

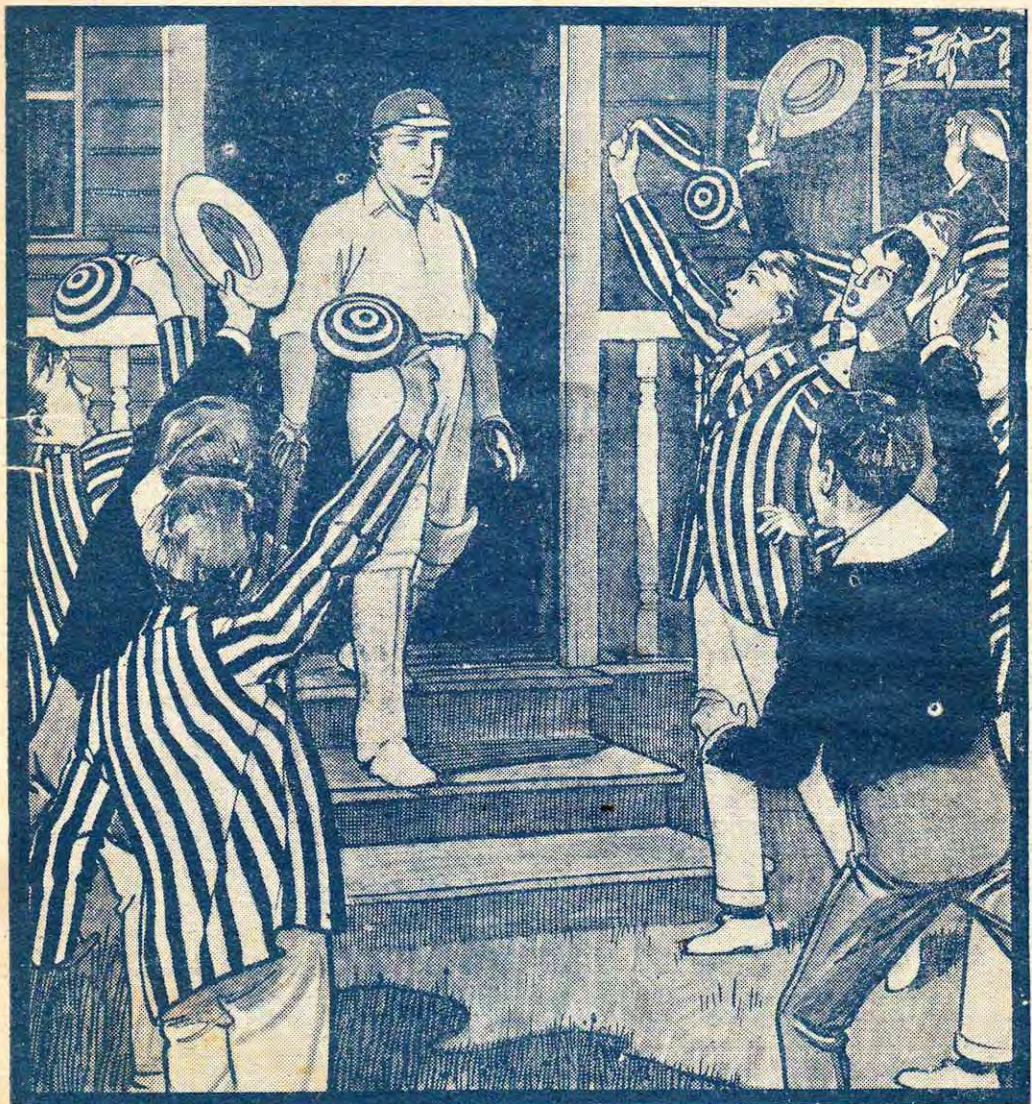


The GEM $1\frac{1}{2}$ ^d

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“FOR SCHOOL AND COUNTY!”



NEXT MAN IN FOR THE COUNTY!

(One of many Dramatic Scenes in the Grand Story of School and Sport in this Issue.)



FOR SCHOOL AND COUNTRY!

A Magnificent Long Complete

Story of

TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's.

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in the Sixth!

"O H!"

"Rotten!"

"Call that cricket?"

"Better try your hand at hopscotch!"

Rushden, of the Sixth-Form at St. Jim's, surveyed his wrecked wicket with a rueful smile.

A senior House match was in progress; and the School House, although they numbered many First Eleven players in their ranks, were having a sorry time of it at the expense of the New House.

Kildare, the School House skipper, had batted well. He generally did.

Monteith of the New House, however, was in such fine form with the ball that the batsmen who followed on after Kildare had put up a very poor show.

Rushden was one of the last to go in, and Kildare had urged him to stop the rot.

On his day Rushden of the Sixth was a fairly useful batsman.

But this was not one of his days.

He seemed all at sea when Monteith sent down the ball. He scooped at it feebly, and it curled round his bat and smashed into the wicket.

"The School House are putting up a putrid show!" growled Jack Blake of the Fourth. "They usually tie the New House beggars up in knots; but they're hopeless to-day!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wushden is wotten! I could put up a much better display myself, bai Jove!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, who, with Manners, Lowther, and Talbot, occupied a seat in front of the pavilion. "Every fellow strikes a bad patch at some time or another, and it's no use ragging Rushden. He's off-colour, that's all."

"Time he backed up, then," said Herries. "Why, old Towser could have performed better than that!"

Rushden made his way back to the pavilion amid the delighted exclamations of the New House supporters and the groans of the School House crowd.

The Sixth-Former flushed a little as he came up the pavilion steps.

"Sorry, Kildare!" he muttered, throwing down his bat.

"You jolly well ought to be!" was the gruff rejoinder. "Why, an infant of two couldn't have played worse!"

"I—I wasn't feeling up to the mark, and—"

"Well, why couldn't you have said so before the match? Then I could have got a substitute. If you felt rotten, it was your place to tell me! No use waking up to the fact half-way through the match!"

Kildare seldom let himself go like this. He was usually of a sunny disposition, and it took more than a trifle to upset him.

But the sight of the School House wickets falling like ninepins exasperated him.

"There goes another!" he growled, as Baker's leg-stump was knocked clean out of the ground. "Blessed if the New House don't deserve to lick us!"

A few minutes later the School House were all out. Their total was fifty, of which Kildare himself had made half.

It was a single-innings match; and fifty was not a formidable total for the New House to make. Indeed, if Monteith were in form he would probably get them off his own bat.

"Carry me home to die, somebody!" said Monty Lowther. "This is where the School House is dished, diddled, and done!"

"Don't be too sure," said Talbot quietly. "Kildare's a first-rate bowler, and so's Darrel. There's no reason why the New House innings shouldn't collapse like a house of cards."

Talbot was a prophet without honour in his own country. But he proved to be right, all the same.

Kildare bowled with deadly effect; and one by one the New House batsmen returned to the pavilion.

Monteith stayed in long enough to scrape together a lucky dozen; but the others did little, and only thirty-seven had been scored when the seventh wicket fell.

"What hopes?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"None at all!" replied Figgins, who

overheard the remark. "Our last three men will simply pulverise you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn. "I always said the School House could not hold a candle to the New House, so far as sport was concerned—or anything else, come to that!"

"Why, you—you inflated barrel!" hooted Manners.

"Bow-wow!"

Grundy of the Shell, who was reclining at the feet of the Terrible Three—a huge retriever, lifted up his voice.

"Now, if I were bowling," he said, "the last three New House wickets would fall before you could say—"

"Rats!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Grundy snorted.

"As a captain, Kildare isn't bad," he said. "But as a bowler, he's—well, outside the pale. He's sending down some very poor stuff—"

"Precisely what he'd be doing if he were to bowl you over!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dry up, you cackling asses—"

"There goes another wicket!" said Manners. "I believe the School House will pull it off, after all!"

It certainly looked like it.

Twelve runs were wanted by the New House. And Kildare was still bowling as well as at the beginning.

The next man in hit his first ball to the boundary for four.

It was a pure fluke, as the next ball proved. For when the batsman tried to repeat the performance, he was clean bowled.

"Eight wanted—and one man to get 'em!" said Tom Merry. "Let's hope the last man in makes a regular hash of it!"

But the last man in was a very obstinate person. He met Kildare's swiftest balls with a bat like a barn door. Nothing could shift him.

After a long period of stonewalling, the batsmen ran a couple. Shortly afterwards they bagged two more. Then Kildare happened to pitch the ball short, and this yielded another two. Then a single was added to the score.

"One to tie—two to win!" said Figgins. "Play up, New House!"

CHAPTER 2.

No Luck for Knox!

And the cry was taken up all round the ground by the New House supporters, who were present in full force.

Kildare looked grim.

The game was in the balance now, and he knew it.

Taking a short, swift run, he sent down the best ball he knew.

The batsman ran out at it, changed his mind and stepped back, and then ran out again.

He hit the ball; but it went straight into the hands of Rushden at mid-off.

"Get ready to shout!" muttered Monty Lowther.

And then a terrible thing happened—terrible to the School House supporters, at any rate.

Rushden allowed the ball to slip through his hands.

"Oh!"

It was a groan of dismay from the School House section of the crowd.

"Missed, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The batsman who had had such a lucky escape chuckled, and called his partner for a run.

The scores were level.

Kildare clenched his hands, and glared at Rushden.

"You—you prize dummy!" he exclaimed.

"Sorry!" faltered Rushden.

"Bless your sorrow! You've lost us the match!"

And so it proved.

The winning hit was made shortly afterwards, and the New House team had proved victorious.

The School House cricketers looked very glum as they came off the field.

Kildare, in particular, was extremely annoyed.

"A fag in the Second would have held that catch!" he said to Rushden. "I can't understand you at all. You've never let us down like this before!"

Knox of the Sixth was standing near the pavilion entrance as the players came in.

"I should give up cricket if I were you," he said to Kildare, "and take up marbles. This is what comes of leaving the best men out of the team!"

Kildare passed on into the pavilion with a frown.

He and Rushden had always been good pals.

Rushden wielded a great influence for good in the Sixth. Although seldom in the limelight, he was a steady, reliable fellow as a rule, and could be counted on to put up a good show in the playing-fields. But he had failed dismally this time, and Kildare was not in the humour to overlook the failure.

Kildare could have forgiven Rushden for being bowled out first ball; but that catch—

The captain of St. Jim's grew hot when he thought of it.

The crowd dispersed to their own houses—Figgins & Co. hugely elated, and the School House fellows gloomy and depressed.

"When the senior match with Greyfriars comes off," said George Alfred Grundy, "I shall persuade Kildare to drop Rushden and play me!"

"Well," said Jack Blake thoughtfully, "in view of Rushden's rotten display, I think Kildare might do worse."

And that was the prevailing opinion in the School House.

RUSHDEN of the Sixth pulled on his blazer, and strode away towards the School House.

A sound followed him which was unmistakable. It was a hiss!

Rushden started.

This was the first time he had ever been the victim of a hostile demonstration.

Although not so popular as Kildare and Darrel, Philip Rushden was a fellow who had always stood well in the esteem of St. Jim's. He was a prefect, but he never abused that position, as was the case with Knox. Taken all round, he was a good sort, and that hiss, coming as it did from a section of the School House supporters, brought a flush to his face.

For the first time in his life he was really unpopular!

"Dash it all," he muttered, as he strode along, "I wish I'd told Kildare in the first place that I felt groggy! Then this wouldn't have happened!"

Rushden had a splitting headache. He had had it all day.

It had not occurred to him to mention the matter to Kildare before the match. It was not usual for St. Jim's fellows—especially seniors—to allow a headache to interfere with their cricket. And it so happened that Rushden's headache was at its worst just when that catch came along. That was why he had failed to hold it.

With a gloomy brow, Rushden strode on into his study.

He hung himself limply into the arm-chair, and gave himself up to bitter reflection.

Everything seemed to be going wrong. Kildare had practically quarrelled with him, and he had incurred the wrath of his House. He had been tested—and found wanting!

There was a tap on the door of Rushden's study, and Jameson of the Third looked in.

Jameson was fagging for Rushden at this period; and he, at all events, was loyal to his master.

"What about tea?" asked Jameson.

"Don't want any!" growled Rushden.

"Dame Taggles has got some really ripping cream-buns—"

"Scat!"

"I say, Rushden, aren't you peckish?"

"Not a scrap! Now clear out!"

Jameson obeyed, wondering.

"Rushden's usually as nice as pie," he murmured. "But something's upset his apple-cart this afternoon, and no mistake!"

And the fag walked away whistling.

Rushden continued his reflections, but not for long.

The study door opened again—without a preliminary knock this time—and the leering face of Knox looked in.

"What do you want?" growled Rushden.

"Oh, I just dropped in for a jaw!"

"Well, you'll oblige me by dropping out again!"

Knox sneered.

"I thought its ickle temper would be a bit ruffled," he said. "I suppose you've been lectured by our worthy skipper?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"Well, you deserved it," said Knox.

"Never saw such a putrid display in all my natural! That catch that you muffed was—"

"I don't want any criticism from you!" said Rushden bluntly.

Knox laughed.

"Look here," he said. "I was going to suggest—"

"You can make your suggestions on

the other side of that door. I don't want to hear them!"

"Don't get huffy. I came along to do you a favour, really."

"My hat! Rather a change for you, isn't it?" said Rushden drily.

Knox ignored that remark.

"You seem to be in danger of being cast off in your old age," he said. "Your old pals are turning their backs on you after what happened at the House match. Kildare's fed up with you, and I heard Darrel telling Baker that he thought you'd deliberately let the side down."

Rushden sprang to his feet.

"Darrel said that!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"Well, not exactly," corrected Knox. "But he practically hinted it. The fact remains that you've got yourself into bad odour."

"What if I have?"

Knox looked hard at Rushden—taking stock of him, as it were.

"Don't you think it's time you chucked cricket, and all that sort of thing?" he said. "It's a mug's game, and you get more kicks than peace."

"What alternative do you suggest?" asked Rushden.

Knox lowered his voice.

"Why not come along to the Green Man with me to-night and have a little flutter? Only billiards, you know," added Knox hastily, startled by the expression on Rushden's face. "Don't look so shocked. Anybody would think I was advising you to burgle a bank!"

"There's not much difference between the two, that I can see," said Rushden. "So you want me to chuck cricket and go on the razzle?"

"That's rather a strong way of putting it," said Knox. "There's nothing wrong with a game of billiards. There's money to be made at it, too."

Rushden looked at Knox as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

This was the first time that the black sheep of the Sixth had ever ventured to seek a fellow partner in Rushden. He sometimes associat-d with Cut's of the Fifth; but there was hardly anyone in the Sixth who approved of his shady ways. Certainly Rushden didn't approve.

"Well," said Knox at length, turning to the door, "I'll leave you to think it over."

"No need for that," said Rushden quietly. "You can have my answer now." And, stepping forward, he shot out his left, straight from the shoulder.

Knox was taken completely by surprise.

He reeled, and went sprawling through the open doorway.

"That's my answer!" said Rushden warmly. "I'll emphasise it, if you like!"

"Grooogh!"

Knox scrambled to his feet, and clasped his nose, which was oozing red.

"My hat!" he muttered thickly. "I'll jolly well—"

But before Knox could make his intentions clear there was a quick tread in the corridor, and Kildare appeared.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, stopping short. "What's all this?"

"I was licking Knox," explained Rushden. "That tap on the nose was the first instalment. The other instalments are just going to follow!"

"I think not!" said Kildare sharply.

"Do you think I'm going to be insulted by that end?" flared Rushden.

"All I know is this," said Kildare.

"I'm not going to allow this tavern-brawl business to go on in the Sixth Form passage. If you want to scrap, have it out in the gym."

"He hit me unawares!" growled Knox, dabbing at his nose.

Kildare frowned.

"I'm not so sure it wasn't deserved," he said. "Anyway, there's going to be no more of it. You're both prefects, and you're supposed to give the lead to the House. How can we expect the juniors to behave, when this sort of thing goes on?"

"It's like you, to interfere!" snarled Knox.

"I'd do more than that if you don't clear off!"

Kildare did not mind his words; and Knox realised that, unless he made himself scarce, the matter might not end there.

He turned on his heel, and went sullenly back to his own study.

When he had gone, Kildare turned to Rushden.

"You're beginning to get on my nerves," he said. "First you make a ghastly mess of the House match, and now you start scrapping like a fag! We all know that Knox is several sorts of a waste; but you might at least have the decency to take your squabble to the gym."

"Pile it on!" said Rushden. "Go right ahead. Never mind me!"

"I've got nothing more to say to you—" began Kildare.

"Good! Then perhaps you'll leave a fellow in peace!"

Kildare breathed hard, and it looked for a moment as if a stormy scene would follow.

But the captain of St. Jim's restrained himself, and went along to his study without a word.

Nevertheless, all was not well in the Sixth!

CHAPTER 3.

Backing up Rushden!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Bring it along!"

"This ought to do the trick!"

The Terrible Three looked at each other in wonder as those exclamations floated in to them from the Shell passage.

"What's going on?" asked Manners.

"A funeral, I expect," said Monty Lowther. "I can hear Crooke's ca-kle!"

"Blow Crooke!" said Tom Merry.

"Let's get on with the 'Weekly.' I'm half-way through the editorial—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The renewed laughter from the passage rendered literary work impossible.

With one accord the Terrible Three went out to investigate.

There was a crowd of Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers outside. They were led by Crooke, Racke, and Mellish. Those three bright specimens of British boyhood were laughing uproariously.

"What's the joke?" inquired Monty Lowther. "Enlighten us, somebody!"

If it's Racke's face, we shall understand. That's a standing joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the past ten minutes," drawled Cardew of the Fourth, "I've been tryin' to fathom the merry joke myself. But I'm afraid it needs a mightier brain than mine to discover where the joke comes in."

"Crooke's sense of humour is rather twisted," said Clive. "It'll land him in prison one of these days."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"What's the little game?" he asked, pushing his way towards Crooke, Racke, and Mellish.

Crooke grinned at the captain of the

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 591.

Shell, and displayed to view a number of placards he was carrying.

One of them contained a sketch, showing a batsman sitting in front of a wrecked wicket with a dazed expression on his face.

The batsman was intended to be Rushden of the Sixth. And underneath the picture appeared the words:

"THE HOPE OF HIS SIDE!"

"Well, if I couldn't draw better than that," said Monty Lowther, "I'd go and suffocate myself! I never saw anything so feeble in my life!"

"Not guilty!" said Crooke. "Racke's the merry artist. I'm merely the poet. How's this for a maiden effort?"

And Crooke held up a placard on which were inscribed several verses.

The Terrible Three read Crooke's effusion; but they did not join in the general laughter.

Crooke's poem did not strike them in any way as being funny. Rather the reverse.

The first verse ran as follows:

"There's a traitor in the camp;

Kick him out!

He's a scoundrel and a scamp,

Kick him out!

For he played most putrid cricket,

And he threw away his wicket.

Are the fellows going to stick it?

Kick him out!"

"My hat!" muttered Manners.

"That's meant for Rushden, of course!"

"If the cap fits, let him wear it," said Racke lightly.

"It's piffle," said Tom Merry. "And it's something more than piffle! It's a caddish libel!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!" said Mellish. "It's true, and Rushden won't be able to deny it!"

The Terrible Three read the second verse.

"There's a black sheep in the fold;

Weed him out!

By the first ball he was bowled.

Weed him out!

Then he muffed a simple catch

That the foe might win the match.

He belongs to Colney Hatch.

Weed him out!"

There were other verses, but those two were enough for Tom Merry & Co.

"Pretty hot stuff—what?" grinned Crooke. "I guess Shakespeare and King will have to take back seats after this."

"What are you going to do with that rot?" asked Tom Merry sharply.

"Take it along to Rushden's study, of course," said Aubrey Racke. "He's out at present, but we shall stick these placards up over the mantelpiece. They ought to hit home."

"But what's the idea of cheeking Rushden?" asked Manners.

"Well, we can't have the School House let down like this, you know!" said Crooke.

"Br-r-r-r! A fat lot you care for the honour and glory of the School House! If this is a jape, then all I can say is it's in rank bad taste!"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry planted himself in the path of Racke, Crooke, and Mellish.

"Stand aside!" said Racke.

"You're not going to take those things to Rushden's study," said the captain of the Shell, gruffly.

Racke sneered.

"Who's goin' to stop us?"

"I am!"

"Really!" murmured Cardew. "This is gettin' most interestin'! Racke says he's determined to go along to Rushden's

study; an' Tom Merry ordains otherwise. What's the bettin' on the result?"

Racke motioned to Crooke and Mellish, who were already showing signs of wavering.

"Come along!" he said. "Don't take any notice of Merry. He's always puttin' his oar in!"

"If you take a single step in this direction," warned Tom Merry, "look out!"

Racke, who had more courage than his companions, made a sudden movement to get past the captain of the Shell.

At the same instant Tom Merry's fist shot out, and Aubrey Racke went to the floor with a bump and a yell.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Very neat, by Jove!" drawled Cardew approvingly. "That was a blow which Jimmy Wilde wouldn't have been ashamed of. Let's have an encore, Merry!"

Tom Merry stood over Racke, with blazing eyes, waiting for him to rise.

But Racke had had enough. His left eye had put up the shutters.

"Look here," said Crooke, feeling that it was up to him to maintain a bold front. "It's like your cheek to interfere, Merry!"

"I haven't quite finished interfering yet," said Tom Merry. "I believe you claimed to be the author of those verses, Crooke?"

"That's so," said Crooke sullenly.

"And, what's more, they're true! Rushden deliberately let the School House down. There are no two ways about it. He turned traitor! Kildare knows it—everybody knows it! And it's only right that Rushden should be reminded what a rotter he is!"

"Hear, hear!" came in a chorus from several of the fellows, for many of them were quite prepared to believe that Rushden had played it low.

"Rushden's as straight as a die!" said Tom Merry. "It's sheer rot to call a fellow a traitor just because he happens to be off-colour."

"Hark at him!" sneered Crooke. "He likes to pose as a giddy champion of the oppressed."

Tom Merry frowned.

"I'll show you what I think of your precious poetry—and you!" he said.

With a quick stride towards Crooke, the captain of the Shell wrenched the offending placard from his grasp and tore it into fragments.

"You—you rotter—" gasped Crooke.

Biff!

Tom Merry shot out his left again, and Crooke rolled over on top of Racke. A duet of groans arose.

"Rippin'!" said Cardew. "There's only Mellish to deal with now. Then we'll ring down the curtain."

But Percy Mellish was not a fighting-man. He had discreetly made himself scarce.

Tom Merry glared down at Racke and Crooke, who were squirming on the floor.

"That's just a little foretaste of what you'll get if we catch you at this little game again!" he said. "Rushden's not a traitor. And if any other fellow differs with me on that point, I shall be pleased to thrash it out with him, here and now!"

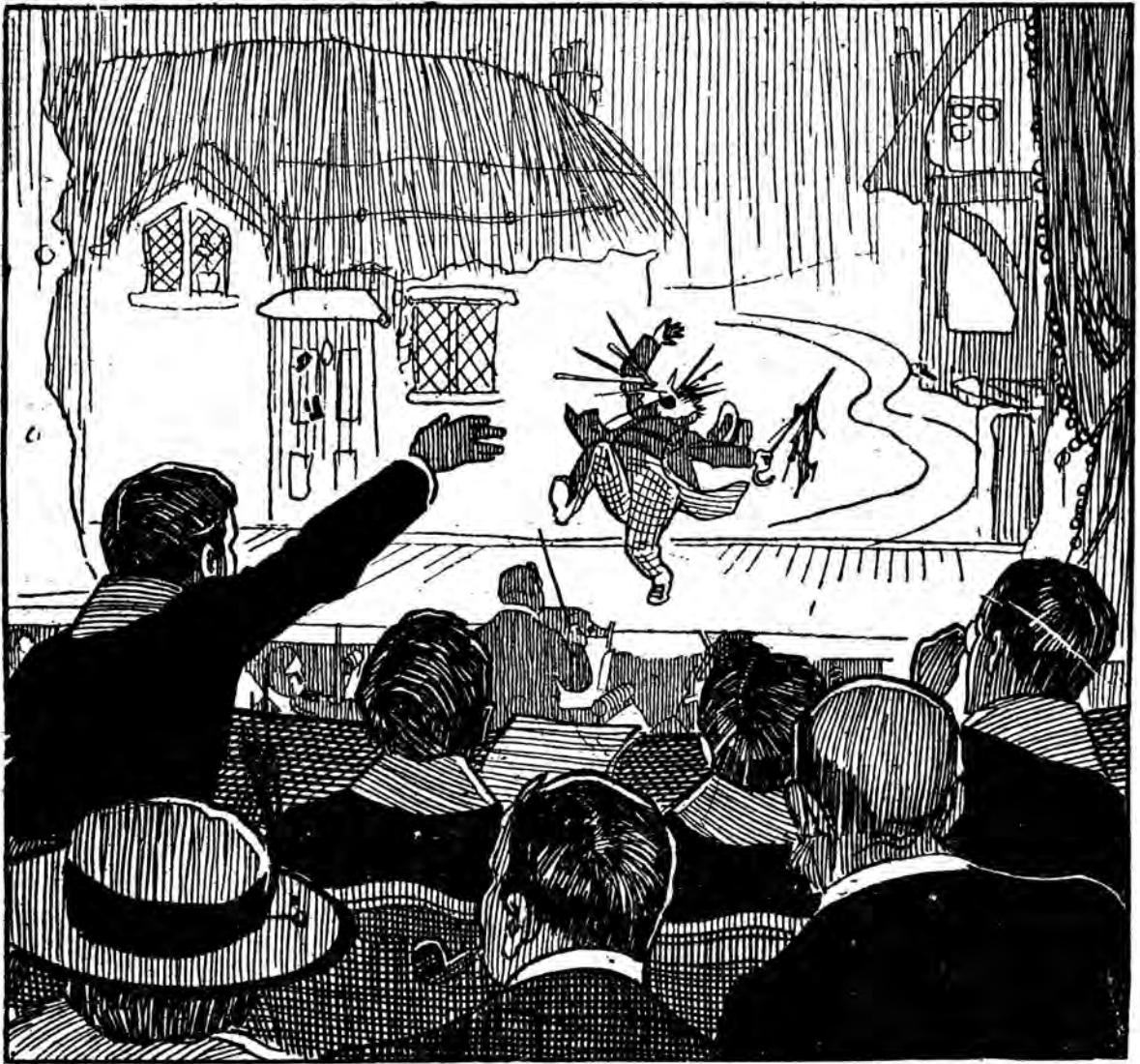
There was a stir amongst the crowd of fellows in the passage.

Monty Lowther took his chum hastily by the arm.

"Come along, you giddy war-horse!" he exclaimed. "Can't have you committing assault and battery ad lib, you know."

Manners took Tom Merry's other arm, and the captain of the Shell was hustled back into Study No. 10.

Lowther kicked the door shut, and



The comedian was half-way through the next verse of his song, when an egg, deftly aimed by Monty Lowther, smote him full in the face. He promptly disappeared into the wings. (See Chapter 5.)

after a time Tom Merry cooled down, and carried on with his editorial.

Meanwhile, the slanderers of Rushden sorted themselves out, and limped away to tend their injuries.

Their anticipated jape, at which they had laughed so heartily a short time since, was emphatically "off!"

CHAPTER 4.

Left Out!

"IT'S a choice of two evils," said Kildare.

He was in his study, compiling the list of players for the First Eleven fixture with Greyfriars.

Darrel nodded.

"I've selected ten," said Kildare, "and all of them are worth their places. Now, the question is, shall we play Knox or Rushden?"

"It's a poser," said Darrel.

"Of course, Knox isn't a fellow one would willingly play in any sort of team," said Kildare. "He's such an outsider. But what we've got to consider is cricketering ability—not character. And

that's where Knox scores over Rushden. After what happened at the House match the other day, I don't feel like putting Rushden in."

"He may buck up in the next match," said Darrel.

"On the other hand, he may not. We can't afford to take any risks. You know what a hot crowd Greyfriars are. If there's a weak spot in the team, we shall go under. Rushden deserves to be left out. And yet—I can't bring myself to play a rotter like Knox."

"Why not put it to the vote?" suggested Darrel.

"Good!"

Kildare was not the fellow to shirk responsibility; but he felt that this was a question which the Sixth Form in general should decide.

All the seniors, with the exception of Rushden and Knox, were sent for; and Kildare explained the situation.

"I've called you fellows here to select the eleventh man," he said.

"Who are the merry candidates for election?" asked Langton.

"Rushden and Knox."

"Oh!"

"I should drop 'em both," said Baker. "One's a smoky beast, and the other plays cricket like a two-year-old."

"We've got to have one of the two to complete the eleven," said Kildare.

"All serene, then!"

And the votes were accordingly taken. Fresh in the minds of the voters was the feeble display put up by Rushden in the House match. The others felt that they could not forgive him for that—not yet, at any rate.

This being so, it was not altogether surprising that the eleventh place fell to Knox, who defeated Rushden by five votes.

"Thanks!" said Kildare. "That's settled the problem, anyway."

And the meeting dispersed.

There was quite a stir when the names of the eleven were posted up on the notice-board.

"Knox is down to play!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My only hat!"

"I suppose he'll walk out to the

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wickets smoking a fat cigar!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry shook his head gravely. "Kildare's made a mistake this time," he said. "Rushden's a better man than Knox. Even if he made a duck's-egg six times off the reel, and muffed half a dozen catches, I should still think so."

"Bai Jovel!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wushden will be vewy watty when he sees he's been left out!"

"And Knox will be all smiles!" said Jack Blake. "There will be no holding him after this. But I agree with Kildare's decision, all the same! On present form, Rushden's 'also ran.'"

"Rats!" growled the Terrible Three in unison.

At that moment Knox of the Sixth stepped up to the notice-board.

A grin spread over his features as he spotted his own name at the foot of the list.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Kildare seems to be waking up at last!"

"So will you when you walk back to the pavilion with your tail between your legs!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Knox scowled.

"You will take fifty lines, Lowther, for impertinence!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The humorist of the Shell ventured no farther comments.

Knox walked away with a grin of self-satisfaction.

Shortly afterwards Rushden came on the scene.

The Sixth-Former scanned the list in vain for his own name.

He clenched his hands hard.

So it had come to this! Kildare had no use for his services.

It was the first time in the history of St. Jim's cricket that Rushden had been left out.

Up to the time of the House match he had always been regarded as a good bat and a useful change-bowler—a sort of general utility man whom the eleven could not afford to be without.

But they were without him now.

He was not wanted. Even the objectionable Knox had been preferred to him.

"Hard cheese, Rushden!" said Tom Merry.

The senior made no reply.

He turned on his heel, and strode abruptly away to Kildare's study.

The captain of St. Jim's was oiling his cricket-bat when Rushden entered.

"You want to see me?" he said.

"Yes," said Rushden. "You appear to have made a mistake. I notice I'm not down to play against Greyfriars."

"That's so!"

"Do you seriously mean that?"

"Of course! I don't joke about these things!" said Kildare.

Rushden was silent for a moment.

"I suppose this is because of my rotten play the other day?" he asked at length.

"You've hit it!"

"In that case, I'd like to tell you that I'm quite fit again now. I was off-colour before, and didn't do myself justice. I promise you I'll put up a good game against Greyfriars if you'll play me."

Kildare shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he said. "It was put to the vote whether you or Knox should play, and the verdict went to Knox."

Rushden laughed bitterly.

"There was a time when you wouldn't have been found dead in any team which included Knox!" he said.

"Perhaps so! But things have changed. I'm not trying to down you, Rushden."

THE GIRL LIBRARY.—No. 591.

You needn't think that. But I can't play a dud cricket."

"So you think I'm a dud?"

Kildare smiled.

"Judging by your performance the other day, one could hardly describe you as a Jack Hobbs!" he said.

"Very well!" said Rushden. "I suppose this means that I shall be out of the team indefinitely?"

"I suppose so!"

Rushden looked grim.

"I'm not going to chuck cricket," he said. "If I can't get a game at St. Jim's I shall go elsewhere!"

"That's your business!"

"Then you don't mind if I turn out for Wayland Ramblers on Saturday?"

"Not a scrap!" said Kildare.

And he continued to oil his bat.

"I think you've acted jolly unfairly!" said Rushden, as he turned to go. "You'll be sorry later on!"

"We shall see!" said Kildare.

And the conversation ended—likewise Rushden's hopes of getting a place in the St. Jim's Eleven against Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Little Mistake!

"GUSSY'S WOBEBY!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"George Wobey is a most remarkable person!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and speaking with an air of authority.

The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 had been discussing ways and means of spending a perfectly good half-holiday. They stared at Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"You don't mean to say you consider George Robey to be a better comedian than yourself, Gussy?" said Monty Lowther in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah! I wogard George Wobey as a fighthfully funnay beggah! The last time I was in London my bwothah Conway took me to a chawty concert, an' I heard Wobey sing!"

"Since when he has heard no other!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Blessed if I know what Gussy's driving at!" said Jack Blake in puzzled tones. "What's George Robey to do with us, anyway?"

"He's comin' heah this aftahnoon!" said Arthur Augustus impressively.

"What! George Robey's coming to St. Jim's?"

"No, you duffah! To Wayland!"

"Oh!"

"There's an extwa-special concert at the Wayland Theatre," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I wemembah to have seen the postah. George Wobey is the leadin' attraction!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Wayland's beginning to wake up at last! They've actually bagged a famous star! George Robey will be a tremendous draw."

"He raised tons of money for charity when the war was on," said Herries.

"I was goin' to suggest," said Arthur Augustus, "that we cut the cwicket for once an' bibe ovah to Wayland to see him."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I don't like the idea of cutting the cricket," he said. "Can't we see George Robey some other time?"

"Afraid not, deah boy! He's goin' back to town to-morrow, accordin' to the postah!"

The juniors glanced at each other in uncertainty.

It was a glorious summer afternoon, and the green cricket-field seemed particularly inviting.

But if, as Gussy had said, George Robey was paying a flying visit to Wayland, they didn't want to miss seeing him.

Monty Lowther, who was anxious to add to his collection of stale puns and worn-out jokes, clinched the matter.

"Let's come over to Wayland!" he said. "After all, we shall have plenty of chances to play cricket; but this is the only one we've got of seeing George Robey."

"All serene!" said Tom Merry.

The seven juniors brought their bicycles from the shed, and started off for Wayland.

A stuffy theatre seemed hardly the sort of place in which to spend the afternoon; but George Robey was such a super-attraction that the juniors felt quite justified in going over to see him.

There was certainly a big queue waiting outside the theatre as the juniors sped up the old-fashioned High Street. But it was not so big as might have been expected.

The juniors jumped off their machines, and scanned the poster which was displayed in front of the theatre.

"Blessed if I can see George Robey's name," said Manners.

"There it is!" said Digby, indicating a name printed in large capitals at the head of the list. "But it's spelt wrong. They've got Ro-bee, instead of Ro-be-y!"

"Some careless set of a printer, I suppose!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! This way, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus, ignoring the queue of people waiting for sixpenny seats, led the way into the dress-circle.

Phew! gasped Jack Blake.

The atmosphere was close and stuffy, and the seats and floor were littered with rubbish. The manager of the theatre evidently set little store by cleanliness.

"Rotten hole!" sniffed Blake. "If George Robey doesn't come up to expectations, Gussy, we'll scalp you!"

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther.

"The interment will take place in Wayland Cemetery. No flowers, by request."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dwy up, you cacklin' asses!"

The curtain went up at last, and the performance began.

A number of chorus-girls, whose faces were obscured by powder and streaks of grease-paint, gave a dance. They sang as they danced; but as the audience could not distinguish a single word of what was sung, they were not sorry to see the chorus-girls disappear into the wings.

"Awful!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"I'd sooner have heard one of Gussy's tenor solos!"

"Lowthah, you uttah wottah!"

"Next man in!" said Herries.

The next performer, attired as Farmer Giles, rendered a pathetic ditty concerning his fondness for apple-dumplings.

Unfortunately, the singer was so flustered, owing to the threatening attitude of a man in the pit, that he mixed up his song with the world-famous refrain, "Boiled Beef and Carrots."

The chorus went something like this:

"Apple dumplings! Apple dumplings! I could eat 'em all day long! Apple dumplings! Apple dumplings! (Oh, help! I've got it wrong), Don't feed like vegetarians, But chuck your cares and grumbings; And day and night blow out your kite On boiled beef and dumplings!"

"E dunno where 'e are!" said the man in the pit.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That song would make Fatty Wynn's mouth water," said Tom Merry, "but it leaves me cold. I've never heard such piffle in my life!"

"Hand over some of those ancient eggs we brought along," said Monty Lowther.

But the man on the stage—who had, as the novelists say, a premonition of disaster—promptly turned and fled.

After a decent interval, during which the audience had time to cool down, a ventriloquist appeared.

The ventriloquism was not at all bad; but the St. Jim's juniors stirred restlessly.

They were waiting for the appearance of George Robey. He—and he alone—could save the concert from being a complete wash-out.

And presently he came.

"Hurrah!"

A cheer went up from the juniors in the dress-circle, and there was some desultory hand-clapping from the back of the theatre.

The comedian looked surprised. He had evidently not expected anything in the nature of an ovation.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That fellow doesn't look much like George Wobey. He's dressed differently, for one thing."

"Robey doesn't wear the same togs every time, fathead!" snapped Blake.

There was a pause.

The blue-nosed comedian cleared his throat, and announced in a cracked voice that he would sing that tender and touching song, "Father's Put the Lodger Through the Hoop."

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "If that's George Robey, he must have run to seed pretty badly!"

"Shurrup!" muttered Manners.

The blue-nosed gentleman had started singing. His voice was like a tramway-car missing the points.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Digby. "It's awful!"

"As soon as we gets 'ome at night, there's bound to be a war,

We're always landed fairly in the soup,

For mother, with the rollin'-pin, is waitin' at the door,

And father's put the lodger through the hoop!"

"If I had a voice like that," said Tom Merry, "I'd take it away and pawn it. That fellow's no more George Robey than I am!"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "Are you suggestin', Tom Mewwy, that—"

"That you're a burbling chump? Yes, I am! We've cut the cricket to come along and see George Robey, and he's not here!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll slay you for this, Gussy!" hissed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

The blue-nosed comedian, having finished putting the lodger through the hoop, started on another song, entitled, "Bertie's Grown Too Big for Father's Bags."

"Bertie ain't a bad 'un in the ordinary way,

Bertie's quite a decent sort of kid; Not a word of impudence to me he'll ever say,

'Cos he knows he'd cop it if he did. (Ave a banana?)

But when it comes to savin', I really can't 'elp ravin'.

For father blues his money on the nags;

'Cutting down' has got to end, and I've got no cash to spend

Now that Bertie's grown too big for father's bags!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Chuck him off!"

"Lynch him!"

The comedian was half-way through the next verse when a prehistoric egg, hurled from the dress-circle by some person unknown—but Monty Lowther was not above suspicion—caught him full in the face. He was repulsed with heavy losses, so to speak, and promptly disappeared into the wings.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Let's quit! George Robey wouldn't be found dead in a show like this!"

Gladly enough, the St. Jim's juniors trooped out into the afternoon sunshine.

Once outside, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy became the centre of a very hostile ring.

"You chump!" said Blake.

"You drivelling dunderhead!" said Digby.

"You wooden-headed candidate for Colney Hatch!" said Lowther.

"Bump him!"

Arthur Augustus backed away in alarm.

"Hands off, you wottahs! I wegard you as bein' quite outside the pale. I—Yoooooop!"

Many hands closed upon the swell of St. Jim's, and he descended upon the pavement with a terrific concussion.

"Give him another," said Tom Merry.

Bump!

"Yawoooooh!"

"One more for luck!" panted Monty Lowther.

For the third time the aristocratic form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hit the pavement.

"Ow! Oh dear! You uttah wottahs! My togs are ruined!"

"And so's our afternoon!" grunted Blake. "You deserve to be hanged, drawn, and quartered!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up.

He was a very complete wreck. His straw hat had rolled into the gutter, his collar and tie had broken loose, and his hair was ruffled and awry. He looked as if he had been sleeping in his clothes.

"I—I have a good mind to administrah a fearful thwashin' all wound—" he began.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Another word from you, Gussy," said Tom Merry, "and we'll shy you into the nearest duck-pond!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the juniors, exasperated to think that the best part of the afternoon had been wasted, recovered their bicycles, and started off for St. Jim's.

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were playing a military team from Shoreham.

As Tom Merry & Co. entered, a very flushed and perspiring fieldsman staggered up.

"Thanks!" he jerked out, as Tom Merry returned the ball.

"You seem to be finding the pace rather warm," observed Jack Blake.

"Warm? Warm isn't the word for it! It's sultry!" said the fieldsman. "Just cast your eye at that telegraph-board!"

The juniors did so.

The figures showed 200 runs for the loss of only one wicket.

"My hat! What a score!" said Digby. The fieldsman grunted.

"I never knew Wayland Ramblers were such a hot lot," he said. "We played them last year, and knocked spots off them. But they've got us tied up in knots this time. Look at that!"

As the man spoke one of the batsmen leapt out of his crease and sent the ball soaring away into space. It fell with a crash and a clatter on to the roof of the pavilion.

"Cricket as she is played!" murmured Jack Blake. "Rushden ought to be here. This would give him a giddy object-lesson. What's up, Tommy?"

Tom Merry had grown strangely excited.

His eyes were fixed upon the batsman who had been responsible for that mighty hit.

"Ye gods!" he exclaimed. "It's Rushden!"

"What?"

"Cafmmon!"

"Tom Mewwy's quite wight!" said Arthur Augustus. "It weally is Wushden! Bai Jove! You could knock me down with a feathah, deah boys!"

There could be no further doubt that the batsman was Rushden of the Sixth.

Realising that he was not wanted at St. Jim's, and resolved not to give up his cricket, Rushden had offered his services to the skipper of the Ramblers, who had cheerfully accepted them.

The military side had batted first, and had scored 230.

It had looked, on paper, as if the Ramblers would have no chance whatever.

But Rushden and the Ramblers skipper had got together, and the second hundred had been passed with only one wicket down.

"They talk of brightening cricket," said Monty Lowther, as Rushden got the full face of his bat to a half-volley and drove it to the boundary. "Well, I don't think this sort of cricket needs much brightening."

"No, rather not!"

"Rushden's a perfect Trojan!" said Jack Blake.

"It's amazin'!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I don't believe I could improve on Wushden's form myself, deah boys!"

"I'm jolly sure you couldn't, Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry. "There he goes again! Talk about fireworks!"

Rushden had mastered the bowling long ago, and he was making hay of it now.

The juniors found it difficult to reconcile his present performance with his feeble display in the House match.

Digby went along to the pavilion, where the score was being kept, and came running back with the news that Rushden was within half a dozen of his century.

The skipper of the military side was in despair.

He put on a couple of change-bowlers in a desperate effort to save the game.

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CHAPTER 6.

Fireworks!

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

The juniors had not proceeded very far when a cricket-ball suddenly thudded into the roadway just in front of them.

At the same moment a burst of applause went up from the other side of the wall.

"Somebody's going strong," said Tom Merry, as he dismounted from his machine and picked up the ball.

"Let's toddle in and investigate," said Monty Lowther.

The cricket-ground belonged to Wayland Ramblers. According to a printed announcement on the gate, the Ramblers

But Rushden continued to go great guns.

A few moments later he lifted the ball clean out of the ground again—for 6.

A burst of cheering greeted the prefect's century.

"Hurrah!"

"Well played, Rushden!"

"Top-hole, dear boy!"

Rushden turned, and caught sight of the St. Jim's juniors. He grinned.

"Almost looks as if he were shamming the other day," said Jack Blake.

"Rot!" said Tom Merry. "He wasn't feeling up to the mark. That's it, and all about it. I'm surprised at old Kildare not tumbling to it!"

"If Kildare could see Rushden now he'd kick himself!" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There were other people watching the match besides the St. Jim's juniors, and they marvelled at the schoolboy's vigorous display.

Rushden never batted wildly. He hit hard when opportunity offered; but he watched the bowling carefully, and took no risks.

The Wayland skipper was caught out at last, but Rushden remained.

He had reached that stage when he could do nothing wrong. He knew in advance where he was going to place each ball, and he showed rare judgment.

Another cheer rang very pleasantly in the prefect's ears when he made the winning hit.

The match was over, and Rushden had scored 125 not out.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Kildare will feel a bit sick when he reads the report of this match in the local paper!"

"His chivvy will turn an art shade in green," said Monty Lowther.

"Yes, rather!"

But the captain of St. Jim's was not destined to see the report of Rushden's big innings.

Had he seen it he would probably have dropped Knox from the First Eleven, and replaced Rushden with all speed.

Rushden, however, had played under an assumed name; and Kildare, when he read, a few days later, of the dazzling performance of a youth named "P. Brown," little dreamt that the fellow in question was Rushden of the Sixth.

Tom Merry & Co., taking it for granted that Kildare would hear of Rushden's display, said nothing, except to their immediate chums. And so the captain of St. Jim's was left in complete ignorance of the affair.

After the match the juniors rode back to St. Jim's.

The fiasco of the concert was quite forgotten in the light of this new sensation.

Rushden of the Sixth was unstrapping his pads outside the pavilion when a hand fell upon his shoulder.

Looking up, he saw a middle-aged man of military bearing, with keen grey eyes which seemed to read Rushden like a book.

"A capital display, by gad!" said the stranger. "You've been trained in a good school, I can see."

Rushden smiled.

"I'm from St. Jim's!" he said.

"Ha! I thought as much. My name is Dyer—Major Dyer. I am a director of the Leamshire County Cricket Club."

Rushden opened his eyes wide.

He had often seen the Leamshire team play, and he had admired them greatly.

The major glanced keenly at the prefect.

"I like your style," he said. "You've got the makings of a first-class batsman."

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I suppose your time at St. Jim's is largely taken up with cricket?"

Rushden's face clouded over.

"I'm playing no cricket there at present," he said.

"You're not! How's that?"

Rushden smiled ruefully.

"We've had trouble in the family," he explained. "I put up a putrid show the other day, and they've chucked me out of the eleven!"

"The crass idiots!" said the major.

"Look here, Brown—"

"My name's Rushden," smiled the prefect.

"You're playing under an assumed name?"

"Yes."

"Shall you be playing for the Ramblers again?"

"I've just promised their skipper I'll turn out whenever he wants me."

"Good!" said the major. "I mean to keep my eye on you, young man!"

"Why?" asked Rushden, in some alarm.

The major's eyes twinkled.

"We'll want you one day for the County!"

CHAPTER 7.

After Lights Out!

RUSHDEN walked back to St. Jim's in high feather.

He was feeling very bucked with life.

Only a few days before he had been seedy and off-colour. But his vitality

had returned to him in full force, and he felt ready for anything.

Major Dyer's words had not been idly spoken.

He—Philip Rushden—might one day be called upon to play for the County!

The Sixth-Former turned almost giddy at the thought.

In the past he had always been in the front rank of St. Jim's cricketers, but he had never considered himself to be anything approaching the standard of a county cricketer.

Yet he had been in capital form that afternoon; so, after all, it was not surprising that he had attracted the attention of one of the Leamshire directors.

Rushden resolved to put in all the practice he could get.

He would show St. Jim's that he was not the "dud" that many of the fellows imagined him to be. He would play for the Ramblers on every possible occasion, and later on his dream might come true, and he might be included in the Leamshire team as an amateur. He had the necessary birth qualification, and he felt more and more convinced as he strode along that he had the necessary cricketing ability.

The day of the Greyfriars match dawned at length.

Most of the fellows were curious to see how Rushden would take his omission from the team. They wanted to see his face as Knox took the field in his stead.

But the pleasure was denied them.

After dinner Rushden packed up a few necessities in a haversack, and cycled to a small town on the Sussex coast where Wayland Ramblers had an away match.

It was a fairly long cycle ride, and Rushden was doubtful if he would get back in decent time to St. Jim's. But he decided to chance that.

The senior was feeling fairly fagged when he reached his destination. But a rest revived him, and as Wayland were batting first, and he was a good way down the list, he had ample time to pull himself together.

It was a two-innings match this time, and Rushden's spell of good fortune continued.

In the first innings he made 42, and in the second innings 70, not out.

It was this latter score which won the match for the Ramblers.

Major Dyer was again present, and his good opinion of Rushden grew.

"I can practically promise you a place in the County team for the match with the M.C.C.," he said.

"Oh, good!" said Rushden.

He felt as if he were dreaming.

How Kildare would gasp when he knew!

Rushden, considered too big a duffer for the St. Jim's Eleven, playing for the County!

"You have the necessary birth qualification, I suppose?" said the major.

Rushden nodded.

"Of course, sir," he said. "I should only be able to play in one match. The Head might put his foot down if he knew—"

"Quite so—quite so! As a matter of fact, I don't suppose you would be wanted again after the M.C.C. match. Leamshire will be a very strong side when all their players are back from the Army. Meanwhile, they are below strength, and that's why I think I can fit you in for the match with the M.C.C."

Rushden's eyes sparkled.

"I should love to play for the County!" he said.

"I'm sure of it, my boy. But you mustn't be too optimistic. Very few men have done anything really brilliant in their first county match. You will go in last, you see, and you will be up against

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Rushden was in the act of untrapping his pike when a hand fell upon his shoulder. Looking up he saw a middle-aged gentleman of military bearing. "A capital display, by gad!" said the stranger. (See Chapter 6.)

howling very different from the stuff you've faced this afternoon. Anyway, I'll write and let you know if you're selected to play in the County team."

"I'm awfully grateful to you, sir!" said Rushden.

And he started on his journey back to St. Jim's.

It was a long ride, and the sun was already beginning to sink over the Sussex downs.

Rushden rode hard, but he was dogged by bad luck.

Pop!

"Oh my hat!" murmured the prefect, in dismay, as his back tyre dragged in the dust.

The puncture was a bad one, and it took the best part of an hour to mend it satisfactorily.

Dusk began to fall.

"It means a late night," thought Rushden. "Some of the fellows will think I've been out on the tiles!"

Progress was difficult in the gloom, and there were several stiff hills to surmount.

Ten was chiming out from the old clock-tower when Rushden dismounted at the gates of St. Jim's.

Taggles shuffled out of his lodge to unlock the gates.

"Which I don't 'old with, these 'ere late 'ours, Master Rushden!" said the porter, with a solemn shake of his head.

"Rats! I've not been imbibing the juice of the juniper, if that's what you mean!" said Rushden.

Before Taggles could reply, the prefect was swallowed up in the darkness of the quadrangle.

Rushden stowed his bicycle away in the shed, and went along to the Sixth-Form passage.

A light was burning in Kildare's study.

Rushden tapped on the door.

"Come in!" growled the captain of St. Jim's. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he added, as Rushden entered. "I've been waiting up for you."

"Sorry!"

"When prefects start drifting in after locking-up time," said Kildare, "one can't wonder at the juniors doing ditto."

"Don't get huffy!" said Rushden.

"How did the Greyfriars match go?"

"We were licked."

"Oh!"

"Knox let us down," explained Kildare briefly.

Rushden smiled rather grimly. "I'm not the only failure, then?" he said.

"I don't know that you would have performed much better than Knox," said Kildare.

Rushden chuckled.

He wondered what Kildare would have said had he known that he was addressing a fellow who had just returned from an important match with two big scores to his credit.

"Look here!" said the captain of St. Jim's, looking hard at Rushden. "It has been suggested to me by Knox that you've been out on the razzle this evening."

Rushden's lip curled contemptuously.

"I guessed Knox would put in a good word for me," he said. "You believe him, of course?"

"I don't believe him. I merely wanted your assurance to the contrary—that was all."

"Well, I haven't developed into a bold, bad blade just yet. Of course, there's no knowing what may happen. With a little

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practice I may become an expert gambler. Who knows?"

"Don't rot!" said Kildare. "You've satisfied me that you're playing a straight game. As a matter of fact, I should have been very much surprised to learn otherwise. You've run badly to seed at cricket; but you're not that sort of a rotter."

"Thanks!" said Rushden. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" grunted Kildare. And Rushden went to bed with the feeling that he had deserved well of his country.

CHAPTER 8.

Glorious News!

"LETTER for you, Rushden!" Jameson of the Third brought the missive along to Rushden's study.

The fag was finding his master a very cheerful person these days; and he couldn't understand it.

Considering that Rushden was barred by half his Form, and exiled from the First Eleven, it was surprising that he should seem merry and bright.

Rushden turned the letter over in his hand.

The handwriting was unfamiliar.

"Who on earth—" began Rushden. And then he remembered that Major Dyer had promised to write.

Ripping open the envelope, the prefect glanced eagerly at the contents:

"My dear Rushden,—I have approached the directors of the Leamshire Cricket Club on your behalf, and they have expressed their willingness for you to be included in the Leamshire County team for the match with the M.C.C., which will be played on Friday and Saturday.

"Your headmaster has also been approached, and he has consented for you to have two days off from St. Jim's."

"I feel sure, judging by your recent displays, that you will give a good account of yourself."

"Good luck!"

"Yours sincerely,

"KENNETH DYER (Major)."

Rushden drew a deep breath.

For a moment the study seemed to spin round him.

He—the man who had let the School House down—who was regarded as a feeble and indifferent cricketer—had been selected to play for a county!

What would Kildare say?

What would St. Jim's in general say when they heard what had come to pass?

But he would not tell them—not yet, at any rate. They should find out the facts for themselves.

"Oh, it's great—great!" murmured Rushden, executing a jazz on the study carpet.

And then, with a flush of self-consciousness, he noticed that Jameson was still standing in the doorway, staring in stupefied surprise at the prefect.

"You can cut off, kid!" said Rushden hastily.

Jameson still lingered.

"Scat!" said Rushden.

"I—I say, Rushden, are you feeling quite well?"

"Of course, you young idiot!"

"You—you're not going potty, by any chance?"

"Potty!" gasped Rushden.

Jameson nodded.

"When I saw you hopping backwards and forwards I thought you might have bats in your belly!"

"Get out!"

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Rushden picked up a cricket-stump so suddenly that Jameson promptly fled.

A few moments later he returned, and poked his head cautiously round the study door.

"The Head wants to see you, Rushden!"

"All serene!"

The Sixth-Former went along to the Head's study.

He guessed why he was wanted—and he guessed rightly.

Dr. Holmes greeted him with a smile.

"Come in, Rushden! I have had a letter from an old friend of mine—Major Dyer—who is a director of the Leamshire Cricket Club. I understand that your services are required in the County team against the M.C.C."

"That's so, sir."

"This is a very high honour, Rushden."

"I realise that, sir."

"Although it is not unheard-of for senior boys at public schools to take part in county cricket, this is the first time the services of a St. Jim's boy have been requisitioned. Your cricketing ability must be distinctly above the average, Rushden."

Rushden smiled.

He was wondering what Kildare would have said to that.

"I have informed Major Dyer," the Head went on, "that you are at liberty to take part in the match in question—as an amateur, of course. You will not be wanted for any future matches; so this appears to be your great opportunity, Rushden. I hope you will take advantage of it to the full."

"Rely on me, sir!" said Rushden.

"I shall be most interested to hear how you acquit yourself," said Dr. Holmes. "I fear, however, that you will have little opportunity to accomplish anything startling. You will be among so many distinguished players that there will be little scope for individual achievement on your part. However, I know you will do your best. That is all, Rushden."

"Thank you, sir!"

Rushden quitted the Head's study, and collided with a fat form in the passage.

"Trimble! You spying young toad, what—"

"Shurrup!" hissed Baggy Trimble, in tones of terror. "The Head will hear you!"

Rushden grasped the fat junior by the ear with his thumb and forefinger and whisked him out into the quadrangle.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo my ear!"

"You were listening at the keyhole!" said Rushden, in disgust.

"Ow! I—I wasn't—I didn't—" gasped Baggy. "I didn't hear the Head give you permission to play for the county—in fact, I didn't hear a word!"

Rushden hurled the spy of the Fourth away from him in contempt.

Baggy Trimble alighted on the flagstones with a bump and a roar, and Rushden strode on.

But the mischief had been done.

It would be impossible now to keep the affair a secret. Trimble would spread the story of Rushden's good fortune all over St. Jim's.

The fat junior lost no time.

His first visit was to Study No. 10 on the Shell passage.

"I say, you chaps—"

"There's nothing for tea!" said Monty Lowther shortly. "The last high kipper and the last stale sardine have been given to the kitchen cat."

"I say—"

"Travel!"

"Oh, all right!" said Baggy. "If you don't want to hear about Rushden playing for England—"

"Wh-a-at?"

"Rushden's going to play cricket for England!" said Baggy Trimble impressively. "I heard the Head tell him so just now."

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"What utter rot!" said Manners.

"It's true," said Baggy Trimble.

"Rushden's playing for England!"

"Why not make it the world?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's not Friday and Saturday off, and the Head slapped him on the back, and wished him the best of luck," said Trimble.

"You fatheaded chump!" said Manners wrathfully.

"Do you think we're going to swallow a yarn like that? England aren't playing on Friday and Saturday, to start with. You're off your rocker!"

"Oh, really, Manners! It—it must be Leamshire, then. Yes, that was the team. Rushden's playing for Leamshire against the M.C.C.!"

"Rats!"

"It's like your cheek, to bring your fairytales to this study!" said Tom Merry. "Bump him, you fellows!"

The Terrible Three rose as one man, and Baggy Trimble went whirling out on to the fineleum.

"Yaroooooh! Beasts! Rotters! I'll jolly well—"

Slam!

And the remainder of Trimble's remarks were addressed to the closed door of Study No. 10.

But Baggy, who could never keep anything to himself for long, spread the amazing tidings throughout the junior studies.

A few of the fellows thought there might be something in it, but the majority concluded that Baggy Trimble was romancing.

Anyway, the fat junior received far more kicks than pence as the result of his latest titbit of information; and, although the news travelled to the sacred precincts of the Sixth Form passage, nobody set any store by it.

The general opinion was that Trimble was talking out of his hat.

But there was a surprise in store for St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

The Road to Fame!

ON the following Friday there was a vacant place in the Sixth Form-room.

The Sixth were being steered through a difficult course of Greek. But Rushden was otherwise engaged.

Even then Kildare and the others had no suspicion of what was really happening. They imagined that Rushden was unwell, or that he had been granted a few days' absence by the Head.

As a matter of fact, Rushden had been up with the lark, and had taken the train to Burchester, where the great match was to be played.

He was feeling in excellent trim.

Come what may, he would give St. Jim's cause to be proud of him.

He was introduced to the Leamshire players on reaching the ground. They were a mixed lot, but keen as mustard.

Rushden joined in the preliminary practice, and whilst this was in progress the spectators began to put in an appearance.

When the match was due to start, Rushden estimated the attendance at about a couple of thousand. Not a very big crowd as crowds go, but sufficient to give a fellow stage-fright unless he has his nerves in good control.

The M.C.C. had sent down a good side.

Rushden felt a thrill when he first caught sight of their blazers.

The M.C.C. blazer, with its outstanding orange stripe, stood for all that was best and most brilliant in cricket. Here, on the Burchester ground, the St. Jim's prefect came face to face with the representatives of the finest cricket club in the world—the club which makes the laws of cricket—laws which are obeyed throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire.

The M.C.C. captain, winning the toss, decided to bat first.

"Good!" murmured Rushden.

He wanted to be up and doing. The suspense was becoming almost intolerable.

Rather than cool his heels in the pavilion, waiting his turn to bat, he preferred to take the field at once.

It was an altogether novel experience for Rushden.

Although one of the biggest fellows at St. Jim's, he felt quite an infant amongst these giants of the game.

He was detailed to field at point, a position in which it was necessary to be very alert and wide awake.

"There aren't going to be any muffed catches this time!" Rushden told himself.

The first two M.C.C. men came down the pavilion steps.

They were solid-looking men, and Rushden hoped they would not stay long. His hopes were ill-founded.

At the luncheon interval the first-wicket partnership had not been disturbed, and the score stood at 120.

Rushden had fielded cleanly and swiftly. But nothing in the nature of a catch had come his way, and he had begun to feel small and insignificant.

After the luncheon interval, however, the game took a startling turn.

The Leamshire bowlers returned to the attack with great vigour, and the M.C.C. wickets fell so rapidly that the side was finally dismissed for 180.

Rushden had brought off one catch. It was high up, and he had just got his left hand to it.

Major Dyer clapped the St. Jim's prefect on the shoulder as he came into the pavilion.

"You're shaping splendidly," he said.

Rushden grinned.

"I've had nothing to do yet," he said.

"Why, your fielding was excellent! I only hope you do as well in the batting department."

Rushden hoped so, too.

As he sat in the pavilion, and watched the first Leamshire pair walking out to the wickets, his thoughts turned to St. Jim's, and to his fellow-prefects swotting in the musty Form-room. He was well out of that, anyway.

But Rushden's reflections were cut short by an alarming turn of events.

The Leamshire wickets were going down fast.

A fat, good-natured-looking man was bowling for the M.C.C. He did not look a dangerous bowler, but the ball whizzed along the turf as if possessed by demons. Leamshire were doing badly.

With five good wickets down the score was only 32.

And then the captain—a young Army officer named Williams—went in and stopped the rot. He hit out vigorously, and, although the fat man sent down some wicked lobs, they were treated with scant respect.

The ninth wicket fell at length, with the score at 95.

Rushden's hands trembled slightly as he buckled on his pads.

It was his turn now!

He prayed that he might not make a fool of himself.

"Good luck!" sang out Major Dyer, as the St. Jim's senior made his way on to the pitch.

The field closed in a little as Rushden took his stand. They did not anticipate that this very youthful-looking county player would give them much trouble.

Rushden swiftly deceived them.

He hit the first ball to leg for two, and a thrill of satisfaction passed through him as he ran.

He had broken his duck, at least!

The fat man looked grim. He was not accustomed to having his bowling knocked about by the last man in.

His next ball was deadly. Rushden just managed to get his bat to it in time.

But the St. Jim's fellow survived the over; and the captain of Leamshire, who was still batting, nodded his approval.

Gradually, Rushden fought down the feeling of nervousness which assailed him. He got into his stride, and his score began to put on flesh.

The M.C.C. men began to look anxious. They had not bargained for a lengthy last-wicket partnership of this sort.

Rushden took few liberties with the fat man; but the other bowler was less deadly, and the prefect warmed to his work.

Boundaries were not so easy to get as on the St. Jim's ground; but Rushden amote three or four at intervals; and the applause of the crowd rang pleasantly in his ears.

He had kept no mental record of his score; but he knew that it was becoming quite a respectable one.

The captain of Leamshire murmured to him once, whilst they were crossing the pitch:

"That's topping! You're keeping your end up fine!"

And then the fat man, with an evil smile hovering on his lips, shattered the Leamshire captain's wicket.

The score was 170—only ten runs behind the M.C.C.'s total for the first innings.

That evening the thunderbolt descended upon St. Jim's.

It was Cardew of the Fourth who first learned of Rushden's performance.

Cardew had biked into Rylcombe for an evening paper; for he was interested in a certain county match.

Glancing under the heading of "Cricket," he was startled to see the following:

"SCHOOLBOY'S BRILLIANT DEBUT!

SPLENDID SCORES BY WILLIAMS AND RUSHDEN!"

"Rushden!" murmured Cardew.

"That's not our Rushden, surely?"

But a survey of the paragraph revealed the fact that it was.

"The match between Leamshire and the M.C.C. was productive of some keen cricket, and those people who are constantly agitating for the game to be brightened would have had an object-lesson had they attended the famous Burchester ground to-day.

"Going in first, on a good wicket, the M.C.C. put together 180.

"Leamshire started badly, and Williams, their captain, aided by P. Rushden of St. Jim's—who made his first appearance in county cricket—saved the side from early disaster. Williams scored 72, and Rushden contributed a meritorious 38, not out.

"Play will be resumed to-morrow morning at eleven."

Cardew stared at that paragraph with fascinated eyes.

It took a good deal to impress Ralph

Reckness Cardew, as a rule; but he was impressed now.

"Rushden!" he exclaimed. "Rushden—of St. Jim's!"

And he kept repeating the name to himself like a parrot.

That evening, all St. Jim's knew what was happening at Burchester.

Kildare heard, and gasped.

Tom Merry & Co. heard, and were jubilant.

"Trimble was right, then, after all," said Manners.

"I knew old Rushden would make the merry critics sing small," said Monty Lowther. "My hat! We must go over to Burchester to-morrow, and see the finish of the match."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Fancy old Rushden playing for Leamshire!"

"He's not good enough for St. Jim's, but he seems to be good enough for the county," said Manners. "Thirty-eight, not out, by Jove!"

The excitement grew, and quite a number of fellows, including Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, made up their minds to accompany Tom Merry & Co. to Burchester next day.

Philip Rushden was coming into his own at last.

CHAPTER 10.

Rushden's Day.

SATURDAY dawned—a day of sunny splendour.

Most of the St. Jim's fellows were astir at an early hour.

All roads led to Burchester.

Kildare and Darrel and Baker, of the Sixth, travelled by train. Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co. covered the distance by cycle. And Aubrey Racke, though not a bit interested in Rushden, chartered a car, for the purpose of "makin' a splash," as he called it.

Crooke and Mellish and Scrope accompanied Racke in the car; but as the vehicle broke down three times en route, the blades of the School House were no better off than anybody else.

Except, perhaps, George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy's notions of travelling were decidedly novel. He had arranged for the station cab to convey him and his two study-mates—Wilkins and Gunn—to Burchester.

Unfortunately, Grundy's method of transportation proved a complete failure.

The very ancient cab, driven by the very ancient driver, crawled along the country roads at a snail's pace. In vain George Alfred Grundy pointed out the necessity for swiftness. The prehistoric horse refused to exceed the speed of four miles an hour.

Shortly before eleven o'clock Burchester was besieged by St. Jim's fellows. By road and rail, in groups and clusters, they had come to see Rushden play for the county.

Rushden himself was feeling in fine fettle after a long night's sleep.

It had not occurred to him that his schoolfellows had heard of his achievements through the Press.

When the M.C.C. started on their second innings, and Rushden came out of the pavilion with the rest of the Leamshire fieldsmen, he was astonished to hear a ringing cheer, coupled with shouts of:

"Good old Rushden!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

And then Rushden observed the familiar caps of the St. Jim's fellows, and he understood. They had come along to see him play. He fervently hoped that he would give them their money's worth.

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Kildare, Darrel, and Parker had a bench to themselves.

The captain of St. Jim's had been knocked off of a heap overnight by the news concerning Rushden. He had, in fact, declined to believe it until he saw Rushden with his own eyes. Even now, as he watched his fellow-prefect going quietly to his place at point, Kildare felt that he must be dreaming.

The M.C.C. were in happy scoring vein.

It was a batsman's wicket, and they made the most of it.

Runs came quickly, and fifty had appeared on the telegraph-board when Rushden, whipping up the ball and hurling it in with one swift movement, caused one of the batsmen to be run out.

"Bai Jove! Did you see that, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Of course we saw it, fathead!" said Tom Merry. "Rushden's all there! Give him a cheer!"

And the sound of the juniors' voices floated out to Rushden, who smiled his acknowledgments.

The St. Jim's prefect had plenty of work to do up to the luncheon interval, and he was rarely at fault.

No catches came his way, but his ground-work was a delight. And he was backed up by an excellent cover-point.

There was room for improvement, however, in the Loamshire bowling. The M.C.C. men made hay of it, for the most part, and at the interval their score was 205, with six wickets down.

The St. Jim's fellows wandered into the town for lunch, well satisfied with what they had seen. There could be no doubt that Rushden had just fied his inclusion in the county team.

"My tweat, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, as he led the way into a restaurant. "I'm afraid I said wotten things about Wushden when he played in the House match. Although a fellow of tact an' judgment as a general wule, I was quite w'ong that time, an' Tom Mewwy was quita wight!"

"Nothing strange about that!" said Monty Lowther. "Our Tommy's always right. It's only silly asses like you and Blake who are ever offside!"

"Weally, Lowthah! I vewy much wesent—"

"Jawing when there's eating to be done!" said Lowther. "So do I! Mine's a cold fowl with a dash of pickles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The meal progressed merrily. The juniors had to wait rather a long time, for their demands were so many and varied that the manager could scarcely cope with them.

When they got back to the ground they found that the match had been resumed, and that two more M.C.C. wickets had fallen.

The last two men, however, gave a good deal of trouble, and when they were eventually sent back to the pavilion Loamshire were faced with a big uphill task. They wanted 270 runs to give them the victory.

"Looks like a win for the M.C.C.!" said Figgins.

"Or a draw!" suggested Kerr.

"There's precious little hope for Loamshire, anyway!" said Fatty Wynn.

At the end of an hour Fatty Wynn's opinion was shared by most of the spectators.

The fat man from the M.C.C. had been causing considerable damage.

Runs were not easy to get, and wickets fell at fairly frequent intervals.

But, again, the Loamshire captain stepped into the breach.

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He caused the fat man to perspire and to murmur things under his breath. And he scored so freely that after a time the plump bowler was taken off, and another man took his place.

The change was for the worse.

The Loamshire skipper's rate of scoring increased, and it began to look as if the County had a sporting chance, after all.

"That fellow Williams is great!" said Tom Merry. "He's played in county cricket for donkey's years now, but he seems to be a sort of Peter Pan, and never gets any older."

"Look at him!" said Monty Lowther. "He's as lively as Gussy when a jumping-cracker's been let off behind him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you wottah! Pway weserve your wotten jokes for the Comic Column in the 'Weekly'! I wegard them as bein' quite out of place heah!"

"So's your sports coat, old top!" said Lowther cheerfully. "I believe it was the sight of that horrible pepper-and-salt pattern that put that fat chap off his bowling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!" said Manners suddenly.

The evergreen Williams had jumped out of his crease, and he lifted the ball in the direction of the St. Jim's juniors.

"Heads!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors averted backwards, with the result that the bench on which they were seated toppled over, bearing its human freight with it in its fall.

"Yaroooooh!"

There was a roar of anguish from the victims.

"Gwooooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway wemove your feet fwom my chest, Hewwies!"

"Bless your chest!" growled Harries. "Some silly ass has got his fist in my neck!"

"My eyeglass—"

"Burst your eyeglass!"

The juniors sorted themselves out with difficulty.

By the time order was restored another Loamshire wicket had fallen. But it was not the capta'n's.

And then there was a stir among the St. Jim's spectators as Rushden, padded and gloved, strode on to the pitch.

In view of his good performance in the first innings, he had been given an earlier position on the batting-list.

"Play up, Rushden!"

It was a unanimous chorus from the whole of the St. Jim's fellows. Rushden detected the voice of Kildare among the rest.

He passed on to the wicket with no trace of the nervousness he had felt the previous day.

Williams crossed over and spoke to him as he took his stand.

"Hit out!" he murmured. "That's the only game to play now!"

Rushden obeyed, with the result that he was very nearly stumped in the first minute.

After this lucky escape, however, he made no mistakes.

For half an hour he thoroughly enjoyed himself at the wicket.

And then the fat man came on to bowl again.

Rushden smiled. He felt that the wiles of the fat man would be wasted upon him.

Williams, however, was ill at ease, and in trying to pull the ball to the boundary he was cleverly caught at square-leg.

A tempest of applause greeted the Loamshire skipper as he entered the pavilion. His exhibition of fireworks had improved the County's position immensely.

Only fifty runs were needed now. But the light was beginning to fail, and there were but three more batsmen to go in.

"Can they possibly do it?" muttered Tom Merry.

Rushden seemed to think so.

He opened his shoulders to the bowling, and each moment the margin grew less.

The St. Jim's fellows looked on in wonder.

Was this really Rushden—the fellow who had been boycotted from the First Eleven?

It seemed incred'ble that a fellow who had come to grief in a House match should be able to hold his own against the M.C.C.'s best bowlers.

But Rushden more than held his own.

Two more wickets fell, but he remained.

He felt that the game was in his hands—that it was for him to make or mar the issue.

The fatuous smile which had adorned the fat man's face at the outset had now vanished. He looked more like weeping as Rushden despatched two of his balls in succession to the boundary.

"Only ten more wanted!" said Manners at length. "If only Rushden's partner can keep his end up—"

The last man in on the Loamshire side seemed quite capable of doing that.

He put a straight bat in front of every ball, and left the hitting to Rushden.

The St. Jim's sen or slowed up a little. The light was not good, and he wanted to make sure of the remaining runs.

And then the fat man sent down a loose ball.

Rushden ran out at it, and once again the heads of the St. Jim's juniors were in jeopardy.

Four more runs wanted!

Rushden got two of them off the next ball.

And then, off the last ball of the over, he scored the winning hit.

The ball sped out into the long-field, and the batsmen crossed twice.

The game was over and won.

Loamshire County had defeated the M.C.C. by one wicket!

"Rushden's made fifty!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Come on, you fellows. Carry him out!"

Rushden, who saw what was coming, strove vainly to hide himself behind the M.C.C. fieldsmen as they came off.

A moment later he was swept off his feet by a horde of excited juniors, and carried off in triumph to the pavilion.

And up in the Press-box a certain sporting scribe was penning a vivid account of how a practically unknown schoolboy had made his first and last appearance for Loamshire, and, batting with the vigour of a Jessop and the judgment of a Hobbs, had won the match for the County!

CHAPTER 11.

All Serene!

AN hour later, refreshed by a bath and a feed, Rushden of the Sixth boarded the train at Burchester Station.

He felt that it was good to be alive. His ambition had been realised; his dream had come true.

The Head had told him that there would be little opportunity of distinguishing himself in a county match. But he had done so.

True, he had experienced a good measure of luck. But there had been merit in his achievement, as well—merit enough to cause Major Dyer to remark that Rushden had a rosy future before him in the world of cricket.

Settling himself in a corner seat of the railway-carriage, Rushden began to weave visions of the future.

He pictured himself, in the years ahead, as a permanent member of a county team.

When that time came—if it ever did come—he would not be content with scoring thirties and fifties. Centuries would stand to his credit. He might even become one of the giants of county cricket.

Rushden was roused from these reflections by the sudden entry into the carriage of Kildare, Darrel, and Baker.

The three seniors were looking decidedly sheepish.

"Rushden, old scout," said Kildare quietly, "we want you to kick us—hard!"

Rushden grinned.

"This isn't the fatter season!" he said.

"Look here," said Darrel, "we've been a set of champion asses! We caused you to be kicked out of the First Eleven because we thought you'd forgotten how to play cricket. We voted you a hopeless failure. And now you've astonished the natives by piling up runs—"

"For a county!" said Baker. "My hat! What priceless asses we've been!"

"Cut it short!" said Rushden. "I've done nothing for you to make a song about."

"Nothing!" gasped Darrel. "My only aunt! You've done what no other St. Jim's fellow has ever done, or is ever likely to do. I—I simply can't get over it!"

"Nor I!" said Kildare. "How on earth did you come to play for Leamshire?"

"It was sheer luck," said Rushden. "I got into the good books of one of the directors when I was playing for Wayland Ramblers. He gave me a leg up, and there you are. I got into the County team, and my luck held good. There's nothing to shout from the house-tops about. Any ass could go in and put together a few runs against tired bowlers."

"I'm not so sure," said Kildare. "I'm pretty certain I should have come a cropper against the M.C.C., anyway."

"Same here!" said Darrel.

"It's up to me to apologise," said Kildare, "for being so beastly to you about that House match. I might have known you were feeling groggy at the time. But I didn't stop to think. I went for you bald-headed, and—"

"Least said soonest mended!" said

Rushden. "I felt a bit sore about it at first, but there's no need to harp on the subject any more."

"It would serve us jolly well right," said Kildare, "if you refused to come back to the First Eleven, after what's happened."

"Rats! Of course I shall come back to the eleven—if you'll have me, that is!"

"Hark at him!" said Baker. "If we'll have him! My hat!"

"We're playing a team of Old Boys next week," said Kildare. "They're bringing down a hot side, and I've got to rake together the strongest team possible. Can I count you in, Rushden?"

"Of course!"

Rushden extended his hand, with a frank smile. Kildare took it in a tight grip.

And so the breach was healed, and Rushden returned to his old position in the First Eleven.

Kildare was not likely to doubt Rushden's cricketing ability again.

A week later the Old Boys came, saw, and were conquered.

The St. Jim's First Eleven played a great game, and the batting honours rested chiefly with Kildare and Rushden.

The only person who was dissatisfied at the result was Knox of the Sixth.

Knox had contracted a little wager with one of his sporting friends that the Old Boys—who included several distinguished players in their ranks—would win.

The Old Boys didn't, and neither did Knox! And the black sheep of the Sixth had to pay, though he found it difficult to look pleasant.

But nobody cared a rap about Knox just then.

The main topic of conversation at St. Jim's centred upon Rushden of the Sixth.

Seniors and juniors alike crowded their congratulations upon him.

The Terrible Three even went so far as to invite Rushden to a study spread.

It was almost unheard-of for a senior—and a prefect at that—to honour a Shell study with his presence.

But Rushden, although he had said nothing, had not been unmindful of the fact that Tom Merry & Co. had stood by him in his dark hour.

When the majority of the fellows were against him, the Terrible Three had never wavered. And, on the strength of their loyalty, Rushden readily consented

to be the guest of honour at a study spread.

It was a very merry repast, and it looked as if Dame Taggles' entire stock had been transplanted to Tom Merry's study.

Fatty Wynn was sent for to do the cooking, and the dishes he served up were faultless.

"This is very decent of you kids," said Rushden, who occupied the place of honour at the head of the table.

"Rats!"

"It isn't every day that a County player drops in to tea!" said Monty Lowther.

"No, rather not!" said Manners.

"But I only played for the county once, you silly young duffers—"

"And you played like a giddy Trojan!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"Why, even Jack Hobbs wouldn't have been ashamed of such an innings!"

"Flattery, thy name is Merry!" said Rushden, with a smile. "My performance was merely a fluke!"

"You seem to be having a good many flukes just lately, then!" grinned Manners. "You'll be saying your big score against the Old Boys was a fluke next!"

"It isn't often that old Kildare's guilty of an error of judgment," said Tom Merry, "but he fairly put his foot in it when he chucked you out of the First Eleven!"

"It wasn't Kildare's fault," said Rushden stoutly. "I was off-colour in the House match, and he jumped to the conclusion that my form had suffered. Cricket captains are not infallible. They make mistakes, like the rest of us."

"I'm jolly glad Kildare woke up to his mistake, anyway!" said the captain of the Shell.

The feed progressed merrily.

Happiness and great good-humour prevailed on every side.

And when Tom Merry proposed, in ringing tones, a toast to Rushden of the Sixth, a cheer went up which echoed and re-echoed through the study, and rang very pleasantly in the ears of the fellow who had made an unexpected entry into the limelight, and who had achieved great things on the field of play for School and County!

THE END.

(Don't miss Next Wednesday's Great

School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at

St. Jim's—"THE HEART OF A

HERO!"—by Martin Clifford.)



THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!

By FRANK NUGENT.

1. COMING over to Courtfield to-night, you fellows?"

Harry Wharton glanced inquiringly at the other members of that select community known to posterity as the Famous Five.

"No," I said promptly.

"What about you, Johnny?"

"Too much fog," yawned Johnny Bull.

"You'll come, won't you, Bob?"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"For once in a way," he said, "I've expended all my store of energy on the

cricket-field. I couldn't walk into Courtfield to save my life."

Harry Wharton gave a grunt of disappointment.

"There's a grand detective drama showing at the cinema," he said. "Sutton Blake, you

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know. It's worth a jolly good walk to see. Coming along, Inky?"

"I prefer to restfully recline on the estomped sofa," murmured Hurree Singh.

"You lazy slacker!"

"I bag the armchair," said Bob Cherry. "Armchairs are topping when the toil of a long day is o'er."

Wharton snorted.

"You're a set of dreamy, dozey idiots!" he said impatiently. "I suppose I've got to spend the evening in my own company?"

"Be not angry with us, O King!" said Bob. "Fact is, I'd simply love to see the Sexton Blake film, and I know there are crowds of other fellows who would revel in it; but it can't be did. It's too far to walk, and my bike's in dock for repair."

"Likewise mine," said Johnny Bull.

"Besides, biking on a night like this is out of the question," I said. "It's blowing great guns, and as black as pitch."

"A taxi!" cried Bob Cherry. "My kingdom for a taxi!"

"Taxis are like houses these days—jolly hard to get," I said. "There are no vehicles at all, as a matter of fact. And I'm fed up with walking."

"I guess you're not the only one, Nugent."

Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior, had suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Where will you have it, Fishy?" inquired Bob Cherry, picking up a cushion.

"Oh, come off, Cherry! I guess I've come hither on business. I've been thinking—"

"Go home!"

"And I reckon that this sleepy old place wants lugging up some! When we want to go to Courtfield we've got to hoof it. There's no taxis, no transport, no nothing. I soter guess I'll speed things up."

"You!" said Wharton. "What can you do?"

"Lots," said Fishy. "In fact, I reckon I can get to grips with the whole trouble. I've got a wheeze."

"Get it off your chest!" we exclaimed in unison.

Fisher T. Fish paused, and looked at us impressively.

"I shall organise," he said, "a motor service between Greyfriars and Courtfield."

Harry Wharton gasped. Bob Cherry chuckled. Johnny Bull grunted.

"Yes don't seem to catch on," complained Fish.

"We don't!" said Bob Cherry frankly.

"But—but it's a gilt-edged stunt!" exclaimed Fish.

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, go home!" said Johnny Bull, in disgust. "How do you think you're going to get hold of a motor, to begin with?"

"I shall leave that to my popper. He's staying in London just now, and he's rolling in dollars—as usual. He'll fork out and buy me a motor-char-a-banc."

"And supposing he did," I said, "who would drive it?"

"I should. I guess I can tackle any old thing that runs on wheels."

"But what would the masters say?"

"Don't know, and don't care. All I know is, I'm going to get that 'bus."

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Pass right inside, please! No more room on top! Yes, ma'am, this runs right through to the Elephant!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fishy, old man, you're a scream!" said Wharton.

"Look here!" roared Fish wrathfully. "If you galeots persist in regarding this as a joke, I shan't let you ride on the 'bus at all!"

"Good! That'll be five necks saved!" said the irrefrangible Bob.

Fish looked very annoyed, but none the less determined.

That evening he wrote to his "popper." The letter was duly despatched, and after that the incident of the motor-char-a-banc dropped.

Three days elapsed before the interest in the affair revived with startling suddenness. Mr. Quelch was conducting morning school, when a sudden rumbling noise came from the Close.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. Toot-toot!

"Why, bless my soul—"

Toot-toot-toot!

Mr. Quelch hurried to the window. About half the class followed his example.

The next moment there was a murmur of surprise.

A brand-new motor-char-a-banc, driven by a mechanic in oilskins, had rumbled to a halt outside.

"A motor-char-a-banc!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in astonishment.

"Oh, no, sir," said Bob Cherry blandly; "it's merely a new sort of Tank."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will take a hundred lines, Cherry!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

He turned once more to the window.

"It would appear that the man has lost his way," he said.

"Not a bit of it, sir!" chimed in Fishy.

"I guess that motor-char-a-banc belongs to me. It's my own property. I shall run it into Courtfield twice nightly, and it'll cost the passengers a tanner a time. Would you care to make a maiden trip, sir?"

"Fish!"

The expression on Mr. Quelch's face made Fishy jump.

"How dare you contemplate such an utterly absurd scheme, Fish!"

"It—it's a great stunt, sir," stammered Fish. "I guess it will save tons of time and trouble."

"But this is unheard-of! Have you Dr. Locke's permission to keep such a vehicle?"

"Nope. But the Head won't object, sir," said Fish confidently. "I guess he'll be very glad of a lift now and again."

"You are romancing, Fish!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

Fish shook his head.

"This is a cold business proposition, sir," he said.

"But even supposing that Dr. Locke permitted you to keep a motor-char-a-banc, do you imagine for one moment that you would be allowed to drive it?"

"I guess I'm a first-rate driver, sir."

"Nonsense, Fish!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Where did you propose to store such a cumbersome vehicle?"

"I—I hadn't thought of that, sir. It could hang out in the Close for a bit, I reckon, and I'd cover it over with tarpaulin every night."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Am I to understand that your father arranged for this char-a-banc to be sent here, Fish?"

"My popper bought it for me, sir."

"Then he has shown a grave lack of discretion," said Mr. Quelch. "You had better go and dismiss the driver, and leave the vehicle where it is for the time being. I will consult Dr. Locke as to the advisability of its removal."

Fishy's jaw dropped.

"You—you're thinking of taking it away, sir?"

"Most certainly!"

Fishy went out of the Form-room looking very glum.

After a brief conversation with the driver of the char-a-banc, he returned; and morning lessons proceeded.

It certainly looked as if Fishy's brilliant scheme for starting a motor service at Greyfriars was doomed to early disaster!

II.

WHEN the Remove were dismissed, Fishy became the centre of a clamorous crowd.

"Lard cheese, Fishy!"

"No chance of a joy-ride, old scout!"

Fisher T. Fish looked grim. He had made up his mind not to surrender that motor-char-a-banc without a struggle.

"I guess the motor service will start to-night," he said.

"Rats!"

"You wouldn't have the nerve!"

"After what Quelch said—"

"Quelch's a Hun! He's a mouldy killjoy! I guess I'm taking no notice of Quelch! Nope! I'm going ahead!"

"Then the chopper will come down, and it will be your own fault," said Wharton.

"Shucks!"

We soon realised that Fishy meant business. On the notice-board, after dinner, the following staggering announcement appeared:

"NOTICE!"

THE GREYFRIARS MOTOR COMPANY!
Sole Manager—FISHER T. FISH.

"The new motor service will come into operation this evening."

"The motor-char-a-banc leaves Greyfriars at 5 p.m. for Friardale and Courtfield, stopping at the Cross Keys en route, for the convenience of a certain prefect."

"Fisher T. Fish will be the driver, and Horace Coker—by special arrangement—the conductor."

"The fare, for the whole route or any part thereof, will be a tanner. Any passenger who travels without paying his fare will get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"Masters may avail themselves of the motor-char-a-banc; but it must be clearly understood that the Company does not hold itself responsible for any broken necks, punctured ribs, or other slight injuries. Passengers travel entirely at their own risk."

"The motor-char-a-banc will return to Greyfriars to pick up all those who were too lame, sick, or lazy, to make the first journey."

"N.B.—It is quite in order to stand the driver a ginger-pop at each stopping-place."

"(Signed) FISHER T. FISH,
Sole Manager."

A chorus of excited exclamations arose.

"My hat!"

"What colossal nerve!"

"He's defying Quelch!"

Fishy was certainly coming out strong. We had not expected him to kick over the traces like this.

CUT THIS FRIDAY! FOUR GRAND NEW VOLUMES of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

No. 462. THE BACKING UP OF ST. ESMOND'S.
Topping School Yarn by S. S. GORDON.

No. 463. THE BOYS OF RAVENWOOD.
Splendid Tale of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

No. 464. RED DENNIS AND THE LOST WILL.
Two Stories of a Boxing Highwayman and a Famous Detective
By ANDREW SOUTAR and MAXWELL SCOTT.

No. 465. THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS.
A Grand Story of Frank Richards & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

PRICE FOURPENCE PER VOLUME!

Opinions were divided on the subject of the motor-char-a-banc.

Some fellows vowed that Fishy was stark, staring mad; others said it was a jolly good wheeze, and that they would back it up all they knew.

Anyway, there was certainly great enthusiasm when five o'clock came. Quite a crowd of fellows had turned up in the Close to see the char-a-banc start on its first journey.

The seniors were playing cricket, and Mr. Quelch was hammering away on the typewriter at his "History of Greyfriars." No one in authority had seen Fishy's announcement on the notice-board; and there were none to say him nay when he clambered up into the driver's seat.

Coker of the Fifth, who rather fancied himself as a conductor, stood on the step. "Hurry on, there!" he shouted.

Within two minutes the vehicle was packed, inside and out.

Fellows who had no desire whatever to go into Courtfield took their seats, merely for the sake of the ride.

It was useless to attempt to dissuade Fishy from his purpose. The Yankee junior had his eye on the sixpences, and he hoped to make quite a good haul as a result of the maiden trip.

The motor-char-a-banc rolled out of the old gateway.

Some of us followed behind on our bikes to see the fun.

"Fares, please!" rapped out Coker.

The passengers paid up promptly. Coker of the Fifth was several sorts of an ass; but he was not a fellow to be trifled with. And anyone who refused to pay up would probably go out of the char-a-banc a jolly sight quicker than they got in.

Fisher T. Fish seemed to have a very crude idea of driving the char-a-banc. He seemed to think the only thing that mattered was speed.

As a result, there were a good many bumpings and hutchings, and more than once a shrill scream of warning went up as the vehicle showed signs of skidding into the ditch.

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "I wouldn't be inside that bus for a whole term's pocket-money! I'm sure there will be some casualties in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At the first stopping-place half the passengers got out.

They had had enough. As Bob Cherry expressed it, they did not wish their remains to be sent home to their sorrowing parents in a matchbox.

Even Coker was alarmed by this time. When the vehicle lurched forward again, he shouted a few words of protest to the driver: "Go easy, Fishy! Do you want to upset the whole box of tricks?"

Fish checked, and quickened his pace. He meant to give a demonstration of Yankee "hustle."

It was as much as we could do to keep pace with the char-a-banc on our bikes. But we went all out, blinking and gasping in the cloud of dust which the vehicle sent up in the rear.

Presently the warning hoot of a horn sounded from the opposite direction.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "There's a motor-cyclist coming!"

"He'll have precious little chance of getting past!" said Wharton. "Fishy's monopolising the road."

The char-a-banc was lurching from one side of the road to the other in a most dangerous manner.

Inside, all was confusion. The perspiration was streaming down Coker's face, and he was yelling to Fish to slow up.

"Toot-toot!"

It was the motor-cyclist's horn again—nearer this time.

"Fishy's mad!" panted Johnny Bull. "He'll be had up for manslaughter before he's finished!"

It certainly looked like it. No motor-cyclist, however skilful, could hope to pass a cumbersome vehicle which persisted in taking up all the road.

We were looking rather scared now. At any moment we expected to hear a grinding collision.

And then, with a last despairing toot of the horn, the motor-cyclist came on.

But he did not attempt to squeeze past the motor-char-a-banc. Instead, he rode full-tilt into the hedge, and disappeared, machine and all, into the ditch.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET.
Every Monday.

THE BOYS' FRIEND.
Every Monday.

THE GEM.
Every Wed.

THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Friday.

CHUCKLES.
Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

GRAND WHITSUN HOLIDAY NUMBER NEXT WEEK!

Next Wednesday's issue of the GEM Library will provide the finest Bank Holiday fare. It will not be a Double Number—for I have no wish to make too big a demand upon the pocket-money of my chums. At the same time, it will be an issue which will compare favourably with a good many Double Numbers of the past—an issue which is worth three-halfpence of anybody's money, be he peer or peasant.

The chief attraction is, of course, the magnificent long, complete story of school life, entitled:

"THE HEART OF A HERO!"

By Martin Clifford.

Levison's charming sister Doris makes her appearance in this story. With the possible exception of cousin Ethel, no girl in fiction has such a hold on the affections of British boys and girls as Doris Levison.

Another character, equally popular as a member of the other sex, plays a strong part in the story. I refer to Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth.

The story tells how a party of juniors, in company with Doris Levison, sets out to explore the vaults beneath the castle. Aubrey Raake, in a fit of jealousy and rage, performs an almost criminal action, which would have been attended by terrible results to Doris Levison but for the courage and coolness of Cardew, who proves himself to possess

"THE HEART OF A HERO!"

This is a story which should add considerably to the charms of Bank Holiday.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

Will the circulation of the GEM Library revive with advancing weeks, or has my frank appeal in last week's Chat been in vain?

It is too early yet to ascertain whether our circulation has changed, either for better or worse. But I am not despairing, not by long chalks! As I said last week, I have sufficient faith in my loyal army of readers to know that they will put their shoulders to the wheel and ensure the permanent and continued success of one of the best—if not the best—boys' papers on the market.

A DARING SCHEME!

What Do You Think About It?

A reader of the "Boys' Friend" suggested a short time ago that a bumper volume should be produced containing stories by Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, Owen Conquest, and all the leading lights in the realm of boys' fiction.

This suggestion was seconded by a Sheffield reader, whose very interesting comments appear in this week's issue of the "Magnet" Library.

Every boy and girl who is interested in such a gigantic project should read the letter in question, and send me their views without delay.

If there is really a big demand among my readers for a huge volume, with long stories, profusely illustrated, of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood, etc., then I shall certainly tackle the scheme at once.

Such a volume, naturally, could not be had for a mere song. But with its many features, including beautiful art plates and photo-gravures, it would prove an admirable Christmas present; and if my chums really wanted it—and their uncles and aunts knew that they wanted it—I feel sure that it would go like hot cakes, and it would be hailed by all lovers of the Companion Papers as a thing of beauty and a joy for ever!

Send me your views on the project NOW!

A SERIAL BY YOUR EDITOR!

From "Sunny Jim," of Southport, comes the following amazing suggestion:

"Dear Editor,—Could you not write a serial in the GEM describing how the Companion Papers first started, how you met Martin

Clifford and Frank Richards and Owen Conquest, and giving your readers a glimpse of the personality of these fine writers?

"Such a serial would be a new and altogether unique departure, I know; but thousands of your chums would be delighted if you would lift the veil and show us how the work of the Companion Papers has been carried on since their inception.

Many of us are simply dying to know what sort of men our favourite authors are—whether they are tall or short, young or old, athletic or deformed, and all that sort of thing.

"Do be a sport, and give us a serial on these lines! If you entertain any doubt as to the reception such a serial would receive, put a notice in your Chat, and I guarantee your sanctum will be flooded out with letters of approval and delight.

"Don't hesitate, dear Editor.—Think of the masses who are yearning and clamouring for such a serial!"

"Believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"SUNNY JIM."

It will come as a surprise to "Sunny Jim" to know that his suggestion is not a new one.

From time to time readers have asked me to write a serial of my own, giving them an insight into the work and history of the Companion Papers.

So much pressure has been brought to bear upon me just lately in this respect that, in the words of the poet, "something will have to be done about it."

Will those in favour kindly signify in the usual manner?

"I THROW OUT THE CHALLENGE!" A Devonshire Clergyman's Rousing Letter!

From one of my numerous friends who wear the "cloth" comes the following interesting and appreciative letter:

"North Devon.

"Dear Editor.—As a Scot, a native of an ancient city about twenty-eight miles east of Falkirk, I must raise a protest at the unjust and ill-tempered attack 'Falkirk' has made upon you.

"I have always been interested in Kerr, and from his conduct—even in spite of his alleged Titian-coloured locks!—if I am any reader of character, I should say Kerr is a gentleman; and in Scotland I know many.

"If 'Falkirk' cannot take a good-natured hit at the peculiarities of the Scot—well, all I'll say, Mr. Editor, is, rub a few more into him, and rub him hard!

"I have often been told that a Scotsman keeps the Sabbath—and everything else he can lay his hands on! And I take it in the spirit in which it is meant.

"Now, I admire the spirit of business perseverance in the Scot; but I do not admire any Scot who imagines the English or the Irish despise the Caledonians as a nation.

"I would recommend 'Falkirk' to travel a little in England and Ireland—and further afield if possible—and get his narrow mind enlarged.

"I have had the chance of reading the GEM, the 'Magnet,' and other papers from The Fleetway House, for the past nine years, and I throw out the challenge, and defy anyone to find more healthy and intellectual reading matter calculated to attract the mind of the youth and maiden.

"I am,

"Yours gratefully,

"ALD REKIE."

I have written a personal letter to my clergyman friend thanking him for his kind tribute.

As for "Falkirk," that misguided youth has retired into the oblivion from which he emerged. Happily, he cannot be regarded as an average Scot, or even an average boy. He is a rank outsider, and neither the GEM Library nor the readers of the GEM Library have any use for him.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR).

THE WAY OF THE TRANSCRESSOR

(Continued from page 15).

"Good!" gasped Wharton. "He'll get a fearful ducking. But he's saved his life, anyway!"

Fishy brought the char-a-banc to a halt. At the same moment a mud-bespattered, slimy figure crawled out of the ditch and advanced into the roadway.

We gave a gasp as we recognised his features, through the mud.

"Prout!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my aunt!"

We jumped off our bikes in astonishment.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had been returning from Courtfield on his motorcycle.

On sighting the approaching char-a-banc he had repeatedly sounded his horn, but to no purpose; and, rather than risk a collision, Mr. Prout had done the only thing possible. He had headed straight for the ditch.

Mr. Prout, although smothered from head to foot, was not damaged.

The same could not be said of his motorcycle. It looked as if it had been struck by a bomb.

For quite two minutes Mr. Prout stood gouging the mud from his eyes and face. When at last he found his voice it was like the roaring of mighty waters.

"Fish!" he roared. "You—you utterly depraved and clumsy boy! I—I might have lost my life!"

"There was plenty of room for you to pass, sir," said Fish calmly.

"There was not!" roared Mr. Prout. "You were obstructing the road, and driving in an utterly reckless and dangerous manner!"

"Oh!"

"I fail to understand how you came to be driving a vehicle at all!" said Mr. Prout sternly. "Are you aware that it is an offence against the law to drive a motor vehicle without a licence?"

"I guess—" "This is no time for guesswork!" snapped Mr. Prout. "Get out at once, all of you!"

The passengers alighted from the bus. Some of them were not sorry.

"Coker," exclaimed Mr. Prout, catching sight of the Fifth Former, "I am astounded to think that a boy in my Form should be a party to this absurd tomfoolery!"

Coker stood blinking sheepishly in the roadway.

"I—I—" he stuttered.

"Do not attempt to excuse yourself!" snarled Mr. Prout. "You will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"As for you, Fish, I shall report your outrageous conduct to Dr. Locke! I have no doubt you will be fogged—possibly expelled!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

Fishy's face was a study. He had not expected this thunderbolt.

"You will return to the school at once, all of you!" said Mr. Prout. "Meanwhile, I will make arrangements for this char-a-banc to be stored in the garage at Courtfield until instructions are issued for its disposal."

"But it's mine, sir!" said Fishy.

"Nonsense! A boy of your age cannot be entrusted with such a dangerous toy! Come down from your seat at once!"

"I—I guess—"

"Do you want me to take you by the collar, sir?" thundered Mr. Prout.

Reluctantly Fishy got down from his perch. He realised, with a sinking heart, that it was all up.

His fond dreams of acquiring a vast fortune by running the Greyfriars Motor Company had, like the company itself, gone smash!

And there was worse to come.

When we were strolling in the Close later in the evening, sounds of unspeakable anguish floated out to us from the Head's study.

The sounds continued for quite a long time, making night hideous.

Fisher T. Fish was being made to realise that The Way of the Transgressor is hard!

THE END.

Back Numbers.

Percy Wilson, 32, Colenso Road, Seven Kings, Essex.—"Victory," "Bunter the Blade," "Bunter the Prize-winner," "Under Bunter's Thumb," "Bob Cherry's Barraging-Out," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," "Wun Lung's Secret," "The Boy Without a Name," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "After Lights Out," "Special Constable Coker," "The Honour of a Jew." 2d. offered for each. Write first.

Robert Hobbs, 69, Stonelaw Drive, Rutherglen, Glasgow, has some "Nelson Lee Libraries" to dispose of—170-194.

W. Davis, 20, Sykefield Avenue, Leicester, wants numbers of "Magnet" and "Gem" from the beginning. Write first.

C. V. Aldrich, Redenhall Terrace, Harleston, Norfolk, wants to thank those who sent him letters and papers.

Miss Geta Gay, Tower Lodge, 4, Orchard Road, Stevenage, Herts.—"Gems" 333-337, 350-51, 358, 359, 371, 375, 376, 378, 383, 393. 2d. each offered; 4d. double numbers. Write first.

Correspondence.

G. Carey, 25, Paris Street, Guernsey, Channel Islands—with readers interested in cycling and motor-cycling—15-16.

Miss Phyllis Upwood, 86, Estcourt Road, Woodside, Surrey—with girl readers anywhere, 17 and over.

Wm. J. Mawley, 99, Trafalgar Road, Camberwell, S.E. 15—with boy readers in British Isles and Australia interested in photography.

Randolph V. Coombs, 34, Rugby Road, Brington, Bristol, wants boy members for the Junior Arts Club. Stamped addressed envelope.

Ernest Brewer, 24, Brynglas Road, Newport, Mon—with boy readers, 16 or over, anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Cricket.

St. JAMES' C.C.—Junior—14—home and away with good-class teams.—J. Millichap, 24, Titchborne Street, W. 2.

St. HELEN'S C.C.—1st and 2nd—require matches—5 miles.—W. Cox, 5, Bracewell Road, St. Quintin's Park, North Kensington, W. 10.

F. Wilson—15—291, Sumner Road, Peckham, S.E. 15, wants place in team. Fair bowler and bat. Three miles radius.

C. Benson, 38, Ellesmere Road, Bow, E. 2, wants to join well-known cricket club. Fast bowler and reliable bat.

Greyfriars Epitaphs.

No. 5. By BOB CHERRY.

WEEP, TRAVELLER!

AND GAZE UPON THE LAST

RESTING-PLACE

of

PETER TODD,

formerly the leader of Study No. 7,

who fell a victim to one of his own jokes,

and

SHUFFLED OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

amid the loud lamentations of his cousin

Alonso.

He was

NEVER BACKWARD IN COMING

FORWARD,

and—next to the Famous Five, of course!

he was the Remove's star turn.

A rattling good half-back, a clever cricketer, well versed in the Law, and a jolly good fellow all round. But

HE COULD NEVER REFORM BUNTER!

His untimely demise was accelerated by the breaking of a blood-vessel in an heroic endeavour to make Tom Dutton understand!

N.B.—No flowers, by request. Billy Bunter has hit upon a novel way of paying a final tribute to Toddy by placing a wreath of jam-tarts on the grave—provided somebody supplies him with the necessary cash!

"Weep, traveller, nor dare to scoff!

Poor Peter Todd has gone.

Full many a jape he carried off,

And now he's carri-on!"

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