

"CHUMS OF THE BOMBAY CASTLE!"

RIPPING SCHOOL & ADVENTURE
STORY—JUST STARTING.

The

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

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**PULLING PROFESSOR
PIFFELL'S LEG!**

*A humorous incident from this week's superb school
story, featuring Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.*

HERE'S A LONG SCHOOL TALE WITH A THOUSAND LAUGHS—

The SPORTS

"Don't play football—you may be terribly injured! Keep clear of cricket—you run the risk of being killed! Never touch a boxing-glove—you may never recover from the effects of a knock-out blow!" These are some of the war-cries of Professor Phineas Piffell, the anti-sport crank. But if he thinks he's going to get any support for his doctrines from Tom Merry & Co. he's making a big mistake!

CHAPTER 1.

Piffle from Professor Piffell!

"PIFFLE!" said Blake impatiently.

He was sitting on the corner of the table in Study No. 6, and there was a frown on his face. Herries and Digby were trying to do their prep at the same table, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reclining gracefully in the easy-chair.

Outside, the wind was buffeting round the School House, and the rain could be heard pattering on the window-panes. It was an evening that made the cheerful warmth of a fire very acceptable, and practically all the inhabitants of St. Jim's were in their various studies, or in the Common-room.

"Piffle!" repeated Blake, with emphasis.

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded Arthur Augustus, opening wide his eyes. "I quite agree with you, Blake, deah boy! Utah piffle!"

Herries looked up from his work. "Cheese it, Blake!" he complained. "How the merry dickens can I do my prep with all this row going on? Can't you cut the wireless off until I've finished?"

"Rats!" said Blake unfeelingly. "I'm waiting for the vaudeville."

"Blow the vaudeville!"

"And blow your prep!" retorted Blake. "You and Dig ought to have finished long ago. Gussy and I aren't going to miss the hour of vaudeville because you fatheads are so slow with your work!"

"How can we help being slow?" roared Digby, throwing down his pen. "How can we work with this jabber going on?"

Blake grinned.

"I'll agree that it's jabber," he said. "In fact, I never heard such rot in all my giddy life!"

"Then cut it off, ass!"

"He's nearly finished," said Blake, glancing at his watch. "It's time for the vaudeville to come on!"

Herries and Digby groaned, and stuck their fingers into their ears. In the meantime, serenely indifferent to this cavalier treatment of his speech, the learned gentleman at the microphone was carrying on. His deep, resonant voice boomed out of the loud-speaker and filled Study No. 6 with sound.

"Who is this chap, anyhow?" asked Blake appealingly.

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ingly. "What authority is he on sports and games? And what does he know about British Public Schools?"

"Vewy little, judgin' fwom his talk," said D'Arcy.

"Yet he seems to think that he's an authority!" snorted Blake. "I never heard such drivel!"

"Neither have I!" said Herries, uncorking his ears. "It would be a lot better if you said nothing at all!"

"I wasn't talking about myself!" roared Blake.

"Sorry! My mistake!"

"It's this chap on the wireless!" said Blake indignantly.

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

"Of course it's piffle!" snorted Blake. "Can't we hear it's piffle?"

"Bai Jove! There is appawently a little misundastandin', deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "We all know that the man is talkin' piffle, but when I say Piffell, I mean——"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" interrupted Blake. "I want to know who the man is."

"Yaas; he's Piffell," said Gussy brightly.

"Idiot!"

"Weally, Blake——"

—FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

CRANK!

by Martin Clifford



"Then that explains it," nodded Blake. "All vegetarians are chumps!"

"Weally, Blake, I must pwo-test!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "There are quite a numbah of vegetawians who have done wondahful things in the sportin' world. Vegetawians have pwoved themselves to be as athletic as weal human bein's!"

"Oh, I see!" said Blake. "Vegetarians aren't real human beings, then?"

"Weally, Blake—"
"They must be animals!" said Digby, grinning.

"We are all animals!" retorted Gussy, with dignity.

"Yes. You're a donkey!" said Blake blandly.

"You fwightful ass!" roared Gussy. "I am twyin' to tell you that vegetawians are not necessawily namby-pamby. They hold all sorts of wunnin' and walkin' weords, and it was a vegetawian who won the amateur middle-weight catch-as-catch-can w'estlin' championship of England."

"I can't help your troubles, Gussy!" said Blake impatiently. "We're not talking

about vegetarians, either! This Professor Piffell chap is getting on my nerves!"

"Then why not cut him off?" asked Herries plaintively. "What about our nerves?"

"And what about our prep?" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Pway be good enough to turn off the loud-speakah, Blake. I don't like bein' impolite to the gentleman, but I cannot help sayin' that Pwofessor Piffell is talkin' dwivel."

But Jack Blake was stubborn.

"He's just fwishing," he said. "And then the vaudeville comes on. If these other fatheads don't like it they can go and do their prep in some other study!"

Herries and Digby gave it up, and they tried to get on with their work. Arthur Augustus relapsed into his chair and closed his eyes. And Blake grinned to himself as he listened to Professor Phineas Piffell's final words.

"I desire, above all else, to be fair," the loud-speaker was saying, to the gentle accompaniment of various atmospherics. "Nothing, however, can alter the fact that our growing youth is being maimed and deformed as a consequence of these rough games."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake.

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"Fathead!" said Blake. "What do you mean—he's piffle!"

"Pwecisely what I say!"

"Then you're off your rocker!" growled Blake. "We know that the man is talking piffle. But how can he be piffle?"

"Because he is Piffell, you uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "His name is Piffell!"

"Oh!" said Blake, with a start.

"Pwofessor Phineas Piffell, the wenowned vegetawian!"

"Oh, I see!" said Blake. "His name is Professor Piffell!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then why couldn't you say so before, you dummy?"

"Weally, Blake, I was twyin' to explain—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "You're too long-winded, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I uttally wefuse to be called long-winded!"

"Of course, I can understand now," said Blake.

"Any chap with a name like that can't help talking piffle! And you say he's a vegetarian?"

"Yaas."

"The time has come when we must rid ourselves of this cankerous evil," continued Professor Piffell stoutly. "We owe it to our sons—yes, and to our daughters—to free them from this bondage. They are not willing participants in these perilous pursuits which are crudely designated as sporting games. In nine cases out of ten the victims are the slaves of compulsion. In the majority of our Public Schools, as my listeners probably know, football and cricket are compulsory. What chance, then, has a boy to avoid these dangers?"

"Oh, dry up!" said Blake, in exasperation. "I'm blessed if he hasn't dragged footer in now!"

"I am afraid he is a cwank, deah boy," murmured D'Arcy.

"They shouldn't allow cranks to broadcast," said Blake sternly.

"Our Public Schools are in a truly dreadful condition," said Professor Piffell angrily. "Even now, I am making a tour of these famous institutions, and thus I know exactly what I am talking about!"

"Bow-wow!" said Blake.

"And I repeat—and I shall keep on repeating—that this evil must be removed!" boomed the loud-speaker. "At every school I have visited, many boys have been in the sanatorium, recovering from injuries. Rugby football and Association football are both to blame for a good deal of maiming and deformity. Even cricket cannot be exonerated. Such games as these should be prohibited by Act of Parliament."

"What does he want us to play—marbles?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"In my talk this evening I have only touched upon the fringe of the subject," concluded Professor Piffell. "In my next talk I hope to go more deeply into the matter. And I shall not rest until I have raised such an agitation throughout the length and breadth of the country that these rough games will be definitely abolished from our Public Schools."

And the loud-speaker became silent.

"Well, thank goodness!" murmured Herries, with a sigh of relief.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That man is a public danger," said Blake indignantly. "Of all the nerve! Spouting that stuff, and broadcasting it! He'll do an awful lot of harm!"

"Rats!" said Digby. "Nobody will take any notice of him!"

A tramp of feet sounded out in the passage, and a moment later the door of Study No. 6 was flung open.

"Oh, help!" groaned Herries, tearing his hair.

"What is it, my child?" asked Monty Lowther kindly.

"How can we do our prep?" hooted Herries.

"Is that a riddle?" murmured Tom Merry.

"No, it isn't!" roared Herries. "Dig and I have been trying to do our prep for the last hour. And all we hear is rot from Professor Piffell, and more rot from Gussy."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"And now you Shell chaps barge in!" snorted Herries. "What's the good of trying to work in a place like this? In a couple of minutes, Blake's going to turn on the vaudeville programme."

Blake grinned.

"It's entirely their own fault," he said, by way of explanation to Tom Merry & Co. "They didn't start their prep. until too late, and this is the result. It serves 'em right!"

"Yaas, wathah," said Gussy. "They had bettah put their pwep. away until the wireless pwogwamme is ovah!"

"And then it'll be supper-time!" hooted Digby.

"Well, we won't bother you," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "We only looked in to ask if you fellows were coming down to the Common-room."

"Not yet," said Blake. "We want to hear the vaudeville on the wireless."

"Well, why not come to the Common-room?" suggested Manners. "Glyn's been fixing up his loud-speaker, and his set is a lot better than your rotten thing."

"Ass!" said Blake coldly.

But after a moment's consideration he decided that

it would be better to go along to the Common-room. And so, a minute later, much to the relief of Herries and Digby, all the other juniors crowded out.

"Peace at last!" murmured Herries, taking a deep breath.

"Thank goodness!" said Dig, as he dipped his pen in the ink.

A crackle came from the loud-speaker.

"This is London calling!" said the announcer. "We now have an hour of variety—"

"Smash the thing up!" yelled Herries wildly.

"Keep your hair on!" grinned Digby, as he got up and crossed the study. "Just like that careless ass, Blake! He forgot to switch it off!"

They ruthlessly interrupted the B.B.C. announcer as he was giving forth the list of artists; and then they went on with their work.

In the meantime, the Junior Common-room was fairly crowded. And as the first vaudeville "turn" fell short of expectations, the wireless was turned off until something more attractive came on the bill.

"Did you fellows hear Professor Piffell giving his talk, five minutes ago?" asked Bernard Glyn, as he came away from the wireless set.

"Yes, we did," growled Blake. "And I never heard such drivel!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why do they let these people broadcast their rot?" asked Levison.

"Oh, it was very interesting," said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "The B.B.C. try to please everybody, and, on the whole, they make a good job of it. Besides, it's the order of the day to introduce controversial subjects, isn't it?"

"Which subjects?" asked Grundy.

"Oh, you wouldn't understand a long word like that, even if I explained it," said Tom blandly.

"Idiot!" frowned Grundy.

"We ought to get up a vote of thanks to the B.B.C. for entertaining us so well," said Monty Lowther. "Professor Piffell is a peach! His talk was a gem. Footer and cricket are dangerous games. Beware, my lads! In future we mustn't play anything more dangerous than hop-scotch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The British Public Schools are going to the dogs!" said Lowther sternly. "Rough games are ruining us! Look at the maimed and injured unfortunates in this very room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at the deformed creatures about us!" said the humorist of the Shell, staring straight at Arthur Augustus. "My eyesight is pained by the spectacle!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I twust you are not wefewwin' to me?" said Gussy coldly.

"Sorry, old man. I suppose you were born like it," murmured Lowther. "Just a little mistake of mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utlah ass!" said the swell of St. Jim's. He walked off, his aristocratic nose in the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Common-room soon forgot all about Professor Phineas Piffell and his entertaining talk on Public School sports.

In fact, the worthy professor passed into complete oblivion so far as St. Jim's was concerned.

But not for long!

CHAPTER 2.

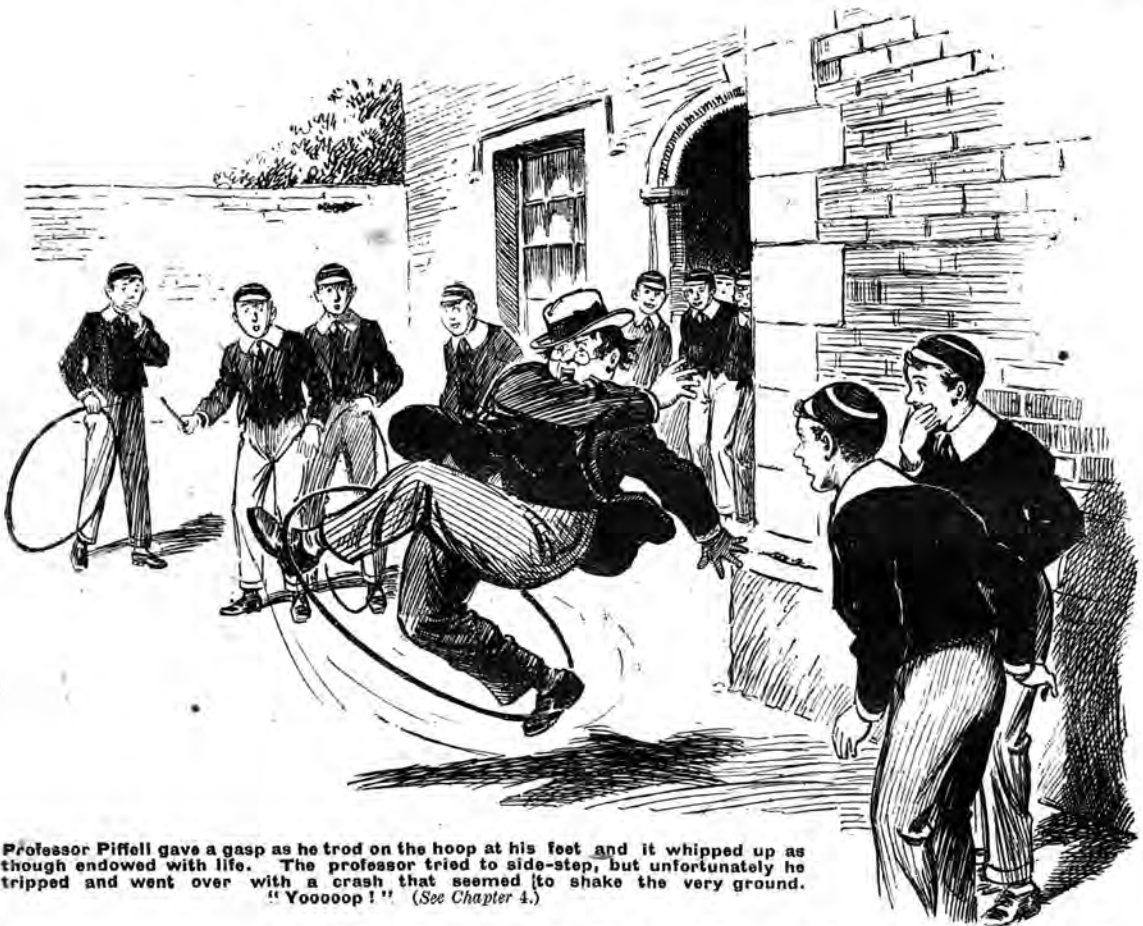
Preparing for the Visitor!

"SILENCE!"

The school resigned itself with a sigh. It was two days later, and prayers were just over in Big Hall. Dr. Holmes was on the dais, and it was apparent that he was about to make an address.

And the school prepared to listen, although it was quite convinced that the Head's words would be of no particular interest. Everybody remained in their places, mainly because they had no option.

"There is just one matter I wish to refer to before you dismiss," said the Head, removing his glasses and looking across Big Hall in a somewhat worried way.



Professor Piffell gave a gasp as he trod on the hoop at his feet and it whipped up as though endowed with life. The professor tried to side-step, but unfortunately he tripped and went over with a crash that seemed to shake the very ground. "Yoooooop!" (See Chapter 4.)

"This afternoon we shall have a visitor in the person of Professor Phineas Piffell."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"That giddy sports crank we heard on the wireless!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Silence!" said Kildare sharply.

The murmurs died away.

"Professor Phineas Piffell is, I believe, making a tour of our great Public Schools," continued the Head. "Naturally, St. Jim's is included in his itinerary, and he has intimated that he will be with us to-day. He is arriving, I think, on the early afternoon train."

The Head paused, as though hardly knowing how to continue.

"You may have heard this—ahem!—learned gentleman on the wireless an evening or two back, when he gave a talk on the—er—harmful effects of present-day school-boy sport," he went on half apologetically. "It is unnecessary for me to add that I do not agree with the professor's opinions."

"We can believe that, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The professor's a crank, sir!"

"I do not suppose that the gentleman will stay with us for long—"

"We hope not, sir!"

"But while he is here we must be courteous to him," said the Head. "I would add that I have never met the professor, and that he is not coming to the school at my invitation. He is, I believe a—ahem!—gentleman with very fixed ideas and dogmatic opinions."

And after that the school was dismissed.

Tom Merry & Co. were chuckling as they crowded out into the quad with Study No. 6 and a number of other Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows.

"Poor old Head!" said Tom Merry, grinning.

"What do you mean?" asked Blake.

"Well, he made it as clear as daylight that he doesn't want this dotty professor at St. Jim's," replied Tom.

"In a way, he was apologising to the school for having to put up with him."

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded D'Arcy. "I gathah that the Head has publicly washed his hands of the entiall affaih. Pwobably the governahs awngated the mattah, and the Head has to put up with it."

"That's about the size of it," said Blake.

Figgins & Co. of the New House joined the group.

"Pax!" said Figgins cheerily. "We want to have a chat about this Professor Phineas Piffell."

"Why?" asked Monty Lowther curiously.

"It seems to us that something ought to be done," replied Figgins. "You heard the josses' talk on the wireless, didn't you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Talk?" repeated Blake. "I didn't call it a talk. It was drivel!"

"Absolute rot, of course!" said Figgins. "Some of the New House chaps wanted to bust up our wireless set. This Professor Piffell is a public danger, and the Head seems to realise it. He warned us as plainly as possible to be prepared for squalls."

"I wouldn't quite say that," remarked Tom Merry. "The Head seems to be afraid that the professor will be ragged, and he just wanted the school to understand that he wasn't responsible for the old ass coming here."

"Exactly!" said Figgins. "Well, why shouldn't we teach him a lesson?"

"Who? The professor?"

"Yes."

"What sort of a lesson?" asked Tom Merry, with interest.

"There are many methods," said Figgins musingly. "Here we have a man, a blister on the community, who is going about preaching rubbish against our healthiest sports and games. The fellow is a danger. He's doing a lot of harm."

"Don't you believe it!" grinned Tom Merry. "There are always people who run down sports—and there

always will be. They are the only ones who'll agree with this dotty professor. Everybody else will laugh at him."

"If you throw enough mud, some is sure to stick!" said Figgins wisely. "It's bad enough for Professor Piffell to broadcast his poison, but things are a bit too thick when he dares to come to St. Jim's to ram it down our throats!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Figgins, old man, there's something in what you say," remarked Blake thoughtfully. "I didn't know that a New House ass could be so brainy."

"Idiot!"

"But what can we do?" put in Manners. "The professor will come here as the Head's guest, and it would be awfully bad form to rag him."

"Bai Jove, I am gwatified to heah you say that, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I had begun to feah that you fellows were gettin' up a wag against the pwofessor."

"That's exactly what we are thinking about, Gussy," nodded Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I cannot agwee to it."

"Bow-wow!"

"I am surprised at you," went on Gussy indignantly. "It will be the worst possible bad form to wag Pwofessor Piffell. The Head pwactically asked us to wefwain fwom any such thing."

"I believe Gussy's right," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "When you come to think of it, why did the Head tell us about Professor Piffell? It was a hint, you fellows!"

"How do you mean—a hint?" asked Blake.

"Didn't the Head disclaim all responsibility for the professor's visit?"

"Well, yes."

"And didn't he say that he thoroughly disagreed with the professor's views?"

"Of course," nodded Kerr. "He couldn't do anything else."

"There you are, then," said Tom Merry. "He was hinting to the school as plainly as he could that the professor is a crank, and that it would be a kindness to tolerate him. In other words, he asked us not to jape the old idiot."

Figgins snorted.

"And because the Head asks these unreasonable things, must we agree?" he demanded. "Have we got to toe the line tamely, and listen to the professor's rot?"

"It would be a gwaceful act on our part to wespect the Head's wishes," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Howevah, I do not intend to waste any words on the subject. If you fellows are plannin' to get up a wag, I must expwess my stwong disappwosal, and wash my hands of the entiah mattah!"

"Good!" said Blake promptly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Your hands look as if they could do with a wash, Gussy!" said Figgins. "As for the Head, we're sorry to disappoint him, but this opportunity's too good to be missed."

"Half a tick!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy's right to a certain extent."

"Bai Jove! I am glad that Tom Mewwy has a sense of the fitness of things," said Arthur Augustus, with a glare at Figgins.

"If we're going to rag the professor, we shall have to do it cautiously," said Tom, a thoughtful frown appearing on his brow. "That is to say, we mustn't interfere with him personally."

"Then how can we rag him?" demanded Figgins.

"There might be a way," replied the Shell captain slowly. "After what the Head said, it would be a bit rotten for us to pounce on the visitor and pulverise him. I agree to a rag—but let's make it brainy. No rough handling. No crudities. Let's think of something clever."

"Oh, be serious!" said Blake tartly.

"We shall wait till Doomsday for you School House duffers to think of something clever!" said Figgins, with disdain.

"You silly New House waster—"

"You frabjous School House lunatics—"

"Now then, my children!" interrupted a cheery voice.

"Things have come to a pretty pass if you St. Jim's
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chaps can't stand about in the quad without squabbling."

The juniors whirled round, and found Gordon Gay & Co., of the Rylcombe Grammar School, in their midst. There was an immediate roar.

"Grammar School cads!"

"Grab 'em!"

But Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and Carboy solemnly stood their ground and crossed their fingers.

"Pax!" grinned Frank Monk. "This is a peaceful visit."

"It's like your giddy nerve, to walk in here!" said Tom Merry. "All the same, we're glad to see you."

"Yaas, wathah!" beamed Gussy. "Welcome, deah boys!"

"We've come on an important matter," said Gordon Gay, after the greetings were over. "Have you chaps, by any chance, heard of a lunatic named Professor Phineas Piffell?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've heard of him!" said Frank Monk, grinning.

"Heard of him?" yelled Blake. "I should think we have! We heard his dotty talk on the wireless, and, as if that wasn't enough, he's coming down to St. Jim's to-day to jaw to us personally."

"That's nothing!" said Gordon Gay. "He's coming to the Grammar School first."

"What!"

"Our Head told us all about it," said Carboy gloomily. "Naturally, the professor couldn't miss an opportunity like this, so he's going to kill two birds with one stone and visit both the Grammar School and St. Jim's. And he intends to give us the doubtful pleasure of his first visit."

"And we're going to rag him!" said Frank Monk.

"Up to the neck!" added Gordon Gay cheerily.

"Bai Jove! Weally, you awful wottahs! You don't mean this," said Arthur Augustus, shocked. "Pway wemembah that the pwofessah will be a guest undah your woof!"

"That's all right, Gussy," interrupted Gordon Gay, grinning. "While the professor's under our roof, we'll be good little boys. But he won't be under our roof all the time, will he?"

"Pway wefwain fwom quibblin'!" said D'Arcy coldly.

"It's a half-holiday to-day, anyhow, and we shan't be under our roof much," continued Gordon Gay. "And the fact is, we thought we'd bury the hatchet for once and warn you fellows in advance," he added, turning to Tom Merry. "We've always been friendly enemies, but for to-day we ought to join forces."

"And do the job thoroughly!" said Frank Monk, nodding.

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry. "Have you decided on anything?"

"Yes, rather," said Frank Monk. "That's why we've buzzed along here. We want to tell you what we've planned—so that you fellows can back us up. This Professor Piffell needs a lesson, and we're going to see that he gets it!"

"Come nearer, my children!" murmured Tom Merry. "Let us put our heads together and plot this sinister conspiracy!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle firmly into his noble eye and bestowed a look of utter disdain upon the crowd of juniors.

"I uttahly disappwove of the whole biznay!" he said coldly. "Undah ordinawy cires I am pwepared to help in the waggin' of a cwank. But aftah the Head's address—"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" said Blake.

"I uttahly wefuse to dwy up!"

"Then go away and dig a hole for yourself!"

"I wefuse to dig a hole!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard you all as feahful wottahs!"

But the other juniors were serenely indifferent as to how Gussy regarded them. And many heads were put together. Levison and Cardew joined the group. And then Bernard Glyn and Talbot came along, followed by Redfern and Harry Noble and a few others.

And by the time the plot had been plotted, even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy allowed his noble features to relax into an approving smile. The rest not only smiled, but they chuckled. In fact, the quad echoed and re-echoed with their yells of laughter.

CHAPTER 3.

Hop-Scotch!

"HERE he comes!"

A warning shout went up from the roadway outside the open gates of Rylcombe Grammar School. And there was an immediate bustle.

The shout had come from Jack Blake, who was concealed behind the hedge on the other side of the road. Incidentally, Tom Merry and Figgins and a large crowd of other St. Jim's juniors were also hidden by that friendly screen.

As Tom Merry had said, they might as well be on the spot to see the fun. And there was liable to be quite a lot of fun that afternoon.

St. Jim's had felt slightly indignant because the professor was visiting the Grammar School first, but they realised that perhaps it was all for the best. The Saints would, at least, have an excellent hour's entertainment before their own turn came. But it was highly necessary for them to remain concealed.

"My sons, this is going to be a scream!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo! I thought you disapproved of it, Gussy!" murmured Blake.

"I disapproved of the suggestion that Prowfessah Piffell should be wagged," replied Arthur Augustus. "But it appears that the old cwank is not goin' to be interfeahed with. If he likes to dwaw w'ong conclusions, then it will be his own twouble!"

Blake was cautiously peering over the top of the hedge, and he grinned as he beheld the figure of a stranger walking up the lane towards the Grammar School gates. Then Blake's grin vanished, and he frowned.

"I say!" he murmured. "I suppose this really is the professor?"

"Bound to be," replied Tom Merry. "We heard the train come in five minutes ago, and it's exactly the time the professor should be here."

"But he doesn't look the part!" growled Blake. "Come and have a squint, you chaps! I was expecting to see a shrivelled-up old boy—a little whippersnapper of a fellow!"

"Well, there's no need to worry," said Figgins. "We can trust Gordon Gay & Co. to make sure before they start anything."

Many faces were peering through the hedge, and there was a great deal of curiosity over the stranger who came walking up the road. He was precisely the opposite to Blake's conception.

The man was of great bulk. He was at least six feet in height, and more than proportionately broad. To be exact, he was fat. He lumbered up the lane laboriously. He was rich in his possession of chins, for no less than three were to be observed. A mass of hair protruded from the rear of his wide-brimmed, soft hat.

"Bai Jove!" whispered D'Arcy. "A wogulah mountain!"

"Well, he only tallies with his voice," said Tom Merry. "Don't you remember what a deep, booming voice he spoke with over the wireless? This makes his crime all the worse!"

"How?"

"A man of his size ought to preach in favour of games—not against 'em!" replied Tom. "In his young days he must have been a figure of a man. We needn't hesitate to go right ahead with this rag."

"Bai Jove! I must say that I agree, deah boy!" approved D'Arcy.

"Shush, you jabbering asses!" whispered Blake.

The stranger was approaching the school gates now, and it appeared

that the Grammarians were equally uncertain as to the newcomer's identity. They, too, had been watching, and they could hardly believe that this huge man was the advocate of namby-pambyism.

Gordon Gay strolled unconcernedly out of the gateway, and then started as though he had just seen the stranger for the first time.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" he said cheerily.

"Good-afternoon, young man!" said the other, in a booming voice that all the juniors instantly recognised. "This, I believe, is Rylcombe Grammar School?"

"Yes, sir," said Gordon Gay meekly. "I—I suppose you're Professor Piffell?"

"I am!" replied the stranger. "You were expecting me, eh?"

"We've been looking forward to your arrival, sir," said Gordon Gay, in a breathless voice. "We heard your talk on the wireless, sir! Oh, what a talk, sir! We never heard such a talk as that, sir!"

Professor Phineas Piffell relaxed his severe expression.

"Ah, you liked it, did you?" he said, in some surprise.

"I am very glad to hear this! I had thought that all schoolboys were opposed to my views. It is very gratifying to find that I was mistaken!"

At this moment Jack Wootton and Carboy and two or three others came out of the gateway, skipping merrily. They were using children's skipping ropes, with gaily-coloured handles, and the effect was comic.

But Gordon Gay didn't seem to think so.

"Be careful, you fellows!" he said warningly. "Don't be so rough, Carboy! You mustn't bump into one another like that!"

It was as much as the St. Jim's fellows could do to prevent themselves from howling with laughter. The picture of half a dozen brawny Grammarians skipping like children, was too funny for words.

Professor Phineas Piffell stood quite still and stared. But never for a moment did he suspect that this recreation was being indulged in especially for his benefit.

"By my faith!" he ejaculated. "Skipping! This—this is extraordinary! I am delighted to see it! I never expected anything so gratifying!"

Gordon Gay looked surprised.

"Skipping is such good exercise, sir," he said.

"True—true!"

"And it isn't rough, either, sir," added the Grammarian.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"marian. "The fellows can get their exercise without danger of being maimed or injured."

"Excellent!" said the professor, adjusting his glasses and moving nearer to the skipping enthusiasts. "Great empires! This is very satisfactory! Am I to take it, boys, that you are adopting this form of exercise in consequence of my speeches and writings?"

The skippers stopped and looked at the great man in awe.

"Yes, sir!" they said in chorus.

"Wonderful!" beamed the professor.

"But we haven't only just started, sir," said Carboy. "Most of us have been skipping for months—years! We don't know what we should do without it."

"The awful fibber!" murmured Blake, across the road.

"Yans, wathah!" breathed Gussy. "I disapprove entirely. There is no need to tell whoppahs!"

"Rats!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Carboy's right. In the gym, skipping is a regular part of training."

"My hat! That's true!" grinned Blake. "I hadn't thought of it like that."

"Neither has the professor!" whispered Tom. "That was a great wheeze of Carboy's—because it's knocked any possible suspicions out of the old boy's mind. He thinks that the chaps have always indulged in kids' skipping."

The professor walked through the gateway, followed by the Grammarians.

"Unfortunately, I cannot spare the time for a long visit," the great man was saying. "It is my intention to look round and to make a short speech, and then I shall be compelled— But what is this? By my flag! What am I seeing?"

He was justified in being astonished.

Just inside the gateway, Harry Wootton and Tadpole and Mont Blong were playing an exciting game of marbles. They were giving all their attention to it, and seemed to be oblivious of everything else.

"Your shoot, Froggy!" said Harry Wootton tensely.

"Oui, oui!" panted the French junior. "He is ze easy shot. I get your marble, mon ami, and place him wiz ze ozzairs."

"Don't you be so jolly sure!" put in Tadpole. "I'm after that alley, anyhow."

"Non, non!" said Mont Blong. "He is mine!"

The other Grammarians gathered round, watching fascinatedly.

"Marbles!" murmured Professor Piffell, his smile of gratification spreading over his massive features. "Excellent! Splendid! I have always advocated the playing of marbles!"

"Sport without peril, sir!" said Carboy brightly.

"Exactly!" boomed the professor. "You have put it very neatly, young man! Sport without peril! Marbles is indeed an exciting game, and there is not the slightest danger of the players being injured."

"But isn't it inclined to make a chap soft, sir?" asked Frank Monk. "Skipping is all right, but—"

"There has been enough nonsense talked about softness," interrupted Professor Piffell. "Such simple games as these tend to satisfy the boyish craving for excitement without laying him open to the stark danger of deformity. On the other hand, a cruel game, such as football—"

"Football, sir?" echoed the Grammarians in horror.

"Don't you play football?" asked the professor quickly.

"Oh, sir!" said Gordon Gay, in a shocked voice. "How can you ask such a question? Boys who play football get bruises and hacks! Sometimes they're in bed for a week afterwards! Football is so rough, sir!"

"It's a barbarous game, sir—according to your own talk," said Frank Monk. "It's a game that leads to permanent injury. It's a game that makes boys into ruffians—"

"My own words!" said the professor triumphantly.

"I know, sir!"

"And they are true!" continued the professor. "Never did I dream that I should find a school in this country where football is regarded with such justified aversion. I can only conclude that your headmaster is a man of unexampled common sense."

A murmur of approval went up.

"Dr. Monk is very careful about our games, sir," said Gordon Gay gravely.

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"So I can see—so I can see," said the visitor. "Skipping—marbles! Upon my faith! I must make it my business to congratulate him personally upon his wisdom. And football, I understand, is definitely absent?"

"Oh, look!" shouted Carboy, pointing. "Look at those chaps playing hop-scotch! This is going to be exciting!"

"Hurrah!" yelled the others.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a soft echo from across the road—unheard, fortunately, by the deluded professor.

"That was cute of Carboy," grinned Blake. "They couldn't very well tell the old ass that they actually do play football here."

Blake was right. At an awkward moment Carboy had distracted the professor's attention. And now the great man was watching with increasing interest the "exciting" game of hop-scotch that was in progress a few yards away in the quad.

Certain mysterious lines and markings had been chalked on the ground, and the St. Jim's crowd enjoyed the spectacle of watching two Grammarians hopping briskly from square to square.

The thing was all the funnier because neither of the participants knew any of the rules of hop-scotch. They had thought it quite sufficient to make a few chalk marks and to hop about. It looked like the real thing, even if it wasn't.

"I have always been under the impression that hop-scotch is a game for girls," mused the professor. "I do not altogether approve of this game either, since it is apt to put an unnecessary strain upon the muscles of one leg, to the detriment of the general stance."

"Oh, we didn't think of that, sir!" said Frank anxiously. "Hi, you fellows! Stop playing hop-scotch!"

The hop-scooters paused and stared.

"What's the matter?" asked one of them.

"The professor says it's dangerous," warned Monk.

"My hat!" ejaculated the players. "Then we'll stop it at once!"

Professor Piffell seemed to expand perceptibly.

"This is the spirit I admire!" he said heartily. "I am pleased beyond measure! I will grant that hop-scotch is a harmless enough game, and my objections to it are not intense. At a pinch you may indulge in this game. But I am glad that you have voluntarily decided to abandon it."

"Are you sure that skipping doesn't hurt us, sir?" asked Gordon Gay anxiously.

"Skipping is perfectly allowable," replied Professor Piffell. "Skipping develops the muscles evenly whilst subjecting the participator to no danger. You may skip to your hearts' content, my boys."

"Hurrah!" yelled the Grammarians, with wild enthusiasm.

And Professor Phineas Piffell, still sublimely unconscious of the truth, continued his general inspection of the Grammarians. But those cheerful youths had by no means finished their great wheeze yet!

CHAPTER 4.

"Topping!"

"B A I Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy murmured that exclamation as two or three Grammarians came into sight round one of the angles of the school. They were accompanied by a metallic ringing, and they were shouting with wild excitement.

"Look out of the way, there!"

"Mind you don't get hurt!"

"Hurrah!"

There was much exaggerated cheering. The Grammarians all raised their voices, and Professor Piffell stood looking on with undisguised pleasure.

To a man of his opinions this was a charming spectacle. For these Grammarians were playing with hoops! They were metal hoops of the usual kind, and they were being propelled along. The other Grammarians scattered in all directions at their approach.

"Gangway!"

"Mind your backs, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even the Grammarians couldn't help roaring with



Delamere, the captain of the Grammar School, rubbed his eyes in wonderment as he glanced out of his study window. Gordon Gay & Co. were busy with lengths of string and tops were being spun all over the quad. Never before in the history of the school had there been such an orgy of top-spinning! (See Chapter 4.)

laughter. Playing with hoops was a new "sport" to Gordon Gay & Co., and they were somewhat erratic in their control of the things.

One hoop, in fact, escaped from its owner altogether and came unerringly across the ground towards the professor.

"Look out, sir!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Cries of horror went up. Whether that hoop had been deliberately rolled at the professor remained a question, but the majority of the fellows were not very doubtful. Thud!

Before the great man could move, the hoop—which was a big one, caught him in the middle of the waist-coat.

"Ugh!" gasped the professor.

He staggered slightly, and the hoop rattled to the ground at his feet. And in moving, the professor unfortunately trod on the hoop, and it whipped up as though endowed with life.

"By my faith!" ejaculated the professor.

He tried to side-step, but the hoop got between his feet, and the next second he tripped wildly and went over with a crash that seemed to shake the very ground. "Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the hidden St. Jim's fellows was, fortunately, drowned in the shouts of consternation which arose from the Grammarians.

There was a rush towards the professor.

"Oh, sir!" said Gordon Gay breathlessly. "Are you hurt, sir?"

"Upon my word!" puffed Professor Piffell, as he struggled laboriously to his feet. "A most unfortunate

accident! It is quite all right, boy—quite all right. I am not hurt!"

"Thank goodness, sir!"

"It is merely a proof of my contentions," boomed the professor. "As you have all seen, even hoops can be dangerous! And if playing with hoops is dangerous, what can be said of such games as football and cricket? I might have been seriously injured!"

"Throw those hoops away, you chaps!" said Frank Monk angrily.

"Yes, rather!"

"We mustn't play with hoops any more!" said Car-boy. "Hoops are nasty, risky things!"

"Mon Dieu!" breathed Mont Blong. "Ze hoop is ze hidden peril!"

"I know!" shouted Tadpole, as if struck by a brilliant idea. "Let's play tops!"

"Bravo, Tadpole!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Tops! Tops!" went up the enthusiastic cry.

"Hurrah!"

Everybody whipped tops out of their pockets, and in less than a minute the Grammarians were all busy with lengths of string. Tops were being spun all over the place.

"Ah, that is better!" said the professor approvingly. "I have no quarrel with pegtops! You may play with these harmless instruments to your hearts' content!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Never had such an orgy of top-spinning been seen at the Grammar School. Indeed, until that day, no such thing as a top had been spun within those historic walls!

Delamere, the captain of the school, rubbed his eyes in wonderment as he glanced out of his study window. But it did not take him long to realise that this was a rag. And when he beheld the figure of Professor Phineas Piffell he knew exactly why the rag was in progress.

And Delamere, like a sensible fellow, vanished abruptly from the window and made himself scarce.

"This is fine sport, sir!" said Gordon Gay, as he wound a length of string round his top.

"I am glad to hear you say it, young man!" declared Professor Piffell. "Indeed, I am altogether delighted with my visit to this school. My previous experiences have been lamentable."

"In what way, sir?"

"The majority of our great schools are in the grip of an insane fever!" replied the professor sadly. "Rugby football and Association football are undermining the health of our boys! They are games that ought not to be tolerated! They are rough, harmful, and vicious!"

"I've heard some chaps say that Soccer is a fine game, sir," replied Frank Monk.

"Do not heed such words!" warned the professor.

"Of the two varieties of football, Soccer is undoubtedly preferable. But both games are evil! At this very moment, as we stand here, many boys in various parts of the kingdom are being maimed!"

Gordon Gay shuddered.

"Horrible, sir!" he said, in a shocked voice.

"It is, indeed, horrible!" agreed Professor Piffell.

"I do not wonder that you tremble at the thought!"

"They might even be getting severe bruises, sir!" said Gordon Gay, horrified.

"Yes, and sprained ankles!" put in Carboy breathlessly.

"To say nothing of black eyes!" said Frank Monk.

"Oh, sir, think of it! In some schools the boys even fight!"

"Do you never fight here?" asked the professor.

"Fight, sir?" said Gordon Gay, in amazement. "Us?"

"No, no—of course not!" said the professor hastily.

"I can see that the boys of this school are extraordinarily peaceful."

"I should hope we are, sir!" said Frank Monk. "Why, in some schools—up at St. Jim's, for instance—they even have boxing contests! You don't approve of boxing, do you, sir?"

"I do not!" said the professor sternly.

"It's so rough!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Boxing is a demoralising sport!" frowned the professor. "It is degrading and coarsening."

"But isn't it sometimes called the noble art of self-defence, sir?" asked Carboy innocently.

The professor started.

"Why should there be any necessity for self-defence?" he demanded. "Tell me that, boy!"

"Well, in case you get attacked by hooligans, or—"

"Enough!" boomed the professor. "In a perfect community, there would be no hooligans! I am all for my country—I am a patriot! And my aim in life is to make this fair land a place of peace and contentment!"

"That's a wonderful ideal, sir," said Gordon Gay approvingly. "I suppose boxing and football and such sports are doing a lot of harm?"

"Incalculable harm!" said Professor Piffell. "Sports of that description are producing a generation of ruffians!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Not ordinary ruffians, of course," proceeded the great man. "Outwardly, they appear to be gentlemanly, and they come of good families. But all their instincts are trained towards violence. Violence in the boxing-ring—violence on the playing fields—violence in every phase of their recreation. It is high time that a great movement was started to combat this evil."

There was no doubt that Professor Piffell was in deadly earnest, and, in a way, the Grammarians pitied him. He had the wrong idea, but at least he was sincere. He really thought that he was preaching a sound gospel.

"My mission is to frown upon all violent sports—to condemn them!" said the professor relentlessly.

"This is the first school I have visited where such sports are not in evidence. And I cannot tell you, boys,

how pleased I am about it. Not only are these games obviously prohibited, but it is clear to me that you desire none of them."

"We're very happy here, sir," said Gordon Gay.

"I am glad!" declared the professor. "In your simple pursuits of marbles and pegtops you are content. And what is far more to the point—you are safe! That is the most important factor of all—safety!"

Whiz!

A pegtop, badly spun—which could not be wondered at, considering that the spinners were all amateurs—flew through the air, and caught Frank Monk a terrible crack on the side of the head.

"Yaroooooh!" hooted Monk, leaping into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good heavens!" gasped the professor. "What—what was that?"

"Nothing, sir!" said Gordon Gay blandly. "You were just saying that top-spinning is so safe, weren't you? Please go on, sir."

"Safe!" howled Frank Monk, rubbing his head. "I'm nearly brained!"

"A mere trifle, old man!" smiled Gordon Gay. "Be thankful that you weren't hit by a football!"

The St. Jim's crowd chuckled joyously, for they could hear every word that was being said just within the gates.

"I wathah think that Fwank Monk would have pweferred the football!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "That pegtop gave him a fweightful cwack!"

"Yow! What the— Ow! I'm hurt!" went up a yell from the Grammar School quad. "You silly ass, Tadpole!"

"Sorry!" said Tadpole. "My top got caught in the string!"

The injured Grammarian junior rubbed his elbow fondly.

"I shan't be able to write for a week!" he said ruefully. "It strikes me these pegtops are more dangerous than catapults."

"Shush, you ass!"

Gordon Gay was moving off, and it seemed to be a signal to most of the others. A whole crowd of them went scurrying away towards the playing-fields, and within a minute nobody was left with Professor Piffell except Frank Monk.

"Dear me!" said the professor. "What does this mean? Why have they all gone so precipitately?"

"Oh, they've only gone to the playing-fields, sir!" replied Frank Monk. "Perhaps you'd like to come along and see my father now?"

"Your father?"

"He's the Head, sir—Dr. Monk."

"I see—I see!" nodded Professor Piffell. "Upon my word! Now I am beginning to understand! You, as the son of the headmaster, naturally have a big influence, and so you have helped to mould the boys' lives in the correct way."

Frank Monk felt that it would be futile to explain that he was on precisely the same footing as any other Fourth-Former, and that he would have kicked badly at any other arrangement.

Besides, he had his own part to perform, and now was the moment for his cue.

"Yes, sir, they've gone to the playing-fields," he said carelessly. "It's a half-holiday to-day, and so we're playing a game of—hem—cricket."

Professor Piffell jumped.

"Cricket!" he ejaculated in horror.

"That's it, sir."

"But I understood that cricket and such games were prohibited in this school?"

"Not prohibited, sir," explained Frank. "We play c-cricket quite a lot."

"Then I am distressed," said Professor Piffell gravely. "I had hoped so much—I had believed that this school, like an oasis in the desert of folly, was consistently sensible. It is a great shock to me, my boy."

Frank Monk tried hard not to grin.

"Is cricket so wicked, then, sir?" he asked.

"It is not wicked," replied the great man. "No, I cannot say that it is wicked. But it is a rough game—a dangerous game."

"I don't think so, sir."

"Boy!" boomed the professor ferociously. "How dare you! I say that cricket is dangerous. In my

writings I have repeatedly emphasised this fact. I have obtained a complete record of serious accidents on the cricket field, and it is truly appalling."

"But nobody's ever really hurt in cricket, sir."

"Your ignorance is pitiful, young man!" snorted the professor. "In many instances boys have been killed. Yes, killed! And there are hundreds of cases of broken limbs, cracked skulls, and similar injuries. The whole game of cricket is savage. Its history is one long list of casualties."

"My only hat!" said Frank Monk blankly.

He certainly didn't feel inclined to argue the matter. He could have pointed out that no game worthy of its salt is devoid of risk. He could also have pointed out

be a weird variety of the normal game. Even Frank Monk was startled, although he had known exactly what to expect.

But the reality was too funny for words.

All the Grammarians were in Etons, while the two batsmen were not only provided with leg-guards, but they wore fencing masks over their faces, and heavy gardening gloves on their hands.

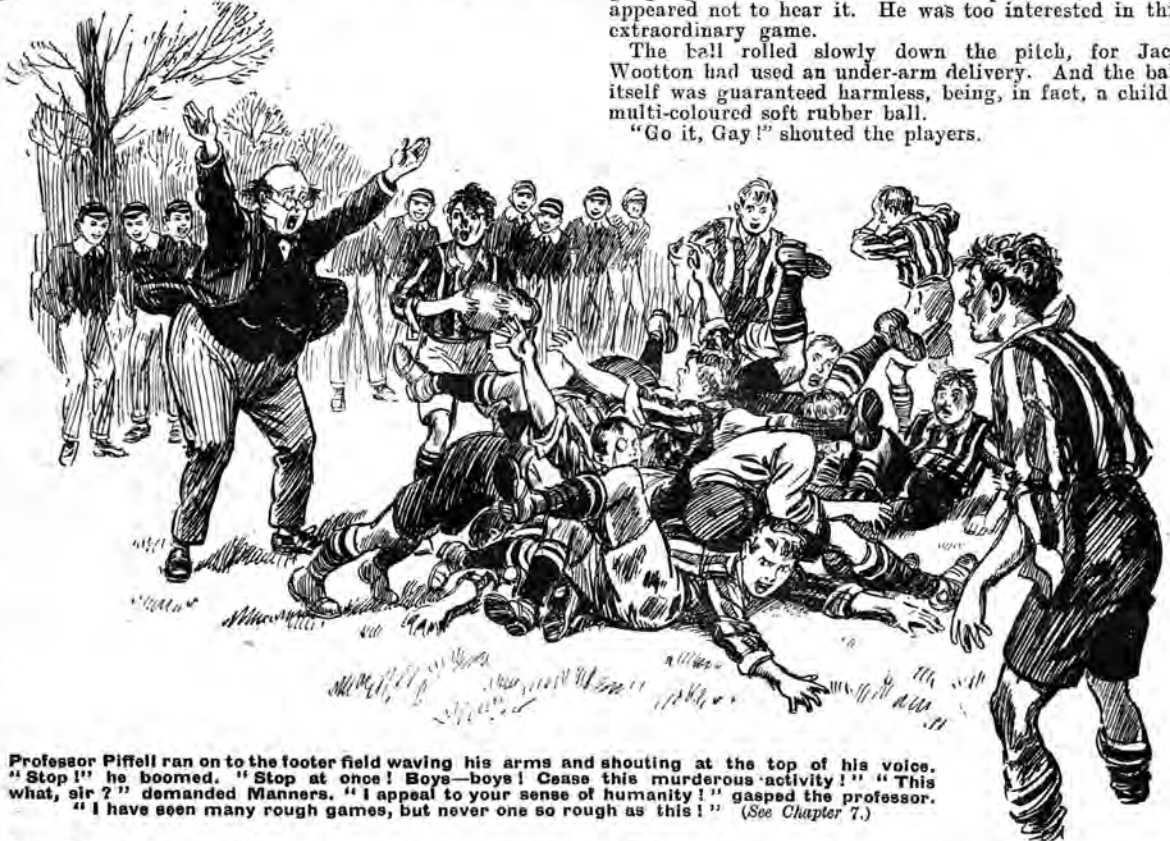
Gordon Gay was about to make a hit, and he stood ready to receive Jack Wootton's bowling. The rest of the players stood round in tense attitudes.

"Play!" sang out Jack Wootton.

He tossed the ball, and Frank Monk made a queer, gurgling sound in his throat. The professor, however, appeared not to hear it. He was too interested in this extraordinary game.

The ball rolled slowly down the pitch, for Jack Wootton had used an under-arm delivery. And the ball itself was guaranteed harmless, being, in fact, a child's multi-coloured soft rubber ball.

"Go it, Gay!" shouted the players.



Professor Piffell ran on to the footer field waving his arms and shouting at the top of his voice. "Stop!" he boomed. "Stop at once! Boys—boys! Cease this murderous activity!" "This what, sir?" demanded Manners. "I appeal to your sense of humanity!" gasped the professor. "I have seen many rough games, but never one so rough as this!" (See Chapter 7.)

that the majority of cricketing accidents are avoidable, and due to carelessness on the part of the players. But what was the use?

"Lead me to this playing-field!" shouted Professor Piffell. "I must put a stop to this game at once!"

"The fellows won't like it, sir," said Frank Monk warningly.

"It does not matter whether they like it or not!" roared the professor. "I shall reason with them, and if they resent my intervention I shall act with decisive strength."

And he strode off to the playing-fields with Frank Monk, and as far as the St. Jim's fellows were concerned the entertainment was over. But they had seen quite enough to satisfy them as to the necessity for ragging this misguided man.

And Tom Merry & Co. had their own affairs to attend to. In less than an hour Professor Phineas Piffell was due at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 5.

Something Like Cricket—But Not Much!

FRANK MONK nearly exploded.

"My sainted aunt!" he breathed.

He stood looking across the playing-fields, holding himself in with the utmost difficulty. Professor Piffell stood beside him, and most of his determination had already left him.

For cricket, at Rylcombe Grammar School, seemed to

"Hurrah!"

Thud!

Gordon Gay swiped feebly and just managed to hit the atrocity with his "bat." In reality it was a tennis racket, and its effect upon the soft ball was comical.

"Catch!" roared Carboy.

"Steady!" put in Jack Wootton, in alarm. "Don't run too hard, you chaps! I shan't send down any more fast balls if you're going to play roughly! Don't forget that you might get injured!"

The highly-coloured ball dropped to the ground, although at least three of the Grammarians could easily have caught it.

"Never mind," said Carboy cheerfully. "We haven't got him out, but we mustn't take any risks. Safety before everything!"

"Oh, rather!" echoed the others.

Frank Monk took a sidelong glance at the professor. The "cricket" match had been arranged specially for the visitor's benefit. But Frank wondered whether it could fail to arouse even that unsuspecting gentleman's suspicions.

He need not have been uneasy, however. So far from dreaming that his august leg was being pulled, it did not even strike Professor Piffell as curious that cricket should be played in winter.

"Is it so very wicked, sir?" asked the junior meekly. The professor started.

"Why, no!" he said hastily. "Frankly, my boy, I am

gratified. Cricket of this description is quite innocuous. This is the first game of such a type that I have had the pleasure of witnessing. Splendid!"

"I am glad, sir!"

"Is this the—er—invention of your father?"

"No, sir," replied Frank. "I think Gordon Gay introduced it."

"Then I must personally congratulate this boy at the first opportunity," said the professor genially. "Great empires! And I had assumed for a terrible moment that you were playing the ordinary savage form of cricket!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Frank Monk in a shocked voice.

"I must, of course, apologise for my ridiculous error," continued the professor. "My first impression of this school is now confirmed. I should very much like to see the headmaster without any further delay. It is my plain duty to congratulate him."

"This way, sir!" said Frank Monk.

He led his companion towards the school buildings, and he felt a trifle anxious as he heard sundry cackles from the distance. The Grammarians, now that the professor's back was turned, had been unable to bottle up their mirth any longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter came floating through the afternoon air. But, fortunately, Professor Piffell was too full of his own satisfaction to notice it. Or perhaps he thought that the gentle Grammarians were amused at some comical incident of the game.

"Here we are, sir!" said Frank Monk cheerfully.

They had arrived at the door of the Head's study. Frank tapped, and then thought it wise to quietly vanish.

"Come in!" said a polite voice.

Professor Piffell entered, and he found Dr. Monk awaiting him with outstretched hand.

"This is a great pleasure, Professor Piffell!" said the Head graciously. "I understood that you were already in the school, and I may say that I have been expecting you for some little time. No doubt you have been making the acquaintance of the boys."

They shook hands warmly.

"Forgive me my apparent discourtesy," apologised the professor, "but the truth is I was so fascinated by your boys, sir, that I neglected my obvious duty of seeing you immediately. Congratulations, Dr. Monk!"

"Really, I—"

"My heartiest congratulations upon your wise and wonderful conduct of this great school!" said the professor enthusiastically. "I have no hesitation in saying, sir, that you are a pioneer."

"Indeed!" said the Head, in astonishment.

"You are blazing the trail to a better and safer world of sport," continued the professor, carried away by his own eloquence. "If a few more schools will only follow your example, you will light such a torch of progress that every other establishment in the kingdom will be compelled to follow in your noble wake."

Dr. Monk felt rather helpless.

"But, really, professor, I am at a loss," he protested. "What is this—ahem!—trail that I am blazing? In what way am I a pioneer?"

"Your modesty is as great as your foresight!" boomed the professor. "Upon my word! Do you realise, sir, that this is the first school I have visited where such brutal games as football and cricket are abolished?"

"Abolished?" gasped the Head.

"This is the first school I have visited where boxing—that savage sport—is prohibited," continued the professor warmly. "I am delighted, sir, that you should have banned these harmful and degrading pastimes, and I am overjoyed that such simple pleasures as hop-scotch and skipping and top-spinning and marble playing have been substituted."

"Good gracious!" murmured Dr. Monk feebly.

He sat down in his chair and regarded Professor Phineas Piffell with wonderment. It was some moments before he realised that his visitor was actually in earnest.

And in as many seconds the headmaster of the Grammar School guessed that his boys had been gently but firmly pulling the leg of this queer old sports crank.

"Ahem! Quite so!" said Dr. Monk, with a cough.

"I—er—appreciate your very natural astonishment, professor. But, really, I think it is incumbent upon me to point out—"

"Nonsense, sir!" broke in the professor. "I have no doubt that you intend to minimise the importance of your pioneering. I shall leave this school happy, sir. I shall leave it glowing in the satisfaction of achievement, for I cannot doubt that you have been guided by my own propaganda."

"I must correct you at once, Professor Piffell," urged Dr. Monk. "You have gained a totally erroneous impression!"

"Naturally, I am reluctant to minimise your own work," said Professor Piffell; "but I am constrained, nevertheless, to assume that my well-known opinions have influenced you. This great school stands as a beacon, sir! It is the leader of the New Movement for Safety in Sport!"

"Upon my soul!" murmured Dr. Monk.

It was impossible for him to stem the flow. And, as a matter of fact, he decided that it might be a wise decision on his part to let the professor go away undecieved.

For explanations would only lead to prolonged arguments. And it was clear that Professor Piffell was a man of dogmatic opinions and violent prejudices. Any discussion with him might well lead to a heated quarrel—particularly after what had happened.

And as the professor hinted that he was prepared to leave at once, so that he could visit St. Jim's, Dr. Monk kept silent. His main desire was to get rid of this old crank as soon as possible.

As for the joke that had been played upon him, the less said about it, the better. The Head saw no reason why he should hold an inquiry. A man like Professor Piffell deserved to be made fun of by the very school-boys he thought fit to decry.

However, there was one point that needed immediate attention.

"Professor Piffell, I have no desire to detain you," said Dr. Monk truthfully. "You have already stated your intention of going at once to St. Jim's."

"Exactly," interrupted the professor. "I am going there now, and I can only hope that the boys of that great school have followed the noble example set them by their neighbours!"

"I cannot possibly answer for the condition of sports at St. Jim's," said Dr. Monk firmly. "But I must insist upon one thing, sir. You are, I believe, in the habit of broadcasting, and I think you also publish a great many treatises and pamphlets?"

"That is quite true."

"Then I must ask you, professor, to make no mention whatsoever of my school in these talks and booklets," said Dr. Monk firmly.

"I protest!" shouted Professor Piffell. "My dear sir, I had already planned to make this school the subject of my very next lecture! I had decided to write a special volume—"

"I am sorry, professor, but I cannot grant you my permission to do so," said the Head. "The—er—sport at Rylcombe Grammar School is perfectly satisfactory, and I cannot countenance any publicity. You will surely realise that such publicity would be misunderstood. This is a select school, and I cannot allow it to be brought into any controversy."

"But on the subject of sport—"

"No, Professor Piffell!" said Dr. Monk. "I definitely and distinctly forbid you to make the slightest mention of this school's name—either in the connection of sport or in any other way!"

And Professor Piffell, greatly disappointed, took his leave of Rylcombe Grammar School. Much as he was interested in the establishment, he had to confess that the place had now lost its charm, since he could make no capital out of it.

And he made his way towards St. Jim's, full of fresh hope.

In the Grammar School grounds Gordon Gay & Co. were yelling themselves hoarse over one of the most entertaining hours they could ever remember.

And now it was the turn of the juniors at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 6.

A Slight Difference of Opinion!

"THE old boy is taking his time!"

It was Jack Blake, of the Fourth who spoke. The chums of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were hanging about the old gateway at St. Jim's, and a number of other juniors were in the offing. They were all anxiously awaiting the arrival of Professor Phineas Piffell. It was high time for him to appear.

"He can't be much longer," said Tom Merry. "The Grammarians had nearly done with him when we left, and you can bet your boots that Dr. Monk would soon pitch him out. Besides, he's got his appointment with the Head."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "If the pwofessah has any sense of what is wight and w'ong, he is bound to appeah within a minute or two. It would be fwightfully bad form to keep the Head waitin'!"

"Well, everything's ready," remarked Figgins cheerily.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay & Co. got the idea of pretending to be molly-coddles, and it wasn't our bizney to criticise."

"We told them it was a good stunt," said Blake.

"It was a good stunt, too," agreed Tom. "But I rather think that we shall go one better."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I twunst that St. Jim's can always be welied upon to go one bettah than those Gwammawian boundahs!"

"Good old Gussy!" said Blake. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That top-spinning and hop-scotch rag was jolly good while it lasted," went on Tom Merry. "Plenty of fun, and plenty of spoofing. The professor had been asking for it, and the Grammarians very kindly obliged him. But we want the old boy to leave St. Jim's with a different impression."

"I'll bet he will, too!" chuckled Figgins.

"Dear men, he'll write about a dozen books on the subject!" drawled Cardew, of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If everything goes right, he'll leave St. Jim's with the certain knowledge that we're a ruffianly set of sports-loving demons," said Tom Merry, with satisfaction. "My hat! We don't want him to spread the rumour that St. Jim's is a soft school. Our scheme is to make him broadcast the yarn that we're hot stuff!"

A shout came from one of the other juniors:

"Look out! Here he comes!"

"Good egg!"

"Get ready, you chaps!" said Blake briskly. "All hands to the pumps—I mean, every man to his post!"

Most of the juniors disappeared as if by magic, leaving Blake & Co. in sole possession of the gateway. It was just the quiet hour of the afternoon—before anybody really began to think of tea. And the quad was empty, except for an odd fag or two in the distance.

"Now for it!" murmured Blake.

"Pway wait a moment, deah boy!"

"Rats! No time for waiting, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake, we must do the thing thowoughly," said Arthur Augustus. "Wemembah that I am onlay to be an onlookah."

"That's all you're fit for, Gussy!" agreed Herries.

"I regard that remark as a slight, Hewwies!" said the swell of St. Jim's coldly.

"You can regard it as any old thing you like—but show some speed, you burbling duffer!" snapped Blake. "The professor's coming up the road, and all you can do is to stand there and jabber!"

It was true that Professor Phineas Piffell had appeared at the bend of the lane; but he was still some little distance off, and there was plenty of time for the few final preparations.

The professor had recovered his spirits.

He knew that he couldn't make any mention of Rylcombe Grammar School in his future broadcast talks or pamphlets. But the professor was an optimist. He had an idea that no such ban would be placed on him with regard to St. Jim's.

And as St. Jim's was a neighbouring school—and by far the most important school of the two—it was

highly probable that the Saints would have similar sporting ideas to the Grammarians.

Indeed, to the professor's mind, it was inevitable. Both these schools were in the same district; the one a renowned Public School of the time-honoured order, and the other a more or less humble Grammar School.

"Yes," muttered the professor firmly, "I must concentrate my main attention upon St. Jim's School. I can now realise that I have been wasting my time at Dr. Monk's establishment. Nevertheless, this afternoon has been most enlightening. Yes, and most gratifying!"

His hopes with regard to St. Jim's rose higher and higher as he caught sight of the long range of picturesque buildings. He could see the School House, grey and ivy-covered and impressive; he could catch a glimpse of the New House, too, while nearer at hand were the chapel and the gym and the massive old elms.

"This is a school indeed!" exclaimed the professor.

"By my faith, what folly was mine! Why did I spend so much time at that ridiculous Grammar School? Here I shall have scope for the outlet of my eloquence!"

He noticed that two or three juniors were chatting near the gateway. He was now about a hundred yards off, and he slightly quickened his pace. He concluded that it would be a good plan to follow the same programme as at the Grammar School. Far better to mix with the boys informally before going to the Head.

Then Professor Piffell received a shock.

"Don't be such an idiot!" said one of the juniors, in a wrathful voice, as he came within hearing. "If you talk to me like that, Herries, I'll punch you on the nose!"

"Try it!" said one of the others mockingly.

Crash!

It sounded very real; but then, Blake and Herries had practised that little manoeuvre a dozen times. The startled professor hadn't the slightest doubt that Blake had punched Herries in the face.

"You silly chump!" hooted Herries, clapping a hand to his nose. "Keep your big fists to yourself, Blake!"

"Well, you shouldn't talk such drivel about football!" growled Blake. "Football's the finest game under the sun!"

"Rot!" yelled Herries. "Cricket licks it into a cocked hat!"

"Cricket?" sneered Blake. "Why, you poor donkey, there aren't any risks in cricket! It's a kid's game! How many of our chaps were injured at cricket last week, Dig?"

"I don't know!" said Digby loudly. "Was it eighteen or twenty?"

"You can't expect me to keep count!" replied Blake. "Anyhow, the number of fellows injured at cricket was so small that we needn't bother about them!"

Professor Piffell came to an abrupt halt, every nerve tingling. He could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. And he was to be excused for jumping to a totally wrong conclusion.

"Good heavens!" he murmured, aghast. "Is it possible? Twenty boys injured at cricket within one week? And—and these young lads appear to think that the number is insignificant! Appalling!"

The professor quite overlooked the fact that no definite number had been stated. Digby's inquiry might have been misleading, but under no circumstances could it have been called a statement. But then, it was intended to be misleading.

"Cricket!" went on Blake, glaring at Herries. "I don't know how you've got the nerve to stand there and talk to me about cricket! Now, football is different. It's a game for he-men!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

"You keep out of it, Gussy!" frowned Blake. "I don't know how many of our players were killed last term—"

"I do!" interrupted Herries.

"How many, then?"

"None, you ass!" said Herries, in a low voice that the listener did not catch.

"What!" roared Blake, his voice carrying about five hundred yards past the professor. "Then it proves what I say! Football is twice as good as cricket! There's more vigour in it—more danger!"

The professor gulped.

"I am inexpressibly shocked!" he panted, as he pulled himself together. "These boys talk about deaths on the football field as though they were the merest trifles! It is rather a pity that I failed to hear the actual number of fatalities. But I will soon find out!"

His jaw became grim and he strode forward.

This was a signal for Blake and Herries to fly at one another like a couple of wild tigers. They both roared at the top of their voices, and the next moment they were at it hammer and tongs. Digby cheerfully joined in, and Arthur Augustus dodged about, shouting encouragement. When Professor Phineas Piffell rushed up the battle was at its height.

"Stop!" shouted the great man. "Stop this at once! By my faith, I have never seen such an exhibition of savagery!"

"Pway stand aside, sir, until the sewap is ovah!" said Arthur Augustus, seizing the professor by the arm and pulling him back.

"Release me, boy!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Stop this at once!" thundered Professor Piffell. "I am appalled! I am startled! Have you no sense of moderation?"

Biff! Crash! Thud!

Blake and Herries and Digby were carrying on vigorously, as though the professor had no existence. By this time, in fact, the chums of Study No. 6 were rolling on the ground in an inextricable heap! Even D'Arcy was astonished at the realistic nature of this fake scrap.

"I insist upon an immediate cessation of these brutal hostilities!" shouted the professor excitedly. "Great empires! You are all in a dreadful state!"

Arthur Augustus laughed.

"Weally, sir, theah is no need for alarm," he murmured. "The fwightful boundahs are wuinin' their clobbah, I will want, but othahwise the sewap is twivial."

"Trivial!" roared the professor. "I am not concerned for their clothing, but for their own safety! They are killing one another!"

And the visitor, finding that his shouts were useless, barged right into the fight. His very weight and bulk had the necessary effect. Blake went reeling one way and Herries another. Digby was already lying on his back in the roadway.

"Here, what's the game, sir?" panted Blake.

"This—this disgraceful fight must cease!"

Professor Piffell stood there, his eyes blazing, his face stern. And as he beheld Blake & Co. he shuddered. Even Arthur Augustus gave a gasp.

Blake was a terrible sight. His collar had been wrenched almost off, his jacket was torn, and his hands and his face were smeared with a significant redness. Herries and Digby were in no better condition.

All three of them were in a dreadful state—or seemed to be. The professor could not be blamed for imagining that several pints of blood had been spilled. How was he to know that Bernard Glyn had provided Study No. 6 with a bottle of his own patent dye, guaranteed to match the precise colour of the best quality gore?

"This—is horrible—horrible!" said the professor in distress. "You have nearly killed yourselves! Fighting of this description is both savage and barbarous!"

"Fighting, sir?" repeated Blake in surprise. "We haven't been fighting!"

"What rot!" said Herries and Digby.

"This is just one of our friendly bouts!" continued Blake, grinning. "Fancy you thinking that we were fighting! What a lark, you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled D'Arcy. "I wondah how the pwofessah made such a mistake? What would he say if he saw a weal fight?"

The professor goggled.

"Do you mean to tell me that this has not been a real fight?" he demanded incredulously.

"Of course it hasn't, sir," said Blake, with perfect truth. "We haven't hurt one another a bit."

"Haven't hurt one another!" yelled the professor.

"Of course not, sir!"

"But you are injured, boy! This—this blood—"

"Nothing, sir!" said Blake carelessly. "We don't take any notice of this sort of thing at St. Jim's! We're not babies, sir!"

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Arthur Augustus suddenly jumped.

"I gathah that you have just come fwom the Gwammah School, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I have!" replied Professor Piffell.

"Ah!" said Blake significantly. "Then that explains it!"

CHAPTER 7.

Football, too!

PROFESSOR PHINEAS PIFFELL looked at Blake sharply.

"What do you mean by that remark?" he demanded.



Professor Piffell looked on with a genial smile at Gordon Gay & Co.'s weird and wonderful game of cricket. All the players were in Etons, while the two batsmen were not only provided with leg-guards, but wore fencing masks over their faces and heavy, gardening gloves on their hands. There was a shout from the players as Gordon Gay made a feeble swipe at the rubber ball with his "bat"—a tennis racket! "Go it, Gay!" "Hurrah!" (See Chapter 5.)

"About the Grammar School fellows, sir?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, they're a queer lot!" said Blake vaguely.

"Decent enough chaps, in the main, but when it comes to sport, we can whack them hollow!"

Jack Blake meant every word of this! But, as he had expected, the professor misunderstood him.

"I do not wonder at it!" said the great man sternly.

"The boys of the Grammar School are gentle and well behaved. They do not indulge in fighting and rough games."

"Ahem!" coughed Blake.

"They are setting an example to every other school in the kingdom," went on Professor Piffell earnestly.

"I am amazed—and shocked—to find that a great school like St. James' is not following the example that these Grammar School youths are so nobly setting."

"Oh, come off it, sir!" said Herries. "We don't want to be soft, like those Grammarians!"

"Rather not! We're tough, sir, at St. Jim's," said Blake, nodding. "We're tough—and we take a pride in our toughness!"

"Bah!" said Professor Piffell, striding on.

The thought had occurred to him that these four boys were not representative of the whole school. Perhaps they were a minor element. And in the hope of securing corroboration of this theory the professor strode into the quad and gazed about him with eagle eyes.

"Well, that's started the ball rolling!" murmured Blake, with a chuckle.

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "and I wathah think that you fellows ought to go indoors and tidy up. You're in a frightful condition!"

"Rats!" grinned Blake. "We want to see the fun!" And in less than a minute Blake and Herries and Digby had, by skilful use of their handkerchiefs, wiped most of the "blood" away. They fastened their collars, dusted themselves down, and then they looked surprisingly respectable. Even Gussy had to admit that they would "do."



The professor, having reached the centre of the quad, paused irresolutely. He thought perhaps it would be as well for him to go to the headmaster at once; but then he changed his mind. He heard all sorts of queer shouts, coming from the playing-fields. Raucous yells, wild cat-calls, and even shouts of pain.

The visitor was drawn towards the sounds as steel is drawn to a magnet. He had a grim suspicion that rough play was in progress, and he had a mind to see with his own eyes what manner of game this was. His very object in visiting the great Public Schools of the country was to examine at first hand the general condition of schoolboy sport.

He reached Little Side, and stood staring across the field in horrified amazement.

Apparently a game of football was in progress. It did not occur to Professor Piffell that this was uncon-

gruous. He had seen cricket at the Grammar School, and now he was seeing football at St. Jim's!

It never struck the learned gentleman that the two games were unlikely to be played on the same day.

But, as Tom Merry & Co. had expected, Professor Piffell was unsuspicious.

The playing of winter and summer games on the same afternoon did not strike him as being out of the ordinary. Which proved, incidentally, what a poor authority on sports he actually was.

"Good heavens!" gasped the professor.

He had witnessed many games of football during the tour. He had seen Rugby, he had seen Soccer, and he had always been impressed by the brutality of these degrading games. At least, Professor Piffell thought they were brutal and degrading. The players in these games, strangely enough, had been thoroughly enjoying themselves, under the apparently mistaken impression that the sport was clean and wholesome and healthy.

But never had Professor Piffell seen such a game as this!

"On the ball, you chaps!"

"Never mind the ball!" sang out Tom Merry, who came swerving towards the spot where the professor was standing. "Don't go for the ball—go for the men!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

The great George Alfred was comparatively close to the professor, and at that moment Tom Merry raced up to the burly Shell fellow and charged him.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Grundy.

He went over like a ninopin, and Tom Merry, carried forward by the very force of his charge, went over, too. Actually, it was Grundy's fault—for Grundy had collapsed rather too abruptly.

"You ass!" gasped Tom, as he rolled over and over.

"Fathead!" hissed Grundy. "Didn't you tell me to go down as soon as I was charged?"

"Yes; but not so suddenly as all that!"

"Rats!" grinned Grundy. "It's all the better!"

They picked themselves up, and the next second a swarm of other footballers came charging down upon them. They disappeared in the general melee.

Never before had such a game been played on the historic playing-fields of St. Jim's.

As a matter of fact, it wasn't a game at all. It was a spoof from start to finish, staged especially for the benefit of Professor Phineas Piffell. Nobody tried to kick the ball, and nobody made any attempt to score.

The players, for the most part, ran all over the field, swarming together in clumps. It was a mixture of Rugby and Soccer. Occasionally there would be a scrum, and then, after that, the players would sort themselves out and remember that this game was supposed to be played under Association rules.

Without the slightest warning, half a dozen juniors would charge at a single player and overwhelm him. Down he would go, howling at the top of his voice.

As a spectacle, the whole thing was appalling.

The players were an awful sight—smothered in mud from head to foot. Quite half of them were limping as they ran, as though they had been terribly injured. And they took no notice whatever of the ponderous figure of Professor Piffell. It seemed to him that he had not even been noticed. He stood there, staring, fascinated by the horror of this so-called game.

"Better buck up!" said Figgins, as he happened to come into contact with Tom Merry. "Some of the prefects might spot us at any minute—or a master. Then the whole thing will be ruined."

"Yes, we'll call a halt soon," chuckled Tom. "But there's not much risk, Figgy. We're safe for another five minutes, I expect."

A howl of anguish that made Professor Piffell shudder afresh went up from the other side of the field. Levison and Clive and one or two other Fourth-Formers were dancing madly round a junior who was sprawled on the turf.

"What's the matter over there?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Nothing much!" replied Levison. "It's only that New House ass, Kerr!"

"What's the matter with him?" roared Figgins.

"Has he broken his leg?"

"Don't be silly!" said somebody else. "Kerr wouldn't make all this fuss over a broken leg!"

This was literally true, for Kerr was kicking up a

terrific row, and had his leg really been broken, not a sound would he have made. But how was the professor to know all this?

"That's the worst of these School House chaps," said Figgins, "they can't play football properly! They only slaughter their opponents!"

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry. "We've slaughtered Kerr—and before we've done we'll slaughter the whole crowd of you!"

"This—is this is horrifying!" gasped Professor Piffell hoarsely. "Upon my faith, these boys talk of slaughter as though it were nothing! Absolutely nothing! Am I witnessing a game of schoolboy football, or is this a shambles?"

Considering that the learned gentleman had made a tour of British Public Schools, he should have known that such words as "slaughter" are commonly used by the schoolboys. Unfortunately, the professor took the term literally, and Kerr's behaviour only added to the effect.

For Kerr was crawling off the field painfully, laboriously. Occasionally he uttered moans.

"Leave him alone!" shouted Tom Merry, as one or two juniors turned towards Kerr. "We can't waste time on the injured! Let him crawl off the field by himself!"

"Ass!" said one of the others. "We were just going to kick him off!"

"Oh, I see!" said Tom.

Without the slightest compunction, Kerr was lifted, bundled towards the touchline, and then flung on to the turf like a sack of potatoes. The New House junior gave a final feeble moan, and subsided into silence.

And the game proceeded, minus Kerr.

Tom Merry & Co. were well aware that they were giving themselves a dreadful name; in the eyes of Professor Piffell they were hooligans and savages. But this was exactly what they wanted! The professor had come to St. Jim's expecting to see rough play on the sports field, and the Shell and the Fourth were kindly obliging him!

As Tom Merry had said, they would rather have a name for roughness than a name for namby-pambyism! If Professor Piffell meant to broadcast his experiences at St. Jim's, they wanted him to broadcast something full-blooded! Indeed, it would be the joke of the term if Professor Piffell "told the world" that St. Jim's was a tough, untamed school. Incidentally, it would do St. Jim's a wonderful amount of good!

For the professor would probably come out with some wild statements—absurd, exaggerated comments. Public interest would then be centred upon St. Jim's, and, finally, the truth would come out.

Everybody would know that the great man's leg had been pulled. And thereafter he would be a laughing-stock—he would be discredited, with the result that his campaign against healthy sport would be ignominiously ended.

In the opinion of the St. Jim's juniors, a man of this sort deserved to be ragged—and the fellows regarded it as a duty to start the ball rolling; the ball that would ultimately lead to the old crank's discomfiture.

Any normal individual would have seen at once that the juniors were spoofing. But Professor Phineas Piffell was not normal. And he actually believed that the unfortunate Kerr was badly injured, and probably dying.

The professor ran on to the field of play, waving his arms, and shouting at the top of his voice.

"Stop!" he boomed. "Stop at once! Boys—boys! Cease this murderous activity!"

"This what, sir?" demanded Manners, in well-feigned amazement.

"I appeal to your sense of humanity!" gasped the professor. "This—is this is appalling! You do not seem to realise the enormity of your behaviour! I have seen many rough games, but never have I seen one so rough as this!"

"We're not made of jelly at St. Jim's, sir," said Lowther blandly. "We believe in having some fun!"

"Fun!" ejaculated the professor.

"Rather, sir!" said Monty. "This is the funniest game we've played for terms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With his usual sense of humour, Monty Lowther was talking literally—and, as he had expected, Professor Piffell remained undecieved.

"It is incredible—positively incredible—that the masters of this school should allow you to play such games!" stormed the visitor indignantly.

"Well, they don't allow it, sir, as a matter of fact," said

Monty, in a grave voice. "I don't suppose they'd like it much if they could see us."

"What!"

"Fact, sir!" said Lowther. "But you'll keep mum, won't you?"

"I certainly shall not keep 'mum,' as you call it!" roared the professor excitedly. "Never, boy! I shall make it my duty to go to your headmaster at once and report to him on this outrageous hooliganism!"

"Oh, sir, don't!" pleaded Monty, while the others gathered round, grinning. "Don't say anything to the Head, sir! For one thing, he might not believe you—and for another thing, if he does believe you, he'll think that it's all a joke! I shouldn't say a word to the Head, sir!"

"Don't give us away, sir!" chorused the others.

Professor Piffell drew himself up, and his eyes were blazing.

"So!" he said triumphantly. "You boys have been transgressing the school rules, have you? You have been playing this indescribably brutal game in defiance of the regulations? Very well! I have no alternative but to go to your headmaster and put a few facts before him!"

And the great man strode off Little Side, his jaw firmly set.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter followed him, for the juniors could contain themselves no longer. But Professor Piffell merely set his teeth all the more firmly. Even now he didn't suspect a joke. He believed that these schoolboys were callous—and he felt that it was up to him to bring about a much-needed reform.

And Tom Merry & Co. nearly wept with joy when they tried to picture to themselves Professor Piffell's forthcoming interview with the Head!

CHAPTER 8.

News for the Head!

"YOU boulder, Monty!"

Tom Merry grinned as he clapped Monty Lowther on the back.

"Why these compliments?" asked Monty serenely.

"You ass! I'm not complimenting you," said Tom. "What the merry dickens do you mean by giving the game away?"

"Yaas, wathah!" put in Arthur Augustus, who had arrived on the scene with his chums-of Study No. 6. "We heard every word, Lowthah, and you distinctly told the pprofessah that the whole thing was a joke."

"But he didn't believe me," said Monty blandly. "And what else could I do, Gussey? You wouldn't have me tell him fibs, would you?"

"Gweat Scott! I twust you are above tellin' whoppahs, deah boy."

"Far, far above!" said Monty gravely. "Can't you see the halo round my head?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I did the right thing," went on Monty Lowther, turning to the others. "I told the old boy, as plainly as possible, that the whole thing was a piece of spoof. I knew he wouldn't believe me, and so it was safe. But the professor can't possibly say afterwards that we ragged him."

"I believe you're right, you deep boulder!" said Tom Merry. "The old ass can't have anything against us, can he? And if he had the sense of an earthworm, he would have spotted the jape."

"I'll bet he's got more sense than an earthworm—but not of the right quality," grinned Blake. "In his own sphere, I dare say he's brainy enough. But why do these learned professors butt in where they're not wanted? Why do they pretend to be authorities on subjects that they don't understand?"

"What is this—a riddle?" asked Monty politely.

"I believe it is!" growled Blake. "Anyhow, I can't find the answer."

And the juniors dispersed, feeling that a little tidying-up would be all to their advantage.

And at that very moment Professor Phineas Piffell was being ushered into the Head's study. Dr. Holmes, who had been expecting this visitor for an hour past, was feeling a trifle uncertain. Secretly he hoped that the professor's visit would be a brief one.

"You are, I take it Dr. Holmes?" demanded the professor, as he glared at the Head, and took no notice of the latter's welcoming hand.

"I am!" said Dr. Holmes, in some surprise.

"Then, sir, I must tell you at once that I am shocked at the way in which you allow your pupils to conduct themselves!" shouted the professor excitedly. "Yes, sir, I am shocked!"

"Really, Professor Piffell—"

"I came to St. James' School, expecting to find a rational, representative body of British boyhood," pursued the professor; "and, instead, I find a crowd of disreputable young hooligans!"

"Upon my word! I cannot allow—"

"Hear me out, sir!" thundered the visitor. "I find boys fighting like wild beasts in the open quadrangle, with blood streaming as though it were water! I find an appalling shambles in progress on the playing-field, with boys smothered in mud, and half killing each other!"

The Head gazed in sheer amazement at the professor.

"Surely there must be some mistake, Professor Piffell?" he exclaimed. "Really, sir, I cannot credit—"

"There is no mistake!" interrupted the professor. "I saw these disgraceful scenes with my own eyes!"

"Then I am quite at a loss!" said the Head coldly. "It is not the custom for boys to fight like—ahem!—wild beasts in the quadrangle. Neither is it customary for them to conduct themselves like hooligans on the playing-fields, sir!"

"Ah!" shouted the professor triumphantly. "That is just the point, Dr. Holmes! I already understand that these boys are committing these offences without your knowledge. They almost admitted as much to me. But the fact remains that such incidents are allowed to take place. And so it is perfectly obvious that the discipline in this school is lax and careless!"

Dr. Holmes became icily frigid.

"Let me point out, Professor Piffell, that you are a guest under this roof!" he said deliberately. "Let me also point out that you are presumptuous to a degree! How dare you, sir! How dare you enter my study and criticise my conduct of this school?"

The professor was rather taken aback.

"Perhaps, in my excitement, I have been unduly blunt, and, if so, I apologise!" he said hastily. "Please understand, Dr. Holmes, that I have no intention of offending you!"

"Then we will say no more, sir," said the Head quietly.

"At the same time, you must allow me to express my distinct disapproval!" went on the professor, bringing his fist down with a bang on the Head's desk. "It is a pity that your boys do not take an example from the well-behaved youths of the Rylcombe Grammar School!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir—indeed!" said the professor fiercely. "At the Grammar School the boys are exemplary in their behaviour. They have no use for such violent games as football; and fighting, I believe, is unknown amongst them!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, startled.

"You may well look surprised, Dr. Holmes!" continued the visitor. "As you doubtless know, the boys at the Grammar School amuse themselves by playing pegtops, hopscotch, and similar harmless games."

"Upon my word!" said the Head wondering. "Surely, Professor Piffell, you do not believe this? Hopscotch! Pegtops! My dear sir, you have obviously been deceived—"

"Nothing of the sort!" broke in the professor. "I saw these things with my own eyes. Yes, and when I arrived at St. Jim's I saw exactly the opposite! Boys fighting savagely in the open, with blood flowing freely—"

"I should like you to tell me the exact details," interrupted the Head, with a curiously suspicious note in his voice. "Come, professor!"

And the visitor, with much gusto, gave the Head full details of the "deadly scrap" which had been taking place at the gates.

Dr. Holmes listened grimly, nodding now and again.

"But that was nothing, sir—nothing by comparison to what I saw on the playing-fields!" continued the professor, before the Head could make any comment. "Words cannot describe my consternation when I beheld what was going on there! Boys throwing themselves over, dragging one another about like wild beasts!—Blood flowing freely! One boy, indeed, was carried from the field in a dying condition!"

"Nonsense, sir!" said the Head angrily. "Arrant nonsense!"

"Sir!" boomed Professor Piffell.

"I am amazed that you should come to me with such a story!" continued Dr. Holmes impatiently. "You have been made the victim of a practical joke, sir. There is no other possible explanation. Sport at this school is clean and healthy, and always has been. And, let me tell you, professor, I am a staunch believer in football and cricket and boxing. It does the boys good; it makes brawn and muscle. It makes men of them, sir! I have utterly no sympathy with your own teachings!"

The Head was feeling annoyed.

It was perfectly clear to him that Professor Phineas Piffell had been fooled. And the Head was very anxious

to get rid of this crank, and he was also determined to wink his eye at the practical joke that had been played. If ever a man deserved to be japed, the professor did! The Head rather sympathised with the juniors, and he had not the slightest intention of pursuing any inquiries.

"I am amazed!" said the professor hotly. "I am shocked! Are you telling me, sir, that you approve of such violent ruffianism as Rugby football?"

"At St. Jim's we play according to Association rules."

"Football is football, and one set of rules is just as bad as another!" retorted Professor Piffell excitedly. "I am astounded, sir, that you should hold these views!"

"Then I can only say that we must agree to differ!" said the Head curtly. "Sport—and plenty of it—has always figured large in the daily routine of this school, Professor Piffell! Whilst I am in authority it will continue to do so!"

"Then you are mistaken!" said the professor. "Think, sir! Pause and think! Reflect upon the harm that you are doing to these innocent youths! You are making them, every one, ruffians and hooligans!"

"On the contrary, I am doing my best to send them out into life fitted for the struggle that will be theirs," replied the Head quietly. "In a word, professor, I want to make men of them. And healthy sports are the truest road."

"Healthy sports!" shouted Professor Piffell. "Do you call football and cricket and boxing healthy sports?"

"I do, sir!"

"Then I am shocked!" said the professor. "Your boys will enter life with a warped mentality. If, on the other hand, you insisted upon such harmless games as marbles and skipping, there would be a different story to tell!"

"A very different story!" agreed the Head, nodding.

"It is these simple games which develop gentleness and modesty, sir."

"For children, such games are doubtless suitable," agreed Dr. Holmes. "But for growing boys, no! Good gracious! How can you hold such ideas, Professor Piffell? Marbles and pegtops and skipping ropes! Upon my word! If such games were in vogue at St. Jim's the boys would soon become soft and spiritless!"

"Impossible!" said the professor. "They would become young gentlemen."

(Continued on next page.)

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"Unable to stand up for themselves in an emergency!" nodded Dr. Holmes grimly. "Unable to fight the coming battles of life! Quite so, professor! Under your system, the boys will be as spiritless and timid as rabbits!"

The visitor rose to his feet.

"I am glad you have been so frank with me, Dr. Holmes!" he said fiercely. "I shall make a point of broadcasting your views during my very next speech! I will tell the whole of this country how you are acting towards the helpless boys in your charge!"

"Indeed, professor, I must protest!" said the Head angrily. "I have already explained to you that you have been made the victim of a practical joke. I cannot possibly allow you to make any speeches regarding—"

"Allow me!" thundered the professor. "This is a free country, sir—a country of free speech! Let me tell you that I shall do just as I please!"

Fuming like an active volcano, Professor Piffell strode to the door, flung it open, and passed out.

And Dr. Holmes gave it up.

CHAPTER 9.

Put to the Test!

"I've been thinking!" said Gordon Gay slowly.

He was leaning against the gateway of Rylcombe Grammar School, and Frank Monk and Carboy were with him. They both looked politely interested.

"Thinking?" repeated Frank Monk.

"Yes!"

"What with?" inquired Carboy politely.

"Idiot!" frowned Gordon Gay. "I've been thinking about that silly old jossor of a professor!"

"Well, that's nothing; we've all been thinking about him," remarked Frank Monk. "We spoofed him up to the neck, and most of the fellows are satisfied."

Gordon Gay nodded.

"I know!" he said. "But I'm not satisfied."

"Why not?"

"Because things can't be left as they are," replied Gordon Gay firmly. "Hang it, we mustn't allow Professor Piffell to go back to Colney Hatch, or wherever he lives, in the belief that this school is full of sottes and simpletons."

"But that was the jape," said Frank Monk. "Didn't we arrange everything with those St. Jim's fellows? Tom Merry and his crowd are going to make the professor believe that St. Jim's is full of toughs."

"Exactly!" nodded Gordon Gay. "And it strikes me that we shall come off second-best. I hadn't thought of it before—but now I believe we shall have the worst of the bargain."

"Blessed if I can see it!" said Carboy, scratching his head.

"Then let me explain," said Gordon Gay. "The professor is a lecturer, and he writes pamphlets, too. The chances are that he'll praise us up to the skies in his next talk, and he'll run the St. Jim's fellows down to the lowest dregs."

"Well, what's wrong with that?" asked Frank Monk, grinning.

"Everything!"

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Everything!" repeated Gordon Gay grimly. "All sensible people know what a crank Professor Piffell is, and praise from him is the last thing a sportsman wants. Don't you twig? Everybody will get the idea that Rylcombe Grammar School is a home for softies and namby-pambies. And when the professor blithers about the young ruffians of St. Jim's, ninety-nine people out of a hundred will think what a fine sporting crowd the St. Jim's chaps are."

"By Jove!" said Frank Monk, looking blank. "I hadn't thought of that!"

"Neither had I—until just now!" growled Gordon Gay. "And I suggest that we run along to St. Jim's straight away, and collar the professor before he leaves. We'll tell him that he's been spoofed, and that we play Soccer and cricket just the same as other schools."

"I believe you're right!" nodded Carboy. "We'll tell him that it was all a practical joke. In fact, it's only right that we should do. We can't let him go away with the opinion he's got of us."

"Hadh't we better get a crowd together?" suggested Frank Monk.

"There's no need for that," replied the Grammarian

junior leader. "The three of us will be enough. Besides, it's nearly tea-time, and I don't suppose the other fellows would care to be dragged into it. Let's buzz along on our own."

"Right-ho!" said the others.

And off they went.

They had had time to ponder over the events of the afternoon, and it was certainly a fact that the Grammarians would cut a very poor figure if Professor Piffell referred to them in any of his talks or writings. It was all very well to have a jape at the learned gentleman's expense. But now that it was over it was time to undeceive him.

So the three Grammarians hurried as they made their way along the lane towards St. Jim's. They were half afraid that they would miss the professor. But their fears were set at rest a few minutes later, when they turned a bend in the lane about half-way to the school.

The big, lumbering figure of Professor Phineas Piffell was within sight far up the lane.

"Good!" said Gordon Gay genially. "Nothing could be better! We shall have him to ourselves here, and we can put him wise in a couple of jiffies!"

"Nothing will make this old jossor wise!" said Carboy.

But he and Frank Monk knew exactly what Gordon Gay meant. They were rather glad of the opportunity of speaking to Professor Piffell privately. The lane just here, was very quiet, and not another soul was within sight. There were no cottages here, no likelihood of being disturbed. The woods were close at hand, with the stile that led into their depths.

Professor Piffell was striding down the lane rapidly, as though he was consumed by some great emotion.

Just when he got opposite the stile he paused in his stride, and glanced towards the wood. Then he came to a halt, and he adjusted his spectacles.

"What's he stopped for?" murmured Carboy.

"Goodness knows!" said Gordon Gay. "Perhaps he's thinking that it'll be a short cut if he takes— By Jove! Look at that!"

Two figures had suddenly appeared from the wood. They vaulted over the stile, and advanced upon Professor Piffell. And, even at this distance, the three Grammarians could see that the strangers were rough-looking tramps.

"Hallo!" said Frank Monk. "This doesn't look any too healthy!"

They advanced slowly, in the hope that Professor Piffell would soon get rid of his unwelcome companions. Probably they were trying to sell him something—or it was just as likely that they were begging.

"Certainly not!" came the professor's voice, echoing down the lane. "I positively refuse! Leave me at once! How dare you stand in my way like this!"

It was impossible to hear what the two men said; but their actions were significant enough. With one accord, they grasped the professor, and began to force him backwards.

"Great empires!" boomed the professor. "You ruffians! You rogues! Release me! Help, help!"

For a moment the three Grammarians hardly realised what was happening.

"Great Scott!" gasped Carboy. "Those rotten tramps are attacking him!"

"Come on!" yelled Frank Monk.

They were off like the wind, and Gordon Gay, whose eyes had suddenly taken on a queer gleam, tried to say something. But his companions were not likely to listen just then.

Within a few seconds they had reached the scene of the little tussle, and they found that their first impression was correct. The men who had seized Professor Piffell were two of the roughest specimens that the Grammarians had ever seen. They were tramps of the worst type.

"You clear out of this, young shavers!" snarled one of the men, as the juniors dashed up. "Clear off while you're safe!"

"My boys—my boys!" panted Professor Piffell. "Help me! Fetch the police! These—these rascals are attempting to extort money from me! That such a thing as this could happen in broad daylight—"

"That's enough!" rapped out the other man. "Give us a quid, and we'll let you go!"

"I will do nothing of the sort!" shouted the professor furiously. "Boys—boys! Help me, I say!"

Gordon Gay started back, his eyes seeming almost to start out of his head with fear.

"We—we can't, sir," he faltered. "We—we're afraid!"

"Afraid!" gasped Frank Monk and Carboy, in one voice. Gordon Gay half turned his head and bestowed a cheerful wink on his chums with the eye farthest from the three men.

"We—we can't fight, sir!" he stammered.

"Strike me pink!" ejaculated one of the tramps.

I · SEE · ALL

Frank Monk and Carboy, after their first startled glance at their leader, instantly took their cue. They hadn't the faintest idea what Gordon Gay was playing at, but they loyally backed him up.

"We—we're afraid!" said Carboy, trembling.

"We'd help you if we could, sir, but these men look so rough!" babbled Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay dragged his chums back, and they all stood there, trembling and shrinking.

"Are you made of straw?" shouted the professor. "By my faith! Is it possible that you boys have no more courage than rabbits?"

"But—but we're from the Grammar School, sir!" protested Gordon Gay. "Didn't you tell us that it's wrong to fight? Didn't you say that football and cricket are such rough games that they make hooligans of us? How can you expect us to help you?"

"Good heavens!" muttered the professor.

"But how?"

"Because we want to teach the old buffer a lesson!" said the Grammarian leader, his face becoming grim. "He thinks we only play hop-sotch, and silly games like that. And so we left him in the cart—because we're too soft to fight!"

"Perhaps he'll change his views after this!" said Gordon Gay. "Anyhow, I hope so! It'll be a lesson that he won't forget in a hurry!"

"But we can't let him be robbed, even for the sake of a lesson!" protested Frank Monk. "Dash it, there's a limit to—"

"Oh, don't be such an ass!" said Gordon Gay. "My idea is to creep round here, at the back of the hedge, and watch the proceedings. If these rotten tramps start rough handling the professor, we'll do for 'em!"

"Oh!" murmured the others.

"But if they don't start any violence, we'll lie-doggo,"



"Help!" panted Professor Piffell, struggling in the grasp of the two tramps. Gordon Gay & Co. started back nervously. "We—we can't, sir!" faltered Gay. "Didn't you tell us that it's wrong to fight?" "Oh, let's run away!" gasped Carboy. "Yes, yes!" agreed Frank Monk. Uttering cries of terror, the three Grammarians ran past the little group and disappeared round a bend in the lane. (See Chapter 9.)

"We mustn't be rough and savage, sir!" said Gordon Gay. "It's against all your principles for us to fight, sir. You know it is! You told us so, sir!"

"Yes, boy; I know that! But—but—"

"Oh, let's run away!" sobbed Carboy.

"Yes, yes!" agreed Frank Monk. "We might get hurt if we stay here! Let's run!"

Uttering cries of terror, the three Grammarians ran past the little group and disappeared round the bend in the lane. But no sooner were they out of sight than Gordon Gay pushed his chums through a gap in the hedge. They sprawled in the grass.

"You—you frabjous idiot!" gurgled Frank Monk.

"What's the giddy idea?"

"We backed you up—but you're off your chump!" said Carboy breathlessly.

"Don't you believe it!" grinned Gordon Gay, with the same gleam in his eyes. "This is a chance that we can't possibly afford to miss!"

"But we've left the professor in the lurch!"

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay. "He's not in any danger. Those tramps are only going to rook him for a quid or two—or perhaps pinch his pocket-book."

"Well, isn't that bad enough?"

"It's not bad at all—it's good!" said Gordon Gay.

continued Gordon Gay. "Then, after the professor has gone, we'll go for the tramps, have a good scrap, and get the professor's property back."

"You deep bouncer!"

"We need to be deep—if we're going to bring Professor Piffell to his senses," replied Gordon Gay. "Don't you see the wheeze? After the professor's had time to reflect, we'll tell him the truth. And then, perhaps, he'll be ready to admit that healthy sports are all for the good of a fellow's character. We'll tell him the truth later on, of course—and it'll be worth quids to watch his face!"

The others chuckled, and slowly began to creep back on the other side of the hedge. They had no intention of deserting Professor Piffell in his hour of need. But they were certainly going to teach him a much-needed lesson.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate professor, helpless in the grasp of the two tramps, looked up and down the lane; but, like the prophet of old, he saw no man.

He was, it appeared, at the mercy of two dangerous-looking tramps. The professor was a big man, but he was flabby—and fighting was not in his line.

It was being brought home to Professor Phineas Piffell, too late, that he had followed his own doctrines not wisely, but too well!

CHAPTER 10.

St. Jim's to the Rescue!

JACK BLAKE looked up at the school clock. "Well, I'm not going to wait much longer!" he said impatiently.

"Weally, Blake, there is no need to speak in that exasperated tone!" protested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It is necessary that we should see the pwofessah, so that we can put things to wights before he leaves the school."

"But what about tea?" demanded Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I twust we can miss tea for once?" said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass, and looking at Herries with disapproval. "It is vewy important that the pwofessah should know that we are not weally the hooligans he thinks."

"Gussy's right!" said Tom Merry, nodding. "We can't go indoors until we've seen the old boy again, and told him the truth. He ought to be out at any minute now—unless he's stayed to tea with the Head."

"Which is very likely," said Manners, with a grin.

Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were waiting about in the quad, and most of the other juniors had gone to their various quarters for tea. But the responsible leaders of the Shell and Fourth felt that it was up to them to put things on a straight footing.

They had had their joke with the cranky professor, but they couldn't let him go away from St. Jim's without explaining that he had been spoofed. In this respect, Tom Merry & Co. naturally had much the same feelings as their Grammarian rivals.

"We shall probably be cooling our heels for another hour or two," snorted Digby. "You know what these old fogies are, when they get together. They start jawing and goodness only knows when they'll stop!"

"Weally, Dig, I twust you are not wewefwin' to the Head as an old fogay?" asked D'Arcy severely.

"Oh, give us a rest, Gussy!"

"I weward it as vewy diswewpectful——"

"Dry up, dummy!" interrupted Blake. "Here comes Darrell. He's just left the Head's house, too. He might be able to tell us something."

Before Arthur Augustus could reply, Blake and Tom Merry hurried forward and stopped Darrell of the Sixth before he could enter the School House.

"I say, Darrell, have you seen Professor Piffell?" asked Blake.

The prefect frowned.

"You young beggars have got a nerve, haven't you?" he demanded. "I've heard a few rumours about the way you spoofed the old boy!"

"Ahem! Just a little amusement!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Not that I blame you," went on Darrell dryly. "The professor seemed to be a bit of an eccentric."

"He hasn't gone, has he?" inquired Tom Merry quickly.

"Of course he has."

"Gone!" yelled Blake.

"Don't bawl at me, you young ass!" said Darrell. "He went ten minutes ago, and——"

"Bai Jove!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "And we've been waitin' heah for nearly half an hour! Weally, Dawwell, I think you must be mistaken!"

"Then you'd better think again, my lad!" said the Sixth-Former. "If you've been waiting for the professor I'm sorry for you. I believe he went out through the Head's garden, and then by the private gate."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then we've missed him!"

"Rather a good thing, too!" chuckled Darrell. "You've spoofed him enough, by all that I can hear."

"Rats!" said Blake. "We wanted to tell him the truth."

The juniors hurried away, making with one accord for the gates, while Darrell went indoors, smiling to himself.

"The only thing we can do is to buzz down to the village and overtake the professor before he gets to the station," said Tom Merry. "There won't be a train for some time yet; so if he's there already, he'll probably be waiting about on the platform. Anyhow, we shall have plenty of time to explain everything."

"Haden't we better get our bikes?" suggested Herries.

"I don't think so," replied Tom Merry. "There's no particular hurry."

But they stepped out quickly as they went down the lane. They were nearer to Professor Piffell than they imagined, however. For that great man was not at the station; he was still in the lane, as a result of his encounter with the tramps.

Actually, Tom Merry & Co. had set out from St. Jim's at precisely the same minute as Gordon Gay & Co. had "bolted" from the tramps. And the Grammarians were

now creeping nearer and nearer to the scene of action, concealed by the hedge.

They could hear the professor's voice very clearly. "I refuse to give way to your ruffianly demands!" he was saying. "You scoundrels! I'll have the police on you for this!"

"Stow it, guv'nor!" growled one of the tramps. "We don't mean you no 'arm, but the sooner you cough up your money the better!"

"By my faith! This is highway robbery!"

"You can call it what you like, mate; but if you don't 'and over your cash within a couple of seconds we'll lay you out!" said the tramp threateningly. "Come on! We don't want no more lip from you!"

"You—you impudent rascal!" fumed the professor.

"Give 'im a swipe, Bill, and let's get the thing over!" said the other tramp. "Lumme! Somebody might come along!"

Gordon Gay & Co. heard a sudden scuffle.

"You—you rogues!" gasped Professor Piffell. "Great Empires! I—I will not submit to this! How dare you! Good heavens! I have never been so treated——"

His words ended in a smothered gulp, and the scuffling continued. The next second the Grammarians caught a glimpse of some figures amid the trees ahead. Professor Piffell had been dragged over the stile and into the shelter of the wood.

The open lane was rather too public for the rascally tramps. They had probably seen at the very first glance that this big, bulky gentleman was no fighter; they had also observed that he was scholarly. And it had taken them only a minute to conclude that he would be an easy victim.

However, when it came to the pinch, Professor Piffell was no coward. He was held by two burly ruffians, but he was not giving in without a fight. He had no hope now of receiving assistance.

"Old 'im, Bill!" gasped one of the tramps.

"You dastardly villains!" shouted the professor hotly. "How dare you lay your hands on me!"

"Give us your pocket-book, and we'll clear off!" snapped Bill.

"Certainly not!" roared the professor. "I will give you nothing! I refuse to submit to this outrage!"

Little more was said. The two tramps made an attempt to throw the professor over, but, although he was no fighter, his very bulk was in his favour. He resisted the onslaught pluckily and struck out with all his strength, gasping breathlessly, for the struggle was beginning to tell on him.

"Come on, you chaps!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"Rather!" said the other Grammarians.

"Bravo, the professor!" added Gordon Gay. "I didn't think he was such a fire-eater! He's not so flabby, after all! But we can't leave him in the cart; we've got to help!"

But before they could enter the fight the whole affair took a new turn. And it was so startling in its unexpectedness that the Grammarians hung back, nonplussed.

Four other men had appeared out of the wood.

They were tramps, similar to Bill and his companion. And it was clear also that all these men belonged to the same party. Perhaps they had been camping in the wood—a kind of tramps' meeting. At all events, the arrival of the reinforcements put a different complexion on the affair.

"Steady!" whispered Gordon Gay warningly.

"Great Scott!" gasped Frank Monk. "There's six of 'em now! What the merry dickens are all these tramps doing here?"

"We needn't bother about that," said Carboy. "They're here, and they're robbing the poor old professor. Let's help him!"

"Ass!" hissed Gordon Gay. "We can't!"

"Can't!"

"It'll be worse than useless!" said the Grammarian leader.

"How the dickens can we hope to beat six rotten tramps? We shall all be knocked out in two ticks! We could have tackled two, but not six!"

"But—but what can we do, then?"

"Go for help!" replied Gordon Gay promptly. "Come on! Let's buzz off and get some St. Jim's fellows. We may be too late, but it's the only hope!"

Gordon Gay was right.

It would have been sheer folly for the three juniors to attack these tramps on their own. All the men looked desperate ruffians. In all probability no such gathering of tramps would be in the district again for months. It was just a chance that they were here now. And it was the professor's bad luck.

The Grammarians swarmed through a gap in the hedge and gained the road, their faces flushed with excitement. They were feeling alarmed for Professor Piffell. His plucky resistance aroused their admiration. They felt that they had done the old fellow an injustice, and that he wasn't half so bad as they had believed.

"Great Scott!" panted Carboy. "Talk about luck! Look who's coming!"

"My only hat!"

"Good egg!"

The Grammarians raced forward. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were swinging down the lane, and such a meeting as this could not have been more opportune. In a way it was positively providential.

"Quick, you chaps!" gasped Gordon Gay, as they ran up. "The professor's being attacked by tramps, and he needs our help!"

"Cheese it!" grinned Blake. "You can't spoof us like that!"

"It's true!" shouted Carboy.

"Weally, Carboy, there is no need to tell whoppahs!" returned Gussy. "You can't play any twicks with us—"

"Tricks be blowed!" roared Gordon Gay. "Look here, I'll tell you the whole story in a nutshell. We haven't got a minute to waste."

"Go ahead!" chuckled Tom Merry.

None of the St. Jim's juniors believed this sensational story, and they waited with grins on their faces to hear what Gordon Gay would say.

"We came along to see the professor, so that we could tell him the truth about that jape at the Grammar School,"

said Gordon Gay quickly. "But when we spotted him in the lane, there were two tramps with him."

"Only two?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yes, two, you disbelieving rotters!" yelled the Grammarian leader. "We pretended to be afraid, and we bolted—"

"What?"

"Well, we thought it would do him good," put in Frank Monk. "At least, Gay did. Jolly good idea, too! The plan was to teach the professor a lesson, and then have a scrap with the tramps afterwards."

"You see, we wanted the old boy to think kids' games made us soft," explained Gordon Gay. "That might bring it home to him that he's on the wrong track. But everything's gone wrong!"

"Go on!"

"There are six tramps now, instead of two!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's juniors yelled.

"Don't you believe us?" hooted Gordon Gay.

"Not likely!"

"You cackling hyenas—"

"Weally, Gordon Gay, it's a frightfully tall stowey!"

(Continued on next page.)



Our doddering, dome-headed old dominie again well earns his daily "dough"!

Q. What is a praying mantis?

A. No trouble at all. "Fifth-Former"—your question as to what is a praying mantis is easily answered. So far as natural history is concerned, I am bursting with knowledge from eels to elephants. The praying mantis (illustrated below) is a type of leaf insect of the family known by the Latin name of *Mantidae*. The insect is usually green or brown in colour and its wings closely resemble a fallen leaf. The common name of praying mantis is derived from the curious posture which this insect assumes when resting on a tree or shrub. In this position it remains perfectly still until a fly or gnat approaches. Then immediately the mantis shoots out its heavy forelegs, grabs its prey and makes a meal.

Q. What is a chukker?

A. The term is applied, F. B., to a period of play in the game of polo.

Q. Has the number 23 any mystic meaning?

A. This curious query has come from a young reader at Southampton who went to a landing-stage to see some friends off by one of the large Transatlantic liners. As he passed along the landing-stage, he happened to tread on the foot of a gentleman in horn-rimmed spectacles who was chewing gum with a fine set of gold-filled teeth, whom he strongly suspected of being a citizen of the United States. To the astonishment of my young chum who apologised, the gentleman in the horn-

rimmed spectacles roared one remark only, a number—"23!" My young friend wonders whether he had rapidly counted 22 to himself on the principle of saying nothing until he had got over his temper. But if so, he says, he did it mighty quickly. The true meaning of that cryptic remark,



If ever you go mountaineering you'll want a piolet (an axe), as shown.

my young friend, was that he wanted you to depart, and lively. The number 23 is commonly used in the western states of America as a synonym for the word "go," and sometimes "back to the bush" is suggested as a destination. Such slang is deplorable with our English mother-tongue so full of beautiful words and phrases such as begone, withdraw, remove thyself, vamoose, beat it, skidoo, decamp, buzz off and 'op it!

Q. What is a monkey's island?

A. I am not surprised, Charlie Needham, that you were astonished when you visited the warship at Southport to hear one of the crew say that the captain was on the monkey's island. This, however, is a small navigating bridge in the forward superstructure where the captain and the

navigating officer usually have their posts at sea. The term "monkey" has no application to the features of these officers, but used in this way merely means "little."

Q. What is a stymie?

A. This question has been sent in by Evan Owens of Llangollen, who states that he is a Welshman. It is a term, Evan, which is used in the game of golf, and is applied when one player's ball is in front of another's on the green, so that the ball farthest away cannot be putted directly into the hole. To negotiate a stymie is a most difficult shot, but it can be done sometimes by putting screw on a ball to pass round the obstructing ball or by chipping over it into the hole.

Q. What is a piolet?

A. An ice-axe of the type used by Alpinists for climbing.

Q. What is the Chinese "cash"?

A. A bronze coin with a square hole in the middle of it and worth about the twentieth part of a ha'penny. Europeans do not use this kind of money, but it is no uncommon thing to see coolies carrying about their wealth in cash coins suspended on long strings over their shoulders.

Q. Is it true the camel is a most ill-tempered animal?

A. Undoubtedly, Gertrude Hatcher—the brute always has its back up!

Q. What is a beret?

A. A round cap of coloured or black cloth commonly worn in France and Spain, and used a good deal in Britain nowadays for tennis, motor-cycling and other sports.

Q. In what country will you find a novel way of judging running races?

A. In Sweden. Seventeen judges sit on steps one above the other at the winning post, and in a close race it is the vote of the majority that decides the winner.

Q. What is a tyro?

A. A tyro is a beginner or novice at anything, such as sport for instance.



What is a beret? A round cloth cap, as shown above.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,082.



A leaf insect known as the praying mantis.

said Arthur Augustus mildly. "Surely you can do something better?"

"It's the truth!" retorted Gordon Gay fiercely. "You silly idiots! Don't I keep telling you that the professor is being attacked by six tramps?"

"Yes; and we don't think much of the joke!" added Blake calmly.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Frank Monk. "It's true—honour bright!"

"Weally, Fwank Monk—"

"Honour bright!" said Tom Merry, startled.

"Yes; honour bright!" chorused the Grammarians.

"Then, you silly fatheads, why didn't you say so before?" roared Tom Merry. "We thought you were spoofing us!"

That assurance from Gordon Gay & Co. was enough. In a second the whole attitude of the St. Jim's juniors changed. They crowded round, excited and eager. They had taken so little notice of the story that even now they did not fully grasp it.

"Come on! Where are these beastly tramps?" demanded Tom Merry. "We don't want any details; we can have them after the scrap. There are ten of us here, and we ought to settle the rotters' hash!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And, with one accord, the friendly rivals rushed pell-mell down the lane to the rescue. It was a tardy effort, but even now it might be useful.

CHAPTER 11.

The Spoof That Worked!

PROFESSOR PHINEAS PIFFELL sank to the ground, puffing laboriously.

"That's got him!" said Bill, in a savage voice. "Lummy! I didn't think the old codger'd be so much trouble! Now then, let's turn his pockets out!"

"You're mad—all of you!" said one of the other roughs nervously. "We might get six months for this!"

"You shut yer 'ead, Ginger!"

"I ain't 'ad nothin' to do with it!" said Ginger, a little, timid-looking man. "An' what's more, I'm goin' to clear off! I may be on me uppers, but I ain't no footpad!"

"Same 'ere!" said one of the other men.

They stood aside—as they had been standing ever since the start of the trouble. But the other four were excited by the prospect of easy money, and they gave no thought to the consequences.

"Come on, Joe! Let's get out of it before we're mixed up in any trouble!" muttered Ginger.

But the other man hesitated. He had just caught sight of the professor's pocket-book as it was roughly pulled out of his coat pocket. And Joe hesitated. He was no thief himself, but he was weak enough to covet the spoils. And if he stayed he would probably join in the share-out.

"Ain't you comin'?" demanded Ginger.

"No!" said Joe gruffly.

So Ginger went off on his own—the only honest man of the lot. And Professor Piffell, exhausted by his struggle, lay on the ground while the motley crowd of tramps ransacked his pockets.

His watch was taken, his wallet, and everything else of value that he carried. Bill, the ringleader, was looking excited. He had caught a glimpse of many notes in that wallet, and he felt that this assault had been well worth the trouble.

But just at that moment a series of shouts rent the air.

"Here they are!"

"The rotters! They've got the professor down!"

"On the ball, you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Like a sudden flood, the Saints and the Grammarians swooped down upon the surprised tramps. They came as though from nowhere, and within a second they were hurling themselves at the enemy.

Thud!

Bill went down, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Herries on top of him. The other tramps were similarly hard-pressed. The fight had developed thoroughly by now, and it was getting hotter and hotter.

Crash!

Gordon Gay went down like a ninepin, rolling over and over. He lay there, dazed.

"You brutes!" panted Frank Monk. "You cowardly rotters!"

He and Carboy charged in to avenge their leader. They fought with redoubled strength, whilst Gordon Gay dizzily rose to his feet, and sailed in once more.

Tom Merry & Co. and Gordon Gay & Co. had all their work cut out, but they fought gamely—tenaciously. With never a pause, they kept up the battle, giving their opponents not a moment's respite. Time and again their blows came home on stubby faces with telling force.

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The tramps were looking much the worse for wear, and at last they were coming to the conclusion that they were unable to maintain the pace.

On the other hand, Tom Merry & Co. and the Grammarians were still fresh. Breathless, perhaps, but in fine fettle.

Not that they had escaped unmarked.

Arthur Augustus possessed a rapidly-colouring eye, and, for that matter, so had Carboy and Herries and Lowther.

"Back up, you chaps!" panted Tom Merry. "They're wavering! Come on—all together!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

"Bravo, the Grammar School!"

In a final, determined effort the Saints and Grammarians simply hurled themselves at the weakened tramps. Two of the men went flying in face of that assault. Bill was down, and in a second Tom Merry and Gordon Gay fell upon him. They wrenched the professor's wallet out of his pocket, and the gold watch was recovered, too.

But Bill was struggling like a demon, and he heaved the two juniors off him, and kicked viciously. His heel caught Tom Merry in the waistcoat, and with a gasp of pain the captain of the Shell rolled over helplessly.

"Let's clear out of this, mates!" gasped one of the other tramps, with a string of oaths. "They've done us, the young rips!"

And it was true.

Even Bill had to admit it. A few moments later the juniors were in victorious possession of the field. In dire disorder, the tramps bolted, too exhausted and battered to fight any longer.

The sound of crashing footsteps died away among the trees, and one by one the juniors threw themselves full length on the ground. They were utterly done—although they hadn't realised it until the tramps had gone. Yet they knew now how close a shave it had been. One final effort by the tramps would have reversed the victory.

"Well, never mind," murmured Tom Merry ruefully, as he sat up. "Oh, crumbs! I feel as though I've been kicked all over by a dozen mules!"

"Ow!" came a moan from Blake.

"But we whacked the wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus happily. "Bai Jove! We administahed a feahful thwashin', deah boys!"

Professor Piffell stirred.

Until this moment he had remained utterly inactive, partially concealed by a clump of bushes. He had been pushed there somehow during the course of the struggle. Everything had happened so swiftly that the unfortunate gentleman was only just getting his wind back.

"Boys—boys!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "What has happened?"

Tom Merry came to his full senses in a flash.

"Hist!" he whispered, beckoning to Gordon Gay & Co.

"Hide, you fellows—quick!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Frank Monk.

"Behind this bush," urged Tom. "Sharp's the word!"

"By Jove!" nodded Gordon Gay. "I've got you, Steve!"

Frank Monk and Carboy were still dazed and bewildered, but they were hustled behind the bush before Professor Piffell had time to see the action. Indeed, when the great man looked about him, he saw only the seven St. Jim's juniors.

"It's all right, sir—we whacked 'em!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Upon my word!" muttered the professor, passing a hand over his brow. "A terrible experience! Good heavens! You boys are in a dreadful condition! You are injured!"

"Yes, it's real blood this time, sir!" said Blake, as he gingerly dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. "We were only spoofing you up at the school, but this has been the real thing!"

"I—I fail to understand!" said the professor wonderingly. "Are you telling me that you—ahem!—deceived me during my visit to your school?"

"Sorry, sir, but I'm afraid we did," replied Tom Merry. "We don't really play such rough games."

But the professor failed to comprehend. He was too startled by what had just happened. With great difficulty he got to his feet, and the juniors crowded round him.

"It's all right now, sir—those tramps have gone," said Manners. "We had a pretty hard fight, but we whacked them!"

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded D'Arcy. "That's the best of bein' well twained, sir!"

"Good gracious!" panted the professor, with a start. "Of course—of course! I see now! You are boys from St. James' School. And it was you who rescued me from those dastardly ruffians?"

"Yes, sir—and here are your valuables!" said Tom Merry.

"Really, boys, I hardly know what to say!" exclaimed

Professor Piffell falteringly. "This is splendid of you! Your services have been both heroic and unselfish. In my extremity I was helpless, and you came to the rescue. Wonderful—wonderful! And you even saved me from being robbed!"

"It was nothing, sir!" chorused the juniors. "It was something very, very noble!" declared the professor. "And that reminds me!" he added, with a start. "There were three other boys here—boys from the Grammar School!"

"Didn't they help you, sir?" asked Tom Merry innocently. "Help me!" echoed the professor bitterly. "The cowards! The rabbits! The spiritless poltroons! They fled, every one of them!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. Here was his very opening! He had expected it—he was ready.

"Well, what else can you expect, sir?" he asked.

"Eh! What do you mean, young man?"

"Surely you know, sir?" said Tom. "Didn't you see those Grammarians playing leapfrog and hop-scootch, and games

"Nevertheless, there is a mystery here," insisted the professor. "These boys belong to the Grammar School. They are weaklings—"

But he got no further.

Tom Merry and Gordon Gay, between them, gently explained the true situation. As the learned gentleman listened his eyes opened wider. Incidentally, those eyes began to twinkle behind their glasses, too.

"So you see, it was all a spoof, sir," concluded Tom Merry. "None of us, in either school, believed in your ideas, and when we heard that you were coming, we decided on these practical jokes. The Grammarians made you believe that they were namby-pamby, and we went to the other extreme, and—"

"Enough!" broke in Professor Phineas Piffell sternly. "I can only characterise you as a parcel of unmitigated young rascals! Yes! I am amazed at your unexampled impudence!"

"Weally, pwofessah—"

"But, by my flag, I deserved it!" bellowed the professor,

Special For Next Week!

Who would willingly fag for Gerald Knox, the unpopular Sixth Form prefect? Why, nobody at St. Jim's! And certainly no one from either the Shell or Fourth Form.

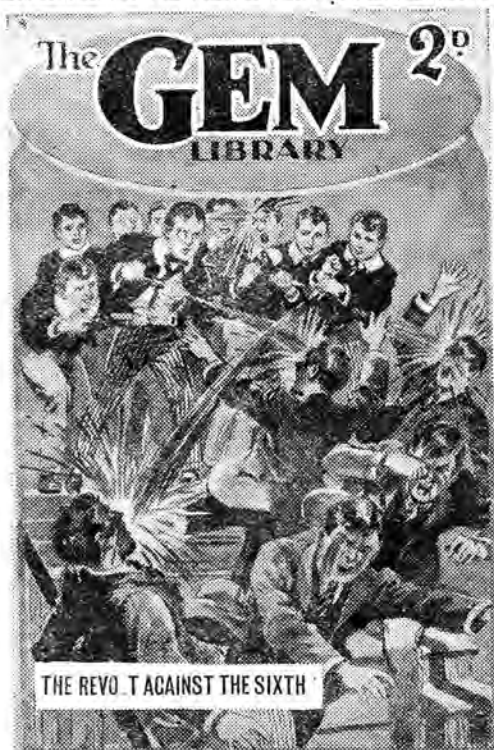
Yet Knox has the satisfaction of seeing this come to pass. What's more, all the juniors from the Shell and Fourth find themselves fagging for the Sixth. How this astonishing state of affairs comes about is vividly described in:—

"The CONSCRIPT FAGS!"

By Martin Clifford

Next week's top-notch school story of St. Jim's.

ORDER YOUR COPY EARLY!



tike that? How can you expect such kiddish exercise to make fellows able to give and take hard knocks? How can you look for fighting qualities from weaklings and softies?"

The professor stood there, looking like a pricked balloon; he had perceptibly shrivelled under the realisation of the truth.

"Upon my word!" he muttered dazedly. "My boy, I believe you are right! Those Grammar School boys were cowardly—because of their training."

"It needs hard games to make brawn, sir!" said Blake. "It's not a question of pluck or courage at all. Plenty of weaklings are plucky enough. But how can they fight if they haven't got the strength?"

"True—true!" said the professor huskily.

Tom Merry gave a sign.

"Come out, you fellows!" he sang out.

Gordon Gay & Co. appeared—with black eyes, tattered clothing, and gore-smeared features.

"What—what is this?" asked the professor blankly.

"The weaklings, sir!" said Tom, with bland politeness.

"Here they are—all three of them! Without their brawn and muscle, we couldn't have won the battle!"

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay. "We only did our bit!"

"But—but I am at a loss!" said Professor Piffell dazedly.

"These—these are the boys who were afraid—"

"We weren't afraid, sir," interrupted Gordon Gay. "We only pretended to bolt. We were near by all the time."

"It was they who warned us that you were in danger, sir," Blake pointed out.

changing his tone. "Yes, I deserved every bit of it! It has taken a practical demonstration like this to convince me that healthy sports and hard games are a necessary item in the life of a growing schoolboy."

"Good for you, sir!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em, sir!"

"Heah, heah!"

"I hope so!" said the professor genially. "I am glad, indeed, that I came here to-day. For this one hour has shown me the folly of my years of lecturing and writing. In future, I shall make amends. In my broadcast talks and in my pamphlets I shall sing the praises of football and cricket—yes, and of boxing, too! Upon my soul! Unless you boys had had a thorough knowledge of boxing, you could never have fought as you did!"

"Yes, boxing is useful, sir," nodded Gordon Gay. "There's nothing to beat the noble art of self-defence!"

"That reminds me!" ejaculated Professor Piffell, with a start. "I must return at once to Dr. Holmes. I fear I insulted him, and it is my plain duty to apologise. Yes, yes, I must go! I must make amends!"

Thus Professor Phineas Piffell was escorted triumphantly to St. Jim's by Tom Merry & Co. and Study No. 6. Gordon Gay & Co. went cheerfully back to their own school, there to make their welcome report.

THE END

(For particulars of next week's ripping story of St. Jim's, see above.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,082.

WHO WANTS A LAUGH?

Ever met Horace, the goat, Gus, the crocodile, and Cecil, the ape? No? Then, lads, you're missing something! Meet them this week, and their youthful masters, Dick Dorrington & Co.!

CHUMS of the BOMBAY CASTLE

by **DUNCAN STORM**



A ROLICKING NEW SERIAL, DEALING WITH THE EXPLOITS OF DICK DORRINGTON & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF THE SCHOOL SHIP BOMBAY CASTLE.

INTRODUCTION.

Afternoon classes aboard the famous ship *Bombay Castle*, have just come to an end when Captain Handyman, the skipper, receives a wireless message to the effect that a shipload of cinema artists have mysteriously disappeared somewhere within the vicinity of the pirate-infested Archipelagoes. In consequence of this, the *Duty Steamboat*, under the supervision of Mr. Pugsley, gunner of the *Bombay Castle*, and manned by Dick Dorrington & Co., of the *Glory Hole Gang*, together with their master, Mr. Lal Tata, is detailed to circumnavigate the Island of Pahang in search of the missing party. Mr. Lal Tata loathes cruising in the *Duty Steamboat*, but he loathes still more the school's pets, Horace the goat, Gus the crocodile, and Cecil the orang-utang. Lal's efforts to prevent them boarding the "D.S.B.," however, proves of little avail, for Gus is smuggled aboard in a cricket bag, while Horace, after sending Mr. Lal Tata flying into the water with a shove of his massive head, arrives head foremost on the cabin roof, just as the *Duty Steamboat* is about to glide away in the dusk from the *Bombay Castle*.

(Now read on.)

The Pirates of Bungaloo!

"DON'T forget to bring the beauty horns back wiv yer!" yelled a parting voice from the *Bombay Castle*.

"Bring us a present from Sarthend!" cried another.

The distance between the craft increased in the swift-falling tropic twilight.

"I insist that goat shall be put back on ship!" puffed Lal.

"Goat's all right," said Mr. Pugsley, popping his head up out of the little engine-room. "Look at 'im!"

Pongo Walker had turned on Horace's favourite record: "When the red, red robin comes bob-bob-bobbing along!"

The green fire had died out of Horace's eyes. He sat on the cabin top wrapped in bliss, with his head slightly on one side, listening to the voice from the gramophone in ecstasy.

"What's the matter with the goat?" asked Mr. Pugsley. "If we don't meet anythin' more snake-headed than ole 'Oraze this trip we'll be in luck!"

Mr. Lal Tata recovered his serenity with his customary good humour. Lal was like an April day, his storms were soon over.

"Where we go to?" he asked.

Mr. Pugsley consulted his small binnacle lamp.

"Due south-east," said he. "I'm steerin' through the Bungaloo Channel towards the Island of Bungaloo, that stands forty miles east of the Three Dead Sailors, which is the point we first sighted. It's a big island. We might get some news there."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,032.

"Is it inhabited?" asked Mr. Lal Tata.

"Inhabited! I should smile!" answered Mr. Pugsley. "Bungaloo is a nest of pirates, full of pirates as a wops-nest is full o' wops! Have you never heard of the young Sultan of Bungaloo?"

"Ha!" said Mr. Lal Tata. "I remember. He was sent to England to school—the nephew of the Rajah of Pahang."

"You've said it," said Mr. Pugsley. "And the school kicked the Sultan out, and the Rajah's kicked him out, too. Now at the age of seventeen 'e's on his own, and about as thievin' and plunderin' a young ruffian as you will find outside the walls o' a prison. Why, a Borstal boy o' the worst is a perfect young gentleman compared with 'is 'Ighness the Sultan o' Bungaloo!"

Mr. Lal Tata looked back regretfully at the spangle of lights and the towering funnels of the *Bombay Castle*, now five miles away.

"Why should we go to push our heads into this nest of expelled schoolboys and dangerous Malay pirates?" he asked.

"Why?" answered Mr. Pugsley. "Because that's the most likely place to 'ear something of this Claude Fairbrother. I don't believe the *Star of the East* with 'er cinema outfit's been wrecked at all. I don't believe she's been downed in a typhoon. It ain't been the typhoon season. Stands to reason. I believe she's been nobbled by pirates!"

Lal sighed.

"I go to change my wet trousers," said he. "They stick to my legs, and I do not wish to catch deathly fevers at outset of this silly and perilous expeditions!"

And he went down into the little cabin.

Mr. Pugsley, peering into the starlit gloom, steered the D.S.B. on a star.

"Ole Lal's got the wind up proper!" he said to Dick. "See that star, Master Dick?"

"It's not the star in the east or a film star, is it, Puggo?" asked Dick, laughing, as Skeleton handed him out his supper.

"No," answered Mr. Pugsley; "but I got it in my mind that it's our lucky star, and that, under it, we'll find the clue to that ten thousand nickers reward. Tell me, Master Dick, what's a film like?"

"Why, it's a round japanned box," said Dick, "something like a box of shortbread. If it's a six-reel film, there's six boxes."

"An' I suppose that the negative of a big story picture is worth a lot of money?"

"Must be," said Dick, "or they wouldn't offer ten thousand nickers reward for it!"

Mr. Pugsley sighed.

"I could do with a few quid," he said. "See that dark cloud just down on the horizon there—the patch that looks like a steamer's smoke?"

"Rather!" replied Dick.

"Well, that's Bungaloo Island," said Mr. Pugsley. "We are now well up the Bungaloo Channel, and we'll be off this pirates' nest in two hours. Then I steer in through the reefs, not taking any notice of 'is 'Ighness' mark buoys, 'cause, as like as not, they'll be arranged to put us on the putty. Coo, lummy!" added Mr. Pugsley. "E's got more under 'is 'at than 'air, that Bungaloo lad!"

There were no leading lights on Bungaloo Island as they approached. There were buoys that showed clearly in the darkness, and lights ashore. There were also the lights of fishing boats working by torchlight along the shore, and they could hear the menacing sound of tom-toms beaten to drive the fish towards the nets in the shallows behind the reefs.

Mr. Pugsley took no notice of buoys. He twisted and turned through the channels of the reef with uncanny accuracy, and soon they saw that they were approaching a small town of white houses which stood below a rising hillside of forest land.

Beneath this was a harbour of piled coral filled with the masts of prahus.

Mr. Pugsley steered straight towards the narrow entrance, reducing his speed.

"Ere we are!" said he.

Then suddenly something grated under his keel, and he reversed his engine.

But the boys heard a clanking of a great chain which was being wound up by machinery on either side of the harbour entrance. They could hear the paws of the windlasses clanking distinctly.

The D.S.B. was riding on two of these great chains, which were lifting her from the water.

"Hoy!" shouted Mr. Pugsley. "What's your game?"

This was soon answered, for out from the shadows of the harbour shot two large vessels crowded with a wild-looking lot of ruffians—yellow, black, and coffee-coloured.

They had only a few yards to come, and they barged into the D.S.B., regardless of her paint. Then a hundred of the ruffians leaped aboard, yelling like a lot of fiends, falling into the water in their eagerness to board the intruder.

Some brandished swords, and others flourished muskets.

"Steady, boys!" called Mr. Pugsley. "No resistance!"

He was a bit too late to save one yellow-faced merchant armed with a huge kris, who got one from Arty Dove that sent him flying into the water, kris and all.

But there was no struggle otherwise.

"Keep quiet, boys!" said Mr. Pugsley. "We are prisoners of 'is Royal 'Ighness the Sultan of Bungaloo! Keep old Cecil quiet!"

But old Cecil had dropped down the fore-hatch into the chain-locker and was hiding himself up behind the spare anchor.

A man with a face like a dog, holding a long, curved sword, stood over Mr. Pugsley. His sword flickered through the air close to Mr. Pugsley's head.

"You prisoner!" said the dog-faced man. "You come with us to sultan's palace. It is not allowed to come into harbour at night."

Mr. Pugsley lit his pipe calmly, as one who has finished his job.

"You've said it, Archibald!" said he. "You've spilled it on your bib! Lead us to the sultan, so's we can explain matters!"

The pirates were pretty quick in sizing up the cargo of the D.S.B. They gathered up the huge cricket-bag containing Gus, and then dragged the boys and Mr. Pugsley unceremoniously aboard the biggest of the craft which had boarded them.

The pirates of Bungaloo had evidently been waiting for their visitors, for cressets of oiled rags on the harbour suddenly lit their red flares, lighting the scene with a ruddy glow.

"What about our goat?" demanded Mr. Pugsley.

The dog-faced man grinned evilly.

"I got heem!" said he. "I like goat!"

"You won't like him so much if you start mucking him about!" said Mr. Pugsley, with a note of warning.

But the dog-faced man, waving his curved sword, had leaped back on the stranded D.S.B.

He approached Horace, who was sitting on the cabin roof listening to the gramophone playing "In a Monastery Garden."

Then his sword glittered red in the light of the flares as he prepared to decapitate Horace at one stroke.

Horace Wins!

"LOOK out, Horace!" shouted Dick Dorrington, as the dog-faced pirate, swinging his curved scimitar, leaped on board the stranded D.S.B. to slash Horace's head off in the style of the Bungaloo island—in one stroke.

It was a wild scene.

There in the harbour mouth, between the narrow piers, was the D.S.B., stranded on the defence chains, lifted slightly from the water, her hull shining rosy red in the lights of the oil cressets which had everywhere sprung to life.

Few of the boys were bound, but they were each held by a dozen dirty hands of all colours, from pale yellow to deep brown.

For the colour of the natives of Bungaloo was in as many varieties as girls' stockings. They ranged from the deepest nigger black to Malay brown and Chinese yellow.

The dog-faced man who liked goat thought he had an easy prey in Horace. He was used to decapitating the mild and skinny goats of the island, and was hoping one day to work up to the post of Chief Executioner.

With his curved sword he could swipe a young goat's head off as easy as if he were headsmen to the late Henry VIIIth of England, and he made no more fuss over a good tough old goat than the executioner of England made of Lady Jane Grey.

"Look out, Horace!" yelled Dick again.

Horace seemed to be quite oblivious to the crouching figure with the glittering sword.

With his head on one side he was sitting on the cabin top, listening to the gramophone, which was still playing "In a Monastery Garden." This was Horace's favourite record. He would sit for hours listening to it if anyone was obliging enough to wind up the machine.

The dog-faced man swung his sword and leaped.

But Horace leaped first.

He was not as much wrapped up in His Master's Voice as he appeared.

The huge Egyptian goat, massive as he was built, was as quick as a kitten.

The dog-faced man met him in mid-air. But behind the spring of Horace there was the punch of a two-seater car. His massive head, heavy as the brazen head of a Roman battering ram, hit the dog-faced man in that part of his anatomy vulgarly known as "the kite," and the thud could be heard all over the harbour. The curved sword went flying through the air as Horace carried the would-be goat-slayer over the stern, and they soused in the water together with a mighty plunge.

Horace popped up again, treading the dog-faced man under as he rose. Then away he swam for the shore.

At the same moment Cecil leaped up out of the chain locker, where he had taken refuge, and plunged overboard.

In the glare of the cressets the two heads could be seen making for the shore. Cecil's battered old topper keeping up with Horace's massive curved horns.

A dozen shots rang out, the bullets kicking up the water all round the runaways, but the aim was wild, and the two were swiftly lost in the shadows of the harbour, where various craft were pulled up on the hard for repairs.

One shadowy figure ran forward with a yell and tried to stop Horace.

He went up in the air as if he were tossed from a blanket, and came down head foremost into a tar-kettle. Then the two fugitives faded away amongst the trees and bushes beyond the shipyard.

"Well, that chap in the tar-pot'll want an 'air cut an' shampoo, anyway!" said Mr. Pugsley, craning forward, in the grasp of the man who held him, to witness this exciting scene. "As for the party what liked goat—ere 'e is. 'Ad all the goat 'e'll want till 'e comes out o' orspital! Be on 'is club for a week or two, I should say, from the look o' 'im!"

The dog-faced man, swordless and swooning, was being fished out of the harbour and lifted on to the deck of the prahu.

"Stand back and give 'im air!" cried Mr. Pugsley, as the mob surged around Horace's antagonist as he lay on the deck groaning. "Been run over! That's what's the matter with 'im! Take 'im 'ome to 'is pore old mother!"

Lal was making a noise in the grip of six yellow men.

"I protest!" he cried. "I protest against this high-handed treatment! We are peaceful peoples! Take us to the sultan at once! I shall lay my just complaints before him, and there will be deuce of rows!"

"No need to make a song about it, Mr. Lal Tata!" said Mr. Pugsley cheerfully. "That's just what they are going to do. They are going to take us to the palace—and it ain't the Crystal Palace, either!"

The crew of the prahu, now that the naval engagement was over, were poling their craft to the wall of the harbour.

The boys were unceremoniously dragged ashore. The huge cricket-bag containing Gus, the crocodile, was shouldered by a dozen staggering natives, who evidently looked on this bag as an object of great suspicion, and the whole party were led along the harbour quay none too gently.

Bungaloo was plainly like any other place in the world. No sooner were the prisoners landed than large numbers of small yellow and brown boys, some wearing shirts, some wearing turbans, and some wearing only loincloths, seemed to spring from the very ground, shouting, "Kill! Kill!"

This seemed to be a particularly nasty breed of small boy, for, armed with heavy lathis, or sticks, or long rattan canes, they rushed in between the guards and lashed at the prisoners.

Lal had a bamboo-pole thrust between his legs, which brought him on his nose.

Skeleton got a wipe across the back of his legs, which made him wince. It was a rattan cane, and was worse than anything that Scorchers Wilkinson handed out in his roughest moments.

"I say, this is a bit thick!" said Arty, as a brick hurtled past his head and hit one of the big niggers who was leading him in the ear.

The nigger thought so, too, for he deserted Arty and, snatching up a big stick, dashed amongst the boys of Bungaloo, laying into them right and left, till they disappeared with a dismal howling to the kennels whence they had emerged.

Soon the boys left the quays and were hurried through dark streets which smelled of jasmine. There were only white walls around them. Apparently windows were not in fashion among the inhabitants of Bungaloo.

There were ladies on the roof, for one of them, with an imprecation on the Christian dogs, dropped a big water jar.

But that was all right. It landed on a native's head and he was very much annoyed about it.

"This is nice pickles we've got ourselves into!" said Mr. Lal Tata breathlessly, as they were dragged up a steep slope bordered by rocky walls set with spicy and flowering trees. "Of all the fool-some adventures we have ever followed, this is the most fool-some. We have walked straight into a trap!"

Before the Sultan!

"WE are in the ole Cross & Blackwell all right," agreed Mr. Pugsley.

"But don't worry, we are coming to the sultan's palace, and that is where we are likely to pick up some clue to the disappearance of Claude Fairbrother."

"Bother Claude Fairbrother!" exclaimed Mr. Lal Tata impatiently. "To think that we may lose our lives for a silly film actor!"

"Film actors," agreed Mr. Pugsley, "ain't much. I like 'Auld Lloyd, though, myself. 'E's my favourite. Makes me laugh, 'e does!"

"You will need Harold Lloyds to make you laugh directly!" said Mr. Lal Tata dismally. "Here we are at the palace."

"Don't look like a palace, does it?" said Mr. Pugsley, looking up at a tall, blank wall of coarse-dressed coral pierced by one small horseshoe archway. "Looks more like a gaol!" he added. "Perhaps we ain't going to see the sultan, after all!"

But the gates grated back noisily on their hinges, and the captives glimpsed some shabbily-dressed soldiers armed with flintlocks as they were hurried through the archway.

"It's all right," said Mr. Pugsley. "It is the palace, after all. Look at the oranges an' the trees in the garden, and the bar-narners!"

They were in a large garden court surrounded by arches of light Arabian design supported on shafts of marble. Gaily plumed birds flew right and left disturbed by the entrance of so large a party. A large fountain in the

centre of the garden court tinkled melodiously as the water fell in a crystal basin.

"This is the palace all right," said Mr. Pugsley confidently. "You see, when we've explained matters to the young master 'ere, the Sultan of Bungaloo, 'e won't dare to keep us prisoners. He'll make an apology and very likely 'e'll ask us to stop for a corfy and a bit o' Turkish delight."

They came to a closed gateway in another white walled building, and their custodians hammered on the stout teak doors.

These were unbolted cautiously from the inside, and most of their guards fell back, indicating that the prisoners were to enter. The cricket-bag containing Gus was handed over



to four huge niggers armed with similar curved swords to that which the dog-faced man had tried on Horace with such ill success.

Another four of these black giants, with a clatter of their weapons, took charge of the party and led them through a number of passages lined with tiles and arched with Moorish arches where jewelled lamps, filled with scented oil, were dimly burning.

"This is the palace all right," said Mr. Pugsley. "They wouldn't keep a quod like this, got up like the Savoy 'Otel, or the Ritz, or one of Lyons' Corner 'Ouses. We are near the presence o' royalty."

One of the big fat natives turned and made an angry gesture for silence.

"Calm yourself, Sid!" said Mr. Pugsley affably. "We won't wake the baby!"

They came to a door built in the Oriental style full of panels and inlaid with mother of pearl. The leading nigger, who had a huge key in his belt, unlocked this, then, standing behind the prisoners, he thrust them forward through the doorway.

The boys gave a gasp of admiration.

They were in the Throne Room or Hall of Justice of the Sultan of Bungaloo, and it was like a palace of the Arabian Nights. From a great vaulted dome, gilded and fretted into a thousand arabesque designs, hung a huge jewelled lantern.

The floor was of mother of pearl. And in the centre of

the floor was a large shallow basin of marble with a fountain.

Half a dozen muscular young men, stripped to the waist, and wearing only baggy breeches and pointed slippers, leaned against the wall staring up at the dome with glazed eyes.

The hall was not well lighted and full of shadows. Something all gold and velvet seemed to pour down from a flight of marble steps, like treacle pouring out of a pot.

Mr. Lal Tata shrank back, and even Mr. Pugsley perspired a bit, for it was a large leopard which approached the prisoners, yawned till it nearly yawned its head off, then snarled.



The Sultan started up from his cushions as Gus, the crocodile, advanced across the floor. At sight of the reptile the palace leopard sprang forward, only to receive a snap from Gus that sent him flying head over heels. (See Page 28.)

"Puss! Puss!" called Mr. Pugsley amiably. "There's a nice pussy!"

Then, to his great relief, the leopard turned away and stalked out of the hall.

Mr. Pugsley followed the natives with the cricket bag across the hall and down a flight of marble steps.

Then the Glory Hole Gang came to a standstill.

In an alcove of the wall, seated on an enormous pile of golden cushions was a pudding-faced fellow with a tiny moustache. He was surrounded by courtiers. He wore a golden turban with an aigrette of osprey clasped in it and baggy pink silk trousers. He had kicked off his slippers, which were covered with jewels. This could be none other than his Highness the Sultan of Bungalow.

The cricket bag was placed on the floor before him, and the guard, bowing to the earth before this evil-looking youth, drew back and stood behind the boys.

"Good-evening!" said Mr. Pugsley, nodding affably.

The Sultan of Bungalow said nothing. He merely scowled at the group and sat there like a wax model.

At length he spoke, prompted by a fat man in a turban, who sat close behind him and who whispered to him obsequiously.

"Who are you?" demanded the sultan in English.

"What are you doing here?"

Mr. Pugsley elected himself the spokesman of the party.

"Nothing much," said he. "We were just having a look round!"

"You were looking round?" asked the sultan. "What do you look round for?"

"We are from the Bombay Castle," said Mr. Pugsley, as if that explained everything.

"What is the Bombay Castle—" asked the sultan.

"What, never heard of the Bombay Castle?" asked Mr. Pugsley, in shocked tones. "Why, it's the famous school ship. Dr. Crabunter is the headmaster. Knows more about starfish than any man living. Captain Handyman, commander. These young gents sail round the world seeing the works of Nature and improving their minds. They are schoolboys!"

"English schoolboys?" demanded the sultan.

"Yes," replied Mr. Pugsley, slightly ruffled by the supercilious manner of his examiner. "They don't look like Portuguese, or Argentines, or Greeks, do they?"

"Guard thy tongue, sailor," said the sultan, "or I will have thee smitten across the mouth with a shoe!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Pugsley, rather ruffled. "Well, let me tell you, young feller, sultan or not, that if any of your snuff an' butter click pulls a shoe off on me, he won't be able to get his turban on without a shoe'orn to-morrow morning!"

The sultan looked a bit scared at this bold pronouncement.

It was plain that he was not used to being so frankly answered in his court of justice.

He whispered to the turbaned man behind him, whose face was hidden in the shadow of a chin-cloth. Mr. Pugsley felt that he had scored a point.

"Why have you left your ship?" demanded the sultan.

"Just to have a look round," repeated Mr. Pugsley.

"Look round! For what do you look round? Do you want to look round my pearl beds?" asked the sultan, with a sneer.

"No," said Mr. Pugsley. "We aren't oyster snatchers, if that's what you mean. If you want to know the truth, we are lookin' round for a ship that's gone a-missing called the Star of the East."

Accused of Smuggling!

"STAR OF THE EAST? I know no ship called Star of the East!" said the sultan. "What is this ship, called the Star of the East?"

It seemed to Mr. Pugsley that the shadowy figure whispering behind the sultan had started slightly at the mention of the ship.

"Why," explained Mr. Pugsley, "have you ever heard of a feller called Claude Fairbrother?"

"Who is he?"

"E's the Flapper's Delight," said Mr. Pugsley. "E's the nib that's got Ivor Novello and Doug Fairbanks stone cold. E's the Beautiful Boy of 'Olywood, and he was makin' a film in these seas called 'The Pirates' Lair' hiring the local talent to play the pirates. And something's gone amiss with the outfit, for the Star of the East is overdue. She's disappeared. They ain't rung the Lutine Bell at Lloyd's for 'er yet, but she's a long price in the insurance market!"

"I know nothing of Claude Fairbrother," said the sultan, in his dull, mechanical voice. "But I do know something of opium and morphine smugglers. You are opium smugglers!"

"Hey? What?" demanded Mr. Pugsley, almost unable to believe his ears. "You got the sauce to call a respectable lot of young English gentlemen dope 'ounds? Bootleggers for the opium joints in your dirty little island?"

Mr. Pugsley was angry.

"Then you say you are not smugglers?" said the sultan.

"Certainly not!" answered Mr. Pugsley. "Archibald, certainly not!"

The sultan made a sign to two of the courtiers who stood behind him, and these stepped forward. They were a couple of hang-dog smoozers with faces like pickpockets.

They spread their hands, and they bowed before him.

"Listen, English!" said the sultan. "For I know that you are English. You choose to laugh in my beard and to think that you throw dust in my eyes. You think to put mud on my head. If you have no opium or morphine crystals on you, you will allow yourselves to be searched"—the sultan pointed to his two courtiers—"by these two gentlemen," he added.

One of the courtiers slipped his long yellow hand into Lal's breast-pocket, and brought out a couple of large balls nearly as large as cricket balls, which they laid on a brass salver before the sultan.

Another pair of these queer balls were taken from Mr. Lal Tata's side pockets, and out of the pockets of his slack pants three more made their appearance.

Lal was speechless for a moment.

"Malwa opium!" he exclaimed.

The fat-faced dummy on the golden cushions scowled.

"So, Hindu," he exclaimed, "you confess it is Malwa opium?"

"Of the best!" replied Lal. "But it was not in my pockets! It is a plant!"

Out of his left breast-pocket the two fakirs produced an envelope full of small packets. They opened this and laid open a packet.

"Morphine!" exclaimed the sultan. "And you say that you come to look round!"

"They are a pair of conjurers! That's what they are!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley. "They are planting the stuff!"

The courtiers had turned on Arty Dove, who allowed himself to be searched peaceably.

Arty was a walking chemist's shop—six flat cakes of inferior Chinese opium were found on him and a slab of yenshee, or degraded opium, such as is used in the lowest opium joints.

All the boys were found with opium in their pockets, or packets of crystals, till the pile of dope on the tray grew large enough to poison a whole city. Out of Mr. Pugsley's pockets was produced a cake of smoking tobacco which was his own, and three cakes of opium which were not.

"Search that large bag," said the sultan. "I know what it is," he said, turning his dull eyes on Mr. Pugsley. "I have been to school in England. I am no fool. Never did I see a cricket bag which takes four men to carry."

The two courtiers unstrapped the bag; and the leopard which had been out of the hall came stealing in, padding across the mother-o'-pearl tiles with silent feet.

Gus had been more or less dormant up to now. But he did not like the opening of the marrow slit in the end of his bag and the thrusting in of yellow hands; and outside he heard the snarl of the leopard.

He did not like leopards, so the next time the hand was thrust in he gave a side twist of his ugly head and grabbed.

A dismal howl went up from the courtier as he tried to drag his hand from the bag.

"It is a crocodile!" he yelled, revealing the fact that he spoke English. "It is a crocodile! Oh, hit him a kick, mister! He will bite my hand off!"

Gus had dragged him down on his hands and knees, and, as he struggled, some pocket within his robe of honour burst with the sound of ripping silk, and from under his robe tumbled a dozen of the balls of opium he had so freely been taking from the boys' pockets!

"There you are, you dirty dorg!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley in triumph. "You are just served out for bearing false witness against your neighbours!"

But the leopard, excited by the cries, gave a savage snarl and leaped upon the other end of the bag.

"Coo!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley. "There goes ole Spot asking for a bit of trouble!"

With a swipe of his paw, the leopard burst the bag wide open and smacked with his paws like lightning at something which waved in the air.

This was Gus' tail, and it caught the leopard a smart left under the jaw which knocked the beast in a series of somersaults down the hall, where it slid on the polished floor till it hit the wall with a dull thud.

With a snarl and a roar it turned and leaped upon the bag again.

But Gus, releasing the courtier, popped his head up and rolled out of the bag on to the floor, fourteen feet of live wire and three feet of teeth.

The sultan started up from his cushions, with a cry of consternation.

"Yes, you dirty dorg! That's what was there, and you've let the cat out of the bag all right!" said Mr. Pugsley, as the leopard sprang in on Gus, only to receive a snap from the old companion's tail that sent him flying amongst the sultan's cushions, knocking the sultan head over heels.

"Look out, boys!" cried Mr. Pugsley, snatching a sword from the trembling native behind him. "That leopard will be going for some of us directly!"

(The leopard's asking for trouble when he tries to take a rise out of old Gus, isn't he, chums? There's heaps more squalls in next week's instalment. Don't miss it, whichever you do.)



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