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No. 322. Vol. XXIV.
Nov. 10th, 1923.

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(Tom Merry & Co., in the hands of the bullies, are forced to indulge in a painful bout of 'cock-fighting,' until Kildare interrupts the proceedings.)

IN BRIEF.

My Dear Chums,—Our Grand Competition is booming. New readers can start right now, thanks to the complete sets of the puzzle-pictures I am giving. Get all your chums to try their hands at this fascinating competition. You will find all the particulars on another page of this issue.

"PONGO'S TRIUMPH!"

By Martin Clifford.

Another unquestioned masterpiece by the famous author of St. Jim's. The Third-Formers have some thrilling adventures in the ancient vaults. A gang of thieves have their headquarters under the school. There are some amazing happenings in this topping yarn which will hold you spellbound when you open the "Gem" for next Wednesday. Wally D'Arcy's game little mongrel, Pongo, plays a big part.

BETTER THAN EVER!

That is the plain verdict on our school stories. There has been a lot of talk about making a change in the junior captaincy. In a coming yarn, Mr. Martin Clifford takes this matter in hand.

OPINIONS WELCOME!

A Newfoundland reader tells me he regrets the absence of the great detective, Anthony Sharpe, in recent numbers of the "Gem." The fact is, other attractions have crowded out this popular character. But we are sure to hear of him again. I want to hear what my readers think. Send in your suggestions, please.

MORE ABOUT D'ARCY!

One request which has just blown in is for more concerning the always popular Gussy. This is the sort of compliment calculated to make Arthur Augustus take off his shiny top-hat and bow his thanks. But D'Arcy gets a very fair show. Mr. Martin Clifford has not the least intention to put the old true blue on the shelf.

"FILM ACTOR'S LUCK!"

Look out for this grand adventurous yarn next week. It shows River-wise Ned, and his staunch supporters, Tony Parr and Jim Cartwright, carrying on with an enterprise which has vastly different results to what they reasonably anticipated. This is a real live story with a gripping plot. Ned was the right fellow for the dangerous job. He is not swept off his feet by the surprise which awaits him and his comrades, but small wonder if he had been. This fine yarn cuts right between disaster and triumph. You will see next Wednesday what fell to the lot of River-wise Ned.

"THE TRIERS!"

By Jack Crichton.

Everybody admires a trier. You have the finest example of the splendid breed in our great serial of footer, and life in the North amidst the factories. Next week's instalment carries interest to fever heat.

Your Editor.

List of Footballers' Names in connection with our Great Competition on pages 14 and 15.

Ashurst, Anderson, Armstrong, Aitken, Adams, Amos, Alderson, Allen, Armitage, Archibald, Ashmore.

Brett, Broadhead, Blyth, Boreham, Blackburn, Bradford, Bassett, Brittain, Blair, Ball, Barkas, Birrell, Bradley, Barnes, Bulling, Burton, Branstom, Buchan, Blake, Bowser, Bishop, Barras, Braithwaite, Bullock, Bliss, Bateman, Best, Bagge, Barson, Broadhurst, Broad, Bolam, Brelsford, Blenkinsopp, Beedie, Birch, Bellamy, Bainbridge, Bowen, Burnham, Boyle, Blackwell, Bennie, Ballantyre, Buchanan, Bamber, Byers, Banks, Brooks, Blood, Baker, Bird, Bromilow.

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennell, Cameron, Chedzoy, Cook, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crookford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Clunas, Connolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

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Hill, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hutton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higglebotham, Hoddinott, Hedden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hanaford, Harrold, Howie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Huggall, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart, Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin.

Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson.

Kirton, Kelly, Kneeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenlyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Keane.

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CATCHING CUTTS!



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Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. Who is Cutts?

"CUTTS of the Fifth is back!"

"Who's Cutts?"

Tom Merry stared at that question. Blake of the Fourth asked it with an air of seriousness.

"Cutts of the Fifth!" repeated Tom. Blake yawned.

That yawn was intended to imply that he was loftily indifferent to the existence of Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's. To put it in Shakespearean language, Cutts of the Fifth passed by him like the idle wind that he regarded not.

"The Fifth!" said Blake thoughtfully. "Yes, now I remember it, there is a Fifth Form here."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy contributed a chuckle. Digby and Herries grinned.

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry. "I tell you Cutts of the Fifth is back! He didn't turn up for the beginning of the term, but I passed him in the quad to-day."

"Slacking," said Monty Lowther. "He got an extra couple of weeks on the vac with some yarn about being seedy."

"Well, he might have been seedy, considering his manners and customs," said Tom. "You can't smoke as Cutts does without getting seedy sometimes."

"I bet that isn't what he told the Head!" chuckled Manners.

"Well, he's back now!" went on Tom Merry.

"In the Fifth Form team?" asked Blake.

"Eh! He's a forward in their football team," said Tom with a stare. "When he plays at all, which isn't often, he's forward."

"I thought you said he was back."

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

And Herries and Dig dutifully chuckled at Blake's little joke. Study No. 6 seemed in a humorous mood.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, frowned. They were taking the affair of Cutts seriously. Therefore, it was up to the Fourth Form fellows to take it seriously.

"Now, don't be an ass, Blake," said Tom Merry. "Cutts of the Fifth is back at St. Jim's now, and he means trouble."

"Dear me!" said Blake.

"We had trouble with him in the vac, when we met him with his friends on the river," said Tom. "Cutts hasn't forgotten it."

"And he means trouble," said Manners.

Blake smiled genially.

"If you Shell fellows feel nervous about Cutts, that's all right," he said. "We'll look after you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come into Study No. 6 for protection any time you like," said Herries generously. "Rely on us."

"We'll take you under our wing," said Digby.

"You cheeky Fourth Form fags!" roared Manners in wrath.

"Shush!" said Blake chidingly. "I tell you it's all right."

You fellows needn't bother about Cutts of the Fifth. With us to protect you—"

"Yaas, wathah! If Cutts should cut up wusty, I should certainly give him a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a nod.

Tom Merry frowned, and then he smiled. But Manners and Lowther frowned, and did not smile. They were annoyed. Feeling that trouble was coming from Cutts of the Fifth, the Terrible Three were prepared to make common cause with Study No. 6 of the Fourth. They had been together in the holidays, when the "row" had occurred with Cutts and his friends. The lofty attitude of indifference adopted by Jack Blake was, in the opinion of the Shell fellows, sheer swank—and swank was quite out of place in the Fourth Form.

"I don't like cheek, in fags!" said Manners.

"Fags?" repeated Blake.

"Yes. You Fourth Form kids are fags, aren't you?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Hallo, talk of angels!" exclaimed Herries. "Here comes Cutts."

All the juniors looked round.

Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form was strolling along the path in the quad, and seemed to be heading for the group of Lower boys.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther eyed him rather grimly. They were ready for trouble if Cutts of the Fifth meant mischief. Blake winked at his chums, and gave another deep yawn.

Cutts of the Fifth came to a halt.

He stood with his hands in his pockets, surveying Tom Merry & Co. with an extremely unpleasant expression on his hard face.

"So you young rotters have turned up for the new term," he remarked.

"If you are alludin' to me as a wottah, Cutts—" began Arthur Augustus warmly.

"We've turned up, dear man," said Blake. "But it's rather surprising for you to turn up. You're not sacked, then?"

"What!" roared Cutts.

"Sacked!" said Blake cheerily. "You have no end of luck, Cutts. When you didn't turn up for the beginning of term, of course, it looked as if the Head had found you out at last, and given you the push!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cutts set his lips.

"You got rather the better of that row we had in the holidays," he said.

"Naturally," said Blake.

"But the matter doesn't end there," said Cutts.

"You want another licking?" asked Blake.

"Study No. 6 will hand out all you want, old bean," said Digby. "You can scare Shell fellows, perhaps; but the Fourth will give you all you want."

"And a little over," added Herries.

Cutts of the Fifth breathed hard. He looked greatly inclined to rush on the group of juniors and knock them right and

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left. But he restrained that impulse. It would have ended painfully and disastrously for Gerald Cutts.

"Why not chuck it, Cutts?" suggested Tom Merry. "We had a row in the holidays, but the hols are over now. What's the good of raking it up again in term?"

"You're going through it, the lot of you," said Cutts. "You can't cheek and rag the Fifth Form, you young sweeps. I'm goin' to make you sorry for yourselves before I've done with you!"

"So kind of you to tell us," said Blake politely. "So there's going to be trouble?"

"Yes," said Cutts between his teeth.

"Then it may as well begin now!" remarked Blake.

Crash!

Cutts' hat flew off under a sudden and unexpected knock. There was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

The hat rolled at Herries' feet, and Herries promptly "passed." Dig took the pass, and sent the hat spinning in the air towards the elms.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Study No. 6 rushed after the hat. Cutts of the Fifth rushed after Study No. 6. They faded away across the quad.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at one another and grinned and walked away. A little later, as they were going into the School House, Blake & Co. joined them, a little breathless, and with smiling faces.

"That's the way, old tops!" said Blake patronisingly. "Don't you worry about Cutts. We'll keep Cutts in his place."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Leave him to us!" said Herries. "He's a bit above the weight of you Shell chaps. Leave him to us!"

"We'll handle him," said Dig. "You Shell fellows keep out of the way, and you won't get hurt. Study No. 6 will deal with the Cutts bird."

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry.

"Cheeky asses!" said Manners.

"Silly fags!" said Monty Lowther.

And the Terrible Three went into their House frowning. Blake winked at his comrades, and the four juniors chuckled in chorus.

"It's rather funny to pull the legs of those Shell duffers," remarked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They think that Cutts is a dangerous animal. But bless your little hearts, Study No. 6 can handle him!" said Blake.

"What-ho!" said Herries and Dig heartily.

And the Fourth-Formers continued their walk, feeling quite satisfied with themselves and things generally.

CHAPTER 2.

Something Like a Ragging!

SLAM!

"Bai Jove!"

It was quite a surprise.

Blake & Co. had walked into their study, No. 6 in the Fourth, for tea. They naturally supposed that study to be empty, until they entered it. Certainly, nobody but the four owners had any business there.

But it was not vacant. The Fourth-Formers were no sooner in the study than the door slammed. It was slammed by a fellow who had been standing behind it.

That fellow was Cutts of the Fifth.

It was an ambush in Blake & Co.'s own study. The juniors stared round as the door slammed, and Cutts promptly turned the key in the lock.

And then from behind the rather ragged old screen in the corner of the study emerged Prye and Gilmore of the Fifth. From the armchair there arose the rather elegant form of St. Leger of the Fifth.

There were four Fifth-Formers in the study—four hefty seniors, against whom the juniors had no chance whatever in a combat—and the door was locked, and Cutts was standing with his back to it.

Blake & Co. drew together quickly. From the door Gerald Cutts surveyed them with a disagreeable grin.

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"Welcome home, little boys!" he said sarcastically.

"What are you doing in our study?" demanded Blake.

"Waiting for you, naturally."

"Look here—"

"Fairly bagged," said Gilmore. "Do you remember, in the vac, Blake, that you turned a soda syphon on my neck?"

"Jolly glad I did!" said Blake.

"Collar the young cads!" said Cutts of the Fifth.

"Bai Jove! Shouldah to shouldah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake was not looking loftily indifferent now. For the entertainment of pulling off from Merry's leg he had affected to regard Cutts of the Fifth with supreme disdain. But supreme disdain could hardly be felt for Cutts now that he was at Cutts' mercy. It was clear that Study No. 6 were booked for a tremendous ragging.

The four big seniors closed in on the juniors.

Blake & Co. had simply no chance. But they were sturdy fellows, and they had heaps of pluck.

They put up a stout fight.

Blake got in with his left on Cutts' nose before he was whirled over and bumped on the floor.

Then Cutts' knee was on him and he was pinned down.

Herries and Digby and D'Arcy struggled hard. But St. Leger, Prye, and Gilmore handled them with ease.

The floor of Study No. 6 was strewn with its breathless owners, with the Fifth-Formers grinning down at them.

"Rescue, Fourth!" roared Blake.

The noise of the struggle had been heard—two or three chairs had crashed over, and a jam-jar had shattered in the fender, and a picture from the wall lay in fragments. And Blake's yell for succour rang almost the length of the Fourth-Form passage.

There were hurried footsteps and voices outside Study No. 6. A good many of the Fourth were out of doors, but there were some fellows in the studies, and they gathered outside Study No. 6. Dick Julian rapped on the door and called:

"What's the row?"

"Rescue!"

"Fifth Form cads!" roared Herries. "Rescue!"

"The door's locked!" called back Julian. "Unlock it, can't you?"

"Unlock it, dear boy!" grinned Cutts.

"I guess we can't burst in that door," said the voice of Wildrake outside. "We'll give the galoots jip when they come out!"

"Wescue!" howled Arthur Augustus.

But there was no rescue for Blake & Co. Outside the door a crowd of juniors buzzed and shouted through the keyhole. But a strong door of oak, locked, stood between the hapless four and rescue, and they were at the mercy of the Fifth Form ragers.

And Cutts & Co. proceeded to "rag" with emphasis.

In that encounter on the riverside, in the holidays, Cutts & Co. had asked for trouble, and had got it. They had had a ragging they were not likely to forget. Now they proceeded to hand back the ragging, as it were, with compound interest.

Blake & Co. resisted all they could.

But though they gave some trouble, Cutts & Co. had it all their own way.

The study cupboard was turned out, and in the study cupboard were the good things for tea. The things were not much good after the Fifth Form ragers had done with them. Butter and jam were plastered on the juniors, jam-tarts squeezed down their necks. Ashes and cinders from the grate were added. Blake & Co. gasped and gurgled under the horrid infliction, especially Arthur Augustus. Arthur Augustus was in such a state as he had never before experienced in all his nutty career. His feelings were of utter anguish.

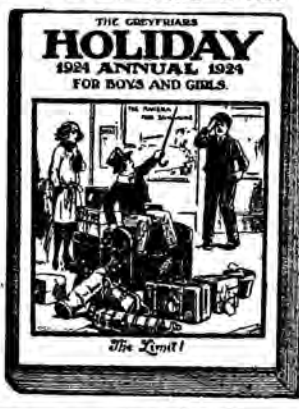
Everything in the study was turned out or turned over. Study raggings were not uncommon at St. Jim's, but there had seldom or never been such a study ragging as this.

A box of beautiful neckties, belonging to Arthur Augustus, came to light. Cutts seized on them with a chuckle, and used

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Blake & Co. were helpless in the hands of Cutts & Co. Sprawling face downwards on the floor, with their hands tied to the leg of the study table, the four juniors went "through" it. The study cupboard having been exhausted of its contents Cutts found a bottle of ink, which was poured over the quartette. (See this page.)

them to tie the hands of the four juniors. He tied them to the leg of the study table, and after that they were helpless to resist.

Sprawling face down on the floor, with their hands tied to the leg of the table, the four juniors went "through" it. The study cupboard having been exhausted, Cutts found a bottle of ink, which was poured impartially over the quartette. Then he sorted out a fives bat, and began to lay it on.

Wild yells arose from the helpless four, while Cutts and Prye and Gilmore roared with laughter. St. Leger frowned. "That will do, Cutts," he said.

"Not at all, dear man," said Cutts genially. "Very far from it. They're goin' to have it hard."

"Let them alone!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Cutts—"

"Oh, cheese it, St. Leger!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, my hat! Help!"

"Yawwoop! Wescue!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Outside the study there was a roar of excitement. Most of the Fourth fellows were enraged at the Fifth Form raid, and would gladly have come to the rescue. Mellish and Baggy Trimble were laughing, but the rest were serious and warlike. But there was nothing to be done. They could not get into the study, and they could do nothing but rage outside, and listen to the loud, resounding whacks, and the terrific yells of the unhappy four.

"It's too thick!" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth. "We've got to stop them somehow!"

"How, dear man?" asked Cardew.

But Levison could not answer that question.

"We'll collar those Fifth Form cads as they come out, anyhow, and put them through it," exclaimed Clive.

"Yes, rather!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came in anguished tones from Study No. 6.

"Look here, I'm not standin' this, Cutts!" said St. Leger, at last. "Leave the kids alone. Raggin' them for their cheek is all very well, but you're goin' too far!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Rot!" said Cutts.

"Well, I'm goin'!" said St. Leger.

He crossed to the door, and put his hand on the key.

"Leave that door alone!" roared Cutts. "Do you want to let in that mob of fags?"

"I'm goin'!"

St. Leger unlocked the door. The ragging of Blake & Co. ceased suddenly. Once the door was open, Cutts & Co. had too many enemies to deal with.

"Better cut!" said Gilmore hastily. "Now, then, all together, shoulder to shoulder, or we sha'n't get through that mob!"

"Come on!" said St. Leger.

He threw the door wide open, and the four Fifth-Formers, in a body, made a sudden rush to escape.

Levison and Clive, who were nearest the door, were knocked over by the sudden rush. Cardew went spinning, and Wildrake was hurled against the opposite wall.

The four powerful seniors fairly drove a way through the shouting crowd of juniors, and escaped along the passage.

"Ow! After them!" gasped Julian.

Levison sprang up.

"After the cads!" he roared.

There was a rush in pursuit. But Cutts & Co. had not lost

a moment, and they were already in the Fifth Form passage. The mob of juniors swept into the senior quarters after them, and almost rushed into Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth.

"Hallo! Get out of this!" exclaimed Lefevre, in angry astonishment.

"We're after Cutts!"

"Get out!" roared the Fifth Form captain.

And the juniors got out. Cutts & Co. were safe in their own quarters, and the juniors had to leave them there. They returned to Study No. 6—in a buzzing, indignant crowd.

CHAPTER 3.

No Help Required!

"SOMETHING'S up!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Sounds like it!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Rorty fags, I suppose!" said Manners, with the lofty dignity of a Middle School fellow.

The Terrible Three had changed after football practice, and were coming in rather late to tea. As they came upstairs they heard the sounds of wrath and strife in the Fourth Form quarters. So instead of heading for their own study—No. 10 in the Shell—they gave the Fourth Form passage a look-in.

Levison, Julian, and a crowd more of the Fourth, were just disappearing in pursuit of Cutts & Co., and for the moment the passage was deserted, save by Baggy Trimble. Baggy was in a state of great merriment, almost weeping with laughter.

"What's this game?" asked Tom Merry, greeting the fat Fourth-Former with a smack on the shoulder.

"Ow!" howled Trimble.

"What's up?" demanded Manners.

"They've ragged Study No. 6!" chortled Trimble. "He, he, he! Cutts and his Fifth Form gang, you know! Fairly wrecked the place!"

"A Fifth Form raid!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That's it! He, he, he! Stuck-up lot in that study! Serve 'em right!" said Trimble. "He, he, he! Ow! Wow!"

Monty Lowther up-ended Trimble, who sat down with a bump. Then the Terrible Three looked into Study No. 6.

They simply stared at the amazing scene that met their astonished gaze.

Four juniors, unrecognisable under layers of jam and butter and ashes and cinders, sprawled on the floor, with their hands tied to the legs of the table.

Only an hour before Blake had loftily declared that Cutts & Co. were nothing, or less than nothing, in the estimation of Study No. 6. He had exasperated the Shell fellows by his assumption of lofty indifference on the subject. Evidently Study No. 6, since then, had been given reason to revise their estimate of Cutts. Blake turned a jammy, inky, cindery face to the three astonished juniors in the doorway.

"Help us out of this!" he gasped feebly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Is that you, Blake?"

"Don't you know it's me, fathead?"

"Well, I don't think your own pater would recognise you in that state," said Tom. "You've changed. Who did this?"

"Cutts, of course!"

"Who's Cutts?" asked Monty Lowther sweetly.

That was the question Blake had asked the Shell fellows in a moment of "swank." Now Monty Lowther asked it, in his turn.

"Eh? Cutts of the Fifth, of course!" spluttered Blake.

"The Fifth!" said Lowther. "Ah! Now I come to think of it, I remember there is a Fifth Form here!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Look here, you Shell rotter—"

"Don't rub it in now, Monty!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Let's help the poor kids out!"

"Who are you calling kids?" gasped Blake.

"Whom, dear boy—whom!" said Lowther gently. "Don't mix your cases, even if you mix your jam and ink—"

"You silly owl!" roared Blake.

"Weally, you fellows—"

The Terrible Three cut the Fourth-Formers loose. They sat up on the floor, and gasped and groaned. Blake & Co. prided themselves upon being a tough study; it was not easy to knock them out. But they were knocked out now. They were too utterly spent to do anything but sit on the carpet and gasp and groan. And the Terrible Three heroically did their very best not to smile.

There was a rush of footsteps in the passage as the mob of Fourth-Formers came back from their vain pursuit of Cutts & Co. Levison and Clive and Cardew looked in.

"My hat! What a wreck!" ejaculated Levison.

"Ow, ow! Wow!"

"By gad, the jolly old study looks as if a tornado had struck it!" remarked Cardew.

"Oh deah!"

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"He, he, he!" came from Trimble. "Those chaps look as if they want a wash, don't they? He, he, he!"

Blake panted.

"Can't some of you kick that fat brute?" he howled.

"Certainly!" said Sidney Clive.

"Yarooooooh!"

Baggy Trimble fled, with the South African junior's boot to help him. Blake & Co. staggered at last to their feet. They looked at one another, almost in horror. The state they were in was really indescribable. Gerald Cutts had done his work not wisely but too well.

A crowd of the Fourth stared in at them. They were sympathetic, but some faces wore smiles. The state of Study No. 6 and of its occupants had a comic side—for the onlookers.

Blake glared at the crowd.

"Never seen a study ragged before?" he hooted. "What are you all sticking your silly faces in here for?"

"Take them away and bury them!" growled Herries.

"Sure, it's hard lines!" said Mulvaney minor. "I wouldn't let the Fifth, or the Sixth, either, rag my study like this. Whooooop!" Mulvaney finished with a yell, as Blake hurled a cushion.

"They're gettin' waxy, by gad!" said Cardew, with a grin. "I'll look in later to sympathise, dear men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd of juniors melted away. Blake & Co. glared after them. Sympathy was all very well in its way; but Study No. 6 was not a study to be sympathised with.

"It's too bad, you fellows!" said Tom Merry. "But we'll make Cutts sit up for this!"

"We don't want any help from the Shell!" growled Blake, whose temper was very sore just then.

"You look as if you do!" grinned Lowther.

"Oh, get out!"

The Terrible Three got out, and went to their study for tea. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy headed for the bath-rooms. They had a great deal of cleaning to do before they could think of tea—and their study had to be set to rights—a long and arduous task. It was not Jack Blake's lucky day.

"Serves those kids right, for their cheek!" remarked Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three sat down to tea in Study No. 10. "They ought to have known that they couldn't handle Cutts."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Manners.

"But we want to keep our eyes peeled," said Monty. "Cutts has squared accounts with Study No. 6, and I fancy we're the next on the list."

"They won't handle us quite so easily," said Tom Merry.

"No fear!"

After prep that evening, Tom Merry looked for Blake & Co. He found the heroes of the Fourth giving the finishing touches to tidying up their study. But with all that they could do, Study No. 6 did not look its old self. It was likely to be some time before the study recovered from that disastrous raid.

And the four juniors had a tired and worn look. They had not got over the ragging yet.

"Done your prep?" asked Tom genially.

"No!" snapped Blake.

"You're leaving it late."

"We're leaving it altogether!" growled Herries. "No time for prep with this dashed wreck to clear up."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Let's join forces against Cutts," suggested Tom Merry. "He'll be going for our scalps next."

"You won't give him much trouble," said Dig.

"Well, you don't seem to have given him a lot," remarked Tom Merry, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"The dear little chaps have lost their dear little tempers," remarked Monty Lowther, with a serious shake of the head.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Blake gave the Terrible Three a morose glare.

"Don't you think it's bad enough, without silly Shell asses butting in here?" he demanded.

"Peace, old infant, peace!" said Tom Merry soothingly.

"Cutts has got to be made to sit up for this—"

"We're going to make him sit up!" snorted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, let's stand together, and go for him!" said Tom Merry. "The more the merrier, you know."

"Oh, the Shell are no good!" said Blake. "Can't bother about looking after you Shell fish now!"

"Why, you silly ass, it's us who are going to look after you!" roared Manners.

"Oh, can it!"

The Terrible Three smiled and strolled on from Study No. 6. It was evident that Blake was not in a reasonable or amenable mood.

"Bai Jove, you know," Arthur Augustus remarked



The footsteps of the senior came nearer and nearer, then a shadowy figure loomed up. "At him!" panted Blake. Seven juniors rushed together. The shadowy senior was swept off his feet by the rush. "Oh! Ah! Ow! What the thump—" roared a well-known voice. It was not Cutts' voice, but Kildare's. (See page 12.)

thoughtfully, "Tom Mewwy's suggestion was weally not a bad one, Blake."

"Oh, rot!" grunted Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"This study can look after itself."

"Yaas; but—"

"Don't jaw!"

"Weally, Blake, I twust you are not goin' to allow a waggin' to detewiwate your mannaahs!"

"Fathead!"

"I wefuse to weply to that wemark, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Blake.

There was no doubt that tempers in Study No. 6 had suffered—as really was not surprising in the circumstances. Blake was almost ferociously determined not to admit that Study No. 6 had bitten off more than it could chew, in undertaking to deal with Gerald Cutts on its own. Somehow or other, Blake was going to turn the tables on Cutts, and make the dandy of the Fifth sorry for himself. Cutts, no doubt, deemed that he was finished with Study No. 6—he had given them a drastic lesson, and after that they would hide their diminished heads. Cutts, without bothering any more about Blake & Co., was probably considering ways and means of dealing equally effectively with the Terrible Three of the Shell. But he was not done with Study No. 6 yet; Blake was determined on that. In the short time that remained before bed that night, Jack Blake did not waste a moment on prep; he devoted every minute to thinking out plans for dealing with Gerald Cutts.

The natural result was that, in the morning there was trouble in the Form-room; Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, not approving of "cutting" prep for any reasons whatsoever. Four hapless juniors earned a hundred lines each.

"Never mind," said Blake, when they left the Form-room. "We'll put it all down to Cutts' account."

"Yaas; but we shall have to do the lines, Blake."

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Rats!"

Blake was still a little morose.

CHAPTER 4.

Not a Success!

KILDARE of the Sixth Form stared.

The captain of St. Jim's was surprised. And his wrath equalled his surprise.

It was evening, and Kildare of the Sixth had dropped into Lefevre's study, in the Fifth Form passage, to discuss football matters. After his chat with Lefevre, Kildare walked down the passage on his way to his own quarters.

That was how he came on Blake & Co.

Four juniors were there, in the Fifth Form passage, where they had no business to be. Kildare had heard nothing of the ragging of Study No. 6 the day before; it was not Blake & Co.'s way to lay complaints. He had no knowledge of the trouble that had occurred in the holidays between the Fifth Form fellows and the party of juniors. So naturally he knew nothing of the feud that was now raging. He was surprised and wrathful to see four Fourth-Formers invading the senior quarters, with the obvious intention of ragging there. The four had just reached Cutts' study when Kildare sighted them.

They were armed for war. Blake had a cricket-stump in his hand, Herries a bat, Digby a ruler, and Arthur Augustus a golf-club. If those weapons had all got into action, there was no doubt that somebody would have been hurt!

"The cad's in his study," said Blake, as Kildare came along. "Now, then, rush in when I open the door, and wallop him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It doesn't matter if you hurt him," continued Blake, "and mind you wreck the study."

"You bet!"

"We'll make Cutts jolly sorry for himself before he's done with," said Blake. "He thinks he's finished with us, the cheeky cad!"

"Mustn't make too much wow, though," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "We don't want the pwefects up heah."

"Oh, blow the prefects!"

"Yaas; but—"

"Bother the prefects!" growled Blake. "Who cares for the prefects, or the whole dashed Sixth? I don't!"

"Indeed!" said Kildare quietly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It—it's Kildare!" stuttered Digby.

The four juniors spun round, and blinked at the captain of the school. Kildare eyed them sternly.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Hem! We—we—"

"A ragging—what?"

"Well, yes," stammered Blake.

"Ragging in a senior passage!" said Kildare. "And it seems that you don't care for the prefects—what?"

"Well, we—we—we—" stammered Blake.

"You see, deah boy—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Cutts' door opened. Doubtless the voices outside had drawn the attention of the dandy of the Fifth.

"Hallo! Holdin' a fag's meetin' outside my study, Kildare?" he asked.

"These fags seem to have come here to rag your study," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"By gad!"

"And we'll jolly well do it another time, too," said Blake savagely. "You won't always have a prefect butting in to protect you, Cutts."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus.

Cutts laughed.

"I fancy I'm not in much need of protection," he remarked. "But I suppose you're not passin' this over, Kildare? There's such a thing as law and order, I believe."

"I don't need you to teach me my duty, thanks," said Kildare stiffly. There was no love lost between Kildare and the sportsman of the Fifth. "Follow me to my study, you juniors!"

"Oh deah!"

There was no help for it. Blake & Co. followed the captain of the school, and Cutts of the Fifth stood in his study doorway, looking after them, and laughing as they went.

The expedition had not been a success.

In Kildare's study the head prefect of St. Jim's picked up his cane. He motioned to the four juniors to lay down their curious assortment of weapons of war.

"That rubbish will be confiscated!" he said.

"Weally, Kildare—"

"And now tell me," said Kildare grimly. "I want to know why you were going to rag Cutts' study."

"He ragged ours yesterday!" growled Herries.

"Oh! In that case you had a right to lay the matter before a prefect," said Kildare.

"We're not going to sneak to prefects."

"We can look after ourselves!" grunted Blake.

"You can't take the law into your own hands," said Kildare. "Ragging a senior study is outside the limit, as you know very well."

Blake was morosely silent. Kildare could talk as much as he liked, but the chief of Study No. 6 had no intention whatever of giving up his warlike plans. The insult to Study No. 6 had to be avenged, though the skies fell. It was easy enough for the captain of St. Jim's to read that determination in Jack Blake's face.

"You'll have to give me your word not to try this on again," he said.

No answer from Blake.

"You hear me, Blake?"

"I hear you," assented Blake.

"Well, will you give me your word?"

"Can't!"

"Why not?" snapped Kildare.

"Because I should have to break it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare knitted his brows. He was a good-natured fellow, and a very popular prefect; but he was accustomed to having his word regarded as law in the Lower School. "Back-chat" from fags was not welcome to the kindest-natured prefect of the Sixth Form.

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"You can please yourself about that, Blake," he said. "But if you don't give me your word I shall have to lick you."

"I'm ready!" said Blake resignedly.

"Weally, Kildare, in the circumstances—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You can either give me your word not to attempt ragging in the Fifth Form passage, or take a licking all round!" said Kildare. "Now, then, what is it going to be?"

"We're goin' to wag Cutts!"

"Yes, rather!"

"That's enough!" said Kildare sharply. "Bend over!"

It was six—six each for the juniors. Kildare was an athlete, and four times six did not seem to tire him. They tired Blake & Co.

"Now cut!" said Kildare briefly. And Blake & Co. limped out of the study. They limped away painfully to Study No. 6 in the Fourth, with feelings towards Gerald Cutts that could not have been expressed in words.

"It's not Kildare's fault!" groaned Digby. "Prefects have to be prefects, blow 'em! I don't blame Kildare. But that rotter Cutts—"

"That brute Cutts!" gasped Herries. "Ow!"

"That howwid wottah Cutts!" groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry glanced in at the door on his way down to the Common-room after prep.

"You fellows scalped Cutts yet?" he asked genially.

"Why—what—oh—ah! Yoooooop!"

Crash!

Four infuriated juniors seized the captain of the Shell and hurled him into the passage, and the door slammed after him. Tom Merry sat on the floor in great astonishment.

Manners and Lowther picked him up.

"What on earth—" gasped Manners.

Tom laughed breathlessly.

"I only asked them if they'd scalped Cutts!" he gasped.

"Looks as if they've got the scalping, the cheeky fags."

"Let's go in and mop up the study," suggested Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Let them rip! It sounds as if they've had enough from somebody."

From within Study No. 6 there proceeded a sort of chorus.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Grooogh!"

The Terrible Three smiled and went on their way. They had been rather late with their prep, and most of the fellows had gone down. The light on the staircase had been turned out; but it was not uncommon for some junior to play a trick like that, and the chums of the Shell groped their way down in the dark. Manners uttered a sudden exclamation as he bumped into somebody in the darkness.

"What the thump—"

"Got them!" said a familiar voice. "Lay hold of the young cads!"

It was Cutts' voice. The next moment the Terrible Three were struggling in the grasp of Cutts & Co. It was their turn now.

CHAPTER 5.

Kildare Takes a Hand!

AFTER Blake & Co. had departed, Kildare of the Sixth remained for a little while in his study, thinking. He had administered justice as a prefect of the Sixth. Law and order had to be maintained in the School House of St. Jim's. But Kildare was not satisfied to let the matter end there. After some reflection the captain of St. Jim's left his study, and proceeded to the Fifth Form passage to call on Gerald Cutts.

He tapped at Cutts' study door and opened it. There was nobody in the study. The light was burning, and Cutts' and St. Leger's books were on the table. They had lately been there. But they were gone now.

Kildare stepped into the passage again, and sighted Lefevre of the Fifth talking to Smith major. He called to them.

"Seen anything of Cutts?"

"I saw him five minutes ago," answered Lefevre. "He went along with three chaps—his usual pals."

"Which way?"

"Downstairs, I believe."

"No," put in Smith major. "I think they've gone up the Fourth Form staircase, Lefevre. They turned off at the landing."

"Thanks!" said Kildare. And he walked away to the landing.

His lips were compressed.

He had intended to talk to Gerald Cutts very plainly on the subject of having ragged the juniors. Now it looked as if Cutts of the Fifth was at the same game again. It was unusual, at least, for four of the Fifth to visit the junior studies in the evening.

Kildare went to the Fourth Form passage and looked about him there. Baggy Trimble was in sight, and he called to Trimble. The fat Fourth-Former approached him in very gingerly manner.

"It wasn't me, Kildare!" he started, before the captain of the school could question him.

"Eh? What wasn't you?"

"I never touched them."

"Touched what, you fat duffer?"

"The tarts. I haven't been in Darrell's study at all," said Baggy anxiously. "Besides, how should I know whether there were any tarts in Darrell's study? I couldn't, could I?"

"You young ass—"

"If Darrell says—"

"Dry up, you young duffer," interrupted Kildare impatiently, "have you seen any Fifth Form fellows in this direction in the last ten minutes?"

"Oh!" said Baggy, realising that it was not one of his many sins that had brought the captain of St. Jim's there. "Oh, yes, Cutts, you know!"

"Anybody with him?"

"Prye and Gilmore and St. Leger."

"Where are they now?"

Baggy grinned.

"They went along to the box-room, I think."

Kildare knitted his brows, puzzled.

"The box-room!"

"I—I think so," grinned Trimble. "Of course, I'm not going to sneak. He, he, he!"

"I'm not asking you to sneak, you young ass," growled Kildare; "I want to speak to Cutts."

"I fancy he's rather busy," grinned Trimble. "As for those rotters, a ragging will do them good. Manners kicked me this afternoon, owing to a misunderstanding about some toffee—"

Kildare did not stay to hear more. He went along to the box-room. That room was rather distant from the studies. As he approached it, Kildare saw a light under the door, and heard the sound of voices.

"You rotten bullies—"

"You Fifth Form cads—"

"You beasts—"

The Terrible Three of the Shell were all speaking at once. Kildare rapped sharply on the door, and there was an exclamation within, in Gerald Cutts' voice.

"Who the thump's that?"

"Only some fag," growled Gilmore. "Let him knock!"

"Open this door!" rapped out Kildare, in angry tones.

"Oh Gad, it's Kildare!" exclaimed Prye.

Kildare rattled the door-knob angrily. The door was locked on the inside.

"Let me in at once, Cutts!" he exclaimed.

"What do you want, Kildare?" asked Cutts, from inside, in a cool voice. Cutts was always as cool as ice.

"I want you to let me in, and if you don't unlock this door instantly I shall fetch the Housemaster here," said Kildare.

"Dash it all, let him in, Cutts," muttered Gilmore.

"Perfect, you know."

Cutts unlocked the door. Kildare threw it wide open, and strode into the box-room.

Cutts & Co. were all there; and so were the Terrible Three. The chums of the Shell looked very rumpled and dusty. They had put up a fight when they were collared on the dark staircase; but three of the Shell were not of much use against four of the Fifth. They had been rushed into the box-room; and now they were "fixed" for cock-fighting. Each of the three juniors was in a sitting posture, with a stump put under his knees, and his hands tied down to it. In that attitude, they were being urged on by the raggars to cock-fight—which they steadily refused to do. Cock-fighting was a game—and it was also a form of bullying, and it was not the intention of Cutts & Co. to let the juniors off till they had hurt one another very considerably. Cutts' method of persuasion was to "boot" the juniors till they began—and they had already been considerably booted.

Kildare looked on at the scene with a grim brow. The Fifth-Formers eyed him evilly and uneasily.

"So that's your game," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"No harm in a little game," yawned Cutts. "It does the fags good—hardens them, you know."

"You rotten bully!" said Tom Merry.

"No harm at all in a little game," said Kildare quietly.

"But a great deal of harm in making the fags back one another against their will, Cutts. You are bullying them."

"You can call it that, if you like, of course," said Cutts, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Let them loose at once!"

Cutts set his teeth.

"Are you givin' me orders?" he asked.

"Yes."

Cutts shrugged his shoulders again, and was silent—and did not stir to obey the order. Kildare was House prefect and School prefect, and he had the authority to give orders.

But it was too bitter a pill for the dandy of the Fifth to swallow.

"I'll let them loose," said Prye hastily, and he made a step towards the tied-up juniors.

"Who tied them up?" asked Kildare.

"I did!" growled Cutts.

"Then you'll let them loose. Stand back, Prye."

"Look here—" muttered Prye.

"Stand back!"

Prye of the Fifth stood back. He had no intention of quarrelling with Kildare, if he could help it. There were prefects at St. Jim's whom the black sheep of the Fifth ventured to "cheek"; but Kildare was not one of them. Prye had no desire to be reported to his Housemaster for bullying; and still less desire to measure strength personally with the hefty captain of St. Jim's.

"I—I say—" murmured St. Leger.

"I'm surprised to see you in this, St. Leger," said Kildare scornfully, "but I know that you're led by the nose by Cutts. Get out of this—and you too, Prye, and you, Gilmore."

"But—I—"

"Get out!" snapped Kildare.

The three Fifth-Formers exchanged glances, and moved to the door. Cutts made a movement to follow them, and Kildare stepped in his way.

"You haven't untied the fags yet!" said Kildare.

"I'm not going to."

"I think you are."

Cutts' eyes glittered.

"Will you let me pass, Kildare?"

"No."

"Don't leave me here, you fellows," called out Cutts, to his comrades, who were now outside the box-room.

Gilmore looked back.

"What's the good, Cutts?" he muttered. "You're not thinkin' of handlin' the captain of the school, I suppose?"

"Yes, if he meddles with me," said Cutts fiercely.

"Do you want to be sacked, you ass?"

With that, Gilmore followed Prye and St. Leger. Cutts of the Fifth breathed hard, his eyes fixed on the stalwart figure of Kildare, that barred his way to the door.

"Are you going to untie those juniors?" asked Kildare quietly.

The Terrible Three looked on in silence. They would not have asked help from a prefect, helpless as they were; but they were extremely glad to see Kildare in the box-room, all the same. They were well aware that otherwise, they would not have escaped from the hands of Cutts & Co. without a savage ragging.

"I'm waiting, Cutts."

"You can wait."

"You refuse to untie those juniors?"

"Yes!" hissed Cutts.

"Very well! You are in the Fifth, Cutts, and will not be flogged. I shall report this to the Housemaster, and ask him to place the matter before the Head!" said Kildare calmly. "That means the sack!—It will be a good thing for St. Jim's!"

"Do as you choose!" said Cutts, between his teeth.

"Very well."

Kildare looked out of the doorway. Several juniors had gathered round now, wondering what was on.

"Wildrake!" called out Kildare.

"Yes, Kildare."

"Go to Mr. Railton's study, and ask him to step here—"

Cutts panted.

"Hold on, Kildare! I—I—"

"You'll toe the line?" asked Kildare calmly.

"Yes!" breather Cutts, pale with rage. He dared not face the Housemaster, with expulsion from the school to follow.

"Very well! You need not go, Wildrake."

Kildare closed the door of the box-room.

"Now untie those juniors, Cutts!"

And Gerald Cutts, with hands that trembled with rage, proceeded to obey.

CHAPTER 6.

A Climb-down For Cutts!

TOM MERRY & Co. rose to their feet. They were cramped and numbed by the box-ropes that had tied them, and they were sore from many applications of Cutts' boots. But they were feeling very relieved.

"Thanks, Kildare!" said Tom.

"Can I go now?" asked Cutts in low, concentrated tones.

That humiliation under the eyes of the Shell fellows was the bitterest blow the lofty Fifth-Former had ever received. He would have given a great deal to hurl himself upon Kildare, hitting out right and left. And it was not fear of the stalwart Sixth-Former that restrained him. Kildare was more than a match for the truculent Fifth-Former, doubtless; but Cutts would gladly have tried his chances in combat just then. It

was the authority behind the captain of the school that subdued him.

"Hold on! I've got to speak to you, Cutts," said Kildare. "Now, you fags have the right, if you choose, to lay this matter before your Housemaster. If you decide to do so I shall take you to Mr. Railton with Cutts, and leave the matter in Mr. Railton's hands."

Three heads were shaken at once.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "We can look after ourselves. We don't want to drag Mr. Railton into it. We don't want to get Cutts sacked, for that matter, cad as he is."

Cutts gritted his teeth.

"Very well," said Kildare—and he was a little relieved, too. He had to use his authority when in duty bound, but he did not want a serious case to be brought up before the Head. "You can cut."

And the Terrible Three left the box-room.

"Now for a lecture, I suppose," said Cutts, with a bitter sneer.

"Yes," said Kildare.

"Cut it short!"

"I've stopped your bullying, Cutts," said Kildare, unheeding. "As the fags do not care to make a complaint, I am willing to deal with the matter without troubling Mr. Railton or the Head."

"Well?"

"You're too old for me to lick," said Kildare, eyeing him. "Anyhow, a Fifth-Former can't be licked without a prefect's meeting to sentence him. Of course, I could do that."

Cutts almost ceased to breathe with suppressed fury. Licked! Called up like a fag before the prefects and told to "bend over"! The cup of his humiliation would have been full to overflowing. Yet he was liable to that punishment, like any other fellow at St. Jim's, if a prefect's meeting sentenced him to six. From the prefects he would have, if he chose, the right to appeal to the Head; but in the circumstances he certainly would not have ventured to exercise that right.

"I'd rather let the matter drop here," said Kildare. "That is, if I have some assurance that it will stop. I can't be watching you at all times, Cutts, and following you into box-rooms to stop your beastly bullying. I want an assurance that you're chucking it."

Cutts panted with rage.

"It's not a case of bullying!" he breathed. "Those young cads cheeked me in the holidays, and I've punished them for it. That's all!"

"You've no right to do anything of the kind. Even a prefect hasn't a right to call fellows to account for what's done in the vacation, away from the school. You know that as well as I do."

"I wasn't bothering about the rights of the matter," sneered Cutts.

"So I thought. In what happened in the vac, whatever it was, I think you were probably as much to blame as the juniors. Anyhow, petty malice is below the dignity of a senior Form, if you could understand it."

"That's my business."

"It's my business to see that you stop this persecution of the juniors," said Kildare. "Do you give me your word that there's going to be no more of it?"

"I've done with them," said Cutts sullenly. "I've licked them for their cheek, some of them, and booted the others. I'm not thinkin' of carryin' the thing any further. I've no time to waste on cheeky young cads of the Fourth and the Shell!"

"All the better, if that's so," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Certainly your time might be better employed. Do you give me your word?"

"Will you trust it?" sneered Cutts.

"I'm bound to take the word of a Fifth-Form senior. If you break it, and I learn the facts, you'll be called up before a prefect's meeting and given six. You give your word?"

"Yes!" hissed Cutts.

"That's all right."

Kildare of the Sixth opened the door of the box-room and walked away without another word to the Fifth-Former.

Cutts followed him more slowly.

He was relieved that the matter was to end, and that he was not to receive the crowning humiliation of six in the prefects' room. After such a humiliation as that he could scarcely have held up his head in the Fifth for the rest of the term. But, relieved as he was on that score, he was almost foaming with rage as he left the box-room. There was a hiss from a dozen juniors in the passage and on the stairs. Cutts gave them a black look and strode on.

In the Fifth-Form passage he came on Lefevre and Smith major.

"Kildare was asking after you," said Lefevre.

Cutts shoved by him rudely and went into his study and slammed the door, leaving the captain of the Fifth staring.

In the study he found St. Leger and Prye and Gilmore. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 322

The elegant St. Leger was stretched in the armchair, with his hands in his pockets, with a bored expression on his handsome face. Prye and Gilmore were muttering together uneasily. They looked at Cutts as he came in, and St. Leger yawned slightly.

"Is there goin' to be a row?" asked Prye eagerly.

"No!" snarled Cutts.

"Oh, good!"

"Dashed if I want to be called up on the carpet!" said Gilmore. "I had six once from the prefects, and the fags never let me forget it till the end of that term!"

"What a giddy relief!" yawned St. Leger. "No end of a bore to have to bend over and take six from a Sixth Form lout—what?"

"Kildare's dropped the matter, on my giving my word to stop raggin' the juniors," growled Cutts.

"That's all right," said Gilmore. "They've had enough for cheekin' us in the holidays, anyhow."

"Too much!" yawned St. Leger.

"You think so, do you?" said Cutts between his teeth.

"Do you think I'm goin' to take this lyin' down?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Prye uneasily. "I think you've got off cheap. Kildare doesn't like you; and some fellows would have jumped at the chance of putting a fellow they didn't like through it. Kildare's not a bad sort."

"He's a meddling hound!"

"Oh, rot!"

"So you're not backin' me up any further?" sneered Cutts.

"No jolly fear!" said Prye emphatically. "The fags have had enough. And I'm not askin' for trouble with Kildare."

"Same here!" said Gilmore with equal emphasis.

And Prye and Gilmore left the study, cutting short any further discussion of the matter. Cutts kicked the door shut after them, and then turned a sour look on his study-mate, St. Leger.

"You say the same?" he asked.

St. Leger nodded.

"So you're afraid?"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" yawned St. Leger. "I was against wallopin' the fags, anyhow. What's the sense of bearin' a grudge for a row in the hols? And, anyway, you've done it now. Let it drop."

"And Kildare—"

"You can't buck against the captain of the school. He could break you like a reed, if he chose."

"There are ways and means," said Cutts, setting his lips.

"Give it a miss in baulk," advised St. Leger. "You're too jolly malicious, Cutts, that's what's the matter with you. Anyhow, leave me out of it. I'm fed-up!"

"You slackin' ass!"

"I think I'll trot along and speak to Lefevre," drawled St. Leger. "He's been askin' me to take up footer this term. Bye-bye!"

St. Leger sauntered out of the study, probably not so much to talk football with the captain of the Fifth as to get away from his study-mate's savage temper and recriminations.

Cutts threw himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette.

His brow was black, and his eyes gleamed under his bent brows. He had given his word to Kildare, but that troubled him little. All fellows who knew Gerald Cutts were aware that his word was not his bond. But the consequences of breaking his word were so very serious that Cutts realised that he had to walk warily. He did not want to bend over in the prefects' room and take six—with the mockery of the fags to haunt him afterwards. That outcome had to be avoided at all costs, even at the cost of giving up the idea of taking further vengeance upon Tom Merry & Co. and Kildare. But Cutts was very unwilling to give up that idea; and he thought of the matter with savage concentration as he smoked cigarette after cigarette.

CHAPTER 7.

Seven on the Warpath!

"WUBBISH!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was emphatic.

And for once Blake and Herries and Digby were in full agreement with their noble chum. They did not always see eye to eye with the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Often and often, when he expressed an opinion, they would deride the output of his noble intellect. But on this occasion they agreed.

"Utter rot!" said Blake.

"Piffle!" said Herries.

"Tosh!" said Robert Arthur Digby.

"You see—" went on Tom Merry.

"I see that you're an ass!" said Blake.

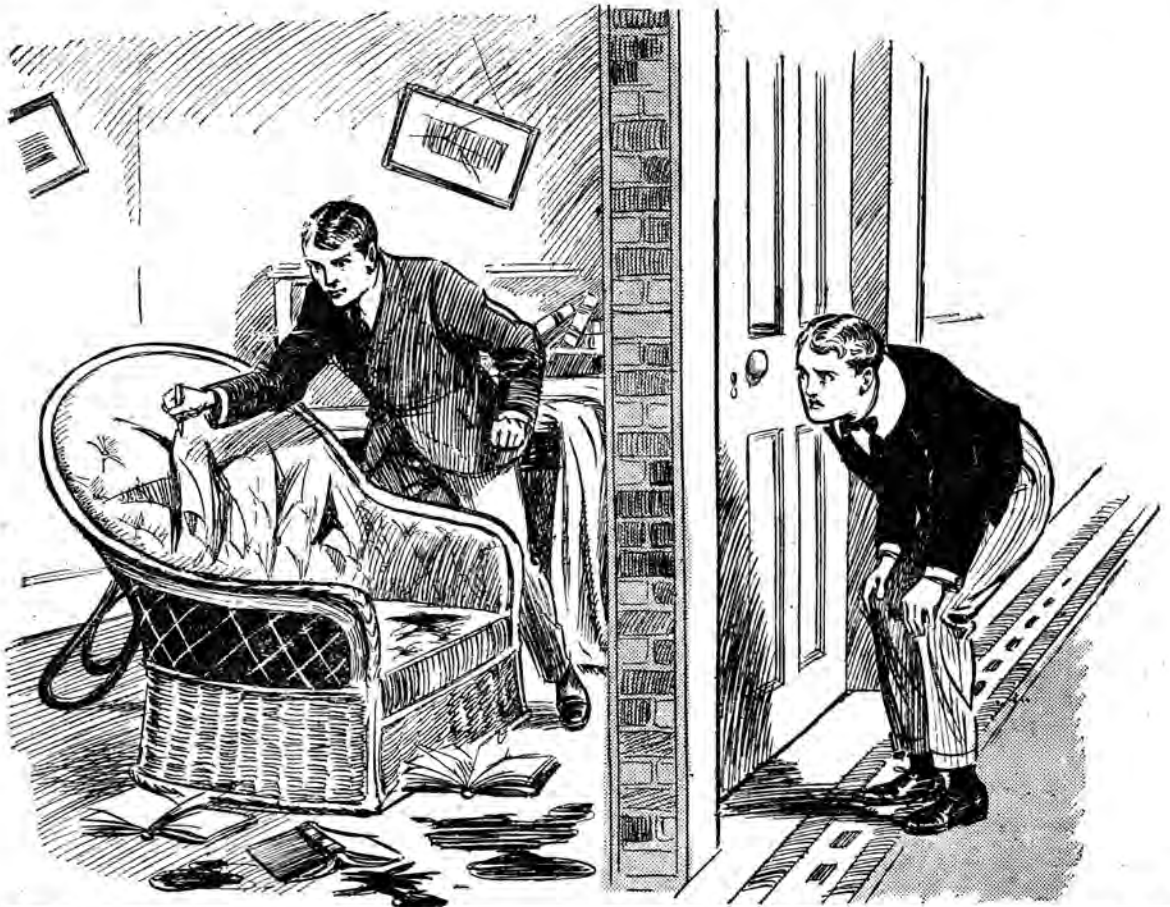
"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, only the other day you proposed going co. to handle Cutts!" exclaimed Herries warmly.

"That's so," agreed Tom. "But since then—"

"Rot!"

"Wats'!"



Blake peered through the keyhole of Kildare's door. Between the door and the window he had a clear view of Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts was occupied in "ragging" the study—silently but very effectively. His face was set and savage as he gashed open the padding of the arm-chair with a large pocket-knife. (See page 16.)

"Kildare's chipped in, and made Cutts give his word to chuck it. He's told me that, so as to warn us against keeping it up," explained Tom Merry. "Now, if Cutts chucks it, we can chuck it."

"When we've given Cutts what he's given us, not before," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They ragged us, and wrecked our study," said Dig. "We're going to do the same for them, somehow. Then we'll chuck it, if Kildare likes."

"And not before," said Herries.

"Well, they ragged us," said Tom. "They tied us up in the box-room for cock-fighting, and because we wouldn't fight one another they booted us. We got it hard."

"And you're taking it smiling?" asked Blake scornfully.

Tom Merry coloured.

"We didn't mean to. But after what Kildare's said—"

"Blow Kildare!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wespect old Kildare, as a wule, but I wefuse to allow him to chip into this mattah until we have given Cutts of the Fifth a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, Tommy's getting to be a jolly old pacifist!" said Blake scornfully. "None of that in our study."

"Wathah not!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Tom Merry hotly. "If Cutts troubles us any more we'll go for him hard enough. But Kildare—"

"Bother Kildare! You offered to lend a hand the other day," said Blake. "Well, I've thought of a wheeze, and we'll accept your help."

"Have you found out that Study No. 6 can't handle Cutts & Co. on its own?" inquired Tom, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Well, we can't handle a crowd of big seniors," admitted Blake. "It isn't to be expected."

"You seemed to expect it," said the captain of the Shell, still sarcastic.

"Oh, don't rub it in. Will you help or won't you?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

All the Terrible Three felt sore—in a double sense—about their experiences in the box-room with Cutts & Co. They

were keen to make the bully of the Fifth sorry for himself. But Kildare's word was law, and it weighed more with Tom Merry, as junior captain, than with the more reckless fellows in the Fourth.

But it was hard to refuse help to the much-injured chums of the Fourth, especially as Cutts' attack on the Terrible Three was unavenged, as well as the rag on Study No. 6. Tom Merry hesitated, and it is well said that he who hesitates is lost.

"Chuck up this rot, and stand in with us to give that Fifth Form cad jip!" said Herries encouragingly.

"Well, you see—"

"I'm sure you're not funkng," began Blake, in a tone that implied that he was beginning to have a doubt on the subject, however.

Tom crimsoned.

"You ass, I'm as keen to down Cutts as you are, but—"

"But rats!" said Blake.

"Yes, wathah—wats!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wathah wagged Blake for wefusin' your help on a pwevious occasion, Tom Mewwy. Now I must say I am surprised at your backin' out."

"I'm not backing out!" roared Tom.

"Then you're standing in?" asked Blake.

"Yes!" growled Tom Merry.

After all, it was rather "hard cheese" that the heavy hand of authority should have intervened before the wrongs were avenged. It was decided now, anyhow, to avenge them, be the result what it might.

"Now just listen to the wheeze, old man," said Blake genially. "I've thought it out. We can't rag Cutts in his own study, because all the Fifth will handle us. They think it cheek to rag the Fifth, though they don't like Cutts. We'll wreck his study some time when he's not there, and we'll wreck Cutts in a more secluded spot."

"Well, that's not bad strategy," admitted Tom Merry.

"Come to Study No. 6 for strategy, you know," remarked Blake.

"And for swank!" said Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Can it!" said Blake. "Now, I've been stalking Cutts, and I've found that he's going over to the New House after lessons to-day, to see his dear old pal Poynings of the New House Fifth. Banker in Poynings' study, of course—we know that, though the jolly old Housemasters don't. It will be dark when he comes back, across the quad."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Poynings may come with him, or any of his pals," said Blake. "We've got to be in force. Seven of us can handle all Cutts' gang, especially if we rush them in the dark. We only want Cutts. Scatter the other rotters, and hang on to Cutts. Rush him away to the fountain—"

"And duck him!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And I shall have a bottle of ink in my pocket for him," said Blake.

"And I shall have a fives-bat to thwash him."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "It looks like a catch—a real cinch, as Wildrake would say. I'm on, and I'll tell Manners and Lowther."

And, after a little further discussion, Tom Merry repaired to Study No. 10 in the Shell, where he acquainted his chums with the plan of campaign.

Monty Lowther smiled assent at once, but Manners looked rather thoughtful.

"Better chuck it, now that Kildare has butted in," he said. "Our skipper will be no end waxy if he finds us ragging Cutts, after he's butted in and stopped his bullying. He will look on it as beginning the trouble again from our side."

"I know," said Tom. "But I've promised Blake—"

"Oh, all right! It's a go, then."

"And I owe Cutts a few kicks," said Monty Lowther. "He booted us in the box-room, the cad!"

"I owe him a few, too," said Manners. "All serene."

And so it was settled.

After prep that evening seven juniors slipped quietly out of the School House, though Lower boys were not supposed to leave their Houses after prep. It was not uncommon for St. Jim's juniors to do things they were not supposed to do, however.

Four of the Fourth and three of the Shell waited and watched for Cutts of the Fifth in the shadowy quadrangle, within sight of the lights glimmering from the windows of the New House.

That he had kept his appointment with Poynings of the Fifth, who was a New House fellow, they were certain, because he had been seen to start. Exactly when he would return to the School House they did not know, but they were fairly certain that it would be before half-past nine—the bedtime of the juniors. They waited and watched, prepared to give Gerald Cutts the time of his life.

A bar of light fell into the gloom of the quad as the New House door was opened. It was shut off again by the closing of the door.

"That's him!" whispered Dig hastily and ungrammatically. "That's the rotter!" growled Blake. "Wait till he's close!"

Some one had left the New House, and was crossing by the path towards the School House.

In the shadows by the path the seven juniors waited.

They were in luck—the senior was coming across the quad by himself. Tom Merry & Co. were prepared to deal with Cutts' friends if necessary, but naturally they were not sorry to avoid combat with a party of big Fifth-Formers. With Cutts on his "lonesome" they would be able to deal with him promptly, thoroughly, and effectively.

The footsteps of the senior could be heard grinding the gravel of the path nearer and nearer. A shadowy figure loomed up.

"At him!" panted Blake.

"Wag him, deah boys!"

Seven juniors rushed on together. The shadowy senior was swept off his feet by the rush, and came down on the gravel with a bump, the juniors sprawling over him.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! What the thump—" roared a well-known voice.

It was not Cutts' voice. It was Kildare's!

For a second the juniors still grasped him, too frozen by horror to make a move. Evidently a mistake had been made in the dark. They had rushed over Kildare, the captain of the school, instead of Cutts of the Fifth!

Only for a second were they frozen with horror. Flight was the only remedy for that ghastly mistake.

They released the sprawling senior, and ran for it.

Only, unfortunately, there was one who could not run. Kildare's grasp had closed on one of his unseen assailants, and he did not let go. The other six, quite ignorant of that unfortunate circumstance, bolted into the night, to penetrate into the School House by back doors or windows, and scatter among the studies. And Tom Merry, helpless in Kildare's powerful grasp, remained alone to face the music.

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CHAPTER 8.

A Chance for Cutts!

KILDARE struggled to his feet breathlessly, still grasping the Shell fellow. He had been rushed over by a crowd of juniors, and he had captured only one of them. But he was making sure of that one. He stood and panted, and peered at the junior in the gloom.

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"Merry of the Shell," answered Tom quietly.

"Tom Merry! And the others?"

Tom was silent.

"So you are giving the Fifth a rest, and ragging the Sixth for a change, Tom Merry?" said Kildare grimly. "And beginning with the captain of the school!"

"Sorry, Kildare—"

"Very likely. Come along to my study."

"We didn't know it was you, Kildare," said Tom. "You can't think we'd want to rag you. We—we took you for somebody else in the dark."

"Oh!" said Kildare. "I think I can guess who the somebody else is. I saw Cutts in the New House a few minutes ago."

"We—we thought—"

"You knew Cutts had gone over to the New House?"

"Yes," muttered Tom.

"And you didn't know I had gone there?"

"How were we to know?" said Tom. "We haven't been taking any notice of where you go."

"You were going to rag Cutts?"

"Yes."

"After I'd told you to drop the matter, and that I'd made Cutts give his word to interfere with you no further."

Tom Merry was silent.

He had acted against his better judgment, and he was sorry enough for it now. But it was impossible to explain all that to Kildare. It was not Tom Merry's way to lay the blame on his comrades.

"Anything to say?" grunted Kildare.

"Nothing."

"Then come along."

There was a footstep on the path, and a figure loomed up, and almost ran into Kildare.

"Hallo!" exclaimed a voice. It was Cutts' voice this time. The dandy of the Fifth was only a few minutes late for the ambush. But those few minutes had done all the mischief.

"You, Kildare?" exclaimed Cutts, turning on an electric torch. "What the thump— And that kid—"

"I walked into an ambush instead of you, Cutts," said the captain of St. Jim's quietly.

Cutts whistled.

"Oh! Is that it? And that young rascal—"

"That young rascal is going to get what he asked for," said Kildare quietly. "Come along, Merry!"

Tom Merry walked back to the School House with the captain of St. Jim's. Cutts followed them, grinning. So far, Cutts of the Fifth had kept his word to Kildare, simply because he had been unable to think of any scheme for persecuting the juniors without Kildare becoming aware of his proceedings. But as he had, for whatever reason, kept his word, Tom Merry & Co. had placed themselves in the wrong. And Gerald Cutts quite enjoyed the situation.

He followed the senior and junior into the lighted School House, and smiled as he glanced at Tom's dismayed face. He would gladly have followed them into Kildare's study and witnessed the punishment; but that he could not do.

Tom Merry glanced round, and was glad to see that none of the other six were in sight. He had to go through it, but he did not want the other fellows to share his bad luck. Manners and Lowther and Study No. 6, knowing nothing of his capture, were keeping themselves dark for the present, supposing that Tom was doing the same. Tom followed the captain of St. Jim's to his study.

There Kildare picked up a cane, eyeing him sternly.

"It's not much use talking to you, Merry," he said. "I interfered to stop bullying, and stopped it. Can you say that Cutts has done anything to you since?"

"No," admitted Tom.

"Then you know that you're to blame. I shall give you four."

Tom Merry took the four—and they were a hefty four. Kildare pointed to the door with his cane, and the Shell fellow left the study. His face was a little pale, and he squeezed his hands as he went.

"Had it, you cheeky young cad?" asked Cutts of the Fifth, with a smile.

Tom gave him a look.

"Still cheeky?" smiled Cutts.

"Shut up, you cad!" said Tom Merry. And he walked on with his head erect, leaving Cutts with eyes that gleamed with rage, and several other fellows, who had heard his reply, grinning.

Tom Merry went to his study—where for a long time he was busily engaged in rubbing his aching palms. Kildare had laid on the strokes with a practised hand, and every one told.

Manners came into the study with Lowther later. They stared at their chum.

"What—" began Lowther.

"You weren't caught?" exclaimed Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Oh, what rotten luck, old chap! We thought you'd got clear, like the rest."

"Can't be helped," said Tom, with a faint smile. "Why grouse? It's all in the day's work."

"All that ass Blake's fault!" grunted Manners.

Jack Blake, when he heard of the unfortunate occurrence, was far from sharing that view.

"Trust a Shell fellow to get nabbed," he said. "Why didn't you clear off as we did, Tom?"

"Because Kildare had hold of my collar, fathead."

"Well, he didn't get hold of my collar," said Blake.

"Nor mine!" said Herries.

"Nor mine!" grinned Dig.

"Nor mine, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus. "I'm awfully sorry, Tom Mewwy! But weally, you are wathah an ass, you know!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted Tom.

"Never mind; we'll take it out of Cutts!" said Blake consolingly.

"Take it out of your grandmother!" growled Tom Merry.

"The less you silly asses go on the warpath the better. You'll be capturing the Head next in mistake for Cutts—or the Housemaster! For goodness' sake, don't let's hear any more of your giddy plans of campaign!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Rats!"

And Tom Merry stalked away, leaving Study No. 6 smiling. Gerald Cutts was smiling, too, over a cigarette in his study. The scheme he had been trying to think out for many days had come into his active mind at last. St. Leger watched him as he smiled, and looked uneasy. He did not like that smile.

"Looks like my game at last," said Cutts cheerily. "Those young cads laid for me in the quad this evenin', and bagged Kildare instead."

St. Leger laughed.

"Kildare's licked Tom Merry for it!" added Cutts.

"What about it?" asked St. Leger.

"Well, naturally the kid will be feeling rather sore," said Cutts. "My idea is that he will try to get back on Kildare somehow. Might rag his study, or somethin' like that!"

St. Leger shook his head.

"He wouldn't," he said. "Those kids respect Kildare—and Merry knows he was only doin' his duty as a prefect in lickin' him. I'd be jolly surprised if he kept it up against Kildare for that."

"He might!" smiled Cutts. "He might rag Kildare's study—no end of a raggin'—and might leave some trace behind showin' that he did it. The lickin' he's had this evenin' supplies the motive. And that will be a bit of our own back on Kildare, won't it?"

"Look here, Cutts, what have you got in your head now?" demanded St. Leger uneasily.

"Nothin', old top—nothin'! Only just thinkin' of what Tom Merry might do out of revenge!" smiled Cutts. "It would get him into jolly bad odour with the prefects, as well as gettin' him a floggin' from the Housemaster—what?"

"He wouldn't—"

Cutts yawned and rose.

"Let's get along to Gilmore's study for a game of nap before bye-bye!" he said. "Poynings has rooked me, an' I want to rook somebody. Come on!"

And the subject dropped.

CHAPTER 9.

Catching Gerald Cutts!

JACK BLAKE stopped on the box-room stairs, and suppressed a whistle of surprise.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the School House was almost deserted. The First Eleven was away, led by Kildare, doing battle on the football-field with Grammar School seniors at Rylcombe. On Little Side at St. Jim's a junior football match was in progress, a junior House-match, with Tom Merry's team matched against Figgins & Co. of the New House. There were plenty of fellows playing and plenty of fellows watching—and as the weather was sunny and fine nobody had any temptation to remain indoors.

Blake ought really to have been in the School House junior eleven, with the rest of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three. But Blake, for once, was crooked. On the eventful evening when the avengers had bagged Kildare instead of Gerald Cutts, Blake had escaped into the house by way of a window, and had sustained a knock on the knee, which did not worry

him much, but made football out of the question until the damage was gone. So Blake that half-holiday, was on his lonely own.

Having seen the House match start, and given the School House a cheer, Blake had debated what he should do with his afternoon. He had lines on hand, but was not feeling disposed for lines—junior schoolboys seldom did. His crooked knee made cycling undesirable. He called on Bernard Glyn of the Shell, who was making wireless experiments in his study; but Glyn's door was locked, and he did not even answer Blake's knocking. Feeling quite bored, Blake decided to visit the box-rooms and rout out Racke & Co., the black sheep, who were probably smoking there. But Blake's luck was out. If Racke & Co. were holding a cigarette meeting, they were doing it elsewhere; the box-rooms were drawn blank. Blake was feeling that life, with a crooked knee, was really a delusion and a snare on a half-holiday, when suddenly, as he was coming down the box-room stairs, he sighted Gerald Cutts.

He was interested at once; and he nearly whistled.

But not quite! The first glance at Cutts showed that the dandy of the Fifth would bear watching.

Cutts whipped along the Shell passage, and passed out of Blake's sight in a moment; but his stealthy manner was not to be mistaken. Blake grinned. He had no doubt whatever that Cutts of the Fifth was heading for Tom Merry's study in the Shell, doubtless intending to rag No. 10 as he had ragged No. 6, while its owners were absent on the football ground.

Blake came down into the passage, and paused. His first thought was to gather a mob of juniors, and corner Cutts in Study No. 10. Kildare could scarcely find fault with ragging a Fifth-Former caught in the act of ragging a junior study—after Cutts had given his word, too. But there was a difficulty—nearly every fellow was out of doors, and it was not easy to rally a mob in a hurry.

Tom Merry's door was shut; but as Cutts was not in the passage, Blake guessed easily enough that he was in No. 10. Then it occurred to him to get a box-robe, and fasten the door outside, thus imprisoning Cutts inside the study.

No sooner had that brilliant wheeze occurred to Jack Blake than he was scudding up the box-room stairs again. In the box-room he found a rope, and coiled it over his arm.

But as he came down the little staircase again to the Shell passage, he stopped once more, suppressing a whistle. Cutts of the Fifth passed hurriedly before his eyes, whipping along the Shell passage at a run. He was returning from Tom Merry's study!

"Well, my hat!" murmured Blake.

The Fourth-Former was practically certain that Cutts had been in Study No. 10. But he could not have ragged the study in two or three minutes, and he had remained no longer than that. Yet his hurried, stealthy manner showed that he was engaged in some trickery.

Blake was very keen on the scent now. He descended into the Shell passage, and caught a glimpse of the back of Cutts' head as the Fifth-Former went down the big staircase.

Blake followed on.

Keeping in cover as well as he could, in case the Fifth-Former should glance back, Blake watched him over the banisters.

To his utter amazement, Cutts whipped into the Sixth Form passage, and disappeared.

"What the thump!" murmured Blake.

He trod lightly round the corner into the passage after Cutts. The dandy of the Fifth had vanished from sight. Evidently he had gone into one of the Sixth Form studies.

It was likely enough that Knox of the Sixth was smoking in his study that afternoon, and that Cutts had gone to join him in a smoke. But in that case, why the surreptitious visit to Tom Merry's study?

Blake intended to know.

He trod softly along the corridor, and halted at a sound from within Kildare's study.

Kildare, of course, was over at Rylcombe with the First Eleven. Nobody should have been in his study. So Blake did not need telling now where Gerald Cutts was.

But he was amazed.

He knew that Cutts' feelings were bitter enough against the captain of the school. But surely he would never dare to rag a prefect's study—and that prefect the captain of St. Jim's!

And then suddenly the truth flashed into Blake's mind. The stealthy visit to Tom Merry's study was explained.

Kildare's study was to be ragged in his absence—and some evidence was to be left there, implicating, not Cutts, but Tom Merry, whom the captain of St. Jim's had caned the day before.

It was a staggering thought, and though it seemed the only explanation that fitted the circumstances, Blake hesitated to believe it. But he meant to know.

(Continued on page 16.)

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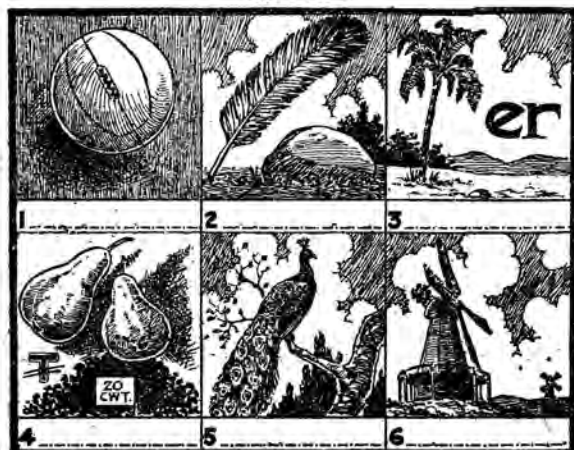
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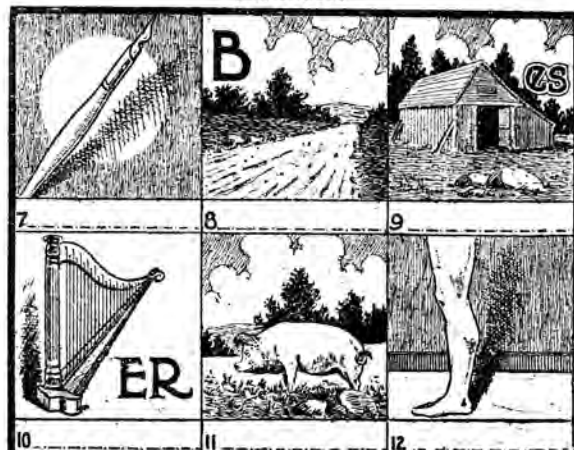


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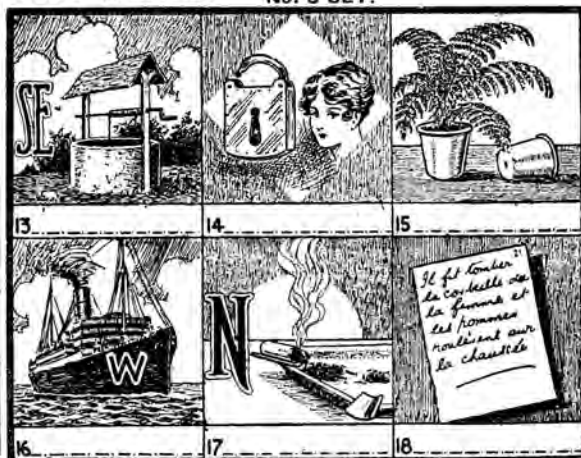
6.—Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

7.—Entry to this competition is on the full understanding that the Editor's decision is final and legally binding throughout.

The list on Page 2 contains all the actual names represented by the puzzle-pictures so that all you have to do is to fit the correct name to each picture.

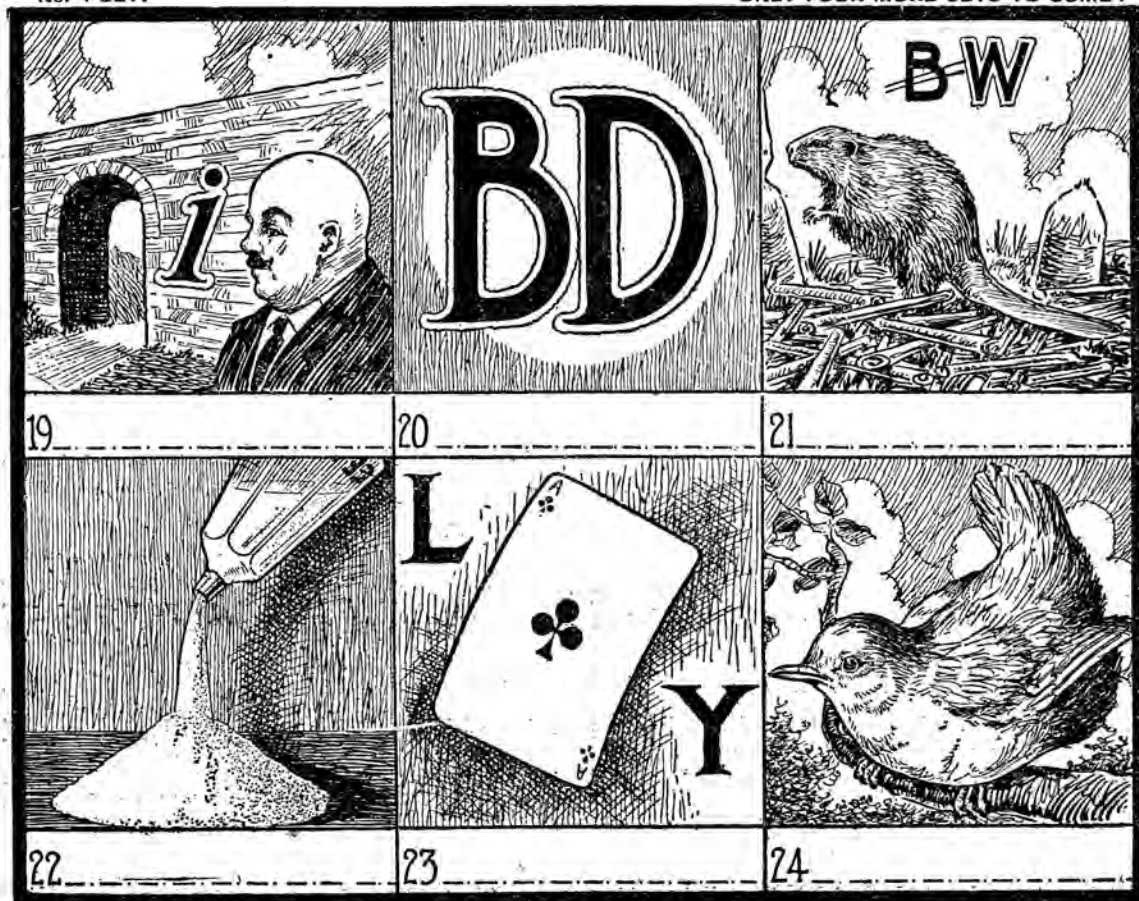
Readers of The "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Union Jack," "Boys' Friend," "Pluck," "Boys' Cinema," "Young Britain," "Magnet," "Popular," "Rocket," and "Nelson Lee Library" are also taking part in the Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.

No. 3 SET.



No. 4 SET.

ONLY FOUR MORE SETS TO COME!



—ON THE TRACK OF THE MYSTERY OF THE FOOTBALLERS' NAMES!

THE GEM LIBRARY, No. 222.



Kildare's door was closed, and Blake peeped through the keyhole. In the peculiar circumstances, he felt that that method of observing the enemy was justified.

Between the door and the window he had a clear view of Cutts of the Fifth.

Cutts was occupied in "ragging" the study, silently, but very effectively. His face was set and savage. He had already torn in pieces a dozen books, scattering the fragments on the floor. Now he was gashing open the padding of the armchair with a large pocket-knife. When he had finished he left the knife sticking in the chair.

Blake watched him breathlessly.

Such carelessness in leaving his knife sticking in the gashed chair surprised him, on the part of a cool, keen fellow like Cutts. It was evidence of who had done the deed, if the knife remained there. And then, again, Blake understood. He recognised the knife—a large one with a thick horn handle. It belonged to Tom Merry. It was clear enough now why Cutts had gone to Study No. 10 in the Shell before visiting Kildare's quarters.

All was quite plain to Blake now.

Cutts turned to the mantelpiece and took down the clock. Almost without a sound he jerked off the hands, and then poured ink into the works.

Blake breathed hard.

This was no ordinary "rag," but sheer hooliganism and the destruction of property. And the blame was to fall on Tom Merry!

Cutts was still hard at work—swiftly, silently, savagely. But Blake was no longer watching him.

Working as silently and cautiously as the ragger, Blake knotted the end of his rope round the knob of the door-handle. Then he carried the rope along to the next study—Darrell's—and knotted it again round Darrell's door-handle.

Kildare's door was now fastened securely on the outside. The rope was strong and well-knotted, and half a dozen Cuttses could not have dragged hard enough on the door to break it.

Oblivious of what was happening outside, Cutts continued his work of destruction within.

Blake scudded away. Five minutes later he was on the football-ground, and a score of fellows had been told. The junior House match was left almost unwatched, as an army of juniors followed Blake back to the School House.

CHAPTER 10.

Caught!

"THAT'S enough!"

Cutts of the Fifth surveyed the damage he had done with savage, satisfied eyes. Certainly it looked enough. Kildare's well-appointed study was a wreck. It looked as if an earthquake had happened there. And in the gashed armchair Tom Merry's pocket-knife was still sticking, as if overlooked and left there by accident by the ragger.

Cutts stepped softly to the door. Nothing remained but to get away unseen—easy enough when the whole House was almost deserted. The junior football match would be over soon, but Kildare would not be back from Rylcombe till later. When he came he would find his study in this state. And what could he conclude, but that Tom Merry had taken advantage of his absence to revenge his late licking? Even if Tom, somehow, scraped through, suspicion would rest on him, and anyhow, Cutts had had his revenge on Kildare. He felt that he had reason to be satisfied. And in a mood of satisfaction he turned the handle of the door.

Then all of a sudden his satisfaction vanished.

The door did not open.

Cutts' heart thumped. The key was on the inside—he saw that. How was the door jammed, then? He dragged at the handle.

There was a chuckle outside.

"He wants to come out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't get that door open in a hurry, Cutts." It was the voice of Cardew of the Fourth. "Sit down and wait for Kildare."

Cutts' face grew white. The awful truth rushed on his mind. He was a prisoner in the study, and there were Lower boys outside who knew that he was there!

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For some moments Cutts stood petrified.

Then he made a wild rush to the window. He had to escape from the room somehow—anyhow—and if hard lying could save him afterwards, that would not be wanted. But as he threw the window up there was a chortle from the quad below.

"Here he is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No exit this way, Cutts!" yelled Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts glared down at a grinning crowd of juniors—fifteen or twenty fellows. With a gasp he slammed down the window again, and there was a roar of laughter without.

"Good gad!" breathed Cutts.

He was a prisoner!

Two score of juniors, at least, knew he was there, and were watching to see that he did not escape. The Fifth-Former's brain swam with the thought of it. He stared round the study. Gladly, then, he would have undone his dastardly work and covered up his tracks. But the ragging had been too well done. The study was a wreck, and the wrecker had been imprisoned amid the havoc he had wrought. And in an hour Kildare would be back!

He sprang to the door and dragged at it furiously. It gave about an inch, giving him a view of the Sixth Form passage swarming with juniors. There was a loud laugh, and Cutts jammed the door shut again.

Wild with rage and apprehension, he scudded to the window again and opened it.

Cutts' face was almost despairing as he glared down at the crowd. Fellows were gathering from far and near. In the distance Cutts caught sight of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, walking with Monsieur Morny, and he hurriedly closed the window again. Even facing Kildare was better than bringing the Housemaster into the matter.

A roar from the football field announced that the House match was over. Tom Merry & Co. came trooping back to the School House, to learn what was "on."

Tom Merry fairly jumped.

"The awful rotter!" he gasped.

"Yaas, wathah! The feahful weptle!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Bai Jove! The howwid wottah is caught in his own twap now."

And the Terrible Three cordially agreed.

Kildare of the Sixth had a surprise when he arrived at St. Jim's after the match at Rylcombe. He found an army of juniors besieging his study—the door roped fast, and a prisoner inside. The door was unfastened, and Kildare strode in with a grim brow. And Cutts, his knees knocking together, faced the captain of St. Jim's in the midst of the wreck he had wrought.

He did not speak—there was nothing to be said. Kildare clenched his hands, but he restrained himself. He pointed to the door.

"Prefects' meeting at seven, Cutts," he said. "You'll turn up. Now go!"

And Cutts went.

The prefects' meeting, in the august prefects' room, was held within closed doors, only the majestic Sixth and the culprit being present. But outside there was a swarming crowd of fellows. Cutts, the dandy of the Fifth, the lofty and supercilious Cutts, was "up" for judgment, and there was no doubt of the sentence. That he had to pay for all the damage he had done went without saying, and most of the fellows had expected Kildare to report him to the Head, in which case he would indubitably have been "sacked" from St. Jim's. But the prefects' meeting dealt with Cutts effectively. Outside there was a buzz as a deep voice was heard to say within:

"Bend over!"

Then followed the sound of an asplant, well laid on!

Cutts, the great Cutts, was "bending over!" Cutts, the lofty Cutts, was taking twenty of the best like any fag! And like a fag again, Cutts was soon yelling!

After that, Cutts of the Fifth hid his diminished head.

He did not seek more trouble with Tom Merry & Co. or Study No. 6. He had had enough, and a little over. For the rest of that term, at least, it was certain that Cutts would never recover his prestige, if he ever recovered it at all. For days and weeks afterwards Cutts could not take his walks abroad without some fag yelling in the distance:

"Bend over!"

Cutts of the Fifth did not enjoy that term at St. Jim's. On the other hand, Tom Merry & Co. found it quite enjoyable, all the more because of Blake's great success in catching Cutts.

THE END.

(There is another grand yarn of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums. Make a note of, the title: "PONGO'S TRIUMPH!" By Martin Clifford. It's extra special.)

A Thrilling Yarn of Adventure in the Wilds of Africa!

The ELEPHANTS' CEMETERY



Young Ted Warrender undergoes some thrilling experiences in his hunt for elephant's tusks, but his endurance reaps for him a rich reward.

By CECIL FANSHAW

CHAPTER 1.

The Mysterious Farmhouse!

THE rays of the setting sun slanted into the deep veranda of the little bungalow, falling on to the figure of Ted Warrender as he sat, stretched low in a long cane chair, his head and shoulders in shadow. He was a tall, well-built young fellow of about twenty-one years of age, and his face had been deeply bronzed by the tropical sun of East Africa. His clothes consisted of the garb common to all African settlers—khaki shirt and shorts, with leather leggings.

Tired out after a hard day's work, Ted had flung himself into the long chair, and was staring gloomily across his small sisal plantation. But the young fellow's view was distinctly limited, for he had only succeeded, after months of work, in clearing a patch of about twenty acres, part of which he had planted with rows of sisal, and the remainder with ground nuts. All the boundaries of the little plantation consisted of thick thorn scrub, with here and there a tall baobab-tree towering above the dense screen.

But the isolated tract of bush had been cheap; and for that reason Ted, after a few months experience on a large estate up-country, had invested all his small capital in buying this heart-breaking, uncleared ground in the hot lowland region. Fortunately Ted had not been forced to exist on the profits of his plantation, but had made some money out of ivory-trading—the local natives being willing to exchange ivory for brass wire and blankets. And occasionally Ted had been lucky enough to shoot a tusker himself.

Suddenly the youngster brought his brown fist crashing down on the arm of his chair.

"What with the shortage of 'boys,'" he exclaimed, "and the cost of clearing bush, I guess this plantation o' mine can't be run much longer! As for ivory, I ain't seen a trace of elephant, nor yet

a trade tusk for weeks! I reckon I shall have to sell out. Hallo, what's that?"

Ted broke off and leapt to his feet. He had just seen some natives emerge from the thick thorn scrub and commence to pass along the narrow footpath which traversed the far end of his plantation. And those natives were carrying some magnificent elephant tusks!

"Phew!" muttered the young fellow. "There's some tiptop ivory, or I'm a Dutchman! If they'll only trade some of it, it'll get me out of the dickens of a hole!"

Without loss of time Ted strode out of his veranda and proceeded, apparently leisurely, towards a point in the path which he knew the natives must pass. From his previous experience of dealing with African savages, he knew better than to appear too anxious, or to mention the subject of ivory straight away.

"Jambo," he said, speaking in Swahili, when the leader of the native gang drew abreast of him, "habari gani? Habari ya shamba yako?" ("What is the news? How are things at your home?")

"Jambo, bwana!" ("Good-day, sir!") replied the foremost savage as he halted. He was a strapping great fellow, almost naked, and he continued, in his own tongue, "Everything is all right with us."

There followed several minutes conversation about nothing in particular and everything in general, until at last Ted ventured to admire the ivory.

"Beautiful teeth," he murmured in the native language, stroking one of the great yellow tusks. "Worth much brass wire and many silver rupees."

"Doubtless, bwana," grunted the big savage; but he gathered up his own load and made a signal to his followers to advance.

"Stop a little!" cried Ted, who was astounded at negotiations being broken off so quickly. "Are the tusks not for sale?"

"Hapana, bwana," ("No, sir,") replied the savage. "All the ivory belongs to a Dutchman, who pays us to carry it

to the coast. Whence it comes we know not."

Ted felt positive that the native knew quite well where the tusks had come from, and had been well paid to hold his tongue. But the young fellow was astonished at the number of tusks and their quality.

"Can none be bought at the place where these were obtained?" he asked anxiously in the local dialect as the natives prepared to move on.

"I don't know," was all the reply the lad received; and the heavily-laden black fellows shuffled off along the footpath, obviously unwilling to give any further information.

Ted, keenly disappointed, stared after the disappearing figures, then he swung round on his heel and returned slowly in the direction of his bungalow.

"There's something queer about this!" he muttered. "I've never seen such a bundle of ivory. A couple of those tusks would have put me right—yet none for sale! Those fellows came from the direction of Kilimanjaro, but I haven't heard of any elephant out that way for a mighty long time. Still, if a Dutchman's getting ivory there now, I'm hanged if I won't have a try!"

As Ted came to this decision he clenched his teeth, strode into his veranda, and shouted loudly for Simba, his head boy.

"Simba," he said when the boy arrived, "to-morrow you and Frasi will come with me in the direction of Mount Kilimanjaro. We go to hunt elephant."

Simba, who was a fine specimen of the East African coast native, clicked his tongue discouragingly, then observed in his own language:

"No elephant out there, bwana. All driven away long time since. And no native man living near Kilimanjaro. No can buy ivory there, or shoot 'him.' Bwana wasting time!"

But Ted insisted. And when he told Simba about the large consignment of ivory he had just seen, the boy rolled his

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* Sisal—a cactus-like shrub which yields a valuable fibre.

brown eyes and opened his mouth wide in amazement.

"That ivory was obtained by a Dutchman, who is shooting somewhere near Kilimanjaro, Simba," ended Ted. "And where a Dutchman can shoot, I can! That is enough. Be here at sunrise tomorrow, and bring Frasi with you."

"Ndio, bwana!" ("Yes, sir!") replied Simba. Then he retreated in the direction of the boys' huts, the conical roofs of which could just be seen from the veranda of Ted's bungalow.

With the following dawn the little party set out. Ted, armed with a light rifle, took the lead, closely followed by Simba, who carried his young boss' heavy elephant gun; while Frasi, a Wakamba boy, brought up the rear, a box of provisions balanced on his head. Half a dozen boys had been left behind to take care of the small plantation.

It was very hot in the close thorn scrub, but all day the party pushed forward, halting only for an hour at noon. And when night fell, tired and covered with sand they were thankful to make camp by a water-hole—the first seen since dawn.

The second day was the same as the first, though now, towering up on the horizon, the twin snow-clad peaks of Kilimanjaro could be plainly seen. Lions had roared in their vicinity the previous night, and of buck they had discovered plenty of tracks, but not a sign of elephant.

"As I said, bwana," grumbled Simba in his own language as they trudged along, "there are no elephants round here. That Dutchman must have been shooting many days' march hence."

Ted made no reply. But when the second evening approached, still without a sign of elephant, he began to fear that Simba was right. And Ted was not provisioned for a long trek, nor could he spare the time.

Shortly before sunset the party struck into a little glade, in the midst of which stood a huge bottle-shaped baobab-tree, and, although the place was waterless, Ted decided to make camp in this open space. Frasi collected some brushwood and soon had a fire going.

Suddenly, as Ted sat puffing at a pipe and staring into the crackling flames, the bush parted, and a young, red-bearded man stepped forth.

Ted glanced up, not a little surprised to see a solitary white man in such a lonely spot, but he cordially invited the fellow to share his fire and food. But the newcomer, obviously a Dutchman, seemed considerably put out by the meeting, and remained on the fringe of the bush, scowling.

"Good-day!" he replied grudgingly to Ted's greeting, then went on: "Vot voo you trekkin' round dese parts?"

"Probably for the same reason that you are!" retorted Ted, gazing pointedly at the other's rifle. "I'm shooting—looking for elephant."

"Huh!" sniffed the young Boer. "Dere aren't elephants anywheres near. Dey all gone since der war. You are wasting your time, mein frien'."

Ted stared, then flushed angrily. He realised that he was being given a very plain hint to clear out, which fact he considered an excellent reason for remaining where he was. So he proceeded to ignore the Boer, and returned to his occupation of staring into the fire, on which Frasi had just placed a large cooking-pot.

For a few seconds the Dutchman shuffled uneasily, then he remarked:

"Dere ees a beeg storm coming, mein frien'. Den you mooch vet vill get. Ja!"

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"Indeed," said Ted; but he didn't trouble to look round, though a distant rumble of thunder told him that the Dutchman was probably right.

Followed another brief silence, after which the Dutchman, as before, was the first to break.

"I go to der farm of mein oncle, Mynheer Schweder," he said. "Berhabs you like to come also. To spend a vet night at der house of Schweder will be better dan to sleep in der bush. Ja! (Yes.)"

Ted swung round, suspicious of the other's sudden affability, but he was not quick enough to catch the fleeting gleam of cunning in the Dutchman's pig-like eyes; the fellow was now smiling pleasantly.

"That's very decent of you," exclaimed Ted, thinking perhaps he had misjudged the young Boer, "for there is certainly going to be the deuce of a storm. But you said a farm—surely there are no farms near here?"

"Der farm of mein oncle ees quite close," was the reply. "Make haste if you are coming."

A swift glance at the lowering sky and the black clouds which already obscured the sinking sun told Ted that there was indeed need to hurry. So in a few minutes he had kicked out his fire, called up Simba and Frasi, and was trudging through the bush beside his new acquaintance.

For about half an hour they tramped steadily forward, hardly exchanging a word, except that Ted learnt that the young Dutchman's name was Piet Duveen, then the bush seemed gradually to thin out. Five minutes later they emerged from the cruel thorn scrub into a large, well-cultivated clearing.

Ted gasped in astonishment. Here, far from any other haunts of men, was a perfect little farm, shut in and well hidden in the midst of a sea of bush. There were several acres of tall, green meales, a windmill that pumped up water from an artesian well into an artificial pond, cattle kraals, outbuildings, and even a "silo"—the latter being a high tower into which chopped green cattle food is poured by machinery.

To Ted, coming out of a wilderness of thorn scrub, the unexpected scene was amazing. But the young Boer, Piet, gave Ted no time for contemplation, but hustled him in the direction of a substantial bungalow that stood at the farther end of the concealed oasis. They reached shelter only just in time. As they dashed up the steps of the veranda, the storm, which had been brewing for some hours, burst with tropical fury.

A hurricane seemed to smite the building with the hand of a giant, shaking it to its very foundations; the first heavy gouts of rain hissed down, and a vivid flash of lightning, accompanied by an appalling crash, momentarily lit up the gathering gloom.

That red glare of electricity showed Ted two things—Frasi and Simba dashing through the driving rain for the shelter of the Kafirs' huts; and a huge, grey-bearded, ogre-like Dutchman who had sprung from a chair in the dark recesses of the veranda and was coming forward menacingly.

Pitch blackness followed the blinding glare of the lightning flash; and Ted, astounded and apprehensive, stood stock still, while the thunder roared and crashed immediately overhead with increased intensity.

CHAPTER 2.

At the Mercy of the Dutchmen!

HERE came another flash. And this one revealed to Ted the terrifying spectacle of the old Dutchman making at him, revolver in hand.

Above the din of the raging elements rose a string of Dutch oaths—then the darkness fell again like a black pall.

Quick as thought, Ted stooped, and shouted out a warning, at the same time pushing forward the muzzle of his rifle. Why he was being received in this outrageous manner the British lad could not imagine. It had all happened with such appalling rapidity.

"Stop the old fool, Piet," bawled Ted to the young Boer who had guided him to the mysterious farmhouse, "or I'll shoot!"

Ted's voice was almost drowned by the deafening clangour of the storm, but Piet seemed suddenly to grasp the situation, and he leapt forward, shouting out something in Dutch.

There followed a wordy conflict between the two Dutchmen in the harsh, guttural language of the back-veldt Boer. Then Piet yelled out to Ted, who was expecting a shot out of the darkness at any moment.

"Come on, put down your rifle! Der vos a leedle mistake! Mein oncle mistook you vooer anoder man."

"Little mistake!" gasped Ted. "I should call it a darned big one!" But he did not lower the muzzle of his rifle until he heard the heavy footsteps of "Uncle Schweder" shuffle off along the veranda. Then Piet struck a match and lit a battered hurricane lantern.

"That was a pleasant welcome!" shouted Ted, as he came forward.

Ted already wished he was back in the bush out in the furious storm, for he was not at all satisfied with Piet's explanation. But the lad had no intention of turning tail, since he felt certain that he was now on the track of the origin of the ivory hoard that had been carried past his plantation. Doubtless either Schweder or Piet was the Dutchman to whom the savage porters had referred, and both seemed to resent an Englishman's intrusion into the district.

Piet threw his match out into the storm, then turned and howled into Ted's ear:

"Do nod notice Oom (uncle) Schweder. He has der fits of der nerves when dere is thunderstorms. Come inside, und we supper will haben. Ja!"

Ted followed the young Dutchman through a french window and into a sparsely furnished room, the farthest corners of which the pale yellow glimmer of Piet's hurricane lantern failed to illuminate. Then, shortly afterwards, supper was served by a hard-featured old Dutchwoman.

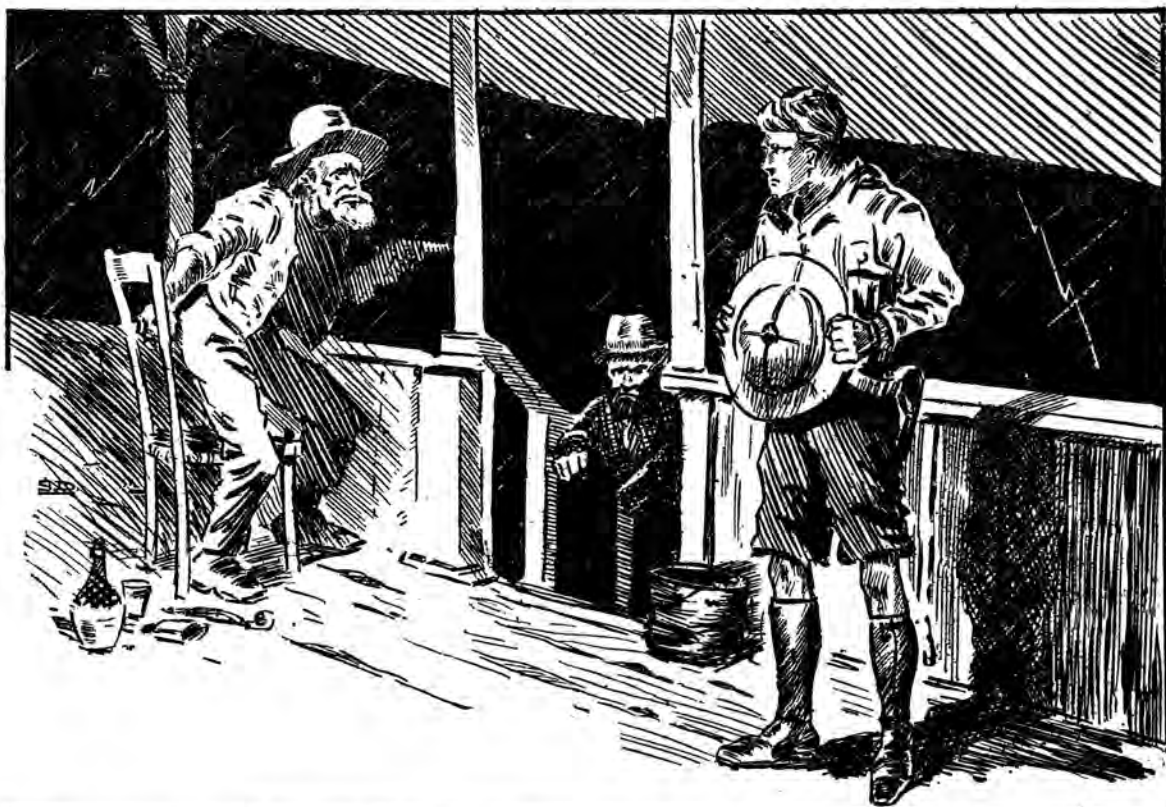
Half-way through the meal the old man, Schweder, reappeared, and he plumped himself down into a wooden chair without a word. Indeed, the whole repast was eaten in silence—Schweder and Piet washing down their food with copious draughts of Cape brandy. But Ted confined himself to water.

Never, the British lad reflected, would he forget that strange meal in the echoing farmhouse—his grim-faced hosts, occasionally lit up by vivid blue flashes of lightning, seeming like goblins of the storm that roared and crashed outside with undiminished fury.

The meal over, Schweder pushed back his chair, its legs scraping harshly over the bare boards, then he rose to his feet, stomped out of the room, and banged the door after him.

"You ready vooer der sleep,

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:



As the blinding glare of the lightning flashed out, Ted Warrender saw the old Dutchman making at him, revolver in hand—Astounded and apprehensive, Ted stood stock still.

Englander?" shouted Piet to Ted, when the old Dutchwoman had followed Schweder.

"Yes!" bawled Ted, only too ready to get away by himself.

"Come along, den!" was the shouted reply. And Piet rose and led the way into a bare little room adjoining.

This room, the walls of which were of naked brick, contained no furniture, except a low bedstead, which stood in one corner, and on which was a kaross (rug) of skins.

"Sleep sound!" shouted Piet, with a malicious grin; then he went out of the room, taking the hurricane-lantern and leaving Ted in pitch darkness.

For a few seconds, Ted, who had retained his rifle, stood listening to the deafening din of the rain on the iron roof, and trying to see out of the solitary window, which was heavily barred. But all he could catch was an occasional glimpse of acres of dripping, wind-tossed green mealies, when the flashes of forked lightning were particularly intense. A foreboding of evil gripped the lad's heart.

"I reckon I'd have done better to stop out in the bush all night," he muttered suddenly. "There's something darned queer about this happy home! Evidently I'm not wanted; yet the Dutchmen seem keen to keep an eye on me. And I'm jolly well going to stick it out, if the secret of that blessed ivory has anything to do with my treatment. I didn't invite myself here; an' I guess the Dutchmen haven't bought up the right to shoot all the elephant in the district, if there are any!"

Ted paused in his musings, then added:

"I hope Simba and Frasi are all right down in the Kafir huts. They should be. Boys usually pal up all right."

Ted turned towards the door, thinking

of having a smoke on the veranda, or of giving Simba a hail. His hand fell on the latch, and he gave a tug. But the door did not yield, so he gave a harder tug. Then he gasped out:

"Locked in, by Jove! What the deuce is the meaning of that?"

Ted shook the stout door for a few seconds; then, realising the futility of what he was doing, he turned and groped his way across to the low bed, and sat down, his rifle across his knees.

"So I'm a prisoner, brother Boer, am I?" he gritted between clenched teeth. "Right-ho! Just come along in and try some fancy tricks, an' see what you'll get!"

The discovery that he was a prisoner—for the bars of the only window were of iron—made Ted furious, but did not rob him of caution. To hammer on the door might only precipitate a tragedy, so he resolved to sit up all night, rifle in hand, ready to give the Dutchmen a hot reception, feeling certain they would come when they thought him asleep.

How long he sat, listening to the thunder as it rolled away towards Kili-manjaro, and watching the blue lightning flashes through the little window, Ted had no idea; but gradually, tired out, he nodded.

With a jerk he pulled himself together, but he felt most unaccountably drowsy, and the rifle slid from his hand on to the bed.

In vain the lad fought against the feeling of lassitude that sank into his brain. Gradually it overcame him.

It seemed impossible that he could have been drugged. He had had nothing but water to drink, but something might have been introduced into his food, a drug that took some time to act. In any case, drugged or tired out, the last thing Ted was conscious of was the

lulling swish and beat of the heavy rain on the iron roof.

Suddenly an appalling, deafening crash, right overhead, seemed to split the universe, rousing even Ted. The storm had worked back, and was now raging more fiercely than ever.

Instantly Ted became aware that the door of the little room was open, for a cold wind blew on his face.

"Who's there?" the lad managed to cry out, as he groped for his rifle, his senses still dull.

But no human voice replied. Instead came a blinding flash of lightning that revealed an alarming spectacle.

Framed in the pitch blackness of the narrow doorway, Ted caught a fleeting glimpse of the orange beard and shifty blue eyes of Piet Duveen, and the younger Dutchman was crouching forward, a black object in his hand. And over Piet's shoulder glared the ogre-like face of old Schweder, his white hair and grey beard a matted tangle, his lips drawn back, exposing a row of yellow fangs.

With a shout, Ted half-rose; but on the instant, snarling like a wild beast, Piet hurled himself forward. A hand found Ted's throat, and something thudded down on to the lad's skull, scattering his wits and driving him down into oblivion.

CHAPTER 3.

Doomed to Suffocation!

WHEN Ted recovered consciousness, his first sensation was one of abominable pain—agony in his aching head and a gnawing torture in his wrists and ankles. Slowly he realised that he was bound hand and

foot, and was lying on his back on something soft. But where he was the young fellow could not, at first, imagine.

Dead silence reigned, so evidently the storm had passed, and from a glimmer of light that appeared high up above him, Ted guessed that it was now daytime. He must have been unconscious for hours.

With difficulty, he rolled over on to his side, and could then make out that the walls of his prison were of grey stone, immensely high and built in a circle, and he was lying on a deep bed of some strong-smelling vegetable.

Suddenly the awful truth beat in upon Ted's brain, and he had to bite his lip to repress a cry of dismay. He was lying almost at the bottom of the big silo, the tower he had caught sight of when he had first reached the isolated farm.

Ted fully understood the use of the silo. It would be filled from the top with tons and tons of chopped, green mealies, poured in by machinery, to be preserved throughout the dry winter. And Ted himself would be buried alive, an awful death by suffocation!

Even if a search was made for him, no one would think of looking in the great tower, and in the following spring his bones would be taken out and cast into the thorn scrub, long after he had been forgotten.

Evidently the Dutchmen had been reluctant to shoot him in the house, for their native servants might have reported the deed. But they were obviously determined to get rid of the stranger who had stumbled into a district where they desired no intruders.

But Ted now cared nothing that he had probably been within an ace of discovering either some spot inhabited by an unknown herd of elephant, or a hoard of ivory wrested by force from some native chief. All Ted wanted was to get free, and he struggled mightily to achieve his object.

"Simba! Frasi!" he yelled, hoping that one of his boys might hear his cries; and he fought desperately at his bonds.

But the solid stone walls of the silo drowned his shouts, and the bonds of raw hide resisted all efforts Ted made to break them.

The young Englishman paused for a moment, breathless; then a dull, humming note reached his ears.

"The scoundrels!" he gasped. "They've started the machinery!"

Furiously Ted redoubled his frenzied efforts, writhing, straining, and shouting; but it was all of no avail. His ears had not deceived him; the fiendish Boers had started the engine which worked the big mealie chopper outside the tower.

Ted glanced up, and his eyes bulged with horror. Already the chopped mealie stalks were coming down from the top of the tower in clouds, looking like big, green snowflakes.

Faster and faster went the chopping machinery, and louder grew the whirr of the fly-wheel of the engine, and thicker and thicker descended the clouds of vegetation, until Ted, within the stone tower, was completely covered by a green blanket.

Several times Ted managed to kick himself clear of the falling masses of green stuff; but it was no use. The fine-chopped stalks were coming down in tons and tons, and soon Ted's body was buried beneath a dead weight of it, and his head, which he had contrived to keep raised, must soon be smothered.

Very speedily the millions of green flakes increased in depth, until the surface of the accumulation reached Ted's mouth, quickly rising to his eyes. Then

the hum of the machinery outside grew fainter and fainter, and the unfortunate youngster found himself fighting against suffocation in pitch darkness.

Meanwhile, Simba and Frasi, who had passed the stormy night in the huts of the Dutchman's native boys, had been astonished at not being summoned at daylight. So, soon after sunrise, they proceeded towards the bungalow to make inquiries.

Of Piet there was no sign, but Simba's sharp eyes quickly discovered the burly figure of Schweder, who was busy running the machinery outside the tall silo.

Hurrying forward, Simba saluted the uncouth old Dutchman, crying:

"Jambo, bwana!" Then adding, in his own tongue, "Have you seen our bwana (master), or the young white man who guided us hither? Is our bwana not yet ready to set out?"

Above the noise of the whirring machinery old Schweder shouted back, in Swahili:

"Your master left an hour since, with the young man who brought him. They have gone to shoot. Clear out yourselves!"

Frasi, who was a rather timid Wakamba boy, was much inclined to act on Schweder's orders. But Simba, a big-kimbed, stout-hearted Swahili, was not satisfied with the Dutchman's account of Ted's movements, and walked off grumbling to himself, Frasi pattering at his side.

Together the two boys went to the bungalow, but they were greeted with such a flow of abuse by the old Dutch woman that they returned, disconsolate, to the Kafir huts. None of the Dutchman's natives were about—all had gone off to work—so Simba spoke his mind freely to Frasi.

"Frasi, thou mud-head," he exclaimed, in the local dialect. "Dost thou believe that our bwana would go hence to shoot without telling us, when I have the big rifle and all the cartridges? No! That ugly, white-bearded old Dutchman has probably done our master some harm. We will wait here a short while, then, if our master does not appear, I will force yonder grey-faced baboon to say where he is. Maybe our master has even been slain, and the younger baboon—he with the red beard—has gone away to bury him."

The meagre-framed Frasi shuffled nervously, as he squatted on his haunches digging at the ground with his bare toes. He was not anxious to try conclusions with a white man. But Simba remembered what Ted had told him—how the ivory that had been carried past the sisal plantation was supposed to have been obtained by a Dutchman, who was shooting somewhere round Kilimanjaro. Naturally, Simba concluded that either Piet or Schweder was the unknown Dutchman, and the boy shrewdly guessed that the back-veldt Boers would stick at nothing in order to keep the whereabouts of any elephant a dead secret.

Ten minutes passed without any sign of Ted. Then Simba, growing anxious, rose to his feet.

"See, Frasi!" he said resolutely. "I will wait no longer. You stay here, while I go and make talk with the old greybeard."

Nothing loth, Frasi remained where he was, squatting in front of a thatched Kafir hut, while Simba, armed with Ted's elephant gun, stalked off, and quickly disappeared behind a patch of tall green mealies.

Old Schweder was so busy with his machinery, which he was working alone,

that he was quite unaware of Simba's approach until that big Swahili boy had crept up within five yards of him.

"Where is my bwana?" bellowed Simba suddenly, in his own tongue.

The old Dutchman let out a roar of rage and jumped round, his white beard bristling, his bloodshot eyes flaming, and his fists clenched. But he made no furious attack, for he was looking straight into the muzzle of a heavy, double-barrelled cordite rifle. And along the sights of that rifle glinted the unwavering eye of Simba.

"What are you doing?" roared Schweder in Swahili, as he checked his intended rush. "Put down that rifle, you son of a hyena! How do I know where your master is?"

The old man was quivering with rage, but was afraid to move.

"My master slept in your house last night!" cried Simba, holding the rifle as steady as a rock. "Quickly say what has become of him, or this elephant gun shall blow you to pieces!"

Schweder made no reply, but stood gnashing his teeth. Then, thinking that Simba would not really dare to shoot, he suddenly leaned forward to spring.

Simba pressed the foremost trigger of his weapon, and, with a terrific roar, a heavy, expanding bullet whizzed out of the right barrel, whirled Schweder's hat off his head, and then slammed up against the grey stone walls of the silo.

Deafened by the explosion, and half-stunned by the shock of the heavy discharge at such close quarters, Schweder went over backwards.

Simba dashed forward. He still had a cartridge in his left barrel, and he menaced the Dutchman as he lay on the ground.

"Upesi (quickly)!" he yelled. "You will not have another chance. Where is my master?"

Schweder, his ears still ringing, and the smell of the cordite in his nostrils, glared up at the big native, who was now shaking with passion. He realised that the boy meant what he said.

"Your master is in the silo!" he yelled, reading death in Simba's smouldering black eyes. "Put aside that rifle, and I will get him out."

Although Simba had felt certain that Schweder had disposed of Ted somehow, he had not expected such a ghastly revelation. But he instantly realised the urgent need for haste if his master was to be rescued alive.

"Then make haste, Dutchman!" he shouted. "Stop the 'tinga-tinga' (machinery), and get my bwana out before I blow you in half."

Schweder, having no desire to receive the full charge of an elephant gun in his stomach, scrambled to his feet, and backed away towards his engine, cursing volubly into his white beard. But Simba followed up step for step, and covered the Dutchman while he tugged and jerked viciously at various levers.

With a final whirr and clatter the humming machinery came to a standstill, and Schweder turned towards Simba, snarling with baffled rage.

"Now get the bwana out!" shouted Simba.

Schweder, still swearing, clambered down from his engine and hastened across to the big silo.

In one side of the stone tower, on the ground level, was a small door, which was used for extracting the fodder—from the bottom upwards—as it was required. This little door Simba forced the unwilling Dutchman to open.

As the door swung open out poured a green stream of chopped mealie stalks, quickly becoming heaped up on the ground. And as the stream grew slacker

and slacker, a bound figure shot out of the aperture, feet foremost.

“Bwana Ted!” cried Simba, darting forward, divided between joy at finding his master and rage at the way in which he had been treated.

But Ted was unconscious and could make no reply. And Schweder, taking advantage of the fact that Simba's rifle had, for a moment, ceased to cover him, took to his heels.

CHAPTER 4.

The Secret of the Valley!

DRAWING a big sheath knife, Simba sliced through the bonds which had rendered Ted helpless, and, strand by strand, the raw-hide thongs parted. Then suddenly Ted drew a deep breath and sat up. But he had only been rescued in the nick of time—five more minutes in the choking mass of vegetation would have sufficed to suffocate the young fellow.

Ted gripped at Simba's arm and dragged himself upright, then for an instant he stood wavering, for his feet were numb and cramped.

“How did you find me, Simba?” he exclaimed hoarsely in Swahili, as memory returned. “And where are the Boer folk?”

“I made the old Dutchman pull you out, bwana,” replied Simba. “The young one, with the red beard, I have not seen.”

“Well done, Simba, stout fellow!” exclaimed Ted. “A good reward shall be yours when we have found what we seek—the elephant herd. And we will now follow up that young Dutchman who, doubtless, knows the haunts of the beasts, for he brought us here with evil intent. But first I have a few words to say to the old man. Here, give me the heavy rifle. I have now quite recovered.”

Reluctantly Simba handed over the elephant gun to his young master, who was still unsteady on his legs. Then they made their way slowly towards the farmhouse together. But they found the house shut up. Neither of Schweder nor of the old Dutch woman was there any sign—both had made themselves scarce. But Ted's light rifle was discovered, lying in a corner of the deep veranda.

“Never mind, Simba,” said Ted, when, for some time, they had searched in vain. “It is the young Boer called Piet whom I wish to find. Call Frasi, and we will set out at once.”

Somewhat shamefacedly, Frasi answered Simba's summons—the Wakamba boy had not expected to see either his master or Simba again, and, thoroughly frightened, had kept out of harm's way. But Ted said nothing to the timid native, and the trio immediately started on the trail of Piet Duveen.

It was easy for Simba to pick up Piet's tracks through the thorn scrub, for the ground had been softened by the torrential downpour. But before they had gone many yards, Simba halted, and, pointing to the ground, exclaimed in his own language:

“This Dutchman has taken six boys with him, bwana.”

Ted hurried forward, and hastily examined the tracks of bare feet that showed distinctly in the red mud.

“You're right, Simba!” he cried. “That means the young Boer is on the track of elephant, and hopes to return with ivory. Good! We will have speech with that man, and return with ivory ourselves also!”

Having a clear track to follow, the party pushed forward as rapidly as



Ted glanced up, and his eyes bulged with horror at the sight of the chopped vegetation coming down from the tower in clouds, gradually covering him with a green blanket. Soon his body would be buried beneath a dead weight of it!

possible; but Piet had several hours' start, and seemed to be making no halts. The bush grew thicker and thicker and great thorns clutched at and tore their clothes, and many times they stumbled over great, jagged boulders.

Over their heads was a thick canopy of laced branches, so that they could get no glimpse of the blue sky; and they lost all sense of direction, for the twin peaks of Kilimanjaro had become invisible. But they kept doggedly to the trail.

“Phew!” exclaimed Ted, as he halted, pushed back his helmet, and mopped his streaming brow. “It's hot enough to cook a lizard. That storm ain't cleared the air much. But I reckon, if we keep on, we should close up with friend Piet by nightfall.”

However, although they pushed forward all day, when the dusk fell, and they were obliged to make camp, there was still no sign of Piet Duveen and his boys. The Dutchman was travelling hard and fast.

With the following dawn, before the dense mists had cleared, the little party resumed the pursuit. And they had not been moving for more than about ten minutes when the rough trail they were following suddenly struck into a broad path. That path had been worn nearly a foot deep by the passing of many huge feet. It was the track of countless elephant!

Ted whistled softly as he surveyed the beaten ground, then stared at Simba in amazement. But Simba shook his head doubtfully.

“Hapana, bwana (No, master)!” exclaimed the Swahili boy. “That is not the track of recent elephant! No great bull has passed this way for many, many years. Once the great ones came, but now they have deserted Kilimanjaro since a long time.”

A few moments' tense silence followed. Then Simba spoke again.

“Whither now, bwana?” he asked. “The tracks of the Dutchman have vanished on the hard rocks. And what use to follow elephant tracks that are a century old?”

“We'll follow the old road of the elephants, Simba!” Ted burst out suddenly. “Who knows where it will lead?”

Simba shrugged his broad, black shoulders helplessly, but immediately prepared to follow his young master, while Frasi groaned dismally; his was not an adventurous spirit.

As the light grew they pushed rapidly along the broad, time-worn track, but it quickly became steeper and steeper, until at last they seemed to reach the top of a ridge. In front of them the ground now sloped down abruptly, but the lower levels were as yet enveloped in a white fog.

“We'll sit down and wait till the mists clear,” said Ted, in Swahili, “then we will descend into the valley.”

Gradually the sun melted the deep pools of mist, and the trees on the steep inclines below began to thrust up their heads. But as the mists sank deeper into the pit no tree-tops appeared, the bottom of the valley apparently being flat and treeless.

The last wreaths of fog vanished, and then Ted sprang to his feet with a gasp of utter bewilderment.

“Look!” was all he could exclaim, clutching at Simba's arm. “Just look!”

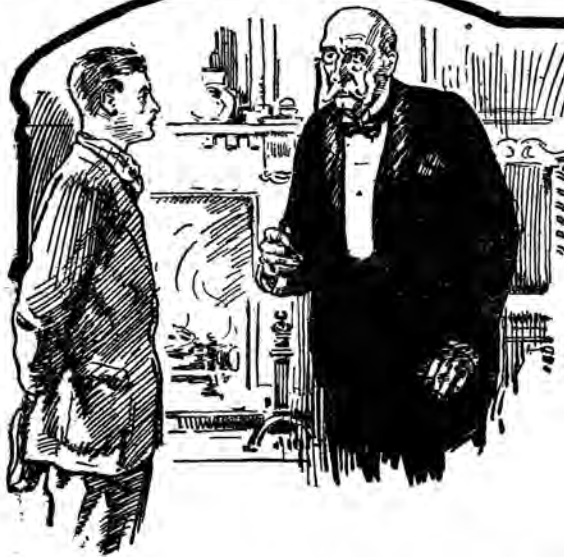
And indeed the spectacle that lay before the astonished gaze of the little party was marvellous in the last degree.

At one time the bottom of the narrow valley must have been the bed of an ancient lake, for here and there grew clumps of strange aquatic plants. But it was not the strange plants that struck Ted dumb, but the things that lay scattered around the plants. All along the valley floor lay huge, gaunt skeletons, immense mouldering bones that sprawled at every conceivable angle, and great white tusks that shimmered and gleamed, undecayed.

“A lost burial ground!” gasped Ted, when he found his voice. “A forgotten cemetery of elephants!”

“True, bwana!” cried Simba at last. “Often have I heard of the burial

(Continued on page 26.)
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THE TRIERS

BY
JACK CRICATON



Fate deals hardly with Jack Morton, yet he sets to work to build up a team of keen triers who will show Boltwich what real football is like!

The Fight.

AS Turner and Babe Bolton faced one another in the ring, a great hush, as it were, fell over Boltwich. Everyone in that large hall seemed to know that there was more than a mere prize-fight here, and more than the mere stake-money in the battle. They shook hands, and then parted, and immediately the Babe danced in, trying his distance nicely with his left. But Harry Turner was every bit as quick as the professional, and he kept his distance nicely, trying a right hook which just missed, and then as the Babe came on to him, covering up, and finally clinching.

"I'm going to show 'em!" muttered the Babe over Harry's ear; but the lad took no notice, and as the referee parted them, he sprang back, and sent a stinger into the Babe's body.

A grunt came from the other, and savagely he lashed out with his right.

The punch missed by a foot almost, and Harry jumped in, a perfectly timed left sending the Babe to the ring.

"Good boy! Good old Harry!"

Up went the roar, and the house fairly rose to its feet as it was seen that Harry Turner had drawn first blood. But the lad, pleased as he was, was not counting his chickens before they were hatched. He knew perfectly well that although he had sent in a beauty, the Babe had been able to get just enough out of its reach to counter its full strength, and that not much damage had been done.

Already the other was mounting to his feet, only taking three seconds of the count, and as Harry sprang at him again like a young tiger, he covered up with all the skill of a professional fighter, and for the rest of the round in some really punishing body work, he made Harry puff and blow more than a little.

They both came up for the second round fresh, and there was a look of murder in the Babe's eyes, even as there was a red patch on his chin where Harry had caught him with his left.

He feinted, and Harry was almost caught napping. A quick jab to Harry's ribs brought his chin forward, and like a flash of lightning the Babe's right came up in a vicious upper-cut; but instinct

saved the lad, for his glove was between his chin and the blow, and although shaken, he was able to cling on to his opponent.

"Break, Turner, break!" roared the referee, and parted the two men.

The Babe rushed in again at once, fiercely, fighting now at the top of his skill. He had Harry on the run for a moment. Right and left he gave them. Luckily for Harry none were fatal. The lad fought back, giving ground all the while, covering, doing his best to stem the other's rush, and fighting for time, for he could tell already by the way the other was fighting, that the Babe didn't want it to last long.

As it was, both of them were suffering terribly from their damaged hands, and only the fact that there was more than the money and honour in the fight kept them going at such a terrific speed.

At last Harry felt the ropes at his back. He could retreat no further. And now the Babe was moving in, punishing

him cruelly, a look of murder in his eyes, and a snarl on his lips.

But Harry had all the pluck in the world. He heard the boys roaring at him above the din.

"The Triers!" they roared, and, standing up, he fought back.

For a moment science was thrown to the winds. Perhaps, if the Babe had kept his head a moment longer, he could have ended the fight then. But he wanted to hurt, and the man who is only out to hurt is not the one who always wins.

It was pure slogging.

The house was almost mad with excitement. Men and lads stood raving. "Biff! Bang! Wallop!"

That was all there was to it for the moment. Harry had his back to the wall now, and was returning blow for blow, until suddenly he pretended to go down on one knee, and slipped beneath the Babe's right arm, and so into the middle of the ring again.

A roar of delight greeted him. He had escaped cleverly, and was on the Babe like lightning, as the other turned rather bewilderedly round. A sharp left caught the Babe nicely, he swayed, but managed to clinch, and then both hung on to one another, breathing hard, while the house gave them both a hearty cheer, and the round ended.

This was indeed a fight, and the excitement was terrific.

"Keep him going at this pace, Harry," Jack murmured, as he bent over his man in his corner. "He is puffing more than you! But don't be so willing to mix it. Last out a few more rounds, and he will be at your mercy!"

Harry tried to grin, and a moment later got to his feet.

How it happened he didn't know.

He thought he was watching the Babe carefully enough, but he couldn't have been.

He missed with his left, and sprang back out of the reach of the Babe's right as it swung round viciously. As the Babe missed, Harry jumped in with his own right; but the Babe neatly side-stepped, and, bringing his own left hard in, had taken Harry on the point.

It was a clean, clever blow, and Harry took the floor, dazed, almost beaten.

"One—two—three—"

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

For the sake of his invalid mother, Jack Morton, a lad of seventeen, calls upon his grandfather, Sir Jasper Clifton, for aid. It was by no means a pleasant undertaking for Jack, for his mother, much against her father's wishes, had married a worker in Sir Jasper's mill, who was now dead. Sir Jasper, however, is taken up with the lad straight away, saying that he will alter his will and make him co-heir with George Clifton, another grandson, and Jack's cousin, and whose great interest in life is the Boltwich Football Club. In high spirits, Jack gives up his old job to take up work at Clifton's. But Sir Jasper dies that night. Thinking only of his mother, Jack goes to George Clifton, but his appeal proves futile, Clifton telling him that the will is unaltered, and that he is not wanted. Jack's anger is aroused, and, meeting Ronnie Stevens, whom George Clifton had deemed it wise to sack, the two lads, former players of Boltwich F.C., determine to fight Clifton.

"We'll get a team that won't be beat," said Stevens, "and call them the Triers." The team shows great promise, much to the annoyance of Clifton. Seeking revenge, the latter approaches Babe Bolton, who is matched to fight Jack Turner, the Triers' goalie. Realising the fruits to follow, Bolton, by fair means or foul, determines to win. The unsuspicious Turner falls an easy victim to trickery, and his right hand is rendered useless by dope. Undismayed, however, the plucky lad enters the ring.

(Now read on.)

He could hear the fatal seconds ringing out. He twisted over on his side. Surely he wasn't going to be beaten like this! After so much training, so much hope. He could see the referee pushing the gloating Babe back.

"Four-five-six—"
Harry was on one knee, but his strength seemed to have deserted him.

Then suddenly he heard the words:
"Come on, the Triers!"
It gave him that last little miraculous bit of strength.

"Seven-eight—"
He was on his feet
Like a dog from the leash the Babe sprang at him, and it was a marvel how he missed.

Harry made no bones about it. He hung on.

"Break—break!" roared the referee.
Then as they broke the Babe gave him a brutal one dangerously low.

"Foul!" roared Jack Morton from his corner.

Few had seen the blow, and so much noise was going on that no notice was taken of it.

But it had been a foul blow, and it had served its purpose.

The Babe came on for Harry again, but instead of clinching, the lad made a superhuman effort now, and fought back. He felt dazed and yet inspired. He knew he was using strength he hadn't got. If anything went wrong now, the other would beat him. He was fighting on his nerve. But he fought brilliantly. A pretty left made the Babe snarl. A right upper-cut caught the Babe unbalanced, and back he went.

How they roared now!
Harry sank back to the ropes himself, glad of the moments, while the Babe knelt there in the middle of the ring, obviously making as much use of the count as he could.

He didn't rise completely until six, and then it was he who clinched.

Now Harry was fighting. He gave as good as he got in the infighting, and when the bell came, the Babe went to his corner very shakily.

"You've got him," cried Jack, "if you keep your eyes open!"
"Yes—yes!"

The Babe came up slowly for the fourth round, and ambled into the ring unsteadily and slowly. But Harry was not to be caught napping. And it was as well. For after swaying rather like a drunken man from one side to the other, the Babe suddenly lurched forward and sent in as perfectly a timed right as need be imagined. But Harry was watching for it, and it missed by inches, and the Babe, losing his temper, bored in furiously.

There in the centre of the ring they fought savagely, with more of the primitive brute about them than of scientific boxers.

"I'll kill yer!" muttered the Babe, and if the words reached no one else, they came to Harry, and he smiled.

He remembered Jack's words. It was madness to fight a fellow like this at his own game. He backed lightly away. The Babe blundered after him. He hit at air, and Harry slipped past him, cleverly, sending in a sharp right to the neck, as he passed.

The Babe had lost his temper now. Bleeding at the nose, his eyes livid, he threw defiance to the four winds of heaven. He probably knew better than anyone else that he was not in the condition to stand many rounds at this pace, and he wanted to finish it now.

A terrific right passed round Harry's neck, so that the Babe was actually hugging him for a moment; but as Harry lurched in against his man he

drove in a short right himself to the body which made the Babe grunt horribly. He tried to hang on, but Harry managed to slip away; and then, flashing in a left, he had the Babe swaying. He struck out; his guard had gone. A moment later his chin went back. He was really beaten then from sheer exhaustion; but, of course, Harry couldn't bet on that in a fight like this.

He jumped in. One to the heart, another to the point, and the Babe went back as dead as a whistle.

They counted him out—and he was out, for even when the ten seconds had passed he had not stirred. There he remained in the centre of the ring, and they had to carry him to his corner.

Harry Turner had beaten the Babe. The Triers were on top once more!

Jack's Suspicious Gather!

IT was on the Monday evening following the great fight that Jack Morton, making his way home from work, met Ronnie Stevens.

"Hallo, Jack!" that young man cried. "I was coming to see you!"

"Good for you, lad!" exclaimed Jack. "And what did you think of the fight?"

Ronnie grinned from ear to ear. "Some scrap, wasn't it!" he said.

"Didn't they let into one another! And both with a bad hand! I understand that there was some dirty work before the fight, too, and that they tried to damage Harry's hand!"

Jack nodded, and told his chum what had happened.

"My word, and he fought like that!"

"He says that from the moment the bell went he forgot all about it. But it was a dirty trick, all the same, and I'm glad to hear that the Babe is leaving Boltwich. If a certain other person would follow his example—"

Ronnie gave his friend a quick, sideways glance.

"You mean George Clifton?"

"I do!"

"Funny!" said Ronnie. "It was about him I wanted to see you this evening, Jack."

"Eh?"
They had reached Jack's humble home, and the lad had stopped instinctively. He tried to take trouble to his mother as rarely as possible.

"Mother's inside," he said. "Hadh't you better tell me here?"

Ronnie nodded.

"Yes, perhaps I had. Well, it's rather a queer thing, Jack, that I never thought of it before, but it only came back to me to-day—not long ago, as a matter of fact. You remember the night when old Sir Jasper died—the night you came up to the Old Hall?"

Jack nodded quickly.

"Sure I do!" he said. "I'm not likely to forget it, my lad."

"No! Well, after you had gone he called Graves and me into the library and made us witness some paper. Said something about a will, but I never thought anything about it. Just put my name to it, and then forgot all about it until to-day!"

Jack stared at his pal. This was indeed news.

"Why to-day, Ronnie?" he asked.

The other considered for a moment. "Well," he said, "it's like this. Old Graves, as you know, was the butler. I didn't like him; but he never did me a really bad turn; and so this evening, as I wanted to see him about something, I went up to his cottage and had some tea. He was as nice as pie to

me. We got talking about all sorts of things, and then just by chance I asked him what the will we signed was all about."

Ronnie paused.
"Yes?"

Ronnie bent nearer.
"You should have seen his face, Jack! His missus and two daughters were there, and they all looked up, and he went as white as a sheet, and then as bold as brass said I must be dreaming!"

"What?" cried Jack.
"Yes! Well, I said, 'But, Mr. Graves, you remember Sir Jasper having you and me into the library the night he died, and telling us to witness something, don't you? Mr. George was standing by the desk, looking like thunder,' I said that. And the old brute shook his head and looked me in the eye and said I must be dreaming; nothing of the sort happened!"

The two lads stared at one another. The night hummed about them, a certain sense of mystery seemed to hang about in the very darkness.

"Good lord!" murmured Jack.
"Funny—eh?"

"Yes. And you are certain, Ronnie, you did sign something?"

"Of course, I'm certain, old chap!"

"A will?"

Ronnie frowned.

"Well, I am almost sure on that point," he said, "but I couldn't be absolutely certain. The old chap was always having us in and making us witness signatures—transfers of shares and things—used to happen every day, like as not. But, Jack, suddenly this evening, when I found myself looking into old Graves' treacherous eyes—fishy always, I thought—and heard him deny a thing he knew as well as I did myself to be true, two things came to me very seriously, old chap!"

"What?" asked Jack, now trembling with excitement.

"Well, the first was that your grandfather said he was going to make a will that evening, leaving you half of his property—eh?"

"Yes—yes, he did!"

Ronnie nodded, and then said:

"And the second is that under the will that they are proving now—the one they read after the old chap was buried—Graves, the butler, comes into a thousand quid. Now, Jack, supposing your uncle did make a second will on a piece of paper, like people do, just a simple document, leaving half to you and half to your cousin, George Clifton, and leaving everything else out, has it occurred to you that it would be very greatly to the advantage both of George Clifton and old Graves to do away with such a second will?"

Jack started violently.

"Great Scott, Ronnie!" he cried. "You don't think that they would do that?"

"I don't know—"

"But it's criminal, it's—"

"They were always as thick as thieves," Ronnie reminded his pal.

Jack stood considering the matter very seriously for a few minutes. It indeed was a serious business, and he was the straightforward, honest sort of lad who simply hated to suspect anyone at all of a dirty trick, and more than hated to suspect anyone of such a trick without real good reason.

It was true that his cousin and old Graves, the butler, had always been very thick. And he saw that there would be very good reason for them destroying such a will as had been made. But to stand here in the dull winter's night in cold blood and to tell

himself that these two men had actually done that very dirty trick—well, that was rather a different question.

He gave a slight laugh.

"Well, in any case," he said slowly, "if they have done away with that will, Ronnie, it's not much good to me!"

Ronnie nodded.

"No; but I thought I ought to tell you. There is no telling what might come of a thing like this. They always say that murder will out; and if they did a thing like this, and you keep your ears and eyes open, you might one day"—he paused and laid a hand on his chum's shoulder—"find out something to your interest!"

"Yes. Thanks, old man!"

"I must get along now," said Ronnie. "Anything fixed up about a match for next Saturday?"

Jack laughed.

"As a matter of fact, we have challenged the Boltwich Reserves, who are without a game, just to see how angry it makes George Clifton; but I'm afraid nothing will come of it!"

"Wish it would!" smiled Ronnie. "I'd like to play against one or two of the old lads. Well, so-long, Jack! And don't forget what I have said to you. There may be more in it than meets the eye."

"Right-ho!"

So they parted, and Jack Morton went in to his mother.

Mrs. Morton was not well these days, and as the lad came in and saw the poor old soul by her fire, coughing badly and trembling with pain, his blood grew hot within him. Just a few pounds of what should have been theirs would have made all the difference in the world to her. And George Clifton had sneered at him and at his mother when he had asked him to be a good fellow and do the decent thing.

"Oh, I'd like to be even with Clifton!" he muttered.

He did not say anything to his mother about the conversation he had had with Ronnie Stevens that evening, because he did not believe in worrying the old lady too much about these matters, especially as they did not seem very likely ever to come to anything. But the thought of it all remained with him, and the next day was brought back to him rather suddenly.

So remarkable had been the success of the Triers over the Hurricanes on the previous Saturday that the lads had decided to make a big effort to turn it into a really first-class club. There was room for another club in Boltwich. Everyone said so. No one was pleased with the way in which George Clifton controlled Boltwich. The prices of admission were excessive, and his heavy hand was felt too often in all the affairs of the club.

As a result the team did not pull well together. It didn't help a man to know that unless he happened to keep in with a young man named George Clifton, who owned most of Boltwich—it did not matter how well he played—he would lose his place.

Besides, there had been a good deal of sympathy for Steve Logan and Ronnie Stevens. They had played good Soccer for the club, and their sudden dismissal from the team had caused angry comment. As it happened, George Clifton had filled their places with expensive transfers, and the matter had been hushed up. But the result had done the team no good, and the moment was indeed ripe for another cleaner, newer club to come into existence in Boltwich and wipe up Clifton's menage.

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The point now, however, was to get a really tiptop team together.

Jack, Ronnie, and Steve Logan had long consultations on the subject, talking until their tongues were weary, and considering all sorts of likely youngsters whose names were put up to them. It seemed that every young fellow in Boltwich who had actually got a place in the town team wanted to join their ranks. But they were not out to rob other clubs, and they wanted, rather, to find a man here and there who would fill one of their vacant positions, and who himself wanted to join a club.

One of their chief troubles was left-back.

Steve Logan was, of course, a tower of strength at right-back, but he was carrying too much on his shoulders at the moment. So far they had not tackled anything very hot, but if it came to a real show-down it would be a very different question.

"Suppose that George Clifton were to let us tackle the reserves next Saturday," said Ronnie, "just to make us look like a lot of fools? We ought to have someone who knows which end of his foot to kick with at left-back!"

"Yes, by Jove!" said Jack. "But who?"

"I heard that there is a youngster named Harvey, who is a clerk at Brown & Clifford's, the solicitors," Steve Logan said in a moment, "who is keen to get a game with us. As a matter of fact, I remember him when he was a kid at school, and he shaped like the real goods then!"

"Left-back?" demanded Ronnie.

"Yes."

"Why, then—"

"I wondered whether you could get along and see him this dinner-time, Jack," Steve said. "I'd go myself, but I must get home. I promised to be back specially early to-day. But if you could see young Harvey and ask him if he'd like to turn out for a bit of practice one evening this week—"

"Sure!" said Jack, and for the moment he did not think much more of the matter, save that he was doing a very simple thing to help the Triers along.

But more was to come of it than that—very much more than he suspected.

He went along to the offices of Brown & Clifford's during the dinner-hour, and was just in time to see young Harvey, whom he knew vaguely by sight, coming out of the office.



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"You're Harvey, aren't you?" he asked.

He was a decent-looking youngster, and he seemed very pleased to see Jack.

"Yes, that's me!" he replied. "And you're Jack Morton. I've heard of you!"

Jack gave a modest and rather self-conscious little laugh.

"Have you?"

"The Triers are getting famous," said Harvey.

They moved down the street together.

"Well," said Jack quietly, "it's about the Triers I've come to see you now, Harvey. We are badly in need of a left-back, and Steve Logan told me to come and see if you'd like to come and have a bit of a kick about with us one evening this week, and see what we think of one another."

The youngster flushed delightedly.

"I'd rather do that than anything I know!" he said. "I'd be tickled to death if I could get a place with you chaps! Where and when?"

"Well," replied Jack, glad that the matter had so far gone so smoothly, "as you may know, Laurie Robson has given us his ground, and any evening you'll find us there—if you don't turn up when it's too dark—and most dinner-times. By the way—"

"Yes!"

Jack considered for a moment.

"I don't think we ought to ask you to come and play for us, the Triers, unless you realise that it'll probably get you into pretty bad odour with George Clifton."

The youngster whistled.

"You see," Jack went on, "I know that Mr. Clifton is a client of Brown & Clifford's, and it might not do you any good. I didn't think of that when Steve Logan mentioned your name, but coming along just now to find you, it occurred to me—and it would be a dirty game to let you play for us, and get the boot for doing so."

In answer to which Harvey laughed outright.

"George Clifton!" he cried. "There is no one in all Boltwich I'd rather do the dirty on than that chap. He certainly is some client of our firm. He's been getting me into the soup every day this week, as though I, a miserable clerk, could do anything. That will of his grandfather's—the chap's mad about it!"

Jack breathed hard. He would, of course, have been half-witted if the words unconsciously used by the lad at his side hadn't connected themselves with what Ronnie Stevens had said to him the previous evening about the two wills. But he made a great effort to keep very calm about it.

"What's the matter with the will?" he asked in an ordinary tone.

Harvey gave an angry exclamation of disgust.

"Why, the chap wants to get it through in about ten minutes, when anyone knows that it takes months to get a will like that through Probate. All that money! He's at the office every day; and, of course, now he's come into all the money old Brown and young Jeff Clifford dance round him, and between the three of them my life isn't worth living. I'll be jolly glad when the beastly thing is through!"

Jack stared ahead of him. He didn't know much about such things, but quite enough to understand that ordinarily there should be no such anxiety on the part of George Clifton to get the will through. If he hadn't been a fool with money before Sir Jasper's death he could now get all he wanted from the bank, even before the will was through Probate.



Flashing in his left, Turner had the Babe swaying. Then, following up, he delivered a hard left jab to the heart and another to the point, and Bolton fell back beaten.

It was all rather strange.
"I'll certainly keep my ears open," he muttered to himself as they hurried along.

Clifton's Sudden Move!

RATTLING good performance you put up, Turner, last Saturday!" said George Clifton as he came into the yard where Harry Turner was examining a car the following Friday, and startled that young man considerably.

Harry turned and saw the other with surprise. He rarely met George Clifton, and he didn't like him, and now he was amazed at the friendliness of his tone.

"Thanks!" he said dryly.
"Dirty dog that Bolton!" Clifton proceeded, taking out a gold cigarette-case and offering Harry one.

"No, thanks. I'm in training!"

"What, another fight?"

"No," said Harry calmly, "for the Triers."

Clifton coloured, but kept his temper. In fact he broke into a light laugh.

"Oh, are you, by Jove! I heard a rumour that you were going to keep goal for them. Well, I've taken them on with our reserves to-morrow afternoon. Hope we don't swamp you too much. However, I've come to talk business. Can you give me ten minutes in your office?"

Harry started and stared. He could not imagine what the other had to say.

"Business?"

"Yes."

"Oh, of course, Mr. Clifton!" the young man said. "Come this way!"

Turner took him across the yard and into his own little office, there giving him a chair at the side of his desk.

George Clifton sat back, blew out a great cloud of smoke, and then said:

"I'm going to buy you up, Turner!"

"You're not!" replied Harry Turner like lightning, flushing.

The other laughed at the tone, and seemed very sure of himself.

"Not so quick, my lad," he said. "Listen to me. As a matter of fact, I have had my eye on your position for some time. My grandfather was thinking of it, when he died. There is no getting away from the fact that it is the ideal position for a garage for our concern."

Harry flushed again.
"I dare say it is, Mr. Clifton," he retorted; "but I happen to be doing very well, and I like my job, and I am not in the market!"

"Every man," said George Clifton, "is in the market!"

Their eyes met.

"That is where you are wrong, Mr. Clifton. Some men are never in the market!"

"I beg your pardon, Turner. I repeat that every man has his price!"

Turner bit his lip.

"Is that meant as an insult, Mr. Clifton?"

"Lor', no, my dear fellow! I've come in here in the friendliest mood this morning, to talk business, and to pay your price. The fact of the matter is that I called at your house on the way here, thinking that I would find you there still; but you are evidently one of the early birds who ever seek that proverbial early worm, and you had gone; but I had a long talk with your mother, and she, I understand, owns half the business."

Harry started.

"I like your cheek!" he said.

"Don't be a fool, Turner! I am offering you ten thousand pounds for the business as it stands at this moment, and I am going to write you a cheque now!"

"Here, hold on a minute, Mr. Clifton!" Harry cried. "You're going too fast. Even if it were ten million, you are not going to fluster me. Why this hurry?"

George Clifton frowned.

"That's my business," he said. "Don't

be a fool, Turner! I have seen your mother. Like the sensible woman that she is, she says that you can't possibly refuse such an offer."

"But—"

Clifford gave a sharp gasp of anger.
"Look here, I'm in a hurry. Do you want to refuse?"

"No; but—"

"Right! I'll write you out the cheque now."

He did so, and, having blotted it, handed it over to the astonished lad with a smile. He seemed to be the one to be pleased, though he was obviously paying several thousand pounds more than the business was worth.

Clifton rose, and held out a hand; and Harry, although he didn't like him, didn't see how to refuse to take it.

"Well," the youngster said, "and what am I to say? Do you want me to continue to work here?"

Clifton started.

"No, I don't think so, Turner," he said. "I think we had better make a clean sweep!"

"My men?"

George Clifton helped himself slowly to another cigarette.

"Oh, let 'em turn up!" he said airily.

"Employment's in a bad way in Bolt-wich, and I don't want to throw a lot of lads out of work. Let 'em turn up. I'll come along myself early to-morrow morning and take charge. I shall be making many changes. Well, so-long, and thanks! I'll get my solicitors to sent you round a line covering the transaction before lunch; and if you find it satisfactory, you might acknowledge it. By the way, let us down easily to-morrow!"

Harry grinned, and took him to the door of the office.

"Good-bye!" he said, and shook hands once again.

Then he went back to his desk, and gazed at the cheque for ten thousand pounds as though he had taken leave of his senses.

"What's it all about?"

He was still seated staring at the little slip of pink paper when there came a knock on the door, and Jack Morton put his head into the office.

"May I come in, Harry?"

"Yes, Jack, do."

"Wasn't that my precious cousin, George Clifton, with you just now, Harry?"

"It was."

Jack stared.

"Don't tell me," he said, "that he is calling the game off to-morrow?"

Harry shook his head and smiled; but it was rather a sad, serious smile.

"No, no, Jack!" he said.

Jack realised that something was worrying his pal, but he did not feel that he could say anything. True, he and Harry were the best of pals; but, after all, he worked for Harry, and he was always careful to remember that fact during working hours.

"Sorry I bother you, Harry," he said; "but Steve and I saw Clifton coming, and, naturally, we thought it was about the game."

"That's all right, old chap."

Jack went off, and Harry was left alone again. He sat staring in front of him. Now he realised what the game was, but he was amazed that George Clifton thought it worth so much to play it. Clifton wanted to get in possession of the business where Jack Morton worked.

Oh, surely not!

Why, the fellow had paid several

thousands of pounds too much for that privilege. He might hate his young cousin, but this was too much of a good thing. Besides, he had said he would keep the men on.

"I'll turn up to-morrow, and see what happens," the young man muttered to himself, and returned to his work.

The next morning there was a surprise for those who worked at Turner's.

Jack Morton was about the last to arrive for work, just on the stroke, as his mother had had a very bad night, and he had had to go into a neighbour, and ask her to look in on Mrs. Morton during the morning.

As he came into the yard he was amazed to find George Clifton standing there. He had obviously ridden down to the yard, for one of the lads was holding his horse.

At his side was standing Harry Turner, and in front of him Steve Logan, his fists clenched, grim, white about the mouth.

Clifton saw Jack, and gave a sharp exclamation.

"And there is the other one—late, too! Come here!"

Jack caught his breath.

"Who are you talking to?" he demanded.

"You, my lad! Now listen to me, men! I have bought this business from Mr. Turner, and I control it absolutely, lock, stock, and barrel. I'm boss. I am going to keep most of you on, but you, Steve Logan, and you, Jack Morton,

I've no room for either of you in any business of mine, and you can get out this morning. The cashier will pay you a week's brass, and you can go! That's all I've got to say!"

Jack fell back a step.

"Is this true, Harry?" he cried.

His unhappy pal looked at him.

"Yes, Jack, I am afraid it is. I had to sell. My mother, you know, owns half the business, and he paid us ten thousand pounds for it. I'm sorry, old chap. I had to sell!"

A gasp went round the group of men, and they stared at the insolent, smiling face of George Clifton. He did not move.

Then Steve touched Jack on the arm.

"Come, lad," he said.

"Yes."

They moved away; and then, when they were just out of earshot, Jack suddenly stopped, and, taking his pal's arm, pointed back at his cousin.

"That settles it, Steve!" he cried.

"Why should Clifton pursue us like this, except to drive me from Boltwich? And why should he want to drive me out of the place, if that business was all on the square—the business of the will. Steve, I told you about last night? I believe he has robbed me and robbed my mother; and, by Harry, I'll find out the truth, or my name's not Jack Morton!"

(There are some startling situations in next week's instalment of this grand serial, so don't miss it, boys!)

"THE ELEPHANTS' CEMETERY!"

(Continued from page 21.)

grounds of the elephants. But I did not believe the stories, and never did I think to behold such a wondrous sight. For many ages the great ones must have come here to die; then they left the place alone, and found another burial ground. Who knows why? But that tells us why none of the tracks were new."

"Ay, and we know more," cried Ted. "We know why the Dutchmen wanted to keep us away—they wanted to keep all the hoard for themselves. For look—look! There is Piet Duveen, the young Boer, and his boys!"

Ted had just caught sight of several figures that had emerged from some bushes at the bottom of the valley, and were even now at work amongst the great skeletons, hacking off the mighty tusks.

Piet was loading up his boys with ivory worth a fortune, and there was more in the valley than a hundred men could remove in a year!

"Come along!" cried Ted, and he raced forward down the steep incline. But he slipped on a smooth rock, lost his footing, and the next instant was tobogganing down the precipitous slopes at a dizzy rate.

The young Englishman landed at the bottom with a thud that made Piet Duveen jump round as if he had been shot. But on the instant the Boer recognised the new arrival.

"Der rooinek Englander!" he roared, in amazement and rage. Then he whipped his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

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But the crack of Piet's rifle coincided with the boom of Ted's heavy elephant gun, and the Dutchman flung up his arms, spun round, and collapsed in a heap.

Simba, half-way down the steep slopes of the valley, had seen his master's predicament, and had let drive at the Dutchman, even as the latter fired at Ted.

In ten seconds Simba was at Ted's side, and had helped the English lad to his feet. But Ted was only bruised by his rapid descent—for Piet's bullet had gone high—and he joined Simba as the latter turned and made a rush at Piet.

"Do not kill me!" bellowed Piet, as he lay rolling on the ground in agony. "Do not kill me!"

But it would have gone hard with Piet if Ted had not dashed up in time to stay Simba's hand.

"Let him live, Simba!" cried Ted. "You cannot kill him in cold blood!"

Simba very reluctantly lowered his rifle.

"It would have served you right," cried Ted, turning to the Dutchman, "if Simba's shot had been fatal, for you've twice tried to murder me. But I reckon you've had enough punishment."

And, indeed, Piet's wound was pretty severe. Caught squarely by the heavy bullet Simba had fired, the young Boer had had his right shoulder smashed to a pulp, and he was bleeding freely.

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But Ted managed to bind the wound up, and then collected Piet's boys, who had all fled for the bushes when they saw their master fall.

"Take your master back to the farm," he said, in the local dialect, when he had finished his task, "and tell the old Dutchman, who will probably now be back in the house, to send for a doctor."

Ted then turned to Simba, as the Dutchman's natives bore their master away.

"Simba," he said, "we will go back to the plantation and collect boys. Then we will return here, to the elephants' cemetery, for ivory, and half of all we take away is for you."

And during the succeeding months Ted removed enough ivory to save his plantation from the threatened bankruptcy. Indeed, both he and Simba soon found they were quite wealthy; and Simba afterwards, as so many rich coast natives have done, purchased a coconut plantation for himself.

Piet recovered, and made many more trips to the elephants' cemetery, in company with Schweder; but the Dutchmen carefully avoided Ted's parties when the young Englishman was removing ivory. Yet the Dutchmen need not have guarded the secret of the valley so jealously, for there was more ivory than they could possibly want or remove—and their greed had nearly proved fatal to Piet.

But Simba insisted that he had been right.

"As I said, bwana," he remarked, "there are no elephants round Kilimanjaro now. We only found forgotten remains—the Great Ones' burial ground!"

THE END.

(Look out for another exciting adventure of River-wise Ned next week, in "FILM ACTOR'S LUCK!" You'll vote it grand!)



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A PROBLEM!

Looking anxious, a small girl approached a policeman. "Please have you seen a lady about here?" "Why, yes, missie," answered the policeman, "a lot." "But have you seen one without a little girl?" "Yes." "Well, I'm the little girl; where's the lady?" She's my mummy, and I've lost her!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Miss Nellie Hoar, 47, Prince John Road, Eltham, London, S.E. 9.

SURPRISING!

A motorist proceeding along a country road was stopped by an inquisitive farmer. "I say, guv'nor, what's that thing on the side of your car?" "That," replied the motorist, following the other's gaze, "is a spare wheel, in case anything happens to one of the others." "Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed the farmer. "I've been driving a horse and cart nigh on forty years, and I've never carried a spare horse's leg!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Castle, 25, Seymour Avenue, Tottenham, N. 17.

THE FIRST THAT TURNED UP!

Among the acquaintances of Mr. Frith, the painter, was a young man with "tip-tilted" nose, which was the jest of his associates. Once he said gravely: "I say, look here, I object to your making my nose a subject of conversation." "That is unfortunate," replied his friend; "we wanted a subject, and we took the first that turned up!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss V. Fisher, 107, Oak Lane, West Bromwich.

CHANGED HIS TONE!

The boy, who had scratched his name on the paint of the stationary motor-car had been soundly cuffed by the enraged owner. Attacked by the loud howling which resulted, a crowd soon gathered, through which the father of the boy pushed his way. "Who struck my boy?" he demanded furiously. "Show me the dastardly villain!" The motorist stepped forward. He was six feet two inches in height and forty-nine round the chest. "I did," he said. "Serves him right, sir," said the boy's father, touching his cap. "I'll give him another hiding when I get him home!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. W. Collett, 34, Trafalgar Road West, Gorleston-on-Sea.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT!

Old Lady: "I suppose that you sailors are very careful when you are at sea?"

Old Sailor: "No, not at all, ma'am. In fact, we try to be as 'wreckless' as possible!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Smalley, 21, Sheringham Avenue, Manor Park, E. 12.

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