

"THE DEMON BOWLER!" Great St. Jim's Yarn of Sport, Fun, Mystery, and Adventure **WITHIN.**

The **GEM**

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AN EXCITING INCIDENT FROM THE RIPPING LONG STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. INSIDE.

The DEMON BOWLER!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Who is Lovell, the demon bowler of the team got together by Gussy's father for the cricket week at Eastwood House? There is a mystery about him, which has a dramatic climax when he is accused of being a forger wanted by the police!

CHAPTER 1.

Rats!

"D'ARCY!"

"Gussy!"

"Pway don't bothah, deah boys!" drawled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "I am feelin' wemarkably comfy at the pwesent moment, and do not wish to be disturbed."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy certainly looked comfortable. He was stretched in a hammock under a shady tree on the lawn before Eastwood House.

Eastwood House was the seat of Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's "governah," as the swell of St. Jim's always called him.

Lord Eastwood was giving a cricket week, and Arthur Augustus had been allowed to come home for the occasion, and bring a friend or two, his friend or two numbering ten. Tom Merry & Co. and all the genial chums of St. Jim's were there, prepared to enjoy themselves in their holiday in the brilliant summer weather.

They were succeeding pretty well, too.

It was after lunch, and as the Eastwood House lunch took the place of a midday meal St. Jim's juniors were accustomed to, they did it full justice.

It was pleasant to lie on the grass under the trees afterwards, taking for once the relaxation of "slacking"—though, as a rule, Tom Merry & Co. were far from being slackers.

Tom Merry had just come down from the direction of the house. He had a telegram in his hand.

The telegram was for D'Arcy. But D'Arcy manifested no curiosity on the subject. He only half-opened his eyes to look at the hero of the Shell.

"Wake up, ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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D'Arcy did not finish the sentence. He allowed his voice to trail away. Tom Merry snorted.

"You blessed slacker!"

"Weally——"

"Get up!"

"I wefuse to get up. I like a west aftah lunch. Besides, we are goin' to play cwicket this aftahnoon, and I wequiah some wepose."

"Here's a wire for you."

"Pway put it somewhere."

"You champion ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It may contain something important!"

"That is not at all likely, deah boy; and, anyway, I can attend to it latah. Pway don't talk any more; you thwow me into a fluttah."

Tom Merry gazed speechless at the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy closed his eyes and breathed gently.

"Of all the blessed slackers!" said Jack Blake, D'Arcy's chum in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Of all the lazy larrikins!" remarked Harry Noble, otherwise called Kangaroo.

"Pway dwy up, deah boys!"

"You've got to open the telegram."

"I decline to open it!"

"But it must be opened, you chump!" exclaimed Digby. "How do you know it doesn't contain important news of some sort?"

"Well, you chaps can open it."

"Do you want me to?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, watah!"

Tom Merry slit the buff envelope with his thumb. He took out the slip inside and unfolded it.

Then he uttered an exclamation:

"Phew!"

—WITH THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S ON A CRICKETING HOLIDAY!

"What's the news?" asked Blake.
 "I haven't read it, but I saw the name signed," said Tom Merry. "It's Wally!"
 "What on earth is young Wally wiring from St. Jim's for?" exclaimed Herries.
 "I don't know."
 "Wake up, Gussy. Your minor's in trouble," said Monty Lowther.
 "That's all right, deah boy; he's always in trouble."
 "You ass! He may have died suddenly, and wired to you on the spot!" said Kangaroo severely.
 "Pway don't be an ass, deah boy. Wead it out, please, Tom Mewwy."
 "Right-ho!"
 Tom Merry read out the telegram.

"Dear Gussy, I've been refused permission to come home for cricket week—"

"We knew that," said Blake.
 The juniors all chuckled.
 Wally, D'Arcy's minor in the Third Form of St. Jim's, had made desperate efforts to be good in order to obtain permission to go home for the cricket week at Eastwood, and the disastrous results of his efforts still furnished food for mirth to the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Order!" said Figgins. "Read it out!"
 "Dear Gussy, I've been refused permission to come home for cricket week, but I am coming, all the same. Can you fix it for me, or shall I bolt?—WALLY."

"Bai Jove!"
 "Cheeky young rascal!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I thought he wouldn't give up the idea of coming."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "There'll be a row if he bolts," said Figgins. "But I don't see how Gussy can fix it for him to come."
 "Especially if he goes to sleep instead of thinking the matter out," said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"
 "Wake up!"
 "It's all right. I'll attend to the mattah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, rising from the hammock. "I'll give Wally stwict ordahs!"

He walked off to the house. The St. Jim's juniors followed him, grinning. They guessed exactly how much influence D'Arcy's strict orders would have over the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus took a form from the telegraph-boy, wetted a pencil, and thought the matter out for a moment. Then, with the juniors looking over his shoulder, he wrote:

"Dear Wally,—I uttahnly wefuse my permish for you to bolt. I order you, as your major, to remain at the school. Reply.—ARTHUR."

"Pway take that, my lad," said D'Arcy to the telegraph-boy, who, by the way, was at least a year older than the swell of St. Jim's. "I wish to pwepay a weply, too."

The lad grinned as he looked over the message.
 "Two shillings, sir."
 "Take that half-crown, please; nevah mind the change."
 And the lad went away with the telegram.

The juniors of St. Jim's went out to cricket practice while they awaited the reply to the telegram. Lovell, the professional cricketer who was engaged by Lord Eastwood to give strength to the house team for the cricket week, had promised to give them some bowling, and they were glad of a chance of standing up to a bowler who had done execution among county bats on the historic ground at Lord's.

Lovell, a young man of not more than twenty-five or six, with a pleasant manner that had already won favour with

the juniors of St. Jim's, had been very kind in the matter of putting them up to cricket wrinkles, and D'Arcy had informed the chums that he approved of Lovell—a statement which made Monty Lowther inquire gravely whether Lovell wasn't likely to get a swelled head if he heard of it.

It was about an hour later, and D'Arcy was at the wicket, trying to stand up to the young professional's bowling, when the uniform of the telegraph-boy was seen again. The lad made his way to the pitch.

"Telegram for you, sir."
 D'Arcy glanced round.
 "Pway excuse me a moment. Mr. Lovell," he said.

The professional nodded.
 "Certainly!"
 "It's the pwepaid weply fwom Wally, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway open it for me, Tom Mewwy, and wead it out."

"Right you are!"
 Tom Merry took the telegram and opened it.
 He gave one glance at the message, and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus stared at him; so did the other juniors of St. Jim's, who were fielding for him.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" D'Arcy began.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wead it out, deah boy, and stop cacklin'."
 "Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Well you asked for it."

"Weally, I fail to compwehend, Tom Mewwy. I asked you to wead out the telegwam fwom my minah—"

"That's what I've done! There's the telegram!" Tom Merry held it under the noble nose of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Look!"
 D'Arcy looked. Then he gasped.

The reply consisted of a single word.
 "Rats!"

CHAPTER 2.

More Rats!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the telegram, and looked at his chums. They roared. The expression on D'Arcy's face was even richer than the message from Wally.

The swell of St. Jim's seemed unable to comprehend.

"Bai Jove!" he said.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway stop that cacklin', deah boys!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"There must be some mistake. I shall have to wiah to Wally again," said Arthur Augustus, his aristocratic brow wrinkling into a frown.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway, have you anothah form, deah boy?"

"Yes, sir."
 "Lend me a pencil, somebody."

"Here you are, kid."
 "Thank you, Kangawoo! Pway wait a minute, my lad."

"Certainly, sir!"
 Arthur Augustus wrote out another telegram.

"Wally,—I fail to understand your wire. Please note that I strictly forbid you to leave St. Jim's without permish.—ARTHUR."

He handed the form to the post office lad.

"Reply paid, sir!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

And D'Arcy paid, and the telegraph-boy grinned and went his way.

D'Arcy looked round at the chums with a dignified expression.

"I wegard this laughtah as out of place," he remarked.

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall not allow my minah to grow up diswespectful to wiss eldahs. I wegard diswespect to an eldah bwothah as bein' the worst of bad form."

"Quite right, Gus!" drawled a pleasant voice.

And Lord Conway, the eldest son-and-heir of the Earl of Eastwood, strolled upon the pitch in spotless flannels. He had a bat under his arm, and he gave the juniors of St. Jim's a genial nod.

They all liked Lord Conway.

He had won his Blue at his University, and he was the strength of the batting side at Eastwood House, the professional Lovell being the strongest bowler.

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and looked at his elder brother.

"Weally, Conway——"

"Mind you never fail in respect to an elder brother, Gussy," said Lord Conway, wagging a warning forefinger at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Weally, you must not take my words too literally," said Arthur Augustus. "I was wewfewwin' exclusively to Wally." Conway laughed.

"Will you send me a ball or two, Lovell?" he asked. "I want to see what form I'm in for the match to-morrow."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Not if you're fagged," added Lord Conway quickly.

Lovell laughed.

"Not in the least, sir. I've only been bowling a few balls to the lads."

"Right-ho, then!"

"Lovell was bowling to me, Conway," Arthur Augustus remarked.

"Then this is a splendid chance for you to show proper respect for an elder brother, by standing out gracefully," Lord Conway remarked.

The juniors chuckled, and Arthur Augustus rubbed his nose thoughtfully. He confided to Tom Merry, as he walked off the pitch, that there were two sides to every question, and that some chaps could apparently only see one. And Tom Merry chuckled and agreed that it was so.

The juniors stood round, or sat on the grass, to look on. They knew what a fine batsman Lord Conway was, and they had had some experience of Lovell's powers as a bowler. Harry Noble was particularly interested in the sturdy, sunburnt professional. He watched every movement that Lovell made.

"There goes the ball," said Tom Merry, and he had added a moment later, "and the wicket."

Lord Conway looked down with a rueful smile as his wicket fell to pieces.

He had been clean bowled, apparently without an effort on the part of the crack bowler; but Conway was a sport to the backbone, and he could take anything of that sort with no feeling but that of admiration for the prowess of the man who had beaten him.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "If you give them many balls like that to-morrow, Lovell, the Gipsies won't have a look in."

Lovell smiled.

"I think we shall give the Gipsies a good game, sir," he said.

Kangaroo fielded the ball, and tossed it back to the bowler, and then stood with his hands in his pockets watching. Kangaroo had been brought up on cricket in Australia, and he was as keenly interested in the great summer game as the keenest of the St. Jim's juniors, which was saying a great deal.

Lovell's form was certainly wonderful, and he was well worth watching; but it had occurred to Tom Merry that Kangaroo took an interest in the professional apart from his bowling.

"Have you seen Lovell play before, Kangy?" he asked.

"Not in England," said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry started.

"Does he come from Australia, then?"

"I don't know," said Kangaroo slowly. "If he doesn't he's the double of the man who does, that's all. Did you see that ball he knocked down Lord Conway's wicket with—a leg break that was the dickens to play? I've seen that bowled on a Melbourne pitch, by a man who was as like that chap Lovell as two peas are alike."

"Perhaps it's the same."

"I think so, only——"

"Only what?"

"Only that chap's not supposed to come from Australia."

"Oh, I see!"

"He's a Suwwey man," Arthur Augustus remarked. "He has played for Suwwey as a professional, and he was born in the county. He made the declaration of birth, you know; so he can't be the same chap, Kangawoo."

Noble shook his head.

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"No, he can't; it's a coincidence, that's all. Yet—look at his delivery; you don't see two bowlers like that every day."

They watched the professional.

His delivery was grace itself. He had a fine figure, full of lissom activity.

"There goes the wicket again!"

Lord Conway's wicket fell.

"Jolly good, Lovell!" he called out.

"Glad you are satisfied, sir."

"Bai Jove! He's a wondahful bowlah, and an awful decent chap!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I could not stand up long to his bowlin' myself."

"You couldn't!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Here, take the bat, Berkeley!" exclaimed Lord Conway, as a tall, handsome cricketer came down from the house. "Let's see how you can stand up to Lovell's bowling."

Berkeley took the bat, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

He was a handsome man, but there was a look about his face that would not have prepossessed a close observer in his favour.

The said close observer would have concluded that Cecil Berkeley was an arrogant man, given to thinking a great deal of himself, and to thinking too little of others, especially if they happened to be below him in social station.

He glanced at the professional bowler with a glance that Lovell appeared not to notice, though Tom Merry saw it, and knitted his brows.

To Berkeley, a professional bowler evidently was of about as much account as a cricket bat or a set of stumps.

He laughed lazily.

"I don't think Lovell will take my wicket easily," he remarked.

"I don't know; he's a demon."

"Hang it all, Conway, don't tell me you let a professional bowler knock out the best amateur bat in the team!"

"Well, Lovell has knocked me out twice."

"Then it's time somebody stood up for the amateurs," said Berkeley. "Let him bowl."

Lord Conway frowned a little.

Berkeley's manner, without having anything in it that could actually be complained of, was disdainful towards the professional cricketer, which was all the more unpleasant because Lovell, being paid for his services, could not resent it.

"That chap Berkeley is wathah a boundah," Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "He doesn't treat Lovell decently. As a mattah of fact, Lovell can play his head off at cwicket."

"It's caddish to take the upper hand of a man who can't hit back," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just what I was thinking," Figgins remarked.

"Who's Berkeley, anyway?" asked Kerr.

"He's an amateuh cwicketah," said Arthur Augustus. "He plays for his county, you know."

"Oh, I know!" said Kerr. "One of those giddy amateurs, I suppose, who picks up twice as much in expenses as a professional picks up in wages."

"Well, pewwaps so. I believe he's wathah an expensive chap," said D'Arcy. "I can't say I like him myself much; but he's a good bat."

The juniors watched the bowling with great interest. There was so much swagger about Berkeley as he went to the wicket that they were all prepared to be pleased if his wicket went down.

And down it did go.

The first ball from Lovell knocked it to pieces, and Berkeley started and stared at his reclining stumps in angry astonishment. That he was angry could hardly be disguised—in fact, he took little trouble to disguise it.

D'Arcy clapped his hands.

"Well bowled!"

"Yes, well bowled, indeed," said Lord Conway. "Had you there, Berkeley!"

Berkeley bit his lip.

"It was a fluke," he said.

"Let him try again," said Lord Conway, with a grin.

Lovell took the ball that was tossed back to him. His lips were set in a tight line, from which Tom Merry gathered that he was inwardly, if not outwardly, ruffled by the manner of the swaggering amateur, and meant to give Berkeley the hottest bowling he was capable of.

Berkeley stood well on the defensive.



"Put out that herring!" roared Jones. "Chuck it out! Stamp on it!" Wally waved the burning herring in the air to extinguish it, but it flew off the two pens which had answered as a toasting fork, and found a resting place on Jameson's waistcoat. "Ow!" he shouted.

CHAPTER 3.

The Woes of Wally!

But he was no good against that ball.

It broke in at an impossible angle—or so the batsman deemed it—and swept the middle stump out of the ground.

"I'm out of form to-day!" exclaimed Berkeley angrily, and he threw the bat on to the crease and walked away towards the house.

Lovell smiled grimly.

Lord Conway's brows came together. He was surprised that a fellow should lose his temper so easily, and he was annoyed at such an exhibition before the boys.

He picked up the bat.

"Thanks, Lovell," he said; "you're in wonderful form. I only hope the Gipsies' wickets will fall as easily."

The juniors of St. Jim's strolled away. Tom Merry chuckled.

"Lovell took him down beautifully, in the best possible way," he remarked. "I rather like that chap Lovell. He's awfully decent."

"I'd bet ten to one he was a Cornstalk!" said Kangaroo musingly. "Only—"

"Only he isn't."

"Yes," said Noble, with a laugh.

They went in to tea. Tea was over when a telegram was brought in to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "That will be fwom Wally! I twust his answah is worded in a pwopahly respectful mannah."

"Let's see it!" grinned Figgins.

"Certainly, deah boy."

D'Arcy tore open the flimsy envelope and revealed the slip. The juniors read it, and gave a shout of laughter that drew all eyes upon them.

Wally's reply was a little longer this time—in fact, twice as long—two words instead of one:

"More rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "'More rats!'"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Going to wire back?" asked Lowther, with a grin.

D'Arcy hesitated, and shook his head.

"No. I wefuse to waste any more cash on the young wascal! When I get back to St. Jim's, I shall make it a point to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And it was the last of the telegrams.

"WALLY!"

"Hullo!"

"Where are you, you duffer? What's the rotten smell of burning?"

"I'm here, cooking a blessed herring, and I'm burning it because I'm interrupted by a silly duffer!" said Wally cheerfully.

Jameson grinned as he came into the Third Form Room at St. Jim's.

It was the evening, and the Third Form at St. Jim's had the room to themselves for the time, lessons being things of the past.

The fags were mostly there, amusing themselves in faggish ways. D'Arcy minor was cooking a herring at the Form-room fire, the said herring being skilfully impaled upon two pens; but it was necessary for D'Arcy minor to get very near to the fire, and his face was ruddy and perspiring; nor was the cooking of the herring progressing with perfectly satisfactory results.

Wally blinked round at Jameson.

"You'd better take a turn with this herring," he said.

Jameson shook his head and grinned.

"Thanks. It's too warm for me."

"That's what I say," broke in Jones of the Third. "What do we want a fire for in this scorching weather? Hang it all, I think D'Arcy minor might go and cook his beastly herring somewhere else!"

"And the smell!" said another fag, with a snort.

"Open the window, somebody," said Jameson.

"Don't!" grinned Jones. "The herring might do a bunk!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

Wally glared at the facetious Jones.

"This is a jolly good herring," he exclaimed. "I gave three-halfpence for it."

"Then it must be a ripper."

"Only it talks."

"Yes," said Jameson, with a wag of the head. "I prefer a herring not to talk. I never did care for the conversational power of herrings."

"Oh, cheese it!" said D'Arcy minor. "What do you

want, anyway? You've made me burn the herring with your clatter."

"I looked in to ask you if you'd had any more wires."

Wally chuckled.

"No."

"No more parental advice from the great Gussy?"

"Nix."

And Jameson chuckled, too.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's telegrams had caused considerable gaiety in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and the prepaid replies had furnished more merriment still.

The fags were rather sorry that Arthur Augustus had stopped sending telegrams.

"Well," said Jameson, "it was funny; but we're no forader. Gussy hasn't found a way for you to go home for the cricket week, and take a couple of your special chums."

"Not yet."

"But will he?"

"I hope he will."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then we shall have to slide."

Jameson whistled. Wally spoke with perfect coolness, as though absenting themselves from school without permission was quite an everyday affair.

But Jameson knew perfectly well that it was not. Jameson already, in anticipation, saw the grim face of the Head, and felt the cane stinging on his palm.

"I say, Wally, that would be serious," he remarked.

Wally snorted.

"Are we going to miss the cricket week?" he demanded.

"Not if we can help it."

"We've missed two days of it already. I think we've been jolly patient," said Wally in an injured tone.

"We have," grinned Curly Gibson.

"Because—"

"Look at the herring!"

A terrible smell of burning pervaded the room, and there was a yell of protest from the fags. Wally, in his interest of the discussion, had forgotten the herring, and the tail of it had gone between the bars and caught alight.

"Phew! It's done for now!"

"Rats!"

"Put it out!" roared Jones. "Chuck it out! Stamp on it!"

Wally waved the herring in the air to extinguish it. It was not very securely fastened upon the two pens which answered the purpose of a toasting-fork, and it swung off them, and described a half-circle in the air, and found a resting-place on Jameson's waistcoat.

"Oh!" shouted Jameson.

He jerked the herring off to the floor.

There it was promptly "passed" by Jones, who had had

enough of the smell of cooking, and it flew through the air from the toe of his boot.

"Stop it!" roared Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pass!" roared Jones. "On the ball!"

"Pass, you duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the herring was passed on, and then centred back to Wally, falling at his feet in several fragments.

Wally gazed at the wreck in dismay and wrath.

"Well, you rotters!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give you 'Ha, ha, ha!'"

And Wally rushed at Jones, and promptly got his head into chancery.

Jones yelled and struggled.

Wally was a terrible youth when he started fighting in earnest, and the loss of the herring upon which he had expended so much pains had exasperated him.

"Ow!" roared Jones. "Stop it! I give you best! Yah!"

"You young bouncer! Take that—and that—"

"Ow! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right, give him a jolly good licking!" said Jameson, who had laughed at the loss to his chum as much as anybody. "Go for him!"

"On the hoko!" said Curly Gibson. "That's right!"

"Yow! Help!" roared the hapless Jones.

There was a sudden shout as the Form-room door opened.

"Cave!"

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, looked in with his thin face and his sour brow.

Wally and Jones instantly separated.

Mr. Selby surveyed the startled fags with a sour smile. He knew that his arrival had interrupted a fight. Wally's excited and untidy look, and the fact that Jones was mopping his nose with a crimsoned handkerchief, was sufficient proof of it—to say nothing of the din he had heard as he approached the Form-room, and the unnatural stillness that had now fallen upon the fags.

"Ah! I trust I do not interrupt you?" said Mr. Selby, in the sarcastic way that always made his pupils want to throw things at him. "Is my arrival inopportune?"

Silence.

"I trust you are not bleeding at the nose, Jones?" said Mr. Selby.

"Groogh!"

"Are you?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Ah! Perhaps D'Arcy minor can explain why?" said Mr. Selby.

"I—I think I must have knocked Jones' nose, sir!" stammered Wally.

"With your fist, I presume?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You will take fifty lines each, Jones and D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-es, sir."

And Mr. Selby closed the door.

Wally looked at Jameson and Curly Gibson, and gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders.

"Curious that the Selby beast is always down on me," he said. "And he was bound to be worse this time than any other."

"Well, fifty lines won't hurt you," grinned Jameson.

"I'll help you do them."

"Oh, blow the lines! I was going to have another try to get his permission to go home for the cricket week."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not much chance of that!"

Wally's lips set determinedly.

"Well, I'm going, and no one will stop me!"

Jameson stared.

"Off your rocker?" he asked pleasantly.

"No," said Wally. "I've been refused permission to go, so I'm going to take French leave to-morrow!"

"You'll be flogged!" exclaimed Jameson.

"We'll see," said Wally. "At any rate, I'm going, that's all."

And as later events proved, on the morrow he went!

CHAPTER 4.

A Case of Personal Dignity!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY rose and brushed a crumb from the sleeve of his jacket, and carefully arranged his monocle in his eye.

"You fellows coming out?" he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I'm not!" said Manners. "I've got some photographs to develop!"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy.



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Manners glared at him.
"I've been taking photographs for two days," he said. "I've got a lot of ripping pictures. I've got that chap Lovell at the wicket, just making a late cut that was a perfect daisy, and I believe it's come out all right. Then I've got him bowling. I took a series of snaps in the Woodford match when he did the hat trick. Then I've got Mr. Berkeley—"

And Manners laughed.
"What's the joke, deah boy?"
"Oh, I snapped Berkeley miffing a catch, you know."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You young scamp!" said Lord Conway, who happened to overhear the remark. "You may as well leave that negative undeveloped till you're back at school."

Manners grinned.
"So I will," he said.
"Pewwaps you won't mind leavin' the development ovah a bit, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I particularly want all you fellows to come out."

"What's on?"
"I will explain."
"Oh, all right! Follow the man from Cook's!" said Monty Lowther.

And the juniors of St. Jim's followed D'Arcy out. They were all looking and feeling very cheerful, with perhaps the exception of Herries, who had a thoughtful cloud upon his brow. Jack Blake slapped his chum on the shoulder.

"Penny for your thoughts, old man?" he remarked.
Herries started a little.
"Oh, I was just thinking!"
"Anything wrong?"
"I hope not."
Blake stared at him.
"You hope not. What do you mean?"
"I was thinking of Towser."

"Oh, Towser!"
"Yes," said Herries, a little nettled; "Towser. You know I trust Taggles to feed him when I'm away from the school, and once when I was away Taggles gave him the wrong kind of biscuits."

Blake grinned.
"Awful!" he said.
"No; it wasn't exactly awful," said Herries seriously. "But it was rotten, you know. I'm rather particular what Towser eats. You know, he bit Taggles one day, and I was awfully anxious about him."
"Taggles wasn't hurt much?"

"Taggles! Who's talking about Taggles? I was anxious about Towser. I didn't know whether he mightn't have been poisoned or something; you never know!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I can't see anything to cackle at. If you had a splendid bulldog like Towser you'd feel anxious about him when you were away. It was awfully kind of D'Arcy to ask us down here for the cricket week, but, really, I felt a bit doubtful about leaving Towser. But you fellows were so set against his coming here."

"I should rather say so!"
"What-ho!" chimed in Digby, with great feeling.
"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
"Towsah hasn't the slightest respect for a fellow's trowsahs, Hewwies, and you must acknowledge that yourself."

"Well, I can't help thinking about him a bit," said Herries. "I think I'll stroll down to Easthorpe presently and send Taggles a wire, and warn him to be careful to keep to the biscuits I told him about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The juniors reached the cricket ground. A number of Lord Eastwood's guests were there, going to practise. The days were very long and light, and there were hours of daylight yet, and Lord Conway's team were meeting a dangerous side on the following day. The Gipsies were an amateur side of great strength, and it was a little risky for a country-house team to meet them at all, but Lord Conway had confidence in his side, more especially as it had been strengthened by the engagement of the professional bowler Lovell.

The Gipsies—who, needless to say, were not gipsies, that simply being the name of the club—had been famed for their victories that season, and they fully expected to wipe the Eastwood side off the ground.

But Lord Conway, when he watched the performances of Lovell, chuckled to himself at the thought of a surprise in store for the visitors.

Eastwood House was full of guests, and some well-known cricketers were there, enjoying the hospitality of Lord Eastwood, and the "cricket week" that had been got up for their entertainment.

"The team are going to practise now, Gussy," Tom Merry remarked. "We'd better keep off the grass."

"Oh, there's room for us at our end of the ground!" said Blake. "We shan't interfere with a match on this side."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'd rather watch the players," said Tom Merry. "There's a jolly lot to be learned by watching that chap Lovell."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, who, as the junior champion bowler of St. Jim's, was supposed to know something about it. "I believe I pick up a new wrinkle every time I see him deliver the ball."

"And his batting's good, too," Figgins remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then let's watch instead of playing," said Blake.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"We're going to play them," he said.

"Eh?"

"We're goin' to play the house team."

"Dreaming, old chap?"

"I am not dreamin', deah boy," said D'Arcy calmly.

"We're goin' to play the house team. There are eleven of us—"

"My dear ass—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass."

"But you are one, you know," said Kangaroo. "Why,

CANDID!



Composer: "What shall I call my new tune?"

Critic: "I would suggest 'The Forger's Wallet'!"

Composer: "Why?"

Critic: "It's so full of false notes!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Cooper, 49, Albert Street, East Brunswick, Melbourne, Australia.

there are Oxford Blues and M.C.C. players in Lord Conway's team."

"All the bettah!"

"And they won't play us."

"Yaas, they will. This is how the mattah stands, deah boy: Mr. Berkeley—"

"Oh, Berkeley!"

"Yaas, Berkeley has had the awful cheek to speak disrespectfully of our cwicket."

"Go hon!"

"My opinion is that he knew perfectly well that I was there and heard what he said, and he said it on purpose," said D'Arcy. "If he wasn't my governah's guest I should chawactewise him as an impertinent wottah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Of course, as he is my governah's guest, undah the family woff, I cannot chawactewise him as anythin' of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I think so, all the same."

"Good!"

"Berkeley made a most contemptuous wemark about kids' cwicket," went on D'Arcy, warming to the subject. "I immediately took him on."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good old Gussy! Did you leave a whole bone in him?"

"I do not mean to say that I thwashed him, Tom Merry. It would be impos for me to tweek a guest of my governah with diswewpect."

"Hear, hear!"

"But I took him on, and challenged him to meet us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I said that a junior side at St. Jim's could meet any side and give a good account of itself; and that after his wemarks our personal dig wequered that we should meet them!"

"Good old Gus!" said Figgins. "But we shouldn't have a look in against a side like this. Lovell would take the wickets six to an over."

"That's where I had him!" said D'Arcy, with a smile of great wisdom. "I said we would meet any amateur side. That bars Lovell—and, as a matter of fact, Lovell is the only weally good bowlah they've got."

"Good old Gussy!"

"He laughed—yaas, laughed at my wemarks!" said D'Arcy warmly. "He said that the side would wipe us all off the gground in a quarah of an hour."

"Oh rats!" said Tom Merry. "We'll give them a tussle."

"Yaas, wathah! And we're goin' to give them a chance to make good the swank. If they don't wipe us out in a quarah of an hour, Berkeley will have to sing smallah."

"But they won't play us."

"Yaas they will. I'm going to speak to Conway."

And Arthur Augustus strode away towards his elder brother, who had just come down from the house with his father.

He broached the subject of the match, and, although at

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first Lord Conway treated the suggestion more in the nature of a joke, Arthur Augustus eventually prevailed upon him to agree to the game. After all, no harm could come of the match, and, as D'Arcy pointed out, it would be good practice for the house team.

Lord Conway went to inform the members of his eleven, and most of them laughed at the suggestion, but agreed to play.

The St. Jim's juniors were highly delighted, and prepared for the match. Tom Merry won the toss, and put in the house team to bat. The juniors, as they went out to field, all felt convinced that there was a surprise in store for their opponents.

"We depend on you, Fatty," said Tom Merry. Fatty Wynn wetted the palms of his hands and rubbed them.

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

"Mind you do! If you don't do bat tricks galore we'll scrag you," said Kangaroo.

"I'm feeling in awfully good form," said Fatty Wynn.

And Tom Merry brightened. He knew what the Welsh junior could do when he was in form, and, unequal as the match was, he felt that there was a surprise in store for the Eastwood House team.

CHAPTER 5.

Something Like a Surprise!

LORD CONWAY looked at the house team with a comical expression. Most of them were in high good-humour, taking the whole matter as a joke.

Berkeley was inclined to be annoyed, as if not considering the affair quite consistent with his dignity.

"We're to bat first," said Conway.

"Rot!" said Berkeley. "What are you playing them for?"

"Well, that's cool, as it was a remark of yours to my young brother that's the cause of it, Berkeley," said Conway.

"It's ridiculous!"

"Oh, I don't see that!" observed Sir Frank Monson, a handsome young cricketer, who was one of the best bats in the house team. "It will be practice."

"They can't stand up to us for a minute!" growled Berkeley. "We shall knock up runs, and then dismiss them for nothing, and have our trouble for nothing. Confounded if I feel like knocking up runs against a baby team!"

"Stuff!" said Raby, who was an old St. Jim's fellow, and had been a great cricketer in the Fifth and Sixth in his time. "The old school always turns out good stuff, and kids as they are, they'll play like anything but babies, I promise you."

"That's right!" said Conway. "I know they put up a good game for a junior side."

Berkeley sniffed.

"Let Berkeley open the innings," suggested Sir Frank Monson. "He's got us in for this, and it's only fair that he should get the runs we want."

"Good!"

"Quite right!"

"Berkeley begins!"

It was a chorus from the house team.

"Stuff!" said Berkeley.

"You can't refuse," said Raby. "You've let us in for this match, and, between ourselves, it wasn't a nice thing you said to young Gussy."

"We only want a dozen runs," said Lord Conway pacifically, "then we'll declare, and let them bat. They won't knock up a dozen against us."

"Hardly!"

"Oh, I'll get them if you like!" said Berkeley ungraciously.

"Go it!"

And Berkeley went out with Pelham to open the innings, Pelham taking the bowler's end.

Tom Merry had already taken his men into the field, and disposed them, and Fatty Wynn was given the ball, with dire threats as to what would happen to him if he failed his side in this emergency.

It wasn't often that the juniors of St. Jim's faced a team of grown-up men—in fact, never.

The Senior Eleven at St. Jim's would not have expected victory in such a tussle. Tom Merry & Co. did not expect it. But they meant to give a good account of themselves, and to steal as many wickets as possible before the house party woke up to the fact that they needed to be careful.

Fatty Wynn said he would do his best, and grinned at the dire threats. They weren't needed to make the sturdy Welsh junior stand up for his side.

Tom Merry grinned as he saw that Berkeley was taking the first over. The swaggering batsman of the house team imagined that he had no difficulties whatever ahead of him.

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He was all swank. And Tom Merry felt that if Berkeley could be dismissed for a duck's-egg, he would not have lived in vain.

Berkeley took his place with his usual manner suggestive of being monarch of all he surveyed, and quite incapable of being moved by a mere human bowler. As he was a man of nearly thirty, and the bowler in question was only half his age, there should have been some grounds for his confidence in this case. But it was said of old that pride goeth before a fall.

Fatty Wynn took Berkeley's measure. He had sent down several trials to the wicket-keeper, and he felt that his hand and eye were in their finest trim. Fatty Wynn would have taken wickets galore against a junior side that afternoon. He hoped that his bowling would be effective even against batsmen who had batted at Lord's and the Oval. But that remained to be seen.

The fat Fourth Former gripped the ball, and walked back from the wicket to get his run. Then he came loping forward, and turned himself into a catherine-wheel.

The ball flew from his hand like a pip from an orange.

Berkeley swiped at the place where he supposed it to be. He certainly was careless; but perhaps if he had been careful the result would have been the same, for the ball was a very tricky one. Berkeley meant to show the juniors that they were taking on an impossible contract by swiping the ball away for a boundary.

But it didn't work out exactly like that.

The willow swept empty space with a mighty sweep, and then a soft click astounded the ears of the batsman.

He looked at his wicket.

The balls were on the ground; the leg-stump was reclining at an angle. From the group of fellows waiting their turns to bat came an irresistible chuckle. They couldn't help it.

After Berkeley's manner, it was too comical to see him dismissed at the first ball of the first over.

Berkeley gazed at his wrecked wicket. His face flushed with rage as he heard the chuckle of his fellow-batsmen.

"My hat!" ejaculated Sir Frank. "This is too good!"

"Comic!" said Raby. "I told you the old school turned out good cricketers."

"You did."

"How's that?" shouted Tom Merry.

And a white-whiskered Indian colonel who was umpiring at the bowler's end chuckled grimly, and said "Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from short-slip. "Fatty Wynn, I weguard you as havin' nobly sustained the cewedit of the old school."

And Fatty Wynn grinned cheerfully.

Berkeley carried out his bat. There was nothing else for him to do. But his face was very dark; he could not conceal his anger and chagrin. His friends looked at him with comical expressions, but they did not speak to him as he came off. Berkeley was not in a mood to be chipped just then.

"Next man in!" said Lord Conway, with a droll look at Monson.

Sir Frank laughed, and went down to the wickets.

The young baronet was not likely to be dismissed so easily as Berkeley. He put on much less side, but he was a surer bat. Fatty Wynn knew from the look of him that he would take some moving. But there were clever fieldsmen as well as a good bowler in the St. Jim's side.

Fatty Wynn sent down the ball, and Sir Frank smiled and cut it away. He cut it into slip, and there was a sudden spring into the air of an elegant form; an eyeglass dangled out to the end of its cord, but the ball was in the hand of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And then there was a roar.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

D'Arcy held up the ball with his left hand, and adjusted his monocle with his right. He smiled serenely at his comrades' yell of delight.

"Oh, ripping, Gussy! Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Sir Frank grinned rather ruefully as he made his way back.

"They're a set of tough young rascals," he said. "You'd better look out, Raby."

Raby grinned, and took his place at the wicket.

He did look out, and the juniors were not given many more chances. Raby and Pelham began to make the running now.

Seven runs were taken for the rest of the over, and when the field crossed Raby still had the bowling. Then Tom Merry bowled, and the over added a single to the score.

"Get him out, Fatty, there's a good porpoise," said Tom, tossing the ball to the Welsh junior.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"I'll try!" he said.

And he did try, with surprising results to Raby. The middle stump went out of the ground, and reposed on its back, and Raby whistled.

"Out, by Jove!"

And he walked away

Three down for 8 runs. Lord Conway burst into a laugh.

"We shall never get over this," he said. "Those cheeky youngsters will be cackling over it for ever and ever."

"Go in and make up the dozen, Conway."

"I suppose I'd better."

Lord Conway went to the wicket. He added two twos to the score, and then the figure stood at 12.

Then Conway declared.

The house innings closed for 12 runs, and Tom Merry's side had to bat. But Tom Merry & Co. meant to make the seniors repent their confidence.

"They've declared! Tom Merry remarked. "We'll make them bat a second time, anyway. We must get 13 runs at least."

And the juniors vowed that they would.

Tom was well on his guard. He stopped three balls of the over with success, and then he hit out. It was a big swipe, such as had often called forth cheers on the cricket ground at St. Jim's. Tom Merry waved Figgins back as he made a motion to run.

"Stay where you are, Figgy."

And Figgins grinned.

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry knew, without looking, that it was a boundary. And so it was. Four for St. Jim's! They had opened well.

The over finished, and then Pelham bowled to Figgins. Figgins knocked up two runs, and was then clean bowled by Pelham. He looked a little grim as he carried out his bat, but Tom Merry gave him an encouraging grin in passing.

"It's all right, Figgy."

"Out for 2!" growled Figgins.

"If everybody does as well, we're all serene."

"Well, that's so, too."



As Berkeley entered the summer-house, the man in the wicker chair gave a grunt. "I've waited for you again, Berkeley," said the bookmaker. "I came as soon as I could," returned the other. Hidden behind the wicker chair, Wally remained very still as, with growing amazement, he listened to the further startling conversation of the two plotters.

CHAPTER 6.

St. Jim's on Their Mettle!

TOM MERRY opened the innings with Figgins. They were two of the best hitters in the junior side, though Jack Blake made a good third. They went to the wickets with the determination to stand up for St. Jim's, and do the best that in them lay. It would be no small triumph for a schoolboy side to compel the house eleven to bat a second time, and thus virtually to admit that they had been too cocksure in declaring their innings closed for a dozen runs.

The cricketers went out to field, most of them grinning. Berkeley was still grim, but Sir Frank and Raby had taken their defeat quite good-humouredly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy patted Fatty Wynn on the back as they stood looking on.

"It was jolly good, Wynn!" he remarked. "You hadn't a chance to show all you could do as they declared so soon, but in the next innings—"

"And there will be a next innings," said Kangaroo. "They mean to dismiss us for about one or two, and make us follow our innings, with another one or two. But they'll find St. Jim's bats a little tougher than that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You bowled remarkably well, Wynn," said Lord Eastwood. "I have never seen a lad bowl better."

And Fatty Wynn coloured with pleasure.

Raby went on to bowl. He bowled to Tom Merry's wicket,

Kangaroo came in.

Kangaroo lived through the rest of the over, and added one, and had the bowler from the other end. Monson took the ball.

Kangaroo put in some hitting that would have done credit to a senior team, if not to a county side. A boundary was followed by two 2's, and St. Jim's roared.

The house cricketers looked grim.

With the junior score at 15, it was evident that the seniors would have to bat again. They had expected to dismiss Tom Merry & Co. for 2 or 3. Then the juniors would have followed on, and been dismissed again for 2 or 3 more. That was the programme, but it hadn't worked out like that.

The juniors were naturally jubilant.

They were putting up a better show than they had expected.

The waiting batsmen watched eagerly as the batting went on. Tom Merry and the Cornstalk chum were standing up wonderfully to the bowling.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Figgins, as Tom Merry cut the ball away, and the batsmen ran, and ran again.

"Ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give 'em a tussle!" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I say, Figgy—"

Lowther paused.

Figgins had suddenly left his side, and was bolting away

at top speed, as if in pursuit of a ball upon the fielding of which a county match depended.

"What the dickens—"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the—"

"It's Cousin Ethel!"

A graceful, girlish figure was coming towards the cricket ground. It was Ethel Cleveland, D'Arcy's cousin. Figgins had sighted her first. It was extraordinary what a keenness of vision Figgins had when there was the slightest chance of seeing Cousin Ethel. He had reached her side before the other juniors knew that she was there.

"Oh, Miss Ethel!" he exclaimed breathlessly, as he dragged off his cricket cap.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

She shook hands with Figgins. Her little, slim hand entirely disappeared within Figgins' big brown one, and Figgins touched it very gently, as if afraid of hurting it.

"So jolly glad to see you," said Figgins, bubbling over with delight. "Gussy said you would be here for the cricket week, you know."

"Yes, I've just arrived," said Ethel brightly. "I heard there was a match on, so I came out at once."

"We're playing the house team," said Figgins, as they walked down to the field. "Of course, it's an awful cheek on our part. But we're showing them that even juniors can stand up for a bit."

"I am sure of that."

"Jolly glad to see you, Ethel, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "There's a wathah good match on."

"Hallo, there goes Tom Merry's wicket!" exclaimed Digby.

But Figgins did not even look. He was looking after Cousin Ethel, and finding her a comfortable seat beside Lord Eastwood, her uncle.

Tom Merry caught out his bat. The score stood at 22.

Lord Conway laughed awkwardly.

"We must stop this," he remarked. "It's absurd. Go and get the Cornstalk out, Berkeley."

"Oh, good!"

Berkeley took the ball and went on. Lovell, the professional stood looking on. Lovell had an eye to a batsman's form, and he knew by Harry Noble's look that he would not be easily disposed of by a bowler of Berkeley's calibre.

Berkeley sent down the ball, and Kangaroo cut it away over the boundary. He tried again, and 3 resulted.

Lovell smiled softly.

But the smile died away from his face as he looked at Kangaroo with more attention. He had not particularly noticed the Australian junior before, in the crowd of boys, with whom the professional bowler came naturally little in contact.

Now, as he watched the Cornstalk, he seemed to find something strangely interesting in his face, and he no longer smiled.

Kangaroo was out at last, not to Berkeley's bowling. Raby took his wicket, and the young Colonial came out leaving the score at 34.

Then the cricketers set to work in deadly earnest, and wickets fell faster.

Kangaroo was standing looking on, when Lovell joined him. The Cornstalk glanced up at the handsome, sturdy professional bowler.

"Excuse me," said Lovell quietly, "you are from Australia?"

Kangaroo nodded.

"What-ho!" he said. "I hail from Victoria."

He looked at Lovell keenly. As the bowler had brought the subject up of his own accord, Kangaroo felt no hesitation in pursuing it. Otherwise, a delicacy would have kept him from speaking of the professional's private affairs.

"You have been in Australia?" he said.

Lovell nodded.

"I thought I'd seen you there," said Kangaroo eagerly. "Weren't you a Cornstalk? I'll stake anything I've seen you playing at Melbourne!"

"I am not an Australian."

"No. They tell me you're a Surrey man," Kangaroo remarked.

"I was born in Surrey."

"But you've been over the water?"

"Yes."

"Played there?"

"I've played cricket everywhere I've been," said Lovell, with a smile. "I generally contrive to get into a game if there's one going."

Kangaroo nodded. Lovell's manner was frank, but he could not help seeing that the bowler had not replied to his question. Lovell had not stated whether he had played as a professional cricketer in Australia.

"I used to go down to the matches a lot at Melbourne."

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said Kangaroo, "especially when the English teams were visiting us. I saw a lot of the big matches. There was a professional in one of the home teams who was wonderfully like you, and had just your style of delivery. It wasn't a common style."

"No?"

"He used to take the wickets in fine style, too—just as you do."

"Thank you!" said Lovell, laughing.

"Hallo, there goes Lowther's wicket!" said Kangaroo, glancing at the field for a moment. Then he turned to Lovell again. "I suppose you couldn't be the same chap, for if I remember, his name wasn't Lovell."

"Do you remember his name?"

Kangaroo scratched his head.

"I don't know—yes—it was—a name something like yours in sound—Lovell—no, it was Luttrell. That's it—Luttrell."

"That settles it, doesn't it?" said Lovell, with a curious smile.

And he turned away. Kangaroo looked back into the field. Berkeley was fielding close to the spot where the two had been talking, and he had lounged back towards the ropes, with his hands in his pockets, evidently careless of his fielding duties.

Kangaroo met his glance.

Berkeley turned away quickly.

But Kangaroo had caught the strange expression on his face, and he knew that Berkeley had heard his talk with the crack bowler—and that Berkeley attached some importance to it. The Cornstalk felt annoyed for a moment. He knew that Berkeley did not like the professional, and he was irritated that the disdainful amateur had heard what he said. Yet surely there was nothing in it that Berkeley could use—even if he wished—to Lovell's detriment.

Surely—yet Berkeley's expression made the Cornstalk feel uneasy for the moment. But his thoughts were soon taken elsewhere by the fall of the St. Jim's wickets.

The tail of the junior innings had not taken the men long to dispose of. Tom Merry & Co. were all down for 40.

CHAPTER 7.

Snatching a Victory!

ALL down for 40!

Considering the side they were playing, Tom Merry & Co. had done wonderfully well, and the cricketers were not grinning now. They had had a tussle to get rid of the youthful batsmen, and they had been taught to respect the St. Jim's eleven. A junior side that could knock up 40 runs against a team including several county players was not to be despised.

And the great men were in rather a difficulty now. They had to bat again; that was inevitable. If they batted to their full strength, there was no doubt that they would pile up a total of runs that would make it impossible for the schoolboys to equal the total. There was no doubt about that; but there was equally no doubt that if they took the time to pile up enough runs to make their position secure, it would be dark before the match was ended, and the match would count as unfinished—that is to say, a draw.

To draw with a schoolboy team was a bitter pill to swallow!

Berkeley snapped his teeth at the idea.

The other fellows were annoyed, too. They had taken the match as a huge joke; but there was no doubt that a draw was a draw; and this team, composed of fellows not one of whom was over fifteen, and many much below that age, would be able to declare truthfully enough that they had drawn with a side composed of county players and M.C.C. members.

And the men did not like it.

"We declared too soon," said Raby ruefully.

"No doubt about that," remarked Monson. "It's all Berkeley's fault. What the deuce did he get us into this absurd position for?"

"I was against playing the young fools," said Berkeley.

"But you were the cause of it."

"Well, it's no good talking of that now," said Lord Conway. "We're committed to the match. The question is, shall we risk declaring the second innings? If we declare for, say 50, the boys won't have a chance of coming up to us, and we shall have time to finish before dark."

"They might just top it," said Pelham.

"Well, if we take the time to put on a safe score, we shall have to leave it unfinished."

"It's a giddy puzzle," said Raby.

"Oh, declare at 50!" said Berkeley.

"I suppose that's the best," said Lord Conway. "It would be too ridiculous to draw with a schoolboy side."

And the house team batted again.

Tom Merry pinched Fatty Wynn's plump arm as he led his men into the field.

"Go it your hardest, Fatty!" he said.

And Fatty Wynn said:

"What-ho!"—as if he meant it.

"Go in and win," said Cousin Ethel, with a bright smile to Figgins, and Figgins went on the field feeling as if he could make the most astounding catches, with Cousin Ethel's bright eyes watching his achievements.

The men were playing now as hard as if they were already meeting the Gipsies, who were due the next day. The unexpected tussle the schoolboys had given them had quite changed their views and their plans. They had not expected to have to work for a victory, but they had to work now, and there was no mistake about that.

Tom Merry & Co. were gleeful.

To have a first-class cricket side on their mettle was an achievement they might well be proud of.

Lord Conway specially selected his batsmen to start, with the idea of knocking up a decent score as quickly as possible, and declaring, so that there would be still time to take all the St. Jim's wickets before dark.

He was bent upon that.

Country house cricket is seldom first-class, but, as it happened, the team got together for the Eastwood cricket week was first-class, and they felt it to be impossible to allow junior schoolboys to claim to have drawn with them.

And they worked hard.

Lord Conway opened the innings with Raby, and batted as hard as if he had been batting against Surrey or Lancashire at Lord's.

The runs piled up.

But the wickets fell, too. Fatty Wynn soon accounted for Raby, and Pelham was caught out by Tom Merry. Kern, with a lucky throw-in, accounted for Berkeley, the lofty amateur again having the cruel luck to be dismissed for a duck's egg.

He strode off the ground in a temper he could not conceal, and left the spot immediately. He returned to the house to console himself with a cigar and a whisky-and-soda, neither of which was a good preparation for a tough match on the morrow.

The runs piled up at a pretty speed, but at a good expense of wickets, and they were six down for fifty runs.

There was certainly not an hour left of daylight sufficient for the game. Now, the St. Jim's first innings had lasted an hour. If the second lasted the same time, the match would be unfinished, even if a single wicket remained to fall. Lord Conway had only fifty runs to add to the first score of twelve; but he could not afford to stop for more, if he was to win. At the risk of being beaten, he resolved that the match should not be a draw.

He accordingly declared the innings closed.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Gussy, old man, you're a genius!" he said. "If you'd sprung this on them earlier in the day, they'd have made sure of it. Now they're between the devil and the deep sea. They must leave something to chance, or leave the match unfinished."

"I nevah thought of it in that light, Tom Mewwy."

"I know you didn't; but it's just as good as if you did!" grinned Tom Merry. "My lads, we're going to beat them."

"Beat them?" said Figgins, with a deep breath.

"Yes, beat 'em," said Tom Merry firmly. "Don't you see, we want only twenty-three runs to win. They've had to give us the chance. We've got an hour to get them in. We're going to get them."

"Bai Jove!"

"They've cut it too fine!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's not often a schoolboy team has a chance of licking a side that's really and practically an M.C.C. side. But we're going to do it."

The juniors chuckled.

It was curious; but owing to the peculiar circumstances of the case, there was a real possibility that they would win.

The thought was almost intoxicating.

Of course, if there had been ample time, and the opposing captain had not felt bound to declare in each innings, they would have had no chance. They had not expected to have one, but Fate was working for them, and a victory was a victory, so long as it was brought about by fair means. And there was no doubt that a victory won by reason of the over-weening confidence of the opposite side was a real one. It counted!

Tom Merry & Co. began their second innings in a mood of grim determination.

The men's bowlers were determined, too. Berkeley reappeared, and did some bowling, but not of a kind that reflected any credit on his side. Tom Merry knocked up eight runs in a single over from Berkeley's bowling, and the

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

CALAMITY.

Mistress (to maid, on hearing a crashing sound from downstairs): "What is happening down there, Mary?"

Maid: "Nothing, ma'am—it's happened!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Mellor, 41, Ruskin Road, Bull Farm, Mansfield, Notts.

IN THE SAME FIX.

It was Timothy's first day at school. He walked up to the teacher's desk and announced:

"I ain't got no pencil."

Shocked at his expression, the teacher exclaimed:

"I have no pencil!"

A sympathetic look crossed Timothy's face as he replied:

"You ain't, either? Well, we're both in the same fix, ain't we?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Culpin, 3a, Broad Street, Halifax, Yorks.

TOUGH!

Landlady: "Isn't it a shame that this poor lamb should be cut off so early in life just to provide food for us?"

Boarder: "Yes, it's certainly tough."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Roff, 68, Pool Road, Leicester.

ABOMINABLE!

Squish: "If a bull swallowed a bomb, what would it be?"

Squash: "Give it up."

Squish: "Abominable!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Reeve, 104, Katherine Road, East Ham, London, E.6.

NO LAUGHING MATTER!

Son: "A boy was caned in school this afternoon and everyone laughed."

Father: "I trust that you did not laugh, my boy."

Son: "I didn't, dad—I was the one who was caned!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Roberts, 267, King's Road, Hurst, Ashton-under-Lyne.

A TOSS-UP.

Willie: "I had to toss up whether to do my music lesson or come out to play cricket."

Billie: "And cricket won?"

Willie: "Yes, but I had to toss up six times before it did!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Smithers, 1/42, Granville Street, Ladywood, Birmingham.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

First Landlady: "My lodgers are all so witty."

Second Landlady: "Ah, there's nothing like hunger to sharpen the wits!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Yoffe, 63, Kay Street, Carlton, N.3, Melbourne, Australia.

[HIS] COMPLAINT.

Bill: "Are you ever troubled with rheumatism?"

Bob: "Only when I try to spell it."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Mitchell, Oakleigh, Aldcliffe Road, Lancaster.

lordly amateur was not entrusted with the ball again by his captain.

The score crept up, and the wickets went down. Seven down for twenty runs; but Tom Merry was still at the wicket, and Kangaroo was his partner. Two runs wanted to tie, and three to win.

Lord Conway's lips set hard.

He sent Raby on to bowl, regretting that Lovell was not in the team. Even Berkeley was regretting that now. The professional would have knocked over every wicket without another run being scored, and saved the match. It was extremely doubtful if the amateurs would succeed in doing so.

Tom Merry's wicket went down, and Figgins took his place. Figgins was inspired by the knowledge that Cousin Ethel's eyes were upon him.

How glorious to make the winning hit under the eyes of Cousin Ethel! And he felt, rather than saw, the girl make a movement of keen interest; he knew that her eyes were on the game, that she was almost breathless now.

Pelham bowled to Figgins.

Figgins marked that ball. He simply could not miss it. He could not fail while Cousin Ethel was watching him.

Smack!

The willow met the leather, and the leather went on its journey—far, far from the grasp of the fieldsmen. Tom Merry threw his cap into the air with a wild yell.

"Hurrah! A boundary!"

"Hurrah!"

"Gwcat Scott!"

"Boundary—boundary!"

The juniors yelled.

A boundary it was!

Figgins had made the winning hit. The total of the St. Jim's score was at sixty-four now, and the men's total was sixty-two. The juniors had a run more than they wanted, and a couple of wickets they did not need.

They had beaten the men by two wickets!

Cousin Ethel was on her feet now, clapping her hands, her eyes dancing with delight. Lord Eastwood laughed and shouted hurrah as heartily as any boy there.

The faces of the men were a study.

They had been beaten.

It was owing to an odd conjunction of circumstances, true; but there it was—they had been beaten, and the schoolboys had wickets to spare.

"Bettah luck next time, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of consolation that made the best-tempered fellows there want to kick him. "We can't all win, you know."

"You young ass!" said Lord Conway, half laughing.

"Weally, Conway—"

"It's all your fault, Berkeley," said half a dozen indignant voices, as the juniors of St. Jim's trooped off, grinning and gleeful.

And Berkeley growled, and went off to find another whisky-and-soda.

CHAPTER 8.

A Mysterious Meeting.

TOM MERRY chuckled as he went up to his room at Eastwood House. The Terrible Three shared a room together, the other fellows being in different rooms on the same floor, along the corridor. Kangaroo was in the room with the Terrible Three, four beds being placed in a row. From the windows there was a wide view over the rolling parkland, with the river winding like a silver streak beyond. The four Shell fellows of St. Jim's were going up after that peculiar cricket match with the house eleven, and they were all in high spirits.

Tom Merry could not help chuckling.

They had beaten Lord Conway's eleven, and it was a cause for rejoicing.

"It's ripping!" said Monty Lowther, as he kicked off his shoes. "Simply ripping!"

"Gorgeous," said Manners, plunging his scarlet face into a basin of water—"gorgeous, my sons!"

"It's the joke of the season!" said Kangaroo, grinning.

"I wonder what the Gipsies will say when they learn they're playing a side that's been licked by a schoolboy team!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll think they had an easier job than ever," Tom Merry remarked. "I've heard that the Gipsies are in great form, and they're making a remarkably successful tour. Country-house cricket is hardly up to their form."

"They'll find a hard nut to crack in Lovell."

"Yes, rather!"

"Between ourselves, I rather think the Gipsies will be beaten," said Kangaroo. "The house team here is a good one. Lovell is magnificent. Even Berkeley can play if he

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chooses, and he'll choose this time—he's got his reasons, I think, for particularly wanting to beat the visitors to-morrow."

The Shell fellows looked at the Cornstalk.

"What do you mean, Kangy?"

"I mean, Berkeley's one of those bounders who bet on the game," said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You think he's got money on the match?"

"I know he has."

"How do you know?"

"He said so to Pelham in my hearing. He doesn't make a secret of it."

"The rotter!"

"Yes, it's rather rotten," agreed Kangaroo, towelling his glowing face. "It's rotten to turn a game like cricket into a gamble. But Berkeley's just that kind of chap. As a matter of fact, I'm pretty certain that he's one of the gentlemen players who live on cricket, just as the professionals do, and he probably makes as much by betting as in expenses. More honest to come out into the open and call himself a professional, to my mind."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who says a run out into the woods?" said Manners, glancing from the window. "I want to select a place for taking photographs. I'm going to have a complete set of pictures of this place."

"Gussy and the rest are going to the village, I think."

"That's all right—we'll see 'em later."

"Good!"

The four Shell fellows left the house and strolled through the gardens into the park. The deep, scented woods reminded them of the surroundings at St. Jim's. Mile on mile of shady woods lay around Eastwood House.

The juniors strolled easily along in the dusk. They were not inclined to exert themselves after the match. They came out on the bank of the river, and Tom Merry threw himself down in the deep grass.

"This is a lovely place," Tom Merry remarked. "Let's take a rest. I've used my legs enough for one day, I think."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors rested in the deep grass and ferns, under the overhanging trees, with the stream running and rippling almost at their feet. They chatted about St. Jim's as they rested, till the stroke of an oar in the water caught their ears.

"Somebody out for a row," said Tom Merry lazily.

"One of the fellows, perhaps."

"Very likely."

From the deep shadows where they lay they glanced out on the river. A boat came into view, but not from the direction of the house. A man was in it, pulling from the village. He rested on his oars as he came opposite the bank where the juniors were.

Tom Merry whispered:

"He's waiting for somebody."

"Phew! Poachers, eh?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

The Shell fellows lay very quiet.

They knew that there had been a great deal of poaching lately on Lord Eastwood's estate—not the petty poaching of a rabbit or two by the country people, but a systematic poaching by fellows who disposed of their plunder to rascally agents who sold the game in the neighbouring towns to dealers who did not ask questions. If anything of that sort was intended now Tom Merry & Co. meant to interfere. They lay quiet and watched.

A gleam of sunlight played on the face of the man in the boat. It was a thick, red, coarse face, but not like the face of a countryman—it was evidently a town-bred man's countenance, and not a pleasant one.

For several minutes the boat remained there, the oars moving sufficiently to counteract the draw of the current. Then the man, who had been searching the bank with his eyes, pulled in close to the reeds, and jumped ashore. He was standing within three yards of the juniors, but the bulk of a big tree and bushes interposed. He stood, waiting, grunting to himself with impatience the while.

There was a sound of footsteps in the wood, and a man came brushing through the foliage.

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

This was evidently the poacher. But the juniors had to make sure before they acted. Tom Merry sat up in the grass, ready.

"I've been waiting for you," said a thick, unpleasant voice. "I've been here some time. Oh, all right; it doesn't matter! Have you got the tin?"

The reply was probably a shake of the head, for the juniors heard nothing, and the thick voice went on:

"You've not! Then you'll have to take the consequences."

(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.

H ALLO, chums! Seen the wonderful news on page three? An unbeatable new St. Frank's story is on the way, and, what will specially please many readers more, it is to be a yarn of hundred per cent school adventure, fun and sport. Mr. Brooks, with his latest masterpiece, which he is very busy on at the present time, considers that it will be the school story of a lifetime! So you can all look out for something really extra-special in fiction treats.

This ripping new serial-story, which starts in a fortnight's time, will also have a topical note, for thrilling Test matches will be introduced in the weeks when the real Tests are being played between England and Australia. These games will be played between the chums of St. Frank's and Australian schoolboys.

I will tell you more about it next week. Meantime, you can do me a favour by putting your pals wise to this great new story. It is much too good for any boy to miss reading it!

"THE RIVER RAGGERS!"

Fun and frolic on the river are the star features of next Wednesday's sparkling long school story. When the chums of St. Jim's get a day's holiday, all the rival companies, by a coincidence and independent of each other, decide to spend the day in a picnic on an island in the River Rhyl. Naturally, there's plenty of ragging between them, until their old rivals, Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, come on the scene, then—well, you'll laugh heartily over what happens when you read this ripping tale.

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

The next gripping instalment brings our popular serial to as thrilling a conclusion as a story could possibly have. And what big surprises there are in it, too! You would never guess what sensations happen in Ghost River Valley. Be sure you don't miss the final chapters.

Lastly, all our other popular features will be well up to their high standard, completing another tip-top number of the GEM.

THE SECOND TEST MATCH.

Once again England and Australia are coming to grips on the cricket field, when the second Test match starts on Friday at the headquarters of English cricket, Lord's, where the memorable Ashes, the story of which I told you a few weeks ago, repose in an urn.

In recent years Australia have been very successful in Tests at Lord's, for not since 1896 has a team from "down under" been beaten there. England won this match by six wickets. Since then the "Aussies" have won four Tests there and four have been drawn, which seems to indicate that Lord's is a happy hunting ground for them! But our record is not so bad as at first appears, as the full summary of Tests played there shows: England has won four, Australia five, and five drawn. England, however, will have to go all out to spoil that long-standing record of Australia's.

COLONIAL READER'S FEAT.

I have received a letter from a reader in New Zealand and in it he tells me of an

achievement of his. He stayed under water for four and a half minutes, being timed by his father. He thinks that his time must be somewhere near the record. While my New Zealand chum's feat is certainly very good, it is no less than two minutes short of the staying-under-water record. This is held by a Frenchman, M. Poulquien, of Paris, who remained submerged in water for six minutes twenty-nine and four-fifth seconds.

RAILWAY FLIERS.

The Great Western Railway's "Cheltenham Flier," John Bodman, of Swindon, still holds the world's speed record for a steam train. It covered the 77½ miles from Swindon to Paddington at an average speed of 81.6 miles per hour. The American streamlined train, the "Zephyr," which recently travelled from Denver to Chicago, a distance of 1,015 miles, in thirteen hours five minutes, is not a steam train. It is driven by a 660 horse-power Diesel motor, and its average speed over the journey was 77.6 miles per hour, touching 112½ m.p.h. in parts! The Cheltenham Flier travelled at over 90 m.p.h. on its record-breaking run.

The Zephyr, made of stainless steel, has three long coaches, and the total cost of fuel—a crude oil—for its record run was about £3 8s.!

SMUGGLERS V. COASTGUARDS.

In these days smugglers are finding it increasingly difficult to carry on their nefarious trade against the forces of the Customs and coastguards. Only the other day three smugglers came to grief very quickly when they found themselves, off the coast of Finland, up against an armed seaplane carrying coastguards! The smugglers were trying to land their contraband spirit by motor-boat when the seaplane swooped down and alighted on the water near them. They attempted to ram the plane, so the coastguards took the air again, and then opened fire with machine-guns on the smugglers. Their boat was riddled and rendered useless by bullets, and they were compelled to surrender. A long spell in prison will give them plenty of time to ponder over the folly of their dishonest calling.

TAILPIECE.

"What couldn't I do to a nice glass of ginger-pop!" said the perspiring golfer. "Hit it wiv a golf-club!" muttered the caddie.

THE EDITOR.



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 Jean Butterfield, 60, Mintaro Avenue, South Strathfield, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants girl correspondents who are interested in the Girl Guide Movement; will reply in French to any French correspondent.

Miss Barbara Maud Lister, Gleneagles, Green Road, Moseley, Birmingham, wants girl correspondents in America, France, and England; interested in swimming, boys' books, and film stars; age 12-14.

Lloyd G. Wilson, 8, Gottingen Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, wants pen pals in England; age 16-17.

W. Graeme-Jakins, 60, Betha Street, Turfontein, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants a stamp correspondent outside South Africa; age 12-14.

Blake Dempster, Bla-Bry, Scottburgh, Natal, South Africa, wants a pen pal who collects stamps; also interested in invention—speed-boats, etc.; Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Greece.

K. R. Phillips, Church Street, Coggeshall, Essex, wants a pen pal in India, Africa, America, and Canada; stamp collecting, football, and cricket.

John (Peter) Everitt, Queen Street, Coggeshall, Essex, wants a pen pal in Egypt, or Italy; interested in boxing and stamps.

J. Miller, 1, School Place, Higham Ferrers, Northants, wants members for his detective club.

Chas. Still, Box 54, Iberville, Quebec, Canada, wants a pen pal; age 14-16.

Miss Daphne Ambler, 35, Bell Street, Wanganui, North Island, New Zealand, wants girl correspondents in London, Spain, or France; age 19-21.

Raymond Munro, 26, King Edward's Road, Middlesbrough, Yorks, wants pen pals anywhere; interested in stamp collecting.

N. E. Winslade, 20, Orwell Street, Oamaru, New Zealand, wants pen pals in England.

D. Tow, 57, Raiton Road, Horne Hill, London, S.E.24, wants pen pals in America and on the Gold Coast; interested in sport; age 12-13.

Miss Pauline Collins, Post Office, Bosham, Sussex, wants girl correspondents in Berlin and England; interested in boys' books, writing stories, and make-up; age 14-16.

Ralph Ostler, 2, Blenheim Road, Upper Holloway, London, N.19, wants a pen pal in India, Africa, or America; age 10-12.

William Kenneth Ball, 4, Cranmore Avenue, Great Crosby, near Liverpool, wants to hear from stamp collectors; age 9-12.

Bill Andrew, 5, Tripney Avenue, Peterborough, South Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE DEMON BOWLER!

(Continued from page 12.)

You mean to say that you've put me to all this trouble for nothing?"

There was a low murmur of a voice in response.

The thick tones went on:

"Speak out, man, there's no one to hear us! We're alone in the wood—nobody within a mile. You've owed me, and owed me again—and it's coming to an end."

Another murmur.

"The match to-morrow," went on the loud tones. "Yes, I shall make a good bit over it. I've got bets on with a dozen fools who backed the house team—and the Gipsies will make hay of them."

Tom Merry started.

These words showed him that his first supposition had been incorrect. The men who were holding this mysterious meeting on the river-bank were not poachers. The man who had come in the boat was a bookmaker; and the other man—who was he?

The other voice murmured again.

"Rot!" broke out the bookmaker. "The house team win—and against the Gipsies! Rot!"

"It's true."

The juniors caught the voice this time. Low as it was, it struck them that there was something familiar in the accents.

"Impossible!"

"It's true, Banks. That professional chap Lovell is a terror, I tell you. I don't like the man, but I can see what his form is like. He will make hay of the Gipsies wickets to-morrow. The Gipsies will lose."

"Lose!"

"Yes. The men you've been betting with have fooled you—they knew Lovell's form, and that is why they were willing to take you on."

"You think I've been taken in?"

"I know you have."

There was a short silence.

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I know that voice," he muttered.

"So do I," said Kangaroo quietly. "It's Berkeley's."

"Yes; and Banks, the bookie!"

"Jolly curious, this," said Manners.

"Yes; but we can't let 'em go on talking, and hear what they say. It's no bizness of ours," whispered Tom Merry. "Let's slide."

"Right—ho!"

The juniors were curious. They could not help being so. There was something very mysterious in Berkeley meeting the bookmaker in this secret way, and warning him that he was about to lose his money on the Eastwood match. But common principles of honour forbade them to play the eavesdropper.

They rose from the grass and moved away into the wood.

They did not desire to show themselves—that would be very awkward for Berkeley if he knew they had seen him there with the bookmaker.

But quietly as they moved, there was some rustling of the bushes, and as they went they heard a sharp exclamation.

"What's that?"

It was Berkeley's voice.

"Only the wind in the trees," said the bookmaker mockingly. "You're all nerves."

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No. 19. Vol. 1 (New Series).

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

GEORGE GORE SPEAKING



Hallo, you men! Jolly decent of me to speak to you like this, I think. I'm not quite such a soft ass as some of the rest of the fellows—talking isn't in my line at all! Oh, no! Actions speak louder than words, they say. That's me, every time!

When Merry suggested that I should speak to you I refused point blank. On second thoughts, though, I decided that it's only fair you should hear both sides. You get enough sheep's jaw from Merry and his pals, goodness knows! I'm the sort of fellow who talks straight from the shoulder, without mincing my words, I can tell you. I don't stand rot from anybody—prefects and masters included! I had a few words with Kildare of the Sixth the other day. I was watching him at the First XI nets. I didn't think much of his batting, and I told him so. Funny thing, prefects can't stand criticism. Kildare cut up rusty in a flash and gave me one hundred lines. Just because I told him to go and eat coke he made me bend over. Jolly galling, just because a fellow speaks his mind!

I had a rub with Linton in class the other morning, too. Linton is no end keen on a fellow having a good Latin "construe," and I had rather a bad one. I admit it—I can't see any good in Latin, anyway. I told Linton so. I said I never intended to talk Latin when I leave school, and I don't see why I should swot over it now! Linton hadn't any reply—he just dragged me out before the class and caned me! Shows what you have to expect if you talk plain English around here!

Merry and his pals are a thorn in my side, too. I can't see why the fellows wanted to elect Merry captain at all. I could run the junior elevens much better than Merry. I should play myself and make up with a few passengers. With my batting and bowling St. Jim's would create a sensation on every cricket field. I can imagine myself swiping sixes off Hurrey Singh's bowling at Greyfriars, or driving Jimmy Silver over the ropes at Rookwood! As for bowling, I'm a regular tiger! Only the other afternoon, at practice, I sent down an absolute "sizzler," which would have made a fearful mess of Merry's wicket. Unfortunately, that silly ass Selby, master of the Third, walked across directly in front of it and stopped the ball with his shin! Silly old chump! Of course, it was no good explaining—Selby hauled me before the Head, and I got six swipes. If it hadn't been for Selby's silly shin I'd have had six wickets in that over!

However, such is life with the potty crowd at present at St. Jim's! Well, cheerio—glad to have met you.

SECOND TEST

FATTY WYNN'S "HA AUSSIES" SHOW TH

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone!

Here we are again, ready for the second Test match! Merry wins the toss. Harry Noble leads his team of Australians out to field. St. Jim's won the first match of the series, but this time Noble and his "Aussies" are determined to show us something!

Crack! There goes the first ball to the boundary! Another soon follows it. Merry has his eye in from the start, and there is no holding him! Blake leaves, victim to a full-length dive and catch by Noble at slip! Figgins of the long arms now swings a vigorous bat. Crack! See the fieldsmen sprint—no, it's over the line. Boundary to Figgins! Merry and Figgins are adepts at sneaking those cheeky-looking "singles" which annoy the bowlers so—look, there they go, adding another run to the Saints' total! Once too often, Figgy—oh, well thrown! Noble's throw-in breaks the wicket just as Figgy thumps his bat home—too late! Figgins is out, 15. Saints looked good for a hundred at least, but the bowling is keen and fielding wonderful. Herries puts up a faint chance to third man—it's taken, Herries is out! Saints last wicket falls at 70. Merry 32 not out.

"Aussies" open disastrously. Noble leaves first ball—playing clean over one of Fatty Wynn's trickiest! Wootton major takes the second delivery—or rather, it takes him! Wootton, clean bowled, a "duck"! Two down for nothing! Stay—"Squiff" of Greyfriars, one of the "Aussies'" best men, comes in. S. Q. I. Field is 'his full name. Watch him now—undeterred by the fate of the early batsmen, he leaps out to the first delivery and smites Wynn for four! A cool front in the face of dangerous bowling often averts a collapse. "Aussies" are steady now. Derwent backs up Squiff. A smashing partnership—plenty of leather-hunting for the Saints now! Derwent is caught magnificently by D'Arcy in the long field. Good old Gus! Squiff keeps the score board moving, and is proof against the bowlers' guiles. Last wicket falls at 70—exactly the same total as St. Jim's!

Flying Squad Report

THE "BRONCHO-BUSTER"

The Rodeo at White City, London, inspired Buck Finn to show the Saints some "crazy" stunts on horseback! Buck startled fellows by galloping into quadrangle on hired mount, and rearing steed up on hind legs! Fags scurried right and left, but Flying Squad flew on scene, anticipating early disaster! Buck shouted that he would show them how a real hundred per cent American could handle the "controls"—and proceeded to put his "broncho" through its paces. Buck's mount stood off for brief period—then suddenly reared and began buck-jumping in real earnest! Buck shot off and put up record

Going in style. instead of and Figgins the master reckless hit! Saints wear rattle up. At 52 Figg wicket—bu roy. Blak up, slower at 75, havi Blake and than make Lowther le the remain still there. Blake carry "Aussies" they keep with Squiff crowd favc Wynn has be overw Lowther a bowling—t liking of t Noble and goes on to other end Squiff—no Conroy bat the runs. bowling w sticks till t one to wir Fatty puts batsmen in with the l leaps out a Only a do: half of tl which is f but Noble! ly. The re another "sies" in St. Jim's! well-deserv

(Cont speed fligh face amid Buck's fall to course and qua by A. A. horse's pat With Guss "broncho brought t D'Arcy wa Finn dooke

Solut

The two same size.

Merry's Weekly



Week Ending June 23rd, 1934.

TEST MATCH WYNN'S "HAT-TRICK" SHOW THEIR METTLE

Going in again, St. Jim's begin in promising style. Merry has Figgins with him instead of his usual partner, Blake. Merry and Figgins are a contrast in style. Merry, the master of every stroke; Figgins, the lanky, reckless hitter. Twenty—thirty on the board. Saints wear big smiles as forty and then fifty rattle up. Merry and Figgins still together! At 52 Figgins gives a difficult catch at the wicket—but nothing is too difficult for Conroy. Blake follows in, and the score creeps up, slower now, but sure. Merry is stumped at 75, having hit a gallant 40. Lowther joins Blake and shows he can do something more than make jokes! The 100 rattles up ere Lowther leaves. Blake holds the fort while the remaining batsmen come and go. Blake is still there when the innings closes for 120—Blake carrying his bat for 35.

"Aussies," set 121 to win, have time, if they keep the score moving. Noble opens with Squiff—a dangerous combination! The crowd favours St. Jim's chances, but Fatty Wynn has twisted his ankle a bit and cannot be overworked. Figgins and Blake and Lowther and Digby provide a variety of bowling—but all of it seems completely to the liking of the Australian pair. At fifty, with Noble and Squiff still unseparated, Merry goes on to bowl himself, with D'Arcy at the other end. D'Arcy succeeds in bowling Squiff—no knowing what a change will do! Conroy bats stolidly now while Noble makes the runs. Fatty Wynn dismisses Conroy, bowling with obvious difficulty. Derwent sticks till the 100 is on the board. Twenty-one to win, and plenty of wickets in hand. Fatty puts in a great over, dismissing three batsmen in succession—a "hat trick"! But with the last batsman at the crease, Noble leaps out at everything, and the score jumps. Only a dozen to win—a "six" accounts for half of them! Noble faces the bowling, which is from Blake. Blake does his best, but Noble leaps out and his bat flashes wickedly. The red speck sails high over our heads—another "six"—and victory for the "Aussies" in the Second Test Match against St. Jim's! The score is now one each, both well-deserved wins. What of the next game?

(Continued from previous column.)

speed flight across quad—crashing flat on face amid laurel bushes! Bushes broke Buck's fall, but American junior too shaken to pursue mount, which was galloping wildly round quadrangle! General alarm averted by A. A. D'Arcy, who stepped coolly in horse's path and vaulted lightly into saddle. With Gussy's hands at the rein, Buck Finn's "broncho" cooled off rapidly, and was brought to standstill. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was cheered, but "broncho-buster" Finn looked very small!

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

The two pieces of melon are identically the same size.

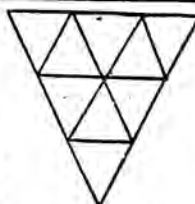
MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! Balloons, three a penny—the last two! A reader asks: What is a highway? A narrow space between two boardings, old chap! I hear Lumley-Lumley's pater has just put over a seven-figure refrigerator deal. A "cool" million! "You probably don't remember me," began the self-made man proudly, "but twenty years ago when I was a poor boy you gave me a message to carry." "Yes, yes!" snapped the busy man. "Where's the answer?" Figgins simply couldn't get his teeth into a pie made by Fatty Wynn. "I made it out of Mrs. Gorgor's Cookery Book!" said Fatty. "Oh!" said Figgins. "Then this leathery part is the binding!" Mr. Rateliff, the crusty New House master, is rather a connoisseur of antique furniture. "I'd like you to see my Queen Anne sideboard," he remarked to an American visitor. "Oh!" answered the visitor. "Your Queen Anne must have had a pretty big dining-room. This'll be the eighth sideboard of hers I've been shown this week!" Don't go away. Here's a hint for gardeners: Mind your peas and cucumbers! "Wireless programmes make me ill!" complains Gore. He feels ohm-sick! Skimpole is trying to invent a wireless set that will run on gas. We thought they did already! Curly Gibson asks me to state that he is very fond of desecrated coconut. I think Curly has got a bit mixed—he means desiccated! Skimpy again: "The most British bird of all is the rook!" British to the caw! Here's an advert from a Wayland paper: "Traveller wanted to cover Wayland district with lace." In other words, to draw a veil over it! Of course, you heard of the Irishman who had a round hole cut in his door for circular letters? The same Irishman became a police constable, and was sent to arrest a man. The man asked leave to go back for his cap—and disappeared. The Irish constable caught him again, though, and when the prisoner asked leave to fetch his cap again, the constable was ready for him. "Not this toime, be jabers!" he exclaimed. "You wait here—I'll fetch your cap meself!" As the customer said to the salesman: "The horn on this car is broken!" "No, it's not," answered the salesman. "It's just indiffernt." "What do you mean?" demanded the customer. "Why," answered the salesman, "it just doesn't give a hoot!" Good hunting, boys!



CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Manners says it is really quite easy to draw the figure shown in one continuous line without crossing at any point and without taking your pencil off the paper. His chums didn't find it so simple. Try it for yourself!



That was all the juniors heard as they disappeared.

CHAPTER 9. The Gipsies Match.

IT was a sunny morning at Eastwood. The juniors of St. Jim's were up with the sun, and most of the cricketers were early, too. Stumps were to be pitched at an early hour. The match was intended to last two days, but some of the men were of opinion that it would require fully that time, if it were not unfinished at the end of the second day. That opinion was not held among the Gipsies. They had been making a successful tour, in which they had beaten several county teams on their own grounds, and country-house teams galore. They had little doubt about walking over Lord Conway's eleven in the easiest way in the world.

But the fact that Mr. Banks had found men ready to lay good money on the Eastwood House team showed that Lord Conway's men had backers. Lovell's form was well known to men in the know; hence the ease with which Banks had succeeded in securing odds against the Gipsies—favourites with most.

At breakfast there was a crowded table. Eastwood House was full of guests, all cricketers or their relations. The talk ran on the coming match. Figgins spent most of his time in explaining cricket matters to Cousin Ethel. The girl was deeply interested in the game, and what Figgins didn't know about it wasn't worth knowing. Perhaps, however, she could not have stood so much cricket if she had not been interested in Figgins, too.

When the stumps were pitched there was a good crowd on the ground.

Village folk and country folk had come in from all sides to see the game, or, at least, part of it, and among the spectators was a fat, red-faced man with flashy watchchain and rings and beetling brows, with little keen eyes under them.

Lord Conway's glance fell upon him, and the viscount frowned.

"That's Banks, the bookmaker," he remarked to Berkeley. "I wonder what he's doing here!"

Berkeley glanced at the fat man.

"Banks, by Jove!" he said.

"I suppose he's been putting some of his rotten money on the game," Lord Conway remarked. "Looks like it, his being here."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"It's a pity some way can't be found to stop that," Lord Conway said, with a frown. "Banks is one of the bookmakers who are turning their attention from racing to cricket and football, and they'll make the game a gamble just as horse-racing is, in the long run. Then it will be good-bye to a decent game."

Berkeley nodded.

"I've a jolly good mind to have him shown off the ground," said Lord Conway. "Well, the public are admitted," said Berkeley. "Banks is one of the public, and you don't know for certain that he's here for any harm."

"I can guess pretty correctly, I think."

"No good making a row, Conway."

"Perhaps you're right. I wish he'd get out."

And Lord Conway took no further notice of Mr. Banks.

The sides tossed for choice of innings, and it fell to the Gipsies to bat first. Yorke went in with another man to open the innings, and Mr. Banks pricked up his ears, so to speak. Now he was to ascertain whether Berkeley's information with respect to the professional bowler was to be relied upon.

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Lord Conway put on Raby to bowl the first over, and Yorke and his partner knocked up eleven runs for the Gipsies. In the second over Lovell took the ball.

Lovell walked on with a quick, springy step. His handsome face was glowing with health and keenness. He looked at the top of his form, as indeed he was.

He grasped the ball and faced the batsman. Yorke, the Gipsies' captain, faced him calmly enough. He knew that Lovell was good stuff, but he did not know how dangerous he was.

The house eleven looked on keenly.

They knew that they had a surprise packet in Lovell, and they were anticipating the effect of his bowling on the visitors with much inward enjoyment.

Lovell took a little run, and the ball left his hand.

Click!

Yorke's wicket went to pieces in a flash.

"My hat!" said Yorke aloud, in his astonishment.

There was a buzz in the crowd.

"Well bowled!"

"Oh, well bowled!"

Lord Conway smiled.

Yorke carried out his bat, and another man took his place. A minute more, and the new man's bails were on the ground.

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his Panama hat. "Bwavo! Wippin'!"

A third man came in.

He met with the same fate.

His wicket went down at the next ball, and there was a yell of "The hat trick! Hurrah!"

Lovell looked quietly satisfied.

He had performed the hat trick in the first over, and it was a feat to be proud of against batsmen like the Gipsies.

Grim enough looked the visitors.

They were three down for 11 runs, and it was a bad beginning to the match they had looked forward to as little more than a walk-over.

The batsmen played Lovell very carefully after that.

"My only hat!" said Yorke, to his friends. "They've got a wonderful man there! He'll play for England in the next Test, if I'm any judge. He's regular mustard."

And the Gipsies agreed that he was.

The St. Jim's juniors were looking on very keenly. They felt that they were backing up Lovell, somehow, and they were very pleased to see him doing so well.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "What did I tell you, deah boys? Fway stop pokin' me in the wibs, Blake."

"Ass, here's a telegram for you."

"Wats!"

"The boy's been waiting five minutes."

"Bai Jove! I think it's wainin' telegwams," said D'Arcy, turning round and taking the buff envelope from the boy.

"I suppose it's ffrom that young wascal Wally again. I weally thought that he had dwopped the subject."

He opened the telegram.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the news?" asked Kerr.

"That young wascal!"

"What's he done?"

"He's bolted!"

"Phew!"

"My hat!" said Digby. "There'll be a row!"

"Poor old Wally!" said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "I suppose he knows there's some jolly good feeding going on here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be trouble," said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood is certain to bundle him back."

D'Arcy nodded.

"The young wascal foresees that," he remarked. "He's wired to me to help him make his peace with the governah."

"By George, that's good!"

"Here's his telegram—it must have cost him a lot. 'Dear Gus,—I've hooked it.' That is a howwibly vulgah expression."

"Does Wally say that?"

"No, you duffah; I say that. Wally says: 'I've hooked it, I shall be home by the twelve train. Meet me in summer-house at twelve-thirty to arrange how to break it to the pater.—WALLY.'"

The juniors grinned.

After his major's strict injunctions to him not to think of "bolting" from St. Jim's, it was considerably cool of Wally to call upon Arthur Augustus to make his peace for him. But Wally knew his major.

"You'll have to do it, Gussy," grinned Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, there goes another wicket."

Lovell was bowling again.

Arthur Augustus thrust the telegram into his pocket, and

watched the bowling. Lovell was dangerous enough. It was pretty clear that the Gipsies' innings would not last after lunch.

And it did not.

At twelve o'clock the last man was out, and the Gipsies' innings closed for a total of 70 runs—about a third as many as they had confidently expected.

Berkeley glanced round for Banks in the crowd as the cricketers went off. The bookmaker had disappeared. The amateur left his comrades as soon as he could, and hurried away.

CHAPTER 10.

What Wally Overheard!

"EARLY, by Jove!"

Wally made that remark.

The scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's had stepped out of the train at precisely twelve o'clock at Easthorpe; but he had obtained a lift as far as the park gates, and so he had arrived much earlier than he had anticipated.

It was not yet ten minutes past twelve when he entered the summer-house—as quietly and stealthily as a cat.

Wally knew that it would not do to see his father at once. He had no desire to be sent directly back to St. Jim's.

With Arthur Augustus as a go-between, peace might be made, and the earl might relent, and intercede for his youngest son with the Head of St. Jim's.

So Wally entered the summer-house quietly, and at the sound of a footstep approaching it from outside, five minutes later, he was on the alert at once.

He knew that both his father and his eldest brother came to the little building in the wood at times, and he didn't want to be discovered there by either of them.

He started up and listened.

The footsteps were coming directly towards the summer-house. Wally looked round quickly. There were several big garden chairs inside the building, and the Third Former promptly ensconced himself behind one of them, kneeling on the ground to be completely covered by the high wicker back, near the wall.

A minute later, someone entered the summer-house.

Wally could not see who it was, and he dared not look—he would himself have been seen at once. He remained crouched behind the chair. The newcomer paused for a moment or two, and then came directly towards the chair, and sat down in it heavily.

Wally hardly breathed.

If it should be his father, the game was up if he was discovered. How long the visitor would stay in the summer-house was a problem, too. Suppose he was still there when D'Arcy came at half-past twelve to keep the appointment. It would be just like D'Arcy to blurt out the facts.

Wally groaned in spirit. But he made no audible sound.

He heard the scratching of a match, and then the scent of a cigar was wafted to him. The strong, coarse smell of it showed him that it could not be Lord Eastwood who was smoking. It was neither his father nor Lord Conway. But it might be just as dangerous to betray his presence to a guest of the house.

Wally remained very still.

There was a quick footstep at the entrance of the summer-house, and the man seated in the wicker chair gave a grunt.

"I've waited for you again, Berkeley!"

"I came as soon as I could."

"Well, the match has gone as you say," Banks remarked, puffing at his cigar. "The house team are bound to knock up more than 70, I suppose."

"At least a 100."

"And the Gipsies will do no better in their second innings."

"Not if Lovell bowls against them."

"I believe you."

Banks smoked in silence for some minutes. Berkeley stood watching him without speaking. He was sure of the bookmaker now.

"Well," said Banks at last, "I suppose it must be as you suggested, Mr. Berkeley."

"Good!"

"If Lovell drops out of the match—"

"Yorke will agree to Conway's playing a substitute; but there's no one at Eastwood to be afraid of. It will be some bungling amateur."

"Then the Gipsies—"

"Will win."

"And my money's safe," said the bookmaker.

"And mine."

Banks nodded.

"Yes."

"You hand me back my paper, and a hundred pounds in addition," said Berkeley quietly. "That's understood?"

"I agree."
 "We'll have it in black and white."
 The bookmaker grinned.
 "An agreement like that wouldn't look well in writing, Mr. Berkeley, and it would do you more harm than good to show it."

"We shan't put it in writing like that. You will book it in the form of a bet—you to pay me three hundred pounds if the Gipsies win. Out of the three hundred you keep the two I owe you."

"That's all serene."
 Wally hardly breathed.

Cool and nerry young scamp as he was, he was terrified at what he was hearing, and he did not know what to do. He simply dared not show himself.

"And now," said the bookmaker, "how are you going to prevent Lovell from playing?"

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.
 "Leave that to me!"

"Are you sure you can do it?"

"Yes."

"Then you have a hold on him?"

"Perhaps."

The bookmaker frowned darkly.

"Why can't you speak out?" he demanded. "We're in the thing together."

"So long as Lovell doesn't play for Conway, that's all that concerns you," said Berkeley coolly. "I keep my secret."

"Oh, have your way, then!"

"I mean to."

Mr. Banks rose to his feet.

"Well, I suppose that's about all," he said. "I may as well get out of this. No need to risk our being seen together."

"Quite so," said Berkeley. "I—"

He paused, with a change of colour.

There was a distinct sound of footsteps coming towards the summer-house. Wally heard them, too, and breathed with relief. He guessed that Arthur Augustus was coming to keep the appointment he had made by telegram.

"Hang it!" muttered Berkeley. "We mustn't be seen here! Get out of the window, Banks, and cut off through the bushes!"

Banks grunted.

"No fear! I'm not climbing out of any windows at my time of life!"

"You'll be seen—"

"That doesn't matter, if you're not seen with me," said Banks quickly. "You cut off by the window, and I'll walk out. Whoever it is, will only suppose I strolled in here for a smoke."

Berkeley hesitated for a moment, but it was evidently the only thing to be done. He stepped out of the low window of the summer-house and disappeared into the trees. The bookmaker walked boldly enough towards the door. He met Arthur Augustus as he crossed the threshold.

The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon the bookmaker.

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Banks jovially. "I just strolled in for a smoke, you know."

And he walked on before the elegant junior could reply.

Arthur Augustus cast a suspicious glance after him. He did not like Mr. Banks' looks. Then he entered the summer-house.

He glanced round. There was no one visible.

"I'm early," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "Wally isn't here yet. Pewwaps he hasn't left the school after all. I— Bai Jove!"

He broke off with an exclamation as Wally rose to view behind the big chair, with a face so pale that Arthur Augustus forgot the lecture he had intended for him, and looked at him with great anxiety instead.

"Gweat Scott, Wally, what's the mattah? Are you ill?"

"No!" gasped Wally. "But I've just been listening to two awful rotters! They're planning to give away the match."

"Bai Jove!"

And the swell of St. Jim's listened in astonishment and growing horror as Wally explained.

When the fog had hastily stammered out what he had heard, D'Arcy grasped him by the arm.

"Come to the governah!" he exclaimed. "He's the pwopah person to know this!"

Wally hesitated.

"He doesn't know I'm here," he said.

"He must know now, Wally. We can't leave these awful wascals to cawvy out their plan. Come on!"

And he simply dragged the fog from the summer-house.

CHAPTER 11.

Lovell's Reply!

LOVELL came out after lunch and strolled in the grounds. There was an interval before the home innings commenced, and Lovell was not wanted to bat first, in any case.

Tom Merry observed him stroll into the park, and noticed that Cecil Berkeley walked in the same direction a little later. He little guessed what was the intention in the mind of the amateur.

"I want to speak to you, Lovell."

Lovell stopped.

He looked at Berkeley with cool, clear eyes. The amateur hesitated a minute or two; he did not like approaching the subject he had in mind.

"Yes?" said Lovell simply.

"We can talk safely here, I suppose?" said Berkeley, with a glance round.

Lovell looked surprised.

"Yes," he said. "There is no one to listen, if that is what you mean. But what would it matter?"

"A great deal."

"Yes?"

"The fact is, it's rather a curious matter," said Berkeley, plunging into the subject. "I want to ask a favour of you."

Lovell could only stare. That the gentleman amateur, who had always treated him with scarcely veiled disdain, should care to ask a favour of him was surprising enough.

"It's rather a peculiar one, too," said Berkeley, the colour coming into his cheeks in spite of himself. "I want you to drop out of the team for the rest of the

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match, and, of course, not to mention that I had anything to do with it."

Lovell could scarcely believe his ears.

"You want me to drop out of the team?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Are you mad?"

"No."

"I think you must be, to make such a request," said Lovell. "Even if I were not bound by honour not to desert the side, I am paid for my services by Lord Eastwood, and I should be a rascal not to play. And I certainly shouldn't dream of dropping the match now to please you or anybody else."

"I don't expect you to do it to please me, of course. I expect you to do it with an eye to your own interests."

"I don't see it."

"You remember a little talk you had with the Australian lad yesterday," said Berkeley.

Lovell started.

"Yes. I did not know you heard it."

"Well, I did hear it, and it made a lot of things clear to me."

"I don't understand you."

"I had been wondering where I had seen you before," said Berkeley coolly. "That little talk made it plain to me. It was in Melbourne, two years ago, when I was over there with an English team. You were a bowler for an Australian side that met us at Melbourne."

Lovell did not speak.

"Your name wasn't Lovell then," went on Berkeley. "It was Luttrell. Luttrell gained a great deal of attention, and was widely mentioned in the Colonial Press as a wonderful bowler, and there was talk of sending him to England in the next team. I remember a newspaper mentioning that he was not Colonial born, but a Surrey man by birth."

Still Lovell was silent.

"Luttrell was never sent to England with the Australian eleven, however," went on Berkeley. "He disappeared from Melbourne very suddenly—to avoid the police, who were after him for the forgery of a cheque by which he cleared three hundred pounds. He escaped, and from some inquiries I made by telegraph yesterday, it's pretty clear that he's never been tracked out by the police, if I did not know it already."

"Well?"

Lovell's face was deadly pale, but he spoke quite calmly. Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "it's pretty clear, I think. You call yourself Lovell, a Surrey man, and so you may be; but in Melbourne two years ago you were Luttrell, and you are wanted by the Melbourne police for forgery!"

"Well?"

Berkeley made an angry gesture; the reiteration of that sharp, contemptuous monosyllable irritated him.

"You are in my hands," he said. "A word to the police, and you would be extradited to Melbourne to take your trial."

Lovell smiled grimly.

"You know it," said Berkeley. "I shall speak that word or not, entirely according to how you act now. I want the Gipsies to win!"

"You want your own team to lose?"

"Yes."

"The side you are playing for!" exclaimed Lovell, in contemptuous surprise.

"I don't intend to discuss it with you!" said Berkeley, flushing. "I want the Gipsies to win, and that's enough. I believe they can win if you don't bowl against them in their second innings. I want you to drop out after the home innings."

"And let the enemy win?"

"Yes."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall denounce you to the police!"

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"Suppose I go straight to Lord Conway now," he said, "and repeat what you have told me, word for word?"

Berkeley smiled contemptuously.

"You're welcome to do so, if you like," he said. "You cannot imagine that Lord Conway would believe a word of it, I suppose? I should deny it from end to end!"

"You scoundrel!"

Berkeley's face went crimson.

"That's enough!" he exclaimed harshly. "I didn't come here to bandy words with a criminal! Will you do as I ask?"

Lovell shook his head.

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Have you thought of the consequences?" demanded Berkeley, amazed and furious.

He was alarmed and confounded by the blank refusal of

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the professional. He had not doubted for a moment that the professional would jump at his terms to save his skin.

"Yes," said Lovell quietly.

"And you are prepared to face them?"

"Yes."

"You must be mad! Look here!" exclaimed Berkeley abruptly. "You will have guessed that I have money on the match. I suppose you really mean that you want your whack. If so, put it in plain English. How much do you want?"

"Nothing!"

"Then you definitely refuse?"

"Definitely!"

Berkeley ground his teeth. He thought of Mr. Banks, and the promise he had given him—of the certain ruin awaiting himself if the Gipsies lost the match. He had counted too surely upon his power over the professional.

He clenched his fists in bitter rage.

"You—you dare to refuse!" he hissed. "You—you forger—you beggarly hound—"

"There's my reply to that!"

Lovell's fist lashed out, and Berkeley staggered back, and rolled on the grass. Lovell gave him one look, and walked slowly away.

There was a cry of surprise. Lord Conway, who had come to look for Berkeley, had caught sight of him just as he fell under Lovell's blow.

He ran up to assist the dazed amateur to rise.

"What on earth does this mean?" he exclaimed.

Berkeley staggered up. He had a last card to play, and he played it. He made a gesture after the retreating form of Lovell.

"You saw it?" he muttered thickly.

"Yes. Have you been quarrelling with Lovell?"

"Quarrelling—with a criminal! No!"

Lord Conway stared at him.

"A criminal! What do you mean, Berkeley?"

"I mean that he is a criminal—that he's wanted by the Australian police for forgery, and that he may be arrested any minute! You can't let him play for the rest of the match!"

CHAPTER 12.

Accused!

LORD CONWAY stared blankly at Berkeley.

"What on earth do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Lovell a criminal! Lovell in danger of arrest!"

"Yes."

"You're dreaming!"

"I'm telling you the exact truth!" said Berkeley, calming himself.

He realised now that he had one chance left of keeping his arrangement with the bookmaker.

If he could brand Lovell as a criminal, an escaped forger wanted by the police, Lord Conway could not possibly allow him to continue playing in the Eastwood side.

At any cost he would have to drop such a player.

That knowledge, and the desire to be revenged upon Lovell, made Berkeley bitterly determined to ruin the young professional.

Berkeley's head was throbbing from the blow Lovell had given him. But he was cool and collected now, and savagely determined.

"I'm telling you the truth!" he repeated. "Lovell is a forger!"

"Impossible!"

"He is being hunted by the Melbourne police!"

"I did not know he was ever in Australia."

"He was a professional bowler there two years ago."

Lord Conway could only stare.

"He is a Surrey man," he said at last.

"So he has led you to believe!"

"But—"

"He went under the name of Luttrell in Australia," said Berkeley. "I saw him when I was playing out in the Colonies, and for a long time I've thought I'd seen him before. It occurred to me all of a sudden just now, and I taxed him with it."

"And he—"

"You saw for yourself."

Lord Conway was silent.

"He struck me," said Berkeley. "I will not soil my hands on the scoundrel; but you can't keep him in the team, Conway."

"Well, look here, Berkeley! If you accused a chap of a thing like that, it's not surprising that he should hit out," said Lord Conway bluntly, "and he's more likely to do it if he's innocent than if he's guilty."

Berkeley bit his lip.

"Does that mean that you do not believe me?" he exclaimed.



"You—you dare to refuse to drop out of the house team!" hissed Berkeley. "You forger—you—you beggarly hound!!" "This is my reply to that!" exclaimed Lovell. His fist lashed out, and Berkeley staggered back from the blow and rolled in the grass.

"Of course not! I take your word; but I shall want proof before I believe that you're not mistaken," said Lord Conway. "What proof have you?"

"I know the man."

"Yet for some days you've been thrown with him continually, and did not recognise him?"

"I was puzzled at first, but I am sure now."

"You are quite certain there is no mistake?"

"Quite!"

"It might be a resemblance——"

"Not at all!"

"Did Lovell admit anything?"

"Was he likely to?"

"I suppose not. But, frankly, Berkeley, I can't believe this! I respect Lovell—I've seen a lot of him, and I've found him a decent chap. I simply can't believe that you're right! There must be some ghastly mistake."

Berkeley breathed hard.

"Let him explain it, then," he said. "I only ask to be allowed to accuse him face to face, and then if he has anything to say, let him say it."

Lord Conway nodded.

"Well, that's only fair," he remarked.

"If he's a criminal, you will not play him for the rest of the match?" Berkeley exclaimed.

"Of course not! It would be impossible! But it's most unfortunate. As a matter of fact, the Gipsies will lick us if Lovell drops out. You must have seen that he's the backbone of the team."

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"I should be very sorry for that, but I'd rather lose a match than win with the assistance of a member of the criminal classes!" he said. "You couldn't in common decency allow such a man to handle a bat here!"

Lord Conway frowned.

"I hope I don't need instructing in what to do if this is true!" he said. "But, to be frank, Berkeley, I can't help saying that you dislike the chap, and most of us have noticed it, and I think very likely that has prejudiced you. I want this proved before I believe it, in common fairness to Lovell."

"His name isn't Lovell, it's Luttrell, and I don't think he'll venture to deny it," said Berkeley. "Anyway, let's see!"

"Come on, then!"

They walked away towards the cricket ground, the direction Lovell had taken.

The young professional was there.

He was standing alone under a big tree beside the ground.

The gloom on his brow was so evident that Lord Conway felt a chill. What was the matter with Lovell—unless there were truth in what Berkeley alleged?

"Lovell," said the viscount, a little sharply.

Lovell started.

He looked up quickly, and the colour came into his face.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"I want to speak to you. Mr. Berkeley has just told me a most extraordinary thing."

"Yes?"

"If it is true you cannot remain in my team, or in cricket at all so far as England is concerned," said Lord Conway gravely. "I hope it is not true, however."

"Yes."

"Mr. Berkeley thinks he recognises you as a man he saw playing under the name of Luttrell in Melbourne some time ago?"

"Yes?"

"This man Luttrell was a criminal."

"Yes?"

"Well, have you anything to say?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Deny that you are the man, if it isn't true," said Lord Conway sharply.

Lovell gave a slight shrug.

"My name is Lovell," he said.

"Your real name?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been known as Luttrell?"

"Never."

"You are not—not——" Lord Conway hesitated.

Lovell smiled bitterly.

"No," he said. "I am not a criminal. I am not wanted by the police. Mr. Berkeley has made a mistake."

Lord Conway heaved a sigh of relief.

"You hear that, Berkeley?" he said.

"Yes, I hear it," said Berkeley derisively; "but I don't believe a word of it."

Lovell's eyes glinted.

"Mr. Berkeley accuses me of being a fugitive from justice," he said. "Has he told you that he asked me to

became a criminal here—that he asked me to sell the match we are playing, and to the Gipsies?"

"What!"

"It's a lie," said Berkeley.

"He had concluded that I was the man he supposed me to be," said Lovell quietly. "He threatened me with exposure if I did not give the match away."

"Liar!"

"Impossible!" said Lord Conway, looking from one to the other in dismay and amazement. "You cannot expect me to believe that, Lovell."

"It is true."

"Why should Berkeley wish his own side to lose?"

"He has his reasons, I have no doubt. Perhaps his friends, the bookmakers, could explain to you."

"This is infamous, Lovell! I could not possibly believe anything of the sort," said Lord Conway angrily. "This absurd accusation against Mr. Berkeley makes me more inclined to believe the charge against you."

"I have told you because it is the truth," said Lovell quietly. "I am ready to leave the team at any moment you please."

"Unless you are guilty I don't want you to go. Mr. Berkeley has not proved his accusation yet, and—"

SOME HOPES!



Passenger: "Shall I catch the ten-ten train?"

Porter: "You might, sir—it's only got two minutes start!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Laughlin, 24, St. Jude's Avenue, Ormeau Road, Belfast.

"I will prove it," said Berkeley, between his teeth. "After what he has said about me, I will have no mercy on him. Call the boy, Harry Noble—the boy they call Kangaroo."

"What does he know about it?"

"He recognised Lovell, too."

"But—"

"Call him."

"Oh, very well!"

Kangaroo was standing at some distance, chatting with Tom Merry.

Lord Conway called to him, and the Australian came up wondering.

"Do you want me?" he said.

"Yes," said Berkeley. "We want your evidence, Noble. Had you ever seen Lovell before you came to Eastwood?"

Harry Noble closed his lips, and looked inquiringly at Lord Conway. He did not mean to let Berkeley extract a word from him against Lovell.

"Please speak, Noble," said Conway, with a worried look. "This is an important matter, and we want to get at the facts."

"Speak out!" said Lovell quietly.

"Very well," said Kangaroo. "When I met Lovell here I thought I had seen him before."

"In Australia?" said Berkeley.

"Yes."

"Under another name?"

"The fellow I took to be him had another name, and then I remembered that I knew it couldn't be Mr. Lovell," said Kangaroo.

"Because Lovell assured you so?"

"I would take Mr. Lovell's word against anybody's," said Kangaroo quietly.

"Thank you, Noble!"

"But you thought he was the man you had seen bowling at Melbourne at first?" asked Lord Conway.

"Yes."

"From a resemblance?"

"Yes; they were wonderfully alike."

"And anything else?"

"They had the same delivery in bowling," said Kangaroo. "Mr. Lovell is not a common bowler, and it struck me."

"But you are assured now that you were mistaken?"

"Yes."

"Only on Lovell's word," said Berkeley.

"Mr. Lovell's word is good enough for me," said Kangaroo, with a flash in his eyes.

"Thank you!" said Lord Conway. "That's enough, Noble."

Kangaroo nodded, and walked back to his friends. "Well, is that pretty clear?" said Berkeley, with a curl.

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of the lip. "I suppose you don't imagine that Noble was deceived by a chance resemblance as well as myself?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"I have told you all I have to tell you, sir," said Lovell, taking no notice of Berkeley, and looking directly at the viscount. "If you wish me to leave the team, I am willing to do so."

"Where were you the year before last?" asked Lord Conway suddenly. "If you were in England at the time—"

"I was not."

"Were you in Australia?"

"Yes."

"In what part?"

"Melbourne."

"I think that settles it," said Lord Conway quietly. "How soon can you leave Eastwood?"

"In five minutes."

"Take your time, but go."

"Very well."

"And now, Berkeley—"

"Conway!"

It was Lord Eastwood's deep voice.

He had joined them unperceived, and his frowning, stern face made the viscount start as he looked at him.

"Yes, father?" he said.

"Stay, Lovell," said the earl.

Lovell hesitated.

"Stay!"

"Very well, sir."

"You, too, Mr. Berkeley."

"Certainly!" said Berkeley, looking in surprise at the earl, and at Arthur Augustus and Wally, who were with him.

"What is it?" asked Lord Conway.

"A matter that must be settled before the second innings is played," said Lord Eastwood quietly.

CHAPTER 13.

Wally Bears Witness!

BERKELEY gave a start. He had no idea of what Wally had heard in the summer-house, but the tone and look of Lord Eastwood struck him with a vague uneasiness.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Berkeley," said the earl. "May I ask if you were in the summer-house in the garden a short time ago, Mr. Berkeley?"

Berkeley turned pale.

"Or, rather, I should not put the question in that form," said Lord Eastwood. "I do not wish to entrap you. I know that you were there."

"I—I—"

"You met Banks, the bookmaker, there."

"What!"

"Do you deny it?"

Berkeley drew a deep breath.

He knew now that he must have been seen in the summer-house at the same time as the bookmaker, but that he had been overheard also he could not guess. He realised that he would have to tread warily.

"I was certainly there," he said. "I really do not see the drift of your remarks, Lord Eastwood. Am I to be called to account for my actions here? I strolled into the summer-house for a smoke. Banks was there."

"I had better speak out plainly," said Lord Eastwood. "My youngest son has left school without permission, to come down here for the cricket week. He hid in the summer-house till Arthur should meet him, intending that Arthur should arrange to make his peace with me. While he was hidden there he heard a certain conversation between you and Mr. Banks, the bookmaker."

Berkeley almost staggered.

That Lord Eastwood was in possession of the whole facts was clear to him at once, as if by a lightning flash.

His brain swam for the moment.

Ruin—black ruin and disgrace—seemed to overwhelm him.

Lord Eastwood's eyes were fixed upon him accusingly.

"You arranged with Mr. Banks to prevent Lovell from playing in the remainder of the match, in order that the Gipsies might win, your reason being that bets were pending on the result, Mr. Berkeley."

"I—I—"

With all his nerve, Berkeley could not immediately recover himself, or think of a plausible falsehood.

He stood unsteadily, his face deadly white.

"Have you any denial to make, Mr. Berkeley?"

"Yes, yes!" muttered the amateur hoarsely. "It's not true!"

"You accuse my son of having invented the story?"

Berkeley almost groaned.

What was the use of accusing Wally of anything of the sort? The story was one which could not have been invented by the fag. Wally had come there fresh from school, without even knowing that Lovell and Berkeley were there, or knowing anything about them.

His story was true on the face of it, even if Lord Eastwood had not known that his youngest son, scamp as he was, was incapable of falsehood.

"It is true," said Lord Conway.

"It's a lie!" muttered Berkeley. "The boy's mad—mad! I met Banks there, but—but we talked of nothing of the sort."

"It's too late for that," said Conway. "It agrees only too well with what Lovell has just told me, that you tried to prevent him from playing in the rest of the match."

Berkeley groaned.

Everything fitted together so well against him, that there was hardly a loophole left through which he could have hoped to crawl, if he had been in possession of all his keenness. And he was not himself now. He was utterly dismayed and thrown off his balance by the sudden turn of affairs.

And there was no mercy in the faces before him.

The baseness he had been guilty of was too black.

A cricketer who would sell his side, a villain who would threaten another player into betraying a match, was too base for pardon.

"Well?" said Lord Eastwood.

"It's a lie!" said Berkeley. "The boy's fallen asleep there and dreamed it. There's not a word of truth in it. Will you take the word of a young cad who confesses himself to be an eavesdropper?"

"Bai Jove—" began Arthur Augustus.

But Wally interrupted him.

"I didn't mean to listen," he explained. "I was hiding there, and you came in and talked, and how could I help it?"

"It's a plot," said Berkeley. "I—I—"

"You rotter!" said Wally forcibly. "You know jolly well that it's true enough. You know you arranged with Banks to sell the match!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Berkeley was almost gasping for breath.

"I'm sorry, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I can see now that it was all false. Berkeley used your resemblance to the Melbourne bowler as a trick to get rid of you. You won't leave the team? I take back what I said."

Lovell nodded.

"It's as you wish, sir," he said.

"Then you'll play?"

"Very good."

Berkeley's eyes blazed.

"Then you are going to play him!" he exclaimed.

"You are going to play that man—that forger—that criminal?"

"Hold your tongue!"

Berkeley panted.

"I have been insulted here!" he exclaimed. "I am no longer a guest of yours, Lord Eastwood. I will go—"

"You will certainly go!" said Lord Eastwood.

"But that scoundrel has not heard the last of this," said Berkeley passionately, pointing at Lovell with a shaking finger. "I shall go directly to Scotland Yard. In two hours' time there will be a detective here, and if Lovell is gone you will be held responsible for his escape."

Lovell's lip curled.

"Is there anything in this?" asked Lord Eastwood.

"I am sure there is not," said Conway. "It is false; Lovell is true blue. I won't hear another word against him. As for you, Berkeley, the sooner you get out of the place the better. And don't trouble to recognise me in future."

Berkeley ground his teeth.

"I will go," he said. "Look for the police, that's all."

And he strode away.

Raby came striding over the cricket ground.

"I say, they're waiting to begin the innings!" he exclaimed. "Hallo, what's wrong? Anything the matter?"

"Yes; Berkeley's not playing any further," said Lord Conway abruptly.

"Why?"

"He's leaving Eastwood."

"Phew!"

"It's—it's important," said Lord Conway. "Tell Yorke, will you, and ask him about our playing a substitute for the rest of the match. I'll join you in a minute."

"Right-ho!" said Raby.

And he walked away, looking astonished.

Berkeley looked back once, and then disappeared into

the house. A quarter of an hour later he was driving furiously to the station.

Lord Conway held out his hand to Lovell.

The professional started a little, and then grasped it.

"You are playing, Lovell?" said Conway.

"Certainly!"

"Then come on!"

And they went to the ground, where the other cricketers were awaiting them impatiently. Lord Eastwood looked at Wally.

The scamp of the Third stood silent.

"You young rascal!" said Lord Eastwood. "So you have bolted from school?"

"Not exactly bolted, dad," said Wally meekly. "I've left."

"Without permission?"

"I tried to get permission."

"And it was refused?"

"Yes."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Well, your arrival here has been so fortunate that I don't think I shall punish you as you deserve," he said. "I ought to send you directly back to St. Jim's to be caned for your impudence in running away. But—"

"But you won't, dad?"

"No, I won't. I'll try to excuse you to Dr. Holmes, and—you can stay here till I hear from him, at all events."

"Hurrah!" yelled Wally.

And Lord Eastwood followed Conway. Wally performed an impromptu dance, Arthur Augustus looking on in rather a shocked way.

"Pway don't be so extremewly obstwepewous, Wally," he said. "I wégard it as wathah bad form."

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus."

"Weally, Wally!"

"It's ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

"I knew I should fix it somehow," said Wally cheerfully.

"Won't Jameson and Curly be sold-for not coming—hey?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Let's go and see the cricket, Gus. Can't stand here listening to you all day."

"Why, you've been doin' all the talkin', and—"

"Oh, cheese it, and come on!"

And Wally scudded off to join the juniors of St. Jim's, who were grouped round Cousin Ethel, and Arthur Augustus followed more slowly, with a more circumspect regard for his dignity.

CHAPTER 14.

Cleared Up!

THE home innings had started now, and Tom Merry & Co. were looking on with great interest. Lovell was not so great a batsman as he was a bowler, and the substitute played in the place of Berkeley was a poor bat. The home side, therefore, could not be expected to make a very great show. But they were quite sure of beating the score made by the Gipsies—and they did!

The innings lasted till dusk was beginning to fall, and the light was failing, and the batting would have had to cease, anyway, for the day, when the last wicket fell.

Eastwood House were all down for 100

But the lead they had gained over the Gipsies would not have been so much but for Lovell's bowling.

Lord Conway knew that, and he knew how much he owed the young professional.

The first day's play was over now, and it had ended greatly to the advantage of the home team. With Lovell
(Continued on the next page.)



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at his best, Lord Conway had little doubt that the second day's play would have a similar result.

The cricketers were in high spirits.

The St. Jim's juniors shared their satisfaction.

As Blake remarked, it was a satisfaction to know that they had beaten a team which could beat the Gipsies.

Lovell was made very much of by Lord Conway, but most of the fellows knew that there had been something up, and that it was in connection with Berkeley's departure.

Of the real reason for Berkeley's going nothing was said. It was best to keep the whole matter quiet, unless, indeed, Berkeley carried out his threat of bringing the police to wreak his spite against Lovell.

That was regarded, so far, as an idle threat.

Lord Conway did not think that Berkeley himself really believed in his accusation against the young bowler.

But he was to learn differently. Tom Merry had noticed a stranger on the ground, amongst the crowd, watching the final innings.

Lovell was last man in, and when his wicket fell the innings closed, and the stranger who was watching followed the handsome young professional with his eyes.

Several of the juniors had remarked the interest that the quietly dressed, keen-eyed stranger took in the professional.

As Lovell walked off the ground with Lord Conway, the stranger approached them, taking off his bowler hat in a respectful way.

Lord Conway looked at him inquiringly.

"Excuse me, sir," said the newcomer. "You are Lord Conway, I think."

"Yes."

"And this is Mr. Lovell, the professional cricketer?"

"Yes."

"Then my business is with you."

Lord Conway looked surprised.

"What business can you have with me?" he said. "I am not aware that I have ever met you before."

The other smiled.

"You have not," he said. "Your business has not lain in the direction of Scotland Yard, I presume."

The viscount started.

"Scotland Yard!"

"Yes. I am Inspector Blaine."

"Oh!"

Lovell looked at him hard.

"Your business is with me?" he said.

The inspector nodded.

"Exactly. We have received some very curious information, and I have come down here to examine into the matter, to see whether there is anything in it. My own impression was that a mistake had been made, but it was my duty to ascertain the truth. Will you kindly step into some place where we can talk in private."

"Come into my rooms," said Lord Conway shortly.

He led the bowler and the detective into his own quarters. He closed the door.

"Now," he said, "I suppose this means that you have received a visit from Mr. Cecil Berkeley?"

"That is the case."

"He has accused Lovell of being a man named Luttrell, who was accused of forgery in Melbourne two years ago?"

"Exactly."

"Well, it is false; he made the accusation here, and we treated it with the contempt it deserved," said Lord Conway hotly.

The detective coughed.

"I am afraid it is a matter for proofs," he remarked. "Mr. Berkeley's statement seemed to me absurd, I admit, but on finding the photograph of the forger, Luttrell, I found that it was exactly like a picture of Mr. Lovell published in a sporting paper. I, therefore, resolved to investigate the matter."

"Quite right," said Lovell.

"I am willing to hear any explanation Mr. Lovell has to make."

Lovell hesitated.

"It is a matter that concerns myself alone," he said. "But, as you are an officer of the law, you are entitled to know the truth. If I succeeded in satisfying you of my innocence, however, I suppose the matter will not go further?"

"Naturally."

"Very well. I have never been known by the name of Luttrell, and I am not the man Mr. Berkeley supposed me to be."

"I was sure of that," said Lord Conway.

"Thank you; but I was in Melbourne at the time Luttrell was playing for an Australian club, and I knew him well. My name is not really Luttrell, as Mr. Berkeley supposed, but Luttrell's real name was Lovell."

"Oh!"

"He was my brother."

"Oh, I see!"

"He was—was unfortunate," said Lovell, colouring. "I

may as well speak plainly. He got into trouble in England, and changed his name on going to Australia. We were both born cricketers, and he took it up there. I went out to see him and to satisfy myself that he was on the right road. I came in time to find him in fresh trouble, and while I was there he fled from Melbourne, with the police on his track. I left the place quietly, and, as you may guess, I have never mentioned the relationship to anyone."

The detective nodded.

"The resemblance, both in looks and style of play, was natural enough," said Lovell; "but you understand that it would do me no good professionally to have it known that the man who committed forgery in Melbourne two years ago was a relation of mine. Goodness knows I could not help it, and poor Frank was the victim of a set of scoundrels who made him their tool and their scapegoat. He has paid for what he did, but I did not feel inclined to explain any of the circumstances to Mr. Berkeley. It was no business of his, as far as I could see."

"Quite so," said Inspector Blaine slowly; "but, excuse me, have you any proof that you can give, that this brother of yours really exists?"

"Ample! If you communicate with the Melbourne police, you will find that Luttrell was arrested three months after his flight, in Ballarat, and was sentenced to prison for two years," said Lovell. "They will tell you also that he is still serving his sentence."

The inspector smiled.

"It will mean only a cable," he said. "I shall certainly do so; and I may as well say now that it is only a matter of form, and that I believe every word you have said, sir. If Mr. Berkeley had thought of inquiring in Melbourne, it would have saved us some trouble. Pray excuse me for having troubled you."

"Not at all; it was your duty."

And the inspector took his leave.

"I am sorry for this, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I quite understand that you wished a matter like that to be kept secret, and it was shameful of Berkeley to drag it into the light; but you can depend upon my silence."

Lovell looked at him.

"Do you want me to play in the team now?" he said.

"Of course."

"I am not a criminal, as Berkeley supposed, but I am the brother of a criminal," said Lovell gloomily.

"That is nothing to me. I know you are as straight as a man could be, and that's all I want to know," said the viscount. "There's my hand!"

And Lovell's eyes were moist as he grasped the hand of Lord Conway. His step was much lighter as he quitted the room.

The next day came the finish of the Eastwood match.

Lovell had never bowled so well as he did against the Gipsies in their second innings, and they were dismissed for 60, a smaller total than they had made on the first day of the match.

When the home side batted again, they did so with a full confidence of victory, a confidence that was not misplaced.

They won hands down, with seven wickets to spare.

Tom Merry & Co. cheered uproariously as the winning run was scored.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's simply wippin'! Conway, deah boy, I cougwatulate you!"

Lord Conway grinned.

"Thanks, Gussy!" he said. "It's pretty good, isn't it, considering the way you fellows licked us."

"Yaas wathah," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

And the juniors roared.

That day Lord Conway heard news of Berkeley, too—he had left the country in haste, and Mr. Banks and a dozen other creditors were raging over it. But they raged in vain. Cecil Berkeley was gone for good, and county cricket knew him no more.

The St. Jim's juniors enjoyed their cricket week keenly enough; but undoubtedly the fellow who had the best time was Wally.

Lord Conway and his father knew that but for Wally's coming Lovell would have left Eastwood in disgrace, and the match would have been lost; and they made much of him.

Lord Eastwood used his influence to make the scamp's peace at St. Jim's, and succeeded, and Wally stayed as long as Tom Merry & Co. did.

(Another sparkling long complete yarn of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday. Look out for "THE RIVER RAGGERS!"—but don't forget to order your copy early).

HANDFORTH UNMASKS THE LEADER OF THE BLACK RIDERS! BIG SENSATION

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 Glenethorne. He discovers that a band of mysterious horsemen known as the Black Riders are terrorising Ghost River Valley, in which his ranch lies. After the St. Frank's chums have had several adventures against the Black Riders, Nelson Lee, the famous schoolmaster detective, appears on the scene. He forms a band of White Riders to fight the enemy, and the Black Riders begin to get rattled. Diamond Eye, their mystery leader, plans a big attack on Farman's Ranch.

Diamond Eye's Desperate Bid!

THE cavern, fairly small in size, with a low roof, was almost completely filled with hard-faced, desperate-looking men. In various places lurid torches were flaring, giving the whole scene a fantastic look.

Some of the men had guns attached to their leather belts; others wore their guns in special holsters, strapped under their armpits in true gangster style. No man was wearing a mask—for Diamond Eye, after his recent experience with the six supposed Black Riders, was taking no chances.

"Waal, boys, we're up against it!"

Diamond Eye himself, clothed entirely in black, with that chromium "eye" of his gleaming in the lurid torchlight, stood facing the desperadoes. Not one of those men knew his real identity. It was a secret he had always rigidly kept.

"You said something, chief!" growled one of the men. "Guess it's gettin' mighty near time for us to quit."

"Oh, yeah?" sneered Diamond Eye, his voice full of rasping menace. "You'll quit when I give the say-so, and not before. Our racket is easy, and we're not gonna throw it up because a bunch of English schoolkids get fresh and fancy themselves as bandit hunters. I'll allow them kids has given us a heap o' trouble. That's why we're going out right now to get the whole bunch."

"Tain't only the kids, chief," said one of the men. "Big Jim Farman and his cowboys are tough meat. Then ther's Jake Liskard, and six of our own boys. Double-crossed us, didn't they? They come right in here and grabbed the two kids we'd already got."

"Say, who's doing the talking here?" demanded Diamond Eye harshly. "I ain't satisfied that them Black Riders who broke in here was our own boys. We was tricked. But

there's no harm done; we've blocked up the Red Rock Gully entrance, and folks in Fortune City think that the White Riders hoaxed them."

"Glad you mentioned the White Riders, chief," came a voice from the ranks. "It's them galoots we're really up against now."

"Sure!" said Diamond Eye grimly. "But tell me this: Who are the White Riders?"

"Nobody don't know, chief."

"No? Waal, I guess I know," retorted Diamond Eye. "Them ranch boys of Big Jim Farman's, and the English schoolkids—they're the White Riders. Mebbe that English detective guy, Lee, is at the back of them."

"It don't sound likely, chief," said one of the men. "Any-way, where's the proof?"

"We're going after it—right now," replied Diamond Eye.

"Gosh, ain't it dead plain? We've got every man in Fortune City watched; we've got every pass out of this valley guarded. 'Tain't possible that any strangers could have got in. There's only one bunch which could be the White Riders—and that's the bunch at the Double Z Ranch."

It was, indeed, a simple deduction—and Diamond Eye, shrewd, quick-thinking man, had arrived at the only possible conclusion. True, he had no proof—but he was satisfied in his own mind. Therefore, there was only one thing to be done.

"Boys," he went on, "this time we've gotta make no mistake. We're going after that Double Z crowd—and we're gonna get 'em! Big Jim Farman, the English kids, Square-Deal Reeve, and the hull bunch. It's gonna be a clean sweep. With them skunks right here under our eye, we can carry on as we did before. And I guess there'll be no more White Riders gallopin' through town."

One of the bandits, a huge, aggressive-looking man, pushed his way forward. He went right up to Diamond Eye's handsome desk and stared across at that glimmering chromium eye on the other side.

"Mebbe you're right at that, chief!" he said harshly. "Mebbe the ranch bunch is the White Riders. And if we grab 'em, the folks in Fortune City will be skeered yellow. But it ain't gonna be easy."

There was a murmur from the other bandits.

"So you want things easy, do you?" sneered Diamond Eye.

"Gee, chief, hold your hosses!" urged the big man. "Tain't that we're getting skeered. But the thing you're

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handin' out is a mighty tough proposition. Ain't we had enough trouble with the Double Z outfit?"

"Too much trouble," agreed Diamond Eye. "That's why we're going out to get that bunch."

"But, chief, it can't be done," said the other. "Why, the Double Z ranch-house is just like a fortress!"

"So what?"

"Aw, chief, can't you figger it out for yourself?" almost shouted the man. "Big Jim Farman and his boys have got things fixed. Rifles—machine-guns—even gas-bombs. If there was five hundred of us we couldn't make that crowd surrender. And after what's just happened, you can bet your last dollar that Big Jim will hev the ranch-house guarded like nobody's business!"

Again there was a murmur of approval from the rest.

"Listen, boys, I know what I'm doing," said Diamond Eye. "Sure, the Double Z bunch is ready for trouble—and when we get around there'll be plenty of it. But we're gonna make one big swoop, and we'll succeed. There's no sense in wastin' time. It's open warfare now, and we're going out to get what we want. The last time we tried a hold-up there was only a dozen of you boys on the job. This time we're all goin'—and I'll be ridin' with you."

"That's sure good to know, chief," said the big man. "But it still don't seem good—"

"You make me tired!" interrupted Diamond Eye harshly. "Beat it out of here, you yeller toad! Scram!"

"Say, chief—"

"I know what I'm doin'—and when I ride out to the Double Z Ranch, I ride on a certainty," said Diamond Eye, his voice full of grim authority. "Listen, you lily-livered quitters, and I'll tell you something!"

And those desperate men, hardened criminals all, almost trembled in their shoes as their unknown chief gave them the length of his tongue. When he had finished there were no further protests. He had succeeded in imbuing them with complete confidence.

"Now scram!" concluded Diamond Eye. "Get into your Black Riders outfits and make it snappy!"

"Do we ride out before dark, chief?"

"Sure! We ride out pronto!"

Without another word, Diamond Eye passed through a rock door of the cavern and made his way along a tunnel—one of the old mine workings which honeycombed the hills like catacombs. Presently, Diamond Eye passed through another rock doorway, and now he found himself within a natural cavern which was filled with subdued daylight. Overhead, far above, there was a slit in the rocks, and the slanting rays of the setting sun were admitted. The cavern was filled with a golden light.

And there, on the rock floor, stood a remarkable object. It was a surprising thing to find within such a cavern—in short, an ultra-modern scouting aeroplane! It was a glorious little machine, trim and fast-looking.

"So she's all set, huh?" said Diamond Eye, his voice full of contentment.

From an alcove on the other side of the cavern, a young man appeared. He was Captain Merton, the air pilot who had been seized by Diamond Eye's gang some weeks earlier. "You come and go like shadows," he complained. "What is it this time?"

"Boy, you've done a good job!" said Diamond Eye. "She's all set, is she?"

"Tanks filled, engine tested, and roarin' to go," replied Merton, with a nod. "Not that she's likely to go any place. Are you reckoning to take her through that slit in the roof?"

Diamond Eye chuckled.

"Ferget it, boy!" he replied. "When I want to take this ship out, I'll take her. Yeah, and you'll be the pilot; so if you've done any monkeying, you'll sure be in a bad spot. Mebbe, if things don't go right, I'll be needin' the ship mighty soon."

"You've got her ready—so that you can make a quick getaway, in case of trouble, eh?" asked the airman. "I figured it was that way."

"Waal, as things look now, I won't be needin' her," said Diamond Eye. "But I guess it's just as well to be on the safe side. Waal, I guess you can take things easy now, boy. I'll be seein' you."

He vanished into the deep shadows, just as he had come; and although Captain Merton leapt across the rock floor as fast as his legs would carry him, when he arrived amid the shadows, he found nothing. Diamond Eye had gone—and there was no opening in the rock wall. Search as he might, Merton had never been able to discover the hidden door, so cunningly was it concealed.

Meanwhile, Diamond Eye himself walked through the tunnels. He arrived at last at an exit which led him into a frowning canyon, where the rock walls rose steeply on

either side. In fact, this was Ghost Pass, one of the few exits of Ghost River Valley. This pass, and every other pass, was watched and guarded by Diamond Eye's men.

A large number of horsemen stood ready. The Black Riders! For this big raid, Diamond Eye had gathered all his forces, and the party numbered between forty and fifty.

"All set, boys?" he asked. "Good! Let's go!"

He walked clumsily forward with his limping gait, and a moment later he was in the saddle. Then, at the head of his men, he rode hard down Ghost Pass.

Old Mesa Matt, the lone prospector, lowered his binoculars. He was perched in a rocky eyrie, some hundreds of feet up. Mesa Matt had been in the hills for years; he was a hermit, and was a staunch believer in the policy of minding his own business. Thus, the Black Riders had never troubled him, and he was more or less free to go anywhere he pleased in the hills.

"Looks like action," muttered Mesa Matt—alias Nelson Lee.

For the great detective had resumed his impersonation, and he had been carefully on the watch. He had seen many suggestive things. By taking the character of Mesa Matt he had rendered himself safe; moreover, he had been able to do his scouting without arousing the slightest suspicion. Had he come into the valley as a stranger, Diamond Eye's men would have regarded him with suspicion.

Nelson Lee had given himself no rest; he knew that things were working up to a big climax. At any hour now the bombshell might burst. And now, seeing the Black Riders go forth in such force, he knew that something big was in the wind. So Nelson Lee lost no time. He knew that the big moment had come.

With the agility of a mountain goat, he descended the rocks, and in Whispering Canyon he went to the tumbledown old shack which had been Mesa Matt's home for years. It was of Diamond Eye's men had seen him they would have thought nothing, for old "Mad Matt" had always been prowling about the hills on his everlasting search for gold.

Within the shack, Lee acted without hesitation. He opened a disreputable trunk, and from the trunk he took a square, leather-covered object which looked something like a portable gramophone. But when he opened the lid, strange-looking valves were visible, and soon they were glowing. Lee secured some headphones, and he turned switches and adjusted tuning-knobs.

For that little case, so small, so portable, was in reality a short-wave transmitting set.

"This is Lee calling," said the detective, speaking in a low, distinct voice. "This is Lee calling. Are you listening, Colonel Grant?"

He turned switches again, so that he could listen-in.

"O.K., Mr. Lee," came a clear voice in the earphones. "We get you."

Lee switched over.

"You'll be needed to-night," he said. "Things are moving fast now. Are you all ready?"

"Waiting for the word from you," came the reply.

"Good!" said Nelson Lee, his voice full of quiet confidence. "You know exactly what to do, colonel. Get busy!"

Thus, by the use of modern equipment, Nelson Lee was in direct communication with the world outside Ghost River Valley—and there was not the slightest doubt that the night was to bring a welter of drama and excitement.

The Hold-up at the Ranch-house!

"WELL, if there's any trouble, we're ready," said Nipper contentedly.

"Think there'll be any real excitement?" asked Handforth. "By George! We had plenty last night, didn't we?"

"Mustn't expect too much, old man," said Nipper. "My guy'nor has been pretty busy of late, and we must leave everything to him. I'd like to know what he's doing at this minute!"

The schoolboys were lounging on the veranda of the log-built ranch-house. The sun had just set, and everything was quiet and peaceful at the Double Z outfit. It would soon be time for supper—and then another night would be upon the boys.

It was a source of great satisfaction that the party was intact once more. With the return of Nipper and Willy, everything seemed as it should be. The boys had heard during the day that the sheriff's posse and the Fortune City Vigilantes had met with failure in Red Rock Gully. Well, it was one up to Diamond Eye. He had taken prompt measure and had averted disaster.

"Ready for trouble, boys?" asked Big Jim Farman, as he came out.

"Ready for anything, sir!" replied Nipper, indicating the

businesslike-looking rifles which stood propped against the veranda rail. "Think we're going to have a busy night?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," replied the millionaire rancher, becoming serious. "To tell you the truth, I've been expecting trouble all day. Last night we issued a challenge to Diamond Eye, more or less—and he's not the kind of man to let any grass grow under his feet."

"But Diamond Eye has no proof that we're the White Riders, dad," said Justin.

"Maybe not; but he's no fool, and he'll put two and two together," replied Big Jim. "I'll be mighty glad when the night's over; and I'm not sure that Mr. Lee was right when he advised me to dispense with the Vigilantes. We could sure do with some of the boys around now."

"If the gov'nor said it, sir, it was right," declared Nipper stoutly. "He's playing a big game on his own—and when the right time comes he'll let us in. I believe he means to rescue all those unfortunate men in the hills—in the underground caverns."

"Some of my own boys are there—Slick Ed, Twirley Sam, and two or three more," said Mr. Farman grimly. "Chained, aren't they? Forced to work long hours, 'washing' for

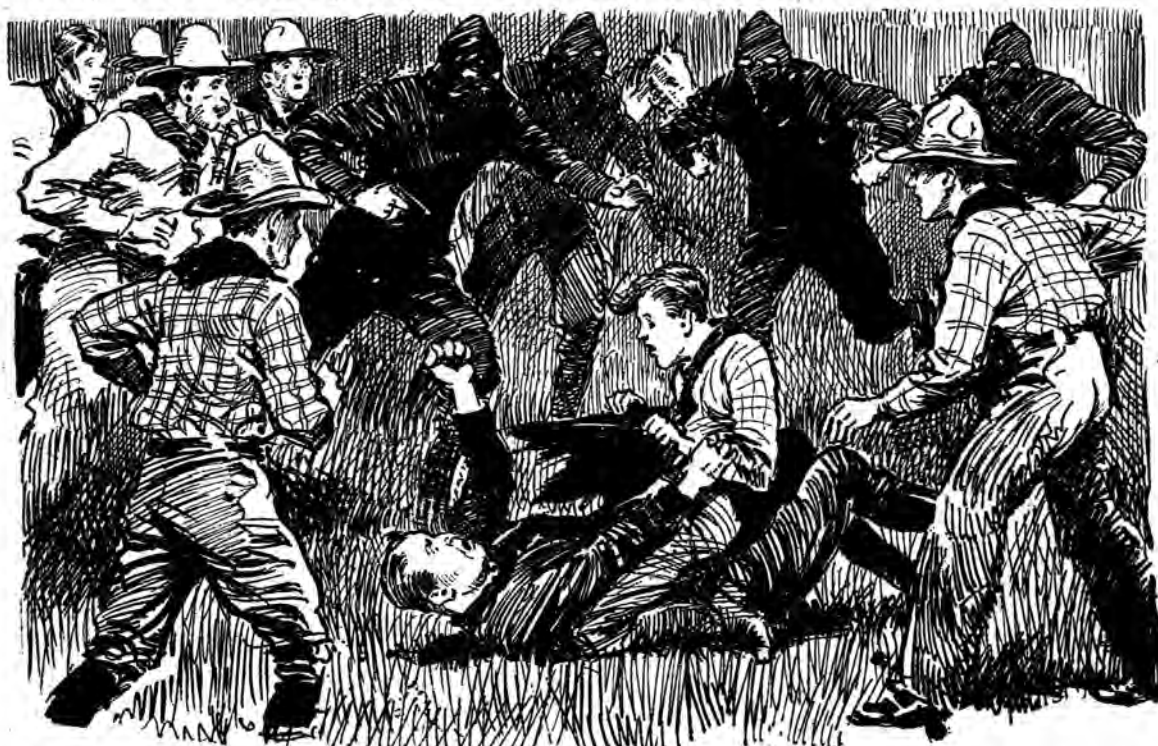
Light-heartedly, the schoolboys hurried to their posts; for they had a sense of absolute security. Such precautionary measures had been taken that they were afraid of no raiding gunmen.

The boys remained on the lower floor. The doors were slammed and locked, and great staves of wood, specially prepared, were thrust into place. Every window, too, had been fitted with enormous shutters, and these were closed and secured. The shutters themselves were made of big logs, and there were tiny loopholes, through which the boys thrust their rifle barrels.

On the upper floor it was just the same. Big Jim Farman led the way, and Square-Deal Reeve and the cowboys went to their places. Every window was barricaded—and from the upper windows the wicked muzzles of machine-guns were thrust forth.

And out of the gathering dusk swept the raiding Black Riders.

They came in two bodies—one charging at the front of the ranch-house, and the other at the rear. They came galloping on, and desperate as those men were, they must have had doubts when they came to close quarters.



"Drag him off, you fools!" screamed Diamond Eye. "By George!" bellowed Handforth, "I'll drag something off!" He seized the mystery man's cowl and gave a terrific wrench. The next moment there was a tearing of cloth, and the cowl came away. The face of Diamond Eye was revealed—and it was the face of Dirk Dixon, the sheriff of Fortune City!

gold. Gee! What a racket! For years past, folks have said that these hills were worked right out. Yet this Diamond Eye skunk gets busy with kidnapped men—"

"One of the boys riding in, dad," interrupted Justin, staring out across the valley. "Gee, he's sure burning up the trail, too!"

They all saw the cowboy as he came galloping in, and when, at length, he flung himself from his hard-riden horse, he proved to be Two-Gun Milligan. Square-Deal Reeve, the ranch foreman, had hurried out to meet him.

"Kind of in a hurry, ain't you, Two-Gun?" asked Reeve.

"Heck! What's the boss?" croaked the perspiring, dust-begrimed cowboy.

"Right here," said Square-Deal.

"Boss! You'll need help!" shouted Two-Gun, running up to the ranch-house. "The Black Riders are coming!"

"What!"

It was a shout of excitement from the schoolboys.

"Sure thing, kids!" went on the cowboy. "Not a dozen—but over two-score. I seed 'em from the top of Pilot Point, and thought I'd best—"

"To your posts, boys!" interrupted Mr. Farman. "This looks bad."

"You mean, it looks good!" roared Handforth. "By George! Another fight, you chaps—and we can't lose!"

"Hurrah!"

"Who's afraid of the big bad Riders?"

For the ranch-house had a grim, forbidding look. Every window had apparently vanished; nothing could be seen but the stout, impregnable log walls.

Crack-crack-crack! Crack-crack-crack!

As the Black Riders swooped down, they loosed off their guns. They were using the old, time-honoured methods—apparently believing that they would strike terror into the hearts of the defenders. In the old days they had thundered in this way through Fortune City, and by their very methods of terrorism, they had killed all resistance.

But now they were up against something different.

Rat-tat-tat—rat-tat-tat—rat-tat-tat!

With a wicked, devastating roar, machine-guns awoke to action on every side of the ranch-house. A deadly hail of bullets went screaming in the direction of the Black Riders. As yet, however, the attackers were not quite within range; they were galloping round in a complete circle, far-flung—after the fashion of Red Indians attacking pioneer wagon-trains.

As the evil, menacing roar of the machine-guns broke out, so the Black Riders wavered. Their ranks were shattered, and at various points the desperadoes galloped for safety. All in a moment the circle of black-clothed figures was broken, and the horsemen went galloping away, farther out of range.

"Hurrah!"

"They daren't even come near us."

Cheers rang out, and from the upper windows the defenders could see the striking figure of Diamond Eye. The mystery man was trying to get his men into ship-shape order again, and more than once he shook his hand furiously in the direction of the ranch-house.

He was finding that his men had been right. Attacking the Double Z outfit was not child's play!

He acted promptly. Fastening a white handkerchief to a rifle-barrel he rode forward—alone. He made an impressive figure on his coal-black horse as he came riding close in.

"That'll do, you rat!" came Big Jim Farman's stern voice. "If you've got anything to say, say it."

"You folks kind of fancy yourselves, huh?" jeered Diamond Eye. "Barricades, machine-guns, an' everything! Waal, I'm handin' it to you that you're sure game."

"Is that all you came to say?" shouted Mr. Farman.

"Not by a heap!" replied Diamond Eye. "I ain't aimin' to shed blood—leastways, not the blood of school-kids. So I'm advisin' you right now to lay your arms down and surrender."

A roar of defiance answered him.

"No?" went on Diamond Eye. "Waal, that's just too bad! I ain't in any hurry. I'll wait. Guess I don't mind waitin' a week—or two weeks—or a month."

"You desert skunk!" roared Big Jim. "What are you trying to tell me? Do you think you can besiege us?"

"You've sure hit it!" retorted Diamond Eye, with a laugh. "My boys are gonna camp right here—just out of your gun range. If we can't shoot you out, we'll starve you out. Guess you needn't expect any help from the folks in town. They don't know a thing—and they ain't likely to. And if any inquisitive guy comes nose-ying around, waal, he'll sure get what's comin' to him."

At this there was silence. Even the excited schoolboys were given grim food for thought. For they knew that the enemy force was a large one—and if Diamond Eye chose to make camp here, and besiege the ranch-house, the defenders would be in a tight corner. There was food within the ranch-house, but only sufficient to last for a few days. Big Jim was alarmed by the thought, too, that the bandits could cut off the water supplies.

"Think it over, you poor fools," sneered Diamond Eye. "I'll give you an hour—then I'll come back for my answer. But I'm advisin' you right now to walk out and surrender. It'll be a heap more pleasant than waitin'—because we'll sure get you in the end."



Friends In Need!

Greyfriars School is in an uproar, for Billy Bunter, the prize ass of the Remove, is accused of squirting ink over a Form-master, and in consequence he is "booked for the bullet." But Harry Wharton & Co., believing in Bunter's innocence, stand by him loyally. "BACKING UP BUNTER!" is the best school yarn of the week. You'll find it in

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Laughing raucously, he rode back to his men.

Meanwhile, a sweating, dust-begrimed cowboy went tearing at the gallop into Fortune City. He was not one of the Double Z ranch-hands, but he had evidently seen enough. As he thundered down Main Street, he loosed off his guns to attract attention, and men came crowding out of the garishly illuminated saloon, and out of the other buildings.

"Whar's the sheriff?" croaked the cowboy, as he flung himself from his horse.

"Out of town, I guess," said somebody. "What's wrong, cowboy?"

"Plenty!" panted the man. "Black Riders—scores—attacking the Double Z outfit. Gee! I seen 'em with my own eyes—ridin' out o' the dusk. Say, ther's mighty big trouble way back ther at the ranch."

"What's that?" demanded a sharp, decisive voice. "Let me get through!"

Mr. Elmer C. Kyle himself, the vigorous mayor of Fortune City, pushed his way through the throng. His face became grave as he listened to the cowboy's story; and, having heard it, he acted with his usual promptitude.

"It looks mighty bad, folks," he said grimly. "I guess we've got to go to the help of those kids at Big Jim's ranch. I was figuring the Black Riders might act this way, and I'm not surprised any."

"Up, the Vigilantes!" yelled somebody. "Whar's the sheriff and his posse?"

"Never mind the sheriff!" snapped Mr. Kyle. "I'll deal with this thing in my own way. Boys, get busy! Get your horses, and see that your guns are loaded."

He gave rapid-fire orders, and with remarkable speed, the Fortune City Vigilantes made themselves ready. A strong force of between twenty and thirty men, well mounted, gathered in the main thoroughfare.

"Let's go, boys!" said Mr. Kyle briskly. "It's a chance to get these blamed Black Riders! Shucks! Diamond Eye must be going soft, to give us boys a chance like this!"

A man in his shirt-sleeves came running out of the First National Bank.

"Say, Mr. Kyle, you can't go out of town!" he called urgently.

"Who says I can't?" demanded Kyle.

"But say, you're waiting for that long distance call, sir!" urged the man. "It's a mighty big deal, and if you miss the call—"

"Heck! I'd forgotten," said the mayor, frowning. "Well it's a darn nuisance that business should interfere with pleasure! Sorry, boys, I guess you'll have to ride out on this job without me."

"O.K., Mr. Kyle, leave it to us," said one of the Vigilantes.

Without a moment's delay the rescue party was off—grimly armed, determined men. Mr. Kyle watched them go almost resentfully.

"Shucks! I'll let that call go!" he muttered suddenly.

But just then a clerk hurried out with the information that the important call had just come through; so it happened that the mayor was unable to go forth with his valiant band of Vigilantes.

The men rode hard, and complete darkness had long since descended before they came within sight of Ghost River Ranch. They made no attempt to approach stealthily—but came on at full gallop.

The Black Riders had carried out their intention of camping near the ranch-house; and one or two fires had already been lit. The glare of them flickered in the darkness as the Vigilantes thundered to the attack.

Suddenly, at one of the fires, some of the men sprang to attention, and stared out into the darkness.

"Say, chief, ther's hosses comin'!" yelled one of the Black Riders.

Diamond Eye cursed.

"Who in blazes can they be?" he snarled, his hand leaping to his gun.

Then, before the desperadoes could reach their horses, the rescue party came charging into their midst at full tilt.

Crack, crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack!

The air became filled with the vicious reports of the guns; the darkness was stabbed by tiny tongues of flame. In that first volley alone, over a dozen Black Riders fell—some to lie motionless, others to sprawl and writhe and scream. The Vigilantes were men of action—and their aim was true.

From the ranch-house came a great shout.

"Hurrah!"

"It's rescue—we're saved!"

"It's Mr. Kyle and his Vigilantes from Fortune City!"

So complete was the surprise—so totally unexpected the charge of the Vigilantes—that the Black Riders were completely disorganised. Many of them managed to reach their horses and, flinging themselves into the saddles, went



Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

YOUR rough sketch of St. Frank's, Ron Oliver, Truro, is just about right. The West Square is, actually, the inside court separating the West House from the Ancient House—and just the same, of course, on the other side of the Triangle. Bellton and Caistowe are approximately south of the old school. Bannington is east, and Edgmore and Helford lie north-east. Yexford is to the west of St. Frank's.

You're not the only reader, by a long chalk, Bob Fyfe, Greenock, who tells me he would prefer a serial with a school setting. I have been fairly bombarded with letters, of late, in

galloping away. Those who remained returned the Vigilantes' fire, and more than one member of the rescue party went hurtling from his horse. But again the Vigilantes sent in a devastating fire, and the other Black Riders were literally shot to pieces. The ground looked like a battlefield.

"It's O.K., folks," called the leader of the Vigilantes, riding up to the front of the ranch-house.

The heavy doors were unbarred, and Big Jim Farman and the cowboys and the St. Frank's fellows came hurrying out.

"Gosh, we're in your debt, boys!" shouted Mr. Farman. "Forget it, Big Jim," said the Vigilantes' leader. "I guess we've been lucky, that's all. We took the rats by surprise. Looks like you folk sure needed us."

"We certainly did," said Mr. Farman. "The Black Riders could not have beaten us in a straight fight, but they were aiming to besiege the ranch-house, and—"

He broke off, for he noticed that the Vigilantes, still mounted, had made a complete circle round the party which had just come out from the building. And, suddenly, a circle of guns came into view.

"Stick 'em up, Farman!" said the Vigilantes' chief, with a mocking laugh. "Yeah, and all the rest of you, too! We've sure got you good this time!"

The Man Behind the Hood!

THE surprise was complete. Big Jim Farman was staggered, for he had always believed that the Vigilantes were honest, trustworthy men. But there could be no mistaking the ugly nature of the situation.

The guns were pointing with deadly accuracy; and Mr. Farman and his cowboys—and the St. Frank's fellows, too—had never thought to bring any weapons out with them. For they had seen the Black Riders fall dead and injured—they had seen the other Black Riders gallop away.

Now they saw something else. From all sides, the "dead" and "injured" Black Riders came swarming up, guns in hand.

"Good work, boys!" said the harsh voice of Diamond Eye himself. "You timed it well."

"We figured that Kyle would come along at first—but one of our boys fixed things right," said the Vigilantes' leader with a laugh. "So Kyle was left behind. I guess the poor sap is fooled as much as ever."

Big Jim Farman took a deep breath. "You cunning devil!" he shouted. "So you tricked us, did you?"

"Take it easy, brother," said Diamond Eye with a sneer. "Do you think I was such a mug that I'd come here and besiege you for weeks on end? No, sir! I figured this all out—and I reckoned that when the 'rescue party' toted along, you'd rush out without a gun between the lot of you. Say, was I right?"

He laughed uproariously; the Vigilantes and the Black Riders closed in, and Mr. Farman and all his companions were roughly seized and held. They were prisoners. They had been trapped neatly. And they now knew—for the first time—that the Vigilantes were "in" with the Black Riders—and it was obvious that they always had been. Small

spite of the popularity of the present serial, "Ghost River Ranch." Now I'll let you into a secret. I am now hard at work on a new serial, and it is a real St. Frank's story. I don't mind telling you that I'm revelling in it! Handy & Co. in Study D, cricket on Little Side, japes, and everything. Just a real school story of the old type, without any fancy trimmings. By the way, from what you tell me, I gather you have been reading my stories since 1926, so your estimate of "seven or eight years" is quite correct.

I'm very bucked to hear from you again, Peter L. Gomm, Bristol. It seems like old times to get a letter from you, and although you grumble a good deal, I'm still pleased! Don't forget that if the Editor cut my stories out of this paper, your only way of reading about St. Frank's would be to buy my yarns in the "Boys' Friend Library" or "Schoolboys' Own Library." I'm sorry you think my serials are "awful." Not that I take much notice of this remark of yours, as, later in your letter, you tell me that you enjoy my stories as much as ever. But I think I know what you mean. What you want is a real school story! All right, then. If you haven't read my answer to Bob Fyfe, above, please do so, for there's your answer. I wonder if the countless readers who revel in Mr. Martin Clifford's tales of Tom Merry & Co., would approve of your suggestion to cut the St. Jim's tale, and make my serial instalment a good deal longer?

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

wonder that in the past the Vigilantes had met with failure after failure!

Nipper and Justin B. Farman and Handforth and the other schoolboys were sick with disappointment—and chagrin. How easily they had been duped!

They had been fooled by the apparent slaughter which had taken place as the Vigilantes had charged to the attack. They had seen the rest of the Black Riders galloping away in a frightened rabble. But it had been planned in advance! Diamond Eye—for the first time—had used his two forces on the same job. Yet, so cunningly had he arranged things that even now the honest people of Fortune City would not know that the Vigilantes were base traitors.

"You—you rattlesnake!" roared Handforth. Ever reckless, he hurled himself at Diamond Eye; he forgot all about the guns which were trained upon him, and it was only the lightning swiftness of his action which saved him from being riddled with bullets. The bandits were so surprised that they had no time to use their weapons—and after that they dared not use them, for Diamond Eye would have been filled with lead, too.

Biff! Thud! Handforth had flung himself wildly at the mystery leader of the Black Riders, and he had borne the man to the ground by the sheer force of his attack. Now they were struggling in a heap, whilst some of the men tried to drag Handforth away. But Handforth's fists were in action, and he was punching with all his vigorous strength.

"Drag him off, you fools—drag him off!" screamed Diamond Eye.

"By George! I'll drag something off!" bellowed Handforth.

With both hands he seized Diamond Eye's cowl; he gave one terrific wrench, and there was an ominous tearing of cloth. The next moment the cowl came completely away. And there, lying on the ground, with Handforth on his chest, was—Dirk Dixon, the sheriff of Fortune City!

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth dazedly.

He was so astonished that he offered no resistance when he was seized and dragged back. Big Jim Farman, Reeve, Nipper, and the others stared almost unbelievably.

Dirk Dixon, the gloomy, slow-moving, placid sheriff!

But they saw a different man now. Dixon's face was contorted with fury, and his eyes glittered like a snake's. In spite of his raging fury, he was as cool as ice as he rose to his feet and dusted himself down.

"Take that kid away—keep him separate!" he ordered in his rasping voice. "I'll deal with him—special. Waal, what are you guys staring at?"

"Gosh, chief, we never thought—" began one of the men.

"You ain't paid to think!" snarled Diamond Eye. "You know me now. Waal? What of it? Everything goes on just the same. Understand? This means that I can't get around Fortune City any more—for I'm taking no chances. I'm not gonna give you boys the opportunity of betraying me. But everything else goes—and I'm giving the orders. Take this mob, and step lively."

He mounted his horse, and five minutes later the prisoners were taken away—and Diamond Eye's success was complete. For everybody belonging to the Double Z outfit

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was a prisoner—the ranchman himself, the hands, and the schoolboy visitors. It was a clean sweep.

Not a man had been killed or injured; and the Black Riders, intact, rode off into the darkness, taking their captives with them. Henceforward, they would all be imprisoned in the big caverns in the hills—and nobody would ever know of the fate which had befallen them.

Little did the Black Riders realise that the great climax was already developing! Nelson Lee was in the hills—waiting, and Lee was aware of what had been taking place.

Meanwhile, the Vigilantes returned to Fortune City. They had gone forth an eager, valiant crowd of determined-looking men; they returned gloomy-faced.

Before they reached the city limits, they encountered half a dozen horsemen. Elmer C. Kyle himself, impatient, had been on the point of riding out to the ranch to see what had happened. With him he was taking a number of Fortune City's prominent business men.

"Say, boys, what does this mean?" asked Mr. Kyle, reining in.

"Guess we were too late, mayor," said one of the men. "When we got around the ranch, there wasn't a living thing within sight."

"But the Black Riders?"

"Gone, I guess."

"Gone!" echoed Kyle. "Do you mean— But what of Big Jim and the boys?"

"Gone, too, Mr. Kyle," said the Vigilante, with a sad shake of his head. "We got there as soon as we could, but we were too late. Diamond Eye's boys must have made a big raid, and they got away with the whole bunch."

It was a clear cut story—and it rang true. The honest business men of Fortune City, listening to it, were appalled. For they knew that this time Diamond Eye had struck with greater force than ever before. With one clean sweep he had kidnapped everybody at the ranch, and by this time the unfortunates had completely disappeared—just as many other men had before.

But at that very minute important things were happening. For this was destined to be a night of intense drama. In Whispering Canyon, Nelson Lee was ready with a little surprise of his own. And far away, in Crag Junction, well beyond the limits of Ghost River Valley—something else, even more startling, was taking place.

For on the railroad tracks stood a long train—and its coaches were filled with keen-faced men in uniform. Soldiers! Attached to the train were trucks which contained field artillery and ammunition. There were machine-guns in scores. In a word, a complete military unit, equipped to the last detail.

Colonel Grant, who was in command, gave the order, and the driver started the train. It rolled off on its journey, taking the grass-covered, disused track which led into Ghost River Valley—a track which had not been run over for many years!

(More big thrills and surprises in next week's concluding chapters of this great serial. Also, news of our magnificent school serial starting in a fortnight's time.)

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PEN PALS

(Continued from page 17)

M. Humphreys, Police Station, Waltham-on-Avon, near Rotherham, Yorkshire, wants a pen pal in the British Isles, interested in old buildings, coins, pottery, etc.; age 14-16.

Miss B. Morgan, 1319, Fourth Street, N.W. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wants girl correspondents in the Empire; age 12-15; interested in music and books.

Clifford Hall, P.O. Box 1431, Cape Town, South Africa, wants a pen pal interested in sports, camping, Rugger, swimming, cycling.

Thomas H. Bush, 14, Copeland Road, Walthamstow, London, E. 17, wants correspondents overseas.

Donald Mason, Bungalow, Arundel Road, Mount Pleasant, Newhaven, Sussex, wants a pen pal in Canada or France; age 13-15.

Miss E. Wheeler, 31, South Street, Lewes, Sussex, wants girl correspondents; age 19-21.

M. Batty, 213, Archery Road, Highgate, London, N.6, wants correspondents overseas; books, hobbies, photography.

William Holmes, 36, Thorney Lane, Midgley, Luddesfoot, Yorks, wants pen pals who are interested in school books and papers.

C. D. Francis, 55, Couchmore Avenue, Esher, Surrey, wants pen pals in France, India, and Canada; age 12-18.

Miss Betty Jennings, 19, Cornish Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants a girl correspondent outside Canada; age 11-13.

Clive Chard, 189, Carisbrook Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, wants a pen pal; age 12-15.

Ernest L. Cross, Colne Road, Coggeshall, Essex, wants correspondents interested in football, stamps, cricket, exchange of news, etc.; age 13-17; N. and S. America, E. and W. Indies, Australasia, Europe, India, and Ceylon.

M. Hardy, 611, West Iron Street, Butte, Montana, U.S.A., wants correspondents in England and Australia; interested in cage birds and rearing game birds.

Kenneth Yates, 22, Brooklawn Drive, Winslow Road, Withington, Manchester, wants a pen pal in the States or Australia; age 16-17; hobby, aviation.

B. Puffer, Wharfedale, Oakham School, Rutland, wants members for his hobby club; British Empire; age 13-16.

Ron Oliver, Victoria, B.M. Three Mile Stone, near Truro, Cornwall, wants correspondents; especially those interested in Nos. 1-70 of the Great (new series), sports, and sectional map of St. Frank's.

Arnold Wansker, 46, Leeds Road, Blackpool, wants pen pals in Canada and Ireland; age 10-12; interested in cigarette cards.

Ang Soo Ghce, 11 OD, Lorong Slamet, Penang, Straits Settlements, wants correspondents in England, Germany, and Canada; interested in photos and magazines.

E. Bromley, 138, Peckham Park Road, Peckham, London, S.E.15, wants to hear from a match-box collector in New Zealand.

Anthony Proctor, 141, Eaton Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants a pen pal in India, France, Africa, Spain, Italy, and England; age 12-15.

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