

Special Sporting "THE ST. JIM'S FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT!"
School Story—

By
Martin Clifford.

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 875.
Vol. XXVI.
November 15th,
1924.

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THE LAST KICK OF THE MATCH!

Kicking with deadly accuracy, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scores the winning goal for his side against the South Africans!
(An exciting incident from the grand school story of Tom Merry & Co. inside.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MY DEAR CHUMS.—Next week our new Portrait Gallery starts! This is a brightening bit of intelligence sure of a boom welcome. The coming series of likenesses will prove to be just what all Gemites want. Look out for next week's number, and be sure not to miss a single portrait. Everybody who is anybody at St. Jim's, will be there!

"THE SHIPWRECKED SEVEN!"

By Martin Clifford.

You will revel in next Wednesday's extra-exciting yarn of St. Jim's. Seven of the trustiest characters in the famous school have the chance of their lives, namely, a grand trip on Lord Conway's yacht. This was a topping idea on the part of Gussy's brother, and the fun is terrific as may be imagined, for the incomparable Gussy is one of the party. But it is not altogether a joy trip. Heaps of weird, unexpected happenings may be looked for amidst the stormy billows. You never know! There is a dash of drama, too, and Tom Merry, Blake, and others figure uncommonly well. The St. Jim's mariners are in for some thrilling times—on the rocks and off!

THE "MAGNET" PLATES!

If you have had a glimpse of the marvellous photogravure plates of fighting-ships there will be no need for me to jog your memory about this stunning feature. But a few Gemites may still be out in the cold. I want everybody to make sure of this brilliant set of naval pictures. Get the "Magnet" and see what you will see!

"LONG ODDS!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

In this pulse-stirring complete of the Turf we get next week the mighty doings at the Manchester November Handicap. There is a lot of gloom, so they say, about November. There would have been still more had the nefarious schemings of rank rogues come to fruition. You will see what happens to Red Knight next week, likewise the amazing occurrences which sweep Sid Morris right into the forefront, and cause a marrow-curdling surprise for the rascally syndicate. This is certainly the racing story of the season.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

There is nothing to beat this splendid treat. For many a year the book has been recognised as the prime budget of good yarns to be found anywhere. Keep your eye on it for Christmas. It brings miles of smiles in its train.

"CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!"

By Roland Spencer and Francis Warwick.

Events travel at express speed in this magnificent serial. The youngster who throws in his lot with the iron horse finds plenty of rough houses, but he is not looking back. Nor is his stout-hearted henchman of the footplate. Next week's happenings are immense.

ANOTHER WORD ON PORTRAITS!

I was about to say this was a lightning reminder. Do not forget that in our next issue the Portrait Gallery gets going. The going will be good! These are not lightning portraits, but real "live" pictures of the celebrities of good old St. Jim's. The latest Gallery is incontestably the best. You will say the Gallery makes a brave show.

A REQUEST FROM AUSTRALIA!

H. D. Wiltshire, of Murrayville, Victoria, Australia, asks me to find him a boy chum this side of the world who will exchange opinions, etc., with him. My correspondent tells me about his school, and his home farm where he works, though he is only twelve. Murrayville is a small town 375½ miles from Melbourne.

Your Editor.



My Readers' Own Corner

GET BUSY NOW!

**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.

Manchester Wins Tuck!

AS HE PUT IT!

"You admit, then," inquired the magistrate severely, "that you stole the pig?" "Yes," said the defendant. "Very well," returned the magistrate, with decision. "There has been a lot of pig-stealing going on around here lately, and if I don't make an example of you none of us will be safe!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Harold Midgley, 15, Ashover Street, Gorse Hill, Stretford, Manchester.

PAINS FOR PAINS!

Little Willie's birthday had just passed, and among the many presents he had received was a knife, given him by his father. He used this knife more than anything else, and everything from the kitchen table to the cat's tail showed signs of its use on them. One day Willie's father was surprised to see his son being carried home by four men. He inquired of Willie what was the matter, to which the battered boy replied: "I've been kicked by a mule!" The father looked angry and worried. "Haven't I told you before that mules are not things to fool about with?" he cried. "Ye-es," wailed Willie; "but I wasn't fooling about with it. I was only trying to cut my monogram on its tail!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Kennish, 25, Wellington Square, Douglas, Isle of Man.

PITY POOR PA!

Father was angry. His expensive gold watch had gone wrong. "I can't think what's the matter," he complained. "Maybe it needs cleaning." "Oh, no, daddy," objected four-year-old Tommy; "it can't want cleaning, 'cause baby and I had it in the bath-room and washed it only yesterday!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. D. Walton, Edenfield, 12, Windmill Lane, Reddish, Stockport.

MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

A negro, employed at one of the movie studios, was drafted to a novel comedy scene with a lion. "You get into bed," ordered the producer, "and we'll bring the lion and put it in bed with you. It will be a scream!" "Put the lion in bed with me!" yelled the dorkie. "No, sah! Not at all! I quit here, right now!" "But," protested the producer, "this lion won't hurt you! Why, it was brought up on milk!" "So was I brought up on milk," wailed the dorkie; "but I eat meat now!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Alice M. Zeiman, The Flats, Bellville, Cape Province, South Africa.

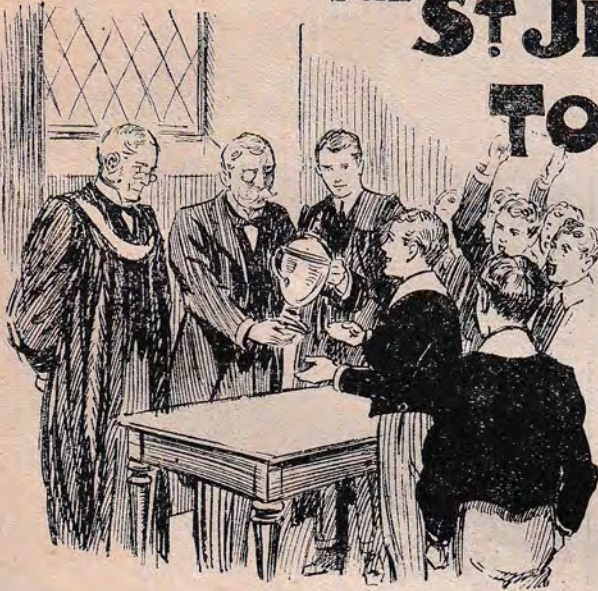
TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

In this splendid football story we find St. Jim's in great fighting form. Lord Eastwood offers a magnificent cup, and keen struggles are put up by the stalwart junior elevens for the coveted prize!

THE ST JIM'S FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT!



A Splendid and Sensational
Sporting Story of the Famous
Chums—Tom Merry & Co., at
St. Jim's.

BY

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Glory for Gussy!

"ONCE more into the breach, dear friends, once more!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Dry up, Gussy!" growled Tom Merry as he laced his football boots.

The School House juniors were not thinking of Shakespeare just then; though Henry the Fifth's famous speech before Agincourt was very appropriate.

School House and New House were about to clash on the football field. And the match between the rival Houses at St. Jim's was always a battle royal.

On the present occasion the excitement and enthusiasm were even more pronounced than usual, for some distinguished visitors were to watch the match. Lord Eastwood, the father of Arthur Augustus, had motored to St. Jim's for the occasion, and his lordship was accompanied by Gussy's charming girl cousin, Ethel Cleveland.

"I considah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, surveying himself in the dressing-room mirror, "that Shakespeah's words are vewy appropwiate. We've got to put it acwoss the New House, or pewish in the attempt!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I think we shall just about win," said Tom Merry, "but Figgy & Co. will make us fight every inch of the way. They're putting out a jolly good team."

"So are we," said Manners. "You couldn't have bettered it, Tommy. If only Cardew plays up—"

"I shall play up all I know, dear man!" drawled Cardew of the Fourth.

As a footballer Cardew was a rather uncertain quantity. His form varied. Like the small boy in the nursery rhyme, when he was good he was very, very good; and when he was bad he was horrid. Tom Merry had taken a risk in putting him in, and he felt rather anxious. But Cardew assured him that there would be no slacking.

"Whenever I play before crowned heads I always put up a good show," said Cardew. "Lord Eastwood, I know, doesn't approve of slackin'."

"Pheep!"

The referee blew his whistle for the teams to come out. Figgins of the New House sprinted out first, with the ball at his toes, and with ten "good men and true" trotting behind him. And there was a cheer from the New House section of the crowd.

"Play up, New House!"

"On the ball, Figgy!"

Cousin Ethel, who was standing on the touchline with Lord Eastwood, greeted George Figgins with a wave of her handkerchief. And Figgy blushed and smiled.

Then Tom Merry's team took the arena, and there was another mighty cheer.

"Hurrah!"

"School House for ever!"

Lord Eastwood ran his eye over the School House players.

"A good side," he murmured approvingly.

And indeed it was a good side. Harry Hammond, the Cockney junior, was in goal. Noble and Reilly looked a sturdy pair of backs. The intermediate line, composed of Manners, Glyn, and Lowther, looked capable of great things. But it was in the forward line that the strength of the side chiefly lay. Tom Merry was the pivot of the attack. On one side of him were D'Arcy and Blake, and on the other side Cardew and Clive. The New House backs would have a busy afternoon checking that lively quintette.

Kildare of the Sixth was the referee. He called Tom Merry and Figgins together, and they tossed for choice of ends. Figgy won; but this brought no advantage, for there was not a breath of wind stirring.

Play opened sensationally.

The ball was sent out to Cardew on the wing, and he sped away like a hare. Showing a clean pair of heels to the half-back opposed to him, he dashed on, and pulled himself up when within a yard of the corner-flag. Then he centred the ball perfectly, and Tom Merry met it with his head.

Fatty Wynn, in goal, was on the alert, but the ball whizzed over his shoulder and crashed into the net.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Tommy!" roared Monty Lowther, clapping his chum on the back.

"It's Cardew you ought to thank!" panted Tom. "That was a peach of a centre!"

The School House players were jubilant. Not even their most optimistic supporters had expected them to score a goal in the first minute.

Figgins & Co. looked a trifle grim as they lined up again. When the ball was kicked off they played up with rare dash, bent heart and soul on obtaining the equaliser.

Noble and Reilly, the School House backs, had all their work cut out to stem the fierce rushes of the New House forwards. For quite a long spell the School House were penned in their own half. After astonishing the natives by scoring in the first minute they seemed to fade right out of the picture.

Lord Eastwood, puffing at a cigar, looked on with keen interest. No less keen was cousin Ethel, standing at his side. She took in every detail of the play.

"It's going to be a rare tussle!" said Lord Eastwood. "The New House forwards are hungry for a goal."

"That's so," agreed cousin Ethel. "I should like to see them score. It would wake the School House up. They seem to have gone to sleep."

The New House were now putting on severe pressure, and but for the sterling display of Harry Hammond in goal they would have scored on several occasions.

It was on the very tick of half-time that Dick Redfern, who had been playing a storming game at centre-half, took the ball in his stride and sent in a terrific drive which beat Hammond all the way.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 375.

"Goal!"

"Good old Reddy!"

Tom Merry made rather a wry face as he sucked a lemon. And it was not entirely the lemon that was responsible for his wry look. It was the unexpectedly fine show that the New House were putting up.

"Dear man," drawled Cardew, "we shall have to pull our socks up in the second half, I'm thinkin'!"

"We certainly shall!" said Tom.

"Those New House boundahs must have gone into special twainin' for this match," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "They seem bent on beatin' us. It will be too dweadful for words if they make us bite the dust, with my patah lookin' on."

"Gussy's about as cheerful as an undertaker," remarked Monty Lowther. "Cheer up, old scout! We're not licked yet, by a jolly long way. The score's one to one at present. It'll be about five to one for us at the finish."

"Excuse me," said Cardew, "but is your name Monty Lowther or Mark Tapley?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare blew his whistle, and the teams lined up again.

The pace in the second half was a "cracker." Every fellow went "all out." There was no slacking, even for an instant. It was to be a grim duel to the end.

The School House showed up to better advantage now. Time and again they swarmed round their opponents' citadel, but Fatty Wynn held the fort in gallant style, and was equal to every emergency. Fatty always enjoyed being kept busy. He could not bear having to pace to and fro in the goal-mouth with nothing to do. The School House forwards were giving him plenty to do now. He was for ever fisting out shots, and diving and leaping and rushing out to take the ball from somebody's toes.

Kerr of the New House eventually relieved the pressure with a mighty kick, and play was transferred to the other end, where Harry Hammond covered himself with glory as much as Fatty Wynn.

The game was very thrilling to watch. Lord Eastwood was so interested that he let his cigar go out.

First one goal and then the other was raided. But the defences held out.

Lord Eastwood glanced at his watch.

"Looks like ending in a draw," he murmured.

"Unless someone performs a miracle in the last few minutes," said cousin Ethel.

It was a ding-dong struggle. The players realised that very little time remained, and they put every ounce of strength into the tussle, though many of them were feeling the strain of the gruelling game.

With three minutes to go Dick Redfern gained possession and forced his way through the School House defence.

"Shoot, Reddy!" came a roar from the New House partisans on the touchline.

And Reddy shot. It was a magnificent effort; but Harry Hammond leapt across the goal-mouth and pulled the ball down. A forward came charging full-tilt at him, but he cleverly swerved to one side, bounced the ball, and punted it well up the field.

There was a scramble for possession, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out from a ruck of players with the ball at his toes. Then he raced down the wing like lightning.

"Go it, Gussy!"

But the swell of the School House needed no prompting. He was already "going it" for all he was worth. Kerr rushed across to intercept him, and Gussy deftly transferred the ball to Blake. When Blake was tackled he sent the leather out to Gussy again; and Arthur Augustus, meeting it in his stride, fired in a shot which even Fatty Wynn was powerless to stop. The ball crashed into the net with such force that it nearly broke the rigging.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Splendid, by gad!" cried Lord Eastwood.

And cousin Ethel clapped her hands in ecstasy.

"Oh, well played, Arthur!"

The whistle shrilled out at that moment, and the great struggle was over. Arthur Augustus had won the match for the School House on the stroke of time.

It was a proud moment for Gussy. He received the plaudits of the crowd, a handshake from Lord Eastwood, and a pat on the back from cousin Ethel. And George Figgins, the skipper of the defeated eleven, staggered breathlessly up to him and panted his congratulations.

"What a game!" gasped Monty Lowther. "If it had gone on much longer I should have collapsed! I feel like a limp rag as it is!"

"Well, we've pulled it off—thanks to Gussy!" said Cardew. "When the tumult an' the shoutin' dies, we'll adjourn to the Common-room, where I understand a toppin' banquet has been prepared for both teams."

And thus the curtain went down upon one of the greatest struggles which had ever been witnessed on Little Side.

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CHAPTER 2.

Springing a Surprise!

AFTER they had "tubbed" and changed, the footballers flocked into the junior Common-room, where a spread had been prepared on a lavish scale.

It was Lord Eastwood's idea to round off the House match with a banquet. And it was voted a capital idea—especially by Fatty Wynn, who declared he was so famished that he could eat an ox. Fatty had certainly earned his feed, for he had performed prodigies of valour in the New House goal.

Lord Eastwood occupied the place of honour at the head of the table. Cousin Ethel sat on one side of him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the other.

Down one side of the table sat the victorious School House eleven; and Figgins & Co. were facing them on the other side.

Lord Eastwood made a short speech, in which he congratulated both teams on having played the game in the true sporting spirit. Then he bade them "pile in."

The juniors needed no second bidding. Dishes were handed round, and the clatter of knife and fork made merry music.

"This rabbit-pie is prime!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Finest I've ever tasted! Pass the sauce, Figgys!"

Figgins passed the sauce, and Fatty Wynn said nothing more for the next twenty minutes. He was too busy to talk.

But the others kept up a cheery buzz of conversation. Lord Eastwood chatted with his guests. Occasionally he left his seat and walked down the long line of feasters, to see that they had everything they wanted.

It was a merry party, and everybody was in high good humour.

Even when Baggy Trimble of the Fourth peeped in at the door of the Common-room—having scented the feast afar off—nobody hurried a loaf at him or ordered him to "buzz off." In fact, Baggy was allowed to enter, and he squeezed himself into a seat between Reilly and Noble. Baggy's face wore a beatific smile as he attacked the good things on the table.

At length Tom Merry jumped to his feet, raising aloft a glass of foaming ginger-pop.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, in ringing tones, "I propose the health of Lord Eastwood, the founder of the feast!"

Instantly all the fellows were on their feet—with the exception of Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble—who experienced great difficulty in rising.

The toast was duly honoured; and Lord Eastwood smiled upon the happy throng.

"Speech!" shouted somebody.

"Yaas, wathah! Come along, patah!"

"Silence for his lordship!" cried Lowther.

Lord Eastwood rose in his place.

"This is indeed a happy occasion!" he began. "I was delighted, my boys, with the great game you served up this afternoon. I am also delighted to have your company at this festive board. It makes me feel twenty years younger to be among such a happy throng. I am not going to bore you with a long speech. I just want to put before you a scheme which has been in my mind for some time."

The juniors leaned forward eagerly.

"Without beating about the bush," continued Lord Eastwood, "the scheme is this. I propose to offer a gold cup for competition amongst various football teams at St. Jim's."

"Hurrah!"

Loud and hearty cheering greeted Lord Eastwood's pronouncement.

A gold cup! That would indeed be something worth striving for. The juniors had visions of many thrilling duels on the football field.

When the applause had died away Lord Eastwood resumed his speech.

"I wish to get eight teams in the competition, if possible," he said. "Then it can be decided on the knock-out principle. There will be a first round, a semi-final, and a final. And the winners of the gold cup will hold the trophy for one year."

"I say, you fellows," said Baggy Trimble, "I'm going to get up a team and bag that cup!"

"Dry up, Trimble!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"It is vewy wude of you to intewwupt, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

Lord Eastwood continued his address.

"I regret that I shall not be able to be present at any of the matches, with the exception of the final," he said. "That will be played within my own grounds at Eastwood House."

"Oh, ripping!"

"I shall ask Mr. Railton to take charge of the competition; and if any disputes should arise—which is unlikely—



"Call yourselves footballers?" cried Grundy. "I engaged you on the understanding that you were experts and that you would win the match for me! And look what a mess you've made of it! Twenty to nil! Twenty to nil against us! I shall never hear the end of this! If you two louts have got any sense of fair play you'll give me back my five bob!" (See page 12.)

his decision shall be final. The eight captains of the various teams will have permission to obtain players from outside the school, if they wish; but such players must not be over the age of sixteen. It would be obviously unfair to allow full-grown men to take part in the competition."

"Of course!"

"Those who wish to organise elevens must hand in their names to Mr. Railton," said Lord Eastwood.

"Will the Sixth be allowed to compete, patah?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly!"

"Oh cwumbs! Supposin' a juniah team happens to be dwawn against the giants of the Sixth? They won't stand an earthly!"

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Football is a game of surprises," he said. "Dwarfs have beaten giants before now, and there is no reason why they should not do so again. At all events, I do not feel justified in barring any particular section of boys from taking part in the contest. It shall be a fair field and no favour."

"Well, all I hope is that the Sixth consider it beneath their dignity to enter," said Monty Lowther.

"Same here!"

"I have nothing more to say," said Lord Eastwood, "beyond expressing the hope that the fight for the gold cup will be worthy of the highest traditions of St. Jim's football."

His lordship was cheered to the echo as he sat down.

The faces of the feasters were flushed with excitement. Tom Merry had already decided to organise an eleven; and so had George Figgins. Baggy Trimble had also resolved to enter the fray; but the Falstaff of the Fourth was likely to find it extremely difficult to raise a team. Trimble was no footballer himself; and there would be no rush of recruits to enlist under his banner.

There was a buzz of animated conversation in the Common-room. In the midst of it Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped to his feet.

"Oh, help!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Gussy's going to make a speech! Where's the emergency exit?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed Lowther sternly through his monocle.

"Weally, Lowthah! I wegard that observation as bein' extremely wude! My speech will not last longah than twenty minutes—"

"Mercy!"

"In fact, I will twy an' compmess it into a quartah of an hour."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I warn you, Gussy, that if you spout for a quarter of an hour, you'll have no audience at the end of that time. We shall fold our tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at the captain of the Shell.

"But for the pwesense of my patah an' my cousin, Mewwyy, I should feel inclined to administrah a feahful thwashin'!" he said. "You are even wudah than Lowthah!"

Nevertheless, Arthur Augustus took Tom Merry's hint, and his speech was limited to two minutes only.

On behalf of all the fellows present, he thanked Lord Eastwood for putting up such a handsome trophy for competition. And he expressed the hope that all the games would be played in "the true sportin' spiwit, bai Jove!"

It was a very happy crowd that streamed out of the junior Common-room, to broadcast the good news to the school at large.

CHAPTER 3.

A One-Man Team!

BAGGY TRIMBLE of the Fourth, armed with a notebook and pencil, rolled into Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

The Terrible Three were at home. They were roasting chestnuts at the fire, and discussing the one topic of the day—the Eastwood Cup.

"We ought to be able to raise a team that will beat all comers," said Tom Merry. "No reason why we shouldn't field the same eleven that licked the New House this afternoon."

"Good idea, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther. "The team we had out this afternoon was sound in every department—especially at right-half."

Lowther himself had played at right-half; and his chums smiled.

"I say, you fellows——"

Nobody heeded Baggy Trimble.

"Of course, if we're drawn against the Sixth in the first round," said Tom Merry, "our chances of bagging the cup will be jolly remote, to say the least of it. Still, as Lord Eastwood said, pigmies have beaten giants before, and there's no reason why they shouldn't do it again."

"I say, you fellows!"

Baggy Trimble's voice rose to a shrill crescendo. It was impossible for the Terrible Three to feign deafness any longer. They turned, and bestowed three separate and distinct glares upon the fat junior.

"What do you want?" growled Tom Merry.

"Recruits for my eleven," said Trimble promptly.

"Eh?"

"I'm getting up a team," explained Baggy. "A team that's going to wipe up the ground with all the others, and bag the gold cup."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And what are you going to do with the cup when you've won it?" asked Manners. "Put it in pawn?"

"Oh, really, Manners——"

"Look here, Baggy," said Tom Merry. "this cup competition is going to be a serious affair—not a howling farce! It's absurd of you to think of entering a team. Personally, I'd prefer to play for a team of First Form fags than for an eleven skippered by you. In any case, I'm getting up a team of my own, so you can keep off the grass!"

Baggy Trimble blinked indignantly at the captain of the Shell.

"I'm making you the first offer of a place in my eleven," he growled, "and this is how you treat me—with scorn and despision!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll repeat my offer once and once only," said Trimble. "If you agree to play in my eleven, Merry you can choose our own position on the field."

"I've already chosen it," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to be outside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" snorted Trimble. "What about you, Manners? You're not much of a player—you barge about on the field like an elephant; but I don't mind stretching a point, and having you in my eleven."

"You—you——" spluttered Manners.

"I'll put you down as left-half, if you like," said Trimble, moistening his pencil with his lips. "Is it a go?"

"No, it isn't!" roared Manners. "Why, you fat dummy, I wouldn't play in any eleven of yours—not if I was offered a hundred quids!"

Baggy Trimble sighed. He was making very little progress with his team-building. In fact, he was making no progress at all. If Baggy had expected the fellows to come flocking to his banner, he was rudely disillusioned.

"I'm sure you'll play, Lowther!" he said.

"Yes, I'll play—but not for your eleven!" replied Lowther, with a chuckle. "I wouldn't be found dead in a team skippered by you!"

Baggy Trimble realised that no recruits were forthcoming from Study No. 10. Like Alexander of old, he would have to seek fresh worlds to conquer. He flourished a fat fist in the faces of the Terrible Three, and then beat a wrathful retreat. As he passed through the doorway, three well-shot feet clumped together on the rear of his plump person, and Baggy pitched forward into the passage, roaring.

"Yaroooooh! Beasts! I've a jolly good mind to come back and wipe up the floor with you!"

But Trimble did not come back. Evidently he deemed discretion the better part of valour. He rolled along to the study which was occupied by Talbot of the Shell. Without troubling to tap on the door, he entered.

"Talbot, old fellow——"

Talbot looked up from his prep. The look he bestowed upon his visitor was not reassuring.

"I'm getting up a team, old chap," explained Trimble.

"A hopscotch team?" queried Talbot.

"No."

"What then—marbles?"

"A footer team, that's going to carry off the Eastwood Cup!" said Baggy Trimble. "You didn't turn out for the School House this afternoon, Talbot. You weren't feeling quite fit. But you'll be fit enough by the time the cup matches come along. I'm not altogether satisfied with your form. You haven't got my speed and skill. But we can't all be Trimbles, can we?" added Baggy, with a smirk.

Talbot glared.

"I've decided to make allowances for your shortcomings, and to give you a place in my team," Trimble went on. "You can play at outside-left, if you like."

"Thanks!" said Talbot dryly, "but I'd prefer to be left

outside. And it's outside that you're going—right now! Choose your exit—door or window?"

Baggy Trimble wisely chose the door. Talbot, although not feeling quite up to the mark, was more than capable of ejecting Trimble by force. And Baggy, having already been ejected from one study, had no desire for an encore. He fairly rushed out of Talbot's study, and ran full-pelt into Bernard Glyn, who was coming along the passage.

"I say, Glyn, old chap——"

"Ow!" gasped Glyn, feeling as if an earthquake had hit him.

"You're just the fellow I wanted to see," said Trimble. "It's about the footer. You played quite a passable game at centre-half this afternoon. Of course, you haven't much polish; but I don't mind giving you a little tuition, and taking the rough edges off your play."

"W-w-what!" gasped Glyn.

"Then, when you have sufficiently improved, I'll have you in my eleven," said Trimble generously. "What do you say?"

Glyn said nothing. Evidently he considered it an occasion for action rather than speech. He suddenly shot out his left, and Baggy Trimble stopped the blow with his chest. There was a crash as he went sprawling in the passage. As falls the giant oak, so fell Trimble.

"Ow-ow-ow!" groaned the unfortunate team-builder.

Bernard Glyn stood over the fat junior, breathing hard.

"Want any more?" he asked.

Baggy declined the invitation. He lay gasping like a newly-landed fish, and Glyn passed on.

Baggy Trimble spent the remainder of the evening looking for recruits for his eleven. He made an exhaustive tour of the junior studies. He approached the good players, and the bad players, and the indifferent players. From one and all he received the order of the boot. And the front page of Baggy's notebook, whereon he hoped to write the names of eleven players, contained one name only—his own. The team that Trimble had succeeded in raising consisted of one person alone—himself!

Just before bed-time an amusing announcement appeared on the notice-board in the hall.

Baggy Trimble blinked at that announcement in great wrath. He didn't know who had posted it there, but the handwriting bore a suspicious resemblance to Monty Lowther's.

"THE EASTWOOD CUP."

"Baggy Trimble has succeeded in raising a team to take part in this competition. The eleven will be as follows:

"Goal, Trimble; backs, Trimble and Trimble; half-backs, Trimble, Trimble, and Trimble; forwards, Trimble, Trimble, Trimble, Trimble, and Trimble."

Baggy Trimble tore down the offending notice, and rolled wrathfully away. Thenceforward, his interest in the Eastwood Cup was dead.

CHAPTER 4.

A Crop of Surprises!

"WHAT'S wrong with Grundy?"

Monty Lowther asked the question in tones of concern. Tom Merry and Manners stared at him.

"Eh? Nothing wrong with Grundy, so far as I know," said Tom Merry. "Of course, he's suffering from swelled head, as usual. But apart from that, there's nothing wrong with him."

"There must be," said Lowther. "The poor fellow must be seriously ill, or something."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Manners. "What on earth makes you think that?"

Lowther gave a chuckle.

"I think this is the first time on record, Tommy, that you've drawn up a footer eleven, and Grundy hasn't come and badgered you to give him a place in it."

"Well, you're quite right, Monty," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's surprising that Grundy hasn't come along. He generally insists on being given a place in any team I'm drawing up. But he hasn't bothered us this evening. I believe you're right. The fellow must be ill."

"Let's come and see," said Manners.

And the Terrible Three strolled along to Grundy's study. George Alfred Grundy was there. He was standing with his back to the fireplace, laying down the law to his two study-mates—Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy was talking about football, and he emphasised his remarks by bringing his clenched fist down on the table with a force that upset the inkpot.

"We're going to pull it off!" shouted Grundy. "We've got the talent, and we've got a born leader. That's me. What I don't know about footer——"

"Would fill volumes!" said Monty Lowther, from the doorway.

Grundy scowled at the intruders.

"What I don't know about footer isn't worth knowing," he said. "What do you fellows want?"

"We've called to make inquiries about your health, Grundy," said Tom Merry.

"Eh? My health's all right. I'm as sound as a bell and as fit as a fiddle."

"Glad to hear it, old chap. But we thought you must be seriously ill."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Grundy, in surprise. "What ever made you think that?"

"Because you haven't called on us this evening and demanded a place in my eleven."

Grundy laughed scornfully.

"I wouldn't play in your eleven if you went down on bended knees and implored me to!" he said. "Why should I want to play for your fifth-rate crowd when I've got an eleven of my own?"

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you're entering a team for the Eastwood Cup?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Grundy. "I've got a wonderful team together—a side that's going to make a sensation."

"Yes, you'll make a sensation all right—by losing your first match by about ten to nil!" said Manners.

Grundy frowned.

"You fellows can cackle," he said. "But I'm out for scalps. I don't care if we're drawn against the Sixth in the first round. We'll wallop them!"

"Wallop" was Grundy's favourite word. He had been expelled from his old school—Redclyffe—for "walloping" a prefect, as he termed it. Grundy was always threatening to "wallop" somebody, though it frequently happened that the boot was on the other foot, and it was Grundy himself who got the "walloping."

"Whom have you got in your team, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, there's me," said Grundy. "I'm a team in myself."

"Quite so!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "And you're merely putting in ten others as a matter of form—what?"

"That's it," said Grundy, who quite failed to see that Lowther was leg-pulling. "Wilkins is going to keep goal for us—"

"Poor old Wilkins!" said Lowther. "He'll bless you after you've put the ball into your own net a few times!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be an ass, Lowther!" said Grundy. "There's Wilky in goal and Gunn and Gore at back. Crooke has promised to play, and so has Mellish. Racke says he'll turn out if he feels like it. And Skimpole's coming in, though I'll admit that Skimpy doesn't know a goalpost from a maiden over. I shall ask Baggy Trimble to play, too; but he's feeling a bit sore at present, because he can't raise a team of his own."

"But that's only nine," said Tom Merry. "Where are the other two coming from?"

"That's a secret," said Grundy, with a wink at Wilkins and Gunn.

"You're getting them from outside the school?" said Manners.

"Well, and what if I am? It's quite permissible. Lord Eastwood said so."

"As long as they're under sixteen, that will be all serene," said Tom Merry. "But do you honestly think, you champion chump, that you've an earthly chance of lifting the cup?"

"I don't think," said Grundy. "I know! That cup is ours in advance! In a week or two you'll see it adorning this mantelpiece!"

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three, in chorus. And they left the study, laughing.

In the passage they encountered Cardew and Clive of the Fourth. The two chums were strolling along, arm-in-arm.

"I've put you fellows down on my list," said Tom Merry. "You're willing to play for my team, I take it?"

"Can't be done, old man!" said Clive, with a shake of the head.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm getting up a team of my own."

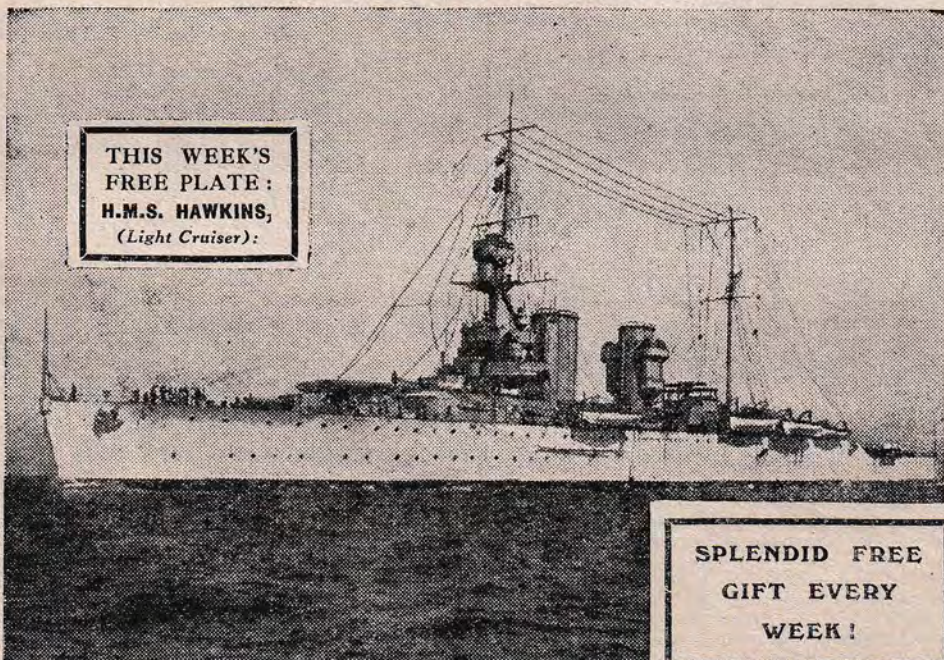
"My hat!"

This was the second surprise Tom Merry & Co. had received in the course of a few moments. First, Grundy had astonished them by saying that he was getting up an eleven. And now Clive had sprung a surprise. Tom Merry had not dreamed that the sturdy South African junior would get up a team of his own.

"Sidney is goin' strong," explained Cardew. "He has enlisted my services, an' Levison's into the bargain. An' we're goin' to collar that gold cup. That's the one great ambition that is flamin' in our breasts at the moment. We're concentratin' all our energies on baggin' the cup."

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Tom Merry smiled.

"Another cheerful optimist!" he said. "Grundy has already cleared a space on the mantelpiece to accommodate the cup—when he gets it! I suppose you've done the same?"

"We're not goin' to keep it on the mantelpiece," said Cardew. "We're goin' to have it put in a glass case an' hung in the dorm. There it will remain for a whole year—perhaps two. Nothin' to prevent us winnin' it again."

"You haven't won it once yet," said Manners. "Where are you getting all your players from? You've only mentioned three."

Cardew chuckled.

"The identity of the others must remain a deep, dark secret," he said. "Suffice it to say that they are all toppin' footballers, capable of winnin' the English Cup, let alone this one."

The Terrible Three were considerably mystified.

Where was Sidney Clive getting the majority of his players from? Was he importing a number of local footballers from Wayland? Tom Merry & Co. felt a strong curiosity on the subject—a curiosity which Cardew and Clive declined to gratify.

"This is a queer business, Clive," said Tom Merry. "But you won't be able to keep it a secret for ever. When the first round comes along we shall see who you've got. I'll drop you and Cardew from my list and put in Talbot and Herries."

Clive nodded, and strolled cheerfully away with Cardew.

"Well, we've met two of the merry team-builders," observed Monty Lowther. "Who are the others, I wonder?"

The identity of the others was soon made public.

Kildare of the Sixth was getting up a team. He had the first eleven at his disposal, and it really seemed, on the face of it, as if Kildare's team would walk over all the rest, and win the Eastwood Cup without much effort.

But, as Lord Eastwood had pointed out, football was full of surprises, and even the mighty men of the Sixth might find themselves in some tight corners when opposed to the younger and lighter teams.

Another of the team-builders was Cutts of the Fifth. Gerald Cutts was a blade and a slacker, and nobody had expected him to take any interest in the Eastwood Cup. But the fact was, Cutts coveted that gold cup, and he was quite determined to win it. When Cutts made up his mind to do a thing he invariably carried it through, and he was none too scrupulous in his methods.

Much amusement was caused by the rumour that Wally D'Arcy of the Third was entering a team.

A team of fags, who had not yet got out of the knickerbocker stage, could hardly hope to go very far in the competition. But Wally D'Arcy thought differently. Like George Alfred Grundy, he was an optimist.

Over in the New House there was quite as much excitement as in the School House.

George Figgins, of course, was getting up a team, and nobody was surprised to hear it.

It was Koumi Rao, the Indian junior, who furnished the surprise. He announced that he was getting into touch with his friends who had come over to England to take part in the British Empire Exhibition, at Wembley, with a view to forming a team called the Wembley Wanderers.

Koumi Rao had friends of all nationalities, for he had done a good deal of globe-trotting before he came to St. Jim's, and had formed friendships in many lands. He told the fellows that there would be three Indians in his eleven, besides himself. There would also be an Australian, a New Zealander, a dusky youth from British East Africa, a Canadian, a Maltese subject, and a couple of fellows from the West Indies. It was a queer mixture.

The eight team-builders duly handed in their names to Mr. Railton. And St. Jim's worked itself up into quite a fever of excitement, and eagerly awaited the draw for the first round.

CHAPTER 5. The Draw!

"ROLL on, Saturday!"

Thus Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three were at tea in their study, discussing the universal topic—the fight for the Eastwood Cup.

The draw for the first round was to be announced that evening, and the four momentous matches were to be played on the Saturday. They would all take place at the same time—two on Big Side, and two on Little Side.

"The question is, who are we drawn against?" said Tom Merry.

"The fags' eleven, let us hope," said Manners with a grin.

"Or Grundy's," said Lowther. "Then we shall pass automatically into the second round, without having to exert ourselves."

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"But supposing we're drawn against the Sixth?" said Tom Merry.

"Ow! Perish the thought!"

The three chums were in such a state of excitement and suspense that they could not settle down to tea. They were intensely eager to know who their opponents would be in the first round, so that they could weigh up their chances. If fortune favoured them, they would be paired off with one of the weak teams. But if fate was unkind, they might find themselves pitted against the St. Jim's first eleven. Such a prospect was enough to daunt the stoutest hearts. Tom Merry had a dashing and a skilful side; but how could he reasonably hope to lay low the giants of the Sixth?

At any moment, the fateful draw would be announced. It was being held in Mr. Railton's study, with a couple of masters present to ensure that everything was in order.

The Terrible Three were restless and fidgety at the tea-table. And their suspense was shared by all the other team-builders, with the exception of Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's didn't much care who his eleven was drawn against in the first round. The Sixth were practically certain of winning, whoever their opponents might be.

"Wish Railton would hurry up and broadcast the result of the draw!" said Tom Merry. "This suspense is awful."

"It's putting me off my feed," said Monty Lowther.

"Hark!" said Manners suddenly. "What's all the rumpus about?"

There was quite a commotion going on in the quadrangle.

Tom Merry & Co. rushed to the window and looked out. Quite a crowd had collected in the quad, and their faces were upturned with eager expectancy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was among the assembly, signalled to the Terrible Three.

"I say, deah boys! Wailton's just goin' to announce the result of the draw, from his studay window."

"Oh, good!"

"Now we shall hear our fate!" murmured Lowther.

In a few moments the deep voice of Mr. Railton could be heard requesting silence from the buzzing crowd below.

The commotion died away as if by magic. And the crowd waited breathlessly for the Housemaster's announcement.

"The draw for the first round of the Eastwood Cup has duly taken place," said Mr. Railton. "The teams will be paired as follows:

"Kildare's XI versus D'Arcy minor's XI."

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd in the quad. The only fellows who were not laughing were Wally D'Arcy and the members of his eleven. It was no laughing matter, so far as the fags were concerned!

"Giants versus pigmies!" chortled Monty Lowther.

"Thank goodness, Tommy, we've escaped being drawn against the First Eleven!"

"Yes, rather!"

The laughter in the quad having died away, Mr. Railton proceeded:

"Clive's XI versus Grundy's XI.

"Figgins' XI versus Wembley Wanderers.

"Merry's XI versus Cutts' XI."

The long-awaited news was out at last, and the crowd dispersed, excitedly discussing the result of the draw, and the prospects of the various elevens.

Tom Merry made a wry face.

"So we're up against Cutts!" he said.

"You don't seem wildly happy about it, Tommy," said Monty Lowther.

"I'm not. I think I'd rather have been drawn against the Sixth, powerful though they are. I don't like Cutts. I don't trust him. He stoops to all sorts of shady tricks."

"That's so," agreed Manners. "If he can't beat us by fair means, he'll resort to foul. That's Cutts all over."

"Talk of angels," said Monty Lowther, "and you're bound to hear the flapping of their giddy wings! Come in, Cutts!"

Cutts of the Fifth came in. He had been standing in the doorway, with a dark scowl on his face. It is said that listeners never hear anything good of themselves. Cutts had been listening, and he had certainly heard nothing to his credit. He glared at the three juniors.

"Judgin' by your remarks, Merry, you haven't a very high opinion of me," said Cutts.

Tom eyed the Fifth-Former fearlessly.

"To be quite frank, I haven't!" he said. "I was just lamenting the fact that we've been drawn against your eleven."

"I heard you," said Cutts. "An' I've a thunderin' good mind to lick you, you cheeky cub!"

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

But Cutts did not go ahead. He knew that he was no match for the Terrible Three on their native heath, so to speak. Big fellow though he was, they could have ejected him without much difficulty. Moreover, they were quite willing to do so. And Cutts, who prided himself on his appearance, had a rooted objection to being rolled along a dusty passage.



In his sudden wave of anger and disappointment Cutts scarcely realised what he was doing. He kicked Harry Hammond while the junior lay on the ground. For a moment there was a breathless hush. Then came a positive chorus of hooting and hissing from the crowd round the ropes. "Oh, the cad!" "The unspeakable rotter!" Cutts turned pale. The enormity of his offence was brought home to him in a flash. (See page 12.)

Cutts decided that it would be discreet to overlook the uncomplimentary remarks he had overheard.

"I dropped in to see you about the footer, Merry," he said with as much civility as he could muster.

"Well?" said Tom.

"We're drawn together," said Cutts. "My team against yours. Of course, you haven't a hope. The match will be a farce—if it's played, that is. We shall simply swamp you."

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three, in chorus.

Cutts frowned.

"Look here, Merry," he said, "unless you want to make a laughin'-stock of yourself on Saturday, you'll cry off, an' retire from the competition."

"Not likely!" said Tom, with emphasis. "We're not such a set of feeble idiots as to throw up the sponge, and give you a walk-over into the second round! That's what you're after, I know; but there's nothing doing."

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "I've given you a chance to stand down, an' you won't take it. On Saturday, after we've mopped you up to the tune of about ten to nil, you'll wish you'd cried off."

"Bow-wow!"

Cutts gave a snort. Tom Merry & Co. were smiling sweetly, and their smiles nettled the cad of the Fifth.

"Here endeth the merry interview," said Monty Lowther. "Run away and pick flowers, Cutts!"

But Cutts, instead of engaging in that horticultural pursuit, clenched his hands and took a quick stride towards the Terrible Three.

"You—you cheeky young sweeps!" he spluttered. "I'll knock your heads together!"

And Cutts would certainly have carried out his threat, had the juniors offered no resistance. But before Cutts could lay his hands on them, they rushed at him with one accord, and grasped him, and sent him whirling through the doorway.

"Hands off!" roared Cutts. "I—I'll jolly well—Yaroooooh!"

The Fifth-Former broke off with a wild yell as he sprawled heavily in the passage. He landed on the linoleum with a crash that shook every bone in his body.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Sorry you feel so 'put out'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts struggled to his feet, breathing threatnings and slaughter. But the door of Study No. 10 was slammed in his face. Cutts looked for a moment as if he would hurl it open, and take the study by storm. But he wisely thought better of it, and with a muttered imprecation, he turned and limped away. His endeavours to persuade Tom Merry to "cry off" the match had proved wholly unsuccessful.

CHAPTER 6.

Ready for the Fray!

SATURDAY dawned a clear and cloudless day, with a frosty nip in the air.

It was a perfect day for football. And St. Jim's was to have a feast of football that afternoon—quite an orgy or it, in fact.

Great excitement prevailed during the morning. At eleven o'clock, the Wembley Wanderers arrived in a privately-hired charabanc. They were effusively greeted at the school gates by their skipper, Koumi Rao of the New House, and crowds of St. Jim's fellows turned out to give them welcome.

They were a curious crowd. The Indians wore their native costumes, and they proposed to play football in their quaint attire. Certainly it would lend a picturesque touch to the proceedings.

The Australian, the New Zealander, and the Canadian were sturdy-limbed fellows, with bronzed faces. The boy from British East Africa had an ebony complexion, and a mop of woolly hair. The two from the West Indies had managed

to pick up a smattering of English whilst they had been at Wembley, but it was very crude English, and it made the St. Jim's fellows smile.

George Figgins ran his eyes over the Wembley Wanderers, and he came to the conclusion that there was plenty of football talent amongst them. Figgins & Co. would have to be at their very best to defeat the British Empire team.

Koumi Rao took his guests under his wing and trotted them off to see the sights of St. Jim's.

At midday there were more arrivals.

Those who were assembled in the school gateway saw a number of athletic-looking young fellows come striding into view along the road. They were carrying handbags, and Clive of the Fourth uttered a joyful exclamation when he caught sight of them.

"Hurrah! My team has arrived!"

"An' they look fightin' fit, by gad!" drawled Cardew. "Go an' embrace them, Sidney."

Clive went forward with outstretched hand to greet the newcomers. They seemed as pleased to see him as Clive was to see them. There was quite a competition amongst them to wring Clive's hand.

"So this is the Mystery Team!" said Tom Merry. "Where on earth did they spring from? They're not local fellows."

"Dear man," said Cardew, "they hail from the sunny south—where Africa's sunny fountains pour down their golden what's-a-name."

"My hat! South Africans!"

Cardew nodded.

"They came over to England with the South African Soccer team which is tourin' the country," he explained. "They've been followin' the team round, watchin' the matches. All of them happen to be pals of Sidney's. So when the Eastwood Cup came along, Sidney wrote an' invited them to join his eleven."

"They're fine-looking fellows, and no mistake!" said Manners. "Are they all under sixteen, Cardew?"

"Yes."

"They look older, to me."

"That's because they're so strappin'. They've been athletes ever since they could toddle. An' they are simply dazzlin' at footer, accordin' to Sidney, whose word I never doubt."

"Then it looks to me," said Tom Merry, "as if Grundy's eleven is in for a record hiding this afternoon!"

Cardew smiled.

"Poor old Grundy!" he murmured. "By the time we've finished pilin' up the giddy goals, he won't know whether he's on his head or his heels!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment Grundy himself came striding on the scene.

Grundy was looking very pompous and important. The expression on his face seemed to say: "I, the great George Alfred Grundy, am approaching! Get off the earth!"

Grundy bestowed a look of lofty condescension upon the South Africans.

"So this is Clive's team?" he said. "Well, they seem a pretty hefty lot, but brawn is no good unless it's combined with brain—as in my case."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Grundy, looking surprised. "It's a well-known fact that you need brain, as well as brawn, in footer. I feel rather sorry for these South African fellows. They've made a long journey, I expect, and they've made it for nothing. I shall send 'em away with their tails between their legs—whacked, wiped up, and walloped!"

"Yes, there's goin' to be a wallopin', all right," admitted Cardew. "But we shall be the wallopers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure you wouldn't like to cry off, Grundy, an' thus avoid a wallopin'?"

Grundy gave a snort.

"If we don't wipe up the ground with Clive's eleven I'll never kick a football again!" he avowed.

"Then your football career will come to a sudden end this afternoon!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy scowled.

"You wait till my two professionals turn up!" he said. "You'll change your tune then."

"Professionals?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes—the two fellows I've engaged from Wayland. I'm paying them half-a-crown apiece for their services."

The juniors chuckled.

"Well, if they're willing to turn out on those terms, they must be pretty putrid players," said Manners. "A good-class pro would want about a fiver."

"You wait till Pugg and Perkins turn up!" said Grundy. "Pugg's a goalie, and Perkins is a centre-forward. Pugg will stop every shot that's sent in, and Perkins will score about a dozen goals off his own bat—I mean, boot."

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No sooner had Clive piloted his South African chums into the building than Grundy's pros arrived.

Pugg and Perkins caused quite a sensation. They were big fellows—bigger, in fact, than Kildare of the Sixth. They were dressed in loud check suits, and their football-boots, tied together with string, were balanced round their necks. The rest of their football equipment was tied up in brown paper.

"My only aunt!" gasped Tom Merry. "Do you mean to say these louts are under sixteen, Grundy? Why, one of them has a moustache!"

"Nothing extraordinary about that," said Grundy. "A fellow can have a moustache before he's sixteen. I've got one coming myself!"

"Lend me a microscope, somebody, and I'll investigate the truth of that statement," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy greeted Messrs. Perkins and Pugg very cordially.

"Glad you've turned up," he said, shaking hands. "Look here, what about your fee? Would you like me to pay you now, or after we've licked the South Africans?"

"Nah!" said Pugg promptly. Perhaps he had a lingering doubt in his mind as to whether the South Africans would be licked, even with a professional goalkeeper and centre-forward against them.

Grundy paid over the two half-crowns. Then he took Pugg's right arm and Perkins' left and marched them away to the tuckshop for light refreshment. The two professionals had no objection—though they would probably have preferred something a little stronger than ginger-pop.

Tom Merry & Co. stared after the trio.

"I'm certain those two fellows are nineteen, if they're a day!" said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"If Railton sees them he'll forbid them to play," he said. "But whether they play or not it won't affect the result. Grundy's team will be publicly pulverised!"

And of that—as the gentleman in "The Gondoliers" observed—there was no shadow of doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever. Wherever the Eastwood Cup might find a resting-place, it would not be on the study mantelpiece of George Alfred Grundy!

CHAPTER 7.

Shattered Dreams!

ALL roads led to the football-ground on that keen November afternoon.

Those who were not actually playing footer had a pretty problem to decide.

Which of the four cupties should they go and see?

On Big Side, Kildare's team were playing the Babes; and Cutts' team were doing battle with Tom Merry & Co.

On Little Side, Figgins' eleven was meeting the Wembley Wanderers; and Grundy's side was pitted against the South Africans.

It was impossible to be in four places at one and the same time; though doubtless a good many fellows would dodge from one match to another, and thus see a portion of the whole lot.

The game which attracted the greatest number of on-lookers was the Cutts versus Tom Merry duel. The teams were fairly evenly matched, so far as football skill went; though, of course, Cutts' eleven had a distinct advantage in height and weight.

There was a fair sprinkling of spectators on Little Side to see how Grundy's hired professionals performed, and what they would do against the South Africans. But the crowd was not so big as Grundy would have wished. In his colossal conceit, Grundy imagined that the whole school would turn out to see that particular match, and to watch the great George Alfred pile up the goals. But Grundy was disappointed.

"A miserable handful of spectators!" growled Grundy. "Where has everybody got to?"

"Most of them are on Big Side, I expect," said Wilkins.

"Bah! They won't see anything worth seeing on Big Side. Kildare's eleven will wallop the fags, and Cutts' eleven will wipe up the ground with Merry's. But there won't be any sparkling football like they'll see here. I feel in fine form!"

Wilkins and Gunn looked rather anxious. Whenever Grundy felt in fine form it was a bad omen. It meant that he would make himself a bigger nuisance than usual—charging his own men off the ball, and all that sort of thing. Grundy was really at his best when he was off-colour, because then he never got in anybody's way, but contented himself with wandering aimlessly up and down the touchline. When in form, however, Grundy was a fellow to be feared—not by the opposing side, but by his own men, amongst whom he barged and charged without ceremony.

"I—I say, old man," stammered Wilkins, "you won't try and do too much in this game, will you? You've got a couple of pros. Leave the donkey-work to them. Pugg will be all right in goal if you leave him alone."

"He might want my help if our defence gets in a tangle," said Grundy.

"Nunno! Don't hinder him, old chap—"

"I said help, not hinder!" said Grundy.

"Ahem!" muttered Wilkins. He regarded Grundy's "help" as very much of a hindrance.

"As for Perkins," said Grundy, "I shall, of course, rely on him to earn his half-crown by getting at least half a dozen goals. I shall get the rest."

"The—the rest?" stuttered Gunn.

"Yes. I ought to be good for half a dozen myself."

"But this is going to be a footer match—not a cricket match! Personally, I shall feel jolly pleased if we can manage to lick the South Africans by a goal to nothing. When you talk of getting goals by the dozen—well, it's what old Euclid calls absurd!"

"Don't argue with me, William Gunn!" said Grundy imperiously. "I'm the skipper of this eleven, and what I say goes. Hallo! What does old Darrell want, I wonder?"

Darrell of the Sixth came strolling on to the ground. He was not in football garb, which was rather surprising. By rights, he should have been playing for the First eleven against the fags.

The Sixth-Former bore down upon Grundy & Co.

"Are you wanting a referee?" he asked good-humouredly.

"Yes, rather!" said Grundy. "But why aren't you playing for the Sixth, Darrell?"

Darrell grinned.

"We're only putting out a team of six against the babes," he said. "Six will be quite enough—a goalie, two backs, and three forwards. I'm standing down, and I'm free to referee this match, if you want my services."

"Jolly good of you," said Grundy. "Blow the merry whistle. Time we started."

"Half a minute," said Darrell. "Who are those two big fellows in the rainbow colours? One's wearing a sweater and the other a jersey, and the colour scheme of both is positively dazzling."

"Oh," said Grundy, "they're a couple of pros I've hired from Wayland! It's permissible to get players from outside the school, you know."

"Yes, so long as they are not over sixteen," agreed Darrell. "But neither of those louts will ever see sixteen again. They're pretty nearly out of their teens, I should say."

"They assured me they were only sixteen," said Grundy. "I didn't ask them to show their birth certificates. I just took their word for it. Don't make a fuss, Darrell."

"Oh, all right! But I don't think Mr. Railton will approve, if he spots them."

Darrell blew his whistle, and the teams lined up.

The South Africans were smiling. They did not seem to be overawed at the prospect of meeting Grundy's eleven, even though the latter had a couple of alleged professionals in its ranks.

Clive and Cardew and Levison took their places in the South African forward line, and they nudged each other in anticipation of having some fun.

"Pile up the merry goals," said Cardew. "Let's show Grundy how to play footer."

"Wonder if the two pros are any good?" said Levison.

"It doesn't matter if they are, dear man. One swallow doesn't make a summer, and two good players don't make a footer eleven. The curtain will now rise on one of the biggest farces in the history of St. Jim's footer."

The ball was set in motion. Clive gained possession, and whipped it across to Cardew, who went away like the wind.

In the very first minute Grundy's goal was in danger. But Percy Pugg, of Wayland, was guarding that goal, and Grundy had every confidence in him. Surely a professional custodian could be relied upon to keep his citadel intact?

Cardew ran on, challenged but unchecked. He pulled up

at the corner flag and sent across a perfect centre. Clive pounced upon the ball and drove it in. And Percy Pugg, instead of trying to stop the shot, stood like a graven image and watched the ball go past him into the net.

"Goal!"

The onlookers chuckled. It seemed that the first nail had been driven into the coffin of George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy himself was furious. He strode savagely towards Pugg, who was slowly gathering the ball out of the net.

"Why didn't you stop that shot?" demanded Grundy.

"Eh?"

"You ought to have saved that, you frantic idiot!"

"Look 'ere!" began Pugg aggressively, "don't you start callin' me no fancy names, young shaver, or I'll clout yer!"

Grundy gave a snort.

"Well, for goodness' sake pull yourself together!" he said. "I paid you half-a-crown to keep goal, not to make a champion ass of yourself!"

As the game went on it became more and more apparent that Grundy's eleven were in for a record licking. Their display was feeble in the extreme. Wilkins and Gunn tried hard, but they got no support. On one occasion Grundy barged Wilkins off the ball when he was in the act of shooting.

As for Perkins, the hired centre-forward, his knowledge of football was as limited as Grundy's. And that was saying a good deal.

Perkins was hopeless. When the ball came to him he stood and looked at it until an opponent ran up and took it from his toes. Grundy scowled at him, and growled at him, and asked him if he called himself a professional.

To which Perkins replied:

"Yus! An' I'm a professional pooglist as well as a professional footballer, so don't you give me none of your lip!"

As for the rest of Grundy's players—Crooke, and Mellish, and the others—they were hopelessly out of condition. Having spent most of their half-holidays in stuffy studies, instead of on the football-field, they were unable to raise a gallop. After five minutes' play they had bellows to mend.

Clive's team were "all over" their opponents, and there was quite a glut of goals.

Clive himself performed the "hat-trick," scoring three goals in quick succession. Cardew netted twice, and Spencer and Marshall, two of the South Africans, added to the rapidly growing score.

At half-time the South Africans led by the amazing margin of eight to nil.

Grundy had prophesied, before the match was played, that there would be a big crop of goals. But, unfortunately, those goals did not come from the boot of George Alfred Grundy. It was the South Africans who were reaping the harvest.

During the interval Clive stepped up to Grundy with a smile.

"Would you like to pack up now and call it a win for us?" he asked.

"Certainly not!" growled Grundy.

"It was for your own sake that I suggested it," said Clive. "I wanted to spare you the humiliation of having another dozen goals scored against you in the second half."

"Thank you for nothing!" snapped Grundy.

"Then you're going on?"

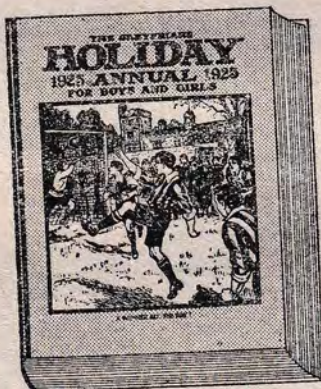
"Yes. I'm going to have a jolly good try to pull the game out of the fire."

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy was not only an optimist, but a super-optimist, if he imagined that he could score nine goals in the second half, and also prevent the South Africans from scoring again. The game was resumed.

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If the first half had been a comedy, the second half was a screaming farce.

Grundy's eleven were outplayed, outwitted, and out-pointed. And Clive's hint that another dozen goals would be scored was fully justified.

Grundy himself was responsible for two of the goals. In dropping back to defend he had diverted the ball into his own net.

When the final whistle rang out the onlookers were sobbing with merriment.

"Twenty to nil!" gurgled Kerruish of the Fourth. "Ye gods and little fishes! What a swamping! Fade away, Grundy, and hide your diminished head!"

But before Grundy "faded away" he had a few words with Perkins and Pugg, the professionals.

"Call yourselves footballers?" snorted Grundy. "I engaged you on the understanding that you were experts, and that you would win the match for me. And look what a fearful mess you've made of it. Twenty to nil! Twenty to nil against us! Oh dear! I shall never hear the end of this. If you two louts have got any sense of fair play you'll give me back my five bob!"

But Grundy was unlucky. Perkins and Pugg had no intention of parting with their remuneration. True, the labourers had not been worthy of their hire. But Grundy's half-crowns reposed safely in their pockets, and possession was nine points of the law.

"What d' you take us for?" asked Percy Pugg. "A money-back-if-not-satisfied firm? I can assure you we ain't nothin' of the sort!"

"We done our best," said Perkins.

"Your worst, you mean!" growled Grundy. "I might as well have played a couple of old women!"

And Grundy strode furiously away. Gone were his fond dreams of winning the gold cup presented by Lord Essex. Grundy's eleven had received the "knock-out" in the first round. And for the rest of that memorable day George Alfred Grundy sat sulking in his study, like Achilles in his tent.

CHAPTER 8.

Ordered Off!

"I CONSIDAH we are doin' splendidly, deah boys!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The whistle had just sounded for half-time in the match between Cutts' eleven and Tom Merry's eleven. And Tom Merry's men gathered together in a group, muddy and breathless, but feeling very pleased with themselves.

It had been a gruelling first half. The burly Fifth-Formers had been attacking for three-parts of the time, and the juniors' defence had been sorely tried. But it had emerged triumphant, thanks to the sterling work of Harry Hammond in goal.

Cutts, who could put up a good game when he chose, had led the Fifth Form forwards with rare dash. But he had been unable to penetrate the rocklike defence of Hammond, Noble, and Reilly.

Goals are the things that count in football, and the only goal of the first half had been taken by Tom Merry. Therefore, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was quite justified in remarking that the juniors were doing splendidly.

"Well, we're on top, so far, and we've got to cling tooth and nail to our lead," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "Cutts has played a clean game up till now, but we must expect trouble in the next half. He'll start throwing his weight about. And he won't be above committing a few fouls, if he finds the game's going against him."

"Oh, I don't know," said Talbot. "Cutts would hardly dare to do that, with Railton refereeing. Railton's got the eye of a hawk."

"I twust that Cutts will conduct himself in a sportsmanlike mannah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We don't want any sly twippin', or ankle-tappin', or anythin' of that sort."

"We don't want it," agreed Blake, "but we'll most likely get it. We shall have to keep our eyes open."

Mr. Railton blew his whistle for the teams to line up again.

There was a rather grim expression on the face of Cutts of the Fifth. He had not expected his team to be behind at the interval; nor, indeed, at any stage of the game.

Cutts had looked upon this match all along as a "soft thing" for the Fifth; but he had taken no risks, and had fielded a strong team—the strongest he could get together. But although the Fifth-Formers had exerted themselves to the utmost, they had the mortification of being a goal behind at half-time.

"We've got to alter all this!" said Cutts. "It would never do to be beaten by a parcel of fags."

"Beaten?" echoed St. Leger. "Why, they wouldn't beat us in a month of Sundays! I'll give that kid Hammond his due. He kept a fine goal in the first half. But if we can't put the ball past him half a dozen times in this half, I'm no footballer!"

"On the ball!" said Gilmore, as the whistle blew.

The Fifth attacked desperately, right from the restart. Their forwards simply swarmed round Harry Hammond, and bombarded him with shots from all angles. But the Cockney junior was as active as a panther. He showed an almost uncanny anticipation of where the ball was coming, and he was ready for it when it came. Some of his saves bordered on the miraculous, and the crowd cheered him to the echo.

But the defence could not hold out for ever. Even Hammond was beaten at last, by a fast low drive from Cutts which found the corner of the net.

"Goal!"

"That's one each!" panted Monty Lowther. "Now comes the tug-of-war!"

The Fifth continued to have most of the play; but Noble and Reilly, at back, defended sturdily. On several occasions Cutts was pulled up when he looked like going through on his own.

It was a stern struggle, with the odds all in favour of the Fifth. But, try as they would, they could not get the winning goal.

Soon it began to look as if the match would end "all square."

This was not what Cutts wanted. Tom Merry's team had given him such a fright that he didn't want to run the risk of a second meeting. He wanted to beat them here and now. And time was flying fast.

With fifteen minutes to go, Cutts picked up a pass from the wing, and dashed at top speed for goal. Harry Noble ran across to intercept him, and Cutts deliberately tripped the Australian junior. Kangaroo went sprawling on the turf.

"Foul!"

"Play the game, Cutts!"

Mr. Railton had seen the incident, and he blew his whistle for a free-kick. He also had a word to say to Cutts.

"I will not tolerate any underhand tactics of that sort, Cutts!" he said sternly.

"It was an accident!" muttered Cutts.

"Do not lie to me!" said Mr. Railton sharply. "Are you all right, Noble?"

"Yes, sir," said Kangaroo, struggling to his feet.

"Then the game will proceed."

The precious minutes were flying, and the Fifth were still without their winning goal.

Cutts rallied his men, and they played with desperate keenness; but they could not get the ball past Hammond.

At length, however, Cutts found himself with a clear opening. He had beaten the back, and he was so near the goal-line that all he had to do was to tap the ball past Hammond. The Cockney junior saw the peril, and flung himself forward to avert it. With delightful daring he snatched the ball from the very toes of Cutts.

This so angered the Fifth-Former—for he had fully expected to score—that he completely forgot himself.

In a sane moment even Cutts would not have dreamed of doing such a thing. But in that sudden wave of anger and disappointment he scarcely realised what he was doing. He kicked Harry Hammond while the junior lay on the ground.

For a moment there was a breathless hush. Then came a positive chorus of hooting and hissing from the crowd round the ropes.

"Oh, the cad!"

"The unspeakable rotter!"

"He kicked young Hammond!"

Cutts turned pale. The enormity of his offence was brought home to him in a flash.

"Cutts!" Mr. Railton's voice was sharp and stern. "You have behaved worse than a common hooligan! I order you to leave the field!"

For an instant Cutts hesitated. Then, with hands tightly clenched, he turned and walked off the playing-pitch, while the hooting and hissing grew in volume.

Harry Hammond rose to his feet, massaging his ribs with his hand.

"I deeply regret that this should have happened, my boy!" said Mr. Railton kindly. "Are you fit enough to resume?"

"Yes, sir; I'm all right!" muttered Hammond. And he went back to guard the goal.

With only five minutes left for play, the excitement rose to fever pitch.

ANSWERS

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THE SHIPWRECKED SEVEN! Clinging on with might and main, drenched through to the skin, shivering, and with white desperate faces, Tom Merry & Co. clung to the rails while the hapless Conquest heaved and crashed beneath them on the cruel, treacherous sands! (A thrilling incident from next week's dramatic yarn of Tom Merry & Co. Make sure you do not miss it!)

The Fifth, having lost their leader, were as sheep without a shepherd. Instead of continuing to attack, they were obliged to fall back and defend.

Tom Merry & Co. were fighting hard now. They swarmed to the attack, and Jack Blake was unlucky with a shot which crashed against the crossbar. But the ball rebounded into play, and Talbot was upon it like a terrier.

"Shoot, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And Talbot shot. The ball travelled into the net at lightning speed, and the next instant Talbot's comrades were shaking his hands like pump-handles.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Oh, well played, Talbot!"

In the last couple of minutes the Fifth attacked; but it was their last dying kick. And Gerald Cutts, looking on from a distance, had the crowning mortification of seeing his side suffer defeat.

A fierce anger flamed up in the Fifth-Former's breast. He was angry with Mr. Railton for having ordered him off; he was angry with his own men for losing the match. But his anger was chiefly directed against Tom Merry & Co. After all his big talk about wiping up the ground with them—after advising them to stand down from the competition—they had triumphed, and triumphed gloriously.

It was a bitter pill for the cad of the Fifth. And an ugly glint came into his eyes.

"They're hugging each other now," he muttered, "an' fallin' on each other's necks. I suppose they think they're goin' to collar the cup. But they won't—not while I'm at hand to prevent it. I'll put a spoke in their wheel somehow!"

And, with that amiable resolve, Gerald Cutts strode away towards the school building.

CHAPTER 9.

High Jinks at St. Jim's!

"**W**ONDER how the other games went?" said Tom Merry.

"I wondah!" echoed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Heah comes my minah, Wally. Judgin' by his hangdog expression, the fags have had a fearful thwashin'!"

"How did the game go, Wally?" asked Jack Blake. "Three to nothing against us," said Wally D'Arcy. "The Sixth only played six men, too. I thought we should be able to wallop them, but they were above our weight."

"Never mind, kid!" said Tom Merry. "Better luck next year!"

At that moment Cardew and Clive approached, arm-in-arm, from the direction of Little Side. They were smiling serenely.

"Hallo," said Manners. "What have you fellows been doing to Grundy's eleven?"

"Pilin' up the giddy goals!" chuckled Cardew. "I bagged half a dozen, an' goodness knows how many Sidney got! I lost count!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Then you must have run up a cricket score."

Cardew nodded and grinned.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 375.



The St. Jim's News

SPECIAL "NEW HOUSE"
NUMBER.

EDITORIAL.

By George Figgins.

WELL, here we are again! And not before time, I can hear some of you saying. You're quite right, it isn't.

Do you fellows know how long it is since the last "New House" Edition was published? In case you don't, I'll just tell you. More than a year!

Perhaps those readers of the "News" who keep their issues stored away—which I hope nearly all of you do—will turn up their copies and prove this.

It beats me how those feeble bits of cheese in the School House can have cheek to carry on in the fashion they do, showing themselves up in the pages of the "News." You'd think they'd be forced to see what hopeless doddlers they are, and agree that the best thing they could possibly do would be to fade away as gently as possible and leave matters in more capable hands.

They must know that New House is cock-house. Snakes alive, I don't give them credit for having much sense at the best of times, but surely they've got enough to realise that.

However, now we've got the chance, we're going to make the best of it. You trust us for that. We'll show 'em what journalism is!

Of course, Fatty has had to write about his favourite subject, grub, as usual. I really don't believe he could turn out a column on any other topic. I wanted him to give a few tips about goalkeeping, but I'm hanged if I could persuade him to do it. He begged me, almost with tears in his eyes, to let him put the story of that pork-pie on record. He's been moaning about that blessed pie for a couple of days, and perhaps now he's aired his grievance he'll give it a rest.

I don't know whether I ought to have passed Lawrence's article just as he wrote it. That Redfern & Co. crowd are getting their ears up a little too much. Reddy's all right in his way, but he can take it from me that he'd make a poor show as leader of the New House. The job isn't all honey.

It's certainly true that Reddy helped me out of a hole in the manner Lawrence describes, but what about the times when Redfern's been in the soup and I've had to pull him through?

Mind you, I'll say the same about Redfern as Lawrence says about me. He's miles ahead of anything they can grow in the School House, though it's true that that isn't saying much for anybody, really. A chap who wasn't well above the School House standard would be a pretty poor specimen.

No, if you want brains, you've got to come over to the New House, and this issue of the "St. Jim's News" proves that—if any proof was necessary.

GEORGE FIGGINS.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 875.



YESTERDAY!

By David Llewellyn Wynn.

I HAD a lovely pork-pie—yesterday! Oh, it was such a beauty! All crisp, brown crust and nice, juicy meat, just cooked to a T.

Now it's gone!

Baggy Trimble! That's the overfed, slab-sided, dough-faced garden-roller in human form who wolfed my lovely pork-pie!

And I'll Trimble him when I get hold of him!

It was all Figgy's fault, really. If Figgy had let me polish that pie off straight away, as I wanted to do, instead of lugging me off to footer-practice, it would never have happened.

I knew Baggy Trimble saw me buy that pork-pie. He was in the tuckshop, gorging himself with stale doughnuts, which Dame Taggles lets him have at a cheap rate, when I took it away. But I didn't think he'd have the nerve to risk coming into the New House after it. Trimble's got about as much pluck as a dead rabbit, generally.

But that's what he did. He was coming out of the tuckshop just as Figgy, Kerr, and I were passing on our way to Little Side. I noticed the fat little rotter squinting at us, but I never thought what he was up to. I won't say I didn't think about the pork-pie, because I couldn't think of anything else just then.

I had been in the very act of cutting it when Figgy came bustling into the study looking for me to go over to Little Side with him. I especially asked him to let me stop a couple of minutes to polish off the pie. It wouldn't have taken me longer than that. I need a lot of nourishment during the footer season, and I can't keep goal on an empty stomach, even in a practice match. I'm always below form when I don't get as much grub as I need. Figgy knows that, and you'd think he'd be careful to see I get enough to eat, for the sake of the team, at least.

But Figgy's awfully unreasonable at times. I have to say it, though he is my pal—or says he is, though you wouldn't think it when he made me lose my pork-pie like he did.

Anyway, when we went back to the New House after the match the pie was gone. And it had only been a practice match at that. Fancy losing a pork-pie all through a practice match!

And that little beast Trimble had the cheek to say it was a "House raid," so, of course, Tom Merry and the rest of the School House had to back him up, though I think they kicked him pretty well between themselves. But it's nothing to what he's going to get when I lay my hands on him.

But that won't bring the pork-pie back. And it was such a beautiful pork-pie—yesterday!

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS!

By Richard Redfern.

THERE was quite a deal of excitement in the New House the other day.

Tom Merry & Co. provided most of it, though we did what we could to keep the pot boiling.

You've probably heard that Ratty takes we gentlemen of the New House for an afternoon walk on certain occasions. It's a silly ass idea, certainly, and there is a great deal said about it by School House worms. But I notice that Railton never takes them out with him, which says a lot for Railton's sense. It's plain that he isn't anxious to be seen in company with a gang like that.

Well, about a week or so ago, Ratty arranged for one of these processions to take place, and on this occasion Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr were not to be of the joys throng. They'd got a lot of arrears in the way of impositions to work off, and Ratty decided that they should stop and get on with the good work, instead of trotting round the countryside studying Nature.

Somehow or other the School House worms got to know of this, and it seemed good to them to take advantage of the situation.

As soon as we were out of gates, therefore, they trotted over to the New House in a gang of about eight or nine, including Blake, who had his little card of carpenter's tools. Arrived chez nous, they proceeded with stealth to the Fourth Form corridor, where Figgy & Co. were working out their penance, and proceeded to screw up the door of the study.

In the meantime we were walking along the Rylcombe lane, in blissful ignorance of what was happening in our stronghold. Ratty walked—or stalked—ahead, occasionally pausing to point out the difference between an oak-tree and a woodpecker, in order to improve our minds.

When we got to a turn in the lane a couple of farm-carts appeared, one behind the other. They were loaded up with mangel-wurzels, and when the two fellows who were driving them saw us coming they guffawed and hurled remarks of a distinctly complimentary nature one to the other. I think it was Ratty who amused them most, however. Anyway, one wasn't content with hurling remarks, he reached into the cart behind him and hurled a mangel-wurzel. It didn't actually hit anybody, but when it vanished into the ditch at the side of the road Ratty's hat went with it.

It was obviously impossible for Ratty to stroll hatless along the country lanes, and as the hat, when recovered, was only fit to be thrown back into the ditch, the only thing left to do was to turn back—which we did.

We arrived in the New House most unexpectedly, and unfortunately, as far as the School House brigands were concerned, for as we outnumbered them by two to one—well, New House is still cock-house!



A FALSE ALARM

By George Francis Kerr

I SUPPOSE a "New House" edition would be incomplete without a little yarn about Ratty. At least, Figgy seems to think so, and as he's editor for this occasion I suppose what he says more or less has to go.

As a matter of fact, Ratty's been on our track lately.

A couple of nights or so ago he came into our study, neglecting, as usual, to knock before he opened the door, and found Figgy rolling Ratty Wynn over on the hearth-rug. I forget what the little scrap was about—something concerning Figgy's features, I think, Fatty having made a remark that was more truthful than polite.

We never learnt what Ratty came to our study for, because he at once went up into the air about the scrap, but I suppose he'd simply drifted in to look for trouble. What he saw going on was quite enough for him. He dragged Figgy off Fatty's chest, and commenced to tootle about "ruffianly hooliganism" and things of that sort, declaring that he intended to put down this disgusting bullying that disgraced the school.

He gave Figgy four—of course he had his cane with him; you never see Ratty abroad without one under his arm—and a thousand lines. Fatty tried to explain that the scrap was nothing but a friendly rag, and got two, and five hundred lines for speaking when he hadn't been spoken to. I escaped with a mere five hundred lines—I don't quite know what for, but I have an idea it must have been a sort of consolation prize for saying nothing.

Of course, none of us was a bit grateful. It is true that as soon as Ratty had gone out of the door we started to discuss methods of returning his kindness.

At last I thought of a notion that seemed as if it might be useful. I don't claim that it's anything particularly great, but, at any rate, it served our purpose.

I proposed tinkering with Ratty's alarm-clock.

It occurred to me that if that alarm-clock was timed to ring about an hour earlier than usual it might do Ratty a bit of good—stir his bones up a trifle, you know. Figgy thought that a couple of hours would be even better than one, and as it didn't make any difference to me I raised no objection to the amendment.

There was a certain amount of risk in going to Ratty's study, where he keeps the alarm-clock during the day; but it had got to be done, so I wasted no time in slipping off in that direction. I guessed that it was more than likely that Ratty was still on the war-path, looking for more trouble, and so it proved.

The alarm-clock was there all right, ticking away merrily, and I grabbed it hastily and took off the glass front, which, luckily, was easily removable.

I bent the pointer that indicated the hour at which the alarm was being set in such a manner that it indicated a time two hours later than that at which the bell would ring, and then twisted the gadget at the back of the clock to reset the alarm.

To all appearances the alarm was due to go off at its usual time; but appearances in this case were deceptive, as Ratty was destined to discover.

Quite a lot of fellows heard that alarm go off early next morning.

Zzzzz—zzzzz—zzzzz!
My aunt's hat, but it did kick up a row! I've heard it before, but never as loudly as that. I suppose it was because everywhere was so silent.

Fellows sat up drowsily in bed and asked if there was a fire. Some of them got out

of bed, and, finding nothing particular was happening, got back again.

But there was one person who got out of bed—and didn't get back again!

That person was Ratty! The silly chump heard the bell go off, concluded it was time to get up, and accordingly he got up. He never thought of looking at the time by the hands of the clock, which was natural, considering that he'd been used to getting up at the summons of that alarm for months, and had no reason for suspecting that this morning was different from other mornings.

If it was a bit darker than usual, I suppose Ratty thought it was a sign of a wet day or something. He's always ready to look on the dark side of things, anyway.

He looked out of his door for his hot water, and it wasn't there. So he rang his bell, and, of course, there was no response, none of the servants being in the kitchen.

When he was tired of wasting his time that way he set out to make things hum.

To his amazement there was nobody about. The corridors were all deserted, and there



Monteith opened his eyes to see Mr. Ratcliff standing before him raving wildly.

was no noise from the direction of the dormitories.

He strode into Monteith's room, and dragged the unfortunate Sixth-Former out of bed. Monteith landed on the floor with a bump, and when he opened his eyes and saw Ratty standing there in a dressing-gown and raving wildly, he couldn't decide whether it was a fire, an earthquake, an invasion by armed burglars, or whether it was merely some new method of making trouble that Mr. Ratcliff had just invented and was trying out.

Then, just as Ratty was in the middle of telling Monteith that laziness was the besetting sin of the twentieth century, and that things were not like this when he was a boy, he suddenly caught sight of the clock on Monteith's mantelpiece.

He glared at it in amazement, crossed over to it, listened to the tick, shook it, listened to it some more, and then rushed off back to his own room.

Even then he wasn't convinced, but came rushing up into the Fourth Form room, demanding to know if any of us had heard the rising-bell, and making fellows sit up in bed and tell him the time by their watches. When he'd seen about ten watches he began to realise what the time really was, and by then most of the fellows were convinced that he really had gone over the fence at last.

Anyway, the old blighter lost two good hours of beauty sleep over it, and you can take it from me that's something he just can't afford to lose!

GOOD FOR REDFERN!

By Edgar Lawrence.

THERE is sometimes a little difference of opinion between Figgins & Co. and the members of our study concerning the leadership of the New House. You see, Figgy's got it firmly fixed in his head that he is head-cook-and-bottle-washer on our side, and we—Reddy, Owen, and I, that is—don't altogether agree.

But I really do think that it's time somebody else had a look-in over the question of leadership. I should like to see what sort of a showing Reddy made at the job.

He's given the kybosh to the School House on several occasions when Figgy wasn't being conspicuously successful at making them put their ears down. It isn't long since he turned the tables on the School House in a fashion that Figgy ought to be especially grateful to him for.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn were in the tuck-shop one day, filling a useful-sized bag with grub, when Manners and Lowther happened to drift in and spot them.

It was rather an awkward situation, because they were two against two, and it was a question of which side received reinforcements first. As it happened, the School House chaps were the favoured ones, Study No. 6 turning up just as Fatty and Figgy were leaving Dame Taggles' shop. The odds were too great for the two New House fellows, and the grub became the spoils of war, while Fatty and Figgy were tied at the wrists with their own neckties and hiked off to the woodshed, in charge of Herries and Manners, where it had been proposed they should be put out of harm's way for a while.

Reddy caught a glimpse of what was going on, and came tearing across to the New House for a rescue-party; but he'd have been too late to do any good if he hadn't been fortunate enough to fall in with Owen and I.

A few words was sufficient for us, and we all scudded back towards the woodshed, reaching it just as Fatty and Figgy were being pushed inside, making as much resistance as they could, which, in view of the way they were tied up, didn't amount to much.

But the arrival of the three of us put a different face on the matter, and while Owen and I tackled Manners and Herries, Reddy cut the other two loose.

Once that had been done it was all over with the School House chaps, bar shouting, which they certainly did, but to no purpose, because by this time the grub-raiders had vanished inside the House, not suspecting that things were not working out as per programme.

Of course, the grub had gone with them, so it looked at first sight as though we weren't very much better off for the rescue, and that the School House had got the honours of war after all. But Reddy didn't see it in that light at all, and he soon showed us a way by which we could turn the tables.

He rummaged about inside the woodshed, and fetched out a couple of pots of paint, together with a filthy-looking brush, and with these in our possession we hustled our prisoners off towards the New House. When we got there we took them up to Figgy's study, and sat on their chests while Reddy went over to the School House under a flag of truce.

And he gave Blake & Co. the alternative of handing over the grub intact, or condemning, by his refusal to do that, Manners and Herries to sharing those two pots of paint between them. Reddy made it clear that we should make a thorough job of it if we were forced to use the paint, and in the face of his threats there was nothing Blake could do but hand over the grub.

Which was a decided triumph for Reddy, I think.



"It was twenty to nil at the finish," he said. "The great Grundy has been humbled in the dust, an' slain in the high places, so to speak. How are the mighty fallen! Methinks there will be weepin' and gnashin' of teeth in Grundy's study this evenin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about Figgy's eleven?" inquired Arthur Augustus. "Did they administah a feaful thwashin' to the Wembley Wandewahs?"

"Not exactly a fearful thrashing," said Clive. "They just managed to scrape home by three goals to two. The fellows who saw the game say that the Wembley Wanderers put up a great show. But the New Zealand chap who played at back kept handling the ball. He's been used to Rugger, you see. He gave away a couple of penalties, and that's how Figgy's team managed to win. So far as the actual footer was concerned, the Wembley crowd had all the best of it. It's rough luck on Koumi Rao. Still, he'll be able to have another shot next year."

"Well, we can't all win the cup," said Tom Merry. "Somebody had to go under. Eight teams lined up for the giddy fray, and now there are only four left in."

"And we're one of the four," said Monty Lowther. "So let us dance and sing, and rejoice with a great rejoicing!"

So saying, the humorous Lowther slipped his arm round the waist of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and waltzed that elegant youth round and round until both were breathless.

"Ow!" panted the swell of St. Jim's. "Unband me, you wough wottah! If you want to do this sort of thing, let's have a Lowah School concert!"

"The very idea!" said Tom Merry. "I could kick myself for not having thought of it. We've got lots of guests to entertain—the South African fellows and Koumi Rao's crowd. Let's treat them to a real, good, slap-up concert!"

"And finish up with a banquet," said Manners.

"Ripping!"

"We'll pool our resources, and have a first-rate spread in the Common-room after the concert," said Monty Lowther. "I'll set the ball rolling with three-ha'pence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fortunately, the rest of the juniors were more "flush" than Lowther, and quite a princely sum was collected.

After Tom Merry & Co. had tubbed and had tea they arranged the details of their impromptu concert.

The Wembley Wanderers were not departing until a late hour. As for Clive's South African friends, they intended to remain in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's, so that they would be on the spot when the semi-final for the Eastwood Cup came along.

It was a very happy, hilarious crowd that flocked into the concert-hall after tea.

Tom Merry had hastily organised a variety show, called "Tom Merry's Merry-Makers." There were a dozen fellows taking part, and they threw themselves heart and soul into the congenial business of making other people laugh.

The hall was packed to overflowing. And the two front rows were occupied by the South Africans and the Wembley Wanderers.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy set the ball rolling by rendering the captain's song from "H.M.S. Pinafore."

"I am the captain of the Pinafoah,

An' a wight good captain, too!

I'm vewy, vewy good, an' be it undahstood,

I command a wight good cwew.

Though welated to a peeah, I can hand, weef, an' steeah,

Or ship a salvagee;

I am nevah known to quail at the fuwy of a gale,

An' I'm nevah, nevah sick at sea!"

"What, never?" chimed in the chorus.

"No, nevah!"

"What, never?"

"Well, hardly evah!" warbled Arthur Augustus.

The audience roared at Gussy's aristocratic accent. And a thunderous "Encore!" greeted the swell of St. Jim's when he had finished his song.

Monty Lowther was the next performer. Monty had been practising his powers of mimicry, and he gave a true-to-life imitation of Mr. Ratcliff, the unpopular master of the New House.

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Two members of the concert-party started having a "scrap" on the platform, and Lowther strode towards them, and barked at them, after the manner of Mr. Ratcliff:

"My boys! My boys! Pray cease this noise! Disgraceful scene! What does it mean?"

The voice was so exactly like Mr. Ratcliff's that some of the New House fellows in the audience fairly jumped.

Unfortunately for Monty Lowther, Mr. Ratcliff himself stepped into the concert-hall just in time to hear himself being "taken off."

The onlookers were shaking with laughter, but Mr. Horace Ratcliff shook with rage.

"Lowther!" he thundered. "How dare you mimic a Housemaster in that disrespectful manner?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Monty. "I—I didn't know you were here, sir."

"Apparently not, Lowther, or you would scarcely have dared to impersonate me in such an insulting way. You will take a thousand lines!"

"Make it a billion!" groaned the unfortunate Lowther. And he was obliged to curtail his impersonation of Mr. Ratcliff and impersonate Taggles, the porter, instead. Taggles was not present, and even if he had been he would not have had the power to award a thousand lines to the impersonator. So Monty Lowther was safe.

The next item on the programme was that rousing song of the sea, "Drake Goes West." Talbot of the Shell sang it, and the South Africans and the Wembley Wanderers were much impressed by his fine voice. Talbot was not allowed to stand down until he had sung three songs in succession.

The concert went with a rare swing.

Mr. Ratcliff had walked off in disgust. Being a kill-joy, he disliked concerts. Like the man mentioned in Shakespeare, he had no music in his soul, and was not moved by concord of sweet sounds.

But other masters had found their way to the concert-hall, and they thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings.

"Tom Merry's Merry-Makers" made the old Hall ring with laughter again and again.

Perhaps the funniest item on the programme was a parody on the death of the late lamented "Cock Robin." Cardew had written the parody, and it was Cardew who sang it.

"Who slew George Grundy?"

"I," said young Clive,

I took him alive.

I slew George Grundy!

All the boys of St. Jim's were a-chaffin' and a-chidin'

When they heard of the Grundy-ites' terrible hidin'!

When they heard of the Grundy-ites' terrible hidin'!

"How many goals?"

"Why, there were twenty,

I think it was plenty—

One score of goals!"

All the boys of St. Jim's from Saturday till Monday

Will be sheddin' briny tears on behalf of Grundy.

Will be weepin' and wailin' for poor old Grundy!"

There were a dozen verses in all, and they were received with roars of merriment.

Grundy himself was not present at the concert. He was still hiding his diminished head. But Wilkins and Gunn and Crooke and Mellish and other members of the vanquished team, sat and listened, with burning cheeks, to Cardew's quaint parody.

Other amusing "turns" followed. And it was not until ten o'clock that the curtain was rung down upon one of the most successful concerts of its kind.

When it was all over Clive escorted his South African friends to the junior Common-room, where a glorious spread had been laid out.

Koumi Rao conducted the Wembley Wanderers to the festive board; and there was more merry-making and rejoicing.

Everybody was sorry when eleven o'clock came, and the Wembley Wanderers had to leave in their charabanc. Although they had been beaten in the fight for the Eastwood Cup, they expressed themselves as highly delighted with their day's outing. Tom Merry & Co. tramped down to the school gates to see them off; and a hearty cheer followed the charabanc as it rumbled away and was swallowed up in the darkness.

CHAPTER 10. Against Heavy Odds!

"GOOD-BYE for ever!" said Monty Lowther glumly. "Good-bye to what?" asked Tom Merry in surprise.

"Our chances of winning the Eastwood Cup. The draw for the semi-finals has just been made, Tommy, and

The worst has happened. We're drawn against the Sixth—the giddy giants of the First eleven! Therefore I say, goodbye to the gold cup. We're doomed, Tommy. Already the mourners go about the streets."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if we hadn't been paired with the Sixth in the semi-final, we should probably have had to meet them in the final," he said. "I know it seems utterly asinine to hope that we shall beat the First eleven. But, anyway, we'll play the game of our lives. If we've got to go under, we'll go under fighting!"

"That's the spirit!" said Manners approvingly.

The draw for the semi-finals had resulted in Tom Merry's eleven being paired with the Sixth, and the South Africans being paired with Figgins' eleven.

Kildare of the Sixth smiled when he heard the news. He regarded the winning of the Eastwood Cup as a certainty; and he could be excused for so regarding it. No fellow in his sober senses imagined that Tom Merry's team had a hope against the St. Jim's First eleven.

Another fellow who smiled when he heard the result of the draw was Cutts of the Fifth.

Cutts had resolved, by every means in his power, to prevent Tom Merry from winning the cup. But it now looked as if it would not be necessary for Cutts to take any action in the matter.

"It will be a walk-over for the Sixth, so I needn't bother my head about it," said Cutts. "I hope Merry's team gets a thunderin' good hidin'!"

The semi-finals were to be played on the Wednesday. And during the intervening days Tom Merry kept his men hard at practice. They rose early every morning and put in half an hour before breakfast. There was not a slacker in the team. Every fellow took his training very seriously. Although faced with practically certain defeat, the juniors refused to be daunted or dismayed.

It seemed ridiculous to expect any other result but a crushing defeat. But, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked:

"There's many a slip 'twixt cup an' lip. An' you nevah know, you know!"

Kildare of the Sixth did not trouble about practice. He considered it totally unnecessary. The First eleven would win by a comfortable margin, he reflected.

But, on the very eve of the match, a series of calamities overtook the Sixth. They found themselves the sport of an unkind fate.

It started with Darrell contracting a chill, and, being a generous sort of fellow, he passed it on to Rushden and Langton and Baker. Monteith also contracted it, and so did Kildare himself, but he did not give in. The others, however, simply had to give in. And Tuesday evening found them all in the sanny, being ministered to by Marie Rivers, the school nurse.

It was atrocious luck for the Sixth, and Tom Merry was the first to condole with Kildare.

"I'm awfully sorry to hear that five of your men are down with flu," said Tom. "We'd better postpone the match."

"No need to do that," answered Kildare. "I can put in five reserves. It will be a very weak team, of course, but strong enough to account for a junior eleven."

"You sound pretty husky yourself, Kildare," said Tom Merry.

"Yes; I've a beast of a cold! But it's not going to prevent me from turning out to-morrow. You'd better buzz off now, kid, in case you catch the germ!"

Next morning it transpired that there were two more victims of the epidemic. And when the time of the match arrived the Sixth fielded a very curious side—four regular players and no less than seven reserves.

Even so, those reserves were strapping fellows, and although the senior side was sadly weakened it was generally thought that they would prove much too strong for Tom Merry & Co.

But the juniors were fighting fit, and they looked very grim and resolute as they lined up for the struggle.

Tom Merry urged his men to go "all out" for an early goal. He realised what a stimulating effect this would have on the whole team.

The juniors attacked right from the kick-off, and they had the opposing defence in a tangle.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raced away on the wing, and after getting the better of the back by slipping the ball between his legs, he dodged round him and whipped the ball across to Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell was unmarked, and with a fine first-time drive he sent the ball crashing into the net.

"Goal!"

There was a rush of feet towards Tom Merry. His hands were seized and shaken, and he was warmly congratulated by his comrades.

"Bwavo, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus. "That was a weally wippin' goal, bai Jove!"

"And a really ripping pass of yours, Gussy!" said Tom Merry breathlessly. "If only we can keep up this form we shall find ourselves in the final!"

The onlookers—they were mostly juniors—were dancing around in high glee. That early goal suggested that the Sixth would have to fight hard for victory.

But the joy of the spectators was short-lived.

Kildare rallied his men, and the Sixth attacked strongly. Their big, bustling forwards proved too strong for the junior defenders. And it came as no surprise when Kildare brought the scores level with a terrific shot, which beat Hammond all the way.

From that time onwards the juniors were penned in their own half. Their formidable opponents seemed to be merely toying with them.

Harry Hammond did valiant things in goal, but he was beaten twice again before the interval.

The half-time score was 3-1 in favour of the senior eleven.

"It's all over bar shouting!" muttered Manners.

Tom Merry turned upon his chum almost fiercely.

"That sort of talk is awfully feeble," he said. "A game's not lost till it's won. We might make a draw of it yet, or even win if we all pull together!"

"Heah, heah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Nevah get slack when things look black—that's my motto!"

A sensation was caused during the interval by the news that Kildare was going to retire from the game. His chill had grown steadily worse, and he didn't feel equal to playing on.

However, the Sixth were in a strong position. And even with a man short—and their best man at that—they were expected to hold their lead.

The second half commenced like a firework display.

Tom Merry & Co. played up as if their lives depended upon it. There was not a weak link in their armour. Fore and aft the team played magnificently. The forwards swept down the field again and again, and bombarded the Sixth Form goal. But they had wretched luck with their shooting.

A fierce drive from Tom Merry shivered the crossbar. Then a shot from Talbot struck one of the uprights. Shortly afterwards Jack Blake headed the ball just over the bar.

The juniors could do everything but score. Their opponents' goal seemed to bear a charmed life.

But that persistent attack had to be rewarded sooner or later. A corner-kick was taken by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The ball came across breast-high, and Talbot, springing forward, breasted it into the net.

"Goal!"

"Good man!" said Tom Merry, clapping Talbot on the shoulder. "One more goal and we shall be level."

The Sixth strove hard to retrieve their fallen fortunes. But they felt the absence of Kildare sorely. He had been their guiding genius, and without him the team was a shadow of its former self.

Harry Hammond was called upon to cope with one or two raids on his goal. And then Tom Merry & Co. returned to the attack.

From the crowd round the ropes came hearty shouts of encouragement.

"Play up, Merry!"

"You've got 'em groggy!"

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WELL IN ADVANCE!

"Two more goals will do the trick!"

The seniors' defence held out until five minutes from the end, then, unable to withstand the hot pressure, it collapsed completely.

Tom Merry & Co. ran riot and put on three goals in swift succession. Tom himself netted the first, and Jack Blake got the other two. And the juniors, playing as if inspired, were still attacking when the end came.

The whistle rang out and the titanic struggle was over. Tom Merry's team had triumphed by five goals to three.

Of course, had the Sixth fielded their full side, a different tale would have to be told. But the influenza epidemic had played havoc with their eleven, and the loss of Kildare in the second half had brought disaster and defeat.

All the same, it was a splendid achievement on the part of Tom Merry's eleven, against bigger, older, and heavier opponents.

Had the juniors lost heart at half-time, when they were two goals in arrears, it would indeed have been all up with them. But they had played like heroes in the second half, and had accomplished the seemingly impossible.

Tom Merry was carried shoulder-high from the field, and the air rang with cheering.

It had been a thrilling match. But scarcely less thrilling had been the duel between Clive's eleven and Figgins eleven. The South Africans had triumphed by the odd goal of three, after a stern struggle.

The final—to be played at Eastwood House between Tom Merry's team and the South Africans—would be worth going many miles to see. It would be a dour struggle—a fight to a finish between two young and enthusiastic teams. And the team which eventually walked off with Lord Eastwood's gold cup would have had to fight every inch of the way for that honour.

CHAPTER 11.

The Cunning of Cutts!

CUTTS of the Fifth was thunderstruck.

He could scarcely believe his ears.

The news had just reached him that the Sixth had been defeated in the semi-final. And it had knocked Gerald Cutts all of a heap.

"To think that those fags have beaten Kildare's eleven!" muttered Cutts, as he paced to and fro in his study. "I'd have given odds of a hundred to one that the Sixth would win!"

The fact that Tom Merry's team had actually reached the final annoyed Cutts immensely. He was still smarting from the indignity of having been ordered off the field by Mr. Railton; and he was still as bitterly disposed as ever towards Tom Merry & Co.—though they were in no way to blame for what had happened.

As he paced to and fro Cutts could hear the sounds of revelry and rejoicing which came from the junior studies.

"I suppose Merry regards the cup as a cert now," he muttered. "If his team can beat the Sixth they can beat the South Africans. But they're not goin' to—not if I know it!"

The uproar from the junior studies grew louder. It exasperated Gerald Cutts. He had always disliked Tom Merry & Co. Now he felt that he hated them. He was prepared to go to any lengths to prevent them from realising their ambition of winning the cup. And he immediately set his wits to work to devise ways and means of carrying out his caddish intention.

The precious rascal's first thought was to kidnap certain members of Tom Merry's eleven on the eve of the match. But Cutts dismissed the idea almost as soon as it came.

The kidnapping of footballers was a serious matter, and it often brought consequences which were very painful to the kidnapper.

Cutts was cad enough to play a kidnapper's part, but he was a coward as well as a cad. He didn't want to do anything that might imperil his own precious skin.

All that evening, and for several evenings to come, Cutts debated the matter in his mind.

It was not until the morning of the match that an inspiration came to him. Cutts happened to be passing the half-open door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. Cheerful voices were heard within. Cutts paused and listened.

"I have awwanged for a special chawabanc to take us to Eastwood House, deah boys!"

"Good for you, Gussy!"

"I have instructed the dwivah to pick up the South Africans in Wayland, an' bwing them along to St. Jim's. Then we will join them, an' twavel down to my patah's place togethah."

"Ripping!"

"How are we going to manage about a referee, Gussy?"

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inquired Jack Blake. "Kildare was going to referee for us, but he's too queer to travel. Of course, old Railton will be coming with us, but it's rather too much to expect him to referee the final. He'll want to stand by and watch it, and enjoy a chat with Lord Eastwood."

"Do not bothah about a wefewee, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "I will awwange with my patah for Phillips, the undah-gardenah, to wefewee. Phillips is an ex-pwofessional, an' he knows the game inside-out. He'll be the vevy man for the job."

"Good!"

Cutts of the Fifth, having heard all he wanted to hear, passed on. His brain was working swiftly. Already a shady scheme had taken shape in his mind.

After taking a few turns in the quadrangle Cutts went along to his study and packed a little bag containing theatrical make-up. There were several wigs, of varying shades of colour. There were several false moustaches; also some false eyebrows and some face-tan.

Evidently Cutts was proposing to impersonate somebody—and he could be a very clever impersonator when he chose.

He clicked the bag shut and quitted the study. Five minutes later he was astride his motor-cycle and speeding out of gates.

Nobody saw him go. Cutts had chosen a convenient moment, when there was no one about.

The school gates were standing open, and Taggies, the porter, was breakfasting in his parlour. He heard the motor-cycle pass out, but he did not trouble to see who the rider was.

Cutts had a long journey in front of him. But he appeared to be enjoying himself as he flashed through the Sussex lanes. From time to time he chuckled softly to himself.

Cutts was going to rather a lot of trouble to bring about the downfall and defeat of Tom Merry's eleven. But he felt that it was well worth while.

The Fifth-Former's destination was the village of Eastwood Priors—the village of which Lord Eastwood was the squire.

It was well past mid-day when Cutts drew up outside the village inn—the Priory Arms. He knew the place well, for he had visited it on several occasions when he had been a guest at Eastwood House. There were very few St. Jim's fellows who had not been invited to Lord Eastwood's residence at some time or other.

Cutts had often excused himself from a dance or a concert at Eastwood House, and had adjourned to the Priory Arms for a game of billiards. The landlord was a burly rascal named Bragg, a man after Cutts' own heart. He greeted the St. Jim's fellow very cordially when Cutts stepped into the saloon.

"Why, Master Cutts, fancy seein' you!" exclaimed Bragg, extending a large flabby hand. "I hear there's a football match in Lord Eastwood's grounds this afternoon. I s'pose it's that what's brought you here?"

Cutts nodded.

"That's so," he said. "I'm not playing in the match myself, but I'm takin' a keen interest in it."

"Got a little bet on the result, eh?" suggested Bragg.

"No; I don't do much bettin' these days."

Bragg opened his eyes wide.

"Crumbs!" he gasped. "You don't mean to say you're reformin'?"

"Not likely!" said Cutts, with a grin. "I'm still treadin' the broad road that the moralists say leads to destruction. By the way, Mr. Bragg, do you happen to know a local man named Phillips?"

"Yes; he's the under-gardener up at the House."

"I badly want an interview with him," said Cutts.

The landlord glanced at the clock.

"Phillips will be along in a few minutes," he said. "He always comes in at half-past twelve to get an appetiser for lunch."

"Good! I'll wait for him."

"Goin' to have a drink?"

"I'll take a dry ginger," said Cutts.

"With a dash of somethin' in it?"

"No, thanks. I've finished with that fool's game!"

Mr. Bragg's face wore a rather mocking expression as he poured out the ginger-ale.

Cutts took a seat on the settee and waited patiently for Phillips, the under-gardener, to arrive.

On the stroke of twelve-thirty Phillips came in, and was greeted affably by Mr. Bragg.

Cutts did not remember to have seen the under-gardener before, and he now took careful stock of him. Phillips was a man of medium height and build. He had a dark moustache, and long, bushy eyebrows. He wore a check suit and a cap. Cutts running his eye over the man, reflected that he was an easy subject to impersonate.

"Here's your man, sir," said the landlord, turning to Cutts.

"Thanks!" said Cutts. "How d'you do, Mr. Phillips? There's no need for me to introduce myself. I'm from St. Jim's, as I expect you've gathered from my school cap."



"I'll give you this fiver if you'll allow me to change clothes with you an' referee the match in your place," said Cutts. "I've got a make-up here in my bag, an' we're of the same height an' build, so the disguise will be a very simple matter. Now, what do you say?" Phillips, the under-gardener of Eastwood House, shook his head. "Couldn't be done, sir," he said. "It would be more than my job's worth!" (See this page.)

"Proud to meet you, sir!" said Phillips, shaking hands. "What are you takin'?" asked Cutts. "Well, I don't mind tryin' a bottle of home-brewed—thank you kindly, sir!"

Cutts reflected that Phillips was just the type of man to fall in with any shady scheme he might suggest. He drew the under-gardener aside and started to talk confidentially.

"Have you been asked to referee the match this afternoon?" he inquired.

Phillips nodded.

"Lord Eastwood asked me just before I came away," he said. "Match starts at two."

"Well," said Cutts in a low tone, "I very badly want to referee that match myself. How would you like to swop places with me for the afternoon?"

Phillips looked astonished.

"I—I don't quite understand—" he began.

"I'll make it worth your while," said Cutts eagerly. He produced a wallet from his breast-pocket, and from the wallet he took a crisp five-pound note.

"I'll give you this fiver if you'll allow me to change clothes with you an' referee the match in your place," he said. "I've got make-up here, in my bag, an' we're of the same height an' build, so the disguise will be a very simple matter. Now, what do you say?"

Phillips shook his head at once.

"Couldn't be done, sir," he said. "It would be more than my job's worth!"

"But nobody will know," said Cutts, greatly disappointed at having met with a refusal. "When I trot on to the field just before two and blow my whistle for the teams to line up everybody will take me to be you. I shall be wearin' your clothes, an' my facial disguise will be perfect. It's only a harmless practical joke that I'm askin' you to be a party to. You needn't be afraid of losin' your job over it."

Again Phillips shook his head.

"Couldn't be done, sir," he repeated.

"I'll make it a tenner—"

"I wouldn't do it at any price," said Phillips. And his tone was firm and final.

Cutts gritted his teeth with vexation. For some moments he appeared to be thinking deeply. Presently he beckoned to the landlord, and drew him into the little parlour at the back of the premises. There they remained for some time deep in conversation.

Cutts then rejoined Phillips, the gardener. After standing him another drink he invited him into the billiards-room for a game.

Cutts' manner was so friendly that Phillips had no suspicion that he was about to be kidnapped, and detained by force in the inn. He accompanied Cutts without demur.

When they reached the door of the billiards-room Cutts stood aside to allow his companion to enter.

Phillips stepped into the room, and instantly the door was slammed behind him, and the key grated in the lock. The under-gardener was a prisoner! Furiously he turned and tugged at the handle of the door. But it refused to budge.

There was no window in the room—merely a skylight, through which escape was impossible.

"Sorry to have to use these somewhat drastic measures!" called Cutts through the keyhole. "You should have agreed to my plans in the first place, an' pocketed the fiver!"

"Let me out, you rascal!" roared Phillips, beating vainly on the panels with his clenched fists.

"I've instructed the landlord to release you at four o'clock," said Cutts. "The match will be over by then. Pity you won't lend me your togs; but Mr. Bragg's got a suit that's identical with yours, so I shall be quite all right. Cheerio!"

"Lord Eastwood shall know of this!" shouted the prisoner.

Cutts chuckled.

"You'll never get his lordship to believe that you've been kidnapped," he said. "He'll think you're sufferin' from mental delusions. 'How on earth could you have been

kidnapped, Phillips,' he'll say, 'when I actually saw you refereein' the cup final?' If you don't want to make a fool of yourself you'll say nothin' about this little incident."

"If you don't unlock this door——" began Phillips.

Cutts walked off without replying. He went up to the landlord's bed-room, and was rigged out in a suit of clothes of the same pattern as those worn by Phillips. Then he very carefully disguised himself, standing before the mirror. He gave the closest attention to every minute detail. In fact, when he had completed his transformation, Mr. Bragg stared at him in admiring wonder.

"Phillips to the life!" he exclaimed. "The livin', speakin' image of him!"

"Good!" said Cutts. "Don't forget to look after the giddy prisoner—also my motor-bike. I'll call for it just before four. Here's your salary, Mr. Bragg."

A five-pound note changed hands. And Cutts of the Fifth—now the very counterpart of Phillips, the under-gardener—quitted the Priory Arms and strolled away in the direction of Eastwood House.

CHAPTER 12.

The Plot that Failed!

A BIG green charabanc stood outside the front portals of Lord Eastwood's mansion.

The rival elevens had arrived. They were, in fact, already on the football ground.

It wanted only a few minutes to the kick-off, and Phillips, the appointed referee, had not yet turned up. Lord Eastwood, standing on the touchline with Mr. Raitton and cousin Ethel, was beginning to look anxious.

"I distinctly impressed upon Phillips that he was to be punctual," said Lord Eastwood. "Ah, here he is!"

Cutts of the Fifth, in his perfect disguise, came hurrying on to the ground.

For a moment the Fifth-Former's heart almost failed him. He had a difficult part to play. He had to pass himself off as Phillips, and a single slip in his speech might betray him.

The South Africans would not suspect, of course. They had never seen Phillips. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had, and so had Tom Merry & Co. Then, again, there was the risk of having to enter into conversation with Lord Eastwood.

Cutts began to feel far from comfortable. But he had taken the plunge now, and there was no retracting.

"Just in time, Phillips!" called Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We were beginnin' to wonder where you had got to."

"I was delayed, Master Arthur," answered Cutts, in the gruff tones that Phillips was accustomed to use.

"Well, you've awwived, an' that's all that mattahs. Blow the whistle, deah man, an' let's get to biznay!"

The whistle rang out, and Clive kicked off for the South Africans.

Quite a big crowd had congregated in the meadow where the match was being played.

Dozens of juniors, and those of the seniors who had managed to dodge the influenza epidemic, had made the journey by train. They stood round the ropes, with their eager gaze fixed upon the playing arena.

Play was confined chiefly to midfield at the outset. The respective half-back lines were so solid that neither set of forwards could break away.

At last, however, Tom Merry darted out from a press of players, with the ball at his toes. He made a bee-line for the South Africans' goal, and he tricked man after man as he ran on.

It was a fine individual burst, and the spectators craned forward eagerly.

"Go it, Tom Merry!"

"You're through!"

"There's only the goalie to beat!"

And the goalie was beaten, too—all ends up—with a shot which no custodian in the kingdom could have saved.

"Goal!"

"A magnificent goal, too!" murmured Lord Eastwood. Then he broke off with a gasp of bewilderment. "Good gracious! What can Phillips be thinking about?"

For the referee, instead of awarding a goal, had blown his whistle for a free kick. He had given Tom Merry off-side!

Now, there had not been the slightest suspicion of off-side about that goal. Even the South Africans admitted that it was a perfectly fair and legitimate goal.

But the referee had disallowed the point; and the referee's decision was final.

Tom Merry looked quite taken aback. So did the other players, for that matter.

"Weally, Phillips!" protested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That was a most extraordinary decision! Tom Merry was not off-side!"

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"That is for me to say, Master Arthur," was the reply. "Please do not question my decisions."

Arthur Augustus subsided. But he felt very puzzled. What was the matter with old Phillips? As a rule he was a most efficient referee. He was seldom guilty of an error of judgment.

"Play on!" said Tom Merry. "I think your man knows more about gardening than refereeing, Gussy. That was a perfectly good goal. But we won't argue about it. I mean to try to get another."

The game was resumed, and, after a bout of midfield play, Tom Merry again broke through. He side-stepped smartly as the back rushed up to dispossess him, and then he fired in a terrific shot along the ground.

The South African goalkeeper stopped the shot, but not before the ball had crossed the line.

"Goal!"

But again the referee considered otherwise. Instead of signalling a goal, he allowed play to proceed.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in blank amazement. "There's somethin' wadically w'ong with you, Phillips. Have you been imbibin'?"

The referee flushed angrily.

"I'm perfectly sober, Master Arthur, and you've no right to suggest otherwise!" he said gruffly.

"But that was a goal, deah man! The ball had c'ossed the line!"

"I beg respectfully to differ," said the referee. "I shall be obliged if you will let me carry out my duties without further interruption!"

Tom Merry & Co. were feeling very annoyed by this time, and justly so. To have two good goals disallowed was heartbreaking.

"One would almost think that the referee had a wager on the game and had backed the South Africans to win!" said Talbot.

Tom Merry nodded.

"He seems determined to stop us from scoring, anyway," he said. "But we mustn't let it put us off our game. Pile in!"

The South Africans, led in spirited fashion by Sidney Clive, now took a turn at attacking.

Harry Hammond, in goal, fisted out some hot shots, but he was beaten at length by a fierce drive from Cardew.

The crowd refrained from shouting "Goal!" on this occasion. They wondered what the referee would have to say about it.

But the referee gave a goal all right. And he gave another a few minutes later, when it was not really a goal at all. A South African forward had handled the ball before it passed into the net.

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry when the referee had given his weird decision. "This is more than flesh and blood can stand! If the South African fellows weren't such thorough sportsmen I should begin to think they had bribed the ref!"

"Same here!" growled Manners. "We're two goals down when by rights we should be leading two-one. We can't hope to win the cup at this rate!"

"It is perfectly disgwaceful!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I shall speak vevy sharply to Phillips duwin' the interval. I shall ask him what he means by it, bai Jove!"

The game proceeded in a most unsatisfactory manner.

Tom Merry floored one of the South African backs with a perfectly fair shoulder-charge; and, to the general consternation, the referee pulled him up for a foul. Tom stood rooted to the ground in astonishment.

"A foul?" he almost shouted. "Why, I've never fouled on the football field in my life!"

"Of course it was no foul!" said the South African back, scrambling to his feet. "The referee doesn't know his job—that's the long and short of it! I've never heard such weird and wonderful decisions in my life! A lunatic could control a game better!"

Both players and spectators were considerably annoyed. The referee had completely spoiled what would otherwise have been a splendid game.

Lord Eastwood was very angry, and he mentally resolved to give Phillips a good dressing-down when the teams came off for the interval.

But the impostor who was impersonating Phillips was not destined to carry his scheme through to a successful conclusion.

Shortly before half-time Tom Merry & Co. launched a hot attack on their opponents' goal.

Tom Merry forced a corner-kick, and it was taken by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Gussy cleverly lobbed the ball into the goalmouth, and there was a mad scramble for possession.

Before he could dodge out of the way, the referee found himself mixed up in a melee of players. A flying figure cannoned into him, and he went sprawling. A South African

back was bowled over at the same instant, and he sprawled on top of the referee.

"Hold on, you fellows!" shouted Tom Merry. "The ref's in the war!"

Play was suspended, and the referee, muddy and dishevelled, staggered to his feet. But he had left some personal property lying on the ground. It was a moustache.

There was a shout of amazement from the footballers.

One moment the referee had worn a dark, heavy moustache. The next he was clean-shaven.

"Bai Jove!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "This isn't Phillips at all, deah boys! The fellow is a wank impostah!"

Gerald Cutts shook in his shoes. He realised that the game was up, that he was on the brink of exposure.

"I believe he's wearin' a wig," said Cardew. "An' I think we shall find, on investigation, that those bushy eyebrows are false."

So saying, Cardew stepped swiftly up to the referee, and, with two sudden jerks of his hand, he dispossessed him of wig and eyebrows.

"Well, I'm dashed!" ejaculated Cardew, in astonishment. "Gaze upon these familiar features, dear men, an' you will recognise our old friend and playmate—Cutts of the Fifth!"

There was a roar from the St. Jim's juniors.

"CUTTS!"

The cad of the Fifth stood unmasked. He was quaking with apprehension. He wanted to turn and flee, but somehow his legs refused to function.

"Cutts, you uttah wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a wank outsiders! By some twick or othah, you changed places with Phillips, the undah-gardenah. You took his place as wefewee, in ordah that we should lose the match!"

"Now we can understand all those queer decisions," said Tom Merry grimly. "The rotter deserves to be lynched!"

Mr. Railton came striding across the turf.

"Cutts!" he said sternly. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I—" stuttered the Fifth-Former.

"You have impersonated one of Lord Eastwood's manservants, who was to have refereed this match," said Mr. Railton. "I await an explanation of your conduct."

"It—it was just a practical joke, sir," stammered Cutts.

Mr. Railton looked searchingly at the cad of the Fifth.

"Are you quite certain, Cutts, that it was not something more serious than a practical joke? Had you any ulterior motive for your action? Did you desire Tom Merry's team to be defeated?"

"Of course not, sir. Why should I?"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"I do not trust you, Cutts, and I do not believe you are speaking the truth. However, I will take the lenient view that you intended to play a practical joke and nothing more. But you shall not go unpunished. I will ask Lord Eastwood if he has any objection to your being ejected from the ground by force."

Lord Eastwood, when he was informed of the masquerade, was highly indignant.

"Let the boys deal with Cutts, Mr. Railton," he said. "He is not deserving of any mercy."

To Tom Merry & Co. was entrusted the task of ejecting Gerald Cutts with violence from the ground. And their methods were the reverse of gentle.

It was extremely fortunate for Cutts that Mr. Railton did not know of the kidnapping of Phillips, the gardener.

Cutts staggered away to the inn and released Phillips, urging him to say nothing about the matter, as it would mean expulsion from the school.

The appeal was not made in vain.

Phillips was much more of a sportsman than Cutts. He undertook to keep his mouth shut. And Gerald Cutts felt greatly relieved when he mounted his motor-cycle and started off on the long, long trail to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13. The Winning Team!

EXCITEMENT ran high in the meadow where the cup final was being staged.

Of course, the match was being replayed, and Mr. Railton was officiating as the referee.

The first half had been fast and thrilling, but it had not yielded any goals. And now the second half was in progress, and the game was being fought out at a terrific pace.

Rain was falling heavily, and it was feared that darkness would set in before the finish.

Slipping and slithering in the mud, the players on both sides fought gamely for victory.

The quality of the football was surprising in the circumstances. The pace of the forwards never slackened, the dauntless spirit of the defenders never wavered.

Midway through the second half, Clive scored a grand goal for the South Africans. Although sent sprawling in the mud when in the act of shooting, he contrived to get his foot to the ball as he lay on his back, and the sphere went

whizzing in as if it had been discharged from a cannon. Clive had exerted all his strength for that desperate kick.

"Goal!"

Harry Hammond ruefully gathered the ball out of the net, and punted it up the field. It was kicked off again from the centre, and Tom Merry & Co. played up heroically for the equaliser.

It was a Spartan struggle.

Dusk was beginning to fall, but nobody heeded the deepening shadows. The white goalposts showed up boldly in the gloom, and there was still sufficient light for the players to see what they were doing. Anyway, the conditions were the same for both sides.

Away went Jack Blake on the wing, with a turn of speed that left the South African defenders standing.

The goalkeeper came rushing out, with the intention of stifling Blake's shot. But, instead of shooting, Blake transferred the ball to Talbot, who drove it into the unguarded net.

"Goal!"

"Oh, well played!" panted Tom Merry, his cheeks glowing. "Keep it up, you fellows! These South Africans will take some beating, but we'll do it!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "On the beastly gweasy ball!"

Fast and fluctuating went the game after Talbot's goal. The South Africans swarmed to the attack, only to be beaten back. Then Tom Merry & Co. launched a spirited offensive, but it came to nothing.

Faster and faster fell the rain. Deeper grew the dusk, and soon darkness would reign over the countryside.

But only a few minutes remained now. And into those few minutes were crowded all the energies of twenty-two players.

The Eastwood Cup was waiting to be won. And both Tom Merry and Clive were firmly resolved to win it. But they could not both win it. One must triumph and one must fail, albeit gloriously.

Mr. Railton was peering at his watch in the gloom.

"Time's nearly up," muttered Tom Merry. "Now, you fellows. One last rally!"

The appeal met with an instant response.

Tom Merry himself started the attack. When challenged by the centre-half, he passed to Talbot, and Talbot, hemmed in by defenders, just managed to tap the ball out to Blake before he was bowled over in the mud.

Blake sped away like the wind. In the darkness he nearly made the fatal mistake of taking the ball out of touch. He pulled up short at the corner flag in the very nick of time. Then he centred magnificently, for the ball to alight a few yards in front of goal.

Two people rushed for the ball simultaneously. One was the South African goalie, the other was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And, in that fierce last-minute dash for possession, Gussy got there first.

In front of him the goalposts gleamed invitingly. And Gussy shot, not with great force, but with deadly accuracy.

The ball landed fairly and squarely in the net, and there was a roar of such volume that it would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

"Goal! Goal! GOAL!"

"Gussy's worked the oracle!"

"Hurrah!"

The whistle rang out, and twenty-two valiant fellows, weary to the verge of exhaustion, staggered off the field.

The game was over and won. And Tom Merry's team had come through with flying colours in their fight for the Eastwood Cup.

St. Jim's was the scene of the presentation.

Lord Eastwood himself presented the trophy, and made a happy little speech, to which Tom Merry fittingly replied.

Big Hall rang with cheering, and there was only one glum face in the whole of that crowded assembly.

The glum face belonged to Cutts of the Fifth. But no one was thinking of Cutts just then.

There were cheers for the victors and cheers for the vanquished. There were sundry speeches, one of which lasted a full twenty minutes. Needless to say, this was the oration of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But as it was Gussy who had scored the winning goal he was freely forgiven for making himself a public nuisance.

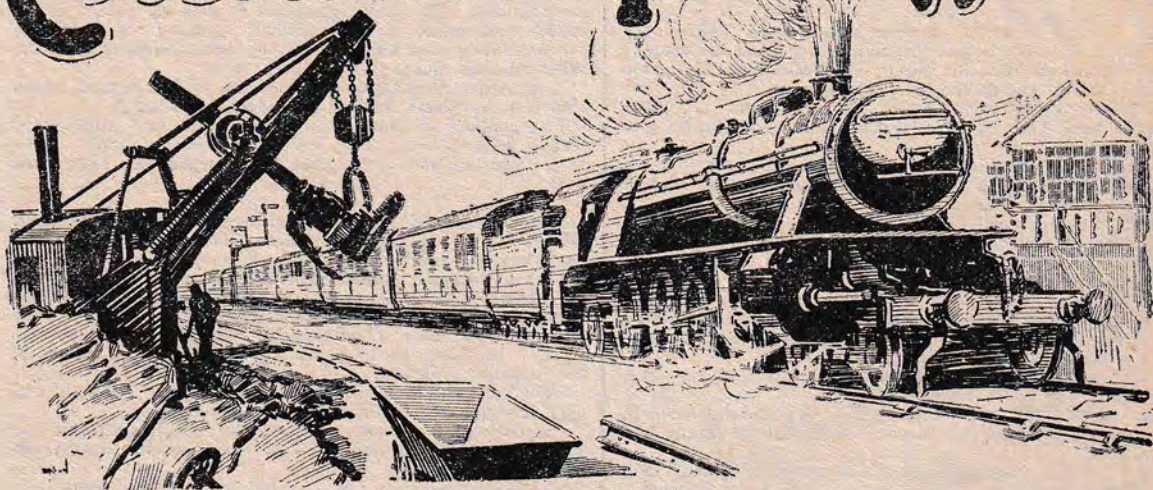
Tom Merry bore the gold cup away in triumph to his study, where it would remain—barring appropriation by burglars—for a whole year. And at the end of that time there would be a renewal of the healthy rivalry which had marked the Great Football Tournament.

THE END.

(Look out for an extra-thrilling yarn next week, chums. "THE SHIPWRECKED SEVEN!" By Martin Clifford. You will vote it as being one of the finest school stories ever written.)

Heedless of the danger to others, the unscrupulous rivals of the G. S. & C. stop at nothing in their endeavour to bring about the downfall of Sir Richard Grant!

CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!



A Thrilling Yarn of Exciting Adventure on the Railroad. By ROLAND SPENCER and FRANCIS WARWICK.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

JIMMY SPEED, a plucky and cheery young newsboy of Blackhampton.

SIR RICHARD GRANT, chief director of the Great Scottish and Central Railway, who has in his employ nearly all the male population of Blackhampton.

JOHN LANGRISH—whose heavy and determined features, square-set jaw, and steely eyes earn for him the title of "Granite"—Langrish—chief director of the Great Electric Northern, and a rival of Sir Richard Grant.

HAROLD SOPER, a foreman shunter on the G.S.C., and an unscrupulous rascal, working in the pay of John Langrish, and

SAM BLUNDELL, a fireman on the G.S.C., and as true as steel.

It was a lucky day for the cheery young newsboy, Jimmy Speed, when, at great risk to himself, he rescued Sir Richard Grant from being crushed beneath the wheels of a monster goods-train engine,

for it meant the realisation of his long-cherished ambition—to get a job in the great workshops of the G.S.C. To hear the clanging and the shouting, and to see the great steel locomotives towering around him, sent a thrill through Jimmy Speed.

But he is soon up against it when he meets Soper, who, in the pay of Granite Langrish, is endeavouring to poison his fellow-workers against the G.S.C.

He finds a friend, however, in Sam Blundell, a fireman. Then, anxious to learn more, he shadows Soper, who, together with Cridland, another confederate of Langrish's, have met in the lonely ruins of Black Hill to discuss further villainous plans. A thrilling fight follows, Speed miraculously escaping from the hands of the villainous Cridland. Suspecting further villainy next night, Sir Richard Grant, together with some detectives and Jimmy Speed, crouch in a ditch waiting. An attempt is made to wreck a train. Speed makes a rush for one of the miscreants, but is felled with a powerful blow and left stretched along the gleaming rails with eyes closed.

(Now read on.)

Face to Face!

WHEN Jimmy Speed's senses returned and he blinked round in the light of the smoking oil-lamp, the first thing that leapt out to his startled eyes was the form of Sam Blundell, lying with wrists bound behind him a few yards away. Jimmy struggled into a sitting posture, to find that he, too, had his arms lashed behind his back.

Jimmy's eyes took in the stone walls of their prison, the damp, old flagged floor on which they were lying. From one corner of the dim-lit room a dark opening gave on to a flight of upward-winding stairs, half hidden by a man who sat tilting his chair, reading by the light of the lamp, which was set on an upturned sugar box.

Cridland!

And at sight of Cridland that vague feeling that he had been in this dark room with the cold stone walls and damp, lichen-covered floor before, grew to a certainty. Jimmy realised in a flash where he was.

"Crums—Black Hill Ruins!"

It was only too clear. He and Sam, both knocked out in the fierce struggle by Old Pithead Signal Cabin, had been carried off prisoners by Cridland and Soper and their men, when the villains had retreated under cover of the dark.

Cridland glanced round sharply as Jimmy moved and their eyes met. Sam, too, was watching Cridland, straining the while against the cords that lashed his wrists behind him. The man in the chair lowered the paper he had been reading, and laughed harshly.

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"Don't waste yer time at that darned fool game, Blundell!" he sneered. "Think the chap wot trussed you up didn't know his job better'n that? Ye won't be loosed till someone looses you, me beauty—you can bet on that!"

"What have you brought us here for, anyway?" burst out Jimmy fiercely.

"You'll know in good time!"

Cridland flung his paper down and rose to his feet.

"It's your own fault, too! D'you know what's wrong with you two? I'll tell you. Nosiness—that's your trouble—too nosy!"

He stood over Jimmy—a tall, lean shape, black against the yellow light.

"Nosiness!" repeated Cridland, with an ugly leer. "Ef you'd minded yer own business from the first, instead o—"

The man broke off and swung round. Footsteps had sounded descending from the darkness of the stairs. The next moment Soper appeared framed in the doorway, to step aside cringing before the man behind. The second man strode forward into the light, his feet ringing hard on the flagstones, and at sight of him Jim Speed gave a gasp.

For this man was Granite Langrish!

Jim heard the breath hiss between Sam's clenched teeth. For the first time the chums were face to face with the power behind Soper and Cridland, the man whose utterly unscrupulous brain had schemed everything—the grim struggle of the Great Electric Northern to bring the Scottish and Central Railway under its heel.

Langrish halted in the centre of the floor, his great frame casting a black shadow on both Soper and Cridland, his strong, cruel face, the hard mouth set grimly, was staring

down in angry surprise at the bound figures of Sam and Jim.

His mouth opened to speak, but Cridland stepped forward swiftly.

"These are the two who were in the tunnel," he explained quickly. "They were with the men who dished the business at Old Pithead to-night. We had the chance to get them, so we brought them here to wait orders. They know a bit too much—best out o' the way, Mr.—"

"No names, you fool!" snarled Langrish, breaking in on Cridland's hurried explanation with an oath. "Curse you! Where's your sense? Bad enough that you've let me see them! Don't you realise the risk of it? But you were right to bring them here." Langrish's hard face grew grim. "Best out of the way if they suspect anything. The tunnel— But it's finished now, that job, or as good as finished. When we've done here these two must disappear!"

There was something in Langrish's voice that sent a cold shudder through Jimmy. What did the man mean—what could he mean but one thing?

Cridland's face had grown dark as Langrish swore at him, and his black, foreign-looking eyes had flashed queerly. Jimmy remembered what he had overheard in these very ruins a week ago—Cridland's boast to Soper that he knew some mysterious secret in connection with Langrish—a knowledge that he would use to break Granite Langrish if the two fell out. And again, as he watched Cridland's gleaming eyes, Jimmy wondered what that strange secret could be.

The youngster's brain was in a whirl. What was Langrish doing here in the lonely ruins of Black Hill Abbey? And what had he meant by those words of his: "The job's as good as finished. And when we've done here—"?

The three men moved away to the farther corner and stood talking in low, hurried tones. Jimmy and Sam strained to hear, but the murmuring voices were quite unintelligible to them.

Jimmy's eyes were fixed on Langrish's face with a queer fascination. It was difficult to take his gaze from that face, with its black, heavy eyebrows and magnetic eyes—the strong-cut features that betrayed the callous cruelty of the unscrupulous mind beneath.

Jim's eyes met Sam's. The young fireman had rolled unnoticed a little nearer to his chum.

"Langrish doesn't know we know him!" muttered Sam softly. "Don't let on, for Heaven's sake, that we do, or it'll be all up! These chaps are sticking at nothing, Jim. I'm afraid they mean to get us out of the way for good later on, when they've finished the job that has brought them to the ruins—though what in blazes it can be, I can't think! We've got to hope on, that's all! Keep your pecker up, young un!"

Jimmy nodded silently. He was not the fellow to show the white feather, for all that he realised fully the terrible, deadly danger that they were in. Langrish had said that, as Sam and he knew too much, they must "disappear." That could only mean one thing; but, as Sam had said, they must hope on.

And it was not so very long before their chance came. Langrish had left the underground room with Soper and Cridland, the three men vanishing up the dark stairs—stairs worn hollow by the footsteps of dead-and-gone monks of long ago. A small, fat-faced man, with yellow hair and a big, almost toothless mouth, who chewed pensively at the end of a battered cigar that filled the damp air with a nauseating stench, was left to keep an eye on the prisoners.

For some time he read Cridland's newspaper, but now he rose to his feet and crossed towards the captives, removing the wet and tattered cigar-stump from between his gums for the purposes of conversation.

"Comfy?" he inquired. "Nice an' soft lyin', mates? Glad o' that!"

He chuckled noisily at his own rich humour, but he had drawn a little too near Sam Blundell. In a flash Sam's leg shot out.

The man with the cigar gave a yell of pain as Sam's hefty boots crashed against his ankles. He crumpled up in a kicking heap. Sam struggled to his knees; a moment later he was on his feet with a dexterous twist and had hurled himself against the other man.

The Secret of the Ruins!

BOUND though his arms were, Sam sent the other flying headlong across the room. The young fireman leapt after him. The fat-faced man was struggling up again, his face black with fury. With a snarl he flung himself at Sam.

Jimmy gave a gasp of delight to see Sam leap nimbly aside. The next moment his chum had hooked his foot under the near-by chair and had lifted it clean from the floor. It flew through the air, crashing with deadly effect into their enemy's face. The thud of the falling man was drowned by the crash of the chair as it fell to the stone floor.

Sam stood panting and breathless, staring down at the senseless form. He turned his head, listening. Surely the noise of the fight must bring Langrish's men on the scene in another moment!

But utter silence reigned. At last Jimmy struggled to his feet and crossed quickly to Sam's side.

"By gum, but that knock-out was great!" muttered Jimmy excitedly. "When that chap wakes up his clothes will be old-fashioned."

Sam nodded.

"I fancy he'll take some time to come round," he muttered grimly. "Run that no one seems to have heard the row down here. But we've no time to pick flowers, old son! Stand back to back and see if we can't untie each other."

It was some minutes before the two chums were free, but at last Jimmy succeeded in releasing Sam, and a few moments later Jimmy, too, was free. He chafed his aching wrists as Sam led the way towards the dark stairs.

Cautiously the two chums crept up into the blackness. As Jimmy knew, once in the upper room, they could gain the open air. Even if Langrish and the others were still in the ruins, in the darkness Jim and Sam might easily slip away on to the moor unobserved.

And then Jimmy heard a sudden exclamation from Sam Blundell ahead. Sam halted in the darkness, half way up the next twist in the stairs, and Jim heard his chum calling softly down to him.

"What's up?" muttered Jimmy swiftly.

"This is rum! There's an opening in the side of the stairs here!" whispered Sam, his voice betraying his excitement. "Wasn't here when they took us down. I'll swear! You were still senseless then, but I wasn't. What does it mean?"

"My hat!" Jimmy's eyes gleamed in the darkness. "Looks to me, Sam, as though this explains how Soper and Cridland vanished that night a week back when I followed them here."

Sam was breathing quickly.

"What Langrish's game is in these ruins we don't know," he muttered; "but we can guess it's something directed against the Great Scottish and Central—something big, since he himself is in it. Seems to me it's up to us to take this chance of finding out what's going on here and get clear afterwards!"

"You're right!" answered Jimmy, grim determination in his voice. "Lead on, Macduff!"

It was a low, square opening in stone that Sam had found. They turned aside into it, groping their way through the pitch blackness that hemmed them in. Almost instantly they came upon unseen steps that wound downwards into the earth.

Jimmy's blood was pulsing swiftly with excitement. What discovery was he and Sam about to make?

The stairs seemed never-ending. The air was cold and damp, but they could feel a draught of wind rising past them.

At last Sam stopped.

"Thundering strange!" he muttered. "Where's this draught coming from? Here we are going deeper an' deeper into the earth, and yet there seems to be an opening at the bottom."

There was still no sound of Langrish's men. The deathly silence, as of the grave, was unbroken.

"Safe to strike a match?" muttered Sam. "Let's see where we are!"

A match scraped on a box and a trembling, yellow light gleamed on damp stone walls, coated with slime and fungus. This strange stairway, leading into the bowels of the earth, was obviously hundreds of years old—a remnant of the troublous Middle Ages, when the monks of Black Hill Abbey had built their hidden refuges to which they could retreat in an emergency.

The light flickered out. Farther down the stairs Sam struck another, and this time something other than the old monks' stairway could be seen.

"Look!" muttered Sam excitedly. "The rest of this stairway below there has caved in, and not so long ago, either. But that's a new passage opening out there to the right. See that dark hole, Jim? Smell the new-turned earth?"

"Rather!" Jimmy sniffed. "Carry on. I want to know what we're going to find down in this beastly coal-mine. Ugh, I shall be thundering glad to get into open air again!"

As they crept down towards the opening below, the eerie silence was suddenly broken by a faint, muffled rumble. Sam and Jim stopped, listening. The sound seemed to come from beneath their feet. It grew a little louder, then died away, leaving the two chums staring at each other in the darkness.

"What's that?" cried Jim in a low, excited voice.

"Dunno," said Sam shortly. "Come on!"

The smell of newly-turned earth grew very strong. A minute later, as the light of a match revealed, they were standing in a low, sloping tunnel, evidently but recently cut through the clayey soil. But even now there was no sight or sound of anyone.

But their discoveries were not over yet. A regular series of galleries seemed to have been hewn out of the earth, the removed soil having all been dropped into the deep stairway, so that Sam and Jim had imagined it to have caved in. And at last, creeping through the dark passages, Sam and Jim heard sounds—the sound of pick and shovel.

But still they failed to locate the mysterious workers, and at last, creeping down some rough-hewn clayey steps, they stepped out from the narrow passages into a vast well of darkness, a distant arch of dim moonlight to their right gleaming faintly on four broad ribbons of steel.

"Railway lines!"

In a flash Jimmy understood.

"The tunnel—we're in Blackhampton Long Tunnel! So that's where Soper disappeared that night. There's a door to that opening—a door as cunning as Langrish himself—and utterly hides it. And that rumble we heard below us—that was a train—"

"Ay, and those sounds of pick and shovel, lad—what do they mean? What does the whole thing mean—all those underground corridors, all the secret work that has been going on here for heaven knows how many weeks? What's Langrish's game?"

Sam's words were hissed fiercely in a way that startled Jimmy.

"Dunno!" he answered hopelessly. "It's—"

"But I do!" muttered Sam Blundell, and his voice sounded strange in the gloom of the great tunnel. "I see it all! There's but one thing it can mean, Jim, and that is that Langrish means Blackhampton Long Tunnel to collapse! He and his fiends found that old monks' stairway and have used it for their vile scheme to make the tunnel cave in!"

Jimmy stared at Sam aghast.

"But—but even Langrish—"

Sam laughed harshly.

"Think Granite Langrish would stick at that? Not he! But we'll spoil his plans, lad—we'll beat Langrish yet! Not a moment must be lost! We heard him tell Soper and Cridland that the job was nearly done. Who knows how soon the tunnel may fall? We've got to get help—we've got to run like the wind!"

And Sam turned towards the tunnel mouth, racing for the open, with Jim hot on his heels. They might save the tunnel yet!

But high above their heads, had they only known it, the man whom Sam had stunned had opened his eyes at last!

While Sam and Jim raced for the lights of the town Langrish knew, by their footsteps in the earth of the tunnel, that his plot had been discovered. He brought a great clenched fist crashing into his palm.

"I won't draw back!" His eyes were grim and hard. "In a few minutes from now we can collapse the tunnel. All's ready! And that's the only safe way! By so doing, all our work here, all these underground passages, will fall in, too, and be hidden for ever! It's safe to do it, and do it I will!"

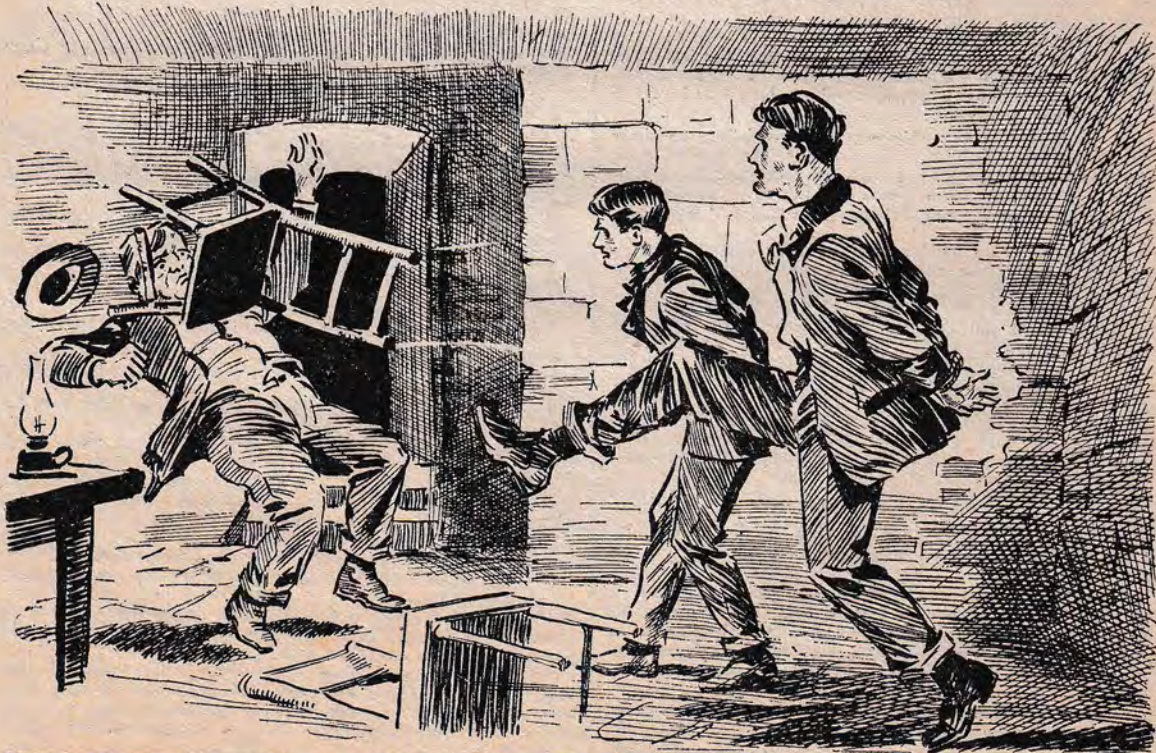
"But—but," stammered one of his men, "the night express! The Scotsman is on its way to the North! It passes through in less than a quarter of an hour—"

"Can't be helped! That's their look-out! The G.S.C. must take care of itself—if the engine-driver doesn't see the debris on the line that's no fault of ours. Cridland, Soper—you know your posts! That tunnel is going to cave in within a few minutes!"

As Langrish spoke, Sam and Jim raced desperately on through the wet night towards the town!

The Night Express!

THE drizzling rain had turned to a torrent of hissing drops sweeping down through the darkness, dashing fiercely into the faces of the two chums as they raced on towards the blurred lights of Blackhampton. The faces of both were as white as paper. Could they be in time to prevent Langrish's fiendish plan of collapsing the tunnel, or would some ghastly tragedy take place? Little time enough, they knew, was at their disposal, for they realised that the moment their escape from Black Hill ruins was discovered Langrish would strike.



Hooking his foot under a near-by chair Sam Blundell lifted it clean off the floor and sent it crashing, with deadly effect, into the enemy's face.

Even as that thought crossed Jimmy's mind, in the heart of the great hill that towered behind them Langrish and Soper and Cridland and their men were working hard. As Jimmy had guessed, on the discovery of their escape and their footsteps in the earth of the tunnels, Granite Langrish had given the word.

"I won't draw back!" Langrish's voice had been cool and hard as he spoke. "In a few minutes from now we can collapse the tunnel. All's ready! And that's the only safe way. By so doing, all our work here, all these underground passages, will fall in, too, and be hidden for ever."

Jim stumbled on a sleeper and all but fell. In grim silence the two raced on. Then suddenly Sam Blundell swung round eagerly. A quick cry broke from him.

"Look, Jim! A light engine!"

A small goods tank engine was clanking along the up line, drawing swiftly nearer to the chums. Sam and Jim, panting hard, stopped at the side of the line.

"We must stop it!" cried Sam breathlessly.

"A lift on this may save the tunnel!"

"They'll never see us!" cried Jim.

"Won't they?"

As Sam Blundell spoke he was peeling off his coat. The next moment the young fireman had leapt into the centre of the line, waving the coat and shouting with all the power of his lungs.

Through the blinding mist of rain Jim saw the engine bearing swiftly down upon his chum. A cry of warning sprang to his lips, but there was no need to utter it, for Sam, still shouting desperately, had jumped clear of the oncoming locomotive when it was only seven yards away. It sailed by, glistening wet in the gloom. Something like a sob choked in Jimmy's throat.

"Never saw us!"

But even as the words broke from him with dreadful hopelessness the locomotive's speed was suddenly checked. The chums heard a shout from the cab, and both broke into a run with a wave of joy and relief. They panted up just as the tank engine had come to a standstill.

"Say, what's the trouble?" came an anxious voice from the darkness of the cab.

Sam swung himself up on to the footplate. In another moment he had plunged into a breathless explanation, while Jimmy swarmed up after him.

"So you see it may be a matter of life and death," finished Sam. "There's this plot to make Blackhampton Long Tunnel cave in—to-night, we believe. The Scotch express is due mighty soon—"

"The Scotsman's late," answered the engine-driver gruffly. "Not much, but p'raps enough to make all the difference." His hand went out to the regulator, and the locomotive swiftly gathered speed. "But where do you want to get to? The station?"

"No. Drop us by the London Road bridge," answered Sam. "We're hard by Sir Richard Grant's house there. That's quickest."

The driver and fireman of the tank engine looked a little surprised. Sam had said nothing of their earlier adventure with Sir Richard's men, or explained how he and Jim had come to discover the plot concerning the tunnel; neither had he mentioned Langrish's name, not knowing quite what Sir Richard's wishes in the matter would be.

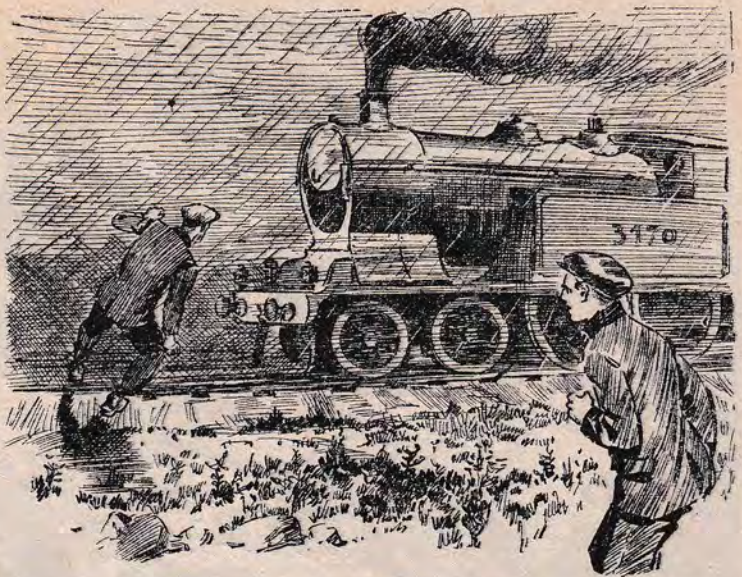
"What'll be the good o' that?" demanded the driver, peering ahead through the glass near his head. "Want to get a bit of kudos from the chief, eh?"

There was a trace of contempt in his voice as he spoke. Sam flushed.

"It's not that," he said shortly. "Only we happen to know that there will be some—some useful men at his house, some railway 'tecs, and—"

"Oh! You seem to know a lot about old Grant's affairs," said the driver curiously. "But here you are. I shall have to report this. I've taken a risk, too, in taking you on board. But if your yarn's true—"

"It's true right enough!" cried Jimmy, as he swung out of the cab. He dropped to the side of the line as the locomotive's speed slackened. Then Sam, with a last few words to the driver, dropped, too. The next moment the two chums were climbing up the side of the cutting towards the road bridge that spanned it. A minute later they had swung themselves over the brickwork at the bridge-head, and they were racing desperately along the road to where they knew Sir Richard's house to be.



Through the blinding mist and rain Jim saw the engine bearing swiftly down upon his chum. A cry of warning sprang to his lips. But there was no need to utter it, for Sam jumped clear of the oncoming locomotive when it was only seven yards away.

"What if they've not returned from the line yet?" gasped Jimmy, as the lights of the house glimmered through the rain to their eager, searching eyes.

"I'll bet they're all here, those 'tecs," answered Sam confidently. "They'll have come to report."

Sam was right. Half a dozen men, some still bearing traces of the struggle with the men who had attempted to wreck the rear portion of the goods express, were with Sir Richard Grant when Sam and Jim, not waiting for the butler, swung open the door and hurried in, wet and panting.

"Blundell! Speed!"

Sir Richard had sprung to his feet. There was a ring of pleasure and surprise in his voice as he spoke. Then their anxious faces brought a quick tightening of the lips, as the baronet cried quickly:

"What is it now?" With a hand on Sam's shoulder, he pushed the young fireman into a chair. "What—"

"The tunnel!" gasped Sam. "Blackhampton Long Tunnel! We were captured in the scrap, and taken by Langrish's men to Black Hill ruins, and there we discovered a plot to collapse the tunnel!"

For a moment a horror-struck silence filled the room. Then Sir Richard cried in a choking voice:

"The Long Tunnel! My heavens! Not a moment to lose!"

A big, fair-haired man pushed his way forward. He was the head of the railway detectives.

"When have they planned to collapse the tunnel?" he cried in clipped, incisive words.

"We don't know. But when they find we've got away they will probably guess we've discovered their plot, and either get away quick or carry out their vile scheme at once, before they can be interfered with—that is, if their work has progressed sufficiently far to make that possible," answered Sam. He jumped to his feet. "Sir Richard's right. There's not a second to be lost!"

Three minutes later the whole party was speeding away from the house in two big covered cars. At the cross-roads each car took its own course. One raced on across the railway bridge, on its way to the ruins of Black Hill Abbey; the other, with Sam and Jim on board, turned left, and went flying along the road that ran by the railway cutting, on their way to the tunnel itself.

Scarcely had the cars separated than with a thunderous roar a train went racing by them in the cutting on the down-line, travelling in the same direction as themselves. They could see the blood-red glow from the fire-box, and the waves of steam rolling, crimson in that lurid light, past the cab. The long, lighted Pullmans vanished into the rain-swept night at sixty miles an hour. Jim felt a queer tightening at his throat.

"The Scotch Express!" he muttered in a voice that sounded oddly strained to Sam Blundell's ears. "Racing all-out for the Long Tunnel! They've not been able to



Speed gazed spellbound at the scene of the disaster. Into the tumbled debris the giant locomotive had churned its way, to be flung backwards on its own tender!

stop her, then. Can't stop her now. Pray heaven the tunnel is clear!"

Sam Blundell and the big, fair-haired detective seated at his side nodded in grim, anxious silence as the car raced on in the wake of the night express.

The Horror of the Tunnel!

THE roads were dangerous and slippery with wet, but the man at the wheel drove fast. It was not long before the party had come to their destination. Jumping out, Sam and Jim and the three men with them climbed over the wall and scrambled down towards the metals below at the point where the Long Tunnel opened on to the deep cutting at its southern mouth.

The wind had risen. The fiercely-driven rain and the howl of the storm drowned all sound for Jim Speed, but for the terrible drumming of the blood in his ears as he peered down into the thick darkness of the cutting. No lights were to be seen, and the conviction came to him that all was well—that the Scotch Express had passed safely on its way.

"The tunnel's not fallen yet! It'll take time before they can finish the job."

And then, half-way down the great bank, Jimmy gave a cry of horror. His fingers dug into the grass, and for a moment his heart seemed to stop beating.

Peering down through the driving rain he had seen something that had touched his nerves with icy fingers—a railway coach lying on its side!

A wave of ghastly horror made him dizzy. He turned his face away and lay, sick with apprehension, face down on the steep grass bank. His breath came quick and hot upon his clawed hand as it gripped the grass. His wet tongue licked along his ice-cold lips.

A dark form went slithering down past him. He heard a cry from the darkness not far away. Then, pulling himself together with a superhuman effort, the youngster went clawing downwards madly.

He had lost the others in the darkness. The howl of wind and rain had drowned all sound of them. But suddenly Jimmy found himself in another world—a dreadful darkness, where men ran and stumbled, and staggered like drunkards in the gloom. He heard the cries now, and the

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groans, and the shouting, and the curious crack and scrunch with which the great Pullman by him settled over farther on to its side.

As in a dream, he saw the white face of a man who struggled beneath a splintered beam of wood. Jim ran to help him, and with a strength of which he had not known himself capable of got the man clear.

He thought he saw Sam Blundell working in the wreckage, and lost sight of him again. A man staggered past with a terrible cut across the mouth, so that he seemed to be grinning, laughing. And then Jim found himself in the tunnel, where the flares were smoking furiously, and moving lights twinkled like little roguish eyes.

A great wall of earth closed the way not far from him, stretching from wall to wall, rising to the unseen roof. Into the tumbled debris the giant locomotive had churned its way to be flung backwards on to its own tender. The first half of the train was telescoped—not one of the long coaches of all the train remained upon the metals.

And as he gazed upon the fruits of Langrish's hideous callousness something in Jim Speed's face changed.

Before he had been a boy. Now he felt himself a man, with a man's work to do—to call a reckoning from John Langrish for this night of horror.

Dawn came, and the work of rescue was still going on. All main-line traffic had been stopped. A hospital train was standing at a little distance, and the breakdown train had come. Almost in silence the workers carried on.

"As for the tunnel," Jim heard one big railway official say to another, "it may be days before it is passable. It is terrible—terrible. For the tunnel to fail—"

Then Jim was called to help with one of the stretchers, and heard no more.

The amazing fact of the accident, as people were only now commencing to realise, was the surprisingly small loss of life. Both the fireman and the driver had been thrown from the cab on to the soft, tumbled earth, and but for the fireman's twisted ankle, neither was hurt. The driver had told his story—told how the huge fall of earth had occurred not a moment too soon; a minute later, and it would have buried part of the train, and the loss of life must inevitably have then been terrible.

Rumours of foul play were already to be heard on all sides—possibly the driver and fireman of the light engine had been the cause of it. But it soon became clear that Sir Richard Grant intended to make the whole story public, omitting only the names.

But, despite that, the newspapers next day were full of censure. Jim read aloud to Sam the leading article of the "Daily Bulletin":

"The somewhat alarming series of minor accidents on the Great Scottish and Central Railway cannot be forgotten. The Blackhampton tragedy is only the last and greatest of this series. Who is responsible? Sir Richard Grant declares this last and most terrible of the accidents upon his line to be the work of train-wreckers. Even if this is actually the case—which seems highly doubtful—this does not account in any way for the fact that during the last few months minor accidents have been only too frequent on this line.

"To say the least, it is unfortunate for the G.S.C. that this alarming sequence of events has come at a time when the new electric railway, the G.E.N., is offering a quick and safe route to the North to the travelling public.

"The public must be safeguarded!"

Jimmy flung the paper down.

"Wish I'd got the chap who wrote that here in this room!" he cried furiously. "Won't that fiend Langrish grin to read it! It's just what he's been playing for, and the papers are helping him all they know, poor idiots!"

"Well, I suppose it must sound a bit lame, Sir Richard's explanation," put in Sam Blundell bitterly. "But he's not yet in a strong enough position to mention names, neither can he tell the papers what the nameless train-wreckers' motive was. Who would believe that Langrish, head of the G.E.N., is the man he is? The man's not fit to live, Jim!"

"Wish we could find out what it is that Cridland knows about Langrish!" said Jim. "According to Cridland, anyone who know what he knows, holds Langrish in the hollow of his hand! What wouldn't I give to hold him there, to expose him, to give the lie to all this newspaper talk slanging the Scottish and Central and patting the Electric Northern on the back!"

"We'll do it in the end, Jim," said Sam quietly. "I'll bet all I own that we'll come through all this trouble in the end, and hold our own—more than hold our own against the Yellow Peril! I'll tell you what I wish, though—that I had just an ounce of brain more! If I had, I could overcome the snags I'm up against in my design for my 'Wolf'

loco; and with that on the G.S.C. rails, I'd guarantee to race any of Langrish's yellow electric box-o'-tricks from London to Scotland, and back again if he wanted!"

"Oh, you've got the brains all right, if you'll give 'em time," said Jimmy. "You'll get over those snags, Sam. Some day we shall see the 'Wolf' standing in flesh and blood—or, rather, in steel and G.S.C. blue!"

The wreck of the Scotch express in Blackhampton Long Tunnel had cast a still deeper shadow over the great railway town. The Yellow Peril from Carnborough seemed more dangerous, more menacing than ever. The papers were still talking, and this newspaper talk made bitter reading for Blackhampton.

More and more agitators were busy among the men, and Sam Blundell and Jim could guess only too well whose money was supporting them. Men were still being wanted for the great new works at Carnborough, and a good many of the less loyal G.S.C. workers went over to the "enemy" that week. Rumours of strikes were whispered.

Feeling was running high in Blackhampton, and in Carnborough, too. As it happened, the following Saturday was the day of the greatest football match of the season, so far as the two rival railway towns were concerned—Blackhampton Albion were to play Carnborough Rovers that day in the second round for the Cup, on the Carnborough ground. It was generally felt that there would probably be trouble at Carnborough that Saturday.

"Trouble or no trouble, I'm going to see that match!" said Jim Speed doggedly. "You'll be coming, Sam?"

"Right-ho!" answered Sam, readily enough. "I'd like to see what does happen if there is a row. But I'll tell you this—you won't find me mixing myself up in any rotten hooliganism, my lad."

The two chums got over to Carnborough in good time on the day of the match, Jim travelling pillion on Sam's motor-bike. They left the machine at a convenient garage, and joined the crowd that was streaming towards the great gates of the football ground.

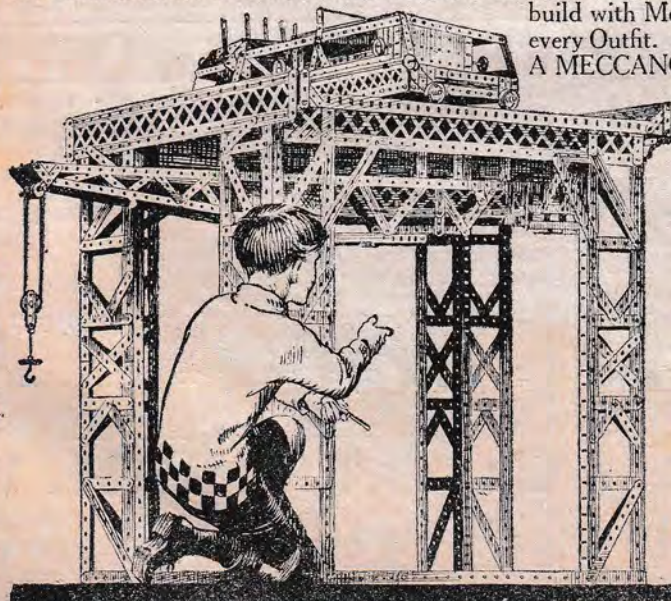
(What will be the outcome of this great match between Blackhampton Albion and the Carnborough Rovers? Be sure you read next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums. As next week's GEM will contain the first picture in our Splendid Portrait Gallery, you will be well advised to order your copy in advance.)

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