

"D'ARCY DOES IT!"

ANOTHER RATTLING YARN OF ST. JIM'S,
BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The GEM 2^d

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY!

"Here is your nephew, Mr. Lowther!" hissed Bosanne. "Here he is—to die with you, if you do not come to your senses within twenty-four hours!" (A dramatic incident from the grand school yarn inside.)



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,—I need hardly say that next week's programme will receive a hearty welcome from everyone. It is a great number in more respects than one.

To begin with, there will be the opening instalment of our grand new serial:

"DAVE THE PIT-BOY!"

By Max Hamilton.

Myriads of readers have been asking for a story of the coal mines, dealing with the thrilling adventures of those plucky fellows who daily risk their lives to supply us with coal.

This thrilling yarn will get a most hearty reception, I'm sure. It features David Steele, who, although quite a lad, but with a heart of steel, enters upon the great open road looking for a "job." What does he find? I will not say too much at this juncture for fear of giving away the interest in this most exciting story. But I will say that the adventures that Dave goes through are calculated to stir the whole world. All "Gemites" will like Dave at the first meeting; he is one of those fine fellows that makes a bobby of giving his aid to his fellow men whenever and wherever it is possible.

Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the opening chapters of this great

serial, which, I firmly believe, will surpass all our other great successes—and that's saying a lot, I'm sure!

"D'ARCY'S SPECULATION!"

By Martin Clifford.

Now we come to another and perhaps the biggest event on our programme. I refer to the ripping complete school story of those great favourites, Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's. The story deals with the ever-popular Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, and is written in Martin Clifford's best style. Without giving away too many facts, this junior of the Fourth, as per usual, uses his "tact and judgment." But not with very great success! Arthur Augustus is a tame ass at the best of times. We don't mind that. Everybody's got their little faults. Some more than others, perhaps. Anyway, in this particular case Arthur Augustus gets wind of a way of making some "easy" money. Without speculation one can't accumulate, he thinks, so when the opportunity arises he goes all out. But thanks to the timely assistance of his many school chums, who turn up at the critical moment, a gentleman rejoicing in the name of Mr. Blum, a swindling stockbroker, fails to net another "mug"—the mug in this case being the one and only Gussy.

"THE NIGHT MAIL MYSTERY!"

By Lester Bidston.

Every one of this splendid author's stories has been tip-top, so I will not bore you with the fact again. "Live Wire" Lindsay and his staunch chum, Jerry O'Gorman, the two finest aero sleuths ever known, again get going in lightning-like fashion.

A series of thefts have taken place on the Great Airways Line, and evidence looks pretty black against the pilot of the machine until Lyle and Jerry note the strange actions of a wily American, Silas K. Locke. This worthy gentleman of the fat cigar is as cunning as a fox, but he is not quite slick enough to escape the attentions of the two aero adventurers who have been the means of solving so many shady affairs and bringing their perpetrators to justice.

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OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL!

My final few words refer once more to our splendid serial. As the opening chapters of this most exciting story appear in next week's GEM, all readers should do the right thing by ordering their copies well in advance. I can tell from the stacks of letters asking for this type of yarn what a rush there will be for copies, so a word of warning, I feel sure, will not be ignored. Go to your newsagent's and order next week's GEM now, and save disappointment.

Your Editor.



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IN THE NICK OF TIME!

Three Cheers for the Sleuth
of St. Jim's!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, like Cæsar of old
came, and saw, and conquered.



D'ARCY DOES IT!

A Thrilling Long Complete School
Story of Tom Merry & Co., on
the track of the Mystery of Holly
Lodge.

By Famous
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. The Hand of the Enemy!

MIDNIGHT!

It was a wild and windy night. The old trees round Holly Lodge groaned in the wind; the shutters creaked on the windows.

Monty Lowther sat up in bed, wide awake.

He was in a troubled mood, and sleep would not visit his eyes. The Easter holiday had not been, so far, a happy one for Monty.

In the adjoining rooms were Tom Merry and Manners who had come from St. Jim's with him; both of them sleeping the sleep of healthy youth, tired by their long ramble along the sea-coast that day.

Lowther was tired, too; but he could not sleep. The electric light was on in his room; and he had a "Holiday Annual" on his knees as he sat up in bed. But he was not reading.

He was thinking—on the topic that had occupied his thoughts ever since St. Jim's had broken up for the holidays: a topic of which he was weary, but which he could not dismiss: the strange disappearance of his uncle, James Lowther, the master of Holly Lodge.

He listened to the wind moaning about the house; and once or twice, to his uneasy hearing, it seemed that he heard sounds in the building, sounds of cautious and stealthy footfalls.

Once he was almost certain that stealthy steps approached the door of his room, as if some unknown had crept there to watch or listen.

He fixed his eyes on the door, half expecting it to open; and then, with an angry murmur, turned his gaze away. His nerves were getting out of hand.

It was no wonder, after the days of anxiety he had been through. He clung, hoping against hope, to the belief that his uncle was still living; that he would yet be found alive. The police theory that Mr. Lowther had fallen from the cliffs, and that his body had been carried away by the tide, Monty could not and would not believe.

For days the chums of St. Jim's had searched and searched along the shore, and in the woods and lonely paths, hoping to find some sign, some clue, to the man who had vanished.

They had searched in vain.

Monty Lowther still hoped, but his hope was growing faint. If his uncle was dead, or if he could not be found, and his death was legally "presumed," Lowther would be master of Holly Lodge, under his uncle's will. Somehow, that seemed to make his loss more bitter to him. Gladly he would have given his inheritance a hundred times over to see once more the crusty, testy old gentleman, who, with all his crusty temper, had been kindness itself to Monty from his earliest boyhood.

The wind howled round the old red chimneys. To Monty's sensitive, nervous mind, the house was full of strange sounds. Once he was tempted to go to Tom Merry's room and wake him; but he checked that impulse. He turned his eyes on his book again and tried to read.

Suddenly the light vanished.

Lowther started, and gritted his teeth.

The electric light had been turned off at the main; which indicated that someone was yet stirring in the house. Undoubtedly it was Mr. Bosanne, his uncle's secretary; the dark and unpleasant man who had assumed the airs of a master at Holly Lodge since Mr. James Lowther had disappeared.

Monty was tempted to go out of his room and seek Mr. Bosanne and give him some plain words; he was more than fed-up with Bosanne's "cheek." But he reflected that it was probably the custom to turn off the light when the secretary went to bed; certainly it was unusual for a school-boy to be awake so late.

He laid his book aside, put his head on the pillow, and tried to sleep.

After all, it was necessary to sleep, if he could, troubled as his mind was. On the morrow the hopeless search for Mr. Lowther was to recommence—so long as the faintest hope remained, Monty would not give it up. On the morrow, too, D'Arcy of the Fourth was coming over from Eastwood House to visit the Shell fellows at Holly Lodge. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was entertaining his chums, Blake and Herries and Digby, at Lord Eastwood's house for the Easter vacation. The noble Gussy had an idea that he might be able to help in discovering what had become of the missing M.P. Upon what he founded that belief it was difficult to say, unless upon his well-known tact and judgment. Monty certainly did not suppose that Gussy would be of any use. But he was quite glad that D'Arcy was coming—his cheerful face would be very welcome in the gloomy house.

Moreover, Mr. Bosanne had raised "cheeky" objections to the visit; and for that reason alone Monty would have been determined that Gussy should come.

With his eyes fast closed Monty tried to sleep. But sleep was long in coming.

Gradually he glided into drowsiness, and his thoughts became dreams.

He slept at last.

In his dreams he still heard the howl of the wind round the chimneys, the groaning of the trees, and the stealthy footfalls with which his disturbed fancy had peopled the echoing house.

His slumber was uneasy; he stirred and moved.

Now the current of his dreams shifted, and it seemed to him that he was back at St. Jim's, ragging in the Shell

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passage in the old School House. He was struggling with some fellow—Grundy of the Shell—or was it Kangaroo?—or Piggins? In the grip of nightmare, he struggled, feeling that he was choking—Grundy was pressing something over his face—

And then he awoke.

It was not all a dream.

Something was pressing on his face—something that suffocated him. There was a faint and sickly smell in the dense darkness.

A terrible shudder ran through the St. Jim's junior.

It was not nightmare, it was not a wild fancy of disordered nerves; it was the grip of an enemy that was upon him.

He struggled madly.

With a frantic effort he tore his head loose, his senses swimming from the sickly drug.

"Tom!"

A wild cry burst from him: the name of his chum.

"Tom! Tom Merry!"

It was a wild, husky cry.

Then the cloth was on his face again, the sickly scent overcame him, and he sank into unconsciousness.

What happened after that he did not know.

Insensible, lifeless to his surroundings, he could not know that he was lifted from the bed, that his clothes were huddled on him, that he was carried from the room. He knew nothing; his mind was a blank; and it was long, long hours before his drugged senses awoke again to consciousness, in the darkness of a strange place.

CHAPTER 2.

The Mystery of the Night!

"HIS gone!"

"Monty—he's gone!"

Tom Merry and Manners looked at one another with startled and scared faces.

Where was Monty Lowther?

Tom had heard the calling of his chum's voice in the dark night, and though he had set it down to fancy, he had turned out of bed; and then, finding Lowther's room empty, he had called Manners, and in amazement and alarm they had searched for their chum.

But they did not find him.

If Monty Lowther was still in Holly Lodge, he was nowhere where the juniors could discover him.

Where was he?

Had, he, driven by his anxiety for his uncle, which his chums knew was telling on his nerves, gone out into the dark windy night alone, to resume the hopeless search!

It was unlikely, unless his nerves were in a much worse state than his comrades had supposed.

But if not, where was he?

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No one seemed awake in the house, excepting the two Shell fellows. The rooms occupied by Miss Skeene, the housekeeper, and the maids, were at some distance from the other bed-rooms, on a separate staircase. But Mr. Bosanney, the secretary, occupied a room quite near that of the missing junior, and Tom and Manners had passed and repassed his door several times in their hurried search for Monty. They rather wondered that they had not awakened him.

"He's gone!" said Tom again. "He must have gone out! What could have made him go—at this hour?"

"And without calling us!" said Manners. "I can't believe it!"

"He did call me," said Tom. "I heard him. I thought the call came from his room, but I was only half-awake. He might have called at my door, and gone before I could wake up and answer."

Manners nodded.

"Might have thought you were too fast asleep to hear him, and so cleared off by himself," he said. "But—"

"But—" repeated Tom.

It seemed the only explanation, yet it did not suffice. But if that was not the explanation, what had become of Monty Lowther?

"We'd better call Mr. Bosanney," said Tom at last.

"I suppose so."

By the light of their electric torches the two juniors proceeded to Mr. Bosanney's room.

Tom knocked sharply on the door.

There was no reply from within, and he knocked again more loudly.

Knock, knock!

The knocking sounded with an eerie echo through the house, amid the wailing of the wind in the trees.

Still there was no answer.

Tom Merry impatiently turned the handle of the door.

It was locked.

"My hat! Is the man sleeping like a log?" exclaimed Tom angrily.

"Looks like it," said Manners. "What about going down and telephoning to the police-station, Tom? If something's happened to Monty—"

"But has anything?" said Tom. "How could anything happen to him here? If he's only gone out—"

"That's so! But—"

The juniors looked at one another dubiously. To call in the police in the small hours of the morning because Monty had gone out of his room and apparently out of the house seemed a wild proceeding. Inspector Cheeseman, the local official who had charge of the search for Mr. James Lowther, was already prejudiced against the two juniors. He resented what he regarded as their ridiculous attempts to find the missing M.P.—"butting into" his official business. They were fairly sure that Mr. Bosanney had helped to instil that resentful frame of mind into the inspector. He had left nothing undone to make the St. Jim's fellows uncomfortable at Holly Lodge.

Manners shook his head at last.

"I don't suppose they'd even send a constable over for such a reason," he said. "Monty may be in the grounds at this very minute. Look here, we've got to wake up Bosanney!"

And Manners thumped on the door again.

Still there was no answer.

"There's another door, I think," said Tom. "I believe Bosanney has two rooms here. I don't know which is his bed-room. Try the next."

The juniors moved along to the next door, and thumped on it. But there was no reply from within, and they found the door locked when they tested it.

"Well, this beats it!" said Manners. "Does the man drink, do you think, Tom? Unless he's dead squiffy he's bound to hear us."

"Blessed if I can make it out! He can't be out, I suppose?"

"Out!" repeated Manners, with a start.

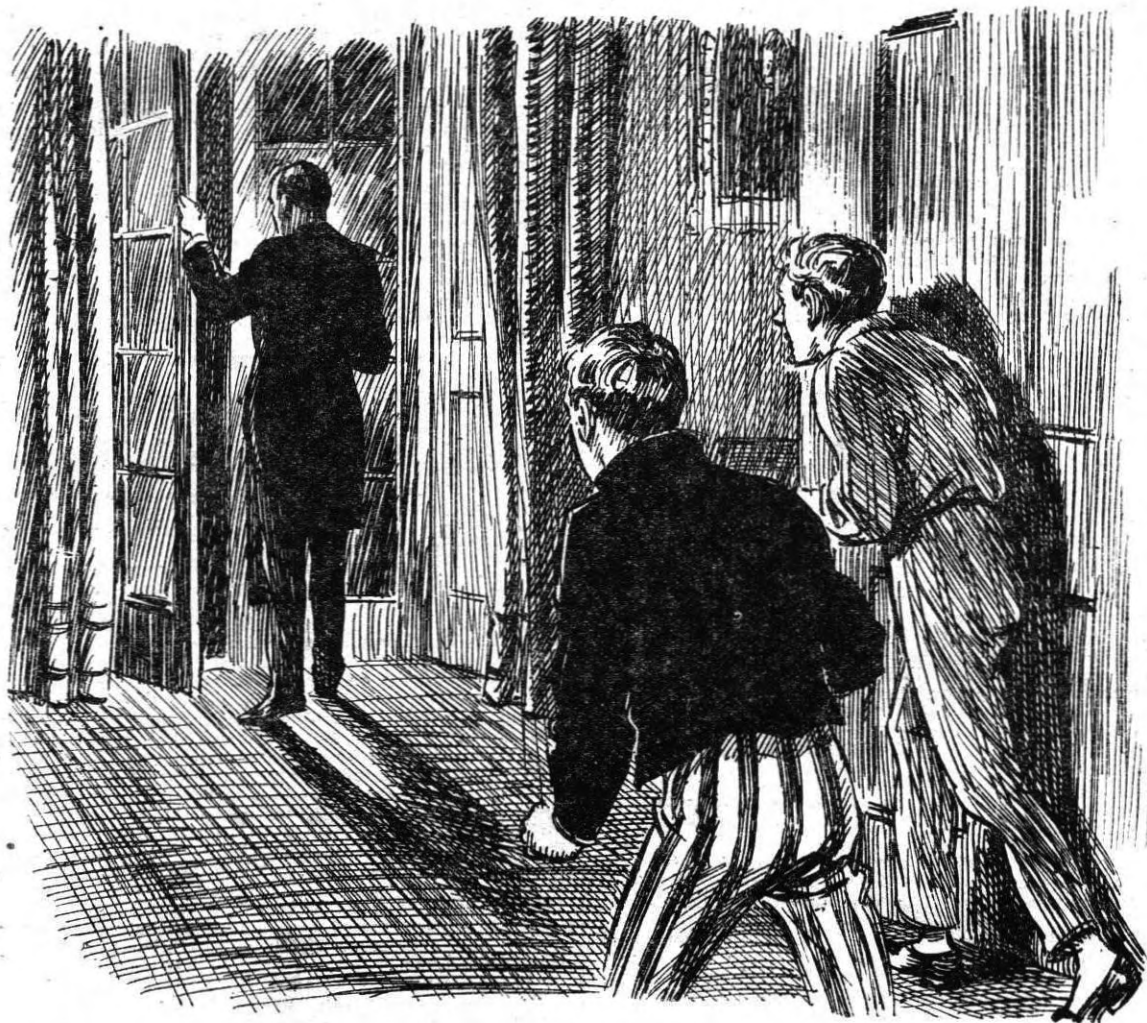
He breathed quickly.

"Tom! You know what Monty said yesterday? He was beginning to suspect Bosanney of having had a hand in his uncle's disappearance. We thought there was nothing in it—nothing but nerves; but—but if Bosanney's out of doors at this hour, and Monty's gone—"

Manners broke off.

"But why—why?" muttered Tom. "It's too thick! If Mr. Lowther is dead, or gone for good, Bosanney loses his job—and he had a good job as secretary to a Member of Parliament. According to Monty, who's seen his uncle's will, Bosanney had nothing to expect from that. Why should he harm his master, to his own disadvantage?"

"But—but it looks— He didn't want us here," said Manners in a low voice. "Look at it! He tried to keep us from coming here when the school broke up, and when D'Arcy telephoned yesterday Monty caught him telling old



"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Lowther's in here!" The junior captain of St. Jim's turned the handle of Mr. Lowther's study door, and pushed at it. But it was only a gleam of light that met his eyes when the door opened, and it came from an electric pocket-lamp. And standing by the french windows, which he was in the act of closing, was—not Monty—but Mr. Bosanne, the secretary of the missing M.P. (See this page.)

Gussy lies on the phone, making out that we'd gone on to your place, and trying by that trick to keep Gussy away. Now, if Monty's disappeared like his uncle—"

"He can't have!" said Tom. "He can't! I—I'm sure he's only gone out! Couldn't sleep, or something, and—and he'll come in all right. He must—"

"Bosanne's out," said Manners. "He can't be in his room."

"Hark!"

There was a sound below.

The juniors' ears were so accustomed to the wailing of the wind that they had ceased to notice it. Another sound, faint as it was, was audible to them.

It was the sound of a door being carefully closed.

"Monty!" murmured Manners, in deep relief. "He was only gone out, after all, and he's come in! Come on, Tom!"

"Oh, good!"

The two Shell fellows ran down the stairs. The hall was dark, and the double doors at the front of the house were closed and the inner door bolted and chained as they had seen it before.

But under the door of Mr. Lowther's study came a gleam of light. From that room there were french windows, giving access to the gardens. Doubtless, if Lowther had gone out, he had chosen that way, instead of unbolting the great door.

Tom Merry hurried across to the study and turned the handle of the door and pushed it. It was only a gleam of light that met his eyes as the door opened. It came from an electric pocket-lamp.

And standing by the french windows, which he was in the act of closing, was—not Monty—but Mr. Bosanne, the secretary of the missing M.P.

CHAPTER 3.

A Night of Anxiety!

BOSANNEY swung round, with a startled exclamation, as he heard the door swing open, and stared at the two juniors in the doorway, the light of his pocket-lamp flashing on them.

For a second he stood quite still, as if rooted to the floor. His face was in the dark behind the lamp; but the juniors noted that it had suddenly paled.

"You!" exclaimed Tom.

For a moment they heard the hurried breathing of the secretary across the wide room—hurried breathing that told of a throbbing heart.

But Eric Bosanne was calm again almost immediately. "You startled me," he said, and his voice had the faintest of quivers. "I thought it was burglars for a moment."

He laid the electric lamp, still burning, on a table, and calmly closed and secured the french windows.

Then he turned to the juniors again.

"May I ask what you are doing out of bed at this hour?" he inquired. "You are very likely to frighten the maids, wandering about the house at three in the morning."

"You seem to be wandering about also," said Manners sharply.

"That need not concern you."

"Where is Monty Lowther?"

The secretary stared at them.

"Master Lowther? In bed, I suppose, if he is not with you."

"He is not in bed," said Tom.

"Then where is he?"

"That is what we are asking you, Mr. Bosanne," answered the captain of the Shell, his eyes fixed on the secretary's face.

Mr. Bosanne made an impatient gesture. "You are talking ridiculously!" he said. "What should I know of Master Lowther's movements? He is in the house somewhere, I presume."

"We have searched for him," repeated Bosanne. "Yes; and we cannot find him. He is not in his room, and his clothes are gone. You have been out, Mr. Bosanne."

"You have seen me come in," answered the secretary coldly. "I am not answerable for my movements to you, Master Merry. You are very well aware that I am in authority here, by the direction of my late master's brother, a military gentleman now stationed in Egypt. Until he can return to England to take control I remain in authority. I have already pointed that out to you."

"You needn't say it all over again, Mr. Bosanne," answered Tom Merry. "We know all that. And we want to know what has become of Monty Lowther. If you don't choose to explain why you are out at this hour of the night—"

"There is nothing to explain, Master Merry," said the secretary smoothly. "I have the misfortune to suffer from insomnia, and when I cannot sleep it is my custom to come down and take a walk on the balcony. If you should be so distrustful as to doubt this statement, you have only to ask Miss Skeene, who is well acquainted with my habits."

He eyed the Shell fellows keenly. "If Master Lowther has really left the house in the night, you do not, I presume, suppose that I had any concern in the matter?" he added.

"I don't know," the secretary laughed slightly. "I am afraid, my boy, that you are very suspicious, or else very nervous," he said. "I have yet to be convinced that Master Lowther is not in the house. I have very little doubt that you have been frightened by some nightmare, and fancied—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Manners. "Let us go to his room and ascertain first of all that he actually is not there," suggested Mr. Bosanne calmly.

"Very well." The two juniors and the secretary proceeded upstairs together. Bosanne's manner was cool and a little impatient. He certainly looked as if he expected to find Lowther in his room.

Three pocket-lamps gleamed into Lowther's room, and on the bed, and showed it empty.

A puzzled look came over the secretary's face. "You say you have looked about the house for him?" he asked.

"We have searched the house thoroughly, so far as was possible," answered Tom Merry. "It is extraordinary. Master Lowther must have gone out."

He looked still more perplexed. "The poor boy has been very nervy, as you know," he said. "Some wild idea of searching for Mr. Lowther may have come into his head, and unhappily I left the study windows unlocked when I went out. No doubt he left the house that way. He may return at any moment. I shall wait up the rest of the night for him. I suppose you will go to bed?"

"We shall do nothing of the kind," said Tom. "We're not likely to sleep while we don't know what's become of Lowther."

"It is very improbable that anything has happened to him. However, you will please yourselves, of course. I will put on the electric light."

The secretary left the juniors and went downstairs. The light came on a few minutes later.

Tom Merry and Manners looked at one another. They were suspicious of the secretary, but their suspicions were very vague. At all events, it was clear that there was nothing to be done but to wait for morning. If Lowther did not come in by then, the police would be called in, whatever might be Mr. Bosanne's views on the subject. Tom Merry and Manners went downstairs, and found Mr. Bosanne lighting a fire on the dead embers in the study grate.

He glanced up at them. "You young gentlemen are resolved to remain up?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom curtly. "I think someone ought to do so," said Mr. Bosanne. "But if you think you had better, then there is no need for me to remain up. You can make yourselves comfortable here."

"Right!" "Good-night, young gentlemen!"

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"Good-night!" said Tom, half-reluctantly and half-ashamed of his reluctance to speak cordially to the secretary. He disliked the man, and vaguely suspected him. But Bosanne's civility left nothing to be desired so far as that went.

Mr. Bosanne went up the staircase. Manners stirred the fire together, and the two juniors settled down in a couple of armchairs to wait.

Every now and then they glanced at the french windows, wondering whether they would see Monty Lowther returning from some inexplicable midnight ramble.

The wild wind died down towards morning, and silence succeeded to the howling and creaking. Tom Merry and Manners nodded in their chairs.

They dozed off at last, tired out and sleepy from their long vigil. The morning sun of spring was streaming in at the french windows, when Tom Merry was awakened by a tap on the shoulder.

He looked up, rubbed his eyes, and blinked at Mr. Bosanne.

The secretary nodded to him. "You saw nothing of Master Lowther?" he asked.

"No." "It is extraordinary," said Mr. Bosanne. "He must have wandered away—goodness knows why, if he is in his right mind. No doubt you agree with me, Master Merry, that the police had better be informed."

Tom Merry eyed him doubtfully as he rose from the armchair. Manners was awake now.

Both the juniors had expected Mr. Bosanne to demur at the mention of the police. The suggestion coming from him took the wind out of their sails, so to speak. They were still feeling drowsy from the loss of sleep the previous night, but Mr. Bosanne seemed as keen, sharp, and alert as ever.

"You see," went on Mr. Bosanne, "it is possible that Master Lowther has simply wandered away, with some wild idea in his mind of searching for his uncle. But this coast is dangerous at night. If he went down to the sea, it is far from impossible that he may have fallen over the cliffs, as I fear Mr. Lowther did. I am quite aware that he may be perfectly well, and may come in to breakfast, and by communicating with the police we risk making ourselves look foolish. But I think we must take that risk, considering the possibility of some mischance."

"I think so," said Tom. "You are quite right, Mr. Bosanne."

"Very good. I will telephone." Mr. Bosanne crossed to the telephone and rang up a number, evidently that of the police-station a mile away from Holly Lodge.

"Is that Inspector Cheeseman?" Tom and Manners watched him silently.

"Good-morning, Mr. Cheeseman! Can you come over here? Bosanne speaking from Holly Lodge. Master Lowther has left the house during the night, and I fear something may have happened to him. Quite so, quite so. I fully agree. The boy should not give more trouble than he has caused already. But—"

Mr. Bosanne paused, apparently listening to some observation from the other end. Then he resumed:

"I quite understand, Mr. Cheeseman. But I am anxious about the boy. He is the nephew of a gentleman who was my most kind and considerate employer, and who I fear I shall never see again. I have a duty towards him. You will oblige me very much if you will come over without delay. Thank you!"

Mr. Bosanne hung up the receiver. "The inspector will be over here shortly," he said, turning to the St. Jim's juniors. "You had better be present to see him. He will want to know anything that you can tell him."

"Very well," said Tom.

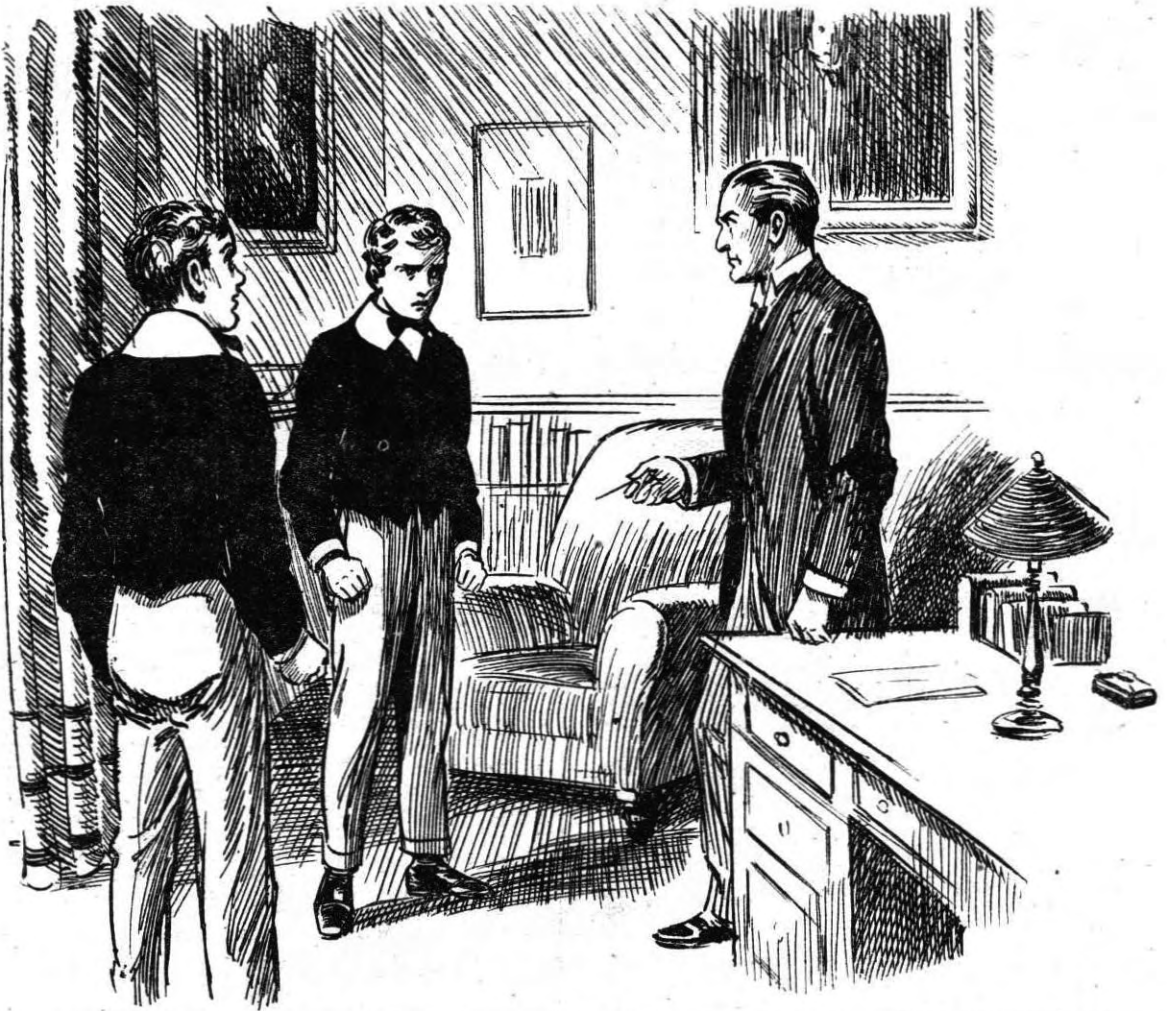
The two juniors went upstairs to bathe and dress for the day, and came down to breakfast. Very soon after breakfast was over the portly inspector arrived, and was admitted to Mr. Lowther's study, of which the secretary had taken possession since the M.P.'s disappearance. It was not till after he had had a long talk with Mr. Bosanne that Inspector Cheeseman sent a message to the juniors that he would like a few words with them, and they repaired to the study.

CHAPTER 4.

Ordered to Quit!

TOM MERRY and Manners came into the M.P.'s study and found Inspector Cheeseman there. Mr. Bosanne was standing by the window looking out into the gardens. The secretary apparently intended to be present during the interview.

Tom Merry noted that the inspector's plump, purple face was irritated in expression. He had never looked on the



"What train are you two young gentlemen catching?" asked Mr. Bosanne. "Train?" repeated Tom Merry. "Yes. I will order the trap to take you to the station, if you have decided upon your train." "Do you think we're going?" exclaimed Manners. The secretary raised his eyebrows. "Naturally," he answered. "Then you're jolly well mistaken," said Manners hotly. "We're not leaving this place until we know what's become of our pal!" (See page 8.)

St. Jim's juniors with a favourable eye; and his eye was less favourable than ever now.

That the country inspector was a somewhat obtuse and heavy-witted gentleman, the juniors were already aware; and they were aware that he was very much led by the nose by Eric Bosanne. They wondered what view he would take of Monty Lowther's disappearance; and it was easy to see at a glance that he did not take it very seriously.

"So it seems that your friend has gone," said the inspector, with a grunt. "You seem to think that something has happened to him."

Tom Merry succinctly explained the happenings of the night. Mr. Cheeseman listened with scarcely concealed impatience, but he heard the St. Jim's fellow to the end.

"The gist of the matter, then, is that Master Lowther went out of the house, and has not come back," said Mr. Cheeseman.

"Well, yes."

"Had he any intention of going, that you know of?"

"Certainly not."

"You had had no quarrel?"

Tom Merry started.

"A quarrel! Of course not!"

"I don't see why 'of course,'" snapped Mr. Cheeseman. "My experience of schoolboys is that they are continually quarrelling. If you had a quarrel, and Master Lowther was annoyed and sulky, he may very well have gone out without telling you his intentions."

Tom glanced at the secretary. He wondered whether Mr. Bosanne had put this idea into the inspector's head.

Mr. Bosanne appeared very interested in the spring sunlight playing on the stirring leaves in the gardens. He did not turn his head.

"You seem to suspect that something has happened to the boy?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"Well, what?"

"I cannot imagine," confessed Tom. "I feel certain, he wouldn't go out like this and leave us to be alarmed if he could help it."

"I understand that when you came here it was your intention to go on to your own home with Master Lowther after a few days?"

"Yes."

"You changed that intention from some ridiculous idea of searching for Mr. Lowther—not supposing that the police officials were equal to their business in the matter?"

Mr. Cheeseman was growing sarcastic.

"Yes," said Tom quietly.

The inspector grunted.

"Do you think Master Lowther may have got tired of such folly and gone on to some friend's place for the remainder of the Easter holidays?" he asked.

"Certainly not without telling us—and in the middle of the night, too," said Tom warmly. "It's impossible. We are his guests here."

"Well, what is your idea of what has happened to the boy?"

"I can't suggest anything," said Tom. "I only know he's gone—and seems to have disappeared as his uncle did."

"If he went fooling about on the cliffs at night, it is quite possible that he met with an accident," said Mr. Cheeseman brusquely. "It is more likely to my mind that he has gone to some friend's house. If you had quarrelled—"

"We had not quarrelled."

"At all events, he went without acquainting you with his intentions."

"He called to me, I am sure of that. My impression was

that it was a call from his room, and that he was calling for help."

"Why should he call for help in his room?" said Mr. Cheeseman testily. "Nightmare, do you mean?"

"N-no."

"You do not suppose that he was attacked in the house, do you?" asked Mr. Cheeseman, staring at the St. Jim's fellow blankly.

"I—I can't think so," said Tom. "Yet—that would account for it, if it's possible."

"Tut, tut!"

Mr. Cheeseman rose.

"I shall give instructions for the boy to be searched for, Mr. Bosanney," he said. "I understand your anxiety about him, which is to your credit, sir—very much to your credit, considering the insolence you received from Master Lowther before he chose to go. But I do not believe there are any grounds for it."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Cheeseman," said the secretary, turning from the window.

"I think you may be quite easy in your mind, sir. As likely as not, the boy is acting in this unaccountable way simply to cause anxiety—simply to make a sensation," said Mr. Cheeseman. "But as it is barely possible that there has been some accident, I shall look into the matter."

"I am very much obliged to you, inspector."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Cheeseman graciously.

Bosanney accompanied the portly inspector to the door. From the windows of the study Tom and Manners watched the official walking away down the drive. They looked at one another uncertainly.

"I—I suppose it would have been no good telling him we—we suspect that Bosanney might have had a hand in it," muttered Manners.

Tom shook his head.

"Not in the least. Bosanney is leading him by the nose, and they're friends. Besides—Tom paused—"it sounds awfully thick, old chap. We've got nothing to go on—only that Bosanney was up last night; and according to what he said, it can be proved that he's often up of a night. There was no sign at all of a struggle in Lowther's room—and surely if he'd been attacked, he'd have put up a fight."

"I—I suppose so—"

"Only," said Tom, in a low voice, "we can't suggest such a thing to the police without an atom of evidence; only—I can't help thinking—"

He broke off as the secretary came back into the room.

Mr. Bosanney regarded the two juniors with a peculiar light in his shifty eyes.

"What train are you two young gentlemen catching?" he asked.

"Train?" repeated Tom.

"Yes. I will order the trap to take you to the station if you have decided upon your train."

"Do you think we're going?" exclaimed Manners.

Mr. Bosanney raised his eyebrows.

"Naturally," he answered.

"Then you're jolly well making a mistake!" said Manners hotly. "We're not leaving this till we know what's become of our pal."

"Let us understand one another," said Mr. Bosanney smoothly. "You were here as Master Lowther's guests. I am in control of the house, on the authority of my late master's brother, with the support of his solicitors. My respect for Mr. Lowther made me very anxious to avoid dispute with Master Montague, and I made concessions to him. I do not feel bound to make similar concessions to you young gentlemen. This is a house of mourning, and no place for schoolboys to make holiday. I put it to your proper feeling and sense of the fitness of things."

Tom Merry looked fixedly at the secretary.

Vague, unformed suspicions had floated in his mind with regard to Mr. Bosanney. Now they grew fixed.

For the secretary's words supplied a motive for Monty Lowther's disappearance.

Now that Lowther was gone, Mr. Bosanney was unquestioned master of Holly Lodge, and it was in his power to order the St. Jim's juniors out of the house.

If he had, as poor Monty had suspected, had a hand in the disappearance of James Lowther, J.P., M.P., obviously he could not want the schoolboys hunting and searching about the place. He had, in fact, shown very plainly before that he wanted them to go.

Now he had the power to make them go; and he evidently meant to exercise that power ruthlessly.

There was a mocking glitter in his close-set eyes.

"I am sure you agree with me that, in the painful circumstances, it will be better in every way for you boys to take your holiday elsewhere," said Mr. Bosanney smoothly.

"We are not making holiday here, as you know very well," said Tom. "We came to help our pal search for his uncle. Now we have Monty Lowther to search for as well."

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Mr. Bosanney smiled.

"That is, of course, absurd," he said. "Master Lowther has taken himself off of his own accord; but in the event of a possible accident having happened to him, the matter is in the hands of the police, and they are quite capable of dealing with it—without assistance from two Lower Form boys from a school."

Tom's eyes gleamed.

"Let's have this plain, Mr. Bosanney," he said. "I suppose, as matters stand, it's in your power to turn us out of the house. Is that your intention?"

The secretary made a deprecating gesture.

"I should be extremely sorry to resort to any such measures," he answered. "I leave the matter to your own proper feeling."

"We want to stay here."

"In the circumstances, there can surely be very few attractions here for your Easter holiday—"

"We want to stay here."

"Then I am sorry to have to tell you that it is impossible," said Mr. Bosanney, shaking his head. "Inspector Cheeseman is already very much annoyed at your interference with his duties—"

"We have not interfered with his duties."

"That is his impression, at least."

"An impression you have taken jolly good care to give him!" exclaimed Manners scornfully.

"Come, do not let us have any unpleasantness," urged Mr. Bosanney. "You are leaving; let us part civilly."

"We're not leaving!" snapped Manners.

Mr. Bosanney drew a deep breath.

"If you force me to speak plainly, you must go!" he said.

"With a little more delicacy, I think, you would not have come here at all, in the painful circumstances. You cannot remain. At what hour do you desire me to order the trap?"

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"You needn't trouble about the trap—we can carry our bags," he said. "You are master here now, Mr. Bosanney—I understand that very well. But you will not be done with us so easily as you think."

"My dear young sir—"

"Come on, Manners."

The two juniors left the study, and went up the staircase. There was no choice about the matter now; they had to go. It was useless to stay in the house and wait till Bosanney called in force to remove them—as undoubtedly was the secretary's intention if they did not depart of their own accord. With dark brows and angry hearts, the two juniors packed their bags and left Holly Lodge.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus to the Rescue!

"ASS!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Fathead!"
"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Duffer!"

"Weally, Dig—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the St. Jim's Fourth, polished his celebrated eyeglass, jammed it into his noble eye, and surveyed his three chums—more in sorrow than in anger.

As Blake and Herries and Digby were the noble Gussy's guests in the house of his noble pater, Lord Eastwood, their remarks to the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might really have been a little more polished.

But polished manners were at a discount in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. Certainly, Gussy's own manners had all the polish that could be desired, either at school or on vacation. He lived in hope that his chums might follow his noble example and become some day as Chesterfieldian as himself. But that hope was never likely to be gratified.

"Of all the chumps—" went on Jack Blake.

"I weally considah—"

"Look at it!" said Blake. "Here's Lowther in a scrape—up against it! His jolly old uncle has bunked for parts unknown and nobody knows what's become of him. Stands to reason he's feeling down. Is this a time for you to butt in on him and play the goat?"

"It is not my intention to play the goat, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity.

"It never is your intention, old bean; but you always do it, all the same."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Give the poor chap a miss," said Blake. "Chuck it! Don't bother, you know. Give him a rest."

"I am goin' to help him in his pwesent difficulty, Blake."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!" said Digby. "What can you do, you duffer? If Lowther's uncle has bunked, you can scoot after him and rope him in, I suppose?"

"He has not exactly bunked, Dig, as you express it wathah coarsely. He has disappeared."

"Comes to the same thing. How are you going to do anything for an old gent who has performed the vanishing trick?"

"It is a question of findin' him, Dig."

"Aren't the police hunting for him?"

"Yaas."

"And Lowther, and Manners and Tom Merry?"

"Yaas."

"And you're going to show them how to do it properly?" inquired Dig, with deep sarcasm.

Sarcasm was wasted on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He nodded cheerfully, as if pleased to see that Dig understood so clearly at last.

"Yaas, wathah!" he assented.

"Well, you frabjous ass—"

"You see, a fellow of tact and judgment is weequiabed, in a difficult mattah like this," explained Arthur, Augustus D'Arcy. "It is vewy likely that somethin' will flash into my bwain when I am on the spot."

"Impossible!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! Why is it impossible, Blake?" asked D'Arcy, rather warmly.

"Can't flash into a thing that isn't there—it stands to reason," answered Blake.

"You uttah ass!"

"Give it a miss, old man," said Herries, shaking his head.

"I telephoned to Lowthah yesterday that I was comin'."

"Telephone to him again to-day that you're not."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus was evidently determined. He did not regard his proposed visit to Holly Lodge as butting in—he regarded it as the removal of the right man to the right place. With his well-known tact and judgment, he had great hopes of solving the problem that had remained unsolved so long.

"Besides, deah boys, Lowthah is quite keen on my goin'," he said.

"I don't think!"

"You see, his uncle's secretary has been puttin' on airs, makin' out that he's head of the place duwin' Mr. Lowthah's absence, and bein' cheeky genewally," said D'Arcy. "He seems to have some sort of powah in his hands, and is makin' himself unpleasant to Lowthah. He told me some feahful whoppahs on the telephone, to keep me away, and Lowthah spotted him and butted in, or else I should nevah have been goin' ovah there at all. Lowthah wants me to come, if only to show that man Bosanne that he can't dictate to him. I realise that. I shall speak vewy plainly to the fellow—he had no wight to tell me whoppahs ovah the phone."

Lord Conway, D'Arcy's elder brother, came out on the terrace, where the Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's were deep in argument. He gave the juniors a cheery nod.

"You're wanted on the telephone, Arthur," he said.

"Bai Jove! Excuse me, you chaps!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried into the house. He wondered whether Tom Merry & Co. were ringing up from Holly Lodge. It was getting near time now for Gussy to catch his train.

The swell of St. Jim's took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Is that you, Lowthah?"

"No. Mr. Bosanne speaking from Holly Lodge."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus frowned over the receiver. He had the lowest possible opinion of Mr. Bosanne, who had told him deliberate falsehoods over the wires the previous day, to

keep him out of communication with the Shell fellows at Holly Lodge.

"What do you want?" he asked curtly.

"I understand that it was your intention to visit Master Lowther here to-day, Master D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I thought I had better ring you up, to mention that Master Lowther is no longer here."

"Bai Jove!"

"He left last night," went on the secretary's smooth voice.

"His friends left this morning. Your journey here would, therefore, be a useless one, Master D'Arcy."

"Is that all?" asked Arthur Augustus grimly.

"Yes, that is all."

"Vewy good! I do not believe a word of it."

"What?"

"Yestahday, when I telephoned, you told me that Lowthah was not there," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "He intewwupted you on the phone, and warned me that you were lyin', Mr. Bosanne. I have not the slightest doubt that you are lyin' again now."

"Sir!"

"I twust I make my meanin' cleah, Mr. Bosanne! If you are tellin' the twuth this time, it is your fault that I do not believe you, as you were lyin' to me yestahday. But I am assured that you are not tellin' the twuth. Lowthah would not go away without a word to me, aftah askin' me to visit him. I wufuse to give your statement the slightest cweedit, and I wufuse to have anythin' more to say to you."

And with that the swell of St. Jim's rang off and jammed the receiver back on the hooks emphatically. He had had enough of Mr. Bosanne. Courteous as he was by nature, he did not regret having given the secretary some plain English. From Gussy's point of view the telephone message was simply another trick of a meddlesome, interfering man, who did not desire his master's nephew to receive a schoolboy visitor in the house. Not for a moment did D'Arcy believe that Monty Lowther had gone away, forgetting to send a word to the expected visitor.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as he went out on the terrace again in the spring sunshine. "That fellow is an uttah wottah! It is vewy odd, too, how familiar his voice seems to me, and I have nevah met anyone named Bosanne, that I know of. I feel quite suah that I have heard him speakin' somewhah, befoah I heard him on the phone yestahday. Anyhow, he is a feahful lyin' wottah, and I wufuse to take any notice of him whatevah."

Arthur Augustus rejoined his comrades, with a slightly flushed face.

Blake & Co. regarded him, grinning.

"From Holly Lodge?" asked Blake.

"Yaas."

"Lowther decided that he's got no use, after all, for your tact and judgment, old man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! It was that wottah Bosanne, twyin' to pull my leg and keep me away again," said D'Arcy, frowning. "Now, it's time for me to catch my twain. You fellows comin' to the station with me? I shall have to take the car, as I shall have a bag. I shall be back this evenin', deah boys. I am suah you will excuse me for leavin' you a



Housemaster of the New House and Form-master of the Fifth. A thorough tyrant to all those under his charge. Wields the cane with extreme vigour, and dishes out lines for the most trivial offences. Figgins & Co. have some very rough times with their master, who apparently has no understanding of boys and no sympathy for their fun and pranks. Mr. Ratcliff has been the cause of many exciting times in the School House—a recent barring-out was entirely due to the tyrannical methods he employed when acting as Head during the absence of Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton.

little while? Old Conway is takin' you motorin', you know; so you won't miss me."

"Not at all," said Blake genially.

"Not a bit!" grinned Herries.

"Pleasure!" said Digby.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"All serene, Gussy; we're seeing you off," said Blake. "Let's get going—and mind you don't play the goat more than you can help."

"Wats!"

Half an hour later Blake & Co. saw Arthur Augustus off in the train at Easthorpe, with smiling faces. D'Arcy waved a cheery hand to them as the train rolled out of the station. Apparently he had a happy belief that he was going to be of great use at Holly Lodge—a belief that his comrades did not share in the very least.

But it is often the unexpected that happens; and there was, if they had only known it, a surprise in store for Gussy's unbelieving comrades.

CHAPTER 6.

Baffled!

TOM MERRY sat down on a jutting ledge on the cliffs, looking away across the water towards the Isle of Wight, in the far distance. It was a fine, clear, spring day, after the rough weather of the night. Manners sat beside him, a little tired, and with a glum brow.

The chums of St. Jim's were in a difficult and doubtful position. They had had to leave Holly Lodge; no choice had been left them on that point. In the house of James Lowther, J.P., M.P., Eric Bosanne was monarch of all he surveyed, for the present. In the absence of the missing M.P.'s nephew, there was no one to say him nay.

But the chums of the Shell had no intention whatever of going away and leaving unsolved the mystery of Monty Lowther's disappearance. That there had been foul play they were assured—whatsoever Inspector Cheeseman might suppose. Lowther had not left the Lodge willingly—that cry that Tom Merry had heard in the night had been a cry for help. Lowther had, in point of fact, been kidnapped, and they were sure of it; and almost sure that Eric Bosanne was at the bottom of it.

They had taken their bags to the inn at Mitford, a mile or so away from Holly Lodge, and engaged rooms there. Then they had returned to the vicinity of the Lodge, to begin a search. Lowther had been taken out of the house in the night, they were assured; doubtless by the french windows of the M.P.'s study. They had an idea of looking for "sign" there; but Mr. Bosanne was taking care that they should do nothing of the kind. As soon as the juniors set foot within the precincts of Holly Lodge, they were warned off by the gardener, who had obviously been told to keep his eyes open for them. As they were, in fact, trespassing now, they had no choice but to go outside the bounds of the estate. Once more Bosanne had checked them, thereby deepening their suspicions of him, but effectively putting an end to any hope of picking up a clue.

In the lanes and roads between Holly Lodge and the shore they hunted for "sign," summoning all the skill they had acquired as Boy Scouts at St. Jim's. But they realised that it was a hopeless quest, and they soon found it so. Then they moved down to the cliffs, where they sat down to rest, and ate the lunch they had brought up with them from the inn.

"Looks as if that fellow has beaten us, Tom," remarked Manners, after a long silence. "What can we do?"

"Stick on!" said Tom resolutely. "We're not going till we know what's become of Lowther."

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"What on earth can have become of him, Tom?"

The captain of the Shell shook his head.

"Goodness knows! It's impossible that he cleared off without a word to us—with D'Arcy coming to-day, too. He's been kidnapped. Bosanne is at the bottom of it. I thought at first that he simply disliked schoolboys about the place, but there's more in it than that. He's got rid of Lowther so that he could order us out."

"It looks like it."

"And why?" said Tom. "Because he was afraid that we might find out something, hunting and rooting about the place."

"But what—"

"Only one thing," said Tom quietly. "We might have found out what became of Monty's uncle—which means, that Mr. Lowther was kidnapped, as Monty has been, and did not fall over the cliffs and get washed away by the tide, as Mr. Cheeseman thinks."

Manners nodded, with a wrinkled brow.

"I know it looks like it," he said. "But the man's motive, Tom—he's not a lunatic, and he must have had a motive. If this is true, and it comes out, it means a long term of imprisonment for him. Why should he do it? He had a well-paid job, and he loses it if Mr. Lowther doesn't return."

"I know, I know."

"And if Monty has been kidnapped, he can't be kept a prisoner for ever—not for long, in fact. Two prisoners to guard, and to supply with food—it's thick, Tom. Of course, it's possible; but the man would have to have a jolly strong motive for it all. What could it be?"

"Goodness knows."

The juniors gave one another discouraged looks. Everything, to their minds, pointed to Bosanne's guilt; yet if that theory was correct, the man was apparently taking great risks in acting against his own plain interests—which was impossible.

"There's one thing," said Tom at last. "You know that Mr. Lowther had recently made Lord Eastwood's acquaintance, over some election business, and it had been arranged for D'Arcy's father to visit him here for Easter."

"Well?"

"Mr. Lowther disappeared a few days before Easter, so the visit had to be cancelled, and Lord Eastwood never came. And yesterday Lowther found Bosanne telling D'Arcy lies over the telephone, to keep him away. And Gussy told him that he thought he knew Bosanne's voice—though he had never met Bosanne, or even heard of him, so far as I know. Well, is it possible that Bosanne had something to fear from Lord Eastwood's visit—or D'Arcy's? Can they know anything about him—anything that would harm him?"

"How could they?"

"I'm dashed if I know," said Tom. "But look at it! If Bosanne's a bad hat, mixed up in kidnapping and so on, it's clear that he must have deceived old Mr. Lowther when he was taken on as secretary. Likely enough he's got a pretty juicy past. Lord Eastwood may have come across him—perhaps under another name—something of the kind—"

Tom Merry paused.

He felt that he was getting into deep waters.

"If he feared Lord Eastwood in some way—seriously—that would account for the whole bizney, Manners," he said at last.

"I—I suppose it would," said Manners dubiously. "But—but then—"

"What then?" asked Tom.

"Suppose—it's a bit thick, but suppose—that Bosanne is some rogue, known to D'Arcy's pater, and was awfully alarmed to hear that Lord Eastwood was coming over. He could have bolted. He couldn't perhaps have avoided him and stayed on in Mr. Lowther's service, as it seems they were going into political business, and perhaps seeing each other a good deal. But he could have sacked himself and bolted."

Tom nodded.

"Why should he commit a crime, and risk years of imprisonment, when there was that easy way out of it, Tom? He loses his job, anyway."

"I know!" said Tom desperately. "Every way one looks at it, it seems like coming up against a stone wall. All the same, I'm sure that Bosanne is at the bottom of it. And if D'Arcy knows him—"

"My hat! Here he is!" muttered Manners.

Tom Merry looked up.

Mr. Bosanne was coming up the cliff path, and his close-set eyes gleamed at the two juniors sitting on the rocky ledge, as he came.

He stopped in front of them.

"So you have not gone," he said.

"We're not going," said Tom briefly.

"Indeed! Why are you lingering here, may I ask?"



Mr. Bosanne set down the bag and opened it. He turned out a bottle of water, a loaf, and a lump of cheese. Then he moved to untie Lowther's left hand. "Eat!" he said briefly. "I shall return in a few minutes to bind you up again. So make the most of your time." "But my uncle—" panted Lowther. Bosanne did not reply. (See page 16.)

"It's no business of yours, Mr. Bosanne," said Manners gruffly. "You haven't bought up all Hampshire, by any chance, I suppose?"

"We're not going till we've found Monty Lowther," said Tom Merry, looking at the man steadily.

The secretary raised his eyebrows.

"You suppose that Master Lowther is somewhere in this neighbourhood?" he asked.

"I am sure of it."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bosanne ironically.

He stood regarding the juniors. Tom Merry's eyes fastened upon a bag the secretary carried in his hand. It seemed to be a rather heavy bag, as Mr. Bosanne shifted it from one hand to the other as he stood. Vaguely in Tom's mind there was a thought of kidnapped prisoners hidden in some obscure recess among the rugged cliffs, and of the kidnapper taking them food. Why was Bosanne carrying a heavy bag in a ramble over the cliffs by the sea?

"I trust you will have a pleasant afternoon here," said Mr. Bosanne, after a pause. "I recommend you to mind your own business, and to go to your homes. By all means do as you please."

His manner was sarcastic and bland; but there was a glitter in his eyes of bitter anger, perhaps of uneasiness. He walked on, and turned the corner of a cliff and disappeared.

Tom sprang up.

"Come on, Manners."

"After him?" asked Manners, puzzled.

"Yes. Suppose—you saw that bag—suppose he's going to Monty now; he would have to take him food at some time or other—"

"Come on," said Manners. "But I say, Tom, if we're going to meet D'Arcy at the station, it's time we got going."

"I forgot that." Tom Merry paused. "You go to the station, Manners, while I follow Bosanne."

"No jolly fear," said Manners. "You're not going after him alone. If it's as you think, what's to prevent him from knocking you on the head?"

"But old Gussy—"

"We'll pick him up later; he will go on to the Lodge if we're not at the station. He won't mind, when we explain."

Tom reflected for a moment.

"All right, then—come on! We can't lose this chance—if it is a chance."

The two Shell fellows hurried on.

They rounded the big cliff, and spotted Mr. Bosanne again, following a rugged path overlooking the sea. Deep below, the waters stirred by the wind of the night before, were rolling in with a heavy boom.

The secretary did not look back. He did not seem to have the slightest suspicion that he was being shadowed.

He walked on steadily, and the Shell fellows followed on, losing sight of him among the rocks, and then sighting him again. He turned inland at last, and to their surprise left the cliffs behind him and struck into a country lane.

He walked on by the lane, still not glancing behind. For nearly an hour the two juniors had been on his trail, and not once in that time had he glanced over his shoulder.

Tom Merry stopped, with a bitter look on his face. A spire showed ahead over the trees; it was useless to follow Eric Bosanne into a village.

"Well?" said Manners.

Tom set his teeth.

"He knew we were following him; he's led us on a wild-goose chase—making fools of us—"

At that moment Bosanne looked round, as if guessing somehow that the juniors had relinquished the pursuit. He stared directly at them, and smiled—a mocking, ironical smile. Then he walked on, and disappeared among the high hedges. The juniors followed him no further. Whether in

the first place it had been Bosanne's intention to visit the hidden recess where Monty was kept a prisoner, or not, it was obvious that he had no such destination now—now that he knew he was followed. For a whole hour he had kept the Shell fellows tramping after him, and it was only too clear now that he had been aware of the shadowing all the time.

And it was borne in upon Tom Merry's mind that, if matters were as he suspected, and Bosanne was guilty, it would be no easy enterprise to catch him napping.

CHAPTER 7.

An Old Acquaintance!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked this way and the other looked that way, like Moses of old.

But he did not see the St. Jim's fellows, whom he had expected to meet him at the station.

He had understood that the Terrible Three would be there to meet him, or at least one of them; but there was no sign of any of them about the railway station when D'Arcy alighted from his train.

"Bai Jove! I am suah I told them my twain would get in at three!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, they are not heah, so I suppose I had bettah get on to the house."

And the swell of St. Jim's left the station, bag in hand, to look for a conveyance. There was a hack outside the station, and Arthur Augustus engaged it to drive him to Holly Lodge. He sat in the hack with his bag at his feet, and kept a keen eye on the windows on either side, as the vehicle rolled away along the country road, hoping to catch sight of Tom Merry & Co. en route.

It was over a mile to Holly Lodge, by a country road bordered by woods, now rich in the green of spring. As the old red chimney-pots came into view over the trees, the driver glanced round at his passenger and pointed with his whip.

"That's the 'ouse, sir."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

He was still looking round him, expecting to catch sight any moment of some member of Tom Merry & Co. He did not see any of the St. Jim's fellows, but he caught sight of a man who was entering the gates of the Lodge with a bag in his hand.

D'Arcy's eyes became fixed on the man with a startled expression.

"Bai Jove! Dwivah!"

"Yessir."

"Dwive on quick; I want to speak to that chap."

"Yessir."

The driver cracked his whip, and the hack rattled on more swiftly. At the clatter of the wheels the man at the gate turned his head, and D'Arcy saw the full face instead of the profile—a hard face, with close-set, glinting eyes.

"Bai Jove! It's that wottah Scaife!"

The close-set eyes glinted at Arthur Augustus, and the man gave a violent start at the sight of him.

"Stop!" shouted D'Arcy.

The hack rattled to a halt close by the wooden gates of the drive.

Arthur Augustus sprang out, but the man with the bag had raced across the road and darted into the wood.

"Stop, you wottah!"

The man had vanished.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He paused, and turned back to the hack, then he spoke to the astonished driver. "All wight! Dwive up to the house."

The hack rolled up the drive to Holly Lodge, with Arthur Augustus sitting in it again.

He dismounted at the door and rang the bell.

The door was opened by Miss Skeene, the housekeeper, in person. The prim, rather acid-looking dame gave the junior a glance of cold inquiry. Arthur Augustus raised his hat politely.

"You are Master D'Arcy?" asked the housekeeper before the swell of St. Jim's could speak.

"Yaas, madam."

"Mr. Bosanne left a message for you. He did not know at what time you would arrive, and so could not remain to see you."

"I am not callin' to see Mr. Bosanne, madam," said Arthur Augustus politely. "Lowthah expects me—"

"Master Lowther is no longer here."

"Bai Jove!"

"He went away last night, sir."

"Gweat Scott! Is it possible that Bosanne was tellin' me the twuth on the telephone?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

Miss Skeene set her lips acidly.

"But Tom Mewwy—and Mannahs—"

"They left this morning," said Miss Skeene coldly.

"Bai Jove! Did they leave a message for me?"

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"None."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood and blinked at Miss Skeene. The acid lady did not ask him to enter, and obviously did not intend to ask him. Indeed, she held the door with her hand as she talked to him, prepared to shut it if he made any attempt to pass in.

Had Bosanne met him at the door, D'Arcy would have known how to deal with him; but with Miss Skeene it was a different matter.

Acid as that lady was, it was obvious that she was perfectly honest and straightforward, and had stated the facts. Whatever might be Eric Bosanne's object in seeking to keep away the St. Jim's fellows, Miss Skeene's motive was plain enough. In the painful, perhaps tragic, circumstances of Mr. Lowther's disappearance, she regarded Holly Lodge as no place for schoolboys on holiday, and was annoyed and offended by their coming. Even the handsome face and polished manners of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had no effect on the acid dame. Obviously, she only wanted to see the last of the visitor, and as soon as possible.

If the Terrible Three were gone, D'Arcy had no desire to enter the house, and he realised, too, that without Lowther's authority he could not do so against the desire of the inmates.

"You are suah that Lowthah did not leave a message for me?" he asked, at last.

"Quite sure. Mr. Bosanne left the message that, in the circumstances, it would be impracticable for you to stay here."

Arthur Augustus coloured a little.

"I have no desiah whatever to stay here, madam, if my friends are no longah here," he said. "I am vevy much surprised; but I shall not stay a moment longah. There is no news yet of Mr. Lowthah?"

"No."

"One moment, madam, befoah you close the door," said Arthur Augustus politely. "As I came along here I saw a man I know well by sight—a wascal named Scaife, who was once my fathah's secwetawwy, and wobbled him and cleahed off. Is he known here?"

"I have never heard the name before."

"He was entewin' the gates when I came up, and when I shouted to him he bolted into the wood," said D'Arcy.

Miss Skeene's black silk rustled as she shrugged her spare shoulders slightly. Apparently she was not interested.

"The man is an awful wascal," went on Arthur Augustus. "As he was about to entah when I came up, I thought pew-waps he had somethin' to do with the place. You are suah you do not know the name?"

"Absolutely."

"You see, madam, if Mr. Lowthah has been the victim of foul play, this man Scaife is just the kind of wottah to have had a hand in it, as he is hangin' about the place."

"I have never seen or heard of the man, and I am afraid that I must now return to my duties, Master D'Arcy."

"Pway do not let me detain you, madam," said Arthur Augustus, with undiminished politeness, and he raised his hat again and walked back to the vehicle waiting on the drive.

The door closed.

Arthur Augustus stepped into the hack.

"Back to the station," he said.

"Yessir."

The hack rolled away again. Arthur Augustus sat in it with a thoughtful brow. It had amazed him to learn that the Terrible Three had departed without leaving a word for him; and although he was not easily offended, Arthur Augustus felt that the matter required explanation. This was not the way to treat a guest, especially a guest like the Chesterfield of St. Jim's.

"Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy!"

The hack stopped, and Tom Merry and Mannahs ran up.

CHAPTER 8.

Light at Last!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his eyeglass into his noble eye and surveyed the two Shell fellows seriously.

"Sorry we missed you at the station, old man!" said Tom. "You've been up to the house?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you see Bosanne?"

"No; a wathah pwim and sour old lady in black, whom I undahstand to be Miss Skeene, the housekeepah," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you fellows, I am wathah surprised—"

"It's all serene," said Tom. "Holly Lodge is barred now. We've been turned out, and something's happened to Lowther. We're putting up at the inn in Mitford; and you'd better come and have tea with us there, and we'll tell you about it."

"Wight-ho, deah boy. Jump in."



"Mr. Bosanney!" gasped Inspector Cheeseman. "What—what—" Lord Conway's eyes were fixed on the secretary's pale, despairing face. "Inspector Cheeseman, I identify that man as Herbert Scaife, wanted for a robbery in my father's house a year ago! Take him into custody!" "Yaas, wathah!" chimed in D'Arcy. (See page 18.)

Tom Merry and Manners entered the hack, and as they drove to the inn they explained to Arthur Augustus what had happened. The swell of St. Jim's listened with a thoughtful air.

"Somethin's happened to Lowthah, suah enough," he said, when the Shell fellows had finished. "He would nevah be so lackin' in mannaahs as to treat a guest in such a way willin'. But you fellows are w'ong about Bosanney."

"Oh, are we?" said Manners, with a grunt.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And how the thump do you know, fathead?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry, as the hack stopped at the inn. Arthur Augustus alighted with the Shell fellows, and his bag was taken in and the hack dismissed. The three juniors sat down to tea in the inn, and then the swell of St. Jim's proceeded to enlighten them.

"I do not considah that Bosanney has anythin' to do with this," he said, "for some vewy good reasons."

"You don't think there's been foul play?" demanded Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, who else—"

"A man named Scaife."

"Scaife!" repeated Manners blankly. "Who in the thump is a man named Scaife? I've never heard of him!"

"Same here," said Tom.

"That is vewy probable," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I can tell you all about him. Last year my fathah engaged a pivate secwetaw, named Herbert Scaife. The man wobbled him of a sum of money and bolted, and it twanspired that he had imposed on Lord Eastwood by forged testimonials—he was a regular bad hat!"

"But what—"

"Pway let me finish, deah boys! He bolted and disappeared, and the police never got hold of him. Unluckily he had a passport, and he cleahed out to the Continent before he could be gwabbed."

"But—"

"But he must have come back," went on D'Arcy, "because I have seen him to-day. See?"

"Oh!" said Tom. "Here, do you mean?"

"He was enterin' the gates at Holly Lodge when I came up, just as if he belonged to the place. I called to the wascal, but he bolted into the woods."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"Now," said Arthur Augustus impressively, "the man is a feahful wascal, and he is hangin' about Holly Lodge secwetly. I questioned Miss Skeene, and she had nevah heard of him. That shows that he is here secwetly—for he was actually goin' in at the gates when I spotted him, yet the housekeepah knew nothin' of him. Now, put it togethah, deah boys! A cwime has been committed here—and I find a regular cwiminal hangin' about the place. What does it look like?"

Tom Merry and Manners looked at one another.

"We've heard nothing of anybody named Scaife, and I'm pretty sure Lowther hadn't," said Tom slowly. "He might be a confederate of Bosanney's."

"I wathah think he could tell us what has become of Monty Lowthah and his uncle," said D'Arcy confidently. "What is he doin' about here? What has he been doin' at Holly Lodge? He isn't here for nothin', I suppose."

"But he wasn't an inmate of the place," said Tom. "If he had been, it would all be clear enough. He would have been scared at the idea of Lord Eastwood coming over for Easter, and that would account—"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly.

"My hat!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

His teacup was in his hand, and he set it down so sharply that it cracked.

"Bai Jove! What—"

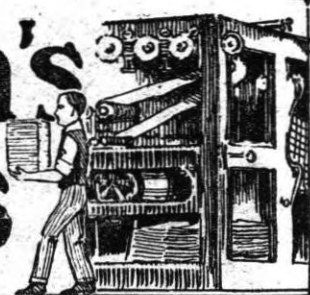
"Is it possible? You say this man Scaife robbed your father and cleared. Then he is wanted by the police!"

(Continued on page 16.)



TOM MERRY

The St. Jim's News



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THIS week the whole of England is in a state of excitement concerning the Final tie for the English Cup, which will take place on Saturday on the now familiar ground at Wembley.

It might be supposed that only the supporters of the two clubs which have fought their way through the preliminary rounds to the Final tussle would have much interest in the match, but past experience has proved that this is far from being the case.

It has often been said that a Cup Final isn't worth seeing, because the standard of football played on that occasion is of a very poor order.

Well, it may be true that Cup Final football isn't exactly gilt-edged, but it's not so true that it isn't worth seeing. The thrill of the game in such a match depends not so much on the footer itself as on the thought of what the result means to the winning team.

Of course, I know there's a lot of miskicking and bustling play, and all that sort of thing, and that players of tip-top ability are apt to make silly mistakes that a kid in a village team ought to be ashamed of; but consider what a state of nerves they must be in. I think I should have nightmare for a week if I knew I'd got to play in a match on which so much depended. (Not the kind of nightmare, though, that Monty Lowther appears to have had, judging from his article in this issue.)

Anyway, I'll say that the two Cup Final footballers had the good fortune to witness were exciting affairs, and more than well worth seeing. I wouldn't have missed them for worlds, and I'm more eager than ever to see this year's event, which, I'm jolly glad to say, I'm going to do. And not only I, but a dozen more St. Jim's chaps, too. Lord Conway, Gussy's elder brother, has made arrangements for Monty Lowther, Manners, Blake, Gussy, Digby, Herries, Levison, Figgins, Kerr, Fatty Wynn, Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, Joe Frayne, and myself—just a round dozen, counting three fags as being equal to one of us—to go up to Wembley for the great event.

Grundy has been trying to get permission to make up a party, but I can't say at the moment whether he's succeeded.

It may possibly be remembered that last year he managed it by means of a stroke of luck. He organised a comic band, and offered their services to the authorities for the purpose of playing to the crowd before the match commenced, and, in consequence of a clerical error, he received a letter accepting his offer, which enabled him to obtain permission from Dr. Holmes to make the journey. But that's not likely to happen this year, and, between ourselves, I'm inclined to regard George Alfred as a certain non-starter. However, we shall see what happens, and, fortunately, speaking for ourselves, we shall also see the Final. If any of you are there, look out for us in the crowd. Some hopes? Um, yes; I expect so!

Tom Merry

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THERE are some silly asses in the world when you come to think of it. At the present moment I'm thinking of Dane and the events that followed last year's Cup tie. I've always given Dane credit for being pretty well all present and correct in the grey-matter department, but I'm hanged if you can answer for anybody besides yourself in this world.

Last year Dane favoured Aston Villa for the Cup, and one evening in the Common-room he got into an argument with Cardew about the result of the match, and, of course, Cardew, in his usual fashion, as soon as he discovered which team Dane was backing, commenced to crack up the other crowd. Well, Dane wouldn't have it at any price that Newcastle United were going to pull it off, and Cardew was equally certain they were—or, at least, to rile Dane, he pretended he was, which comes to the same thing—and the argument became fiercer and fiercer. It ended by Cardew suggesting that, as Dane was so certain about it, he should make a little wager on the result, but, as he knew perfectly well Dane wouldn't dream of actual betting, he put it another way.

This was Cardew's proposal—that if Newcastle United lost, Cardew was to pay five pounds to the local hospital funds; but if they won, Dane was to pay forfeit by pushing a wheelbarrow upside-down from St. Jim's to Rylcombe, wearing carpet slippers and no hat.

Well, you'd have thought any fellow would have had more sense than to make such a fat-headed bargain, but you'd have thought wrongly, for Dane made it. Whether he felt so certain that Newcastle couldn't win, or whether it was that Cardew had worked him up till he was feeling crazy enough for anything, I don't know. The fact remains he made the wager.

And, of course, Newcastle did win, as you know.

On the following evening, just after tea, Dane set out to pay his forfeit in the prescribed manner. He set out, wheeling the barrow upside-down, and wearing the slippers as agreed upon, and amidst the cheers of nearly the whole of the Lower School.

Quite a crowd of us followed him down the lane, not to see that he carried out his part of the bargain, because we knew, having passed his word, that he'd do it, but just to see what happened. Dane had not gone far, however, before he ran into Mr. Railton.

Now, when your Housemaster meets you walking along without a hat, in carpet slippers, wheeling a barrow upside-down, and you can't explain to him just why you're doing it, you're likely to be in something of a fix.

Dane said he was doing it "for fun," so Railton said "Indeed!" and went on to inform Dane that if he—Dane—would return to St. Jim's and put the barrow back where he got it from, and then go to his—Railton's—study, he would endeavour to provide Dane with a little amusement on the school premises.

And, in my opinion, it served Dane right for being such a silly ass as to make such an arrangement with Cardew.

SEEING THE FINAL!

By Dick Julian.

WHEN anybody asks me if I've ever seen a Cup tie, I say "Yes," because it's true. I went to one a year or two ago; but in one sense it isn't quite right to say I've ever actually "seen" a Final.

Mind you, I was there all right, from the kick-off to the final whistle, and I had a jolly good time while the match was going on, even though I did wish at times that there was a little more space so that the fifteen-stone man in front of me had got room to put his feet down without having to use the same piece of ground that I happened to be standing on at the time; and that the red-nosed gentleman with a muffer round his throat who was standing next to me on the right could have smoked twist out of a clay pipe without finding it necessary to present me with all his smoke as soon as he had done with it himself.

Then the efforts of the bony, angular individual on my left to obtain a better view by means of levering himself upwards with one hand on my shoulder and the pressure of a sharp kneecap into my side were rather distracting; to say nothing of the attentions of a young man, aged five or thereabouts, sitting on his father's shoulder just behind me, and leisurely consuming a very sticky jam-tart, which he was generously offering, from time to time in a fashion peculiar to himself, to share with me.

The roar that went up when the two teams came out on to the field was absolutely deafening. It must have been heard miles away from the ground; and if the individual with a watchman's rattle and a huge tin megaphone about a yard away from my off-side ear-drum wasn't responsible for about half of it I must be a rotten judge.

There was a breathless hush as the two captains tossed for choice of goals, and a lot of cheering from the supporters of the side which had won, assisted by a sort of neutral yell from a large number of people who didn't quite know who'd won the toss, but were determined that no opportunity for kicking up a row should pass them disregarded.

The teams took their places, the referee's whistle shrilled, and the game commenced.

It was a great game. The gentleman who was climbing on to my shoulders all the while said so on several occasions; and as, by means of jumping into the air, or climbing up people round him till they shook him off, he managed to obtain at least half a dozen momentary glimpses of a portion of the ground with, on one memorable occasion, no less than five of the players visible to him at the same time, there is no doubt it must have been.

Anyway, I took his word for it. As my view of the match was limited to the back of the man in front of me, and the sight of the ball on four occasions when it was punted high into the air, I felt I was hardly in a position to contradict somebody who had seen at least twice as much as I.

As I have said, I've seen a Cup Final. Yes; I said "seen," didn't I? And I can assure you that I should not be very anxious to attempt to see it again. Oh, no, thanks! I've had my fill!



ST. JIM'S WIN the CUP!

By Monty Lowther.

AN AWKWARD SITUATION!

OF course, I must say it appeared to me to be a most peculiar affair from the very commencement, and, speaking for myself, I'll admit I never really understood the ins and outs of the business. Not that I bothered to at the time, because I was too busy to ask questions, and everybody else was too busy to have answered them even if I had asked any.

With special training every day, and practically every hour of the day, as it seemed, there wasn't much time to talk about what was happening, why it was happening, or how it ever came to happen at all.

What am I talking about?

Why, the occasion on which the St. Jim's Junior Eleven won the English Cup!

You never knew they did? Well, bless my soul, what ever part of Central Africa do you come from? Don't you ever read the newspapers?

Wait a minute, though! On second thoughts, I am inclined to believe that the whole business didn't get into the newspapers. In fact, now I come to think it over, I'm sure there was no mention of it. You see, the matter was rather hushed up at the time because of—well, anyhow, there's no need to go into details and explain every little thing. It was kept a secret, and that's the end of the matter.

So, as you don't seem to know anything about the affair, I'll tell it to you right from the beginning. You see, it was like this.

One of the big League teams didn't want to have a shot at lifting the Cup that year. They were out for the League Championship, and the directors of the club felt that the double event was a bit over their weight, so they withdrew, and, of course, that made rather a mess of things. I dare say you're all wondering which club it was; but if you don't know, I'm not going to tell you, because I don't know myself, and, anyway, it doesn't matter.

But you can understand what an awkward position it was for the committee who preside over the destinies of the English Cup.

Here was one of the first and foremost football clubs in England sending them a message to say that their centre-forward had been to a whist-drive and won a tea-service, and they'd got more than enough cups to go round when they held their annual bun-and-coffee struggle at the end of the season, or words to that effect, and—well, what about it?

They were a team short. The committee held a meeting, and talked and argued it over, and then went home and puzzled their brains some more, and held another meeting and did some more arguing; and if there hadn't been an old St. Jim's chap on the Committee, I dare say they'd have been arguing still.

The decision they arrived at was the most sensible one I've ever heard of any committee arriving at.

They agreed that the St. Jim's Junior team should be invited to take the place of the club that had dropped out of the contest.

So the secretary wrote to Tom Merry, and our jolly old junior skipper nearly went through the roof when he got the letter. In fact, I'm not so certain that he didn't actually go through the roof. As I say, my memory regarding small details connected with this amazing business isn't very clear. I know Thomas accepted the offer on the spot, and then things began to hum.

TRAINING!

Of course, we had to go into training straightaway—and, my word, when I say training, you can take it from me that I mean it!

Dr. Holmes engaged a special trainer for the job of licking us into shape, and what he didn't know about his job could have been written on the back of a postage-stamp without making a mess of the gum.

Of course, we didn't stop at St. Jim's to train. Oh dear, no! We were packed off to Slocumbe-on-Slush.

Never heard of the place? Really, you do surprise me! As a matter of fact, I hadn't heard of it myself till we were on our way there, and when we arrived I gave one look round and decided that, if I'd never heard of it at all, I shouldn't have been much worse off. In fact, it's a wonder we found it at all; and I don't think we should have done if it hadn't been for an accident. We got out of the train and set off to walk there, and Blake happened to kick against something, and he looked down and found it was Slocumbe-on-Slush.

Quite a queer little place, you know. Only one street, and only one house in that street. Well, it's not exactly a house. It's really a chicken-coop that's been washed up by the sea and taken root there. At least, that was the idea we got about it when we first saw it.

It's supposed to be an hotel, and that's where we took up our quarters. The next morning we started on our training. We were provided with time-tables, because, of course, you can't "train" properly without a time-table.

We trained on acid-drops and cods'-heads, with carraway-seeds as dessert after each meal.

Every morning we got up and swam across the Channel, there and back; then ran sixty miles across country, finishing up by jumping over the hotel three times for luck. This helped to give us an appetite for breakfast.

After breakfast we commenced the really serious work of the day, retiring about seven o'clock in the evening.

The following is a list of the team that was chosen by Tom Merry to uphold the honour of St. Jim's in the great undertaking: Tom Merry, Levison, D'Arcy, Blake, Lowther, Clive, Digby, Talbot, Kerr, Figgins, and Fatty Wynn, with Manners and Brooke as reserves.

VICTORY AFTER VICTORY!

We got through the first two rounds very easily, winning the first match against Tottenham Totspur by 14 goals to nil; and in the second, with Redburn Roamers as our opponents, we finished up 10 to 5—or else a quarter to, I forget which. Anyway, I know we had plenty of time to get ready for tea at half-past five.

I am not going to tell in full the story of how we conquered team after team and fought our way right up to the Final; but when we had emerged victorious from the Semi-Final, and realised that at last we were en route for Wembley, we solemnly shook hands all round, and vowed a great VOW we would take the Cup back to St. Jim's or leave our bones to strew the battlefield of Wembley.

Between the Semi-Final and our appearance in the last great struggle we went back to Slocumbe-on-Slush, and resumed our strenuous training as before—only more so.

People came from all parts of England to watch us performing our daily doings, and I shall never forget the sight of the great crowd that stood, breathless and spellbound, on the top of the cliffs one morning watching Figgins' great struggle with a savage jellyfish that had attacked him as he was returning from France after his daily cross-Channel swim.

How they cheered when Figgy at last, after five hours' heroic resistance, finally overcame the voracious monster of the deep. But when Figgy swam wearily ashore our jubilation at his escape was turned to dire dismay as we saw that he had been scratched and torn in a dozen places by the claws of the jellyfish.

It was obvious that the New House fellow would not be fit to take his place in the team at the Final, and it seemed to us that at the last moment victory was to be snatched from our grasp.

We did not give way to dull despair, though, and we resolved to fight to the bitter end—whatever that is.

We took Brooke, our reserve, out of cold storage, carefully dusted him, and bunged him into Figgy's place as full-back.

And it was with the team thus altered that we journeyed to Wembley.

We donned our footer-kit in a fever of excitement—not because we felt particularly excited, but we understood, from newspaper accounts of teams just going to play in a Cup Final, that they are in a state of fevered excitement just before they go on to the field, and we thought we ought to do the thing properly.

There was a trifling unpleasantness in the dressing-room just before we went out on to the field, in consequence of Tom Merry and Kerr arguing about whether the Cup was going into the School House or the New House when we'd got it. As there were nine School House fellows present to a couple of New House cheese-mites, that argument was soon settled. It was more difficult to adjust the one that immediately arose between Tom Merry and Blake as to whether Study No. 10 in the Shell corridor, or No. 6 in the Fourth Form corridor should be its abiding-place; but harmony was fortunately restored after somebody had suggested that it really wouldn't be at all a bad idea to win the Cup first, and then discuss the question of where it was going to be kept. We had no time to do more than have a short heart-to-heart talk with the silly ass who had the bad taste to suggest that there might be any possibility that we were not going to take home the bacon before the call came to go out on to the field.

AND THEN—

We were playing against Tynemouth United, and a jolly hefty set of chaps they were, too; about enough meat on any one of them to make three of us—with the exception of Fatty Wynn.

But we held them. What's more, we had the bulk of the play.

At half-time we were leading one nil. Ten minutes after the game restarted Tom Merry netted the ball again, amid frantic cheers from the crowd of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Redcliff fellows, who were all there in full force. Dr. Holmes threw his silk topper into the air, and knocked Selby's flat on his head. I suppose the dear old chap was a trifle excited. At any rate, that's the only explanation I can think of because that sort of thing isn't what you could call a habit with him. I hoped to goodness we should score another goal, and then the Head might serve Ratty in the same fashion.

Then it came on to rain suddenly. It literally poured, so that we were all streaming with water in a few seconds. But we played on in spite of it.

Tom Merry whipped the ball over to me, and I raced off down the field. A back challenged me. I heard Tom Merry call out, and back-heeled the ball to him. He was immediately tackled, and flashed the ball across to me again.

There was only one thing to do, and I did it. I trapped the ball and shot for goal. I saw the leather rise, and the goalkeeper jump to meet it, but it curved above his outstretched hands and dropped into the net.

"Goal!"

It was a roar of voices, among which I could clearly hear that of Tom Merry.

At the same moment the back charged me a split second too late, and I went sprawling into a huge pool of water.

Ugh! It was icy cold.

And the next moment—

Well, the next moment I awoke flat on my back on the floor of the dorm, with Tom Merry bending over me, a silly grin on his face and a dripping sponge of cold water in his hand.

The roars of the crowd at the Stadium became suddenly transformed into a yell of laughter, in which every fellow in the Shell dorm was joining.

Silly asses!

If a fellow can't oversleep a few seconds on a cold and frosty morning without that sort of thing happening, it's a thumping pity!



D'ARCY DOES IT!

(Continued from page 13.)

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In that case, he would not be using his own name now! He would not dare to let it be known!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! Of course, Miss Skeene could not have heard of him as Scaife, if she had heard of him at all."

"You say he got the post with Lord Eastwood with forged testimonials, as secretary—"

"Yaas."

"Then—it's possible—that would account for everything—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners, catching Tom Merry's thought. "My only hat! Tom, you've hit it! He's Scaife!"

"Bosanney!" breathed Tom.

"Bai Jove! I weally fail to gathah what you two chaps are talkin' about!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in perplexity. "I wepeat that Bosanney has nothin' to do with it—now I've seen that wascal Scaife here!"

"Suppose," said Tom slowly—"suppose Scaife played his same trick over again, and got a job with Mr. Lowther by means of forged papers, as he did with your father—under a new name—say, the name of Bosanney?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You remember you said to Lowther on the phone that Bosanney's voice seemed familiar to you when he phoned. Was it Scaife's voice you had in mind?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Gweat Scott! That's it!"

"What was Scaife like to look at?" asked Manners.

"A commonplace sort of johnny, not vewy big, with vewy close-set eyes—wathah foxy, I thought—"

"That suits Bosanney vewy well," said Manners.

"It does!" said Tom Merry.

"That accounts for the whole thing," breathed Manners. "If Bosanney is really Scaife, no wonder he was scared when he heard that Lord Eastwood was coming to stay at Holly Lodge! No wonder he wanted to keep D'Arcy away! Both know him by sight! But I still can't understand why he didn't bolt, instead of—"

"He may have some rotten game to carry out before he bolts," said Tom. "If he robbed Lord Eastwood, he may have some scheme of robbery at Holly Lodge in his mind. Anyhow, it looks to me as if D'Arcy has cut the giddy Gordian knot by coming here! It looks to me as if Bosanney is the man Scaife! D'Arcy saw him going in at the Lodge."

"Yaas, wathah, with a bag in his hand—as if he belonged to the place, you know!"

"A bag in his hand!" repeated Tom. "Bosanney had a bag in his hand, you remember, Manners, and we thought—My hat! D'Arcy must have seen him going home, after leading us on that wild-goose chase round the cliffs. Was it a brown-leather bag, Gussy?"

"Yaas."

"That settles it. It was a brown leather bag Bosanney was carrying when we lost sight of him. That settles it, Manners."

Manners nodded.

"He bolted, of course, when he saw Gussy. He dared not go up to the house then. He won't go back to Holly Lodge until he's sure that Gussy isn't on the scene any longer." Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. "You fellows, we've got to it at last! Now, what are we going to do?"

"No good going to Cheeseman," said Manners.

"No; not unless Gussy can positively identify him as Scaife—and give him in charge," said Tom. "Even then that fat old duffer might hesitate, and give him a chance to bolt. Is your brother Conway at home, Gussy?"

"Yaas."

"He knows Scaife, of course?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then he's the man to deal with him. You're going to

get on the telephone to Eastwood House and explain to Lord Conway, and ask him to come over at once in his car. He's bound to come if you tell him you've seen Scaife and can put your finger on him."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus looked thoughtful. "But we mustn't wun any wisks, deah boys. Old Conway is a deah old chap, but he is wathah given to comin' the eldah bwothah ovah a chap, you know, and it is quite poss that he might wefuse to act undah my diwectioms."

"Eh?"

"And that might make a muck of the whole bizney, you know," said Arthur Augustus seriously.

"You silly owl—" began Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We must risk that, Gussy! Mop up your tea, and let's get along to the station and use the phone!"

"Vewy well, deah boy."

And in great excitement the three St. Jim's juniors walked down to the station, where Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was soon on the telephone, talking to an extremely astonished Lord Conway at the other end of the wire.

CHAPTER 9.

The Prisoners!

MONTY LOWTHER stirred in the darkness and looked up. In the deep gloom a point of light twinkled, and there was an echo of footfalls.

Darkness surrounded the kidnapped Shell fellow of St. Jim's. He was lying on hard rock, and there were cords on his hands and feet; he was a helpless prisoner. He was free to shout if he liked—and many and many a time had he shouted for help, till his throat was husky, only to realise that there was no hope of being heard. Only the hollow caves in the cliffs had echoed back his despairing voice.

Where he was he could not guess; but he knew that he was in some hidden cave in the cliffs, some secret recess known only to his kidnapper. Only Eric Bosanney could have seized him in his room at Holly Lodge that wild night and drugged him with chloroform and carried him away to this obscure hiding-place.

How long he had been there he did not know. It seemed like centuries.

He had come to his senses in the deep darkness; he had been lying there, bound and helpless, since.

He was sick and worn, and in despair. The light that twinkled before his eyes now was welcome, though he could guess that it only heralded the approach of the kidnapper.

The light came nearer—the gleam of an electric lamp. Behind it he made out a figure muffled in a large coat, carrying a bag.

The man flashed the light on his face, and peered down at him. Monty Lowther fixed his eyes on the face of Eric Bosanney.

"You villain!" he muttered.

Bosanney smiled mockingly.

"I should have brought you food before," he said. "You have to thank your friends that I did not come this afternoon; they were too inquisitive. Are you hungry?"

"Yes," muttered Lowther.

"Here is food and drink."

The secretary set down the bag and opened it. He turned out a bottle of water, a loaf, and a lump of cheese. Then he untied Lowther's left hand.

"Eat!" he said briefly. "I shall return in a few minutes to bind you again. Make the most of your time."

"Hold on!" panted Lowther. "Answer one question—my uncle—"

Bosanney did not reply. He picked up the lamp and the bag and walked on, following the winding of the crevice in the great cliff. The light vanished from Lowther's sight.

Bosanney pressed on by cave and fissure, and stopped at last in a deep hollow of the cliff. He flashed the light on a man who lay on an old rug on the rocky floor.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lowther!"

James Lowther, J.P., M.P., sat up on the rug.

His old face was lined and haggard and fearfully pale. His hands were secured with a cord, and his legs shackled to a peg driven into a crevice of the rocks, allowing him a few yards of movement. Bosanney stood looking down on him, placing the lamp on a ledge.

"You scoundrel, you have come again," said Mr. Lowther in a low, faint voice.

"Did I not tell you that I should visit you once in every twenty-four hours, sir?" said Bosanney coolly. "It is twenty-four hours since I saw you last."

He opened the bag.

"Here is your food; you look as if you need it."

"I shall not need it long," said the old man huskily. "Life will not last many days longer here. You will have a charge of murder to meet when you are discovered."

Bosanney shrugged his shoulders. But there was a trace of anxiety in his hard face as he searched the worn features in the light of the lamp.

"It is your own fault," he said. "I have to go, but I cannot go empty-handed. You are a rich man, and five thousand pounds is little enough to you."

"Not a shilling!" said the M.P. "Not a penny! Not a farthing! I will die here sooner."

"Die, then, if you choose it," said Bosanney. "If your life is not worth five thousand pounds, die like the old fool you are. Your bones will never be discovered here, nor those of your nephew."

James Lowther flinched at that.

"My nephew is not in your power," he said. "I do not believe it. But even so, I would not trust you. Release me, and I will promise to give you twenty-four hours to escape before I inform the police. That is all you have to expect from me."

Bosanney laughed evilly.

"That is not quite enough," he said. "After this, I shall have to leave England for good; and I am not going with empty pockets. I have writing materials here, if you choose to sign the draft—"

"Never!"

"Not to save your life?"

"Never!"

"And your nephew's life?"

"You will not dare!" muttered the old man.

"You will see," said Bosanney coolly. "I shall not wait many days longer. Already I risk too much by staying here; though I have succeeded easily enough in throwing dust into the eyes of the police. But there is risk—great risk. Something has happened to-day to increase it, well as I have guarded myself. A set of schoolboys—but no matter! Listen, Mr. Lowther! You should know that you have to deal with a desperate man—the man who seized you in your study, drugged you, and carried you from your own house in the dead of night, is not likely to stick at trifles! Listen! This is my last visit here—your last chance! Refuse to sign the draft, and I shall rely upon my own skill. You should know that I have some skill in penmanship; you must have guessed that my testimonials were forgeries, I suppose. Well, then, it is an additional risk, but I shall take it rather than remain longer at Holly Lodge. I tell you, I have been seen to-day by someone who knew me under another name, and I cannot—I dare not risk more. Do you understand?"

His eyes glinted at the haggard face of the M.P.

"Do you understand, man? If I risk a fresh forgery, adding to my danger, I shall leave the moment the money is in my hands—leaving you here? Have you been found yet in this hidden cave? Do you think you ever will be found? The entrance is below water at high tide. At low water it

is practically undiscoverable. But you have had proof of that. Will you remain here to die?"

He hissed out the words.

"I have answered you," said Mr. Lowther faintly.

"For the last time—even if I show you your nephew, a prisoner like yourself—doomed to death—"

"I have answered you!"

Bosanney uttered an oath.

"Fool! Then die like the obstinate fool you are!"

He snatched up the bag and the lamp, and tramped away. He had left no food. Whether with the intention of carrying out his terrible threat, or to subdue his victim by hunger, the old man did not and could not know. But the grim old man uttered no word as he went. The scheming rascal had entered into conflict with a will stronger than his own.

The light glimmered again on Monty Lowther's eyes in the cave nearer the sea. He had eaten the bread and cheese, and there was a faint colour now in his pale cheeks. Bosanney, without a word, bent over him and bound his arm again. Then he lifted the St. Jim's junior to his feet, and half dragged, half carried him along the winding fissures to the inner cave.

He panted as he threw him down, at last, in the hollow of the rock where James Lowther lay.

"Here is your nephew, Mr. Lowther!" His voice was low and savage. "Here he is—to die with you of hunger, if you do not come to your senses! I will give you twenty-four hours longer together. To-morrow night is the last time I shall come, unless you come to your senses!"

He tramped savagely away.

"Uncle!" muttered Monty Lowther. He had had a glimpse of the haggard face of his uncle in the lamp before Bosanney went.

"You, my boy—and here!" muttered the old man.

"I've found you—alive!" breathed Lowther. "I'm jolly glad I'm here, uncle—jolly glad! I've found you."

His voice was glad; his heart was light. For the moment, at least, he had forgotten that he was a prisoner in desperate hands, with the shadow of a terrible death looming darkly over him.

CHAPTER 10, In the Toils!

"INSPECTOR CHEESEMAN!"

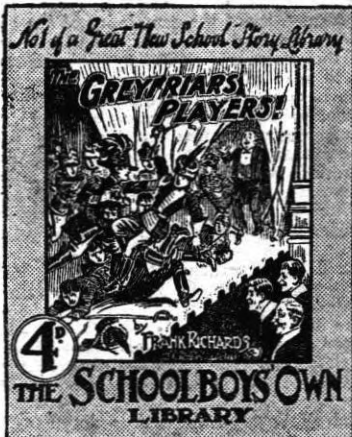
Bosanney muttered something under his breath.

He was seated before the fire in Mr. Lowther's study in Holly Lodge, with a glass in his hand and a decanter beside him. He had been buried in gloomy thought for some time as the night grew older. Coolly, cautiously,

(Continued on the next page.)

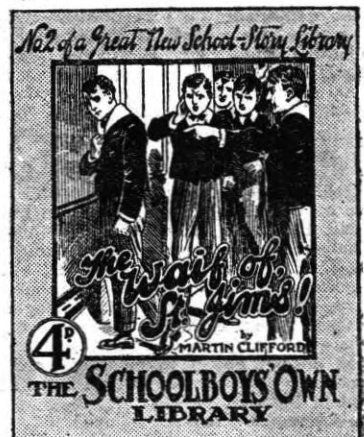
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Bosanney had played his desperate game, and so far he had been successful. But the dangers that encircled him had only been staved off; the situation could not last, and he knew it. Every day that he lingered added to his peril; he longed to flee, and to place the seas between him and the land where the law must, sooner or later, close its grasp on him. Yet to go with empty hands, after all he had risked, was too bitter. He had not counted upon the grim obduracy of old Mr. Lowther's nature, but now he realised that it was likely, after all, that his treachery would be unrewarded; that his victim might perish in the hidden cave, but never would yield.

He might have fled in safety, when the threatened arrival of Lord Eastwood made it clear that he could no longer continue to play the part of the M.P.'s secretary. But he would not go empty-handed; he had piled risk on risk rather than that. And now it seemed that he must go with empty hands after all.

His mood was black and bitter.

The announcement of Inspector Cheeseman irritated him; but he had his part to play, so long as he remained at Holly Lodge, and he could not afford to displease the inspector.

"Show him in at once," he said.

The portly inspector entered.

Bosanney, keen as a razor, saw at once that there was a change in the portly inspector. Mr. Cheeseman did not advance to shake hands, and his glance rested on the secretary with a curious uneasiness. It was clear to Bosanney's keen eyes that the inspector was hesitating between two opinions—that he had heard something that had shaken his faith in Mr. Bosanney, and yet was deeply reluctant to admit that he had been mistaken and deceived.

Bosanney scented danger at once, and he pulled himself together.

"Good-evening, Cheeseman! This is a rather late hour for a call. Is there any news? I am glad to see you, anyway."

"I called earlier, Mr. Bosanney, and you were out," said Mr. Cheeseman.

"Yes; I have been suffering from insomnia, as usual, and I have taken a walk on the cliffs, to tire myself out," said Bosanney, with a smile. "I think I shall sleep to-night. But sit down, my dear fellow."

The inspector did not move.

"The fact is, Mr. Bosanney—" He hesitated, and then took the plunge. "I have seen Lord Conway—"

Bosanney's heart stood still.

"Who is Lord Conway?" he asked.

"The son of Lord Eastwood, who, I understand, was to have stayed with Mr. Lowther for Easter but for Mr. Lowther's disappearance."

"Yes, I remember that," assented Bosanney, with an air of polite inquiry. "But what—"

"It seems that Lord Conway's younger brother came here to-day, and saw a man hanging about the place—a man named Scaife. Do you know the name?"

Bosanney shook his head. His sharp, hard face gave no clue to the terror that was rising in his heart.

"This man Scaife was once Lord Eastwood's secretary, and he is wanted for a theft at Eastwood House, committed a considerable time ago. I will be plain, Mr. Bosanney, Young D'Arcy, and his friends, Merry and Manners, believe that you are the man Scaife, under another name."

"Really, Mr. Cheeseman, if you take notice of the absurdities of silly schoolboys—"

The inspector flushed.

"I should not have taken the slightest notice," he answered. "But Lord Conway is of the same opinion, since I have conferred with him, and given him a description of you, Mr. Bosanney. I do not believe anything of the kind, personally; but the matter is easily settled; you have only to see Lord Conway in my presence, sir. I am bound to take notice of such a statement by a man in his lordship's position, whatever I might have thought of a schoolboy's statement. You see that?"

"Oh, quite so!"

"You do not object to meeting Lord Conway—who, of course, is very well acquainted with the man Scaife."

"Not in the least."

Mr. Cheeseman looked relieved.

"I was sure it was a mistake," he said. "I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Bosanney. Lord Conway is waiting without—shall I bring him in?"

"Most decidedly."

Inspector Cheeseman, quite relieved and reassured now, turned back into the hall, where a tall young man was standing. Bosanney's eyes burned after him. The instant the inspector was out of the room, he leaped forward, slammed the door after him, and turned the key in the lock.

Then he tore across the room to the french windows.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 898

He had only seconds, and he knew it. Once in the presence of Lord Conway, the game was up; the handcuffs in the inspector's pocket would be clicked upon the wrists of Herbert Scaife. The game was up now, with a vengeance—plunder, the reward of crime, had to be forgotten now—only a desperate chance of liberty remained, and it depended on instant flight.

He tore open the french windows.

The inspector and Lord Conway were in the hall, locked out of the room; he had a breathing space. The french windows flew open, and Bosanney sprang out on the balcony.

The dark gardens, the shadowy woods, lay before him, and rapid flight might save him yet.

He rushed across the balcony to the steps.

"Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Three shadowy figures leaped on the secretary as he ran.

He came down on the balcony with a crash and a panting cry; and Tom Merry's knee was planted on his chest, and Manners gripped his collar, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy his wrists.

"Got him!" gasped Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Bosanney struggled wildly.

"Let me go! I—I—"

"Wathah not! Old Conway wants to see you, deah boy."

"Hold him!"

"You bet!"

"This way, Conway!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Bosanney groaned. He had taken his only chance, and it had failed. Tom Merry & Co. had been too much for him. He had not guessed that they were watching the french windows while the inspector and Lord Conway entered the house; but had he guessed it, it would not have helped him. It had been his only chance, and it had failed.

"Here he is!" Lord Conway came up with the portly, panting inspector, and a light flashed on Bosanney's face.

"Mr. Bosanney!" gasped Inspector Cheeseman. "What—what—"

Lord Conway's eyes were fixed on the secretary's pale, despairing face.

"Inspector Cheeseman, I identify that man as Herbert Scaife, wanted for a robbery in my father's house a year ago. Take him into custody."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a chink of metal. The handcuffs fastened on Bosanney's wrists. Even Mr. Cheeseman was convinced now, and his purple face was very grim.

"And now, Scaife, or Bosanney, or whatever your name may be," said Lord Conway, as the secretary was lifted to his feet, "where is Mr. Lowther—where is his nephew?"

Bosanney ground his teeth.

"Where you will never find them! I will not say a word."

"We shall see! Take him away, Mr. Cheeseman."

"You villain!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where is Monty Lowther? Where is he, you scoundrel?"

But the defeated schemer with the inspector's hand on his arm, went in silence, without a word.

Scaife, alias Bosanney, spent the remainder of the night in a cell. By morning he had time for reflection—time to realise that only the discovery of Monty Lowther and the missing M.P. could save him from a capital charge. The result was that he became almost as anxious as Tom Merry & Co. for the prisoners of the cave to be rescued; and by his directions the hidden cave was penetrated by a rescue party early in the morning. An hour later Monty Lowther and his uncle were safe at Holly Lodge.

It was long before Mr. Lowther recovered from his terrible experience; but Monty Lowther was very quickly himself again, and the Easter holiday was, after all, a happy one for Tom Merry & Co.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy returned to Eastwood House in the cheeriest of spirits. Blake and Herries and Digby met him in quite a subdued mood.

D'Arcy had done it!

True, the chapter of accidents had had something to do with it; nevertheless, the fact remained that D'Arcy had done it! Like Cæsar of old, he had come, he had seen, he had conquered!

"And I twust, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in his most fatherly manner, "that this will be a lesson to you, and that in future you will always wely on a fellow of tact and judgment!"

And Blake & Co. grinned and declared that they would!

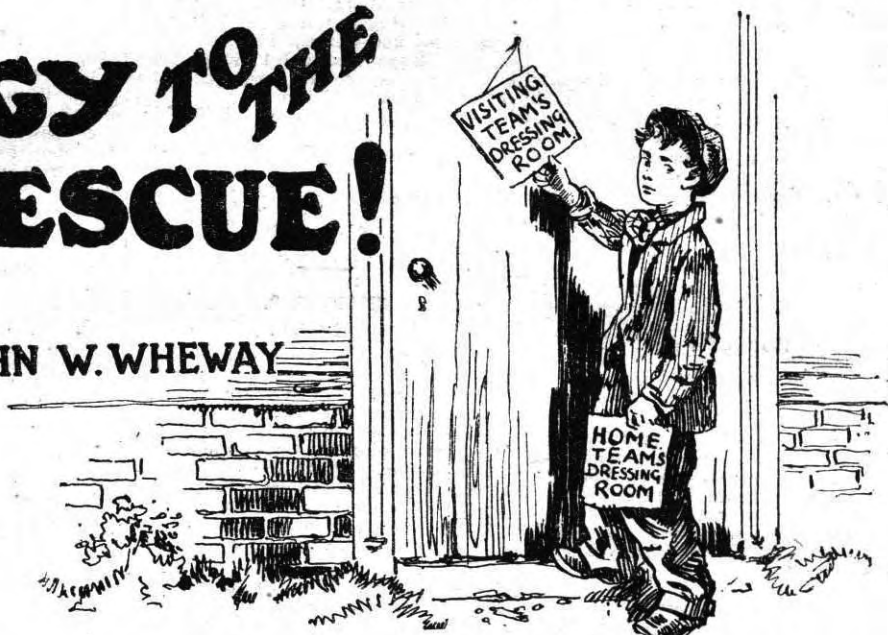
THE END.

(Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tact and judgment play another important part in next week's ripping school yarn, entitled, "Gussy's Speculation," by Martin Clifford. Don't miss this exciting story, whatever you do, chums!)

THE TABLES TURNED! Rough and ready Raggy Jones again proves a thorn in the side of Trojan Tim's enemies!

RAGGY TO THE RESCUE!

By JOHN W. WHEWAY



CHAPTER 1.

The Hidden Listener!

"WEBSTER!" Trojan Tim, composing stick in hand, turned from the case of type at which he was working and frowned.

"Well," he said with no very great warmth in his tone, for although Jim Watkins was a fellow-apprentice, he did not like him.

"Webster!" Watkins came forward and lowered his voice as he glanced cautiously round. "I want to speak to you—on the quiet. Slip along to the wash-house in about five minutes, will you? I'll be waiting for you there. It's rather private—about the match on Saturday, as a matter of fact."

He slunk away without waiting for a reply, leaving Tim wondering and half-inclined to refuse. Jim Watkins was a fifth-year apprentice in Pritchard's Printing and Publishing Works, Ltd., and because Tim was only a third-year man he had always shown an inclination to look down upon him. Therefore, this unusual endeavour to be confidential was surprising.

It was, until Tim thought about Watkins' last words, and then a great light dawned upon him.

For he remembered now. Jim Watkins was captain of the local amateurs, the Midborough Hornets, a strong team who, this year, bid fair to run off with the Staffordshire Amateur League championship and the Staffordshire Amateur Cup into the bargain. It was sheer fate that had matched the Trojans and the Hornets in the Fourth Round of the latter competition, which was to be played off on the following Saturday at the Hornets' ground, for these were the biggest and bitterest amateur rivals for miles around. A sudden gleam came into Tim's eyes.

"Oh!" he remarked to the case of type before him. It was not a very intelligent or a very lucid remark, but its tone conveyed a fair idea of what was passing in the young centre-forward's mind.

Preoccupied, he set another line of type, found, upon examining his handi-

work, that he had left out half a dozen words, and carefully lifted the type and laid it on a galley at his side. Before starting again he went down to the wash-house.

The wash-house was everything its name implied. It was here that the apprentices foregathered at tea-time and made the tea from the two big urns which stood in the corner for the journeymen who worked outside. It was here, when morning and afternoon work was done, that the workers repaired for a well-earned wash and brush up before seeking their homes. It was here, too, that the apprentices, wishing to be free from the duties of the composing-room, came for an occasional "mike" or a smoke. One could always be sure of a quiet chat during business hours unless Foulton, the overseer, took it into his head to pop in and investigate.

Watkins was there when Tim entered, negligently toying with one of the taps. He came forward as the door opened, however, a look of relief on his face.

"Hallo!" he said, and paused a little awkwardly. "I'm glad you've come."

Tim nodded.

"You asked me," he said. "I confess I'm curious. What's this you want to tell me about the match on Saturday?"

"I didn't want to tell you anything. I wanted to ask you something. Look here, Webster, I'm on a good thing, and I'm going to let you into it, if you're willing. You're centre-forward for the Trojans?"

Tim did not deny the fact.

"And you're a jolly good centre, too," Watkins went on warmly. "So good, that the Trojans wouldn't be anywhere without you." He paused as Tim did not answer, and, rather uncertainly, went on: "Without you, indeed, the Hornets would stand a jolly good chance of winning. With you—"

Another pause.

"With me," Tim prompted ominously. "Well, we'd be nowhere. Everybody knows it's you who scores the Trojans' goals. Everybody knows that you're the man who got them through to the Fourth Round of the Cup. Well, you might as well have it. I'm offering you a fiver on Saturday to abstain from scoring goals, and let my crowd win."

"Several of us are making a book on this match," he went on eagerly, and failing, by reason of his eagerness, to read the danger signs in Tim's face. "Everybody's backing the Trojans, and if the Hornets can only win, we stand to rope in a fair amount of cash. I'll guarantee you a fiver, and on top of that we'll go twenty-five per cent. with you in the winnings. Of course, this is K.D. Just between you and me. What about it?"

"Just this," said Tim, and with the words bunched his fist and drove forward with a punch that, catching Jim Watkins amidships, deposited him with a tremendous clatter clean between the two large urns.

"That's my answer to all such dirty proposals as yours, Jim Watkins!" he went on hotly. "And you can think yourself lucky that I don't write to the County authorities about it. You dirty cur!"

Jim, too surprised and too dazed by the suddenness of the catastrophe to be capable of words, remained clutching at the top of each urn for support, and glaring in utter stupefaction at the face of the lad in front of him. And, without giving him time to recover, Tim turned scornfully on his heels and walked back to his "case."

There he resumed his work, his mind still infuriated by the treachery of Jim Watkins, and a deepening furrow between his eyes indicating how he felt at this affront to his sportsmanship. It was not until the hooter signalled the lunch-hour that he encountered Jim Watkins again, but he avoided him. Jim did not speak, but the look he turned upon the young centre-forward was almost murderous in its hatred, and spoke volumes of the Gem Library.—No. 898.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

of what he would do to Tim if ever an opportunity arose.

As a matter of fact, it arose pretty quickly. For hardly had Jim Watkins reached the next street on his rapid homeward journey than he found himself hailed by Coulson Ferriers.

Jim knew Coulson Ferriers, the suspended manager of the local Second Division team of Midborough Athletic, but he did not recognise the long and extremely thin gentleman who was Ferriers' companion on this occasion.

"I say," Ferriers said. "You're the very man we're looking for, Watkins. This is a pal of mine—Nick Webster," he added offhandedly, indicating Tim Webster's good-for-nothing uncle, whereat Tim gave a start and blinked in surprise. "Anywhere where we can have a quiet chat?"

"There's the coffee-shop," Watkins pointed out.

Five minutes later they were seated together in one of the partitioned compartments of the Carman's Rest.

"It's about the match," said Ferriers, attacking an enormous steak-and-kidney pudding. "More particularly about the Trojans. I want the Trojans to lose—never mind why—and I've got a little scheme for making 'em lose, even if they win. That sounds absurd, eh? But let me explain."

Watkins was by no means adverse to the ex-manager's explanation.

"This is an amateur cup-tie. Your team are amateurs—the Trojans are amateurs. Supposing"—Ferriers eyed the other keenly—"supposing, after the match, the Trojans were found to have been receiving money for their matches?"

"They'd be suspended," Watkins said. "Also every man of them found to have taken money would automatically become a pro."

"And the result of the match?"

"Wouldn't count. We should go into the next round."

"That's it!" Ferriers nodded in satisfaction. "That's what I am aiming to bring about. You don't like the Trojans, Watkins?"

"I hate them!" Jim said with a flash of passion.

"Right-ho! Then this is my plan, and I'm letting you into it because I want you to help. This afternoon I'm writing to the secretary of the County Association, telling him that I have good reason to believe that the Trojans are paid players, but that, instead of being paid openly, a sum of money is hidden in each man's locker in the dressing-room on match days. I shall ask him to make an unexpected call and examine these lockers at half-time next Saturday. Will he do it?"

"I should think so," Jim replied. "They're bound to investigate these complaints, you know."

"Then that's good enough. All I want you to do is to arrange for the dressing-rooms to be clear between kick-off and half-time next Saturday; to see that the Trojans are forced to leave their lockers open—you can pinch the keys or something—and leave the rest to me. You can manage that?"

"Easily," said Jim. "As a matter of fact, the dressing-rooms are always empty during the match, and the lockers have no keys. But be careful you don't make a mistake. Our dressing-rooms aren't posh affairs like the Trojans, you know. All we've got is two sheds which serve as offices during the week, and only as dressing-rooms on actual match days. But you'll have no difficulty there," he went on confidently. "They're always labelled."

Ferriers nodded. Ten minutes later

the precious trio took their departure, leaving behind the partition a very thoughtful-faced youngster who went by the name of Raggy Jones. And as it happened, Raggy was Tim Webster's biggest pal and Coulson Ferriers' worst enemy. Raggy worshipped Trojan Tim; in a lesser degree he worshipped the club for which he played.

"And so that's the game, is it, Mr. Ferriers?" he muttered, addressing the beefsteak on his plate. "That's the latest stunt to professionalise Tim. You're going to write a letter, are you, this afternoon?" He scowled darkly. "Well, we'll see about that," he muttered.

CHAPTER 2.

Counterplot!

YOU, who have met Tim Webster in these stories before, know his history. You also know of the peculiar will his father left, making him heir to an estate of £5,000 upon his coming of age, provided, in the meantime, that he did not turn to professionalism in sport. You also know that in the event of Tim disobeying that order the whole of the money was to revert to his rascally uncle, Nick Webster.

Good enough. You have met Nick Webster, too, and you have met Coulson Ferriers and Raggy. You know that between Ferriers and Nick was a compact to share the five thousand pounds should they succeed in forcing Tim to turn pro. That being so, it needs no word of mine to explain that this move of Coulson Ferriers to professionalise the whole of the Trojan team had for its real victim Tim Webster only.

Again—good enough. Tim was aware of the intentions of these two. He had his eyes open, and was ready to frustrate every new attempt he chanced upon. But had it not been for his little henchman, Raggy, who, in his own juvenile way, was more than a match for Coulson Ferriers and Uncle Nick put together, it is to be feared that Tim would have fallen an easy victim.

For Tim's sense of honour, his ingrained sense of what was right and what was wrong, would not allow him to stoop to the methods that Raggy cheerfully employed. Perhaps, fortunately for Tim, Raggy's moral outlook had been so blunted by his gutter upbringing that he saw no shadow of wrong in using Ferriers' own weapons against him.

Yet his short acquaintanceship with Tim, and his hero worship for Tim, had already sharpened Raggy's moral perceptions, and there were certain things he had promised Tim not to do that he would not have done for all the world. It was characteristic of Raggy that, as soon as he had heard the plot over the partition, a counterplot equally cunning had jumped to his own fertile mind. Now, however, turning it over, he foresaw a difficulty.

"No," he decided, rejecting the idea of writing a letter there and then to the secretary of the County Association, informing him that the Hornets (not the Trojans) were professionals, and signing it with Ferriers' name. "Tim says it's wrong to use another chap's name, so that's squashed. Besides, it might look fishy," as further reflection was induced. "Ferriers would write just the same, and when they got both letters—"

He remained for a time plunged in thought. Then he brightened.

"By thump, the very ticket!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, and then paused, reflecting upon the advisability of telling Tim. "Wouldn't do!" he

admitted, after further meditation. "Tim wouldn't like the business, even though I am signing the letter with me own name. 'E wouldn't like the idea of the 'Ornets, either.' He shook his head. "It's a lone 'and, Raggy, for you, me lad," he informed himself. "And Tim musn't know anything about it until it's all done and gone with."

He rose, paid his bill, and went out. His steps took him in the direction of the street in which Coulson Ferriers' flat was situated, at the end of which was a pillar-box, to which Ferriers would have to come to post the letter he had said he was going to write that afternoon. For the next two hours Raggy was never very far away from that pillar-box.

At four o'clock his vigilance was rewarded. From the top of the street he saw Ferriers emerge from his flat, the letter in his hand. The ex-manager turned to pull the door to after him, and in the action slipped the letter into a side pocket of his overcoat. That was enough for Raggy. Like a shot he turned and pelted down the street.

Twenty yards farther along was a narrow turning. Like a hare Raggy accomplished the journey, only halting when he had reached the corner. Then he stopped very abruptly, and very cautiously peered round.

Ferriers, humming a tune to himself, was five yards away, and coming towards him. Raggy braced himself, and, lowering his head, took a deep breath.

"'Allo, 'allo! Outer the road!" he yelled boisterously, and contrived to cannon into the utterly stupefied Ferriers at the very moment Ferriers elected to cross from one side of the road to the other. The manager took Raggy's head forcibly in the waistcoat, shot back down the pavement like a bullet from a gun, and collapsed on his back in the gutter.

Very carelessly Raggy sprawled on top of him, gripped him round the waist, prodded his stomach with a knee, then rose, and with a breathless "Sorry, guv'nor!" bolted away. Ferriers had not regained either breath or faculties before Raggy was well out of sight again.

Two hundred yards down the street the urchin stopped, grinned triumphantly, and looked slyly at a crushed and crumpled thing he held in his hand. It was Ferriers' letter, addressed to the secretary of the County Association.

But strangely enough Ferriers was not aware of it. Fate was working against the ex-manager that afternoon. As he scrambled to his feet, infuriated and wrathful, he forgot, momentarily, all about his letter, and had to pause and think when he reached the pillar-box, the sight of which prompted his memory. He plunged a hand into his coat-pocket, encountered there a letter which he had received only that morning, and drew it out.

He did not look at it. He was about to do so when somebody rounded the corner and brought an involuntary gasp to his lips. Almost without thinking, Ferriers slipped the once-posted letter into the pillar-box, his eyes staring into the face of Tim Webster.

"Hallo!" he muttered.

Tim nodded distantly and passed on. Ferriers placed a hand across his brows.

"I wonder," he said, staring after the retreating form, "if he saw that letter—the address on it, I mean. If he did"—he fell into an unpleasant reflection—"Well, what if he did?" he argued a trifle defiantly. "He won't understand—till Saturday, at all events. And then, Mr. Tim, you'll find your goose cooked!"

He grinned malevolently.

Farther down the street Tim met Raggy, who hastily stuffed something into his pocket as the Trojan approached, and looked a trifle guilty and confused. Tim, with a faintly perplexed stare, stopped.

"Hallo!" he said.

"Woto!" Raggy returned, and for once was at a loss for words. "S'pose—s'pose yer 'aven't seen Ferriers?" he asked for want of something better to say.

Tim looked surprised.

"I have," he said. "Met him just now, down the road at the pillar-box posting a letter. Looked a bit disconcerted when he saw me. Why? Anything on?"

"Maybe," Raggy answered cautiously. "I—I'm just keepin' an eye on 'im, same's you told me to do. Posting a letter, you say? Wot sorter letter?"

"What sort?"

Tim stared at the extraordinary question, and Raggy, seeing his blunder, made a hasty effort to retrieve it.

"Oh, nothing," he returned, and laughed. "I—I was thinkin' o' something else," he excused himself lamely. "I didn't ardy know what I was sayin'. You comin' this way, Tim? I'll come with you."

His mind was busy as he accompanied his idol down the street. This information was rather a staggerer. Coulson posted a letter! What letter?

Perhaps the ex-manager had written two. But no, Raggy dismissed that thought as soon as it had entered his head. If Ferriers had had two letters to post he would have missed the second at the pillar-box. Therefore the only conclusion that Raggy could come to was that Ferriers had another—a used letter—in his pocket which, in his preoccupation, he had posted in mistake for the one he had written that afternoon.

A peculiar glitter came into the youngster's eyes at the reflection, and thereupon he altered all the plans he had already formed.

He said "Good-bye!" to Tim at the end of the street, and went to the Fried Fish Emporium he called his home. There, shutting himself up in the little attic he proudly called his study—a room, for the most part, furnished with fish-barrels and boxes, the effluvia of which grew rather than abated as the days passed—he set himself laboriously to copy out the text of the letter he had filched from Coulson Ferriers.

It was a long letter, and it took some time. But Raggy, remembering that Tim held strong views on the subject of copying another's handwriting, took good care to write it in his own hand and to sign it with his own name. He made no alteration except to substitute "Midborough Hornets" for the "Trojans." When the letter was finished, Raggy placed it in an envelope and addressed it to the secretary of the County Association.

Triumphantly he posted it.

"And that's put a spoke in your wheel, Mr. Ferriers!" he muttered, as, with satisfaction, he saw the letter devoured by the yawning mouth of the pillar-

box. "First move to me. Next act—Saturday!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Two Notices!

IT was a dreary ground, this patch belonging to the Midborough Hornets. The playing pitch was bumpy and bald; the goalposts were rotting in their sockets, and the small stand which accommodated the leading local lights on match days was cranky and rotten. The whole affair, indeed, gave an irresistible impression of one day dropping clean through the earth and vanishing.

The only structures approaching respectability were the two sheds set at right angles to the goalposts, which served as dressing-rooms. They had been bought cheaply out of surplus Army war stock, and were recent additions. But, as Jim Watkins had said,

got money, but they don't seem inclined to spend it. Perhaps they'll have to, though, later on. Shouldn't be surprised if there's not some move in that direction on the board now. I saw Chadwick as I came in."

"Chadwick?"

Chadwick was the secretary of the County Association.

"Ay, Chadwick and Croft. Croft's one of the management committee on the County Association, you know, and it's his job to look into things. Perhaps it's this ground they're down here about to-day—that or something else. The Hornets always seem to be in some sort of hot water!"

"Rotten crowd altogether!" Frank Gunter supplied. "It's rumoured, too, that they are more than half professionals, and I know for a fact that half a dozen of 'em receive money regularly from the secretary. Watkins is one—" He broke off, and looked up. "Talk of angels!" he finished.



Jim Watkins' face blanched as Mr. Croft inserted a finger and thumb into the envelope and drew out a pound note. "Watkins, you're captain of the team," said the official sternly. "What have you to say about this?"

they were only dressing-rooms on match days. On other days they served divers purposes.

They were set some distance from the touchline and partly screened from view of the field by an enormous bank which had once formed a part of an ancient slag-heap. A rusted nail had been driven into each of the doors, and on this Saturday there dangled a crudely painted notice from each. One bore the legend: "Visiting Team's Dressing-Room." The other "Home Team's Dressing-Room."

It was in the former that Tim Webster and his colleagues were busy changing from mufti into uniform, while the local Ragged Schools band played varying airs upon the baked hard pitch outside, and the mud banks which served as terracing slowly filled up with spectators.

"Disgusting!" said Braithwaite, captain of the side, referring to the ground. Dick Lane snorted.

"More than disgusting!" he said. "It knocks me why the Hornets don't start a few ground improvements. They have got a good following. They've

For the door had opened, and Jim Watkins himself came in.

Jim was looking a trifle anxious, yet there was an enigmatical grin upon his face which made Tim Webster, for some reason, vaguely irritated.

"I just wanted a word with you, Braithwaite," said Watkins.

"Fire away, then!" returned the Trojan skipper.

"It's about this room. Our manager told me to ask, as a matter of fact. He might want to use this dressing-room for about a quarter of an hour after the match starts. The turnstile men are coming in here to count the takings or something," he added vaguely, "and if you could leave it empty for a time—"

"Sure," agreed Braithwaite, and looked questioningly toward Bill Jennings, the trainer. "What about you, Bill?"

"I shall be down at the touchline, in case anything goes wrong," answered Jennings.

"Right-ho!" Braithwaite nodded.

"It'll be O.K. then. The dressing-room

will be empty till half-time, and you can make what use you like of it. Don't apologise, Watkins. We can see you're up against it for room." He nodded cheerily, whereat Jim, after a lingering glance at Tim, went out.

Ten minutes later the players pushed their way through the crowd on to the field, and Braithwaite, winning the toss, set his men to play with the wind at their backs.

The Hornets started off with an inspired rush. They knew the topography of their ground, and the fact was all in their favour; for the Hornets' ground wanted a bit of getting used to on the best occasions: It seemed to bristle with unexpected knolls and bumps and minute valleys, and the Trojans, encountering them all in the opening stages of the game, found them a severe handicap to good football.

Twice Tim, rushing for possession, caught his foot against a lump and went sprawling. Twice Braithwaite, darting in to tackle, found his foot slipping down the side of a shallow valley and went headlong.

It seemed that the Trojans would be hopelessly out of it when the Hornets opened the scoring account with a full-blooded volley from their centre-forward's toe. But after that they pulled themselves together.

From then they seemed to have the ground, with its treacherous pitfalls weighed up, and from then also they went at it with a determination and irresistibility that there was no denying.

Five yards from goal Tim, receiving the ball from a beautifully placed centre, steadied himself, shot, hit the upright, and, catching the ball well and truly with his head as it rebounded, placed it in the far corner of the net beyond the goalkeeper's upthrust arms. Five minutes later, following a brief but scintillating duel with Jim Watkins at centre-half, he rushed on to slam in a shot which almost brought the half-rotten uprights tumbling.

The crowd began to yell. There was a fair sprinkling of Trojan supporters among the spectators, and to them Tim Webster was a hero. The sound of their cheers was still echoing when the teams kicked off again from the centre line.

And it was about then that Raggy made his move—Raggy, who all this while had been concealed in a dip of the slag-heap watching the dressing-room intently to assure himself that Ferriers had not yet arrived on the scene. He rose from his cramped position, glanced round, and, hands in pockets, walked towards the two sheds which stood side by side.

Just for a moment he halted at the first and glanced in through the window. He repeated the manoeuvre at the window of the second shed and then, lifting the notices which depended from the rusty nails upon the doors, he swiftly transferred them. Thus the home team's dressing-room immediately became the temporary possession of the visiting team and the visiting team's dressing-room the property of the home team.

That done, Raggy, grinning a little to himself, doubled back to his hiding-place.

Five minutes later there strolled into the open space between the two dressing-rooms and the playing-pitch the figure of Coulson Ferriers, who stood in front of the shed labelled "Visiting Team's Dressing-Room," and coughed a little, so as to attract the attention of anyone who might be there. There was no answer, of course, and after another

moment's hesitation, Ferriers plunged through the open door.

Raggy smiled to himself.

"By gum, he's bitten it!" he muttered gleefully.

He guessed now that Ferriers would be busy among the lockers in that room—and he was right. For in Ferriers' hand were eleven envelopes, and at the moment the ex-manager was busily engaged in slipping each of these envelopes beneath the lid of the lockers that stood under the bench which had been erected alongside one wall. He was not in the room more than two minutes, after which he came out, glanced round him once again, and began to walk briskly away towards the touchline.

Not until he had disappeared did Raggy venture from his place of concealment. He went into the room, which Ferriers had recently vacated, lifted the lid of the first locker, and smiled as he saw the white envelope there. Then, walking outside again, he deftly re-changed the dressing-room notices to their original positions. That done, he ambled off towards the touchline just in time to see Tim, playing the game of his life now, score the third goal of the half for his side.

CHAPTER 4.

Bowled Out!

"JUST a minute!" Fenton Chadwick, who had followed the Hornets' players into the dressing-room at the interval, held up his hand. "Before any of you go to your lockers I have an announcement to make," he said impressively.

The Hornets' players stopped and stared. Jim Watkins and the few others who were in the "know" regarding the plot against the Trojans, looked a little uneasy.

"As you know, it is my duty, and the duty of Mr. Croft here"—he indicated his colleague—"to investigate any complaints that may be made against clubs within the County Association's jurisdiction. I regret to say that during the week a complaint has been made against this club. A very serious complaint. That of professionalism!"

Jim Watkins' jaw dropped.

"I hope it's not true," Chadwick went on. "I sincerely hope it is not true. But I have my duty to do, as you will recognise; and in the interests of our Association, and of amateur football generally, I must ask each one of you to allow us to examine your lockers. Mr. Croft, will you search them, please?"

Jim Watkins frowned. Many of the Hornets looked astonished, some looked uneasy, several looked both. For though they called themselves amateurs, there was not a man among this crowd who, at some time or another, had not received a money present for his football services, and therefore constituted himself a professional. They watched apprehensively as Croft strode over to Jim Watkins' locker.

He threw open the lid. Watkins' eyes opened as he saw the white envelope revealed, saw, also, printed across it in copying ink, the words "With the secretary's compliments." The next moment his face blanched, for Croft, inserting a finger and thumb into the envelope, drew out a pound-note!

Chadwick looked grim. He nodded to his fellow-official as the other hesitated. "Go on," he said.

A silence, fraught with heavy responsibility fell upon the room, broken only by a distant mutter or a gasp from the onlookers, as one by one the lockers gave up their envelopes. Croft collected them, placed them all in a neat pile,

and, when he had finished, handed them over to the secretary. Chadwick, his eyes hard, fixed them upon Jim Watkins. "Watkins, you're captain of the team," he demanded grimly. "What have you to say about this?"

Jim, who had watched the proceedings like a man in a dream, looked up.

"You know that this amounts to professionalism?" Chadwick went on. "You know what this means. The expulsion of this club and the suspension of the players in it. It is fairly obvious that our information was right—that this game has been going on for some time. What have you to say?"

"To say!" Watkins' fists clenched. "It's a plant—a trick!" he broke out furiously. "We never get money for playing. Somebody else has put those envelopes there during our absence on the field. Somebody—" His voice rose. A conviction that had dawned upon him when the first note was produced now took definite and concrete shape. "It's Ferriers, you chaps! He's sold us!"

"Ferriers!" Chadwick's voice rang sharply. "Coulson Ferriers!"

"He's sold us!" Watkins shouted, unheeding. "The rotter! He was the only outsider in this. He's using us in some deep game of his own. By George—"

He stopped as a startling idea flashed into his mind. Supposing, he thought, that Ferriers had backed the Trojans to win, and had engendered this traitorous plot to make certain of them winning? It came home to Jim as the very solution, and immediately sent him white hot and seething with rage.

"Just the sort of thing Ferriers would do," he said, and then abruptly stopped, the blue veins swelling in his forehead. For, glancing beyond the secretary, towards the open door, he saw suddenly the man whose name had left his lips. And Ferriers, hearing the voice and beholding the scene, stopped for a moment in puzzlement, and then stared with eyes that almost popped out of his head. In a flash the hideousness of the mistake he had made dawned upon him. This was the Hornets' dressing-room, and the County representative was here! He had put the notes in the wrong team's lockers!

Ferriers' jaw dropped. He had come here to enjoy the discomfiture of his enemies, to see his plot against Tim Webster in its fullest fruition. Instead, this! For a moment he stood paralysed with amazement, and in that moment Watkins made his spring. With a yell he dived past Chadwick, and in three leaps was in the open outside. Once there, a mass of concentrated, over-boiling fury, Jim faced the man he considered had betrayed him.

"You rotter, Ferriers!" he said between his teeth. "You rotten traitor!" He did not stop to finish the sentence, but, bunching his fist, drove it with all his force between the ex-manager's eyes.

Ferriers let out a little shriek, and his face turned ashen. A sudden, blind, unreasoning terror gripped him at sight of the other's pitiless face. There came upon him one of those moments which come to most men at some time of their lives, with no apparent reason to prompt it. Blind instinct commanded, and blindly Ferriers obeyed. He turned and ran.

He could not run anywhere except towards the playing pitch. He did. Like a hunted hare he hurled himself through the crowd of spectators, and, breathless, emerged on to the turf with Watkins, still blinded by rage, in full pursuit. The crowd began to yell.

"Chase him, Jimmy boy!"

"Mind he don't catch yer, mister!"

The words brought Ferriers back to reason. Who and what was he running from? The thought acted like a cold douche upon him, brought him up in his tracks, and made him face about, suddenly ashamed of his retreat. Watkins, elated by his first success, drove straight at him.

"Watkins!" yelled Ferriers desperately.

Jim did not heed. His face, as he came forward, plainly proclaimed his intentions. Ferriers wasn't going to be hit in full view of the spectators by a kid like this. Already he was conscious of the sorry figure he must have cut in running away. His own fist bunched. He ducked the blow that Watkins aimed at him, and in return brought a swing-in-knuck hook to a successful contact on the point of the other's nose.

"Oh, dirty man!"

"Give 'im beans, Jim!" yelled the crowd.

But that was enough for Watkins. Ferriers was bigger and stronger in every way than himself. Moreover, Ferriers now was as hot as Watkins with rage—rage against himself for having displayed the white feather—rage with the way in which his plot once again had recoiled. Blindly, devastatingly he went for Jim. In two minutes he had reduced Jim's wrathful face to a sticky mess and got his head in chancery.

The crowd yelled, but none seemed inclined to interfere.

Then, on to the pitch ran Trojan Tim, Back at the dressing-room Tim had gleaned something of what had happened, and had been attracted by the hullabaloo upon the ground. He did not know who the contestants were, but even if he had, it is doubtful whether he would have behaved differently. He saw a lad in a Hornets' jersey being unmercifully laboured by a brawny lout almost twice his size. That was enough for Tim. With a shout, he rushed across the field.

"Hi! Stop that!" he yelled.

Ferriers did not heed. The ex-manager's blood was up now, and his ugly passion was flaming redly. Crash! For the seventh time his fist met Watkins' badly battered nose, and Jim gave out a helpless whimper. Back came the arm, swung for another punch. It had already descended upon its destroying mission, when it was suddenly arrested in mid-air.

"Leave him alone!" Tim Webster snapped.

Ferriers paused. He released his hold on Webster, and turned to face his new assailant, swinging a blow at his head as he did so. Tim avoided it, and planted his fist hard and shrewdly into Ferriers' features. Coulson fumed. Again Tim hit out, danced away as Ferriers came for him, and when Ferriers had exhausted himself, rushed in once more and sent a rain of blows to his chest.

Ferriers staggered. Blood appeared at the corners of his mouth; blood over his left eye, momentarily blinding him. He was thoroughly beaten from that



moment, but his rage kept his fighting spirit alive, and, nothing daunted, he sailed in once more. Tim side-stepped as the ex-manager blundered past him, brought up his fist in a terrific jolt which met Ferriers solar plexus, and brought him abruptly to the upright again.

Gasping and grunting, he stood and stared.

The ground was in an uproar now. The crowd, climbing the barriers, were beginning to surge on to the pitch so as to get a better view of it all. Tim breathed hard; he was determined to teach the bullying Ferriers a lesson, and in that determination had forgotten where he was.

But Ferriers was not done yet. Dashing a hand across his eyes he bored in again. A sledge-hammer blow intended for his jaw was deflected by Tim's arm and glanced off his shoulder.

Tim winced a little as he felt the pain of it, and brought round his left in a hook that found Ferriers' throat, causing him to choke and gurgle and to drop his guard. For a second he stood there gazing stupidly at his opponent.

And then Ferriers, for the first time, recognised his assailant, and all the fight went out of him.

"Webster!" he gasped.

He said no more. Like a human fury, Tim piled in. He drove Ferriers back before a hurricane of blows, while the crowd cheered frantically. Ferriers, remembering one terrific licking he had had at Tim's hands, fought back feebly, but the superb skill of the Trojan baffled him. He found himself retreating, felt his face wet and sticky with blood. And suddenly Ferriers felt his nerve fail him for the second time. With a sudden yell of terror, he turned on his heel and fled.

"Yah, funk!" yelled the crowd.

Tim did not follow, but stood and watched the retreating form, a curious smile on his lips. Then his eyes swung back to the crowd, and he sought out Raggy. For a moment they stayed there.

Despairingly, Tim shook his head, and Raggy, discomfited, fumbled awkwardly with his cap.

"I—I did it for the best, Tim!" he muttered.

"I know. I suppose I should thank you, really," Tim said. "I do. I'm grateful, Raggy! But I wish you'd have come and told me first. As things have turned out, everything's O.K., of course. The Hornets were really professionals before you showed them up. But supposing they'd been a real sound amateur team? It was wrong, Raggy. It was wrong of you to steal that letter from Ferriers as you did; the whole thing was wrong. You see? I don't want to lecture you—"

He stopped. Raggy grinned a little.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I oughtn't to 'a' done it, p'raps. I oughter told you, same's you say. But I knowed you wouldn't approve of wot I intended to do, Tim, and so I thought it best to go me own way. Next time, if yer want me to, I'll tell you beforehand, o' course, and we'll think of some way to diddle those rotters between us. But —"

"You think there'll be a next time, Raggy?" Tim broke in. "You don't think Ferriers and Uncle Nick have had enough yet?"

Raggy nodded.

"As long as them two's out o' prison there'll be 'eaps o' next times!" he said, with conviction. "They're after you! They're out for that money wot's coming to you, Tim, and they won't let you rest until they've got it! No next time? Oh, yes, there'll be a next time and another time after that, unless they are quodded first. You watch!"

THE END.

(And young Raggy Jones was right, too. So look out for another exciting story soon. Meanwhile, there will be another rattling yarn of "Live-wire" Lindsay and Jerry O'Gorman next week, entitled, "THE NIGHT MAIL MYSTERY!" Don't miss this thrilling adventure, whatever you do, chums!)
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Hal Chester wins through! The concluding chapters of this splendid footer serial!

FOOTBALL CHUMS!



By

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Writer of the Day.)



A Thrilling yarn of a fight
for fame.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

HAROLD CHESTER, a well-knit youngster in his teens, and a member of the Kingdown Football Club. His love for football earns for him the disapproval of

JAMES HENSON, his stepfather, a Nottingham grocer, in whose employ Hal Chester is. An important match is down for decision on Saturday for which Hal had already been granted permission to assist his team. But when the great day comes Mr. Henson cancels his promise.

Suffering from a sense of injustice, Hal turns out for his team, but when he returns he finds the door locked against him. He meets an old school friend, however, in Tommy Bell, who is well in with the management of the Nottingham Football Club, and who gets him a place in the team. The youngster proves a great asset to his side.

Having realised his ambition, Hal pays a visit to his sick mother, and, on learning of his stepfather's slump in business, the lad offers to find the necessary to send his mother away. It is a rude awakening indeed for Mr. Henson to find Hal doing well, and at football, too—the game he hated!

Hal sees his club's manager, and, after getting permission to accompany his mother to the seaside, returns to convey the good news. He arrives at the office just in time to warn his stepfather against Stevens, the man who had brought so much trouble upon his shoulders, and who is applying for a vacant position in the shop. In consequence, he is turned down.

Seeking vengeance, the unscrupulous Stevens, ably assisted by the traitorous errand-boy, breaks into the grocer's shop. The two are disturbed in their work, however, for Mr. Henson makes a sudden appearance upon the threshold. Stevens rushes at the storekeeper and knocks him unconscious. Then, realising his fateful mistake, he saturates the shop with oil, sets it alight, and hurries away, leaving the unconscious Henson to his fate.

Luckily, however, that same night Hal and Tommy Bell are near at hand, and the storekeeper is rescued and taken to hospital.

Mr. Henson could not praise his stepson enough for his great gallantry when he began to get well.

With a light heart and his mind at rest, Hal travelled to Villa Park to put up one of the finest performances of the day for his side. The Villa's goal was in danger, for Roberts, receiving a pass from Hal, was racing through on his own.

(Now read on.)

After the Match!

AT the last moment the Villa goalie came out. Would Roberts at the last muff the chance? The answer came in the shot that Roberts fired knee-high for the back of the net, the ball travelling at a rare speed.

The goalkeeper had missed it, and nine hundred and ninety-nine goalkeepers out of a thousand would have missed such a shot as that.

Roberts' aim had been true, and the Town had taken the lead.

From that moment until nearing half-time the Villans fought desperately to equalise. But the Town's defence was as steady as a rock, and, as well as the men in claret-and-blue played, they could not score.

The referee was glancing at his watch. In a moment the whistle for half-time would blow.

Dorrell, now well away, made for the corner flag, and, cutting in, beat the back and drove the ball hard at goal.

Dicky Double caught it rocking back upon his heels, but even as he did so one of the Villa's forwards charged upon him.

Big as he was, the fat goalkeeper lost his balance and fell, the ball passing well over the goal-line.

Aston Villa were level, the half-time score being 1-1.

It had been a great game so far, but in the second half more thrills were to come.

From the restart the Villa nearly scored again. Then the Town defence settled down, Dicky Double shining in the goal-mouth.

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It was turn and turn about, the pace being as fast as ever, and the footwork on both sides unusually brilliant.

Walker was a host in himself, making openings time and again, which were nullified by the clever work of Smart, Low, and Tommy Bell.

The players began to tire now, and the crowd, hoarse from shouting, lapsed into momentary silence.

Then a double run by Harold and Bert, the two in the end changing places, saw Harold with a clear path for goal in front of him. He ran in and shot, and had the mortification of seeing the goalkeeper pull the ball down from right under the bar.

But the goalkeeper could not hold it, and Bert, rushing up at that moment, got his foot to it and tapped it into the net.

There was no more scoring after this, and full-time found the Town winners of a hard-fought and brilliant game by the odd goal in three.

And as the players trooped off the field, tired but elated, to ringing cheers, George Bliss met them. His hand went out to Roberts in a flash.

"Boy," he said, "you're ours! Sign on and we'll pay you the maximum wage from the start! You're just the lad we've been looking for!"

The game the Town played against the Villa that afternoon was long remembered at Aston. They are judges of football there, for from the time when the League was first founded, when the name of William McGregor was a household word in football and Aston had risen first to fame, they had seen the very best.

Football is supposed to be poor these days. But at all events, the Town showed that they could play. Dicky Double might well have been beaten on a dozen different occasions, for the shots hurled at him had plenty of power behind them.

Low and Smart, with such a sure keeper behind them, found their task easy enough. The three halves—Warren, Tommy Bell, and Thomas—were all brilliant, their tackling deadly, and their thrusts through to their forwards always well placed. And in front of them was a forward line, fast, clever, and dashing, with a dead shot in Harold Chester in support of a centre who had the speed of a sprinter and the ability to get on the move in a flash.

If the ball came the way of him and a Villan, it was odds on Bert Roberts getting it, for though the two moved together, Bert was going full speed whilst the other had always to gather pace.

And so Roberts, in a single-handed rush down the field, eluded all opposition and crashed the ball into the net with a shot that no goalie living could have held.

Harold, revelling in the going, supporting his friend like a master, and dribbling this way and that with elusive and clever footwork, was equally dangerous. And so, when the end of the match came, with the Villa well beaten, as we have seen, there was scarcely one man who had watched the game who had a grumble.

"Bert," said Harold, when they got back to the dressing-room, "I don't think I have ever seen you play better football! You were great! I'm so glad George Bliss is going to sign you on! Think of the great days we'll have playing for the Town!"

"Ay, it looks to me as if we ought to be happy," smiled Bert, as he beamed at Dicky Double and Tommy Bell. "I like your chums, Hal, and you know what I think of you. I don't mind saying with regard to to-day's game, though, that I have never had football made so easy for me. That pass you slipped in when I scored my first goal was a fair paralysing, Harold."

"I know you like that kind," laughed Harold, "and I promise you you'll have a lot of them, Bert, before you've played many more games for Nettingham Town."

The players changed in the happiest of moods, and then, when they were ready, entered their omnibus and were driven back to their hotel.

They were to have dinner there and start for the journey back to Nettingham afterwards. A crowd watched them as, laughing and joking, they entered the hotel. The news of their gallant victory over the Villa had startled the Town.

The locals wanted to see what the chaps who had put it across the clever Aston Villa side so decisively were like.

One after the other the members of the team hurried up the steps and swung through the doors of the hotel.

Harold Chester was in the rear, with Bert Roberts just in front of him.

The new forward had reached the steps of the hotel, when he paused and looked back.

"Harold," he said, "I'll just run upstairs to my room and then we'll take a walk and have a look at the shops until dinner-time."

Harold did not answer, and to his surprise Bert Roberts saw that the boy was not there. What had happened to him? Only a moment ago they had been talking together.

"He must have gone into the hotel," muttered Roberts to himself.

But when he got inside the building Hal was not to be found. Bert questioned the rest of the boys; but nobody had seen Hal Chester.

"Strange," muttered Bert, frowning. "Can Hal be playing a joke?"

Moody he wandered into the vestibule of the hotel, waited there for some time, and then, as it was getting near the time for dinner, he walked out into the street.

But although he walked the whole length of New Street, went up Corporation Street and back again, and still hung about, no trace of Harold did he see.

"Odd," he muttered, as he swung up the hotel steps again—"odd!" Then he heard hurried steps behind him, and heard the sound of his name being called. "Hal!" he cried, swinging round.

And sure enough, there stood Harold Chester, with his head bandaged and one eye discoloured, but with a smile upon his thickening lips.

"Great Scotland Yard!" ejaculated Bert. "What on earth have you been up to, Hal? Been struck down by a motor omnibus, or what?"

"I've been putting paid to the evil career of an enemy of mine, Bert," said Hal, trying to smile. "It was touch-and-go—me or him—but I managed to come out on top—"

"What do you mean, Hal?" gasped Bert, as he led Harold into the hotel. "Tell me all about it."

"Bill Stevens is in the hands of the police," Harold explained. "And it was I who got him arrested, Bert. He'll get a heavy sentence when he comes up for trial, and I'm glad. He nearly killed my stepfather. He burnt down Mr. Henson's stores. He's an out-and-out scoundrel, and he was caught red-handed to-night. I tell you the police handled him pretty roughly when they came up, too."

"Don't talk a lot of stuff one can't understand!" gasped Bert excitedly. "But tell us the story, Harold."

And Harold Chester did.

Hal's Great Coup!

HE explained how he had been in the act of following Bert into the hotel, after alighting from the players' omnibus, when he had suddenly caught sight of a face in the crowd that seemed familiar to him. An evil face it was, and its eyes were turned away from him. For a moment even Harold was puzzled to place it, but then revelation came in a flash, and he knew that it was Bill Stevens, with a short growth of beard—Stevens, the man who was wanted in connection with the burning of Henson's Stores.

Almost as soon as Harold caught sight of the man Stevens edged away.

The boy saw him move to the kerb and leap into a car which was standing there, containing three other men, whose faces Harold saw quite clearly. They were evil faces, and the four began to whisper eagerly together as the car travelled slowly up the street, turned, and proceeded along the other side of the road.

Most of the shops were closed, but some were still open.

Following them, his heart beating high, Harold determined never to leave it until he had handed Stevens over to the police. He had to run at first, keeping the car in sight with some difficulty.

Suddenly it slowed, and before he could reach it one of the men jumped out and smashed in the window of a jeweller's shop, the front of which was protected by thin iron bars, and, thrusting his hand through the broken pane, daringly snatched at the valuables which had been on exhibition there.

The sound of the splintering glass could be heard far along the street. It made people stop and turn round, some of them being close by. But none of them attempted to interfere. They were either too taken by surprise or else afraid.

A second or two after the smashing of the window the men were back in the car, which went speeding recklessly along the street.

But it carried one extra passenger now; for, running at top speed after it, Harold leapt on to the back and climbed in over the heads of the occupants of the back seats. Then, entwining his fingers round the neck of the driver, he called upon him to pull up.

"I tell you," said Harold, when relating the story, "it was a thrilling moment. I was hit savagely from behind, struck in the eye, hit in the mouth, and kicked all over the body, I think."

"They shouted to me to let go my hold, but I didn't intend doing that. I held on for dear life, held tighter and tighter, whilst the fellow at the wheel squirmed and choked and tried to keep the car going."

"How we escaped being smashed up on the instant I don't know. We seemed to bear a charmed life. In and out among the traffic the car sped, scraping against omnibus, charabanc, and car."

"I think the police must have commandeered another car and given chase. Anyway, we blundered to the corner of Corporation Street somehow, escaping the smash there by a miracle. On we went. I was nearly fainting. The man I was choking was blue in the face. But yet he continued to drive. We went at racing pace along the street. I was kicked in the small of the back, and let go my hold at last. Then the thief who was driving turned the wheel, and we crashed full tilt into the base of a standard, snapping the upright off short like a carrot. It fell across the bonnet and into the road, and the next moment there was a crowd around us."

"A blow felled me to the floor of the car, Bert. But I still kept my senses, and shouted to the crowd to hold the fugitives. Then the car with the police arrived. The driver was thoroughly done by now. He could not move a leg. Bill Stevens and the others made a dash for it, one of them flourishing a revolver, but the crowd was not to be scared. They swarmed round the brutes. More people came running along the street, policemen among them, and after a free fight the lot of them were captured."

"I say," ejaculated Bert Roberts, "we can't allow you out alone after this exploit, Hal. It isn't safe. Crumbs! What an adventure!"

"The tray with the stolen diamonds was found at the bottom of the car," continued Hal. "I saw the police recover it. They found some weapons and some housebreaking tools besides. And the joke was on Stevens and his crowd, too."



"Bravo, Harold!" cried Mr. Henson, rushing on to the field and gripping his stepson by the hand. "Well played, my boy!" But the referee had seen him and came rushing across the field.

for the police say the brilliants that were stolen are only imitations, the real ones being locked up in the safe at the jeweller's shop."

Bert and the boys looked Harold critically up and down. There was no doubt about it, he had been very severely handled, and yet he was cheery and bright, in spite of all.

Not only did he eat a rattling good dinner and make light of his bruises, but he laughed and joked as well.

"The police said some very nice things to me," he declared. "And you ought to have heard Bill Stevens when they thrust him into the charge dock at the police-station. His hands were manacled and his face was bruised where a policeman had hit him with a truncheon. I had just finished telling the police that he was the man who was wanted for the burning of my stepfather's stores and for attempted murder.

"Served James Henson right," he cried; "and when I come out I'll not only do him in, but you, too!"

"He fought like a tiger-cat as they bundled him away, and fell down on the floor and kicked. It took half a dozen policemen to handle him.

"But they got him to his cell all right, and treated him pretty roughly when they got him there, I should say, or I'm a Dutchman."

"Well, Hal," said Bert, with a smile, "you're feeling pretty happy, aren't you? He's the chap you wanted laid by the heels, isn't he? Think of the good news you'll take back with you to Nettingham! I'm sure your stepfather won't mind."

"I don't suppose he will!" laughed Harold. "And it will certainly ease my mind. I have never felt safe with Stevens at large, Bert. I can't explain why, but it has hung over my head like a threatening cloud. I have dreamt often that he and I would meet again, and that the meeting would be the last."

"It might well have been the last—for you, my boy," remarked Manager George Bliss. "I don't know how you escaped alive after doing what you did—a kid—and fight and defy a car full of desperate thieves! After that, my boy, I shall never feel concerned about you. Nothing would ever

scare a boy like that. If ever the Town got into the Cup Final I should look to you to score the winning goal, and blowed if I don't think you'd do it; for you've got the nerve, the coolness, and the power to act. There are lots of people who can think after the event. But there are not a lot who can make up their minds in a flash the right thing to do and do it!"

Tommy Bell laughed across the dinner table.

"Don't you run away with the idea, either, George Bliss," he cried, "that you have found out anything new in Harold! He's always been like that. He was like that at school, and he was like that when you gave him his first trial, although you were then too blind to realise the worth of him—"

"And he was like that," chimed in Bert Roberts, "when he played for Kingsdown Athletic and proved himself the best player we ever had. What's bred in the bone, you know. Hal's a leopard that isn't going to change its spots."

The Convict!

THE arrest and trial of Bill Stevens and the gang of thieves who were arrested through the daring of Harold Chester, the young Nettingham Town forward, caused a very big sensation. Even the preliminary hearings, before they were committed for trial, roused interest throughout the country.

The principal witnesses against Stevens were, of course, Harold and his stepfather. The case was proved up to the very hilt, and the fact that Stevens had persuaded a bit of a boy to help him to rob and burn the stores made the crime

a thousand times worse.

Stevens, protesting and fuming, and even threatening the judge, was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, the others receiving varying terms of imprisonment, according to their age, experience in crime, and criminal record.

But long before the trial of the gang of rascals James Henson was completely restored to health again. Whilst his stores was being rebuilt he had a long rest from business worry beside the sea, drinking in daily the health-giving breezes of the East Coast.

The change in him was marvellous. He seemed to change in mental outlook also. Harold's courage in that affair of the arrest of Bill Stevens was again deeply emphasised. Coupled with his pluck in saving Henson's life from the burning stores, it stamped him as no common boy.

And one day, when James Henson made one of his few visits to Nettingham to see how the business premises were growing—it was a Saturday morning, and the team were playing Bradford in the Cup that afternoon at the City Ground—he paid a visit to Harold.

"Harold, my dear lad," he said, "you have much to forgive me. I hope you have forgiven. But lest I should still do you an injustice, I am coming to see you play football this afternoon—"

"The game you hate and despise, sir," said Harold, flushing hotly.

"Why, yes," said Henson mildly, "I want to see just what I have missed—or not missed. The game grows. There are nice lads that play it—Tommy Bell, for instance, and your friend Roberts, and Dicky Double, and more, besides. Even at the seaside where I am staying they are football mad. Perhaps I have been wrong in my judgment. I just want to make sure."

Harold frowned. He was in doubt. James Henson would never really like football he believed.

The afternoon would put him to the proof.

It was after Harold had scored the goal which passed Nettingham into the next Round of the Cup, and whilst Tommy Bell and his chums were hugging him back to mid-field, that Harold, casting his eyes towards the rails where his

Continued on page 28.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

TUCK FOR CORNWALL! IT'S ALL THE SAME!

Sergeant Sharp was as regimental as it was possible for a man to be. "Shun!" he cried to his squad. "Quick march! Left wheel! Halt! Take Murphy's name for talking in the ranks!" "But he wasn't talking," protested a corporal who was standing near by. "Wasn't he?" roared Sergeant Sharp. "It doesn't matter, then. Cross it out, and put him in the guard-room for deceiving me!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to F. A. Pine, 4, Mitchell Hill Terrace, Truro, Cornwall.

A USEFUL PRESENT!

"What's that?" asked a country gentleman in a music-shop. "That? Oh, that is used on violins. It is called a chin-rest." "Chin-rest, is it?" queried the old man, with a smile. "Well, give me one. It's just the sort of thing I want for a present for my wife!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ronald H. Antram, 120, Richmond Road, Lewes Road, Brighton.

NOT SO EASY!

"I told you to be in by half-past ten, didn't I?" said the angry father. "Yes,

daddy, but I'm only a quarter of an hour after time," replied his daughter. "I give you a liberty and you abuse it," stormed the old man; "and as a punishment, you will go to your room at once, lock yourself in, and bring me the key!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alan Stannard, 58, Bury Street, Stowmarket.

CHILDLIKE!

A little boy was at a tea-party when a lady who was serving said: "Will you have a piece of bread-and-butter, sonny?" "No," was the reply. "No what?" asked the lady kindly. "No jolly fear, while there's cake about!" said the boy.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Jack Brough, Kenewood, Park Grove, Macclesfield, Cheshire.

PROOF!

Father was utilising Saturday afternoon to widen Norman's sphere of knowledge. "Just fancy, Norman!" he said, pointing around him. "At one time these fields were covered by the sea, and



GREAT CUP FINAL NUMBER

Here are some of the features in this week's FOOTBALL FAVOURITE (on sale Wednesday, April 22nd): "FINALS—FARE AND FAILURE," a Special Cuptie Chat by STEVE BLOOMER; Great New Serial Story, "For Football and Throne"; FIFTY YEARS OF CUP FIGHTS; and ALL ABOUT THE MEN WHO MATTER AT WEMBLEY. Make sure of this bumper number. Ask for

FOOTBALL FAVOURITE

On Sale Wed., April 22nd. Order To-day.

fish were swimming about on the very spot on which we stand." "Yes, dad," said Norman. "Look! Here's an empty salmon-tin!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Reginald Crice, 53, Littlefield Lane, Grimsby, Lincolnshire.

THE ONLY WAY!

This incident occurred when Fred Fulton, one of the boxers who just missed getting to the very top of the tree, was preparing to fight the negro boxer, Sam Langford. "What's the best way to beat the old champion?" asked Fulton, of another boxer. This man, like Langford, was a negro. "Well," replied the negro adviser, "debes' way, Mistah Fulton, is to take a club, and when your opponent ain't lookin', jess bust him on de haid, and when he turns round with evuh so much surprise, jess bust him again!" "And then?" inquired Fulton. "Nuthin' then—only doan' miss dat second hit, dass all!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Harold Salisbury, Bramley Dene, Madresfield Road, Great Malvern.

DEFINED!

Smith arrived at the office one morning looking very cheerful, and nodded brightly to all and sundry. "Hallo!" said Jones. "You're looking mighty pleased with yourself—been left a fortune or something?" Smith smiled, and leaned forward confidently. "Last night," he said thrillingly, "my wife called me a model husband!" Here he preened himself like a peacock, while Jones thoughtfully turned the pages of a dictionary. "Model," he read out at last—"A small imitation of the real thing!" No wonder Smith collapsed.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Phyllis Dempsey, 8, Lillian Road, Anfield, Liverpool.

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"FOOTBALL CHUMS!"

(Continued from page 25.)

stepfather was seated, saw a frenzied figure waving his hat excitedly round his head, his mouth wide stretched, his voice yelling hoarsely.

"Bravo! Bravo!" came to Harold lustily above the roar of the crowd. "Bravo, Harold! Well played, my dear boy!"

Then out James Henson ran and grasped his hand.

Harold was no longer in doubt, and as the referee ordered his stepfather sternly off the field he smiled.

Football had won yet one more convert, and this a hard case.

It pleased Hal Chester. The future that lay before them all now was rosy with promise.

Back to the centre of the field Harold ran, and as the whistle shrilled, plunged into the thick of the play. And his lips were curved in a happy smile.

Now that Hal had won the praises of his stepfather it put new life into him. Week after week saw him put up a brilliant performance for his side, till at last he became known as the Town's idol. And well did he merit that honour!

THE END.

(And so we come to the conclusion of this splendid footer serial. But why worry, when such another treat as "DAVE, THE PIT BOY!" follows on? Make sure you read the opening chapters of this full-of-thrills yarn, which will appear in next week's GEM.)

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