

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!" THRILLING WILD WEST STORY
OF THE ST. FRANK'S CHUMS— WITHIN.



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A COOLER FOR A CAD! An Incident From The Great St. Jim's Yarn Inside.

The COMPLETE CAD!



Deservedly treated with scorn and contempt by the Chums of St. Jim's, there yet seems to be no limit to the caddish behaviour of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the worldly-wise new boy from New York. But not for the first time, the Outsider discovers that there is a definite limit to the amount of nonsense Tom Merry & Co. will stand from him!

CHAPTER 1.

Wet!

"YOU fellows weady?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question as he came to the doorway of the School House at St. Jim's.

A crowd of juniors stood outside on the steps and the drive, and a charabanc was in waiting. There was a buzz of talk and laughter.

The St. Jim's fellows were in high spirits. They were breaking up for the holidays.

Jack Blake was chatting with Tom Merry on the steps when D'Arcy came to the door. He turned a civil glance upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ready?" he echoed. "We've been waiting for you for hours."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, for five minutes, anyway," said Blake. "Are you ready at last?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Got your best necktie on?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And your diamond stud?"

"Weally—"

"And your spats?"

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"Blake—"

"And your highest collar—"

"My deah boy—"

"And your toppest topper—"

"I wefuse to listen to any more of these fwivolous remarks!" said D'Arcy loftily. "I am weady to get into the chawabanc."

And he descended the School House steps.

D'Arcy did indeed look a picture; he had forgotten none of the things that Jack Blake had enumerated. His collar was very high and very white, and his boots were only equalled in their polish by the gleam of his silk hat.

There had been rain the previous day, and there were still little pools of water on the drive, and D'Arcy trod with great care as he went towards the waiting charabanc, which was to bear a crowd of the juniors to the station.

"Mind the step," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The bottom step's the lowest," added Monty Lowther, with the gravity of an owl.

D'Arcy turned to Lowther, and adjusted his eyeglass, and favoured the humorist of the Shell with an inquiring gaze.

"May I twouble you to wepeat that wemark, Lowthah?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Lowther, in his blandest tone. "The bottom step's the lowest."

—OF THIS GRAND YARN OF THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Weally, Lowthah, that is quite obvious, you know. I wegard you as an ass!"

"Well, you ought to know," said Lowther. "You ought to know all about donkeys, Gussy; I know you're an authority on family matters."

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Might I venture to point out that the luggage is in the charabanc, and the driver's waiting, and the train won't wait?" said Manners of the Shell.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"We've waited for ten minutes while Gussy put on his necktie," said Harry Noble, otherwise known as Kangaroo, of Australia. "I vote that we don't wait any longer. I don't mind chucking Gussy into the charabanc."

"Hear, hear!"

"I uttally wefuse to be chucked into the chawabanc!"

"My dear chap, we simply won't take a refusal!" said Tom Merry. "Collar him!"

"You ass—"

"Now, all together!" shouted Blake.

The juniors made a simultaneous movement towards the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy made a hurried jump on to the step of the charabanc, to get aboard before he could be seized.

In his excitement he missed the step.

"Look out!" shouted Monty Lowther.

But it was no use looking out. Besides, Arthur Augustus had no time to look out. He fell back in a sitting posture on the ground.

There was a splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus had sat down in a wide puddle.

He sent a splash of muddy water on all sides, and several of the juniors received drops on their faces and clothes; but they did not mind that. D'Arcy's face, as he sat in the puddle, was worth it.

"Ow!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

The juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Blake, almost choking with laughter, ran forward to help the swell of St. Jim's to his feet.

D'Arcy staggered up out of the puddle, leaning heavily upon the two juniors.

"Ow!" he gasped, as the water ran down his clothes. "Yow! My twousahs must be ruined! I feel vewy wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, they'll soon get dry!" said Tom Merry. "Jump into the charabanc."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I shall have to change my twousahs before I go."

"Rats!"

"They're all right."

"Only a little damp."

"Jump in!"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"The train goes in twenty minutes!" he exclaimed.

"Now, how long will it take you to change your things, Gussy?"

"I weally don't know, you know. I shall have to have my twunk uncorded, and—"

"What!"

"You've got to unpack your box to get a pair of bags?" roared Blake indignantly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And—and you think we're going to wait? The check!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We shall lose the train, Gussy."

"I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but I cannot consent to twavel in muddy bags. Taggles, kindly take my twunk in again."

"Which—"

"I will give you an extwa shillin' for your twouble—"

"Suttlingly, sir."

"Let that box alone!" roared Tom Merry. "We're going to catch this train!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Chuck him into the charabanc!"

"I wefuse—"

The juniors rushed at the swell of St. Jim's.

But D'Arcy meant business, or, as he would have called it, "bisnay."

He dodged the rush, handed off Tom Merry, tackled Lowther, and rolled him over, and made a break for the doorway, for all the world like a Rugby three-quarter getting away and heading for the line.

He vanished into the School House, and there was a roar from the juniors.

"After him!"

They rushed up the steps.

At that moment Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, stepped into view, and the juniors stopped suddenly in their rush, just in time to avoid bowling over the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton smiled genially.

"Just off, boys?" he remarked.

"Ye-es, sir!"

"You've no time to lose for your train."

From upstairs came a faint click, and Tom Merry & Co. knew that D'Arcy had locked himself in Study No. 6 to make terms from behind a fastened door.

"We shall be catching the next train, sir," said Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 2.

Off for the Holidays!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS did change his trousers. He declined to come out from his fastness till Tom Merry & Co. had agreed to make it pax, and the trunk was uncorded, and the trousers changed, and the swell of St. Jim's was satisfied.

But the others were not satisfied. They raged.

They had particularly wanted to catch that train, to obtain another at the junction at Wayland, and the losing of it threw all their plans out of gear.

D'Arcy was responsible, and the juniors were wrathful.

A party of St. Jim's juniors were going down to Tom Merry's place for the first part of the vac, and the journey was a long one, and they could not afford to lose trains at the beginning of it.

But the train was lost, and Tom Merry hunted out a time-table to seek a fresh train to serve his purpose.

He grunted wrathfully over the time-table.

"All through Gussy's blessed trousers!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Blessed if I know why Gussy wasn't suffocated at birth!" said Herries, with a growl. "Why doesn't somebody painlessly extract him now?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"The check of it!" growled Kangaroo. "He thinks the British public has nothing to do but to keep an eye on his bags!"

"Weally, Kangawoo!"

"Never mind!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We shall arrive at Huckleberry Heath about two hours later than we intended."

"Better send a wire to Miss Fawcett," said Lowther.

"Yes, rather!"

"Yaas, that's a good ideah," said D'Arcy. "Miss Pwiscillah may be anxious about us if we don't awvive by the earliah twain. I should be vewy sowwy to cause any anxiety to your estimable governess, Tom Mewwy."

"Go hon!"

"Besides, Cousin Ethel will be there—she will be there before us now," said Manners severely—"all through Gussy!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Oh, don't talk—you make me tired!"

The telegram was dispatched to Miss Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess. The juniors waited with all the patience they could muster for the next train.

They saw a good many fellows off in the meantime.

The unused charabanc was taken by a crowd of other fellows, and for a long time charabancs were coming and going.

As the groups grew thinner and thinner, Tom Merry & Co. found themselves almost alone in the shady old quadrangle.

Tom Merry and some of the others were chatting on the School House steps when Figgins & Co. of the New House strolled by.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn stopped and looked at the School House chums.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, in surprise. "You still here?"

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CHAPTER 3.

Stuck Fast!

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.
 "Looks like it, doesn't it?" remarked Lowther.
 "I thought you were catching the 11.25?"
 "So we were."
 "It was all through Gussy," explained Tom Merry. "At the last moment he decided to change his trousers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "So we lost the train," said Tom Merry. "We hope to catch the next one, unless Gussy decides to change his waistcoat, or his socks just when we're starting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I refuse to allow those ridiculous remarks to pass, Tom Mewwy. I certainly did insist upon changin' my twucks, but only because I sat down in a puddle!"

"I don't know why he does these things," said Tom Merry. "But you know Gussy! What train are you New House bounders going by?"

"The 12.30."
 "That's our train."
 "Well, there'll be room for all of us," grunted Figgins.

"We shall be about the last lot."
 "I wish you were coming down to my quarters," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 Figgins nodded.

"Thanks!" he said. "As a matter of fact, we shan't be very far away from you part of the time. Kerr and Wynn are going to stay with me in Somersetshire, but part of the time we're going to an old friend of my governor's in Sussex, within twenty miles of Huckleberry Heath, so we may see you."

"Jolly good!"
 "It's a cricketing place," said Figgins. "We may be able to get up a match—New House against School House, you know, out of the school."

"Wippin', deah boy!"
 "Here comes the charabanc," said Tom Merry. "Were you walking to the station, Figgy?"

"Yes, the luggage was sent on; but—"
 "Get into our charabanc, then."

"What-ho!" said Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, with one voice.

The charabanc stopped outside the School House. The juniors began to clamber in. A lad came out of the House with a bag in his hand.

It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the new boy at St. Jim's—the "Rank Outsider," as the fellows called him. Untruthful and spiteful, the new boy certainly deserved the estimation in which the St. Jim's fellows held him.

He was on extremely bad terms with Tom Merry & Co. His early training among a rough class in New York—before Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley became a millionaire—and sent his hopeful son to an English Public school—had not fitted him to chum up with fellows like Tom Merry; nor did he care to change his ways.

He looked round him as he came out.

"Going to the station?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Give me a lift?"

Tom Merry hesitated only for a moment. He was always an obliging fellow, and he overcame his dislike for the Outsider's company.

"Certainly, if you like!" he said cheerily.

"You're going to Wayland Junction to catch a train there, I suppose?" said Lumley.

"Yes."

"Which train?"

"The 12.30 down."

"Curious! That's my train."

Tom Merry's face fell a little.

"Your train!"

"Yes. It stops at Forest Burford, I believe."

"Forest Burford!" shouted Figgins.

Lumley stared at him.

"Yes; that's where I'm going for my holiday," he said.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Why, Kerr and Wynn and I are going to be there for a time, that's all—it's only twenty miles from Tom Merry's place, too!"

The new boy smiled unpleasantly.

"Then I shall have the doubtful pleasure of seeing you during the holiday," he remarked.

"You needn't trouble," said Figgins politely.

Lumley flushed.

"Well, get in!" said Tom Merry hastily, desirous to avoid hot words on breaking-up day. "Time we were off!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"

The juniors piled into the charabanc, and it moved off.

They were almost the last to leave St. Jim's.

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THE juniors were in good time for the local train to Wayland Junction.

Tom Merry's party numbered eight, and Figgins & Co. made eleven, and the Outsider twelve. All but Lumley crowded into one carriage. There wasn't much room, but they wanted to be together. Lumley got into the next carriage.

There was very little that was chummy or spontaneous about him, and he did not want to be crowded.

"For this relief, much thanks!" grunted Jack Blake, as the porter closed the carriage door. "We shan't have the Outsider with us as far as Wayland, anyway."

"Not much woom in this cawriage," said D'Arcy, who was standing up at the end. "Which of you chaps is goin' to give me a seat?"

"Don't all speak at once!" said Figgins sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"I think Lowther ought to get up and give Gussy a seat," said Kangaroo.

To the surprise of the juniors, Monty Lowther rose at once.

"Thanks for the suggestion, Kangy," he said. "Sit down, Gussy."

The swell of St. Jim's hesitated a moment.

"Weally, Lowthah, you're awfully kind!" he said.

"My dear chap, I'd rather stand than sit on that seat," said Lowther. "Sit down, my son. It's only proper that one of us should make way for the great Gussy!"

"Weally—"

"Sit down!"

Monty Lowther pushed D'Arcy into the seat. The other juniors were all grinning. Lowther took D'Arcy's place and stood up serenely.

"Thank you vewy much!" said D'Arcy. "I am weally vewy much obliged to you, Lowthah!" He carefully pulled up the knees of his trousers. "Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"The seat feels a little damp."

"Damp!"

"Yaas. I trust you haven't been spillin' any of your wotten ginger-beer ovali this seat, Fatty Wynn?"

"Not at all," said Wynn. "I've only got one bottle, and I can't afford to upset that, just for you to sit in!"

"The seat was dry enough when I was on it," said Lowther.

"Vewy well; I suppose it is all wight."

"Why don't you get up and see?" demanded Digby.

"Well, I have just awwanged the knees of my twousahs, you know."

D'Arcy evidently regarded that as unanswerable. The juniors grinned and the train rattled on. Fatty Wynn extracted sandwiches from the open end of a packet he carried.

"You've got a long journey ahead of you!" said Figgins warningly.

"We stop half an hour in Wayland, you know; I can get some more."

"Twenty minutes," said Kerr.

"Well, that's enough to get a fresh supply of sandwiches," said Fatty Wynn. "It's no good starting on a journey hungry. Always lay a good, solid foundation; that's my idea."

And he munched away busily.

The sandwiches were finished by the time the train ran into the station. Figgins threw the door open, and the juniors poured out upon the platform.

Tom Merry and Figgins ran off to see to the luggage at once. There was an excited voice from the carriage they had left.

"Gweat Scott! Help!"

"Come on out, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Why don't you come out?" called out Blake. "The train's going on to a siding as soon as the luggage is off."

"Help!"

"What's the matter?"

"Owl! I'm stuck to the seat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus made heroic efforts to rise. The juniors stared in at the carriage with grinning faces.

D'Arcy was tightly fastened to his seat.

His face was red with exertion as he strove to rise.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We shall have to leave him behind," grinned Monty Lowther. "How lucky it is that it's not I who am stuck there!"

"You wottah!" roared D'Arcy. "You did this on purpose. It is a twick. I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"



It was unfortunate for Gussy, as he fell backwards in a sitting posture, that there was a wide puddle right behind him. He sat down in it with a big splash! "Ow-wow!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "My twousahs are ruined!" The other juniors roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus made a desperate effort to tear himself from the seat. There was an ominous tearing and rending. "Take care, Gussy!" gasped Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Gweat Scott!"
 "What's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, hurrying back along the platform. "The luggage is out. Why don't you get out, Gussy? You'll be shoved on to a siding!"
 "Oh! I can't get out!"
 "My hat!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
 "He's stuck to the seat!" chuckled Monty Lowther.
 "You wottah! You've done it on purpose; that's why you gave me your seat!"
 "Well, it must have been the liquid glue," said Lowther. "I had a bottle of it, and I haven't it now, and Gussy said the seat was damp."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It's rough on the trousers," said Manners sympathetically. "Gussy has lost one train through the last pair. We shall lose him through this pair, if he doesn't buck up!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Make an effort, old chap!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "Here, we'll take your arms and pull."
 "Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"
 "Pull away! All together!"
 "Here goes!"
 "Ow! Yow! Yah! Yawoooh!"
 "He's coming!"
 He came—suddenly.
 There was a terrific tearing, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came away from the seat. But he left a large patch of cloth sticking to the hardened glue there.
 "Phew!" gasped Blake. "Gussy, you want patching!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Lend me a coat, somebody!"
 "Here you are!" said Tom Merry. "Put it round you—quick! We can't have you going round like this!"
 "Jump out!"

D'Arcy hopped out of the carriage with the coat half on. He finished donning it, and stood in the midst of a grinning circle of juniors, with a very red face.
 "You uttah asses, there is no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah!" he exclaimed.
 But the juniors seemed to think that there was. They yelled.
 "Lowtah—"
 "Keep him off!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "He's dangerous!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Lowtah, I insist upon givin' you a fealful thwashin'!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You uttah asses! I wefuse to pwoceed upon this journey until I have a new pair of twousahs."
 "Rats!"
 "I am firmly wosolved upon that point. We shall have to unpack a box—"
 "No fear! It's wheeled off to the down platform already."
 "Or else go out into Wayland and buy a pair of bags."
 "My dear chap, you'd get the most unfashionable garments in a country town like this," said Blake, with a grave shake of the head. "It wouldn't do."
 "I insist upon havin' a new pair of bags before I pwoceed upon the journey."
 "Train goes in twelve minutes," said Kerr, looking at his watch.
 "My word!" gasped Fatty Wynn. And he dashed off at top speed in the direction of the buffet.
 "I hardly like to appeal in the public sweets like this," said D'Arcy, "but I shall have to do so, unless one of you fellows goes for me to purchase a new pair of twucks."
 "Well, I suppose I ought to do that," said Monty Lowther, "as it was my glue that Gussy sat in. It was careless of Gussy—"
 "Weally, Lowtah—"
 "But I'm quite willing to go," said Lowther. "Gussy can't remain in that state till we get to Huckleberry Heath, I suppose."

"Certainly not, deah boys!"
 "Train goes in eleven minutes," said Kerr.
 "Bettah, buzz off, Lowthab. Take this banknote and change it."
 Lowther shook his head.
 "No; I'm going to stand the trousers, Gussy, as it was my fault."
 "Weally—"
 "I insist upon it."
 "Train goes in ten minutes."
 "I'll buzz off," said Lowther. "Wait on the down platform for me."
 And he ran out of the station.

CHAPTER 4.

Very Obliging of Lowther.

TOM MERRY & CO. proceeded to the platform from which the train was to start for home.

The express was not in sight yet. The luggage was piled on the platform ready, with piles of other luggage, and there was a goodly crowd of passengers on the platform. The juniors of St. Jim's stood together, with two exceptions—Monty Lowther was absent, and Fatty Wynn was laying in provisions at the buffet. Tom Merry had arranged for a lunch-basket to be put on the train, but Fatty Wynn preferred to make assurance doubly sure by laying in an extra supply.

Kerr kept an eye on the station clock and on the line. Kerr was a careful youth, and had never been known to lose a train in his life.

"Here she is!" he exclaimed.

The express was coming in.

With a whirr the train pulled into the station and stopped. There was an opening and banging of doors at once.

Tom Merry looked round anxiously.

"Get Fatty out of the buffet, Figgins!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho!" said Figgy.

He ran off to the buffet, and returned with Fatty Wynn, his hand tight on the collar of the plump junior.

The St. Jim's party entered the train. Jerrold Lumley

stepped into the same carriage as Tom Merry and took a corner seat. The juniors looked out anxiously for Monty Lowther. He could not be seen in the crowd on the platform.

D'Arcy was very anxious.

"The ass will miss the twain!" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it," growled Manners. "We shall never hear the end of your blessed bags, I suppose."

"Here he is!" shouted Digby suddenly.

Lowther came tearing along the platform with a bundle swinging in his hand. The juniors waved to him.

"This way!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Here you are, Lowther!"

"Wun like anythin', deah boy!"

Lowther came panting up and jumped into the carriage. A porter slammed the door; the train was moving.

"Bai Jovo!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "That was a close shave, deah boy!"

"Done it!" gasped Lowther. "And here are Gussy's new trucks. Where are you going to change them, Gussy?"

"Take 'em along and change in the lavatory," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, that's a good ideah, deah boy."

The express was a corridor train. D'Arcy took the bundle and disappeared along the corridor.

Monty Lowther chuckled. Tom Merry caught the expression of his face and laughed, too.

"What sort of trucks have you got for Gussy?" he demanded.

"You'll see soon."

"How much did you give for them?" asked Blake.

"Two-and-eleven."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They were hanging up outside the second-hand clothes shop at the corner," explained Lowther. "They were marked 'A bargain—two-and-eleven.' I thought they would suit Gussy down to the ground—right down to the ground. You'll see."

The juniors watched for D'Arcy's return.

Those of the party who could not find room in the carriage were in the corridor adjoining, and all of them watched for Gussy.

It was some minutes before the swell of St. Jim's returned.

As soon as he came in sight there was a yell from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was wearing the new trousers Lowther had so kindly fetched for him.

They had cost Lowther two shillings and elevenpence, which might be considered cheap for trousers, but it really looked as if Lowther had been "done."

The trousers were of a rough material, and of a brilliant check design, almost on the scale of a chessboard. A large variety of colours added vivacity to the pattern. They reached to the floor as D'Arcy walked, although he had turned up the ends. As a matter of fact, the trousers were intended for a large, fat man, and Arthur Augustus was almost lost in them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy looked worried.

"What do you think of these twucks, deah boys?" he asked.

And the juniors testified what they thought of them by a fresh yell of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and stared at the grinning juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—," he began.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you wegard these twousahs as widiculous?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthab, I suppose you have bwrought me these twucks as a silly twick?"

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, Gussy," said Manners admonishingly. "Lowther stood you those trousers, remember."

"Yaas, but—"

"It would be only decent to thank him—"

"I am convinced that Lowthab bwrought those twousahs for a wotten twick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have no wesoource but to wear them," said D'Arcy. "But I wegard Lowthab as a wottah of the deepest dye."

"Go hon!" said Lowther. "This is what comes of being obliging."

"Gussy is always ungrateful," said Manners solemnly.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

D'Arcy sat down.

He maintained a dignified silence for some time, evidently feeling very much injured, but the juniors could not restrain their chuckles whenever they glanced at the trousers. People who came along the corridor looked in, and seemed to be



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taken with fits of coughing as they caught sight of Arthur Augustus.

The express rushed on through the green country. Jerrold Lumley had grinned over the incident as much as the rest. As the train rushed on he yawned, and drew a leather case from his pocket and opened it, revealing a pack of cards.

"Any of you fellows feel inclined for a game?" he asked. Tom Merry shook his head.

"Oh, we might play beat your neighbour," said Blake. "I will play snap with pleasaah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't play kids' games," he replied. "Weally, Lumley—"

"Can't you play banker?" "I can play bankah," said D'Arcy. "But you need

countahs for that game, or nuts, or buttons, you know." Lumley sniffed contemptuously.

"Counters! Nuts! Buttons! Are you off your rocker?" he asked.

"Bai Jove!" "You won't catch me playing for nuts and buttons. Haven't you any tin?"

"Tin?" "Yes. Are you afraid to risk it?" "You uttah wottah—"

"We don't gamble, if that is what you mean," said Tom Merry quietly; "and you'd better put those cards away, Lumley."

"Bah! Haven't you the grit to play a little game?" "Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "It's not a question of

grit, but of playing the blackguard as soon as we're out of sight of the master's eyes. Put those cards away, or I'll throw them out of the window."

Lumley flushed, and put the cards back into his pocket. Then he left the carriage, and the St. Jim's juniors were relieved of his presence.

Blake drew a deep breath as he went. "Blessed if I can stand that chap!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah, Blake! I wegard him as a wauk wottah!" D'Arcy remarked. "Bai Jove! What are you gwinning at, Hewwies?"

"I just caught sight of your bags," said Herries blandly. "You uttah ass!"

"They'll make a sensation in Huckleberry Heath," Kerr remarked. "I'll wager that trousers of that pattern have never been seen there before."

"Weally, Kerr—" "Well, Gussy expects to make a sensation wherever he goes," remarked Blake. "I think a vote of trousers—I mean a vote of thanks ought to be passed to Lowther."

"Hear, hear!" "I wegard Lowthah as a wottah!" "Ungrateful!"

"Weally, Blake—" "Hollo, the train's stopped." "It's our station!" said Tom Merry, jumping up.

The luggage was tumbled out of the guard's van. Monty Lowther threw open the carriage door.

"Well, we say good-bye here," said Figgins. "We'll see you later, you know, when we're at Forest Burford."

"Good!" "Yaas, wathah!" Tom Merry & Co. crowded out on to the platform.

Figgins & Co. alighted, too, to say good-bye to them. They shook hands all round, and Figgins gave D'Arcy a hearty slap on the back, which made the swell of St. Jim's gasp for breath.

"Weally, Figgins—" he exclaimed. "The New House juniors re-entered the train, which carried them on to their destination."

CHAPTER 5.

Not Pleasant for Gussy!

"THIS way for the local!" said Tom Merry. The luggage was already trundling off. The juniors followed it. They had only a few minutes

in which to catch the local train which ran at long intervals to the sleepy village of Huckleberry Heath.

People on the platform looked at D'Arcy's wonderful trousers and smiled. The swell of St. Jim's looked very uneasy.

He twitched Tom Merry by the sleeve. "Tom Mewwy, deah boy—" "Come on, Gussy! This way!"

"I wathah think people are lookin' at my bags, you know—" "Let 'em look!"

"But I feel doocid awkward, you know, and—" "Run for it, then," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Buck up!" said Blake.

There was no help for it. D'Arcy had to run the gauntlet of every eye on the platform.

They reached the other platform, and found the local train waiting. The blushing swell of St. Jim's was glad to hide his amazing trousers in the first carriage he came to.

He sat, with a very pink face, and shook his finger at Monty Lowther's bland countenance.

"I wegard you as an uttah wottah, deah boy!" he said. "If we were not both guests at Tom Mewwy's I should feel that I had no wescource but to thvash you."

Monty Lowther clung to Tom Merry. "Get in front of me," he moaned.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It will be all right when we get to Laurel Villa, Gussy. You'll get a change."

"That's all vewy well, but—" "I don't see that he wants a change," said Lowther. "He looks vey striking."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The local train was soon at Huckleberry Heath. Tom Merry & Co. alighted, and Arthur Augustus' trousers attracted general attention once more.

HELP NEEDED!



Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Woodhouse, No. 1 Pavilion, White Abbey Sanatorium, Belfast.

As the second fanned the badly-battered features of the would-be world champion, he murmured in tones of disgust:

"It's all right, Bill—we've sent for a private detective."

"What do I want a detective for?" groaned Bill.

"He'll help you find the chap you've been trying to hit during the last two rounds!"

"Is there anything to meet us from Laurel Villa, Giles?" asked Tom Merry, with a friendly nod to the old porter.

Giles shook his head.

"No, Master Merry!"

"That's odd," he remarked.

"Did Miss Fawcett know what train we were coming by?" asked Blake, with a grin.

Tom Merry laughed.

"By George, I believe I forgot to mention that in my wire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind! It's not a long walk; and it's a beautiful day," said Tom. "We shall be able to stretch our legs a little. Send the luggage on as soon as possible, Giles, will you?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"This way, you chaps."

D'Arcy hesitated.

"I should greatly pwefer a vehicle of some kind, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "I have a gveat objection to

appeavin' in the streets in these bags."

"Well, you can take the station cab," said Tom Merry.

"It won't hold the lot of us, and we shall have to walk; but it will hold you—even with those trucks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not wish to dwive alone."

"Then come on!"

"But—"

"My dear chap, we're all hungry, and there will be supper at Laurel Villa."

"Yaas, but—"

Jack Blake linked his arm in D'Arcy's and marched him off without waiting for any further objections.

The juniors of St. Jim's walked through the village.

Huckleberry Heath was a very quiet old place, but D'Arcy woke it up. The inhabitants mostly spent their time at the cottage doors or garden gates in the summer evenings, so most of the population were ready to observe the swell of St. Jim's.

They stared at the big-check trousers, and grinned. Some of them grinned and some of them chuckled.

D'Arcy's face was crimson as he walked along, looking neither to the right nor to the left. The elegance of the rest of his attire made the absurd trousers more noticeable.

The swell of St. Jim's breathed a little more freely when they had eventually passed through the village.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I wouldn't go through that again for worlds, you know! Pway buck up, deah boys, and let's get to Lauwel Villah as soon as poss."

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"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, as they came in sight of the gates of Laurel Villa, the dwelling of Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

"What is it?"

"Cousin Ethel!"

"What?"

"She's coming to meet us!"

Arthur Augustus halted in utter dismay. Thinking so much about the ridiculous figure he cut had prevented him from looking ahead.

It was seldom that D'Arcy forgot the important circumstance that he was to meet a lady; but he had certainly allowed it to escape his memory that he was to see Ethel Cleveland at Laurel Villa.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gazed along the lane in alarm. In the red light of the sunset the gates of Laurel Villa could be seen in the distance, and coming from them were two girlish figures.

They were far off as yet, but easily recognised as those of Cousin Ethel and Phyllis Monk—the latter the sister of Frank Monk, of Rylcombe Grammar School. Cousin Ethel and Phyllis were great friends, and they were spending part of their holidays together.

"Gwreat Scott!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in utter dismay.

"What are you stopping for?" asked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry briskly.

"I wufuse to come on!"

"But you can't stay here!" grinned Tom Merry.

D'Arcy was crimson and excited.

"I uttably wufuse to face the ladies in this state!" he exclaimed. "I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort. Bai Jove, they're comin' in this diwectioun!"

"They've seen us, you know."

"Ethel's wavin' her hand," said Manners.

Tom Merry waved his cap back to the girls. They quickened their pace.

Arthur Augustus cast a wild glance round, and made a spring through the hedge and ran.

"Come back!" roared Tom Merry.

But the swell of St. Jim's had fled.

Two minutes later Cousin Ethel and Phyllis Monk joined the juniors, and there were warm greetings all round. Ethel was a little perplexed, however.

"Isn't Arthur with you?" she asked.

The juniors made heroic attempts not to grin.

"He was," said Tom Merry; "but he's—he's—"

"He's—" stammered Blake.

"Yes?"

"He's taken a short cut to the house!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh, I see! We shall see him there, then."

"Oh, rather!"

And they all walked together towards Laurel Villa, both the girls a little puzzled by D'Arcy's peculiar behaviour.

CHAPTER 6.

Caught!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS darted across the field at top speed, and did not pause till a clump of trees on the other side hid him from possible view.

There he halted to take breath.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "It's simply wotten! What am I to do? I shall have to dodge into Lauwel Villah before the gala weturn, somehow."

It was possible to get to the villa across the field, and to enter at the back garden gate, and that D'Arcy resolved to do.

If he could get into the house unobserved and escape to his room there, he could await the arrival of the luggage from Huckleberry Heath Station, and refuse to be seen until he had obtained a change of attire.

D'Arcy waited only to obtain his breath after that rapid run, and then dashed away in the direction of the villa.

He reached the quiet lane upon which the gardens at the back bordered, and entered at the gate, and took a cautious look over it.

The extensive gardens seemed deserted; there was no one in sight.

D'Arcy opened the gate and went in.

Miss Fawcett's gardener was looking to the roses, and he turned his head and stared at the swell of St. Jim's as he heard his footsteps. But D'Arcy did not mind Mr. Macilvane. He hurried on towards the house.

His idea was to enter by the french windows of the dining-room, which were almost certain to be open, and so gain his room without being seen. The juniors of St. Jim's always had the same room when they came to Laurel Villa, so there would be no mistake about that.

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D'Arcy reached the dining-room.

The windows were open in the summer evening, and he could see no one in the room. He stepped in and crossed the door upon the hall.

That door was ajar.

Just as D'Arcy reached it, he heard a sound of voices on the other side, and recognised the tones of Miss Priscilla Fawcett and Vera Stanhope, Miss Phyllis' bosom friend.

D'Arcy groaned inwardly.

It was evident that both Miss Phyllis and Miss Vera had come down for the holiday with Cousin Ethel; and though this would have delighted D'Arcy at any other time, it was far from affording him pleasure now.

The next moment the door was pushed open before Arthur Augustus could make up his mind what to do.

Miss Priscilla Fawcett and Vera came in, the fresh young girl with her arm linked in that of the silver-haired old lady, and an affectionate look upon her face. Miss Fawcett was always a favourite with young people. She might be a little fussy over them, but her fussiness was prompted by affection.

"What a beautiful evening," said Vera. "Shall we walk in the garden till they come, Miss Fawcett? What—who—D'Arcy!" exclaimed Vera, as she caught sight of Gussy.

"D'Arcy!" repeated Miss Priscilla in astonishment.

"I weally beg your pardon!" said Arthur Augustus, blushing. "I have been the victim of a twick—"

"Oh!"

"I slipped into the house to change the widiculous attire in which you see me now," said D'Arcy. "It is a wotten twick of Lowthah's."

"I—I do not quite understand," said Miss Fawcett. "Get me my glasses, Vera dear. I do not quite understand."

"Pway allow me to wetiah, and I will explain latah!" stammered D'Arcy, who was eager to escape before Miss Fawcett obtained her glasses.

"Pray wait a moment!"

Vera handed Miss Fawcett her glasses, and the old lady put them on and looked at Arthur Augustus, and ejaculated:

"My goodness! Extraordinary!"

The swell of St. Jim's rushed from the room. He dashed upstairs and into his own room, and locked himself in; and he was there in a mood of fury, when Tom Merry & Co. arrived at Laurel Villa, and their merry voices and laughter below apprised the swell of St. Jim's of their arrival.

"Gussy!"

"Where's Gussy?"

"Where are you, Gussy, old man?"

Arthur Augustus, who had been pacing the room, stopped his hurried walk, and turned to the door.

"Is that you, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather!"

D'Arcy unlocked the door.

The juniors of St. Jim's crowded in, grinning.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the chums of St. Jim's with a steady and dignified stare.

But his trousers rather took from the effect of his dignified attitude, and the juniors only roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been placed in a most awkward and widiculous posish," said D'Arcy warmly. "I wegard you as a set of cacklin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to thwash Lowthah! I wegard him as a beast!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Pway put up your hands, you boundah!"

Monty Lowther put up his hands, clasped together, in a beseeching attitude.

"Mercy, great signor! Quarter!" he yelled.

"Don't be a widiculous ass!"

"Mercy!"

"I shall stwike you if you don't put up your wotten fists!"

"Keep him off!" moaned Lowther. "I'm frightened to death! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Lowthah, you duffah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheer up, Gussy! The luggage is coming from the station," said Tom Merry comfortingly. "You'll get a change soon."

"I wufuse to cheer up! I mean, I am goin' to thwash Lowthah!"

"Hold him!"
D'Arcy was rushed back from Lowther, who was trembling excessively, though perhaps more with merriment than with fright.
"Welease me, you wottahs—"
"Make it pax!"
"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"
"Do you always treat your host in this way when you're on a visit?" Blake asked. "Wanting to start a fight the very evening you arrive in his house!"
"Bai Jove!"
"I don't—I wasn't—I didn't!"
"It looks to me as if Gussy's manners are going down," said Monty Lowther. "I can remember the time when he was quite a decent chap."
"You wottah!"

"Quite willing," said Lowther. "I'm not a chap to bear malice, you know; I never was. I'll overlook everything for the sake of peace."
"Shake hands!" said Tom Merry.
"But—"
"Shake hands!" roared the juniors.
"I wefuse—"
"Gussy!"
"Don't be a bouncer!"
"Shake hands!"
Monty Lowther held out his hand. Arthur Augustus hesitated, but he took it at last in a gingerly way.
Monty Lowther gave him a grip that brought a gasp from his lips.
"Ow!"
"Now bygones are bygones," said Lowther affectionately.



"Pull away!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "All together!" "Ow! Yow! Yawooh!" yelled Gussy as the juniors heaved. "He's coming!" said Blake. Arthur Augustus came suddenly. There was a terrific tearing as he was wrenched from the seat, and he left a large part of his trousers behind!

"So can I," said Kangaroo. "There was a time when he would have thanked a fellow very prettily for treating him to a new pair of trucks."

"You feahful duffahs! You know perfectly well that Lowthah has played a wotten twick on me, and made me look a silly ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'! He has played a weally wotten twick on me, and you know it!"

"Well, I don't mind letting bygones be bygones, if Gussy's agreeable," said Monty Lowther, with the air of a fellow making a generous offer.

"Hear, hear!"
"Now that's jolly decent of Lowther," said Manners.

"What do you say, Gussy?"
D'Arcy seemed hardly able to find words for a moment.

"You—you uttah wottah!" he gasped, at last. "I am goin' to thwash Lowthah, and aftah that I am willin' to let bygones be bygones, if you like."

"Lowther's made a fair offer," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "I'm afraid you'll shock all of us, Gussy, if you don't accept it."

"But—"
"Are you willing to let bygones be bygones, Lowther?"

"Howevah, I still wegard you as a wottah!" said D'Arcy.

"How nice to see little boys agree!" sighed Manners. "Georgie—I mean Monty! Don't you feel ever so much better now that you have forgiven D'Arcy?"

"Ever so much, dear Manners," said Lowther. "Don't you feel ever so much better, D'Arcy?"
"Oh, wats!"

But Arthur Augustus did feel ever so much better when the luggage arrived from the station, and he was able to get rid of the terrible trousers, and to appear once more his own elegant self.

CHAPTER 7.

The Unexpected Guest!

THE holiday at Laurel Villa passed pleasantly and quickly enough for Tom Merry & Co. The weather was very fine, and the girls and the boys enjoyed themselves immensely, playing tennis or cricket, boating on the river, or rambling in the woods.

Tom Merry and his chums were looking forward, too, to

the arrival of Figgins & Co. at Forest Burford, when they would see their rivals of the New House again.

Jerrold Lumley was staying at Forest Burford, too, and they were likely to see him again as well; but the juniors had already forgotten the Outsider.

But Lumley was destined to bring himself to their recollection in a far from pleasant way.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, one hot afternoon, coming up to Tom Merry and Blake with a racket in his hand, as they sat in easy attitudes in big garden chairs. "Bai Jove! Have you fellows evah noticed that tennis is a wathah exhaustin' game?"

"Awful!" said Blake sympathetically. "Hand me that lemon-squash, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake, I should imagine that you could weach the glass yourself."

"Not without turning on my side."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hand it over," yawned Blake. "Don't you know that it's exhausting to a chap to reach his own lemon-squash?"

D'Arcy handed it over, and Blake sucked through the straw.

"That's refreshing," he said. "Take it and put it down, will you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"And now stay here handy to reach it to me again when I want it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"What are the fellows doing?" asked Tom Merry lazily. "Mannahs is out with his camewah," said D'Arcy.

"Hewwies is witin' to Taggles about his bulldog. Dig is asleep on the grass. The othahs are playin' tennis, I believe. Cousin Ethel is beatin' them like anythin'."

"Good for Ethel."

"I am feelin' wathah exhausted, and I'm goin' to west. Bai Jove! How annoyin' for that beastlay cyclist to be wingin' his bell just when I want to west!"

Ting, ting, ting!

It was a loud ringing of a cycle bell in the lane that ran past the gates of Laurel Villa.

The St. Jim's juniors looked out lazily to see the cyclist as he passed the gate. The form of the rider shot into view at the gate, past the row of trees.

There the cyclist halted, with a jamming of brakes.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation as he saw the cyclist.

"Lumley!"

It was Jerrold Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's. He jumped off his bicycle and looked into the garden. A curious expression came over his face as he saw the chums of St. Jim's.

He leaned his machine against the fence, opened the gate, and came in.

Tom Merry sat upright.

"Hallo!" he said.

"Hallo!" said Lumley. "Here you are!"

"Yes, here I am," said Tom Merry. "And here you are apparently."

"Not very welcome, I suppose?" said Lumley, with a sneer.

"Any St. Jim's fellow is welcome, if it comes to that," said Tom Merry. "There's a chair there; sit down."

Lumley sat down.

Nobody there was glad to see Lumley, but as a St. Jim's fellow he was entitled to civility, anyway.

"I thought I'd give you a look in," said Lumley. "I'm having a frightfully dull time at Forest Burford. My uncle there is a crusty old bounder, and there's nobody of my own age about the place."

"H'm!"

"And the old boy gets wrathful if I go to the pub," said Lumley. "Of course, a fellow must dig up something to do, and I like billiards as well as anything."

Tom Merry's lips curled.

"So I came over to give you a look up," said Lumley. "If you don't want me, say so, and I'll clear off. Don't stand on ceremony."

"Stay to tea, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"As a matter of fact, we don't get on, and it's no good pretending we do," said Tom Merry; "but I shan't be the one to be on bad terms with you."

"Thank you; you're awfully kind. I'm not such a disagreeable beast, you know, if I'm treated properly. How are you fellows passing the time?"

"Pretty well."

"I mean, how do you amuse yourselves?"

"Oh, walking, cycling, tennis, cricket, boating, talking, and a little dancing," said Tom Merry. "Nothing much in your line, I'm afraid."

"Not a little gamble on the quiet now and then?"

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"Certainly not!"

Lumley yawned.

"Blessed if I know how you stand it. When I was in New York I guess I had a good time."

"I don't think we should care for what you call a good time," said Tom Merry dryly. "Hallo! Here are the girls!"

Jerrold Lumley coloured a little as he was presented to the girls. Cool and careless, and somewhat insolent, as he was in his dealings with his own sex, he was generally awkward in the presence of a girl. He would have liked to be impertinent and familiar, but somehow he did not find the courage for it.

Cousin Ethel seemed to make very much of an impression upon the Outsider. He drew D'Arcy a little aside as the others were chatting cheerily.

"Who is that girl?" he asked in his brusque way.

D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave the Outsider a glance through it.

"That is Miss Cleveland," he replied. "Didn't you catch her name?"

"Yes; but who is she—friend of yours?"

"My cousin," said D'Arcy, with a touch of haughtiness.

"Oh!"

Lumley stared at Cousin Ethel.

"Pretty," he said. "I like her."

"You are vewy good."

"I don't generally care for girls," said Lumley. "But I think I could get on with your cousin, you know."

And Jerrold Lumley proceeded to join in the conversation and to make himself as agreeable as possible to Miss Cleveland.

But Cousin Ethel hardly noticed him.

Perhaps, with the keen, unconscious instinct which Nature has bestowed upon the gentle sex as a defensive weapon, she realised that he was not what she would have called a nice boy; at all events, she had as little to say to him as possible.

But Cousin Ethel was always courteous, and so Lumley did not observe the bad impression he made upon her; and, as a matter of fact, his perceptions were not of the finest.

Jerrold Lumley stayed to tea, and he contrived to sit next to Cousin Ethel at tea in the garden under the shade of the old trees; and he entertained the girl with remarks and observations which would have come better from a man of forty than a lad of under fifteen, and which made Cousin Ethel wonder more and more what sort of a boy her new acquaintance was.

CHAPTER 8.

No Luck for Lumley!

"A H! Here you are!"

Jerrold Lumley uttered the words.

It was an hour after the merry tea under the trees in the grounds of Laurel Villa.

Cousin Ethel had gone down to the stream, with a book in her hand, to finish a chapter quietly which had been left off in the middle when the tennis started. The sun was setting, and the river rolled like gold past the sloping banks.

It was a beautiful scene, and very quiet, though within call of the house behind the trees.

Ethel glanced up at the Outsider's voice.

She had seated herself upon a fallen log and opened her book, and was beginning to read when the newcomer's voice interrupted her.

She lowered her book quietly.

Lumley's tone, as he said "Here you are!" was familiar, and did not please Ethel; but she smiled as she looked up.

"Yes, I am here," she said. "Does Miss Fawcett wish to see me?"

"Not that I know of."

"I thought you might have been sent for me."

"Oh, no!"

Lumley did not see in Ethel's tone a hint that he ought not to have come unless he had been sent.

Ethel dropped her eyes to her book again.

Lumley sat on the log beside her.

"Nice view from here," he remarked.

"Very."

"It's a quiet spot."

"Yes."

"But seems a little lonely."

"I did not notice it."

"Well, it's not so lonely now I'm here," said Lumley, with a grin.

"No."

"Interested in your book?"

"Yes."

"What is it called?"

Ethel held up the book to show the title.
"Conquest of Peru," yawned Lumley. "Do you really like it?"

"Yes."

"It's interesting."

"It is about the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards," said Ethel. "All the incidents are interesting, you see, though the writing may be a little heavy in places."

"Wouldn't you rather read a smart, up-to-date novel?"

"No; I am not allowed to read novels."

"But here—"

Ethel looked directly at him.

"Don't speak like that, please. I hope you would not be deceitful; but I do not like you to pretend that you would."

Lumley laughed.

"I should do as I like," he said. "Look here." He drew a pink paper from his pocket. "This is a sporting paper. Do you think I should be allowed to have it at St. Jim's?"

"I suppose not."

"Well, I have it here, you see."

"It is not right of you to do so."

"Rats!" said Lumley. "I generally do as I like, I guess."

I suppose you don't know anything about horses?"

"Not horse racing, if that is what you mean."

"Look here, I'm in touch with a bookie, and if you like I could put a little on for you," said Lumley. "I know a dead cert for the Newstead Stakes."

"Please do not think of such a thing."

"But you could make seven to one, in shillings or pounds, as you choose."

"I should not like to."

"Look here, I'll risk a pound for you, if you like," said Lumley. "I have plenty of money. Shall I put a pound on for you, and stand the loss if it goes myself?"

"Certainly not!"

"Why not?"

"I should not care for it."

Lumley stared at her.

"I suppose you are spoofing me?" he said at last. Cousin Ethel stared.

"What?"

"I guess I've got my eye teeth out," said Lumley, with a grin. "I suppose you think I should talk about it; but I know how to keep mum."

Ethel laid down her book.

"I think I had better go back to the house now," she remarked.

"Don't go yet."

"I think I had better."

"You haven't finished your chapter."

"That can wait."

Lumley bit his lip.

"I suppose you mean you're tired of my company," he said tartly. "Why don't you speak in plain English?"

Cousin Ethel rose without replying.

Lumley rose, too, his face dark and angry. He had been very civil and very generous, according to his own ideas, and he had been repulsed.

"Look here," he said, "I suppose you're rattled because you can't humbug me. But sit down; let's have a talk."

"I prefer to go, thank you!"

"Which means that I've offended you, eh?"

"I think you are very rude," said Ethel.

"Not like Tom Merry—eh?" sneered the Outsider.

"No," said Ethel quietly. "Not like Tom Merry at all."

"Oh, I shall never be a soft mug," said Lumley scornfully. "And that's what Tom Merry is. You could twist him round your finger, I know."

Ethel coloured. She was very sweet-tempered, but the Outsider of St. Jim's would have made anyone angry at last.

"I should certainly never think of doing anything of the sort," she said. "Tom Merry would never speak disrespectfully to a girl as you have done. Let me pass."

Lumley stood directly in her path. She could not leave the spot, except by passing him, for there was the river on one side, and a thorny thicket on the other. The Outsider did not move.

"Will you let me pass, please?"

"All in good time!" grinned Lumley. "I haven't finished this interesting little chat yet."

"Let me pass!"

"Perhaps you wouldn't be in such a hurry to pass if it were Tom Merry here instead of me," said the Outsider, with a bitter sneer.

"Tom Merry would never be as rude and brutal as you are," said Ethel. "Let me pass, or I will call out to the others."

"Good! That would make quite a dramatic scene, and I know that that's what a girl is fond of more than anything

(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 on this page.

OH, YEAH!

Old Lady (on liner): "Oh, steward, will you help me to find my state-room?"

Steward: "Have you forgotten the number of it, madam?"

Old Lady: "Yes; but I'll know it if I see it again. There was a lighthouse just outside the window!"

A football has been awarded to P. Giffins, 4, Clive Road, Colliers Wood, London, S.W.19.

THE GATE CRASHER.

First Scot: "Weel, Sandy, was it a good game?"

Second Scot: "Ay, it was great."

First Scot: "Big gate?"

Second Scot: "Ay, 'twas the biggest gate I ever] climbed o'er!"

A football has been awarded to L. Jillians, 36, Martin's Road, Shortlands, Kent.

WHERE THE NUTS COME FROM!

"This is Barcelona!" exclaimed the wireless enthusiast with pride, as he twiddled the knobs of his set.

"Yes," said his small son, as the atmospherics began, "I can hear them cracking nuts!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Moore, 20, Birkbeck Grove, Acton, London, W.3.

NATURALLY.

American: "This is a very wet country. What do you raise here chiefly?"

Englishman: "Umbrellas!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. George, 93, Forrest Street, Cottesloe, Fremantle, W. Australia.

THE OPTIMIST.

Owner of Old Car: "My price, sir, includes everything you'll need—even road maps."

Prospective Purchaser: "And what about a railway timetable?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. West, 55, Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London, W.5.

FISHLESS.

"Is this lake public?" asked the angler.

"Yes, sir," replied the local.

"Then," said the angler, "it'll be no crime if I land a fish."

"No, sir; it'll be a miracle!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Robinson, 33, Fonnereau Road, Ipswich.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

Lady: "So you are an ex-soldier? Did you go to the front?"

Tramp: "Yes, mum; but I couldn't make anybody hear so I came to the back."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Mason, 24, Cambridge Road, Shoeburyness, Essex.

ONE BETTER.

Smith was swanking about his new wireless set.

"Last night," he said, "I got America on my set."

"That's nothing," replied Brown, "I've got America on my alarm clock."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Epstein, 412, Bury New Road, near Broughton, Manchester.

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else," said Lumley, laughing. "Distressed damsel—persecuting ruffian—handsome rescuer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not want to make a scene," said Ethel, with set lips. "But for that, I should have called out before now; but if you do not let me pass—"

"I shall not."

The girl breathed quickly.

Lumley came a step closer to her.

"Come, now, you shall pay toll, and then you shall pass," he said, with a grin.

Ethel flushed scarlet.

Lumley took hold of her hands in both of his, with a mocking smile upon his face.

"Tom Merry! Arthur!" cried Ethel.

Lumley laughed mockingly.

"What a pretty scene! You really ought to be on the stage! I—"

He did not finish.

Two strong hands grasped him, and he let go Ethel's hands in his surprise. Before he could speak, or even see whom his assailant was, he was whirled round, whipped off his feet, and hurled into the water.

CHAPTER 9. Figgins' Letter.

SPLASH!

Jerrold Lumley quite disappeared under the water, and Cousin Ethel gave a little cry.

"It's all right," said Tom Merry; "don't be alarmed."

Tom's eyes were flashing, and his face was red with anger. He stood with his fists clenched, looking towards Jerrold Lumley as the latter rose from the water.

Close to the bank the water was shallow, and Lumley, as he scrambled to his feet in it, was submerged only to the waist. He was in no danger.

But he was drenched and dazed, and he blinked round him, knocking the water from his eyes in a confused manner.

He saw Tom Merry standing on the bank, and a black look came over his dripping face. The Outsider scrambled ashore. Water was running down his clothes, and his trousers were a mass of mud. His boots were clogged with it, and he squelched in the grass as he moved. His face was black with rage.

"You—you bound!" he muttered.

Tom Merry gave him a scornful look.

"Hold your tongue," he said, "and get out of this. You came here without being asked, but you were welcome to stay if you had been decent. Get out!"

Lumley smiled bitterly.

"I will go if you like, but there's no need for this dramatic bizney, you know. I wasn't going to hurt Miss Cleveland."

"Your touch is hurt enough to any decent person," said Tom Merry.

"I was only joking."

"So was I, then," said Tom Merry grimly. "And I shall repeat the joke if you don't apologise to Miss Cleveland and get out."

Lumley looked at Ethel.

"I am sorry," he said, "not because Tom Merry tells me to apologise, but—but I am really sorry. Good-bye!"

He plunged into the thickets.

The next moment Arthur Augustus arrived upon the scene. He, too, had heard Ethel call out, but he did not see the Outsider go.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Anythin' the mattah, you know?"

"It is all right, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel.

"I thought I heard you call."

"Yes, I—I called."

"Yaas?"

"But it is all right."

"It was Lumley," said Tom Merry, seeing that explanation was necessary. "He was rude, and I pitched him into the river, that's all."

Three or four fellows came bursting through the trees, and Tom Merry told them what had happened.

"You told Lumley to get out?" said Blake.

"Yes."

"Well, it's better for him if he has; but we'll have a look, and give him a bumping if he isn't gone yet."

"Good egg!"

And the juniors hurried away in quest of Jerrold Lumley.

But he was not to be found, and his cycle was gone from the garden.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had evidently taken a hurried departure from the precincts of Laurel Villa.

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"Your friend is gone, Tommy darling!" said Miss Fawcett, as Tom Merry came up to her chair in the garden.

"He did not say good-bye."

"You must excuse him, dear," said Tom Merry. "He was in a hurry. He simply had to get off as quickly as possible."

"I am afraid he had some accident," said Miss Priscilla.

"He was quite covered in mud when I saw him wheel out his bicycle."

Tom Merry coloured a little, but the arrival of the postman with the evening's letters saved him from the difficulty of pursuing the subject.

There were letters for most of the party, and one specially for Tom Merry, addressed in a big, sprawling hand that he knew well.

"Figgy!" he exclaimed.

The postmark on the envelope was Forest Burford. Tom Merry opened the letter quickly.

The letter was from Figgins.

"The Lodge, Forest Burford.

"Dear Tom Merry.—Here we are, and ready to meet you and lick you at cricket. We're making up an eleven of chaps staying here, and we shall be ready for you any day you like to come over.

"C. FIGGINS."

Tom Merry waved the letter in the air.

"Hurrah!" he shouted.

"What's the news?"

"Figgins & Co. are at Burford, and ready for the cricket match. We'll meet them to-morrow, and show them that the School House is Cock-House, eh?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry ran his eye over the juniors.

"Kangaroo and Lowther, Manners and myself—that's four. Blake, Herries, Dig, D'Arcy—that's eight. We want three more for the eleven."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wonder—" Tom Merry's eyes danced as he paused.

"Yaas, deah boy?"

They all looked at him inquiringly.

"I wonder whether you would care to play?" said Tom Merry, looking at the girls. "There are three of you, you know, and we want three more in the eleven."

Ethel and Phyllis and Vera smiled together.

"Should we like it?" laughed Phyllis.

"What-ho!" said Vera.

"Very much," said Cousin Ethel brightly. "But—but is our form good enough?"

"Yes, I think so. I don't know what Figgy's team is like, but I don't suppose it's first-class, scratched up in a place like Forest Burford. Besides, you three are jolly good cricketers, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite approve of Tom Mewwy's ideah."

"Hear, hear!"

"And you will come over and see the match, dear?" asked Tom Merry of Miss Priscilla. "We'll have to take the brake from the Railway Arms. No charabanc is obtainable in these parts!"

"My darling Tommy—"

"Then that's settled. It will be a jolly outing, kids!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! Hawwah!"

CHAPTER 10. The Rival Elevens.

THE next morning Tom Merry's eleven were in a state of excited expectation.

Tom Merry had written overnight to Figgins to tell him that they were coming, and to bid him prepare for a tremendous licking.

The brake from the Railway Arms was to be at Laurel Villa at eight o'clock in the morning, for it was necessary to start early, and an early and substantial breakfast was eaten at Laurel Villa.

Miss Fawcett, of course, was coming, to take care of the girls—though, as a matter of fact, the kind old lady was as cheerful on the occasion of an outing as anyone else, and she was looking forward to the excursion.

D'Arcy uttered an exclamation as he picked up a letter beside his plate at the breakfast-table.

"Bai Jove! Here's a lettah fwom Wally!"

"Wally! Perhaps he's coming over," said Blake.

D'Arcy opened the letter.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, what's the news?"

"We shall see Wally to-day."

"Where?"

(Continued on page 14.)



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! In spite of the fact that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the new St. Jim's boy from New York, is an out-and-out young scamp, he is a very strong character, and his adventures, described as only the inimitable Martin Clifford could tell them, are of absorbing interest. St. Jim's has never known a boy quite like Lumley. His hardened nature, cool nerve, and worldly habits make him a character to be respected, if not admired. No doubt the reason that he cannot be expelled has made him more bold than he would naturally be. But nevertheless, he is a cool customer. Instance of this is shown in next week's great yarn of this tip-top series. In

"A DISGRACE TO ST. JIM'S!"

Lumley has the temerity to pit his skill at cards against the shady characters at the Green Man Inn, near St. Jim's—men who, knowing Lumley to be the son of a millionaire, think he is a "bird" to be easily plucked. But they little know the sort of fellow they are attempting to fleece!

Lumley's defiance of orders not to break bounds, his visit to the Green Man to gamble, and what happened there, makes a story that you will read with avid interest—a story you will vote the best of the series yet.

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

Judging by the letters of congratulation, Mr. Brooks' serial is "going down" exceptionally well with all readers. It fully merits the highest of praise, and I consider it to be better than any of his previous serials. In next week's all-thrilling chapters more mysterious things happen in Ghost River Valley, with the St. Frank's chums well in the midst of all the exciting adventures.

In another topping number of "Tom Merry's Weekly" you will find that the St. Jim's journalists are at the top of their form, while another column of jokes will give you all the laughs you want. Lastly, I will have some news for you of an interesting new feature that will start soon.

THE BOY PILOT.

To pilot a plane at the youthful age of fourteen is not only an outstanding achievement of which every boy would well be proud, but it is believed to be a record. In this age of flying, when, although aeroplanes are fast becoming the popular mode of travelling, complete safety in the air has yet to be achieved, it is pleasing to read of a boy of fourteen showing the skill, confidence and pluck to fly solo a plane after a mere five hours' tuition as a pilot! I'm sure all GEM readers would like to congratulate Ovid Otley, of Alexandra Park, London, on his great performance at Abridge Aerodrome recently. Watched by a large crowd, Ovid took off in a small plane, and after five minutes' flight, during which he reached a height of over one thousand feet, he brought the plane to earth again. So skilfully did he accomplish the flight, that many watchers thought that an experienced pilot was handling the plane. Ovid was all smiles as he serenely climbed from the cockpit afterwards, and he stated that he was not a bit nervous and that it was a wonderful experience. He hopes to take up aviation as a career. Good luck, Ovid! So are the Mollisons of the future developed.

BIRD SENSE

The uncanny intuition of birds to sense impending danger is well shown in the following story from Beamish, Durham: For many years a big elm-tree was loaded with birds' nests, for it was the home

of many rooks. Then, one day, things unusual began to happen in the rookery. The rooks started to take down their nests and rebuild them again in another tree. The removal of the rookery had barely been completed when, with a terrific crack, the great elm crashed to the ground! The rooks, who had lived in its branches for over fifty years, had sensed their peril and got out while the getting was good!

BULLET-PROOF BEASTS!

This world of ours is for ever revealing secrets that sometimes leave us gasping. Such a one is revealed by the story of an American missionary who has spent much of his life in the jungles of Yunnan Province, China. He tells of amazing beasts that inhabit these jungles. The creatures, which have shaggy, silvery coats, are somewhat like apes, and the natives call them "taws." But the astonishing facts about them are, that they are immune from bullets and knife thrusts! The beasts are only seen at night, for in the day-time they are apparently invisible! What an attraction one of these creatures would be at the Zoo, though to see him, the visiting hours would have to be extended to after dark!

HIDDEN TREASURE.

Our recent St. Jim's treasure-seeking series has brought a query from John Bowman, of Birmingham, who wants to know if there are pirates' treasures believed to be still hidden on Pacific islands. There must be many treasures hidden in remote parts that have never seen the light of day since pirate chiefs hid them in the old days. There is at least one that is known to be concealed on Cocos Island, in the Pacific, for the treasure has been found—and lost again! Two seamen from a whaler seeking fresh water, discovered the hidden hoard by luck. They promptly filled their pockets with gold coins and jewels, and then returned to the ship—keeping the whereabouts of the treasure a secret. But one of them, having spent the proceeds of the lucky find, later returned to seek the hidden loot; but he couldn't find the place where it was hidden. All clues had been covered by the growth of tropical vegetation, and so; to this day, the treasure is still there.

TAILPIECE.

In conclusion, here is a joke I heard the other day:

"With your constitution," said the doctor to the patient, "you ought to be hale and hearty at seventy-five."

"But I am seventy-five," returned the patient.

"Well, what did I tell you!"

THE EDITOR.

Sheffield, 3, wishes to hear from readers who play brass band instruments.

Reginald Morris, 8, Gordon Road, Swindon, Wilts, wants correspondents interested in radio, dancing, and organisation of dance orchestras; ages 18-20.

Edward McGee, 88, Shrubbery Avenue, Worcester, wants a pen pal in Africa, India, or Australia.

Ernest L. le Poidevin, Hauteville Stores, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands, wants correspondents in France, Switzerland, or England; ages 14-17.

Miss Gladys Rogers, 78a, Westbourne Park Villas, Bayswater, London, W.2, wants girl correspondents in U.S.A., Egypt, or France; ages 15-17.

James Rose, 133, Napier Street, South Melbourne, S.C.5, Australia, wants a correspondent in England; age 17-18.

Fred Harvey, 15, Hatton Street, Stockport, Ches, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of collecting old numbers of GEM, "Magnet," etc.

J. Fuller, Broadeaves, Copse Avenue, West Wickham, Kent, wants a pen pal who is interested in model railways; Australia or New Zealand; age 14-15.

(Continued on page 22.)

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A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Miss Joy Hancock, 9, Hazlemere Avenue, Marton, Blackpool, Lancs, wants girl correspondents.

Arthur V. H. Gandy, 93, Alfred Street, Roath Park, Cardiff, South Wales, wants a pen pal in Canada, or Australia; age 13-16; interested in amateur theatricals, films, etc; would exchange newspaper cuttings.

Howard W. Bird, 20, Ocean View Avenue, Windward Road, P.O. Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies, wants correspondents in England, Australia, or New Zealand; interested in swimming, cycling, and books; ages 12-13.

J. Greaves, c/o H. Morris, King's Chambers, Angel Street,

THE COMPLETE CAD!

(Continued from page 12.)

"With Figgins. You know, Wally is stayin' at Eastwood with his friends, Jameson and Gibson, for the holidays. It seems that Figgins has written to him, and the three of them are goin' ova to play in Figgins' eleven."

Manners sniffed.
"Third Formers to play against us!" he exclaimed.

"Well, we have girls in the team, so it will be pretty well matched," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I wegard that we mark as indisweet."

"Rats!"

"I wefuse to—I mean—"

"Hallo, here's the brake!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Get a move on!"

The juniors were up from the breakfast-table in a moment.
There was a general hurrying and scurrying, and coats and cricket-bags and other implements were carried to the brake, and then Miss Fawcett and the girls were helped in, and the juniors crowded into their places.

It was twenty miles to Forest Burford, but the brake covered the ground at a spanking rate, and the road flew under the wheels. In less than two hours' run the brake was within sight of Figgins' uncle's house.

"Here they are!"

Figgins uttered the words.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were standing in the lane that ran past the lodge gates. They waved their hands as the brake rolled into sight.

"Here you are, my sons," said Figgins, as the brake halted, and his eyes danced as he saw Cousin Ethel looking down at him. "How jolly good of you to come," he added, as he shook hands with Ethel over the side of the brake.

Ethel smiled.

"We're playing," she said.

"Playing!"

"Yes."

"Oh!" gasped Figgins.

"We shan't have much of a chance, then," said Kerr politely.

Cousin Ethel laughed again, and descended from the brake. The vehicle was driven in, as it was to wait for the juniors to take them home at dusk. Miss Priscilla and the girls were taken up to the house, where the latter were made acquainted with Figgins' uncle, the major.

Tom Merry & Co. knew the major well. He greeted the girls and the boys warmly, evidently glad to see them, and ready to make much of them.

Figgins' cousin, Archie Hilton, a handsome young man, with a good-natured face, was staying in the house, and it transpired that he was playing in Figgins' eleven. Tom Merry and his chums greeted Hilton warmly.

"I suppose you don't mind Hilton playing," Figgins remarked. "Of course, he's much older than any of you fellows, and above your form, I suppose; but some of my team are much below Shell form, so that will make it level."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "Who's playing?"

"We three," said Figgins, "and Hilton

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No. 12. Vol. 1 (New Series).

TEST MATCH TRIAL SAINTS AND AUSTRALIANS IN FORM

Eric Kildare's Running Commentary

The arrival of the Australian Trial XI to do battle for the Noble Shield has caused a big stir.

The idea of schoolboy Test matches originated with an uncle of Harry Noble of the Shell, a famous cricketer of other days. He suggested to Noble that there are many Australians at neighbouring schools, who might form a team to play St. Jim's in a series of Tests. Noble's uncle presented a valuable silver shield—and it did not take "Kangaroo" long to form an XI for a trial match, with Tests to follow!

On paper, the "Aussies" look pretty powerful. They include Gay and the Wootton brothers, of the Grammar School, "Squiff," of Greyfriars, Derwent, of Highcliffe, and Conroy, of Rookwood—all "cracks"! Here are the teams:

AUSTRALIAN TRIAL XI.: Noble (St. Jim's) (Capt.), Gay, Wootton major, Wootton minor (Rylcombe Gram. School), S. Q. I. Field (Greyfriars), Derwent (Highcliffe), Conroy (Rookwood), Raymond (Claremont), Thane (Redclyffe), Franklin (St. Jude's), Ferrers (Abbotsford).

St. Jim's: Merry (Capt.), Blake, D'Arey, Lowther, Manners, Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Herries, Digby, Pratt.

Here they come—Merry and Noble are tossing before the pavilion. Noble wins, and elects to bat. He and Gordon Gay open the "Aussie" innings to Fatty Wynn's bowling. Noble opens cautiously, knowing Wynn's guile, scoring only a single run. Gay is more adventurous, and drives the last ball of the over for four.

Blake bowls at the other end, very fast. Noble and Gay seem keyed up to the occasion, though, and they are playing like real Australian Test batsmen. Nothing can tempt Noble, but Gay's bat flashes merrily. Gay 20, and set. Noble is coming out of his shell now, hitting two nice fours. The pitch gives the bowlers no help. Fielding is keen, but of no avail against two lynx-eyed batsmen, who are apparently set for life. Gay is nearing his fifty, with Noble plodding in the twenties—Gay sends one clean over the ropes for six to top his fifty! Well played, sir! You should hear the cheering!

A single through the slips for Gay. He essays the same stroke again, and Figgins darts across. A brilliant catch by Figgins—Gay is out with 61.

Jack Wootton follows. He does not look comfortable. Hallo, he asked that one off Wynn—Merry holds it safely at mid-on, and Wootton wends his way back!

"Squiff" of Greyfriars is next, and run-getting is resumed. S. Q. I. Field is a free-style batsman, who if in form may make a hundred, but who may come out first ball. He has got going this time—a four, another, then a six! The "Aussies" are giving the Saints some leather-chasing in the hot sun.

A productive partnership this. After changing his bowlers repeatedly, Merry succeeds in uprooting "Squiff's" off-stump himself! Field has made a snappy 36.

Noble is still there, in his fifties now, with Harry Wootton coming in. The scoreboard shows 152—with only three wickets down. An imposing start, this!

Fatty Wynn has had a rest, and returns now. His first ball claims Wootton minor's wicket—a real "sizzler." Derwent, of Highcliffe, fares little better. He slices two of Wynn's for singles, but the next ball deceives him and his middle stump is knocked flying. Conroy stands firm, while Noble opens his shoulders and with mighty hits approaches his century. Terrific cheering greets the hit which completes Kangaroo's hundred!

Another couple, however, and he is smartly caught by Blake at slip. The "Aussies" are all out for 243—a splendid total.

Lunch over, St. Jim's open with Tom Merry and Jack Blake. The first wicket falls at fifty—Blake mistiming one of Squiff's deliveries and giving an easy catch. D'Arey joins Merry, and shows that he can face fast bowling without finching. Nothing "soft" about the way D'Arey bangs Squiff's expresses to the boundary! When D'Arey leaves, with 34 to his credit, it is to a brilliant catch at the wicket by Conroy.

Figgins joins Merry, who appears set. Figgins finds the boundary rapidly. His bat swings like a flail amidst the bowling. Forty runs have rippled from Figgins' bat ere Thane, of Redclyffe, bowls him! The "tail" wags freely, but despite Tom Merry's brilliant innings of 72 not out, the last wicket falls with the St. Jim's total at 200—43 behind the "Aussies."

Time is short now, and it looks like being a draw. Hallo, though! Fatty Wynn did not shine so much in the first innings. Now he has struck his form—and the "Aussies" are coming and going in a regular procession! Gay does not last long—Noble himself is bowled by Wynn for 7. Conroy hits out, and Derwent backs him up for a brief period, but Fatty Wynn has struck a patch, as they say, and the "Aussies" are all out for 57.

Set 101 to win, St. Jim's have less than an hour to get them. This is the moment for hitters! Tom Merry wisely opens with Figgins, a mighty slogger. No time to play themselves in—Merry and Figgins are hitting out at anything and everything in a sporting effort to wrest a victory! Look is with them—twenty, thirty, forty are on the board. At 50, Figgins drives hard into Gay's hands. Figgins caught, 28. Blake follows, abandoning his usual careful game and letting fly at every ball. They are ahead of the clock—Blake gets a sizzling dozen and is stumped! Tom Merry is set and going like a house on fire—Lowther joins him. Nothing funny about Lowther now—he is smashing the ball hard and true! Ten minutes to go, and fifteen runs wanted! Merry bangs a four off Squiff. Another off Thane. Lowther hits, and the batsmen run three. Four wanted—Merry has the bowling, and fairly leaps at it. There it goes—high over our heads—mind, you fellows! A sixer—and a gallant last-minute victory for St. Jim's!

The result seems a happy augury for the Test matches against the Australian XI!

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Merry's Weekly



Week Ending May 5th, 1934.

Flying Squad Report

SQUAD SQUASH "AUSSIES."

Tom Merry, as junior captain, astonished to receive typewritten challenge from "The Aussies," a mysterious Australian cricket squadron. Scout planes ordered out. Mystery solved when Blake zoomed down on sheet of paper outside Third Form Room—a copy of the challenge in Wally D'Arcy's handwriting! "Aussies" evidently fags trying to get fixture with St. Jim's Junior XI. Blake urged the affront to dignity of Junior XI be avenged. After Flying Squad conclave, Chief Air Marshall Merry answered challenge, accepting. On fateful afternoon, "Aussies" took field—led by Wally D'Arcy. To their amazement, they were met by detachment of Flying Squad—four fellows, Merry, Blake, Figgins, and Wynn. Flying Squad quartette speedily skittled "Aussies." Fatty Wynn's deliveries wrecking all wickets! "Aussies" all bombed out for 15. Flying Squad batted, Tom Merry and Blake knocking off required runs without loss. Thus ended hopes of "Aussies"—bombed out of existence by Flying Squad!



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everyb o d y !
Now for the wild and woolly vest, as Gore said when he ripped off the new vest that was tickling him!

Mr. Isaacs, the Rylecombe pawnbroker, thumped his counter.

"I owe all my success to pluck!" he said. "But how do you find the right people to pluck?" asked Figgins coolly.

A horse belonging to a Shropshire farmer at times insists on running backwards. Crooke says he backed a horse like that once.

"It's no use complaining about this world," observes Skimpole. Quite right! None of us will get out of it alive!

A cowboy was applying for a job as hangman. "How fast do you work?" asked the sheriff.

"Fifteen knots an hour!" came the response.

Rushden of the Sixth has been chipped by the other Sixth Form men because he shaves regularly.

"I get my whiskers on the instalment plan," he said to Knox.

"The instalment plan?" repeated Knox.

"Yes—a little 'down' each week!" grinned Rushden.

Buck Fann, the American junior, went into Wayland cafe.

"I often wondered why you English are such tea drinkers," he told the waiter. "Now I know—I've had some of your coffee!"

A newspaper says: "It is not always the smart schoolboy who is a success in after life."

Hear, hear! But, unfortunately, Linton won't accept that as an excuse for a bad 'construe'!

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

2 to 1, 5 to 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 3, 7 to 6, 4 to 7, 1 to 4, 3 to 1, 6 to 3, 7 to 6.

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

HARRY NOBLE SPEAKING



It's very pleasant to meet you all face to face!

Of course, you all know I'm an Australian. Australia is a great country—particularly the part where I come from—the State of Victoria. The Cabbage Garden State, it is sometimes called. Fellows call me a Cornstalk, but that's not strictly correct, though the name is used commonly for Australians. It applies really to New South Wales men only.

Without wishing to run down the English climate, bless it, I must say that we get more sun in Australia. Our pitches frequently crack and the nice green sward you are accustomed to in England is a rarity. On the other hand, I believe there is more enthusiasm for cricket in Australia. Our crowds are as partisan and as vocal as your football crowds. They don't mind telling a batsman to get a move on—and in no uncertain terms! "Aussies" are used to this sort of thing, and ignore it. Englishmen sometimes find it disturbing.

I think cricket at St. Jim's reaches a very high level. I have won my place in the Junior XI, but I know I am not such an accomplished bat as Merry. Merry is really wonderful, and should play for England some day.

I am watching the Australian tour this summer with the keenest interest. We want those "Ashes," and this time I think we shall get them! I am just as sure that in our own private series of "Tests" at St. Jim's, I and my Australian XI will manage to beat Tom Merry's team and carry off my uncle's silver shield. On the other hand, Merry is just as certain that his men will win. I think the best thing you fellows can do is to come down to Little Side and see for yourselves! I'll expect you!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Below you will see seven spaces, each one occupied by a cricketer, numbered from 1 to 6. The captain arranged his first six batsmen as shown. At the last moment, however, he decided to reverse the order of going in, and he wanted them to change round so that they would read 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, with the blank square in its present position.

Can you see how to perform the feat in the fewest possible moves?

Use counters for the cricketers. They can jump to the next square (if vacant), or leap over one cricketer to the next square beyond (if vacant), just as we move at draughts, and they can go backwards or forwards as desired.



and young Wally, Jameson, and Gibson. That's seven. I have two gardening chaps belonging to my uncle. They're very willing, but their cricket would make an angel weep. They'll balance Hilton and make it fair. See?"

"That's all right."

"Then there's the page here. He plays in the village eleven, so I roped him in."

"And who's your eleventh man?"

Figgins hesitated.

"As a matter of fact, he's a chap you know," he said.

Tom Merry looked interested.

"Yes? A native of this place?"

"Oh, no; a St. Jim's fellow staying near here—Lumley."

Tom Merry's face fell.

"Lumley! The Outsider?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

"You don't like him?" said Figgins anxiously.

"Well, I don't, either; but he came and asked me if he could play, and I was hard-up for an eleventh man, and anyway he's a St. Jim's chap, you know."

"I know; but—"

"You object?"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Tom Merry slowly.

"I've no right to object to a man in your team; but Cousin Ethel—"

"Ethel doesn't know him."

"He came to Laurel Villa yesterday."

"Oh, doesn't Ethel like him?" said Figgins anxiously.

"Of course, I didn't know anything about that."

Tom Merry paused.

He felt that it would be hardly the thing to interfere with the composition of Figgins' team, especially when the New House captain was so hard-up for an eleventh man.

At the same time it would be very awkward for Cousin Ethel to meet Lumley after what had happened at Laurel Villa.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry, at last.

"You'd better play him."

"But—"

"That's all right, old man. It can't be helped now."

And Tom Merry left Figgins before he could ask any questions. Under the circumstances it was more judicious not to let Figgins know that Jerrold Lumley had been rude to Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry joined the girls on the cricket ground. There was a very fine ground at the Lodge, with a handsome pavilion, for the major was an old cricketer, and often had cricketing friends down to stay with him in the summer.

"Stumps are pitched!" said Ethel cheerily.

"Yes. By the way, Ethel—" Tom Merry hesitated.

The girl looked at him quickly.

"Yes, Tom?"

"Lumley's in Figgins' team."

"Oh!"

"Figgins didn't know anything about his coming to Laurel Villa," said Tom Merry.

"He would kick him out if he knew. But that would muck up his team for the match. Do you mind if we pass it over, and let Lumley play?"

"It will be best, Tom."

"You don't mind?"

"Not at all."

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"All right. It would be rotten to spoil Figgins' eleven, and the fellow can play cricket, you know, cad as he is. But if you minded, I've only to say a word to Figgins, and he'd kick the rotter out like anything."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"I don't mind," she said. "I mean, I don't mind enough to want to give trouble. It would not be fair to him."

"Right-ho, then!"

Figgins came up with his followers, in cricketing attire. The Terrible Three looked them over.

They were certainly an oddly assorted team.

Hilton was head and shoulders above the rest, and made a very handsome figure in flannels. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked fit and trim. Wally, Jameson, and Gibson were fit, but, of course, small for such a match. The page, Wilkins, was fat and stumpy, but looked active enough. The two gardeners' boys were exceedingly clumsy in appearance, and none too bright in countenance. They were ruddy and good-natured and willing, but they did not look as if they knew much about cricket.

Figgins and Tom Merry tossed for choice of innings, and Figgins named the coin. He elected to bat first.

Major Figgins sat down on a garden-chair before the pavilion, to watch; with two or three acquaintances from the neighbourhood who had come to see the match and to stay to lunch. Tom Merry led his men—and girls—out to field. Just before Figgins came on the pitch to open the innings, the Outsider arrived.

There was a cool and insolent smile upon Jerrold Lumley's face as he glanced at Tom Merry & Co. They were careful not to take notice of him.

Figgins and Kerr came to the wickets, and Tom Merry put Kangaroo on to bowl, and the match started.

CHAPTER 11. The Cricket Match!

F IGGINS stole a glance towards Cousin Ethel as he took up his position at the wicket.

Miss Cleveland was fielding at cover-point, and very pretty and graceful she looked there.

Figgins would have preferred to have Ethel in his own eleven, though not much of a believer in girls' cricket, as a rule. Figgins was a dashing batsman, but to-day he felt a slight nervousness. It was not merely that he was playing under bright eyes; he had often played before a crowded pavilion. But he was afraid that Cousin Ethel or Vera or Phyllis might be hurt, especially Cousin Ethel. But the call of play forced Figgins to give his thoughts to the game.

He faced the bowling.

Kangaroo was in good form. He sent down a ball that gave Figgins plenty to do, and he kept it up. Five balls in the over Figgins had to play carefully. But Figgins was warming to his work now.

Clack!

The bat met the last ball of the over, and away it went.

Figgins ran and Kerr ran, and they crossed.

Smack!

What was that sound—of leather meeting palm?

There was a yell.

"Well caught!"

Figgins stopped.

Cousin Ethel was holding up the ball.

Figgins had been caught out at the first hit, and by Cousin Ethel.

His face fell for a moment.

Ethel smiled brightly.

"Well caught!" cried Tom Merry.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned the gentleman who was umpiring at that end.

Figgins ran quickly towards Cousin Ethel. The whole field looked at him in astonishment.

Cousin Ethel met him with a glance of surprise.

"You caught me out?" said Figgins.

"Yes," smiled Ethel.

"It was an awful smack!" said Figgins seriously. "You— you must have hurt your hand!"

Cousin Ethel laughed merrily.

"Oh, I thought you were going to make some objection to the catch!" she said.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Figgins. "It's all in the game. I don't mind that. I was thinking about your fingers. You—"

"Oh, nonsense! It is all right," said Cousin Ethel. "I am not soft."

"Right-ho, then!"

And Figgins went to the pavilion.

"What a beautiful nature!" murmured Monty Lowther, with a grin. "I'm blessed if I've ever thought about the fieldsman's fingers when I've been caught out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard it as very decent of Figgins," said Arthur Augustus. "As a matter of fact, it was wathah wuff on Ethel, but she stands it like a wick."

"Who's next man in?" said Lowther. "Oh, it's Wally! Look out for squalls; here comes the terror of the Third Form!"

And Tom Merry & Co. laughed.

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Wally heard the laugh, and looked round indignantly, and determined in his own mind that he would show the laughers that Third Form cricket was not to be despised.

But, alas! for Wally's determination.

Kerr made a score of one, which brought Wally facing the bowler, and Wally was bowled first ball by Jack Blake.

The hero of the Third looked at his wicket.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated.

And the fieldsmen chuckled.

"I say, was that a trial?" called out Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha! No."

"Out!" said the umpire.

Wally carried out his bat.

"This is quite exhilarating," grinned Monty Lowther. "Here comes the Outsider! Get him out first ball, Blake, or I'll scalp you!"

"What-ho!" said Blake confidently.

But Blake was mistaken in his estimation of Lumley's prowess.

Jerrold Lumley had earned contempt at St. Jim's by not playing cricket, and by openly professing a dislike and contempt of the great summer game.

The fellows had taken this to mean that he could not play, and, as a rule, either cricket or football is never spoken of contemptuously by those who can play.

But the case was different with Lumley.

He was undoubtedly a cad, a complete cad, but he had played cricket under a professional coach to prepare for his life at St. Jim's, and, though he did not care for the game, he was clever enough to benefit by the instruction.

His form now was, therefore, a surprise to the St. Jim's fellows.

Blake put in the best bowling he knew, but Lumley stopped it all, and twice cut the ball away to the boundary.

The fieldsmen exchanged wondering glances.

They had expected little of Jerrold Lumley, but it was pretty clear at the start that he was one of the best bats in Figgins' team.

Figgins' face brightened up as he watched from the pavilion.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Lumley's going to make a stand!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn. "He's a rank outsider, but he knows how to handle the willow. Look! There he goes!"

The last ball of the over sailed away from the Outsider's bat, and Lumley and Kerr ran, and ran, and ran again before it was fielded.

"Bravo!" shouted Figgins.

The odd run brought Lumley to the batting end again. Tom Merry tossed the ball to Kangaroo.

"Get him out!" he said.

The Cornstalk nodded.

"I'll do my level," he said.

Tom Merry's brows knitted a little.

If any other fellow in Figgins' eleven had made a good stand against the bowling, Tom Merry would have taken it cordially enough; but he did not like Lumley, and he felt a curious sense of annoyance, which he tried to suppress as unsportsmanlike.

Apart from the match entirely, the fieldsmen would all have been glad to see Jerrold Lumley's wicket fall.

But it was soon clear enough that that was not likely to happen.

Lumley was in to stay.

There was a sneering smile on his face as he batted, facing every kind of bowling, and knocking it all over the field.

Tom Merry looked grim as another boundary was taken.

"There's only one junior at St. Jim's who can bowl that chap," he said. "And that's Fatty Wynn—and Wynn's on his side."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the fielding side looked serious about it.

Figgins' innings had begun badly enough, but already Lumley's score was 20 for himself alone, and he was well backed up by Kerr, who added 10.

Tom Merry's bowlers exhausted themselves in vain upon Lumley's wicket.

But Fate was overtaking him.

The home score stood at 45, of which 30 belonged to Jerrold Lumley, when the Outsider, flushed with success, ran a little too much risk.

The ball had gone into the long field, and twice the batsmen had run, and Lumley tempted Fate a third time.

But Phyllis Monk was "on the ball."

Lumley had been encouraged to take that third run by the fact that it was "only a girl" after the ball.

But he soon learned that he had underrated Phyllis.

The ball was in her hand, and she swung up and returned it with lightning speed—not to the wicket-keeper, but direct to the wicket.

Crash!

Lumley realised the danger, and put on a desperate spurt, in a frantic endeavour to reach the wicket in time; but his bat was still a foot off the crease when the ball crashed into the stumps, and the bails flew away.

There was a delighted shout from the field.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

There wasn't much doubt on that point.

Jerrold Lumley was out.

He did not take his defeat kindly.

A black look came over his face and his eyes glinted. He had done very well in his innings, but he was evidently not satisfied, and the fall of his wicket—and to a throw-in from a girl, too!—galled him bitterly.

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"I'm jolly glad to be rid of him!" he remarked.

"Looks nice, doesn't he?" murmured Lowther.

"Oh, he's not a sportsman—he can't take it calmly!"

"Might as well—he's got to take it, anyway!"

Jerrold Lumley sullenly carried out his bat.

Figgins slapped him on the shoulder in his hearty way as he reached the pavilion. Figgins' honest face was beaming.

"Jolly good!" he exclaimed. "You've done splendidly, Lumley! You bouncer! I never dreamed you could play like that!"

Lumley grunted.

"I was careless at the finish," he said. "I never thought a girl could throw in straight. Of course, it was a fluke!"

"It wasn't!" grinned Wally. "It was a good throw-in!"

"Bah! What do you know about it?"

"I know more than you about cricket, I expect," retorted Wally. "I dare say you could give me points about drinking and gambling, but when you come to cricket—"

"Shut up, Wally!" said Figgins.

"Well, let him shut up, then!" said Wally truculently. "Fluke—eh? Why, I never saw a better or straighter throw-in in my life! Fluke! Rats!"

"Next man in, Fatty!" said Figgins, laughing.

Fatty Wynn drew on his batting gloves.

"Got any toffee about you, Figgys?" he asked.

"No. I gave you some; where's that?"

"I've eaten it. I feel a bit peckish, and—"

"Here's some milk chocolate," said Wally. "Stuff it in and get to the pitch!"

Fatty Wynn grinned, and went down to the pitch chewing milk chocolate.

Fatty Wynn and Kerr together made the fur fly a little. The score went up in jumps, and was soon at seventy-five. Then Fatty fell a victim, and it was Vera Stanhope who brought the plump Welsh junior to grief.

Fatty had batted in fine style, till Tom Merry put Vera on to bowl.

Then it must be admitted that Fatty was ungallant enough to underestimate the powers of a mere girl when it came to bowling.

Fatty did not guard his wicket as he should have done, and the ball came down a regular scorcher, as it happened. Crash!

Fatty Wynn woke up to the fact that he had a keen bowler to deal with, what time his stumps and bails were reclining on the sward.

"My hat!" ejaculated Fatty.

There was a yell from some of the juniors.

"Well bowled!"

Fatty Wynn coloured, and carried out his bat.

The remainder of the home innings did not occupy much time. The "tail" of the innings tailed off, with little to show for itself. Kerr was out at the finish, after being first man in.

The total for the innings was 94 runs, which Figgins was pretty well satisfied with; feeling quite assured in his own mind that, with Fatty Wynn bowling, Tom Merry's Eleven would never reach a figure to equal it. And, as it was a single-innings match, all depended upon the batting in the next innings.

"Well, I'm glad that's over!" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh.

"What!" exclaimed Kerr. "You're glad to see our wickets go down, you bouncer?"

"Oh, no!" said Wynn hastily. "I'm sorry, of course; but I was thinking of lunch. I'm awfully hungry, you see!"

Fatty Wynn, however, was not the only one who was hungry. The innings had lasted a fairly long time, and all had keen appetites when it was over, and all welcomed the substantial lunch the major's housekeeper had provided.

Figgins hoped that Fatty Wynn, the great bowler, would distinguish himself in the visitors' innings; but however that might be, there was no doubt at all that Fatty Wynn would distinguish himself at the lunch.

He did!

(Continued on next page.)

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CHAPTER 12.

Last "Man" In!

LUNCH was a merry meal to the cricketers.

All of them were in high spirits; the home team because they had made a good score, and the visitors because they were going to make a better one—or believed they were, at all events.

Only the Outsider wore a shade upon his face.

The juniors were civil to him, because in general company and in Major Figgins' house they could hardly be anything else.

But their looks showed their contempt and dislike plainly enough.

A fellow who could be rude to a girl was not the kind of fellow they cared to associate with; and Lumley had been rude, moreover, to Cousin Ethel, the girl whom the juniors esteemed above all others.

Ethel, Phyllis, and Vera contrived to have nothing to say to Lumley, without appearing to be studiously avoiding him, managing the matter with the tact which is a feminine attribute.

The boys were less tactful and less careful of the Outsider's feelings.

As Blake expressed it, for two pins he would have knocked the "rotter" sky-high. As for Figgins & Co., they did not yet know the cause of the Outsider's especial offending; and they attributed Tom Merry & Co.'s manner towards him to the old feeling there had been against him at St. Jim's.

Lumley scowled as he heard the merry chatter, in which he could scarcely join.

When lunch was over he strolled out and stood moodily under the trees. The sound of girlish voices made him look round, and he saw the three girls walking together.

They made a pretty picture, and even Lumley's black face softened for a moment. He came awkwardly towards them.

They turned away.

"You don't want to speak to me—eh?" said Jerrold Lumley angrily.

"No," said Ethel.

"Why not?"

"You know the reason best."

"But—"

Tom Merry and Blake came quickly up, and the Outsider turned away. Both the juniors looked ready to eat him if he said another word.

Lumley walked away alone.

Envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness were running riot in his breast.

His face was still clouded when the cricketers came down to the ground for the second innings.

Figgins was grinning cheerfully.

"You're going to do most of the bowling, Fatty!" he said, slapping the Welsh junior on the back. "And, mind, duck's eggs galore for them!"

Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"We want them all out for about twenty, you know."

"Good egg!" said Kerr. "What are you thinking of, Fatty?"

"The lunch," said Fatty Wynn, with a happy smile.

"Wasn't it ripping?"

"Poof!"

"Well, it was, you know."

Hilton came up with a smile.

"Will you give me some bowling, Figgins?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Figgins, a little dubiously, for, as a matter of fact, Hilton had not cut a very fine figure in the home innings, being stumped by Lowther for 3. But, of course, he might be a good bowler, all the same.

"I am good with the ball," said Hilton. "I think I can promise you some wickets."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "You and Wynn shall have it between you, and we'll see how we get on, anyway."

"Good!"

"You chaps ready?" called out Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, so are we."

And Figgins & Co. and their followers went into the field.

The ball was given to Archie Hilton for the first over, though, as a matter of fact, Figgins would have preferred Fatty Wynn to open the bowling. But politeness came first, and, after all, one over did not matter much.

Jerrold Lumley tapped Figgins on the shoulder.

"Will you give me some bowling?" he asked.

"Well, I've got Hilton and Wynn," said Figgins.

"I can bowl."

"Yes; but—"

"You might give me a chance. I will take wickets, I promise you that. I've coached with a professional—a good county bowler," said Lumley.

Figgins nodded.

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"Very well, if I need a change bowler I'll give you a chance."

And with that Jerrold Lumley had to be content.

He went into the slips to field with a savage expression upon his face. There was no doubt that Jerrold Lumley would do his hardest against the visiting team, not from a sportsmanlike desire to do his best for his side, but from spite against his adversaries.

Tom Merry opened the innings with Jack Blake, and the innings was lively from the start—lively, that is, in one sense, deadly in another, as far as Tom Merry & Co. were concerned.

Tom Merry received the first over, and lived through it, but that was all he did.

Hilton's bowling was too good to be scored off. Then Jack Blake faced the ball in the hands of Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn, the terror of all the junior bats at St. Jim's, was in fine form.

His fat face was glowing, his eyes were shining, and he moved with a springy step that told of the pink of condition.

Fatty Wynn meant business. The Terrible Three and their comrades saw it at once, and were prepared for trouble. And there was trouble!

Fatty took a little run and turned himself into a catherine-wheel, and sent the ball down like a bullet.

Jack Blake swiped at the ball—at all events at the place where the ball ought to have been—but his bat did not find it.

The stumps found it, however, or it found the stumps, and the middle stump went out of the ground with the bails.

"My hat!" gasped Blake.

"How's that?" yelled the delighted fieldsmen.

"Out!"

"What price ducks' eggs?" grinned Lumley.

Herries came in next and was clean bowled, and then Manners, and Manners dropped to the first ball from Fatty Wynn.

Figgins gave a yell of delight.

"The bat-trick! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn grinned modestly. He was too used to hat-tricks to feel very much elated about it, but he was glad he had pleased Figgins.

"Go it, Fatty!" chuckled Kerr.

"More wickets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo joined Tom Merry, and Fatty Wynn found him a tough nut. He scored 6 off the rest of the over, and lived through it.

Hilton bowled again, and then Tom Merry began to score.

A little later Kangaroo fell to a smart catch by Figgins, and carried his bat out for 15, and Digby came in.

Digby retired, clean bowled by Fatty Wynn, and in the next over Monty Lowther was caught out by Kerr.

"Six down for 28," said Tom Merry to himself. And in spite of his pluck he looked a little serious.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in next.

The swell of St. Jim's came down to the wickets buttoning his gloves, with his bat under his arm, with the peculiarly graceful walk which was one of his distinguishing traits.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Figgins. "Wipe him out, Fatty!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

The demon bowler of the New House did not expect much trouble with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But it is the unexpected that always happens.

D'Arcy did not score much, but he defended his wicket well, and both the batsmen showed signs of getting well set.

Hilton and Fatty Wynn bowled their best, but they were not to be moved, though the character of the bowling, and the excellence of the fielding, cut down the margin of runs.

Lumley eagerly met Figgins' eyes as the field crossed over a little later. Figgins gave him a short nod.

"Pitch the ball to Lumley," he said. "Go and see if you can take Tom Merry's wicket, Lumley."

"I'll try," said Jerrold eagerly.

He went on to bowl against Tom Merry.

Tom Merry smiled confidently. He did not fear Lumley's bowling. As a matter of fact, Lumley had exaggerated his own powers in that line. He could bowl well, but not nearly as well as Fatty Wynn.

The over was eventless, except that it produced a couple of runs for Tom Merry. Lumley bit his lip hard as he came off.

"All right," said Figgins cheerily. "Can't expect everything, you know. Don't be downhearted."

"Give me another over," said Lumley.

"All right—after this."

Hilton took an over without success, and the score was creeping up. Then the Outsider was put on to bowl again, this time against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy stood in his usual graceful attitude, as if it were really too much trouble to swing the willow; but when it

came to batting no one had really a keener or quicker eye, or a surer hand.

Lumley put all he knew into that over, but it was in vain. D'Arcy whipped his bowling all over the field and scored run after run from it, till Lumley was red with rage.

"Good man!" murmured Monty Lowther, watching from the pavilion. "I think he'd like to eat Gussy without salt—what?"



Three savage cuts from the whip Tom Merry received before he could grapple with the Outsider of St. Jim's. But the next moment Lumley was dragged from his seat, and the two juniors rolled on the floor of the brake, fighting furiously.

"I think so," said Blake. "Blessed worm! Why can't he be a sportsman?"

"Ain't in him!" said Digby.

"My hat, I believe he'll chuck the ball at Gussy's head if this goes on much longer!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Lumley delivered the last ball of the over, and D'Arcy cut it away to the boundary.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Major Figgins, clapping his brown hands.

But Fate was overtaking D'Arcy. In the next over 1 run was scored. Arthur Augustus received the bowling from Fatty Wynn, and his wicket fell in ruins.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy as his middle stump fell with the bails. "Is that out, deah boy?"

The umpire chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, that's out!"

Arthur Augustus carried out his bat. The visitors were seven wickets down for 50 runs—and the remaining batsmen were girls!

Tom Merry looked a little serious as Vera Stanhope came in.

Forty-five runs were wanted to win, and he hardly believed that he would be able to get them, backed up only by girls.

And, as a matter of fact, it soon became clear that he, at all events, would not have much to do with getting them, whether they were got or not.

For in the next over he was caught out by Jerrold Lumley from a ball from Hilton. The Outsider of St. Jim's grinned as he held up the ball.

"How's that?" he cried.

"Out!"

Tom Merry went back to the pavilion. Plucky as he was, and resolute, he could not help looking and feeling grave.

"Next man in!" he said, with a smile, to Phyllis Monk. And Miss Phyllis went to the wickets.

Tom Merry stood beside Cousin Ethel, who was the last "man" in. The girls had preferred to be left to the tail of the innings.

"Looks bad," said Tom Merry.

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"Forty-five to get to win," remarked Blake.

"They may be taken," said Ethel quietly.

"By girls?" asked Herries in uncomplimentary surprise.

Ethel laughed. Blake trod on the foot of his too candid chum, and Herries stared down to see what it was. Cousin Ethel did not seem to notice.

"Phyllis and Vera were both good bats," she said. "I think I can bat a little myself, too."

"We've seen you bat," said Tom Merry. "We know it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, I don't think the innings is hopeless yet."

"Wathah not."

Cousin Ethel laughed and watched the cricket without replying. Fatty Wynn was bowling again, against Miss Vera's wicket.

The Welsh junior was feeling a little doubtful in his mind at first. His natural politeness made him wish to make things easy for a member of the gentle sex. At the same time, he was there to take wickets, and he didn't want to risk losing the match for his side. After a little reflection he decided that he was bound to play his hardest, and that it would be more merciful to put the other side out of their misery as soon as possible.

Curiously enough, however, the "other side" did not seem to be in a hurry to be put out of their misery.

Miss Vera stopped every ball that Fatty Wynn sent down, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,368.

and the two girls scored runs off them, much to the surprise of the fieldsmen.

Cousin Ethel smiled as she heard the involuntary exclamations of surprise round her from Tom Merry and his comrades, who were expecting the finish of the innings at almost any moment.

Major Figgins twisted his moustache and laughed.

"Gad!" he said. "The girls are cutting a good figure there, begad! Why, they'll win the match yet!"

"Hurrah for the Terrible Three!" chirruped Kangaroo. And they all laughed.

"Well caught!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly.

Miss Vera had knocked the ball fairly into Lumley's hand. The Outsider tossed it up and caught it again, and asked:

"How's that?"

Vera carried out her bat, but she left the score at 65. Thirty runs were wanted to win.

"Last man in!" said D'Arcy—"I should say last gal!"

THE LAST CHANCE!



The new recruits at rifle practice had missed the target at 100, 75, and 50 yards. The disgusted sergeant tried them at 25 yards, and they missed it again.

"Fix bayonets—charge!" cried the sergeant, almost bursting with rage. "It's your only chance!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Burrows, Ty Melyn, Berwy, Llangollen, N. Wales.

Cousin Ethel nodded and took up her bat.

And there was a buzz of keen interest among the cricketers as Cousin Ethel joined Miss Phyllis at the wickets. It was the last throw of the dice for the visitors.

CHAPTER 13.

Ordered Off!

Cousin Ethel stood at the wicket, a graceful figure. She faced the bowling with perfect coolness, although it was Fatty Wynn who had the ball.

The spectators, including the batsmen who were out, looked on with keen interest.

Tom Merry had given up the match as lost when his own wicket fell, but a hope was creeping into his breast now. The girls might pull the game out of the fire yet.

Fatty Wynn was bowling his best. There was no doubt about that. But at the same time it was possible that innumerable ginger-beers and chunks of chocolate during the match had taken the edge off Fatty Wynn's form.

Still, his bowling was undeniably good.

Cousin Ethel faced it coolly enough, however. And there was evidently a great deal of strength in the supple arms of the girl.

The ball went on many a long journey, and Figgins & Co. were given plenty of leather-hunting.

The home team were surprised, and not wholly pleased—excepting Figgins. Figgins grinned all over his face with evident delight.

He took as much pride in the exploits of Cousin Ethel as if she belonged to his own team, and cheered every good hit, although it was adding to the score against his side.

Tom Merry could not help grinning at Figgins' loud bravos.

"Good old Figgins!" he murmured. "What a sportsman!"

"How's the score now?" asked Blake, looking round.

"Eighty-six."

"My hat! It's creeping up."

"Yaas, wathah! I shouldn't wondah if we win, aftah all," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, rubbing his hands. "It was a jolly wippin' ideah of mine, you know, to play the gals in the eleven."

Tom Merry stared.

"Your idea!" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, of all the cheek! Why, it was my idea from the start!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well hit!" roared Kangaroo.

The ball was over the boundary again, and the girls

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smiled at one another across the pitch, with 4 runs to their credit without the trouble of running.

"Begad!" said the major. "Splendid—what?"

"Wippin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Hear Figgins?"

"Hurrah!" roared Figgins.

"You giddy chump!" growled Wally. "What are you hurrahing for? They're going to lick us, you champion duffer!"

"Eh?" said Figgins.

"They're licking us, you fathead!"

Figgins rubbed his nose.

"By George!" he said. "That's true! Never mind; may the best team win, you know! If they lick us, hurrah for them."

"Well, of all the chumps—"

Fatty Wynn bowled again with deadly intent. The fieldsmen were all on the look-out for catches, including Figgins—who was keen enough, in spite of his curious enthusiasm for the enemy.

Jerrold Lumley was as watchful as a cat. He saw his chance at last.

The ball had fled, and Cousin Ethel and Phyllis were running—once, twice, thrice!

The ball was returning to Lumley from the long field. Lumley caught it and flung it in with the same movement.

Ethel saw the danger and threw herself forward. She fell upon her knees, the end of her bat on the crease.

The next instant the wicket crashed down under the ball from Lumley's hand.

"Out!" yelled Lumley.

The umpire shook his head.

"Not out!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins.

"Bravo!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove Huwway!"

Lumley was crimson with rage. He really thought that the wicket had gone down simultaneously with the clump of the bat on the crease, and he was always ready to stretch a point in his own favour.

"It's out!" he roared angrily.

The umpire, a gentleman of fifty, an acquaintance of the major's, stared at the boy, and frowned.

"Nor out!" he repeated.

"I tell you—"

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed the umpire angrily.

Cousin Ethel had gained her feet. She was standing, flushed and very pretty.

"I think my bat was on the crease," she said.

"I know it was," said the umpire, "or I shouldn't have given you not out."

Lumley strode up to the wicket.

"I object!" he shouted. "It was out!"

Figgins strode after the Outsider, grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him round. The angry junior turned a furious face upon his skipper.

"Stop that!" said Figgins.

"I tell you—"

"Hold your tongue! How dare you question the umpire's decision?"

"It's favouritism, rank favouritism, that's what it is!" yelled the Outsider.

Figgins' brow grew black.

He pointed to the pavilion.

"That's your way!" he said curtly.

"What?"

"Get off the field!"

"But—"

"You're ordered off the field!" said Figgins curtly.

"That's your way! Get out!"

"I won't go!"

"Get out!"

"I won't!"

Figgins stepped closer to him, looking very grim.

"I give you two seconds to clear," he said. "Then I'll throw you off if you don't go! Take your choice!"

The Outsider gave him a furious look and stamped away.

"I say Figgy," called out Tom Merry, "you're not going to play a man short?"

"Yes, I am," said Figgins. "That cad will never play on the same field with me again, I can promise you!"

"I wegard Figgy as havin' acted in a stwictly pwopah mannah!"

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, fair's fair," said Tom Merry. "We'll lenç you a man."

"But—"

"Take Digby."

"I'm willing," said Digby.

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "Come on; you can field in Lumley's place."

And Digby joined his former adversaries for the finish of the match. It was a curious change of sides, but Digby was loyal to the core, and prepared to work his hardest for Figgins' eleven.

But the luck of the day was evidently with the batting side.

Cousin Ethel and Miss Phyllis were well set at the wickets now, and even Fatty Wynn could not move them, and Hilton was powerless.

Slowly but surely the score crept up.

Ninety-one—ninety-three—ninety-four!

The scores had tied; and still the batsmen were well set at the wickets.

Figgins gave the ball to Fatty Wynn once more.

"It's the last chance, Fatty," he said. "Either a wicket goes down in this over—or there's a winning hit! Do your best!"

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"I will, Figgys, old son."

And he did his best. But fortune was favouring the gentle sex now. Cousin Ethel met Fatty Wynn's first ball with a swipe that sent it far on its journey.

Miss Phyllis had started from her end when Ethel's voice was heard:

"No need to run, Phyllis."

And there wasn't—it was a boundary.

The match was won—well won!

"Hurrah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

The juniors swarmed on the field, shouting:

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'! Let's chair them off, deah boys!"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Cheese it!"

And D'Arcy realised that perhaps his suggestion was a little too enthusiastic. But the girls walked back to the pavilion with a cheering crowd, and happy smiles upon their faces.

Tom Merry's team had won the match; but there was no doubt that the greater part of the credit was due to the "Terrible Three"—Phyllis, Vera, and Ethel!

CHAPTER 14.

Neck or Nothing!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed the tea on the lawn, in the sunset, after the exciting match. All the juniors were merry enough. Figgins & Co. had been beaten, after all, but both sides could not win, and the match had been well-fought. Besides, it was almost a pleasure to be beaten by Cousin Ethel so heartily, though Wally was observed to grunt.

It was a merry meal, and no one missed the Outsider. Jerrold Lumley had gone; and they were glad that he had gone.

Now that the match was over, Figgins learned what had happened at Laurel Villa, and he knitted his brows over the story; and if the Outsider had still been there, it is probable that Figgins would have made an example of him.

Still, on account of Miss Priscilla and the girls, it was just as well that a row was avoided by Lumley taking himself off.

The Laurel Villa party were to return home in the dusk, and the major gave orders for the horses to be put to the brake. The sun had disappeared when the juniors and the girls put on their hats and coats at last.

"Where's the brake?" said Tom Merry, looking out at the door.

"Hark!"

There was a sound of a thunder of hoofs on the drive. A few moments later the driver appeared in view, running towards the house.

Tom Merry ran down the steps to meet him.

"Anything wrong?" he cried.

"The horses have run away, sir."

"With the brake?"

"Yes!"

"Great Scott! How did it happen?"

"There's somebody in the brake, sir. He nipped in, and I only came out in time to see him drive off—but I think the horses were running away with him, from the speed they went at."

"Which way have they gone?"

"Towards the gate, sir."

"Phew! Are the gates open?"

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry listened intently.

The thunder of the hoofs was dying away in the distance towards the gates. The two horses were evidently going at top speed—either running away, or driven recklessly by whoever was in the brake.

Who could it be?

"I thought it was one of the young gentlemen joking at first," said the driver; "but they are all here."

A name leaped to Tom Merry's lips at once.

"Lumley!"

"Bai Jove! The Outsider!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther. "Then he's collared the brake to strand us here to-night! The worm!"

"It's a rotten jape!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We—"

"Bai Jove!"

Wally, Jameson, and Gibson had just wheeled their bicycles out for the homeward run. The lamps were not yet lighted on them. Tom Merry signed to Blake and Lowther, and ran towards the Third Formers.

"Here, what are you up to?" exclaimed Wally, as Tom Merry jerked his bicycle away.

"I want your machine—"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Must! Explain to him, Figgys."

And Tom Merry put his leg over the bicycle and pounded away. Blake and Lowther were after him in a flash, leaving the Third Formers staring blankly.

Down the dark drive the three cyclists swept together.

In a minute or less they were at the gates, and the lodge-keeper called to them, but they did not reply.

Out into the shadows of the road they swept.

Far ahead they caught the glimmer of light from the brake, which was going along at top speed.

In the glimmer of the starlight Tom Merry made out a youthful form in the driver's seat, and he was relieved to assure himself that the horses were not running away. The Outsider was driving, and he could drive well.

It was a jape.

But it was an ill-natured jape, which might mean trouble enough for the Laurel Villa party; for no preparations had been made at the major's house for their reception, and suddenly to have to find accommodation for twelve of them—four of them ladies—would have very much taxed the resources of Major Figgins' housekeeper.

And unless the brake was recaptured, there was no possibility of getting back to Laurel Villa that night.

"We'll have him yet!" exclaimed Blake, between his teeth. "What a rotten jape! This is in return for his being ordered off the field."

"The rotten bounder!" said Lowther. "It's just like one of his tricks!"

Tom Merry clicked his teeth.

"I'll back the bikes against the brake any day!" he exclaimed.

"What-ho!"

And, indeed, the cycles were gaining fast on the brake. The pace of the latter had slackened down. The Outsider, not knowing that he was pursued, did not seem in so great a hurry now.

He glanced back, but for some time did not see the machines or their riders. The cyclists had no lamps, and they made little noise.

But the Outsider caught sight of them in the starlight at last. In the quiet of the country lanes the chums of St. Jim's heard the startled exclamation he gave.

The whip cracked.

"Buck up!" muttered Tom Merry. "He's seen us!"

"What-ho!"

The cyclists tore on.

(Continued on the next page.)

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Jerrold Lumley was urging the horses on to a reckless speed now. But the cyclists were steadily gaining. It was fortunate for all concerned that it was a lonely road, and it was deserted at night.

Pop!

It was a sudden explosion, like a rifle-shot.

Tom Merry turned his head.

"What's that?"

"Tyro bust!" gasped Lowther. "Keep on! I'm done!"

He jumped off his machine.

Tom Merry and Blake scorching on. There was no use in stopping, and two of them were enough—twice enough—to tackle the Outsider.

"Stick it out!" said Blake cheerily.

On they swept.

The horses were thundering along at top speed now, but the cyclists were close behind the brake. There was narrow room between the brake and the ditch, but Tom Merry steered his bicycle that way. Blake shot ahead of him, and came up the other side of the brake. Lumley glanced down, and set his teeth, and drew the horses a little to one side, so as to force Blake to ride into the ditch, or to be crushed under the brake.

Blake had no choice in the matter, and the reckless young ruffian in the brake gave him no time to think. Cycle and cyclist ran into the shallow ditch, and the brake's wheel scraped the edge of the ditch as it swept on.

Blake was hopelessly behind.

But Blake's disaster had given Tom Merry his chance. He had ridden on the other side of the brake, where for the moment there was ample room.

He shot ahead, passed the brake, pedalled on furiously for fifty yards, and then jammed on the brakes and jumped off. He swung the cycle into the hedge, turned round, and waited.

The brake came tearing on.

Lumley could have stopped it then if he had tried. Tom Merry stood ready. It was no light task to board a brake going at top speed, but Tom knew what he was about.

He allowed the heavy vehicle to pass him, and sprang up behind on the step, holding on for dear life.

A moment more, and he was rolling in the brake.

Lumley stood up, and turned round, cutting at him savagely with the whip.

Tom Merry leaped to his feet.

Three savage cuts he received before he reached Lumley. Then the Outsider of St. Jim's was dragged down into the brake, and they rolled together on the floor, fighting fiercely.

But at that game Jerrold Lumley was no match for the hero of St. Jim's.

He was pommelled into submission in a couple of minutes, and left gasping in the bottom of the brake, while Tom Merry clambered into the driver's seat.

Left uncontrolled for even a few minutes, the horses had taken full advantage of it, and they were now fairly running away with the brake.

Tom Merry grasped the reins.

Tom was a good driver, and he had driven horses before; but he had never had such a task as this presented to him.

But he did not lose his nerve.

The brake, and his own life and Lumley's, now depended upon his handling of them, for an accident was likely enough to be fatal.

And unless the horses were subdued, an accident might happen at the first turning, and certainly would happen if they met anything in the road.

Slowly, but surely, he reduced the mad speed, and brought the frightened animals back to a sense of obedience to the rein.

The pace of the brake slackened.

Tom Merry heard a gasp behind him.

"I guess that was a close call for both of us," said the Outsider.

Tom Merry gave the Outsider a glance.

Lumley had a black eye, and his nose was streaming red. But there was a grin on his face. He seemed to take his defeat with complete complacency.

"You cad!" said Tom. "There might have been an accident."

"I guess I thought there would be," said Lumley coolly.

"You do know how to drive, some."

Tom Merry made no reply. He brought the brake to a halt at last, and then turned to Jerrold Lumley again.

"Get out!" he said.

"Oh, all serene!"

Lumley jumped out of the brake, and disappeared into the darkness.

Tom Merry turned the brake in the road, and drove back towards the house, which was now more than a mile distant. He stopped to pick up the cycle he had left in the hedge. A few minutes later he came upon Blake, standing by the ditch, caked in mud, and supporting a bicycle with a twisted wheel, equally muddled.

"Oh, you've got the brake!" exclaimed the Fourth Former.

"And you've got the mud," grinned Tom Merry. "Jump in, and shove the bike in. I don't know how Wally & Co. will get home to-night."

Lowther was encountered half-way to the Lodge, wheeling his bicycle. He was glad enough to get it, and himself, into the brake.

"Where's Lumley?" was his first question.

"Gone!"

"I'd jolly well like to punch his head."

"His head's punched," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"That's all right."

Ten minutes later Tom Merry drove the brake up in triumph to the lighted door of the major's house.

Miss Priscilla gave a cry of relief.

"My darling Tommy, you are safe!"

"Safe as houses," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Nothing damaged, except the bikes. Here they are, kids."

There was a howl of wrath from Wally & Co.

(Continued on page 28.)

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 13.)

J. Morgan, 9, Bush Street, Hunslet, Leeds, 10, wants to hear from stamp collectors; age 13-14.

Harry Boot, Newhaven, Exley Road, Ingrow, Keighley, Yorks, wants pen pals; Dominions, Europe, U.S.A.; stamps and cricket; age 11-13.

Arthur R. Lawrence, 7, Botha Crescent, Kensington, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wants pen pals who are interested in fishing; age 13-30.

Ronald F. Cox, 7, Botha Crescent, Kensington, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wants correspondents anywhere; age 15-18; football, cycling, books.

The Henry Edwards' Film Club, Hon. Sec., Miss Kathleen Costello, 32, Amesbury Avenue, Streatham Hill, London, S.W.2, wants new members. It issues a magazine, the "Bulletin."

M. Moore, 21, Holders Hill Crescent, Hendon, London, N.W.10, would like to hear from any reader who has visited Russell-Cotes Home of Recovery, Parkstone, Dorset.

Audrey Chatters, Auden, Carlton Road, Pakefield, Lowestoft, Suffolk, wants a pen pal who is a stamp collector; age 10-13; New South Wales, Canada, North Borneo.

Will any reader who has a copy of the GEM dated March 29th, 1930, communicate with Mr. Geoffrey Steeples, c/o Mrs. G. Eric Whiteley, 17, Westmoreland Road, Southport, Lancs.

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P. Bessell, 3a, Pierrepont Street, Bath, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of the old numbers of the "Nelson Lee."

Miss Olive Beech, The Springs, Bury, Lancs, wants girl correspondents.

William Bartlett, 1, Rose Street, Box Hill, E.11, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors in South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand; age 14-18.

Miss Violet R. W. Cummins, 65, Mountjoy Street, Dublin, wants to hear from girl readers who were born on September 3rd.

R. H. Lee, 27, Meyrick Road, Battersea, London, S.W.11, wants members for his model aeroplane club; age up to 18.

Miss Joyce Smith, 40, Paddington Street, Paddington, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants a girl correspondent interested in books and films; age 16-18.

Sydney Bloch, P.O. Box 50, Witbank, Transvaal, South Africa, wants a pen pal interested in stamp collecting; Australia, America, Europe, England; age 12-17.

William Small, c/o Cobb, 3, Scott Street, Dundee, Scotland, wants pen pals keen on the old papers published for boys, also cigarette cards.

H. S. Hodges, 5, Lawn Terrace, Moseley Village, Moseley, Birmingham, wants a correspondent interested in films, stamps, and music; age 13-16. Birmingham only.

M. D. Jenkins, P.O. Box 136, Napier Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, wants to hear from stamp collectors in Spain and East and West Indies; age 14-16.

H. Deer, 20, Lagland Street, Poole, Dorset, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of old "Nelson Lees," etc.

MORE THRILLS IN THE WILD WEST WITH THE ST. FRANK'S CHUMS!

GHOST RIVER RANCH!



By E. S. BROOKS.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Justin B. Farman, of St. Frank's, learns that strange things are happening on the ranch he has inherited, he goes out to Arizona to investigate, taking with him Nipper, Handforth & Co., Willy and Archie Glen-thorne. No sooner do the seven schoolboys arrive by plane than they are attacked by mysterious horsemen known as the Black Riders, who are terrorising Ghost River Valley. The St. Frank's chums are unharmed, however, but the plane is destroyed by fire. The pilot leaves later by stage-coach, only to be held up on the trail by the Black Riders! "Hands up!" is the cry.

Prisoner of the Black Riders!

THE command uttered by Diamond Eye was so astonishing that for some moments Captain Merton could only stare. He saw that the other Black Riders had closed round the stationary stage-coach, and guns were gleaming from every black-covered hand. The stage-driver's hands were raised over his head. There were no other passengers within the coach, for to-day it happened to be running "light."

"Get moving, mister," said the leader of the Black Riders. "We're reckoning to tote you along with us."

"You're crazy!" retorted the airman, anger getting the better of his astonishment. "What do you want with me? This hold-up won't get you anywhere. I'm not carrying big money—"

"Quite stallin', young feller," broke in Diamond Eye. "Jump off that coach—and make it snappy."

He brought his coal-black horse nearer, and the menace in his voice was not lost by the muffling effect of the all-covering headgear. Recognition of this man was sheerly impossible, for even his eyes were concealed. There was only the single diamond-shaped "window" in the cowl. It appeared to be a section of fine gauze, chromium-plated. The diamond stood out vividly against the black. The great advantage of the arrangement was that whilst the wearer could see perfectly through the gauze, those with him could not even tell the colour of his eye—which might have been a possible source of identification.

"But this is absurd," protested Captain Merton hotly. "What are you going to do—kidnap me?"

"Just that!" replied Diamond Eye grimly.

Resistance was out of the question. Captain Merton was unarmed, and he could expect no aid from the stage-coach driver, who was badly scared. The black-garbed desperadoes

were pressing round closely, and their ready guns warned the airman he had no option but to obey.

As he leapt down from the box a Black Rider edged near him, leading a horse which was ready saddled—clear proof that this abduction had been carefully planned.

"Get mounted, brother, and trail along," ordered the Black Rider.

Diamond Eye waited until the prisoner, surrounded by his guards, had retreated some distance from the trail. Then he cocked his gun suggestively at the coach-driver.

"Listen, feller," he said. "When you get to Crag Junction you'll be suffering from a bad memory. Get me? You'll fergit you was carrying a passenger from Fortuna City."

"But, say—" began the driver.

"I'm doin' the sayin'," snapped Diamond Eye. "Next trip you make into this valley, if folks ask you if Captain Merton made the train, tell 'em yes. What happened right here—didn't happen. If you don't forget it, and you spill anything—waal, I guess it'll be just too bad, for they'll sure be needin' a new stage-driver for this run. Get going!"

He fired both his guns into the air, and the startled stage horses reared and broke into a gallop. The coach went swaying and rolling down the trail—and the driver deemed himself lucky to escape from the notorious Black Riders with his life.

"He's fixed, boys," said Diamond Eye, as he joined his gang. "O.K.! On your way!"

He did not once turn his strange, chromium eye towards the prisoner. Captain Merton, boiling inwardly, knew better than to offer resistance. Riding in the middle of this desperate bunch he found himself farther and farther from the trail.

They rode between majestic masses of rock, over the cactus studded desert, into a very wilderness of craggy hills and confusing defiles.

Presently, the Black Riders entered Red Rock Gully—although Captain Merton did not know its name. The crags towered high on either side, and they were reddish in colour. Along the floor of the gully ran a shallow stream; and as the party penetrated deeper and deeper, so the gully narrowed. The precipitous rocks on either side became higher and they closed in. The river occupied the entire floor of the gully, and the horses were now splashing their way through the water, and advancing into the mysterious depths of the canyon.

In spite of his alarm and anger, Captain Merton was

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interested. He was game enough, and he possessed an adventurous spirit. This experience was giving him a thrill.

It seemed to him that there was no possible exit from the gully, for the sheer sides now rose to dizzy heights, and, ahead, the gully abruptly ended in a noisy waterfall. The river came tumbling down in a mighty cascade from the upper level, and the Black Riders were now forcing their way through shallow rapids.

"Let her go, boys!" yelled Diamond Eye suddenly.

He was in the lead, and he spurred his horse and sent it charging straight at the waterfall. The other riders, with Captain Merton in their midst, followed his example. The young airman was bewildered.

The thunder of the falling water deafened his ears; his eyes smarted under the drifting spray; and then, all in a second, he was in a great smother of water. But even in that dramatic moment he realised that the horses must be specially trained animals, for they galloped straight into the waterfall without a sign of jibbing.

Swooooooosh!

Merton gasped as he went plunging straight through the sheet of falling water; but the passage was so swift that it was over in a flash. Drenched to the skin, dazed, he suddenly realised that he was safely behind the waterfall. The roaring had become subdued, and the sound echoed strangely. Shaking the water from his eyes, he saw that he was within a rock cavern, the floor and sides of which glistened with moisture. The Black Riders had all halted. A cold fear suddenly gripped the young airman. Openly the desperadoes had brought him into their secret hideout—and that could mean only one thing. They would never let him go!

He was impressed by the effectiveness of this extraordinary entry. From outside, there was no sign of the cavern, for the falling water completely masked the entrance. And the waterfall, Merton now realised, was deceptive. Even at close quarters—outside—it looked like a heavy, impenetrable body. Yet it was really a mere film of water through which the horsemen had dashed with impunity.

"On your way!" said one of the Black Riders.

Captain Merton had dismounted, and now he felt a gun muzzle thrust into the small of his back. Two men forced him along. He saw there was a black hole in the rocks at the rear of the cavern, yet he could have sworn that it had not been there a minute earlier.

The other Black Riders had gone in advance, leading their horses into the tunnel. Electric torches suddenly blazed out, supplying the necessary illumination.

The airman soon gathered the impression that this was no natural fissure, but a man-made tunnel—and of considerable age, too. He remembered, then, that many of the hills round and about Ghost River Valley were honeycombed with old mine-workings.

They came to a junction of two tunnels. Merton caught a glimpse of some of the Black Riders leading the horses down one tunnel. Diamond Eye, striding alone, took the other tunnel. Merton followed, compelled to do so by the men who guarded him.

It was an eerie experience. The only light was provided by Diamond Eye's torch, and the gang leader's figure was silhouetted blackly. The light flashed on the tunnel sides ahead, and now and again the prisoner stumbled over the rough rocky floor of the tunnel.

He found himself studying Diamond Eye as the bandit walked. He was a big, bulky man, with abnormally broad shoulders—so broad, in fact, that he was misshapen—and the effect was exaggerated now, owing to the queer tricks of light and shadow.

There was another peculiarity about Diamond Eye. In spite of the dull-black covering which encased his legs, and even his boots, it was noticeable that he had a limp; and then Captain Merton saw that the man's left foot was more bulky than the right. A club-foot, in fact. He limped on like some grotesque ghoul of a subterranean world.

The tunnel unexpectedly came to an end, and Captain Merton found himself blinking in clear daylight. He and his captors had walked into a great natural cavern. It was not completely roofed over, for there were long crevices overhead, through which the sunlight slanted dazzlingly.

Merton heard a thud behind him, and when he looked round, startled, he could see no sign of the tunnel. Mysteriously a rock door had closed. There was no other visible exit.

Escape by means of one of the upper crevices was impossible, for they were fifty or sixty feet overhead, and the rock sides of the chamber were sheer.

"Look here!" burst out the young airman. "What kind of game is this? Why have you brought me here?"

"Kind of rattled, ain't you, mister?" asked Diamond Eye, with a sneer in his voice. "Get this, and let it soak right in. From now on you're working for me."

"You're mad if you think I'll join your cutthroat mob—"

"Nix!" interrupted Diamond Eye. "Your work, pardner, is right here. As long as you work and ask no questions, I guess you'll be fed reg'lar. But I don't aim to feed guys who loaf around. There's your work!"

He pointed to a number of enormous packing-cases which were ranged against the far side of the cavern. How such bulky objects could have been brought in was a mystery. Captain Merton strode over to one of them. Its side had been removed, and the airman gave a start as he instantly recognised the nature of the packing-case's contents. The end section of an aeroplane's wing!

"Yep, you've got it," said Diamond Eye, behind his muffling mask. "See all them boxes? Each one contains a section of the plane. Your job, Captain Merton, is to get busy and assemble the machine."

"Here?" asked the airman, in amazement.

"Right here."

"In this cavern?"

"Sure!"

"But you must be crazy," said Merton. "What's the good of assembling the machine here? How can you get it out into the open?"

"That's my business!" said Diamond Eye. "Get busy, mister—and quit the questions!"

"Do I get any help?"

"Nope. I guess it's a one-man job," replied his captor. "But you don't need to get skerced. You can take your time. But you'd best not try any tricks, because when the time comes for the ship to be tested, you'll be the pilot."

Captain Merton was breathing hard. He thoroughly understood now why he had been kidnapped. These crooks apparently knew that he was not only a skilled pilot but a first-class ground engineer, too. After that warning to the stage-driver it might be weeks—months—before people in the outside world realised that he had disappeared in Ghost River Valley. To all intents and purposes he had gone to the railroad, and the stage-driver, with the threat of death hanging over him, would swear that he had boarded the train. He was lost—vanished from human ken.

Diamond Eye showed him all the necessary tools, then he was taken to a deep crevice at the back of the cavern, and he saw it was fitted up like a little living apartment. There was a camp-bed, a table, a chair, books, washing utensils.

"Holy gee!" ejaculated Merton. "How long do you mean to keep me here?"

He had been examining his quarters, and now he turned an angry, flushed face towards his captors. He jumped. They had gone.

Running out into the main cavern, he looked round. But Diamond Eye and the other Black Riders were nowhere to be seen. In some mysterious way they had made their exit, and Captain Merton was alone in his prison.

Whispering Canyon!

"ALL set?" asked the foreman of the Double Z outfit. "I reckon so, Square-Deal," replied Justin B. Farman. "Let's go."

The midday meal at Ghost River Ranch was over, and the school-boy owner, with his St. Frank's chums, was just on the point of starting off on a tour of the range. Square-Deal Reeve and three of the other cowboys, all fully armed at Mr. Farman's suggestion, were going along as escort.

"It's a good idea, junior," said Mr. Farman. "I reckon it's just as well that you should get a good eyeful of your own property. If it wasn't for the 'hoodoo' this ranch would be a good proposition."

"Then it's still a good proposition, dad," replied Justin promptly. "All we've got to do is to get rid of the hoodoo. Say, you don't believe in that hokum, do you?"

"Son, I've sure had a stomachful of this ranch during the past weeks," replied the millionaire, almost grimly. "You're new here, or maybe you'd be less enthusiastic. But I'm a patient man, and I'll give you time."

Justin was thoughtful as, mounted on their pintos, they all went riding off across the sunlit range.

"I don't kind of like it, boys," said Farman, after a while. "Dad's no quitter—yet he's ready to quit right now if I say the word."

"Well, it's jolly sporting of him to let you have the last word!" said Nipper. "Many a father wouldn't give his son the chance. But he reckons that it's your ranch, and it's up to you to have the say."

"Dad's like that," said Farman, his eyes shining. "He's a sportsman! Gee! Isn't this just grand?"

"Glorious!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

It was indeed exhilarating—this ride across the valley. The day was perfect, and the air was like wine.

Mountains, stretching all around, enclosed the broad valley, with its many miles of grassy plains. The boys could

see the winding trail in the far distance, wending its way down from the high summit of Ghost Pass—a trail worn deep by the feet of many thousands of steers pushing over the divide.

The boys were thoroughly comfortable in the saddle, although it was any odds that they would be saddle-sore towards the end of the day. Over gently rising hills, dotted with sage-brush and cactus, they advanced, and every now and again they brought their mounts to a halt, so that they could admire some fresh vista of scenery.

Farman was fascinated by it all. Until now he had not realised the extent of his inheritance. This was a ranch to be proud of.

"And dad wants me to give it up!" he exclaimed, his eyes glowing. "Not on your life, boys! It's mine, and I'm keeping it!"



Suddenly, as Nipper & Co. and the cowboys were riding through Whispering Canyon, there came a loud roar from overhead. On the instant they all looked up, to see an avalanche of boulders hurtling down upon them! "Back!" roared Square-Deal Reeve. "Back for your lives!"

"Hot ziggerty!" said Handforth, with approval. "That's the talk, old man!"

"I want you fellers to rally round," continued Farman. "Say, who are these Black Riders, anyway? We're not scared of a bunch of outlaw rustlers, are we?"

"Everything seems peaceful enough now," said Nipper dryly. "But don't forget that warning last night, Farman. The rustlers mean business."

"And so do I," retorted the American boy. "I guess the Black Riders thought they were sitting pretty—until we turned up. Dad was ready to sell, and they knew it. But we're right here, and we'll stick around until this mystery is solved."

"Mighty fine soundin' words, son," said Square-Deal, with a sober note in his voice. "But it ain't quite so easy. This hyar peace ain't natural. I reckon there's li'ble to be trouble before long. That's the way it goes in this durned valley! A galoot never knows what's goin' to happen next."

"Aw, I guess you're all nerry!" said Farman. "Mysterious things have happened—that's certain—but I'm sticking around. Say, do you think I'm going to sell this ranch for a song? That's all I'd get for it, with all these hard-luck stories floating about." He stretched out a hand. "All this is mine—the land, the cattle, everything. Gee, I'm holding it!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the St. Frank's fellows.

"And I'm counting on you fellows to help me hold it," continued Farman. "That's what we're here for, isn't it?"

"Rather!" grinned Handforth. "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?"

"Where are we making for now, Square-Deal?" asked Farman.

"Whispering Canyon," replied the foreman, jerking a horny finger upwards, and indicating a rocky gulch ahead. "Tain't much, as canyons go—just a short cut, 'bout half a mile, leadin' us to the southern slopes. I want to show you the herds we've got there. Mighty fine animals."

The sides of Whispering Canyon were not sheer. As the party penetrated more deeply they saw that the slopes rose gradually on either hand, with pinewoods higher up, and crags higher still. Standing half-way up one of the grassy slopes, backed by the pine trees, was a ramshackle-looking shack. To Farman's surprise, he saw smoke rising in an almost straight line from the single chimney.

"Who lives way out here?" he asked.

Crack, crack!

Before any of the cowboys could answer, two shots rang out, and a strange figure suddenly appeared from behind a big boulder, not twenty yards away.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth. "The rustlers!"

But Farman saw that the cowboys were all grinning.

"What's this—a joke?" demanded Farman.

"Kind of," said Square-Deal. "You don't need to be skeered of old Mesa Matt. Howdy, Mesa!"

He raised his voice, and waved a genial hand to the man behind the boulder.

"Keep on your side o' the line, cowboy!" came the threatening order. "Set one foot over it, and I guess you'll be cold meat."

"He fired on us!" said Handforth, staring.

"Old Matt never killed nothin' wuss than a coyote," said Ace-High Peter. "He only fired his gun into the air—as a kind o' warning. He allus does it when we ride by. See



that 'line' of his? As long as we don't cross it, we're safe."

The surprised boys understood. Just in front of the old man's boulder, and running parallel with the trail for quite a distance, was a line made up of irregular pieces of silver-coloured quartz. The line drifted up the hillside, vaguely encircling the shack.

"Old Mesa Matt kinder figgers that the land inside that border is his," explained Square-Deal Reeve. "He's a lone prospector—been here nine or ten years, and as he don't do no harm, he jest stays."

All the boys had halted their horses. And Mesa Matt now approached, taking care, however, to remain on his side of the line. He was a shaggy-haired, bewhiskered individual with bent shoulders and tattered clothing. Beady eyes looked out from beneath grizzled brows, and his lower jaw was champing regularly on his tobacco chew.

"Huh! Tenderfoot kids!" he jeered, as he eyed the

schoolboys. "What are ye figgerin' on doin', Square-Deal? Turning the ranch into a kindergarden?"

"Don't take no notice," advised Square-Deal.

"Think I'm crazy, don't ye?" went on Mesa Matt. "But I guess I see things nights which you other folks only dream of. There's ugly things happenin' in Ghost River Valley after sundown; and I don't allus sleep." He came nearer, and pointed a warning finger at Farman and the other boys. "This ain't no country for the likes o' you," he went on earnestly. "Mebbe I'm an old fool, and mebbe I ain't. But I'm advisin' you kids to quit while you're safe. D'ye think ye can probe the secrets of this valley? Bah! More like to get yourselves killed. I'm an old-timer, and I'm tellin' ye this valley ain't healthy."

"You've lived in it a long while," said Farman.

"Mebbe," replied Mesa Matt. "But I'm an old man—a no-account prospector. Nobody don't take notice o' me—not even the rustlers. Ay, and I could tell ye things if I was so minded, which I ain't. Best get goin'. And don't cross the line, or I'll pepper ye with lead!"

There was such menace in his attitude, in his voice, that the boys looked at him strangely. This sort of thing was new to them. But the cowboys only laughed. In the hills and mountains of Arizona there were many such "lone prospectors," and men of his type were generally eccentric. Living like hermits, they had lost touch with the outside world, and were difficult to deal with.

"A thoroughly nasty piece of work, old things," commented Archie Glenthorne, after they had ridden on for some distance. "I mean to say, he looked dangerous."

"Does dad know about him?" asked Farman, glancing at Square-Deal.

"Sure," said the foreman, laughing. "Everybody in Ghost River Valley knows about Mesa Matt. He's all right, son; mebbe a bit loco, but he don't do no harm."

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth, with sudden eagerness. "He might be one of the Black Riders! It's all very well to say he's harmless, and that he's only a prospector. But how do you know? Even if he isn't one of the rustlers, he might be in their pay."

"Cheese it, Ted!" said his younger brother Willy, in a tired voice. "Do you think these cowboys don't know? You're always jumping to dotty conclusions."

"I don't know why Farman brought you along," complained Handforth. "Goodness knows, I didn't want you with me! You're only a trouble and a responsibility."

"Oh, yeah!" said Willy coolly.

"Anyhow, I'm going to give Mesa Matt some attention," went on Handforth. "I'm not satisfied that he's so jolly innocent. I'm going to watch him; and it wouldn't be a bad idea to come out here during the night."

Church and McClure looked alarmed. Handforth was quite capable of "investigating" on such lines, and it would inevitably mean that they would have to go with him. Farman grinned as he saw their expressions.

"Don't worry, fellers!" he chuckled. "I'm boss here, and I'll see that Handforth doesn't get loose."

"Get loose!" repeated Handforth indignantly. "What do you think I am—a lunatic, or a freak, or something?"

"I'd sure hate to tell you," replied Farman blandly.

Laughing, they went riding into Whispering Canyon. The slopes had closed in now, and frowning rocks towered high above them. But the pass was quite short, for just ahead it widened out and there was open country beyond.

Square-Deal Reeve and Slick Ed were riding in advance; then came the schoolboys, and Ace-High Peter and Twirly Sam brought up the rear.

Farman was exhilarated. There was something grand and fine in the scenery—something which stirred his blood. All this ruggedness appealed to him, and the thought that it was all his never left him.

Without warning there came a loud crackling roar from overhead, and it reverberated throughout the canyon.

"Jumpin' gee!" ejaculated Twirly. "What was that?"

They were all staring up—and in that second they knew that a verbal answer to Twirly Sam's inquiry was unnecessary. For they saw something which almost stopped the beating of their hearts.

An immense quantity of rock, high up in the canyon, had separated itself from the main body and was falling—thousands and thousands of tons of rock hurtling straight down upon them in an avalanche.

The Second Warning!

THE horses, instinctive of danger, were on the point of bolting; they quivered under their riders.

In that dread second Square-Deal Reeve, man of instant action, kept his head. His horse—and the other horses—were ready to bolt forward. But that would mean certain death.

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There was no time for hesitation. A split second might make all the difference between life and death. Square-Deal Reeve did not wait for a split second.

"Back!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "For your lives!"

And as he uttered the words he swung his horse round and jammed his heels hard into the animal's flanks. Square-Deal was in greater danger than any of the others—as that single upward glance had told him. The avalanche of rock was right above him.

Mercifully the boys took their cue on the instant. As Square-Deal Reeve swung his horse round they swung theirs. Just for an instant there was dire confusion—horses colliding with one another, the boys shouting. Then they were galloping—racing for their lives back on their own tracks, out of Whispering Canyon.

And above and behind them came the menacing rumble of the falling rock.

Nipper caught one glimpse as he turned his head, and he was horrified. The very air was filled with hurtling boulders, and the sky above was obliterated by a dense cloud of dust.

Craaaaaaaaash!

A deafening, earth-shaking noise filled the air. Fragments of rock flew in all directions, some missing the boys by mere inches.

Square-Deal Reeve, who was in the rear, was struck on the head by a falling rock, and he hurtled out of the saddle, to roll over and over on the hard ground. That fall saved his life—for almost in the same instant an immense boulder, weighing half a ton, fell on his horse, killing it instantly.

The boys knew nothing of this at the time, for they were galloping for their lives. When at last they were clear of the danger they drew rain, breathless and white-faced. Sweat ran down their cheeks.

"Look!" muttered Church.

Through the dense cloud of dust that was rising the juniors saw that the narrow pass was obliterated.

Nipper's arm was bleeding where a fragment of rock had grazed him. Slick Ed had been hit, too, but not seriously.

At any second they expected to hear further falls of rock, but none came. Their ears still rang with the tumultuous thunder of the crashing rock, and they were half dazed by the narrowness of their escape.

"That was no accident," said Justin B. Farman, when he found his voice.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth. "You—you mean—"

"Dynamite—high explosive of some kind," said Farman. "Didn't you see the smoke up there? It was done deliberately—with the intention of killing every one of us."

"My goodness!" said Willy. "That's a pretty horrible thought."

"These blighters are an unfriendly lot, I must say!" observed Archie Glenthorne. "Dash it, I'm most frightfully annoyed!"

"Say," burst out Slick Ed, with sudden alarm, "whar's Square-Deal?"

By this time clouds of blinding, choking dust had come billowing out of the pass, and the entire party was enveloped in the smother. In the tense silence which followed Slick Ed's inquiry the boys heard the occasional crash of an isolated piece of rock—a loosened boulder, here and there, which followed the main fall.

"Shucks! I guess ther's a heap o' danger around still," said Slick Ed. "Twirly, you stick around with the kids. Ace-High, you'd best come with me—"

"If you think we're going to stay out here while you go back for Square-Deal you're mistaken," interrupted Farman. "Come on, St. Frank's!"

"Rather!"

"But, listen, boss—" began Slick Ed.

"I'm glad you've remembered that I am boss," said Farman. "I'm giving the orders on this ranch, Ed. We're going to find Square-Deal."

They went plunging into the choking dust, and presently they came upon the ranch foreman—sprawling on the hard ground, bleeding profusely from a wound in the head. At first they thought he was dead, for there was a pool of blood near him. Then, through the dust, they caught sight of his mangled horse.

"He's hurt—but I don't think his skull is broken," said Nipper, who had made a quick examination. "It's a nasty gash though. Help me, you claps!"

Carefully they lifted Square-Deal and carried him out into the more open part of Whispering Canyon. Even then their danger was not over, for occasional fragments of rock fell dangerously close.

"We need water," said Nipper crisply. He had taken command of the situation. "Better carry him to Mesa Matt's shack—there's bound to be water there."

"Bullets, too, like as not," said Slick Ed gloomily. "Best not take chances with that old bird."

"Matt!" yelled Nipper. "Mesa Matt!"

But there was no response to his shouting; neither was there any visible sign of the old man.

"Dash it, he won't fire on us in a case like this!" said Nipper. "Come on, you fellows—carry him up to the shack!"

The cowboys, knowing Mesa Matt as they did, might have hesitated; but the St. Frank's fellows were bold enough, and they crossed the "line," and carried the unconscious Reeve up the grassy slope to the ramshackle hut. They were beyond the range of the dust cloud now, and grateful for the warm sunshine and the clear air. They laid their patient down in front of the shack, and Handforth recklessly plunged into the building in search of water.

Within a minute he returned, carrying a tin pannikin, and Nipper proceeded to render first-aid in a businesslike way—indeed, with such skill that the cowboys watched with open admiration. They were pretty good hands at that sort of thing themselves.

"Just a bad scalp cut," said Nipper, with relief. "He'll be all right soon. Anybody got any bandages? Your shirt will do, Archie."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenothorne promptly.

The elegant junior yanked his expensive shirt out of his breeches and tore half of it away. Nipper had meant to use his own shirt, and he had made the request of Archie more or less as a joke.

"Good man, Archie!" said Nipper. "I thought you'd jib."

"In a case like this?" asked Archie, hurt. "I mean to say, first-aid, and all that! A chippie has to be humane, don't you know! What's a shirt between friends?"

Square-Deal, under the treatment, was showing sign of recovery. Seeing that things were going well, Handforth wandered back into the shack. He was a curious youth—and he had grim suspicions against Mesa Matt.

The shack was extraordinarily untidy; fragments of food lay on the table, clothing and old tins and boxes littered the floor. In one corner there was a camp-bed with grubby blankets and a gammy leg. There were crudely made cupboards, which Handforth explored.

Outside, Square-Deal had opened his eyes, and he looked about him half dazedly.

"The kids," he muttered hoarsely, as he tried to stagger up. "Are the kids safe?"

"You'll do, Square-Deal," said Farman softly. "The first thing you think of is our safety. Yes, we're all right—thanks to you."

"Gee!" muttered the foreman. "What happened?" They told him.

"You took a mighty big chance in comin' to this shack," said Square-Deal, looking about him uneasily. "Where's that doggone Matt? He don't mean maybe when he says he'll fire on us."

"He seems to have gone," said Nipper. "Dash it, we had to bring you here, Square-Deal. We had to have water."

"Yeah, but that old man is sure pizen," said the foreman. "Mighty queer that he ain't around. Seems kind of suspicious."

Before any of the others could answer, a loud yell sounded from within the shack. The next moment Edward Oswald Handforth came tearing out, and as he burst into the sunshine, he was waving something black in his hand.

In a flash, at that alarm, Slick Ed and the other cowboys whipped out their guns, and the juniors heard the ominous "click-click" of the safety catches as they were operated.

"Anything wrong, pardner?" asked Ace-High.

"Wrong!" roared Handforth. "Look at this! A black suit—with coverings for the feet, gloves, headgear, and everything!"

"Hully gee! A Black Rider's outfit!" ejaculated Slick Ed.

"You've said it," agreed Handforth, his eyes burning. "I found it in the shack—in one of the old cupboards. Well, you chaps, what have you got to say now?" he went on triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you that Mesa Matt was one of the Black Riders?"

"Say, this knocks me all of a heap," said Square-Deal, who was rapidly recovering. "Looks like as if Matt worked that fall of rock, and then lit out into the hills."

"Of course," said Handforth. "He tried to kill the whole lot of us, and then he bolted. The blighter's in league with the gang—just as I suspected from the first."

"Waal, what d'you know about that?" said Square-Deal, puzzled. "I allus figured that Mesa Matt was on the level. Plumb crazy, yep, but that's different from bein' a doggone cattle-thief!"

Justin B. Farman was deadly serious.

"Anyhow, we've had proof enough that the brutes mean mischief," he said. "In open daylight they tried to kill us. Say, are they afraid of a bunch of schoolboys?"

"I guess it's gone around that you kids are here to investigate the mystery," said Square-Deal. "The men behind this racket are killers—and they won't stand for no buttin' in. Boss, it don't look too good."

Farman squared his jaw.

"By which you mean, I suppose, that we'd better chuck it up?" he asked doggedly. "Well, you're wrong! I'm not going to be scared away by this murderous attempt to kill us. I'll carry on until I've got the crooks, and discovered their game."

"Hallo! Look there," said Nipper suddenly.

They had left the shack, and by this time they had crossed the old prospector's "line." Handforth was still carrying the Black Rider's suit as a trophy. They all halted, however, as Nipper spoke.

He was pointing to a spot down the canyon in the direction of the fallen rock. All the dust had cleared away by now, and the atmosphere was quite clear.

"Leapin' lizards!" exclaimed Twirly Sam.

A figure was lying sprawling against some fallen rocks—an ill-clad, bewhiskered figure. It was Mesa Matt himself!

They ran up, and they found the old man unconscious, his gun by his side. Blood was coming from a gash in his forehead, and there was more blood on his shirtfront.

"So this man was responsible for the fall of rock, eh?" said Nipper, with a look at Handforth. "Funny thing he got caught in his own trap, wasn't it?"

"I—I don't understand," said Handforth.

"But I do," said Nipper grimly. "Mesa Matt had nothing to do with it. When he heard the rumbling roar he ran in this direction, and some flying fragments of rock struck him down. We didn't see him because of the clouds of dust."

"Guess you've hit it, pardner," remarked Square-Deal. "I sure thought it was queer that Mesa Matt could be a hoss thief. Best tend him."

Nipper tore open the old man's clothing, and as he caught sight of the hairy chest he winced. For right across the chest there was a hideous, deeply marked scar—the relic, no doubt, of an old wound. Seldom had Nipper seen such a terrible scar as that. But he gave it very little attention;



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he was looking at the punctured wound lower down, caused by a sharp scrap of rock which had penetrated the clothing. "We'll carry him to the shack," said Nipper. "We can look after him—"

"Don't ye cross the line!" came a muttered threat from the old man. "Say, what's doin'? What are ye mussin' me up like this for? Take your hands off!"

The voices and the disturbance had aroused him. He sat up, gave a groan of pain, and looked about him out of his beady eyes with dazed bewilderment.

"You were hit," said Nipper. "Do you know anything about the fall of rock?"

"Do you know anything about these?" added Handforth, thrusting the Black Rider's clothing under Mesa Matt's gaze.

The effect was instantaneous. The old man, tough as leather, leapt to his feet. His eyes were blazing.

"Easy, old-timer!" said the foreman.

"Ye've been to my shack!" said Mesa Matt hoarsely.

They explained why they had come to go there, and he calmed down.

"Think I'm a Black Rider, do ye?" he said, with jeering contempt. "Say, do I look like I was any good on the back of a hoss? A month back I found a wounded man out on the range—dressed all in black. I knew he was one o' them rustlers, but the pore skunk was dyin'. I brought him in, tended him—and he died in my bed."

The old man pointed towards an ominous looking mound. "That's where I buried him," he added. "If ye don't believe me, dig him up! A Black Rider, am I? I kep' his clothes—"

"Yes, we understand," interrupted Nipper. "We made a mistake—and we're sorry. If you let us help you to your shack we'll look after your hurts."

But the old man refused. He was allowed to take his gun—after Square-Deal had unloaded it—and thus they parted. Mesa Matt dragged his way back to his shack, and the schoolboys and their escort mounted their horses and rode off. Square-Deal Reeve shared Slick Ed's horse.

"A giddy frost," said Handforth in disgust. Mesa Matt's explanation had been logical—his story rang true. It remained a mystery, therefore; that fall of rock in Whispering Canyon.

The schoolboys were silent as they rode back along the trail, for their experience had shaken them somewhat. Suddenly, one of the leading horses shied, and then something was seen just ahead.

It was a stake sticking out of the ground—and in the split top of it there was a fragment of white paper. It bore the words:

"YOU WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE. QUIT NOW, OR THERE WILL BE NO NEXT TIME."

The second warning! The mysterious criminals of Ghost River Valley were allowing no grass to grow under their feet!

(More Thrill-packed chapters of this great serial appear in next week's number. Don't miss the further exciting adventures of the St. Frank's Chums.)

THE COMPLETE CAD!

(Continued from page 22.)

"You can't ride them home to-night, that's a dead cert," grinned Figgins. "You'll have to stay overnight, Wally, that's all."

"Just so," said the major.

"Good!" said Wally. "And we'll look for Lumley before we go in the morning." A suggestion which was received with great favour by Jameson and Gibson.

Tom Merry & Co. and the girls mounted into the recaptured brake. They took an affectionate leave of Figgins & Co., and the major, with promises on both sides of mutual visits to be made in the near future.

After the brake had rolled off on its homeward journey, Figgins stood gazing after it dreamily, the soft touch of Cousin Ethel's hand still lingering on his palm.

Fatty Wynn nudged him several times.

"I say, supper's ready!"

"What?"

"Supper!"

"Supper! Eh? Oh!"

"What on earth's the matter with him, Kerr?" said Fatty Wynn. "He doesn't seem to understand."

"Let him alone," he advised.

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I'm not going to see a chap miss his supper, if I can help it. I say, Figgy, come in! Supper, you know—supper!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Figgins.

And he walked away, leaving Fatty Wynn so much surprised that it was a full minute before he went in to his own supper.

The brake contained a jolly party as it rolled homeward. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave his opinion on the cricket match at length, and mentioned Figgins cheering the hits of the rival side.

"I must say I regard Figgy as a great sportsman," said D'Arcy. "Figgy has his faults, but I must remark that he is a weally good sport, you know—the kind of chap a fellow ought to be proud to chum with."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry & Co. heartily.

And Cousin Ethel gave Arthur Augustus a sweet smile; so sweet a smile, in fact, that Arthur Augustus was very glad indeed that he had put on his smartest necktie.

Cousin Ethel did not often give him so sweet a smile as that, and D'Arcy, in default of any other possible explanation suggesting itself, put it down to that really attractive and becoming necktie.

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