Kerr's father was an actor, and Kerr himself was the leading light in the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. He had more than once shown his delighted House-fellows really excellent impersonations, and his fame was all over St. Jim's.

"Yes, you'll do," declared Figgins. "You are a born giddy actor, Kerr. You remember how you played off being a long-lost cousin of that bounder D'Arcy, and gave him a showing-up. You will be able to pull it off, there isn't the slightest doubt about that."

"Well, I'm willing to risk it," said Kerr, a little dubious inwardly, but unable to resist this torrent of praise. "How shall I fix it up?"

"Let me see. You must make up as a chap about your own size. Oh, I say, go as little Latham! He's away this evening, you know, and it will be safe, and if they take you for a master, they won't dare to scrag you. You imitate Latham beautifully."

Kerr grinned.

Mr. Latham was the fussy shortsighted master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. He was a good little man, but extremely fussy. He wore glasses, and had a habit of peering before him, so that he had a comical resemblance to a tortoise poking its head forward. He had a habit, too, of speaking sententiously, with much hawing and humming, and of imparting wisdom in the form of aphorisms.

Kerr, for the amusement of the juniors of the New House, had often imitated Mr. Latham, and had once made up as that gentleman with great success. Figgins's idea was really brilliant, for in the dusky winter evening it was a thousand to one that the imposture would never be detected. Kerr's "property" wardrobe was varied and extensive, and equal to the demand.

"Little Latham's about your height," said Figgins, "and you can pad to get the breadth. You have his voice and gestures to the life. Come on, and we'll help you. We've got a clear hour without being worried by any of those beastly prefects."

And Figgins & Co. set to work.

With the assistance of Figg and Wynn, Kerr was soon made up in his new character. Figg called in some of the New House boys to see him when he was finished, as a test of the disguise.

"Come in here, Pratt, Wilcox, Pringle. Mr. Latham wants you."

"No larks," said Pratt. "Old Latham's gone off. I saw him go out of the gates myself, and he looked as big a guy as ever! Oh, crickey!"

He gasped in dismay as he saw the figure in the study. Kerr played the part to the life.

"Er—what did you say, Pratt? Repeat your remark, if you please."

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," stammered Pratt, frozen with terror. "I didn't know you were here, sir. I was only jo-joking."

"You were jo-joking, were you? How dare you jo-joke upon so sacred a subject! Flip him over the ear, Figg."

Pratt gasped again on hearing such a command from the supposed Form master.

"Dot him on the boko!" exclaimed Mr. Latham, with great dignity.

The stupefaction of Pratt was so ludicrous that the chums burst into a roar of laughter, and Pratt was enlightened.

"Oh, it's you, Kerr!" he exclaimed, panting with relief. "You beastly bounder! You nearly frightened me out of my wits!"

"You should learn to be a good boy, and to speak respectfully of your kind teachers," grinned Kerr.

"Oh, rats! What's the japs, anyway?"

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS."
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long),
By Jack North;

AND

"HELD IN CHECK."
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Inman;

IN "PLUCK" 1D.

"I'm going on a visit to the School House, that's all. Keep it dark."

Pratt grinned.

"What ho!"

And quite a number of New House Juniors watched the pseudo-master of the Fourth as he crossed the quadrangle in the dusky evening.

"He's great," said Figgins—"he's simply great!"

"Be it if he's spotted," said Wynn, "there will be a howling row."

"Oh, he won't be spotted!"

Kerr entered the School House boldly, with Mr. Latham's slow and solemn tread, his head poked forward, a pair of big glasses on his nose. A couple of Third Form youngsters, who were chasing each other in the passage, bolted at sight of him. He passed up the stairs with great dignity, and reached the famous No. 6 Study.

The fact that there was no light in the window showed that the chums were not at home. Kerr tried the door, and it opened readily. He grinned as he went in. He turned up the gas, and looked around.

The room presented its usual aspect, and except that it was a little better furnished, did not differ from the usual run of studies at St. Jim's. Kerr looked round the room, and nothing out of the common caught his eye.

Yet for days past the chums of Study 6 had been busy there, hatching some plot or other, and surely there must remain some clue to the secret if he looked long enough for it. So Kerr said to himself, and he renewed his search.

A pile of manuscript on the table, under a book, came in for his attention, and he glanced at it carelessly. Then he started, and his look became riveted.

For this is what caught his eye.

"The Saint," the Official School Magazine of St. Jim's. Edited by Jack Blake, Esq., S.S."

Kerr gave a whistle.

The secret was out.

He was strongly tempted to open the pages of "The Saint," and ascertain just what they contained, but he thought it better to hurry back to Figgins with the news of the discovery he had made.

"What a go!" he muttered. "So that's their little game! What a go!"

He replaced the book on the foolscap, and turned towards the door.

At the same moment there was a tramping of feet in the passage without, and Kerr had just time to whip into the cupboard before the chums of Study No. 6 entered.

Kerr's movement had been quick as lightning, and he was out of sight, and the cupboard door closed when Jack Blake and his companions entered the room.

"Hallo, the gas is alight!" exclaimed Blake. "You careless ass, Herries! Why didn't you turn it out? I told you to!"

"I did," said Herries.

"Stuff! It didn't light itself! Never mind, let's get to work. We've got to finish this number to-night, and we've only got twenty minutes. Buck up!"

The four juniors sat down, produced their pens, and began to write.

Kerr ventured to peep from the cupboard, and saw the quartette busily at work.

"I think my leader is all right," said Jack, with a grin of satisfaction. "I've slated those Rats a treat!"

"I say," said Digby, "do you spell 'conglomeration' with two r's or one?"

"I ain't quite sure," said Jack dubiously. "Put it in inverted commas. Then if it's wrong, it'll be supposed to be a joke."

"Ah, that's a jolly good idea!"

"I've finished my article," said Arthur Augustus. "I think it is really good. It's a description of a beast known as the Monteith-beast, and it's awfully funny, you know."

"And I've given Figgins & Co. something," said Blake. "This will make them sit up. What do you think of this as a bimerick?"

"There are three horrid bounders who go

By the queer name of Figgins & Co.;

They ought to be sacked

From the school, that's a fact;

They're a howling disgrace to the show."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not bad, is it? Hallo, what's that?"

"What's what?"

"I thought I heard something. Fancy, I suppose. Get on, and we'll get the thing pasted out, and it will be all ready."

Kerr remained as still as a mouse in the cupboard.

He had nearly betrayed himself when he listened to Jack

Blake's flattering description of the Co., to which he had the honour to belong; but he was on his guard now.

The chums finished their writing at last. It had not been a short or an easy task, for, beside their own compositions, they had to copy out the various contributions sent in by School House boys.

But it was done at last.

The method of "publication" hit upon by Blake was a very ingenious one.

To have the magazine printed was out of the question, and to make a number of written copies was too much like work, as Herries put it. So Blake had purchased a large sheet of cardboard, and the contributions being written on one side of the paper only, they could be pasted in proper order on the cardboard and read by all.

Blake had made a large pot of paste, about twenty times as much as he required for his purpose, and invested three-pence in a brush. He flattened out the sheet of cardboard on the table, and commenced to paste the sheets of foolscap upon it. The board was a "double imperial," so there was plenty of room.

Blake was finished at last, and the cardboard was left lying on the table with several books placed round its edges to weight it, it having shown a tendency to buckle under the influence of the paste.

"That's done," said Blake. "We'll leave it here to dry, and later on we'll post it up in the hall. Then we'll issue a special invitation to Figgins & Co. to come over with their pals and read the pretty things we've said about them."

And the chums quitted the study.

As soon as they were fairly gone, Kerr stole from his hiding-place. He turned up the light, and surveyed the first number of "The Saint."

There were many items that made him grin and many that made him savage, but he did not empty the inkpot over the first number of Study No. 6's paper. He felt that it would not be playing the game. But he considered himself quite free to make any revisions he chose. And so, with Blake's pen and ink-eraser, Kerr proceeded to make some alterations, so neatly that they could only be noticed by actually reading through the lines. And as the chums had already finished the work of revision, they were not likely to read "The Saint" over again before posting it up in the common-room.

Kerr grinned when his work was completed. It satisfied him. He turned the light out and left the study. He was bursting with the news he had for Figgins and Wynn, but he was not fated to escape yet.

He was descending into the hall, when Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House, came along to his study. He nodded genially.

The Fourth Form master boarded in Mr. Kidd's house, and so frequently went to the housemaster's study to smoke a pipe in the evening. Mr. Kidd, unfortunately for Kerr, was in a humour for a chat.

"Ah, back already?" he said. "I thought you were going to be away all the evening, Latham."

Kerr groaned inwardly.

"I—er—returned," he said, in Mr. Latham's drawing voice. "I—er—altered my mind."

"Yes, I see you did. Come and have a smoke."

And Mr. Kidd linked his arm in Kerr's, and marched him off to his room.

Kerr was quaking. His get-up was a first-rate one, but how would it stand the scrutiny of the keen-eyed housemaster in the full light he did not dare to think.

They entered the housemaster's study, and Kerr had sufficient presence of mind to sit down in a deep easy chair with his back to the gas Mr. Kidd was turning higher.

"Please—er—don't turn it too high," he said. "You know my—er—eyes are weak."

"Certainly," said Mr. Kidd; "there is nothing more enjoyable than a smoke in the twilight, is there?"

"Nothing," said the supposed Form master; "but I—er—I've forgotten my pipe. I will go to my room and fetch it."

"Don't trouble. I have some of those cigars you admired so much. There's the box. Let me give you a light."

Kerr trembled. He mechanically accepted the cigar and the light. The dimness of the study and the excellence of his make-up had saved him so far. But what was going to happen? He had a pretty clear idea of what would happen if he smoked that cigar. But how could he get out of it?

He began to smoke mechanically. He had never smoked a cigarette even before, for he was a lad of cleanly ways. He had no very clear idea of how he should smoke that cigar, and ere long he swallowed a gulp of smoke that nearly suffocated him.

He coughed so violently that his glasses fell off and he replaced them with a trembling hand.

"Are you ill, Latham?"

"Er—no—I am all right, thank you."

Kerr could not turn pale, because his face was made up to imitate Mr. Lathom's sallow complexion; but he was beginning to feel awful.

A deadly faintness seized upon him, and alternate hot and cold thrills passed through his body. He felt that he would be sick if he moved, and he dived not move a limb. His strange stiffness awoke Mr. Kidd's curiosity.

"Is there anything wrong, my dear Lathom?"

"I—I'm afraid I'm ill," stammered Kerr desperately. "I will—er—"

"Dear me, what can it be?"

"This—er—cigar—"

"The best Havanas, Mr. Lathom."

"I—I—er—"

Kerr made a bolt for the door. He disappeared, leaving the housemaster staring after him in absolute stupefaction.

"Well," said Mr. Kidd to himself, "I have noticed that Lathom is a queer sort of animal, but what's the matter with him now, I wonder?"

And he sat down to finish his own cigar.

The unhappy impostor bolted along the passage. He only wanted to escape—to get into the open air. He would have given worlds to be safe back in the New House. He dashed into the quadrangle, going down the steps three at a bound, much to the amazement of several juniors who saw him.

"Never knew old Lathom was such an acrobat," said Jack Blake, in wonder.

"Lathom!" said Herries. "Lathom's away."

"No, he isn't—that's Lathom."

"Is it? Hallo! There's something wrong with him. What's he gurgling about?"

"He's ill," said Blake, concerned at once, for the Fourth Formers liked their Form-master, in spite of his eccentricities. "Let's go and see if we can do anything."

They hurried towards the unhappy humbug, who was leaning over a flower-bed in a state of physical and mental misery impossible to describe. Kerr had felt like it only once before, when he had crossed the Irish Sea on a stormy day. He was mumbling and moaning to himself.

But what amazed the chums on approaching him was to see that his whiskers were dangling from one cheek, and that he was mumbling in the strong voice of a suffering boy, instead of the weak tones of Mr. Lathom.

"My hat!" whispered Blake. "It's a swindle: that isn't Lathom at all, it's Kerr."

"I thought Lathom was away."

"Yes, this is another of Kerr's giddy impersonations."

"The bouncer! And he's been in the School House playing some giddy joke, I suppose."

"He came out in a mighty hurry, anyway. He seems better now. This is where we go and sympathise with him," grinned Jack.

The chums caught on to the idea, and in a moment they had surrounded the sham Mr. Lathom.

CHAPTER 6, A Terrible Mistake.

KERR was feeling more himself now. The weight was gone from his chest, and his head was clear. He had turned to go to the New House, when the chums came up.

"Good evening, Mr. Lathom!" said Blake, raising his cap.

"Er—good evening, my boy!" Mr. Lathom adjusted his glasses and peered at Blake, and feeling as he did so that his whiskers were in the wrong place, he surreptitiously put them straight as well as he could. "You have—er—I perceive, just come from the—er—gymnasium. I am always pleased to see my boys indulge in—er—beneficial and healthful exercise."

"Thank you, sir. Will you see now the lines you gave me to do?"

"Another time, Blak—another time. I am—er—busy now."

"Yes, sir. You are going in for botany?"

"Botany, Blake! Er—I don't quite understand you."

"I thought you were examining the flower-bed just now, sir."

Mr. Lathom coughed uncomfortably.

"Rather a queer time to start botany in the winter, sir," said Blake.

"Yes—yes. Go into your House now, boys."

"There's something I wanted to say to you, sir."

"Another time, Blake."

"It's only a few words, sir."

"Well, well, be quick, then."

"It's about a horrid bouncer in the New House, sir. A

measly sort of awful mongrel, named Kerr. You must have noticed the tripe-hound."

The pseudo Mr. Lathom trembled with rage.

"Blake!"

"Yes, sir. Of course, you've noticed him. He is conspicuous, even among the New House cads, by his slovenliness and general untidiness. He has joined the Anti-Washing League, as a protest against the Soap Trust, and—"

"Blake, I'll break you— I mean, you must not speak of your schoolfellow in this extremely reprehensible way."

"No, sir; but I want you to know the horrid bouncer I am referring to, and I can't without describing him. Though, of course, if I said he was the frostiest, funniest-faced waster in the New House, you'd know I meant Kerr."

"This Blake—go into your House at once!"

"But I've got something particular to tell you about this horrible cad of a Kerr, sir. The beast is in the habit of impersonating people for a joke, because he thinks he's a giddy actor."

Mr. Lathom started.

"And I've seen him get up as you, sir," said Blake mercilessly. "I've known him have the cheek to get himself up as the master of the Fourth, and poke himself into the School House, and come out three steps at a time because he was spotted!"

"I—I—"

"Yes, sir; if we find the horrid bouncer masquerading like that, I suppose we ought to go for him, oughtn't we, and frog-march him up and down the quad as a lesson?"

Then Kerr realised that he was in a moment the chums of Study No. 6 had fastened upon him.

"No, you don't," said Blake cheerfully.

"Blake! How dare you!"

"Oh, come off! Do you think we don't know who you are? Think I should have said all that if I didn't know who you were, Kerr?"

Kerr affected to surrender, watching like a cat for a chance to break loose.

"We'll give him the frog-march," went on Blake. "These New House kids are getting altogether too impudent. Prisoner, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?"

"I'll break all your necks if you don't chuck it!" growled Kerr, in his natural voice.

"Hallo, he's getting ferocious!"

"Look out!" whispered Kerr suddenly. "Cave!"

For a moment the attention of the chums was taken from him. He made a sudden spring and eluded them, and bounded away into the gloom.

"Taken in!" exclaimed Blake. "The horrid bouncer! After him!"

Annoyed at being so easily hoodwinked, the chums gave chase. Kerr had dashed off towards the gates, the only way open to him. He intended to dodge among the elms and get round to his own House. The chums dashed after him, and Kerr, having swiftly done his dodging, they missed him.

Blake halted with a growl.

"He's gone!"

"No, he isn't!" muttered Herries. "Look, here he comes! Dodge behind the trees."

Blake could hardly believe his eyes.

There was Kerr coming directly towards them, as it seemed, from the direction of the gates. They dodged into cover in a twinkling. Not for an instant did it cross their mind that the real Mr. Lathom had returned to the school at this inopportune moment, had let himself in with his key, and was now going towards his House in blissful unconsciousness of the surprise awaiting him.

The chums could not be expected to guess all that, and, as a matter of fact, no doubts even came into their mind. They had not the slightest uneasiness that the individual coming towards them might not be the disguised junior from the New House.

"Ready!" whispered Blake.

"Right-ho!"

"Collar him!"

The chums rushed out, and in a second the master was collared and dragged to the ground. Mr. Lathom was so paralysed with amazement that he could only faintly gasp.

"Got you!" yelled Blake. "Got you, you bouncer! Frog-march him, kids!"

They seized the unfortunate master of the Fourth, and prepared to frog-march him across the quadrangle.

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "What does this—er—mean? Let me go instantly!"

"Doesn't he do it well?" said Blake admiringly. "One would think it was old Lathom himself talking."

"Blake! How dare you! Let me go instantly!"

"Oh, chuck it! You know we know who you are."

"TRUE CHUMS."
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long).
By Jack North.

"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Duran.

NEXT SATURDAY:

IN "PLUCK," P.

"I am Mr. Latham, your master. I—"

"That's right; keep it up!"

"I will cane you severely!"

"Go on!"

"You shall all be expelled from the school!" howled Mr. Latham. "Are you mad to dare to treat your master with such—unparalleled insolence?"

"Famous!"

"I say," said Herries uneasily. "There's no mistake, is there?"

"Rats! Pull his whiskers off; he'll own up then."

Herries filled his fingers with Mr. Latham's whiskers and tugged. The unhappy master gave a fenish yell.

"They won't come off!" gasped Herries, in dismay.

"What!"

"They won't come off."

"Oh, rot! Let me have a try."

"But—"

"Rats! Give me hold."

Blake tugged at the whiskers. Then he had to admit that they were genuine, and the whole horror of the mistake that had been made rushed upon him.

They let Mr. Latham drop as suddenly as if he had become red-hot. He was upon his feet in a moment, boiling over with rage.

"Flogged! Caned! Expelled!" he yelled. "I'll have you all expelled! I—I—I— How dare you—how dare you!"

"We beg your pardon, sir," gasped Blake.

"I—I—I—"

Indignation choked Mr. Latham's utterance.

"We took you for somebody else, sir."

"Follow me instantly, all of you! Don't try to get away. I know who you are. Follow me immediately!"

And the outraged master of the Fourth stalked off to the School House, with the chums at his heels. They were nearly frozen with horror.

"What on earth shall we do?" muttered Blake hopelessly.

"We can't give Kerr away. Hallo! There the image is; he's seen it all!"

They caught a glimpse of Kerr, still in his make-up, peering out from behind a tree. The New House junior watched the unhappy procession vanish into the School House.

"Go to your study," said Mr. Latham sternly. "I will deal with you in the morning. I do not—er—wish to punish you till I have had time to reflect. But such an—er—unheard-of outbreak of hoodlomanism can only be adequately punished by your expulsion from the school, and I hold out no hope of pardon to you."

And the chums went away disconsolately enough.

A few minutes later Mr. Kidd looked into the Form master's room.

"Hallo, Latham!" said the housemaster genially. "I hope you're better now."

"Yes," said Mr. Latham. "I am feeling better. It was a terrible shock to me, as you may imagine. You saw it, then?"

"Saw it? Naturally. I don't quite understand you. If your indisposition is quite over, perhaps you will have another cigar."

"I don't quite follow. I have been treated with unheard-of insolence—"

"Mr. Latham!"

"Assaulted, and nearly frightened out of my wits."

"How? By whom? Since you left my study?"

"What do you mean? I haven't been in your study."

"You must certainly be dreaming, Mr. Latham! It is not twenty minutes since you left my study," said the puzzled housemaster.

"Mr. Kidd, it is not ten minutes since I returned to the school from Rylecombe!"

They stared at one another. Each one strongly suspected the other of insanity, and there is no telling how the situation would have ended, but just then there came a tap at the door, and Kerr opened it. Kerr was himself again now, though there were traces of the make-up left on his face.

"What do you want, Kerr?" asked Mr. Latham angrily.

"I—I want to tell you something," faltered Kerr. "I heard you say you were going to expel Blake for tackling you in the quad, sir, and—"

"What do you know about it?"

"It was my fault, sir."

"Your fault—how?"

"He took you for me, sir."

"How could he take me for you—a boy? Don't be absurd!" Kerr falteringly explained.

"You—you dared to impersonate me?" spluttered Mr. Latham. "You—you—"

"It was a joke, sir."

"I'll teach you to play such jokes!" shouted Mr. Latham.

He took up a pen. "Take this note to your housemaster, sir."

He scribbled a note and handed it to Kerr.

"Yes, sir."

"One moment," said Mr. Kidd mildly. "The boy has acted very bravely in owning up like this, Mr. Latham. He might have allowed the punishment to fall upon Blake and saved himself."

"That is true," said Mr. Latham, after a pause.

"I don't know what you have said to Mr. Ratcliff—"

"I have explained the boy's fault, and asked him to administer a sound flogging."

"Now," said Mr. Kidd persuasively, "as Kerr admits his fault, and is sorry—"

He paused a moment.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Kerr contritely.

"And as he has owned up in a manly way, don't you think a caning would meet the case?"

Mr. Latham, who was a good-tempered little man at heart, was already calming down, and he had too great a respect for Mr. Kidd to wish to oppose him.

"Certainly, if you think so, Mr. Kidd," he said. "You may return me the note, Kerr. Hold out your hand, sir!"

Kerr obeyed. He received six stingers on each hand, and he went out of the study fairly doubled up, but satisfied, upon the whole, to have got off so cheaply.

Mr. Latham sent for Blake later, and explained to him that the facts were known, and the chums of Study No. 6 pardoned. The chums went their way rejoicing, and voted Kerr a brick, as indeed he was.

CHAPTER 7. Ordered Off the Field.

"WHAT are we going to do about it?"

It was James Monteith who spoke.

A number of New House seniors had met in the head prefect's study to discuss the question of the football team, and they were all looking angry and incensed.

"This is how the matter stands," went on the prefect. "We are practically ousted from the college team. As it is, we are five against six of the School House. If Sifton and Rake are turned out, we have only three members left. The team will be practically a School House side. Are we going to stand it?"

"No!" was the general reply.

"But what can we do?" asked Baker. "Kildare is captain, and the captain's word is law upon the question of making up the team."

"That's so," said Monteith. "Kildare has the power to leave out whom he pleases; but we have a way of bringing him to reason."

"How?"

"By refusing to play with the eleven, and leaving him to make up a whole side from the School House. It would puzzle him to do it."

The seniors looked at each other doubtfully.

"That would be a serious step," said Baker. "It might easily lead to the defeat of the college on the football field."

"That's Kildare's look out."

"It's ours, too. We don't want the college beaten. Hang it all, we can't put our personal feelings before the game."

"I say you are inclined to back up Kildare in his dictating to us."

"Nothing of the kind," said Baker hotly. "I don't back him up. I think he's rough on the New House, and I'm for using any legitimate means to bring him to reason. But when it's proposed to risk getting the school licked for the sake of scoring off Kildare, I must say I think it's time to draw the line."

Monteith set his lips. He had not expected opposition on his own side, and it annoyed him deeply. But Baker was one of those quiet, obstinate youths who have decided opinions and stick to them. He would not see reason—from the prefect's point of view. And a murmur from the meeting showed that the rest were to a great extent in agreement with Baker.

Monteith saw that he would have to trim his sails carefully if he was to remain a trusted leader of his House. He was willing to sacrifice the interests of the school to his revenge upon Kildare, but the others were made of manlier stuff. He swallowed his rage and changed his tack.

"That was only a suggestion, of course," he remarked. "I don't say that we should be driven to do it. Kildare would see reason. I mean, and realise that he must make some concessions to our House. He couldn't spare us from the team."

"But if you used that as a threat, you'd have to stick to it if he defied you."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then it would come to getting the college licked, as I said," replied Baker. "I can't say I'm in favour of anything of that kind."

"I want to take the sense of the meeting," said Monteith, looking round. "I don't want to impose my own views upon anyone. Kildare has laid it down that we are to have only three men in the college team. Baker, Jones, and myself. If you fellows are agreeable, I've got nothing to complain about."

There was a discussion, and very divergent views were expressed. Some were for detesting Kildare and withdrawing wholly from the football team if he refused to concede their demands. But they were a minority. Most of the New House seniors shared Baker's views—that the honour of the school must come first.

It was finally put to the vote, and the majority declared for accepting Kildare's terms, and Monteith gave in with the best grace he could.

"That's settled, then," he said. "We play in the Clifden match to-morrow. Whether we shall play in the return Milverton match I have my doubts."

"What do you mean?" asked Baker.

"I mean that if we surrender now, Kildare will be encouraged to make further demands. He says already he is not satisfied with Jones's play. I fancy there'll be another New House man turned out of the team soon."

"I don't believe Kildare will go any further."

"But what if he does?"

"Well, if he does, I'll agree that it's time to put our foot down. But, so far, I think we ought to play, and do our best for the school," said Baker.

"Very well, I'll tell Kildare we play to-morrow, and that's settled."

The meeting broke up. Monteith took the first opportunity of paying a visit to the captain of St. Jim's to acquaint him with the determination arrived at by the New House.

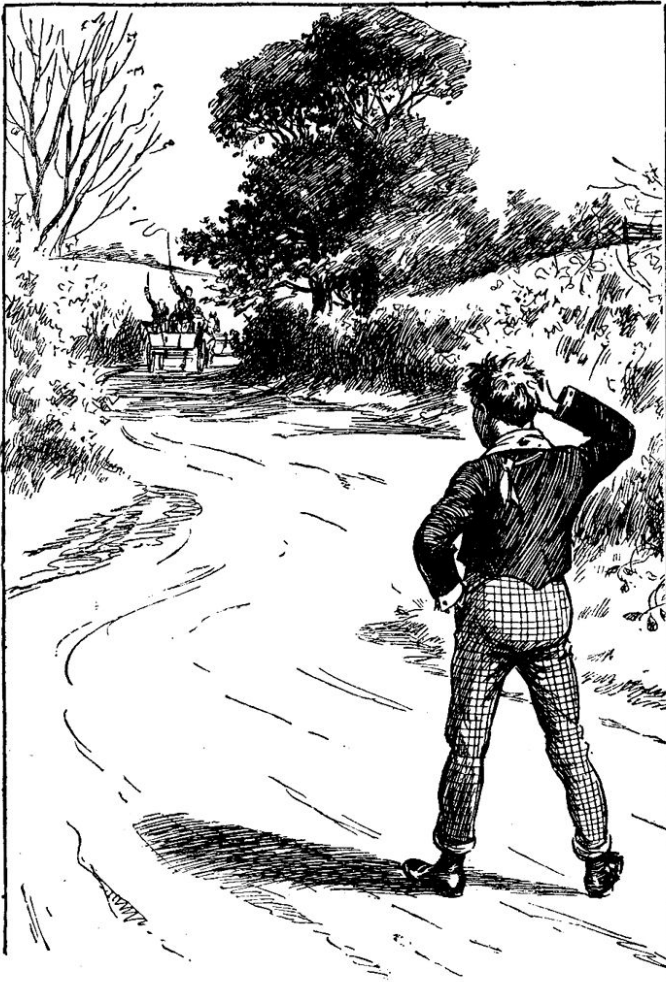
Kildare had been considerably worried lately as to what course the New House prefect would take, and Monteith had purposely kept him in suspense. But the captain had no idea of receiving an inch from the position he had taken up. He looked at Monteith with cold inquiry as the prefect entered his study.


"I've come to speak to you about the Clifden match," said Monteith icily. "I've talked it over with the fellows on my side, Kildare, and I may as well tell you that we were strongly inclined to withdraw altogether, and leave your side to run the team alone. It appears to me that that's what you want."

"I want nothing of the kind," replied Kildare. "I hope that your side have not determined upon such a step?"

"No. We want the college to win as much as you do, or more, and so we've decided to take it lying down. We are willing to play only three men to your eight, for the sake of peace, but we want it distinctly understood that that ends our surrendering."

"I don't understand you."



Figgins slowed down, and Jack was dropped into the road. "Ta-ta!" said Figgins, and he drove off towards Milverton. Blake stood looking after the trap, and the  dropped their hands to him as they went. (See page 16.)

"I mean that if you want to further reduce the New House portion of the team you had better go the whole hog at once, and have done with it."

"I don't want to reduce it. I'd rather increase it, if you had the players, but you haven't. The school has got to win. I've never complained about your play or Baker's. I admit I have my doubts about Jones. I've told you so already. But I'm giving him a fresh trial in the Clifden match to-morrow, and he'll have a chance of showing whether he's fit to meet the Milvertons again."

Monteith gave a disagreeable smile.

"Very well. You'll bear in mind what I've said. We're given way all we intend. If there is further friction, the responsibility is on your shoulders, not mine."

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long),
By Jack North.

AND

"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mar. Davran;

IN "PLUCK" 1^o.

And he quitted the study.

Kildare gave a sigh. It was not all pleasure to be captain of a school like St. Jim's, with two rival houses pulling different ways. His path would have been a great deal easier if the New House prefect had shown the least desire to pull with him, but that was not to be expected of James Monteith.

The next day was the day of the Clifden match. The Clifden fellows were an average team, nothing like the Milverton men in form, and Kildare could afford to take some risks with them. That was his reason for giving Jones another chance.

Had not Kildare been so concerned about his immediate worries, he would have noticed that something was agog in the junior portion of the School House that Saturday. There was much whispering and chucking among the juniors. As a matter of fact, the first number of "The Saint," prepared for publication, as we have seen, the previous evening, was to be given to the public that afternoon. Blake, after mature consideration, had decided to let the hour of publication be immediately after the football match, when all the School House would be at liberty to enjoy the rare treat prepared for them. Meanwhile, "The Saint" reposed in the cupboard in the Study No. 6. Blake had put it away without, of course, examining it, and he had no idea of the revisions Kerr had made upon it.

Figgins & Co. said nothing of their knowledge of the secret. They were willing to let the number be published, with Kerr's amendments, but they intended to be on the spot with some friends to see it.

The afternoon was cold and windy, with a thin, wet mist hovering over the ground. It was not a pleasant day for football, but that made no difference to the teams. The Clifden fellows arrived in due course, and the two elevens turned out for the match. Round the field the spectators, of whom there was a goodly number in spite of the weather, stood in their coats and macintoshes, with their caps pulled down over their ears. St. Jim's won the toss. Clifden were given the wind to kick off against, and it was still. As soon as the teams got to work, the most prejudiced observer could not fail to see what an improvement had been wrought in the team by the changes Kildare had made.

The Saints' forward line had always been good, but the backs had failed to do what was required of them. Now that the two worst failures were gone, and two sturdy School House fellows were in their places, the home defence was much sounder. But there was still a weak spot, and that was Jones at centre-half. Jones had been a good player in his time, but he had gone off form of late. His wind was not what it had been, and he was not quick or steady. An emergency took him by surprise, and a charge bowled him over like a ninepin. He was slow and clumsy, and it seemed to Kildare that he had got worse even during the last week, since the Milverton visit.

Clifden were the first to score. They brought the ball goalward with a rush, and Jones was nowhere, and as it happened the brunt of the attack fell on centre-half. The ball went in, and Kildare snapped his teeth.

"For goodness' sake buck up, Jones!" he said, as they walked back to the centre of the field. "What's the matter with you?"

Jones scowled. He knew that he had failed lamentably, but he was not inclined to admit it.

The game was resumed, and the college attacked vigorously, and their efforts were loudly cheered, especially when they materialised in a goal, and the score stood level. The goal came from Monteith's foot, and it was really well taken, and his name was shouted with loud cheers by the boys of St. Jim's. There was no further scoring in the first half.

When the whistle went again, the home team started with a powerful attack, which drove the visitors back towards their goal. But with a strong wind behind them, Clifden recovered and began to gain ground. They put all their "boots" into a big effort, and came on with a rush that for the moment staggered the Saints.

The Clifden forwards brought the ball on with a fine burst, and went through the red-and-white team, beating the halves finely. The Clifden captain had the ball, and he was opposed by Jones. He dribbled the ball fairly round Jones's feet, and rushed on with a quiet grin on his face. Jones charged his teeth, and, forgetting himself in his annoyance, charged the Clifden skipper and brought him heavily to the ground.

It was a charge of the roughest description from behind, and the Clifden man went down with a crash. The foul was undeniable, and a yell rose round the field, in the midst of which the referee's whistle was heard shrilling. Play was immediately stopped, and the players gathered round the fallen skipper, and he was helped to his feet. He had gone down right within the penalty area, and he was not slow to claim the kick.

Kildare was pale with rage. It was not only the advantage

gained by the enemy, through the penalty-kick, that annoyed him. It was the blackguardly action of the back in charging the Clifden skipper foully, and bringing disgrace upon the side he belonged to. Kildare strode up to Jones with a look upon his face that made the New House fellow extremely uneasy.

"Get off the field, Jones!"

Jones glared at him.

"Do you hear? I order you off the field,"

"I didn't mean—"

"I don't know and don't care what you meant. I know what you did. You're a disgrace to any decent team. Get off the field!"

Jones ground his teeth. His eyes were blazing. He had expected to be "stanged"; but the public humiliation of being ordered off the field was maddening.

"Sha'n't!" he ground out.

Kildare came nearer to him, his hands clenched, his eyes on fire.

"Are you going, or shall I shove you off?"

Jones receded a pace. He turned an appealing glance upon the referee—Mr. Kidd of the School House. But Mr. Kidd's face was cold and stern.

"Get off the ground, Jones," he said. "I uphold Kildare's decision, and should have said so myself if he had not spoken. Get off!"

There was no disputing the referee's order. Jones, with hanging head, and his nails digging into his palms, turned and slowly made his way off the field, greeted with groans by most of the spectators.

"I protest!" exclaimed Monteith, his brow dark with anger. "I protest!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare roughly. "There's been too much time wasted already."

Monteith gritted his teeth. He was inclined to walk off the field himself, there and then, and leave Kildare to finish the match as best he could. He was angry with Jones for having placed himself in the captain's hands by his folly, and still more angry with Kildare. But to leave his side in the lurch in the middle of a match was too serious a step to be taken in a hurry, and so he controlled himself.

"Very well," he muttered thoughtfully—"very well. You'll hear more of this."

The Clifden fellows were looking at each other rather queerly. It was very patent to them that there was a split in the school at St. Jim's. All this washing of dirty linen in public was extremely annoying to Kildare, but Monteith was too angry to care. But the referee put a sharp end to the scene. The penalty-kick was awarded to the Clifden team, and their skipper took it with a care and calculation which were well rewarded. Russhen, in goal, was all eyes and hands, but the kick was a little too much for him. The ball went into the net, and Clifden were a goal to the good.

The Saints resumed play a man short, and the Clifden men were not slow to take advantage of it. Monteith, too, was too passionately angry to play up to his usual form. He simply "walked" through the game, and did not improve a single chance that came his way. The wind, too, was increasing in force, and was blowing raindrops in the faces of the Saints; so the difficulties they had to contend with were almost hopeless.

Kildare played up splendidly, and most of his men backed him up as well as they could, but the task was too big for them. With the centre-half gone, and the best winger playing listlessly, the side were too heavily handicapped. Had Clifden been a strong team they would have walked all over the Saints. As it was, Kildare succeeded in holding his ground, though the Saints never looked like scoring again.

When the final whistle went the score was unaltered. The Clifden team had won by two goals to one. And the Saints went off the field in the worst of spirits; some of them in the worst of tempers.

"Rotten!" said Jack Blake, in disgust. "What is St. Jim's coming to, I wonder? I never saw such a poor show. Look here, kids, if the seniors don't buck up, we shall have to petition the Head to let a junior eleven represent St. Jim's."

"Well, a junior eleven couldn't do much worse than that," said Herries. "It wasn't so bad being licked by the Milvertons. But to let a third-rate team like Clifden walk over us—well, it's simply sickening."

And Herries' opinion was very generally shared by seniors and juniors alike.

"DAILY MAIL"

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
A Splendid Story Tale (Extra Long),
By Jack North.

AND

"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure
By Mark Deveraux.

IN **"PLUCK" P**

CHAPTER 8.

The First Number of "The Saint."

"HALLO, Figgy! You're the very chap I want to see."
 "How curious," grinned Figgy. "I was just coming over to see you."
 "Come in," said Blake. "We've got something to show you."

"Curious again! I thought you had."
 "Did you? You'll never guess what it was. Come on; it's in the common-room."
 "So you've posted it up?"

Blake stared.
 "What? How do you know anything about it?"
 "Oh," said Figgy, "a little bird told me! That's what we've come over for. Come on, chaps; you're all invited to read the first number of 'The Saint.'"

A dozen New House juniors, including, of course, the "Co.," were at the heels of Figgy. They followed Jack Blake into the junior's room in the School House. Shrieks of laughter were proceeding from that apartment. Jack Blake had hung up the big cardboard sheet, upon which the pages of the magazine were pasted in careful array, in a prominent place.

The news that the first number of "The Saint" was published had flown like wildfire, and the room was crowded. Besides as well as juniors had come to see this latest production of Study No. 6. The howls of laughter made Blake grin with gratification. He knew that the paper was a success, and its reception was very pleasing. But the laughter exceeded even his rosiest anticipations as he entered the room with Figgy and Co. A yell greeted him.

"Hallo, ass!"
 "You've described yourself well, Blake."
 "It's the giddy truth!"
 "Fancy Blake growing so candid in his old age!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Somewhat mystified, Blake pushed his way to the front. Percy Mellish kindly pointed out to him the cause of the uproarious laughter. Herries was standing by glowering, yet half grinning, too. Blake coloured as he read. The title of the paper had been altered by the addition of a single letter, so that it now read:

"The Saint"; the Official School Magazine of St. Jim's. Edited by John Blake, Esq., A.S.S.
 Kerr had put in the "A" very neatly before the "S.S."
 The effect was comical in the extreme.

"Who did that?" demanded Blake wrathfully. "Herries, you ass, I left you in charge of the thing while I went for Figgy, and I haven't been gone two minutes! Why didn't you—"

"It hasn't been done now," said Herries. "It must have been got at in the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgy. A light dawned upon Blake. The unexpected knowledge of Figgy and Co. was now explained. Somehow or other they had discovered the project of Study No. 6, and had got at the first number of "The Saint," and the chums had never noticed it.

"I smile!" yelled Figgy. "Hear me smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

Blake ran his eyes swiftly over the magazine. Ready fingers pointed out more of the improvements Kerr had made upon it. The limerick, for instance, in which Blake had described Figgy and Co. in terms the reverse of complimentary, had been wofully changed. Now it ran as follows, and Blake could hardly help grinning as he read:

"There are three jolly fellows we know,
 By the title of Figgy's & Co.,
 They are all of them bricks,
 And they've whacked Study Six,
 And they don't give the School House a show."

"Hear me smile!" chirped Figgy. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the Co.
 "Never mind," said Blake. "Read the rest, you boudlers, that's all."

Digby had gone to Study No. 6 for a bottle of ink and a brush, and he now returned, and the alterations were carefully blacked out.

But they had caught on, and the juniors began to address Blake with the addition of initials after his name, and Figgy and Co. set Kerr's limerick to a kind of chant and began to sing it.

This was not likely to be stood by Study No. 6, and it looked as if a general row was coming, but just then Kildare came in, and the sight of the captain restored order.

"Hallo, Blake!" said Kildare good-humouredly. "I hear you have started in the editorial line. Is this your effusion?"
 "That's it," said Blake modestly. "I wish you'd read it,

Kildare. Good literature is always improving to the mind, and—"

"Thanks, I will."
 And Kildare stopped before "The Saint" and began to read.

The editors had no space in the New House, by any means. Digby's paragraph headed "Natural History," for example, could only be described as extremely personal.

"The Moutche-beast is a peculiar animal. It is long and thin, and has a prominent proboscis, which it is always poking into people's business. The animal cannot be tamed, and it is useless for anyone to try to live peacefully with it. It is generally growling at something, and its physiognomy is often distinguished by hideous scowls. A specimen is kept at St. Jim's, but its presence there is very disagreeable to all other inmates, and there would be general rejoicing if it were sent to its proper home, the Zoo."

"Come, come," said Kildare, "that won't do, you know." Digby's article was funny, funnier than Dig had intended. Dig was weak in orthography, weaker still in punctuation. He hadn't been very clear where the story ought to be put, and being of a liberal turn of mind, he had sprinkled them freely over his composition, after he had finished it, determined that at all events there should not be too few. The result was peculiar.

"We are informed: that there is a plague of rats at St. Jim's; These noxious animals generally live in old houses, but in the present: case they inhabit a New House. They are nasty little animals, very unpleasant to look at, and very troublesome: to decent people. The New House is: simply a conglomeration of rat holes, where the little bruits live in swarms; They sometimes come out and are cheery, and then the young gentlemen of the School House: have to; chase them back: to their dens again."

There was more in the same strain, and the punctuation was decidedly the funniest part of Dig's crushing article.

Kildare's grin grew broader when he came to Herries' contribution, which was in a more serious vein. The chief editor had declared that there ought to be some serious writing in the paper, it couldn't be all fun, and Herries had produced a poem, but its effect upon most of the readers was the reverse of solemn.

It was entitled "Ode to a Perishing Sparrow," and commenced thusly:

"Poor little sparrow, I see thee lie,
 Ad a tear of sympathy comes into my eye,
 Some cruel boy with a catapult
 Has slain thee in the prime of life.
 Never more wilt thou chirp or fly home to thy nest,
 Poor little sparrow!"

The poem had originally contained twelve stanzas, but space was limited, and Blake had only been able to squeeze in four and a half, so that the poem ended rather abruptly, which Herries said spoiled the effect.

Kildare did not seem to think that the effect was spoiled, however, for he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. Herries watched him in amazement and some indignation.

"There's nothing funny in that poem," he said. "It's a serious one, Kildare."

Kildare gasped.

"Is it? I mistook it for humour. I beg your pardon, Herries."
 "Poor little sparrow," giggled Figgy—"poor little perishing sparrow! Perishing roe, I say! Ha, ha, ha!"
 The rest of the first number of "The Saint" we need not describe in detail, but it was about on a par with what we have quoted.

The Rats were slated right and left, and the School House exulted, as was only to be expected.

Under the head of "Football Notes" appeared the following:

"The St. Jim's First Eleven is going to the dogs. They can't play better for toffee. The editor of 'The Saint' has a suggestion to make. That is, that all the Rats shall be forthwith kicked out, and their places filled by School House chaps, who will uphold the honour of the old school. If this is not done, the captain of St. Jim's is hereby warned that the juniors of the School House wash their hands of the result."

"Well, it's about time they washed their hands, some of them," said Figgy.

Kildare finished his perusal and walked away, leaving the juniors in possession of the room. Figgy and Co. began to chant their limerick again, and Blake and his chums, getting out of patience, charged them out of the room, and ejected them ignominiously from the School House.

From time to time, however, New House boys came in in twos and threes to look at the first number of "The Saint,"

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS."
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IN "PLUCK," P^o

and all the time one or other of the chums of Study No. 6 mounted guard over it, in case any of the enemy should be tempted to damage the interesting publication.

Monteith heard of "The Saint" in due course, and of its uncomplimentary references to himself, and he came over to see it, and he read D'Arcy's paragraph on the natural history of the Monteith-beast in a towering fury.

Digby happened to be on guard just then, and he eyed the New House prefect rather uneasily. Monteith finished his reading, and then grabbed the big cardboard sheet.

"Here, I say, what are you up to?" demanded Dig. In alarm.

Monteith gave him a cuff that sent him reeling. Then he crumpled up the cardboard, tore it, and scattered the fragments round the common-room, amid cries of indignation from the juniors present.

Then the incensed prefect stalked out of the School House, followed by loud groans and hisses.

"Never mind," said Blake, when he was told of the untimely fate of the first number of "The Saint"—"never mind, my infants. We've made them sit up, and that's what we wanted. I never thought Monteith would show how much we had ruffled him, the ass. We've made those New House wasters wriggle, and that was what we wanted. And let them wait till the next number comes out, that's all!"

CHAPTER 9.

Monteith Puts His Foot Down.

AFTER the Clifden match, Kildare had quickly made up his mind as to the course he would pursue. Whatever might be the views of the New House, whatever the action taken by Monteith, he was determined that Jones should not play in the first eleven again.

This exclusion would reduce the representation of the New House in the team to two members, Monteith and Baker. But it could not be helped. Jones was not fit to play, and the New House could not supply his place so well as the School House could. With a strict eye to the efficiency of the team, Kildare was compelled to increase the number of fellows from his own House in the team to nine.

The news was received in the New House with boundless indignation.

The seniors met as usual in Monteith's study to discuss the situation, during the week. The question was whether Monteith and Baker should turn up to practise with the team.

The New House fellows were much more inclined to follow the prefect's lead to extremities now than they had been before.

Monteith's prophecy, a very easy one for him to make, knowing Kildare's views as he did, had come true. The New House surrender had been followed by the exclusion of another New House player. Still, even Monteith did not uphold Jones's conduct on the field.

"I admit that Jones forgot himself," he said. "He acted badly, but we all lose our tempers at times, and Jones says that he was worried and nervous through knowing that Kildare was watching for a chance to pick faults in him."

"That's so," said Jones. "That's just how I felt. I should have played all right if it hadn't been for that."

"I don't know how you'd have done it then," said Baker. "I don't believe you've got it in you, Jones, and that's plain English."

"I hope you don't intend to back up the enemy, Baker?" said Monteith savagely.

"Certainly not; still, facts are facts. Jones disgraced us in the eyes of the Clifden fellows, and Kildare was quite right to order him off the field."

"The question is, not about Jones, but about the New House generally. Suppose Jones ought to leave the team, how can we have a right to insist upon another fellow of our house being put on in his place?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" came a chorus in reply.

"Do you agree with Kildare that the only material for strengthening the team is to be found in the School House?"

"No, no! Never!"

"Well, then, we'll agree to Jones being left out, if Kildare will put on a New House chap in his place."

"He won't," said Baker. "He's already said he won't."

"Then my opinion is that we ought to wash our hands of the business altogether!" exclaimed Monteith. "If Kildare wants to have it all to himself, let him have it."

"That means losing the Milverton match on Saturday."

"It will be Kildare who loses it."

"It will be a rotten come-down for the school to be licked both at home and away by Milverton."

"It's Kildare's fault. Suppose you and I, Baker, play on Saturday? The Milverton match is the toughest before us, and after that Kildare will be able to dispense with our

services. Then we shall get the order of the boot to make room for School House fellows."

"I don't believe it."

"No; you want to back up Kildare against your own House."

"No; I don't," said Baker, reddening. "I'm ready to stand by my house, and to do just what the fellows think best. It ought to be put to the vote."

"And you'll stand by the vote?"

Baker hesitated.

"Yes," he said, at last, "I'll stand by it."

"Good enough. It would be useless for us to attempt anything if we were not united. If we are going to stand up for our rights we must all stand up together."

"Put it to the vote," said Webb.

The vote was taken, and it was almost unanimously in favour of breaking entirely with Kildare unless he would allow at least three New House players in the eleven.

"Very well," said Baker. "I stand to it. Some of us had better go and tell Kildare what he's to expect. Or perhaps it would be better to write."

"Yes, I'll write," said Monteith, "and send my fag over with the note."

After a good deal of discussion, the following letter was agreed to and written:

"Dear Kildare,—It is impossible for the New House to agree to your decision to play a team composed almost wholly of School House fellows. If you will the whole thing in your hands, say so plainly, and we will withdraw."

"Unless at least three New House fellows are to be played on Saturday, Baker and myself will have no alternative but to resign our places in the team. Yours sincerely,

"JAMES MONTEITH."

Figgins was called, and entrusted with the note.

"Take it to Kildare," said Monteith, "and wait for an answer. And back up!"

"Right you are, old sport!" said Figgins.

And he hurried over to the New House. He found Kildare in the seniors' room talking to several School House fellows on the topic of the Milverton match.

"Letter for you, Kildare," said Figgins. "I'm to wait for an answer."

"Very good."

Kildare read the letter, and then read it again aloud, so that those who were with him could hear the precious epistle.

"He means business," said Darrel. "Well, all the better. Now we shall have done with the end for good and all."

"You won't give in, Kildare?" Rushden asked, anxiously.

The captain of the school shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible!" he replied. "I could not give in."

He took out a pencil and wrote a reply on the back of Monteith's note.

"Dear Monteith,—I am sorry you take this view. If the New House could provide efficient players I should be only too glad to play them. I have given your side every chance, and the result has been two matches lost to St. Jim's. I cannot change my decision, and the team for Saturday stands as I have already decided. I hope you and Baker will think better of it, and decide not to leave the school in the lurch at a critical time.—Sincerely yours,

"E. KILDARE."

Back went Figgins with the captain's note.

It was opened by Monteith in the presence of his friends, who all waited eagerly for him to read out the answer. Monteith gritted his teeth and read.

"He won't give in," he said. "There's only one answer to be made to this."

He scribbled a note and handed it to Figgins. Again that long-legged Mercury sought the captain of St. Jim's in the School House.

Kildare's face set grimly as he read out Monteith's reply:

"Dear Kildare,—Please scratch my name and Baker's from the list for Saturday. We resign.—J. MONTEITH."

"Any answer?" asked Figgins affably. "I don't want to grumble, but you'll make me tired between you. Think you could squeeze all the rest into one letter?"

Kildare made no reply. He wrote the briefest of answers to Monteith, and gave it to Figgins.

There was a growl in Monteith's study when the answer was read out by the prefect:

"Dear Monteith,—Resignations accepted.—E. KILDARE."

"So that's settled," said Monteith, setting his lips. "Our resignations are accepted, and we don't play for the school on Saturday. I shall be glad to see how they get on without us. We shall see."

"Any more messages?" inquired Figgins.

"No. Get out!"

And Figgins got out.

The meeting broke up gloomily. Kildare's prompt acceptance of the gaze of battle had taken some of the New House seniors by surprise, and some of them had doubts as to the wisdom of the course they had taken. If St. Jim's won the

match now, it would be an intolerable triumph for the School House, and the bitterest humiliation for their rivals.

On the other hand, the New House fellows could hardly hope that St. Jim's would lose. They were, in fact, placed in a false position; but there was no retreat now. They could not retreat without making themselves look ridiculous. They had taken up a position they were bound not to recede from.

Even Monteith, though he affected a certain jauntiness of manner, was secretly uneasy, and wondered whether he had not gone too far at last.

CHAPTER 10.

Figgins's Coup—Off to Milverton.

THE news was soon all over St. Jim's. Kildare had scratched the names of the two New House players, and, after consulting with his friends, he selected two School House boys to take their places. Both the latter were good, reliable players, but with nothing whatever brilliant about them, and Kildare himself acknowledged that they were not a patch on the men they displaced.

But there was no help for it. It was simply a question whether the captain of the team should have authority, or whether Monteith should have it, and there was only one possible decision for a skipper who was worth his salt to come to. That decision Kildare had taken, and he stood by it.

The New House had chosen to withdraw from the team, and he let them go. He filled their places, and kept the team assiduously at practice. It was evident that he had not abandoned the hope of pulling off the Milverton match, in spite of the defection of two of his best players.

"Hang him!" muttered Monteith, as he watched the eleven at practice one afternoon. "Hang him! He can't possibly expect to win. He can't win. By George, I hope the Milverton men will wipe up the ground with them!"

But Monteith could not deny that the eleven shaped very well. They were playing a scratch team picked from the Sixth—all School House boys, of course, for the New House let them severally alone—and the first eleven was doing very well.

Kildare and Darrel in the forward line, Drake at centre-half, and Rusden in goal, were brilliant, and, though they were the only stars in the team, the rest were good, steady, reliable players, who could be depended upon to do their best.

"The team's improved, hasn't it?" exclaimed Blake, coming up with his chums to watch the practice. He pretended not to know Monteith. "I told you it would be all right as soon as those New House wasters were kicked out. If Kildare had taken my advice he'd have fired them long ago!"

Monteith scowled and stalked away. An uneasiness was growing up in his breast that the college might pull off the match, after all, and he ground his teeth at the mere thought of this crowning triumph of the rival House. If it indeed turned out so, the move he had made with the intention of injuring Kildare would recoil upon himself with a vengeance. How the School House would crow if they, unaided, beat the Milverton men, who had walked over the side composed of players from both the houses!

Kildare meant to leave no stone unturned to win. He kept his men at practice without mercy, even at the risk of over-doing it. By the time the eventful Saturday came round they were very fit, and worked together splendidly.

Figgins & Co. viewed the new state of affairs with dismay. They blamed Monteith whole-heartedly, and broached dark projects for getting rid of their head prefect and finding another chief for the New House.

"He simply lets our side down," said Figgins. "If Kildare wins the Milverton match, think of the crowing of the Kids! If he loses it the college will be licked, and it will be the fault of the New House. Either way we stand to lose over it. Monteith is a silly ass and a cad, and ought to be scragged."

"Well, we can't scrag him," said Kerr. "I wish we could, but we can't. The only thing we can do is to see that we get the best of our juniors over there. We can't help the seniors making fools of themselves, but we can make the Kids squirm."

"That's right," agreed Figgins. "So long as we keep our end up, that's all we can do. Now, I suppose you know Blake and Studv No. 6 are going over to Milverton to-morrow to see the match?"

"Well, I suppose they would," said Wynn. "We're going, aren't we?"

"We are, my son—we are. We are going in a way that will astonish Blake. Lend me your ears, my infants, while I whisper a deadly secret."

"Oh, cut the cackle, Figgys! What's the glib game?"

"We are going to go to school to spoil the Egyptians, infant."

"Go ahead!" said Kerr, terse.

"I have been doing some giddy scouting. Blake and his

fellow-bounders are going to do the thing in style. They have hired a trap of Short, the Rylcombe man, and it's coming up to catch them to-morrow. I stalked Blake in Rylcombe, and found out all about it. They're taking a lunch in a hamper, which will come up from the village in the trap."

"Jolly nice for them, but I don't see where we come in. They're not likely to ask us to go in the trap, or to invite us to their feed."

"My dear fellow, we are going to invite ourselves!" The Co. grinned jocosely as they caught on to Figgins's plan.

"You see," explained Figgins condescendingly, "when the trap comes up for Blake, what's to prevent us from rushing it? It's going to wait for them outside the school gates. All we've got to do is to trick the driver out somehow, and collar the trap."

"Ripping!" "You know Short's trap, the one he lets out on half-holidays, when the chaps want a drive. I can manage his giddy old horse first rate; and I dare say we shall know how to manage the hamper."

"What-ho!" ejaculated the Co. together. "Mum's the word, you know," warned Figgins. "Don't breathe a whisper to a soul. Blake doesn't know we're up to the game, or he'd be on his guard. It will be a pleasant surprise to-morrow for our dear schoolfellow, and will be a bit of our own back for the things he said about us in that blooming newspaper of his!"

And Figgins & Co. kept the deadly secret well. The next day St. Jim's was in a state of subdued excitement. The Milverton return match, of course, was the subject uppermost in every mind.

The School House were looking forward to the match with a grim determination, not unmixed with doubt as to the result but quite hopeful.

The New House had very mixed feelings upon the subject. However the visit to Milverton turned out, there would be no credit for them, and whether St. Jim's won or lost the result could not fail to be humiliating to the New House.

They all knew it, and Monteith knew it, and Monteith knew as well that his influence in the New House had never been tottering so near its fall. He had gone too far—he realised it now—and his hold upon the fellows he had led into a painful and ridiculous position was weakening. But the prefect concealed very well his secret misgivings.

"Are you going over to see the match, Monteith?" asked Baker, after morning school.

Baker was looking very worried. He felt his exclusion from the team in which he might have played very keenly indeed. He bitterly regretted having allowed Monteith to

Sandow Anecdotes

SULTAN.

Sandow possessed a handsome bairnhood named "Sultan," who was given to him as a puppy by Prince Bismarck. This dog stood about thirty-four inches high at the shoulder, weighed nearly two hundred pounds, and was the winner of seventeen first prizes.

He was a remarkably intelligent animal, and would never go out without carrying a satchel which contained his chain and muzzle, bones and a box of pills and towels for rubbing him down.

When Sandow sprained his foot whilst in America he was staying in an hotel which was not furnished with a lift, and Sultan carried him up and down stairs each day.

Sultan was an excellent thief-catcher, as the following incident will show. It may be mentioned here that a person who was unknown to him entered a room where he was he would never allow that person to leave the room until someone he knew had seen the intruder.

When performing, Sandow always left Sultan in charge of his clothes in the dressing-room, and one night one of the stage assistants was missed for about an hour. When Sandow returned to his dressing-room he could not open the door. Sultan was lying in front of it, and only moved when Sandow ordered him to do so.

Entering the room, Sandow found the missing assistant covering in the farthest corner. He said he had come into the room to see if he could assist Sandow, but once in the room the dog would not let him leave, and he had been in fear of his life the whole time he was there. As the man appeared upset, Sandow gave him some silver and allowed him to leave.

When Sandow commenced to dress himself he found that his watch and chain, other valuables, and all his money had been taken out of his clothes and placed in a heap on the table. It was then clear that the man had not entered the room with the idea of helping Sandow, but in order to commit robbery; he had reckoned, without Sultan, however, and was kept a prisoner until Sandow's return.

The man was found, and afterwards confessed to the attempted robbery, and was immediately discharged. For "playing policeman" so successfully Sultan was treated to a special steak for supper that night.

Any reader writing to No. 1, Sandow Hall, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C., will be supplied with a free copy of the booklet, "Sandow's Way to Strength," which shows how Sandow obtained this magnificent strength, and gives full instructions how readers may obtain similar muscular development and robust health.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long),
By Jack North;

AND

"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Barran;

IN "PLUCK" 1c.

prevail upon him to resign, but, having done so, he felt bound in honour to stand to his guns.

"Yes," said Monteith, "I am going to see them licked!"

"I hope they won't be licked. It's a beastly business!"

"All Kildare's fault. Of course, I couldn't foresee that he would be so obstinate. Not that I'm sorry. We have acted in the only way we could have acted with dignity."

"Well, I can't see much dignity in loafing around while other fellows play the game," said Baker. "Perhaps I'm dull, but I really can't. I think I shall go over to see the match. I feel a bit anxious about it."

Monteith sneered savagely. Baker evidently hoped that the School House would win, in spite of the humiliation that meant for his own house.

"I am going in the brake," said Monteith. "After all, I am vice-captain, and have a perfect right to go. We may as well see them make asses of themselves!"

And when the brake that was to convey the team to Milverton drew up in the quadrangle, Monteith and several of his friends climbed into it, along with the team.

The New House fellows were looking for trouble, but they did not get it. The players did not take the slightest notice of them. Only Blake and his chums gave them a long, un-musical groan.

But Blake had no time for more attention than that, for it was time for him to start himself. As the brake was set in motion the chums of Study No. 6 started for the gates, where it was time that the trap was in waiting. They had arranged for it to arrive at the same time as the brake.

Blake was in high spirits. He did not allow himself to doubt that Kildare's team would beat the Milverton men by a long way, and the fact that Monteith would be there to see it was gratifying. After that victory, which Blake was certain would come to pass, the New House would have to sing small. Even Figgins & Co. would hardly be able to deny that the School House was cock house of St. Jim's.

Study No. 6 were, as Figgins had said, doing the thing in style to-day. A big hamper, well packed, had been sent in the trap from the best confectioner's in Rylcombe, and, as the keen, winter air would sharpen appetites, which were certainly already very good, Blake and his chums anticipated the enjoyment of a first-class feed. And to drive over in a trap, instead of "hoofing" it like most of the juniors, or pedalling along the muddy lanes on their cycles, was a treat.

But alas for Study No. 6!

While the chums had been watching the footballers taking their places in the brake, Figgins & Co. had not been idle. The long-legged chuff of the New House juniors had been on the alert for some time watching for the trap from Rylcombe, and when it came along and halted in the road outside the school gates, Fergy immediately signalled to his friends.

"Hallo, Peter!" said Figgins affably to the driver, who was looking at the three rather suspiciously. He was a Rylcombe man and knew Figgins & Co. "Hallo, old fellow! Nice afternoon, ain't it?"

"Um!" grunted Peter.

"Did you drop that shilling, Peter?"

Figgins pointed to a shilling lying in the dust close beside the trap. Peter's eyes lighted up a little.

"I must have," he said, with an air of reflection. "And it came up to me, Master Figgins."

"Now, look here, Peter, you must not be lazy," said Figgins, wagging his finger at him. "I haven't any objection on principle to handing you up that shilling, but I can't aid and abet a man of your years in idleness. You shock me, you do really."

"And it up!" growled Peter.

"Not at all. If you want it you must pick it up."

Now, Peter knew perfectly well that he had not dropped a shilling, but he had no objection in the world to picking one up, and so he descended from the trap.

He stooped to take possession of the shilling, and Figgins charged him behind, and he gave a wild yell and went down on his hands and knees.

In a moment Figgins was in the trap, the whip in his hand, and grabbing the reins.

"Buck up!" he shouted. "In with you!"

Kerr and Fatty Wynn swarmed in behind.

Peter, with a growl, picked himself up, and rushed to stop them. He gripped Fatty Wynn by the legs to drag him out, but Fatty kicked out spasmodically, and Peter received his foot in the region vulgarly known as the broad-basket. Peter sat down in a hurry with a shock that jarred all his bones, and sat there in the middle of the road gasping.

Figgins gathered up the reins and cracked the whip. Kerr scrambled in over the back of the trap and lent a hand to Wynn, who, by reason of his stoutness, was not quite so agile.

It was at this moment that the chums of Study No. 6 reached the gates. They stopped for a moment in sheer

stupor as they saw Figgins & Co. in possession of the trap. But it took Blake only a second to recover himself.

"At 'em!" he yelled, and he rushed forward to the attack. Figgins was cracking the whip frantically, but he did not like to hit the sleepy old horse, which put itself into motion in a very leisurely way.

Blake, with a desperate spurt, reached the trap just as Fatty Wynn rolled inside it, and Blake caught at the back and clung on.

"Buck up, Figg!" yelled Kerr.

Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy were racing to join Blake. Blake hung a dead weight on the back of the trap. Herries made a fine burst and joined them. He caught hold beside his leader. Figgins gave the horse a touch of the whip, and it started on at a greater speed, and Dig and D'Arcy dropped hopelessly behind. Kerr and Wynn turned their attention immediately to Blake and Herries. The chiefs of the School House juniors were hanging on like grim death. The speed of the trap was increasing, and their feet rattled noisily along the road.

"Thieves!" gasped Herries. "Give us our trap!"

"Sorry," said Kerr. "I can't give you the trap, but I've got something else for you. Here it is, my dear school-fellow!"

He took an orange from his pocket, and began to squeeze it down Herries' neck. Herries had to hold on with both hands, or drop into the road, so he was absolutely defenceless. Kerr squeezed the orange with a firm hand, and Herries wriggled and writhed.

"You beast! Leave off!"

"Not at all. You're welcome to all of it, my dear Herries."

"Rat! Beast! Chuck it!"

"Anything to oblige," said Kerr politely, and he "chucked" it, though not in the sense that Herries meant. The orange flattened on the School House junior's face, and Herries lost his hold and dropped in the muddy road.

Blake was still hanging on. He had got both his arms over the backboard, and was making desperate efforts to drag himself into the trap. To his surprise Kerr gripped hold of his shoulders and helped him in. He rolled into the bottom of the trap head-first, and Kerr and Wynn immediately sat upon him and pinned him down.

Figgins turned round and grinned at his fallen enemy.

"Hallo, Blake!" he said. "You want to come, too? All right, keep him there. Sit on him. Don't let him get up."

"You beasts!" gasped Blake. "You are suf-suf-suffocating me!"

"Sorry; but chaps who shove themselves in where they're not wanted have to take the risk of getting suf-suf-suffocated."

"Let me get up, you ends!"

"Not much."

The trap bowled on. Blake's chums had vanished far behind, and he was a helpless prisoner in the hands of the Co. The trio were roaring with laughter, but Blake could not see anything humorous in the situation.

"Lemme get up, you Rats!"

"Will you make it pax if we let you go?"

"No!"

"All right. Squeeze an orange down his neck, Wynn."

"Buck-lo."

"Chuck it!" exclaimed Blake hastily. "Pax, pax!"

"Thought you would," grinned Figgins. "Now, you admit that you're licked, don't you? And you make us a free present of all that grub in that hamper. Can we have it?"

"Yes," said Blake, with a wry face.

"Do you hope we'll enjoy it?"

"Yes."

"Right. Now we'll forgive you and let you go. Go back for the other wasters, and I'll tell you what, Blake. When you arrive at Milverton, we'll invite you to lunch with us."

"I'll invite myself to break your neck!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha! Shove him out!"

Figgins nodded down, and Blake was dropped into the road.

"Ta-ta!" said Figgins, and he drove off towards Milverton. Blake stood looking after the trap, and the Co. kissed their hands to him as they went.

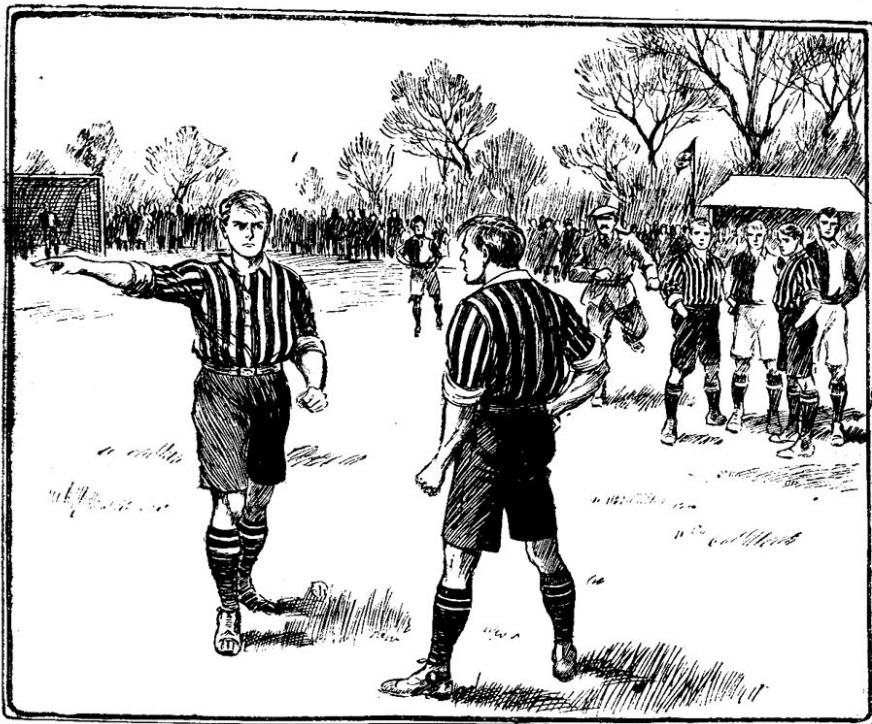
"Well, this is a rotten sell!" growled Blake.

He sat upon a stile to wait for his chums to come up. The St. Jim's brake passed him with the footballers on board. Later on Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy came up.

"They've done us," said Blake. "We've got to hoof it; but never say die. We'll make Figgins & Co. wriggle for this some time."

And with this comforting reflection he trudged on. The chums stepped out briskly, taking their defeat cheerfully, as they did everything.

It was close upon time for the kick-off when they arrived



"Get off the field, Joe!" said Kildare, as he strode up. (See page 12.)

at Milverton. They found the trap tied up to a hedge, empty. Figgins & Co. were gone, so was the hamper. The raiders were seen soon afterwards. They were close to the ropes for a good view of the ground, the hamper at their feet. Blake and his chums made their way towards the group, and Figgins greeted them with an amiable grin.

"Don't forget it's pax!" he exclaimed. "We can't row on other people's ground; and that invitation to lunch still holds good."

Blake grinned.

"Right you are, old Figgy. No more rows till we get back to St. Jim's; and we'll share the hamper, you giddy raider. Hallo, there they are!"

The teams were coming into the field. Immediately the attention of the rivals of St. Jim's was turned to the football field, and they joined heartily in the rousing cheer which greeted the appearance of the opposing teams.

Louder still rang their "Hurrah!" when Kildare was seen pointing to a goal, and they knew that the St. Jim's skipper had won the toss. And now commenced the Milverton match, the result of which was expected with such varied feelings by the rival houses of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 11. The Winning Goal.

THE whistle went. York, the Milverton skipper, kicked off. There was a big crowd round the field. Milverton College had turned out in full force, and at least fifty boys of all forms had come over from St. Jim's. Very fit looked the Saints in their red-and-white, and equally ready for good work the Milverton men appeared. The teams, as a matter of fact, appeared well matched, and if Kildare had doubts about any of his men, he did not allow his face to show it.

The Milvertons had evidently not forgotten their victory at St. Jim's, and were inclined to underrate their opponents. The Saints, on the other hand, addressed themselves to their task seriously, knowing well that it was a difficult one. The Milverton men had the wind in their faces as they kicked off, but that did not prevent them from invading the visitors' half with a rush.

The red-and-white fell back before the attack, and York came on with the ball at his feet, well backed up by his forwards. He remembered how weak the St. Jim's defence had been last time, and he was a little over-confident in his powers. But he soon learned that the St. Jim's second and third lines were now made of sterner stuff.

Drake, centre-half, tackled the Milverton skipper and took the ball fairly from his foot, and skied it, and it came down in midfield just where Kildare wanted it. Off went Kildare with the ball, leaving the home forwards staring, and the backs rushed in vain to stop him.

He was going like lightning, and when a full-back, in desperation, charged him off the ball, Darrel was ready to take it and slam it into the goal. The home custodian just missed the leather, which whizzed in and lodged in a corner of the net.

The air rocked with the yell that went up from the Saints' round the ropes.

"Goal!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

Blake and his chums roared themselves hoarse; and Figgins & Co., who were just as anxious for St. Jim's to win, cheered as loudly as Study No. 6. Monteith scowled and gritted his teeth.

It was first blood to the Saints, and the New House prefect

was far from expecting it. But Baker, who was standing by his side, grinned with satisfaction.

"St. Jim's may pull it off, after all!" he exclaimed.

"Hang them!" growled Monteith. "Hang them!"

Baker stared at him.

"Do you want the school to lose, Monteith?" he exclaimed.

"You—you couldn't be such a howling cad."

"Oh, shut up!" said Monteith, walking away.

The teams had lined up again, and York kicked off.

The Milverton men were in a more chastened mood now.

The game was not to be the walk-over they had fancied, and it was clear that if they were to win, they would have to put their best foot foremost.

They attacked more steadily now, but still they attacked, and their onslaught drove back the Saints, and ere long the Milvertons were massed before the goal, and Rusden had all his work cut out to save the whizzing shots that were sent in.

The rush was irresistible, and the Saints' right wing crumpled up before it, and the Milvertons, working their way down the field, forced the St. Jim's back to concede a corner.

Instantly York claimed the kick.

With eager faces the players stood while it was taken.

His masterly rush the Saints followed, but in vain. The Milverton men had not failed to make the most of their advantage, and in a second the ball went in from the foot of York.

This time Rusden was beaten.

The ball was in the net, and the Milverton crowd cheered loudly the success of their champions.

The score was now level—one to one—and thirty of the first forty-five minutes had ticked away.

Kildare was in high good humour now.

The Milvertons had been fighting hard, and yet his team had held its ground. They had been put to a stern test, and had not been found wanting.

His hope of victory was strengthening in the captain's breast.

His growing confidence was shared by the rest of the team.

They played up for all they were worth, and for a long time they held the Milverton men and all York's efforts to get goalward were frustrated.

Play went on for a long time in midfield, and the ball frequently went into touch, and it was close upon half-time when the Milvertons fairly got going again.

A prolonged tussle was waged almost on the touch-line, the home players working their way down the field with irresistible determination, and the red-and-white team obstinately contesting every foot of ground.

The struggle was watched with the keenest interest by the spectators.

Back went the red-and-white, and the black stripes were massed before the goal, and York cut in a tearing shot.

Rusden grabbed at it, but, unfortunately his foot slipped on the turf at the same moment, and he fell upon one knee.

The ball whizzed over his head into the net.

"Goal!" cried all Milverton, in wild delight.

A few minutes later the whistle went for the interval, and the rival teams stopped for a much-needed rest.

Milverton were two to one, but Kildare was still hopeful.

With luck, St. Jim's might pull it off yet; and certainly, if they did not win, it would not be for want of grit and British pluck.

Play went the whistle.

All eyes were fastened upon the field again.

The change of ends brought the wind against St. Jim's, and Kildare kicked off in the teeth of it.

There was a quiet look of confidence on the Milverton skipper's face.

His momentary doubts at the beginning of the first half were dispelled now.

He was quite certain that the home side would prove victorious. They had scored two goals to one in the first half, with the wind against them. It was pretty certain, he considered, that they would do better in the second half, with the wind blowing harder than ever now, behind their backs.

So, it certainly seemed; but the Saints evidently did not consider the result a foregone conclusion, for they threw themselves into the game with grim earnestness.

The Milverton men attacked vigorously, but somehow they could not get away, and as fast as the ball was sent forward, the visiting backs sent it back again, and play was more in the home half than in that of the enemy.

And presently the Saints began to gain ground, and in spite of the wind and the Milvertons, they forced their way onward.

York called to his men, and with a desperate and combined effort, they stemmed the advance of the Saints, and drove them back again. And York, seizing his opportunity, broke through the visitors with the ball, and, dashing on, kicked for goal.

The crowd roared as the ball was seen in the net; but they rejoiced too soon, for the referee's whistle shrilled out instantly.

"Off-side!" the St. Jim's contingent were yelling, and they were right. York, in his excitement, had not noticed that he was off-side, but so it was, and the goal was not allowed.

The Milverton rejoicing had been premature; the score was still unchanged. York, with his teeth set, led a fierce attack, and the Milvertons gained ground. But Kildare packed his goal, and paid no heed to every attempt of the home forwards to get through.

And now the St. Jim's contingent roared as the red-and-white were seen going in spanking style, and the cheers were deafening when Darrel sent the ball into the Milverton goal with a lightning-like shot that gave the goalie no earthly chance.

The score was level.

Kildare's eyes were flashing now.

Two goals all, and ten minutes more to play.

"We must win!" he muttered. "We will win! Back up, lads, for the honour of St. Jim's!"

And the Saints did back up.

They meant to take the winning goal before that last ten minutes had ticked away, and they played up splendidly.

Only the Milverton men were equally determined to have the odd goal, and they, too, played with renewed vigour and determination.

To and fro swept the tide of conflict, and minute followed minute, and the deciding goal seemed as far off as ever from either side.

"Time's nearly up!" growled Blake. "Oh, my hat! It ain't going to be a ghastly draw after all, is it?"

Figgins gave a yell.

"Look! Look! Kildare's away!"

"Hurrah!"

Kildare was streaking goalward like a racer, the ball at his feet.

It was a critical moment.

The whistle might go at any second now, and there were still three of the enemy, as well as the custodian, between Kildare and the Milverton goal.

He could ~~not~~ do it.

But Kildare knew what he was about.

He made a feint of passing to Darrel, and deceived the backs and the goalie, too. Then he kicked for goal—a long kick from a distance that was decidedly risky; but the risk had to be taken.

Kildare kicked, and the next moment he staggered and fell under the charge of a home half. But every eye was watching the flight of the ball. They saw the goalkeeper fling himself at it with a frantic clutch—they saw him miss it by an inch—they saw the sphere of leather drop into the net.

And then they yelled!

"Hurrah!"

"Goal!"

The whistle went with a shrill blast.

The game was over. The Milverton match was won. The Saints trooped off the field, winners of the great match by three goals to two.

Blake turned to Figgins, and hugged his old enemy.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "Yell, you beggars, yell!"

And they yelled.

The Milverton crowd were cheering, too. They were sportsmen, and liked to see good play, even against themselves. And the winning goal, taken on the stroke of time, deserved a cheer.

As Kildare went off the field, he passed between two rows of St. Jim's boys, who were yelling themselves hoarse, and waving their caps in the air.

There was only one better heart in the field.

It was Monteith's.

The prefect of the New House, hardly able to contain his rage at the victory of his hated rival, left the ground as quickly as he could, and returned with a scowling brew to St. Jim's. Baker did not go with him. He joined the crowd that was cheering Kildare, and his voice rang out heartily with the loudest.

And a great reception awaited the victorious footballers when they returned to St. Jim's. Needless to say, the School House juniors "kept it up" on the great occasion with becoming noise and hilarity. They had Figgins & Co. to tea in Study No. 6, and, having patched up a truce for the evening, the seven juniors celebrated with tremendous noise the glorious victory of St. Jim's in the Milverton Match.

THE END.

(Now you have finished this, turn to page 30 and read "The Rivals of St. Kils" by Chas. Hamilton. You will like it.)

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS."
A Splendid School Tale (Extra Long,
By Jack North.)

AND

"HELD IN CHECK,"
A Thrilling Tale of Adventure,
By Mark Duran.

IN "PLUCK," 1st

NEW SCHOOL TALE.

THE RIVALS OF ST KIT'S

By Charles Hamilton

CHAPTER I.

Introducing the Boys of St. Kit's.



Round the football ground at St. Kit's a great crowd thronged, and it was growing greater every moment. A buzz of talk filled the air, and ebbed and flowed, but never ceased for a moment. The field was as yet vacant, save for a couple of reckless juniors who had ventured into the sacred precincts and were racing each other from goal to goal amid encouraging shouts from their Form-fellows of "Go

Blaggy!" and "Buck up, young Greene!" But it was evident that a match of unusual interest was about to commence, for the whole school was turning out to see it. Every Form was there in force, from the great men of the lordly Sixth to the smallest and inkiest "infants" of the Third and Second Forms.

At St. Christopher's College, more familiarly known as St. Kit's, they took football as it should be taken—seriously. They fancied themselves at the game, and they played it well. To win recognition in the footer field, and to shine in the college eleven, was the ambition of every sportsman in the upper Forms. A safe custodian, a reliable back, or a sure kick at goal was assured of respectful attention at St. Kit's, whosoever might be his failings in other respects.

The match about to be played was not one of the usual fixtures, but a trial match between two elevens picked from the Sixth and Fifth Forms. But the sides were captained by Arthur Talbot and Eldred Lacy, and therein lay the cause of the keen interest displayed by the whole school.

For at St. Kit's the post of school captain had fallen vacant, and there were two candidates for election—Talbot and Lacy. In considering the merits of a candidate every fellow asked himself the important question, how were the school sports likely to flourish under his rule? In this respect, however, there seemed to be little to choose between the two aspirants. Talbot was the more popular personality, for he was a frank, cordial fellow, whom everyone liked, while Lacy was somewhat given to putting on side. But Lacy had the influence which inevitably attends wealth and high connections. His elder brother, Squire Lacy, of Lynwood, was one of the governors of St. Kit's, and a county magnate. Both fellows were keen footballers, and played well for the school in the first eleven. Their chances of election seemed, therefore, about even, and the contest was certain to be a close one.

In the eyes of the St. Kit's fellows it was quite in accordance with the fitness of things for the captaincy to be won or lost on the football field, and some of the fellows had openly declared their intention of voting for the winning captain in the trial match when the election of the new captain of St. Kit's came about. Other things being equal, that seemed a fair and sportsmanlike way of deciding between the two candidates.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at St. Kit's. The kick-off was timed for half-past two, but long before that the ground was crowded.

The boys wore the colours of the side they favoured—red for Arthur Talbot and blue for his rival. It was hard to tell which colour predominated. Some, whose minds were still open on the subject, wore no colours at all.

Everybody was anxiously awaiting the kick-off, and watches were frequently consulted. There was a cheer as the doctor was seen to descend the steps of his house and take his way to the ground, an imposing figure in cap and gown.

The hour was at hand!

At sight of the doctor, Blagden and Greene, the two juniors who were racing the length of the ground, ducked under the ropes and disappeared among the legs of the crowd.

The cheer was renewed as the rival captains entered the pavilion together. The crowd was now deep all round the ropes, very nearly all St. Kit's being on the spot. Mr. Slaney, the master of the Fourth, who was refereeing the match, in Norfolk jacket and whistle, looked on at his watch.

"Hallo, here they come!" exclaimed Blagden of the Fourth, as the teams came streaming into the field.

"Hurrah! Good old Talbot!"

"Good old Arthur!" roared Greene, waving his cap.

And the group of Fourth Formers round the pair joined heartily in the cheering for Arthur Talbot. It could easily be seen that, in the lower Forms at least, Talbot was more popular than his rival.

The two captains tossed for choice of goal, and there was a fresh cheer as Arthur Talbot was seen putting to the end from which the wind was blowing.

"We've got the wind," chuckled Blagden, digging Greene violently in the ribs—"we've got the wind, old son!"

Greene gasped.

"You've knocked all mine out of me, you ass!"

"Never mind! How fit Talbot looks, doesn't he?"

Handsome and very fit Arthur Talbot looked in the scarlet shirt and white knickers of his side. Sturdy and stalwart, straight as a pine, a splendid specimen of young British manhood.

Eldred Lacy, facing him, did not cut so good a figure. He was about Talbot's age and height, but slimmer and less compact in build. His face was handsome, but the chin was weak and the mouth obstinate. His brow was clouded now, the result of losing the toss. With so much at stake on the game he grudged the slightest advantage to his adversary, and the flush of annoyance in his face showed how little of a real sportsman he was at heart.

The whistle went, and Lacy kicked off. There was a hush round the field, every eye being fixed eagerly upon the play. The silence was broken by a cheer as the red shirts were seen swarming over the enemy's territory.

"Go it, Red!" shouted Talbot's partisans, to be answered by counter-shouts from the backers of Lacy, "Buck up, Blue!"

The Blues did buck up, and the rush of the Reds was stopped short of goal. The ball was brought back into the Reds' half, and there was a desperate tussle in midfield, from which the leather came out to the foot of Talbot, who was away with it like a shot.

A buzz round the field gradually grew to a roar as the Red captain was seen streaking like lightning for the goal.

"Kick, kick!"

"Look out in goal!"

"Stop him!"

"Go it!"

"Oh, well kicked, sir—well kicked!"

"Goal!"

The ball was in the net!

Loud and ringing were the cheers that greeted Talbot's feat. Blagden and Greene roared till they were black in the face. The Blue goalkeeper picked up the ball and slung it out ruefully. Eldred Lacy set his teeth hard.

"For goodness' sake buck up!" he said, as he walked back to the centre of the field. "They will simply walk over us at this rate!"

The irritable remark was received in silence. The backs had done their best, but Talbot had done better, and that was all there was to be said about it. Lacy's reproach was quite uncalled for. The teams lined up again, and again the Blue captain kicked off.

A prolonged tussle for the ball followed. The Reds did most of the attacking, but the defence of the Blues was sound, and the goal long remained intact. At the Reds' end of the ground the Red goalkeeper was waving his arms and stamping to keep himself warm, but the Blue goalie was given plenty of exercise by his opponents. Still the goal did

NEXT SATURDAY:

"TRUE CHUMS,"

A Splendid Tale of Adventure (By Mrs. A. Lane).

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AND

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By Mark Dorn.

IN "PLUCK" P.

not fall, and the minutes wore away with incessant, lively, but unproductive play.

At last came a chance to Lacy, and he improved it at once. With a fine exhibition of machine-like passing the Blues brought the leather up the field, beating the Red backs hollow, and Lacy sent the ball whizzing in. The shot beat the Red goalie all the way, and at once there was a roar.

"Goal!"
A few minutes later the whistle went, and the first half ended with the score level. The Reds had certainly had most of the game; but, on the other hand, the Blues had taken their goal against the wind. Which was the better team, and which the better captain, it would have been hard to decide so far.

In the interval the boys eagerly discussed the performances and the prospects of the rivals. During the buzz of excited talk a new spectator arrived upon the scene. He was a tall, darkly-handsome man of about thirty, in riding-clothes. He made his way directly towards the doctor, and joined the Head of St. Kit's, who greeted him cordially.

"Hallo," said Blagden, "wonder who that is? The Head's awfully chummy with him, ain't he?"

The juniors stared towards the man who had joined the doctor. The stranger, evidently, was on the best of terms with Dr. Kent. He sat down beside the Head and entered into conversation with him.

Greene gave a whistle.
"I think I know who it is," he remarked. "You know somebody said Lacy's brother was coming to see the match. This must be Lacy major."

"My hat!" exclaimed Blagden. "Of course it must. Now I look at him, I can see that he is like Lacy in the dial."

The juniors looked at the stranger with renewed interest. Eldred Lacy derived a certain importance from being younger brother of the Squire of Lynwood, who was a governor of the school.

But the squire was quite a stranger at St. Kit's. He had been abroad for a good many years, but had recently returned and taken up his residence at Lynwood. As his name passed through the crowd many curious glances were turned upon the young squire.

He did not appear to be aware of it, as he sat and chatted easily with the doctor.

"I am sorry to be late," he remarked. "It seems that I have missed the first half. How does the score stand, doctor?"

"Level so far—one goal each," replied the doctor.

"Ah, yes. Well, I hope I shall see Eldred the victor. Ho wished me to come very much, and I am very glad to see the old school again. I understand that there is something of unusual importance depending upon this match."

"Yes, there is to be an election of a new captain of St. Kit's, and it is extremely probable that the winning captain in this trial match will secure the post. You see, there is little to choose between the two candidates personally, and many of the boys seem to have made up their minds to allow this match to decide how they shall vote."

"And a good way, too!" exclaimed the squire heartily. "The best to the best sportsman, that is a good idea. Who is my brother's opponent?"

"Arthur Talbot; a fine fellow—a very fine fellow indeed!" said the doctor, with an unusual warmth in his manner.

The squire smiled.
"Ah, yes, I remember now that Eldred mentioned him to me. A sort of protege of yours, is he not—a founding, or something?"

"A protege of mine, certainly," said the doctor briefly. "I am his guardian. But there he is, Mr. Lacy!"

The teams were taking up their position again. The doctor pointed out Talbot, and Squire Lacy glanced carelessly at him.

The next moment, however, his glance became fixed and earnest, and a strange look came over his face.

"That is Arthur Talbot?"

The doctor looked at him in surprise. He could not imagine why the sight of Talbot should awaken such a sudden and evidently deep interest in the Squire of Lynwood.

"Yes, that is he."
"His name is Talbot? I mean,"—the squire stammered a little—"I think I have seen him somewhere. His face seems familiar. His name is Talbot?"

"It does not seem possible that you have met him," said the doctor, smiling. "He has always lived at St. Kit's since I have been here as Head, while you have been abroad. But see, they are kicking off."

He turned his attention to the game. The squire's glance was upon the field also, and it followed Arthur Talbot wherever he moved, but he was giving little attention to the game.

If the doctor had looked at Rupert Lacy then he would

have seen that the colour was wavering in the squire's sunburnt cheek.

"By Jove," said the doctor to himself, "the Reds have it!"

That certainly seemed to be the case. The change of ends had brought the wind in favour of the Blues, but they did not seem to be able to make much of this advantage.

They were penned up in their own half from the start, and Eldred Lacy's desperate efforts to get his forwards going were baffled by the Reds; and ere long there were cheers as the scarlet shirts bore down upon the Blues' goal, and shots were rained in thick and fast upon the custodian. And Haywood, the Blue goalie, after manfully holding his own for a long time, missed a keen daisy-cutter from the foot of Arthur Talbot, which found the net, and a roar of cheering made the air rock.

"Goal!"
"Talbot—Talbot!"

Desperate were the efforts of the Blues to equalise after that; but grim and determined was the opposition of the red shirts, and the latter more than held their own. Try as they would, Lacy and his men could not get to the Reds' goal; while again and again the tussle was brought right up to the citadel of the Blues.

And at last the ball again found the net, and the Reds were two up. Right up to the finish Lacy and his men fought out the fight, but their fate was fixed. Mr. Slaney blew his whistle, and the score was still three to one.

Pretty well fagged out by a grudging game, the rival teams quitted the field, followed by ringing cheers. Dr. Kent turned to the squire.

"This boy Talbot seems to be a splendid footballer," Rupert Lacy remarked. "I'm afraid there's no doubt that he's streets ahead of my brother."

Dr. Kent nodded.

"Yes, the best side won, and that is as it should be. I fancy this will settle the question of the election."

But that remained to be seen. Eldred Lacy well knew that he had lost ground in losing the trial match, but he was still determined to make a desperate fight for the captaincy of St. Kit's. And he had at least one advantage over his opponent; for, while Arthur Talbot "played the game" upon all occasions, and never thought of doing anything else, there were few things that would come amiss to Eldred Lacy if only they helped him on to the goal of his ambition.

Pat Nugent Comes to St. Kit's.

Pat Nugent stepped from the station back at the gates of St. Kit's, and walked calmly in. It was the first time he had set foot within the precincts of St. Christopher's Collegiate School; but no one would have thought so, judging by his perfectly unconcerned manner as he strolled across the close.

Trimble of the Upper Fourth was the first to spot the new boy. Trimble was a big and somewhat ungainly fellow, with red hair that grew in tufts upon a large head, and his best charm had never called him handsome; but he was nearly as tall as any other boy in the Form, and so he was cock of the walk there.

Trimble was accustomed to inspiring terror in the bosoms of small boys, and the cool way the new boy surveyed him as he bore down upon him was more than sufficient to rouse his ire.

"Hallo!" he said majestically, stopping directly in the path of the new arrival—"hallo!"

Pat Nugent smiled agreeably.

"Same to you," he said, "and many of them."

Trimble glared.

"Don't you give me any of your cheek, young 'un! I'm Trimble, captain of the Upper Fourth."

"Are you taller than any other boy to meet you, Trimble, captain of the Upper Fourth. Ta-ta! See you again, Trimble, captain of the—"

The jocular new boy was interrupted. A large hand descended upon him, and gripped his ear.

"Now, you cub—"

"Let go my ear, Trimble, captain of the Upper Fourth!"

"Rats! I'll—"

Biff! A fist, which seemed to Trimble as hard as a lump of iron, smote him full upon his prominent nose, and he sat down with a suddenness that jarred every bone in his body.

Pat Nugent waited a moment, looking at him, and then walked away unconcernedly with his hands in his pockets, leaving Trimble sitting on the ground holding his injured nose in his hand, and staring dazedly after him. The new boy grinned to himself.

"Faith, I think I have surprised that merchant!" he murmured. "Hallo! I suppose this is where I go in. I wonder what kind of chaps I shall meet here? If they're all like that long-legged specimen, I don't think much of St. Kit's."

He mounted two wide granite steps, and entered the schoolhouse. The next moment, with a loud whoop, half a dozen juniors swooped down upon him.

"A new kid!" exclaimed Blagden. "Collar him!"

"Bring him into the common-room!" cried Greene.

"Here, I say," protested Pat, "sure and I—"
"Sure and you'd better shut up!" said Blagden, grinning. "We're not going to hurt you, young Ireland. Just come along, that's all!"

They hustled him into the juniors' common-room. There were a good many other youngsters there, and they gathered round Blagden and his prize. Pat, after the first moment of surprise, was taking it calmly. Calmness seemed to be the new boy's strong point, and he saw that the intention of the juniors was not yet, at all events, hostile.

"Well, here I am!" he remarked. "Faith, and is this the way you always welcome new-comers to St. Kit's, kids?"

"My hat, here's a cool merchant!" said Blagden.

"Look here, Tipperary, or whatever your name is, there's a giddy election on to-night, and we want to explain to you, so that you sha'n't go and vote on the wrong side. See? There's two candidates—Talbot, the finest fellow that ever breathed, and Eldred Lacy. Lacy is a prefect, and a pig, and a rotter, and a howling cad. You can't vote for him. The election's at eight. You'll come into the hall with us and vote for Talbot."

"Perhaps."

"Look here, we're not going to fool with you. Are you going to vote with us?"

"Faith, and that depends. I can promise you one thing. I shall vote exactly as I please, without taking advice from anybody but myself."

"Oh, you will, will you?"

"And the more you worry me, the less likely I shall be to vote with you," continued Pat cheerfully. "So there's the case in a nutshell."

"So that's the sort of giddy mongrel you are, is it? You think too much of yourself, young Tipperary. We'll teach you a lesson, and I hope it will do you good! Got the rope there, you kippers?"

"Here it is," replied Greene.

"That's right. Fasten the young brute up. Don't mind if you hurt him. It's all for his own good, you know."

"I say——" began Pat, in expostulation.

"He got no further. Blagden squeezed a handkerchief into his mouth, and he choked into silence. The juniors, chuckling with glee, fastened the cords about his legs and arms, binding him hand and foot.

"There, that looks like a workmanlike job," said Blagden, as he stood back and surveyed the new boy with extreme satisfaction. Pat was leaning against a desk, absolutely helpless; but, in spite of his bonds and his gag, he was as cool as ever.

"Of course, it's rot for a new kid to be allowed to vote at all," continued Blagden, rather illogically. "'It's our duty to keep him off the grass. The election's at eight. Where can we shove him till it's over?"

Pat began to struggle as he heard this. But the rope held him fast, and a judicious pinch or two in tender places soon quieted him.

"In the box-room," suggested one junior.

Blagden shook his head.

"I know!" exclaimed Greene suddenly.

"Well, what place have you thought of?"

"Lacy's study."

"What!"

"I mean it. Lacy is busy electioneering, and he won't be in his study again till after eight, sure as a gun. The Sixth studies will all be empty, and nobody will hear the beast if he whistles."

"But if Lacy should come and find him?"

"He'll give him a hiding for being there, without stopping to ask questions. That's his sweet way. And it's just what the cheeky kid requires."

"Greene, you've got some sense," said Blagden emphatically. "I've never noticed it before, but you have, really. Bring him along, chappies!"

The grinning juniors lifted Pat and carried him in their midst out into the dark passage. It was easy to convey him undiscovered to Lacy's study; and Blagden, scouting ahead, found that the study was dark and empty, as he expected.

"Stick him here," said Blagden, opening a cupboard door.

"Hallo! What have you shoved him on! My aunt, that's Lacy's Sunday topper in that box, and you've smashed it as flat as a pancake!" Tipperary, I don't envy you if Lacy comes in and finds you sitting on the wreck of his Sunday topper! But cheer up! We'll come and have you out after the election. I'll take that gag off. Good-bye, young Ireland!"

And the juniors decamped.

Pat, as we have said, remained perfectly cool in his plight.

But his feelings were not to be envied. He could not get loose. If the juniors did not choose to return and release him he was a prisoner till after the election of the new captain of St. Kit's. And if Lacy came in and found him and the damage his presence had done in the cupboard, it was certain that something awful would happen.

Suddenly there was the sound of an opening door. Pat drew a quick breath. Someone had come into Lacy's study. He wondered whether he should wriggle, and make his presence known. He was still undecided, when a gleam of light, penetrating under the cupboard door, showed that the gas was lighted in the study.

"Sit down, Rupert."

It was Lacy's voice. A deeper voice replied:

"I suppose you are busy now, Eldred, with the election at hand. But it's that I want to speak to you about. You must leave no stone unturned to get in as captain of St. Kit's!"

"You're very good to take such an interest in—"

"Tut-tut! You must become captain of the school, because it will give you power to do what you must do, what I shall help you to do by every means, fair and foul."

"And what is that?"

"To ruin and disgrace Arthur Talbot and drive him from the school! Do you understand? He must be ruined—utterly crushed—and driven away! Listen! I am Squire Lacy, of Lynwood, to-day, the richest land-owner in the county. Arthur Talbot could make me a beggar to-morrow if he knew—if he only knew!"

"Rupert, you must be mad! How——"

"I am not mad; I am speaking in sober earnest. Arthur Talbot is a menace to me—to both of us. But ruined, disgraced, driven forth into poverty and obscurity, I shall no longer fear him!"

And every word came distinctly to the ears of the hidden boy, filling him with horror and amazement.

(Another long instalment of this New School Tale in next Saturday's PLUCK.)



(An extra amount of space has been given to our serial, and my chat has therefore been crowded out; but please note footlines, and order next Saturday's PLUCK in advance.

YOUR EDITOR.)