

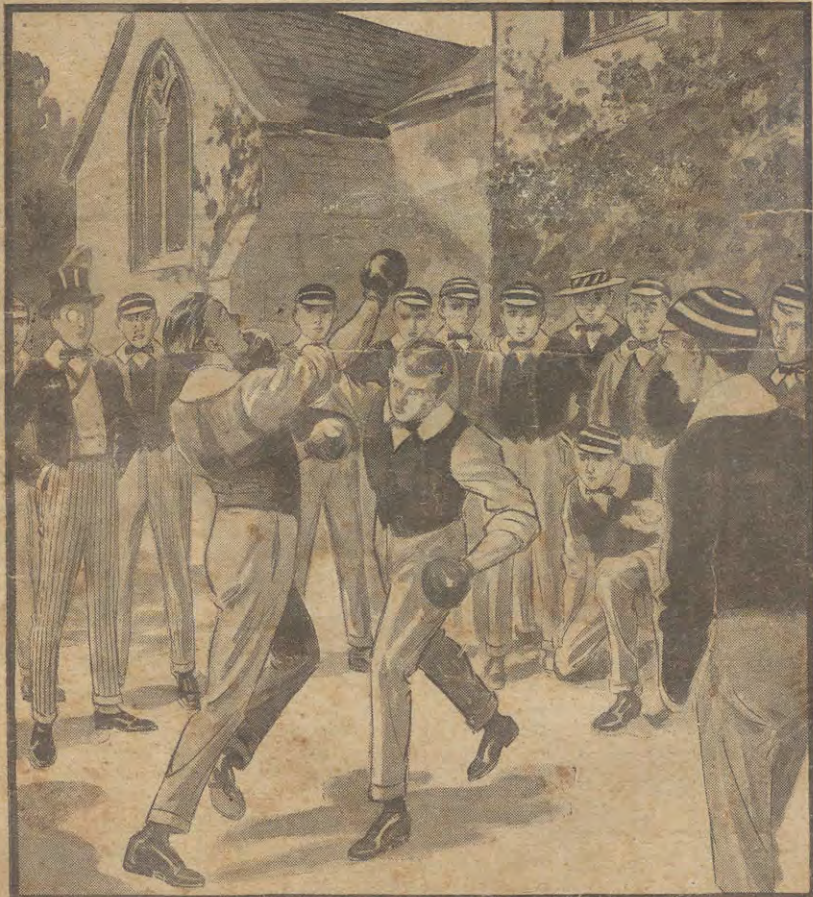
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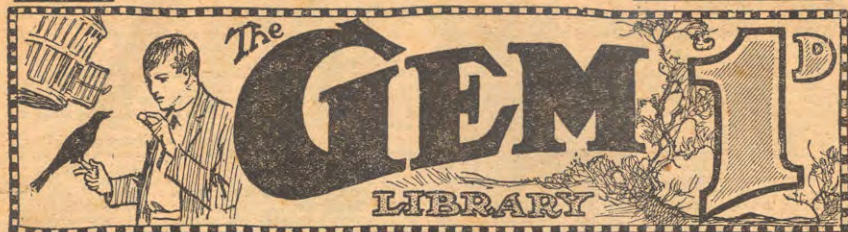
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CHAPTER 1.

The Troubles of an Elderly Relation.

"DOTTY!" said Monty Lowther softly.

And Tom Merry and Manners nodded assent.

The Terrible Three of the Shell had sauntered under the old elms in the quadrangle of St. Jim's for shade upon that scorching afternoon. Under the elms they sighted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form.

The motions of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, were so peculiar that the chums of the Shell paused to look at him in wonder.

He did not see them.

There was a cloud upon the noble brow of the swell of the Fourth, showing that he was plunged into the depths of unusual thoughtfulness.

His eyes were fixed upon the ground, as though he was striving to read the secrets of Fate in the fallen leaves, and occasionally he muttered to himself, and once he shook his fist in the air.

Monty Lowther's suspicion that the elegant Fourth-Former had become what Lowther politely called "dotty" seemed to be not without foundation.

"Bai Jove! Weally! Yaas!"

These words, murmured by the swell of St. Jim's, came to the ears of the astonished Shell fellows.

It was evident that Arthur Augustus was in a state of unusual agitation. He was too preoccupied to see three grinning faces within a couple of yards of him.

"Yaas, wathah! It's my duty—as a cousin. Yaas, but—"

D'Arcy's mutterings broke off.

"Poor old Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry. "I suppose it's

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BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

the hot weather. Something ought to be done. A ducking in cold water—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sudden laughter of the Shell fellows broke in upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's meditations, whatever they were, and caused him to start, and glance round. He groped for his famous eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and fixed his gaze upon the Terrible Three.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"So sorry, Gussy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Can't Blake do anything for it? Study No. 6 ought to subscribe for a strait-waistcoat, or something of that sort. When did you first feel it coming on?"

"I fail to apprehend what you are alludin' to, deah boy. I'm wathah glad to see you, though; pewwaps you can advise me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a matter of fact, I am wathah in need of a friend's advice, and Blake and Howwies and Dig have gone on the beastly wivah. I'm in a wotten difficult posish."

"Not dotty?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

"Certainly not, you ass! If you fellows will be sewious, I shall be glad to confide the frightful difficulty to you—of course, without mentionin' names. I don't want to say anythin' against Bwooke."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Is Brooke one of the names you're not going to mention?"

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha! Go ahead!"

"Pway be sewious."

"Order!" said Tom Merry severely. "When an old pal is in a dreadfully sewious posish, it becomes us to be sewious, too. Are you serious, Lowther?"

"I'm serious."

"Are you serious, Manners?"

"I'm serious."

"Am I serious?" went on Tom Merry solemnly. "Yes, I'm serious. Now, Gussy, we're all three in a state of unusual and extraordinary seriousness, so go ahead. What's the trouble that's turning your little brain?"

"It's not turnin' my brain, you ass, but it is wathah serious. I have my duty as a cousin to considah—practically as a guardian, you know. I regard it as my duty to keep a supervisin' eye ovah my Cousin Ethel, of course. You know, gals—all gals—are liable to be weckless unless they're looked aftah by an oldah wethah," said Arthur Augustus, with a wise shake of the head.

"Quite so," said Tom Merry seriously; "and, as far as that goes, we're willing to help you look after Cousin Ethel. So would Figgins be. So would—"

"I do not require any assistance in performin' my duties as an oldah wethah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "In fact, upon wethah, I think I had bettah not mention Ethel's name in the mattah at all."

"Nor Brooke's?" said Lowther, with great gravity.

"No, nor Brooke's, dear boy."

"Good. What other names are you not going to mention?"

"Well, I must refer to Levison, as he gave the envelope to me, you know."

"Oh, Levison gave you the envelope, did he?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, othahwise I should not have known anythin' about it, of course. I am quite aware of your opinion of Levison; he is an awful wothah, and is always makin' mischief. But you see, I shouldn't have believed his statement, and should probably have punched his head for makin' it, only he gave me the envelope. You must admit that that puts a very different complexion on the mattah."

It was somewhat difficult for the Terrible Three to remain serious. But they tried very hard.

"You haven't explained yet what the envelope is, or what it's got to do with the bizney at all," said Tom Merry.

"It was the envelope of the lettah, of course. You are wathah slow to comprehend, Tom Mewwy, I must say."

"What lettah?"

"The letter Cousin Ethel w'ote."

"You don't mean to say that Cousin Ethel has been writing to Levison? Why, she can't stand Levison at any price. Though I don't see that it's any business of yours if she has," Tom Merry added, as an afterthought.

"I should regard it as my business. It is my duty as an oldah wethah to look aftah my cousin—especially a gal cousin. But she has not w'ritten to Levison; she has w'ritten to the othah chap, whose name I think I had bettah not mention."

"Brooke?" grinned Lowther.

"Yaas—but pway don't mention names. You see, Ethel might be annoyed if she knew I had been talkin' about it."

"Very likely," agreed Tom Merry. "If I were a girl, and my cousin started looking after me, I should dot him on the nose."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We could do that, anyway," Monty Lowther suggested thoughtfully. "If it would help, I'm ready to dot Gussy on the nose."

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah. Of course, I know that Ethel is a very sensible gal, but the question is, isn't it wathah thoughtless of her to cawrespond with a chap without askin' my advice? Of course, Bwooke is a very decent chap, and fightwifly cleveh—he works for his livin', you know, and I have a great respect for a chap who can do a thing like that. I can do lots of things, but I'm afraid it wouldn't be much good my attemptin' anythin' of that sort. And I trust you couldn't possibly think I could be such a wotten snob as to care twopence about Bwooke bein' a day-boy, and poor. I leave that kind of caddishness to Levison and Mellish. But—"

"Go on!" said Tom Merry, with interest. "I didn't know you were such a rippin' speechifier. This is good practice for the time when you get into the House of Lords."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Pway don't wot; this is a serious mattah. The question is—wethah it isn't wathah wotten of Bwooke to lead a gal into writin' to him—for he must have done that, you know, or Ethel couldn't have w'ritten. I have been wethah wethah I ought to give Bwooke a fashful thwashin'. I know he's a very decent chap, but I am called upon to protect my female wethah."

"But suppose it worked round the other way, and Brooke gave you the lickin'?" asked Monty Lowther, with an air of deep thought.

"I wese to suppose anythin' of the kind."

"So that's the frightfully difficult position?" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Cousin Ethel has w'ritten to Brooke, and Levison has sneaked the envelope, and handed it to you to try to make trouble."

"Well, I suppose he was twain to make twouble," admitted D'Arcy. "He couldn't have been doin' it out of friendship, because he's no friend of mine."

"People don't make trouble out of friendship," said Tom Merry drily. "Now, you want our opinion on the subject, don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good. My opinion is that the very best thing you can possibly do is to mind your own business."

"Weally—"

"My opinion is," said Lowther, with due solemnity, "that you run away and play, and let Cousin Ethel manage her affairs without your fatherly assistance."

"Weally, you—"

"My opinion," said Manners, "is that you take the advice of Tom Merry and Lowther, with a rider to the effect that you punch Levison's head for trying to make trouble."

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows.

"But it's weckless of Ethel to entah into a cawrespondence with Bwooke, isn't it—and wotten of him to lead her into it?" he urged.

"One letter isn't a cawrespondence, fathead."

"Levison says—"

"Don't believe a word he says. How many envelopes has he shewn you?"

"Only one," said D'Arcy; "but he says—"

"Never mind what he says. That envelope belongs to Brooke, and you ought to return it to him," said Tom Merry. "Levison must have picked it up, or found it—perhaps in one of Brooke's pockets. He's capable of that."

"By acceptin' the envelope from Levison, you make yourself a party to his underhand proceedings," said Manners solemnly. "Shame!"

Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"Bai Jove, I never thought of that, you know! I suppose I had bettah return the envelope to Bwooke, as it is his property."

"I should say so, and apologise to him," said Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

"Now, Gussy—"

"Wats—thousands of wats!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I shall return the envelope to Bwooke, but I shall demand an explanation."

"Now, don't play the giddy goat—"

"Wubbish!"

And Arthur Augustus stalked away, with his aristocratic nose very high in the air.

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins Loses His Temper.

Figgins of the Fourth was standing before the glass in his study in the New House, regarding his reflection therein.

The reflection was that of a kind and good-natured and manly face, though it would not have been called handsome, even by Figgins's best friends.

Figgins was adjusting a necktie—a new necktie. The new necktie had almost as many colours in it as Joseph's famous coat. Figgins was tying the necktie with great care, and did not seem to be satisfied with the result after fifteen or sixteen attempts.

Kerr and Wynn, his chums and study-mates, were watching him with growing surprise. Figgins was such a healthy, frank, unaffected chap, as a rule, that anything like personal conceit seemed quite out of keeping with his character. Kerr would not have been surprised to see him practising his special "late cut" for an hour at a time, and Fatty Wynn could have understood it if he had devoted an afternoon to the study of a cookery-book, or anything entertaining like that.

But both Figgins's chums were astonished by this new

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"If Brooke doesn't come soon, you can keep the letter and give it to him at the school to-morrow," said Cousin Ethel. "Good-bye!" "Good-bye!" stammered Figgins. (See Chapter 6.)

trait in his character. A new necktie was an event in Figgins's life, anyway, and generally he cared little how they looked; indeed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had told him that he generally looked as if he had been trying to hang himself.

So Kerr and Wynn watched with growing wonder.

"It won't do!" growled Figgins, jerking the tie off again. "It's queer that chap D'Arcy in the School House always gets his ties so nice. I can't do it."

"It's a gift," said Kerr solemnly. "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness shoved upon them. Gussy was born great."

"Some pals would lend a chap a hand," said Figgins. Kerr rose obligingly.

"But what's the little game?" he asked. "What does it matter how your blessed necktie's tied to-day, more than any other day?"

"Well, a chap likes to look neat."

"Never heard you say so before. But there you are!"

Kerr, who could do nearly everything, gave the necktie an artistic twist, and Figgins surveyed the result in the glass with satisfaction.

"Good egg!" he said. "I say, you chaps, it's a lovely afternoon for a run on the bikes, isn't it?"

"Too hot," said Fatty Wynn.

"I suppose you're not afraid of a bit of a fog?" said Figgins.

"Well, I was thinking of sitting under a tree with some ginger-beer."

"Oh, rot!"

"What about the cricket?" said Kerr.

"Too hot," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha! You mean you want to go out on the bikes. Well, all serene! Where shall we go? Lots of time, and we might get as far as the sea."

"Oh, no, not a long ride!"

"Just a run over to Abbotsford, then?"

"Too far. What about a ride round Wayland?"

"Yee-es," said Kerr, in surprise. "Just as you like. Ride there and back!"

"Well, ride round the town, you know, and—and up and down, you know," said Figgins, rather vaguely. "Down the Wayland road, you know, and—and then up the Wayland road, you know, and—and then down again, and—and so on."

Kerr looked at his chum in concern.

"Not sunstroke, I suppose?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" demanded Figgins, reddening.

"Well, a chap who proposes to ride up and down a dusty road for nothing on a blazing afternoon must have something

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
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"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

wrong with his brain, I should think," said Kerr. "What in the name of all that's idiotic do you want to ride up and down the Wayland road for?"

Figgins' colour deepened.

"It would be good exercise," he said defensively.

"Exercise? Heavens! You've got some other reason, unless you're potty."

"Well, a chap might run into a friend by chance."

"You—you want to ride up and down the Wayland road for the sake of running into a friend. Into Kerr or me?" asked Fatty Wynn, in amazement.

"You ass!" roared Figgins. "I mean we might meet a friend."

"Some friend in Wayland? Do you mean Brooke, the day boy?"

"No, I don't."

"But if you want to meet a friend, why can't you go to his house?"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Figgins. "It's too hot to jaw this afternoon. I think the exercise would do us good."

"I'd rather have some ginger-beer," said Fatty Wynn.

"And I really think we oughtn't to neglect the cricket practice," said Kerr—"not for the sake of collecting dust and the smell of petrol, anyway."

Figgins was about to make a warm reply, when the study door opened, and Levison of the Fourth came in.

Levison was a School House boy, and not on good terms as a rule with Figgins & Co. Not that Levison joined much in the House rivalry which enlivened affairs at St. Jim's. He was not on good terms with very many fellows in his own House, either.

"Hallo!" said Levison cheerily. "Going out?"

"Yes," said Figgins shortly.

"Going to Wayland, I suppose?"

Figgins stared.

"I don't see how you could know that, unless you just heard it at the door," he said bluntly.

Levison laughed.

"I thought Brooke might have mentioned to you that Cousin Ethel—I mean Miss Cleveland—is in Wayland," he said.

"Oh!" said Kerr and Wynn together.

They understood now the why and wherefore of the new necktie, and the great care in adjusting it, and the extraordinary desire of Figgins to spend a scorching afternoon riding up and down a dusty road. The deep blush that came into Figgins' face showed them that their guess was correct.

"Brooke hasn't spoken to me about Miss Cleveland," said Figgins angrily. "I don't see how Brooke could possibly know anything about D'Arcy's cousin, or where she is."

"I don't see how he could avoid knowing, as he corresponds with her regularly," said Levison.

"What he does," said Levison. "D'Arcy is quite rattled about it. He's come across one of the envelopes of her letters to Brooke, and he's rattled. He doesn't like it."

Figgins' brow darkened.

"You know my opinion of you, Levison," he said. "I've said before that you are a cad and a liar. I say it again."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you can say what you like; hard words break no bones. But it's a fact all the same. Ethel Cleveland meets Brooke secretly—"

Levison did not get any further.

Figgins made one stride across the study, and grasped the cad of the Fourth, and the next moment Levison's head was in chancery, and Figgins was hammering at it as if he were going into training for a blacksmith.

Levison yelled with anguish.

"Oh, oh, oh! Leggo! Yah! You rotter! Leggo! Grooh!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Levison struggled wildly; but he had little chance against the champion junior athlete of the New House. Figgins was crimson with rage and excitement, and he hammered at Levison with blind fury. The cad of the Fourth kicked out savagely; but even a kick on the shins did not stop Figgins. He thrashed Levison with undying energy, though he winced with pain.

"Help!" panted Levison. "Drag him off! He's mad! Oh, help!"

Kerr and Wynn, alarmed for their chum, rushed at Figgins and grasped him. They did not care two straws for Levison, but they did not want Figgins to get into trouble for half-killing him.

"Let go!" roared Figgins furiously. "Hands off, you silly idiots! I'm going to thrash that cad! I'm going to smash him! I'm—"

"Yank him off!" gasped Kerr.

"Figgins," spluttered Fatty Wynn—"Figgy, old man, THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 233.

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you've licked him enough! Stop it! Buzz off, Levison, you fool!"

With their combined efforts, Kerr and Wynn dragged Figgins off his victim. Levison staggered back, panting.

Figgins struggled with his chains furiously, evidently not convinced that the cad of the Fourth had had enough.

"Get out, Levison, you fool!" yelled Kerr.

Levison dashed out of the study, and slammed the door behind him. His nose was streaming red, and he reeled as he ran.

Figgins made a spring towards the door. Kerr set his back to it, and pushed Figgins away.

"No, you don't!" he said. "Shut up, Figgy! You've given him enough!"

Figgins panted.

"Not half enough!" he said fiercely. "You heard how he spoke of Ethel—of Miss Cleveland! The rotten cad, to dare to mention her name as all!"

"You'll stay where you are," said Kerr calmly. "Lot of use it was tying your necktie, wasn't it? Look at it now!"

"Hang the necktie!"

But Figgins made no further attempt to pass Kerr. He flung himself into a chair, panting for breath. There was a lump on his shin where Levison had kicked him, and he was feeling it now.

"The rotter only came here to get your rag out!" said Kerr. "Don't play the giddy ox, Figgy! It's no business of yours if Miss Cleveland writes to Brooke."

"I know it isn't; but she doesn't!" growled Figgins.

"But it wasn't that I punched him for." He said Miss Cleveland meets Brooke secretly; and you know that's a lie. Ethel isn't the kind of girl to do anything secretly. And if she's met Brooke, it was openly."

"Of course it is. And I don't suppose she's met him at all," said Kerr. "Why, she hardly knows Brooke! He's only a day-boy."

"D'Arcy took her to Brooke's house once," said Figgins.

"D'Arcy was interested in Brooke's working for his living, and used to think he helped him—the ass! I remember hearing that Ethel had been there, and had met Brooke's sister. But it's silly rot to say that they correspond. How could they?"

"Of course it is," said Kerr soothingly.

"Not that it's any business of mine," added Figgins, crimsoning again. "I've got no right to pass an opinion on what Miss Cleveland does."

"Just thought of that?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"Only I'm not going to hear her spoken of disrespectfully!" said Figgins hotly.

"Quite so," he said. "I'm with you there," said Kerr, with a nod.

"Only how did you know that Miss Cleveland was at Wayland?"

"I—I heard D'Arcy mention that his cousin was coming there, to stay at the vicarage for a few days," said Figgins.

"I don't whether she'll be coming to the school at all; but—but no harm in seeing an old friend, is there?"

"None at all," said Kerr cheerfully.

Figgins lowered his eyes. Poor Figgins hardly knew what to say, as a matter of fact. The junior was too young to have thought about such matters as being in love, of course, and he was not so absurd as to let such ideas come into his mind. But he had a great regard for Cousin Ethel—the worship of a generous and manly lad for a kind and noble-hearted girl. And Ethel liked Figgins very much. She seemed to see more in Figgins than in the other fellows, somehow, though he certainly was not so good-looking as Tom Merry, or Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, or Lowther, or any of the chums of St. Jim's, in fact. Perhaps Cousin Ethel valued other qualities higher than good looks.

Everybody agreed about Figgins that he was as true as steel, generous to a fault, and brave as a lion. Some regarded him, certainly, as a bit of an ass; but he had plenty of down-right common-sense. And perhaps a simple, straightforward nature that was not difficult to deceive was one of the things most likeable about George Figgins.

Figgins rubbed the lump on his shin and grunted.

"Let's get the bikes out," said Kerr.

Figgins shook his head.

"No," he said. "I—I don't want to ride up and down a dusty road collecting petrol smell. I think I'll go for a stroll."

"Just what I should like," said Fatty Wynn, heroically striving to dismiss the thought of a shady tree and foaming ginger-beer from his mind.

"Same here!" said Kerr promptly.

But Figgins shook his head again.

"You get down to the cricket, Kerr! And you buzz off to the tuckshop, Fatty! I'm just going for a saunter round, that's all. And I won't drag you out."

It was evident that Figgins wanted his saunter alone, and

his chums said no more. Figgins took his cap and left the store. Fatty Wynn and Kere exchanged a grimace.

"It's all rot, of course," said Fatty Wynn.

"Of course," said Kere. "Levison was lying, just to get old Figgins's rag out. Poor old Figg, it's so jolly easy to draw him! But I think Levison must be sorry he called, all the same."

And Fatty Wynn chuckled. There was little doubt upon that point.

CHAPTER 3. The Day-Boy.

"BROOKE, dear boy!"

Dick Brooke looked up with a smile. He was at work in the Fourth-Form-room. Being a day-boy, Brooke, of course, had no study, and when he had any work to do at the school after lessons, he generally used the Form-room, though sometimes he worked in other fellows' studies. Study No. 6, and Tom Merry's study were always open to him.

Brooke was on very good terms with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, so far as their very different characters and pursuits would permit.

The fastidious elegance of the swell of St. Jim's, his beautiful and expensive neatness, and his more than Chesterfieldian manners, made Brooke admire him, and D'Arcy admired Brooke as a fellow who worked for his living—a performance so extraordinary in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's opinion that it merited never-ending surprise and admiration.

The desk before Brooke was covered with papers that looked weird and unintelligible to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy had once taken up Greek for a few days, and so he knew the characters by sight, but that was about all he knew. The study of the tongue of Homer and Sophocles did not appeal to Arthur Augustus. He had confided to Blake that upon the whole he would rather have influenza.

"Busay, dear boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Nearly finished," said Brooke. "I'm getting through this to leave it with Mr. Lathom before I go home, you know."

"Wotten way to spend a half-holiday, Brooke," said D'Arcy sympathetically.

Brooke smiled. He was not a handsome boy, but when he smiled his face became very attractive.

"I don't mind it," he said.

"You wouldn't wathah play cricket?" asked D'Arcy.

"Well, perhaps I would; but now I'm getting beastly short-sighted, I muf all the catches, you know," said Brooke.

"Besides, I'm working for an exam. It's jolly good of Lathom to give me extra top for nothing."

"Yaas; he's an old sport," said D'Arcy.

He paused.

He had come to look for Dick Brooke in the Form-room on a not very pleasant errand, and he found himself chatting to him in a friendly way instead.

He tried to lead the talk round diplomatically to the subject he had in his mind, but Brooke was so frank and unsuspicious that it was not easy.

"How's the work goin' on?" he asked.

"Same as usual," said Brooke.

"Still paintin' postahs and things for the twadespeople in Wayland?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Still," said Brooke.

"Makin' lots of money—eh?"

"Not lots, but enough to keep the giddy wolf from the door," said Brooke.

"It's weally splendid!" said D'Arcy. "You are the only chap here who pays his own fees, Brooke."

"I'm lucky to be able to do it," said Brooke.

"But your patah used to be rich," said Arthur Augustus.

Brooke nodded. He did not talk much on the subject of his father. That John Brooke had been rich, and that his own recklessness had reduced him to poverty, all the school knew, and John Brooke was not a very reputable gentleman in these days. St. Jim's fellows had seen him under the influence of liquor, and Levison of the Fourth was fond of relating, with great gloze, how he had seen "old Brooke" propped up against the Green Man in Rycombe, spouting the "Iliad" in Greek to a crew of gaping, grinning yokels.

If Brooke had cared to pose as an injured and neglected son he might have won a great deal of sympathy; but that was not in Brooke's nature. His father was a weak and amiable man, nobody's enemy but his own, and Brooke was far from setting up in judgment upon his own parent. Whatever John Brooke might do or leave undone, he was always secure of the respect and affection of his son.

"I've been comin' ovah to help you with your work again, Brooke," said D'Arcy. "But I haven't, somehow."

"Thanks all the same," said Brooke, smiling.

"I'm glad it's still going strong."

"Yes, and I've got some new prospects, a bit better now," said Brooke. "I don't know how it will turn out yet, but a friend is trying to help me, and I think it will mean a big improvement. I may be able to chuck writing advertisements for Tipton's Tea and Bunker's Stove Polish."

"Yaas, that will be good. I suppose I'm intewwuptin' you," D'Arcy remarked, as Brooke absently dipped his pen into the ink.

"Well, I'm nearly done."

"Finish, dear boy; I'll wait. I—I want to speak to you," Arthur Augustus said, colouring a little.

"You don't mind if—"

"Pway wiah in, dear boy."

Brooke wiah in, and the characters, that looked to D'Arcy like spiders and ants, ran off his pen as fast as D'Arcy could have written English. The day-boy worked steadily, and laid down his pen at last.

"Finished, dear boy?"

"Yes, that's done. I've to take it to Mr. Lathom before I go," Brooke looked at the Form-room clock. "I shall have to buzz off, too. Suppose you walk down the road with me?"

"Yes, that's a good idea."

D'Arcy understood that the day-boy might have work waiting for him at home, to fill up the rest of the afternoon. He accompanied him to Mr. Lathom's study, and waited in the doorway while Brooke delivered his exercise to the master of the Fourth.

Little Mr. Lathom laid his book aside, and went over the exercise with Brooke, and Arthur Augustus looked on. The Form-master and the day-boy were speaking, but what they were saying was literally Greek to D'Arcy.

Brooke came out at last, and the two juniors walked out of the School House together. In the quad, they met the Terrible Three, in cricketing flannels. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had been batting, and they were "out," and were going to the tuckshop in search of liquid refreshment. They grinned at the sight of Arthur Augustus and Brooke walking together, apparently on the best of terms, as they remembered D'Arcy's remarks an hour before under the elms.

Arthur Augustus coloured a little as he met their grinning gaze, and only nodded and walked on with Brooke.

"Gussy seems to have got over his painful state of mind," murmured Tom Merry, as the two Fourth-Formers went down to the gates.

"Yes," grinned Lowther. "I suppose he's going home with Brooke to help him with his work. Poor old Brooke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the gateway Arthur Augustus and Brooke encountered Figgins of the New House. Figgins nodded very cordially to D'Arcy, and shortly to Brooke. He liked Brooke as a rule, but Levison's words were fresh in Figgins' memory. He did not believe what Levison had said, but the sting remained.

"Going out, Gussy?" he asked cordially.

"Yaas, dear boy."

"H'm! Going over to Wayland, I suppose?" Figgins remarked. "Calling in at the vicarage, perhaps?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"No, I was not thinkin' of callin' in at the vicarage, dear boy," he replied.

"Oh!" said Figgins.

Figgins had been about to offer D'Arcy the boon of his company, but he refrained now. He stood leaning on the gate as the two juniors went out. There was a gloomy cloud upon Figgins' brow. He watched the two juniors out of sight down the road, and then strolled away aimlessly himself. Figgins was in a worried and disturbed frame of mind, he hardly knew why.

He had not spoken to Brooke, and he knew that the day-boy had noticed the coldness in his manner, and had been surprised by it.

But Figgins could not help it.

Levison had lied, of course, he was always lying, and he had lied worse than ever this time; Figgins was quite sure of that. But he had felt, all the same, a strong desire to punch Brooke's head on mere suspicion.

CHAPTER 4. Old Friends Fall Out.

"AHEM!"

Brooke glanced curiously at Arthur Augustus. It was the tenth or eleventh time that D'Arcy had coughed, in an awkward and self-conscious manner, but he had not spoken yet.

He had evidently something to say, and found it very awkward to begin. The two juniors reached the stile, from which the footpath ran through Rycombe Wood—a short cut

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

to Brooke's home. Brooke's people lived in a rambling old house, half in ruins, on the edge of Wayland Moor, an old place that was all that remained of a fine estate that had once belonged to John Brooke.

"Ahem!"

"Coming further?" asked Brooke.

"Yaas, I'll just twot through the wood with you," said D'Arcy.

"Good."

They walked on through the wood. Arthur Augustus coughed again several times, but did not succeed in speaking.

At the further side of the wood Brooke paused, and looked at his cheap silver watch.

"In a hewwy to get home?" asked D'Arcy.

"Oh, no, not that."

"Got some work to do—eh?"

"Yes, this evening."

"I'll tell you what—I'll come and help you," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm awfully interested in writing advertisements and things."

Brooke smiled.

"I'm not going in just yet," he said. "Thank you all the same, D'Arcy."

"The fact is, Bwooke, deah boy—"

"Yes?" said Brooke. "You have something to say to me?"

"Bai Jove! How did you guess that?"

"Well, it wasn't hard to guess," said Brooke, amused.

"What is it, D'Arcy? As a matter of fact, I've got an appointment to keep this afternoon, and the time is getting close. Otherwise I should march you in and set you to work on my paint-pots."

"An appointment?" said Arthur Augustus, and his suspicions revived. "A business appointment, you mean?"

"Yes, in a way," said Brooke.

"Oh!"

Brooke looked at him rather hard. It was so unlike Arthur Augustus to ask personal questions about another fellow's affairs that Brooke could not help being surprised. Arthur Augustus realised that he had fallen for a moment from his high estate of irreproachable manners, and he coloured.

"The fact is, Bwooke—" he said awkwardly,

"Yes?"

"I've got somethin' that belongs to you."

Brooke looked astonished.

"Something that belongs to me?" he repeated.

"Yaas."

"I don't quite see—"

"It's an old envelope," D'Arcy explained.

"Not very valuable, then, I suppose?" said Brooke, laughing.

"It's an envelope addressed to you at the school, not to your house," said D'Arcy. "I suppose you threw it away afore openin' it, and a fellow picked it up."

"The fellow must have been in want of something to do," said Brooke. "What the dickens did he want with picking up my old envelopes?"

"And he handed it to me."

"What on earth for? I should have thought he'd hand it to me, if to anybody," said Brooke, in astonishment.

"Because he knew the writin'," said D'Arcy.

"Oh!" Brooke's manner changed a little. "He knew the writing?"

"Yaas; it was my cousin Ethel's hand."

"Indeed?"

Arthur Augustus took the envelope from his pocket, and handed it to Brooke. The day-boy turned a little red as he received it. He tore it into pieces and scattered them among the underwoods.

"The fellow, whoever he is, won't pick that up again," he remarked. "Not that he picked it up before, either. I hope it wasn't a friend of yours, Gussy. I remember perfectly well receiving that letter, and I did not throw away the envelope. I put it into my jacket pocket. I was under the impression that it was still there. I took off my jacket when I went into the gym, an hour or two ago, and whoever gave you that envelope must have taken it out of my pocket."

"Bai Jove!"

Brooke felt in his pocket, and a dismayed look came over his face.

"He has taken the letter, too," he said quietly. "The cad! Did he give you the letter?"

"Certainly not. I trust you do not suppose that I would have read the letter, if the attach beast had given it to me?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly.

"I know you wouldn't," said Brooke. "Of course I don't think so. But the fellow was an utter cad; I'm pretty certain he's read it himself, or he wouldn't have stolen it. Who was it?"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"I'm afraid I can't mention the name, deah boy. He said he was actin' out of friendship to me in givin' me that envelope."

Brooke's lip curled.

"Is that what you wanted to speak to me about?" he asked. "Yaas. Bwooke, old man, you know that I'm oldah than my cousin Ethel, and bound to look after her as an oldah relative. Of course, I know you are a decent chap."

"Thank you," said Brooke.

"Not at all. But it is reckless of a young gal to entah into correspondence with a fellow," said Arthur Augustus. "I wergad it as my duty to take notice of the matiah."

"Indeed."

"Yaas. Of course, I know you mean no harm, and Ethel is simply thoughtless. But I cannot allow anythin' of the sort."

"Isn't Miss Cleveland the best judge of that?"

"Certainly not. Young gals don't know anythin' of the world," said Arthur Augustus, with the air of a very old stager. "I'm not goin' to wisk havin' Ethel's name spoken of in the school in a gossipin' way. It would be wotten."

"It would be rotten, certainly," said Brooke. "Nobody would speak in a gossiping way of Miss Cleveland in my presence, I can assure you."

"Quite wight, deah boy. I won't tell you the things that chap hinted to me. I don't believe for a moment that you are wottah enough to be meetin' a gal secretly without her people knowin', but—"

Arthur Augustus paused. Brooke's face had gone quite crimson.

"Bai Jove! Bwooke, old man, I must ask you a question—have you met my cousin Ethel?"

Brooke did not reply.

"I want an answah to that question, Bwooke," said D'Arcy firmly.

"Well, I can answer it," said Brooke quietly. "I don't think you've a right to ask it, D'Arcy. If I were a caddish rotter like Levison or Mellich, you might be called upon to speak, but you know me."

"Yaas, but—"

"I have not met Miss Cleveland since the last time she was at the school," said Brooke. "I had a talk with her then, and she was kind enough to be interested in some of my affairs. She likes my sister, too, and asked about her. Is that enough?"

"Yaas; but—"

Brooke looked at his watch again.

"Go on!" he said. "What is it now?"

"I don't want to ask what was in that letter. I trust you will not wergad me as an inquisitive chap, but—but—"

"I really must go," said Brooke. "I'm late now."

"You must weally answah this question first, deah boy. Was that lettah anythin' to do with awwagin' a meetin' between you and my cousin?"

Brooke was silent.

"Tell me that, Brooke, and it will be all wight."

Brooke was very red now.

"I don't think you ought to ask me what is in my private letters," he said. "I wouldn't take the trouble to answer anybody else; but I know you are an ass."

"What!"

"I mean—I know you mean well," said Brooke hastily. "But you must not ask me questions. You know I'm a decent chap, and that ought to be enough."

"Yaas, it is enough," said Arthur Augustus, rather distressed; "but—but—"

"Then let's say no more about it," said Brooke. "Good-bye."

"Hold on! You haven't answahed me!"

"I can't answer you," said Brooke shortly.

"Do you mean you won't?" asked D'Arcy; and his manner grew harder at once. The swell of St. Jim's could be as stern as steel when he liked.

"If you like to put it that way—yes."

"Then I shall have to conclude, deah boy, that the letter was about some meetin'—"

"Oh, rot!"

"And that this appointment you have spoken of—that you're in such a hewwy to keep—is with my cousin?"

Brooke did not answer.

ANSWERS

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"Is that the case, Bwooke?"

"Don't ask questions."

"That is the same as sayin' yass, I suppose. Now, Bwooke, I can't have it. Ethel would get spoken of very unpleasantly if people knew. And, owin' to your letter gettin' about, people will know. I cannot allow it. I want you to promise me that you won't see my Cousin Ethel except in my presence, or at the vicarage."

Brooke laughed shortly.

"I'm not on visiting terms at the vicarage," he said.

"Will you promise me?"

"No, I won't."

"Then I shall insist! Pway don't walk off, Bwooke! I have not yet finished speakin' to you!"

But Brooke was walking off, and walking very fast. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried after him, his eyes gleaming with anger.

"Bwooke, stop! Do you heah?"

Brooke heard; but he did not stop. D'Arcy quickened his pace, and caught him by the arm, and jerked him to a stop.

"Bwooke, I insist upon that promise from you!"

"Don't bother," said Brooke.

"Why, you utah wotah—"

"Do let me go!" said Brooke, jerking at his arm. "I don't want to quarrel with you, D'Arcy—it's the last thing in the world I should want. Don't force me to quarrel."

"I do not care twopenny wethah we quawwel or not," exclaimed D'Arcy angrily. "You are practically confessin' that you are goin' to meet my cousin secretly, and I refuse to allow anythin' of the sort!"

"Nonsense!"

"You will either give me that promise, or I shall give you a fearful thwashin', Bwooke!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Brooke impatiently.

"Will you promise me?"

"No."

"Then take off your jacket, and put up your hands!" said D'Arcy.

He whipped off his own elegant Eton jacket, and pushed back his cuffs. He had planted himself directly in Brooke's path, and the day-boy could not go on. Brooke backed away from him, and did not remove his jacket.

"Will you put up your hands?" demanded D'Arcy menacingly, following the day-boy step by step.

"No."

"I trust you will not compel me to give you the coward's blow!"

Brooke gave an angry laugh.

"I hope you won't be such an idiot!" he exclaimed.

"I shall certainly be such an idiot, you wotah, unless you put up your hands at once!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to thwash you!"

"Don't play the giddy ox!" said Brooke, breathing hard. "There's nothing for us to quarrel about—nothing! If you knew the circumstances, you would see that you are making a silly ass of yourself. Whoever showed you that envelope was trying to make trouble between us. I wish I knew who it was!" He gritted his teeth. "D'Arcy, there's nothing for us to row about. Don't play the giddy ox, I tell you!"

"Are you going to put up your hands?"

"No," said Brooke. "Not to you."

"Then I shall strike you."

"Keep off, you ass!" said Brooke fiercely.

But Arthur Augustus did not keep off. He rushed at Brooke, hitting out, and the day-boy caught a blow on the chin. Then he closed with the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy, to his surprise, found himself swept clean off his feet.

"Let me go, you wotah!" roared D'Arcy. "That isn't the way to fight, you silly ass! Let me go at once!"

"Will you cheese it, then?"

"No, I won't! I'm goin' to thwash you!"

Brooke did not speak again. He tightened his grasp upon the struggling, furious swell of the Fourth, and D'Arcy could not release himself. All he could do was to punch violently at Brooke's ribs; but Brooke hardly appeared to notice it. He swung Arthur Augustus round, and tossed him into the bushes as he had been a sack of potatoes.

Crash!

Yawwoh! Oh!"

The swell of St. Jim's was rending through the underbrush, down a somewhat steep slope of the unequal ground. He rolled a dozen yards before he reached the level and stopped, and sat up in the ferns, gasping and panting.

"Bai Jove! Ow! Oh! Gweat Scott! I'll give him an awful thwashin'! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus leaped to his feet. He scrambled up the slope again, and plunged furiously up through the underbrush. But it was five minutes before he reached the spot where he had left Brooke; and Brooke was no longer there.

The swell of St. Jim's understood. Brooke had rolled him down the slope in order to get rid of him while he cleared off.

"Bwooke, you wotah! Bwooke, you beast! You awful funk!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

But only the echo of his own voice answered. Dick Brooke was gone. And Arthur Augustus rushed to and fro in the bushes seeking him in vain. The day-boy had disappeared, and, as Arthur Augustus did not know which direction he had taken, it was not of much use trying to pursue him. The swell of St. Jim's took his way towards the school, breathing fury, and registering inward vows of what he would do to Brooke when the day-boy turned up at St. Jim's on the morrow.

CHAPTER 5.

Figgins to the Rescue.

"HALLO, what is that cad up to, I wonder?" Figgins muttered the words aloud. The New House junior had been striding across the moor, a gloomy frown upon his brow, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets, when he caught sight of Levison of the Fourth.

Levison was some little distance ahead of him, and Figgins could see only his head and shoulders above the gorse. Some distance ahead lay the old manor house, a deserted and ruined building on the moor, far from other habitations. Levison seemed to be making his way towards the old house, and, with considerable caution, as though he fancied someone there might observe his approach. Figgins, in growing surprise, saw that the cad of the School House moved as he went on so that clumps of trees and bushes would cover him from the view of anyone in the old house or the garden.

"Spying, as usual, the cad!" Figgins muttered, in disgust.

But he could not help wondering what Levison was spying on at the deserted house. The old manor house had been uninhabited for many years. Lately, Figgins knew, a gang of gamblers had met there, and some St. Jim's fellows had gone there to play, or rather to be fleeced by the gang of sharpers. But that had been put an end to. Tom Merry & Co. had descended upon them in force, and wrecked the place, and the rascals had cleared off, and had not been seen in the neighbourhood since. That could not be the attraction for Levison. And, besides, his motions showed that he was, as usual, spying.

Figgins's feelings towards Levison were not amiable just then. He was not satisfied with the punishment he had administered to the tall-tale of the Fourth in his study. He felt a very strong inclination to hammer Levison again. He moved his direction a little, so as to follow on Levison's track. He had been tramping aimlessly over the moor when he caught sight of the School House junior.

Levison paused and stooped in the ferns, and disappeared from sight for a moment. He rose with a stone in his hand. Figgins wondered; but in a moment he saw the junior's object. One of the horses that roamed the moor was near the cad of the Fourth, and Levison could not resist the temptation to stone him. Figgins gritted his teeth. It was just one of Levison's cruel tricks, and it made Figgins more than ever inclined to hammer him.

Whiz!

The stone struck the horse upon the flank, and the animal gave a startled whinny, and galloped off, and disappeared in at the shattered gateway of the manor house.

Levison laughed—his hard, unpleasant laugh. But he ceased to laugh as he heard the gorse crashing before Figgins, and looked round and saw the New House junior bearing down upon him.

Levison's face did not look nice. His nose was swollen, and his left eye was half-closed, and his mouth had a crooked look. He was still suffering from the effects of the licking he had received in the New House.

"You cad!" shouted Figgins.

Levison looked at him doggedly.

"Oh, don't be an idiot!" he said. "I only wanted to see the brute run!"

"You rotter!" said Figgins, glaring at him. "I've a jolly good mind to give you the licking of your life!"

Levison backed away.

"What are you spying on here?" asked Figgins. "What is there going on at the old house that you want see, you rotter?"

Levison showed his teeth in an unpleasant grin.

"You seem to have come along for the same reason," he sneered. "How did you know?"

"How did I know what?" asked Figgins puzzled.

"Oh, don't pretend you've come here by chance!" said Levison. "You were going to Wayland when I saw you last. You know as well as I do that Brooke is meeting Ethel

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Cleveland over there, and you want to see what they're meeting about so jolly mysteriously, same as I do."

Figgins almost staggered.

"Brooke!" he repeated.

"You didn't know, of course?" sneered Levison.

"Do you mean to say he's there?" said Figgins, jerking his arm towards the silent, deserted-looking old manor house.

"Either there or coming there," said Levison. "The appointment was for four."

"You—you liar! You dare to say that Miss Cleveland is there to meet Brooke?"

"You know she is as well as I do," said Levison.

"It's a lie!"

"I saw her go," said Levison. "She came from the vicarage."

Figgins looked at him blankly. Levison was evidently speaking the truth now. Cousin Ethel had come from the vicarage across the moor, and was at the old manor house. But to meet Brooke—to have a clandestine meeting with a St. Jim's fellow! That was impossible. If she wanted to see Brooke, why couldn't she come to the school, or to Brooke's house, where his mother and sister were? It was impossible that Cousin Ethel should be meeting Brooke in a deserted place, unknown to everyone.

"You lying cad!" Figgins gasped, at last.

Levison sneered.

"Go there and see for yourself," he said.

"I'll go there, just to prove that you're a liar," said Figgins. "But you won't. You'll clear off!"

"I'll do as I like," said Levison.

"You'll do as I like!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"You'll get out, or I'll give you such a hiding that you'll have to crawl home! Understand that?"

Levison qualified.

"Well, I don't know that I want to hang about here," he said. "Go to the dickens!"

And Levison turned his back and walked away.

Figgins strode on towards the manor house. His brain was in a whirl.

If Cousin Ethel was there, there could be no harm in seeing her; but he was quite certain that he would not find Brooke of the Fourth there. He felt that he must speak to Cousin Ethel, and assure himself that she had simply gone there to see the old place, without any thought of meeting anybody. Levison had seen her, and had misconstrued the matter, as a fellow with a mind like Levison's would be sure to do.

The stray horse was browsing inside the gates, and he started and dashed off as the New House juniors came along. He trotted away down the weedy path. Figgins entered at the old gateway where the gate had long disappeared.

He gave a sudden start and paused. On one of the weedy paths in the old tangled garden lay a rusty garden-roller, left there from the time the house had been inhabited. On the old roller a graceful form was seated.

It was Cousin Ethel!

The girl had a book in her hands and was reading, and Figgins saw her profile, and the calm, clear expression on the sweet face brought comfort to his heart. Ethel was reading, and did not see him.

Figgins drew back a little among the ragged trees to pull himself together, and regain his calmness before he advanced.

He did not see a head that rose above the old wall, or a pair of keen, cunning eyes that looked into the garden. Levison had not gone; he had made a detour among the gorse, and had reached the wall of the old garden about the same time that Figgins reached the gate.

There was a vengeful gleam in the eyes of the cad of the Fourth, and his hand was grasping a large, jagged stone.

That stone was intended for Figgins; and but for his unconscious action in drawing back among the trees, it would have come crashing upon him.

Levison gratted his teeth. He took Figgins' action to mean that he had seen him, and he did not dare to linger. He did not want to get to close quarters with Figgins again.

The stray horse, feeding in the garden, was in easy range, and Levison spitefully hurled the stone at him, and then turned and ran.

There was a loud, shrill neigh of pain from the horse, and it broke into a mad rush. Cousin Ethel looked up, and the colour faded from her face as she caught sight of the maddened animal tearing down the narrow path towards her. She was directly in the way, and for a moment the suddenness of her danger seemed to stun her, and she could not move, her eyes fixing themselves in dazed terror upon the rushing animal.

A cry broke from Figgins. He saw the girl's danger, and he cut across madly to intercept the horse. He had never covered the ground so quickly in his life before.

The maddened animal was almost upon the girl when

Figgins tore up, and hurled himself in the way. He leaped between them, his arm going up to strike the horse's head aside, and the animal swerved just in time.

His shoulder struck Figgins heavily, and hurled him to the ground, and then the frantic animal went careering past into the bushes beside the path.

Cousin Ethel sprang to her feet with a cry.

"Figgins!" In a moment she was upon her knees on the ground beside the dazed junior. "Oh, Figgins, are you hurt?"

CHAPTER 6.

Rough on Figgins.

FIGGINS blinked dazedly at the girl as she bent over him.

As a matter of fact he was hurt; but he tried to grin.

"It's all right, Ethel," he muttered thickly. "I—I had a bump, that's all. I shall be all right in a minute."

He was badly shaken, and he knew that his arm was bruised, but no bones were broken. He tried to rise, and Ethel helped him, and he sank down upon the old garden-roller.

Ethel's face was regaining its colour now.

"How good of you! And how brave!" said Ethel softly. "The horse would have dashed over me. I might have been killed. And you—you might have been killed, Figgins."

Figgins grinned.

"That's all right," he said. "It gave me a—queer turn when I saw him running at you, Ethel. I don't know how I got here in time. Some cad threw a stone at him—Levison, I suppose. I saw him do it once out on the moor. Don't blame the poor old geegee."

"Levison is a cruel boy," said Ethel. "He ought to be punished."

"He will be," said Figgins grimly.

"No, no, no, I don't mean that!" said Ethel alarmed. "You must not touch him, Figgins."

"All serene," said Figgins. "Just as you like."

Ethel smiled a little. She had a way of giving Figgins orders, and Figgins always received her orders as if he had been born to obey them, and never thought of doing anything else. Faintly over the wide moor came the chime of distant bells.

"Four o'clock!" said Ethel, with a little start.

Figgins remembered.

"Yes, four," he said; and Levison's words seemed to hammer into his brain. Levison had said that Ethel was to meet Brooke at the old manor house at four. How did Levison know? But, of course, it was true.

Only what did that new expression of uneasiness in Ethel's face mean?

"How did you come here, Figgins?" asked Ethel. "I did not expect to meet you."

Figgins coloured.

"I was strolling over the moor," he explained. "I met Levison, and—and he told me he'd seen you here, so I—I came."

"I did not see Levison," said Ethel.

"Oh, you wouldn't see him! When he's spying on anybody, he would take care of that," said Figgins bitterly.

Ethel looked astonished.

"Spying on anybody!" she repeated. "Why should Levison spy on me?"

"It's his nature to," said Figgins. "He'd spy on the plumber who comes to mend the taps, or on the cook or the porter, rather than not spy at all. Some fellows are born like that." Then Figgins flushed uncomfortably, as he realised that he was talking about a fellow behind his back. "Oh, blow Levison!" he muttered.

He could not help noticing that Ethel was looking towards the gate, as if in expectation of seeing someone enter.

The demon of jealousy was working in Figgins' breast. He could not help blurring out a question:

"You are expecting somebody?"

Ethel nodded.

"Yes," she said calmly.

"Then—then perhaps I'd better be going," said Figgins huskily, rising from his seat on the roller.

"I—I don't know," said Ethel; and then she coloured a little as she caught Figgins' expression. "I haven't seen you for a long time, have I? Are you in a hurry?"

"No fear!" said Figgins promptly.

"Then suppose you stay until he comes!"

Figgins gulped something down.

Stay until "he" came. He was pretty certain whom "he" was, Brooke of the Fourth, of course. But Ethel didn't seem to mind his knowing.

It was, of course, utterly impossible that Ethel could descend to the smallness of playing off one boy friend against



"Is it you, Arthur?" Brandreth's voice, low but more distinct, replied: "Yes, father." Then the door closed upon him, and the light was shut off. But the spies had seen and heard enough, for that one word on Brandreth's lips had told them all! (An incident in the splendid, 50,000 word long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "*SHUNNED BY THE FORM*," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's Special Summer Number of "*THE MAGNET*" LIBRARY. Now on sale everywhere. Price 2d.)

another. Figgins knew that; but—somehow or other he was feeling horribly miserable just then.

He sat silent, trying to feel quite commonplace and ordinary, and failing lamentably. Figgins had never known who it was to hate anybody before; but he was very near to hating Dick Brooke at that moment.

Yes, he remembered once—in a train—a miserable old Frenchman had persisted in making himself agreeable to Ethel, and the girl in her innocence had not crushed him as Figgins wanted her to, and Figgins' feelings towards that Frenchman had been almost murderous. He had fought whole Blenheim and Waterloo over in his mind as he had watched him. But he had almost forgotten that; but now the same kind of feeling was reviving in him, and he pictured himself in the gym, with Dick Brooke, hammering him—and there was a kind of ferocious pleasure in the thought.

Ethel looked at him and laughed.

"Do you know you have not said a word for ten minutes?" she asked, consulting the little watch on her wrist.

Figgins turned scarlet.

"Haven't I?" he gasped.

"No. You are angry with me?"

"I? Oh, no! Never!"

"With somebody, then," said Ethel.

"I? Why, what stuff!" said Figgins, trying to smile.

"What could put that idea into your head, Ethel?"

"I've been watching your face," said Ethel cheerfully.

"Oh!"

"I hope you have not been quarrelling with Kerr or Wynn?"

"No fear!"

"Or the School House boys?"

"No, no—only one! I—I had a row with Levison," said Figgins. "I punched him, that's all. Nothing, you know!"

"I hope Levison thought it was nothing," said Ethel drily.

"Oh! Don't you think me a quarrelsome boulder, you know," said Figgins in alarm. "If you'd heard what Levison said, you'd have punched him—no, I don't mean that—of course, you wouldn't! But if you'd been me, and I'd been you, and Levison had—had—had—" Figgins' voice trailed

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A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

off, as he realised that it was impossible to give Ethel the slightest hint of what Levison had said.

"Well, never mind Levison," said Ethel, much to Figgins' relief. "I don't think I shall stay here much longer. He should have been here at four, and it is a quarter past now."

"The rotter!" muttered Figgins.

"What?"

"I—I mean how rotten to keep you waiting," stammered Figgins.

"Oh, my time isn't valuable; only I have to get back to the vicarage to tea," said Ethel calmly. "I dare say he has some important work that has kept him—or he might have been detained at school. Have you seen Brooke to-day?"

"Brooke?" gasped Figgins.

"Yes. He is in your form."

"Only a day boy!" growled Figgins.

"Yes; he is a day boy. You like him, don't you?"

"Oh, awfully!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"I really must go," said Ethel. "I can't be late for tea at the vicarage, and it's a good walk from here. You said you're not in a hurry, Figgins?"

"Not at all—not in the least," said Figgins, his brow clearing at the prospect of walking home to the vicarage with Cousin Ethel.

"Then, would you mind—"

"I'd be jolly glad!" said Figgins eagerly.

The girl laughed.

"But you don't know yet what I'm going to ask you," she said.

"I'd be glad to do anything you wanted," said Figgins, his spirits sinking again. It was evidently not a walk to the vicarage that he was to have.

"I can't wait any longer," said Ethel. "Would you mind waiting for Brooke, and giving him a note from me?"

Figgins looked at her blankly. Ethel had taken a sheet of paper and a pencil from her bag, and was writing, with the sheet spread out on her book.

Figgins wondered whether he was dreaming. The garden seemed to be turning round his head.

What Levison had said was true! Ethel was there to meet Brooke of the Fourth—and she didn't care if Figgins knew it! She was going to use him as a messenger to Brooke—him, Figgins—to Brooke!

Well, there was nothing secret about it, at all events. But—

Ethel folded up the paper she had written.

"Will you wait here and give this to Brooke?" she asked.

Figgins nodded; he could not speak.

"If he doesn't come soon, you can keep it and give it to him at the school to-morrow," Ethel added. "But I should like him to have it to-day."

Another nod.

Ethel picked up her jacket, and Figgins held it for her. She handed him the note, and then put on her gloves.

"Good-bye!" she said brightly.

"G-g-good-bye!" stammered Figgins.

She gave him her hand, and then, with a friendly nod, walked away. Figgins stood rooted to the ground, gazing after her till she disappeared from the old garden.

Then he sank down again, staring blankly at the letter in his hand, as he sat upon the old garden-roller. Ethel was gone, and Figgins was waiting for Dick Brooke—with Ethel's letter in his hand!

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins' Foe.

Figgins sat quite silent, without moving, the letter in his hand.

The sun fell with a golden glow in the old tangled garden. In the silence of the deserted place, came the croop of the stray horse, from somewhere behind the trees.

The silence was broken at last by the sound of running feet.

Figgins looked up.

Dick Brooke had entered the garden by the old gateway, flushed and breathless with running. He stood and looked about him—looking for Ethel.

Figgins rose to his feet.

Brooke started as he saw him, and, after a moment's hesitation, came towards him, the flush deepening in his face.

"You here, Figg!" he said.

Figgins nodded.

"Have you seen anybody—here?" Brooke asked.

"I've met Miss Cleveland here."

"Has she gone?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm sorry for that."

"She couldn't wait any longer," Figgins explained sadly. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 283.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

castically. "She had to get home to tea at the vicarage, and as you kept her waiting too long, she had to go."

"It wasn't my fault," said Brooke. "Somebody detained me on a silly ass insisted upon bothering me and making a row with me, and I couldn't get rid of him. It's beastly unlucky!"

"Miss Cleveland left a letter for you."

"Oh, good!"

Figgins handed over the letter. It had been simply folded, and Figgins could have opened it if he had chosen. Figgins would have given anything to know what was in that letter, but it had not even occurred to him that it was possible to look in it.

Brooke opened the letter and read it quickly.

A smile came over his face, and his eyes glowed.

"Good! Oh, good!" he said.

"Good, is it?" said Figgins, his hands clenching hard, till his nails dug into his palms.

Brooke looked up buoyantly.

"Jolly good!" he said. "Miss Cleveland is kindness itself!"

"So it seems," said Figgins.

Brooke started a little, and put the letter into his pocket. He realised for the first time that Figgins was in a dangerous temper.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, no," said Figgins, with gleaming eyes. "nothing! Nothing—only I've a good mind to handle you as I've handled Levison already—as you ought to be handled, you cur!"

Brooke started back.

"Are you mad?" he exclaimed.

"I don't think so. I suppose I can tell you my opinion of you if I like."

"What's the matter with you? What are you calling me names for?" asked Brooke. "What have I done to you?"

"Nothing at all. I've told you my opinion of you. If you don't know what it's for, you are a bigger fool than I take you for!"

Brooke drew a deep breath.

A sudden suspicion had come into his mind, and his eyes were gleaming now, too.

"So you are the fellow?" he said slowly.

"What?"

"You knew that Miss Cleveland was coming here. You knew she had written to me at the school," said Brooke.

"I knew she had written to you at the school!" said Figgins.

"Then it's you I owe it to that I've had a row with D'Arcy? You were the fellow who took the letter out of my pocket."

Figgins started as if stung.

"I took a letter out of your pocket! You are a liar!"

"How did you know Miss Cleveland would be here, then? Somebody has stolen my letter and told D'Arcy about it, and made him quarrel with me."

"What right have you to receive a letter from D'Arcy's cousin at all?" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"What right have you to dictate to whom Miss Cleveland shall write?" asked Brooke, in his turn.

"Don't mention Miss Cleveland's name to me," said Figgins.

"I won't have you mention it. You're not fit to mention it, or to speak to her!"

"I think you must be dotty!" said Brooke coldly.

"If D'Arcy has objected to your rotten actions, D'Arcy is quite right, and shows more sense than usual," said Figgins.

"What rotten actions? What are you talking about?"

"You know well enough. To draw an innocent girl into writing to you, and meeting you secretly! You know that's a rotten thing to do, I suppose."

"You don't understand."

"I don't want to. I know what you've done, and that's enough. If I were in D'Arcy's place, I'd hammer you!"

Brooke smiled slightly.

"D'Arcy thought the same," he said.

"I hope he liked you, then."

"Not quite. I left him wriggling out of the bushes I chucked him into."

Figgins set his teeth.

"I wish you would try the same with me," he said.

"I haven't any quarrel with you," said Brooke. "I can't see what you're interfering in this matter at all for. What business is it of yours?"

Poor Figgins!

It wasn't any business of his, as a matter of fact, and he knew it.

And if you're going to make a row with me, and drag Miss Cleveland's name into it, you're acting rottenly, not me," said Brooke. "Don't be a fool! Can't you foresee how Miss Cleveland would be talked about if we started rowing about her? I think you must be an idiot!"

"I'm not going to do that," said Figgins. "I'm not

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going to touch you—now. I shall see you again to-morrow—and if we have a row, it can be about something else. Understand?"

"Not quite. What do you want to row with me for?"

"Because you are a cad!"

"You will certainly row with me, if you keep on like that," said Brooke, his eyes flashing. "But—but I don't see what you are meddling for, anyway."

"What did you make an appointment with Miss Cleveland here for?"

"That is her business, and mine—not yours!"

"Then you won't explain?"

"Certainly I won't! Why should I explain to the first blundering, meddling duffer who asks me questions?"

"Pile it on!" said Figgins, between his teeth. "I'll make you eat every word of it!"

"I think I'd better leave you," said Brooke. "I'm obliged to you for sending me this letter. If you want trouble with me, you'll find me at the school to-morrow as usual. You won't have to look for me."

And Brooke swung round and left the garden.

Figgins drove his hands deep into his trousers-pockets, and strode to and fro, restlessly and aimlessly. He had made a fool of himself—he knew that.

But—

If Ethel had changed her mind; if she wanted a new friend instead of the old one, it would be more sensible of him to accept the situation quietly, and say nothing.

But he was not in a mood to accept anything quietly. He was almost alarmed, himself, by the intensity of the desire he felt to hammer Brooke—to hammer and hammer again. He strode from the garden at last, and tramped away across the moor, his hands deep in his pockets, his brows contracted, his eyes on the ground. He did not look up when he reached the school, but strode right in, without even seeing Fatty Wynn and Kerr, who were waiting for him at the gates.

"Figgie, old man," said Kerr.

Figgins strode on.

Fatty Wynn strode after him, and touched him on the arm. Fatty Wynn's plump face was full of concern.

"I say, Figgie—"

"Let me alone!" muttered Figgins.

"Will you come and have some ginger-pop?" urged Fatty Wynn. "And Mrs. Taggles has got some ripping fresh jam-tarts."

"Oh, buzz off!"

Fatty Wynn stopped in dismay, and Figgins tramped into the New House. That evening, Figgins hardly spoke a word to anybody. He was thinking chiefly of the morrow, and of standing face to face with Dick Brooke in the gym—without the gloves on.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus Is Not Taken Seriously.

TOM MERRY whistled.

Manners and Lowther grinned.

They stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he came up the steps of the School House. When the swell of St. Jim's had gone out with Dick Brooke, he had looked the usual picture of clean and easy elegance. But there was a great change in him now. He was dusty, and he was untidy. His elegant jacket was split, and his trousers were very stained. His collar was dirty, his necktie awry, and he was hatless. His face was very red, for he was fully conscious of the untidy state of his appearance, and it worried him dreadfully. His colour deepened as he met the inquiring gaze of the Terrible Three.

"Been scrapping with the Grammarians?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"No, dear boy."

"Wrestling with a steam-roller?" asked Lowther.

"No, you ass!"

"Collision with a motor-car?" asked Tom Merry.

"Weally, you duffah—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake of the Fourth, coming out of the doorway of the School House. "What on earth's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"I have been tweeked with gwoss disrespect."

"Well, you look it," admitted Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's your hat?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Somewheah in Wylcombe Wood. I have been thrown into the bushes, and my hat wolloed away, and I couldn't find it. I am in a howld state."

"But who did it?" asked Blake. "Who has ventured to lift a scorching finger against the noblest scion of the House of Vere de Vere?"

"That uttah wottah Bwooke!"

"You don't mean to say that you've been rowing with Brooke?" Blake exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, you must have been looking for trouble," said Blake. "Brooke never rows with anybody. What on earth did you want to quarrel with old Brooke for?"

"He is a wottah!"

"Rats!"

"If you doubt my statement, Blake—"

"I do," said Blake cheerfully. "You're an ass! Brooke isn't a rotter. He's one of the best chaps breathing, though he does mull easy catches."

"He is an uttah wottah! And he wan away aftah chuckin' me into the bushes, or I should have given him a fearful thwashin'! I shall want you to be my second to-morrow, Blake, when I thwash him!"

"Oh, you're going to thrash Brooke, are you?" said Blake puzzled. "It might work out the other way, you know."

"Do you versse?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I'm goin' to thwash him! He is a wottah! And he has insulted me! I shall expect you to be my second, Blake. I am goin' to change my clothes now."

"Better change your mind at the same time," grinned Blake.

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went into the house, and made his way to the Fourth-Form dormitory to change his clothes. Blake looked in perplexity at the grinning Shell fellows.

"What's biting Gussy this time?" he asked. "What on earth does he want to row with old Brooke for? You fellows know anything about it?"

"Well, yes," admitted Tom Merry. "We do; but Gussy told us in confidence. I dare say he'll tell you in confidence, too, as soon as he's changed his clothes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's not going to fight Brooke," said Blake decidedly. "I'll jolly soon put a stop to that! I'll make him fight me first, the ass! Why, Brooke is one of the quietest and peaceablest chaps in the blessed school; never rows with anybody! Gussy must be off his silly rooker!"

And Blake went up to Study No. 6 to acquaint Herries and Digby with "Gussy's latest," and to wait there for the swell of St. Jim's to come down and explain.

Blake and Herries and Digby had newly finished their tea when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the study.

The swell of St. Jim's looked his usual nasty self again now, but there were traces of excitement and anger in his aristocratic face.

Blake and Herries and Digby looked at him with a grin. The chums of Study No. 6 persisted in refusing to take Arthur Augustus with the seriousness that was due to him.

"Got over it?" asked Blake.

"No," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I have not got ovah it! And I wogard the question as ridiculous!"

There was a tap at the door, and the Terrible Three followed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in. They sat down at the tea-table with cheerful unconcern.

"Nothing going on in our study," Tom Merry explained.

"We've come to tea."

"Well, there are some sardines left," said Blake, "and plenty of jam. Glad you've come. You can help us deal with Gussy. It may be necessary to tie him up."

"I should staltly wefuse to be tied up!"

"We'll lend a hand with pleasure," said Monty Lowther genially. "Pass the sardines."

Arthur Augustus looked at the Shell fellows through his eyeglass disdainfully. The swell of St. Jim's was very much upon the high horse at present.

"Now, give us the history of the mystery," said Herries. "We shall have to be doing our prep. soon."

"Blow the prep, Hewies!"

"No good blowing the prep., unless you can blow Mr. Latham to-morrow morning," said Digby.

"What's the trouble, Gussy?"

"I'm goin' to thwash Bwooke!"

"We've had that," murmured Blake. "Put on another record."

"I wish you silly asses would be serious. I don't know whethah I'd bettah discuss the mattah in the pwesenche of these Shell boundahs."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "You can speak before me as before your own uncle."

"And you can treat me as an aunt," said Monty Lowther.

"Howevah, they know about it," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I have already acquainted them with Bwooke's wotter conduct."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake. "I'm jolly sure that Brooke hasn't done anything rotten."

"You are a duffah, Blake! I suppose you can trust to my judgment?"

"No, that's just what I can't do," said Blake. "But let's

have it. What has old Brooke done? Does he say your latest fancy waistcoat hasn't as many colours as Joseph's coat?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Has he dared to hint that your topper isn't in the latest style?"

"Pway don't be an ass! He has enticed into a secret correspondence with my Cousin Ethel, and has led her into meetin' him sweetly."

"Rats!"

"It is a fact, dear boy. Levison showed me an envelope he had found. Bwooke said it must have been taken from his pocket. I suppose Levison is cad enough to do that; but, anyway, there was the proof. And Bwooke refused to deny that he was goin' to meet Cousin Ethel when I taxed him with it."

"You taxed him?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas."

"Then you were exceeding your powers. The House of Lords has no right to tax anybody," said Lowther. "That's in Lloyd George's department."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "If you cannot speak sensibly, I shall have to request you to leave this study."

"Well, I'm going to leave it," said Lowther, in astonishment. "You don't suppose I'm going to take your blessed study away with me, do you?"

"You—you—"

"If it wasn't for the sardines," said Lowther, "I would shake the dust of your study from my feet immediately, and refuse to regard you as a friend; but considering the sardines, I will overlook your bad manners. Pass the giddy fishes!"

Arthur Augustus jammed in his eyeglass a little tighter, and gave Lowther a look that ought to have bored a hole in him. But the humorist of the Shell was busy with the sardines, and did not even see it.

"I asked Bwooke whether he would promise me not to meet my cousin except in the presence of her friends, and he refused. You will admit that he is actin' in a wotten way in drawin' Ethel into clandestine meetin's."

"Well, that's a good word," agreed Lowther. "If I were a sporting man, I'd back that both ways. What does it mean, by the way?"

"Anybody got a dictionary?" asked Tom Merry. "Lend us the dictionary you got that word out of, Gussy, so that we can read up what it means and start fair."

"You uttah asses!"

"It's a Scotch word," said Blake thoughtfully. "All words beginning with clan are Scotch words. If Kerr were over here, we could ask him what it means. Clanranald, Clanrarity, clandestine—they're all of the same ilk."

"You know perfectly well what the word means, you uttah wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. "It means secret meetings and things."

"It's a word they use in novels," said Manners, with an air of great thoughtfulness. "The kind of novels where the hero calls his daddy a revered and honoured parent, and the heroine says, 'Touch me not, Sir Archibald! Unhand me, villain!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to discuss the mattah with you wottahs any longer! I will ask Weilly or Way to be my second to-morrow."

"Hold on!" said Blake pacifically. "It's much better to understand the words as we go along—it may prevent misunderstandings, you know. It seems that Ethel has written to Brooke. Is that it?"

"Yaas."

"Didn't she stamp the letter?"

"Ya-a-as, I suppose so."

"Then what is there to complain of?"

"A clandestine correspondence is likely to cause unpleasant remarks to be passed. And Bwooke has met her secretly this afternoon."

"There doesn't seem to be much of a secret about it," said Blake, with a chuckle. "Here we are, seven chaps who know it, and if Levison knows it, that's the same as saying all St. Jim's does. Don't you worry about it being a secret. It isn't."

"That's the worst of it. The fellows will be talkin' about it. Of course, Ethel is only a gal, and doesn't understand these things. It is my duty as an oldish relation to look after her. I suppose you can see that?"

"Blessed if I can!" said Herries. "She's got more sense in her little finger than you've got in your whole carcase, Gussy."

"Gals have to be looked after. And I'm not goin' to have my cousin talked about," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"There'll be talk enough if you make her name the cause of a row and a fight," said Tom Merry. "It's the

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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worst thing you could do. And Ethel would be wild if she heard of it. Very likely box your ears."

"I should refuse to have my yabs boxed. But there is somethin' in what you say," Arthur Augustus admitted. "Ethel's name must not be mentioned."

"Suppose you were to mind your own business?" suggested Herries, speaking as if a really brilliant idea had struck him suddenly. "That would settle the whole matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard this as my bizney. Bwooke has acted in a wotten way, and he seems to mean to go on doin' it."

"Everybody's doing it," murmured Lowther.

"I am bound to call him to account, and stop him. In the time of my ancestors, he would have been called out—coffee and pistols for two!" said D'Arcy severely.

"Jolly lucky you're not living in the time of your aunt's sisters, then," said Lowther. "Gussy, old man, you ought to be on a cinematograph. That's the place for you. You're wasted here."

"You've got to let this drop, Gussy," said Blake seriously. "Ethel's a sensible girl. If she were a noodle, and getting under the influence of some cad like Levison, there might be reason to interfere. But, as it is, you're only making a silly ass of yourself! You are going the right way to work to get your cousin's head up and down the school."

"I suppose that's what Levison wants when he showed you the envelope. If you want to fight anybody, fight Levison. I'll back you up there."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am goin' to fight Bwooke."

"You're not!" said Blake positively. "You'll have to fight me first. Then each of the fellows here in turn."

"Hear, hear!"

"I should be sorry to have to thrash you all round—" "You'd be very sorry before you'd finished," agreed Manners.

"But I shall not swerve from what I regard as my duty! I am goin' to fight Bwooke to-morrow, and you can back me up or not, as you like. And I decline to discuss the mattah any further."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stalked out of the study, and slammed the door with more force than was really consistent with aristocratic repose.

The juniors looked at one another helplessly.

"He'll bring down my grey hairs with sorrow, yet!" sighed Blake. "Mind, all of us are to keep an eye on him to-morrow, and whenever he gets near Brooke, he's to be collared! Is that agreed?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

And the next morning, when the School House fellows came down from the dormitories, Tom Merry and & Co. paid Arthur Augustus D'Arcy special attention.

CHAPTER 9.

Bound Over to Keep the Peace!

DICK BROOKE came into the Fourth Form the following morning as usual, with a very cheerful expression upon his face.

Brooke, though he probably had more troubles on his young shoulders than any other fellow in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was always cheerful—but it was a sedate cheerfulness, as a rule.

On this particular morning, however, he looked almost beaming.

A good many fellows in the Fourth noted his looks with unusual attention that morning, and it was easy for them to see that something must have happened to make the day-boy feel unusually happy.

Figgins had no doubt what it was. The rotter—so Figgins' thoughts ran—had cut out Ethel's best chum, and taken his place. Figgins clenched his fists under the desk as he thought of it, and promised himself that, after lessons, he would make Dick Brooke look a little less cheerful.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was also in an unusually pugnacious mood.

When Arthur Augustus had an idea fixed in his mind, it seemed to be rooted there, and it was difficult to uproot it. In spite of the remonstrances of his chums, he intended to call Dick Brooke to account, so the unfortunate day-boy had two battles to fight that afternoon, if nothing intervened.

So far as D'Arcy was concerned, Tom Merry & Co. intended to intervene. As for Figgins, they knew nothing of his intentions.

Brooke was always well to the fore in class work, but that morning he excelled himself, and drew several warm commendations from Mr. Lathom.

Poor Figgins, on the other hand, was in trouble several times. He was never brilliant in class, but this morning, with his thoughts elsewhere, he gave Mr. Lathom the impression

that he was an utter dunce. He was given fifty lines for neglecting his preparation on the previous evening, and fifty more for absurd blunders during the morning. Kerr, who was at his side, helped him out of his troubles as well as he could with whispers, or Figgins would have fared even worse.

After morning lessons, when the Fourth marched out of the form-room, Figgins was looking worn and harassed. Brooke seemed to be walking on air.

"You look awfully chippy, Brooke," Levison remarked, in the passage. "Have you had a special order to paint a new sign for the Green Man?"

And Mellish and some others laughed.

Brooke smiled. He did not mind sneers at his work—he was only too glad to be able to get work to do.

"Bwooke!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice. The brightness left Brooke's face as the swell of St. Jim's bore down upon him.

"Yes, D'Arcy," he said quietly.

"I have a bone to pick with you, Bwooke. You tweeked me with gross disrespect yesterday."

"I'm sorry," said Brooke. "You wouldn't let me alone, and I had to get away. As it was, I was too late for my appointment."

"I am not wewefewin' to your appointment. I am goin' to thwash you because you tweeked me with disrespect, and made me lose my hat!" said D'Arcy.

"This way, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, who had just come out of the Shell room. "Just in time for a bit of cricket practice before dinner."

"I have no time for cricket practice now, Tom Mewwy."

"Your mistake; you have. Come on!"

"I wefuse—"

"This way, Gussy, old man! I want to see you do that lovely late cut of yours, you know."

"Wefuse me, you ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as Tom Merry marched him away towards the door of the quad. "I wefuse— If you do not immediately wefuse me, Tom Mewwy, I shall have no resource but to stwike you!"

Jack Blake took D'Arcy's other arm just in time. Between them the Shell fellow and the Fourth-Former marched Arthur Augustus out into the quadrangle.

The swell of St. Jim's breathed hard. He bestowed alternate glares upon Tom Merry and Blake, but they did not seem to mind. They walked him away towards the cricket ground by main force.

"You uttah wotters!" said D'Arcy, between his teeth. "Wefuse me at once. You are twyin' to pwevent me thwashin' Bwooke!"

"We're succeeding, too," grinned Blake.

Arthur Augustus made a terrific effort and dragged his arms free, and dashed away towards the School House like a hunted deer.

"Stop him!" roared Tom Merry.

"Collar him!" shrieked Blake.

Herries and Digby and Manners were in the way. They closed up and captured the excited swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus struggled violently.

Tom Merry and Blake dashed up, and caught hold of him again. In the midst of the five juniors, Arthur Augustus was walked away helplessly to the cricket ground. They jammed him down into a seat outside the pavilion and held him there.

The elegant junior was still struggling. His collar had burst, and his jacket was over his ears.

"You frightful wottahs!" he gasped.

"Are you going to keep the peace?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I uttably wefuse to keep the peace!"

"Then we'll keep you," grinned Blake.

"Wefuse me!"

"Anybody got a cord?" asked Blake. "We'll tie him down and leave him to get cool."

"I uttably wefuse to be tied down."

"Now, Gussy, listen to your uncle," urged Tom Merry.

"If we tie you up, you'll have a crowd of fags round you, and they'll pelt you. It will be like being in the stocks. We'll let you go, if you'll give us your word not to rag Brooke."

"I wefuse!"

"Here's a cord," said Herries. "I've got it read."

"Good egg!"

Arthur Augustus struggled desperately.

"What on earth's the row there?" demanded Kildare of the Sixth, passing on his way to Big Side with Darrel and Rushden.

"Only keeping Gussy in order," said Tom Merry. "He wants to fight one of his best chums, and we're persuading him not to."

The captain of St. Jim's grinned and passed on.

"Will you wefuse me?" said D'Arcy, sulphurously.

"No fear! Tie his legs first, Herries."

"I wefuse to have my legs tied! I decline to be placed in such a wicidulous posish. I weward you as wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus furiously.

"Tie the knots safely—never mind if it hurts him a bit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you wottahs! You uttah wotters! I no longer weward you as fwends! I shall wefuse to speak to you again."

"Hear, hear!"

"I shall nevah address anothah word to any of you!"

"For this relief much thanks!" grinned Blake. "Now his arms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I will pwomise you to let Bwooke alone," said Arthur Augustus, as he realised that the chums of the School House were in deadly earnest. "I cannot be placed in this wicidulous posish. Wefuse me."

"Honour bright!" asked Blake.

"Yas, you awful boss!"

"Good egg! Let him loose!"

Arthur Augustus, released by the grinning juniors, roared to his feet. He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and regarded them witheringly.

"Hurrah!"

"You disgustin' boundahs—"

"Hear, hear!"

"You wank outsidahs—"

"Good!"

"You—your frightful wottahs—"

Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. He strode away with his aristocratic nose high in the air, and the juniors collapsed upon the seat and yelled with laughter. They knew that Arthur Augustus would keep his word, and that there would be no fight with Brooke. And when they had recovered from their merriment, they went out contentedly to cricket practice.

CHAPTER 10.

Forced to Fight.

BRooke smiled as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched off by his chums. He was very glad to avoid trouble with the swell of St. Jim's, whom he sincerely liked. He was glad, too, to be saved the bother of it, for he had work to do, and intended to put in half an hour at a Greek paper before dinner.

But D'Arcy was not the only fellow who was looking for trouble with Dick Brooke that morning.

Figgins had made in Brooke's direction the moment the Fourth were out of the form-room; but Kerr and Wynn had stopped him.

Kerr and Wynn were anxious to prevent trouble if they could, and though they loyally backed up their leader on all occasions, they felt that Figgins was in the wrong this time. Brooke might or might not have acted badly, but Figgins had no right to interfere, and they wanted to keep him in check till he was calm enough to realise that. But Figgins, usually very amenable to reason, had taken the bit between his teeth with a vengeful howl. He scowled at the two juniors as they detained him.

"Don't bother me now, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "I want to speak to Brooke."

"What for?" asked Kerr.

"I've got something to say to him."

"You're not going to pick a quarrel with him, Figgys?"

"Why shouldn't I, if I want to?" demanded Figgins.

"Oh, be reasonable," said Kerr. "Brooke hasn't done anything to you. Besides, you can't quarrel with a fellow about such a thing—it will make the chaps talk about Ethel Cleveland."

"I'm not going to quarrel with him about that!" said Figgins, flushing.

"What else is there to quarrel about, then?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 238.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



WALLY ON THE WARPATH!

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"Lots of things. I don't like the way he does his hair," snorted Figgins.

"I say, Figgy, come to the tuck-shop, old man, and have some ginger-beer!" murmured Fatty Wynn persuasively.

Figgins jerked himself away from the detaining hands of his chums, and strode over to the day-boy.

"Brooke!"
He rapped out the name so sharply and loudly that every fellow in the passage turned his head to look, guessing that it meant trouble.

Brooke turned round and faced Figgins.

"Yes," he said.

"You remember what you said to me yesterday," said Figgins.

"I said a good many things, and so did you," said Brooke. "I'm quite willing to forget all about them."

"I'm not," said Figgins.

"You can please yourself about that, of course."

"You said I'd taken a letter from your pocket."

"I said somebody did," said Brooke. "And, as you seemed to know all about it, I thought it might be you. I don't see how you knew anything about my affairs, otherwise. But if you tell me you didn't, I'll take your word."

"I didn't!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"Very well, that ends it," said Brooke. "I believe you."

"But it doesn't end it," said Figgins. "You've got to answer for what you said. I suppose you understand me?"

"If you mean that you are picking a quarrel with me—"

"You can put it like that if you like," said Figgins. "Will you come into the gym. with me?"

Brooke was silent.
The juniors were gathering round on all sides now. Figgins' face was hard and set, and his eyes gleamed under his bent brows. It was seldom that Figgy's good-natured face had been seen to look so grim.

"Well, you're not in a hurry to answer," said Figgins, his lip curling.

Brooke coloured.

"I don't want to fight you, Figgins," he said, at length. "I've got something else to do. I'm working hard at my Greek now, for a special reason, and it may mean a lot to me. I don't want to waste my time hammering you. I'm not afraid of you, and you know it. But it means being put off my work for the day. I shan't feel up to doing Greek when we've finished our mill. I think you might be a bit more considerate."

Brooke spoke quietly and steadily. There was no trace of fear in his clear, blue eyes. He was simply looking at the matter from a practical standpoint. He had work to do, and no time to waste in fisticuffs.

If Figgins had not been so angry, he would have been moved. But he was too exasperated now to care for anything but punishing his enemy.

"Will you meet me or not?" he said.

"I don't want to."

Then Mellish of the Fourth chimed in with a giggle:

"Funk!"

Brooke's eyes gleamed for a moment as they turned on Mellish.

"Sure, stand up to him, Brooke," said Reilly of the Fourth. "A School House chap can't refuse to fight a New House rotter. Stand up to him!"

"Play up, Brooke, old man!" said Kangaroo. "I'll back you up!"

"The School House is coming to something," sneered Gore of the Shell. "Look here, Figgins, I'll fight you if you like, if Brooke won't."

"I don't want to fight you," said Figgins. "I'll fight you, or any other rotter in the School House to-morrow, if you like. I'm going to fight Brooke to-day."

"Play up, Brooke!" said Korrish. "You can't refuse a challenge from the New House."

Brooke set his teeth.

"You've heard what I said, Figgins!" he exclaimed. "I've got to work, and it may mean a lot to me if I leave it. And—and I've got to have a business interview, too, that may be very important, and I can't go with a battered face. Will you leave this over till next week, and I'll give you all the fighting you want?"

"Faith, and that's reasonable," said Reilly. "And I'll fight ye to-day, Figgins, if it's spoiling for a fight ye are."

"I won't leave it over for ten minutes," said Figgins.

Brooke still hesitated.

"If you don't step into the gym. with me, I'll give you the coward's blow," said Figgins. "I fancy that will buck you up, and put the Greek out of your mind."

Brooke flushed crimson.

"No need for that," he said. "If you won't do the decent thing, I'm ready to meet you now, and I'll do my best to knock some of the foolishness out of you."

"Bravo!" shouted the School House fellows.

Kerr and Wynn whispered to Figgins, and Redfern of the New House joined them. Brooke's manner had a quiet dignity in it, which contrasted with Figgy's angry excitement, and made him look more than ever in the wrong.

"It would be a rotten thing to spoil his form for an exam," Figgy, Redfern urged.

"Yes, rather," said Lawrence. "Leave it over till next week, Figgy."

"What exam?" said Figgins bitterly. "There isn't any Greek exam, this week that I've heard of."

Redfern whistled softly.

"By Jove, there isn't, either!" he exclaimed. "But Brooke said—"

"It was a rotten excuse to get off!" said Figgins. "He thinks it will be all blown over by next week."

Kerr shook his head.

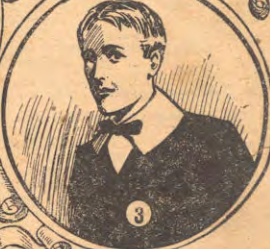
"Brooke isn't that sort," he said. "And you'd know it if you weren't so beastly ratty, Figgy. Look here, will you agree to leave it over, if we find that there is an exam?"

Figgins hesitated a moment.

"Well, yes," he said. "I know there jolly well isn't any exam.; but if there were, I admit it would be rotten to hammer him just before it. If he gives the particulars—"

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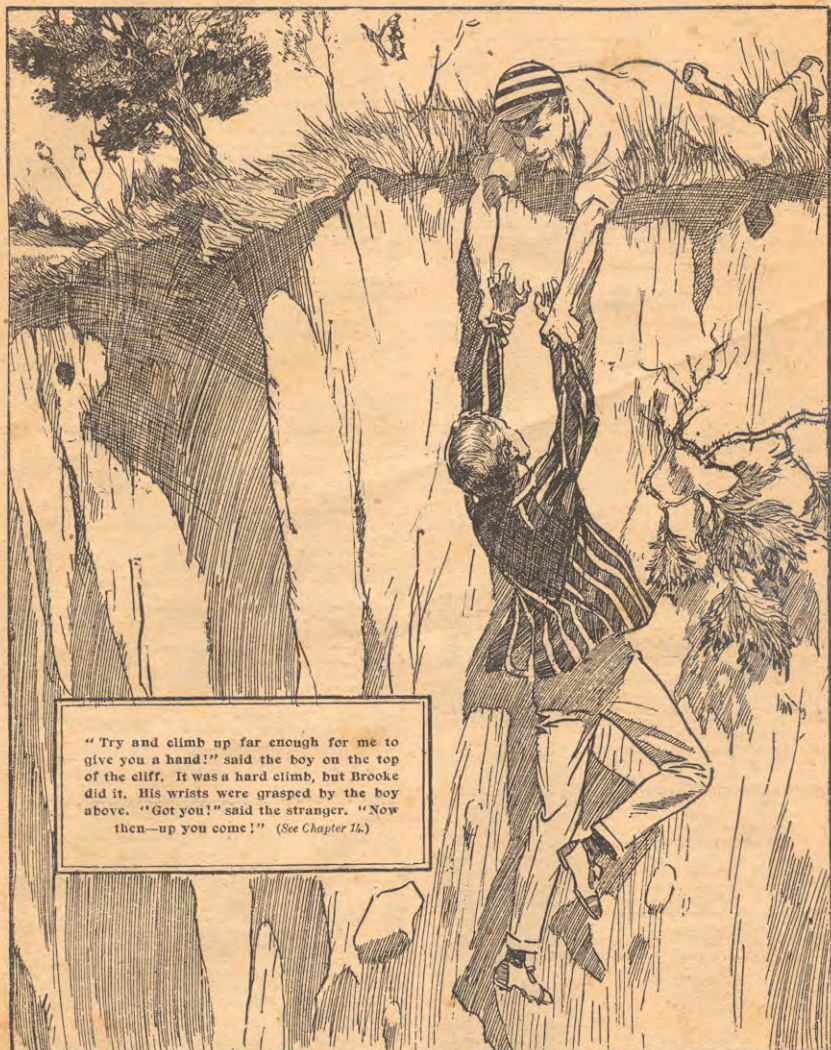
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"Try and climb up far enough for me to give you a hand!" said the boy on the top of the cliff. It was a hard climb, but Brooke did it. His wrists were grasped by the boy above. "Got you!" said the stranger. "Now then—up you come!" (See Chapter 14.)

"It may be some exam. outside St. Jim's," said Redfern.

Figgins sniffed.

"Well, ask him."

Kerr came over to Brooke.

"Figgins is willing to leave it over, Brooke," he said, "if you are working up for an exam. this week. But what exam. is there? There's nothing in Greek this week at St. Jim's."

"I didn't say it was an exam," said Brooke quietly.

"But you said you are working at Greek for a special reason this week."

"That is true."

"But it isn't an exam.?"

"No, it isn't."

"Would you mind saying what it is, then?" asked Kerr, his faith in Brooke's veracity considerably damped.

"It's a private matter, that I don't care to chatter about the school," said Brooke coldly. "But it's more important to me than an exam. That's all."

"Oh," said Kerr, "we'll see you in the gym, then!"

"All right!"

Kerr rejoined the group of New House fellows.

"Well, what price the exam.?" growled Figgins.

"There isn't one," said Kerr uncomfortably. "Brooke's

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 288.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

working up his Greek for some private reason he doesn't care to explain."

"A rotten excuse!" said Figgins. "I said that before, and I say it again!"

"Well, the fight's coming off, anyway. Come down to the gym."

Figgins paused.

"Behind the chapel would be better," he said. "I don't want the gloves on with Brooke."

"Rot!" said Kerr. "You're going to have the gloves on, of course, wherever you fight!"

Figgins knitted his brows; but all his friends were against him there, and he had to give in. He growled as he accompanied them behind the chapel.

"After all, you can give a fellow a good licking with the gloves on," he muttered.

"And get one," remarked Kangaroo of the Shell. "But I'll go and tell Brooke to come behind the chapel."

CHAPTER 11. Fist to Fist!

TOM MERRY looked round from the wicket, and the ball from Blake passed his bat and knocked out his middle-stump.

"How's that?" chuckled Blake.

"Out!" said Manners. "What are you dreaming about, Tommy?"

Tom Merry did not reply. He was staring away in the direction of the chapel. A crowd of juniors were proceeding there, and he recognised Brooke among the School House fellows, and Figgins following with a crowd of New House juniors.

"Hallo, Brooke's in for it, after all!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Looks like a House row. Give the cricket a rest, my sons, and come along."

The cricketers promptly abandoned the pitch. A "mill" between a School House and a New House fellow was more interesting, and the Terrible Three had a persuasion that they were wanted on the scene to manage affairs. The juniors hurried away towards the chapel, and met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy en route.

"What's going on, Gussy?" asked Blake, greeting the swell of St. Jim's with a sounding slap on the shoulder.

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He drew back, adjusted his eyeglass, and gave his old chum a stony stare.

"Pain in your eye?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pwaw do not address me, you wotahs! I wogard you as uttah outsidahs, and wufuse to wogcognise you as fiwends."

"Horrible!" groaned Lowther. "Hold me, somebody, before I faint! Turn not thy scornful eye so crushingly upon thy humble slave, oh great Augustus!"

Great Augustus turned away with a sniff, and the juniors chuckled as they hurried on to the chapel. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was evidently very much upon his dignity.

Quite a little crowd had collected, and a ring was already being formed. In the ring were the two champions. Kerr was helping Figgins on with his jacket, and Patty Wynn held the boxing-gloves ready. Kangaroo of the Shell and Reilly were performing the same services for Brooke.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "What is it, a friendly spar?"

"No, it isn't!" growled Figgins.

"Not trouble—eh?" said Monty Lowther.

"Figgie is looking for a licking," explained Kangaroo. "Brooke is going to oblige him."

"But what's the trouble?" said Tom Merry puzzled. "I always thought you fellows were friends. It isn't a House row surely? You don't want to hammer one another for that?"

"It isn't that," said Brooke.

"Then what is it?"

"Better ask Figgins."

Tom Merry turned to Figgins. They were rival leaders of the juniors of St. Jim's, and had many a rub; but they generally contrived to be on pretty good terms all the same. But Figgins did not look like being on good terms with anybody just at present.

"What's the row, Figgie?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"I had an impression that you were friends with Brooke."

"Might be friends with any cad till you find him out!" grunted Figgins.

"Oh, cheese it! We all know Brooke's all right!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"You don't know what I know."

"Well, what do you know, if it comes to that?" said Tom Merry.

"I know I'm going to lick Brooke, or else he's going to the Gem Library—No. 238."

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lick me," said Figgins. "I'm not here to jaw, but to fight."

"Is it your birthday to-day, Figgins?" asked Monty Lowther.

Figgins stared at him, surprised by the question.

"No," he replied. "What the dickens—"

"Ah, I'm sorry!"

"Why are you sorry it isn't my birthday, you fathead!"

"Because I should buy you a nice book for a birthday present," explained Lowther genially. "A nice little volume called, 'Good Manners for Boys.'"

There was a laugh, and Figgins scowled.

"Oh, shut up!" he snapped. "Are you ready, Brooke, or are you going to keep me waiting all the rotten afternoon?"

"I'm not going to keep you waiting."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down upon the scene. "Are you going to fight Brooke, Figgie, dear boy?"

"Yes," said Figgins shortly.

"Bwavo! I was goin' to thrash him; but a set of silly asses made me promise to let him alone. Go in and win, dear boy. I trust you will give him a fearful thrashing!"

Figgins looked surprised.

"Oh," he murmured, "I—I suppose Levison told you as well."

"Yaas, Pwaw don't mention names here, Figgie. Ethel would—"

"Shurrup!" muttered Figgins. "I understand, Gussy. Well, if they've stopped you from treating him as he deserves, you'll have the pleasure of seeing me do it."

"Yaas, wathah! Go in and win, dear boy. By the way, though," added Arthur Augustus, as a new thought struck him, "by the way though, what bizney is it of yours, Figgie?"

"Time!" called out Thompson, of the Shell, and Figgins was saved from the difficulty of answering that rather awkward question.

The two combatants stepped up, and started. They did not shake hands, but started right away, with grim vigour. At a glance it could be seen that, although they had the gloves on, it was going to be a fight of unusual bitterness. Figgins was a good boxer, but he did not seem to remember his skill now. He attacked Brooke with blind force, seeking only to hammer him, and did not seem to consider defence at all. Kerr and Wynn exchanged a hopeless look. That was not the way to win a fight. Figgins was too angry and excited to do himself justice.

Brooke was much calmer. He paid as much attention to defence as to attack, and at the end of the first round he had hardly been touched, and Figgins was looking very flustered and hampered.

"For goodness' sake be more careful, Figgie!" muttered Kerr, as the round ended and he had made a knee for his principal. "You're going out for a licking."

"Oh, rot!"

"Put a bit more science in it. Brooke is a good boxer, and you can't beat him by rushing at him like a bull at a gate."

"I can lick him!"

"Yes, if you're careful, but not in that style."

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Figgins.

Figgins was evidently not in a mood to be argued with. Thompson, of the Shell, had his eye on his watch, and he called time again. Figgins stepped up to Brooke at once for the second round. Second and third rounds were fought out, and the School House fellows in the crowd grinned cheerfully. Brooke was getting the best of it all along the line. He was not, under ordinary circumstances, a match for the mighty Figgins; but Figgie's anger and excitement played into his adversary's hands now. Instead of putting more care into his boxing, Figgins grew angrier and angrier, and hit harder and harder, striving to beat down his opponent by sheer strength. And in the fourth round Brooke simply played with him, and the round finished with Figgins lying on his back.

Kerr had given Figgins up now. If he wouldn't listen to reason, it was no use talking to him, and the Scottish junior made up his mind that he had simply to wait there and see Figgins licked. He could not help feeling that it served Figgins right.

"Go it, Brooke! Play up, School House!" came the shout, as the foes faced one another for the fifth round.

"Figgie must be off his rocker," said Tom Merry. "He seems to have forgotten how to use his hands. He's booked for a drubbing."

"Serve him right!" said Manners. "What is he bothering Brooke at all for? He seems to have been looking for trouble for nothing."

"Well, he's found it, and heaps of it," grinned Monty Lowther. "Look at that!"

Bump!

Figgins was down again.

Thompson began to count, in quite a professional manner; but Figgins was on his feet again before he had reached five.

Figgins rushed fiercely at Brooke, and for once it seemed that sheer strength would bear down science and coolness. Figgins' blows came like rain, and Brooke retreated before them; his guard was fairly smashed away, and Figgins' fists came, right and left, left and right, upon his face. Brooke went to the ground with a crash.

"Good egg!" muttered Kerr.

"Bravo, Figgins!"

"Shut up!" growled Blake, with a glare at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Back up your own House, can't you, image?"

"Wats!"

Brooke lay dazed on the ground. His nose was red and streaming, and his left eye closed. The attack had been overwhelming. Brooke had received more punishment in that round than Figgins had had in the previous four.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—" counted Thompson.

Brooke staggered up. He came on again, looking very groggy, and Figgins, angry as he was, allowed him time to recover. Brooke staggered to Kangaroo's knee at the end of the round. Kerr patted his principal on the back as he sat down.

"That's better, Figgins!"

"I shall lick him!" growled Figgins.

"Yes. Only be careful in the next round."

"Careful be blowed! I'm going to smash him!"

It was not quite so easy to smash Brooke, however. A minute's rest between the rounds seemed to set him up wonderfully. He stood up for the sixth round with grim coolness and unabated courage. Brooke's blood was up, and he was fighting hard. He attacked fiercely, and Figgins had to give ground. The round was a hard one, hammer and tongs all the time, and the juniors had serious faces as they looked on. It was not a pleasant sight, and all the fellows felt that it was going too far.

"What's this? Stop this at once!"

It was a sharp, angry voice, as Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strode up, pushing his way through the crowd of juniors.

CHAPTER 12.

The Swat!

KILDARE's voice rang out sharply; but neither of the combatants heeded it. They were too fiercely engaged.

"Chuck it, you asses!" called out Thompson of the Shell. "Do you hear me?" shouted Kildare. "Figgins! Brooke! Stop that at once!"

And as they did not stop, the captain of St. Jim's grasped them, one in either hand, and swung them apart by main force.

"Let go!" roared Figgins.

"Figgins!" rapped out Kildare.

"Let go, hang you!"

"What?" Kildare was talking as well as angry. "Do you understand whom you're amzing to, Figgins?"

"Let me alone! You're not my prefect! Let me alone!"

Kildare tightened his grip on the excited junior.

"Do you want a licking?" he asked. "I've a jolly good mind to march you into my study and cane you till you can't walk, you cheeky young rascal!"

"Shut up, Figgins!" murmured Kerr anxiously. "What's the good of checking old Kildare? Besides, it's gone far enough."

Figgins stood back sullenly. Brooke had dropped his hands. It was impossible for the fight to go on in the presence of the captain of the school.

"You young rascals!" said Kildare sternly. "There's no objection to a mill with the gloves, if you keep within bounds, but what do you mean by slogging one another like a pair of prize-fighters?"

"I'm going to lick him!" snapped Figgins.

Kildare raised his hand.

"This has got to stop!" he said. "Mind, I won't have any more of it. You have both got to give me your word that it won't go any further, and I'll let the matter drop. Otherwise, you will get it in the neck. Your word—sharp!"

"I won't!" said Figgins.

"What?"

"You heard what I said. You're not my prefect," said Figgins sullenly.

"I had an idea that I was captain of the school, and not to be checked by juniors in the Fourth Form," said Kildare. "But I'll hand you over to a New House prefect, all the same, if you prefer it. Brooke, I ask for your promise?"

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

"I give it—if Figgins lets me alone, of course," said Brooke. "I've had enough—and so has Figgins, if he had sense enough to see it."

"I daresay you've had enough, but you're going to have some more, all the same," said Figgins between his teeth.

"What's the matter with you, Figgins?" exclaimed Kildare in astonishment. "What has Brooke done to you?"

Figgins was sullenly silent.

"What does this mean?" asked Kildare, glancing round. "What have you done, Brooke?"

"Nothing, that I know of," said Brooke quietly.

"What is it, Figgins?"

"Nothing," said Figgins bitterly. "You hear what Brooke says. I think he's a cad, and I'm going to lick him! That's all!"

"It seems to me that you are an unreasonable young ass!" said Kildare. "This has got to stop. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Brooke has given me his word, and now you've got to give me yours. Do your hear?"

"I hear," said Figgins.

"Well, I'm waiting."

"You can wait!"

There was a murmur from the juniors. Cheeking Kildare was past the limit. With New House boys, as with the School House, Kildare was popular, and he had no enemies. Even Kerr and Wynn felt ashamed of their chum at that moment. Kildare's brow grew very dark.

"That's enough!" he said curtly. "Come with me! Put your jacket on!"

Figgins did not move.

"Put your jacket on!" said Kildare.

Figgins gritted his teeth and obeyed. He left the gym with Kildare's hand on his shoulder. There was a buzz of excited voices in the crowd. Figgins' conduct astonished all the fellows, and many of them inquired of Brooke eagerly the cause of the quarrel. But Brooke had no information to give them. He bathed his face and put on his jacket, and left the ground almost without a word.

The fight was over—undecided. And, in spite of Figgins' obstinacy, it was pretty certain that it would not soon be renewed. Kildare would take care of that. Brooke went into the Form-room and took out his books.

The Terrible Three looked into the Form-room a little later, and found him there. Brooke was bending wearily over his work; but he was tired, and the reaction after the excitement of the fight left him feeling spent and depressed. He was striving to get to work to fix his attention upon his work. The Greek characters seemed to dance before his dizzy eyes.

"Swotting!" asked Tom Merry.

Brooke smiled ruefully.

"Trying to," he said.

"I shouldn't think you felt much up to swotting over Greek now," said Manners.

"I don't."

"Then come out and get some air. There isn't any exam. to be swotted for," said Tom Merry. "Give it a rest for a bit."

Brooke shook his head.

"There's more than an exam. in it for me," he said. "It's a big chance for me, if my Greek's all right. A chance of getting work that suits me, and that I shall enjoy doing—if only I'm up to the mark."

"Work in Greek?" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Coaching," Brooke explained.

"Oh, I see. Coaching somebody in Greek?"

"That's it. Only I shall have to pass a pretty stiff test first," said Brooke with a sigh. "I've got to face it this week, and I'm working as hard as I can. It means a lot to me, you know. A good screw for it, and all done after school, instead of earning bits of money writing advertisements for local tradesmen, and painting texts to hang up on walls, and things. But it all depends on the form I'm in."

Rather idiotic to go in for slogging Figgins at such a time, wasn't it?" said Tom.

"I hadn't any choice about that; he made me."

"Blessed if I know what's come over Figgins," said Tom Merry. "He never had enough spite in him to hurt a fly, and now he seems all spite. What on earth have you done to him?"

"Nothing—but he thinks I have," said Brooke, smiling. "It would be all right if he understood—but he doesn't."

"Can't you explain to him?"

"Not very well. I'm not called upon to tell Figgins my private affairs, I suppose? And if this doesn't come off, I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to look like a silly ass, trying to get a job that's really fit for a University man. Besides, the fellow who's helping me doesn't want it jawed all over the place; it's not a secret, but one doesn't want private affairs shouted from the house-tops."

"You don't mean to say that Figgins' rattiness is in connection with the Gem Library,—No. 288.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

nection with this coaching job you're trying to get?" said Tom Merry in perplexity.

"Yes, in a way," said Brooke. "But never mind Figgins—he can go and eat coke! He has no right to meddle in the matter at all, so far as I can see. I can't explain any further without mentioning names, so you'll excuse me."

Tom Merry whistled.

"Well, I'm sorry to see you on terms like this with Figgins," he said. "I wish I could help you with your Greek, Brooke, old man. I suppose the best way we can help you is to get out. Ta-ta!"

And the chums of the Shell left Brooke alone in the Form-room, and the day-boy resumed his weary task.

Meanwhile, Kildare marched Figgins across the quadrangle to the New House. Outside the New House the captain of St. Jim's paused. Kildare liked Figgins well enough, and did not want to get him into trouble with his Housemaster if he could help it.

"Now, look here, Figgins," he said, kindly enough. "I can't let this go on, and I want you to promise me to stop it. If you don't, I shall have to hand you over to your Housemaster, and you know that Mr. Ratcliff will keep you in order sharp enough. You don't want to be detained to your House for a week, do you? I don't want to take you to Mr. Ratcliff, but I shall have to if you're not reasonable. Now, be a sensible kid."

Figgins hesitated. He was not insensible to the kindness of the St. Jim's captain; he knew very well how differently Monteith, his own prefect, would have used him. And he had calmed down enough to realise, too, that he had no choice in the matter. His trouble with Brooke could not be settled if he were detained in the New House and caned.

"All right, Kildare," he muttered. "You're a good sort. I—I'm sorry I checked you."

Kildare smiled.

"That's all right," he said. "You were excited. I have your word, then, that this isn't to go any further?"

"Yes," said Figgins reluctantly.

"That's enough," said Kildare. "Better go and bathe your eye."

Kildare walked away, and Figgins went into the New House. He bathed his eye—it needed it. He bathed his nose, which also needed it. He came downstairs, and found Kerr and Fatty Wynn waiting for him; but he passed without a word, and went out to tramp in the quad, by himself till dinner-time. And at dinner Fatty Wynn noted with alarm that Figgins ate hardly anything. To lose one's appetite was, in Fatty's eyes, the last sign of distress and downheartedness, and he was really alarmed about Figgins.

After dinner Figgins tramped away, and about Figgins upon a bench under the old elms, where he could brood unobserved. He grunted as Fatty Wynn followed him there. Fatty sat down on the seat beside him, and mysteriously drew a packet from his pocket.

"I say, Figg, look here—" he said persuasively.

"Oh, don't worry," said Figgins.

"You didn't have much dinner, Figg."

"Well, you had enough for two," growled Figgins.

"Oh!" said Fatty, rather dashed.

"I'd rather be alone, if you don't mind," said Figgins ungraciously.

"I—I don't mind, Figg," said the loyal Fatty. "Anything you like. But, look here, I've got you some lovely ham sandwiches—fresh, ripping ham, and lovely bread, and the best fresh butter. Just look at them. They'd melt in your mouth."

"Let 'em melt in yours, then," said Figgins, smiling in spite of himself. "I know I'm a beast, Fatty, but I can't help it—I'm feeling rotten. Just buzz off and let me alone."

"But eat the sandwiches first."

"I don't want any."

"Shall I get you some tarts?"

"No!"

"Or cream puffs?"

"No!" roared Figgins. "Buzz off!"

Fatty Wynn rolled away sadly. He was very much concerned for his chum, and his only consolation was to eat the sandwiches—which he did.

(Continued on page 19.)

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CHAPTER 13.

A Wasted Apology.

M R. LATHOM glanced at both Figgins and Brooke in the Form-room that afternoon. Both of them bore signs of the combat behind the chapel. The gloves, fortunately, had prevented the damage that would otherwise have been done, but a good deal had been done, all the same, and it was quite visible. Brooke had a bluish shade round one eye, and his nose looked very red, while Figgins' left eye persisted in winking at the Form-master, and his nose looked a size too large. But Mr. Lathom did not make any remark, much to their relief. He knew that they had been fighting, but perhaps he thought that they had been punished enough by one another.

They had, certainly. Both of them felt the lassitude naturally following their exertion and excitement, and afternoon lessons were a misery to them. They were glad enough when they escaped from the Form-room.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was surrounded by his old friends as he came out of the Form-room. The Terrible Three and Study No. 6 seemed to have forgotten that Arthur Augustus no longer regarded them as friends. As a matter of fact, they knew that Arthur Augustus was invited to tea at the vicarage, and that he could take a friend with him. Tea at the vicarage was not specially entertaining, but, as Cousin Ethel was there, all the juniors naturally wanted to go. Therefore they turned upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy their sweetest smiles.

Arthur Augustus replied with a glare that might have been the reflection of an iceberg in the depths of the Arctic regions.

"When are you starting, Gussy, old man?" asked Blake affectionately.

"Pway do not address me, deah boy—I mean young person," said D'Arcy stiffly. "I do not regard you as an acquaintance of mine."

"Not your uncle Blake?" said the cheerful junior, in astonishment. "Gussy, you're not turning your back on your old uncle, are you?"

"I regard you as a wottah."

"That's all right; I don't mind. When are you starting?" "I'm starting in a quartah of an hour," said Arthur Augustus. "But I wally do not see how it concerns fellows I don't know."

"Quite right," said Monty Lowther. "You let my old pal Gussy alone, Blake, you bad boy. Gussy is going to take me to the vicarage."

"I am goin' to do nothin' of the kind, Lowther."

"Can't you take a friend with you?" demanded Monty.

"Yaas, but—"

"Well, I'm the friend, you know."

"Wats?"

"Yes, rats!" said Digby. "Codlin's the friend, not Short. Did you say you wanted me to come, Gussy?"

"I did not."

"I'll tell you what," said Herries confidentially. "I'll come, and bring Towser. The vicar's nephew, young Hutton, has a bull-pup, and he will get on splendidly with Towser. I know young Hutton, too—Towser chased him across a field the other day—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wally wish you fellows would not address me. I have already stated that I decline to keep up my acquaintance with you."

"Yes, you leave my old pal Gussy to me," said Tom Merry. "Buzz off, all of you. I'm ready to start when you are, Gussy."

"My remark applies to you, Tom Mewwy."

"Not your old Uncle Tom!" urged the captain of the Shell. "Not Tommy, who dandled you on his knee when you were a new boy—"

"You uttah ass! I was at St. Jim's before you were," shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You are practically a new boy."

"Of course he is," said Blake. "Now, Gussy—"

"I am Gussy to my friends."

Blake took out Digby's handkerchief and wept into it, Arthur Augustus sniffed scornfully, and would have passed on, but the juniors lined up to stop him.

"Gussy—"

"Pway allow me to pass."

"Between gentlemen, an apology sets every matter right," said Tom Merry severely. "I've often heard you say so yourself, Gussy."

"Yaas, that is cowwett. But—"

"Well, we apologise," said Tom Merry, closing one eye—the eye that was away from Arthur Augustus. "All together! Take the plunge, you fellows."

"Hear, hear!"

"I apologise, thou apologisest, he apologisest!" said Monty Lowther. And Digby chimed in:

"J'apologise, tu apologise, il apologise—"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Nous apologiseons, vous apologisez—"

"From one gentleman to another, that is quite enough," said Monty Lowther reproachfully. "Don't make us think you are no gentleman, Gussy."

"If you chaps weally apologise—" said Arthur Augustus, thawing considerably.

"We does! We do! We does!"

"In that case," said Arthur Augustus gracefully, "I will overlook your wotten conduct, and will we-admit you to my acquaintance."

"Hurrah!"

"I am forgiven, thou art forgiven, he is forgiven," said Monty Lowther.

"Je suis pardonne, tu es pardonne, il est pardonne,"

chortled Digby. "Nous sommes—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Now, how many of your old chums can you take to see Cousin Ethel—I mean to tea at the vicarage?" asked Lowther.

"I have been requested to bring one friend."

"Only one?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, select your man," said Jack Blake. "If you pass me over, I shall feel called upon to dot you in the eye, but I don't want to influence you in any way. Which is it?"

"None of those Shell chaps!" said Digby warmly. "You can't pass over your own study for those Shell-fellows."

"Certainly not. I am not going to take a Shell fellow."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rotten!"

"I'll bring my bulldog," said Herries. "I'll make him sit up and eat cakes in Mrs. Hutton's drawing-room, if you like."

There was a roar of laughter. The juniors could imagine the prim face of the vicar's wife expanding in horror if Herries introduced his famous bulldog into her drawing-room.

"Yaas, I can see Towser there—I do not think!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I regard you as an ass, Hewwies."

"Well, I am not going without Towser," said Herries.

"You are not going at all," grinned Blake. "Gussy, shall I put a silk hat on?"

"I am sowwy I cannot take you, Blake."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Good egg!" said Digby. "I'm the man. I'll do you credit, Gussy. You can rely on me to scoff the cakes."

"I am sowwy—"

"I'll be ready as soon as you are," said Digby briskly.

"I am sowwy that you chaps did not do the wight thing before," said Arthur Augustus. "But now it is impos. for me to take you, as I have already asked Figgins."

"Figgins!" roared the juniors.

"Yaas, wathah."

"You're leaving us out to take a New House bounder!" yelled Blake.

"I regard Figgins as a friend. He has thrashed Brooke when you fellows prevented me from doin' so. I have asked him to come with me, and he has accepted. I am sowwy, but it is weally your own fault, you know."

Arthur Augustus passed on, leaving the School House juniors simply—as Blake described it—flabbergasted. If Arthur Augustus had not been going to see Cousin Ethel, they would have rushed after him and slaughtered him on the spot. As it was, they refrained, but they exchanged deadly vows of what they would do when he returned. As Lowther remarked, it was an apology sheer waste.

Arthur Augustus sallied forth from the School House a quarter of an hour later, looking his very best, spotless and natty from the tips of his gleaming boots to the crown of his shining silk topper. Figgins was waiting for him at the gates. Figgins had on a silk topper, too, and the new necktie, at which Arthur Augustus glanced with a suppressed shiver. The colour scheme of that necktie did not meet with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's fastidious approval. But he did not think so much even of the necktie as of Figgins' eye, that persisted in winking, in spite of the greatest efforts of its owner to keep it still.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus in dismay. "I—I say, Figgay, your eye has gone vewy dark, deah boy."

"Yes," said Figgins. "All right to-morrow, I expect."

Ready!

"Ahem! That eye—"

"It doesn't hurt much," said Figgins.

"I was not thinkin' of that. I weally don't see how you can go to tea at the vicarage with an eye like that."

"Well, I can't leave it behind," said Figgins.

"Pewpaws, deah boy—pewpaws, aftah all—"

"A walk in the open air may do it good," said Figgins hopefully.

"I do not regard that as vewy pwob."

"Well, let's start, and—we'll see," said Figgins feebly. The hero of the New House wished that he had not been quite so prompt in taking vengeance upon the obnoxious Brooke; but he had not, of course, foreseen Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's kind invitation.

They walked down the road together. Arthur Augustus's face was thoughtful and distressed. Figgins had really been fighting his battle in dealing with Brooke; but a discoloured eye was a discoloured eye, and to take a discoloured eye to tea at the vicarage, of all places, was really the limit. They walked in silence as far as the Wayland road. There Arthur Augustus halted, with a firm expression.

"Figgay, dear boy," he said, "you must weally see for yourself that you can't take that black eye to the vicarage."

"It isn't really black," murmured Figgins.

"It's jollay neah it! What would the vicah say?"

"Oh, he's bound to be out!" said Figgins. "He never stays in to afternoon tea if he can help it, you know."

"Yaas. But what will Mrs. Hutton say?"

"She won't say anything; she's too polite," urged Figgins.

"But she will think," said D'Arcy severely.

"She may think I—I ran into a motor-car or something," said Figgins brilliantly, "or—that I—I—I got it by over-work, or something, you know."

"Weally, Figgins—What will Ethel think, too?"

"Is it really very noticeable?" asked poor Figgins.

"It weally seems to cwy out, Figgins."

Figgins groaned.

"I suppose I'd better not come in, then. It's rotten! All right."

"Of course, I will take you in, Figgay, as I said I would; but weally, you must see for yourself, old chap—"

"It's all right. Never mind me. Buzz on, old man! I'll keep off the grass," said Figgins heroically.

And so Arthur Augustus went to the vicarage alone to tea. And Figgins, more than sufficiently punished for all his sins, tramped away in a doleful mood.

CHAPTER 14.

The Bond of Union.

THERE was another member of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's who was feeling very doleful that day. It was Dick Brooke.

The day-boy had left the school after lessons were over, to walk home to the rambling house on the edge of the moor where his home was. But Brooke was not in his usual cheerful spirits. He was still tired and aching from the tough encounter behind the chapel, and he felt unfit for work. And work was very necessary to him then. A chance had come his way—a good chance that had been quite unexpected—and unless he kept himself right up to the mark he might lose it, and once lost, it was gone for ever. Brooke's feelings were bitter as he came gloomily through the wood towards the moor. Instead of turning into the path towards his home, the day-boy strode on across the moor, hoping that a brisk walk in the keen, fresh air might set him right again.

He tramped on knee-deep in the ferns and grasses, his brows bent. The wide, lonely moor stretched round him, richly-hued in the setting sun. Suddenly, from the expanse of the moor, came a wailing cry.

Brooke stopped, and lifted his head. He knew that it was the howl of a dog in distress, and it went straight to his heart. In his own trouble he still had feelings for the suffering of others—especially of a dog. He looked round him in search of the animal.

The howl came again, but there was no dog to be seen. But Brooke knew what it meant. The dog had fallen into one of the deep rifts in the ground—one of the old quarry workings, perhaps. He hurried in the direction of the sound, and halted on the brink of an abrupt slope.

Twenty feet or more down he caught sight of a bull-pup scuttling to and fro in search of a way of escape, and howling. The dog had evidently wandered from its master, and perhaps in pursuit of some animal had fallen into the rift. Brooke looked down and called to the dog, and then considered. He could clamber down the cliff and reach the dog easily enough, but getting out again was another matter. It would be a very easy matter to fall and break a leg in such an attempt. Brooke remembered that only a week or so before Lowther of the Shell had fallen into one of the old quarry workings on the moor, and had been unable to get out again.

But he did not hesitate many moments. He determined to risk it, and he clambered carefully down the steep, and dropped upon the dog's back at the bottom. The bull-pup

ran to him at once, whining with pleasure, and Brooke patted and stroked him.

"That's all very well," muttered Brooke, as the dog, relieved of his terrors by the presence of a human being, snuggled up to him. "But how are we going to get out—eh?"

He took the dog in his arms, and essayed the climb. He rolled back again and fell, and picked himself up, considerably shaken. He could have climbed out alone, with difficulty, but with the dog it was impossible.

Brooke wrinkled his brows and reflected. He felt that he could not abandon the little beast that snuggled up to him so confidently. But to climb out with him was impossible. And it was a lonely place. It was not likely that anyone would pass.

Brooke thought it out as he stroked the dog. There was evidently only one thing to be done—to climb out again and fetch a rope from somewhere to pull the dog out. He started to climb again, the dog whining below. The climber reached within a couple of feet of the summit, and then he had to stop. The roots he had clung to in lowering himself had been torn out by his weight, and offered no further hold. His heart beat as he realised that he could not reach the top. The strain upon his arms was terrible, and he was aching and sweating all over. With a gasp he gave up the task, and lowered himself into the rift again.

"My only hat, this is a fix!" he muttered. "I'm in for it now! I shall have to wait till somebody comes by. And when's that likely to be—"

It was a dismaying situation. His people at home would not be alarmed; he sometimes stayed late at the school. But the moor was lonely, and there was no path near the rift. When was he likely to get help?

Suddenly a voice rang out over the moor—a loud, boyish voice.

"Flip—Flip—Flip!"

The dog whined. Brooke drew a breath of relief. He guessed that it was the owner of the dog in search of him.

"Flip—Flip!"

"This way!" shouted Brooke.

"Hallo!" came back a startled voice. "Where are you?"

"In the rift! Look out, and don't fall in!"

"My hat!"

Brooke saw the ferns at the edge of the rift stirring, and then a head appeared. The owner of the head had crawled on hands and knees to the verge, and was looking down.

"Hallo! How did you get there?" he called out.

"I came down for the dog," said Brooke.

"Flip, you little rascal!" said the boy above, "so you're there! Why didn't you get out, then?" he went on, addressing Brooke.

"Because I couldn't," said Brooke ruefully. "I can't get any hold within two feet of the top. I've tried."

"I say, it was awfully plucky of you to go down for my dog," said the master of Flip. "I'm awfully obliged to you. Look here, if I let down a cord, you can tie it to his collar, and I'll pull him up. Then I'll help you out."

"Right-ho!"

"I'll let it down in a jiffy."

The cord came fluttering down at last. It was queerly composed—a dog-chain, and a whip-cord, and a top-string, and several other fragments had been joined together to make up the required length. But it was strong enough to bear the weight of the pup, and Brooke fastened the end of it to the collar on the animal.

Flip was drawn wriggling and howling to the top, where his master gripped him, and landed him safely.

Then his face came over the verge again.

"I can't pull you up on this, young 'un," grinned the lad. "But if you can climb up near enough for me to give you a hand— Otherwise, I'll go and get help."

"I think I can do it," said Brooke.

"Go it, then!"

Brooke climbed steadily up on the cliff. The boy above lay on his face, reaching down both hands to help him as soon as he should be near enough.

It was a hard climb; but Brooke did it. His hands reached the outstretched palms of the boy above at last.

"Got you?" said the stranger, as his grasp closed on Brooke. "Now, then, up you come!"

With a final drag Brooke was at the top.

Flip's master dragged him over the perilous verge, and he sank down exhausted in the ferns, his brain swimming.

"Pretty fagged out—eh?"

"Yes," gasped Brooke.

"I say, I'm awfully obliged to you!" said the other. "I should have gone down for him. And there wouldn't have been anybody to help me out. Might have stayed all night there. You are a plucky chap to risk it, for a stranger's dog."

"I heard him howl," said Brooke.
 "Good for you. I believe I've seen you before," said the lad, looking at Brooke. "Do you belong to St. Jim's?"
 "Yes."

"I thought so. I belong to the vicarage," said the boy, with a grin. "I'm Billy Hutton, the vicar's nephew, you know. I'm staying with my uncle."

Brooke started, and sprang to his feet.

"You're Hutton?" he exclaimed.

Billy Hutton nodded.

"That's me! Seen me before?"

"No. But—but—"

"But you've heard of me," grinned Hutton. "I see! I'm the scapegrace of the family. Always in trouble, like Flip—always come a mucker at exams, and get the parental and avuncular wrath poured out on me by the bucketful. That's me!"

Brooke smiled.

"Fancy me sticking at Greek exams!" grinned the cheerful youth. "Me, you know! I know all about bull-pups. Look at Flip! Ever see a breed like that? But fancy me sweating for exams! What?"

"But it must be done sometimes," said Brooke.

"Yes," growled Hutton, "I've got to do it. I'm going to have a rotten coach, you know, and have it jammed into me. Come along home with me to tea!"

"But I—I—"

"Come on! I'm just going in," said Billy Hutton. "I'll tell them what a plucky thing you've done. Are you near your home?"

"No."

"Had your tea?"

"Not yet."

"Then come with me!" Billy Hutton slipped his arm through Brooke's, and led him off without waiting for objections, and Brooke submitted. "You'll meet a nice girl at tea," Hutton went on. "A distant relation of ours staying with us."

"Miss Cleveland?"

"That's the name. You know her?"

"Yes," said Brooke, with a smile.

"All the better! Jolly ripping girl!"

Fond of dogs!" said Hutton. "Though I owe her one, as a matter of fact."

"You owe her a dog?"

"Ha, ha! No, a grudge. What do you think she has suggested to my uncle?"

said Billy, talking to Brooke as if he had known him for years—evidently a way of this breezy young gentleman.

"Suggested instead of having an ordinary coach—not that a coach would get much work out of me—suggested that I should have a kid—a kid younger than myself, you know—fellow who's been sweating at Greek well enough to be able to teach it. What do you think of that?"

Brooke coloured.

"You don't like the idea?" he asked.

"Well, I don't want to swot. I'd rather have a fellow my own age than a fat old master of arts, of course. But—but—I don't like the idea. If I get that kid coach, I'll make him sit up! What?"

Brooke grinned.

"If you get that kid coach, he may keep you at it and make you work, quite as much as an Oxford man," he remarked.

"Then there will be trouble in the family!" said Billy Hutton. "I'll make him glad to go."

"But think of the future—" urged Brooke.

"Oh, blow the future! The present's bother enough."

"Then it won't be much use my taking on the job," said Brooke, with a sigh.

Billy Hutton halted, and stared at him.

"You!" he ejaculated.

Brooke nodded.

"I'm the kid coach," he explained.

"My only hat!"

Billy Hutton gave a long whistle of amazement.

"Well, that takes the cake!" he ejaculated at last. "I say, I'm sorry for what I said—I take it all back. I didn't know it was a fellow of your sort. A chap who'd risk his neck to get a dog out of a hole is good enough for me. I was thinking of some skinny swot, you know, with a snuffling voice, and a horror of dogs, and cricket, and things of that sort. Why, you'll suit me down to the ground. Give us your slipper, old man!"

And Brooke gave the volatile Billy his "flipper" with great heartiness.

CHAPTER 15.

Brooke's Chance.

"Bai Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that ejaculation and put up his eyeglass in sheer astonishment. Arthur Augustus was elegantly taking tea in the drawing-room at the vicarage. Cousin Ethel was there, and Mrs. Hutton. Arthur Augustus was talking—he usually was—but he broke off as two somewhat dusty figures appeared in the open French windows.

"Hallo, auntie, I'm ready for tea!" announced Billy Hutton. "How do, Tin-ribs?" Tin-ribs was Master Hutton's disrespectful appellation for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, probably in reference to his elegant and stately bearing. "You know Brooke, I suppose? A St. Jim's chap. Auntie, this is Brooke."

Mrs. Hutton gave Brooke a kind smile.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The awful cheek of the boundah, to come here while I am here! The wotah!"

"You know Brooke?" said Hutton again.

"I have seen Bwooke at the school," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

Cousin Ethel looked at him in surprise.

"Why, surely you and Brooke are great friends, Arthur?" she exclaimed.

"Ya-a-a, but—"

"I didn't know D'Arcy was here," said Brooke.

"I brought him in," said Billy Hutton. "I say, auntie, what do you think? He went down into one of the old quarry workings on the moor to fetch out Flip. Poor old Flip tumbled in. He couldn't get out again—Brooke couldn't, I mean. Plucky, wasn't it?"

"I'm afraid it was very reckless," said Mrs. Hutton. "But it was very brave."

"Bai Jove, it was a wippin' thing to do!" said Arthur Augustus involuntarily.

"You wisked breakin' your neck and wumin' your clothes, Bwooke, deah boy."

"He's going to be my coach," said Billy as he helped himself to cake liberally. "Brooke, old man, you're not eating. This is good cake!"

"Your coach!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Yes, rather!" said Billy, with his mouth full of cake. "Miss Cleveland recommended him to uncle. Didn't you, Ethel?"

Ethel smiled.

"I knew Brooke would be able to coach you, Billy," she said. "It would be a good thing for you, and your uncle approves—only he will have to examine Brooke first in his Greek. But I am sure that will be all right."

"But you did not seem to like the idea before, Billy," said Mrs. Hutton, with an affectionate glance at her scapegrace nephew.

"Well, I didn't know him then; but a fellow who will risk his neck to save a dog, that's the kind of chap I could get on with," said Billy Hutton emphatically. "I'm going to slog at Greek, to show that I appreciate it."

"I hope you will," said his aunt.

"Oh, I will, right enough," said Billy. "Have some more cake, Brooke."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus again.

The swell of St. Jim's was staggered. He was beginning to understand now. He contrived to get Ethel aside a little later, and ask her questions.

"You have done this for Bwooke, Ethel, deah gal?" he asked.

"Yes; I heard about Billy wanting a new coach, and the trouble he gives them, and I thought of Brooke," she said.

"It was a good idea, wasn't it?"

"It will be a good thing for him, I suppose?"

"Yes, and for Billy, too."

"Then that was what you wrote to him about?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes. Did Brooke tell you?"

"N-n-no!" stammered Arthur Augustus. "I—I heard—that is, I—I— B-b-but did you see Bwooke to tell him about it?"

"Yes, of course."

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bwooke nevah mentioned it."

Ethel laughed.

"No, he wouldn't speak of it till it was settled," she said.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 288.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
 By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE
 SPECIAL SUMMER
 NUMBER OF
THE MAGNET
 JUST OUT! BUY
 IT TO-DAY.

"It is a big thing for Brooke, if it turns out well, but if he fails there is no need to say anything about it. Some of the boys might think he was conceited to think he could get such a post, though I know very well that he is quite suited for it."

"I undahstand," said D'Arcy slowly. "So—so that was what you met Bwooke about?"

Ethel lifted her eyebrows.

"Didn't you say that Brooke did not mention it?"

"Yaas."

"Then how do you know I met him?" asked Ethel.

D'Arcy's face went crimson. "I—I—I happened to know," he stammered. "A—a fellow told me—a wotten boundal, who is always spyin' on people."

"Oh!" said Ethel, her lip curling. "Levison, I suppose. I remember Levison was hanging about the old manor house, where I went to see Brooke. You see, we were keeping it secret at first, in case it came to nothing—and I couldn't come to the school specially to see Brooke. It would have caused remarks, you know."

"Yaas, wathah."

"So I wrote to him and told him to come to the old manor house, and I would tell him there. It is only a short walk from here across the moor. As it happened, he was detained, and I didn't see him, after all."

D'Arcy coughed. "He remembered what had detained Brooke on that occasion."

"But it was all right," said Ethel. "Figgins happened to come there, and I gave him a note for Brooke, which was just as good as seeing him."

"Oh!"

"I told him to keep on hard at his Greek, and to come and see the vicar on Saturday," said Ethel. "It is a surprise to see him here to-day—it was Billy's doing—but it is very lucky. It was a week ago I first thought of the idea, and Brooke has been preparing for it, but Billy was the chief difficulty. I am sure Brooke will be able to satisfy Mr. Hutton."

"I trust so. He seems to have satisfied Billy now, too," said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, I'm so glad. It will be a pleasant surprise for Brooke's sister," said Ethel. "I shall go over and tell Amy myself when it's settled. Of course, Brooke's mother and sister don't know anything yet; it would have disappointed them if it had come to nothing, you see."

"I see, Ethel. I say, deah gal, will you do me a favah?"

"Certainly: what is it?"

"Punch my head."

"What?"

"Punch my 'silly head," said Arthur Augustus. "I have always regarded myself as a fellow of tact and judgment, but I have put my foot in it this time—come a wegulah muckah, bai Jove. I should weally be obliged to you if you would punch my head."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"You had better ask Blake," she said. "I don't know in the least what you are talking about, Arthur."

"And you nevah will, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus fervently. "I weally want somebody to punch my head. I'm an ass, Ethel. A dufkah! A silly chump, bai Jove!"

Ethel Augustus looked round. "Where are you goin', Brooke?"

"I'm taking him to see my uncle," said Billy.

And Brooke disappeared with Billy.

"I suppose poor old Bwooke's goin' to be put to the torchah now," said Arthur Augustus. "I hope he'll come through all right."

"I am sure he will," said Ethel brightly.

And Brooke did. He was shut up in the vicar's study for nearly an hour, but when he came back with Billy Hutton his face was very bright. Billy's arm was linked affectionately in Brooke's.

"All right?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Brooke nodded.

"Right as rain!" he said. "Mr. Hutton is satisfied with me, and Billy seems to like the idea."

"What-ho!" said Billy emphatically.

"And we begin this evening," said Brooke.

"Alpha, beta, gamma, delta!" groaned Billy Hutton.

"Never mind, I'm going to stick it out."

Arthur Augustus found an opportunity of speaking to Brooke alone before he left.

"I'm sorry, Bwooke," he murmured. "I apologise. I was a silly ass."

"Has Miss Cleveland told you?" asked Brooke with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Good!"

"And you ovahlook my asinine conduct, deah boy?"

"Of course; that's all right. Perhaps I might have expected."

THE GYM LIBRARY.—No. 283.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

plained better, only you caught me at an unlucky moment, and then it had been arranged that nothing was to be said, in case it came to nothing," said Brooke. "I didn't want to set up as a conceited ass, you know. And I must say that your suspicions made me feel a bit obstinate."

"It's all right, deah boy—wight as wain!" I was an ass, and—and you can punch my head if you like."

Brooke laughed.

"I'll shake hands with you instead," he said.

And he did.

CHAPTER 16.

Light at Last!

TOM MERRY & CO., the next day, showed signs of excitement as they came out after lessons.

It was observed that Digby hurried away to put on a new collar; and Monty Lowther was sporting a brilliant tie.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, were equally spruce. They did not go down to the cricket practice after lessons.

There was evidently something "on."

Figgins, for the first time in his life, carried a little pocket-mirror about with him. It was not for the purpose of admiring his beauty, as Kerr suggested. He took it out every few minutes to see how his eye was getting on.

"It's practically gone now, isn't it?" he appealed to Kerr about a hundred times.

And Kerr answered loyally every time:

"Almost disappeared, Figgys."

"I shouldn't like Ethel to think I'd been fighting," said Figgins.

Kerr grinned.

"Of course, girls wouldn't understand," said Figgins.

"You could explain to her what you were fighting Brooke for," suggested Kerr.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Figgins.

"The question is whether we have tea in the New House or the School House," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"What do you think, Figgins?"

"Oh, blow tea!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Fatty Wynn. "You know Cousin Ethel's coming over to tea, I suppose. Blake says it's to be in Study No. 6, and we're to take our stuff over there if we want to stand our whack."

"Well, that's all right," said Figgins.

"Only—ahem—"

"Only what?"

"Brooke's in the party."

Figgins started.

"D'Arcy can't have asked Brooke to meet his cousin!"

"He has," said Kerr.

"But—but they were on fighting terms yesterday," said Figgins, in distress and amazement. "He was as much up against that cad as I was. He asked me out with him yesterday, because I had fought Brooke. He was going to fight him himself, only the fellows stopped him."

"I know all that," said Kerr. "But they've made it up again, and they're as thick as thieves. Will you go if Brooke is there?"

"No, I won't!" said Figgins shortly.

Levison of the Fourth strolled up, and nodded to the chums of the New House. They regarded him with a very unfriendly stare.

"Going to the celebration?" asked the cad of the Fourth, with a sneering grin.

"Mind your own business!" growled Figgins.

"Well, I'm not, for one," said Levison. "They haven't honoured me with an invitation. Brooke is staying, specially to be present. Miss Ethel wants him specially, and—"

Levison broke off as Figgins came towards him with gleaming eyes, and fairly ran. Kerr caught hold of his chum's arm.

"Hold on, Figgys—"

"Let me go! I'll—"

"You don't want another black eye for Ethel to see."

Figgins paused.

"Right, old man. But—but that cad—"

Figgins turned away, and strode down to the school gates by himself. Levison's words had roused all the old bitterness in his breast. Why was Brooke a member of the tea-party in Study No. 6? It was seldom that the day-boy stayed late enough at the school to have tea with the juniors. Was it possible that he was staying simply to meet Cousin Ethel—and that she wanted him!

All the happiness was gone from Figgins's face now. His brow was dark and dejected, and the misery of jealousy was in his breast. Was he thrown over for a new friend, after all? He had tried not to think so, but—but—

(Concluded on page 26.)

GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY!

START TO-DAY.



A Magnificent New Story of the Old-Time Prize-Ring.

By BRIAN KINGSTON.

READ THIS FIRST.

Hilary Bevan, a sturdy young Britisher of gentle birth, who has been living in the country, sets out to walk to London

TO SEE HIS FATHER,

Sir Patrick Bevan, whom he has not met for three years. Arriving at his father's house, Hil learns that the latter has been absent for three days at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes, one of the leading bucks of the time. He also learns that Sir Patrick has earned the nickname of

"PLUNGER" BEVAN,

and is heavily in debt, having dissipated his fortune.

Bending his steps to Sir Vincent Brooke's house in Grosvenor Street, Hilary finds two sheriff's men waiting outside to arrest his father when he should come out. The lad enters the house, and

FINDS HIS FATHER AT THE GAMING-TABLES,

where he has been, without intermission, for three days and nights. Among the circle of faces round the tables, Hil recognises a friend in Squire Oliver, a big landowner from his neighbourhood.

Sir Patrick rises from the table an utterly ruined man. Hilary, his heart full of grief, slips out of the house, and, engaging the two waiting sheriff's men in a fight, puts both of them to flight, thus saving his father from immediate danger of arrest. The sum for which a warrant is out against Sir Patrick is only twenty guineas; and in order to raise this amount, Hilary's next act is to accept a challenge offered in the prize-ring at Moulsey Hurst. His opponent is a Jew pugilist, Barney Isaacs by name, while Tom Owen, a well-known ringside character, offers to second Hil. "You may do something if Barney don't knock you out time in the first two rounds," says Owen, as his man strips.

"He won't do that!" rejoins Hil, with quiet confidence.

(Now go on with the story.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 288.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

In the Ring.

"Feels well, but Isaacs will kill him!" commented a gentleman standing in company with Dudley Vavasour and a knot of other Corinthians, as Hil, immediately "Time!" was called, advanced briskly to the scratch.

"Maybe, Sir John; but as the Jew does as you suggest, the fight will continue," said Vavasour calmly. "The blood horse runs until it drops, and that lad yonder owns blood. I have never in my life seen him until this day, so can say nothing of his form. But he has blood."

"And the Jew the qualities of a bruiser," returned Sir John Shelley. "Give me the man with these."

"With the willingness to fight a cross if it serve his purpose thrown in?" asked a tall, military-looking man with something of a sneer, for Barney Isaacs' honesty was a matter of considerable public doubt.

"General, I should have thought your military experience had told you the worst blackguards make the best fighting men!" retorted the baronet warmly. "Anyway, I'll wager ten guineas on the Jew with pleasure."

"Wait until after the first round."

"And that won't be finished yet. Look, the boy knows something, even if he has never been in the ring before," put in another gentleman.

Hil, following the precepts of his master, and warned of his opponent's style, was not going to let Isaacs have it all his own way, by playing into his hands. The Jew, true to his boast, had not troubled to remove even his coat, and immediately "Time!" was called had leaped forward like a tiger, smashing in overhead blows, and endeavouring to drive his young opponent to the ropes, but such a game did not suit Hil.

"First find out what your man is like, then go in to fight him" had been the advice of his tutor. So, instead of playing the Jew's game, joining in a furious rally, or allowing himself to be rushed into a dangerous position, Hil contented himself with defence. His left fist well advanced, and the right held some six inches behind it, and level with his chin, he blocked or evaded the hammer-like blows, and,

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

working his feet, contrived to keep in the centre of the twenty-four-foot ring. In the language of the Fancy, he was feeling his man.

"Go in—go in; he's afraid of being hit!" the Hebrews shouted to their countryman delightedly.

On both arms Hil took the fierce blows. He had not struck once in return yet, but he was feeling anything but afraid. And then all at once he sent in a low, straight-armed punch, stooping slightly as he did so, and got home. The next instant he jumped back, broke ground, appeared at the Hebrew's right side, and shot over his right hand with a beautiful cross-counter that caught Isaacs smartly on the cheek. There came a loud shout of surprise, for Isaacs went down sideways, though less by the actual force of the blow than from the fact that it had taken him when he was standing in an awkward position, and momentarily off his balance.

"First knock down, and first blood!" yelled Tom Owen excitedly, as he ran to his man.

Isaacs was on his feet in an instant, his face distorted with rage. Tearing off his coat, he flung it on the ground, and would have rounded the contest there and then, but was prevented. The round was at an end. The knock-down claimed was allowed by the umpire, which post Gentleman Jackson had taken upon himself, but not the claim for first blood drawn. True, there was blood on Isaacs' cheek, but it had come from Hil's knuckles, the skin of which had been broken by contact with a button of his opponent's coat when he got in the body blow.

"Better than I thought!" cried Owen delightedly to his man when in their corner. "Who was it taught you?"

Hil mentioned a name, and the old second whistled between his teeth.

"Harry Lee, was it? Well, we thought Harry nothing but a good sparrer until he fought Mendoza. I saw the fight; and Harry went fifty-three rounds, though no one looked for him to last five. Harry learned something that day. I reckon, and you're getting the benefit of it, young master. Never could keep himself in, could Harry. Thought all he'd do to was go in and hit, and never mind defence. If Dan hadn't licked him you'd be playing the same game. Did he— But don't answer, lad. Pretty second I am! You'll want all your wind for fighting, not jawing. Keep away, lad, from Barney, and I won't say but you may have a chance."

"If you can hit!" muttered the old fighter to himself, as Hil went again to the scratch. "Ah, by the powers, but he can do that, then."

Hil had just shown he could hit as well as stop. Isaacs, persuaded that he had a more dangerous customer before him than he had reckoned on, he discarded his superfluous garments. Coming to the scratch, he stood eyeing Hil for a few seconds, moved back as though trying to draw him in, and when that manoeuvre failed, stepped in with a straight blow. But he was not quick enough, and Hil was endowed with a long arm. He shot out his right, and the Jew napped a severe nose-ender that made him see stars while his own fist was still in the air.

Irritated, he dashed in pell-mell, throwing science to the four winds, hitting hand-over-hand, and trying to smash down Hil's guard by sheer force of blows. But Hil's muscles were toughened by the active life he led. He turned aside or broke the force of the slaughtering blows so that none reached his face, and, although he was on the retreat, he did not allow himself to become confused, but kept his left arm well extended. He realised fully the danger of being pinned on the ropes by such a hitter as Isaacs, and broke for the middle as Isaacs was in the act of a wild-bull rush. And as the Jew passed a pretty left took him in the ribs, making him grunt.

"You've smoked us, Vavasour," grumbled Sir John Shelley. "This is no Johnny raw you have put your money on!"

The dandy turned on him quickly. "Let me remind you, Sir John, that I said ten minutes since I had not seen the boy in my life until this morning," he said, with something less than his usual drawl. "If you choose to believe I said something that I knew to be incorrect."

"By no means," the other put in hastily. "But if this lad is fighting his first battle in the ring, as Jackson told us, then he has been well tutored. He is cool as a veteran, and knows when and where to plant his blows. Still, I don't go back— Ah, the Jew found the mark that time!"

Isaacs had. Taking three jobbing hits in the face as though they had been rain-spots, he got in close enough to land a round-arm blow that caught Hil under the ear. It was a smasher, and the lad tottered.

"Go down! Why doesn't he go down?" muttered General Barton.

Tom Owen was saying the same thing, shouting to Hil to avail himself of the chance of ending the round.

"Because, general, his price will not permit him. Did I The GEM LIBRARY, No. 282.

not say the lad had blood? Your common fellow would fall; this lad will go down only when he can't stand up."

"Yes, sir," agreed a well-dressed man within earshot of Vavasour's remark. "But it ain't so."

"Maybe, Belcher, but it's pluck and give me that." If pluck were all that was needed to win, the few rash ones who had betted a guinea or two on Hil on the strength of his first showing need have felt no fear for their money. But, in addition to pluck, a fighter required the ability to stand punishment, and punishment has a moral as well as a physical effect; and, what was quite as necessary, that spirit which enables a man to come up again and again in face of all disaster. This, in the days of the old prize-ring, was known as bottom, or game, that never-ay-die doggedness which had pulled many a result, in other matters than that of the ring, out of the fire, and converted what appeared to be inevitable defeat into glorious victory. More than one hero of the P.R. owed his fame and success to his gameness, rather than to his science. Scroggins, the little, comical-faced fellow who was seconding Hil's opponent, never won a battle because of his superiority of science, but simply because he was strong, and refused to admit defeat. He would face half a dozen antagonists as cheerfully as he would one; and when a pressing was sent to capture him, and convey him to his ship, he being a naval man, such was the estimate made of his fighting powers that it consisted of no fewer than seventeen men.

It was gameness, itself a species of pride, that prevented Hil from dropping under the smashing blow in the neck as a more cunning pugilist might have done. It sent him staggering six feet, but he was able to recover himself, and drop he would not. Isaacs followed up his success, but Hil's throw-up left arm broke the force of the following blow, and for several seconds Hil contented himself with guarding. Until the Jew, thinking he saw a ready opening, ducked his head and ran in for the close. One arm went about Hil's neck, the other round his body, and the lad was lifted fairly from his feet to be hurled to the ground, and, as there was a convenient stake at hand, the Jew made a side twist so that when Hil was thrown his head might come into contact with it. It would appear an accident, and if the blow had stunned the lad so much the better for the Jew. For always in sport there have been, and will be, found rascals willing to win by any means, and the P.R. was not lacking in such scoundrels.

But Isaacs had not reckoned on Hil being the wrestler he was; and a twist of the dropping game, but the lad had mastered; and, at the instant of the Jew's half-turn, he played a leg stroke. Swiftly his heel struck behind the other's leg, low down, and, to the Jew's amazement, it was himself who went down, and with the whole of his opponent's weight squarely on top of him.

With a yell of anger his fellow-countryman ran in to pick him up with all the breath driven from his body by the fall, the heavier for that it was so totally unexpected. Tom Owen did the same for Hil.

"Hi, hi!" shrieked the veteran, almost incoherent with delight. "Bellows to mend there, my son, even if they ain't altogether busted! Another burster like that, and he'll be so far into Queer Street he won't know how to find his way out again. Keep him going. Whitechapel's napped it to-day."

Hil looked across the ring to the opposite corner where his seconds were hard at work on Isaacs. The bruiser sat limply on Bitton's knees, panting heavily; and when time was called, it was with a dragging, reluctant step he moved to the scratch.

"Go in and bustle him," shouted Owen after his man, "while his wind's bad! You're young, and can stand it. Keep him on the move, but don't let him get his right near you!"

And Hil went in, and fought according to orders. His own wind was still sound, thanks to his healthy life, and he was not feeling a bit the worse for the heavy blow under his ear. All over the ring he drove the puffing Hebrew, giving him no time to rest and regain his breath. Some of his blows missed their mark, but the majority went home with deadly effect; while the crowd, realising that the lad they had been ready to laugh at as a novice was proving himself a thorough and accomplished workman, yelled their frantic delight, drowning the angry cries of the few who took no pleasure in seeing their countryman so soundly thrashed.

"Well, Tom, and what have you to say now of the Johnny raw?" asked the neighbour of the landlord of the Castle.

"Why, it looks as though I'd made a mistake," admitted Belcher good-humouredly. "The lad has sense enough to know when as well as where to hit his man, not to speak of putting him down hard."

"And his science?" asked the other.

For as a scientific performer with the gloves, and master of the art and technique of fighting, there was no man superior to Tom Belcher, and his opinion was accordingly valued.

"Well, it mayn't be as good as some, but it's a sight better than that of most," was the cautious answer.

"It's good enough to keep the fellow safe from Isaacs' ruffianing," declared an aristocratic, effeminate-looking man; and Darcy Vavasour caught the remark.

"What, you giving an opinion on a fighting-man, Lord Alvanley?" he drawled. "But I'm glad you think as I do in this matter. At least, we have the pleasure of agreeing on one subject."

For Darcy Vavasour and Lord Alvanley each enjoyed the reputation of leading a distinct and bitterly antagonistic party which concerned itself with the all-important question of the fit clothing of a gentleman, and this difference of opinion led to disagreement, on principle, upon every other subject under the sun.

"I regret, Mr. Vavasour, the disagreeable circumstances," returned Alvanley gravely, "and I promise you I will not impose upon the situation. But I repeat, the young fellow is the better man."

"That being so, I cannot have the pleasure of betting you a supper and a dozen that he wins inside ten rounds."

"Who wins inside ten rounds?"

Vavasour glanced at the speaker with a faint expression of disgust upon his high-bred face, and turned away with an answer. He was an eccentric in all things except his acquaintances, and it did not please him even to speak to such a person as Captain Cokerley, sometime of his Majesty's Army, card-player, card-sharper, some persons said—and adventurer. The captain, a burly, red-faced man in a light-green coat, observed the slight and swore under his breath.

"We'll get even with you one of these days, my fine peacock," he muttered, and then turned to a corpulent man on the other side of him, who gave an answer to his question.

"Why, the white-skinned lad on Tom Owen's knee, captain. Mr. Vavasour's latest fancy. He's giving Barney Isaacs the hiding of his life."

"That boy!" ejaculated Cokerley incredulously. "He doesn't look a fighting-man. So, he's Vavasour's find, is he? I must keep an eye on him."

Many were thinking this Ned Farley would be worth keeping an eye upon. At present his movements needed some following. Time had been again called, and he was surprising all, amateurs and professionals alike, by the accuracy and swiftness of his hitting. The fight was being hammered out of the Jew, and he was descending—readily enough—to the use of all those tricks, crafty and dishonourable without being exactly against the rules, which a coward could employ when he found himself getting the worst of a bout.

He seized every chance of falling. Once Hil's second claimed a foul against him for the suspicious use of his knee, but the umpire told them to fight on. Isaacs' wind had gone. When he did hit his blows were brought to nothing, and his cowardly heart was weakening fast under punishment.

"But his seconds did their best to hearten him." "It's 'tventy guineash, don't forget, Barney," Pittoon reminded him. "And the flash covey's han's'll knock up soon. Vo 'n't be throwin' the sponsh up yet. Get under his guard, vish you can't get over."

"Too quick," mumbled Isaacs between his puffed lips. "Then catch his arm an' pull it down," advised his second, which action the rules at the time recognised as quite legitimate.

And Isaacs tried when he staggered up for the ninth round. Hil shot a left at his head and landed, though not with great force, and before he could draw back found his wrist grasped. Up went the Jew's other fist for a chop at his face, but in so doing the Israelite necessarily left his own exposed. Quick as lightning Hil drove in his own right, and Isaacs took the full force upon his throat. His grip loosed, and, with a gurgling cry, he dropped flat on his back.

"Another like that, young master, and the game's yours," predicted Tom Owen as he dabbed the sponge on Hil's face.

Mr. Darcy Vavasour.

But there was no need for another, although a better-placed man than the Jew would have laughed to scorn the idea of giving in. But going on did not suit Isaacs. He had got more than a bellyful, and he flatly refused to continue. Groans and shouts of excretion greeted him as he slunk out of the ring.

So Hilary Bevan—or, Ned Farley, as he was to be known—won his first milking match. Amid cheering he received the award of victory and Mr. Jackson's congratulations.

"Because of the unsatisfactory conduct of your opponent in refusing to continue," added Jackson, "the full twenty

guineas are yours, Ned Farley. Nor should they be the last you will win if you continue as you have begun to-day. For such fighters as you the ring will ever have the warmest welcome."

Success makes many friends. A stranger in a strange land, not a soul had spoken to Hil save those who had vigorously expressed their disapproval of his strenuous methods of obtaining a position close to the ringside, and when he had entered the roped square as a contestant the general opinion of him had been anything but complimentary.

The defeat of Barney Isaacs made him quite another individual. As he resumed his clothes, he was quickly surrounded by a crowd of men, Paddington Jones, Bob Gregson, and several other fighting men who had opened sporting schools were anxious he should visit them for instruction. Half a dozen flash sportsmen of suspicious appearance invited him to allow them to make matches for him. Tom Belcher kindly asked him to give him a call at his hostelry in Holborn whenever he felt inclined. And on the skirts of the crowd, asking a question here, his ears open to all the gossip, hovered the tall man in the green coat whom Darcy Vavasour had refused to speak to. For Captain Leonard Cokerley was by way of playing jackal to his master, Sir Vincent Brookes, in these and other matters, and it was his duty to keep his patron informed of any likely means for the turning of an honest—or otherwise—guinea.

But Hil had no time to waste. The sooner the twenty guineas in his pocket were handed to Sir Vincent Brookes, and his father relieved from the arrest threatening him, the better. And there were twenty long miles between him and Brookes' house, and these had to be walked. He meant starting with as little delay as possible.

When a man pushed through the crowd, and mentioning himself as a servant of Mr. Darcy Vavasour, requested the young man to at once go to where Mr. Vavasour was waiting with his curicle, his master desiring to speak to him, Hil refused.

"Give my compliments to your master," he said, "and say that I have business which claims my attention immediately, and that I request the honour may be deferred."

The servant retired, amazed at such an answer from a pug to a man of his master's consequence, and there were not wanting several to let Hil know that he acted like a fool. But for the moment the single thought of his father's position was in the lad's mind, and he was indifferent to criticism.

Dressed, and looking little worse for his experience in the ring, he was leaving the ground, when Darcy Vavasour, leaving his carriage by which he had been waiting, came towards him. His intention was so obvious that in courtesy Hil could not but stop.

"My man informs me, Farley, that you are too busy to give me a few minutes of your conversation," he said, and in the Corinthian's face and drawing voice there was no trace of the irritation he was actually feeling.

"Sir," replied Hil quietly, "your servant was correct. I fully appreciate your kindness in being interested in me, and I have no wish to be rude; but it is imperative that I get to London with as little delay as possible. My business is important—to me—and I dare not lose any time."

The dandy looked at him curiously for several seconds. More than ever was he sure his first impression of the lad was a correct one.

"Of course you know your own business best," he rejoined. "What I wished to inform you is that I have been so impressed by your showing in the ring I am willing to back you against the best second-class fighter of your weight in England."

The offer was tempting, but it went beyond Hil's present uncertain intentions. He had fought in the ring, but he had not decided yet his fists should be of means of livelihood.

"You are very kind, sir, and I thank you," he said; "but an answer at once is impossible."

"The offer may not be repeated."

"Then, sir, I shall be the loser. And if you will now excuse me—"

But the other still detained him. How did he mean reaching London?

"I walked here. I shall walk back again."

"You walked!" Mr. Vavasour was almost surprised.

"And now you would walk back again—after a fight in the ring! Why, Captain Barclay himself must surely see you! But, too, and going to London. There is a vacant seat in my curicle. Will you take it? I promise you the getting there quicker than your own legs will carry you."

(There will be another long instalment of this grand prize-ring story in next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem" Library. Please order your copy early.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"WALLY ON THE WARPAT!"

"FIGGINS' FOE."

(Concluded from Page 22.)

His eyes blazed as he caught sight of Brooke. He strode up to him, forgetting everything else in his misery and rage. "So you're staying for tea in Study No. 6?" he said, between his teeth.

Brooke looked up in surprise.

"Yes, D'Arcy has asked me," he replied.

"I sha'n't come if you do," said Figgins.

"You can please yourself about that."

"You ought to stay away, you know," Figgins clenched his hands hard. "Oh, if it wasn't for my promise to Kildare, I would—"

"Hush, you ass!" muttered Brooke. "Here's my sister, and Cousin Ethel!"

Figgins unclenched his hands, and tried to unclench his brows as the two girls came in at the gateway. Brooke hurried towards them. Figgins drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped away. But Cousin Ethel had seen him, and she called to him.

"I want you to congratulate Brooke," she said.

Figgins started as if he had been stung.

"C-congratulate Brooke!" he gasped.

"Yes."

"What about?"

"His success."

"His—his—his success!" muttered Figgins, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"Yes," said Ethel, with a bright smile. "It has been a secret so far, in case it should come to nothing, but it is all right now. Brooke is engaged to coach Billy Hutton, the vicar's nephew, you know. And I recommended him. Do you remember taking that letter for me to Brooke?"

Did Figgins remember it?

"Ye-es," muttered poor Figgins.

"That was to tell him it was all right, if Billy would agree to it. Billy agrees to it now, so it is all right. Brooke is very pleased about it, though it was chiefly thinking of my that put it into my head." Ethel glanced at the girl, who was walking towards the School House with her brother. "Now, don't you think you ought to congratulate Brooke?"

"It—it—it's ripping for Brooke!"

"Yes, isn't it? I recommended him," said Ethel brightly. "When I hear that a football coach is wanted, Figgins, I shall recommend you."

Figgins laughed—he could laugh now.

"Oh, my hat," he said, "was that all it was about? You were trying to help the poor chap into a better job?"

"Why, what did you think I was seeing him for?" asked Ethel.

Figgins could not answer that question. He wanted to go into his study and kick himself hard. Poor old Brooke! He had hammered him for this! And Ethel! He had suspected her of throwing over an old friend for a new one, when the kind and generous girl was doing what he ought to have guessed she would be the first to think of doing—helping a good fellow who was in need of help.

"Oh!" said Figgins. "I—I—I—Ethel, I—I'm an idiot! I say, I'm jolly glad about Brooke, you know! If—if you'll excuse me a second, I—I'll go and congratulate him."

"Certainly," said Ethel, smiling.

Figgins dashed off Brooke, and tapped him on the shoulder and stopped him, and Brooke looked round in surprise.

"I—I say, Brooke, I—I'm sorry—I—I mean I'm glad!" gasped Figgins. "I—I congratulate you, you know! Ethel—Miss Cleveland's—told me! Isn't it ripping! I—I'm glad!"

"Thank you!" said Brooke, with a smile. "Are we friends again now?"

"Yes. If you like to be friends with such a silly idiot," said Figgins. "Miss Brooke, your brother's a trump—a regular trump! Give us your fist, Brooke, old man!"

And when the tea-party gathered in Study No. 6, there was not a merrier member of it than Figgins—Figgins, who had been so extremely "down in the mouth" of late. Figgins was jollity itself; he was the soul of the party. And if there was one member to whom he was more cordial and affectionate than to the others, it was Brooke, who so lately had been regarded as Figgins' foe.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "WALLY ON THE WARPATH," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of "THE GEM" Library in Advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 288.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

**A NEW FREE
CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.**

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

E. B. Blawett, P.O. Box 443, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader.

J. Davidson, Bonaccord House, Pinetown, Natal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Colonies, aged 18-19.

O. W. Compton, Pinetown, Natal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Colonies, aged 15-18.

E. Summers, 5, Evandale Road, Malvern, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a Scotch girl reader, age 14.

Miss O. M. Russell, St. Clair, 15, Armadale Street, Northcote, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in England aged 18-20.

S. Beavan, Knox Street, Hamilton, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers in England or Ireland, age 20.

Miss Morgan, Auckland Street, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards, age 16 upwards.

A. Bradnock, Blakang Mata, Singapore, Strait Settlements, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 20.

C. Dunn, John Street, Goodwood Park, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in the British Isles, age 12.

J. Semple, junior, Benoni, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers of "The Gem" Library.

W. Haines, Blight Street, North Geydon, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader employed in a big London firm of wall-paper makers.

W. Nelson, P.O. Box 585, Bulawayo, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader interested in postcards, age 15-16.

L. A. Wilson, 52, Church Street, Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I., wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-20.

L. A. Wilson, 52, Church Street, Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I., wishes to correspond with a public schoolboy reader.

E. Berry, 1070, Dufferin Street, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers, age 21-25.

R. H. Richardson, Crawford Road, Maylands, West Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 17.

C. A. Baird, Frank Street, Boulder, a member of the senior cadets of West Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in a similar corps in Britain.

C. H. Dickinson, care of Bing Harris & Co., Dunedin, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 1-16.

W. A. Jones, 52, Brighton Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in South Wales.

R. Asherson, Calvania C.P., South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and postcards.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

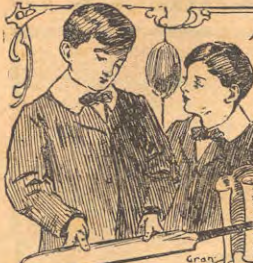
FAMOUS FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG. No. 15

Specially drawn for "THE GEM" Library by C. H. Blake.

The Battle of Inkermann, fought on November 5th, 1854, provided one of the fiercest struggles of the Crimean War. The Russians attacked the British position in overwhelming numbers at early dawn, but after a terrific fight were repulsed with great loss. Perhaps the most noteworthy performance on that day of gallant deeds was the storming of a Russian redoubt by the Coldstream Guards in a style so dashing as to be quite irresistible. It is this incident that forms the subject of our picture this week.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 288.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



THIS WEEK'S CHAT

WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS:
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
 EVERY MONDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday,

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

This grand, long, complete tale of the juniors of St. Jim's relates how Wally D'Arcy and his chums of the Third Form set their hearts upon at least one Third-Former being included in the Junior House Cricket Eleven, of which Tom Merry is captain.

The refusal of Tom Merry & Co. to entertain any such idea is the signal for hostilities to commence. Wally & Co. go on the warpath with a vengeance, and there are ructions in the School House, Tom Merry especially coming in for a very rough time.

Levison, the cad of the Fourth, also takes a hand in the game; and altogether things become very lively indeed at St. Jim's—a state of things which is directly due to

"WALLY ON THE WARPATH!"**THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL NUMBER.**

This week our grand companion paper, the "Magnet Library," has blossomed out into a

Special Summer Number,

packed from cover to cover with the best of everything—long,

complete stories, special illustrations, Boy Scout photographs, and new features galore. Famous Frank Richards is, of course, the principal contributor, his splendid fifty-thousand-word complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. being one of his best pieces of work, and the piece de resistance of the Special Number. In the matter of the cover, too, this great issue of the "Magnet Library" stands by itself, the front page being occupied by a bright and pleasing picture

**Printed in Colours**

on special paper, the effect being most attractive and artistic. The price of this Great Summer Number of our companion paper is twopenny, and all "Gemites" who have not already seen it should make a point of getting it at once.

KING GEORGE'S KEYS.

"It has struck me," writes K. S. of Penzance, "that with such an immense amount of important State business to transact, King George must have to carry a large bunch of private keys round with him wherever he goes. Can you tell me, dear Editor, whether this is so?"

No, K. S. The King does not burden himself with a very heavy key-ring. The only key which King George habitually carries about with him is one which opens the writing-desk in the King's private writing-room at each of the Royal residences, each desk being specially fitted with the same type of lock. This key, which is a small one, is attached to the end of the King's watchchain, and is carried in his Majesty's waistcoat-pocket.

The King's private bunch of keys is kept in the writing-desk in his Majesty's writing-room at whatever Royal residence the King may be staying.

HOW TO BECOME A PHOTO-PLAY ACTOR.

Before I get right down to ways and means of becoming a photo-play actor, let me impress upon you that this article is not written to incite you to become a film-actor, but to show you "how to do it" if you are so inclined.

Qualifications.—Ask yourself "Could I stand in front of a camera and perform actions which would accurately convey impressions of a story, without any spoken words at all?"

These are, briefly, the qualifications which will enable you to do so: You must have expressive features which readily lend themselves to quick changes of expression; that is, they must be able to portray the various emotions—sorrow, joy, pain, despair, triumph, humour, remorse, love, etc. Ere proceeding any further with the idea, stand in front of a glass, and see how many of these expressions you can assume. When you have arrived at a fair stage of proficiency, call in a friend—one who will be brutally candid—and go through your pantomimic display before him, and, without giving him any indication by spoken word, ask him to name the emotions you are attempting to portray. You will probably find his criticism discouraging at first; but bear in mind that as he judges your efforts so will the general public judge them, and in him you have some sort of criterion.

Then practise hard for a week or so, studying the pictures carefully in the meantime, whereby you will learn much, and then ask your friend to

watch you again. If you have persevered, you will be surprised at the progress you have made.

Another good plan is to have a series of photographs taken of yourself when assuming the different roles named, which is the next best thing to appearing on the film. In this manner, and by careful studying of the leading cinema stars, such as Maurics Costello, Florence Turner, Mary Pickford, Lieutenant Daring, etc.,

etc., you will pick up a great deal of usable knowledge about cinema-acting.

In addition to this, there is, of course, the all-important question of gesture—body-movement and pose—which also requires considerable practice. Even more important than all these qualifications is the advice: Be natural. If you can act in a perfectly natural manner, you are on the high-road to success. The reason for this is that the modern picture story, instead of representing something from the realms of fiction, is intended to represent some phase of life that may actually happen any day of the week.

It is advisable to make up your mind what kind of cinema-acting you wish to specialise in, and carefully study yourself into that part, whether it be drama, comedy, or rough knock-about work. In this connection a single visit to a good picture show will teach you more than I can do in a dozen articles.

(This helpful article will be continued in next Wednesday's Chat Page.)

The Editor

Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

PAT'S SCHEME.

An Irishman named Pat O'Brien enlisted in the Army at the time of an outbreak of the natives in India. Pat and his regiment were despatched to the front, and in his first engagement he became very nervous, and retreated to the rear. He was seen by the colonel, who immediately called to him.

"Where are you going?" he rapped out.

"Sure, your honour, is not the world round?" said Pat.

The angry colonel wanted to know what difference that made. So Pat knowingly remarked:

"Hist, colonel! I'm going to attack the enemy in the rear!"—Sent in by J. Watson, Leeds.

THE DIFFERENCE.

"If you were asked to distinguish between the death of a barber and the death of a sculptor, how would you do it?" asked Bill.

"I hardly know. Perhaps you will tell me?" said George.

"Well, to put it concisely, I should sum it up like this. The barber curls up and dyes, while the sculptor makes faces and busts."—Sent in by J. Scarborough, Sunderland.

DONE AT LAST.

Jim: "How many are twice two?"

John: "Four."

Jim: "Twice four?"

John: "Eight."

Jim (with terrific speed): "How many pennies in a dozen?"

John (gasping): "Twelve!"

Jim (faster): "How many halfpennies?"

John: "Twenty-four!"

Jim: "Oh, no! Quite a mistake. Only twelve halfpennies in a dozen."—Sent in by Jack Miller, Australia.

FINISHING THE ARGUMENT.

An Irishman and a Yankee were arguing about the respective Navies. The Irishman listened to the American boasting for some time, but at last got weary of it.

"Now, look here," said he, "if our Navy came over to the United States, it would take a better man than Christopher Columbus to discover America in the morning!"—Sent in by R. F. Armstrong, Toronto.

TUT! TUT!

The golf course was bordered on the one side by a railway and on the other by the ocean. Jock Tamson and Sandy Cairncross—both new-comers to the game, and indeed to the village—were playing off a long-delayed match. The former had just driven the ball over the metals, amongst some bracken on the opposite side, and after a long and fruitless search, Sandy wanted Jock to admit that the ball was lost. As this meant losing a hole, Jock refused, and, slyly dropping another from his pocket, sang out:

"Hey, Sandy, I've found it!"

"You're a liar," cried Sandy hotly. "for I hev it in ma pook!"—Sent in by G. McIntosh, Aberdeen.

DID THE DOG KNOW?

A Frenchman had been invited to dinner at the house of an English friend. On opening the gate, a fierce-looking dog snarled and barked at him.

"Come on!" said the host, coming up at that moment. "Don't you know the old proverb, 'Barking dogs don't bite'?"

"Oui," said the Frenchman, with one eye on the dog and the other on the gate. "I know ze proverb; but ze question is, does ze dog know ze proverb?"—Sent in by Z. Earle, Portsmouth.

NOT SO SIMPLE AS HE SEEMED.

Friend: "Why do you have such misspelt and ungrammatical signs in your shop windows?"

Sharp Tradesman: "People think I'm such a dunce, and come in to swindle me. Trade's booming!"—Sent in by G. Hendle, Tottenham.

S-S-S-S!

Sir Samuel Simms saw sweet Sarah swimming. Suddenly she seemed sinking. Sir Samuel stood stunned. Striding seawards, spurning shingle, Sir Samuel swiftly swam Sarahwards. Sir Samuel skilfully supported swooning Sarah, swimming shorewards. Sir Samuel successfully succoured Sarah. Seeming somewhat shaky, Sir Samuel sampled some spirits—special Scotch. Sarah, saw Sir Samuel's self-sacrificing spirit. Sir Samuel saw Sarah's sweetness. Sir Samuel soon sought Sarah. Striding slowly, Sarah seemed speechless.

"Say something, Sir Samuel," said Sarah.

"Say 'Sam, Sarah,'" said Sir Samuel.

Sarah, smiling shyly, softly said "Sam."

"Sarah—Sally!" stammered Sir Samuel. "Sweet Sarah! Sweetheart!"

Sarah swiftly surrendered.—Sent in by P. T. Owen, Maidie, Newport.

HER KETTLE.

"I'll learn ye tae tie the kettle tae the dog's tail!" yelled Tommy's mother, chasing her young hopeful up the stairs.

"It wasna oor dog!" panted the elusive Tommy.

"Naw, it wasna oor dog," said the enraged mother, "but it was—" West Kensington.

THE CAREFUL.

"Mister," said the small boy to the chemist, "give me another bottle of them pills you sold father the day before yesterday."

"Are they doing him good?" asked the pleased chemist.

"I don't know whether they are doing father any good, or not, but they're doing me good. They just fit my air-gun."—Sent in by J. McLanctan.

FOR HIS FRIEND'S SAKE.

Two men were out shooting, when suddenly a policeman came upon them and asked to see their licences. One man promptly rushed away, and the policeman chased him for about a mile, and, catching him, again demanded the licence, which was instantly produced.

"What on earth did you make me run all this way for, if you've got a licence?" asked the police-officer.

"Cause my mate hadn't one," was the reply.—Sent in by E. G. Peacock, West Hampstead.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Mamma (anxiously watching her little boy at dinner): "My dear child, you really should not eat your pudding so quickly!"

Small Child: "Why not, mamma?"

Mamma: "Because it is dangerous. I once knew a boy of your age who was eating his pudding so quickly that he died before he had finished it."

Small Child (very much concerned): "And what did they do with the rest of the pudding, mamma?"—Sent in by H. Raper, Scarborough.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED
The Editor, "The Gem" Library, The Fleetway
House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

BUY THIS NUMBER TO-DAY.

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NO. 44 VOL. 2

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