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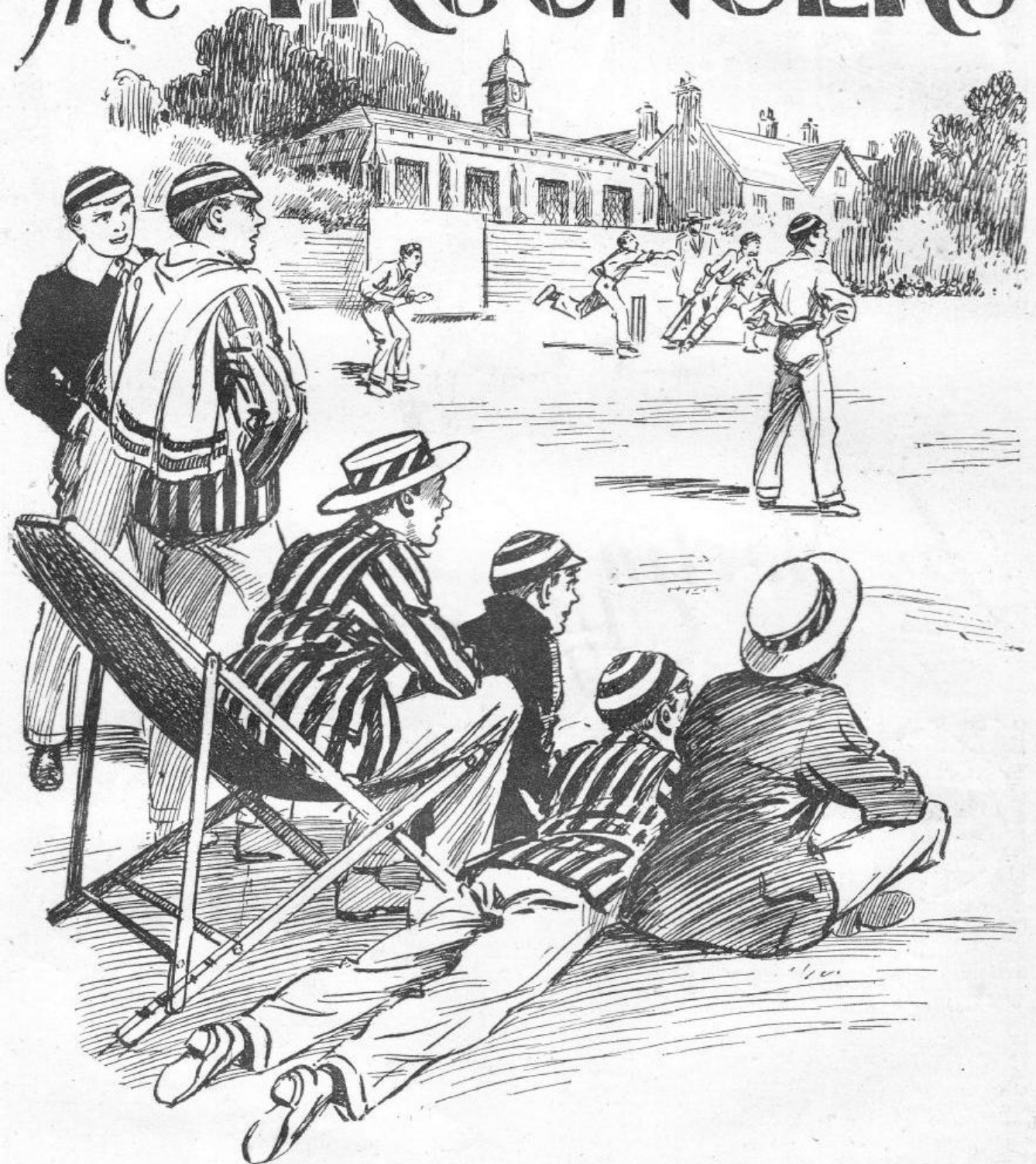


"TREED!"

**SEE THE SPLENDID SCHOOL
STORY OF ST JIM'S INSIDE**

A ROUSING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY—

The TROUNCERS'



CHAPTER 1.

Wallace & Co. on the Warpath!

"IT'S rotten!" exclaimed Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell at St. Jim's.

"Putrid!" agreed Harry Manners.

"Mumps!" sniffed Monty Lowther, the third occupant of Study No. 10. "Mumps! Just like a New House ass to go and get mumps when he's wanted to play in the Abbotsford match!"

There was disgust in Lowther's voice. Tom Merry grinned.

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"Well, I don't suppose Reddy's got mumps for the fun of the thing!" he chuckled. The frown returned to his face. "But it's rotten luck, his getting mumps at a time like this!"

As captain of the junior cricket eleven, Tom Merry was very worried to know that Redfern, of the New House, had gone down with the mumps. Dick Redfern was one of the best bats in the junior eleven, and his loss would be felt keenly on the following Saturday, when St. Jim's were going over to Abbotsford for their fixture with Abbotsford School. It was an important match, and the problem of filling Redfern's place in the eleven was not an easy one.

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—STARRING TOM MERRY & CO. AND THE "TROUNCER TRIO"!

TRIUMPH!



by Martin
Clifford

Dogged determination, amazing resource, and the outside edge in "nerve"—these are the characteristics of the extraordinary trio of new boys at St. Jim's. That being so, it's not surprising that the Three Trouncers succeed in making themselves the talk of the school!

There were plenty of fellows for Tom to draw from. But the thing was to get the right man in the right place. "Mumps!" repeated Monty Lowther, with a sniff. "Such a blessed kiddish thing for a chap to get! Just like a New House man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Manners. "You know, Monty, I don't suppose Reddy got mumps on purpose."

"Anyway," interrupted Tom Merry, "he's got 'em, and he won't be able to play against Abbotsford; and the question is, who's to take his place?"

"What about Wallace?" said Monty Lowther, with a sudden dry smile.

At mention of Wallace, Tom Merry frowned.

"Yes," he growled. "Wallace would have been the chap. He's a ripping batsman, and he'd have filled Redfern's place nicely. But—"

And Tom Merry broke off with a shrug.

Wallace was a newcomer to St. Jim's.

Together with his two friends, Woolley and Willis, Wallace had arrived at St. Jim's quite recently; but he and his chums had already made quite a stir in the School House. Utterly ignoring the unwritten rule that new boys should be seen and not heard, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley had made themselves heard with a vengeance! At their previous school—Ramhurst—they had been cocks of the walk—as they had explained. And they had calmly announced their intention of winning the same position for themselves at St. Jim's!

They had proved themselves amazing fighters. Even Tom Merry & Co. had been unable to lick them. And at cricket Wallace had shown himself a splendid batsman. He was so good, in fact, that Tom Merry had offered him a place in the team that was visiting Abbotsford.

But Wallace, Willis, and Woolley had peculiar ideas in many ways. One of their chief peculiarities was that they were utterly inseparable. Where one went, there went the others!

To his astonishment and exasperation, Tom Merry had been informed by Wallace that he could not play for St. Jim's against Abbotsford unless Woolley and Willis were

also in the team. It was a question of all or none, and to that amazing demand Tom Merry had promptly answered "None!"

Accordingly, Wallace's name had been removed from the cricket list, and that of Manners substituted.

Not that this had ended the matter. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were keen to play against Abbotsford, it seemed, despite Wallace's refusal to do so unless his chums were also in the team. And the three amazing new fellows had, therefore, issued a challenge to the cricket eleven; they had announced themselves willing, and eager, to meet three of the junior team in a three-a-side match. If Wallace & Co. won the contest—and they had every intention of doing so!—they had announced that they would expect to be included in the team in place of the three fellows they had beaten.

It was an audacious challenge, and had caused quite a stir in the junior school. But, after their first indignation at the stupendous "cheek" of the three new boys, the cricket eleven had let the matter slip from their minds. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were finding that once again their efforts to make themselves cocks of the walk in the junior school were not being taken very seriously!

"Yes," repeated Tom, with a frown. "Wallace would have been the man. But, as it is, he isn't! I think Olive—"

Bang!

There had come an anything but gentle tap on the door. In answer to a shouted invitation from Tom Merry, the door swung open, and three grinning faces were framed in the doorway.

Tom Merry jumped.

The three visitors were none other than the fellows who had been in the minds of the Terrible Three at that moment—Wallace, Willis, and Woolley!

Whatever their faults—and, in the opinion of the other juniors, who strongly resented the new boys' cheek, they had many faults—there was no denying that Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were a cheery-looking trio. With their dancing blue eyes and tousled fair hair, their athletic frames, and their cheery grins, they were fellows whom the other chaps could not help but like, in spite of themselves.

"Hallo, hallo!" sang out Willis cheerily, as the three inseparables entered the study.

"Hallo!" answered Tom questioningly. "Want anything?"

"You bet!" nodded Woolley.

"Absolutely!" agreed Wallace, closing the door. "It's about the Abbotsford match."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther glanced at one another.

"Well?" said Tom, a trifle curtly.

"You've heard Redfern's got mumps?" chuckled Willis.

"I have," nodded Tom. "Well?"

"You've got to fill his place with somebody," said Wallace briskly. "Now's your chance to get three really fine cricketers in your one-horse team! Put in us three, and we'll lick Abbotsford off our own bats for St. Jim's! Drop Manners and, say, Lowther, and play us, and you'll never regret it!"

"Never!" chorused Willis and Woolley in one voice.

Manners and Lowther surveyed the visitors with feelings that were almost too deep for words.

"Why, you cheeky asses!" gasped Manners.

"You—you—"

"Don't get ratty!" murmured Willis. "Just think of the good of St. Jim's, and forgo your own selfish ends!"

Manners and Lowther, both crimson, glared at him speechlessly. Willis turned a grinning face to Tom Merry.

"Well, what about it? Is it a go?"

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"No," said Tom shortly. "It jolly well isn't!"

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley looked at him sadly. Tom Merry smiled a dry smile.

"I offered Wallace a place in the team," he went on quietly, "and he turned it down. But if he likes, I'll renew the offer. Wallace, you can have Redfern's place on Saturday. Will you have it, or not?"

"Certainly," nodded Wallace eagerly. "But Willis and Woolley must come along, too, of course. As you know, we never split up."

Tom's face went grim.

"Then there's nothing doing!" he snapped. "I'm not putting Willis and Woolley in the team, and that's final. I consider I've got better men than they, and I won't put 'em in to please you, Wallace, and you needn't think I shall for a moment. Good-bye—and shut the door behind you!"

Wallace frowned.

"You're making a big mistake," he said severely. "You're missing a good thing. At Ramhurst, we could lick anybody else at cricket. We used to be called the Three Trouncers at Ramhurst—"

"So you've said before," nodded Tom coolly. "So long!"

"Half a minute!" said Willis. "If you won't put us in now, we've got to persuade you. We mean to play against Abbotsford in the end—"

"Absolutely!" chuckled Wallace.

"What do you mean, that you're going to persuade me?" exclaimed Tom Merry, glaring. He rose to his feet and began to push back his cuffs. "If you mean—"

"We don't!" grinned Woolley. "Oh, no! Scraping wouldn't do any good—we realise that. But we mean to show you that you can't afford to do without us in the eleven—"

"Exactly," broke in Willis. "And with that end in view we issued a challenge to the giddy eleven. We offered to take any of 'em on in a three-a-side cricket match, and trounce 'em! If we did that it would prove we were of more value to the team than the chaps we trounced, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," admitted Tom. "But—"

"Well, why haven't we had an answer to that challenge?" demanded Woolley.

"This is Monday and we issued the challenge on Saturday!" growled Wallace.

"Looks as if the cricket team funks meeting us!" declared Willis.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther glared at Wallace, Willis, and Woolley indignantly.

"Rats!" snapped Manners. "Of course, the team don't funk you!"

"Well, why has our challenge been ignored?" demanded Willis eagerly.

Tom Merry shrugged.

"Well," he said, "there hasn't been much time to think about it. But if you really mean it—"

"Of course we really mean it!" howled Woolley.

"Then I'll mention it this evening at the cricket meeting," promised Tom, with a chuckle.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley looked brighter.

"Good!" said Willis briskly. "We expect that challenge to be accepted, mind you. We're going to show our giddy worth all right! I tell you, we're going to play against Abbotsford on Saturday, for certain. You can make up your mind to that."

"Why, you cheeky asses!" gasped Manners.

Tom smiled grimly.

"Are you?" he retorted dryly. "Seems to me I'm the chap to decide that! Personally, I don't think you are!"

Wallace opened the door, and the Three Trouncers moved out into the passage. In the doorway Willis turned.

"You've promised to put our challenge to the team at the meeting this evening, you know," he remarked warningly.

"Oh, rather!" grinned Tom Merry. "I'll let you know the result!"

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley departed arm-in-arm along the passage, looking very determined. They, at any rate, took their dogged assertion that they meant to play in the Abbotsford match seriously enough. Though how they could do so when Tom Merry, the junior cricket skipper, was equally determined that they should not, only they could have explained.

"Queer chaps!" murmured Tom Merry, as the door closed behind the Three Trouncers. "Seems to me that their blessed cheek needs giving a lesson!"

"You bet it does!" growled Monty Lowther. "Why, Wallace had the nerve to suggest that you dropped me out of the team to play one of his blessed pals!"

"Yes, they need taking down a peg," nodded Manners. "But how?"

"That," chuckled Tom Merry, "is the problem!"

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry's Wheeze!

"BAI Jove! What fwightful cheek, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, adjusted his celebrated eyeglass and glanced round the little crowd assembled in Study No. 10 with an indignant look upon his aristocratic features.

It was later that evening, and the cricket eleven had held their meeting. Various necessary matters had been discussed; among others, Tom had asked for the cricketers' opinion about the matter of replacing Redfern, and his suggestion that Clive of the Fourth should be included in the team had met with general approval.

With the other business finished, Tom had referred rather grimly to the challenge issued to the cricket team by the Three Trouncers. Instantly, snorts and growls and indignant exclamations had filled the study.

"Those three asses need sitting on!" declared Figgins, of the New House.

"They take the giddy biscuit!" grinned Talbot, of the Shell.

"I considah—"

"As a matter of fact," went on Tom, interrupting the swell of St. Jim's, "I've got rather a good wheeze—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! As I was sayin'—"

"A good wheeze to make the asses look small," Tom continued with a chuckle. "I suggest—"

"Bai Jove! I was wemarkin'—"

"They're determined to play in the Abbotsford match!" explained Tom. "They think that by this challenge they can prove their worth, and all that, so—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I have been twyin' to point out, deah boy, that—"

Tom groaned.

"Oh, crumbs! Sit on Gussy's head, somebody!"

"Certainly!" chuckled Kangaroo, the Australian junior. "Anything to oblige."

"Yawooooooooop!"

There was an indignant howl from Arthur Augustus as Kangaroo collared him and laid him on the floor. With the junior from "down under" sitting on his chest, and a handkerchief stuffed into his mouth, the swell of St. Jim's was powerless, and his wrathful interjections were silenced at last.

"Thanks Kangaroo!" grinned Tom. "Now, listen to me, you chaps. We're all agreed, I think, that these new chaps, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, need taking down a peg?"

"Rather!" growled Jack Blake, and the other cricketers joined in a chorus of agreement.

"Good! Well, this is my scheme—I propose that we accept their challenge—"

"What? And make 'em more cocky than ever!" roared Fatty Wynn, of the New House—the demon bowler of the team.

"They won't be cocky when we've finished with them!" chuckled Tom. "You see, my idea is that we all of us take them on!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Kerr, the Scottish junior. "All of us? But—"

"They issued their challenge to every one of us," nodded Tom. "So we all have the right to take them on. And since we'll all fix the same date—Wednesday afternoon—they'll get about all the cricket they want by the time they have played three lots of us!"

His listeners stared at him. Then there was a great yell of laughter as they understood.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're good cricketers all right," went on Tom, "but I feel sure they won't be able to beat any of our trios! To avoid any flukes we'll put our best three in the first trio to take 'em on. After that, these giddy inseparables will be so fagged that, even with Wallace on form, the other two trios will fairly thrash 'em!"

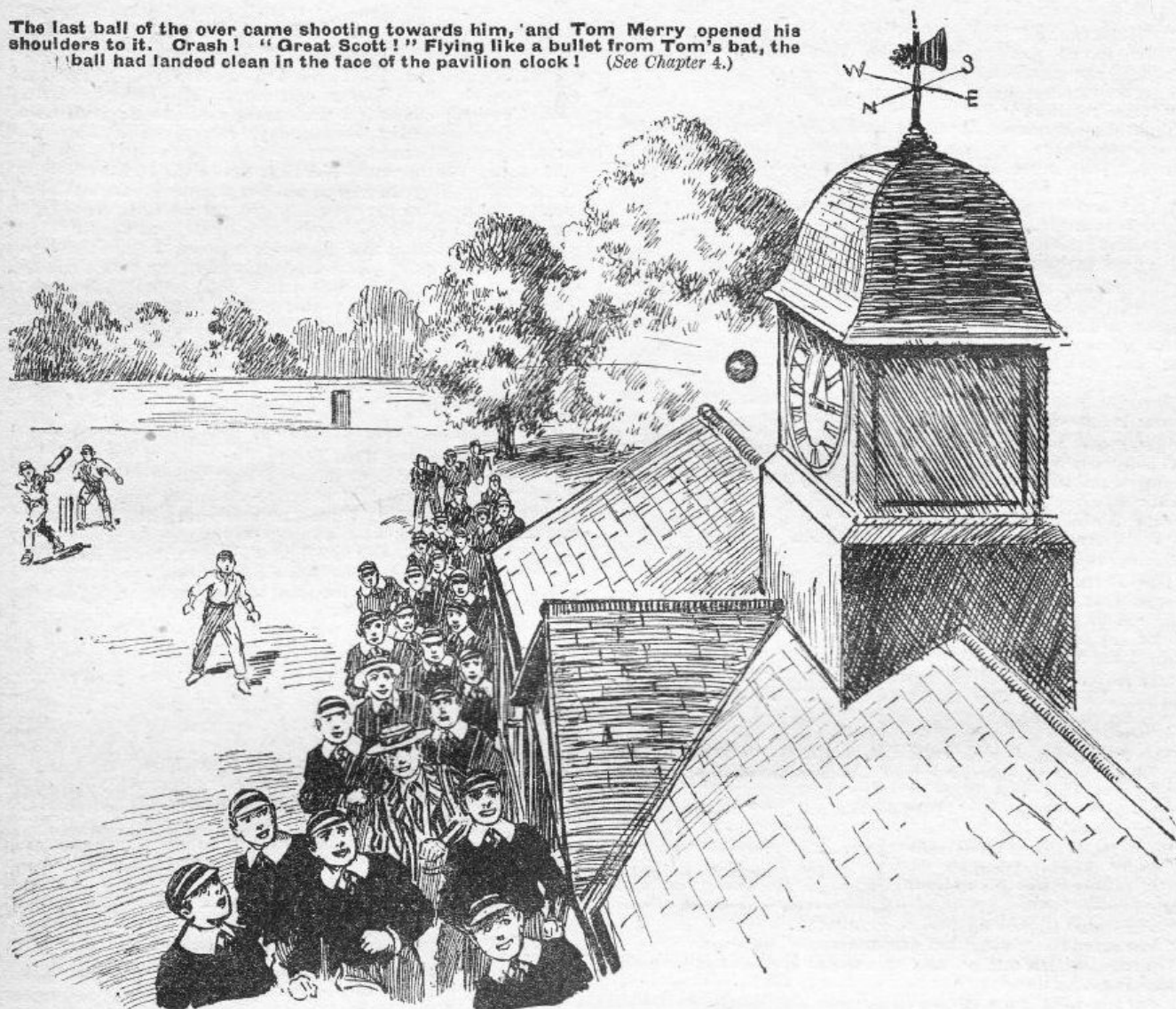
"Oh, good!" grinned Blake.

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The last ball of the over came shooting towards him, and Tom Merry opened his shoulders to it. Crash! "Great Scott!" Flying like a bullet from Tom's bat, the ball had landed clean in the face of the pavilion clock! (See Chapter 4.)



"But suppose they refuse to meet all of us on the same day?" objected Manners.

"They can't refuse," said Tom grimly. "They've issued the challenges, so we, as the challenged parties, have the right to fix the time of meeting 'em. As I say, we'll all insist on Wednesday afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "I propose that Tom and Talbot and Fatty Wynn make up the first trio. With Fatty to bag their wickets, and Tom and Talbot to wipe up the ground with their bowling, they'll be about dead when they meet the next three!"

"Right-ho!" agreed Tom, with a laugh. "Talbot and Fatty and I'll take 'em on first. Then I suggest Figgins and Gussy and Kangaroo! Then Blake and Manners and Lowther—"

"Good!" chuckled Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Carried unan!" grinned Kangaroo. "Except for Gussy! Do you agree, Gussy?"

But Arthur Augustus was incapable at that moment of agreeing to anything. He glared up at the grinning cricketers, with a furious face. Kangaroo rose to his feet, releasing the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus scrambled up, breathless and raging.

"You uttah wottah, Kangawoo!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "You have ruined my clobber, you boundah! I—I shall administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

But the meeting being now over, Kangaroo did not wait for a "feahful thwashin'!" He vanished, chuckling, through the door, with the swell of St. Jim's in hot pursuit. A yell of laughter followed them.

Tom Merry glanced at the others.

"I'll just stroll along to Study No. 12 and tell Wallace & Co. that Talbot and Fatty and I will take 'em on. You other chaps blow in later! I fancy when we've done with them on Wednesday they'll give up any idea of playing in the Abbotsford match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And as the cricketers dispersed, their chuckles were loud and long.

CHAPTER 3. Up Against It!

IN Study No. 12, at the end of the passage, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were busy with their prep when Tom Merry looked in.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley greeted him eagerly.

"Come about the challenge?" exclaimed Willis.

"I have!" grinned Tom.

"Well, has anyone in the team got the pluck to accept it?" queried Woolley.

"Rather! Talbot and Fatty Wynn and I will take you on. We'll meet you on Little Side at two o'clock on Wednesday."

"That's fine!" beamed Willis.

"We'll trounce you!" observed Woolley cheerfully.

"Absolutely!" nodded Wallace. "And then we shall expect places in the team against Abbotsford, of course."

"We'll have to see about that when you've trounced us!" answered Tom dryly; and, with a nod, he left the study.

"Good!" exclaimed Willis joyously, as the door closed. "We'll trounce those three, with luck, and then—"

He broke off. Another tap had come at the door.

"Come in!"

Figgins of the New House appeared in the doorway. Figgins was grinning.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Willis, in surprise. "What do you want?"

"I've come about that challenge of yours," chuckled Figgins.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley glared at him rather blankly. Woolley shook his head.

"You're too late! Tom Merry and Talbot and Fatty Wynn have just accepted it."

"I don't mind," said Figgins. "That's nothing to do with me. I still accept it. I and Gussy and Kangaroo are going to take you on. Our time is Wednesday afternoon!"

"But we've promised to play Tom Merry and Talbot and Wynn on Wednesday afternoon!" roared Willis.

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"I don't mind!"

"But I tell you we're playing Tom Merry—" began Wallace, exasperated.

Figgins interrupted.

"I don't mind!"

The three inseparables stared at Figgins, then they stared at one another. It had never occurred to them for a moment that more than one trio from the cricket eleven would want to accept their challenge.

"You aren't trying to back out of it, I s'pose?" added Figgins severely.

"Nunno! But—"

Figgins tapped the table.

"Listen to me!" he said grimly. "We accept your challenge—Gussy and Kangaroo and I! And our time is Wednesday afternoon. You can't back out of it. It's nothing to do with me if Tom Merry and other chaps are also taking you on. We'll take you on when they've finished with you!"

And, with a cheery nod, Figgins departed, leaving the Three Trouncers looking rather bewildered.

"Oh, well," said Willis, with a shrug, "we'll have to stand by our word, of course. I—I never thought two lots would want to meet us. But we'll jolly well trounce both lots!"

And Willis chuckled confidently.

"We'll trounce 'em all right!" grinned Willis.

"Absolutely!" agreed Wallace.

The Three Trouncers were nothing if not always sure of themselves. Any other three fellows might have felt rather alarmed at the prospect of having to meet six of the finest junior cricketers at St. Jim's in three-a-side matches on the same afternoon; but not Wallace, Willis, and Woolley!

The three inseparables resumed their prep, and for a while there was silence in Study No. 12. Then there came a tap on the door.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Jack Blake appeared, grinning, in the doorway. He strolled into the study, with a nod to Wallace, Willis, and Woolley.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake cheerily. "About that challenge—"

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley jumped.

"Eh?" gasped Woolley.

"I accept the challenge—I and Monty Lowther and Manners—"

"You what?" gasped Willis in dismay.

"We accept it," returned Blake airily.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley glared at Blake in speechless amazement. Then they looked at one another. Then they stared again at Jack Blake.

"But we—we're already taking on Tom Merry's three, and Figgins' lot!" exclaimed Willis, a trifle faintly. "We—we—"

Blake lifted his eyebrows in mild surprise.

"Really?" he murmured. "Well, that's your look-out. That's nothing to do with me and Manners and Lowther. You challenged us, you know, and you'll have to stand by it."

"Ye-es, but—"

"Our time is Wednesday afternoon."

"Wednesday?" yelled Wallace.

"Yes, Wednesday?" yelled Willis.

"But Merry and Figgins have fixed up Wednesday!" howled Woolley.

"Really, now? Have they?" Blake appeared quite astonished. "Well, that's nothing to do with us! Our time is still Wednesday. We'll be there, ready for you. So—long!"

Blake strolled from the study followed by blank stares. Willis gasped.

"Great pip!" he panted. "The spoofing rotters must have fixed the whole thing up between them! They've not taken our challenge seriously!"

"Seems to me they've taken it a darned sight too seriously!" groaned Woolley.

"But we can't back out now!" sighed Wallace.

Willis' face set in grim lines.

"Well, who cares?" he exclaimed. "Hang it, we'll lick some of 'em, anyhow!"

The confidence of the three inseparables might be a little shaken, but it was too powerful to have been extinguished altogether. The Three Trouncers were the last fellows in the world to admit defeat beforehand.

"Even if we lick only one of their batches, we shall have shown that we deserve places in the Abbotsford match!" grinned Woolley cheerily.

"Absolutely!" agreed Wallace.

And, with the grim determination to win through or perish in the attempt, the three inseparables resumed their interrupted prep.

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CHAPTER 4.

Trouncings for Three!

THE news that the Three Trouncers were "up against" nearly the whole cricket eleven, and were committed to play off no less than three three-a-side matches on the following Wednesday, caused something of a sensation at St. Jim's.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley would have been chaffed unmercifully, had they been fellows whom it was considered safe to chaff. But they were known to be dangerous fighting-men, and so the other juniors mostly contented themselves with greeting the Three Trouncers with broad grins wherever they went. And on Wednesday, by two o'clock, a huge crowd had gathered on Little Side to watch the fun.

The gigantic task with which they were faced evidently had no terrors for Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, for they appeared quite calm and confident when in flannels and blazers, they strolled down to the ground.

Tom Merry, Talbot, and Fatty Wynn were ready for them by the pavilion. The Three Trouncers nodded to them coolly.

"All ready for a trouncing?" inquired Willis.

"Quite!" chuckled Tom Merry.

The crowd chuckled, too. They knew that Wallace, Willis, and Woolley did not quite realise what they were up against, in meeting three fine cricketers like Tom Merry and Talbot and David Llewellyn Wynn.

Tom spun a coin, and the Three Trouncers won the toss.

"Good!" said Wallace. "We'll bat first."

And the crowd round the field settled down in the blazing sunshine to watch the fun.

Wallace was greeted with a cheer as he appeared in pads, bat in hand, striding out towards the wicket. He grinned to the crowd, and took his stand at the crease confidently enough.

Tom Merry was behind the wicket, Talbot was to do the fielding, and Fatty Wynn, of course, was the bowler of the trio.

But if the demon bowler of the New House expected to make short work of Wallace he was mistaken!

Wallace began to hit up runs merrily right from the first, and Talbot had a busy time.

"My hat!" exclaimed Herries, lying on the grass with Digby, and Levison, and Clive, of the Fourth. "This chap Wallace certainly is a cricketer! If a chap can hit Fatty's bowling like that, he knows which end of a bat is which!"

"If only the ass would play against Abbotsford!" growled Levison.

"He wants to!" chuckled Clive.

"I mean, without all this rot about not playing unless Willis and Woolley play, too!" snorted Levison. "Naturally, Tom Merry won't stand for that. But—Hallo!"

Levison broke off sharply.

Wallace had opened his shoulders to a ball and slammed it round to square-leg. But Talbot, at a sign from Fatty Wynn, shifted in that direction, and the next moment Talbot's fingers were tightly round the ball, and Wallace, with his score at thirty-one, was tramping back towards the pavilion.

Willis went out to the wicket, watched by interested eyes.

Willis was a good cricketer, though not in the same class as Wallace. He began to bat very cautiously, treating the bowling with all the respect due.

"He'll start knocking 'em up in a jiff, though," said Woolley confidently to those near him.

"Absolutely!" agreed Wallace.

Crash!

Wallace and Woolley jumped.

"My hat!" gasped Wallace.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Woolley.

The two goggled across the grass towards the wicket.

The middle stump was leaning at a sharp angle, and the bails were on the ground. Tom Merry was picking them up, with a grin on his face, and Willis was turning dolefully towards the pavilion.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, himself ready changed into flannels for his coming contest, adjusted his eyeglass and surveyed the despondent figure of Willis with a gleaming eye. "Out, bai Jove!"

"Oh dear!" said Woolley blankly.

The onlookers were very tickled by the expressions on the faces of Wallace and Woolley as they watched their returning chum.

Clearly, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were not feeling so confident of victory now, after all!

With grim face, Woolley went out to bat.

The third member of the trio was a good man with the willow; but, like Willis, he was not in the same class as Wallace.

But he lasted longer than Willis. He "stonewalled" at first, then began to hit out more confidently, and the score rose gradually to fifty.

Fatty Wynn's cunning deliveries, however, were too much for Woolley in the end, and at last a ball curled merrily round his bat and picked his leg-stump clean out of the ground. The Three Trouncers' innings was over!

Tom Merry went out to open the batting for his side, and Wallace, Willis, and Woolley took the field with very determined expressions on their faces.

Willis was the bowler of the trio. He bowled a useful ball, as Tom Merry knew. But the captain of the Shell was feeling on top of his form that afternoon, and it was without much anxiety that he faced Willis' first delivery.

Crack!

The sound of leather on willow was followed by a yell of applause from the crowd, as the ball went soaring away towards the boundary.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Willis blankly.

Tom's unceremonious treatment of his opening ball had been rather a shock to Willis.

The ball was returned to him. Willis sent it flashing up the pitch again.

It was a good ball, with a tricky leg-break. But it failed to beat Tom Merry. Tom slammed it over Woolley's head, and it soared toward the pavilion. The crowd scattered before it, as it dropped right in their midst.

The faces of the three inseparables were very grim.

Off the first five balls of the over Tom knocked up sixteen runs. The last ball came shooting towards him, and he opened his shoulders to it.

Crash!

Flying like a bullet from Tom's bat, the ball had landed clean in the face of the pavilion clock. There was a roar of laughter and cheering.

"Well hit, sir!"

"This isn't clockless cricket, anyway!" remarked Kangaroo, with a chuckle.

After that Tom Merry settled down to giving the Three Trouncers plenty of leather hunting, and he succeeded thoroughly in the task he had set himself. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, run off their feet, grew hotter and hotter in the broiling sun, and more and more weary. But still Tom Merry flogged the bowling all over the field—till at

last he had scored fifty-three. A yell from the onlookers announced that the contest was over.

Tom Merry, Talbot, and Fatty Wynn had trounced the Trouncers! With their three wickets still in hand, they had passed the score registered by Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, and for once the inseparables of Study No. 12 looked thoroughly disheartened as they crawled wearily off the field.

Figgins, Kangaroo, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped forward.

"Our turn now, I fancy!" chuckled Figgins.

The Three Trouncers, weary and hot as they were, glared at the new trio. But there was no backing out for them!

"We'll trounce you!" said Willis between his teeth.

"Absolutely!" gasped Wallace, mopping his forehead.

Figgins tossed a coin.

"Heads!" growled Willis.

"Tails it is!" chuckled Figgins. "We bat first!"

The Three Trouncers had plenty of pluck. But even they appeared anything but happy as they trailed out on to the field again. They were tired out after Tom Merry's dashing innings. And when Figgins started to slam the ball all round the wicket, and they were again reduced to leather-hunting in the hot sun, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley began to feel that life was scarcely worth living.

There was no doubt that the inseparables had bitten off a good deal more than they could chew in challenging the junior cricket eleven!

Not till he had kept the three leather-hunting for nearly half an hour, did Figgins declare, and tramp cheerily from the field, while Wallace, Willis, and Woolley flopped on to the grass wearily. But they were not left in peace for a minute. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out gracefully towards the wicket, and once again the Three Trouncers were put to work.

Arthur Augustus was the stylist of the junior eleven. He began a delightfully polished innings now; but the beauty of his strokes was quite lost on Wallace, Willis, and Woolley!

(Continued on next page.)

NOW, YOU BUDDING ENGINEERS! HERE'S SOMETHING TO INTEREST YOU!

Express engines of the "Royal Scot" class, on the L.M.S. Railway, are named after famous regiments of the British Army. The history of Locomotive No. 6107 is the subject of this week's article.



Regimental "ROYAL SCOTS!"

HERE is "Argyll and Sutherland Highlander," Locomotive 6107 of the "Royal Scot" class. Her motto, like that of the famous British regiment whose name she bears, is "Sans peur," meaning "without fear." We can easily understand this as we glance up at the mighty red and black engine towering above our heads, waiting impatiently at Euston platform to be off on her long journey of 300 miles to Carlisle, and then onwards a further 100 miles to Glasgow or Edinburgh, as the case may be.

Could anything be more fearless than this mighty steel monster drawing her five hundred tons of coaches and passengers for eight hours non-stop at the rate of fifty miles per hour?

Hail, rain or snow does not deter her

progress; she cares nothing for the raging of the elements, the battery of the highest wind, the thunder of the heaviest storm. She is omnipotent!

Her daily feat is akin only to those of the famous Regiment of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, more familiarly known as the "Rorys," who gained undying glory in the Indian Mutiny and at the historic Battle of Balaclava.

In the latter encounter five hundred and fifty Rorys barred the way to twenty-five thousand Russians. That was why they became known as the "Thin Red Line!" One can picture them now in their vivid scarlet coats, five hundred and fifty heroes, bayonets gleaming, holding at bay the whole might of the Russian Army. It is a feat only to be likened to the historic charge of the Light Brigade, immortalised

by Lord Tennyson in his famous poem and by the sterling feats of many a regiment during the Great War.

The 2nd Battalion, raised in 1800, of the Sutherland Highlanders, won its greatest fame in the Crimea, when, under Colin Campbell, it received unsupported, the full charge of the Russian cavalry, and drove them off.

Is any regiment or any locomotive more deserving of the motto—"Without fear"—than the Argyll and Sutherland Highlander?

No, certainly not!

(Another interesting railway article next week.)

It was only when the swell of St. Jim's had brought his score to twenty-five that, becoming careless, he failed to stop what was a lucky ball for the Three Trouncers, and returned to the pavilion. Kangaroo came out, grinning, to take his place. The inseparables groaned.

"I can't stick much more of this!" gasped Willis feebly.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Woolley. "This is awful!"

"Maybe this one's not so good!" mumbled Wallace.

But Kangaroo soon showed that he was a very sound bat indeed. Willis' bowling was hopelessly bad now, and though Wallace and Woolley both gave him occasional rests, their own efforts were so hopeless that Willis soon returned to the bowler's end.

When Kangaroo, with a score of thirty to his credit, finally declared—in order to allow time for Blake's trio to get to work—Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were beginning to look like Red Indians, in complexion, as Monty Lowther cheerfully remarked.

Their attempts at batting were so feeble that Kangaroo took their wickets in the first eight balls. And the roar of laughter and chaff that greeted Wallace & Co. as they staggered off the field did nothing towards cheering them up.

Neither did the grinning face of Blake, as he stepped forward and tapped Wallace on the shoulder.

"Now us!" chuckled Blake.

"What about s-s-s-some tea first?" suggested Wallace feebly.

"Rats!" grinned Blake. "Call!"

"Heads!" croaked Wallace.

"Tails it is!" said Blake blandly. "We bat first!"

And Blake went out to the wicket, looking fresh and cheery.

Feeling more dead than alive, the Three Trouncers crawled back on the field.

CHAPTER 5.

The Plotters!

THE next hour was a nightmare for Wallace, Willis, and Woolley.

With scarcely an ounce of strength left in them they staggered about the field in pursuit of the slashing hits of Blake and Lowther and Manners, and wished that the earth would open and swallow them up. They failed to bag a single wicket, and, one after another, their opponents had to declare; otherwise there would have been no end to the game!

And the crowd, watching the Three Trouncers crawling over the grass, with glassy eyes and damp faces, shrieked with merriment.

When, at last, Manners declared, and Wallace & Co. had to bat, the three inseparables could scarcely stand. Their wickets fell like ninepins, and they were not sorry. They left the field miserably, and were greeted by a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jevver get left?"

"What price trouncings to-day?"

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley glared at the shrieking juniors speechlessly. Picking up their blazers, they crawled away towards the School House, with yells of laughter still echoing in their ears.

As they went wearily up the School House steps Grundy of the Shell came out of the House. He stared at their streaming faces and beetroot-like complexions in astonishment. Grundy had forgotten for the moment that the Three Trouncers had been meeting the cricket eleven on Little Side that afternoon.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Grundy. "You chaps look hot! Been playing cricket?"

It was the last straw.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley hurled themselves at Grundy, and, despite their aching limbs, they seized and bundled him down the steps.

"Yaroooooogh!"

Grundy gave a howl as he bumped from step to step, and another howl as he landed in the quad with a dull and sickening thud.

"Whoooooop! Yow! You—you—you—"

Grundy sat up dazedly, and the Three Trouncers, with murderous glares, vanished into the House.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison and Clive had strolled up, on their way back from Little Side. Grundy stared at them dazedly.

"They're mad!" gasped Grundy, struggling up. "I—I told Wallace and Woolley and Willis that they looked hot, and asked 'em if they'd been playing cricket, and they chuckled me down the steps!"

"You what?" shrieked Levison.

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Clive.

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Levison and Clive almost went into hysterics. Grundy glared at them.

"I don't see anything funny in it!" he roared.

"We do!" panted Levison, wiping his eyes. "Oh, my hat!"

Grundy breathed hard. He was feeling hurt and wrathful. He grasped the two shrieking Fourth-Formers by their collars, and there was a sharp crack as he banged their heads together.

"Yowp!"

"Ow!"

"There!" panted Grundy. "You cackling dummies!"

And George Alfred Grundy stamped away, leaving Levison and Clive rubbing their heads dazedly. For a moment they looked as though they would follow Grundy, on vengeance bent. But the next moment they again relapsed into helpless laughter, and Grundy went his way unmolested.

"He asked 'em if they'd been playing cricket!" gurgled Levison. "Oh, that's rich!"

And Levison and Clive staggered up the steps into the House in paroxysms of merriment.

But there was no merriment in Study No. 12 at that moment. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were sitting in a state of collapse in their study, mopping their brows and feeling their blistered feet tenderly. Willis groaned.

"Yow! What an afternoon!"

"It was awful!" mumbled Woolley.

"Absolutely!" growled Wallace. "Oh dear!"

"It'll be jolly hard to persuade Tom Merry to play us against Abbotsford after this!" sighed Willis.

But at mention of Abbotsford the faces of his two chums set in grim and dogged lines.

"Yes, this makes it difficult," agreed Woolley. "But we'll jolly well play in the Abbotsford match, all the same!"

"You bet we do!" snorted Wallace.

"Oh, of course we shall!" nodded Willis. "But we'll have to think out some good scheme, otherwise——"

"Yes, we must think of something!" declared Woolley grimly.

Three furrowed brows showed that Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were thinking hard.

They were still determined to play in the Abbotsford match, though by that time any other fellows would have given up that hope as a very bad job indeed. But the Three Trouncers were made of stern stuff. "Never say die!" was their motto!

And suddenly a grin appeared on the face of Willis.

"I've got it!"

"A scheme?" asked Woolley excitedly.

"Oh, good!" chuckled Wallace.

"Yes, I've got a scheme!" announced Willis eagerly.

"We'll play against Abbotsford on Saturday, all right! Listen to me, you lads!"

And as Wallace and Woolley listened to Willis' little scheme, their eyes brightened, and broad grins appeared on their perspiring faces.

"We'll do it!" breathed Woolley.

"It ought to work!" agreed Wallace. "Absolutely!"

The Three Trouncers chuckled. Whether Tom Merry, the junior cricket skipper, wanted them in the team or not, the three inseparables of Study No. 12 were still determined to win places for all three in the team visiting Abbotsford on Saturday!

CHAPTER 6.

Out of Luck!

"WALLACE!"

"Ye-es, sir?"

"You were talking! Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

It was the following morning, in the Shell Form-room, and Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was in rather a fiery mood. Since the beginning of the lesson, lines had fallen thicker than leaves in Vallombrosa on the heads of the Shell fellows.

Latin was the subject that the Shell were struggling with. To the Shell, the works of the famous Mr. Virgil were not exactly fascinating.

"If you ask me," breathed Willis to Woolley, "old Virgil wrote a lot of piffle!"

"Willis!"

"Oh, my hat! Y-yes, sir?"

"You were talking, too! What did you find it so important to say to Woolley?" demanded Mr. Linton, in a vinegary tone.

"Ahem!" Willis went the colour of a lobster. "I—I——"

"I am waiting, Willis!"

"It wasn't anything important, sir!" gasped Willis.

Mr. Linton's eyes glinted. He reached for his cane,

"I insist upon knowing! Otherwise——" And Mr. Linton swished the cane ominously.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Willis. "As—as a matter of fact, sir, I simply said that Virgil wrote a—a lot of piffle, sir!"

Mr. Linton jumped.

A titter ran round the Form-room. The Shell, at any rate, agreed with Willis! Mr. Linton, on the other hand, did not, and the Shell felt sorry for the object of his wrath.

"A—a lot of—of piffle?" gasped Mr. Linton.

He passed a hand feebly across his brow. It was quite a shock to Mr. Linton to know that anyone could suggest such an outrageous thing about the writer of the "Aeneid."

"Piffle?" repeated the master of the Shell weakly. Then his brow grew stern and his eyes glinted. "You will do me two hundred lines of Virgil, to try to teach you to appreciate his immortal works, Willis."

And, with a glare at the unfortunate Willis, Mr. Linton turned his attention once more to his "Aeneid."

"We are on page fifteen!" announced Mr. Linton in a voice that nearly broke a window, according to Lowther afterwards. "Begin at 'Jupiter!'"

Woolley found the place in a flustered way and coughed.

"Hem! 'Jupiter omnipotens——'"

Woolley had not the faintest idea what 'omnipotens' meant.

Wallace, on his left, tried to whisper to him that 'omnipotens' meant 'almighty,' but Woolley failed to hear. He racked his brains feverishly. Somehow the word looked familiar. Suddenly he brightened.



As the Three Trouncers went wearily up the School House steps, Grundy of the Shell met them. "Great pip!" he exclaimed. "You chaps look hot! Been playing cricket?" It was the last straw. Wallace, Willis and Woolley hurled themselves at Grundy and bundled him down the steps. "Yarooogh!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Woolley! Kindly continue construing where Merry left off!"

With a distinctly sickly expression on his face Woolley rose to his feet.

There were several reasons for that sickly look!

For one thing, Woolley had not the faintest idea where Tom Merry had left off—but he dared not admit that awkward fact to Mr. Linton. Another reason was that Woolley was supposed to have prepared his construe on the previous evening. But after his nightmare experience on Little Side, Woolley had felt too utterly weary to be capable of dealing with the works of Mr. Virgil that evening.

"I am waiting, Woolley!" snapped Mr. Linton.

Woolley took the plunge.

"Hem! 'Extemplo'—straightway——"

Mr. Linton gave a growl which could only be likened to that of a hungry tiger.

"What page are you on?" roared Mr. Linton.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Woolley under his breath. "Page th-thirteen, sir."

"Jupiter got on an omnibus——" began Woolley hopefully.

"What?" shrieked Mr. Linton.

Woolley jumped.

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Did I hear you aright?" gasped Mr. Linton. "Will you kindly repeat what you said?"

"Jupiter got off the omnibus," mumbled Woolley, hoping that the alteration would improve matters. Apparently it had not done so, however. Mr. Linton's face went almost purple. And the Shell, though they felt sorry for Woolley, could not stifle their merriment any longer. They yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Linton.

The Shell, with a great effort, stifled their hilarity.

Mr. Linton turned a glittering eye upon the unhappy Woolley.

"Are you trying to be humorous, sir?" roared Mr. Linton.

"Humorous?" echoed Woolley. "Oh, no, sir!"

Mr. Linton glared at him. Then he turned his gaze upon Wallace.

"Wallace! Construe!" he barked.

Wallace rose to his feet.

True to the tradition of the Trouncers, Wallace had no intention of construing a passage that one of his chums had failed in. So Wallace floundered and coughed, till Mr. Linton, with savage face, told Willis to attempt the passage in question.

But Willis, like Wallace, seemed incapable of the task.

Mr. Linton's lips tightened.

"You three boys have evidently made no attempt to prepare this lesson!" he snapped. "Such laziness merits a severe punishment. You will all three be detained on Saturday afternoon, and will copy out the whole lesson in Latin and in English."

"Great pip!" breathed Wallace.

The Three Trouncers looked at one another in dismay.

They had their secret scheme for playing in the team against Abbotsford on Saturday, and they had high hopes of its success. But all that would be knocked on the head if they had to spend the afternoon in the Shell Form-room, working on a detention task for Mr. Linton.

"Talbot, construe!"

Talbot rose, and the mystery as to the meaning of the word 'omnipotens' was solved at last for Woolley—or would have been had he been listening. But he was not. Neither were Willis or Wallace.

With long faces, the Three Trouncers were busy with their own thoughts.

It was really beginning to look as though Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, despite their determined efforts, would be kept out of the Abbotsford match, after all!

CHAPTER 7.

Trouble over Towser!

"IT'S rotten!"

Woolley made that observation in a tone of great despondency.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were seated round a little table in Dame Taggles' tuckshop at tea-time that day, and their faces were frowning and thoughtful.

"Something must be done!" said Willis firmly.

"Absolutely!" declared Wallace.

"But what?" grunted Woolley. "Old Linton is down on us at present. That time we cut detention, you know—"

"He's not forgotten that," admitted Willis gloomily.

As Woolley had remarked, the Three Trouncers had once broken detention, and been caught. Their punishment had been a caning that had lingered in their memory for a long time. If they dared such a thing again, expulsion would probably follow; and even the Three Trouncers were not prepared to risk expulsion, even for the sake of playing in the Abbotsford match!

Some other way had to be found out of the difficulty.

Woolley, sipping a glass of lemonade very thoughtfully, gazed across the tuckshop to where the fat figure of David Llewellyn Wynn was seated at the counter. Fatty Wynn was gorging heartily, and was far too busy to pay any attention to the three plotters in the corner.

"If only Linton would fall in the river, and we saved him!" murmured Wallace longingly. "He'd be sure to let us off then!"

"S'pose we pushed him in—then rescued him!" suggested Willis brightly.

"Rats! Too jolly risky!"

"Think, ye lame ducks!" urged Woolley. "Think of something!"

And, as they munched biscuits and sipped lemonade, the Three Trouncers thought at top pressure.

It was Wallace who had the sudden idea.

"Listen!" he breathed, and proceeded to expound his scheme.

Jack Blake glanced up as there came a tap on the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and three cheery faces grinned into the study. Blake, Herries, and Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who were all busy removing the tea-things from the table, paused in their task.

"Hallo!" grinned Blake. "Come right in!"

"We want to see Herries!" said Willis cheerfully.

"Well, here I am!" nodded Herries.

Wallace Willis, and Woolley beamed on him.

"We hear you've got a dog, Herries," murmured Woolley.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "What do you chaps want with Hewwies' howwid bwute?"

"What?" roared Herries, glaring at the swell of St. Jim's. He began to push back his cuffs. "So Towser's a horrid brute, is he?"

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"He wuined my best toppah the othah day!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "Towsah is a howwid animal—Yawwoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a yell.

If there was one thing that it was not safe to tell Herries it was that his bulldog, Towser, was not the perfect dog Herries considered him to be. To describe Towser as a "howwid animal" was asking for trouble—and Arthur Augustus got it.

"Yow! Oh! You fwightful wottah—"

The swell of St. Jim's tenderly caressed his noble nose, where Herries' fist had landed. Then, pushing back his cuffs, Arthur Augustus hurled himself at Herries.

Crash!

Herries landed in the coal-scuttle, with a yell, as Gussy's fist thumped him on the chin. The swell of St. Jim's stood over him, brandishing his fists.

"Take that, you wuff wottah! I shall administah a feahful thwashin'—"

But Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, grinning, stepped between Arthur Augustus and Herries, pushing the indignant swell of St. Jim's away, and lifting Herries to his feet.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Willis, pway wemembah this is not your studey!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus angrily. "Pway stand aside while I thwash Hewwies—"

"Chuck it, you idiot!" exclaimed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'll scrag him!" hooted Herries.

"Chuck it, Herries, you ass!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Oh, rats!" Blake turned to Wallace, Willis, and Woolley. He was curious to know what the Three Trouncers wanted with Herries—and, more particularly, with Towser. "What do you fellows want, anyway?"

"It's about Herries' ripping bulldog, Towser!" said Willis gravely.

Herries' wrath died away on the instant. He beamed at Willis. Anyone who spoke of that "ripping bulldog, Towser," was sure of Herries' regard.

"What about Towser, old chap?" beamed Herries.

"We're going for a walk into Rylcombe," explained Woolley. "We thought we'd like to take old Towser with us."

"Absolutely," nodded Wallace.

"It would be good for him, the exercise, too," put in Willis.

Blake, Digby, and Arthur Augustus stared at the three chums from Study No. 12 in great astonishment.

It was staggering to them that anyone in their senses could wish to take Towser for a walk!

In the opinion of Herries, Towser was a noble animal; in the opinion of Herries' chums, he was more often a fearful nuisance. Towser nearly always landed his human companions into trouble when he went out. Either he would bite a postman, or kill a chicken, or upset a cyclist—something, at any rate, always happened.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"You must be potty!" exclaimed Blake, staring at the Three Trouncers.

"What's that?" roared Herries fiercely, glaring at Blake.

"Nun-nothing!" said Blake hastily.

"Well, what about it, Herries, old chap?" inquired Willis eagerly.

Herries looked thoughtful. In Herries' opinion, not only was Towser a noble animal, but a valuable animal. He scarcely liked to trust him out with other fellows.

"Well," he said doubtfully, "it's very thoughtful of you—"

"Not at all!"

"He needs exercise, too," added Herries. "But—well, he's not like an ordinary dog—"

"Wathah not!"

"What d'you mean, Gussy?" demanded Herries suspiciously.

"I meahly wemarked 'Wathah not!'" grinned the swell of St. Jim's. "Nothin' in a chap-sayin' 'Wathah not,' is there?"

Herries still looked suspicious, but he let the matter drop and turned again to the Three Trouncers.

"If you'll promise to take the greatest care of him, you can take him with you!" said Herries kindly, as though he were conferring a tremendous favour.

"I'll give you chaps five bob each to lose the beast," grunted Digby. "He ate my best footer boots the other day."

Herries glared at Digby.

"You mean, your rotten footer boots nearly poisoned poor old Towser!" he snapped.

"Why, you cheeky ass!" gasped Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Digby!" snorted Herries, rolling up his sleeves again.

(Continued on page 12.)

AND STILL THEY COME!

Here's another WONDERFUL PICTURE CARD,
IN FULL COLOURS,

TO ADD TO YOUR SET, CHAPS!

You will Find this Free Gift in Next Wednesday's
Bumper Issue. Don't Miss It!



MARVELS of the FUTURE!



No. 9.—A Gyroscopic Mono-railway.

WHAT would you think of a railway where the trains ordinarily ran at 120 miles or so an hour, with only a *single* line instead of the customary double track, and with just a series of wheels down the *centre* of the engine and carriages instead of wheels on both sides?

Well, the whole lot would fall over, you say, and as for the 120 miles an hour it wouldn't do an inch! Wrong! You've heard of the gyroscope? You've probably amused yourself with one—a solid wheel, that spins so quickly you cannot see its motion, inside a couple of circular supports crossing at right angles.

Top and bottom, that furiously spinning wheel ends in points which fit into tiny recesses—thus holding it in place. The great marvel of the gyroscope is that whilst that enclosed wheel, or disc, is in motion, the apparatus cannot over-balance, even though the gadget is placed on the thin edge of a wineglass. That's the toy variety.

The grown-up gyroscopes are now actually operating in torpedoes. One forms part of the steering mechanism, its purpose being to keep the torpedo on a straight course the moment it is fired. Well, this amazing invention has also solved for engineers the secret of travelling by train on a *single* rail. Over twenty years ago an inventor constructed the first mono-rail train. He used petrol engines to work an electric generator and to supply the necessary current to two gyroscopes—built on a colossal scale—which he fitted inside the engine's cab. His mono-rail car ran successfully on a single line, with a single row of wheels down the car's centre, and did miracles in turning extremely sharp bends and climbing gradients which would have brought the ordinary railway engine to an absolute standstill.

His gyroscopes made it simply impossible for the car to topple either one side or the other. The gyroscopes weighed three-

quarters of a ton each, their discs each measured more than three feet across and whirled round at the rate of *fifty revolutions a second*!

Carried a bit further, the idea developed into a complete gyroscope-stabilised train, with a single guide rail running overhead to support the carriages themselves. The overhead guide rail has since been considered unnecessary, and the day may be dawning when all engines and carriages and trucks are gyroscope-fitted—and the railway system of to-day will be as extinct as the bow and arrow in modern warfare!

We have already progressed as far as oil-electric locomotives that do not carry so much as a lump of coal, and the inevitable march of mechanical science—which every day is busy demonstrating that nothing is impossible—is likely in due course to make three out of every four railway wheels follow the coal into the old-fashioned past!

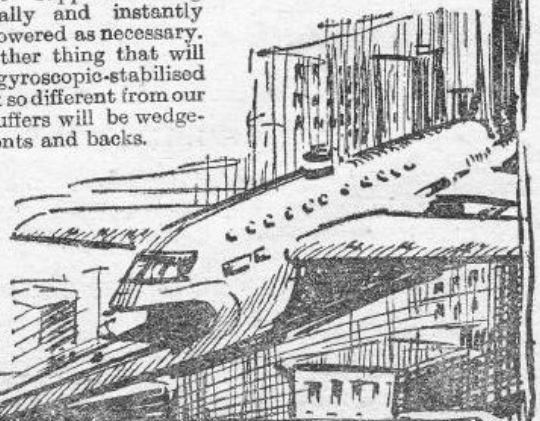
With those colossal discs whirling so that no human being could hope to count the revolutions, hurtling at 120 miles an hour on a steady "keel," on one rail, the trains of some future day will perhaps bear so little resemblance to to-day's monarchs of the iron road that George Stephenson, walking the earth again, would fail utterly to recognize them!

But doubtless you will already have recognized what appears to be the "snag." Supposing the gyroscopes stopped whirling? Supposing the petrol motors supplying the energy to drive the electric generator, on which the gyroscopes depend absolutely, were to crock up? All those points have been weighed—and found wanting! The gyroscopes would not stop spinning for several minutes after the power were cut off, simply because of their speed, the driver and other officials on the train thus having ample warning.

Naturally these amazing trains will be fitted with side flanges which will support them upright when at rest, these supports being automatically and instantly raised or lowered as necessary.

One further thing that will make the gyroscopic-stabilised trains look so different from our familiar buffers will be wedge-shaped fronts and backs.

Next week's article deals with "Shooting the Moon!" another dream of the future, which is the subject of the TENTH Free Gift Picture Card.



"The Trouncers' Triumph!"

(Continued from page 10.)

But Blake stepped between the two.

"Chuck rowing, you idiots! Nobody can say a blessed thing against Towser without you going off at the deep end, Herries, you chump. Anybody would think the rotten tyke was—"

"Look here, Blake, if you're going to call Towser a tyke—"

"Pway wefwain fwom shoutin', Hewwies, deah boy!"

"Rats! Blake called Towser a tyke, and I'll jolly well—"

"Chuck rowing, there's a good chap," said Willis soothingly, stepping forward with a hastily concealed grin on his face, and patting Herries on the shoulder. "These chaps don't appreciate Towser, but they're more to be pitied than blamed, you know." He winked at Blake. "But if you spend all the evening rowing in here, instead of getting old Towser, we shan't be able to take him out, and he'll miss his exercise. So come along!"

With a final glare at his chums, Herries allowed himself to be drawn from the study in company with the Three Trouncers. As the door closed behind them, Blake and Digby and the swell of St. Jim's looked at one another oddly.

"Bai Jove! How vewy extwaordinawy that those three chaps should want to take Towsah for a walk!"

"It beats the band!" agreed Blake, with a puzzled frown.

"Oh, they always were potty!" grinned Digby. "Why, only this morning I heard one of 'em say that they still had hopes of playing in the Abbotsford match!"

"What!" yelled Blake.

"S'fact! How they figured out they had a dog's chance, goodness knows. Anyway, even they must have given up that idea now Linton's dropped on 'em, as Tom Merry was telling us, and has stuck 'em in detention for Saturday afternoon!"

The three chums had finished clearing away the tea-things by the time Herries came back. He closed the door behind him, and glared at the others.

"So you've sent 'em off with Towser?" queried Blake.

"Yes!"

"Poor chaps!" sighed Digby.

Herries began to peel off his coat.

"I've had enough of this!" he said, with icy calm. "I won't stand here and listen to you bounders slanging poor old Towser!"

"Blow Towsah! I considah—"

But what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy considered about Towser was never heard.

Herries, true to his promise, punched the swell of St. Jim's forcibly on the nose. Within three seconds a free fight was raging in Study No. 6, while Towser, the innocent cause of all the trouble, was trotting off on a lead with the Three Trouncers along Rylcombe Lane, sniffing happily at the evening air.

That he was to be used to aid Wallace, Willis, and Woolley in their great design of playing in the Abbotsford match, Towser—like Herries himself—was blissfully unaware!

CHAPTER 8. Treed!

TOWSER was looked after for Herries by one of the school groundsmen. In Herries' opinion it was a crying shame that he was not allowed to keep Towser in his study. But since he was not, Towser did not get all the exercise that he would have liked, and so he strained eagerly at the lead, anxious to be free as he was led along the lane.

"Good old Towser!" grinned Willis. "Wait a bit, then you'll get a good run!"

Wallace and Woolley chuckled mysterious chuckles.

"You're sure you saw Linton go this way?" Willis asked Woolley.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!"

The Three Trouncers hurried on, with Towser snuffing and grunting at the end of the lead.

"There he is!" breathed Woolley suddenly.

The three inseparables had rounded a bend in the lane, and had caught sight of an elderly figure strolling slowly along in front of them. It was Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, out for a quiet evening walk.

Mr. Linton was feeling very peaceful and contented as he

strolled along. The birds were singing in the woods, and the evening sunlight flooded the road pleasantly. Mr. Linton began to hum softly to himself as he went.

Footsteps behind him caused him to turn his head.

Willis was overtaking him.

Mr. Linton frowned. He did not like the Three Trouncers—they gave him far too much trouble, in his opinion. But despite the frown, Willis raised his cap cheerfully and fell into step beside the master of the Shell. Mr. Linton had not seen Wallace and Woolley, for the simple reason that those two youths had slipped out of sight behind the hedge, and were keeping within reach on the other side of it.

"Good-evening, sir!" beamed Willis. "Lovely evening!"

"A very pleasant evening," admitted Mr. Linton severely.

"The birds sound nice, sir," suggested Willis.

"Very!" replied the master of the Shell. "I trust, Willis," he added acidly, "that you will return to the school in plenty of time to attend to your evening's preparation."

"Oh, yes, sir," nodded Willis calmly. "I am just going into Rylcombe. Perhaps I had better hurry on."

And raising his cap again, Willis hurried on, and Mr. Linton strolled on alone—in utter ignorance of the fact that Willis had taken the opportunity, while walking alongside, to pin a large and juicy-looking piece of beef to his coat-tails.

Mr. Linton strolled on, and again began to hum. But he did not hum for long.

A sudden, wild yell caused him to jump almost out of his skin. He glanced round hastily, and gave a quick exclamation.

Two running figures some distance down the road he recognised as being Wallace and Woolley. But it was not they who interested Mr. Linton at the moment. It was the sight of a large bulldog rushing up the road in his direction, with a hungry light in its eyes, that caused Mr. Linton to give a gasp of alarm.

"Look out, sir!"

Wallace's warning yell came to his ears. But it was not needed. Mr. Linton's starting eyes had already taken in the sight of Towser coming for him, and he did not wait. He broke into a sprint, and tore off up the lane, with the bulldog in hot pursuit.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Linton. "The animal is after me! Help!"

The master of the Shell had an idea that the dog was mad. At any rate, it had looked thoroughly savage, and without a doubt it was pursuing him. Mr. Linton raced on, with a turn of speed that astonished Wallace and Woolley.

It astonished Towser, too.

Towser, his eyes on the delicious lump of meat dangling at Mr. Linton's coat-tails, gave a growl of annoyance as he saw it vanishing up the road. He redoubled his exertions. But the lack of exercise that Towser suffered was beginning to tell. Though he kept up a good speed he failed to overtake the flying figure of the master of the Shell, and the lump of meat to which he was attached.

But Towser was nothing, if not determined. Wheezing and snorting, he pounded on in hungry pursuit.

Mr. Linton, glancing over his shoulder, saw that he was being slowly overhauled, and a chill went down his spine.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Linton. "Groooooffff!"

He raced on madly.

Wallace and Woolley, following in the rear, were so helpless with laughter that they could hardly run. The sight of Mr. Linton with the lump of meat fastened to his coat-tails, flying up Rylcombe Lane with Towser hot on his heels, was one that sent them almost into hysterics.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wallace. "Oh, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Woolley. "Come on! It's working fine!"

Mr. Linton was too far ahead to hear their laughter. His eyes were fixed glassily upon a tree standing at the roadside a little farther on. He made a bee-line for it.

With Towser steadily overhauling him now, Mr. Linton regarded that tree as his only hope. He staggered up to it breathlessly, and Towser came scooting up behind, with his eyes on the juicy piece of meat attached to Mr. Linton. The Form master, with a last, desperate effort, sprang for the lowest branch of the tree just as Towser sprang for the meat.

The master of the Shell beat Towser by inches only; but he did beat him.

Towser's teeth snapped in mid-air within a couple of inches of the seat of Mr. Linton's trousers, and the master of the Shell clutched frantically at the stout branch above him, and clasped it with his arms and legs, hanging on for dear life.

"Saved!" panted Mr. Linton. "Saved! Oh! Groooooff!"

Breathless and perspiring, the master of the Shell hung on, clinging to his branch, and twisting his head to glare down at Towser.

Towser, bitterly disappointed, was jumping up in a vain attempt to reach the piece of meat he was after, which was still pinned securely to the unsuspecting master's coat-tails. He had set his heart upon that tasty morsel.

To Mr. Linton, however, it seemed that Towser was trying to get at him, and that the eager, hungry light in Towser's eyes was a maddened gleam.

Mr. Linton shuddered.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Linton. "What a terrible predicament!"

"Grrrr!" growled Towser. "Gr-r-r-r!"

Mr. Linton shivered with fright, and clung tighter to the branch. He glanced wildly up and down the road. It seemed deserted. As yet Wallace and Woolley had not come into sight round the corner.

"Oh dear!" groaned Mr. Linton. "I—I—I—shall fall in a minute! The beast will attack me—"

He broke off with a gasp.

Unused as he was to athletic performances, Mr. Linton felt that he could not cling to that branch much longer. His strength was already beginning to fail him. Only the desperation of fear enabled him to retain his hold.

"Gr-r-r-r!" from Towser.

Towser licked his lips greedily. He could still see the tasty morsel hanging from those coat-tails above him, out

of reach. Mr. Linton glanced down and shuddered at the sight of the gleaming teeth below him.

And then there came a shout from up the road.

A running figure came sprinting towards the trees. It was Willis. The next moment two more figures appeared from the other direction—Wallace and Woolley.

"Help!" wailed Mr. Linton.

The three Trouncers rushed bravely forward.

Towser eyed them in great surprise. He wagged his stumpy tail and snuffled in a friendly way. The Three Trouncers brandished their arms at him, shouting.

"Clear off, you brute!" shouted Willis.

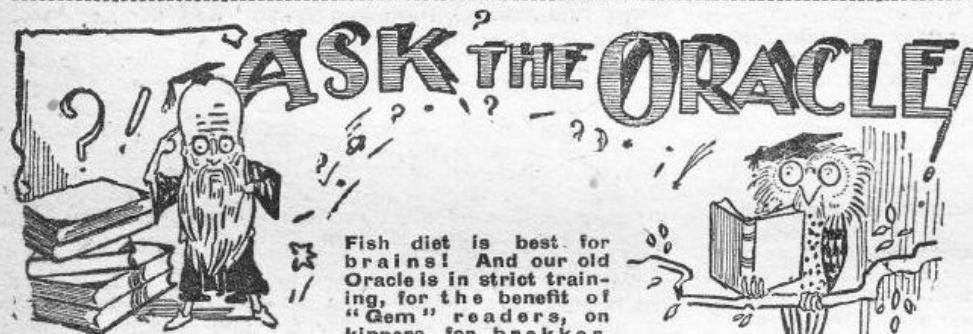
"Shoooo!" cried Wallace.

"Get out, you beast!" roared Woolley.

To all appearance Wallace, Willis, and Woolley were doing their best to scare away the "ferocious" animal, ignoring all danger to themselves. But Mr. Linton, clinging excitedly above their heads, failed to see that Woolley had a piece of meat hidden in his hand—failed, too, to see that junior toss it quickly over the hedge.

But Towser saw it, and in a flash he rushed away through a hole in the hedge in pursuit of it. A moment later he was contentedly devouring his prize on the other side of

(Continued on next page.)



Fish diet is best for brains! And our old Oracle is in strict training, for the benefit of "Gem" readers, on kippers for brekker, dabs for dinner, shrimps for tea, and bloaters for supper. His landlady, however, does not guarantee the quality of the grub, and he complained the other day that he noticed something decidedly fishy about it!

Q. How many millionaires are there in Great Britain?

A. No less than 543. But, nowadays, "Crocus," men with over a million of money don't shout too loudly about it, and as they usually have it spread throughout many business concerns, the public do not know the full extent of their wealth even if the Income Tax collectors do. It is also known, though, that 147 people in Great Britain have an annual income of £100,000. By the way, my chum, you chose a very extraordinary pen-name in "Crocus." Do you by any chance mean "Crosus," which was the name of a king of Lydia, and now is the term for any wealthy person? The first syllable of it, "Croe," is pronounced "krese."

Q. Is there such a thing as a sea-dragon?

A. Yes, "Sister of Regular Reader," a small creature such as is depicted below, lives in Australian waters.



This queer-looking creature is a sea-dragon of Australian waters.

Q. Who was Dr. Buchan?

A. A famous meteorologist who was born over a hundred years ago and whose weather prophecies are still noted with interest. Alexander Buchan is chiefly remembered because of his statement that cold periods of weather and warm periods might be expected with a certain regularity. The "Buchan's cold periods" are:

1st: Feb. 7—10 4th: June 29—July 4

2nd: April 11—14 5th: Aug. 6—11

3rd: May 9—14 6th: Nov. 6—12

The "Buchan warm periods" are:

1st: July 12—15 3rd: Dec. 3—9

2nd: Aug. 12—15

Now, take note, my chums, and see how these ancient prophecies by Dr. Buchan pan out for the rest of the year.

Q. Which crack tennis players are known as "Big Bill," "Poker Face," and "Bunny" respectively?

A. This is the question sent in from Charlie B., of Bootle, except that he wrote the last word as "respectfully" which, in the circles, was somewhat out of place. "Big Bill" is William Tilden, ex-champion of the world; "Poker Face" is Miss Helen Wills, the lady champion, whose countenance shows neither joy nor disappointment while a match is on. "Bunny" is the young Englishman, H. W. Austin, whom we hope one day will be good enough to beat the best of the American and French players. Even as a schoolboy, "Bunny" was no "rabbit" at the great lawn tennis game!

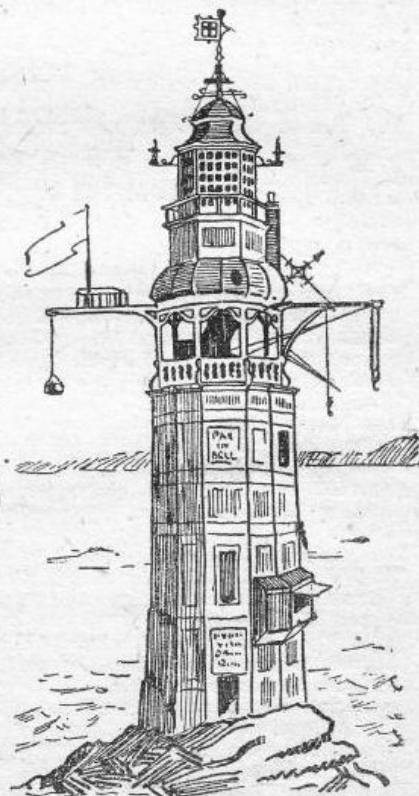
Q. Why not paint pillar-boxes green?

A. That is what a Bulberry-on-the-Hill chum wants to know. It seems that this lad, who tells me that he is known locally as "Looney" Luck, was coming home from his job scaring crows the other crimson evening when he walked into one without seeing it—a pillar-box, I mean, not a crow. The result was that the nose of my correspondent speedily matched in splendour both the pillar-box and the sunset. And, as "L" L. points out, had not the pillar-box been of a hue to match the western sky, he would have been saved tuppence for sticking-plaster. But obviously, my chum, the question of changing the colour scheme of the pillar-boxes throughout Great Britain, as you suggest, is one for the Postmaster-General. In writing to him, however, mind you put a 1½d. stamp on the letter and not a green ha'penny one as you did on mine!

Q. Who was Henry Winstanley?

A. The builder of the first Eddystone lighthouse, the fantastic-looking building shown in the illustration. Winstanley was

born at Saffron Waldron in March, 1644, and became keen to set a light on the dreaded Eddystone rocks about fourteen miles south-west of Plymouth. In this project he had to overcome the most bitter opposition, not only of the wreckers of those times, but also certain powerful squires who took toll from wrecked ships. Then, while Winstanley was building his lighthouse, he was bodily carried off by a French pirate who, however, released him on the order of Louis the Fourteenth. The lighthouse stood but for a short time, and then was swept away in a great storm with the gallant builder in it. Winstanley's failure in his humane work of providing light and safety to the seafarers, was caused by his insufficient knowledge of cements, or so it has been said.



The first Eddystone lighthouse, built by Henry Winstanley hundreds of years ago.

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the hedge, while the Three Trouncers were busy helping Mr. Linton to earth from his precarious perch.

Back on the solid ground again, Mr. Linton almost collapsed. He was far too breathless and dazed to notice Wallace hastily unpin the piece of meat from his coat-tails, and toss it over the hedge to keep Towser busy.

"My—my brave boys!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Not at all, sir," murmured Willis modestly.

Woolley retrieved Mr. Linton's fallen hat, and the master of the Shell returned it to his head.

"It was most heroic, the way you three boys risked the maddened animal's fury, and came to my rescue," declared Mr. Linton faintly.

"Oh, sir!"

"I could not have clung to that branch much longer," went on Mr. Linton breathlessly. "I—I tremble to think what would have happened had I fallen. I should have been at the ferocious animal's mercy."

"Yes, I'm afraid you would," said Wallace gravely.

"Lucky we came along when we did, sir."

"Most fortunate," agreed Mr. Linton warmly.

He patted Wallace on the shoulder, and beamed at all three.

"I can never thank you boys enough! I—I feel that such bravery must not go unrewarded."

Unseen by Mr. Linton, Woolley winked gravely at Willis and Wallace.

"I feel that I was a little severe with you three boys this morning," went on Mr. Linton kindly. "I—er—I misjudged you, I feel sure. In the circumstances, I shall not require you boys to remain in detention on Saturday afternoon after all."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" chorused Wallace, Willis, and Woolley.

Mr. Linton gave them a very kindly nod, set his hat at a rather more dignified angle, and set off a little shakily along the road back to St. Jim's. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley watched him go, with grave faces. But as soon as Mr. Linton had vanished round the bend, they collapsed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Three Trouncers.

Their plan had worked. They were free on Saturday to put into practice their plan for including themselves in the cricket eleven to meet the Abbotsford team. But even so they had no thoughts of Abbotsford at the moment. The picture of Mr. Linton, treed by Towser, occupied their minds to the exclusion of all else.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wallace straightened himself at last with difficulty, and whistled. Towser came trotting back on to the road through the hole in the hedge, licking his lips.

He had finished his meal, and was feeling very pleased with himself and the world. Wallace stooped over him and pulled his ear.

"Good old Towser!" he chuckled. "Thanks to you, we're jolly well going to play in the Abbotsford match, whether Tom Merry wants us to or not."

"You bet we are!" grinned Willis and Woolley.

And Towser wagged his tail cheerily.

CHAPTER 9.

Wallace Climbs Down!

"COME in!"

Tom Merry, busy with his prep that evening, glanced up as the door opened.

Wallace, Woolley, and Willis entered the junior captain's study. They nodded to Manners and Lowther, who were also seated at the table, and then Wallace turned to Tom Merry.

"About Abbotsford!" said Wallace.

Tom Merry jumped.

He had imagined that the Three Trouncers had given up all thoughts of taking part in the Abbotsford match after the terrific trouncing they had received on Little Side on Wednesday afternoon. But apparently he had been very mistaken.

"Abbotsford?" echoed Tom.

"That's what I said!" grinned Wallace. "Absolutely."

Tom smiled rather grimly. He leant back in his chair and eyed Wallace steadily.

"Well?" he said. "What about Abbotsford, Wallace?"

"I want to play in that match," explained Wallace.

Tom's smile went more grim still.

"I offered you a place in the team, and you turned it down," he said curtly.

"I know," Wallace nodded. "But I've changed my mind. I want to play, after all."

Tom Merry stared at Wallace searchingly. Then he glanced at Willis and Woolley.

"And I suppose," he said dryly, "you two also want to play?"

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"Naturally," nodded Willis coolly. "But we don't insist."

"That's jolly kind of 'em!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"No," said Wallace. "It's just me! Of course, you're an ass not to play Woolley and Willis, but we don't insist on their names going down."

"You mean you're willing to play in the team without them?" ejaculated Tom, staring at Wallace curiously. This was certainly a big change of front for the three inseparables!

"I suppose I shall have to!" grinned Wallace.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another. It seemed that a big change had come over the Three Trouncers, for them to agree to split up in any way. But if Wallace were really willing to play in the team without his chums, it meant that the loss of Redfern could be replaced better than by Clive.

But still Tom hesitated.

He had strongly resented Wallace's calm cheek in refusing to play in the first place unless Willis and Woolley were also included in the team. He felt that Wallace needed a lesson. Yet if Wallace had really come to see sense, was it fair to keep him out of the eleven?

Besides, there was St. Jim's to think of. There was no doubt that Wallace was a first-class cricketer, and would be a greater asset to the team than Clive, sound cricketer though the South African junior was. With Wallace's aid



"Hard luck, Clive, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy across the table. "Digby, seated beside Arthur Augustus, dug his elbow into his side, raising his cup to his lips."

in the batting line, St. Jim's would stand a very fine chance of beating the strongest of Abbotsford sides.

"Very well," said Tom briefly. "I'll put you in the team, Wallace."

"Good!"

"But, mind you, there's no room for Woolley and Willis!" added Tom suspiciously.

"That's all right!" chuckled Willis.

"Don't worry about us," grinned Woolley.

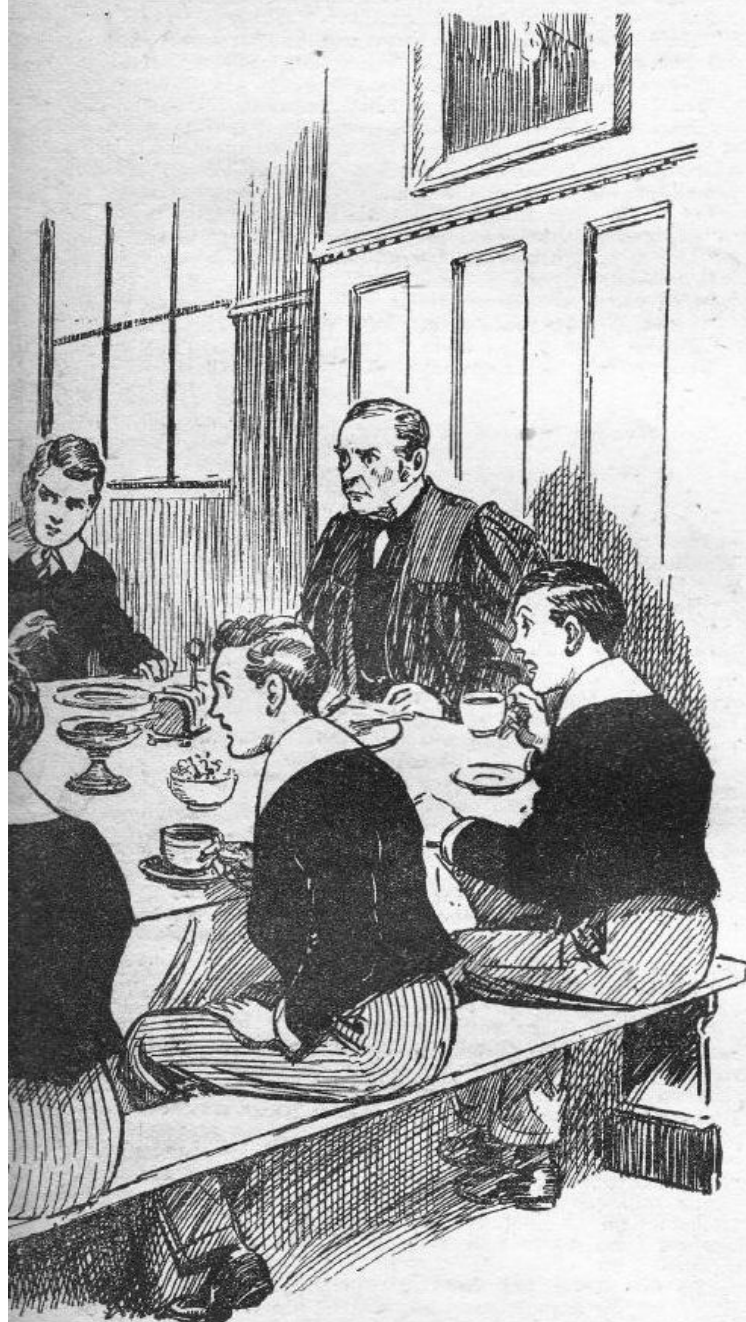
Tom Merry & Co. felt that the age of miracles had certainly not passed as they watched the Three Trouncers stroll from the study.

"My hat!" ejaculated Manners, as the door closed behind them. "The blessed inseparables are going to separate, after all!"

"I'm jolly glad to have Wallace in the team, I must say!" exclaimed Tom. "He'll take Redfern's place well. I'm afraid old Clive will be disappointed, but that can't be helped. I'll just buzz down and alter the list."

There was a look of satisfaction on Tom Merry's face as he rose to his feet. But could he have seen the grave winks that the Three Trouncers had exchanged after closing the door of the study, the suspicions of the skipper of the junior eleven would certainly have had a sudden revival.

There were several fellows standing in the Hall when Tom came down the stairs. Among them was Clive, with Levison and Cardew, his two chums, with whom he shared Study No. 9 in the Fourth. Tom approached the group.



akfast table. "Although you are not quite good enough for the team Gussy's ribs at an unlucky moment, for the swell of St. Jim's was pooch!" (See Chapter 10.)

"Hallo, dear man!" drawled Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth. "Wherefore the solemn look, Thomas?"

"I've got rather bad news for Clive," confessed Tom. "I'm afraid you'll be frightfully disappointed, old man, but I shan't be wanting you on Saturday, after all."

Clive's face fell. "Oh! Why not? You don't mean Redfern's better? He can't be!"

"No, of course not. But Wallace is p'aying in the team, after all."

Clive jumped.

"Wallace! But he won't separate from Woolley and Willis!"

"He is, after all," explained Tom Merry. "He came to me just now and asked for his place again. I'm sorry to have to drop you, but Wallace is a pretty hot batsman, and I can't say no to him."

"Of course not," nodded Clive, trying to hide his dis-

appointment. "Don't worry about me. So long as we lick Abbotsford, that's all I care about!"

"So our friend Wallace has decided to split from our inseparable pals for once?" drawled Cardew.

"That's it!" nodded Tom.

"I wonder!" yawned Cardew.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Nothin', dear man!"

Tom Merry, puzzled by Cardew's cryptic remark, turned towards the board, where the cricket list was pinned. He substituted Wallace's name for Clive's, while the South African watched the proceeding with a rueful smile.

It was a great disappointment to Clive to be dropped from the team, but he had to admit that Tom had done the right thing. Since Wallace had seen sense, and was now willing to play without his chums being also included in the eleven, Tom had done the only possible thing in putting him in; for Wallace was known to be a first-class batsman, and would be much more use to the team than Clive, good though Clive could be when on form.

But there was an odd look in the eyes of Ralph Reckness Cardew as Tom Merry vanished up the stairs.

Cardew was wondering how genuine was Wallace's declaration that he would be willing to play in the team without his chums.

In everything, the Three Trouncers stuck together like glue. It seemed curious that Wallace should suddenly be willing to break away.

And again, under his breath, the slacker of the Fourth murmured to himself, with a curious smile:

"I wonder!"

CHAPTER 10. Off to Abbotsford!

"RIPPING day for the match!"

Tom Merry, standing at the window of the Shell dormitory, in his pyjamas, made that remark with great satisfaction.

Tom had just tumbled out of bed, but the clang of the rising-bell was only now dying away. It was the morning of the day of the Abbotsford match.

As Tom had announced, it promised to be an ideal day for cricket. The morning was cool and fresh, and the grass of the distant playing-fields looked green and tempting.

"Good!" grinned Talbot, crossing to Tom's side. "Let's hope we give Abbotsford a trouncing."

"Well, we've got one Trouncer in the team, anyway!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows chuckled, and glanced across at the bed from which Wallace was at that moment scrambling. Willis and Woolley, who were also climbing out from between the blankets, grinned serenely. Apparently they had quite resigned themselves to being left out, despite the inclusion of their inseparable chum.

There were very bright faces at breakfast that morning. The members of the team were looking forward keenly to their visit to Abbotsford that afternoon.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaned across the table, and addressed Clive in a kindly tone.

"Hard luck, deah boy!"

"Eh?" Clive coloured a trifle. "Oh, rats! Good luck to Wallace."

"That's the spiwit, deah boy! So long as we lick Abbotsford, you won't mind bein' left out of the team, I pwesume?"

"Of course not!" growled Clive.

"That's the way to talk, deah boy!" The swell of St. Jim's nodded approvingly. "It doesn't matter, so long as we win, that you are not quite good enough for the team, does it?"

"Ass!" said Clive, going very red indeed, and looking considerably less cheery.

Arthur Augustus, with his usual "tact," had managed to say the wrong thing entirely! Blake, opposite the swell of St. Jim's, kicked out under the table, and Arthur Augustus gave a yell.

"Yawooooop! Bai Jove!"

"Leave old Clive alone!" hissed Blake.

"I meahly told Clive it didn't mattah that he was not good enough for the team, so long as we won!" snorted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I considah— Yooooch!"

Again Blake's foot hacked Gussy's elegant shin, and again Gussy gave a sharp ejaculation. Mr. Lathom, at the head of the table, frowned.

"Kindly refrain from making so much noise at breakfast, D'Arcy!"

"Ow! Yaas— Vewy well, sir!"

Arthur Augustus glared at Blake. Then he leaned across towards Clive again.

"Clive, deah boy!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, in

genuine concern. "I twust you did not mind my mentionin' the fact that you were dwoopped fwom the team?"

"No, ass!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Clive! I mean to say, the fact that you are not good enough for the team is not—"

Digby, seated beside Arthur Augustus, saw Clive's face grow very red and uncomfortable. It was not pleasant for Clive to have it rubbed in before everybody that he was not considered good enough for the Abbotsford match! But before Arthur Augustus could "put his foot in it" any farther, Digby dug an elbow sharply into the swell of St. Jim's ribs.

It was unlucky that Arthur Augustus was just raising his cup to his lips at that moment.

"Ooooooh!"

The cup went flying, and there was a yell from Herries as the contents of it poured over him. The cup shattered on the table, smashing a plate with it, and Mr. Lathom gave an exclamation.

"D'Arcy!"

"Y-y-yaas, sir?" gasped Arthur Augustus in dismay.

"How dare you indulge in this hooliganism at the breakfast table?" thundered Mr. Lathom. "Take two hundred lines!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus lapsed into silence at last on the subject of Clive's omission from the team—much to that junior's relief!

Morning lessons seemed to drag very, very slowly that morning. But at last they were finished; and after a hasty dinner the cricketers piled into the big motor-coach that was to take them to Rylcombe Station.

A tremendous cheer rang out in the old quad as the team passed out of the gates.

"Good luck, chaps!" roared Grundy of the Shell.

"Give Abbotsford my love—and a licking!" shouted Owen, of the New House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, with the cheers of the juniors ringing in their ears, Tom Merry's team settled down in their seats for the brief drive to Rylcombe. Monty Lowther, seated next to Wallace, glanced at the new fellow curiously.

"What's happened to Woolley and Willis?" asked Lowther.

He had noticed, rather to his surprise, that neither of Wallace's chums were in the crowd gathered round the gates to send the team off with a cheer.

"Weren't they there?" murmured Wallace.

But a little later, as the motor-coach drew up in the station yard, two figures came strolling from the direction of the booking-office, grinning broadly. Monty Lowther gave a gasp.

The two were Woolley and Willis.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he jumped down.

"What are you chaps doing here?"

"We're coming with you!" explained Willis. "We want to see the match."

"Have you got leave to go over to Abbotsford?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rather!" chuckled Willis. "Mr. Linton got leave for us from the Head!"

"You see," said Woolley blandly, "we can't separate. We couldn't let old Wallace go over to Abbotsford without us!"

"Rather not!" grinned Willis.

"Absolutely!" chimed in Wallace.

And the three inseparables grinned cheery grins, as they and the rest of the juniors marched into the station, just as the Abbotsford train steamed in.

CHAPTER 11.

Left Behind!

"NOW we're off!"

It was Willis who spoke, as the train drew slowly out of Rylcombe Station. There was an odd tone of satisfaction in Willis' voice.

Wallace and Woolley chuckled.

The Three Truncers were sharing a carriage with Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Talbot, and Kangaroo. In the next carriage Tom Merry, and Lowther, and Levison, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, had piled in together.

"A pretty long journey to Abbotsford, isn't it?" murmured Wallace.

"Over an hour," nodded Talbot.

"A pity we haven't got some dominoes to pass the time away," suggested Willis.

"We ought to get some at Wayland, when we stop there," put in Woolley brightly.

"That's not a bad idea," agreed Blake.

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It did not take long for the train to reach Wayland. As it drew to a standstill Woolley glanced at Blake.

"Shall we see if we can get some dominoes at the bookstall?"

"All right."

Woolley jumped out on to the platform, and Blake followed him.

The two headed for the bookstall, to find that dominoes were not among the things for sale there. Blake turned to go back to the carriage, but Woolley touched him on the arm.

"Half a jiff! Plenty of time, you know. I say, these 'Annuals' look pretty good. What about buying one?"

"Not a bad idea," nodded Blake.

Woolley began to turn over the 'Annuals' thoughtfully.

"Buck up!" exclaimed Blake.

But Woolley evidently could not make up his mind which "Annual" he would like to buy. Blake, growing impatient, took him by the arm.

"Come on, you idiot! The train'll be going in a jiff!"

"Oh, rats! Plenty of time! I say, what about this one?"

"That'll do! Come on, for goodness' sake!"

But Woolley found he hadn't any change.

"Can you change a ten-bob note?" he inquired.

"I can't!" snapped Blake. "Come along!"

"But—"

Blake gave a sharp exclamation. He had seen the guard raise the whistle to his lips.

"Look out; they're off!"

Still Woolley lingered, searching through his pockets for change. Again Blake caught his arm. The whistle shrilled, and the train began to move slowly.

"Quick, you idiots!"

It was the voice of Tom Merry. Tom was leaning out of the window of his carriage, yelling to Blake and Woolley. At last Woolley turned away from the bookstall and broke into a run beside Blake towards the train.

"Stand back there!" shouted a porter warningly.

"I don't think!" panted Blake.

Kangaroo flung open the door of the carriage, which the porter had slammed. The excited faces of the juniors crowded at the door, and at the window of the next carriage. The porter sprang forward to intercept Blake and Woolley; but Blake was not standing on ceremony!

Thanks to Woolley's lingering, Blake realised that he was in grave danger of missing the train—and he knew that there was not another one to Abbotsford for a long time. His face went grim as the porter stepped between him and the open door, and without hesitation the leader of the Fourth put his head down and charged.

The porter was a big, fat man, and he gave a gasp like a punctured balloon as Blake's head struck him amidships. "Groooooofff!" gasped the porter, and sat down on the platform with a bump.

"Good man!" yelled Talbot, at the door of the open carriage. He stretched out a hand to Blake. "Quick—"

But before Blake could grasp Talbot's hand Woolley, racing at his side, stumbled. He fell against Blake, and sent him spinning.

There was a group of empty milk-cans near by, and Blake collapsed amongst them with a great clatter.

Crash!

One of the milk-cans overturned as Blake clutched it round the middle, and the leader of the Fourth and the empty milk-can went bowling along the platform merrily. Blake let go his hold, and the milk-can, rolling on, neatly knocked from under him the legs of the fat porter as he scrambled up.

The fat porter sat down with another thud and yell. Blake sat up dazedly, and goggled at the train. The last carriage was sliding past, and Woolley was in the act of climbing hastily into it.

"My hat!" stuttered Blake.

He struggled to his feet in utter dismay.

He had a vague idea that even now he might not be too late. But before he could dash for the last carriage as it slid past, the burly porter had grasped him.

"You young limb!" roared the porter.

"Hands off!" panted Blake wildly. "I must catch that train—"

"I don't think!"

Helpless in that powerful grasp, Blake watched with agonised eyes as the last carriage slid out past the end of the platform and vanished under the bridge. As it disappeared he caught a glimpse of Woolley hanging out of the last compartment with a broad grin on his face. From windows farther along the dismayed faces of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Talbot and Kangaroo, of Tom Merry and Lowther and Figgins were protruding in utter consternation.

"Blake's missed the train!" panted Tom Merry. "Oh, great pip!"

"The frabjous idiot!" groaned Figgins.

"And there isn't another train to Abbotsford for hours!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

The six occupants of Tom Merry's carriage looked at one another blankly.

Picking up speed rapidly the train rattled on towards Abbotsford without Jack Blake.

CHAPTER 12.

Figgins, Too!

IN the compartment next to Tom Merry's, Wallace and Willis shook their heads gravely.

"The silly ass!" said Willis. "He deserved to get left behind, if you ask me."

"Absolutely!" nodded Wallace. "He would hang about on the platform."

"Oh deah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy withdrew his head from the window, and surveyed his companions with a troubled look. "This is wotten, deah boys! Fwightfully wotten!"

"It is," agreed Talbot grimly.

"Well," said Kangaroo, with a wry grin, "it's a lucky thing for the team that we've got Woolley and Willis with us. We shan't have to play a man short, anyway."

"You are suah Blake can't get to Abbotsford in time?" asked the swell of St. Jim's unhappily.

"Of course, he can't!"

"Oh deah!"

"Never mind," said Wallace soothingly. "Woolley or Willis can take his place, and they'll put up a better show than old Blake would have done, if you ask me."

"Wats!" snorted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "They aren't in the same stweet as Blake as cwicketahs—"

"Oh, aren't we?" ejaculated Willis grimly. "Why, you silly dummy—"

"I wefuse to be called a dummay!"

"Refuse away! I'm calling you one."

Biff!

Arthur Augustus, feeling that actions were of more use than words, hit out, and his elegant knuckles took Willis on the nose. Willis yelled, and flung himself at the swell of St. Jim's. But Talbot and Kangaroo soon dragged the two apart.

"Chuck that, you idiots!" growled Talbot.

"But he punched me on the nose!" howled Willis.

"The boundah called me a dummay!"

"Chuck it!" roared Talbot.

With the help of the grinning Kangaroo, Talbot pushed the two indignant juniors into opposite corners of the carriage. Arthur Augustus and Willis sat glaring at one another.

Talbot, Kangaroo, and the six cricketers in the next carriage were all feeling the reverse of cheerful.

The loss of Blake had cast a shadow over their spirits.

They discussed the catastrophe in both carriages, and only Wallace and Willis failed to join in the conversation. And Woolley, being alone in the last compartment of the train, also kept his thoughts to himself.

"Well," said Figgins, with an attempt at cheerfulness in Tom Merry's carriage, "it's a bit of luck that Woolley and Willis decided to come along with the team."

"Yes, that's so," admitted Tom. "I shall have to play one of them. Woolley, I think, is the better bat of the two, and it's batting we want," he added thoughtfully. "But it's rotten, Blake getting left at Wayland."

And Monty Lowther, Levison, and Figgins & Co. agreed that it was very rotten indeed.

At the next stop Woolley rejoined his chums in the compartment they were sharing with Kangaroo, Talbot, and Arthur Augustus. Woolley shook his head sadly.

"Poor old Blake!" he murmured. "What rotten luck!"

Tom Merry, leaning out of the window of the next carriage, called to Woolley, who put his head out of the window.

"I shall want you to play this afternoon in Blake's place," said Tom shortly. "Think you can wear his flannels?"

"You bet!" nodded Woolley cheerfully.

The train moved on.

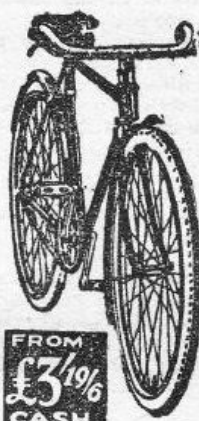
The next stop, twenty minutes later, was at Meltham Junction. The cricketers knew that the train stopped there five minutes, so most of them got out to stretch their legs. Fatty Wynn rolled in the direction of the buffet, and did not reappear until Figgins dived in and hauled him out, wiping jam from his mouth and protesting violently.

"Hang it, Figgy! There's time for another tart or two!" gasped the Falstaff of the New House plaintively.

"There isn't!" said Figgins grimly. "We're not going to risk losing you, as well as Blake!"

And with a firm grasp on Fatty Wynn's collar the leader

(Continued on next page.)



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of the New House whirled the demon bowler of the eleven towards his carriage and bundled him in.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, returning from a look at the bookstall, climbed into Tom Merry's carriage.

"Thought we'd change," chuckled Willis. "Things are a bit strained in the next carriage Gussy's in one of his freezing moods because I called him a dummy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A porter slammed the door.

"Now, we're off!" said Figgins. "I say, Lowther, I haven't got room for these pads in my bag! I wonder if I could stick 'em in yours?"

"Right-ho!" nodded Lowther.

Figgins picked his cricket pads from the rack. Wallace, moving to his seat, stumbled at that moment and cannoned into Willis. Willis gave a gasp and floundered heavily against Figgins. There was a yell from the New House leader as he collapsed against the window, and the next moment his pads had shot out on to the platform.

"You clumsy ass!" roared Figgins.

"Buck up and get those pads in!" shouted Tom Merry anxiously. "We're just about going."

Figgins hastily flung open the door. As he did so the whistle shrilled and the train began to move. There was a shout of alarm from Fatty Wynn.

"Buck up, Figgy, you ass!"

Figgins sprang out swiftly on to the platform and snatched up his pads. Willis, apparently in great excitement, leapt out, too, as if to help Figgins recover the pads, but he stumbled against Figgins, and the two collapsed in a heap.

"Oh, you idiot!" gasped Figgins.

He scrambled up, and so did Willis. Figgins snatched up his pads again, and Willis caught hold of them, too.

"Leggo!" roared Figgins.

The train was moving quite swiftly now. Together Figgins and Willis sprang for their carriage.

"Stand back, there!" roared the angry guard.

Figgins jumped for the open door. Willis caught hold of him, dragging him back.

"You can't risk it!" he shouted. "The next carriage will—"

The next carriage door was open, too; and Talbot and Kangaroo and the swell of St. Jim's were excitedly stretching out their hands to help Figgins and Willis on board—particularly Figgins. But Willis, in rushing forward, seemed to catch a foot between Figgins' legs, sending him over with a bump and a yell.

"Groooooof!"

Utterly winded, George Figgins sat on the hard, unsympathetic platform and watched stupidly as the train glided from the station. He saw Willis spring nimbly into the last carriage and wave a hand cheerily as he vanished from sight.

Figgins scrambled up, almost bursting with rage.

"The rotter!" gasped Figgins. "He tripped me up on purpose!"

He brandished a furious fist after the cheerful face of Willis, grinning triumphantly from the window of the end compartment. Could Figgins have chosen Willis' fate at that moment, it would have been something painful and lingering, with boiling oil in it!

Willis kissed his hand sweetly to Figgins before he disappeared from the sight of the dishevelled and raging New House junior.

One thing was very certain. Figgins, like Blake, would not be playing against Abbotsford that afternoon.

CHAPTER 13.

A Stormy Arrival!

"ABBOTSFORD!"

The hoarse voice of a porter could be heard as the train drew to a standstill.

Tom Merry's face was thunderous as the cricketers got out on to the platform.

The little plan of the Three Trouncers was quite clear to Tom now, and he felt he could have kicked himself for not having guessed it before. His blood was fairly boiling as he turned to meet the grinning face of Willis, as Willis came up from the last carriage.

Tom surveyed Willis with gleaming eyes.

"Bad luck, Figgins getting left like that!" remarked Willis.

(THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,112.)

"You think so?" said Tom between his teeth.

"Yes, rather! Frightful bad luck!"

"If you think I don't see through your little game you're mistaken!" said Tom Merry, with dangerous quiet.

"Why, what do you mean?" inquired Willis, in apparent surprise.

Tom Merry glanced round. That end of the platform was, luckily, deserted.

"I'll show you what I mean!" said Tom.

The next moment his fist had shot out straight from the shoulder, and Willis staggered back before a stinging left to the jaw.

"Come on!" said Tom fiercely. "Put 'em up!"

Talbot pushed his way quickly between the two.

"Here, hold on!" he exclaimed. "You can't fight here!"

Tom thrust Talbot aside. It was not often that Tom Merry's temper rose to its present pitch; but when it did, the captain of the Shell was a dangerous individual to interfere with.

"I'm going to give the cad the licking of his life!"

Willis met Tom's gleaming eyes steadily, and slowly raised his fists.

"Right-ho!" he said coolly. "You can try!"

A moment later Willis and Tom Merry were hitting out in grim earnest in the centre of the ring of cricketers.

"Go it, Tom!" muttered Lowther.

"On the ball, Willis, old chap!" breathed Woolley.

There was no need to urge on the combatants, however. Tom Merry was grimly determined to give Willis the licking of his life; and Willis, for his part, was fully roused.

Again Willis staggered back before a heavy blow to the jaw. But he recovered his balance before Tom could follow

it up, and landed a powerful right in Tom's ribs that pulled the captain of the Shell up very sharply. The blow had shaken him.

Standing toe to toe, the two combatants hit out with all their force, their eyes blazing with grim anger.

The sympathy of the cricketers was all with Tom Merry. They felt that the Three Trouncers deserved a thorough thrashing for the way in which they deliberately tricked Blake and Figgins into getting left behind. Consequently, there was something of a cheer when

Tom Merry, planting a fist squarely on Willis' chin, sent him flying back through the ring of excited onlookers, to collapse on his back at the feet of a fellow who had just come hurrying up.

"Ahem!"

The newcomer coughed.

Tom Merry gave a startled gasp. With dismay in his face, he saw that the fellow at whose feet Willis was sprawling was wearing an Abbotsford cap. He recognised the junior cricket captain of Abbotsford—and in a moment Tom's wrath died away completely.

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom went the colour of a beetroot.

To have been found scrapping on the station platform by the Abbotsford captain was distinctly humiliating.

Willis scrambled to his feet. His eyes were gleaming. He had not noticed the arrival of the Abbotsford fellow, and he did not realise that Tom had dropped his hands. He put up his own fists again and advanced on Tom Merry.

"Pax, you ass!" hissed Tom. "Here's their skipper—Oh! Yarooooop!"

Willis had hit out, and this time it was Tom who went sprawling on the platform, while Willis danced over him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up and have some more!" roared Willis.

Talbot and Lowther seized him and dragged him back, while Tom scrambled up, looking very dishevelled and anything but comfortable as he met the grinning glance of the Abbotsford skipper.

"Lemme go!" snorted Willis. "I'll smash him—"

"Chuck it, you idiot!" hissed Wallace, lending Talbot and Lowther a hand to hold his struggling chum. "Here's the Abbotsford skipper!"

"Oh!"

Willis' jaw dropped.

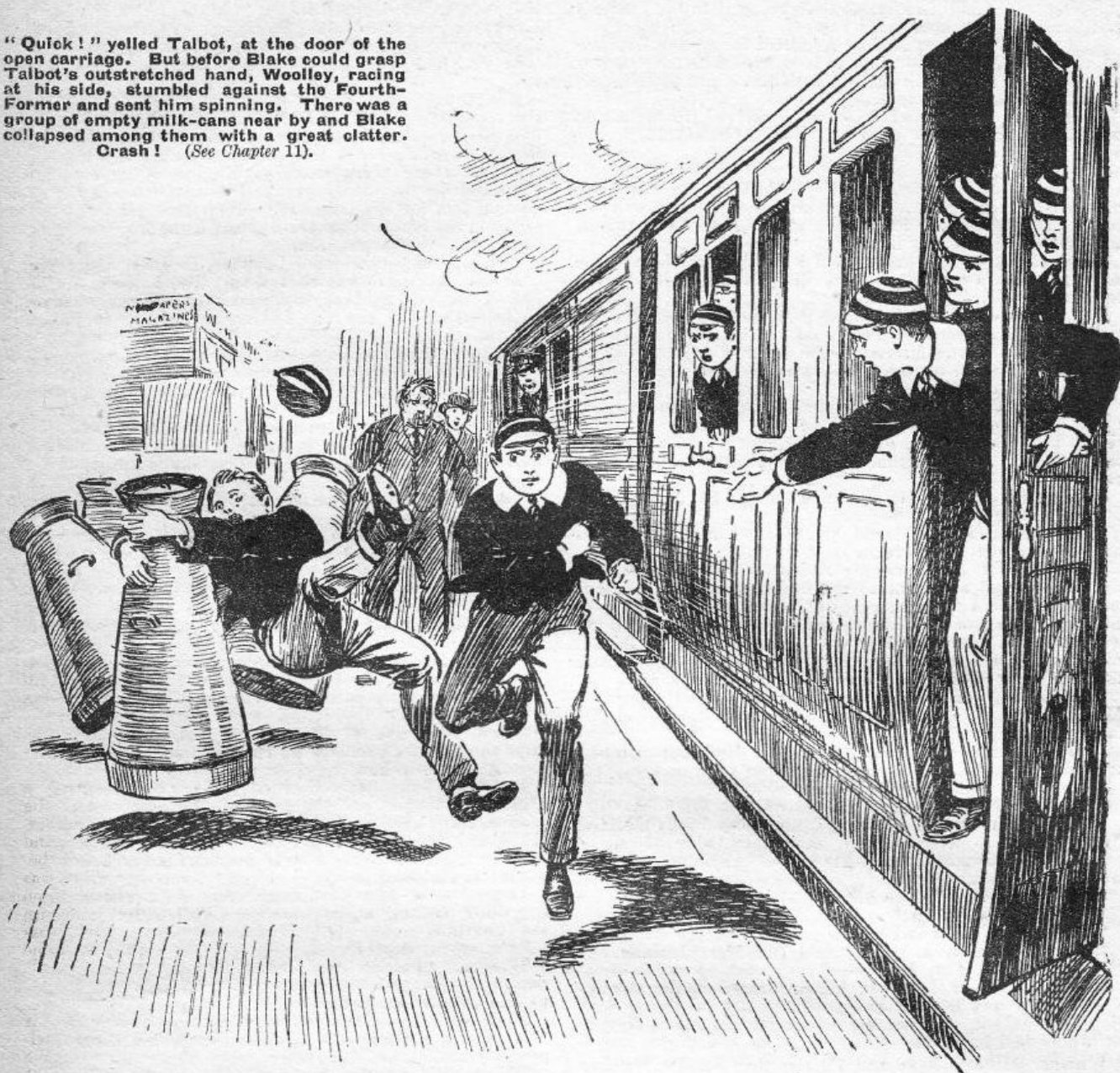
He glanced round and he, like Tom Merry, went very red as he caught sight of the fellow in the Abbotsford cap. He lowered his fists hastily.

Tom Merry, refastening his collar—which had come astray in the struggle—coughed.

"Hem! I—er—that is, we—we never saw you, you know!" he stammered.

"That's all right!" chuckled the Abbotsford fellow

"Quick!" yelled Talbot, at the door of the open carriage. But before Blake could grasp Talbot's outstretched hand, Woolley, racing at his side, stumbled against the Fourth-Former and sent him spinning. There was a group of empty milk-cans near by and Blake collapsed among them with a great clatter. Crash! (See Chapter 11).



cheerily. "Don't mind me if you want to finish your—er—little argument—"

"Oh, nunno!" said Tom hastily. "We—we've finished!"

"Rather!" mumbled Willis.

"Good! Then come along. I've got a motor-coach outside to take you along to the school."

And two minutes later the St. Jim's party were being driven swiftly through the country lanes towards Abbotsford.

It had certainly been an eventful journey, and there had been a stormy end to it! But three fellows in the motor-coach, at least, were feeling thoroughly pleased with themselves.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley, sitting together in the back seats, grinned cheerfully in answer to the glares that were bestowed upon them by the other St. Jim's juniors from time to time.

Whatever the other fellows thought of their methods, there was no doubt that the Three Trouncers had scored in the end! They knew that Tom Merry could not possibly help but give them places in the team now.

And at that thought, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley chuckled soft chuckles.

CHAPTER 14.

The Great Match!

"WELL hit, sir!"

The Abbotsford match had begun, and Abbotsford were batting first. Their captain had just put the ball past mid-off for a boundary from a ball of Fatty Wynn's opening over, and there had been a chorus of applause from the onlookers.

For the time, at least, the wrath of the St. Jim's cricketers against the Three Trouncers had to be forgotten!

In the absence of Blake, Tom had put Kangaroo behind the wicket. The Australian junior was a very useful man in that position. Kerr was bowling from the end opposite Fatty Wynn, and already the St. Jim's fielding had shown itself to be very smart. But Tom Merry could not help but feel that the absence of Figgins in the deep field would be noticed, to the cost of his side; to say nothing of Figgins' batting later on—and Blake's as well.

And as he thought of his two missing men, Tom's brow went dark, and he cast a very grim glance to where the Three Trouncers were fielding.

As the fielders crossed at the end of the over Tom Merry found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at his side.

"Those three wottahs need a feahful thwashin' when they get back to St. Jim's!" announced the swell of St. Jim's.

"They'll get it, with luck!" growled Tom.

"I considah—"

"Shut up, Gussy! Kerr's bowling."

Tom was fielding close by Arthur Augustus in the slips, and he turned his attention to the cricket. But the swell of St. Jim's, boiling with wrath as he was, had not noticed that Kerr had begun his run at the bowler's end.

"I considah the boundahs need a— Yow! Oh! Whoop!"

The Abbotsford batsman had deflected the ball into the slips. It had shot up from the grass, to crack painfully on to Gussy's knee, and the swell of St. Jim's yelled and danced.

"Oh! Bai Jove! Yow!"

"Pay attention to the game, you idiot!" hissed Tom, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,112.

scooping up the ball hastily, and returning it to the bowler's end before the batsman could run.

And after that, even Arthur Augustus forgot for the time being the righteous wrath that burned within him at the way that Woolley and Willis had tricked Blake and Figgins out of their places in the team.

That little matter would have to be shelved till the match was over, if St. Jim's were to defeat Abbotsford!

"Well held!"

The ball had soared into the deep field from the bat of one of the Abbotsford men. The batsmen had started to run; but a lithe figure had leapt high into the air, and caught the ball in an up-flung hand.

Monty Lowther had brought off a dazzling catch, and the Abbotsford man turned towards the pavilion sadly, to the relief of the St. Jim's team.

For it was certainly time that that opening combination was broken! Despite the deadly skill of Fatty Wynn at one end, and all Kerr's efforts at the other, the two opening batsmen had piled up the runs from the start, and already 40 runs were on the board.

Next man, however, also proved a difficult man to get rid of. The score rose steadily; 50 went up, then 60. Not till 70 had been marked up, however, did a smart throw-in from D'Arcy send another of the batsmen back to the pavilion.

Seventy for two wickets was good going. St. Jim's began to look grim.

They looked a good deal brighter when Fatty Wynn bagged the next wicket for a duck's egg.

But after that, once more the Abbotsford men got set, and the store began to mount to the hundred mark. Tom put on Figgins for a spell in place of Kerr, and himself gave Fatty Wynn a rest by taking a few overs. The combination was broken at last. But there was no doubt that the Abbotsford batting was first-rate, and by the time the last wicket fell, the home team had collected the big score of 195!

"A hundred and ninety-six wanted for a win!" muttered Monty Lowther, with something very like dismay in his face. "Great pip!"

It was certainly a big task that the St. Jim's batsmen had to face. But three, at least, of the eleven were undismayed.

"We'll lick 'em easily!" chuckled Wallace.

"Off our own bats probably!" murmured Woolley.

"I'll tell you what, Tom Merry," suggested Willis blandly, "why not put us three in first? A century from each of us will finish the match, and save you chaps any further trouble!"

Tom Merry eyed Willis grimly.

"Don't talk so much!"

"Well, when am I in?"

"You're last man in, Willis," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Oh crumbs! But, I say—"

Willis' objections, however, fell on deaf ears, for already Tom Merry was leaving the pavilion, bat in hand, with Reginald Talbot, to open the attack on the big task that St. Jim's had been set.

Whether without Blake and Figgins they could succeed in gathering sufficient runs to beat Abbotsford was a very doubtful problem. Willis and Woolley might think they were as good, or even better, than the two missing cricketers, but nobody else thought so, except Wallace.

It was, therefore, with decidedly grim faces that Tom Merry and Talbot took their places at the wicket and prepared to face the Abbotsford bowling.

"Play up, deah boys!" came the voice of Arthur Augustus from the pavilion. "St. Jim's for evah!"

"If only Tom Merry had the sense to put Wallace and Woolley, or me in," sighed Willis, "the whole thing would be over in no time!"

"Wats!" sniffed Arthur Augustus.

At that moment the opening bowler for Abbotsford began his over, and conversation among the rest of the St. Jim's team lapsed as they watched Tom Merry and Talbot begin the great battle for runs!

CHAPTER 15.

Tumbling Wickets!

"HOW'S that, umpire?"

"Out!"

Talbot, neatly stumped from a smart throw-in when within a few inches of his crease, strode towards the pavilion looking anything but happy.

The St. Jim's team looked at one another rather blankly. Talbot, who shared with Tom Merry the honour of being the best batsman in the eleven, had been dismissed for 8 runs!

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "This is wotten, deah boys!"

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Talbot, as he dropped into a chair between Lowther and Kangaroo, began to take off his pads in grim silence. And Kangaroo, who had not expected to be wanted for some time yet, had to buckle his own pads on hastily and hurry off.

Kangaroo was a strong, forcing batsman. In the past the combination of Tom Merry and Kangaroo at the wicket had often resulted in an absolute orgy of run-getting. But to-day St. Jim's seemed out of luck.

After taking three cautious singles, Kangaroo opened his shoulders to the fourth ball that came his way, and slammed it for the boundary. Next moment the ball was safely in the hands of square-leg, and Kangaroo was trudging back towards the pavilion.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Lowther, in great dismay.

Arthur Augustus was next man. The swell of St. Jim's had a very determined expression on his aristocratic face as he sailed out towards the empty wicket to join Tom Merry.

"If only he can settle down!" muttered Talbot.

And Arthur Augustus, after one of his most shaky starts, did settle down. Runs began to come fairly steadily at last. St. Jim's began to breathe again.

Playing beautifully polished cricket, the swell of St. Jim's helped Tom Merry increase the score rapidly. A burst of cheering from the pavilion announced that it had reached the 50 mark.

"A century from Tom is what we want this afternoon," said Talbot hopefully.

"He looks to me like getting it," said Kangaroo.

But Kangaroo had omitted to touch wood in making that rash statement!

Whatever the reason, a few moments later there came the crash of a wicket.

Tom Merry, with his score at 35, had been bowled by a tricky ball that had pitched clean in the block. The St. Jim's skipper returned to the pavilion amid a burst of cheering, and Monty Lowther went out bat in hand.

Monty Lowther, with his dashing methods and fearless hitting, was just the fellow who might step in and do wonders at a critical moment. It was with hopeful looks that the St. Jim's fellows by the pavilion watched him face the Abbotsford bowling.

But their hopes were doomed to disappointment.

Monty Lowther put the first ball through the slips for a single, and Arthur Augustus faced the bowling again for the remainder of the over. Then Lowther took the opening ball of the next over, and it picked his leg stump clean out of the ground.

There was a gasp of dismay from Arthur Augustus, at the other wicket, as he watched Lowther retreat towards the pavilion.

"Oh, gweat 'Scott!"

With the total St. Jim's score standing at only seventy-one, and four wickets already lost, things looked about as bad as they could do for St. Jim's.

Next man strode out to the wicket.

It was Wallace; and Woolley, watching from by the pavilion rail, chuckled.

"Now we'll see the fur fly!"

"I hope so," said Tom Merry grimly. "But if chaps like Talbot and Kangaroo are out for practically nix, you needn't think you fellows will set the Thames on fire!"

"You don't know us!" grinned Willis. "It's a pity you didn't send us in before."

"I fancy I know you a bit too well!" snorted Tom. "If only we had Blake and Figgins—"

He checked himself. He had made up his mind not to discuss the little matter of Blake and Figgins at present. There would be time enough for that when the match was over. He turned his attention to the wicket, where Wallace was taking centre.

Tom's brow was clouded.

With more than a hundred still needed for a win, things looked gloomy for St. Jim's. They looked still more gloomy when Arthur Augustus was caught at the wicket a few balls later.

His score standing at twenty-four, the swell of St. Jim's followed the dreary path to the pavilion.

"This is the limit!" groaned Kerr. "Seventy-one for five now! We've about as much of getting 196 as a pig has of flying."

"Never say die, anyway!" said Tom, with an attempt at cheeriness that he by no means felt. "Good luck, Levison, old hoss!"

Levison was next man in. But the Fourth Former looked a good deal like a sheep going to the slaughter as he made his way out towards the wicket.

However, Levison was a fighter, and once he was facing the bowling he cheered up wonderfully. He began to hit out from the first, and a beautiful boundary hit brought a yell of applause from the watching St. Jim's fellows.

As yet, Wallace had had no chance of showing what he was made of when "up against it." Except for his first

single he had been at the bowler's end all the time. Levison, taking three off the last ball of the over, faced the bowling again, and Wallace was still kept in idleness. But that next over saw the finish of things for Levison.

He was caught at point, and the last flicker of hope in the heart of Tom Merry and the other St. Jim's cricketers—with the exception of Wallace & Co.—died out.

This despondency was made complete when Kerr and Fatty Wynn were both dismissed for duck's eggs in the last three balls of the over, the Abbotsford bowler only narrowly missing the hat trick.

Tom Merry looked at Monty Lowther and Talbot with feelings too deep for words.

There were three more wickets to fall—Wallace's, Woolley's and Willis'.

The chances of their defeating Abbotsford were so remote

"But we are in the soup!" growled Fatty Wynn. "And largely thanks to you! With the proper team——"

"Rats!" chuckled Willis amiably. "Watch the game!" Fatty glared at Willis speechlessly. His feelings were too deep for words. Even yet the Three Trouncers did not seem to realise the enormity of their offence. They actually had the cheek to act as though they had done the team a good turn by managing to substitute themselves for Figgins and Blake!

There was no doubt that St. Jim's had never come across such colossal cheek—never.

But what was the use of talking? With a gloomy grunt, Fatty Wynn settled down to watch as Wallace and Woolley, far out over the grass on the gleaming green pitch, prepared to do or die.

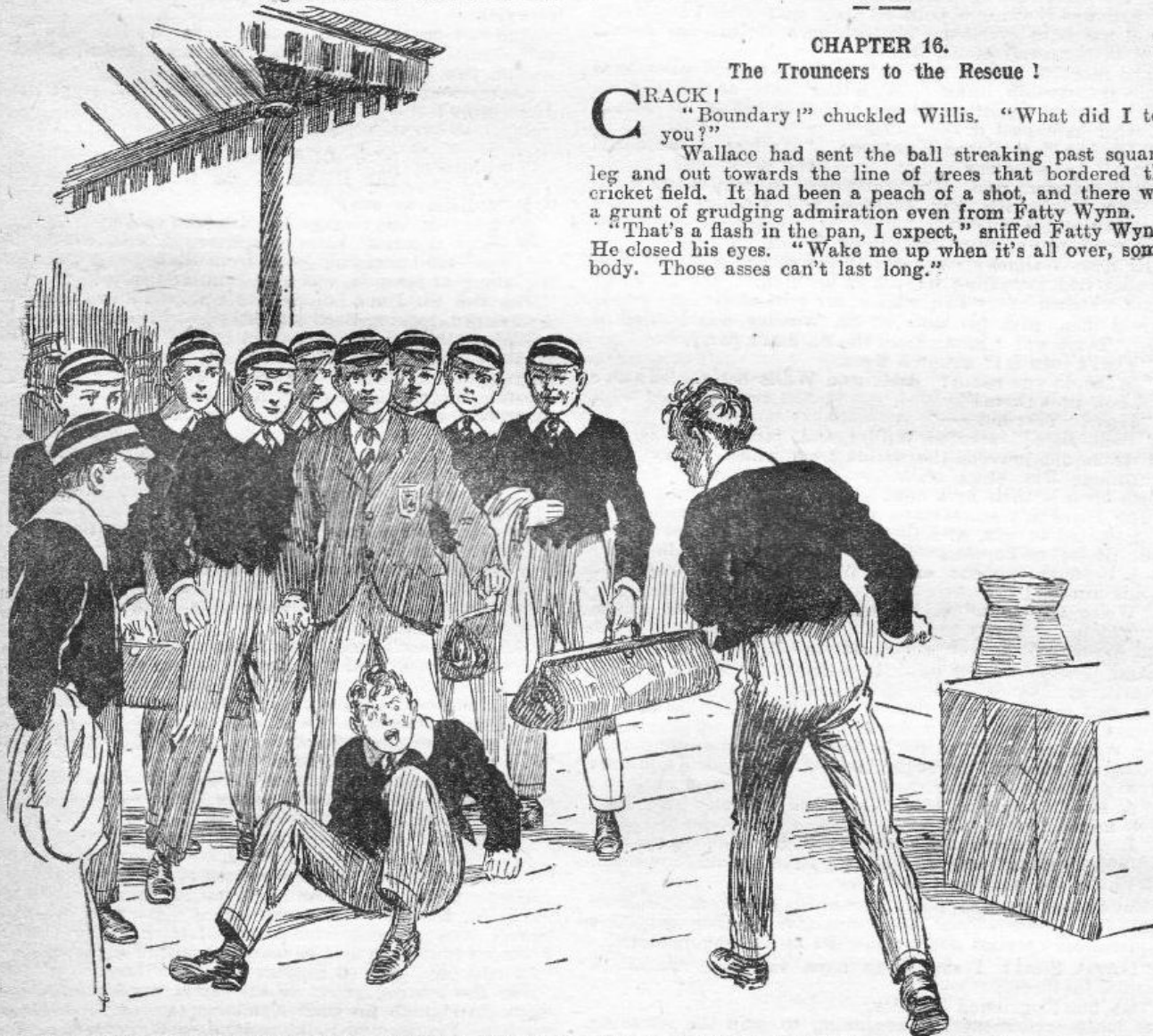
CHAPTER 16.

The Trouncers to the Rescue !

CRACK!
"Boundary!" chuckled Willis. "What did I tell you?"

Wallace had sent the ball streaking past square-leg and out towards the line of trees that bordered the cricket field. It had been a peach of a shot, and there was a grunt of grudging admiration even from Fatty Wynn.

"That's a flash in the pan, I expect," sniffed Fatty Wynn. He closed his eyes. "Wake me up when it's all over, somebody. Those asses can't last long."



Planting a fist squarely on Willis' chin, Tom Merry stretched him on his back at the feet of a fellow who had just come hurrying up. Tom Merry gave a gasp of dismay as he recognised the junior cricket captain of Abbotsford. "Oh crumbs!" (See Chapter 13.)

as to be hardly worth considering. That was Tom Merry's secret opinion, and the opinion of every St. Jim's fellow in the little dismal group by the pavilion—with one exception.

Willis tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder cheerily, glancing out across the grass to where Woolley was joining Wallace.

"It's all right, old boss," murmured Willis. "We're the Three Trouncers, you know. Trust us!"

"To get over a hundred between you?" snapped Tom. "That's what we want for a win!" He glared at Willis. "If we'd had Figgins and Blake, you—you——"

"Don't worry about Figgins and Blake," said Willis serenely. "Just thank your stars you've got us instead!"

"Bai Jove! Weally Willis, you take the giddy bun!" snorted the swell of St. Jim's hotly. "You have the uttah cheek to suggest——"

"Hush!" said Willis reprovingly. "Let not thy angry passions rise, Augustus. Watch the game! And, as I say, be thankful that St. Jim's have the Three Trouncers to pull the fat out of the fire for 'em. You know, you'd have been in the soup without us."

Willis glared at the fat New House bowler.

"I tell you——"

"Chuck arguing!" snapped Tom Merry.

He was feeling angry and bitter with the Three Trouncers for the trick that they had played—a trick which in Tom's opinion had done almost more than anything else towards ensuring victory for Abbotsford. But Tom did not want to hear any more wrangling over the question. It would be time enough to talk about it when the team had returned to St. Jim's, and the Three Trouncers could be made to face the reckoning.

Click!

"Another boundary!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

There was no doubt that Wallace seemed to have mastered the Abbotsford bowling. With the exception of Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus, both of whom had put up good performances, no one else of the St. Jim's team had shown the same easy control of the bowling as Wallace was now displaying.

A hundred was soon reached and passed. Tom Merry glanced at his companions.

"That's just over half what we want!" he said gloomily. That another ninety runs could be collected before the last two wickets fell Tom did not believe for a moment. It was impossible! Wallace was hitting freely, but the Abbotsford bowling was good, and sooner or later he must fall a victim. Woolley was playing dogged cricket at the other end; but Woolley did not look like staying much longer, in Tom's opinion.

But a few overs later, with the score risen to a hundred and twenty, Woolley began to appear more confident. He was hitting out now, and it was not long before he, too, was slamming the ball to the boundary at fairly regular intervals.

But Woolley was only opening his shoulders to the less tricky balls that he received. He was playing a cautious game, it was clear, and his score was not rising at anything like the same rate as Wallace's. Wallace, playing beautiful cricket, was showing a polished style that even Tom Merry could not have excelled; Wallace, as a stylist, was second only to the swell of St. Jim's.

The minutes passed, and still Wallace and Woolley kept their partnership intact. With the score at 140 the St. Jim's fellows began to sit up and take notice, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

"My hat!" muttered Kangaroo. "Wallace is the chap! What if he saves our giddy bacon even yet?"

Still the score rose. The Abbotsford captain changed his bowlers again, but still Wallace and Woolley remained together at the wicket.

A hundred and fifty went up on the score-board.

By now, Wallace's score was in the region of 50, whereas Woolley had something like 20 to his credit. The St. Jim's team watched every ball with eager eyes now.

And then, with his score at 25, Woolley was bowled at last. There was a groan from the St. Jim's party.

"That's torn it!" grunted Kerr.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Willis hotly. "There's still me, isn't there?"

"Hem! Yes; but—"

"Well, then!" snorted Willis; and, picking up his bat, he strode out towards the wicket from which Woolley was returning. The other cricketers watched him go without much hope in their eyes now.

The St. Jim's score stood at 160. Thirty-six runs were still wanted to win, and there was only one wicket still to fall. It looked hopeless. No one had much faith in Willis as a batsman—no one except Wallace and Woolley, and Willis himself!

"We're all right," said Woolley cheerily, as he joined the group. "Thirty-odd runs! That's nothing. Wallace and Willis will collect 'em in no time."

And Woolley settled down in a deckchair with his usual amazing confidence shining in his cheery face.

It was a confidence that no one else felt justified in sharing. But as Wallace continued piling up the runs, and Willis appeared to settle down to a little quiet run-getting on his own, the eager faces of the St. Jim's juniors grew gradually brighter.

"A hundred and seventy!" breathed Talbot. "My hat! They might do it!"

"I weally cannot think they will be able to gathah anothah 26 wuns," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "Willis is the weak spot—"

But at that moment Willis opened his shoulders to a loose one, and it soared to the boundary. Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and watched its flight open-mouthed.

"Gweat Scott! I say, deah boys, that was wathah a wipin' hit!"

"Go hon!" grinned Woolley.

A tense excitement was beginning to grip the watching St. Jim's juniors now.

Tremendous though the task was, that faced Wallace and Willis, they were certainly tackling it in masterly fashion. Another 22 were still needed for victory, and Tom Merry could not remember that as many runs as that had ever been scored in a last-wicket stand in his experience as junior cricket captain at St. Jim's! But something in the way Wallace and Willis were cheerily piling up the runs had brought hope to Tom Merry when all hope seemed dead.

What if the three inseparables could make good their boast, and could even yet snatch victory for their side?

Tom Merry thrilled at the thought.

He found himself applauding feverishly every good stroke—and good strokes were frequent. Willis was not doing anything important in the way of gathering runs; he was clearly concentrating on keeping his wicket safe, while his chum piled up the runs. But Wallace was flogging the bowling in great style, and the St. Jim's juniors yelled and cheered every time a boundary hit was registered, or some pretty stroke enabled Wallace and Willis to snatch an unexpected single.

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Even Fatty Wynn and Kerr, Figgins' two great chums, had forgotten their ire at Figgins' fate on the platform at Meltham Junction, as they applauded noisily and excitedly with the rest. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had at last forgotten his indignation at the way the Three Trouncers had caused Blake to be left behind at Wayland. The swell of St. Jim's, his eyeglass gleaming enthusiastically, watched the runs being gathered with breathless eagerness.

"Bai Jove! That was a wipin' hit! Huwvah! Well hit, sir!"

A hundred and eighty appeared on the score-board, and excitement rose to fever pitch. The watching Abbotsford fellows who, a little while ago, had felt that victory was theirs for a certainty, watched with set faces as the St. Jim's score soared dangerous towards their own big total.

An electric hush fell over the cricket field. The silence was tense, but the excitement in the air could be felt by everyone.

And out on the sunlit cricket pitch, Wallace and Willis batted merrily, crossing and recrossing from wicket to wicket, two lithe, white-clad figures.

Nearer and nearer to the Abbotsford total crept the St. Jim's score!

CHAPTER 17.

The Heroes of the Hour!

"HERE we are!"

It was George Figgins who spoke.

Figgins' voice was charged with wrath. And the answering grunt from Blake, who was tramping along at his side, was also grim and ireful.

The two St. Jim's fellows had tramped into the quad at Abbotsford, looking tired and fed-up—which they were.

Blake, catching the next train to Meltham Junction from Wayland, had found Figgins there, and the two furious victims of the wiles of the Three Trouncers had come on together in the first Abbotsford train available. Unfortunately for them, it had been too late to land them at Abbotsford early enough for them to be any use in the match. But they had come, nevertheless, breathing vengeance and fire and slaughter.

There having been no cab at Abbotsford Station, they had had to walk from the station to the school. Their feet were sore, their clothes dusty, and their faces hot and perspiring. Tempers were just about at boiling point, as the two chagrined and weary figures tramped in through the gates of Abbotsford.

From somewhere beyond the grey old buildings came the sound of distant shouting.

"Listen!" exclaimed Blake sharply.

From the volume of the cheering it was clear that Abbotsford were applauding something or someone. The St. Jim's team alone could never have made so much noise. Blake and Figgins looked at one another grimly.

"That means Abbotsford's won, after all!" snapped Blake. "We might have licked 'em if we'd been there—"

"Well," said Figgins modestly, "it might have made a bit of difference. When I catch young Willis—"

"When I get hold of Woolley—"

"Come on!" growled Figgins. "This is the way!"

And the two disgruntled St. Jim's juniors strode across the Abbotsford quad in the direction of the distant shouting.

They emerged through an arch on to the tree-lined playing-fields, and stared across to where a group of white-clad figures were crossing from a cricket pitch to the pavilion. From all round the field came the sounds of applause.

"Great pip!" gasped Figgins faintly. "Look!"

For the moving group of cricketers were the St. Jim's team. And high on their shoulders swayed three of their number. Figgins and Blake recognised Wallace, Willis, and Woolley.

"What on earth—"

Blake and Figgins stared at one another blankly. The last thing in the world that they had expected to see was the sight of the Three Trouncers being chaired by the rest of the St. Jim's team. They had come to Abbotsford breathing vengeance—to find the miscreants the heroes of the hour, it seemed!

Figgins grabbed a small boy who was passing, wearing the Abbotsford colours on his straw hat.

"What's happened?" demanded Figgins.

The fag grinned ruefully.

"St. Jim's won," he said. "We had 'em right under. Everyone thought we were bound to win. But their last three batsmen put up a ripping stand, and saved the game for their side. One of 'em got a century—chap called Wallace. Our chaps are cheering him. He deserves it, although he licked us!"

"M-my hat!" breathed Blake dazedly.

The fag scuttled off, and Blake and Figgins stood staring blankly across the grass to where the rest of the St. Jim's team were chairing Wallace, Willis, and Woolley to the pavilion.

"They—they saved the game!" gasped Figgins. "Well, I'm blessed!"

Figgins and Blake looked at one another. A faint grin appeared on Blake's face.

"In that case," said Blake thoughtfully, "things are rather different! The—the cheeky rotters! But they saved the game, did they? Hang it, we've got to give 'em a yell!"

And Blake and Figgins found themselves the next moment doing a thing that half an hour ago they would have thought impossible. They found themselves waving their hats and cheering lustily the fellows whom they had felt more like kicking a little while ago!

"After all," panted Figgins, "as long as St. Jim's won—"

"Hurrah!" yelled Blake.

The two broke into a run. Across the grass they raced, and joined the St. Jim's party just as the cricketers were putting Wallace, Willis, and Woolley down at last, by the steps of the pavilion.

"Gweat Scott!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught sight of Blake suddenly, and jumped. "Look who's heah!"

The cricketers looked. At sight of Figgins and Blake the Three Trouncers glanced at one another.

"Ahem!" coughed Woolley. "Fancy seeing you here!"

Blake gripped him by the hand, to Woolley's intense astonishment, and wrung it violently.

"Good man!" chuckled Blake. "Oh, good man! You three won the game for St. Jim's, I hear. Good men, all of you!"

The generous applause of the Abbotsford fellows had died

away, and the crowd was dispersing, with disappointed faces. The Abbotsford skipper approached the group.

"Congrattlers!" he said. "It was a pretty big surprise for us, I don't mind saying, that you pulled the fat out of the fire like that!"

He smiled rather ruefully. Tom Merry chuckled.

"It was a bit of a surprise to some of us, too, as a matter of fact!" he confessed.

"Why?" asked Willis in surprise. "We told you we'd do the job all right."

This typical "modesty" from the Three Trouncers caused the rest of the St. Jim's team to chuckle.

It was true that Wallace, Willis, and Woolley had been quite confident all along that a cricket eleven containing themselves was bound to win. But somehow the rest of the team had not been convinced—until now!

As the St. Jim's party crowded into their dressing-room Figgins tapped Woolley on the shoulder.

"We came over here to pick a bone with you chaps!" announced the New House leader cheerily to the Three Trouncers. "But I think we'll let 'em off now, eh, Blake?"

"I think we will," agreed Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And so it was, with all their quarrels settled and finished with, that the St. Jim's party, after a cheery tea at Abbotsford, set off for the railway station.

And the heroes of the hour were Wallace, Willis, and Woolley.

(Continued on next page.)

YOUR EDITOR SAYS—

THE FLYING SCOTSMAN—A.D. 1950?

READING through the scores of cheering, enthusiastic letters from my readers all over the world, who, in terms that almost make their Editor blush at times, tell me what a "wonderful idea" the GEM's free gift scheme is, I find many written almost in a tone of amazement. How is it, they ask, that the artists and others responsible for the magnificent series of picture-cards that the GEM is presenting to its readers can "keep it up" in such spanking style week after week?

Well, I must confess to having paused and wondered myself at times. But the fact remains, and I know you'll all back me up when I say it, that so far from losing any of their fascination, our free gifts are getting better and better! In proof of this comes next week's free card showing A GYROSCOPIC MONO-RAILWAY, one of the most amazing of our Marvels of the Future series. Of course, you'll all want to add it to your sets, so

ORDER NEXT WEDNESDAY'S
"GEM" TO-DAY!

"THE DOWNFALL OF THE TOFF!"

That's the title of next week's splendid story of Tom Merry & Co., chums, and one that will keep you impatient for the whole seven days, I know. Stories dealing with Reginald Talbot, of the Shell, the junior who was once known as the Toff, prince of cracksmen, are always sure of a great welcome. Let me just say that this is without doubt one of Martin Clifford's best!

Other attractions in next week's BUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER, are a further fine instalment of our thrilling serial, "The Flying Fish"; more replies showing the Oracle, our walking encyclopedia, at his best, and another interesting article on the subject of the

famous L.M.S. "Royal Scot" Locomotive No. 6108.

By the way, keep your peepers open, you fellows, for announcements of the first-class new serial that's coming along. It's a winner.

DO YOU KNOW A FUNNY STORY?

Surely every chap has heard a joke that he can remember, or can write a limerick. Of course! Well, wouldn't you like to turn either of these to good account? I should think so!

Buy a copy of the "Magnet" this week, and you will find that penknives and pocket-wallets are being given away for jokes and limericks.

Now you mustn't miss this. Why, it's easier than shelling peas, and a good deal more profitable. All you have to do is to send in a joke, or a limerick, and if it is published you will be sent a handsome little gift.

What about it?

PERSONALITY!

A notion seems to be going round I have gathered from readers' letters, that a fellow ought to try and model himself and his actions on someone else who has done well in life. Now, that kind of thing is all very well up to a point, but it must not be carried too far. It is up to everybody to be true to himself. He has his own individuality to think about. He must be true to it. It is no use being a mere copy when you can be an original, as it were—your real, original self. It is personality that wins. The men who have done great things in the past did not bother about imitating other people. They were just themselves all the time. Be yourself.

THE SCHOOL SANNY!

"Is the School Sanny ever deserted?" asks Tom Woobrough, of Kent. That

seems rather a peculiar question; however, it is not very difficult to answer. As there are round about three hundred boys at St. Jim's you can safely reckon, Tom, that the sanny is never without a patient from New Year's Day to the thirty-first of December. Yes, Marie Rivers is still the nurse there, and she is just as popular as ever. There will be a story in which Marie figures prominently very shortly, so keep your peepers open for it.

ALL OVER THE COUNTRY!

It is interesting to note the growth and progress of that well-known firm of manufacturers, Mead's. I know a good many of you chaps have dealt with this firm for your bicycles, gramophones, and wireless sets, and a good many more will be thinking of doing so at this time of the year. We are now in the midst of the summer, a time when bikes and gramophones are in great demand. And never before have Mead's been so constantly on the lips of boys and girls throughout the country. They see in the various branches of this firm the machines they want to buy. They know the value they will get, and the easy terms of payment that are obtainable—and, as a result, they patronise Mead's.

PASSING IT ON!

A very lengthy letter has reached me from a loyal chum. He cannot say enough in favour of the Companion Papers. But there's one thing he has done, namely, to introduce a new reader to our select band. He loaned some Companion Papers to a friend while he was on holidays, and now learns that his pal is so taken with Tom Merry & Co. in the GEM, and Harry Wharton & Co. in the "Magnet," that he has placed a regular order with his newsagent for both these papers. That's the spirit! That's what I want every "Gemite" to do. In fact, chums, make a campaign of it. Take the GEM into every home. That constitutes your "little bit," and the rest you can safely leave to

* YOUR EDITOR.

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CHAPTER 18.

Exit The Trouncers !

"HERE they come!"
 "Here are the giddy conquering heroes!"
 "Hip, hip, hurrah!"
 A huge crowd gathered at the gates of St. Jim's.

A telegram dispatched from Abbotsford railway station had told St. Jim's the news of the victory over Abbotsford, and nearly all the junior school had turned out to welcome home their victorious representatives.

As the motor-coach in which the team had travelled back from Wayland drew up by the gates, a cheering throng surrounded it. The cricketers were seized and mounted on the shoulders of their enthusiastic fellow-juniors, and marched into the quad.

At first Woolley and Willis were left out of it, since no one at St. Jim's knew that they had taken part in the big match—let alone helped so largely in winning it for St. Jim's. But Tom Merry soon explained the details of the game, and the part that the Three Trouncers had played.

"My hat!" ejaculated Clive wonderingly. "So they aren't just gas-bags after all?"

"Rather not!" chuckled Tom Merry. "They're the giddy saviours of St. Jim's this time!"

And at that there was a rush, and the Three Trouncers were seized and marched round and round the quad in triumph.

Without a doubt, it was a day of triumph for the Trouncers! Despite all opposition, they had proved their worth with a vengeance.

And the St. Jim's juniors were out to show their appreciation of the fact.

It was a long while before Wallace, Woolley, and Willis were released. When at last they did find themselves free to go to their study they were warm and breathless, but very cheery!

That evening a big supper was held in the junior Common-room at the School House, to celebrate the victory of St. Jim's over Abbotsford. For once New House fellows and School House mingled in perfect amiability. Everyone was feeling so pleased with things that even Baggy Trimble was allowed to stuff himself to his heart's content at the supper—and even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not complain, for about the first time in his life, when a cup of cocoa was spilled by mistake over his immaculate trousers!

Which showed what wonderful contentment reigned in the junior Common-room, thanks to the victory over Abbotsford—which was, after all, only another way of saying thanks to the Three Trouncers!

It was a great meal for Wallace, Willis, and Woolley in particular.

They had come into their own at last! At last their fellow juniors were hailing them as Trouncers in fact as well as in name. For that they had trounced Abbotsford all were agreed.

In the middle of the proceedings Toby Marsh, the School House page, entered the Common-room. Toby crossed towards Wallace, Willis, and Woolley. Toby had three letters on a tray.

"Talk about inseparables!" chuckled Talbot. "They even get their letters all together!"

The Three Trouncers opened their letters and read the contents. Then they looked at one another.

"My hat!" said Wallace.

"Great Scott!" breathed Woolley.

"Whew!" whistled Willis.

Evidently the contents of their letters had surprised the three inseparables. But whether the news was good or bad it was impossible for the other juniors to judge from the expressions on their faces.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" queried Tom Merry.

"Nunno," said Willis doubtfully. "At least, I'm sorry in a way."

"Same here!" agreed Wallace. "Absolutely!"

"Rather!" nodded Woolley. "Though, mind you, for some things it'll be nice to be back at Ramhurst."

The mention of their old school by the Three Trouncers caused the St. Jim's juniors to stare at them wonderingly.

"What about Ramhurst?" demanded Figgins.

Wallace, Willis, and Woolley glanced at one another, as though uncertain whether or not to explain. But Wallace and Woolley nodded, and Willis glanced at the juniors with a curious smile on his face.

"We left Ramhurst because our parents had a bit of a row with the Head there," explained Willis. "But it seems that the row's been made up. The giddy old breach is healed! And so our respected parents now want us to go back to Ramhurst and carry on there."

"We'll be sorry to leave St. Jim's, for lots of things!" said Woolley.

"Absolutely!" nodded Wallace. "But, mind you, Ramhurst is a good place."

"Rather!" agreed Willis.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. had listened with genuine dismay to this news, as had the rest of the juniors. Now Tom Merry rose slowly to his feet.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "this is rather rotten news for us, as I feel sure you'll all agree. Wallace, Willis, and Woolley are the kind of fellows we like at St. Jim's. They're good sportsmen—even if they are Trouncers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we shall all be sorry that they are going!" went on Tom. "Anyway, their brief stay here has not been in vain. They won the Abbotsford match for us—despite ourselves!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Figgins.

"So I propose we drink their giddy health!" finished Tom. "For they are jolly good fellows!"

And round the supper table the toast was drunk with a will, in lemonade and cocoa; and the St. Jim's juniors made the Common-room fairly echo as they cheered Wallace, Willis, and Woolley!

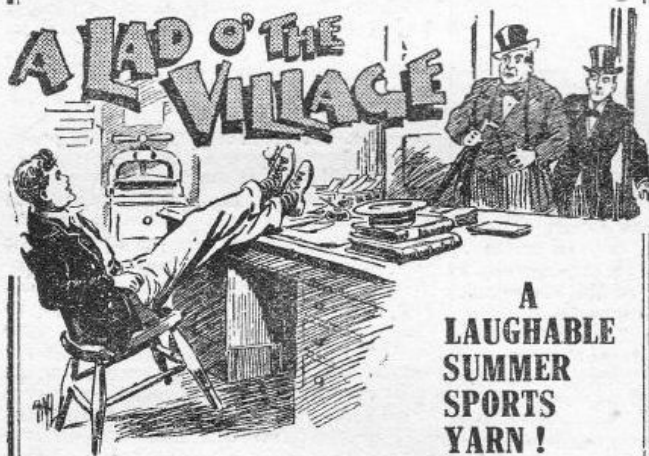
When, a few days later, the three inseparables drove away from St. Jim's in a station cab, and the grinning faces of Wallace, Willis, and Woolley vanished from sight down the road at last, it was generally agreed among the great crowd of juniors that had turned out to see them off that the loss was to St. Jim's.

And, as Tom Merry remarked, since they had to go, Wallace, Willis, and Woolley could not have gone at a better time than at the height of what was, without the slightest doubt, the Trouncers' Triumph!

THE END.

(Next week's "Gem" will contain another grand long story of St. Jim's, featuring an old favourite in Reginald Talbot. Note the title chums: "THE DOWNFALL OF THE 'TOFF'!" and make a point of ordering your copy EARLY!)

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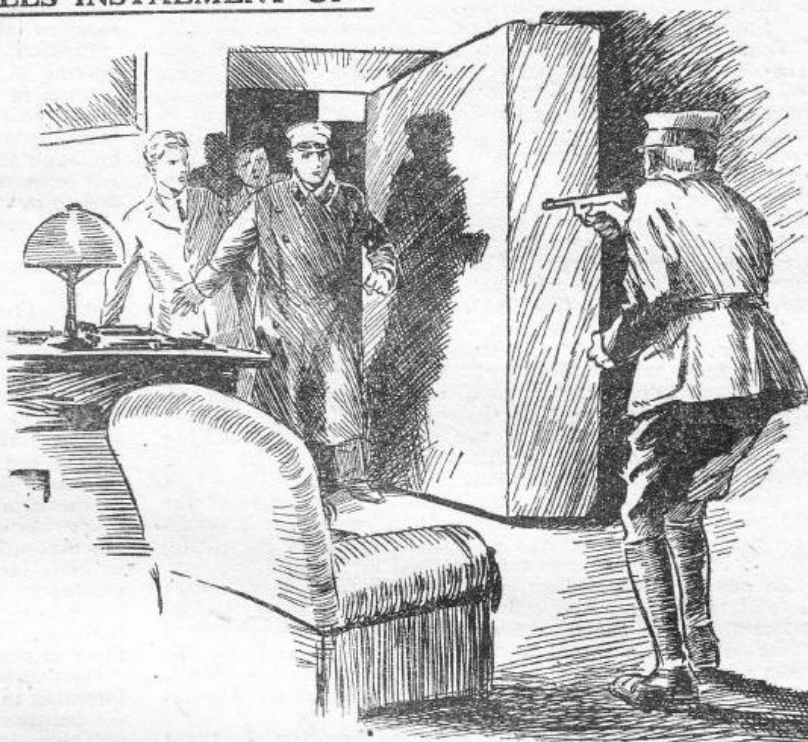
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HERE'S ANOTHER FULL-O'-THRILLS INSTALMENT OF—

The FLYING FISH!



Fiercely and desperately the revolutionaries press home the small advantage they have gained in their unexpected rising. Slaves no longer, but masters to be, they can see victory looming ahead—freedom—and the downfall of Boronov, the Tyrant!

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

RODNEY BLAKE, a stocky youngster, whose one ambition is to follow in the footsteps of his father, Adrian Blake—a news correspondent now out of England on business for his paper—is strolling along Littleworth Cove in company with his chum,

DAN LEA, when he sees a strange-looking craft resembling in shape an airship and a boat combined.

PRINCE ALEXIS KARAGENSKI, the ship's commander, informs Rodney that there is a serious case of illness aboard, and in consequence succeeds in getting Dr. Fraser, the youngster's guardian, to go aboard. Some time later Rodney and Dan are captured by Karagenski's men and taken to the ship as prisoners. The strange craft then rises after the fashion of an airship and speeds them away to the "Valley of No Escape." Here, in charge of Herr Boronov, Colonel Stangersfeld, Wummburg, an obnoxious, one-eyed giant, and a host of armed guards, are thousands of prisoners building at desperate speed a fleet of Flying Fish. With this formidable fleet the heads of the conspiracy hope to conquer the whole world. Following a rumpus with Wummburg, Rodney, to his amazement, comes face to face with his father. Adrian Blake hurriedly explains that, in the guise of a Russian expert in poison gas, he has gained access to the conspirators' stronghold with a view to encouraging the half-starved slaves to revolt against their taskmasters. The deception is discovered almost as soon as the revolution begins, and Rodney quickly realises that the only way to save his father and completely beat the guards is for Dan and himself to make use of the Flying Fish. Unable to manoeuvre the craft themselves, they conceive the idea of forcing Von Roden to do it for them. With this notion in view they gain access to the castle, where they see Adrian Blake, Lord Braxton, his millionaire friend, and Prince Karagenski being led to the castle.

"What are we going to do now?" says Rodney, turning to Dan.

The Counsel of Despair!

FOR a moment Dan made no answer. There seemed to be none he could find. And before he could say anything at all, a voice spoke softly from the shadows of an embrasure next to the one in which they had hidden, and a slim figure emerged from it, lit for one second by a flash of flame caused by an explosion down in the town. With surprise the two lads recognised the figure and voice to belong to Sacha Karagenski.

"How glad I am to find it is you, Rodney, and your friend!" he whispered eagerly. "At first I thought it was really two of the guards, and I was hiding from you. Then, when my father and the others were being locked in there, I heard you talking in English and knew who you were. I have been wondering how things were going with you all this time. I heard you were in the town, fighting on the revolutionary side. And how I wished I had only been with you!"

"And what's happened then that they've locked up your father with mine, Sacha?" asked Rodney, after, in a few words, he had whispered a rough outline of Dan's and his experiences of the last twenty-four hours.

"Boronov and the others accused him of being the first cause why your father got into the valley and stirred up this rising," replied the Russian lad. "Before they tried to kill your father months and months ago, my father warned him that the attempt was being made, and that was how he really escaped. Besides, Boronov hates father and me, because we are of royal blood. Father and the others are

locked in there till the reinforcements arrive and the rising is quelled. Then they are to be taken out and shot."

"And you?" asked Rodney.

"They were looking for me to lock me up, too. But I overheard Kraft sending a servant to find me, and I escaped. That's why I was hiding from you when I thought you were guards. I didn't want to be locked up with the others. And if there is any chance of helping the others, I mustn't be."

"Just now, Rodney," continued the Russian lad in a tense whisper, "you said something about getting the people outside into the castle."

"That's why we came to this gate," replied Rodney. "It always used to have a key in the lock. But that's gone to-night. We'd meant to try and admit them that way after we'd let them know. But we were stumped. There doesn't seem any way now—"

"There is one way. The only trouble is how we could make use of it without being discovered. This castle has belonged to my family for ever so long. I was born here. I know every inch of it. And I know of a way that these people here don't know about—a secret way in and out—"

"From the room where we used to sleep?" demanded Rodney eagerly, and gripping Sacha by the hand.

The other nodded.

"You know about it?" he asked, surprised.

"Father knew. He'd been up the passage from the town end, and heard Dan and myself talking through a slit in the wall. But he didn't know how the wall opened."

"It's a little lever in that very slit!" explained Sacha, in eager undertones. "It moves amazingly easily. I've opened it lots of times, both from the room side and the passage side. Of course, my father knew of the passage; I believe I remember him mentioning it to your father long ago, when they were friends. But dad didn't know how it worked. It was I who discovered that a few weeks ago by accident!"

"The thing is—how can we get to that room now? It would settle everything!" muttered Rodney, with impatience. "We didn't know the opening could be worked as well from the passage side. That makes everything easier, if we could once get to that room and escape into the passage—the three of us in no time. Then down to the town and find Larry O'Hagan. In less than an hour we'd have this castle flooded with revolutionaries!"

"But—how to get to the room, Mister Rodney?" Dan reminded his enthusiastic friend. "We might possibly enough manage that, being supposed to be guards—though we might get caught in the act. But Mister Sacha here—he's the only one who knows how the thing works, and he's hiding from the people here. If they get him, they'll lock him up with his father and yours, and that won't help any."

"True enough!" mused Rodney. "It does seem, whichever way we turn in this business, something crops up to stump us. Still, we must think of something. We've

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managed things well enough so far. We might have a bit of luck.

"Listen here," he added, after a moment of thought. "Those people in there are all in a state of nerves to-night. The castle's not lit properly, either, so we can take risks. What I think we ought to do is to try a bluff. So long as they get hold of you, Sacha, I don't think they'll want to come marching all over this end of the castle just to lock you up. It would be enough if they locked you up in your own room. And a door leads through your room into ours. What I suggest is that we should march you along now as our captive, and—if we're questioned by any of the servants—say we've been ordered to lock you in your room and stand on guard over you. What we'll actually do is to lock ourselves in the room with you, pass on into ours and out through that passage like lightning!"

"If we're lucky!" muttered Dan, in his slow way.

"It's our one hope!" said Rodney.

"We must take it, Rodney!" agreed the young Russian stoically. "It's a clever idea, and it ought to succeed. Whatever happens, we'll do that—at once!"

So it came about that a few minutes later, struggling between two uniformed guards, the figure of Sacha Karaginski was dragged into the vast and barely-lit entrance hall of the castle. As Rodney had surmised, the heads of the conspiracy and their underlings were in such a nervy condition that a certain amount of chaos reigned in the castle. Only a couple of menservants lingered in the hall.

To one of these Rodney growled in German a statement that Herr Boronov had ordered the Russian lad to be imprisoned in his room. Rodney also had the temerity to insist on the manservant taking them upstairs and showing them which room it was. Without argument, he acquiesced, and so far this bold plan had worked with an almost breathless simplicity.

With every step taken up the staircase, however, the three were afraid they might be met by Boronov himself, or someone who knew that no such orders had been given. At the top of the stairs a broad corridor went right and left, the manservant leading the way to the right, and still no one came in sight to question what was happening.

"Here, Kamaraden!" grinned the servant, flinging open the door of the room which, of course, they knew quite well belonged to Sacha.

"That is good!" growled Rodney, muffled in the upturned collar of his heavy overcoat. "That will be all right. We will remain here with the prisoner, and shall not want you any more."

With sighs of relief they watched the man take his way back down the candle-lit corridor, and passed into Sacha's room, which was faintly lit by the windows overlooking the town, the sky above which was aglow with the fires of the still burning Flying Fish docks.

"What could have been easier?" chuckled Rodney, as he shut the door and turned the key in the lock, after which, without waste of time, the three turned to the door leading into the room they most wanted to enter.

"Not quite so easy!" muttered Dan, who had reached it first. The communicating door was locked and—as in the earlier case of the postern gate—the key was missing.

Sacha gave a little exclamation of dismay.

"Of course!" he said, under his breath. "I had forgotten altogether! The door was locked by Kraft, after you were found to be with the revolutionaries, and he took the key away. Your room has been locked up. I don't know why."

"Anyhow," said Dan, who had been examining the door, "this isn't such a very strong door. We don't want to be beaten by a lock this time, seems to me."

He stepped back and took a running leap at it with his broad right shoulder, so that it shook under the shock. Then, with all his force, he crashed the sole of a heavy-booted foot against the lock, time after time, till—as they were begin-

ning to be afraid the noise might be heard even through the thick walls—the lock suddenly gave, and Dan was pitched forward into the next room.

Picking himself up, he was followed by the other two, making at once for the particular part of the room where the slit in the stone wall was to be found. It was plainly visible in the red light of burning which flooded the room from the windows. Sacha, as soon as they reached it, slipped his hand into it and fumbled for an instant. Then, slowly, but quite easily, the wall moved outwards, and a black gap was to be seen with steps leading downwards.

"The thing's done!" exclaimed Rodney, under his breath in delight. "Now to bring up reinforcements jolly old Boronov won't like at all! Let's hurry off!"

"You shtand where you vas, if you don't want a bullet in you!" snapped a voice from the background, the voice of Kraft, who seemingly had entered by the other door from the corridor unheard, and was covering them with an automatic.

"Some secret vays, hein?" he chuckled in astonishment. "That vas interesting indeed! Thanks very much for this information. Ve vill vith pleasure let the Herr Boronov be acquainted vith this piece of news. Ve vill—"

Despite the threat of the automatic, Rodney hurled himself at the man in a blind fury of rage and disappointment, a desperate effort to prevent their plan from being ruined at the eleventh hour. A stream of bullets spat in his direction, without, however, striking him. He closed with the German, around whose throat his fingers took a stranglehold, as he and the German rolled out in a struggling heap on to the corridor. This, to Rodney's added fury and dismay, was filled at one end with guards running towards them.

He had barely time to hope that Dan had understood his intention to cover Sacha and him while they got away down the passage in search of help, closing it up so that they could not be followed, when a violent blow on the head sent him sinking back into the darkness of oblivion.

Sentenced to be Shot!

WHEN Rodney came to his senses he found himself lying in comparative darkness. Someone was bending over him, and he heard his father's voice anxiously repeating his name. He heard occasionally also other voices joining in, which he gradually recognised as belonging to Lord Braxton and Prince Karaginski. He knew, therefore, that, whatever had happened to Dan and Sacha, he, himself, must be in that dungeon into which he had watched his father and the others being thrust.

In a dazed way he gathered from the talk around him that they were impatient to know how he came in this condition, and what had been happening. As soon as he could speak and move himself Rodney flung at them the question most naturally on his tongue.

"Dan isn't here as well, then?"

"No, sonny," answered his father.

"That's good!" muttered Rodney. "Looks as if he and Sacha got away. I hope to goodness they did!"

"Got away—Sacha?" inquired eagerly the voice of the prince, from the background of darkness.

"You know, Rodney," interposed Adrian Blake, "we're quite at sea as to what's been happening to you. They just dropped you in here like a sack of coals. It took me some time before I discovered if you were dead or alive. I'd only just been hearing from Karaginski that you and Dan were down in the town, apparently quite safe with Larry O'Hagan and the revolutionaries, and I was feeling immensely thankful for that. Then in you were carried. If you're better now, lad, tell us what's been going on."

Briefly Rodney did so. He began right back to the time Dan and he had left the underground room in the town to return to the castle. He explained how they had discovered the arrival in the valley of the real Alexis Saranoff, and had gone back with the intention of warning Adrian Blake. How, afterwards, Dan and he had been first with one side and then the other, and how they had eventuated at the castle, discovered Sacha Karaginski hiding from the guards, planned together to make use of the secret way to bring in revolutionary reinforcements, and had been discovered at a critical moment by Kraft.

"If my newspapers in England were to publish that story," murmured Lord Braxton, from the corner in which he sat, "there would be people saying it could never be true. But—bless my soul—here am I talking about my newspapers in England! In an hour or so's time they won't any longer be mine, for I shan't be in the land of the living, unless something marvellous happens."

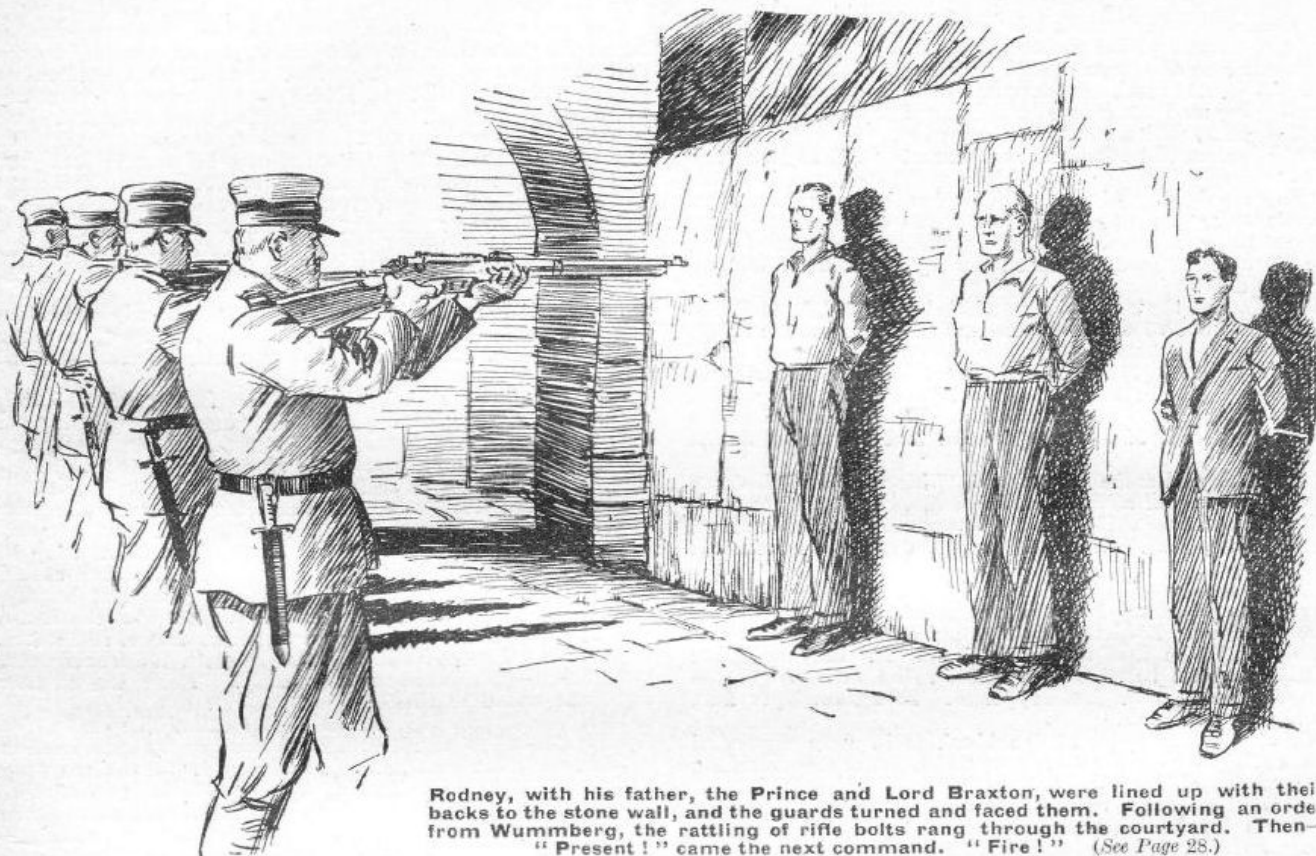
"Never say die!" laughed Adrian Blake. "While there's life, my lord, there's always hope."

SCHOOL and CRICKET LIFE!

WALTER HAMMOND'S OWN STORY!

In this Week's

MODERN BOY, 2d.



Rodney, with his father, the Prince and Lord Braxton, were lined up with their backs to the stone wall, and the guards turned and faced them. Following an order from Wummborg, the rattling of rifle bolts rang through the courtyard. Then—"Present!" came the next command. "Fire!" (See Page 28.)

"And so you don't really know what happened to your friend and my son, Sacha?" inquired anxiously the voice of the prince.

"All I know, prince," replied Rodney, "was that they and I were standing close to the wall, which Sacha had just opened for us as easy as anything, and we were just saying how soon jolly old Boronov would get an unexpected surprise when—there was Kraft with a gun pointed at us, like a hold-up on the cinema. Well, I went straight at him, gun or no gun, counting on Dan and Sacha taking the chance to clear out by the secret passage, and close it up again before it was too late. So long as two of them got away to Larry O'Hagan and brought help, nothing else mattered. But whether they did that or not, I don't know. For a number of guards came running up while I was struggling with Kraft, and someone hit me a whack on the head.

"Seeing that Dan and Sacha aren't here with us," added Rodney, "I should think they got away down that passage, wouldn't you, dad?"

"There's more than one dungeon in this castle, my young optimist," the prince answered, since Adrian Blake had maintained a silence expressing doubt. "I should think it very unlikely they did as you hoped. It's more natural to me that they stood by you and were taken. That passage, of course, would have been the one way of definitely beating Boronov and the others, if only it could have been used. But I think we can safely dismiss all hope of that from our minds."

"All hope of anything," interposed Lord Braxton, with his cynical drawl. "Anything, except the bullet Boronov has promised us whatever happens. Sentenced to be shot, we are, whether Boronov wins or loses. There's something too fiendish about the man to give anyone even a sporting chance."

"That's true enough," agreed Adrian Blake. "But don't forget they've too much at stake—he and his friends—to be kind to us. Even if the reinforcements come in time, and the revolution's squashed, they've suffered damage that will take them many months, and a small mint of money to repair. They've got us all comfortably in their hands—the only outside people who knew what was going on. Is it likely they're going to give us a chance to spoil their game for a second time?"

The talk drifted to the earlier stages of this great conspiracy, and Rodney heard more fully the story of how his father had heard the first breath of it, while investigating the mysterious murder in far-off Shanghai of a British secret service agent, and so first heard of Boronov. Rodney discovered, too, how Adrian Blake, following certain clues and reaching Egypt in the process, first came in touch with Larry O'Hagan. For the first time Rodney learnt that Larry O'Hagan was an Irish-American, and like

Adrian Blake was a newspaper man, working for a large American news syndicate.

It appeared that Larry and Adrian Blake had eventually both reached a stage in their search when, if they were to get any farther, the one could not do without the other, and so had joined forces. Larry had actually managed to secure an engineer's berth on the Flying Fish without his real standing and purpose even being suspected.

"And now," said Adrian Blake, "dear old Larry's the only one left free for the minute, and it doesn't look as if he'll be free very long if Moscow is going to be as quick with Boronov's reinforcements as you say, prince. Boronov looks like romping home, with nothing to do but to build afresh. He has one Flying Fish intact. And, in any case, he has poor Ashton's plans on which to work."

"It was to get those plans that you walked into a trap up here, wasn't it?" asked Rodney.

"All to no purpose, too," murmured his father, with a dry little laugh. "It seems—so the prince says—that Boronov took them down to the office in the works only a few hours before the revolution broke out, and left them there. Boronov has been as anxious to get down there for those plans as I was to come up here and lay my hands on them."

"He hasn't got them yet, anyhow, any more than you have," Rodney reminded him. "He may never get them. Mr. O'Hagan was making no end of a fuss trying to get possession of that northern pass before we left. If he holds that pass, the troops from Moscow will have a hard job to get through."

"That's right," nodded Adrian Blake. "Larry's a top-hole fighting man with an eye to every chance. If I'd followed his advice I wouldn't have been here now. But I was so dead set on getting those plans. Also, I felt that if I was up here I couldn't be suspected of having anything to do with what was going on in the town. He said all along it was like walking into the lion's mouth—and it was."

"Anyway," said Rodney, "the jaws haven't shut tight on us yet. Somehow, I don't think they will. We mustn't give up all hope. There is a chance that Sacha and Dan may have used that secret passage."

"Bright young optimist!" drawled Lord Braxton from his corner. "Your son's certainly a chip of the old block, Blake. I've never known you despair, in the face of the worst of circumstances."

"And I don't now," laughed Adrian Blake, "though I'm free to admit that I've never found myself in worse circumstances than we all are at the minute. Still, Rodney may be quite right. If young Sacha and Dan had the wit to see it at the moment, Rodney gave them the chance to take the wisest course. And, in that case, Boronov's minutes are really nearly as finely numbered as our own."

Here, while Adrian Blake's words were dropped slowly into the silence of the dark dungeon, lit only by the light of burning in the town filtering through a barred window high up in one wall, the dungeon door was opened with a turning key and flung back, the bulky figure of Wummburg looming in it, with a number of armed guards behind him.

"Marchieren!" he barked in German. "All of you—outside!"

"The numbering of our minutes has begun sooner than we expected," murmured Adrian Blake dryly, rising from the ground and standing erect, proud and contemptuous, a smile on his lips as he faced the lighted lantern Wummburg held over his head.

Rodney and the others followed the lead of Adrian Blake and passed out of the dungeon into the courtyard outside. The firelit sky showed them the vulturelike Boronov and his companions in conspiracy against the world, standing in a group at the far end of the courtyard under the arched gate which led into the front court. Even at that distance the glinting eyes of Boronov seemed to be shooting flames of malice.

"Be quick and make an end of it!" his voice called, sharp as the cracking of a whip, while Wummburg's guards were roughly thrusting their prisoners towards a blank wall of the castle, hastening their movements with blows from the butts of rifles.

"It looks to me," said Adrian Blake, with his dry little laugh, "as if friend Boronov knows his own time is very close at hand. Evidently something has happened which has decided him that the game is up. My only objection to this indecent haste is that I am being deprived of the chance to know what has happened. To a newspaper man that's very annoying."

All of them, arrived at the blank wall, were separated from each other by the couple of dozen guards surrounding them. Each of them had his wrists roughly tied behind his back, and that done, was pushed against the wall. Wummburg and his guards moved away from them, the guards lining up at a distance of about fifteen yards. Following upon an order from Wummburg, the rattling of rifle bolts rang through the courtyard. Another word from Wummburg and the rifles were lifted to the "present."

"Fire!" rasped Wummburg in German.

A Different Kind of Fire!

RODNEY, with his eyes closed, had faced the line of rifle muzzles, awaiting with what calm and pluck he could summon up the inevitable death speeding towards him. Actually, he felt neither calm nor plucky. His back was pressed to the stone wall of the castle as if it were trying to force its way through it. Yet, if only to end the suspense, he longed to hear the explosion of the volley following Wummburg's rasping order.

But the explosion which followed was not that of rifle fire entirely. It was an explosion which shook the castle to its very foundations, filling the courtyard behind Boronov and his companions with a vivid sheet of flame. Certainly rifle-bullets did splatter the wall close to Rodney, but none hit him.

Glancing hurriedly to either side of him, Rodney saw that only Prince Karaganski had fallen. Adrian Blake and Lord Braxton were as unhurt as Rodney. In front, the guards had turned in fear and amazement towards the scene of the real explosion, too panic-stricken to pay any further attention to the people they had been summoned to shoot. Boronov and his companions also seemed to have forgotten the purpose for which they had been gathered together.

That was natural enough, as Rodney realised. The front part of the castle was lit by flickering flames, the front courtyard was fogged by dense black smoke, and the whole atmosphere was pungent with stifling fumes. The smoke and fumes seemed to swallow up Wummburg and his panic-stricken guards. Rodney and the others against the wall remained the only occupants of the back courtyard. Behind the veil of smoke, lit by an increasing glare of burning, the voices of Wummburg and his guards could be heard calling to each other in anxious inquiry.

"Didn't I say there was no need to despair?" laughed Adrian Blake. "Though I must confess that salvation's come by a way I never expected for a moment."

"What on earth then has happened?" questioned Lord Braxton querulously.

"Well, I'm only surmising, of course, being no more able than you, my lord, to be certain about the truth. But I imagine that a store of a new pet explosive with which Von Roden had been experimenting up here in the castle has gone sky high. If so, the castle won't be habitable any longer—for anybody. You can see that the fire's growing worse every minute. And here we are, tied up. Rodney, come closer. Stand with your back to me and see if you can feel for the jack-knife in my hip pocket. We must free ourselves somehow as quickly as we can."

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Rodney, with his wrists tied behind his back, eventually found the jack-knife, and Adrian Blake, taking it from his son, managed to open it. But it took what seemed an endless time before, first, Rodney's wrists were freed, and presently he had cut the ropes binding his father and Lord Braxton. Then they all turned their attention on Prince Karaganski, Adrian Blake turning over his limp fallen figure and making an examination. It took him but a minute to be certain, speaking with the hoarseness of tense emotion.

"Poor old chap!" he said to the others under his breath, showing the palm of his hand to be red with blood as he withdrew it from the prince's heart.

"Dead?" gasped Lord Braxton.

"Instantly," replied Adrian Blake. "The only one of us. It's a shame. He was one of the best. He ought never to have been mixed up with a crowd like Boronov and his friends."

"Anyhow," he added, the emotion in his voice fading away and a note of common-sense urgency replacing it, "we've no time now to think about that. We can't do anything for poor Karaganski; but we can and must do something for ourselves, or be burned instead of merely shot."

The destructive power of Von Roden's mysterious new explosive must have been tremendous. It had created havoc with the front part of the castle, the eastern wing of which was not only wrecked but ablaze, the flames eating up the magnificent furnishings of the interior and leaping from room to room so swiftly as to suggest that the castle was doomed. Into this holocaust of flame, smoke, and stench of chemicals Boronov and his friends—with Wummburg and the guards—had vanished completely. There was neither sight nor sound of them.

That was apparently the only way out of the castle, for Adrian Blake led his son and Lord Braxton in that direction with as much haste as possible, making for the western wing which, so far, was untouched by the fire but was densely filled with smoke. Here, when the three had gained the large entrance hall, there was still no sign of anybody. Seemingly panic-stricken by the explosion and its effects, everyone had rushed out of the castle through the wide-flung front doors while they were still safe.

But by the time Adrian Blake and his companions had reached the front doors, the fire had already gained so far as to make escape impossible by that way. The flames were making a barrier across it, so fiery hot as to scorch one several feet away. There were, of course, windows from which to escape easily enough, and Adrian Blake led the way straight to the library, a large ground-floor room in the western wing, with a number of windows.

They were just about to enter this room when a second tremendous explosion shook the castle to its foundations, the force of it throwing them off their feet. They could see that the far end of the library had been blown in. The far end of the hall, too, had burst into flames with an appalling swiftness, and the stench of chemicals was so bad that Adrian Blake and his companions had difficulty in breathing.

Adrian Blake dragged his son towards the staircase, and shouted to Lord Braxton to follow.

"We must jump from the first floor, and risk breaking our necks!" he said.

Staggering up the staircase, choking for breath, Rodney reached the corridor and instinctively turned in the direction of the room Dan and he had occupied.

The door of this room was open, fortunately, as Rodney reached the threshold. In the yellow glare of flames which lit the room he swung round on his father, pointing a finger excitedly:

"Look!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "That's the secret way, and the wall's still open! Dan and Sacha can't have got clear, as I'd hoped. They must be somewhere in the castle."

"Poor little beggars!" gasped Adrian Blake.

"We must go back and find them!" urged Rodney.

But Lord Braxton pointed out through the open door to the rolling smoke and licking flame, which showed that the entrance hall and staircase must by now be unapproachable.

"It isn't humanly possible—that way!" he gasped.

"I'm afraid not," agreed Adrian Blake regretfully. "We can't go back—unless we want to throw away our lives needlessly. If Dan and Sacha are in the castle they'll be in the part from which we came, and we couldn't possibly reach them. No; our best plan is to make use of this underground way ourselves, join the others in the town, and come back again to look for those two. Let us hurry, for a wasted minute might make the difference between life and death!"

(What's become of Dan and Sacha? Have they taken the chance afforded them and cleared out of the secret passage, or have they fallen into the merciless hands of the guards? Don't miss a line of next week's thrilling instalment of this gripping serial, whatever you do, chums. And don't forget that next week's GEM will contain another dandy FREE picture card.)