

THRILLING COMPLETE YARN OF SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE!

SEE
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CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS—
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



HERE IS A FINE YARN OF THRILLS AND FOOTBALL, FEATURING—

The MYSTERY FOOTBALLER!



Jack Blake is worried, and when he decides to forget his worries for a bit and see a football match, he hardly expects that this match will solve all his troubles. But it does!

CHAPTER 1. Family Troubles!

JACK BLAKE of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's sat in his study in the School House with his elbow resting on the table and his chin resting in his hand.

His eyes were fixed straight before him, with an unseeing gaze. His boyish face was wrinkled. He was in deep thought—so deep that he did not hear a footstep at the door or look up when a newcomer glanced inside the study.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the ejaculation in great surprise.

As a rule, Jack Blake's face was as sunny as any in the school, and such an attack of deep and painful thought was so unusual with him that D'Arcy stared at him for some moments in astonishment.

Then he advanced into the study, but even then Blake did not look up.

"I say, deah boy—"

Blake glanced up at last.

"Hallo, Gus!"

He spoke in such a listless and dispirited fashion that the amazement of Arthur Augustus increased.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boy?"

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Blake did not reply. The swell of St. Jim's looked greatly concerned. In spite of the chipping to which Arthur Augustus was frequently subjected by his chums in Study No. 6, there was a very real friendship between them.

"I say, Blake, this is wotten, you know. You look as if you were in twouble."

Blake grunted.

"Is it tin, deah boy? If you are bwoke, and in want of tin, I twust that you will not forget me. I had a fivah from my govannah yesterday—"

"It's not that."

D'Arcy wrinkled his brows in thought. He could not imagine what the trouble was, if it wasn't that, but he was very sympathetic, and he tried to work it out. And suddenly a bright idea struck him.

"Ah! I wathah think I know."

Blake started.

"You don't know anything about it, old son."

"Yaas, I wathah think I do, Blake. I felt exactly like that when it happened to me. Your tailah has disappointed you."

Jack Blake could not help grinning.

"No, Gussy, there are worse troubles even than that."

D'Arcy's brows wrinkled up again in an intense effort of thought.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see what gweatah twouble there can be, short of the death of a near welation," he said.

By Martin Clifford.

"But can I help you, deah boy? In a case of doubt, you know, you can always wely upon me to tell you what's the pwopah thing to do."

"I'm afraid you can't, Gus. I've had a letter from my father—"

"Well, old chap, I suppose that's a bothah; but, weally, you know, fathahs get into the habit of witin' to a fellow at school. It's best to set aside an hour on one evenin' in the week for wepyin', and then you get it off your mind. Besides, I have no doubt your governah means well."

Blake smiled faintly.

"It's not that, Gussy—it's bad news from home. My brother Frank—did you know him?"

"Yaas, wathah! I had the pleasuah of makin' his acquaintance when we went to see a football match last year."

"Yes, I remember. Frank is a born footballer, and that's the cause of the row, I believe. He's bolted!"

"Bai Jove! Bolted!"

"Yes," said Blake miserably. "Bunked!"

"Bolted f'rom home," said D'Arcy, looking shocked. "Weally, Blake, it's wathah bad form for a fellow to bolt f'rom home."

"There's been a row," said Blake. "Frank's taken the bit in his teeth and bolted. Dad doesn't go deep into it, but I believe the footer was at the bottom of it. You see, Frank was bent on playing as an amateur for the Millfield United—that's the League team of our part at home in Yorkshire, you know. Dad was against it. I thought they had patched it up somehow, but now—"

Blake did not finish. But he looked intensely miserable. D'Arcy tapped him on the shoulder.

"Buck up, deah boy! Couwage! How long has he been gone?"

"A fortnight or more. Dad wouldn't have told me, only I wrote to Frank, you see, and I was expecting an answer. Dad says nothing has been heard of him since he went, but he hopes he will return any day. He doesn't know Frank as well as I do. Frank won't give in. He's obstinate."

"Powwaps it wuns in the family," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, you are wathah obstinate, you know, deah boy. I wish I knew where the weckless boundah was, and I would go and weason with him. You know, my young bwothah Wally wan away f'rom school once, and I know what it's like to be anxious. If you had any ideah where F'rank had gone, we might go and look for him."

Blake shook his head.

"I haven't. I— Hallo, Mellish! What the dickens do you want?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, turning as he saw the cad of the Fourth looking into the study. "What the deuce do you want?"

"Nothing!" said Mellish.

"Take it and go!"

"Oh, don't get ratty! I thought I heard you call me as I passed—"

"(Rot!) said Blake, in his direct way. "You know we didn't! You put your sneaking head in here to listen! Get out!"

"Look here—"

"I am not watty at pwesent, Mellish, but I shall get watty if you do not immediately wetinah," said D'Arcy. "And I warn you that if get watty I shall pwobably lose my tempah and strike you!"

"Oh, go and eat tinkacks!" said Mellish.

"If you are lookin' for a feahful thwashin', Mellish—" But Mellish retired as the swell of St. Jim's took a step towards the door. He chuckled to himself as he went down the corridor. Apparently the cad of the Fourth found something amusing in what he had heard in Study No. 6.

Blake rose from his seat with a heavy sigh.

"Well, it's no good moping, I suppose," he said. "I can't help worrying about Frank. He's an obstinate beggar, you see, and dad's got a temper, too. If I knew where the bounder had bunked to, I'd go and see him and yank him home."

"But you are youngah than he is, Blake?"

"What on earth's that got to do with it?"

"I should certainly wefuse to be yanked home by my youngah brother Wally," said D'Arcy, with dignity; "and I wathah think that F'rank would wefuse you. You could go to him and wespwctfully wewpwsent to him what you thought on the mattah—"

"Rats!"

And Blake left the study, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and his brows contracted with sombre thought.

His appearance attracted more than one curious glance from the juniors of the School House. Blake, though perhaps a little quick-tempered, was the best-natured fellow in the House, with, perhaps, the exception of Tom Merry, and always of a sunny disposition. The clouds on his brow made the fellows wonder what was up; and Blake was not inclined to be talkative about his family troubles, outside his own chums.

But, as it happened, there was another junior who had an explanation all ready for Blake's worried looks; and that junior was Mellish, the cad of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Chips In!

"TOM!"
Tom Merry did not appear to hear; at all events, he did not look up from the "Wayland Chronicle," which he was perusing with great and intense interest.

"Tom Merry!"

"Yes, what's the row?" said Tom Merry, still reading. "Go on—I can read at the same time. Monty."

Monty Lowther reached across and jerked the paper out of Tom's hand.

"No, you can't," he said cheerfully. "And you can't possibly be interested in a local rag, anyway. What on earth do you want to read the 'Wayland Chronicle' for? What do you care for the price of cattle at Wayland Market?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not much, but—"

"Or for the fact that John Smith, labourer, of no address, was charged before the justices with being found in possession of three small green apples, identified by Farmer Giles as his property—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I wasn't reading anything of the sort."

"What was it, then? The great drapery sale at the Wayland Stores, everything marked down to double the usual price—"

"No, you ass! There's news in one part of the paper."

"Blessed if I know where to look for it, then," said Monty Lowther, turning over the big pages of the "Wayland Chronicle." "Nothing ever happens in this part of Sussex except our footer matches, and they're not reported."

"Oh, there's something in that rag sometimes!" said Manners, looking up from a print he was touching-up. "I've sent them contributions to the photography column."

"Oh, how awfully exciting! I suppose there was a rush on the number that week, and they sold a couple of extra copies."

"But there's really an item of interest," said Tom Merry. "Look at the bottom of page five, and you'll see what I was reading."

Lowther turned the pages. The chums of the Shell had finished their preparations, but they had not yet left their study. Lowther wanted to go down to the gym, but something interesting in the local paper had detained Tom Merry.

"Hallo, is this it?" said Lowther, looking interested himself. "Northwood Athletic are meeting Newcastle United in a 'friendly' on the home ground on Saturday—"

"That's it!" said Tom Merry, with a big sparkle in his eyes. "You know Northwood have a big professional club now, and their team is one of the best in the South. They're in the running for the championship of their league. This match with Newcastle United will be a ripper!"

"By Jove, I suppose so!"

"I've never seen Newcastle play," said Tom Merry, "but you know it's one of the finest clubs in the First Division. Jack Blake has seen them play, and he says they are ripping—and Blake knows a lot about football for a Fourth Form kid!"

"Blessed if I see what it's got to do with us, though!" said Lowther. "Northwood's a good step from here—"

"The match is to-morrow, Monty, and we're going!"

"Are we? That's the first I've heard of it!"

"You'll follow your uncle," said Tom Merry severely. "Of course, I know that our footer leaves very little to be desired. We are absolutely ripping—especially myself! All the same, we might possibly pick up a few tips from a professional match. I don't say we should, mind, but it's within the bounds of possibility."

"Oh, don't be funny! There's something in it. It's jolly good for young footballers to see all the League matches they can!" assented Lowther. "Now I come to think of it, it's a good idea to buzz over to Northwood and watch the match. How are we getting over, though?"

"Lots of ways—train, bike, or shanks' pony."

"The roads'll be bad for biking. And if we walked we shouldn't get there till the match was over and the players gone to bed. As for rail, tickets cost money."

"Yes, I've noticed that!" said Tom Merry. "I don't know what the fare is, but I do know one thing—I'm stony!"

"Moi aussi," said Lowther. "Same here, kid!"

"How much tin have you got, Manners?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then, look, duffer!"

"How can I look into my trousers-pockets? I haven't got the neck of a giraffe!"

"You dummy! Feel, then!"

"How can I feel when I'm touching up this print?"

"Look here—"

"Oh, I'll show him how to feel!" grinned Lowther, leaning over the table and giving Manners a fearful pinch.

"You see—Hullo, what's the matter, Manners?"

Manners had jumped up with a fiendish yell.

"You—you horrid ass! You've taken a lump out of my arm!"

"Well, I was going to show you how to feel. Did you feel that?"

Manners did not reply, but he was so evidently going to commit assault and battery on the spot that Tom Merry pushed him back into his chair and held him there.

"Now, keep calm!" he urged. "Lowther was only making an appeal to your feelings. How much tin have you got?"

"I don't know—but it's in coppers, and there's not more than four or five."

"Oh, rats! You needn't count them, then!" said Tom Merry. "We shall have some more tin to-morrow, but not in time. Blake had a letter to-day—"

"Good!" said Lowther. "Blake may turn up trumps. Let's see!"

"Come on, Manners."

"Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Oh, stay there and take root if you like!" said Tom Merry. "If Blake fails us in the hour of need, I will sell your camera—"

"You'll what?" roared Manners.

"French of the New House wants a camera, and he'd give a guinea for it—"

"That camera cost eight guineas!" hooted Manners.

"Then French would be getting a big bargain! I suppose you like a chap to get a good bargain?" said Tom Merry severely. "Still, we'll keep Manners' camera as a last resource, as he's attached to it! Let's try Blake first!"

Tom Merry and Lowther left the study and strolled along the passage, and as they came near the Fourth Form quarters they heard the voice of Mellish. Mellish was standing in the midst of an attentive group of juniors, holding forth in tones of explanation, and Tom and Lowther stopped to listen. There were eight or nine fellows collected round Mellish, and he did not at first observe that the chums of the Shell had joined the group.

"You all noticed how he was looking yourselves?" said Mellish.

"Yes, rather!" assented Gore.

"I happened to be passing Study No. 6 while he was talking to D'Arcy about it—"

"Blessed if I could see what you could find out by passing a fellow's study!" said Hancock.

"Well, you see, I thought I heard Blake call me, and looked in—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I happened to hear—"

"You often happen to hear things, don't you, Mellish?" remarked Sharp.

"I happened to hear Blake say something on the subject," went on Mellish, unheeding. "I'm not going to tell you what he said—"

"Oh, get on!"

"Only his elder brother has bunked off from home. He had his own reasons for bunking—that's all."

"So Blake is looking down in the mouth because his elder brother has bunked off from home?" said Jameson of the Third.

"That's it. About his reasons for going I'm not going to

tell you anything. He may have broken into his governor's cashbox before he went, or he may not. I don't say Blake said so."

"Dear me," said Skimpole of the Shell, blinking at Mellish through his big spectacles, "that is a somewhat serious allegation to make, Mellish! Of course, if Blake's brother broke into his father's cashbox, he is not really to blame for so doing, as every crime can be traced to the united effects of heredity and environment—"

"Oh, shut up, Skimpole!"

"This is the great truth of Determinism," said Skimpole, who was the genius of the Shell, and always had a collection of the most remarkable ideas that were ever gathered in a single brain.

"You see—"

"Are you going to ring off?"

"Everything being the result of either heredity or environment, or both, nobody is to blame for anything. If I were to strike you violently, Gore, for instance, I should not be to blame, as it would simply be an outcrop of heredity—a trace of violent temper inherited from some remote ancestor—"

Gore grinned and drove his elbow on Skimpole's chest with such force that the Determinist of St. Jim's staggered against the wall and slid to the floor in a sitting posture.

He blinked dazedly at Gore.

"Dear me! I—I—I— What did you do that for, Gore?"

"Don't blame me," said Gore. "That was simply heredity—a trace of violent temper inherited from a remote ancestor. If you don't slide this instant I shall show another trace of violent temper inherited from another remote ancestor."

Skimpole blinked doubtfully at Gore, but the latter was already lifting his boot for a kick, and the Determinist decided to depart. Gore's boot helped him along the passage. The interrupter being gone, questions were showered on Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth grinned knowingly, and shook his head.

"I'm not saying anything," he said. "I'm not going to have Blake coming down on me for yarning about his brother. I give you this for what it's worth—if Blake major left home with his governor's cashbox—"

"You said he broke it open just now," said Jameson.

"I never said anything of the sort; I said he might have."

"Well, he might have done anything. My opinion is that you are lying."

"If you're looking for a row, young Jameson—"

"Never min, Jameson," said Tom Merry, pushing his way through the juniors, his brow dark. "Just answer me, Mellish."

Mellish looked a little alarmed. He would not have been quite so free with his cowardly insinuations if he had known that a friend of Blake's was present. He would gladly have scuttled away, but Tom Merry looked as if he meant business.

"What's it got to do with you, Merry?"

"Just this much—I believe every word you have uttered is a lie!"

"We all know Mellish," said Monty Lowther. "You fellows must be utter asses to take notice of what the young rotter says."

"Oh, I don't know," said Gore. "I never thought much of Blake."

"A cad like you wouldn't!"

"Why, confound you, you are always rowing with him yourself!"

"But I wouldn't slander a chap behind his back," said Lowther scornfully. "I leave that to you and Mellish."

"Blake's brother has bolted," said Mellish, looking a little scared. "You can ask him yourself!"

"Blake's brother may have bolted," said Tom Merry, "but I'm jolly certain that he had no dishonourable reason for bolting—and, anyway, you can't possibly know anything about it if he had. You have been lying!"

"I never said he had. I—"

"No; but you hinted it! Come along!"

"What do you mean?"

"You're going to say all this over again before Blake," said Tom Merry, grasping the cad of the Shell by the shoulder. "Come on!"

Mellish squirmed.

"I—I won't! Leggo! I—I was only japing these fellows—it was all a joke! I didn't mean it to be taken seriously!"

"Liar!" said Sharp.

"I—I—I—"

Tom Merry flung the cad of the Fourth from him contemptuously.

"Well, if you're ready to eat your words like that, you can go! But mind, if I catch you on the subject again you won't get off so easily!"

"It's nothing to do with you," said Gore. "Mind your own business!"

Tom Merry turned on him with flashing eyes.

"It's every chap's business to stop a cowardly backbiter," he exclaimed, "and every fellow who would listen to Mellish's lies without stopping him is as dirty a cad as Mellish himself! That's for all of you!"

"That young wottah Mellish has been tellin' a yarn about his bwotah Fwank," explained D'Arcy, stopping. "Fwank Blake has bolted fwoh home, and Mellish heard Blake tellin' me, and he's invented a yarn that Fwank wobbed his governah!"

"We heard him telling it, and shut him up!" said Tom Merry. "I don't envy Mellish when Blake gets hold of him now."

"No, I wathah think he will have a vewy uncomfy time. I don't want Blake to wag him too much, though, so I am followin' him to westwain him."

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.



Gore grinned and drove his elbow into Skimpole's chest with such force that the Determinist of St. Jim's staggered against the wall. He blinked dazedly at Gore. "Dear me! I—I—I—What did you do that for, Gore?" he gasped.

CHAPTER 3.

Brought to Book!

MELLISH was not easily found. Jack Blake, quite white with wrath, rushed up and down, seeking him.

He ran into Tom Merry and Lowther, who were looking for him, but the chums of the Shell called on him in vain to stop.

"Blake! Here, hold on!"

"Can't stop!"

And Blake was gone.

Tom Merry stared at him in amazement.

"What's up with Blake?"

"Looks off his rocker!" said Monty Lowther. "Surely there can't be anything in what we heard that cad Mellish saying?"

Tom Merry shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible."

"Here's Gusy! Let's ask him! Hold on, Gus!"

"I'm in wathah a huwvy, deah boy."

"Hold on! What's the matter with Blake?"

"He is wathah excited!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He looks it!"

"Good idea! He looked as if he might do the little beast some damage. We've all had some experience of Mellish's slanders, but we don't want Blake to get into a row for handling him too roughly. Come on!"

The juniors hurried after Blake. He had looked in several quarters for the cad of the Fourth without finding him. He arrived at Mellish's study in the Fourth Form passage, and kicked the door open. A junior was sitting at the table eating jam-tarts, and in a second Blake had him by the shoulders and had dragged him over, his chair going with a crash to the floor.

"Now then, you young beast! Hallo, Reilly!"

"Faith, and is it off ye dot ye are?" roared the boy from Belfast, scrambling up. "Sure, and I—"

"I'm sorry—I took you for Mellish—"

"Faith, and if ye insinuate that I'm like Mellish at all, at all, it's a foight ye'll have on your hands!" exclaimed Reilly. "Sure, I—"

"Sorry! Where is Mellish?"

"Blessed if I know! I—"

But Blake did not wait for more. He darted out of the study again, and as it happened met Mellish face to face in the corridor.

Mellish had one look at Blake's face and saw it white and furious. One look was enough for him. He turned like a flash and ran.

"Stop!" roared Blake.

Mellish would not have stopped for a thousand pounds at that moment. He ran like a deer for safety.

"Stop him!" roared Blake.

But Mellish dodged and turned and ran. Blake pursued him at top speed. The hapless prevaricator dodged and turned like a fox with the hounds close behind, but he was hunted down at last, and he was run to earth in the Common-room, where he darted behind Lefevre of the Fifth, who happened to be there. Mellish sometimes fagged for Lefevre—a thing no other Fourth-Former would do—and in consequence he was rather in favour with the Fifth-Former.

Lefevre pushed Blake back.

"Hold on! What's the row?"

"Let me get at him!" roared Blake.

"But what's the trouble? That's what I say—what's the trouble?"

"He's been telling lies about my brother."

"I—I haven't," gasped Mellish. "It—it—it was only a joke."

"There you are," said Lefevre. "Let him alone! He says it is only a joke."

"Get out of the way!"

The Fifth-Former flushed with anger.

"Hang it, Blake, do you know whom you're speaking to?" he exclaimed.

"Will you stand aside?"

"You cheeky young brat! Do you know I'm in the Fifth, and—"

"I don't care if you were in the Sixth! I'm going to give that hound a hiding!" yelled Blake. "Get out of the way, or I'll shift you!"

Lefevre gasped for breath.

"You—you cheeky imp! What the deuce are you up to, Tom Merry?"

"Shifting you!" said Tom Merry. "What the dickens are you doing in the Junior Room, anyway? Outside!"

"I—I'll wring your necks!"

"Bai Jove! I should absolutely refuse to have my neck wung! I insist upon your immediately takin' your departure, deah boy!"

"Let me—Ow! Oh! I'll—Groooogh!"

The Fifth-Former, in spite of his angry resistance, was hustled to the door by a dozen juniors and ejected into the passage. Then Blake pushed back his cuffs and squared up to Mellish.

"Put up your fists, you rat!"

"I—I won't!"

"Take that, then—and that—and that!" Every "that" was accompanied by a punch, and Mellish threw himself on the floor.

"Get up!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Get up, deah boy, and take your gwuel, you know."

"I—I—I'm hurt!"

"Herries, old man, fetch me your dogwhip, will you?"

"Certainly!" said Herries, leaving the room.

"Help!" yelled Mellish.

"You've got to answer for your lies," said Blake between his teeth. "Get up and fight, or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!"

Herries brought in the dogwhip. Tom Merry closed the door and locked it. There was no escape for Mellish. He was white as a sheet, and for once in his life he deeply regretted having departed from the paths of voracity.

"Now then, which is it to be?" exclaimed Blake.

Mellish rose slowly to his feet.

"I'll fight you," he said sullenly.

And he did.

He had no escape, and he had to defend himself, or else be knocked about like a punching-ball, and so he put the best he knew into the fight.

But he was as nothing to Blake.

He was quite as big, and a little older, but he had little pluck, and he had usually avoided fights with so much skill that he had had very little practice in the art. Blake knocked him right and left, and whenever he refused to rise a touch of the dogwhip brought him to his feet again.

At last he was quite knocked out, and it was plain that he could not get on.

"Better let him off now," said D'Arcy, putting up his eyeglass and surveying Mellish as he lay on the floor groaning. "There is hardly room for another blow on his face, and his nose won't stand much more. I wathah think that he will wemembah this auspicious occasion for some time to come."

Jack Blake panted.

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"You'll think twice before you start telling lies again. I hope, you cur!" he said. "You'd better, anyway!" And Mellish only groaned.

There was an angry hammering at the door, and Tom Merry opened it, and Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked in.

"What's all this confounded row about?" he exclaimed. "And what have you got the door locked for?"

"Only a little argument between Blake and Mellish," said Monty Lowther.

Kildare looked at Mellish.

"What have you been fighting for?"

"His lies!" said Blake savagely. "And if he begins again I'll jolly well lick him again!"

Kildare looked at him sternly.

"That's not the way to speak to me, Blake."

"I'm sorry!" said Blake penitently. "I know that, Kildare. Only—the mongrel said that my brother was a thief and—"

"Jack's voice broke. "Frank has left home, and Mellish found it out, and then he invented that yarn, and there's not a word of truth in it."

Mellish was sullenly silent. The captain of St. Jim's looked at him with a glint in his eyes.

"Serve him right, then!" he said. "I think I know Mellish's ways. He has made trouble in the school before with his falsehoods. If you hadn't licked him, I would have done it myself."

And Mellish received no more sympathy than that from anyone. At the same time, his insinuations had taken root.

"Must have been something in it," Gore remarked privately to Sharp, "or else Blake wouldn't have been so awfully ratty about it."

And Sharp nodded assent.

"Oh, of course it's true!" said Dudley of the Third. "I don't see why Blake should fly into such a temper if it wasn't."

But he took care not to say so in Jack Blake's hearing.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy's Treat!

JACK BLAKE, still looking very excited, strode into his study and banged the door.

The door was opened the next moment, and Blake looked round impatiently. But it was only Arthur Augustus.

There was a thoughtful expression upon the brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was evident that something was working in his brain.

"I've got a wathah good ideah," he remarked.

Blake grunted.

"It's wathah wotten for you to have your bwothah disappah in this weekless mannah," continued the swell of the School House. "You wemembah that some time ago I took up amatuah detective work and was wathah successful?"

"I don't remember that part."

"My dear chap, you wemembah that I twacked down some burglahs, and cleared the name of a gamekeepah who was accused of poachin'—"

"No, I don't."

"Then I can only wemark that you've got a wotten bad memowry," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I was most successful as an amatuah detective. I was thinkin' that if you like I will undahtake the task of findin' your misin' bwothah. If you like to place the case in my hands—"

"Oh, don't be a duffer, old chap!"

"Weally, Blake—"

The door opened, and Skimpole blinked in.

"I want to speak to you on a most important matter, Blake—"

"Get out!"

"As you seem to entertain a doubt of your brother's guilt—"

"Shut the door after you."

"I am willing to take up the case in my capacity of amateur detective and sift it to the bottom. You will remember that some time ago I was very successful as an amateur detective—"

"Weally, Skimmy—"

"And tracked down some burglars—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And helped to clear a chap who was charged with poaching—"

"Well, of all the cheek, you boundah! It was I—"

"And there is no doubt that I could handle this case quite easily and get to the bottom of the mystery," said Skimpole, taking out his notebook. "Please—"

"There isn't any mystery!" roared Blake.

Skimpole shook his head with a very sage look.

"Come, come, Blake! You must keep no secrets from a

professional adviser. Do you know when it was that your brother broke into Mr. Blake's cashbox?"

"You—you—you—"

"And whether the money purloined was in notes or silver? If in notes, the numbers would help us a great deal—"

Jack Blake picked up a cushion.

"I give you one second to get out," he said.

"Really, Blake—"

Biff!

The cushion caught Skimpole fairly on the chest, and he crashed on the door. He slid to the floor, looking considerably dazed. Blake picked up another cushion from the easy-chair, and whirled it aloft.

"Now then, are you going?"

"Ye-es, under the circumstances I had better go!" gasped Skimpole, squirming through the doorway. "I shall, however, take up the case, and you can rely upon me to sift the matter to the bottom, and— I'm going!"

Blake made a threatening motion, and Skimpole slammed the door and disappeared.

"The uttah ass!" said D'Arcy. "But you can wely upon

"Pway do not wun away, Tom Mewwy. It makes me uttably out of bweath chasin' you wound the table, and it thwows me into a fluttah."

"Hold on! Is this how you always receive visitors, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to wegard you as a visitah!"

"It's the D'Arcy brand of hospitality," said Monty Lowther, from the door.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I am surprised at you, Gussy!"

"Undah the circs, I will let Tom Mewwy off that thwash-in'," said D'Arcy, stopping breathlessly; "but I considah that—"

"Never mind what you consider," said Tom Merry, "we



D'Arcy clutched up the rest of his garments and rushed from the study. He ran full tilt into the waiting juniors, and his silk hat went one way and his coat another. "Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Finished already?"

me, Blake. I will find the missin' boundah, and bwing him back—"

The door opened again.

"Haven't you had enough?" shouted Blake, and he hurled the cushion with unerring aim at the head that looked in round the door.

There was a roar from Tom Merry.

"Oh! What on earth—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm sorry! I thought it was Skimmy!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard that as wathah funnay!"

"Do you?" said Tom Merry. "Then here's some more fun for you!" And he hurled the cushion back, and the swell of St. Jim's was bowled over like a ninepin.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah!"

D'Arcy sat down. He jumped up again, and rushed towards Tom Merry.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom, dodging round the table.

"Peace, my son—pax!"

"I wefuse to make it pax! You have cwumpled up my waistcoat, as well as causin' me a severe ache in my inward weigions, and I'm goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

came here on business. Do you know that Northwood are playing Newcastle United to-morrow, on the home ground?"

"I weally was not aware of the fact."

"We are thinking of going," said Tom Merry. "We thought you Fourth Form kids might be glad to come along. It's a first-class match. You know how Newcastle play, and Northwood are in fine form, too."

Blake's eyes sparkled.

"Good! I'd like to see it, if it can be fixed."

"Then it's a go?"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall be vewy pleased."

"Then," said Tom Merry, looking round, "we all accept Gussy's invitation?"

"Eh?"

"We all accept Gussy's invitation to come with him."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gussy being the most suitable person to take the lead on an occasion like this."

"Yaas, wathah, though you don't usually see facts in so clear a light, Tom Mewwy. Of course, when it's a question

of makin' up a party, what you wequiah as a leader is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Exactly! It being D'Arcy's treat—"

"Eh?"

"I don't know what the railway fares to Northwood are, but I think they're pretty dear. That can be left to D'Arcy, however."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Now, we'll be ready to leave directly after dinner to-morrow," said Tom Merry, unheeding. "We rely on you, Gussy."

"Yaas, but—"

"Now, we won't bother you any longer. Good-bye!"

And Tom Merry and Monty Lowther quitted Study No. 6, leaving Arthur Augustus staring at Blake, and Blake grinning.

CHAPTER 5.

Off to the Match!

"READY?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I am wathah surprised at the question. It is only a quartah of an hour since we finished dinnah."

It was Saturday, and a fine, cold winter day. Morning lessons and the midday dinner of the juniors was over, and the party for Northwood were preparing to start.

Tom Merry had looked into Study No. 6 for D'Arcy, and he found the swell of St. Jim's tying his necktie before a big glass.

"Quarter of an hour!" grunted Tom Merry. "I was ready in five minutes."

"And, judgin' by the extremewly untidday state of your attiah, Tom Mewwy, I should weally considah that five minutes was quite enough," said D'Arcy, leaving his necktie alone for a moment, while he jammed his monocle into his eye and took a survey of the hero of the Shell.

"Why, wathah the matter with me?" demanded Tom indignantly.

"The necktie is cwooked—"

"Oh, rats!"

"And the twousahs look as if they haven't been in the pwess for a week."

"Well, they haven't!"

"As this is a wippin' match, and we are goin' to see a first-class team, I weally considah that we might dwess decently for the occasion."

"Look here! How long are you going to be?"

"I hope to have my dwessin' completed by anothah five minutes."

"Then we shall jolly well leave you behind!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Or, rather, we would do so, only we want you to take the tickets. Now, then, Gussy, be a good chap and hurry up!"

"I would oblige you like anythin', Tom Mewwy, but my personal attiah is weally the one thing a chap can't huwvy ovah."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Tom Merry left the doorway. Lowther and Manners were waiting in the passage, in coats and caps and scarfs. It was a cold February day.

"Isn't the image ready?" demanded Lowther.

"Nother five minutes!"

"I'll jolly soon have him out!" Lowther kicked open the door of the study. "Gussy, how long, duffer?"

"Not more than five minutes, I hope, Lowthah. I have only my waistcoat and jacket and coat to put on, and my hair to bwush, and my toppah, too—"

Lowther picked up the inkpot from the table.

"Do you see this inkpot, dear boy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you like the contents over your chivvy?"

"I wegard that as a widiculous question, Lowthah, and I wegard the word chivvy as a vulgah expression!"

"Well, I give you till I've counted three to get out of this study," said Lowther, "then I shall start with the ink."

"I absolutely wefuse to get out!"

"One!"

"I decline to be ordahed out!"

"Two!"

"I wegard you as an intwudin' scoundwel, and I wequest you to kindly wethah fwom my quartahs!"

"Three!"

Up went the inkpot.

"Hold on, deah boy, I'm going—"

D'Arcy clutched up the rest of his garments and bolted from the study. He ran into the waiting juniors, and his silk hat went one way and his coat another.

"Hallo," exclaimed Tom Merry, "finished already?"

"No, I am not finished. That wottah Lowthah—"

Monty Lowther came to the door of the study with the

inkpot in his hand. Arthur Augustus hastily went down the passage, putting on his things as he went.

"Is my collah stwaight, Tom Mewwy?" he asked anxiously.

"Straight as a die!"

"And my necktie?"

"A perfect picture."

"My jacket is wumped."

"It fits you like the paper on the wall."

"Then pway give me a hand with my coat," said D'Arcy,

"I must go back and bwush my hat a little."

"It's simply perfect."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"In my opinion," said Manners solemnly, "any further brushing would rather detract from the general effect than otherwise."

"Well, if you weally think so, powwaps it will do. At the same time, I wegard Lowthah as a wuff beast, and I wefuse to continue his acquaintance."

Lowther sobbed pathetically, a demonstration of which Arthur Augustus refused to take any notice. They joined Blake, Herries, and Digby downstairs. Herries had his bulldog on a chain. D'Arcy stared at the animal.

"What are you doin' with that bwute, Howwies?"

"Leading him."

"You are not bwingin' him along?"

"What do you think I am leading him for, then?"

"He will not be allowed on the football gwound."

"Bosh! What harm is there in a nice quiet animal like Towser? It isn't as if he were a rotten mongrel like your young brother's Pongo."

"Wats! I object to the pwesence of a dog in the party."

"Rot! Towser doesn't object to you, and he's got a jolly lot more reason."

"I wegard that wemark as wotten, Howwies."

"Oh, come on!" said Herries crossly. "We shall miss the first half if we stay here till Gussy has done talking."

"Weally, Howwies—"

But the party were marching off, and D'Arcy followed.

Herries did not let go his bulldog. Towser wanted a run, and that was quite sufficient reason for Herries to take him out.

Three juniors were coming over from the New House, and they met the School House party at the gates. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. They were clad for going out, and they grinned genially at Tom Merry & Co. For once in a while the rivals of St. Jim's met without a House row.

"Whither bound?" said Figgins, the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors. "You ought to be practising footer. We shall jolly well lick you in the House match when it comes off, if you don't."

"Not much fear of that," Tom Merry remarked. "If that was all we had to think of, Figgy, we shouldn't trouble to practise much."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Are you going to the village for a feed?" asked Fatty Wynn, with a covetous look in his eyes. "If you are, I don't mind coming with you. Of course, Figgy, I want to come to the Northwood match, but—"

"Boah! You're coming with us! You've just had a feed."

"Yes, but it wasn't much—"

"My hat! It was double what I had, at all events."

"Oh, come, Figgins," remonstrated the Falstaff of the New House, "you know jolly well that there was just the usual school dinner—"

"That's enough for any ordinary octopus."

"Then I only had the sausages and bacon and chips besides, and the rabbit-pie in the study afterwards, as well as the scones and the tarts, and a few nuts and some toffee. I get so jolly hungry in this February weather."

"You don't want another feed."

"If Tom Merry wants to—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"But we're not going to a feed," he said. "We're going to see the Northwood Athletic play Newcastle United."

"My hat! So are we!"

"Then we'll go together—that's if," said Tom Merry dubiously, "if you New House kids can behave yourselves for the whole afternoon."

"We'll jolly well keep you in order," said Figgins.

CHAPTER 6.

At the Football Ground!

THERE was a big crowd round the entrance to the Northwood Athletic Football Ground. The fine sharp winter afternoon, and the prospects of seeing a match between two splendid teams had drawn football lovers from far and near, and all the approaches to the ground were crowded for an hour before the gates were opened.

The gates were flung open half an hour before time for kick-off, and the crowd swarmed in.

The party from St. Jim's arrived just after the gates had opened, and they found the entrance simply blocked.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "This looks wathah wotten, deah boys."

"Oh, we'll get in!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! We must get a seat in time for the beastly kick-off, you know. I heah there is a new playah in the wanks of the Athletic—a weally wippin' sort of wingab, and everybody is anxious to see him play."

"That accounts for this confounded crowd, perhaps."

Lowiner remarked. "Here, don't let those chaps shove us back! Elbows!"

Arthur Augustus had no time to finish.

A batch had been admitted at the gates, and the crowd closed up, and the roughs took advantage of the opportunity to make another rush.

The juniors stood their ground. But they were rushed apart, and there was a general scramble.

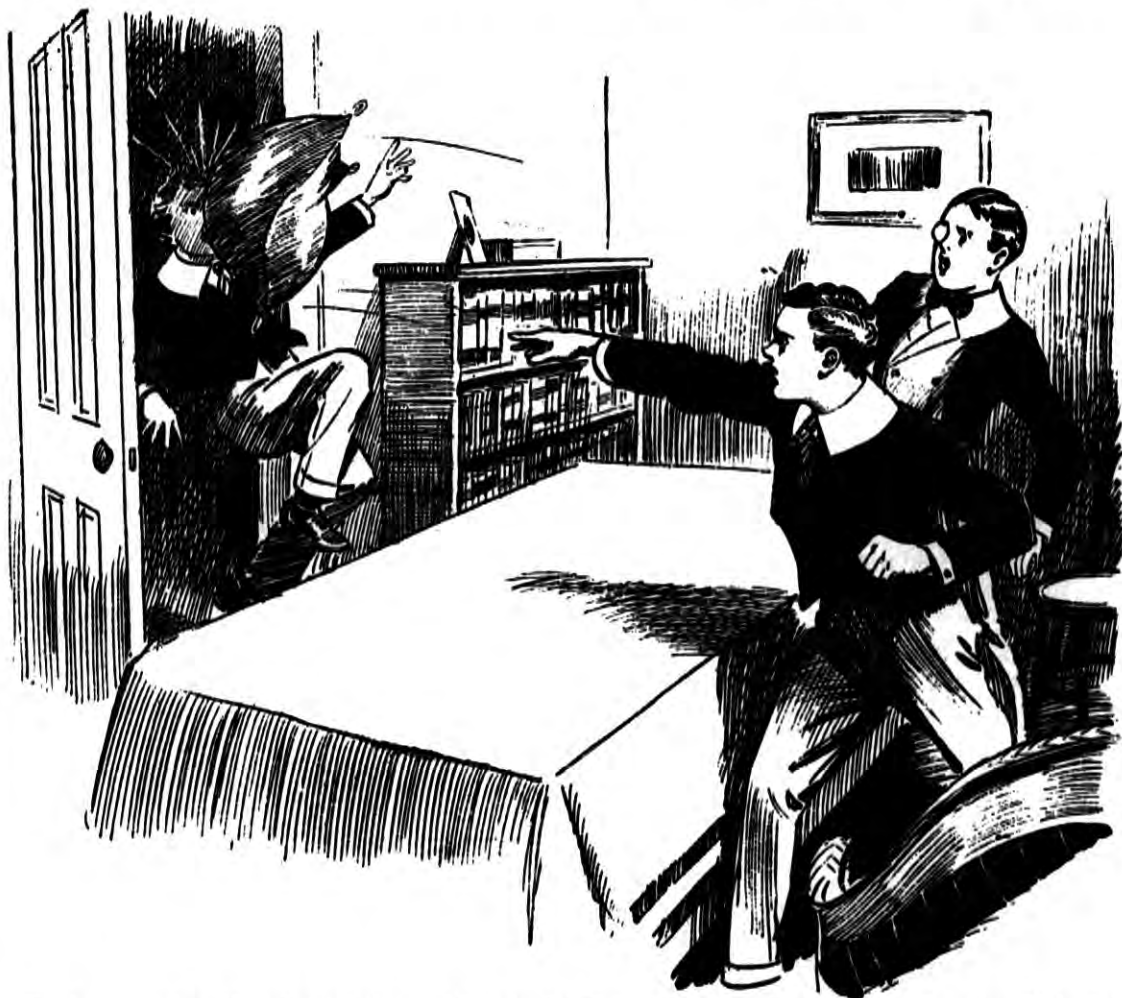
Arthur Augustus found himself whirled away from his friends, and jammed in the midst of a rough crowd.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

He looked round him helplessly.

He was being pushed and rumpled and ruffled, and his struggles only seemed to make the crowd jam tighter about him.

His elegant coat and gloves and silk hat seemed



The door opened. "Haven't you had enough?" shouted Blake, thinking that it was Skimpole again. He hurled the cushion with unerring aim at the head that came round the door. There was a roar from Tom Merry. "What on earth? Whoop!"

There was a rush of a number of rough-looking fellows to plunge through the crowd, and they had not expected much difficulty with a party of boys.

But they found the juniors of St. Jim's sturdy stuff to tackle.

They stood well together, and gave elbow for elbow, and shove for shove, and the roughs failed to get through.

A red-nosed man in a dirty cap stared savagely at Tom Merry, who had just pushed him back in a way he disliked. "Who are you a-shoving?" he demanded.

"You," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Didn't you feel it?"

And the juniors chuckled.

"You get outer the way!"

"You go and eat coke!"

"I'm coming in!"

"All in good time, daddy; you wait your turn!"

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I regard it as extremely ungentlemanly to shove in this wude way, and I am surprised—"

to amuse the rougher section of the crowd, too, and the swell of St. Jim's came in for a few extra shoves on that account alone.

"Pway give me a little more woom, deah boys!" he gasped. "Weally, I entweat—"

"Hallo, are you 'ere agin!" said the man in the cap, shoving his bristly face close to D'Arcy. "Don't you shove me."

"Weally, my twiend, I wasn't shovin' you."

"Then don't do it again!"

"I am bein' shoved myself in the most wude and weekless mannah. I insist upon your givin' me a little more woom."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Pway—"

"Hallo, there's Gussy!" shouted Blake. "This way!"

The rest of the juniors had got together again. They made a concerted rush for Arthur Augustus, and the roughs had to give way.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I am weally feelin' vewy hot and uncomfy. Pway keep close to me, deah boys, and don't get sepawated again. I cannot undahtake to look aftah you unless you are careful to keep with me!"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Here we are! Take the tickets, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ten, please, in the gwand stand," said D'Arcy, laying a five-pound note down before the man in the paybox.

The man glared at him.

To be asked to change a five-pound note while an eager crowd clamoured for admission was bad enough, but that was not all.

"Wrong entrance!" he roared. "This is the shilling entrance!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Pass on there!"

"We had bettah go back, deah boys, it's the wong entrance."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "It's the right entrance. Get on!"

"But—"

"Shilling is good enough for us. We're not giddy aristocrats!" said Blake. "Shilling a time, old son!"

"But—"

"Get on!"

"I wefuse to get on!" said D'Arcy, putting up his eye-glass and surveying the crowd. "Undah the cires, I think we had bettah go back and go to the othah entrance."

There did not seem to be much chance of getting back through that clamouring crowd.

"Get on!" roared Blake. "I'll dot you on the nose if you don't take the tickets!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be dotted on the nose!"

"I—I—I—"

"Ere's yer change, sir!" said the man in the paybox, giving D'Arcy a huge pile of small silver. "I've taken for ten."

The swell of St. Jim's had forgotten the banknote he had laid down.

He stared at the heap of silver.

"Bai Jove, I can't cawwy all that, you know! Besides, I am goin' to the othah entrance."

"No money returned!"

"Get on there!" said the policeman at the gate. "Can't you see you're delaying the crowd? Get on!"

"But—"

Blake pushed D'Arcy on by main force, and they went forward.

The swell of St. Jim's resisted strenuously.

"Blake, pway let me return! I insist!"

"Rats! Get on!"

"Pway allow me!"

"Go ahead!"

"I insist!"

"You're not going back. Buck up, you chaps!"

"But I have left my change lyin' there!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"By Jove, I forgot that!"

"It's all right!" called out Tom Merry, who was last in.

"I've got your change, Gussy. Travel along!"

"Oh, vewy well; but—"

Blake dragged him forward. The juniors scrambled on and secured pretty good places. Tom Merry handed over D'Arcy's change. He had taken it in his handkerchief. It consisted mostly of shillings and sixpences, and weighed a good deal. D'Arcy looked at it in dismay.

"Bai Jove! How am I to cawwy all that?"

"In your hat," suggested Kerr.

"Pway don't be widiculous, deah boy! I suppose I can shove it into my trousahs pocket, but it will make the twousahs sag."

"Horrid!"

"I'll take it if you like," said Fatty Wynn. "We shall all be jolly hungry after watching this match, and I know a nice place in town where we could get a good feed. On four-pound-ten I could—"

D'Arcy let the money slide into his trousers pockets.

CHAPTER 7.

Northwood v. Newcastle United!

"TEN minutes yet to the kick-off," said Tom Merry.

"Jolly good crowd here!"

"Wathah too many for comfort," said D'Arcy.

"I have been twowed vewy wuffly. There was a wude wottah in a gween cap who—"

"Who yer talking about?" demanded a voice from behind the juniors, and D'Arcy looked round in surprise.

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It was the hero of the green cap.

He was glaring at D'Arcy, apparently very much angered by the uncomplimentary reference to him.

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Tailor's dummy!" said the man in the green cap.

"Yah!"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a tailah's dummy. Tom Mewwy, will you kindly hold my hat while I thwash this wottah!"

"Not much!"

"Digby, pway hold my hat and cane!"

"I'll hold you if you start making a row here!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig, it is not I who am makin' a wov; it is this wottah! I am goin' to give him a thwashin'!"

"Keep quiet!"

"I wefuse to keep quiet! I—"

"You'll get chucked out!" said Manners.

"I should absolutely wefuse to be chucked out!"

"Let him come hon!" said the man in the green cap.

"Let him come, that's all! Let him come hon!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Tom Merry. "Curious thing Gussy can't go anywhere without making a row!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort! I wegard it as beastlay bad form to make a wov, but, undah the cires—"

"Hallo," exclaimed Lowther suddenly, "there's young Wally."

The exclamation took D'Arcy's attention off the gentleman in the green cap. He looked round for his younger brother.

Wally D'Arcy was seated at a little distance with another junior of the Third Form by his side. The head of a dog was peeping up between them, and the phums of St. Jim's recognised Pongo.

"He's got his dog in!" said Herries, with interest.

"Towser got loose in the crowd, or I'd have him here. I wonder how the mongrel got in?"

"Smuggled him under his jacket, I suppose!" laughed Tom Merry. "I say, D'Arcy, that's Dudley of the Third your young brother's with. He's a young rotter, and you ought to keep Wally away from him."

"Yaas, wathah! But young Wally is such an obstinate wascal. He will nevah show me the wespsect due to an eldah bwother."

"More of our chaps here, too," said Figgins, looking round. "There's the American chap."

He waved his hand to Buck Finn, the American junior, who had lately entered the School House at St. Jim's as Tom Merry's Form fellow of the Shell.

"What-ho!" sang back Buck Finn. "I guess I've got a front seat! You don't catch me getting left!"

"What-ho, St. Jim's!" roared Reilly of the Fourth, who was staring across the ground through a field-glass.

"Hallo, Tipperary!" roared back Blake.

The juniors of St. Jim's, in whatever part of the ground they found themselves, hailed one another with a lordly disregard for anybody else. One might have supposed that the match was being played for their benefit alone, and that the general public had only been admitted as a favour.

There was a buzz of conversation among the swarms of spectators who were standing.

The ground was full, not to say overflowing, and it was not yet time for the kick-off.

The chief topic of conversation seemed to be the new player in the ranks of Northwood Athletic.

His name was Howard, according to the programme, and the chums listened with attention as they heard him discussed by the people round them.

He was a new forward, playing on the right wing, and he had only been on the books of Northwood Athletic a week, but in that short time he had made his mark.

He had played in a League match the previous Saturday, and scored three goals off his own bat, so to speak, against a "crack" side.

In a mid-week match he had met a Southern side, and had done even better, and all Northwood were talking about him.

He was expected to do well to-day against the "Magpies," and, as a matter of fact, the great hope of the Northwooders lay in the new forward.

For, good as the Athletic undoubtedly were, there was no denying the fact that the splendid Newcastle team was a little above their weight.

It was hoped that the new winger would give to the home team that magic touch it required to put it on a level with the men from the North.

"By George!" said Tom Merry. "I'm getting awfully keen to see this new chap! I wonder what he's like?"

"Kerr's seen him," said Figgins. "Haven't you, Scotty, old boy?"

"Yes, rather," said Kerr.
 "What's he like?" demanded nine voices.
 Kerr reflected.
 "Oh, an ordinary chap, you know! Jolly well built, and looks as if he were a goer. Rather a serious chivvy, same coloured eyes as Blake, and rather like him in features, but, of course, much better looking."
 Blake grunted.
 "That's not saying much," said Figgins. "Anything else?"
 "Not that I noticed. He was pointed out to me by a chap as the new Northwood winger, that's all."
 "Well, we shall see him soon," said Digby, glancing at the programme. "I see he's playing on the right wing. He'll have to be jolly good class if he's anything like good enough for Newcastle."
 "Yass, wathah!"
 "What do you know about Newcastle, Gussy?"
 "Nothin' at all, deah boy; but I know the United are a wippin' team, you know. I've nevah seen them play, and I haven't wead anythin' about them, and I don't know anythin' weally on the subject, but a fellow told my cousin they were wippin'!"
 "Then, of course, there's no further doubt on the subject," said Blake. "You couldn't want more conclusive evidence in a court of law."
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Still, Gussy's right," said Figgins: "they are ripping. You know they've put up some splendid performances in the Cup, and a side has to be jolly good to get to Wembley for the Final!"
 "Yes, rather!"
 "Besides, they play such ripping scientific footer," said Figgins. "It's an education to watch 'em play. You'll see!"
 "Bui Jove! Isn't it neahly time for the kick-off, deah boys?"
 "Not yet, Gussy."
 "Pewwaps they might kick-off a little earliah to oblige us, if they knew," said D'Arcy. "I don't like waitin', you know."
 "Better go to see about it," said Figgins. "If they knew the one and only Arthur Augustus was waiting, of course they'd rush out to kick-off, fit to break their necks."
 "Pway don't attempt to be humowous, Figgins, if that is the best you can do," said Arthur Augustus. "It is wotten enough to have Lowthah always perpetwatin' wotten jokes, without you followin' in his track! Ow! What beastlay boundah twod on my beastlay foot? Lowthah, I believe it was you!"
 "Good shot!" said Lowther.
 "I considah—"
 "Here they come!"
 There was a scamper of feet and a cheer, and Newcastle United ran out on to the ground.
 A fine team they looked in their garb of black-and-white striped jerseys, very fit and very keen.
 There was a shout.
 "Come on, Northwood!"
 "Where are the boys?"
 "Here they come! Hurrah!"
 The Northwood fellows came sprinting on to the ground.
 They were in red shirts and white knickers, and looked very fit in them. All eyes were turned upon the new winger, and he was cheered loudly by name.
 "Howard! Howard!"
 "Bravo!"
 Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.
 "I've seen that chap before!"
 There was a sharp cry from Jack Blake.
 They looked at him. He was standing as if spellbound, pointing at the new winger of Northwood Athletic.
 His eyes seemed to be starting from his head.
 "What's the mattah, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in alarm.
 Blake sprang to his feet.
 "Frank! It's my brother!"

CHAPTER 8.

A Lad of the League!

"YOUR brother!"
 Blake was staring blankly at the new winger. He was too far from the players for the winger to have heard his cry, and the young man known in Northwood as "Howard" evidently had no idea of his presence there.
 Tom Merry whistled.

(Continued on the next page.)



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Half-a-crown will be paid for every joke that appears in this column.

SPLENDID!

Old Gentleman (to dog-dealer): "You said that dog you sold me was fine for rats. He won't go near them!"
 Dealer: "Well, that is fine for rats, isn't it?"
 J. N. AVES, "Fairstead," Connaught Hill, Loughton.

HARD LINES!

First Workman: "Ain't it a pity Bill's short-sighted?"
 Second Workman: "Why?"
 First Workman: "Well, 'e can't see when the foreman's looking and when 'e's not, so 'e 'as to keep on working!"
 FRED HAMER, 20, Frederick Street, Littleborough, near Manchester.

HE KNEW.

Uncle: "Tommy, can you give me an example of wasted energy?"
 Tommy (after some thought): "Yes, uncle. Telling a bald man a hair-raising story!"
 LEONARD MILLER, 150, Masterman Road, East Ham, E.6.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER!

Pedestrian (who has been knocked into hedge by motorist): "Road-hog!"
 Motorist: "Hedge-hog!"
 DUNCAN STEWART, 33, Torryglen Street, Glasgow, C.5.

MAKING SURE.

Teddy: "Would you punish me for doing nothing, teacher?"
 Teacher: "Of course not, Teddy. Why do you ask?"
 Teddy: "Because I haven't done any homework!"
 W. HOFFMAN, 24, Listria Park, Stoke Newington, N.10.

HE WON!

Street Musician: "Spare us a copper, sir. Even the world's champion miser gave me something."
 Mr. Mean: "Then gaze upon the new champion!"
 LEONARD KNIGHT, 44, Gareth Grove, Dovenham Estate, Bromley, Kent.

SWALLOW THIS ONE!

Father: "Johnny, give me a sentence bringing in 'Politics.'"
 Johnny: "Polly the parrot swallowed a watch, and now Polly ticks!"
 MICHAEL SEGAL, 9, Melville Terrace, Edinburgh.

NOT WHAT SHE MEANT!

Mrs. Jones (to husband): "Don't knock that nail in with my brush! Use your head!"
 HARRY ROSEN, 409, Crown Street, Surrey Hills, Sydney, Australia.

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"My hat! So that's Frank!"
The juniors stared at Blake and then they stared at the winger.

The likeness between the two was unmistakable.

The winger was older, larger in every way, and his face had a serious and somewhat worn expression that contrasted with Blake's.

But Jack's words were evidently true. It was no mistake. By chance, on the football field, he had discovered his missing brother.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as extremely cwicious, you know. I told you so, Blake."

Blake stared at him.

"Eh? You told me what?"

"I told you that if you left it to me I should find your missin' bwothah!"

"My word!" said Digby. "Of all the——"

"I twust you are not goin' to detwact fwom my cwedit in this mannah, Dig! I bwought Blake here, and though I did not exactly foresee that he would wecognise his lost bwothah in this new wingah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "No, I don't think you did exactly foresee it, you young bouncer!"

"I did not exactly foresee it," said D'Arcy calmly; "but that is how it has turned out. In all detective work there is an element of chance——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at in that statement, Tom Mewwy, and no weason at all for you to gwin like a Cheshire cat, Figgins. You know vewy well that Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake always owe a gweat deal to chance, aided by tact and judgment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I am to be intewwupted by wibald laughtah, I shall wefuse to pursue the subject furthah," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I can only hope that Blake, on wefection, will give me pwopah cwedit for discovewin' his long-lost bwothah!"



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"Hallo! Northwood's won the toss!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Good!"

There was a keen wintry wind blowing, but little sun. Northwood naturally chose the goal the wind was blowing from, and Newcastle were given the kick-off against it.

Two finer sets of fellows had seldom been seen on a British football ground.

The juniors, who—with the exception of Blake—did not know the Newcastle men by sight—consulted the programme, and found that the Tyneside team were made up as follows: Burns; Nelson, Fairhurst; McKenzie, Belton, Murray; Boyd, Richardson, Allen, McMenemy, Lang.

"Jolly good team!" said Blake. "I've seen nearly all of 'em play in the North, and I can tell you you're going to see a good game!"

"Yaas, wathah! A fellow told my cousin——"

"Blow the fellow, and blow your cousin! Look!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"They're kicking off!"

Newcastle kicked off against the wind. Thousands of eyes were on the players now. The juniors of St. Jim's watched eagerly.

Blake's eyes were on his brother. He had not yet recovered from his amazement at seeing Frank Blake in the ranks of Northwood Athletic.

He knew that the new winger, "Howard," was a professional footballer who had been taken on by the club. To discover his brother under the guise of a professional footballer was amazing.

Yet when he came to think of it there was really nothing so surprising in it. Frank Blake had left home after a dispute with his father, and he had been too proud to ask any assistance from the home he had left.

His going had broken off all the prospects of his career, and he had taken to professional football evidently as a means of earning a livelihood. And what better means could there be than playing the grand old game for his bread, so long as he played it clean and straight?

And that Frank was always certain to do. And Jack, as he watched his brother contending with the giants of the North, felt a thrill of pride.

It was evident that from the start Newcastle had marked the new winger, yet though they paid him every attention, he outwitted them time and again.

If the rest of the Northwood team had been up to the new winger's form, there is no doubt that the Tynesiders, good as they were, would have gone goalless home from that match.

But that was not the case. Northwood were good, but not up to Tyneside form, and from the rest Frank Blake seemed to stand out head and shoulders in quality.

"Ripping!" said Blake. "Bravo, Franky!"

"Hurrah!" yelled the juniors of St. Jim's.

They already took a personal sort of pride in the new winger. He was Blake's brother, and therefore one of them, and they watched his progress with fatherly eyes.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "That chap is playin' wemarkably well! I could not have twapped the ball bettah than that, deah boys."

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I am speakin' quite sewiously, you know. I wegard it as wippin'!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Franky!"

"On the ball! On the ball!"

The shouts rang over the field. Frank Blake had trapped the ball, and was off with it like a shot. The other forwards of Northwood were not near enough to help him, having nothing like his pace. But Frank had seen his opportunity, and he was through the Newcastle halves, and making a great break on his own.

The juniors jostled each other in their excitement to watch him.

"Go it, Franky!"

"On the ball!"

"Play up!"

The Newcastle halves were good, but they did not seem up to the Northwood forward. He dodged McKenzie—not an easy thing to do at any time—ran round Belton, who stumbled; Murray being too far off to take a hand in the proceedings.

Nelson and Fairhurst were almost upon him, and it was pretty clear that he would never get through the backs. His comrades were well behind, and there was no chance of giving a pass, save to the enemy.

"Kick!" breathed Tom Merry.

It was exactly the same thought that was in the mind of the Northwood winger. He kicked.

There seemed to be every chance against the kick, but the winger had judged well. The moment after his toe had touched the ball, he was shouldered over by the rush of Nelson.

But the leather was whizzing on. The shot had been true—true for a corner of the net, and Newcastle's chance

depended upon the goalkeeper now. And Burns was to be depended upon.

But even Burns could not work miracles, and that shot was a little too much for him. The tips of his fingers were one inch from the ball when it bumped in. But it did bump in, and there was a shriek from the Northwood crowd.

"Goal! Goal!"

CHAPTER 9.

Pongo on the Ball!

"GOAL!"

The shout rang and echoed again and again.

"Goal! Hurrah!"

It was a splendid goal, scored almost single-handed against a powerful side, and it was no wonder the Northwood partisans yelled and shrieked and threw up their hats in the air, careless where they came down, or whether they came down at all.

"Goal!"

Frank Blake was a little flushed, and breathing rather hard; otherwise, as cool as ever. The wild shouts rang in his ears, bringing a sparkle to his eyes.

"Goal! Bravo!"

The captain clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well done, Howard!"

Jack Blake was on his feet, waving his cap excitedly.

"Goal! Good old Franky! Hurrah!"

In the general din his voice was lost, so far as Frank Blake was concerned.

Burns threw out the leather, and the teams returned slowly to the centre of the field.

Northwood were one up—a goal scored early in the game, and a splendid augury to the enthusiastic supporters of Northwood Athletic.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "I've never seen anything neater, and I've seen some professional matches, too."

"Yas, wathah! I wegard Fwank Blake as a wippin' playah!"

"Prime!" said Figgins. "Spiffing!"

"Bai Jove! Did you notice how he spwinted, deah boys? He was wunnin' like anythin'. It was weally wippin'!"

"There they go!"

Newcastle had kicked off again. As the game recommenced, it was soon evident that Newcastle intended to play Frank Blake the compliment of bestowing upon him the most particular attention.

He was well watched, and "paid" was put to all his attempts to capture the leather for some time to come. But he was watching his opportunity, and he kept the Tynosiders busy.

Newcastle were playing a splendid game. The clean and scientific football for which they were famous had seldom been better exemplified. And there was no doubt that, save for the luck of Frank Blake, they were the better side of the two.

Towards half-time, after a long and strenuous struggle, Newcastle scored. The ball was taken by Boyd, from a pass by Richardson, and he plumped it into the net in a way that gave the Northwood goalie no earthly chance.

The score was level, and for the rest of the first half both sides contended energetically to change it. But neither succeeded in the task.

Most of the play was now in the home half, the Magpies concentrating in a steady and sustained attack that gradually drove the home defence before it.

Five minutes longer would probably have seen the Northwooders broken up, but the shrill blast of the whistle came in time for them.

The interval gave both sides a much-needed rest.

The juniors gasped as the tension was relieved. For some time they had spoken hardly a word, so intensely were they watching the game.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "This is worth watching, you chaps."

"Yas, wathah!"

"Northwood's outclassed," said Tom Merry. "If they're pulled out of the fire, it will be by Howard—I mean Blake."

"Yes, rather!" said Jack Blake, his eyes sparkling. "Did you ever see a forward like Frank before?"

"Never!"

"He's ripping!" said Fatty Wynn. "I say, is there any chance of getting anything to eat at the interval? I'm getting jolly hungry."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Kerr. "Where are the sandwiches you shoved in your pocket before you left the New House?"

"I've eaten them!"

"Then you can't be hungry."

"There were only a dozen, and—"

"Hallo!" roared Wally, from the distance. "How do you like the game, you kids?"

"Ripping!"

"Like some toffee, Gus?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass towards his younger brother, and frowned.

"No, Wally," he replied stiffly. "No, certainly not! I should not care to devour toffee in public."

Fatty Wynn started up.

"I would, young Wally!" he called out. "I'm famished! Chuck us over the toffee!"

"Right-ho!" said the Third-Former gleefully.

He extracted a packet of toffee from his pocket, and hurled it with a deft aim. It struck Arthur Augustus' topper, and sent it toppling off. The swell of the School House gave a howl.

"Bai Jove! Why, what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry!" bawled Wally. "You'll find the toffee among Gussy's feet, Wynn."

D'Arcy clutched at his hat.

"You young wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I could weach you, I would give you a foahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme that toffee!" said Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Mind you don't tread on it, Gussy!"

"Wats! Blow the toffee!"

"Look here—"

"Hallo, I'm treading on something!" exclaimed Blake, and he lifted his boot into the air. A squashed mass of toffee was sticking to the sole. "Is that what you're looking for, Wynn?"

The fat Fourth-Former gave a howl.

"You—you clumsy ass!"

"You can have it!"

But even Fatty Wynn did not want the squashed toffee. Blake scraped it off his feet, but the Falstaff of the New House indignantly declined it.

"May as well let Wally have it back, then," Blake remarked. And he took careful aim, and caught D'Arcy minor under the chin with it.

Wally sprang up, startled.

"Wh-wh-what was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Arthur Augustus. "That was a Woland for your Olivah, deah boy."

"You duffer! Hallo! Stop him!"

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah?"

"Pongo, Pongo! Come here, you beast! Good old Pong!"

But good old Pong failed to respond to the call. He had, as a matter of fact, been watching his opportunity of bolting for some time, but the wary junior had kept a tight hand on his collar.

His chance had come now, and Pongo had not been slow to take it.

He was gone, and entreaties and threats were equally impotent with Pongo when he felt inclined to go a-roaming.

He disappeared amongst countless legs, and Wally shrieked and whistled after him in vain.

"Never mind," said Dudley, "you'll find him coming out."

Wally grunted. He was not so easily consoled. More than once he had narrowly escaped losing Pongo for good, and he was always anxious when his erratic pet left him.

The band was playing during the interval, and the boys of St. Jim's joined in as they recognised a well-known tune, and hundreds of voices joined in with the chorus. The strains ceased as the players reappeared, and the musicians marched off. The spectators were all eagerness for the second half.

The whistle went, and Northwood kicked off, with the wind in their faces now.

The change of ends brought the advantage of the wind to the side of the visitors, and Newcastle were not slow to make the best of it.

The game was soon in the home half, and Northwood, after a desperate resistance, were forced to concede a corner.

But, to the intense relief of the home crowd, the kick did not materialise.

A sharp struggle in front of goal followed, and then a home back succeeded in clearing, and the ball came out of the press like a pip from an orange.

Then there was a roar from the crowd. A ragged mongrel had whisked into the arena, and was "on the ball" in a flash.

It was Pongo!

Pongo was accustomed to joining Wally in chasing a

football about the quad at St. Jim's, and he had frequently captured the ball with the loose tag in his teeth, and led his young master a chase to regain it.

He wasn't able to get hold of the match ball with his teeth, but it bounded along from his nose as he chased it at a great rate.

The crowd roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, doggie!"

Wally gave a yell of excitement.

"Pongo! Pongo! On the ball, Pongo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The referee's whistle rang out sharply. Several of the players made a rush for Pongo, and the game was stopped.

Wally scrambled down to the front, careless of the feet he trod on and the ribs he elbowed.

"That's my dog! Chuck him here!"

McKenzie, of Newcastle, had caught Pongo by the collar. Pongo growled and barked, but he was in an iron grip.

With a smile the Newcastle half-back handed the dog to Wally, who caught him and hugged him under his arm.

"You young boulder!" growled Wally. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking!"

But Wally never got farther than having "a good mind" to lick Pongo. He scrambled back to his original position on the bank.

The whistle went again, and the game was resumed, the crowd still grinning over the redoubtable Pongo's first essay as a footballer in a professional match.

CHAPTER 10.

An Exciting Finish!

THE second half was keenly contested. As it wore on, the excitement of the spectators became keener than ever, and at times there was a breathless hush upon the crowd of ten thousand eager watchers.

Northwood were outclassed, and even the most enthusiastic of the home partisans had to admit that patent fact. But a moderate side with a single brilliant player had a sporting chance against a side of good all-round quality. And everyone knew that everything depended on the new winger.

Frank Blake was doing the work of a giant. Again and again cheers rang out for some brilliant dash of the new forward. And there was nothing selfish about Frank's play. He never strove to shine when the game demanded that he should give a chance to another player. He was as ready to back up as to lead, as quick to pass as to kick for goal.

And, in spite of the keen wind blowing in their faces, the next goal was scored by Northwood Athletic.

They had succeeded in breaking through the Newcastle defence, and they had rushed up to goal with the "ball" passing wonderfully well from foot to foot.

The backs were fairly upon Frank Blake, and he had the ball, with no earthly chance of sending it to goal. But there was a tenth part of a chance of passing to his captain at centre, and that he did, with a pass that landed the ball just where it was wanted.

The Northwood captain kicked in a flash, and the leather banged home into the net before Burns knew it was coming.

And once more the Northwood crowd showed startling symptoms of insanity.

"Goal!"

"Goal, goal, goal!"

They yelled, they shouted, they raved, they slapped one another on the back.

The second goal with the wind against them! Northwood were a winning team; the match was another for Northwood!

But Northwood exulted too soon. Newcastle had no intention of letting the southern side walk off with the match, and they bucked up after that goal as if rather refreshed by their reverse.

During the following ten minutes play was sharp and brisk, and the faces of the Northwood crowd grew longer and longer.

The ball went into the home net from the foot of Allen, and five minutes later McMenemy headed it in again.

The Newcastle success was swift and crushing.

The score now stood with the visitors three to two, and there was a quarter of an hour more to play.

Both sides were worn down by the gruelling play, but it was noticeable that the Tynesiders were the fresher of the two teams.

After the last goal, the home captain packed his goal for some time, content to defend and leave the attacking to the enemy.

And now the clever combination of the Magpies showed to great advantage. They cut through the home defence

like a knife through cheese, and only skill and good luck in goal saved Northwood from paying the penalty.

The crowd were growing restive now.

Five minutes more to time, and the play was all in the home half, and Burns, in the Newcastle goal, was slapping his chest to keep himself warm.

There were shouts from the Northwooders:

"Buck up, Northwood!"

"Don't go to sleep!"

"Give us another goal, Howard!"

"On the ball!"

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, "I suppose they can't beat the Tynesiders! But I weally wish they would get another goal, deah boys!"

"Watch Frank!" said Blake, his eyes on his brother.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, he's off!"

The winger had seized a golden opportunity. A back had



Tom Merry and Manners seized one of the ruffians who were attacking the bowler-hatted young man, and Blake, Herries, and Digby seized the other and dragged him over in the dust. Lowther and D'Arcy were only a moment behind. "Get 'em!" panted Tom Merry.

cleared with a kick that carried the leather almost to the half-way line, and there was a rush of players after it.

Frank Blake reached it. Twice he was shouldered; but he hardly swerved, and he had the ball at his feet, and, with a magnificent dribble, he brought it down the field.

A shout rose among the crowd, swelling to a roar:

"On the ball!"

"Go it!"

"Hurrah!"

The Newcastle men, for once, had been outwitted. Their forwards were nowhere, their halves eluded. The backs rushed in too late. There was the Northwood winger, right up to goal with the ball at his foot.

Burns seemed all eyes.

If the winger could beat him, he would deserve well of his side. But could he do it? He would have only one chance, for the Newcastle defenders were racing up.

He had time for a single kick,

He kicked.

The shouts died away. A breathless hush fell on the crowd as they watched the leather whiz.

Burns was seen to clutch it, and his foot slipped on the turf, and the ball escaped his fingers by half an inch.

But half an inch was as good just then and just there as half a mile.

The ball was in the net!

For a moment the crowd hesitated—it seemed too good to be true—and then a tremendous roar burst forth:

"Goal!"

The juniors of St. Jim's were on their feet, yelling like lunatics. Round them was a sea of rolling sound.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

In the midst of the roar came the pheeep of the whistle.

It was the finish.

Northwood had equalised, and the game was drawn, and the players trooped off the field.



It was only a draw, but it had been so perilously near a black defeat that the Northwooders were as enthusiastic as if there had been a great victory for the home colours.

They raved and yelled and stamped as the players went off, and Howard was cheered till the welkin rang.

"Bai Jove," exclaimed D'Arcy, "that was what I wegard as weally wippin'!"

Blake gave his elegant chum a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"What do you think of that?" he roared.

"Ow! I think you are a beastlay wuff boundah!"

"Goal!" yelled Blake. "Good old Franky!"

And in his excitement he smote again at Arthur Augustus, but this time the swell of St. Jim's dodged.

The crowd was pouring out of the enclosures, excitedly discussing the match. Even the man in the fur cap, who had intended to wait for the juniors and rag them as they came out, forgot his amiable intentions, and went off, talking football with his friends and lauding the new winger.

The juniors of St. Jim's left the ground and walked off, every movement made by D'Arcy being accompanied by a clink of small silver.

CHAPTER 11.

Arthur Augustus Thinks It Out!

JACK BLAKE halted in the street, with a shade of deep thought on his face. His chums gathered round him.

"Going to speak to Frank?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake nodded.

"That's what I was thinking of. You see—"

He paused.

"Yaas, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"Go on. If you want any advice in dealin' with this delicate mattah—"

"I don't!"

"Weally, Blake, I was only goin' to tell you what's the propah thing to do."

"Don't trouble, Gussy. Look here, you chaps, I don't know whether you're interested at all in my family concerns—"

"I wegard that as wathah wotten, Blake! You know perfectly well that we wegard you as a twiend, in spite of many disagreeable ways you have, and that your bwothah, Fwank Blake, is our twiend also. If we could do anythin' to cement this unhappy bweach in your family welations, we should only be too happy."

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry. "For once in his life Gussy has stated the exact facts without talking rot."

"Weally, Tom Mewwey—"

"He talks like a giddy gramophone!" said Digby. "My sentiments exactly! Good old one and only!"

"Of course, we're all interested in the matter," said Figgins. "As a rule, I believe in sitting on you School House rotters. But when it's a serious matter like this—why, we all want to chip in and help!"

"You're awfully good!" said Blake. "Well, then—"

"Pway just a moment, deah boy! There is already a bweach in your family, but you must be careful how you go to work about it. You must not fail to show Fwank the respect due to an eldah bwothah. You see, he might cut up wusty and get watty, and then there would be two bweaches in the family."

"By Jove!" said Lowther. "It wouldn't do to have a pair of bweaches, would it?"

"Weally Lowthah—"

"Gussy's right," said Tom Merry. "Let's take counsel with one another about it. We're all anxious to help Blake. First of all, if the question may be asked, how does your governor take it, Blake?"

"He's cut up, of course."

"Willing to be reconciled, of course?"

Jack Blake hesitated a moment.

"I'd better tell you the facts," he said. "The governor and Frank quarrelled on a question of footer. I've no doubt Frank was rather pig-headed. I've often found him so myself when I've been at home. He never would give in to a chap. He used to think that an elder brother ought to order a younger chap about—"

"I must remark that I quite agree with Fwank on that point."

"But he was a ripping chap, all the same," said Blake. "And he's really an awfully great favourite with the governor, only dad must have lost his temper and ordered him out for his nerve. Then it's just like Frank to take him too seriously, and not go back unless the governor climbs down. And that's a thing the governor would never do."

"Yes, I know. You Yorkshire chaps are obstinate asses!"

"So we are," said Blake, in full assent. "It's really firmness, you know, but lots of people mistake it for obstinacy. Well, dad and Frank will never meet of their own accord; but if they could be brought together, they'd chum up no end on the spot, and admit that they'd acted the giddy goat. But I'm blessed if I can see how it's to be worked!"

The juniors looked thoughtful.

It was evidently a serious matter, and they were all interested in bringing it to a satisfactory conclusion, but they realised that it was quite possible that their interference might make it worse instead of better.

"Suppose you wired to your governor," suggested Figgins, "and told him where Frank is to be found?"

"Would he come down from Yorkshire?" said Tom Merry.

Blake shook his head.

"He would if Frank asked him to make it up, but he wouldn't come to make the overtures himself."

"I see. Each of the giddy goats—excuse me—is waiting

for the other to give in. You couldn't very well wire in Frank's name, as that would be a swindle."

"Yass, wathah! It is an old maxim, deah boys, nevah to be a wascal that good may come of it."

"Right!" said Figgins. "But how—"

"Pewwaps I can think out an ideah," said D'Arcy, tapping his forehead with his fingertips, as if to assist the working of the brain within.

"Perhaps you can," said Lowther, "or perhaps you could if you had the necessary apparatus."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What if you go round and speak to Frank now and get his views on the subject?" suggested Tom Merry.

Jack Blake shook his head again.

"No good."

"Why not?"

"He would know he was spotted then, and he'd know I should chip in. He'd make me promise not to give him away to the governor."

"But you needn't promise."

"Then he's as likely as not to bunk and leave Northwood."

"My hat! That wouldn't do."

"Wathah not! I have an ideah, deah boys—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy! You're interrupting the thinks."

"I wefuse to wing off. I have—"

"Lie down!"

"I uttably and absolutely wefuse to lie down. I wegard the suggestion as widiculous. I have a wippin' ideah!"

"Oh, go ahead, then!" said Tom Merry resignedly.

"Let's get the agony over. What is the idea?"

"I wefuse to have it wegard in that light."

"What's the wheeze, ass?"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as an ass!"

"Are you going to explain," shouted Herries, "or are you not going to explain?"

"Pway give me a chance, deah boy. I have a wippin' ideah. What you want, Blake, is to bwing your governah and your eldah bwothah togethah unexpectedly."

"Yes, if it could be fixed."

"I have thought of a weally wippin' wheeze. Suppose we invited Fwank Blake to tea in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's."

"What then—"

"And send a message to your governah askin' him to come to St. Jim's on important business—somethin' important, such as advisin' you about gettin' a new toppah, or choosin' a new thing in waistcoats—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally see nothin' comical in the suggestion. Of course, I do not suggest pweavocations in the mattah. You must have some important mattah of that kind on hand, in ordah to bear out the statement in the telegwam. Then your governah can meet your bwothah in the study."

"There might be something in that," said Blake thoughtfully.

"My deah boy, there's heaps in it. You can make Fwank come—"

"That's the difficulty. He's more likely to bolt when he knows I know he's here," said Blake ruefully.

"Yass; but you haven't heard the west of my wippin' scheme. You wemembah what Mellish and his wascally fwiends were sayin' about your bwothah."

Jack Blake's eyes darkened.

"What on earth—"

"Pway be patient, deah boy. I assuah you frowm my gweat knowledge of human natuah in genewal, and of Mellish and his fwiends' natuah in particulah, that they will not allow that slandah to dwop."

Blake's eyes gleamed.

"They will keep it up, deah boy, unless they are simply forced to admit that there is nothin' in it. And there's only one way of foroin' them to do that—by gettin' Fwank Blake to show himself at St. Jim's."

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings and silly asses—"

"Pway don't be funny, Tom Mewwy! Blake, deah boy, if you explain to your eldah bwothah, in a pwopahly respectful way, how you are situated at St. Jim's, I am quite suah that he will accept your invitation to call."

"I rather think so," said Blake reflectively. "Blessed if I ever knew that Gussy had so much hoss-sense."

"When in doubt, ask Gussy!" said Monty Lowther.

"I have fwequently pointed out to you fellows that in a case of doubt I am the vovvy chap to show you what's the pwopah thing to do, but I must wemark that I have nevah been tweated with weal wespoot on such occasions."

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "this must be set right. Gussy has never been tweated with weal wespoot. I move that Arthur Adolphus Fitzgerald has deserved well of his country on this present occasion, and that it be unanimously passed by the meeting here present that he is not invariably a silly ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I second," exclaimed Figgins, "that Gussy is not invariably a silly ass!"

"Passed unanimously!" said Blake. "Gussy is not invariably a silly ass!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I insist upon—"

"Hear, hear!"

And Arthur Augustus gave it up.

CHAPTER 12.

Straight From the Shoulder!

CLINK, clink, clink!

The pocketful of small silver clinked musically as the chums of St. Jim's walked off towards the railway station.

Jack Blake was still looking very thoughtful. He would gladly have gone round to the players' quarters to speak to his brother, but under the circumstances it was better not. The invitation to Frank to come to tea in Study No. 6 was not to be sent until Monday.

Clink, clink, clink!

"Oh, I say, keep that old clothes' man off!" said Figgins. "Figgins, I wegard that wemark a simply beastlay—"

"By Jove! Is it you, Gus?"

"You were perfectly well awah that it was I, Figgins. It is not my fault if I weceived the change of my fivah in silvah!"

"Tie it up in a handkerchief and put it in your hat."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Perhaps you could carry it in your mouth, as Pongo carries things!" Monty Lowther suggested.

"I wegard that wemark as absolutely wibald—"

Clink, clink, clink!

Arthur Augustus strode on indignantly, and the small silver clinked away merrily. He drew out a handful of it in despair.

SCHOOLBOYS versus TERRORISTS!



"Carry out the orders of the Fellowship of Fear, and we shall not molest you. Ignore them and death will be the penalty." This is the terrible ultimatum which the Headmaster of St. Frank's receives—an ultimatum from a notorious gang of terrorists and anarchists. To obey their commands will bring disaster upon St. Frank's, to disobey, death to himself. What does the Head do? Read "The Fighting Six!" By E. S. Brooks. A gripping long complete school and detective story starring Nelson Lee, the famous detective, Nipper, his assistant, and the popular chums of St. Frank's in

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"Bai Jove! I've a gweat mind to thwow it away!" he exclaimed.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I know a jolly place near the station where you can get ripping feeds."

"It's not a bad idea," said Tom Merry. "I'm hungry myself."

"So am I."

"And I—rather!"

"Pewwaps it is wathah a good ideah, now you come to think of it," said D'Arcy, lading out the silver in his gloved hand. "I can't cawwy this stuff wound with me. Pewwaps I could get wid of ten shillings or so, and change the west into—Oh!"

He broke off suddenly.

Two rough-looking fellows had been standing on the kerb, and as the juniors passed they caught sight of the handfuls of silver.

They exchanged a glance, and one of them, pretending to stumble, rolled right upon D'Arcy, and sent him reeling.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a yell.

He staggered under the impact, and his silk hat fell off, and D'Arcy made a wild clutch at it to save it.

Needless to say, everything in his hands went by the board, and there was a scattering of small silver on the pavement.

"You ass!" roared Blake.

"It was that rotter's fault!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Pick up the money, you chaps!"

The juniors did their best. But the clinking of falling coins had attracted eager seekers instantly from all quarters. There was a scramble for the falling silver, and the juniors of St. Jim's were soon outnumbered.

Arthur Augustus recovered his hat and jammed it on his head.

He stuck his monocle in his eye, and looked round upon the scrambling crowd.

He did not take part in the scramble. He regarded it as rather unseemly.

"Hold on, deah boys!" he said. "Pway don't get excited! You can let them have the west of it! I make them a pwesen of all they can find. Go ahead, deah boys!"

Blake snorted.

"Well, of all the dummies—"

"Wats! Scwamble for the silvah, deah boys—I make you a pwesen of it! Come on, you chaps, or we shall lose our twain!"

The juniors walked on, leaving a dozen or fifteen men and boys scrambling for what money was still left on the ground.

Arthur Augustus, perfectly satisfied with the way he had settled the difficulty, brushed his silk topper with his sleeve as he walked on.

"You—you ass!" said Fatty Wynn, in measured accents.

"What price that feed now?"

"Bai Jove, I'd forgotten that!"

"Forgotten it! Oh, there ain't a word for you."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Br-r-r-r! You want suffocating," said Fatty Wynn. "There's a ripping feed gone! How much have you chaps saved from the scramble?"

"A bob here," said Figgins.

"Tanner," said Manners.

"Same here."

"Another bob."

"Bai Jove, there isn't vewy much out of four pounds ten," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy fortunate that we took return tickets."

"Yes, you duffer, and more fortunate still that they weren't trusted in your hands."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Two-and-six the lot," grunted Fatty Wynn. "Still, that will do us a cup of coffee and a sandwich apiece. Come on, I know a place."

Fatty Wynn generally did know a place where provisions could be got. Figgins had remarked that if Fatty took a journey to the moon some day, he wouldn't be there five minutes before he spotted a buffet.

The coffee and sandwiches weren't much after the feed the juniors had promised themselves, but they were welcome to the hungry and cold juniors.

Then they took the train for Rylecombe, and arrived at the village in the dusk of the early February evening.

They walked back to the school, and arrived there in good time for calling-over.

Gore and Mellish, and several of their set were in the hall of the School House when Tom Merry and his friends came in.

They looked at Blake, and grinned at one another.

Their looks were too pointed to be passed unnoticed by Blake, and the junior knew perfectly well what they meant. His face went scarlet.

Jack Blake was not given to wasting words. He walked straight up to Gore.

The cad of the Shell looked at him coolly.

"What do you mean?" demanded Blake hotly.

Gore yawned.

"What do I mean by what?"

"You grinned at me."

"Well, it's a free country—I suppose a fellow's at liberty to grin if he wants to?" yawned Gore.

"Not at me," said Blake. "I know what you meant."

"Then why did you ask me?"

"I know what you meant," repeated Blake unheeding. "You were thinking of the lies Mellish invented about my brother."

"You seem to be mighty touchy about your brother," sneered Gore. "I haven't said that I believe what Mellish said."

"I jolly well know you don't believe it, but you want to make out that you do!" exclaimed Blake excitedly. "And you're a cad!"

"Yaas, wathah! I must say that I quite agree with my friend Blake. Gore is certainly a wotten cad."

Gore flushed red. Although he never cared for a row with Tom Merry, it was different with Blake & Co. They were in the Fourth, and Gore was in a higher form. The bully of the Shell clenched his fists.

"Well, I'd rather be a cad than a thief!" he said.

Blake's eyes blazed. He did not reply; he hit out straight from the shoulder. Gore's parry was too late, and he could not have stopped that blow, anyway. Blake's fist caught him just under the nose, and he went over backwards as if he had been shot.

Blake stood over him with clenched fists, panting chest, and eyes that seemed to flame.

"Get up!" he said thickly. "Get up, you cur, and take some more!"

But Gore did not get up. He lay, looking dazed and stupid; and Blake, with a savage look of scorn, passed him and left him there.

Tom Merry slapped Blake on the shoulder, and Buck Finn, the American chum of the Shell, drawled:

"I guess you've got what you've been asking for, Gore, by gum!"

And Gore only scowled savagely.

CHAPTER 13. Kildare's Advice!

THERE was a serious consultation in Study No. 6 that evening.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's plan had been adopted unanimously, and the School House chums talked it over to decide about the best way of putting it into execution. Figgins & Co. had offered to take the whole matter in hand and run it for Blake, and the offer had been firmly, if not respectfully, declined.

"You had better leave it to me," said D'Arcy. "It was my ideah in the first place, and I am bound to be able to handle it better than you chaps. Besides, what is wanted now is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"I move that Gussy rings off."

"I decline to wing off! Undah the cires—"

"It's about settled," said Tom Merry. "Frank Blake is to be invited to tea on Monday evening, and Blake is to go over with the invitation specially, so as to be able to explain matters to him."

"That's right," said Blake.

"Then the question is, how to get Blake's governor at the school at the same time."

"I have already made a suggestion on that point—"

"But your suggestions are like the suggester—no good!" said Lowther. "We want a good idea."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"How can we get Blake senior here? Suppose Blake falls ill, and we wire his governor?"

"I should weseuse to have any hand in a pwevawication."

"Who's talking about prevarications, ass? Blake would have really to fall ill, of course."

"Blessed if I know how to do it at a moment's notice!" grinned Blake. "I've never been ill in my life!"

"Oh, that's easy enough! You can take some of the medicines that Miss Priscilla Fawcett sends to Tom Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or let Herries play his cornet to you."

"You let my cornet alone!" growled Herries.

"Or listen to some of Monty Lowther's jokes," suggested Ligby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 19.)

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HERE IS A PAGE FROM—



Address all letters : The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, ohums! I have just finished reading for about the sixth time the long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. for next Wednesday's GEM. It's a peach—a real gem, so to speak. In

"HERO AND CAD!"

you will get a fine admixture of laughs, thrills, and exciting adventure. And when you have finished Martin Clifford's story you will find another amazing yarn by Cecil Fanshawe, which is staged in the South Seas. Potts, who was "absent" last week—he says he'd got the 'flu—will again be in our programme of good things. In addition to these features there will be another batch of prize-winning jokes, the senders of which will be presented with half-a-crown apiece. Just one more thing—next week's GEM will also contain the solution of our simple Home Cinema Competition. By glancing at this solution you will be able to see how near your efforts were and will also find full instructions for sending in your claims. That makes the next issue of the GEM more important than ever, so don't fail to order your copy early! Now for some unusual news para.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

It was in the year 1881 (sounds a deuce of a time ago, doesn't it) when a certain gentleman hopped into a train at Finsbury Park without a ticket and travelled to Peterborough—a distance of seventy-six miles. At Peterborough he bilked the railway company. In other words, he walked out of the station, having travelled the aforementioned distance without paying a penny. But consciences are peculiar things. In the case of this particular bilker that "free" journey must have haunted him, for now, after all these years, he has sent five-and-sixpence and a letter of apology to the stationmaster at Finsbury Park! It's worth mentioning, to wind up this story, that the fare to-day from Finsbury Park to Peterborough is nine shillings and sevenpence!

THE ACROBATIC DOG!

It was quite an attractive-looking dog and it trotted along by its owner's side at the end of a leash in a strictly decorous manner. Then, suddenly, just as the owner crossed the wet pavement to enter a shop the dog forgot its manners. It yelped and pranced and howled and performed all manner of strange antics, finishing up with a double somersault which landed it in the shop. Coming out of the shop some time later the dog did the whole bag of tricks over again, with

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the exception that this time it seemed glued to the pavement. Up popped a constable. He was a knowing man in blue, too, because he had mugged up a thing or two about electricity. Directly he stepped on to that wet pavement he felt a shock and he knew that the dog had felt a worse one. He lifted up the dog and carried him a few yards away, whereupon the dog licked him gratefully. Then along came those people who pull up roads and pavements and things and discovered that there was a bad leakage of electric current. But the dog, doubtless, will always remember that he discovered it first!

REPLY TO "GEMITE" SINCE 1925.

Most editors, or publishers, prefer a typewritten manuscript. If this is not within your power or means, you should write your story in a clear handwriting, using, of course, only one side of the paper. Should you require the manuscript returned to you, in the event of its being unsuitable, you should enclose a stamped and addressed envelope.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Teacher: "Boy! Stand up! Come out and give me what you've got in your mouth!"

Pupil: "You're welcome to it, sir. It's toothache!"

CRICKET ON A GOLDMINE!

When England's Test players met a Victorian country team at Bendigo, just prior to the third Test match in Australia, they had the novel experience of playing cricket on top of a goldfield. There's a big gold boom at Bendigo, and it has been stated on good authority that gold actually exists no more than twenty feet below the surface of the pitch upon which Jardine, Larwood, Sutcliffe, & Co. did their "stuff." Now some wag writes in and asks: "Is it cricket playing cricket on a goldmine?"

TALLY-HO!

That's what the huntmen were saying (or whatever it is they do say) when two healthy-looking foxes were practically cornered by the hounds recently in a hunt in Ireland. But these foxes knew a thing or two. They certainly know something about geography, for the spot was the border line of the Irish Free State. They (the foxes) darted across the border, but the hounds and the huntmen did not give further chase. If the huntmen had crossed the border they would have been liable to a hefty penalty for importing live horseflesh into Ulster! No wonder the hounds were called off. But what I want to know is, who told the wily foxes about this tariff business?

A LUCKY FALL!

A ten-year-old youngster recently collected, like many more of us, a dose of the 'flu and was put to bed. He was soon fast asleep. He was still just asleep when he arose from his bed, walked to the window, and opened it—and fell fifty feet into the garden outside! The sleepwalker was fortunate enough to break his fall by crashing into a clothes line, and but for a few bruises was none the worse. Next time you're looking at a "high" house just work out the height of fifty feet from the ground, and ask yourself whether you'd like to fall from a window that much "off" the ground!

A SCHOOLBOY HOWLER!

A volcano is something that forces its inside out. They are surmounted by a big hole at the top to do this.—Extract from the "University Correspondent."

PRESENCE OF MIND!

He was a window cleaner and he was plying his energy to a shop front when he suddenly noticed that a passer-by was carrying an umbrella which was ablaze. Swoosh! The window cleaner's bucket of water came in useful as it put out that blaze mighty quickly—but the owner of the umbrella got soaked into the bargain! Still, he was grateful!

HOME-MADE MEAT!

Scientists have made a great discovery. They have taken a piece of chicken's flesh, shoved it into a tank, fed it with various chemicals and—believe it or not—that piece of chicken's flesh has gone on growing and growing as if it were still part of a live chicken. The experiment opens up amazing possibilities, for already these scientists are looking forward to the day when we shall be able to grow our beef steaks, lamb cutlets, etcetera, without having to worry about rearing animals. As proof of what can be done "biochemically" a factory in Germany is preparing to make real sweet, eatable sugar from waste wood and sawdust! Grooooooh!

THE LATEST SCOTCH YARN!

And it's true! At least I've seen it in a newspaper! There was a young Scotsman who fairly worshipped the girl of his heart. She worked in a jewellery factory and every night she came home the Scotsman insisted on brushing her clothes and cleaning her shoes. All that he brushed off he kept. Then he washed this dust which, incidentally, he had brushed off for a period of two years or more, through a gold-miner's sluice pan. Result—a quantity of gold and platinum filings worth twelve pounds. Yes! He got the twelve quid for it when he offered it to a refiner. But the boss of the jewellery factory has got wise to things. Before his employees go home these days they are "relieved" of the gold and platinum dust which accumulates on their clothing by means of a vacuum cleaner. Hard luck on our Scotsman, what?

STILL GOING STRONG!

Ever wondered how many miles you have walked since you were able to toddle? Bit of a poser, isn't it? But list to the tale of a Norfolk postwoman, who has been delivering letters for the past thirty-five years. She works it out that she has covered one hundred thousand miles. This energetic lady is now fifty-five, but she reckons that she is still good for many thousands of miles yet!

THE MYSTERY FOOTBALLER!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Look here, Digby——"
 "Shan't! Blake can, if he wants to fall ill."
 "Bai Jove, you know, I wegard that as wathah funnay! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You're jolly easily pleased, then!" growled Lowther.
 "We're getting off the point," said Tom Merry. "How is Blake senior to be gently persuaded to turn up here on Monday evening?"
 "Suppose you wired, 'Come at once—important!'" said Manners. "I suppose that would fetch him."
 "He might wire back 'Rats!'" suggested Lowther.
 Blake grinned.
 "You see, a chap can't order his father about," he remarked. "It's a rotten state of things, perhaps, but there you are. We must take things as we find 'em."
 "Bai Jove, I've got another wippin' ideah!"
 "Take it out and bury it!"
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. Suppose we ask the Head to help?"
 "The Head doesn't know anything about it."
 "He would if you told him, deah boy."
 "Did you work that out in your head, Gussy?"
 "Pway don't be funny, Lowthah, on a serious subject. A telegram to Mr. Blake in this style: 'Come at once. Vewy important.—Holmes,' would fetch the old gentleman like anythin'."
 Lowther gave a sudden yell.
 "I've got it!"
 They looked at him.
 "What have you got?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.
 "The jim-jams!"
 "No; the wheeze!"
 "Get it off your chest, then."
 "There's a kid in the Third who can help us."
 "Bai Jove! Do you mean young Wally?"
 "No; I mean young Holmes."
 "Holmes?"
 "Yes, of course! He can send this wire for us. Mr. Blake will very likely think it comes from the Head——"
 "Very ukely! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "But, as a matter of fact, it will come from young Holmes. What do you think of the idea?"
 "I think it's an idea you won't carry out," said a voice at the door; and the juniors looked round, startled, and saw Kildare of the Sixth looking in.
 "Bai Jove!"
 The big Sixth-Former came into the study.
 "Sorry to spoil a little joke," he said, "but I shall have to nip this in the bud, Lowther. It's not much of an idea, anyway. I looked in to tell you kids that I haven't had the lines this study owes me, and this is the last evening in the week. If they're left over Sunday there'll be ructions."
 "Weally, Kildare——"
 "And now, what is it you want to bring Mr. Blake here for?" demanded the captain of St. Jim's.
 The juniors looked at one another. Kildare evidently had his suspicions, and, after all, he was a kind-hearted fellow, and could be confided in.
 "Is it something about your brother, Blake?"
 "Yes," blurted out Blake. "Keep it dark, Kildare; but this is how the matter stands. I've found Frank——"
 "You've found him!" exclaimed Kildare, in astonishment.
 "Yes. He's joined a professional football club, and he was playing in the match to-day over at Northwood."
 "My las!"
 "I think I can get him here on Monday evening, and if I can get the governor here, too, they'll make it up."
 "I see. It's a jolly good motive, I admit, but there oughtn't to be anything like trickery about it."
 "Oh, I say——" began Lowther.
 "You didn't mean it for trickery, Lowther, but it was something of that sort. It won't do. Don't you think, Blake, that if you wrote your father that Frank would be here, he would be likely to come?"
 Blake looked worried.
 "Well, as - matter of fact, the dad is beastly firm," he said. "I've never known him give up a point in dispute."
 "But this sort of thing can never have happened before. Surely, in a case like this——"
 "Well, perhaps——"
 "If your father doesn't want to come and meet Frank, you've no right to dodge him into it," said Kildare quietly.

"But I think it very likely that if you bring yourself to trust to your father's judgment in the matter——"

"Oh, Kildare!"

"In that case I think it probable that he will jump at the opportunity, and come as fast as an express train can bring him."

"I—I shouldn't wonder. If—if you think it's the best wheeze——"

"I do undoubtedly, if you are willing to take my advice."

"Of course we are, Kildare. We know you've got sense."
 "Yaas, wathah! I haven't much of an opinion of Sixth Form chaps as a wule, but I must say I have always wegarded Kildare as a chap with sense."

"Thank you!" said Kildare gravely. "Then that's my advice. And—and as you're so busy doing something useful for once in your lives, you can leave the lines. I dare say you'll have a fresh lot next week."

And the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study, leaving the juniors extremely satisfied with themselves, with him, and with things generally.

CHAPTER 14.

To the Rescue!

KILDARE turned out to be correct in his opinion, after all, and Blake's doubts were set to rest.

For on Monday, in reply to Blake's letter to his father, came a wire that completely satisfied the youthful plotters:

"Coming at once.—Blake."

Blake tore open the envelope when the telegraph-boy brought it, and tossed the boy a shilling in the exuberance of his spirits when he read the message.

Then he danced away in search of his chums.

"Read that!" he exclaimed, thrusting the telegram under the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would not be so beastlay wuff——"

"Read it, duffer!"

"I declire to be addressed as a duffah——"

"Read it!"

"Bai Jove, that's good news!" said D'Arcy, looking at the telegram at last. "Weally, Blake, I think you may congratulate yourself at havin' requested me to take the lead in this mattah!"

"Oh, yes, rether!" grinned Blake. And he dashed off to show the telegram to Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said the hero of the Shell. "Now, all we've got to do is to get your brother here. You're going to make him a personal visit?"

"That's the idea!"

"And I think I had better come along," said D'Arcy, who was at Blake's heels. "Undah the cires we can't be too careful. If Fwank Blake cuts up wusty a fellow of tact and judgment will be wequiahed——"

"We may as well all go—or as many as can get leave," Tom Merry remarked. "Gussy wants to come to take care of you, and certainly somebody ought to come to take care of Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let 'em all come," said Blake. "You can all pay your own fares, and Gussy can pay mine."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "What's the good of chucking money away? If we can get leave to go to Northwood, we can start early and hoof it. What's a few miles to us?"

"Yaas, wathah: only it might be wathah exhaustin'."

"You can stay behind."

"Yaas: but you fellows would be bound to get into some twouble."

"Then you can walk."

"Yaas: but——"

"My word! He's all 'buts' to-day! Ring off!"

"Wats! I wefuse to wing off! I was goin' to say——"

But Blake and Tom Merry were walking off in different directions, and they never knew what Arthur Augustus was going to say.

It was easy for the juniors to obtain permission to walk over to Northwood. Kildare, the captain of the school, gave them the required pass. He knew what they meant to do, and he approved. And he knew that Tom Merry & Co. could be trusted out of bounds at any time.

When they were put upon their honour there was no doubt that they would "play the game," and the captain of St. Jim's knew it by experience.

After tea the youngsters put on their caps and coats for the start. Figgins & Co were in the quadrangle, and Blake stopped to speak to them in passing.

"Going to fetch Frank?" asked Figgins.
 "Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm goin' to walk, and these chaps are comin' with me."

Figgins grinned.

"Like us to come?"

"We should," said Jack Blake. "But there's something else you can do if you want to be obliging. We want a bit of a feed ready for Frank. Will you make it pax and get tea in our study? I know we can trust to Wynn's judgment in getting the grub."

"Yes, rather," said Fatty Wynn emphatically. "You can rely upon me when it comes to that, Blake, and I'll do it with pleasure."

The chief of the New House juniors nodded.

"Right you are, Blake!"

"Whip round for the tin, you chaps!" said Tom Merry. As most of the juniors had received pocket-money some time on Saturday they were pretty flush on Monday, and they made up a handsome sum by general contributions.

Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened as he received nearly a pound in silver.

"By George! I can get a ripping feed for this!" he exclaimed.

"That's right! We'll undertake to come back with good appetites."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House chums left the gates and took the dusty road to Northwood. It was a long, long walk, but the boys were fit and keen, and they did not care for that.

They were a couple of miles from St. Jim's, and in a lonely and shadowy lane, when Tom Merry suddenly stopped.

"What was that?" he muttered.

"I didn't see anything," said Blake.

"No, I didn't; but I heard something."

"What was it?"

"Hark!"

The juniors listened intently.

Around them were the trees, heavy and dark and silent, save for the rustle of the winter wind in the leafless branches.

Through the silence came ringing a faint cry:

"Help!"

It was faint and far off, but unmistakable.

"Help!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"You heard that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's buzz on!" exclaimed Blake, breaking into a run.

The juniors dashed forward. The road they were following was a lonely one, and had an unenviable reputation as the scene of more than one outrage by footpads.

The juniors had not the least doubt that some luckless wayfarer had been attacked by thieves, and, judging from his cry for help, he was probably being hurt as well as robbed.

Not for an instant did the juniors of St. Jim's hesitate to go to the rescue. As for the danger, they not only did not care for it, but they did not even think of it till they were on the scene.

They ran swiftly along the shadowy lane. Two figures came into sight, and then a third, and again the cry rang out through the silent woods that bordered the lane.

"Help!"

A young man in a bowler hat and an overcoat was defending himself against the attack of two roughly clad men, who were evidently seeking to get him down.

Jack Blake gave a cry.

"My hat, Frank!"

"Frank Blake! Buzz on!"

It was Frank Blake, the young footballer—the gallant forward of Northwood Athletic—who was defending himself desperately against two ruffians.

Tom Merry & Co. dashed on at top speed. The footpads were too busily engaged to heed them. The attack came wholly by surprise.

Tom Merry and Manners grasped one of the ruffians from behind and dragged him over in the dust, while Blake, Herries, and Digby seized the other. Lowther and D'Arcy were only a moment behind.

The ruffians uttered yells of surprise and rage as they were seized, but they had little chance of resisting the odds.

They were down, and the juniors of St. Jim's were scrambling over them like cats.

"Got 'em!" panted Tom Merry.

Blake sprang towards his brother.

"Frank!"

The Northwood winger uttered a cry of amazement.

"Jack!"

Jack Blake grasped his brother's hand and shook it again.

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and again. Frank stared at him in amazement. The two ruffians were squirming under the weight of the juniors, and yelling for mercy now.

"I—I never expected to see you, Jack!" grasped Frank Blake. "What on earth are you doing so far from the school?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Blake. "What are we going to do with these rotters?"

The footballer laughed.

"Well, they seem to have been pretty well punished already. I dare say they've had enough."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have been stwikin' this one violently, and I must say that he has had a fearful thwashin'."

"And I've nearly squashed this one!" chuckled Manners. "He will want a new eye and another nose to-morrow."

"Ow! Lemme go!"

"Gerroff!"

"Let them go!" laughed Frank Blake. "They won't feel fit for any more hooliganism to-night or for some time to come to judge by their looks."

The footballer of Northwood was right.

The two footpads had been very roughly used. When the juniors let them go they crawled away and disappeared into the darkness with many a groan.

CHAPTER 15.

A Guest in Study No. 6!

FRANK BLAKE shook hands with Tom Merry & Co. as his brother introduced them. He had been saved from a tight fix by the arrival of the juniors on the scene.

There was no doubt that the footpads had intended to use any amount of violence to overcome his resistance, and the young Yorkshireman was not the kind of fellow to give in where he could strike a blow in defence of his belongings.

"I'm jolly glad you came up!" he said. "But surely you are not allowed so far from the school at this time? I hope this is not an escapade, Jack?"

Jack Blake grinned.

"If it is, it's your fault. What do you mean by bolting away from home and making me anxious about you?"

"Jack!"

"Blessed if something doesn't always happen, except when I'm home in the holidays!" said Jack Blake. "Never knew such a chap as you are for getting into trouble. What were you doing here, come to that?"

Frank laughed and coloured.

"I was coming to St. Jim's—"

"Coming to see me?"

"Oh, no! I shouldn't have come in. I was going to take a look at the school, that's all. I wanted a trot for exercise, anyway, and I thought I might as well come in this direction. But you—"

"We were coming for you. It's all right; these chaps know all about it."

"Indeed!"

"We want you to come to tea in Study No. 6 in the School House," explained Blake. "We were coming over with the invitation."

"How on earth did you know—"

Blake chuckled.

"We saw you on Saturday."

"Yaas, wathah! As a mattah of fact, deah boy, it was through me. I took up the case of the mysterious disappearance in my capacity of amatuah detective, and I took Jack to the football ground at Northwood—"

"Well, of all the—"

"I pwesume that you do not deny, Blake, that I took you to the football ground? You and Tom Mewwy both agreed that I was leadah of the party."

"But—"

"Also that I took up the case in my pwofessional capacity—"

"Yes; but—"

"Therefore, the case is made out."

"There's no connection—"

"Weally, Blake, I have pwovided you with an explanation. I am not bound to pwovide you with a bwaïn to undahstand it!" said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity.

Frank Blake laughed.

"Well, whatever the reason, you've found me," he said. "I'm sorry for this, Blake, as you will be bound to tell the pater, and I shall have to leave Northwood."

"Never mind that now," said Blake. "You've got to come to St. Jim's to tea now."

"I'm afraid it's impossible."

"Rats!" said the younger brother cheerfully. "I—"

"Weally, Blake, I should wecomend tweekin' your oldah bwothah with pwopah wespsect, as he is almost certain to cut up wustay."

"Dry up, Gussy, and don't interrupt your uncle! You see, Frank, you've got to come. Some of the fellows at the school have found out that you've bolted from home, and they are starting a yarn that you busted the paternal cash-box as a preliminary canter."

Frank Blake started.

"Is it possible?"

"Fact, my son!" said Jack, calmly oblivious of the fact that he was eight or nine years his brother's junior. "That's how the case stands. I've biffed some of them; but, bless you, fellows are too obstinate to be convinced by mere biffing. Nothing will convince them that you are not scooting from the police—but one thing. You'll have to show up at St. Jim's."

"But—but I—"

"You can't leave me in such a fix, when you've brought it all on me."

"Yes, you could—you could have laid low for a bit. You know the dad; he soon gets over his tantrums, and he'd have been sorry."

"Well, I was in a temper, too!"

"Of course you were—silly ass!"

"Look here, Jack—"

"I'm looking—and I can see a champion duffer," said Jack Blake uncompromisingly. "You've played the giddy ox, and you know it. You've got to go back."

"I shan't go back!"

"Obstinate ass!"

"It's not obstinacy. I'm a firm chap."

"Rats!"

The brothers walked on in silence. Frank showed signs of hesitating again when the gates of St. Jim's came in sight. But Jack kept a tight hold on his arm.

"You've got me into a fix," he said. "You've got to



One of the roughs pretended to stumble, rolled right upon D'Arcy, and sent him reeling. The swell of St. Jim's gave a yell. He staggered, his silk hat fell off, and he made a wild clutch at it to save it. Everything in his hands went by the board and there was a scattering of small silver!

"I—I suppose not."

"Come on, then!"

Blake slipped his arm through his brother's, and led him off towards the school. Frank hesitated a moment, and then slowly acceded.

Tom Merry & Co. dropped a little behind, from motives of delicacy. The brothers were free to talk unheard.

"Nice sort of giddy goat you are, to hop off like that without asking my leave," Jack Blake said severely. "I am—"

"Look here, Jack! I can't go back," said Frank quietly. "It was about football, in the first place. Perhaps I oughtn't to have lost my temper—"

"No perhaps about it."

"Well, I admit I oughtn't, then; but the guv'nor ordered me out."

"I don't suppose he meant it for a moment. And, besides, it served you right, if you lost your temper with your own father."

Frank Blake looked angry for a moment, and then he smiled.

"Well, I took him at his word, Jack."

"Like a silly ass!"

"I suppose I couldn't do anything else?"

get me out. Blessed if I can understand you, Frank. You've been away some time; I should think you were anxious to make it up with dad."

"So I am; but—"

"I understand; you won't give in."

"Well, I'd concede the point in dispute, as far as that goes, but I can't make the first overtures. I can't, and I won't!"

"Well, come in and have tea, and stop the ends jawing. I suppose you can do that much, Mr. High and Mighty?"

Frank laughed.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors and their guest entered the quad, and passed on to the School House. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, met them as they went in, and he looked at Frank.

"My brother Frank, sir," said Blake. "You met him when he came down for the sports, sir. He's the new winger of Northwood Athletic, sir."

Mr. Railton shook hands with the young footballer.

A dozen fellows had heard the words, and Gore and Mellish, who were there, looked at one another with rather sickly expressions. They could guess Blake's motive for thus parading his brother before the House, and they

ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

LATEST NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL

ATALK from Mr. Railton, the School House master, on the subject of "Ambition" started the discussion.

The average fellow is usually rather shy of admitting that he has any particular ambition, as thoughtless idiots who haven't any ambition beyond slacking are apt to cackle. Geese, however, will always cackle, and it is well to remember that it takes real stuffing to decide to make something of yourself and carry it through in spite of all obstacles.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the model of fashion in the junior school, surprised me by attesting very serious ambitions for the future.

"You have heard of Mussolini, the Italian Prime Minister?" asked D'Arcy. I asked who hadn't.

"While I do not agree with all that Mussolini does, I have a great regard for him as a man of action," said Gussy solemnly. "I think he is comparable to Napoleon and other great men. Most of these great men eventually get a bee in their bonnets and spoil their own work. But that is no reason why a fellow of tact and judgment should not go one better, is it?"

I asked if Gussy contemplated following Napoleon and Mussolini.

"In different mannah, yes," admitted the swell of St. Jim's. "Of course, I want to bring about reforms as gently as possible. I hope some day to stand for Parliament, and when I am elected—"

"You mean if you are elected?" I suggested.

"I have no doubt that I shall get in," said Gussy modestly. "With everybody talkin' such blather nowadays, people will be glad to have a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Ah, yes!" I agreed.

"And when I am a fully fledged membah I intend givin' the Pwime Ministah one or two tips—"

"That ought to cheer him up!" I grinned.

"Yaas, it ought to," agreed Gussy innocently. "The Cabinet needs reconstruction, too. I have a scheme for that—"

Gussy started suddenly.

"What's wrong?" I inquired.

"Bai Jove! I almost forgot I have to finish my lines for Latham! Unfortunately, I am not a membah of Parliament yet, you know."

I left Gussy busy with his lines, Parliament forgotten. But whether Arthur Augustus ever reaches the House of Commons or not, he is to be congratulated on his determination to do something besides wearing a silk hat. Good luck, Gussy!

The next fellow I bumped into was Kerr of the New House. Kerr is a canny Scot, and he has his plans for the future cut and dried. His father is a big industrial man, and Kerr has schemes in mind to reorganise industry in the North. As Kerr never fails with his chess problems, I have a suspicion that in due course he will apply his keen brain to industry with marked effect.

Crossing the quad I encountered Monty Lowther, who was retailing a joke to Tom Merry and Manners and Blake and Herries. Judging by their laughter, it was quite funny.

"Monty wants to go on the stage," said Tom Merry, as I came up. "I

think he'd be a roaring success, don't you?"

"It isn't only a question of being a good comedian, you know," said Lowther. "It means sticking it for months, and possibly years, in small parts till you get a really big chance. I've met one or two broken-down actors in Wayland. They hover round the Wayland Theatre in the hope of seeing an old friend. It's a hard life, they warn me. Very few get to the top, and hundreds fail. But I'm going to be one of the few. After all, there's plenty of room at the top, they say."

And Lowther's face brightened. One of these days Lowther's ambitions may be realised in electric lights. Who knows?

"Can you imagine Dr. Holmes and Railton and Ratty in the stalls, listening to me?" asked Lowther, chuckling at the thought. "What a giddy triumph for the School House!"

Figgins strolled up to us.

"What's that about a triumph for the School House?" asked Figgins. "If there's any triumph knocking around, it belongs to the New House."

I seized the chance to ask the long-legged Figgins what he intends to do when he leaves school.

"I'd like to represent England at the Olympic Games?" he answered. "I'd like to specialise in sprinting, the high jump, and boxing. I shouldn't like to say that I shall be good enough. But there's no harm in trying, is there?"

I agreed that there isn't, and wished Figgins all the luck in the world. A St. Jim's man at the Olympic Games would be a feather in the cap of the old school.

Fatty Wynn, after some thought, decided that he had no very startling ambition. He would, however, like to own and direct a large hotel, giving his personal attention to the restaurant, and cooking the most succulent dishes.

Having learned from Percy Mellish that he desires nothing but an "easy time," I taxed Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, the scamp of the Third. Wally said he had not thought about the matter much, having a lot to do already, running the Third Form and keeping an eye on his "major," Arthur Augustus. He admitted, however, that he has a passion for motor racing, and would like to try to lower the speed record set up by Sir Malcolm Campbell. Wally will have to wait a while before he attempts that, however.

Finally, Tom Merry told me that he would like to enter the Colonial Service. Certainly, Merry is an ideal type to send overseas to represent the Old Country. But what Miss Priscilla Fawcett will have to say when she hears of the idea I don't know.

At least it is pretty plain that St. Jim's men are looking ahead and keeping well abreast of the times!

AUTOMATIC INTERVIEWS: GEORGE KERR SPEAKING

"You're quite right—all the clever people come from Scotland!" assented Kerr, without the ghost of a smile.

"It's to be expected, when you remember that we have the finest city in the world—Edinburgh—the finest footballers in the world, the finest climate, and—"

"The finest climate?" I ejaculated. "I understand it is nearly always misty in Scotland!"

"Don't you believe it!" retorted Kerr. "The sun shines in Scotland just as much as anywhere else. And where else would you find the wonderful scenery—the mountains and lakes and moors—that you find in Scotland? Then look at our history—one long list of triumphs against the marauding English—"

"But didn't the Scots do any marauding, too?" I asked.

"We defended our rights," answered Kerr. "For years we kept the English at bay—"

"What about the Battle of Bannockburn?" I inquired gently.

"We had to give you a chance sometimes," said Kerr imperturbably. "And then, when finally the English and Scottish Crowns were united, England accepted a Scottish King—James I."

You can't out-argue Kerr, so I asked what were his favourite pastimes.

"Chess and amateur acting," said Kerr, "and football and cricket and boxing."

I didn't ask which he is best at. Kerr is a true Scot, and, like most Scots, good at everything!

A CHALLENGE FROM THE THIRD. THE JUNIOR XI, 23. THE THIRD, 1.

The above remarkable football score was the result of a "freak" match between the Junior Eleven in all its might and the fags of the Third, led by Wally D'Arcy.

D'Arcy minor, the most irrepressible fag at St. Jim's, startled the junior committee by sending them a challenge, branding them as funks if they refused it. As Wally threatened to put up a notice in Hall branding the Junior Eleven as funks, something had to be done about it. Tom Merry decided to offer Wally an unofficial match, to be played after classes. If the Third showed up well against the Junior Eleven, Merry agreed to give him a proper fixture. If not—nuff said!

Wally and his men jumped at the chance, but before the ball had been rolling long they wished most heartily that they had not been so eager!

Tom Merry & Co., justly incensed, went all out to pile up the score, and, good as the fags were in their own class, they had no chance against the stalwarts of the Fourth and Shell.

Tom Merry opened the scoring with a hat-trick, and Blake, nothing daunted, equalled his performance. D'Arcy major followed up with a brace of goals, and Monty Lowther netted a couple as well. Long-legged George Figgins then came into the picture, and netted four times consecutively, and by this time the Third were almost dropping!

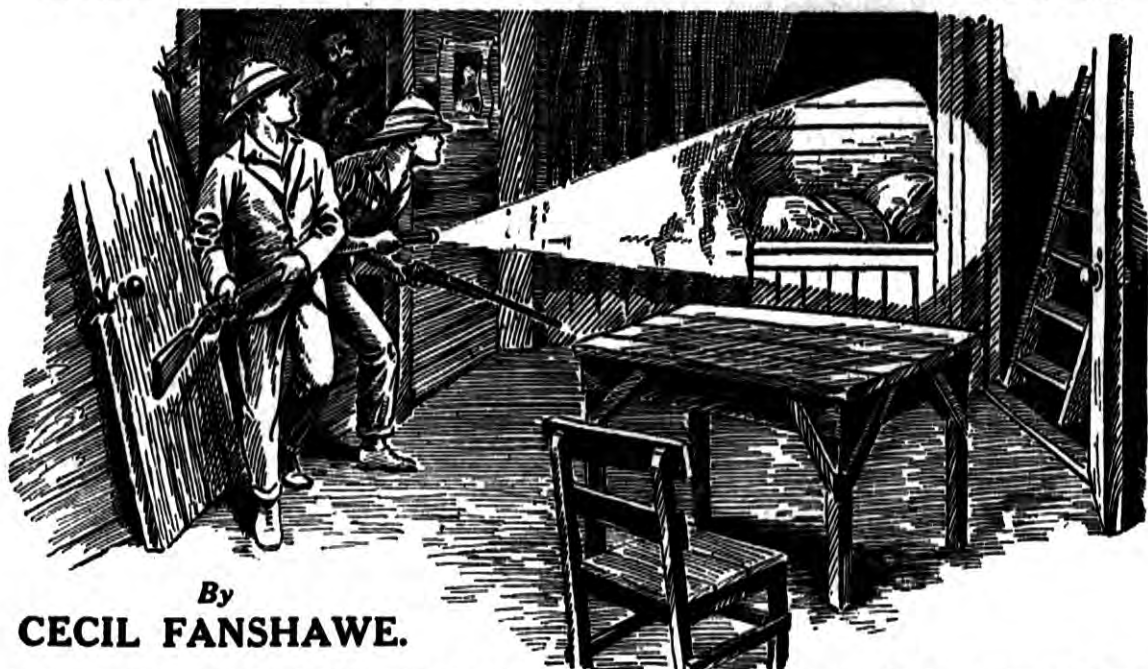
The score piled up higher and higher, and Wally and his men were on their last legs as Tom Merry popped in the twenty goal. The game was only half an hour old, but the fags were beaten to the wide.

Wally D'Arcy made one last despairing effort on his own, and, taking Fatty Wynn completely off his guard, he netted for the Third, amid wild applause from the fags.

It was the last kick of the match; for, with his blushing honours thick upon him, Wally gracefully withdrew the challenge and retired—with dignity!

BATTLER BART CREWISON SOLVES—

THE LIGHTHOUSE MYSTERY!



By
CECIL FANSHAW.

Some think that Skull Island is haunted by ghosts, but Battler Bart and his brother Dick are determined to lay those ghosts—and they do—with a diving suit!

CHAPTER 1. Skull Island!

BIG fella light he no look along us! He no walk about, master!" Tokelau Jim bawled over his shoulder. "Me fright along this storm too much!" The stalwart Kanaka bosun stood swaying on the deck of the Radio Ray. He gripped the rails and stared into the howling darkness with horrified eyes, as the little schooner bucked and pitched in the South Seas typhoon.

But not even the fact that they were tearing through the perilous Horner Straits without a glimmer showing from Skull Island Lighthouse could dismay "Battler" Bart Crewison.

"Gammon!" roared Battler, knees jammed in the bucking steering-wheel. "You no fright, my lad. Plenty soon we see him fella light, then we go through these straits like blazes!"

Battler's shout rose cheerily above the howl of wind and drum of waters. But well he knew the schooner's peril, and was inwardly puzzled at the failure of the lighthouse. If no light showed soon he would have to investigate it.

All around lay invisible islands, perilous shoals and reefs, and terrific currents raced up Horner Straits. There would be more than one wreck by dawn if Skull Island Lighthouse remained in darkness.

It was a mystery, that lighthouse, which stood on the shore of an unexplored, jungle island in the middle of the straits. Battler knew the grim stories about it.

Two successive keepers had been found dead when wrathful shipmasters called to demand reasons for the light's failure. A third had vanished without trace, leaving the dark lighthouse empty; another had been removed raving mad.

But Battler and his young brother Dick were not the fellows to be scared by mysteries. They were on a rush job in their little schooner, which was manned by a crew of five Kanakas.

They had contracted to recruit fifty savage labourers for a coconut plantation within a fortnight, to pay a nifty fine for every day overdue. It would have been a tough job in any case; now, with a typhoon racing up Horner Straits, and the mystery lighthouse invisible once more, it seemed impossible.

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But still Battler hoped to see the light shine out suddenly. He glared into the gloom, gripping the wheel with powerful hands, his face lashed by flying spray.

On raced the Radio Ray, pounded by seas that thundered against her sides, bucking, shuddering from nose to stern. Overhead the gale roared like an express train, and the wind came shouting out of the darkness, roaring and yelling like a wild beast.

In Battler's ears was the wild clatter of gear aloft, the yells of the dismayed Kanakas, and the crash of waters. At each roll of the schooner he lurched heavily, was flung gasping against the wheel; from the engine-room came a horrid clamour of iron things falling.

Brief glimpses Battler got of stars flying madly overhead. Through the murk and spray he glimpsed white-crested waves, and dim, forested shores that loomed up blackly. But no light showed from Skull Island, and by now Battler reckoned he was close off the mysterious lighthouse.

"It's no go, Dick, old lad!" he roared between booming gusts. "I know these infernal straits—could get our hooker through. But it's up to us to scotch this rotten mystery; we must get that light fizzing. Otherwise umpteen wrecks before this blow's over! I'm going to run in to investigate."

"Rather!" shouted the oil-grimed Dick, flourishing a spanner.

The lad fought his way back to the little cramped engine-room, shouting to brown Tokelau Jim to give a hand and to set the other Kanakas lashing down loose gear on deck.

Both brothers were imbued with the proper spirit. Desperately keen though they were to carry out their contract to recruit the wanted labourers in time, neither would casually have left that blind lighthouse on their stern.

It was a menace to all shipping venturing into the straits.

But Battler could have taken the Radio Ray through the storm and darkness, for he knew every shoal, reef, and current here like the palm of his hand.

Lithe and muscular, over six feet in his socks, and broad-shouldered, Battler Bart was a mighty smart skipper. From the Solomons to the Spice islands the young giant was known as Battler, because he was never happier than when butting into a fight against odds or pitting his strength and skill against the elements.

But never had even Battler encountered so strange a

mystery as this Skull Island Lighthouse. Its keepers died mysteriously without visible cause, vanished without trace, were removed raving mad. Horner Straits were perilous enough without that.

"I'll jolly well scotch this hoodoo for keeps!" Battler laughed grimly as he wrenched the wheel round. "We can't have a comic lighthouse in these parts!"

Round came the handy Radio Ray in a smother of foam. She lay over, then she was racing through the dark welter of wind and waves for the dim shore.

There came to the brothers' ears the thunder of a reef. Then they glimpsed foaming breakers and a black wall of thrashing jungle some distance beyond. Disaster seemed imminent. But Battler knew the spot. Away on his left he got a blurred glimpse of the ramshackle tower that was Skull Island Lighthouse, which was nothing more or less than a circular two-storied wooden shack, with the glass cupola atop.

The crude structure, on a jumble of rocks, separated from the jungle by a strip of sand, showed up gaunt against the stars for a second. A few minutes later Battler ran his schooner up the narrow mouth of a jungle-walled lagoon, to drop anchor inside it.

"Now to tackle the hoodoo, Dick!" he laughed, dashing salt spray from his eyes. "We'll have that jolly old light winking again in two ticks!"

"What the deuce has happened to this keeper?" Dick gasped.

"If he's pushed off or gone off his onion, m'lad," Battler said soberly, "one of us'll have to stop and keep the light going, while the other takes the schooner and crew to recruit our fifty woolly-headed labourers, as per contract. Got that?"

"Yes. I'll stop, Battler. It'll need a mighty powerful hoodoo to make me let that light out!"

"Good lad! Come on!"

The jungle seemed to close like a black wall all round the lagoon. The wind was still roaring overhead, causing the upper branches to thrash and beat wildly. But the water in here was calm, and in a few seconds the brothers were pulling for shore in the schooner's boat.

Both took rifles, for there was no knowing into what they might bump, and the marshes and creeks were sure to be haunted by crocodiles. With them went the stalwart Tokelau Jim, armed with a cane knife. All three carried electric torches.

They moored the boat to a great, knotted mangrove root, then plunged into the rank jungle.

Almost instantly their feet sank deep in black ooze. Then they were stumbling forward over gnarled roots, hacking through dense undergrowth, slipping into marshy holes. Thorns ripped their tropical clothing; creepers and vines tugged at their sun-helmets; wet leaves slapped their faces like giant hands.

But the torches cleaved a bright path through the blackness, and brown Tokelau Jim steered for the shore of the island instinctively.

Suddenly all three burst out of the jungle on to the sandy foreshore, to see the ramshackle lighthouse looming up against dark sea. Still no light showed from the eight-sided glass cupola. Skull Island Lighthouse seemed entirely deserted.

Heads bent to the gale, Battler and Dick went plunging along the raised gangway which connected the building with the shore, their footfalls thudding on the thick planks.

Straining his eyes, Battler saw a large rainwater tub beside the door. He leapt forward, gripped the door-handle in his huge fist, and shook it violently.

"Locked!" he growled. "It seems the blighted keeper got fed-up and pushed off. Well, we've no time to lose. Stand back, my lads!"

In fact, the brothers had no time to lose on mysteries, with their recruiting contract running out against time, meanwhile, and likely to cost them a packet if they were late on it. Teeth clenched, Battler gripped his rifle, swung it above his head, then—

Crash! The door burst open, and in tumbled the brothers, with Tokelau Jim panting on their heels.

Dick swung his torch round, and the white beam revealed a bunk against the timbered wall, an open doorway, with a ladder leading away upwards. The beam fell on a rough table and chairs and coloured pictures, torn from magazines, pasted on the walls. But there was no sign of the lighthouse keeper. The bunk, half-hidden by a white mosquito curtain, with smooth blankets, seemed not to have been used for days.

"Yes; the rotter's cleared out, and left ships to look out for themselves!" Dick snapped angrily. "So I'll jolly well have to stop here and—"

"No, old lad. There he is."

Dick gasped, and swung round. Something in Battler's grim tones made his pulses leap. The lad looked where

Battler's torch threw a white shaft of light. Then he saw the keeper of Skull Island Lighthouse lying back in a long cane chair, with his eyes shut and his fists clenched on the arm-rests.

"Dead!" snapped Battler, removing his battered sun-helmet as he crossed over. "He's the fifth keeper to come to a queer end in four months! What the deuce does it mean?"

CHAPTER 2.

Battler Disappears!

BATTLER, Dick, and Tokelau Jim stood tense for a few seconds, gripping their rifles, aghast and bewildered.

There came to their ears the thunder of the reef, the howl of the wind, the clatter of a loose sheet in the iron roof overhead. Despite the gale, the air was hot and heavy inside the lighthouse, and sweat ran down the brothers' faces.

"Finish along him fella, master!" the big Kanaka gasped uneasily, rolling his eyes. "What name him finish? No stick um spear. No bang um head belong him."

In fact, there was no wound on the dead keeper of the light. Nor was there any sign of a scrap. The room was in order, and it was plain the man had died after locking himself inside.

Battler shook his head, then swung round.

"The light!" he snapped. "We must do this poor chap's job instant! We may lose our contract, Dick, old lad, but I'm not going to leave this island until the mystery's suppered! We'll make Horner Straits safe somehow, by thunder!"

He leapt through the inner door, his jaw squared, and all three went thudding up the ladder to the upper room.

The mystery baffled Battler. Never in all his experience of the South Seas had he met anything like it. He determined to solve it, and make the perilous straits safe for shipping at all costs.

"You bet we will!" Dick grunted.

They flung themselves into the upper room, to find a huge, crude lantern. From a large tub of paraffin in the middle of the room eight wicks ran up to burners fixed on a circular iron frame, and round the burners stood the eight-sided glass cupola.

Crude, indeed, was Skull Island Lighthouse. But when alight it served to keep the remote straits safe for Chinese junks, native proas, and trading tramp steamers. A hasty examination of the burners showed that the wicks had burnt out a day previously.

"Lucky it wasn't longer!" snapped Battler.

They trimmed and lit the wicks, and in a few minutes yellow beams of light once more shone forth into the windy tropical night. Then Battler spun round.

"I'll stay!" he frowned.

"Be blowed to that! I'm not scared of hoodoos, old bean!" Dick cried stoutly. "See here, if you'll get me some grub and paraffin—that tub's half-empty—from the schooner, I'll stick here and run the lighthouse. You sail on and recruit our woolly-heads, then call back for me."

Stoutly the lad pointed out that if he kept the light burning there was no need to fall down on their recruiting contract, after all. But he couldn't skipper the Radio Ray. Only Battler could take the schooner on, with a typhoon roaring up the straits.

In a week at most, Battler could call back for his young brother, after collecting the woolly-heads and sending word by some vessel for a new lighthouse keeper.

Battler hesitated.

"But your scheme seems O.K., old son!" he growled at last, not liking it inwardly. "It's mighty stout of you! Well, I'll get you grub and paraffin. There's drinking water in that rain-tub outside."

He gripped Dick's hand, then thumped away down the ladder with Tokelau Jim. Stalwart, fearless Kanaka though the latter was, he was mighty glad to quit the mystery lighthouse.

Above the howl of wind, Dick heard the outer door bang below him. Then he was alone, and little guessed what was to happen before he saw the big-fisted Battler again.

The lad busied himself with the wicks, adjusting the flames. He polished the inside of the glass cupola, and knew his light was streaming out into the shouting gloom. All was safe for ships at last.

But time passed, and Battler did not return from the Radio Ray, with Kanakas carrying supplies.

Dick got uneasy. He could hear the wind howling round the crazy building, which shook to frequent gusts. He heard the loose sheet-iron clatter, and the ladder creak.

Sweat rained down the lad's face. His nerves were steel,

but more than once he thought he heard stealthy steps up the dark ladder below him. Why the deuce had previous lighthouse keepers died mysteriously, vanished, or gone crazy? What had happened to Battler? Lost his way in the jungle?

Impossible! Battler couldn't lose his way back to the lagoon. Tokelau Jim would have done the short double journey in half an hour on the darkest night, moving by instinct.

"Yes! And they've been gone an hour!" Dick gritted at last. "Hey!" He shouted suddenly down the ladder, as the outer door banged. "You there, Battler? Buck up, you old mud-turtle!"

There was no reply.

Dick gripped his rifle. He was in charge of Skull Island Lighthouse now. Hoodoo or not, he didn't mean to let the light go out. But there was not enough paraffin in the tub to last the clumsy old lantern until daylight.

"I'm thumping well going to see what held Battler up!" the lad gritted at last. "Must have paraffin."

A final examination showed him the burners would last for about two hours, then he went scuttling down the ladder, his heart thumping with anxiety. It would take something mighty unusual to have stopped big Battler.

A few minutes later, torn, grimed, and drenched with sweat, Dick emerged on to the edge of the lagoon.

He pulled up with a gasp.

He could see dimly the Radio Ray lying at anchor, her masts and funnel reflected in the black water, could see the jungle wall on the farther side. But no sound reached his ears. The little schooner lay black and silent, and Dick could see their boat still lying moored to the bank.

"Gone!" gasped Dick. "This takes the boiled egg! What's up with this mouldy island? First lighthouse keepers! Then a whole crew of Kanakas—and Battler spirited away—of all people!"

The lad stared in amazement at the dim schooner. But, just as he decided to row out and investigate, a strange noise reached his ears, above the thrash of wind in the jungle-top.

The sounds came with infrequent gusts, a strange hoarse bellowing mingled with fiendish yells.

Dick's nerves thrilled. Could there be savages on the island, after all? Tokelau Jim and the other Kanakas had vowed it was haunted, of course.

Promptly, the blood racing in his veins, Dick played his

torch round. Then he uttered a gasp of excitement, suddenly spotting a leafy tunnel leading away through the jungle in the direction of the sounds. He made out the tracks of naked feet.

Dick gripped his rifle and flung himself into the tunnel. "If any woolly-headed head-hunters have ambushed Battler, I'll give 'em what for!" he muttered. "I guess they'll collar my napper, too, but not before I've slammed some lead into 'em. Maybe savages explain the mystery of that lighthouse—"

He broke off suddenly. Hardly could Dick believe his eyes.

He was staring into a savages' village, almost surrounded by high, jungle-clad cliffs. But it was not such a village as Dick had ever previously seen in the South Seas, though he had cruised with Battler from the Marshalls to the Thousand Isles, had traded in Papeete, ridden the rolling combers that thunder on the reef of Manahiki.

Here were no thatched houses in the branches of lofty trees, no huts on stilts. Dick was looking into a village of wooden huts, of which the windows were ships' portholes, with chimneys of ships' ventilators. Here and there amongst the huts stood strange, well-made wooden gods, which were, in fact, ships' figureheads.

But Dick barely glanced at the impossible village. For a moment he thought he was dreaming, then a gasp of rage left his lips.

He could see Battler and four of the missing Kanakas, surrounded by a crowd of whooping woolly-heads. The latter, half-naked blacks, wearing shell ornaments in their ears, shell necklaces, and wild pigs' tusks, skewered through their nostrils, were as ugly-looking a gang as ever stewed a trader or cooked a schooner's skipper.

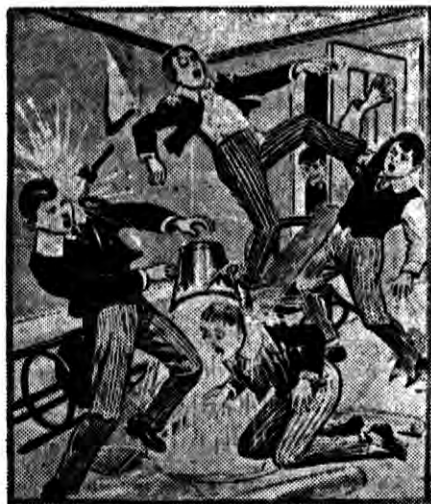
Plainly revealed by huge fires, they capered and danced, brandishing long knives and barbed fishing spears. They were dancing round Battler and the captive Kanakas, who were tied with ships' rigging to battered boat-davits, stuck upright in the ground.

Before the prisoners capered the blacks' chief, a huge shell-decked savage, wearing a ship's bell for a hat.

Dick racked his brains for a plan. Suddenly a grim smile flickered across his sunburnt features, and he whipped round and dashed back up the leafy tunnel.

"I think I know the dodge to scupper that outfit," the lad chuckled grimly, as he ran. "It seems they're pretty cute, but I'll put the lid on Brass Hat & Co.—if only I can get back in time!"

NEXT WEEK'S GEM!



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Dick ploughed forward in his diving-suit. "Woi!" roared the horrified islanders. "Big fella demon!" They broke and scattered. But not all ran. The big chief and two islanders stood their ground and three spears went whistling at the lad, clanging on his copper helmet.

CHAPTER 3.

Battler Wins the Day!

TEN minutes of headlong dashing, slipping, and plunging along the tunnel, and Dick was back at the lagoon.

Even as the lad burst forth, to see the silent schooner once more, he heard a rustling close by. He whipped round, rifle ready.

But it was only Tokelau Jim who struggled into view, grimed with blood and mire and with a lump over his right eye as big as a turtle's egg.

"My word! What name you come along here, master?" gasped the big Kanaka. "You hear un bush fella sing out? My word! They jump on us and him big master when we come back along schooner. Bang um head! Plenty bush fellas. They knock seven bells outa us fellas like blazes. All gone bang along us."

Dick gathered that Battler and Tokelau Jim had been ambushed by waiting islanders on their return to the Radio Ray for supplies. There must have been a whale of a scrap! A grim smile leapt to Dick's eyes as he pictured Battler pastering the savages until overcome by numbers.

Then the islanders, led by Chief Bell-hat, must have swarmed over the schooner and surprised the remaining Kanakas. Tokelau Jim, dropping stunned in the jungle, had been left behind unnoticed.

"I heard no firing!" snapped Dick to himself. "But, o' course, that wind round the lighthouse drowned all other sounds. Come on, Jim!" he added briskly. "Bush fella done take big master and all your brothers along village. We go rescue one-time."

"Gammon!" Tokelau Jim gasped, with bulging eyes. The big Kanaka ho'sun was bold as a tiger-shark, but he thought a rescue impossible. Dick, however, swiftly explained the scheme that had flashed to his mind, and then Tokelau Jim opened his big mouth and roared delightedly. But there was not an instant to lose.

Dick and Tokelau Jim sprang into the boat, neglected by the islanders, and pulled for the shadowy schooner. In a few minutes they were aboard, and flung themselves down the iron ladder into the hold.

Dick was after the diving dress which he and Battler used when going down for sponges in deep water or salvaging valuables from wrecks. He soon climbed back to the deck, hugging the great copper, glass-fronted helmet. He told Tokelau Jim to bring the canvas suit, also some explosives, which might come in handy.

Back to the lagoon-bank the pair rowed with their strange gear.

In a few moments, strangely burdened, they were plunging along the leafy tunnel that led to the islanders' fantastic village.

Louder and louder sounded the conch-blowing and whooping in the village. Then once more Dick saw the red glare of the big fire.

Straining his eyes through the trees a few minutes later, the plucky lad gasped in relief.

"I'm in time!" he muttered, staring at Battler and the other captives, still alive though tightly bound to the up-right boat-davits which served for stakes. "Now I'm going to be one big fella demon, Jim. Help me into this rig one-time."

Tokelau Jim's teeth flashed in a vast grin. And it didn't take many minutes for Dick to get into the stiff, canvas, rubber-lined diving dress.

Then Dick asked the big Kanaka if he knew exactly what to do if the islanders charged instead of bolting in panic from the "water demon."

"My word! Me savvy fine, master!" Tokelau Jim grinned; then he screwed the heavy copper helmet down over Dick's head and on to the lad's shoulders.

Then Dick moved forward. He moved clumsily and stiffly in the stiff diving dress. Sweat rained off him, for the air was hot and stifling inside the suit.

But he moved. A huge, strange figure, he waddled out of the leafy tunnel towards the capering islanders. His heart thumped anxiously as he glared through the glass front of his helmet. Would his ruse work?

Suddenly the savages spotted him. A moment later he grinned delightedly.

He saw, through his thick glass, the grotesque huts, the plundered ventilators, portholes, and ships' figureheads that served for gods. He saw, too, the bound captives. And he saw the hideously ornamented savages recoil at sight of him, then go staggering away with squeals of terror.

The natives had never before come across a diving dress! They took Dick in his rig for a dreadful demon stumbling out of the forest, just as they were meant to do.

The lad ploughed forward. He raised his fist, shook it, then pointed at the prisoners.

"Woi!" roared the horrified islanders, and broke and scattered.

Away they dashed, with a clatter of shell ornaments, through their crazy village, leaping, howling, uttering pig-like squeals.

"Big fella demon!" rose shrieks of terror.

But not all ran. To his dismay, Dick saw the big chief whirl round with a roar of fury. Two other islanders followed their bell-helmeted chief's lead, then three spears went whistling at the lad.

Two clanged on his copper diving helmet. A third clashed on the thick glass front that seemed to the savages a dreadful, staring eye. The spears rebounded harmlessly.

At that all fled except the chief. He seemed made desperately bold by fury, however, and charged the encased lad with a plundered baying-pin.

Dick was almost helpless in his stifling suit. It seemed his game would be up in a second. But Tokelau Jim was behind him in the shadows, and something the big Kanaka hurled sizzling at the charging chief with deadly accuracy. Then—

Bang! There was a red flash and a deafening explosion. Tokelau Jim had cast a stick of dynamite. Down went the black chieftain of Skull Island like a pole-axed ox, the heavy bell on his head split from top to bottom. Such was the force of the explosion that Chief Bell-hat had the shell ornaments blown clean out of his ears and the pig's tusk skewer flew from his nostrils, for the dynamite burst almost on his head.

He lay inert.

A shout of grim delight burst from Battler and the other captives. Then forward from the jungle edge ran Tokelau Jim, brandishing a cane-knife.

Whooping, the big Kanaka cut free the prisoners. Then they soon dug Dick out of the diving-dress, and Battler fiercely wrung his young brother's hand.

"Bully for you and Jim, old lad!" Battler laughed grimly. "I guessed it was you in the diving-rig. You fooled those black curs properly."

"Best clear out!" gasped Dick.

"No fear, my lad!" Battler replied with his old grin. "We need to recruit labour, eh. Why go on? These rotten black wrokers—ay, that's what they are!—shall pay for their misdeeds! I mean to round up the whole troop, ship 'em back to Port Mary, and dump 'em on that coconut plantation down yonder. They're going to sweat for their living in future, by thunder."

"Crumbs!" Dick grinned delightedly.

Then they picked up the party's stolen rifles, dropped by the fleeing savages, and all dashed into one of the queer huts to watch developments through a porthole window. But first they bound the senseless chief, whose bell and thick skull had saved him from death, and they left him lying in the open.

Very soon the grim-eyed party saw black forms come stealing back through the huts. Fingering their spears and throwing stones, the islanders came stealing towards the big fire.

They peered around, wondering where the demon had vanished. They looked round the huts to see if he was hiding, waiting to pounce. They stared upwards, as if expecting to see his balloon-like shape winging towards the stars. They looked for a hole in the ground, wondering if he had taken cover.

But the black ruffians, about fifty in number, couldn't see the one-eyed demon anywhere. They plucked up courage and whooped to each other.

Then they crowded round their helpless chief, wondering whether to cut him free or cook him.

That moment out of their hut burst Battler, Dick, and the five roaring Kanakas. Followed a wild scrimmage.

Some of the islanders howled in terror and started to run. Others turned desperately at bay. But the brothers and their crew took them, by surprise and laid into them lustily with rifle butts.

Before Battler's swinging weapon shell-decked islanders went down like ninespins. This time it was the islanders

taken by surprise. They were quite demoralised, too, by the startling turn of events. There was little fight in them. They preferred ambushes to open scraps. Also, they thought the demon had released the prisoners and knocked out their chief and wrecked his brass hat by fiendish magic.

Very soon a dozen lay sprawling, howling for mercy. The rest surrendered as rifles, wielded by lusty arms, clubbed them back into the centre of the village.

At last it was over. The disarmed islanders were fastened together with cordage they had themselves stolen from wrecked ships. Not more than ten escaped. The remainder, roped in a long string, were the brothers' prisoners, and Battler, Dick, and their Kanaka crew started to march the whole gang to the Radio Ray.

"But we must keep that lighthouse going!" cried Dick. "We must take supplies of paraffin and grub to it instantler," and added that he would be keeper of the lighthouse while Battler ran the prisoners down to Port Mary in the schooner.

"But what the thump did cause mysterious ends to all those lighthouse keepers?" the lad ended.

"I've got a notion, old lad," Battler replied grimly. "And I'll soon find out if I'm right."

Battler did, for the brothers put most of their captives on board the schooner under a Kanaka guard. Then they made the savage chief and six other prisoners carry supplies to the lighthouse. And there Battler offered the chief a drink from the rain-water tub that stood by the door. Down on his face flopped the savage scoundrel, yelping for mercy, begging not to be forced to drink.

"You see, Dick," Battler scowled, kicking the islander chief to his feet, "these ruffians spotted that tub was used for drinking-water by the lighthouse keepers, so they doped it with some poisonous drug of their own!"

"The drug killed some of the keepers!" gritted Dick.

"And drove others mad," Battler nodded grimly. "This chief was cute enough to note that ships got wrecked on Skull Island when the light went out, and so, drugging the water was a cute way of suppering the keepers without causing suspicion. I reckon the ruffians did collar and cook one or two keepers who were rash enough to wander into the jungle."

"But we've cleaned up the mystery. There'll be no more trouble with this lighthouse, for Chief Bell-top & Co. are going to work on that coconut plantation down yonder for the rest of their lives."

Great was the astonishment of the Port Mary plantation owner when Battler turned up with forty ferocious-looking labourers a whole week ahead of his contract time. The man was so astonished that he paid the brothers double the usual recruiting price, for he was in great need of labour. Then he asked questions. But Battler waved them aside with his well-known grin.

"My young brother nabbed them with a diving dress," he said. "You needn't be afraid to make 'em sweat for, say, ten years or so. If they cut up rough ask 'em if they'd prefer jug. I bet their rotten chief is cute enough to know that ten years on a plantation is getting off light."

And Chief Bell-hat did, for he had travelled a lot, and knew what he merited for: cutting lights off and killing lighthouse keepers.

(Battler Bart and his brother Dick feature in another thrilling South Seas adventure yarn in next week's GEM! Don't miss it!)

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