

Great New Story "FOOTBALL CHUMS!" By A. S. Hardy. IN THIS ISSUE.

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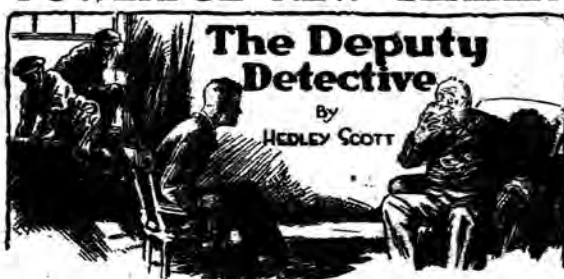


A FATEFUL BLOW!

In the heat of the moment the newcomer to St. Jim's hits out and sends Manners, of the Shell, hurtling backwards into the rushing torrent below! (A dramatic incident from the grand school story of Tom Merry & Co., in this issue.)

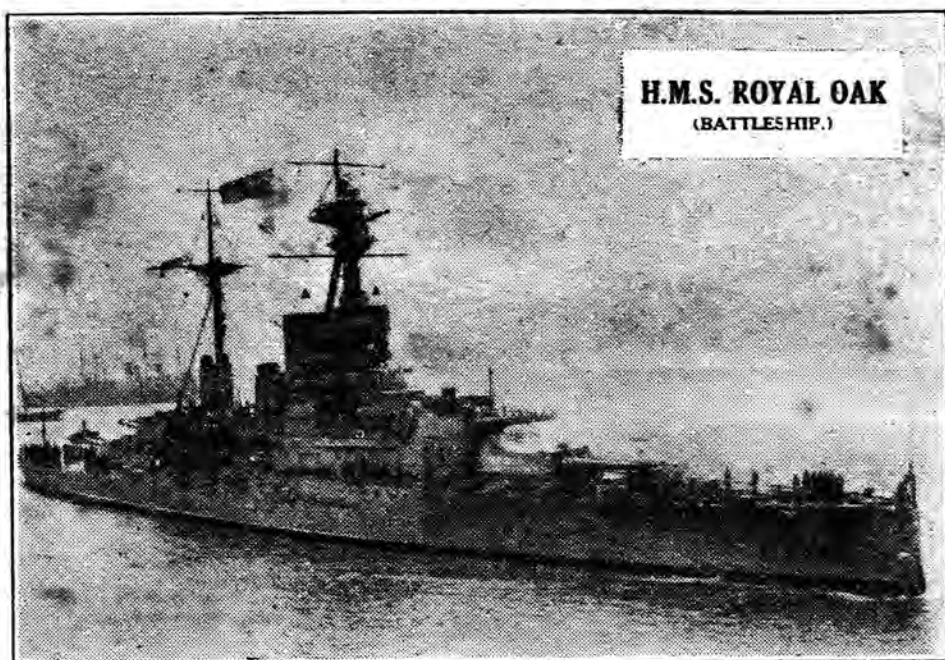
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It was unlike Harry Manners of the Shell to look for "scraps." But his warlike attitude solved the mystery surrounding the new arrival at St. Jim's!



MANNERS' FEUD!

A Magnificent and Exciting Long Complete School Story of the World-Famous Chums of St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Manners Looks for Trouble!

"MANNERS, old man—"

"Now, look here, Manners—"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, both of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, spoke together.

Manners of the Shell knitted his brows.

Generally, Manners of the Shell was a good-tempered and placable fellow. Now he looked neither good-tempered nor placable.

Manners' nose was red and swollen, evidently from contact with a very hefty set of knuckles. No doubt that had something to do with his present implacable mood.

"There's no need to jaw," he said acidly. "I'm going to thrash that New House cad—Torrence—"

"Look here, old man—"

"Rats!"

"It's all rot!" said Tom Merry uneasily. "The fellow's new here. He only came to St. Jim's yesterday."

"He's got too much cheek for a new kid!"

"Oh, bother!" said Tom. "What does it matter? If he's got too much cheek they can take it out of him in his own House."

"I'm going to take it out of him," said Manners.

"But look here—"

"Bosh!"

Manners of the Shell evidently was not open to argument. "It's all rot!" said Monty Lowther. "You had a row with the fellow yesterday. It was all Trimble's fault. No reason why you should scrap with him to-day."

"Lots of reason," said Manners. "He's a cheeky rotter!"

"He may be cheeky," said Tom Merry. "But I don't see that he's a rotter, Manners. Seems to me a decent chap enough."

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Tom Merry frowned and Monty Lowther grinned.

"I know you don't approve," went on Manners sarcastically. "I'm not asking you to back me up. You can back up Torrence, if you like. As you seem to be fond of that New House cad—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry hotly. "I don't know anything of the fellow, and don't want to. But I think—"

"No, you don't," said Manners. "You can't, old fellow. Better not try."

Tom Merry breathed hard and deep.

"Peace, my infants!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Don't let's have any ragging in this study. After all, what does a new kid matter—especially a new kid in the New House? Nothing at all."

"Quite so!" agreed Manners. "After I've licked him he can go and eat coke. But I'm going to lick him."

Manners passed his hand over his nose. There was an ache in his swollen nose, and its red and fiery aspect had caused some jocular remarks in the School House. Grundy of the Shell, indeed, had asked Manners whether he really had let a new kid—and a Fourth Form kid at that—give him that boko. A question that had very nearly led to a scrap with the tactless Grundy.

"I'm not so jolly sure that you'll lick him," said Tom Merry crossly. "He seems to me to be able to take care of himself."

Manners' eyes flashed.

"We'll see about that!" he snapped. "I'm going to try, anyhow. Much obliged for your opinion."

"I wish you'd let it drop," said Tom. "It's not like you, old man, to bear malice like this."

"Who's bearing malice?"

"Well, you are," said Tom. "What else do you call it?"

Manners' face set hard.

"That's enough," he said. "I'm not asking you to chip in. I've asked D'Arcy of the Fourth to be my second."

"Well, you needn't have!" snapped Tom. "If you're determined on it, one of your own pals would have been your second, and you know it."

"I didn't know it!" sneered Manners.

"But I think it's all rot—"

"You can think what you like, and be blown!"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Bai Jove!" An eyeglass gleamed in at the doorway of Study No. 10 in the Shell, with the noble face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth behind it. "You fellows wov'in'. Pwaw modewate your tempahs, deah boys."

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite, you know," said Arthur Augustus, in his most fatherly manner. "It is their nature to. Let beahs and lions gwohl and fight—"

"It is their nature, too!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Have you been over to the New House, D'Arcy?" demanded Manners impatiently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

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"Seen that cad Torrence?"

"I have seen Towwence," said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of mild reproof. "I gave him your message, Mannahs."

"Good! What did he say?"

"He said there was nothin' to fight about," replied Arthur Augustus.

Manners' lip curled.

"I didn't think he was a funk," he remarked. "If he funks coming up to the scratch, I dare say I can think of a way of helping him to screw up his courage."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Did he say anything else?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, cough it up," said Monty Lowther. "Don't be so jolly long-winded, Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What did he say?" snapped Manners.

"He said he would pwefer to let the mattah dwop, if you would," said Arthur Augustus. "He says he is sowwy he had any twouble with you yestahday, and he doesn't see any reason for fightin' about it."

Manners laughed.

"I'll give him a reason," he said.

"Dash it all, let it drop, Manners!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"I agree with Tom Mewwy, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I wathah think you are bitin' off more than you can chew, you know. Look at your nose!"

"What?"

"I think it vewy pwobable, Mannahs, that you will be licked—if you go scwappin' with Towwence. In the cirts, I advise you, as a fwend, to let the mattah dwop."

Manners gave the swell of St. Jim's a dark look, and brushed past him and left the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed after him in surprise, and then turned his eye-glass upon Tom Merry and Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Mannahs' mannahs weally seem to be detewiwatin' you fellows!" he remarked. "I can only chawacterwise his conduct as uttally wude."

"You silly ass!" growled Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You chump!" said Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Depend on Gussy to make matters worse!" growled Monty Lowther. "There will be no stopping Manners now."

"Bai Jove! I was weally twyin' to make mattahs bettah, Lowthah. I was pointin' out to Mannahs that he is huntin' for a lickin'—"

"Oh, bump him!" said Lowther.

"Weally, you fellows— Oh ewumbs! Welease me, you wottahs!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the two Shell fellows collided him.

Bump!

"Oh ewumbs! Ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat on the well-worn carpet in Study No. 10 and spluttered. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther left him spluttering, and followed their chum.

CHAPTER 2.

The Fight!

"THIS won't do, you know, Torrence."

George Figgins spoke very seriously.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were at tea in their study. Eric Torrence, the new junior in Mr. Ratcliff's house, was at tea with them.

Torrence was a new fellow at St. Jim's—it was only his second day in the school. Figgins & Co. had kindly asked him to tea, to make him feel at home in his new quarters—and it was in Figgy's study that D'Arcy had delivered the message from Manners of the Shell.

Torrence glanced across at Figgins with a smile.

Figgins was looking serious, and so were Kerr and Fatty Wynn. Evidently something was amiss.

"What's the trouble?" asked Torrence cheerily.

"Of course, you're new here," said Figgins considerably. "You don't know the ropes. But, you see, New House is Cock House of St. Jim's. You've been here long enough to learn that."

Torrence grinned.

"I've heard it," he assented. "I've heard from the other side, too, that School House is Cock House."

"Of course, that's all rot!" said Kerr.

"Of course," assented Torrence. "We are the real goods, I say, this is a jolly good cake."

"Isn't it!" said Fatty Wynn, beaming. "Have some more, old bean."

"Thanks! I will."

"You see," went on Figgins, "D'Arcy brought you a challenge from a School House chap. You've declined it."

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"Well, I don't want to scrap with Manners," said Torrence. "I've got no quarrel with him."

"He seems to think you have," said Figgins. "And when a School House fellow comes looking for trouble, it's up to a New House fellow to give him all he wants, and a little over—see?"

"I see," assented Torrence.

"Mind, I don't think you're a funk," said Figgins. "You simply don't know the ropes. We can't have School House chaps saying that New House chaps aren't keen on scrapping with them."

"But I'm not keen, in this case," said Torrence, colouring a little. "You see, it was a misunderstanding. That ass Lowther pulled my leg yesterday, and planted me in Manners' study, making me think it was Mr. Ratcliff's study. Then Manners came in and told me to clear, and I wouldn't clear, and there was a scrap. I never wanted any trouble."

"You must have been an ass, to be taken in like that!" said Kerr. "Still, new fellows generally are asses. I saw Manners with a prize nose this morning. I suppose you gave it him."

"Yes," said Torrence. "But it was a misunderstanding, and I'd rather let the matter drop. I don't think he's a bad chap."

"He isn't," said Figgins. "One of the best, in fact. Still, he's a School House boulder, and we can't have the School House fellows swanking that New House chaps funk them. Of course, Manners is in the Shell, and rather a bigger fellow than you. Still—"

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and a frowning face looked into Figgins' study.

"Oh, you're here!" said Manners.

Figgins & Co. rose to their feet. Torrence looked round from the tea-table without rising.

"I'm here," he assented cheerily.

"I sent my second over to arrange matters with you," said Manners, his lip curling contemptuously. "You don't seem keen on putting up your hands."

Torrence nodded coolly.

"I'm not keen," he answered.

"Oh, you're not?" ejaculated Manners. "That means that you're a funk, I suppose, as well as a cheeky cad!"

Torrence's eyes gleamed.

"Not at all! I'd rather let the matter drop; but if you're keen on it, I'm your man. I dare say one of these fellows will second me."

"You bet!" said Figgins heartily. "Now you're talking!"

"So you've screwed your courage up to the sticking-point, what?" sneered Manners.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Torrence scornfully. "I'm sorry I gave you that nose—but there it is! You ought to know that I can handle you!"

Manners' face flamed.

"You cheeky rotter!" he panted.

And Manners strode straight at the new junior, his fists clenched. Torrence jumped up quickly—so quickly that his chair flew over backwards with a crash.

"Ready!" he said, with a grin.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kerr. "You can't scrap in this study! Look here, Manners—"

But Manners of the Shell did not heed.

His hands were up, and so were those of the new junior, and they were already fighting.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "Look here! Chuck it! You've got to have the gloves on, anyhow!"

"Shove that table out of the way!" said Fatty Wynn. "They'll have the crocks over in a minute!"

"Look here!" roared Figgins.

But Figgins was not heeded.

Manners was attacking furiously, and Torrence was standing up to it with a flushed and angry face.

Figgins & Co. pulled the study table aside, to give the combatants room. Kerr closed the door; but it opened again, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther looked in.

"Manners here— Oh, my hat!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Crash!

Eric Torrence was down on his back on the study carpet. He lay there gasping for breath—and Manners stood, gasping, too.

"Man down!" said Monty Lowther.

"Come in and shut that door!" growled Figgins. "We don't want Ratty or a prefect up here, with this going on! Give them the gloves, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn sorted two pairs of gloves out of a box, and Torrence rose rather unsteadily to his feet.

"I don't want gloves!" snapped Manners.

"You do!" said Tom Merry sharply. "Put them on at once, you fathead, or we'll jolly well scrag you!"

Manners snorted, but he put on the gloves, and Torrence followed his example. Figgins took out a big silver watch to keep time.



"You cheeky rotter!" panted Manners. He strode straight at the new junior, his fists clenched. Torrence jumped up quickly—so quickly that his chair flew over backwards with a crash. "Ready!" he said with a grin. "Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kerr. "You can't scrap in this study! Look here, Manners—" But Harry Manners did not heed. (See page 4.)

"Now then, we'll have this in order!" he said. "This is a scrap, not a hooligan row. Time!"

Manners came on to the attack hotly. Torrence stood up to it with a set face and gleaming eyes.

It was a hard-fought round.

Manners of the Shell was not a fighting man like Tom Merry or Figgins, but he was a sturdy fellow, and he had boundless pluck. He put up a stout fight.

But his chums looked on with many misgivings. Torrence was a couple of inches shorter than Manners, and shorter in the reach; but he seemed as hard as nails, and was evidently the better boxer of the two. Manners' hot attack had seemed to carry all before it at first, but Torrence was more than holding his own now. As a matter of fact, Manners' anger told against him. He needed all his coolness, and he was far from cool.

Crash!

Manners went spinning against the study table, rocking it against the wall. There was a clatter of falling tea-cups.

"Time!" rapped out Figgins.

Manners recovered himself. When time was called again he came on hotly.

"Go it, New House!" chuckled Figgins.

Figgins & Co. were smiling now. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther looked grave.

In that round Torrence had the upper hand all along the line.

Manners' furious attack spent itself on an almost impregnable defence, and Torrence's blows came rapping home every few seconds.

Only the call of "Time!" saved Manners from going down, and he almost reeled to a chair and sat down in it.

Tom Merry fanned his heated face with a sheet of impot paper.

"Keep cool, old chap!" he whispered.

Now that the fight was on, Manners' chums wanted to see him the victor. But it was only too clear to them that

Torrence was the heftier fighting man of the two, and that Manners' angry temper was giving away what chances he had of victory.

Manners gritted his teeth.

"You think he's going to lick me?" he muttered.

"Not if you're careful. But you're giving yourself away," muttered the captain of the Shell. "Keep cool, and don't force the fighting."

"Oh, rot!"

Tom Merry said no more. Manners was not to be reasoned with.

"Time!"

Manners came on again savagely. Torrence was fighting hard now, and a rain of blows came on the Shell fellow. The study door was opened again, and a crowd of the New House Fourth gathered outside to look in at the fight.

Crash!

Manners went down heavily.

George Figgins began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

Tom and Lowther looked anxiously at their chum. Manners made an effort to get on his feet, but sank back again.

"Six, seven, eight, nine—"

Again Manners made an effort. But he was spent, and he dropped back, gasping faintly.

"Out!"

Figgins slipped his watch back into his pocket.

Torrence quietly peeled off the gloves. Tom Merry picked Manners up and helped him off with the gloves and on with his jacket. Manners leaned heavily on the captain of the Shell.

"I'm not done," he muttered thickly. "I can go on! That cad hasn't licked me!"

"You're counted out, old man," said Tom soothingly.

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"Can it!" said Figgins. "Look here, you'd better cut into the bath-room and bathe your face before you clear."

"Come on, Manners, old man!" said Lowther.

The two Shell fellows led their chum to the door. Torrence dabbed a stream of crimson from his nose and made a step towards them.

"We've had it out," he said. "You've had bad luck, Manners. I'm sorry there was trouble. Let's shake hands over it."

"Good man!" said Figgins approvingly.

Manners gave the new junior a black look.

"Manners, old man—" whispered Tom.

"Let's get out of this!" muttered Manners.

"But—" said Tom.

"Let's get out, I say."

Manners did not answer Torrence. He left Figgins' study, leaning rather heavily on Tom Merry's arm.

CHAPTER 3.

Manners' Feud!

"LICKED, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked that question as the Terrible Three came up the staircase in the School House into the junior quarters.

Arthur Augustus rather prided himself upon being a fellow of tact and judgment. He often said so.

But, really, in asking that question Gussy did not display a remarkable amount of tact.

Manners had bathed his face before leaving the New House, but he had not been able to remove many of the signs of damage. His nose, already red and swollen, was now a bright crimson, and swollen more severely than before, and there was a dark shade round one of his eyes. His whole appearance was that of a fellow who had been through a hard fight and had had the worst of it, and was in a state of bitter resentment and humiliation and annoyance.

He did not answer Gussy, but he gave him a glare that made the swell of St. Jim's jump.

"Bai Jove! Are you watty about anythin', Mannahs?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"You silly owl!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Do shut up!"

"Bai Jove!"

Manners tramped on, and his comrades followed. Arthur Augustus followed also. He was not satisfied.

"Mannahs—"

"Sheer off, ass!" snapped Manners.

"I refuse to sheeah off, Mannahs, until I have said what I have to say," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as havin' failed to play up in a mannah worthy of the twadi-tions of this House."

"You dummy!"

"You asked me to be your second," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I agreed. Then you wush ovah to the New House and start fightin' Towrence, wegardless of me. I think your conduct is weemarkably bad form."

"Go and eat coke!"

"If you are licked I am sowwy," said Gussy. "But I weally think, Mannahs, that it serves you wight. You have tweated me with diswespect."

"Ass!"

"And I considah—"

"Ring off, Gussy, old man!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Manners tramped into Study No. 10 in the Shell, and his comrades followed him in and shut the door almost on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's nose. They had no use for further eloquence from the swell of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus sniffed indignantly and walked away. Really, he had some cause to be indignant. Manners certainly had treated his selected second in a rather cavalier way.

Manners was not worrying about that, however. He threw himself into the armchair in No. 10, with a black brow. He was tired and aching and hurt and humiliated. He was a Shell fellow, and had been licked by a Fourth-Former. An old hand, and licked by a new kid. And he was only too acutely conscious that there was something ridiculous in having rushed over to the New House to thrash Torrence and having bagged a thrashing at the hands of that obnoxious youth. Altogether the cup of Manners' chagrin and humiliation was full.

Tom Merry and Lowther felt and looked exceedingly uncomfortable. They really hardly knew how to deal with Manners now.

He was obviously in a mood to quarrel with anyone, even his best chum; yet they did not like to leave him to himself in this state. They sympathised with him, but at the same time they disapproved of his feud with Eric Torrence. The

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bitterness he had displayed was quite unlike his usual self, and quite unworthy of him.

Manners sat in silence for some time, apparently waiting for his chums to speak. But they did not speak; they were only too well aware that almost any remark would have given offence in his present mood.

So it was Manners who broke the silence.

"Well, I'm licked!" he said.

"Yes, old chap," said Tom.

"It was my own fault," said Manners. "I underrated that rotter. He's a good fighting-man. I ought to have taken more care."

"Yes," said Tom.

"You don't think so?"

"Well, I think you'd have had a better chance if you'd kept cool, old fellow," said Tom soothingly. "You didn't do yourself justice."

"I'll be more careful next time."

"Next time?" said Tom.

"Yes."

Manners, old man!" said the captain of the Shell un-easily.

Manners sneered.

"Do you think I'm going to take this lying down? I'm going to lick that New House cad."

"For goodness' sake, Manners, chuck it!" exclaimed Monty Lowther impatiently. "You've had a scrap with the fellow—now let it drop. It was a fair fight. You can't keep on quarrelling with a fellow and fighting him. Torrence doesn't want any trouble. Let the fellow alone, and forget all about it."

"So that's your advice?"

"Yes."

"Keep it till I ask for it, then."

Monty Lowther opened his lips to reply; but he sagely checked the angry words, and left the study instead of speaking. Silence was golden at the present juncture.

Manners' resentful glance fixed on Tom Merry.

"You think I'm down on Torrence for nothing?" he said.

"Well, I can't see that he's done anything," said Tom.

"Trimble caused a row, and then Lowther's joke caused another row; but the fellow seems harmless enough."

"I think he's a rotter."

Tom was silent.

"I think he's some sort of an impostor," went on Manners savagely. "You know what happened when he was scrapping in this study yesterday. He dropped a letter—addressed to somebody named Parkinson. He came back and claimed it as his letter."

"I know that," said Tom.

"He refused to explain how he came to have another fellow's letter in his hands—"

"I don't see that he was called on to explain. It might have happened in lots of ways; and we've no right to question him."

"He said it was his letter, not another fellow's," went on Manners. "I believed that much. He's some sort of a humbug—a spoofer. He calls himself Torrence, and his name's Parkinson."

Tom Merry made an uneasy and impatient movement.

"You don't agree, of course?" sneered Manners.

"No. It's all rot, old chap. I admit it was queer about the letter; but it's his own bizney. A fellow couldn't come here in a false name. Do you think the Head would let a fellow into the school without knowing who he was and where he came from?"

"He's spoofered the Head somehow."

"He couldn't," said Tom.

"He could, for he has," said Manners. "He and his people together, I suppose. He may have been expelled from his last school. Anyhow, it was clear that that letter was his, and that it was written to him under the name of Parkinson."

Tom Merry did not reply to that.

"Or he may have spoofered his people—if they are his people," went on Manners sourly. "I can't quite make it out. I had a talk with Pratt this morning in break—"

"Pratt?" repeated Tom.

"Pratt's his study-mate in the New House. Pratt says that he was sent to St. Jim's by his uncle, Colonel Torrence, an old St. Jim's man. Colonel Torrence came home from India only a few weeks ago. Pratt got that from Torrence."

"Well?" said Tom, rather curtly.

"Colonel Torrence's name is on the School Roll of Honour," said Manners. "I've looked it out. He got the D.S.O. in the war."

"Well, it's utter rot to suppose that such a man would have a hand in any kind of spoofering," said Tom.

"I suppose so. Looks as if this fellow has spoofered him somehow."

Tom Merry tried not to smile.

"But how—and why?"

"I don't know, excepting that either his name's Parkinson, or he's gone by the name of Parkinson some time or other. In either case, he's some sort of a spoofing humbug, and must have taken in the Head."

"Oh, bosh, old chap!"

"That isn't all I heard from Pratt," sneered Manners. "It seems that Pratt borrowed a book from him, and on the title-page he found the name Parkinson—Eric Parkinson, Ridsdale."

"That's odd," said Tom.

"I should jolly well think so. Pratt thinks that Torrence bought the book second-hand—he wouldn't have thought of mentioning it, only I was asking him pretty keen questions about the fellow."

Tom frowned.

"Well, if he had bought the book second-hand, that would account for somebody else's name being written in it," he said.

"It wouldn't account for the letter that was picked up in this study, addressed to the same name—Parkinson."

"Well, no."

"Ridsdale seems to be the name of a school," said Manners. "The facts speak for themselves. He was at Ridsdale under the name of Parkinson. He has come up to St. Jim's calling himself Torrence. There's a spoof somewhere, and it's jolly shady."

Tom Merry was silent.

"That's what I think," said Manners. "Well, I don't like spoofers who use false names. I'm down on him."

Tom Merry did not answer.

"Well?" snapped Manners.

"Look here, old man," said Tom seriously, "I know it looks queer, but it's all rot to suppose that that chap can have spoofed the Head, or that he's a plotting, scheming sort of fellow. He's nothing of the kind. He looks honest and straightforward enough. I'm going to speak plainly, Manners, as a pal should sometimes. You're down on the chap, and you're trying to find reasons to justify yourself in being down on him."

Manners flushed crimson.

Possibly Tom Merry's words found an echo in his own heart.

"So that's what you think?" he exclaimed.

"I can't help thinking so, old chap. I don't like your asking Pratt questions about him—that's more in Baggy Trimble's line than yours. For goodness' sake, forget all about the whole thing."

"That's enough," said Manners.

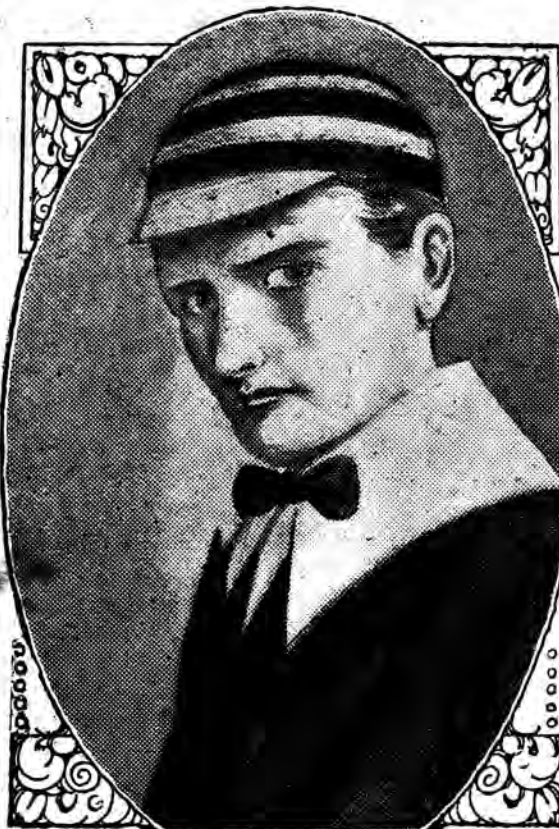
"Look here, old fellow—"

"I'm going to show up that spoofing impostor," said Manners bitterly. "If you're against me, I don't care! You needn't say any more."

"But, I say—"

"Oh, give us a rest!" snapped Manners.

Tom Merry quietly left the study, and Manners was left alone to his own black and bitter thoughts.



CYRIL CHOWLE.

A member of Study No. 6 in the New House Fourth, and one of the lesser lights of St. Jim's. Like the rest of the members of the rotters' brigade, he is always ready to indulge in any shady undertaking. Always fond of a cigarette and will take a hand at cards at any time. When in trouble he will always try to save himself by placing the blame on to another's shoulders. Despised by all the decent fellows at the school, his only friends are Mellish and fellows of his kidney. Played an underhanded trick in a recent story, but was shown up in his true colours by Kerr, another member of the New House.

on the tree, and there was already a circle round him of cigarette-stumps.

Manners supposed him to be some sort of a fellow on tramp, but did not heed him specially. But Manners started a little, and a gleam came into his eyes, at the sight of Torrence of the Fourth coming along the path towards the stream on the opposite side.

Torrence had on no coat, and his face glistened, too, with wet, but he looked very cheery. Apparently the new junior of St. Jim's was enjoying his ramble in the wintry woods, in spite of the weather.

"Master Parkinson!"

Then Manners jumped. For it was the shabby man, smoking cigarettes under the tree, who spoke, and he addressed Torrence of the Fourth.

Manners stared across the stream at the two.

Torrence stopped, and glanced at the man.

He did not seem taken aback at being addressed as Parkinson. He gave the shabby young man a cool nod.

"Hallo, Smiley!" he said civilly, though not very cordially. Manners breathed hard.

Neither of the two had glanced across the little stream towards him; neither was aware of his presence there under the tree.

But every word they uttered came quite clearly to his ears in the silence of the woods.

Manners was not the fellow to play the eavesdropper, bitter as his feelings were towards Eric Torrence. But he saw no reason for leaving his shelter and going out into the rain simply because the two were talking in his hearing.

The name of Smiley was familiar to him. It had been

CHAPTER 4.

"Parkinson!"

"MASTER PARKINSON!"

Manners fairly jumped.

It was Saturday afternoon; and that afternoon there was a junior House match on at St. Jim's. Tom Merry wanted to play Manners; but Manners had declined.

As a matter of fact, Manners had not yet quite recovered from the effects of the fight in Figgins' study in the New

mentioned in the letter he had picked up in Study No. 10, dropped there by Torrence. In that letter, evidently written by a former school-mate of "Parkinson's" at Ridsdale, Smiley had been referred to as a boot-boy who had been sacked. And here was Smiley. And he had recognised Eric Torrence as "Master Parkinson"—addressing him by that name as a matter of course. Manners smiled sourly, and wondered what Tom Merry and Monty Lowther would have said if they had heard it.

"Rather a surprise meetin' you here, Master Parkinson, sir," said Smiley, detaching himself from the tree.

"Yes," said Torrence.

"I've left Ridsdale, sir. Lost my job, sir."

Torrence's lip curled.

"I heard that in a letter from a chap at Ridsdale," he said. "I can't say I'm sorry for you, Smiley. You were sacked for smuggling smokes into the school for some of the chaps. You shouldn't have done it!"

"They shouldn't 'ave tipped me to do it," said Smiley.

"Well, no. But you were a rotter, Smiley. When I was at Ridsdale you used to keep cigarettes in the boot-room and let fellows have them at a profit to you," said Torrence. "It was a dirty game, as I remember telling you more than once. No wonder you got the boot when it came out. But what the thump are you doing here?"

"Tramping, sir," said Smiley. "I ain't been able to get another job. You see, I hadn't got a character."

Torrence laughed.

"You couldn't quite expect that, could you?" he said.

"No, sir; but it's hard on a man," said Smiley. "You being so well off, sir, you might 'elp a man on his way."

Torrence's hand went into his pocket.

"I'm sorry you're up against it, Smiley, though you fairly asked for it," he said. "I hope you'll get another job. Here you are!"

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Smiley, taking the ten-shilling note Torrence held out to him.

"So-long!" said Torrence, and, with a nod, he crossed the plank over the stream, and came on the bank where Manners stood under the tree. He was almost upon Manners when he saw him.

Manners looked him full in the face grimly.

Torrence flushed.

It came into his mind at once that Manners must have heard all that was said. He opened his lips, but closed them again without speaking. With a look of scorn that cut Manners like a whip-lash, he strode on, and disappeared among the leafless trees of the wood.

CHAPTER 5.

What Smiley Knew!

MANNERS of the Shell breathed hard.

He had chanced upon proof—absolute proof—that Eric Torrence of the Fourth Form was somehow "spoofing" at St. Jim's.

The evidence had been strong enough before—strong enough for Manners. Now there was absolute proof.

Yet the fellow had dared to eye him scornfully and pass him by in contempt. Deep resentment surged up in Manners' breast. This fellow, who had been known as Eric Parkinson at Ridsdale School, and who had come to St. Jim's as Eric Torrence, dared to treat him with scorn—careless of his resentment.

Manners was tempted to follow the Fourth-Former and try again his luck with his knuckles. But he controlled that impulse. He watched Torrence out of sight, and noted that the new junior did not even turn his head once. He was an impostor, a humbug, a deceiver. Yet he seemed utterly careless and contemptuous of the fellow who knew him in his true colours.

Manners set his lips and picked his way across the wet plank to the opposite side of the stream, where the man Smiley was still sheltering and smoking incessant cigarettes. Smiley glanced at him casually.

Manners stopped.

"I heard what you were saying to that chap," he said abruptly.

"Did you?" said Smiley. "No business of yours, that I know of."

"I couldn't help hearing, when I was standing just yonder!" snapped Manners angrily.

"Much good may it do you!" said Smiley, staring at him. "I don't care much whether you 'eard it or not, whoever you are!"

"You know that fellow?" said Manners.

"Course I do!"

"What is his real name?"

Smiley stared.

"If you 'eard me, you know his name!" he answered.

"His name's Parkinson!"

"You're sure of that?"

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"Look 'ere! What are you arter?" demanded Smiley, eyeing Manners very suspiciously. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

Manners flushed a little. He knew that it was unworthy of him to enter into talk with this shifty, rascally fellow, who had been discharged from his employment for rascally conduct, and still more unworthy to seek information from him. But he repeated to himself that he had to deal with a deceiving impostor, and that it was a fellow's duty to show up an impostor.

"You called him Parkinson," he said.

"That's his name, ain't it?" said Smiley.

"He calls himself Torrence here."

"Bosh!" said Smiley.

"He came to my school—St. Jim's—this week," said Manners. "He's there under the name of Torrence. That's why I want to know whether his name really is Parkinson."

Smiley stared at Manners. For a minute or more he was silent, his shifty eyes gleaming cunningly.

"St. Jim's!" he said, at last. "That's the big school by Rylcombe, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"'Ow would he be called Torrence there, when his name's Parkinson?" said Smiley. "That sounds rather thick!"

"That's what I want to know."

Smiley grinned.

"You don't like him?" he said.

"That's got nothing to do with it!" snapped Manners. "I'm down on a fellow shoving into my school in a false name!"

Smiley's eyes roamed over Manners' face, which still showed very visible traces of the fight with the New House junior.

"He was always a good man with his fists at Ridsdale," he said. "He's 'ad trouble with you and knocked you out—wot?"

Manners crimsoned.

"Mind your own business!" he said savagely.

"Easy does it, sir," chuckled Smiley. "He's knocked out better men nor you—he was the best boxer at Ridsdale!"

"Was he sacked from Ridsdale?" asked Manners eagerly.

"Sacked?" repeated Smiley.

"I mean expelled—expelled from the school?"

"Course he wasn't!" said Smiley. "Catch old Stinky expelling anybody. He was too jolly glad to rope in fellers in his twopenny-halfpenny school!"

"Oh!" said Manners. "I've never heard anything about Ridsdale—what sort of a school is it? Anything like St. Jim's?"

"Course not!" said Smiley, with a grin. "It's a cheap school—next to nothing a term and all found. Only poor fellers there—sons of poor clergymen, and country solicitors, and such. Fellers kept over the 'olidays so as not to be a trouble to their loving relations, and all that. Next to nothing to eat—pupils prepared for Cambridge senior—and so on. A blooming semi-detached 'ouse at Margate, with a brass plate on the door."

"Oh, my hat!" said Manners.

"Me, I was bootboy and porter, and gardener and man of all work, and lots of other things," said Smiley. "Wages you could put in a thimble, and grub to match. I wouldn't have 'ad the job at any price if I could 'ave got on the dole. No fear!"

"But I don't understand," said Manners. "This fellow, Torrence, has plenty of money—he's one of the best-off fellows in his House, I believe."

Smiley stared.

"Then he's come into it sudden," he said. "I was s'prised when he give me ten bob jest now. He never had any ten bobs to spare when he was at Ridsdale, no more than the others. He left very sudden, and I never knowed why. P'r'aps he had come into a fortune."

The sly, cunning look intensified in Smiley's shifty eyes.

"Feller as had any money wouldn't hang on at Ridsdale, you bet!" he said. "I say, is it straight?"

"Is what straight?"

"That young Parkinson's got money, and that he's come to your school under a new name?"

"Yes," said Manners, "that's certain enough. He didn't have to leave Ridsdale, then—he wasn't in any trouble?"

"Bless you, no; he was one of the good ones!" said Smiley. "He never came along to the boot-room for a packet of smokes, not 'im!"

Manners eyed the shifty fellow. Smiley looked as if he would have had no scruple about lying, or any sort of roguery, had it suited him. But it seemed plain enough that he was telling the truth now; indeed, he was evidently genuinely surprised to learn that "Parkinson" was wealthy, and that he was passing at St. Jim's under an assumed name.

"Anything more you'd like to know, sir?" said Smiley. "Is it worth 'arf-a-crown to you, what I've told you, seeing that you're down on the bloke!"

Manners made a movement of repugnance. He extracted



"Master Parkinson!" Manners jumped. For it was the shabby man, under the tree, who spoke, and he addressed Torrence of the Fourth. Manners stared across the stream at the two. Torrence did not seem to be taken aback at being addressed as Parkinson. He gave the shabby young man a cool nod. "Hallo, Smiley!" he said civilly, though not very cordially. (See page 7.)

half-a-crown from his pocket, and handed it to Smiley, and stepped back. He was ashamed of having entered into talk with this shifty rogue at all; but he now had in his hands, at all events, proof that Torrence of the Fourth was an impostor, and there was a witness to the fact if needed, in the shifty Smiley himself.

Smiley, twelve shillings and sixpence the richer for his halt by the woodland stream, touched his hat to Manners, and slouched away by the path.

Manners remained where he was in deep thought.

He had suspected Torrence. But he was startled by this complete proof of the justice of his suspicions.

He was glad to be justified; for at the bottom of his heart there had been a lingering feeling that his feud with the new junior was unworthy of him, as his chums evidently considered. They would have to change their opinion as soon as they learned what he could now tell them—that it was beyond doubt that Torrence of St. Jim's only a few weeks before had been Parkinson of Ridsdale. Manners smiled rather sourly at the thought.

He had been down on the fellow from the beginning—and he had been right. Tom Merry and Monty had pooh-poohed the matter, and they had been wrong! That was satisfactory; and yet Manners was conscious that he was not feeling quite satisfied. He disliked Torrence, yet when the New House junior's frank and good-humoured face came before his mind's eye he had to admit that it was not the face of a shady or scheming fellow. Yet surely the facts spoke for themselves.

Manners moved away to cross the plank bridge over the stream again, to return to St. Jim's. As he did so he sighted Torrence of the Fourth returning. Torrence reached the stream and came across the plank, and Manners halted by the waterside with a grim look on his face. Eric Torrence had come back, and there was an expression on his face that boded trouble as he stepped from the plank bridge and faced Manners.

CHAPTER 6.

Hand to Hand!

"MANNERS!"

Torrence spoke quietly, but there was an undertone of anger in his voice, and his eyes were gleaming.

Manners smiled.

"Well, Parkinson?" he said.

"My name is Torrence," said the New House junior.

"You have so many names, old scout," said the Shell fellow, still smiling. "Does it matter by which one I call you?"

"That's enough. This has got to stop!" said Torrence quietly. "You've had a down on me ever since I came to the school. That's your own bizney; but you've no right to spy into my affairs, and I won't have it."

"Spy!" repeated Manners, flushing.

"What do you call it?" exclaimed Torrence angrily. "You've been asking my study-mates in the New House, Pratt and Digges, questions about me. They've told me so."

"Fellows who haven't anything to hide don't mind questions being asked," said Manners. "Anybody who likes can ask all the questions he pleases about me. I've no objection!"

"Now you've been asking questions of that rotter, Smiley, and—"

"Why shouldn't I talk to him?" smiled Manners. "I saw you talking to him, Parkinson."

"You've been asking him about me."

"Why not?"

"Well, I won't have it!" exclaimed Torrence, raising his voice a little. "Why can't you let me alone? I never wanted to quarrel with you, and I tried to keep out of a scrap with you. We belong to different Forms and different Houses. No need for us to have anything to do with one another."

another. Why can't you mind your own business and let a fellow alone?"

"I'm down on impostors," said Manners coolly. "You've no right to butt into St. Jim's under a false name!"

"That's enough!" broke in Torrence angrily. "I don't choose to explain to you!"

"I fancy you couldn't explain," said Manners contemptuously. "A fellow who uses a false name—"

"False of not, it's no business of yours."

"That's a little mistake!" said Manners coolly. "I belong to St. Jim's, and I think something of the school's good name. We don't want rogues and impostors at St. Jim's—even in the New House."

Torrence flushed scarlet.

"So you're calling me a rogue?"

"Certainly!" said Manners. "I call you a rogue because I think you one. I don't know how you've fixed it, or why; but your name isn't Torrence, and you're a cheat and a humbug. It looks to me as if you've imposed on Colonel Torrence somehow. Anyhow, you've imposed on the Head. It's up to me to see that you're known in your true colours."

"It's never up to any fellow to play the spy and the informer," said Torrence contemptuously.

Manners trembled with anger.

"You've made a discovery, or you think you have," went on Torrence. "You're welcome to your opinion; but I won't have you spying on me, asking fellows questions, and making out that I'm a suspicious character. It's not good enough, and I'm not standing it, see?"

"Fellow shouldn't be a suspicious character if he doesn't like being known as one!" sneered Manners.

"That's why I came back now," resumed Torrence. "I was thinking of letting you rip, and treating you with contempt. I knew you'd be asking that man Smiley questions. But I decided to come back, and have it out plain. You've got to stop it."

"Have I?" smiled Manners. "How are you going to stop me?"

Torrence gave him a dark look.

"I've licked you once," he said. "I'll lick you again, and keep on licking you till you mind your own business."

"Will you?" said Manners, between his teeth. "You shady rascal, do you think I'm a funk like Trimble or Chowle, to be talked to like that? I'll tell you what I'm going to do, then, Master Parkinson. I'm going to shout out your real name to all St. Jim's, and let them know that you're a spoofer and some sort of swindler. How do you like that?"

Torrence clenched his hands.

"Come on, you rotter!" said Manners, putting up his hands. "You think you can bully me! Come on!"

Torrence did not come on, however.

"I shouldn't have said that," he muttered. "But really, you're enough to make a fellow wild. I'm not going to touch you, Manners. Why can't you leave my affairs alone?"

"I've told you!"

"Oh, gammon!" said Torrence impatiently. "You seem to be a hot-headed ass, but you've got sense enough to know that I'm not a rogue and a spoofer. You don't choose to know it, that's all. And I don't think you're the sort of chap to be down on a fellow because he was poor once, and went to a poor school."

"Nothing of the kind," said Manners hotly. "What the thump would that matter to me. I don't care what Ridsdale was—whether it's a school as big as Eton, or a semi-detached house with a brass plate on the door, as Smiley called it."

Torrence's frowning brow relaxed, and he smiled.

"There are a good many fellows at St. Jim's who would look down on a Ridsdale chap," he said. "Still, I don't think you're one of that sort. I think it's up to you not to say a word about it in the school."

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"I've told you what I think of you," he said. "You're a scheming rogue, and that's the long and short of it. If your name's Parkinson, it can't be Torrence, and you're not Colonel Torrence's nephew at all. It looks to me like a jolly big swindle of some kind, with chokey for you when it all comes out."

To Manners' surprise, Torrence burst into a laugh.

"Well, if you think it's a laughing matter, cackle while you've got the chance," said the Shell fellow savagely. "I'm going to see that you're known in your true colours."

"You're going to spy and meddle and tattle, you mean!" exclaimed Torrence angrily. "Well, I'm fed-up with it. You've got to stop it. You'll give me your word to say nothing on the subject in the school, or—"

"Or what?" sneered Manners.

"Or you'll put up your hands here and now, and I'll do my best to give you the licking of your life for your meddling!" shouted Torrence.

"Go it!"

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"Look here, Manners—"

"I'm ready, and that's to begin!" said Manners; and he reached out and struck Torrence with his open hand.

"You rotter!"

Torrence sprang forward, and the next moment they were fighting.

For two or three minutes the two angry juniors were tramping, panting and pommelling, fiercely and savagely. Manners was holding his own; he was striving his hardest. He drove Torrence back, till the Fourth-Former was close to the water's edge; then Torrence shifted his ground, and began to press the Shell fellow in his turn.

Manners, with bitter chagrin, realised that Torrence was getting the upper hand again; that he was no match for this new fellow in the Fourth Form.

But he fought on fiercely, striving hard.

Crash!

A right-hander that caught Manners on the chin sent him spinning backwards.

He had his back to the stream, and he came down on the plank bridge over the water.

"Look out!" gasped Torrence.

He sprang forward to give the Shell fellow a helping hand. But it was too late.

Only for an instant Manners lay dazedly on the trembling plank. Then he rolled off helplessly into the water.

"Manners!" panted Torrence.

The dazed Shell fellow made a clutch at the plank, and missed it. A moment more and he was swept away by the swollen stream—away towards the wide waters of the river, a hundred yards distant. A faint cry came echoing back from the hapless junior as he was swept away in the whirling waters.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Shadow of Death!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was not looking his brightest.

His aristocratic face matched, in its expression, the gloom of the misty weather.

Really it was hard cheese.

There was a House match in progress, and Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were engaged in deadly strife with Figgins & Co. of the New House. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not in the School House team.

An accidental kick on the knee at games practice had knocked Gussy out of football for the week. The House match had to be played without him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt that it was very hard—hard on him personally, and hard on the House.

For how could the House expect or hope to win that match without their most brilliant winger on the field?

Echo answered, how?

D'Arcy of the Fourth wandered away when the game started. His knee was too crooked for football, but he was able to take a gentle walk. So he took one. Really, he did not want to hang about Little Side, watching the inevitable defeat of his House.

That the defeat of his House was not inevitable had not occurred to his noble brain. Yet Tom Merry & Co., from their cheery looks, seemed to have an idea that they were going to beat the New House, although Arthur Augustus was not in the front line.

Gussy, with an unusually sombre brow, wandered away, and walked forth from the gates of St. Jim's, and was caught in the drizzle of rain on the towpath by the river, where there was no shelter. This did not have the effect of brightening his overcast countenance.

Finally, he stopped under a tree, at the point where the woodland stream poured into the river. In the summer-time that little stream murmured and sang under leafy branches, almost shallow enough to be waded. But the autumn rains had swollen it, and now it poured into the Rhyl in a turbulent flood. Arthur Augustus, standing under the tree, waited for the rain to stop, and idly watched fragments of driftwood borne down by the current and floating out into the river.

And then, all of a sudden, Arthur Augustus gave a jump. "Gweat Scott!"

Down the stream towards the junction with the river came a struggling, half-floating figure—the figure of a fellow who was vainly trying to resist the current. D'Arcy caught a glimpse of a white face, and recognised Manners of the Shell.

Manners was fighting hard with the rushing water, but it was too powerful for him. He was being swept out into the river—swept out to certain death.

In a flash Arthur Augustus realised his fearful danger, and the swell of St. Jim's did not hesitate for a second. The glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus, with all his elegant ways,

(Continued on page 12.)

GRAND "ERRORS" COMPETITION!

£25 IN PRIZE MONEY

1st Prize £10, 2nd Prize £5, 5 Prizes of £1 Each.



AND SIX FOOTBALLS



WHAT a splendid offer, chums! £10 First Prize; £5 Second Prize; 5 Prizes of £1 each, and consolation prizes of Six Footballs!

This easy competition is only open to readers of the GEM, and the opportunity afforded should not be missed.

If you do not win the First Prize you may be the successful winner of one of the smaller awards.

It is a competition in which keenness counts. And who could be keener than readers of the GEM?

This is the Fifth Picture in our easy contest, and all readers who have not yet obtained the First Four Pictures should get them through their newsagents, or our Back Number Department, Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

is to study carefully the picture below—an illustration in which the artist has purposely made mistakes—and see how many "Errors" you can find in the picture.

For instance, one mistake is pretty obvious; aeroplanes do not carry anchors.

There are several "Errors" like this that the keen observer will soon discover.

Don't be satisfied with the most obvious mistakes, but look into the drawing until you are satisfied that no "Error" has escaped your attention.

Remember there are other readers competing against you, and it is up to YOU to beat them, if possible.

As you find the mistakes, jot them down neatly upon a piece of paper, then, when you have satisfied yourself that you have discovered all the "Errors," count them, put the Total—that is, the exact number of all the "Errors" found—in the space provided in the top right-hand corner of the Entrance Form.

Having followed these simple instructions, sign your name and address in the space provided on the Entrance Form. Then pin the Entrance Form to your neatly-written list of "Errors," and put both in a safe place until next Wednesday, when the final picture containing "Errors" will appear.

Thus there will be six of these pictures, and readers are asked to study each in turn, making a FRESH LIST OF "ERRORS" for each picture.

When the last picture in this "ERRORS" COMPETITION appears

next week you will be informed when and where to send in your complete six lists of errors.

Remember, all the above prizes **MUST BE WON**—the First Prize of £10 being awarded to the sender who has found the largest number of "Errors" throughout the whole competition. The decision of the Editor of the GEM will be absolutely final.

There is always this fact to remember, too—that if you only find a fair number of "Errors" in one picture you may be able to bring yourself level with others in another picture.

Keenness is the key to success, so **GET BUSY NOW** with this FIFTH picture.

Every attempt must be complete in itself—that is, your six lists of "Errors" and the six coupons all properly arranged and filled in as directed.

"ERRORS" COMPETITION—ENTRANCE FORM. FIFTH PICTURE.

I accept the Editor's
decision as final.

Number of
"Errors,"

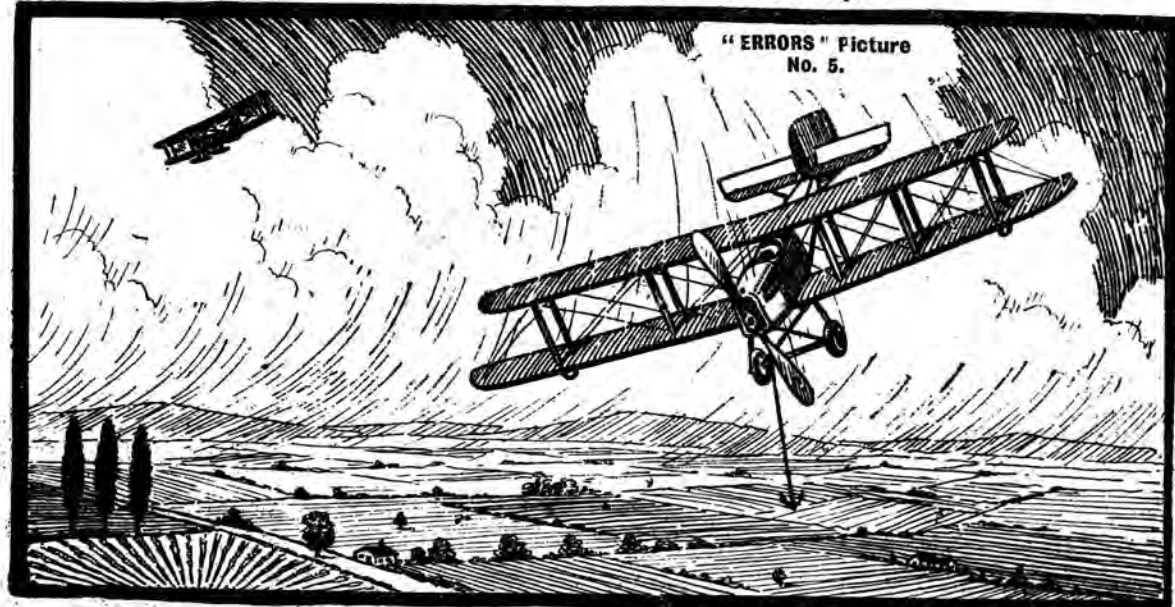
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And don't forget the Final picture in this Great Competition will appear in next week's GEM—SO DON'T SEND

ANY ENTRIES YET. Employees of the proprietors of this journal may not compete.



was of the stuff of which heroes are made. In a twinkling Gussy had tossed off hat and overcoat—careless of where they fell, though both were expensive and elegant—and plunged headlong into the rushing water.

Manners came sweeping by, and D'Arcy's headlong plunge brought him directly in the Shell fellow's way. In a moment he had grasped him.

Manners seemed almost exhausted. As a matter of fact, he was spent from the struggle with Eric Torrence, and the heavy blow that had knocked him into the stream had dazed him. He was almost helpless, when D'Arcy's strong grasp closed on him and dragged him up from death.

"Buck up, deah boy!" panted Gussy.

With one hand he grasped Manners, with the other he struck out for the bank.

But Manners, though he still struggled with the stream, was little better than a burden to his rescuer, and D'Arcy realised very quickly that he could not reach the bank with him.

To hold on to Manners was to be swept out into the wide river along with him to almost certain destruction. There were no boats on the river in that rainy, misty weather; no chance of rescue there.

But Arthur Augustus did not think of letting go.

He fought gamely, still holding on to Manners of the Shell. Fortune is said to favour the brave, and it favoured Arthur Augustus. A trailing branch from a tree, broken by the wind, swept the water, and Arthur Augustus caught it as he was rushed past, and held on with his free hand.

The water tore and sucked at him like a giant's hand, seeking to drag him away to death.

But the swell of St. Jim's held on.

One hand grasped the trailing branch, the other was firmly fixed on Manners' collar. Holding on with all his strength, Arthur Augustus shouted for help.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"I'm coming!"

It was an answering shout, and it was like music to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's ears.

He had shouted with little hope of being heard. But there were ears to hear. Eric Torrence was running hard along the bank of the stream towards the river. He had lost ground, for the trees and thickets by the woodland stream impeded him, and he was far behind the Shell fellow, who was borne away by the rush of the flood.

But now he came panting up, abreast of the two juniors.

"Hold on, D'Arcy—hold on!" he shouted.

"Yaas, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I'm coming!"

Splash!

Eric Torrence was in the water, swimming with powerful strokes towards Arthur Augustus. Gallantly he fought against the rush of the water which would have swept him past the swell of St. Jim's, and he succeeded. He grasped Manners with one hand and the trailing branch with the other, and D'Arcy's aching, straining arms felt the relief at once.

"Bai Jove! That's bettah!" he gasped. "I weally believe I was just goin' to let go, Towrence."

"Hold on, old chap!"

"I can hold on all wight now."

The water tore and tore at them. Torrence's face was dark and anxious.

"That branch is going," he said, as a sharp crack came from the straining wood to which they clung. "We've got to get him ashore—sharp. Do you feel up to trying it now?"

"Yaas, wathah! The soonah the bettah!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Manners did not speak. He was only half conscious now.

Together the two Fourth-Formers let go the saving branch and struck out for the bank, holding Manners of the Shell between them.

What was impossible for one was practicable for two, though even now it was touch and go, and the two juniors had to exert all their strength and determination to reach the bank.

But they reached it and struggled ashore, and Manners was dragged out of reach of the lapping water.

He sank down helplessly on the wet grass, too spent for speech. Arthur Augustus sat down and panted, quite exhausted. Torrence stood and shook the water from his clothes, breathing hard and deep.

"My hat, we've been lucky!" he muttered.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If—if he'd been drowned—" Torrence shuddered from head to foot. "It was plucky of you to go in for him like that, D'Arcy."

"Wats! You did the same."

"That's different. I—I'd rather have been drowned with him than have—" Torrence shivered, and his face was white. "I—I knocked him into the water. We were fighting."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Thank Heaven we've saved him! I say, we must get him somewhere."

"There's the boat-keeper's cottage only a little way along the towpath—behind those twees."

"Can you lend a hand, old man?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus struggled to his feet. Between them the two Fourth-Formers lifted Manners and carried him away; and five minutes later the Shell fellow was stripped and tucked under warm blankets in the boat-keeper's cottage, and D'Arcy and Torrence were drying themselves before a blazing fire.

CHAPTER 8.

A Chance for Mr. Smiley!

"YOUNG Parkinson!"

Torrence frowned and Manners started.

It was a couple of hours since the episode on the river. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had remained at the boat-keeper's cottage long enough to dry himself, and then he had left, leaving Torrence to wait till Manners was fit to move. Arthur Augustus was not much concerned about the peril he had been through. But he was very much concerned about his clothes. It was probable that those elegant clothes would never be quite the same again, which was naturally a matter of deep concern. But evidently no time was to be lost in seeing what could be done for them.

Torrence waited by the fire in the boat-keeper's cottage till Manners came down, dressed, and looking rather pale. Manners coloured as he saw him, and Torrence felt awkward enough.

"Feeling pretty fit?" he asked.

"Not so bad," said Manners. "I can walk back to the school all right."

"I'll trot along with you."

"All right."

The two juniors walked towards St. Jim's together in silence. Both of them were feeling very constrained.

As they came out into Rylcombe Lane a shabby, squat figure lurched into view from the direction of the Green Man. It was Mr. Smiley.

Smiley halted and grinned at the two juniors, and addressed Torrence with impudent familiarity.

"Ere we are agin, young Parkinson!" he said.

It was no longer "Mister Parkinson." Smiley had learned enough from Manners to feel that he had power in his hands.

Torrence gave him a look of cold contempt. It was plain that Smiley had been drinking.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

Smiley grinned.

"I want a little talk with you, young Parkinson," he said impudently.

"Stand aside!"

"Where's the 'urry?" grinned Smiley. "Don't you come the 'igh 'orse with me, young Parkinson! I know you. Name of Torrence now—what? 'Ow would you like your 'eadmaster to 'ear that you're in his school under a false name—what? What's the game, young Parkinson? You're swindling somebody."

Torrence gave him a black look.

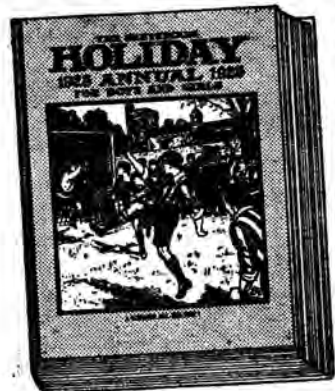
"Will you stand aside, you blackguard?" he exclaimed.

"No, I won't!" said Smiley coolly. "You're calling yourself Torrence at the big school, as I've 'eard from this young feller. You was Parkinson at Ridsdale, wasn't you? Well, what's the game?"

Torrence gave Manners a glance, and the Shell fellow crimsoned. It was clear that Smiley, evidently a blackguard to the finger-tips, was scheming to make use of what he had heard from Manners, an idea that naturally had never occurred to the Shell fellow.

"We change our name along with our school, and we've got plenty of money now—what?" grinned Smiley. "Well, if you don't want to be give away to your 'eadmaster you've got to be civil to Smiley. That's me. Catch on, young Parkinson!"

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The water tore and sucked at D'Arcy, seeking to drag him away to death, but the swell of St. Jim's held on. One hand grasped the trailing branch, while the other was firmly fixed on Manners' collar. Holding on with all his strength, Arthur Augustus shouted for help. "Help, help, help!" There came an answering shout, and Torrence came running hard along the bank of the stream. (See page 12.)

"Will you let me pass?" said Torrence quietly. The leering rascal had planted himself directly in the way of the two juniors.

"No, I won't! Not till you've 'anded it out," said Smiley insolently. "It's worth a fiver, and you can afford it now, young Parkinson-Torrence!"

"You blackmailing scoundrel!" exclaimed Manners hotly.

"Oh, can it!" said Smiley. "I dessay you're on the same lay yourself, come to that."

"What?" gasped Manners.

"You was mighty keen 'earing about young Parkinson, anyhow," said Smiley, with a sneer. "Don't you call a cove names, sir! I ain't talking to you! Is it worth a fiver, young Parkinson?"

Torrence smiled contemptuously.

"You'll get nothing from me," he said.

"You want me to walk up to the school and tell the 'ead-master that he's got a cove there under a false name, and that—"

"Do as you choose, you blackguard! Now stand aside, or I'll jolly well make you!"

"Will you, by gum?" said Smiley. "You don't dare, you cheating rascal! You— Oh!"

Crash!

Torrence hit out from the shoulder, and Smiley went spinning heels over head in the dusky lane.

"Come on, Manners!"

Smiley sat up dazedly. As the two juniors walked on towards the school a torrent of imprecations and threats followed them.

Manners' face was crimson. Torrence did not speak, and they reached St. Jim's in silence.

In the quadrangle, as they were parting to go to their different Houses, Manners found his voice at last.

"Torrence! I—I'm sorry!"

"All serene!" said Torrence.

"I don't know why you've done what you have!" muttered Manners. "You don't deny that you're here under a name that's not your own. But—but— I know now." He breathed hard. "I know you must be a decent chap after—after what you've done."

Torrence smiled.

"You've changed your opinion, then," he said.

"I should have been drowned, and D'Arcy along with me, if you hadn't come in for us!" muttered Manners.

"Well, it was my fault."

"It wasn't. It was mine," said Manners huskily. "I—I've treated you rottenly. I—I was trying to think all the time that I was down on you for being a spoofer, but I knew jolly well all the time that it wasn't that. It wasn't! I—I hated being licked by a Fourth Form chap. I—I was just feeling savage and malicious!" Manners choked. "I—I'm sorry. It's no good saying so, now that I've landed you into trouble; but—but it's all I can say."

Torrence looked at him curiously.

"It's all right," he said. "That brute Smiley won't have the cheek to come here!"

"I—I'm afraid he will!" muttered Manners. "And—and it's all my fault. I knew I oughtn't to speak to him. But I never dreamed he would think of trying to get money out of you, though I might have guessed it from his looks. Look here, Torrence!" He paused.

"Well?"

"That man can give you away here, and he means to. You—you must bar him off somehow!"

"You don't want me given away?" asked Torrence, with a rather curious smile.

"Not now. I don't know why you're playing this queer game; but—but I'm sure there's no swindle in it now. I'm

sure you're a white man all right. I—I don't think I ever really doubted it, only I was bitter and revengeful. I know it was rotten! Look here! If you can get rid of that scoundrel for a fiver, I'll manage to find the fiver for you."

"That's jolly decent of you!" said Torrence. "But I'm not short of a fiver, old man. I've got lots of money—more than I ever had when I was at Ridsdale. But I wouldn't give that scoundrel a shilling at any price, however much he could hurt me!"

"But—but—"

"Besides, if he had a fiver he would come back again for a tenner," said Torrence, laughing.

"I—I suppose so," said Manners miserably.

"It's all right," said Torrence cheerfully. "I'm not afraid of anything Smiley can do."

"He can give you away here."

"Let him!"

"But—but—"

"It's all right," said Torrence. "Let him rip! I'm jolly glad you've changed your opinion of me, Manners. I never disliked you as you did me, and I'm glad we're not going to be enemies. Don't worry about me. Let's forget that we ever had a row!"

"I'll be only too glad to," said Manners. "I've treated you rottenly, though I never seemed to realise it at the time."

"That's all right now."

"Anyhow, you can depend on me to say nothing, if that's anything."

"Oh, that's something!" said Torrence. "I don't want it shouted all over St. Jim's that I was at Ridsdale. Lots of fellows here would sneer and gibe about it; not fellows of your sort, of course, but there are other sorts."

"I know," said Manners. "There are silly snobs here, I know, and you've no reason for telling them your affairs. But—but that man Smiley will tell the Head."

"The Head knows that I was at Ridsdale, of course."

"I don't mean that. Dr. Holmes wouldn't think anything of that, or if you'd been at a Council School. He's not a snob or a fool," said Manners. "I mean, about your name being—"

"That's all right."

"Hallo, Manners!" Tom Merry and Monty Lowther came up. "Where the thump have you been all this time?"

Torrence gave Manners a nod, and walked off to his own House. Manners went on towards the School House with his chums.

"Not ragging with Torrence again?" asked Tom Merry rather anxiously.

"No."

"You're looking a bit seedy, old man!" said Lowther. "Anything happened?"

"Yes."

"Well, what?" asked Tom.

"I'll tell you in the study."

The Terrible Three went into the School House together. Tom and Monty were conscious of a change in Manners. There was no trace now of sullenness or sulkingness. Manners seemed his old self again, though unusually subdued, and his chums were glad to see it.

CHAPTER 9.

Manners Makes Amends!

MANNERS sat down rather heavily in the armchair in Study No. 10 in the Shell. In the light his comrades could see that his face was pale and looked worn and troubled. But they did not question him till tea was on the table. And hot tea and muffins made Manners of the Shell feel a great deal better. But he was still deeply troubled. There was evidently something on his mind, and his chums waited for him to tell them what it was.

"About Torrence—" said Manners at last.

"You seem to have made friends with him," said Tom.

"I have."

"That's good!" said the captain of the Shell heartily.

"Didn't I tell you he was a decent chap enough?"

"You don't think his name's Parkinson any more?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I know now that his name's Parkinson," answered Manners quietly. "I can't understand what it all means; but I'm sure that he's straight now. I'll tell you about it."

And he told them.

"Well, that beats the band!" said Tom Merry. "Jolly lucky that Gussy cut the House match to-day!"

"Fancy old Gussy!" said Lowther. "And Torrence played up jolly well, too! Still, I suppose it was up to him to fish you out of the water after pitching you in?"

"He's a white man," said Tom.

"I'm pretty sure that he's one of the best," said Manners. "I've treated him rather badly, and I've owned up to it and told him I'm sorry. But—but the harm's done now."

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That man Smiley is trying to blackmail him, and it's my fault that he knows anything about Torrence."

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I can't make it out," he said. "If the chap's name is Parkinson, why didn't he come here as Parkinson?"

"I don't know—can't guess. But—but I don't think now that there's any swindle in it."

"Well, it's jolly queer," said Monty Lowther. "He must have made the Head believe his name was Torrence. Colonel Torrence must believe so. It looks like a big swindle of some kind, a regular case of an impostor, but—but Torrence doesn't look that sort."

"He's not that sort," said Manners. "I—I was trying to think that he was, but I knew he wasn't! Only—only there's the fact that he's here under a false name, and that villain Smiley is going to betray him to the Head."

Tom wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Well, it was jolly plucky of him to go into the river for you," he said. "But all the same, if he's deceiving the Head and all the fellows, it ought to come out. He's no right to do that, whatever his motive may be. But I don't catch on to it at all. If looks go for anything, Torrence is as straight as a die."

"He looks it," assented Lowther. "But, dash it all, a straight fellow uses his own name, not another chap's."

"That's so! It's a giddy puzzle."

"I can understand his keeping Ridsdale dark, at a big school like this," said Tom. "He's not bound to talk about his private affairs, and snobs like Racke and Crooke would jeer at him. It's a case of least said soonest mended. But his name—"

"There's the rub," said Lowther.

"I don't know his motive," said Manners. "I don't want to—now. But I'm standing by him, after what he's done, and after what I've done. I'm going to help him, if I can. But how? He will be bunked from St. Jim's when that brute Smiley gives him away to the Head."

"It can't be helped, old chap," said Tom. "If he's really taken the Head in, he must expect it."

"I'm going to help him, somehow," said Manners stubbornly.

"The Smiley man seems to be a pretty sort of a rotter, anyhow," said Monty Lowther. "A ducking in a ditch is what he wants. But we can't stop him coming here to see the Head if he chooses."

"And it's all my fault!" muttered Manners miserably.

Tea was over, and the Terrible Three left Study No. 10 and went down the stairs. Manners in a mood of remorseful misgiving, and his comrades very much puzzled and perplexed.

They sauntered out into the quadrangle, where the dusk was falling. Taggles, the porter, was at the gates, with his bunch of keys in his hand, but the gates were not yet closed. The chums of the Shell heard the old porter's voice.

"You clear hoff! You can't come in here! Now you mind what I say, and get going."

"I've called to see the 'Ead!"

Manners started violently.

"That's Smiley!" he breathed.

"Oh, my hat!" Tom Merry whistled. "Then he's come!"

Manners hurried down to the gates, and his comrades followed him. In the gateway stood the shabby, squat figure of Smiley, his ill-favoured, shifty face adorned by a black eye, evidently the result of the hefty drive Torrence had delivered in Rycombe Lane.

"I'm coming in, my man," said Smiley savagely. "I've got a special message for the 'Ead."

"Oh, rubbish!" said Taggles derisively. "The 'Ead don't see fellers of your kidney. You clear hoff!"

"You take my name to your master, you blooming cheeky menial," said Smiley. "I tell you it's important." He glanced at Manners, as the three Shell fellows arrived on the scene. "Ere's a young gent what can tell you I've got business with your 'cadmaster."

"You know this feller, Master Manners?" asked Taggles, perplexed.

Manners' eyes gleamed at the shifty rascal.

"I know he's a scoundrel, and he's been trying to extort money from a St. Jim's chap," he said. "Don't let him in, Taggles."

"Well, he looks that sort," said Taggles. "Outside, my man."

"I'm coming in!" yelled Smiley.

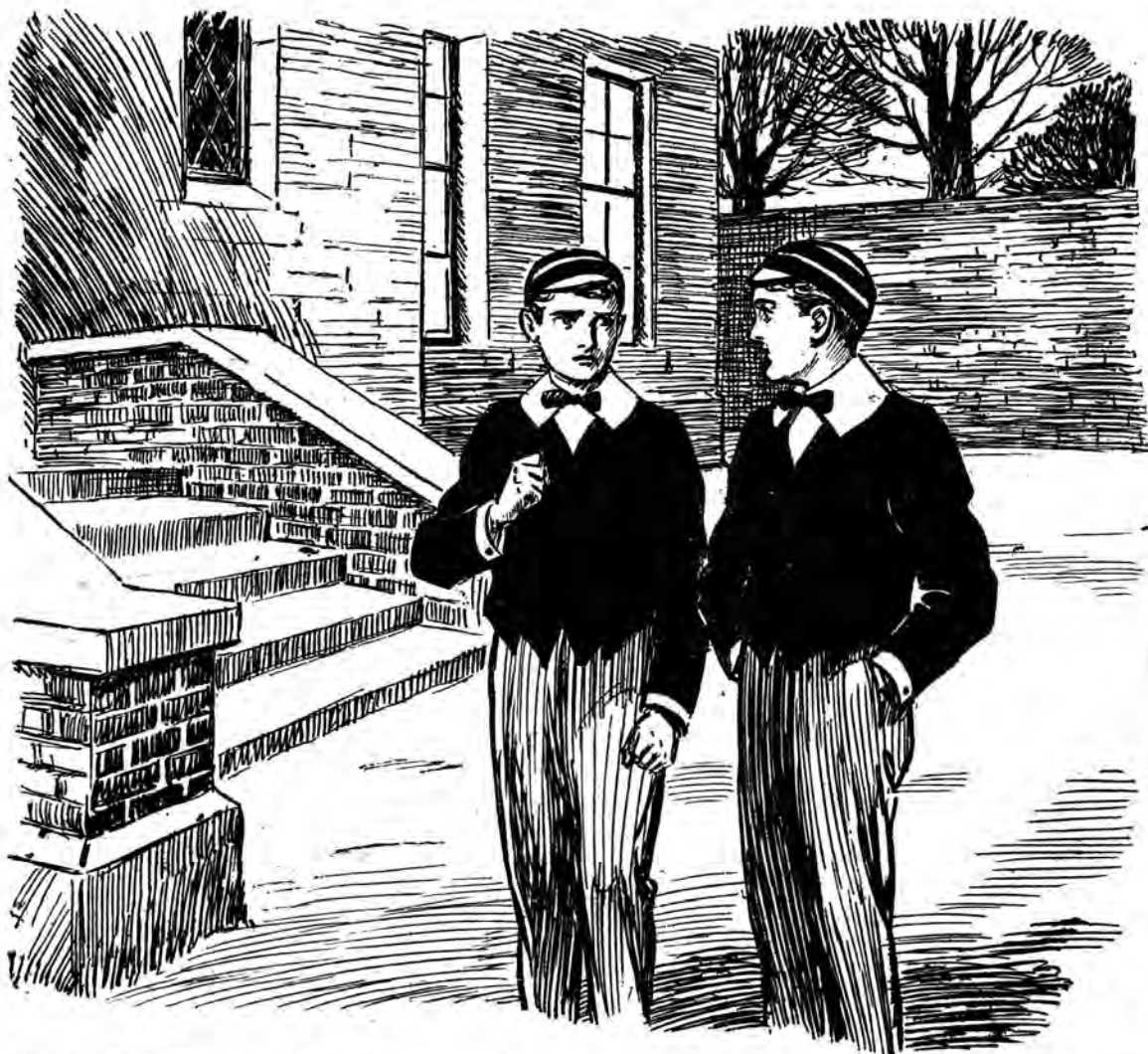
"That you ain't! You— Oh, lor!" he gasped, as the rascal gave him a violent shove and tramped past him as he staggered.

"Collar him!" exclaimed Manners.

"I—I say, Manners!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Back me up!"

Manners rushed at the shifty, shabby Smiley. His chums exchanged a rather doubtful glance, and then followed Manners. Three pairs of hands were laid on Smiley at once.



As the two juniors were parting to go to their different Houses, Manners found his voice. "Torrence! I—I'm sorry!" "All serene," said Torrence, "it was my fault." "It wasn't—it was mine," said Manners huskily. "I—I've treated you rottenly! I—I'm sorry—it's no good saying so, now that I have landed you into trouble, but—but it's all I can say!" (See page 13.)

"Out you go, you scoundrel!" exclaimed Manners. "Let go!" roared Smiley. "You young rip, you know as much about that there Parkinson as I do. I'm going to tell his 'eadmaster."

"Outside!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Kick the brute out!"

Smiley struggled savagely in the grasp of the Terrible Three. They swung him towards the gateway, handling the rascal without ceremony. The yells and imprecations of Smiley drew a crowd of St. Jim's fellows to the spot.

"Outside!" panted Tom Merry.

"Look out—"

"Collar him!"

Smiley twisted himself loose in the gateway, and, dodging the grasping hands of the Terrible Three, he rushed in. Tom Merry & Co. rushed after him into the quadrangle.

"Stop him!" panted Manners.

"Bai Jove! What's the woe—"

"Stop him!"

Smiley twisted and dodged and ran on, with a crowd of juniors after him. He ran almost into the arms of Kildare of the Sixth, hurrying out of the School House in the dusk to see what the trouble was.

Kildare's grasp closed on his collar.

"Now then—"

"Let go!" howled Smiley. "I'm asking to see the 'Ead, young fellow-me-lad; I've got noos for him—important noos and—"

"Rot!" snapped Kildare. "Who's this man, Tom Merry?"

"A rotter, a scoundrel!" panted Manners. "We—we were helping Taggles turn him out—"

"He knows!" howled Smiley. "He knows what I'm going to tell the 'eadmaster, he does, about young Parkinson—"

"What on earth does he mean, Manners?" exclaimed the Sixth-Former, still holding Smiley with an iron grip on his collar. Smiley wriggled in vain in the hefty grasp of the captain of St. Jim's.

The Head's study window opened, and the severe face of Dr. Holmes looked out on the startling scene.

"What is it, Kildare?"

"This rowdy, sir, this man says he wishes to see you—"

"Let him come in, then."

"Oh! Very well, sir."

Kildare released Smiley's collar.

"Follow me," he said.

"After you, sir!" said Mr. Smiley, with an impudent leer. And Kildare, without another look at the dingy rascal, strode into the House, with Smiley at his heels.

"That does it!" said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther whistled.

"The game's up for Torrence, then," muttered Manners huskily. "After—after what he did for me, this is what I've done for him!" Manners' voice choked.

"What the thump is the row about?" asked Figgins of the New House. "Who's that johnny, you chaps?"

"Looks no end of a brute, doesn't he?" said Pratt of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove, you know, he is a feahful wottah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He bwushed past me quite wudely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who the thump is he?" said Blake.

"He was calling himself Smiley," said Fatty Wynn. "I heard him speaking to Taggles. Talking about somebody named Parkinson."

"Nobody of that name at St. Jim's," said Figgins.

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Manners closed his lips hard. Through the dusk he sighted Eric Torrence coming up with three or four New House fellows, attracted by that amazing "shindy" in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

By the slight start he gave, Manners knew that Torrence had caught Fatty Wynn's words.

Manners joined the new junior.

"It's all up!" he muttered. "He's here!"

"Smiley?" asked Torrence.

"Yes, Kildare's taken him in to see the Head."

"What a giddy visitor for the Head!" smiled Torrence.

"I fancy it's the first time he's had a visitor like that."

Manners stared at him.

"You're not afraid?"

"Not at all."

"But—but—" stammered Manners.

Torrence laughed.

"Look!" he said.

He pointed to the big, lighted doorway of the School House. Kildare had reappeared there—with Smiley! His hand was on Smiley's collar again, and Smiley walked, or rather cringed along, under that powerful grasp. The shifty rascal looked very different now. He had entered the house impudent and self-confident, he left it crestfallen, with all the leering impudence taken out of him by that brief interview with the headmaster of St. Jim's.

Without a word, sneaking along in the grasp of the big Sixth-Former, Smiley cringed away to the school gates.

Manners stared after him.

"He—he must have told the Head!" he breathed.

"No doubt," assented Torrence.

"You'll be sent for."

"I don't suppose so."

"They're turning him out, anyhow," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

A crowd of the fellows followed Kildare and the hapless blackmailer down to the gates. Kildare marched Smiley out. Then, without a word, quietly but heftily, he kicked the shifty rascal, and started him up the road. There was a howl from

"Not a bit of it," said Monty Lowther. "No business of ours."

"Not in the least," said Manners quickly.

Torrence laughed.

"But I don't mind explaining," he said. "It's not exactly a secret, but a fellow naturally doesn't like to shout his private affairs out all over the school. So long as you were up against me I didn't intend to say a word. But perhaps I was a bit too stiff about it. Only, you see, my uncle told me I'd better say nothing about it here. He said there were all sorts of fellows at St. Jim's, and the least said soonest mended. And nobody had a right to ask about my private affairs, anyhow."

"That's quite right," said Manners, colouring. "We're not asking now. It's a queer bizney, but we take you on trust."

"Good man! If you take me on trust I don't mind explaining, in the least," said Torrence, laughing. "My uncle—"

"Colonel Torrence?" asked Tom.

"Yes. Really my uncle," smiled Torrence, "and one of the best. He was an old St. Jim's man, as I dare say you know. He's been away from England since I was a little nipper, but when he came back he took me in hand. You see, my people weren't rich, and my poor old pater was killed in Flanders, and the mater was jolly glad to get me into a school as good as Ridsdale, though it was only a semi-detached house at Margate with a brass plate on the door. When Uncle Torrence came home he looked us out, and he rather liked me when I was fetched home to see him. No accounting for tastes, you know."

Torrence laughed again.

"I left Ridsdale as Eric Parkinson, and I came to St. Jim's as Eric Torrence," he went on. "It seems to puzzle you chaps. But I was at Ridsdale under my own name, and I'm at St. Jim's under my own name."

Tom Merry rubbed his nose.

"I've known a chap with six front names," he said, "but I never heard before of a chap having two surnames."

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Smiley. He did not wait for another kick. He took to his heels and ran, and vanished into the winter dusk.

CHAPTER 10.

What's In a Name?

TAP!

It was a knock at the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell, where the Terrible Three had gathered after the exciting episode in the quad. A bright fire blazed in Tom Merry's study, and Monty Lowther was busy at it, turning out a masterly welsh rabbit for supper. A fragrance of toasted cheese scented Study No. 10 in the Shell.

"Trot in!" called out Tom Merry. "Oh, Torrence!"

Torrence of the New House stepped in.

Manners gave him a cheery nod.

"Glad to see you," he said. "Take a pew, old man."

"All serene—what?" asked Torrence with his cheery smile.

"I—I thought I'd just look in—"

"Just in time for supper, old bean," said Monty Lowther.

"Manners isn't going to bite. His bark's always worse than his bite, anyhow."

"Fathead!" said Manners. "You're always welcome in this study, Torrence. I—I'm only too glad that I haven't done you any harm, as I supposed I had. I can't understand it, but I'm glad."

"It's simple enough," said Torrence, taking a seat on the corner of the table. "I think I owe you fellows some explanation."

"Not at all," said Tom.

A TIP FROM YOUR EDITOR.

Thursday, January 15th, will see the publication of a new work of great importance to all boys and young men who are starting out in life. "HARMSWORTH'S BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA," written by Cabinet Ministers, Treasury officials, and some of our greatest business men, will contain full information on every branch of business and commerce. It will form a complete guide to the choice of a career, and will supply everything necessary for study and advancement. It is to be issued in fortnightly parts at 1/3 per part—only just over 1d. per day. If you are ambitious, if you want to be successful, make a point of buying Part 1. You will see at once how useful it is going to be to you. You will be able to get it at any newsagent or bookstall.

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"Yet it's quite simple."

"Simple as Euclid," said Monty Lowther.

"You see, my jolly old uncle adopted me," said Torrence. "Being the mater's brother, and a giddy old bachelor, I suppose he had nothing better to do. One condition was that I should adopt his name, instead of my own, and, as it had been the mater's name, naturally I had no objection. In fact, I like Torrence better than Parkinson as a patronymic. Anyhow, as Shakespeare remarks, what's in a name? I dare say you chaps have heard that a fellow's name can be legally changed by deed-poll?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Manners.

"Oh!" repeated Tom Merry and Lowther blankly.

They stared at Torrence.

That explanation had never occurred to them, simple as it was.

"The jolly old colonel has made me his heir, and hands out a good allowance," went on Torrence. "He's a wealthy man, and I can tell you it's made a lot of difference to us. I've taken his name, and I'd black his boots for him if he wanted me to. I was Parkinson at Ridsdale—I'm Torrence at St. Jim's, and it's my own real name, legally."

"I—I see!" stammered Manners.

"The Head knew, of course," said Torrence. "There was nothing secret about it, only, being a private matter, I didn't see fit to shout it out, especially as I didn't see why anybody should be interested in the matter excepting myself. Catch on?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Quite!" he said. "Manners, old man, of all the duffers I ever—"

"Of all the goats—" said Monty Lowther.

Manners was crimson.

"Pile it on," he said. "You can't call me a bigger ass than I call myself. I've begged your pardon already, Torrence. I'll beg it again, if you like."

"Rot!" said Torrence cheerily. "What about that welsh rabbit?"

Four cheery fellows sat down to supper in Study No. 10. The clouds had rolled by, and after supper three School House fellows marched across the quad with Torrence, to escort him back to his own House. And Figgins & Co., with great surprise, saw Manners and Torrence part on the best of terms at the door of the New House. The trouble was over, and it was a happy end to Manners' Feud.

THE END.

The two boy sleuths, "Live-Wire" Lindsay and Jerry O'Gorman, risk everything in their desperate attempt to run down the elusive master-criminal, Ultima!

The U-WAVE!

By
LESTER BIDSTON



A Thrilling Yarn of Wireless Adventure and Intrigue.

CHAPTER 1.

The Stolen "Beam."

"GREAT smoke! They're gone—gone! Not a line or a scrap left! Jay, come here quickly!"

The urgency in "Live-Wire" Lindsay's voice was so unmistakable that his partner instantly abandoned the "Radio Record" he was reading, and dashed towards the snugger—a small room behind the shop and the Shanty's business office.

Entering, he saw Lyle Lindsay kneeling in front of the desk, wrenching drawer after drawer open, turning their contents impatiently and tossing them recklessly to the floor.

"Bedad, it's a fine row an' a broth av a mess ye're making!" Jerry O'Gorman grumbled. "Phwat's gone—an' phwat's all th' fuss about?"

Lyle looked up, white-faced and agitated—a combination so unusual that Jerry knew the matter must be serious.

"The papers!" Lyle gasped. "The complete plans of our directional 'beam'—the loaded wave-carrier that's taken us two whole years to perfect!"

Instantly Jerry was beside his pal, searching frenziedly as though he found the statement impossible of belief.

"Shure, they're not here!" he grunted at last. "It's a week or more since I saw them. You haven't had 'em out, by any chance?"

"No, you ass!" Lyle grunted. "We've been too busy stocktaking ever since that Rivington affair."

"But if any spalpeen knew of their existence what good could he get from 'em?" Jerry protested. "Faith, they've given me many a fat head, an' I doubt any but ourselves radin' 'em aright."

"One man could," Lyle answered. "And that man is capable of reading them and using them as well."

"You mean Ultima?" Jerry whispered, voicing the name of one who was now seldom absent from their thoughts.

"I mean Ultima," Lyle admitted, adding quietly: "Jay, on the night I was drugged and Cremlin's jewels were stolen we wondered why Ultima dropped out of the game so mysteriously. You'll also remember, coming home,

how mightily worried I was that my keys were missing."

"But ye found 'em atop of the desk where ye've often thrown them before," Jerry protested. "Faith, I don't see the connection. You decided yourself ye must have left them there."

"It's evident I decided wrong," Lyle answered, glancing ruefully at his desk. "Can't you see, Jay, whilst Armstrong fled to London with the plunder Ultima hurried here." He sighed gloomily. "Of the two Ultima's game was the bigger," he added.

"Shure, it's swell ideas ye have of the beam," Jerry grinned. "The jewels were worth pots o' money—I don't know if the beam iver will be."

"It isn't the beam's cash value, you juggins!" Lyle snapped. "I'm worrying over the secret of the loaded carrier wave and the terrible threat it becomes in the hands of an expert wireless crook—as, to our sorrow, we know Ultima to be."

"The loaded wave is your own private stunt," Jerry answered. "I've helped you in patches, but I don't quite see what Ultima can do wid it."

"He can make himself the most powerful rogue in the world," Lyle retorted. "In fact, it's difficult to place a limit to his powers if he retains freedom long enough."

He mused in silence for a time, and Jerry commenced to gather up the litter of papers from the carpet.

"It's kid's knowledge that wireless is a force coming through the ether—that telephony's only a side-line, so to speak," Lyle said.

Jerry didn't deal in "kid's knowledge," so he continued his siding-up job without comment.

"That force, old boy, is capable of carrying more than sound," Lyle continued gloomily. "It's capable of carrying substance—substance disintegrated, that is."

"Faith, put it in Ainglish!" Jerry protested.

"Well, break a substance up, reduce it to atoms, and the carrier wave is capable of projecting it through the ether," Lyle explained. "That is the theory I worked on, and, in a small way, I've proved it."

"You mane that Ultima might disintegrate himself an' reassemble in this room?" Jerry grinned.

Despite his gloom, Lyle chuckled. "Not quite," he answered. "But if he is capable of completing what I've more than half done—and I'm sure he is—well, there is going to be giddy old fireworks!"

"And we'll be in 'em?" Jerry asked eagerly.

"Very much in them," Lyle answered grimly. "Just remember, Jay, we're the inventors of the loaded wave, the only fellows who know its possibilities—so Ultima is bound to try and squash us first."

"You mane, once we're out of th' way, he has a free market, a monopoly?" Jerry demanded.

"He scoops the pool," Lyle admitted. "An' how d'you reckon to stop him?" Jerry asked.

"Until he emerges from cover we can do nothing," Lyle replied ruefully. "Every blessed policeman in Europe is looking for Ultima—and looking in vain, so far."

"Faith, I'm thinking he'll be wireless'n' a love-token very soon," Jerry said.

"We'll know about it when he does," Lyle replied quietly.

But there the Shanty partners were wrong. It was not Ultima's way to work in the open. Rather did he, like the fox, burrow underground—seeking to lull his victims into deceptive security, to strike when danger least threatened.

They reported their loss to the authorities, without going into details about the loaded wave, and they worked hard and late for several weeks drawing up new plans and assembling much strange material. Then, one night, Jerry began reading out an interesting article on radio mishaps, without having a suspicion that it held any personal interest for himself or his pal.

"Faith, now, these journalist johnnies THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 883

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are beginning to put as many crimes on innocent radio as the little lawyer looms put on the pictures!" he chuckled. "Just listen to this, bedad—it's headed 'Radio Danger.'

"In less than forty-eight hours three strange radio mishaps have been reported to us. In Chorley, a two-valve set exploded with the force of a .5 shell; in Horwich, the contents of a six volt accumulator bubbled like boiling pitch; and in Bolton, Mr. Danny Snell, the genial chairman of Whiteside Wanderers, has been found unconscious beside his set. In all these cases the injured people exhibit advanced symptoms of shell-shock. We are forced to the conclusion that 'listening-in' must be classed amongst the more dangerous hobbies, that the unknown something we name 'ether' secretes an uncanny threat to mankind."

"There's a lot more av it!" Jerry chuckled. "But did ye iver hear such flip-flap?"

But Lyle's face reflected none of Jerry's amusement.

"Chorley, Horwich, Bolton," he repeated slowly. "It's no newspaper howl, Jay; it's the reawakening of Ultima!"

Jerry stared.

"Shure, bhoy, an' how d'ye work that out?" he asked.

"Just plain, cold logic," Lyle answered soberly. "Wireless sets don't burst; listeners-in cannot get shell-shock; and the ether holds no danger unknown to science. No, old man, Ultima's growing busy. He's built from our plans; he is turning our own brain-wave against us—as we knew he must do."

"But why begin by outing other fellows in whom he can have no real interest?" Jerry argued.

"Fortune of war," Lyle snapped impatiently. "Ultima's station must be beyond those three towns. He is experimenting, groping his way through the ether, trying to reach out and focus the beam's full force on this show of ours. It's certain that the damaged sets have chanced to be in his path—it's a sure thing he's a most horribly annoyed man that the accidents have happened at all."

"Y'mane that a bullet's no respecter of persons—that the beam destroys innocent and guilty alike?" Jerry asked.

Lyle nodded.

"That's near enough," he smiled. "Anyway, we're not lying down to be kicked, we're not waiting for old Ult to broil, frizzle, fry, or poison us—we're adjoining to the tower to start a giddy old counter-offensive on our own!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Loaded "Wave."

THE radio enthusiasts in the Shanty's neighbourhood had exhibited full measure of curiosity when a gang of workmen planted four forty-foot poles behind the shop, and curiosity had risen to fever-heat when a wooden hut was securely clamped on top of the poles.

To satisfy the multitude of inquirers the partners had simply explained that they were preparing to experiment in beam projection. That was strictly true. But had Lyle mentioned the weird threat the crow's-nest was built to counter he'd have been accused of leg-pulling, or been favoured with nasty remarks about the reality of "radio mania."

There was nothing spectacular in the hut's furnishings—in fact, the average sightseer would have been bored to

distraction by an examination of the mass of wires that had been assembled in the Shanty's fittings-shop and laboriously lifted to the nest during sundry a.m. hours.

But that is the way of this marvel we name wireless. Miracles are being wrought every day, yet the wizards performing them are cold, calculating scientists, who make the unbelievable merely commonplace.

In this rather ugly eyrie an ebonite plate mounting six valves and covering unusual circuits was packed away in one corner. Near by was a series of twelve-inch test-tubes filled with tinted acids, connected to the set by selenium strands that glowed golden red. But the real wizard's wand was an erection that stood breast-high—a nest of reflectors, or grids, composed of packed wires so arranged in relation to the aerial that the wired arc would act on other waves exactly as a parabolic mirror concentrates and reflects rays of light. In short, the whole invention was to wireless as is the burning-glass to the sun.

"Now, old dear," Lyle said, as they climbed into the nest. "we've a beam here as powerful as anything Ultima is likely to focus on us, yet he's got us 'on toast' in more ways than one."

"As how?" Jerry demanded.

"Well, our new dynamo gives us three kilowatts—that's all right," Lyle answered. "But he's got the initiative—that's all wrong. I mean, he knows exactly where we are. We only know that he's screened somewhere behind Chorley, Horwich, or Bolton. Again, he can choose his own wave-length—and what that'll be leaves us guessing."

"Sounds a sad mess," Jerry grunted.

"But not a hopeless one," Lyle answered brightly. "First, the three towns he's blundered into give us a fairly clean line as to his direction; we won't have to 'feel' over a very wide arc for him. Then, as regards wave-length, the mishaps reported in the newspapers will have taught him to use either a very high or a very low wave, so as to avoid 'fouling' a chance listener-in."

"And as beam wireless is a jolly sight more searching on a low wave, he'll likely use that?" Jerry suggested shrewdly.

"Eggsakerly!" Lyle nodded. "I'm banking on something between eighty and one hundred and twenty—sort of inviting disaster, in the hope of locating and overloading his dinky little 'carrier'."

Jerry shook his head.

"Even now I don't quite get your game," he sighed. "To do us any harm, owd Ult's got to tune in on a wave we're using, hasn't he?"

"Sure thing," Lyle agreed.

"Yet now it's yourself says use a low wave that nobody else'll be using," Jerry complained. "Bedad, if Ultima uses a wave that no one wants, why not let him have it? It'll harm no one?"

Lyle grinned.

"Sound reasoning—only you're forgetting one little fact," he answered, the smile swiftly vanishing. "At the moment, Ultima is simply searching out our exact position—a thing none so easy to a fellow who must be somewhat new to a very intricate game. Now, isn't it common sense to suggest that one of his many subordinates is quietly located in this neighbourhood, listening-in on a prearranged wave-length with an ordinary directional screen, and reporting to Ultima the exact position when sound reaches maximum?"

"Shure, that possible," Jerry agreed cautiously. "But even admit he gets our position to a fractional degree, I still

don't see how he can force us to listen-in to suit him."

"The other thing you're forgetting," Lyle answered quietly, "is the fact that we run a wireless outfitting shop, and that every shop of our class is forced to give wireless demonstrations to its customers during broadcasting hours. In other words, Ultima knows that we must tune in on B.E.C. wave-lengths almost every afternoon and evening, and once he has our position mathematically correct—he has us."

Jerry thought it out, and whistled shrill surprise when Lyle's shrewd reasoning struck home.

"Bedad, you're the lad to tune into other fellow's brain-waves!" he murmured admiringly.

Lyle let the compliment pass.

"It's about bed-time for the B.B.C. stations, and, until the 'C.W.' Press stuff warms up round midnight, a slack half-hour," he said. "It's also Ultima's best time for really reliable testing, and very soon he's going to fasten his unseen thread on the show below."

Though Lyle's arguments had seemed so sound, in two vital points he was hopelessly astray. It was impossible for him to know it, but Ultima had already fastened his thread, and the supposed mishaps in Lancashire towns were merely his callous method of testing the uncanny power he had stolen.

But, innocently confident that they had time in hand, they set the six valves glowing, connected the outside antenna, and capped their ears with phones. In silence Lyle moved the wired arc by minute degrees, Jerry slowly varied the tuner between 80 and 120, and they strained their hearing without any real hope of luck coming their way so quickly.

Then a shrill howl vibrated the phones and sank swiftly to silence.

"S-sh, boy!" Jerry whispered. "Someone working round ninety—I'll tune back!"

Swiftly reversing, they pitched straight into the last sound they expected to hear—the sad wail of a collo!

"Larry's lament!" Jerry gasped. "Playin' his fiddle, and, above all, broadcastin' his 'Broken Melody'—after the Rotterdam affair!"

"It's Ultima right enough," Lyle muttered. "He isn't broadcasting, though—he's working on a beam that few can possibly trap; and he's playing a fiddle simply because it is the most penetrating sound borne by the ether."

Abruptly the music stopped. Almost immediately it was replaced by a drawing, cultured voice:

"Hallo, Three Pip Don! Please report reception. Over."

"Transmission perfect," came the reply. "Fixed as you are, I would ask an immediate repeat—in fact, an exceptional opportunity has arisen to carry through to a great finish."

That ended the conversation, but the fiddle started again, so loud and clear that Lyle had little difficulty in finding sound's maximum and in fixing the arc of his wires on the exact fount of transmission.

But he was ill-satisfied, and frowned heavily whilst studying a scale map of Lancashire.

"Too easy, Jay—almost as though Ultima wanted us to pick up his direction," he grumbled. "Stranger still, the line takes us back to Rivington—to Greystones, or beyond it."

"Shure, he'd never dare show his ugliness there again," Jerry answered. Lyle completely ignored Jerry's words. Instead, he was glancing from the wireless valves to the ordinary electric bulb

suspended from the roof—obviously puzzled over something that was not apparent to his partner.

"Faith, phwat's moitherin' ye, bhoy?" Jerry demanded.

"The lights—they seem to be growing stronger," Lyle answered hesitatingly. "It's queer—it almost looks as though they—"

Unconscious of Jerry's impatient curiosity, Lyle's voice trailed away, and he bent closer to the six glowing valves. Then suddenly he voiced shrill surprise, tore the phones from Jerry's head, and followed suit with his own.

"Down, Jay!" he cried. "Drop flat—drop, you ass!"

He literally hurled his pal to the rough boards, and flung himself down in the same second. They had a momentary impression of a lightning flash bursting full in their eyes, and their hearing was deafened by an ear-splitting crash!

Then, as an echo that rolls back to its source, a devastating roar ascended from the Shanty, and they were horrified by sight of red, flaming fury that shot past the hut's open door.

The roof and walls of the tiny place split asunder in a dozen places, the four great aerial masts that supported it bent and snapped like flimsy matchwood, and the two bewildered experimenters dropped to the ground in a welter of tangled wreckage!

CHAPTER 3.

Lyle Blunders!

FORTUNATELY, the flooring-board on which they lay dropped in a solid segment, taking the worst of their fall and saving them from serious injury.

But they acquired bruises in amazing profusion. When they finally struggled to their feet and gazed on the blazing inferno that had been their great pride in life Jerry became sourly and vindictively morose.

"D'ye reckon Ultima's done that?" he yelled, staring at the Shanty's burning ruins.

"As surely as if we'd watched him," Lyle answered.

"Then I'm huntin' him wid a gun from now on!" Jerry growled. "He's deprived us of the old Fleetwing, he's sent the shop and stock to glory. We owe him something that's goin' to be paid—eh, bhoy?"

"Surest thing you know!" Lyle snapped. "But he's got the interested sightseers rousin' up and rallyin' round, so it's us for the coy shadows. Come, Jay, we're not in this act—we're missing!"

"Shure, what bee's buzzin' in your box now, Lyle?" Jerry panted, as his pal hurried from the place, hugging the friendly darkness and avoiding the scores of startled people who were converging on the wrecked radio-shop.

Only when they were treading the silent streets a full mile from the disaster did Lyle consent to enlighten his chum.

"Jay, it's generally known that we were conducting some tall experiment and that we'd installed a pretty powerful plant—" he began.

"Shure, that's what we've been telling all the 'questioners,'" Jerry answered.

"And Ultima undoubtedly meant to put us well away to-night," Lyle continued.

"Faith, there's no doubt of that, the spalpeen!" Jerry grunted.

"Well, he failed, narrowly; but I'm hoping he won't know he failed at all," Lyle muttered. "There's enough petrol and wood in the store to turn it into a giddy old volcano, and a word to the

police'll make 'em jolly reticent as to what is found amongst the cinders afterwards."

Jerry whistled softly.

"Ye'll be letting everyone think we're part of the cinders?" he gasped.

"Just that," Lyle answered quietly. "It'll be generally thought that we were playing with forces greater than we could control—that we've paid for our folly with our lives."

Jerry was silent, hardly liking the deception, yet hesitating to criticise his partner's ideas. But Lyle guessed the thought he was holding back, and made the matter plain.

"Jay, I warned you that there would be no limit to Ultima's power on the day he read the stolen plans aright," he began. "To-night he proved how great that power is. Had we died, it would have appeared the merest accident, and Ultima would have had a clear field and a diabolical force to forward his crooked aims."

"Yet he failed, for we still live," Jerry interrupted.



"Down, Jay!" cried Lyle. "Drop flat—drop, you ass!" He literally hurled his pal to the rough boards and flung himself down in the same second. The two chums had a momentary impression of a lightning flash bursting full in their eyes, and they were deafened by an ear-splitting crash.

Lyle nodded.

"We live, because the loaded carrier-wave's a new science—an uncanny mystery, whose surface is hardly scratched as yet," he replied.

"Faith, a mystery it is!" Jerry sighed. "I know Ultima bust our set and fired the Shanty, but I'm all astray as to how he did it."

"Radio activity to the ninth degree!" Lyle snapped. "We've been closely watched. Ultima already had the 'beam' locked on our set, and the moment we tuned in he commenced loading the beam with a tremendous voltage. It's plain had we been working with self-contained accumulators he'd have blown us to dust; instead, most of the energy was carried through the cable to the Shanty's dynamo, so that we only got the backfire of the explosion, so to speak."

"Bad enough it was, bedad!" Jerry grumbled.

"Anyway, he's become an international menace," Lyle answered. "Besides, we allowed the thing to drop into his hands, so it is up to us to squash him."

"Bad cess to it! He's put us out at a job and ruined us!" Jerry groused.

"Our job's to break him!" Lyle snapped. "Nothing doing to-night, so I vote we beg a snooze off Jimmy Dibbs, an old pal who lives hereabouts. Tomorrow we get out Rivington way and start burrowing."

The morning papers proved how cunningly Ultima had worked. The locally famous Radio Shanty had ceased to exist. Startling theories were advanced to account for the terrible explosion that shattered it, a great regret was expressed for the sad fate of the young experimenters who had owned it.

But not a line or a word was printed about Ultima and the stolen plans; though the proper authorities knew far more than they admitted to the many inquiring reporters who nosed round the charred ruins.

"Old son," Lyle chuckled, as he finished reading one highly-coloured account, "if Ultima swallows that blithe-some obituary, he's going full-steam

ahead, and we'll soon hear more about the loaded wave."

"Phwat line d'ye reckon he'll take?" Jerry asked.

"Any old line that'll give him big profits and quick returns!" Lyle chuckled. "The radio-wave, for instance, will make triple steel as soft as Cheddar cheese, and Ultima's simply going to wade into the world's valuables—to try and garner a gigantic harvest whilst the going's good."

Jerry nodded understanding.

"And our game. I suppose you have a plan?" he asked.

"First, locate his nest; he can't carry a high-power station about on his back," Lyle grinned. "Once we find that, he'll have to be mighty slim to dodge the police this time."

"Shure, yes!" Jerry laughed. "The Press is growin' rale nasty about the bluebottle's blunderin' ways in connection with Ulty." He tossed the paper across to Lyle. "Ye'll be readin' there that Lord Basingbrook has returned to Greystones, and that he's raled about the way Ultima used his house to work the Crenlin affair from."

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But Lyle ignored the paper.

"Basingbrook doesn't matter," he said. "You get on your pins, Jay, for we've a busy day waiting us."

As a result of their activities and a long interview with Liverpool's chief of police, they were leisurely running a touring-car up and down the network of roads that lie beyond Horwich that same night. The six stolid fellows who accompanied them would never have been taken for a squad of Liverpool's keenest law officers, and the frame aerial that adorned the back of the car was merely a sign that is rapidly becoming commonplace.

"Now, gentlemen, it's about the hour when ghosties walk and nightbirds become busy," Lyle announced. "You know the programme—to circle this district in the hope of crossing Ultima's 'beam,' if he's working, and to try to trace the beam to its source."

"Rather like hunting a shadow, Mr. Lindsay," Inspector Hansen smiled.

"That's exactly Ultima's description—a shadow," Lyle replied. "Anyway, shadow-hunting's the only way that'll bring this job to an end, so crank her up, Jerry dear, and don't rattle her beyond the needful."

Jerry complied, but it is doubtful if ever a charabanc party spent a time more packed with sheer drab dreariness. Lyle insisted upon absolute silence, and for two deadly dull hours they trundled through deserted country lanes—Lyle listening in to nothing until his head ached, and Jerry, at the wheel, growing increasingly despondent.

"Shure, now, it's a wash-out!" the latter grouched, at last. "Ult's slapin' th' slape av the injust, an' we're—"

"Shurrup!" Lyle suddenly hissed. "Stop the thing! Back slowly, Jay. I ran through something—Ah, that's it! Woa!"

For a moment he listened, then indicated spare phones.

"Put 'em on, Hansen," he whispered, "and watch the valves!"

"Sounds like trickling water," Hansen decided, a second later. "And, my goodness, the valve glow's increasing, as you said it would."

Lyle nodded.

"The loaded carrier-wave—we've tested it too often to mistake its peculiar note," he answered. "Back the car, Jay; we'll soon make certain."

He quickly convinced the doubting inspector. By slowly running the car up and down the lane he proved that the sound "like trickling water" cut a clean twenty-foot path across the road, and that on either side lay dead silence. Beyond argument, Ultima was again operating the dangerous wave, though its source and its object were still tantalisingly uncertain.

"Now, inspector, as the beam points on Bolton, we must work away from that place," Lyle said quickly. "Whip her up, Jay—time's short."

Lyle's plan was simple and clever. By criss-crossing the path of the beam he must, sooner or later, work up to the plant that operated it.

That, at least, was the theory of it. In practice it left them in the air, so to speak. Actually the hunt carried them nearer and nearer to the notorious Grey-stones, and finally ended at a little country cottage quite close to the walled estate.

Twice they circled the place, the beam powerfully assertive in front of it, utterly silent beyond it. Then, as though the unseen inmates had taken fright, the beam was still and Lyle discarded the now useless phones.

"There's the source of the radio wave,"

Hansen," he whispered. "The place is in darkness; but somewhere behind those walls Ultima is waiting!"

"But, Lyle, it's silly," Jerry protested. "Ultima used the big house yonder when the lord was away; he'd never dare come nosin' round again when Basingbrook's at home and yellin' for his gore."

"Sounds tall, I'll own," Lyle frowned. "But there it is—the frame cannot lie."

"We'll soon find out!" Hansen snapped briskly. "Men, over the wall—surround the place and light up every window and door!" He turned to the chums. "You fellows come with me; we'll ask, or force, an entrance."

A moment later he was thundering on the door, making enough noise to rouse the countryside. But not a sound or sign of life came from the cottage until he yelled angry orders to his heavy-weights to break a way in.

Then, as if this had been a signal, an upper window suddenly opened. In the light that Hansen focussed on it they saw the head and shoulders of a stout old dame, night-capped and beribboned, sharply outlined.

"Dearie me, what ever is the matter?" the old lady shrilled. "I've nothing worth stealing! Go away—leave a lone old body to her sleep!"

"Stop yelling, ma!" Hansen called up. "We're police officers. You'd better come down and open the door."

"I won't! I don't believe it! Go away!" came the explosive answer. "Widow Wilson has nothing to do with policemen—can't abide the things!"

"Don't close the window—listen to me," Hansen said quickly. "You'll either let us in, or we'll camp here whilst one of my men applies for a warrant. Then we'll turn the place upside down."

The old dame glared down in grim and expressive silence.

"Nice carryings on at two o'clock in the morning," she said caustically. "What ever is it you want, you—you big booby?"

"We're looking for a wireless set—one that's forgotten to take its little licence out," Hansen smiled.

"Wireless?" The dame's eyes opened wide. "That's the telephone thing without wires, isn't it—the new-fangled toy that's taken the place of a gramophone?"

"It has other uses," Hansen replied. "Come now, missus, open the door, and we'll be away in less than a minute."

"But I have no wireless—can't abide the things!" Widow Wilson shrilled.

"I don't think you can; but open the door, lady," Hansen replied patiently; adding in a whisper to Lyle: "I'm thinking you've struck a snag, young 'un."

Lyle had his doubts, and felt them growing when the elderly widow grumpily ordered them to wait whilst she "clad herself," and lectured poor Hansen caustically as to the complaint she'd lodge about his "impudence" on the morrow.

But finally she closed the window with a bang. Even then she kept them standing in the cold a good fifteen minutes before opening the door and sourly bidding them enter.

"Now, you stupid gawk, come and look for your silly toy," she chided bitterly. "Why men are allowed in the world I don't know; I never yet met one that had a dram o' sense in his whole body! If I had my way—"

Her tirade was shrill and unending—it cascaded without pause or diminution whilst Hansen and the chums glanced through the four tiny rooms that comprised the cottage. They drew blank, not a sign or a trace of wireless gadget was in evidence, and even Lyle was compelled to admit that a powerful transmitting set must quickly have been revealed to their prying eyes.

Then Hansen, his temper frayed and raw with the dame's bitter jibes, grew exceedingly wrath.

"Um—told the chief the thing was fantastically impossible!" he grunted, turning on Lyle. "Sure there is a radio beam—sure you haven't had nightmare, my lad?"

"Quite sure, and quite as sure that Ultima will prove it before long," Lyle answered quietly.

"Ultima!" Hansen snorted. "He's about as visible as your wave."

Then Widow Wilson put the finishing touch on the night's fiasco.

"Mr. Inspector, you haven't pushed your stupid head up the chimney yet," she giggled. "Wasn't there a play once where a German spy hid a wireless thing in his chimney?"

Hansen glared, tinted to a ripe purple, grunted, and strode for the door.

"Into the car, men!" he rasped, and glared at the chums. "You fellows coming, or perhaps you prefer to stay and examine the chimney?"

Jerry grinned; he saw the humour of the situation. But Lyle was quietly studying the old lady's face and appeared contentedly deaf to the inspector's sour sarcasm.

CHAPTER 4.

Lyle Goes Back:

LYLE remained tongue-tied until the car was well away from the cottage; then abruptly he called upon Jerry to halt.

"You've a man can drive back to the depot, inspector?" he asked.

"Well, yes," Hansen replied awkwardly. "But you're not leaving us, Lindsay? That woman's tongue upset me, I'm afraid, and I've offended you, eh?"

"Nothing like it," Lyle answered cheerfully. "I've an idea, that's all, and I'm going back to test it."

"But you must admit you drew a complete blank," Hansen protested.

"And made a complete ass of myself," Lyle agreed. "But we're going back, all the same."

The inspector did his level best to dissuade them from what he considered a futile journey; in fact, he was about to order his squad to forcibly detain the two stubborn fellows, when they took matters into their own hands by suddenly slipping away in the darkness.

"Faith, I'm like Hansen," Jerry said, as they again neared the cottage. "I'm not seein' as we can see more than we saw before."

"You're all at sea, what?" Lyle twitted. "Jay, that dear old dame talked too much to ring quite true; besides, either wireless science is just a silly swindle, or the beam simply must originate from this neighbourhood."

"Well, here we are again!" Jerry whispered presently. "What do we do—rouse th' owld leddy up again?"

"Not quite," Lyle chuckled. "We've looked inside the house and been laughed at; now we'll look outside and try to do a bit of laughing ourselves."

But, once again Lyle had to confess himself beaten. The lights of their pocket-lamps showed an extensive garden surrounding the tiny house on all four sides; but not a trace of out-house, or summer-house, or anything that could hide a wireless plant, was to be seen.

"Shure, there's plenty of thistles!" Jerry sniggered, when they had completely circled the low granite wall. "It's a paradise for donkeys—we'd better go inside."

To Jerry's amazement, Lyle answered by scaling the wall: then, crouching

low, he commenced to quarter the weed-grown ground with his electric torch. "Bedad, the poor chap's got the 'willies!'" Jerry gasped; and, leaning over the wall, he called softly: "Come back, Lyle lad! Ye'll be better f'r rest in bed."

"Oh, don't be funny!" Lyle snapped. "Drop over the wall, Jay, and look here!"

Wondering, Jerry made his way to Lyle's side—to find him on hands and knees facing a patch of dense bramble, shooting his light into the tangled place and grinning happily at what he saw.

"Now, Jay, what about it?" he demanded.

"Faith, it's a disused well, by th' look of it," Jerry replied. "I'm askin' th' same as you—what about it?"

"It's exactly the kind of place I was looking for," Lyle chuckled. "It's a disused well, and a very cleverly masked well—and I'm going down to find what it really does mask!"

"Hist, Lyle!" Jerry warned. "The old dame's spotted us—she's coming from the house."

"Don't move!" Lyle whispered. "We're well hidden; she might miss us."

Instantly deadening the torches, and hardly breathing, they crouched motionless. But their luck was out, apparently, for soon they heard the swish of disturbed branches, and saw a light making straight for their shelter.

They had no thought but that Widow Wilson was coming to oust them, angry and voluble; instead, they watched a broad-shouldered fellow force his way through the bushes, grope in a dark corner for a moment, then fling a heavy, knotted rope into the depths of the well.

Obviously unaware that keen eyes overlooked him, he knelt on the stone ledge, adjusted the rope to his liking, and carefully lowered himself over the ledge. His laboured breathing reached up to the hidden chums for half a minute; then—complete silence!

"Murtherin' Moike!" Jerry gasped. "If that isn't Widdy Wilson, I'm—I'm a flapper!"

"Of course it is—an' Hansen'd feel joyful if he knew the 'have' he's had!" Lyle chuckled. "Well, old dear, three a.m.'s a bit early to go visitin'; but I'm followin' his nibs down under."

"An' I'm followin' father's footsteps," Jerry murmured, as Lyle prepared to descend. "See you kape your face out of th' way av me fate!"

The descent was short and surprisingly easy. The rope, knotted at intervals of a yard, gave secure hand-holds, and Lyle was in such a hurry to touch bottom that he almost shot past the black opening of a narrow tunnel ere he noticed it.

Abruptly he stopped, reached up a warning hand to Jerry's leg, and swung himself gently inwards. Twice his feet failed to gain hold; then, digging his heels deep into loose soil, he won footing, and steadied the rope, until Jerry stood beside him.

"D'you get it, Jay?" he whispered. "The place has been dug out quite recently. You can smell the freshly-turned earth and the well below has taken the displaced stuff. Not a sound now—the widow can't be far away."

Sometimes risking a flash of torch, but mostly groping their way by touch alone, they crawled a full fifty yards before sighting a light far ahead. At the same time, the soil they trod gave way to hard, uneven stone, the tunnel suddenly widened, and they heard the sound of a low-pitched voice.

"Great smoke!" Lyle whispered.



Obviously unaware that keen eyes overlooked him, the broad-shouldered fellow knelt on the stone ledge and adjusted the rope to his liking, preparatory to carefully lowering himself over the edge.

"We're in the cutting of some old mine—quartz, by the feel of it."

"An old lead mine," Jerry hazarded. "There's plenty of 'em hereabouts, I know."

"That'll be it!" Lyle agreed, again moving cautiously onward.

The voice grew stronger with every step they took, reaching out from the far side of a great stone pillar left as support for the roof.

Five yards from this place, Lyle again stopped and placed his lips to Jerry's ear.

"Recognise the voice?" he breathed. Jerry shook his head, listened intently, then gasped.

"Ultima, himself!" he muttered. "But who's he talking to?"

By way of answer Lyle dropped to hands and knees and wormed his way cautiously round the pillar. Nor was Jerry far behind—all unprepared for a sight so amazing that he nearly betrayed their presence by a yell of surprise.

"Weepin' William!" he cried. "It's a blessed broadcastin' station we've dropped on!"

"And this shake-to is the transmitting chamber," Lyle whispered. "Softly, Jay; we'll listen in."

Carefully avoiding the cables that came from some dynamo away up the cutting and working their way along the side of a rough shed, they reached and stared through the wide-open door.

To a point the place was practically a copy of their own wrecked beam-station—complete with six valve set, wired arc, and hanging microphone!

But Lyle's lips tightened grimly as he noticed a thin, flexible cable running through the arc, its end widening to a fluted nozzle that was fixed to point exactly through the arc's centre.

To the venturesome chums the meaning of the sinister apparatus was plain. Stealing from Lyle's brain, Ultima had created a radio power that acted on the X-ray principle—an invisible energy that had already blown the Shanty to scrap, and one the wireless crook had again used with dastardly effect an hour since.

With his own lips, Ultima told how dastardly that purpose was, and how completely successful Lyle's invention

had been. They saw him now for the first time without disguise, they noted the strong lines of his pale, fleshy face, and the squat automatic that glinted beside his elbow was evidence of his watchful ruthlessness.

"Late—of course I'm late!" he was mouthing into the microphone. "You'll understand when I tell you that Lindsay, the prying fool, escaped the trap we laid for him and descended on me with a crowd of bulldozers twenty minutes ago. I bluffed 'em, but it means abandoning the plant—for Lindsay'll never rest until he's located it. Now, tell me—was the beam successful to-night?"

He listened attentively for a time, evidently pleased with the news that came to him, and again bent over the microphone.

"Froissard, that's fine!" he chuckled. "You attached the receiving-box to the bank's door and it burned through in six minutes! You've made a haul of twelve thousand, you say? That's good, but not half as good as the news that Lindsay's beam is going to open a way to Eldorado to us. If only we can settle those two enterprising youths, my friend, there's not a power—Ah!"

The boast was never ended. His eyes, turning by chance towards the door, glimpsed the listening chums before ever they could dodge away.

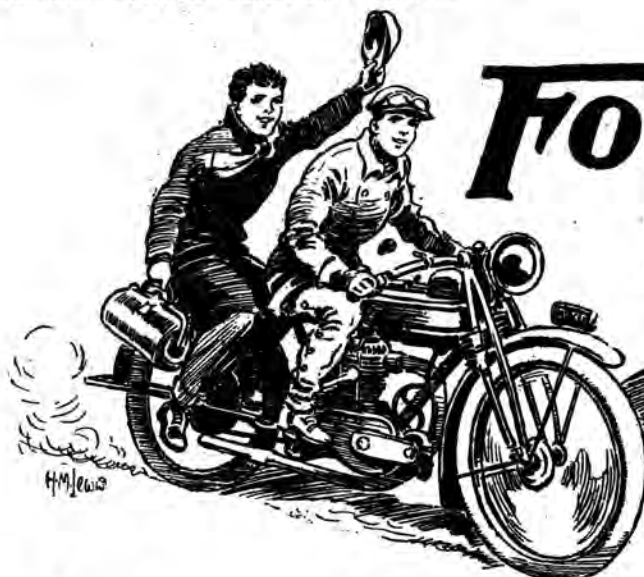
Startled beyond measure, Ultima blundered for once. Instead of snatching at the gun, his hands flew up to whip away the phones he wore; and, in that priceless second, Lyle hurled himself into the hut.

Straight at Ultima he sprang, knocking the crook's arm aside, crashing into him with the force of a battering-ram, and driving him against the rough deal boards.

Ultima blinked, dropped to one knee, and aimed a terrific jolt at Lyle that would have winded him had it taken effect. Instead, Lyle took the blow on his upflung knee, grunted agony as the pain stabbed up to his brain, and lashed an undercut at Ultima's jaw that drove the crook's head hard against the boards.

Then Jerry took a hand in the game.

(Continued on page 28.)
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FOOTBALL CHUMS!

By
ARTHUR S. HARDY.

(The Most Popular Football Writer of
the Day.)

A thrilling yarn, telling of the trials and tribulations of young Hal Chester, in his bid for fame on the footer field.

A Broken Promise!

"WELL, what is it?" James Henson looked up from his writing and stared disapprovingly at the boy who stood before him.

Harold Chester shifted nervously.

For three or four minutes he had occupied a single position, waiting until his stepfather deigned to take notice of him, and James Henson had gone on writing, as if unaware of the boy's existence. That was his uncomfortable way.

But the spell had been broken at last. Hal did not mind the obvious disapproval of his stepfather, in view of the fact that freedom loomed near.

"Can I go now, sir?" he asked.

"Go? Go where?" fumed James Henson. "The shop doesn't close until eight o'clock on Saturdays. We may keep open until even later. No, you cannot go!"

Harold coloured hotly.

"But you gave me permission to go when I asked you during the week," he protested. "You will remember that, sir."

James Henson smiled. His eyes travelled up and down the small but well-knit figure of the boy. The eager expression on Harold's face, which would have impressed and pleased most men, only irritated him.

He was master here, autocrat. He could do exactly as he pleased, and in his present humour he was ready to thwart anybody.

"I gave you permission to go, did I? Ah, yes, I remember something about it now. But—well—I have altered my mind. You will stay in and work for a change."

"But I can't do that! I have pledged myself to play for Kingsdown to-day, sir! I can't get out of it. If I don't turn up the team will be a man short. It's the most important away game of the season! I must go!"

James Henson had returned to his writing, but he swung round again at Hal's words.

"How do you expect to get on in life if you put your football before work?" he demanded. "I tell you I have changed my mind. I don't care a straw about Kingsdown and Staverdale, or whatever other club it may be you are up against. Football, with its crazy crowds and its hired gladiators, is an abomination! If I had my way I'd have it suppressed by law! In my opinion it is responsible for a lot of harm! It is a disgusting game! No, you will stay in and work!"

Harold looked distressed. His lips quivered. Tears of mortification welled into his eyes, but were checked there. He had been afraid of this.

First of all, his stepfather disapproved of him, and always had. Secondly, James Henson hated football. Thirdly, Mr. Henson believed that he—Harold—was an idler.

He did not understand. Perhaps he never would understand, and it was as Greek to him that a boy who had

pledged himself to play for his team, who was considered one of the best players in the club, could not very well let his side down.

How was one to persuade him to change his views?

Harold scraped his feet on the carpet while he revolved the problem in his mind. How could it be done?

James Henson, glaring at him, now ordered him out of the office.

"I won't have you standing here and interfering with my work!" he declared. "Go back to your duties at once!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't. I've given my word, and—"

James Henson, grating his teeth, pointed at the window, beyond which one could see the rain beating down steadily into the yard of the grocer's shop.

"You can't play football in rain like that!" he said.

"And, listen to me! If you want to remain in my shop you will have to do as I want. I will not have you roaming off to football on a Saturday afternoon. I will not have you opposing my wishes in any way whatever. Goodness knows, you give me trouble enough without adding to it by your passion for idling and play. You have a good home. Although I do not pay you high wages, you are learning a sound business that may be worth a living to you some day. But I am tired of all this! Either you will stay here this afternoon and attend to your work and remain in my employment, or, if you prefer to play your game of football, you can look out for something else to do. I will not stand in your way if you want to—er—commit moral suicide. But I warn you, if you go you will have to reckon with my sternest disapproval."

"But, sir," Harold pleaded, "you did promise me that I could go to-day. It was not until you promised that I let them know that I would turn out. Surely you—"

"I will have no argument!" snapped the Nettingham grocer. "I have already told you that any promise I may have made has been withdrawn. Let me have no more of this!"

He dismissed Harold with a wave of the hand, touched the electric bell at his desk, which brought a girl running swiftly into the room, her face expressive of alarm, for she, like the rest of the employees at Henson's, found the grocer a very hard taskmaster; and Harold, realising that further argument would be worse than useless, left the office.

As he passed the girl she gave him a sympathetic smile, for she knew well enough what had happened.

Harold, with a heart as heavy as lead, and suffering under a sense of injustice, passed out into the well-appointed shop, and, walking to the door, looked out.

The rain was falling steadily. He could hear the wind moaning as it swept along the street. It was indeed a wretched day. He could scarcely remember a worse. Perhaps, after all, it would be wiser not to play football. But how could he let the boys know? He would have to do that somehow, in order that they might fill his place in the team, for the game would be played that afternoon, wet or fine.

Harold had almost made up his mind to stand down, when there sounded the tut-tut-tut! of an approaching motor-

bicycle. A powerful Norton ran up to the door of the shop, and the lad who was riding it, seeing Hal Chester standing there, waved a hand and smiled cheerfully at him.

That decided Harold.

His chum, Bert Roberts, had called for him!

Bert was going to play. And then and there he made up his mind that, whatever the cost might be, he would not fail the team, but would play for Kingsdown in the keen game against Staverdale that was to be played upon the Staverdale pitch at three o'clock that afternoon.

Hal waved back. Then, making a sign, he ran from the door back into the shop. A minute later he stood in the pouring rain, bag in hand, and clad in an overcoat, ready for any sort of trouble that might follow.

Through the Rain!

"I SAY, old man," said Bert Roberts, who, like Hal, was a lad in his teens, "haven't you got a mack?"

"No," answered Hal.

"H'm! It's a decent long ride. You'll be soaked before we get there!"

Bert Roberts was himself enveloped in a waterproof suit of motoring overalls. There were leg shields to his powerful bicycle.

"Here," he said, "we'll run round home, and I'll get my walking mack. Jump up, old man!"

Hal needed no second bidding. Seating himself upon the pillion carrier behind, with the bag dangling from his glove-protected hand, he balanced himself, whilst his chum drove off through the mud and the slush of the Nottingham streets.

Flashing along narrow ways they emerged into broader thoroughfares, and so came to Bert's home, a nice house standing within its own grounds. There the mack was procured. Hal donned it, reseated himself, and off they sped upon their journey to Staverdale.

A very damp and muddy journey it turned out, too, which was no fault of the motor-bicycle or its driver. The roads were thick with mud, in which the water-laden wheel-tracks stood out like curving bars of silver as they flashed along. The splash of the mud as the wheels drove through it, the spurt of the water as it was driven aside in fan-like waves, made merry music, and down upon them from the leaden skies fell the never-ceasing rain.

The country was flooded in all its lower lying areas. Hal had not known to date what it meant to play upon a football pitch that was not ankle deep in mud. And yet in spite of it his club, the Kingsdown Athletic, had managed to get to the top of the Junior League, in which it operated, and to stay there. Staverdale, its oldest and most distinguished rival, whose team Kingsdown Athletic were to meet to-day, had once been the bright and particular star team of that combination. And ever since the Kingsdown Athletic had deprived them of supremacy a deal of ill-feeling had been manifested on the part of the Staverdale players against the Athletic.

Therefore, when they played the Staverdale men on their own pitch, in the mud, this afternoon, the odds were on its being a mighty unpleasant game, Hal thought, as his chum steered his Norton very cleverly over the treacherous roads that led to the scene of action.

They arrived there to find a trickle of spectators making their way towards the entrance gates from a dozen different directions.

A bedraggled flag hung disconsolately from a masthead. It was difficult to make out the claret and blue of the Staverdale Club in the sodden rag.

A smiling steward pushed a gate open as the boys flashed up on the motor-bike.

"Good-afternoon, Bert!" he called to young Roberts, as the motor-cyclist steered the machine through.

"Afternoon!" came back from Bert. And, making his way to a shelter, he dismounted, ran the machine to a rest and left it there. Then he stretched himself and stamped to get the cold out of his feet.

His cheeks were rosy with the hue of health. There was a smile on his lips, and a rare gleam in his eyes as he stared round at the leaden sky.

"H'm! I see a bit of a break far over there," he said, "It may take half an hour for it to reach here. But we've

got plenty of time to change, and it seems as if we may be able to play without the rain, after all, Hal."

"I hope so, Bert," returned Harold. "But, whatever happens, the pitch will be in an awful state. It always is heavy here. We're in for a hard game."

"Yes, it will be hard, Hal," Bert agreed. "But, all the same, we shall lick 'em. We're a better side. Now you come into the warm, for you look cold and tired."

The warmth of a tortoise stove soon began to drive the cramp out of Hal's bones, but still he looked gloomy, and was silent as he began slowly to prepare himself for the game.

Bert Roberts, who had been talking to other members of the team who came trickling in, walked back to him.

"What's the trouble, Hal?" he asked understandingly. "Had a row with the old man again?"

Hal nodded.

"Yes," he explained. "He gave me permission to play to-day, as you know, but this morning he gnashed it. I have taken French leave. But there is bound to be trouble when I get back home. And I hate rows, Bert. Mr. Henson always puts me in the wrong, and as mother is made to see through his eyes, I have a pretty bad time of it."

"I know," growled Bert indignantly. "It's a rotten shame. I wish I could talk to your stepfather. I'd tell him what I think of him. And I've a good mind to do it, too!"

"It would do no good," Hal said sullenly. "He is as obstinate as a mule. And it isn't only in respect of football that he is so impossible; it's the same with business, with politics, with the theatre—anything you like. He has only use for one point of view—his own. Please don't interfere, Bert, old man, for it would only make it the worse for me."

Roberts nodded.

"All right, I'll let it go, then," he returned. "But one of these fine days I shall speak my mind to him, Hal, and then—"

He turned the conversation with a laugh, and Hal, realising that they must hurry, threw off his fit of depression, rose, and donned his football things. And as he gave the finishing touches to his toilet, smoothed his hair as he looked in a mirror, and made sure that his boots were properly laced, he felt his spirits soar.

He had an hour and a half of football, the game he loved, before him, and the excitement of the game would make him forget his troubles for a while.

With a bit of luck he ought to be back at the shop in Nottingham about six o'clock. Then he would go straight into James Henson's office, apologise handsomely, take his reprimand like a man, and then go on with his work as usual.

But Fate has an odd way of interfering with the best-laid plans of mice and men, as Robert Burns so aptly put it.

It was not intended that Hal Chester should go back to Nottingham that afternoon. For good or for ill he had disobeyed the command of his stepfather, and would have to abide by the consequences.

The Football Bully!

THERE were about three thousand spectators surrounding the playing field at the Staverdale football ground that wet afternoon when the teams turned out, about one third of the gate they might have drawn had the weather conditions been fine.

But it was a pretty decent sort of gate for a junior match.

The football ground was spacious, for it occupied land that was of little use for building purposes or other development just yet.

Four high protecting fences surrounded it, which had been rendered unclimbable by a deep border of wet pitch and the barbed wire that ran along the top.

Its wooden stand was well built and protected by a sloping roof.

Banks of earth surrounded the field at the two ends and the side opposite the stand, and in one or two places wooden crush barriers had been set up for the convenience of the onlookers.

There were plenty of entrances and exits, for Staverdale was a prosperous little club, which had hopes in future of rising to higher things.

Its team consisted mainly of youngsters in their teens, but there were

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HAL CHESTER.

three grown men in the side who had had experience of League football.

One of these was the left full-back, Stevens; another was the centre-half, Radford; the third was the goalkeeper, who had grown grey in the service of football. These three men were one-time professionals, who were now supposed to play the game for the sheer love of it, and each was employed in business in the near-by town.

The Kingsdown Athletic team, on the other hand, was made up entirely of boys. And clever they were, from long John Reed, in goal, to Timmins, the lanky, bespectacled outside-left.

Harold Chester played inside-right, inside-left, or centre-forward, and had on occasion done well on the wing. He could use right and left foot with equal effect, and was considered by his chum, Bert Roberts, who was playing at centre-forward for this match, to be the cleverest player that had ever worn the broad blue and white stripes of the Kingsdown Athletic.

As the teams filed through the gate on to the pitch they were welcomed by a mighty cheer, the local crowd leading the way and drowning the voices of the loyal supporters of the visiting team, who had come over for this needle game in spite of the wet. But still, the boys from Nettingham had a say.

"Good old Bert! Bravo, John! Keep 'em out! Cheerio, Hal!"

Hal swung round, smiling, and saw a broad-shouldered man with a laughing face waving a hand to him.

Instantly he hurried to the railings and shook hands with the cheery soul.

"Rotten day for the game, Hal boy!" said the spectator, whose macintosh collar was turned up to protect his neck. "How are you feeling?"

"Pretty good, Jim."

Jim Burrows, it may here be stated, had followed the fortunes of the Kingsdown Athletic ever since the team used to play on the common, long before ever it thought of getting a ground of its own. He had never kicked a football in his life, and yet there was not a better judge of the game than he. He liked to watch these boys play, because in his opinion they played better football than the big professional clubs of the town, Nettingham United and Nettingham Town, about which the crowd raved so much.

"Hal," said Jim after the handshake, "I'm afraid if your side's on top this afternoon there'll be trouble. So I want you to be careful when you go near that bullying brute, Bill Stevens, the left-back. I overheard him talking to some of his supporters as I came in. They were saying that you and Bert were the most dangerous players on your side, and he said that he'd stop you somehow. 'They won't get any goals, take it from me,' I heard him say. And, frankly, kid, I'm worried about it. He's big and strong, and don't care a rap for the referee. Dodge him if you can."

Hal laughed. He had heard a lot of this sort of talk before, and he had been able, whenever he had played against Stevens and Radford in the past, to get the better of them because of his greater skill and elusiveness. He believed that he could beat the pair of them for speed, too.



As Hal Chester sped for goal big Bill Stevens ran in and closed with the boy. There was a sickening crash and young Hal Chester thudded to the ground.

"Thanks, Jim, for telling me," he said as he turned away. "I'll be on my guard. And I'll let Bert know about it, too. All we want to do this afternoon is to pop on an early goal and they'll crumple up like a pricked balloon!"

Jim nodded and smiled. He liked the kid for his cheery optimism, but in his heart he was not so sure that things would work out quite like that.

The teams began to gather in midfield, their boots sinking into the mud as they walked or ran.

Bert Roberts, as captain of the Athletic, met Bill Stevens, skipper of the Staverdale team, and to the spin of the coin called heads.

It was the reverse side of the coin that showed itself, however, and with a grin Stevens pointed to the end of the field from which the wind was blowing.

"We'll play there," he said. "And I tell you frankly, Roberts, I don't think much of your chance of licking us to-day!"

Bert Roberts smiled brightly.

"We're top of the league," he said. "I think we may do it as long as your side plays the game."

The words were accompanied by a meaning glance that brought a scowl to the face of the burly full-back.

Billy Stevens went to his place in a very ugly humour, and he registered the intention of stopping Bert Roberts by foul means if he could not stop him by fair even before the ball was set in motion; he was that kind of man.

The players crossed over and took their places, and at the call of the whistle set the game going.

It was soon seen what havoc the incessant rain had played with a football pitch which was considered under normal conditions to be one of the best in the league.

The new, bright yellow ball soon lost its colour.

Whilst it flew at speed and with great precision just where the player wanted it to go with the opening kicks of the match, as the game developed they could not kick it too accurately owing to their uncertain foothold.

It was one of those balls which are impervious to wet—which was something to be thankful for; but the all-pervading, clinging mud precluded any sort of certainty in the dealing with it.

And so the game developed into a real mud-plug, in which individual vied with individual in trying to win the match for his side.

Handicapped by the impossibility of developing any real sort of combination, the visitors resorted, after a while, on the instructions of Bert Roberts, to individual dribbling, and very well they did it, too. Sometimes it would be one of the halves who would take the ball through, draw an opposing player, and then slip a pass neatly to a comrade who would take up the running in turn.

And often they very nearly succeeded.

But they found Bill Stevens a rare spoiler. The big, burly back, regardless of the fact that he had to deal only with boys, would cut in on them, using his weight and strength to full advantage.

He bowled Hal Chester over and left him lying prone in the clinging mud.

He caught Bert Roberts with the full weight of the shoulder as the centre-forward was running through, and knocked him head over heels. Then, when Bert indignantly protested against the foul charge, Stevens laughed.

"The referee was up—he didn't see nothing wrong!" cried the full-back. "The whistle didn't go! You don't know nothing about football!"

Bert took it like a sportsman, whilst registering a vow that he would get even with the brutal Stevens if he could. Flecking away the lumps of mud that adhered to his fingers and forearms as he went back upfield, he carried on like the rare little sportsman he was.

But the brutal charge had shaken him, and for some minutes after that it was a subdued captain that led the Kingsdown Athletic.

There were other players on the side, however, who were out to win, and two of them got through. The final pass sent the ball in front of goal. The right-back, Widdows, floored young Green, the inside, who was about to shoot, but Simpson, the outside-right, seeing a chance, cut in and drove the ball hard and true for the net.

The Staverdale goalkeeper was an experienced veteran, and he judged well the flight of the mud-covered ball, taking it in safe hands, and kicking it far down the field. From that goal kick the home forwards broke away, Reed having no chance with the ground shot that beat him, Staverdale scoring the first goal of the game nineteen minutes from the start.

There had been an element of luck in the scoring of the goal, for first the left-half and then the left-back had slipped whilst turning and trying to tackle, leaving the way clear. And the goalkeeper's feet even slipped on the muddy fringe of the goal-line as the ball came at him, whilst its coating of grease prevented him from clutching it as it spun rapidly. It gave a leap from his hand and dropped just over the line.

But the crowd did not care what sort of goal it was, or how it had come to be scored—the one thing that mattered was, it was a goal, and Staverdale had taken the lead. A goal lead on that quagmire was as good as a two goals lead under normal conditions. Let Kingsdown Athletic take it out of that!

Stung by the shouts and cries of the crowd, the supporters of the visiting team began to call upon their favourites for a reply.

The players also were nerved to greater endeavour by the reverse.

And so from the kick-off they took the ball through. Bert Roberts cleverly eluding the upstanding, bullying back this time, and slipping the ball over the very feet of Hal Chester.

"There you are, Hal!" he yelled. "Shoot!"

Hal ran on, steadied himself, swung a leg, and then found himself floundering in the mud.

The back, Stevens, who did not care a jot how badly he might injure the player, had brought Hal down from behind, as flagrant a foul as ever had been committed on a football field.

Hal's face bit the mud heavily; the soil filled his mouth, nostrils, and eyes. The home supporters yelled and cheered, but the loyal adherents of the visitors yelled and screamed "Foul!"

The referee had no option but to award a free-kick; but Stevens only grinned under reprimand, for Hal had fallen a yard outside the penalty area. They could get no penalty out of that.

Bert took the shot, and, to his mortification, drove the ball high above the bar.

Shaking himself, Hal Chester walked up to Stevens.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" he cried. "You're a man, but I'm only a boy, and half your size and weight. You hurt me. Can't you play the game fairly?"

Stevens only laughed.

"I'll play the game just how I like," he returned. "And if you don't like the way I handle yer, keep out of my way, that's all."

Hal's heart swelled. Lights were dancing before his eyes. He was conscious of considerable pain.

"You're a cad!" he said indignantly.

Bill Stevens' eyes snapped, and his lips tightened in a downward curving line.

"Wait!" he said. "You'll pay for that!"

And poor Hal did.

A minute later he had the great satisfaction of breaking through the Staverdale defence after combining cleverly with Bert and the winger, Timmins, and the final touch put the ball at his feet with the goal ten yards away, with no Staverdale defender near enough to trip or foul.

Bill Stevens had slipped in a rush and was down.

Hal was not the boy to miss a chance like this. Taking one glance at the net, he drove the heavy ball a yard wide of the keeper, and into the net, equalising the scores.

Hal was hugged back over the mud to the middle, while Stevens rose with an ugly scowl on his face.

Elated by their success, urged on by the cries of their supporters, and fully aware that they were on top now, and the better side, the Kingsdown boys literally ran over the Staverdale men, and within a minute Bert, with a grand pass, sent Hal through again.

Hal had recovered. Here was a another great chance. With eyes glued on the ball at his feet, he tapped it in front of him, and sped for goal.

Bill Stevens saw him coming, gave his knickers a hitch, ran in, and with a laugh, closed with the boy.

There was a sickening crash, and Hal went hurtling down.

It was just as if he had ran right into a flying express, and as the shock of the impact jarred his brain, the light seemed to go right out. He knew no more.



"So you've come home, then?" sneered Hal's stepfather. "Well, you took French leave—you played football against my wish. You'll never enter my house again! I'm done with you!"

No Home!

WHEN consciousness returned to Hal, he found himself lying in bed, and, bending over him, with an anxious grin upon his good-looking, boyish face, was his chum, Bert Roberts.

The room in which he found himself was strange to him. Its curtains were drawn, and an electric light was burning.

"Hallo, Bert!" he muttered.

"Hallo, Hal, boy! Feeling better?"

Hal was not quite sure. He began to analyse how he did feel. His head was throbbing; he felt an overpowering desire to lie quite still, and he was vaguely conscious of bodily pain that increased as he moved about.

For just an instant he was at a loss to recall what had happened, and then it all came back to him in a flood of remembrance.

He levered himself up to find that he was wearing his ordinary underclothes, a shirt, and his trousers. They had evidently undressed and then dressed him, it would seem, indicating that things were not too bad.

"Great Scott, Bert!" he cried, his eyes bulging in alarm. "What's the time?"

"It's a quarter to ten, Hal."

Hal sank back with a groan.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"At Dr. Simpson's, near the Staverdale Ground. The doctor will be back directly. You were brought here while the game was on as you didn't come round. The doctor says you've been badly shaken up, but he doesn't think there is any special injury. Your body and left leg are badly bruised and you've an injured knee. You'll be all right with rest and quiet, the doctor says."

All right with rest and quiet. But what about the shop? What about James Henson and home? A quarter to ten, and here he was lying on a bed in a doctor's house at Staverdale, and he had yet to get home.

The alarm that came to him drove all thought of pain or depression from the boy's mind as, with a throw of the arms and a swing of the legs, he got out of bed.

"Bert," he groaned, "I must go home at once. This is awful! What ever will my stepfather say? Of course, it would happen like this when it was so vitally necessary for me to be back early. I came without permission in the end, you know, and—"

Bert put an arm round his friend.

"Don't worry, Hal!" he cried. "If your stepfather makes a fuss after all you've been through, then he's a rank outsider!"

Harold forced a smile.

"You don't know him," he returned. "He's not such a bad sort really, but he's so full of self-righteousness, he's so hard. He never makes any allowances for the weaknesses, the failings, and the likings of others. He's the same in business and out of it, and—"

"I know!" growled Bert. "Don't talk to me about him. He's a hard-boiled egg. But don't worry, Hal. Dr. Simpson has promised to drive you home in his car, and that will make some difference surely."

Hal nodded, uttering a sigh of relief. Then his mind, reverting to the great event of the day, he asked breathlessly:

"Bert, when Bill Stevens fouled me like that, knocking me out, what happened?"

Bert looked hard at Hal, then, aware that his chum was getting better every moment, he realised that it would be wiser to tell everything rather than let him excite himself about it.

"You fell in the penalty area, Hal," he said. "This time the referee was close up and saw. He awarded us a penalty kick, and then ordered Stevens off the field. The back was truculent, but he had to go, even the home crowd being against him. Hal, I took the kick myself."

"And scored?"

"Ay, I scored, boy! Trust me to do that! I could never have missed that penalty kick after seeing what Stevens did to you. But before I took it Stevens had left the field to a storm of hisses, and they had carried you off, old man. I fairly shook the rigging with the drive I sent in. The goalkeeper hadn't a dog's chance!"

"And the match?" Hal was warming up.

"The match? Oh, well, we went on, ten men against ten, and our ten were so mad I don't think any team could have kept us out. The Staverdale chaps became disheartened, too. The ref, who didn't care a rap for the crowd, kept a close eye on them, and the moment they infringed the rules, even ever so slightly, he was down on them like a ton of bricks. The whistle was going constantly, but we kept our lead."

Bert paused a moment, and then continued.

"The referee was afraid there might be a scene, and so he ordered us to play on without an interval. The trainer came out with some pieces of lemon, we sucked 'em, crossed over, and began again. And all the time we were on top. Half-way through the second half, after we had had hard lines in not scoring on several occasions, I got right away, and, carrying the ball close to goal in the mud, I shot it past the Staverdale goalie with the utmost ease. He never saw the ball go by."

"And"—Bert Roberts smiled again—"that goal settled it. Staverdale were thoroughly disorganised. Even the crowd couldn't raise a shout. All we had to do was to keep them out, to play the ball into touch, or to kick it hard down the field every time it came our way. We did it, too. We won the match by three goals to one."

Hal beamed.

"That's grand!" he said. "I don't care how bad I am now, and I shan't mind the wiggling that my stepfather'll give me when I get back. I'm in for it, Bert. But the same sort of thing has happened before. But I shall have to be starting back home soon, or they'll be in bed before I arrive, and then there will be the dickens of a row!"

"Yes; but are you strong enough to go yet?" asked Bert, as he saw Hal's eyes roam the room in search of his clothes. "Hadden't you better wait here a while? I'll soon run back on my motor-bike, and I can call and tell Mr. Henson how matters stand, seeing that there is no telephone."

"It's awfully good of you, old man," answered Hal earnestly. "But I must go."

Bert then found Hal's clothes, and the boy dressed as rapidly as his bruises and his damaged leg would permit. In the midst of his changing, the doctor, who had been out on a visit to a patient, returned.

He was surprised to find Hal dressing, and at once examined him.

Whilst he ran the rule over Hal, Bert watched in silence.

At the end of the examination Dr. Simpson appeared to be satisfied.

"You are indeed a plucky lad," he said. "And I'll drive you home. I'll soon get the car round."

"Bert has explained how matters stand, hasn't he, sir?" asked Hal.

"Yes, my dear boy. Speaking frankly, I am astonished that you are fit to leave the house. I had not thought it possible."

"I suppose"—Hal's pale face twisted in a ghost of a smile—"I'm not so badly hurt, and that I'll be able to play football next Saturday?"

"That I cannot promise you. There is an extensive bruise on the body where that brute kicked you. Your knee is strained, your ankle bruised and turned, and there are a dozen other minor injuries besides. You hurt your head as well, and some internal trouble may develop. Go to bed the moment you arrive home, and have a doctor to see you as soon as possible. It is essential that you should remain in medical hands."

Hal smiled, thinking of his stepfather and the objections that would be raised against the performance of any of these directions. But all he said was, "Yes, doctor."

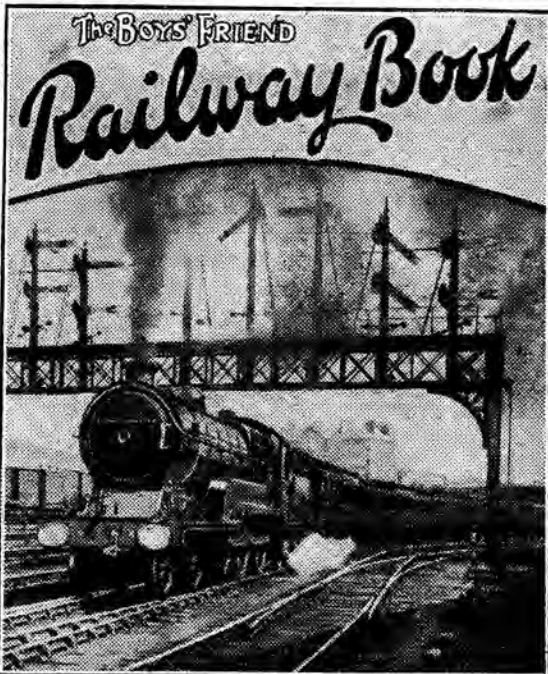
The doctor left the room. Then Hal hobbled downstairs, leaning on Bert's shoulder, and slipped into his overcoat.

The doctor's wife came to see Hal off, bringing a hot-water bottle to place in the car. Bert tuned up his Norton and switched on its lights.

After having seen Hal take his place by the doctor's side in the two-seater car, and move off in it, he waved his chum adieu, and flashed off to the rhythmic purring of his engine.

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"See you to-morrow, Hal!" he cried cheerily. "I'll call. Mind you get to bed quick. So-long, old man!"

"So-long!" called back Harold.

Then, as the car bore him through the night, his nodding head rested on his chest, and his eyes closed.

He awoke to find himself home, and the rain pouring steadily down.

Before him stood the house in which his stepfather lived, the doctor having had little difficulty in finding it, for the address had been given him, and he knew the street.

Hal, rousing himself, climbed painfully out of the car, and, managing to hide his crippled condition, whilst pretending to be better than he really was, he assured the doctor that he would be all right now.

"Had not I better wait to see you safe indoors?" asked Dr. Simpson anxiously.

Hal smiled at him in the darkness.

"No, sir," he said. "I'm all right now. I'll be indoors in a jiffy."

"Oh, if you think so," said the doctor, after a moment's hesitation, "I'll be going, for there are two very urgent cases that require my attention."

He nodded encouragingly to Hal, bade him good-night, told him to take care of himself, and then, as Hal knocked at his stepfather's door and rang the bell, the doctor drove the car away.

For ten minutes after that Hal stood in the street in the pouring rain, shivering, for the cold was getting at him. His head was swimming; he was not feeling at all well.

Nobody came along the street. No light shone in any of the windows of the house. Far away a dog barked. Near by there was no sound to be heard save the steady beat of the pitiless rain.

As the minutes passed Hal grew more and more desperate. Suddenly a window opened above him, and a head was thrust out.

"Who's there?" rasped his stepfather.

"It's I, your stepson—it's Harold," answered Hal. James Henson laughed, then leaned farther out to get a better view of the boy.

"Ah, you've come home!" he sneered.

"Yes, sir. I was badly hurt at the football match. Dr. Simpson, of Staverdale, drove me home. I feel pretty bad still. Won't you please come down and open the door?"

Again Hal's stepfather laughed.

"You took French leave. You played football against my expressed wishes to the contrary. If you were hurt it serves you right. You have made your bed. You must lie on it! You'll never enter my house again with my permission! I've done with you! There is no home for you here now!"

"But—" Hal protested, reeling as if stunned, and losing his power of speech.

"There are no buts. I mean what I say!"

"It's raining, and—"

The only reply Hal received was a banging down of the window. He tried the door, beat upon its panels, but got no answer. Then, as the rain soaked him through, he reeled away.

Half-way down the street he fell against a lamp-post from sheer weakness, feeling as if he must drop there, and lie in the pouring rain.

His brain was swimming. He felt sick and ill and too weak to go on.

The utter helplessness of his position and his condition came home to him then, and with a sob of despair he leaned his head against his arm, and stood there incapable of any further effort. He had passed the limit; human nature could endure no more.

(Injured, ill, and cast out from his home, Hal's plight is a desperate one indeed—and it is his love of football that has brought him to such a pass! But football is in his blood, and his spirit is not easily crushed. Read of the dramatic turn of Fate told in next week's fine instalment. And tell all your chums about this fine footer story.)



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.—There is some bright, invigorating, altogether New Year intelligence regarding our next week's bumper number. As befits the occasion, there is a bumper yarn by Martin Clifford. This story is thoroughly typical of the St. Jim's series. It is crammed full of exciting incident, and with heaps of mystification to keep the interest at fever-heat.

"THE PREFECT'S DILEMMA!" By Martin Clifford.

This splendid tale in our coming issue is twenty-five thousand words in length. Long or short, the yarns by Martin Clifford are always prime, but the longer the better. The story deals with Knox and his remarkable curiosity. The plot presents an extraordinary knot of puzzling circumstances. Knox chooses to entertain the notion that there is something wrong with D'Arcy. Nobody but a hopeless duffer would think of querying the conduct of Gussy. He is above-board in all his doings. Three cheers for Arthur Augustus!

A WHIRL OF INCIDENT.

It is up to me to drop a few suggestions concerning this record yarn. But I am not giving anything away. It is amply sufficient to state that Knox gets himself into a rare mix-up. You won't be likely to feel particularly sorry for Mr. Nosey Parker. If he chooses to act like a prize ass, that is his own affair, and there is not the slightest reason why a prefect should not find a painful dilemma awaiting him if he elects to go off the deep end. The story has several lessons in it—for inquisitive mischief-makers who cannot mind their own business and carry themselves with proper modesty. Knox fancies he has got hold of a deplorable mystery concerning Gussy's private affairs. For Gussy has been seen befriending

ing an old man. Events follow thick and fast, but Knox gets a lesson in the end.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Better late than never! It's a good motto. Has any tardy Gemite omitted to secure a copy of the "Holiday Annual"? If so, let the oversight be rectified right away. There is still time. This season's "H. A." is far too good a thing to miss.

"ERRORS."

In our next number the final puzzle-picture in this splendid competition will appear. Anybody who has not had a shot for the magnificent prizes offered should make good the delay at once. Not a moment to lose. It is quite easy to spot mistakes, especially when other fellows make them. This competition is a wits-tester and a brain-biller. GEM readers have given the feature a hearty welcome. I have even better things to come.

"WRITE BACK, PLEASE!"

Nothing would give me greater pleasure, but what can I do when the address is insufficient? A loyal supporter of the GEM sends me this request attached to a very jolly letter. I was glad to get it. The sum and substance of it all was that the writer is keen as mustard on the GEM Library. I can promise him some extra fine yarns of St. Jim's. The New Year's programme is topping.

A BRACE OF REQUESTS.

A chum in Subiaco asks for more about the Third-Formers, also for a Portrait Gallery. This correspondent is Pat Power, 316, Barker Road, Subiaco, Western Australia, and before he sees this paragraph he will know that both requests have been acted upon. The new Portrait Gallery, with the chirpy little biographies attached, beats any-

thing yet. As for the sprightly Third Form, trust Martin Clifford to see that those irrepressibles are not left out in the cold! By the way, Pat was put on the track of the GEM by meeting with a volume of the "Holiday Annual," which is just all right. The "Annual" always has a grand yarn of St. Jim's.

MOST SEASONABLE!

All my chums of the GEM might just pass on the topping news about the first-rate Free Books on Sports and Hobbies being given away by the "Boys' Friend." These capital books will make up a library which any fellow will be proud to own. They deal with Stamp-collecting, Detective Work, Railways, Boxing, Football, Wireless, and many other subjects. The "Magnet," another Companion Paper, is swinging along into even greater popularity by reason of its gripping Greyfriars stories, and its wonderful series of Photogravure Plates of Fighting Ships. As for the "Popular," it scores again with its school yarns, fine serial, and its all-round Hobby Supplement.

"FOOTBALL CHUMS!" By A. S. Hardy.

Many a fellow has experienced that "down-and-out" feeling, and the sense of relief when there comes a break in the dark clouds and he sees a way out of his troubles is just something which you simply cannot put down in black and white. It is the amazing contrast which hits one. You get something of the reality of this feeling in the superb instalment of A. S. Hardy's new serial in our next. Harold Chester's treatment at the hands of his rascally stepfather has been crushing. But the tale of disaster does not end there. Mr. Hardy has a big theme, and it rings real, the same as all this author's stories do.

OUR TUCK HAMPER.

Many readers have written in to ask me what about the Tuck Hamper! There seems to have been a notion knocking round that this popular feature had faded out. Not so! I shall shortly reintroduce the Tuck Hamper Competition with added attractions and substantial money prizes.

MUSIC!

They know how to face the music at St. Jim's; but for all that I fail to see the wisdom of acting on a suggestion from a correspondent, who asks: "Why not have a Song Supplement in the GEM?" Space will not allow it. Perhaps Monty Lowther might oblige with a comic-song in the "St. Jim's News!"

YOUR EDITOR.

THE "U" WAVE!

(Continued from page 21.)

Pushing Lyle aside, he planted himself in front of Ultima, and jabbed the fellow's own gun into his neck.

"Aise off, ye spalpeen, or it's meself'll be aisin' ye!" he yelled. "Lyle we'll be ropin' him up wid the phone cord and leavin' him snug till Inspector Hansen calls round again, eh?"

"That's the goods, old dear," Lyle murmured. "Keep your eye on him a moment."

"Two eyes, and no blinkers, the slippery customer!" Jerry grinned. "Now, me lad, up on your pins, so's me pal can put th' wrappings on!"

Ultima obeyed like a trained lamb. He even smiled, rubbed his bruised dome gently, and spoke as calmly as though inviting Jerry to share a bath-bun.

"Thet gun's hair-triggered, young 'un, so treat it gently," he murmured. "Sorry I'm unable to entertain you better. I'll arrange a real tea-party next time you look in."

"It's entertaining us fine you are!" Jerry grinned. "An' there'll be no next."

Then, with lightning speed, Ultima's boot hooked in the chair he had lately occupied, and up it whirled at the solitary bulb that lighted the place. There came a tinkle of glass, instant darkness, and the lurch of a heavy body that flung the chums right and left.

"Oh, hang it all!" Lyle yelled as he sprang for the door and straightway blundered into Jerry.

It was a sorry mix-up, and vital seconds were wasted before they sorted themselves out, got their torches going, and gained the outer channel.

"Come on, Jay," Lyle urged. "Back to the well, all speed!"

But a glance showed that the rope was still in position and motionless—conclusive proof that Ultima had not escaped by that road.

"Dash! There's probably a dozen exits from this blessed old mine!" Lyle groaned. "It's pretty hopeless; but come on and keep the gun cocked."

But the search proved a disheartening fiasco. Lyle was right—the place was literally a rabbit warren.

Ten minutes of bewildering wandering up and down a maze of tunnels ended in their emerging to a rocky hill-

side—a desolate country in which they were hopelessly lost.

Nothing remained but to wait the tardy arrival of dawn—an interval disconsolate with the knowledge that Ultima had again escaped and that he carried the secret of the beam with him.

It was hours later when they trailed wearily into Horwich, to report the night's adventure at the nearest police depot, and to hear, without surprise, that the Home and Counties Bank was twelve thousand pounds poorer as a result of Ultima's overnight activities.

THE END.

(Ultima has escaped again, but the Aero Chums are not beaten yet! Don't miss "THE GOLDEN POPPY-HEAD!" the next and most exciting story in this amazing series.)

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