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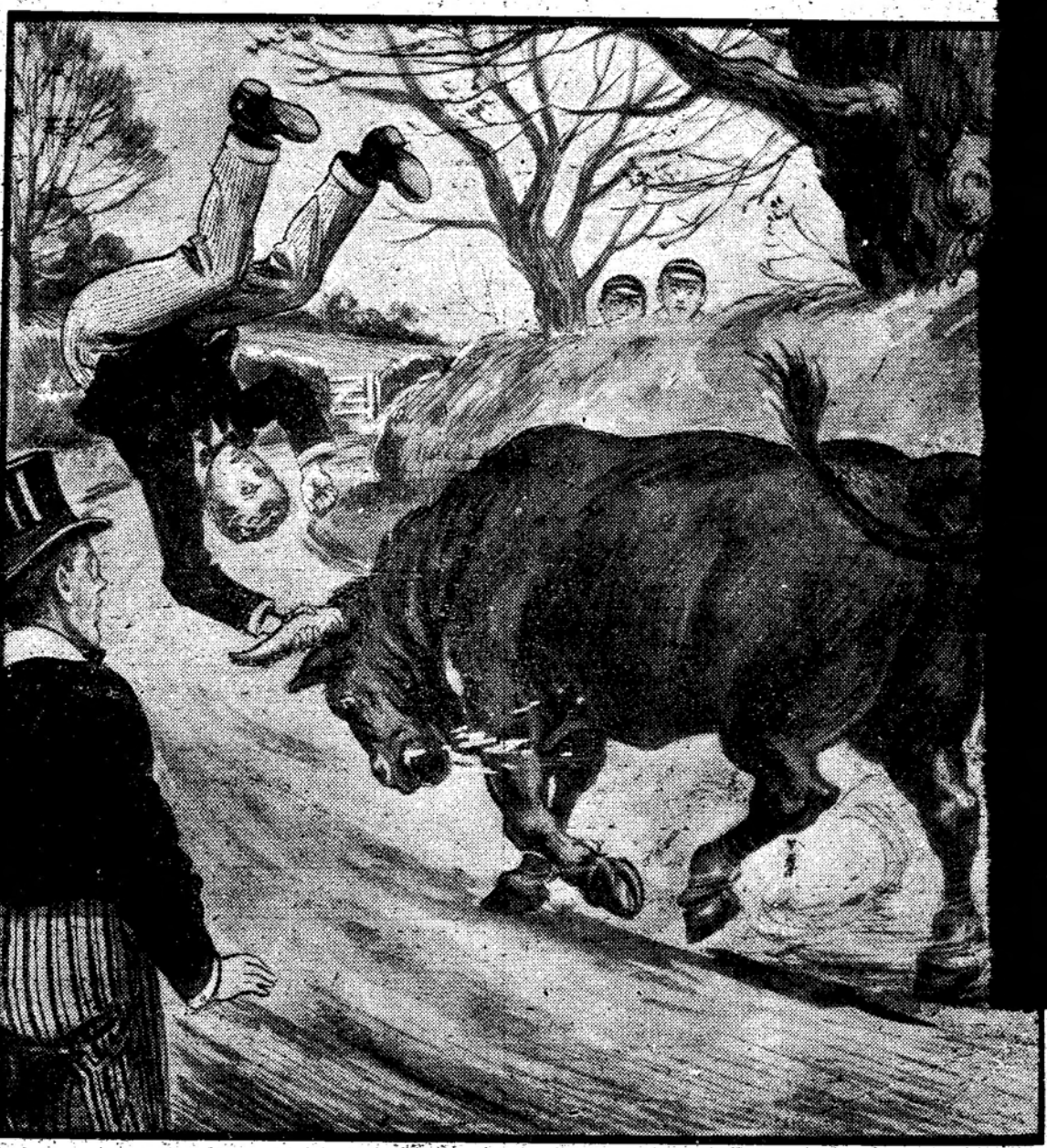
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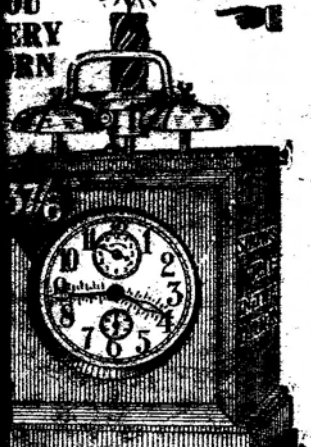
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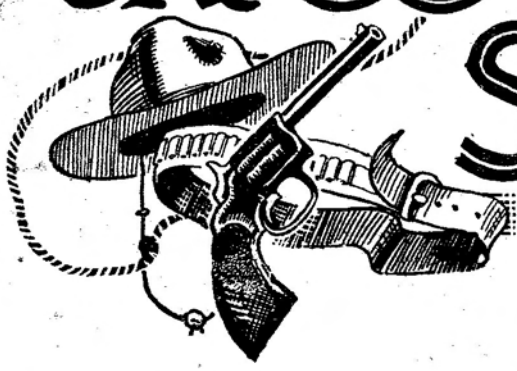
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The COWBOY of St. JIM'S



A Grand Long Thrilling Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, introducing Kit Wildrake, the Boy from the Wild West.

:: **By MARTIN CLIFFORD.** ::

CHAPTER 1.
Arthur Augustus Finds Trouble.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, of the Fourth Form, tapped at the door of Study No. 2. The fat voice of Baggy Trimble squeaked from within.

"Come in, fathead!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door and entered.

Trimble and Mellish, to whom Study No. 2 belonged, were both at home. It was the hour of evening prep, and the two Fourth-Formers were at work—not very hard. Mellish was yawning portentously over his books; Baggy Trimble was chiefly occupied in negotiating a large chunk of toffee. Both of them stared inquiringly at Arthur Augustus as the swell of St. Jim's came in, and glanced round the study.

It was not often that Arthur Augustus honoured Study No. 2 with a visit. Trimble and Mellish were both on the list of persons whom the noble Gussy did not care to know.

"Isn't he heah?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"He! Who?"

"The new chap—Wildwake?"

"Wildrake?" yawned Mellish. "I've heard he's stuck in this study, but he's not here. I should think you could see that, D'Arcy, with the aid of your glass eye."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Baggy Trimble.

"Shut the door after you!" added Mellish.

"Weally, Mellish——"

"Dry up, Mellish!" said Baggy Trimble. "If Gussy has come to ask us to supper in Study No. 6——"

"I have not come to ask you to suppah, Twimble."

"Then what the thump have you come for?" asked Trimble discontentedly.

"To speak to the new chap."

"Well, he isn't here," grunted Trimble. "Run away and play!"

"Yes, hook it!" said Mellish.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy coloured. He wanted very much to see the new junior, Kit Wildrake, the boy from Canada. He did not want to see Trimble and Mellish in the least, as they were well aware. So they did not see fit to waste any politeness on him.

Mellish pointed to the doorway with the handle of his pen. Baggy Trimble indicated the same spot with a fat thumb.

"Weally, you wottahs——" began Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Hook it!"

"Back out!"

"I wefuse to hook it," said Arthur Augustus. "I have come heah to see Wildwake, and I choose to wemain. If that is what you boundahs call good mannahs——"

"Rats! You're too numerous, Gussy," said Trimble. "Travel along, and don't worry. I don't want to have to lift you out——"

"Bai Jove!"

"But if you don't walk out you'll be put out," said Mellish, with great enjoyment.

Arthur Augustus paused, and considered whether to walk out of the study in lofty and contemptuous dignity or whether to take Trimble and Mellish by the collars, and knock their heads together for their impertinence. As his noble temper was roused, he decided upon the latter alternative, and he strode towards the study table, and grasped them, one in either hand.

"Now, you wottahs, I am goin' to give you a lesson in good mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus' programme was simple. He was going to bring the two juniors' heads together with a resounding whack, as a warning to them to be more circumspect when he condescended to visit their study.

Unfortunately, there were difficulties in the way of carrying out that simple programme which Gussy had overlooked.

Mellish and Trimble were both jerked from their chairs, but their heads did not come together with the anticipated whack.

Instead of that, they both grasped Arthur Augustus at once, and Mellish hooked his leg; and before Arthur Augustus knew what was happening he was sitting on the study carpet.

He sat there, with a heavy bump and a gasp.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Jump on him!" shouted Mellish.

His arm was round Gussy's neck before the swell of St. Jim's could rise, and Arthur Augustus was dragged over on his chest.

That did it!

With Baggy Trimble sitting on his chest, Goliath himself would have found the situation awkward to deal with. Baggy's circumference was large, and his weight was terrific. Arthur Augustus simply collapsed under him. A long gasp escaped the swell of St. Jim's as the solid weight of Baggy settled down upon him, and he lay helpless.

"Oooooooh!"

"That's right, sit on him!" chuckled Mellish. "Give him your weight."

"I'm giving it to him," grinned Trimble. "You dab the ink over his chivvy. We'll teach him to come here cheeking us in our own study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "If you dare to put that ink neah me, Mellish, you feahful wottah——"

"You'll see!" grinned Mellish.

"Wow! Wescue!"

Arthur Augustus struggled. But the solid weight on his chest was too much for him. Mellish stepped to the table for the ink. He found this much more entertaining than prep. It was but seldom that Mellish found himself able to indulge in the pleasure of ragging one of the doughty members of Study No. 6. Now Arthur Augustus had asked for it, and he was going to get it.

Gussy's eyes opened wide with horror as Mellish held the inkpot over his face and chuckled.

"Let him have it!" grinned Trimble.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah——"

Mellish gradually turned the inkpot, keeping Arthur Augustus in suspense, and greatly enjoying the expression of apprehension on his aristocratic face. The ink was about to drip, when there was a step at the door, and a handsome, sunburnt face looked into Study No. 2.

"Hold on! Two to one! That's not fair play, I guess!" exclaimed a cheery voice.

Kit Wildrake stepped quickly into the study, and grasped Mellish's wrist in a grasp of iron.

The inkpot was jerked away just in time.

A stream of ink slid from it, but it splashed on the study carpet, missing Arthur Augustus' upturned face by nearly a yard.

Mellish turned savagely on the newcomer.

"Let go!" he howled.

"Fair play's a jewel, I guess," answered Wildrake. "Put that inkpot down, my pippin!"

"I won't, confound you!"

"Then I guess I'll make you!"

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Wildrake compressed his grip, and Mellish gave a squeak of pain, and the inkpot crashed on the floor. The weedy slacker of the Fourth was like an infant in Wildrake's sturdy grasp. Wildrake, with a grin, plumped Mellish into a chair, and he sat there, and gasped helplessly. Then the newcomer turned on Baggy Trimble.

"Roll off!" he commanded.

"Look here——"

Wildrake took Baggy by the collar. In spite of Baggy's weight, the new junior swung him off quite easily. Baggy gasped and choked as he was swung away.

"Groogh! Leggo! You awful beast, leggo my collar! Ooooop! Look here, we're pals, you know. Didn't I take your note to Tom Merry? Ow! I'll jolly well punch your nose! Wow!"

Bump!

Baggy Trimble sat heavily on the floor and spluttered. Wildrake stood and gave Arthur Augustus a hand up with a smile.

CHAPTER 2.

Wildrake of the Fourth!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS staggered to his feet.

He was breathless, and he was very rumpled and crumpled. But he was very thankful for the newcomer's aid. He had had a narrow escape of having his noble visage swamped with ink.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!" he gasped.

"Don't mench," said Wildrake carelessly. "What are you fellows ragging about, anyhow? Do you all belong to this study?"

"Bai Jove! No. I should be vewy sowwy to share a study with those two howwid outsidahs."

"Yah!" spluttered Trimble.

Wildrake laughed.

"Well, it's my study," he said. "I'm in the Fourth, and Mr. Lathom has sent me here. He told me my study-mates were Mellish and Trimble. I've met Trimble already. You're not Mellish?"

"Wats! I mean, certainly not! That wottah in the chair is Mellish!"

"Oh!" said Wildrake, glancing at Mellish and then at Trimble. He did not seem to be very favourably impressed by his new study-mates. He smiled in response to Mellish's angry scowl. "Don't be ratty, old scout. Two to one isn't fair play, you know!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Mellish.

"I came heah to speak to you, Wildwake," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy you found me engaged in a wow in your study. Do you mind vewy much if I thwash your study-mates?"

"Not at all. I'll hold your jacket."

"Here, I say, you keep off, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble, in alarm. "It was only a j-j-j-joke!"

"Hands off, you beast!" growled Mellish, jumping off the chair and getting behind it. "I'm not going to fight you, you rotter!"

"Weally, you feahful funk——"

"I guess you were going it when I came in," remarked Wildrake, raising his eyebrows. "You haven't finished so soon, sure, Mellish?"

"Mind your own business!"

"The wottahs took me by surpwise," explained Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to knock their heads togethah, and they had the feahful cheek to collah me and dwag me ovah on the flooah. I am quite pwepared to thwash them both at once, and you can see fair play, Wildwake."

"Sure!" assented the Canadian. "Toe the line, Trimble!"

"I—I say——"

"Get a move on, Mellish!"

Mellish got a move on—promptly. He slipped out of the study, and banged the door behind him.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Trimble cast a longing blink at the door. But the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was between him and safety.

The fat junior grinned feebly a propitiatory grin.

"Only a j-j-joke, Gussy!" he stuttered. "C-c-can't you t-t-take a j-j-j-joke?"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and gave Baggy Trimble a look of sovereign disdain.

"I wefuse to take the twouble to thwash you, Twimble. You are not worth a fellow soilin' his hands on."

"Oh, I say, old chap!" murmured Trimble, feeling very glad indeed that he was not worth a fellow soiling his hands on.

"Dwy up, you wottah! I wegard you with despision—I mean, contempt," Arthur Augustus turned his back on Trimble—much to that fat youth's satisfaction. "Wildwake, deah boy, I came heah to speak to you vewy particulahly."

"Go ahead!" said Wildrake.

"I owe you an apology."

"Do you?" ejaculated the new junior, in astonishment. "As I've never seen you before, that's rather queer, isn't it?"

"You have seen me befoah, deah boy. You passed me in the lane when you were widin' to St. Jim's this afternoon."

"I passed a chap with a mottled complexion——"

"I had been wagged," explained Arthur Augustus.

"You'd been whatted?"

"Wagged."

"Wagged?" repeated Wildrake blankly. "I—I guess that lets me out! I've never heard of anything being wagged except a dog's tail."

"Weally, Wildwake——"

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. "That's Gussy's beautiful accent. He practices it before a looking-glass. He means ragged."

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Oh, ragged!" said Wildrake comprehending. "I see!"

"Yaas, wagged—I said wagged," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I had been wagged by Wacke and Cwooke, two howwid boundahs in the Shell. I am goin' to give them a feahful thwashin' to-mowwow. But, as I was sayin', I owe you an apology——"

"Accepted!" said Wildrake, with a grin. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I accept your apology."

"Pway allow me to explain. Tom Mewwy was sent to meet you at Wayland Station yesterday——"

"Yes, I know."

"He was booked for a vewy important football match, and he got me to go instead——"

"Did he?"

"Yaas. And Wacke and Cwooke stopped me in the wood, and tied me, you know, and marked my face with markin'-ink——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, what are you laughin' at, Wildwake?"

"Oh, nothing! Go on!"

"I do not considah the mattah funnay," said Arthur Augustus, with some stiffness. "I was tweated in an uttahly diswespectful mannah, without wegard for my personal dig."

"Oh," gasped Wildrake. "w-w-w-were you?"

"Yaas, wathah! Undah those painful circs, I was unable to come to the station, and so there was no one to meet you. I feel that I owe you an apology for that, and I have come heah to make it," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "It must have been wathah wotten for you to awwive at the station and find nobody there to meet you!"

Wildrake looked puzzled.

"But somebody was there," he said. "Tom Merry met me at the station, and he landed me at the Grammar School—by way of a fool joke. That is how I got here so late."

"Bai Jove. I undahstood that Tom Mewwy played in the House match," said Arthur Augustus, puzzled in his turn.

"Well, that's what happened," said Wildrake. "I've sent him a note asking him to take a licking to-morrow. I guess I'm going to knock some sense into his head, if I can. We're going to meet behind the chapel at twelve o'clock to-morrow."

"That is vewy odd," said Arthur Augustus. "I certainly undahstood that Tom Mewwy stayed in and played in the football match."

"So he did," said Trimble. "I saw him. He never went out till after the football match."

Wildrake started.

"But I tell you he met me at the station, and took me to the Grammar School, and left me there thinking it was St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

"There is some misappwehension, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I will ask Blake—he was in the team. Pway come with me. I will intwoduce you to my study-mates."

"Oh, certainly!" said the Canadian.

He accompanied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy along the passage to Study No. 6, where three Fourth-Formers were chatting after prep. Arthur Augustus led the new junior in, and presented him in his graceful manner.

"This is Wildwake, the new chap, deah boys. Wildwake, these chaps are Blake, Hewwies, and Digby."

"I've seen him already," said Blake.

"So have I," said Herries. "The silly ass came prancing here on a barebacked horse. I wonder Railton didn't lick him."

"Did Railton lick you, Wildrake?" asked Digby.

"Thanks, no!"

"You're lucky, then!"

"Blake, deah boy, Wildwake is undah the impwession that Tom Mewwy met him at the station, and twicked him into goin' to the Gwammah School!"

"Then he's off his silly rocker," said Jack Blake. "Tom Merry was playing the New House with us!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!" ejaculated Wildrake. "Then who met me at the station?"

"Nobody, that I know of."

"Somebody did, and he gave me his name as Tom Merry. Are there two Tom Merrys at St. Jim's?"

"Only one, and that's enough," grinned Blake. "Somebody's been pulling your leg, you duffer! What was he like?"

"Chap with a rather sandy complexion, red nose, and big, thick eyebrows."

"Well, that's about as like Tom Merry as chalk is like cheese!" remarked Herries.

"I do not wecognise the descwiption," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "But certainly it is nothin' like Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wildrake. "But I've sent Tom Merry a challenge for playing a silly trick on me, and he's accepted it. What's he accepted it for, if he isn't the fellow?"

Blake chuckled.

"Perhaps he thinks you're too fresh," he suggested. "A new kid who sends a challenge to the junior captain, on his first day at school, is the kind of ass who would be all the better for a licking. I dare say Tom Merry is going to lick you for your own good. He's a kind-hearted chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I put it plain enough in my note," said Wildrake. "He must be a silly chump to accept a challenge he must have known was meant for somebody else! The chap I want to find is the one who played that rotten trick on me."

"Racke or Crooke," said Digby. "That's why they stopped Gussy in the wood."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"You wouldn't!" said Blake. "But it's as plain as daylight."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Where can I find Racke and Crooke, as you call them?" said Wildrake.

"I will take you to them, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus piloted the new junior to the Shell passage, and knocked at the door of Study No. 7 and opened it. Racke and Crooke, who were dawdling dismally over their prep, looked up. Racke started as he saw the new junior, and Gerald Crooke picked up a ruler.

"Well, what do you want?" growled Racke.

"Is either of these wottahs the wottah you want, Wildwake?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Wildrake looked at them, and shook his head.

"That chap is something like him," he said, with a nod towards Racke. "But the fellow at the station had big, bushy, dark eyebrows, so it can't be he. The other chap I don't know at all."

"Bai Jove, then, it is wathah a puzzle!" said Arthur Augustus. "While I am heah, I may as well mention that I am goin' to thwash you two fellows to-mowwow for waggin' me in the wood."

"Bow-wow!" said Racke.

"Weally, Wacke——"

"Shut the door after you!" said Crooke.

Arthur Augustus, with a glance of lofty scorn, retired from the study. Racke looked relieved when the door closed on the visitors.

"All safe!" said Crooke, with a grin. "Jolly lucky for you that you thought of sticking on those false eyebrows, though. That chap looks rather hefty, and he would make mincemeat of you!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"He'll never guess," he said; "and I dare say I could knock him out if he did, if he wanted trouble."

"Shall I mention the fact to him, then?" grinned Crooke. "If you could knock him out, in case of trouble, it won't matter."

To which Aubrey Racke responded only with a scowl.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led his protege on to Study No. 10 in the Shell, determined to probe this mystery to the bottom. The Terrible Three were there. Having finished prep, they were discussing the football match of the afternoon, when the two Fourth-Formers arrived.

"Hallo! That's the new kid," remarked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! Tom Mewwy——"

"Hallo!" said Tom.

"Wildwake is undah the impwession that you met him at the station, and spoofed him into goin' to the Gwammah School instead of St. Jim's."

"Wildrake's an ass," answered Tom Merry politely.

"That's not the chap," said Wildrake. "If that's Tom Merry, he's not the chap who met me at the station. Somebody else must have used his name."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But why the thump couldn't you say so, Merry, instead of accepting the challenge I sent you?" exclaimed Wildrake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"My dear chap, if you want a licking behind the chapel at twelve to-morrow, I don't mind giving you one," he answered.

"Oh, if you put it like that, I'll give you a chance!" said Wildrake, at once. "I'll meet you all the same, then."

"Just as you like," answered the captain of the Shell carelessly.

"Bai Jove! Undah the circs, Tom Mewwy——"

"Don't worry, Gussy," said Monty Lowther soothingly. "It will do the new kid good. He's got rather too much nerve for a new kid."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"A Fourth-Former is never much good till he's been licked," remarked Manners, in a reflective sort of way.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Besides, the silly ass has got me a licking from Mr. Linton!" said Tom. "If he hadn't let some chump spoof him into going to the Grammar School, he would have come along all right to St. Jim's, and Linton wouldn't have got his hair off."

"Well, that wasn't my fault," said Wildrake. "I believed the chap when he told me——"

"You were wathah gween, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But new kids always are wathah gween. In fact, I was wathah gween myself when I first came to St. Jim's."

"And you haven't changed since, have you, old top?" asked Monty Lowther affably.

"Weally, you ass——"

"I want to find the chap who spoofed me," said Wildrake. "I owe him a licking. Don't you know who it was, Merry, who used your name?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," yawned Tom. "But don't worry; you won't feel like licking anybody for some time after you've kept your appointment to-morrow behind the chapel."

"I guess that remains to be seen," said Wildrake good-humouredly. And he left the study with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who, in the kindness of his heart, expended the remainder of the evening in helping the new junior to get his things to rights in Study No. 4.

"He doesn't seem a bad sort of kid," Manners remarked. "Too cheeky for a Fourth Form fag, but——"

"Oh, he's all right," said Tom cheerily. "We'll just have a round or two, and then shake hands over it."

And with that the new junior was dismissed from the lofty consideration of the Terrible Three; and they returned to the more interesting topic of football.

CHAPTER 3.

George Alfred Chips in!

"TOM MERRY and Wildrake——"

"Who's Wildrake?"

"New kid."

"Behind the chapel at twelve——"

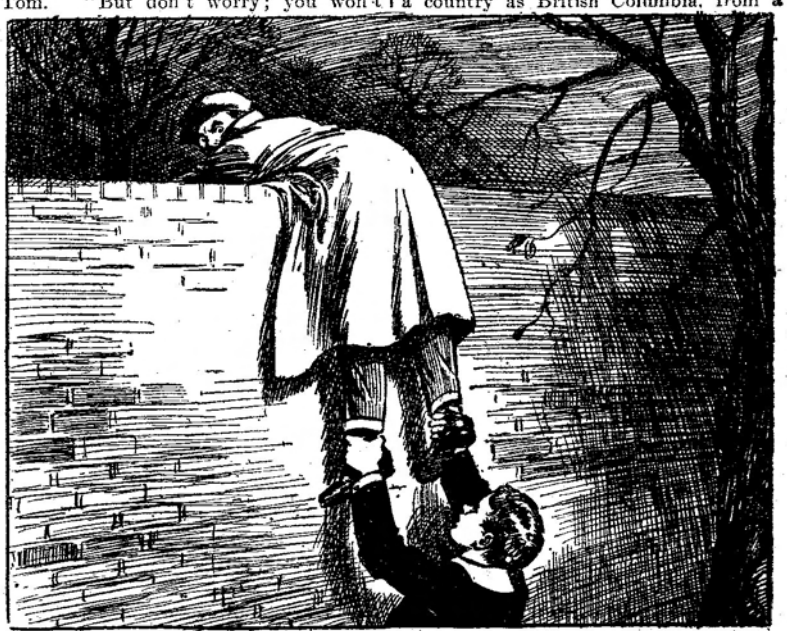
"Good!"

These remarks, and a good many more of the like kind, were being made up and down the Lower School at St. Jim's the following morning.

There was keen interest in that appointment behind the chapel after morning lessons.

Tom Merry's powers as a fighting-man were well known at St. Jim's. Had he not licked even the great Grundy of the Shell, and downed even the redoubtable Figgins of the New House? Any scrap in which Tom Merry was engaged was certain to be worth watching.

And there was some interest taken in Wildrake. The manner in which he had arrived at St. Jim's had caused rather a sensation: no other new-junior had ever arrived at the old school riding a bareback horse. And his being booked for a fight with the junior captain on his first day at school added to the interest. Moreover, the fellows were interested in him because he hailed from so far-away a country as British Columbia, from a



Racke reached the school wall at last, and made a spring. His hands caught the top of the wall, but he was too spent to drag himself up. Footsteps pattered below him, and he was seized by both ankles. "Caught!" chuckled Wildrake. "Ow! Leggo!" (*See page* 8.)

home called the Boot Leg Ranch. He had been seen turning out all sorts of queer possessions from a big trunk in the box-room—cowboy clothes, and a Stetson hat, and a coiled lasso. Baggy Trimble even said that there was a loaded revolver. But for that detail Baggy drew on his fertile imagination.

Undoubtedly the new fellow was something rather out of the common, and he was much observed when he took his place in the Fourth Form-room that morning.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was very kind to the new fellow, apparently feeling called upon to do the honours to the stranger from afar. Arthur Augustus was a little worried by the appointment with Tom Merry. During morning lessons Gussy was thinking over that matter—rather to the detriment of his construe. He felt that the encounter ought not to take place, caused as it was by a mistake; or, rather, by the trickery of the unknown delinquent who had met Wildrake at the station. When Mr. Lathom dismissed the Fourth, Arthur Augustus went at once in search of Tom Merry, determined to speak to him very severely. The Shell were out, and he found the Terrible Three in the corridor.

"Hallo, here's Gussy!" said Tom. "You've come to tell me the new kid is ready? Right-ho!"

"Nothin' of the sort, Tom Mewwy. I have come to speak to you vewy sewiously."

"Oh dear!"

"Undah the cires, Tom Mewwy, I feel that it is up to you to back out of this scwap. It cannot be called hospitable to thump a chap on his first day at school.

Add to your circle of friends by lending this copy to a non-reader.

As you are in the w'ong——"

"Oh, am I?" said Tom, rather warmly.

"Yaas, wathah! It is up to you to withdwaw," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I think you ought to see that yourself."

Tom Merry paused.

In point of fact, he was a little troubled in mind over the affair, and he had no desire whatever to thump Wildrake. But withdrawing from a fight that had been arranged was a rather delicate matter.

"I don't want to lick the chap," he said, at last. "But he sent me a challenge, you know——"

"Undah a misappwehension."

"Yes, but if I back out, he would think it's funk——" said Tom uneasily.

"You are bound to wisk that, undah the cires. I twust you are goin' to play up and do the wight thing."

Tom hesitated. He looked at Manners and Lowther, who seemed dubious.

"Oh, all right!" he said resignedly. "I'll back out, Gussy, on condition that you don't talk any more."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let's go and get it over!" said Tom. "After all, it's more sensible to punt a footer than to punch a chap's nose for nothing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Wildrake was in the corridor, and Tom Merry came up to him at once. The Canadian eyed him curiously. Tom was a little flushed.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Grundy of the Shell, before Tom Merry could speak. "Ready for you, Merry. I'll keep time, if you like!"

"Thanks—there won't be a timekeeper wanted," answered Tom. "Wildrake, just a word with you. I'm not going to fight you!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wildrake.

"There's nothing to fight about," said Tom Merry. "Of course, if you're keen on it, I'll come along. Otherwise, call it off!"

There were a good many curious glances cast at Tom Merry as he spoke. But for his reputation as a redoubtable fighting-man, he might have been suspected of a sudden attack of "cold feet." There came a very loud and emphatic snort from Grundy of the Shell.

Wildrake nodded cheerily.

"All serene, old scout!" he said. "Call it off!"

"Done!" said Tom.

Another snort from Grundy!

"I call this rot!" said Grundy.

"You can call it what you like, fathead!" answered Tom Merry. "I don't see that it concerns you, anyhow!"

"Wathah not, Gwunday——"

"Well, it does," said George Alfred Grundy emphatically. "I don't think the Shell ought to back down before the Fourth. That's my opinion, for what it's worth!"

Grundy's manner indicated that he thought it was worth something—that it was, indeed, of considerable value. Wildrake chimed in:

"About a Continental red cent, I guess!" he remarked.

Grundy turned on him.

"What's that?" he snapped.

"I guess that's about the value of your opinion," said Wildrake, with a smile. "Not that I'd give a cent for it."

"Why, you cheeky young sweep!" exclaimed Grundy indignantly. "I'll tell you what I'll do. You're too fresh. If Tom Merry doesn't lick you, I'll lick you myself. You Fourth Form fags have got to be kept in your place!"

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"Come along!" said Grundy loftily. "If Merry doesn't keep the appointment behind the chapel, I will. I can see that what you want is a thumpin' good licking!"

"Lead on, Macduff!" answered Wildrake coolly.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "Look here, Gwunday——"

"Rats! If the kid isn't a funk, he's goin' to come along and take his gruel!" said Grundy disdainfully. "I don't believe in letting fags cheek the Shell!"

"You uttah ass——"

"I'm waiting for you, old scout!" said Wildrake; and with another snort, George Alfred Grundy marched off. Wildrake followed him, with a smile on his face—and a crowd of juniors accompanied them. The fight was to take place, after all—with a change of principal. Tom Merry tapped Wildrake on the arm.

"Like me to be your second?" he asked.

"Thanks, yes!"

Blake of the Fourth cut off to fetch the gloves. It was rather a secluded spot behind the chapel, where the proceedings were not likely to be interrupted.

Wilkins of the Shell was Grundy's second; but when he offered to help George Alfred off with his jacket, the great Grundy declined with a scornful snort.

"Not necessary!" he said. "This isn't a serious bizney—I shall wallop him in one round."

"He looks rather hefty——" hinted Wilkins.

"Rot! When I was at Redclyffe I licked chaps twice his size. Did I ever tell you about whopping a prefect at Redclyffe——"

"About a hundred times," said Wilkins.

"Ready?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes!" snorted Grundy.

Arthur Augustus took out his handsome gold ticker to keep time.

"Put on your gloves, deah boys! Now, then, seconds out of the wing! Weady! Time!"

And George Alfred Grundy rushed in to close combat, to knock the new Fourth-Former into smithereens in a single round. Wildrake backed quickly, and side-stepped, and before the big and burly Grundy could turn on him, the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch landed his right on the side of Grundy's jaw. There was a crash as George Alfred Grundy went over, and he sprawled on the ground with a gasp.

"Huwway!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Man down!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Grundy sat up.

"Ow! Oh! What—— Groogh! Oh!"

"One, two, thwee——" counted Arthur Augustus gleefully. "Four, five——"

But at five George Alfred Grundy was up again and rushing to the attack. And the juniors looked on breathlessly at a terrific combat.

CHAPTER 4.
Grundy is Satisfied!

"TIME!"

George Alfred Grundy was quite relieved at the call of time. He sat on the knee that Wilkins made for him, and grunted. His head was singing from the right-hander that had opened the combat.

Wildrake looked as fresh as paint.

"You know how to use your hands, kid," said Tom Merry. "It would not have been a walk-over for me, after all, as I thought."

Wildrake grinned.

"That chap doesn't know how to scrap," he said. "So long as I can keep him at arm's-length, I can play with him."

"You've done some fighting before, I should think."

"You bet! I've scrapped with hoboes on the Boot Leg Ranch," said Wildrake. "In my country a chap has to know how to use his hands, to save his head. I guess this is simply pie to me."

"Oh!" said Tom.

A youth to whom a scrap with the great Grundy was simply "pie" was rather a novelty.

"Time!" said D'Arcy.

The combatants stepped up briskly. In the second round it was evident that Kit Wildrake knew as much as any fellow there of the noble art of self-defence. He was far too quick and nimble for Grundy, who relied chiefly on his tremendous muscular strength. If one of Grundy's terrific drives had got fairly home, it would have been a serious matter—but they did not get home.

The quick-footed Canadian played round Grundy, giving him a tap here, and a rap there, till George Alfred was quite bewildered.

The spectators were chuckling now.

In the third round Grundy was down again; but he came up quite gamely. There was no limit to George Alfred's pluck, and he knew how to take punishment without complaint. In the fourth

NEXT WEEK.

Our Splendid Long Complete Story.

"Fun at the Crystal Palace!"

Introducing Kit Wildrake and the chums of St Jim's. Don't Miss It!

round he succeeded in getting in a few hard knocks, but he finished the round on his back again. He never quite knew how he got there, but he certainly did get there, and he stared up at the sky in a state of great astonishment.

"Two to one on the Canadian!" Racke of the Shell whispered to Crooke. "In anything you like!"

Gerald Crooke shook his head promptly.

"No fear! But I'll give you three to one, if you like," he answered.

"Keep it!" answered Racke.

Crooke chuckled.

"I say, how would you like him to guess that it was you who spoofed him yesterday—now?"

"Shut up, you ass!" muttered Racke in alarm, with an uneasy look round. The bare thought of facing the fists that were making havoc with Grundy turned Aubrey Racke quite cold.

"Hallo! Grundy's down again!" said Racke. "Grundy seems to have a fancy for lying around!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy staggered up before he was counted out, however. The fifth round continued, and was going strong, when there was a yell from Trimble:

"Cave!"

Kildare of the Sixth came round the chapel rails with his ashplant under his arm. Secluded as the spot was, the captain of St. Jim's had noted the numbers of juniors trooping there, and his suspicions had been awakened. He came striding on the spot.

"Stop this!" he exclaimed.

Grundy dropped his hands and stepped back. He was not sorry for the interruption. He was feeling very hardly used, and his breath was coming and going in spasmodic gasps.

Wildrake followed his example, looking curiously at the big Sixth-Former.

"What are you chipping in for?" he inquired.

"Shurrup!" murmured Tom Merry. "It's Kildare!"

"Who's Kildare?" asked Wildrake, apparently not impressed.

"Captain of the school, ass! Shurrup!"

"Big gun hereabouts?" asked Wildrake coolly.

"Yes, ass!"

"Oh, all right!"

"Stop this at once," said Kildare sternly. "You are fighting with a new boy, I see, Grundy. Bullying again?"

"Oh, no, Kildare!" said Grundy. "Just whopping him for his own good, you know——"

"I know," said Kildare. "You will take fifty lines, Grundy, for quarrelling, and if there is any more of this, I shall see that you get a prefects' licking. Now clear off——"

"But I—I say——"

"That's enough! All of you clear off at once!"

Kildare's word was law, and the crowd broke up at once. Tom Merry helped Wildrake on with his jacket, and the juniors moved off.

Grundy was gasping as he went, and Wilkins and Gunn, who walked with him, smiled to one another. Kildare's mistake was a natural one; he had supposed that the big and burly Grundy was "whopping" the newcomer. As a matter of fact, the St. Jim's captain's intervention had come only just in time to save George Alfred from a whipping himself.

"Rotten!" Grundy remarked to his chums. "Kildare oughtn't to chip in like this; he might have let me finish him!"

"Fuf-fuf-finish him!" stuttered Wilkins.

"Yes; I think I nearly had him beat."

"Oh, my hat!" said Gunn.

"He can put up his hands fairly well for a Fourth-Form kid," said Grundy patronisingly. "Never expected a fag to stand up to me for so long. He's got pluck. I'll tell him so."

Grundy bore down upon the new junior, who was sauntering away cheerfully with Tom Merry and D'Arcy. Wilkins and Gunn blinked at one another.

"Here, young Wildrake——"

"Hallo!" said Wildrake.

"It's rather too bad to be interrupted like this," said Grundy. "We sha'n't be able to finish now."

"I don't mind if we don't," said Wildrake, with a smile.

"Well, I don't exactly mind," said Grundy. "Though it's always more satisfactory to finish a scrap, and knock a fellow out. But you're a plucky kid, I will say that, and, upon the whole, I'm not sorry to let you down lightly."

"You're letting me down lightly, then?" asked Wildrake, with a stare.

Grundy nodded.



KIT WILDRAKE.

A new arrival at St. Jim's. Hails from a far-away country—British Columbia, from a home called the "Boot Leg Ranch." An extremely clever horseman. Quite as safe without saddle and bridle as with. The manner in which he arrived at St. Jim's caused rather a sensation—no other new junior had ever arrived at St. Jim's riding a bareback horse. Shares Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form with Trimble and Mellish.

"Yes. I hardly think you'd have lasted another round."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm letting you off," said Grundy. "Mind, you're not to be cheeky, or I shall have to whop you."

And Grundy walked away, feeling that he had acted in a rather handsome manner. Wildrake stared after him, while Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"I gness that chap must be a little loose in the roof," said Wildrake. "Doesn't he know he was on his last legs?"

"Apparently not," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I've got a suspicion that you could have finished him in the fourth round. But Grundy will never suspect that. Come into the gym—if you're not tired—and have the gloves on with me for a round or two—in a friendly way, you know."

"I'm your man!"

"Yaas, wathah, and I will stand you a twial, too, Wildwake," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think you could stand up to me for a wound or two."

"I rather think I could," assented Wildrake.

And he did.

When the juniors left the gym to go in to dinner, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had quite a serious expression on his face.

"That chap is wathah a corkah, Tom Mewwy," he confided to the captain of the Shell. "I weally doubt vewy much whethah I could knock him out—not without a feahful lot of twouble, anyhow. Do you know, I almost had a suspish that he was simply playin' with me?"

And Tom Merry chuckled. He shared that suspicion.

CHAPTER 5.
Out of Bounds!

"IT'S rather risky!"

Gerald Crooke of the Shell made that remark. Racke gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"You mean you funk comin'?" he asked.

"I'm not comin', anyhow," said Crooke. "Kildare's had his eye on us for some time, and I'm givin' the Green Man a wide berth for a bit. The fact is, we're suspected, and it's safer to lie low for a while."

"Rot!" said Racke. "I didn't come to St. Jim's to live the life of a dashed vegetable. Sayin' 'Oh, sir!' and 'No, sir!' to a dashed master isn't quite enough excitement for me. I haven't been to the Green Man for a week, and I'm pinin' for a little game."

"What about the sack?"

"Oh, rats! I'm goin' alone, if you don't come. Easy enough to drop from the wall, after callin'-over, these dark evenin's. Nobody will be any the wiser."

"If you're spotted——"

"I shouldn't be spotted," said Racke. "I'm not walkin' into the Green Man in Etons and a St. Jim's cap. I'm goin' to rig up, same as when I fooled that Colonial chump at the station the other day. If you don't want to come, go and eat coke!"

And Aubrey Racke swung irritably out of the study, leaving Gerald Crooke shrugging his shoulders.

In Hall, Racke answered to his name when Mr. Railton called the roll, and he thought he saw Wildrake's eye linger on him from the ranks of the Fourth. He wondered whether Wildrake had a good memory for voices. Certainly he had not recognised Racke as the fellow who had used Tom Merry's name in spoofing him on the day of his arrival; but Racke always felt uneasy when he was near the Canadian—all the more since he had seen the way in which Wildrake had handled Grundy of the Shell.

Racke slipped away quietly after call-over, and scudded through the dusk in the quad. Under the trees near the school wall he stopped, in deep shadow; and there he made his preparations for his intended escapade. He had had more than one narrow escape of detection recently, and it had made him careful. He was well aware that discovery meant good-bye to St. Jim's for him, and a consequent angry reception at home from his worthy father, Sir Jonas.

The war-profiteer had sent his son to St. Jim's to "get in," as he called it, with the "nobs"; and certainly he would have cut up very rusty if Aubrey had come home in disgrace. So it

behoved Racke to be very careful: and he was very careful indeed.

He slipped on an old macintosh that was hidden ready in a hollow trunk, left his school cap there, and put on an old cap. Then he fixed on the false eyebrows, which completely changed his appearance, added to a dab of red on his thin, colourless nose. Then he clambered over the wall and dropped into the road.

At a good pace, he set out through the winter dusk towards Rylcombe, keeping his eyes about him, and prepared to dodge into the shadow when anyone passed. There was a certain amount of anxiety attached to the career of a bold blade in the Shell at St. Jim's.

He intended to return by nine o'clock, and enter as he had left. That would give him time to take a hasty look at prep before dormitory. Unless he was missed, he was secure enough, and he was not likely to be missed. He had played the same game a good many times before quite successfully. But on this occasion Aubrey Racke's luck was destined to fail him.

While the blackguard of the Shell was enjoying himself, in his own shady manner, in a smoky back room at the Green Man, with cards in his hands and a cigarette in his mouth—"seeing life" with the expert assistance of Mr. Banks and two or three other shady characters—most of the St. Jim's juniors were at prep. Wildrake rather yawned over his prep in Study No. 2. He was accustomed to an open-air life, and he found St. Jim's a very considerable change from the Boot Leg Ranch, B.C. But he worked well, and did not follow his study-mate's example of slacking—there was nothing like slacking about the energetic youth from the Wild West. He was finished prep before Mellish or Trimble, and then he strolled out of the study and went downstairs. He was going into the quadrangle when he was hailed by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Finished your pwep, deah boy?" asked Gussy.

"Yep!" said Wildrake tersely.

"Not goin' out, are you?"

"I guess I was thinking of taking a trot round the quadrangle," said Wildrake. "I suppose we're not allowed out of gates at this time?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Hardly, deah boy! The gates are locked at dark."

"I'm just feeling like a ten-mile walk," said Wildrake.

"Bai Jove! Did you do ten-mile twots on the Boot-Leg Wanch?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Twenty, sometimes."

"Gweat Scott! I suppose you feel too fearfully energetic to come into the Common-room and play chess?"

"Correct! I'll take a little trot. I suppose they don't scalp a fellow if he goes out for a walk?"

Arthur Augustus looked serious.

"It's wathah a gwave mattah to bweak bounds aftah lock-up," he said. "There are fellows heah who do so, but they are wathah wottahs—fellows like Wacke and Cwooke, and Chowle of the New House. Of course, if you only go for a wamble there is no weal harm in it, but you would get detention if you were spotted, and pewwaps a lickin'."

"How do you vamoose?" asked Wildrake.

"Which?"

"I mean, get out."

"I will show you if you like, deah boy; but I weally advise you to stick to the quadwangle."

"Come on, then," said Wildrake.

"Oh, vewy well!"

The two juniors slipped out into the dusky quad. The night was fine and starry, though sharply cold. Kit Wildrake seemed to breathe more easily as soon as he was outside the house.

"This way, deah boy."

And the obliging Gussy pointed out the slanting oak by the school wall, which had often been used to help a climber from within.

"Thanks, old scout!" said Wildrake.

He was up the oak the next moment, and sitting on top of the wall, in the shadow of the leafless branches.

"Bai Jove! I weally advise you, Wildwake——"

Thud!

The sound of Kit Wildrake dropping into the road was the only answer Arthur Augustus received.

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head seriously as he walked back to the School House. Certainly, he did not suspect the new junior of any shady projects such as Racke might have had, but he regarded his conduct as exceedingly "weckless."

CHAPTER 6.
Face to Face!

WILDRAKE set out along the road with a light and springy step, enjoying his freedom. He did not see why he should not enjoy a long ramble over the frosty, starlit countryside, and return in time for bed. He had come out without coat or cap, and the evening was cold; but he did not seem to notice it as he strode cheerily on towards the village.

It was about the same time that Aubrey Racke, his little game finished—and several of his currency notes having passed into the keeping of Mr. Banks—quitted the Green Man by a back door, and started to return to the school.

Racke left the unhallowed precincts in a vile temper. He had lost several pounds, he had smoked till he felt queer, and the tobacco-laden atmosphere of Mr. Banks' room had been very oppressive. Racke had a headache and a general feeling of "rottenness." A dog ran across his path as he started up the lane, and he found a savage satisfaction in kicking it.

As he came to the cross-roads, a shadow moved by the trees. Kit Wildrake had reached the cross-roads, and stopped there, undecided which way to take. He did not know the lanes about St. Jim's yet, and the finger-post was old and unreadable. And he smiled at the thought of getting lost, and not showing up at the school again till late at night. While he was hesitating, Racke came striding by.

Racke stopped as he caught sight of the Fourth-Former, but that was not till he was quite close on him. Wildrake's eyes turned on the new arrival as he came up, and he saw Racke first.

He did not recognise Racke of the Shell. But instantly he recognised the fellow who had met him at Wayland Junction and given him the name of "Tom Merry."

"You!" ejaculated Wildrake.

Racke sprang back, but it was too late. Wildrake ran to him.

"So I've found you!" he exclaimed.

"Stand back, you fool!" muttered Racke. He saw at once that Wildrake did not recognise him as a St. Jim's fellow.

"I've been wondering if I should see you again," said Wildrake grimly. "You spoofed me the other day——"

"I don't know you," muttered Racke.

"I guess I know you well enough, my pippin. You met me at Wayland the day I came——"

"I—I didn't——"

"You told me your name was Tom Merry——"

"I haven't seen you before——"

"You took me to the Grammar School, and landed me there, making me believe it was St. Jim's——"

"I—I——"

"It was a rotten trick to play on a new chap," said Wildrake. "I came near being ragged by the Grammar School chaps, and I've no doubt that was what you intended. Now I want to know who you are. You must be a St. Jim's chap to play the trick you did, but I haven't seen you about the school. I want to ask you very pressingly to have the gloves on."

Racke breathed hard.

"You're making a mistake," he said desperately. "I don't know you——"

"You told me a bushel of lies the other day," said Wildrake. "Now you're adding to them. I'd know those bushy eyebrows anywhere."

The cad of the Shell grinned faintly.

"Look here——" he began.

"I guess I've promised you a licking," said Wildrake cheerfully. "Will you have it now?"

"Look out!" exclaimed Racke suddenly. "The bull!"

Wildrake glanced over his shoulder as Racke pointed. Racke made a rush past him as he did so, and dashed off towards St. Jim's.

"Spoofed again!" ejaculated Wildrake.

Racke ran his hardest. But there came a pattering of active feet behind him on the hard, frosty road. He glanced back, and saw the new junior in full pursuit in the starlight.

Aubrey Racke was not an athlete; he rather regretted the fact at that moment. Banks' room did not assist him in running, either. He was soon panting, and his breath came in heavy throbs as he raced on towards St. Jim's.

If he had looked back again, he might have seen that Wildrake was laughing. He could have overtaken the fugitive in a few minutes; but he suited his pace to Racke's, keeping him a dozen yards ahead. He did not intend, as a matter of fact, to do Racke any damage, but he found entertainment in giving him a scare, in return for his trickery. Racke, however, in horrid anticipation of a pommelling, such as he had seen Grundy receive, tore on desperately, panting and gasping and spluttering.

He reached the school wall at last, and made a spring. His hands caught the top of the wall, but he was too spent to drag himself up. Footsteps pattered below him, and to his horror he was seized by both ankles.

"Caught!" chuckled Wildrake.

"Ow! Leggo!"

Wildrake tightened his grasp on Racke's ankles.

"Fairly roped in!" he said. "So you belong to St. Jim's after all—I reckoned so!"

Racke clung to the top of the wall panting. He dared not let go while his ankles were held; the fall would have been too painful.

"Will you let go?" he hissed. "You rotter! I shall fall in a minute! I can't hold on much longer!"

"Don't yell, old scout—you'll have the Head hear you, and think what will happen then!" chuckled Wildrake. "This is no end of a joke, if you could only see it—quite as funny as spoofing a new kid! Ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotter! I—I'm falling!" groaned Racke.

"I'll catch you when you do!"

"Oh!"

Racke's hold gave at last.

He came slithering down the wall helplessly, expecting to crash on the hard

ground. But Wildrake's strong arms caught him easily enough, and lowered him to his feet. Aubrey Racke was a good weight; but the boy from the ranch handled him almost as if he had been a baby. Racke landed on his feet safe and sound, but still spluttering with dread. But as he felt himself safe, his fear gave place to fury, and he struck out savagely; and Wildrake, catching the unexpected blow in his face, went with a crash to the ground.

CHAPTER 7.
Not Nice for Racke.

CRASH!

Wildrake went at full length on the hard road with a sharp cry. Racke turned instantly to the wall again, to spring up and climb over. This time he was successful, and he clambered frantically over the top of the wall.

Wildrake was on his feet again as Racke scrambled over.

He made an active spring, caught the top of the wall, and drew himself up much more actively than Racke. He dropped inside at the same moment as the Shell fellow, and instantly turned on him and grasped him.

Racke struck out savagely and passionately, but this time the Canadian was on his guard.

He knocked Racke's fists aside, and struck in return, and the Shell fellow staggered against the wall with a howl.

"Now come on!" said Wildrake between his teeth.

But Racke kept back to the wall.

"Stop it! I—I give you best!" he panted.

Wildrake laughed scornfully.

"I guess I'll let you off if you're funky," he said. "But I'm going to know who you are. You'll come into the light with me."

He grasped Racke by the shoulder, and marched him towards the School House. Racke resisted.

"You fool——" he panted.

"Come on!"

"I—I can't go into the house like this!" panted Racke shrilly.

"Like what?" demanded Wildrake, with a stare.

"Like—like this! Let me go!"

"Bai Jove! What's the wow?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came sauntering gracefully through the starlight. "Is that you, Wildwake? I'm glad you've got back, you weckless young duffah!"

"I guess it's little me," said Wildrake, "and I want to know who this galoot is."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass in astonishment on the disguised cad of the Shell. "I have nevah seen him befoah—but there is somethin' familiah about him——"

"It's the chap who spoofed me the day I came," said Wildrake. "Doesn't he belong to St. Jim's? What is he doing in here, then?"

"Bai Jove! He is quite a stwangah to me. Pewwaps he is a burglah," said Arthur Augustus. "Bwing him into the light, deah boy!"

"You—you fool!" hissed Racke.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! That's Wacke!"

"Racke?" repeated Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah! I should know that very unpleasant voice anywhah. What have you been doin' to your face, Wacke?"

Racke muttered a curse.

There was no escape for him, and he dared not be taken into the lighted house with his disguise on. He put up his hand to the false eyebrows and dragged them off.

Wildrake uttered a surprised exclamation. The thick dark eyebrows being gone, Racke's own thin, sandy brows were revealed, and he was easily enough recognised then.

"Gweat Scott! The uttah ass has been playin' theatwical twicks!" said Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "Have you weally been out of gates like that, Wacke?"

"Shut up, you fool!" hissed Racke. "Do you want to bring the prefects here?"

"I weally do not mind if the pwefects come heah, Wacke."

Wildrake released the Shell fellow.

"I guess I understand," he said contemptuously. "So you're Racke, are you? And sneaking about in disguise like a pesky pickpocket!"

"Mind your own business, confound you!" snarled Racke.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass severely upon the cad of the Shell.

"Wacke, you uttah wottah——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off, Wacke. You have been out of bounds——"

"So has your precious chum from the backwoods!" sneered Racke.

"Wildrake has been out for a wamble!" said Arthur severely. "But I feah vewy sewiously that you have been actin' the goat, and disgwacin' yourself and your school. I wondah, Wacke, that you are not ashamed to look a decent chap in the face."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Wacke——"

But Aubrey Racke was not in a humour for homilies from Arthur Augustus, valuable as they were to a youth on the downward path. He strode away savagely, gritting his teeth with rage, and hatred running riot in his breast. Kit Wildrake glanced after him, and then followed Arthur Augustus into the School House.

"So it was Wacke, aftah all, who played that twick on you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally think the pwopah capah would be to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

Wildrake smiled.

"I guess he can go and chop chips," he answered. "I don't reckon it would be easy to make him put up his hands."

"Yaas, that is vewy twue. I have been askin' him to come to the gym evewy day, and he wefuses to come," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps it is bettah to tweat him with contempt. A howwid boundah who goes awound disguised like some membah of the cwiminal classes——"

"Hallo! Who's been ruffling your lofty serenity, Gussy?" inquired Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three came along on their way to the Common-room.

"That is wathah a widiculous way of puttin' it, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "That howwid boundah Wacke——"

"What's Racke's latest?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

Arthur Augustus explained. Monty Lowther burst into a chuckle, while Tom Merry frowned, and Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Dear old Racke—always up to something new!" said Lowther. "We'll jolly well pull his legs over this!"

"I wegard it as a sewious mattah, Lowthah!"

"My dear man, you can regard it as you like," said Lowther affably. "I'm going to screw a little joke out of it!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I hardly appwove of——"

"Dear me!" said Lowther sadly. "Just think—I shall have to survive without Gussy's approval! Fancy that, you fellows!"

And Monty Lowther strolled away, not looking very downhearted, in spite of Gussy's disapproval. Racke had hurried to his study to get done what work he could before bed-time. He was very busy there till half-past nine, and did not heed the sound of chuckling in the Shell passage outside his door. But at half-past nine it was time to proceed to the dormitory, and Racke had to leave his unfinished prep.

He pulled the door open to leave the study, and a prolonged chortle fell upon his ears. On the door was a large placard pinned; and it bore a picture delineated by Monty Lowther's hand, evidently intended as a portrait of Aubrey Racke. An enormous pair of dark eyebrows half-covered the pictured



"Yarooh!" There was a dreadful yell from Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. The fat youth was strolling in the quad when he heard a bellow and looked round to see a shaggy, furious head in the gateway. "Yarooh! Help! Wild bull!" he yelled. (*See page* 11).

face. Racke stared at the picture, and then at the chuckling juniors.

"Your portrait, dear boy," said Monty Lowther. "Eyebrows and all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" hissed Racke. "What do you mean?"

"Walk up, gentlemen," said Lowther, in the manner of a showman. "Latest portrait of Aubrey Racke, Esquire, in his celebrated Green Man act."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke tore the picture from the door, and hurled it into the fire. Then he strode from the study, pushing his way savagely through the hilarious juniors. He stopped as he saw Wildrake.

"So you've been jawing about me?" he exclaimed furiously.

Wildrake gave him a look of contempt.

"I haven't, as a matter of fact," he said. "But I certainly shouldn't take the trouble to keep your shady secrets. If you don't want to be known as a blackguard, there's always time to reform, you know."

Racke clenched his hand savagely. Wildrake laughed

"Better think twice," he said contemptuously. "I'm half sorry I let you off, and I guess I'd be real pleased to mop up the passage with you."

Racke unclenched his hand, and strode away. When the Shell went to their dormitory, grinning glances were turned on Racke on all sides. After Kildare had put out the light and was gone, Monty Lowther had a remark to make.

"You fellows like to hear my latest limerick for the 'Weekly'?"

"Oh, give us a rest!" said Grundy.

"Go it, Lowther!"

"Lend me your ears, gentlemen. Are you listening, Racke?"

"Go and eat coke!" snarled Racke.

And Monty Lowther recited:

"There's a shady young blackguard named Racke,
Whose character's shockingly black;
Some day he'll get lagged,
By a prefect and scragged,
Then for Racke it's the whack and the sack!"

"You silly idiot!" roared Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well——"

"Well, what will you jolly well do, dear boy?" asked Lowther sweetly.

Aubrey Racke decided not to answer that question. He turned his head on the pillow, and affected to sleep, while the Shell continued to pass remarks on his late escapade. But Racke was not sleeping. He heard every word; and he was thinking of Kit Wildrake, and savagely turning over in his mind vain schemes of vengeance upon the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch.

CHAPTER 8.

The Way of the Cowboy!

"LET him alone, you ass!" said Crooke.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Racke and Crooke were leaning on a gate in Rylcombe Lane, discussing whether it would be safe to drop in at the Green Man that afternoon. The gate was padlocked; in the field, within, was a big black bull, known all over Rylcombe for his savage temper. Racke was amusing himself by throwing stones at the bull, feeling secure with the gate between. The savage animal was lowing and glaring, quite close to the gate.

"Let him alone," said Crooke uneasily. "If you make him wild, he might charge at the gate. I don't know if it would stand."

"The gate's all right," answered Racke carelessly, and he pitched another stone. There was an angry bellow from the bull as it was struck.

"Oh, come away!" said Crooke angrily. And he seized his companion's arm and dragged him from the gate.

As they stepped out into the road, two figures came in sight, from the direction of St. Jim's. Racke scowled blackly at the sight of Kit Wildrake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy, in his benignant way, was showing the new junior round the environs of St. Jim's.

A glitter shot into Racke's eyes.

"What a chance!" he muttered.

"Chance of hammering him, do you mean?" grinned Crooke. "I dare say he wouldn't say no."

"The bull!" muttered Racke.

"Eh?"

"If the gate was open——"

"You mad fool!" exclaimed Crooke, in alarm. "That bull half killed a man once before when he got loose! Come away!"

"We could shin over the fence on the other side before he got out!" muttered Racke. "Nobody'd know. The hedge screens us here——"

"You must be potty!" exclaimed the alarmed Crooke. "You—you fool! Stop it—stop it, I tell you!"

Racke had taken out his pocket-knife, and was already forcing the rusty old padlock. It opened with a snap.

Crooke did not wait for more than that. He fairly flew across the road, and clambered over the fence on the other side.

Racke cast a glance along the road, pitched the gate wide open, leaving a free passage to the bull, and sprinted after his comrade. In a second or two he was over the fence, crouching beside Crooke.

"Oh, you fool—you fool!" breathed Crooke.

"Quiet, you funky duffer!" hissed Racke. "Keep quiet and see what happens."

They watched through the palings, Crooke as white as a sheet, Racke with a malicious grin on his face. The black bull had advanced into the gateway, and stood there, pawing and lowing, as if uncertain. The high hedge along the field hid him from the two juniors who were coming along from the school. In a couple of minutes at the most they would be abreast of the gateway, where the savage animal stood pawing.

Perhaps Racke repented, as he realised that what he had done might lead to an actual tragedy. But it was too late for repentance now. He clutched Crooke's arm as his companion half rose.

"Quiet!"

"I—I must call out—warn them!" said Crooke huskily.

"Shut up!" hissed Racke. "If this comes out, it's a police-court affair, and you're in it with me!"

"I—I was against it! You know——"

"Will you shut up? They'll hear you!"

Crooke sank back, trembling. Wildrake and D'Arcy were near enough now for the two rascals to hear their voices across the frosty road.

"That's a jolly old familiar sound," said Wildrake. "Sounds like the steers on the ranch at home."

"It's Mr. Giles' bull," said Arthur Augustus. "It's all wight—he's always carefully shut in. He got out once and goahed a man, and Mr. Giles had to pay damages. So——"

A black, brustling head was thrust out beyond the hedge, and Arthur Augustus stopped suddenly.

"Bai Jove! He's loose!"

Bellow!

The two juniors stopped dead. The savage bull was within three yards of them, with glaring eyes and tossing head.

"Wun for it!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wun like anythin', deah boy."

He caught Wildrake by the arm and spun him round.

The bull, with a roar, rushed right at the two juniors. There was no time for running.

Wildrake caught Arthur Augustus, in his turn, and dragged him aside on the grass by the road, just in time to escape the rush. The black bull careered by with lowered head.

Arthur Augustus staggered, and fell on his knees in the grass. The bull was already turning.

"Leave him to me!" exclaimed Wildrake. "I can handle him, D'Arcy. I guess I'm used to steers. Shin over something."

He ran towards the bull.

Crooke and Racke, through the palings, watched him in blank astonishment. There was no sign of fear or hesitation in the sunburnt face of the Canadian junior.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. He did not think for a moment of deserting his comrade, but it was pretty clear that he could not help him.

The bull swung round in the road, and charged straight at Wildrake as he ran towards the animal.

What happened next seemed like some wild dream to the onlookers.

It seemed as if the boy from the ranch must be rushed down by the savage animal, and a cry of horror escaped D'Arcy.

But at the last instant Wildrake sidestepped and closed in beside the bull, seizing the horns of the lowered head.

The next moment he was off the ground, and D'Arcy groaned with horror as he saw him, as he believed, tossed by the bull. But Wildrake was not tossed on the horns. He had them in his grasp, and as the savage head was flung up Wildrake vaulted on the animal's back.

There was a fearful roar from the bull as Wildrake dropped into his place, gripping the tough sides with his knees as if he were riding a bareback horse.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy faintly.

He was safe now. The bull was thinking only of the strange burden on his back, striving wildly and savagely to rid himself of it.

Racke and Crooke, through the railings, watched spellbound.

Wildrake shouted to Arthur Augustus.

"Vamoose, you ass! Clear while I keep him busy! Clear!"

The bull was prancing and careering furiously from side to side of the road; every instant it looked as if the daring rider must be hurled from his precarious perch.

Once he had fallen there was no hope for him; he would have been gored by the savage brute the moment he touched the ground.

But with feet, knees, and hands he was clinging to his mount, his teeth set, his eyes gleaming, his face calm.

"Clear, you dummy!" he shouted to D'Arcy.

THE
"BOYS' HERALD."
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Boys' Papers.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus realised that Wildrake would not make an attempt to save himself until he was in safety. He made a run for the palings across the road and clambered over, dropping almost on top of Racke and Crooke, but hardly noticing them in his excitement.

It was none too soon.

On the open prairie of the Boot Leg Ranch the cowboy schoolboy could probably have ridden the bull till the animal exhausted his rage, but in a narrow English lane it was quite another matter. The bull, finding that he could not unseat the cowboy of St. Jim's, made a furious rush for the hedge to brush him off by plunging through.

But Wildrake was wary. As the brute plunged headlong into the hedge, he made a flying leap and landed on his feet in the lane.

Crash!

The heavy head of the bull went into the hedge, almost smashing through, and for some moments he was entangled there, bellowing madly.

Those few moments were enough for Kit Wildrake.

He sprinted across the road, leaped over the palings, and tumbled down breathlessly beside D'Arcy.

Racke and Crooke were hurrying away across the field. Wildrake gave them only one glance, but it was a significant one.

"All O.K. now, old scout!" he said.

D'Arcy gasped.

"Oh deah! You—you are not hurt, Wildwake?"

"Only a bit shaken up," said the Canadian, with a smile. "I've been on the back of a bull before, many a time, at the ranch."

"Bai Jove!"

"Here he comes!"

The bull had dragged himself from the hedge, and glared round in search of his victim. He came charging over to the fence, and the palings shook as he thundered against them. But they held.

With another bellow, the infuriated animal turned and thundered away in the direction of the school.

"Come on!"

Wildrake jumped into the road again, and D'Arcy followed him. The Canadian stopped for a moment to look at the gate. He held up the broken padlock.

"I reckoned so!" he said grimly.

"Bai Jove! Some awful wottah has let the bull out on purpose!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, aghast. "Who could have been wottah enough——"

"I guess I know! But come on!"

Wildrake hurried off towards the school, and D'Arcy followed him. They were ready to turn and dodge if the bull turned back. But the black bull thundered right on, in a cloud of dust—and the gates of St. Jim's were wide open before him.

CHAPTER 9.

The St. Jim's Cowboy to the Rescue!

"YAROOOOH!"

It was a fearful yell from Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

The fat youth was strolling in the quad, debating in his podgy mind as to which member of the Fourth Form was likeliest to "play up" if "touched" for a little loan. The principal event in the solar system, to Baggy, was the arrival that day of fresh cakes at Dame Taggles' tuckshop. But all thought of cakes was driven from Baggy's mind as he heard a bellow and looked round to see a shaggy, furious head in the gateway.

"Yarooh! Help! Wild bull!" yelled Trimble.

He sprinted for the School House.

"Look out!"

"Mad bull!"

"Run!"

There were shouts on all sides. Taggles, the porter, looked out of his lodge, and jumped in again and bolted and barred the door. Taggles had no desire to interview Mr. Giles' black bull at close quarters.

The bull had paused at the gateway, and might not, perhaps, have entered had he not been tempted by the sight of Baggy Trimble's flying form. That decided him. He thundered in at the gate and thundered after Trimble, who, luckily, had a good start. Baggy never distinguished himself on the cinder-path, but he distinguished himself in the St. Jim's quadrangle that afternoon. He reached the house in record time, and fairly flew up the steps and dodged inside.

"Shut the door!" roared Baggy.

"What——"

"Trimble——"

"Help! Mad bull! Yaroooooh!"

Baggy was struggling with the heavy oaken door as Mr. Railton came hurrying from his study.

The Housemaster looked into the quadrangle, and uttered an alarmed exclamation.

St. Jim's fellows were vanishing on all sides, out of the way of the bull. Some were running into the gym, some into the New House; some had clambered up the elms, or on top of the wall. The quadrangle was cleared in record time. The School House was given a wide berth, as the bull was there. Mr. Railton closed the big door as the bull came thundering up to the steps and essayed to mount them. But the savage brute turned away from the steps and careered across the quadrangle, seeking a victim.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Yow-ow! We shall all be killed!" yelled Trimble.

"Silence!"

"Yarooh!"

"Go upstairs, Trimble, and be quiet!"

Trimble bolted up the staircase, still howling with alarm. Mr. Railton looked from the doorway again.

The quadrangle was clear; no one was in danger at the moment. But the quad was in the possession of the bull. He stopped under an elm, to the branches of which clung D'Arcy minor and Levison minor of the Third Form.

"Pray Heaven they may not fall!" breathed the Housemaster.

D'Arcy minor, at least, was not in danger of losing his nerve. Sitting astride a branch, the cheerful Wally put his fingers and thumb to his nose towards the bull, evidently in sign of mockery. Mr. Railton smiled involuntarily.

Two juniors appeared in the distant gateway. They were Wildrake and D'Arcy.

"Keep cleah, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"You stay here," said Wildrake. "Get on the wall, D'Arcy. I've got to get into the School House somehow."

"What for?"

"My lasso."

"Bai Jove!"

"Stay here. You can't help. And I don't want to have to ride that bull again, I guess!" grinned Wildrake.

"Pway be awf'ly careful, deah boy!"

"All serene!"

Wildrake ran into the quadrangle, and immediately the bull sighted him and quitted the tree in which the fags had taken shelter. With a bellow he charged across at Wildrake. But the Canadian junior ran like a deer, and beat him to the School House. He darted into the house, almost into the arms of Mr. Railton.

"You foolish, reckless boy!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"I guess it's all right, sir!"



Wally and Levison minor were running for the School House—running for their lives! The infuriated bull rushed after them, to the full length of the lasso. It tightened, and its sudden grip brought the animal to a standstill. (*See page* 12).

Wildrake hurried upstairs to the box-room. In a few moments he had taken the coiled lasso from his trunk, and was hurrying down again. He had brought the lariat with him from the Boot Leg Ranch, though never guessing that he would ever have serious use for it in the Old Country. Mr. Railton jumped to stop him as he went to the door, rope in hand.

"Wildrake! Stop instantly!"

The Canadian stopped.

"How dare you venture out with that fearful animal loose?" exclaimed Mr. Railton angrily.

"I guess I'm going to rope him, sir."

"What?"

Wildrake held up the lasso.

"It's easy enough, sir; simply pie to me! I've lassoed wilder bulls than that cavorting around on the Boot Leg Ranch."

"Bless my soul!" said the Housemaster. "But I cannot allow you to go into danger, Wildrake. Stop where you are!"

There was a crowd inside the door of the School House now, ready to shut the door if the bull succeeded in negotiating the steps. But the animal was careering round the quadrangle again, trampling furiously on the grass plots and flower-beds.

"He's got to be caught, sir!" said Wildrake earnestly. "Any minute fellows may come in at the gate, not knowing he's here, and get gored, perhaps killed."

"True! But—— He—he—he may go out again of his own accord!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

"And if he meets anyone on the road, sir—— He might run into children," said Wildrake. "I guess I can handle him, if you'll let me! The danger's simply nix for a cowboy."

Mr. Railton paused.

Wildrake's look inspired confidence, and it was true that a fatality might happen at any moment with the savage bull loose in the quadrangle. But the point was not decided by Mr. Railton. There came a loud crack, and the branch to which D'Arcy minor and Frank Levison were clinging was seen to sag downwards.

Kit Wildrake, without waiting for permission, made a sudden spring out of the doorway, and dashed down the steps.

Wally and Levison minor were clinging to the sagging branch, but in a minute more they would have been within reach of the bull.

Wildrake dashed across towards them.

The bull had stopped, and his blood-shot eyes were fixed on the two fags, sagging down almost within reach of his horns. Watched by a breathless crowd from the doorway, Wildrake dashed towards the bull and drew his attention away from the fags. He turned savagely, and the Fourth-Former dodged behind the tree as the animal rushed at him.

The bull careered furiously by.

He swept round to charge at Wildrake again, and as he did so the lasso flew, uncoiling as it whizzed in the air.

The loop settled down over the head of the bull, and encircled the brawny neck.

The animal was rushing on, and Wildrake dodged round the tree-trunk again actively.

Then he ran, the end of the noose still in his hand.

In a second he was "shinning" up an elm, and the charging head of the bull struck the trunk a foot below his boots.

Without losing a second, he took a turn of the rope round the nearest branch.

The bull, roaring with rage at the escape of his victim, glared round at the two fags. They had fallen now, and were running for the School House, running for their lives! The infuriated animal rushed after them, to the full length of the lasso.

It tautened, and its sudden grip hurled the huge animal upon his haunches. Wildrake's end of it was turned round a branch, and it held. The Canadian schoolboy calmly proceeded to tie the end to the branch.

The bull struggled up, perplexed and enraged by his unexpected captivity. He strove again and again to tear himself away, and the taut rope twitched and sang. But it did not break. It had held animals quite as powerful in the old days when Wildrake had lassoed steers on his father's ranch.

The black bull was a prisoner at last.

Wildrake slipped from the tree, and scudded away. The bull rushed after him, but only to the length of the lasso, and was again hurled upon his haunches.

Out of the radius of the rope, Wildrake dropped into a walk, and he signed to Arthur Augustus, watching him from the gates.

"All serene now, old scout!" he called out.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gave the tree to which the bull was secured a very wide berth as he came in. And, seeing that the savage animal was secure, a crowd of fellows left their various perches. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther dropped from the roof of the gym, and they rushed up to Wildrake and clapped him on the shoulders.

"Good man!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've saved some lives to-day very likely," said Manners soberly. "Where did you get your nerve, young 'un?"

Wildrake smiled.

"I guess I'm used to using the rope," he said.

"On the Boot Leg Ranch, you know," smiled Arthur Augustus. "Jolly lucky for some of us we had a newwy cowboy heah to-day! Shouldah high, you fellows!"

"Bravo!"

"Here, hold on!" yelled Wildrake. "What are you playing the goat for? Stoppit!"

But, heedless of the Canadian's expostulations, the juniors seized him and lifted him shoulder-high, and carried him to the School House in triumph, followed by a roar from the baffled bull.

Loud cheers greeted the cowboy junior as he was borne into the School House. The Head was there, and he grasped Wildrake's hand as the Canadian was set down.

"My dear, brave lad!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "I saw it all from my window. You ran a fearful risk. You are a credit to the school, my dear boy."

And the Head shook hands warmly with the boy from Boot Leg Ranch.

"Thwee cheeahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass. "Hip, hip, huwway!"

And they were given with a will.

* * * * * * *

Later, when the black bull had been recaptured, and led away by Farmer Giles and his men, Racke and Crooke stole in. They crept to their study with pale faces, relieved to find that there had been no fatality, but trembling with apprehension for themselves. And their apprehensions were not groundless, as they soon discovered. A few minutes after they were in the study the door opened, and Kit Wildrake came in with a grim face.

"Which of you let the bull loose?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" blustered Racke.

"I guess I mean what I say! If it was both of you, both of you are going through it!" said Wildrake coolly. "I fancy I can handle the two of you together. Ready?"

"It was Racke!" hissed Crooke. "I tried to stop him——"

Racke gave him a bitter look.

"I deny it!" he said, between his teeth. "And if you go to the Head——"

Wildrake interrupted him.

"I'm not going to the Head; I'm coming to you! Put up your hands!"

No more was said.

Racke was a most unwilling combatant. But as he had to take a licking he put up the best fight he could. For five minutes there was a terrific uproar in Study No. 7 in the Shell. Crooke looked on with a pallid face, not even wishing to intervene.

When Wildrake quitted the study he left a groaning wreck behind him, sitting on the carpet, and dabbing a streaming nose. Aubrey Racke had paid for his sins with interest. It was a long time before Racke recovered from that severe punishment. And from that day Racke of the Shell was very careful to give a wide berth to the Cowboy of St. Jim's.

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John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service of Chicago, to track down the band of organised criminals operating in the West under the guidance of Iron Hand. Black, Burnett's assistant, overhears the plans and informs Iron Hand in the latter's lair in San Francisco. Black is discovered by Sharpe, who disguises as a telegraph operator, and he is traced to the home of his sister, Marna Black, one of the band of crooks. Marna is captured. Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand. She is not known to Sharpe. The detective starts off for Iron Hand's lair, and on the train three of the band planned to kill him with "mustard gas." After a severe struggle he fortunately escapes.

The mountain den, Eagle's Nest, is run by Potsdam, Iron Hand's lieutenant. Anne meets Iron Hand, presents her credentials, and is taken into the gang. She is sent to Potsdam, and is in the den when a signal warns that someone is approaching. As Sharpe rides along the road to the den, a trap falls, precipitating him and his horse into a deep pit. He is captured, and thrown into a room adjoining that of Anne. Anne slips a knife-blade through a crack in the wall, enabling Sharpe to free himself of his bonds.

Sharpe escapes from Eagle's Nest on a horse he seized from Potsdam and his gang. Potsdam explodes various bombs along the road. The first two miss Sharpe, and the third explodes under his horse. Sharpe, however, has sensed the danger, and slipped from the animal. He rolls down the cliff to a ledge, quickly arranges a dummy of himself, and hides in the tunnel of an abandoned mine. The gang rushes out, looks down and sees the dummy, believing Sharpe killed. Sharpe follows the tunnel, and comes up into the cellar of Eagle's Nest. He overhears Anne, who poses as Marna Black, talking to Potsdam. The latter tells her to go to the ranch and use a motor to get back to the headquarters of Iron Hand. Sharpe makes his way to the ranch, overpowers the chauffeur, and, disguised, takes the latter's place, and drives Anne back to the city. Anne reaches the headquarters. Sharpe follows, climbing down the lift-shaft. He listens to talk between Iron Hand and Anne. The lift, descending, forces Sharpe into the room, where he holds up Iron Hand and Anne. Sharpe is tricked, and plunged into the well through a trapdoor.

(Now read on.)

Off to Eagle's Nest.

A MOMENT after John Sharpe disappeared, the trapdoor closed again as suddenly as it had opened.

Anne Crawford endeavoured to hide her real feelings in regard to the terrible things she had recently witnessed, and she addressed Iron Hand, who had by now quite recovered his composure.

"His body—how will you dispose of it?" she asked.

Poor Anne wanted to find out as much as she could about Sharpe, although she dared not let Iron Hand think that she had any interest in him. If she did, she would undoubtedly share the same fate.

The master criminal was delighted at the opportunity to show off his mechanical contrivances. He pointed out a special lever to Anne.

"This opens the well into the main sewer," he explained. "They go out—I neither know nor care!"

Then Iron Hand signalled for one of his assistants.

"Go down into the well, and see if he is dead," he ordered. "If not——" The chief indicated that his man was to finish the job off.

The assistant, taking a revolver with him, opened another trapdoor, and carefully made his way down the flight of steps. As he neared the bottom, he took out an electric-torch.

After his departure, and seizing a favourable opportunity when Iron Hand's back was turned, Anne took a desperate measure.

She knew that if the assistant found Sharpe still alive he would kill him, so she decided to pull the lever which opened the well into the main sewer.

There seemed but little hope that she would be able to save the detective's life by this means, but it was the last chance and one worth trying.

Soon the assistant returned from his grim mission.

"Well?" grunted Iron Hand.

"The man is dead—drowned, your Excellency!" he replied.

Complete satisfaction was registered on the chief's face, but poor Anne Crawford could scarce refrain from showing her real emotion. So poor John Sharpe was really killed this time, she reflected.

The harsh voice of Iron Hand suddenly awoke her from her unpleasant dreams.

"Well, leave the body there until the morning!" he announced.

But John Sharpe had had one more miraculous escape. Anne unknowingly had rendered him a great service when she pulled the lever, and he was even now swimming for his life in the murky, rat-infested water of the main sewer.

The body which the assistant had seen lying face downward was that of Hausen, and not the detective. He was not aware of the grim drama which had recently been enacted in his absence.

It did not take John Sharpe very long to weigh up the circumstances, and when he got over the first shock of his sudden immersion, he decided that the best plan for him would be to return to the ladder in the well. This would afford him at least a resting-place for a time.

When he reached the bottom of the well again, he cautiously made his way up the ladder, and he was delighted to find that he could overhear the voices of the men in the room above.

The ladder was very slippery, and it was with great difficulty that he held on. He placed his ear as near as possible to the floor, so that he could hear very distinctly all that was being said.

"Have you heard from the manager of the explosive factory? Has he agreed to pay the money we demand?"

Sharpe smiled grimly as he heard Iron Hand question the assistant, and he waited eagerly for the man's reply.

"He has refused our terms!" came the answer.

The chief stroked his chin.

"Very good! We will take the steps we arranged upon!" he responded, in a threatening manner.

"Yes, Excellency! Black Flag reports that Zehier and Lauken have arranged it for eleven-thirty to-night!" returned the assistant.

Iron Hand expressed great satisfaction at this.

"It will teach the others a lesson," he muttered; then, turning towards Anne, he said: "You and I will start off for Eagle's Nest—there will be great news for our friends in the morning!"

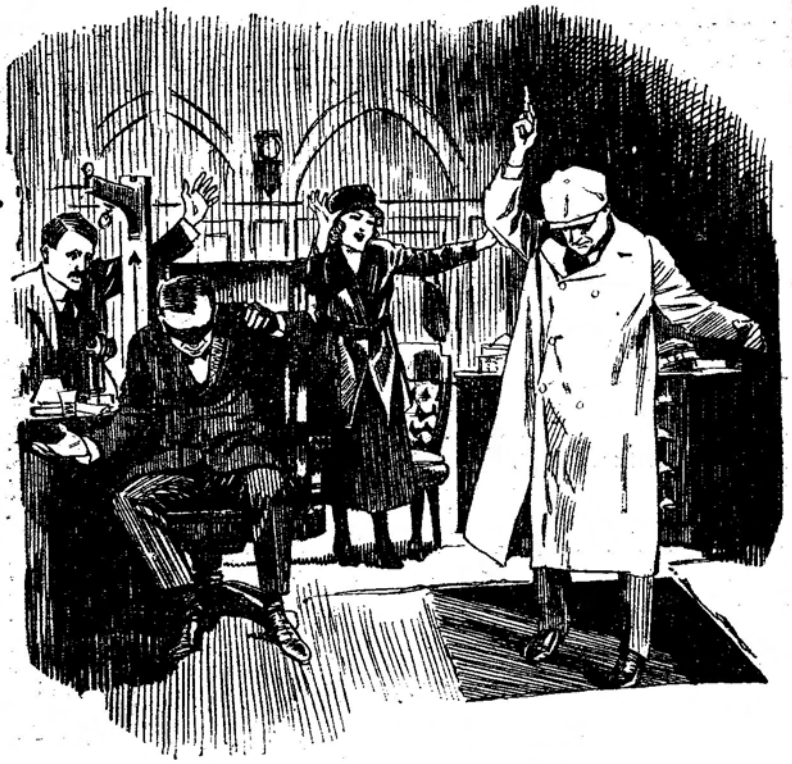
The chief rose from his chair, and conducted the girl, whom he fully believed to be his trusted assistant, Marna Black, to the lift.

John Sharpe had heard all he required to know, but he was now in a great predicament, and it puzzled him not a little to know how to get out of it successfully.

The trapdoor was no doubt securely locked on him, and even if it were not it would be a foolish thing for him to attempt to escape this way, for the place was too well watched.

No; the only thing for him to do was to take his life in his hands and swim through the sewer. Even in the darkest hours this fearless man's courage never failed him. He would never give up while the faintest hope remained.

Sharpe was a strong swimmer, and, after a moment's pause on the ladder to take a survey of his position, he struck out manfully. It was one of the most unpleasant incidents he had ever experienced in the whole course of his eventful life, and he was overjoyed when, after



Iron Hand lowered one hand suddenly and pressed a button. John Sharpe immediately fired, but his shot went wide, and he felt the floor give way beneath him.

a while, he saw in the distance a glimmer of daylight in front of him.

This told him instinctively that he was nearing the end of the tunnel. A few minutes later the detective found himself in the open river, and, needless to say, it was a great relief for him.

A short distance away, John Sharpe noticed a motor-boat at moorings. He swam over to it, and soon climbed aboard in order to obtain a much-needed rest.

The detective then consulted his watch, and he gave a sudden start as he looked at the hands.

"The conspirators said eleven-thirty—that gives me only thirty minutes!" he muttered. "Can I stop them in time?"

Hastily he cast off the moorings of the boat, started the motor, and, in a short time, the craft was plunging rapidly through the water in the direction of the explosive factory.

The Gang at Work.

THE watchman in the yard of the explosive factory was alarmed. He could hear a noise suspiciously like somebody climbing over the gates. He listened again, and advanced cautiously in the direction of the noise. Whoever it was, he had no business here this time of night, he thought.

Suddenly the figure of a man appeared over the top of the fence. It was dark, and the watcher below could but dimly make out his outline. Then, almost before he realised what was happening, the stranger dropped swiftly to the ground and rushed at him. He swung a heavy weight which he carried, down upon the head of the helpless watchman, and immediately rendered him unconscious.

The assailant then speedily returned to the gate, unlocked it, and let in his accomplice, who was carrying a small handbag which appeared to contain something of considerable weight.

By this time John Sharpe had reached his desired destination. He drove the motor-boat up against the wharf, hastily secured it, and ran rapidly in the direction of the factory yard.

On his arrival, he was quick to notice that the gate had been left partly open, a most unusual thing to do, he considered, and this fact at once told him that the gang had apparently already started on their nefarious work.

The detective peered cautiously around, and then entered the yard. The first thing which attracted his attention was the body of the watchman lying on the ground, and he went straight over to him.

The man was now in a semi-conscious condition, and as Sharpe lifted him up, he had just strength enough to murmur:

"Powder house — third — building — hurry!"

Sharpe hurried off in the direction indicated, and, on approaching the building, he heard the sound of whispering. He hastily concealed himself.

The two gangsters were emerging from the building without their little handbag, and they carefully shut the door and padlocked it.

Suddenly one man stopped the other.

"Footsteps!" he murmured, in an agitated voice.

Hastily they endeavoured to hide themselves.

After a while John Sharpe started off again. There was no time to be lost, and he felt he could now gain the building unseen by the men. He rushed to the door, but was disappointed to find it locked, and then he made for a small window, which was covered by a small iron grating.

By the aid of the moonlight he could distinctly see that the building contained large stores of powder, and, what troubled him most of all, an infernal machine, which had undoubtedly been placed there by the gang. He could hear it ticking, and also see the wires, and the small clock-dial which registered the time.

For a brief moment Sharpe's heart seemed to stop beating; as he looked at the clock he saw that it registered 11.28, and it was timed to go off at 11.30. The minute-hand was moving slowly, but surely.

In desperation the detective shook at the iron grating in a vain endeavour to tear it away by sheer strength. But it was too firm, and he could not budge it.

What was he to do?

Again Sharpe looked inside, and saw the fateful clock ticking steadily away. The terrible machine of disaster would soon do its ghastly work.

Meanwhile, the two crooks were feeling somewhat anxious of their own safety. One of them took out his watch, and in the dim light he was able to see that it was nearly time for the explosion.

Turning to his friend, he whispered:

"Let's beat it. We must take the risk of being seen; it is no longer safe to stay here!"

The men commenced to retreat when their attention was suddenly attracted by a loud report, and they halted. The two looked at each other in dismay, wondering if they were being fired at.

They expected to hear a second report, but it did not come, and their feelings were somewhat relieved.

Had they known that the revolver-shot was caused by Sharpe, and that he had succeeded in spoiling their little game, they would have been far more agitated than they were at this moment.

Realising how precious time was, the detective's thoughts flew to his revolver, and he determined to take the last opportunity which remained to avert the tragedy.

Taking careful aim, he fired in through the window at the mechanism of the clock, and to his great joy he discovered that the bullet had succeeded in jamming the machinery. The instrument of death was effectively silenced. But only in the very nick of time—it needed but five seconds to the half-hour.

When the detective had got over the excitement of his success he prepared to go. He could do no more good here for the moment, and he guessed that the noise of the revolver-shot would have frightened the plotters, and put them to flight.

His calculations, however, proved incorrect.

Suddenly, from the other side of the building, the two gangsters leaped at him and bore him to the ground. In a minute or two they had securely bound him, hand and foot.

Their next move was to unlock the door of the powder building and drag the unfortunate detective inside.

Even yet they were not content, and the taller of the two men took a gag from his pocket, which he promptly proceeded to tie tightly around John Sharpe's mouth, thus effectively preventing him shouting for help.

While he was thus engaged, the other man produced a long fuse, and on the signal from his friend, they lifted the helpless form of John Sharpe from the ground and placed him on top of the powder-barrel.

One of them then struck a match and applied it to the end of the fuse, and they hastily made their exit from the building.

Nearer and nearer the spark spluttered

towards the powder upon which the detective had been placed.

Poor John Sharpe had been a silent and helpless victim of their ghastly work. He exerted all his strength, and struggled in vain to release his bonds. But his efforts were of no avail. He realised he was a doomed man.

Death crept relentlessly towards him!

Just in Time!

JOHN SHARPE continued his struggles, and he became agonised when he saw that there was no possible chance of escape for him. In frantic haste the two crooks rushed towards the gate in order to make sure of freedom. Their path was near the spot where the injured watchman had fallen, and by this time his strength had returned, and he was struggling to get on his feet again.

The noise of the running men aroused his attention, and, shamming unconsciousness again, he waited for them to come near him.

When the second man passed, he raised himself and made a grab at his legs, bringing the fellow to the ground with a thud that shook him up completely.

A muttered oath broke from his lips, and drawing a gleaming knife from his belt, he instantly prepared to use it on the powerless watchman. But his friend was anxious to get away before the explosion occurred, and he was in no mood to settle accounts just now.

"Come on, quick!" he growled. "There is no time to be lost!" and he gripped the other man's arm in an effort to pull him away from the prostrate watchman.

The desire for revenge gleamed in his eyes, however, and he wrenched his arm free.

"I'm going to finish this fellow first!" he growled. "He knows too much for my liking. You can go on alone if you wish."

He raised his arm to plunge the knife into his enemy, but at that moment the sound of many footsteps echoed in the stillness of the night.

The first crook endeavoured to rush through the open gateway, but he was too late. The other man paused in consternation at this unwelcome turn of events, and the knife fell to the ground.

Through the gate rushed five men, and instinct at once told the crooks that they were trapped by secret-service men. Escape for them was now quite impossible.

The newcomers entered the yard at a run and leaped upon the astonished and bewildered crooks, heaving them to the ground. Rising weakly, the watchman pointed in the direction of the powder-house.

"Go quickly," he muttered hoarsely, "before it is too late!"

Three of the men at once ran off in the direction indicated, leaving the two crooks safely in the hands of the other two.

Arriving at the powder-house they looked through the window, and were aghast at the sight which met their eyes.

John Sharpe was still struggling fiercely to release himself, and the lighted fuse was perilously near the infernal machine, which would instantly explode when the naked light reached it, blowing the detective and the building to fragments.

The men instantly rushed around to the door, and their hearts fell when they found that it was locked.

What could be done at such a terrible moment as this?

"We must smash down the door," declared one man, in a husky voice. "Now then, altogether!"

No thought of their own danger disturbed these brave fellows.

All together they hurled their bodies at the wooden door. At first their efforts received no encouragement whatever. Then, as they continued, they were rewarded by the ominous sound of creaking wood. Again they used Herculean efforts.

It was a terribly painful business for them, but an innocent and brave man's life was at stake, and nothing else mattered.

Suddenly their efforts were rewarded, part of the wooden door crashed in, and there was sufficient room for the three heroes to enter.

It took two of the men but a second to cut the bonds which made Sharpe a prisoner, and the third one picked up the machine of destruction and hurled it with a mighty heave out through the doorway.

The burning fuse was now less than six inches away from the deadly powder-box.

Some yards away from the building, where it fell, a mighty explosion rent the air, hurling up great masses of earth in its fury.

Sharpe had given up all hope of rescue, and he could not realise that he had been saved from destruction, as if by a miracle, at this late hour.

Even where they stood the four men felt the effects of the explosion, although, fortunately, no injury was done to any of them.

After a brief rest the detective, accompanied by his rescuers, made their exit from the building. One of the men turned towards Sharpe and questioned him as to his identity, and how he came to be in such a terrible predicament.

"I'm Sharpe," he replied, "on the track of this gang. I tried to stop this business, but, as you see, they got the better of me; another minute and I should have been blown to smithereens."

The detective continued to tell his experiences of the last few minutes, and the secret-service men were greatly interested. When Sharpe asked how they got wind of the affair, the men smiled.

"We heard by telephone half an hour ago," one of them replied. "Don't know who it was—but it was a woman's voice!"

The detective racked his brains, but he was equally perplexed. He could not think of anyone in this quarter of the world who was interested enough in him to send aid. He also wondered how anybody, especially a woman, got to know of the attempt to blow up the powder factory.

The secret-service men congratulated him upon his escape, and all three of them made off towards the gate, where the two crooks were being held as prisoners.

A Dramatic Meeting.

IRON HAND and Anne Crawford, on their way to Eagle's Nest, halted at a small restaurant in order to obtain some light refreshment. The master-criminal discarded his mask when in public places, but his features were still sufficiently concealed by his large motor-goggles, and it was quite impossible for anybody to recognise him. Needless to say, he never appeared in public more often than he could help.

The two had just completed their meal, when Iron Hand consulted his watch, and announced somewhat hastily:

"We must go! Our submarine will be off Eagle's Nest in the morning. We shall use her to hold up the Oriental mail



The third man picked up the machine of destruction and with a mighty heave hurled it out through the doorway. The burning fuse was now less than six inches away from the deadly powder box! Some yards away from the building, where it fell, a mighty explosion rent the air, hurling up great masses of earth in its fury. *(See this page.)*

steamer leaving for Yokohama to-morrow night. Here is the telegram——"

Iron Hand felt in his pocket for the paper containing the message, but failed to find it. Then he suddenly recalled where he had left the telegram.

"It's at the headquarters," he told Anne. "Will you go back and get it? It's too valuable to leave around. You can then take the four-o'clock train for Eagle's Nest. Bring it to me there. I'm motoring down."

Anne agreed, and with his usual exaggerated politeness the chief bid her "good-bye." He had not too much time left for the business he had on hand, and he hurried away. He did not imagine that the girl who was now speeding away from him, and whom he firmly believed was Marna Black, was hatching out a scheme to foil him over his precious submarine business.

As soon as Anne reached a telegraph-office she hastily wrote out the following message:

"Burnett, Chief, Secret Service, Chicago. Order Oriental steamer for Yokohama to remain in harbour till further orders.—A. C."

The girl then continued her way back to Iron Hand's underground headquarters.

In the meantime, John Sharpe had not been wasting any time.

As he entered the motor-boat which he had left moored at the wharf, he was deep in thought.

"A woman," he mused. "I wonder who it was who sent the warning? Well, anyway, I'm going back to that den of thieves!"

Sharpe started the engine, and the motor-boat jumped away in the direction of the sewer opening.

The detective did not look forward to his swim again, but it had to be done, and he was going to make the best of it. At length he reached the well once more, and with the aid of his flashlight he gained the ladder.

Reaching the top, the detective endeavoured to push open the trap-door, but it would not yield. Then he suddenly remembered the file which he had brought with him. This would serve admirably as a jemmy.

Before getting on with the job Sharpe listened intently in order to make quite certain that there was nobody in the room above. Satisfied on this point, he continued. Soon his efforts were rewarded, and he was able to prise open the door.

Entering, he took a handkerchief from his pocket, and in order to disguise his features he used it as a mask.

Stealthily he entered the dark room, flashing his light around as he walked. The scene seemed now quite familiar to him. He soon recognised Iron Hand's desk, and, approaching it, he switched on the light over it.

John Sharpe hastily searched the contents of the desk, and presently came upon a telegram-form. He picked it up eagerly and held it under the light in order to examine it closely. He guessed that it would probably contain particulars of another of the criminal's schemes.

The telegram was in code, but above was the translation written by Iron Hand.

"Submarine at Eagle's Nest to-morrow morning. Will attack Oriental steamer on your orders.

586746385 32 723950 7382 86-049375 7568473. 2935 076524 54637289 0283749 74 9485 364758.

"R2.
"72."

Sharpe was delighted with his find, and he immediately consulted his watch. It was almost two o'clock.

He prepared for further action, when he suddenly stopped, tense and alarmed.

At the end of the room a panel was opening, and a woman's hand appeared. A finger stretched out and pressed a button.

Sharpe stood still beside the desk, scarcely daring to breathe. Then, as all the lights in the room went up, he saw the woman advance, and a revolver was levelled at him. At the order to put up his hands, he obeyed.

The woman then told him to back away from the desk, and Sharpe retreated. Suddenly he recognised who it was, and, with amazement, uttered the words:

"Good heavens, you!"

Anne recognised the detective's voice, and realised that in interfering with him she was impeding the course of justice. She felt inclined to speak out at once and tell him her real identity, but she realised that in this room of many panels and possible spies it would not be safe. She would have to remain a "crook" in his eyes.

Anne had a big puzzle to solve. She wanted to aid the detective without exposing her hand. Immediately an idea came into her head. She lowered her revolver slightly, and turned her head in the opposite direction in order to give him the chance he needed.

Sharpe was quick to notice that her attention was directed elsewhere.

He reached out and pressed the button which controlled the lights, and suddenly the place was plunged into darkness again. The desk light, however, was still on.

Anne fired her pistol, but she took good care that the bullet would go out of harm's way.

Sharpe stooped to avoid it, and he smiled when he saw what a bad shot the girl was. He did not know that she intended the bullet to go astray.

The detective rushed over and seized her in his arms, and took possession of her revolver. Then, covering her with the weapon, he ordered her to sit in the chair, and commenced to bind her arms and legs.

When he had completed his task, John Sharpe looked at her sternly.

"Where's your boss?" he demanded.

Anne pretended reluctance to answer, although she really desired to help the detective all she could. But she did not want others of the gang to enter and trap him.

"Iron Hand?" she said. "You should guess from that telegram you were reading." She tried to speak with an air of indifference.

"I have business in that direction, too!" replied Sharpe as politely as possible under the circumstances. "I'm afraid I'll have to leave you here, and to keep you from giving the alarm——"

Sharpe removed his handkerchief, and prepared to gag her.

Still acting, Anne retorted hotly:

"You are a coward to gag a woman!"

The detective laughed grimly. He did not like this job, but it was necessary.

But Anne was not a bit unhappy.

"It looks bad for the submarine," she thought, as the detective prepared to go. When he had left the room she struggled to loosen her bonds, and as Sharpe had only tied them tight enough to hold her while he got away, she felt she would soon be able to get free again.

On leaving Iron Hand's headquarters, Sharpe made his way to the office of the local Secret Service agent. Here he quickly removed his wet and soiled clothes, and donned a new suit.

Then he presented a list of articles which he urgently required for the plan he had on hand.

They were quickly brought to him.

The list was an interesting one, and consisted of two large signal-rockets, one revolver, one box of cartridges, one electric torch and an extra battery, one pair of strong field-glasses, one hand grenade, and one folding parachute.

Sharpe packed them into his bag, and, saying good-night to the agent, he made his departure.

At Iron Hand's headquarters, Anne had managed to free herself soon after the detective left. She hastily rearranged the room in order to hide all signs of the detective's visit.

Picking up the handkerchief which had been used as a gag, the girl looked at it fondly, and then, folding it up, she placed it away carefully.

The girl felt a growing fondness for the clever and plucky detective. The other things which Sharpe had used to tie her up with she dropped through the trap-door, and they disappeared into the water beneath.

Taking the telegram which Iron Hand desired with her, Anne then made her exit by the secret panel, and went up the stairs to the street.

The girl at once made her way to the nearest telegraph-office, where she sent off another message to Burnett, the chief of the Secret Service.

"Request permission to tell Sharpe who I am, and work with him. At present we are playing at cross purposes.—A. C." were the words she wrote.

She sincerely hoped that she would receive the necessary permission.

Anne then went off rapidly in the direction of the station.

By a somewhat curious coincidence, Sharpe was also busily engaged at the telegraph-office.

His message was also to Burnett, and he said:

"Stop sailing of Oriental steamer.—SHARPE."

This, of course, was in the special code which all the agents used when communicating with their chief.

He chuckled when he reflected what a disappointment the crooks would receive.

The detective's next move was to ring up on the telephone the camp of the Border Patrol, which was near Los Angeles.

The operator in the camp at the other end was dozing, when he was suddenly aroused by the ringing of the bell.

After the receipt of the message, the operator in uniform hastened off to the tent in order to find his superior officer, Captain West.

"You're wanted on the telephone by someone calling himself K. 714," was the strange message the operator delivered.

The officer addressed rushed out excitedly in the direction of the telephone-tent.

He placed his ear to the receiver.

"This is K. 714."

"Yes; I understand," came the prompt reply from Captain West.

"Send to nearest aviation headquarters, and have bombing 'plane ready for instant service in the meadow at Kelly's Farm, near Barclay's Point, by eleven o'clock to-day. On signal from me it will cross range and engage pirate submarine!"

West was now excited and alert.

"What will the signal be?" he asked.

Sharpe briefly explained, then he added:

"And I may want to use your men soon. Hold yourself in readiness."

The conversation closed, and the two men hung up the receivers.

Off to Eagles Nest.

ANNE CRAWFORD had reached the station. She glanced around once or twice to make sure that she was not being watched, and then boarded a train which pulled into the station. As she paused on the step, before entering, she caught sight of John Sharpe approaching in the distance, and a smile of satisfaction spread over her pretty countenance.

Anne Crawford took her seat, and pulled down a thick veil which she was wearing.

A moment later, John Sharpe entered the train, and as he walked down the corridor of the long-distance express, he scrutinised the faces of the passengers. Then he sat down, satisfied that he was not being shadowed by any of Iron Hand's accomplices.

He cast a casual glance in Anne's direction, but he did not recognise her, and, of course, her presence never occurred to him, for he had left her bound up at Iron Hand's headquarters.

Still, had he but known, he had nothing to fear as far as she was concerned. Her only object was to assist him as much as she possibly could without revealing her identity.

Behind her thick veil, Anne smiled as she looked at the man she admired so much.

Soon the easy motion of the train sent her to sleep, while Sharpe, a few seats away, amused himself with an idle conversation with the talkative passenger next to him.

At length the train came to a stop at a small station near Eagle's Nest, and Sharpe was all briskness again.

He would have to be on the alert, for the country here was desolate of people, and he did not desire any of Potsdam's men to get on his track.

On the platform, watching the arrival of the train, were two men, and Sharpe felt that they were assistants of Potsdam.

Would he be able to evade them successfully?

Sharpe's mind was quickly made up.

There was a good deal of bustle and excitement now, for many of the passengers who had been travelling a long time took the opportunity of the brief halt to stretch their legs a bit.

He waited his opportunity, then quickly made his exit from the other side of the train. Fortunately there were many trees and bushes about, and it was a simple matter for him to dash off, keeping well under cover all the time.

Before descending herself, Anne glanced in the direction Sharpe took, and once more she felt admiration for his resource and presence of mind. She noticed that he was heading directly for Potsdam's ranch-house near Eagle's Nest.

The two men saw Anne leave the train, but they did not speak to her, although they recognised her. They were present on the station for another purpose.

"This is the fourth train we've met to-night," mumbled one of the men surlily to his companion, "an' we ain't seen no suspicious characters yet, in spite of the chief's orders."

The two men then moved off in the same direction taken by Sharpe and Anne.

(NEXT WEEK! This thrilling story will be continued in the next number of the GEM. Do not miss the thrilling account of John Sharpe's amazing visit to Potsdam of Eagle's Nest. Order your GEM early, boys!)

WHO'S WHO IN THIS WEEK'S "GEM" STORY.

(For the Benefit of New Readers.)

KIT WILDRAKE, a new arrival at St. Jim's. Hails from a far-away country as British Columbia—from a home called the Boot Leg Ranch. His big trunk contained cowboy clothes, a Stetson hat, and a coiled lasso. Baggy Trimble even said there was a loaded revolver. The manner in which he arrived at St. Jim's caused rather a sensation. No other junior ever arrived at the school riding a bareback horse. And his being booked for a fight with the junior captain on his first day at the school added to the interest. Shares Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form with Baggy Trimble and Mellish.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, known as the "Swell of St. Jim's." The famous aristocrat is liked and respected by all. Immaculate in attire, and as interested as any in the latest fashions. Is the recipient of a large number of "fivahs," sent him by his "patah," Lord Eastwood.

BAGLEY TRIMBLE, commonly known to all at St. Jim's as "Baggy." Very similar in character to that of George William Bunter, of Greyfriars. Not unlike him in appearance. Enormous appetite—always ready to eat. Cannot be said to be anyone's chum. Shares Study No. 2 with Mellish and Wildrake.

PERCY MELLISH. Can be said to be about the worst fellow in the Fourth Form. Despised by all the decent fellows in the school. Always ready to sneak. Associates with Racke & Co., and is always ready to assist in any of their low-down schemes, providing it suits his own purpose. Shares Study No. 2 with Baggy Trimble.

AUBREY RACKE, the son of a war-profiteer, purse-proud, snobbish, cunning, unscrupulous, and dissipated. He is known to be the leader among the rotters. Will partake in any low-down and shady trick.

GEORGE GERALD CROOKE, one of the worst fellows at St. Jim's. Would be still more dangerous if he had more courage. The chief ally of Racke, who usually leads all the shady escapades.

JACK BLAKE, considered to be the leader of the Fourth in the School House. Always ready to stand against tyranny, and to help a fellow down on his luck. Good at heart, and a staunch friend of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the same study.

TOM MERRY, the respected junior captain of the school, and leader of the Terrible Three. Liked and respected by all the decent fellows. Interested in sports of all sorts, and is clever with his fists. Can take a joke, and is always ready to give one. A real nice fellow all round.

HARRY MANNERS, another member of the Terrible Three. More studious than either of his chums. A good photographer and a very clever mathematician. Always bright and cheerful, and is interesting in his conversation. Not much of an athlete.

MONTY LOWTHER, a further member of the Terrible Three, known as the humorist of the Shell. His jokes and puns are most remarkable. Very fond of impersonating, and can always carry same out to effect. Always ready to give others a helping hand.

THE REV. RICHARD HOLMES, D.D., M.A., the respected headmaster of St. Jim's, and every bit worthy of his position. It can never be said that he is all work and no play. He is thoroughly interested in all the school sports. Stern at times, and always as cute as a new pin. Is a great friend of all the juniors under his charge. Has no time for sneaks. Never deals out a punishment unless thoroughly convinced that the victim is deserving of it. One who is kind and considerate to all.

ERIC KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's and head-prefect. A splendid athlete, and a general all-round good sort. Captains both the cricket and football elevens. Is respected by all, with the exception of the rotters, on whom he lays a heavy hand. Will pit himself against anyone and in any undertaking. Fearless and brave.

EPHRAIM TAGGLES, the porter of St. Jim's. Not very alert in the execution of his duties. His usual greeting to the fellows of St. Jim's is either "Wot I says is this 'ere!" and "You young rips!" A great lover of the "bottle." Very polite and affable when he thinks there is a tip forthcoming.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY, a rather burly fellow, and self-opinionated. Fancies he has the capabilites of a great detective. Is a fairly good boxer, but could not stand up to such as Tom Merry, Talbot, or Noble. Is very liberal at giving tips, being well supplied with pocket-money by his rich uncle. Honest, brave, and fearless, and is a rare sticker. Always ready to offer his services for the good of the cause.



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"JOY'S" WEEKLY LETTER.

Dear Mr. GEM Editor,—

Although I am only a girl, I do think I know things, and I want to ask you to let me have my say about boys' stories, and the things they call stories for girls.

N.B.—I was born in Australia, but my Uncle Tom, with whom I live, brought me over to England soon after the war started. I just love London, as there is always so much to do.

Girls' stories are generally pretty potty, all about being tender and washed out. I read one the other day in which the girl was ill right away from the beginning, and she nearly died in the last chapter. Not quite. I suppose the author wanted to keep her going for a sequel. I sha'n't read the sequel.

Some folks pretend to be shocked at a girl reading a ripping boys' paper like the GEM. You find them, what they are pleased to call, "looking at it" on the q.t. That's their way.

There are crowds of things I want to say about the GEM, and Cardew, and Tom Merry. I hope T. M. won't mind, for once, coming second. I like them both. I think boys' stories are also for girls. Why not?

"THE WRITER CHAPPIES."

The worst of girls' tales is that the writer always preaches, or else he, or she, slops over with sentiment, and, you may take it from me, there isn't half as much sentiment in girls as some of these writer chappies make out.

What I complain about is that we girls do not have a fair chance. We are talked at, or else ignored. That's why I love your stories. "The Invisible Hand" is topping. They are all straight-going, with plenty of interest, and not so much scenery and moonshine.

Why, I read a yarn the other day about two people who said they admired each other, but they were always getting misunderstood. The man believed everything horrid he was told about the girl, and the girl did the same about the man; and there the two poor things were, refusing to see each other, until the ninety-first chapter, when they met in a blizzard, and discovered they had both been hoaxed. Oh, they were sillies!

You can rely on me. I always say a good word for the GEM and "Boys' Herald." They are the best papers published, and if everybody took a hint from Tom Merry, who is as true as steel, the world would be all the better. Then Cardew, with his sarcastic ways, is first rate, if a bit trying now and then; and D'Arcy is the finest fellow possible. I like Dick O'Dare, too.

But I would like to ask you not to forget us girls. We ought to have a look in. I don't mean I want a lot of cookery hints, or advice about how to sew on a button. None of that.

Next week I should like to write about other thoughts that have come to me, and what London is like, and England, and how the Empire is going on. I will have a try if you will let me, though uncle says I can't write for toffee. Not that I care, for I never eat toffee.

Your chirpy chum,

JOY.

(Another interesting letter from "Joy" in next week's GEM.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 678.

GOSSIP ABOUT St. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

It is rumoured:—

That Banks, the bookie, having been picked up in a near-by lane in an exhausted state, was said to be suffering from a bruised chest, a swollen eye, a ricked ankle, a broken nose, and a lump bitten from both ears. Evidently this was due to his assailant having lost his temper.

* * * * * *

That the proprietor of the local picture palace has kindly asked William George Bunter to make a point of entering the door sideways when next he makes an appearance there. (Probably this is to allow for two or more to pass in at the same time.)

* * * * * *

That owing to the fact of the increased number of inky collars now being forwarded to the laundry by Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, the authorities have found it necessary to increase their staff.

* * * * * *

That Ephraim Taggles was caught in the act of throwing a gin-bottle at Minnie, the Greyfriars mouser. On confirmation from him that the "ruin"-bottle was empty, he was let off with a caution.

* * * * * *

That Toby, who does service as the St. Jim's boot-boy, has received many praises of late for his devotion to duty. We should like to advise the said junior not to wear himself out, otherwise he'll soon be "down on his uppers."

* * * * * *

That the Rev. Herbert Henry Locke, D.D., the respected headmaster of Greyfriars, has missed his typewriter from his study, and is in difficulties. Apparently the machine is in a like position, and is out looking for work. (Make inquiries at the local Labour Exchange.)

* * * * * *

That David Llewellyn Wynn recently picked up a sixpence which he found lying in the corridor. He had just handed same to his Form-master, when he was confronted by George Francis Kerr. "Good man!" said the Scotch junior. "Honesty is the best policy!" (Pride of race probably.)

* * * * * *

That a notice appearing in the local "rag" asking for volunteers to assist in a collection for the local hospital has attracted the attention of William George Bunter. We distinctly refuse to stand security for the box in his possession.

* * * * * *

That Baggy Trimble has again got himself into hot water. Whilst about to receive the necessary chastisement from Mr. Philip Lathom, he began crying. Evidently he was in the hopes of getting "bailed" out.

* * * * * *

That George Gerald Crooke has just found a horseshoe, and is keeping same by him for luck. Better for him for it to have been on a winning horse.

* * * * * *

That it cannot be said of Gerald Knox that he looks the picture of health. Quite likely he is being choked by too many "weeds."

EDITORIAL CHAT.

My Dear Chums,—

In this week's number of the "Gem" you will see I have introduced a new feature, especially for my girl readers. So many of them have written to me appealing for just a small space to themselves in their favourite paper, that I have fallen in with their wishes. I feel confident the boys won't mind this, and if I am not very much mistaken, they will also find Joy's gossip very interesting. Next week there will be a further letter from Joy, and a special sketch of her, so that you will all be able to see exactly what she is like. Our special long complete story next week is entitled, "Fun at the Crystal Palace," and it is a yarn that will interest you all very much. The famous circus at the Crystal Palace is the scene of the story, and the visit of the chums of St. Jim's to this historic place is marked by thrilling and amusing incidents. Our next issue will also contain a thrilling instalment of "The Invisible Hand," and another special free portrait for your collection. More big money prizes are being offered in this week's "Boys' Herald," in a simple and amusing competition. Have you won yours yet? The "Boys' Herald" is packed with splendid school and adventure stories, and is well worth the 1½d. which is charged for it. Get a copy today. You are certain to be pleased with it.

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO READERS.

"A FAG READER" (Australia).—You have been a reader of the GEM since "Tom Merry for England"! And you are now only eleven! Gracious! You must have been rather youthful when you first took them up! Now to answer your questions: Jack Drake was originally at St. Winifred's, with his father paying his fees. His father was ruined, and Drake had to go back to the Benbow and sit for a scholarship, so that he could remain at the old school. During the time when he was "mugging up" he was termed by his chums "sap"—meaning swot!

"ANOTHER FAG" (Anerley), asks me some "fag" questions. These fags make a very fagging subject! No. 1. How old is Manners minor? 12 years, 10 months, old chap. No. 2. How many sisters has he got, and what are their names, and how old are they? He has four sisters; their names are as follows: May, Phyllis, Winnie, and Violet. Their ages are: 20, 18; 17 and 3 months; and 15 and 8 months. Then there is Harry Manners of the Shell, who is 16. Now you want to know what kind of fags the "fags" indulge in when inclined that way? Well, to begin with, Wally D'Arcy, Levison minor, and a number of others never smoke. Reuben Piggott and Manners minor are the worst offenders. When Piggott is desperately "hard up," brown paper and dried elm-leaves form a delightfully soothing weed—according to Piggott! When he is "flush," "Woodbines" dipped in scent and pressed in an exercise-book are described by the blade of the Third Form as "No. 99 Turkish," and, when opportunity serves, he smokes them with much effect in Racke's study.

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AVE YOU PRIZE YET?



Half-a-crown is paid for every contribution printed on this page.

PASS THE SALT.

Mr. Green's radish bed suffered from ugs. A friend told him to put salt etween the rows. "Did you find the medy efficacious?" asked the friend a w days later. "I should say I did," id Green. "I put salt down one even- g, and, bless me, when I got up next orning the slugs were pulling up the adishes, dipping them in the salt, and ating them quite contentedly!"—N. urnham, 27, Parkbridge Road, Birken- ead, Cheshire.

CAUTION.

In these days, when burglaries are not nknown, it is as well to be cautious. So hought Mrs. Jones. When her husband eached home the other night he found a ote pinned in a conspicuous place on the ront door. The letter ran: "Dear Fred,—I have gone out to my mother's, and ave hidden the key so that nobody will nd it but you. It is under the spray of y on the window ledge!"—Gwilym P. Davies, 2, Fairfield, King's Road, Holy- ead.

THE HAIR.

Fair people, as a rule, have the largest number of hairs on their heads. The average figures are 150,000 for blondes, 105,000 for brunettes, and only 30,000 for red-haired folks. These last, however, are less apt to become bald than the others. Dark hair is finer, as a rule, than red or blonde. It is said that, if plaited together, the hair of a blonde would sustain the weight of eighty tons.—Miss Doreen Bedford, Mayfield, Denby Dale Road, Durkar, near Wakefield.

A GOOD EXAMPLE.

Uneasy passenger on board an ocean steamer: "Doesn't the vessel tip frightfully?" Dignified steward: "The vessel, madam, is trying to set a good example to the passengers."—D. Pelling, 20, Roundhill Crescent, Brighton.

A FROG'S LIFE.

A frog begins its life as an egg. There are three stages—first the egg, then the grub, last the tadpole. The mother frog, just before she dies, goes down to the edge of a pond and lays her eggs in some quiet nook. When the eggs are hatched by the sun, small grubs appear; these change to tadpoles in a fortnight. The tadpole is just a small ball with a long tail and bright eyes. Then legs appear, and the tail vanishes. —Miss Lizzie Bown, 62, Darlington Road, Southsea, Portsmouth.

THE LAST TIME.

Mrs. Bacon: "Do you remember the night you proposed to me?"

Mr. Bacon: "Oh, yes, very well indeed."

"I just hung my head and said nothing, didn't I?"

"You did, and that was the last time I ever saw you that way!"—Miss A. Davey, 6, Edith Street, Miry Lane, Wigan, Lancs.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

An old lady asked the booking-clerk to give her a single ticket to Brighton. The man slipped the ticket into the dating machine, and banged it down. "Change at Lewes!" he said. "No, you don't, my man!" said the old dame promptly. "I have travelled before. I'll have my change here, or lose my train!" —A. E. Payne, 2, Munster Cottages, Barcombe, Sussex.

JOHN O'GROAT.

John O'Groat was a Dutchman, who came to live in Caithness, in Scotland, during the reign of James the Fourth. Two brothers accompanied him, and, as the years rolled by, there were eight members of the Groat family in the parish. The family held a feast each year to celebrate the landing in Britain of the brothers, and one time a quarrel arose as to who should have the place of honour at the table. John was the peacemaker. He told his kinsfolk that he would find a way of settling the dispute. He went to great trouble and expense. He built a house with eight sides, the same number of windows and also doors. Here the family dined next year at an octagonal table. Each one had a different door to enter by, and nobody could claim that he was first.—A Beardsall, Hawthorn Cottage, Holme, Holmsbridge, near Huddersfield.

ASKING A FAVOUR.

Lady (handing cabman his exact legal fare): "Here's your fare, driver, and here's a bun to refresh yourself with."

Cabman: "Thank'ee, mum. You don't happen to have a wisp of hay for the 'oss, I s'pose?"—Harry Pearce, 41, West Street, South Molton, North Devon.

A SAD CASE.

Perhaps the most curious instance of absence of mind is that recorded of a gentleman, who, after taking his bath in the morning, dried himself with his newspaper, and sat down to read his towel.—Mrs. E. A. Bull, Hill Crest, Purton, near Swindon, Wilts.

A SENSE OF HUMOUR.

The sense of humour is not entirely quenched by the humdrum life in a Government office. There is a placard on the door of a department in the Pensions Ministry which reads: "Everyone closes this door, except you."—R. Phillips, 84, Hole Road, Hole, Cheshire.

THE BEAR AND THE BOAR.

Once upon a barren moor,
There dwelt a bear, also a boar.
The bear couldn't bear the boar,
The boar thought the bear a bore.
At length the bear could bear no more
The boar that bored him on the moor.
And so one morn he ate the boar.
The boar now bores the bear no more.
Miss R. Mendelsohn, 50, Carlisle Street, Splotlands, Cardiff.

MISSED THE TARGET.

"And how did you come to be in this condition?" asked the kind old lady visitor of a patient who was suffering from a broken arm, a couple of fractured ribs, and several minor injuries. "Oh, I took a shot from a window and missed the target!" replied the patient. "Indeed! But what has that to do with your present condition?" "Well, you see, I was the missile. My house was on fire, and I tried to jump into a sheet from the top window, but shot wide."—W. G. E. Dyer, Market Place, Southam, near Rugby.

WHEN FORTUNE KNOCKED.

Editor (to unsuccessful artist): "None of these drawings suit me, but cheer up! Dame Fortune will come to your door one of these fine days." Artist: "She'll jolly well have to knock, then. Her daughter, Mis-fortune, has broken the bell."—R. J. Blake, Waiseley, Avondale, Auckland, New Zealand.

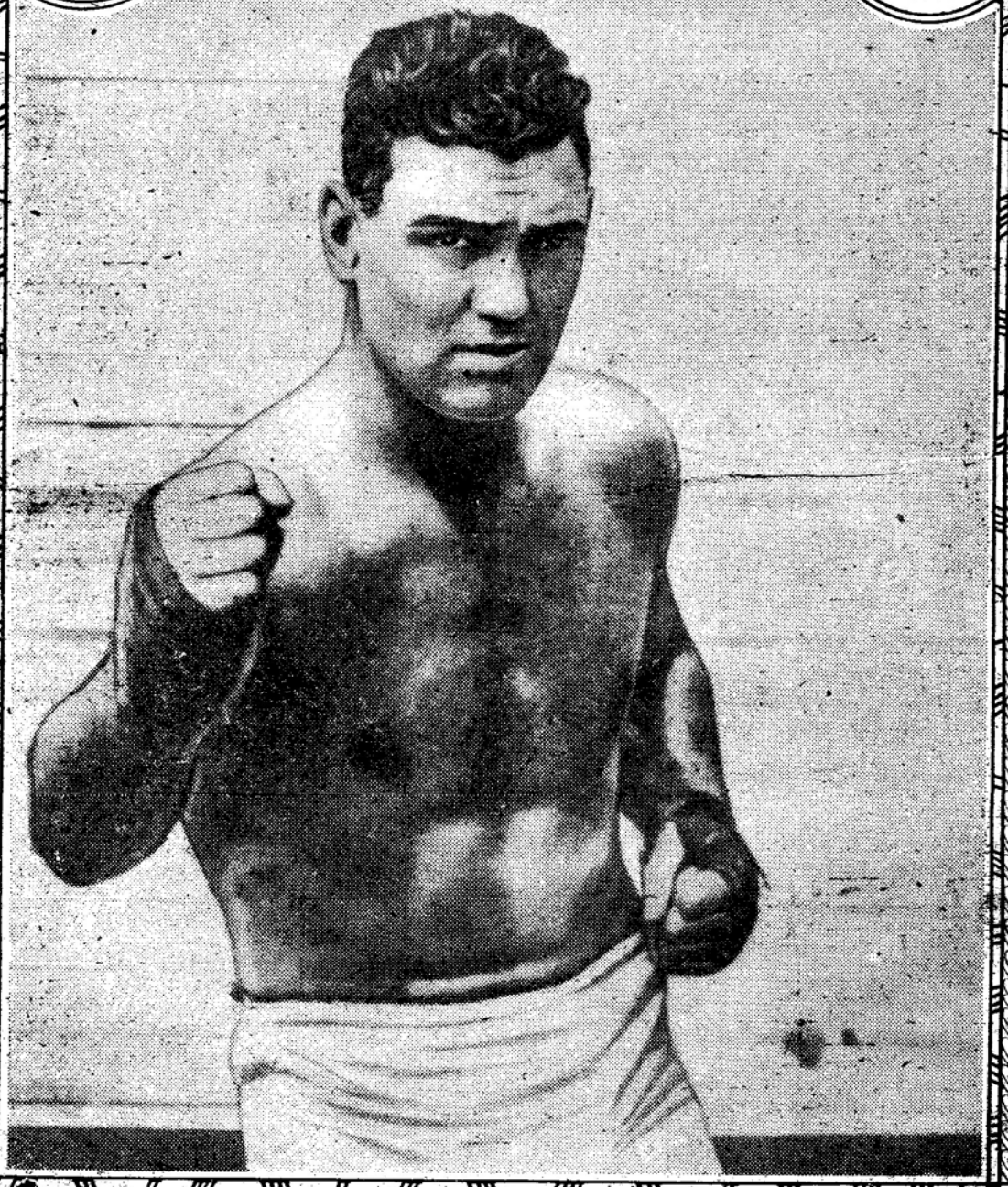
VERY STRANGE!

"It is a queer thing," said the professor, "but I was shaved this morning by a man who studied at Oxford, and spent several years in other educational centres. I know also that he has contributed scientific articles to our best magazines, and has numbered amongst his intimate friends men of the highest social and scientific standing in Europe. And yet," soliloquised the professor, "he can't shave a man decently." "The idea!" exclaimed his friend in astonishment. "Oh, he isn't a barber!" said the professor, yawning. "You see, I shaved myself this morning."—Andrew Martin, 4, Arundel Drive, Langside, Glasgow.

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PICTURES FOR YOUR DEN.

No. 9. JACK DEMPSEY.

Another Splendid Portrait of a great Favourite in next week's "Gem." Don't miss it!