

"TOM MERRY'S TEN POUND NOTE!" INSIDE

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LIBRARY

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SANKEY'S CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN!

(An incident from the grand long complete story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

It is, I think, up to me to thank you one and all for the splendid reception you have given the new feature, the "St. Jim's News." As Tom Merry sits in the Editorial Chair, the new supplement can be relied upon to have the real St. Jim's touch. As we know we shall get to know all that is to be known about the life at the grand old school. Well, I am certain you will like the present number of the "Gem" more than ever, and say, like a Canadian reader does, that it is the best sort of companion when work is done and a quiet read is in view.

If I once got going talking about the stories of St. Jim's, I should never have

done. Chats have to be brief, worse luck! at least, that is the opinion of some of my friends. I could enlarge on the new yarn of the school, which brings into prominence a few of the old favourites, and throws new light on a host of things. There is this about the tales of the school—they hum with life and reality. Cardew, Merry, Talbot, all of them are live characters to all my readers, as my post-bag shows week by week.

One of the astounding, and, I consider, cleverly indicated facts in the "Gem," is the slow development—slow, but sure—of Tom Mace in the serial of Millford. We have all met chaps who had the goods, so to speak, but thanks to up-bringing and natural reserve, it has taken

months to reveal the real stuff that was latent in them. Personally, I should never waste an ounce of sympathy on such fellows. They are really the lucky ones, for they usually prove to be the stayers in life. Better be a stayer than a flash in the pan, all fresh, momentary success, and quickly-lived popularity, then obscurity and failure.

I know you all take an immense interest in the details of our yarns. Then watch the "Gem" closer than ever. You will find therein many new features which will please you, and make the grand old paper a stronger link than ever between ourselves and

YOUR EDITOR

ANSWERS TO READERS.

MERLIN CAYNES (Malvern, Australia).—Many thanks, my friend, for the large number of new readers you have obtained for me. I wish all my readers could be as successful as that. The half-way line between the two sections, juniors and seniors, is termed "Shell." A senior is like a butterfly. A junior is like a caterpillar. A fellow in the Shell is like a chrysalis. I think you can gather what I mean from that. Too many boys admire Mary Pickford for me to be able to publish their names. Dick Brooke and Philip Lefevre like Dorothy Gish.

R. TUT (Kensington).—I am very pleased to know you consider the "Gem" a hundred per cent. better than any other paper. There are already two boys from America at St. Jim's—Buck Finn and Clifton Dane. Rowing stories have appeared in the "Gem." I will try and get Mr. Martin Clifford to write the yarn about Rylcombe Regatta next summer. Sporting stories are constantly appearing. What did you think of "The St. Jim's Swimmers"?

"BABS AND BUBBLES" (Blackpool).—So you both admire the "Gem"? Well, I admire your letter, and would very much like to see your photographs. D'Arcy has two brothers, but I don't know of any sisters. Tom Merry has no parents. He is an orphan under the guardianship of Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Lord Conway has been in quite a number of stories. Tom Merry has already started a weekly, as you have seen. What do you both think of it? Cousin Ethel's age is fifteen years eleven months. Thanks again for your wishes.

AUDREY DUCKHAM (Merstham, Surrey) sends me a nice letter, parts of which are well worth publishing. She says: "Kerr is my favourite, although I also like Tom Merry, Cardew, and Wildrake. The school yarn about Tom Mace is splendid, and I am eagerly looking forward to the next instalment. I like the funny stories, which Martin Clifford writes, best. I do hope a portrait of Tom Merry and Kerr will appear soon. The one of Baggy Trimble was very good—so like him! How old is Dr. Holmes? He must be

fairly old, as he has got white hair. Is Mr. Latham nice? All I ever hear about him is that he gives boys lines. I like old Cardew, in spite of all his funny ways. He is always interesting and clever, and I think that is all that really matters. Who is the best brawler and bowler at St. Jim's? Among the juniors I should imagine Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn. What are Tom Merry, Kerr, and Cardew going to do when they grow up? Have they any ideas? Who is the cleverest of the three at lessons?" Dr. Holmes is turned sixty, my chum, and Mr. Latham—making a few allowances—is quite a nice, gentleman. Your guess concerning the best bowler and batsman is very near the mark. Tom Merry says he wants to be an editor when he grows up, while in his spare time he would like to play for Surrey. Cardew says he hopes to be a man when he grows up, and have nothing to do. Kerr wants to be a private detective. This Scotch junior is easily the cleverest of the three at lessons. Tom is also very good, but Cardew prefers to be a dunce.

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

"Still No Rain" is the headline that appears so prominently lately. Well, why the dickens can't Arthur Augustus D'Arcy "rent the air with one of his tenor solos? He's burst the patience of his study mates on more than one occasion.

The "St. Jim's News" is undoubtedly proving a great success with Tom Merry as editor. Should a "Personal Column" be needed, Baggy Trimble has kindly condescended to fill the gap.

Ralph Reckness Cardew would take up sailing as a sport if only he could get some glue to "feather his oars."

So Reggie Manners was unable to finish his game of tennis with Wally D'Arcy the other day, owing to the misfortune of smashing his racket on Joe Frayne's hard head. If Reggie's major is interested in the two fags' play, he'll come to the rescue

by standing the "racket" for a new racket. What?

Humour can always be carried too far. Such was the case with Monty Lowther the other day. He went to the local hoailer's to purchase a pair of stockings, and the shopman, thinking him a little cheeky, gave him "socks."

I overheard the other day that Baggy Trimble intends to run his fat down. If he stands in the road ignoring the traffic as I saw him the other day, I feel sure it won't be long ere some motorist rides him down.

An interesting item of news is that Tom Merry has received a five-pound note from

an anonymous donor in appreciation of his gallant attempt to swim the Channel. The kind-hearted Tommy sent the fiver on to swell the coffers of the cottage hospital. It is whispered that Bernard Glyn is to take on a grand flying expedition in the near future. We all wish him the best of luck.

A big theft has just taken place at Messrs. Topp & Nott, the local hatters. As a likely return is to be made by the gang, a real live figure representing a tailor's dummy is to be placed in the window. 25 per week is offered for the vacancy. Surely this wonderful offer will appeal to our worthy friend, D'Arcy?

I hear that George Herries had a great fight for life whilst practising in the River Rhyll the other day. Thank goodness his chums were near at hand, and were able to "wade in" to his assistance.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2



A Grand, Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's at Sankey's Circus.

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Rough on Tom!

"I AM goin' to thrash Tom Mewwy!"

"What?"

"Who?"

"Which?"

Blake and Herries and Digby uttered those ejaculations in a sort of chorus.

Prep was going on in Study No. 6 when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled in, and made his astonishing observation.

Blake & Co. suspended prep at once. They blinked across the study table at their noble chum.

"It's all right, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "Nothin' to be surprised about!"

"You're going to thrash Tom Merry?" hooted Blake.

"Yaas!"

"What for?"

"Oh, nothin'!"

"I mean, what's he done?"

"Nothin' that I am awah of, Blake."

"Have you been rowing with those Shell bounders?" asked Digby.

"It is not my custom to wow with fellows, Dig! Certainly I have not been wovin' with Tom Mewwy!"

"But you're going to thrash him?" howled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you asked his permission?" inquired Herries.

"Eh? No!"

"Then how are you going to manage it?"

"Weally, Hewwies—" began Arthur Augustus warmly. "You see, Tom Merry could make rings round you, old bird," said Jack Blake. "Better give him a miss in baulk."

"I refuse to admit for a moment, Blake, that Tom Mewwy could make wings wound me!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"In fact, I am goin' to make wings wound him! Will you fellows come along and see me thrash him? Mannahs, and Lowtah will be there to see fair play for Tom Mewwy."

"Do you mean you want us to come and carry home the pieces after Tom Merry's done with you?" asked Herries.

"I do not mean anythin' of the sort, Hewwies!"

"But what's the row about?" exclaimed Blake, greatly perplexed. It was not like the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to go round looking for trouble; and Tom Merry was so good-tempered a fellow that really it was quite difficult to quarrel with him. The announcement that Gussy was "out" to thrash Tom Merry was the surprise of the term, to Study No. 6, in the School House of St. Jim's.

"There isn't any row, Blake!"

"Have you quarrelled with him?"

"Certainly not!"

"Does he know you're going for his scalp?" queried the astounded Blake.

"I have not mentioned it to him yet, Blake."

"Well, my hat!"

George Herries tapped his forehead significantly. Blake and Digby nodded; and Arthur Augustus frowned.

"If you are hintin' that I am off my wockah, Hewwies—" he began wrathfully.

"Aren't you?" asked Herries, in surprise.

"No, you uttah ass!"

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"Nothin' the mattah with me. I will explain how the mattah stands," said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows may be awah that a circus has pitched neah Wylcombe?"

"What about it?" grunted Blake.

"Sankey's Circus," said Arthur Augustus. "Probably you have seen the postahs."

"Probably, as they're stuck on every dashed wall within a mile of the school!" assented Blake sarcastically. "It's barely possible that we've noticed them staring us in the face every time we go out of gates!"

"Pway don't give me any sarc, Blake! This is a sewious mattah. You may be awah that one of the turns at Sankey's Circus is a boxin' turn?"

"I believe so."

"There is a young boxah called Sankey's Lamb, who challenges all comahs to six wounds for a purse of ten pounds."

"Well?"

"Well, I am goin' to take him on," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "You see, as he is challengin' all comahs, I wogard it as bein' up to St. Jim's to take him down a peg or two. Besides, I can do with the ten pounds. The patah has not even welped to my last lettah askin' him to wemit me a fivah, and I'm gettin' short of tin. This offah of ten pounds from Mr. Sankey is weally like corn in Egypt in one of the lean yahs, you know."

"You think you'll bag ten quids by beating a professional boxer?" yelled Blake.

"I twist so."

"Aas!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"So you're going to thrash Sankey's Lamb, and Tom Merry?" said Herries. "Anybody else? Why not make a list while you're about it, beginning with Kildare of the Sixth?"

"Kildare of the Sixth would be wathah too hefty for me, Hewwies."

"Go hon!"

"I am goin' to take on Sankey's Lamb in the boxin' turn at the circus, for the honah of St. Jim's," continued Arthur Augustus. "But I want to be in my vewy best form when I tackle him. I am goin' to twy my hand on Tom Mewwy—see? If I can lick him, I shall be able to handle the Lamb all wight."

"If!" grinned Digby.

"I have selected Tom Mewwy, as about the best boxah in the lowah school, bar one," said Gussy.

"You flatter me," said Blake modestly.

"I was not alludin' to you, Blake. I was alludin' to myself."

"Might have known you were talking out of your hat, as usual!" grunted Blake.

"I thought at first," continued Arthur Augustus, "of thwashin' you fellows—"

"Eh?"

"Beginnin' with you, Blake, I was thinkin' of workin' through the studay," said Gussy calmly. "That would have given me some weally good pwactice—"

"And something more, I fancy."

"But, on second thoughts, I decided to let this studay off," said Arthur Augustus. "I do not want to knock you fellows about—"

"Knock us about!" said Blake dazedly. "You!"

"Yaas! I do not want to knock my own pals about; but I weally must have some stiff boxin' pwactice befoah I tackle Sankey's Lamb. Those Shell boundahs are wathah cheekay, and Tom Mewwy is captain of the Shell, so I have decided to thrash him. It will take the Shell down a peg, won't it? And aftah lickin' Tom Mewwy, I shall feel wight in the vein for tacklin' the boxah at the circus, and baggin' the ten pounds. What do you fellows think of the ideah?"

There was a yell in Study No. 6.

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"I weally do not see anythin' to cackle at, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "I am speakin' quite seewiously. Will you fellows come along with me to Tom Mewwy's studay and see me handle him?"

Blake rose from the table. "We'll come!" he said. "I suppose you've made your will?"

"You'll want us to carry you home, anyhow," said Herries. "Wubbish!"

"Lead on, Macduff!" grinned Digby. And Arthur Augustus led on. With a very serious countenance, the swell of St. Jim's led the way to the Shell passage—followed by three grinning Fourth Formers. At Study No. 10 in the Shell, Arthur Augustus tapped politely at the door, and Tom Merry's cheery voice sang out from within the stupor:

"Come in!" And Arthur Augustus walked in, with his grinning chums at his heels.

CHAPTER 2.

Thrashing Tom Merry.

TOM MERRY was busy with his prep; but he stopped to look up inquiringly at his visitors. Manners and Lowther went on with their work. They weren't expecting callers during the hour and a half devoted in the evening to preparing the next day's lessons. And they hadn't any time to waste on callers. So only Tom Merry's cheery glance greeted Study No. 6 as they came in. "Finished prep already?" asked Tom. "I hope you youngsters haven't been scamping your work."

"Who are you calling youngsters?" demanded Blake. "Whom, dear boy—whom?" said Manners, looking up. "If you used the nominative like that in the Shell, you'd catch it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Look here—" "Pway don't butt in, Blake, deah boy, when I have come heah specially to thrash Tom Mewwy!" Tom Merry jumped.

"You've come to do what?" he ejaculated. "Thrash you deah boy." "My hat! What have I done?" asked Tom Merry good-humouredly. "Won't you let me off if I give you a stick of toffee?"

"Pway be seewious, deah boy. This is a wathah seewious mattah."

"By Jove, is it? Sure of that?" asked Tom. "Yaas, you ass! Pway do not think there is any ill-feelin', eithah," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I wespetch you vewy much, Tom Mewwy, and I wathah like you personally. I am simply goin' to thrash you for pwactice, to get my hand in! I am goin' to tackle Sankey's Lamb, at the circus, to-morrow, and I am goin' to thrash you this evenin' for pwactice. I trust you have no objection to a scwap, deah boy."

"Not at all," said Tom, laughing. "You won't mind some weally hard hittin'?"

"Not if you don't." "Wight! Of course, if you would wathah not stand up to a weally stiff fight, I will let you off, and look for somebody else. I have decided not to thrash Blake, as he is my chum so."

"You silly owl!" roared Blake. "You couldn't thrash one of my eyelashes!"

"Wats, deah boy! Besides," continued Arthur Augustus, "Blake has a cuwious ideah in his head that he could lick me, you know, and I don't want to hurt his feelin's. I don't mind his goin' on thinkin' so, because it pleases him, you know, and it doesn't wowy me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three, much tickled by the extraordinary expression on Jack Blake's face at that moment.

"Besides, I think you are a wathah bettah boxer than Blake," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Befoah I tackle the circus boxah, I want to stand up to a weally stiff woposition. But if you feel nervous, deah boy, I will thrash Talbot or Figgins instead."

"My dear chap, I don't feel very nervous—not very!" said Tom Merry. "In fact, I believe my pulse is quite normal at the present moment. I'm not even going to make my will before you thrash me." He glanced at his chums. "You fellows can chuck prep for five minutes while Gussy runs his head against a brick wall."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "We will have the scwap in the study, if you don't mind, Tom Mewwy. In the gym the pwefects might stop us, as we are goin' to have some weally hard hittin'. Cleah the table back, you fellows!"

Manners and Lowther, with grinning faces, cleared—the table back. It was worth while "chucking" prep for a little

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while, for an entertainment like this. Room was left for the boxers, and boxing-gloves were produced. Arthur Augustus took off his elegant and well-fitting jacket, and his waistcoat followed, and his collar and tie. His preparations were made very carefully and seriously. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was going to leave nothing to chance.

The gloves were put on, and Blake took out his watch to keep time. Only Arthur Augustus considered that the watch would be wanted for very long. Gussy was a most courageous youth, and he never counted odds; and he was a good fighting-man against his own size and weight. But he really hadn't very much chance against the heaviest boxer in the Lower School of St. Jim's. But that was a discovery Gussy had yet to make.

"Ready?" asked Blake, with a grin. Arthur Augustus appeared to hesitate.

"One moment, deah boy! Tom Mewwy—" "Hello!" said Tom, smiling. "Going to let me off?"

"If you are sush that you won't object to some weally hard hittin', Tom Mewwy, we will pwocceed."

"No objection in the world."

"If I hurt you—" "I'll chance it!" chuckled the captain of the Shell.

"You see, I would weally wathah hammah Wacke, or Cwooke, or Twimble, but those slackahs couldn't put up a fight worth mentionin'." It is weally a compliment to you, Tom Mewwy, selectin' you for the thrashin' on this occasion."

At the call of time, Arthur Augustus started in his most scientific manner. His plan was good. Feinting with his left, he was going to catch Tom Merry with his right, and the captain of the Shell was going to measure his length on the study carpet.

This excellent scheme would probably have been carried out, but for the circumstance that something jarred suddenly on Gussy's noble chin, and he found himself extended on the carpet, gazing upwards at a rather murky ceiling with a fixed gaze of astonishment.

It was Tom Merry's right that had jarred there, and it was Gussy who had measured his length. This incident, of course, quite upset all Arthur Augustus' calculations. It was a change in the programme.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus sat up. Blake was counting; and he had already reached six. The swell of the Fourth blinked dizzily round the study, and at six grinning faces.

"Seven—eight—" chortled Blake. "Oh deah!" "Nine—"

Arthur Augustus leaped up just before Blake could utter the fatal word.

"I am weady!" he gasped.

Tom Merry stood back while Arthur Augustus got safely upon his "pins." The swell of St. Jim's advanced upon him, showing some little excitement now. The grinning faces in the study seemed to have an exasperating effect on Arthur Augustus.

He attacked hotly, but he gave a little more attention to his guard this time. Tom Merry did not walk through his defence so easily as before. But he tapped the swell of the Fourth on the nose, on the chin, and on the chest, and, somehow or other, Tom's own smiling face seemed to be covered all the time. Herdly a hand reached it, and he was still smiling serenely when the call of time ended the first round.

Arthur Augustus went back to his corner and sat in a chair, rather breathlessly. It was dawning upon his noble brain that he had taken on a rather hefty task; but he did not think of giving in. Digby kindly fanned him with an atlas, but he could not help grinning.

"Going on?" he asked. "Of course I am goin' on, Dig. I believe I mentioned that I came heah to thrash Tom Mewwy."

"Let's call it a draw, old chap!" suggested the captain of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus shook his head. "A draw?" said Tom Merry, when I am gettin' into form for tacklin' Sankey's Lamb!" he said. "Besides, as a mattah of fact, you have had wathah the best of it, so fah."

"Go hon!" murmured Tom. "Howevah, I am goin' to atlah all that," said Arthur Augustus. "You are sush you don't mind some hard hittin'?"

"Ha, ha! Not at all." "Time!" rapped out Blake.

Arthur Augustus attacked again in the second round, but with a little greater caution. He had the satisfaction of driving Tom Merry right round the ring in the middle of the study, and round it again. His satisfaction received a sudden jar, however, when Tom all at once ceased to retreat, and piled upon the almost breathless Gussy with right and left.

Crash! "Gwooooooooh!"

"Man down!" chuckled Monty Lowther.
"One, two, three, four, five—" chanted Jack Blake.
"Oh owumba!"

Arthur Augustus was on his back, gasping. How he had got there he hardly knew. He had a feeling that a piston-rod had hit him somewhere. He gazed about him dizzily.

"Six, seven, eight—"
"Oh, deah! I'm gettin' up, you know."

"Nine—"
"Oh owumba!"
"OUT!"

Arthur Augustus sat up, swaying.
"Oh, deah! My nose feels vewy queeah! Are you suah that you have not counted too wapidly, Blake?"
"Quite sure!" chuckled Blake.

Digby helped up the panting Arthur Augustus. Gussy leaned heavily on his chum, and blinked at Tom Merry. Tom was already peeling off the gloves.

"It appeahs," gasped Arthur Augustus, "that I have been counted out."

"It does appear something like that," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Howevah, I should pwefer this to be a fight to a finish," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, I am doin' this for practice. You do not mind goin' on for a few more wounds, Tom Mewwy?"

"My dear chap—" said Tom, laughing.
"I am all wight now," continued Arthur Augustus. "That knock-out was wathah a fluke, wasn't it?"

"Why, you ass—" began Monty Lowther.
"Gussy, old man, you've had enough," said Tom Merry.
"Wats! Howevah, if you would weally wathah not face some hard hittin', I will go and see Talbot—"

"You howling ass!" roared Blake. "You're licked!"
"Wats!"

"Oh, we'll go on if you like," said Tom Merry resignedly. And he fastened on the gloves again.

"Time!" grunted Blake.
The combatants faced one another again. This time Tom Merry did not hit out. He contented himself with defence, and his defence was a little too masterly for Arthur Augustus to penetrate through it. The swell of St. Jim's attacked with great energy, but he seemed to be expending his energy on a stone wall. When Blake called time, the swell of St. Jim's gasped his way to his chair in the corner, and the grinning Digby fanned him with the atlas.

"Atfah all, he didn't touch me that time, Dig!" he said, breathlessly.

"He didn't try to!" chuckled Dig.
"Time!" sang out Blake.

Arthur Augustus came up to the call gamely, but rather groggily. The round was like the previous one over again. Tom Merry had about six or seven chances of delivering a knock-out blow, but he did not avail himself of any of them. He contented himself with letting the swell of the Fourth exhaust his strength upon an impregnable defence.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus suddenly. "You are not twyin' to hit me at all, Tom Mewwy. You uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Do you call this fightin'?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he answered cheerily. "I call it playing the goat, old top. But I'll go on as long as you like. I'm not going to punch you any more."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus made a desperate rush. Tom Merry gave ground a little, stalling him off with success and ease.

"Time!" chorled Blake.

Arthur Augustus sank into his chair. Blake brought his waistcoat and jacket to him.

"Here you are, Gussy—"

"I have not finished yet, Blake," gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Your mistake—you have!" grinned Blake. "Here's your clobber. Put them on."

"I wufese to do anythin' of the kind, Blake. I have come heah to thrash Tom Mewwy."

"Take his other arm, Herries."

"Yes, rather!"

"Welease me!" roared Arthur Augustus, struggling indignantly in

the grasp of his chums. "Welease me at once, you wottahs!"

"Kim on!"

"I wufese to come out! I am not leavin' this studay till I have thrashed Tom Mewwy!"

"You can't pass the whole term of your natural life here, old top!" remonstrated Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! I ordah you wottahs to welease me—I wufese to leave the studay—I am goin' to— Yawwoocooch!"

Arthur Augustus, in spite of his refusal, did leave the study. Blake and Herries had hold of his arms, and Digby took an affectionate grasp on his nose with finger and thumb. Thus led, Arthur Augustus simply had to go. He went—loudly protesting—and his voice died away 'down the passage, still affirming wrathfully and indignantly that he was going to thrash Tom Merry.

And in Study No. 10 the Terrible Three, with many chuckles, settled down to finish their interrupted prep.

CHAPTER 3.

Trimble's Last Resource.

"I GUESS I'm going!"

Kit Wildrake, of the Fourth Form, made that remark on the following afternoon. It was Wednesday, a half-holiday, and there was an afternoon performance of Sankey's Circus at the big tent pitched near Rylcombe, beginning at three. Quite a number of St. Jim's fellows had decided to go; in fact, Mr. Sankey, of the circus, was likely to do quite well that afternoon out of St. Jim's.

"I'm coming with you, Wildrake, old chap," said Baggy Trimble affectionately. "I'll explain the whole thing to you—you've never seen a circus before, of course? They don't have circuses in Saskatchewan, do they?"

The Canadian junior grinned.

"In where?" he asked.

"Isn't it Saskatchewan you come from?" asked Trimble. Or is it Labrador or British Alaska?"

"Well, I know it's some benighted place," said Trimble, "and of course you've never seen a circus before."

"You jay!" said Wildrake. "I've seen circuses that



Joey Jorrocks pointed an accusing finger at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and shouted in a voice that was heard all over the tent: "Give me my rabbit!" "What!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Give me my rabbit!" bawled the clown. "Bai Jove! Whatvav does the fellow mean?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "My deah man, I assuah you I know nothin' about your wabbit!"

could knock spots off anything in this little island in that line. But I'm going to hustle along to the performance this afternoon to see how they ride. There's a buck-jumping turn, and I guess I'm interested."

"I'm thinking of accepting the boxing challenge," said Trimble modestly. "There's a purse of ten quids—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wildrake.

"Hallo! What's the merry joke?" asked Jack Blake, coming out of the School House with Dig and Herries and D'Arcy.

"Trimble's thinking of boxing Sankey's Lamb for the purse of ten quids!" chuckled Wildrake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I may, or I may not," said Trimble disdainfully. "It would be rather a tag—otherwise, I shouldn't hesitate for one moment."

"Bai Jove! You are wathah an ass, Twimble, to think of such a thing," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You would be knocked wight off the face of the earth, you know!"

"You look as if somebody had been knocking you off the face of the earth," grinned Trimble, blinking at Gussy's noble nose. That feature was appearing that afternoon in an enlarged edition, as it were. There were several signs about Arthur Augustus of the terrible combat in Tom Merry's study of the evening before.

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus, rather crossly.

"Gore says you were kicking up a row in Tom Merry's study, next to his," said Trimble. "Did Tom Merry lick you, D'Arcy?"

"I wogard that question as impertinent, Twimble."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Trimble.

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Come on," said Blake. "We've got to get good seats at the giddy circus. And you fellows keep ready to hold Gussy down if he starts challenging any boxers to single combat."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Dig.

"I should wefuse to be held down, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "But I have given up the ideah of thashin' the Lamb. I have thought of anothah stunt."

"Your brain will burst at this rate," said Blake. "This is the second time you've been thinking—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo! Here are those Shell bounders! Going to the circus, you chaps?"

The Terrible Three came cheerily down the steps of the School House. They nodded agreeably to the Fourth-Formers.

"We're going," said Tom Merry.

"Let's keep together, and keep the New House bounders out of the best seats," suggested Blake.

"Good!"

The little crowd of School House fellows crossed the quad together. Figgins & Co., of the New House, had already started. Talbot and Gore and Julian joined Tom Merry & Co. in the quad, and they picked up Levison and Clive and Cardew at the gates. Baggy Trimble trotted along with them, inwardly debating which of the party was likeliest to pay for his admission to Mr. Sankey's entertainment. He fixed his attention chiefly upon Kit Wildrake, who was his study-mate, and therefore bound, according to Baggy's views, to see him through. Anyhow, somebody had to see him through: for admission was a shilling, and Baggy had only one shilling in his pocket. To use his own shilling was a last and desperate resource, which was to be avoided, if possible.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drew the captain of the Shell a little aside, as the School House crowd walked down the leafy lane towards Rylcombe. Tom glanced at him with a smile.

"Not feeling ratty, old top?" he asked genially.

"Not at all, deah boy! On reflection, I have come to the conclusion that you had wathah the best of it in your study last evenin'!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Perhaps a mere trifle!" murmured Tom.

"My goin' down several times, as a matter of fact, a sewies of remarkable flukes," went on Arthur Augustus.

"No doubt!" assented the captain of the Shell.

"However," continued Gussy graciously, "on the whole, Tom Mewwy, I think you had wathah the best of it."

"You flatter me!" said Tom gravely.

"Not at all. Just statin' the facts as they appeah to me, you know," said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "I have, therefore, decided not to take up the challenge of Sankey's Lamb this afternoon. I suggest that you take it up instead, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"Somebody ought to stand up for the honah of St. Jim's, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I suggest your doin' it, deah boy. I am willin' to stand out in your favah."

"Thanks, awfully!" said Tom, laughing. "I don't know that I'm specially keen on being slogged by a professional

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boxer in a circus ring. There are more agreeable ways of passing a half-holiday."

"Wats! Somebody ought to tackle him. We can't have him chuckin' woud challenges within a mile of the school, without some St. Jim's fellow takin' him on," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "If I had thwashed you, deah boy, I should have done it; but as—as—"

"As I thrashed you," said Tom innocently.

"In the circus, Tom Mewwy, it is up to you," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I trust you will not be backward in comin' forward."

Tom Merry glanced at his chums, and Manners and Lowther nodded assent. Apparently they approved of Gussy's suggestion.

"Good idea," said Manners. "Ten quids isn't to be sneezed at. It will come in handy in the study."

"Yes, rather," agreed Lowther. "Money's tight. You ought to be able to handle the Lamb, Tommy; and if you don't bag the purse, you will get the glory, anyhow."

"Hum!" said Tom thoughtfully.

"Pway wise to the occasion, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "It would be wathah worth if some New House chap wushed in, you know, and bagged the glowy of lickin' the Lamb and baggin' the tennah."

"Something in that," agreed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo! Here's the giddy circus!"

The strains of several musical instruments came to the ears of the juniors, as they approached the field by Rylcombe Lane, where Sankey's Circus was pitched. There was already a crowd approaching the big tent.

The rising generation in Rylcombe and the surrounding villages seemed to have turned out in full force, and there was a throng from St. Jim's and from the Grammar School. People were passing in every moment at the big entrance, where a clown stood beating a drum and addressing the crowd.

"Pom, pom, pom!"

"Walk up, gentlemen! This way for Sankey's World-Renowned Circus! Come and see the Lamb box all comers for a purse of ten quidlets! Come and see Texas Bill in his daring, dashing, desperate buck-jumping act! Come and see Joey Jorrocks, the funniest clown on earth! Walk up, gents!"

"Pom, pom! Pom, pom!"

"Heah you are, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't dwag at my arm like that, Twimble!"

"Can you lend me a bob?"

"Weally, Twimble—"

Jack Blake jerked Trimble away, and the chums of Study No. 6 walked in. The Terrible Three followed them, deaf to the voice of Trimble. The fat Fourth-Former clutched Kit Wildrake by the arm.

"I say, Wildrake, old top—"

"Leggo!"

"You're going to lend me a bob, ain't you?"

"I guess you've had enough bobs out of me for this week, Trimble," said the Canadian junior.

And he shook off Trimble's arm and walked in after the rest.

"I say, Talbot— Gore, old chap— I say, Cardew— Levison—Clive—" howled Trimble, as the juniors passed him.

They seemed deaf; but Trimble caught Cardew by the sleeve, and fairly dragged him aside. Ralph Reckness Cardew jerked his sleeve away.

"You fat chump—" he began.

"Cardew, old fellow, lend me a bob."

"Go and eat coke!"

"You don't want me to miss the circus, do you?" asked Trimble pathetically. "We don't have a circus here every day. Pay for me to go in, old chap, and—I'll have you home to Trimble Hall for the holidays."

Cardew grinned.

"Can't you really go in if somebody doesn't pay for you?" he asked.

"Nunno!"

"You'll have to keep outside!"

"Ye-es."

"And we sha'n't have your company?"

"No, old chap."

"Then I wouldn't pay for you for worlds," said Cardew. "No end of a relief not to see you for a couple of hours, Trimble!"

And the dandy of the Fourth walked into the tent, leaving Baggy Trimble red with wrath.

"Yah! Rotter!" howled Trimble. "I say, Kerruish! Are you deaf, Kerruish! I say, Reilly! Reilly, old chap, are you deaf!"

"Faith, and I am," said Reilly—"just now, anyhow."

"I say, Julian—Julian, old chap, will you lend me a bob?"

Figgins! I say, Figgins—Kerr—Wynn— Oh, you rotters!"

gasped Trimble, as the New House Co. passed him unheeding. "Redfern—Owen—I say, Racke—Racke, you rotter—Crooke—I say, Mellish—Oh dear!" Buggy Trimble's eloquence was wasted on the desert air. Nobody seemed anxious to "spring" a bob for the sake of Buggy's fascinating company during the circus performance. Buggy even appealed to Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School; but the Grammarians smiled, and passed him unheeding. And so it came about that Trimble, with a feeling of deep injury, was driven to his last and desperate resource, and handed out his own shilling for admission to Sankey's Circus.

CHAPTER 4.

A Surprise for Gussy.

TOM MERRY & CO. found themselves in front seats, with a good view of the stretch of tan in the circus ring. Behind them the crowd poured in, and the benches filled rapidly. It was a "full house," and the seats were swarmed to the last row, and in the last row Buggy Trimble was wedged between a stout lady and a brawny farm-hoover, perspiring, and regretting, as he perceived, that he had not parted with his own shilling a little sooner.

Two or three horses were driven round the ring as a preliminary to the entertainment, and then Mr. Sankey, gorgeous in evening clothes, though it was early in the afternoon, rolled in. Joey Jorrock, the funniest clown on earth, entered in a series of somersaults, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass very curiously on the mirth-merchant.

"Bai jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "that is the chap who was standin' outside, you know, tellin' us to come and see Joey Jowrock, the Funniest Clown on Earth! Blowin' his own trumpet, bai jove! I do not see anythin' vewy specially funny about him."

Joey Jorrock, having somersaulted half-a-dozen times, landed in the tan just under the barrier where the St. Jim's juniors sat in a row. He grinned up at Arthur Augustus, evidently having heard his remark.

Then he suddenly jumped up, pointed an accusing finger at Arthur Augustus, and shouted in a voice that was heard all over the tent:

"Give me my rabbit!"

"What?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Give me my rabbit!" bawled the clown.

"Bai jove! Whatevah does the fellow mean?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "My deah man, I assuah you that I know nothin' about your wabbit."

Mr. Sankey came over to the side, cracking his whip.

"Now then, Joey, what's the trouble?" demanded the ring-master.

"He's got my white rabbit!" shouted Joey.

"I haven't!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "Do I look like a fellow who would bag anothah fellow's white wabbit?"

"You're mistaken, Joey, the gentleman hasn't got your white rabbit!" said the ring-master, soothingly.

"He's got my rabbit."

"Weally, you know—"

"If you have the rabbit, sir!" said Mr. Sankey.

"I haven't!" roared Arthur Augustus. "How dare you ask me such a question, sir? I know nothin' whatevah about his wotten white wabbit."

The altercation attracted attention from all sides. Every eye in the crowded circus was turned on the crimson face of Arthur Augustus—people at a distance stood on their seats to get a better view. Tom Merry & Co. were smiling—they guessed that this was a part of Mr. Jorrock's humorous entertainment, but that reflection did not occur to the powerful brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and gave Mr. Jorrock a withering stare.

Instead of being withered, however, Joey Jorrock kept an accusing finger fixed at Arthur Augustus, and in louder tones demanded his white rabbit.

"You uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I assuah you that I have not even seen your white wabbit."

"Where has the gentleman got it, Joey?" asked Mr. Sankey.

"In his hat!"

"Wubbish!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "How could I possibly have a white wabbit in my hat? Don't be widdlewious."

"Give me my rabbit!" yelled Mr. Jorrock.

"You sillay ass—"

"Will you let Mr. Jorrock look into your hat, sir?" asked Mr. Sankey.

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the kind," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly.

"Give him his rabbit!" shouted two or three voices from behind.

Arthur Augustus spun round and stared at rows of grinning faces.

"I—I—I—"

"He's got it in his topper," shouted Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School. "I can see it's tail."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him his rabbit, Gussy!" shrieked Buggy Trimble.

"What do you mean by stealing a clap's rabbit? He, he, he! Hand over his rabbit."

"You wottah, Twimble."

"Pass over your hat, and let me see whether my rabbit's in it," shouted Mr. Jorrock.

"Wats! I wufuse—oh, you awful wottah, Blake." Jack Blake jerked off his noble chum's topper, and passed it over the barrier to Joey Jorrock.

"Let him see, Gussy."

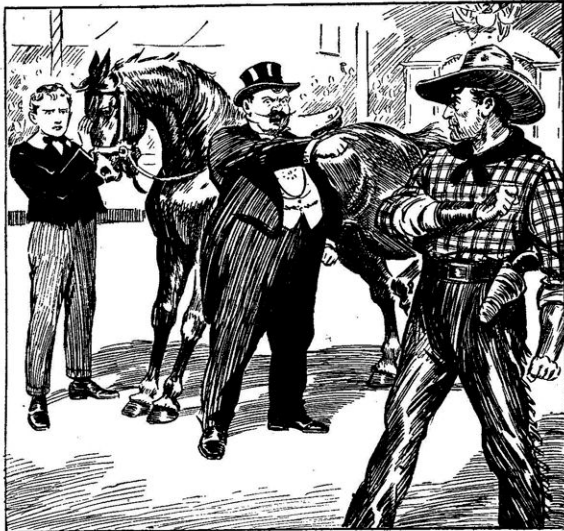
"Wubbish! How could there be a wabbit in my silk hat?" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "You are an ass, Blake! However, I trust that you are satisfied now, you uttally widdlewious person!" added Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass severely upon the clown.

"Look!" yelled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwest Scott!"

Joey Jorrock was groping inside the silk topper. Arthur Augustus almost fell down in his amazement, as the clown withdrew his hand from the hat—with a white rabbit in it!



Wildrake held the trembling horse's head. Mr. Sankey turned upon Texas Bill. "You confounded rascal," he thundered. "You might have ruined the circus with your dirty tricks. You can hop it out of this circus at once. You can call at the office after the show, and I'll settle with you. Now, get out or I'll kick you out."

"Oh, deah!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "What—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's my white rabbit!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, triumphantly. "What does the gentleman say now?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Is there anything else in the hat?" demanded Mr. Sankey.

"Yes, sir! Look here!"

To D'Arcy's further blank amazement, Joey Jorrocks drew a Teddy Bear from the hat, and then a rag doll. D'Arcy's eyeglasses fell from his eye, and his eyes opened wide.

"Gweat Scott!" he breathed. "Some awful wottah has been playin' twicks with my hat!"

Mr. Jorrocks was not finished yet. He proceeded to draw a toy balloon, a humming-top, and several other small articles from the silk hat, one after another. There was a roar of laughter all through the circus now. It dawned even upon Arthur Augustus, at that point, that the circus clown was performing conjuring tricks—a fact that had dawned upon the rest of the audience considerably earlier.

"The sillay ass!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in relief, mingled with vexation. "He is simply conjuw'n, you fellows!"

"Go hon!" chuckled Blake.

"Got that at last, Gussy?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Joey Jorrocks, having apparently emptied Gussy's hat, handed it back to him with a smile. Arthur Augustus brushed his topper tenderly with a folded handkerchief, and set it firmly upon his head. He confided to his chums that Mr. Jorrocks might be a "funny beggah," but that he had no right to take liberties with a fellow's topper—at which Tom Merry & Co. only chortled.

CHAPTER 5.

Wildrake to the Rescue!

HERE'S the giddy buck-jumper," said Kit Wildrake. The Canadian junior was keenly interested when "Texas Bill" rode into the ring mounted upon the "fiery untamed." What Wildrake did not know about horses, and the riding of them, was not worth knowing, and a buck-jumping act appealed to him very keenly. The circus rider was dressed in cow-boy style, and looked the part; though whether he had ever seen Texas was a doubtful question. But certainly he could ride, and the mustang "cavorted" round the ring in great style. Kit Wildrake's brow darkened a little as he watched the performance.

"That chap can wide, deah boy," Arthur Augustus remarked.

Wildrake nodded.

"I wathah think it is a genuine buck-jumpin' act, too," said the swell of St. Jim's, sagely. "The horse is quite wild."

"I guess he's been doped," growled Wildrake.

"Bai Jove!"

"They've given him some dope to excite him for the act," said the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch. "I guess there'll be some real buck-jumping soon—if I know anything about a hoss. It's a rotten trick, and that fellow is a brute."

"Yaas, wathah if you are wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, rather dubiously.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The mustang was tearing round the ring now at a terrific pace, flashing before the eyes of the onlookers.

There was breathless excitement in the circus, as the crowds watched the excited horse. Texas Bill just had it in control; but only just. His hard, tanned face was set grimly, the jaw protruding. If the horse had really been "doped" for the performance, it was probable that for once the dope had been over-done. As it tore and clattered round the ring, the mustang was evidently in a state of wild and fearful excitement.

The rider dragged on the reins, and the mustang came to a halt at last; but only for a second. Then the buck-jumping began.

Up went the fore-feet of the animal, till he had reared on his hind legs, and seemed to be walking on them. The skillful rider clung to his back, and still kept his seat, as the animal came down again on his fore-feet with a crash that rang through the circus tent.

Then up went the hind legs in the air, to come down again crashing.

The motions of the horse were so rapid that they could scarcely be followed by the eye. Mr. Sankey was watching the act with involuntary anxiety in his face, and he was careful to keep the centre pole between him and the rough-rider. Joey Jorrocks had caught himself up into a trapeze, and sat there out of danger to watch. There was a deep murmur in the crowded seats, and it changed to a yell as

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the mustang, making a sudden bolt, headed for the barrier, with the evident intention of leaping it into the midst of the people.

"Bai Jove!"

"Look out!"

People were on their feet, with startled faces, crowding and shoving. But Texas Bill, with a desperate effort, dragged the frantic animal in before it could leap the barrier. Turned from its object, the mustang went racing round the ring again at a furious speed.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, fanning himself with his programme. "Bai Jove! That is wathah thick, you know! If that howvid beast got among us—"

Wildrake was on his feet now, close to the wooden barrier that separated the audience from the tan. His face was anxious and grim.

"It's all right!" said Tom Merry. "The man's got the animal in control."

Wildrake glanced round for a moment.

"He's losing control!" he said shortly.

"What?"

"I guess I know what I'm talking about!" snapped the Canadian junior. "The horse is nearly mad, and that man will be down in the sawdust in a minute or two!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors watched the scene tensely. The mustang was bucking again, and it was growing clear that Texas Bill had his hands more than full. More than once he nearly lost his seat, and it could be seen that his face was white, his jaws set like a vice.

The catastrophe came suddenly. The mustang reared and crashed and rolled over in the tan. When he scrambled up again, his rider was two or three yards away, staggering to his feet, thrown at last.

Mr. Sankey yelled something at the performer. There was a shout of alarm all through the tent. Texas Bill made a desperate rush after the animal, and the mustang turned upon him with gleaming eyes and bared teeth. Then the circus rider's courage failed, and he made a bolt for safety. The mustang swept round the ring again, free and uncontrolled. Already people were crowding out of the tent in alarm, and there were cries and shouts on all sides.

Kit Wildrake placed his hand on the barrier, and leaped into the arena.

"Wildrake!" shouted Tom Merry, in alarm.

The Canadian junior answered without looking round. His eyes were fixed on the frantic horse.

"I guess that critter's got to be mastered! If he jumps the barrier there'll be a dozen deaths here this afternoon."

"But—but you—"

"I guess I'm going to try it on!"

The savage animal came careering round the ring again, the whites of his eyes gleaming in the light. Wildrake sprang to intercept him as he passed, heedless of the bared teeth and the clattering hoofs. It seemed as if it was by a miracle that the Canadian junior sprang upon the back of the tearing animal, and caught the reins that streamed over the tossing neck.

But he was upon the bare back, his knees gripping the flanks of the horse. Long ago, on the Boot Leg Ranch, the junior from British Columbia had learned to ride bareback, and his skill stood him in good stead now. Tom Merry & Co. watched him breathlessly.

The mustang, finding a rider on its back again, reared and jumped and plunged frantically. Twice, thrice, he rolled over in the tan, but with lashing heels in the air, and Wildrake sprang clear. But each time the Canadian junior landed on his back as he scrambled up again. Texas Bill, dodging with Mr. Sankey round the centre pole, stared on at the scene with scowling amazement in his hard face.

"Bwaw, Wildrake!" shouted Arthur Augustus, waving his topper enthusiastically in the air. And cheers rang out from every corner of the crowded tent.

Wildrake did not heed. He had all his work cut out to handle the maddened horse. Twice the mustang rushed at the barrier, and each time an iron wrist turned him from it, and drove him round the ring.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is what I call widdin' you chaps."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Tom Merry. "Good old Wildrake!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter! Crash!

For several minutes the mustang seemed to be seeking to unseat his rider by sheer speed. He seemed to flash round the ring. Then he drove close by the wooden barrier, but Wildrake's leg was lifted to escape the contact, which might have smashed his limb but for his rapid care. Again and again the savage teeth snapped round at the rider, but they did not reach him. More than once the mustang leaped clear into the air, with all four feet off the tan, coming down again with a jarring crash. And still Kit Wildrake kept his seat, and his hand was like iron on the rein. It seemed an age to the anxious watchers before the horse showed signs of exhaustion.

But the fit of fury passed at last, and at length Wildrake

rode the mustang round the tan at a leisurely pace, obedient to the lightest touch on the rein.

"He's done it!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good old Wildrake."

"Bravo, St. Jim's!"

Wildrake halted at last. The horse, exhausted, streaming with sweat, stood trembling. Wildrake rode him up to Mr. Sankey and Texas Bill, pulled him in, and dismounted. He fixed his eyes on the circus-rider.

"There's your horse," he said. "Take him away! You've put a good many lives in danger this afternoon, Mr. Texas Bill."

The scowling man took the reins.

"You doped that horse for the performance," went on Wildrake, "and you'll hear more of this. That comes under the head of cruelty to animals, Mr. Sankey."

Mr. Sankey spluttered.

"I never knew it," he said. "I've suspected it before, but I never knew. Thank Heaven you were able to handle the horse, young gentleman. You've saved lives, and I reckon you've saved my circus from being ruined. I've never seen riding like that before. I reckon I'd be glad to have you in my circus."

Wildrake smiled involuntarily. But his sunburnt face became grave again at once.

"What are you going to do about this?" he demanded. "The matter can't rest here. Nobody has a right to treat a horse like that."

"Mind your own business, you meddling young fool!" growled the circus-rider.

Mr. Sankey turned on Texas Bill at once.

"It's my business, anyhow, Bill Benson!" he exclaimed. "You confounded fool and rascal, you might have ruined the circus with your dirty tricks. Here"—Mr. Sankey shouted to an attendant, who was looking into the ring with a scared face—"take away this horse. He's quiet enough now, thanks to this young gentleman. Take him away, and see to him. He's been doped. As for you, Bill Benson, you'll hop it out of this circus instant!"

"What?" growled Texas Bill, scowling.

"You can call in the office after the show, and I'll settle with you, but I'll never trust you with a horse again, and you're quitting!" said Mr. Sankey. "Now, get out of the ring, or I'll have you kicked out!"

And Texas Bill, with a savage face, tramped to the exit, and disappeared.

CHAPTER 6. The Circus Boxer.

TOM MERRY clapped Wildrake on the shoulder when he had vaulted over the barrier again and dropped into his seat. The St. Jim's juniors surrounded him with congratulations.

"It was simply wippin', old bean!" said Arthur Augustus.

"We are all proud of you, dear boy!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wildrake cheerily. "Draw it mild!"

"It was splendid," said Tom Merry.

"I guess the giddy elephant is coming in," said Wildrake. "Attention! You're blocking the view of the people behind." The Canadian junior was evidently anxious for the subject to be dropped.

Mr. Sankey, in haste to remove the impression caused by the most tragic occurrence on the minds of the audience, hurried on the next turn. The crowd resumed their seats as the performing elephants came in. Tom Merry & Co. settled down in their places again. After the elephants, there came the boxing turn, in which the juniors were much more interested.

"Sankey's Lamb" entered the arena, and was greeted with some cheering. The circus had already been on the present pitch a couple of days, so the Lamb was quite well-known. He was a rather short, sturdily-built man of about thirty, with a bulldog jaw, and a rather flattened nose. There was something very like "swank" in his demeanour as he came into the ring. The Lamb was accustomed, like Caesar of old, to come, and see, and conquer, and his easy successes against rustic opponents had given him a remarkably good opinion of himself.

Tom Merry measured the boxer with his eye, and decided that, in spite of his swank, he would be a "tough proposition" in a tussle. But the captain of the Shell had already decided about "taking him on." All the juniors were keen to see Tom pitted against the circus boxer, for the sport of the thing, and Tom was not the fellow to hang back. But he was in a hurry to claim the distinction, and he waited to see whether anyone else accepted the challenge before speaking himself.

Mr. Sankey, in a loud voice, announced the Lamb, who was evidently the "show turn" of Mr. Sankey's entertainment. Two big fellows came in, and the Lamb boxed them in turn, and easily defeated them. This was a sort of pre-

liminary canter. When it was over, Mr. Sankey, in a still louder voice, announced the Lamb's challenge to "any gentleman" present to box six rounds for a purse of ten pounds. Any gentleman who succeeded in standing up to the Lamb for six rounds was entitled to carry off the purse. The Lamb smiled sweetly, plainly having a fixed belief that no gentleman present was able to stand up to him for three rounds, let alone six.

"Now, then, dear boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus, nudging the captain of the Shell.

"No hurry!" said Tom. "Give the other fellows a chance."

"No your man, mesier!" called out a voice from the back seats, and a sturdy young labouring man rose to view. There was a shout of encouragement from various quarters.

"Go it, Garge!"

"Garge" was evidently a popular youth. His fresh face flushed a beautiful crimson as he picked his way down the rows of seats and stepped over the barrier into the tan.

Mr. Sankey greeted him with great politeness.

"Gentlemen, the challenge is accepted!" he announced. "Our young friend here is going to encounter the celebrated Lamb, who has boxed all the crowned heads in Europe—I mean, who has boxed before all the crowned heads of Europe! This way, sir! Mr. Jorrocks will accommodate you with gloves. Just a friendly bout, with the gloves on, of course—sport in the truly British sense of the word, gentlemen."

"Ear, ear!"

George was relieved of his coat and vest, and Mr. Jorrocks helped him on with the gloves. He looked a sturdy figure, and he was considerably bigger than the Lamb. And his attitude as he faced the boxer was not wholly unscientific. George was, in fact, a boxer of some renown in Rylcombe and Woodend, well-known, indeed, for a couple of miles round about. And his friends in the crowd, who were numerous, were keen on the contest, and they shouted encouragement to George from all sides.

The Lamb lounged forward to the contest. Mr. Sankey, in his most impressive manner, took out a big rolled-gold watch and kept time.

"Shake hands, gentlemen!"

The gentlemen shook hands.

"I guess poor old George's number will soon be up!" murmured Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the boxing began. Somewhat to the surprise of Tom Merry, who had measured the adversaries pretty accurately with his eye, George was not knocked out in the first round. He lived through the second also. But Tom observed the Lamb exchanging a wink with Mr. Sankey, and he realised that the boxer was giving George a run for his money, so to speak. A knock-out at the beginning of the first round would have been rather a poor entertainment for Mr. Sankey's audience, and the Lamb was letting George run on to furnish a "turn" to entertain the patrons of the circus.

But George, quite ignorant of the fact that Sankey's Lamb could have knocked him out at any moment he had chosen, went on sparring manfully, and he was enthusiastically cheered by his friends when he came safely through the third round.

In the fourth, however, the Lamb woke up, as it were. He proceeded to make rings all round poor George, who was tapped and rapped, and rapped and tapped, right and left, till he was so bewildered that he hardly knew what was happening to him.

When Mr. Sankey, with a smiling face, called time again, George fairly staggered to Mr. Jorrocks' ready knee, and sank down on it, breathless.

But he came up gamely at the call of time.

In the fifth round, however, Sankey's Lamb went to work in earnest; he was not running any risks with the "tenner." The hapless George was knocked right and left, and he spent most of his time on his back, staring up dazedly at the roof of the circus tent. And Mr. Sankey counted him out at last—and he might as well have counted twenty as ten, for George could not possibly have got up after the last drive he had received. Poor George had to be helped out of the ring after the combat.

Then Mr. Sankey looked round the circus.

"If any other gentleman—" he began.

There was a pause. After the way the Lamb had handled the venturesome George, none of the local boxers felt disposed to face his hammering blows. Tom Merry looked round, and in a leisurely way rose to his feet. With a light spring he cleared the barrier from his seat, and landed in the arena. A roar of cheering from the St. Jim's crowd followed him.

"Good old St. Jim's! Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Bwavo, dear boy!"

Mr. Sankey glanced at the active, well-knit junior. Then he glanced at the Lamb, who grinned and nodded.

"I'm your man, sir!" called out Tom Merry, in a clear voice.

"Good old Tommy!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Sankey. "You are a plucky kid, at all events; and there's the tennor to be captured if you can do it."

"I'll try!" said Tom modestly.

And he accepted the gloves from Joey Jorrocks, and prepared himself for the fray. Monty Lowther followed him into the ring to act as his second. The eyes of all the St. Jim's crowd, and, indeed, all the numerous audience, were upon Tom as he faced Sankey's Lamb coolly and steadily, and Mr. Sankey gave the word.

"Time!"

And the fight began.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry v. The Lamb.

SANKEY'S LAMB smiled as he began sparring with the St. Jim's junior. It was quite clear that he underestimated his opponent, and, indeed, rated him lower than the hapless George. The Lamb was a good inch taller than Tom, much wider in the chest, and longer in the reach. He probably had twice the physical strength of the Shell fellow of St. Jim's. But the champion junior boxer of St. Jim's was a much more dangerous adversary than the Lamb supposed. In the first round the Lamb played the same game with Tom Merry as he had played with George, giving him a run to make him last, as it were. And it was with blank astonishment that, towards the end of the round, the Lamb found something very hard jarring on his flat nose, and found it followed up by another jar on his bulldog chin. Sankey's Lamb staggered back, and Tom was following up the attack hotly when Mr. Sankey called "Time"—perhaps a second or so too soon.

Tom Merry stepped back at once. The Lamb gasped a little, and righted himself on his pins, staring at the schoolboy with a quite new expression on his face.

Mr. Sankey's expression also had changed a little. Perhaps he realised, for the first time, that his tennor was in peril. He never expected it to be captured. But if it was won, it had to be paid over, there was no doubt about that; and Mr. Sankey's plump face betrayed a slight shade of anxiety.

"Time!"

Tom Merry stepped up briskly from the corner where Lowther had been fanning his heated face. The Lamb came up to the mark more slowly than before, and with very evident caution in his manner. Arthur Augustus screwed his eyeglass a little more tightly into his eye, and grinned joyously at his comrades.

"I wathah think that Tom Mewwy is goin' to give him as much as he can bite on, you chaps," remarked Arthur Augustus. "The Lamb is beginnin' to undahstand that already. He isn't swankin' now."

"Sure!" grinned Wildrake.

"Good old Tommy!" breathed Manners. "Watch that left—"

The Lamb had rushed in with a sudden drive, and a quick movement of the head aside saved Tom, and he countered with his right as the Lamb closed on him, delivering a hefty body blow that made the boxer stagger. Mr. Sankey glanced anxiously at his watch; but he couldn't possibly call time, and Tom had leisure to improve his advantage, which he did. As the Lamb staggered, the St. Jim's junior attacked in his turn, left and right crashing on the boxer, left and right again; and the Lamb, grunting heavily, pitched over in the sawdust.

"Man down!" yelled Manners, in great delight.

"Bravo, St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry stood, panting a little, while Mr. Sankey began to count, with a rather extraordinary expression on his face. The Lamb seemed dazed, and an effort he made to raise himself failed, and he sank back again in the tan.

There was an eager buzz in the crowd, and all eyes were breathlessly fixed on the fallen boxer. The sympathy of the crowd was, naturally, with the local champion against the professional, and there were few of the St. Jim's fellows who would not have given a week's pocket-money to see Tom Merry the winner.

But the Lamb was not beaten yet. Mr. Sankey, counting as slowly as he decently could, was at seven, when the Lamb got on his feet again.

"Go in and win, Merry!" yelled Crooke of the Shell.

But Tom Merry stood back, chivalrously giving his opponent time to get fairly on his feet.

The Lamb stood rather unsteadily, gasping for breath, and his defence was rather erratic when Tom came on again. The call of time was a distinct relief to the circus boxer.

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He sank down on Mr. Jorrocks' knee, gasping for breath, and the clown sponged his blazing face. Mr. Sankey hovered near him, and whispered:

"For goodness' sake, look out, you know! You're not here to cause me to give tennors away!"

The Lamb blinked at him sourly.

"The kid's a blessed prize bantam!" he said. "A bloke's doing his best, and a bloke can't do more! Let me alone!"

And Mr. Sankey retired discomfited, with deep and serious inward misgivings with regard to his tennor.

The third round was watched in a breathless silence. Tom Merry had had the advantage so far; but the Lamb was, as Tom had judged, a "tough proposition." He forced the fighting in the third round, and succeeded in getting close, and before Tom could get away, the Lamb had pounded him mercilessly.

The juniors watched him with tense faces, as the hammer-like blows fairly rang on Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom got away at last, and stalled off the Lamb's further attack, but he was evidently fighting for time. The call of time saved him, and he retreated to his corner, almost spent, and sank on Lowther's knee.

Monty Lowther eyed him rather anxiously, but did not speak. Neither did Tom Merry speak; he wanted all his breath.

But a rest worked wonders, and Tom was not groggy as he faced the Lamb for the fourth round. He had not fully recovered from his grueling; and he fought carefully and scientifically, taking great care that the Lamb did not get too close again. And the Lamb, as he strove to force the fighting, found the active junior very elusive.

Again and again a quick side-step or a spring saved Tom Merry, and he almost danced round the ring, with the angry boxer in pursuit. And the call of time came again.

"Fifth round!" murmured Blake, when the adversaries toed the line again. "Tommy's sticking it, anyhow!"

"Two to one on Tommy, in quids!" said Cardew of the Fourth. But nobody heeded Cardew.

The Lamb exerted himself manfully in the fifth round. But his previous exertions had told upon him; and Tom Merry, contenting himself with defence, succeeded in holding him off. The boxer looked a good deal less fresh than the schoolboy when the round ended. Mr. Sankey very reluctantly called time, and he cast an almost imploring look at the Lamb.

If the schoolboy succeeded in living through one more round he had captured the tennor, according to the terms of the contest. And Mr. Sankey had a fearful foreboding that the schoolboy was going to do it!

"Time!"

"Sixth round!" said Blake. "Go it, Tommy! How do you think you'd have shaped by this time, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus looked rather thoughtful.

"I fear, Blake, that I should not have stood up for more than five wounds," he answered modestly. "Pewwaps only four."

"And perhaps only one!" grinned Blake. "And perhaps not that!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, good old Tommy!" gasped Manners. "Watch him!"

Tom Merry had staggered, as if exhausted, and the Lamb, with a triumphant grin, rushed recklessly in to finish him—just in time to save the tennor. But that reckless rush proved the Lamb's undoing. For the stagger was only a feint; Tom's hands swept up, and dashed up the Lamb's fierce drive, and for a second the boxer was exposed defencelessly to attack. And Tom Merry did not lose a fraction of a second. Crash, crash! came left and right, on the Lamb's muscular chest and on his chin, and the circus champion went over like a log. He fairly thudded into the sawdust.

"Down!" gasped Blake.

"Smile manfully on the defeat of his champion and the loss of his tennor."

"Bravo, Tommy!"

Mr. Sankey, with a grim brow, counted. The Lamb made an heroic effort to rise, but his senses were swimming, and he fell back. Gasping in the sawdust, the circus champion was counted out.

There was a roar that almost shook the big tent.

Joey Jorrocks helped up the defeated Lamb. He stood gasping, leaning on the clown. Tom Merry peeled off the gloves, breathing hard. And Mr. Sankey, suppressing his feelings, made up his mind painfully to the sacrifice of the tennor.

"Mr. Sankey was a sportsman at heart, and he contrived to smile manfully over the defeat of his champion and the loss of his tennor."

"Gentlemen—!" began Mr. Sankey.

"Hurrah!" roared the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

"Bravo!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, our young friend here, Master

er "Merry!" said Monty Lowther.

"Master Merry has not only stood up to the Lamb for six rounds, as stipulated, but has knocked him out—"

"Hurrah!"

"And he, therefore, wins the purse," said Mr. Sankey. "Master Merry, I have great pleasure in presenting you with the purse of ten pounds, which you have won, by luck—I mean, pluck—"

"Hurrah! Good old Tommy!"

"Bwavo, Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus, waving his eyelashes frantically in the air.

Tom Merry, with a rather breathless smile, stepped towards the defeated champion, and held out his hand.

"It was a jolly good fight!" he said. "I was rather lucky to catch you out like that! Give us your fist!"

And the Lamb, with a rather wry grin, gave the school-boy his fist, amid a fresh round of cheers from the audience.

Tom Merry went back to his seat feeling breathless and fatigued, and rather knocked about, but with a crisp ten-pound note in his pocket. He smiled in response to his chums' congratulations, but he had not much breath left to answer them. And he was very glad of a rest while the circus performance went on to its conclusion.

CHAPTER 8. Lost—A Tinner.

"**B**AI Jove, there's that wotah!"

Tom Merry & Co. came out of the circus tent, mingled with the crowd pouring out after the performance. Tom Merry, Wildrake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found themselves together in the throng. A hard, evil face, flushed with drink, came close to the three juniors, and they recognised Benson, known on the circus posters as "Texas Bill." The man shoved his way through the crowd to the three juniors.

"Looking for trouble, I guess!" said Wildrake coolly.

"Stop shovin'!" called out two or three voices. But the ruffian came on, forcing a way through the crowd, till he was close to the three juniors, his eyes glittering savagely at Wildrake.

It was evident that he attributed to the Canadian junior the "sack" that he had received at Mr. Sankey's hands, and that he was primed with drink and seeking revenge. Kit Wildrake faced him with perfect coolness as he shoved up, and Tom Merry and D'Arcy drew quickly to Wildrake's side.

"You young 'sb!" muttered Benson savagely. "I reckon—"

"Stand back, you boozy brute!" snapped Wildrake disdainfully.

"Yas, wathah, you wotah— Oh, gwest Scott!"

The next moment the juniors were struggling with the ruffian.

The crowd shouted and cleared back, leaving them room. Kit Wildrake, sturdy as he was, would not have had much chance singly against the hulking man. But he had two comrades to help him. Billy Benson reeled in the grasp of the three juniors, and they went to the ground together with a crash.

"Wescue!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Oh, crumbs!" A savage blow in the ribs rolled the swell of St. Jim's over, and he was out of the combat.

Tom Merry and Wildrake struggled with the ruffian. And then there was a shout, as three or four St. Jim's juniors came racing up.

Lowther and Manners grasped the ruffian at once, and dragged him off. He turned on them savagely; but Blake and Herries and Dig came up, and Figgins & Co. followed them.

Bill Benson backed away, snarling savagely—a good deal like a wild animal—and dodged into the crowded field, and fled.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, sitting up. "I am quite breathless, you know! Where is that wotah?"

"Gone!" grinned Blake, giving the swell of St. Jim's a hand up. "Too late for you to make mincemeat of him, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I have a gweat mind to go aftah him and give him a feafuhl thwashin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"That brute ought to be given in charge," said Manners wrathfully, as he helped Tom Merry to his feet. "Hurt, old chap?"

"Only a bump or two," said Tom cheerily. "Let's get back to the school. Never mind the brute!"

"I guess I landed him a sockdolager in the eye, anyhow," remarked Wildrake. "And he's sacked! Let him rip!"

And as "Texas Bill" had quite disappeared, the juniors gave him up, and started for St. Jim's.

"Study No. 10 is going to swank this evening!" remarked Monty Lowther, as they neared the gates of the school.

"We'll stick that tinner up in the Common-room for all the fellows to see before we change it—what?"

"Good egg!" said Manners.

"Oh, rot!" answered Tom Merry, laughing.

"You've got it safe?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes, in my pocket."

Tom Merry put his hand into his jacket pocket, and stopped suddenly. He felt carefully through the pocket, and turned the lining out.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"Don't say you've lost it!" said Manners chidingly.

"Well, I couldn't have lost it," said Tom. "It was safe enough in that pocket. It's been pinched!"

"Pshaw!"

"Ass! You ought to look out for pickpockets in a crowd like that!" said Monty Lowther. "There goes our swank—along with the tinner!"

"Pewwaps you put it in anothah pocket, Tom Mewwy!" suggested D'Arcy. "I have several times lost a fivah and found it in anothah pocket."

"Yes, but you're an ass, you know—"

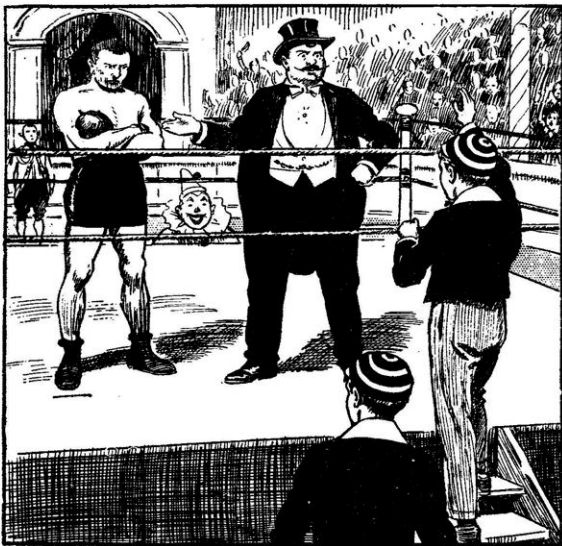
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"My pocket wasn't picked in the crowd," said the captain of the Shell quietly. "The tinner was taken while I was struggling with that brute Texas Bill. I'm sure of that."

"Benson!" exclaimed Wildrake. "Ten to one it was he!"

"I'm sure it was!" said Tom. "He knew I had the bank-note, of course; and I dare say he was in the tent and saw me put it into that pocket. That tussle was his opportunity, and—"

"The awful wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.



Mr. Sankey looked round the circus. "If any other gentleman—" he began, with a light spring Tom Merry landed in the arena. "I'm your man, sir," he called out in a clear voice. There was a roar of cheering from the St. Jim's crowd. Mr. Sankey glanced at the active, well-knit junior. Then he glanced at the Lamb who grinned and nodded.

The Terrible Three had stopped, and Wildrake and Study No. 6 stopped with them. All the juniors were concerned in the loss of the tenner. Tom Merry's eyes glinted.

"I'm not going to lose it like this," he said. "I'm pretty certain that ruffian had it. He was waiting outside the tent to hustle us as we came out. I'm going to look for him! You fellows coming?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors turned back towards the village. When they reached the circus tent they found it closed and the field deserted. But Mr. Sankey was seen standing by a caravan and talking to Joey Jorrocks; the latter now in ordinary attire, though daubs of grease-paint were still visible on his face. Mr. Sankey glanced inquiringly at the juniors as they came up.

"Evening performance begins at seven!" he said genially. "We're after your precious Texas Bill!" said Monty Lowther. "He's picked Tom Merry's pocket of the tenner!"

Mr. Sankey looked concerned.

"By gad!" he said. "I'm sorry to hear that! I hope you'll get it back! I can give you the number, if that's any good."

"You don't know where Benson is now?"

The circus proprietor shook his head.

"I said him off and shifted him," he answered. "He cleared; that's all I know. Most likely he'll be found in a pub. He won't come back to the circus, you can bet on that. There's a large size in boots waiting for him if he shows up in Sankey's World-Renowned Circus and Hippodrome again. There's the number of the note—00000666. Wish you luck!"

"Hold on," said Kit Wildrake quietly. "The rotter will guess that Tom Merry will miss the note pretty quick, and he will expect the police to be informed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about that, Wildrake?" asked Tom.

"What I mean is, he won't show up in the village or anywhere hereabouts if he can help it," said the Canadian junior. "He would expect to be tapped on the shoulder by a bobby if he did."

"So he will be," said Manners. "We shall go to the police-station, of course."

"Benson knows that," said Wildrake, "and I guess he's most likely to mosey off across country with his loot. Isn't that so?"

"Most likely," said Tom, after a little thought. "He's likely enough to have cut across the fields to the woods, and gone that way."

"That's how I figure it out," assented the Canadian junior. "And if he has, I reckon we may be able to pick up his tracks!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're not more than half an hour behind him," said the Canadian junior. "I reckon we may be able to handle this affair better than the police could. Once I get an eye on his hoof-print I guess I can follow him home."

Mr. Sankey looked very curiously at the Canadian junior. Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully. He had seen many examples of the skill in tracking displayed by the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch. It was a chance, at least.

"Can you help us, Mr. Sankey?" asked Wildrake. "I want a squint at his tracks, so that I shall know them again. When was it you turned him out?"

"I saw him in the interval and paid him off," said Mr. Sankey. "I haven't seen him since."

"Where was that?"

"Here, in my van," answered Mr. Sankey. "I paid him through that window from inside, him standing outside and cursing black and blue."

"Oh, he stood there, did he?" said Wildrake. "I guess that will be good enough for me."

Wildrake went round the van under the window. He dropped on his knees, and made a searching examination of the grass. There was a good deal of mud round the van, and at the spot where Texas Bill had stood there were quite visible tracks to be seen. The juniors followed Wildrake, keeping back to give him room, however, and Mr. Sankey looked on with great interest. The Canadian junior glanced up.

"Anybody come to the window since Benson?" he asked.

"No."

"Then these'll be his marks?"

"I suppose so," assented Mr. Sankey. "I reckon they are." He took a good size in boots, and them tracks are fairly big."

"Right heel worn down, and left sole split and patched," said Wildrake, reading from the "sign" as if from a book. "I guess I shall know those tracks again if I see them." He measured the footprints carefully with a length of whipcord.

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"Thanks, Mr. Sankey! Come on, you chaps, if you're interested."

There was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. were interested. Besides the fact that the ten-pound note was at stake, they were keenly interested in the task the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch had set himself. They followed him to the spot where the struggle with Texas Bill had taken place. Too many feet had passed over that spot for "sign" to be read there; but the juniors remembered the direction in which Benson had disappeared across the field. Wildrake led the way to the spot where he had last been seen. In a few minutes he had picked up a track again, leading towards a distant hedge.

"Follow on!" he sang out.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a gap in the hedge in the distance, and Wildrake headed for it without troubling to look for further sign. But when he reached the gap he scanned the ground carefully. A shallow ditch ran by the hedge on the other side, and in the mud of its slope the tracks of the circus rider were plainly seen.

"I reckon this was his way!" said Wildrake. "You fellows game for a chase?"

"You bet!"

"Come on, then!"

Kit Wildrake led the way across the second field. Beyond the field was Rylcombe Wood, divided here from the open meadows by a fence. There were several gaps in the fence, however, and Wildrake stopped at one of them, and pushed through. Grass and brambles grew thickly under the old trees, and the Canadian's keen eyes searched them for a sign. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"What have you found?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not the tenner?" grinned Lowther.

"Nope! But look here!" Wildrake pointed to a spot under an oak-tree, where the grass had been flattened evidently by some rather heavy object lying there for a time. "See the sign?"

"Somebody's laid down there, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Something—not somebody!" said Wildrake. "I guess it was a bag or suit-case of some kind that laid there—and here's the track close by it."

"What do you work out from that?" asked Blake.

"I figure it out that Mr. Benson took away his things in a bag," said Wildrake. "After getting his pay from Sankey, he packed his bag, I reckon, and brought it here, and left it to be called for, so to put it. He meant all along to hustle us when we came out of the tent, and bag the tenner if he could. And he knew that in that case he would have to light out quick. So he put his bag here ready to be picked up when he vamoosed the ranch. How does that strike you?"

"Good enough!" said Tom Merry, with a nod. "I suppose he must have had some clothes and things to take away with him, and he would have to carry a bag."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's the tracks here leading back as well as on," said Wildrake, pointing to the grass. "Now, he didn't come back after bolting with the tenner. I reckon he came back after putting the bag here to be picked up when he bolted for good. After collaring the banknote, he headed for this spot, got his bag, and went on through the wood. What's on the other side of the wood from here? You fellows know the country better than I do."

"The Wayland high-road," said Tom Merry. "It's about a mile and a half if you keep right on by the footpath near here."

"Then I guess that's the way our pesky friend has gone," said the Canadian junior, "and as he has a bag to carry, and as he can't guess that a Canadian is tracking him like a giddy Red Indian, I guess he won't hurry himself very much, and we've got a good chance of gaining on him. Let's hustle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

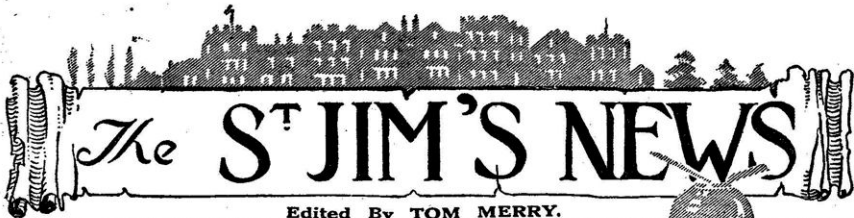
And Tom Merry & Co., led by the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch, pressed eagerly on the trail.

CHAPTER 9.

Tracked Down!

KIT WILDRAKE led the way through the leafy wood without a pause. Once or twice he turned back from a blind trail, where the tracks reversed; but he seemed never at a loss. Judging by the trail, the fugitive had lost some considerable time in futile movements in the wood, and the circumstance rather puzzled the juniors. But the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch quietly explained.

(Continued on page 18.)



ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT RE-OPENS.

Exciting Election Scenes.

TRIMBLE'S GREAT TWO-MINUTE SPEECH.

Grundy Elected War Minister—Opposition Surprise.

(By Redfern, Our Special Representative.)

Pepper's Barn, Tuesday.

BEFORE I describe the scene which took place I will just make a remark on the little stop-press notice you saw in this paper last week.

This great assembly only gathered yesterday afternoon, and to-day you are reading the account of it. I might add that it meant mighty quick work on the part of the editor and ourselves to do it, but we have succeeded.

The re-opening of the St. Jim's Parliament as a junior function has proved more successful than the wildest hopes expected. Soon after doors were opened, Pepper's Barn was packed, and the attendants had fears of disorder. Excitement among the fags was quickly quelled when Grundy took upon himself the duty of clumping ears. But the fag members resented that, and the result was that George Alfred had his nose rubbed on the floor.

The Cabinet consists of a number of School House Shell Fish—altogether too many for my liking, but with Tom Merry for Prime Minister it is quite useless to hope for anything better, I suppose—and in a most unexpected manner they all turned up for the first debate. At least half the Cabinet should be absent to make things seem real.

My job was to mount the old ladder and get up into the loft. Here I scribbled off all I heard. I might say the amount I got written down would not only pack the "St. Jim's News" from beginning to end, but the whole of the "Gem" Library from cover to cover.

Taggies had been elected Sergeant-at-Arms. The Clerk of the Fees, Rev. Talbot, had had to pay Taggies two weeks' money in advance to persuade him to leave his lodge at St. Jim's, and take up his position outside the barn door. His appearance, to some of the timid fags, was a cross between a school board inspector and an hotel porter.

Harry Noble was Mr. Speaker, and he opened things in a brisk fashion. An eighteen-inch ruler did service for that magic symbol, the mace, and Lowther, in a most unparliamentary manner, remarked that Noble reminded him of an auctioneer trying to sell corn-plasters.

Noble first demanded that St. Jim's should be divided into two Houses, the House of

Ratcliff and the House of Ratliff; that opposition should cease in the school itself and be left to the Grammarians. Loud cheers greeted this proposal.

Before Noble could resume, however, about seven fellows (all, I think, belonged to Racker's smart set) bundled Baggy Trimble forward, pushed Noble from the Tate sugar-box, and planted Baggybus in his place. This was how Baggy expressed himself:

"I say, you fellows, I want to make a big appeal to this House, and everybody present. Grub is the mainstay of school-boys, and St. Jim's hasn't yet realised it. I vote for more grub, for free prog at the tuckshop, and for midnight feasts eight nights a week! I vote for bedtime at ten o'clock, rising bell at eleven, and breakfast laid at twelve. We ought to have dinner at one, tea at five, and supper at nine. We ought to have snacks in between, and no lessons in the afternoon—Trimble's row ceased abruptly here. I will explain why.

At the rear of the barn where Cardew sat, the emergency gun was kept. We manufactured it ourselves from a piece of iron piping. It is loaded by the muzzle, and fired on the same principle as an air-gun. It faces the door, and Mr. Speaker when standing on the Tate sugar-box is directly in the range of fire. Noble saw this, and beckoned to Cardew to prepare the gun to bombard the usurper. Trimble, quite unaware of the gun's presence, stood with his flabby face posing as a fine target. The ammunition we use is, of course, of the harmless variety—but, on the other hand, it is not very pleasant to get hit. Rottun eggs, squashy tomatoes, mouldy apples, and oranges of uncertain age, were the chief things used.

Of course, the whole volley couldn't go into a mouth even the size of Baggy Trimble's. But what didn't go into his capacious pate went down his neck, or in his eyes, ears, and down his waistcoat.

Baggy hoted from the barn—and Taggies, waiting discontentedly outside, was simply itching to use his carbine on somebody's person. And when old Baggy tore through the doorway, friend Taggy welcomed him such a fourpenny one, and sent Trimble, well—yards! We didn't see him again until we got to St. Jim's.

We never really succeeded in getting order again, after that incident. Immedi-

ately Trimble was gone Grundy hopped up into his place, and commenced a glorious oration about himself.

Cardew said he didn't know Baggy had gone, but I really doubt his word. Anyway, Ralph Reckness went on stuffing the gun with ammunition, and just when Grundy's vocal efforts were loudest, he despatched another volley at where Trimble should have been, but where Grundy happened to be at the moment. Talk about laugh! Why, the old barn shook so that I could hardly write down my report.

It so happened that George Figgins had been sitting just in front of the gun. If Figny had been the height of an ordinary junior everything would have been all right. But Figny wasn't. The first and second volleys passed quite clear of his cap, but the third volley smote him beautifully in the back of the neck. The New House contingent were apparently waiting for something of this kind to happen. They rose as one man armed with peashooters, water-pistols loaded with ink, and similar weapons used in modern schoolboy warfare, and in a few minutes a wonderful scene was in progress. The School House hadn't come empty-handed, though, and they soon gave as good as they got! Grundy was made a universal doormat, and (guess the objective of all random shots). The Parliament proposes to meet again next week, and, if successful, I shall try to report.

Kildare in Hot Water.

ST. JIM'S CAPTAIN MISJUDGED

By COUSIN ETHEL.

(Continued from last week.)

THE lamp from Monteith's cycle gleamed across the quadrangle, and served to warn the ambushed foes that he was coming. Retribution was very near at hand now. Even as he paused to lean his cycle against the shed, he was seized by hands which reached out of the darkness, and dragged him to the ground.

Ropes were quickly tied, and a thick gag was bound round the captain's mouth. In this state he was pushed into the cycle-shed, and left to pass the night.

Next morning, a little before seven o'clock, Darrel of the School House Sixth Form came down to the shed, intent on an early morning spin. He alighted on Monteith, groaning pitifully. Darrel was simply astounded at first, and quickly effected his release. But he was to be still more surprised when the handkerchief which Monteith had been gagged turned out to be Kildare's.

Darrel quickly sped away from the cycle-shed to inform his chum of what he had seen.

So serious a view of the outrage did the authorities take, that the Head deemed it necessary to call an assembly of the whole school. The Head made a strikingly generous offer to begin with. He demanded that the guilty parties should be honest enough to step forward, accept severe chastisement, and then be expelled. But, as Jack Blake murmured, there were no takers.

When the great moment came, James Garston Monteith made his statement, and succeeded in sending the whole school agog with excitement. In a frank, open manner, Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, said:

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all the Head's questions, and this fact alone cleared him in the eyes of the School House boys. But with the New House it was different. Somebody in the School House was guilty, and suspicion fell on Kildare. The Head took good care not to voice his opinion of the matter, but what he did do was quite as effective. Dr. Holmes cancelled all the half-holidays, gated the whole school, and suspended all sporting fixtures until the culprit was discovered.

When Dr. Holmes left the Hall, cries from the New House ranks burst forth: "Confess, Kildare!" "Confess, you boulder!" "Make a clean breast of it, you howling dog!" and Eric Kildare waded out of Hall with his head erect, and took no notice of the cries.

Immediately he was gone School House and New House juniors waded exceeding wrath on the topic of whether Kildare was innocent or guilty. In a short time both Rats and Kidds were waging war against one another, and it needed the presence of four or five seniors with ashplants before the youthful heroes could be dispersed.

One day a meeting of the football committee was called, and it ended in so rowdy a manner that Monteith was obliged to send a challenge to the captain of the school to combat. Newcastle Barr was the spot he fixed that they should meet. The seniors tried hard to keep the matter dark from the juniors, but they had about as much chance of doing that as a pig has of flying. Figgins & Co., in support of Monteith, and Jack Blake & Co., to add encouragement to Kildare, were strongly in evidence, greatly to the surprise of the combatants. Of course Kildare gave Monteith, that thrashing he so richly deserved, and in reward for so doing was curtly requested by Dr. Holmes to resign his position of captain of St. Jim's.

That naturally meant another election, and everything voted to a walk-over for James Garston Monteith!

Now, in the New House was a certain junior, who ever since the affair of the bound prefect had been much less than the public eye was on him. This boy had happened to be the junior leader, a big deputation went along to inquire the wherefore of his backwardness in coming forward. To the satisfaction of all, he said that he was chief knave nothing about the election, and that Monteith was the favourite candidate.

The news made him jump, but not with joy.

"That brute!" cried Figgins. "He isn't fit to be captain of a convict prison! It's bad enough to have the cur as our prefect, without making him captain of St. Jim's!"

The deputation could get no encouragement from their leader, so they retired somewhat crestfallen.

After they had been gone some time, Figgins excused himself by saying he was going to take a turn in the quad. But it was not merely for a stroll in the quad Figgins had gone. He went with an unhesitating stride towards the School House.

"GOO OLD FGGY!"

"What do you want, you cheeky brat?" This was how Monteith scowled at Jack Blake when that young fellow came up to his head at the door of the study and informed Monteith that the Head wanted him. When the New House senior reached there, Monteith found two others also. Kildare and Figgins—the latter looking red-hot and wretched.

I expect you can guess what is coming now. Monteith was told by the doctor that the junior had made a startling confession.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins, "it was I who attacked Monteith in the bike-shed that night."

Information made the two seniors jump. Monteith, however, had most food for thought. He recalled to mind the thorough brutality he had inflicted which had driven the junior to his foolish action, and he knew that he would no longer be able to retain his position as Head prefect if Figgins chose to speak out. To save himself, so to speak, he had to save Figgins, with the consequence of being able to take it out of that young gentleman's hide on the morrow.

Figgins had the caning of his life the next morning, and he had been for expecting expulsion, the caning, although never seemed quite cheap in comparison. Everybody admired and appreciated his action, and as Jack Blake affectionately remarked, "You call your old pal Coochie as St. Jim's, old man, until the footer match."

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which will settle the question for the rest of the term!"

(In next week's "St. Jim's News" cousin Ethel tells how a new boy, called George Edward Barbry, arrives, and of what befell him during his first few days at St. Jim's.)

Juniors Discuss Big Problem.

DORIS LEVISON'S PERT QUESTION.

"Why do boys require from nine to fourteen pockets in a suit of clothes?" The following boys give their reasons—and otherwise.)

WALLY D'ARCY, Third Form.—Well, it's like this, my dear. If a fellow wants to have a conker-fight with a pal, the bigger the supply of last year's oven-baked warriors he can carry in his pockets the more chances he stands. That's my reason! (If I were a boy, I would carry mine in a Dorothy bag. Though, whatever conkers may be I'm sure I don't know 'em.)

PATTY WYNN, Fourth Form, New House.—My answer to Miss Levison is this: How could a fellow possibly keep body and soul together if he hasn't got at least nine or ten pockets in which he can hold sufficient stores of grub to endure the three hours siege in the Form-room every morning? Perhaps this little explanation solves one of the mysteries of my existence, and reminds me of my pet mole, which died when it missed its first meal.—(D. L.)

HERBERT SKIMPOL, Shell Form.—My dear, if I had it, I would do the Darwinian theory and turn back our minds a mere thirty million years, we should no doubt discover that man or monkey had a far better use for fourteen pockets than the present-day species have. At that time common sense was obviously at its greatest height; a man could put his wife and children in his pockets in a manner similar to the garzo today while he held up the progress of a mountain glacier with his hands. After shopping for Sunday dinner, he could place all his purchases in his pockets while he fought with a king cobra, crocodile, or a sea serpent. I will now discuss waistcoat-pockets, together with the evolution of man, and the effect socialism and determinism would have on mis-guided sages on the Gobi-mountain and the islands of the east of Germany. In the—(I really wish Skimpole could have found time to answer my simple question instead of wasting a shilling in postage to send me about the words of some silly professor's rambling pipe!—D. L.)

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW, Fourth Form.—Pockets. Why does a fellow want from nine to fourteen pockets in a suit? By gad! I'm jiggered if I know! The trousers pockets are all right for shoving one's hands in, but for the others I can only repeat something I once heard Aubrey Racke of the Shell say. Nine or ten pockets come in distinctly useful for carrying about a convenient number of slips of paper with the names of horses on. If you can make head or tail of them, you ought to get a job at Scotland Yard. (You don't seem to give a girl much information which she can understand.—D. L.)

ARTUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, Fourth Form.—I am aah I feel very highly flattered at having to answer your weally topin' question. You show a wippin' judgment of a fellow, which is the only way that sort is just in my line. Of course, dear old junior Ettons have only six pockets, but my best lounge suit has quite a Continental touch with fifteen. With a fellow who has to work for his money, they never leave him without his goods and chattels in. A gentleman of the wood, for instance, uses his pockets as a kitbag, portmanteau, and 'twavelin'—twelve in all. With a fellow like myself, for instance, they are merely ornaments. The breast-pocket in any suit is the most essential! That is the pocket that holds the silk handkerchief, which is the only thing that a chap's got! These articles are obtainable at Woodworth's for sixpence, and in the West End for half a guinea! (Thank you very much, Artur. Yours is the best reply of the lot. The others seem to have taken my letter as an expedient for relieving their brains of all the silly nonsense they had got stored there. The only thing I can say is, that good ones are given, but never want more than one pocket.—D. L.)

(A few more replies next week.)

St. Jim's Great Relay Race.

AN INTERESTING SPORTING EVENT.

By REGINALD TALBOT.

SPORTING contests, taking in every branch of outdoor sport, have just commenced at St. Jim's. This weather is simply ideal for some events, and, from the lengthly lengthly Raiton prepared, I should say that they will extend well into the autumn.

The whole idea was hailed with great delight by the majority of sport-loving boys. Of course, the opinion of individual boys in such a matter is of no account. If their names appear in the list they must put in an appearance, whether they like it or not. Weather conditions being so favourable, the relay running race was chosen as the first event. Quoting from the rules:

"The course will be to Abbotsford and back, a distance of about twenty miles. This has been divided into eleven sections, which will mean eleven relays. As there are four boys to each relay, forty-four will find their names on the list."

From where afterwards gathered, Aubrey Racke of the Shell had arranged one of his "select smoking concerts" for the afternoon of the relay with Gerald Cutts & Co. of the Fifth, their retreat being a back-parlour in the Green Man Public-house.

Can't you just picture Racke's chagrin when he found his name on the list as one of the first relay runners. To make matters worse from his point of view—and funnier from ours—he had been elected to run just five minutes before his appointment at the village inn. I heard Racke pass many uncomplimentary remarks about old Raiton when he found his merry little afternoon mucked up.

The course commenced in the lane outside St. Jim's, continued along the footpath to the banks of the Rhyll, where it passed the outskirts of Fycombe, and entered Wayland Wood. From here it led on to Wayland Moor, under the railway viaduct, and along the main road to Abbotsford.

The return course led through the pine wood to the old quarry. From here to the banks of the higher Rhyll, and then along the river banks as far as Minnow's Eyot. At this point the course left the river and headed through Fycombe Village. A short distance past the Grammar School, and it ended at the gates of St. Jim's again.

This was how the ballot had arranged things:

RELAY 1.

St. Jim's to River Rhyll—Racke, Freere, Noble, Talbot.

RELAY 2.

River banks to Wayland Wood—Hammond, Contarini, Lorne, Wyatt.

RELAY 3.

Wayland Wood to Wayland Moor—Blake, Manners, Figgins, Trimble.

RELAY 4.

Moor to railway viaduct—Clampe, Freach, Reilly, Mulvaney.

RELAY 5.

Viaduct to Abbotsford—Lawrence, Wynn, Digby, Brooke.

RELAY 6.

Return course, Abbotsford High Street—Kerruish, Levison, Lundy, Scrope.

RELAY 7.

Pine wood to quarry—D'Arcy, Julian, Gibbons, Daue.

RELAY 8.

Quarry to river banks—Mellish, Clive, Pratt, Lennox.

RELAY 9.

River banks as far as Minnow's Eyot—Cardew, Smith, Clwile, Hart.

RELAY 10.

Minnow's Eyot to the Grammar School—Gunn, Redfern, Kouni Rao, Gore.

RELAY 11.

Grammar School to St. Jim's—Herries, Merry, Skimpole, Durraunce.

(The results of each relay, and the surprising finish to the event, will be given in next week's "St. Jim's News.")



A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Tom Mace, the son of a crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. The poor circumstances in which he has lived earns for him the scorn of Simon Lundy & Co., the school snobs. Spikey Meadows, a friend of Tom's father, Mr. Bill Mace, calls upon Tom, and tries to persuade the lad to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night. Returning late that evening, Tom is questioned by his Form-master, Mr. Mullins, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious Mr. Mullins, who knows something about Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. The following day Tom sees Mr. Gale, whom he had seen in conversation with Spikey Meadows when journeying to the school. Mr. Gale warns the lad against this man. Later Tom's mother comes to the school, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom would have fought the snob but for the promise to his mother not to fight. Tom is again visited by Spikey Meadows, the incident being witnessed by Lundy and Mr. Gale. Lundy is rather interested, and meets Spikey Meadows himself. He is encouraged to place a bet, and, together with Garnet and Bradshaw, cuts a cricket match, and goes to the races. Tom and his friend Peel give chase and bring them back. The Millford team are in a bad way when Lundy goes to the wicket to partner Tom. Will Lundy let his side down? (Now read on.)

The Hour of Victory!

AFTER that there was a ding-dong battle of bat and ball. Tom added fifteen, and Lundy ten. Rider and Peel, who were watching from the pavilion, could not understand Lundy at all. He was playing well and carefully, taking no risks at all. Usually he showed off in a risky manner. Yet to-day, when everyone who knew him expected he would get out quickly, he was making what promised to be a quite creditable stand.

A cheer went up as Lundy drove a ball clean past the bowler. Then he was heard to call out to Tom.

Peel gave a shout, for he had seen that it was a trick—a trick to run out Tom.

But Tom had seen it himself. He did not trust Lundy, and when he heard the cad call he looked round, even as the long-off threw in.

"Too late," said Tom calmly, though his eyes glittered. Tom did not wish to let the cad know he had been discovered. The longer Lundy stayed in and made a score the better.

So the two remained together for another two overs. And during those two overs neither gave a chance.

Tom Mace had reached the fifty now, and he had received a rousing cheer. The ropes were thronged; fellows seemed to have come up from every corner of the school and playing-fields. Even the masters were present, and the Head, though not a cricket enthusiast, was watching keenly.

It was the first time that anyone had taken the Millford Fourth Form's cricket efforts at all seriously. But all realised that it was Tom who was pulling the side together.

A fast bowler had been put on, and Tom had played him with ease. Two and four he had scored from the first two balls. The third was a two by, and the fourth—

"Come on!" called Lundy, as the ball shot by Tom. For a second the scholarship lad thought the call genuine. But almost by instinct he noted that Lundy's run forward was half-hearted, and drew back.

First slip had the ball. He saw that Tom was back, and,

to the amazement of Lundy, hurled the ball down to that end, where the fast bowler, waiting by the stumps, caught it neatly and whipped off the balls.

"How's that?"

"Out!" said the Fifth Former, with a pleased look.

Lundy scowled and glared at Tom.

"You cad!" he hissed. "Why the dickens didn't you run? You heard me call!"

But Tom did not reply. The hiss that came from the Fourth Formers in the pavilion told Lundy that his trick had not pulled the wool over the eyes of anyone.

At first, when he threw his bat down, he attempted to put the blame on Tom. But he was greeted by a cold, icy silence.

Bob Peel, unable to control himself, spoke at last.

"You're a cad, Lundy," he said hotly, "and I'm glad you got out! You can't be trusted a hanged inch! I admit you ran up a fair score, but you only did it so that you could play that low-down trick! Serve you right!"

And Peel turned his back.

There was a hiss for Lundy.

Lundy went pale, then red.

"That's what you think!" he said. "Well, you can! I'm done with this hanged Form! I've stuck out there in the broiling sun, pulling you through, scored fourteen, that brat of a scholarship cad runs me out, and you call me names!"

Rave though he did, and protest, he got no satisfaction.

"I hope Bradshaw refuses to bat!" said Lundy. "That cad will run him out if he does play!"

Peel wheeled round.

"Shut up!" he hissed. "If you can't keep quiet of your own accord, I'll help you, and sharp, too, with a stump!"

"Bosh!" hooted Lundy, thoroughly annoyed that his scheme had failed. "Rats to you all!"

Bob Peel picked up a spare stump, and brought it down thwack near Lundy's foot. In sheer fright the cad of the Fourth leaped into the air. And after that he was silent.

In sulky mood he resigned himself to the amusing, if not exhilarating, pastime of watching Luke Bradshaw bat.

A few giggles, some caustic remarks, and mock cheers came from the ropes; but they did not affect Bradshaw. He awaited the first lightning delivery.

"Down it came to the leg side, and he waited calmly, coolly. This was not because he was brave, but because as yet he had not fully realised the fact that the ball had been bowled. He was not a bright youth.

Something small, fierce, and dark whizzed up to him, and experience told him it was the ball.

Automatically he jumped aside and ducked. The ball flew over his head.

Immediately there was a cackle of laughter, and Tom gripped his bat in anger. Yet he knew that he was quite helpless. It might be that Bradshaw did not intend to give the game to the Drayson fellows. It was certain that he hadn't the faintest idea of what was and what was not cricket.

Down went the next ball, slightly wide to the leg side, and Bradshaw, making the same "stroke" that he had made before, was too late.

With a wild, frantic yell, he leapt into the air.

"Yarough!"

There came a perfect hurricane of laughter, and the bowler was almost hysterical.

"Stand up to them, man!" called out Peel to Bradshaw, but that youth merely glowered and rubbed himself painfully where the ball had raised a huge bruise on his right thigh.

He only lasted one ball more, then, with a merry "click," his stumps went tumbling down.

"How's that?"

"Out!" giggled the umpire. And back, back in lonely state went the crestfallen Bradshaw, his expensive, but hardly breezed bat tucked under his arm.

The next four batsmen were dismissed for six, and Tom added four. The score stood at ninety-four.

Ten to win! A fast bowler on a bumpy pitch!

How could it be done when there were only two more to come in?

But Tom was facing the bowling, and he determined to keep it if he could.

A two, and he had the bowling again. Then another two, and though he drove the next well away, he ran three instead of four, so that he could keep the bowling. It was not selfish, it was wise policy—for Smythe would probably have gone under. It was over—and now he faced the new bowler.

The first ball ran clean through, and they ran a by—there was no time for two then.

Smythe had the bowling, and the bowling had Smythe—for his wicket clicked down.

Out came Hill, with a crowd round him offering advice, which he did not heed. Nervous he was, and his hand shook as he clumped the bat on the crease. It is always very important to be last man, for so much depends on that unfortunate individual, and everyone seems to take it for granted that he will be out first ball.

Two to win, and the batsman as nervous as a cat on a church steeple!

Hill stopped the first. The second, which came from the slow bowler in a curve was a very cunning delivery, but though it missed Hill—or Hill missed it, the wicket stood safely erect still.

Nevertheless, it was a bye, a rather close run, but the two accomplished it in safety.

One to win, and Tom Mace batting. They were level, and a cheer went up.

The bowler was breathing deeply.

He had to save defeat now, defeat from the contemptible Millford Fourth Form team!

Though Tom Mace was cool, he could not forget the fact that the whole match now depended upon him.

Never had the bowler bowled a better ball. It went spinning down the pitch with a wonderful length, and an absurdly wonderful break. No one could be blamed for missing that ball. And miss Tom did, though it was only by an inch or two.

Click! His stumps were down.

But a moment before the umpire had called out "No ball!" His voice had not carried, but he had signalled the fact. The cheers that the Drayson fellows had started dwindled away, and there came a perfect roar.

"Millford wins!"

Won—and by a no-ball. Partly, yes—but Tom Mace's sixty-seven had been the real cause.

The cry of Millford died down, and there came an additional cheer:

"Tom Mace!"

And Tom certainly deserved that cheer they gave him. But his ears burned and his face flushed. How fortunate that in his eagerness the bowler had overstepped the crease! But perhaps had he not done so, the ball would not have beaten Tom.

Nevertheless, it was hard luck, very hard luck, and as Tom walked back, he patted the unfortunate bowler heartily on the back.

"Hard luck!" he said. "That was very unlucky. I quite thought you had got me."

The other pulled a face.

"So did I," he said glumly. "But you've played a fine innings, anyway," he finished, with a shrug of the shoulders. "It's all in the game. It works both ways."

Half-way to the pavilion a crowd of fellows swarmed on to the pitch, and Tom clenched his bat-handle tightly, fearing a scrap.

But their motives were far more worthy than he had supposed. They were cheering, and cheering him, the lad they had once scorned!

"Bravo!"

It was Mr. Gale whose hearty cheer reached Tom's still burning ears. And it was praise indeed. For Mr. Gale was the judge of a good game, and he knew that Tom had played a splendid, faultless innings.

"Chair him!" came a yell. And the idea caught on at once.

Tom Mace was lifted bodily, and carried shoulder-high to the pavilion. He still held his bat in his hand.

"Let me down, please!" he laughed. But they would not.

"Three cheers for Tom Mace!" rose Peel's voice.

"Hip—hip—hip hurrah!"

It was the proudest moment of Tom's life.

These fellows were cheering him! The fellow they had once scorned. In that friendly, admiring crowd around him he recognised many who had cut him before.

And as he went into the school to change he still heard them calling his name.

"Mace!"

"Hurrah! Well played, Mace!"

It was Tom Mace's hour of triumph!

(Continued on the next page.)

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ANSWERS

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A Licking for Lundy!

"PASS the jam!"

Bob Peel took the jam from Tom, and dug into it deeply, unloading some of it into his plate. "Topping!" said Peel. "Now this is what I call a real meal, after a famous victory!"

"Forgetting food for a moment," said Rider, "what is the best thing to do about Lundy?"

"Lundy!" scoffed Peel, with his mouth full of cake. "There is only one thing to do with that chap—thrash him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Tom. Then, to the others' surprise, he added: "And I'm going to do it."

"Oh!"

Seeing they looked so surprised, Tom explained himself. "As you know, mother asked me to promise not to fight. Well, I wrote to her—and the promise is off now. Lundy has always been a cad—he offered me the coward's blow. He can do it again. I have reason to think that he knew I had made that promise to my mother."

"My hat!" said Peel. "That's not at all unlikely. It wouldn't surprise me if the cad did a bit of eavesdropping. He knew your mother was at the school."

Tom nodded.

"The fellows must think that I'm a funk," he said. "And that is the last thing I want them to think me, especially after today."

"So you're going to wallop the cheerful and idiotic Lundy," finished Peel. "That's a splendid idea."

"When?" asked Rider.

Tom put down his cup.

"To-night," he answered. "Strike while the iron's hot. I've got an excuse now. I can't go for the chap unless I have. He tried to run me out, and he chuckled away his innings. He could have made many more runs this afternoon, because he doesn't bat badly, and he was set."

"True, O King!" nodded Peel, munching some cake. "We'll have to first, and then you can get on with the clauset. Rider and I will pick up the bits. Won't we, Dick, old son?"

"We will," said Rider. "But look here! Tom has proved himself the best cricketer in the Form—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then why not make him captain? Let the fight decide." Peel slapped his hands together.

"The idea—the great idea!" he said. "Bonanza!"

"Oh, no," laughed Tom. "Why, I haven't been here long."

"What does that matter? This must be settled right away."

And Peel, despite the fact that he had not finished his tea, jumped up, and darted out of the study.

"Going to get the Form together," he said. "This is some affair, my lads!"

A few minutes later he came back.

"All clear!" he said. "There's to be a Form meeting. A contest by votes, then by combat. A regular trial by ordeal, that we read about in history."

Tom was not allowed to finish his tea, for he was carted out in the passage and led off to the big Hall used as a rule only by the Head's permission, and on very special occasions.

The Hall was already crowded, and fellows were still coming in their twos and threes.

Lundy, looking very sulky, and out of temper, was already there, accompanied as usual by Garnet and Bradshaw.

Bradshaw was looking elegant and helpless in light trousers and white spats, he was also looking bored. Why on earth Lundy wanted to keep the captaincy he could not think.

When the room was nearly full, and Peel had decided that all the fellows who really mattered were present, he opened the proceedings.

"Listen!" bellowed Peel. "All you fellows have to do is to vote. I'll ask for hands for Lundy, and then for Mace. After that there will be a fight—"

"Hooray!"

"I've already issued the challenge on behalf of my principal, Mr. Thomas Mace—"

"Hooray!"

Peel realised that he could say no more. His place on the platform was taken suddenly by Lundy. Lundy looked angry, and he thumped on the table for silence.

"Listen!" he shouted. "I've captained you idiots—"

"Boooo!"

It was most decidedly not the way to address one's electors. "We don't want a scholarship cad—"

"Boooo! Sit down!"

"Who tried to give away the match!"

"Boo-oo!"

Several times Lundy opened his mouth, and as many times closed it, before he at last realised that his mission was hopeless. He had planned such a scornful speech, too! A speech that was to be full of gibes at gutter-snipes—and now they wouldn't listen to him!



"Hands up for Lundy!" said Peel. Five hands were shown. The grand show of hands that Tom got a minute later was not needed to show the cad that he had been beaten. "I'm not done, though!" snarled Lundy. "There is still the trial by ordeal."

"Hands up for Lundy!" said Peel.

Five hands were shown. The grand show of hands that Tom got a minute later was not needed to show the cad that he had been beaten.

"I'm not done, though!" snarled Lundy. "There is still the trial by ordeal, as Peel is pleased to call it."

"And I am ready, too," said Tom. His face was flushed with the pleasure of his victory, and he was quite ready and confident.

"Then it's the gym," said Peel. "Come on! Bring a barrow, someone—Lundy'll need it!"

"Rats! Mace'll need it!" said Bradshaw.

All fights took place in the gym, and it was usually occupied by various youths showing one another what they could do on trapeze and bars.

As the crowd of juniors entered everyone stopped and stared. A Sixth-Former was there, and he uttered two short expressive words.

"Get out!"

"But it's a fight!" said Peel. "A fight for the Fourth Form captaincy—Mace against Lundy. Will you referee?"

"I will," said the Sixth-Former—"like a bird!"

"And Bradshaw can time-keep."

So it was agreed upon. The juniors soon formed a ring. They gathered round the combatants in a circle, and there were grins on every face. Now that it had actually come to the point Lundy seemed nervous. There was a look of doubt in his eyes.

At that moment, but for the fear of what would have been said afterwards, Lundy would have cheerfully given up the captaincy.

Tom Mace tucked up his sleeves in businesslike fashion, and Peel was slipping on the gloves for him.

"Time!" said Bradshaw at last.

As he called, the two combatants advanced to the centre of the human ring.

Lundy set his teeth grimly. He realised that his only chance was to go "all out," and chance getting in a heavy knock-out blow. It might be a remote chance, but it was the only way.

So he went forward with swinging fists. His blows never seemed likely to damage Tom; they did not get really near to the scholarship lad.

But Tom was lying low. He was watching Lundy, waiting to find an opening. He, too, wanted to finish the fight quickly. To win on points was not satisfactory, and the sooner he won, therefore, the better it would be.

Left, right, left, on Lundy's head and chest, and the big fellow reeled back. Lundy was shaken somewhat by the stinging punches. They were not like his heavy heaves, but had strength and direction behind them.

Smash! A hook that swept outside a weak left lead from Lundy sent the ex-Form captain down.

"One, two, three—" said Bradshaw slowly.

(Another grand instalment of this fine serial will appear in next week's issue of the "Gem.")

"TOM MERRY'S TEN POUND NOTE!"

(Continued from page 12.)

"I guess that galoot knew there was a footpath through the woods hereabouts," he said, "but he didn't know exactly where to strike it. He got going among the trees, you see, seeking up and down for the footpath, and turning back on his tracks here and there. That's how I figure it out."

"Wight as wain, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with conviction.

"Looks like it," agreed Blake.

"If we had my bulldog Towser here," said Herries regretfully, "it wouldn't take long. Would you fellows like to wait while I cut off and fetch my bulldog?"

There was a chuckle from the fellows.

"You can cut off if you like, old top," grinned Blake. "But wo jolly well sha'n't wait."

"Wathah not!"

"I think we'll rely on Wildrake," said Tom Merry, laughingly. "Cut ahead, Wildrake."

The Canadian junior led the way onward, and the party came out into the footpath at last. By the direction in which the trail joined the footpath, it was easy to see which way the fugitive had proceeded after getting into the path. It was evident that he had gone on towards the Wayland road in the distance.

"I guess we needn't look for tracks any more," said Wildrake quietly. "He would keep to the footpath after striking it, of course."

"We're half an hour behind him; but he had a bag to carry, and he lost a bit of time finding the path," said the Canadian junior. "I guess he's not so very far ahead of us now, and he's still on the path, I calculate. I guess he's walking, with that bag, and not knowing he's followed; but I reckon we're going to run, just as if we were on the cinder-path, you galoots. What?"

"What-ho! Put it on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Wun like anything, deah boys!"

The St. Jim's party broke into a rapid run. Wildrake's reasoning seemed to them without a flaw, and the chances were great that the thief was still tramping ahead of them on that footpath, with his bag in his hand, and the stolen banknote in his pocket.

Wildrake and Tom Merry drew ahead of the rest of the party. Tom Merry was a good runner, but he found that the fleet-footed Canadian junior easily kept pace with him. The rest of the party came on behind, strung out at various distances. The ground seemed to race under the feet of the two leading juniors.

Wildrake uttered a sudden low exclamation, and lifted his hand to point.

"Look!"

"That's the man!" muttered Tom Merry.

The two juniors had entered a long, straight stretch of footpath. Far ahead of them was an opening in the wood, where the path entered on the open Wayland road. But that was still a good quarter of a mile distant when they sighted the fugitive. His back was to them, but they recognised the figure of Texas Bill.

Their footsteps made no sound on the grass as they ran, and the ruffian did not glance back. With a rather heavy bag in his hand he was tramping on towards the high-road.

Once he had reached that road he would have left no tracks that even the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch could have followed. But Mr. William Benson was not destined to reach it uncaptured.

Running hard, Tom Merry and Wildrake drew closer and closer to the unconscious fugitive.

They were within six yards of him when some slight sound warned him, and he cast a suspicious glance over his shoulder.

He started violently at the sight of the two juniors, and broke into a run for a moment or two. But then he stopped,

and swung round, with an evil scowl upon his face. The rest of the St. Jim's party were still out of sight beyond the winding of the path, and the ruffian naturally supposed that he had only to deal with the two he saw, and he did not seem averse from the encounter. He pitched down his bag, and clenched his muscular fists as the two juniors came panting up.

"So you're arter me!" he growled.

"I guess so," said Wildrake, halting. "We're after the banknote, my pippin. Hand it over!"

"Hand over the note you have stolen, and you can go!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

Texas Bill laughed harshly.

"I reckon you'll be sorry you follered me afore I'm done with you!" he said grimly. And, without waiting to be attacked, the ruffian rushed at the two juniors.

They sprang back and separated, the same thought in both their minds—to keep the ruffian delayed till their friends came up. Texas Bill paused for a moment, and then rushed at Wildrake. He received, without heeding, a heavy drive in his evil face, and then Wildrake, in the ruffian's grasp, was swept off his feet.

Tom Merry rushed to his help at once, shouting to his comrades:

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah!" came a yell from the distance.

Tom grasped the ruffian, and dragged him over. The two juniors struggled fiercely; but together they were no match for the muscular ruffian, and it would have gone hard with them had not Arthur Augustus come panting up. The swell of St. Jim's, without stopping to take breath, hurled himself into the fight. There were shouts ringing through the wood now, and Manners and Lowther were the next to arrive, and they piled in without a second's delay. And then Blake and Herries and Digby were on the scene.

Powerful as he was, Texas Bill had no chance against eight sturdy juniors. They fairly swamped him.

He was spreadeagled in the grass, with the St. Jim's juniors swarming over him, and in a few minutes he was howling for mercy.

"Wag him, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus, in great excitement. "Wag the wothah!"

"Yaroo! Leggo! Let up!" spluttered the ruffian. "I give in! Yow-ow! Let a bloke off! Ow! Wow!"

Tom Merry planted a knee on the ruffian's chest.

"Hand over the tenner!" he said.

"Ow! Wow! It's in that there pocket!" gasped Texas Bill.

A moment more, and the ten-pound note was in Tom Merry's hand. Benson sprawled in the grass, gasping for breath, and glaring evilly at the St. Jim's juniors.

"Got it!" said Tom. "It's the note right enough—No. 00000666. Now, what are we going to do with this rotter?"

"Wag him!"

"Kick him out!" said Jack Blake. "Let him get on his hoofs and give him boot-leather!"

"Good! You hear that, you ruffian? Off you go!"

Bill Benson spat out, and staggered to his feet as the juniors yelled him. Eight bodies were ready, and the rascal yelled as he started to run. He clutched up his bag as he passed it, and ran on desperately, and disappeared, still yelling, in the direction of the Wayland road.

And Tom Merry & Co., breathless but triumphant, marched back in triumph to St. Jim's.

The tenner was duly displayed in the Common-room that evening by Tom Merry's chums, and later, a considerable part of it was expended in a noble feed, at which Kit Wildrake was the guest of honour, in acknowledgment of his services in recapturing the tenner. As for Texas Bill, the juniors dismissed him from their minds; but—if they had known it—they were not yet done with Mr. Benson or with Sankey's Circus.

THE END.

(Next week's grand long story deals with the further exploits of the Chums of St. Jim's. Don't miss the thrilling story which is entitled "In the Hour of Peril.")

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