

The

GEM

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



A GRAMMARIAN RAID !

(An exciting incident from this week's
grand school yarn.)

A LONG SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S—

HANDFORTH'S

Only a born ass or an optimist would dream of attempting to raid a rival school single-handed. Yet Handforth, a born ass and an optimist, sets about this dangerous mission with his usual confidence!

CHAPTER 1.

Just Like Handy!

"SHRIMPS!" said Handforth firmly.

"Eh?"
"Which?"

"No picnic is a success without shrimps!" said Handforth, with an air of finality.

There were many chuckles. Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, the Terrible Three of the Shell, and a crowd of other juniors, were standing about in the old quadrangle at St. Jim's. The June afternoon was blazingly hot. The sun shone down out of a cloudless sky; the very air seemed to quiver with heat. The droning hum of insects was continuous.

Even Figgins & Co., the doughty leaders of the New House juniors, were among the crowd. The pipe of peace had been smoked, and the hatchet was buried. For once, harmony was complete.

A big picnic had been arranged for that afternoon, a half-holiday.

There was no cricket match fixed for the day, and, as the temperature was somewhere up in the eighties, Tom Merry & Co. had decided that a lazy afternoon by the riverside was more in accord with the conditions. The weather was too hot for cricket; the idea of standing about in the pitiless glare of sunshine on Little Side was not one that appealed to the juniors. How much better to disport themselves in the river, and then while away the afternoon hours under the shade of the riverside trees! And, finally, to finish up, a picnic.

To the juniors, the programme seemed as perfect as anything could be.

And they were just ready to start. Everybody carried a parcel or a bag, and the majority of them had their swimming costumes and towels slung over their shoulders.

"Never mind about shrimps, Handy," said Levison, with a chuckle. "We've got plenty of sardines and hard-boiled eggs, and ham sandwiches and—"

"But you can't beat shrimps on a hot day!" interrupted Handforth obstinately.

He was a comparatively new fellow at St. Jim's, but already he had done a few remarkable things. He shared Study No. 9 in the School House with Cardew and Levison and Clive. But even now, after nearly a month of his company, they did not quite know how to deal with him. Otherwise they would have promptly agreed that shrimps were essential. In that case, Handforth would probably have thought no more about them.

For Edward Oswald Handforth was inclined to be perverse; and the more the fellows urged him not to do any particular thing, the more he wanted to do it. It was just his nature.

"It's no good talking!" he said. "We've got to have some shrimps!"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Jack Blake. "You can't get any shrimps nearer than Rylcombe—"

"Then I'm going to Rylcombe!"

"Weally, Handay, you cannot be sewions!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and inspecting Handforth in astonishment. "You appeal to forget that we are weady to start!"

"All right—start!" said Handforth.

"And what about you, you fwithful ass?"

"I can follow," replied Handforth. "Or, better still, I'll pop down to the village in my Austin Seven, and then I can join the rest of you later."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "What an obstinate mule the chap is! Bother the shrimps! Does anybody here want any shrimps?"

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We, the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School, hereby freely admit, without prejudice, that we are not fit to clean the boots of the Shell and the Fourth of St. Jim's.

Signed on behalf of the Fourth Form.

*Gordon Gay
Captain.*

"No!" chorused the others, in one voice.

"There you are!" said Blake, turning to Handforth.

"I want some shrimps!" said Handforth, as if that was the only thing in the world that mattered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not asking you to wait for me!" went on Handforth. "You can all clear off! But I'm going to the village—"

"Oh, go, then!" interrupted Blake crossly. "I never knew such a stubborn idiot in all my life! Always wanting to do something different from everybody else! All for the sake of a few rotten shrimps, too!"

"Look here, Jack Blake!" roared Handforth, turning red. "If you're asking for a thick ear—"

"I'm not!" said Blake. "It's no good asking you for a thick ear, because you couldn't give it to me!"

"Why, you silly lunatic—"

"Weally, deah boys, pway don't start scwappin' on an aftahnoon like this!" said Arthur Augustus, with concern.

"Yes, chuck it, you fellows!" said Tom Merry. "If Handforth wants to get his shrimps, let him get them! You know where we're going to hold the picnic, don't you, Handy?"

"Down by the river, of course!"

"That's a bit vague," smiled Tom. "We're going to a particularly secluded spot, where we can bathe in comfort, and where we can disport ourselves merrily to our heart's content."

"Back to Nature!" nodded Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy. "It will be wippin' to get far frowm the maddin' cwoold for once!"

Handforth was given full directions as to how he should find the rendezvous. As he would be in his Austin Seven, he would have to make a fairly wide detour, after leaving the village. Even then, it would be necessary for him to leave his car at the beginning of a footpath somewhere near the river.

"That's all right!" he said, at length. "I can understand. No need to go into all these details. I'm not dense."

"Well, don't blame us if you can't find the place!" said Tom Merry. "Ready, you fellows?"

"We've been waiting for ages," said Figgins politely. "But, never mind—don't worry about us! We're very patient!"

"I don't think!" growled Blake.

—IN WHICH HANDFORTH OF THE FOURTH CAUSES A SENSATION!

TRIUMPH!



They went off at last, exasperated by Handforth's obstinacy. And the fellow from St. Frank's, left alone, began to regret his stubborn decision. Now that he had got his way, he didn't really want it!

Within two minutes, he had got out his little Austin Seven. He was the only fellow at St. Jim's who owned a car—and he was well aware of this distinction.

"After all, shrimps aren't much of a catch!" he grumbled, as he drove down the lane. "Besides, they may not have any in the village! It's just like those asses to go off without me!"

And thus calmly placing the blame for his pigheadedness on to the other juniors, Handforth continued on his way.

He had got nearly into Rylcombe—in fact, he was just entering the quaint village High Street—when he beheld a number of youthful figures ahead. They were dressed in flannels, and they wore school caps. In fact, there was quite a crowd.

"My goodness!" murmured Handforth. "Grammarians." He had been long enough at St. Jim's to realise that Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, were a force to be reckoned with. Yet his confidence was such that he felt no uneasiness as he now approached Tom Merry & Co.'s deadly rivals.

The Grammarians acted promptly.

They recognised the little Austin Seven at the first glance, and they also recognised the rugged-featured junior at the wheel. And Handforth was alone! Here was a golden opportunity to rag the new St. Jim's junior!

"Shall we let him pass, you chaps?" asked Gordon Gay.

The others grinned, and immediately formed a barrier across the narrow lane. Handforth was a reckless driver, but he was not reckless enough to charge full tilt into this human barricade.

He hooted wildly for a moment, then took his foot off

the accelerator, and applied the brakes. The little Austin came to a standstill a few feet from the Grammarians.

"What's the silly idea?" demanded Handforth wrathfully.

"We couldn't let you go by without passing the time of day," said Gordon Gay, in a genial voice. "Could we, you chaps?"

"Rather not!" said the others.

"We felt that we had to become more closely acquainted," nodded the Grammarian leader.

"Hear, hear!"

"We've heard such a lot about you, Handforth, old man, that we wanted to get in closer touch with you," said Gordon Gay genially.

"Much closer touch!" nodded Frank Monk.

Handforth expanded visibly.

These Grammarians, apparently, weren't such bad fellows after all!

"That's all right!" he said, as the Grammarians came crowding round the Austin Seven. "As a matter of fact, I was rather keen on getting to know you fellows better. One of these days I may pop along to the Grammar School."

"Pop as soon as you like," said Gordon Gay, agreeably. "I'll guarantee that we'll give you a warm reception!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll welcome you with open arms!" said Gordon Gay.

"In fact, any time that you feel like looking for trouble, just pop!"

Handforth frowned.

"I'll take all the trouble you chaps can give me," he replied tartly. "Here, I say! Keep your paws off my radiator! And don't maul those headlamps about!"

The Grammarians were pressing very close. There was a very big crowd of them, including such stalwarts as the brothers Wootton, Tadpole, Carboy, Lane, and Mont Bloop.

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Handforth regarded them all with great interest. He was particularly attentive to Gordon Gay and Frank Monk. And as he looked at them he remembered that this was his fourth week at St. Jim's. He remembered, also, the jape that had been played upon him during his first day in the old school.

He had been told then that he would have to complete four difficult "tests" before he could be regarded as a fully-fledged Fourth-Former. This had been a piece of pure spoof, but Handforth had not known it at the time. And he had sworn to go through with the tests.

Remarkably enough, he had already succeeded in doing three of them, impossible as they had seemed. And although he had been told, time after time, that the whole thing was a joke, he insisted upon going ahead with the farce.

He had undertaken to complete the four tests, and nothing was going to deter him!

Besides, he meant to keep Jack Blake to his word. Blake had told him that if he completed the tests successfully, he would automatically become the leader of the Fourth! Blake would stand down in his favour. And Edward Oswald Handforth, who considered himself to be a great leader, was not going to let this chance slip by.

But he knew well enough that the fourth test was the most difficult of all. In order to claim the leadership of the Fourth, he had to raid the Grammar School single-handed, and extract a written statement from Gordon Gay to the effect that the Grammarians were not fit to clean the boots of the Saints! And that, without doubt was a tall order.

So Handforth was particularly interested in the Grammarians now. Here was a good chance to give them the "once over." And their very friendliness attracted him. He did not know, yet, that they were pulling his leg.

"What's it going to be?" asked Frank Monk thoughtfully. "Shall we empty his petrol-tank and leave him stranded, or shall we only let the wind out of his tyres?"

"Why, you silly asses—" began Handforth wrathfully.

"That's not a bad idea!" grinned Gordon Gay. "We'll let the wind out of his tyres! It's too hot this afternoon to do anything strenuous, and as the air is so still a little wind will be welcome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, think of Handy's feelings as he is pumping up all the tyres again!" continued Gordon Gay, with a chuckle. "Poor chap! He'll have a pretty strenuous time, with four tyres to fill! But exercise is good for all of us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth stood up in his seat, his face flushed with wrath.

"You rotters!" he shouted. "Leave my tyres alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ought to be jolly thankful that we don't do something more drastic!" said Carboy. "We would do, only it's so hot this afternoon."

"Hi!" howled Handforth. "If you let the wind out of my tyres—"

"They'll be flat!" said Gordon Gay, nodding.

"You babbling idiot, I know they'll be flat!" howled Handforth. "By George! And I thought you were friendly!"

"So we are!" said Gordon Gay. "We look upon you as a long lost brother. But there's no reason why we shouldn't have a little fun at your expense, old man."

"Fun!" hooted Handforth. "Do you call it funny to flatten my tyres, so that I've got to pump them all up again?"

"Jolly funny!" said Gordon Gay. "Just listen to me laughing! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the other Grammarians echoed that hilarious outburst.

But Handforth could not see the point of the joke.

"Hi, stop!" he bellowed. "I've got to join the other chaps at a picnic!"

"What?" said Gordon Gay, pricking up his ears.

"I'm just going to the village to get some shrimps!" said Handforth desperately.

"Shrimps?" repeated Frank Monk. "What do you want shrimps for?"

"For the picnic, of course!" said Handforth, with incredible folly. "I've arranged to meet the other chaps down by the river."

"Oh, they're having a picnic, are they?" said Gordon Gay casually.

"Yes."

"How many of them?"

"Oh, a whole crowd—Tom Merry, and Blake, and Figgins, and the rest," said Handforth. "I should have been with them, only I thought I'd fancy some shrimps."

"Good man!" said Frank Monk. "I'm glad you wanted some shrimps!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And where is this delightful spot?" inquired Gordon Gay.

"Haven't I told you that it's down by the river?" said Handforth impatiently. "It's a quiet place, just near a bend, behind the wood. There's a clump of willows—"

"Yes, I know the spot!" nodded Gordon Gay. "Thanks, awfully, Handy, old man! You're a brick!"

"Eh? What the—?"

"A picnic!" murmured Gordon Gay. "And those St. Jim's asses will be unprepared and unsuspecting!"

Handforth was aghast.

"What!" he ejaculated. "You rotters! You're not going to raid the picnic, are you?"

"What an idea!" said Gordon Gay, in a shocked voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians pressed round closer than ever.

"There's only one thing to do, of course," said Gordon Gay briskly. "We can't let this fathead go along in his Austin and give the warning. So the best thing we can do is to rope him to his steering-wheel, and hide him up somewhere."

"Hear, hear!"

Handforth rolled up his sleeves.

"If you touch me—" he began wildly.

But they did touch him. They more than touched him—they pushed him down into his seat, and tied his feet to the clutch and brake pedals. They roped his hand to the steering-wheel, and they even went to the length of wrapping a scarf round his mouth, so that he was unable to make a sound.

And after that the Austin Seven was pushed back along the lane, forced through a big gap in the hedge, and left concealed in a thicket.

Yelling with laughter, the Grammarians retreated. And Handforth fumed as he heard their voices dying away.

Too late, he realised his folly. He had given the game away, and he was left here, helpless, unable to carry any word of warning to the unsuspecting picnickers!

CHAPTER 2.

The Raiders!

SPLASH, splash!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Cardew dived neatly off the grassy bank into the sparkling waters of the River Rhyl. They were the last two in, and they soon came to the surface, gasping and spluttering.

"Bai Jove! This is wippin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Gorgeous!" agreed Blake. "Race you to the bend, Gussy!"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "I'm in the watah to enjoy myself, not to wace!"

There was a deep pool in the river at this point, and the water was clear and fresh. It was an ideal place for swimming. And all the other juniors were splashing about, floating on their backs, diving, and generally having a good time.

The river bank was grassy, and some little distance from the water's edge there were a number of leafy willow-trees. The materials for the picnic had been dumped here, and dotted all about were the heaps of clothing that the juniors had discarded. The towels were lying there, too.

In the background was a stretch of woodland, and in no direction was a house or a cottage to be seen.

This place was absolutely private—far from the madding crowd.

There wasn't even a footpath near by, just meadows and woodland, all basking in the hot afternoon sunshine.

"We can do with an hour of this," said Figgins contentedly, as he floated on his back. "By then we shall be nicely cool, and we can have a go at the grub!"

"Rats!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "What rot! I'm not going to stop in the water for an hour! In my opinion, we ought to have had the picnic first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's bad to go into the water on a full tummy, Fatty," said Kerr, grinning.

"Don't you believe it!" retorted Fatty Wynn. "There's nothing like laying a solid foundation!"

"Well, it's a good thing that you didn't eat before you came in," remarked Blake, as he swam past. "Otherwise, you'd have sunk like a stone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the juniors proceeded to enjoy themselves, certain lurking figures were creeping nearer and nearer, taking cover behind various clumps of trees that offered such excellent protection.

In a word, the Grammarian raiders were on the war-path.

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They approached cautiously, for if the Saints caught any sight of them the whole raid might fail. The Grammarians were in strong force; but, too, there were a large number of St. Jim's juniors. And a desperate fight, on a hot afternoon like this, was not to be even thought of.

Besides, if it came to a fight, the Grammarians might lose, and that wasn't to be thought of, either.

"My sons, it's going to be easy!" murmured Gordon Gay contentedly.

"It's a cert!" chortled Tadpole. "As soon as we get near enough, we'll make one rush, and it'll be all over in a couple of minutes."

"That's the idea!" breathed Frank Monk. "A surprise raid, and a swift retreat."

"But we mustn't leave anything to chance," warned the

"Hurrah!"

"On the ball!"

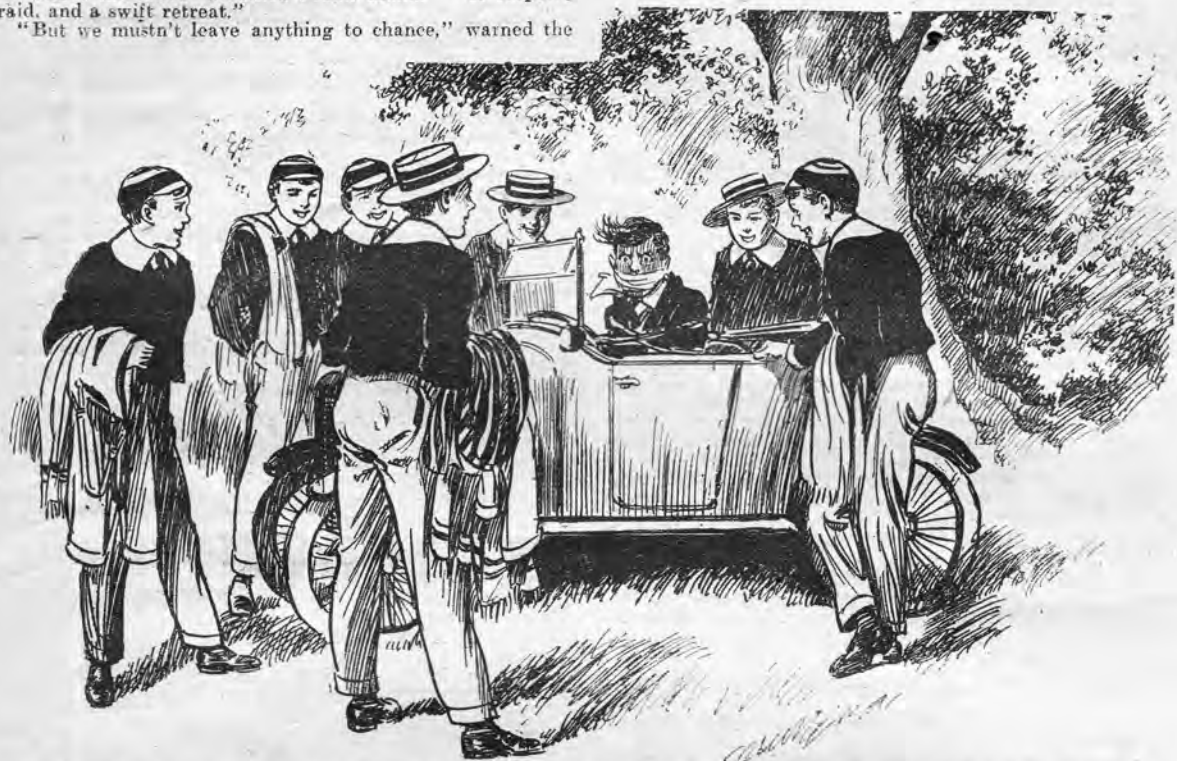
Forms sprang up as though from nowhere, and the next moment the Grammarian forces charged down upon the clearing, filling the air with their yells. They swept down to the river bank at top speed.

"Grammar School for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with St. Jim's!"

In the river, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy abruptly assumed



"Gurrrrh! Ummmmph!" Weird sounds came from the muffled Handforth as he sat tied to the steering-wheel of his little car. His eyes were glaring, and the portion of his face that was visible was fiery red. "Poor old Handy!" grinned Frank Monk. "He looks a bit hot and bothered!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 3.)

Grammarian leader. "By Jove! Look over there!" he added, with sudden excitement. "They're getting up a kind of race, or something, and they're starting off up the river!"

"My hat! So they are!"

"The time for us to act will come when they are at the farthest point away," went on Gordon Gay shrewdly. "That will give us all the more time."

"Well, they haven't spotted us yet," murmured Carboy. "We're as safe as houses!"

The Grammarian forces were stretched out for some little distance, all crouching behind the trees and bushes. From the river nothing could be seen of them. There wasn't the slightest hint that enemies were so close at hand.

"Now, don't forget the plan," said Gordon Gay. "Tadpole, old man, pass the word along to the other chaps. When I give the shout, we'll all dash forward, and grab the grub and all the togs."

"Particularly the grub," nodded Carboy.

"Yes, but the togs are just as important," said Gordon Gay. "We might as well do the thing thoroughly, while we're about it. And don't forget their shoes!"

"Oh, dash it!" protested Frank Monk. "We don't want to be lumbered up with their beastly shoes!"

"Ass!" retorted Gordon Gay. "It's more important than anything else to pinch the shoes, as you'll realise if you only think for a moment."

Frank Monk looked puzzled, and then he grinned.

"Perhaps you're right!" he chuckled.

"Look out!" warned Carboy. "Now's our chance."

Most of the St. Jim's juniors were now a considerable distance away, having swum well up the river to the bend. A kind of impromptu race was in progress, and only a few fellows had been left behind in the wide pool, and even these were some little distance from the bank.

"Now then!" roared Gordon Gay, leaping to his feet. "Let it go, you chaps!"

an upright position. He had been floating on his back, with Cardew and one or two other languid fellows near by. They all splashed about, staring wildly at the river bank.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Gussy. "Gwammawians!"

"Raided, by gad!" said Cardew.

"Hi!" howled one of the other juniors. "Blake! Tom Merry! Quick! Rescue!"

"Dear men, what's the use?" murmured Cardew lazily.

"We can't do a thing."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"If you think you can—go ahead!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew amusedly. "But what's the good of foolin' yourselves?"

Nobody took any notice of him. D'Arcy and the other juniors were swimming desperately towards the bank. Down the river, the juniors had heard the yells from the pool, and, with Blake and Tom Merry and Figgins leading the way, they swam desperately to the rescue. Some of them were making for the bank at the nearest point, their one desire being to get ashore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians were yelling with laughter. With a precision that spoke of good generalship, the raiders seized the various parcels of food and the heaps of clothes. Indeed, in less than a minute every scrap of material had been picked up from the ground—parcels, clothing, shoes, and towels. Nothing was left.

The Grammarians, heavily laden, were in retreat, yelling with triumph.

Gordon Gay paused for a moment to glance back.

"Thanks, you fellows!" he sang out. "It's a lovely afternoon for a picnic, isn't it?"

"You—you rotters!" bellowed Blake. "Put those things down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Toodle-oo!" chortled Gordon Gay. "Ta-ta, children!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll see you another time, when we're not in such a hurry!" shouted Frank Monk, grinning. "But just at the moment we've got a pressing engagement!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, yelling harder than ever, the Grammarians vanished among the trees. The whole thing had been accomplished with incredible speed. There was not a sign of the raiders left. They had vanished, and only the echo of their laughter could now be heard.

Panting hard, the St. Jim's juniors reached the bank, climbed out, and raced off in pursuit.

But even as they were running they seemed to know that the day was lost.

"Yawwooh!" howled Arthur Augustus suddenly. "Bai Jove! I've twodden on a thistle!"

"Blow the thistles!" roared Blake. "We've got to overtake those rotters! We've got to—Yow! Oh, crumbs!"

He hopped about on one foot, having caught his bare toe on a hidden root.

"I'm stung!" groaned Herries, a moment later. "I've never known so many nettles in all my life!"

"What about the thistles?" said Figgins wrathfully. "This place is simply overgrown with thistles and nettles!"

"And we haven't even got our shoes!" groaned Tom Merry, coming to a halt.

He knew that there was no chance of overtaking the raiders. In their bare feet, the victims could not proceed at any pace. There were nettles and thistles and hidden roots. Adequate pursuit was impossible.

"Dished and diddled!" said Blake miserably. "Oh, my hat!"

"How the dickens did the rotters know anything about it?" demanded Levison wrathfully. "Who told them that we were going to hold a picnic here this afternoon?"

"Oh, what's the good?" asked Tom Merry, recovering his good humour. "A raid's a raid—and we've done the same to the Grammarians before to-day! What does it matter how they found out? We've been done, you fellows, and we'd better take it with a good grace."

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded Arthur Augustus. "It's a fwihtful fwoot, but it's no good ewyin' over spilt milk."

"But they've pinched our clothes!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! I'd forgotten that!" said Gussy blankly.

"The fwihtful wottahs! We cannot altogethah blame them for takin' the gwub, but it was a wotten twick to bone our clobbah!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Last Straw!

"HERE we are!"

Gordon Gay was rather breathless as he uttered the words. But he was grinning, too. He and the other Grammarians had come to a halt behind the hedge in a quiet part of Rylcombe Lane. Frank Monk stood on his tip-toes, and looked over the hedge.

"It's all serene!" he said. "Handforth's Austin Seven is still there!"

"Of course it's still there!" grinned Tadpole. "We made a proper job of it. The poor fathead won't be able to get free until we release him!"

The Grammarians paused for a few moments to cool down. The afternoon was swelteringly hot, and the violent exercise had caused Gordon Gay & Co. to perspire freely. But the spoils were easily worth the trouble that had been taken.

"Come on!" said Gordon Gay at last. "Might as well get it over. No need to keep the poor chaps in a state of suspense. We'll let Handforth go to their rescue."

The others chuckled, and a moment later they pushed through some gaps in the hedge, and crossed the lane. They had now left the main booty behind, and were carrying only the raided clothes and towels.

On the other side of the opposite hedge, they gathered round the Austin, hidden as it was in the thicket, and they grinned broadly.

"Poor old Handy!" murmured Frank Monk. "He looks a bit hot and bothered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No reason why he should be," remarked Jack Wootton. "He's had a nice opportunity for peaceful meditation."

"Gurrrrrr! Ummmmph!"

Those weird sounds came from the muffled Handforth, as he sat tied to the steering-wheel of his little car. He was still quite helpless. His eyes were glaring, and the portion of his face that was visible was fiery red.

"Sorry, old man!" said Gordon Gay coolly, as he removed the scarf. "A bit warm for you, wasn't it?"

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Handforth spluttered.

"You—you rotters!" he gulped. "I'm nearly suffocated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm half dead!" hooted Handforth violently.

"Yes, I've noticed it!" nodded Gordon Gay. "You sound like it, old scout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait till I can get at you!" bawled Handforth furiously. "You Grammar School wasters! You—you tricky fat-heads! I'll get my own back for this!"

"Poor old chap!" sighed Frank Monk, shaking his head.

"What strange delusion he does get!"

"Must be off his rocker!" said Tadpole.

They cut the strings that bound Handforth to his car, and as soon as was free he leapt out, and made a dash for Gordon Gay.

"Put up your hands, you rotter!" he hooted.

"It's too hot, old man!" said the Grammarian leader calmly.

Handforth was seized, and held back. And, as he continued to be violent, he was bumped. At last he realised that the odds were overwhelming, and that he was only asking for trouble.

So, in a flash, his mood turned. This was characteristic of him. From being wildly angry, he now became icily cold. He looked at the Grammarians with withering scorn.

"Go ahead!" he said bitterly. "Twenty to one is just about your mark!"

"Cheese it!" said Gordon Gay. "We shouldn't have bumped you, Handy, if you hadn't wanted to fight us. You know jolly well that these raids are perfectly legitimate. We've pinched all your grub, and now we're going to have a nice little picnic of our own!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I know all about that!" said Handforth frigidly. "But you needn't jolly well think I'm going to take this lying down! Not likely! Before long I'm going to have my revenge! I'm going to make you chaps wish that you'd never seen me!"

"We wish that already!" said Frank Monk. "What have we done that we should suffer this pain?"

"Are you saying that the sight of me gives you pain?" roared Handforth.

"Perhaps it's not exactly a pain," replied Frank Monk. "It's more of a dazed kind of feeling. We can't really believe it, you know. I suppose that really is your face, Handforth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

"Don't bother!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Here you are, Handy! Here are all the togs that we pinched from the other chaps. We're shoving them into your pantechicon. Be a sport, and deliver them as soon as possible, won't you? I daresay Tom Merry and the others are feeling a bit chilly!"

Without ceremony, the clothes and the boots and shoes and the towels were bundled into the Austin Seven, and then the Grammarians prepared to take their departure.

But before actually going, they were thoughtful enough to push the little car back into the road.

"There you are!" said Gordon Gay. "Don't say that we're not sportsmen. We've released you, Handy, and we've given you all the togs back!"

"And let this be a lesson to you!" said Frank Monk warningly. "Never, in any circumstances, go to the village for shrimps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Grammarians, chuckling loudly, vanished among the trees on the other side of the lane. Handforth watched them go, and his feelings were too deep for words.

But, incensed as he was against the Grammarians, he had to admit that they had played the game. Raiding the picnic was a perfectly legitimate piece of work; and they had only borrowed Tom Merry & Co.'s clothing so that the pursuit should be rendered out of the question.

And now, being beyond the possibility of capture, they had handed the togs back again.

Gordon Gay & Co. retired from the field as honourable victors.

In the meantime, the victims of the raid had recovered from their first outburst of indignation and anger. Now they were disconsolate. The sunshine of the afternoon had gone, and for them the outlook was dreary.

"This is what comes of joining forces with these School House burlers!" said Figgins bitterly. "We might have known what would happen!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard that remark as uncalled for!" said Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "You surely cannot blame us for what those wotten Gwammawians have done?"

"I'm not blaming you!" replied George Figgins. "I'm pitying you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, rather!" said Redfern. "If the New House had been in charge of this picnic, there wouldn't have been any Grammarian raid! We should have taken the proper precautions!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "Nobody was in charge of the picnic. Figgys was just as much the leader as I was. So why talk rats?"

Figgins gave a weak grin.

"Well, we've got to blame somebody, haven't we?" he said frankly. "But you're right, Tommy, old scout. Nobody's to blame, really—except those beastly Grammarians!"

"Heah, heah!" said D'Arcy.

"Well, the only thing we can do is to look the facts in the face," said Tom Merry practically. "We're stranded here, without any togs. The picnic's gone for ever!"

"I told you we ought to have eaten the grub first!" said Fatty Wynn mournfully. "If you'd taken my advice, and laid a solid foundation—"

"Don't make things worse, Fatty old man!" interrupted Tom Merry. "The grub's gone—and by this time, I expect, it is absolutely beyond recovery."

"What about our clobber?" asked Blake wrathfully.

"How are we going to get back to the school like this?"

"Well, thank goodness we've got our swimming costumes on!" said Tom Merry. "I expect Gordon Gay will send the clothes back some time this evening—with his compliments. The best thing we can do is to dodge back to St. Jim's as quickly as we can, and sneak in without being spotted."

"Yes—if we're lucky," said Figgins dubiously.

"Well, we stand a better chance now than later on," said Tom. "In the heat of the afternoon it's quite likely that all the masters will be taking naps, and the prefects will be out of doors. But if we wait until tea-time, we shall never get in without being seen."

And so the discomfited picnickers commenced their cautious walk back across the fields to St. Jim's. They knew nothing of the events that had been happening in Rylcombe Lane; they had no idea that Handforth was already in possession of their clothes, and that it was in his power to bring them to the rendezvous.

It was a glum, silent procession that picked its way gingerly through the nettles and thistles towards the school. Long before Tom Merry & Co. reached the playing fields, their bare feet were covered with tiny blisters from the nettles, and scarcely a leg had escaped a fair number of scratches.

"Thank goodness!" said Blake, gasping with relief as the grey pile of St. Jim's came within sight. "We'll soon be indoors now. And won't we give those beastly Grammarians a hot time the next time we meet them!"

"Yaas, wathap!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I trust we shall be able to get indoors without being spotted!"

"It strikes me we're spotted already!" said Monty Lowther, as he gazed down ruefully at his shins and ankles. "I'm trying to think of the revenge we're going to have on Gordon Gay & Co."

They became more cautious as they grew nearer.

"It's all clear, as far as I can see!" said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps! Better make a dash for it now!"

"Yes, rather!"

Tired, sore, and weary, the juniors prepared to make a final burst, so that they could get into their own quarters

with as little waste of time as possible. They were just on the outskirts of Little Side, and there was only the quad to be crossed.

As far as they could see, everything was quiet. St. Jim's was dozing in the heat of the afternoon, and the only sound that came across on the quivering air was the whirring of a lawn-mower—probably from the Head's garden.

"Stop!"

Every one of those juniors jumped at the unexpected command. They halted in their tracks and stared round.

"Cave!" whispered Blake. "The Head!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Before any of them could move, Dr. Holmes himself came striding up, his brow black. Indeed, none of those lightly-clad figures dared move, since the Head had commanded them to stop.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Dr. Holmes, as he surveyed them all with one comprehensive glance.

"Upon my soul! Where have you boys come from?"

"The—the river, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"And what of your clothing?"

"We—we haven't got any, sir!" chorused the juniors.

It was impossible for them to be more explicit. They could not explain that their "clobber" had been commandeered by the Grammarians.

For, if they did so, Dr. Holmes would undoubtedly communicate with the Headmaster of the Grammar School, and then Gordon Gay & Co. would find themselves in trouble. It was essential that no word of the truth should come out.

"Upon my word!" said the Head sternly. "I am amazed that you boys should go down to the river to bathe in this unseemly condition!"

Tom Merry & Co. were silent.

"You are perfectly well aware that it is strictly against the school rules!" continued Dr. Holmes angrily. "How dare you appear in public like this—dressed only in your swimming costumes?"

"There's nobody about, sir!" said Blake defensively.

"Nobody about!" thundered the Head. "What of that? You do not need telling. I presume, that this is practically public ground. And yet you come across the playing fields in this—this state of undress!"

"It's very hot this afternoon, sir," said Figgins.

"That is no excuse!" retorted the Head. "Every boy will go indoors at once, and clothe himself in a rational manner. Furthermore, every boy here will report to his Housemaster, and say that I have ordered him to write five hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir!" said the unfortunates in mournful voices.

"And since it is obviously difficult for you to conduct yourselves properly in public, you will all be confined to gates for the period of one week!" said Dr. Holmes curtly.

"Go! And never let me see you like this again!"

The juniors went—feeling that Fate had played them the shabbiest trick of all.

It had been bad enough to suffer defeat at the hands of the Grammarians; it had been bad enough to lose the grub; but this final disaster was the last straw.

"Five hundred lines each!" groaned Blake dismally.

"Gated for a week!" said Levison, pulling a long face. "Gated—in June! Oh, my hat! We've got a nice little score to settle against Gordon Gay and his crowd!"

And they passed into the quad, their footsteps flagging, their spirits drooped. Seldom had they suffered such an afternoon of ill-fortune!

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CHAPTER 4.

Up to Handy!

"**B**AI JOVE!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation as he and the other School House juniors were about to enter their own quarters. The purring hum of a motor-car was sounding in the afternoon air, and a moment later an Austin Seven came gliding through the gateway.

"It's Handy!" said Blake, staring.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I am wondewin', deah boys, if Handay knows anythin' about the Gwammawians—"

"Look!" broke in Tom Merry, pointing. "Look at all that stuff in the back of Handy's car! Our togs!"

"What?" yelled the others.

Without waiting further, they ran across the quad, and surrounded the little Austin Seven as it came to a standstill. Figgins & Co., who had been about to enter the New House, were also on the spot. For every junior had come to the same conclusion.

Handforth himself was rather astonished; he had not expected to find the picnickers here. As a matter of fact, he had just come back from a long detour. He had driven to Rylcombe, and then round some of the side lanes, in an endeavour to find the rendezvous.

But Handforth was not so familiar with the ground as the other St. Jim's juniors, and he was compelled to admit, too, that he had not been paying very close attention when Tom Merry had given him directions. So after wasting a good deal of time, the Fourth-Former had been obliged to give the search up as a bad job and return to St. Jim's to seek directions.

It was a piece of pure chance that he encountered the picnic party in the quad.

"You silly asses!" said Handforth, as he got out of the little car. "What the dickens are you doing here?"

"That's just what I was going to ask you!" said Tom Merry. "I thought you were going to join us—"

"Blow that!" interrupted Blake. "Here's our clobber!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How did you get it?" demanded Figgins. "What's been happening, you School House chump?"

"Don't all speak at once!" retorted Handforth glaring. "If you had waited by the river, I should have brought your clothes back to you. But I couldn't find the beastly place! I went all round—"

"We're not interested in that!" broke in Tom Merry.

"We want to know what happened!"

"Can't you see what happened?" said Handforth tartly.

"I was grabbed by those rotten Grammarians!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Grabbed and tied to my steering-wheel!" roared Handforth indignantly. "They left me there, gagged and bound, with the car hidden in the trees! Then they went off to raid the picnic!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"No wonder you didn't turn up, Handy!"

"How the dickens could I turn up when I was bound and gagged?" said Handforth. "I'm going to smash those Grammarians to pulp—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Tom Merry, a grim note creeping into his voice. "There's something here that needs explaining, Handy! We couldn't understand how the Grammarians got to know that we were holding a picnic by the river. Did you tell them?"

Handforth started.

"Eh?" he said. "Well, no! I—I mean— I didn't exactly—"

"What?" yelled Figgins. "Then it's all your fault!"

"Grab him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The excited juniors surged round Handforth, and many hands reached out for him. But Tom Merry managed to restore order.

"Let's have the thing straight!" he exclaimed. "Now, look here, Handy, let's know exactly what happened. You say that you were grabbed by the Grammarians as you were going down to the village?"

"Yes," replied Handforth. "I told them that I couldn't stop, but they wouldn't take any notice!"

"Go hon!"

"And then they jumped on me, tied me up, and left me!" said Handforth fiercely. "After I'd been nearly suffocated, they came back, and set me free, and bundled all this stuff in my car!"

"Yes, we can see that!" put in Blake. "But did you tell Gordon Gay anything about the picnic?"

"Of course I didn't!" said Handforth indignantly. "At least, I didn't mean to!"

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"You didn't mean to!" howled Figgins.

"Well, it slipped out!" said Handforth.

"What!"

"I happened to mention that I was going to the village for some shrimps," said the new fellow gruffly. "And then, I suppose, I said something about the picnic. Not that it makes any difference—"

"It makes all the difference, you careless ass!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "We don't need to ask any more, you chaps! It's as plain as a pikestaff that this lunatic gave the whole game away. He told those Grammarians that we were holding a picnic, and I daresay he mentioned the exact spot, too! That's why they grabbed him and bound him up!"

Handforth, knowing this to be the truth, bottled up his wrath. In fact, he admitted his guilt then and there.

"I suppose it was my fault, really!" he said frankly. "I was an ass! I'm awfully sorry, you chaps—I didn't mean to give anything away, but those Grammarian rotters flustered me—"

"That's enough!" snorted Blake. "My hat! If you hadn't dashed well insisted on barging off to the village, we should have been having the picnic by now. Gordon Gay and his crowd wouldn't have known anything about it! Oh, you—you— What are we going to do with him?"

"Slaughter him on the spot!" said Figgins promptly.

"Bump him!" yelled Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"Yes, rather!"

Handforth was seized by the excited crowd, and he was whirled into the air, and then dropped with a thud on the hard, unsympathetic quad.

"Yaroooooh!" he howled wildly. "You—you fatheads— Yow! Yoooooop!"

"Again!" said Figgins.

Bump!

"Ow-yow!" bellowed Handforth. "You babbling lunatics! Lemme go! I'll smash the whole crowd of you! Oh, dear! Yow!"

He was bumped two or three more times, and then the juniors, feeling somewhat better, sorted out their clothes, and hurried into their respective Houses. It was exasperating, indeed, to learn that the whole catastrophe had happened because of Handforth's lack of caution.

When Tom Merry & Co. came out into the quad again, ten minutes later, they were rather at a loose end. The afternoon was only half spent, and they were wondering how they could use the time. To go out of gates was impossible, since any such move was prohibited.

They found Handforth in the quad, leaping against the wall of the gym, in the shade. The great Edward Oswald was looking very thoughtful.

The bumping, apparently, had done him a lot of good.

For one thing, he knew that the juniors had been justified in handling him so roughly. But for his folly, the Grammarians would never have made their raid. Thus, Handforth felt, in his inner heart, that it was up to him to make amends. And while the fellows had been dressing, Handforth had been thinking.

"I hope you're feeling pretty proud of yourself!" said Figgins, as he approached the gym with Kerr and Fatty Wynn and a few other New House fellows. "You've spoilt the afternoon, and—"

"Cheese it!" broke in Handforth. "You've given me a bumping, haven't you? I thought the matter was settled!"

"So it is!" said Tom Merry, as he came up with his chums. "Go easy, Figgy! Handy's had his gruel, and, besides, I don't think he really meant to give us away. It was only his silly carelessness."

"People ought to pay for their carelessness!" said Figgins.

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, I have paid, haven't I?" demanded Handforth, as he ruefully rubbed himself. "And I'll do some paying myself, too! You fellows needn't worry! I'll get my own back on those cheeky Grammarians!"

"Oh!" said Blake. "And how do you propose to work this miracle?"

"I'm going to lead a raid on the Grammar School—"

"In that case, you'll have to wait for a week!" said Figgins bitterly. "We're all gated!"

"What?"

"Didn't you know?" said Blake. "We ran up against the Head, and he gave us five hundred lines each, and gated us for a week!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth, staring round. "Is this true?"

"Of course it's true, you ass!"

"By George! What rough luck!" said Handforth, with real concern. "No wonder you fellows bumped me like that!"

"Yes; and we're liable to bump you again!" said Figgins darkly.

Handforth's eyes were gleaming.
"So I'm the only one who isn't gated, eh?" he said gloatingly.

"That's right—crow about it!" said Bernard Glyn. "By Jove! Are we going to stand this, you chaps? He's crowing over us because he isn't gated! I think we ought to give him another bumping!"

"Hear, hear!"
"Wait a minute!" said Handforth hastily, as he backed away. "I've admitted that I was an ass, and I'm going to make amends! You're gated, but I'm not! So I'm going over to the Grammar School, and I'm going to wipe out this stain!"

The juniors stared at him blankly.
"You're going over to the Grammar School?" repeated Blake.

"Yes."
"All by yourself?"
"Yes," repeated Handforth. "I'm the only fellow who

Grammar School, and I'm going to put the kybosh on those fatheaded Grammarians!"

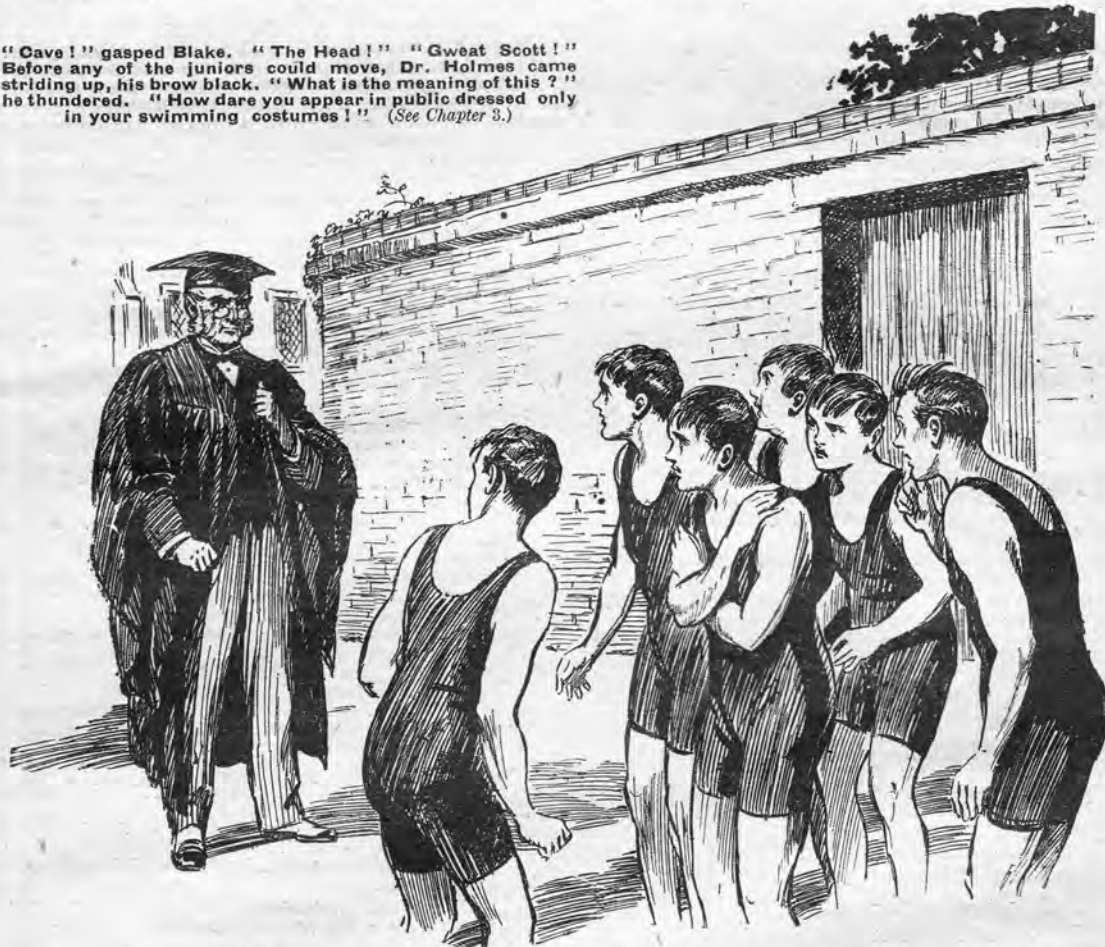
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"This is my fourth week at St. Jim's, and if I don't succeed in that final test, I shall never become leader of the Fourth!" said Handforth grimly. "So I'm going ahead! Here is my opportunity, and I'm going to grab it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"He means it, too!" said Cardew wonderingly. "Dear men, he actually means it!"

"Then the sooner we can knock these crazy ideas out of his head, the better!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Have you forgotten the conditions of that fourth test, Handy?"

"No, I haven't!"
"Weally, Handay—"
"I know exactly what I've got to do!" said Handforth. "I wathah think you have ovahlooked some of the points, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Othahwise you would nevah suggest this widiculous pwoject."

"Cave!" gasped Blake. "The Head!" "Gweat Scott!"
Before any of the juniors could move, Dr. Holmes came striding up, his brow black. "What is the meaning of this?" he thundered. "How dare you appear in public dressed only in your swimming costumes!" (See Chapter 3.)



can go, and so I'll play a lone hand. My idea is to go over to the Grammar School now—this very minute—and to turn the tables on Gordon Gay & Co.!"

"Poor chap!" said Monty Lowther, touching his head. "It must be the sun!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed D'Arcy. "Weally, Handay, you are not sewiously suggestin' that you should waid the Gwammah School single-handed, are you?"

"That's exactly the idea, Gussy—single-handed!" agreed Handforth.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "He's thinking about that fourth test!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Handy, old man, take my advice and forget it!" said Tom Merry gently. "You're not a bad sort, on the whole—although you're not to be trusted off the leash—but we shouldn't like you to come to an untimely end. If you go to the Grammar School all on your little ownsome, you'll never come out alive!"

"Daniel in the lions' den!" said Monty Lowther, nodding. "Exactly!" said Handforth promptly. "Daniel went into the lions' den, and he wasn't hurt! And I'm going to the

"Tell us what you have to do, Handy!" said Tom Merry. "That's easy," replied Handforth. "First of all, I've got to go to the Grammar School alone."

"Correct!"

"As it happens, it's the only way," continued Handforth. "All you fellows are gated, and so it's my job to exact a terrible vengeance for this afternoon's raid. And as it was mainly my fault, I shall go on this errand with a firm determination to win. You see, I've got to put things right. I feel pretty bad about the way I let you down, too!"

The juniors looked at him in wonder.

They rather admired his spirit; they liked the frank way in which he took the blame, and for that very reason they were reluctant to let him go. They felt that he would be sacrificing himself for nothing.

"Just think for a moment, old scout," said Tom Merry quietly. "You won't carry out the conditions if you creep secretly into the Grammar School. If you want to win this test you will have to go in boldly—"

"I know that!" broke in Handforth. "And that's what

I shall do. I shall walk straight in, and raid the Grammarians single-handed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're mad!" said Blake impatiently. "You know jolly well that you can't do anything like that! Besides, what about the document?"

"The which?"

"Oh, don't pretend that you don't know!" said Blake. "Before you win this fourth test, you've got to get a signed paper from Gordon Gay—"

"Oh, yes!" said Handforth, nodding. "That's what I've been planning out!"

"Oh, you've been planning it out?" asked Figgins.

"Rather!" said Handforth. "Before I come away from the Grammar School I shall get a signed paper from Gordon Gay, admitting that the Grammarians aren't fit to clean our boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And how do you propose to get anything of the sort from Gordon Gay?" asked Tom Merry. "How do you think you'll be able to get into the Grammar School and out again with that signed statement?"

"That is my secret!" replied Handforth firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're spoofing, old man!" said Levison. "You can't do it—you can't even attempt to do it!"

Handforth squared his shoulders.

"Can't I?" he said fiercely. "Well, I'm going now!"

"Hold him!" said Blake. "We can't let the lunatic do a thing like this! It's no better than sending a lamb to the slaughter!"

"Keep your hands off me!" said Handforth fiercely.

"I've made up my mind to raid the Grammarians, and I'm going!"

"But, you burbling duffer, the thing's a sheer impossibility!" shouted Bernard Glyn. "If a couple of dozen of us went, we couldn't do it!"

"A couple of dozen of us aren't going!" retorted Handforth. "I'm going alone!"

"Oh, let him go!" said Figgins impatiently. "It'll teach him a lesson! It'll knock some of the conceit out of him!"

"Yaas, watah!" said D'Arcy. "Weally, Handay, I think you ought to take our advice. We know what twicky boundahs the Gwammawians are!"

"Well, they say fools rush in where angels fear to tread," growled Tom Merry. "Not that there's the faintest hope of his getting an admission from the Grammarians that St. Jim's is top dog!"

Handforth was quite cool as he prepared to go.

"Well, I shall see you fellows soon after tea," he said serenely. "I'm sorry you're gated, but you'll have a little consolation when I get back."

"You're an optimist, old man," said Monty Lowther. "You won't be back at St. Jim's for at least a fortnight."

"A fortnight!"

"Yes," said Monty. "I expect you'll spend a couple of weeks in Wayland Hospital!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" said Handforth witheringly.

He shouldered his way through the crowd, and most of the juniors were willing to let him go. But Tom Merry and Jack Blake ran after him, and caught him by the shoulders.

"Look here, Handy, chuck it!" said Tom Merry earnestly.

"Rats!"

"We can't let you do it!" said Blake. "It's—it's cruelty to animals!"

"Lemme go!" shouted Handforth, shaking himself free. "I tell you I've made up my mind to complete the fourth test—and when I come back I shall be leader of the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what's the use?" asked Blake hopelessly.

"No use at all," replied Tom Merry. "Let him go—and I hope he learns his lesson thoroughly!"

But, in spite of his exasperations, the captain of the Shell had many misgivings as he watched Handforth stride boldly through the gateway.

CHAPTER 5.

The Lone Raider!

HANDFORTH'S determination was something to marvel at.

It wasn't like the determination of any other fellow. He was unique. He did not pause to consider the odds. He just made up his mind to do a certain thing, and he went straight ahead and did it. More often than not, he came a frightful cropper in the process. But

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the more knocks he got, the greater became his stubbornness.

But it had to be admitted that luck was generally on his side.

He had set out, now, on a mission that seemed foredoomed to failure. Under no possible circumstances could Tom Merry & Co. see the faintest glimmering of hope. If anything in this world was certain, then it was certain that Edward Oswald Handforth would come back from Rylcombe Grammar School a wreck.

Needless to say, that opinion was not shared by Handforth.

He went on his way, his confidence growing with every step he took. He had already made up his mind exactly what he was going to do. And failure, in his opinion, was impossible. Not that this was anything to go upon; for Handforth always regarded failure as impossible.

When he arrived at the Grammar School he was as cool as ice. Perhaps he did not realise the perilous nature of his undertaking. There was, indeed, something pathetic in his supreme confidence.

And it never occurred to him that his lone raid was really a piece of colossal nerve. Like everything else, Handforth took it as a matter of course. He had let Tom Merry & Co. down, and now it was up to him to make amends.

And, instead of being dismayed at the prospect, instead of entering upon this task in the belief that it was a forlorn hope, he went ahead with the grim determination to succeed.

Once through the gateway he paused and looked at the buildings of the Grammar School in an uncertain way. Nobody was within sight. Like St. Jim's, the Grammar School was dozing in the sweltering heat of the June afternoon.

"Hallo! What do you think you're doing here?"

Handforth spun round at the sound of the voice, and he found a tall, good-looking senior approaching him. He was a stranger to Handforth—a pleasant-looking fellow, dressed in fannels. He was Delamere, the captain of the school.

"I'm from St. Jim's!" said Handforth briefly.

"Yes, so I notice," said Delamere, glancing at Handforth's cap. "Are you alone?"

"Well, I seem to be, don't I?"

"Rather a risky thing for you to walk in here like this," said Delamere, with a smile. "But you must be a new kid at St. Jim's. I don't think I've seen you before."

"I haven't been there long," replied Handforth. "Look here, can you tell me where Gordon Gay is? Have those rotters come back yet?"

Delamere laughed.

"It strikes me, young 'un, that you're looking for trouble," he said good-naturedly. "Still, if you want to find it, why should I stand in your way? The majority of the Fourth Form kids are in the Common-room, I believe. They're having a sort of feed."

"Our grub!" said Handforth fiercely.

"Oh!" said Delamere. "Ahem! Perhaps I'd better not make too many inquiries. Anyhow, I heard an unholy row coming from the Common-room, and I had to go there to tone it down. You'll find quite a merry crowd waiting to welcome you!"

"How do I get to the Common-room?" asked Handforth grimly.

Delamere told him, and with a nod of thanks, Handforth walked straight indoors.

The Grammarian senior skipper shook his head and went on his own way.

"Well, it's not my business," he told himself. "I think I'd better have a bad memory and forget all about it."

Handforth found the Common-room without difficulty, and he barged straight in, and took in the whole scene with one comprehensive glance.

Gordon Gay & Co. were there in force. The feed, apparently, had just ended, for the Grammarian juniors were standing about in groups, chuckling and chatting. It was cool in the Common-room—much cooler than out of doors. This explained, perhaps, why the juniors had gathered here.

At Handforth's entrance, all eyes were turned upon him. For a moment there was a sort of stunned silence. An incident of this sort was well-nigh unprecedented. A solitary St. Jim's fellow, walking straight into the midst of the Grammarians—in their own Common-room!

Then Gordon Gay broke the silence.

"Look out! St. Jim's cad!"

"Grab him!"

The Common-room immediately became filled with voices, and there was a general move towards Handforth.

"Chuck it!" said Handforth calmly. "There's nobody else with me!"

"What?"

"I've come here alone!" said Handforth.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Carboy.

"Of all the nerve!" grinned Gordon Gay. "My poor

benighted fathead! Do you mean to tell us that you have had the nerve to come here entirely on your own?"

"It didn't require much nerve!" replied Handforth coolly. "You've just finished eating that raided grub—eh? Well, I'm here to have revenge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians howled with laughter.

"Come on, your fellows!" sang out Jack Wootton. "We can't allow this, can we?"

"Rather not!"

"Let's jump on him, and make him realise that he can't walk into this Common-room as though he owns it!" went on Wootton. "I rather think that we ought to do something special. How about tarring and feathering him?"

Handforth stood his ground.

"That's right!" he said witheringly. "You can do exactly as you like with me, and I shan't be able to put up much of a fight. I'm alone, I tell you."

"Yes, draw it mild!" said Gordon Gay. "There's no need to jump on the fellow. He deserves to be treated leniently for his cheek. We can't very well slaughter him."

The Grammarians were amazed. But they were inclined to have mercy on Handforth. The very fact that he had walked in so boldly stood in his favour. He hadn't an earthly chance against them, so why should they take the trouble of attacking him?

Gordon Gay was the first to see the possibilities, and he

closed one eye at his chums. Handforth saw nothing of it. But Gordon Gay considered that this was too good an opportunity to be missed.

"What are you going to do with us, Handforth, old man?" asked Gordon Gay gravely.

"I've come here for revenge!" replied Handforth.

"What!"

"Revenge!" repeated Handforth, striding forward. "You rotters raided our picnic, and now I mean to make you pay!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, please, Handforth, it was only a jape!" said Gordon Gay, in a trembling voice. "I don't think you quite understand. Sometimes the St. Jim's fellows raid us, you know. And at other times we raid them. It's give and take. Won't you please forgive us?"

"No, I won't!" roared Handforth.

"He won't forgive us!" said Gordon Gay mournfully.

Heroically, the other Grammarians held their laughter in check. They could see that Gordon Gay was spoofing this St. Jim's fellow; and, astonishingly enough, Handforth took it all seriously! He apparently had no idea that his leg was being pulled.

"Oh, but Handforth!" pleaded Gordon Gay. "Do you really mean it when you say that you won't forgive us?"

"Forgive you!" repeated Handforth scornfully. "Even if

(Continued on next page.)



The all-knowing Oracle replies to some more interesting queries—some of which have been received from GEM readers.

Q. What is a lurcher?

A. This is a name—among others—sometimes given to a petty thief or swindler. A certain kind of mongrel dog usually a cross between a collie and greyhound, and which is used by poachers in many country districts, is also known by this name.

Q. Who was Garibaldi?

A. This question was sent in by a young reader, Percy Killick, of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. And from what Percy tells me in his letter, he is feeling very sore about Garibaldi, having recently got six swishes from his Form-master for stating in an examination paper that he (Garibaldi) was the inventor and manufacturer of biscuits with currants in them. No, Percy, you were wrong. Garibaldi was an Italian patriot, a fisherman's son who joined in the revolt against the rule of the Austrians during the middle of last century and largely helped to make his country a free nation. Garibaldi had a powerful way of filling those about him with amazing courage and enthusiasm, whereas the "Garibaldis" that Percy Killick has been thinking of, merely fill one with baked flour and currants.



JOLLY ROGER—the standard of the grim old pirates of bygone days.

Q. What is aerated bread?

A. This term is applied to bread that is not fermented with yeast. Instead, it is mechanically charged with carbonic acid gas. As to whether it is better for you, Tom

Mayes, than the ordinary kind of bread, I should not like to express an opinion. As, however, you asked my advice, I advise you to stick to what you are accustomed to during your training for the local junior sports championship.

Q. What was the Jolly Roger?

A. This, Franklyn Webber, was the name given to the notorious flag of the old-time pirates—a black flag with white skull and crossbones, that but a century or two ago was dreaded all over the Seven Seas.

Q. What is a tarboosh?

A. A type of fez worn by many Egyptians. In appearance it is rather like a red flower-pot inverted.

Q. What is a wildebeest?

A. This, a native of Africa, is one of the queerest of all living animals. Really, it is a kind of antelope, but it has the shoulders of a bullock, the body of a horse, the legs of a deer, and a face like nothing on earth. Another name for this freak of Nature is the gnu.

Q. Where is the finest statue in London?

A. When you come on your holiday to London, Fred Foster, of Peebles, note the statue of King Charles I. on horseback in Trafalgar Square. This is considered by many people to be the best statue in the metropolis and has Rima-Feeding-the-Birds in a nearby park, knocked into a cocked hat.

Q. What is the difference between an alibi and an alkali?

A. There is quite a lot, Gertie M. Alibi is a Latin word meaning "elsewhere." It is a word you will often see in the police court reports in the newspapers. For example, if a crook is accused of stealing and charged at court, he promptly produces an alibi. That is,

all his pals swear that he was in the Green Duck round the corner and therefore could not possibly have been on the scene of the crime. An alkali may be one of several compounds including soda, potash, and ammonia, and its properties are the opposite to those of an acid.

Q. What is a bashi-bazouk?

A. The original meaning of this was a paid fighter of the Turkish irregular force, a type that became notorious for their brutality and love of loot. The term also is one of several that the blue-jackets of the Royal Navy sometimes apply to their comrades of the Royal Marines.

Q. What is a bumping race?

A. Two or three keen sporting readers sent in this question after reading about "bumping races" at one of the universities. This, chums, is a rowing race where boats start at short intervals one behind another in a river where it is too narrow for them to start abreast. The object is to try and touch the boat in front, and any boat that makes a "bump" scores a win.

Q. Why does an eel have ears?

A. This question was sent to me by George S., of B. O. O. L. George, you have stumped me! The only use for them as far as I can see is to keep the poor thing's face within neat bounds.



TARBOOSH—not tar brush. The headgear of the gentlemen of Egypt.

Q. What is the difference between plumbago and lumbago?

A. And hearty congratulations, Tom Walton, of Sheffield, that you don't know! Plumbago is black lead, a form of carbon used for lead pencils. Lumbago—and don't I know it as an old man!—is a rheumatic affection in the loins.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,062.

I could forgive the raiding of the picnic I couldn't forgive you chaps for the way you handled me this afternoon!"

"It was only part of the game!" said Frank Monk defensively.

"That's no excuse!" said Handforth. "It isn't a case of forgiveness at all! I'm here to wipe out the stain!"

"Who's got a duster?" asked Tadpole, looking round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't need a duster!" roared Handforth sternly. "I'm going to wipe out the stain with these!"

And he displayed his two clenched fists.

"Impossible, old man!" said Gordon Gay, inspecting them.

"You can't wipe out any stains with those things! You're more liable to make some fresh stains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Here was an unexpected treat! Handforth, the new fellow at St. Jim's, calmly barging into their midst, asking for trouble! To fall upon him and ignominiously pitch him out was a crude way of dealing with him. Far better let him run on, and have some fun at his expense.

Handforth himself was feeling triumphant. He had succeeded in getting right into the Grammar School—into the midst of the enemy. And he was overjoyed to find that they were awed at his presence. But he wasn't surprised, for he had expected this!

"How are you going to deal with us, old scout?" asked Gordon Gay interestedly. "You've raided us, and now you're fairly on the warpath. Naturally, we're a bit interested. What's the programme?"

"Don't make it too hard!" urged Carboy.

Handforth stalked forward, examining the Grammarians critically. Finally, he came to a halt in front of Gordon Gay, and he jabbed the Australian junior in the chest.

"You're the leader of this mob, aren't you?" he demanded.

"Which mob?"

"Are you the leader, or are you not?" said Handforth darkly. "Don't quibble!"

"I—I'm sorry!" faltered Gordon Gay in a trembling tone. "Please forgive me, Handy!"

"Will you answer my question, blow you?"

"Yes, if you please!" whispered Gordon Gay. "But if I confess that I'm the leader, what are you going to do to me?"

"You'll find out!" retorted Handforth.

"Well, I am the leader!" said Gordon Gay, hanging his head.

"Good!" said Handforth. "I knew it all the time, but I wanted to get the words from your own lips! And now I'm going to give you a good hiding!"

"Oh, Handforth!" gasped Gordon Gay, staggering back. "I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life!" thundered Handforth.

"Help—help!" moaned the Grammarian leader, looking round wildly. "Keep him off! I—I'm afraid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other Grammarians shrieked with laughter. They couldn't keep it up any longer. And Handforth, as that outburst fell upon his ears, turned round and looked at the yelling crowds.

"You rotters!" he hooted. "You've been spoofing me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not afraid of me at all!"

"Not a bit!" grinned Gordon Gay, recovering his usual composure. "Sorry, old man, but we couldn't resist it."

"You—you—"

"Better go easy!" warned Frank Monk. "We've been having some fun with you, old man, but if you start calling us names we might get violent. For example, it's quite on the cards that we shall give you a bumping and chuck you out on your neck."

"Why not put him in a packing-case and send him back to St. Jim's, carriage forward?" suggested Tadpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait a minute!" laughed Gordon Gay. "Have you forgotten that he's going to give me a good hiding?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right—cackle away!" said Handforth scornfully. "I'm just one against the lot of you. I've come here alone, trusting to your good sportsmanship to give me a fair deal. And if you lay your paws on me you'll be a lot of outsiders!"

Gordon Gay became serious.

"There's something in that, old man," he agreed. "And we'll give you a fair deal. We won't let you go back to St. Jim's saying that the Grammarians are bad sportsmen."

"Good!" said Handforth promptly. "That's exactly what I wanted to hear you say! Now, Gordon Gay, I challenge you!"

"Eh?"

"I challenge you to a fight here and now!" said Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "With or without gloves—I don't care which! But if I win, it's to be regarded as a St.

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Jim's victory. If you win, I'll go back and admit that I've been thrashed—that St. Jim's has been thrashed, and you can record it—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Gordon Gay. "Let's get this straight. You say you challenge me to a fight?"

"Yes, I do!" replied Handforth. "I'm a chap who believes in the generals of an army fighting the battles. Why should the rank and file be used as cannon fodder?"

"Why, indeed?" murmured Frank Monk.

"The quarrel is between the leaders—the generals!" said Handforth sternly. "They are the ones who ought to fight! And which ever general wins gains the victory for his entire army!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And that's my challenge!" said Handforth triumphantly. "I'm here as the representative of the Fourth and the Shell at St. Jim's!"

"But you're not one of their generals!" said Gordon Gay.

"Yes, I am!" roared Handforth. "After to-day I shall be the leader of the Fourth—I shall step into Blake's shoes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll laugh on the other side of your face before I've finished!" said Handforth. "Now, Gordon Gay, are you going to accept this challenge or not? If I win, it's to be set down as a St. Jim's victory, and not merely as a personal success, and it applies the same both ways. I'm waiting for your answer!"

The Grammarians were silent. They were all looking at Gordon Gay. Handforth had sprung his bombshell, for, without question, his methods were unique.

CHAPTER 6.

Gordon Gay's Promise!

GORDON GAY did not hesitate for long.

He knew that he was in a trap, and there was no getting out of it. If he refused to accept this challenge all the St. Jim's fellows would laugh at him—would chip him unmercifully. Handforth had come to the Grammar School single-handed, and had offered to fight the Grammarian leader. There was no possibility of evading the scrap.

Not that Gordon Gay had the faintest suspicion that he might lose. His prowess with the gloves was well known, while Handforth, on the other hand, was a fellow who looked a slogger first and foremost, with no idea of science.

"Done!" said Gordon Gay suddenly. "I accept!"

"Good man!" ejaculated Handforth, grasping Gordon Gay's hand and shaking it. "That's the stuff! All right, then! We'll have our mill, and the winner is to claim a complete victory for his school. That's understood, isn't it?"

"Quite understood!" replied Gordon Gay.

"Well, we're not grumbling!" grinned Frank Monk. "You've only got to knock this ass sideways, Gay, and we shall be able to record two victories against St. Jim's in one afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait until he knocks me sideways!" snorted Handforth. "I suppose the other fellows know that you have come here?"

"Of course they know," replied Handforth. "As a matter of fact, they're all gated, or some of them might have come with me."

"Gated?"

"Yes—gated!" repeated Handforth. "And all through you!"

"Here, cheese it!" protested Frank Monk. "What do you mean?"

"You pinched their clobber, and they didn't know you'd shoved it into my Austin," replied Handforth. "They ran into the Head on their way back to St. Jim's, and he gave 'em five hundred lines each, and gated 'em for a week!"

"Oh, hard lines!" said Gordon Gay, with real concern. "We didn't mean to tip them into the soup like that!"

"Well, whether you meant it or not, they're in!" said Handforth. "I'm about the only chap who isn't gated. That's why I'm here alone."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So that explains it?"

"Yes," said Handforth, "that explains it. As they're all gated, I'm here as their representative."

"Well, we'll soon settle it!" said Gordon Gay, with a chuckle. "Bring out the gloves, somebody! You'd rather have gloves, wouldn't you, Handy?"

"I don't care," replied Handforth. "Suit yourself."

"Well, it's better," argued Gordon Gay. "We don't want to actually fight, do we? We're friends at heart, and a boxing-match will meet the needs of the occasion."

"But it's got to go on until there's a knock-out!" said Handforth firmly.

"I'm agreeable," said the Grammarian leader. "The fight will last about two rounds."

"Probably one," nodded Handforth. "It won't take me long to put you to sleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The lone raider's confidence was highly amusing to the Grammarians.

"And there's something else," went on Handforth. "There's something that's got to be settled before we strike the first blow."

The gloves had been brought, and eager juniors were helping the combatants to fit them on. Gordon Gay was grinning, and the other Grammarians were highly entertained. Only Handforth regarded the whole thing as serious.

"Something else?" said Gordon Gay inquiringly.

"Yes."

"Trot it out, then."

"If I win this fight, I want you to sign a document," said Handforth. "In fact, you've got to promise me that you will sign it. If you don't promise, there'll be no match."

"Document?" said Frank Monk. "What's the ass talking about?"

"Explain, O oracle!" said Gordon Gay, looking at the visitor.

"It's just this," said Handforth, leaning forward. "If I win this fight, you've got to give me a signed paper, stating, in plain terms, that the Grammar School Fourth isn't fit to clean the boots of the St. Jim's fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you babbling lunatic!" said Frank Monk wrathfully. "Do you think you'll get a signed document of that sort?"

"Of all the nerve!" said Harry Wootton.

"Cheek!"

"The chap deserves to be bumped!"

"Hold on!" grinned Gordon Gay. "This needs thinking over. As there's not one chance in a thousand that Handforth will whack me, why shouldn't I sign the document? I mean, why shouldn't I promise to sign it?"

"Great Scott! You don't mean it?" gasped Frank Monk.

"Yes, I do."

"But—but supposing you lose?"

"Do you think that I shall lose?"

"Of course I don't!"

"Then there's no risk," said Gordon Gay coolly. "In fact, I've got to promise."

He could see this in a flash. For if he refused to make the promise, there would be no fight. And Handforth would go back to St. Jim's, spreading the story that Gordon Gay had refused to fight him because he had feared that he might lose! In spite of Handforth's blundering ways, there was a good deal of cleverness in his mode of attack.

"Do you agree?" asked the St. Jim's fellow eagerly.

"Yes," replied Gordon Gay.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!"

"You'd better go easy, Gay!"

"Cheese it, you funky asses!" said Gordon Gay tartly. "I'm going to knock this St. Jim's fathead into a cocked hat!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You will knock him into what you call ze middle of ze next week!" grinned Mont Blong.

"Let's have no misunderstanding about this," said Gordon Gay, speaking deliberately. "Now, then, Handforth, we'll have it straight. We're going to fight, and the scrap must go on until there's a knock-out."

"That's right."

"If you win, I've got to write, in your presence, a statement to the effect that we're not fit to clean the boots of the St. Jim's fellows."

"Yes, and you've got to sign it!" nodded Handforth.

"I agree to all that," said Gordon Gay calmly. "I promise you that if you win I'll write that statement, and sign it."

"Good man!" grinned Handforth. "Then let's go ahead."

"Just a minute!" said Gordon Gay gently. "This ought to cut both ways, my son."

"Eh?"

"Isn't that fair?" asked Gordon Gay. "If you get knocked out, my son, I shall expect you to write and sign an exactly similar document. You'll have to state, in plain writing, that the St. Jim's fellows aren't fit to clean our boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, that's only fair!" said Handforth promptly. "I agree."

"Then there's nothing more to be said!" remarked Gordon Gay. "Let's get it over!"

The Grammarians grinned with huge delight. They hadn't the faintest fear that their leader would fail. And then the joke would be supreme. For Handforth would write that statement, and they would always have it to chip the Saints with.

As for Handforth, he entered into this scrap with terrific gusto. Here was his chance to be the recognised leader of the St. Jim's Fourth! He remembered Jack Blake's original promise, and he was determined to keep Blake to it.

For Handforth, in his fierce determination, was set upon winning. If only he could knock Gordon Gay out, then he would complete that fourth test! He would carry that signed statement back to St. Jim's, and his triumph would be absolute.

A referee—Carboy—was quickly appointed, and a ring was formed.

CHAPTER 7.

The Fight!

"TIME!"

Frank Monk, who was timekeeper, brought his hand down with a swing, as a signal. And a shout went up from the crowd in the Common-room. Within the hastily-formed ring Gordon Gay and Handforth sought warily for an opening.

"Go it, Gay, old man!"

"Knock him out in the first round!"

Gordon Gay undoubtedly had this idea in mind. For suddenly, like a panther, he leapt to the attack, sweeping through Handforth's guard, and delivering a terrific drive on the point of the jaw. Handforth staggered back, and was driven round the ring by the force of Gordon Gay's assault.

"Hurrah!"

"That's the way, Gay!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,062.

The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL!

By TOM MERRY.

I AM writing this Editorial under very pleasant conditions—sitting in a deckchair just outside the door of a bell tent pitched in a meadow, at the bottom of which flows the Rhyl. About a dozen of the fellows are engaged in a scratch game of cricket, Shell v. Fourth, and nothing but the fact that I have got to revise the articles and write the Editorial for this special "Camping" issue of the "St. Jim's News" before tea-time, prevents my joining them. I don't mind confessing that I'd a deal rather be with them playing cricket than sitting here writing.

I tried to persuade Cardew to edit this issue, but he said that he was very sorry he couldn't oblige me, as there was something that he particularly wanted to do this afternoon. It was not until I had settled myself down to work that I discovered the "something" he was so keen on spending the afternoon doing was—going to sleep! At the present moment he's stretched out full length in a deckchair with a handkerchief over his face to protect him from the sun's rays, as fast asleep as—well, as Baggy Trimble, whose buzz-saw snore is proceeding from the interior of a tent a little distance away.

A round half-dozen of the fellows are sitting about in the shadow of the trees, reading, while a little group of three or four more, over against the hedge, have got a portable gramophone going. Manners is busy with his camera, taking "snaps," while Skimpole is deeply engrossed in the works of Professor Balmycrumpet.

This is the second week-end's camping-out we've had this summer, and I sincerely trust that it won't be the last. If this real summery weather continues for a few weeks longer, I'm certain it won't be.

This camp, for the first time on record, has included the New House fellows. During previous years Mr. Ratcliff has stubbornly refused to permit the juniors of his House to spend a night or two under canvas during the term, but this time he has relented and permitted them to join us, much to their delight, and, incidentally, to ours also. After all, a Lower School week-end camp isn't all that it ought to be without the cheery presence of Figgins & Co. and the rest of the New House cripples.

In order to mark the occasion with a white stone, so to speak, I have asked Figg to come to the fore with an article in this number.

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IT'S always the same when Trimble's about. If you're in St. Jim's you can't keep him out of a study in which there is any grub, unless you lock the door, and when you're in camp you can't keep him out of the grub-tent—on which, unfortunately, there is no lock. The only thing you can do is to maintain a constant watch and ward over the place. In the midst of the countless distractions of a camp, however, you're liable to relax your vigilance a trifle now and then, with the result that the fat blighter takes instant advantage of it and gets there. Tins of fruit, cakes, pies, and things of that kind have a queer way of disappearing in the most mysterious fashion.

But in this camp he's over-reached himself for once. It happened to be frightfully hot this morning, and the fat Fourth-Former was craving for something cool to drink. There are a number of bottles of concentrated lemonade in the grub-tent—I daresay you know the kind of stuff I mean; you mix a spoonful of it with water to make a tumblersful of lemonade—and this morning Trimble managed to sneak in and bag a bottle. I don't think he was quite certain what he'd got hold of, but anyway he drank the contents of the bottle, just as it was, without any water, and he'd just finished it up when Cardew, who was strolling past, heard him moving about inside, and went in and caught him.

When Cardew saw what Trimble had been up to he pretended to be frightfully concerned, and explained to Trimble that he'd been drinking concentrated lemonade, which was really a sort of acid, and frightfully dangerous if taken undiluted. He put the wind up Baggy so much that the fat junior became convinced that he'd poisoned himself and was dying, and begged of Cardew to do something to save him.

Cardew very obligingly mixed him an emetic, which he said was the only known remedy, and though it consisted of a tin of mustard in a cupful of water, Baggy was scared so stiff that he gulped it down.

The following hour or so could scarcely be described as the brightest moments of Baggy's career, but though the experience ought to prove a lesson to him, I'm inclined to doubt whether it will. I'm afraid it would take more than mere mustard and water to reform Baggy Trimble.

ANTICIPATIONS!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

NOBODY but an absolute born idiot would ever think of taking a silk topper to camp, and if there could be the slightest possible shadow of a doubt about Gussy being what I've just said, that little point alone would serve to dispel it. Because Gussy has this time brought with him not one, but three toppers. And it hasn't stopped at toppers, either. He's dragged along about half his entire wardrobe—including about a couple of dozen ties, six or seven fancy waistcoats, four pairs of flannel bags, three sports coats, countless pairs of socks, gloves, patent-leather shoes, and three pairs of spats. In fact, you'd really think Gussy was staying here for a month instead of a week-end.

He tipped Taggles to wheel all this clobber down in a big trunk on a wheelbarrow, but what Gussy doesn't yet know, mercifully for his peace of mind, is that Taggy had a slight accident en route. The wheelbarrow was by way of being a bit of a relic, and the weight of that trunk was more than its old timbers would stand. The result was that one side of the barrow came off, and the trunk went with it. Of course that wouldn't have mattered so much if Taggy hadn't been so near to the duck-pond at the time. Anyway, the trunk went rolling down the slight slope and into the pond.

Taggy had no difficulty in getting the trunk out again, but as it was never intended for submarine excursions, I am wondering what kind of a state that beautiful—or rather, once beautiful—clobber is in at the present moment. Taggles, unaware of the fact that several of us had witnessed the incident from the other side of a hedge, retrieved the trunk, wiped it dry with some old sacks, and took it into camp, where he deposited it in Study No. 6 tent without bothering to mention the little incident in any way.

These few lines are being penned within an hour or so of our arrival in camp, and a number of us are eagerly awaiting the time for Gussy to open the trunk. It's certain that he will very shortly decide that the occasion calls for his changing something, if it's only his tie, and when he does open the trunk—well, he'll get one of the biggest shocks of his life. Myes. Somehow or other I don't think we're likely to have the camp brightened up by much of Gussy's sartorial splendour this trip.

HURRAH, hurrah, hurrah!

Excuse my cheers, but I really can't resist a little outbreak of public jubilation. I really feel that the occasion calls for it.

To be spending a ripping week-end in camp, instead of stewing in the New House in this stifling weather and envying the School House fellows the freshness and freedom of the open air, as we've hitherto had to do—though, of course, we've never confessed as much to them—is surely a matter for a bit of rejoicing. And to think that we might have enjoyed several more treats of this kind in the past if it hadn't been for Ratty's kill-joy spirit!

Possibly some of you may think it's not very nice of me to speak about Ratty like that, considering that he's turned over a new leaf and allowed us to join in the camp this time. But no thanks are due to Ratty for our being here. It's entirely the Head's doing. Ratty as good as said so, though you'd have thought he'd have had the sense to keep quiet and let us give him the credit for one decent action at least.

Most of the New House fellows nearly fainted when the notice was put up on the New House announcement-board that we were to go into camp in Jingle's meadow for the week-end. We all thought it must be a rag by some practical joker until we saw Ratty's signature as large as life at the bottom, and then we decided that it must be a mistake.

But we soon discovered that it was true enough. Ratty himself came stalking round the studies to tell us that he had made arrangements with Mr. Railton for New House juniors to take part in the week-end camp that had been arranged for members of the School House, Dr. Holmes having expressed a desire that such should be the case.

"I might say," went on Ratty viciously, "that I personally do not approve of such a proceeding, as I am convinced that granting such ridiculous privileges is encouraging mischief. However, I must bow to Dr. Holmes' superior judgment. I shall not personally be present; but if any of you are guilty of any conduct that gives cause for complaint, you will have reason for regretting it."

Of course, we took about as much notice of what he was saying as if he'd been reciting "The Wreck of the Hesperus" in Chinese. But when he buzzed off we heaved a sigh of relief to think that we would be free of Ratty's jurisdiction for a whole forty-eight hours.

We lugged out tents and blankets and ground-sheets and all sorts of camping equipment that belong to the Scout Troop, and overhauled everything to make sure that it was in tip-top condition.

On the Friday night we were on the camping site half an hour before the School House chaps arrived, and by the time they came drifting up we had pitched our tents, and were getting everything ship-shape.

Friday night passed quite uneventfully, and, in spite of the novelty of having a canvas dorm, most of us slept quite well. But on Saturday night—Gee! I wouldn't have missed it for worlds!

We turned in about a quarter to ten, and all lights were put out promptly at ten o'clock, according to the standing orders of the camp. Very few of the fellows went to sleep straightaway, though, because there was a nightingale singing in a little copse near by, and everybody but the sluggards—who couldn't be kept awake by a brass band



ALARMS and EXCURSIONS!

By George Figgins.

—was listening to it. I heard half-past ten boom out from Rylcombe church clock, and just after that I thought I heard somebody moving about outside our tent.

Nobody was supposed to be out and about at that hour, because there was a strict rule forbidding fellows leaving their tents after lights-out, and everybody was careful to keep to it, as any sort of fooling about would mean that the Head would withdraw his permission for the camping. So I called out in a loud whisper and told whoever was there to go back to his tent and not to be a silly idiot. But there was no answer.

Anyway, we heard no more for about a couple of minutes after I spoke, and then there was a faint sound as if somebody was moving away from our tent. I



Tom Merry & Co. dealt suitably with the cheeky raiders by hurling them into the ditch.

slipped out of my blankets and shoved on a pair of gym shoes and a raincoat, and Kerr did the same. We glided out of the tent like a couple of shadows, and got round to the back of it just in time to see what looked like another shadow disappearing behind the next tent to us.

We were after it in one, but we had no sort of luck.

I was inclined to think it might be some blessed tramp on the prowl, and you never know what's going to happen when you've got a Frowsy Freddie scrounging about a sleeping camp. But tramp or no tramp, he was keeping out of sight, and Kerr and I were just giving up the search when we were startled by a loud yell from the other end of the line of tents. It was followed by an outcry that roused the whole of the camp in a brace of shakes, and Kerr and I went streaking off in that direction at top speed.

Just then the moon, which had been hidden by a bank of clouds, came sailing out and lighted up the scene. Directly in front of us was a heaving mass of

canvas, that we immediately recognised as a fallen tent with fellows underneath trying to struggle out. At the same moment that we caught sight of it the next tent came toppling over, right in our path, to the accompaniment of a fresh uproar, which became worse when Kerr and I, unable to pull up in time, tripped up and sprawled in the middle of the fallen canvas. In struggling to our feet we probably did, as we were afterwards accused of doing, tread on a few of the occupants. But you can't pick and choose where you're putting your feet down at a time like that.

Lights began to show up in all the other tents, and the one behind us had just gleamed out, when over it went like the first two.

But it was the last to go, because the three figures whose knives had just severed the guy-ropes had no time to turn their attention to another tent before Kerr and I were on them. We were tackling them when Tom Merry and Blake and half a dozen more chaps came flying up to see what all the excitement was about.

We didn't need lights to discover that the raiders were Grammarians. Actually, it was Gordon Gay, Monk, and Carboy. We'd hardly secured them before Railton, who had been sleeping in a tent at the other end of the lines, came on the scene with an electric torch, with the result that we had to hustle them behind a tent in mighty sharp time. If Railton had spotted them the fat would have been in the fire with a vengeance. Luckily, the moon went in again just then, and while Railton was shining his torch here and there, trying to find out what had happened, seven or eight of us rushed the Grammarians away under cover of the tents and through a near-by gap in the hedge.

We hadn't much time to spare, because we were even then due to show up at the spot where Railton was conducting his investigations into the disturbance, as our absence would have inevitably been noticed and consequently led to some awkward questions being asked.

But we had just sufficient time to deal suitably with those cheeky raiders, although not enough of it to do the job as thoroughly as we should have liked to do. We had to be content with dropping them into the ditch and then racing back to the fallen tents. However, we had the consolation of knowing that the ditch was fairly deep and particularly muddy, and although we couldn't wait to see them climb out, we could pretty well guess what sort of a state they must have been in when they did.

Railton's inquiries didn't have much result, though I have an idea he wasn't without his suspicions of who was responsible for the fallen tents.

But it was lucky for the camp that New House chaps took part in it this time, because if Kerr and I hadn't been little johnnies-on-the-spot, not only would the Grammarians have got away in safety, with all the honours, but they would probably have succeeded in dropping several more tents while the confusion was at its height.

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Handforth's Triumph!

(Continued from page 13.)

"You've got him now!"

Handforth's recovery was swift. The blow had shaken him up a little, but he was as tough as leather, and he immediately pulled himself up and faced Gordon Gay squarely.

Slam! Biff! Slam!

They were fighting for all they were worth, and Gordon Gay was now making the discovery that Handforth was a formidable opponent. He had tightened up his guard now, and the Grammarian leader found it difficult to get through it again.

Furthermore, Handforth was now attacking.

With tremendous energy and force he drove Gordon Gay back. His science was not particularly noticeable, but his attack was irresistible.

Crash!

Handforth's right drove past Gordon Gay's guard, as though it had never existed. And it seemed to the Grammarian leader that a battering-ram had struck him. He reeled back, lost his balance, and crashed to the floor.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Buck up, Gay!" gasped Frank Monk wildly.

"One—two—three—" counted the referee, in anguish.

There were anxious shouts from the ring of Grammarians.

"Get up, Gay! Get up!"

"All right, I'm not done!" panted Gordon Gay as he rose to his feet, much to the referee's relief. "I didn't see that one coming—"

"Or this one, either!" roared Handforth, leaping in again.

But Gordon Gay side-stepped neatly, and Handforth blundered on. The next moment they were at it again, and by this time Gordon Gay was grim and anxious. He knew, from the force of Handforth's blows, that the next one might well be decisive.

"Time!"

The boxers separated, and went to their "corners." Handforth was flushed and hot, but he was far from looking "done." And the bulk of the Grammarians were plainly showing their anxiety. Without doubt, Gordon Gay had nearly come a cropper during that first round. And it was a shock to his followers. They were beginning to realise now that victory for them was not absolutely positive.

Ordinarily, perhaps, Handforth might not have been able to beat the junior leader of the Grammar School. But this afternoon he was like a fellow possessed. So much depended upon his success; so much would result if he gained the day! His eyes were quicker, his senses tuned to the occasion.

And, what was more to the point, he was determined that nothing should prevent him from winning.

"Time!"

There was a difference in Gordon Gay's attitude now. He was more wary; he was not so anxious to rush in and finish the scrap on the spot.

He was feeling more respect for his adversary.

And it became clear to the excited onlookers that Gordon Gay was now boxing cleverly, sparring with consummate skill, and waiting for Handforth to tire himself out by his tornado-like rushes.

But Handforth was a difficult fellow to tire out.

Moreover, much to the Grammarians' dismay, he was not at all inclined to fall in with Gordon Gay's scheme. He was pressing the pace all the time, forcing his opponent to fight.

And that second round was undoubtedly Handforth's.

"Time!"

The third round commenced with the Grammarians watching silently—anxiously. They knew how much depended upon the result of this fight. Their care-free interest had gone now. They were filled with doubts—they were in a state of continual suspense.

But the third round was Gordon Gay's. Towards the end of it he nearly delivered a knock-out, and Handforth was jarred badly. But for the calling of time, he might easily have gone down for the count.

"Keep it up, Gay!"

"You've got him now, old man!"

"Finish him off in the next round!"

Gordon Gay was encouraged by these and similar shouts. After their leader's success in the last round the Grammarians were much more confident. But they were soon to discover that this confidence was misplaced.

"Time!"

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Handforth started off with whirlwind speed. He rushed in to the attack, swept Gordon Gay's guard aside, and got in a body punch which had dire effect.

Gordon Gay fell back a pace, and Handforth followed up his advantage.

Crash!

His left, swinging round, struck the Grammarian leader's face. Then, before he could recover, Handforth's right swung in from nowhere. It caught Gordon Gay under the chin, and down he went.

"Well, that's that!" panted Handforth triumphantly.

"One—two—three—" counted the referee.

"Get up, Gay!" shouted Frank Monk, in a fever of anxiety.

"Six—seven—eight—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jack Wootton. "Quick, Gay, old man—"

"Nine—out!" said the referee.

"Out!" went up a general roar.

Gordon Gay lifted his head, and he looked dazedly at the crowd. Handforth stood quite still, his eyes gleaming, his breath coming and going in gasps.

"You're whacked!" gasped Carboy. "Oh, my hat!"

Handforth went down on his knees and helped Gordon Gay to his feet.

"Sorry, old man!" he said, with concern. "I didn't mean to give you such a terrific swipe. But I was excited."

"Cheese it!" murmured Gordon Gay. "It was all in the scrap. Well, you've done it, Handy! You've whacked me!"

"Yes, I know!" said Handforth. "But what of it? I came here to whack you."

The Grammarians were filled with consternation. Never for a moment had they believed that their leader would be vanquished. Even Handforth was ready to admit that there was a good deal of luck in the knock-out. But the fact remained. Gordon Gay was beaten!

The Grammarians could hardly believe it.

In the blind confidence that he would win Gordon Gay had recklessly promised to write that little document!

Within three or four minutes the Grammarian leader had recovered, and he grinned ruefully at his victor.

"The fat's in the fire now, you fellows!" he said, with a grimace. "I gave Handforth my promise, and I have got to keep it!"

"You bet you have!" nodded Handforth.

"But you can't!" shouted Frank Monk. "Great Scott! You can't do it, Gay! You can't write that statement saying that we're not fit to clean the boots of the St. Jim's chaps!"

"Of course you can't!" yelled the others.

"Oh, you ass!" said Carboy. "Why did you let him knock you out?"

Gordon Gay looked round wonderingly.

"You're excited, that's what's the matter with you!" he said severely. "I gave my promise, didn't I?"

"Yes; but—"

"But nothing!" said Gordon Gay. "A promise is a promise. I'm surprised at you fellows for even suggesting that I should try to get out of it!"

"You're right, of course," admitted Frank Monk. "But it's so—so— Oh crumbs!"

Words failed him.

"Awful or not, the thing must be done," said Gordon Gay.

"I gave my word, and that's settled it. Who's got a sheet of paper?"

"Here you are!" said Handforth promptly.

Evidently, he had come prepared. He seized his jacket, and took out a plain sheet of exercise paper. And Gordon Gay produced his fountain-pen, and he went to a table.

"Now let's get this exact," he said. "I gave you my word that I would write a certain statement, didn't I?"

"You did," nodded Handforth.

"Very well; you've beaten me in a fair bout, and there's nothing more to be said," exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Tell me if this will suit you, Handforth."

He wrote rapidly, and a dead silence fell in the Common-room. At last Gordon Gay put his pen down, and handed the fatal sheet to the eager Handforth.

"There you are!" said Gordon Gay. "Mind the ink; it's still wet."

Handforth took the document and read it over.

"By George!" he muttered.

"Read it out," said Gordon Gay. "Let all the other fellows hear, so that they can know that I haven't broken my word."

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth. "Here you are, my fine Grammarian beauties! Listen to this:

"We, the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School, hereby freely admit, without prejudice, that we are not fit to clean the boots of the Shell and the Fourth of St. Jim's."

"Signed, on behalf of the Fourth Form,

"GORDON GAY, Captain."

"Satisfied?" asked Gordon Gay.
"Rather!" nodded Handforth. "You couldn't write anything else, if it comes to that. You promised to write this statement and to sign it. And I'm jolly glad to find, Gordon Gay, that you've been decent enough to keep your word. Yes, this will suit me down to the ground."

A roar went up from all the others.
"You're mad, Gay!"
"You can't let that St. Jim's waster get away with that paper!"

"Not likely!" yelled Jack Wootton. "Grab it back, somebody!"

"Yes, and let's tear it up!"
There was a rush; but Gordon Gay stood in front of Handforth, and his eyes were blazing.

"Stop!" he shouted angrily. "A promise is a promise, and you can't get away from it. Keep calm, for goodness' sake!"

His followers stopped short; and Handforth, folding the paper containing those all-important words, placed it in his pocket.

Victory was his—complete and absolute victory!

CHAPTER 8.

Not According to Programme!

HARDLY had Handforth got the folded paper into his pocket before Carboy let out a yell of fresh excitement.

"By jingo!" he shouted. "I've got it!"
"Eh?" said Frank Monk. "What have you got?"

"I can understand now," said Carboy. "I thought Gay was mad for a minute, but now I can see the wheeze. There's nothing to worry about at all!"

"Oh, isn't there?" said Lane. "How the merry dickens do you make that out?"

"It's easy!" grinned Carboy.
"Then explain, ass!" roared Harry Wootton.

"Yes, explain!" went up a chorus.
"Of course, it's rotten that Gordon Gay should have been knocked out by this silly St. Jim's fathead!" said Carboy.

"But we'll let that pass."
"Thanks!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Still, there's no need to worry about the signed document," said Carboy.

"You must be dotty!" snapped Frank Monk.

"I'm not dotty, but you are!" retorted Carboy. "Gay distinctly promised that he would write that statement and sign it. Isn't that right?"

"Yes."
"Well, he's kept his promise," grinned Carboy. "But I don't remember him saying anything about Handforth keeping the document."

"Eh? What?"
"There wasn't any promise given that Handforth would be allowed to get away with it!" chuckled Carboy. "Don't you see, you fatheads? Gay has kept his word; he's written the thing and signed it."

"My hat!" shouted Frank Monk. "Of course! We've only got to grab Handforth and tear the paper up, and everything will be all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
It was a laugh of sheer relief from all the Grammarians.

Gordon Gay himself, curiously enough, was looking rather startled.

"Hold on!" he said. "I didn't mean—"

"Look out!" roared Jack Wootton suddenly. "Hold him, you chaps! He's bunking!"

"Great Scott!"
Perhaps it had been unwise of Carboy to speak so boldly as he had done. At all events, Handforth was streaking for the door, which happened, at the moment, to be unguarded.

He was filled with sudden alarm. He, too, had been vaguely surprised at Gordon Gay's apparent willingness. But now he understood. The Grammarian leader had kept his promise; but, as Carboy had said, no undertaking had been given that Handforth should be escorted safely off the premises. The Grammarians would be well within their rights if they seized the intruder, took the paper from him, and tore it up. Gay would still have kept his promise!

But Handforth was too quick for them.

"Rats!" he roared, at the top of his voice. "Try and catch me! I've got that paper, and I'm going to stick to it!"

He tore the door open and dashed out.

"Stop him!" howled Carboy.

"My only aunt! He's escaping!" shouted Frank Monk.

"After him!"
But Handforth was already down the passage, and a moment later he tore outside into the sunshine of the quad,

and streaked across towards the gates. A number of Grammarians were pouring out after him, but luck was still against them. For Dr. Monk himself appeared from the direction of the playing-fields, and the juniors came to a halt, uncertain and dismayed.

In the meantime Handforth had reached the lane, and he was running off at full speed.

"He's gone!" panted Frank Monk despairingly.

"And your pater's watching us, so that we can't chase him," said Gordon Gay. "Well, never mind!"

"Never mind?" echoed Carboy, staring. "But—but Handforth has got that paper in his pocket!"

"I know it," said Gordon Gay. "But what's the good of crying over spilt milk?"

"It's all very well for you to take it like that, but I can guarantee that you'll have a warm time with the rest of the fellows!" said Frank Monk wrathfully.

"We never ought to have let Handforth get away! By Jove! He's done us! We're dished and diddled!"

"It's a sad world!" sighed Gordon Gay, shaking his head.

Handforth, who had not seen the figure of Dr. Monk, was at a loss to understand the absence of pursuit. But by the time he had got into the village High Street he had slackened his pace, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes.

He had won!
Even he, with all his confidence, could hardly believe it. It seemed too good to be true. Yet there could be no mistake about it. He had given Gordon Gay the knock-out,

(Continued on next page.)



Feeding Time!

Pal Up with Fatty Fowkes!

Fatty is the genial goalie of the Blue Crusaders—the famous First Division footer team. He turns the scale at sixteen stone and

you couldn't wish for a better chum. In a scrap, between the posts, or when there's a lot of grub, he's a corker. His great pals are Ben Gillingham, the bowlegged back, who never took a prize in a beauty competition, and "Tich" Harborough, the midget schoolboy winger, who plays at outside-right. You'll like Mr. Piccombe, too. He's the Crusaders' manager and is a bit of a crank. He used to be a schoolmaster, which perhaps accounts for some of his crazy ideas! Why not meet the whole jolly team this week in the "Boys' Realm"? They are featured in an amazing yarn of close-season footer and thrills abroad, entitled:



Fighting Fit!

"ULMUTZ THE TRAITOR!"

By CHARLES WENTWORTH.

The Crusaders are on tour in the tiny republic of Molavia, and they've fallen into a real red-hot revolution. There's a pile of other striking features in the "Boys' Realm." For instance, a special article called "Winning Through to the Tests!" illustrated with photographs, which deals with the West Indies' cricketers, playing this week at Lord's. There's also a gripping serial of open-air life and adventure, and a special complete test match yarn. Go along to your newsagent right away and get a copy of

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Price Twopence.

Every Wednesday.

and he had that paper in his pocket! Single-handed he had got the better of the entire Grammarian force!

When he arrived back at St. Jim's he was perspiring freely, and his face was red. As he turned through the gateway a number of shouts went up. The chums of Study No. 6 were lounging on the School House steps, and Figgins & Co. were on the watch, too, near the New House. Numbers of other fellows came running across the quad with them. In a moment Handforth was surrounded.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, inspecting the new fellow through his eyeglass. "He appears to be still whole, deah boys!"

"He hasn't been to the Grammar School!" said Figgins bluntly.

"Haven't I?" retorted Handforth. "You silly asses! I've not only been to the Grammar School, but I've succeeded!"

"Come off it!" grinned Manners, as he walked up with Tom Merry and Monty Lowther. "You can't spoof us like that, Handy!"

"I'm not trying to spoof you!" roared Handforth.

"But you must be, old man!" said Tom Merry gently.

"The Grammarians would never have allowed you to come back to St. Jim's in this condition."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "We expected you to be painted wed and green, or covahed with feathahs, or somethin' equally howwible!"

"Then I'm sorry to disappoint you!" said Handforth tartly. "It would take more than those Grammarian fat-heads to paint me red and green! If you want to know the truth, I had a fight with Gordon Gay, and I whacked him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a laugh of sheer incredulity that went up.

"Don't you believe me?" hooted Handforth.

"Sorry, old man—we don't!" said Blake.

"But it's true!"

"Look here, Handy, is this honest Injun?" asked Tom Merry sharply.

"Yes—honest Injun!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You—you really whacked Gordon Gay?" gasped Blake.

"Of course I did!"

"My only sainted aunt!" said Blake, clapping a hand to his head. "Water, somebody!"

"Weally, Handay, I congwatulate you!" said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "Bwavo, deah boy!"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "He's trying to pull our legs!"

"But he said 'honah bwight, Figgay.'"

"That's true!" admitted Figgins, with a stare. "Well, I can't understand it—that's all I can say!"

"Thank goodness for that!" retorted Handforth tartly.

"But I haven't told you half of it yet!"

"Silence for the chair!" sang out Tom Merry. "Now then, Handy, let's have the whole yarn!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Trot it out, Handy, old scout!"

"Let's have the full story!"

Handforth swelled visibly as the shouts went up and the juniors pressed closer round him. He was a fellow of importance at last! They weren't fooling him now!

And so, with much gusto, he proceeded to tell the story.

He explained how he had walked boldly into the Grammarian Common-room, and how he had challenged Gordon Gay to a fight.

"What a nerve!" said Blake wonderingly.

"You can't do much without nerve!" replied Handforth. "I challenged the boulder to a fight on novel terms. If I won, it was to be counted as a victory for St. Jim's. Well, I did win, and I've wiped out this afternoon's affair. I've raided the Grammar School single-handed, and I've won that fourth test!"

"Here, steady!" said Tom Merry, smiling. "You're a bit too hasty, old man!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Blake, I'll trouble you to hand over the reins of leadership to me! In future I'm leader of the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You drivelling dummy!" said Blake wrathfully. "What the dickens are you talking about? You may have whacked Gordon Gay, but you haven't won that fourth test! What about the document?"

"I've got it!"

"What!" went up a general roar.

"I've got it!" repeated Handforth triumphantly.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake crossly. "You haven't got it!"

"Of course he hasn't!" said Figgins. "You're not trying to tell us, Handy, are you, that Gordon Gay wrote that fatheaded statement and signed it?"

"He couldn't do anything else!" replied Handforth. "Gordon Gay is a fellow of honour, and he had to write it."

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"Bai Jove! Whatevah do you mean?"

"It's easy, Gussy," replied Handforth coolly. "Before I fought Gordon Gay I told him that the winner would expect to receive a signed document, on the lines that you know about."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Did you promise to sign a paper like that, in case you lost?"

"Yes."

"You hopeless ass!" groaned Tom. "Thank goodness you won the scrap!"

"I knew I should win it!" said Handforth. "And as I did win it, Gordon Gay wrote that paper and signed it; then he handed it over to me."

"What did he say on it?" asked half a dozen voices.

"That he and the rest of the Fourth aren't fit to clean our boots!" grinned Handforth.

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Wats!"

"That's too tall, Handy!" grinned Manners. "We don't believe it—simply because we can't! Gordon Gay would never have written a thing like that!"

"Never!" agreed Tom Merry. "Or if he did write it, he wouldn't let it be brought to us!"

Handforth laughed outright.

"That's just the point!" he grinned. "Gordon Gay wrote it because he never believed that I should get away with it. But I bolted before they could get the paper back. I was out of that Common-room like a streak. And here I am—and here's the paper!"

He thrust his hand into his jacket pocket, and produced the folded sheet of paper. There were many shouts from the crowd of juniors.

"Let's see it!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "By Jove! I'm beginning to believe that Handy is right, you chaps! And while we've got this paper we can—"

"Wait a minute!" said Blake sceptically. "Let's see the precious statement before we start crowing."

Handforth chuckled.

"You still don't believe it, eh?" he said serenely. "All right, my lad. Look at this!"

And, with a great flourish, he unfolded the paper, and held it under Blake's startled gaze.

Blake looked at it, his eyes widened a little, and then he glanced at Handforth.

"Well?" he said tartly. "What's the idea?"

"Can't you read?"

"Are you trying to be funny?" roared Blake. "How can I read, when there's nothing to read?"

Handforth looked at the paper, and then he jumped about a foot into the air. For his startled, bewildered gaze beheld a blank sheet!

CHAPTER 9.

The Explanation!

"GREAT pip!" Handforth gulped out the exclamation in a tone of choking stupefaction.

"Very funny!" said Blake sarcastically. "Very clever! Is this your idea of a joke?"

Handforth nearly collapsed. He turned the paper over and over. But it was blank on both sides. It was absolutely devoid of any writing.

"I—I can't understand it!" he gasped frantically. "It's blank! There's no writing on this piece of paper!"

"Marvellous!" said Kerr.

"They've swindled me!" said Handforth wildly. "They must have changed the paper— But that's impossible!" he added, in a startled voice. "The ink was wet when Gordon Gay handed it to me, and I let it dry! And then I put the thing in my pocket!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "They fooled you somehow, Handy. We knew, all along, that they would never write a statement like that, and hand it over to you. The age of miracles has passed!"

Handforth continued to stare at the blank sheet.

"It beats me!" he muttered, as if he could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes. "I—I'm knocked sideways!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

The juniors had no sympathy for him. It was just like the chump to think that he had got away from the Grammar School with "the goods." Gordon Gay had been knocked out in the fight, but he hadn't taken leave of his senses.

"I'm sorry, Handy, but I can't hand over the reins of leadership to you just yet!" said Blake blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a fraud!" shouted Handforth, with sudden violence. "There's something funny about this paper!"

"Rot! The paper's all right!" said Blake. "They never meant you to get away with the real one, and they must have changed it!"

"But they didn't change it!" insisted Handforth.

"Weally, Handay, you are fwightfully obstumate!" said Arthur Augustus. "If they didn't change the papah, it would have the w'itin' upon it. But the fact that this papah is blank pwoves that they must have substituted it."

"They were just having a game with you, old man," said Tom Merry gently.

Handforth's brow was wrinkled, and his eyes were burning.

"I can't understand it!" he said. "Gordon Gay gave me the paper, and I read it, while the ink was still wet. And then, as soon as it had dried, I put it in my pocket."



Handforth tore open the door of the Common-room and dashed down the passage. "My only aunt! He's escaping!" shouted Frank Monk. "After him!" "Rats!" roared Handforth. "Try and catch me!" (See Chapter 8.)

I tell you, they couldn't have changed it! It was impossible! I had it in my hands the whole time!"

"They must have taken it out of your pocket, then!"

"That's just as impossible!" replied Handforth. "Because, as soon as I put it into my pocket, I bolted. This is the very paper that Gordon Gay gave me. Great Scott! I ought to know! It's my own paper!"

"What do you mean—your own paper?"

"I had this blank sheet in my pocket, and I gave it to Gordon Gay," replied Handforth excitedly. "Can't you see? It's a sheet out of one of our exercise books!"

Tom Merry took it, and turned it over in his fingers.

"Looks like it," he admitted. "But then, most exercise books are the same."

"I know it's the sheet, because there's a bit torn off the corner," went on Handforth furiously. "I don't know how they tricked me, but they did it! Oh, the rotters!"

"But they didn't break their promise!" said Blake.

"No—and that's what makes them safe!" growled Handforth, in exasperation. "Gordon Gay only promised me that he would write and sign the paper. Well, he did that—in front of my eyes. I've been tricked right enough."

"I'm glad you admit it, old man!" said Figgins.

"What else can I do?" roared Handforth. "But, by George, I'm going to have my revenge! I'm going back to the Grammar School, and I'll get another written statement—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've escaped once, and you'd better not go there again!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "That luck won't hold twice, Handy!"

There was a commotion at the edge of the crowd, and before Handforth could answer, Langton, of the Sixth,

appeared. There was an immediate silence, for Langton was a prefect.

"Oh, there you are, Merry!" he said. "Somebody is asking for you on the telephone. Gay, of the Grammar School, I believe. You'll have to tell him not to ring up like this!"

"Thanks, Langton," said Tom Merry. "I'll buzz along to the prefects' room."

"It's like Gay's nerve to ring you up at all!" grumbled Langton. "What does he think we are—fags for you juniors?"

There were many chuckles as Tom Merry made off, and Langton went his way. Arriving in the prefects' room, Tom Merry seized the telephone, and placed the receiver to his ear.

"Hallo!" he said. "That you, Gay?"

"Oh, hallo, Tom Merry, my lad!" came Gordon Gay's cheery voice. "How goes it?"

"What's the joke?" demanded Tom.

"I rather thought you would have found it out by this time!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "Hasn't dear old Handy produced that marvellous document yet?"

"Yes, he has!"

"I hope you liked the writing on it!" said Gordon Gay sweetly.

"You silly Grammarian ass!" roared Tom. "There isn't any writing on it!"

"No?" came Gordon Gay's bland voice. "Well, I never!"

Tom Merry heard some faint yells of laughter floating along the wire—proving that a number of other Grammarians were collected round the Grammar School instrument.

"Look here, Gay!" said Tom Merry darkly. "You fooled Handforth pretty thoroughly!"

"Did I?" said Gordon Gay. "I ought to be spanked, then!"

"You tricky boulder!" said Tom wrathfully. "I don't blame you, of course, but I'd just like to know how you did it."

"How I did what?"

"Handforth swears that the paper was never changed," said Tom Merry. "How the dickens did you manage to substitute that blank sheet?"

"My dear chap, what the dickens are you talking about?" asked Gordon Gay, in wonder. "The paper wasn't changed. Handforth saw me write it, and I handed it over to him. Hasn't he told you that?"

"Yes."

"Then what are you grumbling about?"

"The paper was blank, you fathead!" shouted Tom. "It wasn't the paper that you originally gave him—"

"Yes, it was!" came Gordon Gay's chuckling voice.

"You can't kid me!"

"My dear fellow, honest Injun!" said Gordon Gay, shouting with laughter. "The paper that Handforth's produced before you is the absolute one—guaranteed in every hole!"

"What!" gasped Tom. "But there's not a line of writing—"

He was aware of more chuckles and then the wire became dead. Obviously, Gordon Gay had rung off, and Tom Merry did likewise. He went out of the prefects' room, puzzled and thoughtful.

When he got back to the others, however, his eyes were gleaming.

"Well?" went up a general shout.

"They fooled Handforth all right," said Tom. "I've just been speaking to Gordon Gay, and I think I know how they worked the stunt. No wonder Gordon Gay wrote that document so readily! No wonder Handforth wasn't chased!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Handforth.

"Why, they must have used some special ink!"

"Special ink!" gasped Handforth, as a great flood of light came to him.

"There's no other explanation," said Tom. "Gordon Gay just told me that the paper was never changed. And you say that there was writing on it when you put it into your pocket?"

"Yes, black writing, as plain as your hat!"

"Then it's perfectly obvious that Gay must have had some tricky kind of ink in his fountain-pen," said Tom Merry. "That's why he was so willing to write any old thing you wanted."

"Do you mean invisible ink?" gasped Handforth.

"Yes, a kind of invisible ink."

"But—but that sort of ink is like water."

"The ordinary kind—yes," said Tom Merry. "But this ink of Gordon Gay's must be the reverse of the usual sort."

"The reverse?"

"There's nothing new about it," said Tom Merry impatiently. "It looks just like ordinary black ink, and it dries in the usual way. But about five minutes after anything has been written with it, it all fades away to nothing."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arey. "How fwightfully remarkable!"

Handforth examined his paper again, turning it over and over helplessly.

"There's nothing on here!" he muttered. "Not even a scratch. You'd have thought that the pen would have left some marks."

"Not if Gordon Gay wrote it on a hard surface, as he was certain to have done, knowing the kind of ink he was using," replied Tom shrewdly. "A fountain-pen nib is usually smooth-running, and it wouldn't leave any scratches. So as soon as ever the ink faded away nothing was left."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"So that's how they diddle me, is it?" he said wrathfully. "The rotters! The bounders! By George, I'll get my own back for this!"

"We couldn't understand why Gordon Gay was so obliging," remarked Blake. "But now we know. Those Grammarian fatheads are cackling like the dickens, I expect!"

"Of course they're cackling!" said Figgins, with a sniff. "That's twice they've bested us in one day!"

"And all through Handforth!" said Blake, glaring.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hadn't we better bump him?" suggested Redfern.

"You silly asses!" howled Handforth, backing away.

"How was I to know? I gave Gordon Gay a good thrashing, didn't I?"

"Yes, we've got to hand it to you for that, old man," said Tom Merry, nodding. "On the whole, you didn't do so badly. It would have been miraculous if you had really got that written statement. We didn't expect it, and so we're not disappointed. Leave him alone, you chaps! He did the best he could; and he did pretty well."

But Edward Oswald Handforth was by no means satisfied.

He felt that he had been basely tricked. And it was galling to think of the Grammarians howling with laughter at the rich joke that they had brought off at his expense.

CHAPTER 10.

Handforth's Luck!

"I'M going back!"

Handforth made that statement in a calm, deliberate voice. Unfortunately, nobody took any notice of him. The juniors had broken up into groups, and they were animatedly discussing the situation.

"I'm going back!" repeated Handforth.

Still, nobody took any notice of him. He set his teeth, squared his shoulders, and walked off towards the gates. At this, Blake & Co., and one or two others, looked in his direction, and then ran after him.

"Hold on, Handy!" said Blake, catching his shoulder. "What's the idea?"

"Didn't you hear me?" demanded Handforth.

"Yes; but we took no notice," replied Blake. "What you said wasn't worth noticing."

"You silly fathead!" roared Handforth. "Lemme go! I'm going back to the Grammar School!"

"That's your delusion, old man! You're staying here!"

"Blow you!" gasped the new fellow. "Do you think I'm going to stand this treatment from those blessed Grammarians? They fooled me, and I mean to make them pay! So I'm going back, and I shall get another signed statement out of Gordon Gay. And this time I'll make sure that it's written with proper ink."

"Hold him!" said Tom Merry. "Don't let him go!"

Handforth struggled in vain.

"Wait until I'm free!" he panted. "You chaps are gated, and I'm not! Once I get away, I'll jolly well show you—"

"This afternoon," said Blake steadily, "you allowed the Grammarians to raid us. Later on this afternoon you went to the Grammar School, and you allowed those fatheads to score over us for a second time. Do you think we're going to let you make things worse? Do you think that we're going to allow the Grammarians to score a hat-trick?"

"I'm going to put this thing straight!" bawled Handforth. "They've fooled me, and I mean to get my own back!"

"It's hopeless, old man—absolutely hopeless!" said Tom Merry. "We know that you mean well, but can't you realise that if you go back to the Grammar School you'll walk into a hornets'-nest? They won't treat you gently this time, my lad! They've had their joke, and if you go there again they'll pulverise you!"

Perhaps Handforth realised the hopelessness of the situation. He ceased his struggles, and he gave a kind of groan.

"All right!" he muttered. "Lemme go, and I'll promise not to bolt!"

He was released, and most of the fellows were feeling rather sorry for him. He had meant well, but he had been victimised by the Grammarians. It would be sheer folly for him to return.

A School Yarn Worth Reading!

THE ST FRANK'S GALA!



The gala is organised by Lord Edgemore, and Claude Gore-Pearce, one of the cads in the Remove at St. Frank's, sees in it a means of getting his "own back" against the genial old peer, whom he has reason to dislike.

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"I saw the thing written, too!" he said miserably. "And look at it now! Nothing but a blank sheet of paper! Oh, my goodness! What a frost!"

"Wait a minute!" said Bernard Glyn, as he pushed forward. "Let's have a look at that paper, Handforth!"

It was handed over to him.



"Really, Handforth!" shouted Skimpole. "I must ask you to be careful——" Crash—swoosh! Backing away from the wrathful juniors, Handforth thudded into the table violently, and a bottle that Skimpole had been using fell over and emptied its contents in a flood. (See Chapter 10.)

"That must be pretty marvellous ink!" said Glyn at length. "There's not a sign of anything on here. And yet it's exactly the same sheet of paper."

"Gordon Gay admitted it!" nodded Tom Merry.

"I was just wondering, that's all," said Bernard Glyn.

"Bai Jove! What were you wonderin', deah boy?"

"I don't suppose there's anything in it, Gussy," said Glyn. "But ordinary invisible ink is blank from the start, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And it can usually be brought to vision by the application of heat," continued the schoolboy inventor. "But, as I said, that's the usual invisible ink."

"By George!" gasped Handforth, his eyes burning. "Do you think there's any chance that this ink might act in the same way?"

"I don't think it will; but there'd be no harm in trying," replied Bernard Glyn. "You see, this ink was black at first, and then it simply evaporated. The other kind of invisible ink is only invisible because it's transparent. And when you hold it before heat it scorches and comes out."

"Yes, but this might be the same!" urged Handforth.

"It might; but we mustn't hope," replied Glyn. "I expect it's evaporated completely away."

"Hold it in the sun," suggested Blake.

"That's not any good," said Glyn. "We want some real heat!"

"Come along to the Common-room, then," said Tom Merry briskly. "We can make a fire with some old newspapers. It won't take us more than a couple of minutes."

And there was an immediate rush for the School House Common-room. A wave of excitement had gripped the juniors. Old newspapers were brought, and they were set ablaze in the fireplace. The fellows crouched round, eager and anxious. Even Figgins & Co. had come across, and there was no thought of any House rivalry.

Bernard Glyn, in the fireplace, held the paper near the flames, and he kept it there until his fingers were nearly scorched. The paper began to crackle and curl.

"That ought to do it!" he said at last.

He rose to his feet and turned the paper over. But it was still utterly blank.

"Thought so!" grunted Bernard Glyn. "It's no good!"

"Try again!" said Handforth eagerly. "Perhaps you didn't hold it near enough."

"If I had held it any nearer, it would have burnt," said Glyn. "No, Handy, it's useless. I didn't think it would be any good, anyhow."

"By Jove, though!" said Tom Merry. "If only we could bring that writing up, what a victory it would be for us!"

"For me, you mean!" said Handforth.

"Well, for you, then!" smiled Tom. "Gordon Gay gave you that paper, believing that we should never be able to read it. But if we could only bring it to life again——"

"What's the good of talking like that?" broke in Blake impatiently. "The heat test is the only one that we can apply, and that has failed. Rats and blow! We can't do anything more!"

"I'm fed-up!" said Handforth disgustedly.

He took the paper from Bernard Glyn's hands, and stared at it as though it had done him an injury. Then, with an exclamation, he tossed it on to a table that stood near by.

"Really, my dear fellows, I must ask you to leave me undisturbed!" said Skimpole of the Shell, who was working at the table. "I cannot understand the meaning of all this commotion."

Skimpole, indeed, had blinked in mild disapproval at the crowd; but he had continued his task. He was cleaning something, apparently—and he was working vigorously with some old rags.

"Oh, blow you!" said Handforth, as he pursed his lips. "I was counting on that heat test! And it's fizzled out! We're done now!"

"Well, it's no good looking glum about it!" said Tom Merry. "I dare say we shall get our own back on the Grammarians one of these days. Until then we shall have to be patient."

"Yes, we shall have to be patient for a week, at least!"

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prumbled Figgins. "This is what comes of joining forces with you silly School House wasters!"

"Why, you New House fathead—"

"You School House dummy—"

"Oh, don't let's start squabbling among ourselves!" said Blake hastily. "And it's all very well to let Handforth off, just because he whacked Gordon Gay. I rather think we ought to give him another bumping."

"Hear, hear!"

And a number of juniors moved purposefully forward.

Handforth backed away, hot and indignant.

"You silly asses!" he shouted. "It's not my fault—"

"Really, Handforth!" shouted Skimpole. "I must ask you to be careful—"

Crash—swoosh!

Backing away, Handforth thudded into the table violently, and a bottle that Skimpole had been using fell over and emptied its contents in a flood.

"My dear Handforth, that was very careless of you!" protested Skimpole angrily. "You have spilt all my methylated spirit! And I would remind you that methylated spirit is not excessively cheap to buy."

"Blow your methylated spirit!" retorted Handforth. "Why the dickens can't you do these things in your study?"

"I regret that you should adopt this domineering tone," said Skimpole, blinking. "But, unfortunately, Gore raised the most unreasonable objections to my remaining in the study. I am afraid that Gore is a rough fellow."

"Bother Gore!" said Handforth. "And bother you, and your beastly methylated spirits! These silly idiots are coming for me—"

"They are!" said Harry Noble grimly. "And they're going to bump you, too!"

"Look here! Lemme alone!" gasped Handforth. "You know jolly well that those Grammarians played a trick on me— Eh? Why, what the— Hi! Look at this!"

Handforth's voice was raised in sudden excitement. He had forgotten the menacing juniors, and he leaned over the table and stared down at the useless sheet of paper that he had flung there.

"The writing!" he bellowed. "It's appearing!"

"What!" shouted Tom Merry, rushing forward.

"Look!" yelled Handforth.

An instantaneous change came over the crowd. Everybody tried to get near the table at once. The unfortunate Skimpole was bowled over, pushed to the edge of the throng, and literally trodden on as though he had been a mat.

Those nearest the table stared in amazement.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "He's right! There's the writing—just as though it had been written a minute ago!"

"Steady!" said Tom Merry. "Don't push so much, you fatheads! The paper is all wet!"

"That's nothing!" said Handforth. "That methylated spirit poured over it, and Skimpole ought to be boiled for bringing the stuff into the room!"

"My dear fathead," said Tom Merry, "can't you understand? We ought to get up a vote of thanks to Skimpole!"

"What the dickens for?"

"It's his methylated spirit that has done the trick!" said Tom Merry. "It's caused a sort of chemical action, and that invisible ink has become visible again. It's the spirit that's done it!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth blankly. "It's—it's like magic!"

He held the spirit-soaked sheet of paper in his hand. There, as clearly as it had originally appeared, Gordon Gay's handwriting was clearly visible. There was that fateful signed statement!

It was another example of Handforth's luck. By the merest accident, the "invisible" writing had been brought to life.

CHAPTER 11.

The Tables Turned!

HANDFORTH was flushed with triumph.

"Now, what about it?" he asked tensely. "Perhaps you silly idiots will believe me after this!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But weally, Handay, we believed you all the time. We were only wild because you have been twicked!"

But a good many of the juniors had had doubts regarding that document. Here was Handforth's vindication!

At the top of his voice, Blake read out the words, and the Common-room echoed with yells of laughter.

"Well, that's clear enough!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Gordon Gay, on behalf of the Fourth Form, admits that he and his followers aren't fit to clean our boots!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he's signed it, too!" said Tom. "Handy, old man, congratters!"

"Eh?"

"You've completed that fourth test!" chuckled Tom Merry. "The age of miracles hasn't gone, after all! You've raided the Grammar School single-handed, and you've brought back that confession from Gordon Gay! The man's a wonder, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove!" beamed Gussy. "I have always maintained that Handay was a bwainy chap!"

Handforth seemed to grow larger as he stood there, surrounded by the excited juniors, listening to their shouts of praise.

"I told you I'd complete all those dotty tests, didn't I?" he said serenely. "You thought you'd have me on toast—but now I've got my own back! And I'll trouble you, Jack Blake, to remember your promise! From this minute I'm leader of the Fourth!"

Blake was flabbergasted.

"But—but I was only rotting!" he protested feebly.

"I don't care whether you were rotting or not!" roared Handforth. "If it comes to that, Tom Merry was rotting! But I'm leader of the Fourth now, and if you're a sportsman, you'll admit it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're dished, Blake; and you can't get out of it!" chuckled Figgins.

"I suppose not!" said Blake ruefully. "Oh, my only sainted aunt. What's going to happen to the Form with Handy at the head of it?"

"Speak for yourself!" said Figgins coldly. "He may be leader of the School House Fourth; but if he tries any rot with the New House fellows, we'll soon put him in his place!"

"Wait a minute, though!" said Blake eagerly. "He hasn't won yet!"

"Haven't I?" snorted Handforth. "What do you mean?"

"Why, this writing will probably fade away when the methylated spirit evaporates!" said Blake quickly.

"Oh crumbs!"

"All the same, I'll admit that you have, in strict fact, done the trick," said Blake grudgingly. "But if this writing fades again, it might make a difference."

"Well, we shall soon know," said Tom Merry, as he waved the sheet of paper to and fro. "This methylated spirit is drying off quickly, and it will be gone completely in a minute or two. Not that we need worry. We've read Gordon Gay's statement, and we know it's genuine."

"Still, it'll be heaps better if it remains permanent," said Kangaroo.

There was further excitement when the last of the spirit dried off. The chemical effect was maintained! There stood the writing, black and apparently permanent. In some magical way—capable of an easy explanation by any chemist, no doubt—the spirit had brought the writing up, and there it stood.

"This is rich!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Good old Handy! We owe him a hearty vote of thanks! Who's got a frame?"

"A frame?" repeated Blake.

"Yes," said Tom. "We're going to frame this piece of paper and hang it up here in the Common-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the next time Gordon Gay comes, we'll show it to him!" grinned the Shell captain. "My hat! He'll turn absolutely green when he sees it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's more likely to have a fit!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "He only wrote that statement because he thought that it would never reach our eyesight. But now we've got it up against him! There it stands in bold writing—the admission by the Grammarians that they aren't fit to clean our boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove!" said Figgins. "This is rich, you chaps! After all, Handy is a pretty useful sort of fellow!"

"Hear, hear!"

Yelling with laughter, the juniors soon produced a frame, and the document was placed in it, and then it was hung in a bold place on the Common-room wall. Crowds of juniors gathered round, inspecting the precious legend.

In the middle of it Baggy Trimble appeared in the doorway, his little eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Clear out, Trimble!" said Blake shortly.

"But those Grammarian chaps are here!" shouted Trimble.

"What's that?" said Tom Merry, turning. "The Grammarians?"

"Yes," said Trimble. "Gordon Gay and a lot of the other chaps! They're in the quad, as bold as brass!"

It was difficult to believe, and most of the juniors went

running out. But it was perfectly true. Gordon Gay & Co. had come along in order to chip their victims. They knew that they would be perfectly safe in the old quad at St. Jim's—for Tom Merry & Co. would never dare to "go for them" in such a public spot. And the thing was all the safer because, when the Grammarians retired the Saints would not be able to follow them. For Tom Merry & Co. were gated!

"Pax, my sons!" said Gordon Gay, as the crowd appeared in the School House doorway.

"Granted, in the circumstances," said Tom Merry. "What do you wasters want?"

"We just want you to answer one question," grinned the leader of the Grammarians. "How do you like 'em done?"

"Brown!" said Carboy solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—your funny fatheads!" roared Blake.

"We're sorry about that piece of paper!" said Gordon Gay, with mock solemnity. "Did Handforth tell you that there was anything written on it?"

"Yes, he did!" said Tom Merry, who had one hand behind his back. "He said that you had written a statement!"

"Ah, me!" sighed Gordon Gay. "How sad! And now the paper's all blank!"

"That's just your little mistake, old man!" said Tom Merry sweetly. "Have a look at this!"

He suddenly withdrew his hand from behind his back and displayed, to the startled gaze of the Grammarians, the framed paper. For a few tense seconds Gordon Gay & Co. stared at it in blank dismay.

"But—but I used a special kind of invisible ink!" gasped Gordon Gay, at length.

"And we used a special kind of reproducer to make it visible again," said Tom kindly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dished and done, my lads!" yelled Blake. "We've got this paper now, and we know the truth! You Grammar School wasters aren't fit to clean our boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Never before had the Saints seen the Grammarians collapse so utterly. All their confidence deserted them; their smiles vanished; they seemed to shrivel up and grow

small as they stood there staring dazedly at the framed document.

Strange to relate, it was Gordon Gay himself who seemed the least taken aback by the way the tables had been turned.

"All right, you can crow!" he snorted, with a glare at the chortling Saints. "But you can take it from me that you won't be able to see that ink in half an hour's time! Mark my words!"

There was an incredulous yell from Tom Merry & Co.

"Rats!"

"Go home!"

"Tell us an easier one!" grinned Handforth.

Even his own followers did not seem to derive much comfort from Gordon Gay's belief, and they crawled away, too utterly dismayed and dumbfounded to answer the jeers and cat-calls that followed them.

"Of course, that ass Gay was talking out of his hat!" said Handforth confidently, as he strutted about in the quad. "I've done the fourth giddy test, and now I'm leader of the School House Fourth! Deny it if you can!"

he added, turning triumphantly to Blake.

"I don't deny it!" said Blake gruffly. "Even if the writing does the disappearing trick again, there's no getting away from the fact that you've pulled it off. Here's my fist! You're a wonder! We all laughed at you, and yet you've done the trick!"

Handforth was delighted as he shook hands.

"That's what I call a sportsman!" he said heartily. "And you needn't worry about your position as leader, either. You're welcome to it!"

"Eh?" gasped Blake. "Say it again!"

"You're welcome to it!" repeated Handforth, grinning.

All the other juniors looked at him in astonishment.

After his four weeks of strenuous battling, and after winning all those four tests, he now placed no value on the reward! But, after all, it was just like him.

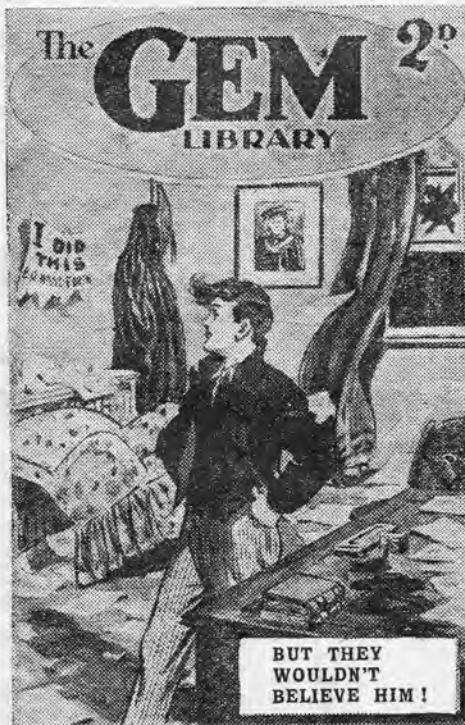
"Do—do you mean that I'm still leader?" asked Blake.

"Have you released me from my promise?"

"Yes, my son!" replied Handforth. "I've been at St. Jim's for four weeks, and I've completed my four tests! In fact, I've proved that I'm not a chap to be messed about!"

(Continued on page 28.)

"THE BOY THEY COULDN'T SACK!"



Handy is determined to get back to his chums at St. Frank's, but the big thing is—how can he wangle it?

This problem causes the one and only Handforth a great deal of anxiety.

But at last he has a brainwave.

If the Head won't let him leave St. Jim's in the ordinary way, he'll force his hand: he'll ask for the sack!

That seems to be a simple solution of the trouble, although the consequences might be painful for Handy.

But getting the "sack" from St. Jim's is more difficult than E. O. H. imagines. Not even "biffing" a prefect will do the trick. Not even checking Form-masters or prefects will bring about the desired effect.

But these are only a few of the wheezes the mighty Handforth employs. The others you'll read about—and scream about in next week's grand long complete school yarn.

ORDER YOUR COPY OF THE "GEM" TO-DAY, BOYS!

HIS FIRST COUNTY MATCH! He's missed his train—he'll miss the match—so think Dick Dare's implacable enemies. But Dick soon puts the kybosh on that little plot to stop him from playing for his county!



The LUCK of the GAME!

RICHARD RANDOLPH

A GRAND NEW CRICKET STORY, DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF A BOY WHO LOVES THE GREAT SUMMER GAME, AND IS A MASTER AT IT, TOO.

A Race Against Time!

DICK mounted the bike, and shot down the hill from the station. He arrived at Jagger's garage in record time.

He was in luck. Old Mr. Jagger, a cautious man, who would have tugged at his beard and hummed and ha'ed if told that Dick wanted to get to Birmingham within a space of time that meant high speed most of the way, was out. Stephen Jagger, his son, was in charge of the garage when Dick showed up.

Steve, though some years older than Dick, had been with him at the Grammar School for two or three terms, like Tryon, and they had always been friendly. Old Grammarians were proud of Dick.

"I'm the man for your money, Dare!" said Steve, when Dick explained how he had missed the express and wanted to get to Birmingham in time to play in the match. "I'll run out our fastest, and I'll drive you myself."

"You're a brick, Jagger! As for money, I don't know that I've enough on me to pay to-day, but—"

"Don't care if you never pay at all! Not sure that I'm going to let you, anyway. But we mustn't waste time talking."

Within three minutes they had taken the road.

"Don't talk to me," said Steve Jagger. "I'm going to put all I know into getting you there in time."

Dick obeyed the command of silence. For a few minutes he sat back and watched trees and telegraph poles and houses whirling past, as it seemed, and rejoiced in the fact that he had a chance, after all.

Then his thoughts turned to the incident at the junction which had caused him to lose the train. Suspicion of foul play grew in his mind.

He remembered that look on Blair's face, seen at the window of the carriage when he—Dick—had been tripped up by a stranger. It was just such a look as might have been worn by the face of one who sees a trick succeed.

There must have been a trick. The fellow who had called to him in the crowd at Yarnley Station, waved a telegram at him, and caused him to leave the train, was in the plot. He had searched for that man in vain.

It was not difficult to guess how the plot worked once one had the clue. Blair had brought along with him from Wickhamdene some rotter

whom he could bribe to help him in the dirty trick he meant to play. At Yarnley the confederate had slipped out at once and waited till the train was on the point of steaming out. The crowd on the platform helped him to play his game, and Dick had been left stranded.

But how did Blair know? The vacancy must have occurred suddenly. The Markshire team had been playing at Worcester, and had gone on to Birmingham thence.

It was impossible not to see in this the hand of Urwine. That the captain of the county team had disliked him from the first Dick was aware. He could not see why Urwine should have anything against him; but Urwine's manner when they met was a plain indication that he had.

Urwine must have written to Blair. He knew—Dick had gathered this from the talk of the other fellows—that Mr. Ainsley did not think as much of Blair's cricket as he did. The captain could not invite Blair to play on his own authority; but if Blair were on the ground and Dick had not turned up in time, he could risk playing Blair in the absentee's place.

If he had done what Dick thought, it was not friendship for Blair that had moved him, but enmity of Dick.

Well, Dick did not want to be at feud with his county captain. But the feud was not of Dick's making, and he was resolved that it should not drive him out of the team once he could get a place in it. And he realised fully that his chance of getting a place would be jeopardised if he missed to-day's match.

He glanced at his watch. Steve Jagger saw him take it out, gave a cheery grin, and pointed to the speedometer. Along a straight stretch of road, bare of traffic for the moment, they were doing just over sixty. Yet they had not seemed to Dick to be travelling fast.

Then ahead showed two big lorries, and Steve slowed down to thirty or so. But they were well in front of the clock.

They were not so very far behind the train that carried Blair, who doubtless was exulting in the success of his trick, to Birmingham.

For it had been Blair's trick, as Dick had guessed. But Urwine had been behind it, of course. Leonard Urwine was out to prevent young Dare playing in the Markshire team if he could.

Blair took a taxi to the ground; while Dick and Steve Jagger entered the outskirts of the great Midland city. He hurried to the pavilion, carrying his bag, when Edgbaston was reached.



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.
Driven to rebellion by the tyranny of an overbearing manager, young Dick Dare is sacked from his job in an insurance office and decides to apply at the Markshire County Cricket Club ground for a place on the staff. A born cricketer, he is engaged by Mr. Ainsley, the man who has brought Markshire to the forefront of cricketing counties, and whose life Dick had saved, a few days before. In his new job at the county ground the youngster makes two bitter enemies in Leonard Urwine and Herbert Blair, who are determined to prevent him from getting a place in the county eleven. On the morning before the match with Warwickshire, however, Dick is told to catch the Birmingham train in order to fill the place of a crooked Markshire player. As the result of a well-laid plot Dick is decoyed from the train at Yarnley station and left stranded. His only chance of getting to the Warwickshire ground at Edgbaston in time for the match is to go by car. Then Dick remembers that the porter at the station is a cyclist and he borrows his machine.

(Now read on.)



Urwine came to meet him. They spoke in low tones, not to be heard by the spectators between them and the green arena.

"He hasn't turned up, Blair!"

"No; I worked it dead right. Young fool to fall for it—but, after all, anyone might have done that. I'll tell you the details later."

"Don't mind if I never hear them. It's the fact that matters."

They passed into the pavilion together. Reggie Westland, the one amateur besides Urwine who played for the county all through the season, met them. Westland had never quarrelled with Urwine; but he did not care for him, or for Blair.

"Oh! Didn't know you were playing, Blair," he remarked, with a glance at the bag.

Both Urwine and Blair thought it unfortunate he should have noted that. Unless Blair had been wired for to play the bag was not easily accounted for. Westland knew that young Dare had been chosen to fill the vacant place, and approved of the choice.

"Blair's playing," said Urwine off-handedly. "Dare hasn't turned up."

"He's got over five minutes yet," answered Westland, "if that's all there is to it. And with Toplady out we shall need his bowling."

It was at that moment that Steve Jagger set Dick down at the gates.

"I'll go and park the bus," he said, "and then come along to see you make a hundred—or take seven or eight wickets if Warwickshire go in. Good luck, old chap!"

Dick's bag had been left in the train, of course. But that was a small trouble. He knew that the other fellows among them would manage to fit him out. With fast-beating heart he hurried to the pavilion. He was in time, thanks to Steve Jagger!

"Urwine! Hi, Urwine!" shouted Westland. "Here's Dare!"

The Markshire skipper appeared, with Blair behind him. Urwine's face was pale with chagrin, Blair's red with confusion. This was a surprise for the two plotters.

His First Big Game!

"WHAT does this mean, Dare?" snapped Urwine. "You're late!"

"I'm in time, I think," replied Dick, looking over the captain's shoulder at Blair, whose face changed from red to ashen at that look. "I got left behind at Yarnley by accident, and came on by car."

"Gad! You must have scorched, young 'un!" remarked Westland, smiling.

"We didn't waste much time," Dick answered.

Urwine could say no more. To play Blair with the man chosen to fill the vacant place on the ground was more than he dared risk, and before Westland he could not say to the colt the things he would have liked to say. He did not guess that Dick had tumbled to the plot. But Blair did!

"You'll have to hurry up, Dare," said Westland. "This way."

And he led Dick to the pros' dressing-room.

It was the sort of kindly action that came naturally to Westland, one of the best of good fellows. But, while he thought nothing of it, Urwine and Blair hated him for it, and Dick fairly loved him.

In the dressing-room Dick was given a hearty welcome. Whatever he wanted he could have. Toplady, limping from a strain, offered flannels and shirt, only a little on the big side, for Dick. Nevern had a spare pair of boots that were a perfect fit. Everyone but Balkwill seemed glad he had turned up. Balkwill took no notice of him at all.

Urwine looked in.

"You're not ready, of course, Dare? Beastly nuisance, for Calthorpe's won the toss, and it looks bad to keep them waiting. Oh, you are ready? Very well!"

It was a few minutes past twelve now. But Dick had not caused the slight delay.

Urwine, Westland, and Ferguson, an occasional player because he could not appear regularly, took the field in the wake of the white-robed umpires; and after them came the eight pro's, Balkwill, lean and dark and tall, in the lead, and Dick bringing up the rear with Peter Nevern, the grey-haired stumper, and Rayner, the young batsman of whom so much was hoped.

The crowd, already big, cheered them. The Markshire team, playing bright cricket, were popular everywhere. Dick thrilled to the sound of many voices and the clapping of many hands. He had never before played in the sight of such a throng. But he did not feel nervous.

"There's a day's work ahead of us," said Peter Nevern. "We shall be lucky if we get six or seven of their wickets down. And you're surely in for a hot day, lad."

"I don't mind," Dick answered.

He felt as though no day could be too hot or too hard for him just then.

"What are you waiting for?" Urwine snapped, a moment later.

The ball had been thrown to Armley, the slow right-hander. Peter Nevern had taken his place behind the stumps, standing with arms akimbo and looking around the enclosure. Here Markshire had played their first game as one of the big counties; and Peter, though even then no longer a young man, could never forget that match. It had meant so much to John Ainsley and to the team he had recruited.

Most of the other men had gone to their accustomed places. But it was not for Dick to take it for granted where he must field.

"To know where I'm to go, sir," he replied, with quiet civility.

"Oh, use your commonsense! You take Toplady's job in the slips. And you will bowl the next over—Mind, I want pace! It's Toplady's job you're to do at the bowling crease, too. Get me?"

"I understand."

Dick would not have minded a bit had the command been given differently, though it was rather a tall order to expect a bowler whose usual pace was medium, with an occasional really fast ball, to send down over after over of expresses. To ask it of a youngster in his first county match was grossly unfair.

Norman Kilner and "Tiger" Smith were the home county's opening pair. Armley's first over produced a single to each. They treated the slow bowler with respect, though they knew him well—or perhaps because they knew him too well.

A little buzz of interest came from the spectators as it was seen that the other bowler was the newcomer, unknown to fame.

The batsman who has had some considerable experience of county cricket seldom takes anything about a new bowler for granted. He seeks to discover what the bowler has up his sleeve. And when the new man is put on first he is wiser than ever. There must be something in him, or that would not be done.

Smith played an over of good fast bowling, and scored no more than a couple of runs. Good—that was Smith's opinion. Hardly great—there was not much variety; but at that as good as Toplady, though this boy could hardly be expected to do the amount of work that the Markshire stalwart did.

Kilner took a couple of fours off Armley. Smith faced Dick again.

But now Dick had made up his mind that there could be no harm in his trying variations of pace. Urwine must surely want to win the game. He could not have meant what he said to be taken quite literally.

So, after two of his fastest, Dick put in a slow without any change of action, as far as Smith could see, and had the veteran guessing. Smith played the ball somehow, but hardly knew how. The fourth of the over was another really fast one. That he sent to the boundary by rather a lucky snick.

The fifth was one of the medium pace deliveries that formed the staple of Dick's bowling in the ordinary way. It came less quickly off the pitch than the ball before it; and the Warwickshire man took it for another slow. He played too late, and cocked it up softly. Nevern, sprinting round the wicket, caught it easily.

The field applauded, all but Urwine. He scowled, and while Smith walked out he said to Dick:

"That was a good deal of a fluke, Dare! You had



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better realise that I mean what I say. When you've had more experience you can begin being clever; but what's needed of you now is to sling them down, after Toplady's fashion."

That command was all wrong, and Dick knew it, and believed that Urwine knew it also. But it was not for him to disobey. And Dick honestly believed that for a few overs he could bowl as fast as Toplady, and at least as well. After that—he was not so sure. He was strong, but he had hardly done growing yet, and he naturally lacked the fast bowler's matured powers of endurance.

Bowling as he would have chosen to bowl Dick might very likely have had Bates early, for Bates played a forcing game from the outset, and Dick fancied he could see holes in his defence. But nothing suits the man who is hustling the score along better than stuff, though good in length and with a genuine nip to it, that comes to him without marked variation.

Armley, though he was treated with much more respect than Dick, was taken off. Ferguson, the amateur, and then Jenyns, a medium pace left-hander, were tried at his end. But Dick was not relieved. No one was much surprised, for Urwine had a way of keeping Toplady on for long spells. But the boy was not Toplady, and, not having heard his orders given him, they did wonder that he should persevere with the fast stuff.

Dick did his best. But at lunch his analysis was one for 97. He had never been off all the time. Another wicket might have been credited to him but that Urwine, at second-slip, had dropped Bates after seeming to have the catch safely held. The total was 183 for two. Jenyns had caught Bates from a hard return, and Parsons had joined Kilner.

Dick did not enjoy his lunch. Thus far he had failed, and it was small consolation that it was not his own fault.

After lunch Armley and Ferguson bowled, and forty more runs were added without another wicket down. Warwickshire looked to be fairly on velvet.

Then came a stroke of luck for Dick. Urwine had a finger badly knocked up in trying for a catch off Ferguson's bowling. He left the field to get it attended to, and Westland took over the leadership in his absence.

"Have another shot, Dare," said Westland. "And don't keep pegging away all the time with the fast stuff. You got Smith very nicely indeed—see if you can't get Parsons or Kilner with a dodge of the same sort."

New hope came to Dick. He was not vain enough to imagine he could run through a strong batting side, but he did believe that he might get a wicket or two with a fair chance.

Urwine did not soon return. He was one of those fellows who are apt to nurse an injury, and he chanced to run against in the pavilion an old pal, a man devoted, like himself, to all forms of sport into which gambling enters, and a recent convert to the cult of dogs. The two stayed at the bar, talking of the greyhounds and the electric hare over their drinks. And the game went on without Urwine's thinking much about the course it might be taking.

Had the match been at Manchester, the applause of the crowd would have warned him that wickets were falling. But the spectators on a county ground do not yell exultation at the downfall of the homeside's cracks. A belated glance at the board showed Urwine that Warwickshire now had six down for 271. That would not have troubled him. Though he was far less keen on the victory of his side than a captain should have been, he did not want it to lose.

But he saw that Dare was bowling again, watched an over, and hurried out. The substitute—a Warwickshire man—saw him come, and went off. Urwine strode out to the middle.

He learned that all four of the wickets got down during his absence had fallen to Dick, and he inwardly cursed his own carelessness.

At the end of Jenyns' over he threw the ball to Armley. "You've had about enough of it for one day, Dare," he said. "I see you can't keep up your pace."

That was quite true. Dick really had had about enough of it. But he would have been glad to go on; and he knew, though others who heard might not, that no consideration for him prompted Urwine's action.

At call of time Warwickshire were all out for 319, and Markshire had made 40 without the loss of a wicket.

"Hands Off!"

"I GUESS I'll run back to Manchester and get my things," said Dick to Peter Nevern, a few hours after the match. "I've phoned to New Street, but they say nothing's known about my bag or suitcase. They weren't labelled, so there's no telling when they'll turn up, if ever. And I've nothing here but what I stand up in."

"Might as well, lad," answered the veteran. "I'd sooner spend Sunday in Manchester than in Brum myself; but the missus won't be expecting me back. Don't cut things too fine on Monday morning, though."

"I'll come by the early train," said Dick.

He hurried off to New Street, and happened to get a compartment to himself. When the train steamed out he was sitting back in a corner, eyes closed, half dozing, for the day had been a tiring one, as Peter had predicted.

"See here!" spoke someone in the corridor.

Dick opened his eyes at once, for it was Urwine's voice he heard.

The county captain's face was flushed, and there was a queer look about his eyes. Dick remembered some of the gossip he had heard among the staff. Urwine, it was said, though very careful at Manchester, was given to drinking pretty heavily on tour, unless Mr. Ainsley was with the team. Then, of course, he was a model of behaviour.

Urwine had been drinking more than usual that day.

It was to Blair he spoke. They had come along looking for an empty compartment, in order that they, Balkwill, and the doggy gentleman, might indulge in a comfortable game of poker.

"Oh, yes—room here," replied Blair uneasily.

"When this cub's cleared out!" snarled Urwine.

"I say, though, you can't force him to move, you know," objected Blair.

He did not want Urwine to have a row with Dick just then. Urwine was sure to put himself in the wrong while in this state. And Blair dreaded that the victim of his dirty trick of the morning might suspect something. Trouble now would be likely to increase his suspicions.

But Urwine was obstinate.

"Can't I?" he returned. "We'll see about that!"

He moved nearer to Dick. Blair followed him into the compartment.

"Chuck it!" Blair whispered. "I dare say we can find another place farther along."

"Clear out of this!" snarled Urwine, glaring at Dick.

Dick did not rise. He thrust his hands deeper into his trousers pockets.

"No, thanks! Quite all right here," he answered calmly.

"Don't you realise that you're under my orders?"

"On the field—not in the train. It's no good, Mr. Urwine. I won't let myself be bullied by anyone."

"You'll go, or—"

"Don't waste your breath! I'm not going. I shouldn't have been keen on obliging you, even if you'd asked me civilly, and I simply won't be driven!"

"You'll be put out, then!"

Dick rose quickly to his feet, and his hands came out of his pockets.

"Oh, you're going!" sneered Urwine, his voice thick and husky.

"Your mistake; I'm not!"

"Then I'll sling you out!"

"Hands off!" rapped out Dick.

But Urwine came on. He made a grab at Dick's collar, but failed to get within a foot of it. Dick did not hit him, but, seizing him by the shoulders, pushed him back.

Urwine reeled up against Blair, who caught and straightened him.

"Chuck it!" whispered Blair again. "You'll only make a beastly scandal!"

But Urwine came on, fists up.

Dick guarded a couple of rather random punches, and in doing so found himself with his back to Blair, and with Urwine between him and the door.

"Collar the young brute, Blair!" snorted Urwine.

That was too much for Dick's patience. He had not wanted to hit Urwine if he could avoid it; but now the time for punching had surely come, though he might have remained on the defensive a little longer had he been sure that Blair would not obey.

Blair had no notion of obeying, but Dick could not know that.

Urwine hit out again, and got Dick on the chin.

Dick punched hard. His fist took the county captain in the chest, and sent him staggering up against the door.

Then Blair yelled in fear, and Dick's face blanched.

The door, insecurely fastened, had flown open, and Urwine had disappeared!

L. H. Urwine—Absent!

DICK jumped for the communication cord. "Lot of use that is!" quavered Blair. "You've done it now, my fine fellow! His neck's broken, for a dead cert!"

"If it is I'm not to blame," replied Dick, shaken, but in no panic of fear. "He came for me, and I'd no choice but to defend myself."

"That be hanged for a tale! You hit him first! I can prove that—"

"And I can prove that you're a liar, Blair!"

It was Gregory Balkwill who spoke. He stood in the door that opened into the corridor.

The train was slowing down already.

Neither Dick nor Blair had known that Balkwill was

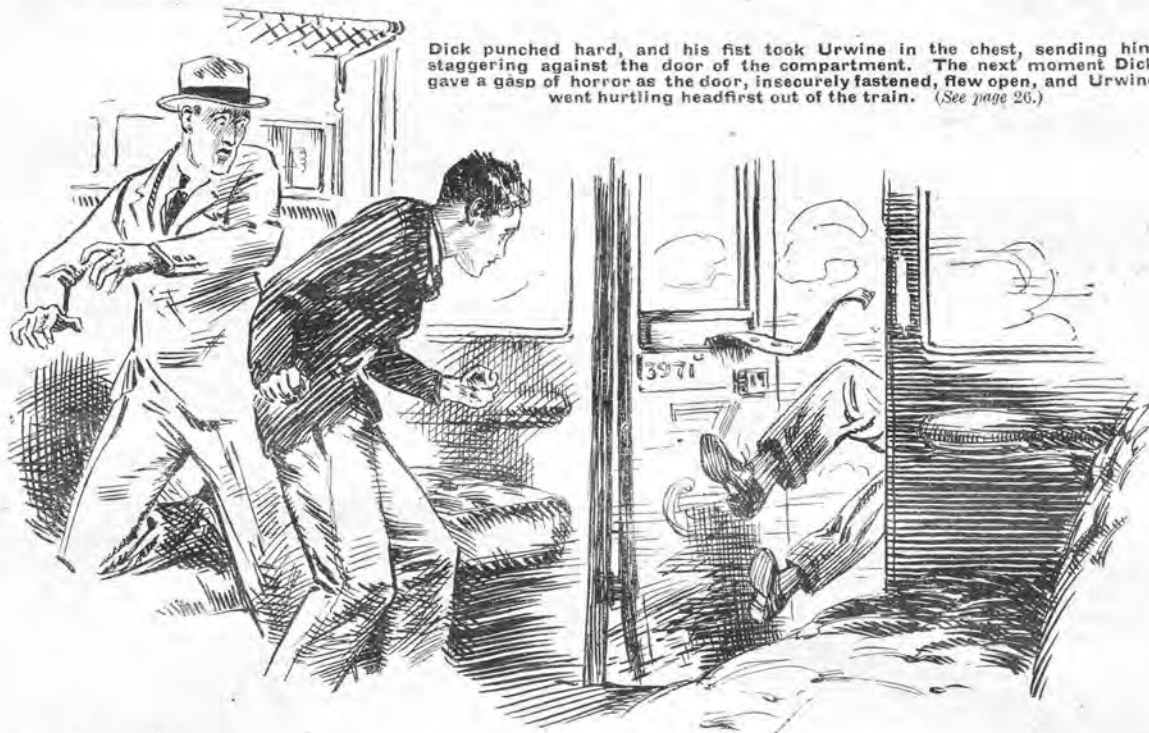
"It's bad enough, I should think!" Urwine retorted. "I'm simply a dashed mass of bruises. I shan't be fit for cricket for weeks."

Dick saw Balkwill grin sardonically. It struck him that the crack would not be the least bit sorry if that turned out to be true.

Balkwill did not even speak to Dick. He got into the compartment which he and the other two had entered at New Street, and Dick returned to that from which Urwine had wanted to oust him.

It was a big relief to know that the consequences of Urwine's fall had not been serious. But Dick could not fail to realise that he was up against something not to be taken lightly.

Blair's enmity did not trouble him. He held Blair cheap



Dick punched hard, and his fist took Urwine in the chest, sending him staggering against the door of the compartment. The next moment Dick gave a gasp of horror as the door, insecurely fastened, flew open, and Urwine went hurtling headfirst out of the train. (See page 26.)

there. Urwine had seen him, but to Urwine in his drunken rage another witness did not matter, though he might have thought otherwise had he guessed what was about to happen.

"You don't know—you didn't see—"

"Saw it all! Lucky for you that you didn't join in, Blair, for if you had I'd have been forced to, and it wouldn't have been on your side."

The train had stopped. Dick jumped out.

"You called me a liar, Balkwill!" snarled Blair.

"I didn't call you out of your name. Let that youngster alone, can't you? He's never done you any harm; but I believe you and Urwine have got it fixed between you to wreck his chance. It was a bit queer that you should bring your bag along to-day, wasn't it?"

Blair did not reply to that. He had a good excuse for silence. He followed Dick, who had already jumped out of the train and was some distance up the line.

Balkwill, without any hurry, went after them. The look on his lean, dark face as he went might have suggested to anyone who saw that he would not grieve much if Urwine's neck were broken.

But nothing at all like that had happened. At the moment when Urwine plunged out, the train had slowed to fifteen miles an hour round a curve at the top of an embankment. Urwine had struck the grassy slope of the bank, and had rolled down to the bottom.

He was shaken and bruised, quite sobered, but not much hurt. When Dick and the guard sighted him, the skipper of Markshire had already scrambled up to the top of the embankment, and was limping towards the train.

"How did this happen, sir?" asked the guard, recognising Urwine.

"Dashed carelessness on the part of some of your people at New Street!" snapped Urwine. "The door wasn't fastened, and I tumbled against it—that's all."

"Well, it's a good thing it's no worse," the guard said,

—though in that he may have been wrong. But the determined hostility of the county captain was a grave matter. Urwine, Dick knew, had little to do with choosing the team, far less than some county skippers, who have only to say that they want one man and don't want another to have their way. But Urwine could do a whole lot to grab a man in the team.

Ah, well! He had done that to-day, before this thing happened, and it was only luck that had given Dick a fair chance to prove himself. There was always the hope that luck would stand his friend.

He saw Blair get out of the train at Wickhamdene. At Marchester Balkwill helped Urwine out. The county captain limped worse than ever, and seemed badly shaken. He would hardly be fit to turn out on Monday.

Dick could not regret that. Westland would be in charge. Westland did not like the job, it was said; but there were many who thought that it would be better for the team if he took over for good.

Taking no chances, Dick was in Birmingham by ten o'clock on Monday.

When he reached Edgbaston he heard that Urwine was in bed, though there was nothing worse than shock and bruises wrong with him, and he spoke of being able to play on the third day.

Balkwill said nothing to Dick. Apparently he had said nothing to anyone else about the part the colt had played in Urwine's accident, for no one asked Dick about it.

The not outs were Westland and Rayner. They began well when the new day's play started. It was not until the score had been taken to 78 that the pro left, having made 35 in first-rate style.

Balkwill joined Westland, and these two were still together at lunch. The boards then showed 183 for one, which was certainly good enough to be going on with.

Dick had seen the order of going-in list on the Saturday. Urwine had put him down last. It was unfair, and Dick knew it. But he knew also that he must not complain. There was some justification for it in the fact that Markshire was a team without any real tail. Not a man on the side but had made runs when they were wanted at some time or other.

After lunch came a slump. Westland was out for 101, Balkwill for 61, and the next two men did nothing.

"Now then, boy, get your pads on!" said Peter Nevern to Dick.

"I shan't be wanted yet," Dick answered. "I'm No. 10, as the captain's absent."

"You're No. 8, sonny. Mr Westland altered the list. He's right. You ought to have a chance before me or Tom. Hurry up!"

With a fast beating heart, Dick hurried up, and had hardly finished buckling his pads before a yell from the crowd announced that Yeoman was out, caught in the long field.

That bat Dick carried under his arm had seen good service. His bag had not yet turned up, and the two bats he had lately bought were in that. This was a seasoned blade with which he had made more than one century at school. Perhaps it might bring him luck, he thought.

An encouraging clapping of hands greeted him. The spectators had appreciated the manner in which he had stuck to his work on Saturday, and on any big ground there is always a generous wish to see a new man do something, though he is a member of the visiting side.

Mayer and Wyatt were bowling; it was the pro, who had taken the last wicket. Dick had only one ball to play before his over was at an end, and Jenyns faced Wyatt.

"Howzat?" roared "Tiger" Smith next moment.

The umpire's hand went up. Jenyns had only just touched the ball, but he had touched it, and another wicket was down.

The second had fallen at 191. Four more had gone down with only 23 added. And against Urwine's name must be written "absent." Warwickshire looked like having a useful lead.

[Now is Dick's chance to show what he can do with the bat, and you can bet he's going to make the most of it. Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's instalment. You'll enjoy every line of it.]

Handforth's Triumph!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"And now that I've won the leadership of the School House Fourth, I'm going!" said Handforth.

"Going?" yelled the crowd.

"Going!" repeated Handforth firmly. "I'm going back to my old school—St. Frank's! Back to the good old Remove! Back to my old chums, Church and McClure!"

"I believe he means it, too!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Of course I mean it," said Edward Oswald Handforth. "I've had my month here, and I'm satisfied! St. Jim's is a jolly good school, but it can't be named in the same breath as St. Frank's!"

"You silly, fatheaded ass!" roared a dozen voices.

"Well, we won't argue!" said Handforth serenely. "I'm going to write to my pater, and I'm going to ask him to take me away. My place at St. Frank's is waiting for me, so I'm going back!"

There were many chuckles throughout the Fourth and the Shell at Handforth's surprise decision. He had completed his "rubber"—a sort of double rubber, if it came to that—and now he had made up his mind to go.

He almost changed his mind half an hour later, however, when it was seen that Gordon Gay had not been talking "out of his hat."

Once again all trace of writing on the sheet of exercise paper had vanished, and this time, in spite of the juniors' desperate efforts, it was soon evident that the famous confession had gone for ever.

But its disappearance, galling as it was to Tom Merry & Co., could not lessen the burly Fourth-Former's triumph. It had been proof enough that the fourth and last "test," had been successfully carried out.

The cheeriest fellow within the four walls of St. Jim's that evening was Edward Oswald Handforth as he pictured to himself his triumphant return as a conquering hero to St. Frank's.

But, if he had only known it, leaving St. Jim's was not going to be quite so easy!

THE END.

(Look out for the last story in this splendid series, entitled: "THE BOY THEY COULDN'T SACK!" A great yarn, this, chums, and one of Martin Clifford's very best. You can only make sure of reading it by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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