

TOM MERRY & CO. : HARRY WHARTON & CO. : JIMMY SILVER & CO.
—INSIDE—

The GEM

2^D





The CONWAY

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

To Meet Lord Conway!

"AFTER you with the hairbrush, young Levison—" "Gimme that clothes-brush, Curly!"

"Is my tie all right, Reggie?" "Looks rather like a bit of chewed string," said Reggie Manners of the Third Form at St. Jim's, critically eyeing the tie that Curly Gibson had been laboriously knotting.

"Look here," began Curly warmly, "if you're trying to be funny, young Reggie Manners—"

"I say," cut in Frank Levison breathlessly, "where's the blessed chalk? I've got an ink-blob on my collar! Chalk it over for me, will you, Curly, old man?"

"All right," nodded Curly. "Gimme the chalk!"

Levison minor, Manners minor, and Curly Gibson were gathered in the Third Form. As a rule, the stalwarts of the Third were not very particular about their personal appearance. But this afternoon—it was a Saturday afternoon, and a half-holiday—the three fags were taking tremendous pains to be really clean and tidy for some mysterious reason.

"Are my shoes clean enough, you chaps?" asked Reggie Manners anxiously.

Reggie had been laboriously attempting to clean his black shoes with a brown boot brush. The result was not really very satisfactory, perhaps, but compared with the usual dusty condition of Reggie's shoes it was, at any rate, an improvement.

"They'll do," nodded Levison minor, turning to the light so that Curly could see well for his task of chalking over a big inky mark on his collar.

Frank Levison broke off. The door had opened and the figure of Wally D'Arcy, the leader of the Third, appeared.

Wally, as a rule, was anything but a dandy as regards his clothes, despite the fact that his elder brother, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth—the swell of St. Jim's—

**Sportsmen do battle for St. Jim's!
Sportsmen do battle for Greyfriars!
But the traitor who tries to stop St.
Jim's from winning is no sportsman!
Read this ripping long complete yarn
of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's!**

was the mould of form and glass of fashion at the famous school. But at the moment Wally was by way of being a thing of beauty and a joy for ever!

His face was bright and clean, his hands were clean, his clothes were brushed, and the inky marks on his collar had been carefully chalked over. His hair was smarmed down lustroously with some hair lotion that could

be smelt a long way away. In his hand he held a bright and shining topper. It looked a good deal too big for Wally; but it was a topper, nevertheless!

"You chaps ready?" demanded Wally, glancing at his watch. "We've jolly well got to buck up if we're to be at the station in time to meet the two o'clock train!"

"Just half a sec!" exclaimed Reggie breathlessly, turning to adjust his tie at a broken mirror that the fags had propped against some books on one of the desks. "So you managed to borrow one of Gussy's toppers all right?"

Wally nodded.

"Yes. Gus was out, so I bagged one. It's a bit big, so I've put some wads of paper in the lining. How does it look?"

Wally placed the topper carefully on his glistening cranium. The "borrowed" topper was at least seven sizes too big; but the wads of paper that had been inserted to remedy this little

difficulty enabled the glossy tile to perch on Wally's head without quite slipping down to his ears.

Reggie, Frank, and Curly surveyed their leader with awe.

"You look swell, Wally," said Frankie admiringly.

Wally nodded complacently.

"Pity you kids haven't got toppers, too. But it can't be helped. As long as you're pretty clean for once—"

"What do you mean—for once?" demanded Curly, glaring.

"Well, you're a grubby crowd, as a rule," said Wally frankly.

It was certainly a case of the pot calling the kettle black! Curly, Reggie, and Frank Levison surveyed Wally with considerable ire.

"Look here, young Wally—" began Curly hotly, pushing up his sleeves.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally hastily. "No time for rowing now, young Curly."

"But look here—"

"Br-r-r!" growled Wally. He surveyed his three followers critically, like a general reviewing his troops. "I must say you chaps look pretty smart—for you! Yes, you'll do. Come on!"

With Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's best Sunday topper



CUP!

perched dangerously upon his youthful head, Wally turned to lead the way from the Form-room.

It was a great occasion which had brought about this sudden surprising cult of cleanliness among the leaders of the fag fraternity.

Wally's eldest brother, Lord Conway, was coming over to St. Jim's that afternoon. The St. Jim's junior eleven, under the captaincy of Tom Merry of the Shell, was playing its oldest and most dreaded rivals, Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, at cricket, and Lord Conway was coming over to see the match, which was sure to be a fine one.

Lord Conway, in writing to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to announce his intention of coming to see the match, had expressly asked not to be met at the station, knowing that his second brother and Gussy's chums would all be busy preparing for the big match. But Wally, who idolised his eldest brother, had decided to meet him, and had kindly promised Reggie, Frank, and Curly that they could come to the station, too—if they were smart enough!

Hence the latter's feverish cleaning-up—and Wally's own efforts to be really smart for once. Whether the topper of Arthur Augustus of the Fourth, so much too large as it was, really served that purpose was perhaps a little doubtful. But Wally & Co. had no doubt at all that it lent an air of great distinction to the party!

Reggie, Frank, and Curly eyed their leader's glossy if ponderous headgear enviously as the four fags crossed the Hall towards the big door opening on to the quad. They had had to content themselves with caps, which was a little humiliating.

"My giddy aunt!"

There was an astonished exclamation as Wally & Co. emerged from the School House doorway and descended the steps into the quad.

Tom Merry & Co. were standing near the foot of the steps, Tom Merry



and Monty Lowther wearing their white flannels in readiness for the match. They and Manners and Cyrus K. Handcock, the junior from the land of skyscrapers and chewing-gum, surveyed Wally & Co. in grinning astonishment.

"My hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, "It's Wally—with a clean face!"

"And a clean collar!" exclaimed Manners wonderingly.

"They've washed their hands!" said Tom Merry, apparently faint with astonishment.

"I guess this is just a dream, buddies!" gasped Cyrus K. Handcock. "Holy smokes—"

"Why, you—you blessed grinning Shellfish!" panted Wally, turning crimson. "Trying to be funny, I suppose?"

"Perish the thought!" grinned Monty Lowther. "I say, kids, what did you use for getting yourselves clean? A pick and shovel?"

"Or a steam-navvy?" asked Manners, laughing.

Reggie Manners glared at his major.

"Look here, major—"

"Where the dickens did you get that tile, Wally?" inquired Tom Merry. "A bit big, isn't it? Great pip! I'll bet it's one of Gussy's!"



"Ha, ha, ha! Must be!" chuckled Manners.

"I say, mum's the word," said Wally

nervously, glancing round anxiously lest his major should turn out to be anywhere in earshot. "Gus doesn't know I've pinched it—I mean, borrowed it—"

"I won't say anything!" grinned Tom. "Off to meet Lord Conway, I suppose? Great Scott! He'll never recognise you, looking so clean!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Curly Gibson. "Come on, you chaps—don't take any notice of these cackling Shellfish!"

And the stalwarts of the Third marched on with their noses in the air, followed by the chuckles of Tom Merry & Co.

As they passed out into Rylcombe Lane, Wally glanced at his watch.

"Buck up—we're late!" he said briskly. "No dawdling!"

"Who's dawdling?" demanded Curly warmly.

"Come on—hurry!"

"Look here, young Wally—" began Curly, halting.

"Do chuck rowing!" urged Frankie Levison. "We've got to hurry, that's all! Mustn't be late at the station and miss Lord Conway!"

Curly grunted, but came on. At a brisk pace, the four fags hurried themselves on down Rylcombe Lane towards the distant village, glorious in their unaccustomed cleanliness!

CHAPTER 2.

Billy Wragg!

"HALLO! What the dickens—"

"Hear that?"

"My hat, yes!"

Wally & Co. had come to a sudden startled halt, glancing at one another oddly.

They were half-way to Rylcombe village, passing a belt of tall trees that flanked the road. It was from somewhere beyond the trees that the sudden sound had come that had startled them, bringing them to an abrupt halt.

The sound of someone crying out in pain or fear!

"What on earth—" began Wally again.

"Listen!" gasped Reggie Manners.

Again it had come to their ears—a frightened scream! It was enough for the four fags. The next moment Wally & Co. were plunging across the ditch at the roadside, through the trees beyond!

Something was the matter somewhere, and Wally & Co., with grimly set faces, were out to find out what the matter was.

They had no difficulty in finding that out!



In a broad, grassy clearing on the other side of the belt of trees, a number of caravans were drawn up in what was evidently a gipsy encampment. The encampment seemed deserted but for two figures.

It was from one of these figures that the startling cries had come.

A ragged youngster, only a year or so older than Wally D'Arcy, was writhing helplessly in the grip of a swarthy, broad-shouldered man, who was grasping his victim's tattered coat-collar in one hand, while he wielded a short length of rope with the other. He was beating the unhappy youngster mercilessly, and the pitiful cries he was forcing from the boy's quivering lips only seemed to encourage the ruffian to increase the strength of his brutal blows.

"My hat!" gasped Frank Levison, halting breathlessly, white-faced. "The brute!"

"Come on, you chaps!" panted Wally, though his face had gone as pale as that of his chum. "We've got to stop this!"

"Rather!" ejaculated Curly Gibson hoarsely.

And as one man, the four fags raced across the clearing towards the big gipsy.

The man had not noticed them, so intent was he upon his cruel task, and he had the surprise of his life when four flying figures hurled themselves upon him. Big and powerful though he was, he was sent staggering by the unexpected attack, and instinctively he released his hold upon the youngster he had been belabouring.

"Oh!" gasped the gipsy boy, with a sobbing breath. "Elp!"

The man had reeled back against the steps of one of the caravans, still grasping the length of rope. He recovered his balance, and a foul imprecation burst from him as he glared with savage fury at the four panting fags.

Wally & Co. faced him with clenched fists. Their faces were very pale.

"You brute!" gasped Wally.

The man seemed beside himself with rage at their interference. He raised the rope's-end in his knotted fist, and Wally leapt back.

"Look out!" he panted. "Run!"

The four fags turned to bolt for it, together with the youngster they had rescued. But Reggie Manners caught his foot in a tussock of grass and went sprawling. The next moment the gipsy had seized him by the arm in a vicelike grip.

"Help!" screamed Reggie, wriggling desperately. "Help! Oh—"

He cried out shrilly as the man dealt him a vicious blow with the rope's-end full across the shoulder.

"You young cub!" snarled the big ruffian savagely. "I'll teach yer!"

But Wally, Curly, and Levison minor, seeing their chum's plight, had halted and turned, together with the gipsy boy.

Before the man could bring the rope down again, they had once more hurled themselves at him, like terriers at a bull. Their small fists lashing out wildly, the fags surged round their foe, struggling desperately to free Reggie Manners.

Curly Gibson staggered back with a gasping cry as the scoundrel dealt him a savage blow on the head with the swinging rope. The gipsy boy, too, was knocked flying—and a minute later Wally dropped to the grass in a writhing heap, his lower lip cut and bleeding.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's best Sunday topper rolled away over the grass, with a dent in it that would have broken its owner's heart, could the swell of St. Jim's have seen his most cherished article of headgear just then!

Reggie Manners, struggling and sobbing, still in the grip of that huge brown fist, gave a despairing cry as the man raised the rope again to deliver a savage blow. But the next moment there was an interruption.

As Wally struggled to his feet, breathless and half-dazed, a tall figure appeared suddenly through the trees that separated the clearing from the road.

In the struggle, none of them had noticed a big open car that had halted in Rylcombe Lane, as its owner, attracted by the sounds from the clearing, drew his machine to a standstill and came racing on to the scene. But now, as the young man appeared through the trees, Wally caught sight of him, and a glad, breathless shout broke from his lips.

It was Lord Conway—his brother!

Wally had no time to wonder just then how it was that his brother came to be there, ten minutes or more before his train was supposed to have arrived at Rylcombe Station. Not till afterwards were the fags to learn that Lord Conway, unaware that anyone was likely to meet him, had changed his mind, and had decided to drive over to St. Jim's from Eastwood House instead of taking the train. Altho' that Wally knew was that his brother was there!

And in a flash Lord Conway grasped the situation; in a moment he was coming over the grass with long, athletic strides, his face terribly grim, his fists clenched.

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Crack!

Even before the gipsy had time to release Reggie Manners, Lord Conway's right fist had crashed home on the ruffian's jaw. The man went flying, and thudded on his back between two of the caravans.

That was a second big surprise for the gipsy! He scrambled up unsteadily, to find a tall figure in a well-cut grey suit facing him—a man in the early twenties, who a moment later had knocked him down again. And this time the gipsy did not rise. He lay glaring up malevolently.

"You hound!" ejaculated Lord Conway.

"That'll teach 'im!" gasped the gipsy boy delightedly.

"Oh, thank you, mister!"

The four fags hastily gathered round the tall figure of the young viscount. Wally's lip was bleeding profusely, and Curly Gibson had a dark bruise on his cheek. The gipsy boy was still white from the pain he had suffered.

"Any of you kids badly hurt?" demanded the viscount quietly.

"I—I'm all right!" gasped Reggie, with quivering lips.

"Same here," mumbled Wally, dabbing with a handkerchief at his bleeding lip. "But if you hadn't come—"

"I have, luckily!" said Lord Conway grimly. "This man needs a lesson he won't forget in a hurry! Here, you—get up!"

But the man did not seem anxious to obey that curt command. He lay where he was, sullen and cowering. But the next instant a hoarse exclamation of delight broke from him.

Three men had come into view from the woods behind the caravans—swarthy scoundrels like himself. Wally gave a gasp of alarm.

"Look out!"

"What's all this, Jake?" cried one of the newcomers, hurrying forward.

The man on the ground, whose name appeared to be Jake, was now scrambling up bravely enough, seeing the reinforcements. He flung out a dirty finger towards Lord Conway.

"E slugged me!" he shouted malevolently. "Quick—get 'im! I'll murder 'im!"

In a moment Lord Conway was surrounded by the four evil ruffians. Wally gave a sobbing cry of terror—fear, not for himself, but for his brother.

"You brutes!" he panted. "Leave him alone!"

"Keep out of this, you kids!" snapped Lord Conway, as the fags and the gipsy boy made an instinctive movement towards him. "If any of you scoundrels lay a finger on me," he went on quietly, glancing round the four faces that had closed in around him, "I shall have the police on you, you may depend."

"Ho, yus?" sneered the man named Jake derisively.

He drove a knotted fist for the viscount's face. But Lord Conway was too quick for him. His own fist landed first—and once more Jake was measuring his length on the ground, a torrent of horrible words breaking from his lips.

Instantly the other three men hurled themselves at their intended victim. One of them staggered back before a cool upper-cut. But one of the others succeeded in getting a blow home, and Wally's brother reeled. He sprang aside, putting his back to the big wheel of one of the caravans; and as the fags watched in frightened dismay, uncertain what to do, Jake and the others closed in upon him again.

"Get 'im!" roared Jake. "I'll murder 'im!"

With his back to the caravan, the viscount hit out coolly against the overwhelming odds.

But the odds were altogether too great—against four powerful ruffians, he could not hope to stand long.

"Come on!" cried Wally despairingly. "Rescue!"

Futile though their attempt at rescue must be, the four fags were not wanting in pluck. They raced forward, and the gipsy boy, despite his evident terror of the man named Jake, joined in their rush!

Had Lord Conway been forced to rely on the aid of the fags and the gipsy boy, his position would have been desperate enough. But unexpected help was at hand.

As Wally & Co. stumbled forward to do their best, there came a sudden shout from the road.

A motor-coach had appeared in Rylcombe Lane, filled with flannel-clad figures. One of them had evidently glimpsed the scene in the clearing, for the coach came to an abrupt halt, and the occupants scrambled out. A dozen figures in white flannels and blazers came tearing through the trees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated one of the newcomers, a stalwartly built, fair-haired youngster. "I fancy this is where we butt in—"

"The infulsness of the butting is terrific!" gasped one of his companions—a slim, dusky-faced youngster, with a flashing smile, who apparently hailed from India's sunny clime,

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled another of the flannelled figures. And at that cry, Wally turned his head.

"Greyfriars!" he gasped. "Oh—hurrah!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars came tearing across the grass in a body! Before the four gipsies realised their danger, they were being knocked right and left.

The Greyfriars cricket team, on its way to St. Jim's for the big match, had arrived in the clearing in the nick of time!

"Back up, Greyfriars!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a grim chuckle from Lord Conway. With a smashing blow, he sent one of his attackers reeling. The other three were already struggling desperately in the hands of the Greyfriars juniors.

"Hurrah for Greyfriars!" panted Wally.

His sentiments were not shared, it was evident, by the four ruffians. Hitting out desperately, they broke clear at last, and raced away into the woods, leaving Lord Conway and the Greyfriars cricketers breathless—but victorious!

"Well?" he said, in a friendly tone. "This is a bad business for you, young 'un, I'm afraid. When your father comes back—"

"E ain't my father, mister," said the ragged youngster, in a low tone. "Ain't got a father. Gipsy Jake, 'e looks after me, that's all. Ain't got no mother, either," he added, as an afterthought.

"I say, that's pretty tough," muttered Harry Wharton.

The viscount's eyes were clouded as he looked down at the sun-tanned, upturned face. The urchin at his side was by no means a bad-looking youngster, with his dark curly hair and frank brown eyes. Lithe and wiry, the gipsy boy looked as though a life in the open had not done him any harm physically, at any rate!

"What'll happen when they come back?" asked Lord Conway.

The boy grinned.

"Nuthin'!" he retorted. "I shan't be 'ere, you see. I'm goin' to do a bunk, I am. If Gipsy Jake caught me now 'e'd fair kill me! So I shan't stay 'ere—not on your life!"



As the ruffians came at him, Lord Conway backed against the caravan and hit out with all his force!

He held out his hand. Harry Wharton, the Greyfriars captain, took it.

"Glad we came along, sir! Those ruffians—"

"They would have given me a nasty time, I think," laughed Lord Conway, rather grimly. "A pity they got away. I shall put the police on to them, of course. By the way, I am a brother of one of the St. Jim's fellows—I was just on my way to St. Jim's to see the match!"

"That's ripping!" grinned Bob Cherry of Greyfriars.

"How did it all start, sir?" asked Harry Wharton curiously.

Lord Conway glanced at his young brother.

"How did it start, Wally?"

Breathlessly Wally explained.

"I see!" The viscount nodded approvingly. "Plucky kids—all of you! I'm proud of you, by gad!"

"My hat, rather!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, slapping Wally on the back with a force that almost knocked the fag flying. "Jolly brave of you!"

"The bravery of the honourable St. Jim's fags is surely certain," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Greyfriars Indian junior, in his weird and wonderful English.

Lord Conway turned to the gipsy boy with curious eyes. He laid a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

"But where can you go?" exclaimed the viscount.

"Oh, anywhere!" The youngster grinned confidently.

"I'll be all right, mister! I'll go on tramp, I will. See?"

Lord Conway frowned. He certainly did not mean to let the youngster go off on his own, to fend for himself.

"That won't do!" he said sharply. "I'm going to look after you till I can arrange for you to be in good hands. I wonder what we can do with you? Perhaps they could give you work at St. Jim's!" he added suddenly, in a thoughtful tone. "Gad, if they could—"

There was a quick exclamation from Wally.

"Good egg!" ejaculated Wally eagerly. "Toby, the page-boy, you know, he's away ill! If the Head would give him Toby's job for a while—"

"By Jove, that's an idea!" Lord Conway smiled down at the ragged boy. "How would you like a job as page-boy at St. Jim's—eh?"

"What—the toffs' school?" gasped the youngster. "My, not 'alf! I'd like that, mister!"

"Well, it's by no means certain, but I'll see what I can do," said the viscount briskly. "Meanwhile, come along with us!"

Three minutes later, Lord Conway was driving towards St. Jim's in his handsome car; the gipsy boy, his brown face

alight with excitement, was at his side, and Wally & Co. were piled in the back. Behind them came the motor-coach containing the Greyfriars cricketers.

"What's your name, young 'un?" asked Lord Conway, with a smile, as the long, low car sped on towards the school.

"Billy, mister—Billy Wragg!" grinned the youngster.

"Well, I'll see what I can do for you, Billy!"

Ten minutes later, Lord Conway's car, with its oddly assorted occupants, was driving in at the gates of St. Jim's, followed by the cricket eleven from Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 3.

Lord Conway's Idea!

"JUST look at it!"

"It's wotten, bai Jove!"

"Talk about raining cats and giddy dogs——"

Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Harry Wharton of Greyfriars, who made those respective remarks, spoke in glum tones.

Together with the rest of the St. Jim's and Greyfriars cricket teams, Lord Conway, and a number of Fourth and Shell fellows who were not playing in Tom Merry's eleven, they were standing in the cricket pavilion on Little Side, staring gloomily through the windows at the rain that was sweeping down outside.

It had been rather grey all that morning, but nobody had dreamed of rain until the start of the big match. Tom Merry had won the toss, and he and George Figgins of the New House had gone out to open the innings. But they had not had very long at the wicket! Scarcely fifteen minutes after Hurree Singh had bowled the first ball of the game, rain had suddenly started to fall—a heavy torrent of it that

had sent the cricketers racing helter-skelter for the shelter of the pav.

That had been nearly half an hour ago. And now the rain seemed to be coming down harder than ever!

"Talk about the giddy Flood——" began Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, in disconsolate tones.

"Comin' down hardah then evah, bai Jove!" nodded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy unhappily.

The swell of St. Jim's adjusted his celebrated monocle to stare out at the weeping skies. The rain had come as a very bitter blow indeed to Arthur Augustus—even more so, if possible, than to any other member of the rival teams. For Arthur Augustus had hoped to display his prowess with the willow before his elder brother—and now it looked as though Lord Conway was to be denied that treat.

That it would have been a very great treat indeed for the viscount, Arthur Augustus did not doubt!

"One thing about the rain, Gussy," grunted Blake, "it's saved you from getting your usual duck."

"B-bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus, very pink, surveyed his chum with a wrathful expression on his noble countenance.

"You uttah ass, Blake! I wefuse to admit that I usually get a duck, bai Jove! I have no doubt I should have knocked up a vewy tiday score——"

Lord Conway smiled.

"This is rotten!" said Figgins, his rugged face deep in gloom. "Beastly luck! Rain—to-day of all days!"

"Putrid!" agreed Talbot of the Shell.

"The putridfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh dolefully. "The honourable wicket is wetfully soaked!"

"It doesn't look as if it meant to stop, either, I am afraid," cut in Lord Conway. "Afraid the match will have to be abandoned—eh?"

"I suppose so," nodded Tom Merry, with a glance at Harry Wharton, who also nodded. "It's the limit!"

"Very bad luck indeed!" agreed Lord Conway, drawing at the cigar he was smoking.

There had been a thoughtful frown upon the viscount's face; sorry though he was to have missed seeing what had promised to be an excellent match, for a time his thoughts had been wandering from the matter of cricket. He had been thinking of Billy Wragg, the youngster he had brought to St. Jim's in the hope that work could be found for him.

The ragged youngster had been left at old Taggles' lodge, since the Head had been out when they had arrived at the school.

"Well, I suppose there's nothing else you St. Jim's men would like to take us on at while we're here?" remarked Bob Cherry of Greyfriars, with a grin. Even the rain did not seem to have been able to damp Bob's cheery spirits. "Some nice indoor game—ludo, or snakes-and-ladders, or something——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We could lick you St. Jim's chaps at either, of course," went on Bob cheerfully. "But——"

"I won't argue about that," laughed Tom Merry—"ludo and snakes-and-ladders not being in our line at St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!" chuckled Kangaroo, the Australian junior.

The Greyfriars fellows laughed, too, though Bob Cherry's little joke had been turned against them. Bob Cherry grinned.

"Oh, well, we'll cut out snakes-and-ladders, then, and take you on at something else!" he chuckled. "We'll guarantee to beat St. Jim's at anything you like, from noughts-and-crosses to mountain-climbing! That's a fair offer!"

Bob Cherry was simply joking—he was the last fellow in the world to brag about either his own prowess or that of his school to others. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fixed the Greyfriars junior with rather an astonished look.

"Bai Jove! Weally, I uttably fail to agree with you!" he ejaculated. "I considah that St. Jim's would vewy likely lick Gweyfwiahs at most things, deah boy!"

"I don't think!" answered Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Bai Jove! I considah——"

"Dry up, you ass!" breathed Blake, who realised that the argument was developing along dangerous grounds. It was anything but tactful to start an argument upon the respective sporting abilities of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, in that mixed company from both schools! "Chuck it!"

Arthur Augustus fixed Blake with a surprised stare through his gleaming monocle. Arthur Augustus was seldom tactful!

"Weally, Blake, deah boy! I was meahly sayin' that I fancied St. Jim's would defeat Gweyfwiahs at most——"

"Shurrup!"

"Look heah, Blake, you ass——"

There was a sudden exclamation from Lord Conway.

"Good gad! That's a ripping idea!"

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The viscount had taken his cigar from his lips, and was glancing round at the crowd of St. Jim's and Greyfriars fellows with dancing eyes.

"Why not?" he ejaculated.

"Why not what, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus, in a puzzled tone.

"Why not, instead of arguing about the general sporting ability of the two schools, put it to the test, in actual fact?" exclaimed Lord Conway eagerly. "Let's have a sports tournament between Greyfriars and St. Jim's! Every sport you can think of—cricket, swimming, boxing—everything!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What a ripping wheeze!"

"Great pip, yes!" ejaculated Monty Lowther breathlessly.

"Bai Jove, I considah—"

"I'll present a cup myself, to be competed for," went on the young viscount decidedly. "A really decent gold cup—something worth fighting for, by gad!" He took out a pencil and an envelope, and began jotting down notes. "Let's decide this right now! What shall we have? Cricket, swimming, boxing—what else?"

There was no need to ask if the rival groups of juniors agreed to his proposal! Their eager, excited faces and shining eyes showed that they did, without any shadow of doubt! They crowded round Lord Conway with breathless exclamations.

"A cross-country marathon?" suggested Figgins eagerly.

"Good!" nodded Lord Conway, making a note. "And an athletic sports meeting, of course—hundred yards, two twenty, mile, high jump, and all the rest of it. The athletic sports to be separate from the marathon, I propose—"

"Hear, hear!"

"What about a boat race, sir?" exclaimed Squiff, of Greyfriars.

"Of course!" agreed Lord Conway, and added that to the list on the back of the envelope. "That makes six contests. We want an odd number of contests, to prevent any chance of a draw. What else can we have to bring the number up to seven?"

"What about rifle-shooting?" suggested Manners.

There was a chorus of agreement from both St. Jim's and Greyfriars fellows.

"Good! I think that covers pretty well every branch of sport!" smiled Lord Conway, glancing at his list. "Footer, of course, must be left out, since it's not in season. Here's the list of contests, then: Cricket, swimming, boxing, cross-country marathon—say, seven-mile marathon—athletic sports, boat race, and rifle-shooting. We've not left out anything that I can see."

"Mountain-climbing?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can arrange later the more particular details," said Lord Conway briskly. "As near as possible, half the contests of the tournament should take place at Greyfriars, of course, and half at St. Jim's. And, obviously, the school which wins most contests wins the cup!"

"Hurrah!"

"Whippin', bai Jove!"

"Afraid St. Jim's doesn't stand much chance of landing that giddy cup, of course!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! No!" chuckled Peter Todd of Greyfriars.

"I should like sadly to condone with the honourable St. Jim's fellows upon their louseful defeat in the honourable tournament!" remarked Hurree Singh, with a dusky smile, in his amazing English.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned his gleaming monocle upon the cheery Greyfriars crowd. "With all due respect, deah boys, I considah you are talkin' through your hats, don't you know!" He chuckled. "I can assuah you that St. Jim's is goin' to win this giddy cup, bai Jove!"

"Or know the reason why?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Eh, you chaps?"

The St. Jim's fellows answered with a lusty cheer, that quite drowned the beating of the rain upon the window. And their cheer was answered by an equally defiant, though friendly cheer from Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars!

"Whoever wins, it will be a great fight, I know!" said Lord Conway, with a smile at the excited faces. "I'll do my best to see as many of the contests as I possibly can, you may depend!"

"Three cheers for Lord Conway!" yelled Tom Merry.

And those cheers, too, were given with a will! That Lord Conway was right, there could be no doubt. Whichever school eventually carried off the gold cup, it was certain that the great sports tournament between Grey-

friars and St. Jim's would be a breathlessly exciting struggle from start to finish.

Of that there was no possible doubt—no shadow of doubt whatever!

CHAPTER 4.

Gipsy Jake Again!

"I WANT a word with you!"

Tom Merry turned his head, as he felt himself tapped on the arm. He found himself looking into the rugged, determined face of George Alfred Grundy, the burly dunce of the Shell.

It was early the following Wednesday afternoon. Tom Merry was crossing the hall towards the steps that led down into the quad, accompanied by Manners and Lowther and Handcock. There was no cricket that afternoon, and the chums of Study No. 10 were going to cycle over to Spalding Hall, together with Blake & Co. of the Fourth, to see Ethel Cleveland & Co., their girl chums.

Tom halted.

"Eh? What's up, Grundy, old bean?"

Grundy flung out a dramatic hand, pointing to a notice that was pinned to the board, near them.

"See that?" inquired the great George Alfred, in booming tones.

Tom Merry glanced at the board, nodded, and laughed.

"Of course, you ass! I stuck it up there this morning myself, didn't I?"

The notice to which Grundy had so darkly referred was as follows:—

The Conway Cup.

By permission of the Headmasters of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and arrangement with H. Wharton of Greyfriars, the Sports Tournament for the gold cup, generously presented by Lord Conway, will take place as follows:

Contest	At
Swimming	Greyfriars
Sports	St. Jim's
Cricket	Greyfriars
Boat Race	St. Jim's
Rifle-shooting	Greyfriars
Boxing	St. Jim's
Marathon	Greyfriars

The St. Jim's teams will be announced shortly before each contest.

(Signed) Tom Merry (capt.).

"What about it, Grundy?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Any complaints?"

"Not yet," said Grundy darkly. "Though I must say I'm blessed if I see why four out of the seven should be at Greyfriars, when it's Gussy's brother who—"

"Wharton and I tossed up for that, Grundy," explained Merry, "before he left last Saturday, when he was over for that cricket match that had to be abandoned because of the rain."

"Oh, I see!"

"Well, is that all?" demanded Tom impatiently. "If so, I want to get along, Grundy!"

"You do, do you?" said Grundy.

"Yes," answered Tom, striving to keep his temper. "If that's all—"

"No, it jolly well isn't all!" said Grundy, in truculent tones, still barring Tom's path. "What I want to know is, which of those blessed contests are you going to put me in the team for? Of course, by rights I ought to be in all of 'em, but I don't expect you to have sense enough to do that. I want to know—"

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Why, do you want Greyfriars to win the giddy cup, Grundy?"

"I don't, you ass!"

"But didn't you ask to be put into some of the teams?" asked Lowther wonderingly.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" roared Grundy.

"Well, if you're in any of the teams, we're sure to lose, aren't we?" said Lowther in innocent tones.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's face, as he glared speechlessly at the humorous Monty, struck Tom Merry, Manners, and Handcock as funny.

They roared.

"Why you—you burbling idiot!" gasped Grundy at last. "Trying to be funny, I suppose? I—I've a jolly good mind to wallop you, Lowther—"

"Spare me!" begged Monty Lowther cheerfully. He

glanced at his watch. "I say, you chaps, if we don't get on, we'll be late at Spalding Hall."

"Here, come back!" roared Grundy, as the chums of Study No. 10 moved on towards the doorway, grinning. "I want to know which teams you're going to put me in, Tom Merry. Personally, I should suggest the swimming team, the sports team, of course, the cricket, boxing, and marathon. I'll waive the boat race and the rifle-shooting, if you like, though I'm hot at both, really. What about it?"

"Sorry, Grundy," chuckled Tom Merry, glancing back at the eager face of the modest George Alfred. "I'm afraid the only team you'll be in is S team."

"S team?" echoed Grundy in bewilderment.

"Yes—your own esteem, you know," grinned Tom Merry. "You've got first place in that, of course, haven't you? So long!"

Chuckling, the Terrible Three and their American chum vanished into the quad, leaving George Alfred Grundy staring speechlessly after them.

"Poor old Grundy!" grinned Manners, as they turned towards the cycle-shed.

"Afternoon, Master Merry!"

A small figure in a smart page's uniform had appeared round the corner of the School House, from the direction of the Head's house. A grinning brown face with merry, dark eyes greeted the chums of the Shell.

It was Billy Wragg, the gipsy youngster. At Lord Conway's instigation, the Head had taken pity on the now homeless Billy, and had allowed the youngster to take over Toby Marsh's place during Toby's absence from the school. All the school knew Billy's story; and already, during the few days he had been page-boy at St. Jim's, the fellows had taken a great liking to the cheery-faced gipsy youngster.

Lord Conway had spoken to the police about Gipsy Jake and his companions. But when the police had visited the clearing where their encampment had been, they had gone, caravans and all! They had apparently left the neighbourhood hastily, knowing that their attack upon Lord Conway would be likely to land them in serious trouble.

"Hallo, Billy!" grinned Tom. "How's it going?"

"Prime, thank you!" said Billy cheerily. "Just takin' a note from the 'Ead to Mr. Pilbeam—e's your Form master, ain't 'e?"

"I guess so," nodded Handcock. "You know your stuff!"

"I 'ad a letter from Lord Conway this mornin'," announced Billy proudly. "Wishin' me luck in me noo job. Ain't that kind of 'im? 'E's a real sport, ain't 'e?"

"He is!" agreed Manners with conviction.

"And I say, ain't that a prime gold cup 'e's given, for this 'ere toonymint against Greyfriars?" chuckled Billy. "I saw it this mornin' in the Common-room. It's jest lovely!"

The Conway Cup had arrived from the London goldsmiths that morning. It was at present on view in the junior Common-room. On Saturday, when the first of the contests took place, the swimming, at Greyfriars, the St. Jim's team were taking it over to Greyfriars with them, to give their rivals a chance of seeing the coveted trophy. After that, it was to be locked away in the Head's safe until its presentation. The Conway Cup was far too valuable for risks to be taken.

"Sure, it's a dandy cup," nodded Handcock, laughing.

"What's a cup like that worth?" asked Billy, in an awed tone.

"I believe that cup's worth fifty pounds," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Perhaps a little more. Nothing stingy about Lord Conway, you know."

"My!" gasped the gipsy youngster breathlessly. "Fifty quid! My! Jest think o' that!"

And it was with very wide eyes that Billy mounted the School House steps and vanished on his errand.

Tom Merry & Co. turned towards the cycle-shed. Five minutes later they were cycling down the road on their way towards Spalding Hall. They had been joined by Blake & Co., and also by George Figgins and Fatty Wynn, of the New House, so that it was quite a little party that was visiting Ethel & Co. that afternoon.

Though there was intense rivalry between School House and New House, House feuds were shelved for the moment. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was exceedingly jealous of his pretty cousin's well-known liking for the lanky, rugged-faced, cheery New House leader, was decidedly frosty in his manner towards Figgy. And Jack Blake, who was rival with Fatty Wynn for first place in the regard of Lady Peggy Brooke, the pretty red-headed tomboy of Spalding Hall, was also evidently anything but pleased by the presence of the two New House fellows in the party.

"I considah it frightful cheek of these New House

boundahs buttin' in, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus to Blake, cycling along a little way ahead of the others.

"Frightful!" growled Blake. "Blow the fat ass!"

"'Hem! I was thinkin' of Figgins wathah than Wynn—"

Bang!

Arthur Augustus broke off, and gave a sharp ejaculation. His front tyre had suddenly exploded with a loud report. He dismounted hurriedly, and surveyed his flattened tyre with dismay.

"Oh deah! A punctuah!"

"Hard luck, Gussy!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Buck up and mend it, and catch us up!"

Herries and Digby good-naturedly dismounted beside their chum. The others rode on—Blake certainly did not mean to stop and wait for his noble study-mate, and allow Fatty Wynn to arrive at Spalding Hall ahead of him.

It was the thought of Figgins stealing a march on him with Ethel that caused Arthur Augustus to set to work so very hastily with the task of repairing his puncture. Herries and Digby leant their bikes against the bank, and sat down on the grass to watch him.

"Oh deah!"

More haste often means less speed. In his hurry, the swell of St. Jim's upset most of his repair outfit in the road, and wasted valuable time gathering it up. Herries chuckled.

"Old Gussy's a first-rate puncture repairer, isn't he?" he grinned. "If only there was a puncture repairing contest in the tournament for the Conway Cup, we'd win it like a shot, with old Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Hewwies—"

"Buck up!" urged Robert Arthur Digby.

"I am buckin' up!" snapped Arthur Augustus.

Herries and Digby grinned. Sitting on the grassy bank, their task turned again to the matter of the Conway Cup. As they were discussing it, they heard a faint rustling sound among the trees and bushes behind them. That it was some animal of the woods moving there, they did not doubt; they scarcely gave the matter any thought. But they were to remember it at a later date.

At last Arthur Augustus, hot and dusty and very irritable, had finished his task. The three chums mounted their machines and set off rapidly in the wake of the others for Spalding Hall.

Ethel & Co.'s visitors from St. Jim's spent a very cheery afternoon with the Spaldingites. Ethel, Doris, and Lady Peggy brought out their cycles, and the party leisurely cycled through the sunny lanes around Wayland very enjoyably, ending up in Rylcombe at Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop for tea. But at last it was necessary for the girls to return to Spalding Hall. The juniors said good-bye to them at the gates, and turned back towards St. Jim's over Wayland Moor.

It was as they were cycling along the moorland road that they came suddenly upon a scene that brought a quick exclamation to the lips of George Figgins, who was the first to turn a bend in the road and see two figures standing on the grass by the roadside.

"My hat—look!" ejaculated Figgy swiftly.

One of the figures by the roadside was that of young Billy Wragg, the temporary page-boy at St. Jim's. He was looking white and scared; his right arm was twisted round behind his back by the rough hand of a big, powerful individual with a swarthy face—a man whom Wally D'Arcy & Co. would have recognised as Gipsy Jake.

None of those present, however, had seen Gipsy Jake before. All they knew was that Billy Wragg was apparently in trouble—and they sped forward on the instant to his assistance.

"Hands off that kid!" yelled Tom Merry angrily, as he pedalled fast towards the pair.

The big gipsy glanced up, with a sudden look of alarm. At sight of the group of St. Jim's juniors, he hastily released the arm he was twisting, and sprang away into the trees, vanishing from sight. Tom Merry & Co. and their companions came up, and jumped from their machines.

"What's up, Billy?" cried Tom Merry. "Who was that brute—was he hurting you?"

Billy shook his head. He still looked very scared.

"He ain't hurt me," he mumbled. "That's Gipsy Jake! He would have, though. I thought he'd gorn right away from 'ere, but 'e 'asn't!"

"Gipsy Jake!" ejaculated Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's all right—'e didn't really 'urt me," muttered Billy. "It's me afternoon orf," he added in explanation, "and I was goin' a walk, like. Then 'alf a minute ago, as I

was comin' along 'ere, somebody jumps out at me from them trees, and it was 'im—Gipsy Jake!"

"What the dickens is he still hanging round here for?" asked Manners curiously.

"Dunno, guv'nor!"

"If I were you, I should keep near the school for a while, Billy," advised Tom Merry. "If that scoundrel is still hanging round the neighbourhood, you don't want anything to do with him, I suppose?"

"Not likely!" said Billy fervently. "I don't want nuffin' to do with Gipsy Jake! 'E's a proper wrong 'un!"

"Hop up on the back of my bike, then," said Tom. "I'll give you a lift back to the school, Billy!"

"My word!" Billy grinned. "Thanks a lot, guv'nor!"

Back at St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. put their machines away in the cycle shed, and turned towards the School House with Blake & Co., nodding to Figgins and Fatty Wynn as the latter headed for the New House. Billy Wragg thanked Tom and turned away towards the Head's house with a queer shadow in his brown eyes.

"The kid seems upset about running into Gipsy Jake," remarked Manners thoughtfully. "Properly upset! I don't

Since Grundy had failed to get out of the way of his own accord, Tom Merry & Co. had pushed him out of the way—hard. Grundy sat down on the floor of the Shell passage with a resounding concussion.

"Oh!" gasped Grundy. "Yarooop!"

Chuckling, the Terrible Three and Cyrus K. Handcock strolled on towards their study—leaving the great George Alfred Grundy gasping on the linoleum.

CHAPTER 5.

The Sports!

"COME on, St. Jim's!"

"Go it, Greyfriars!"

"Giddap, you lame ducks!"

"Come on, Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

Excited shouts were to be heard on all sides in the sunny playing fields of St. Jim's!

It was a week later—the Wednesday on which Greyfriars were visiting St. Jim's for the second of the contests for the Conway Cup—the athletic sports. The green playing fields, lined with ancient elms, were crowded with fellows—



With a last terrific spurt Tom Merry passed Hurree Singh and breasted the tape a yard in front of his Greyfriars rival!

see that's he's really got very much to worry about, though. He's all right here."

"He is upset, though," agreed Blake. "No doubt about it."

They mounted the School House steps. Tom Merry had before him the task of selecting the swimming team to represent St. Jim's on the following Saturday, and it was with a thoughtful frown that he ascended the stairs to the Shell passage with his three chums. At the top of the stairs a rugged figure loomed up.

"Oh, my hat—Grundy!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Look here, Tom Merry," said George Alfred Grundy, planting his big figure in the captain of the Shell's path, "what I want to know is, am I going to be in the swimming team on Saturday?"

"Sorry—no!"

"But I'm a fine swimmer, I am!" roared Grundy.

"So's a brick, Grundy," grinned Lowther. "Downwards—the way you swim!"

"If you don't put me in the team, I—I'll jolly well—"

became Grundy hotly.

"Out of the light, old chap—we're busy!" said Tom.

"Rats! I tell you—"

Bump!

nearly as many Greyfriars juniors as St. Jim's juniors seemed to be present. With the different coloured blazers, the gay flags lining the running-track, and the big white refreshment marquee that had been erected for the occasion, it was a bright animated scene.

At the moment all interest was centred on the track, where the eleventh event of the afternoon was being fought out—the mile.

"We've got to win this!" breathed Kangaroo, the Australian, as he watched the eight white-clad runners speeding past on the second of the four laps. "We've got to!"

His voice was very grim.

Of the ten events that had already been decided, St. Jim's had won the hundred yards, the hundred and twenty yards hurdles, the half-mile, and the long jump; four wins in all. Greyfriars had won the two hundred and twenty yards, the quarter-mile, the relay race, the three-quarter-mile steeplechase, putting the weight, and throwing the cricket ball—six wins to St. Jim's four!

There was still the mile, the high jump, and the tug-of-war to be decided. But with Greyfriars two wins ahead, St. Jim's could not afford to lose a single one of the last

three events if they were to fulfil their hopes of ultimate victory that day.

It was a terribly stiff task that faced them—but they were not downhearted.

"Tom Merry ought to win this," muttered Kangaroo, to Clifton Dane, his Canadian chum. "And if old Figgy pulls off the high jump, as he ought to, it'll all be on the tug-of-war!"

Clifton Dane nodded anxiously.

The previous Saturday, Tom Merry's swimming team of eight had visited Greyfriars. On that occasion St. Jim's had been very optimistic of success. But though the contest had been a desperately close thing, Greyfriars had won it. Though they had taken their defeat cheerfully enough, it had been rather a blow to the St. Jim's fellows—and they had set their hearts on making up for that first defeat by winning the sports.

Whether they could succeed in doing so, however, was now looking very doubtful.

The faces of the St. Jim's fellows were decidedly anxious as they watched the runners enter on the third lap of the mile.

Tom Merry, Reginald Talbot, Ernest Levison of the Fourth, and Kerr, the New House junior, were representing St. Jim's in the event. Harry Wharton, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and two others fellows whose faces were not so well known to the St. Jim's juniors, were running for Greyfriars.

As the runners passed the point where Kangaroo and Clifton Dane were standing by the rope that marked out the track, among a mixed crowd of St. Jim's and Greyfriars supporters, Harry Wharton was leading the field, a yard or so in advance of Levison. Another Greyfriars man came next, with Talbot almost level. Tom Merry was the last but one, while Hurree Singh brought up the rear, running coolly and steadily.

"Tommy's still saving himself for the last lap," muttered Kangaroo.

"So's the Indian," nodded Clifton Dane. "Hope to goodness Tommy doesn't wait too long, that's all!"

"Come on, St. Jim's!" piped the sudden shrill tones of a School House flag, as the runners pattered past.

"Go it, Greyfriars!" sang out the stentorian tones of Bob Cherry, who was standing not far from Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. "Go it, ye giddy cripples!"

"On the ball, Saints!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

A burst of excited shouts and cheers broke out on all sides as the runners were seen to quicken up abruptly as they turned into the last lap.

Quarter of a mile to go!

Harry Wharton was still in the lead, but Talbot had drawn up almost level with him, while Levison had dropped back to fifth place. Tom Merry, suddenly spurting, was drawing up towards the leaders with a turn of speed that brought yells of applause from the St. Jim's supporters. But Inky, of Greyfriars, was spurting, too, close behind Tom Merry.

"Tom's ahead!" gasped Clifton Dane, staring across towards the distant heads of the runners.

"With the Indian on his tail!" breathed Kangaroo anxiously.

There was a yell as it was seen that Tom Merry had taken the lead. Hurree Singh was only a yard behind him, however. Harry Wharton and Talbot were next, still almost dead level. Levison and Kerr and the two other Greyfriars men were doing their utmost, but the pace that the four leaders had set seemed to be too much for them after that first gruelling three-quarters of a mile in the hot sun.

It was clear enough now that the first three places would be taken by three of the leading four—Tom Merry, Hurree Singh, Harry Wharton, and Reginald Talbot.

The shouting died to a breathless murmur as the white-clad figures flashed on round the big circular track.

"The Indian's level with Tom Merry!" muttered Kangaroo hoarsely.

"My hat, the Indian's going to win!" breathed his chum.

"Good old Inky!" yelled Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, waving his cap excitedly in the air.

The running figures had turned into the long final straight, at the end of which Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth stood with a tape held across the track. Towards it Hurree Singh of Greyfriars was streaking like the wind, at an amazing pace, considering that it was the end of a mile race. But Tom Merry was only a yard behind him; close behind Tom Merry, Wharton and Talbot were neck-and-neck.

The yelling rose to a roar, as it was seen that Tom Merry was putting on a final spurt. None of the onlookers had dreamed for a moment that he had another ounce of

speed to draw upon—no one had guessed for an instant that Tom had been saving himself even yet for that last desperate hundred yards!

As he spurred now, it was like an arrow leaving a bow. He forged past the dusky, white-clad figure of Hurree Singh at flashing speed, and a roar of cheering that scared the rooks from the old elms burst out over the playing fields as the captain of the Shell breasted the tape a few moments later, nearly a couple of yards in front of the Indian youngster. Talbot snatched third place from Harry Wharton by a few feet, and St. Jim's had won the race! "My hat!" Bob Cherry, naturally, was looking a trifle disappointed. "That was a ripping finish! Good old Tom Merry!"

And Bob Cherry joined in the cheering very sportingly, as Tom Merry and Talbot were borne away high on the shoulders of the crowd.

The victory of St. Jim's in the mile had brought the respective scores to six wins against five, with Greyfriars in the lead. Two more events to be decided, which meant that Greyfriars still had two chances of winning the day; whereas if St. Jim's lost either of the last two events, they were defeated.

Things were certainly very anxious, from the St. Jim's point of view. But Tom Merry's victory in the mile had cheered them up a lot, and everyone was in good spirits for the next event on the programme—a combined wheelbarrow and obstacle race, open to anyone, for which Lord Conway had offered a special prize. The result of it was not to be included in the contest for the cup.

Fellows of the two sports teams were, naturally, keeping themselves as fresh as possible for the important events, so that it was a decidedly ragtime crowd that lined up for the wheelbarrow race, as Monty Lowther remarked, with a grin.

Some of the fags had entered for it, and so had Mellish and Crooke—the latter out to collar Lord Conway's prize if they could, knowing that it would be well worth having, though its exact nature was a secret. For the same reason Baggy Trimble had entered for the race; Baggy had found great difficulty in getting anyone to take him on—pushing Baggy Trimble in a wheelbarrow was not a task to be lightly undertaken! But the Falstaff of the Fourth had somehow succeeded in prevailing upon the good nature of Herbert Skimpole, the bulging browed freak of the Shell.

There were yells of laughter when the motley collection of competitors started off at the sound of the pistol.

"Go it, Skimmy!" gasped Baggy, in the barrow that the skinny-armed freak was wobbling along in a way that threatened to tip Baggy out at any moment. "Buck up, you blessed dummy—"

"I am endeavouring to proceed with rapidity!" panted Skimpole breathlessly. "But the combined weight of the barrow and yourself make perambulation excessively difficult, my dear Trimble!"

The first obstacle consisted of a number of large flour-bins, from which the wheelbarrow passengers had to pick apples with their teeth. There were shrieks of laughter as the competitors dived for the apples, flour flying in all directions. But Baggy Trimble was always first where tuck was concerned! There was a yell of laughter and applause when Baggy's head emerged from one of the barrels, caked with flour, but with the apple safe; he dived back into the barrow, and was first away, Skimpole panting manfully on towards the next obstacle—a row of buckets suspended over the track, one of which had to be tilted with a pole by each wheelbarrow passenger.

Baggy collected his pole hastily, and Skimpole tottered towards the suspended buckets, still in the lead, amazingly enough, despite his tremendous burden!

Crash!

Baggy's pole struck one of the buckets well and truly. But at that moment Herbert Skimpole found he could push the barrow no farther! He dropped the handles, with the result that, instead of being safely past when the water fell, both Baggy and Skimpole received the lot over them.

"Yarooooooh!"

"Ow! Groooh! Gug-gug-gug! Skimmy, you burbling ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were shrieks of laughter from the onlookers as the spluttering, furious Baggy scrambled, dripping, from the barrow and hurled himself at Skimpole. Skimpole, utterly drenched, flew for his life, with Baggy in hot pursuit, and followed by hilarious yells.

The Falstaff of the Fourth and the freak of the Shell had failed, after all, to win the handsome silver watches that turned out to be Lord Conway's prize—they were carried off by Hammond and Lumley-Lumley. But the juniors were still chortling over Baggy and Skimmy's valiant effort as the crowd closed in round the scene of the next event—the high jump.

As in the other events, four representatives from each school were taking part in the high jump. Monty Lowther, Kangaroo, and Figgins and Dick Redfern of the New House were the St. Jim's quartet.

Kangaroo slipped off the long coat he had been wearing over his running kit while watching the mile, and handed it to Clifton Dane.

"Good luck, Kangy!" grinned the Canadian junior.

"Thanks, old man!"

Eric Kildare, who was in charge of the high jump, started the bar fairly low, and none of the competitors had any difficulty in the opening stages. But at four-foot-eleven Redfern dropped out, to everyone's surprise. He was evidently off form—unluckily for St. Jim's.

At five-foot-three two of the Greyfriars men came to grief, and so did Monty Lowther. Three men out at once, leaving Figgins and Kangaroo of St. Jim's and Linley and Bulstrode of Greyfriars.

The excitement was breathless now.

"That chap Bulstrode is a nuisance!" muttered Manners to Tom Merry, among the watching crowd.

Bulstrode had won the putting the weight for Greyfriars, and had been second in the quarter-mile. He was jumping easily and well, and looked certain of taking a place, at least, in the present event.

All four of them succeeded in getting over the five-foot-four mark, though on his first attempt Linley of Greyfriars kicked the bar off with his heel. His second jump, however, was perfect, and the bar went up half an inch.

That half inch was too much for two of the competitors. To the utter consternation of St. Jim's, Kangaroo failed three times to get over without kicking off the bar; but they breathed again when, to everyone's astonishment, Bulstrode also failed to do it.

Kangaroo and Bulstrode had tied for third place—leaving Figgins and Linley of Greyfriars to fight for first place!

"Go it, Figgy, old boss!" muttered Monty Lowther, rather hoarsely.

There was not a sound to be heard, except for the cawing of distant rooks, as Figgins and Linley, each looking very cool but determined, tackled five-foot-five. Each got over at the second attempt, after kicking off the bar once. Kildare raised the bar another half-inch.

"Five feet five and a half inches!" announced the captain of St. Jim's, in impersonal tones.

There was a yell of applause as Figgins sailed over the bar beautifully. The Greyfriars fellow tipped it off the first time, but succeeded at his second attempt.

"Blow!" grunted Wally D'Arcy, who was watching the event in company with Reggie Manners, Frankie Levison, and Curly Gibson.

"Five-foot-six!" breathed Harry Wharton. "Go it, Mark!"

"Go it, Figgy!" muttered Manners.

But both the competitors had difficulty at that height. Only on the third attempt did either of them surmount the bar without displacing it. It was put up another half-inch, and the onlookers scarcely breathed.

Again Figgins displaced the bar with his first attempt. But Mark Linley got over with a beautiful, clean jump that brought a shout of applause from Greyfriars and St. Jim's fellows alike.

"Now, then, Figgy, deah boy!" urged Arthur Augustus D'Arcy under his breath, his monocle jammed into his eye as he watched, with evident burning anxiety. "It's up to you, Figgy!"

Again Figgins ran at the bar and soared into the air. But his heel touched it as he flew over, and it fell.

"Last try!" muttered Tom Merry in a strained voice.

"If he doesn't get over this time, Greyfriars win the sports as well as the swimming."

That George Figgins fully realised the terrible responsibility was clear enough from the strained look that had come into his usually care-free face as he faced the bar for the third time.

He ran forward.

For a moment it looked as though he had done it. But he had just brushed the flimsy bar, and as it fell a groan of disappointment murmured round the crowd from the St. Jim's fellows, to be followed by a wild cheer from the Greyfriars fellows as they realised that Figgins' failure meant that they had won not only the high jump, but the whole afternoon's contest.

Greyfriars had started off by winning the swimming, now they had won the sports as well.

"Holy smokes!" ejaculated Cyrus K. Handcock blankly. Handcock, who had done his bit by winning the hurdle race for St. Jim's, was wearing a long coat over his running-kit, as were his chums. "I guess we're ditched again! Whadyer know about that, buddies?"

Greyfriars fellows were surging round Mark Linley joyously, chairing him and Harry Wharton, their captain,

on their shoulders. The St. Jim's fellows, trying hard to hide their disappointment and dismay, generously joined in the cheering. "But Tom Merry's face was grim as he glanced at his chums.

"Another win for Greyfriars," he said quietly. "We've got to pull our socks up, or we're going to lose the Conway Cup. Five more contests, and we've got to win four of 'em to get the cup. It can be done, and it's going to be done!"

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah!"

"We'll beat Greyfriars yet!" said Blake fiercely.

"Or die in the giddy attempt," nodded Monty Lowther, in a voice that was filled with determination. "I tell you we've just got to win that cup!"

One thing was certain enough—the St. Jim's juniors might be dismayed, but they were not downhearted. They had plenty of fight left yet, as the grim looks on their faces showed.

But meanwhile it was Greyfriars' hour. And the lusty cheers of the victorious Greyfriars visitors echoed and re-echoed round the playing fields of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

The Cricket Match!

"LETTER for you, Gussy!"

It was two days later, the evening before the day on which Tom Merry had to take a cricket eleven over to Greyfriars for the third contest in the tournament for the Conway Cup which had begun so disastrously for St. Jim's.

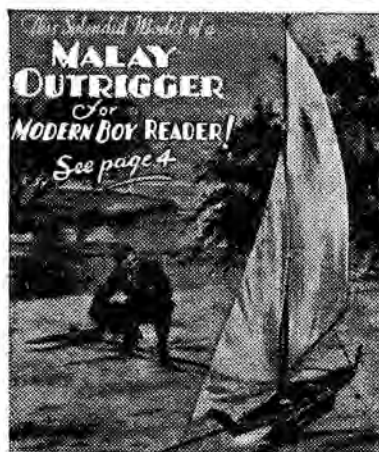
The eleven to visit Greyfriars was already posted on the board. It was a strong team, and the St. Jim's fellows were full of hope that the next day would see a change in their fortunes.

In the Hall a number of fellows were gathered round the board, glancing with satisfaction at the list of names on which the St. Jim's hopes rested. But the postman had just arrived, and most of the juniors had turned their attention to the mail.

"Thanks, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as Jack Blake handed him a crested envelope. "Bai Jove, it's from my bwothah!"

"From Lord Conway?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas!"



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The swell of St. Jim's opened the letter and read it, after carefully adjusting his gleaming monocle for the task.

"What does he think of our ripping start in the tournament—I don't think?" inquired Blake rather glumly.

"He's vewy sympathetic, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "Howevah, he says 'Bettah luck next time!' And he says he is sowwy he has been unable to see eithah of the first two contests, don't you know, but will be able, he expects, to get ovah to Gweyfwiahs for the cwicket match to-morrow."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Tom Merry, who had come up.

"What do you want Lord Conway to see you licked at cricket by Greyfriars for?" sniggered Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove! We shall not necessawily be licked, Mellish, you silly wottah!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Well, they've licked you twice, at sports and swimming," grinned Mellish, with a sneer. "I expect they'll lick you at cricket, too—Oh! Yow! Gerrooooo!"

Mellish gave a wild howl as Tom Merry's boot landed on the seat of his trousers and he shot across the Hall, to land in a struggling heap on the linoleum.

"That's for being such an unpatriotic cad!" grinned Tom.

"You beast!" gasped Mellish, scrambling up. "Yah! I jolly well hope Greyfriars win the Conway Cup!"

"What?" roared a dozen voices. And Mellish hastily shot away up the stairs before the indignant crowd could fall upon him.

"The—the howwible wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Did you heah him say he hopes Gweyfwiahs win the cup? Bai Jove, I—"

"Oh, who cares what Mellish says?" cut in Blake impatiently. "Blow Mellish! What we've got to think about is the cricket to-morrow. Gussy, you've got to play as you've never played before! None of your fluff business!"

"Bai Jove! If you considah my play fluffay—" began the swell of St. Jim's, in breathless indignation.

"Well, play up, that's all!" urged Blake. "We've lost two of the contests to Greyfriars. To-morrow we've got to win!"

Click!

The sound of the cricket ball meeting willow rang out sweetly across the green turf of Little Side, at Greyfriars, as the ball went soaring to the boundary, past square-leg, from the bat of Monty Lowther.

"Well hit!" yelled a dozen voices from the pavilion.

"A pretty shot!" murmured the deep tones of Lord Conway.

The third event in the great tournament for the Conway Cup was in full swing. Against the picturesque background of the grey old buildings of Greyfriars Tom Merry's eleven was meeting Harry Wharton's, with St. Jim's fighting desperately for runs.

Harry Wharton had won the toss, and Greyfriars had batted first, piling up the big score of 115 between them. St. Jim's had taken the field faced with a really formidable task, but they were meeting the challenge gamely.

Tom Merry and Figgins had opened the innings, and they had punished the Greyfriars bowling from the first. Runy had come thick and fast, to the delight of the St. Jim's supporters, until at last Tom Merry had been caught in the slips off a tricky ball from the dusky fingers of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Talbot, who had followed, had carried on the work well, though he had finally been bowled by Bob Cherry. Monty Lowther had taken his place, and he and Figgins were proving to be a great partnership. With

the score standing at 65 for two wickets, St. Jim's were jubilant. Some of them were even inclined to regard the game as good as won.

That it was by no means as good as won, however, Tom Merry, with his long experience as cricket captain of St. Jim's, realised only too well. He knew what an uncertain game cricket can be—and the very first ball of the next over picked Figgy's leg-stump clean out of the ground, as if to justify his inward uncertainties.

Figgins had a great reception from his friends as he strode from the wicket. He had wielded a splendid bat, and he had done invaluable work for his side. Ernest Levison went out to replace him.

Crack!

Levison opened his shoulders to the very first ball. It soared away towards the boundary. The beginnings of a burst of applause broke out—to die away abruptly as it was seen that the Greyfriars deep-field was racing across towards the spot at which the soaring ball must fall!

The ball came curving down towards the grass, close to the trees, but within the boundary line. With a last terrific spurt the Greyfriars fielder hurled himself forward. His foot slipped—but as he lay breathless on the grass one arm was upflung.

In his upraised hand he grasped the ball. Levison had been caught, first ball!

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Oh, wotten!"

"Ripping catch!" exclaimed Talbot.

Levison's face was disconsolate as he marched back to the pavilion, passing Dick Redfern of the New House on his way out.

With the abrupt dismissal of Figgins and Levison with two successive balls, a temporary rot seemed to have set in. Though Redfern was not bowled by the next ball, thus disappointing those of the Greyfriars fellows who had been optimistic enough to hope for a hat-trick, he did not last long, and retired with only two runs to his credit.

The St. Jim's juniors looked decidedly dismayed, as Jack Blake replaced Redfern at the wicket.

Blake was not exactly a dashing batsman; his value to the eleven was in his capabilities as a wicket-keeper. But he usually played a dogged sort of innings, and collected a number of runs in a quiet way.

This afternoon, however, was apparently his unlucky day. A twisting ball from the dusky fingers of Inky picked Blake's middle stump from the grass.

"Out for a duck!" breathed Figgins, his rugged face dismayed. "Oh crumbs!"

Blake trudged back towards the pavilion. Kangaroo, hastily buckling on his pads, marched out towards the vacant wicket.

As a rule, Kangaroo was much earlier in the batting list. But he had hurt his hand in making a hot catch that afternoon, and Tom Merry had accordingly given the Australian youngster a chance of resting it. It was with a good deal of hope that Tom watched Kangaroo take his place at the crease.

Off the first ball Kangaroo knocked two. It was the last ball of the over. Monty Lowther faced the bowling again, and a lusty cheer from the St. Jim's onlookers greeted a pretty cut through the slips, and it brought a murmur of approval from Lord Conway.

"Good old Monty!" grinned Tom Merry, more cheerfully. "He's on form!"

For the time being, the rot seemed to have been stopped. Kangaroo was not hitting out in his usual easy style, but

Would You Believe It?

A mountain of peanuts!



80,000 tons of peanuts exported annually from Gambia on the West Coast of Africa are first piled high in the sun to dry.

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The Mouse Tower, on the River Rhine, where, according to legend, Hatto was devoured



by mice, after he had cruelly compared the cry of the poor to the squeaking of rats & mice. A.D. 969



Herr Kronfeld, the German expert glider, holds nearly all the world's gliding records. Seagulls have been known to fly in formation with a glider, mystified.

he was looking after his wicket confidently, and it looked as though the hurt to his fingers had recovered. He took a couple of singles, and Monty Lowther in the meantime added at least a dozen to the St. Jim's score.

With 85 for six marked up on the board, the St. Jim's crowd began to look quite cheery again.

They still needed thirty or so runs to win, it was true. But Monty Lowther looked as though he were set for hours, piling up the runs merrily; and Kangaroo, playing a stonewalling game though he was for once, looked like keeping his wicket intact almost indefinitely.

Crash!

"Oh, my aunt!" groaned Blake.

In the most unexpected fashion, Kangaroo's wicket had been spreadeagled by a fast leg-break—and, with St. Jim's still 30 from their desired total, the Australian youngster was returning to the pavilion.

That Greyfriars were feeling very confident of victory now was clear enough from the exuberant cheers that greeted the bowling feat!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was next man in. Looking very natty indeed in his immaculate whites, with his brand new pads and his expensive bat, the swell of St. Jim's sailed out to the wicket with a do-or-die expression on his noble brow.

Monty Lowther was standing by the pavilion end of the pitch. The swell of St. Jim's halted beside him.

"I should just like to make a suggestion, deah boy," murmured the swell of St. Jim's earnestly. "Things are lookin' wathah despewate, you know—"

"I know that, ass!"

"Weally, Lowthah! I was goin' to say that I should advise you to concentwate upon pweservin' your wicket intact, deah boy, and leave it to me to knock up the wuns. You see—"

"What's that?" ejaculated Lowther, staring.

"I know you have been doin' vewy well, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "Some of youah shots are a little wisky, pewwaps, howevah—I advise you to be more careful, in the present circe. As I say, you simplay concentwate on stayin' in, and leave it to me to get all the wuns."

"Why, you—you blessed dummy!" gasped Lowther. "Buzz off to your wicket, ass—and try not to be out with a duck!"

"I wegard that remark as perfectly asinine, Lowthah. All I want is for you to give me a chance to pull the game out of the fish. I weally think you should put in a little stonewallin'—"

"Scat!"

"Man in!" grinned one of the Greyfriars players.

Arthur Augustus hurried to his wicket. He looked a little exasperated. It nettled him that Lowther was too dense to see how necessary it was that he—Lowther—should stonewall, to give his brilliant partner at the wicket a chance to knock off the runs. Lowther seemed amazingly dense!

With his gleaming monocle jammed in his eye, Arthur Augustus took his stand at the wicket, and faced the bowling.

Bob Cherry was taking an over for Greyfriars. As Bob ran up to the opposite wicket, and delivered the ball, the swell of St. Jim's waited tensely. The ball came speeding towards him.

There were various things that Arthur Augustus might have done with that ball. It was not one of Bob Cherry's best, as a matter of fact. Arthur Augustus might have

slammed it round to square-leg for a boundary, or he might have driven it past mid-off, or he might have cut it behind the wicket for three runs at least.

Arthur Augustus decided upon the drive to mid-off. He stepped out to it, and the ball sped on its way—clean into the waiting hand of Harry Wharton.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dazedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars team chuckled. They could not help it. The expression on the swell of St. Jim's face was too much for them. Arthur Augustus, with a last astonished look round, tucked his bat under his elegant arm and headed for the pavilion. On the way he met Kerr coming out.

"Did you see that, Kerr?" he asked.

"I did!"

"Astonishin', wasn't it?"

"Oh, astonishing!" agreed Kerr gravely. "That you hit the ball at all, you mean?"

"Eh? B-bai Jove! You uttah ass—"

But Kerr had passed on, leaving the swell of St. Jim's to wend his way on towards the pavilion—still feeling utterly astonished that he was out so soon.

George Francis Kerr was a bowler, but he could generally be relied on for a few runs. Now, however, with everything going wrong, the St. Jim's fellows scarcely dared hope that Kerr would survive for very long! And once he had gone, Fatty Wyny, the New House demon bowler, who was certainly nothing of a batsman, was all that was left to keep the innings alive, and to enable Monty Lowther to continue knocking up runs.

Magnificently though Lowther was batting, with the support he had at his disposal it certainly seemed all but hopeless to think that there was any chance of his hitting thirty odd more runs for St. Jim's, to save the game!

"It's all up," said Blake gloomily, staring with shadowed eyes across the grass. "Old Monty's doing giddy miracles, but he can't do super-miracles, I suppose."

"Oh rats!" grunted Talbot. "While there's life there's hope, you ass!"

"Ninety up!" exclaimed Tom Merry a few minutes later as that figure appeared on the board, after a cleverly snatched single at the end of an over had put Monty Lowther opposite the bowling again. "Good old Monty! My hat—look at that!" he added a few moments later.

"That!" was a beautiful boundary hit that went leaping along the grass between two Greyfriars fielders—beautifully placed. There was an eager shout of applause from the St. Jim's party.

"Gad! Young Lowther is making hay of the Greyfriars bowling!" ejaculated Lord Conway. "What if he saved the game, even now?"

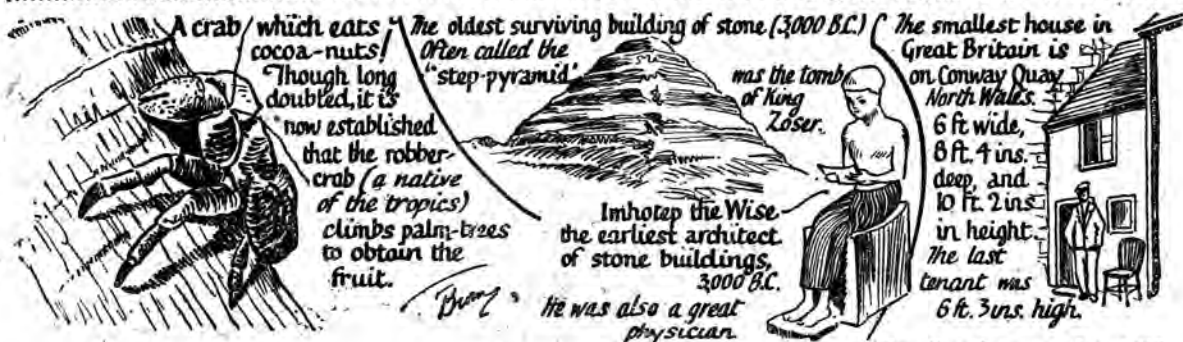
"I believe he will!" breathed Tom Merry excitedly, as Lowther slammed the next ball to leg for yet another boundary. "Talk about piling up the giddy runs—"

The Greyfriars fellows were beginning to look anxious. The fielders were beginning to look a little weary, too; they had been leather-hunting in the hot sun for a long time now, and Monty Lowther was keeping them at it mercilessly.

A tremendous cheer greeted the appearance of three figures on the score-board at last—a hundred.

"Only sixteen more wanted for a win!" gasped Glyn of the Shell, who was one of the St. Jim's fellows who had come over with the cricketers. "I believe we're going to do it—thanks to old Monty!"

Facts from Far and Near.



Breathless with excitement, they watched Monty knock up another ten runs off the next two overs. He was going more cautiously now.

After that, each run was greeted with a wild tumult of cheers from the St. Jim's crowd. Then, when the St. Jim's total was within three of the Greyfriars score, the tragedy happened! Lowther failed to snatch a third run from the last ball of an over, and Kerr faced the bowling once more. The ball grazed his bat and shot past him into the wicket-keeper's hands. Kerr turned towards the pavilion—and there was a groan from his friends.

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Redfern. "That's torn it!"

There was still Fatty Wynn. But could Fatty Wynn, who was clearly very nervous at the terrible responsibility that rested on his plump shoulders, save his wicket against the deadly bowling of Hurree Singh?

The fat New House man went out to the wicket looking as though he wished the earth would open and swallow him. But he pulled himself together when he reached the crease, and faced the bowler's end with a light of despairing resolve in his eyes.

Click!

As if by a miracle, Fatty Wynn had poked the ball past point, and he and Monty Lowther were running a single! "Good old Fatty!" gasped Figgins joyously. "Hurrah! He'd never let us down!"

And then, a few moments later, the St. Jim's party burst into such a thunder of cheering that it was a wonder—so Lord Conway remarked afterwards—that the pavilion did not collapse like the walls of Jericho! For, off the next ball, Monty Lowther had hit a glorious boundary for four—and St. Jim's had won!

A minute afterwards Monty Lowther was swaying high above the heads of the crowd as he was borne off Greyfriars Little Side in shouting triumph, the hero of the hour! And behind him, also shoulder high, a hero of the hour in his way, came Fatty Wynn.

Altogether, Lowther had knocked up the magnificent score of fifty-two runs—and that, together with Fatty Wynn's heroic single, just when it was wanted, had won the game for Tom Merry's eleven!

Greyfriars had won the swimming and the sports, but St. Jim's had won the cricket. The tide had turned!

CHAPTER 7.

The Boat Race.

"THE old mill, I tell you—that's the place!" "Rats! I tell you, the Abbotsford Road Bridge—"

"What about the winning-post by the boat-house?"

"Or up there by the bathing-pool?"

Wally D'Arcy glared round at Reggie, Frankie, and Curly, and began to push back his cuffs.

"I tell you, the bridge is the best place to see the boat race, you blessed jabbering jackasses!" said Wally warmly. "I'll punch the nose of the next idiot that argues!"

"Oh, all right!" said Reggie Manners sulkily.

"I don't mind," said Frankie Levison, rather hastily.

"Very well," growled Curly. "But—"

"And no 'buts'!" yelled Wally. He glanced at his watch. "It's five past two already—race starts at half-past! Come on!"

And Wally led the way from the Third Form room with the air of a victorious general.

It was Wednesday, the day of the fourth contest for the Conway Cup—the boat race. Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, had arrived in force for the event, those who were not actually in the Greyfriars rowing eight having come to cheer on their boat for all they were worth.

Already the banks of the Rhyll near the finishing post, which was close by the school boathouse, were thick with fellows. Greyfriars juniors and St. Jim's mixed in good-natured throngs.

But Wally had his own ideas. Wally was convinced that the ideal position from which to view the race was the old bridge where the road to Abbotsford crossed the river. And, having successfully persuaded his three chums of that fact, it was there that Wally arrived some little time later, with Reggie, Frankie, and Curly.

The four fags made themselves comfortable on the wide stone coping, and stared eagerly up the river.

"Won't be long now!" said Wally. "They'll be starting in another two minutes. Shouldn't wonder if we hear Kildare's gun when he starts 'em off!"

And, after a brief wait, from somewhere far away they did indeed hear the sound of a faint report.

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"That's it!" breathed Wally with gleaming eyes. "They're off!"

There was no doubt that Wally's choice of a grandstand had some advantages, although it gave no view of the winning-post, which was some distance farther on, within the precincts of the school. From the bridge, however, the fags had an excellent view of a straight quarter-mile of broad river, up which the rival boats would soon be coming. On the right side trees and bushes grew thick to the water's edge.

The ensuing wait seemed like an eternity to the excited fags. Though the Third had no part in the struggle for the Conway Cup, as a brother of the donor of that valuable trophy, Wally had a personal interest in it that, together with his usual patriotic feelings towards any St. Jim's team, caused him to follow the fortunes of the fight for the cup



In a wild effort to avoid the drifting punt, the St.

with a passionate keenness. And his chums were equally enthusiastic.

The long minutes dragged by.

From Curly Gibson there broke a sudden breathless shout. He flung out a pointing hand.

"Look!"

"My hat—here they come!"

Far up the gleaming stretch of river two long, thin racing craft had come into view round the broad, sweeping bend. Even at that distance the sunlight could be seen gleaming on the rising and falling banks of oars.

"Who's leading?" gasped Reggie.

"Can't see yet!"

"Oh, go it, St. Jim's!" panted Frank Levison, with shining eyes.

READ "GUSSY, THE WAITER!" NEXT WEEK'S RIOTOUS ST. JIM'S YARN!

They could make out now the running figures of the fellows who were following the race on the towing-path. And as the two boats drew swiftly towards the bridge, Wally gave a delighted yell.

"St. Jim's is leading! Oh, golly—look! Hurrah!"

The boats were near enough now for the fags to make out the colours of the oar-blades—red for Greyfriars, blue for St. Jim's. And the St. Jim boat, they were able to see, was at least a length ahead of the other!

"Go it!" panted Wally, wild with excitement, clinging to the stone parapet with quivering fingers. "Pull, there! Oh, well rowed—"

"Hurrah!" yelled his three followers. "They're winning!"

There was no doubt that the St. Jim's eight was winning. Greyfriars were putting up a splendid fight; but the St.

moving—that it was being thrust out with a pole by some person hidden among the concealing bushes, into the stream. "M-my hat!" gasped Wally, in sudden dismay. "Some rotter—"

That someone was deliberately pushing the old punt out into the river in the path of the oncoming St. Jim's boat there was no doubt. And it was clear enough to the fags on the bridge that it was going to be the cause of a disaster!

Thrust out by the pole that was being wielded by the mysterious, hidden person among the bushes, the ancient punt was swinging full into the path of the St. Jim's craft. It seemed as though the sharp-pointed prow of the leading boat would strike it; but suddenly Digby caught sight of the swinging punt, and, with a startled shout, he dragged on the rudder.

"Look out!" yelled Wally instinctively, almost falling from the parapet in his excitement. "Oh, great Scott—"

The St. Jim's boat, in avoiding the punt that had been thrust out from the bank into its path with evident deliberate purpose, had leapt straight for the right-hand pier of the old stone bridge, by the side of which the racing craft should have passed. With a splintering crash, the prow of the St. Jim's boat smashed against the grey old stonework, and the next instant the St. Jim's crew were struggling in the water, under the dismayed eyes of Wally & Co.

And the Greyfriars boat sped on through the second arch—on towards the distant winning-post!

CHAPTER 8.

A Startling Mystery!

"I CAN'T make it out! Blessed if I can!"

It was Tom Merry who spoke.

It was later that day, in the junior Common-room. The Greyfriars fellows had gone home, and in the Common-room the sole topic of conversation was the amazing attempt on the part of some mysterious, unknown person to ruin the chances of the St. Jim's crew in that afternoon's race.

That the unknown individual would have succeeded well enough in his scoundrelly intention had been proved by the wreck of the St. Jim's boat against the pier of the bridge. But Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars had been far too sporting to take advantage of that, in the circumstances. They had declined to row out the race by themselves, though, technically, they had every right to do so; and later in the afternoon the race had been rowed again, over the full course, with Tom Merry's eight in a fresh boat.

Shaken though the St. Jim's crew had been, none of them had been hurt. And they had passed the winning-post this time without mishap, a full two and a half lengths ahead of the Greyfriars boat.

Their victory had made the St. Jim's juniors wild with delight, for it brought St. Jim's level with Greyfriars in the struggle for the Conway Cup. Each school had now won two events. But the mystery of the attempt to cause St. Jim's to lose the boat race by foul means had cast something of a cloud over the day's sport.

"Who the dickens can it have been?" asked Manners of no one in particular, with a hopeless shrug.

"Some Greyfriars chap, hidden there in the bushes, of course!" grinned Percy Mellish sneeringly.

"Rats!" snapped Tom Merry. "I don't believe that! If a Greyfriars chap had been blackguardly enough to do a thing like that, it's not likely he'd be keen enough on sport to come all the way over to St. Jim's to see the race at all, let alone care much who won!"

"Something in that," nodded Talbot.

"Harry Wharton & Co. were jolly worried about it," put in Kangaroo. "I suppose they thought one of their lot might be suspected."

"I told Wharton not to worry," said Tom, frowning. "I'm sure it wasn't one of the Greyfriars chaps. But the problem is, who was it?"

He stared round the Common-room at the equally puzzled faces of the crowd of juniors. None of them could answer that question.

"I'll bet it was a Greyfriars chap!" sneered Mellish.

"Kick Mellish, somebody!" suggested Clifton Dane.

"Anything to oblige!" grinned Lowther.

"Yarough!"

Mellish gave a yell as the cheery Monty's boot landed on the seat of his trousers, propelling him towards the door, which Roylance had swung open. The sneak of the Fourth shot out into the passage, with another yell, as Monty Lowther planted a second hefty kick behind him, and Roylance slammed the door.

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crashed head on into the pier of the stone bridge:

Jim's boat was gradually increasing its lead as the two craft came shooting towards the bridge.

Tom Merry, at stroke, was rowing superbly, and the rest of the crew—Manners, Handcock, Talbot, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, Figgins, and Clive—were rowing beautifully, too, under the watchful eyes of Digby, who was coxing the St. Jim's boat.

Rising and falling like one, the eight oars flashed and glimmered in the sunlight as they came racing on.

"Great Scott! Look there—"

From Reggie Manners there had broken a sudden, startled cry.

An ancient, half-rotten punt was moored against the left-hand bank, among the straggling bushes that sprawled over the water's edge. Reggie had suddenly noticed that it was

It was quite certain that no one at St. Jim's agreed with Mellish that it must have been a Greyfriars chap who had caused the wreck of the St. Jim's boat that afternoon. They knew the Greyfriars men to be thorough sportsmen.

But who could it have been?

"It's twighfully bafflin'!" observed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a worried tone. "Wathah wotten, this havin' happened, I considah. Who evah could want to queeah our pitch in the boat wace? I considah—"

The swell of St. Jim's broke off as the door of the Common-room suddenly opened. The burly figure of George Alfred Grundy entered the room.

"Oh, there you are, Tom Merry!" said Grundy.

"Here I am, Grundy!" sighed Tom. He knew what was coming.

"Now listen to me!" growled Grundy, halting in front of Tom Merry, and tapping the captain of the Shell on the chest with a rugged forefinger. "About the next event for this blessed Conway Cup—the rifle-shooting match, on Saturday. I'm a regular game-shot—"

"We're not shooting game, old chap—targets!" grinned Tom Merry. "So you won't do!"

"You mean to say you're not putting me in the shooting team?" hooted Grundy.

"Just what I mean, old bean!"

Grundy breathed hard.

"You're crazy!" he growled at last. "Anybody would think you wanted Greyfriars to win the shooting!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not exactly!"

"Listen!" roared Grundy. "Listen to me, I tell you—"

"I'm listening," said Tom Merry meekly.

"What I want to know is this!" boomed Grundy, with a heavy frown. "Am I in any of the teams in this tournament, or not? I don't want you to beat about the bush. All I want is a plain answer. Am I wanted? Yes or no?" finished Grundy majestically.

"No!"

"Eh?"

"I said no!"

Grundy surveyed Tom Merry as though he could scarcely believe his ears. Though Tom had frequently told Grundy that he was not wanted, Grundy seemed incapable of realising that Tom Merry actually meant it. Grundy was

undoubtedly the finest all-round sportsman at St. Jim's—in the opinion of George Alfred Grundy! And it was difficult for Grundy to understand that no one else shared his flattering view of his own prowess.

"Why, you—you burbling dummy, Tom Merry!" roared Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd of juniors chuckled. Grundy's countenance struck them as being funny, as he glared breathlessly at Tom.

"All right!" gasped Grundy. "You're crazy! A chap like you, who can't recognise talent right under his blessed nose, ought never to be captain. Very well—lose the Conway Cup! You'll lose it, that's all. I—"

"I hope not," said Tom, in meek tones.

"Oh, yes you will!" roared Grundy. "I tell you, you'll lose the Conway Cup—as sure as eggs!"

And with a scarlet countenance, George Alfred Grundy strode from the Common-room, closing the door behind him with a resounding slam.

CHAPTER 9.

The "Hidden Hand!"

NOTICE.

The following twelve will shoot for St. Jim's in the fifth of the contests for the Conway Cup, at Greyfriars:—

Blake.

Dane.

D'Arcy major.

Figgins.

Glyn.

Handcock.

Julian.

Lowther.

Manners major.

Merry (capt.).

Redfern.

Talbot.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY stood and surveyed that notice, pinned to the board in the hall, with a truly ferocious expression on his rugged face.

"The ass!" muttered Grundy. "The silly, burbling, footling ass! That's what Tom Merry is. Fancy leaving out me, and sticking in somebody like Lowther—or Talbot! My hat!"

It was early after dinner on Saturday afternoon. Already the motor-coach that had been hired to take the shooting team to the railway station, en route for Greyfriars, was waiting in the quad. Through the open doorway Grundy could see half a dozen figures already seated in it, waiting for the others.

"Br-r-r!" growled Grundy.

"Anybody seen Tom Merry?"

Grundy glanced round. Jack Blake had entered the hall from the quad, looking a trifle exasperated.

"No!" said Grundy fiercely.

"Tom Merry & Co. have been keeping the rest of us waiting ten blessed minutes!" grunted Blake. "If we aren't careful we'll miss the blessed train to Greyfriars!"

Blake hurried past Grundy and up the stairs. He turned into the Shell passage, and hurried along to Study No. 10, and knocked on the door.

There was no answer from within. But Blake heard a faint movement within the study. Something in the sound of it brought a quick look of alarm to Blake's face, and he pushed open the door quickly, and stared into the study.

"Good heavens!"

Tom Merry & Co. were here; so was Reginald Talbot.

The five Shell fellows were seated round the table, with cups of half-drunk cocoa before them—evidently they had been having refreshment before the journey to Greyfriars. But none of them even glanced round at the sound of the opening door.

Tom Merry & Co. were sitting with strange, dazed looks on their faces. Their cheeks were white, their breathing heavy. They seemed half asleep. That they were ill, Blake realised in a moment, as he rushed into the study.

"My heavens!" he breathed again, in frightened alarm.

"Tommy—Monty! Talbot—"

Tom Merry turned heavy eyes towards him, as if he only half-heard. Then the captain of the Shell dropped his head on his chest, and his eyes closed.

From Manners there came a low mumble. There was a faint look of understanding in his eyes.

"The—the cocoa," muttered Manners, "must have been—doctored—"

Then his head, too, fell forward on to his chest.

In breathless dismay and horror, Jack Blake stared round at the five Shell fellows.

Drugged!

Five members of the team who were to have gone to Greyfriars to shoot in the Conway Cup contest—drugged! It could only mean one thing.



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TWICKENHAM.

"The 'hidden hand' that had tried to make St. Jim's lose the boat race was at its deadly work again!

"Here they come!"

Tom Merry spoke in anxious tones.

Together with Manners, Lowther, Handcock, and Talbot, Tom was standing in the quad near the school gates. It was later that evening. For half an hour or so the five of them had been waiting impatiently for the motor-coach that would bring the shooting team back to the school from the station when it returned from its visit to Greyfriars.

The five victims of the mysterious "hidden hand" had been rushed to the sanatorium. But though they had soon recovered from the effects of the drug that had doubtless been administered to them in the cocoa they had drunk, and they had afterwards felt no ill-effects, it had been too late for them to go with the team to Greyfriars.

Levison, Clive, Digby, Kangaroo, and Kerruish had been put into the shooting team to fill their places at the last minute.

But how the team would fare against Greyfriars with Tom Merry & Co. absent was a very doubtful problem.

"Here they come!"

The motor-coach had appeared at last in Rylcombe Lane, speeding towards the gates. Soon Tom Merry & Co. would learn the result of the latest of the matches against Greyfriars.

"Who was it?"

That was the question that was still drumming in their minds, as with troubled eyes they watched the coach approach.

Tom Merry had remembered remarking in the Hall before dinner that he intended to have a cup of cocoa before setting off for Greyfriars; he had made the remark when advising his team not to eat too heartily at dinner-time, with the shooting match in prospect. Anyone might have heard his words—and one of the people who had heard them had taken advantage of it in scoundrelly fashion.

But who that person had been was a baffling mystery.

The coach drew into the quad and came to a standstill. Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot hurried forward. The fellows in the coach were piling out; but the look on their faces told Tom Merry what he wanted to know before he even asked the question.

"Who won?"

"Greyfriars!" answered George Figgins quietly. "Beat us hollow. We were no good without you fellows. How do you feel?"

"Any idea yet who doctored your cocoa?" demanded Blake in savage tones.

The faces of the returned team were very grim as they clustered round the five.

"We're all right," said Tom Merry quietly. His fists clenched. "But if ever I find out who the hound is who's working against us like this in the dark, he'll wish he had never been born!"

CHAPTER 10. The Telegram!

"SECONDS out of the ring!"

The quiet tones of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, broke the waiting hush that had fallen in the big gymnasium.

The gym was packed. And all eyes were centred on the roped ring in the middle of the floor, where Ernest Levison of St. Jim's, in boxing kit, was facing Harry Wharton of Greyfriars.

It was the following Wednesday—the day of the boxing match against Greyfriars, in the tournament for the gold cup, and the first of the seven fights that were to be held was about to take place.

A big crowd of Greyfriars juniors had come over to watch the contest and cheer their men. Lord Conway was expected to arrive a little later.

The faces of the St. Jim's juniors were set in rather anxious lines.

With the Greyfriars victory in the shooting contest Harry Wharton & Co. had taken the lead again in the struggle for the cup. With three wins to their credit now, as against the St. Jim's two, Greyfriars only needed to win either the boxing or the marathon—the two contests which had still to be decided—to carry off the coveted Conway Cup!

And that Greyfriars would take a lot of beating in the boxing-ring, the St. Jim's fellows knew only too well.

"Time!"

Kildare was refereeing the boxing. Levison and Wharton stepped forward and shook hands.

The first of the seven fights had started!

"Go it, Levison, old chap," muttered Sidney Clive, Levison's South African chum, who was one of the St. Jim's fighter's seconds.

Thud! Thud!

Harry Wharton had led with a lightning left, but Levison had warded off the blow, and stepping quickly forward had landed a couple of flashing body blows, left and right, that staggered the Greyfriars fellow for a moment. But he had recovered instantly, and the next moment his right fist had connected with Levison's jaw.

Levison reeled.

Tom Merry, watching anxiously from a chair near the door that led to the dressing-rooms, realised, as he watched that first round, that Levison was not likely to prove a match for the Greyfriars captain.

Tom Merry was down to meet Bob Cherry, the champion fighting man of Greyfriars. That Tom was "up against it" in his fight with Bob Cherry, he knew. But he was by no means unhelpful.

Talbot, Figgins, Blake, Kangaroo, and Burkett were the other St. Jim's boxers and they were to meet Bulstrode, Bull, Tom Browne, Peter Todd, and Redwing of Greyfriars.

When the gong sounded at the end of the first round there was no doubt that the umpires—Darrell of the Sixth and George Wingate, the stalwart captain of Greyfriars—must have awarded Harry Wharton a few more points than Levison, Tom realised.

But there were to be six rounds; and there was still a hope that Levison might do great things, even though he did them unexpectedly, considering whom he was up against.

The first round had been fiercely fought. The second was quieter, and Levison held his own well enough. The applause was about equal for both fighters at the end of the round.

And in the third round Levison suddenly got going! He was a splendid boxer, even though not so good as Wharton. The St. Jim's man succeeded early in the round in landing a beautiful right hook to his opponent's chin that sent Wharton reeling against the ropes. The Greyfriars fellow recovered well enough, and for a few moments he drove Levison back. Then, seizing a momentary opportunity like a flash, Levison got home with his left. It crashed on to Wharton's chin, and the Greyfriars man, lifted clean off his feet, went sprawling on the sawdust.

A wild yell of delight burst from the watching St. Jim's fellows.

"One, two, three——"

Kildare began to count. Wharton scrambled up on to one knee, resting. At the word "eight," he rose briskly, and once more he and Levison were fighting fiercely, though with cool enough science.

But in the next round the end came suddenly. Wharton had driven Levison back against the ropes, and for a moment the St. Jim's man, distinctly "rattled," left his chin unguarded.

Wharton's fist flashed home, straight and clean. His glove crashed on to Levison's jaw, full on the "point"—and Levison dropped like a sack of coals. He lay writhing at Wharton's feet, and a pin could have been heard to drop in the packed gymnasium as Kildare's voice began the count.

Levison tried to rise; but he was too dazed. There was a murmur of bitter disappointment from the St. Jim's fellows as the count ended.

Harry Wharton had won the first event for Greyfriars! And the Greyfriars cheer that echoed round the gym was thunderous!

The second fight was between George Figgins and Tom Browne.

From the very first, it was a breathless affair. During the course of it each of the fighters went down more than once, and excitement was soon at fever heat. But there was no knock-out, and the fight went the full six rounds. At the end of that time the umpires announced a win for Figgins on points, and the St. Jim's fellows let themselves go in lusty fashion as they cheered Figgie to the echo.

Kangaroo of St. Jim's and Redwing of Greyfriars stepped into the ring for the next event, and both were cheered noisily by their supporters.

"Go it, Kangy! Cooo-ee!" yelled someone, as the Australian youngster grinned over the ropes at his chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fight began excitedly enough—for in the first half-minute Kangaroo had floored Redwing with a smashing uppercut, and Redwing had returned the compliment soon afterwards with a deadly left that "strewed the St. Jim's man all over the ropes," as Bob Cherry of Greyfriars cheerfully put it. Then the gong sounded the end of the round.

"Nothing in this," muttered Tom Merry to Monty Lowther. "Either of 'em might win it!"

"Well, I fancy old Kangaroo," murmured Lowther hopefully.

"I say—Merry!"

A sudden anxious whisper in Tom's ear caused him to turn his head. Wally D'Arcy was standing beside his chair, looking worried.

"What's up?" breathed Tom.

"Old Taggles is looking for you," muttered the Third-Former. "He's got a telegram for you!"

"A telegram?" Rather a startled look had leapt into Tom Merry's face. He glanced round and saw the figure of Ephraim Taggles, the school porter, standing not far away, his eyes roaming over the crowd, evidently in search of him. "Thanks, Wally!"

Tom rose and made his way quickly towards the porter, and took the orange envelope. He ripped it open, and drew out the enclosed sheet. As he read it, his face whitened strangely.

"My heavens!"

"What's up?" breathed Monty Lowther, who had followed him.

Tom Merry handed the wire to Lowther, who read it hastily, and gave a gasp of consternation.

"Miss Fawcett injured by car, in Wayland Hospital. Come at once," ran the telegram, which was unsigned.

Miss Fawcett was Tom Merry's old guardian—a dear old lady, who adored Tom, and whom the captain of the Shell adored, on his part. How she came to be in Wayland that afternoon was a mystery—presumably she had come over to pay Tom Merry a surprise visit. The telegram, doubtless, had been sent by the hospital authorities.

"What are you going to do?" asked Monty Lowther hoarsely.

"Go to her at once!" Tom Merry's voice was strained.

"But—but you're down to fight Bob Cherry!"

"I can't help that!" Tom Merry spoke almost roughly.

"Get Talbot to find a substitute. I must go at once!"

He hurried from the gym.

Monty Lowther stood with the telegram still in his hand, staring after him with shadowed eyes.

That Tom Merry was willing to give up his place in the St. Jim's boxing team, despite the tremendous importance of the match against Greyfriars, which meant all the difference between the possible winning or the definite losing of the Conway Cup, Monty Lowther could understand. He did not blame Tom Merry for a moment—he would have blamed him had he decided to wait for his fight before hurrying to the hospital.

But he knew well enough that Tom Merry was the only fellow they could find who stood any hope of beating Bob Cherry of Greyfriars in the boxing-ring!

With Tom Merry absent, Bob Cherry's match was a certain win for Greyfriars, whoever Tom's substitute might be.

And Lowther knew how ill St. Jim's could afford to be faced with a definite defeat in any of that afternoon's events!

Even as that thought crossed his mind he heard a heavy thud from the ring in the centre of the gym—heard Kildare start to count. He turned his head quickly, and caught his breath.

Kangaroo was down, writhing feebly to rise.

"... five, six, seven—"

Kangaroo lifted himself on one elbow, but he sank down again. His foot had slipped, and Redwing had landed a terrific blow on the Australian youngster's jaw that had utterly dazed him.

Kildare finished the count, and Redwing stepped quickly forward to help his beaten foe to his feet.

Greyfriars had won again!

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Monty Lowther miserably.

Already Greyfriars had won two out of the first three fights, and with Tom Merry gone Bob Cherry was sure to win another for them. Of the other three fights it could scarcely be hoped that Greyfriars would fail to win a single one, with such fellows as Bulstrode, Johnny Bull, and Peter Todd boxing for the visitors!

That telegram in Monty Lowther's hand had spelt defeat for St. Jim's that day—it meant the loss of the Conway Cup, after all their struggles. That fact Monty Lowther could not doubt for a moment!

Sick at heart, Lowther turned and pushed his way through the crowd in search of Reginald Talbot, to arrange for Tom Merry's substitute.

CHAPTER 11.

Tricked!

ON the road to Wayland, Tom Merry drove the pedals of his cycle round at flashing speed, tearing along towards the little town at breakneck pace.

His cap had flown from his head soon after he had shot out of the gates of St. Jim's on his speeding machine; he had not stopped to recover it.

Every moment was valuable!

He was in an agony of fear and suspense.

That Miss Fawcett was badly injured he was convinced; otherwise, it was unlikely that the hospital authorities would have sent him that urgent message.

But one thing, at any rate, seemed clear—Miss Fawcett had not been so badly hurt that she had been unable to state her identity and give the hospital authorities Tom's name and address. That was something! It brought a ray of hope to Tom Merry.

Perhaps his old guardian, though without doubt badly injured, was not in actual danger of her life, as he had at first assumed.

Driving round the pedals with every ounce of strength he possessed, Tom Merry tore on along the moorland road.

All thoughts of the boxing contest at St. Jim's had fled from his mind in his burning anxiety for Miss Fawcett. But for a moment thought of the Conway Cup came back to him. What was happening in the gym?

He knew in his heart that by leaving the gym he had given Greyfriars a victory in one of the events at least. Without being conceited over his abilities in the ring, Tom Merry could not help but know that he was the finest boxer in the junior school at St. Jim's; and he knew that no one but himself would stand a dog's chance against Bob Cherry, the cheery fighting man of the Greyfriars Remove.

But though he had given Greyfriars the victory, he did not feel an ounce of compunction. Tom Merry would willingly have foregone the Conway Cup outright for the sake of the injured old lady now lying in Wayland Hospital—wanting him!

His machine flew on down the road. In the distance he could see the steeples of Wayland above the far-off trees.

His thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

A short, lithe figure hurrying down the road in the opposite direction to himself came into view as he swung round a bend in the road.

At sight of Tom Merry streaking towards him on his flying cycle the hurrying figure gave a sudden exclamation and sprang into the centre of the road, arms held out to stop him.

And at the same instant Tom Merry recognised Billy Wragg, the gipsy youngster who had become temporary pageboy at St. Jim's.

A gasp of angry impatience broke from Tom's lips. He certainly had no wish to be stopped now, when every moment was so precious! But the road was narrow, and he had either to stop or run the youngster down. He jammed on his brakes and came skidding to a standstill, swinging from the saddle.

"Out of the light, you young ass—"

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"You're goin' to the 'orspital?" cried Billy. Tom Merry stared at him. "Yes! How on earth do you know about it?" Billy Wragg ignored the question. He clutched Tom's arm with a quivering hand. "Don't you go!" he panted. "That telegram was a fake!"

Tom Merry caught his breath. "Billy! What on earth do you mean?" "Wot I says!" retorted Billy, in an odd, defiant tone. "That telegram was a fraud—straight, it was!" "A—a fake?" Tom Merry stared at the brown-faced youngster as though he could scarcely believe his ears. He grasped him by the shoulder. "How do you know? What the dickens—?"

"I do know, that's all," muttered Billy. "I—I can't tell you how I knows, but I does!" An anxious look came into his dark eyes. "The boxin'!" he cried suddenly. "What's appened? You ain't fought in it yet?"

Tom Merry shook his head. His face was alight with a wonderful relief. Though as yet the whole thing was an utter mystery to him, there was something in Billy's face and tone that convinced Tom that the gipsy youngster knew what he was talking about.

A fake! A deliberate trick to get him away from St. Jim's, so that he would be unable to take part in the boxing contest! It could only mean one thing—the mysterious "hidden hand" was at work again!

For the first few moments Tom's relief at the knowledge that Miss Fawcett was not injured at all—was not even in the neighbourhood, as he realised now—had brought a wonderful wave of joy and relief to Tom. But now, as he began to realise the whole situation, his face went dark.

"The hound!" he panted. "Whoever it is he's at work again!"

Who could it be? The question hammered in his brain maddeningly, without an answer.

Billy clutched his sleeve again.

"Maybe it's not too late!" muttered the gipsy youngster hoarsely. "Maybe you can get back in time to fight in that there match—"

Tom shook his head.

"I can't!" His voice was hard. "Even on a bike I can't hope to get back in time. My substitute will have taken my place before I can get back!"

He felt sick at heart. He had been tricked—and though he had been warned before actually arriving at the Wayland Hospital on a fool's errand, it was surely too late now, he knew, to return in time to take his place in the ring against Bob Cherry.

"Oh loy!" groaned Billy Wragg, his face a picture of misery. "I—I wish I'd never bin born—straight, I do!"

Tom Merry stared at him wonderingly.

"Don't be a young ass, Billy!" Despite his own sickness of heart, Tom Merry managed some sort of a smile as he clapped the gipsy youngster on the back. "Cheer up, Billy! It's rotten, my being tricked out of the boxing like this—but, hang it, it's not your fault!"

"It is!" cried Billy; and big tears were rolling down his cheeks now. "It was me that sent that dud telegram! I did it!"

CHAPTER 12.

The Amazing Truth.

"YUS, I sent that telegram!" groaned Billy Wragg. "You!" breathed Tom Merry incredulously.

Billy nodded tearfully.

"But—but—" Tom Merry stared down at the brown, upturned face in dazed bewilderment. "Billy, you're crazy! You can't—"

"I did, though!" sniffed Billy. "I wish I never 'ad, now it's too late. But—"

Tom Merry passed a hand dazedly across his eyes. He felt that he must be dreaming. Yet he could not help but believe the gipsy youngster. There was a ring of truth in Billy's voice.

He felt utterly staggered.

"Then—then it was you, too, that—" began Tom slowly.

"It was me that shoved the old boat out in front o' yours in that there boat race," nodded Billy mournfully.

"Yus, an' it was me that put the stuff in your drinks that time, too! I'd 'eard you talk about 'avin' some cocoa before goin' to Greyfriars, and I 'ad to go over to the sannytory for the 'Ead at dinner-time, and I 'appened to 'ear the matron tellin' Miss Rivers some powder, stuff in a bottle was sleepin' mixture, or somethin'. An' so I pinched some of it when they was out o' the room, to give to you. I mixed it in with the cocoa in your tin while you was at dinner!"

"Good heavens! But why?" cried Tom Merry hoarsely.

"'Cause I wanted St. Jim's to lose the Conway Cup," said the gipsy boy.

"But why did you want ~~as~~ not to win the cup?" asked Tom Merry, still with the feeling that he must be dreaming.

"It was like this 'ere," mumbled Billy, wiping his eyes and sniffing. "Gipsy Jake, 'e 'eard some of you young gents talkin' about the Conway Cup while one of you was mendin' a bike puncture. Gipsy Jake, 'e was 'idden in the bushes by the road, yer see, and 'e 'eard it said that the cup was worth about fifty quid."

"Well?" breathed Tom.

"'E's a wrong 'un, is Gipsy Jake. 'E figured out 'e'd like to steal that there cup, it bein' worth so much," went on the gipsy boy. "But, o' course, 'e wouldn't get a chance of stealin' it if it was won by Greyfriars, 'cause it would go to Greyfriars, wouldn't it? 'E was 'opin' St. Jim's would win it, then 'e meant to burgle it, and I was to 'elp 'im."

"Good heavens, Billy!"

"'E threatened me!" muttered Billy. "'E said what 'e'd do if I wouldn't 'elp 'im. I was scared. 'E's a terror, is Gipsy Jake! I knew I wouldn't dare not 'elp 'im when the time come. 'An I can tell yer, guv'nor, I didn't want to steal it, not after everyone's bin so kind to me, an' all. But I knew I'd 'avs to. So I 'oped Greyfriars would win it, so as Gipsy Jake couldn't never make me 'elp 'im steal it."

"My giddy aunt!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Now he understood!

"That's why I wanted to queer your pitch," went on Billy, in miserable tones. "I thought of all the ways I could. But this afternoon, after I'd spent a slice o' me wages on that there telegram to get you away, 'cause I knew you was the big noise at boxin' at the school, and I'd 'eard you talk about Miss Fawcett as bein' a lady you thought very 'ighly of. You give me a letter to 'er to post once, too—"

"I remember," nodded Tom.

"Well, after I'd sent that there telegram," went on Billy in the same miserable voice, "I come out o' the post office, and what did I see but—but Gipsy Jake hisself, bein' led off by a copper what 'ad pinched 'im! 'E burgled a 'ouse last night, a feller in the crowd told me, an' that means 'e'll go to quod all right for a fair stretch. So then it didn't matter about the Conway Cup, guv'nor. An' since I wants you to win it, apart from which I jest told you, I came 'urryin' back to the school to tell you it was just a fake telegram. See, guv'nor?"

"Yes," said Tom quietly. "Billy, you've been a young fool."

His voice had gone very stern. Billy nodded, and the tears welled up afresh. Tom clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, cheer up, kid! I can understand you were scared to death of Gipsy Jake. You've been a little fool, but it'll be a lesson to you. And—Hallo!"

Tom gave a sudden exclamation. Round the corner, from the direction of Wayland, a long, powerful car had come sweeping. A familiar figure was at the wheel, and, with a stare of astonishment, he brought the car to a standstill.

"Hallo, Merry! What the dickens—"

It was Lord Conway.

"Why aren't you at the school, boxing?" ejaculated the viscount, in a perplexed tone.

At sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's brother, Tom Merry's heart had leapt.

With Lord Conway's powerful racing-car, even yet he might get back to St. Jim's in time to meet Bob Cherry in the ring!

He leapt on to the running-board.

"I'll explain as we go," he cried. "Will you drive me to St. Jim's as fast as you can get the car to go? Billy, bring my bike back to the school for me. And don't worry, kid. I may be in time yet!"

"Gad!" ejaculated Lord Conway, as Tom slipped breathlessly into the seat beside him and the long car glided forward. "I was cursing my luck at being so late. Looks as if it was a good thing I was, perhaps."

"My hat, rather!" gasped Tom Merry, with shining eyes. Already the car was leaping down the road at sixty or so miles an hour, under the capable control of Lord Conway. "I believe I'll do it, after all!"

"Seconds out of the ring!"

Kildare's quiet voice cut the hush of the St. Jim's gymnasium.

At opposite corners of the roped square Bob Cherry of Greyfriars and Tom Merry of St. Jim's faced one another.

During Tom's absence Bulstrode of Greyfriars had defeated Blake on points; but Talbot and Burkett had won their fights with Peter Todd and Bull for St. Jim's. Thus, with three victories that afternoon to the credit of each school, the final result of the boxing contest depended entirely upon the fight between Bob Cherry and Tom Merry.

Bob Cherry was all out to win. If he could do so, the Conway Cup was Greyfriars', since, even if St. Jim's were to win the last event of the series—the marathon—Greyfriars would have won four out of the seven events of which the tournament was composed.

And, knowing that if he lost to Bob Cherry he lost the cup for St. Jim's, Tom Merry was as determined as the Greyfriars man to win that fight!

There was not a sound to be heard in the gym as the two champion fighting-men of their respective schools stepped from their corners and stood face to face.

CHAPTER 13.

The Great Fight!

"ALL the best, Tommy!" murmured Bob Cherry, with a grin, as he and Tom Merry shook hands.

"Same to you, Bob, old hoss!"

And with that friendly greeting the big fight of the afternoon had begun.

That the two combatants were just about equally matched was obvious from the very first sound of the gong. Tom Merry's stalwart frame, with its rippling muscles and smooth, healthy skin, was matched perfectly by that of Bob Cherry of Greyfriars. In height and reach the two were about the same as well.

The round opened quietly enough, each combatant sparring cautiously, as if to measure up his foe.

"My hat!" sneered Percy Mellish. "They're playing kiss-in-the-ring, if you ask me!"

"Oh, dry up, Mellish!" snapped Herries. "Get out!"

"Oh, look at that!" gasped George Alfred Grundy, who was sitting near. "Hurrah!"

Tom Merry had landed a stinging left to Bob Cherry's chin, jerking back the Greyfriars fellow's head, and had followed it up with a swinging right-hander that had sent Bob Cherry staggering against the ropes. Grundy, who had forgotten his disappointment at not being included in the team, yelled his appreciation, and his cheer was taken up all round the gym as Tom Merry again knocked Bob Cherry back against the ropes.

"Good old Tommy!" gasped Monty Lowther delightedly.

But the next moment his excited cheer died away. Bob Cherry, recovering wonderfully from the attack, had got home with his muscular left, and this time it was Tom Merry who reeled back, his gloved hands dropping for a moment as he strove to regain his balance.

Thud!

Bob Cherry's fist crashed home on Tom's defenceless jaw. And Tom Merry dropped with a crash.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Monty Lowther, in horrified dismay.

"One, two, three—"

Kildare's voice droned out the beginning of the count in impersonal tones. Tom, clearly badly shaken, rolled over, and staggered up on to one knee. On the "nine" he jumped to his feet, and the next moment the two were at it again, hammer and tongs. The bell broke in, announcing the end of the round.

On points—by which the fight would probably be decided—there was nothing in it so far, as far as the spectators could judge, except for the fact that Tom had been floored once. For though Bob Cherry had not touched the sawdust, he had been knocked into the ropes in a way that would have floored him had the ropes not been there to catch him.

An atmosphere of electric tension filled the gym as the two fighters left their corners for the second round.

It was a fierce round from the start, fought out at lightning speed. The gym was continually echoing to the cheers of first one fighter's supporters, then the other's, as the pair of junior champions moved, with flashing footwork, about the ring.

The round finished, with neither of the pair having had any advantage over the other, in the general opinion.

By the end of the third round both Tom Merry and Bob Cherry were looking decidedly battered. But each seemed as fresh as ever as regards stamina. There was no slowing-up of the speed at which they were moving, no lack of crispness in their flashing blows.

The fourth round was just as fast, and by now the excitement in the gym was at fever-heat. There was very little cheering—the excitement was too great. All eyes were riveted on the two lithe, muscular figures in the roped ring.

Thud, thud!

Bob Cherry had got home a smashing blow to Tom Merry's heart, and Tom's eyes twitched for a moment; the blow had clearly shaken him. Bob followed it up with a lightning left to the chin, and Tom reeled, dazed for the

moment. The tense hush was broken by an excited yell from one of the Greyfriars fellows:

"Now's your chance! Finish him!"

Bob stepped forward, quick as light, his right drawn back to deliver another smashing blow. But Tom Merry's head ducked aside as the clenched glove drove for his head, and the next instant he had brought his own right crashing home between Bob Cherry's eyes.

The Greyfriars fellow staggered back, blinded, against the ropes. There was a roar from the St. Jim's fellows. And then, as Tom Merry drew back sportingly, instead of delivering another to the fellow against the ropes, the gong sounded.

It had been a thrilling finish to the round. But even yet it was difficult to say which of the fighters led on points in the umpire's opinion.

The fifth round went to Bob Cherry, however—there could be no doubt about that.

But Tom Merry was looking cool enough as he left his corner for the sixth and last round, despite the battered appearance of his face. And there was no doubt that Bob Cherry was looking equally battered.

Bob Cherry led off at a hot pace, and Tom Merry was driven slowly back before his terrific onslaught. The Greyfriars fighting man seemed to have as much strength left as when the fight had started; whereas Tom, still a little shaken, it seemed, by two knock-down blows he had received in the previous round, seemed a little unsteadier than usual as he strove to keep off the fierce attack levelled against him.

"Come on, Tommy!" yelled Monty Lowther suddenly.

The sound of his chum's voice seemed to lend the captain of the Shell sudden fresh strength, in some peculiar way! The friendly shout had no doubt reminded him of all that hung in the balance for his friends in the result of his fight with Bob Cherry.

Bob Cherry was knocked reeling against the ropes, as in some of the earlier rounds, by a sudden lightning jab to the chin that had all Tom's strength behind it. The Greyfriars man fought back doggedly as Tom pressed his attack with all his usual fire, and for some moments there was a ding-dong struggle in the corner of the ring.

Tom fell back slowly, forced to do so by Bob Cherry's slamming blows. But in the middle of the ring he stood his ground. And suddenly the end came.

Thud!

Bob Cherry had failed to land a left to Tom's chin, which Tom had guarded with his right. The Greyfriars man, expecting a hard left to come smashing in at him, brought up his right to meet the supposedly coming blow. But it was Tom Merry's right fist that smashed on to his chin the next moment, thrust forward with every ounce of Tom's strength and weight behind it, without even a momentary drawing back of his right arm to warn Bob Cherry of his danger.

Crash!

Bob Cherry, lifted clean off his feet, toppled over backwards, his arms dropping to his sides. He collapsed in a sprawling heap, and lay still, as Kildare counted him out.

Tom Merry had won his fight!

With three events in the great tournament won by either school, St. Jim's had fought through to the finish!

The fate of the Conway Cup depended on the result of the last contest of the tournament, after all!

The truth about Billy Wragg's responsibility for the mysterious happenings in connection with the Conway Cup that had so excited St. Jim's was never known to most of the fellows.

Tom Merry & Co. kept Billy's secret.

And when, on the following Saturday, the St. Jim's cross-country team won the seven-mile marathon against Greyfriars, and so became winners of the Conway Cup, no one was more delighted than Billy Wragg!

Lord Conway, too, kept Billy's secret. And it was Lord Conway who found the gipsy youngster a post as page-boy in a big London hotel eventually, when Toby Marsh, the School House page, returned to the school after his illness, to resume his old duties.

But it was quite certain that Billy Wragg would never forget his brief career as pageboy at St. Jim's, or the thrilling struggle for the Conway Cup, in which, against his own will, he had so nearly brought about the defeat of the school he had learnt to love!

THE END.

(St. Jim's have won the Conway Cup after all, but what a thrilling fight! Next week you'll laugh till your sides split when you read: "GUSSEY, THE WAITER!")

FURTHER FUN AT ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!

THE CATCH OF THE TERM!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1.

Not Lovell!

"LEAVE Lovell out, for goodness' sake!" said Raby.

"Yes, rather!" said Newcome emphatically.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

It went rather against the grain to leave Lovell out. Lovell was a chum, and a good chum. The Fistical Four of Rookwood were a happy and united company; and generally they had no secrets from one another.

But the three members of the Co., in deep discussion in the end study, agreed unanimously that Lovell had better be left out of this.

The chums of the Classical Fourth were on the warpath. Mr. Manders, the Modern master, was marked out as the victim. The sins of Manders were many and various, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had no doubt that it was up to them to make Manders suffer for his sins. Manders had made the Fistical Four sit up. Manders had to be made to sit up in his turn.

But making a Housemaster sit up was hardly easy. It was hardly safe. It was a matter that required the greatest discretion. Discretion was not counted among Arthur Edward Lovell's many gifts. It was altogether safer to leave out Lovell.

Lovell, in fact, had already tried his hand at making Manders sit up. He had made a ghastly failure of it. He had very nearly got himself sacked from the school. His chums had no doubt that if Lovell tried again, history would repeat itself. In this delicate matter Lovell, for his own sake, had to be left out.

There was a footstep in the Fourth Form passage, and the voices in the end study hushed suddenly as the door opened. Arthur Edward Lovell came in with his heavy tread.

He pitched his bat on the study table, and turned a cheery, ruddy face on his silent chums.

"Glorious day!" said Lovell. "Half-holiday and lovely weather! Every man in the House is out! Even the Modern ticks have all crawled out of their mouldy House. Tommy

Lovell. And that afternoon they had an opportunity of dealing with Manders, which might not recur.

"Well, if you want to go on the river, old chap—" said Jimmy.

"I don't!" contradicted Lovell.

"But you were saying—"

"I was saying that you fellows might go up the river. You don't want to frowst about the study."

Lovell's chums eyed him curiously. Much as they liked Lovell, they preferred his room to his company just at present. Strangely enough, it seemed that Lovell was feeling the same! The proposed trip on the Rook was not, apparently, to include Arthur Edward.

"The fact is, I've got lines to do for Dicky Dalton!" said Lovell. For some reason, Lovell coloured as he made that remark.

"I'm staying in for a bit. You fellows get out."

The three exchanged glances.

This was a chance!

They knew that Lovell had a hundred lines of Virgil to write for Mr. Dalton, though it was odd enough that he should have selected a sunny summer's half-holiday for the task. It was more like Lovell to leave his impots till he had

time, and to get them doubled because he hadn't found time. Still, it was very convenient for his friends. With Lovell safely booked, writing lines, they were free to act. Attention could be paid to the obnoxious Manders before Lovell had finished his lines.

The three rose to their feet.

"Well, if you're going to do lines—" said Jimmy.

"We may as well get out!" remarked Raby.

"Let's!" said Newcome.

"Do you good!" said Lovell. Lovell was the man to utter a word in season, also out of season. "Frowsting about like Tubby Muffin, slacking around like Peele or Gower! For goodness' sake get out into the air!"

The three got out.

They grinned as they walked down the passage.

"All serene now!" said Raby. "That duffer is safe for half an hour, at least—more likely an hour. I feel a bit

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,217.

LOCKED OUT!
Form master finds himself locked out! But the three jokers who have ragged his study find themselves
LOCKED IN!

mean—but it's for Lovell's own sake—he would play the goat if we let him into it."

"Can't risk it," said Newcome. "We don't want Lovell sacked, or flogged. Or ourselves, either."

"Blessed if I like leaving Lovell out," said Jimmy. "But it's a case of needs must! He would make a muck of it somehow, and get us all into the soup. Come on—while the Manders bird is on the wing."

The three juniors hurried out of the House. In the quadrangle they assumed a careless, casual sort of air as they strolled across to the Modern side. Mornington of the Fourth hailed them.

"You men coming on the river?"

"Can't!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Something on! Seen anything of the Manders bird, Morny?"

The chums of the Fourth knew that a "walk" had been arranged that afternoon between Manders and Greely. That was why they had selected that afternoon for dealing with Manders. Lovell had stated that he had seen Manders go. But in such a matter as this, a fellow could not be too sure. Jimmy Silver & Co. were heading for Manders' study, and it would have been rather disastrous to find Manders there, after all.

But Mornington's reply was reassuring.

"He went out with Greely half an hour ago."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the three walked on to Manders' House.

CHAPTER 2.

A Record Rag!

JIMMY SILVER grinned.

Raby and Newcome chuckled.

The thing could not have gone better. It was "pie"—simply pie to the avenging trio.

Manders' House seemed absolutely deserted that afternoon. There was a senior House match on, and all the Fifth and Sixth who were not playing cricket were gathered to watch it, with hardly an exception. Juniors, of course, were not likely to stay indoors on a glorious sunny half-holiday. One or two fellows might have been in their studies; but not a single soul was visible when the three Classics strolled into the Modern House.

Not an eye fell on them as they whipped into Mr. Manders' study, and closed the door after them.

No wonder they grinned and chuckled.

Manders' study was at their mercy; and Manders safely off the scene for a long time to come. Lovell, whose assistance would probably have caused disaster, was safe in the end study, over the way, doing his lines. All was clear!

"Get going!" said Jimmy.

"What-ho!" chuckled Raby.

And the three got going, with promptness and dispatch.

Manders' uncommonly tidy study grew rapidly into an uncommonly untidy one.

In such matters Jimmy Silver & Co. knew exactly what to do and how to do it. They were past-masters in the gentle art of ragging.

Orderly piles of papers—papers that contained scientific problems liable to make a fellow's head ache simply to look at them—were scattered over the study like leaves in Vallambrosa of old.

Gum was poured into the inkwell on the writing-table. Room was made for the gum, by the simple process of scattering the ink over the papers already scattered on the floor.

A large bottle of red ink in the cupboard was a valuable find. Jimmy Silver did not trouble to draw the cork. He knocked off the neck as if it had been a bottle of champagne instead of red ink. Then, with a sweep of the arm, he streamed the contents over the table, the chairs, and the walls. Mr. Manders' study became, so to speak, a study in scarlet.

By this time the cheery ragers were warming to the work. They were beginning to enjoy life.

Books were hooked out of the bookcase and off the shelves. They were hurled in all directions. The study clock was filled with soot from the chimney; and as there was plenty of soot, some happy moments were spent in lathering it over the furniture. It stuck to the wet ink quite nicely.

A quarter of an hour made a vast difference to the tidiest study in all Rookwood School.

It did not look a tidy study now. It looked as if three or four hurricanes had struck it at once.

The feelings of Roger Manders when he should once more behold that study could scarcely be imagined.

Manders, it was certain, would raise Cain. But as no clue was left by the ragers the cheery Classics were prepared to let him raise Cain to any extent he liked. In fact, they rather looked forward to seeing the antics of Manders.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,217.

Jimmy Silver glanced round the havocked study, breathing rather hard.

"That's done!" he said.

It was done, that was a certainty. The only doubt was whether it had not been over-done.

"What about having the legs off the table?" asked Raby. Evidently Raby had thoroughly warmed to the work.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"There's a limit, old man! Better clear, I think! But, for goodness' sake, make sure we've left nothing to give us away!"

"That's all right! Lovell would have dropped a hanky with his initials on it, or signed his name in the ink!" chuckled Newcome. "Thank goodness we left Lovell safe at home!"

"Hark!" breathed Jimmy Silver, his heart giving a sudden and very unpleasant jump.

There was a footstep in the passage. It was approaching rather rapidly the door of the study.

The three juniors stood quite still.

They looked at one another with almost ghastly faces. It couldn't be Manders—it couldn't! Manders could not possibly have got back from his walk yet! But it was somebody, and if the ragers were caught in the room with the room in its present state their doom was sealed. It meant a Head's flogging; and not a common or garden flogging, so to speak; but the stiffest flogging ever administered by Dr. Chisholm's muscular arm.

For an instant the hapless ragers stood rooted. The footsteps came along, clearer and clearer, nearer and nearer.

Was the brute, whoever he was, going to pass the study? Or was he coming there to see Manders? A Modern prefect, perhaps—perhaps Knowles or Catesby—

"Cover!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

There was a large screen in the study. It had been overturned and trodden on. Swiftly Jimmy Silver lifted it and placed it across a corner of the room. Swiftly the three juniors backed out of sight behind it.

It was a respite, at least.

If someone had come to see Manders, whoever it was would see that the study had been ragged. But he would not see the ragers. After he was gone they could escape. It was a chance, at least.

The footsteps stopped.

As the Classical juniors had dreaded, they stopped at Manders' door. The door handle turned.

Jimmy Silver & Co., with their hearts thumping like pistons, crouched in the dusky corner behind the screen. They hoped for the best, but their hopes were almost at zero.

CHAPTER 3.

Lovell Does the Trick!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL looked at his watch, laid down his pen, and rose from the table in the end study on the Classical side.

Lovell had not finished his lines. Neither had Lovell any intention of finishing them at present.

Lovell was being rather deep and diplomatic this afternoon. He was going for Manders, but he was going for him on his own, without a word to the doubtful chums who could not, or would not, see that Lovell was the man for the job.

Arthur Edward Lovell strolled out of the House with his hands in his pockets. He sauntered across to Manders' House with an air of carelessness that would certainly have drawn suspicious eyes on him had anyone happened to observe him. Fortunately, no one did.

Manders' House was still in the same state of quiet and solitude as when Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome had entered. There was absolutely not a single soul about. Lovell grinned and walked in.

Once inside the House his careless air left him. In the enemy's territory it behoved him to lose no time.

He walked quickly down the passage to Manders' study.

Manders was out, and the study, of course, would be empty. That three Classical juniors were there, listening to his approaching footsteps in fear and trembling, naturally never occurred to Lovell. So far as he knew Jimmy Silver & Co. were safe on the river.

He reached Manders' door, and stopped.

He turned the door-handle.

He did not enter the study.

That was not Lovell's intention. His powerful brain had worked, but not to the extent of planning a ragging of Manders' room. His idea was simpler than that.

He opened the door only a few inches, reached inside



Mr. Manders snorted; something seemed to be amiss with the door. He pushed and shoved, and then snapped his teeth!

with his right hand, extracted the key from the inner side of the lock and closed the door again.

He had not even looked into the study. All he wanted was the key.

That key he pushed into the outside of the lock. He turned it, pulled it out, and slipped it into his pocket.

He suppressed a chuckle as he walked away.

Manders' door was locked, and the key was gone. When Manders came in he would find himself locked out of his study. Lovell, picturing the astonishment, the irritation, the rage, of the Modern master, finding himself locked out of his study, suppressed his merriment with difficulty as he walked out of the House.

He walked out swiftly. There would be no end of a row about the locking-out of Manders; and had a Classical junior been seen about the House, that Classical junior certainly would have been suspected.

Lovell breathed more freely when he was on the safe side of the quadrangle once more.

He went in, grinning, for his bat, and strolled down to Little Side, to join the cricketers there. If the Co. were there, instead of on the river, he had something to tell them now. But the Co. were not there.

A good many fellows, however, noticed the beaming satisfaction in Arthur Edward's countenance. And Lovell, of course, was not the fellow to hide his light under a bushel. He had scored over Manders; he had brought off the coup successfully; and he was the man to tell the world about it—at least, the Classical world.

"What's up?" asked Conroy of the Fourth. "You look frightfully bucked."

Lovell chuckled.

"I've rather scored off the Manders bird," he said negligently.

"Put your foot in it this time?" asked Putty of the Fourth.

Lovell glared.

"Well, you remember what happened last time," chortled Jones minor. "Bet you there'll be a row!"

"Well, what's the jolly old game?" asked Conroy.

"What do you think Manders will feel like when he comes in and finds his study locked and the key missing?" asked Lovell.

"Oh, my hat! You haven't—"

"I jolly well have!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Classicals.

Lovell drew Mr. Manders' study doorknob from his pocket. He held it up to the admiring view of the grinning Classicals. Then, with a swing of his arm, he sent it whizzing away over the Rookwood beeches.

"That's that!" he remarked.

"Who saw you doing it?" grinned Putty.

"Nobody!" roared Lovell. "Think I'm an ass? I wasn't ten ticks in the House—just nipped in, locked the door, and bagged the key! And I can tell you that Manders will be hopping outside the study and raising the roof—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get to the cricket! I'd jolly well like to see old Manders hop, when he can't get into his study. But I'm jolly well going to give the Modern side a wide berth. The Modern ticks can have Manders all to themselves. He will be wild!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell quite enjoyed the cricket. He had the happy feeling of good work well done. When he went back to the end study at tea-time he hoped that his chums had come in from the river. He wanted to tell them about it. But Jimmy and Raby and Newcome had not come in yet!

CHAPTER 4.

Trapped!

"O H dear!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh thump!"

Three hapless raggies, in Mr. Manders' study, on the Modern side, looked at one another and groaned in chorus.

It was awful—really awful!

Crouched in the corner behind the screen, Jimmy Silver & Co. had scarcely breathed when the study door was opened. They were certain that it could not be Manders, but they expected to hear exclamations of surprise, of horror, from some Modern prefect, when he saw the dismantled state of the study. Instead of which, they heard the door close immediately after it had opened, and heard the key turn in the lock, followed by the sound of rapidly retreating footsteps.

"Oh lor'!" moaned Newcome.

Raby merely groaned.

Jimmy Silver stepped to the window. A desperate thought was in his mind of escape that way. But the window was high from the ground, and it was in full view of a dozen other windows. It was in full view of the quadrangle, and the quad was by no means deserted, like the House. Carthew of the Sixth could be seen reading a novel under the beeches. Half a dozen juniors were collected round Sergeant Kettle's tuckshop, in the far corner. Mr. Dalton, Master of the Fourth, was pacing the Beech Walk, in sedate conversation with Flinders, a Modern master. Fellows would not have been noticed going in or out of the House by the door. But it was absolutely certain that any fellow who climbed out of a front window of the House would be spotted instantly.

There was no escape that way! Getting out of the window was simply hastening discovery.

Jimmy Silver turned back and looked at his comrades. They looked at him.

"Manders won't be back yet," said Jimmy at last.

"He will be back for tea!" groaned Raby.

"What blithering idiot locked that door?" snapped Newcome.

"What born fool came along and locked that door?"

"Some fatheaded Modern tick, playing a trick on Manders! If we'd only known that it wasn't a master or a prefect!" groaned Jimmy. "But who could have guessed?"

He glanced from the window again. It was hopeless. He tried the door once more. It was as firm as a rock.

"Oh crickey!" said Jimmy. "Keep smiling," was Jimmy's motto; but for once even Uncle James of Rookwood could not smile. The situation was too awful for that.

"What on earth's going to be done?" asked Newcome at last.

"We are," said Raby, with a ghastly grin. "Brown!"

"If I could get near enough to punch that idiot who's locked us in the study—" snapped Newcome.

"He couldn't have known anybody was here!" moaned Raby. "Somebody playing a trick on Manders while he's out—same as we are! I—I say, I—I wonder if we could get up the chimney?"

It was a desperate suggestion, and not acted upon. Really and truly, there was no escape by that sooty route.

But to wait there for Manders was too fearful! Jimmy Silver gave a desperate wrench at the door. He tried the

He raised the lock and turned the handle. But that was all. He heard the door shut behind the fender.

"Hallo, somebody's coming!" cried Baby. "Somebody's heard that row."

There were footsteps in the passage. No doubt fellows were coming in to tea by that time. Jimmy's exploits with the poker certainly had made rather a noise while they lasted.

"It was here!" They heard the voice of Knowles of the Modern Sixth. "Can't make it out. Somebody's banging."

"Manders is out," said another voice. "Can't be anybody here."

"Well, it sounded like it." The door, of course, did not open. Jimmy Silver & Co. stood silent.

Tap! Tap! Knowles was knocking. "Are you here, sir?"

"I tell you he's gone out, Knowles!" said Cateby. "Well, there seems to be nobody there," said Knowles.

"Can't make it out. The door's locked. Manders must have taken the key with him. Still, I'm certain it came from his study."

The two Modern seniors walked away. Jimmy peered from the window again. A tall, thin, angular figure was in sight in the distance, walking by the side of portly Mr. Greely, from the direction of the gates.

Jimmy turned a dismal face on his chums. "Manders!" he said faintly.

"Oh, holy smoke!"

The game was up now, that was a certainty. Jimmy signed to his chums, and they began to set the study in order, as much as they could. But there was not a lot they could do in the way of undoing their deadly work. They picked up furniture, books, papers, and replaced them. But they could not pick up and replace soot, and ashes, and cinders, and ink, red and black. They took the edge off the ragging, as it were. But mops and mops, soap and scrubbing-brushes, were needed to restore Manders' study to anything like its pristine state.

"Here he comes!" breathed Newton, as there was a sound of jerky footsteps in the passage.

The three juniors scarcely breathed. The door was locked, but Roger Manders, of course, would get in, sooner or later. He might even have a spare key in his pocket. Jimmy Silver pointed silently to the screen in the corner. It was a last resource. There was a faint, slight, remote possibility of keeping in cover till a chance came to dodge

out. Slight as the chance was, it was all that remained to the unhappy raggers.

They squeezed themselves in the corner behind the screen. The jerky footsteps stopped at the door.

CHAPTER 5.

For It!

MR. MANDERS snorted.

He was annoyed.

His walk with Mr. Greely had tired him. So had Greely's conversation. He had arrived in an irritable temper.

It was, therefore, exasperating to Manders to find that his study door would not open. He turned the door-handle and pushed. He shoved and he wrenched. The door remained fast.

Manders snorted, and snorted again. Something seemed to be amiss with the door. It was intensely irritating.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Manders angrily. "Upon my word! The door will not open! Why will not the door open? Upon my word!"

He pushed, shoved, wrenched, and snapped his teeth. Three hidden juniors in the study listened and quaked. Mr. Manders' ejaculations showed that he was getting steam up.

"Knowles!" They heard Mr. Manders call. "Knowles! Will you see if you can open this door? Something appears to be wrong with it. It is very extraordinary—very!"

"Certainly, sir! But haven't you the key?"

"The key? No! The door is not locked."

"It was locked some time ago, sir. I heard a noise in the study, and came along, and the door was locked."

"Locked! It cannot be locked! How could the door be locked? Who could have locked it? Do you mean that someone is in my study, Knowles?" Manders snapped and snorted. "No one would have the impertinence, the impudence, to lock himself in my study, I presume."

"It's locked, sir," said Knowles, testing the door. "The keyhole seems to be empty—the key's gone."

"Upon my word! The key was left in the lock, as usual. Are you sure that the key is gone, Knowles?"

"I can't see anything of it, sir." Knowles was evidently peering in at the keyhole. "Yes. It's gone."

Manders breathed wrath.

"Then someone has locked my door and taken away the key. A prank—a trick—a practical joke—a—a—upon my word! Fortunately, I have another key. But the rascal—the scoundrel—who has played this—this wretched trick—"

Manders' crusty voice ceased; and there was a sound of a key being inserted on the outside of the lock. The powerful intellect of Arthur Edward Lovell had not envisaged the possibility, or, rather, the probability, that Manders had his spare key on his key-ring.

Lovell's jape, such as it was, had caused Manders a few minutes of irritation. It had not caused the forcing of the study door, and excitement all over Manders House, as Arthur Edward had joyfully anticipated. It had simply caused Manders to sort out his key-ring. Apart, of course, from what it had caused for Jimmy Silver & Co. The door flew open.

Manders strode in, with his jerky steps and irritated face. The next moment he stopped dead.

The extraordinary state of his study

(Continued on page 23.)



Knowles grasped the screen and pulled it aside. Three dismayed Classical juniors were revealed!

CONTINUING OUR THRILLING SERIAL.

THE ISLAND CASTAWAYS!



(Opening Chapters
re-told on page 26.)

twisting snake-like over the top.

It was mother who broke the awed silence.

"But, my dear boy," she said, "does it really belong to us?"

Dud lit a cigarette, and his hand was a little unsteady.

"It's treasure-trove," he said. "In theory it belongs to the Crown, but in practice the chap who finds it owns it. This lot must be worth thousands. I don't say it will make us rich, but it will make us independent. Of course, you stand in, Matt; in fact, you actually dis—"

"You can wash me out!" drawled Matt. "I've already got more money than I know what to do with. My mother left me half a million dollars, and though I don't suppose you've ever heard of the old dad, he's a millionaire, and I'm his sole heir. Guess it's nothing to swank about, but I just wanted to let you know that the treasure cuts no ice with me, but I'm mighty glad for your sake that we've found it!"

And we could only stare blankly at him.

With the headphones over my ears, I listened intently for a reply to the message I kept tapping out on the Morse key. It was four days since we had discovered the buried treasure, and Matt Kay Lee had been with us over a week, but we had not seen a sign of a ship or picked up any message from one.

Matt had been so confident that it would only be a matter of waiting on the island for a few days that we had all become unsettled and could not settle down. We had lost the excitement of building a new home and preparing for a long stay, and since the discovery of the treasure we were all the keener to be taken off. Dud knew he could achieve his ambition of becoming a partner in a motor business, whilst I knew that it would now be possible for me to qualify as an electrical engineer, and dad would have no financial worry.

We could return to England infinitely better off than when we had left it, and able to do the sort of things we wanted to do, and we wished that the U.S.A. would

buck up and send a destroyer somewhere reasonably near our neighbourhood.

Dud came in.

"Nothing doing?"

I shook my head.

"I'm going to try to get Daventry now. It will be about their nine o'clock news time over there."

Although the old set was a dud transmitter it was a jolly good receiver, and unless conditions were very bad

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Alarms!

JILL wanted to break the chest open, but Dud pointed out that such an old chest, in such wonderful preservation, would be of great historical value; that it would be a pity to damage it. Back in camp we could probably wangle the padlocks open—or, anyway, file through them. We put the chest on the carrier of the Moonbeam, and I reckon it was all she wanted, even for that short journey over the sand.

As we drove back I thought what a picture it would make. The posh saloon car—more fitted for Hyde Park than a Pacific island—four perspiring, excited castaways inside her with picks, shovels, and revolvers, and a treasure chest on the luggage carrier, not even secured by a solitary rope.

It was dad who wangled the padlocks; and then for a moment we all seemed afraid to lift the lid. But Dud, with a grim, set face, pulled it back, and then we all gave a little gasp.

It was pirates' treasure all right—a mass of golden Spanish coins; gold plates and goblets; huge, dazzling, sparkling jewels, with a wonderfully wrought gold chain

**Six boatloads of hungry cannibals
get indigestion when they tackle the
Island Castaways!**

we could generally rely upon picking up the Daventry station; and the moment I tuned in the announcer was describing some exciting scene in Parliament. Then came the news of the death of some apparently famous musician, though I had never heard of him, and then Dud listened with interest to some new record set up at Brooklands.

"The missing airman," said the cultured voice, speaking thousands of miles away—and we both sat up, listening intently. "A message from New York to-night states the destroyers which have been searching for Kay Lee, the young American airman, who was attempting a solo flight round the world, have found no trace of his machine. There seems little or no doubt that he perished in the violent gale of a week ago, and further search has been abandoned!"

The cultured voice, speaking in a broadcasting studio in London, thousands of miles away, went on with some other item of news, but the message was a mere jumble of words to me. We sat there, Dud and I, with the headphones over our ears, looking at each other with blank dismay; and instead of the voice of the distant announcer those words of my brother, spoken a few days ago, were ringing in my ears.

"If we're not found now, with the Press of the world screaming about the missing airman, it's heavy odds on us being here for the remainder of our lives!"

For a moment I felt absolutely down and out. Before the arrival of Matt I had never really worried about being rescued—we had been busy digging ourselves in on the island; the prospect of spending even a year or so there had not really been unpleasant—but with the arrival of the plane and the discovery of the buried treasure the whole outlook had changed.

Not only had we learnt to expect rescue at any moment, but we now had enough money to gratify our ambitions. A return to civilisation would now be a very different thing from what it would have been a couple of weeks ago.

Dud took off his headphones.

"Well, old lad," he said calmly—and his lean, tanned face was grim—"our only hope now is that trading steamer which occasionally puts in at the island where Man Sunday hails from. We must conserve the wireless until we can spot something in the distance, and then pound out a message for all we're worth."

I switched off the set.

"Look here, Dud," I said, "the only thing is to tell the others. It's no use going on like this, letting them expect to be rescued at any moment. Everyone is unsettled; it's like losing interest in a house when you know you're going to move. We've got to settle down to it, plant potatoes and corn, raise poultry, and make the best of things, and I vote we go and tell them now."

Dud shrugged his shoulders.

"It will be a big jar for young Matt Kay Lee—he was so confident of being taken off—but you're right, Barry, it's the only thing. We should go potty just hanging about with little or nothing to do."

We found the others, and Dud bluntly told them of the news we'd just received over the wireless. Dad affected a concern, but I really believe he was quite bucked about it; I'm sure he loved being sort of monarch of all he surveyed. I suppose it was natural, for all his life he'd been under other people, and though he did not yelp about it I fancy he'd had a pretty worrying old time.

Mother gave a little sigh. Jill looked dismayed for a tick, and then said philosophically that after all we were no worse off than we'd been before Matt arrived.

And the millionaire's son just stroked his chin.

"I guess your folks at Daventry have got it all wrong," he drawled. "They sure don't know dad. Maybe the Navy Department of the U.S.A. have decided that I'm deep in the depths, but I don't believe dad will give up so easily. You see, I matter a good deal to the old man, and, unless he's been convinced, I guess it's safe to say that officials at Washington are going to be worried stiff."

There was something in his quiet confidence which evidently pleased my pretty sister, for I saw her give the young American an admiring glance.

"But you know the ways of Governments, Lee?" said dad.

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"No, not a lot, sir," replied Matt Kay Lee; "but I guess I know the ways of my father!"

"Well, I hope you're right, my boy, and that your father will be able to persuade them to continue the search; but this seems to be the position—we must not rely upon an early rescue; we must settle down to our old life here, and, whilst hoping for the best, prepare for the worst!"

We all agreed that that was sound, and the next morning we got seriously to work. Dad and my brother, with the assistance of Sunday, started on the work of clearing ground for the cultivation of crops. Jill was to help mother in getting things straight again in the camp, and Matt and I were detailed to go and sink a pump we'd brought off the Maglo into the spring in the jungle from which we got our fresh water.

Ever since we had discovered our water supply dad had been keen on fitting the pump and running a hose to a sixty-gallon cistern in the camp, so that we could pump the water direct to the camp instead of having to make the wearying journey with pails to and from the spring. If after its journey through the hose and standing in the tank it should be unfit for drinking, it would at least be all right for domestic purposes.

In the middle of our midday meal Sunday came dashing in. He had picked up a few words of English and was inordinately proud of them, but now his slight knowledge of our language seemed to have deserted him, he was trembling like a leaf, and his eyes rolled with fear as he jabbered away and pointed out to sea.

We all rushed out from our shelter, known as the dining-room, and there in the distance, being rowed rapidly towards us, were six long canoes, crowded with natives.

We were in for another attack from Sunday's tribesmen! Faced with such overwhelming odds that I doubted if we could have withstood them even had we possessed an up-to-date machine-gun.

Dud was the first to speak.

"Look here, Matt! It was your plane that saved us last time, and it strikes me that it's our only chance now. If those brutes land it will be all U.P. with us!"

Matt stroked his chin.

"But I don't get you. What can I do?"

"Take one of us up, and attack them over the water!" came the swift reply.

We knew from the previous visit that the natives possessed at least one modern sporting rifle, and that they might be pretty deadly against an aeroplane flying low enough to be able to pick off anyone in the canoes. But we also knew that Matt was a deadly shot, that the plane itself tended to have a terrifying effect upon the enemy, and that, anyway, it seemed our only chance, and there was certainly no time to lose.

"I'll take Barry," said Matt. "You understand swinging the prop, Dad. Look here! Whilst we're getting the machine ready, Mr. Mayne, will you and Heroic Herbert there get some fairly hefty lumps of rock. They won't be exactly equal to a real honest to goodness bomb, but I guess that twenty pounds of rock dropped from five or six hundred feet into a frail canoe, is going to damage it some! But say, look slippery! We don't want survivors swimming ashore!"

Jill turned pale, but she pulled herself together, and went to help dad and Sunday collect our primitive bombs, whilst mother set about conveying some necessities into the very rough-and-ready fort we had built, and which, since its use as a fort during the last attack, had been occupied by the now terrified native.

Dud, Matt, and I made for the plane. With the small amount of petrol left in her tank we knew we'd got to make a quick job of it, and that we were taking a pretty big risk in going up at all on such a job.

"That's a bright idea of yours about the rocks," said Dud, as we wheeled the machine round on to a stretch of sand

facing the sea. "Take your revolver, Barry, but don't waste ammunition. Matt's the boy to pick off the sportsmen with rifles, whilst you drop your bombs, and for pity's sake don't either of you be squeamish. You must treat them as beasts. If I see any of them swimming for shore I shall pot them off with as little compunction as I would one of those crocodiles in the creek!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Young BARRY MAYNE, in company with his mother and father, his elder brother, DUDLEY, and his sister, JILL, are wrecked on a Pacific island. Salvaging a car, together with some provisions, Barry and Dud tour the island and discover a skeleton buried in the sand. After many unsuccessful attempts, Barry succeeds in getting a transmitting wireless set working. Later, during the eruption of a volcano on the island, the Castaways come across a native, who informs them that a cannibal tribe may arrive at any moment. Sure enough the cannibals arrive, but turn tail when an aeroplane suddenly appears. It is piloted by Kay Lee, a young American, who has run short of petrol. Three days later, the Castaways discover a brass-bound chest buried in the sand.

(Now continue the story as told by Barry himself.)

I gave a little shudder and Matt looked a bit queer.

"I guess it sounds a bit awful!" he said, a little hoarsely.

Dud's lean, tanned face was grim.

He went off to help with the rocks whilst Matt and I busied ourselves with the machine.

Your brother's rather wonderful," said Matt, and I think I gave a rather hysterical laugh. At home old Dud had been a failure, sacked from job after job, said to lack concentration and enterprise, a wash-out—the "Dud"—and here was this wealthy young American, a famous flying man, making orders from him, admiring him, and old Dud as cool and collected and as hard as some experienced soldier. It was funny, really, but I'd no time to think about it then. I climbed up into the seat behind the pilot's cockpit, and stowed as many hefty pieces of rock as Matt thought safe to take, at my feet. Matt climbed in and took the controls, his revolver handy to his right hand. Dud pulled over the propeller, sucking in the mixture to the cylinders.

"Contact!" called Matt.

I had never been up in a plane before, but somehow I wasn't thinking or marvelling in the least about the experience. My mind was upon those crowded canoes out at sea and the ghastly work we had got to do, or suffer a more ghastly fate ourselves.

I saw the propeller fly round, and then the engine broke into life with a terrific din. The machine was trembling and then moving swiftly forward over the sand.

We skimmed over the surface of the water, racing towards the canoes, and then began to rise. I was close enough to see the paddles lose their rhythmical swing as the rowers gazed at the plane rushing noisily towards them.

"Stand by to drop a brick!" shouted Matt over his shoulder. "I'm going for the leading canoe. If that goes down there'll probably be a panic."

I stooped and picked up a lump of rock, which I reckoned must have weighed well over twenty pounds, and the plane was rising steadily.

Bang!

A puff of smoke came from the stern of the leading canoe, and it looked as though the chief in command was taking a pot-shot at what appeared to him to be some terrifying species of monster mechanical bird; but if his rifle carried to us, he certainly did not make a hit. The shot had the effect of nerving me for the job we'd got on hand. They were the aggressors, out for plunder and killing.

"Wait for the word go!" shouted Matt. "I'm going to take a pot at that sportsman with the rifle."

His hand went over the side, I heard the sharp crack of the revolver, and then I saw the next to naked man in the stern of the canoe, who had been standing up to take another shot, drop his rifle into the sea, topple sideways, and follow it.

"Now!" shouted Matt.

We were almost over the packed canoe, and I dropped the lump of rock.

Crash!

The rock had gone clean through the canoe, killing or maiming a couple of savages in the process, and the next moment there was a struggling brown mass in the water.

Whirr! Zoooooom!

Round came the plane, banking beautifully.

Bang!

A bullet went through a wing, decidedly too close to be pleasant, but Matt's revolver barked out, and the man who had fired the shot pitched with his rifle into the sea, and at Matt's command I dropped another of our primitive bombs. This time I had been a little slower at the job, and



It was pirates' treasure indeed! Golden coins and jewels lay there, sparkling in the sun!

the rock fell into the sea beside the canoe, covering the occupants with spray and smashing a paddle.

"Quick! Up with another! Now!"

Down it crashed on the stern of the next canoe, the bows shot upwards, brown figures went tumbling, and the next instant were struggling in the sea, and it was clear that few of the natives were expert swimmers.

The canoes were trying to get away; the survivors of the two we had sunk were trying to clamber into another already overcrowded. I landed a rock on the guwale, wood cracked, and the canoe went over amid unearthly yells. At the same moment, Matt, leaning out, shot the chief of the canoe just in front.

And then I saw something triangular speeding through the water towards the scene just as I had dropped a heavy rock on the screaming, struggling mass in another canoe. It was the dorsal fin of a shark, and it was followed by another and another.

I leant forward.

"We can't sink any more, Matt!" I yelled, and my voice sounded thin to my ears. "Sharks, man! We can't do it!"

"I guess your brother knows his job, Barry, but we'll let the two canoes go. They won't stomach another go at us after this, even if they've got the men and canoes. Petrol's running low, too. We've done our job, and we'll get back!"

We roared above the other canoes, with the rowers paddling away for dear life and making no attempt to help the men in the water. We both fired into the packed canoes so that they might take home a few wounded as a lesson to those at home, and then headed for the island two or three miles away, and I noticed that Matt was climbing.

And then the engine misfired, and I leant over to Matt:

"Does that mean finish petrol?"

"Yes," he said grimly. "The thing is, does it mean finish us? I'm only eight hundred feet up, and it's going to be touch-and-go whether we make the island!"

(Will Matt and Barry succeed in reaching the island in safety? Don't miss the next instalment of this thrilling narrative. It's a wow!)

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THE CATCH of the TERM!

(Continued from page 24.)

struck him like a cannon-ball. He stopped, stared, and gasped. For some moments he could hardly believe his eyes. He knew that a cyclone could not have struck his study in his absence. But it looked like it.

"G-g-g good heavens!" gurgled Mr. Manders.
"What is the matter, sir? Oh, great 'jumping Moses!'" gasped Knowles, staring in at the doorway.

Manders stuttered.
"Look! Look at my study! My papers—my books—soot—ink—outrageous—gum—horrible! Ink—upon my word! Who has done this?"

"Three wretched juniors, who could have answered that question easily, were careful to keep awfully quiet. The screen barely hid the three. They crouched and quivered.

"It's a rag, sir!" gasped Knowles.

"A—a—a rag? It is an outrage!" shrieked Mr. Manders.
"He—they—shall be flogged. I—I—I will—!" Manders choked. "He—they—must have done this, and locked the door after leaving. Did you not see—or hear—?"

"No, sir!" gasped Knowles. "I've been at the cricket. But—the noise I heard—I'm sure somebody was in the study when I found the door locked—I feel sure of that now. They may be still here."

"Nonsense! How could they be still here, when the door was locked and the key gone? Nevertheless, search the study, Knowles—search it thoroughly—lose no time—"

"There was only one spot in the study where anyone could be hidden from sight. Knowles grasped the screen and pulled it aside.

Three dismayed Classical juniors were revealed.

They did not speak. Their feelings were beyond speech. Besides, there was nothing to say. The circumstances spoke for themselves. They only gazed dismally at Roger Manders, as fascinated rabbits might have gazed at a serpent.

Mr. Manders jumped at the sight of them.

"Silver—Raby—Newcome!" he articulated. "You! You here! You—you have done this! You—you—you—!" Manders gurgled. "You—you—you—!"

Raby gave a groan. Jimmy and Newcome were silent. They were "for it" now. All they could do was to screw up their courage to the sticking point, and go through it. The rag was an awful frost; although Lovell had been left out. After the feast came the reckoning.

Manders gurgled for some moments. Knowles grinned. Manders found his voice again at last.

"Silver, Raby, Newcome! Follow me! I shall take you directly to your headmaster! Follow me!"

Three dismal juniors followed Mr. Manders from the study. They followed him from the House. They trailed across the quad at the heels of Manders. Fifty pairs of eyes were turned on them. Astonished glances followed them into the Head's House. In the deepest depths of woe the three wretched raggers trailed after Manders into Dr. Chisholm's study.

The Head gave the Modern master and his flock a rather icy glance of inquiry. But when Manders stuttered out an explanation, the Head's brow grew thunderous with wrath. He rose, and selected his stoutest birch. And then—

Let us draw a veil, as a novelist would say, over the painful scene. It was painful—frightfully painful. The

Head looked tired when he had finished. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked, and felt, more than tired. They felt that life was scarcely worth living. Even Manders thought that they had had enough! Jimmy Silver & Co. thought that they had had too much—much too much. After it was over they crept away from the Head's study, quite crumpled up.

Arthur Edward Lovell smiled.
The door of the end study opened, and his friends came in.

They came in very quietly, strangely subdued. They walked delicately, like Agag of old. Lovell did not, for the moment, notice anything special. He was too full of his own merry satisfaction. He grinned as they came in, in anticipation of the roars of laughter that were going to be evoked by his description of his joke on Manders.

"You fellows are rather late for tea," he began.
There was no answer. Raby drifted dismally to the window, and leaned there. Newcome leaned on the mantelpiece. Jimmy Silver sat down—and jumped up again very hurriedly.

"Had a good time on the river?" said Lovell. Without waiting for a reply he went on: "I've been rather busy while you fellows have been out. I can tell you I wasn't doing lines all the time. Ha, ha, ha!" Lovell roared. "I've jolly well got back on Manders."

"Manders?" groaned Jimmy Silver.
"You don't seem very backed. I can tell you I've pulled the old bird's leg!" chorled Lovell. "He was out this afternoon—"

"I know," said Jimmy, in a hollow voice.

"Well, while he was out, I nipped into Manders' House—and what do you think I jolly well did?" chuckled Lovell.

Three juniors started, and stared at Lovell. An awful suspicion flashed into three minds at once. They did not speak.

"I jolly well bagged his key, and locked his study door, and chucked the key away!" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Still the three did not speak. They only gazed at Lovell. Stolidly they gazed at the hilarious Arthur Edward.

"He'll be in soon—I dare say he's in now," resumed Lovell. "He won't be able to get into his study. He will rave! He will hop! He will roar! You know old Manders! He will—I say, is anything up with you fellows?" asked Lovell. It dawned even upon Arthur Edward, at last, that his comrades were giving him very strange looks.

"You!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You!" said Raby.

"You!" said Newcome.

It was not till afterwards, some time afterwards, that Arthur Edward Lovell learned why his comrades and study-mates flew at him like tigers. At that moment he was taken quite by surprise, and quite at a loss to know why Jimmy and Raby and Newcome seized him, banged him on the floor, rolled him over, thumped him, barged his head into the coalbox, ragged and scragged him, and finally hurled him forth from the study in a sprawling, gasping, breathless, astounded heap.

The door of the end study banged after him. And the most amazed fellow at Rookwood sprawled in the passage, and gasped and gasped and gasped as if he would never leave off gasping.

(Lovell has only made matters worse, so the Fistical Four are sure to have another go at Mr. Manders! Read next week's ripping fine Rookwood yarn and see what happens!)

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Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Sydney, June 13th, 1931.