

GREAT NEW SERIAL STARTS INSIDE!

The

GEM

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LIBRARY

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D'ARCY'S SCHEME GOES WRONG!

(Another Thrilling Complete Story of the Great School Battle.)

My Dear Chums—

We are always being told that it is unwise to bank on things, to sell the lion's skin before you have shot the lion, and so on, but there are occasions when it is permissible, and, in fact, only sheer common sense to feel certain. I am inclined to be that way concerning the new serial, "The Valley of Surprise." This is a story of romantic adventure; it contains just that thrill of the unknown which everybody likes to feel now and again. So don't miss it!

Tastes have changed a good deal. Never were more things demanded of a serial writer than now. He must make his story exciting, but he is not asked to desert the fields of probability. It is not more excitement that makes a gripping yarn, but the ordinary everyday interests of flesh and blood. The great fascination comes when a group of characters, whom we are introduced in a story, come upon amazing sights, and experience thrilling adventures. You will find the new serial is a real thriller, and that there is plenty of human nature in it.

We are not yet in a position even dimly to gauge some of the marvellous discoveries to be made in the world. Because ships circle the globe, and there are a few railway tracks from point to point, some folks dare to suggest that exploration has finished its job. The fact is the job has only just begun. Just read the new story and form your own conclusions.

The new School House and New House stories by Mr. Martin Clifford can stand

any test. They are among the raciest and most buoyant we have ever had. By the way, letters have already begun to drop in on me asking about Christmas Numbers. I can promise a bumper, greatly enlarged issue of the "Gem," with the pick of the fiction market inside. The special number will bear the date of December 21st. How time flies!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAN WHO KNEW THE SECRET



Look out for ANSWERS
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ANSWERS TO READERS

VANHORNE (St. Toronto).—Hugh Gibbons is Scrope's study-mate. They belong to Study No. 5. Wildrake's best friend is Clifton Dane. Kit is fifteen years and nine months of age. George Alfred Grundy's study is No. 3. Lumley-Lumley's is No. 1. George Durrance is his only study-mate.

"A TRUE READER" (Queen's Park, Glasgow).—The boys you name weigh between eight and ten stone. There are about forty-five boys in the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School. The Grammarians you name weigh on an average between eight and nine stone. Quite a number of cricket enthusiasts went to see the Test matches.

Mrs. E. C. (Penhill Road, Weston, nr. Bath).—I feel quite proud to possess such an old supporter as yourself. You certainly must know the boys very well by now. No reader can do me a better turn than by passing the paper along to a friend. Please accept my best thanks for your loyal support.

"CARDW AND TALBOT" (Ambreath).—The early adventures of Jack Blake, Figgins, and the rest of the chums of St. Jim's are being recorded by Cousin Ethel in the "St. Jim's News," my chum. You show a very keen discrimination in choosing Cardew and Talbot as your favourite characters.

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BLAKE & Co's CAMPAIGN

A Grand Long School Story of the Chums
of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I. Back Numbers!

"TOM MEWWY!"
"Bother!"
"Look here, Tom Merry!"
"Rats!"

Tom Merry's calmness seemed to have rather an irritating effect upon the visitors to Study No. 10 in the Shell in the School House at St. Jim's.

"Blake & Co. of the Fourth had presented themselves there in a body. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, were all looking very serious and determined. Apparently, it was a serious occasion.

But Tom Merry persisted in being calm and smiling. Manners and Lowther, who were in the study with him, smiled calmly, too. And the more calmly they smiled, the more exasperated Blake & Co. seemed to become.

"We've come here to talk sense!" bawled Blake.

"Why not begin?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Why, you ask—"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy interrupted his excited chum.

"Pwaw, don't wear, Blake!" he said. "It is no use to wear at Tom Merry! Pwawps you had better leave the talkin' to me, as a fellow of tact and judgment!"

"Aes!" snapped Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The fact is—" began Herries.

"We want to put it plain—" said Digby.

Tom Merry raised a hand, gently and calmly.

"Don't all talk at once!" he urged. "Of course, your conversation is valuable and enlightening, and your remarks of a most interesting nature. But take it in turns, and do yourselves justice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I repeat, Blake, that it would be better to leave the talkin' to me!"

"Dry up!" howled Blake.

"Yes. Shut up, Gussy!" said Herries. "Don't butt in!"

"I am not buttin' in, Hewwies!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I am goin' to explain to Tom Mewwy how the matlah stands."

"The fact is—" recommenced Blake.

"Pwaw, give a chap a chance to speak, Blake!"

"Gag him, somebody!" said Blake. "Now, look here, Tom Merry! We've had a jaw in Study No. 6, and we've come to the conclusion that it's not good enough. You're leader of the School House—at least, you say you are!"

"I do!" assented Tom Merry.

"It's up to you to keep up our end against the New House."

"Quite so!"

"Figgins & Co. of the New House have been licking us all along the line," resumed Blake. "They've spoofed us, and japed us, and given us the kyboah! If something isn't done, we may as well throw up the sponge, and admit that the New House is cock-house of St. Jim's."

"That's it!" said Herries.

"And it's up to you, Tom Merry," went on Blake. "We've come to give you fair warning that you've got to get a move on!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"If you don't, you can consider yourself sacked!" said Digby.

"That's how it stands, Tom Merry!"

"Study No. 6 is quite ready and willing to take on Figgins & Co. and knock the New House into a cocked hat!" said

Blake. "You've tried, and you've failed, Merry! In fact, you're no good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If you had the brains of a bunny rabbit," went on Blake, "you'd think of some stunt for shoving those cheeky New House bouncers into their place! But you haven't!"

"The best brains in the School House are in our study!" remarked Arthur Augustus, with a nod.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Then, what must the worst be like?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Now, what have you got to say, Tom Merry?" demanded Blake.

And Jack Blake paused, like Brutus, for a reply.

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"It's a fine afternoon!" he said.

Blake stared at him.

"What are you babbling about?" he demanded.

"The weather."

"Look here!" roared Blake.

"Pwaw, don't wear, Blake!"

"Shut up, D'Arcy! Look here, Tom Merry! We want to know whether you are going to take the lead in knocking the New House off their perch or not?"

"That's it," said Digby. "No cheek, you know! We're not going to stand any cheek from the Shell!"

"Wathah not!"

"If it doesn't rain—" said Tom Merry.

"Rain?"

"Yes. If it doesn't rain, we shall get some footer on Saturday!"

"Who's talking about footer?" shrieked Blake.

"I am!" said Tom, raising his eyebrows a little, with an air of surprise.

"Why, you—you—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"So we must hope that it won't rain," continued Tom Merry. "Judging by the look of the sky, I think it won't!"

Blake gasped.

"You—you cheeky Shell bouncer! Is that all you've got to say?" he exclaimed.

"Not at all! Frinstance, I'm doing lines!" said Tom. "You're interrupting me. Verb sap!"

Jack Blake drew a deep breath. He was simmering with wrath and indignation. There was no doubt—no doubt at all—that the New House had scored recently in the perpetual warfare that waged between the two Houses at St. Jim's. It was, undoubtedly, up to Tom Merry to redress the balance, as it were. Study No. 6 had come along to point out that fact to the School House junior captain, with emphasis. And instead of meekly admitting his shortcomings, and holding out hope of amendment, Tom Merry took this line of calmly ignoring criticism—which seemed to Blake & Co. sheer, unadulterated "neck."

"I've a jolly good mind," said Blake, in measured tones, "to wade in and mop up this study!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go ahead!" said Lowther.

"Peace, my infants—peace!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "You Fourth Form kids run away and play! I'll tell you when there's anything on. Until then, keep quiet and behave yourselves, like good little fags!"

"Why, you—you—" Blake gasped. "Look here! We've given you a chance! You're no good! So far as

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Study No 6 is concerned, you're sacked! Our study is going to take the lead, and give the New House the kybosh! You're back numbers here, and we're done with you!"

"Yaas. I approve of that!"

"Done!" said Herries.

"Do your lines!" said Blake witheringly. "Leave the New House to us. We'll deal with Figgins & Co., and put them in their place. Leave it to Study No. 6. We'll get on with it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just don't butt in, that's all!" said Blake. "Do you understand, Tom Merry? Got anything to say?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, what is it?"

"It's a lovely afternoon!" said Tom affably.

Jack Blake looked, for a moment, as if there would be a serious case of assault and battery in No. 10 in the Shell. But he controlled his feelings with a great effort.

"Come out, you fellows!" he gasped. "No good talking to these silly owls. They're back numbers—quite played out. Come on! We've got to deal with Figgins & Co."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Blake & Co. marched out of Study No. 10, Blake closing the door after him with a terrific slam.

Tom Merry sighed gently, and turned to his imposition again. Manners and Lowther were grinning.

"Poor old Blake!" remarked Lowther. "It's said that a soft answer turneth away wrath; but it doesn't seem to have that effect on Blake. All the same, Tommy, there's something in what those chaps have been saying. You've let the New House get its ears up."

"You have, Tommy," said Manners chidingly. "All the fellows are grouching about it. You'll have to get a move on, you know."

Tom Merry smiled, and strolled out of the study. Manners and Lowther looked after him, and exchanged a glance—that had some exasperation in it. And Tom Merry, unmoved and serene, strolled away to Mr. Linton's study to hand over his lines to the master of the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus Takes Control!

"IT'S up to us!"

Jack Blake of the Fourth made that remark over the tea-table in Study No. 6. And three heads nodded in assent.

"Tom Merry's played out!" continued Blake. "If this study doesn't stand up for the School House, the game is up. We're going to leave Tom Merry on the beach, and take the matter in hand ourselves."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the stunt?" asked Digby.

Blake coughed.

"I haven't thought that out yet," he said. "But we know what we're going to do, anyhow—we've got a free field now. We'll jolly soon think of something!"

"I have thought of something already, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gently.

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Blake disrespectfully. Apparently Blake did not expect suggestions of great value from the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Pass the jam!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus passed the jam.

"I have an idea—" he recommenced.

"Take it out and bury it," suggested Blake. "Don't you worry about ideas, Gussy. They're really not in your line, you know."

"I insist upon explainin' my idea, Blake!" said D'Arcy warmly. "It is weally the catch of the season. I have been givin' it a great deal of thought, and I have worked out a way of givin' Figgins & Co. the wegular kybosh!"

"Well, let's hear it," said Blake. "I don't suppose it's any good, but you won't be happy till you've got it off your chest. Fire away!"

"You know that fellow Kerr of the New House is awfully clevah at makin' up, and disguisin' himself, an' all that—"

"Bother Kerr!"

"But I think there is a chap in this House who can beat him at it, if he weally puts his mind into it," said D'Arcy confidently. "Little me, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You know how I act in the dwamatic society, Blake—"

"I do!" assented Blake. "Like a goat!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"But what's the idea?" asked Herries. "Cut the cackle and come to the hosses, Gussy!"

"That's the idea," said Arthur Augustus. "I have pondahed over it, and worked it all out in my bwain. I am goin' to disguise myself—"

"Disguise yourself!" ejaculated Blake.

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"Yaas; as Mr. Watcliff—"

"Mr. Ratcliff?"

"The Housemaster of the New House, you know."

"My only hat!"

Blake & Co. stared almost dazedly at Arthur Augustus. That noble youth smiled back at them confidently.

"That's the idea!" he said. "I shall select a time when Mr. Watcliff is out of gates, and then I shall calmly walk into the New House, disguised as Mr. Watcliff."

"Oh dear!"

"I shall cane Figgins & Co. all wound—"

"Kik-kik-cane them?"

"Yaas!"

"Do you think they'll let you?" shrieked Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, they'll take me for their Housemaster," explained Arthur Augustus. "That's the idea! I shall cane them all wound, and give them impots, and so on, and, in fact, lead them an awful dance. When they know they have been taken in, they will feel awfully small—what? Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's "Ha, ha, ha!" rang through a silent study. His chums did not join in his hilarity, as he seemed to expect. Blake and Digby and Herries seemed dazed.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake, at last. "You—you—you think you—you could get yourself up as Ratty and take in the New House?"

"I am convinced of it, deah boy!"

"You howling ass!" roared Herries. "Ratcliff is about a foot and a half taller than you are!"

"I refuse to be called an ass, Hewvies!"

"He's got a nose like a knife-blade, and yours is like a little chunk of putty—"

"I regard your observations as bein' in the vewy worst of taste. The question is, are you goin' to back me up?" inquired Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Back you up!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas! I may require assistance."

"You howling ass!" stuttered Blake. "Let me catch you tryin' to rig yourself up as Ratcliff, and I'll bang your silly napper on the study wall."

"I should refuse to have my nappah barged on the study wall, Blake," said Arthur Augustus rigidly. "I regard my idea as a weally wippin' stunt, and I am certainly goin' to cawwy it out. It will be no end of a score over the New House if it comes off all right."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, with an expression of great dignity on his aristocratic features.

"Fathead!" snorted Blake.

"Aftah that dewogativat wearnik, Blake, I shall refuse to allow you to assist me," he said. "It was said a long time ago that a pwophet is without honah in his own country. It seems to be the same with a weally bwainy chap in his own study. I shall seek the aid I require elsewhere."

And Arthur Augustus stalked out of the study with great dignity. Blake & Co. stared at one another, and chuckled. The idea of the elegant swell of the Fourth Form disguising himself as the lanky ungainly Mr. Ratcliff was really too much for them. It was an idea that could only have occurred to the powerful brain of Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus tapped at the door of Study No. 5, and looked in. Julian and Hammond, Reilly and Kerruish of the Fourth, were at tea there. They greeted Gussy cheerily.

"Trot in, old top!" said Julian. "Just in time for the muffins!"

"Thank you vewy much, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I have not come to tea. I weeah some assistance in pullin' Figgins' leg."

"Count on this study," said Julian. "What's the game?"

"I am goin' to disguise myself as Mr. Ratcliff."

Julian & Co. stared at Arthur Augustus. Then there was a yell of merriment in the study, as it dawned upon the juniors that the swell of St. Jim's was in earnest.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Julian & Co.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus withdrew in a dignified way from Study No. 5, and slammed the door. Yells of laughter followed him through the closed door.

"The uttah asses!" murmured Arthur Augustus, annoyed and puzzled. "When Tom Mewy was a stunt for scowin' ovah the New House, the fellows back him up like anythin'. They only seem to cackle when I have a weally wippin' wheeze. Howevah, there are othahs."

Arthur Augustus walked on to Study No. 9, which was tenanted by Levison, Cardew, and Olive, of the Fourth. He found those three youths at home, and they, too, gave him quite welcoming looks.

"Blow in, old bean!" said Cardew. "You've come at the very moment—right in the nick of time!"

"I am glad of that, Cardew. Anythin' up?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes; Levison's urg'in' me to take up footer, and you've

interrupted him," said Cardew. "Stay as long as you can."
"Wats! The fact is, deah boys, I have drowped in to ask you to lend me a hand," said Arthur Augustus. "Our study has decided to give Tom Mewwy the go-by; he is a back numbs, you know. We are goin' to knock the New House into a cocked hat. I have taken the mattsah in hand, and thought out a weally remarkable stunt. I am goin' to disguise myself as Mr. Watcliff—"

"What?"
Levison & Co. uttered that remark in chorus. Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Surprised you, what?" he asked.
"Oh, my hat!" gasped Levison. "Yes, rather!"
"Just a few!" stuttered Clive.
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cardew.

Arthur Augustus jammed his celebrated eyeglass into his eye, and stared at Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Weally, Cardew, I see no occasion whatevah for wibald laughin!" he exclaimed.

Cardew became grave at once.
"My mistake!" he said. "I—I was thinkin' how the New House fellows would—would squirm, you know, when you—"

"Yaas, I wathah think they will," said Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction. "I want some fellow to help me wig myself up, you know; we've got plenty of things in the property-box of the Junior Dramatic Society."

"You—you're really thinking—" stuttered Clive.
"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but you can't—you couldn't—"
"Wubbish! I simply wequiah a little assistance," said Arthur Augustus.

"But—" said Levison.
Cardew jumped up. The dandy of the Fourth had been the very picture of slack laziness when Arthur Augustus came into Study No. 9. Now he was quite alert, as if he had suddenly found a new interest in life.

"I'm your man, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Rely on me! Let's get along to the box-room; the property-box is there, I believe."

"Thank you vewy much, Cardew!"
"Not at all! I'm wholly at your service."
"Look here, Cardew—" began Levison.
"My dear chap, don't argue; I'm goin' to help D'Arcy score over the New House. Come on, D'Arcy!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew slipped his arm through D'Arcy's, and walked him out of the study. Ernest Levison half-rose, but sat down again, and looked at Clive. Clive grinned.

Then both the juniors chuckled.
Headless of Study No. 9, Arthur Augustus proceeded to the box-room with Cardew, and in a few minutes they were busy with the ample contents of the property-box that belonged to the School House Amateur Dramatic Society. There were plenty of things to choose from, and Cardew helped Arthur Augustus in the selection of them, with a keen interest in the stunt that was very gratifying to Gussy. The swell of St. Jim's felt that he was understood and appreciated at last, and his opinion of Cardew rose very considerably.

A fat face looked into the box-room while they were busy. It belonged to Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth.

"If you fellows have come here for a feed—" began Trimble.

Then he stopped. His little, round eyes seemed to bulge out of his fat face, as he looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus was already arrayed in baggy trousers and coat, which were used by the junior dramatic society for schoolmaster "parts." His height was increased by high boots with elevators in them, though certainly that did not raise him to the tallness of Mr. Ratcliff. Cardew was skillfully "making up" his face. A scraggy, greyish beard, which greatly resembled Mr. Ratcliff's, but did not, somehow, make D'Arcy look much like the New House master. But it gave him a most remarkable aspect.

"Wha-a-t—" stuttered Trimble. "Who—what—is that D'Arcy?"

"Keep it dark," said Cardew gravely. "I'm disguising D'Arcy as Mr. Ratcliff, to take in the New House fellows—"

"He, he, he!" Baggy Trimble almost exploded. "He, he, he!"

"Weally, Twimble—" Trimble staggered out of the box-room. He seemed overcome. Arthur Augustus looked anxious for a moment.

"I twust you are makin' me look quite natuval, Cardew," he said.

"More natural than life," said Cardew calmly. "If Ratcliff saw you, he would think you were his twin brother, by the time I've finished."

"Bai Jove! If you are suah of that—" "Oh, quite!"

"Then that's all wight."

"A bit on the nose," said Cardew. "Ratty's got a fair-sized beak; I must enlarge yours a little."

"You don't think it looks like a false nose, Cardew?" Ralph Reckness Cardew coughed.

"My dear chap, leave it to me. I'd better dab a bit of red on it; Ratty's nose is always red."

"Yaas; he suffahs from indigestion. But—"

"Now for some eyebrows—" Arthur Augustus submitted meekly. Cardew worked away industriously, and stood back and surveyed him with great admiration.

"Amazin'!" he ejaculated. "You ought to go on the stage, Gussy. You've never let on that you could make up like this."

"As a mattsah of fact, Cardew, a fellow doesn't want to bwag, you know; but I weally think I am a pretty good actah."

Cardew seemed to be suffering from some internal convulsion for a moment. But he recovered himself at once.

"You—you are!" he gasped. "Well, I don't think we can improve that, Gussy. Shall I cut across to the New House, and see if the coast is clear? Of—of course, you don't want to run into Ratcliff himself."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus waited in the box-room until Cardew returned. He came back with good news.

"Ratcliff's out," he said. "Now you'd better get out the back way, D'Arcy. No good riskin' running into Raiton; he might speak. This way."

Arthur Augustus left the box-room with his valuable assistant. They came on the Terrible Three in the passage. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther jumped, and stared breathlessly at the remarkable figure that passed them.

"Hurry up!" whispered Cardew.

He led Arthur Augustus towards the back stairs. Tom Merry gasped.

"Wha-a-a-t's that game?" he stuttered. "Wha-a-a-t's Gussy got up like that for? Is he playing old clo' man?"

"Some lark of Cardew's, I suppose," chuckled Lowther. "He's putting Gussy's leg!"

In a few minutes Ralph Reckness Cardew came strolling back—alone. The Terrible Three hailed him.

"What have you been doing to Gussy, Cardew?"

"Helping him to make up as Mr. Ratcliff," he answered.

"He's gone over to the New House to take in Figgins & Co."

"Like that?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Like that!" assented Cardew.

The Terrible Three staggered against the passage wall, yelling. Cardew sauntered on to Study No. 9, with a cheery smile on his face. No doubt his conscience approved of the kind assistance he had given Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in carrying out his amazing stunt.



A fat face looked into the box-room. It belonged to Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. His little, round eyes seemed to bulge out of his fat face, as he looked at D'Arcy. Cardew was skillfully "making up" his face. "Wha-a-t—" stuttered Trimble. "Who—what—is that D'Arcy?"

CHAPTER 3.

Gussy Tries it On!

GEORGE FIGGINS, of the Fourth Form, leaned back in his chair and yawned. Fatty Wynn was carefully finishing what remained of eatables on the tea-table in Figgins's study. George Francis Kerr was standing at the window, looking out into the quadrangle. Kerr seemed strangely interested in what he saw from the window. Figgins yawned.

"Time was," said Figgins, "when the School House kept us lively. They used to be able to keep their end up a bit over the way. Now they seem to be quite played out."

"No doubt about that," said Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full. "They're just back numbers—no good at all. They'll have to admit that the New House is cock-house of St. Jim's pretty soon."

"It's so, whether they admit it or not," yawned Figgins. "It's so easy to pull their silly School House legs that it's hardly worth the trouble. What are you blinking at there, Kerr?"

"For goodness' sake, come and look!" gasped Kerr. "I don't know whether I'm dreaming!"

Figgins and David Llewellyn Wynn approached the window, their curiosity aroused. Kerr was staring blankly into the quad. Figgins and Fatty Wynn stared, too, and gasped.

"Why, what—what—" stuttered Figgins.

"Is he potty?" gasped Fatty Wynn.

A strange and awful figure was approaching the New House. At first glance it looked like some old-clothes merchant of about fifty. At the second glance it looked like Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, arrayed in a considerable quantity of the "properties" of the Junior Dramatic Society.

Figgins & Co. gazed down upon him, almost awed.

A false nose, a greyish beard, artificial eyebrows, and make-up did not make Arthur Augustus look much like Horace Ratcliff, though he fondly believed that they did.

"What does it mean?" murmured Kerr. "What on earth has he got himself up like that for? He's got a master's gown on, too. He must be off his rocker!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Figgins, with conviction. "Hallo! He's seen us!"

The disguised junior had caught sight of the three amazed faces up at the study window. He changed his direction a little and came under the window, and made a sign to Figgins & Co.

"Figgins! he's rapped out."

"Eh? What?"

"Come downstairs at once!"

"Eh?"

"Pway do not uttah widiculous ejaculations, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus, pitching his voice high, in imitation of Mr. Ratcliff. "Come downstairs at once! I ordah you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Do you heah me, Figgins?"

"I—I hear you!" gasped Figgins.

"You will come to my study at once, Figgins!"

"Your—your study?"

"Yas—immediatly! I am goin' to cane you!"

"C-c-cane you?" gasped Figgins. "If you think I'm going to let you cane me, you howling ass—"

"Figgins, how dare you address your Housemaster in that disrespectful mannah?"

Figgins almost staggered.

"My Housemaster?" he said faintly.

"Yas! How dare you, Figgins? Come down to my study at once!"

And Arthur Augustus, in the fond belief that Figgins & Co. took him for Mr. Horace Ratcliff, passed into the New House, and walked on to Mr. Ratcliff's study. Figgins & Co. gazed at one another. The amazing truth sank slowly into their bewildered brains.

"The—the—the howling ass has got himself up like that thinking he looks like old Ratty!" gasped Figgins faintly.

"He—he thinks we shall take him for our Housemaster!" babbled Fatty Wynn.

"Oh dear!"

"Let's go down," said Figgins. "This is too rich to miss. Come on, you fellows!"

The New House trio hurried from the study and down the stairs. In the Hall below they caught sight of the weird figure of the disguised Fourth-Former. Monteith of the

Sixth, the head-prefect of the New House, had caught sight of it, too, and hurried up.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Monteith, staring at the disguised junior blankly. He did not for the moment recognise D'Arcy of the Fourth, but he could see that the new arrival was a junior got up in a remarkable way.

"Weally, Monteith—"

"What are you up to?" demanded the astounded New House prefect.

"Pway do not venture to question your Housemaster, Monteith!" said the new Mr. Ratcliff, with dignity.

He walked on, with his nose in the air, leaving James Monteith rooted to the floor.

So dazed was Monteith that he could not speak; he could only stare after the amazing figure as it walked into Mr. Ratcliff's study.

There was a loud chortle from Figgins & Co. as they came down the staircase. Several fellows had gathered round, all staring in the direction of Mr. Ratcliff's study. Mr. Ratcliff at that moment was fortunately absent; Cardew's information had been precise upon that point. The new edition of Ratty had been the Housemaster's study all to himself. Monteith of the Sixth looked round at Figgins & Co.

"Do you kids know anything about this?" he exclaimed.

"Only that old Gussy's off his merry rocker!" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A head adorned with a wig, a false beard, a false nose, and false eyebrows was projected from the doorway of Mr. Ratcliff's study.

"Figgins!"

"Hallo!"

"Come in heah at once, Figgins! I am goin' to cane you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does he mean?" gasped Monteith. "Is he mad?"

"Mad as a hatter! I should think!" chuckled Kerr. "He thinks that we take him for Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"He's disguised, you know—"

"Disguised!" stuttered Monteith.

"Figgins, do you heah me?" shouted the new Mr. Ratcliff.

"Ha, ha! Yes! I'm coming!"

Figgins & Co. walked along to their Housemaster's study. Redfern and Owen, and two or three more fellows, followed on, anxious to behold Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in all his glory.

D'Arcy was standing by Mr. Ratcliff's table, and he had picked up Mr. Ratcliff's cane. He bestowed a severe frown upon Figgins & Co. as they came in.

"How dare you laugh in my presence, you young boundahs—I—I mean, you young wascals? Have you no respect for your Housemaster?"

"Our Housemaster!" sobbed Fatty Wynn. "Oh, crumbs!"

"You howling ass!" roared Figgins. "Do you think you look anything like old Ratty?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the passage.

Monteith of the Sixth pushed his way through the crowd of juniors there. The prefect was trying hard not to laugh. Arthur Augustus' extraordinary "stunt" was really too much for the gravity even of a prefect of the Sixth Form.

"D'Arcy, you young ass—"

"Bai Jove! What do you mean by addressin' me as D'Arcy?" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's faintly. "Do you not know your Housemaster when you see him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You crass young idiot!" said Monteith. "I suppose somebody has been pulling your leg! You ought to be licked for playing this goat like this! But cut off! Mr. Ratcliff is just coming in! If he catches you here you will be sorry for yourself!" said Monteith, and he walked away laughing.

"Oh dear!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "Gussy, you born idiot—"

"You—you—you recognise me, Figgins?" said D'Arcy faintly.

"Ha, ha! Yes! Did you think you looked anything like Ratty?"

"Cardew assured me—and he helped to make me up, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "I—I weally—"

"Cave!" called out Pratt, from the passage. "Here comes Mr. Ratcliff! Hook it!"

Figgins & Co. scampered out of the Housemaster's study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood for a moment longer, full of dismay. He had tried on his amazing stunt, and he had to admit that it had not been a success—not at all.

The return of Mr. Ratcliff, while his substitute was still in the New House, was an added stroke of misfortune.

"Oh dear!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

There was evidently no time to be lost, however. The thought of being caught in that study by Mr. Ratcliff

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is the date of the Special Bumper Number of the "Boys' Herald." This issue will contain heaps of special attractions, including the first of the long complete stories of Frank Sturdy & Co., of H.M.S. Thunderclou, and the opening chapters of the master serial, "The Sportsman—and the Snacker!" Look out for this record-making number of the

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himself made Gussy turn cold all over. He whisked across to the door. But it was too late.

A rather ungainly figure and a cross-looking face was coming along the corridor. Arthur Augustus caught a brief

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glimpse of them and backed into the study. His escape was cut off; he could not venture into the corridor without the practical certainty of meeting Mr. Horace Ratcliff face to face.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he gasped. He gazed round the study wildly for a place of concealment.

There was a screen in one corner, and Arthur Augustus scuttled behind it. He was scarcely out of sight when foot-steps were heard at the doorway. Arthur Augustus squeezed himself into the smallest space possible and tried to still the beating of his heart, as Mr. Ratcliff walked into the study.

CHAPTER 4.

Tom Merry to the Rescue.

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther, of the School House, strolled across the quadrangle with smiling faces. They could not help smiling; but they were rather concerned about the swell of the

Fourth. Blake & Co. were at prep. in Study No. 6, ignorant of Arthur Augustus' desperate adventure; but the Terrible Three had heard it all from Cardew. Cardew did not venture to drop into No. 6 with his information. It was probable that Blake & Co. would have dealt with him severely for his jape on the hapless Gussy.

The Terrible Three came up to the New House, and they spotted Figgins & Co. inside, with a dozen other New House fellows, all chortling. The New House crowd chortled still more at the sight of the School House trio.

"Looking for Gussy?" asked Figgins.

"Yes," said Tom.

"Kick those School House bounders out!" exclaimed Pratt.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Pax!" he said. "We're looking for our prize duffer."

"Pax it is," said Figgins, agreeably. "Fact is, we're rather anxious about your pet lunatic. He's in a terrific scrape. He came over here in what he seems to have thought a disguise."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the New House crowd.

"Cardew pulled his leg," said Tom, laughing. "The howling ass thought he was got up to look like Ratty. Is Ratty out?"

"He's just come in!"

"Where's Gussy, then?" exclaimed Manners.

"In Ratty's study!"

"And Ratty?"

"He's there, too!"

"We're waiting for the thunderstorm to break," explained Kerr. "Ratty came in and went to his study, and that howling ass hadn't cleared off. I don't know why we haven't heard a row yet. Gussy must have got out of sight somehow."

"There's a screen in the study," said Redfern. "I'll bet that Gussy is behind it, and Ratty hasn't seen him yet."

"Poor old Gussy!" gasped Lowther.

"When Ratty unearths him there will be merry trouble," said Figgins. "I'd help him out if I could. But Ratty's there!"

"He's got to be rescued!" said Tom Merry. "Study No. 6 have been getting their ears up; but it's up to their kind uncles in the Shell to see them through. We're going to rescue Gussy. It's pax for the present, Figgy—you don't want Gussy slaughtered by your ferocious house-master?"

"No fear!" said Figgins amicably. "We'll help you if we can."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Kerr heartily. "But how are we going to extract Gussy? Ratty's there, I tell you."

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry candidly. "But we've got to work the oracle somehow. Why, Ratty will simply skin him."

There was a consultation on the spot. House rivalry was forgotten for the moment.

"Better see how the land lies, first," said Kerr. "I've got some lines to take in to Ratty. I'll buzz into the study and see how the matter stands."

The Scottish junior, armed with an imposition, tapped at the door of the House-master's study.

"Come in!" said the crusty voice of Mr. Ratcliff.

Kerr entered the study. Mr. Ratcliff was seated at his writing-table, with a pen in his hand. The screen was on his left, and Kerr's eyes went to it involuntarily. The toe

of a boot showed beyond a corner of the screen. Mr. Ratcliff had not noticed it, not having glanced in that direction. But it did not escape Kerr's keen eyes.

"Well, Kerr?" said Mr. Ratcliff sharply.

"My lines, sir!" said Kerr meekly.

"You may lay them on the table."

"Yes, sir."

Kerr laid his imposition on Mr. Ratcliff's table and left the study. He rejoined the crowd of juniors at the end of the corridor.

"Gussy's there, behind the screen," he said. "I saw a bit of his hoof."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ratty doesn't suspect anything, yet," said Kerr with a grin. "But he's settled down to write. He won't be quitting for some time, I fancy."

"Poor old Gussy! He's a giddy prisoner."

"We can't rush Ratty's study and yank him out," grinned Lowther. "What are we going to do, Tommy? It's up to you, Show Study No. 6 that they can't do without the Shell."

"Yes, rather," said Manners. "Go it, Tommy."

Tom Merry was thinking hard.

"I've got it," said Tom, at last. "The giddy telephone will do the trick. I'll cut off to the School House, and you fellows stand ready to help Gussy out as soon as the coast is clear."

"But how?"

"I can use the telephone in the prefects' room in our House," said Tom. "If not, there's Linton's 'phone—he's out. Lend me your ears, my sons."

Tom Merry explained his scheme rapidly, and Manners and Lowther nodded assent. The captain of the Shell scudded away to the School House, and Manners and Lowther posted themselves in a window-recess as near to Mr. Ratcliff's door as possible. Figgins & Co. hovered near at hand, ready to render any assistance if they could. And Manners and Lowther exchanged a grin as they heard the telephone bell ring in Mr. Ratcliff's study.

Buzzzzzzzz!

Mr. Ratcliff gave a grunt, as the bell rang at his elbow. He laid down his pen and picked up the receiver.

Arthur Augustus peered out from behind the screen and had a brief view of Mr. Ratcliff at the telephone. Then he popped back again, almost holding his breath. Mr. Ratcliff was not six feet away from him, and Gussy was getting cramped in his crouched position behind the screen. The unfortunate japer was wondering how long this was going to last.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Ratcliff into the transmitter. "Hallo! Yes—Mr. Ratcliff speaking. What is it?"

"Mr. Ratcliff?" came a deep, husky voice on the 'phone,



"Bal Jove! Don't dwwag a fellow about, you chaps! I—I say! Oh cwumbs! There was no time to listen to Gussy. Manners and Lowther took an arm each of the swell of St. Jim's and rushed him away down the passage. "Bal Jove, you fellows—" "This way!" panted Lowther.

that did not sound at all like the voice of Tom Merry of the Shell.

"Yes, yes!"
"Have you a man in your employ named Taggles—Ephraim Taggles?"
"Eh? Taggles is the school porter here," said Mr. Ratcliff, puzzled.

"Are you aware that he has been picked up in Rylcombe High Street in a state of intoxication?"

"Bless my soul!"

"If you will come down to the police-station at once, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Certainly not. It is not my business. That is a matter for Dr. Holmes, not for me," snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "You had better ring up Dr. Holmes."

"Perhaps you would mention the matter to Dr. Holmes, then. I am afraid I cannot give the matter any further time."

"But—are you there? Kindly listen to me—pah!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff, as he failed to receive any further answer. His interlocutor had evidently rung off.

Mr. Ratcliff rose angrily to his feet. If the school porter of St. Jim's had been taken to Rylcombe Police Station in a state of intoxication, it was evidently a matter that required seeing to at once. Mr. Ratcliff did not intend to see to it himself; but he could scarcely do less than inform the Head of the circumstances. He whisked out of his study, to cross over to the Head's house.

Manners and Lowther stared from the corridor window as Mr. Ratcliff passed them. The Housemaster disappeared down the corridor; and a minute later they saw him in the quad, whisking away to the Head's house. The coast was clear at last. The two Shell fellows rushed into the New House master's study.

"Gussy!" howled Lowther.

"D'Arcy, you ass!" shouted Manners.

Arthur Augustus emerged from behind the screen. He had taken off his false nose and false beard; but his aspect was striking and remarkable. The Shell fellows could not help grinning as they saw him. But there was no time to lose. Lowther caught him by the arm.

"We've got rid of Ratty for a few minutes. Hook it—quick!"

"Yaas, watah! Oh, deah!"

Arthur Augustus was rushed out of the study breathlessly. Figgins came racing up the corridor.

"Hook it by the back way!" he gasped. "Ratty's coming back!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bai Jove! Don't dwag a fellow about, you chaps! I—I say—"

But there was no time to listen to Gussy. Manners and Lowther took an arm each of the swell of St. Jim's, and rushed him away down the passage.

"Bai Jove, you fellows—"

"This way!" panted Lowther.

The three School House juniors escaped from the New House by a back door. They were only just in time. Mr. Ratcliff, with a scowling brow, came striding back to his study. He had not gone so far as the Head's house, for the simple reason that in the quadrangle he had encountered Taggles himself, evidently not in a state of intoxication, and, still more evidently, not in a cell at Rylcombe Police Station.

Mr. Ratcliff came back to his study in a towering rage, and immediately rang up the police-station to learn that he had not been telephoned to from that quarter at all. And while the New House master fumed over the trick that had been played on him by some person or persons unknown, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reached in safety the shelter of the School House, where he divested himself of the remains of his remarkable disguise, in the midst of a chortling crowd of School House juniors.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Reward!

"I AM goin' to thrash Cardew!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement in Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby glared at him. Study No. 6 knew all that had happened now, and they were simmering with wrath. D'Arcy's wrath was directed against Ralph Reckness Cardew, whose misdirected sense of humour had landed him in such a painful scrape. Blake & Co.'s wrath was directed against Arthur Augustus.

"The uttah wotah was pullin' my leg!" continued Arthur Augustus hotly. "On weddellion, I am suah that my disguise was actually no good, and that Cardew knew it all the time."

"You howling ass!" roared Blake.

"If I'd known what you were up to," howled Herries, "I'd

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have fastened you up with Tower's chain, you potty jabberwock!"

"Of all the frabjous chumps—" said Digby.
"I wufuse to be chawncetwised as a frabjous chump, Digby!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "It was a weally wippin' wheeze—"

"Chump!"
"If you fellows had backed me up, it would have been all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "As it was, that howdid wottah Cardew pulled my leg, and it was a wfoat. I am goin' to thrash Cardew!"

"Isn't it just like Gussy to let the study down like this?" exclaimed Jack Blake, in great exasperation. "We sacked Tom Merry, and took the thing into our own hands; and then Gussy goes and plays the goat—"

"Nothin' of the sort, Blake! I—"

"And those Shell bounders had to get him out of it!" snorted Blake. "Nice for this study!"

"Just like Gussy!" said Dig.

"Oh, just!" said Herries.

"Now both Houses are howling themselves husky over it!" exclaimed Blake. "Isn't it just like Gussy? Didn't we warn him not to have any ideas, and not to act on 'em if he had any? This study has been let down, and Gussy is going to be ragged!"

"Yes, rather."

"A dozen with a fives bat, at least!" said Herries, with a nod.

"Weally, you fellows, if that is your gwatitude to me for takin' the cat against the New House—"

"Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back as his exasperated study-mates rushed at him. Arthur Augustus had to admit that his amazing stunt had been a failure; he did not expect admiration for the way it had turned out. But he expected sympathy. Sympathy, however, was at a discount just then in Study No. 6. Blake & Co. were exasperated; their new campaign had been turned to ridicule, and it was Gussy's fault. And they felt that Gussy ought to answer for his sins.

Herries and Digby collared him, and jerked him across the table. Jack Blake set to work with the fives bat.

"Whack, whack, whack!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, struggling frantically in the grasp of his incensed chums. "You feahful wuffians! Yooop! Mind my twousahs! Oh crumbs!"

"Whack, whack, whack!"

"He, he, he!" Baggy Trimble looked in at the door.

"He, he, he!" Poor old Gussy! Come and look, you fellows!"

"Yaroooh! You wottahs! Oh deah!"

"What's that game?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three looked in. "What are you whacking poor old Gussy for?"

"For letting the study down!" snapped Blake.

"My dear chap, this study would only have come a cropper, anyhow," said Tom soothingly. "Besides, you can always depend on the Shell to pull you through when you come a mucker."

"Certainly," said Monty Lowther. "We keep an eye on you fags, you know. We regard it as a duty to look after you a bit."

Jack Blake had raised the fives bat for another whack. But Arthur Augustus did not receive the whack. The exasperated Blake rushed at the Terrible Three instead.

Tom Merry & Co. fled, laughing, up the passage. Arthur Augustus tore himself loose from Herries and Digby, and rolled off the table.

"You wotten wuffians!" he roared. "I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean, contempt! I wufuse to have anythin' more to do with you!"

And Arthur Augustus stalked out of the study, just escaping another lick from the fives bat, and departed in wrath. He headed for Study No. 9, where he found Levison & Co. at prep. They looked up at him, smiling. Cardew gave him an affable nod.

"Was it a tremendous success?" he asked.

"It was nothin' of the sort, Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "And I have come to the conclusion that you were pullin' my leg when you made me up as Mr. Watcliff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison and Clive.

But Ralph Reckness Cardew looked pained and serious.

"Is that the way you thank a fellow for doin' his best, D'Arcy?" he asked, more in sorrow than in anger.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! If you assuah me that you were doin' your best, Cardew—"

"My very best!" said Cardew gravely. "I'd never taken so much trouble about anythin' before."

"Oh, vewy well! In that case, Cardew, I beg your pardon for havin' doubted you!" said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously.

"Granted!" said Cardew, with a graceful wave of the hand.

And Arthur Augustus retired. Levison and Clive looked at Cardew when the swell of St. Jim's was gone.

"Dash it all, Cardew—" murmured Clive.

"My dear man, I was telling the dear boy the frozen truth," said Cardew, with a yawn.

"The truth?" ejaculated Levison. "You did your best?"

"Certainly. I did my best—to make Gussy look like a Fifth of November guy," said Cardew cheerily. "I think I fairly succeeded. Next time Gussy wants to disguise himself, I wonder if he will come to me?"

But Arthur Augustus was not thinking of any more "stunts." He had had enough of them, and more than enough of Cardew's valuable assistance, even if Cardew had done his best. Arthur Augustus did not return to Study No. 6. The licking with the fives bat rankled. The swell of the School House was on his lofty dignity that evening, and refused to come off it. It was not till the following day that Gussy condescended to speak to Blake & Co. again, and then only because he felt that, in their campaign against the New House, they would be bound to come a "mucker" if deprived of his brainy assistance! Rather than abandon them to their own incompetent devices, Arthur Augustus came round; and once more peace reigned in Study No. 6, and four heads were put together over Blake & Co.'s campaign.

CHAPTER 6.

Trimble Sees it All.

"TRIMBLE, my podgy pippin!"

George Figgins spoke quite politely, and Kerr and Wynn smiled with considerable sweetness. But Baggy Trimble did not seem influenced by the voice of the charmer. He backed away, his round eyes wide open with watchful alarm, eyeing the New House juniors apprehensively.

"No, larks, you know," said Trimble.

"Larks!" said Figgins, with a pained look. "Do we ever lark? Are we anything like larks?"

"Look here, you know—" mumbled Trimble.

Baggy was haunting the window of the school shop that half-holiday, and Figgins & Co. had borne down upon him there. Baggy rather winded now that he had bucked up for once, and gone down to the Slacking and the quad had landed Baggy into the hands of the Philistines.

But the Philistines were on their best behaviour, fortunately for Baggy. They showed no desire whatever to roll the fat School House junior over in the quad. They did not even knock his hat off. They did not jerk out his tie, or even tap him gently on his fat little nose. Instead of doing any of these things, they regarded him with affability.

"Looking at the tuck in the window?" asked Figgins.

"Ye-es. I—I happen to be short of money," said Trimble. "I had a bad remittance from Trimble Hall yesterday, but, like a generous ass, you know, I lent Tom Merry a fiver, and—and so—"

"Exactly," said Figgins graciously. "Well, we're not wealthy fellows like you, Baggy, but we can whack out a packet of toffee with a fellow who's down on his luck."

Trimble's fat face brightened. He stretched out a plump paw for the toffee, and helped himself liberally from Figgins's packet.

"Sit down on this bench, old top," said Figgins.

"No larks, you know," said Trimble suspiciously.

"Honest injun!"

Baggy Trimble sat down and chewed toffee. His little sharp eyes scanned Figgins & Co. as he chewed. He was quite well aware that the cheery Co. of the New House had not neglected footer, and sought his fascinating society, for nothing. They had an axe to grind, and Trimble wondered what it was.

"Blake & Co. getting up to any more stunts against our House?" asked Figgins casually.

Trimble winked.

"That's telling," he answered. "Of course, I'm quite in their confidence. They generally come to me for advice. But I'm not giving anything away."

"Not even if I stand you a ginger-pop?"

Baggy shook his head. As he knew nothing whatever about the plans and plots of Blake & Co., he could not give them away, even for a bribe of ginger-beer. So he nobly refrained.

"Not for untold gold!" he answered loftily.

"Good man!" said Figgins heartily. "But that isn't what I was going to talk about. Is Latham in the School House now, do you know?"

"Do I know?" sniffed Trimble. Baggy prided himself on knowing everything, and a little over. "Yes, I do know. Mr. Latham has gone over to the vicarage this afternoon. He plays chess with the vicar. I heard him speaking to Mr. Ralston about it."

"Then he'll be off the scene for some time!" said Figgins.

"Up to five o'clock," said Trimble. "He's coming back at five to tea. I happened to hear—"

"Exactly! Now, suppose a chap wanted to borrow Latham's old coat," said Figgins—"suppose a chap wanted to borrow his old coat, could you sneak it out of his study?"

"Easy as falling off a form," said Trimble. "But I jolly well ain't going to. I know your game!"

"You do?" ejaculated Figgins.

Trimble gave another fat wink.

"Think I don't remember about Kerr making himself up as Mr. Latham once?" he said. "You borrowed his old gown then. Gussy's stunt has put it into your heads, hasn't it? I've got you!"

Figgins glanced at his comrades.

"Bowled out!" he said sadly. "Who'd have thought that Trimble would tumble like this?"

"Trimble's pretty keen," said Kerr, with a shake of the head.

"Like a razor!" said Fatty Wynn.

Trimble smirked.

"A chap would have to get up very early in the morning to pull the wool over my eyes," he said. "Why, I guessed there was something on, as soon as you asked me whether Latham was out. Then your wanting his old coat," Trimble chuckled. "My dear chaps, you can't take me in!"

"Not much good trying, it seems," said Figgins. "But look here, Trimble, keep it dark."

"I might," said Trimble. "The fact is, those fellows don't treat me with the respect that is my due. Blake kicked me only yesterday, and Tom Merry pulled my ear for listening at his keyhole—I mean, thinking that I was listening at his keyhole when I wasn't, you know. I'd have thrashed him, only—I—I decided to treat him with contempt. I'm quite prepared to become leader of the School House; but they give me the go-by—they won't have it. In the circumstances, I think I should be justified in keeping this dark, to oblige you, Figgins."

Figgins winked at the Co. with the eye that was furthest from Baggy Trimble.

"By the way," said Trimble casually, "could you lend me a bob, Figgins—I mean, eighteenpence?"

"Certainly," said Figgins.

Trimble's fat paw closed on a shilling and a sixpence, and he rose quickly from the bench.

"Thanks, awfully!" he said. "I'll return this when I get my next cheque from my meter. I'll keep your little game dark, of course, and if you like, I'll send the School House and sneak Latham's coat, you can go ahead, and I won't say a word. I'd do it for you myself only I'm rather busy this afternoon."

And Baggy Trimble rolled into the tuckshop. His business that afternoon was concerned with the expenditure of eighteenpence on refreshments liquid and solid.

Figgins & Co. grinned at one another.

"He sees it all—or thinks he does," grinned Kerr.

"I rather think we've landed that fat gudgeon," remarked Figgins. "We haven't kept anything to himself, that's a cert. Now, we know that Mr. Latham has started for the vicarage, because we saw him go out a quarter of an hour ago. We know he's coming back at four, instead of five, as usual, when he goes to the vicarage, because we heard him tell Taggles to send the trap for him just before four. Dear old Baggy doesn't know quite so much as he fancies. The question arises, will those School House duffers be duffy enough to fall into our little trap?"

"More likely than not," said Fatty Wynn. "Kerr did make himself up once as Latham, and took them in. And after Gussy's smashing stunt, they won't be surprised at our trying on something of the kind. They'll think Gussy's stunt put it into our heads, just as Trimble thought."

George Figgins nodded.

"That's my idea," he said. "Well, if it's a failure, there's no harm done; but if it comes off—What do you think they'd do, chappies, if they found Kerr walking into the School House got up as Latham, and knew him?"

"Snatch him bald-headed!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Kerr.

"Exactly!" said Figgins. "Well, they'll have a chance at four o'clock or so. If they make a mistake of identity—"

"H-h-h," he said.

"It's worth trying," yawned Figgins, as he rose from the bench. "It's getting so jolly easy to pull the leg of the School House chaps, that it's really hardly worth our while. But we're going to keep 'em lively till they own up that we're cock-house of St. Jim's."

"What-ho!"

And Figgins & Co. strolled away, smiling, and conversing in low tones. When Baggy Trimble came out of the tuckshop he blinked round, and discerned Figgins and Fatty Wynn strolling by the old elms. George Francis Kerr was not to be seen. Baggy rolled up to the two New House juniors and bestowed a fat wink on them.

"Where's Kerr?" he asked.

"Oh, somewhere," said Figgins vaguely.

Kerr was hard at work at extra "maths" in the study in the New House, as a matter of actual fact; but Figgys was not disposed to tell Baggy Trimble so. Not that Baggy would have believed him if he had. Baggy had his own ideas on that subject.

"Making up what?" grinned Trimble.

"Hem!"

"Did you bag Lathom's old coat?"

"H'm!"

"Oh, you needn't tell me anything," said Trimble, with a fat chuckle. "I know! You can't take me in, you know. Ho, he, he! I say, Figgys, I'm keeping it dark, of course. Can you lend me another bob? I'll settle up the lot out of my next cheque for my paper."

Figgys seemed suddenly afflicted with deafness. He walked away with Fatty Wynn, without answering Trimble's question.

"I say, Figgins!" bawled Trimble.

Figgins was still deaf.

Baggy Trimble gave a grunt, and rolled away in the direction of the football-ground.

CHAPTER 7.

News For Sale.

TOM MERRY!"

"Don't worry!" was the brief reply of the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry was rather busy that afternoon. Football practice was on, and the junior football skipper of St. Jim's had enough to do, without wasting time on Trimble of the Fourth.

"But I say, Merry——"

"Buzz off!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were watching the play, and they had no eyes for Baggy. But Baggy was not to be denied.

"I say, it's rather important, Tom Merry," urged Baggy. "If you fellows want to be done in the eye by Figgins, of course——"

"Bother!" said Tom.

"I suppose you've noticed that Figgins & Co. haven't turned up to footer?" said Trimble.

"By Jove! I'd noticed that!" said Manners, glancing round. "Not like Figgys to cut footer, either. I wonder what he's up to?"

"He, he, he! I know!"

"Oh, you know, do you?" asked Tom Merry, honouring the fat Fourth-Former with a glance at last.

Trimble grinned.

"You bet!" he answered. "Precious few things I don't get on to, sooner or later, if you come to that."

"And you always will, so long as they make keyholes to doors," remarked Manners, with a sniff.

"Rate to you!" said Trimble, independently. "I can tell you that Figgins & Co. are getting up the jape of the term, and I know all about it. I can put you on your guard—as as a loyal School House chap. Figgins asked me to keep it dark. Of course, I said I would, but I was only pulling his leg. I'm going to tip you fellows the wink."

Tom Merry frowned.

"You told Figgins you'd keep something dark?" he asked.

"Yes."

"From us?"

"That's it."

"Well," said Tom Merry curtly, "you're a dishonourable little beast, Trimble. Cut off!"

"But—but I say——" stammered Trimble.

"I dare say it's all rot, too," said Tom. "Anyhow, don't worry now. Get off the grass, Trimble!"

"Why, you silly ass——" shouted Trimble. "I tell you Figgins is going to——"

"Scat!"

The Terrible Three moved a little further off. Manners and Lowther joined the players again, and Tom Merry gave all his attention to the practice. Trimble followed him, and jerked at his sleeve.

"I say, Merry——"

"Buzz off, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Tom impatiently.

"But I say, Figgins is going to spoof you no end," urged Trimble. "I'm going to open your eyes, you know. Kerr is going to——"

"Cheese it!"

"You stand me a decent spread in the study," said Trimble. "I don't want any reward for finding out these things for you; but I think that, in the circumstances, you might stand a chap a spread. What do you think, Merry?"

"Then I'll spin you the whole yarn."

Tom Merry turned on the fat Fourth-Former. Whether there was anything in Trimble's statements or not, Tom did not want to be bothered with the matter just then. Football

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was of more importance in his eyes than House rags. He took Trimble by one fat ear.

"Now buzz off!" he said.

And he twirled the fat junior round and started him off. There was a roar of wrath from Baggy.

"Yah! Rotter! I won't tell you a word now! Yah!"

Tom Merry laughed, and turned his attention to the football again. Baggy Trimble rolled away in great indignation.

Having been bribed by Figgins to keep the matter dark, the worthy Baggy had anticipated being bribed by the Terrible Three to let it out. But his little scheme was not a success—with Tom Merry at all events.

But Baggy Trimble was not beaten yet. He hung about the football ground, watching Blake & Co., and when they came off he joined them. Study No. 6 threw on their coats and mufflers, and started for the School House, and Trimble followed on.

"I say, Blake, going in to tea?"

"Yes, and we don't want any guests," said Blake, who was a very plain speaker at times.

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You have not done any footah to-day, Trimble. Why don't you pile in, deah boy?"

"I've been scouting among the enemy," said Trimble loftily. "I've got on to a New House scheme——"

"Wats?"

"You'll see," said Baggy darkly. "If you're taken in and done for, you can thank yourselves!"

Blake paused and looked at him.

"Do you mean that Figgins & Co. are up to something this afternoon?" he demanded.

"That's it. Didn't you miss them from the footer?" grinned Trimble.

"Why, there's Figgins and Fatty Wynn over yonder!" said Herries, jerking his head towards the elms.

"But not Kerr!" chuckled Trimble.

"Where's Kerr, then?" asked Digby.

"That's telling. I don't mind putting you fellows on your guard," said Trimble. "I've refused to tell Tom Merry. I don't hold with backing up those Shell bounders."

"Bai Jove! That is very wight of you, Trimble!" said Arthur Augustus. "If you have any information about the enemy, bring it to Studay No. 6."

"I expect he's gammoning," said Blake, sceptically.

"But you can come in and tell us, Trimble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was not a very hearty invitation; but Baggy felt that it was better than nothing. He followed Blake & Co. to Study No. 6. Football practice in the keen air had made the chums of the Fourth hungry, and they were going to have an early tea. Trimble hadn't done any footer, but he was quite prepared to help them dispose of the tea.

"Well, what is it?" asked Blake, rather curtly.

"If you're spoofing us, to bag a tea, Trimble, you'll get scalped!" said Herries, warningly.

"Honest Injun!" protested Trimble's.

"Well, we'll give you a chance!" said Blake.

And when tea was ready, Baggy Trimble joined the four chums round the festive board, helping himself to the lion's share, as usual. He did not seem in a hurry to speak. His attention was chiefly devoted to the comestibles; and, indeed, he seemed to have quite forgotten Figgins & Co. and their stunt.

"Go easy on that cake, Trimble!" growled Herries. "If you've got anything to tell us, get it off your chest!"

"Oh, kick him out!" said Herries. "He's only gammoning!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I was just going to tell you," said Trimble hastily, with his large mouth full of cake, "Kerr's making himself up as Mr. Lathom."

"Rats!"

"I got it out of Figgins. He wanted me to borrow Mr. Lathom's old coat for Kerr. They're going to make out that Mr. Lathom's come back early from the vicarage, or something of that sort," said Trimble, with a grin. "It was D'Arcy's silly rot, making himself up as Mr. Ratcliff, that put it into their heads. That's why they cut the footer. Figgys didn't know I should guess, but I tumbled at once, when he asked me questions about Lathom going out, and asked me to meak both his coats."

Blake & Co. exchanged glances.

That information, if true, was valuable. Well they remembered Kerr's marvellous skill at making-up and impersonation. There were few things the clever Scottish junior could not do in that line.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "It would be just like those New House bounders to bag my wippin' ideah like that, and turn it wound on us."

THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

It is not possible for every boy to accompany Sir Ernest Shackleton in the Quest, but you can all read this amazing narrative of adventure.

By REID WHITLEY.

CHAPTER 1.

Thieves of the Night.

"**R**ATHER a change from jolly old Devon—eh, Hobby, old bean?" chuckled Tony Matthers, reining in his mule. "Some of the chaps at St. Jude's would tear their hair if they could only see us—eh?"

"Er—ah—ooch! They wouldn't envy me!" groaned Hobby Tarrant, as he joined him. "This mule's spine has worked through the saddle, and I've been sitting on a blunt ledge for the last two hours! I wish this country hadn't been set up on end. Still, it's very fine!"

His short-sighted eyes, beaming through large, round, horn-rimmed spectacles, switched to and fro over the prospect before them.

"Very fine! Why, you old ass, it's stupendous!" replied Tony. "Those ranges seem to run away for ever, and ever, and I guess no one has ever been into any of the valleys between."

Hobby nodded, then cocked his head on one side as though about to deliver a lecture.

"This portion of the Andes of Ecuador is practically virgin territory," he began. "No one has ever explored it. This trail which we have followed—"

Tony Matthers clutched at his bridle, and forced the mule back from the brink of the plateau. Hobby had unconsciously hampered his heels against the beast's ribs, causing it to start forward.

"This trail'll be the last you'll ever follow if you're not careful, old man!" exclaimed Tony. "Come out of the clouds! You're not in a lecture-hall! You're in the Andes!"

Hobby grinned good-naturedly, quite unmoved by his narrow escape. When Sir Herbert Matthers had invited his nephew, Tony, to spend a few months with him among the mountains, he had told him to bring a friend. So Tony had arrived at the port of Guayaquil with his chum, Oliver Tarrant, usually known as Hobby, in tow.

Probably the pair were close friends because they were so utterly unlike. Tony had been captain of the boats at St. Jude's, and also skippered the Rugby team. He was an adept at all kinds of sports, while Hobby cared for none of these things.

He was at home in a library or a laboratory, and knew more about the "ologies" than all the rest of the school put together. He had brought with him a case containing scalpels, tweezers, killing-bottles, preservatives, a camera and films, and other scientific gear.

This case was a mighty anxiety to him. He travelled in continual fear that it might be lost or damaged. Even as he gazed out across the unknown country which their path skirted, he was uneasy about it.

"Hi, Billy!" he shouted, turning to stare down the trail that wound through scrub up the mountain. "Is my box all right?"

Abruptly a black, shining face popped up

out of the gully close behind him, nodding vigorously. Billy Kettle was a Jamaican negro, Sir Herbert's trusted serrano. He had met the lads at Guayaquil, and brought them so far towards the explorer's camp in the mountains without mishap.

"Orright, Marse Hobby, sah!" he replied. "That thar box is orright! You'se feelin' hungry—eh? Ain't much further. Dat's where we jus' nat'urly camps. Dat yellow fellow, Pedro, says plenty water dere."

He pointed along the plateau which they had gained to where a group of stunted manzanita-trees huddled together in the mouth of a shallow ravine.

"So let's be gettin' along, gente! Dark soon," he added, leading the way towards the spot.

Hobby threw one more anxious glance down the trail, saw the string of mules, accompanied by four half-breed muleteers, close at hand, and followed. Soon the camp was made. The two lads sat down to supper beside a fire, where Billy Kettle presently joined them, carrying the box that held the spare ammunition.

This he set down at a safe distance from the flames, and squatted upon it.

"Dose dere fellows would be mighty well to git off wild dis here," he said, in a whisper. "Dem scallywags, dey are, but de best I could get! Dem mighty wishful to know what sorter truck you got along in dat box o' yours, Marse Hobby. Got it inter dem thick heads yo' got sometin' mighty precious."

"The contents would be of no use to them, Billy," replied Hobby, smiling. "But they are precious to me. How much further is it to Sir Herbert's camp?"

"Three days' march more, Marse Hobby—leastways, dat's how I reckon. But dis here's a new trail to me. Dem fellows, dey say dey know orright. Now, I reckon you oughter turn in. Gettin' late it is."

But before he rolled himself into his blankets Hobby went to where the baggage was piled, to reassure himself that all was well with his precious appliances. He examined the box, made sure that it had not suffered, and returned.

"Good-night, men!" he called, as he passed the four natives huddled over a game of cards beside their fire.

A chorus of grunts answered him, but he would have been surprised if he could have noted the evil smiles that hovered on the dark faces turned momentarily towards him. Thinking no ill, however, he lay down, grumbling a little as Billy Kettle thrust his gun into the blanket-roll beside him.

"I don't need the beastly thing in my sleep!" he remonstrated.

"Mebbe you want it blamed quick one day!" replied Billy. "You jut larn to keep it whar you can lay hands on it. I see going to hit de hay miself. Sleep well!"

A few minutes later the three were snoring. Then the four at the other fire began to

move stealthily. Noiselessly they carried the baggage out of the grove, and there packed it on the mules.

One of them crept to where Billy Kettle lay with his head on the ammunition-box; but, though he seemed to make never a sound, the darky stirred restlessly. One hand moved out from under his blanket. In it was a big Colt.

"Who's dar?" he granted. "Lie still, yellow kisser! Whar for yo' make dem racket?"

His eyes opened for a moment, rested on the two lads sleeping quietly within arm's reach, then closed again, without seeing the half-breed who lay behind him.

But that gentleman would take no more risks. When Billy's breathing grew regular again he slipped away silently, joined his companions, and the four disappeared into the night.

"Hi, Tony—Billy Kettle! Rouse up! Here's a go! Those blighters have bolted! They've bagged my box! Oh, Gemini! Whar the deuce shall I do? My camera! My specimen cases! My microscope!"

Hobby's voice rang through the grove, rising to a passionate howl with the last words. Anxiety had awakened him, though it was not yet dawn, and he had discovered that the camp was empty.

His frenzied yell brought Tony Matthers and Billy wide awake on the instant. Shaking off their blankets, they sprang to their feet, Billy brandishing his big pistol, Tony balancing his rifle ready for a shot.

A few words and a hurried survey of the ground made the situation clear.

"And I haven't even got my dissecting-case!" cried Hobby.

"Oh, blow your stuff!" snapped Tony. "We haven't an ounce of grub left. We don't know the trails. We're jolly well hung up in the air, and we'll be lucky if we don't stay here till we die."

"But I'm dashed peckish!" suddenly realising that, after all, his loss was not the most important. "No grub? But I'm dashed peckish!"

"Hi, Marse Hobby! But us'll have to hold on a bit, I reckon." "Dese here yellow beasts have been gone a long time. Dese here hoof-marks, dey was gone along about six hour pass, I reckon. Guess dere won't be no good chasin' along after 'em. We best push on."

"But what about a guide? You don't know the way, do you?" put in Tony. "Are you sure we're on the right trail? It seems to me that if these fellows had made up their minds to steal our baggage, they would first lead us astray!"

"Yes, I do believe you is right, Marse Tony! I do believe dem low-down yellow faces been takin' us wrong, right along!"

"Then we're lost!" groaned Hobby. "If only I had my box. I had a compass in it." "I'm afraid it wouldn't have been much use," said Tony. "Jee-rosseem! Won't those fellows be sold when they open your



Tony was staring at something which moved very slowly along the edge of the crater lake. "What's that, Billy?" he asked. The negro shaded his eyes, and looked long. "Dat's a man. Injun, I reckon," he said, at length. "I think we had better go down to him," said Tony. "He might guide us or at least put us on the right track!"

precious case and find what they've bagged! But meantime, what are we going to do? Shall we go back or try forward? D'you know the whereabouts of my uncle's camp, Billy?"

Billy rolled his eyes helplessly over the tremendous stretch of landscape. "No, sah! I ain't no trackah, sah. I reckon we've plain lost, same as Marsie Hobby say."

"Then we will go back, and the sooner we start, the better. We'll have to depend on our guns for food. Lucky those hounds didn't manage to sneak the cartridges!"

"Yes, sah!" responded Billy, with a grin. Then his face lengthened woefully. "But dere ain't nothing to shoot up along this way, sah," he added.

It was true. Though game was plentiful enough in the valleys, Tony remembered that they had seen nothing but a condor or two during the last two days' marches up the slopes of the mountain. And one would have to be uncommonly hungry even to think of tackling a meal of such rank flesh.

"That settles it. We'll go down. Open that ammunition-box, Billy. We'll divide it up among us. Roll up your blankets, Hobby! What's the matter?"

For Hobby had dropped on all fours, and was crouching across a patch of level ground with his nose to the earth, like a grotesque pantomime bear.

"Him gone mad!" bawled Billy. "Him going to eat mud!"

Hobby had stopped, and was clawing frantically among the stones when the negro threw himself forward and hauled him to his feet.

"Leggo, you black idiot!" howled Hobby. "It's Xestia Nitida. Very rare! Oh, confound you, he's gone!"

Something rose from among the stones and buzzed away. Hobby, breaking loose from the nigger, ran a few yards in pursuit, then stopped with another howl of rage and disappointment.

"Xestia Nitida!" he repeated, as though it had been a war cry. "One of the rarest beetles in the country, and I almost had him! Oh, you-you-Cherryblossom!"

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"Yeste'day Knitlin'-needle!" exclaimed Billy. "A bug, Marsie Hobby! What for you want bugs? You can't eat dem!"

"It is very rare!" mourned Hobby. "And most likely I'll never have another chance of catching one."

"You wot," if we stay here!" said Tony. "Smart's the word! Spread your blankets. Fold 'em so. Buck up, man! We want to be going before the sun gets hot."

CHAPTER 2. The Lost Trail.

EXCEPT for their blankets, arms, ammunition, and water-bottles, with a kettle and two aluminium cooking-pots, they had nothing to carry, the traitor guides having made a clean sweep of everything else. Within a few minutes they were making their way along the edge of the narrow plateau or shelf towards the spot where they had reached it on the previous evening.

Presently Tony paused. He looked about him. Every object showed up clearly in the cold light of early dawn.

"I think it was somewhere about here," he said.

"No, Marsie Tony. Further along dis way," replied Billy, and strode confidently forward another couple of hundred yards. There he paused, and scratched his head. "Blamed funny!" he growled. "Dese here gullies, they look all same t'other as which."

He came back, searching the ground for signs of hoof tracks, but finding none. The half-breeds had muffled the mules' hoofs in blankets that they might go silently, so they left no tracks. The heavy dew which had fallen in the night had effectually concealed any trail that might have remained.

"Don't seem to see nothing nowhow!" he complained, and scratched his woolly neck.

Tony stood irresolute. In that pathless wilderness they might wander for days before hitting on the track by which they had ascended. A hundred gullies, each almost precisely alike to untrained eyes, ran down the slope towards the dim valley beneath.

"What are we waiting for? Won't any

one of these do?" inquired Hobby. "I'm getting deuced peckish, old man!"

"Any one won't do; that's the trouble," replied Tony. "Don't you remember those thundering great precipices, and the trouble we had to find the way up? What did that scoundrel, Pedro, say, Billy?"

"Him say they had to look about mighty careful, sah, because dere wasn't but de one road," replied Billy, in funeral tones.

"He may have been lying, of course," went on Tony. "But we can't afford to go down and find ourselves stuck. I'll tell you what. You will stay here, Hobby. Billy, you take that gully. I'll take the one along there where the rock sticks out. We'll each travel for an hour, then return and report. You understand?"

"Yussah!" answered Billy, with a flourishing salute, and at once disappeared into the scrub that fringed the gully.

"The night! Whatever happens, don't go wandering off on your own, Hobby," said Tony. "Keep your gun handy, though I don't suppose anything will molest you up here. If I hear a shot I'll hurry back. Ta, ta!"

Then he, too, plunged into the mouth of a narrow ravine, and, slipping over boulders, sliding down banks of loose rubble, made his way towards the valley.

He was careful to mark his path by breaking branches of the scrub every few yards, a wise precaution, since the gully branched frequently, and every branch looked much the same as the others.

Half an hour's hard going brought him to the mouth of a narrow crevice worn by the floods of a thousand springs, and, hoping against hope, he scented his way in, turned a corner, and halted abruptly, leaning back against the rock wall.

The path ended in a tremendous precipice. Lying down, Tony peered over the verge. Perhaps a thousand feet below lay another slope which, after running down for half a mile or so, vanished in yet another chasm.

Far beyond he could see the valley along which they had come three days before, covered in blue haze and still in shadow.

"No road this way!" he muttered, and worming his way back from the edge, began to retrace his steps, half-minded to try one of the branches of the ravine above.

But while he paused at the mouth of the first of these he heard the sound of a shot, faint but clear, ringing down the mountain-side. Another followed.

"Hallo! Hobby's up against something! I hope a gunn ham 'a fallen foot of him," thought Tony, and hurried on as fast as the ground would allow.

As he climbed and swung himself from rock to rock he became more and more confronted with a mountain lion, blinking blandly at the beast, and addressing it by its scientific name.

"And probably forgetting that his gun wasn't loaded for big game!" he thought. Then, with a final effort that left him panting, he achieved the last dozen yards, and hauled himself upon the level ground where he had left his friend.

Hobby had disappeared. At the spot where he had been sitting something white flashed from beneath a rock. Tony bounded to it, and, with a sigh of relief, picked up a leaf from Hobby's pocket-book, scrawled with a few pencilled lines.

"Have wounded Guanaco. Going after it. Very peckish. White cross trail," he read; and laughed with relief.

"Thank goodness he's had the commonsense to leave a trail, anyhow!" he muttered; then turned at sound of falling stones in time to see Billy emerging from the gully down which he had disappeared an hour before.

"No good, Marsie Tony!" wheezed Billy. "Dat dere path stops at de end of the world! Go down straight. I come back. What's Marsie?"

"He has shot a guanaco and has gone after it. Grab his blankets. Come on!" interrupted Tony. And, catching up his own pack, set off along the plateau, guided by a large white cross marked with chalk upon a rock.

Past the gorge where disaster had befallen them the pair hurried, round the shoulder of an outlying spur, and up a gentle incline towards the summit of a long ridge, guided by an occasional white cross.

They were still some little way below the summit when they heard a couple of shots fired in quick succession. Reaching the ridge they paused in astonishment. For another spur ran down towards where they looked at first sight like an immense brownish-grey bowl, half filled with blue water. From one side

of the bowl smoke curled lazily out of a crack in the rocks.

"Old crater-of-a volcano!" panted Tony. "Look! There's Hobby!" He has got his gun. Hurry on!"

Without waiting for an answer from the puffing Billy, Tony ran on along the ridge towards where Hobby pranced against the sky. As he drew nearer, Tony could hear snatches of a sort of song, which Hobby was yelling, in imitation of the Zulus, or some other gang of savages of whom he had read.

"Wow! He came! He sniffed at the boots of the white man. Wow! The white man has lifted his head. Wow! He has lifted his gun. Wow, wow! He has filled up the guano with lead. It is dead—it is dead—it is dead! Wow, wow!"

"Shut up, you silly old tom-cat!" called Tony. "You've been blazing away enough lead to kill an elephant. What have you got?"

Hobby ceased his capers, wiped his face, and pointed proudly to something lying at his feet.

"Llama Guanaco," he said proudly. "This beauty's an interesting animal."

"Yes, yes," broke in Tony impatiently. "I see the beggar. But how in the name of all that's wonderful did you get within range of it? I've heard that they're very wary."

"This one wasn't. After you had gone I closed my eyes to meditate. I was disturbed by something snuffing at my toes. It was this beauty. I picked up my gun and shot him. He began to run off. I shot him again. He hobbled on on two legs and a half, and since I was hungry, and didn't want the poor beggar to suffer, I left a little note for you and hobbled after him. I overtook him here and slew him."

He ground his gun, which he had been swinging round his head, and blinked with great satisfaction.

"Not bad for a beginner—eh, what?" he asked, with a smile.

"First-class, old chap!" replied Tony heartily. "Only next time try to aim a little straighter. It would save cartridges, you know."

"Er—certainly! I will make a note of it," murmured Hobby; and, taking out his notebook, wrote:

"Note.—To save cartridges, aim very straight."

"Now we're going to have breakfast!" shouted Billy, staggering up. "Look down dere, Marse Tony. We'll light a fire. Dere's water."

He pointed to a hollow on the face of the incline, a little way below them. Carrying the guanaco between them, they moved down to it, and soon had steaks sizzling before a blaze.

The meat was dry and tough, but they were all too hungry to be particular. Hobby complained of lack of salt, but this couldn't be remedied. When they had finished they climbed back to the top of the ridge, and scanned the great crater lying before them.

"It's getting very hot. Let's go down and bathe," suggested Hobby.

Tony didn't answer for a minute. He was staring at something which moved very slowly along the edge of the crater lake.

"What's that, Billy?" he asked.

The negro shaded his eyes, and looked long.

"Dat's a man. Injun, I reckon," he said, at length. "Mighty old man, or mebbe him sick."

"Sick or well, I think we had better go down to him," said Tony. "He might guide us or at least put us on the right track. Stir your pegs, Hobby. We have a long tramp before us, about twice as far as you think it is. Catch hold of that leg. Marrrh!"

Bearing the remains of the guanaco, their blankets, and ammunition, they were well laden, and could not make very fast time. The ground was very rough, and they had to proceed with great care at some spots, lest they started a slide of loose earth and rock.

But by dint of plugging steadily onwards they made good progress, and by midday had reached the rim of the crater, and could see its whole extent.

It was very large, perhaps five miles in diameter, and was evidently ancient, since its lower slopes showed patches of vegetation in hollows near the water's edge. Almost directly opposite the place where they had halted, a great cleft split the sloping side of the bowl, nearly to the surface of the lake. Through it they caught a glimpse of a far-beyond vale shimmering in the sunlight.

Nearer them was a crack from which rose plumes of smoke and jets of steam, proving

that volcanic action was still going on underground, even though the main outlet had long been sealed.

But for the moment they were not concerned with these things. They scanned the lake shore for signs of life, and speedily found them in the shape of a small hut or tent of skins stretched over branches, with a big log canoe, moored to a stone, floating in front of it. There was no one in sight, however.

"The chap we saw has gone indoors for a snooze," said Tony.

"A jolly good judge, too!" grumbled Hobby. "Let's do ditto. It's frightfully hot!"

"I've broiled, Marse Tony," chimed in Billy. "Dere's a shade under dat rock."

Tony shook his head.

"No you don't. We'll rest when we're down there, not before. Step lively, and we'll soon be there."

The descent was steep and encumbered by great chunks of weather-worn lava and masses of stone, which lay imbedded like plums in a pudding; but at last they came to the water, and approached the hut.

No sound came from it. Billy Kettle lifted the flap that served as a door and peered in, to start back with a yell of fright.

"Oh! Dat Injun! Him in dere, and him dead!" he screamed.

"Dead!" exclaimed Tony, and made haste to look.

It was too true. The Indian—a very old man—lay on his back beside a cooking-pot, his wrinkled face peaceful, as though he were merely asleep. He had died in the act of preparing his dinner.

"He could hardly crawl when we saw him, poor old chap!" said Tony, drawing back and letting the tent-flap fall. "How d'you think he comes to be alone, Billy?"

"Dem Injuns, dey leave de old folk when dem no good no more. Dis old fellow left that way. No more Injun here. Dey not come back for a while."

"It's a great pity we didn't come a little sooner," said Tony. "If we had he might have been able to tell us where his tribe is, and then we could have got guides. Perhaps they're not far off."

Billy shook his head, and said that Indians usually kept well away from the old people, they left to perish. Then, though he was afraid of dead folks, as are most negroes, he summoned enough courage to help the lady bury the ancient in a hole among the rocks at some distance from his tent.

This done, they examined the place, but found nothing except a supply of fish-hooks and lines.

"We'll take these and the canoe," said Tony. "I think we had best camp here for a day or two. We can catch fish, and dry them in the sun, and make trips over the rim of the crater in different directions. Then when we have found a line we can follow, off we go. What do you say?"

"Dat's de notion, Marse Tony," agreed Billy.

"Your words are the words of wisdom, honoured brother in arms," said Hobby. "Let's set about fishing at once. I begin to feel peckish, and I think a change of diet would suit me."

He hauled in the canoe, and would have deposited his pack and gun on the shore before stepping into her, had not Billy remonstrated.

"You listen, Marse Hobby!" he cried. "You don't never stir nowhere without your gun and traps, see! I have told you so once."

"But we're coming back again!" grumbled Hobby. "What's the sense of lugging all that stuff along?"

"You sure would look mighty sick if you was to come back, and find it not dere," insisted Billy, so, still growling, Hobby piled his baggage along with the others before he got aboard.

Little did he imagine how soon he would have reason to be thankful for the darkey's persistence!

The canoe was a very clumsy craft, but she had two good points. She did not leak, and she was not cranky. They found that they could move about without fear of a capsize, and having baited with some grubs which the Indian seemed to have kept for the purpose, were soon hauling up fish which Billy pronounced good to eat.



Up and up went the little craft until she was balanced on the very crest of the ridge of water. Then, amidst a stunning, deafening uproar, she was hurled itself and its featherweight burden through the cleft in the walls of the crater, and down the long, steeply-tilled bed of a gorge into the Valley of Surprise.

A breeze had sprung up, driving them slowly before it towards the cleft which they had seen from aloft.

"If it had only split a little further, there would be a stream running out of the lake through it," observed Hobby.

"I should imagine there is after every heavy shower," said Tony. "See, the water laps up nearly to the edge of that bar of rock, that serves for a dam. Hallo! What's that?"

Across the water came the echo of a heavy splash. They turned about, seeking the cause.

"Along that way dere, up by the smoke, Mar-se Tony!" Billy said. "Oh, look dere! Dem rock movin' down! Get to de shore, Mar-se Tony, right smart!"

"Que-too-sahm!" yelled Tony. "It's a landslide! The whole of that side of the crater's moving! Paddle, Hobby!"

But they were already too late. With a terrific roar that echoed around the crater like the noise of a thousand guns fired together, a solid mile of steeply-sloping lava and rock had begun to move, faster and faster, down into the central depths far below the surface of the big wavelets.

And as it fell it drove the water before it. A great wave reared itself on high before the drive of millions of tons of rock and earth, and raced across the lake towards the canoe. Up and up went the little craft until she was balanced on the very crest of the ridge of water. Then, amidst a stunning, deafening uproar, the wave hurled itself and its featherweight burden through the cleft in the walls of the crater, and down the long, steeply-tilted bed of a gorge, out towards that utterly unknown tract of country that the travellers had glimpsed from afar.

Blinded and drenched by spray, almost paralysed by the horrible turmoil of sounds, the three could only hang on to the canoe and trust that the luck which had so far been theirs would not forsake them in this supreme emergency.

CHAPTER 3.

Into the Valley of Surprise.

HOW long that nightmare journey continued none of the three could ever afterwards tell. For a while the canoe, riding on the crest of the immense wave, raced down a narrow gorge which had been split through the very heart of the mountain by some far-off, gigantic volcanic convulsion.

Through the mist of spray flying about them they caught glimpses of blue sky far overhead, framed by towering cliffs that looked as though they might fall at any moment.

The roar of the rushing water in that home of echoes was deafening. It seemed to beat the sense out of them, so that they could do nothing but hang on, gasping for breath.

The canoe behaved very well. Hewn from a single huge log, flat-bottomed, with outriggers on either side which made her almost a raft, she could neither capsize nor leak. But the rain of spray had filled her a half mile of water in the first minute; a little more, and she would be waterlogged and beaten down by the swirling torrent.

By some miracle, none of the baggage had got so much as the first impact of the wave, but remained jammed under the thwart. Tony Mather rubbed the water from his eyes, took in the situation at a glance, and grabbed one of the two cooking-pots.

"Bale for your life!" he yelled in Billy Kettle's ear, and set an example.

The negro, his teeth chattering—for the sudden icy douche had chilled him to the marrow, took the other pot, and followed.

Then Hobby, whose drooping eyes were taking, and lent a hand, using his helmet; and though they could not clear the boat, they at least prevented the water from getting on to any one.

The wild pace began to slacken. The gorge had become wider, giving the water room to spread. The noise decreased, the spray ceased to fly, and Tony, looking forward, saw that they were near the end of the pass.

A few moments more and the canoe was sliding down a long, very steep incline, a regular chute, into a wide valley, green, and wet, now as far as eye could reach. Steep, tremendous hills fenced it on either hand, while in the distance ahead towered a line of mountains capped by eternal snow.

On whirled the canoe. They reached the bottom of the chute, and shot out across the level, grassy floor. Beyond them rose a grove of trees. Tony saw the van of the way reach them, surge up the trunks, and over the topmost boughs.

"Hold on for your lives!" he yelled, and saw instantly they were among the branches.

Boughs snapped, one of the outriggers parted company with a crash, the gunwale on the same side was ripped for half the canoe's length, water spouted high above them, and the canopy deserted them! Swinging a little, jerking from side to side, the canoe settled down into the crotch of an immense mahogany-tree, fifty feet from the ground, the surface of which now began to appear above the swiftly-subsiding water.

Billy Kettle's eyes bulged as he realised where they had arrived.

"Loramusy!" he ejaculated. "We're hung up, sah! Like de washin', sah, dat my old mother used to do! Hung up to dry, Mar-se Tony!"

"That won't take long. The sun's hot enough," replied Tony, and, stripping to the buff, spread his clothes to dry, the others following his example.

Then they examined the canoe. The poor old craft which had borne them so staunchly would never float again, even if they had been able to shift her from her strange resting-place. The final bumper which had wedged her among the branches had opened a long crack in her timber, running almost her whole length. But a little more force and she would have been split in halves.

However, she was firmly fixed, her stern in the fork of the tree, her bows supported by a stout bough. Nothing short of a hurricane could dislodge her till she rotted.

"I haven't a notion how we're going to get out of this place," said Tony. "But, at all events, we won't starve. Look, there's a flock of ducks feeding over there in that pool. And there's a little river, which'll give us fish and water."

"I'm peckish," exclaimed Hobby. "Let's feed. Here're the guanoes hausses, a bit wet, but all right. We'll go down, gather some wood, and build a fire. Let's start, for it'll take a while to dry."

"Yes," agreed Tony. "Everything's sudden. Why they stay here, Billy, and place a look-out on the north place where they might expect to find Indians. They might be hostiles."

"Yussah. The kinder place where they'd shuah camp. But it ain't any use lookin' out 'cos dere ain't nothing to see, Mar-se Tony."

This was true for the moment. The huge wave had spread itself across the valley, soaking the soil, and at once the moisture had begun to evaporate under the fierce rays of the sun. A steamy mist had risen,

veiling the landscape so that they could not see more than a stone's-throw from their perch.

"Very well. Come down, too," replied Tony; and, to his astonishment, Billy swung himself down the rough trunk of the tree with amazing agility.

"You did that like a steeplejack," he added, when he and Hobby had descended at a much slower rate.

"Me, Mar-se Tony? Dat's nuffin. I been in a circus when I was a young 'un. You oughter see me on de trapeze and de tight-rope! Ain't nuffin dis chille can't do of all dem tricks. I show you one of dese days. What's dat?"

Out of the mist, from no great distance, came a rumbling snort, the sort of noise that might be made by a horse about ten times the usual horse size.

Hobby raised his gun. Tony gripped his arm.

"Stop!" he whispered. "The beast that makes that racket wouldn't feel your shot. At best it would only annoy him. Hark!"

There was another rumble, the trackle of bushes, and of a heavy body, a stately thud-thud of retreating feet, then silence.

"Dat dere was a big un, Mar-se Tony," whispered Billy. "Reckon we'd be better up de tree. Dem fat stones dere would make de place dere a fire. Reckon I'm going to take dem up."

He proceeded to do so, while Tony and Hobby swiftly gathered all the wood they could lay hands on, tying it in bundles with lengths of a tough creeper which covered the tree stem.

"What could that thing be?" said Hobby, as he paused to wipe his glasses. "The tapir is the biggest native beast in South America. I thought at first it might be a horse, but—"

"No horse could make a row like that, even if it were as big as three elephants," replied Tony. "We have enough wood. Get aloft with this line, and you and Billy can haul the wood up. Hurry! The mist is lifting, and the sun may spot us before long."

By the time the wood was all aloft Tony could see the river clearly, its bank outlined by a line of reeds. Something like a lane cut sheer through the close-growing vegetation. He went towards it, his rifle at the ready, and quickly found that he sought—the track of the mysterious animal that had made the alarming noise.

There in the midst of the wide swathe cut by its great body was a double line of deep indentations, two legs, each as thick as the trunk of a tree, and as long as the trunk of a tree. The ground, softened by the flood, showed the markings perfectly.

"Well I'm jiggered!" muttered Tony. "A two-legged, three-toed beast—or was it a bird? I'm hanged if I know what it can have been, but that sort of hollow looks as though it had a tail which dragged along behind it. A kangaroo might, but there aren't any here. And, anyhow, no kangaroo, or bird, or beast that has two legs and feet and long legs! I'm glad it didn't come on us in the mist!"

And suddenly feeling very lonely, he hurried back to the tree and shinned aloft, aided by the creeper line.

"What is that beast which has three toes, walks on two legs, has a long tail that drags on the ground, and a voice like a croupy foghorn?" he demanded of Hobby, who was diligently blowing the damp wood into a flame. "The tracks of the big bear are as long as that!" He measured their length on his rifle barrel. "You're up in these things. What was it?"

"Hanged if I know!" answered Hobby. "I'm Lemmy. Lemmy have a bit of grub, and I'll think it over."

They set about making a fire upon the flat stones. Though the wood which they had gathered had been well soaked, it soon dried under the rays of the sun, and presently they were feasting slices of guanoes steak over a good blaze.

(Next Wednesday this amazing story of the adventures of Hobby, Tony, and Billy will be continued. The three chums are now in the Valley of Surprise, where the most thrilling and unexpected events occur. No boy must miss this wonderful story which will be related week by week in the pages of the GEM.)



1. C•O•R•E•S	C•A•P•L•I•N
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The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

Latest Football Results.

MATCHES PLAYED LAST SATURDAY.

By HARRY NOBLE. (Special Football Correspondent.)

St. Jim's Win Again—Thrilling Game at Courtfield Gasworks—Bolslover's Bashers Suffer Defeat—Junior Bagshot's Smart Game—Hunter Wins XI. Put to Rest, and Chased Twelve Miles—Shell Second's Flattering Score—Abbotsford Seniors' Brilliant Play.

SENIOR.	RESULTS.
St. Jim's v. St. Jude's	2 1
(At St. Jude's.)	
Highcliffe v. Rylcombe	2 1
(At Highcliffe.)	
Abbotsford v. Redcliffe	3 1
(At Abbotsford.)	
Bagshot v. Rookwood	1 0
(At Bagshot.)	

JUNIOR.	RESULTS.
Bagshot v. Rylcombe	4 3
(At Rylcombe.)	
St. Jim's v. Abbotsford	2 0
(At Abbotsford.)	
St. Jim's v. Redcliffe	3 2
(At Redcliffe.)	
Courtfield v. Greyfriars	4 4
(At Courtfield.)	
Rookwood v. Highcliffe	1 0
(At Highcliffe.)	

INTER-HOUSE MATCHES.

Bolslover's Bashers v. St. Jim's Shell Second. (At St. Jim's) ..	1 8
Greyfriars Middle School v. Rookwood Fifth. (At Rookwood) ..	3 6
Rookwood Shell v. Remove Second Team. (At Greyfriars) ..	4 16
Highcliffe Select v. St. Jim's Fifth ..	6 7
(At Highcliffe.)	

OTHER MATCHES (Unofficial).

Sammy Bunter's XI. Greyfriars Fag Team. (By Courtfield Gasworks) ..	0 64
St. Jim's Third v. Redcliffe Fags. (In a neighbouring Cornfield) ..	3 30
Rookwood Fag Team v. St. Jude's Fags. (In Cosy's Orchard) ..	3 7

NOTES.

BY NOBLE.

The fact that the favourites met St. Jude's on an away ground did not discourage them in the least. After ten minutes' splendid play Darrel scored with a capital shot. St. Jude's tried hard to equalise during the first half but their attacks were repeatedly thwarted off through the combined defence which St. Jim's put up. When half-time had passed St. Jude's scored as the result of some clever attacking. The winning shot for St. Jim's was scored by Rubden, after a two-minute struggle in front of the net.

Highcliffe won their game entirely through the brilliant combination of Langley and Roper, who both scored. Dalesmore of Rylcombe, also scored in the first half, beating the Highcliffe goalie hands down. No goals were scored in the second half and it was obvious that it was only a very stern defence on the part of Highcliffe which saved them from defeat. Langley himself admitted that Rylcombe was the better team.

Abbotsford played in a dashing manner, and, on the whole, deserved their victory over Redcliffe. When Abbotsford were three goals up, Redcliffe adopted the one-back game, and effectively checked their rivals' score. Redcliffe's one goal was scored from a penalty-kick by Salter.

Bulkeley's team went to Bagshot in the highest of spirits, but returned back again with them considerably damp. Bagshot had the advantage of knowing their own ground, and the only goal was scored within ten minutes of long whistle. Both halves were evenly contested, and it was only after many well-planned attempts that Bagshot broke through to victory.

JUNIOR.

Rylcombe seems to be "in the cart" this week. Gordon Gay was more than selfish with the ball, and Monk and Woodson minor gave one the impression that they were playing marbles instead of Soccer. Bagshot left, cheering in such a manner that all the birds flew away from the trees.

St. Jude's fought like a tribe of tigers, and caught Abbotsford unawares. When Abbotsford really woke up the score stood at 2-0, and two-thirds of the time had gone. At last, when Abbotsford managed to rally, and pressed an attack, it was too late. It was a real feather in St. Jude's cap.

This was, of course, the most important match of the whole day. Redcliffe came prepared for trouble, and got it. They put up a plucky fight, and forced matters to the extent of bagging two goals from our invincible Fatty Wyman. But we proved to be the better side, and Levison, with a pass received from Talbot, netted our third. Fane & Co. gave us a royal entertainment, and we shall eagerly look forward to the return match later in the season.

Everybody expected Greyfriars to walk away with this match. But Dick Trumper soon put a stop to that idea. Peter Todd scored first, and this lead of one to nil continued right into the second half. Sensational goals were then netted by Cherry, Vernon-Smith, and Hurree Singh. Trumper held three of the goals to his credit, and Grahame one. Greyfriars stood one last chance of winning, but Cherry, who was shooting, kicked too vigorously, and then came long whistle.

This game, on the whole, was rather dull. Jimmy Silver slammed the leather home within the first two minutes, and from then to the end of the game nothing further happened. Combination was good, but the attacks had no sting. A slight rain made things more than unpleasant for the spectators.

Skimpole In Search of Peace.

HE GETS A SURPRISE.

By HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

THE real reason why I decided to take possession of the old railway-carriage down by the river was that I wanted a quiet place in which to think out my new work on King Henry V. at St. Jim's.

We hear a lot concerning the famous history Mr. Quelch, of Greyfriars, is supposed to be writing, though so far it is all talk. Nobody has seen anything about it, and I, for one, am disposed to think Mr. Quelch is only pretending. It would give him an excuse for being lazy, or something. If you want to do deep things you have got to worry about them, and you must have time to yourself. If I had not got away from Henry's "Skimmey, deah boy!" and from Baggy and his sneaking ways, I could never have fixed my attention on my history, which will show when I get a publisher, how the conqueror of Agincourt was at one time studying at St. Jim's. Don't ask me how I came to know this. I shan't tell.

Well, as I was saying, there was the jolly old railway-carriage standing down there close to the river near the weir. Nobody owned it. I explored one day when I was rambling round with Prof. Cress. Barrowcrumpet's work on Determinism. Inside there was some moth-eaten furniture, and in the larder a hunk of cheese. The cheese was not at all calm. It spoke. I checked it overboard, for I had brought something to eat. It was nice and quiet in the old coach, and I sat down on the step to the smoking half of it, and set to work to carry on with my history. I told you I will make history tear his hair—what there is of it, and that isn't much—when he sees my name all over the world in big gilt letters as the author of a work he would have liked to have written himself. But, between you and me, Ratcliff is no good. He cannot take a grasp of anything larger than a poister. That's where his narrowness comes in.

But, who'd have thought the deserted railway-carriage really did belong to someone, likewise the cheese? That's the worst of our country. There's always some dingy person putting in a claim for things. I had not been working more'n an hour when there was a sort of squishy lurch of the carriage, and I was aloft, while as we—the carriage with me on the step—sheered off, a man with a most displeasing countenance, made worse by a beard which ought not to have been there at all, but I expect he had lost his razor, came leaping down the path. He was shaking his fist at me.

"How dare you run off with my hutch, you young thief!" he roared.

"I am running off with nothing," I said, as I stood up and leaned against the corridor. "You must see for yourself, if you can see anything, that this floating object is acting entirely of its own volition. I have done no more than sit on it."

After this matters became somewhat confused. I shall always feel I owe a debt of gratitude to Cardew, for he luckily came down the set path just as the car moved. A boogian made a dash, and succeeded in getting hold of the footboard. The miserable person hung on, but the water was much deeper than he had thought, and Cardew, thinking the man would be all the better for a wash, came up and shoved him under. But the rough individual managed to clamber on board, and I tell you it was no joke being chased through a Fulham by a damp person whose language left much to be desired. My first copy of Henry V. at St. Jim's suffered in the water, for I had to get back to land, and the old carriage was by that time well on its way. I am looking out for another quiet place in which to complete my great work.

HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

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Brutell's Thrilling Fight.

"LET us take a walk, Mr. Stanley. I am sure you will be interested to see my cattle ranches!"

Mr. Robert Stanton, millionaire ranch-owner, addressed the remark to his friend, who was making a short stay in the west.

Robert Stanton and his daughter Madeline were neighbours of Dr. Brutell, and, in fact, part of their respective ranches adjoined. Although the two men were known to each other they were not at present great friends.

Dr. Brutell, of course, was a busy man, and Robert Stanton knew that he had to spend a great deal of his time studying and making experiments in his laboratory. Consequently, the neighbours did not meet very often. But Mr. Stanton, naturally, knew nothing of the other side of the doctor, and if he had been told that the greatly respected scientist was also the leader of a villainous gang, he would have found it difficult to believe it.

"Brutell the good," as it has already been explained, remembered nothing that he had done in his evil self, and nobody knew that he was the helpless victim of a strange malady, which turned him into a fiend.

Mr. Stanton and his friend started off for their tour of inspection of the ranches, and Madeline met some of her chums and went off for the afternoon. The two men had been walking for some time, noting everything of interest on the way, when they moved in the direction of the tree which contained the hiding-place of the hunted Dr. Brutell.

The doctor was alarmed for a moment when he saw the two figures approaching, but a closer inspection showed him that one of the men was his neighbour, Dr. Stanton, and he was reassured.

Brutell was still under the influence of his evil spell, and as the two men came nearer to the spot where he was hidden, a sudden desire to leap upon them and kill them seized hold of him. He was burning with rage and fury, and he was determined to have his revenge upon somebody.

It made him spiteful when he realised how nearly he had been caught. He welcomed the sight of the two unarmed men beneath him. They would be fit subjects for his violent passion.

Brutell waited for them to get a little nearer, and he was about to carry his plan into execution when his attention was directed elsewhere.

The two men stopped suddenly with their eyes fixed upon something in the distance. The next moment a loud roar sounded over the ranch, and this was followed by the noise of heavy hoofs pounding on the ground.

Mr. Stanton clutched at the arm of his friend.

"Quick! Run!" he gasped. "It's a mad steer!"

The ferocious animal came tearing along in their direction. Its head was down, and it bellowed and snorted defiance as it approached.

Mr. Stanley did not run; he seemed unable to move—held to the spot with horror—and so Robert Stanton also remained.

Dr. Brutell heard the roar of the mad bull, but it held no terrors for him. The noise sounded like music in his ears—it fascinated him.

The fugitive forgot his desire to vent his THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 714.

The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written By Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.

rage upon the two men. In the sound of the bellowing of the bull he heard a challenge to the evil nature in himself.

Dr. Brutell moved, and, as the mad animal came beneath the tree, within a few yards of the spot where Stanton and his friend stood, he let go his hold and dropped clean on the back of the steer.

Grasping the animal's horns, there commenced one of the most desperate duels which have ever taken place between man and beast.

Dr. Brutell was a son of the plains, and before the days when he took up the study of science, he often used to accompany and assist his father, who was a noted rancher. The knowledge he picked up in those days now came to his aid. He had learnt a good deal in the way of handling cattle, and had bull-dogged many a steer in the way shown him by his father's cowboys.

Brutell secured a firm hold of the animal's horns, and instantly closed with the mad brute. The bull struggled fiercely, and strained every ounce of muscle in an effort to break loose. But Brutell held him as in a vice.

The fury of the raging animal seemed to give him more than ordinary strength, but the evil spell which still held sway over the doctor also gave him added power, and he fought like a madman.

Robert Stanton and Mr. Stanley looked on with amazement. They marvelled at the herculean strength which the bull's adversary was putting forth, but they fully expected to see him give way, and be gored or kicked to death at any moment. They shouted warnings to him, but Brutell did not heed them, and he would not release his hold on the steer.

Brutell now tried to manœuvre the bull so that he could get him off his balance, and it would then be a fairly easy matter for him to throw the animal.

Expert cowboys have been known to throw or "bull-dog" a steer in this way in three or four minutes, but an animal in this condition was a far different proposition.

The two strange adversaries continued to sway and struggle, but it was quite apparent that the bull realised that he had met his match.

Mr. Stanton now rushed in in order to render his assistance, but this move was not appreciated by Dr. Brutell, or else he was thinking of the other's safety, for he gave a fierce kick with his right foot, which made the millionaire rancher decide to keep away.

It seemed as though Brutell wanted to keep the unenviable job to himself. Rivers of perspiration were running down his face, but he did not intend to give in. His coat was ripped, and altogether the man looked a pitiful sight. But if he was showing signs of exhaustion there was no slightest doubt, that the bull was showing it to a greater degree.

The animal's nostrils were distended widely, and its sides were heaving like a pair of great bellows. Presently the animal's legs commenced to tremble, and it seemed that the end was near.

The finish, indeed, came with startling suddenness. The now weakened bull lurched and heaved completely over, giving way to the force of Dr. Brutell's powerful arms.

Then the animal painfully stretched himself out, and the doctor knew that his task was finished. Brutell had twisted the bull's neck almost to breaking-point.

The Invitation.

DR. BRUTELL looked at the lifeless form of the man-killing bull, and again there came to him a loud roar of monstrous laughter. The noise sounded so horrible that Mr. Stanton and his companion shuddered.

They looked at one another significantly, and came to the conclusion that the terrible ordeal which their neighbour had passed through must have turned his brain.

A second later, however, and the evil look on the face of Dr. Brutell had completely disappeared. The shock of his struggle with the raging animal had brought him back to his normal nature. The evil spell went as it came—through nervous shock—and now the kindly doctor had no memory of the deeds done by his evil self.

Mr. Stanton went over to Brutell, and congratulated him upon his successful encounter. For a moment the doctor looked puzzled, but Mr. Stanton's words, and the sight of the lifeless animal at his feet, told him that he had been the principal actor in a thrilling drama of some sort.

He withdrew his handkerchief and wiped his perspiring brow. Slowly his memory came back to him, and he recollected how he had been walking in his garden when that unanny feeling which he had experienced on more than one occasion overcame him.

The rest was a perfect blank to him, and for the life of Mr. Brutell could not remember how he came to be where he was standing at that moment. At first he thought he would put a question to Mr. Stanton, but he changed his mind about it. Brutell was standing in modest confusion when he felt the hand of Mr. Stanton upon his shoulder.

"You have undoubtedly saved us from injury," doctor remarked the millionaire rancher. "Indeed, it is possible that Mr. Stanley and I would have lost our lives had it not been for your timely assistance!"

Brutell, who was now quite himself, smiled in reply. He felt that it was the safest kind of answer he could make. It was very puzzling for him to be receiving congratulations for a brave act that he was fully unconscious of performing. Mr. Stanton broke the silence.

"My daughter and I will be delighted if you will honour us with your company at dinner to-night, Dr. Brutell," he said.

The doctor thanked his new-found friend, and intimated that he would be glad to accept the invitation.

"It will be a splendid opportunity for us to become better acquainted," he remarked. "It is very strange, Mr. Stanton, that we have been neighbours for so long, and yet we are only on nodding terms, as it were."

"That is so," the rancher replied, with a laugh. "We must remedy the trouble to-night."

The three men strolled slowly away from the scene of the struggle, and when Dr. Brutell approached the route leading to his house he took his leave, and left them to continue their journey alone.

"A very interesting personality is Dr. Brutell," remarked Mr. Stanton to his friend, when they were alone. "Wonderfully clever man, and I shall spend a thoroughly interesting evening when he comes to my home to-night. Strange thing, though, Stanley, he's nearly always alone. I suppose it's a way with these brilliant men. They seem to be being to prefer their own company best, I expect!"

Mr. Stanton, millionaire ranch owner, was looking forward to the privilege of entertaining the distinguished neighbour who had saved him.

A minute or two before the appointed time Dr. Brutell arrived on the scene. He, too, was looking forward to a pleasant evening.

The doctor had been studying too much of late, and he realised that he needed a change. An evening in the company of such an entertaining gentleman as the wealthy cattle king would do him a world of good.

But when he had dressed as he took his seat in the luxurious study of Mr. Stanton's home, that events of great importance were to take place during the next few hours, and that he was destined to be one of the principal actors in the strange drama that was to be unfolded.

(To be continued.)

(Adapted from incidents in the
Fitzgerald serial "Hidden Danger.")

BLAKE & Co's CAMPAIGN.

(Continued from page 10.)

"Kerr played that trick once before," said Herries. "He's clever enough. But he was caught—I fancy he wouldn't try it again!"

"He might!" said Blake thoughtfully. "Of course, he couldn't take us in. Anyhow, I fancy they'd chuck the idea if Trimble knew."

"Figgis asked me not to tell you," explained Trimble.

"He lent me eighteenpence—"

"Bai Jove! Do you mean that he bribed you, Twimble?"

"Certainly not!" said Baggy Trimble loftily. "I should disdain to be bribed, I hope. Figgins gave me the eighteenpence to keep it dark. But I meant to tell you fellows all the same."

"You young wascal!"

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"I regard you with contempt, Twimble. If you undahtook to keep it secret, you ought to have kept it!"

"What's eighteenpence?" said Trimble contemptuously.

"You're going to lend me five bob, ain't you, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not!"

"I think it's worth something, to be put on your guard like this," said Trimble, in an injured tone. "Besides, I shall square up as soon as I get another cheque from Trimble Hall."

"Chuck it!" granted Herries. "Look here, you chaps, it's easy enough to see whether there's anything in this."

"Yaas, wathah! We can easily see whethah both his coats are gone!"

"I'll do that!" said Blake at once.

Jack Blake left Study No. 6. He returned in a few minutes with a very serious expression on his face.

"Lathom's old rag is gone!" he said. "It's not hanging on the peg where he always keeps it. And I've just seen Skimpole, and he says that he saw Figgins scooting along the passage some time ago. Figgins has been in the School House. So—"

"That makes it pretty clear!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What did I tell you?" grinned Trimble. "Look from this window, you fellows. Don't Figgins and Wynn look as if there was something on?"

Blake & Co. glanced from the study window. Figgins and Fatty Wynn could be seen in the distance, and it could be seen that they were grinning. Still, there was no sign of Kerr; a fact that was suspicious in itself, for the New House terrace were always inseparable.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It weally looks as if we have had a nawwow escape of bein' fairly done, you know. Of course, I should spot Kerr at once if he got himself up as Lathom—"

"Of course, you wouldn't!" granted Herries. "You didn't last time!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Jack Blake's jaw set square and grim.

"We'll jolly well keep on the watch," he said. "If Kerr tries to jape us, got up as Lathom, we'll give him a high old time. He might have taken us in. He's jolly clever at that kind of game. But, forewarned is forearmed."

"Just what I say!" said Trimble. "I think in the circumstances, that if you don't lend me five bob—"

"Dry up, Trimble!"

"Bai Jove! I think that Twimble ought to be kicked for givin' Figgins away, afah pwomisin' to keep it dark," said Arthur Augustus. "He ought not to have pwomised, but, havin' pwomised, he ought to have kept his word. I think we ought to wag Twimble!"

Baggy Trimble jumped up spluttering.

"Here, I say—hold on—I—I—yaroooooh!"

"Bump him!" said Blake.

"I'll jolly well warn Figgins—!" roared Trimble.

"You jolly well won't!" said Blake. "You're jolly well going to be locked in this study for a bit, Trimble, and if you jolly well make a sound above a whisper, we'll jolly well come back and jolly well bump you till you burst. Catch on!"

"Ow-wow!"

"You'd sell your House for a bob," said Blake. "You're not going to have the chance, you fat bounder. Stick there!"

Blake & Co. quitted the study, and Blake locked the door on the outside. Trimble sat and gasped for several minutes before he picked himself up at last. He felt a very much-injured youth, but he found some solace in finishing every scrap of eatables that remained on the study table. Mean-

while, Blake & Co. were keeping a sharp look-out for the pseudo Mr. Lathom—prepared to give Kerr of the Fourth the ragging of his life if he had the temerity to attempt to "spoo!" the School House in that extraordinary manner.

CHAPTER 8.

Simply Awful!

JACK BLAKE wore a serene and satisfied smile as he lounged on the first landing of the School House staircase with his chums, keeping watch and ward.

Matters seemed to be playing into Blake's hands in the most gratifying way. Since Study No. 6 had "sucked" Tom Merry, fortune had not smiled on them in their warfare with the rival House at St. Jim's. Even Blake had to admit that matters hadn't gone better since the "sacking" of the captain of the Shell. But that was going to be changed now. Figgins & Co. were devising a startling "spoo!" that would inevitably have been successful but for Blake & Co.—and perhaps Trimble. But Blake & Co. were the fellows who were taking the matter in hand—and they were going to defeat the New House, quite independently of the Terrible Three of the Shell. Tom Merry & Co. would have to admit that they had been quite in the dark, and that, but for Study No. 6, Figgins & Co. would have scored another success. For it was quite probable that Kerr would succeed where Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had failed. He was quite capable of making himself up to impersonate the little Form master, and had he succeeded, he could certainly have put the School House juniors "through it." Blake & Co. were there to see that he did not succeed. The Terrible Three came in from the footer, and passed the Fourth-Formers on the landing. They glanced at them.

"Hallo! What are you fags hanging about for?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Perhaps we're expecting a raid from the New House," said Blake loftily. "Perhaps we're on the watch while some other fellows are fast asleep."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Are Figgins & Co. up to anything this afternoon?" he asked.

"I noticed they cut the footer!"

"Perhaps they are, and perhaps they aren't!" said Blake mysteriously.

"Well, if they're up to anything, what are they up to?" asked Tom Merry good-humouredly. "Give it a name."

"That's all right, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "We're lookin' into the mattah. You Shell bounders needn't twouble."

"If you Fourth-Form fags are cheeky—!" began Lowther.

"Cave! There's Lathom!" murmured Manners.

"Pax, you Shell bounders!" breathed Blake. "Shut up! Quiet!"

The Terrible Three looked on in astonishment. Blake & Co. were peering over the banisters, into the rather dusky hall, as Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, came in, and whisked along to his study with his jerky steps. Rather to the surprise of the Terrible Three, Figgins and Fatty Wynn came in with the Form-master. But Blake & Co. weren't surprised. They divined that Piggy and Fatty had come in with their disgraced chum, to see him through in case his disguise was penetrated.

"Bai Jove! It looks exactly like Lathom!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"It is Lathom!" said Tom Merry, with a stare.

"That's all you know, dear boy."

"Come on!" muttered Blake.

He hurried down the stairs. Herries and Digby and D'Arcy followed him. The Terrible Three, in great surprise, followed. They simply could not guess what was "on"; but it was clear that there was something in the wind. Mr. Lathom and Figgins and Fatty Wynn had gone into the Form-master's study, and the door was closed.

"Wait till those New House bounders come out!" whispered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Can't make too sure!" remarked Herries.

"What on earth—" began Tom Merry.

"I don't mind telling you—now," said Jack Blake loftily.

"That isn't Mr. Lathom at all."

"Then it's his twin brother," said Monty Lowther.

"It's Kerr of the Fourth, made up," said Blake coolly.

"We happen to have had some information."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled D'Arcy.

"But—" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"He never comes back from the vicarage till five," said Digby. "It's only ten past four now."

"Might have come back early—" said Lowther.

"We happen to know that it's Kerr," said Blake calmly.

"We're going to make absolutely sure, of course. You see, the Fourth Form isn't taken in quite so easily as the Shell."

"But—"

"Here they come!" Mr. Lathom's door opened, and Figgins and Fatty Wynn came out. As soon as the door had closed behind them, Blake & Co. gathered round the two New House juniors. "No larks!" said Figgins. "Lathom's in the study—"

"Is he?" grinned Blake. "Yes; we've just left him," said Figgins innocently. "We came in with him to—to—to—" Figgins seemed to hesitate. "To—to ask him some questions about—about Latin grammar—"

"About deponent verbs," said Fatty Wynn, with a nod.

Blake chuckled. "You're jolly interested in deponent verbs, on a half-holiday—I don't think!" he remarked. "As it happens, Figgins, we're on to the stunt, and we happen to know that it's Kerr, got up to look like Lathom—"

"You—you know?" gasped Figgins, with a dramatic start.

"That—that rotter Trimble—"

"Never mind Trimble; we happen to know. You're going out on your neck, and then we'll deal with Kerr," chuckled Blake. "Collar them!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Figgins. "Let's get Kerr away, and—and we'll go quietly—"

"Ha, ha! You'll go on your neck!" With a rush, Study No. 6 collared Figgins and Fatty Wynn. All their lingering doubts on the subject were resolved now; Figgins' stammering words had practically admitted that it was Kerr in the study, in the guise of Mr. Lathom. Figgins and Fatty Wynn went down the passage with a rush, in the grasp of many hands, and they were hurled forth into the quadrangle. Then Blake & Co. returned to Mr. Lathom's door.

"You 'Shell bounders can keep out of this!" said Blake. "We spotted the game, and we're going to deal with Kerr. Catch on!"

"But—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Blake.

He threw Mr. Lathom's door wide open. The little Form-master was discerned in the study, and he started as the door was flung open, and the four juniors rushed in.

"Really, Blake—Herries—Digby—D'Arcy!" he ejaculated. "What do you mean by rushing into my study in this unmannerly way? I am most surprised!"

"We're going to surprise you some more!" chuckled Blake.

"What—what?"

"Yaas, yithah, you cheeky boundah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The little Form-master blinked at them over his glasses. He seemed almost stounded for speech. If he was not really Mr. Lathom, he was certainly playing his part extremely well.

"Are you boys out of your senses?" he ejaculated. "This—this insolence— Bless my soul!"

"Collar him!" roared Blake.

"Yank his whiskers off!" chortled Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good heavens! What—what—"

There was a startled howl from the little gentleman, as Blake & Co. rushed on him.

In a second, the little man was struggling frantically in the grasp of the four Fourth-Formers.

He came down on the study carpet with a mighty bump. From the passage, Tom Merry & Co. looked on at the scene with startled eyes. Blake & Co. did not heed them. They had collared the spoofer, and they proceeded to rag him.

"Bump him!" roared Blake.

"Help! Help!"

"No good yellin' for help, Kerr, old bean!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "The New House boundahs can't help you heah, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! Jerk his whiskers off!" yelled Digby. Herries took a grip on Mr. Lathom's little grey beard. He gave it a powerful jerk. But it did not come off.

"My hat! He's got it fastened on pretty tight!" gasped Herries.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Give it another tug, Howwies, deah boy!"

Herries gave it another tug. But the beard did not come off. It dawned upon Herries that the reason why it did not come off was because it was growing there; and Herries suddenly let go.

"I—I—I say," he babbled. "It—it's a real beard!"

"Help! Help!"

"It can't be Kerr!" spluttered Herries. "Kerr hasn't a beard—"

"Wats! Let me get a grip on it!"

"Help!" shrieked the struggling Form-master.

Arthur Augustus got a grip on the supposed false beard, and he put his beef into the tug he gave it. There was a fiendish yell from Mr. Lathom. But the beard did not come off.

"Bai Jove!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "It—it—it's weal!"

"Greatest Scott!"

"Stop it, you potty duffers!" shrieked Tom Merry, in the doorway. "It's Mr. Lathom—"

"Oh dear!"

The dreadful truth forced itself at last into the minds of Blake & Co. They released Mr. Lathom as if he had suddenly become red-hot, and backed away, in utter consternation.

Mr. Lathom sat up on the floor.

"Groogh! Oh dear! Bless my soul! Help! The boys are mad! You shall be flogged for this! You shall be expelled from the school! Oh dear!"

"Bai Jove! We've put our foot in this time!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in utter dismay. "Hook it!"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Lathom. "You young rascals! You—your wretched hooligans! You—you—you—Stop!"

But Blake & Co. did not stop. They fled from the study and vanished up the staircase. The awful deed they had done almost froze their blood, and they fled as if for their lives. Mr. Lathom staggered to his feet. He was in a state of extraordinary rage and bewilderment. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther hastily retreated from the scene. They scudded away to Study No. 10 in the Shell.

"They've done it this time!" gasped Tom Merry, as he sank into the armchair. "They—they've fairly done it! Oh dear! Figgins has pulled their silly leg again—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"It's not a laughing matter for Study No. 6!" gasped Tom.

"Why, Lathom will scalp them! They—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners.

And Tom Merry joined in the roar of laughter. He was concerned for the hapless study who had taken the war against the New House into their own hands. But he could not help seeing the humorous side of the affair. Study No. 10 in the Shell rang with merriment.

But in Study No. 6, in the Fourth, there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

Study No. 6 had been through troublous times in the course of an eventful history, but they had seldom, or never, been "up against it" so severely as now. Mr. Lathom, naturally enough, was infuriated, and he carried his amazing tale of wrong and outrage to the Head. The Head sent for Blake & Co. to answer for their sins. And fortunately Figgins & Co., realising rather late the serious results of their "jape" on the School House, manfully turned up in the Head's presence, and confessed their share in the affair—much to Mr. Lathom's and the Head's astonishment. So as it was clear that Blake & Co. had acted under a misapprehension—in Mr. Lathom's opinion—the Fourth Form-master withdrew his demand for flogging and expulsion, and was satisfied with administering a severe caning, which he bestowed also on Figgins & Co.

So when the affair ended, there were seven members of the Fourth Form who had achin' palms—four in the School House and three in the New House. But Figgins & Co. did not mind the licking very much—at least, after the ache had worn off. They had scored once more over the School House, and all the New House chortled over their triumph.

Study No. 6 fairly blushed under the hurricane of chipping they received from the rest of the School House. They could not deny that they had been taken in; that the astute Figgins had "played" them like a fish. They found some slight solace in ragging Baggy Trimble. But that solace was slight; and Study No. 6 had to blush and hide its diminished head. And a day or two later, Blake dropped into Tom Merry's study, and intimated, hesitatingly, that Study No. 6 were prepared to back up the Terrible Three in putting an end to the insufferable swank of the New House. So there was once more union in the School House—which was at least one happy result of Blake & Co.'s Campaign. ♦

THE END.

(There will be another Grand Long Story of the Chums of St. Jim's next week. Make sure you order your copy early!)



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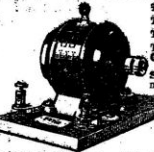
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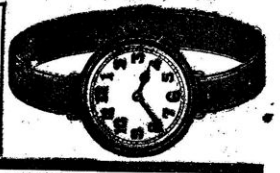
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