

GRAND COLOURED PICTURES GIVEN FREE WITH THIS ISSUE!

The **GEM** **2d**

No. 1,353. Vol. XLV.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending January 20th, 1934.



EXCITING STORIES OF SCHOOL, SPORT AND ADVENTURE—WITHIN.

ST JIM'S IN THE SCRUM!



It's one thing for the Soccer-playing Chums of St. Jim's to get a Rugger challenge from a rival school, but it's quite another matter when their refusal to play is answered with a white feather—the taunt of cowardice!

CHAPTER 1.

A Stormy Meeting!

"Of course not!" said Tom Merry, the junior captain of St. Jim's, somewhat warmly. And Manners and Lowther, who always backed up their chum without stopping to reflect about rights or wrongs, chimed in:

"Of course not! Of course not, indeed!"

"But—" said Jack Blake.

Tom Merry made a gesture of finality.

"Of course not, Blake!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Of course not, D'Arcy!"

"Oh, hang it!" said Figgins. "I don't see—"

"Of course not, Figgins!"

And Tom Merry sat down.

There was a low murmur in the room. It was the club-room of the Merry Hobby Society, on the ground floor of the School House, but it was being used for a meeting of the committee of the Junior Football Club. And that meeting looked like being a warm and excited one.

In the Junior Football Club all the footballers of the Lower School were enrolled—all, that is, who belonged to the Shell and the Fourth Form. Lower than the Fourth the "Infants" had infantile clubs of their own, which they were conceited enough to think quite as good as the Junior Club.

Fellows of both Houses belonged to the Junior Football Club. Tom Merry, of the Shell, a School House fellow, was junior captain, but after Tom Merry the best forward in the team was Figgins, of the New House, and the inimitable goalkeeper was Fatty Wynn, also of the New House. In football matters the juniors of St. Jim's were allowed to sink the rivalry which existed between the two Houses.

It was not a House dispute which was going on now, though that was not of infrequent occurrence at committee meetings. It was a matter in which the Shell fellows did not agree with the Fourth Formers, and it looked like finishing up with a Form row.

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Tom Merry was quite pink, and Jack Blake was very red. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, who generally cultivated that repose which is said to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere, was looking excited, and his eyeglass was continually dropping out of his eye, and once, in his excitement, he had jammed it in the wrong eye by mistake!

There was a moment's pause after Tom Merry had sat down.

Manners took advantage of it to add more emphatically:

"Of course not!"

Jack Blake snorted.

"Of course not!" said Monty Lowther defiantly.

"Rats! Bosh!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Wats! Wubbish!"

"Rot!" said Digby and Herries of the Fourth, speaking with one voice.

"I don't see it," said Harry Noble, otherwise Kangaroo.

"I agree with Tom Merry. What I say is—"

"Piffle!" said Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"Bosh!"

"If you want a thick ear—" began the Cornstalk junior warmly.

"I want all you can give me!" said Blake promptly.

"Then I'll jolly well—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, pushing back the excited Cornstalk. "Don't have any rows in committee. Look here—"

"I think—"

"Weally—"

"Let's discuss it calmly," said Tom Merry, who did not look very calm. "You will admit that you've been talking rot—"

"Wats!"

"You've been talking piffle!" said Blake. "You want St. Jim's to back down—"

"I don't!"

"Yes you do! Back down before a team like Tipton!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "Why, I tell you—"

"I tell you—"

—FEATURING THE LIVELY ADVENTURES OF TOM MERRY & CO.!

By Martin Clifford.

"Don't you interrupt me, Tom Merry!"

"Wathah not! I wegard it as most ungentlemanly to intewwupt a gentleman while that gentleman is makin' wernarks!"

"Cheeso it, Gussy!"

"Ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off! I wegard you as a wottah, Lowthah—a wank outsiders! I have a gweat mind to thwash you!"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me—"

"Well, I do, and many of them!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Order!" roared Manners. "Order!"

"Shut up, Manners!"

"Rats!"

"Hold Gussy, somebody—he'll get hurt!"

"Weally, you know—"

"I want to speak of this matter calmly," roared Jack Blake. "Do you hear, you frabjous fatheads? This matter has got to be talked over quietly and calmly."

"It's settled—"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

"We're not going to play Tipton—"

"We are!"

"We're not!"

"Ass!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Chump! Fathead! Why can't you be quiet and calm about it, and talk it over civilly, like I'm doing?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're not going to play Tipton—"

"We are!"

"We don't play Rugger—"

"We can learn."

"Bosh! Not in the time."

"Most of us have played Rugger before."

"Yes, but—"

"We can play it again."

"Yaas, wathah, and lick those Tipton wottahs, you know. Yaas, I wathah think so!"

"Chump!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a chump! I—"

"I wish you'd refuse to be one—"

"I wefuse to wefuse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"The meeting's over!" said Tom Merry, bawling to make his voice heard. "We don't play Tipton. Of course not! That settles it!"

"Of course not!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Bosh!"

"Yaas, and wubbish!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"No, you won't—"

"Go for those blessed Shellfish! Hurrah!"

"You Fourth Form kids—"

"Hurrah! Sock in to 'em!" roared Blake, who was completely beside himself with excitement by this time.

"Chuck 'em out!"

"Buck up, you chaps!"

The next moment the junior football committee of St. Jim's had resolved itself, apparently, into a junior prize-fighting committee. There was a wild and whirling tussle, and chairs and the table went flying.

Trampling feet, and bumping bodies, and gasping breath, and loud war cries made a terrific din.

The juniors had quite forgotten that the club-room was near the prefects' and the masters' studies, and that the terrific uproar could not possibly pass unheard.

In the midst of the deafening din the door opened.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, appeared upon the threshold. He had a cane in his hand, and a frown on his face.

"Boys!"

"Bai Jove! It's Wailton!"

"Cave!"

And the uproar ceased, and the juniors stood gasping and dishevelled and sheepish under the frowning eyes of the Housemaster.

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Railton. "You have made a great disturbance. I have had complaints from all along the passage. I shall not take it upon myself to decide who was to blame. As you were all equally concerned, I shall cane you all."

"Oh!"

"Weally, sir—"

"You will leave the room one at a time, and hold out your hands," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh, sir!"

"You first, Merry."

Tom Merry made a grimace, and obeyed. As he passed the doorway he held out his hand and received a cut upon it that made him gasp.

Then followed Blake, and he received the same, and D'Arcy and the rest, till the file of juniors had passed, and they went down the passage, sucking or squeezing their right hands.

Mr. Railton switched out the light and closed the club-room door before he went away.

The meeting was evidently over for that evening.

At the end of the passage a wrathful group gathered.

"Ow!" murmured Digby, sucking his palm. "How that chap can lay it on! I think Housemasters ought to be forbidden to exercise with Indian clubs."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was all Tom Merry's fault, of course?" said Blake.

"Oh, of course!"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry.

"Howling bosh!" said Monty Lowther and Manners.

"Shrieking bosh!" said Kangaroo.

"Look here—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I agree with Blake!" exclaimed Figgins warmly.

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr.

"Of course, you Fourth Form kids hang together," said Lowther. "Now, I consider you all a set of duffers!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I was thinking—"

"Oh, don't you begin to think, Fatty!" said Manners.

"I was thinking that we might as well adjourn the meeting," said Fatty, undisturbed. "I left some potatoes to bake by the fire in the study, and I think they'll be done by this time."

"About time you kids were done, too," said Manners.

"Isn't Tom Merry captain of the footer team, I want to know? Isn't it his business to decide whether we play Tipton or not?"

"Yes; but—"

"There are no buts in the matter."

"But—"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Railton's left his study door open," said Kangaroo warningly. "No good beginning again here. We'll have him down on us like a sack of coke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I'm sorry you chaps won't listen to reason," said Tom Merry. "I'm sure I've tried to make you."

"I tell you—"

"It wouldn't do to play Tipton. They play Rugby, and we don't. I know we played a Rugby match once, and won it, but we had the assistance of seniors, and we were lucky to win, and it wasn't a very strong team we were opposing, either. It's different with the Tipton lot."

"But we can't refuse a challenge—"

"Yes, we can."

"They'll crow at us."

"Let 'em!"

"That's all very well, but—"

"But I'm jolly well going to look after those potatoes!" said Fatty Wynn. "They'll be overdone."

THE FIFTEEN GRAND PICTURES IN COLOUR

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And the Falstaff of the New House started off, and Figgins and Kerr, after a moment's hesitation, followed him. The Terrible Three and Kangaroo went upstairs to the Shell studies. The chums of Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy—were left alone. They looked at one another grimly.

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Blake.

"It's wotten!"

"Yes, rather," said Digby; "but I suppose we can't accept the challenge if Tom Merry decides not."

"I suppose not; but it's wotten!"

"I think we ought to play them," said Blake.

And then the subject dropped as the Fourth Formers moved away to repair damages.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were putting themselves tidy in their study. Now that the excitement of the argument and the combat were over, Tom Merry was looking extremely thoughtful.

"Of course, we can't play Tipton," he remarked, looking at his chums.

But Manners and Lowther were silent. In the committee-room they had backed up their leader loyally, as in duty bound; but their faces wore a different expression in their own study.

"You don't agree with Blake, do you?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, you see—" began Monty Lowther cautiously.

"We can't play Tipton."

"But—"

"They would walk over us as easily as anything, and then they'd crow; and, besides, we should look a set of fools for accepting a challenge to a game we don't play, if we were licked."

"Yes; but—"

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "You were backing me up like anything only ten minutes ago."

"That was against the Fourth, of course."

"Bound to stand by one another against the Fourth," said Manners solemnly. "But, taking one consideration with another—Ahem!"

"You agree with Blake?"

"Not exactly; but—"

"You'd like to play Tipton?"

"Yes."

"Then you're an ass, Manners!"

"Thank you!"

"And you're another, Lowther!"

"Thanks!"

And in that unsatisfactory manner the subject dropped among the Terrible Three.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Accepted!

IT was not often that a serious difference arose among the chums of St. Jim's. True, there was always the rivalry between the two Houses. That undoubtedly was always with them. But there was no bitterness in that. It was productive of athletic emulation and fun more than anything else.

Then there was the old question, never satisfactorily settled, whether Tom Merry of the Shell, or Jack Blake of the Fourth, was to be considered leader of the School House juniors. But, as Blake himself had remarked, they could jog along pretty comfortably with that question unsettled. But now, at last, there had risen a real difficulty, and one that could not apparently be bridged over.

It was natural that there should be a difference of opinion.

Among the most enlightened and candid of people differences of opinion will arise, and, of course, argument—intended to clear the air—only has the result of confirming each fellow in his own opinion.

Thus it was with the juniors of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry was junior football captain. Although the seniors of St. Jim's, the high and mighty Sixth and the Fifth, scarcely deigned to notice their existence, the junior footballers thought as much of themselves as the Sixth could possibly do—which was saying a great deal.

School matches were the senior matches, played by Sixth and Fifth Form fellows, captained by Kildare, and sometimes by Monteith, the head prefect of the New House. But the juniors kept a careful record of junior matches, and attached quite as much importance to them as the Sixth did to the First Eleven affairs. And Tom Merry, as junior football captain, felt his responsibility heavy upon him.

The usual troubles of a football captain he could face with equanimity. When a match was won, he would cheerfully hear the victory attributed to this chap's good game, or that chap's shooting, or the other chap's goalkeeping. When the match was lost, he would hear, with equal cheerfulness, that it was the skipper's fault, and would listen unmoved to

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loudly expressed wonder that he didn't know better than to play this chap, or that chap, or the other chap.

To take the blame in case of failure, and to see most of the praise given to others in case of success, and to bear the whole responsibility all the time, are not uncommon experiences of a football captain.

Tom Merry tolerated them with fortitude.

But the matter was different now. It was a question of accepting or declining a challenge, and Tom Merry's natural impulse was to accept it. But there were considerations that made him pause.

Tipton had challenged the St. Jim's juniors to a Rugger match. Now, Tipton were a junior school team, about the same age as the St. Jim's juniors, and, in all probability, of the same standing.

But Tipton played Rugger.

St. Jim's played the Soccer game, and the fact that a Rugger match had once been played at St. Jim's made no difference to that.

Tom Merry's eleven was a Soccer eleven.

Some of them had played Rugby, and most of them had an idea of the game. But what was that? What chance would they naturally have against a practised Rugger team? And the date was so near. Hobson, the Tipton skipper, had learned that St. Jim's had a vacant date, and he had sent his challenge for that date.

There was no getting out of it on the score of having all dates full. Tom Merry would not condescend to prevaricate; and, besides, Tipton knew the facts.

Tipton fellows knew well enough that St. Jim's did not play Rugger. Under ordinary circumstances, they would not, of course, have challenged them. But Blake was really at the bottom of that.

It could not be denied that Tipton were a set of "swankers." They swanked abominably, and the St. Jim's fellows—who had a very good opinion of themselves, but would have indignantly denied that they had the slightest tendency to swank, for their part—found Tipton hard to tolerate.

As the two colleges were far apart, and the fellows met but seldom, their mutual antipathy might not have been the cause of trouble but for that unfortunate affair of Blake's.

The chums of Study No. 6 had met Hobson and a crowd of Tiptonians at a footer match in Wayland, and, naturally, had fallen into a discussion of football. Hobson had remarked, in the modest and unassuming way he had, that if he and his men played Soccer, he hadn't the slightest doubt that they would walk over St. Jim's at that game. He added that he wished they played Rugger, so that he might have an opportunity, by means of a sound licking, to show them exactly what real footer was.

To which Blake somewhat rashly retorted, in the heat of the moment, that he'd undertake to raise a team at St. Jim's to play Tipton at Rugger, or any other game, and wipe them off the face of the earth!

And only the next day had come a letter from Tipton, in which the Tipton secretary reminded the juniors of those rash words, and held them as a promise. Of course, Blake had not meant anything of the sort.

He had forgotten the words an hour afterwards. But when Tipton thus reminded him, he wanted to live up to them.

His idea was that Tipton were a set of swankers, and that St. Jim's could raise a team to lick them hollow.

Tom Merry's view was that Tipton certainly were an abominable set of swanking duffers, but that they had played Rugger for years, and, naturally, would be able to wipe up the ground with any scratch team hastily got together in a couple of days at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry held fast to this point.

Tipton were taking an unfair advantage in pressing the challenge, and he did not mean to record a crushing defeat among St. Jim's experiences that season simply because of a few hasty words Blake had spoken.

That was Tom Merry's position. He was junior football captain, and responsible, and he didn't mean the junior team to make an ass of itself.

The Fourth Formers disagreed.

Hence the difference that had arisen which had been thrashed out at the committee meeting; and that difference, as we have seen, was not the only thing that was thrashed out.

After argument, which had culminated in the punching of noses, each fellow was, of course, only confirmed in his original views.

Blake was rather inclined to look upon Tom Merry as a "funk"—not personally, of course, but in his capacity as football captain.

Tom Merry regarded Blake as a rash duffer who had let his team in for a challenge they weren't prepared to meet,



The wild and whirling tussle between the members of the football committee was in full swing when there came a dramatic interruption. In the midst of the deafening din the door opened and Mr. Railton appeared. "Boys!" thundered the Housemaster. "Cave!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

and who was willing to throw every other consideration aside merely for a chance to get at the enemy.

What was to be done was a puzzle, but what Tom Merry meant to do was quite clear.

He meant to decline the challenge.

And if his decision was not accepted by the football committee, he meant to resign his captaincy.

That meant, of course, that his decision was accepted, and that a letter was to be written declining the challenge, on the grounds that, as Tipton played Rugger and St. Jim's Soccer, a meeting was impossible.

That was reasonable enough, but it did not explain away Blake's words to Hobson or make his position any the better.

The letter was written and dispatched.

After it had been consigned to the postbox Jack Blake came into his study—No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage—with a gloomy brow.

"It's all up!" he announced.

"What is?" asked Herries.

"The letter's sent."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove! And the challenge is declined?"

"Yes."

"Wotten!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"St. Jim's is jolly well disgraced!" said Blake gloomily. "It's the first time we've ever refused a challenge! Why, if a party challenged us to play marbles we ought to take them on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it can't be helped," said Digby. "Figgins & Co.

feel just as rotten about it as we do. Between ourselves, I fancy that Manners and Lowther only back up Tom Merry for the sake of appearances. They want to play Tipton."

"Everybody does except Tom Merry, and perhaps Kangaroo."

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, deah boys," said D'Arcy thoughtfully—"weally, you know, I don't know about givin' in like this."

"Tom Merry's captain."

"Yaas, but—"

"Oh, we can't back up against the skipper!" said Digby. "That wouldn't be cricket. But I'm surprised at Tom Merry—I am, really!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Tipton will crow over us royally!" said Blake, with a snort. "Of course, perhaps I oughtn't to have said what I did that time to Hobson, just as Tom Merry says. But I did say it."

"Of course you did! He was enough to provoke anybody."

"And having said it, we ought to stand by it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But Tom Merry doesn't see it in that light. Well, I suppose we shall have to give in, but it's rotten!"

"Vewy wotten, deah boy!"

"Tipton will crow, that's the worst of it, and—"

"And you've given 'em a right to crow by what you said to Hobson!" Herries remarked, in his slow and thoughtful way.

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Let's do our prep!"

And the subject dropped.

CHAPTER 3.

Hobson Looks In!

BUT the subject which the juniors agreed to say no more about was not destined to be got rid of so easily. The Tipton fellows weren't inclined to let it drop so easily.

The next afternoon was a half-holiday, and the juniors were, as usual, preparing to go down to the footer, when four cyclists rode up to the gates and dismounted. They wheeled their machines in, leaning them against the wall of Taggles' lodge, and walked towards the House.

They were in time to meet a crowd of juniors coming out. Tom Merry's brow contracted as he saw them.

"Hallo!" he muttered. "Here's Tipton!"

"Tipton cads!" said Blake.

Hobson, the Tipton captain, came up with a grin. The three fellows with him, Bates and Marker and Crane, were three of the least pleasant of the Tiptonians. All four of them had been seen at St. Jim's before, and none were liked there.

"Hallo!" said Hobson, with a genial nod. "Just in time to see you, I see. Thought we'd run over and talk about it."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

"You know Bates, our secretary, and Marker and Crane. Now, what's that about declining our challenge?" said Hobson, in a boisterous way.

"Sorry you've taken the trouble to call about that," said Tom Merry calmly. "I thought it was all made clear in the letter."

"Oh, yes, it's clear enough that you funk the match!" said Hobson.

Tom Merry flushed.

"Nothing of the sort," he said. "I suppose you would decline a challenge to a Soccer match if we sent you one?"

ANNOYED!



Player: "Here, who kicked me?"

Referee: "It's all right; it was a foul!"

Player: "Gosh! It felt more like a mule!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Hancock, 16, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

"I don't know about that," said Hobson; "but that's neither here nor there. Blake says there's a team at St. Jim's ready to lick us at Rugger, and we accept the hint, and send you a challenge in proper form. Now you decline it."

"Yes, we decline."

"Well, I want to know why. I suppose you want us to understand that Blake was talking out of his hat?"

"Hold on!" murmured Digby, as he saw Blake clench his fists. "You can't give 'em any of that, Jack."

"The rotter—"

"I know; but they're on a friendly visit."

He realised that it would not do.

"Never mind what Blake said or didn't say," replied Tom Merry brusquely. "I wasn't there, anyway, and I didn't hear it. The fact remains that you've challenged us to a game we don't play, and we decline the challenge. There's no more to be said that I know of."

Hobson laughed, and shrugged his shoulders.

"It's no good saying you haven't the date open," Bates remarked. "We happen to know you have."

"I haven't said so."

"Well," said Marker, "we've kept the date open, too, relying on what Blake said about your being willing to meet us."

"You can't have kept it open long, as it's only two days since Blake made the remark you're making such a song about!"

"I think you ought to accept."

"We shall please ourselves about that!"

"I suppose you know what we think of you if you persist in refusing?" said Hobson.

"You can think what you like!" said Tom Merry shortly.

"We shall think you're a set of funks!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bates, Marker, and Crane, all together.

There was a murmur among the St. Jim's juniors.

"You won't get me to make an ass of myself by accepting

your rotten challenge," said Tom Merry calmly. "If you think we're funks, meet us at Soccer. That would be as fair for you as Rugger would be for us."

"That's not the question now."

"And if you think I personally am a funk, I'd be happy to prove it to you if you'll come into the gym!"

Hobson backed away a pace.

"I didn't come here for a row," he said.

"Then you'd better pick your language a little more carefully!"

"Oh, all right!" said Hobson defiantly. "I shall know what to think, anyway. You fellows swank about meeting us at Rugger, and as soon as we challenge you, you find an excuse for sneaking out of it."

"I'd accept fast enough if I were skipper," said Blake.

"Oh, you can gas!" said Hobson. "I've heard you at it before—day before yesterday, as a matter of fact. So you definitely refuse?"

"Definitely!" said Tom Merry.

"We've come over here for nothing, chaps!" said Bates.

"Looks like it!"

"Blessed set of funks!" said Marker.

"Bai Jove, I'm not goin' to stand that! Markah, you wottah, I will twouble you to put up your fists and answer for your wotten remarks!"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove! I'll—"

Tom Merry pushed the excited swell of St. Jim's back.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "You can't touch them when they come over to see us—it's a point of honour, my son. Of course, they'll take advantage of it—we knew before that they were cads!"

"Well, we'll go," said Hobson. "But, mind, you chaps haven't heard the end of this! You've given us a journey for nothing. But you'll play that match, my sons, and take your gruel, or you'll be made to sing confoundedly small, I warn you! Come on, you chaps; we've been here long enough!"

"Quite long enough!" agreed Monty Lowther.

And the Tipton fellows went back to their bicycles and rode away. They left the juniors of the School House looking decidedly glum.

"We shall never hear the end of it!" growled Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it can't be helped," said Tom Merry. "Let's get down to the footer!"

"I've got a suggestion to make," remarked Kangaroo. "Let's practise the Rugger game this afternoon, and see the kind of form we're in. I used to play Rugger, you know, at home in Victoria, and Fatty Wynn is a wonderful Rugger man. Let's see what sort of a team we can raise."

Tom Merry hesitated. He did not see the use of it. But the feeling of the juniors was evidently with Kangaroo, and the captain of the Shell did not oppose it.

"Very well," he said shortly.

And the juniors, for that afternoon, abandoned the Soccer game, and threw themselves into the unaccustomed Rugger.

CHAPTER 4.

The White Feather!

"TOM MERRY!"

"Hallo!"

"Parcel for you!"

"Good!"

The Rugby practice was over long since, and most of the junior players were thinking of tea. The Rugby practice had been successful in its way; but it had chiefly shown up the fact that the St. Jim's juniors would want a lot of practice before they could play a Rugger team.

Tom Merry & Co. were gathering about the tuckshop, to lay in provisions for tea, when Tom's name was called.

Three or four fellows were calling it, all interested in the parcel that was arriving for Tom Merry. The page had taken it from the carrier, and the juniors announced its arrival. For Tom Merry was in the habit of receiving all sorts of packages from his old governess and guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. True, the parcels sometimes turned out to contain only comforters or chest protectors, worked by Miss Fawcett's own fingers; but on other occasions they brought to Tom Merry luscious fruits, or delicious cakes baked by Miss Fawcett herself, and sometimes jam or honey in nice big jars.

The parcel now was not a large one, but a great many juniors gathered round Tom Merry as he received it.

"Which there's sixpence to pay the man, Master Merry," said the pageboy.

"Here you are."

Tom Merry cut the string of the parcel.

There was no postmark or carrier's mark on the parcel—the only direction being "Tom Merry, St. Jim's," in a

large handwriting that was certainly not Miss Priscilla Fawcett's.

Tom Merry looked a little puzzled.

"I don't think this is from home," he remarked.

Fatty Wynn was watching him, and a shade of disappointment came over his plump face as Tom Merry spoke.

"Not from home!" he said.

"I think not."

"H'm! I was thinking perhaps it was one of those cakes," said Fatty Wynn, with a reminiscent smack of the lips. "You remember the last?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"This isn't a cake. It feels too soft, and it's not large enough. It's not from Miss Fawcett at all. I wonder what it is?"

His expression grew more surprised as he unfastened several wrappings of paper. The juniors watched him with keen interest.

"What the dickens can it be?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Anyway, it's nothing to eat; it's too soft."

"It might be—a jelly," said Fatty Wynn, as if unwilling to give up the last shred of hope.

"Bet you it isn't!"

"Buck up, Merry; let's see what it is!"

"Here you are, then."

Tom Merry opened the last wrapping of brown paper. Inside was a sheet of tissue-paper, in which something small and soft was wrapped.

Tom Merry, with a curious expression dawning upon his face, opened the tissue-paper and exposed the contents.

It was a single feather—a white feather!

The juniors looked at it in astonishment. A little fragment of paper, pencilled on, had fluttered to the ground. Manners picked it up, and held it up for the juniors to read. It contained but a single line.

"From Tipton!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The white feather!"

"The white feather," said Tom Merry. "From Tipton! The cads!"

Exclamations of anger broke out on all sides.

"The white feather!"

"The rotten cads!" exclaimed Figgins. "The—the beasts! That means they think we're afraid to meet them!"

"It means they pretend to think so, to get our backs up," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, hang it!" exclaimed Blake. "We must play them!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Look here, are we going to have them calling us cowards, and sending us white feathers?" demanded Blake excitedly.

"Wathah not!"

"No good taking any notice of it," said Tom Merry steadily. "We should be fools to allow them to chip us into doing what we don't want to do!"

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I wepeat, wats! I think we ought to play them!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, I don't!"

"Oh, that settles it," said Digby. "The great chief hath spoken!"

"Oh, cheese that, Dig! I don't see any reason for altering our decision, just because Tipton choose to act like cads!"

Tom Merry was very firm in his opinion. But he was almost alone in it. Manners and Lowther backed him up, but not heartily.

But Tom felt that he was right.

The Tipton fellows wanted to take them at an unfair advantage and inflict a defeat upon them, and Tom Merry would not have it.

He was not called upon to take his team into the field and let it be walked over because Blake had spoken a few hasty words.

The juniors dispersed with gloomy faces.

They would have liked very much to be within hitting distance of the Tipton fellows, to show them that they were not afraid in that way, at all events.

But Hobson, Marker & Co. were nowhere at hand.

Fellows had to grin and bear it—or, at least, to bear it, if they did not grin. They did not bear it patiently.

The chums of Study No. 6 went in to tea with glum looks. Blake jammed the kettle on the fire with a force that spilt half its contents over the embers.

Digby growled as steam and blacks flooded the study.

"Clumsy ass!"

Blake scowled.

"Oh, shut up!" he said.

"Rats!"

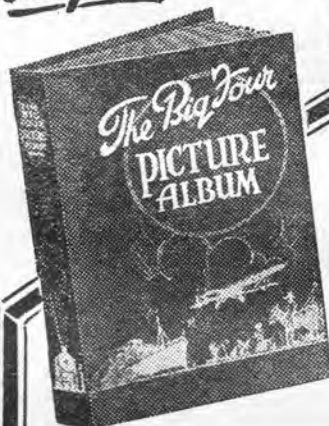
"You ass—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

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"Oh, don't jaw, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ring off!"

"I wefuse—"

"Pooh!"

"Blake—"

"Pish!"

"Weally," said D'Arcy, keeping his temper admirably. "Weally, you know, I don't think it's sensible of us to wag one another because we're wowwied about those Tipton wottahs! I weally think we'd better take it more sensibly."

Blake burst into a laugh.

"You're right, Gussy! No good getting our backs up!"

"Just so," said Dig. "I'm sorry I spoke as I did, Blake. But I feel so wild about those rotten Tipton bounders, with their blessed white feather—"

"So do I!"

"It's wotten, deah boys! But—" He broke off suddenly as the page-boy entered the room. "Weally, you know, you should not come in so suddenly! You intewwupt me!"

The page-boy grinned.

"Postcard for Master Blake," he said.

"Hand it over!"

"Buttons" grinned as he handed it over. He was grinning as he left the study. Blake soon discovered the cause of the grin.

The postcard contained no message. It was addressed to Blake, and on the back of it was a neat drawing in pen and ink of a white feather.

Blake brought his teeth together hard.

"What is it, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Look!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

"Bai Jove! The white feathah again!"
 Blake snapped his teeth.
 "We can't stand this!" he exclaimed desperately.
 "Wathah not!"
 "We shall be bothered to death by those cads if we don't play them," said Blake. "Look here, we're going to play them!"
 "But Tom Mewwy—"
 "Hang Tom Merry!"
 "With pleasuah, deah boy, but—"
 "Look here, we can raise a team ourselves, unofficially, and play the rotters," said Jack Blake. "A Fourth Form team, leaving out the Shell!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "What do you think?"
 "Vewy wisky, deah boy!"
 "I don't care," said Blake determinedly. "I'll go and ask Figgins about it, and talk it over."
 "We're just going to have tea—"
 "Hang tea!"
 And Blake swung out of the study. His chums followed him, without saying anything further about tea.

CHAPTER 5.

Blake's Brain-wave!

"**R**OTTEN!" said Figgins gloomily.
 Figgins was cutting bread-and-butter in his study in the New House. Fatty Wynn was carefully attending to baking potatoes on the grate.
 Kerr was opening a tin of bloater-paste. The chums of the New House were about to have tea, with less of an appetite than usual.
 "Yes, it was rotten!" said Fatty Wynn, looking up from the grate with a glowing face. "I made sure there was something to eat in the parcel, you know, and it turned out to be only a rotten white feather!"
 "It's rotten!"
 "I should say so! And we've only got potatoes and bloater-paste for tea!"
 "Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins irritably. "I'm thinking of the insult to the school, not of your unearthly appetite!"
 "Look here, Figgy—"
 "We've been called cowards—kicked; jumped on—in effect," said Figgins. "That's what the white feather implies!"
 "It's rotten," growled Kerr. The cool and canny Scots junior was very seldom excited, but his eyes were gleaming now.
 "The potatoes are done!" said Fatty Wynn.
 "Blow the potatoes!" roared Figgins ferociously. "Is this a time to be talking about potatoes, you—you fat boulder?"
 "Well, I suppose we're going to have tea?"
 "Blow tea!"
 "I'm hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "I feel the insult as much as you do, of course, but you can't mend matters by going hungry—in fact, if you've got any trouble to bear, you can stand it better by laying a solid foundation. I've always noticed that, Figgy, and you take my word for it!"
 "Ass!"
 "The potatoes are—"
 "Chump!"
 "Done!"
 "Chuck 'em out of the window!" said Figgins. "Or put 'em in the fire!"
 "Rats!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I think you must be off your rocker, Figgy! I— Hallo! What do you School House boulders want?"
 Jack Blake strode into the study, followed by his three chums.
 The New House fellows looked at them far from agreeably. They were not in an agreeable mood. The insults from Tipton had had a rasping effect upon all tempers.
 "Hallo!" growled Figgins.
 "Want anything?" grunted Kerr.
 "No!"
 "Then good-bye!"
 Blake snorted.
 "Look at that!"
 "What is it—a giddy picture postcard? Bury it!"
 "Look at it, ass!"
 "Who are you calling an ass?" demanded Figgins belligerently.
 "You! Look!"
 Figgins looked.
 "Oh, the white feather again!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "From Tipton, of course!"
 "Of course!" said Blake. "We've come over to talk to you chaps about it. I've got an idea."
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,35

"If you've got any idea about going for Tipton and taking them down a peg or two, this is the right shop!" said Figgins eagerly.
 "Look here," said Blake, "Tom Merry's skipper of the Junior Eleven, and he refuses to play Tipton at Rugger."
 "We know that."
 "Perhaps he's right."
 "And perhaps he isn't."
 "Exactly! Perhaps he isn't. But if we can't play Tipton with the official team, why can't we make up an eleven—or, rather, a fifteen in this case—to play them on our own—a Rugger team in the Fourth?"
 Figgins started.
 "Tom Merry doesn't want a licking at Rugger to go down in the season's record," said Blake. "He's right, as far as that goes—only we can't stand these blessed insults from Tipton!"
 "Right!"
 "If we raise a Fourth Form Rugger team, and play Tipton on our own, he wouldn't have the right to interfere, and the match wouldn't count among the regular matches of the Junior Eleven, you see."
 "My hat!"
 "Good egg!" said Kerr.
 "It would simply be a private venture of the Fourth," said Blake. "Just a dodge to fill up the afternoon, you know, because the junior team had no match on for that day."
 "Good!"
 "Tom Merry wouldn't have the right to interfere, even if he wanted to—and as we shouldn't play any Shell fellows, the team couldn't be supposed to be the official junior team."
 Figgins' eyes sparkled.
 "Blake, old man, you're a genius!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Why, the idea is simply ripping!"
 "Gorgeous!" said Kerr.
 "What do you think, Fatty?"
 "I think I'll have a little more butter," said Fatty Wynn, looking up from the plate upon which he was busily engaged.
 "Eh?"
 "The 'taters are rather dry."
 "Ass! What do you think of playing Tipton with a Rugger Fourth team?"
 "Oh, that's all right!" said Fatty. "I was brought up on Rugger, and I'd like it better than anything."
 "It's settled, then," said Figgins. "Why, the idea's worth a guinea a box."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "We'll call a meeting of the Fourth Form—both Houses," said Figgins warmly. "And we can select the fifteen this evening, to save time, and have the first practice to-morrow morning, before brekker."
 "Good!"
 "I'm jolly glad you chaps like the idea," said Blake. "If we back one another up, we shall get the team together all right. We can't have any of the Shell in it, or the Tiptons would have a right to pretend that they were playing the regular junior team. Besides, the Fourth Form is able to stand alone."
 "Of course."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "In fact, I dare say we shall be all the better without the Shell," said Blake, rather loftily. "Fatty Wynn is first-rate at Rugger, and there are some other Fourth Formers who know the game like a book. I've played myself at home in Yorkshire, though I don't claim to be up to Fatty Wynn's form."
 "Then there's Evans," said Figgins. "He's a Welshman, and all Welshmen play Rugger first-rate."
 "Good! Of course!"
 "Then it's settled. We'll call a Form meeting this evening."
 "Yaas, wathah! I say—"
 "I'll write out the notice and put it up," said Blake.
 "You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."
 "I know that, Gussy. Come on; our tea will be cold."
 "I have a suggestion to make—"
 "Leave it till to-morrow, old chap."
 "I refuse to do anythin' of the sort. I have a vewy valuable suggestion to make!" said D'Arcy indignantly.
 "It flashed into my bwaain—"
 "Plenty of room there, I expect," said Herries.
 "Weally, Howwies—"
 "Come on," said Blake. "I've got to draw up the notice to the Form. You draw one up to put in the New House, Figgy. We'll hold the meeting in the Form-room."
 "Right you are!"
 "Weally, deah boys—"

"That's settled, then."
 "I insist upon makin' my suggestion."
 "Go ahead," said Blake resignedly.
 "Get it over," said Digby.
 "Wats! Look here, it doesn't mattah where we get the weewuits fwom, so long as we get a team togethah to lick the Tipton wottahs?"
 "Not a bit," said Blake. "We'll have the postman and the butcher's boy, if they can play Ruggèr."
 "Vewy well. I have an ideah!"
 "Buck up!"
 "I wish you would not hawwy me. It thwows me into confusion. Undah the cires—"

"Then we'll write to Greyfriars to-night, and ask them. Those chaps—Wharton and the rest—belong to the Lower Fourth there—the Remove. If they come in, it will still be a Fourth Form team. If three or four of them come, it may make all the difference to us. Of course, they may have a match on for Saturday afternoon—in fact, most likely they have—but it's a chance."

"And we'll try it," said Figgins.
 "That's settled, then."

And the School House chums 'quitted Figgins' study, feeling much more satisfied than they had felt for some time.



As Tom Merry exposed the contents of the tissue paper, the juniors stared in utter astonishment—for the wrapper held a feather! "The white feather!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "From Tipton! The cads! This means they think we are afraid to play them!"

"What's the idea?" bawled Blake.
 "I am comin' to it as fast as I can. I was thinkin' about those chaps at Gweyfwahs, you know."
 "Greyfriars?"
 "Yaas, wathah! They play Soccah, the same as we do, but they have played Wuggah—I wememibah Hawwy Wharton tellin' me so—and some of them were brougnt up on Wuggah at home, just like Fatty. They have a chap named Linley, who comes fwom Lancashire, who is a wegulah marvel. Wharton told me."
 Blake gave a sort of gasp.
 "My hat! You're a genius, Gussy!"
 "Yaas, wathah! I mean, weally—"
 "It's a good wheeze," said Blake, turning to Figgins. "We want to get together a team to lick Tipton, and if we could get three or four Greyfriars chaps to play, it would be ripping! What do you think?"
 "Good!"
 "Ripping!" said Kerr.

CHAPTER 6.

No Admittance!

"HALLO! Wherefore this thushness?" exclaimed Monty Lowther.
 The Shell fellow had stopped before the notice-board in the Hall, and, as he stopped, Tom Merry and Manners stopped, too.
 The Terrible Three had strolled down after tea, when a new notice on the board caught Lowther's eye.
 "What is it?" asked Tom Merry.
 "A notice to the Fourth."
 "Nothing to do with us, then," remarked Manners, with all the loftiness of a Shell fellow.
 "That's where you're wrong," said Lowther. "Read it." And the chums of the Shell read the notice. It ran as follows:

"NOTICE TO THE FOURTH FORM!"

"A meeting of the Fourth will be held in the Form-room at seven o'clock precisely. Means will be discussed
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

of shutting up the Tipton fellows. As the matter only affects the Fourth Form, Shell fellows are requested to stay away.

"(Signed) J. BLAKE."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Cheek!" cried Manners.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"Hang it all, this won't do!" he exclaimed. "We can't have the Fourth mucking up things like this! We shall have to go!"

"Of course."

"It's close on seven now," Monty Lowther remarked, glancing at his watch.

"Let's look in at the Form-room, then."

The Terrible Three made their way towards the Form-room. They noticed now that a crowd of Fourth Formers were going in that direction.

Tom caught Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the sleeve.

"Gussy, old man—"

"Pway don't detain me, deah boy," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the captain of the Shell. "I'm in wathah a hawwy."

"What's this rotten meeting about?"

"It's—it's about to take place, deah boy."

"Ass! I mean—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass."

And D'Arcy jerked his sleeve away and hurried on. The Terrible Three surrounded Reilly of the Fourth, and stopped him in the passage.

"Look here, Reilly—"

"Faith, and let me get on!" said Reilly. "Sure, the meeting's going to begin."

"What's it about?"

"Eh? What do you mean—"

"I mean to get to the meeting entoi'rely."

And Reilly hurried on.

Tom Merry looked exasperated.

"We'll attend the meeting ourselves," he exclaimed.

"We can't have the Fourth Form duffers taking matters into their own hands and mucking things up."

"Hear, hear!"

And the Terrible Three joined the stream that was setting towards the Fourth Form Room. New House juniors mingled with School House juniors on the best of terms. But quite uncordial glances were cast at the heroes of the Shell.

"Shellfish barred," said Hancock, in the doorway, as the Terrible Three appeared.

"Rats!" said Lowther.

"No admittance for Shellfish!"

"More rats!"

And the Terrible Three pushed their way in, shoulder to shoulder.

There was a roar at once from the Fourth.

"No admittance."

"Get out!"

"Chuck those Shell bounders out!"

"Kick them out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three shouldered their way in. But there was a rush of the Fourth, and they were hurled out again. A crowd of Fourth Formers blocked up the door.

Tom Merry picked himself up rather dazedly in the passage.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"My head!" gasped Lowther. "It's been bumped against something awfully hard—against some wood, I think."

"It was against my head!" groaned Manners, rubbing his cranium. "Ow!"

"Well, I said some wood—"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

"Chuck it!" said Tom Merry crisply. "Look here, we're going to attend that meeting. Call up the Shell!"

"What-ho!"

Some Shell fellows were soon on the spot, and they backed up the Terrible Three in endeavouring to force a way into the Form-room. Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane, and Glyn, and Gore, and French shoved away heartily. But the cram in the doorway was too thick for them. There was no admittance for the Shell.

Again the Shell fellows were hurled forth.

"Keep the wottahs out!" said D'Arcy, surveying the scene through his eyeglass. "We can't have those duffahs muckin' up the meetin'!"

"Outside, you Shellfish!"

"Look here," roared Tom Merry, "we're coming in!"

"Your mistake, you're going out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rush them again!" shouted Manners.

"Hurrah!"

The Fourth Formers were all in now—or nearly all. The Shell were gathering in great force. All of them were indignant at the idea of being excluded from the Form meeting. True, it was a Fourth Form affair, but, as Lowther said, the kids ought to have felt honoured at Shell fellows coming to it. Anyway, the Shell fellows were determined to come, whether the Fourth felt honoured or not.

Tom Merry gathered his followers for a mighty rush. But the Fourth Formers were closing the door now, and Blake had his foot behind it.

"Lock the door!" said Blake.

"Buck up, chaps!" shouted Tom Merry. "They're going to lock the door!"

The Shell fellows pushed on resolutely, and there was a wild scramble in the doorway. The attack was hurled back once more, however, and Blake snapped the door to.

Tom Merry hurled himself upon it the next moment.

But Blake had his foot to it, and he held it fast while Digby turned the key.

Snap!

The door was locked, and the baffled Shell hammered upon the outside of it in vain. And the sound of a master's voice calling, warned them to leave off hammering, and they scuttled away in hot haste, and the Fourth Form were left to hold their own meeting in peace.

Jack Blake grinned as he heard the footsteps scuttling away in the passage.

"They're gone!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now to business!" said Figgins.

"Hear, hear!"

Jack Blake mounted upon a form.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth—"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's what I want you to do, so don't make a row," said Blake politely. "You all know that we've been challenged to a Rugger match by Tipton School."

A groan for Tipton.

"We've refused—or, rather, Tom Merry has refused—"

A groan for Tom Merry.

"He has his reasons," said Blake generously. "As football skipper he feels himself responsible, and he thinks he ought to decline the challenge. Well, we know how to play the game, and we've given in on that point."

"Oh!"

"But at the same time, though the junior team doesn't

"I say, you fellows—"

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accept officially the challenge of the Tipton rotters, I think a team ought to be got up to meet them."

"Hear, hear!"
"Hurrah!"

The cheer rang through the Form-room. It was evident that the proposition was a popular one with the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"I think it ought to be a wholly unofficial affair—that is, the Fourth Form ought to manage it entirely, and leave the Shell quite out," said Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"This meeting is called to put the matter to the Form, and take votes upon it. Shall we make up a Rugger Fourth team, and play the Tiptonians?"

There was a yell of approval.

The fellows who had never played Rugger in their lives were as loud in shouting applause as Fatty Wynn himself.

Blake looked very pleased. It was gratifying to have his idea received in this enthusiastic way.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when something like silence had been restored. "I'm glad to see you approve of the idea."

"Hear, hear!"

"And we'll arrange the matter at this meeting. We've written to Greyfriars to ask some of the Fourth Form fellows there to play for us, if they can get away on Saturday, and if they can, I've no doubt we can make up a team to beat Tipton."

"Hear, hear!"

"If they can't, we'll do the best we can without them," said Blake. "In that case, we'll make up a fifteen to meet Tipton."

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"You're all agreed?"

"Yes, rather! Hear, hear!"

"Hands up for playing Tipton with a Rugger Fourth team!"

A forest of hands went up.

"Good! Now, hands up against it!"

There was not a single hand elevated in the air at this appeal. It was evident that the Fourth Form at St. Jim's were all of one mind on the subject.

Blake's eyes glistened.

"Good!" he exclaimed again.

"That's bisney. Now, pending the reply from Greyfriars, we'll make up fifteen players here, and get to practice first thing in the morning. If we get some recruits from Greyfriars, we'll leave out the weakest players we have. That's about the best idea."

"Hear, hear!"

"Fellows who have played Rugger at home stand out here!"

A number of juniors came forward. Foremost was Fatty Wynn, who was known to be as good at Rugger as at Soccer, which was saying a good deal, for Fatty Wynn was one of the pillars of the Junior Eleven. He usually kept goal for the eleven, but he could play either back or half-back very well, and in the front line on occasion.

Following him came Kerr. Kerr was one of those fellows who seem to be able to do nearly everything. He could rattle off German and Latin as easily as English, and he played the violin as well as he played forward in the football team, and he batted every bit as well as he bowled at cricket, and did both as well as he cycled and swam. He was one of the quietest of fellows, too, not at all given to talking about his powers; and it was a surprise to many when he came forward as a Rugby player. But when he did come forward nobody doubted for a moment that he could play the game, and play it well.

Evans and Kerruish came forward, too, and one or two others.

"Well, that's a beginning," said Blake. "A lot more of us have played Rugger once in a way, too, and we shall be able to make up a fifteen."

"Yaas, wathah! I am wathah a dab at Wuggah myself, deah boys."

"Anything you're not a dab at, Gussy?" asked Reilly.

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Well, that's a beginning," repeated Blake. "I'll make up the list of the fifteen now. And we'll make up a second fifteen, too, to see how the chaps form, and to play the first fifteen in scratch matches. We haven't much time before Saturday, you know, and we shall want all the practice we can put in."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Jack Blake took pencil and paper, and made up his list.

It ran: Jack Blake, Digby, Herries, D'Arcy, Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Evans, Kerruish, Hancock, Jones, Harrison, Wilkins, Reilly, Pratt.

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

SAFETY FIRST.

Navy (holding pike): "Ere, mate, do you 'it where yo're looking?"

Cross-eyed Navy: "Course, I do!"

Navy: "Well, you 'old this spike—yo're looking straight at me!"

A football has been awarded to J. White, 25, Grafton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

EQUAL TO THE EXAM.

Examining Officer (to Cadet): "Now, supposing you were on the lee shore when a storm blew up; what would you do?"

Cadet: "I would drop an anchor, sir."

E.O.: "Supposing the anchor broke?"

Cadet: "I would drop another anchor, sir."

E.O.: "And if that one broke?"

Cadet: "I would drop another one, sir."

E.O.: "But where are you getting all your anchors from?"

Cadet: "Where you got your storm from!"

A football has been awarded to D. Allen, 100, Vallance Road, Alexandra Park, London, N.22.

HE SAID "NO"!

Mother: "I hope you remembered, John, not to have a second helping of anything at the party. Did you say 'no'?"

John: "Oh, yes. I kept saying 'no' every time I was asked if I had had enough!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss J. Gibson, Linthorpe, Buxton Road, Chinley, Derbyshire.

THEIR JOB.

The energetic speaker at the meeting had lashed himself into a frenzy.

"I ask you," he shouted to the audience, "are you going to take all this lying down?"

"No," shouted a voice from the back of the hall; "the reporters are doing that!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Garrett, 119, Lower Oldfield Park, Bath.

EXPECTANT.

Sir Bumpus: "What did you think, John, when you heard I had got a knighthood?"

John: "I thought, 'Well, that's good enough for a fiver when I see him!'"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Bond, 135, Hesketh Street, Heaton Norris, Stockport.

TAKEN LITERALLY.

Rastus: "Does you know, Sambo, dat a man gets run over ebbery few minutes in London?"

Sambo: "Yas, and ah pities de poor guy!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Jacobus, 313, Finchley Road, Hampstead, London, N.W.3.

A SLIP OF THE PEN.

Boarder: "My name is Carpenter. You've put it down as Carter."

Clerk: "Oh, that's only a slip of the pen!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Broughton, 3, Grange Road, Cleckheaton, Yorks.

"There!" said Blake. "I don't think that can be improved on at present; but everybody here who's so much as seen a Rugger ball has got to practise. We shall be able to manage this affair rippingly without the Shell."

"Hear, hear!"

And the Fourth Form meeting broke up.

CHAPTER 7.

The Rugger Fourth!

EARLY the next morning Jack Blake sat up in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House. It was not yet time for the rising-bell, and it was not Blake's habit to waken before that clang rang through the morning air.

Something had awakened him, and, as he sat up in bed, wondering what it was, he heard a clink at the dormitory window.

Clink, clink!

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

Clink!

The junior jumped out of bed, and ran to the window and looked out.

In the dim light of dawn three or four figures were visible below.

"Hallo!" said Blake.

"Hallo!" came back the voice of Figgins. "Get up, lazybones! Have you forgotten the Rugger practice before breakfast?"

"You're up jolly early!" yawned Blake.

"Well, if you School House chaps are going to slack—"

"Rats! We'll be down in a jiffy!"

"We're waiting for you."

Blake turned back into the dormitory.

The Fourth Formers were still sleeping in blissful unconsciousness of the early rising of Figgins & Co., but Blake soon changed that.

He whipped the bedclothes off D'Arcy's bed, and the swell of St. Jim's started up with an exclamation:

"Bai Jove!"

"Jump up, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Time to get up!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"No slackin'!" said Blake severely.

"I'm not slackin'," said Arthur Augustus, groping for

HELPFUL!

Bill (who is tangled up in wire-netting): "Hey, Tom, how do you make a chicken run?"

Tom: "Clap your hands and say 'Shoo'!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Williams, 24, Cornuna Avenue, Colonel Light Gardens, Adelaide, Australia.



his eyeglass. "But I dislike bein' woke up so vevy abwuptly. I wegard you as an ass. You have thwone me into quite a flutah!"

"Help me to wake the others," said Blake, going to Dig's bed.

He had Digby's bedclothes off in a twinkling, and Dig gave a yell.

"Yaroo! Oh!"

"Time to get up!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Herries, old man—"

"Keep that rotten sponge away, Blake, or I'll jolly well punch your head!" exclaimed Herries, rolling out of bed.

"Reilly—"

"Faith, and I'm getting up!"

"Hancock—"

"I'm up, you chump! Keep that sponge away!"

Blake chuckled. The juniors were turning out fast enough. In a few minutes they were bolting into their football things.

"Groogh!" said Kerruish. "It's c-cold!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I say, it's not a very good idea having a practice before breakfast," Jones remarked. "Suppose we put it off till the— Ow, ow, ow!"

"Anybody suggest putting it off?" asked Blake, dipping

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

the squeezed sponge into the water again, and looking round blandly.

No one else suggested it.

The Fourth Formers were soon ready to go down, and they followed Jack Blake from the dormitory, surprising the early housemaid by their unexpected appearance.

Figgins & Co. were waiting in the quadrangle.

It was a very fine and clear morning, and as soon as they were in the open air the juniors felt keen enough. Some of them were already munching, and there was a great aroma of bullseyes about Fatty Wynn.

Blake had brought out a Rugger ball, which he was fortunately in possession of, and the juniors lost no time in getting to work.

As Blake was the originator of the Rugger Fourth idea, it had been taken for granted that he was to be the captain, Figgins gracefully refraining from putting forward any claim to that position.

But Blake, who was generally quite willing to take the lead—perhaps a little too willing—was too businesslike to think of doing so when there was an evidently better leader to be had, for the special occasion of fighting Tipton.

He tapped Fatty Wynn on the shoulder as they reached the footer ground.

"Fatty, old man, I want you to take—"

"Take what?" asked Fatty quickly. "As a matter of fact, I'm jolly hungry, Blake. I've had nothing to eat this morning but a pie and some bullseyes."

Blake laughed.

"Nothing to eat, Fatty!"

Wynn's face fell.

"Oh!" he said.

"I wish you to take the lead."

"The lead!"

"Yes. You're the best Rugger man here, and I think you ought to captain us against Tipton."

Fatty Wynn looked very pleased.

"Well, I suppose I play Rugger about the best of this lot," he assented. "I was brought up on the game. I'll skipper if you like."

"That's settled, then."

"And it's jolly decent of you, Blake, although you're a School House chap," said Figgins.

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Blake as havin' done the pwopah thing, except that I wegard it as wathah wotten to have a New House chap for a leadah."

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I decline to wing off! I was thinkin'—"

"Ready, there!"

"I was thinking that Blake is weally hardly up to the posish of leadah, so he has done quite wight to wesign. But he should have asked me to take ovah the posish."

"Rats!"

"I wegard myself as wathah a dab at Wuggah, and I have no doubt that Fatty Wynn will wegnise the fact that I am a more suitable person to take the lead, and will wesign in my favah," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the fat Fourth Former.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"No jolly fear!" he remarked.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Play up!" said Blake.

"Pway don't be in a huwwy, Blake! I wegard this as a vevy important question."

"But it's settled."

"No; Wynn has not yet wesigned in my favah," explained D'Arcy.

"Ass!"

"I wufese to be called an ass! I put it plainly to Fatty Wynn. Now, weally, Fatty Wynn, don't you sewiously considah that I am more suitable to be skippah?"

Fatty Wynn looked D'Arcy over.

"Well, that's according," he remarked. "If it was to be skipper of a team of tailor's dummies, or of white rabbits, I should say yes; but—"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Oh, come on, Gussy," said Blake, dragging his elegant chum on to the field. "You'll go on talking till breakfast bell!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Line up, there!"

And the team fell to practice.

Blake had brought out his full force, and there were thirty of the Fourth Formers on the ground, and under Fatty Wynn's direction they soon fell into shape.

Fatty may not have been an ideal captain, being too fat and easy-going and good-natured to keep in order a team that required much management. But much management was not required now.

The fellows were all bucking-up and doing their best to

Continued on page 14.)

GREAT NEW ST. FRANK'S SERIAL-STORY COMING!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! The headline above sums up in brief the good news I have for you this week. A great new serial-story by Mr. E. S. Brooks commences a fortnight from to-day. So popular has our present serial been with readers that I asked the author to write another story of the further adventures of the boys of St. Frank's on their world educational tour aboard the Sky Wanderer. Naturally, Mr. Brooks was very keen on the idea, and I have now got his latest effort—and it's another winner. All I will tell you about it this week is that the story is staged on a wild island in the Pacific, and from the moment the Sky Wanderer lands on it, thrilling adventure starts with a bang!

You are all going to like this new serial even more than the present one, and no praise could be high enough for it, I am sure. Watch out for further details next week, chums.

Meanwhile, Martin Clifford has provided another star St. Jim's story for us next Wednesday. It's a marvel the way he keeps up his consistently high standard. It's no easy task, week after week, thinking out a different plot and writing it up into a long story that cannot fail to have its appeal to all types of readers. However, we can safely rely upon Mr. Clifford "to keep the pot a-boiling," so to speak. He has certainly done so with

"THE WORST BOY AT ST. JIM'S!"

Who is the unfortunate fellow to have this title bestowed upon him? You will never guess, for, as a matter of fact, he is a new junior. His name is Albert Clyne, and he fully earns the title of the worst boy at the school. Clyne is an unprincipled scamp with a bad reputation, and he soon gets into hot water among his new school-fellows. Read and enjoy the amusing and exciting adventures of the chums of St. Jim's and the newcomer.

Next week's rousing instalment of

"THE WHITE GIANTS OF EL DORADO!"

concludes our grand serial, and what a conclusion it is! It ends in a blaze of thrills and a blaze of another kind, with the St. Frank's party in the midst of it all. Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the final chapters.

Finally, there will be another set of thrilling pictures from our picture-story, "Mick o' the Mounted!" and the Jester has another prize-winning selection of jokes from readers.

BLACK MAGIC!

If you had lived a few hundred years ago, you would probably have believed in black magic as naturally as you believe

that twice two makes four. But it comes as a shock to know that some modern learned men believe in it even to-day! One of them, a doctor, has just written a book describing some magical miracles which he and others are quite convinced actually happened. One of these amazing incidents describes how the Dalai Lama, ruler of Tibet, told a dead man to get out of his coffin and walk—which the corpse did!

It sounds quite incredible, doesn't it? But is there just a chance that in a country like Tibet, where white men go only once every few years, such things do happen? It makes you think!

CAN YOU SOLVE THIS?

I came across a very clever brain-teaser the other day; I wonder if you can solve it. The puzzle is to punctuate the following sentence and make it read sensibly: "Where Tom had had had Bill had had had had." If you can't find the answer for yourself, look at the end of my chat, where the solution is printed.

PAUL, THE PARROT.

Town Malling, Kent, is still chuckling over the antics of a parrot belonging to a resident in the High Street. Paul, as this forty-year-old jasper is called, is hung outside his owner's window when the weather is fine, and amuses himself by screaming at the top of his voice, "Hi, stop!" at passing buses. Hearing the shout, the driver of the bus promptly pulls up with a jarring of brakes and starts looking for the would-be passenger, while Paul sits back to enjoy the joke!

THE DEATH RAY!

In a London laboratory some British scientists have made experiments with a new type of ray which can kill at a range up to forty-eight feet. Naturally, no experiments have been made on human beings, but small animals have been killed by this new invisible weapon. It works by wireless, of course, but it is not the rays themselves which kill. What happens is that the death ray acts upon its victim and makes him vulnerable to the disease germs in the air which, in a normal state, living things are not affected by. The victim therefore dies of a kind of plague.

It is not as a horrible weapon of war that this death ray is being perfected,

To Irish Free State Readers.

Readers in the Irish Free State are requested to note that when free gifts are offered with the GEM, they can only be supplied when the article is of a non-dutiable character.

however, but as a means for doing good. It has the power to kill disease germs in growing plants and animals, and its inventors hope that one day they will bring it to a state of perfection whereby it can be used to treat fields of blighted crops, or people suffering from what we now call incurable diseases.

A COMPASS PLANT.

In the State of Texas, in the United States of America, outdoor folk have known for a long time that a plant known as the traveller's plant can be used as a compass, for it always turns its leaves and flowers towards the north, despite wind, rain, snow, or sun. Botanists have been trying to discover why the plant has this strange habit, but without success.

The plant is jolly useful to anyone lost in the plains where it grows. He just sees in which direction its foliage is pointing, and then, if his course is due south, say, he sets off in the opposite direction, knowing that the plant cannot be wrong.

FIREMEN VERSUS TIDDLERS!

If you look at the ends of the hoses through which water is pumped aboard a fire-boat—a vessel used for fire-fighting in harbours and rivers—you will see they are closed by big copper strainers pierced with tiny holes. During a chat I had with a river fireman the other day, I was told an interesting fact about these strainers.

Their purpose is to prevent stray flotsam from the river getting into the hoses, of course, but they also have an irresistible attraction for tiddlers, who will poke their noses into the tiny holes and block them up. During a big fire, when water is being pumped through those hoses at the rate of thousands of gallons per hour, the tiddlers soon block all the holes, and the pumps have to be stopped while the fish are picked out one by one.

So next time you want a few tiddlers, go and ask the fire-boat men for some when they are in the middle of fighting a big fire. Perhaps you'd better not, though!

A MODEL PLANE RECORD.

While competing in a model plane contest at Windsor, Australia, a sixteen-year-old boy sent his home-made model skywards to an altitude of about 6,000 feet. Observers with stop-watches timed its flight for 28 minutes 30 seconds, and then the machine went out of sight. A search for it was made, but as the model plane could not be found a reward for its recovery was offered by the club which had organised the contest. The machine was found in due course no less than five miles from where it started! Some flight, eh?

ADVENTURE BOUND!

Because three New Zealand youths thirsted for adventure, they are now aboard the good ship Jacob Ruppert, and on their way to the South Pole. The ship, which is carrying Admiral Richard Byrd's Polar expedition to the Antarctic, called at Wellington, New Zealand, before setting off on the last stage to the Farthest South, and there the three adventure-seeking youngsters stowed away on board. They were not discovered till the ship was plunging through the Ross Sea, so they had to be enrolled in the members of the expedition—which is what they wanted!

SOLUTION TO

"CAN YOU SOLVE THIS?"

"Where Tom had had 'had,' Bill had had 'had had.'"

THE EDITOR.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

St. Jim's in the Scrum!

(Continued from page 12.)

get into good form, for the sake of triumphing over Tipton, and Fatty had only to tell them what to do.

In the keen interest of the play the juniors did not notice that the rest of St. Jim's were gradually getting astir, and did not see the Terrible Three and a crowd of the Shell fellows coming down to the ground.

Tom Merry stared at the Rugger players.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"Playing Rugger, by Jove!" said Monty Lowther.

"This is the result of the giddy meeting, then."

"The young asses!"

"Cheeky young duffers!"

"Blake! Here, Blake!"

Blake turned his head for a moment.

"Can't talk now," he said. "See you later!"

"But—"

"No time!"

"Buck up, there!" rang out Fatty Wynn's voice.

And Blake was too busy to speak again.

The Shell fellows remained watching till, a few minutes before breakfast-time, the Fourth Formers came off the ground and put on their coats and hurried back to their Houses to change into everyday attire.

The Terrible Three joined Blake and Gussy as they went towards the School House in a rapid walk.

CHAPTER 8.

A Fourth Form Affair.

TOM MERRY was looking concerned. He thought he knew the little game of the Fourth Formers now, and it bothered him. He did not quite know how to deal with this new development.

"Blake," he exclaimed, as he kept stride with the Fourth Formers, "what's the little game?"

"Rugger!" said Blake innocently.

"Ass! I mean—"

"A variety of football," explained Blake. "You see, there are two varieties of the game, called Soccer and Rugger. We—"

"Don't be an ass! What are you Fourth Form kids practising Rugger for?"

"To get into form."

"For what?"

"The match."

"What match?"

"With Tipton."

"What?"

"When?"

"Saturday afternoon," said Blake serenely.

"Look here, Blake, the Junior Club has already declined to play Tipton."

"We're not going to play them as members of the Junior Club! I'm writing to Hobson to tell him, if he cares to take us on."

"If they lick you—I mean when they lick you—they'll regard it as a victory over St. Jim's."

"They can regard it as they like."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Besides, they won't lick us!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "I'm in hopes of getting some recruits from Greyfriars."

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MICK O'THE

OUR THRILLING PICTURE-STORY

Mick Ray goes to the Pine Gulch Reservation to investigate the mystery of a "White Demon." Mick is returning by canoe to make his report when he is suddenly lassoed.



"Grab hold of the boat!" Dimly Mick heard the words as he struggled in the rapids; dazedly he glimpsed the White Demon. Next moment he clutched at the canoe as it swept past.



The boat rocked dangerously, but using the paddle expertly, the mysterious figure in white steered to safety. Reaching the bank, the White Demon carried the exhausted Mountie ashore.



After a change of clothes, Mick was summoned by the superintendent. "Hooded Raven complains that you made no attempt to capture the White Demon last night," said the super.



Mick protested against the unfairness of the complaint, and vowed he would capture the White Demon. That night he was patrolling near the reservation when he saw a signal light by the river.



Still concealed, Mick saw the White Demon pick up a cask and, broaching it, empty the contents into the river. "Looks like raw spirit," said Mick, and decided it was time for action.



"Put up your hands!" he ordered, striding forward with his gun raised. "What's your game—?" Mick broke off in amazement as the White Demon turned and spoke in a muffled voice.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's)

MOUNTED!

ORY OF THE WILD WEST!

White Demon." In the night he encounters the Demon, but the unknown escapes. Mick is jerked from his boat into the rapids. But the Demon comes to his help.



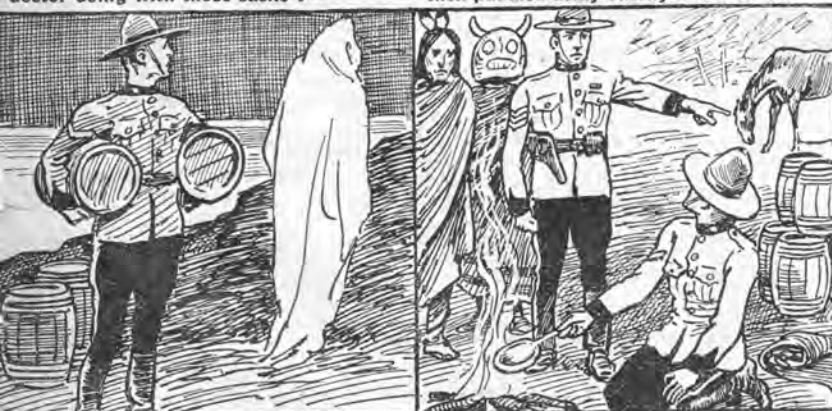
"You saved my life—but who are you?" Mick, having recovered from his ordeal, asked the question. The White Demon shook his head. "That I cannot tell you," he said, and walked away.

Mick returned to the barracks, and there saw Hooded Raven, the Indian witch-doctor, talking to the superintendent. "Curious why that Indian always wears his headdress," muttered Mick.



Mick crept down to the river-bank, and saw Hooded Raven and two other Indians unloading casks from a canoe. "Gosh!" exclaimed Mick. "What's that witch-doctor doing with those casks?"

Suddenly a white-robed figure appeared—the White Demon! The Indians dropped the casks and bolted in terror, while the white man fired at the ghostly figure and then paddled away swiftly in the canoe.



The story which the White Demon told Mick made the Mountie gasp. "I'll take charge of these casks," he said at last, "and together we'll get to the bottom of this business!"

Mick camped out that night, and in the morning received visitors—Sergeant Kelly and Hooded Raven! "So you're one of the smugglers, Ray!" said Kelly, and pointed at the casks.

(An exciting set of pictures.)

"Greyfriars!" repeated Tom Merry. "Yes, rather—fellows like Linley, you know. If we can make up a strong team and lick Tipton—"

"Rats!"

"Well, we're going to try."

"Look here, Blake, it won't do. The Junior Club—"

"The Junior Club's nothing to do with this," said Blake grimly. "It's quite a private venture of our own, in the Fourth. We're not admitting any Shell fellows at all."

"Wathah not!"

"It won't do. The Tiptonians will look on it as the regular St. Jim's team, and they will crow just the same if they lick you."

"Can't help that! Besides, I'm explaining the matter fully to Hobson. He will know it's a Fourth Form team. Anyway, we're playing Tipton on our own. The Fourth Form can do as it likes, I suppose."

"I wathah think so. As a mattah of fact, we should uttahly wefuse to be instructed in anythin' by the Shell, you know."

The juniors went in to breakfast, and the subject dropped.

Tom Merry wore a worried look. He did not quite know how to deal with the matter. As junior captain he had declined to play Tipton. But he had no control of the juniors outside the pale of the club. If the Fourth Formers chose to take the reins in their own hands and play Tipton "on their own," he did not see what he was to do.

Jack Blake looked very pleased with himself during breakfast. The morning practice had turned out very well considering everything.

A great deal depended upon the answer to his letter to Greyfriars, but apart from that Blake was not without hope of beating Tipton.

After morning school that day the Fourth Formers went down to the Rugger practice with as much assiduity as they had ever shown in turning out for Soccer.

A great number of the Shell fellows came to look on, and some of them sought out Tom Merry and wanted to know what he thought about it.

The captain of the Shell told them, with his usual frankness. He explained that he considered Blake an ass, and all his backers asses, too.

"Are you going to let them play Tipton?" Gore wanted to know.

"I don't see how I'm to prevent them, Gore."

"You're junior captain."

"But this isn't the junior team that's playing," said Tom Merry. "They're playing as private individuals on their own."

"Well, then, tell them that every chap who plays for Blake will be excluded from the junior team in future," said Gore.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No good cutting off one's nose to spite one's face, Gore, old man. We don't want to lose half a dozen of our best players in the next Soccer match."

"Rats!"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"If that's all you've got to say, Gore—"

"It isn't," said Gore. "My idea is that you ought to kick the Fourth Formers out of the junior eleven. Then you could play more Shell fellows."

Monty Loyther burst into a laugh.

"My hat! Gore is thinking that he'd like his cap for the junior eleven, Tommy."

Gore turned red.

"Well, I don't see why not," he exclaimed.

"You'll have your cap if you're ever fit for it," said Tom Merry, "but not at the cost of turning out better men, my son."

"Look here! If Blake is allowed to play Tipton the team ought to be as strong as possible," said Gore, changing his ground. "A few Shell fellows would give it a backbone, I think."

"They won't play the Shell, they say."

"I dare say they would if they had an offer from the Shell."

"Well, you can try if you like."

"I jolly well will."

And Gore strode away angrily towards the football ground. Tom Merry looked after him and smiled, and turned to Monty Lowther.

"Gore's been turning over a new leaf lately," he remarked. "But I fancy there's a lot of the old Adam left in him. How jolly quick he was to jump at the chance of getting one of the other fellow's caps for the eleven."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"That's Gore all over," he remarked.

And it certainly was. Gore had taken up football lately, and as his usual amusements had been more in the line of smoking and betting on horses, when he had an opportunity, he felt very virtuous about it and considered that he ought to be backed up.

Tom Merry was quite willing to back him up, as far as that went, and was pleased to see him developing a decent character, but not to the extent of playing him in the junior eleven while there was a better man going.

Gore arrived on the football ground, and found the Fourth Formers hard at it. He called to Blake, but Blake was far too busy to talk. He called to Figgins, and then to D'Arcy, but received no reply.

Scowling, he waited for the practice to be over.

The juniors stopped it at last, and as they came off the ground Gore spoke to Jack Blake. He assumed his most agreeable smile for the occasion.

"I hear you're getting together a team to play Tipton, Blake," he remarked.

"We've got it together," said Blake.

"Looking for decent players, of course?"

"Oh, yes."

"Look here—I've played Rugby at home," said Gore. "I think you'd find me useful, and I should be quite willing to play."

"Sorry! We're not playing anybody from the Shell."

"Hang it all! If I'm willing to play in a team of kids I should think you'd be willing to have me!" exclaimed Gore angrily.

Blake smiled.

"You may think so, but you're wrong," he replied coolly. "We're not willing to take anybody from the Shell. This is wholly a Fourth Form affair—the Rugger Fourth, you know. Sorry, of course."

"You'll be licked."

"Thanks!" said Blake lazily.

"Look here, are you captaining the team?"

"No; Fatty Wynn. He's our best Rugger man."

"Oh, then I needn't waste my time on you!" said Gore angrily.

"Certainly not!" said Blake, laughing.

Gore hurried over to Fatty Wynn and slipped his arm through Wynn's in the most friendly manner. Fatty looked at him.

"I want to speak to you, Wynn. Are you willing to—"

"What is it—a feed?"

"A feed! No!"

"Then I'm in rather a hurry," said Wynn, drawing his arm away. "Excuse me, won't you?"

"Look here, Wynn, I'm willing to play for the Rugger team."

"No Shellfish allowed."

"But I can play—"

"Sorry—not possible!"

And Fatty Wynn went into the New House with Figgins and Kerr, and Gore retired baffled.

After the practice that evening, when Blake returned to the School House, he found a letter waiting for him with the Friardale postmark on it.

He read it out to the gleeful juniors. It was the reply from Harry Wharton, of the Remove Form—the Lower Fourth—at Greyfriars School:

"Dear Blake,—Glad to hear from you, and glad, too, that we can help you in the way you want. We have only a very small match on for Saturday, and we can easily make up a strong enough team without four of the fellows who usually play, and they are quite willing to come over and lend you a hand. They are Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Tom Brown, and David Morgan. They have met you before. They all play Rugby, and Linley, for one, plays it better than Soccer, and I think you will find them useful. They'll be over as early as possible on Saturday.

"Always yours,

"HARRY WHARTON."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Hurrah!" said the juniors in chorus.

"Good!" said Jack Blake. "We'll leave out the four weakest players to make room for them, and between us, my sons, we'll give Tipton the licking of their lives."

And the Fourth Formers shouted again:

"Bravo!"

Jack Blake looked rather anxiously at the letter-rack after lessons on Friday.

Tom Merry, coming out of the Shell Form Room with his chums, stopped and looked, too.

"Expecting cheques and postal-orders, Jack?" asked Monty Lowther. "If so, don't forget your best chum, Monty!"

Blake shook his head.

"No," he said. "I'm expecting a reply from Tipton."

"Haven't they answered yet?"

"No," said Blake, with rather a worried expression. "I wrote to say that we were getting up a team to meet them, and I expected an answer; but it hasn't come. I suppose the cads can't be intending to leave the letter unanswered, can they? It would be just like Hobson to back out of the match now that he knows we'll play."

The Terrible Three grinned.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Tom Merry. "Serve you right for your cheek in taking on a thing like this."

"Oh, rats!"

"Perhaps they're coming over to see you about it," suggested Manners.

"They're leaving it jolly late, then."

"Come on, kids!" said Tom Merry. "If we're going to

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get a spin before dark we'd better get the bikes out. No time to lose."

"Right you are!"

And the Terrible Three hurried out.

Blake took a last look over the letter-rack. He was surprised at a letter not having arrived from Tipton.

CHAPTER 9.

Gay's Warning!

"THEY'VE come!"

"Here they are!"

"Bai Jove! It's time, too!"

Jack Blake and a crowd of the Fourth Form were standing at the gates of St. Jim's, looking for possible visitors from Tipton. They had kept up the Rugger practice till dusk forced them to stop. Then they had leisure to be anxious about the failure of a reply from Tipton.

Glad enough was Jack Blake when he saw the three Tipton fellows cycling up. It was a great relief.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I nevah thought I should be glad to see a Tipton cad, you know, but I am, you know."

The cyclists came to a halt.

"So you've come, Hobson," said Blake, rather grimly.

"Yes, here we are!"

"Might have come before, or written, I should think."

"We'll make the arrangements now," said Hobson, standing with his hand on his machine. "We won't come in, thanks!"

"Oh, just as you like!" said Blake. "Here, where's Wynn? He's skipper!"

"Wynn! Where's Wynn?"

"In the tuckshop, I expect," said Kangaroo, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha! Most likely!"

"Come into the tuckshop and jaw it over there, you fellows!" said Blake hospitably. "They've got some jolly good cakes, and coffee, too!"

punched me in the back—hoo—groo! It's all right now—groo—groo—groo!"

"We've come over to make the arrangements for tomorrow," said Hobson loftily.

"All right—groo!"

"I suppose you'll come over to our ground, as it's a Rugger match?"

"Certainly—hoo—groo!"

"What time will suit you?"

"Late as possible," whispered Figgins to Fatty Wynn. "Give time to the Greyfriars fellows to get here."

"Good! Groo! Late as possible," said Fatty Wynn.

"Friends coming from a distance to play. Hoo—groo!"

"Say kick-off at three," said Hobson.

"Half-past three," said Figgins.

"Half-past three," said Fatty Wynn. "Hoo—hoo—groo!"

"Oh, all right! It's settled."

"Quite settled."

"It seems that we're not playing the junior team," Marker observed. "A team picked out of the Fourth Form, isn't it?"

"Yes, with some friends who are playing for us. Groo!"

"Not old stagers, I suppose?"

"Oh, no! Fourth Form chaps, like ourselves—in fact, Lower Fourth."

"Good! That's all right," said Hobson.

"Won't you come in and—groo—groo—groo—" coughed Fatty Wynn. "I mean, won't you come in and—he-he-hem-hem! That is, have some refreshments?"

"No, thanks."

"Time we were off," said Crane.

And the Tipton trio mounted their machines and pedalled away in the dusk.

The next morning there was one topic in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—Rugger.

Rugger was in their minds, and Rugger was on their lips; Rugger had been in their dreams on the previous night.

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Hobson shook his head. He preferred to keep up his lofty attitude of ill-humour.

"Thanks, no!"

Blake compressed his lips.

"Oh, very well! I'll fetch Wynn."

He ran to the school shop, and there, as he expected, was Fatty Wynn finishing a plate of tarts.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's looked at Blake with an affable smile.

"Hallo!" he remarked. "Try these tarts. I'm on the last of my lot. I'm sorry, but Mrs. Taggles has got lots more. Haven't you, Mrs. Taggles?"

"Plenty, Master Wynn."

"I haven't come here for tarts," said Blake. "I've come for you. Come on!"

"What's on?" asked Fatty, bolting his last tart.

"Fellows from Tipton want to see the Rugger skipper. Come on!"

And Blake grasped Fatty Wynn by the arm and dragged him out. The fat Fourth Former coughed and turned purple in the face.

"Gro-ooh!" he gasped. "D-don't! I'm cho-choking!"

"Well, you can choke in the quad just as well as here!" said Blake practically.

"Ow! O-oh! Groogh!"

Blake patted Fatty Wynn on the back—or, more correctly, thumped him. The fat New House fellow roared.

"Ow! Hoo! Groo! Silly ass! Chuck it!"

"Feel better?" asked Blake.

"Yah! Ass! Lemme alone!"

And Fatty Wynn jerked himself away and coughed without Blake's assistance. They arrived at the gates, Fatty Wynn still grunting.

"Glad to see you—hoo—hoo!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "Excuse me—hoo—groo—just swallowed a tart, and silly ass

They gloried in the title they had given themselves of the Rugger Fourth. They swanked as the only exponents at St. Jim's of the game. They patronised the Shell in a way that brought about many warm arguments and not a few fistical encounters.

"You fellows should really take up Rugger," said little Thompson of the Fourth in an insufferable manner, addressing the Terrible Three, the mighty footballers of the Lower School. "You should really, you know. Splendid for developing a chap, you know."

And little Thompson drew himself up to the full height of his five-foot-one.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther and Manners together.

"Splendid thing for you if you did," said little Thompson. "I don't like to see you fellows slacking about."

"What?"

"Of course, we couldn't have you in our team—I'm down as a reserve. But you might get up some sort of a team of your own."

"Eh?"

"Yes, some sort of a team in the Shell," said little Thompson. "I really don't see why you shouldn't."

Some sort of a team! It was too much. With one accord the Terrible Three grasped little Thompson and rolled him down the steps.

Blake & Co. were at practice that morning before breakfast, and there was no doubt that there had been a great improvement in form.

The fifteen were pulling together well, and there was no doubt, either, that the team would be improved when the Greyfriars fellows came.

Tom Merry watched them at practice.

"Good!" he said. "I don't know if they'll lick Tipton!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

but they'll put up a fairly good show, and that's really quite as much as can be expected of the Fourth."

"Quite!" agreed Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" said Jack Blake, coming off the ground in time to hear the remark. "You just come along and see the match, my sons, and see us lick 'em!"

"We'll come along," said Tom Merry. "If you do lick Tipton you'll need to have some friends on the ground, my boy."

"How do you mean?"

"I know the Tiptons' little ways. I was told the other day about their playing the Grammar School. Gordon Gay and his men licked them hollow—playing Rugger, too—and the Tipton fellows got up a row with them on the ground."

"Rotten!" said Blake.

"Well, as the Grammarians had only about eighteen fellows there in all, they were pretty badly rushed."

Blake looked grave.

"I hadn't heard about that," he said. "It's rotten! We're going to beat Tipton if we can, of course."

"Oh, I don't suppose you're in much danger!"

"Rats! It would be beastly to be rushed by a crowd of them if we lick Tipton. But perhaps some of the fault was on the Grammar School side. Those fellows are always getting into rows. They have rows with us, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I know they do. But I fancy Tipton got their backs up because they were licked. Anyway, you want to look out."

"Bai Jove! Yaas!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I shall make it a point to look out. If the Tipton chaps begin any wotten twicks, you know, I shall give them a fearful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We simply must go over," Monty Lowther remarked. "It's worth the journey to see Gussy thrashing all Tipton at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy walked on with his nose high in the air. But Blake was not laughing. He knew that there was something in the warning Tom Merry had given him.

The Tipton fellows were known to be very unsportsmanlike. They had sent that challenge to St. Jim's in the full expectation of licking the Saints if the challenge had been accepted. Would they have sent it if they had anticipated a fair game on equal terms?

Blake knew the answer to that question was "No." They wouldn't; and so it was pretty certain that they would get ratty if they were beaten.

Blake would never have expected even fellows who were unsportsmanlike and ever so ratty to rush players who had come to meet them on their own ground.

But the story of the Grammarians' experience was a clincher. There was no getting out of that.

Blake related what Tom Merry had told him to the Fourth Formers, and they all looked grave over it.

"I shouldn't wonder if we have to look for something of the sort," said Figgins. "That won't prevent us from licking them if we can, of course."

"Wathah not!"

"But we shall have to look out, that's all."

"We'll make the whole Fourth go with us," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Tom Merry says he's coming with the Shell crowd to see fair play," Blake remarked thoughtfully.

"That's jolly decent of him after the way we've taken the affair out of his hands!" Figgins exclaimed.

"Well, Tom Merry is decent, jolly decent—always was!"

"Yaas, wathah! I will say that for Tom Mewwy. He doesn't always treat a fellow with pwopah respect; but he is jolly decent."

"Only the Tiptonians will be such a big crowd that we may get walked over, anyway, if they cut up rough," Kerr remarked.

"That's likely enough. But—"

"We'll try to keep on honey terms," said Monty Lowther. "A soft answer turns away wrath, you know."

"Something in that."

"Oh, lots!" said Lowther. "If Hobson says we can't play footer for toffee, we'll say that we like the way he does his front hair. If he declares that we are duffers and bouders, we'll say that his sweet voice haunts us still."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! But we'll keep on peaceful terms, if we can, and if we can't, we'll give 'em all the fight they want."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And that was the best decision the St. Jim's Fourth could come to. It was too late in the day to think of making

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,353.

any alterations in the plans; and, after all, the Tipton crowd might play the game.

As soon as the time came, Blake and his men waited at the gates for the arrival of the charabanc that was to take them to the station, and the Greyfriars fellows, too.

Blake had wired the time of departure to Greyfriars, and he had no doubt that the Removites from the famous school would arrive in time.

As Blake and his chums stood looking out down the white road, three cyclists went by in a cloud of dust. They were Gay, Monk, and Wootton, of the Rylcombe Grammar School. The Saints gave them a yell, and the Grammarians slackened down and came tearing back.

It looked like a hostile demonstration for a moment, and the St. Jim's juniors were ready for it; but Gay waved his hand in sign of friendship, and jumped off his machine.

"No larks!" he exclaimed. "Pax! Look here! I hear you fellows are sending a team over to Tipton this afternoon."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, taking it upon himself to answer.

"Well, look out for squalls, if you win, that's all," said Gay. "We played them at Rugger last Saturday—you know we've a lot of Rugger players. We beat them hollow; they're not up to much form. And they cut up rusty, and there was a row on the ground. I told Tom Merry about it."

"Yes, I heard," said Blake.

"How many fellows are you taking?"

"Oh, there'll be forty or more of us in all!"

"Good! But look out, all the same."

"Thanks!" said Blake. "We'll look out."

The Grammarians rode on. Gordon Gay was silent for some minutes as they passed out of view of the St. Jim's fellows.

"We've had lots of rows with the Saints," he remarked at last.

Frank Monk grinned assent.

"Lots!" he said.

"But they always play the game."

"Always!"

"And Tipton don't."

"They don't!"

"Then," said Gordon Gay, "I think we may as well stroll over to Tipton this afternoon to see that Rugger match."

"Not much to see."

"No; but after the match—"

"But we're playing at home, Gay."

"We play early, and they must be playing late, as they haven't left St. Jim's yet," said Gordon Gay. "We shall have time to get over to Tipton by the time they finish."

"But—"

"And if there's any foul play, my sons, that's where we come in strong," said Gay. "Last Saturday they rushed us. If there's any trouble this afternoon, we'll pay them back in their own coin. What do you say?"

And Monk and Wootton said:

"What-ho!"

CHAPTER 10.

Off to Tipton!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars Remove, as he came swinging up to the gates of St. Jim's with his long stride. "Here we are!"

The Greyfriars fellows had arrived.

Bob Cherry shook hands with Blake.

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Tom Brown, and David Morgan of the Greyfriars Remove, looked in the best of form and the best of tempers.

The St. Jim's juniors greeted them warmly.

"Jolly glad to see you!" said Blake. "Jolly good of you to come. And here's the charabanc! Tumble in, you chaps!"

The fifteen, and the friends for whom room was found in the vehicle, were soon aboard. All the cargo belonged to the Fourth.

The Shell fellows stood round to see them off.

The Greyfriars four looked at them in surprise. Bob Cherry and his comrades did not yet know of the Rugger Fourth scheme.

"Who's skippingper this team, then?" Bob Cherry asked, as the charabanc started.

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Oh!"

"It's a Fourth Form match," Blake explained. "Tom Merry, as junior captain, refused to play Tipton, because we don't play Rugger. We've raised a Fourth Form team to beat them."

"Oh, I see!"

"With you fellows helping, I think we shall do it."



The Tiptonians rushed furiously at the St. Jim's juniors, and in a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs. "Shoulder to shoulder!" exclaimed Tom Merry. The Saints were cumbered with their bags, but they gave as good as they received, as they fought their way to the road.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll try our hardest," said Mark Linley. "It will be a pleasure to me, at least, to play a Rugger game again. I always used to play Rugger at home in Lancashire."

The charabanc soon reached the station, and the juniors took the train for Tipton.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and most of the Shell were walking down to the station, or had taken their machines out for a spin across country to the scene of the football match.

It was a merry party in the train going to Tipton. D'Arcy volunteered to sing a tenor solo, and was howled down, and was still in a state of considerable excitement when the train stopped at Tipton.

There were no Tipton fellows there to meet the team, and no vehicle, when Blake looked round for one.

Blake gave an expressive sniff.

"These Tipton chaps are simply pigs," he said to Bob Cherry. "We're only playing them to take them down a peg or two. They're not a side that we like to meet, you know."

"I understand," said Bob.

The juniors walked down to the school, carrying their bags, and inquiring their way.

They reached Tipton.

"Oh, here you are!" said Hobson, meeting them, and staring at them in a far from friendly manner. "You've come!"

"Didn't you expect us?" said Blake.

"We thought you'd most likely funk it at the last minute." Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"Well, we haven't," he said, as calmly as he could. "Here we are!"

"You're going to play—eh?"

"I suppose so."

"Here they are, you fellows!" called out Hobson. "They're going to play, after all!"

There was a laugh from some of the Tiptonians. The greeting could not be called polite. Bob Cherry and his friends said nothing, but their looks told a good deal. However, the rudeness of the Tiptonians was none of their business; they had come there to play for St. Jim's, that was all.

"Here's the pavilion," said Hobson. "You'd better change. We're quite ready. Matter of fact, we thought you were never coming, and we were getting up a practice match with the Fifth here."

"We're not late."

"Oh, it's all right, as you've come!"

"What do you think of the pigs?" demanded Blake, as he stripped off his jacket in the dressing-room. "What's your opinion of them?"

"I wegard them as wotten boundahs."

"Bounders isn't the word," said Bob Cherry. "We've got a chap at Greyfriars we call the Bounder, but he's a perfect gentleman compared with these chaps."

"Hogs!" said Figgins. "Never mind, we'll cure 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Kerr?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the—?"

"Very good!"

"What's good?" demanded Figgins.

"Why, that pun."

"What pun?"

Kerr stared.

"Might have guessed you did it by accident," he said. "I never knew you make a good one before, Figgy."

"Blessed if I know what you're jawing about!" said Figgins. "I never made any pun. I said they were hogs, and we'd cure 'em!"

"Cure 'em—see?" said Kerr. "Hogs—bacon cured, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, seeing his own joke. "Jolly good! I'll put that in 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"Yes, we'll cure 'em, and show them that they're rasher than they think!" said Hancock, venturing to carry the pun further.

At which there was a howl.

"Gammon!"

"My only hat!" said Blake, in astonishment. "If it were a punning match, I dare say we should win hands down."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Gussy, are you going to be all the afternoon getting into your things?"

"I considah—"

"Change first, and consider afterwards, old boy."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Buck up!" said Blake. "Those chaps are ready now. We don't want to keep them waiting. They're pigs."

Fatty Wynn's fifteen sallied out of the dressing-room.

They found Hobson & Co. quite ready, talking rather loudly among themselves, and to the crowd round the field.

Half Tipton seemed to have turned up for the match.

They looked on in anticipation of fun, not thinking for a moment that St. Jim's would make any show against the home side; and this opinion they expressed without taking the trouble to lower their voices.

Tipton may have been an excellent college in other respects, but certainly manners did not seem to be included in the curriculum, as Blake remarked to his friends.

The Tiptonians thought nothing of laughing at their

visitors and criticising their probable play in tones quite loud enough for them to hear. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass came in for its share of this well-bred commentary, and the swell of St. Jim's was soon quite crimson with indignation.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured to Blake. "I wathah think that I shall thrash some of these fellows before we leave Tipton, you know."

"I'd jolly well like to get a dozen of them into the gym at our show, with five or six of ours," said Blake. "We'd show 'em! But we're in too small a minority here, Gussy. Even those worms would lick us, so many against us."

"Yaas; but—"

"Ready, there?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Tipton fellows were ready, too. Round the ground was a swarm of Tiptonians, most of them laughing and exchanging jeering remarks. It was a new experience for the St. Jim's fellows, and their cheeks were burning.

CHAPTER 11.

The Rugger Match!

THE kick-off fell to Tipton.

The Tiptonians commenced with a swagger which showed how low they rated their opponents, and that alone would have been sufficient to put the St. Jim's backs up.

Jack Blake and his comrades were in a grim humour. They meant to show the swanking Tiptonians that there was something in them.

It was soon evident, too, that Tipton methods were of the roughest. Many of the Tipton players belonged to the Shell, and so the average age and weight was above that of Fatty Wynn's fifteen. This gave them an additional advantage in rough play; and Blake soon observed that the referee had a way of keeping one eye closed when the Tipton fellows offended.

The referee was a Sixth Form fellow of Tipton School, and the Saints had taken it for granted that he might be relied upon to do his duty; but they soon discovered that all the Tiptonians were tarred with the same brush.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as Hobson charged him from behind and sent him sprawling. "Gweat Scott!"

Blake gave him a hand up.

The swell of St. Jim's was very shaken, but his eye was gleaming hard.

"All wight, deah boy!" he said quietly.

"Hurt, Gussy?"

"Nothing to speak of."

D'Arcy was not likely to speak of it, if he was hurt. But he kept an eye on Hobson after that.

His chance came presently.

Hobson, who was playing three-quarter for his side, got away with the ball, and looked like clearing a path through the St. Jim's defence.

Blake and Figgins, and two or three other forwards, tried to stop him in vain, the Tipton skipper either shouldering them off or eluding them.

But a St. Jim's three-quarter was on his track.

It was Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's skimmed over the ground with a fleetness that astonished those who had chiefly observed him lounging round with an eyeglass in his eye. It was evident that there was real stuff in Arthur Augustus.

Fatty Wynn was full-back, and he was ready for Hobson. It was doubtful if the Tipton skipper would have got past him. But Hobson realised that, and instead of carrying out his original intention of touching down, he tried to drop a goal.

But just as the ball was leaving his fingers, two arms were flung round Hobson, and he was whirled over.

He came to the ground with a crash, and Arthur Augustus fell across him, and seemed disinclined to move.

Hobson lay with his brain swimming, hardly knowing what had happened, but with a general impression that there had been a terrible earthquake, and that he had been in the very centre of it.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he gasped blindly.

"Bai Jove!"

The rival packs quickly formed a loose scrum, and the ball was heeled back to Kerr, who dashed in and collared it in a twinkling, and was off with it towards the Tipton goal-line.

"Ow!" gasped Hobson. "Yow! Gerroff!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slowly drew his elegant limbs off the Tipton skipper, and gave him a sweet smile as he rose.

"Yow!" groaned Hobson.

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"Quite a fair tackle, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Wathah differrent from your style of chargin'—quite fair and above-board, you know."

And the swell of St. Jim's ambled off contentedly.

Hobson staggered to his feet in a deserted field—deserted save by Fatty Wynn. The players were massed towards the Tipton goal.

For Kerr, the fellow who had never talked about what he could do at Rugby, was streaking through the enemy like lightning, and he had handed off or shouldered off half a dozen opponents, and charged over two, and eluded more of them, and now there was only Marker, the full-back, to stop him from touching down right under the crossbar.

Marker was watching him, ready.

Kerr came straight on at dashing speed, as if he meant to charge the full-back direct, and Marker stood steady and ready.

Within three feet of the back, Kerr swerved off with a suddenness that took Marker wholly by surprise, and in the twinkling of an eye he had reached the goal-line well to the side of the goal, and touched down with perfect coolness.

There was a roar from the Saints.

"Bravo, Kerr!"

"Hurrah!"

"Try! Try! Try!"

There wasn't any doubt on that subject.

It was a try—the first score of the game, and scored with surprising ease. The Tipton fellows simply glared, and the Saints overflowed with delight.

Figgins gave his chum a mighty slap on the back.

"Good old Kerr!" he bellowed. "Scotland for ever! Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard that as weally neat, you know. Those Tipton wottahs are all swank. If we'd had an extra week's pwactice before the match, we'd have walked all ovah them, deah boys."

And the "dear boys" fully assented.

The ball was carried out, and Tom Brown, of Greyfriars, was asked to take the kick. Tom Brown's quality was well known at St. Jim's, and they knew he had been brought up on the Rugger game in New Zealand.

He kicked, and the leather sailed gracefully over the crossbar.

The Saints shrieked.

"Goal!"

"Goal! Hurrah!"

Perhaps it wasn't quite the thing for the Saints to cheer themselves, but after the Tipton jeers and swank, they couldn't help it. It seemed so comic that goal and try both should come to them, the first taken in the game, after the airs the Tipton fellows had assumed.

Hobson was looking furious.

He didn't take the trouble to conceal what he felt. He was angry and savage. He had been very much shaken up by that terrific tackle by D'Arcy, and he didn't like that. And the St. Jim's score was exasperating.

He spoke in low tones to his men when they lined up, and they were all looking far from pleasant.

The Saints knew what was coming.

From the restart the game was rougher and more lawless. The Tiptonians were taking full advantage of their weight and size, and of the favourable eye of the referee.

In the scrum, too, they had an advantage, naturally, without foul play, and they generally got the better of the close play; but in the open the Saints seemed able to hold their own with their Greyfriars allies.

Blake was more and more satisfied with the latter as the game wore on.

Bob Cherry dropped a goal, and Mark Linley scored a try in the first twenty minutes, and the score of the visitors was already at eleven points.

Against this the Tipton fellows could count three for a try and three for a penalty goal, the latter a point stretched in their favour by the referee.

No wonder the St. Jim's fellows were feeling elated, and showing it, and no wonder the Tiptonians were feeling savage, and showing that, too.

And by this time the fellows from St. Jim's were beginning to drop in at the ground by twos and threes.

The Terrible Three arrived together, dusty from a fast cycle spin, and their first question on getting to the ground was:

"How's the score?"

The score was all right—St. Jim's eleven to six. Most of the points had been scored by the Greyfriars allies, but that didn't matter. So long as they were scored against Tipton, that was all right.

Tom Merry gave a gleeful laugh as he read the score.

"Eleven to six!" he exclaimed. "This is great!"

"Splendid!" said Monty Lowther.

"All the same, I was quite right to refuse to play with the official team," said Tom Merry seriously. "In the regular St. Jim's team we couldn't have played Greyfriars fellows, of course; and without them—"

"Without them, I fancy the Fourth would be getting a licking," Manners remarked. "You can see that it is Mark Linley and Brown, and Cherry, and Morgan who are holding the Tipton cads."

"Yes; and Kerr and Fatty Wynn. The others have more keenness than skill, I rather think; but with a little more practice—"

"With a little more practice they'd crawl all over Tipton."

"Exactly," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "But, as it stands, with the match to-day, and no time for practice, I was quite right to refuse the challenge. But I'm jolly glad to see Tipton getting licked all the same."

"And they will be licked."

"What ho! Look at that chap Linley—he's simply making hay of them," said Tom Merry enthusiastically.

Mark Linley, of Greyfriars, was certainly playing up wonderfully. Keen and cool and quiet, he was always ready, always fleet, never taken by surprise, and the Tipton fellows had no man within miles of him for form.

"Look, look!" shouted Tom Merry.

Mark Linley had the ball in his hands and was breaking for goal.

The way he simply walked through the clumsy Tipton forwards was a delight to watch. The defence was helpless against him.

Marker, the full-back, tackled him fairly before the goal, but the Lancashire lad dropped his tackle off as if it had been a flimsy thread thrown upon him, and leaving Marker on his back, he touched down under the bar.

The try was converted, and five points more were added to the score of the visitors, making it jump to sixteen.

Sixteen points to six!

And so closed the first half.

CHAPTER 12.

The Second Half!

FATTY WYNN and his men quitted play in very cheerful spirits.

There was no jealousy about them, and they gave their Greyfriars allies their full due. And the latter were very pleased.

They had never heard of Tipton before they heard of that match, and had never met the Tiptonians anywhere. But their brief acquaintance had been long enough to implant in their breasts a very keen dislike for Hobson & Co. And they enjoyed the prospect of licking the cads quite as much as the Saints themselves did.

"And we shall lick them," said Bob Cherry. "Sixteen to six! They can't make that up, unless they play in a very different style, my sons."

"Wathah not!"

"They're taking to fouling all the time," Jack Blake remarked. "It's rotten, and the referee ought to pull them up for it; but he won't."

"Oh, they've never heard of playing the game."

"But it's a good sign, look you," remarked Morgan, of Greyfriars. "They wouldn't begin foul play if they thought they could win fairly, whatever."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's right enough," said Figgins. "But with all their foul play, we'll beat them all the same. They can't play for toffee, as a matter of fact, and if we were in practice we'd squash them. But as it is, we've only two players in really good form—Wynn and Kerr. If it wasn't for you Greyfriars chaps, the cads would lick us hollow."

"Yaas, wathah, that's vewy twue, Figgys, though you have missed out the name of one more who's in wathah good form," said D'Arcy modestly.

Figgins grinned, affecting not to understand.

"Do you mean Blake?" he asked.

"Certainly not."

"Oh, Dig, I suppose?"

"I wasn't thinking of Dig."

"Herries, of course?"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Wathah!" not."

"Kerruish!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Time's up," said Blake.

And the players turned out upon the field again, without the swell of St. Jim's disclosing the name of the "one more" who was in good form!

The Tiptonians lined up, looking decidedly sullen.

The laughter and jeering remarks among the crowd, too, were missing. The Tipton crowd began to realise that their champions were in a bad way, and they didn't like it.

Little cared the Saints what they liked or disliked.

They threw themselves into the game cheerfully and energetically.

More and more fellows had arrived from St. Jim's by now, and there were two score of them gathered round the field looking on.

Tom Merry, anticipating trouble in the long run, called them altogether and warned them to look out for anything that might happen, and so the Saints remained in a compact group, ready to stand by one another if necessary.

Tom Merry believed that it would arise.

The faces of the Tiptonians, both on the field of play and off, were lowering and threatening, and if Hobson & Co. were beaten, Tom Merry was certain that there would be trouble.

And it certainly looked now as if they would be beaten.

Hobson and his men were playing like hooligans now, taking the most unfair advantages of the preference of the referee, and of their weight.

Fouls of the most glaring description were passed over when they were committed by the Tiptonians, and the Saints had already learned how useless it was to appeal to the referee. That gentleman either wasn't looking at the time, or was of a different opinion, and never once did he decide in their favour. But if one of the Saints retaliated with a little roughness, then the referee was looking—there was never any doubt about that. The whistle would shrill out instantly, and the offending player would be called to account.

Twice in the second half penalties were awarded to Tipton, and they scored, adding six points to their total; and the gross unfairness of it did not seem to worry the crowd at all. In fact, the Tiptonians seemed to regard the referee rather as a sixteenth man in the team, than as an umpire who should have been upright and unprejudiced.

But, even so, the St. Jim's score went ahead.

Tipton was mainly swank; and rough play, though it helped them, could not win the game for them, and with all the help of the referee, they could not expect actually to win the match on penalty goals.

So while the Tipton score crept up, the St. Jim's total was advancing by leaps and bounds.

Mark Linley was specially marked by the Tiptonians. The Lancashire lad had scored three tries in succession, in the space of ten minutes, and then Hobson resolved to be rid of him. Five or six of the heavy Tipton forwards found an opportunity of piling on him, and when Linley was extracted from beneath the heap he was looking very white and shaken.

The Saints were simply furious, and but for Blake's efforts, there might have been a free fight on the field then. But Mark Linley backed up Blake in keeping order.

"I'm not hurt!" he exclaimed. "I can go on. Keep it up, and lick them, that's all."

"The cads!" said Arthur Augustus. "The wotten cads! Look here, let's refuse to finish the match, and give them a fearful thwashin' instead."

"No—no! Go on!"

Mark Linley continued to play, but the cowardly device had succeeded; he was quite off his form now, limping instead of running like a deer. But for that, the St. Jim's score would have leaped up faster and faster, for the Tiptonians were very groggy now, and their defence grew weaker every minute.

But even without the aid of their best man, the Saints scored on, less fast, but fast enough to knock the Tipton chances sky-high.

Hobson and his men had given up hope now. The St. Jim's score was at forty points, and their own was under twenty, including all the penalty goals they had taken without being entitled to them.

The game was degenerating into a scramble, in which the Tiptonians played as roughly as they could and did everything but use their fists against their opponents.

The referee was too watchful for the Saints to retaliate in kind, penalties swooping down upon them at once at a sign of anything of the sort.

They remained patient, contenting themselves with the knowledge that they were beating Tipton hollow.

And they were—beating them as hollow as a drum, as Tom Merry put it. Forty-five points now—the last try

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and goal being taken almost without resistance on the part of the Tiptonians, so blown were they.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If we had a little longah to play, you know, we'd wun up a score of a hundred, you know."

Jack Blake laughed breathlessly.

"Yes, rather! They're on their last legs!"

Time was up now, but the referee, taking advantage of the powers vested in him of allowing extra time for stoppages, gave the Tiptonians another five minutes.

In that five minutes he helped them to a penalty goal, but it was all he could do. The game had to finish, and it finished with the St. Jim's score at forty-five, and the home total twenty-three.

Tipton had been soundly licked.

The Saints went off the ground, jubilant at their victory and savage at their treatment. The Tipton fellows went off scowling with anger and looks of thunder.

CHAPTER 13.

Well Licked!

TOM MERRY put his head into the dressing-room where the St. Jim's fifteen were changing.

His look was very serious.

"Better buck up," he said—"there's going to be trouble. Stick together. There's enough of us to make 'em look sick, I think!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

"Sorry to have got you chaps into this," Blake remarked, looking at his Greyfriars recruits. "It's rough on you!"

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Oh, it's ripping fun!" he exclaimed. "We'll enjoy a tussle with the cads. Feeling a bit fitter now, Marky?"

Mark Linley laughed cheerfully.

"Oh, yes, I'm all right now!" he said. "Ready to give those cads as good as they send, too, Bob!"

"That's right!"

The St. Jim's fellows left the pavilion and joined their friends outside. Hobson & Co. had changed, and most of them were scowling and talking loudly to their friends. There was no doubt that they meant trouble.

"Well," Hobson exclaimed, as he saw Blake, "you've pulled it off!"

"Just so," agreed Blake.

"You wouldn't if you'd played fair," said Marker.

Blake's face flamed.

"Played fair! Our play was only too fair!" he exclaimed.

"I wasn't going to speak about it, but since you've mentioned the subject I'll tell you what I think of you! You're a set of sneaks and cads! Your referee was ruling unfairly all the time, and two-thirds of the score you did make was a bare-faced swindle! You're not fit to play a team of Second Form fags, and your style of play is only fit for hooligans! I've heard that you refused to play a working-club team because they weren't good enough for you! Why, there isn't a working-lads' footer club in England that isn't worth fifty of you! If it hadn't been that we wanted to take down your swank we wouldn't have soiled our hands playing you! That's plain English!"

Plain English was apparently not to the Tipton taste. There was a yell as Blake concluded, and Hobson and several more dashed at him.

Blake laid Hobson on his back with an upper-cut that lifted him off his feet first, and Hobson, like the gentleman in the ballad, found that the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

But the others rushed on furiously, and in a moment or two there was a wild and whirling conflict going on.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" shouted Tom Merry.

Shoulder to shoulder, the St. Jim's fellows forced their way to the road. They were cumbered with their bags, but they fought their way out, many hard knocks being given and taken on both sides.

In the road the Tiptonians rallied in greater force and renewed the attack, and the further progress of the Saints was stopped. Another fierce rush of the Tiptonians and the St. Jim's group was almost broken. They hit out fiercely, and many of their foes were rolling in the dust.

In the midst of the uproar there came a sudden shout.

"Here they are! Grammar School to the rescue!"

"Hurrah!"

The road seemed alive with cyclists. Neither the Tiptonians nor the Saints knew how they came there, or why they came there—but there they were.

In a crowd the Grammar School juniors flung themselves into the conflict. They came in the nick of time. The Tiptonians, assailed by the new enemy, broke up at once. They were still in greater force, as far as numbers went, but they didn't want any more.

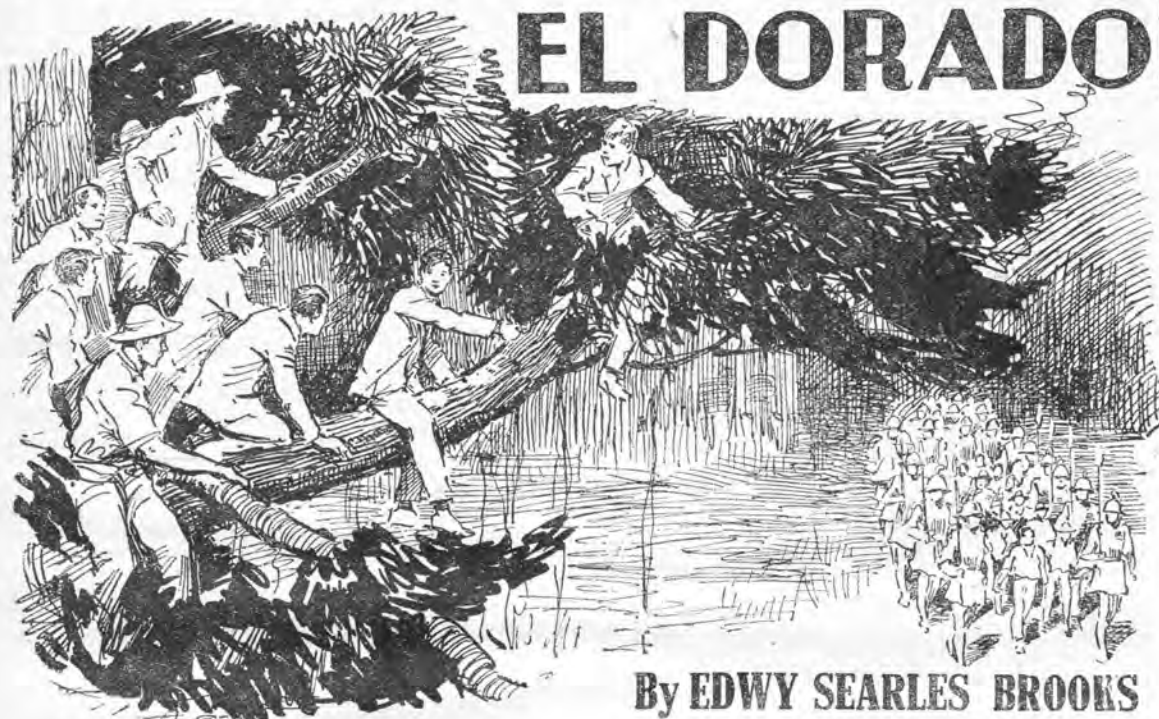
"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "It's Gay!"

Gordon Gay laughed.

(Continued on page 23.)

NELSON LEE & CO. CAUGHT IN THE GRIP OF A TREE OF DEATH!

THE WHITE GIANTS OF EL DORADO!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

In a super airship, the *Sly Wanderer*, a big party of St. Frank's fellows, under Nelson Lee and three other masters, set off on an educational tour of the world. With the party also are Lord Dorrmore and his black friend, Umlosi. The airship is brought down in Arzacland by a powerful ray, and the whole party fall into the hands of Professor Cyrus Zingrave, ruler of a race of White Giants. The St. Frank's boys escape, however, and take refuge in an Arzac city preparing for war against Zingrave. They join up with the rebel army when it sets out to attack El Dorado, the capital of Arzacland. One night, en route, Umlosi suddenly grapples with a figure lurking among the trees!

The Tree of Death!

WITH one accord Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Captain Hurricane leapt forward. They reached the spot where two black figures were writhing and struggling on the ground. It was some moments before they could be certain that Umlosi was the uppermost figure, for they were some distance from the fire. When Lee snapped on an electric torch the brilliant beam of light had a double effect; it distinguished Umlosi from his captive, and the latter, with a low cry of fear, ceased his struggling and stared like a frightened animal into the full glare of the light.

He was immediately seized by Dorrie and Cane. They experienced some difficulty in holding him, for he was smothered with a black, greasy, glutinous stuff which transferred itself to the fingers of the men who held him.

"Well done, Umlosi!" said Lee appreciatively.

"Wau! A shadow moved, Umtagati—and when a shadow moves in a spot where there should be no shadow, it is bad," rumbled Umlosi. "See! This man, with his coating of stickiness, is no friend."

"Bring him to the fire," said Nelson Lee grimly.

The stranger rose sullenly to his feet, his frightened eyes still turned fascinatingly upon the torchlight. He knew that there was no possibility of escape, and he went obediently to the fire. He was a squat, misshapen man, not more than five feet high. He wore no clothing, except a strip of black cloth round his middle; his body, his arms, and his legs were coated with the dull black pigment—used, no

doubt, so that the man should be as black as the night itself.

"Who the deuce can he be?" asked Dorrie. "He's no Arzac; he's too small."

"He is an Arzac dwarf," said Captain Cane, after giving the man a keen scrutiny. "There is no mistaking the characteristic features. The Arzacs have their dwarfs, just as any other race. This fellow was probably chosen for duty as a spy because of his smallness."

The prisoner was recovering from his fright.

"Me, Altti," he said jerkily. "Me work on land—see fires—come look. Me do no harm."

"You speak good English, my friend," said Lee grimly. "Tell me the truth. You are a spy; you were sent hither by King Yoga."

"All men obey King Yoga," said the captive simply.

"You see this?" said Lee, withdrawing his automatic from his holster. "This we call a gun. To you it is magic; I touch a little lever and you die. You die quickly."

The man gave the gun a doubtful look.

"Why you tell me this?" he asked.

"Because it is fair that you should be warned," replied Lee. "Do not attempt to escape, or I shall pull the little lever, and you will die. Are you alone? Has King Yoga sent others beyond the great wall?"

"King Yoga kill you soon," said Altti. "He kill all men who do not obey him. He kill men of building which flies in sky. They all dead."

Nelson Lee and Dorrie exchanged startled glances.

"Make it plain, you hound!" said Dorrie harshly. "What men do you mean?"

"Why you angry with me?" asked Altti. "I not kill them. They kill themselves. All of them. The men who were with you once. Yes? Big men for your race—men wearing strange clothes, with buttons which shine."

"By James! He certainly means Manners and the officers and men of the airship," said Lee in a hard voice. "What talk is this, Altti? Such men would not kill themselves. You tell lies."

The Arzac spy shook both his hands with vehement protest.

"No, no; I speak truth," he explained. "The men, they die by accident. Very clever men; they escape from place

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where they are kept. They use much cunning, and they get through big gates, and escape into wild country."

"Yes?" demanded Lee. "And then?"

"They escape at night," replied the Arzac. "Very dark. They walk down into deep hollow of ground. Strange place; no grass. Steep sides all round."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Captain Harry Cane, his voice charged with horror.

Lee scarcely glanced at him.

"These men were in the hollow," he said, looking straight at Altti. "How did they die—by accident?"

"Me, Altti, I do not know," said the man. "They make flame—a little flame—and then there is a terrible big flame and a great noise. They all die quickly. Me, I show you their bones."

"Manners—Truscott—Vickers—Hunt!" muttered Dorrie. "It can't be true! All of them gone! It's too ghastly!"

"What was the meaning of your exclamation just now, Cane?" asked Lee. "Can you tell us anything which might explain this man's vague story?"

"Vague to you—but horribly clear to me," said Captain Hurricane, whose face had become almost pallid. "What a terrible thing to happen!"

"In Heaven's name, man, tell us what you mean!" burst out Dorrie.

"I've seen these hollows with my own eyes," replied Cane. "There are at least four of them, all very similar—and quite peculiar to this strange country. They are like miniature craters; and, indeed, at one time they may have been volcanic. All I know is that they are like basins in the face of the countryside—with steep sides. The bottoms of the basins are absolutely barren, and the ground is generally spongy and sodden. But not with water. There is a kind of natural oil which seeps up in these hollows, and I can only conclude that Sir Hobart Manners and his men, escaping in the darkness, accidentally descended into one of the infernal death-traps."

"And then?" asked Lee.

"Somebody evidently struck a match," replied Cane, with a shrug. "The air in the hollow must have been gaseous—explosive. The next second the entire floor of the hollow must have been a raging inferno. Poor beggars!"

They were silent. Altti had been listening intently, trying, no doubt, to grasp Cane's words. Once or twice he nodded.

Nelson Lee was the only one who did not change expression. But in his heart he was bitter—sad. Furthermore, he tried to convince himself that this story was false—that there had been some mistake. He dared not believe that Sir Hobart Manners and all his men were dead. For if that were the case, there could be no possible escape for all the St. Frank's boys, for Dorrie, for himself. They would be doomed to spend the rest of their lives in Arzacland. Without expert engineering skill the Sky Wanderer could not be made airworthy.

"You say you can show us this place?" demanded Lee, turning suddenly upon the Arzac spy.

"Come—I show you, yes," said Altti. "It is long way off—but I point. From top of hill we can see. I point to place."

Guarded closely by Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Captain Cane, the spy moved away from the fire. They pressed round him closely as they went beyond the fire's range, and not only Lee, but Dorrie, too, kept a torchlight flashed upon the man. Both kept their guns handy.

Their thoughts were grim as they made that silent trip. The forest was not thick here. They came to rising ground, and Altti led the way to the very summit of a high ridge. At the top of this grew a great tree with strangely drooping branches. They passed beneath it, and now they could see the countryside beyond for miles. It was a dark, sombre scene in the starlight.

Altti flung out an arm.

"There!" he exclaimed. "This way is the spot. When daylight comes, you see. You go there, and you find the bones. I speak truth."

Something brushed against Dorrie's neck, and at first he thought it was a night insect. But when he tried to knock it away his hand encountered a curious tendril, which quivered under his touch. The next second something fastened itself to the skin of his neck, and it seemed that a kind of sucker had grasped him.

"What on earth—" he began, and then stopped.

He was nauseated by an extraordinarily pungent reek—a stench which sickened him. He felt something touch his hand, and it was moist and unpleasant; it became attached. He struggled angrily, and at that moment the light of Nelson Lee's electric torch flashed round, and Dorrie was horrified to see dozens of quivering tendrils wriggling down from the tree like living things.

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"In Heaven's name, what is this abomination?" gasped Dorrie.

He tore at the "suckers" which had attached themselves to him, but he could not wrench them free. Each tendril, as thick round as a man's finger, had become as taut as steel, and each one quivered with vibrant life.

Nelson Lee and Captain Harry Cane were struggling, too. Before they could be aware of their peril, they had been seized. The detective was furious, for he realised in a flash that the Arzac spy had deliberately led them into this trap. Alert as Lee was, he could not have anticipated the danger.

"We're finished!" gasped Cane, as he struggled with wild despair. "I've heard—of these trees—they're only dangerous at night—they poison their victims—in the morning men have been found bloated, swollen to a fantastic size—"

"Why didn't you warn us?" demanded Lee harshly.

"Sorry—didn't know—thought the tree was a myth," muttered Cane drunkenly. "It's got me! I can't see—everything's blurred—"

The others were feeling strangely weak, too; Nelson Lee, at least, knew that his senses were leaving him. The vile reek which emanated from the tree was poisonous. It seemed to come from the tendrils themselves. They were of a brownish-yellow, and near the "suckers" there were thousands of tiny pores which kept opening and closing, emitting the death spray of poisonous vapour.

"You die, and me, Altti, go to King Yoga and tell!" gloated the Arzac spy.

He stood there unharmed. Not a tendril came near him. The explanation was obvious. The black, sticky substance on the man was not for the purpose of disguising him, but to protect him against the danger of such trees! No doubt it was the sap of another bush, which rejected the death tree's poison.

With a fiendish, horrible glee the Arzac dwarf stood by, watching the futile struggles of the helpless victims. By this time scores of the tendrils had descended as though from nowhere. Lee and his companions were festooned with them, and their struggles were growing weaker and weaker. A deadly paralysis was attacking them, numbing their limbs and rendering them helpless.

"So! Soon you die!" said Altti venomously. "I go to tell King Yoga."

Like a shadow he sped off into the night. But those words were the last he uttered, for in the next second he was a dead man.

Something long, something which seemed to hiss as it sped through the air, struck him to the ground. He pitched forward, stumbled, and lay still. A quivering shaft was projecting from his body.

It was Umlosi's mighty spear!

The Burnt Bones!

"W AU! N'Kose, my father, what ails thee?"

Umlosi himself followed hard on the heels of his trusty spear. Clearly he had heard the Arzac dwarf's words, and he had flung his spear with that deadly accuracy for which he was famous.

The Kutana chief had remained by the camp-fire; but he had heard on the night air the startled exclamations of his "white masters."

No vocal sounds came from the victims. Both Lee and Dorrie tried to speak, but already the muscles of their jaws were paralysed. Their struggles were nearly over.

"Wau! Can, then, a tree deliver death?" bellowed Umlosi contemptuously.

He hurled himself forward, and for some moments his mighty strength prevailed. Tearing at the slimy tendrils he severed many, and the broken ends writhed like live things, a yellowish sap dripping from them. As the glutinous drops touched Umlosi's bare skin he felt a dreadful numbness affecting each part.

At the top of his voice he shouted, as though his very violence would frighten this enemy. But as he tore the tendrils from Dorrie, others came down. They fastened themselves to both men, and presently Umlosi himself, in spite of his terrific strength, was a prisoner. He felt the numbness creeping throughout his frame, his voice cracked and lost its power, for his vocal chords were being rapidly affected by the ghastly paralysis.

"Listen!" said Nipper tensely.

He had been sleeping soundly, but, like his famous "guy nor," he always slept, so to speak, with one eye open. Any unusual sound was apt to bring him into instant wakefulness. On the night air he heard the shouting of Umlosi from afar, and it was such an unusual sound that Nipper was alarmed.

In a moment Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, Travers, Pitt, and others were wakeful. Browne and Stevens and Fenton, and some other seniors struggled to their feet, too. They had all been sleeping peacefully, and they awoke



"We're finished!" gasped Cane as he, Nelson Lee, and Lord Dorrimore tore at the tendrils of the death tree. "I've heard of these trees—they poison their victims!" "You die!" gloated the Arzac spy. "Me go to King Yoga and tell!"

to find the fires burning about them and the night beyond as black as pitch. They were some distance from the Arzac encampment.

"Where's the gov'nor?" demanded Nipper. "He and Dorrie said that they would be near us. Hi, gov'nor! Dorrie!"

"My only hat! Something must have happened!" ejaculated Handforth, as he tried to rub the sleep from his eyes. "Who was that yelling just now?"

"Umlosi," replied Nipper. "Come on! The sounds came from this direction. Wait a minute, though! Listen! Quiet, everybody! Listen!"

The urgency of his words stilled their voices. And in the tense silence which followed they heard, as though from a great distance, the cries from Umlosi. But now the Kutana chief's voice was feeble and unnatural.

"There's something wrong!" said Nipper. "Come on—this way."

His action in picking up a small machine-gun was more or less mechanical. Some of the seniors grabbed their rifles, too. They went running into the darkness beyond the range of the camp-fires. Their movements disturbed the Arzacs, and some of the officers joined them, inquiring as to what was wrong.

But the boys took no notice; they ran hard. Nipper had judged the direction unerringly, and he went straight up the ridge towards that tree which stood in such isolation on the top.

He was running harder than the others, and he was in advance. As he approached he saw, silhouetted against the starlit sky beyond the ridge, the figures of human beings under the trees. Three of them were still, and the fourth was moving slowly, jerkily.

"There they are!" gasped Nipper. "Great Scott! What's the matter with them? Hi, gov'nor!"

The boys swept up, and just in their rear came a shouting crowd of White Giants—and many of these men had grabbed burning brands from the fires, and the improvised torches were casting a lurid, flickering, yellow light upon the scene.

"Wait! Do not go near!" shouted one of the Arzac officers. "This is the Ab-yat tree! The tree of death!"

Shouts of horror arose. For the sight, in that lurid light, was terrible. Nelson Lee and his companions were limp, hanging in the grip of hundreds of the unhealthy-looking creepers, or tendrils, which festooned down from the tree like so many living creatures.

"Gov'nor!" shouted Nipper frantically,

He was about to rush forward, but a White Giant held him back.

"No! It is death!" he exclaimed warningly.

Nipper was as white as a sheet.

"But can't we do anything?" he panted. "Are they dead already?"

"Not yet." The Arzac officer shrugged. "In an hour, perhaps. But nothing can save them."

"Can't those horrible creepers be cut?" yelled Handforth.

"There are hundreds—and the sharpest of knives can have little effect," said the officer. "And when cut the tree gives forth its poison."

Most of the boys were more than horrified; they were scared. They stood staring at that devil tree, which seemed to take on the shape of some living monstrosity in the uncertain light of the flaring torches. Nipper saw something else; he saw that every tendril which gripped the victims came down from a great limb of the tree which jutted out, almost at right-angles, from the main trunk.

"Stand clear!" panted Nipper suddenly. "There's just a chance."

He moved nearer, and now he held the machine-gun to his shoulder. With a steady finger, and with an accurate aim, he sent a stream of bullets hurtling at the great limb a foot from the spot where it joined the trunk.

The machine-gun roared noisily, and at the spot where the bullets struck the bark of the tree was bared as though by magic. Fragments of wood splintered out in all directions. The bullets, delivered at such close range, were cutting a jagged, uneven furrow right through the great limb.

Although the startled onlookers did not realise it at the time, they were all becoming slightly numb; they knew that the air was filled with a terrible stench from the tree, but they did not quite realise that its effect was semi-paralysing.

But everybody knew that Nipper had hit upon a brilliant plan. If that branch was completely severed from the parent trunk, the deadly tendrils would lose their energy. To cut the branch off by any other means was impossible, for it was high above the ground, and more of those horrid tendrils were wavering about, seeking victims.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

Nipper's shoulder was numb from the recoil of the gun, but he grimly carried on. His one fear was that the magazine would exhaust itself before the branch was

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severed. But his fears were needless, for in the very middle of a second burst the branch parted from the trunk with a sudden crack, and it parted sideways, hovered for a split second, and then crashed to the ground. Fortunately, it missed the victims.

"Now then—all together!" shouted Nipper, flinging his smoking gun aside. "Drag them clear, branch and all!"

With a rush they went forward, the White Giants as eager as the boys. There were hundreds of them on the scene now, so it was a simple enough task for them to grip the severed branch, with its hundreds of tendrils, and drag it well clear into the open.

Before they had proceeded far they found that Lord Dorriemore had been left clear on the ground—then Lee, Cane, and Umlosi. Nipper had feared that the "suckers" would still remain attached to the victims. But as soon as the branch had been severed from the trunk, the life had gone out of the tendrils, and their suction automatically ceased.

It was only a matter of moments before the four unconscious men were carried clear of all danger. They were lifted in the arms of the White Giants, and quickly carried down the hillside, back to the camp, where the fires had been replenished, and were blazing mightily.

The Arzacs were shouting among themselves, and, at first, the boys did not understand. Men were rushing into the forest, taking flaming brands from the fire. A frantic search of some kind was being made.

When Nipper knelt beside Lee he received a shock. For Nelson Lee's wrists, his face, his neck—all were covered with great bulbous swellings. Indeed, it was difficult to recognise any of the victims.

"Guv'nor guv'nor!" muttered Nipper tragically. "You're not going to die like this! It's too awful!"

"Can't something be done?" asked Fenton, between his clenched teeth.

"I venture to suggest, brother, that the Arzacs are about to rally round to some purpose," said Browne.

He was right. Already, Arzac soldiers in twos and threes were running in from the forest; they carried branches which had been torn from a certain bush—a bush with almost black leaves, and of a peculiar shape. An intensely black sticky substance was oozing out from the broken ends. It looked like tar, but it was, of course, the sap of this particular growth.

Smothering their hands with the strange stuff, the Arzacs commenced rubbing Nelson Lee and his companions vigorously. They were rough and ready; they smeared the black sap all over their heads, faces, and bodies. The St. Frank's fellows stood round, breathless, watching with acute anxiety.

"Is—there any hope?" asked Nipper hoarsely.

He had been trying to give voice to the inquiry for some time—but he had hardly dared to utter the words. One of the Arzacs who was nearby looked down into Nipper's upturned face and grinned.

"They live," he said cheerfully. "Soon, they walk and speak."

Nipper clutched at him.

"You—you mean that?" he gasped.

"The black sap cure them," said the other, nodding. "In an hour, it would have been too late. But they were saved in time. To-morrow, they feel nothing. All right again."

How right the man was, was proved soon afterwards, for Umlosi, who had been the least affected, struggled dazedly to his feet, protesting against the treatment. He soon recovered the full use of his limbs, and he insisted upon helping in the restoration of Dorrie—his beloved "N'Kose." Thereafter, Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Captain Cane slowly but surely came out of that deadly paralysis.

To the boys it seemed like a miracle. When the new day came Nelson Lee and his fellow victims were looking almost normal. After the treatment of the black sap they had bathed, clearing the sticky stuff away from their bodies. Then they had slept.

"It was a nasty experience, Nipper," said Lee, as he patted the youngster on the shoulder. "We have to thank you for our lives, I fancy. It was your brainwave in using the machine-gun which did the trick."

"Are you sure you're all right?" asked Nipper anxiously.

"Except for a general tenderness, we all feel quite fit," replied Lee. "The Arzacs tell me that there is no danger. Indeed, the black sap with which we were treated is a kind of stimulant, and, in the end, we shall benefit by its application. Nature generally provides an antidote to its own poisons, you know. But without our Arzac friends, we might have died—for you boys would have been unable to find the antidote."

"It's something like our harmless stinging nettles at home, sir," said Handforth. "The juice of a dock leaf is a good antidote."

"Exactly," replied Lee. "Wherever you find stinging nettles in an English meadow, you generally find dock leaves also. The Arzacs tell me that this peculiar black plant only grows in the vicinity of an Ab-yat tree."

When the advance was continued, both Lee and Dorrie were looking unusually grave—and the boys naturally concluded that their dreadful experience of the night was still affecting them. But this was not the cause of their gravity. They were remembering the words of Altti—and that awful story concerning Sir Hobart Manners and his men. Could it possibly be true?

"We've got to be sure, Dorrie," said Lee as they marched. "How can we be sure?" asked his lordship. "It's any odds that the man was foolin' us!"

"Let us pray that he was," said Lee fervently. "But don't forget that Cane has verified Altti's statement. There are crater-like hollows, filled with natural oil, or gas. We must make a detour, while the main party marches onwards."

They followed the general direction which Altti had indicated. The Great Wall which surrounded El Dorado, vaguely visible in the far distance, was, as yet, many miles away. The country hereabouts was fairly open, but it was wild in the extreme, with treacherous swamps, ravines, and obstacles of all kinds.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie detoured from the main column, and they could not prevent the St. Frank's boys accompanying them. It was better, perhaps, that this should be so. And soon the fellows were aware that there was "something in the wind." They did not know what—and they asked no questions.

However, the secret was soon out.

After a matter of five miles had been covered—five miles of hard going, for a great tract of bogland, where grasses twelve feet high grew in profusion, had been crossed—they found themselves on hard, rocky ground. The heat was stifling, for the rocks retained the heat from the blazing sun, and it came up in suffocating waves.

On the air, too, there was a curious smell of stale burning, with a peculiarly pungent oily odour.

"Just over this rim, I fancy," said Captain Hurricane tensely. "By St. Peter! I'm almost afraid to look!"

With firm strides they covered the last few yards over the burning, sun-scorched rocks. They found themselves gazing down into a crater-like hollow. It was comparatively small, being no more than fifty feet across, and almost circular in formation. The sides were steep, like a basin, and the barren rocks were fire-blackened. The base of the hollow was black, too, and littered about there were numbers of odd-looking objects.

"What is this place, guv'nor?" asked Nipper curiously.

But Nelson Lee did not reply. He leapt forward, running down into that charred, blackened basin.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

For he had seen that the odd-looking objects were bones! Human skulls—rib bones—hands—feet! More than a score of men had died here. The tragedy was written clearly, for there was plain evidence of the terrific fire which had raged like an inferno.

"It can't be!" muttered Dorrie, standing there with clenched hands. "No, Lee! It's too ghastly!"

Before Nelson Lee could make any comment a yell came from Handforth. All the boys had plunged down into the hollow after the men, and for some moments they had stood staring in silent awe at the pitiful human remains.

"Great Scott!" shouted Handforth. "Look what I've found, sir!"

He ran up with a blackened, twisted object which he held in the palm of his hand. At the first glance Lee saw that it was the remains of an automatic cigarette lighter. And the Arzacs did not use such modern contrivances!

"How awful!" said Nelson Lee quietly.

Then, on the heels of that discovery, came others, tumbling one upon the last. Captain Cane found a charred pocket-knife. Then somebody else found the bent and twisted cases of two watches. Buttons came to light, too—blackened, but recognisable, nevertheless. The metal buttons from the uniforms of the unfortunate men who had formed the Sky Wanderer's crew!

The evidence was there—it was irrefutable. The burnt bones, the watches, the buttons, and the other relics. Nelson Lee covered his eyes with his hand, as a picture of that dreadful scene came vividly to his mind. The escaping

**St.
Frank's
STAMP
WHO'S
WHO**



G. Bell. C. De Valerio. Professor Tucker.

(Three more portraits next week.)

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men, plunging into this strange hollow in the darkness, and not knowing where they were. The striking of a match—then the explosion and the flames. They had been hopelessly trapped, and they must have died, mercifully, during the first split second.

There was no need for the men to tell the St. Frank's boys. They understood for themselves—they could read what they saw. And they were awed by the utter horror of it.

"Poor Manners!" muttered Dorrie brokenly. "And we were hoping—"

"We've got to go on!" broke in Nelson Lee, his voice unusually strained and harsh. "Zingrave is responsible for this appalling tragedy—and Zingrave shall pay!"

Trapped!

"NOW for the fireworks!" said Handforth exultantly. Hours had passed—hours of breathless activity, during which the dreadful shock had lost some of its horror. Nelson Lee threw himself fiercely into the task of leading and organising the great rebel force.

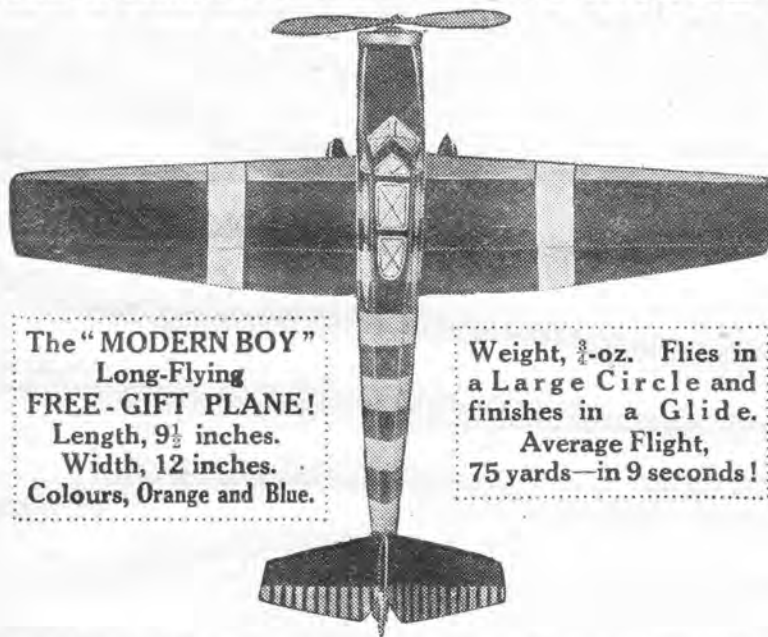
base. Giant Arzacs laboured at the great stone blocks, and after one had been loosened, others came away fairly easily until a deep hole appeared in the wall. In the depths of this Nelson Lee placed a number of high explosive bombs which had been carried in the Sky Wanderer. Actually, the bombs were quite small, and one, alone, could not have done much damage. But Nelson Lee was using them all. And when they were set in place, a long fuse was laid. The tunnel was again blocked. All the men retreated. Lee himself lit the fuse, and ran back to safety.

The sight of Lee running had occasioned Handforth's remark—and the burly Removite was certainly right about the fireworks. For, after a breathless pause, the air was split by a terrific detonation. The sight itself was startling—and Nelson Lee was filled with anxiety. Would the breach be made?

A section of the wall went skywards—great masses of stone hurtling in all directions. Smoke and dust obscured the view. In the distance, King Yoga's Arzacs were plainly alarmed. But the rebels took no notice.

What they saw filled them with amazement and satisfaction. Part of the wall had gone; when the smoke cleared, a

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Nelson Lee was not a revengeful man, but that which he had seen in that blackened hollow had filled him with a grim ferocity which was really foreign to his nature. He was determined to sweep on with his men—to advance to El Dorado and come to grips with the self-styled King Yoga.

Everything had been speeded up. The rebels marched on in spite of the blazing noonday heat. There was no attempt at secrecy. Some miles away there was a great road—and immense doors could be seen in the wall. Already the doors had been closed, and strong forces could be seen on the wall-top. The El Dorado Arzacs no doubt believed that the attack would be made there—that the rebels would attempt to force the great doors.

But Lee was planning otherwise. He had modern methods of warfare at his command, and he meant to utilise them. The Arzacs, knowing nothing of such things, were not prepared. They concentrated their forces at the gateway.

But Lee, with many men, went straight to the nearest point of the wall, where it arose in all its towering might. The St. Frank's boys, obeying strict orders, remained a full mile distant, and they were in the charge of Mr. Wilkes. At present they could only watch.

It was an impressive sight. There were tens of thousands of Arzac rebels and Ciri-ok-Baks gathered for the assault. Yet the assault of the wall itself was accomplished mainly by Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and a handful of helpers.

Nelson Lee superintended the breaking of the wall at its

great, jagged gap could be seen. The explosion itself had disturbed the lower blocks of stone, and then the wall itself had collapsed.

"On—on!" shouted Lee, waving to the Arzac officers. "In the name of Surnum Mentius—on to El Dorado and victory!"

"On to El Dorado!"

A shout went up which rolled from one end of the rebel force to the other. It was repeated, again and again, and a general movement followed. Nipper, Handforth, Browne, and the other boys, watching from the distance, were fascinated by that sight. Then the word of command came from Old Wilkey; he had been given his instructions by Lee. The prefects echoed the orders, and soon all the St. Frank's fellows were hurrying towards the wall gash to take their places in the general advance.

At close quarters it was found that the collapse had been so complete that there was little or no obstruction. Just a great heap of stones on either side of the wall, and it was easy enough for the advancing army to march straight through the gap.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore led the advance, and immediately in their rear came the picked guards of Surnum Mentius—strong, brawny, determined men, their blood afire with the prospect of victory.

The schoolboys, hot and dusty, arrived in time to take

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their places in the forefront; and all the seniors, at least, were armed with rifles.

"If there should be resistance—fire!" Nelson Lee had ordered. "We cannot afford to take chances; and an early display of our modern weapons will have a tremendous moral effect upon the enemy."

Through the breach panted the rank and file of the rebel force; and trailing away into the distance the bearded, dark-skinned Ciri-ok-Baks. There could be no retreating now; the march must go on, right to the fabulous City of Gold.

The difference in the countryside, beyond the wall, was startling. On one side, wild, rugged land like a wilderness; on the other side, roads, well-ordered fields, long stretches of rolling grassland.

The foremost rebels were soon engaged; and Lee saw, at a glance, that Professor Zingrave was fully prepared for the attack. He must have known of the advance for days. For there were thousands of his men massing for an assault. They had been gathered, however, at the great gateway, a mile or two distant. But now that a breach had been made in the wall, they were sweeping on to the attack. The whole countryside was thick with Zingrave's soldiers, their gold ornaments and helmets gleaming and shimmering in the sunshine. They came on in dense formation.

Nelson Lee had some quick, urgent words with the Arzac officers. The advance checked. Lee, Dorrie, and the other Britishers walked forward alone; but just in their rear came Fenton and a number of other St. Frank's seniors.

"We've got to let them have it!" said Lee grimly. "They must thoroughly understand our strength."

It seemed madness to go on; it was like suicide. A handful, almost, against a horde! The Arzacs, in their thousands, were advancing at the double, their weapons gleaming. It was like a great, tidal wave, sweeping relentlessly forward.

Then Nelson Lee gave the order; he and his immediate companions dropped to their knees, and a sharp, staccato rattle of rifle-fire sounded. Immediately following (his Dorrie, Cane, and two or three others leapt quickly forward, and they hurled hand grenades with all their strength.

The miniature bombs fell harmlessly in front of the advancing host—as Lee had intended. And the explosions which immediately resulted were shattering, and the Arzacs hesitated. Then a mighty shout went up as the leaders urged their men onwards. Some hundreds came rushing to the attack.

Rat-rat-rat-rat!

ST. JIM'S IN THE SCRUM!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "We thought you might have an experience like ours last Saturday, and we came over!"

"Jolly good of you! You're a brick!"

The Tiptonians were flying in all directions now. Arthur Augustus wanted to chase them and inflict upon every individual one of them a "feaful thwashing," but he was persuaded to moderate his wartime ardour and to walk quietly to the railway station instead.

Saints and Grammarians returned home in the highest

With a shattering roar four machine-guns leapt to life. A hail of bullets swept the Arzac force, and the leaders, screaming, fell. And this display of sudden death, coming so unexpectedly, caused the other enemy forces to check. Wild shouts arose on the air—shouts of fear, of utter consternation.

The Arzacs wavered; they broke into confused groups, and some of these groups turned tail and ran. Then the rest followed suit. Nelson Lee nodded grimly.

"We've got them on the run," he said. "The advantage is all with us, although we are a much weaker force."

He gave rapid orders to his officers, and these orders were sent down the line in the Arzac tongue. Loud shouts of triumph arose, and the rebels swept on.

The debacle was complete. Professor Zingrave's entire defence force was in full retreat, demoralised.

"By glory! It's easy!" said Dorrie jubilantly. "What's wrong, Lee? You're not lookin' so happy as you were."

"I feel a trifle suspicious," replied Lee.

"Of what?"

"Of a trap—of treachery," replied the detective. "I know Zingrave better than you do; and he is as cunning as a fox. I don't quite like the way in which the Arzacs are bolting."

But it was futile to attempt to stop the rebels, and the general advance continued.

By now the rebels were on the great road which led straight to El Dorado. On either side were cultivated fields and meadows. Here and there they passed through outlying towns and villages. Not a living soul was to be seen; all had fled to El Dorado. On went the victorious rebels over rising ground, and then down along the straight, smooth road into a deep, grassy valley.

It was when the men of Surnum Mentius were well in the valley that from the heights on one side there came a sudden movement, half-hidden by the glare of the sun, which was now low in the sky. Nelson Lee halted, staring. There were rocky crags in that direction, and many of the gigantic rocks were falling, tumbling down the hillside. Then, dramatically, came a great flood of water. It swept through the breach with terrific, bewildering force. It grew greater in volume, until a vast cascade was rushing down the hillside.

"By Heaven!" shouted Nelson Lee. "Dorrie, I was right! We have walked into a trap!"

(Don't miss the thrilling and dramatic developments in the concluding chapters of this grand serial. Order your GEM early.)

of spirits and best of terms. Tipton had been licked, at football and at fists, and they were done with Tipton!

When they reached St. Jim's one of the merriest parties the famous apartment had ever known assembled in Tom Merry's study. It was so numerous that it overflowed into the passage.

The defeat of Tipton had delighted everybody, and everybody was in the highest good humour. Even the discovery that one of his eyes was turning a decidedly dark colour did not damp D'Arcy's spirits. He was as cheerful as anybody, where all were very cheerful. And there was the wildest enthusiasm when a toast was proposed and drunk in lemonade, tea, and ginger-beer to the Rugger victory.

THE END

("THE WORST BOY AT ST. JIM'S!" is the title of next week's grand yarn of the chums of St. Jim's. Read all about the unruly newcomer who arrives at the school. Order your GEM now.)

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