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**"UNCLE
DOES THE
TRICK!"**

*Complete Tale of
School life inside*

A SPECIAL COMPLETE STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. OF ST. JIM'S—

UNCLE

does the

TRICK!

by MARTIN CLIFFORD

With the famous South African cricketers figuring in a match not far from the school, all St. Jim's is naturally anxious to see the game. Both Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. are determined to "work the oracle," but they are hardly prepared for the amazing situations that attend their scheming!

CHAPTER 1.

Not a Success!

"P'WAPS I had bettah go, deah boy."

As he made that remark, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy favoured Tom Merry with the gleam of his polished monocle and a portentous frown. The swell of St. Jim's noble brow was often marred by a heavy frown; but as a rule, it came as the result of the mental turmoil involved in the selection of a suitable tie to go with the right kind of waistcoat, or some other important sartorial problem. At the moment neither ties nor waistcoats had entered into the discussion, yet Arthur Augustus frowned. He had looked into Study No. 10 in the Shell to give Tom Merry a little advice, and Tom Merry had hinted all too plainly that it was more blessed to give than to receive.

Now, apparently, D'Arcy was suggesting going, and the Terrible Three brightened.

"Rather! Trot along, Gussy!" said Tom Merry cheerfully, as he brushed his somewhat baggy trousers.

"Sorry to lose you," added Manners, and Monty Lowther chuckled.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle more securely in his eye and regarded Tom Merry & Co. witheringly.

"Weally, deah boys," he protested, "I meant that p'waps it would be bettah if I went to Kildare instead of you, Tom Mewwy. It would be best if the mattah were put by a fellow with tact and judgment, you know. The wight phwase at the wight moment."

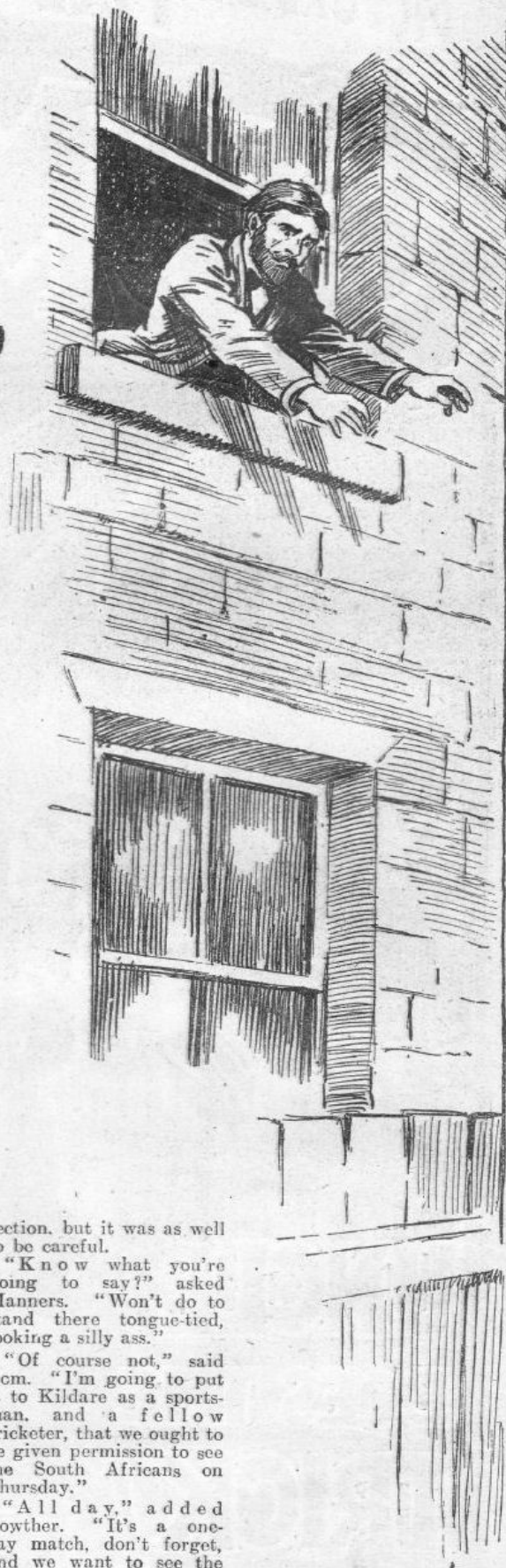
"It'd be a black moment, not white, when Kildare chucked you out," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I wegard you as an ass. I did not mean white, but wight, you know. The wight word."

"I see," nodded Lowther. "Well, nothing could be clearer than that, Gussy. For lucid exposition, old chap, I don't know anyone who could beat you. But Tommy is skipper, and Tommy's going to put the whole thing in a nutshell."

Tom Merry brushed the sleeves of his jacket, while Manners gave him a look over to see if he were really in a fit condition to pay a visit to Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. On the rare occasions when Tom Merry, or anyone else in the Shell, paid a visit to a prefect, it was generally to take lines, and then, of course, it was the condition of the lines rather than the state of the junior's clothes that mattered most. But this was, in a sense, a social call, and it might be as well to look as spick and span as possible. Not that Kildare was particular in the matter of sartorial per-

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fection, but it was as well to be careful.

"Know what you're going to say?" asked Manners. "Won't do to stand there tongue-tied, looking a silly ass."

"Of course not," said Tom. "I'm going to put it to Kildare as a sportsman, and a fellow cricketer, that we ought to be given permission to see the South Africans on Thursday."

"All day," added Lowther. "It's a one-day match, don't forget, and we want to see the thing through."

"Yaas, wathah! It's a pity, deah boys, that the

—IN WHICH THE SOUTH AFRICAN CRICKETERS ARE FEATURED!

match doesn't take place to-morrow, Wednesday bein' a half-holiday, you know—"

"Good old Gussy! Always ready with the stop-press news," said Lowther. "Why not ask them to make the match a day earlier so that we can go?"

"Yaas, wathah! As a mattah of fact, I thought of that," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "But I wathah fancy, you know, that there might be difficulties."

"Perhaps," agreed Tom Merry, with a grin. "You never know, of course. Now I'm ready, you chaps. Fit to kill?"

"Fine!" said Manners.

"First rate!" said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shuddered. In view of the possibility of interviewing the captain of St. Jim's on behalf of the juniors, he had arrayed himself gorgeously, and the sight of Tom Merry's "bags" gave him a pain.

"I am suah I had bettah go, you know," he said. "You are hardly a wəpəsentative membəh of the Lower School, Tom Mewwy. Kildare might think it would not show the South Africans the best side of ourselves." And he shook his head sagely.

The three juniors only grinned.

"If only my uncle were here in time," said Monty Lowther, "all would be well. But you know what these uncles are. Never where they are wanted. It isn't every day I have an uncle from South Africa, and the least that he could do would be to arrive in time."

"Can't be relied on, though," said Manners. "And anyway, he couldn't get all of us leave. Hurry up, Tom."

Tom Merry set out for Kildare's study, and in the corridor several other fellows gave him encouragement. The fact was that on the following Thursday the South Africans were playing a team raised by Mr. Graham Paine, and since the match was to take place only ten miles from St. Jim's, most of the juniors were anxious to see it.

What made the match even more exciting was the fact that Kildare, of St. Jim's, had been selected to play for the

amateur eleven, adding a local flavour to an international game. That Kildare would give a good account of himself went without saying; but St. Jim's wanted to see him give it.

It seemed to the juniors that, in the circumstances, the very least that Kildare could do would be to put in a good word for them. Hence Tom Merry's "social call" upon the captain of the school.

Jack Blake was on the stairs as Tom descended, and he grinned.

"Bearding the lion in his den?" he asked.

"More or less. I'm going to ask Kildare to do the proper thing," said Tom Merry gravely. "Urge the Head on bended knees that he can't play his best if we're not there."

"Good egg!" said Herries, coming up with Digby. "Cussy was going to do the same thing. Haven't seen him, by the way?"

"Yes; in our study," said Tom, and went on his way.

It was tea-time, and Kildare would probably be in a kindly mood. It was, on the whole, the best and most suitable time to state the Junior School's proposition, and Tom Merry's hopes were high.

Behind him walked Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby; Clive and Levison stood on the stairs, while Talbot and one or two others of the Shell peered over the landings.

Tom Merry paused for a moment, made an heroic gesture, and then disappeared down the Sixth Form corridor and tapped on Kildare's door. The captain's deep voice answered him, and he entered.

Kildare, in flannels and a blazer, fresh from practice, was adjusting the strap of a pad, and he looked up with a pleasant smile as Tom Merry entered.

"Hallo! What do you want, Merry?"

"Ahem! We're frightfully proud of your having been picked to play in Mr. Graham Paine's team, Kildare," began Tom Merry. "Honour for the school, and—er—a leg-up for the team, and all that."

"Thanks. Very decent of you to come and say that, Merry. I hope I shan't let St. Jim's down."

"My hat! Of course you won't, although—ahem!—it might be a little lonely for you there."

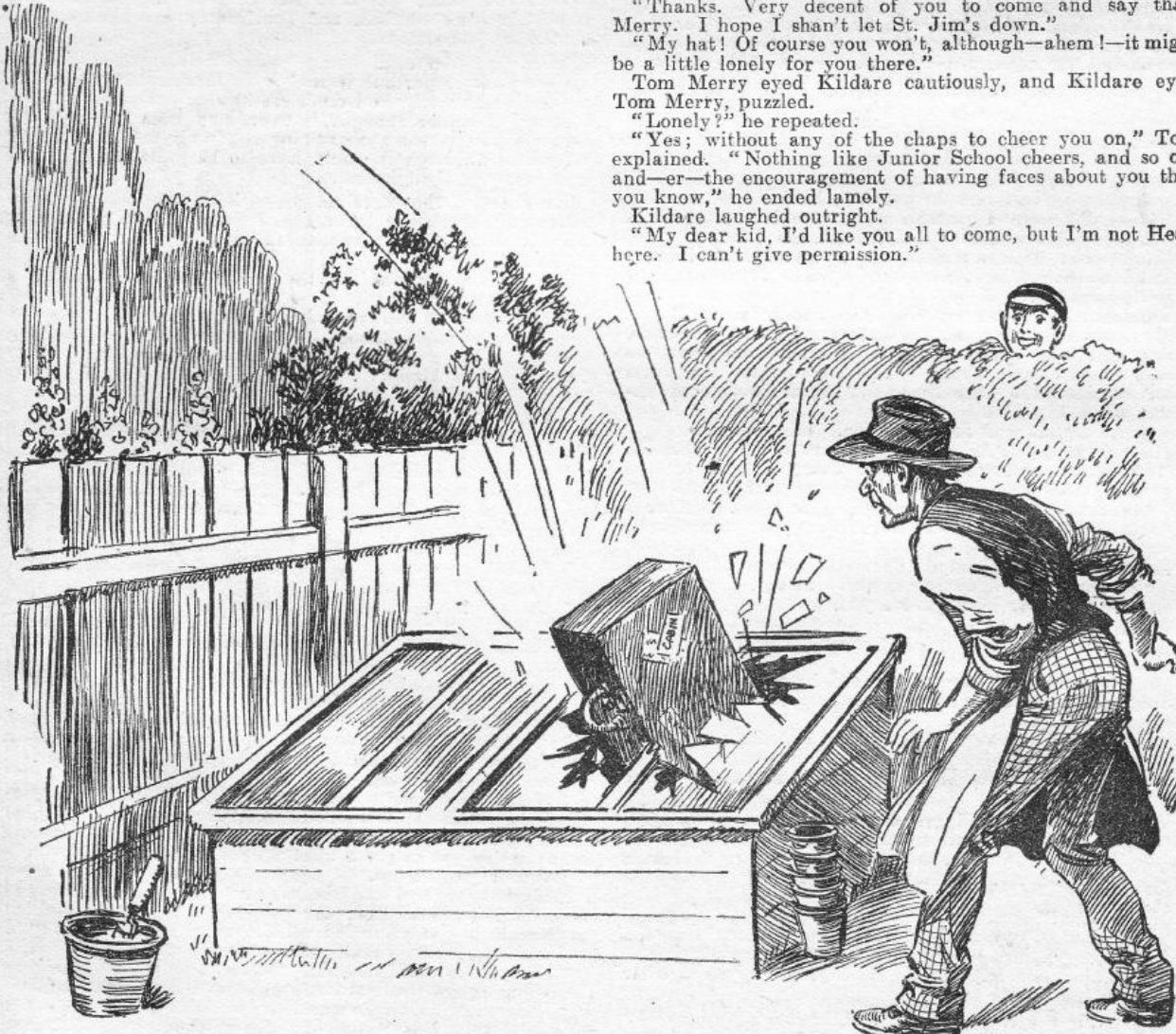
Tom Merry eyed Kildare cautiously, and Kildare eyed Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Lonely?" he repeated.

"Yes; without any of the chaps to cheer you on," Tom explained. "Nothing like Junior School cheers, and so on, and—er—the encouragement of having faces about you that you know," he ended lamely.

Kildare laughed outright.

"My dear kid, I'd like you all to come, but I'm not Head here. I can't give permission."



"Oh, no, of course not!" said Tom Merry eagerly; and his face wore a sunny, cheery smile that was hard to resist. "But suppose you dropped a hint to the Head? Perhaps he's forgotten."

Kildare shook his head decidedly.

"I can assure you, Dr. Holmes has thought about it. But there's nothing doing. A few seniors are coming over, and they'll give all the atmosphere I shall want; but, of course, I'll be glad to know you are all thinking about me during lessons."

Tom Merry persisted.

"But, I say, Kildare, suppose you went to the Head and put it to him? Suppose you said how eager we were and how we shouldn't be able to work properly, anyway?"

Kildare smiled good-naturedly.

"No go. The Head would refuse. If he gave permission to a few juniors it wouldn't be fair to the rest of the Lower School. I'm sorry, Merry; I'd like you all to see the game, but there it is."

Tom Merry groaned and turned to the door; but he hesitated there and looked back.

"I suppose a fellow's uncle might be able to get permission; especially if he's coming from South Africa? Lowther's uncle is, and he's as keen as mustard on cricket. If he asked the Head—"

"Well, that might be different. If Lowther's got an uncle like that, tell him to be kind and gentle to him; they're rare. And now trot along, there's a good kid."

Tom Merry trotted along, and Lowther and Manners and a crowd of fellows met him in the Hall.

"No go?" said Manners, at sight of Tom's gloomy face.

"No; absolutely off."

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Yaas, wathah! I feah you did not put the mattah with pwopah tact, Tom Mewwy. Did you suggest that it might be as well to have some St. Jim's fellows in weserve in case Kildare cwocked?"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, deah boy! I fail to see any occasion for that remark. I wathah fancy I could knock spots off the South Afwican bowlin' myself. I have been weadin' the accounts of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Gussy, don't!" pleaded Lowther. "You're getting mixed. You're thinking of wiping spots off fancy waistcoats."

"Wats! I shall go to Kildare and put the mattah in its pwopah perspective," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sniffing in disdain. "I have a wathah persuasive mannah, and I wathah fancy, y'know, that Kildare will see weason."

"Oh crumbs! You're really going?" asked Blake faintly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He'll be ratty!"

"Wubbish! I shall use my usual tact and judgment."

There was a chuckle in the Hall, but Arthur Augustus, flicking dust from his immaculate jacket, walked down the corridor to Kildare's study. The juniors, in breathless silence, watched the door open and Arthur Augustus disappear within.

"Talk of Daniel and the lion's den," said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had the heart of a lion, but his persuasive manner seemed to have deserted him, or else Kildare was in a most unreciprocative mood. At any rate, the action did not go according to plan. Arthur Augustus did not emerge like a sunbeam, but more like a streak of lightning.

The door of Kildare's study opened, and something came through it and landed on the carpet. Bump!

The juniors in the Hall gave a yell.

"Gussy!"

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy it was, and he sat on the carpet blinking and groping for his monocle as Kildare's door shut with a resounding slam.

The swell of St. Jim's rose to his feet and dusted himself, staring haughtily at his chums through his monocle.

"Now have a go at the Head," grinned Lowther. "Never say die, Gussy."

"Wats! I wegard Kildare as an uttah ass. I put the mattah to him fairly and squarely. I offahed myself as weserve, and gave him one or two tips on how to deal with Quinn, the South Afwican bowlah, you know."

"What?"

"Oh, my hat!"

The idea of Gussy giving advice to Kildare was too much for the juniors—they howled, for Arthur Augustus, although an elegant batsman on his day, was given to what Lowther called duck's egg collecting.

"No go," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "If Gussy's tact and judgment can't soothe Kildare into agreement, nothing can, and I'm afraid it's Latin instead of cricket."

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"Unless Lowther's nunky turns up," said Manners.

"That won't be any good to us," pointed out Blake. "He can't get permission for half the school—only for you three."

And with that the somewhat disappointed juniors dispersed.

It was the general opinion that their only hope had been shattered.

CHAPTER 2.

Telegrams!

TOM MERRY was cutting bread-and-butter, Manners was making the tea, and all was peace in Study No. 10. But all was not in a state of bliss and happiness. So long as no one had put the matter to Kildare there had been the faint hope that Dr. Holmes might announce that, in his considered opinion, the junior school would profit more by watching the cricket-match than by swotting at Latin, history, and geography. But now that hope was gone, and there were heavy sighs in consequence.

"Monty, it's up to you. We rely on the Lowther family to come up to the scratch," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose it is," Monty Lowther agreed. "But you know what unreliable things uncles are."

"It's a pity," remarked Manners.

"Here's what he says," said Lowther, taking a letter from his pocket: "I shall be in England, then, on the twenty-second, but shall not be able to see you until a week from that date."

Tom Merry shot a look at the calendar and shook his head.

"No go, I'm afraid; no go at all."

Monty Lowther folded the letter, and a most thoughtful expression appeared on his face. He had taken a considerable pride in his South African uncle ever since he had known that there was a chance that he might take them to see the cricket-match, and Tom Merry and Manners had shared his enthusiasm.

"Couldn't you send him a wire or telephone him and explain how important it is?" said Manners. "As it's to see the South Africans I don't see how he can refuse."

Monty Lowther thought it over, and then decided that there might be some chance of receiving a reply from a telegram, although it would have to be judiciously worded and carefully thought out.

So after tea the three set to work to compose a suitable telegram. But their labours had hardly begun when they were interrupted by a rap on the door.

"Roll in!"

Jack Blake looked into the study, his face wearing a frown.

"Just come to tell you about Figgins & Co. The fat-heads are swanking about the place that they're going to the match. Are we going to put up with that sort of thing from the New House?"

Tom Merry stared.

"Figgy going to the match!" he repeated in surprise. "But how? Why? Who gave them permission? Not Ratty?"

"Hardly!" said Blake. "I can't picture old Ratty doing anything decent; but Figgy's strutting around, and Fatty Wynn is planning a hamper basket they're going to take, so they'll be there all day."

Manners shook his head.

"Bluff!" he opined. "They'll cry off at the last minute. How can they be going?"

"Don't know," Blake was forced to admit. "But we can't let them score like this. We'll have to manage it somehow. Gussy's talking of sending his pater a wire, asking special permission."

"Phew! That's an outside chance!" chuckled Lowther.

"Dig's doing the same thing, and so is Herries."

Tom Merry and Lowther exchanged looks. It seemed that there was to be quite a run on telegrams that day. In consequence, the sooner theirs was dispatched the better.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, if all their paters say 'Yes' the Head's going to have the shock of his life. It may be a case, if he did, of all or none," he mused; then added: "Excuse us, Blake, old man; we've got to get a most urgent telegram off!"

Lowther jumped up.

"My hat, yes! First win, rest nowhere. If you see any New House fellows near the post office, Blake, or looking as though they're going to send telegrams, clear 'em off!"

Jack Blake waved his hand reassuringly.

"Leave it to me," he said. "Gussy's only sending a curt little message of two hundred words, so I doubt if there'll be time for them to send more than his before the post office closes. I suggested jotting it down in exciting instalments; but you know what our Gussy is—never listens to reason."

Blake left the study, and Tom Merry scribbled down a

hasty message, which Lowther altered, and Manners corrected, in order that there should be no faults in it.

"Can't have the New House crowing over us," Tom Merry explained. "Your uncle has got to listen to the call, Monty."

"He certainly has!" said Monty Lowther. "And he will. I promise you he'll come. Leave it to me, you chaps!"

Monty Lowther took the telegram and snatched up his cap, while Tom Merry and Manners went to discover whether Figgins & Co., of the New House, were bluffing or not. Their keenness to witness the match was by this time considerably increased. And although it would be bad enough not to have seen it, it would be ten times worse if Figgins & Co. scored over them by being the only fellows who had managed to do so.

pathetic ground, shaking his fist at the disappearing cyclist.

It seemed suddenly to have occurred to half St. Jim's that there was a telegraph office in Rylcombe, and that fond parents could be reached by wire. At any rate, there was a good number of juniors cycling towards the village, and Monty Lowther put on his best speed.

He passed Herries and Digby, of the Fourth, Lawrence and Owen, of the New House, and Noble, of the Shell. Others were strung out along the road. Although one or two fellows might be lucky, they would not all of them be allowed to go to the match, even though their fathers and uncles agreed to take them.

However, it was quite on the cards that most parents would refuse. There were possibly one or two old St. Jim's men, who might have a twinkle in their eyes on receiving



"Hi! Stop!" Taggles, the porter, jumped into the path and waved his arms at the oncoming Monty Lowther. Next moment, as Lowther lowered his head and bore straight down on him, Taggles leapt aside, just in time to avoid being run down. (See Chapter 2.)

"Just imagine Figgy describing every over and how the runs were scored!" said Tom Merry.

"Don't!" implored Manners.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther ran as hard as he could for the bicycle-shed. But there seemed to be quite a rush on the bicycle-shed just then. Half St. Jim's seemed to be gathered there.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House, were standing just outside, grinning broadly.

"Hallo, here's Lowther!" said Figgins. "Going to send a wire to his uncle!"

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Lowther. "No time to stop and talk. I'll tell you all about the match on Friday, Figgy?"

"Thanks; I shall be able to tell you on Thursday! No need for us to wait for the papers!"

"Special permission," added Kerr. "Perhaps you're not the only one with a South African uncle. What do you feed him on, Lowther?"

Lowther did not reply. He sorted his machine out from the rest, brushed aside Clive, who was struggling to disentangle his machine from Racke's, and then, heedless of rules and regulations, mounted in the quadrangle.

Taggles, the porter, saw him coming, and jumped out into his path, waving his arms; but Monty Lowther lowered his head and trod hard on the pedals.

"Hi! Stop! Which I'll report you, you young rip!" roared Taggles.

Lowther bore straight down on him, grinning, and Taggles leapt aside just in time to avoid being run down. Next moment the old porter subsided on the hard, unsym-

metrical ground, and act generously; but there were many more who were merely business men, and had the impression that they sent their sons to St. Jim's in order to study. So in all probability there would be many stern letters received at the school within the next few days, and many groans heard.

Monty Lowther, however, was full of hope, and he reached the post office in a gasping state, having done the last half-mile at the speed of fifteen miles an hour. But when he saw the post office his face fell.

Redfern, of the New House, was standing in the doorway, grinning, and he bowed to Lowther.

"Telegram?" he asked. "Join at the end of the queue."

"Queue?" gasped Lowther, and then looked at the line of juniors in the shop. "Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"Giddy uncle, don't you mean?" asked Redfern facetiously.

"But, I say, this is all rot!" protested Lowther indignantly. "I've got an urgent telegram—"

"Faith, an' we all have," called Reilly. "And it's D'Arcy who's sending the whole of the 'Encyclopedia Britannica' at a penny a word!"

Lowther marched into the small shop, and there was a howl of protest from the other fellows. The shop was a small one, and sold papers and writing necessities apart from stamps; but the customers there were interested in the post office side only, and they crowded out the shop.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was at the counter, writing in his elegant hand on a telegraph form and thinking over

every word. He had already handed in one completed form, and now was going strong on his second.

"Buck up, Gussy, you ass!" exclaimed Lowther. "I've got an urgent telegram to send off!"

"Bai Jove! Pway don't intewwupt, deah boy! This is most important." The swell of St. Jim's silk hat was at the back of his head, his noble brow was wrinkled in thought. "How do you spell iwwe-pawable?"

"I don't. But try i-r-e-p-p-a-r-r-i-b-u-l," said Lowther humorously.

D'Arcy tried it, and scratched his head.

"That doesn't look wight. I'll have to get another form."

And while Arthur Augustus moved away to get another form, Lowther took his stance at the vacant place at the counter.

From the others came a howl of protest. Reilly grasped Lowther round the neck, while Kerruish took him by the ears, and Arthur Augustus clutched his collar.

"Oh dear, please, young gentlemen, please!" expostulated the postmistress. "No fighting."

"No fighting," said Lowther, shaking himself free. "Gussy, I'm surprised at you. Is that a blot on your spats?"

"Gweat Scott! Where?"

Lowther snatched up the pen and looked in triumph at the others. But, before he could write, the postmistress called his attention.

"There's a telegram for you, Master Lowther. It has just come through."

Lowther dropped the pen and looked amazed.

"For me?"

There was a buzz in the post office as the postmistress took the buff envelope and handed it to Monty Lowther. Lowther looked at it and assumed a nonchalant attitude.

The others held their breaths as he opened the envelope and read the message on the form.

It ran:

"Will arrive Friday.—
UNCLE MONTY."

Lowther gave an inward groan, but he grinned as cheerfully as he could to hide his chagrin. There was a chorus of questions from the other juniors.

"From your uncle?"

"Any luck?"

"Is he comin', deah boy?"

"Coming?" said Lowther easily. "Yes, rather. Of course he's coming. Didn't I say he was?"

"My hat!"

"Of all the luck!"

And Lowther received many envious glances as he secured a telegraph form and scribbled on it:

"Delighted to see you Wednesday, to-morrow. South African match here Thursday. One of our fellows playing.—MONTY."

That was the message Lowther sent, and he flourished it for all to see on the counter. From that message it certainly seemed that Monty Lowther's uncle would arrive on the morrow, and, of course, that would be just the day on which to obtain permission to take Lowther to the match.

Only that wasn't quite the case, as Lowther realised; and when he had shaken the dust and admiration of the post office behind him, his face clouded over.

"Well, anyway," he said grimly, as he set out for St. Jim's, "that's finished it. But some kind of an uncle has simply got to blow in to-morrow—by hook or by crook!—even if it's only me."

After which cryptic remark he abandoned himself to the ride home.

CHAPTER 3.

Kerr Comes up to Scratch!

SILENCE had reigned for some time in the study which Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn shared in the Fourth Form corridor in the New House, for the Co. were plunged in thought.

"Um!" murmured Kerr at last.

George Figgins looked across the study at his study-mate.

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"Thought of anything?" he asked.

The Scottish junior shook his head. When ideas were obtained in the New House their usual source was George Francis Kerr, and Figgins had grown to rely upon him as universal provider. Figgy was a first-class cricketer and a useful man with his fists, but when it came to ideas he was not among those competing.

But, alas, Kerr, for once, had failed!

"No, nothing," he said gloomily. "Of course, I might send a wire to a relation, but it wouldn't be any good. Half the school has thought of that."

Figgins sighed.

"I've been thinking till my head's gone foggy, but I can't think of anything. If nothing comes we'll have to cut, that's all."

Kerr looked serious. He had a level Scottish head, and had learned that certain causes are invariably followed by certain effects. It was all very well to talk of breaking bounds, therefore; but one had to remember that there was punishment to follow; and it followed as surely as night followed day.

"It'll mean a licking," he said, "and a stiff one, from Ratty."

Figgins was dogged.

"Can't be helped. We can't let ourselves down in front of those School House men. We've told them we're going, so go we blessed well must."

Kerr shook his head.

"I said from the first it was a silly idea to brag until we had an idea."

"Well, that was up to you, old man. You're the ideas department, and I consider you've let us down. You ought to have thought of something—oughtn't he, Fatty?"

He appealed to Fatty Wynn, who, too, was plunged in thought.

"Eh?" said Fatty, looking up.

"I said Kerr ought to have thought of something," repeated Figgins.

"Oh, I see," said Fatty.

"Yes, I suppose he ought. But it doesn't matter, because I've got it all planned. You can always leave things like this safely to me, Figgy."

Figgins sat up in surprise. He had not looked upon Fatty Wynn as a possible supplier of ideas. A trencherman of the best, a vanisher of tarts and doughnuts, a scoffer of ginger-beer—yes; but not a great schemer like Kerr. Yet Fatty was beaming now in obvious triumph.

"Well, this is good news, Fatty!"

"Um," said Kerr doubtfully. "What have you thought of, Fatty?"

A seraphic smile dawned on Fatty Wynn's face.

"Well, I thought we'd kick off with cold chicken—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Cold chicken," said Fatty Wynn firmly. "Always start with something pretty solid, Figgy. And after that I thought perhaps we might have a few sandwiches to keep going, pate de fois gras, you know, and—Here! Hold on!"

Figgins certainly held on. He had shot out a long arm, and now had Fatty Wynn fairly in his grasp.

"You fat gormandizer—you blessed glutton!" he hooted. "Do you mean you've been thinking about grub all this time?"

Fatty Wynn struggled free.

"Of course I have!" he said indignantly. "What else did you think I was thinking about?"

Kerr chuckled.

"Yes, what else? Use your brains, Figgy, do!"

"I'd like to know how we'd get on," sniffed Fatty Wynn, "if I didn't think out these things. Starve, I dare say. Fine thing to get there and find that the buffet didn't open until one o'clock."

"Oh, dry up!" said Figgins irritably. "You'd be thinking of food if the school were on fire. There won't be any need for a giddy hamper, you fat chump, if we don't get an idea."

Fatty Wynn's mouth fell open.

"N-no hamper, Figgy?" he gasped. "Are you joking?"

Fatty Wynn paled at the thought of losing that wonderful hamper.

"No, you idiot! We can't have a hamper in the Form-room, can we? And how can we go to the cricket match if we haven't an idea for wangling it?"

"Oh," said Fatty Wynn in dismay, "but that's Kerr's

job! I say, this is pretty thick, you know. I've got the whole thing planned perfectly."

"Well, you can unplan it!" snorted Figgins. "Pull yourself together and think of an idea, for goodness' sake! Suppose Lowther's uncle comes and takes those three to the match. We shall look pretty silly duffers."

Fatty Wynn rubbed his nose and chuckled.

"We could scoff their hamper, though. Rather a rag that."

Figgins picked up a book and hurled it with unerring aim across the study. It took Fatty on the middle waistcoat button, and the Falstaff of the New House subsided on to the floor with a gasp.

But Kerr had heard a shout in the quadrangle below, and he leapt to the window.

"Hallo—Reddy!" he exclaimed to Figgins.

Dick Redfern was in the quadrangle below, and he waved to Figgins.

"Hey! Figgy!"

Figgins joined Kerr at the window.

"Lowther's uncle is coming to-morrow," said Redfern.

"I thought you'd like to know."

"Hang Lowther's uncle," said Figgins irritably. "I'm not interested in his silly relations."

Redfern chuckled.

"That means you haven't plotted a plot. Time you resigned and left things to me, Figgy. How about asking Ratty's permission? I can lend you an exercise book to stuff in your bags."

Figgins banged down the window and looked at Kerr darkly.

"You see," he snorted. "The School House scores again. They'll be crowing over us from morning to night, describing every stroke in the game, and—" Figgins' voice tailed away, and a gleam came into his eyes. Then he took Kerr by the shoulders and shook him.

"Here, let up!" said Kerr anxiously. "What's the idea, Figgy?"

"He's potty!" gasped Fatty from the floor. "Oof—I'm winded!"

"I've got an idea—a peach," said Figgins exultantly. "Suppose Lowther's uncle is kidnapped on the way here, and suppose a New House chap—a frightfully good actor, name of Kerr—were to take his place, eh?"

Kerr waved his hand deprecatingly.

"My dear old Figgy, I thought of that ages ago. It's no good."

"Why not?" demanded Figgins.

"Because, my dear old son," said Kerr deliberately, "it

(Continued on next page.)



Famous Daredevils!

As one of the greatest heroes that ever lived, Buffalo Bill, the famous Wild West Scout, has endeared himself to all boys' hearts. Here is another tribute to the memory of this wonderful man!

WHO has not heard of the thrilling exploits of that famous daredevil of the Wild West—Buffalo Bill?

William Cody was his real name, although he was always called Buffalo Bill because of his prowess as a buffalo hunter. It is recorded that he killed no less than 4,280 buffaloes in eighteen months.

He was born in the State of Iowa, in U.S.A., in 1846, and answered the call of the plains at a time when little was known of the rolling tracts of prairie; when the march of civilisation had not penetrated into the Wild West, when the country was infested with roving bands of fierce Indians, road-agents, bad-men, gun-men, robbers and thieves, and when the only means of travel was by horse or stage-coach.

Buffalo Bill was one of the first "Pony Express" riders. He served as a Scout in the American Civil War, and also in the never-ceasing warfare between the white men and the redskins. He was a magnificent rider, a crack shot, and became famous as the greatest buffalo hunter in the Wild West.

Nor were these the sum of his talents, for in later life, when the three hundred year's feud between the Indians and the Americans at last came to a close, he started his great "Wild West Show" which was the profoundest sensation, not only in the New World, but in the Old.

Cody constantly carried his life in his hands during those adventurous years on the plains of the Wild West. Skirmishes with redskins were everyday occurrences, and dozens of times Buffalo Bill escaped being scalped by a veritable hair's-breadth.

One of his narrowest shaves occurred soon after the terrible massacre of General

Custer and his troops on the Little Big Horn by the famous chief, Sitting Bull, and his Sioux warriors.

While engaged in a punitive expedition for this outrage, Cody was involved in a skirmish with a small band of Indians, scouts attached to a large body of Cheyennes hurrying to join Sitting Bull.

After a brisk battle, in which three of the Indians were killed, the remainder fled back to the main force, save one, a fine figure of a man, adorned with all the elaborate raiment of a chief. He recognised Cody by his flowing locks, and cried out in a loud voice:

"I know you, Pa-ho-has-ka! Come and fight with me!"

Buffalo Bill knew that the brave was addressing him, because "Pa-ho-has-ka" stood for "Long-Yellow-Hair." He accepted the challenge, and wheeling his horse rode at full speed towards the Indian.

On he thundered, crouching low in his saddle, his rifle ready, his eyes keen and merciless, peering from beneath the wide sombrero he wore.

Forty yards from his adversary, Cody fired, killing the Indian's horse and pitching the rider head over heels to the ground. At the same moment, Cody's horse stumbled into a hole, and the Scout crashed to the turf.

It was a tense moment! No time to think about slight bruises and cuts from his fall. Already the redskin was staggering to his feet, ten yards away.

Both fired their rifles simultaneously. Cody's luck held. The chief's bullet skimmed past his ear, but he had wounded the redskin mortally in the chest.

The Indian pitched to the ground

without a sound, and just to make sure, Cody stabbed him with his knife. But Buffalo Bill was not out of the wood by any means, for other Indians came riding towards him, with fierce cries, cracking rifles, and waving tomahawks, when they saw the downfall of their champion.

Luckily General Merritt, who was in command of the expedition, hurriedly sent a detachment of troops to Cody's rescue, and as the soldiers came up he waved the feathered bonnet of the dead chief in the air and bellowed:

"The first scalp for Custer!"

Stirring tales of Buffalo Bill's exploits are legion. The above is but one in a thousand, but it serves to illustrate the hazardous existence which Cody led in the days when the West was really wild and woolly.

Since then the relentless march of civilisation has brought changes. Railroads run where once the Deadwood Coach rumbled along its rugged track. The Indians are peaceful, law-abiding people now. The bad-men and gun-men no longer indulge in their nefarious practices without let or hindrance.

The Wild West, as Cody knew it, is a thing of the past! But the memory of Buffalo Bill will live on through the ages, not only because he was the greatest daredevil the Wild West ever saw, but because he symbolises the Wild West that has gone for ever. Someone has said that Buffalo Bill was the man who put the Wild West on the map. There can be no finer epitaph than that!

(Next week our special contributor deals with Jack Cornwell, V.C., the hero of Jutland.)

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would take a heap of explaining why I was out of lessons on Thursday."

"But you can arrange to take us instead of Tom Merry and the others."

"And do you think they'd take that lying down? Wouldn't they smell a rat if I'd disappeared, and Lowther's uncle wanted especially to take you and Fatty?"

Figgins' face fell, and he passed a weary hand across his forehead.

"I suppose you're right, Kerr; you usually are. We're done, of course."

But Kerr apparently intended to be contrary.

"No we're not done, Figgins," he said quietly. "The first half of your idea is all right; the second is tripe. Listen! We can kidnap Lowther's uncle without force or injury, or anything else. He hasn't seen Lowther for years."

"No. But what about it?" challenged Figgins, becoming keenly critical. "It might stop their going, but that wouldn't be any good if we didn't go."

"Yes, but we're going," said Kerr, and grinned. "Nunky arrives to-morrow, you know. Tom Merry & Co. will be out of the way."

"Will they?" challenged Figgins, and Fatty Wynn gasped and wheezed a similar inquiry from the floor.

"Yes, they will. We'll see to that," Kerr explained meaningly. "Then I introduce myself as Monty Lowther. You can be my friends, Figgins and Wynn, savvy? We'll wire Lowther's uncle to meet us in a special place—and keep Lowther well away."

"Ye-e-e-s," said Figgins, who took his time to assimilate ideas. "I'm beginning to get the hang of it now."

"Very well. We introduce him to Ratty—"

"What-at?"

"To Ratty," said Kerr firmly. "It'll be daring, but all the best ideas are. We introduce him to Ratty, and there we are. I'll say 'This is my uncle, sir.' Ratty will have to give us permission to see the cricket; or we may appeal to the Head," added Kerr a little doubtfully. "But I think Ratty will cave in, if Lowther's uncle is the bluff, hearty bloke I think he is."

Figgins' eyes gleamed, and he clasped Kerr by the neck.

"Kerr, you're a wizard, old man. You are really. It's a peach of an idea. Lowther will think his uncle hasn't arrived, eh?"

"Yes. He won't know him, anyway. Nor will Lowther's uncle know I'm not Lowther. They haven't seen each other for years. Of course, we shall have to edge the old boy away from the Head, unless I introduce him as my uncle, and keep with him. Otherwise he may talk about Monty, and that would put paid to our plan."

"It can be worked all right," said Figgins excitedly. "My hat, yes! The Head won't ask who is his nephew if you roll up with him and call him uncle. I'm glad I thought of this."

"Glad you thought of it?" inquired Kerr blankly.

"Of course," said Figgins in gentle rebuke. "It was my idea—the first half of mine. What do you say, Fatty?"

Fatty Wynn clasped his waistcoat tenderly and gave utterance.

"Ooooh!"

"Fatty agrees," said Figgins briskly. "Well, now to work out details. You had better pump Monty for information about his uncle—judiciously, you know—and then what else?"

Fatty Wynn spoke faintly.

"The hamper," he said.

This time Figgins gave him a benign grin.

"Hamper's right. We'll have a whacking good one," he beamed. "This, my children, is going to be the outing of our lives."

"And let's hope," Kerr added, "it'll be the innings of Kildare's life. It would need only that to complete a perfect day."

CHAPTER 4.

Lowther Plays a Lone Hand!

MONTY LOWTHER was in great demand that evening, and there were many callers at Study No. 10; but Lowther busied himself with preparation, and kept a ruler handy for callers. It had occurred to him that it might be just as well to be in his Form master's good books when the question of permission to go to the match was raised, so he was keeping his nose to the grindstone.

Tom Merry and Manners, having hopes as high as Lowther's, also worked with a will.

"Rather a sell if your uncle shouldn't want to take us to the match," said Tom Merry, looking up from a map he was drawing. "All this good work for nothing."

Lowther smiled urbanely.

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"My dear man, don't worry on that score. I'll promise for him. He'll have to take us and he will."

"Well, if you're sure," said Tom Merry doubtfully, "that's O.K. But it's hard to be quite certain of anything with uncles, I've found."

Lowther smiled at the ceiling, and then went on writing busily. He had not yet shown his uncle's telegram to his chums, and he had not decided whether to or not. Having allowed the whole school to take it for granted that his uncle would arrive on the morrow, it was certain that some kind of an uncle would have to arrive. So far as his uncle was concerned, Friday would be the day, and by then the match would have been settled one way or the other. Something clearly had to be done, and Lowther realised he was the only one to do it. Consequently, he found it hard to suppress a smile now and again when his mind turned to the wheeze he had thought of.

"What are you sniggering about, Monty?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"Was I sniggering?"

"You were making a noise like a cheap American alarm," said Manners. "You've been making it on and off for some time now."

"Have I really?" said Lowther, rubbing his nose, his eyes twinkling. "Well, the fact is, you men, I was thinking of how amusing it will be when we roll up to the match and the other poor little lads are being baked to death in the Form-room. Think," he added eloquently, "of the lovely green grass, the click of bat meeting ball, the pop of a ginger-beer cork, and the rattle of stumps. Think—"

"I wish you'd shut up," said Manners. "I'm drawing a map, and if that noise you make is when you think, make your mind a blank, old chap; it's quieter."

Lowther chuckled again and got on with his work, but not in peace. Several times after that there were interruptions. Talbot looked in hopefully, and wondered if Lowther's uncle could manage to take four. Levison had wondered very much the same sort of thing, and so had Clive, who being a South African himself, had an additional interest in the match. But it was an inspiration that had seized half the junior school. Lowther found then that he was a friend in need if not indeed.

But Monty had expressed doubts and regrets, although, like a sportsman, he had promised to get as many of the fellows permission as was possible.

Even Baggy Trimble looked in for a moment, putting his fat face round the door. He would have looked in for two, only Monty Lowther had grown expert with the ruler; so Baggy looked out again very quickly.

By bed-time even Fifth-Formers had taken to being affable to Lowther. Cutts had dropped his hand on Lowther's shoulder in an affectionate manner, and Lefevre chattily had asked him from what part of South Africa his uncle came. Half a dozen others suddenly became aware of the existence of a mere junior. But Lowther became aloof in a maddening way.

"My hat!" he chuckled, when the Terrible Three were in the dormitory. "I'm beginning to be sorry he's coming to-morrow. If this lasts another day I shall have the whole school on its knees. How much can I charge fellows for shaking my uncle's hand, Tom?"

"Depends on whether he invites them to the cricket match," said Tom Merry.

"I'll swop an uncle and an aunt for him," offered Gore.

"After the match," said Lowther, "I'll consider it. Rich uncle? Nice aunt?"

"Rats! Before the match," said Gore, and there was a laugh.

Lowther took his time undressing, as befitted a fellow with a Colonial uncle; but Knox, of the Sixth, who came to put out lights, had a different conception of things.

"Lowther, you slacker, why aren't you undressed?"

"Thinking of my uncle, Knox, and wondering who I can take to the match."

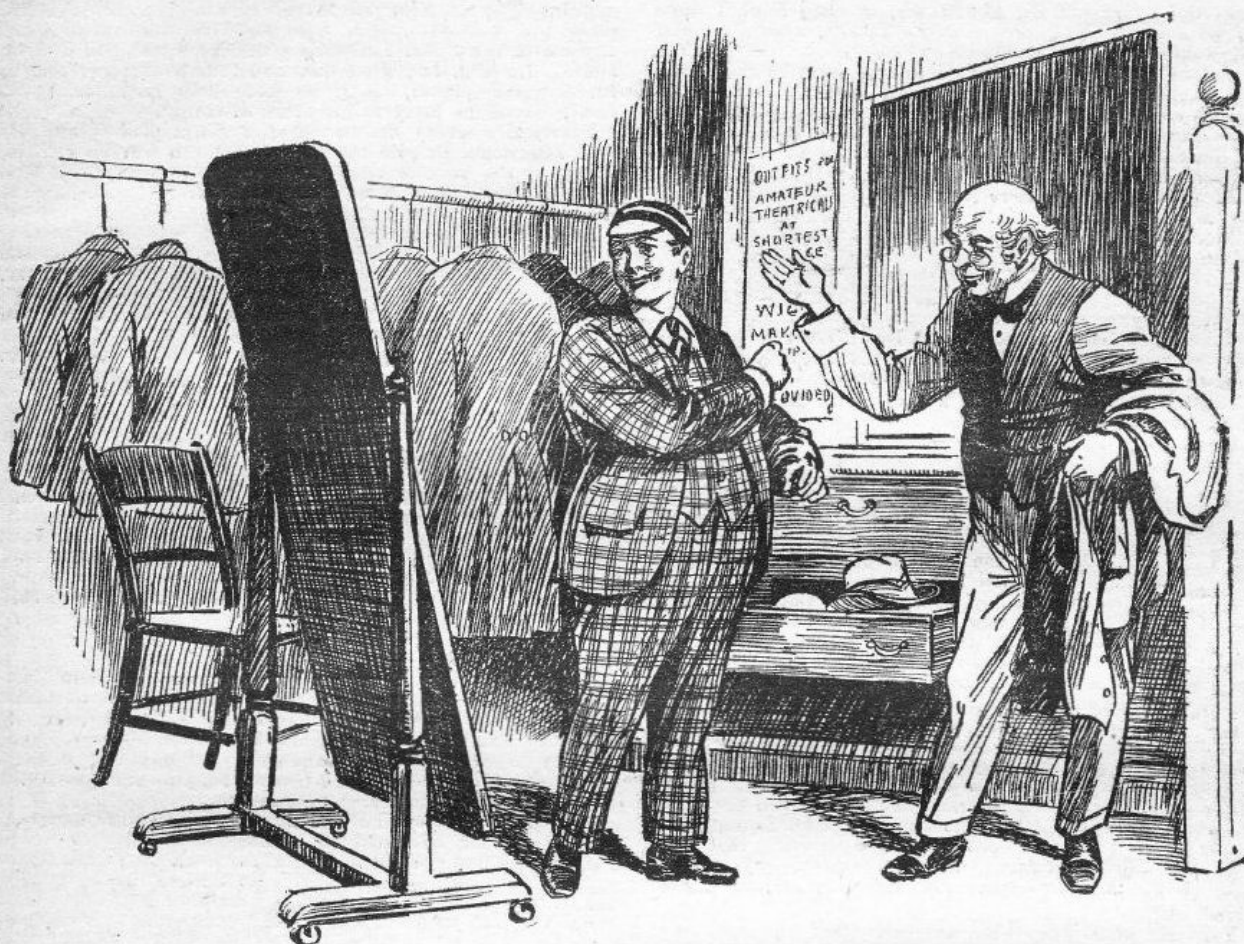
Knox scowled. As a prefect, he would be able to go if he wished, and not being in any way a sportsman, he resented the juniors having a chance to go at all.

"If you're not in bed in two seconds you'll be gated, anyway," he said. "Get into bed, and no nonsense, Lowther. If you kids think there's a chance of your going to the match, forget it."

When the lights were out, and the door closed, Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Poor old Knox, he'll have a shock when nunky comes. I'll have to get nunky to give him a few tips on how to deal with yokkers."

As Knox had a weakness for playing over yokkers, nothing could give him greater displeasure than advice on the subject with a crowd of juniors present. To Lowther it was a pleasing idea. But he dismissed Knox from his mind a moment later and fell to planning what was to happen on the morrow. Tom Merry and Manners, in adjoining beds, went to sleep with blissful smiles in the



The proprietor of the costume shop at Wayland, where Monty Lowther hired the "props" for his great spoof, was an old actor, full of useful hints and tips. Lowther secured an old suit, padding, and the rest of the impedimenta necessary for the part he was going to play. (See Chapter 4.)

expectation of Mr. Montague Lowther senior's arrival from South Africa and the joy it would bring them. If they had known the truth, sleep might not have come so easily!

Lowther was already feeling a little uneasy in mind. He had let his chums believe that everything in the garden was lovely, so it was up to him to see that his scheme worked successfully. Since some kind of an uncle would have to appear, Monty's sole idea was that it would have to be himself. Hence his chuckles during preparation. Many another fellow would have been unnerved at the bare idea of impersonating his own uncle, and certainly only a few would have gone to the lengths of visiting St. Jim's. For it was usual for uncles to pay a visit to Dr. Holmes on arrival, and there was no guarantee that, if Dr. Holmes discovered the "uncle" to be a disguised junior, he would see the joke. He might, on the contrary, introduce a cane into the argument.

But Monty Lowther was prepared to take that risk, and he lay in bed in the darkness working out his plan in detail. He lay awake for an hour or more, and then fell asleep. But before his eyes closed he vowed that he would arise early on the following morning.

Somewhat to his surprise, he awoke before rising-bell on the next morning, when most of the other fellows were asleep.

Lowther had much to do before breakfast, and he stretched himself and slipped quietly out of bed. Tom Merry and Manners, like the rest, were fast asleep.

With the greatest possible speed Lowther washed and dressed, then stole from the dormitory down the deserted staircase and across the quadrangle to the bicycle shed.

Taggles the porter was, of course, up and about at that hour, but the junior saw no sign of him as he mounted his machine.

Peddalling hard, Lowther reached Rylcombe in a few minutes, and leaving his cycle at the small garage, caught a bus to Wayland. It would be a race with time in any case, but there was a frequent bus service, and if he were quick he could get one back that would give him time to stroll in casually to breakfast at St. Jim's.

In Wayland there was a costume shop, where wigs and all requirements for theatrical make-up were sold. Old suits could be obtained, padding, and any impedimenta that

was considered essential to the well-being of a South African uncle.

The proprietor, an old actor, was kindness itself, and full of all manner of useful hints and tips. What Lowther did not know about make-up the old actor told him, and provided the right grade of grease-paint for the purpose.

Speed was the order of the day and the things were packed in a suitcase hired at a suitable figure, and Lowther left the shop beaming. The clock showed that he was in good time for the bus.

Tom Merry and Manners were awaiting Lowther in the gateway at St. Jim's, but Lowther arrived without the suitcase, which had been deposited at a suitably secluded spot in the woods near the school.

"Where have you been, duffer?" asked Tom Merry. "We've been hunting for you everywhere! Kerr's up to some game!"

"Is he?" asked Lowther indifferently. "Well, well, boys will be boys, you know!"

"Where have you been?" insisted Manners.

"Out and about. Just seeing about my uncle.

"Oh, finding the time of the trains, you mean," said Tom Merry understandingly.

And Lowther left it at that.

On the way to the School House Tom Merry explained that Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were looking mysterious. Fatty Wynn had been seen in the tuckshop ordering up contents for a really spanking picnic hamper, and Kerr had been making judicious inquiries about Lowther's uncle.

"It looks to me," said Tom Merry, "as though they're up to something. You know what those bounders are."

"Poof!" said Lowther. "Nothing to worry about."

"I'm not so sure. Blake thinks they mean to waylay your uncle on the way here. I think we'd better arrange some sort of escort."

"Shouldn't worry," said Lowther easily. "Uncle can look after himself."

"H'm!" murmured Manners. "But I shall keep an eye open, all the same."

"Rather!" agreed Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther chuckled to himself.

It would spoil a good rag to tell even his chums his scheme, so he kept quiet about it. Tom Merry and Manners

might not be so pleased afterwards, or they might; there was no telling. But, provided the results were all right, that wouldn't matter much.

Lowther's opinion was that if fellows were in the secret they might by their manner or their looks, give it away. And no risk of that could be taken.

But Lowther would not have felt so easy in mind if he had heard Tom Merry give a final word of warning to Manners as they were about to enter the House.

"If an uncle arrives here for Monty while Monty's away, take a good look at him—good and hard—and tug his whiskers."

Manners whistled.

"You mean you think Kerr may try to impersonate him? He's good enough actor to carry it off, I know."

Tom Merry nodded seriously.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised. But it's worth watching. They may kidnap both Monty and his uncle, you know; they're up to something."

"Right!" said Manners. "I'll pass round the word!"

And he did!

CHAPTER 5. Not According to Plan!

"FIGGINS!"

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, fixed Figgins with a glittering eye and called him by name. Mr. Lathom was a patient little gentleman, but the Fourth-Formers were apt to run his store of patience dry in a very short while. As a rule, it was not the most attentive of Forms, and this morning more inattention had been shown than usual. The subject of the lesson was the rainfall in the British Isles, and it was interesting enough, yet the Fourth-Formers were inattentive.

Jack Blake had been given fifty lines for rolling a piece of paper into a ball and being found in illegal possession of a piece of elastic. Herries had been given fifty lines for putting out his foot at a moment when Mr. Lathom was passing; while there had been so much whispering that lines had fallen thick and fast.

And now, as a last straw, Figgins was staring out of the window.

"Figgins!" repeated Mr. Lathom.

George Figgins continued to stare out of the window, so Kerr, under cover of the desk, dealt him a shrewd blow with a ruler.

"Ow! You silly fathead!" roared Figgins, clapping his knee.

Mr. Lathom adjusted his glasses.

"Am I to understand that you allude to me as a— a silly fathead, Figgins?" he asked quietly, and in a tone of patient inquiry.

"Me? No, no, sir, not at all! I had a sudden stab of pain on my knee!" he gasped.

"Indeed! Well, now that you have succeeded, by dint of great personal effort, in dragging your attention from the great outdoors, Figgins, perhaps you will tell me what was my last remark?"

Figgins scratched his head and groaned.

"Y-your last remark, sir— Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "Figgins, how dare you! Are you trying to be impertinent, boy?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then, what was my last remark? I do not believe you were listening. If you cannot give me the last remark I made—"

"Ahem! You were talking about the rainfall in the British Isles, sir," said Figgins brightly. "And you—er— your last remark was—er— What was your last remark, sir?"

Mr. Lathom coughed. In the ensuing confusion he had himself forgotten what his last remark was, and he snapped his fingers.

"Enough of this foolery, Figgins! You will write out fifty lines—that is, from the text-book here. And if there is any further inattention you will be detained this afternoon! Now let us resume. The shaded portion on the map—"

Mr. Lathom droned on, and Figgins leaned over to Kerr.

"Lowther's gone," he whispered.

Kerr started and frowned.

"Out already—quarter of an hour before time?"

Figgins nodded gloomily, and then, as Mr. Lathom turned, his eyes became riveted on the blackboard with a look of rapt attention.

"Someone was whispering," said Mr. Lathom tartly. "If there is any more of it, you will all be detained!"

Figgins sat bolt upright, and did not so much as open his

mouth. The long-legged leader of the New House had plans for that afternoon, and was, therefore, not at all anxious to draw Mr. Lathom's glittering eyes upon himself again. Lowther had gone out, and that was rather serious for Figgins' plans; but if he were kept in himself, the result would be fatal to all their scheming.

Practically every fellow in the Form had plans for that afternoon, despite the fact that there was no cricket. Many of the fellows were expecting telegrams; some had received them. The latter could easily be recognised by the length of their faces.

But Figgins, having sent no telegram, was not expecting one. All the same, when the bell rang for the end of the morning lessons, he was one of the first to reach the door, and Kerr was by his side.

"Now, then, you rotters," said Blake, "where are you going?"

"Going?" said Figgins, puzzled. "Were we going, Kerr?"

"Were we going, Fatty?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Blake sharply. "You needn't think you can work any stunts, because we're keeping a weather eye on you!"

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "Thanks most awfully!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn hurried off, while Blake turned to Arthur Augustus.

"We've got to see what their game is," he said. "I heard Figgie whisper to Kerr that Lowther had gone out. That seemed to upset him."

"Weally! Pewwaps he wanted Lowthah to stay in, then," said D'Arcy sagely.

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He didn't want Lowther to get ahead of them," explained Blake. "Can't you see that that's it? If you watch you'll see them go out of gates in a minute."

"Fatty won't—not before dinner!" grinned Herries.

Fatty Wynn was quite unlikely to do anything of that sort, but it so happened that neither Figgins nor Kerr went towards the gates either.

Kerr had interviewed Redfern, who had seen the telegram which Lowther had sent his uncle and intentionally displayed, and had got the address of the hotel where Lowther's uncle was staying. Consequently, Kerr's task had been easy. He had sent another telegram to Lowther's uncle, and had requested him to meet them at a rendezvous in Wayland. Lowther, of course, would be at the station, or so Kerr thought.

So rather to Blake's surprise, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn acted in a perfectly normal manner until dinner-time.

Tom Merry and manners met the three New House juniors near the School House, and bowed.

"Want us to phone the result of the match directly it's over?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, thanks!" returned Figgins, and laughed.

Kerr laughed, too; and Fatty Wynn gave a fat chuckle, and the three walked on. If the intention of the New House Co. was to cause uneasiness, they succeeded admirably, for Tom Merry cast a worried look at Manners, who knitted his brows in perplexity.

"They're up to something," said Tom Merry darkly. "We shall have to keep an eye on them."

Manners nodded in complete agreement.

"Mightn't be at all a bad idea, Tom, to lock them out of harm's way this afternoon. In the coal-shed, say. Taggles won't be going there."

Tom Merry stopped and his eyes gleamed.

"Something in that, Manners. Directly after dinner?"

"Directly after dinner," nodded Manners. "Get Blake and his crowd to hide in the coal-shed, and lure Figgie there."

That scheme was easily arranged. Since Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn seemed certain to be planning some kind of mischief, they would indubitably be safer out of the way. And the coal-shed was as good a place as any for hiding them, since in summer-time it was rarely used.

Plans were quickly made, and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby agreed to hide in the coal-shed. D'Arcy thought a cleaner place would be preferable.

"The coal-shed is wathah gwubby, deah boy," he pointed out.

"You can go in a bathing suit," said Blake. "What's a little coal-dust, more or less?"

"Wats! I wathah fancay I will see to the organisin' and leave the donkay work to you fellows. I will see to twappin' Figgay. I will lure him to the coal-shed on some fwightfully clevah pwetext."

Blake regarded him witheringly.

"If you start any of your organisin', Gussy, I'll roll you in the coal-dust until you're as black as your hat."

The bell rang for dinner then, and the rival schemers separated. There was, so far as could be seen, nothing

(Continued on page 12.)

WHEN WE ALL FLY

there will be city air termini, as there are for the railways of to-day. These "dromes" will be constructed in the years to come to deal with the enormous air traffic in all parts of England and, in fact, the world. What these termini will be like you will see from the black and white reproduction on the right, of next week's FREE COLOURED PICTURE CARD. Be sure you get this card, for it completes your set!



MARVELS of the FUTURE!

No. 16.—A City Air Terminus.

TRAFFIC "cops" up among the clouds! No, not an idea from the cinema, but something that is certainly coming to pass one day. Aerial scouts, invested with powers of arrest and so on, whizzing through the air in bullet-like two-seaters, will have to be given a job if the swarming streams of air-traffic of the future are not to tie themselves up in knots and rain down on the heads of people on the earth bits of mechanism and flung-out passengers!

For the greatest problem that will then have to be solved will be the prevention of traffic jams—when the usual method of getting about will be by air-liners, aerial taxis, and family flying cars.

Great light-beacons, and wireless towers giving constant orders, will help to prevent and clear-up confusion—as will the aerial scouts who direct the stopping and starting of planes from the enormous air termini that will then be as much a part of every city as the dwelling-houses themselves.

Each air terminus will have to be well up in the air, too. There isn't enough vacant ground to accommodate the vast aerodromes down below. Then where will they be built? Above the big railway stations! Simple, isn't it?

A system of tremendously strong steel lattice-work supports will straddle the actual railway station lines and platforms, carrying a deck many acres in extent. There's your air terminus. Planes will be able to come down and start off again, with no hindrance to ordinary traffic. There will be no question of the planes missing these overhead termini, because the latter will be so vast.

Even on the darkest and stormiest nights the raised landing-ground will be visible from a distance of several miles. The

boundaries will be marked by immensely powerful light-beacons, the streams of non-glare lights being thrown into the eye of the wind, for aeroplanes have, of course, to land into the wind.

Enormous globes of red glass will mark obstructions on the landing-way. Green ones will point out to all

incoming pilots the line they are to take in "making" the air terminus. There will be other powerful lights to show up the wind-cones (which indicate to pilots an immensely important detail—the way the wind is blowing). And other beams of light will be flung straight up, so that the height of any clouds above the 'drome can be calculated.

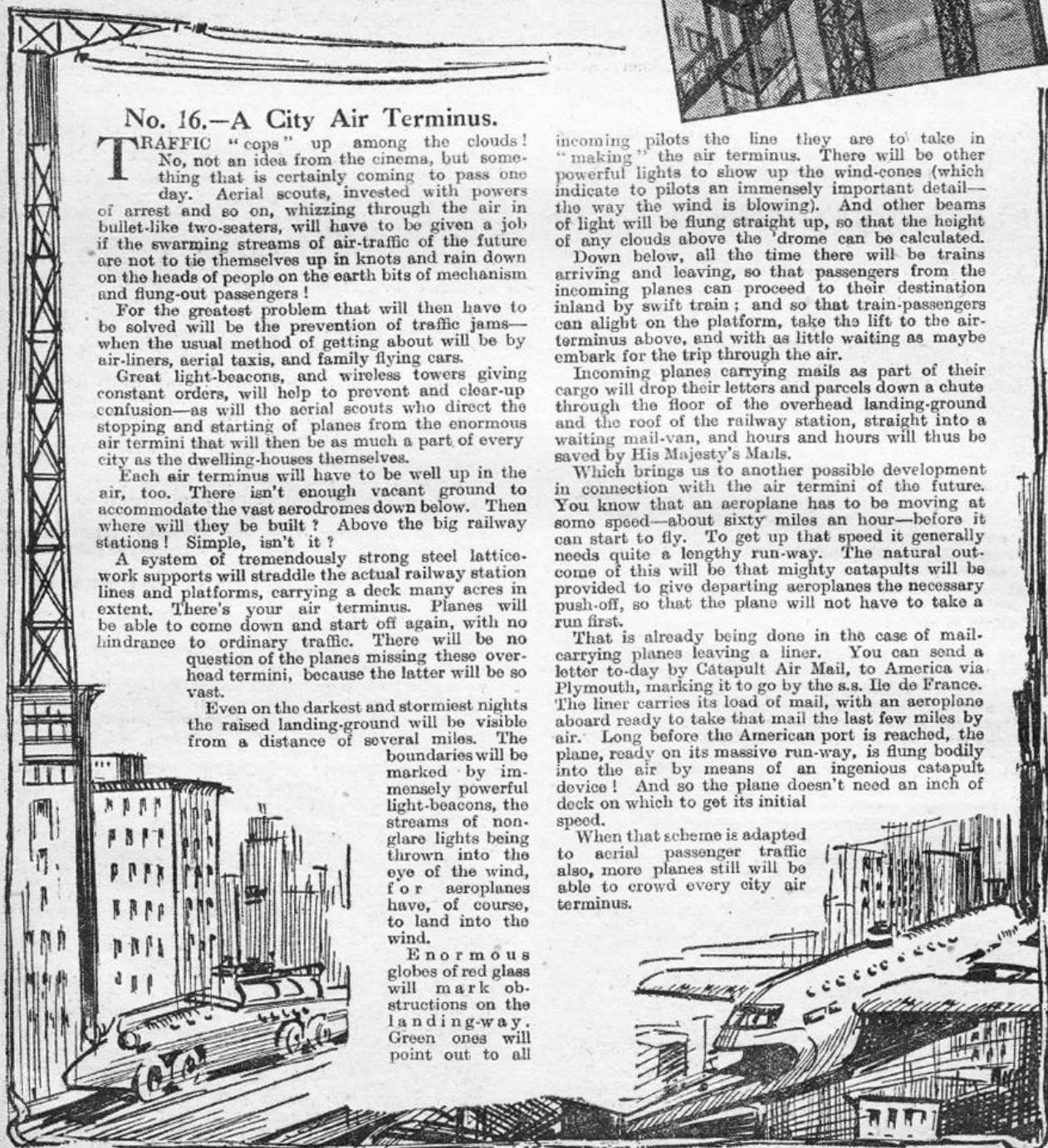
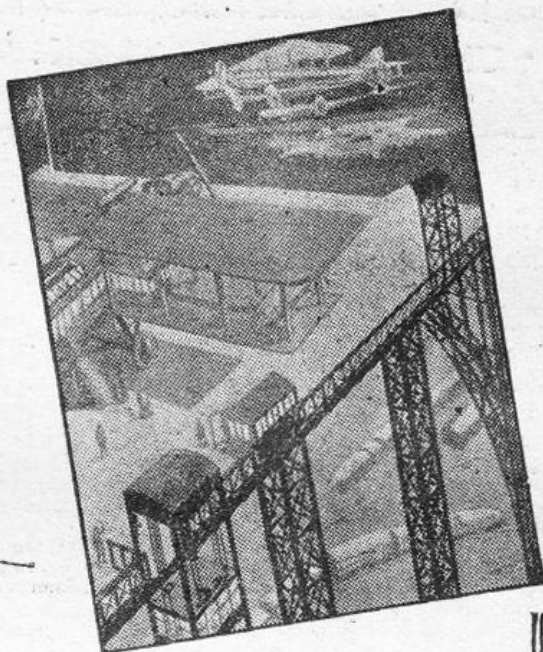
Down below, all the time there will be trains arriving and leaving, so that passengers from the incoming planes can proceed to their destination inland by swift train; and so that train-passengers can alight on the platform, take the lift to the air-terminus above, and with as little waiting as maybe embark for the trip through the air.

Incoming planes carrying mails as part of their cargo will drop their letters and parcels down a chute through the floor of the overhead landing-ground and the roof of the railway station, straight into a waiting mail-van, and hours and hours will thus be saved by His Majesty's Mails.

Which brings us to another possible development in connection with the air terminus of the future. You know that an aeroplane has to be moving at some speed—about sixty miles an hour—before it can start to fly. To get up that speed it generally needs quite a lengthy run-way. The natural outcome of this will be that mighty catapults will be provided to give departing aeroplanes the necessary push-off, so that the plane will not have to take a run first.

That is already being done in the case of mail-carrying planes leaving a liner. You can send a letter to-day by Catapult Air Mail, to America via Plymouth, marking it to go by the s.s. Ile de France. The liner carries its load of mail, with an aeroplane aboard ready to take that mail the last few miles by air. Long before the American port is reached, the plane, ready on its massive run-way, is flung bodily into the air by means of an ingenious catapult device! And so the plane doesn't need an inch of deck on which to get its initial speed.

When that scheme is adapted to aerial passenger traffic also, more planes still will be able to crowd every city air terminus.



"UNCLE DOES THE TRICK!"

(Continued from page 10.)

wrong with the School House plan at all. Figgins was to be lured to the coal-shed in company with Kerr and Wynn, and Blake, Herries, and Digby were to pounce on them, Tom Merry and Manners making a certainty of it by weight of cumbers. A little rope and a few handkerchiefs would then keep the New House Co. quiet until danger was past.

Blake, Herries, and Digby left the dining-hall promptly, and went by a circuitous route to the coal-shed. Besides coal-dust, which was used for damping down the furnace, wood was kept there, and it was not a choice place to make a rendezvous; but it had the advantage of being fairly quiet.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Manners sought out Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, but not too obviously. It had been arranged that in their hearing, Manners was to say that Monty was still in the coal-shed, and Tom Merry was to whet the New House Co.'s appetite by making further mention of the delectable resort.

Figgins and Kerr were standing together near the tuckshop when Tom Merry approached them, Fatty Wynn being inside the shop making quite sure that the chicken was as he had ordered it.

"Right!" whispered Tom.

Then a surprising thing happened.

"Better make sure Blake's not hanging about before we go into the old pav," said Figgins softly.

"Oh, Blake's gone out!" said Kerr. "I can pull it off all right, Figgy, if you keep the coast clear. I can make-up in a jiff."

Tom Merry came to a halt. Manners stopped dead, and they exchanged stares.

"Hear that?" they said together.

Figgins and Kerr looked into the tuckshop and called for Fatty Wynn; and Tom Merry, plucking Manners' arm, dodged aside behind an elm.

"Mum's the word," he whispered. "See their game. The old pavilion?"

"Rather. No one will be there this afternoon. No match, except on Big Side."

The two Shell fellows crouched behind the tree, and a moment later, Figgins, looking cautiously right and left, emerged from the shop. Kerr followed, and then, with a nod to his chums, set off for the old pavilion.

Fatty Wynn, with a parcel under his arm, set out for the New House, while Figgins lounged carelessly towards the gates, looking right and left.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry gleefully. "Poor old New House. They ought to have nurses. We'll give Kerr two minutes start."

They gave the Scottish junior rather more than that, and then they crept out and made a detour of the playing-fields so that they should arrive at the old pavilion from the rear. The pavilion was situated at one corner of the playing-fields, and behind it were shrubs and a few trees. As there was no match, the pavilion was deserted, but Tom Merry caught sight of the back of Kerr's head through one small window.

Very cautiously the two Shell fellows crept up to a back window, and Tom Merry opened it slowly, inch by inch, without a sound. That done, he chuckled softly and climbed in, followed by Manners.

"All clear!" he whispered. "We're— Oh, my hat! Look out, Manners!"

"Trapped!" gasped Manners.

And trapped they were. For the room which had seemed deserted suddenly proved to be full of New House juniors, who had been crouching under forms and hiding in the curtained recesses.

"Got 'em!" yelled Redfern.

"Trapped you are," chuckled Kerr. "Poor little bunnies in a trap. Down them, you men!"

The New House juniors needed no urging. Fighting lustily, Tom Merry and Manners went down under an army of them, standing no chance at all, and Kerr stood back, grinning broadly.

"Now rope 'em up. Can't have these men at large!"

Tom Merry struggled frantically.

"Kerr, you rotter: let us go. This isn't a joke!"

"Lemme gerrup!" hooted Manners. "Ow!"

"Sorry," said Redfern. "That must have been my elbow! Pass the gags, Kerr. Thanks!"

"You—gugugug—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Ooooh!" spluttered Manners.

Struggle though they did, it was not many minutes before Tom Merry and Manners were gagged and trussed securely. Kerr, who was a good general, ordered their removal to

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the loft, and then, blowing kisses, the New House ambushers took their departure, closing the door firmly behind them.

Tom Merry looked at Manners; Manners looked at Tom Merry. Their gags forbade speech, but their looks were eloquent. And so would Jack Blake & Co. be eloquent when they had waited for an hour or so in the dark and gloomy coalshed! Someone's wheeze had gone wrong; but it was not Kerr's!

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy Does It!

"GOIN' out, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pleasantly, as he saw Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn making for the gates a few minutes later.

Figgins shook his head.

"No," he answered gravely. "We've got our caps on to go and write lines in the Form-room. That's why we're coming down to the gates, Gussy."

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard that as bein' merely wude. I asked you a polite question."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy barred the way. It was evident to him that something was wrong. Blake & Co., he knew, were in the coalshed; but it was obvious that Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were not.

"Well, write it down," said Kerr. "We must have notice of these questions. Is there a prize for getting the answers right?"

"I wegard you as an ass, Kerr!" But Arthur Augustus, realising the need of diplomacy, changed his tactics. "Er—ahem! Have you seen Tom Mewwy?"

Kerr looked at D'Arcy blankly.

"Tom Merry? Now, let me see, the name sounds familiar," he murmured, knitting his brows. "Tall chap with glasses and bow legs?"

"No, you ass. You know him quite well. I believe you have seen him and he has failed."

"Failed? What, faded away? Failed in health?" inquired Figgins, while Kerr gave D'Arcy a keen look.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a way of keeping secrets which was extremely original and which was, in every sense of the word, a revelation. If Kerr could not wheedle out the truth in a few minutes he was not a Scotsman.

"Never mind what I mean, deah boy," said D'Arcy cautiously. "Pewwaps I didn't mean anythin'."

"Perhaps not," said Kerr genially. "And if you did it would take too long to unfathom it. I've got to meet my uncle."

"Your uncle? Bai Jove! Have you an uncle, deah boy?"

"Oh, two or three!" said Kerr.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drew a breath. He was sure now that something was amiss, and by hook or by crook he had to get Figgins & Co. securely into the coalshed. He was the last hope!

"Pway don't huwwy, deah boy," he said earnestly, and took hold of Figgins' arm. "I was wonderin' if—them—if a New House fellow can chop wood."

Figgins stared, and Kerr frowned, while Fatty Wynn blinked.

"Why, want one of the School House men beheaded?" asked Figgins pleasantly.

"Wats! I was wondewin' if a New House fellow could split a log of wood with one swipe. I'm wathah a dab at wood-choppin' myself, you know. One flick of the choppah and the log is split in half. Wathah a mighty swipe is needed. Pwobably a weedy fellow like you, Figgay—"

"A what?" said Figgins.

"A weeday fellow," said D'Arcy, making a judicious rearward movement in readiness for strategic retreat in view of the superior number of his opponents.

"Look here," said Figgins darkly, "what are you getting at? What's the idea? Do you really mean you think I can't split a log of wood with one biff?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm not a bettin' man, but if I were I'd bet a fivah. Why, it would take a good School House chap to do it!"

"Why, you silly, blithering ass!" said Figgins. "Leggo my arm, Kerr. Leggo!"

But Kerr held on. Figgins was sufficiently impetuous to fall into any trap, but Kerr was shrewd, and it struck him that there was something more than a little unusual in D'Arcy's request.

"Don't be a chump, Figgy," he said. "We're in a hurry. Let Reddy chop for the old New House, if chop we must."

"Weddy won't do," said D'Arcy hurriedly. "You had bettah come as a witness, Kerr, and you, Wynn."

Then Figgins began to see daylight.

"Well, bring me a log and axe here," he said. "It won't take a minute."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, feeling that his trap was working, could not repress a smile.

"Wathah not! Taggles would not like it, you know. Come into the coalshed—"
 "Come into my parlour," said the spider to the fly," murmured Kerr softly; but he added aloud. "Will ten minutes' time do, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, wathah! But huwwy back, deah boys. If Figgay can do it, I'll stand you a special spweed in the tuckshop."
 "Done," said Figgins. "I must hurry back for this. This mustn't be missed."

Arthur Augustus, immensely pleased, ambled back into the quadrangle far away from the coalshed, so that his actions should not appear suspicious.

"Oh, my hat! Poor old Gussy!" chuckled Kerr.

"Looks as though there's an ambush for us in the coalshed," grinned Figgins.

Kerr nodded his head sagely.

"Yes; and we ought to give them a little shock."

Taggles was sitting not far away smoking his pipe, and Kerr called to him.

"Taggles," said Kerr, "are you sure there are no rats in the coalshed?"

Taggles stared.

"Rats! 'Course I'm sure!" he grunted.

"Well, you go and listen," advised Kerr. "You'll hear funny sorts of noises going on. Let a little coal-dust down out of the chute; that'll give them something to think about."

Taggles gave Kerr a long, searching look. He had been porter at St. Jim's for sufficiently long to be well aware that behind a junior's apparent innocence much depth might lie. He noticed the grin on Figgins' face, and the queer look on Fatty Wynn's.

"Huh!" said Taggles. "Someone larking in the coalshed, hey? I'll give 'em something to lark about!"

"Do," said Kerr. "You have my permission."

"And mine," said Figgins. "Use the New House coal-dust. Ratty has it damped so that it shall burn slower, and it'll stick more."

"Ho!" said Taggles. "We'll see!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, feeling that they had done their best to bring a little excitement into Jack Blake & Co.'s dull lives, passed out into the lane, and Taggles, with a most determined look on his rugged face, made for the coalshed!

Meanwhile, Jack Blake & Co., little dreaming of the pleasures that were in store for them, waited patiently for Figgins & Co.

"Long time coming," muttered Blake, and shifted uncomfortably. He would not, himself, have chosen the coalshed as a place suitable to spend a sunny afternoon. Provided Figgins & Co. could arrive and be rolled in the coal-dust he did not mind much. But time was passing, and there was neither sound nor sign of the New House juniors.

"I'm getting tired of this," said Herries in muffled tones. "I'm sitting on a chunk—"

"Shush!" said Blake. "Figgy!"

But he was wrong.

"Bai Jove!" came a well-known voice. "That you, Blake, deah boy?"

"My hat!" said Blake in surprise. "Gussy! What are you doing here, you duffer? You'll give the show away."

"I wathah fancy not," said the swell of St. Jim's complacently. "Tom Mewwy has disappeared, but I have seen Figgay and let him into the twap nicely. Can't stay long, y'know, in case I'm seen."

Blake started and looked anxious. He knew Gussy of old, and he had no faith in his noble chum's tact and judgment.

"You've let Figgy into the trap?" he asked. "Have you been doing any of your diplomacy, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus chuckled to himself.

"You'll have your hands full in a minute, deah boy. Don't be surprised if Figgay awwiveth with an axe—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"An axe?"

"Yaas, wathah! Can't stop now, deah boy. Be pwepared, y'know."

Arthur Augustus' retreating steps could be heard, and Jack Blake stared at the dim faces of Herries and Digby.

"Now what the dickens has that fathead been up to? Why is Figgins coming here with an axe? An axe!"

Herries, who did not believe in taking chances, snatched at a chopper, and Digby took up a heavy lump of wood. But the attack came from the rear. It was, indeed, as D'Arcy had promised—a surprise.

Above the three juniors, as they crouched beside the wood pile in armed concealment, was the coal-chute, from which measured supplies were allowed for scuttle-filling purposes.

There were no scuttles to fill now, but there was Jack Blake & Co. And Taggles, with a most malevolent expression on his gnarled face, was outside operating the chain.

"Now," whispered Blake tensely, hearing a sound. "Ready—"

Swoosh!

The attack had been launched!

Coal-dust shot down the chute in mass, and Jack Blake, with a wild yell, collapsed on his hands and knees. Herries rolled over on his side, and Digby, slashing at the air, went down like a drowning man.

"Ugh! Gug— Ooch!"

"Groo— Help!"

"Yaroooh!"

The door of the coalshed opened and Taggles looked in, assuming a look of ridiculous surprise.

"My heye! What's this 'ere? Who's 'ere?" he asked.

Jack Blake fought his way through the blackness—coal-dust trickling down his neck, damp coal-dust sticking to his face and hair—and blinked dazedly at Taggles.

"Ow! Oh, crumbs! Wh-what w-was that?" he demanded. "An earthquake?"

"No, Master Blake. It was coal. And I shall 'ave to report yer for being 'ere, I'm afraid. The hidea of coming in 'ere to sneak bits of coal!"

If Taggles was in humorous mood, Blake was not. Shaking his fist at the porter, he staggered out of the coalshed, followed by Herries and Digby, black but by no means comely, threatening vengeance and coal-dust.

Taggles looked at them and guffawed.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Jack Blake shook himself like a dog, and Taggles' laughter changed to a cough as he was enveloped in a cloud of coal-dust.

"Ooch!" he gasped.

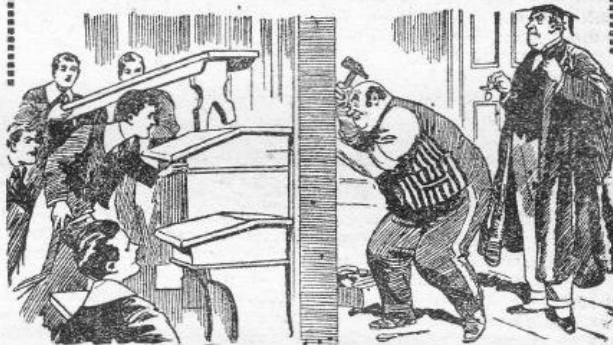
Then Blake blinked about him.

In the quadrangle sauntered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, still smiling, and feeling very pleased with himself, waiting for Figgins' return. At the same moment that he saw Blake, Blake saw him.

Arthur Augustus leapt into the air and gasped.

"B-bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

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"At him!" said Blake, through his teeth. "Gussy as usual!"

"Smother him!" roared Herries.

"Blake, you wottah! Keep away! You're all dusty and dirty! Bai Jove! Pway stand back—"

But Blake did not stand back. He advanced menacingly.

"So this was your surprise, Gussy?" he asked.

Arthur Augustus looked blank.

"Weally, deah boy, not at all. I fail to undahstand. I told Figgay—"

"Yes, and Figgay told Taggles, you prize image!"

"You blithering jabberwock!" yelled Herries.

Blake made a leap and flung his arms round D'Arcy, hugging him tightly and rubbing faces in a most affectionate manner, while the swell of St. Jim's wailed in horror.

"Welease me, you wottah! You are wuinin' my waistcoat! Help!"

Only when D'Arcy's face was as black as his own did Blake release him, and then Herries took his place. By the time Herries and Digby had done their work, D'Arcy's fancy waistcoat was a sight for the gods, and his face would have been the envy of any nigger.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, restored to humour. "My hat, Gussy, you look a picture! Let this be a lesson to you! Never diplom. Leave those things to your wisers and elders!"

"Blake, you wottah, put up your hands! Hewwies—Digby—"

Arthur Augustus danced like a Dervish on the warpath, brandishing his fists. But Blake, Herries, and Digby had gone, and just then a laugh floated across the quadrangle. Gussy jammed his monocle tightly into his eye and stared at a face that appeared over the school wall.

"Bai Jove!" he cried. "Figgay! Figgay, you uttah wottah, I believe you told Taggles. Wait! I ordah you to wait, Figgay! I will give you a feaful thwashin'!"

But George Figgins, with a joyful wave of the hand, disappeared. D'Arcy, with warlike intentions, ran through the gate just in time to see the New House trio disappearing down the road. Apparently Figgins did not consider his offer of a fearful thrashing good enough, or perhaps he did not want any of the coal-dust.

At any rate, he disappeared, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, breathing dire vengeance, returned to the School House to join his chums in a bath-room. But it was likely to be some time before the swell of St. Jim's was restored to his former pristine beauty.

CHAPTER 7.

"Uncle Monty!"

MONTY LOWTHER chuckled softly and studied his reflection in a small mirror affixed to a convenient tree-trunk. The spiny in the woods near the road to Rylcombe concealed him well, and there was but a remote chance of his being overlooked from the road, or of his being observed by passers-by.

The mirror gave back the reflection of a tanned gentleman a little past middle age; a man with a black beard, bushy eyebrows, and a face that was strangely like Monty Lowther's own in general outline, although that fact was not, in a relation, at all unseemly.

The make-up was going on according to plan.

The youth of Lowther's face had been suitably disguised. His eyes were surrounded with wrinkles, while his nose, which might have suggested youth, was suitably pasted and thickened. A large-brimmed hat, such as Colonials wear, graced his head, a black wig peeping out coyly from underneath.

No one at St. Jim's, looking at Lowther then, would have recognised him. His waistline alone would have obviated that; for it was a little on the portly side.

A light grey suit, a spotted tie, and a pair of brown shoes, completed the make-up. Uncle Monty might have considered the attempt at likeness a little offensive, but provided the St. Jim's fellows were satisfied, Uncle Monty's opinion could be deferred.

"Huh!" said Lowther to the mirror. "So this is England. Huh! Same old place! Huh!"

Satisfied at last that all was correct, he buttoned the jacket across his portly form, and stuffing his Etons into the suitcase, fastened it and grabbed up the heavy stick.

"Now, Monty, my boy, I must see your old school. Dear old school!" he said to the unresponsive trees. "Good old Monty! Here's a fiver, my boy!"

Swinging the stick gaily, Lowther took things easily. He had but a little way to walk in order to reach Rylcombe, and there he intended to have a meal and then get a car to the school. That short distance would give him a little practice in adjusting his gait to the new waistline load, and also give him his baptism of fire as regards looks from passers-by.

He had "cut" dinner at St. Jim's in order to give Figgins

the slip, so, since the inner man needed to be satisfied, he made for a restaurant in Rylcombe. By that time, he judged, he would be ready for the journey to St. Jim's; but, being a cautious youth, he decided to time his departure to coincide with a train from Rylcombe, since if he arrived in a Rylcombe cab at a time when there was known to be no train, suspicions might be aroused, and that was the very last thing that he wanted.

He kept a close eye on the time while he had his meal, and then sauntered along to the garage. The waitress had not suspected that he was anything but a Colonial home on a tour of inspection, a bronzed, well-set-up member of the British Empire.



Gerald Knox took a swift run and the ball shot down the pitch like a bullet short and shot up dangerously, and then the crowd gave a gasp. The ships with terrific

At the garage he told the proprietor how the South Africans were going to walk through the English team like a knife through butter.

"Ha!" said the man. "South African yourself, perhaps, sir?"

"That's so," said Monty Lowther, perking up. "Just back from the Cape. Same sleepy old England. Going to St. Jim's to see my nephew."

"Be a treat for him, sir," said the garage man.

Monty Lowther tossed his suitcase lightly into the cab, and then stepped in, in sprightly fashion. He dared not smile, much though he wanted to, and rather regretted his make-up on that account. He also had an uneasy feeling that the strong sun might cause his make-up to run. But there it was.

Leaning back in the taxicab, he looked what he was pretending to be—a prosperous Colonial taking a look at old England once again; and it spoke well for Lowther's histrionic ability that he felt the part that he was acting. He took an extra-keen look at the pleasant fields they passed, at the woods, and at the hedges of the winding lane that led to St. Jim's.

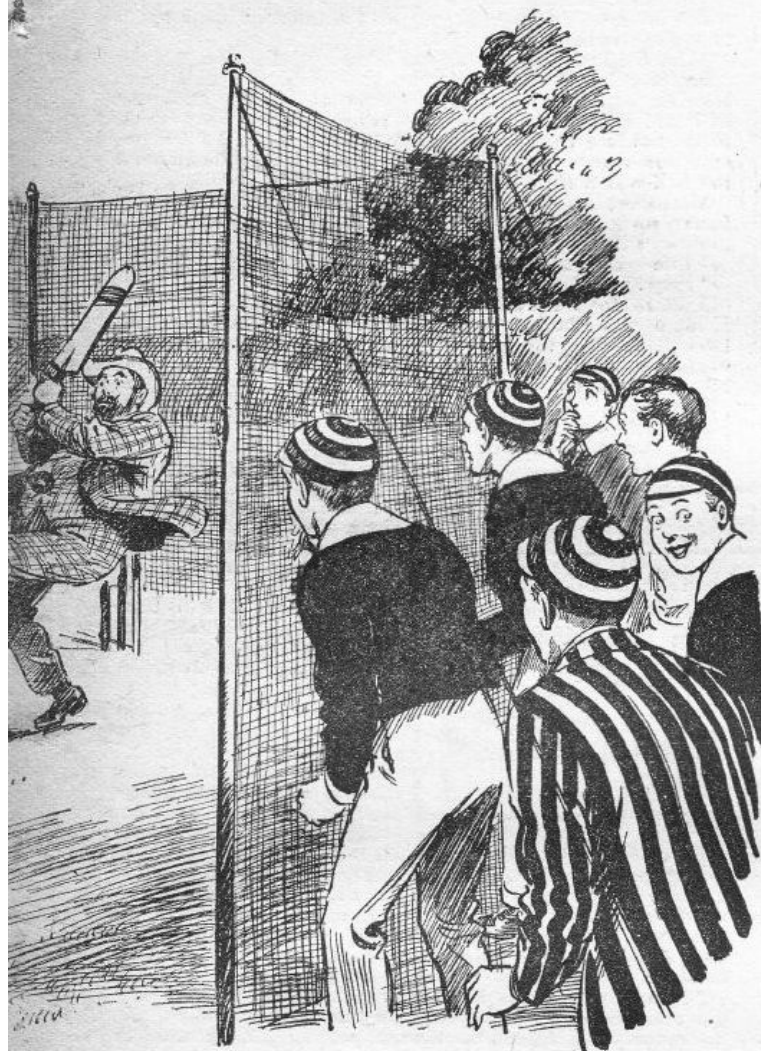
On the way the car passed one or two St. Jim's juniors,

and Lowther gave them each a steely glance, although he was not easily seen in the shady interior of the vehicle.

When St. Jim's at last came into sight, and with it more juniors, Lowther's heart quickened with excitement. The fun was about to begin!

Ralph Reckness Cardew, lounging along in the company of Clive and Levison, caught sight of the occupant as the taxi slowed, and whispered to Clive. Clive gave a quick look, and then all three turned back, for Sidney Clive, hailing from South Africa, was naturally interested in Lowther's uncle.

"Hang!" thought Lowther, in annoyance. "If Clive starts questioning me—"



liet. There were warning shouts from the onlookers as the ball pitched and delivery gave the disguised Monty Lowther no chance, taking him amid force! (See Chapter 8.)

But the taxi was now in the quadrangle, and several fellows came hopefully towards it, in the vain hope that it was their own pater who had rushed down to the school to make frantic arrangements for his son to be granted a whole day's holiday on Thursday.

"Lowther's uncle, by the looks of him," said Reilly.

"Must be."

As the pseudo Uncle Monty alighted from the taxi, Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped forward to be of assistance.

"Is my nephew anywhere about?" asked Lowther. "I'm Mr. Lowther, his uncle."

"Your nephew went to the station to meet you, sir," said Blake. "Apparently you have missed each other."

"Tut, tut! Very careless of him!" said Uncle Monty, and met the curious gazes of the juniors quite coolly.

"Well," he added, "I suppose I had better put in a little sight-seeing until he comes."

"Yaas, wathah, my deah sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway allow me to act as escort, you know. I am a friend of Lowthah's. My name is D'Arcy."

"Oh, I don't like that!" said Lowther, whose sense of

humour overcame discretion. "I'll call you Bertie, little boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"B-bai Jove, weally! But—"

"Come, Bertie, my little man," said Uncle Monty. "Do your stuff. On the left we have—and on the right—Rattle it out. Speak clearly, and take that piece of toffee out of your mouth."

There were chuckles from the crowd, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came as near to glowering upon a stranger as he had ever done in his life; but he swallowed his wrath. He did not swallow the toffee, because he had none to swallow. That was merely a most impolite aspersion Uncle Monty had cast upon his beautiful accent. However, Uncle Monty was a stranger within the gates and a guest from a far land, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remembered that, for the moment, he was host.

"Pway walk this way, my deah sir," he said.

CHAPTER 8.

Knox and Knocks!

MONTY LOWTHER'S sense of humour was a source of danger to him. It was always overcoming his judgment, and now it prompted him to obey the swell of St. Jim's instructions a little too literally. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a most elegant saunter, and Monty Lowther mimicked the saunter splendidly. D'Arcy had asked him to walk that way, and he was doing it, to the immense amusement of the other fellows.

Fortunately, however, he overheard Blake whisper to Herries that Lowther's uncle was a bit of a kid for his years, and Lowther stiffened at once.

"By the way," he said, turning to Blake, "where are the lads Merry and Manners? I thought they were Montague's friends."

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another. That was just what they wanted to know, too. They had an account to settle with those two juniors when they found them!

"I think they must have gone out, sir," said Blake.

"Pity," said Lowther, and a shade crossed his brow.

He had expected to find Manners and Tom Merry awaiting him, and it struck him as decidedly queer that they were not on view.

D'Arcy was leading the way to the cricket-field, and Lowther indicated the nets where some seniors were practising.

"I see you play cricket here. Hard ball?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake. "Yes, rather!"

Lowther, out of the corner of his eye, saw Clive, Cardew, and Levison approaching. He tried to hurry, but in vain. Clive was right in his path, and Blake introduced him, and explained that he, too, was from South Africa.

"Splendid—splendid! I suppose, then, you taught these lads cricket?" said Lowther.

Clive grinned.

"More or less," he said.

"Wats!" said D'Arcy, overhearing the remark. "We played cwicket here before South Afwica was thought of, you know."

"How's the old country looking, sir?" asked Clive. "You come from Natal, I hear?"

"Something like that—I mean, rather," said Lowther hurriedly. "Rather! Looking well. Springboks blooming, you know, and so on. Diamonds sparkling, and all that."

Clive stared; but as Lowther chuckled he took it for a joke; and the spoofer, nodding to him, hurried on. Clive had hoped for rather a chat with Mr. Lowther, but he was to be disappointed. Lowther was not at all keen on much "local colour," for fear of making howlers.

All that it was really necessary for him to do was to seek out Dr. Holmes and put his proposition that his nephew and two friends should be allowed a whole day's holiday. And, with that end in view, there was no need for him to make a tour of inspection of the school. But the fact was that Lowther was feeling in rather fine fettle, and chuckling to himself at having so successfully "put it across" the juniors, he could not resist the temptation to do a little leg-pulling in the capacity of an old gentleman.

So Lowther and Blake and a few other juniors sauntered along to the nets, where Knox of the Sixth was standing up to Kildare's bowling.

"That's Kildare. Kildare is playing for Mr. Graham Paine's eleven," said Blake. "Great chap. Skipper of the first eleven, you know, sir, and one of the best."

"And who's that boob batting?" asked Mr. Lowther.

Knox, conscious of having an audience, including a distinguished stranger, was about to make an even prettier late cut than usual, but Mr. Lowther's remark unnerved him. The cut was too late altogether!

Crash went the stumps with a clatter as the ball turned slightly, and Mr. Lowther grunted.

"The bowling is too fast for him," he said. "Why don't they bowl underarm?"

Knox, bad-tempered at the best of times, gave him a furious scowl, and sent the ball back to Kildare viciously.

"Who is this fellow?" asked Lowther in a penetrating whisper.

"Knox," said Blake.

"Knocks what?" asked Lowther. "He didn't knock that one far."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox, who was just taking his stance again, held up his hand as Darrell of the Sixth started to run to the bowling stump.

"One moment," he said. "I can't bat while this confusion is going on behind me."

Lowther chuckled.

"Oh, is that what it is?" he asked. "Stand back, you boys, and give the lad a chance. Ugly stance rather, hasn't he?" he commented in a low whisper.

Knox saw red as he took his stance at the wicket. The remarks were hardly in the best of taste, and there is no doubt at all that Lowther's uncle would have refrained from such personal comment; but Monty Lowther had several little scores to settle with the cad of the Sixth.

When the ball came down Knox took a vicious swipe at it which should have been a drive through cover, but which became a snick off the edge of the bat in a direction which would have given third slip an easy catch. The ball rolled up the net, and Mr. Lowther gave a sharp exclamation of warning.

"Stand back, boys! Mind the splinters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox tossed down the ball, and then turned to the back of the net.

"I trust my comments are not annoying you, young man," said Uncle Monty.

"But I am a South African, and we take cricket rather seriously, so if you want a few tips don't be too shy to ask me."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake.

"Perhaps you'd like to come and show us how to do it, sir?" said Knox savagely.

"No, no; carry on, carry on! Just put your right foot back a little more. I will tell you how to play each ball. The other boys can listen and pick up tips," said Lowther in his kindest tone.

Knox's face was a picture. The prefect took himself very seriously as a cricketer, and if he had paid less attention to the Green Man at Rylcombe, and considerably less to cigarettes, he might have been better. In any case, the idea of being coached as though he were a fag—and in front of juniors—was too much for him.

"I've had enough," he said through his teeth to Kildare. "You'd better take a turn. You'll have to face South Africans sooner or later; their barracking is worse than their bowling."

Lowther adjusted his "stomach," which had slipped slightly, and stepped over the ropes on to the playing-field.

"Young man," he said to Knox, "one word with you."

"Oh, rats!" said Knox crossly, under his breath.

Kildare gave him a quick look. Ill-temper had no place in the cricket-field, whatever the provocation.

"It's Lowther's uncle, I think, Knox," said Kildare quickly, and added in an undertone: "Go easy!"

The juniors followed Lowther on to the grass, and they wore broad grins. Knox was the most unpopular prefect in the school, and nothing gave the juniors greater pleasure than the sight of his being taken down a peg or two, or preferably three.

Knox faced Lowther with a scowl.

"Well?" he said ungraciously.

"Pray don't take it to heart," said Lowther. "A good man never resents advice. It's only the mugs who do that. I mean well, so do not mistake my—er—bluff Colonial manner. I was playing cricket when you were a babe in arms, squawking and squalling and making night hideous. I was playing cricket when you were an inky-fingered little fag cooking kippers on a pen-nib."

Knox moved restlessly, and his eyes gleamed.

"Then perhaps you'd like to show us how you play, sir," he suggested. "Kildare won't mind your having a knock."

Monty Lowther coughed. He was quite a useful member of the junior eleven, but he did not fancy his chances against Kildare's bowling or Knox's express deliveries, and

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he had no wish to make an ass of himself. He rather wished that he had not been so keenly critical.

"That's right. Go it, sir. Show 'em how we play in South Africa," said Clive.

"Wathah! An exhibition!" said Arthur Augustus in approval.

Kildare held out the bat, and Lowther sighed. He was so deeply involved that he could scarcely withdraw now, and he took the bat up a little anxiously.

"Rather like Monty in a way," said Blake truthfully. "They're very much alike in face, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! But uncle and nephew are often alike," said D'Arcy sagely. "I've noticed it with relations, you know."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

But he eyed Lowther keenly as that worthy lined up to take the bowling.

"Got the same sort of stance," commented Clive.

Lowther heard those remarks, and did not feel happy. He felt anything but happy either as Kildare took the ball and turned it in his hand; for Kildare knew more about bowling than anyone at St. Jim's, and if he did not send the stumps flying first ball it would only be because the ball was a little off the wicket.

Moreover, Lowther felt a little unusual with his portly form preventing his getting a look at his feet. To be at a greater advantage he turned half-left.

"Two-eyed stance," said Blake.

"Play!"

Kildare took a run, and down came the ball. Either Kildare was bowling soft, or else it was an unintentional loose ball. But the fact remained that it was a long hop slightly to leg, and Monty Lowther felt that he was at home. He braced himself and let fly.

Smack!

The ball received what long hops deserve, and went sailing away to the leg side loftily, far away across the grass, and Monty Lowther, with a sigh of relief, leaned on his bat.

Knox glared.

"Old age, you know," said Lowther, shaking his head wistfully. "Mistimed that badly. If I had been twenty years younger that would have been out of the ground, half-way to Rylcombe."

"Bai Jove! It was pwetty good, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I doubt if I could have sent it much farthah myself, you know."

Monty Lowther self-consciously adjusted the foremost

portion of his artificial stomach, which had a knack of listing to starboard, and then Knox took up a ball.

There was an ugly look in Knox's face, and he looked most unpleasantly vicious. Lowther quaked inwardly. He was not a funk, but the pitch in the nets was a little worn, and Knox's express deliveries would jump rather badly on it.

At any time Knox's bowling was fiery, and he generally did more damage to the batsman than to the stumps. At the moment he looked as though putting the batsman in hospital was his sole object.

"Steady, Knox," warned Kildare softly. "Don't forget he isn't very young."

"I'll teach the old fool to give me advice!" snarled Knox. He took a swift run, and the ball shot down the pitch like a bullet.

There were warning shouts from the onlookers.

"Look out!"

The ball pitched short and shot up dangerously.

Monty Lowther stood no chance against the erratic behaviour of that ball, and he was hit amidships with such force that there was a gasp from the crowd. The speed of the ball was terrific, and being hit by it in the "engine-room," as Blake expressed it, was not a joke at all. But Mr. Lowther seemed to be made of leather, or, at least, of cotton wool, for although the ball buried itself in his waistcoat and made him stagger, he gave no twinge of pain.

Naturally enough, the crowd had expected him to collapse. At the very least they had expected to see him writhing in agony, rolling over on the ground. Instead of that, Lowther stooped and tossed back the ball.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked Kildare, in dismay and wonder.

Lowther, suddenly conscious of the wonderment, gave a look at the crowd, and saw blank surprise. Then he remembered, and clasped his middle. Rolling up his eyes, he then fell to the ground, gasping, a little late with his agony, but doing the thing really well.

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"Ooooh—ah—ugugug—" he gasped. Kildare at once rushed to his side, while Knox went rather white, and wondered if he had not gone a little too far.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, who was standing by the nets, looked at Clive, and from Clive to Blake.

"Tough old fellow—what?" he said, in his amused, cynical way. "They make 'em tough in Natal, I suppose. Might have been cotton wool under his waistcoat, the way the ball went in."

The faintly cynical tone in Cardew's voice did not go unnoticed, and Blake gave a jump. He had thought it strange that that terrific blow had not knocked out Mr. Lowther sooner, but Cardew's mention of cotton wool gave him a clue.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "I wonder——"

Then he caught D'Arcy by the sleeve and dragged him away, motioning at the same time to Herries and Digby. Lowther was still lying on the ground, but gasping less and less, and pulling round remarkably well, considering his apparent age and the force of the blow.

"You heard that?" asked Blake excitedly, when he had dragged his friends out of earshot of the crowd. "Manners warned us to take a good look at any uncle that arrived while Lowther was away!"

"Phew!" said Herries. "You mean it may be Kerr made-up? But it's a jolly good make-up!"

"All the more reason," said Blake. "No man could have had that buff without feeling it; but he didn't blink an eyelid until he saw how surprised we were."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Then pewwaps—gweat Scott!—pewwaps he isn't a man at all! Pewwaps he is a boy dressed up!" Kerr! he shrieked.

The crowd looked round, and Blake gave his noble chum a sulphuric look.

"You can't get a car," he said loudly. "You'll have to walk. Take hold of him, Herries, old man."

And Herries, grinning, walked Arthur Augustus away, Blake hoping that his pun upon Kerr's name had saved the situation and that the Colonial gentleman had not heard him. For, of course, if it were Kerr, then he had to be given no warning, but had to be unmasked in no uncertain manner. That was Blake's idea, and Blake had a score to pay Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, which could now be nicely settled! Or so he thought.

CHAPTER 9.

Uncle Monty Sees the Joke!

"NOW," said Figgins, "how do we look?"

The hour of trial had arrived, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn stood outside the teashop in Wayland, which Kerr had made the rendezvous with Lowther's uncle. That assignation had been made at the suggestion principally of Fatty Wynn. Fatty had declared that there was no better way of telling a man's worth than seeing how he could order tea.

True, half-past two was a little early in the day for tea, so far as most people were concerned, but Fatty Wynn always said that if he started then he would be able to get into his stride nicely by the time half-past four struck.

At any rate, here was the place, and this was the time, so Figgins took a nervous look at himself and then at Kerr. As Figgins was leader it had been decided, after an argument, that he should be Monty Lowther for the afternoon, and, as such, he wanted to make a hit with Uncle Monty.

"You look fine, but don't forget that you're supposed to have broken it off with Merry and Manners," warned Kerr.

Figgins nodded, and took a look at himself in a shop window.

"Bit of a shock for the old boy," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "But he's probably a strong man. The difficulty is, we don't know him, so Fatty and I had better keep calling on you, Lowther, then he'll introduce himself."

"Yes, Lowther; here we are!" said Fatty, as the three juniors entered the teashop. "Fine show of tarts, Lowther, old man!"

"Fathead!" warned Kerr. "You'll overdo it!"

Figgins braced himself, and assumed such a grim look that the waitress standing near was quite startled. School-boys with grim, set faces did sometimes arrive to make a serious onslaught on the cakes, but they did not, as a rule, look quite so fierce as George Figgins did at that moment.

"Lowther, old man—" began Kerr, leisurely glancing about him.

As he spoke, a man at the far end of the room looked up, and then rose to his feet, beaming.

"Cheery old bird!" whispered Kerr. "I like your uncle, Fig—Lowther!"

(Continued on next page.)

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Figgins advanced tentatively, and forced a smile as the man approached. The stranger was a good-looking man of a little more than forty years of age. He was clean-shaven and healthily tanned, and there was nothing at all to distinguish him by appearance from a man who had spent most of his life in England.

He advanced, and took Figgins by the shoulder, and the New House leader gulped.

"Ah! Monty—eh?" said the Colonial.

"Hallo, Uncle Monty!" said Figgins.

"Well, my boy, you have shot up!" said Uncle Monty, looking the junior up and down. "Fine strapping lad! Not much like your father—what? Like your mother, perhaps—eh?"

"Ahem! I think I t-take after my aunt," said Figgins unguardedly.

"Aunt Millicent? Yes, you've certainly her long nose; but I trust you haven't her long tongue, Montague!"

"Ha, ha! No," laughed Figgins, wondering what Aunt Millicent's tongue was like. "Glad you came to-day, uncle!"

"Yes. I arranged Friday; but when I received your two telegrams, I stretched a point and came to-day. Besides, I saw the mention of the match in the paper. We mustn't miss that. I want you to see what South Africa can do in the way of cricket."

Figgins beamed and Kerr beamed. Fatty Wynn had been beaming for some minutes, chiefly owing to the proximity of tarts, and his expression did not alter.

"Too early for tea," said Uncle Monty. "I suppose we ought to be rolling back to the school—what?"

Fatty Wynn gave a groan, and eyed the tarts hungrily.

"Y-yes, uncle; but no hurry," said Figgins. "We—er—"

"Well, well, how about some tarts and ginger-pop? I see your friend is eyeing the tarts!" Uncle Monty chuckled, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn liked him at once, especially Fatty Wynn.

"Say yes, Figgy," urged Fatty Wynn.

Uncle Monty had turned to beckon a waitress, but he heard that remark, and looked at Figgins with a broad smile.

"Figgy? That a nickname?"

"Er—ahem!" coughed Figgy, giving Fatty a concentrated glare.

But Kerr leapt into the breach.

"We always call him Figgy, sir," he said. "We always have done."

"And a good enough reason, I suppose. Just figuratively," said Uncle Monty, in the best Lowther manner.

Kerr whispered to Figgins, and Figgins' eyes gleamed as he repeated the remark to Uncle Monty.

"I don't give a fig what they call me!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! Punning runs in the family—eh? Well, come along, boys. Sit down; order what you like."

They took their places at a table, and Figgins & Co. looked as though life had never been so pleasant as this. Fatty Wynn could have flung his arm round Uncle Monty's neck, and was beginning to wish that he had been playing the part of Monty Lowther. It was a pity to waste such an uncle as this! And Uncle Monty meant what he said, too. Tarts and cakes of every kind that there was on display were placed on the table, and Fatty Wynn's eyes shone.

"You haven't introduced your friends, Monty," reminded Lowther's uncle. "Which is Tom Merry?"

Figgins coughed.

"The fact is, Uncle, Merry and I have fallen out. We don't share a study. I share a study with these fellows. This is Kerr, a Scotsman with a head worth two, and this chap is Fatty Wynn."

"Sounds like a motor race!" chuckled Uncle Monty.

"Kerr—Wynn. Your name does rhyme with car?" he asked the Scots junior.

"Yes, sir, not car."

"Figgy, Kerr, and Wynn," said Uncle Monty, his eyes twinkling. "H'm, a fine combination!"

He said it slowly, and Kerr gave him a rather sharp look, and wondered rather late in the day if Monty Lowther, in letters home, had ever mentioned the rivalry with the New House, and given names.

But that did not seem likely at all; for Uncle Monty was affability itself.

"I trust you had a good crossing, sir?" Kerr asked, tactfully opening up a safe subject.

"Oh, splendid," said Uncle Monty. "First rate—first rate. I suppose you boys all want to go to the match?" His eyes twinkled, and the three juniors nodded their heads eagerly.

"Yes, all of us, if you can work it, uncle," said Figgins. "Rather. Fatty Wynn's the best bowler in the House, and he wants to improve his style if possible. Pick up one or

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two tips, and so on. Of course, Thursday is not a half-holiday."

"No, no; it would mean my obtaining permission from Dr. Holmes for all of you to have a whole day's holiday, I suppose?"

"Well, it would rather," said Kerr cautiously. "But I think we might manage to lose one day's lessons without much harm, and if you spoke nicely to the Head, sir—"

"Yes, I do not doubt that it could be managed," Uncle Monty replied slowly. "I must ask him how you have been getting on with your work, Monty."

Figgins put down his glass of ginger-beer, and tried to appear eager.

"Er—yes, uncle. I'll take you to him directly we arrive, and then show you round."

"Splendid, splendid. I would like to look round." Then he chuckled. "I do look a bit round, I suppose? But we don't mind, do we, Wynn?"

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn, engrossed now in lemon-curd tarts. "Ha, ha! No, sir, not a bit. I don't mind. I say, these tarts are pretty good."

"Tuck in," said Uncle Monty pleasantly. "There are a few more trays over there."

Figgins' doubts were eased. If Uncle Monty was such a cheery, good sort, he would not make much of a fuss surely, even if their deception were discovered; but his very cheeriness, on the other hand, suggested that he had suspected nothing.

Figgins and Kerr ate one or two tarts, but Fatty Wynn's jaws champed unceasingly, and his opinion of Colonials rose to a high point. But Uncle Monty was wanting news of the people at home.

"How is your Aunt Gertrude, Montague?"

"Aunt—Aunt Gertrude—er—pretty braced, thanks," said Figgins.

"Really! Is she not still bedridden?"

Figgins jumped. He began to wish that he had made a habit of inquiring after the health of Lowther's relatives. There seemed no lack of aunts in the Lowther family.

"Well—er—she's pulling round a bit," said Figgins.

"What, walking now, is she?"

"Yes—just tottering around, as it were," said Figgins uncomfortably.

Uncle Monty shook his head.

"She ought not to be allowed to, my boy. With her artificial leg, and in her present state of health, and her great age. At ninety-three it ought not to be allowed."

Figgins' jaw dropped. An old lady of ninety-three was hardly likely to be "pretty braced." Apparently Gertrude was a great-aunt of Lowther's; and he began to wish that the cross-examination had ceased.

"I suppose you've still got your old dog, Fido?" asked Uncle Monty.

"Oh, rather," said Figgins enthusiastically.

"Splendid! He got over that bite the cow gave him?"

There was a twinkle in Uncle Monty's eye, and Figgins' reply froze on his lips. He had never heard of a dog being bitten by a cow; but on the other hand, was there any reason why an infuriated cow might not bite a dog? He realised that he was in deep water. But Kerr came to the rescue.

"The fact is," said Kerr, "during term-time news is a bit scrappy, sir. We're not much better off being only a hundred miles from home than you are being umpteen thousand. It's being away that matters."

"I suppose so, I suppose so," said Uncle Monty.

Even Fatty Wynn could not go on eating for ever, and there were signs already that he was losing the first hectic pose that he had set up. The speed of his champing was diminished; the fire had gone from his eyes. He was satisfied at last, and Uncle Monty nodded to the waitress when she approached with her small order book.

"Yes, I think we may have the bill now. Wynn mustn't spoil his tea, eh?"

"No, sir; wouldn't do," agreed Fatty, breathing rather heavily.

The bill was accepted, and Uncle Monty dived into his breast pocket. Then he frowned, and searched in his other breast pocket. He tapped his trouser pockets, and then shook his head.

"H'm. Must be at the hotel. What a nuisance! Dear, dear! This is a fine thing. I'm afraid I shall have to borrow from you, Monty, until we get to the school."

Figgins put his hand into his pocket and pulled out five shillings. Kerr produced half-a-crown, but Fatty Wynn had no money. But seven-and-six was enough, and the bill was paid.

"You had better settle with your friends, and I'll remember to settle with you, Monty, my boy, and perhaps with a handsome surplus."

"Oh, thanks, uncle," said Figgins, a little uncomfortably. If he were tipped, he would, of course, have to pass the tip on to Lowther; but that would soon be remedied.

"And now for St. Jim's, what? And Dr. Holmes, Monty." "Ye-es, uncle," said Figgins, wishing that he had let Kerr play the part of Monty Lowther, after all. "That's the idea, of course."

They were outside the shop now, and Uncle Monty continued to pat at his pockets.

"Wait here a moment, will you?" he asked. "I must see about this money business. I have some coppers. I'll telephone."

He went across the road to a telephone-box, leaving Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn a little uneasy in mind. Kerr looked even more anxious than Figgins.

"He's smelling a rat," said Kerr uneasily. "I think

out of the ordinary run of events that the headmaster of St. Jim's sat up and took notice.

Taggles had just delivered a parcel at the Head's private house, and Dr. Holmes called him.

"Taggles, is that groaning I can hear? Is one of the boys hurt, do you think?"

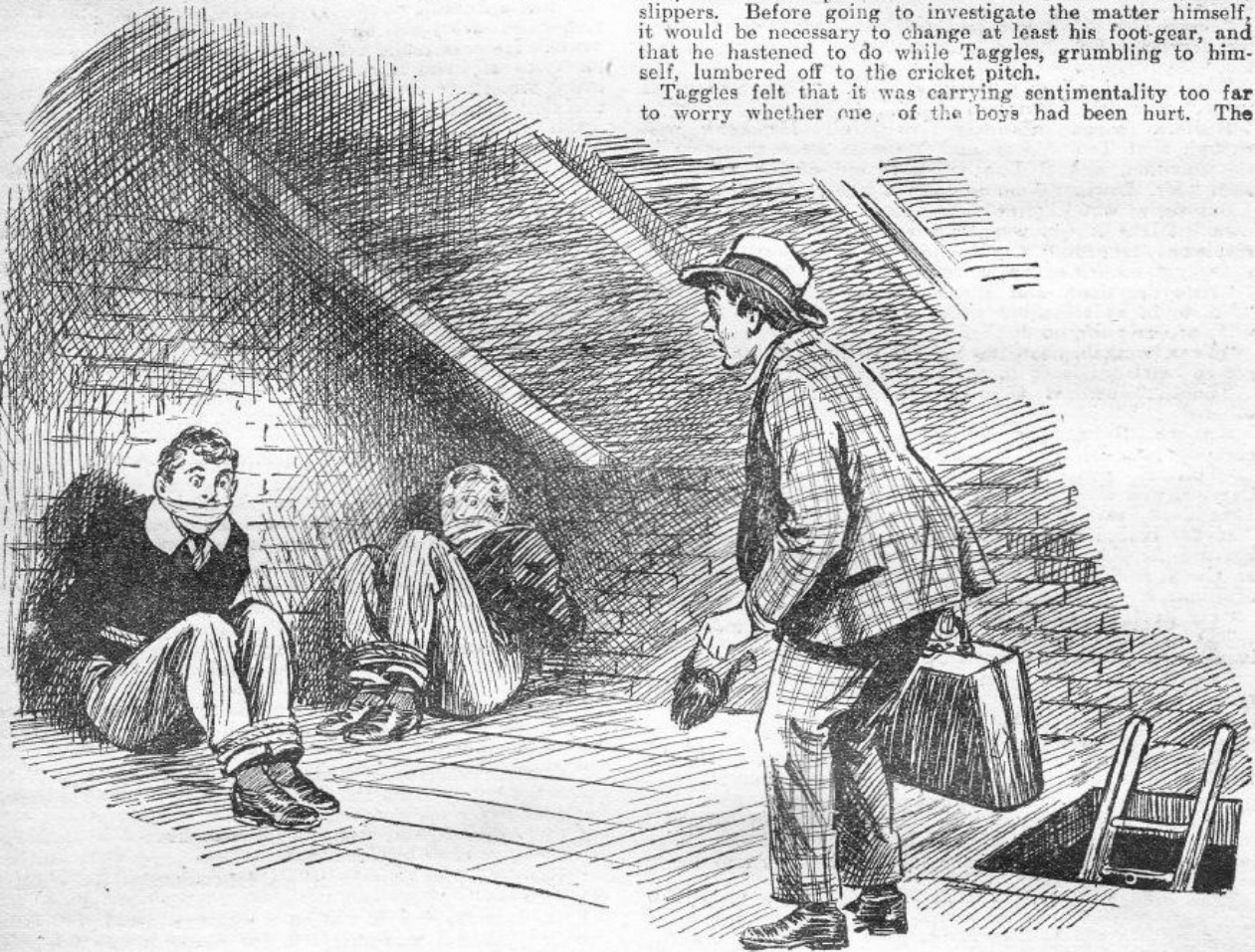
Taggles shook his head.

"Takes a lot to reely 'urt a boy," he said gloomily. "And they 'oller for nothin', sir."

"Taggles, kindly go and see what is wrong. I think perhaps a boy has been hurt by a cricket ball."

Dr. Holmes, for comfort's sake, was in a light flannel suit, and wore a pair of old shoes that were more akin to slippers. Before going to investigate the matter himself, it would be necessary to change at least his foot-gear, and that he hastened to do while Taggles, grumbling to himself, lumbered off to the cricket pitch.

Taggles felt that it was carrying sentimentality too far to worry whether one of the boys had been hurt. The



With his beard in one hand and his bag in the other, Monty Lowther reached the safety of the cricket pavilion and ascended to the loft. There he halted in amazement, and stared at the two juniors who blinked back at him and made grunting noises through their gags! (See Chapter 11.)

he was pumping you about the family, Figgy. I don't believe there is an Aunt Gertrude."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Or a dog bitten by a cow. His eyes were twinkling like anything."

Figgins groaned.

"Oh, crumbs! Jolly lucky we didn't try to pull it off at St. Jim's. I said it was a rotten idea all along."

"Well, my hat," gasped Kerr. "You claimed it as yours—didn't he, Fatty?"

"That's right," said Fatty. "Jolly good idea, too. I've enjoyed myself fine, haven't you? Great chap!"

Uncle Monty, from the other side of the road, smiled and nodded at them through the glass-fronted door of the telephone-box, what time he got busy on the telephone.

"Oh, I think it's all right," said Figgins. "Anyway, we've got to go through with it now, as far as I can see, Kerr."

"Maybe," said Kerr. "But I have my doubts."

CHAPTER 10.

Getting Suspicious!

DR. HOLMES was sitting in a deck-chair, in his garden, reading, while "Uncle Monty" was giving his demonstration of batting at the nets. Being used to the sounds of bat meeting ball, and the faint murmur of voices floating distantly from the cricket field, he had not been disturbed. But the groans that Monty Lowther gave to add realism to his injury were so much

porter held the firm and oft-repeated conviction that all boys ought to have been "drowned at birth."

Consequently, when he reached the playing-fields, and saw that it was an old gentleman, he was rather disappointed.

"Ain't no boy 'urt?" he asked.

"No, Taggles. It's Lowther's uncle. He's all right now, I think," said Kildare worriedly. "But the ball gave him rather a hard knock."

"Ho!" said Taggles. "Well, I'll go and tell the doctor."

"Here—I don't want a doctor," said Lowther anxiously.

"He means the Head," smiled Kildare. "Dr. Holmes, sir."

Dr. Holmes, appearing on the scene almost at once, needed no calling, having followed soon after Taggles.

"Tain't a boy at all, sir," said Taggles lugubriously. "It's an old gent—Master Lowther's uncle."

Dr. Holmes gave a start of surprise. He had heard rumours about Lowther's uncle, but he had not seen him arrive, and he was considerably perturbed, therefore, to hear of this contretemps. The headmaster approached, and the juniors cleared back from the net. Monty Lowther staggered to his feet and forced a faint smile.

"My dear sir," said Dr. Holmes, in great concern, as he advanced, a hand outstretched, "I trust that you have not been seriously hurt."

"Me? Oh, no," said Lowther. "Not a bit, sir—er—Dr. Holmes. Just a bit of a buff on the waistcoat."

"An extra-fast one," explained Kildare. "Mr. Lowther

was batting. He lifted the one I sent down over to the boundary—"

"And stopped the next one with my lunch," said Lowther. "I suppose that was leg before wicket?"

Dr. Holmes smiled a little dryly.

"I think perhaps the ground is a little too rough for really fast bowling, Mr. Lowther."

"Oh, I was just showing the boy Knox how to play," said Lowther jovially, as he turned away with Dr. Holmes. "He wanted a few tips." At which remark Knox scowled darkly and the juniors roared with laughter.

"My word, the old boy's been pulling his leg," said Owen of the New House, when the Head and Lowther had departed.

"Looks like it," mused Redfern, who kept looking round for Figgins & Co. "And looks as though Figgy has failed, too."

"And Lowther," said Owen quickly. "He's missed his uncle," suggested Lawrence.

Redfern looked extremely thoughtful. He knew well enough that Tom Merry and Manners were prisoners in the pavilion, and if Lowther were out of the way, too, then "Mr. Lowther" would have a lonely afternoon.

But where was Figgins?

Jack Blake & Co. were wondering that, too; but their suspicions regarding the identity of Mr. Lowther were seemingly confirmed by a closer observation.

"He's disguised, and it's Kerr all right," said Blake. "No doubt at all about that, in fact. But the thing is what are we going to do?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! That is the question. We've got to bowl out Kerr in some way, what?"

"Shush!" warned Herries, "Here's Reddy and the others."

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, arm in arm, strolled casually near Blake & Co., and the two Co.'s "dried up."

"This is gettin' interestin', my friends," chuckled Cardew, who was standing by. "They're all smelling a rat. That black beard is coming off in a moment."

It was indeed getting interesting; for Redfern had overheard D'Arcy's remark, and his eyes gleamed as he looked at Owen and Lawrence. They were now out of earshot of Blake & Co., and Redfern spoke excitedly.

"My hat! You heard what Gussy said?"

"About Kerr," nodded Owen. "But that's rot. It can't be Kerr, surely. He'd have tipped us the wink."

"He may not have seen us. But come to think of it," mused Redfern, "it wouldn't surprise me a little bit if that chap were made-up."

"My hat! But he's gone into the Head's house."

"I know. But it was rather queer, don't you think, the way he didn't seem to notice that biff in the tummy?"

It was queer! Owen and Lawrence saw that now.

"And his voice changed a bit when he spoke to Taggles," cut in Lawrence. "My hat! I believe it is Kerr. Those lads have kidnapped the real nunky, and Figgy and Fatty are looking after him."

That seemed, in fact, a most reasonable hypothesis, and met with Redfern and Owen's entire approval. But there remained now for them to decide what to do. Blake & Co. were mouching about with felonious intent of some kind, and casting looks towards the Head's house.

CHAPTER 11

A Hurried Departure!

MONTY LOWTHER, standing in the gateway of Dr. Holmes' garden, sniffing the roses and discreetly adjusting his wig, which had taken a slightly rakish tilt to starboard, looked across warily at Blake & Co. and Redfern & Co., realising that trouble of some kind was abroad.

"You must have tea with me, my dear sir," said Dr. Holmes. "It will be served in the garden in a few minutes. The garden is shady and most delightful at this time of the year, and I do not doubt we shall find many topics of mutual interest."

"Rather. I mean, of course—certainly—thanks," said Lowther. "Nothing I would like—er—better, Dr. Holmes. Then you must tell me how that young rascal Monty is getting on."

"Lowther, I believe, is working quite hard, and certainly playing quite hard," said Dr. Holmes, with one of his dry smiles.

"Good! Excellent! I want to take the lad to see the match the South Africans are playing near here. Probably you have heard of it?" said Lowther artlessly.

Dr. Holmes, it proved, had heard of the match.

"Yes, Kildare is a member of Mr. Graham Paine's eleven. It will be a match worth seeing. But a whole—

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day affair, and I am not quite sure about granting leave of absence—"

Monty Lowther fingered his collar at the throat. This was really where his effort began. He had rather thought that Dr. Holmes was in the habit of rubbing his hands with delight at the idea of falling in with any suggestion made by relations of juniors. At the very least Lowther had expected a bow and immediate compliance with his desires.

But, alas! Dr. Holmes was shaking his head, and Lowther began to wonder what line he ought to take now. Were uncles high and mighty with headmasters? Should he throw his weight about? Ought he to insist, or should he plead?

It was a difficult point. Lowther began to see that it was rather an oversight on his part never having been an uncle. He was really rather in the dark as to the mental processes of those strange people, and he could not quite bring himself to forget that he was a Fourth Form junior and Dr. Holmes was the headmaster of St. Jim's!

But at that moment tea was served, and Lowther was momentarily saved.

"Perhaps you had better stay the night here?" suggested Dr. Holmes, over tea. "I'm afraid you will feel the effects of your injury later. Is there much of a bruise?"

Lowther coughed. The only bruise was on the cotton-wool padding.

"You are no longer a young man," pointed out Dr. Holmes, adjusting his glasses, with the object perhaps of determining more exactly his companion's age. But Lowther dabbed his face cautiously with a large handkerchief, so concealing it from view.

"Well—er—" he mumbled.

"I can easily put you up here," said Dr. Holmes kindly. "And if you are going to the match, this would be a convenient starting-place. I am rather a sociable man, and the prospect of having a companion this evening appeals to me."

Lowther blinked. If he stayed the night, what of Monty Lowther of the Fourth? But could he refuse?

"Well—er—I'm afraid I have an appointment," he said. "Otherwise—"

"But you will presumably have to call here in the morning for your nephew, if you wish to take him to the match," said Dr. Holmes, who apparently was very keen to have a companion that evening.

"Ye-es."

"When is your appointment?"

Monty Lowther shifted uncomfortably. He began to see that there were breakers ahead, and that everything in the garden was not lovely.

"You can come back to-night. I will instruct a maid to prepare a room," said Dr. Holmes, who had grown into the habit of expecting complete obedience and invariable concurrence with his wishes. "That will be the best thing. Your bag you left by the nets."

"N-no; I've got that here," said Lowther. "But—but, I say, you—"

"Oh, I assure you it will be a pleasure," said the headmaster. "And I will telephone for a doctor now. I shall not listen to a refusal to that. By all accounts, the knock was a very hard one. You had better see a doctor. Excuse me a moment."

And before Lowther could protest, the headmaster vanished into his house. Monty Lowther's face had gone quite pale under his make-up. He felt no ill effects from that ball, but he wondered how he was going to get out of his scrape.

To stay the night was clearly impossible, but how was he going to escape? Could he run away? Could he make some ingenuous excuse? The longer he stayed the more chance there was of his being found out.

And then another fear assailed him. Monty Lowther would have to be in to calling-over, and Monty Lowther's things were in the suitcase!

Lowther jumped up and looked at the spot on the garden path where he had put the suitcase. It was not there! One of the servants had taken it in. Perhaps one of the servants was now kindly unpacking it for him, revealing only Etons and a school cap!

Monty Lowther groaned within and trembled. Any thought of escape would be hopeless now, until he had regained possession of that bag. For could any evidence be more incriminating than that? Lowther seemed to hear the whistle of cane in the air. Worse still, gone would be all chance of visiting the match—seeing any match, perhaps, for weeks.

"Oh, my giddy aunt—I mean, my giddy uncle!" he groaned hollowly.

And then, looking towards the hedge that bordered the garden, he saw a head peer over. It was Redfern's, and Redfern gave a penetrating whisper:

"The game's up!"

Monty Lowther jumped, and his dismay as he looked at Redfern was evident.

"Bowled you out, you clever dog, Kerr!" went on Redfern.

"What?" gasped Lowther, and then dropped back into the chair. Kerr? Redfern thought he was Kerr!

"It's all right," said Redfern. "No one else has spotted you."

"Good!" said Lowther.

"Mind you get us permission," warned Redfern, "or look out for yourself, Kerr! You've taken everyone else in, but I think Blake's a bit suspicious, and— Shush!"

Redfern dropped from view, and Lowther jumped up. It was news to him that he had been bowled out. It was even still more surprising that he had been taken for Kerr. But that was better, surely, than being taken for Lowther! At least, he had Reddy on his side.

It was the approach of a parlourmaid which had caused Redfern's flight, and Lowther eyed her warily.

"I have taken your suitcase to your room, sir. May I show you the way?" she said.

"Me?" said Lowther. "Oh—er—right-ho! Thanks! Yes, please! Oh crumbs!"

He followed the girl into the house, and then up the stairs to the sunny room which he had been allotted. It was a very pleasant room, and he noticed with distinct

pleasure that it gave out on to the back of the house. If need be, there was a way of escape there.

"The doctor will arrive in a few minutes," said the parlourmaid sweetly as she went out of the room.

Lowther swung round in dismay.

"The d-doctor! Oh, my hat! Here, I say—"

Click!

The door was closed, and now it would only be a very short time before the arrival of the doctor! Monty Lowther became frantic. Escape! That was the only thing to do! He snatched up his suitcase and tossed it out of the window into the garden below, aiming it at the hedge, for the suitcase contained incriminating evidence.

Alas! The suitcase was heavier than he had thought, and dropped short. In horror, Lowther watched it descend on a cucumber frame.

Crash!

Instantly the gardener appeared in view, and threw up his hands, glaring from Lowther at the window to the suitcase.

"Ere! Hi!" the gardener cried in wrath.

"Ahem!" said Lowther. "Would you be good enough to return me my suitcase, please?"

"Broke this frame, it 'as," said the gardener wrathfully. "What for did you throw that, sir?"

(Continued on next page.)

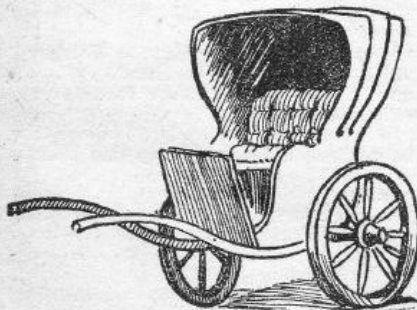
ASK THE ORACLE!




A few minutes with our wonder man, the Oracle, is the best tonic for the blues and gloom. He has cured so many readers that a special testimonial six miles long has been drawn up, ready to be signed by all those who have benefited.

Q. What is a cabriolet?

A. It is charming of you, Rudolph Clutterbuck of Shoreditch, to send me a free ticket for the social of the Smithkin Road Vegetarian Debating Society, in which you hold the office of chief chucker-out. I note, too, that refreshments are on the card—but I fear that I can no longer crack nuts with my teeth, and I always wear rubber-soled boots. However, I am delighted to answer your question here about the cabriolet, which is not, as you seem to suppose, a new kind of gambling game which might be introduced with advantage (to yourself) in the debating society. It was a sort of hooded carriage introduced into England from Paris in the year 1820, and very popular among some of the smart young men-about-town. It was the forerunner of the Hansom cab, invented by an architect named Mr. Hansom in 1834. I hope, Rudolph, your social evening at the debating society will go off without your official services being called into use many times. So long!



How would you like a ride in one of these? Not quite up to a Rolls or a Ford, but a bit cheaper on petrol. This vehicle is called a cabriolet.

Our Oracle informed the Editor that a reader sent in the following query:

"A tutor who tooted the flute
Tried to tutor two tutors to toot,
Said the two to the tutor,
'Is it easier to toot or
To tutor two tootors to toot'?"

After saying which the old man was removed to the dentist's to have a few new rivets soldered into his dental plate. Now try the above on your chums, but take a deep breath first!

Q. What is a sucker?

A. A chum who signs himself "Angler" has sent in the above question, and I am left to presume that it has a fishy application. Fish known as suckers live in muddy waters of the world, especially in muddy rivers, and they get their living by sucking small creatures and other food from the sea or river-bed. In addition, there is a great family known as the sucking-fishes, so named because they attach themselves to other fishes or moving objects by means of a rubber-like pad. This variety, "Angler," has a fondness for fixing itself to the body of a shark and so being carried about in the sea without effort. Sometimes this species also attaches itself to a ship, turtle, or something else with a definite power of moving at a much faster speed through the water than itself. In Great Britain the word "sucker" is sometimes used as a slang term for a sweetmeat; in the United States "sucker" is slang for a fool or "mug."

Q. What is a patio?

A. This, G. C. B., is the Spanish name for an inner court, open to the sky, of a house, and which is the usual feature of dwellings in Spain and Spanish America. Thanks for sending the used ha'penny stamp issued to commemorate the Postal Union Congress in London held this year. I am thinking of bequeathing it to the office boy in my will.

Q. What is the difference in rank between a captain in the Royal Navy and a captain in the Army?

A. This interesting query has been sent in by a Manchester lad who, like a few hundred other eager readers, demands that I shall put the answer in next week's "Gem." Will the Manchester chum and others please take note again that the "Gem" goes to press three weeks before publication: also that owing to the hundreds of letters sent in, questions have to be dealt with in strict rotation and only the most interesting can be used in these columns. The rest are answered by a learned staff specially employed under the Oracle's own supervision. And now about the Navy and Army! There is a dickens



CAPTAIN
(NAVY)



CAPTAIN
(ARMY)

The badges of rank worn on the sleeves of Navy and Army captains.

of a lot of difference in rank between a captain in one and the other. A naval lieutenant—a "two-ringer"—is equal in rank to a captain of the Army. A captain in the Navy, however, is equal in rank to a colonel. The artist has drawn for you the badges of rank worn on the sleeves of the Navy and Army captains respectively.

Q. Who was Fray Bentos?

A. To be frank, the only thing of this name I ever heard of, Morrish Lee of Hampstead, was bully beef—and jolly good stuff, too! One of my grandsons has informed me that this brand was frequently issued to him in France during the War.

Q. What is parquetry?

A. The term, W. H. A., of Bath, refers to a kind of mosaic in wood used for ornamental flooring. To make patterns, the colour and grain of oak, walnut, lime, cherry, pine, etc., are employed in contrast, and geometrical designs, mainly consisting of squares and triangles, are carried out.

"D-did I throw it?"

"I see you done it," said the gardener.

Lowther frantically tried to think of some excuse. To say that the bag had fallen was clearly impossible. But, to make matters worse, Dr. Holmes, attracted by the noise, appeared on the scene, and the gardener explained what had happened.

Dr. Holmes looked up at the window in surprise.

"Dear me! Can it be possible, Mr. Lowther, that you threw down this bag?"

"I must have," said Lowther. "I—er—I'm rather absent-minded. The accident has rather upset me, too. I'll come down and fetch the bag," he concluded, anxious to recover that important article.

"Don't trouble," said the Head, evidently satisfied with the explanation. "The gardener will bring it up to you."

Dr. Holmes turned to the gardener.

"Take the bag to Mr. Lowther," he said, now somewhat worried. "I fear," he added in an undertone, "that the mishap this afternoon has affected his mind. He seems very strange in manner."

"Yes, sir," said the gardener, and entered the house with the bag.

But at that moment Lowther heard a car purr into the quadrangle. The doctor! He dashed from the room and down the stairs. He met the gardener in the hall, and snatched his suitcase from him.

Realising that he was nearing the end of his tether now the doctor had arrived, Lowther made a bolt for the back passage that led down to the kitchen quarters.

"Stop—stop!" cried the Head.

But Lowther had decided that he had better clear, and for once he ventured to disobey the Head's commands. Straight through the kitchen he ran, out into the gardens, and then over the fence into the playing-fields. Fast as he could, he ran across these, while juniors and seniors stared at the strange sight.

Then, realising that he was not pursued, and finding running not so easy with his make-up, he eased up slightly. That was his downfall, for Jack Blake & Co., coming from behind the elms, hurried towards him.

"Look out!" called Redfern.

Lowther looked and made a bolt for the old pavilion, the nearest refuge where he might be able to change his clothes.

Blake & Co. were too near for that, and he leapt over the hedge, only to stumble, however, on landing. In a moment Blake was on top of him, Herries had rolled him over, and was sitting on his chest, while Arthur Augustus tugged at his beard.

"Kerr, you wottah! You are bowled out, you—Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy waved the beard in his hand, and from the others there came a chorus.

"Lowther!"

"My giddy aunt—Lowther!"

Lowther sat up.

"You howling idiot!" he roared. "You've spoiled everything. Oh, you fatheads! They're after me!"

Jack Blake looked from Lowther to the advancing crowd, and made up his mind.

"Sneak into the old pav!" he exclaimed. "Go up into the loft and change. I'll lead them on to a false scent."

Lowther, grasping his beard and his bag, crept along the hedge, while Jack Blake went in the opposite direction, and the Co. followed him. The crowd veered with them, and a moment later Lowther was safe—safe in the loft where two juniors blinked at him and made grunting noises through their gags!

CHAPTER 12.

The Last Laugh!

F IGGINS, Kerr, and Wynn were not in the best of spirits. Their afternoon had started well, but they were not really so optimistic as before about the finish of it. Mr. Lowther seemed a good sort, but even a good sort might object to being hoaxed, and they rather funk'd telling him the truth. What they funk'd still more was his finding it out, and already they had grave doubts about his having done so. Mr. Lowther was no fool.

Flight seemed one way out, but Mr. Lowther had Figgins by the arm, and he halted before a barber's shop.

"Here's the very place. Your hair is much too long at the back of the neck, Monty. In you go, my boy. And you two had better roll in, too."

Rather surprised and a little perturbed by the look in his eye, Figgins entered the barber's shop, followed by Kerr and Wynn. The assistant, who was sitting reading, rose to meet them, and Mr. Lowther nodded at Figgins.

"This is my nephew, Monty. Fine strapping lad. Take the chair, Monty my boy."

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Figgins groaned and took the chair, suffering the sheet to be wrapped round him.

"Haircut, sir?" asked the barber.

"No; waved. A long flowing wave in front, and short, tight curls behind," said Mr. Lowther.

George Figgins gave a violent start and shot up in the chair.

"What! Wave my hair! Curl it like a girl's!" he shrieked.

"Certainly, Monty," said Mr. Lowther firmly. "No disobedience, my boy. You would not defy your uncle, I trust!"

Figgins went pale and sat back in the chair. A Marcel wave—curly hair! His mind swam; he recoiled from the horrible thought. Why, he would be the laughing stock of the school for weeks! It was incredible—impossible!

"Permanent wave," said Mr. Lowther, sitting down and selecting a cigar, while Kerr and Wynn sat very near to the entrance, ready to bolt.

"Yes, sir," said the assistant. "Certainly, sir. Special apparatus of our own for waving ladies' hair, sir."

A fearsome-looking apparatus was fixed over Figgins' head while he quaked. Dare he own up? Dare he resist? Before he had decided his fate was sealed.

"Don't move, sir. It would be dangerous," said the assistant. "You might set your head alight!"

Figgins sat quite still, and Mr. Lowther beamed.

"Good!" he said. "I'll be back in a minute. Must get some cigars. And don't forget to use that purple-looking brilliantine on his hair."

Mr. Lowther went out of the hairdressing saloon humming, watched warily by Kerr and Wynn. It suddenly struck Kerr as strange that he now had money to buy cigars. More than ever now the Scotch lad realised that Mr. Lowther had been pulling their legs.

Smiling to himself, Mr. Lowther crossed the road and entered the telephone-box again. He had been unable to get through previously to St. Jim's, and he badly wanted a word with his real nephew!

"Lowther cannot be found, sir," came the reply in Darrell's voice, when Mr. Lowther got through. "Who is that speaking?"

"I am his uncle."

"What? His uncle is here. He has just been struck by a cricket-ball!"

Mr. Lowther jumped.

"What's that? Describe him, please."

"Oh, a tanned-looking man, with a black beard. Rather portly. Very nice man," said Darrell hurriedly.

Mr. Lowther puckered his brow, and then grinned broadly. Finally he chuckled.

"The young imps!" he said.

"What did you say, sir?"

"That man is an escaped lunatic," said Mr. Lowther. "You will find he acts very queerly indeed. Er—he is not responsible for his actions at all. He hasn't obtained credit under my name?"

"Oh, no! Not yet, anyway! Are you sure about this?" asked Darrell anxiously. "I must say he has been acting a little queerly. I hear he has broken a frame in the Head's garden."

"He may do worse than that. He's dippy. Keep away from him. Humour him."

"What?"

"I'm coming there at once," said Mr. Lowther. "And possibly an ambulance may arrive. I want to have a word with him in private, if possible. Poor fellow! I know how to handle him."

Mr. Lowther twiddled his cane thoughtfully, and then hung up the receiver.

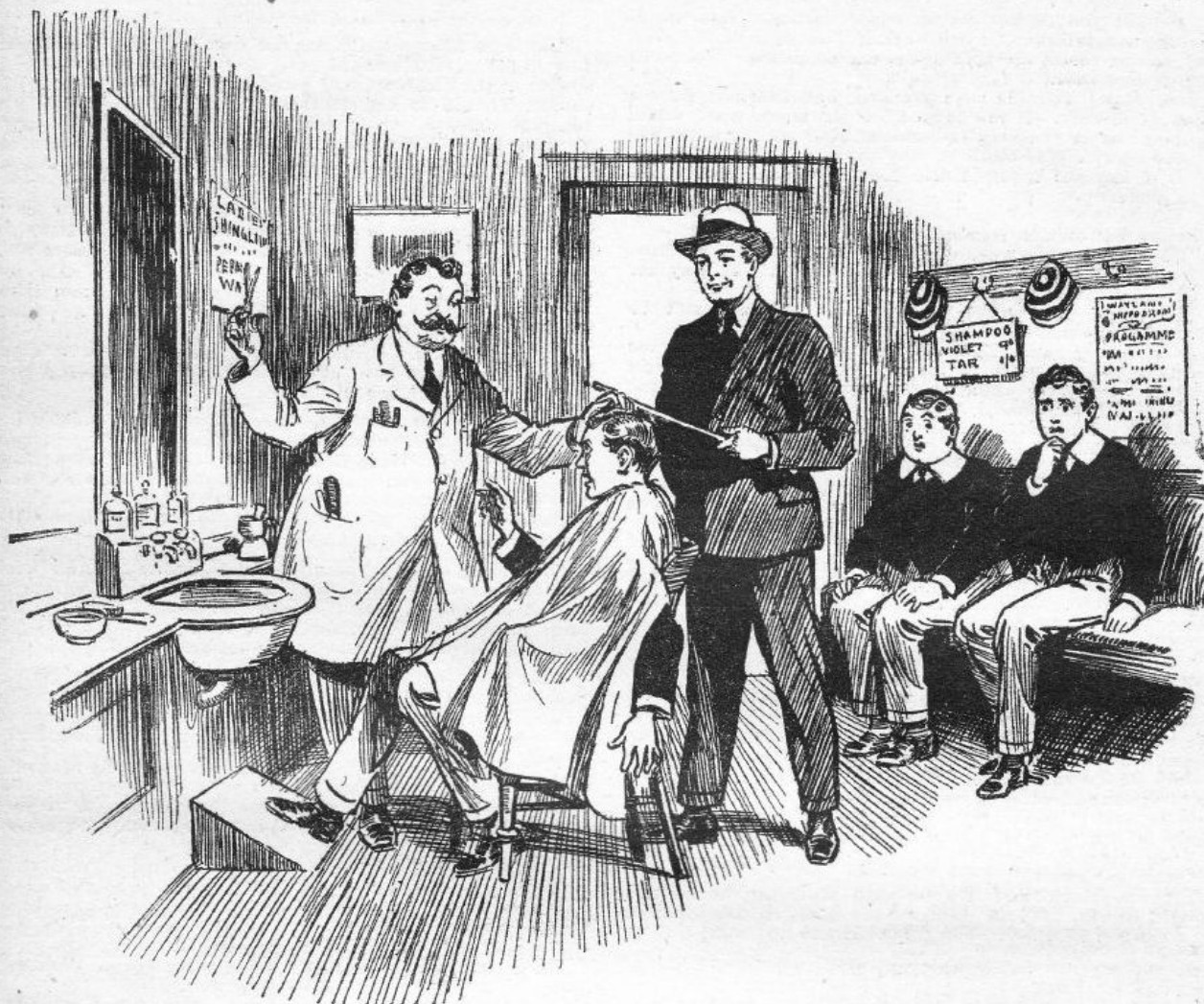
"So that's the game, hey?" he murmured. "Someone dressed up as me. Some friend of these lads. Well, I hope Figgies likes his hair, that's all. A life with a permanent wave will be worse than going to sea. Ha, ha! Now for St. Jim's!"

He hailed a taxicab and, leaving Figgins to finish his coiffure and pay the bill for it, he drove to St. Jim's, quite looking forward to meeting his impersonator face to face and having a word with him in private.

He did not intend to make a report to Dr. Holmes, for in his day, it must be confessed, Uncle Monty had been a "young rip."

St. Jim's, when he arrived, did not disappoint him at all. Darrell had taken the news to Dr. Holmes, and the quadrangle was filled with juniors and seniors on the lookout for the supposed lunatic. There were fellows with cricket-bats, fellows with stumps, pokers, hockey-sticks, garden forks, and each and every kind of implement.

Well to the fore was Tom Merry, stretching his cramped arms, after his release by Lowther, and swinging a stump. Manners wielded a bat, and Monty Lowther, freshly washed and tidy in his Etons again, was looking fierce, with a cricket-ball in his hand ready to throw.



"Haircut, sir?" asked the barber's assistant as Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Mr. Lowther entered the shop. "No, permanent wave," said Mr. Lowther, as Figgins took the chair. "What?" shrieked Figgins. "Curl my hair like a girl's!" "Certainly," said Mr. Lowther. "No disobedience, my boy." (See Chapter 12.)

The car passed in at the entrance, and was forced to halt on account of the crowd. Amidst much comment Mr. Lowther alighted, and Dr. Holmes hurried forward, looking agitated and ill-at-ease.

"Mr. Lowther?" he asked.

"Yes, yes. Dr. Holmes? This is all very terrible for you!" said Mr. Lowther, trying to keep the gleam from his eyes as he looked round the crowded quadrangle. "You have locked the fellow in?"

"No. He has escaped."

"Escaped?" Mr. Lowther's face fell. "That is bad! But, still, he will go back home, I dare say."

"You know him?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"Harmless, really. But a pity he got away. I would have liked a word with him. However, all is well, no doubt."

"If you say this man is harmless and has probably returned home, all is well," agreed Dr. Holmes. "He certainly acted in a most peculiar manner—most. Threw his bag out of the window. And yet," mused the Head, "he seemed to know your nephew, and asked that he should have the day off to-morrow."

"Did he?" said Mr. Lowther, and just managed to chuckle. "I see. Well, of course he knew all about the match, and all about my nephew, too. He carries off these things up to a point, and then—well, goes batty!"

"Precisely what he—er—did do, although the word is new to me. But if you are sure there is no danger, I will disperse the boys. Ah," he added, as Lowther came for—"Here is your nephew!"

Monty Lowther advanced a little shame-faced and considerably surprised, and his uncle took him aside. After a few remarks about the people at home, he broached the subject of the New House Co.

"Did you ask me to meet you in Wayland to-day, Monty?"

"Eh? No. In my telegram I didn't make any arrangement as to where I should meet you, because I thought you wouldn't arrive until Friday."

"Ah! I thought it strange receiving two telegrams from you. Know three boys named Figgy, Kerr, and Wynn?"

Lowther jumped.

"My hat! Two telegrams! The New House rotters! Have they been up to tricks, uncle?"

Mr. Lowther chuckled.

"They have. New House—eh? That was the first slip I spotted."

"I've had fun with them, Monty, pulling their legs. Nice boys. But that boy Figgins' hair is too straight!" he laughed. "However, it will look better waved!"

"Waved?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Yes. He introduced himself to me as my nephew," said Mr. Lowther, shaking his head. "Naturally, such a thing could not go unpunished. However, my better nature triumphed, and, instead of doing the lad an injury, I arranged for him to have his hair permanently waved. He's at the hairdresser's now."

Monty Lowther blinked; then he roared with laughter, and Tom Merry & Co. joined in. Mr. Lowther laughed as merrily as any, and when he shook Tom Merry & Co. by the hand, he was fairly bubbling with mirth.

"Oh, my hat! Poor old Figgy!" said Lowther.

"Well done, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"I've dished those New House fellows for you!" laughed Mr. Lowther. "And I suppose it was one of them who came here as me—what? Cheeky young rascal! I'll give that fellow, whoever he is, a taste of my stick! I don't approve of that!"

Lowther coughed and looked at the stick.

"Oh! Ah—hum—" he mumbled.

"Pity he got away," mused Uncle Monty, in disappointment—"great pity! I saved his skin for him by telling the headmaster that he was a dotty chap. Don't want to get the kid expelled; but I mean to punish him in my own way."

"About the match, uncle," said Lowther, turning the subject.

"I'll get you permission on one condition," said Uncle Monty thoughtfully. "I can work it with your headmaster. But on one condition, Montague—one condition. You must bag the impostor."

Tom Merry and Manners groaned, and Lowther gave a blink of dismay. If his uncle knew the truth, gone would be their chance of seeing the match. And yet his uncle was a good sport. Was there no way out?

"If I bag the spoof, Uncle Monty?" asked Monty, his eyes gleaming.

"Yes."

Monty Lowther brightened considerably. "Then come this way, uncle," he said. "You promise, though, that I shan't be made to suffer in any way for it?"

"Oh, yes! I won't give you away! You shan't be punished!" said Uncle Monty, all eagerness.

Tom Merry and Manners, rather puzzled, followed Lowther and his uncle to the old pavilion, waiting below while Lowther went upstairs. He then returned bearing the suitcase. Uncle Monty frowned in surprise as Lowther opened it and struck an attitude of triumph.

"There you are," said Lowther. "There's the false Uncle Monty! Bagged! All complete in a bag—beard, wig, and everything, uncle!"

Uncle Monty stared, frowned for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"Then—then it was you, Monty, you young scamp? Tricked me—eh? You young rascal! But you've certainly 'bagged' him! Good pun, Monty!" He patted his nephew on the shoulder and roared again. "Now there's another bag I want to see."

"Another?"

"Yes," said Uncle Monty. "I want to see Figgy bag—bag home again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And so did all the School House! So when Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn arrived, looking very sheepish, they found an eager crowd awaiting them.

Jack Blake snatched off Figgins' cap, and as the New House junior's head was revealed, with a crop of delightful crinkly hair, beautifully waved—despite the number of times he had plunged it into water—a roar went up:

"Oh, girlie!"

"Isn't she sweet?"

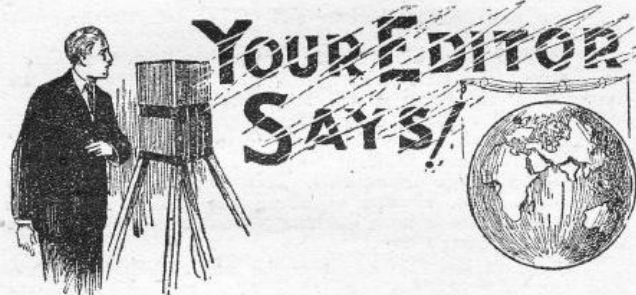
Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, with downcast heads and scarlet cheeks, made a dash for the New House, followed by shouts of laughter. The School House had won!

CHAPTER 13.

All's Well that Ends Well!

"MY hat!" said Figgins. "The old chap's a brick! I can forgive him my hair! Is it really true, Kerr?"

"Absolutely true! I don't know how he wangled it, but we're to draw lots. One of us can go to the match. What do you think of it? Rather a sport?"



A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT!

Next week, chums, with the last of the GEM's Free Gifts in your hands, you will be able to sit back and contemplate with expressions of pride and satisfaction on your faces the complete set of sixteen picture cards you've been collecting week by week. Looking through my own private set just now, I couldn't resist the temptation to give myself a pat on the back for a job well done, though, of course, most of the credit belongs to the little band of artists who put their finest work into the fascinating series of pictures that my readers have looked forward to so eagerly every Wednesday. Take another look at your collections, chums, and then answer this question: Hasn't the good old GEM an achievement to be proud of? I venture to think so, and I feel sure that you're ready to add a hearty "Hear, hear!"

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"One of the best!" said Figgins.

And Tom Merry & Co. agreed that that was a just and fair decision of Uncle Monty, who had stood a splendid spread in the tuckshop, and acted in the manner of an ideal uncle. Thanks to his influence with Dr. Holmes, and his pleasant manner, which had put the Head into his best temper, Uncle Monty was allowed to take five juniors to the match—Tom Merry & Co., one of the Fourth, and a New House fellow.

In the end, Figgins, as compensation for his hair, was the elect of the New House Co., Kerr and Wynn refusing to draw lots. Jack Blake went as Fourth Form representative; so all was fair.

And what a match it was, too. Figgins even managed to forget his hair in the excitement of the game; and when Kildare sent his fifty up, the juniors nearly split the sky with their cheers. Kildare carried his bat for a well-hit 63, and, put on to bowl at the very end, took the last two wickets at the expense of 8 runs.

It was a match worth seeing, even though it ended with a draw, and there were fierce arguments on what would have happened if there had been another day's play. But the chief thing was that it had been a great game, and that there was great news to take back to St. Jim's.

The envy of the whole school, the five returned to give detailed accounts that no newspaper could hope to better.

The truth about the "lunatic" did gradually filter out, and perhaps it even reached Dr. Holmes' ears, but he gave no sign of knowledge, even if it did. Knox, however, had his knife in Monty Lowther for weeks after; but so far as the junior school was concerned there was only joy.

After a three days' stay at St. Jim's, Uncle Monty departed, to the accompaniment of rousing cheers. The juniors were quite sorry to lose him; and he was sorry to go, although, as he said, he had certainly left his mark—if only on Figgins' hair.

But even in that Mr. Lowther proved a good sort, for before his departure he whispered in Figgins' ear a sure way of removing the curls, and Figgins' cheers were louder than all the rest!

"A great fellow!" was the general verdict; and Monty Lowther was heard to remark that his affection for his uncle was quite touching. There was evidently something in that, for Monty Lowther was richer by a five-pound note when St. Jim's saw the last of Uncle Monty.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "WHO KISSED ETHEL?" Make sure you read it, chums!)

"WHO KISSED ETHEL?"

"What on earth—" I can hear you ejaculate. Thought you'd be surprised when you caught sight of that question. There you have the title for next week's story of the chums of St. Jim's, the first of a grand series of holiday yarns. An "unusual," intriguing title, isn't it? Tom Merry & Co. are looking forward to having the time of their lives during this summer vac., for, together with Ethel Cleveland & Co., of Spalding Hall, they are invited by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to spend the holiday at a lonely old house on the coast of Cornwall. On top of this there is the prospect of a thrilling hunt for a long-lost treasure! Everything is merry and bright among Gussy's house-party until—What happens then? You'll find out for yourself when you read:

"WHO KISSED ETHEL?"

Next week's article in the series that deals so grippingly with FAMOUS DAREDEVILS will be of special interest to every boy. It tells an undying story—that of Jack Cornwell, V.C. This brave young seaman was an ex-Scout who remembered the Scout motto: "Stick to it!" even when mortally wounded, and the story of his heroism will grip every young fellow who reads it. Boy Scouts especially, who know that the "Cornwell Badge" is the highest honour to which they can aspire, will welcome this article, which, incidentally, appears during the celebrations of the Scout Movement's 21st birthday at Arrowe Park, Birkenhead.

Other splendid attractions in next Wednesday's bumper number of the GEM are a further thrilling instalment of our serial THE ROBOT MAN, and another batch of rib-tickling replies from the ORACLE. Don't hesitate to sling your posers at him!

So-long, chums!

THE EDITOR



The Robot Man!

By H.J. ALLINGHAM

To be master of the world, to hold in his hand the destinies of mankind, is the ambition of a mad scientist. And there is only one person who can prevent this terrible catastrophe from coming to pass. That is young Jack Carter, of the Rollins Relief Expedition!

The Doctor's Diary!

"DUCK!" cried Teddy White, dropping to the floor. But Harry Frobisher was too astonished at that shot through the window, and too curious to know where it came from, to think of his own safety, and dashing to the door he flung it open and peered out.

He was just in time to see a crouching figure, carrying a still-smoking rifle, plunge into the bush and disappear.

It was only a momentary glimpse, but it caused Harry to give an exclamation of astonishment, and when he returned to the room his face wore a dazed expression.

"See him?" gasped Teddy from the floor.

"Yes; he's gone. You can get up," replied Harry, speaking in a half-stupefied way.

"Did you see him?"

"Yes."

"Wot was he like?"

"That's what's worrying me," replied Harry. "Of course it can't be, but—well, it was awfully like him. As he ducked under the palms at the edge of the clearing I caught a glimpse of his face, and I could have sworn— But, of course, it is all rot. He is half-way to the coast by this time."

"Who is yer talking about? Who was it you fort you saw?" demanded Teddy, with pardonable impatience.

"His figure, too, and the way he crouched as he ran. It was just like— Hanged if I can make it out!"

"Who was it?" shouted Teddy as he rose from the floor, at the same time taking care not to stand in front of the window.

"I tell you I don't know," replied Harry, "but it looked just like Paul Tench."

"Tench?" exclaimed Teddy excitedly. "You bet it was him! I never liked the white-livered toad, nor did Mr. Jack. We knowed he was up to no good."

"But he left us to go back to the coast with the others. Why should he be hanging about here?"

"That's his business, and you bet your life it's a precious ugly business, too!"

"Still, I don't understand," protested Harry. "Why should he take a pot-shot at my hat?"

"Because he thought your 'ead was in it, Mr. Harry—that's why!" replied the Cockney, with conviction.

"But I haven't done Paul Tench any harm," objected Harry, still unconvinced.

"That don't matter," retorted Teddy. "He's allers wanted a accident to 'appen to you. Didn't he go off with you alone, time after time, on the way down, and didn't you hev some close

shaves? And wasn't he mad when you wouldn't go back with him to the coast? Wot was that for? You mark my words, he's out to do you in. He daren't try that game when we was all together, but now he finks he's got his chance. You may laugh, but I knows wot I'm saying, and wot I says to you is—keep your eyes skinned."

"I will," replied Harry. "All the same, I can't believe Paul Tench would murder me. Why, he was my uncle's favourite servant down in Sussex."

"P'raps that's the reason," replied Teddy mysteriously; but he did not pursue the subject. "The question now is, do we stay on here, bearing in mind wot's 'appened?" was his next remark. "With that there 'ole in the winder, it don't seem quite the snug little 'iding-place I fort it was."

Harry looked thoughtful.

"I think we will stay," he said, after a pause. "If anyone is really after us with a gun, we shall be safer in here than roaming about the forest. Let us have a look over the house."

"It's not 'arf a bad crib," said Teddy, who had already explored the bungalow. "The pore 'ole jossor outside knew 'ow to make hisself comfortable."

They went over the house together. There were two bedrooms, each with a single bed in it, covered by a mosquito-net. The rooms were both simply but adequately furnished, and the only difference between them was that one had a shelf containing books, and a reading-lamp on a small table beside the bed.

The next room they visited had the appearance of a surgery. The walls were covered with shelves containing bottles and drugs of various kinds. There was also a contrivance for making distilled water, and in one corner was a sink with a pump over it.

In front of the window, which overlooked the now neglected garden at the back of the house, was a writing-

desk, on which were writing materials and a big book which looked like a ledger.

Harry opened this, and found it nearly full of writing in a neat, scholarly hand.

As he examined it he uttered an exclamation.

"I say, Teddy, come here."

"Wot's up? Found anyfink?" asked the Cockney.

"Yes. Look at this."

"Wot is it?"

"The diary of the man who used to live here," replied Harry, almost in a tone of awe. "What's the date to-day?"

"I dunno. I've lost count of time. Somewheres near the end of July, I reckon."

Harry turned to the last entry in the book before him.

"Sunday, July 7th," he read. "He wrote this not more than three weeks ago!"

It gave the boy a curious feeling to think that so recently that poor skeleton on the veranda outside had been a living, breathing, human being.

"Wot's he say?" demanded Teddy, leaning forward.

Harry read aloud the final entry.

"No change. Every day is now the same. How much longer will it last? For thirty years I laboured here among a simple, happy, gay, and industrious people. By my poor skill I won their gratitude and affection. Under my guidance they tilled the land and fought the forest, and sickness was rare among them. We were a happy family altogether. And then a year ago a strange and mysterious terror fell upon the land. What is this secret horror that has cast a blight upon us all? I pay but little attention to the wild tales told me by the poor, frightened natives. Their stories are absurd, poor souls! But there is something real—something evil—behind their crazy, fantastic imaginings. What is it? I have asked myself that question a thousand times, and now I know I shall never get an answer. The people have fled, leaving their crops ungarnished, their fields untilled. The ravenous forest is creeping once more over the land, and regaining what has been won from it by so much toil. My own servants left me one by one; and yesterday even my faithful Jose told me, with terror in his eyes, that he must go. Now I am alone. What am I to do? I am too old and too tired to wander. I must rest and I must think. To-morrow perhaps my head will be clearer. To-night I feel strangely dull and weak and tired."

"And that is all," said Harry, in a low voice, as he turned over the blank pages. "He never wrote any more after that."

"Pore old chappie!" said Teddy, with real sympathy. "Fancy doing his job for thirty year in a 'ole like this, and then being left to die all by hisself. He was a doctor, I reckon."

"Yes," said Harry, "it looks like it. That must be his name in the book in the other room, Dr. Henry Slater. I suppose it was that mechanical man that frightened all the people away."

"I don't blame 'em, for one!" said Teddy, with a shiver. "Wot do you say, chummie, if we do a bolt, too? There's that little boat all neat and handy. As soon as it's dark we could slip away in that, and be miles down the river by the morning."

Harry shook his head.

"I'm not leaving this neighbourhood till I know what has become of Jack and the captain. You can go if you like. I don't want the canoe."

"That ain't friendly. Mr. Harry," said the little man, in an injured tone. "Magic or no magic, I sticks by you to the deff. All the same. I ain't 'appy."

They dug a grave in the garden behind the bungalow and buried the remains of the brave old English doctor who had done his work so well among this alien people and then died at his post.

Then for a long time they sat talking and trying without much success to make plans for the future.

Soon after sundown they retired to rest.

In the Cell of Darkness!

WHEN Jack Carter was seized by the two powerful natives he thought his last hour had come, and there was something hysterical in the wild laugh which escaped his lips as he saw in the pictured scene on the table the giant Robot dancing like the figure in a puppet-show, and then go crashing to the ground a ruined mass.

Believing he was to die, he nevertheless experienced a fierce joy at having with his last act smashed that hideous monster.

His captors, however, though they held him in a grip of steel, did not subject him to any rough treatment.

He felt himself being borne along swiftly and almost silently through the darkness.

It was pitch dark and he could see nothing, but he had the impression they were passing along a narrow passage.

He also had the horrible feeling that the creatures who held him were hardly human. They displayed no anger or any emotion of any kind, but handled him as though he had been a bale of goods.

Suddenly he heard a slight noise just in front of them as though a sliding door had moved open on well-greased wheels.

The next moment he was put down on his feet, the hands which held him were relaxed, and then vanished, and he stood alone in the darkness.

Again he heard that sound of a sliding door. Then all was still.

He stretched out his arms, and the fingers of one hand touched a wall.

He approached it and began to feel his way along it cautiously.

He had gone three paces, however, when he pulled up short with his heart in his mouth, for he distinctly heard quite near to him the sound of someone breathing.

His first impulse was to fling a challenge out into the darkness, but something checked him, and he kept quite still, making no sound and straining his ears.

He heard the breathing again, and then the faint sound of padding footsteps moving away from him.

A horrible thought flashed across his mind. Was it possible that he was penned up in this dark cell with some wild animal? The cold-blooded, diabolical cruelty of that crazy professor might easily have conceived such a scheme of revenge.

A thrill of fear like a trickle of ice-cold water passed down Jack's spine.

He leaned against the wall, hardly daring to breathe, and with wide open eyes stared in front of him, striving in vain to pierce the inky blackness.

The minutes passed, and to Jack with his strained nerves they seemed like hours.

He felt sick and giddy, and he wondered how much longer he would be able to restrain the impulse to scream aloud.

And then just as the strain was becoming unendurable a startling thing happened.

Without warning and without a sound there came a blinding flash, and the prison-cell was flooded with the glare of electric light.

At first Jack's eyes were dazzled, and then as he blinked helplessly he heard a kind of grunt.

Looking in the direction of the sound he saw to his astonishment on the opposite side of the cell, scarcely ten feet away from him, the figure of a man.

The man was seated on the floor with his back to the wall, his arms round his knees, and his head bent forward as though he was asleep.

And then as Jack stared, the man slowly raised his head and revealed his drawn and haggard face.

It was the face of Captain Storm.

For some seconds the two stared at one another, unable to speak or move.

Then suddenly the man staggered to his feet and came forward.

"Lad, I'm sorry," he said tremulously. "I had hoped you had escaped these fiends and that I was the only

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Reports having been received that Professor Rollins, who went to South America to explore the unknown regions through which the mighty Amazon flows, is held in captivity. Captain Storm, a broad-shouldered man, in company with Teddy White, a middle-aged Cockney, and two youngsters named Jack Carter and Harry Frobisher, set off in search of the missing scientist. Heedless of the dangers ahead, the four plucky adventurers push on into the unknown regions until they reach a cave in the hillside where they make camp. Before very long, however, a huge steel monster, formed like a man, suddenly appears, seizes Captain Storm by the waist, and carries him away. Almost immediately following this, Jack Carter comes face to face with Professor Rollins, the inventor of the strange monstrosity known as the Robot. The professor insists on the youngster accompanying him to his quarters in the rocks. Convinced that the professor must be mad, Jack deems it wise to humour him. Unhappy at the mysterious disappearance of Carter, White and Frobisher are collecting some brushwood to make a fire when they see the Robot appear. Suddenly the monster collapses. Before the two chums can pull themselves together, however, a lorry appears on the scene laden with slaves, who pile up the shattered machinery into the lorry and then move off. Realising it wise to make themselves scarce, White and Frobisher make for the river where they discover a bungalow, in the shadow of which they see a skeleton reclining in a hammock chair. Their explorations in the interior of the bungalow are suddenly interrupted by the sharp crack of a rifle, and a bullet whistles through the window, sends Harry's hat spinning, then buries itself in the wall opposite.

(Now read on.)

Without warning or sound there came a blinding flash, and the prison-cell was flooded with a glare of electric light. And then Jack was able to make out his companion, a man of middle age, who sat huddled in a hopeless position in the corner. It was Captain Storm! (See page 26.)



They gripped hands as he spoke, and into Jack Carter's face there came a brave smile.

"I thank Heaven you are alive, sir, and I am glad to be with you," he said earnestly.

His voice was so sincere, and the look in his clear young eyes so full of courage that the man was deeply moved.

"Do you know what you are saying, lad?" he said unsteadily. "This means a living death for us both. I am no longer young. It does not matter much. But you, a boy with all your life before you—it is cruel, it is infamous."

"While there's life there's hope, captain," said Jack cheerfully. "We will get away. Don't lose heart. It is a great thing that we have found one another. If we put our heads together we shall think of something."

The man gazed at the boy wonderingly, and as he looked into those bright, fearless eyes, a faint new hope rose within him.

"Jack," he said with emotion, "it is good to have you here. It is good! Although heaven knows I am sorry to see you and wish you were safe out of it and on your way to the coast."

"When we go to the coast, captain, we will go together," replied Jack confidently. "But where did this light come from? Did you switch it on?"

"Oh, no! They switch it on every now and again, to see what I am doing, I suppose."

Jack looked round the cell in surprise. It was a square lofty chamber, with walls apparently of solid rock. There were no windows, and as far as one could see there was no door. Nor was there any indication as to where the light came from. It descended upon them in a blinding flood from above.

"Can they see us here?" asked Jack, and unconsciously he lowered his voice.

"I think so," said Captain Storm. "It is one of that fiend's inventions. Have you seen him? Rollins, I mean."

Jack nodded, and gave a rapid account of how he had fallen into the professor's hands.

Captain Storm listened intently, and when the final scene in the story was reached, his eyes opened wide, and in spite of his weakness, and all he had endured, a broad smile spread over his rugged face.

"You kicked him?" he said in an excited whisper. "You kicked Rollins?"

"In the ribs," Jack said. "Pretty hard, too. You see I was angry."

"Lad," said the captain, with tears in his eyes, "now I can die happy. I thought that monster was beyond the reach of any kind of human vengeance. And you kicked him! Kicked him in the ribs. Jack, my son, you don't know how you've cheered me up."

Jack smiled, delighted to note that the look of hopeless despair had passed out of those pale blue eyes.

Captain Storm then told his own story.

When he found that the mechanical monster had no intention of crushing him to death, he ceased to struggle, and resigned himself to what might happen.

"I felt I was a lad again, up aloft in a rough sea, and I thought the best thing I could do was to hold on," he explained.

The monster had carried him across the plain and then deposited him unharmed, save for a few bruises, in a kind of pit or hollow in the hill-side.

Here, before he could recover his wits, he was surrounded by a number of powerful bronze-coloured natives who at once seized and bore him off to the presence of Professor Rollins.

Captain Storm could hardly keep calm while he recorded to Jack the story of his interview with the professor.

"Treated me as so much dirt," declared the captain. "Wouldn't listen to a word I had to say. Said he could see I was only fit for manual labour and ordered me to be taken away and put to work with a gang of navvies. They dragged me away and tried to make me work. I put a stop to that anyway."

"You refused to work?" asked Jack quietly.

"I did!" replied the captain grimly, his square jaw looking more resolute than ever. "I told them they could kill me if they liked, but I wouldn't do a stroke. So they shoved me in here, and here I've been ever since."

Jack Carter's face became serious, his brow was knitted in thought and he did not speak.

The captain gave him a swift look.

"Do you blame me?" he said.

Jack nodded and then smiled.

"I rather do, sir," he said. "Though, of course, I quite understand your feelings. But, after all, the chief thing is to get out of the hands of this scientific lunatic, isn't it?"

"Not much chance of that, I fear," said Captain Storm gloomily.

"We shan't do it by force and we shan't do it by refusing to obey the man who for the time being is our master," returned Jack.

"Rollins?"

"Yes, for the moment our lives are in his hands. For some reason he has decided not to kill us—at any rate not yet. That gives us a chance."

"What is your idea?" asked Storm, and in his voice there was a note of eager interest.

"I think we ought to try to make friends with him," replied Jack simply.

In spite of himself, Captain Storm smiled again broadly.

"And you think a kick in the ribs is a good way of opening friendly relations?" he suggested.

"No," said Jack, still very seriously, "that was an unfortunate necessity. If the professor gives me the opportunity I shall apologise and meekly accept any punishment he decrees. Then I shall offer to serve him in any capacity he decides. You must do the same. Cheerfully and with all our might we must do any work he gives us. So we must gain his confidence and then when our chance comes—"

"Well, what then?" said the captain, as the boy paused.

"Then we must kill him," said Jack simply.

Captain Storm blinked and stared at the speaker, completely taken by surprise.

Jack Carter's handsome face was so frank, so honest, indicating a nature utterly free from any kind of baseness or cruelty, that his cold-blooded remark startled the older man and gave him something of a shock.

But Jack went on in the same calm, unemotional voice. "You must not look upon Professor Rollins as a human being, but rather as a poisonous and very dangerous reptile. With my own eyes I saw him try to murder my chum Harry Frobisher and poor little Teddy White. If our chance ever comes there must be no mercy, no weakness, no hesitation."

As he concluded there was a hard glitter in his clear grey eyes which Captain Storm had never seen before.

"You have done me a world of good, lad," said the captain, after a pause. "You've got a longer head than I have that's certain. It's not a job I fancy, but if they don't take me out of here to hang or electrocute me, I'll try your plan."

"I don't think they mean to kill us," said Jack. "The professor thinks he can use us. My impression of the man is that he never throws away a tool until it is broken or worn out. Of course, he may have forgotten all about us. In that case—"

He stopped abruptly, for at that moment the brilliant electric light vanished and the cell was plunged once more into impenetrable darkness.

Before either could speak another voice was heard in a slightly foreign accent.

"Captain John Storm, be good enough to step this way."

"Go!" murmured Jack under his breath, "and remember."

There was a sound of shuffling footsteps and then silence. Jack waited to hear that voice again, but it did not come.

Then suddenly the electric light was flashed on again.

The boy looked eagerly about him. He was in the cell alone.

THE PROFESSOR BEARS NO MALICE!

JACK shivered involuntarily. There was something uncanny in the silence and swiftness of Captain Storm's disappearance. But before he had time to give much thought to this, he heard a slight sound behind him, and swinging round he perceived that a portion of the wall at the other end of the cell had slid away, and in the opening stood the figure of the terrible professor himself.

In his right hand he held a curious cylindrical instrument which looked like a small telescope.

For a moment he stood looking at the prisoner out of those incredibly piercing eyes of his. Then he spoke:

"First I show you this and explain its purpose," he said smoothly, and at the same time he raised the instrument he held in his soft, white hand.

Jack looked at it, glad to turn his gaze away from those piercing eyes which had held him.

"This is a toy of my own invention," went on the professor. "It is the R.D.R.—the Rollins death-ray. I have but to direct it thus against any living creature I wish to destroy. Then I press this little knob and death ensues instantly. You understand?"

"I have no doubt you can kill me if you wish, sir, but I do not believe that is your intention," he said in a tone that was astonishingly calm and level.

An odd, indescribable expression rested for a moment on the professor's face.

It revealed neither surprise nor admiration, but a kind of intense scientific curiosity. The man might have been examining a new specimen of the animal or insect world that had been brought to his notice.

"You are quite right, Carter," he said at length. "I have no intention of killing you unless you again attempt violence. For what occurred in the Round Tower I blame no one but myself. A man of my attainments should never be taken by surprise. You surprised me. That is to your credit and has made me more than ever resolved to make you my colleague and my successor."

He did not speak, however, and the professor went on.

"You will work by my side and little by little I will teach you all I know. But I must tell you of one precaution I am taking. When I am engaged on an important or interesting experiment I often become very much absorbed. On such occasions you might easily do me an injury if you were foolish enough to desire to do so. Therefore I have made arrangements for my protection. When in my company you will in future always be watched by invisible eyes. Unseen by you an instrument similar to this will always be directed at you. If you raise your hand against me or so much as make an impulsive movement in my direction you will be instantly destroyed. So you will be very careful, will you not?"

"I will remember what you have said," replied Jack gravely.

"That's right. It would distress me greatly if I were deprived of your services just as they were becoming useful. Now, will you tell me why you attacked me in the Round Tower? That puzzles me."

This astonishing statement nearly took Jack's breath away, but he managed to reply:

"I thought you were going to kill my friends," he said.

The professor raised his eyebrows in genuine surprise.

"Do you mean that schoolboy and that little Cockney?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I was going to kill them, and I am. That is necessary. But why do you speak of them as your friends? Friendship is an association between equals for their mutual benefit. Your late companions are no longer in your world. You will never see them again. They are nothing to you. You must clear your mind of all such nonsense. I am your friend and your only friend. We are united by a common purpose. Together with the weapons of science in our hands we will conquer the world and make our names immortal. With such a prospect before your eyes, boy, how can you speak to me of friendship or of the other trivial and frivolous things upon which common men waste their time?"

He began quietly, but concluded with a note of passionate earnestness in his voice that betrayed the fanatic while into his cold, grey eyes there came that unearthly glow which had so startled Jack on his first meeting with this terrible man.

Jack now kept his head.

"You must teach me, sir," he said quietly. "I see I have much to learn."

The professor nodded approval.

"You will make an apt pupil," he said. "I am most fortunate to have found you. Now come with me. But you had better go in front."

He stood aside, and Jack passed out through the opening in the wall.

(Jack Carter realises too well that his only chance of getting out of the hands of this scientific madman is to betray no sign of fear or anger. You'll read just how he fares in next week's gripping instalment of this powerful serial. Don't miss it, chums, whatever you do!)



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