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No. 825.
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Tom Merry, the junior football captain, loses his temper with Ralph Reckness Cardew. (A lively incident from the splendid long complete school story in this issue.)

YOUR EDITOR CHATS ABOUT NEXT WEEK'S "GEM."

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"CAPTAIN CARDEW!"

By Martin Clifford.

There are big events recorded in the grand St. Jim's yarn for next week. Keen and clever as he may be, Cardew has taken on rather a lot. The struggle between him and Tom Merry for supremacy has culminated exactly as Cardew's supporters wished; but there is a hitch, all the same, and there are doubters abroad. How long will matters rest as they are?

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By Cecil Fanshaw.

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"THE TRIERS!"

By Jack Orickton.

You will find grip and heaps of drama in next week's instalment of this fine serial. Jack Morton springs a mighty big surprise on George Clifton. We get a tremendous situation on the football-field, and it all goes to show that where there's a will there's a way.

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captaincy of St. Jim's.**

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Cardew's Programme!

“WHICH are you?”
Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's asked that question. He addressed Tom Merry.

“Eh, what?” ejaculated Tom.

“Which are you?” repeated Cardew.

Cardew asked that question with perfect gravity. His study-mates, Levison and Clive, stared at him, wondering what he was driving at; but Cardew did not seem to notice it.

Tom Merry had dropped into Study No. 9 in the Fourth, with something to say on the subject of football and House matches. That subject was always interesting enough to Levison and Clive; and of late it had seemed an interesting subject to Cardew. Tom Merry, as junior captain of St. Jim's, was an important person in football matters, though there never was a trace of “swank” about him.

Ralph Reckness Cardew interrupted the football talk by asking his rather remarkable question. He was sprawled at ease in the armchair, with his feet resting on another chair, and his hands clasped behind his head. He looked a picture of lazy slackness as he sprawled.

“Is that a joke, Cardew?” asked Tom Merry, after a pause. “If it is, I don't quite see where it comes in. Now, Levison—”

“It isn't a joke.”

“Well, never mind. Levison, on Saturday—”

“Dear man,” said Cardew, interrupting again with quiet persistence. “Won't you answer a little innocent and harmless question? I really want to know.”

Tom looked slightly impatient.

“What do you want to know?” he demanded.

“Which are you?”

“Oh, don't be an ass!”

“Let me elucidate,” went on Cardew. “I'll try to put it simply, in the words of one syllable, suitable to the undeveloped intellect of the Shell. You are junior captain of St. Jim's.”

“I think that's fairly well known,” assented Tom.

“You are also junior House captain of the School House.”

“Quite so!”

“Likewise you are captain of the Shell.”

“What about it?”

“Well, you seem to be three captains rolled into one,” said Cardew. “What I was askin' is this; which are you at the present moment? In which of your many characters have you honoured this study with a visit?”

Tom Merry laughed.

“I suppose I've come here as junior captain of the school, as it's about the football,” he said.

“Weren't you discussin' a House match with the New House?”

“Yes.”

“Then surely you were speakin' as junior House captain?”

“Eh? Yes, I suppose I was,” assented Tom Merry.

“What the merry thump does it matter?”

“What are you getting at, Cardew?” asked Levison.

“You're wasting time, you know!”

“As per usual!” remarked Sidney Clive.

Cardew shook his head.

“Not at all,” he answered. “I only want to get things exact. That's what the study of mathematics is for—the jolly old maths master will tell you any day that it trains its victims into intellectual exactitude. I'm a whale on maths, as you know—”

“Oh, my hat!”

“So I want to get this thing fair and square,” continued Cardew, with great gravity. “I am keenly interested in Thomas and the many parts he plays. Shakespeare has remarked—”

“Give Shakespeare a rest, for goodness' sake!”

“He has remarked that one man in his time plays many parts. The same applies to nippers like Tom Merry, apparently. As junior captain of the school, he leads us forth to victory over the Grammarians, and Rookwood, and Greyfriars, and, in fact, over all the barbarians who inhabit the unexplored regions outside the gates of St. Jim's—”

“Fathead!”

“As junior House captain, he guides our faltering steps to conquest over the New House of St. Jim's—”

“Cut it short!”

“As captain of the Shell, he commands the heroes of the Middle School when they play the Fourth. It must be a strenuous life, and I wonder sometimes that Thomas doesn't forget which he is at any given moment.”

“Is that all?” asked Tom.

“No; that's only the prelude. A short time ago I was slackin' at footer, and you rooted me out and made me play up. In revenge I told you that I was goin' to make things hum at football, and boost you out of your job as captain.”

“Did you?” yawned Tom.

“Don't you remember?”

“I believe you did talk some rot of the kind,” admitted Tom. “But you talk such an awful lot of rot, you know, Cardew! You can't expect a chap to remember it all.”

Levison and Clive grinned.

“A hit—a very palpable hit!” said Cardew calmly. “Well, among the rest of the rot I talked, there was that little bit which I happened to mean seriously. I'm goin' to boost you out of the captaincy.”

“Go ahead!” said Tom, with a laugh.

“I'm goin'!”

“Don't be an ass, Cardew!” suggested Clive.

“Asses are born, not made, old man! What you ask is beyond my power to grant,” answered Cardew.

“Fathead!”

“Well, about the House match—” said Levison.

“Let the House match rest for a minute or two,” persisted Cardew. “You see, Thomas, when I undertook to boost you out of the captaincy, I forgot for the moment how many captains you were. It seems that I've let myself in for more than one job. I've decided to boost you out of one captaincy to begin with, and leave you the others as a sort of consolation prize.”

“Thanks!”

“Not at all. You can keep the captaincy of the Shell—it's no use to me as I'm in the Fourth. That's one job! Now, I'm goin' in first for House captain.”

“That's all rot!” said Tom. “House captain is always captain of the school at St. Jim's. Kildare is senior House captain, and he is captain of St. Jim's.”

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"That's a custom, but not a rule," said Cardew. "I've been lookin' into the giddy history of St. Jim's. At times there have been two captains—one of the House, and one of the school. Generally the two jobs go together—but not always. Captain of the school has to be elected by all St. Jim's—both Houses. House captain has to be elected only by his own House. Figgins is junior House captain in the New House. I'm goin' to be junior House captain in the School House—leavin' your out in the cold."

"Ass!"

"It's a bit complicated," went on Cardew. "Quite a strain on the intellect to work it out. House captain is not always football captain, though they generally go together. Lots of complications and disputes are saved, Thomas, by you uniting all these important offices in your single person. You're football captain, too—that's a fourth captaincy you hold. You really ought to be called a field-marshal, or a general at least."

"Aren't you tired yet, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry. "You're giving your chin a lot of work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's simply dazzling, all these high offices that you hold, Thomas," went on Cardew, unheeding. "It reminds a chap of Gilbert and Sullivan. That man Pooh-Bah, you know, who was Lord High Everything-Else. Well, I don't feel hefty enough to go for all these jobs and take them on in a bunch. I shall be satisfied with the House captaincy. After I've held that for a time I may annex the rest of your jobs one by one. Are you thinkin' of resignin' the House captaincy?"

"Hardly!"

"You don't want to give me a chance?"

"How many votes do you think you would get?" asked Tom with an amused smile.

"Lots, I hope. Here's Levison and Clive simply yearnin' to back me up to begin with."

"I'm afraid we couldn't have all the bother of a House election to entertain you in your idle moments, Cardew."

"In short, you won't resign and stand for re-election?"

"No."

Cardew sighed.

"Then I shall have to make you," he said.

"And how will you do that?" asked the Shell-fellow.

"If as many as one-third of the House at any time express dissatisfaction with the House captain, and demand a new election, it's bound to take place."

"Is it?"

"Quite so. I seem to know the rules better than you do," yawned Cardew. "I suppose you haven't time to read 'em up, with all those jolly old captaincies to fill? Now, I'm suggestin' that it would be a graceful act on your part to stand down and fix a new election, and give me my chance of gettin' in."

"Rats!"

"It would save me a lot of trouble in electioneerin' and stirrin' up strife," said Cardew.

"Go ahead with your electioneering," said Tom Merry.

"I think you're a silly ass, Cardew, and you haven't the remotest chance of bagging the House captaincy; and you couldn't handle it if you bagged it. House captains have to do something more than sprawl in armchairs and talk piffle. Now give us a rest while I speak to Levison."

"I'm done! I was only warnin' you."

Cardew collapsed lazily into the armchair and watched the three juniors, with a smile, while they discussed the coming House match. When Tom Merry left the study Levison and Clive turned to the dandy of the Fourth.

"I suppose you were only pulling Tom's leg?" said Ernest Levison.

"Not at all."

"You're not seriously thinking of standing for School House junior captain?" hooted Clive.

"Quite seriously."

"Then you're an ass!"

"Thanks. You're backing me up, of course?"

"Rats!"

"And you, Levison?"

"Rot!"

Levison and Clive strolled out of the study. Cardew smiled.

He was quite determined upon this new stunt, and with all his laziness Cardew had an iron determination when his mind was made up. He had resolved to give Tom Merry a fall, but he realised that the task he had set himself was not an easy one. To obtain the House captaincy he had first to bring about a new election, and then to obtain a majority of the junior votes. And at the present moment he could count with certainty upon only one supporter—and that was Ralph Reckness Cardew himself.

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CHAPTER 2.

Grundy Is Not Pleased!

"THAT ass!"

"Looks like it!"

"That slacker!"

Grundy of the Shell was wrathful. The rugged face of George Alfred Grundy was, in fact, crimson with wrath.

He was standing before the notice-board, with his chums Wilkins and Gunn. On the board was a list of the House junior footballers selected to play the New House on Saturday afternoon. Grundy's name did not appear there. Grundy of the Shell haunted the notice-boards, in the hope of some day finding the name of G. A. Grundy down for something. He never found it. He was accustomed to reading down the lists, and snorting contemptuously over nearly every name there. But on this occasion Grundy's snorts were more contemptuous than ever. For in the list, on this occasion, appeared the name of R. R. Cardew.

"That slacking nincompoop!" said Grundy of the Shell. "That dummy! That—that necktie merchant! That puffer in silk socks! He's down for the House match! And I—I—m left out!"

"You're left out, old chap," assented Wilkins. "No doubt about that." And he bestowed a wink on Gunn.

"You're down, Wilkins."

"Seems so."

"That crass ass, Tom Merry, seems to think you can play football better than I can."

"He seems to," assented Wilkins.

"My hat! He'll be playing Gunny next."

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded Cuthbert Gunn warmly. Grundy snorted.

"No reason why he shouldn't, old chap, as he knows nothing about a footballer's form."

"Look here, Grundy—"

"But this is the limit," said George Alfred excitedly. "This is the outside edge—the very rim! That ass D'Arcy is down to play. But we're used to that. But isn't one tailor's dummy in a team enough? Now Cardew—"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had come along to look at the list. He was pleased to find his own aristocratic name on it, but he was not pleased by Grundy's comments thereon.

"Well, you know you're a tailor's dummy, I suppose?" said Grundy. "But I admit you ain't such a slacking ass as Cardew. What has Tom Merry put him in the team for?"

"Cardew has been playin' up wathah well lately," said Arthur Augustus. "I have heard Tom Mewwy say that it is time he had a chance in a House match."

"Rot!"

"Weally, Gwunday!"

"And that's the fellow who's swankin' about turnin' Merry out of the House captaincy!" said Grundy. "Looks to me as if Tom Merry is afraid of him, and this is a sop to Hercules."

"A what?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"A sop to Hercules."

"Do you mean a sop to Cerberus?" asked Gunn politely.

"I don't care whether it's Cerberus or Hercules. That's what it is, a sop, because Cardew's making out he's going to boost him. Just to keep him quiet! Why, Cardew would stop in the middle of the game if he got a spot of mud on his clothes," snorted Grundy. "My opinion is that it's time we had a new captain!"

"Then you'd better vote for Cardew when he puts up!" grinned Wilkins.

"Rats! I'm jolly well going to speak to Tom Merry about this! Anybody know where he is?"

"Asking after little me?" queried a cheery voice, as Tom Merry came along with Manners and Lowther of the Shell. Grundy whirled round.

"Yes. Are you afraid of what Cardew says he is going to do?"

"Not very."

"Then why are you shoving that slacker into the House team?"

"Couldn't possibly explain," answered Tom.

"Why not?" roared Grundy.

"I should have to deal with football matters, and that's a subject beyond the grasp of your intellect, Grundy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy spluttered with wrath.

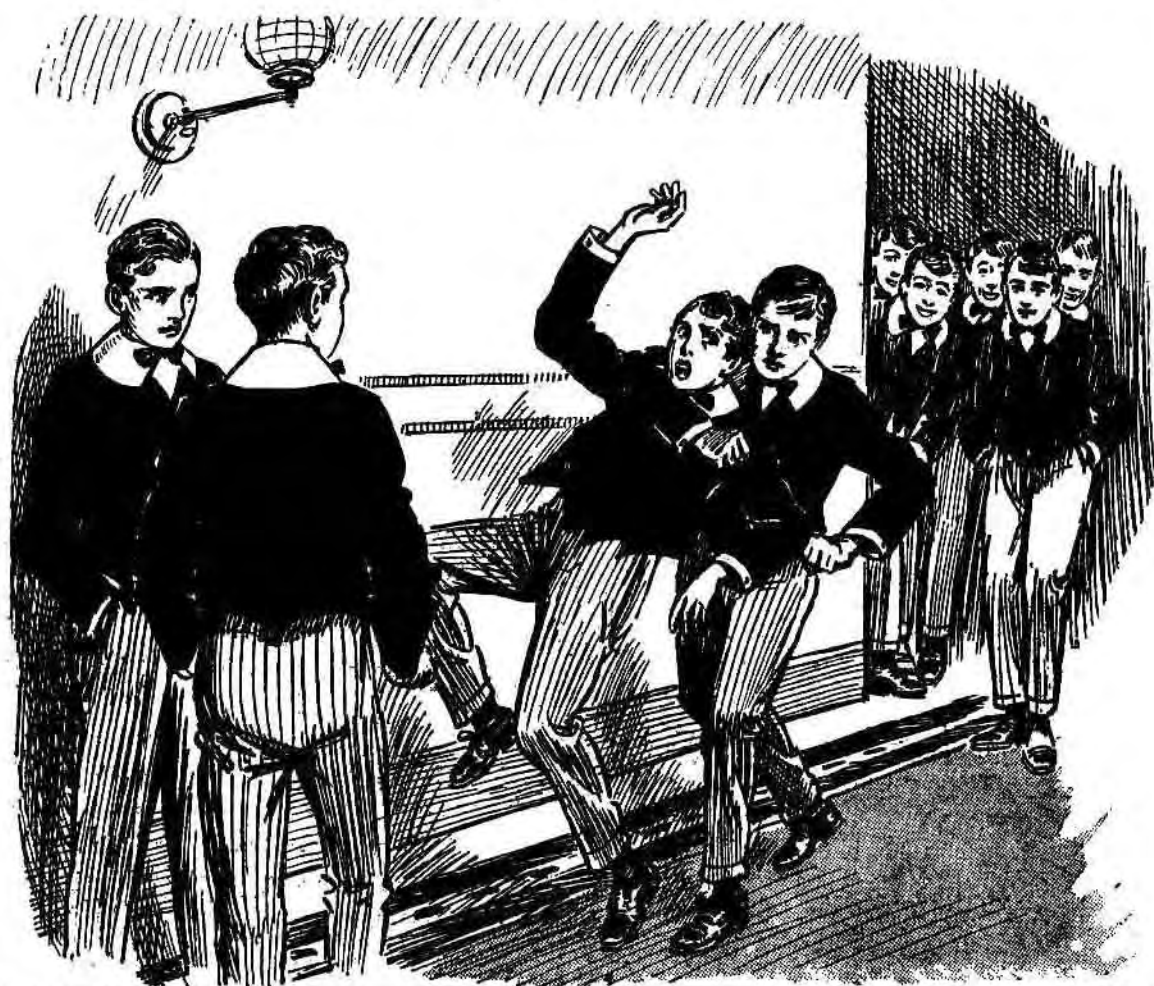
"Ask me anything you like about marbles or hop-scotch," said Tom Merry blandly. "You can discuss things like that. But keep off the subject of football, Grundy. It's out of your depth."

And the Terrible Three walked on, leaving Grundy spluttering and the other fellows laughing.

"The—the—the cheeky cad!" gasped Grundy. "Out of my depth—and me the only real footballer at St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jov—!" If you are a good footballah, Gwunday, I



George Alfred Grundy rushed after the Terrible Three. He was wrathful; and when Grundy was wrathful, he was reckless. He overtook the chums of the Shell, and threw his arm round Tom Merry's neck. "Now, you cheeky rotter!" Crash! "Ow!" roared Tom, as he toppled backwards in Grundy's grasp. (See this page.)

should weally like to see a bad one," chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"I'll show him!" roared Grundy.

He rushed after the Terrible Three. Grundy was wrathful, and when Grundy was wrathful he was reckless. He overtook the chums of the Shell, and threw his arm round Tom Merry's neck.

"Now, you cheeky rotter—"

Crash!

"Ow!" roared Tom.

He went bumping to the floor in Grundy's grasp. Grundy rolled over him.

"Oh! Ow! Oh!" gasped Tom Merry. "What—"

"Now, you silly cad—" hooted Grundy.

Tom Merry scrambled up. Grundy scrambled up, too, and put up his hands in a hurry. All his defence was needed. The captain of the Shell was coming at him like a whirlwind. The next few minutes were wild and whirling ones. Grundy was a hefty youth, and a great fighting-man. But Tom Merry's rushing attack carried all before it.

Grundy was driven along the corridor under the rain of blows, and he collapsed at last in a gasping heap.

"There, you cheeky chump!" gasped Tom.

"Ow, ow, ow!" gasped Grundy dazedly.

"Better come and bathe your nose, Tom," chuckled Manners.

"Wow, wow, wow!"

The Terrible Three walked away, and Grundy sat up dazedly as they turned the corner. He mopped his nose and rubbed his eyes, and spluttered breathlessly.

"I—I—I'll—" He scrambled up. "I—I'll smash him—"

"I say, hold on!" exclaimed Wilkins.

But Grundy of the Shell did not hold on. His cup of wrath was full to overflowing. He rushed down the corridor after the chums of the Shell, and went round the corner like a whirlwind. There was a terrific crash.

"Now," gasped Grundy, "you— Oh crumbs! Mr. Railton!"

The Housemaster had reached the corner from another direction as Grundy arrived there. Mr. Railton felt as if a battering-ram had smitten him as he encountered Grundy's frantic rush. He staggered against the wall, and Grundy sat down from the shock.

"What—what—" stammered Mr. Railton.

"Ow, ow! I—"

"Grundy! How dare you rush round corners in that manner!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "Are you out of your senses?"

"I—I— Groogh!"

"Come with me, you foolish and thoughtless boy. I shall cane you severely!"

"Ow! I—I—I—"

"Not a word! Come!"

Mr. Railton grasped Grundy by the collar, and jerked him to his feet. Spluttering and gasping, George Alfred Grundy was hustled away to the Housemaster's study. There Mr. Railton's cane came into play.

After the Housemaster had finished with him Grundy limped from the study, feeling as if life were not worth living. He did not seek Tom Merry. He did not feel equal to any more trouble just then. He limped away in a collapsed state, and for quite a long time afterwards his remarks were chiefly:

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow, wow, wow!"

CHAPTER 3.

The House Match!

THERE was a touch of frost in the air, and it was cold. Fellows who gathered on Little Side to watch the House game thought it cold enough. They stamped their feet and thumped their chests to keep warm. But the footballers found their work warm, very warm indeed.

House games at St. Jim's were generally keenly contested, and this special match was quite up to the average.

Tom Merry's team was not at its strongest. Talbot of the Shell had been unable to play, and Kangaroo was off colour and standing out. Blake of the Fourth had a damaged ankle and had had to be omitted from the list; it was, in fact, in Blake's place that Ralph Reckness Cardew had been included in the junior School House team. As an all-round player, Cardew could not be considered Blake's equal—Jack Blake was not often brilliant, but he was steady and reliable, and seldom played anything but a very good game. Cardew was good in patches, so to speak. At his best, he was one of the finest junior footballers in the House; at his worst, he was very nearly useless to his side. And nobody ever felt very certain whether Cardew would show up at his best or his worst.

Tom Merry had considered the matter very carefully before he decided to give Cardew a chance. Cardew's new campaign for the House captaincy did not affect his judgment one way or the other. Tom was too good and loyal a football skipper to allow personal considerations to influence him.

In point of fact, Cardew's new stunt irritated him a little. All the more for that reason, Tom weighed the matter carefully, to give Cardew full justice.

Only a couple of weeks before, Cardew had been unmercifully ragged for slacking at games. But since then there was no doubt that he had played up wonderfully, and shown great form.

In the pick-ups Cardew had never lost a chance, and he had played in a Form match—Fourth against Shell—and made a good display. Tom Merry decided that he was worth his place in the junior House team, and so he gave him his chance.

It surprised Cardew a little.

He was now "up against" Tom Merry, and he did not expect Tom to give him a chance in the football if he could help it. A good game on his part would undoubtedly help in his new campaign, and if he succeeded in shining in the House match it would be a great help—and Cardew was determined to do his very best. He reflected rather cynically that Tom Merry was giving away a point in the contest by playing him—and no doubt that was the case, though Tom did not think or care about it. It was not as though Cardew's claim was a recognised one, which the junior captain would have found it difficult to ignore. That was not the case at all. Tom was much more criticised for playing Cardew than for leaving him out.

It was Tom's sense of fair play and the fitness of things that made him act as he did. Cardew had earned his chance, and he should have it, regardless of other considerations.

Cardew grimly resolved to make the most of it. If his rival chose to give away chances, that was his look-out.

So the dandy of the Fourth lined up with the School House team, and threw himself heart and soul into the game.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were in great form. Quite early in the game Kerr gave Figgins a pass from which Figgy scored, and the School House attack was baffled for a long time by Fatty Wynn in the New House citadel. Herries was keeping goal for the School House; but though he was a good custodian, it could not be said that he was anywhere near the form of Fatty Wynn. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the School House front line, very nearly got the ball in, but David Llewellyn Wynn's fat fist drove it out again, and again he defeated a near thing from Levison of the Fourth. At half-time the New House were one up; and both teams were looking ruddy and well exercised. Cardew had played a good forward game, but nothing remarkable about it had so far struck the onlookers.

"Lot of good playing that slacker!" Grundy of the Shell remarked to Gunn at half-time. "What's the good of him?"

"He doesn't seem to be slacking now," said Gunn mildly.

"Not much worse than the rest, perhaps," admitted Grundy. "They're a lot of fumblerers, if you ask me!"

Gunn hadn't asked him, but that was only Grundy's way of putting it. Grundy never waited to be asked before he stated his opinion.

"Wilkins is the only decent player in the team," added Grundy, "and he owes that to the tips I've given him on the game."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Gunn.

"They're off again!" observed Racko of the Shell. Racko and Crooke had strolled down to look on for a few minutes. The black sheep of the School House weren't interested in football; but they had a bet on the result of the match with Clampe of the New House; hence their unaccustomed presence on Little Side.

"Looks to me like a New House win!" grunted Crooke.

"Lot you care!" snorted Grundy.

"Well, I care," said Racko. "I've put a quid on the School House side, and I don't want to lose it."

"You're a gambling blackguard!" said Grundy.

"Thanks!"

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"There they go!" exclaimed Crooke. "By gad, I fancy they'll get through this time!"

Soon after the whistle, the School House attack came up the field against the wind, and the New House forwards were left nowhere. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had the ball on the left wing; he sent it to Levison, as a New House half charged him over, and Levison centred to Tom Merry at the right moment. Tom Merry came to grief against Redfern of New House, but he had passed the ball out to Monty Lowther on the right wing, quite near to the destination. Owen laid Monty Lowther low, but the ball went to Cardew on the right, and Cardew ran it on in great style and kicked for goal.

Fatty Wynn met the ball with a ready foot, and it whizzed out again, and Cardew's eyes flashed. It had been a near thing, but it had not come off.

But Tom Merry was racing up, and he drove the ball in again. Again the fat custodian dealt with it, fisting it out; and the New House defenders were closing up now. A kick from a rather hurried back dropped the ball at Cardew's feet.

"Pass!" shouted Tom Merry; for two New House men were rushing Cardew down, and he did not seem to have the ghost of a chance, while Tom had almost an open goal before him, with only the custodian to beat.

Cardew did not seem to hear Tom Merry shout. If he did he totally ignored it.

He kicked for goal.

The next instant he was sprawling on the ground, with a New House half sprawling over him, and a New House back staggering across his legs.

But from the watching crowd there came a roar.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"School House! School House!"

Fatty Wynn had been caught napping. It was small blame to him; for, as a matter of fact, Cardew ought not to have kicked for goal—it was the wildest fluke. But a fluke that lands in the net covers a multitude of sins. And the leather was in the net, and Fatty Wynn stared at it rather blankly.

Cardew picked himself up dazedly.

"You ass!" muttered Levison, who had run across to give him a hand.

"Missed it?" yawned Cardew.

"No; it's a goal."

"Then what's the matter?"

"You know as well as I do!" grunted Levison.

Cardew laughed.

"Line up!" snapped Tom Merry.

The score was level; and Racko and Crooke, among the onlookers, were more cheerful. Their "quids" seemed to be safer now. Grundy was pleased to give an approving grunt.

"Not so bad for a slacker like Cardew!" he said.

"Not so bad?" said Jack Blake, who was standing by. "You born ass! If I were skipper I'd kick Cardew out of the team for that!"

"For taking the only goal?" jeered Grundy.

"For disobeying orders and chancing a fluke!" growled Blake. "It was just a miracle that that goal came off, and it would have been practically a sure thing if he'd let Tom have the ball."

"Well, a goal's a goal!" said Grundy.

"Yes; a goal's a goal," remarked Gunn. "School House was in need of that goal, anyhow; Blake."

Blake sniffed. Nothing succeeds like success, and as Cardew had actually captured the goal, his recklessness was overlooked by most of the fellows. Blake knew better; but most of the fellows were willing to believe that Cardew had seen a good chance and taken it; the success of the goal counted as proof that he had judged well.

The game went on, hot and strong; but the School House did not get through again. All they could do was to defeat the attacks of the New House, and that they did effectually.

After a rather gruelling game the House match ended in a draw, one goal each, and the players came off breathing hard and deep.

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble!

"**B**AI Jove, you know, we ought to have beaten them!" Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the changing-room in the School House, after the match.

"Well, they sent back as good as we gave," remarked Levison of the Fourth. "I dare say Figgins & Co. are saying just now that they ought to have beaten us."

"Yaas, wathah, that's so! Nevahtheless, we ought to have beaten the boundahs!" declared the swell of St. Jim's. "Howevah, I suppose we were lucky to get off with a draw, consid'win'. Cardew's fluke saved us from a defeat, weally."

"Fluke!" repeated Cardew.

"Yaas."



"Pass!" shouted Tom Merry as the New House fellow left him unmarked to rush down upon Ralph Reckness Cardew who, with the ball at his feet, was closing in upon the goal. "Pass!" Cardew ignored his captain's cry and kicked for goal. By the merest fluke—for the shot was an almost impossible one—the ball shot into the net. It was a goal! (See page 6.)

"Was my goal a fluke?"

"Don't you know it was, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Time you learned something about football, Cardew, if you're going to play in House matches," remarked Monty Lowther.

"High time," observed Digby of the Fourth.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cardew yawned.

"Isn't it rather a pity some of you fellows couldn't fluke in the same way?" he asked. "Another fluke like mine would have made it a win for the School House."

"Yaas, but—"

Tom Merry came over to the Fourth-Formers. His face was rather serious.

"That kind of thing won't do, Cardew!" he said abruptly.

Cardew smiled at him cheerily.

"What kind of thing, old bean?"

"Selfish play never does any good to a side. It may come off every now and then, but the game's the thing," said Tom. "You know very well that you ought not to have pitched in the ball from the right-wing, with everything against you, when the centre was clear, and your captain called to you to pass."

"Did you call?"

"Well, if you didn't hear me—" said Tom.

Cardew hesitated a moment.

"I did hear you," he said, after that brief hesitation.

Tom flushed.

"And you took no notice?"

"You remember the jolly old dying gladiator in Byron?" asked Cardew affably—"the chap who heard it, but he heeded not, you know! I was understudyin' the jolly old gladiator."

"Is that your idea of playing your part in a football side?" asked Tom, with dangerous calm.

"Well, you see, I bagged the goal," said Cardew calmly. "You might have bagged it. That's a possibility that never can be proved now. But in actual fact I did bag it. What more do you want?"

"I want you to play the game, if you play for the House," said Tom. "It was the wildest chance that the ball got in."

"Do you think so?"

"I don't think it—I know it. And so does every fellow who saw it, if he knows anything about soccer."

"I don't agree."

"You don't agree?" exclaimed Tom, his colour rising.

"Do you set yourself up to know more about the game than your skipper, and to follow your own nose against orders?"

"Well, a goal is a goal, you know," reminded Cardew.

"And, with all your superior knowledge of the game, old bean, I didn't notice you puttin' the ball in to any great extent."

There was a laugh from some of the fellows in the changing-room.

"That's enough!" said Tom, biting his lip. "You're dropped out of the House team for the rest of the season. Cardew. That's all."

"Dear me!" said Cardew. "Then I sha'n't play again till I'm House captain—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dry up that rot!" snapped Tom, and he turned away.

"Alas!" sighed Cardew. "How does a fellow get on with Thomas? A couple of weeks ago he was raggin' me baldheaded for shirk'n games. Now he's raggin' me bald-headed for takin' goals! It's really a bit difficult to know what Thomas really wants."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Well, I only want to know how I've offended," said Cardew. "If it's a sin to take goals when the jolly old

captain can't take any, I plead guilty. If it's a sin to put Thomas in the shade, I have to own up that I have sinned."

Tom Merry swung round.

"It's not that, and you know it, Cardew," he said between his teeth. "You know perfectly well that I should have been glad to see you score for the House."

"You didn't seem glad when I did it. You don't seem really glad now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Cardew!" muttered Levison uneasily.

"Why should I shut up?" asked Cardew. "I didn't begin this argument; Thomas began it. He turns me out of the team for takin' goals. If he'll play me again I'll promise not to take any more goals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll undertake to stand still in my place and gaze at him with speechless admiration, if that's what he wants," went on Cardew. "Is that what you want, Thomas? Just say so."

"Weally, Cardew, you ass—"

"I don't want any more of your cheek, at all events, Cardew," said Tom Merry, his eyes flashing. "And if you call me 'Thomas' again I'll punch you!"

"My dear Thomas—"

Tom Merry came straight at Cardew on that. It did not occur to Tom at the moment that that was exactly what Cardew wanted. Trouble with Tom Merry over that disputed goal exactly suited Cardew's book, and Tom fell blindly into the trap.

Cardew sprang back and put up his hands.

"Tom!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Stop them!" shouted Wildrake.

But there was no stopping them. Tom Merry was really angry, and Cardew, though not in the least angry, was bent on trouble. They were fighting in a moment more, and the crowd of fellows in the changing-room gathered round to look on.

Cardew, with all his black ways, was as hard as nails, and a good fighting-man. But he was no match for the captain of the Shell.

He put up a good fight, however, and seemed to be holding his own.

But a fight in the changing-room was not likely to pass without interruption. It was not the spot to select for a fight to a finish, as Ralph Reckness Cardew knew very well.

Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth came in with several other seniors, and Kildare shouted across to the juniors at once.

"What's that? Stop that!"

And as the fight did not stop Kildare came over, with a frowning brow, and grasped Cardew and Tom Merry, one in either hand, and fairly wrenched them apart.

"Let me go!" panted Tom.

"What?"

"Look here, Kildare—"

"Stand back!" snapped the captain of St. Jim's. "You ought to know better than this, Tom Merry! Stand back, Cardew!"

"I'm standin' back, Kildare," said Cardew meekly. "I'm not in the least keen on fightin' Thomas. He's too hefty for me."

"Let there be no more of this," said Kildare, with a rather grim look at Tom; and the captain of the school went back to his companions.

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"Is the circus over?" asked Cardew urbanely. "If so, I'll get on with changin'. You interrupted me, Thomas."

"If you want this to go farther I'll meet you in the gym after tea, Cardew," said Tom quietly.

"But I don't," smiled Cardew. "As I remarked to Kildare, you are too hefty for me, Thomas. When I'm huntin' for trouble I'll pick a row with Trimble or Mellish or somebody. I'm all for an easy life."

Tom Merry turned his back on the dandy of the Fourth.

The trouble was over; though it was to have its results.

Cardew finished changing and strolled out of the room with Clive and Levison. Both the latter were looking serious, but Cardew seemed to be in the best of spirits.

Racke of the Shell met the three on the staircase.

"Hold on, Cardew!" he called out.

"Oh, come on!" muttered Levison.

"Wait a minute, Racke's speakin'," said Cardew. "What is it, Racke?"

"If you're going out for givin' Tom Merry a fall, I'm backin' you up, that's all," said Racke; "and I've got a good few friends who will stand in with me."

"Thanks, old man! I'll be jolly glad of your support!" answered Cardew.

"Then you mean business?"

"Real business."

"Good!" said Racke heartily. "I'm for you, and I fancy I can rally round at least seven or eight fellows."

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"Many thanks, old bean!"

Levison & Co. went on to Study No. 9 in the Fourth. Ralph Reckness Cardew wore a cheery smile.

"Gettin' on!" he remarked, as he sank into the armchair in the study. "Things are movin', old beanlets! I fancy I shall be able to get together the necessary number to call for a new election of junior House captain—what?"

"Fellows like Racke and Crooke and Mellish," said Levison bitterly. "Fellows that no decent chap speaks to!"

"But they have votes," smiled Cardew.

"I wouldn't touch their votes with a barge-pole!" snapped Sidney Clive.

"You're not standin' for election. I am."

"Look here, Cardew," exclaimed Ernest Levison abruptly, "you're not going on with this rot!"

"I jolly well am!"

"You know very well you were wrong about that goal, and you know that you deliberately provoked Tom Merry in the changing-room!" exclaimed Levison angrily.

Cardew nodded.

"Must get on with it somehow," he said. "Thomas is rather a simple old duck—it's child's play to pull his leg and make him hop. I'm rather enjoyin' it. Of course, you fellows are goin' to back up a chap in your own study?"

Levison and Clive made no answer to that.

"Think of Study No. 9 providin' a House captain!" urged Cardew. "It will be no end of a leg-up for our study—what?"

"There's something in that," admitted Levison. "But—but—"

"Well, then, back up!"

"You're not going the right way to work, Cardew," said Clive. "If you played a straight game—"

"Would a straight game down the esteemed Thomas?"

"Well, no."

"Well, I'm out to down him, and so I'm goin' to play any kind of game that's necessary for the purpose," said Cardew coolly. "To be quite candid, my goal this afternoon was a rotten fluke, and I took the chance because I was up against Thomas. But it came off, and so it counts. Nine-tenths of the fellows will look at it like this—I bagged the goal, and Thomas was ratty about it to the extent of punchin' me in the changin'-room. That helps me a lot."

"Don't you call that unscrupulous?" asked Clive.

"I'm an unscrupulous chap when my dander is up!" explained Cardew.

"You won't get any support from me on those lines."

"Nor from me," said Levison.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll try to do without it," he said; and he moved to the door.

"Aren't you going to have tea?" asked Levison.

"I'm goin' to stand tea to some of my supporters. If you change your minds, and decide to back up your old pal, come along to the club-room. You'll find a feast of the gods goin' on."

And Cardew walked away.

Levison and Clive did not change their minds, and they did not follow him. But their faces were rather gloomy as they sat down to tea in Study No. 9. It had often happened that there was a rift in the lute in Study No. 9, and it seemed that history was to repeat itself once more. But whether his chums were for him or against him, it was clear that Ralph Reckness Cardew meant to go his own wilful way.

CHAPTER 5. Electioneering!

"YOU'RE an ass, Tom!"

"Really an ass!"

Manners and Lowther delivered their chummy opinion in Study No. 10 in the Shell, a few days after the House match.

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"How's that?" he asked.

"You're giving everything away to Cardew."

"Bless Cardew!"

"Bless him black and blue!" said Monty Lowther. "He's nobody, and worth nothing; but he's dangerous."

"Bosh!" said Tom cheerily.

"He's working hard," said Manners. "The fact is, Tom, it looks pretty certain that there will have to be a new election for House captain."

"You think so?"

"It's almost a cert. While you're turning up your nose at Cardew and anything he can do, he is leaving no stone unturned."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Let him rip," he answered. "Do you think I'm going to worry about a fellow like Cardew? No jolly fear!"

"That's all very well," said Lowther; "but if he should get in as House captain he could give you no end of trouble. House captain and school captain here are generally the same chap; but the jobs have been divided before, and may be

divided again. And the two would have to pull together jolly well to keep from trouble. And you can guess how you'd pull with Cardew."

"I'm not bothering about it."

"Cardew is. Of course, his game is to give all the trouble he can," said Lowther. "He doesn't care a twopenny rap for the House or the school, if you come to that; he's just up to mischief. And he's not very particular about his methods. Racke and his gang are backing him up through thick and thin."

"Let them! I'd be jolly well ashamed to be backed up by Racke and his gang!" said Tom contemptuously.

"Their votes count, all the same. Every black sheep in the House is naturally up against you," said Monty. "Naturally they're rallying round your enemy."

"Oh, Cardew isn't my enemy!" said Tom cheerily.

"Your rival, at least. He's got Baggy Trimble—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"And Mulvaney minor, and other fellows of that kidney," said Lowther. "You know he's got plenty of money, and he's been standing spreads in the club-room, and every fellow like Baggy Trimble is backing him up for the sake of the grub."

"There aren't many fellows at St. Jim's like Baggy Trimble, thank goodness!" said Tom Merry.

"There's a good many who are glad to be chummy with Cardew, a rich chap and a lord's grandson," said Manners. "I know he's asked some fellows home to Reckness Towers for the hols. He's got all the blackguards, all the grub-hunters, and all the snobs."

"Oh, my hat! What a crew!"

"I know; but their votes count. And there's a lot of fellows, too, who'd like a change, just for the sake of a change. Fellows who think they haven't had their proper chances in matches, and all that. And there's Grundy of the Shell—"

"Is Grundy backing him up?" said Tom, laughing. "He's welcome."

"I know Grundy is a born idiot," said Manners. "He's up against you all the more for that reason. He thinks he ought to play for House and School, though he can't play footer for toffee. He thinks he will have a better chance under a new captain."

"Cardew wouldn't play him if he was captain of footer. He's got more sense than that."

"I'm afraid he isn't above letting Grundy fancy that he would play him," answered Manners.

"That's a pretty rotten deception."

"Well, Cardew's ways aren't your ways, old chap. That's why you've got to be on your guard."

"Oh, bother!" said Tom.

"Grundy certainly fancies that he will get a chance under Cardew, for he is backing him up no end," said Monty Lowther. "Wilkins and Gunn will follow his lead, or Grundy will rag them in the study. That's three votes."

Tom Merry laughed carelessly.

"So I've got against me all the blackguards, all the grub-hunters, all the snobs, and all the fatheads!" he exclaimed. "I really don't think it's a very dangerous combination."

"There are others, too," said Lowther. "Better fellows, too. I'm not sure Study No. 6 in the Fourth are reliable."

"They wouldn't back up Cardew."

"No; but you know Study No. 6 thinks that junior captain ought to be in the Fourth, not the Shell. Rot, of course; but they're bound to think so in the Fourth. I've got an idea that a third candidate will butt in from Study No. 6—Blake or D'Arcy."

"What a storm in a teacup!" yawned Tom Merry.

"Well, you really ought to buck up, and see to things," urged Manners. "This study doesn't want a change of captain."

There was a thump at the door, and George Gore of the Shell looked into Study No. 10. He gave Tom Merry an affable, friendly, but somewhat patronising nod. Gore's manner was that of a fellow who meant to be kind, and meant to have it understood that he was being kind.

"Looking around for supporters—what?" asked Gore breezily.

"Who? I?"

"Yes, you. I suppose you've got an eye on what's going on?" said Gore.

"More or less," assented Tom.

"You've got plenty of backers," said Gore reassuringly.

"As a Shell fellow, I'm not going to see a Fourth Form kid get in as House captain. I don't say I'm wholly satisfied with you."

"No?" said Tom, with a smile.

"I'm a candid chap," said Gore. "I speak as I think. You don't come up to the mark in my opinion. But you're better than Cardew. Anyhow, you're in the Shell. I'm going to see you through. You can rely on me to help."

"Thanks!"

"But you'll have to get a bit of a move on," said Gore. "Your supporters will expect you to hustle a bit."

"Will they?" murmured Tom.

"Of course. What about a meeting in the club-room and a speech or two? I'm willing to take the chair."

"I don't think I'm going to hold any meetings," said Tom. "You see, if the fellows don't want me for captain, I haven't the slightest desire to hang on."

"Oh, utter rot!" said Gore. "When a chap's captain, he naturally wants to hang on. I know I should."

"Tastes may differ," suggested Tom Merry.

"That's all bosh! I can tell you that the fellows will expect you to value their support, if they support you," said Gore warmly. "You'll be expected to go round being a bit civil, and doing a bit of electioneering, and all that."

"Too jolly busy for electioneering," smiled Tom; "and I believe I'm always fairly civil. Certainly I shouldn't dream of putting on any extra civility at election-time."

Gore stared.

"Is that the way you expect to win an election?" he asked.

"Why not?" answered Tom Merry. "If the fellows want me to skipper them, I'm ready. If they don't, I'm prepared to stand down. Do you think a House captain at St. Jim's ought to go in for electioneering and wire-pulling, and bamboozling, like a sneaking politician? That's not quite good enough for this study."

Gore sniffed.

"You'll get left, at that rate," he said.

"Well, I'm not afraid of getting left," answered Tom. "If the Lower School wants Cardew, let the Lower School have Cardew. If they want me, they can have me. There it is in a nutshell."

"And you're not going to be civil to a fellow because he's got a vote?"

"No jolly fear! I don't want any fellow to vote for me if he thinks Cardew the better man."

"Well, Cardew's got a lot more sense than you have, in some ways," snapped Gore. "He's talked to me for half an hour, trying to get me round on his side."

"My hat!"

"And you haven't a civil word to say," said Gore. "I can jolly well tell you, Tom Merry, that you're not going the right way to work to bag my vote."

"No?" said Tom.

"No! You're going the right way to work to lose it."

"Right-ho!"

Gore flushed angrily. He had come to Study No. 10 to be kind and friendly, in a rather lofty way—the loftiness being inspired by the knowledge of his value as a voter. But evidently Tom Merry had no use for loftiness or patronage, even at election-time.

"You don't care, what?" he exclaimed.

"Not a rap!" said Tom coolly. "It's your duty to vote in the election, if it comes off, for the candidate you believe to be the better man. You can do that without being soft-sawdtered, I suppose."

"So that's your way of looking at it?"

"Just that!"

"You won't even take the trouble to ask me to vote for you, I suppose?" sneered Gore, with angry sarcasm.

"Not in the least!"

"Well," said Gore, "I meant to back you up. But if that's your style, don't count on me."

"Right-ho! I won't," assented Tom.

"And that's all you've got to say?"

"What else is there to say?"

"Oh, rats!"

Gore departed from Study No. 10 in high dudgeon, slamming the door after him. Manners and Lowther looked at one another comically, and then at Tom Merry.

"Is that your electioneering style, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

"That's it," said Tom.

"You've lost Gore's vote."

"Cardew's welcome to it."

"Tom, old man—"

"Look here," said Tom quietly. "Do you think I'm the chap to talk to Gore as if butter wouldn't melt in my mouth, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 825,

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The date of Mr. Hornby's birthday will be announced in the "Meccano Magazine" published on May 15th, 1924. You can obtain a form of application giving full particulars from the Editor, Meccano Magazine, Binns Road, LIVERPOOL, or from any dealer. Be sure and mention GEM.

as he says Cardew's done? I don't like Gore much—we've never been friends. It's his duty to vote for me if he thinks me the best man for the job. If he doesn't choose to do his duty, let him go and eat coke. I'm not asking favours of any man at St. Jim's."

"How many chaps, do you think, would get elected to the House of Commons on those lines?" asked Manners.

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, and don't care! I know that if I ever vote in an election, I shall vote for the man I think the best man, and I shall distrust any candidate who comes sneaking round asking for votes," he answered. "Anyhow, there you are!"

"Dear man," said Monty Lowther affectionately, "I wonder what it will be like with Cardew as House captain!"

"You think he'll get in?"

"Certainly—with your support!" said Lowther.

"My support!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, old chap! With your methods, it won't be necessary for Cardew to do any electioneering—you're doing it for him."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let it go at that, then," he said.

And it was let go at that.

CHAPTER 6.

Moving!

KILDARE of the Sixth frowned over a paper that lay on his study table. It was a sheet of impot paper, that bore a large number of signatures. The captain of St. Jim's looked up from it, as a tap came at the study door.

"Come in!"

Tom Merry entered the study.

It was some days since Gore's visit to Study No. 10, when Tom Merry had lost the support of George Gore by his reception of that youth. During those days things had been moving in the School House at St. Jim's.

Fellows had expected Tom Merry to be disturbed about the new proceedings; at least, to be keen in his own defence. They had been disappointed.

Certainly, Tom's own friends understood him, and backed him up without hesitation. But there were others.

Apart from Racke & Co., and Trimble and Grundy and fellows of like sort, there were many fellows who felt aggrieved at the indifference displayed by the junior captain.

As Smith minor remarked, if a fellow's vote was worth having, it was worth asking for. It was only at election-times that the common member of the rank and file had any importance. At such times he expected his importance to be recognised a little.

Tom seemed quite indifferent.

He was not, as a matter of fact, indifferent. But nothing would have induced him to compete with Cardew on Cardew's own lines.

Not only would he do no electioneering, but he would not deign even to ask a fellow for his vote. If a fellow did not want to support him, Tom Merry did not want his support.

That was a method that appealed to the more thoughtful fellows, and to Tom's own friends. But it was not a method by which the thoughtless majority could be won.

Many fellows regarded Tom Merry's attitude as disdainful, and certainly it was in strong contrast to Cardew's attitude. Cardew was exactly the fellow to win an election; he had something gratifying to say to every fellow who had a vote, and a clever way of raising vague hopes which—after the election—were never to be realised. Cardew would not have made false promises; he would never have descended quite to that. But certainly many fellows were expecting advantages from his election. Grundy had the idea fixed in his mind that Cardew's chief object was to back up his—Grundy's—claims to be played in the junior eleven. Racke & Co. believed that under Cardew as House Captain compulsory games practice would be almost a thing of the past. Baggy Trimble was assured that if he voted for Cardew he would always be able to drop into Study No. 9 in the Fourth to tea. Cardew had not said anything of the sort, but his propitiatory manner led his backers to believe in their own hopes.

Cardew, in fact, was following the methods generally followed at elections; and, like the wire-pulling politicians, he despised in his heart those whom he gulled, or who gulled themselves.

Tom Merry would not have descended to such methods to save his captaincy, or to save his life, for that matter.

The junior captain had been called to Kildare's study by a message brought by Wally of the Third, and he came to see Kildare, wondering what was wanted. The grave expression of the captain of the school showed that something was "up."

Kildare tapped the paper on the table before him.

"I suppose you know about this, Merry," he said.

"No, Kildare! What is it?"

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"You know the rule that a new election for House captain can be called for, if a certain number of the House ask for it."

"Oh, yes!" said Tom.

"Well, that's it. This is a list of the junior members of the School House who ask for a new election for junior captain."

"I see," said Tom.

"I've seen that something's been going on for some time past," said Kildare. "I can't quite make out why so many fellows are dissatisfied with you."

Tom did not answer that.

"There are other juniors in the House who can fill your place," went on Kildare. "Talbot, of your Form, would make a good captain; Noble, or perhaps Blake, would fill your place fairly well. But I don't see their names in this list."

"No," said Tom.

"This paper has been handed to me by Cardew of the Fourth," went on the captain of St. Jim's. "I think I am right in supposing that Cardew is setting up as your rival."

"That's correct."

"I'm bound to act on this; but if you have any objection to raise, the matter will be referred to the Housemaster. Do you prefer Mr. Railton to deal with it?"

"Oh, no!"

"You've no objection to a new election being held?"

"None at all."

"That's all I wanted to know," said Kildare. "I shall be sorry if you lose the captaincy; you're the best man for the job, I think, excepting perhaps Talbot."

"Thank you," said Tom.

"If you prefer the matter to go before the Housemaster, it is likely enough that he will use his authority to quash the whole thing," said Kildare.

"I don't!" said Tom. "If the fellows want a new election, let them have it."

"Then I've only to fix the date."

"Yes."

"Very well. I'll put a notice on the board this evening."

"That's all right!" said Tom.

And he quitted the study, leaving the captain of the school still frowning thoughtfully.

Tom Merry returned to Study No. 10 in the Shell. The message from Kildare had interrupted tea in that study. Manners and Lowther regarded him rather anxiously as he came in.

"Well?" they asked simultaneously.

Tom smiled.

"There's to be a new election," he said.

"Cardew's got that far, then?"

"It seems so."

"When?" asked Manners.

"Kildare's fixing a date. Saturday, most likely, I should think," said Tom. "Pass the marmalade."

"Well, you don't seem much worried about it, anyway."

"I'm not worried."

"We've time to do some electioneering, anyhow," said Monty Lowther.

"Cut that out!" said Tom.

"Fathead! If you won't lift a finger for yourself, we're jolly well going to wire in and save the situation."

"Rot!"

"Now, look here, Tom—"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "Cardew won't bag a majority of votes when it comes to the test."

"He might!"

"Well, if he does, let him. Don't I keep on telling you that I don't want to keep the captaincy unless I'm wanted to keep it?"

"We want you to keep it!" said Manners warmly.

"You're not going to be boosted for a cad like Cardew."

"He isn't exactly a cad," said Tom mildly. "He seems to me to be more a mischievous monkey than anything else. Besides, I dare say he would make a good House captain. He's got his good qualities."

"Oh, you're hopeless!" said Lowther. "You can do as you like, Tom, but I can tell you that we're going in for electioneering hot and strong."

"Don't!" said Tom quietly. "What have you got to tell the fellows that they don't know already?"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Lowther. "Leave it to us."

"I'd rather you didn't!"

"We're going to save you from yourself, old chap," said Manners kindly. "You can't win an election by standing on your dignity. If the other side tout for votes, you've got to tout for votes."

"I sha'n't do anything of the kind."

"Then we'll do your touting."

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Rats!"

Manners and Lowther left their tea unfinished; they felt that there was no time to lose. Five minutes later there was



There was a roar as Tom Merry, hoisted on the shoulders of his loyal followers, was carried into the crowded club-room. "Here he comes!" "Bravo!" "Tom Merry!" "Tom Merry!" Dishevelled, red, and breathless, the junior captain of St. Jim's was carried to the speaker's platform (See page 12.)

a hurriedly-written notice on the board, announcing that a meeting of Tom Merry's supporters would be held in the club-room at seven o'clock. It appeared beside a notice in Kildare's hand, which announced that the election for junior House captain would take place on Saturday afternoon at three. Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled along with Levison and Clive and read both notices, and smiled genially.

"Things are movin'!" he remarked.

His comrades did not speak.

"The giddy enemy are gettin' a move on, too, you see," added Cardew. "I think I shall hold a rival meetin'. You fellows comin'?"

"I'm going to Tom Merry's meeting," said Levison grimly. "Supportin' him?"

"Yes."

"And you, Clive?"

"Same as Levison."

"Such is friendship," sighed Cardew. "Why, if either of you fellows put up for anythin', I'd support you through thick and thin."

"Well, you oughtn't to, unless you thought we were doing right," said Sidney Clive bluntly.

Cardew made a grimace.

"That's the higher morality, isn't it?" he asked. "Considerin' what a juicy old reputation you used to have, Levison, you're improvin' wonderfully."

Ernest Levison flushed.

"As for Clive, I believe he was born good," went on Cardew. "What beats me is why either of you two thoroughly good and decent chaps keeps on speakin' terms with me? It isn't because you want me to ask you to Reckness Towers for the hols; you've both refused to come. And you don't want to borrow any money from me. Why do you do it?"

"Ass!" said Levison.

"I wish you'd chuck this, Cardew," said Clive.

What—when the fun's just beginnin'? No fear! Look

here, won't you fellows vote for me if I get you a long stay next vac with my noble grandfather?"

"Cheese it!"

Levison and Clive walked away, leaving Cardew laughing.

CHAPTER 7.

The Meeting!

"TOM MERRY!"

"Where's Tom Merry?"

Two or three score of voices demanded Tom Merry, in the club-room soon after seven.

The meeting was crowded.

With all Cardew's manoeuvres, he had certainly not succeeded in getting anything like a majority on his side. He had a powerful minority backing him; but a majority was quite another matter. Tom Merry was popular, undoubtedly very much more popular than Cardew was over likely to be. The club-room was swarming with juniors, of the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third. And at least two-thirds of the crowd had come there to support Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther were very satisfied as they looked over the meeting, to begin with. All Tom's best friends had turned up. Talbot of the Shell was prominent; Kangaroo and Glyn and Dane were there. Wildrake of the Fourth was conspicuous as a supporter of the Merry party, and a good many more of the Fourth. Blake & Co. had come in, though it was rather uncertain what line they intended to take. Grundy was extremely prominent on Cardew's side. Cardew had shepherded all his backers into the club-room, with the intention of disturbing the meeting as much as possible, and of swaying it against Tom if he could. Both parties were rather surprised by Tom's own failure to appear.

Monty Lowther had started by addressing the meeting, and Tom Merry's name was cheered again and again. If the same enthusiasm lasted over Saturday, Tom's re-election

seemed a certainty. But Cardew had his own ideas about that.

The cry for Tom Merry to appear was started by Cardew's faction. It was taken up by the other side.

"Tom Merry!"

"Where's Tom? Why isn't he here?"

"Is Tom Merry afraid to show up?" roared Grundy of the Shell.

"Shut up, Grundy!" shouted Kangaroo.

"Why doesn't he show up?" retorted Grundy.

"He's afraid to face the meeting, you fellows!" squeaked Trimble.

"He knows he's going to be bunked!" hooted Aubrey Racke.

There was a roar.

"Tom Merry!"

George Gore jumped on a chair.

"Gentlemen—"

"Shut up, Gore! Get down!"

"Gentlemen!" roared Gore. "I call on Tom Merry to show up! If he's afraid to face this meeting of the House, he's not the man to stand for election as House captain on Saturday."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

"Dash it all, Tom ought to come!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Why isn't he here, Lowther?"

"He won't come!"

"That's rot! Doesn't he want to be elected on Saturday?"

"Well, he won't come!"

"Bosh! He's got to come!" said Glyn. "He's got to address the meeting. Some of you fellows come with me, and we'll fetch him."

"Tom Merry's turning up his nose at this meeting!" shouted Crooke. "He thinks we're all his slaves, and bound to vote for him whether we like it or not."

"Bai Jove! I weally think Tom Mewwy might honah us with his pwesence!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seriously. "I am not suah whethah I am goin' to back him up, but weally he ought to be heah!"

"You're goin' to back me up, old top—what?" said Cardew.

Arthur Augustus turned his celebrated eyeglass severely upon the dandy of the Fourth.

"Certainly not, Cardew! If there is an election, aftah all, my ideah is that a candidate ought to stand fwom Studay No. 6—eithah Blake or myself!"

"Good man!" said Cardew cordially. "Jolly good ideah!"

"Bai Jove! I think it is wathah a good ideah, Cardew, but I weally did not expect you to see it in the same light, you know!"

"Ass!" said Dick Julian. "Cardew wants to split the vote."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"You wouldn't!" grunted Lumley-Lumley.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Tom Merry! Where's Tom Merry?" roared the meeting.

Glyn and Kangaroo and Talbot, and several other fellows had hurriedly left the club-room to seek the captain of the Shell. They found Tom Merry in his study, beginning his prep.

"You're wanted, Tom, old chap!" said Talbot.

"What is it?"

"Meeting of your supporters."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm not coming!"

"Now, don't be an ass, old chap!" said Kangaroo. "The fellows expect you to put in a word for yourself. If you don't turn up it's as likely as not that Cardew will get the meeting over to his side."

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom cheerily.

"Some of them are saying that you're afraid to face the meeting," urged Glyn.

Tom Merry flushed.

"They know that's all piffle!" he said.

"Well, come along and prove that it's piffle."

"It's not worth the trouble. I'm not going to tout for votes," said Tom. "I don't want any fellow to back me up unless he's thought the matter out and thinks he ought to do it."

"As if a voter ever thinks!" grunted Glyn. "Come on! Look here, if you won't walk, we shall carry you."

"Rats!"

"Collar him!" said Kangaroo.

"Look here—" roared Tom, jumping up.

Four or five pairs of hands were laid upon him, and Tom Merry, struggling, was whirled into the passage. There he was hoisted on the shoulders of his loyal followers, and carried bodily down to the club-room.

There was a roar as Talbot & Co. appeared in the crowded room, with Tom Merry on their shoulders.

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"Here he comes!"

"Bravo!"

"Tom Merry—Tom Merry!"

Tom was carried to the speakers' platform, and there set down, very dishevelled and red and breathless. Manners and Lowther gave him almost imploring looks.

"Play up, Tom!" whispered Monty.

"Oh, rot!"

"Speech! Speech!" roared the meeting.

"Now then, Tom!"

"Speech! Speech!"

"You've got to speak, Tom!" implored Manners. "For goodness' sake, stop playing the goat, and put in something nice and pleasant! Go it! My hat, I'll jolly well punch your nose if you don't make a speech!"

"I'll speak!"

"Good!"

Monty Lowther shouted for silence, and Tom Merry stood up to speak.

CHAPTER 8.

The Rivals!

TOM MERRY stood facing the meeting, his face flushed and his eyes sparkling. His loyal backers had insisted upon his coming—insisted most emphatically; but they had not stopped to reflect that although a horse could be brought to the water, it could not be made to drink. Tom Merry had never had any intention of electioneering, and he had no such intention now. As he was there, and called upon to speak, he simply intended to tell the electors so. That was all. His speech was not precisely what his comrades had expected to hear.

"Gentlemen—" began Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it!"

There were groans from the Cardewites, but they were drowned by the cheers of the majority.

"Gentlemen, I have nothing whatever to say—"

"What!"

"So I will say it in as few words as possible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You all know me," continued Tom Merry. "I'm junior captain, and I've done my best in the job. If I keep the job, I mean to go on doing my best."

"Bravo!"

"There's to be a new election on Saturday. I shall stand for re-election."

"Hurrah!"

"I understand that Cardew of the Fourth will be standing against me. Let the best man win!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If any fellow here thinks I ought to keep the job, he ought to vote for me. If he thinks Cardew will do better, he ought to vote for Cardew, and I hope he will do so."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! This is somethin' wathah new in election speechifyin'!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked to Blake.

"Something jolly new!" grinned Blake. "Not exactly the style for an election meeting."

"I believe it's possible that a third candidate may come forward," went on Tom Merry. "If any junior in the House thinks he's fit for the job, and able to handle it, let him stand. I myself think that Talbot of the Shell would make as good a captain as I myself."

"What rot!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Blake of the Fourth would make a good skipper, too," said Tom Merry. "So would Kangaroo. You've got plenty of good men to choose from, if you want a change. If a new man is elected, I shall back him up, as I expect to be backed up myself while I hold the captaincy. Cardew, in my opinion, would not make a good captain, and I should be sorry to see him elected. But, as I've said, any man who thinks that Cardew's the best man for the job ought to back him up!"

"Cardew gets goals, anyhow!" roared Racke.

"And somebody else rags him for gettin' them!" howled Crooke.

"Silence!"

"Order!"

"Go it, Tom Merry!" shouted Wildrake.

"I've about finished," said Tom. "I've told my friends that I'm not going to do any electioneering. They insist upon my speaking here, so I've spoken. I'm not asking any chap for his vote. The way a fellow votes is a matter for him to settle with his own judgment and conscience. If he's too lazy to think the matter out for himself, he ought not to vote at all."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Don't you want our votes?" shouted Mulvaney indignantly.

"Only on the lines I've explained," answered Tom Merry.

"I am not asking for votes, and I don't intend to ask for them. The fellows know my record, such as it is, and can judge for themselves."

"Do you think you'll get what you're too jolly uppish to ask for?" hooted Melish.

"Up with Cardew!" shouted Grundy.

"Boo! Boo! Boo!"

Tom Merry turned to walk away. Monty Lowther caught him by the arm.

"Tom, for goodness' sake—"

"I've finished," said Tom.

"Put in a little soft sawder, for goodness' sake—just a word or two!" whispered Lowther. "Something about thanking fellows for rallying round, and loyal support, and all that!"

"Not a giddy syllable!" said Tom.

"Cardew, Cardew!" roared a score of voices; and Ralph Reckness Cardew jumped on a chair to speak.

"Go it, Cardew!"

"Speak up!"

"Chuck it!"

"Order!"

"Gentlemen—" began Cardew in his silkiest tones.

"Boo! Go home!"

"Keep on!"

"Gentlemen, you have listened to the address of our esteemed friend and captain, Thomas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Far be it from me to pick faults in the election address of my esteemed rival. In fact, I regard Thomas as one of my most strenuous supporters. He has done more for me than I could possibly have done for myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He tells you," continued Cardew, "that he doesn't care a hang which way you vote—for that's what it amounts to. Thomas appears to think that he reigns in the School House by right divine, like one of the jolly old Stuarts. Well—he doesn't!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's for the honourable electors of this House to decide who shall hold the captaincy. Thomas is above asking you for your votes. I am not above it. I think that you have a right to be consulted, and to be considered."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"We all admire our Thomas," continued Cardew. "He's a straight chap. We all know how carefully he was brought

up by his old governess, Miss Priscilla—a lady whom I can never mention without respect, and, indeed, awe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—" went on Cardew.

He did not get any farther. Tom Merry walked across to him, took him by the collar, and shook him. There was a roar from the meeting.

"Hands off!"

"Don't interrupt!"

"Fair play!"

"Hands off, you cad!" yelled Cardew, struggling in Tom's powerful grasp, his cool insouciance deserting him, and his face red with rage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter!" said Tom, his eyes blazing. "You can be as funny as you like about me, and welcome; but you will not speak disrespectfully of Miss Fawcett! Do you hear?"

"Let go!" shrieked Cardew, struggling furiously.

Tom Merry, with a swing of his arm, sent Cardew whirling across the platform. The dandy of the Fourth sprawled breathless, and Tom walked out of the room, amid a hubbub of voices.

CHAPTER 9.
The Election!

MANNERS and Lowther looked rather gloomy when they came back to Study No. 10 in the Shell after the meeting. Tom Merry was at work on his prep; but he looked up with a cheery smile as his chums came in. He had recovered the usual serenity of his sunny temper by this time.

"You're a bit late for prep," he remarked.

"Blow prep!" growled Lowther.

"You're an awful ass, Tom, old man!" groaned Manners.

"You fairly mucked up our meeting!"

"Why, what did I do?" asked Tom.

"Your speech—"

"What was the matter with it?"

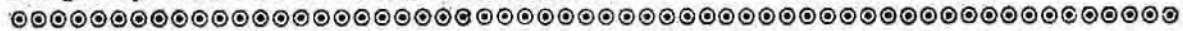
"What wasn't the matter with it?" grunted Monty Lowther. "And then handling Cardew before all the fellows—"

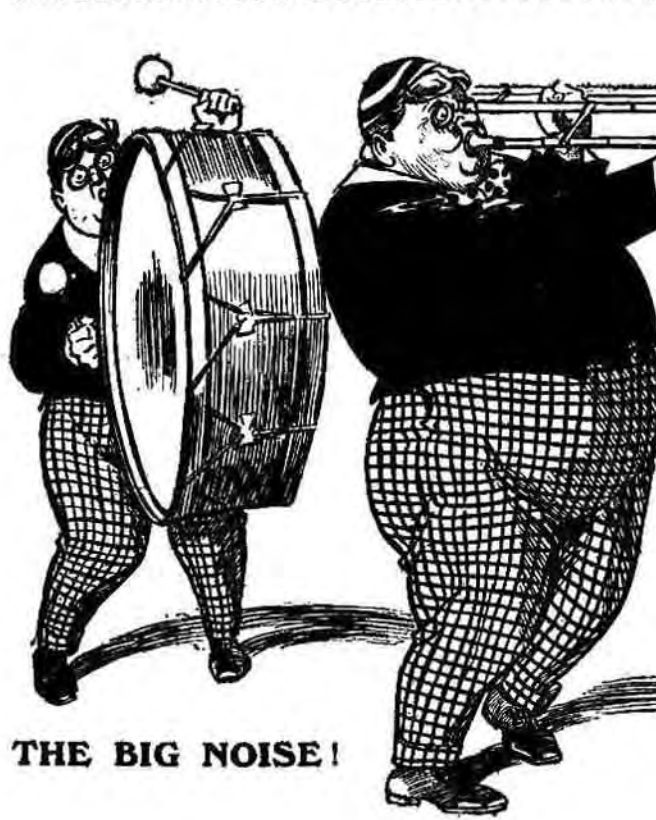
Tom Merry flushed.

"You know why I handled him, Monty."

"I know. His silly joke about Miss Priscilla was in rotten bad taste. He said it to make the fellows laugh. You

(Continued on page 16.)





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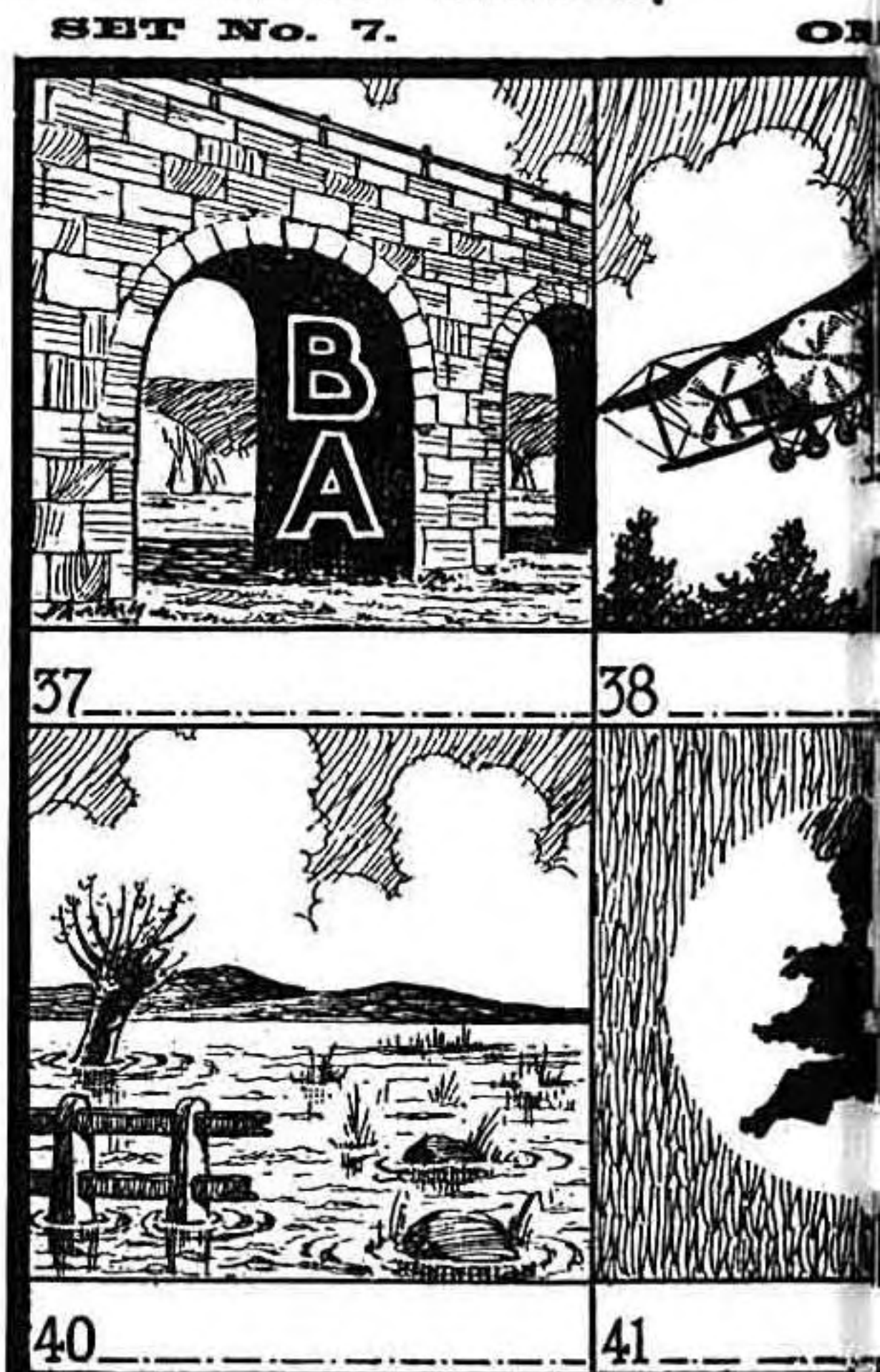
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5.—The names under the pictures must be written IN INK.

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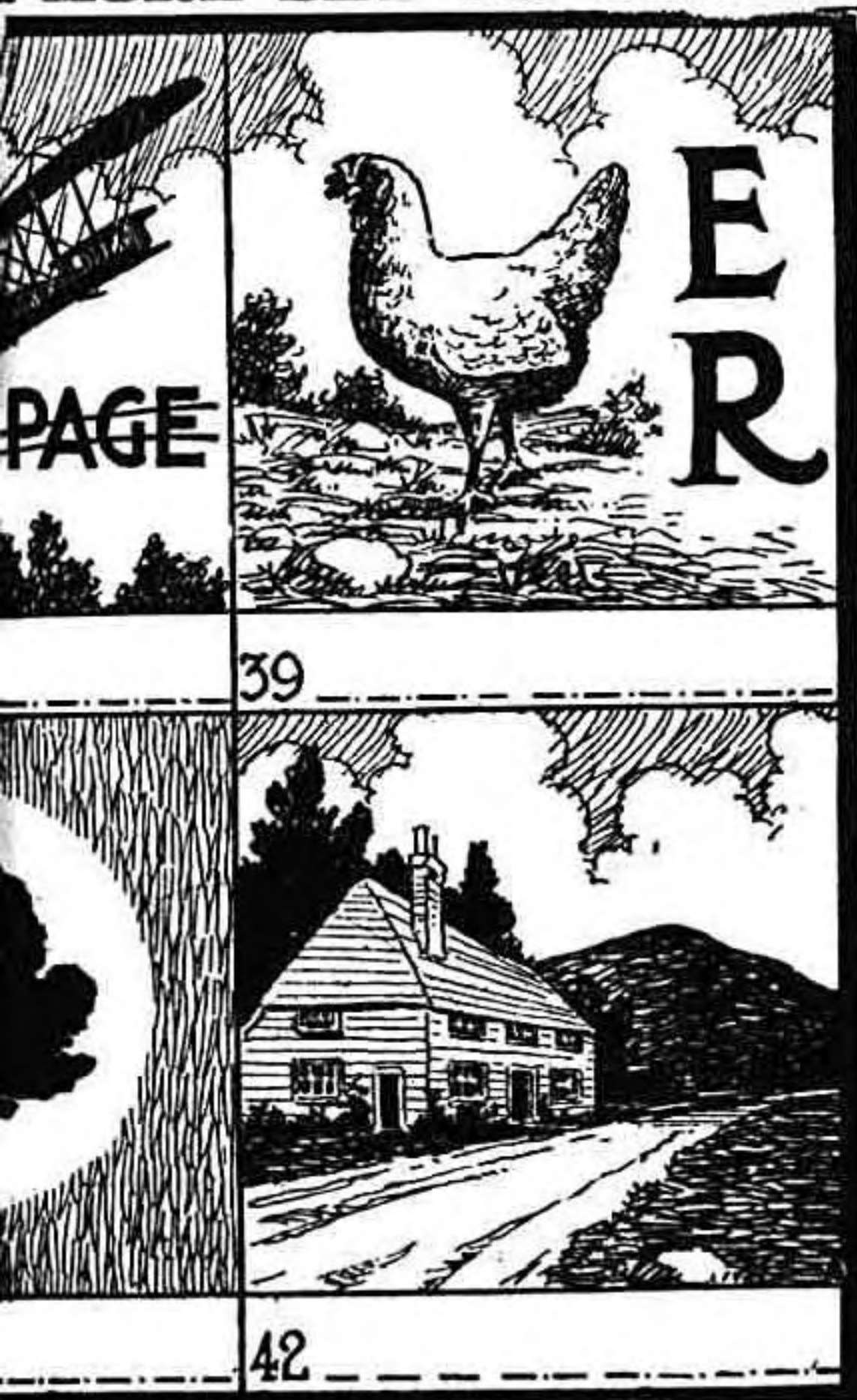
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To help you still further, we have published in the preceding issues of the GEM a list of footballers' names, which contains the actual names of the footballers represented by all the pictures appearing in this competition.

New readers desirous of entering this contest can do so by obtaining the LAST THREE numbers of the GEM Nos. 822, 823, and 824, which, between them, contained all the previous sets of pictures. Back numbers of those issues can be obtained on application to the "Back Numbers Dept.," Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. For each single number required twopence in stamps should be forwarded, also one penny stamp to cover postage. The postal rate for additional copies is an extra halfpenny per copy.

There is still time for newcomers to take part in this great contest.

Readers of the "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Union Jack," "Boys' Friend," "Pluck," "Boys' Cinema," "Young Britain," "Popular," "Magnet," "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.



FOR THE LAST SET WHICH APPEARS NEXT WEEK!

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"TOM MERRY'S RIVAL!"

(Continued from page 13.)

old ass, Tom; if you can make the other candidate look ridiculous, it's half-winning the battle! That was his game."

"Well, I stopped him."

"That wasn't the way. You ought to have made a rejoinder, holding him up to ridicule. There was plenty of material—"

"Oh, rot!" said Tom. "That may be good electioneering, but it isn't good enough for me."

"Well, it's done now," said Manners. "Do you want to know what happened after you left the meeting?"

"I'm not curious," said Tom, with a smile. "I gave it to them straight; and it's for the fellows to think it out."

"Think it out!" snorted Manners. "Catch them thinking! Cardew made his speech all right after you were gone—leaving the field open to him! He soon had all the fellows yelling with laughter. More than that, he's made most of them believe that you think yourself a sort of tin god, above appealing to them; and lots of them, I know, have made up their minds to show you that they're jolly well to be reckoned with, whether you choose to think so or not."

"Let 'em!" said Tom.

"He's holding another meeting, in the Third Form-room, after prep," said Lowther—"addressing the fags specially. You've got more friends in the Third than he has—Levison minor, and young Manners, and Wally—they'll back you up no end. But, after flattering them and pulling their legs Cardew will have more backers in the Third than you will have, unless you take a leaf out of his book."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Catch me flattering them and pulling their legs!" he said. "It's not in my line, old man."

"Well, your goose is cooked," said Monty Lowther. "You minko me tired, Tom! Let's get on to prep."

The Terrible Three settled down to work, and the discussion ceased. When they came down to the Common-room after prep a great many fellows looked curiously at Tom Merry. From the talk in the Common-room it was easy to tell that Cardew's party had greatly strengthened. Racke & Co. were looking jubilant. Trimble was grinning. Grundy appeared very satisfied. Many fellows who had intended to back up Tom Merry had changed their minds now—partly owing to Cardew's electioneering devices, and partly from a desire to show Tom Merry that he was not a little tin god, as Manners had put it.

Clarence York Tompkins was heard to remark that he wasn't going to give his vote to a fellow who was too proud to ask for it, and Tompkins was far from being alone in that view. Tom Merry, as a matter of fact, was the very last fellow in the world to contest an election on the usual lines.

Cardew, on the other hand, revelled in all the trickery of electioneering; instead of despising such methods, he despised the fellows who were influenced by them. That was the difference between his nature and Tom Merry's.

But Cardew could speak cheerily, with a smile on his face, to a fellow whom he disliked and despised; and Tom Merry could not. If Racke of the Shell had offered Tom his support, the offer would have been rejected without ceremony. Cardew was "out" for all the support he could get, and his manner to Racke was honeyed, and he treated even Baggy Trimble with studied politeness.

When Saturday came round there was considerable excitement in the School House of St. Jim's.

Cardew and his supporters were counting their numbers again and again, and Tom Merry did not even trouble to make a list of his party. If a fellow wanted to come in and vote for him—well, he could do it; that was Tom's view. Cardew, on the other hand, was busy that Saturday. Even in class in the morning he was eager and whispering.

On one point, at least, Cardew had failed—no third candidate appeared on Saturday. Talbot of the Shell was Tom's firmest supporter. And Blake of the Fourth, after long hesitation, had decided not to split the vote by putting himself forward. Study No. 6 were convinced that a member of that celebrated study would make a first-class House captain. But they realised that if they drew a party to themselves, it would thin out Tom Merry's party, and make Cardew's success almost a certainty. So Study No. 6 nobly stood down and threw their weight into Tom Merry's scale.

At three o'clock on Saturday afternoon the lecture-room in the School House was crowded. Almost every junior of that house was present. The New House, of course, had nothing to do with the affair. It was a House matter.

Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth came in to conduct the

election. Junior elections always required the presence of a couple of prefects, otherwise the excitement was liable to get out of hand. There was a cheer for Kildare as he came in.

Tom Merry was present with his friends, and Cardew stood in the midst of a crowd. There was a cool and confident smile on Cardew's face. He nodded across to Levison and Clive, who were with Tom Merry.

The proceedings started without delay. Kildare stated—what everybody present already knew—that this meeting of the Lower School House was held for the election of a junior House captain. Talbot of the Shell proposed Tom Merry and was seconded by Manners. Kildare called for a show of hands, and there was a goodly show. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his excitement, held up both hands till he was called to order. Cardew shook his head sorrowfully at Levison and Clive as they put up their hands for Tom Merry.

The show of hands for Cardew certainly looked as numerous as that for Tom Merry. A count was called for, and Kildare and Darrell proceeded patiently to count.

There was a buzz of excitement in the room as the count proceeded.

Cardew, with all his cool self-confidence, looked a trifle anxious and eager now. He could not bear the thought of failure, and he realised that he would look more than a little ridiculous if he failed, after his herculean efforts to rally a party round himself and "give Tom Merry a fall."

The two prefects compared notes when they had finished the count, and eager eyes watched them on all sides.

"Bai Jove! I weally wish they would buck up!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to his chums. "I am weally on tentahooks, you know. It will be feafuhly wotten if Cardew gets in!"

"It will be a near thing, anyhow," grunted Blake. "Blessed if I quite know how Cardew's done it; but he's got a big party."

"It's wathah we remarkable, as Cardew isn't weally populah," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "Only a few days ago Gwunday of the Shell was wagin' with w'ath about Cardew bein' played in the House match, and now he's backin' him up like anythin'. Of course, Gwunday is a sillay ass!"

"Silence!"

Kildare was about to announce the result. His face was grave.

"Tom Merry—seventy votes."

"Bai Jove! That's not bad! Have you any ideah how many fellows there are in the House, Blake?"

"Hush!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence!"

"Ralph Reckness Cardew, seventy-seven votes. Cardew of the Fourth Form is duly elected junior House captain of the School House."

There was silence for the moment. Most eyes turned upon Tom Merry. He did not flinch.

"Then Racke gave a yell."

"Three cheers for Cardew!"

And there was a roar. Loud boos and catcalls came from the opposite party, and for some moments Kildare shouted in vain for silence. But silence was restored at last.

"Cardew of the Fourth becomes junior House captain," said Kildare. "Tom Merry, of course, remains junior captain of the school. This election does not affect that. Generally, House captain and school captain have been the same man, though not always. Before this meeting breaks up, I should like to point out that unless House captain and school captain pull well together, the result is likely to be bad for the House, and bad for the school."

"I shall do my best, Kildare," said Tom Merry.

Cardew smiled.

"I hope I can be relied upon to play up," he said. His eyes rested on Tom Merry's face, as he spoke, with a mocking expression.

Tom Merry set his lips. He knew that there was trouble to come—that Cardew would give him all the trouble he could, and in his new position the trouble he could give was very great.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I wegard the result of this election as wotten!"

"Thanks!" said Cardew.

"I mean it, Cardew! Although you are a distant relation of mine, I am vewy sowry to see you elected House captain. Howevah, I trust you will play up, and pull with Tom Mewry for the good of the House."

Cardew laughed.

"My dear chap," he said, "I can promise you, at least, that Tom Merry is goin' to have a high old time."

And Cardew walked away with his friends, leaving Arthur Augustus shaking his noble head seriously.

THE END.

(Cardew has scored his first success against Tom Merry. What will happen next? Look out for "CAPTAIN CARDEW!"—the next of this splendid series of school stories by Martin Clifford.)



MIKE MAKES A WIRELESS SET

A Screamingly Funny Yarn of Mirthful
Mike, Bright Billy Burton, and Mischievous
Marmaduke.

By ELMER K. ARTER.



CHAPTER 1. A Terrible Tangle!

"I'M going to make a wireless set," said Michael McAndrew to his friend Billy Burton.

"I don't think!" scoffed Billy, from the garden wall. "You don't know anything about it!"

"I've been reading and studying," returned Mike, climbing up on to the wall that separated the two gardens. "It seems simple enough. All you've got to do is to get a lot of wire—"

"I thought you said it was wireless," interrupted his friend, squinting along the model boat he was carving.

"So it is when you've got it made. All you do is to wrap a lot of wire round a cardboard tube, and then you find the sensitive spot, or something, and slide along it and adjust the crystal which can be either a cat's whisper or crystalite, and zincyte, or borneite, or a variometer."

"Help!" cried Billy, holding his hands to his ears. "I know you've got it all wrong. I know enough about wireless to tell you that a cat's whisker is used, not a cat's whisper—"

"Our cat's got some lovely whiskers," piped Marmaduke, Mike's young brother, who had been listening with open mouth.

"You shut up!" said Mike rudely.

"Our wireless hasn't got any cat's whiskers," said Billy, "and it's more complicated than you seem to think, and it hasn't got any crystalites and zincytes and things. When you switch on it lights up, and you sometimes get a noise like a cat—"

"That's the cat's whisper," interrupted Mike.

"There is no cat's whisper," argued Billy. "Nor a cat's whisker. Our's is a three valve set."

"I don't know anything about valves. This book says you need not have valves."

"Oh, all right, have it your own way! If you don't have valves, you don't get any light."

"What do I want light for?"

"I don't know. All I know is that if we don't get a light, we don't get any music. Our set cost twenty pounds, and if you think you can do the same as we do with a bit of wire and a cat's whisker, do it. It doesn't sound very exciting to me. All the same, if you want to come and have a look at dad's set, I'll show

you. There'll be no one in the conservatory at dinner-time."

"I've seen it often enough," replied Mike. "It's a box of tricks. My set will be simple. This book says any fool can make one."

"Then make one. Marmaduke will help you. I'm tired of kids' games."

It was clear that Billy was not interested; but later that day when he called round to borrow a book, his attention was attracted by the state of the kitchen in which Mike was busy at work. Making a wireless set seemed to offer possibilities.

Mike was surrounded with wire of various kinds; there were tools on every piece of furniture, including the gas stove. Dotted about were bright brass terminals and screws, and last, but not least, on one corner of the table, in a small bag, there was something that resembled toffee. Apparently Marmaduke had noticed the toffee-like substance, for he kept walking past it to examine the packet without touching it. It certainly did look like toffee, he thought, but after a second or third look he was undecided whether it was not ginger-snap.

Mike, his tongue between his teeth, was carefully winding purple-coloured wire around a cardboard tube. It was astonishing how much wire it took and how slow was his progress.

"That's funny wire," commented Billy, his nose over the work, and obstructing Mike's view.

"It's enamelled," explained the prospective wireless expert. "When the job's finished, you scrape it off."

"Then why do they put it on?"

"To keep it from rusting, I suppose."

"Copper doesn't rust."

"Well, it does something!" snapped

Mike bad-temperedly. His fingers were getting quite sore and his arms were aching.

Just then, Marmaduke, in investigating the contents of the paper bag, tripped over the enamelled wire, which, unwinding from its reel, was describing many circles on the kitchen floor.

"Look out, clumsy!" cried Mike, in alarm.

Poor Marmaduke tried to avoid the circles of spinning copper, but it was no good. While he was trying to balance on one foot, he found loops of wire on the foot raised in the air, and when he tried to lift the other foot, more coils had wrapped round it. He could not raise both feet at once. Perhaps he tried; anyhow, he finished up in the coal-bucket with the wire decorating the airing rack overhead.

Mike, his hands gripping his half-finished coil, was helpless to assist his brother, but Billy, anxious to help, dived to the rescue across the wire entanglement. His feet also gathered up loops of the wire, and he fell on the fender.

This was too much for Mike. He could see his beautiful kinkless wire becoming so much scrap, so he placed his coil on the side table to free his hands. As he released it, it seemed to jump like a released clock spring. He made a grab to stay its course, but he must have missed, for he, too, found himself wrapped in wire.

"Keep cool!" he shouted to the yelling Marmaduke and the squirming Billy. "Keep cool, stay where you are, and I'll wind it up."

But Mike could not expect his brother to remain with his head in the coal-bucket, and Billy was none too comfortable with one leg through the fender. No doubt Mike could have retrieved the wire in time, but just then the maid decided to enter in a hurry. She had a tray in her hand, and could not see where she was walking. The crash she made as she fell among the wire was heard in the dining-room, and Mr. McAndrew came along to investigate its cause.

"What are you doing?" he asked, taking care not to step into the danger zone. "What on earth are you doing?"

Mr. McAndrew was an engineer, but it took all his engineering skill to unravel the puzzle in front of him. Each of the prisoners tried to free himself, but only to get more entangled.

"Don't kink it, pa!" pleaded Mike, anxious for his wire.

"I've got some coal in my mouth!" spluttered Marmaduke.

Billy was silent, but Mary, seeing a mouse scurry along the skirting-board, THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 825.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2!

screamed and completely tied herself in a knot in trying to rise to her feet.

Mr. McAndrew could see that things were getting serious. On the table where Mike had been working there was a pair of nippers. He called to Mike to pass them to him, but Mike guessed that this meant ruination to his beautiful wire.

"No, pa, don't cut it!" he cried.

But his father, stepping over the writhing coils, climbed on to the table and reached for the tool. His first task was to cut Mary loose; the girl seemed in danger of going into hysterics, so he lay on the table and extended his arms towards her. He forgot that the table had an extension which had no supporting leg; the next moment he had dived headfirst into the wire.

This was not the worst; his foot, in describing an arc overhead caught the gas-pendant.

Smash went the globe and the mantle, and darkness fell upon the scene.

At this moment, Mrs. McAndrew, hearing the uproar, decided to visit the centre of tumult. She walked clean into the wire; it wrapped around her ankles. For a few seconds she struggled to maintain her equilibrium, then fell upon her husband and the maid.

Mr. McAndrew was a powerful man, so, wire or no wire, he was soon on his feet. Then out of the kitchen he strode, trailing the stuff after him, and tightening the bonds that held the others.

He was still grasping the nippers, and in a few moments he had freed himself by the light in the hall; in another minute he had a candle upon the scene, and one by one he rescued the members of his family, and soon poor Mike's wire was in many pieces.

By the time the gas had been put in order, and Mike had collected all his paraphernalia, it was time for bed, and everyone had decided that "wireless" was not the proper name for such apparatus as he was trying to make.

CHAPTER 2.

First Aid!

IMEDIATELY Mike had finished his home lessons the next evening he again laid out his materials in the kitchen, hoping that Marmaduke would find something else with which to interest himself.

He was doomed to disappointment, for hardly had he got half the coil completed before his small brother again joined him, and Billy, too, came in to help.

"You must keep your feet in your pockets," said Mike to Marmaduke. "It was all your fault last night. Get a chair, and play with those screws and things."

"Was your father cross?" asked Billy anxiously.

"I don't know," answered Mike. "We went to bed in a hurry."

Assisted by his chum, Mike slowly wound his wire round the cardboard tube, and Marmaduke, tired of playing with the screws and terminals, cast around for the mysterious packet of toffee stuff he had seen the night before. He found it. It certainly did look like toffee. He wondered what it was. Was it toffee? If so, why didn't Mike have some? But, of course, Mike was busy, and had even refused a chocolate offered him by the maid.

It was either toffee or ginger-snap, Marmaduke decided. It was very tempting, and he was inclined to think that Mike was selfish in not offering him some. Surely it would not matter if he took just a little bit!

He glanced at Mike and Billy, who

were bending their heads over the coil, and his hand crept into the bag. He placed a handful in his mouth; but just then Mike looked up, and Marmaduke closed his lips, and again entertained himself with the screws.

"Don't you lose any of those," said Mike.

Marmaduke, unable to speak, nodded that he would not lose the screws, but he was really more concerned about the stuff in his mouth. It was not a bit like toffee. It was quite nasty, and it caused him to puff out his cheeks.

"What are you blowing about?" asked Billy.

Marmaduke was no ventriloquist, and what he said without opening his lips was not clear, but to Mike it looked like a man he had once seen on an excursion steamer in a rough sea.

"What's the matter with you?" Mike demanded.

"Mur-mur-mur—" mumbled Marmaduke, and his effort evidently caused him to swallow some of the stuff, for the next moment he appeared to explode.

The boys thought that the youngster was choking, so they dropped the coil and rushed to his aid; but Marmaduke had left the chair, and was grovelling about under the table, coughing, and making weird noises.

"Oh!" he groaned, crawling out into the open.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, oh!" gasped Marmaduke, pointing an accusing finger at the packet on the table.

"Have you been eating that?" gasped Mike.

"Oh, oh!" was Marmaduke's only reply.

"That's shellac."

"Is it poison?" whispered Billy, greatly concerned.

"I don't know!" groaned Mike, looking round helplessly.

His mother and father were out, and the maid had gone to the post. He would have to decide things for himself. He had heard that mustard-and-water was good for poisons, and the mustard-jar was near at hand. He emptied it into a basin, ran to the tap, and mixed enough to supply a dozen large restaurants.

"What do you do with it?" asked Billy.

"Haven't you heard of mustard-plasters?"

"I don't want a poultice," whined Marmaduke.

"Grab hold of him," Mike ordered; and Billy caught the youngster, while the self-appointed doctor proceeded to lay out the yellow mixture on a handkerchief.

"Where does it hurt?" he asked his brother.

"It doesn't hurt."

"It will perhaps."

"It tastes nasty in my throat."

"Dab it on his throat," suggested Billy, holding the younger boy between his knees and forcing the curly head backwards.

Without more ado, and in spite of all opposition, Mike slapped the mustard-plaster on Marmaduke's throat and covered it with a towel.

"Is that better?" he asked, after a minute's silence, watching for signs of result.

"Yes—no! Oh, it's starting to burn—it's burning!" screamed Marmaduke, trying to tear the towel from his neck.

But he was no match for the two elder boys, who held him tight.

Marmaduke's cries could be heard a mile away.

Fortunately for Marmaduke, the maid

returned; and, on ascertaining the cause of the uproar, put an end to Mike's drastic treatment by removing the mustard-plaster and giving the patient a glass of milk.

When Mike went back to his coil he found that it had again unwound itself, and the job had to be started again.

With Billy's help the cardboard tube was eventually covered until it looked as neat as a huge reel of silk.

He was holding it up to examine it with admiring eyes when his face fell. He placed the coil on the table, and sat down, holding his head. On his face there was an expression of despair.

"What's up?" inquired Billy.

"I forgot to shellac the tube first," he said.

"Does it matter?"

"I don't know; but if it doesn't matter, why does the book say it should be done, and why have I spent a shilling in shellac and methylated spirits?"

Billy could not answer this question.

And so it had to be done all over again.

After this the work proceeded apace. The finished coil was fixed between two pieces of wood, which were bridged by a slide-rod and a slider. The terminals were screwed into the board, and altogether the apparatus was beginning to look like a wireless set such as are to be seen in dealers' windows.

"Now for the cat's whisker," said Mike, very satisfied with his work.

With heads together Billy and Mike pored over the handbook to obtain knowledge of crystals and cat's whiskers.

"I don't know how it works," said Billy; "but it seems easy enough to make. All you do is to get a bit of zincite in a crystal cup—"

"It's made of brass."

"Who said it wasn't?"

"You said a crystal cup. I see, a cup for the crystal."

"You get the cup and half fill it with solder, and then run in some Wood's metal. Have you got any Wood's metal?"

"Yes."

"Then when the Wood's metal is nearly cold—"

"How do you find out whether it is nearly cold?"

"By your fingers, I suppose."

"It may be very hot."

"You can wet your finger. Anyway, when the Wood's metal is nearly cold you place the zincite in. Got any zincite?"

"Yes; it's that bit of shiny stuff in the pill-box. What else?"

"Having placed the zincite flat in the Wood's metal," Billy read on, "this part of the work may be considered finished. To find the sensitive point—"

"That'll do for the present. Let's do the Wood's metal and stuff."

Before the boys had finished this small job, which meant filling a thimble with solder, the gas-stove and the floor of the scullery were literally treated with flat discs of solder. Mike had burned fingers and thumbs on both hands, and Billy had burned a hole in his trousers. But the job was well done, and they were proud when they fixed it on the base board.

Then Mike discovered that he had lost the cat's whisker.

Marmaduke was at once interrogated. He had not seen it, but he hastened to remedy the loss.

The cat was in the drawing-room, there were a pair of scissors in his mother's sewing-box. Without a word he left the others to apply this knowledge to the benefit of all concerned. He found the scissors, and he found the cat, but Tabby was not to yield up its whiskers, or even one whisker, without a struggle, and it was some time before the youngster emerged from the struggle with

victory illuminating his scratched face. He re-entered the kitchen with arms upraised, the scissors in one hand and the cat's whisker in the other.

"I've got one, Mike!" he cried triumphantly.

Mike was on his hands and knees under the table searching for the missing item.

"Got what?" he asked.

"A cat's whisker. I cut off the longest," replied his brother.

"You clown!" said Mike, in disgust. "It's not a real cat's whisker we want! It's a bit of wire coiled like a spring."

Considering the trouble Marmaduke had gone to in order to supply his brother's requirements, there was small return for his labour. His face fell, and then just as suddenly brightened. He felt in the pocket of his tunic, and after many contortions withdrew a hairlike piece of brass.

"Is that it, Mike?" he asked.

Mike abandoned politeness, and made a grab at the wire.

"Of course it is! Why can't you leave things alone?"

"I didn't know it was a cat's whisker," whimpered Marmaduke. "What a silly name to give a bit of wire!"

Mike and Billy carefully studied the handbook, and fixed the whisker in position, and spent the rest of the evening sitting looking at the apparatus, admiring their handiwork, and silently imagining the delights of listening-in.

"To-morrow we rig up the aerial," said Mike finally. "There's a scaffolding pole at the bottom of the garden, and we can run the wire from that to the attic window."

"Will it have to have trapezes in it?" asked Billy, referring to the crossbars on his father's aerial.

"No; the book says a long single wire is best."

"What about the licence?"

"No one will know."

"They'll see the aerial."

"We can take it down each night. No one will see it in the dark."

"But the pole?"

"People will think it's a flag-pole."

CHAPTER 3.

Erecting the Aerial!

MR. McANDREW was very pleased with Mike's workmanship. He liked to encourage his son to study mechanics, and gave him every assistance, so he bought Mike a pair of headphones, which the young wireless expert promptly carried off to show his friend.

"They're four thousand ohms!" he announced.

"Four thousand whats?" asked the puzzled Billy.

"No, not watts. Watt is another electric thing. Ohms are a sort of—kind of—well, you know. They say a motor-bike is so many horse-power. The one in pa's garage is two and a quarter horse-power, but you couldn't harness two horses and a quarter of a horse—"

"That would be a donkey—"

"But you know what I mean."

"Then what's a watt?"

"It's a kind of a—sort of a therm that the gasworks sell."

"Go on. A therm is an insect!"

"Well, if it is," answered Mike, uncertain himself, "a watt isn't, neither is a volt."

"Help! Don't say any more of them. You'll dream of them. Watts and therms and ohms and volts. You've been reading too much. We don't want any therms and insects like that to put up a flag-pole."



As the prisoners were making frantic efforts to extricate themselves from the encircling wire entanglement, the kitchen door opened, and Mr. McAndrew looked into the room. "What on earth are you doing?" he asked, taking care not to step into the danger zone.

"But aren't they splendid—these headphones?"

"Yes; but we've got a loud speaker, and everyone can hear," Billy did not mean Mike to have a monopoly in wireless.

"You can't have a loud speaker with a crystal set, in any case. I don't like loud speakers; they are no better than a gramophone. I think headphones look much more like wireless."

Mike strutted about with the phones on his head, and imagined himself a wireless operator.

That day they started on the erection of the mast for the aerial. They found the scaffolding pole; and, deciding that the best position would be at the bottom of the garden near the greenhouse, they commenced to dig.

It was hard work. The ground was firm and apparently had been the burial-ground of a number of brick-ends, so Billy and Mike had not got very far down at the conclusion of the evening's labour.

With tired limbs and blistered hands they went to bed, and next day being Saturday they had plenty of time available. They worked hard, but to get down deep enough it was necessary to enlarge the hole, and it was then that the gardener advised them not to.

"That is where we buried Fido," he said.

Naturally, Mike did not want to disturb the remains of his departed pet,

and reluctantly they filled in the hole and cast around for another site.

Work was proceeding very satisfactorily when Mr. McAndrew interrupted the excavations.

"Don't dig there, my boy," he said. "That is where we buried Fido."

Poor Mike subsided on to the cucumber-frame, and Billy dropped helplessly to the ground.

"But, pa, Jenks said he buried Fido over there," said Mike, pointing to the refilled hole.

"No, my boy; it was just where you are digging," returned his father. "If you want to dig a hole for your aerial mast, there is that bare patch behind Fido's old kennel."

So back into the hole went the soil they had removed so energetically, and another day's work was done.

It was a week before they could get going again. The short evenings made after-school labour impossible, but everything comes to an end, including seven days' waiting for Saturday. Anyhow, it gave their blistered hands a much-needed rest.

Then they started all over again. Despite cramped quarters, they made good progress, and had decided that they had gone deep enough, when the gardener next door popped his head over the wall.

"What are you doing, young gentlemen?" he croaked.

"Discovering Australia," replied The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 825.

Mike, with a smile that prevented the remark from being rudeness.

"I shouldn't dig just there if I were you," the old man went on.

Mike threw down his spade and faced the major's servant with arms akimbo. His attitude was one of defiance.

"You see, Master Michael," the gardener squeaked—"you see, Mr. Jenks buried your little dog just there."

Mike clasped his hands to his head.

Billy, looking at the blisters on his hands, seemed glad of a respite. But Marmaduke without further ado started to shovel the soil back into the hole.

"I wonder where Fido was buried?" said the puzzled Mike.

A little dazed, he went in search of Jenks, and found that individual tending his plants in the greenhouse.

"Here, Jenks," he said, "where was Fido buried? Wilks, next door, says you buried him behind the kennel."

The old gardener ambled out of the greenhouse, and for some time stood rubbing his brow as if to stimulate his memory.

"Of course, I may be a little mixed," he said finally, staring first at the original site for the mast and then at the second mound. "You see," he went on, "your mother told me to bury him there"—pointing to the spot where operations had been started—"and then your father instructed me to plant him over there. Mr. Wilks said he thought behind the kennel would be best, and I'm blest if I can remember now."

A new thought illuminated his wrinkled face.

"I know," he said, "Mr. Brown, the chauffeur, helped me. He will know."

The chauffeur was in the garage cleaning the car, and to him went Mike, Billy, and Mr. Jenks.

"Mr. Brown," wheezed the old gardener, "where did we bury Fido?"

"He wasn't buried," replied Brown. "If you remember, we placed him in an old sack, and when we had dug the hole we found that the sack had been stolen

by that rag and bone merchant who came mooching about."

"Ah!" cried Jenks. "I remember now, you see, Master Michael—"

But Mike wanted to know nothing more.

"Carry on!" he cried.

And the two boys raced back to the hole, only to find that Marmaduke had worked very hard and nearly completed filling it in.

"Br-r-r-r!" cried Mike. And poor Marmaduke went off to tell his mother.

However, the soil was soft, and did not take Mike and Billy very long to remove it, and the work of placing the pole in position began.

A scaffolding-pole is not light. It is not an easy thing to handle; in fact, it is extremely difficult to up-end such a long and weighty piece of wood.

There were several things to do before tackling this job, however, and they set to work in earnest. On the thin end of the pole they fixed a small pulley, in which they threaded the clothes-line. Half-way along it they fixed a band for three ropes to act as guys. Then the pole was ready for placing in the hole.

With Jenks' help they got it to the hole, but the gardener disclaims all responsibility for the glass that was broken in the greenhouse.

Mike was engineer in chief, so he placed a man at each guy-rope—Billy, Jenks, and Marmaduke—and, taking the thin end of the pole, raised it from the ground. His plan was to walk along with the pole on his shoulder, and so gradually raise it to the perpendicular. He was surprised to find that every step he took the pole got heavier, and he had it raised quite a height when the others thought they would help with the ropes. Next moment the pole was swinging round, first towards the greenhouse and then towards the major's wall. It ended up on the wall.

Although it was Saturday, the major's servant had been having a wash-day, and the end of the pole rested just beneath the array of the major's underwear.

Mike rearranged his forces, and gave the order to pull. The pole moved, turning to the right and then to the left, and, unknown to the boys, collected a

great deal of the washing from the next garden in the process.

Puffing and panting, the boys got the pole nearly upright, with the major's garments flying from it like the signals of a ship in distress.

When Mike saw the waving linen overhead he let go in surprise. Billy, too, let go, and bang went the pole, to rest upon the wall that separated the garden from the street beyond.

"Pull!" shouted Mike, throwing his weight upon the ropes.

And when finally the pole was raised again there was nothing but the ropes upon it. The major's underwear was in the street.

While Jenks, Billy, and Marmaduke held the ropes, Billy started to shovel in the soil around the base of the pole.

"Those clothes, Mike!" said Billy in a hoarse whisper.

"Shut up!" Mike growled. "They'll think the wind has done it."

"There isn't any wind, Master Michael," said old Jenks.

"Well, we can't let go now to hunt for that stuff!" panted the young contractor.

CHAPTER 4.

The Major is Wrathful!

WHEN finally the pole was fixed, the boys climbed on the cucumber-frame to look over the wall into the street. They were just in time to see a clergyman and his wife disappear round the corner with the major's linen in their arms.

"What have you done with Major Clinton's clothes?" a shrill voice cried from over the garden wall.

The boys wheeled suddenly, to see the major's housekeeper glaring at them.

Mike tried to speak, but he did not know what to say. Marmaduke and Billy disappeared behind the greenhouse, and after another fruitless effort to answer the major's servant, Mike followed them.

"You naughty boys! You naughty boys!" shrieked the woman.

But the wireless experts were crouching low, Billy with his handkerchief stuffed in his mouth and Marmaduke looking very scared.

Jenks had returned hurriedly to his work, and was very deaf indeed that afternoon.

"We'll put the aerial up to-night," announced Mike, when the housekeeper had finally gone back to the house, and they parted company for tea.

But the aerial was not fixed that night. Just as the brothers were leaving the table after tea the front door bell rang violently, and the maid came in to announce that Major Clinton wished to speak to Mr. McAndrew.

Mike and Marmaduke exchanged glances. Several thoughts flashed through their minds, but their retreat was cut off. To reach the stairs, the kitchen, or the garden they would have to pass through the hall. Now, if their father took the major into the drawing-room they might escape, but from the noise made by the major in the hall, there was little chance of this happening.

Mrs. McAndrew left the table to ascertain what was disturbing their neighbour, and this gave the boys an opportunity to crawl under the table.

"It is an outrage!" they heard the major bawl. "An outrage, sir! My housekeeper saw those young rascals reach for the laundry with a pole, and deliberately deposit it in the back street. Unfor— Fortunately the Rev. Shepley



Held securely between his knees, Billy forced the squirming young Marmaduke's head backwards, while Mike clapped the mustard plaster on the youngster's throat.

and his wife discovered them, and very kindly brought them to me. I repeat, sir, it's an outrage, and I demand that you chastise them!"

"I will interrogate them," Mr. McAndrew was heard to say. "And if I am satisfied that they deserve it, they shall be punished."

"The old crank!" muttered Mike.

Marmaduke began to whimper, which gave away their whereabouts to their mother who peered into the room.

"Michael!" she said severely. "Come here!"

Mike emerged from beneath the table, looking very sheepish.

"Did you have anything to do with the major's washing?" she asked.

"Well, you see, mother—" Michael commenced.

"Come here, Michael!" called his father.

Mike slowly went to the door.

"Did you hear Major Clinton's indictment?" Mr. McAndrew solemnly questioned him.

"I heard his voice," faltered Mike.

"Michael. That is being rude," warned his mother.

Poor Mike looked puzzled.

"Did you, or did you not interfere with the laundry next door?"

"I didn't know the major had a laundry," answered Mike stubbornly.

"My washing, you young rascal!" shouted the infuriated major.

Mike looked round helplessly for a way of escape.

"It—it— They were only old things!" he stammered. "They were all patched and holey."

"Michael!" cried his mother.

"Br-r-r-r!" spluttered the major.

"Go to your room!" said his father calmly.

And Michael went, expecting a visit from his parent later on.

When Billy called for him to continue the work, he saw his chum at his bedroom window.

"Clear off!" whispered Mike, in a hoarse stage whisper. "The major is in the house!"

That night Mike heard his mother and father enjoying a good joke at someone's expense, and after a while he felt convinced that it was not at himself they were laughing.

Next day was Sunday, and throughout the bright, sunny day the boys sauntered about with envious eyes on the aerial mast. Darkness came at last. Mr. and Mrs. McAndrew then went out, and Mike and Billy got busy with their coil of aerial wire.

Whispering and moving about the garden like burglars, they fixed one end of the wire to the line on the pole, and the other to a length of rope lowered from the attic window. The aerial wire had been prepared beforehand, and after several stealthy trips down the garden to disconnect it from bushes and tree branches, they finally got it up, and out of sight in the darkness overhead.

Then upstairs they went to connect it to the wireless set.

Mike, complete with head-phones, started to tune in. Up and down the coil he slid the slider, but nothing happened.

"I suppose there is a concert?" queried Billy, impatiently waiting to try the head-phones.

"Yes—8-30 to 10-30. I've seen it in the Sunday papers," replied Mike, staring at the cat's whisker. "You can't expect too much at first. I don't know whether the cat's whisker has a sensitive spot."

"You mean whether it is on the sensitive spot," corrected Billy, who remembered the context of the book better than his chum.

"Hush!" whispered Mike. "I heard something!"

"What?" "A clicking noise!" "That would be ships signalling," suggested Billy. The two boys listened intently, unaware of the fact that the wire was disconnected and that young Marmaduke was amusing himself by tapping the two ends of it together.



"Perhaps so," returned Mike, resuming his painstaking task of discovering the particular pin's point on the crystal which would transmit sound.

For quite an hour Mike tried, and then for half an hour Billy manipulated the little wire on the zincite.

"Let me have another go," said Mike, taking the head-phones from his chum and refitting them on his own head.

After five minutes' earnest research work, Mike suddenly stiffened.

"Hush!" he whispered. "I heard something!"

"What?"

"A clicking noise."

"That would be ships signalling," suggested Billy, who had heard Morse on his uncle's wireless. Marmaduke was seated on the floor behind Mike's seat, playing with the ends of two pieces of wire.

"I heard it again!" whispered Mike.

"Let me hear," pleaded Billy, and reluctantly Mike passed the head-phones.

"I know," he said. "We can unscrew one of the phones and then we can both hear."

This was accordingly done, and presently both boys could hear the clicking sound referred to by Mike.

"That's Morse right enough," said Billy, as if he were accustomed to hearing Morse every day.

"Let's take it down."

"Dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot!" called Billy, making signs on a piece of paper.

"Well, what does it mean?"

"It sounds like the S O S. There's a ship in distress somewhere."

"I think," said Marmaduke, assuming a knowing tone—"I think, Mike, you ought to connect these wires with the set."

Mike looked down and staggered back with surprise, pulling the head-phone off Billy's head in doing so.

"You—you— What are you doing with those?" he gasped.

For Marmaduke was playing with the telephone wires, and the Morse messages they had been hearing were of his making.

"You clown!" he snorted, snatching the wires from the youngster's hands.

"We haven't been listening to wireless at all. We haven't been connected up!"

It did not take long to remedy this small fault, and after a little more adjusting of the crystal, and a little more sliding the slider, their operations were abruptly stopped by a well-known voice lawling in their ears.

"Yes," it said, "the boys of Mr. McAndrew. Proper nuisance, sir! But now you have a chance to prosecute! At this moment, sir, they are tampering with my telephone wires. They have a wire across it, and for half an hour or more they have been trying to break down the telephone wire which is Government property. I demand, sir, that you send a policeman at once. Are you there? Confound you, sir! Miss! Exchange! We have been cut off!"

Billy and Mike knew very little about wireless; they thought they knew less about ordinary telephony, but now they knew enough to realise that their aerial was fouling the major's telephone wire.

The boys read each other's thoughts. Billy snatched the lead-in off the set, and threw it out of the window. Mike let go the line that held the aerial, and they both ran downstairs.

In another minute it had been lowered from the mast, and the wire coiled up.

Then the whole lot—wire, set, and odds and ends that were evidence of their activity, was rammed into a box which was hidden under Mike's bed.

When Mr. and Mrs. McAndrew returned from their evening walk, Mike and Marmaduke were in bed, a most unusual happening, since they had not been ordered to go.

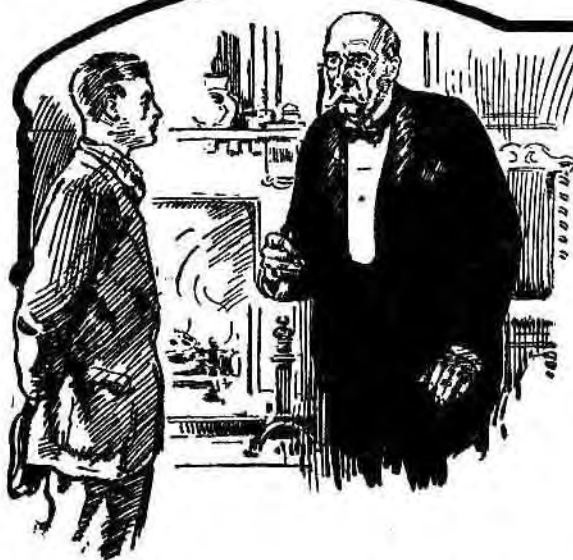
Events, however, passed in favour of Mike and Billy, and the whole business was soon forgotten.

Mike has now got his wireless set in working order, but, like many other things he possesses, he has tired of it, and now he is engaged in making something else.

THE END.

(Look out for a splendid story of thrilling adventure in India next week. boys: "THE RED IMAGE!" You will vote it ripping.)

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THE TRIERS

BY
JACK CRICHTON



A victim of Fate, Jack Morton, with the assistance of his stalwart followers, fights valiantly against his rascally cousin, George Clifton, for the rights of which he has been deprived.

Clifton's Treachery!

JACK didn't answer at once. He was simply too flabbergasted for words. With his own eyes he saw the sergeant of police take the missing pocket-book out of his own overcoat pocket. He rubbed his eyes, as though to make quite certain that he was not dreaming.

"Well?" asked the detective. "What now?"

The lad made a great effort.

"Well," he replied in the same tone, "the fact of the matter is that I haven't worn that overcoat for several weeks, and that I did not wear it last night when I went to see Mr. Clifton!"

The two policemen exchanged an incredulous smile.

"Well, you know," said the sergeant, "you had better not say anything more without understanding that we shall use it against you!"

"Against me!" cried Jack. "All right, go ahead, but you can't do anything. I know nothing about that pocket-book. I don't even know how it got there!"

"Fairies put it there," sneered the detective after the manner of his kind.

"Well," exclaimed the lad stoutly, "Mr. George Clifton can tell you that I had no overcoat last night!"

"Will he?" said the detective.

And suddenly the lad's heart seemed to stop beating, and he stared at them with fresh horror in his eyes. He seemed to understand. He was in a trap. He didn't, of course, for one moment believe that these two men were in it against him, but there it was, a trap, and one from which escape began to look very doubtful. Of course, that miserable cousin of his would

not dream of speaking a single word to help him!

"Can you explain how it got there?" asked the detective harshly.

"No, I can't!"

"Well, it can't have walked there, or flown there, so the best thing you can do is to come along with us."

"What?"

The sergeant smiled grimly.

"There are notes for fifty pounds in here, young man," he explained. "You don't suppose that sort of thing can be looked over, do you?"

Jack caught his breath. He needed all his pluck now, all his presence of mind. For two pins he would have made a fight of it, as mad as that would have been. But the unfairness of it all seemed so outrageous. Every moment brought with it the growing feeling that this was George Clifton's dirty work, and that somehow he had been trapped like this by his cousin's machinations.

"My mother—" he said.

"Oh," sneered the detective, "we've all got mothers my lad, and if we let everyone go who happened to have a mother, we should soon be in a fine state. Now, come along like a sensible lad, and we'll try to make the best of it for you. Dare say it was sudden temptation—"

"It was sudden nothing, you idiot!" Jack exclaimed, unable to endure the insults any longer, "and I am going to have a word with my mother!"

"No you are not!" cried the sergeant, putting a hand on the lad's shoulder.

Jack drew himself up.

"Look here," he said, "I don't blame you two for this. You have both got to do your duty, but the fact of the matter is—my mother is very, very ill. If she hears of this it might kill her. Let me go up and have a word with her. I'll tell her something—"

"Yes, and slip out of the back window!" said the detective.

"I give you my word of honour that I will be back in five minutes," said the lad. "Oh, please be kind about this. You have both had mothers of your own!"

The two men exchanged another glance.

"All right," said the sergeant. "Only if you are more than five minutes we'll be after you, and don't you try any tricks! I shall watch the back of the house!"

"Thank you!" said Jack, and he hurried away.

He knocked on his mother's door, and went quickly in when the old lady replied.

She was in bed, of course, looking very sweet and frail, and for a moment or two the lad knelt down at her side and pressed his lips to her forehead.

"Early, dear?" she said.

Jack nodded.

"Mother," he whispered, "I am very sorry to wake you up so early like this, but I've got to go out early to-day. I sha'n't be back for a few days. We are going down to London for a special match, and then into training by the sea on the South Coast—Brighton, you know. I am sorry, but I have to go now I belong to the club!"

The old lady gave him a brave smile.

"Yes, dear," she said, "I understand perfectly. Be happy. I am proud of you!"

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, who, scheming to get Morton hounded out of Boltwich, makes a spoof appointment with the lad. Unsuspectingly Jack falls into the trap when calling upon Clifton, who denies knowledge of the letter. Later, to Jack's surprise, he is arrested and accused of the theft of fifty pounds from Clifton. Jack pleads not guilty, but a close search reveals Clifton's missing case in his overcoat pocket.

Come back quickly, but do not worry about me!"

"And you'll be all right?"

The old lady nodded bravely.

"Yes, yes, dear!" she answered. "I'll get someone to come in and help me. Now run along, if you must, and take care of yourself!"

"You bet I will!" said the lad.

The smile he gave his mother then cost Jack more than a smile had ever cost him in his life, and then he was gone from her.

The two men downstairs were evidently surprised to see him return so quickly.

"I am at your service," said Jack.

"That's right!" grunted the detective. "No good kicking up rough at these times, my lad!"

"Well, I'm ready!"

They left the cottage.

It was early yet, and there were not many people about; but now and again they would run into someone, and Jack realised that before many hours were out the news would go through Boltwich that Jack Morton, the new centre-forward of the club, had been taken in charge for something.

At the station they were not unkind to him, but they were not very sympathetic.

The inspector questioned him stoutly, for the lad still insisted on sticking to his story that he knew nothing about all that had happened.

"You say that Mr. Clifton sent you a letter to go and see him?" he asked after a little while. "Got the letter?"

Jack started.

"No!"

"Ah," said the inspector grimly, "and where may it be?"

"I left it with Mr. Clifton."

"What?"

"He said it was not his letter, that he had not sent for me at all, and asked me to show him the letter. I did, and he forgot to hand it back to me. That's the truth, and if you ask Mr. Clifton he will tell you that it is!"

The man nodded.

"Yes, we had better have Mr. Clifton. Take him along to the cells, Smith, and I will telephone to Mr. Clifton, and ask him whether he will come along. We won't charge him till then, as Mr. Clifton may, of course, clear him!"

So Jack found himself in a cell, alone with all his miserable thoughts. Yet he was not entirely downhearted. Things were bad. They had, of course, never been nearly so bad before, but he was not despairing. Had this been something unconnected with George Clifton he would have felt like despairing. But he realised now very well that it was all his cousin's doings, all part of the fight which was being waged between him, and, after all, he must not expect in that fight that everything would go his way. There must be ups and downs, and he had no doubt that in a little while he would come through this very successfully.

Half an hour later he was taken before the inspector again, and there he found his cousin waiting.

"Well, I'm very sorry about this, Morton," said George Clifton—"more sorry than I can possibly say. Why on earth didn't you tell me that you wanted money?"

Jack could do nothing but stare.

The cool cheek of it was more than he could swallow, and it rendered him speechless.

"You'd better let me do the talking, Mr. Clifton," said the inspector of police. "Oh, yes, certainly!"

The inspector turned to the lad.

"Now, you understand, young man,"

he said, "you are in a very serious position. You look like being charged with stealing a pocket-book containing fifty pounds belonging to Mr. George Clifton from the Old Hall last night, and I have to warn you that anything you now say will be taken down and used as evidence against you!"

Jack squared his shoulders.

"I understand," he said.

"Did you steal that pocket-book?"

"No, I did not!"

"Why did you go to see Mr. Clifton?"

"Because I received a letter asking me to go and see him!"

"Got the letter?" asked the inspector for a second time.

"No. I told you I haven't. I handed it to Mr. Clifton!"

There was a moment's pause, and all eyes were turned on Clifton. He looked merely pained.

"Know anything about this letter, Mr. Clifton?"

To Jack's horror, the man shook his head, and burst out:

"No, of course I don't. But, I say, inspector, I hate this sort of thing. Can't something be done?"

"Not now, sir," said the inspector, who had the reputation of being a brute.

He turned to Jack Morton again.

"Now, you hear that, Morton," he said sternly. "Mr. Clifton knows absolutely nothing about that letter. So that is that—"

"He is lying!"

"How dare you!" cried Clifton, springing forward.

The sergeant of police rested a hand on his arm.

"Steady, sir!"

"I beg your pardon," said Clifton.

"But it is abominable to have a whipper-snapper like this give one the lie direct. He—he knows perfectly well that I wrote no letter, and that he gave me none!"

Jack said nothing.

"Well, young man, anything else?" asked the inspector.

Jack drew himself up, and instead of speaking to the inspector, he turned and faced his cousin.

"You know perfectly well that this is your doing, George Clifton," he said.

"You have been trying to get me down, and you have nearly succeeded. But you won't! You have robbed me of my

grandfather's money, you leave my poor old mother to starve, and now you have worked up this plot to get me put away in prison. But I'm not afraid of you, not in a million years; and the time will come soon when I shall show to the whole of Boltwich that you are a thie and a scoundrel—and perhaps worse!"

The Escape!

THINGS were not going quite so smoothly for the renovated Boltwich Club as might have been expected now that George Clifton was out of the saddle.

The trouble was with some of the players.

It had been apparent enough on the previous Saturday against the League leaders—who had indeed been beaten—that the whole team was not pulling together, and had it not been for Jack Morton's supreme efforts there was little doubt that the home lads would have had a very nasty smack in the eye.

And now the directors, with Laurie in their midst, confident, inspiring, and amazingly self-assured, were facing something which looked like nothing more nor less than open rebellion.

Old Blake, the trainer, had been the first to bring the news to the directors. It had come about through trouble with Bill Atkins, owing to the way in which he had behaved on the previous Saturday.

There had been a short and sharp inquiry into the trouble between himself and Jack Morton, and during it Atkins had lost his temper, had told the directors what he thought of them, and had as good as admitted that he had done his best to maim Jack.

There had been nothing left for the directors to do but to stand Atkins down.

He had been too secure in his place, and there were several youngsters fighting for it, and so after a short deliberation the directors had informed him that he would not be needed in the club again. Indeed, it was the sack complete.

He could not have taken it with a worse grace, cursing and threatening as he did, and now Blake had come to the



Suddenly darting in, Jack Morton caught the burly Bolton by the wrist. In another moment, with a swift clever movement, he had caused the bully to sling his stick aside. "Now fight like a man!" he roared.

directors and had informed them that several other members of the team had sworn that until Atkins was reinstated Boltwich should not gain another point.

"Talking about putting through their own goal, one or two of them," Blake had said; and the position, with a match coming on every week, looked serious.

Besides, to-day their brilliant new centre-forward had been arrested and thrown into prison.

No wonder, then, that the group of men round the table looked serious, and that only Laurie Robson, screwing his eyeglass farther and farther into his eye showed the slightest sign of light-heartedness.

"It's a nasty, sticky mess," he agreed, "but at the same time, I'm all for fighting the blighters. Who are they, Blake?"

The old trainer told them.

"Hunter, the goalie, sir," he said. "Tomkins, left-half, and Jevings, inside-right!"

Laurie nodded.

"Are they here?"

"Yes, sir."

Laurie looked round at his fellow-directors.

"It's a serious position," he said, "and it calls for a serious remedy. One can do nothing by gentle means in a thing like this. I suggest that we call these three men before us, tell them that we didn't think much of the way they played last Saturday, and let them understand that we suspect their game, and then if they do not play up on Saturday we will out them!"

One of the directors gave a bit of a gasp.

"Wait a minute, young man," he said.

"Aren't you going rather fast?"

Laurie smiled.

"I always do. It saves time."

"But what is going to become of Boltwich Club? Our centre-forward seems to be rather a doubtful character—"

"Excuse me," said Laurie, flushing hotly. "I will speak for Jack Morton. He is under suspicion, but it is up to us to believe in him, gentlemen; and I will pledge you my personal word of honour that he is not capable of doing a dirty trick to any man. It is all the handiwork of that fellow Clifton, and I should not be surprised if this trouble in the team was also his handiwork!"

"Nor I!" agreed Mr. Graham, the managing-director.

There was a short silence, and then it was agreed that Laurie's way was a good one, and the three players were sent for.

They came in together, looking sulky and angry, three great, hulking fellows, who were obviously in no mood to do themselves justice or to listen to reason.

"Sit down," said Mr. Graham, and they sat down opposite the directors rather like a trio of truants at school.

"We have sent for you men," the managing-director began, "to have a friendly talk with you. We were not satisfied with the way you shaped last Saturday, although we won the match, and we are not entirely satisfied that you put in all you knew. Mind you, we do not make any direct accusation, but the fact of the matter is, we thought it most fair to send for you and tell you quite plainly that you must give a better show this coming Saturday!"

There was a short silence.

"If not," said Mr. Graham, "we may have to do something else!"

Tomkins, the left-half, looked up.

"Is that all, sir?" he said.

"Yes, Tomkins; but if you have got anything to say, say it, and don't be afraid. We only wish to be fair!"

Tomkins gave a bit of a sneer.

"The team's upset, sir!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Well, sir, it's not for us to criticise, but you can't be surprised, with the changes that there have been. First of all you bring in a kid to play centre-forward—"

"What," asked Laurie Robson quickly, screwing his glass into his eye—"what was wrong with his play last Saturday, my dear fellow?"

Tomkins gave a grunt.

"Stunts!" he said.

Laurie started.

"Very useful stunts, as it turned out!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tomkins looked up quickly, and there was a patch of red on his cheek which showed he was angry. As a matter of fact, he was a great personal friend of Bill Atkins, and he had always hated Mr. Graham and Blake, the trainer, and now, egged on by Atkins, and, unwittingly by George Clifton, he was all for trouble.

"Then, sir," he said, "it hasn't made a nice impression in the team the way poor Bill Atkins was turned down. After all, he has been a faithful servant to the club for a long time, and that business last week was six of one to half a dozen of the other!"

Mr. Graham snapped his lips together.

"Look here, Tomkins," he said, "we want to be just to you; but do you really think you are in a better position to judge as to this than we are?"

Tomkins nodded.

"Yes, sir!"

"What?"

"I was in the middle of it all, and young Morton was to blame, and, anyhow, sir, to get down to business, we three are not happy. Of course, we are always going to do our best for the club, but we think the team would work better together with Atkins in his old place, and if we were not asked to play with a fellow who seems to spend most of his time in prison!"

This was too much for Laurie.

He jumped to his feet.

"Look here, Tomkins," he said; "you—you can't say that sort of thing about a pal of mine. All Boltwich knows that George Clifton is after Jack Morton's blood, and you can take it from me that in some dirty way or other George Clifton has now managed to get him put away in prison!"

Mr. Graham rose to his feet.

"Excuse me, Robson!"

"Sorry!"

"We won't go into that, if you don't mind. We will stick to points. Do you three men mean to play properly next Saturday?"

The three men looked at one another, and for a few seconds there was a deadly silence in the room.

Then Tomkins looked up again.

"We don't feel we can do much good if that fellow Morton is centre-forward, sir!"

"It's open rebellion, then?"

"I don't know about that, sir—"

"Yes, it is!" cried Mr. Graham. "And it is now the moment to nip it in the bud. If Jack Morton is available he will, after his brilliant display last Saturday, play for us! Well?"

Tomkins stood sullen and furious.

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"It's not for me to say what will happen, sir," he replied. Graham looked round at his fellow-directors. From them all came a nod. He turned to the three men again.

"Are you all of one mind?"

"Yes, sir!" said Hunter.

"Yes!" said the third.

There was a pause.

"Very well," said Mr. Graham, "then you are all placed on the transfer-list, and we shall not play you again!"

A gasp ran round the room. The three men had evidently not expected such strong methods. They had hoped to be bargained with, and this was a bit strong.

"But you'll not get a team out, sir!" exclaimed Hunter, the goalie.

Laurie laughed.

"Oh, yes, Hunter," he said. "There is a certain Mr. Harry Turner, you may have heard of, the amateur boxer. He is the finest goalkeeper in this town, and I think he will help us in a pinch!"

"That's all," said Graham then, and the three men went slowly and sorrowfully from the room.

A short silence followed their departure.

"Well," said Laurie brightly, "we've done it; and now we can really start and build up our team!"

One of the directors, who had always been rather disposed to look down upon Laurie and his opinions on account of his youth, gave a short grunt.

"Well," he said, "I only hope we can get a team on to the ground next Saturday. We have no centre-forward to speak of now."

Laurie held up a hand.

"Wait a minute, gentlemen," he said. "I'll manage to get young Morton to the game—"

"Eh?"

"And I'll arrange with Turner, if you will fill the other two vacancies!"

Graham smiled.

"You certainly have a way of doing things, young man," he said.

Laurie nodded.

"I'm one of the Triers, sir," he said. "And it takes more than a smack in the eye to stop us. I will promise you here and now that before the end of the season the Triers have raised Boltwich very near to the top of the League, and mayhap, they will have done sturdy things in the Cup. Are you willing, then, to leave Morton and Turner to me?"

"We are!"

"I thank you, gentlemen!"

On the following Friday Jack was to be brought up before the court on the charge of having stolen fifty pounds from his cousin, and he was not feeling exactly merry and bright about the business as he waited in his lonely cell.

Indeed, nothing had happened to make him feel at all hopeful that he was going to get off.

The dice were too heavily weighted against him.

He tried to believe that something would turn up, and when Laurie had engaged an eminent lawyer to defend him, he had been quite hopeful.

But after he had spent half an hour telling all his story to the eminent lawyer, and then had realised that the eminent prig had regarded him as a confounded young liar, his spirit fell heavily again.

The cell door opened suddenly, and a constable appeared.

"Come along, lad," he ordered.

Jack rose and followed the man out to the waiting van which was to take him to the court.

He entered it, and sat there alone, as miserable as he had ever been.

Suddenly he realised that the constable was speaking to him.

"Pity you can't go over to Crewbridge with the team to-morrow, lad!"

"It is!"

"I'd like to see our lads beat them Crewbridge boys!"

Jack nodded. But he was not very interested in Soccer at the moment. He was too downhearted. Still, he understood well enough what the other man meant. Crewbridge was a neighbouring town, and the rivalry between them and Boltwich had been keen for generations.

"Pity you can't manage it," said the constable, and looked at Jack meaningly.

Then quite deliberately he walked away from the door of the van.

Jack gave a gasp.

He looked about. Not a soul was in sight. It was a terrible temptation. He ought, of course, to stay and face the music. That would be the wise thing to do. But the temptation was terrible. He seemed to have so little chance of getting off,

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and if he were sent to prison, what earthly chance would he have to follow up all the clues against George Clifton? What chance would he have to get the rights for his darling old mother?

Besides, if he could play to-morrow! Of course, the mere thought was insane, but if he could, how foolish Clifton would look!

In a flash he jumped to the ground, and in another moment he was scudding round a corner, and safe for the time being.

A Chase and After!

JACK did not make for home. His instinct was to do so, but after the first few seconds of freedom he found his mind working very clearly.

He made for Laurie's house, and then, instead of going up to the house and asking for that young man, he hung about, hidden, until he saw him coming along by himself. And then, with a yell of delight, he sprang forward to meet his pal.

"Laurie!"

The young man dropped his eyeglass, with a gulp.

"Golly, dear lad," he cried, "you nearly made me swallow the jolly old thing! So there you are. My word, but you are giving me a bit of trouble, young fellow m'lad. I have had to promise that policeman a life job on the estate after he gets the sack for letting you escape this morning. And even then he would not have done it had it not been for the fact that he would give his right hand to see us beat Crewbridge to-morrow!"

Jack caught his breath.

"Crewbridge," he cried. "Are you mad? I can't turn out for Crewbridge—against them, I mean!"

"Why not?"

"Great Scott, they will nab me!"

"Nothing of the sort," said Laurie. "You leave that to me. And the great thing now is not to get nabbed before you turn out to-morrow. Come along with me. I am going to fix you up in a spare room in the house, and bring you your grub myself. No one in the house shall know you are about. That is best, isn't it?"

"Sure!"

Rather like one in a dream, the lad went along, listening to all that Laurie had to tell him. And as soon as he heard how a minor rebellion had broken out in the team on his account, as it were, he became more and more keen to turn out the next day and to give of his best.

How this was going to be done he did not know, and Laurie Robson was mildly mysterious about it.

They got into the house all right, and for the rest of the morning the lad sat about in his room, reading and waiting.

After lunch Laurie came to him.

"My word," he said, with a laugh, "there is an ado in the town to-day about your escape. The police are raising Cain, and George Clifton, they say, is almost off his nut with anger. Now, my gay lad, don't you think that you ought to kick a football about this afternoon?"

Jack started.

"I am sure I should!"

"Right. Here are some togs. I'll go and change, and we will slip back on to one of our meadows, and we will soon see whether you are in good trim."

Jack changed, marvelling at it all, and wondering what the end of all this weird business was going to be, but for the moment content to leave everything in the hands of his pal.

"Half an hour later his troubles were forgotten as he kicked about with Laurie, exalting in the fresh air, his freedom, and the glory of having a football at the end of his toe.

"This is fine!" he said. "I don't ever want to go to prison again!"

Laurie laughed.

At that moment Jack turned with the ball, but it was too late.

He gave a shout.

"Look out, Laurie!"

But his warning shout came too late.

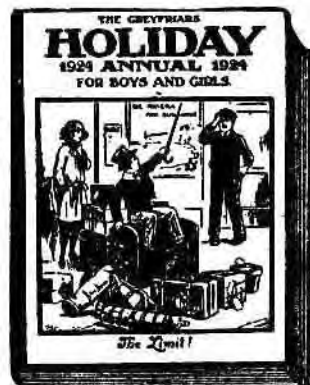
Babe Bolton had approached Laurie from behind, and even as Jack shouted he carried with a brutal thud upon the lad's head, and in another moment Laurie had fallen to the ground.

"You brute!" cried Jack, springing forward.

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"I'll show you!" muttered the Babe. "You gaolbird—I'll show you! There'll be a nice little reward for this job!"

Jack was at a sore disadvantage. The fellow was coming at him now with murder in his eyes, and there was no doubt that he meant mischief. The trouble was that he carried that wicked-looking weapon.

As he struck at the lad Jack dodged; but he realised even as he did so that he was in a bad way. It could not last long, and perhaps the best thing was to take to flight.

But that was not Jack Morton's way. Suddenly darting in, he caught the bully by the wrist, and in another moment, with a swift, clever movement, he had caused Bolton to fling the stick aside, with a scream of pain.

"I'll show you!"

"Then fight like a man!" roared Jack, springing at the burly Bolton.

It was a goodly fight, witnessed by no one, and for a long it went in Jack's favour, for the professional was so furious that he had thrown his undoubted science and experience to the winds, and was fighting madly.

But although Jack got home some shrewd blows, he didn't manage to down his man, and after a few minutes the Babe began to fight his own battle.

A right-hook caught Jack unawares, and he went down.

A brutal kick followed, and he lay groaning on the ground, with the Babe gloating over him.

"Now you'll come along with me, you young brute," he muttered. "This'll teach you. This—"

Jack had darted to his feet.

There was no time to waste.

The Babe grabbed at him, and he dodged, and in another moment anyone looking into that meadow would have seen the somewhat amazing sight of the centre-forward of Boltwick Association Football Club, in full Soccer togs, pursued by a very heavy, angry, and slow professional boxer, a young gentleman in footer togs slowly getting to his feet, and a football sitting up and wondering why it was so neglected.

The Babe was no match now for Jack.

He was slow and heavy, and within a few minutes he was a long way behind his man, and before he had covered half a mile he had stopped altogether, and was merely shaking his great fist after the lad.

"I'll get you!"

In the fight he had dropped his cap, and now he went back for it. He stopped suddenly as he saw Laurie Robson, still dizzy with pain, coming towards him.

They met and regarded one another.

"Ah," exclaimed Laurie, "the playful Babe, is it? And I suppose it was you who hit me so considerably on the back of the head!"

"Yus—it was!"

"I sha'n't forget!"

The Babe grinned.

"I don't want you to forget, young fellow," he said. "And I ain't going to forget, neither. I sha'n't forget that you were playing football in this 'ere meadow with that gaolbird. I am going straight to the police now, and I dare say you'll be under lock and key yourself in half an hour!"

Laurie drew a deep breath.

"I see," he said. "Well, I can't stop you doing that, if you mean to, Bolton, but you are being rather an idiot!"

"What?"

"Don't you think you are backing the wrong horse, man?"

"I don't back horses!"

"Oh, come, Bolton, I know that you bruisers are all half-witted, but you know what I mean. Don't you think you are a fool to throw in your lot with George Clifton? Take my advice and leave the Triers and Jack Morton alone. We are going to beat George Clifton, and if—if, when we have done so, we have to make certain inquiries into your private history, I fancy you will be sorry. Take my advice. I will forgive this whack on the head. Keep your silly mouth shut, and don't get me up against you! I'm as rich as Clifton—and I happen to keep my word. Make a friend of me, man, not an enemy!"

(Whether Bolton takes Laurie's hint remains to be seen. Anyway, look out for some startling situations in next week's grand long instalment of this powerful serial.)

SPECIAL NOTICES.

Would Miss M. Ravelle, of Liverpool, who wrote to the Editor in May, 1922, and whose Correspondence Notice appeared in the "Gem" Library dated January 6th, 1923, kindly communicate with the Editor again?



Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.

(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—You May Next!)

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: **The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.**

TUCK FOR MANCHESTER! "SOME" COFFEE!

After a strenuous football-match two of the footballers entered a coffee-shop for a cup of coffee. After being served, one of them was heard to remark: "This coffee tastes like mud." "Well," chimed in the shop-keeper, overhearing the remark, "it was only 'ground' this morning, sir!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to H. Davies, 58, Cromwell Avenue, Whalley Range, Manchester.

KINDNESS NOT APPRECIATED!

The furniture-van blocked the way in a suburban thoroughfare, and a little boy was standing by the horse, giving it some bread to eat. The driver looked on approvingly. "That's right," he said to the young benefactor: "always be kind to dumb animals. Look how the horse enjoys it. But does your mother generally give you big hunks of bread like that?" "No," replied the youngster. "I found it in the van." "What!" yelled the carrier. "Why, you young imp, that was my breakfast!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss May Paget, 33, Coombe Road, Gravesend, Kent.

HARD ON THE PIG!

The twenty-fifth anniversary of two dear old villagers, Jarge and Ann, was drawing nigh, but it was Ann who first spoke about it. "Dost know, Jarge," she said, "it be our silver wedding next week? We ought to have a celebration o' sorts that day. Shall us kill the pig?" Jarge grunted. "Woman," he said, "who murder an innocent pig for what appened twenty-foive year ago?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Haunier, 1, Scott Avenue, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.

THEN HE FLED!

"In vain—in vain!" cried the young man distractedly. His face was deathly white, and his damp hair hung in wisps about his forehead. A crowd gathered. "In vain—in vain!" he cried again, wringing his hands and gnashing his teeth. "What?" cried the curious crowd. "What is in vain?" "The letter 'V'!" cried the young man, jumping on a passing omnibus.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Edward Welch, 6, Derwentwater Road, Acton, W. 3.

SARCASM!

A very stout man mounted the scales and dropped a penny in the slot. After a furious clanking and rattling, the pointer finally came to rest not far from the twenty-five stone mark. There was an unken witness to the ceremony, and as the big man contemplated the result, the voice of a small boy piped from behind him: "Say, mister, how many times did it go round?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. V. Barwood, 41, Marlborough Road, Tue Brook, Liverpool.

SURE PROOF!

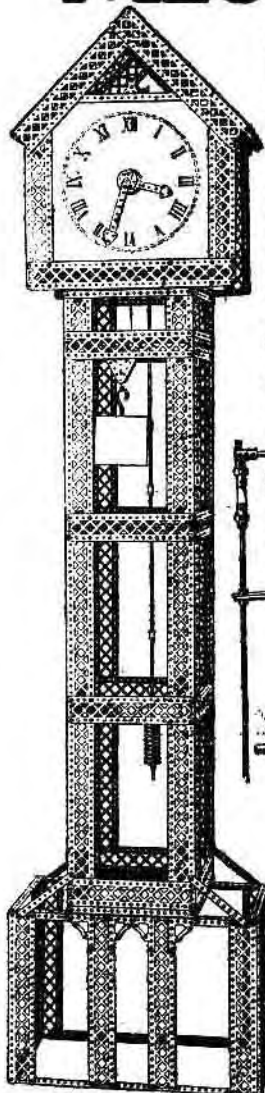
Mrs. Greener: "I hear that Mrs. Newlywed simply worships her husband." Mrs. White: "Yes; she places burnt offerings before him three times a day!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss A. Weninger, 389, Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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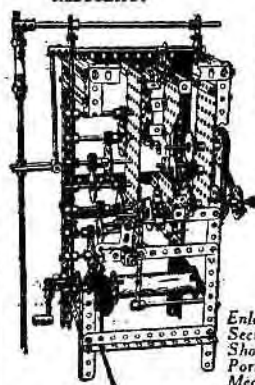
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To help you still further, we have published in the preceding
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the actual names of the footballers represented by all the pictures
appearing in this competition.

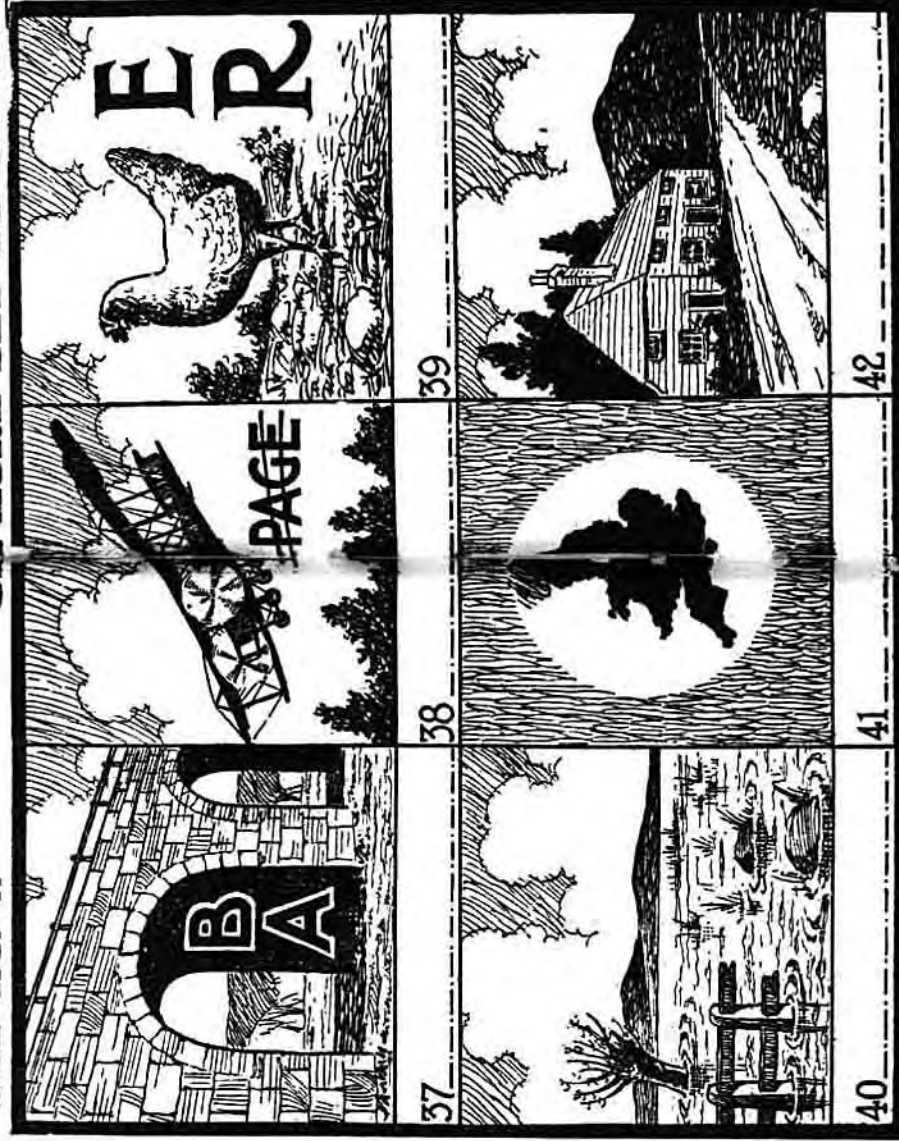
New readers desirous of entering this contest can do so by
obtaining the LAST THREE numbers of the GEM Nos. 822, 823,
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3.—All the prizes will be awarded. If two or more
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4.—No solutions may be sent in until all the sets
of the pictures and the necessary coupon have been
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5.—The names under the pictures must be
written IN INK.



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

7.—Entry to this competition is on
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