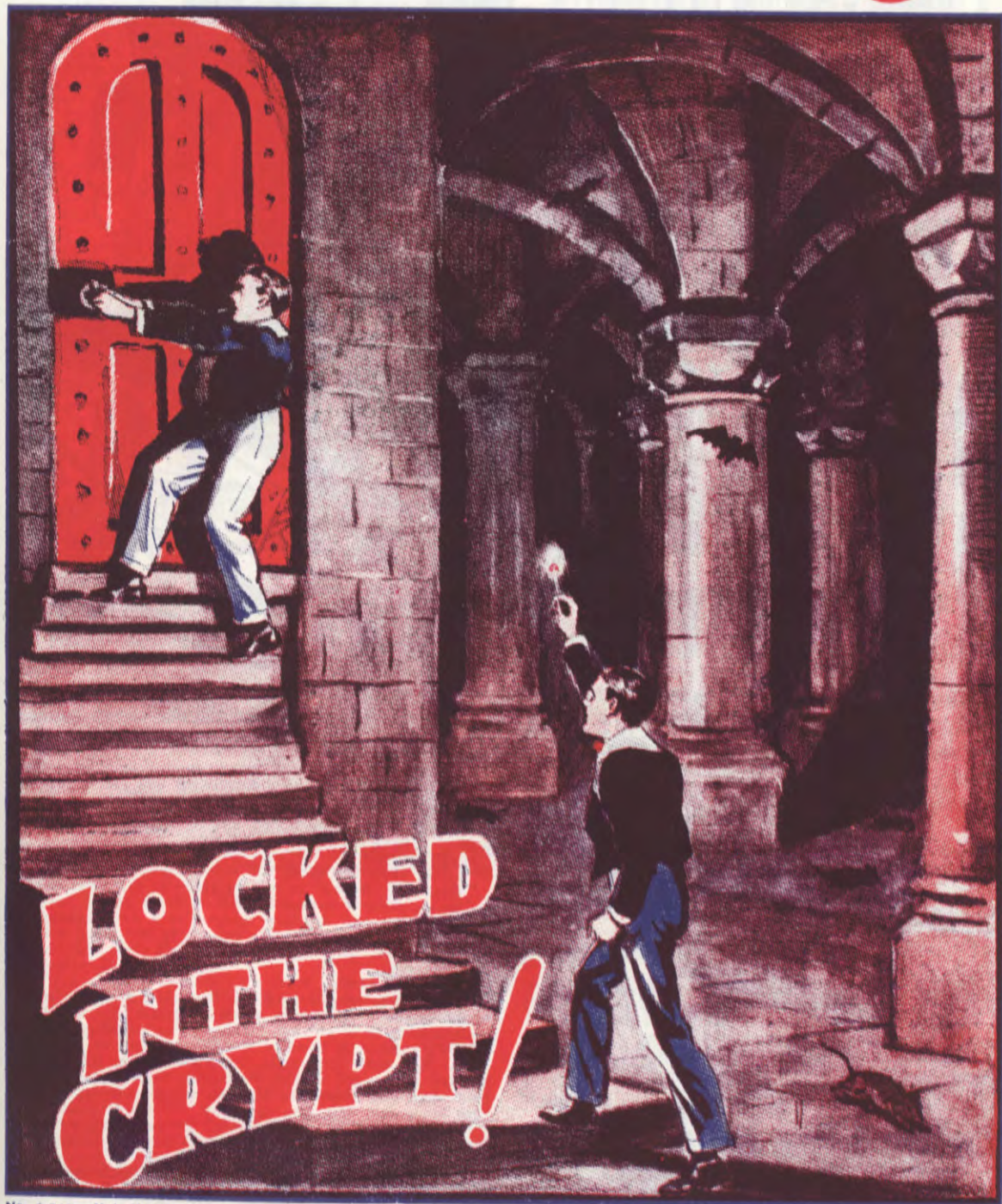


FIVE JAMES CYCLES OFFERED ^{IN} A SIMPLE COMPETITION! 800 Page 17.

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

The GEM

2^d



LOCKED
IN THE
CRYPT!

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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The JAPE of the TERM!



Blake finds his uncle a little strange as soon as he arrives, but when the uncle runs away from the Head and then locks Blake and D'Arcy in the crypt, Blake thinks there must be something really wrong with him, but never for a moment does he suspect the truth!

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Blake!

"MY Dear Nephew Jack,—As I promised some time ago, I am about to pay you a visit at the school. I am in London for a few days, and shall have time to run down to Sussex for an afternoon. You may expect me on Wednesday, unless I should wire to the contrary.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"HARRY BLAKE."

"My hat!"

That was Jack Blake's ejaculation as he read the foregoing letter. The letter had come by the evening delivery on Tuesday, and Jack Blake was standing in the Hall reading it, with a curious expression on his face.

He had recognised his Uncle Harry's writing on the outside of the envelope, and he had opened the letter with a grin of anticipation; for funds were low in Study No. 6, and Uncle Harry was the most affectionate and generous of uncles as a rule.

Instead of a postal order, Jack Blake found the above letter. And the leader of Study No. 6, after drawing a deep breath, ejaculated:

"My only summer hat!"

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"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his Form-fellow in the Fourth, and his chum in Study No. 6, stopping as he caught sight of Blake, and read the dismay in his face. "What's the mattah, deah boy?"

Blake grunted.

"Letter from my uncle."

"That all? Nothin' to wowwy about in that, I suppose?"

"He's coming to see me."

"Well, they will do these things," said Arthur Augustus consolingly. "A chap's uncle expects to run down and see him at times, you know. Aftah all, it's only to be expected!"

"Ass! He—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake! I am quite willin' to advise you if you are in a difficult posish, but it must be undahstood first of all that I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"He's coming on Wednesday afternoon."

"All the more convenient, I should say, as it is a half-holiday at this col. I should imagine that the worthy old gentleman has awganged that on purpose, so as to have time for a walk with you, deah boy."

"Of course he has, ass!" howled Blake. "But have you forgotten that we're playing the Shell that afternoon?"

"Bai Jove!"

"That's where the shoe pinches!" growled Blake. "Of course, I want to see my uncle. He's an awfully jolly little

HAPPEN WHEN THE LITTLE GENTLEMAN FROM AFRICA ARRIVES!

By Martin Clifford.

beggar. I haven't seen him for six or seven years—not since I was a kid, in fact.” Blake spoke as if he were now quite in the calm and tranquil vale of middle life. “Not since I was eight or nine years old; but he sends me ripping tips, and he always shoves along a first-class present every birthday and Christmas. I want to see him, of course. Only the thing's unfortunate all round. We're playing the Shell on Wednesday afternoon. Funds are low, and I want to give him a jolly time when he comes—”

“I will wish my governor for a fivah.”

Jack Blake grinned.

“The worst of it is, that if I put off the match with the Shell, he may not come. He's only in London for a few days, home from abroad on business—and if he can't put it in, he'll wire to let me know—at the last minute, of course.”

“Bai Jove! That's wuff!”

“Of course it is. If I put off the match with the Shell, and the wire comes to say it's all right—”

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows reflectively.

Blake looked glum.

As he had said, he wanted to see his uncle. He was an affectionate lad, and his uncle had treated him well. But a cricket fixture was important. He could put the fixture off. But if his uncle couldn't come, after all—well, that would be distinctly rotten!

That cricket match between the Fourth Form and the Shell was an important matter. Tom Merry of the Shell was junior captain in the School House. But Jack Blake was quite convinced that he could give Tom Merry endless points in the noble game of cricket. Just in a friendly way he wanted to have a Form match, to show the Shell fellows that the Fourth knew as much about cricket as the next Form above them in the school.

Most of the half-holidays being filled up with other fixtures, Blake had been lucky to secure that Wednesday for the match.

It had been settled, and now—

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. He had evidently thought of an excellent way out of the difficulty. Blake looked at him.

“I think I can tell you what's the pwopah thing to do,” Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. “The Shell match ought not to be put off.”

“Of course not.”

“But if your uncle comes you can't captain the Fourth Form team?”

“That's it.”

“Then there is only one way out of the difficulty—I will captain the team instead of you, deah boy.”

D'Arcy made this suggestion with an air of great satisfaction, evidently deeming that he deserved well of his Form for having thought of it.

But Blake did not seem at all grateful.

Instead of jumping at the offer, and telling D'Arcy that he was a clever chap, and a true chum, he sniffed—not to say snorted.

“What do you think of the ideal, deah boy?”

“Rotten!”

“Eh?”

“Rotten! Piffle!”

“Weally, Blake—”

“We're playing the Shell to show Tom Merry and his gang that we can play cricket quite as well as the Shell,” said Blake. “I wasn't thinking of giving an exhibition of humorous cricket.”

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Blake from top to toe, and then from toe to top again.

His intent gaze travelled from Blake's curly hair down to the toes of his boots, and from his boots to the topmost curl on his head once more.

Blake ought to have been shrivelled up by the lofty scorn in the stare, but he wasn't; he didn't even appear to notice it. He looked at the letter again.

“It's all right,” he said. “The match is off. I'll tell Tom Merry so. I'm going to look after my uncle, if he comes, that's a cert. He's an awfully decent little chap. Did you speak, Gussy?”

“I wegard you with scorn.”

“Go hon!”

“I shall insist upon playin' the Shell, all the same, and if you don't get up a team, I shall get up a team.”

“Oh, you can get up a chimney, if you like!” said Blake, and he turned and marched off towards Tom Merry's study to break the news.

“Blake—”

“Sorry—can't stop.”

“I wegard you—”

But Blake was gone. D'Arcy looked after his chum through his monocle for a few moments, with wrath in his aristocratic countenance, and then he slowly turned and made his way into the quadrangle.

Jack Blake, with the letter in his hand, marched along the Shell passage, and kicked at the door of Tom Merry's study.

“Come in, fathead!” sang out the cheery voice of the hero of the Shell.

And Blake went in. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the chums of the Shell, were at tea. The anxious expression upon the Fourth-Former's face excited their interest at once.

CHAPTER 2.

Captains Courageous!

TOM MERRY was pouring out a second cup of tea for Manners, when Blake came in, and he paused to look inquiringly at Blake.

The teapot remained poised in his hand.

“Nothing wrong, Blake?” he asked.

For, although the Shell and the Fourth Form might be rivals in many matters, especially on the cricket field, there was never anything but real, good fellowship between the leaders of the rival Forms, at bottom.

Jack Blake nodded.

“Not exactly wrong,” he said. “I've had a letter from my uncle. I haven't seen him for dog's ages, and he's coming to the school on Wednesday. I shall have to chum up with him and show him round, and so forth. The match is off.”

“Saves you a licking,” said Lowther consolingly.

“Rats! Of course, we should have licked you hollow!”

“Of course—I don't think!”

“He's a jolly little chap as I remember him,” said Blake.

“He's been awfully decent to me. I couldn't fail to play up, you know, on Wednesday.”

“That's all right,” said Tom Merry heartily. “If the match is off, we'll help you show him round.”

“Thanks awfully! That's settled, then.”

“So are the sardines,” remarked Monty Lowther.

“Eh? What's that?” remarked Tom Merry.

“You've been pouring the tea into the dish of sardines for the last two minutes, that's all,” said Lowther, grinning.

“If you've done, you may as well leave off.”

“My hat!”

Tom Merry jerked the teapot round from the sardines. There was a yell from Manners. He was reaching for the radishes, and he received a stream of hot tea across the wrist.

“Ow! Wow! You dummy!”

“Sorry! I—”

Tom Merry jerked the teapot back, and Lowther shrieked as he was splashed across the legs.

“Hold on! Ow!”

“Sorry! I—”

“You utter ass!” roared Lowther. “What's the good of being sorry? You've scalded me!”

“I'm sorry! The tea's wasted now—”

“The tea! I'm scalded!”

“Never mind! It's jolly lucky there's some more hot water in the kettle. Stick it on the fire, Manners, and stir the fire.”

“You shrieking idiot—”

“Seems to me you're doing the shrieking,” said Tom Merry. “I'm sorry—”

“Br-r-r-r!”

Jack Blake grinned and left the study. The voices of the Terrible Three were raised in wrathful argument as he walked away. There was a sound of smashing crockery as he went down the passage, and he chuckled.

Herries and Digby, his chums in the Fourth, stopped him as he passed Study No. 6. They were looking serious.

“What's this about Wednesday's match being off?” asked Digby. “Gussy has just told us you—”

“Yes. My uncle's coming.”

“You won't be able to play?”

“No. Rotten, isn't it?”

“Yes,” said Digby, not, however, showing the sorrow that

might have been expected. "But I don't see cutting the match. I wouldn't mind captaining the side."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries warmly. "Of course, it would be rot to put the match off; but I'm the fellow to cap—"

"Now, look here, Herries—"

"Look here, Dig—"

"You know something about dogs, but your cricket would make an angel weep, and you jolly well know it."

"And yours would make a gargoyle snigger, if you come to that."

"If you want a swollen nose, Herries—"

"If you want a black eye, Dig—"

"I'll jolly well—"

"No, you won't, you ass!"

"Who are you calling an ass, you cheerful idiot? I—"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"Go it!" said Blake cheerfully, and he strolled on, leaving the two juniors arguing matters out on the linoleum. Reilly of the Fourth collared him as he reached the stairs.

"Faith, Blake darling—"

"Hallo, Tipperary, what do you want?"

"Don't put off the match on Wednesday—"

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Are you willing to skipper in my place?" he asked.

"Faith, and that's just what I was thinking of, darling!"

"Go and talk it over with Herries and Dig," said Blake.

"They're discussing the matter now."

And he strolled away, grinning.

CHAPTER 3. Plotting a Plot!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wrinkled his brows in thought as he strolled in the quad. Arthur Augustus, like others in the Fourth Form, didn't see putting that match off.

The Fourth-Formers meant to knock the Shell sky-high that time, and, of course, every fellow in the side was fully capable of acting as captain at a pinch—in his own opinion, at least. There never was a cricket eleven that didn't contain eleven possible captains, if the opinions of the eleven were to be credited.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus aloud. "I weally can't stand this absurd obstinacy in Blake. I'm surprisid at it, for he's usually a sensible chap. I've pointed out the pwopah thing to do, and he ought to have jumped at it."

"And didn't he?" said a voice.

Arthur Augustus jumped himself.

In his abstractedness he had nearly walked into three youths who were standing near the fountain in the quadrangle, regarding him with broad smiles.

The three were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—Figgins & Co. of the New House, the ancient rivals of the School House juniors.

"Bai Jove! Did you speak, Figgins?" asked D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors.

The New House trio grinned knowingly at one another, but, catching D'Arcy's eye, they immediately assumed the most grave expressions.

"Yes, rather! Didn't he jump at it?" asked Figgins as if amazed.

"No, he didn't. He absolutely wefused."

"Too bad!" said Figgins sympathetically. "Altogether bad—altogether rotten. By the way, who was he, and what did he refuse?"

And the Co. chuckled.

"It weally does not concern you chaps, as New House boundahs," said D'Arcy, with an air of reflection. "This ewicket match is confined to the School House. New House boundahs are not admitted."

"Yes, I hear you've got some measly match on for to-morrow afternoon," assented Figgins. "You've got the check to call it Fourth Form v. Shell."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You seem to forget that a big part of the Fourth Form and the Shell dig in the New House, and that the leader of the Fourth Form is there, too."

"Wats!"

"We were thinking of coming," said Figgins patronisingly. "We should like to see how you chaps play cricket on your own. It will be worth watching."

"The match isn't comin' off, deah boy!"

"Oh, you find you're not quite up to it, eh? Look here, if you like we'll get you half a dozen Fourth-Formers from the New House to give your team a sort of backbone," said Figgins generously. "With Wynn and Kerr to bowl, and me to bat, you would be able to give the Shell fits."

"You are awfully kind, deah boy!"

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"I mean to be kind."

"But I wefuse, all the same. You see, this is a School House match, and only School House fellows are playin'. Besides, the match is off."

"Well of all the asses—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. The posish is a wathah ewicious one," said D'Arcy. "I should weally be glad of your opinion of the mattah, deah boys!"

"What-ho!" said Figgins, with a wink at the Co. "Gather round, my sons! Now then, Gussy, go ahead! Get on with the confession!"

"You see, Blake has an uncle—"

"Where did he get it?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Some are born with uncles," said Figgins. "Some haven't uncles, and some have uncles thrust upon them.—Shakespeare. Which is Blake's case?"

"His uncle is comin' to the school to-morrow attahnoon—"

"Well, I've had an uncle come to the school, and no bones broken," said Figgins. "What is there to worry about?"

"You see, this uncle chap has been abwoad six or seven years, and Blake wants to do the pwopah thing by him when he comes. Of course, that's only wight and pwopah. I have always appowed of gweat wespert bein' shown to eldahly wrelatives. Blake says he's a nice little chap, too, this uncle. Blake is goin' to cut the match, so as to show his uncle wound."

"Good old Blake! We'll help him!"

"Yaas, that's all wight; but he wants to cut the match. Of course, there's no harm in him cuttin' it himself, as I could captain in his place quite as well—pewwaps a little bettah; but he insists upon scwatchin' the match."

"Oh, that's rot!" said Figgins solemnly. "He ought to have jumped at the chance of letting you skipper them."

"Yaas, that's what I thought; and I was thinkin' that it was my duty to get up an eleven and play the Shell myself."

"Good wheeze!"

"You weally think it is a good wheeze, Figgins?"

"Rippin'! What do you say, Kerr?"

"First chop!" said Kerr.

"What do you say, Wynn?"

"I'm hungry!" said Wynn, coming out of his reverie.

"Eh?"

"I'm hungry!"

"You ass!" roared Figgins. "I didn't ask you if you were hungry. I knew that without asking. I asked you what you thought of D'Arcy's wheeze?"

"Oh, jolly good!" said Fatty Wynn. "What is it?"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"It's rippin'!" said Figgins. "Go ahead, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! You see, Blake's uncle says that he may wiah at the last moment to say he isn't comin', if he can't find time aftah all. Undah those circo, it seems to me it would be a cwyin' shame to put the match off."

"So it would, rather. Besides, we want to see Gussy & Co. play. It would be worth seeing. It would be as funny as the time you disguised yourself as a boots, and tried to take the Grammarians in!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I say, I'm jolly hungry!" said Fatty Wynn. "Are you coming towards the tuckshop, D'Arcy?"

"No, I am not, deah boy!"

"Then good-bye!" said Fatty Wynn.

The New House trio strolled away, and D'Arcy, fortified in mind by Figgins' advice, went back to the School House with a very determined expression upon his face.

Kerr was looking thoughtful. In the tuckshop, Fatty Wynn asked him twice whether he would have an ice, without eliciting any reply.

"By gum!" said Kerr, at last. "I wonder if it would work?"

"Will you have an ice?" bawled Fatty Wynn for the third time.

But Figgins dropped his hand upon Fatty's shoulder and told him to ring off.

Wynn stared at him.

"It's a wheeze," said Figgins. "I know it by the gleam in his eye. It's time we wiped up the School House again. Now then, Kerr, what is it?"

Kerr was still thinking deeply. He did not reply for the moment, and Figgins waited patiently.

For, although Figgins was the great chief of the New House juniors in their alarms and excursions against the School House fellows, Figgins himself would have been the first to admit that Kerr supplied most of the brains to the Co. Kerr was one of those quiet fellows, with a total absence of anything like "swank" about them, who, nevertheless, "get there" all the time, to use an Americanism.

Kerr could think things out, with his clear, quick brain, while other fellows were fumbling with the subject. Nothing

ever escaped Kerr's keen eye. Kerr played the violin, and took photographs, and composed Latin odes, and wrote the best article in "Tom Merry's Weekly." His great gift, however, was impersonation—he was the son of a famous actor, and inherited all his father's gifts. He had played off a joke on the Grammar School by visiting it in the guise of a new boy with Tom Merry. And Figgins, who freely admitted that in brains he wasn't in the same street with his Scottish chum, always listened to Kerr's ideas with the greatest respect.

When Kerr thought of a wheeze, Figgins was always ready to play up and carry it out.

"Blake's uncle?"

"Yes. You heard Gussy say he was a little man."

"What on earth—"

"Blake is to have a wire to-morrow if he isn't coming."

"That's right."

"Then, my sons, look out for that wire," said Kerr. "If that wire comes, Blake's uncle won't—and then there'll be the biggest, most frabjous jape we've ever worked off in our lives!"

"Explain!" shouted Figgins and Fatty Wynn together.

"Listen, then!"

And Kerr lowered his voice. In hushed tones of great



The bat flashed—the ball whizzed hard back to the bowler! Crash went the round red ball on Gore's ribs, and the astonished bowler gave a gasp and tumbled over. "Ow!" yelled Gore.

"I wonder—" said Kerr again, and then he stopped. Figgins waited.

"It would be tremendous!" said Kerr. "Amazing!"

"The wheeze?"

"Yes."

"Up against the School House?"

"Yes."

"Tremendous?"

"Yes."

"Amazing?"

"Yes."

"Good!" exclaimed Figgins. "Now, what's the wheeze? We'll work it, if it costs us a leg! Go ahead, my bonnie boy!"

Kerr was still looking very serious.

"It all depends upon Blake's uncle not coming," he said.

caution he explained, and Figgins gasped and Fatty Wynn yelled. In whispers, with many a chuckle, the three juniors plotted the plot.

CHAPTER 4.

Who Shall be Skipper?

JACK BLAKE was in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, hard at work upon his prep, when Arthur Augustus came in.

Herries and Digby were not there. They had finished their argument a short time before, and Herries had gone to a bath-room to bathe his nose, and Digby was scuttling up and down in search of a beefsteak to put on his left eye.

Blake was at work, with a very virtuous feeling, as he was the only one at work in the study.

"Blake, deah boy!"

Jack Blake looked up and made a sign for silence. He placed his fingers on his lips in a most mysterious way.

"Hush!"

D'Arcy looked puzzled.

"What's the matter, Blake?"

"Hush! Not a word!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Sh!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and looked at Blake, and then looked round the study. If there had been a sick man in the study Blake could not have been more impressive. But there was no sign of a sick man.

"Are you off your wockah, Blake?"

"No. Hush!"

"I wufuse to hush! Why should I hush? Is anybody ill?"

"No."

"What's the mattah, then?"

"I'm working," said Blake. "I've got to be very careful with my prep to make sure of getting through all right to-morrow. I musn't risk being detained in the morning. See? Go away quietly, on tiptoe!"

He turned to the table again. Arthur Augustus gazed at him speechlessly. He had been told to hush in that mysterious way simply so that he should not interrupt Blake's prep. In spite of Blake's grave face, D'Arcy realised very clearly that his chum was solemnly pulling his leg.

"Blake," he said at last, "I wegard you as an uttah wottah. I wufuse to hush! I have come here to speak to you."

"Couldn't you go and speak to Herries, instead?"

"Certainly not! I—"

"Well, there's Dig. I'm sure he would be pleased."

"I wufuse—"

"Then I'll tell you what. Go to Tom Merry's study and speak to him."

"I twust you will not exaspawate me, Blake. I should be sowwy to have to give you a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I have come heah to speak about the match for to-morrow aftahnoon. I wufuse to have it sawatched!"

"But that's settled."

"I decline to wegard it as settled. I am willin' to captain the side."

"So are Herries and Dig, and Reilly and Kerruish, and Hancock and Dixon, and the rest of the Fourth Form," said Blake. "Now, a team ought to be well led, I know, but eleven captains to one team are too many."

"The othahs would no doubt acknowledge my superior claim."

"Yes, I think I can see them doing it," grinned Blake. "But, look here! If the Fourth Form plays the Shell without me, the Fourth will get licked, unless we strengthen the team with some New House fellows."

"I fail to see it."

"It will be rotten to have the Shell crowing over us. Still, if the eleven thinks that the match ought to be played, and can decide on a skipper, I don't object. Now, that's fair, I suppose? Go and get licked."

"Vewy good. I will hold a meetin' of the eleven heah."

"That you jolly well won't! I'm doing my prep here. Hold a meeting on the roof, if you like, or in Taggles' lodge."

"I will hold it in a class-woom, then."

"Then go and hold it, old chap; and if you could manage to hold your jaw, too, I should take it as a personal favour."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buzz off, Gussy! Can't you see I'm busy?"

And Blake plunged into his work again. Arthur Augustus closed the door emphatically as he withdrew. Still, upon the whole he was satisfied. All that remained now was that he should prove to the rest of the eleven that he was the fellow to take the lead, and the matter would be settled.

It was possible that that would require some proving, however.

D'Arcy lost no time in calling the meeting. Having asked and obtained Mr. Railton's permission to hold a cricket committee in a class-room, he proceeded to call together the members of the School House Fourth Form team.

More than thirty Fourth Form juniors boarded in the School House, and as most of them played cricket, Blake had not had much difficulty in getting together a decent eleven, without calling upon the Fourth-Formers who boarded over the way in the New House.

The four chums of Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy—were the backbone of the team. Reilly, the

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boy from Belfast, and Kerruish the Manxman, were very nearly on a level with them. Then there were Hancock, Dixon, Bright, Smith minor, and Yates, all respectable cricketers. Blake being left out, another fellow would be wanted; but D'Arcy left that to be settled later. He would have enough to do to convince nine fellows that he was the proper fellow for skipper.

The swell of St. Jim's met Herries coming from the bath-room. Herries looked very washed and wet about the roots of his hair, and his collar was a little limp. His nose was decidedly swollen and very red.

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, what's the mattah, old chap?" asked D'Arcy, in surprise.

Herries grunted.

"That ass, Dig! We had an argument—"

"Bai Jove, here's Dig!"

Dig came along the passage. He had failed to discover a raw beefsteak anywhere within the walls of the School House, and his eye was turning from an art shade of blue to a deep and beautiful black.

"Bai Jove! Dig!"

"It's that dummy, Herries!" growled Dig. "He—"

"Look here, Dig!"

"Look here, Herries!"

"If you had not been such an ass—"

"If you hadn't been such a dummy—"

"I—"

"Pway hold on, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, pushing between them, as they began to look warlike again. "Pway don't act the giddy ox, you know. It's all settled about the match to-morrow."

"Oh! Is Blake playing?"

"No; he's going to cut the match, and go wound with his avunculah wrelative, but—"

"Then I'm to—"

"Then I'm to—"

"Pway allow me to finish, deah boys. It's settled that I'm to captain the side in the match with the Shell."

Herries and Digby ceased to stare at each other, and turned their stares upon the swell of the School House.

"Look here," said Herries, "this is no time for jokes!"

"It isn't a joke," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I have settled it with Blake. We're holdin' a meetin' of the eleven in No. 2 class-woom, and I'm to captain if the eleven agree. I—"

"Yes, they'll agree—I don't think!" grunted Herries. "Don't be an ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass!"

"I wish you'd refuse to be one. Now, look here—"

"I decline to look there. I twust you will not compel me to give you a feahful thwashin', Hewwies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for wibald laughtah. I—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to wing off. I—"

"Rats!"

"Did you say wats to me, Hewwies?"

"Yes, I did. What about it?"

"Put up your hands, deah boy!"

D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs.

The next moment the juniors were rolling on the floor. Digby gazed at them with a grin. Herries jumped up—and Arthur Augustus sat on the linoleum gasping for breath and groping for his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, Dig," said Herries. "Let's get the fellows to the meeting. Gussy can sort himself out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Herries and Digby went along the Fourth Form passage, calling the members of the Fourth Form eleven to the meeting. Arthur Augustus sat gasping still.

The Terrible Three came along the passage, and stopped to stare at him.

"Curious place to choose to take a rest," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Ow! I'm not westin', you ass!"

"What's the game, then?"

"Pway lend me a hand, deah boys."

Tom Merry lent him a hand, and the swell of St. Jim's staggered up. He straightened out his collar, and dusted his trousers with his handkerchief.

"Bai Jove! The wuff ass!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"We're playin' you to-morrow, aftah all, Tom Mewwy. And we were just arguin' about the captaincy of the Fourth Form team—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I cannot stay here talkin' to silly asses; I must get to the meetin'."

And Arthur Augustus scudded away. The chums of the Shell roared.

CHAPTER 5. An Excited Meeting!

"ORDER!"

"Shut up!"

"Silence!"

Tom Merry looked into the class-room. There were ten Fourth-Formers present, and they were making enough noise for twenty or thirty.

Ten men of Blake's eleven were there, Blake himself being still at work in his study. Of the ten there was not one who was not fully convinced that he was the very chap that was required to fill the vacant captaincy, and that the others were prevented from recognising an evident fact by sheer obstinacy.

In the School House, the Fourth Form and the Shell ran a cricket club in conjunction, the junior School House Cricket Club. When the Fourth and the Shell were divided, as on the present occasion, the members followed the lead of Blake, or Tom Merry, according to the Form they belonged to. That was a simple arrangement; but Blake having scratched, chaos reigned among the Fourth Form section—as in Israel of old, when there was no king, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Every fellow being bent upon maintaining his own claims, there was plenty of noise, plenty of threatening and stamping, and no business done.

The chums of the Shell chuckled as they looked in. "Jolly, isn't it?" remarked Lowther. "Let's watch 'em! This is as good as a comedy."

But hostile eyes were upon them already. "Faith, and there's the Shellfish grinning at the door!" exclaimed Reilly.

There was a roar. "Kick them out!" "Bai Jove! Follow me, deah boys!"

And Arthur Augustus rushed to the attack. The Fourth-Formers were excited, and they weren't inclined for any chipping from the Shell just then.

Tom Merry & Co. did not wait for the rush. They grinned and went down the passage, and the Fourth-Formers hurled taunts and catcalls after them. Reilly slammed the door.

"Now, gentlemen—" began Arthur Augustus. "Order!"

"I wese to ordah—I mean—"

"Look here, you chaps—"

"Faith, and I—"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Sure I—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Reilly and Hancock retired to a corner with their arms lovingly round one another's necks to finish the argument. Bright and Dixon were already rolling on the floor. D'Arcy surveyed them through his eyeglass.

"I weward this as a widiculous way of settlin' the mattah," he exclaimed. "It would be much simplah to select me as skipph."

"More rats!"

"If you say more wats to me, young Kewwuish—"

"And many of 'em!" said Kerruish.

"Then I shall have no wesource but to thwash you," said D'Arcy, slipping his eyeglass into his pocket. "Pway put up your hands, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus and the Manx boy pranced round each other, hitting the air a great deal, and one another every now and then.

"Look here, you chumps," said Digby. "We shall never settle it by jawing or by slogging one another. Why not toss up, old man?"

"Better elect me," said Herries. "That's quicker and simpler."

"Bosh!"

"Good, let's toss up!" exclaimed Dixon. "It's no good keeping on like this—we shall have the prefects here soon. If Knox hears us, he'll come in with a cane—he's always looking for a chance to go for us."

"Ow! Bai Jove! Wow! Wesease me, you wuffian!"

Kerruish had his arm round D'Arcy's neck, and was getting D'Arcy's head into chancery. The swell of the School House struggled violently.

"Wesease me! I will let you off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerruish, giving the swell of the Fourth a tap on the nose. "You'll let me off, will you?"

"Yaas, I won't thwash you."

"No, I don't think you will."

"Ow! Leggo! I make it pax!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerruish released the swell of the Fourth, laughing too much to hold him any longer. D'Arcy staggered to a desk and sat down. His collar was terribly rumpled, and his necktie hung out by one end.

"Bai Jove! Kewwuish, I weward you as a wuffian."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that row, all of you!" shouted Herries. "We're going to toss up, odd man out, for the skipperhip. Order!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good ideah! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

Order was restored at last.

Odd man out was the best method of settling the dispute, for any amount of punching and pummelling would never have convinced that team that it did not contain ten first-class cricket captains.

"Anybody got a penny?" asked Digby, feeling in his pocket.

"Will a shillin' do, deah boy?"

"Certainly. You don't mind if it's lost?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Now, then, there's ten of us," said Digby thoughtfully.

"Look here! I'll chuck the shilling on the floor—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And shove my foot on it. Then you can all guess in turn, head or tail, and those who are wrong walk out. Then the winners settle it. Now, then!"

Click!

"Hallo, where did that go?"

"It rolled somewhere," said Herries.

"Faith, so it did—but where?"

There was a general hunt for the shilling.

But they hunted in vain. It was not to be found. It had rolled somewhere, under a desk or into a corner, and they failed to find it.

"Pity it wasn't a penny," remarked Digby. "Never mind, I've found a penny and we'll toss up again."

"Weally, deah boy, my shillin'—"

"Never mind your shilling now, Gussy. Here goes!"

"But weally—"

Click!

The penny descended, and Digby put his foot on it.

Six fellows pronounced head, and four tail. It turned out to be tail. Arthur Augustus, Digby, Herries, and Dixon were the four who named it correctly.

"Good!" said D'Arcy. "I don't think this need go any further. If you thwee fellows make up your minds to elect me—"

"Oh! Ring off!"

Digby tossed up again, and this time Herries and himself failed to name the coin correctly. D'Arcy picked it up.

"Dixon, deah boy, shall we take the twouble to toss?"

"What-ho!" said Dixon; "unless you want to resign your chance to me?"

"Pway don't be a widiculous ass, deah boy."

"Go ahead!"

D'Arcy tossed the penny.

"Tail!" said Dixon.

"Head, deah boy."

"Oh, bother!"

Arthur Augustus looked round upon the assembly of disgusted juniors with a bland smile.

"It's all wight, deah boys."

"Is it?" growled Digby. "I call it all wrong."

"That is merely a silly pwejudice on your part, Dig. I am convinced that we shall beat the Shell hollow if you chaps back me up to-morrow. As captain of the side, I will select the eleven men. By the way, where is that shillin'?" Pway stay and help me look for it, deah boys."

But the dear boys declined to stay, now that the captaincy was decided. They marched out. When Tom Merry looked into the class-room ten minutes later Arthur Augustus was still looking for his shillin'.

CHAPTER 6.

Blake is Asked Out to Tea!

FIGGINS came over towards the School House in the dusk.

He affected not to hear several personal remarks from the School House juniors who caught sight of him. Some of them wanted to know how the New House chap had the cheek to show himself in a respectable place. Others affectionately inquired whether he had taken an over-dose of anti-fat for his calves. Some questioned as to where he had dug up his features. Some, again, asked him if he was wearing a Guy Fawkes' mask; and others asked him why he wasn't.

Figgins marched on with a lofty disregard of those personal observations, which excited considerable surprise.

"The boulder's got something on," said Monty Lowther. "Let's bump him."

And there was a rush for Figgins.

He skipped into the School House, and half a dozen juniors skipped in after him. They found Figgins speaking

to Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school; and they looked sheepish and skipped out again.

Figgins grinned. He had stopped to speak to Kildare because he knew that the juniors wouldn't venture upon any japing in the presence of the high and mighty head of the Sixth Form.

Kildare laughed; he guessed what Figgins' object was, too.

"What are you doing in the School House, Figgins?" he asked.

"Only going up to speak to Blake, Kildare. I can't see him in the quad, so I suppose he's in the House."

Kildare nodded, and Figgins went upstairs unpursued. But in the upper passages several juniors caught sight of him, and there was another rush.

He scudded along to the door of Study No. 6, with Herries and Digby and D'Arcy hot on his track.

Figgins tore open the door, and rushed in, and Blake jumped up, with an exclamation. Blake had finished work, and was thinking about tea.

"Hallo, is that the wild man from Borneo?" he exclaimed. "It's me!" said Figgins breathlessly and ungrammatically.

"My dear chap, you should say it's I—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "We can't have any of your New House gwammah in this study, Figgins. You say it is I."

"But it isn't you," said Figgins. "It's I!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"We found this bounder prowling about," said Digby.

"Got anything to say before you go out on your neck, Figgys?"

"Pax! I came to speak to Blake."

"That's all very well—"

"It's all right, Dig—I don't want to give you another eye to match that one," said Figgins. "I hear that Blake has an uncle or something of the sort coming to-morrow, and he's scratching the match with Tom Merry."

"The match will be played, all the same, deah boy, and I shall skip," said D'Arcy.

"You will which?"

"Skip."

"Is it a game of skipping with the Shell?"

"Certainly not! I mean, I shall be skippah."

"Oh, I see! Well, if you haven't had tea, Blake—"

"I haven't," said Blake. "I've done my prep first to make sure of it. Are you going to fill the kettle, Dig?"

"I've had tea in Hall."

"What about you, Gussy?"

"I've had tea, deah boy, and now I'm going to do my prep."

"Oh, rats! I want some tea, anyway. You're not going to do your prep on this table now!" said Blake indignantly.

"Why can't you work hard, as I do, and get it over early? Blessed if I'd be a slacker!"

"I wefuse to be called a slackah!"

"Come and have tea with us, Blake," said Figgins.

"That's really what I came over for, to ask you to come to tea. Wynn is cooking some special sausages."

Jack Blake looked at him.

"What's the game?" he asked bluntly.

"Game!" said Figgins, apparently not comprehending.

"Yes. What is it?"

"My dear chap, surely we can invite a pleasant, talkative fellow to tea without being suspected of any game!" said Figgins, in an injured tone. "If you knew what an acquisition you were to any tea-party, you wouldn't talk about a game."

"No gammon?" said Blake.

"Well, will you come? The sausages are ripping, and Fatty Wynn is turning out a now thing in table jellies."

"It's pax?"

"Certainly!"

"Then I'll come, with pleasure," said Blake, taking down his cap. "You kids can get your prep done while I'm gone."

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a kid!"

"Well, goat, then," said Blake, making a concession.

"I decline to be—"

But Blake was gone with Figgins. The door of the study slammed, and the three Fourth-Formers were left to their preparation. Jack Blake, still considerably puzzled, crossed the quadrangle with the New House junior in the dusk.

It was not unusual for the juniors of the rival Houses to have tea with one another at times when rows were off; still, Blake was puzzled. He could not help feeling that there was something behind this.

Figgins chatted away agreeably as they strolled over in the dusk. He praised Blake's cricket freely, and declared that it would be a terrible pity if Blake didn't play in the Form match on the morrow. Blake stared at him.

"Oh, get off!" he said, with Yorkshire directness.

"What's the game, I say? It's true that I play better

cricket than you do, of course, but you know you jolly well don't think so, Figgys."

"Well, here we are!" said Figgins, changing the subject.

They went into the New House, and met Monteith, the head prefect, in the Hall. He called to Figgins.

"Figgins, I want you—"

"Oh, I say, Monteith! I'm engaged," said Figgins.

"Young Pratt is looking for a chance to fag, ain't you, Pratt?"

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Pratt.

"Oh, Pratt will do!" said Monteith carelessly.

And Pratt, with a dazed stare at Figgins, followed the prefect, and had the pleasure of fagging for him. Figgins was leader of the juniors, and Pratt guessed that he had something on, and loyally backed him up.

Figgins made haste to get to his study before he could be called upon by any other senior. A pleasant smell of cooking proceeded from the study when the juniors opened the door.

There was a bright fire glowing in the grate, and Fatty Wynn was standing before it with an equally glowing face, attending to a frying-pan. Kerr was giving the finishing touches to laying the table.

"Just finished," said Fatty Wynn. "Glad to see you, Blake. Hope you've brought an appetite with you."

"What-ho!" said Blake.

"Make the tea, Kerr, old chap."

"Right-ho—the kettle's just on the boil."

The tea was made—sausages served. Blake sat down at the table, still in a state of considerable surprise. There was a big cake in the middle of the table, and jellies hardening in big moulds on the shelf. It was evident that Figgins & Co. meant to "do him down" well.

"Well, this is ripping!" Blake remarked.

"Glad you like it," said Figgins. "Fatty can cook sausages, I'll say that for him. I was thinking of making a fig pudding, but there wasn't time."

Blake felt very glad that there wasn't time, but he did not say so. He wired into the sausages, the ham, and the bread and butter.

"You've got an uncle coming," Figgins remarked casually.

"Yes, rather!"

"And you're scratching the match with the Shell in consequence, eh?"

"No. Gussy's taking my place," grinned Blake. "If my uncle comes, it will be something for him to see—Gussy skipping a cricket team."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a bit of a joke to see you School House chaps playing cricket any time," remarked Fatty Wynn, forgetting himself for a moment.

Jack Blake glared.

"What's that?" he demanded.

Figgins gave Fatty a warning glance, and the fat Fourth-Former bolted a huge lump of hot sausage in his confusion, and nearly choked. Kerr patted him on the back, and Blake had risen to lend a hand when Fatty recovered.

"Of course, we've heard about your uncle," Figgins remarked. "You called on him that time you were in America with Tom Merry."

Blake shook his head.

"Oh, no, this isn't my American uncle. It's another uncle. It's not the chap who sent me the Redskin things from Wyoming. This uncle is my Uncle Harry. That was my Uncle James."

"Oh, I see! Has he been to St. Jim's before?"

"Of course he hasn't. He's been abroad for about six years. I haven't seen him since I was a kid."

"Then you won't remember him?"

"Oh, yes, I expect I shall know him. He's a jolly little beggar, you know—he wasn't much bigger when I saw him last than I am now, but he had a ginger-coloured beard, and he was forty years old. We're mostly big chaps in our family," Blake added hastily. "My Uncle Harry is the smallest."

"I suppose you get it from him?" Fatty Wynn observed unfortunately.

Blake began to glare again.

"If you've asked me here to be entertained by agonising witticisms from Fatty Wynn, the sooner you say so the better!" he exclaimed.

Figgins glared at the unfortunate Fatty.

"Fatty, I'm surprised at you!"

"Oh, hang it! I—I only meant—"

"Never mind what you meant!" said Kerr severely.

"Shut up! Honour the stranger that is within thy gates."

"But I only meant—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Figgins.

"I only meant that Blake was medium-sized, and—"

"I'm jolly well taller than you are, anyway," said Blake.

"I've got the start of Kerr. As for Figgins, we can't all be long-legged lamp-posts."

"Of course we can't!" said Figgins, with unexpected cordiality. "Blake is just the exact size for—fgr splendid

development, not too short and not too tall; in fact, he's got a splendid physique."

"What the dickens are you getting at?" demanded Blake ungratefully. "What's all this soft sawder for?"

"I was thinking about your uncle. You were saying that he had a ginger moustache."

"A ginger beard, I said," said Blake. "His moustache was darker than his beard, I remember."

"Ginger eyebrows, I suppose?"

"Of course not, ass. His eyebrows were quite dark—dark as mine."

"Did you say he wore glasses?"

blandly. "Five feet four and three-quarters in your socks, eh?"

"Well, in slippers," said Blake.

"Good! I'll bet you won't know your uncle when he arrives, though. He might have shaved off his beard and given up his moustache. They're out of date now."

"I don't suppose Uncle Harry would change, though," said Blake, shaking his head. "He's an obstinate old chap. You know, I'm jolly firm myself, but the other members of my family are jolly obstinate, all of them. I've got a brother who's simply pig-headed. We always have rows in the holidays because he won't give in. But look here, it



"Look out!" yelled Herries, but it was too late. The frying-pan had slipped on the fire, and the whole of the contents were shot into the heart of the flames. There was a rush and a roar of flame that made Uncle Harry jump back from the fire like an india-rubber man. "Bless my soul!" he gasped.

"No, I didn't."

"Oh, I—I thought——"

"Still, as a matter of fact he does wear glasses," said Blake. "He's the only short-sighted chap in our family."

"And he's only five feet four," said Figgins casually. Blake looked unpleasant.

"I said he was my height," he replied.

"Oh!"

"I'm five feet four and three-quarters," said Blake.

At any other time a battle would probably have been fought on the subject of the odd three-quarters of an inch; but just now Figgins & Co. had their own reasons for being specially agreeable.

"That's without your boots, of course," said Figgins

seems to me that you chaps are awfully interested in my uncle."

"We might help you to entertain him, if the other chaps are playing cricket," said Figgins.

"Well, that's decent of you, Figgins. These uncles are a bit of a bother to entertain, as a rule."

"Oh, as he's roughed it in India, he's bound to know how to look after himself," Kerr remarked carelessly.

"He hasn't been in India, ass! He's home from South Africa."

"Oh, was it South Africa? He'll come back with a jolly dark complexion, I suppose—brown as a berry, you know."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder."

"He's certain to come!"

"Oh, no. I may have a wire to-morrow to say he can't come if he finds that he can't manage it in the time."

"Oh! Then you'll play in the Shell match, I suppose?"

Blake chuckled.

"That's it; and Gussy will lose his skipperiship."

"Ha, ha, ha! But then he may wire that he can't come, and find time at the last moment to run down."

"Shouldn't wonder. He's a bit eccentric, if he's anything like he used to be," said Blake carelessly. "Pass the sausage."

Figgins passed the sausages. That tea in Figgins' study was really enjoyable. Blake did most of the talking, and by skilful diplomacy Figgins & Co. led him to relate stories of his Uncle Harry. When at last Blake took his leave, the chums of the New House were in a state of suppressed excitement and glee.

They walked over to the School House with Blake, and saw him safely in, and then they strolled to their own House again, chuckling.

"It was worth the tea!" Fatty Wynn remarked.

"My hat! Rather!"

"If only Blake gets a wire to-morrow," said Kerr, with a grin, "it will be the biggest, the most tremendous jape ever japed at St. Jim's."

And Figgins & Co. chuckled in chorus.

CHAPTER 7.

Blake Receives a Telegram!

"I SHALL call you chaps early in the morning," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House that night. "I want my team to turn out for early practice at the nets." There was a general grunt from his team.



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"I twust," said D'Arcy, looking round—"I twust that there are no slackahs in the eleven. I should uttably wufuse to have any slackin'."

"Oh, go to bed!" said Kerruish.

"I am goin' to bed," said Kewwuish. "I shall be sowwy to twash you before goin' to bed—"

"Now then," said Knox, the prefect, looking into the dormitory, "can't you get to bed, you young sweeps? Do you want me to warm you?"

"I should decline to be warmed, Knox. I—"

Knox slammed the door, with a threat as to what he would do if the Fourth were not in bed when he came back in five minutes. Upon reflection, Arthur Augustus decided to be in bed when the prefect returned.

After lights out, the swell of St. Jim's spoke further on the subject. The Fourth Form seemed inclined to go to sleep, and perhaps D'Arcy's remarks made the inclination all the stronger.

"I have awwanged a pwactice match for to-morrow mornin' before bwekkah," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall call you at six in the mornin'. You hear me, Dig?"

Snore!

"I shall expect you all to turn out, deah boys! Did you speak, Hewwies?"

Snore!

"I am wesolved to keep my team up to the mark, and bwing you into a fit condish to give the Shell boundahs a lickin'. You hear me, Weilly?"

Snore!

"I weward you as a set of wottahs. I don't believe you are asleep, and I considah you are not twentin' your cwicket captain with pwopah wespect."

Chorus of snores!

And Arthur Augustus, with a sniff, turned his head over on his pillow and went to sleep.

Arthur Augustus had fully intended to have his team out for early practice as soon as it was light. Unfortunately he had not taken into account the great probability that he might not wake before rising-bell.

As a matter of fact, the first sound he heard after closing his eyes was the clang, clang, clang, by which Taggles awoke the sleepy youths of St. Jim's at seven o'clock.

Arthur Augustus opened his eyes.

Clang, clang, clang!

"Bai Jove! What's that, Blake, deah boy?"

Jack Blake sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Well, it might be a train-whistle, Gussy, or a steamer's siren, or a nightingale singing early in the morning," he replied. "But it sounds to me more like a bell."

"Pwaw don't wot, deah boy! I know it was a bell; but it can't be the wisin'-bell."

"I wish it weren't!" grunted Digby, slowly rolling out of bed. "By the way, how did you get on with the early morning practice, Gussy?"

"I am afwaid I did not wake up, if that is the wisin'-bell. I suppose you are sure it is the wisin'-bell?"

"Well, it's not a man with muffins and crumpets."

"I didn't suppose it was, Dig. I suppose, upon weflection, that it is the wisin'-bell. I am sowwy I did not wake up. I intended to have all you lazy slackahs out to practice."

And Arthur Augustus turned out of bed.

"You ought to have a bit of a wun this mornin', to get into form," he remarked, as he splashed through his morning bath. "I nevah did believe in slackin', you know. You see what comes of slackin'. Look at that chap Mellish."

Mellish looked round with a snort.

"Pwaw weward him," said Arthur Augustus, with a lofty disregard of what Mellish might think on the subject. "It takes him less than a minute and a half to do all his washin'. I have no doubt that in time he will come to dwessin' himself entirely before he begins to wash."

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"I am lookin', deah boy! If you were in my eleven, Mellish, I should insist upon your keepin' cleanah."

"You ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass, Mellish! Unless you with-draw that expression, I shall be compelled to stwike you—or, wathah, upon the whole, I will let you off. Undah the cires, I do not care to touch you without the gloves on."

And the Fourth-Formers sniggered, and Mellish looked daggers. He did not do very much washing, as a rule, but it was an exaggeration to suppose that it would not be safe to touch him without the gloves on.

"Well, what about that wun, deah boys?" said D'Arcy, as he finished his toilet—a little more rapidly than usual.

"Suppose you race us downstairs?" suggested Blake. "You start ten seconds first, and if we don't overtake you, we'll admit you've won."

"Wight-ho! I'll show you what wunnin' is like!"

And they crowded out of the dormitory.

The Fourth-Formers waited for Arthur Augustus to start.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

He drew a deep breath, and looked round to see if they were ready.

"Ten seconds, Blake, deah boy!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake, looking at his watch.

"Then I'm off!"

And Arthur Augustus dashed along the corridor at top speed. He passed Monty Lowther in the passage, bumping him over, and ran on with hardly a pause, only shouting back that he was "sowwy" to the dazed and astounded Shell fellows.

At the head of the stairs he ran into Binks, the School House boots. He laid Binks on the floor.

"Sowwy!" gasped D'Arcy. "Can't stop—I'm wunnin' a wace—"

He dashed on down the stairs. There was a yell, and Lefevre of the Fifth clutched the banisters with one hand and D'Arcy with the other.

"You young idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called—"

"What are you bolting along like that for?" roared the Fifth-Former.

"Sowwy, deah boy! I'm wunnin' a wace!"

D'Arcy jerked himself away and dashed on.

Right down to the Lower Hall he went, breathless—to fall into the arms of Kildare, who gripped him with a grip of iron.

"D'Arcy! What are you tearing about for like that?"

"I've won!"

"What?"

"It's all wight, deah boy! I'm wunnin' a race!"

"You young ass—"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"And whom are you running a race with?" demanded Kildare, releasing the gasping swell of St. Jim's. "I can't see anybody."

D'Arcy looked back up the stairs. He adjusted his eye-glass and looked back again. There was no sign of the Fourth-Formers on the stairs.

"Bai Jove!"

Kildare laughed.

"Well, where's the other fellows, D'Arcy?"

"I have been done, deah boy—the wottahs were only wottin'. I do not see anythin' to laugh at, Kildare. I have been tweated with gwoss diswesp-ect."

Kildare laughed and walked away. Down the stairs came the Fourth Form, with slow and regulated tread. Arthur Augustus watched them speechlessly.

"Blake!" he ejaculated, when the juniors reached the bottom of the staircase.

"Hallo! You seemed in rather a hurry, D'Arcy."

"I was wunnin' a wace."

"Dear me!"

"You said you would start ten seconds after I did—"

"Rats! You're dreaming!" said Blake. "I said that if you started ten seconds before us, and we didn't overtake you, we'd admit that you'd won. Well, we admit it."

D'Arcy's face was a study. Blake turned to his companions suddenly.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form, D'Arcy has won the race. Having no competitors, he was in at the finish."

"Bravo, D'Arcy!"

"I wogard you as a set of wottahs," said Arthur Augustus, "and I have a jolly good mind to wesign my posish as cwicket captain, and leave you in the lurch!"

"Good—then we shall have a chance again! the Shell!" said Digby, with much satisfaction.

To which D'Arcy replied only with a sniff; and he did not resign.

Although he had, as he had said, been treated with scarcely the respect that was due to a cricket captain, D'Arcy looked very cheerful during breakfast. He was going to distinguish himself that afternoon, and show the School House what a junior cricket captain really ought to be like.

Blake was feeling rather anxious that morning, as his absent answers in the Form-room showed. Mr. Latham kindly gave him a hundred lines, but that did not seem to improve matters.

Blake was wondering whether a telegram would come from his uncle. So wore Figgins & Co. If a wire arrived, Blake would be playing in the Form match, after all, and D'Arcy would lose his skippership. And if it arrived, too, Figgins & Co. had promised themselves the most tremendous jape in the history of St. Jim's.

Would that telegram come?

Jack Blake was really eager to see his uncle again, after so long a separation, and upon the whole he would have preferred Uncle Harry to the telegram. But it was not for him to decide. The exigencies of Uncle Harry's business in London would determine whether he came to St. Jim's or not.

(Continued on next page.)



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

SO SKINNY!

Pat: "I've never seen anyone so thin as O'Brien. I'm thin, Mike, and you're thin, but O'Brien is as thin as the two of us put together!"

D. G. GUNN, 62, St. Stephen's Road, Enfield Wash, Middlesex.

HARD LUCK!

Fortune Teller: "I see a dark man standing in your path!"

Client: "Poor bloke!"

Fortune Teller: "What do you mean?"

Client: "I'm a steam-roller driver!"

A. WOODWARD, 12, Roydene Road, Plumstead, S.E.13.

FIERCE!

Bobby: "I've just been to the Zoo and seen a real man-eating tiger!"

Jackie: "Pooh! That's nothing! I've just been to a restaurant and seen a real man eating rabbit!"

TERENCE HEGARTY, 68, Blair Street, Poplar, E.14.

PROOF!

First Card Player: "One of us is a cheat!"

Second Ditto: "How do you know?"

First Ditto: "Well, five minutes ago I had a fifth ace in my boot, and now it has gone!"

E. TRUSTY, 5, Wybert Street, Euston Road, N.W.1.

HE'D FIND OUT!

Old Gent (poking tough in the chest with his stick): "Tell me, my man, which is the quickest way to the hospital?"

Tough: "Poke me with that stick again, and you'll find out!"

PETER FLOWERS, 8, Hamlin Lane, Exeter, Devon.

TOO BAD!

Professor: "Did you hear that awful person snoring during my lecture?"

Friend: "Yes, disgusting! He woke me up several times!"

PETER JONES, 165, Chamberlain Street, St. Helens, Lancs.

HARD HIT!

First Sailor: "How's your new cabin-boy getting on?"

Second Ditto: "Clumsy, 'e is. 'E broke all the saucers and now we 'ave to drink out of the cups!"

ALBERT SEARLE, 21, Mornington Buildings, Mornington Road, Regent's Park, N.W.1.

QUITE RIGHT!

Father: "James, I believe you are teaching the parrot to swear!"

James: "Oh, no, father. I am only telling it what it must not say!"

G. A. GUTHRIE, House B, Royal Masonic Senior School, The Avenue, Bushey, Herts.

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THE JAPE OF THE TERM!

(Continued from page 11.)

If the wire came, there was no telling exactly when it would come—whether during morning lessons or afterwards. If it did not come by half-past two, the Form match would begin without Blake. But if the Fourth batted first, he might have last man's place left for him until, perhaps, half-past three.

Blake and Figgins waited in suspense.

The last lesson of the morning was half through when there was a tap on the door of the Form-room, and Binks came in with a familiar-looking, buff-coloured envelope.

"Telegram, sir!"

"For me?" said little Mr. Lathom, blinking over his glasses at the page.

"For Master Blake, sir."

Figgins & Co. exchanged glances of glee.

"Ah, you may give it to Blake. Blake, you may peruse the telegram."

"Thank you, sir."

Blake took the envelope and slit it. He eagerly read the message within:

"Sorry shall not have time to come down, after all. Shall try to manage it later."

"UNCLE HARRY."

Blake felt a keen sense of disappointment.

But it could not be helped; and, after all, there was the Form match.

"No answer, sir," he said.

"Very good. You may go, Binks."

And the Fourth-Formers all glanced curiously at Blake as lessons were resumed. It was rather a distinction to have a telegram delivered in the Form-room. Figgins leaned over towards Blake.

"No bad news, Blake?"

"Well, my uncle's not coming."

"Too bad!"

"Can't be helped, I suppose," said Blake. "It's all right; I'm sure to see him before he leaves England again, so it really doesn't matter. Gussy, old man, are you going to resign in my favour?"

"I shall regard it as practically givin' the match away to the Shell, Blake, but it would not be form to insist upon my wights. I shall be vewy pleased to let you skip."

"Dear me! I'm sure somebody is talking," said Mr. Lathom, looking round.

And the matter dropped till lessons were over.

CHAPTER 8.

But the Uncle Arrives!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was considerably surprised, and a little indignant, to see how the Fourth Form Eleven took it.

The relief in every look, when they found that Blake was to captain them, after all, was not complimentary to the swell of St. Jim's.

"We shall have a chance now," said Kerruish.

And that was the general impression.

"Blake's playing, after all," Tom Merry remarked to his team, after dinner. "You'll have to pull up your socks!"

Immediately after dinner the rival cricketers repaired to the junior ground.

A great many of the juniors of both Houses, and some of the seniors, followed them. All the cricket talent of the junior portion of the School House was there, and the play would probably be worth watching.

Blake looked over Tom Merry's Eleven as they came down from the School House in spotless flannels.

There was no denying that they were a very fit team.

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, and Harry Noble, the Australian, were the backbone of the team. But Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn were very nearly as good. Finn, the American boy, was in the team. The rest were Macdonald, Whitehead, Williams, and Gore. The last-named was personally on the worst possible terms with Tom Merry; but he could play cricket when he chose, and Tom was willing to give him a chance.

The stumps had been pitched, and the big hand on the clock in the tower was drawing towards half-past two.

"Glad you're playing, after all!" said Tom Merry, as he met Blake. "Of course, it would have been a great pleasure to see Gussy skipping!"

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwy!"

The two captains tossed for choice of innings.

The Fourth-Formers won, and Blake decided to go in first. Tom Merry led his men out to field.

Nearly all the Fourth and the Shell who were not playing were round the ropes. The New House fellows mustered strongly. Figgins was there, over-topping all but the seniors, and Fatty Wynn was standing beside him munching chocolates. Kerr was not to be seen. But in the crowd the absence or the presence of one junior more or less was not likely to be noticed.

The School House cricketers were too much occupied with the business in hand to give the New House fellows a single thought.

Tom Merry put Harry Noble on to bowl the first over, and the Cornstalk walked to the bowler's wicket. Jack Blake was facing the bowling, and he looked out for all he was worth. For, although Kangaroo was his very best at the wicket, he was extremely good as a bowler, and there were not many batsmen in the Junior Forms who could hold out long against him.

Jack Blake was on his guard; and he needed to be. Kangaroo sent the first ball down like a shell. The second was irritatingly slow. There was never any telling what a ball from Noble would be like—until it came!

But Blake was a good batsman. He stopped them all, even when he did not score; and then the over gave him two.

Then Tom Merry bowled to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy stood in his usually graceful attitude and waited for the ball. Tom Merry sent down a very hot one.

Everybody expected D'Arcy's wicket to go down to it; but one could never really rely upon D'Arcy. He swiped the ball away with easy grace, and Blake was just starting to run when the swell of the School House waved him back.

"It's all wight, deah boy; it's a boundawy."

And a boundary it was.

The Fourth Form gave a shout.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"Good old window-pane!"
And Arthur Augustus gracefully raised his Panama hat in acknowledgment. When the next ball came down he swiped at it in the same way, but his bat swept only the empty air.

Clack!
"Bai Jove!"
Arthur Augustus looked down at his wrecked wicket. The middle stump had been sent flying.

"How's that?" yelled Tom Merry.
"Out!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
And Arthur Augustus carried out his bat with perfect nonchalance.

Reilly came in to take his place. He lived through the rest of the over, though the bowling was very trying. In the interest of that duel between batsman and bowler the crowd did not think of looking towards the distant gates of St. Jim's, where a vehicle had just driven up.

The field changed over, and Blake had the bowling again. Noble put in all he knew, but, for a time at least, Blake held his own against it.

Ball after ball Kangaroo sent down, and Blake stopped one, and snicked another away through the slips for two, and swiped a third off the field for a boundary.

The crowd looked on keenly.
No one noticed a little gentleman, with a reddish-hued beard and moustache, and a dark, wrinkled face, almost the colour of mahogany, and a pair of rimless glasses perched on his nose, who was coming towards the cricket field.

He was a benevolent-looking old fellow, with thick, reddish hair tinged with white, and he wheezed considerably, as if out of breath, as he made his way towards the cricketers. He was very neatly and nicely dressed, and wore a silk hat and a big gold watch-chain. He carried an umbrella in his hand, though the day was one of the finest.

Clack!
Away went the ball again, and Blake and Reilly were running. The old gentleman stopped on the edge of the crowd, and regarded the cricketers through his rimless glasses.

He gave a little crow of satisfaction.
"Bravo, Jack! Well hit, my boy!"
And he clapped his hands heartily, till the gloves threatened to split.

The fellows nearest him looked round, and regarded him with surprise.

"Hallo!" remarked Lefevre of the Fifth. "Where did this spring from?"

"Bravo, Jack!"

"Oh, he knows Blake!" Lefevre raised his cap to the old gentleman with great politeness. "Excuse me, sir! Are you a relation of Blake's?"

"Ah! My nephew!"

"My hat!" exclaimed one of the cricketers. "It's Blake's uncle!"

Blake's uncle!

The words ran through the crowd.

Most of the fellows knew that Blake had been expecting an uncle, and that he had had a wire to say that the expected visitor could not come.

It was evident that he had changed his mind, or found time, after all—for here he was!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Did somebody say Blake's uncle?"

"Yes; there he is!"
"Then he has come, atlah all!"
"Looks like it!" grinned Digby.
Blake is engaged for the moment, and it is up to us, deah boys, to greet the old gentleman with pwopah respect."

And the swell of St. Jim's hurried towards the newcomer. Mr. Blake was clapping his hands as Blake made the last hit of the over. But, as it happened, there was nothing to clap for. For Blake had sent the ball clean into Clifton Dane's hand at point, and he was caught out.

"Excuse me, deah sir—"
Mr. Blake looked at the speaker.
"You are Blake's uncle, I pwesume?"
"I found I was able to run down," said Mr. Blake. "It will be a pleasant surprise for my nephew, I hope."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. It is very agreeable to all of us. Blake is my chum, sir, and I look atlah him. Pway allow me to welcome you to St. Jim's, sir, in Blake's name."

"You are very good!"

"Not at all, my deah sir. Any welative of my friend Blake is a friend of mine. Blake is just coming off, sir. Blake, deah boy—"

"Hallo, Gustavus!"

"Here is your uncle, Blake!"

"My hat!"

Blake dropped his bat and ran forward.

"Uncle! So you've come, after all! I'm jolly glad to see you!"

And Mr. Blake and his nephew shook hands most affectionately.

CHAPTER 9.

Blake's Uncle!

JACK BLAKE looked with great interest at the affectionate relative he had not seen for so long.

Mr. Blake was not much bigger than a boy, as far as height went, but he was a great deal broader, of course; in fact, he was rather inclined to stoutness. His face looked as if it had been burnt brown by the tropical sun. His clothes, though good, had a cut that was not that of a London tailor. Everything about Mr. Blake seemed to tell of a returned traveller from an outlying part of the Empire.

"I'm jolly glad to see you, uncle," said Blake. "I didn't expect you after your wire, of course."

"I found I was able to run down, after all," said Mr. Blake, in his curiously wheezy voice. "I couldn't miss an opportunity of seeing you, after being away for six or seven years."

"I'm glad you've come. It's a jolly surprise," said Blake.

"Dear me, how you've grown!" said Mr. Blake, patting him on the head. "You must be nearly as tall as I am myself, Jack."

Jack Blake concealed a grin.

"Yes, I suppose I'm shooting up," he remarked.

"You were such a pretty little fellow," said Mr. Blake.

"Dear me, I can hardly believe that this is little Jackie!"

The fellows round began to grin, and Blake turned a little red. He had often smiled broadly over the fuss Miss Priscilla Fawcett made of Tom Merry when that dear old lady visited St. Jim's. It looked as if he was going to have a little of the same himself from his affectionate uncle.

"Bless his little heart!" went on Mr. Blake. "Do you

SO FAR—AND YET SO NEAR!



remember, Jackie, how you used to cry for some sugar when I used to dandle you on my knee?"

"No, I don't!" said Blake hurriedly. "You must be tired after your journey. Will you come in and—"

"Not at all. I am not in the least fatigued. You were playing cricket?"

"Yes; but I'm just out, so that's all right."

"It is a long time since I played cricket," Mr. Blake remarked, as he looked on at the game.

"I—I suppose so."

"One gets so few opportunities up-country in South Africa, Jackie."

Mr. Blake watched the game.

Noble was bowling to Herries now, and Herries had all his work cut out to keep his wicket up.

"That is a good bowler, Jackie."

"Yes," said Blake, inwardly writhing at the word Jackie. "That's an Australian chap, you know—bowls like an angel."

"Ah! There goes the wicket!"

Herries left the wicket, and Digby went in.

Noble brought Dig's balls down with the last ball of the over, and there was a general chuckle from the Shell.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Blake. "Are you captaining the side, Jackie?"

"Yes, uncle."

"You have some more wickets?"

"Yes; we're only four down so far."

"Ah!" Mr. Blake rubbed his hands. "Jackie, my boy, it is a long time since I played cricket."

"So you said, sir."

"Play me."

Jack Blake jumped,

"What?"

"Play me!"

"Eh?"

"I am sure one of the lads would not mind standing out, if you asked them in your pretty way, Jackie."

Herries crammed his cap in his mouth to keep back a yell.

"Oh, my word!" murmured Digby. "His pretty way! Jackie's pretty way! Oh, my only summer hat!"

"He hasn't seen Jack for a long time, you know," murmured Kerruish.

"Yaas, wathah! That accounts."

Jack Blake smiled a ghastly smile.

"Play me, Jackie."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, pretending to think that his uncle was joking. "Ha, ha, ha! Very good!"

Mr. Blake surveyed him with a stony look that speedily brought his merriment to a finish.

"What are you laughing at, Jackie?"

"Eh? Your—er—joke, uncle."

"I was not joking."

"Oh!"

"If you would rather not play me—"

"Oh, uncle!"

"Blake, dear boy, I insist upon your respected uncle bein' gwatified in this mattah," said D'Arcy, who had had his innings. "I am sure that Hancock would be vewy glad to waive his innings in favah of Mr. Blake."

Hancock looked daggers at the generous junior, but he did not like to say anything.

Mr. Blake turned his pince-nez towards Hancock.

"You are willing, my boy?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Hancock, with a forced grin.

"Then send me in next, Jackie."

"Cer-certainly, uncle."

"I will make some preparations," said Mr. Blake, going towards the entrance of the tent. "I dare say you can lend me some pads."

"Yaas, wathah, my deah sir. Pewwaps mine would be too small for you. Kowwuish, deah boy, win up to the School House, and bowwow some of Mr. Wailton's pads."

"Go yourself," murmured Kerruish, under his breath.

"I think I can make these do," said Mr. Blake. "I am not a large man. The Blakes are all rather small."

Figgins grinned. Blake turned crimson as he caught that grin.

"Ill weeds gwow apace, sir," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a disparaging glance at the long legs of Figgins.

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Good rye runs high."

"Wats, Figgins! I—"

"I dare say this bat will do," said Mr. Blake, picking up the beautiful bat which was the pride of D'Arcy's heart. The swell of St. Jim's shivered.

"Pewwaps Blake's bat would suit you a little bettah, sir."

"Stuff!" said Blake. "That one will be ripping. I can

recommend that bat, uncle. Gussy never lets anybody use it but himself, and it's a ripper!"

"Will you lend it to me, my boy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said Arthur Augustus unhappily.

"Thank you. I will retain the gloves I am wearing, I think. These would be too large for me," said Mr. Blake, glancing at the batting-gloves D'Arcy was offering him.

D'Arcy turned pink, and there was a chuckle in the tent. D'Arcy thought very much of his small hands, but Mr. Blake seemed unconscious of having said anything amiss.

There was a shout from the field.

"Well bowled!"

"Hallo, there's Reilly's stumps down!"



The little man wrenched himself away. D'Arcy's grip was his. "Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Strangest!"

Mr. Blake tucked the bat under his arm, giving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a bump on the chest with the business end of it.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy, staggering back.

Mr. Blake swung round towards him, and the end of the bat clumped against Kerruish, and the Manx lad gave a roar.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Blake, turning round again, and catching Blake a crack with the bat. "I'm sorry—"

"Better go down to the wicket, sir," grinned Digby, dodging the bat.

"Ah, yes, undoubtedly."

And Mr. Blake left the tent, to the great relief of everybody who was in it.

Uncle Harry handed his silk hat to Herries to hold, and then went down to the wicket.

The sight of the old gentleman going on the pitch brought a buzz of excitement from the Shell fieldsmen.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's Blake's uncle!"

"Blake's uncle! Well, why the dickens doesn't Blake keep him on a chain?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody tell Blake to come and collar him. What's he doing with a hat? My only Aunt Maria! He's going to the wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's next man in!"

"Phew!"



hair, and to D'Arcy's horror the hair came off in his hand! With the wig came also the beard and moustache!

Mr. Blake settled himself at the wicket. He stood with his legs crooked in a curious attitude, and his coat-tails flying in the breeze. He held the bat as if it were a woodman's axe, and blinked round through his glasses.

"Well, this is jolly," said Noble. "Blake always was a funny beggar, but fancy his digging up an uncle like this, and springing him on us in a cricket match! It's the last word in japes."

"Blake doesn't look as if he enjoyed it, though," grinned Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Here, go and bowl, Gore," said Tom Merry, tossing the ball to the cad of the Shell.

And Gore went on to bowl.

CHAPTER 10.

Uncle Harry Plays Cricket I

THE interest with which the crowd watched for that over was intense.

Jack Blake looked somewhat unhappy, but the other juniors enjoyed the situation immensely. Uncle Harry waited for the ball to come down, standing in his original attitude at the wicket.

Gore grinned as he prepared to deliver.

Gore had had no chance of being entrusted with the bowling until Uncle Harry appeared on the pitch. Gore was a very poor bowler, and, as a matter of fact, Tom Merry had put him on as the weakest bowler in the team. He did not expect Uncle Harry to stand against the bowling of the worst bowler for half an over. But as a sportsman he wanted to give the old gentleman a chance.

Gore ought really to have been grateful to Uncle Harry for getting him the chance to bowl; but Gore was only thinking of a joke. Gore disliked Blake very much, as much as he disliked Tom Merry. Anything up against Blake's uncle could be put down to the old score, and Gore didn't mind how cruel or brutal it was.

He sent down a careless ball, and, to the surprise of everybody, including Gore, Uncle Harry knocked it through the slips.

The fieldsmen, of course, were not expecting any trouble, and the ball ran its course and gave the batsmen plenty of time to run.

Smith minor was at the other end of the pitch, and he was grinning too much to run. Uncle Harry started, and shouted to him:

"Run, you young beggar—run!"

And Smith, with a gasp, started.

There was a shout from the surprised crowd.

"Bravo!"

"Go it!"

"Bravo!"

The batsmen crossed the pitch, Mr. Blake moving with amazing speed for a gentleman of his age and stoutness. Twice across—and the bats were on the creases before the ball came in to the wicketkeeper.

"Two runs! And from the first ball of the over."

It was not so bad, and Arthur Augustus clapped Blake on the back in an approving way and nearly knocked him over the ropes.

"Your wespected uncle can play cwicket, deah boy."

"Yes," grunted Blake.

"I wegard your avunculah welative as a vewy intewestin' old gentleman."

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

Gore had received the ball again, and he was looking cross. He felt that the laugh was against him to some extent.

But had his own plans for turning it against Blake's uncle.

The next ball down did not go anywhere near the wicket. It was neither a very wide ball, nor was it a joke. It caught Mr. Blake upon the leg, and the leg was not before the wicket. It was, in fact, a real bit of "bodyline" bowling.

The thud was distinctly heard as the ball crashed on Mr. Blake's leg, just above the top of the pads, and everybody expected to see the old gentleman double up with pain. Tom Merry's brows contracted.

"Gore, you cad—"

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Look at him! He doesn't mind!"

Mr. Blake had not turned a hair.

The ball had thudded on him like a hammer, but he only dusted his trousers with his hand, to knock off the few specks left there by the impact.

"My word!" said Digby. "What's he made of?"

Gore stood aghast. He had intended to double the old gentleman up, but he had not succeeded. The ball was fielded, and Gore bowled again. It was another short-pitched bumper! This time the leather rose with terrific force from the pitch and crashed on Mr. Blake's chest.

"Oh!" gasped a dozen fellows.

Uncle Harry calmly picked up the ball and threw it back.

"Try again, my boy!" he called out.

Tom Merry ran towards Gore.

"Any more of that, Gore, and I'll kick you off the field."

"It was an accident!"

"Liar!"

Gore bit his lips. After that he did not try any more "bodyline" stuff, and he sent the next ball down true for the wicket. It was an easy ball to play, and Uncle Harry played it—in a rather unexpected manner!

The bat flashed—the ball whizzed hard straight back to the bowler!

Crash went the round red ball upon Gore's ribs, and the

astonished bowler, hardly knowing for the moment what had hit him, gave a gasp and tumbled over.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! A Woland for an Olivah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore staggered up, black with rage.

The crowd was yelling with laughter; for it was pretty plain to all that Mr. Blake had deliberately repaid Gore's "accidents" with another "accident" of the same sort—which had hurt Gore considerably, for he did not possess that strange imperviousness to hurt which seemed to belong to Uncle Harry.

"Ow!" gasped Gore. "I—I'm winded! I shall have a bruise as big as an egg! That silly old fool!"

"Shut up!" said Tom Merry angrily. "Serve you jolly well right. Get off the pitch!"

"I've not finished the over."

"And you're not going to. Take the ball, Manners."

"Right-ho!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—" began Gore hotly.

"If you say another word I'll order you off the field."

And Gore, without saying another word, strode sulkily away to long on.

Manners finished that over against the gentleman from South Africa.

The way Uncle Harry kept his end up was surprising. Smith minor was bowled in the next over, but Uncle Harry had scored eighteen runs by the time his wicket fell.

Blake's face was a little brighter as he greeted his uncle coming off the field with D'Arcy's bat under his arm.

"Ripping, uncle!"

Mr. Blake fanned himself with a big handkerchief. He seemed to be very warm, more so than the other cricketers.

"It was not so bad, Jackie," said Mr. Blake. "The Blakes are all cricketers, eh? We're little, but good, Jackie."

Blake caught a grin on Figgins' face, and blushed.

"Yes," he said hurriedly. "But I say, you've had a long journey, uncle—"

"Yaas, wathah! I should think you were gettin' weady for tea, sir?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I should like some tea," said Mr. Blake.

"Come along then, uncle," said Blake, quite willing to get his uncle off the cricket field. "We haven't made much in the way of preparations, as we didn't know you were coming, you know, but—"

"If you like, Blake, I'll drop in at Mrs. Taggles?" said Digby.

"Thanks awfully, old chap."

Digby cut off towards the School shop. Although funds were low in Study No. 6—with the exception of D'Arcy, who was always flush of cash—credit was always good at the school shop. Digby could be trusted to get in the necessary supplies for giving the African uncle a really good feed.

Mr. Blake walked with Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy towards the School House. Blake's chums manfully stuck to him. It was, in fact, an understood thing that they were to stand by one another on such occasions.

"Dear me," said Mr. Blake, turning his rimless glasses towards the School House. "What a fine old place! Is that the New House?"

Blake almost snorted.

"No, sir, that the School House—our House! The Cock House of St. Jim's."

"Dear me! Surely you do not keep chickens in so fine a building?"

Herries and D'Arcy turned their faces away to grin. Blake laboriously explained.

"Oh, no, sir! I didn't mean we kept chickens there. We call it the Cock House because we're cock of the walk, you know, and always lick the New House."

"Oh, I see!"

"Here's the Head, uncle," added Blake, as the revered figure of Dr. Holmes was seen issuing from the House. "You would like to see him— I—I say—what—how—my only hat—"

Blake stood petrified with astonishment.

For, at the sight of Dr. Holmes, his uncle had suddenly scudded off among the elms, and was lost to sight in a moment.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy stood staring after him in blank bewilderment.

CHAPTER 11.

Hurried Preparations!

DR. HOLMES passed the juniors, with a kind nod, as they mechanically raised their caps.

Blake was rooted to the ground.

What was the matter with his uncle?

Why had Harry Blake bolted in that extraordinary manner at the sight of the Head?

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It was inexplicable.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first to speak.

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!" said Herries. "My only summer hat! Is your uncle off his giddy rocker, Blake?"

"I don't know," said Blake faintly. "Perhaps it's sunstroke. They often get sunstroke in South Africa, I believe. It must be sunstroke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's go and look for him."

"We had bettah, Blake, deah boy."

Blake nodded.

"Come on."

The three astounded juniors ran under the trees in search of Mr. Blake.

They found the old gentleman standing among the elms, vigorously fanning himself with his big, coloured handkerchief.

He blinked at them through his glasses.

"Are you ill, uncle?" asked Blake anxiously.

"Eh! Ill?" stammered Uncle Harry.

"Yes, I thought—"

"I—I am taken like that sometimes," said Uncle Harry.

"You see—South Africa—sunstroke— Ahem! I am sorry I startled you."

"Oh, pway don't mention it, my deah sir," said Arthur Augustus. "It's all wight!"

Blake, considerably disturbed in his mind, led the way towards the School House again.

He remembered his uncle, as he had told Figgins, as an eccentric fellow; but he had never expected to be treated to eccentricity like this.

He began to think, with some alarm, about what further eccentricities the old gentleman might be guilty of during his stay at St. Jim's. The afternoon was yet young.

They entered the School House, and, as luck would have it, met Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, almost face to face.

Uncle Harry showed, for a moment, symptoms of a return of his strange attack; but Blake slipped his arm through his uncle's, determined that he should not bolt again.

Mr. Railton glanced at him.

"My uncle, sir," said Blake diffidently. "Uncle Harry, this is Mr. Railton, our Housemaster."

Uncle Harry raised his silk hat.

"I am very happy to make the acquaintance of Mr. Railton," he said, in his wheezy voice.

The Housemaster looked at him curiously.

There was something about Mr. Blake that arrested his attention, he did not quite know what it was.

Before he could speak Uncle Harry went on hurriedly:

"I—I am feeling very faint, Jackie. I should like to sit down. The journey has overtired me, I am afraid."

"Pray come into my study, sir," said Mr. Railton, in his courteous way, and he threw open the door.

"This way, uncle."

"I—I'd rather cut up to your study, Jackie!" whispered Mr. Blake.

Blake turned red.

It was impossible to refuse Mr. Railton's kindness, and for the moment he was almost ashamed of Uncle Harry.

"Pray come in!" said Mr. Railton.

"Better come in, uncle. Railton's awfully decent," whispered Blake.

And he almost ran his uncle into the Housemaster's room. Mr. Blake gave in.

He walked into the study; and Blake, at the door, muttered something to D'Arcy and Herries.

"Cut up to the study, and make it decent."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And D'Arcy and Herries rushed upstairs. Mr. Blake sank into a deep armchair, with his back to the light, and blinked at the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton was all kindness and hospitality.

"Pray rest as long as you wish, my dear sir," he said.

"I did not know that Blake was expecting a relative to visit him to-day."

"It was really quite unexpected," said Blake. "We're going to have tea in the study, sir. I'll go and see about it, uncle."

"Certainly, Jackie," said Mr. Blake faintly.

Blake left the study.

He was looking and feeling considerably puzzled as he mounted the stairs and hurried along to the Fourth Form passage.

Herries and D'Arcy were already in Study No. 6, carrying out Blake's instructions to "make it decent."

Herries was sweeping up the grate, which certainly wasn't in the tidiest condition, and D'Arcy had picked up a crumb-brush, apparently with the idea of making himself useful, but he was doing nothing but carrying the brush to and fro in the study.

(Continued on page 19.)

Our Bumper Competition Offer!

5 "JAMES" CYCLES FREE



MUST Be Won Here!

BIG news for you this week—about big prizes which we want five of you fellows to win quickly. Think—five glistening new bikes all waiting in their crates to be sent away. Perhaps we can send you one! Well, let's see. It is the simplest competition out, and one with a really new idea in it.

So enter now. The opportunity is open to you for this week only—see that you don't miss it!

HOW TO WIN. The puzzle below consists of the outlines of nine well-known objects for you to recognise! They are perfectly easy, especially as we also give you a guide list in which you

can find all the answers. For instance, No. 1 is obviously the outline of an Aeroplane, and we have written that on the coupon to give you a start. What is No. 2?—No. 3?—and so on. Consult the list, look at the pictures carefully, and fill in IN INK on the form, the names of the other eight objects. Then sign and address the form, also in ink, and enclose it in a properly stamped envelope. And be careful to write your **NAME, INITIALS** and **TOWN** in block capital letters on the back of the envelope. You will be disqualified if you omit to do this.

Post your entry to:

GEM "Outlines,"

5, Carmelite Street,

London, E.C.4 (Comp.),

so as to reach that address not later than **WEDNESDAY, MAY 31st.**

Entries arriving after this closing date cannot be accepted.

SPECIAL NOTE.—KEEP A COPY OF YOUR ENTRY, because as soon as all entries are under seal, the **CORRECT SOLUTION** will appear in the "Gem" issue dated June 24th, 1933. All competitors must make sure they watch the "Gem," so that they can check their entries by that solution, and those whose attempts contain five errors or less, will have to send in claims for the prizes. Full particulars for claiming will be given with the solution—remember the date!

What Are They?



Write the 8 Remaining Names on this Free Coupon.

All the Answers Are Here!

Cycle, Aeroplane, Camel, Carrot, Cat, Apple, Stamp, Dog, Policeman, Beetroot, Bugler, Donkey, Watch, Lioness, Monkey, Leopard, Parsnip, Biscuit, Plum, Tiger, Peach, Panda, Motor-bike, Drum-dary, Mule, Trumpeter, Tomato, Zebra, Lamp, Ass, Cab, Pony.

"OUTLINES" ENTRY FORM.

1. AEROPLANE

2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

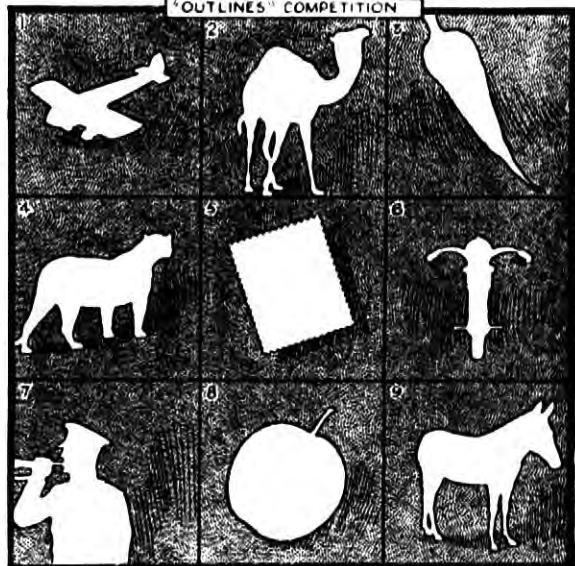
Signed

Address

G.

CUT HERE.

"OUTLINES" COMPETITION



THE Five "James" Cycles will be awarded to the five competitors whose solutions are correct, or most nearly so. In the event of too many ties, the cost of the prizes may be divided.

All solutions must be written IN INK on the "Outlines" coupon. Forms mutilated, or which bear alterations or more than one answer in each space, will be disqualified. No responsibility can be taken for delay or loss in the post or

RULES (which must be strictly adhered to) otherwise. No correspondence will be allowed, and the decision of the Editor will be final and legally binding. Employees of the proprietors of this paper must not compete. The Correct Solution will appear in the "Gem" issue dated June 24th, 1933, and competitors must get it to check their entries. Failure to claim by the date stated will entail forfeiture of all interest in the competition.

HURRY UP FOR A FREE "BIKE"!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,319.

A PAGE FROM—

The Editor's Notebook



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

HALLO, chums! Have you had a look at page 17 and seen our simple competition? I bet you have! Don't forget to have a go at it—you can't afford to miss this opportunity of winning a ripping "James" cycle! Get down to it straight away and see what you can do with it!

And now about next week's issue. You all know that Bernard Glyn is a bit of a knut as an inventor, but, believe me, he excels himself next week in

"THE ROBOT OF ST. JIM'S!"

Amazing things happen in this first-class yarn of Tom Merry & Co., in which the ever-popular author, Martin Clifford, reaches great heights. I can assure you that you will enjoy every word of it! For the thrill-brigade there will be further chapters of

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

W. E. Johns' nerve-tingling War flying story. In addition there will be another antic from the irrepressible Potts, as well as a column of readers' jokes, for each of which I pay half-a-crown. Also, of course, there will be another page from my Notebook.

THE YOUNGEST DETECTIVE?

Who do you think is the youngest detective in this country? Well, I think you may take it that Desmond Phillips has that honour. Desmond is ten years old and he has just completed his first "case" very satisfactorily. Desmond saw a man take two bottles of milk from a milk-cart, and being suspicious that the man had no right to the bottles, he followed him for half a mile to find out where he went. Then this bright lad went and told a policeman just what had happened, and a few days later he picked the man out at an identification parade. And that was that! Bravo, Desmond!

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK.

Lots of authors have written stories about men who have come back to life after they have been believed dead, but here is an example from real life. In 1913 a Liverpool man was on board a ship in the Panama Canal, when there was an explosion. Later his relatives were informed by the owners of the vessel that the man had been killed in the explosion. Now, after twenty years, he has suddenly turned up in Liverpool again, very much alive! Can you beat that?

THE DERBY WINNER?

Recently an amazing trick was played upon a certain Epsom horse trainer. The trainer, an Irishman, arranged for a

horse to be sent to him from Ireland, in order that he might train it for one of the big races. He duly received news that the horse had been dispatched and would arrive at Camden Town station on a certain day in one of the most expensive horse-boxes on the L.M.S. railway. The trainer, eagerly looking forward to seeing his new charge, went to the station complete with a beautiful motor horse-box and several grooms. The truck arrived and was shunted into a siding. The trainer and his grooms approached, and with great excitement opened the doors of the truck. Out stepped a lovely—donkey! What did the trainer say? Well, I'm afraid I can't tell you that, but being an Irishman he had a sense of humour, and soon saw the joke! So he sent a wire to the sender, saying that the animal had arrived safely and that it was almost certain to become favourite for the Derby. But, he said, he could not make out why it was so fond of carrots!

The story has a happy ending, for the donkey, at any rate. The trainer did not want him, so he told the railway company to dispose of him. The lucky animal was adopted by the Duchess of Portland, and has taken up his residence at Welbeck Abbey!

WHOSE CROC?

From time to time all sorts of strange things are found in the Thames, but just recently one of the strangest discoveries of all was made. A man was crossing Battersea Bridge when he saw what appeared to be a crocodile, swimming lazily about in the shallow water. He rubbed his eyes and looked again—the crocodile was still there. At about the same time a fireman saw the crocodile from the window of the fire station. Both these men went down to the bank to make further investigations. They discovered that the crocodile was quite real, but that it was dead, and it had been the movement of the water that had made it appear to be swimming. The men dragged the crocodile up on to the bank, and on measuring it found that it was five feet long. The man who saw it first is to have it stuffed—but there has been no explanation as to what a crocodile, either dead or alive, was doing in the Thames at Battersea!

A MYSTERY!

Some time ago a plant mysteriously vanished from the rock garden of the Rev. J. F. Anderson. Now it may seem that it was rather strange that the disappearance of one plant should thus be noted, for flowers are often picked—even when they shouldn't be! But this plant was worth £200—it is believed to be the

only one of its kind in the world! In the circumstances naturally the fact that it had been taken was made known, and the owner appealed for its return as he was very proud of his plant. Nothing, however, was heard of it. Then one day a villager noticed a brown paper parcel lying on a rock within a few feet of where the missing plant had originally been. He opened the parcel and found inside—the plant! He ran to the owner and told him the good news. Needless to say, Mr. Anderson was delighted, but the mystery still remains, for there was no word of explanation with the returned plant!

THE READING ROBOT!

Next week, as I have already told you, Glyn introduces a robot to St. Jim's, but though this mechanical wonder is very efficient, it hardly comes up to the standard of the latest robot from Russia. A student in Leningrad has built a mechanical man that can read, in a human voice, ordinary printed, written, or typed words! One of the uses of this machine will be to help the blind to read, and it will also be able to answer telephone calls, teach, and act as a prompter in the theatre! How would you like a robot teacher? All right, I suppose, as long as it was not able to wield a cane!

ODDS AND ENDS.

A farmer in Oklahoma had to appear before a court, but he wrote to say that he was unable to attend, as the seat of his only pair of trousers had recently collapsed! His explanation was accepted!

How's this for a strange occupation. Marko Petrovitch is 115 years old. He lives in a Dalmatian town and earns his living by begging nuts from the shopkeepers and cracking them with his gums for the amusement of the crowd!

A large forty-five horse-power saloon car, magnificently fitted, which was originally built for the ex-Kaiser, but which he never obtained, was sold in London the other day for £15!

SOME QUESTION!

Alfred Hibbins, of Chelsea, set me something of a poser last week, when he wrote to ask me how many miles of cable are used to connect up all the telephone subscribers in this country. Did you think you had caught me there, Alfred? Well, you weren't far off it, but I have discovered that there are no less than 3,572,062 miles of wire used for this purpose! Next question, please!

"THE REBEL FORTRESS!"

If you like a thrilling yarn of a school rebellion, you certainly ought to read the magnificent yarn of the St. Frank's barring-out, which appears in to-day's splendid number of "The Nelson Lee Library." The Remove Form have rebelled against their tyrant House-master, and safe in their fortress on an island, they effectively cool the hot-tempered Mr. Hunter with cold water when he attacks them with a horde of toughs! Read of the Remove rebels' adventures by getting this grand story now. It is too good to miss!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE JAPE OF THE TERM!

(Continued from page 16.)

"Bai Jove! Here's Blake!"

"Railton's got Uncle Harry for a bit," said Blake. "It couldn't have happened more rippingly. We shall have time to make a bit of a show."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Nice state this study's in, for a man's uncle to come and see it," said Blake, with a sniff. "Whose boots are these on the bookshelf, I'd like to know?"

"Why, they're your own, deah boy."

"By George, so they are! Get that grate a bit decent, Herries, for goodness' sake! It never ought to be allowed to go as long as this."

"It was your turn to tidy up!" grunted Herries.

"Look here, don't you begin to argue, Herries, when we've only got a few minutes to get ready for a visitor. For goodness' sake do something, D'Arcy! Can't you give the looking-glass a rub? It looks rotten for a chap to see a looking-glass all splashed with ink."

"I'll give it a good clean, deah boy—"

"That's right; buckle to."

"I shall have to put some old clothes on first, and some old gloves; but it's all wight—I'll be back in a quartah of an hour."

Blake caught the swell of St. Jim's by the collar as he was making for the door, and whisked him back into the study.

"You ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I decline uttably to be tweated in this wuff mannah! I wegard you as a wottah!"

"If you start changing your clothes now, I'll begin changing your features!" said Blake darkly. "My blessed uncle may come toddling up any second now. Railton won't stand him long."

"Weally, Blake!"

"Rub that glass down!"

"I shall soil my hands—"

"I'll soil your face if you don't buck up!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to—"

"Don't make such a muck with those ashes, Herries! What on earth are you going to do with that ashpan?"

"Take it away, of course."

"And very likely run into Uncle Harry with it in the passage. Shove it behind something!"

"I decline to give my approval to this slovenliness, Blake! The ideah of shovin' untidy things out of sight is absolutely wotten and in bad form!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off! I—"

"Shove those ashes into Gussy's hatbox, Herries."

"Hewwies! Stop! If you appoach my hatbox with those ashes I shall stwike you!"

"Look here—"

"I uttably decline to have my hatbox used as a weceptacle for ashes!" said Arthur Augustus, standing on guard over his treasure. "I wegard the mere suggestion as uttably brutal!"

"I tell you—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Here, I'll empty the ashpan into the bookcase," said Herries. "The ashes won't be noticed there. There's nothing in the cupboard part."

"Stop, Hewwies—"

But it was too late!

The bookcase in Study No. 6 had glass doors above, to the shelves, and wooden doors below, enclosing a cupboard in which the juniors bestowed odds and ends. Arthur Augustus had lately taken possession of that cupboard as a receptacle for several fancy waistcoats, and it was upon these valuable garments that Herries shot the ashes.

"Hewwies, you uttah ass! Oh!"

"What's the matter?"

"My waistcoats! They are wuined! Oh, you ass!"

"Waistcoats!"

"I had thwice there—thwice waistcoats!"

"Blessed if that chap doesn't keep waistcoats in every blessed corner!" grunted Herries. "Well, it can't be helped now."

"You uttah barbwian!"

"Oh, rats! I tell you it can't be helped."

And Herries closed the doors on the ashes and the waistcoats. Arthur Augustus ran towards the bookcase.

"Weally, Hewwies, you cannot imagine that I am goin' to leave them there like that, and—"

"Let it alone," said Blake. "There's no time to bother over your blessed waistcoats now!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up!"

"I wefuse to shut up!"

"Let that door alone!" roared Blake, as D'Arcy caught hold of the lower door of the bookcase, with the evident intention of opening it and jerking out waistcoats and ashes. "You'll make the place in a fearful muck if you spill all that on the carpet."

"I am sowwy, Blake!"

"Well, chuck it, then!"

"But even for the sake of a visitah I cannot have my waistcoats wuined. You can sweep up the ashes."

"Stand away from that bookcase, ass!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! Ow! Wefuse me, you wottah!"

Blake grabbed his elegant chum and whirled him away from the bookcase. They waltzed round the study.

D'Arcy began to struggle.

"Wefuse me!" he gasped. "I insist upon bein' immediately wefused, you feahful wuffian!"

"Will you let that bookcase alone?"

"Certainly not! I—"

"Look here—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I tell you—"

"You uttah outsidah!"

They whirled round the study again. D'Arcy caught his foot in a rent in the carpet, and went down with a bump, Blake sprawling across him.

The door opened at the same moment.

"Bless my soul!" said Uncle Harry.

His nephew and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were sprawling on the carpet in mortal combat. He stood looking at them.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Oh, my Aunt Maria!" murmured Blake, in dismay.

They scrambled to their feet at once, very dirty and dishevelled.

Mr. Blake looked at them through his rimless glasses.

"Jackie!"

"Oh, uncle, I—"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"I am shocked!" said Mr. Blake. "You were fighting!"

"Not exactly fighting, deah sir; only—only a little scwap, you know."

"That's all," said Blake. "I was pointing out something to Gussy, really, that's all."

But Mr. Blake looked deeply shocked. Several juniors in the passage who had stopped to look in, grinned, and looked on with great interest. Blake would willingly have slammed the door, but his uncle stood in the way. The uncle from Africa did not seem to have any objection to an audience.

"I am sorry, Jackie, to see this dreadful custom of fighting in the school," he said, in portentous tones. "Jackie, Jackie, I am shocked!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Mellish in the passage.

"Jackie, Jackie, how could you—"

Jack Blake turned crimson.

"Really, uncle—"

"Alas!" said Uncle Harry. "This is terrible! It is harrowing! Jackie, Jackie! Think of the time when you were a rosy-fingered baby, and your hand had never been raised in anger against a fellow-creature!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let dogs delight," said Mr. Blake, "to bark and bite. It is their nature to. Let bears and bulldogs growl and fight. They've nothing else to do."

"My word!" giggled Mellish.

"But, Jackie, you should never let such angry passions rise," said Mr. Blake, with a solemn shake of the head. "Your little knuckles were not meant to dot a fellow's eyes."

"Oh, uncle!" said Blake feebly.

"Those touching lines of Shakespeare's, Jackie—"

"Shakespeare's!" murmured the juniors in the passage. "This is rich!"

"Gorgeous!" said Mellish.

"Exactly describe the case, Jackie. Never, never, never raise your hand against the nasal organ of a fellow-creature. Now, I insist upon both of you immediately making it up."

"Oh!"

"Shake hands immediately!"

"It's all right, sir!" groaned Blake. "It was only a scap. We're the best of friends. Let me close the door, uncle!"

"Shake hands at once!"

"It's all wight, weally, sir!"

"Unless you shake hands, Jackie, I shall leave the school."

Blake, as a matter of fact, would have been greatly

relieved and pleased if his uncle had carried out his threat. But that would not have done, of course. He gingerly extended his hand to Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus took it gingerly.

They shook hands, to the great delight of the juniors at the doorway. Mellish, affecting to weep, shook hands with Reilly, who had just come in, and Reilly appeared to be overcome with emotion. Blake was furious, and he looked daggers at them.

Mr. Blake turned to the boys outside with a benevolent smile.

"Let this be a lesson to you, my boys," he said. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite; but never, never allow your angry passions to rise."

"Oh, never, sir," said Mellish, "or hardly ever!"

"Now you may close the door, Jackie."

Blake slammed it.

CHAPTER 12.

Uncle Harry Does Some Cooking!

DIGBY came in with the supplies from the tuckshop. The supplies were ample enough, and some wanted cooking, and some were already cooked.

Blake's suggestion was a cold collation, but Mr. Blake appeared to have heard of study feeds, and to be rather keen on the idea.

"Not at all," he said. "I am not in a hurry, I am sure, and I would not interfere with your usual customs for anything."

"It's all wight, sir—"

"Not at all. We are going to cook for tea," said Mr. Blake, with a beaming smile. "I will show you some of the cooking I have learned on the—the veldt. You can entrust me with the frying-pan."

"We could not think of troubling you, sir."

"Not at all. It will be a pleasure."

"But, uncle—"

"Come, Jackie, I want to be useful."

Politeness forbade Jack Blake to state that his uncle would be most useful sitting in the armchair in the corner out of the way.

"Just as you like, uncle," he said, with resignation as cheerful as he could make it.

Hancock put his head in at the door.

"I say, Blake, the innings is over!"

"Oh, is it?" said Blake.

"Yes; we're all out for fifty."

"Fifty! Good!"

"Well, I suppose you're going to turn up when the Shell go in!" exclaimed Hancock. "I suppose we're playing out the match?"

"Oh, buzz off, old chap!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, get away!"

"Aren't you going—"

"No; you're going!"

And Blake pushed Hancock out, and closed the door. Mr. Blake was busy getting the frying-pan in order, and he did not seem to have heard the dialogue at the door.

"I shall want some grease," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! I say, Blake," whispered D'Arcy, "aren't we goin' to finish the match?"

"Haven't we got a visitor?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Shut up, then!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Butter will do," said Uncle Harry.

"Here's the butter, my deah sir."

Uncle Harry jammed half a pound of butter into the frying-pan, and jammed the pan on the glowing coals. The juniors watched him in dismay, and looked at one another hopelessly; but they did not like to speak.

"Now the sausages," said Mr. Blake, flourishing a fork.

"Here they are, sir."

The door opened, and Reilly came in.

"Sure, Blake, Tom Merry wants to know when ye'll be ready for the Shell innings to begin!" he exclaimed.

"Tell Tom Merry to go and eat coke!"

"But, faith—"

"Go and tell him, and don't come back!"

"But the Shell innings—"

"Be off!"

"Faith, and I—"

"Bunk!"

Blake picked up a jam-pot from the table, and he looked so excited that Reilly promptly placed himself on the outside of the door.

Jack Blake was, as a matter of fact, growing excitable. The strange proceedings of his amazing uncle was getting on his nerves, and, keen cricketer as he usually was, he could not be worried by cricket just then.

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Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy thought differently about the matter. They wanted to do the polite thing by Mr. Blake, but they wanted to finish the match. Dig whispered to Blake that it was hardly the thing for a cricket captain to absent himself from a match.

Blake snorted.

"Can I go and leave my uncle without his tea, fathhead?"

"No, but—"

"Well, shut up!"

"I'll go and captain the team, if you like."

"All right; buzz off!"

"Soon done!"

And Digby skipped out of the study. Their remarks had been exchanged in whispers, and Mr. Blake seemed unconscious of them; but Arthur Augustus guessed what it meant when Dig hurried out. He came over to Blake with a very determined expression upon his aristocratic features.

"Blake, deah boy—"

"Is the kettle boiling?"

"Weally, Blake, I am not wowwyin' about the kettle. If you are not goin' back to the ewicket field, I think I ought to go there to captain the side."

"Dig's gone."

"I wufuse to allow Dig to take my place. I gwacefully wetweated to allow you to wesome the skippahship, but I decline to wesign my wights to Dig."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

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

"Look here, Gus! Stand by me, old chap, and help me stand this," murmured Blake.

D'Arcy heart was melted at once.

"Certainly, deah boy, if you put it like that."

And he said no more about going to the cricket field. Herries was dubious in his mind; but Herries never could come to a decision, and he remained undecided as to what he had better do.

But all attention was now bestowed upon Mr. Blake and his remarkable cooking. Whether Mr. Blake could cook or not in South Africa, he certainly did not seem to make much of a success of it in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's. The half-pound of butter melted in the pan and slopped over into the fire, and there was such a sizzling and a sputtering, as had never before been heard in the study.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy looked dismayed, but it was impossible to interfere. The laws of hospitality and respect for elders restrained them.

Into the simmering mass of melted butter Mr. Blake plunged the sausages. They swam about in grease, and splashed a great deal more of it over the fire, and there was a roar of flame up the chimney.

"My hat!" muttered the unhappy Blake. "We shall have it on fire soon!"

"Did you speak?" asked Uncle Harry.

Herries gave a yell:

"Look out!"

But it was too late. The frying-pan, neglected for the moment, had slipped on the fire, and the whole contents were shot into the heart of the flames.

There was a rush and a roar of blaze that made Uncle Harry jump back from the fire like an indiarubber man, and the juniors uttered exclamations of dismay.

CHAPTER 13.

Something Like a Feast!

"BLESS my soul!" gasped Uncle Harry.

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

The grate was a mass of flame, and the juniors dared not go near it. Blake remembered, with thankfulness, that the chimney had been recently swept. Perhaps it would not catch fire. Mr. Blake gazed at the flames.

"This is unfortunate!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It is making the study quite smoky."

"Go hon!" murmured Herries.

"The blacks are settling all over the place."

"Yaas, wathah! That was weally to be expected, undah the circes, my deah sir."

"Jackie, you really should not have taken my attention off the frying-pan at that moment!" said Mr. Blake severely. Blake almost staggered.

"I—uncle?"

"Yes, you, sir!"

"Oh!"

The fire died down at last. From the window Blake caught sight of a great many faces upturned towards the roof of the School House, and he knew that showers of sparks and smoke must be pouring from the chimney. It was fortunate that it did not catch fire. Blake would not have been surprised to hear an alarm at any moment.

The study was in a most unpleasant state. Smoke

(Continued on page 22.)

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You'll soon be a crack at table tennis when you've got this Nestlé's set! Or if you'd rather be a darts champion there's a double-sided board for you. There are scores of fine games to choose from in the new Nestlé's Free Gift Book—write for your copy and five free coupons now! Nestlé's is the nicest of chocolate—but you'll enjoy it twice as much when you think of your free gift! There's a gift coupon with all the wrapped varieties from the 2d. bars upwards.

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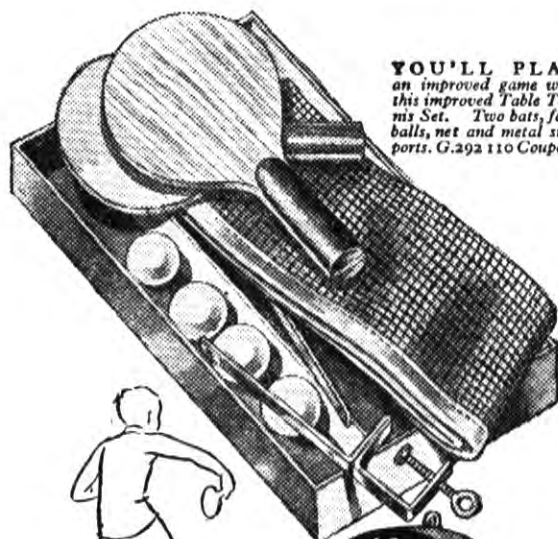
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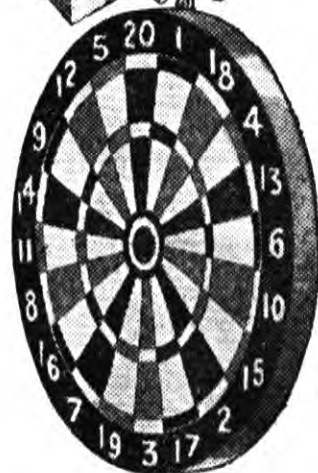
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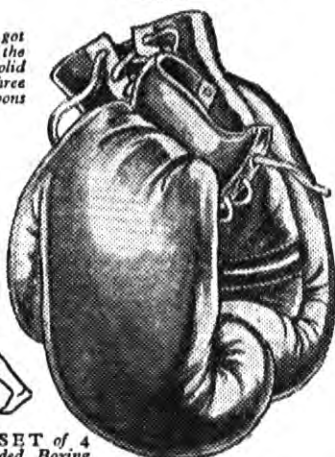
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lingered in every corner, and made the juniors sniff and gasp, and thick blacks were settling upon everything. Uncle Harry seemed to be very cheerful, however.

"Perhaps, after all, we had better have the cold collation," he remarked.

Blake felt greatly relieved. He had a feeling that even his duty as a nephew would not hold out against further attempts at cooking on the part of Uncle Harry. Willingly enough the juniors assented, and the cold collation was spread on the table. It was early yet for tea for the juniors, but they ate to keep the distinguished visitor company.

Mr. Blake, apparently, had very little appetite, even after his long journey. The tea was not what the juniors regarded as a success.

Mr. Blake looked out of the window when he rose from the tea-table.

"Ah, they are still playing cricket!" he observed.

"Yes; it's the Shell innings now, uncle."

"Shall we go and watch them?"

"Certainly, uncle. But are you sure you've had enough tea?"

"Yes, thank you, Jackie. If I feel peckish in the open air we will pay a visit to the tuckshop."

"Yass, wathah!"

And Blake and his uncle left the study.

D'Arcy glanced round it as he followed more slowly with Herries.

"I say, Hewwies, old man," he whispered, "what would you do if you had an uncle like that?"

"Drown him!"

"I should think his family must find him wathah twyin'." D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully. "I am wathah glad that he is not my avunculah welative."

Fellows looked at Blake and his uncle from all sides as they left the School House.

"Jackie! Jackie! How could you?" murmured Mellish as he passed. And Blake had to repress the desire that rose within him to slay Mellish.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn exchanged a wink as Uncle Harry and the Fourth-Formers strolled on to the field. Figgins gave Blake a nudge.

Jack Blake looked round inquiringly.

"Introduce me to your uncle, old chap," said Figgins.

Figgins was introduced to Mr. Blake, who was very polite to him. Mr. Blake showed a great knowledge of St. Jim's,

though he had—to the School House view—got most of it wrong.

"Ah, you are Figgins," he said. "You belong to the New House. You are head of the juniors, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

"Rats!" said Blake warmly. "That's quite a mistake, uncle. I'm head of the juniors, the New House doesn't count at all."

"More rats!" said Figgins. "Mr. Blake seems to be very accurately informed. We're the Cock House at St. Jim's, Mr. Blake."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"And you put the best junior team into the field?" said Mr. Blake.

"Yes, rather; Blake will admit that."

"Rats!" said Blake.

"And you have the greatest record for swimming, running, walking, cycling, football—"

"Look here, uncle, you've got it all wrong," said Blake heatedly; "we hold the record for everything except swelled head. Figgins holds that."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Jackie! Jackie!" said Mr. Blake chidingly; "let dogs delight to bark and fight, it is their nature to do these unruly things."

"Well, I'm not stopping them," growled Blake, under his breath.

"We're awfully glad to see you at St. Jim's, sir," said Fatty Wynn. "It's a pleasure to see Blake's uncle, sir. We're all so fond of Blake."

"People are always fond of dear little Jackie!" said Uncle Harry. "You have no idea what a sweet little fellow he was when I saw him last. You should have heard him cry for sugar candy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Monty Lowther. "I—I mean, how interesting."

"It's ripping to see you here, sir," went on Fatty Wynn, who had a purpose in view. "If you should feel at all peckish, sir, I'd show you the way to the tuckshop."

"Good old Fatty!" murmured Manners.

"As a matter of fact, I am a little hungry," said Mr. Blake. "Suppose we pay a visit to the school shop. I believe it is a custom here for boy's relatives to stand treat when they visit the school?"

The juniors grinned. It was not exactly a custom, though it was frequently done. But they were willing to make it a custom on the spot.

"Exactly, sir," said Fatty Wynn. "Shall I show you the way?"

"Thank you. Come on, my boys. I shall be glad if all of you will join my nephew and myself in the tuckshop."

"Hear, hear!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "I'm on in this scene."

"What-ho!" said Manners. "Count on me!"

And a considerable crowd followed Mr. Blake to the little shop kept within the precincts of St. Jim's by Dame Taggles, the porter's wife.

Blake and his friends, and all the Shell cricketers whose wickets had fallen, led the way, and after them came a crowd of juniors of both Houses and all Forms. Even the Third Form had the "cheek," as Blake regarded it, to join in the treat. Wally, the younger brother of Arthur Augustus, came along with Jameson and Gibson and a crew of inky-fingered fags.

The little shop was crammed.

Mr. Blake, his nephew, D'Arcy, Herries, Figgins, and Wynn filled up the length of the little counter, and all the rest of the available space was speedily taken up. And then there were a great many fellows outside who couldn't possibly find room inside.

"Now, what will you have, my boys?" said Mr. Blake hospitably. "Order anything you like. There is no limit."

"Bravo, Blake's uncle!"

And the juniors did not stand upon the order of their ordering, so to speak, but ordered all at once!

Never had Dame Taggles had such a rush of orders.

Ginger-beer and lemonade flowed in abundance, and jam-tarts and cream-puffs, jellies, and cakes, and pies passed on all sides.

Good-natured fellows who found room in the shop passed out good things of all sorts to the fellows outside, so that they shouldn't lose their share of the treat.

All was mirth and merriment.

It was getting near tea-time, and most of the juniors were peckish; but as a rule a healthy boy can dispose of a pleasant meal at any time. And the juniors now distinguished themselves.

Fatty Wynn, of course, made the greatest exertions in the common cause.

He sat on a high stool at the counter and started on everything that was within his reach.



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He soon cleared that part of the counter of eatables, and then he began to give orders.

Dame Taggles was not given a moment's rest. It was almost impossible to keep count of the various items that were disposed of, and so Dame Taggles was content with a rough idea of the amount—a rough idea which did not err on the side of being too moderate.

The account had already run up to a large figure, and the guests of Blake's uncle were far from satisfied.

Most of the fellows in the shop were New House boys, and it really looked as if the New House had had some idea that something of the sort was about to happen, and had placed themselves on the spot ready.

But the School House boys fared pretty well, too. Mr. Blake was the most generous of hosts. He pressed the fellows continually to have more and more.

"I am sure you could eat some of these cream-puffs, D'Arcy?"

"Thank you vewy much, sir."

"Try some cheese-cakes, Wynn."

"Certainly, Mr. Blake."

"Lowther, you will like these tarts."

"Thank you, sir."

"Ginger-beer, please—ginger-beer for Figgins."

"Don't he pick up the names quickly, too?" murmured Lowther. "He seems to know the blessed lot of us by name, and he's never seen any of us before to-day."

Mr. Blake was immensely popular now.

There wasn't a fellow who didn't envy Blake the possession of such an uncle, and Blake himself was feeling very satisfied with him.

After all, with all his eccentricities, he was a jolly good fellow. This feed would run into pounds, and it wasn't every fellow's uncle who would stand it.

The best of things come to an end at last, and so did that gorgeous feed. The orders slackened and dropped off, and the shop cleared a little.

Mr. Blake beamed upon those who remained through his rimless glasses.

"Come, help yourself," he exclaimed. "Surely you are not finished yet, Wynn?"

"Well, I could do with some more cake, sir."

"Certainly."

"And a few more tarts."

"Help yourself."

And Fatty Wynn helped himself—generously.

"It is a great pleasure to me," said Mr. Blake, "to see so many happy faces round me. It is very pleasant to see that my nephew Jackie has so many friends."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Jacko!"

It is also gratifying to me, as an uncle, to know that he is so careful with his money so as to be able to save up for a feast like this," pursued Mr. Blake.

Jack Blake's jaws dropped.

"I have partaken of his hospitality with great pleasure, and I trust you have all done the same," said Uncle Harry affably. "Jackie, my dear boy, don't hurry yourself. When you have settled with Mrs. Taggles, join me on the cricket field."

And Mr. Blake walked out of the shop.

The fellows looked at one another, and at Blake, and at one another again, and with suppressed whistles they followed in the footsteps of Mr. Blake.

Blake, D'Arcy, and Herries remained alone, and a dreadful silence fell upon them.

CHAPTER 14.

Trapped!

D'ARCY was the first to speak.

"Bai Jove!"

That was all he had to say, but it expressed his feelings. Herries stared after Uncle Harry, then he stared at Blake. Then he bestowed a stare upon Mrs. Taggles. Finally, he stared at his boots. He seemed to be particularly interested in his boots, for his glance remained upon them.

Blake turned red, then pale, then pink!

"My hat!" he said, at last.

"Three pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence," said Dame Taggles, looking up from a paper upon which she had been making laborious calculations with the aid of a stump of pencil.

"My word!"

"Three pounds fifteen—"

"Great Scott!"

"Deary me! The gentleman is gone!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's all right, Dame Taggles," said Blake desperately.

"You can put that down to my account."

"I thought the gentleman—"

"Never mind what you thought; put it down to my account."

Dame Taggles bestowed a freezing look upon Blake. The sublime coolness of a junior in requesting that three pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence should be put down to his account astonished her.

"Master Blake—"

"Did you speak, Mrs. Taggles?" asked Blake feebly.

"Yes, I did speak, Master Blake," said the dame, with asperity.

"I'm in rather a hurry now, Mrs. Taggles. I'll look in presently—"

"Three pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Taggles—I know the sum exactly."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Master Blake—"

"It's all right, Mrs. Taggles," said D'Arcy. "I'm goin' to wire to my governah for a fivah, and it will be all right. This is my account as well as Blake's."

"Oh, very well!" said Dame Taggles.

And the juniors left the shop.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "Mad, of course."

"Must have had the sunstroke in Africa," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! It's wathah awkward, you know, but I suppose it's weally only absent-mindedness, Blake, deah boy. He's wathah eccentwic."

"My hat, he is!"

They strolled down to the cricket field. Blake was over-come. He didn't want to be inhospitable or undutiful. But really Uncle Harry seemed to be bent upon placing him in continual awkward positions.

Uncle was watching the finish of the Shell innings, and clapping his hands warmly.

He beamed at Blake through his rimless glasses as the junior came up.

"Last man in, Jackie. Your innings soon."

"I'm not in it now, uncle."

"Ah, no; I forgot! Let me see, I must not forget about my train," said Mr. Blake thoughtfully, as he glanced at his watch.

"Pway don't think of goin' yet, deah sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, no, uncle, not yet!"

"Deary me, my watch has stopped! Can you tell me the time, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said Arthur Augustus, pulling out his famous twenty-five guinea gold timekeeper. "Just five, sir."

"Ahem! You may lend me your watch," said Mr. Blake. "I will return it to you when my own is going."

Arthur Augustus gasped a little. He didn't like lending his watch to anybody, naturally enough, and Mr. Harry Blake was so very eccentric that there was no telling what might happen to it in his care. But politeness came before every other consideration.

D'Arcy unhooked his watch from the chain and handed it to Mr. Blake. Jack Blake watched the transaction speechlessly.

Mr. Blake slipped the watch into his pocket.

"Thank you very much!" he said.

"You are vewy welcome, my deah sir!" said D'Arcy, and for once, perhaps, courtesy led Arthur Augustus from the strict line of veracity.

Mr. Blake glanced round the wide, green quad.

"I should like to have a look round the school," he remarked.

"Certainly, uncle; let us show you round," said Blake.

They strolled away from the playing fields. The Fourth Form second innings was beginning, under Dig's lead, but Blake was too worried to think anything about cricket.

The school library, the Form-rooms, the studies, the chapel, were all suggested in vain, and Mr. Blake decided that what he really wanted to see was the ruins of the abbey.

These relics of the ancient buildings of St. Jim's were enclosed by a fence, entered by a little gate, and they lay in a secluded part of the grounds.

Uncle Harry was guided thither by his dutiful nephew, but Herries dropped behind to watch the cricket. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, stuck to Jack Blake like a Briton.

"That's the crypt, uncle," said Blake, pointing to a thick, oaken door that stood open at the head of a narrow flight of stone steps.

Mr. Blake blinked at it through his glasses.

"I should like to see it."

"Jolly dark in there, sir!"

"Go down first, my boys, and strike a match."

"Certainly, uncle!"

Blake and D'Arcy descended the steps. They went into

the crypt, and Uncle Harry stood close by the door on the steps.

Blake struck a match. As the light flickered out into the gloom of the crypt there was the sudden sound of a shutting door.

The two juniors jumped.

"My hat! He's shut us in!"

Blake dashed up the steps.

The door was closed at the top. The door was made to open outwards, but it did not open now. Blake guessed that a stone or a chip of wood had been thrust under it on the outside.

"My hat!" he murmured dazedly.

"Bai Jove, Blake!"

Jack Blake struck another match, and in its flickering light the two juniors looked at one another.

"He's shut us in!" faltered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He must be mad!"

"Wight off his beastlay wockah, deah boy!"

"It must be sunstroke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The match burned out.

With the door closed the crypt was in pitchy darkness.

"Put your shoulder to it, and shove, Gussy!" muttered Blake.

"Wight-ho!"

They shoved the door. But it was firmly fixed, and quite immovable. They exerted themselves in vain; it did not even creak.

They desisted at last in utter dismay.

D'Arcy carefully dusted with his hand the shoulder of his jacket where it had been pressed against the wood.

"I say, Blake, deah boy, this is alarming," he remarked.

"We are absolutely shut up here, you know."

"It's rotten!"

"Wotten isn't the word! I weally wish your uncle were a twife less eocentwic, old chap."

"Oh, it's sunstroke!" groaned Blake. "I—I never expected this, though—though I might have been prepared for anything, after that affair in the tuckshop."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The fellows will let us out soon; we shall have to wait for that. But"—Blake hushed his breath—"what may he be doing while we're shut up here?"

"Phew!"

"If he's mad enough to play tricks like this—"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, it's a deucid awkward posish! Let's have anothah try at that beastlay door!" said Arthur Augustus anxiously.

They tried—and tried again!

But it was in vain; they were hopeless prisoners in the crypt. Meanwhile, what of the amazing uncle?

CHAPTER 15.

An Astounding Discovery!

JACK BLAKE leaned against the oaken door, in a cold perspiration. He could only attribute his uncle's action to sudden insanity.

It was evident that this was the outcome of sunstroke in South Africa. But what was to be done? If Uncle Harry were not responsible for his actions, what wild doings might be going on at that very moment? Perhaps he had purposely shut up his nephew in the vaults while he carried out some insane scheme!

At that thought Blake hammered savagely on the door. He could not move it, but someone might hear.

Bow-wow-wow!

"Hark!"

"It was a dog, Blake."

"Pongo!" exclaimed Blake joyfully. "Where Pongo is, young Wally isn't far off."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

Blake hammered on the oaken door again. Arthur Augustus seconded him manfully with fists and boot.

The crypt rang with echo.

A tap came on the door from outside.

"Hallo, there!"

"Open the door, Wally, deah boy!"

"My only Aunt Jane! Is that you, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unfasten the door, you young sweep!" roared Blake.

"Hallo! You too, Brutus!" chuckled Wally.

"Will you let us out?"

"I don't know," said Wally coolly through the door. "I'm not the chap to spoil a jape. How did you come to shut yourselves up here?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"We were shut up!" growled Blake.

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"Who shut you up? Figgins?"

"No; my—my uncle."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Will you open the door, Wally?"

"Certainly, cocky!"

And the door swung open. Wally had only to kick away a wooden wedge that had been thrust under it.

The juniors burst into the sunlight again, with great gasps of relief. D'Arcy minor stared at them in amazement. He was holding Pongo by the collar. He had chased the truant Pongo into the ruins, with no expectation of being called upon to release two prisoners from the crypt.

"Do you mean to say your uncle played a jape like that on you, Blake?" he demanded half incredulously.

"He's off his rocker, I think—sunstroke."

"Oh!"

"Have you seen him? Do you know where he is?"

"Yes; I saw him going towards the School House, while I was chasing Pongo here," said Wally. "Fancy his being off his onion. I suppose it's in the family. I've noticed signs of it about you a lot of times."

Blake made no reply to that remark. He dashed off in the direction of the School House, with D'Arcy at his heels.

Both the juniors were extremely anxious as to what the supposed lunatic might do. There was no telling!

They ran into the School House, and Binks, the page, met Blake in the hall.

"This letter just come for you, Master Blake," he said.

Blake took the letter mechanically, without looking at it.

"Have you seen my uncle, Binks?"

"Yes, Master Blake. He's gone up to your study."

"Thanks!"

Blake and D'Arcy dashed upstairs. As they ran down the Fourth Form passage they heard strange sounds proceeding from Study No. 6.

Bump! Crash!

D'Arcy turned quite pale.

"He—he's smashing up the furniture, Blake!"

"Come on!" panted Blake.

They ran on to the study. The door was ajar, and they paused and looked in before entering.

Blake's uncle was there.

He evidently did not expect to be interrupted or observed. The House was quite empty, owing to the half-holiday and the fine weather, and the gentleman from South Africa naturally imagined that both Blake and D'Arcy were safe in the crypt till he chose to let them out.

The juniors gasped as they saw how Blake's astounding uncle was occupied. He had turned the table upside down in the centre of the room, and had emptied the ashpan from the grate into it.

He had opened D'Arcy's famous hat-box, and taken out the hats, and stuck them in a prominent position on the shelf with a label on them, "Shop Soiled, Sixpence Each."

He was now engaged in scribbling a note, and chuckling over it with great glee as he scribbled.

Blake and D'Arcy drew back into the passage.

"Mad as a battah!" muttered D'Arcy.

Blake nodded.

"He's wrecked the study. He ought to be secured. We can't allow him to leave the school in this state," said Blake in a whisper.

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"What can he be writing in that note?"

D'Arcy peered into the study again, and drew back.

"He's sticking it on the looking-glass," he whispered. "It's a note to us, I suppose. This is weally most surprisin' in 'em. The swell of St. Jin's looked quickly at Blake."

"What's the mattah with you, Blake?"

Blake was staring at the letter in his hand.

"Look! This is from my uncle."

"Eh?"

"I can't understand it. He never mentioned anything about having written, yet this letter has just been delivered."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake tore open the letter. As he read the contents, his face was a study.

"Read it!" he uttered.

Arthur Augustus glanced over the letter. It ran as follows:

"Dear Jack,—I am sorry I had to wire to you that I could not come down to St. Jim's. I am so pressed by business to-day that it is impossible, but I hope to run down in the evening just to have half an hour's chat with you. You may expect me by the seven train at Rykcombe. If Dr. Holmes will allow it, I should like you to meet the train.
Your affectionate uncle,
"HARRY BLAKE."

"Bai Jove!"

"He says he's coming to Rykcombe by the seven train—"

"Amazing!"

"Yet he's come—"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake rubbed his forehead feverishly.
"I can't understand it. Why hasn't he mentioned this letter?"
"Because he's off his wackah, deah boy."

"I—I suppose that's it." Blake gave a sudden start. "I—I say, it isn't possible that there's any trick about it, is there?"

"Twick!"
"I haven't seen my uncle for years. I—I— My hat! That chap collared your gold watch, and then shut us up in the crypt."

"Gweat Scott!"
"He's nothing like what I expected my uncle to be, except in appearance, and I remember precious little except the glasses and the ginger beard. I'm jolly well going to see about it before he leaves the school."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, growing excited at the possibility of an imposture dawned on his mind. "Let's wush in, and I'll guard the door while you talk to him and make him explain."

"Good!"
There was a chuckle in the study. Something seemed very familiar to Blake's ears about that chuckle somehow.

...They wasted no more time.
Together they ran into the study, and D'Arcy slammed the door and put his back to it.

Mr. Blake gave a sudden jump.
"D-dear me!" he stammered. "You at-startled me!"

"I've just had your letter, uncle," said Blake, watching him narrowly, and making no reference to the affair of the crypt.

"M-my letter? Oh, y-e-es!"
"You changed your mind and came earlier?"

"Exactly, my dear boy," said Mr. Blake, recovering himself, and edging towards the door. "You—you must excuse that little joke at the crypt, you know—a little—er—jape. And—and—"

"Wait a minute, uncle!"
"I—I think—"

Blake took down the note which had been stuck on the looking-glass.

Uncle Harry made a bound to the door.
"Stop!"

"Pway hold on, deah sir!"
Uncle Harry did not reply. He dragged D'Arcy away from the door and tore it open.

Arthur Augustus made a wild grab at him and dragged him back into the study. The little man wrenched himself away. D'Arcy's grip was on his hair, and to D'Arcy's horror the hair came off in his hand.

"Gweat Scott!"
A head of dark hair was disclosed under the wig. Stranger still, along with the wig the beard and moustache came away.

In spite of the artificial sunburn on the face, in spite of all that spook wrinkles could do, the face was recognisable then, with the beard and wig and moustaches gone, and the glasses off.

Blake and D'Arcy gave one wild shout.
"Kerr!"

And in his blank amazement D'Arcy let go.
In a second the impostor whipped out of the study and ran.

CHAPTER 16.

Spooled!

"KERR!"
"My hat! Kerr!"
"Kerr! Bai Jove!"
D'Arcy's mouth was wide open, and Blake staggered in his astonishment. He had expected anything but this.

It was not Blake's uncle at all!
The wire and the letter explained everything. Blake's uncle had not come. But the New House juniors, knowing all about the matter, had worked off this daring jape on the unsuspecting School House juniors.

Blake remembered only too clearly that tea-party in Figgins' study, and how cunningly Figgins & Co. had extracted from him a description of the personal appearance of his uncle, as far as he knew it.

"Kerr! My only hat! Kerr!"
He glanced at the note Kerr had written and left there on the looking-glass for him. He understood now why Uncle Harry had bolted so desperately when he saw Blake take the note.

For the note ran thus:
"Dear Jackie,—This is to certify that you and the other School House asses have been completely diddled, dished,

and done! Thanks very much for the feed, and for the amusement you have afforded me—most of it unconscious on your part.

"Your affectionate uncle,
"Kerr (of the New House)."

"Bai Jove!"
Blake crumpled the note in his hand.
"After him!" he yelled. "He shan't get away! I'll—I'll make him squirm! I'll snatch him baldheaded! After him!"

Blake tore out of the study, with D'Arcy at his heels.
But Kerr had a good start.
He was already in the quadrangle, and by the time Blake and D'Arcy burst out of the School House, Kerr was racing across to his own House.

A curious sight he looked, with a boy's face and the clothes of a man upon his figure, padded to the stoutness of middle age.

"Stop him!" roared Blake.
He put on a desperate spurt. Figgins & Co. were racing up, and a crowd of amazed juniors followed them.

Kerr, encumbered with his paddings, ran fast, but not so fast as Blake. The hand of the avenger was on his shoulder, and he would have been called to a dire account the next moment, but Figgins came tearing up.

Figgins tackled Blake like a Rugby three-quarter, and Blake reeled in a graceful attitude on the ground, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn disappeared into the New House.

Arthur Augustus came tearing up, and rolled right over Blake, and sat in the quad, gasping for breath.

"Ow! Blake, you are an ass!"
"You duffer!"

"I wufese to be called a duffah!"
"What did you sprawl over me for?"

"Wecally, Blake, I wegard it as wepwehensible of you to lie about on the ground and twip people up."

"Br-r-r-r!"
Blake staggered to his feet.

The pseudo Uncle Harry was gone; but in a minute or so he was cooking out of the window of Figgins' study, waving his hand to the incensed School House juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Who's done this time?"
"Blake & Co.!" chorled Kerr and Wynn.

"Thanks for the feed!" sang out Figgins.
And the Co. simply yelled.

And in the quadrangle the juniors yelled, too. The discovery had spread like wildfire. The sight of Kerr careering across the quad in Uncle Harry's clothes had explained everything.

Even the School House boys were shrieking over it. The very cricketers forgot that they were playing cricket in the excitement of the moment.

"It was an awfully good feed!" said Figgins.
Fatty Wynn smacked his lips.

"Ripping!" he said.
"Of course, we're going to pay the bill," went on Figgins. "We'll settle with Dame Taggles. But the joke! Ha, ha, ha! It's up against you duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Blake shook his fist and said things. But the laugh was against him. The whole crowd roared over the joke.

Jack Blake thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets and strode away.

But the yells of laughter and the jubilant catcalls of Figgins & Co. followed him all the way to the School House.

All St. Jim's shrieked over the jape of Figgins & Co. It had to be agreed that the New House had scored this time with a vengeance.

Even Mr. Railton laughed over the story when it at last reached his ears, and he understood the cause of Mr. Blake's strange behaviour in his study.

Blake was a little sore at first, but he was relieved to find that he had not really an uncle who was "off his rocker." And as his real uncle was coming that evening he had no time for rows with Figgins & Co. over the matter. He had to prepare for the real individual. And his chums, when they had finished laughing themselves hoarse over the jape, helped him. And Figgins & Co. joined in, too, and Blake forgave them.

And then the real Uncle Harry came, and a jolly gentleman he proved to be. All the juniors vied with one another in entertaining him, and the story of Kerr's escapade was related to him over supper. And Uncle Harry laughed as heartily as anyone at the history of the amazing uncle.

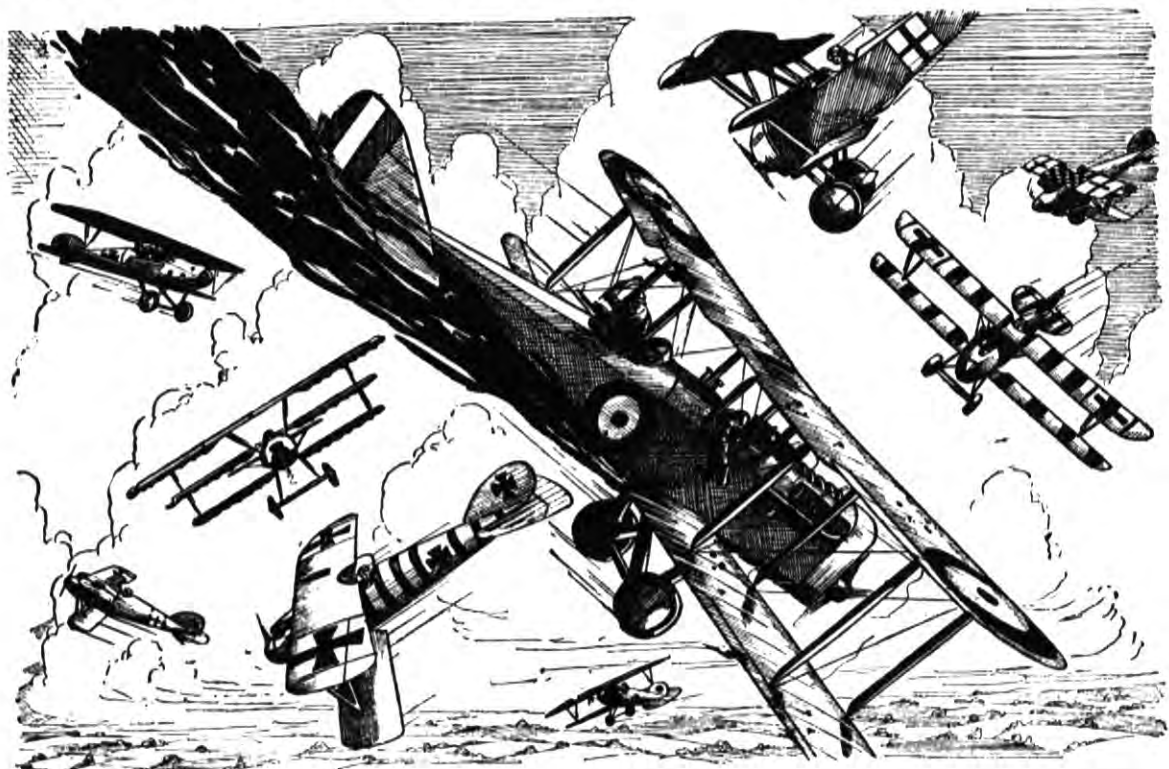
THE END.

(Whatever you do don't miss next week's ripping yarn of Tom Merry & Co., "THE ROBOT OF ST. JIM'S!" It's packed with thrills from start to finish!)

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,319.

AIR THRILLS OF THE GREAT WAR!

THE SPY-FLYERS!

 By
W. E. JOHNS.


WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER, engaged on Secret Service work in the air, discover that MAJOR TREVOR, their "boss," is himself a German agent! Knowing that he is discovered, Trevor tries to escape in a DH 4, but Rex and Tony give chase in a Bristol Fighter, and sight him heading towards the German lines.
 (Now read on.)

The End of the DH 4!

APPARENTLY Trevor had not seen them, for he was staring over his tail, and had not moved since the Bristol appeared. Rex started to edge his way into the sun, but he was too late. He saw the gunner turn round, signal to his pilot, and then swing two Lewis guns round on their Scarff mounting.

Rex put his nose down and rapidly overhauled the run-away. While he was still 200 yards away he saw the tracer leap from the other's guns, and his lip curled in a sneer.

"Either he is scared stiff, or he thinks this is just a casual machine, and he is trying to scare us away," he mused.

The pilot of the Four had put his nose down, too, and was racing full out for a mighty cloud-bank that towered up to high heaven straight ahead.

"If he once reaches that he'll stand a good chance of getting away," thought Rex, and tilted his nose down a little steeper.

The gunner in the other machine was shooting at him all the time, firing long bursts, which would soon exhaust his ammunition if he kept it up.

"Ah! He has run to the end of his drum; now's my chance," thought Rex, and he charged in with a double stream of lead pouring through his flashing propeller from the twin Vickers guns on the engine cowling.

The pilot of the De Havilland machine lost his nerve under that deadly hail, and swerved wildly. Rex's dive carried him below and past his adversary, and as he zoomed up on the far side he heard Tony's Lewis guns begin their staccato song.

They were on the very edge of the cloud-bank, and Rex turned just in time to see the other machine disappear into it in a steep dive. A huge V-shaped cleft split the clouds a short distance to his right, and as he veered towards it he looked round at Tony and raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,519.

The gunner made a gesture of annoyance, and turned his thumbs down; he had missed.

"I think one of us must have hit him!" he bawled in Rex's ear as they roared through the valley of cloud looking for an opening.

Rex had made no attempt to follow the other machine into the cloud, knowing quite well that such a course would be useless, and he was content to fly a parallel course through the cleft cloud-bank, hoping that the other machine would be in sight when they emerged on the other side.

The roar of the engine and the whip of the propeller reverberated deafeningly from the towering walls of cloud on either side as they thundered along on the trail of the fleeing traitor. A great mass of mist projected into the narrow lane just ahead of them, and as they flashed by it a wide patch of blue sky came into sight.

They had nearly reached it when the DH 4 emerged from the cloud in a steep bank just below them, and Rex's eyes were already seeking his gun sights, when Tony struck him on the shoulder, with a wild yell, and pointed.

Following the outstretched finger Rex gave a gasp and stiffened in his seat; a mixed circus of about twenty Albatrosses and Triplanes were dropping vertically out of the sky above them like vultures hastening to a kill.

Rex swung the Bristol round in a lightning turn, and thrusting the stick forward, plunged back into the cloud. The major would have to go. To attempt to continue the pursuit with so many enemy machines about would be suicidal. They burst out of the cloud again into the sunlight, and as Rex snatched a swift glance around a cry of startled surprise broke from his lips.

There was no need to point, for Tony's eyes were already fixed on a scene which was to remain in their memory for ever. The luckless Four was roaring down towards the ground, a long plume of black smoke trailing out behind it; above and around it a cloud of triumphant black-crossed machines were following it down.

Rex realised that unless they were fortunate the major's fate was likely to be their own, for already the uppermost German scouts had seen them, and were turning in their direction. He literally flung the Bristol back into the cloud, and breathed a sigh of relief as they were once more swallowed up in the swirling mist. He kept his direction towards the lines as well as he could, and when he again emerged from the cloud-bank he put his nose down in a steep dive and raced for home.

He knew it was no use trying to outclimb the Triplanes, but there was a chance that they might hold their own with them in a dive. The thought of Major Trevor's end brought a grim smile to his lips. What a curious trick of Fate it was, he thought, that he should have been sent to his death by the very people he had taken such risks to serve.

Rex knew what had happened; either the pilot of the D114 had been unaware of the recognition signal, or had not had time to make it. It was possible that he had not even seen the circus above him until it was too late, and the flail of death was already shooting the machine to pieces about him.

Another towering cloud lay ahead, and as he reached it the circus burst out of the big cloud bank behind him. He examined the ground closely, and saw that they were still four or five miles over the lines. Against the inevitable head-wind it would take them quite five minutes to reach safety; it was not long, but there was ample time for tragedy to overtake them. Almost anything could happen in five minutes.

Something did happen, something quite unexpected, but something which brought an Indian-like whoop from Tony's lips. Rex looked back over his tail; the Fokkers were turning away. He raised his eyes and saw the reason; a big patrol of S.E.5s had seen the unequal fight from high above, and were roaring down to the rescue. The boot was now on the other foot, and it was the Fokker's turn to fly for safety.

As they raced across the lines Tony emptied drum after drum of ammunition into the enemy trenches below; and Rex breathed a sigh of relief as they passed over into the security of their own lines. Tony tapped him on the shoulder, and grinning broadly, raised both thumbs high in the air. Five minutes later they touched their wheels on the aerodrome at Maranique.

The first person they saw when they landed was Captain Fairfax, and he waved a cheery greeting to them as the Bristol ran to a standstill on the tarmac. To think that we thought he was a spy, mused Rex as he switched off his engine. Well, Trevor at least told the truth when he said you could never tell who was friend and who was foe in the espionage game.

"What happened?" cried Fairfax excitedly, as the boys clambered stiffly from their seats.

"He went down in flames about half way between here and Varne," replied Rex quietly.

Fairfax Explains

"IT is all fairly clear now," said Rex as they settled themselves down in his room, after a wash and a good meal, "but there are still one or two things I am a bit hazy about. I can see that Trevor had some difficult problems to face if he was to hold down his job. For instance, he was told by the general to put someone on that tunnel job, and he sent us. Naturally, he did his best to make sure that we failed, but both the traps he set misfired, and it must have shaken him to see us come back. We know that he got it in the neck from the other side. It is quite certain, too, that he thought you were an agent working for Germany, and he got the wind up properly when he learned that we had spotted you. That was why he sent us to Lille—to get rid of us—but we slipped through his fingers again.

"Then he got a brainwave about making us carriers, and I must say that was pretty smart, particularly as he thought he could have us shot when we had served his purpose. But I still do not quite see where you fitted in, Fairfax. It looks as if you were a German spy, but actually working for the British.

Fairfax nodded. "That's about it," he said. "It's been done before, and it's still being done to-day."

"It was you outside the window when Trevor was giving us instructions about the Lille show?" asked Rex.

"It was," admitted Fairfax, with a grin. "It's funny, but I did not suspect Trevor even then. I turned up at the rendezvous to see that you didn't get into trouble, but you got to the house faster than I expected."

"We jumped a German lorry," grinned Rex. "And it looks as if you nearly jumped into the frying-pan as well," said Fairfax seriously. "I was in a difficult position all the time, because I dared not let you into my real identity. Why, you might have been German spies

yourselves for all I knew. It doesn't pay to trust anybody."

"What about that day we held you up in the Boche hangar?" asked Rex. "You must have been sick."

"I was. In fact, I was within an ace of telling you who I was. You see, I had some papers the German Higher Command had asked for, and I had to deliver them or incur suspicion. Needless to say, I had altered them so that they were really of no value. I had to produce the papers that day, and I raced off after you in the S.E., determined to knock you down to get them back, if necessary. I waited for you in Trevor's office, but I saw at a glance that you hadn't got them on you. It was a fairly bulky package, you remember. As you know, I got them out of the pocket of your flying-coat. It was a good thing I did, for had you shown those papers to Trevor I should have been in a mess. He would have seen that they were useless, and suspected me at once. It just shows how intricate the game becomes. There was Trevor, faced with the task of unravelling a spy system of which he was one of the prime agents. And there were you looking for the people who were carrying the messages, and all the time you were carrying them yourself.

"Well, stranger things than that have happened in the records of espionage. These things are not altogether coincidence, you know; don't get that idea. Trevor was probably working for years before the War to get into that very position when war did break out, and I did the very same thing over the other side. With unlimited money and influence behind you it can be done. He knew—or, rather, thought—that I was working for his side. How he found out I don't know, and I don't suppose I ever shall know. After the lesson of 1914, when every German spy in Great Britain was scooped up in one net through them being known to each other and having a common rendezvous, I thought the Wilhelmstrasse took care that agents were unknown to each other. Just see how strangely these things work out.

"I was with the general at H.Q. when he told Trevor to find the spy who was going to and fro to Germany, and all the time he thought it was me. I never suspected him. Why should I? I knew you suspected me; in fact, it was more than suspicion after you got my finger-prints so neatly. That was smart. I had taken all sorts of precautions, too. For instance, I told my assistant at H.Q. that if ever you rang me up he was to say I was there. I thought you might do that, and, as a matter of fact, you did."

"Suppose I had insisted that I must speak to you?" said Rex.

"You didn't, though!" grinned Fairfax. "You could have called my bluff had you dared to go far enough; but I didn't expect you would, and it panned out as I anticipated. H.Q. were ready for you had you rolled up with a warrant demanding my arrest, for they were following your movements very closely."

"Watching our movements!" cried Rex, in amazement.

"How the dickens could they do that?"

"I was telling them," smiled Fairfax. "I had to report on what you were doing every day. They were a bit scared at first for fear you got yourselves into trouble and upset the whole apple-cart; but when they realised you were able to hold your own they let you go on in the hope that you might strike something useful, as, indeed, you did. I can tell you that H.Q. is very pleased with you, and I should think you will both get a decoration."

"I couldn't figure it out at all when you didn't blow the gaff on us after we had held you up at Varne," broke in Tony. "That got us absolutely stumped."

"It put me in an awful hole," replied Fairfax. "I was afraid that my failure to report you might lead you to suspect that I was working on your side. If you had once spotted that it would only have needed a glance from you at the wrong moment to have sent me before a firing-party. At the finish I had to step in, as you know. I had got to like you both, and I couldn't just stand by and watch you shot, as you certainly would have been by now. Strictly speaking, I had no right to butt in. I should have let you go to the wall, because by exposing myself I have ruined most of my value to our side. I dare not go back openly now, any more than you dare. It was a pity it came to a slow-down. I hoped you were both going to get away in the afternoon when you were trying to collar that Rumpier. I had my eye on you."

"We saw you had," said Rex dryly.

"It was tough luck you couldn't manage it. It shook me to see you both crawl out of that machine after you had to force land. It looked as if you were in a pretty mess."

"Well, I shouldn't have known about Trevor if it hadn't been for that," said Rex grimly.

"Well, Hartzmann was a clever old devil, but he overreached himself by sending you on that special mission. He knew you would come back while he held Fraser; in fact, he had allowed for every possible emergency except one."

"What was that?" asked Rex.

"Mo," answered Fairfax. "He failed to realise that there might be a flaw in his own cast-iron organisation. Everyone makes a boob sooner or later. That was his, and it was his undoing. You can't really blame him; he had to trust somebody. My hold-up in the mess afterwards was simpler than it looked or sounded. I had the whole table covered, stone cold. It is an old trick. Everyone wanted to see me downed, but no one wanted to be the first man to die. I've got out of worse fixes than that."

"I hope we shall never be in a worse one, anyway," observed Rex grimly, "and I'll thank you now for what you did. Maybe we shall have the opportunity of doing the same for you one day."

"Bosh!" replied Fairfax. "People in our profession don't look for thanks; we shouldn't get 'em if we did. You would have done the same for me, and as likely as not you'll have the opportunity of proving it one day. Well, I think that's cleared the air a bit. You'd better forget the whole thing. My name is Fairfax, of Divisional Headquarters. Forget everything else about me, and never mention my name in any other capacity. Walls have ears, you know."

"Well, from what I have heard from headquarters, and that isn't much, I should imagine that neither of you are sorry to be back at the squadron again," smiled Major Inkers to Rex and Tony, as they reported for duty at their old squadron after a few days' leave of absence, which they had spent "seeing the sights" in Paris.

Rex laughed.

"Oh, I don't know, sir. It was all very exciting, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that we did some useful work for the higher authority," he answered. "We shall have to be careful though," he added soberly. "The general wanted to send us home out of the War for good. He warned us that we must never fall into the hands of the enemy, or we shall have pretty short shrift."

"Naturally," replied the major seriously. "Even an officer who escapes from Germany in the ordinary way is liable to be shot as a spy if he is recaptured at a future date. They must hate you pretty thoroughly over there. Don't go far over the line, that's my advice. Take things quietly for a week or two, and give the pot that you must have stirred up a chance to simmer down."

The telephone at his elbow rang its jangling summons, and as the major picked up the receiver the boys turned to leave the room.

"Wait a moment," called the major; "this is headquarters on the line—it may be something for you."

They waited in the doorway while the C.O. continued his conversation.

"Yes, sir—I will, sir—certainly—I'll send them along right away—good-bye, sir." He hung up the receiver and eyed the two officers wistfully.

"It looks as if I'm going to lose you again," he said, with an anxious frown. "General Fellowes wants to see you both in his office as soon as possible. You can't land there, so you had better go by road; take my Crossley."

"Thanks, sir," replied Rex. "We'll report at once."

The major stared at the door thoughtfully for a full minute after they had gone, and then, with a gesture of helplessness, resumed his writing.

"What do you suppose he wants us for?" asked Tony, as they sped along the road towards Divisional Headquarters. "I don't know," replied Rex gravely, "but I've a feeling in my bones that something has happened. Did you notice

the major's expression while the general was speaking to him?"

Tony nodded.

"Yes," he replied. "I'm afraid something is in the wind. I hope he doesn't want us to go and land at Varne again, that's all," he muttered, with a wry face.

"We shall hardly be likely to do that," laughed Rex. "But here we are, we shall soon know all about it."

"The general is expecting you," announced the red-lapelled staff captain to whom they reported. "Stand fast a moment, and I'll see if he's ready."

He disappeared into a room leading off the corridor, to reappear almost immediately and beckon them with his finger.

"In you go," he said.

"Sit down, gentlemen," began the general. "I am very busy, so I must come to the point without preamble. First of all I may tell you that the excellent work you have been doing for us lately has not been overlooked, but you will hear more about that through official channels in the near future. My next news is not so good; indeed, it is definitely bad." The general paused and drummed on the desk. "It concerns Captain Fairfax," he added slowly.

Rex started, and stiffened into an attitude of expectancy. "Two days after the recent disturbing events with which you are fully acquainted," went on the general, "it became very necessary for us to locate the exact whereabouts of the long-range gun the enemy is using against our rest-camps. It is hardly necessary for me to say that the mission was a very dangerous one, and Captain Fairfax asked to be allowed to undertake it. I hesitated to permit it, as he is such a marked man, but he was so desperately keen to go that I allowed myself to be persuaded into granting permission. He expected to be back within forty-eight hours; at the end of that time he was to keep an appointment with the pilot who took him over, and who was to bring him back. He failed to keep the appointment, and we know what that means. I was afraid that Fairfax had been apprehended by the enemy, but this morning I received a message which put a different complexion on things. The message was brought in by carrier pigeon, and was written on paper which we are able to identify as that carried by Fairfax."

The general took up a tiny slip of paper from the desk before him, and read aloud:

"Urgent. Wounded, and in great danger. Hiding in farmhouse at G.14. E.27. 23."

"That is the pin-point of the farmhouse, of course," continued the general, looking up. "At the foot of the message is the number by which Fairfax is known to us. Well, gentlemen, that is how things stand, and I am afraid he is in evil case. Now, I believe Captain Fairfax recently ran a great risk to help you. I am not going to ask you to go and fetch him, because that, too, would be irregular, but in the circumstances, in fairness to you all, I—er—well—"

"Quite, sir. I understand," broke in Rex. "If anybody volunteered to go and fetch him it is possible that I might sanction such a step," continued the general, examining his pen reflectively.

"In that case, I beg to apply for twenty-four hours leave of absence," said Rex quickly.

(Rex and Tony have got another dangerous job on, so look out for thrills in next week's gripping instalment!)

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