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"THE SCHOOL FROM 'DOWN UNDER'!" GREAT NEW STORY OF AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLBOYS IN ENGLAND.



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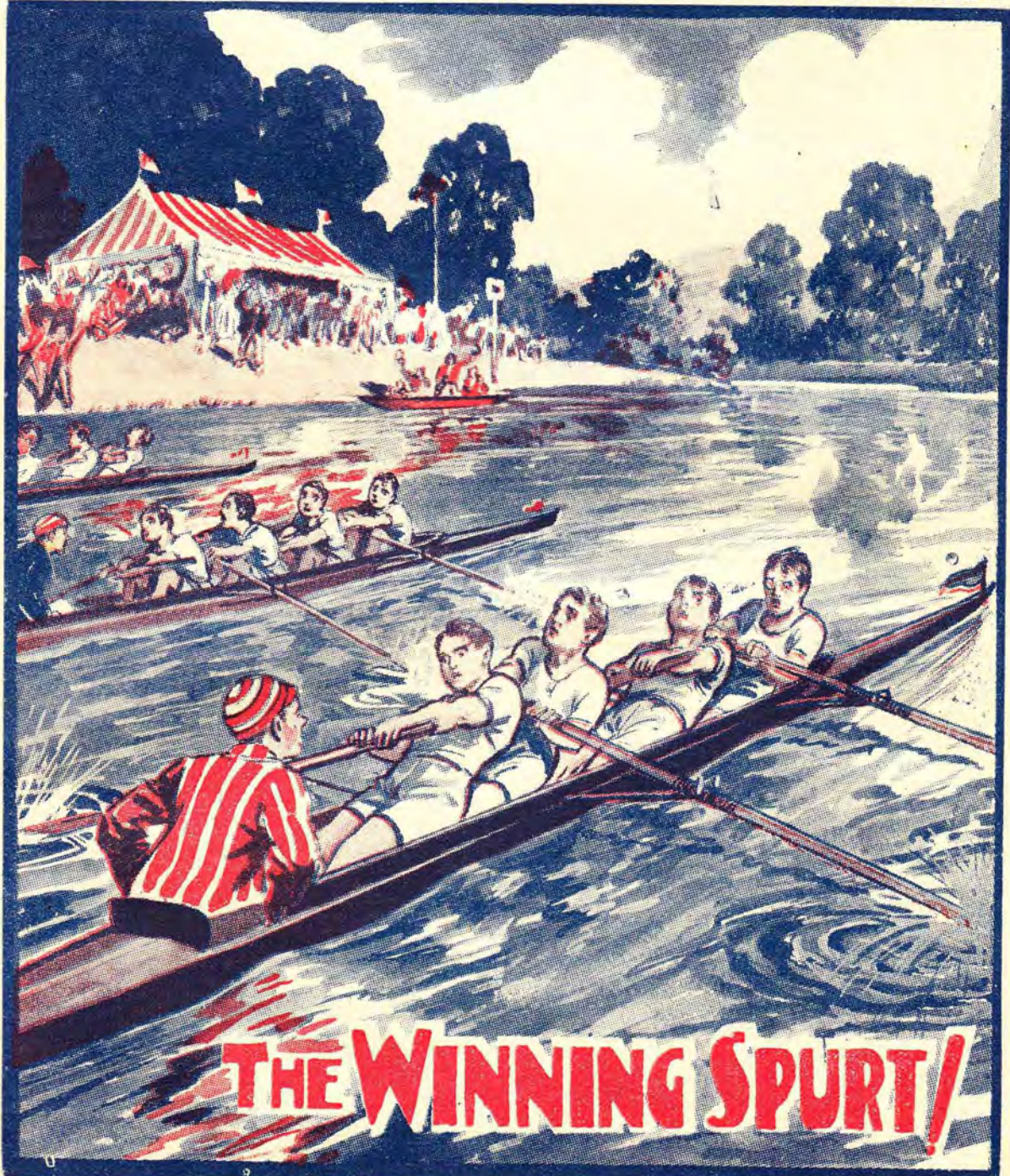
THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending July 14th, 1934.



THE WINNING SPURT!

"TOM MERRY & CO.'S REGATTA!" RIPPING LONG YARN OF SCHOOL, SPORT, AND ADVENTURE INSIDE!

A GRAND LONG YARN OF BOAT RACING AND ADVENTURE—

TOM MERRY & Co's



It's just like Gussy, on the eve of the St. Jim's Regatta, to rouse the wrath of the local landowner over whose stretch of water the races will be rowed! But, as you will read in this ripping yarn, exciting after-events are to have an unexpected influence on the landowner's decision to forbid the use of the course to the St. Jim's oarsmen!

CHAPTER 1.

The Beginning of the Trouble!

"**C**OME ashore, Gussy; we've got the boat ready."
 "Weally, Blake, deah boy—"
 "Oh, don't be an ass, Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake, leader of the School House Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "If we have to wait for you we'll never get going."

"Weally, Blake, pway don't be so widic. I have already told you that I shall be unable to take my place in the wacin' boat this aftahnoon, as I considah the weathah much too warm for wovin'—"

"Slacker!"

"Frabjous duffer!"

"Weally, Hewwies; weally, Digbay. Howevah, I see that you are only waggin', as I am weally vevy busy coachin' the Third Formahs."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, paddled his light river boat round again, glancing loftily at a racing four stroked by his younger brother, and with Dudley, Jameson, and Curly Gibson at the remaining oars.

D'Arcy minor looked back to see his brother's boat in the path of his own.

"Look out, Gus!" he yelled. "Get out of the way, can't you!"

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"Weally, Wally, as I am goin' to spend my aftahnoon coachin' you youngstahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Wally—"

Arthur Augustus went rather pink. He rose cautiously to his feet in the light boat, holding a megaphone in his hand.

"Pway get undah way, deah boys—"

"Rats!"

"And whatevah you do, Dudley, you weally mustn't hold the oars as if they were cwicket bats or hockey sticks," went on the elegant Fourth Former. "The hands should be about eight inches apart, and the gwip firm but not tight. In fact—"

"Are you going to take your place in the boat, Gussy?"

"Pway don't intewwupt, Blake, deah boy—"

Jack Blake rushed to the edge of the landing stage. "Yank the ass ashore with a boathook, someone, Gussy, for the last time, are you coming ashore to change?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Jameson, you have a wotten leg action. I twust you have made up your mind to improve it before the wace against the Glynside Third Formahs—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Gweat Scott! Wally, as your eldah bwother—"

"Are you coming to take your place in the boat, duffer?" interrupted Jack Blake wrathfully. Gussy took no notice.

"Bai Jove, Wally, you have no ideah how to get your ship undah way—"

—STARRING THE ST. JIM'S RIVALS OF THE RIVER!

REGATTA

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Ass! We're only paddling."

"No talking in the boat! I shall ordah you all off the watah if there's talkin' in the boat—"

"Order away! Steady there, Dud; we don't want the ship to go round in a giddy circle."

But in spite of his words there was a delighted grin on D'Arcy minor's face as he spoke.

Dudley of the Third was a big fellow, with even more strength than his rather shambling form suggested. It was only during the last week that the president of the Third Form boat had discovered that he could pull an oar.

Wally rather prided himself on his discovery, but Dudley's style made Arthur Augustus cringe.

"Gweat Scott, Dudlay, you are wovin' wottenly! Pway make the actions quite sepawate and don't use the slide so soon—"

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby stood on the landing stage, yelling.

"Ass—"

"Come and take your place in the boat, Gussy—"

"You'll be boiled in oil if you don't!"

Arthur Augustus languidly waved his hand.

"Pway don't get in a fluttah, deah boys. The weathah is much too warm to wov this affahnoon, and I considah it is my dutay to coach the Third Form boat— Bai Jove! Wally, stop! Back watah and get my oar!"

In taking his hand from the scull to wave, Arthur Augustus had forgotten that rowlocks are open at the top. Almost as soon as he let go, the scull slipped into the river.

It was now drifting rapidly down the stream. Arthur Augustus made frantic efforts to reach it.

"Sorry we can't stop!" chuckled Wally, beginning to quicken his stroke. "We're only going about a mile up the river and if you haven't got your scull by the time we get back we'll lend you a hand. See you later!"

"Wally, as your eldah bwotah—"

"Look out, there!"

The warning shout was uttered loudly, but Arthur Augustus failed to hear it. As he would have expressed the situation himself, he was "all in a fluttah."

He was standing up in his boat trying to reach the missing scull with a floorboard.

"Look out! Steady—"

Arthur Augustus heard this time, and turned round.

"Weally, deah boy, I must wequest you not to shout at me. Bai Jove!"

"Get out of the way, Gussy!"

"Gweat Scott!"

And Arthur Augustus dropped down on his seat again in wild excitement.

Three huge trunks of trees were coming down the river towards him, drawn by a small motor-launch.

Jack Blake had got his boat afloat, and was shouting advice:

"Pull, ass—"

"Get the skiff round— Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House Fourth Formers yelled with laughter.

Arthur Augustus was rowing wildly with one scull, with the result that he was describing rapid circles. And the tree trunks were coming nearer.

The man in charge of the motor-launch did his best, which was not much. He got his boat clear of Gussy's easily enough, but it was more than he could do to drag the floating trees from the centre of the river.

"Bless me 'at!" he gasped, slowing down.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Scull her, ass!" yelled Jack Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake's advice was good, and Arthur Augustus tried to act upon it. But it was too late, and he jumped to his feet in dismay.

The floating trees were dangerously near.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

There was a thud. One of the trunks had caught the boat amidships, and the craft heeled over.

Arthur Augustus gave vent to a wild yell, and commenced swaying about recklessly. Then he made a grab at thin air.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look at him! My only Aunt Jane—"

Another despairing shout had gone up from the skiff; Then Arthur Augustus' elegantly clothed form declined from the perpendicular. He was falling overboard.

An instant later there was a loud splash, and Arthur Augustus disappeared into midstream.

Just then the Shell four-oared racing boat came along in fine style. Tom Merry, at stroke, eased up.

"My only Aunt Jane! Is Gussy going in for life-saving in his old age—"

"Yes; saving his own life!" yelled Jack Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wottahs— You wuffianly wottahs—"

Arthur Augustus came up panting and spluttering. He was between two of the tree trunks, clinging to them.

The rival crews in the racing boats paddled after the drifting trees, yelling with laughter.

"Why don't you swim ashore, Gussy?"

"Did you do it on purpose, old chap?"

"You uttah duffah, Lowthah!" gasped the swell of the Fourth, struggling desperately. "I twust I am not in the habit of behavin' widiculously on purpose. Pway lend me a hand someone."

Jack Blake stopped laughing, urging his dainty boat on a yard or so.

"Why, what's up, Gussy?"

"I am caught in the wotten bwanches—pway lend me a hand, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The watah is feahfully chilly, and my clothes will be uttally wuined."

Jack Blake and Tom Merry exchanged glances. Both were thinking that a racing four was scarcely the type of boat to attempt rescue work in.

"Can't be done, Gussy!"

"Wats! I ordah you to lend me a hand instantly, as the watah is becomin' more chilly ewery minute. Figgay, pway lend me a hand."

Figgins & Co. of the New House had also come up at an easy paddle, hot and panting after a hard pull in their new racing four.

"Ha, ha, ha! What's the wheeze, Blake?"

"What's the one and only been doing this time?"

"Trying to drown himself, but changed his mind at the last minute," grinned Jack Blake. "He wants us to rescue him."

"I ordah you to wescue me, you wottahs, as the watah is weally wemarkably chillay for the time of the yeah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say," shouted Tom Merry to the man in charge of the motor-launch, "you knocked the kid in, so you'd better haul him out again."

The man looked puzzled. Experience told him that if he once allowed the trees to run into the river bank his subsequent work in freeing them would be something to remember.

It was quite likely the trees would get stuck, and his small boat would not be nearly powerful enough to haul them clear again.

He removed his cap and scratched his head.

"I'm afraid you'll have to stay where you are, sir, until I land the lumber," he said apologetically. "It isn't far down the river. Besides, I'll 'aul you along as fast as I can."

And, to Arthur Augustus' dismay, the motor-boat was started at top speed again, just in time to prevent the trees running into the bank.

The three rival crews paddled on behind, and a moment or two later they were joined by a fourth.

The Third Form boat was back again.

"My only Aunt Jane! Where's Gus?"

"Heah I am, deah boy, and I ordah you, as an eldah bwotah, to lend me a hand—"

The rest of his words were lost as the Third Form crew joined in the yells of laughter.

Arthur Augustus went a deep red and made desperate efforts to free himself.

But it was no good. In some way he could not quite understand he had become securely wedged between the trees. The few branches which had not been lopped off held him in a vice-like grip.

"You wuffians—you wetched wottahs! Stop! I ordah you to stop! I wefuse to be dwaggd thwough the watah in this wotten mannah."

"It's only a few yards," grinned the motor-boatman.

"I'm landing just down by the summer-house."

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The rival crews, looking ahead, saw where the trees were to be run into the bank, and realised the lumber must have come from Sir Caleb Ashton's woods, and were to be landed at another portion of the estate. But Tom Merry saw something else.

A tall, austere figure was standing on the river-bank.

"My hat, Monty! Who's that?"

Lowther twisted further round on his thwart.

"Sir Caleb, Tommy!"

"I thought so! Blake, look ahead!"

Jack Blake whistled, and Figgins, the long-limbed leader of the New House juniors, gave a warning shout.

"Steady, there!"

But it was too late even to think of attempting a rescue now. Arthur Augustus was being towed rapidly towards the tall, austere figure.

The juniors exchanged glances.

There had been trouble between Sir Caleb Ashton and the St. Jim's juniors in the past, and, knowing Sir Caleb as he did, Tom Merry thought he could detect some more trouble right ahead.

The leader of the Shell hesitated for a moment, then got his crew rowing hard.

Arthur Augustus must be backed up, whatever happened.

The Shell boat flashed past Jack Blake's four in a way that would have troubled the Fourth Former a great deal at any less exciting moment.

Arthur Augustus had his back to Sir Caleb and was still making desperate struggles to get free.

CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy's Surprise!

"TOM MEWWY, I ordah you to wescue me, for the last time!"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"I uttahly wefuse to dwy up!"

"Do ring off, Gussy!" whispered Jack Blake anxiously.

"Sir—"

"I wefuse to wing off. I— Bai Jove, I am fwee!" And, with a great wriggle, the swell of St. Jim's managed to scramble clear. He struck out for the river-bank with a gasp of relief.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins watched in horror.

Arthur Augustus was making directly towards a small inlet of water which Sir Caleb Ashton used for experiments in trout rearing.

For the moment the juniors were too dismayed to speak.

"Gussy!"

"Come back, Gussy!"

"For goodness' sake, old chap—"

"Wats!" spluttered Arthur Augustus, swimming on in fine style.

"Gussy!"

Tom Merry shouted in despair. Then another voice was added to his.

The man in charge of the motor-boat saw what was about to happen.

"You mustn't land there," he shouted. "Come back—"

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus swam on.

He had not been able to see Sir Caleb while wedged in between the trees, because his back had been turned towards him, and he could not see the tall, austere figure now on account of a clump of bushes.

For the same reason, Sir Caleb had been unable to see where Arthur Augustus was making for, but there was an angry flush on his thin face all the same. At the sound of his man's warning shout he stepped towards the clump of bushes.

"Good gracious!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors gasped.

They had often glanced towards the inlet of water and at Sir Caleb's rather elaborate fish-rearing contrivances. Now Arthur Augustus had swum right into them.

"Bai Jove—"

"Boy, how—how dare you! Good gracious!"

"Bai Jove, what a wotten landing-place!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he clambered on to the bank. "Gweat Scott! I am feahfully scwatched."

Sir Caleb was still trying to get over his surprise when the Fourth Former scrambled from the water, but Arthur Augustus still had not noticed him. When at last Gussy looked up, he merely started a little.

"Bai Jove, I must apologise for appeawin' in this weally wegwettable state, sir!" he said hastily. "I swust I have not startled you in any way."

Sir Caleb gasped.

"Bai Jove, it almost appeahs as if I have," went on Arthur Augustus politely. "I know how weally wotten it is THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,378.

to be startled, my deah sir, but I twust you will soon get ovah the fluttah."

"I—I—"

"Yaas, wathah! I must be in a feahful state," exclaimed Arthur Augustus in alarm. "As it is a good way fwom heah to the coll, I wondah whethah you would lend me a wigout? I feah it is wathah wude to ask, sir, but, undah the cires—"

"Barlow, throw him off the ground!" suddenly yelled Sir Caleb. "Throw him off the estate! I will have the young rascal put in a reformatory!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped in blank astonishment. He could see no reason for a storm, as the others could. He had been under the impression Sir Caleb's silence was due to surprise.

The outburst fluttered the swell of St. Jim's.

"Weally, sir—"

"If you were older, I would send you to prison!" choked Sir Caleb, waving his stick wildly in the air. "You're a disgrace to the neighbourhood!"

"Gweat—gweat Scott!"

"It is little ragamuffins like you that make life on a country estate intolerable!"

"Wagamuffin!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wagamuffin! Good gwacious!"

"Don't you dare to answer me, boy!"

"No, sir; but— Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus was completely bewildered. He stood, his arms well out on both sides to allow the water to drain from his once elegant coat, and stared blankly at the excited landowner.

Sir Caleb was waving his stick again.

"If you are not off the estate in two minutes, I shall thrash you within an inch of your life!" he thundered. "Yqu hear me, boy?"

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

"Two minutes!"

"Yaas, certainly, sir; only—"

"Are you going?" roared Sir Caleb, stepping forward. And Arthur Augustus retreated.

It was not often the swell of St. Jim's gave ground in that mild fashion, but it was not often he found himself in such an unpleasant position.

He could not think clearly.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake had exchanged another expressive glance; then Digby leaned forward and touched his stroke on the shoulder.

"Kangaroo is coming, Blake."

Jack Blake glanced up the river, and heaved a sigh of relief.

Harry Noble, the Australian junior, was coming along at a fine pace in a light river skiff. He was sculling rapidly towards the racing boat.

"Thought I'd better bring out a lifeboat for Gussy, chaps," he called as he drew alongside the racing craft.

"Good man. It's needed, too."

"I should say so," muttered Tom Merry seriously.

"Gussy's on the verge of being assaulted. Get closer in, Kangaroo."

The Cornstalk nodded and got his boat round.

Figgins gave a loud hail.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Yes; come along, old chap!" added Harry Noble, urging his boat closer to the bank. "Look alive!"

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"Are you going, boy?" demanded Sir Caleb, flourishing his stick more aggressively. "I shall not ask you again."

"I will wetiah instantly, sir," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Kangawoo, did you heah him call me a wagamuffin? Gweat Scott!"

The Cornstalk grinned a little as he helped Arthur Augustus into the boat; then he rowed him out to where the racing crews were resting on their oars.

Sir Caleb was still raving to his man Barlow.

Tom Merry looked rather serious.

"The sooner we get out of this, the better, Blake."

"Just so. Steady, there!"

And the juniors bent to their oars, Figgins getting away in fine style, while Tom Merry and his crew followed.

Jack Blake paddled at an easy pace, so as to give Harry Noble a chance of keeping up with him.

Noble was still chuckling.

"Shouldn't wonder if the one and only has a fit or something," he grinned. "He's gibbering to himself."

Arthur Augustus certainly looked very flustered. Jack Blake and Digby and Herries stared at him severely.

"There, Gussy, now you see what comes of slacking."

"You've only got yourself to blame," added Digby gravely. "If you will goat about in a boat without someone to look after you, you must take the consequences."



As one of the trunks caught D'Arcy's boat amidships, the craft heeled over. Arthur Augustus gave vent to a wild yell, made a grab at thin air, and his elegantly clothed form declined from the perpendicular. Next moment there was a loud splash as he plunged into midstream!

'Bai Jove! He called me a wagamuffin! Yet it seems imposs that he could have been wewewin' to me. I'm all in a fluttah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned and stared loftily.

"Weally, Blake, I fail to see any weason for wibald laughtah in the fact that I am all in a fluttah."

"Oh, ring off, ass! And look out, young Merry, we don't have bumping races at St. Jim's."

Tom Merry did not answer. He was watching Jack Blake manœuvre his boat instead.

At the same moment, Figgins & Co. were watching Tom Merry, and Jack Blake was keeping a watchful eye on both crews, looking for weak points.

The rivalry which existed between the three Co.'s was to be continued on the river with increased keenness during the next few days.

But as Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins watched one another, very much the same thought was passing through all their minds.

Race No. 5 on the forthcoming regatta programme was going to be a close affair.

Presently Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"By Jove, there's Cousin Ethel, you chaps."

The crews screwed round on their seats.

"My hat, so it is!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry bent to his oar.

"Paddle altogether, chaps; show 'em what we can do."

"Steer for the landing-stage, Pratt!" exclaimed Figgins, colouring deeply. "Steady, there!"

Within half a minute all four boats, including the skiff, were making for the landing-stage. All were steering a good course for a pretty, girlish figure in a light summer frock.

"Bai Jove! Stop! I ordah you to stop instantly, Kangawoo!"

"What's up now, ass?" grinned the Cornstalk, rowing hard. "Want another swim?"

"Stop! Gweat Scott! Stop, or I shall have to administah you a feahful thwashin', Kangawoo!"

Arthur Augustus was almost as flustered as he had been a few minutes before. Harry Noble realised that fact, but did not stop to inquire the cause. He merely bent to his oars as hard as ever.

CHAPTER 3A

Cousin Ethel's Promise!

"STOP wowin', Kangawoo! Stop wowin' instantly!" "Right-ho, kid!" chuckled Harry Noble. "Wheea I get to the landing-stage!"

"You wottah! You wank outsidah!"

"You don't say so, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wegard you as a fwiend! I considah you in the light of a wastah of the first watah!"

"Go hon!"

Arthur Augustus became desperate.

He jumped up and tried to wrest the sculls from the Cornstalk's hands. Harry Noble went on rowing.

"It is uttaly imposs for me to allow you to go on!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "I absolutely wefuse to meet Cousin Ethel in this state."

"Ha, ha, ha! I forgot all about your togs!" chuckled the Cornstalk, rowing harder than ever. "Perhaps she won't notice, Gussy."

"You weckless ass! Bai Jove!"

Harry Noble had skillfully dodged in between the racing boats, the skiff bringing up with a bump against the neat little landing-stage.

He was out of the boat in a flash.

"How do you do, Cousin Ethel?" he grinned, raising his cap.

Cousin Ethel laughed pleasantly; then every trace of a smile vanished from her pretty, girlish face.

She was looking at Arthur Augustus in a manner which convinced the swell of St. Jim's there was little chance of her failing to notice the state of his clothes.

The other juniors scrambled from the racing boats, but Cousin Ethel took no notice of them for a moment or two. She was still looking in bewilderment at Arthur Augustus.

"Good—good gracious! What have you been doing, Arthur?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has been having a swim, Cousin Ethel," explained Lowther solemnly. "He would do it; we couldn't stop him."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Arthur Augustus glanced down at himself. He looked very slimy, and what had once been a beautiful white shirt was now green with river weed.

One glance was enough for the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! Pway excuse me, Cousin Ethel."

And Gussy turned and fled. The juniors chuckled loudly, but Cousin Ethel stopped them. She made Jack Blake tell the whole story.

"And if you could only have seen Gussy tramping through the fish-rearing water!" he concluded with a chuckle. "He didn't know Sir Caleb was there, and we did. It was great."

Cousin Ethel looked rather grave. "You ought to have been more careful," she said severely. "Sir Caleb might make things very unpleasant for you all."

"But it was an accident, Cousin Ethel."

"Rather! Gussy hadn't any idea where he was going."

"No, I don't suppose he had," laughed the girl chum. "Anyway, I shan't blame Sir Caleb if he gets very cross about it all. He is only staying at the Towers this summer for the fishing. Still, I don't want to talk about that."

"No, Cousin Ethel?"

"No, I want to talk about something quite different," said the girl. "Arthur told me all you deadly rivals were going to race against one another at the regatta!"

"Rather!" grinned Jack Blake. "I'm getting a crew from the School House Fourth, Tom Merry & Co. are going to try to uphold the honour of the Shell, and Figgins is turning out a set of New House kids."

"What prize are you three crews going to row for?"

"Oh, there isn't a prize, Cousin Ethel!"

"I thought there would be."

"No, rather not. We got up the race ourselves, and we had rather a bother to get Kildare to consent to it, let alone ask the regatta committee for a prize."

"But we don't mind about the prize a bit."

"Rather not—"

"Still, there ought to be a prize," said Cousin Ethel.

"I think I shall give one."

Figgins was colouring again.

"Yes, I'm certain I shall give one," went on their girl chum coolly. "I shall ask the winning crew to come over to Cleveland Lodge to join a picnic party which is going to motor down to the coast the day after the regatta."

The juniors gasped.

A motor picnic to the coast! Silver cups could not be compared with a prize like that.

"Ripping!"

"Hurrah!"

"It—it's awfully kind of you, Cousin Ethel."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I hope you all mean to train hard," she said. "Good-bye!"

And, with that, she hurried away.

The rival juniors looked at one another. There were very grim expressions on the faces of Tom Merry, Figgins, and Jack Blake.

"My—my hat!"

"Hallo, deah boys! I have been lookin' all ovah the place for you."

Arthur Augustus—dry-clad once more—came up breathlessly. No one took any notice of him.

"Ring off, ass!" snapped Blake. "Tom Merry, if we don't massacre you kids—"

"If we don't give you our backwash in the first five minutes—"

"If we don't make a procession of it—"

"Weally, deah boys, I have something of gweat importance to tell you."

"Dry up, ass!"

"I wefuse to dwy up!"

"Ring off, then!"

"I wefuse to wing off!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Look, you uttah wottahs!"

And the juniors looked.

Walking along the path leading from the college was a tall, stern-looking man.

It was Sir Caleb Ashton.

"My hat! What's he doing here?"

"He's been up to the coll!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"He awwived soon aftah I did, and he has been in the Head's woom."

"My aunt!"

"And he was in an awful wage, too!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Mellich ass you could hear his voice wight at the end of the cowwidor. He must have been wavin'!"

"Phew!"

"What—what can he have come for?"

There was no need to answer that question.

Without another word, the juniors commenced to run for the college.

CHAPTER 4.

A Big Disappointment!

"BAI Jove, there is the Head, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus made the remark in a gasp. The other juniors stopped.

They wished now that they had not been quite so anxious to follow the matter up. Dr. Holmes was walking directly towards them, a stern frown on his usually kindly face.

"Bai Jove, I believe there's goin' to be a wow, deah boys."

"Humph! Shouldn't wonder!"

"Hadh't we bettah wetiah, Tom Mewwy?"

"Ass! The Head's seen us!"

"Bai Jove, so he has!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Besides, we must think of our dig."

"Think of five hundred lines and detention, you mean!"

"Weally, Figgay— Howevah, the mattah only wequahs tact and judgment, and I wathah think I am the fellow—"

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus started.

The Head's voice had rung out very clearly across the intervening stretch of quadrangle.

"Yaas, sir!"

"Taggles tells me you returned to the college just now in a drenched state?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Was it you who caused the damage in Sir Caleb Ashton's fishing water?"

"Weally, sir—"

"Was it you, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, only the whole affair was an accident," ventured Arthur Augustus. "I wegwet to say I was weaked—that is to remark, I fell in the wivah."

"You may have caused a great amount of damage, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove, I wegwet that, sir, and I will, of course, make good the—"

Dr. Holmes frowned impatiently.

"But you cannot!" he exclaimed in exasperation. "The damage cannot be known until after the fishing season. It is out of your power to make it good."

"Bai Jove, I wegwet that, I nevah thought of that, sir!"

"Sir Caleb is very angry—justly angry," went on Dr. Holmes, "and he protested against the stretch of the river



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being used for the St. Jim's regatta. I have promised him that it shall not be used."

"Oh, sir!"

"It is your own fault, boys!" said Dr. Holmes sternly. "I have told Kildare that a fresh course will have to be mapped out."

"But—"

"Well, Merry?"

"But—but there isn't another stretch wide enough for three four-oars to race, sir."

"You should have thought of that before. D'Arcy, how did the accident happen?"

"I was wecked—that is to say, I fell into the wivah, sir."

"Were you playing tricks on one another?"

"No, sir, wathah not! I was coaching the Third Formals, when some floatin' twees dwawn by a motor-boat wecked me—"

"You give me your word it was entirely an accident?"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"Then the matter ends here!" exclaimed the Head. "I trust we shall be able to arrange the races satisfactorily on another stretch of the water."

And the Head strode away before the juniors had time to recover from their dismay.

The moment he had gone, Tom Merry wheeled round.

"That's snatched the whole thing baldheaded!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Gussy, you ought to be boiled in oil!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, bump the young ass, someone!"

"Weally, Digbay, deah boy—"

"Ass!"

"Frabjous lunatic!"

"Bai Jove, Kerr—"

"Oh, it's too rotten!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "We shan't be able to have the race now. There isn't another stretch for miles where we could row three boats abreast!"

"Rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah. I considah it wotten in the extweme, deah boys."

"And it's all your fault, ass!" growled Jack Blake. "If you hadn't slacked and taken your place in the boat—"

"Oh, Gussy ought to be chained up!"

The juniors were too disappointed at that moment to slang Arthur Augustus as they would have done under less trying circumstances. They were all thinking of Cousin Ethel's promised prize.

Tom Merry looked desperate.

"We shall have to arrange a bumping race, or something, Blake!"

"Will Kildare let us use the boats for bumping?"

"Oh, hang it all!"

And Tom Merry strode away, followed by Manners and Lowther.

CHAPTER 5.

"We'll Show 'Em!"

"THUMP away, kids!"

Curly Gibson, Jameson, and Dudley thumped.

D'Arcy minor began to kick.

"Open the door, Blake—"

"Look here—"

"Open the door!" repeated D'Arcy minor. "Important bisney—honour bright!"

Jack Blake growled and flung open the door.

"Look here! We can't have a lot of Third Form kids bothering us; we've got a jolly awkward thing to work out—"

"The Sir Caleb Ashton affair, my son?"

Jack Blake started.

"So it's all over the college already, is it?" he growled.

"Anyway, you can clear, Wally!"

"We will—when we've finished. Sit down, chaps!"

And the Third Formers coolly took the chairs Jack Blake & Co. had just risen from.

Jack Blake & Co. glared at them.

Wally nodded pleasantly.

"Thought you'd be glad of some help," he said cheerily.

"It's all a lot of piffle. Gussy never meant to do the damage."

"Of all the giddy cheek—"

"It isn't likely Gus would go and fall into the river on purpose. As a matter of fact, it was Sir Caleb's own man who upset him."

Jack Blake grimly opened the study door.

"Take your choice, Wally," he said tersely. "The window or the door."

"Oh, don't come the old fogey wheeze with us, my son! We're here to lend you a helping hand in a very difficult biz—"

"Are you going to clear?"

Jack Blake & Co. had gone very red. It wasn't likely Fourth Formers were going to listen to advice from ~~far~~.

Wally glanced from one to the other pleasantly.

"My only Aunt Jane, aren't they ratty, kids?"

"They'll calm down when they hear our plan."

"Are you going?" yelled Jack Blake.

"It's a ripping fine plan—"

"Bump 'em! Bump 'em, chaps!"

"And if you'll agree to help us we'll jolly well make Sir Caleb sing small, and no mistake," went on Wally, as cool as ever. "You see—"

"Altogether!" growled Jack Blake. "Now!"

And there was a general rush.

Wally dodged round the table.

"Don't play the goat, Blake! You're as bad as Tom

BREAKING IT GENTLY!



Tommy: "You know that old vase, mother, that you said had been handed down from generation to generation?"

Mother: "Yes—what about it?"

Tommy: "Well, this generation has dropped it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss M. Hall, 9, Bramwith Road, Nether Green, Sheffield 11.

Merry in the old fogey line. All you Fourth Formers and Shellfish are jealous of the Third Form—"

"Collar them!"

"Bump the young sweeps!"

"Turn the soda water on them!"

D'Arcy minor glanced round. There were two siphons of soda water and one of lemonade on the cupboard.

Digby was making towards them.

Jack Blake dashed for Wally.

"Out you go, kids!"

Wally went first, sitting down with a thump on the passage floor.

The next moment Jameson also came out and sprawled over his leader, while Dudley also left the room as a violent charge from Herries' shoulder knocked him off his balance.

Wally tried to scramble to his feet, but it was no good. He had just got up as far as his knees, when the last of the fags left Study No. 6. It was Curly Gibson being carried out by Herries and Jack Blake.

"Drop him on top of them."

Gibson was duly dropped.

"Is that how you like it done, Wally?" chuckled Blake.

And the door of the Fourth Form study was slammed to. For an instant or two the Third Formers lay in a confused heap, then a groan came from Jameson.

"Lemme get up, Dud! Lemme get up!"

"What about my ear?"

No one seemed to know anything about Dudley's ear. Even Dudley himself was feeling it gently as if he doubted its existence.

Wally sat up with a growl, rubbing the back of his head.

"This comes of trying to help the rotters!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Talk about gratitude—"

"O-oh!" groaned Curly Gibson. "Oo-oh!"

"Outsiders!"

"They haven't got the spirit to stand up for the old coll themselves," went on Wally darkly. "And they're jealous of anyone else who has."

"Oh-o-oh!"

"Dry up, Curly! We'll jolly well show 'em, chaps!" went on Wally, with rising indignation. "We'll show 'em St. Jim's isn't going to knuckle under to an old fogey like Sir Caleb!"

"Rather!"

"Like his cheek to come sneaking to the Head, and getting him to promise the races shan't take place on the best stretch of the whole river."

The Third Formers spoke indignantly. It was not that the alteration in the course meant a very great deal to them, but it was the principle of the thing.

The idea of a portion of a river being barred by one man went very much against the grain of the fags of the Third.

"Whatever we do," said Wally "it'll have to be done at once."

"Rather!"

"To-night, I vote!"

Wally nodded.

"Yes, to-night's the time," he added darkly. "We'll show Sir Caleb he doesn't own the earth, and we'll show Tom Merry and the other old fags how to stick up for the school."

The fags were in deadly earnest, and when D'Arcy minor and his lieutenants were in earnest things generally happened.

Of all of them Dudley was perhaps the least concerned. But he was not good at thinking things out. He was quite content to let Wally do that, and then back him up.

The lines of thought on Wally's brow at that moment almost suggested physical pain.

CHAPTER 6.

Breaking Bounds!

"NOW'S the time, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

It was nearly ten at night, but the fags' dormitory was far from quiet. About a dozen juniors sat up in bed at Wally's call, and Wally himself crossed to the window.

"It's all right, chaps; there isn't a sign of a moon yet."

"Good egg!"

The Third Formers grinned in the darkness. They had not a great deal of dressing to do—coats and shoes being the only things to put on. Under Wally's directions they had gone to bed "all standing."

The clock struck ten just as they moved towards the door.

"My hat! We shall have to be careful! Selby won't be in bed yet."

"Bother Selby!"

D'Arcy minor refused to listen to any words of caution. To his way of thinking Sir Caleb had been unfair to St. Jim's; consequently, Sir Caleb must be japed.

Wally felt very sure of his ground on the point.

"What are we going to do, Wally?"

"Going through the Caleb bird's grounds, and then think of some way of ragging him. Squirt water through his bed-room window if there's a hose handy—anything like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's all very well to chuckle, Dudley—but what about the row?" said Curly Gibson, rather doubtfully.

"Bother rows!" muttered Wally.

Dudley pressed on by Wally's side, and Curly Gibson and Jameson were not far behind. Those three, at any rate, were ready to back their leader, but one or two of the more cautious members of the party felt a little uneasy. They kept wary eyes turned towards the prefect's studies as they crept along the corridor.

But the journey to the passage window was made in safety, and Wally soon had the window open.

"Down the ivy, kids!"

"Rather! Shall I go first, as I'm about the heaviest?"

Wally nodded, and Dudley started. He did not consider the recklessness of Wally's plan.

There was a time when Dudley had been one of those accidental outcasts of the school—a fellow no one seemed to notice or want to notice.

Wally had chummed in with him somewhat against public opinion, and Dudley had not forgotten. He was not likely to forget, either.

The moment his feet touched the ground he gave the signal.

"All right; coast clear!"

"Good!"

"All here, then—now for it!" And the fags came down in rapid succession. As they reached the ground they dashed, one by one, across the quadrangle.

Wally called a halt by a gate well decorated with barbed wire. He pointed at the wire, with a grin.

"That shows the sort of bird it is we're going to stir up."

"He's got barbed wire all over the place."

"Yes, and he jolly well thinks it will keep us out of his rotten grounds," chuckled Wally, vaulting the gate. "Here goes! And, remember, we wait for each other in the quad if we get separated."

"Ye-es."

"Right-ho!"

Some of the answers were not very enthusiastic. The younger portion of the party did not like the idea of being separated in the dark, gloomy woods.

They crept silently amongst the trees, listening for sounds of keepers. The place seemed deserted enough.

"It's all right, Curly," muttered Dudley. "I don't believe there's a giddy keeper about."

"Anyway, don't make a row. My hat!"

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A soft growl sounded through the night air. The woods were not so deserted, after all!

Wally stopped dead.

"Don't make a noise, kids. It'll be all right."

"Right-ho!"

"Get on, Wally; there's no time— My only Aunt Jane!"

A crash rang out, followed by a yell. Curly Gibson had stumbled into a rabbit hole.

"Ass!"

"Dry up, Curly!"

"My only aunt!"

A loud shout sounded behind them, followed by footsteps on the dry twigs. Someone was approaching—a keeper most likely.

"My aunt!"

"Scud for it!" panted Wally. "Separate!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when three men burst through the trees, guns under their arms. The sight of the guns did not add to the younger juniors' peace of mind.

With a wild rush the youngsters scattered in all directions.

"We have them! After the scamps!"

Wally chuckled.

"That's Barlow's voice!" he gasped, as he ran on between Curly Gibson and Jameson. "They take us for poachers."

"Good egg!"

"We won't half lead them a giddy dance!"

There was pleasure to the scamp of the Third in the knowledge that the mere fact of their being in the woods at all would anger Sir Caleb.

D'Arcy minor glanced over his shoulder. He caught a glimpse of a lantern one of the men was carrying, then he dashed on again. Where he was making for he did not know, nor did he care. But, for all his recklessness, Wally knew it would never do for any of them to be caught by the keepers.

"We'd better separate, chaps!" he whispered. "As hard as you can!"

And he pelted off alone. That would divide the pursuit, and minimise the chance of capture.

The man with the lantern came on with a rush. He was not far behind Wally, and he knew the ground.

Wally glanced back again and saw the situation was becoming desperate. The man, whoever he was, could run.

Wally gasped and glanced about him; then he acted with the coolness which so often amazed his chums. He dropped quietly down behind a clump of bushes.

The man with the lantern lumbered past him. If Wally had put out his hand he could have touched him.

"My hat! That was close!" chuckled the Third Former to himself.

He waited a moment or two, then scrambled to his feet. The woods seemed fairly quiet again.

For a moment the scamp of the Third hesitated, then he made up his mind. It would be safer to follow in the footsteps of the man with the lantern than double on his tracks.

Wally acted promptly, but he stopped almost as promptly the next moment.

Someone had flashed past him. For an instant Wally thought he was caught, then he grinned.

"Dud—for a pension!"

But it was too late to warn the big Third Former he was following the man with the lantern, for Wally knew it would be madness to shout. Besides, an instant later D'Arcy minor had to think for himself.

Another keeper burst through the undergrowth with startling suddenness.

"Got you!"

"I don't think!" gasped Wally, as he flashed away.

The keeper followed with a rush.

It was going to be a near thing once more for the leader of the fag Form of St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 7.

A Brush With the Keepers!

THE shock when Wally caught sight of Dudley was mutual.

Dudley had only seen the outline of his leader, and it had made him redouble his efforts to get out of the woods.

He dashed on almost recklessly, but luck was with him. He managed to escape the many treacherous branches which bestrewed his path.

Presently he pulled up with a start.

There was a light ahead, and a keeper with a lantern was just in front of him.

"My hat!" gasped Dudley, swerving to the right. Then he dashed on.

It was intensely dark in the woods, and the trees grew

closely together. But presently Dudley gave vent to a gasp of relief. It had suddenly become lighter, and the trees had disappeared. He was out of the wood.

In reality it was a very dark night, but there might have been a moon, so great was the contrast with the pitch-black woods. Dudley distinctly saw a haystack ahead of him, and he pelted for it, determined to crouch down in its shadow and figure out his bearings.

A moment or two later he was kneeling amongst the loose hay.

But the big Third Former was not to have the haystack to himself for long, for he had scarcely taken cover when someone else dashed up.

Dudley crouched lower among the hay, then suddenly the runner stopped dead. For an instant Dudley thought he had been seen and got ready to scud for it.

Then he peered through the darkness in surprise.

the man who was following Dudley was without a lantern. The other keeper must have seen Wally.

"Trust Wally to look after himself," thought Dudley, with a grin. "It'll take a good many keepers to catch him."

He raced on, then suddenly a cry of alarm rang out behind him. The keeper had stopped.

Dudley went on for a few yards farther before turning, then he glanced back again. To his amazement, a tremendous fire was raging at the other side of the field.

It looked almost at first as if some huge house was in flames.

"My hat!"

A gasp of astonishment rang out behind him, and Curly Gibson and Jameson peered over the top of the hedge.

"Thought it was you, Dud!"

"What on earth has happened?"

"The haystack has caught alight in some way," answered the big Third Former, wetting his lips.



"Run for it!" panted Wally. "Separate!" The words were scarcely out of his mouth when three keepers burst through the trees! With a wild rush the fags scattered in all directions. "We have them!" came a yell from behind. "After the scamps!"

The newcomer was groping about on the ground. Dudley watched in surprise. It must be a keeper. None of the fellows would waste time in the open like that.

Suddenly Dudley started up. It was Wally who was at the other side of the haystack.

The big Third Former was certain. His eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and the groping figure had only been a few feet away at one moment.

"Wally—"

Dudley muffled his cry almost as soon as it rose to his lips. The keeper with the lantern had come out in the open.

In the same instant Wally dashed away. Dudley did not hesitate.

The keeper was between Wally and himself, so there was nothing for it but to make off in the opposite direction. He pelted across the field as hard as he could scud.

For a moment he thought he was to be free from pursuit, then the sound of heavy footsteps undeceived him. He was being followed by a man who ran well.

The big Third Former looked about him anxiously as he ran.

Wally was probably having an exciting time as well, for

"Haystack! Is there a haystack there?"

"Rather! I was hiding behind it."

The three juniors crouched down behind the hedge and watched. None of them talked much.

Curly Gibson looked a little scared.

"I—I say, Dud, none of our chaps have been mad enough to fire it, have they?"

"Of course not, Curly!" exclaimed Jameson.

"But how did it catch alight, then?"

There was a curious expression on Dudley's face, but he did not answer. Could it have been Wally who had set fire to the stack? Wally seldom shirked doing things because they were reckless, but to fire a haystack was more than reckless.

Still, in spite of his conviction, Dudley said nothing about having seen Wally.

"Let's scud for the coll," he said abruptly. "The others ought to be there by now."

"Right-ho!"

And, with one accord, the three fags started off.

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CHAPTER 8.

The Burnt Haystack!

"HALLO, kids!" The juniors thus addressed started as they clambered over the college wall. Then they chuckled loudly.

"Is that you, Curly?"

"Rather, and Dud and Jameson!"

"Good egg! Were any of us nabbed, do you think?"

The speaker's tones were anxious, but Curly Gibson shook his head.

"Trust Wally— Hallo!"

Someone was pelting along the road towards the college. The Third Formers peered over the wall.

"It's Wally and two others, chaps."

"Yes, that's Wally. Cheer-ho, D'Arcy!"

"Cheer-ho!" came back Wally's voice, in low tones.

"Anyone caught?"

"We don't know—"

D'Arcy minor and the two other fags with him were over the wall in a flash. The leader of the Third Form glanced at his party. They were now all present.

"My only Aunt Jane, what a piece of luck! Not one of us snatched!"

"Good egg!"

"I met these kids just down the road," grinned Wally. "They've been hiding in a ditch. My aunt, we stirred things up some!"

"Rather! I say, what about the fire, Wally?"

"Fire! What fire?"

"My hat! Didn't you see the flames?" exclaimed Jameson, in surprise. "A whacking great fire, and no mistake! I never saw such flames!"

"Phew! Whereabouts?"

"In the field at the other side of the woods," said Dudley gruffly. "Someone set fire to the haystack there."

"My aunt! Was there a haystack, Dudley?"

"Yes, a large one, Wally," went on Dudley.

"Rats! None of our chaps would have done a thing like that. Sure it wasn't a rubbish heap, or something the keepers fired on purpose? I don't believe Sir Caleb runs to a haystack."

"No; it was a haystack all right."

"How did you know, Dud?"

"I was hiding behind it just before the thing caught fire—"

Wally shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyway, it hadn't anything to do with us," he said coolly. "I hope it jolly well burns down to the ground so long as those ripping woods don't catch fire. But come on; we'd better get in."

"Yes, rather!" observed Jameson. "There may be a row about that haystack if inquiries are made."

"Well, it's no good worrying about what may happen," said Wally, getting ready to clamber up the ivy. "I lost my cap, with my name printed inside, but I'm not going to worry about it. Ten to one it won't be found, and ten to one the haystack Dudley saw was a rubbish heap the keepers fired to frighten us, or something."

"I tell you it was a haystack!"

"All right, kid, only don't get ratty!" chuckled Wally. "It wasn't our haystack. Up you go, my sons!"

And they commenced their journey up the ivy.

Luck was still with them, for the corridor was deserted, and they got past the prefects' room safely. A few moments later they were in the Third Form dormitory again.

Wally sat down on the bed with a chuckle.

"My hat, what a spree!"

Dudley was looking across the dark room towards the junior who had made such a vast difference in his life. Wally would never know what his act of chumming in with the big Third Former had meant to Dudley.

Dudley knew, though, although he had not said anything.

The other juniors were whispering their experiences, all except Dudley. There was a curious expression on his face as he listened.

"But we didn't do so much, after all, Wally," he said at last; "that is, if none of us had a hand in firing the haystack."

Wally laughed.

"Dud's blessed old haystack! Of course we hadn't anything to do with it, ass!"

"Who had, then?"

"Never mind who had! Who hadn't is good enough for us!" said Wally coolly. "To set old Dud's mind at rest, kids, did any of you fire the haystack?"

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"No."

"Of course not!"

"Dud, you ought to be bumped for suggesting we might have done it."

"There you are, Dudley," grinned Wally. "We'll wander round to-morrow, and I'll jolly well prove to you your haystack was a rubbish heap."

"Rats! It was a haystack all right."

"That's right," put in Jameson. "We saw it flare up, you know."

"And I saw it before it flared up at all, Wally," said Dudley deliberately. "I was hiding amongst the hay for quite a long time—"

"Go hon!"

Dudley coloured.

"It won't be such a laughing matter to-morrow!" he said.

"Bother to-morrow!"

Dudley jumped to his feet. His temper was not of the best, and his eyes were sparkling a little just now.

"You've done nothing all the evening but say 'bother' things!" he exclaimed, lowering his voice so that it was only audible to Wally. "I tell you I was hiding amongst the hay for a long time, and someone else came up and hid at the other side."

"My hat! Who was that?" asked Wally.

Dudley did not answer, so Wally went on, with a careless laugh:

"I believe that about settles it, then. It was a rubbish heap, after all, and the other bird you saw was a keeper setting fire to it. Anyway, it wasn't one of us."

And that was the last word he said. He scrambled into bed and covered himself up, and a few minutes later the others were following his example.

Soon heavy breathing told of sleep, with one exception.

Dudley did not fall asleep; he did not even doze. He lay on his side, staring at the wall.

Wally had lost his cap, he remembered—but where? And was it Wally he had seen by the haystack? In his heart, Dudley was certain it was.

But that meant Wally must have told him a lie when he said he had not seen a haystack—that he did not believe Sir Caleb had one. Dudley had never known Wally to speak falsely before.

The heavy breathing became more regular. There was no doubt about it, the juniors were asleep all right.

Dudley listened, then slipped out of bed.

"Anyone awake, chaps?"

There was no answer. Dudley hurried into his clothes again, his mouth set firmly.

Wally's cap had his name printed on the lining. It might mean a very serious thing to the scamp of the Third if that cap was found by a keeper.

Dudley did not hesitate.

He crept steadily along the corridor again, making for the window which looked out on the ivy-covered wall.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally's Cap!

THE fact that he had embarked upon a wild-goose chase did not occur to Dudley until he had gained the wood. As he clambered over the gate and slipped away amongst the trees, the improbability of his ever finding Wally's cap struck him.

But the improbability did not strike him as thoroughly as might have been expected, for he was not so deadly in earnest to find the cap as to discover whether it had been dropped anywhere near the haystack.

That was Dudley's real reason for his second journey into the woods.

Dudley thought his sole motive was to discover whether Wally had spoken falsely in saying he had not seen the haystack, but there was another motive at the bottom of it all.

The big Third Former was painfully anxious to find the cap before any of the keepers did so. Nothing could very well be proved against Wally unless the cap happened to be found near the haystack.

"After all, there were a dozen of us in the woods," Dudley mused, as he hurried along. "They can't bring it home to him, even if he did do it. I—I am certain it was Wally I saw, though."

But there was no good in going over that old ground again. The thing was to do something practical to help the junior who had chummed in with him when no one else had thought of doing so.

Dudley went on grimly.

It was dreary work walking along the same paths where there had been so much excitement an hour before.

Presently a faint glimmer above told him the young moon

had risen at last, and that the trees were beginning to thin. He was nearing the field with the haystack at last.

A few steps farther, and he knew he must be almost upon the haystack, or what remained of it, and he began to slow down. The keepers might still be about. It was no good running absurd risks, he told himself.

But he could see no one ahead, and there was no haystack. Just a black, charred patch, which showed up strangely in the faint light.

He hesitated a moment or two longer, then stepped forward. There was not a sound to be heard.

The big Third Former knew the exact spot where he thought he had seen Wally kneel, and made for it at once. The place was quite near a clump of bushes.

He dropped to his knees and commenced to search.

The moments slipped by, and Dudley's hopes began to rise. Perhaps he had made a mistake, after all.

Then he started.

There was something round and black lying ahead of him. It looked much as a cap might have looked on the blackened ground.

Dudley stepped towards it. It was a cap, right enough.

Wally had spoken falsely when he said he had not been near the haystack, then; and if Wally had spoken falsely, there must have been a very big inducement.

Dudley stood for a moment or two looking at the cap. He was not thinking very clearly, for his discovery had come as a great shock to him.

The dry twigs behind him crackled, but he did not hear them; he heard nothing until a sudden cry rang out:

"Ah, it was you, was it?"

The next instant a grasp fell on Dudley's shoulder.

"Thought you'd come back to see the damage you'd done—eh?" said the keeper, in triumph. "Didn't know as one of us would most likely be keeping an eye on the hay, to see it didn't smoulder up again. You're from St. Jim's, aren't you?"

Dudley did not answer.

He was thrusting Wally's cap into his jacket pocket.

The keeper went on gleefully.

"You're coming with me, my lad. Sir Caleb'll have something to say to you, and he isn't in his best temper, either. He came out to see the flames, and he said then what he'd do to the fellow who'd done it."

"You needn't hold my arm."

"Oh, needn't I, my lad! This way, and it's no good trying to make a bolt for it. I've got you set this time, and no mistake."

Dudley did not answer. He let the keeper lead him towards Sir Caleb's mansion in silence.

What was he to say to Sir Caleb? Wally's name must be kept out of the matter, even though Wally was the culprit.

That was about the only point Dudley felt sure of as the keeper hurried him along the path. A few minutes later he was being taken to Sir Caleb's study.

Sir Caleb was sitting by the window when Dudley was pushed into the room.

"What does this mean, Greaves?"

"Please, sir, I caught this lad by the burnt haystack."

"By the burnt haystack!" exclaimed Sir Caleb, springing to his feet. "I thought you suspected poachers?"

"We thought so, sir; but it seems it was the boys from St. Jim's, sir."

"Boys from St. Jim's! Are you from St. Jim's?"

"Yes," said Dudley.

"And you found him by the remains of the haystack, Greaves?"

"Yes, sir; looking for something. I'd just run out to have another glance to see that the fire was properly out—"

"Never mind that now. What is your name, boy?"

"Dudley, sir."

"Ah, Dudley!" said Caleb ominously. "I'm afraid this will prove a very serious matter for you. I scarcely think Dr. Holmes will view arson out of revenge as a boyish trick. I shall recognise you to-morrow if you have given a false name!"

"I haven't done that, sir; and I didn't fire the haystack, if that's what you are hinting at!"

"Silence, boy!" said Sir Caleb sharply. "Greaves, show him out, then come back here."

And Dudley found himself in the grounds again.

He was a little astonished at first at Sir Caleb's quiet manner after his exhibition of temper by the river that afternoon.

Perhaps Sir Caleb was one of those people who only lost their tempers over trivial matters and could keep perfectly calm when the affair was serious.

And this was serious enough in all conscience.

Dudley was very white as he made his way back to the college. He stopped once by a gas-lamp and looked at the lining of the cap he had found.

(Continued on the next page.)



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

A STINGING RETORT!

Tom Merry: "Why do you wear an eyeglass, Gussy?"
D'Arcy: "Weally, Mewwy, I should have thought you'd have known that. It's because I have a weak eye, deah boy."

Tom Merry (departing): "Then why on earth don't you wear a glass hat?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Walker, 88, Penny Street, Lancaster.

SNAPPY BACKCHAT!

"You lanky strip," said the diminutive chap to his tall opponent. "I'd tie you in knots if I thought it would make you look any more human!"

"Sez you!" came back the retort. "Why, you daren't even pull up your socks for fear of blindfolding yourself!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Bernard Cohen, Beach Hotel, Woodstock, Cape Town, South Africa.

NO SECOND CHANCE!

Private Miggs: "What did the sergeant say to you when you fell out of the ranks six times during the route march?"

Private Biggs: "He told me I ought to join the Air Force, where I could only fall out once!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to John P. G. Bernard, 19, Cantibury Street, Cradock, South Africa.

THE PLAINEST PROOF!

Magistrate: "The evidence shows that you threw a brick at this man."

Prisoner: "It shows more than that, y'r honour: it shows I 'it 'im!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Stenton, Wolsthorpe House, Wright's Lane, Kensington, London, W.8.

GOOD FOR HIM!

The chap suffering from toothache was in no mood for listening to commonplace advice, but the busybody stranger would have his say.

"If that tooth were mine," said the interfering one, "I'd have the wretched thing taken out."

"And if it really were yours," said the sufferer, "so would I!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Smith, 551, Netheravon Road, Durrington, Salisbury, Wilt.

WHAT A FOOTBALLER!

Jack: "I hear your brother plays for the local Soccer team now. What's his position on the field?"

Jock: "He's a back."

Jack: "Half-back or full-back?"

Jock: "Neither, he's just a drawback!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Denis H. Strange, "Kearsney," 123, Upney Lane, Barking, Essex.

IN TROUBLE!

Waitress: "I've got stewed kidneys, boiled tongue, fried liver, pigs' feet, and—"

Customer: "Never mind about telling me your troubles. Give me a chicken pie, please!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Dench, 57, Marnell Way, Hounslow West, Middlesex.

Wally's name was printed there in large letters.

The cap went back into the Third Former's pocket, and he hurried into the college and into bed.

He did not wake Wally; but he did not go to sleep himself.

He tossed about in bed the whole night, listening to the college clock tolling off the dreary hours.

He longed for the morning, in spite of what it might mean to him.

CHAPTER 10.

Facing the Music!

"BAI JOVE, deah boys—"

"Oh, do ring off, Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"We must get this worked out before brekker.

That's my idea, Tom Merry.

"Yes, ring off!" added Jack Blake. "It may be a rotten idea to turn our race into a bumping race, but it'll have to be done. It mayn't be so bad, after all, and we've never had a bumping race at St. Jim's!"

"What about the boats, as I remarked before, ass?"

"Oh, we shall have to get the proper cushions fastened, and all that, but—"

He got no further. Arthur Augustus, from his seat by the window, suddenly interrupted with a startled cry.

"Look, deah boys—look! There goes Sir Caleb Ashton! He's just come from the Head's private house, bai Jove!"

The other juniors raced to the window, where they could see Sir Caleb's tall, thin figure distinctly.

Then a startling sound rang out—the college bell was ringing!

Tom Merry hurried to the door.

"There's something up here," he said. "That's a summons to the Hall for something or other. We'd better buck up!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

They all hurried from the room, reaching Hall without meeting any other fellows, and found, to their surprise, they were almost the last to enter. Dr. Holmes was at his place at the reading-desk.

There was a very stern light in his eyes as he faced the packed seats of boys.

"Silence, please! Call the roll!"

Instantly there was a dead silence, and after the roll had been called the Head stood up.

"What boys were out of the college last night between the hours of ten and eleven?" he demanded.

A pause followed; then Wally jumped to his feet. It was the signal.

Jameson, Curly Gibson, Dudley, and all the others rose at once.

Dr. Holmes glanced along their ranks.

"Twelve of you, eh?" he exclaimed sternly. "Any more?"

"No, sir," answered Wally.

Even the scamp of the Third was quelled by the expression on the Head's face.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in alarm.

"Quiet, ass!"

But Arthur Augustus was not the only anxious looking junior along the Fourth Form benches. Jack Blake, for instance, looked almost as concerned as if it had been one of his own party who was in trouble.

Dr. Holmes was facing the fags.

"Then what do you know about this affair of the burnt haystack?" he demanded.

There was no answer. Tom Merry & Co. glanced towards their great rivals from the New House. Figgins & Co. were looking very blank.

They had heard nothing about a burnt haystack.

"Who was near the haystack last night?"

The Head's question came crisply. Dudley answered after a short pause.

"I was, sir."

"Ah, you were caught by one of the keepers near the haystack—but that was after the fire, I understand. Were you near the haystack before that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Before it was fired?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dudley, his voice dropping a little.

Curly Gibson and Jameson were staring at him. They remembered again having seen Dudley running across the field.

The Head frowned.

"Then you returned a second time to the haystack, Dudley?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I—I—"

The big Third Former's voice faltered. He had gone very white now.

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"It has been suggested by Sir Caleb that the haystack was fired out of revenge for the action taken in the matter of the regatta course," Dr. Holmes exclaimed. "Was that so?"

Again there was no answer. It was difficult for one fellow to answer a question like that on his own responsibility, although there was a flush of indignation on many faces.

"Did any of you set fire to the stack?"

That was a different sort of question. The answers came in a single chorus.

"No, sir!"

"Then why did you go into the woods?" demanded the Head. "You, D'Arcy minor, why did you go into the woods?"

"To—to jape—I mean, play a trick on Sir Caleb, sir."

"And can you give me your word, D'Arcy, that, as far as you know, none of you set fire to the stack?"

"Yes, rather, sir. I don't believe any of us would do a thing like that."

"Jameson?"

"No, sir; I don't know anything about it."

The Head asked all of them the same question in turn, stopping for an instant when he came to Dudley.

"No, sir, I didn't do it," answered the big Third Former.

"You admit being near the stack?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you admit returning to the spot afterwards? Why did you do that?"

Dudley was silent.

"Answer me, boy!"

Still Dudley was silent. The others were looking at him in amazement. But the Head did not give them much time for wondering.

"Dismiss!" he said briefly. "Dudley, you will go to my room and wait for me there."

And Dudley walked from Hall, the amazed glances of the Third still directed upon him.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy Minor's Doubt!

"MY only Aunt Jane!"

Jameson's astonishment was complete.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he repeated. "Dudley never returned to the fire, chaps; he came back to the coll with Curly and myself."

"Perhaps he went out again."

"But what would he want to do that for? I—I say, you don't think he did it, do you, Curly?"

Curly Gibson looked rather scared.

"He'll get sacked if he did. Where's Wally?"

"Yaas, wathah! Where's Wally, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, hurrying up. "Where's my minah?"

Wally answered for himself.

"Here I am; but—"

"I must wequest you to wetiah with me to the study, Wally, at once, as I wish to talk the mattah ovah—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Wally, I must wequest you not to say wats to me!"

"Rabbits, then! Anyway, I'm not coming."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, go and eat coke! I am going to wait for Dudley."

Arthur Augustus stepped forward and laid an anxious hand on his minor's shoulder.

"I should wegwet havin' to administah a feahful thwashin', Wally, but—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! I tell you I am going to wait for old Dud. What do you want, Tom Merry?"

The three friendly rivals, Tom Merry, Figgins, and Jack Blake, were pushing their way through the white-faced group of fags. They were walking directly towards D'Arcy minor.

"Collar his arm, Gussy!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"Look here, Gus, I'm not going to be ordered about—"

"You are coming to the study to talk things over, Wally," said Tom Merry quietly. "You've made a pretty fine hash of it. His other arm, Blake."

"He's as slippery as a young eel."

"Rescue!" panted Wally, struggling desperately. "It's got nothing to do with these old fogies! Rescue, Third!"

But the Third did not obey their leader for once in a way. They were too upset.

Wally glanced round him. There was no chance of escape, so he resigned himself to his fate.

"I'll come, then," he grumbled. "Fat lot of good it will do, I don't think!"

"We can talk mattahs ovah."

(Continued on page 14.)

MORE NOTES AND NEWS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! I've just been reading some of your letters to me about the new St. Frank's serial, and, believe me, it's given me a real "kick" to hear your enthusiastic comments on Mr. E. S. Brooks' latest effort. When I first talked over the broad outline of the plot of this story with Mr. Brooks, I felt sure it was a real winner, but that doesn't make any difference to the very great pleasure of knowing that you fellows think the same.

We editors are just like other folk in our appreciation of a "pat on the back," and I want to thank all you chaps who have written to me praising "The School From 'Down Under'!" Don't forget, too, that if you have any criticisms of the GEM, I am just as pleased to be told of them, for it's only by knowing your likes and dislikes that I can keep up the high standard of the old paper.

It isn't every editor that welcomes criticism, however helpful. Certainly the editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly" doesn't, for in next week's magnificent, long story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"WALLY'S WILY WHEEZE!"

it is Tom Merry's prompt refusal of Wally D'Arcy's "help" in editing the famous weekly that rouses D'Arcy minor's wrath and gives the leader of the St. Jim's fags the idea for a great jape by means of which to get his own back. What happens then makes a story full of fun and excitement, and it is written in Martin Clifford's best vein. Don't miss it—order your copy of the GEM to-day, and tell your pals about this treat in store for them!

The instalment of

"THE SCHOOL FROM 'DOWN UNDER'!"

which backs up this great St. Jim's yarn, is another tit-bit in next week's GEM

feast of fiction. The friendly "war" between Nipper & Co. and the Australian schoolboys is still going strongly, and next week's instalment is full of adventure—and surprises!

THE STAFF OF LIFE!

The saying that "bread is the staff of life" has a very real meaning for one W. B. Cooper, a London fellow whose hobby is rock-climbing, for a loaf of bread was recently the means of saving his life. Cooper, on holiday in the Lake District, was climbing Blea Crag, at Mouse Ghyll, with a party of friends, when he lost his foothold and dropped ninety feet down a sheer rock-face. He would have fallen farther had it not been for the rope linking him to the rest of the party, which held him fast.

At the end of the drop, Cooper landed with a bump on a ledge of rock. By all the laws of gravity, the impact should have broken half the bones in his body, but by a freak of luck he landed with his haversack—which had slipped—under him, and in that haversack was a loaf of bread. The bread acted as a cushion, broke the force of the fall, and saved the climber's life. What an escape!

THE SHIP THAT CAME BACK!

"Was there ever such a ship as the Flying Dutchman?" asked a reader the other day. The answer is "No," but there have been real-life stories of ships which matched the history of the legendary Flying Dutchman in their amazing adventures. One such was the W. G. Sargent, a schooner which was so badly damaged in a terrific storm off Virginia Capes, U.S.A., that the crew abandoned her, believing the vessel to be on the point of foundering. Far from sinking, the schooner weathered the rest of the storm, drifted about the Atlantic for several years, and she was not seen again until she

reached the coast of Spain. Then, just as she was about to be boarded by the seamen who spotted her, night fell, and the vessel disappeared into the darkness.

Where she went nobody knows, but she turned up again years later off the coast of America, and this time she was towed into harbour. It was found that the vessel had been prevented from sinking by her cargo of timber, and she was so little damaged that it was possible to refit her, and put her back into service again!

£5 DOG WORTH £105!

Sounds silly, that heading to this paragraph, doesn't it? But it's quite true! I'll explain. Not long ago, the wife of a doctor discovered she had lost a ring worth £100 from her bed-room. It was impossible for anyone to have broken in and stolen it, for she had only put it down for a few minutes. Yet a frantic search of the whole room produced no sign of the missing jewel.

High and low, the search went on. Even the pet dog of the household joined in the hunt. And then something about the dog aroused its mistress' curiosity—a curiosity that grew when she remembered that the dog had been the only other living thing in the room when the ring was lost. At last, the doctor put his dog under the X-ray—and the ring was found! Fido had swallowed it!

The ring is still inside the dog. It doesn't seem to worry him, or to interfere with his appetite; nor does he mind the daily X-ray examination of his "innards" to make sure the ring is still there. To all outward appearances, he's just a cocker-spaniel worth about £5—but to those "in the know" he's the dog with a £100 secret!

QUEER SWIMMING RECORDS.

Did you know that a swimmer has remained under water for no less than six minutes and twenty-nine and four-fifths seconds? That's a staggering feat when you realise that very few people can hold their breath for even a third of that time, let alone swim under water! The record-holder who achieved this amazing feat is M. Poulquien, of France, and although his record was made as far back as 1912, nobody has ever broken it.

The other big endurance record in swimming—that for length of time spent in the water—is held by an Indian, P. K. Ghose, who swam about continuously for over three days and nights on end—72 hours, 18 minutes, to be exact! He was fed while he swam, of course, but how he resisted the chill of the water and the fatigue of the exercise is beyond me!

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.

Patrick J. O'Donoghue, John's Gate Street, Wexford, Ireland, wants correspondents—especially in Llanelly.

Miss Mignon E. Russell, 49, Grove Road, Kencot, Half Way Tree, P.O., Jamaica, West Indies, wants girl correspondents in England, Canada, and Australia; interested in swimming and films; age 16-18.

Cecil Small, 43, Arthur Street, Dunedin, New Zealand, wants pen pals; preferably in the East.

Miss Edna Norman, 15, Hazelwell Road, Putney, London, S.W.15, wants girl correspondents; interested in sports, swimming, books; age 19-20.

Dallas Kirk, 166, Main Highway, Ellerslie, S.E.6, Auckland, New Zealand, wants a pen pal in Gibraltar or India; interested in stamps and match brands; age 10-12.

Miss Marcienne Kirk, 1, Seymour Street, Ellerslie, S.E.6, Auckland, New Zealand, wants a girl correspondent in India or China; interested in stamps; age 7-8.

Miss Helen Condie, 19, Crighton Place, Pilrig, Edinburgh, wants girl correspondents interested in films; age 14-16.

John McDaniel, 56, Castellain Mansions, Maida Vale, London, W.9, wants to hear from stamp collectors overseas.

Cyril S. Cressey, 52, Napier Road, Tottenham, London, N.17, wants correspondents in Africa, Egypt, South America, China; age 16-18.

D. Owen, 110, Chepstow Road, Newport, Mon., wants a pen pal in France or Canada who can speak French; age 14.

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TOM MERRY & Co.'s REGATTA!

(Continued from page 12.)

"But there aren't any matters to talk over, ass. You heard all there is to say in Hall just now. We went out to rag the Caleb bird, and a haystack caught alight. I never saw it myself, but some of the others did. Jolly big fire, Curly says it was."

But Wally's remarks had no effect. He was taken to Study No. 6 in grim silence.

Jack Blake shut the door after them, then turned on the Third Former bluntly.

"Did Dudley do it?"

D'Arcy minor lost his resentment at once, and a troubled expression flashed across his usually reckless young face.

"I don't know, Blake—honour bright, I don't. But I'm going to find out."

"Do you think he did it?"

Wally did not answer.

There was no proof that Dudley was the culprit, except that he had returned to the site of the fire. Curly Gibson and Jameson had met him running away from the haystack, certainly, and he admitted having hidden behind it, but that was not proof of guilt, and Wally refused to make up his mind until he had seen Dudley.

"It isn't like Dud, anyway," was all he could say.

"He was a bit of a waster once, wasn't he?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"It doesn't matter what a fellow was once. Anyway, I'm not saying I think Dud did it until I've seen him. And now I'm clearing out!"

"Wait a moment, Wally. As your eldah bwothah—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Wally! As your eldah bwothah, I must remark that I considah you have behaved in the most weckless mannah poss undah the cires—"

"Oh, shut up!"

And for once Arthur Augustus obeyed his minor, for the simple reason that Wally had slammed out of the room.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake looked at each other thoughtfully. It was the Shell junior who spoke first.

"This means the sack for Dudley, Jack."

"You think he did it?"

"I shall be jolly surprised if it turns out that he didn't," replied Tom Merry quietly. "In his heart Wally thinks so, too."

"Yaas, wathah! I noticed that myself."

"Oh, we all noticed it!" put in Figgins soberly. "Dudley is as good as sacked. Young rotter!"

"Poor beggar!" added Tom Merry. Figgins nodded.

"Yes, poor beggar as well," he said thoughtfully. "I expect he did it on the spur of the moment."

"Yaas, wathah! I twust he did, deah boys."

The others nodded, then silence reigned in Study No. 6.

None of them knew much about Dudley. He was not an attractive junior like Wally or Gibson or Jameson, but he was a St. Jim's fellow. And to Tom Merry & Co. that counted for a lot.

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No. 22. Vol. 1 (New Series).



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! Can you tell me who is the highest paid man in New York? No?

It's the fellow who paints the flagpole on top of the Empire State Building! Do you know how to get across a busy street in perfect safety? Carry a box marked in big letters: **EXPLOSIVES!** The air pilot whose parachute had failed to open staggered back to the shop with it. The assistant regarded him suspiciously. "This is the first time we've had a complaint about one of our parachutes not opening, sir," he said. Bear in mind that thin men may be honest, but fat ones can't stoop very low, either! I see a Chair of Humour is suggested at a University. Probably the sort of chair that isn't there when you sit down! Skimpole tells me he's taking a correspondence course in boxing. Nearly as bad as the contractor who built a prison wall to scale! Here's an easy one: How would you make a broomstick? Dip it in gum. Thank you! A man recently laughed for three hours without stopping. A stage comedy producer is eager to engage him to sit in the stalls! The school dentist tells me there is nothing more beautiful than a modern liner. I should have expected him to prefer a little tug! Now, quickly—which way do wireless waves travel? Either way! Gore read that if an escaped lunatic can elude capture for a fortnight he is free. Gore thinks his study-mate, Skimpole, must have been out some time now! In an after-dinner speech, an Eskimo described his rival in a few well-frozen words. Icy! "How To Cook Potatoes in a Nutshell" is the title of a new book. Another way is to use a saucepan. I've just been talking to Dame Taggles. She thought a "joint account" was the butcher's bill! A Rylcombe butcher was fined for using unjust scales. We trust he now sees the error of his weighs. Ow! The shipwrecked mariner sat on his desert isle, with nothing but a wireless set. "Hallo, everybody," came the announcer's voice. "Be sure and place your set where it won't annoy your neighbours!" A new ice-hockey rink is advertised as having seating accommodation for 20,000. Fall in and fall down! Did you hear about the wooden-legged man who stole and concealed a large sum of money in his wooden leg—but the police made him stump up! "My dear sir," said the professor to Farmer Blunt, "your methods are hopelessly out of date. I doubt whether you'll get ten pounds of apples from that tree!" "So do I, zur!" responded the farmer. "That be a pear tree, that be!" All the best, boys!

Blake and Co. were looking very "Har-rowed." They said Fatty Wynn had raided and "Eton" some tuck, with which they were going to picnic on the "Highlife," taking the path through the "Rookwood," past the monastery of the "Greyfriars." Blake said it was enough to make a "Saint" weep, but with a "Frank" smile he said they were going to find Wynn and duck him in the "Abbotsford"!

SAINTS v

FOR HEAD'S C

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

The record of the first St. Jim's v. Greyfriars match is lost in the mists of antiquity. We know the two schools met in 1792, when notches cut in a stick indicated the score. Greyfriars won, 14 notches to 10. Not a very impressive score—but better things are expected to-day. This is the annual match for the Head's Challenge Cup. Excitement is at such a pitch that it is a wonder the batsmen can hold their bats for nerves!

Here they come—Harry Wharton looking as cool as ever. He wins the toss and elects to bat. A perfect pitch. Sun and a slight breeze. Fatty Wynn bowling. Rumour has it that "Fatty" has perfected a new type of delivery, and is about to introduce it. Wharton meets the first delivery very coolly, as is his wont.

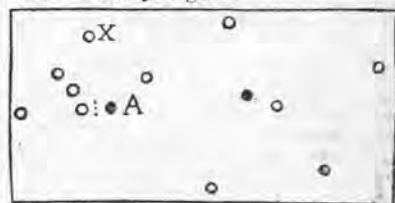
Snick! That's gone through the slips—Figgins flashing out a long arm a fraction too late. A "four" off the first ball! Wynn's new bowling is not having the desired effect. Everybody is restless, eager for a wicket—but no wicket falls! Wharton bats with impeccable skill, Bob Cherry slogs like Jessop at the other end. Fifty up. At seventy, when faces have become long, Bob Cherry gives a difficult catch to D'Arcy at mid-on. D'Arcy holds on to it—good old Gus! My major, you know!

Now the wickets are tumbling—good men scraping for runs, in contrast to the scene a few minutes ago! Last wicket falls to Fatty Wynn with the total at 103.

St. Jim's open with Blake and Figgins. They bat with caution against the cunning deliveries of Hurree Singh, the Greyfriars Nabob. "Inky's" stuff is as dangerous as Wynn's—nuff said! Blake goes, clean bowled. D'Arcy follows. Herries fails to stick—unusual for Herries! Kangaroo hits

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

The Blankshire XI (white circles) came out to field, and off the first ball the batsman marked "A" gave a catch. The fieldsman marked "X" knocked the ball up with his hands, but held it before it touched the ground. The Blankshire players appealed. What decision would you give?



Stop Press

Explosion at St. Jim's School, Sussex, early to-day. Believed to have been Knox's bellow of rage at finding his shoes filled with treacle.



Week ending July 14th, 1934.

'FRIARS CHALLENGE CUP

a couple of fours, and Figgins leaps into the picture—only a flash, though. Merry comes out at last, but seems off his stroke. The whole side is skittled out for a mere 45. Hurree Singh claims seven for 22.

'Friars are batting again. Wynn can't get a wicket, but he keeps the score down! Now he's struck his form—Wharton mistimes a "googly" and plays on to his own wicket! Peter Todd falls victim to Fatty's wiles. So does Vernon-Smith and Johnny Bull. Good old Fatty—bowling now like a champion—last wicket down at 56. Saints set 115 to win. Plenty of time if they can withstand Hurree Singh's bowling.

Merry opens with Blake. It takes cool nerves to face a bowler like that dusky wizard, when the eyes of your schoolfellows are on every move you make, and the Head's Cup is in the balance. Wharton shifts his field continually, closing up gaps and penning the batsmen in. He sets traps innumerable. Still Merry and Blake defend with skill and discretion. Now a change! Merry as skipper sets an example. A nice carpet-drive to the "on" boundary, and another to the "off." Nobody but an all-round-the-wicket batsman has a chance against the good fielding.

Blake goes with 10. Figgins backs up. Merry is set now. Figgins gets 23 and is snapped at the wicket. Tom Brown behind the stumps gives nothing away. Kangaroo bats well for St. Jim's—collecting a useful 17 before a catch sends him back. Herries sticks, enabling Merry to increase the total with accurately-placed drives. Nearing the hundred now—whooops, there she goes, a "six" to celebrate it! Two wickets in hand. The Head's Cup glints in front of the pavilion steps. Hurree Singh puts all he knows into his bowling—but Tom Merry, batting superbly, hits off the required runs—not out 51. Good man, Merry—the Cup's ours! Cheer, you chaps—cheer!

St. Jim's News Reel

Mr. Linton's close questioning re the Battle of Agincourt was not quite "cricket." Gore knew nothing of what happened on the "field," and was "stumped" when asked for the number of killed. He was "clean bowled" when Linton said his "slips" were inexcusable, and was thankful when "break" enabled him to "declare" his feelings!

Referring to St. Jim's v. Greyfriars, Lowther said: These "needle" matches "sharpen" the wits, and make one "razor-keen," while rendering one immune from "pin-pricks" and swift to seize on every "point."

George Gore claims he can bat as well with one hand as with two. We agree. It would probably look the same if Gore batted with his feet!

(Continued at foot of column 1.)

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

GERALD KNOX SPEAKING



Well, I've decided to speak to you after all, though it isn't a particularly dignified thing for a Sixth Form man and a prefect to get mixed up with fag pursuits and pastimes.

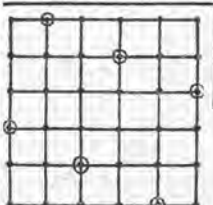
I'm consenting to appear only because I feel it's time somebody said a few words straight from the shoulder! This is addressed to you, Merry, as junior captain, and to all the other young bounders who follow your lead.

I know that I am usually presented in the light of a bully and cad. I know it's no good asking the cheeky young rascals of the Junior School to respect a prefect. From bitter experience I know that they're the most unruly lot of fellows a prefect could have to deal with! But I'm taking this opportunity of warning them that from now on I'm starting a big push—I'm going to keep the juniors right down where they belong, and we'll see if Gerald Knox isn't top dog after all! Why, it's disgusting the way I'm cheeked! Only this morning young Manners remarked as I was passing in my new sports suit: "What price that for a cheek?" And when I took him up on it, he had the nerve to pretend that he had been referring to a game of chess which he was playing with Kerr! The kid had the impudence to produce a pocket chess set as proof, and as Mr. Linton was passing, I had to take his word! If you're listening in just now, young Manners—watch your step!

Of course if I complain of insubordination, and demand a thrashing all round for the young sweeps, the Head will tell me that Kildare never makes any complaint, nor does Darrell, or Rushton, or Monteith. They can control juniors without trouble—so why can't I? The Head doesn't know how they all work together to score off me.

Oh, I'm not appealing to them—don't think that! While I can still wield my ash-plant I'm ready to give them as good as they send. As a matter of fact I'd rather have the excuse to hand out lickings to juniors than see the Head do it! He wouldn't lick them half hard enough!

Excuse me, somebody's knocking at my study door. Shan't be a moment—gerroooh! Gerroooh! Oh, jumping snakes! As I opened the door some little rotter squirted a beastly sticky mess right into my face. And I didn't catch sight of him! Gerroooh! Ow! Groo!



Solution to Last Week's Puzzle

CHAPTER 12.

To Leave St. Jim's!

"WHAT happened, Dudley?" The fags of the Third Form crowded round Dudley the moment he came from the Head's room. Dudley was rather white.

"He thinks I did it," he said roughly.

"Where's Wally?"

"In Study No. 6."

"My hat! Are you gated for the rest of the term, Dud?"

"No," answered the big Third Former; "but I expect my pater will be asked to take me away at the end of the term. I must see Wally."

He hurried off, leaving the Third Formers more scared than ever.

No one in the school was respected as much by the fags as Dr. Holmes. The fact that it might be possible for even the Head of St. Jim's to make a mistake did not present itself to the majority of the youngsters.

If Dr. Holmes was going to send Dudley away at the end of the term Dudley must have started the fire.

The Third Formers stood where they were in silence, until Wally's well-known voice hailed them.

"Has—has Dud come out, chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"He's gone to look for you."

"Then he must have taken the other corridor!" muttered Wally. "I expect he's gone to our room!"

And the scamp of the Third flashed away again.

He ran most of the distance, sending the study door open with a thud. Dudley was there all right, standing near the window. Wally came in quietly.

"What's the verdict, Dud?"

"I am to go at the end of the term, I think."

"Phew! The Head thinks you did it, then?"

Wally asked his question hesitatingly. Speaking falsely was considered as bad form in the Third as it was in the Sixth at St. Jim's, and Dudley had already told Wally he had not fired the haystack. Wally had a little of the tact and judgment his brother, so prided himself upon, only it was of a different brand.

He did not raise the point of whether Dudley were guilty or not.

"I—I am sorry, Dud."

The result of his words startled the leader of the Third.

"What do you mean by that?" flashed Dudley angrily. "What do you mean by saying you're sorry."

"I mean, I am sorry if you have to go."

"If?"

"You said you thought it would come to that, old chap," answered Wally in surprise. "I—I am partly to blame, too."

Dudley looked up quickly, but he did not answer.

"You see, it was my idea we should break bounds," went on D'Arcy minor. "Would—would it do any good if I went and told the Head that?"

"If you went and told him that breaking bounds was your idea?"

"Yes. I—I'm awfully sorry, Dud!"

"I don't want your pity!" cried Dudley angrily. "You can keep it for yourself."

There was something in Dudley's voice which astounded Wally. An almost aggressive note was there—a tone which D'Arcy minor would have resented at any other time.

But Dudley had always been a strange fellow.

The door opened, and Curly Gibson and Jameson came into the room.

The two other juniors took no notice of them. Wally felt rather uncomfortable for a moment or two.

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"I know pretty well how you're feeling, old chap!" he said. "And if there's anything on the face of the earth I can do to help—"

"Is there anything?"

"I—I don't know. Is there, Dud?"

"You cad!" shouted the big Third Former. "You hypocrite!"

And he strode from the room, his hands clenched and his lips trembling.

Wally, Curly Gibson, and Jameson looked after him in silent amazement.

They did not speak for a moment or two, then it was Jameson who broke the sudden silence.

"What did he call you a cad for, Wally?"

Wally shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows, but he's upset; and I don't wonder. Perhaps there's something we can do for him, and he doesn't like to ask us to do it."

"Something pretty obvious, you mean?"

Wally nodded.

"Something we ought to have seen at once. No, I don't think that is it, somehow. He's on the rocks, that's what it is, and he didn't think what he was saying."

"Anyway, he can't blame you just because it was your idea to jape Sir Caleb."

"And he must have been a cad himself to set fire to a haystack."

Wally went and sat down on the window-ledge.

"No; Dud isn't a cad," he said thoughtfully. "He never was that."

CHAPTER 13.

Dudley Hits Out!

OUT in the passage Dudley was walking at a great pace, making for the quadrangle. It would be quiet enough there, and for once in his school life the big Third Former wished to be alone.

He clenched his fists until the nails sunk painfully into the palms.

Then gradually he became cooler, and began to think of Wally.

He wished now he had not called him a cad. Any fellow who would consent to allow another to be punished for his fault was a cad, but the big Third Former wished he had not used the word. Curly Gibson and Jameson had been present. He ought to have thought of that at the time.

But it was no good doing things by halves. He must either go through with it or throw it up and tell Wally what he knew. But Wally had done so much for him—and Dudley thought of that, too.

Wally had chummed in with him when he had been in that most lonely state in the world—one by himself in a crowd. The act itself had not been much, but the result had been great.

It had meant more than anything else in the world could have meant to him at the time.

Dudley was not a good-looking youngster. There was not a great deal of intelligence showing in his face, for one thing, but his mouth and chin were very strong. They looked stronger than ever now.

He must go through with this, he reasoned. And, after all, it would not mean so much to him. He could tell his father the whole story in confidence—Captain Dudley was a man you could tell things to in confidence—and then his parents' worry would not last so very long.

And he would have repaid Wally a hundredfold.

He clenched his hands again at that. Wally had acted caddishly. Why hadn't he owned up to the fellow who meant to stand the racket for him—a decent chap would have done that, at least. But to pretend to be sorry!

That was where Dudley's real resentment lay. He would have liked to have knocked Wally down.

And to have to leave St. Jim's!

It was not going to be so easy to carry it through, after all.

"Row up, chaps, for the finish!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway show Cousin Ethel what we can do, deah boys!"

The Chums of Study No. 6 bent to their work.

In the stern of their dainty racing-boat sat Cousin Ethel. She was steering the boat, and brought her up to the landing-stage splendidly.

Jack Blake helped her out.

"Are we better than Tom Merry's crew, Cousin Ethel?" he asked anxiously.

Ethel had steered the School House Fourth Formers for a long pull, and half an hour before she had taken Tom Merry's boat over the same course. Her opinion would be worth a lot to the Study No. 6 juniors.

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"You don't row so badly," she admitted.

"Bai Jove—"

"And Tom Merry's crowd don't row so badly, either."

"Weally—"

"Rather!"

"Then I am afraid you will have to wait until Regatta Day," said Cousin Ethel, pleasantly. "There is Figgins & Co. waiting for me to steer them now."

And she hurried away.

The juniors of Study No. 6 grinned ruefully.

It was difficult work trying to find out what Cousin Ethel really thought about the rowing when she had made up her mind to keep her opinion secret. Jack Blake turned away with a laugh.

"Jolly decent of her to steer us at all, anyway!" he exclaimed. "Can't she steer, too!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"She's going to take Figgy over the same course, by the look of it."

"Yaas, wathah! I pwopose we wun like anythin', and watch them pass down the mill!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Of course, Figgay & Co. aren't to be considered in the same sweet as our cweu, but you nevah know in wovin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!"

And the four flashed along the river-bank.

Figgins & Co. and the Terrible Three had been watching Blake & Co.'s practice closely enough. It was only fair the chums of Study No. 6 should now see if there was anything to be learned from the way Figgins' ship stood the cross-wind at the mill.

They reached the spot before the New House boat was under way. Jack Blake glanced round.

"May as well drop down amongst the bracken," he grinned, wrapping his blazer closer round him. "They'll think we're just taking a breather, then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We don't won't them to get swelled heads through thinking we are watching them."

"Rather not!"

They dropped down on the soft ferns. It was very peaceful and pleasant to be there after their hard pull.

Presently a rhythmic swish in the water below them told of the rivals' approach. In spite of his previous decision to the contrary, Jack Blake jumped to his feet.

Cousin Ethel was steering a beautiful course, and Figgins & Co. were rowing a beautiful stroke.

The long-limbed leader of the New House juniors had a wonderful reach, and it was fortunate for the welfare of the crew that Kerr, French, and Pratt were able to answer to it.

The boat flashed past the mill at a great pace, and Jack Blake watched them anxiously.

"My hat! Haven't they come on, chaps!"

"Nothing like the same crew they were a week ago!"

"Good old Figgy!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle deeper into his eye. "Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove! There's my minah, deah boys!"

"And young Dudley!" added Jack Blake, as the New House boat was lost to sight rounding the bend. "What are they up to?"

The Fourth Formers watched them curiously from the distance.

There were three or four fags with D'Arcy minor, and apparently they had just come upon Dudley, leaning against the gate.

How it all exactly happened, Jack Blake could not see, but from where he stood it looked as if Dudley suddenly landed out with his fist and struck Wally in the chest.

It was a heavy blow, and it sent D'Arcy minor staggering. "Gweat Scott! Did you see that, deah boy?"

Jack Blake stepped forward, shrugging his shoulders.

"A split in the cabinet!" he exclaimed. "There'll be a fight over this! Hallo, Dudley is clearing off!"

"Pewwaps Wally has thweatened to administah a feahful thwashin', deah boy!"

"Why didn't the kid go for him?"

"It's not like Wally to take a blow and not return it. Still, it's no concern of ours. Let's get going."

And the chums of Study No. 6 moved on.

CHAPTER 14.

For The Sake of His Chum!

PRESENTLY, continuing their stroll, Blake & Co. met Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. At the same moment Arthur Augustus stopped dead.

"Pway excuse me, deah boys, but I-feah I shall have to wun away!"

"Good!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Excellent!"

"Bai Jove, Mannahs! Howevah, I see you are only waggin', and I must hewwy, because—"

"Shall we see you later?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Blow!" grinned the humorist of the Shell.

He was rewarded with a look of disfavour from D'Arcy, as the elegant Fourth Former stalked off.

On any other occasion, Gussy would have remonstrated with Lowther, but there was no time now. He felt certain he had caught sight of Sir Caleb Ashton's keeper, Barlow, amongst the trees.

"Bai Jove, I was wight, too. Barlow, pway stop a moment or two!"

The keeper started, then hurried up to meet the swell of St. Jim's.

"I've been lookin' for you, sir!"

"Have you weally, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in surprise.

"Yes, sir. I wanted to know if you could tell me what has happened to the young gentleman Greaves caught last night?"

"Dudley? I am wathah afwaid he may have to leave at the end of the term!"

"Leave at the end of the term? Not expelled?"

"Well, not quite that, pewwaps," answered Arthur Augustus seriously. "Something wathah wotten, though!"

"But there isn't any proof he did it. Sir Caleb himself said there wasn't!"

"Did he weally, bai Jove!"

"It's a shame if he's sent away without proof!"

"Yaas, wathah; but we can twust the Head not to do that!"

"I—I'd like to know how it goes on, sir."

"Bai Jove, that's vewy wippin' of you, Barlow!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. He paused, catching sight of a figure not far off. "Look! That's Dudlay, ovah there, walking by himself!"

The young keeper looked across the field, but Dudley did not glance their way. He had seen them, but he did not want to stop.

He walked on until he came to a lane which led from the high road. There was an ancient tree-stump there, covered with the names of past St. Jim's fellows, and Dudley sat down on it.

It would not be so long before he would be a past St. Jim's chap, he reflected.

But he did not commence to carve his name; he had not come there to do that. Instead, he looked dully at the names without reading them.

"Bother it! I'm always wishing I hadn't done something or other!" he mused. "I wish I hadn't struck Wally!"

The minutes slipped by. Barlow, the young gamekeeper, passed along the road at the head of the lane, and Sir Caleb's huge motor-car raised a storm of dust not long afterwards.

Dudley hardly noticed it, then suddenly he became aware of the fact that he was not alone in the lane.

He turned hastily to see Cousin Ethel standing a few yards away.

"I have been waiting for you to notice me, Dudley," she said quietly.

"I am sorry," muttered the Third Former. "I wasn't thinking—"

"Or rather—you were thinking about the trouble over the haystack," said Cousin Ethel, looking at the youngster's white face. "Oh, Dudley, how could you be so reckless?"

"I—I—"

Dudley jumped to his feet.

The girl looked at him curiously.

"Sir Caleb said you denied doing it," she said. "Did you?"

"Yes."

"But you did do it?"

Dudley did not answer for a moment, then he coloured to the roots of his hair.

"No, I didn't do it, Miss Cleveland, but I don't suppose you will believe that."

"Why don't you suppose so?"

"Because—because no one else does."

Cousin Ethel smiled again.

"That isn't a very good reason, Dudley," she said quietly.

"If you did not actually set fire to the hay, you must know who did—you must be shielding someone."

Dudley started violently.

Cousin Ethel was a year or two older than he was, and she was a girl, with a girl's intuition and understanding. The fag's embarrassment told her a good deal.

"Dudley, you are shielding someone!"

The Third Former tried to answer her, but there was no answer to give. The Head had raised the point himself, but Dudley had managed to gloss over that for a time. It was different with Cousin Ethel.

"I heard that you would have to leave at the end of the term," went on the girl chum.

"I expect it will come to that."

"But why? Won't Dr. Holmes take your word that you did not do it?"

"I—I wouldn't give him my word," answered Dudley, in a low voice. "I did say it wasn't me at first, but I wouldn't give any information. That's why I shall have to leave."

"I see!" answered Cousin Ethel softly.

"Yes; but you won't tell anyone, will you?"

"Someone ought to be told. It's a shame! The other boy must be a cad."

"No, he isn't that," exclaimed Dudley, using the same words Wally had used about himself. "Not quite, anyway! Will you please promise not to tell, Miss Cleveland?"

"Oh, Dudley, you ought not ask me to give a promise like that!"

"But I do, Miss Cleveland!" persisted the Third Former excitedly. "You will?"

"I suppose so, if you ask me."

"Thanks awfully!" muttered Dudley. "And it doesn't matter. I believe the Head half thinks I am shielding someone as it is—the chap who did it with me. I—I had better be going."

"Good-bye!" went on Cousin Ethel. "I am sorry, Dudley!"

Dudley went without answering.

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CHAPTER 15.

A Strange Meeting!

"IT is only a mattah of about twenty minutes, deah boys—"

"Rats!" said Digby.

"We aren't going to wait twenty seconds, let alone twenty minutes," added Herries.

Jack Blake moved towards the door of Study No. 6. "Weally, Blake, you must wait. It is uttably imposs for me to wow on the wivah with tah on my vest. I will wush upstairs and change my attiah instantly."

"You can please yourself about that," said Jack Blake firmly. "We're going down to the river at once. If you aren't there by the time we get the boat afloat you'll find us gone, with Reilly in your place."

"Hear, hear!" said Reilly heartily. "Shure, and you couldn't do better, me bhoys!"

"Wats, Weilly—uttah wats!"

Jack Blake flung open the door.

"Come on, chaps!"

And the four of them hurried from the room.

Arthur Augustus hesitated. He felt that the fact that there was a smear of tar on his rowing vest would spoil his rowing, but on the other hand, he knew Jack Blake had meant what he said.

"I shall have to wun like anythin'!" mused Arthur Augustus, racing upstairs. "Jack Blake has left me no othah resource but to considah his action unwiendly in the extweme. It would have been uttably imposs for me to wow like that!"

He changed hastily enough, but then his hair had to be done again, and that was always a long task with the swell of St. Jim's. A good ten minutes had gone by the time he was ready to leave the college.

He started off at a brisk run, taking in deep breaths of crisp morning air.

"Bai Jove, this is weally wippin'. I shall wow like anythin' this mornin'!"

He ran on, rounding a bend in fine style. Then he gave vent to a yell. He had brought up against something with a resounding bump.

He staggered back, his monocle falling from his eye.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Bless me 'at! I'm sorry, sir."

"Bai Jove, it's Barlow, isn't it? I twust I haven't hurt you, deah boy!"

The gamekeeper grinned slightly. He went twelve stone in boxing attire, and Arthur Augustus was not a substantially built junior.

"No, you haven't hurt me, sir—"

"Bai Jove, that's all wight, then!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I am all in a fluttah. Howevah, I must huwwy like anythin'."

"Yes, sir, nice mornin', isn't it, sir?"

"Wathah—wippin' in the extreme as a mattah of fact. Howevah I shall have to wun."

"Are—are things pretty quiet at the school, sir?"

"Yaas, wathah. Only a few fellows have wisen from their beds yet."

Barlow looked uneasy.

If Arthur Augustus had been in less of a hurry to get down to the river he must have noticed it.

"I meant—has anything else happened about that—that haystack business, sir?" added Barlow. "About Master Dudley?"

"Bai Jove! I haven't heard of anythin' happenin'—but pway excuse me as I am in a wetched huwwy."

"Cheeri-ho, Gussy!"

The cheery hail from behind caused Arthur Augustus to turn.

"Bai Jove! All weady, Tom Mewwy, deah boy?"

"Do I look as if I am still in bed, ass?"

Before Gussy could answer, Tom Merry & Co. came up with a ran.

"Talk about early birds," grinned Manners, tucking his sweater closer round his neck. "We've been up for hours in the gym."

"Looking for worms," exclaimed Lowther pleasantly. "We've just found one—How are you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove, weally, deah boy—"

"Oh, don't apologise," chuckled Tom Merry. "I say, though, have you heard about Dudley?"

"No, wathah not—"

"He's leaving at once—to-day, someone said."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Not—not expelled Master Merry?"

Tom Merry glanced at the gamekeeper before answering.

"Not very far from it, anyway," he said soberly. "It seems the Head wrote to Dudley's pater, saying he had better leave at the end of the term, and Dudley's pater has

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wired that he is to leave at once. Best thing for the kid, I say."

"Yaas, wathah. Undah the cires I am wathah inclined to agree with you, deah boy. However, I must say I wegard the mattah as wotten in the extweme."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's all that," he said; "but I don't see that you can blame the Head."

"If chaps will go about doing rotten things like setting haystacks on fire, they must face the music."

"Yaas, wathah, Mannahs, deah boy. Bai Jove, but I must go. I shall have to wun."

"I'll come along with you, if you don't mind, sir," put in Barlow.

"I'm afraid it is quite imposs, Barlow, as I shall have to wun—"

"I don't mind running, sir."

"Bai Jove! Well, if we walk vewy quickly, I wathah fancy it will be all wight. Jack Blake will never be so uttably weckless to attempt to take the boat out without me there to look aftah them. See you latah, Tom Merry, deah boy."

"Right-ho, dear ass!"

"See you on Wegattah Day."

"Rather, but you won't see us for long," called out Lowther cheerily. "Just catch a glimpse of us as we flash past."

"Wats—uttah wats! Howevah, I have no time to pwove you are wong, Lowthah. We shall have to huwwy like anythin', Barlow."

"Right-ho, sir."

Arthur Augustus glanced up at the gamekeeper. He was a little surprised that Barlow should be so anxious to walk down the river with him. It was out of his way if he were going back to Sir Caleb's place.

"Pewwaps he is keen on wowin', though," thought the swell of St. Jim's, adding aloud: "I twust you will be able to take a day off for the vegatta, Barlow."

"Ye-es!"

"There will be some wippin' waces."

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

Silence fell between them again. Arthur Augustus could not make it out.

He tried again.

"Have you evah done any wowin', deah boy?"

"No, sir; I've never had a chance. I say, sir—"

"Yaas! Pway go on!"

"Is—there any chance that Dr. Holmes may change his mind about Master Dudley?" asked the young gamekeeper.

"It's a pretty bad thing for a boy to be sent away from a Public school, isn't it, sir?"

"Yaas, wathah! Wotten! I am afraid the mattah is settled for Dudley, though."

"You don't think the Head may change his mind?"

"Wathah not, I wegwet to say. You see, Barlow, we are all afraid Dudley did set fire to the hay."

"I see, sir," answered Barlow. "Well, I—I think I'll turn down here."

And he walked off, taking a lane which led to Sir Ashton's estate.

Arthur Augustus looked after him, considerably surprised.

"Bai Jove! I considah him wathah a wippah, though. He appeahs weally twoubled about young Dudley—"

"Steady, there; we'll give the young ass three more seconds."

The words came to Arthur Augustus on the light morning breeze, and there was no mistaking Jack Blake's voice.

Arthur Augustus forgot about Barlow and his concern for Dudley. The honour of the Fourth Form of the School House had to be considered.

"Bai Jove! I believe the wottahs are startin'—Blake, deah boy—pway wait!"

And the swell of St. Jim's dashed across the field.

The boat was already afloat, but the crew not yet in their places. Reilly had the rudder under his arm.

Jack Blake looked severely across the field.

"Just in time, ass," he said crisply. "We were just going on without you. Tumble in!"

And the juniors took their places for one of Jack Blake's punishing pulls up the river.

CHAPTER 16.

The Mystery!

"HERE come the Fourth Form kids!"

Tom Merry spun round and looked critically across the quadrangle.

Jack Blake & Co. certainly looked very fresh and fit after their long pull. They came towards the Shell juniors with cheery grins.

"Ripping on the river, young Merry."

"Rather! Let's hope Regatta Day turns out like this!"



"Ah, it was you, was it?" The next moment a grasp fell on Dudley's shoulder. "Thought you'd come back to see the damage you'd done, eh?" said the keeper. The fag, in returning for Wally's cap, was fairly caught.

observed the hero of the Shell cheerily. "Is Figgins on the water?"

"Came off soon after we did. Here he comes."

"Good!" exclaimed Maumers. "We can settle about the race once and for all."

Jack Blake nodded.

As far as he could see the matter was settled for them. It would have to be carried out on bumping principles, a spin of the coin to decide which boat should lead.

It was rather a come-down from the real thing, but that could not be helped.

"Have the fags been out as well?" asked Lowther, glancing towards the knot of Third Formers talking in lowered voices. "A bit bowled over by the Dudley affair, aren't they?"

"Yaas, wathah; and the ewew is all to pieces without Dudley."

"Here come the young idiots!"

There were about eleven of the fags—the party, with one exception, which had visited Sir Caleb's woods. The one exception was leaving St. Jim's that morning.

"Dudley goes by the ten o'clock train," said Wally quietly. "Poor old Dud."

"Yaas, wathah; are you goin' to see him off?"

"Rather—at least, the others are. He cuts me, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"Have you got permission to go to the station?" asked Tom Merry. "Better to get it from the Head than Selby."

Wally nodded.

"Not much chance of Selby giving it, you bet; he likes Dud about as much as he likes me."

Someone was crossing the quadrangle in flowing gown. Arthur Augustus peered through the sunlight, shading his eye.

"Bai Jove! Here comes the Head, deah boy."

"Good egg! You ask, Curly."

Curly Gibson nodded and waited for the Head to approach. Dr. Holmes came up rather hurriedly.

"Good-morning, boys! Training for the races?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, we have just come fwom the wivah."

"That's the way," answered the Head of St. Jim's kindly.

"D'Arcy minor, where is Dudley?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Well, will you tell him to come to my room before he leaves," answered Dr. Holmes, watching the approach of two figures. "Dear me, can you see who that is, Merry?"

Tom Merry looked.

"Sir Caleb Ashton, I think, sir."

"So it is. Humph!"

A frown settled on Dr. Holmes' face. He was becoming tired of Sir Caleb's perpetual visits during the last day or so. They were usually the forerunners of unpleasant events.

Sir Caleb came up hurriedly, and the man who was with him was the gamekeeper, Barlow.

Wally started and tried to look unconcerned. Had something else happened on that unfortunate night in the woods?

But the scamp of the Third was not long left in suspense.

"Can I speak to you for a moment or two, Dr. Holmes?"

"Yes, Sir Caleb; will you come into the college?"

"I would rather say what I have to say here, sir, if you have no objection—before these boys," replied Sir Caleb, who was obviously upset. "Barlow, tell Dr. Holmes what you have just told me."

The gamekeeper stepped forward. He was rather pale, but seemed steady enough.

The Head started.

"It wasn't Master Dudley who set fire to the hay, sir."

"Not Dudley! Then who was it? Explain instantly, please."

"It was I, sir."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

If the penalty had been instant annihilation, D'Arcy minor could not have suppressed the exclamation. He was staring blankly at the gamekeeper.

The expression on Dr. Holmes' face was one of blank amazement.

"I—I do not understand, Barlow."

"It was simple enough, sir. I—I had a lantern in the woods. Perhaps some of the young gentlemen saw it?"

"Rather!" gasped Wally in wild excitement.

"Well, sir, it was doing our side more harm than good," went on the gamekeeper. "I was pretty excited, or I would have turned it out, but somehow I never thought of that. I—I put it down near the haystack, sir, when I caught sight of one of the young gentlemen running across the field."

"That would be Dud!" gasped Jameson and Curly Gibson together.

"Most likely it was. I must have been mad to put the lantern near the hay; it must have fallen over," said the gamekeeper, meeting the Head's eyes pretty steadily considering the circumstances. "I ran after Master Dudley, and then I caught sight of the flames behind me."

"Of course, I went back, sir, as hard as I could, but it was too late. Some of the oil had run out of the lantern, and the hay was well alight. I—I then did something I'm real ashamed of, sir."

"What was that, Barlow?" asked the Head of St. Jim's sternly.

"I hid the lantern, sir."

There was dead silence at that. Wally was trembling with excitement, but even he had nothing to say for the moment.

It was Sir Caleb who spoke first.

"And I am partly to blame, Dr. Holmes," he said quietly. "It appears Barlow was afraid he might lose his place, and he has a widowed mother. It has come as a very severe and unpleasant surprise to me to learn that I am viewed with such fear by the men I employ."

Arthur Augustus looked up. He could not quite wonder at that view on the part of Sir Caleb's servants. The incident of his fall in the river was still fresh in the Fourth Former's mind.

THE CONVICT'S DOWNFALL.



Dear Old Lady: "My poor man, I suppose you were tempted and fell?"

Convict: "Yes, mum, I was tempted by a handbag, and fell over a blinking dog!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Illingworth, 6, Gretton Houses, Globe Road, Bethnal Green, London.

"Barlow, this is a very serious matter. You were willing to cover up a pure accident by allowing a boy to be suspected of what amounts to a crime."

"No, sir, not quite that."

"But—"

"I never thought anyone would be suspected. It was an accident, only it wouldn't be known who had done it. It was a pretty low-down trick, though, sir."

"But Dudley might have been expelled!"

Barlow did not answer. He was not given the time, for Arthur Augustus answered for him.

"Bai Jove, I don't think that would evah have happened, sir. I believe Barlow would have owned up, as he has been askin' me about the affair on every occasion poss."

"And he has owned up now," put in Sir Caleb.

Dr. Holmes still looked very puzzled.

"It is an extraordinary affair, and I do not understand it at all. Dudley would give me no information. Surely he was not shielding you, Barlow?"

"No, sir; I don't think he knows me."

"D'Arcy minor, can you explain this?"

Wally shook his head.

"I can't understand Dudley at all these last two days, sir," he exclaimed doubtfully. "He's been acting awfully strange."

"Great Scott!"

"What is the matter, D'Arcy?"

The Head followed the junior's surprised glance across the quadrangle. A tall, rather shambling youngster was slinking along by the wall, carrying a bag.

It was Dudley.

Wally knew the fellow who was to have left that day better than any of the others, and understood. The train Dudley was to leave by went at ten o'clock; it was only eight o'clock now, but the big Third Former was slipping away so as to avoid good-byes. That was very like Dudley.

"Please, sir, Dudley won't have to leave now?" gasped Wally.

"No, of course not, but—"

"Hurrah!" yelled the scamp of the Third. "Come on, chaps!"

And the eleven fags pelted across the quadrangle in a flash.

CHAPTER 17.

All's Well That Ends Well!

DUDLEY coloured as he caught sight of the Third Formers approaching. He would have to say good-bye after all.

He caught sight of Wally, and drew himself erect.

"Dudley!"

"Dud!"

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Wally was well ahead. He dashed up excitedly.

"You frabjous ass, Dud!"

Dudley's eyes flashed.

"I haven't anything to say to you, D'Arcy. I wonder you care to stop me."

"My only Aunt Jane! What are you raving about now?"

"Let me get past!" said Dudley angrily. "Look here—"

Just then Curly Gibson and Jameson dashed up.

"Won't he stop, Wally?" asked Curly.

"Blessed if I know what's up with the young ass," replied Wally. "Look out!"

Dudley was trying to slip away again. The approaching fags were just too quick for him.

He was surrounded in an instant.

"Take his bag from him!"

"Bring him along to the gym, you chaps!"

Dudley struggled desperately.

"Look here, D'Arcy—I'll punch your head, Jameson. All right, you rotters!"

His struggles had little effect upon the Third Formers. They rushed him along at a great pace, and were out of the quadrangle before Dr. Holmes had realised what was going to happen.

With a thud, Wally sent the gymnasium door flying open. Then they gathered round Dudley in great excitement.

"Of all the frabjous young asses! Dudley, you aren't to go after all."

Dudley had lost his temper. He stared at Curly Gibson, without quite understanding.

"I haven't to go? Don't talk rot. I had a letter from my pater saying I was to come home at once."

"Rats! You aren't to leave at all!"

Dudley started. He was staring at Wally now. Perhaps Wally had owned up at the eleventh hour.

But Wally was chuckling in huge glee. He did not look like a fellow who had just owned up to something that meant expulsion.

Dudley stepped up to him.

"Have you owned up, Wally?"

"Owned up? What do you mean, duffer? I never knew that—"

"Barlow owned up, Dud," shouted Jameson, who had not heard Dudley's whispers. "Came and owned up like a sportsman."

"Barlow? What do you mean? Who is Barlow, anyway?"

"One of Sir Caleb's gamekeepers. It was he who set fire to the hay—upset a lantern, or something of that sort."

"A gamekeeper upset a lantern?"

"Yes, ass. And why you have been goating about and generally playing the ass, goodness knows!" exclaimed Curly Gibson. "We all thought you must be off your rocker."

Dudley drew Wally aside, his chin set.

"Look here, D'Arcy, what's it all about?" he exclaimed quickly. "You know it was you who set fire to the haystack!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"What's he raving about now, Wally?"

"He's just accusing me now of burning the haystack," gasped Wally. "Hang it all Dud!"

Dudley looked bewildered. The expression of amazement on D'Arcy minor's face would have convinced anyone.

"W-wasn't it you, Wally?"

"How could it have been Wally when Barlow has just owned up, ass?" said Jameson indignantly. "Of all the shrieking duffers—"

"But—but you were near the haystack that night, Wally."

"Rats! I never saw a beastly haystack."

"You were crouching down doing something in the loose hay. I saw you, Wally."

The scamp of the Third looked bewildered. For a moment he thought Dudley must be light-headed, or something.

"Don't talk such piffle."

"But—"

Dudley's voice faltered. Bending down, he unfastened his bag and began rummaging amongst the few hastily packed contents instead.

The others watched him with growing amazement, not untinged with alarm.

Suddenly Dudley brought to view a rather scorched cap.

"Where did you lose that, then?" demanded the big Third Former.

"My only Aunt Jane! Where did you find it? That's the point."

"By the burnt haystack."

Wally stared; and everyone else stared at him. Most of them remembered having heard Wally speak of his lost cap.

"I—I haven't the faintest notion where I lost it," exclaimed the scamp of the Third. "It blew off when I was running away from the keepers. My aunt! You say you saw me groping about on the ground?"

"In the loose hay."

"There wasn't any hay there—at least, I never saw any. Phew! You must have seen me looking for the blessed cap. About how long was I groping about?"

"Only a few seconds. Less than a minute, I should say." "That was it! I had to bunk like anything on account of Barlow coming up," exclaimed Wally breathlessly. "Did you find the cap directly I dropped it?"

"No. I didn't find that until just before I was caught by Greaves."

"During your second visit there," said Wally, looking straight into Dudley's eyes. "I suppose you went to look for the cap, Dud?"

"I went to try to prove whether you'd told a lie about not having seen the haystack."

Wally still looked puzzled.

"The haystack fairly knocks me, kids," he admitted. "I never saw anything like a haystack."

Jameson suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"My aunt, I have it! There is a clump of bushes there. You know, we noticed them yesterday, when we went to see what damage was done. Perhaps you were on the other side of the bushes, Wally."

Dudley started.

It was quite likely some of the bushes may have been between Wally and the haystack, and the fact that he was on the ground looking for his cap would have prevented him seeing over them.

Dudley went pink.

It all seemed so very simple now. Even if there had been no bushes it was quite possible Wally might have failed to notice the haystack in the excitement of the moment. If there were some trees behind it—and Dudley remembered there were now—to form a dark background, it was probable he would have missed seeing it.

The big Third Former turned from pink to deep crimson.

"I—I am sorry, Wally!"

"And I'm glad—jolly glad you're not going. Rather! Three cheers for Dud!"

In the middle of the wildly excited cheers Dr. Holmes arrived on the scene. There was a smile on his kindly, splendid face.

"I want you to come to my room, Dudley," he said quietly. "I see you have heard most of the news. At once, please! Boys, I am pleased to tell you that Sir Caleb Ashton has withdrawn his request that the races shall not take place on the river in front of his estate. On the contrary, he now hopes they will take place there."

A few more cheers went up, then Green, the youngest Third Former, pushed his way past D'Arcy minor.

"And you will row for us, after all, Dud?" he exclaimed anxiously. "We aren't half the crew without you."

Dudley grinned, rather sheepishly.

"Rather—if there's still a place for me!"

CHAPTER 18.

Regatta Day!

"**B**AI Jove! This is wippin'—wippin' in the extreme!"

Arthur Augustus spoke enthusiastically. He was standing in the doorway of St. Jim's boathouse, a small crowd of other juniors with him.

There were more fellows at the water's edge, and still more in flannels, lying in the bottom of boats, waiting for the regatta to begin.

For nearly a mile down the river the banks were lined with onlookers, the gaily coloured sunshades of the ladies lending an added charm to the always beautiful Rhyl.

The juniors were anxiously awaiting the sound of the gun.

The first race on the programme was the Third Form crew against the Glynside Third Form, and it was likely to prove a close match.

"Bai Jove, isn't this gweat, deah boys?"

"Ripping, and no mistake."

"Couldn't have been a better day."

A crisp pistol report cut through the still air, and the juniors crowded near the water's edge, for the boathouse was the winning-post for Third Form races.

The fags were rowing splendidly. There was little to choose between the crews, but Wally had set a stroke that was a fraction slower than his rivals, and his crew were longing for him to quicken. Through the glasses Tom Merry could see that there was a desperate expression on Dudley's face.

No stroke that Wally could have set would have been too quick for Dudley that day. Dudley felt as if he could have rowed behind Kildare, even.

The Glynside crew were creeping ahead. There was half a length between the boats now; then Wally caught sight of something he had been looking for all along. It was a white gate in a field just off the river bank.

That was Wally's spurting point.

He quickened until Curly Gibson and Jameson were gasping.

But they stuck to their work magnificently. Dudley had the advantage in weight and age, and Wally in science, but there was not a great deal in it when it came to pluck. Curly Gibson and Jameson would only stop spurting when they found themselves at the bottom of the boat.

Still, it was not to come to that. The lead Glynside College had gained gradually decreased; cheers went up, then came the loud crack of the pistol.

The race was over, and Wally's boat was home by less than a foot.

The cheering became terrific. The close thing was just the one thing needed to start the regatta well.

But nearly all the races that afternoon were to be close, for No. 2 race on the programme was settled by less than half a length.

It was a single-sculling race—Kildare, college captain, against Monteith, head prefect of the New House.

Kildare was considered a School House man, so the affair had evolved itself into quite a House contest, as far as the juniors were concerned.

Tom Merry and Figgins shouted their respective favourite's name unceasingly, and the row was deafening.

The race was worth it, though—the beautiful river skiffs cutting through the water in a manner that held the glance. Dead level they rode for three-quarters of the long course, then Kildare drew ahead.

Monteith spurted at the finish, but he never quite recovered the lost water, and the pistol sounded for Kildare.

"What did I tell you, Figg?"

"School House—School House!"

"Rats!"

"Did you say wats to me, Figgay—"

"Rather, kid!" grinned Figgins. "You wait until our race comes off. You'll see who is Cock House then. The seniors don't really count."

The argument subsided. Figgins was right in the main. Seniors scarcely counted in the perpetual warfare which waged between the two Houses.

But there were to be two more races before item No. 5 on the programme was rowed.

The first was a senior pair-oared race. Two New House prefects turned the tables on a School House pair, winning by less than a length.

Then came the senior eight race against Glynside College, and this event St. Jim's won fairly easily. The result was expected, but the enthusiasm was there just the same.

Then the scoring-board showed item No. 5.

It was the rival Co.'s race at last.

CHAPTER 19.

The Great Race!

"**B**AI Jove! Where is Cousin Ethel, deah boys?"

Jack Blake pushed open the boathouse door.

"Down by the winning-post, of course. Hallo! What's this?"

A slip of paper had been pinned on the door. Jack Blake took it down.

There were only a few words written on it, and Jack Blake read the message aloud:

"Don't forget the prize.—(Signed) ETHEL CLEVELAND."

"Don't forget the prize! No, wathah not!" said

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Arthur Augustus, removing his blazer. "I pwopose we wow like anythin', deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The four juniors, with Reilly as cox, were already very excited, but they were calm enough to take care of their boat as they lifted her down from the trestles.

"Steady, there! My hat, doesn't she shine!"
Jack Blake grinned. He had oiled and polished the boat the night before.

She was in perfect order.
"Get on with the washing, chaps! The others are on the water."

But there was plenty of time yet. A swimming race had just commenced, in which Kildare and Monteith were doing great things against the Glynside College pair.

"Steady, there! Bai Jove! Shall I cawwy the wuddah, Weilly, and you take this end of the boat?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Right-ho, kid!"

"Thanks, awfully, deah boy! I shall wequiah a gweat deal of stwength latah on, dawning the wace, and it is fatiguin' work cawwyin' the boat!"

"Tom Merry & Co. are afloat—"

"And Figgins!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway huwwy, deah boys!"

The dainty racing boat was afloat at last. Reilly knelt down and fixed his rudder. Oars were got into place; then Jack Blake gave the word.

"All in!"

And the juniors of Study No. 6 took their places gingerly. Their light boat rolled as if she would never carry them all.

But that was before they could make use of the oars. Once they were paddling out to mid-stream she was steady enough.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins had already tossed up for positions, Blake having won the middle station.

Figgins and Tom Merry were as excited as he was.

"Did you get a note from Cousin Ethel, chaps?" asked Tom Merry, as they paddled to the start.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"Ours was fastened to the boat," grinned the hero of the Shell.

"She sent a junior fag with one for us," said Figgins.

There was no need to ask the contents of the notes. Cousin Ethel would have taken great care that each of them should be worded and written exactly alike.

It was not long before the boats reached the start.

"Are you ready? Back, No. 1!" called the starter.

"Sorry!" breathed Tom Merry; and he got his boat back.

The three small flags in the bows were in a dead line now. The starter saw his chance.

Crack!

The pistol sounded loudly. Twelve blades took the water at the same instant, and the boats shot away. It was a magnificent start, whatever the race was going to be.

For the first few yards the rowing was nothing very great. A stroke or two was needed for them all to get rid of their excitement, but they settled down to their work almost together.

Figgins had a slight lead at first, but he lost it to Tom Merry just before half-distance. Jack Blake was a short canvas behind.

But there was nothing in it, and they were all beginning to row splendidly.

"Oh, well pulled, sir!"

"Blake—row up, Blake!"

"Tom Merry! Good old Tom Merry!"

"New House! Figgy! New House, chaps!"

The roars were deafening. Crowds of juniors were racing along the river-bank to keep up with the boats, much to the discomfort of the less energetic spectators who preferred to watch a portion of the race only from deck-chairs.

To the rival strokes the shouts had no meaning. There was only one thought far Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins—to get past the other fellows' boats.

Figgins had his lead again, and the stroke he was rowing was tremendous—three inches longer than Tom Merry's best. The only thing was—would the men behind him in his boat be able to stand it for the long course? So far, however, Kerr & Co. appeared to be enjoying their work.

Tom Merry was behind now, and Jack Blake was creeping up, so the hero of the Shell quickened a little. He knew his crew to a man, and the answer came instantly. The Shell boat leapt to the front.

"Tom Merry has it! Shell! Shell! Shell!"

But it was a rash prophet who would have cared to give an opinion at that stage. The rowing men in the crowd looked anxious, but they said nothing.

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They were waiting until the bridge was gained. It would be easier to see how things were there.

The bridge was approaching rapidly, Figgins and Blake still pulling strongly, and all three boats shot under the bridge almost together.

Those who were looking down from above said afterwards that there wasn't a foot between them. Barring accidents, a close finish was certain.

The excited juniors on the bridge seized bicycles—anyone's bicycle, so long as it would carry them to the winning-flag—and dashed away.

The traffic on the river bank was becoming congested.

Fatty Wynn had already slipped into the river twice through trying to get his portly form through anything but portly space.

But the Falstaff of St. Jim's did not trouble about that.

"Figgins! New House! New House!"

His stentorian voice could be heard above the uproar.

And all the time the three boats were still together!

CHAPTER 20.

Fighting Out the Finish!

"QUICKEN up, chaps!"
Reilly panted the words out, but Jack Blake took no notice.

It was not time to call on his crew again.

He was a short canvas behind the other pair, but that could not be helped.

Reilly's face was becoming horror-stricken.

The short canvas was lengthening into a long one.

"Oh, do row up, Blake!"

But Jack Blake was waiting his time. Like Wally, he was looking for a well-known landmark.

A glance ashore told him there was plenty of time yet, then he caught sight of a tall, thin figure.

Not only had Sir Caleb asked that the races should take place in front of his estate, but he had come to watch them!

But Jack Blake had not time to think about Sir Caleb.

The leading boats were almost level again—a bare few inches' lead giving Figgins' crew the advantage.

Tom Merry could see Arthur Augustus' back now. Was the Study No. 6 crew beginning to splash?

Tom Merry longed to see them do that, and Figgins as well. But there seemed little chance of Figgins & Co. going to pieces.

Tom Merry thought it was a race between his crew and the New House.

And the prize to be won! A motor picnic down by the sea—the sea in this weather, and after a hard day like this!

That was inducement enough to make a fellow row himself to his stretchers.

And very similar thoughts, from a different point of view, were troubling the New House crew—with one addition. Cousin Ethel would be watching the finish. That made the leader of the New House juniors long to get his boat past the winning-post first more than anything else.

Tom Merry and Figgins quickened again together. They must be nearing the winning-post now.

Stroke for stroke the rival crews rowed, with Figgins' blade always a little longer in the water.

Both boats were nearly half a length in front of Jack Blake now.

"Can't you quicken?" gasped Reilly. "Shure, an' they're running away from us, man."

Then at last Jack Blake called upon his crew. He had seen his landmark—a battered old oak he had had in his mind's eye for a good many days now.

The shouts along the river bank were becoming confused.

Tom Merry could not distinguish voices; even Fatty Wynn's stentorian yells sounded miles away to Figgins.

Jack Blake's boat was becoming a blurred mass to both rival strokes.

The Shell cox was wildly excited.

"We're nearly there, Tommy! A dozen yards—well, twenty! My hat!"

As if they were coupled together by some unseen force, the two outside boats swept along as level as possible. Jack Blake was bringing his boat up in wild jerks. He was not rowing as he had rowed under the bridge.

The boat had gone to pieces as far as style went, even Arthur Augustus having lost his graceful grip on the water. But the Study No. 6 ship was coming along.

"Quicken, my bhoys!" yelled Reilly, with a loud Irish yell. "We've got 'em!"

Jack Blake was gasping. He quickened anew—and was answered! Then, in a solid body, the three boats swept past the winning-post.

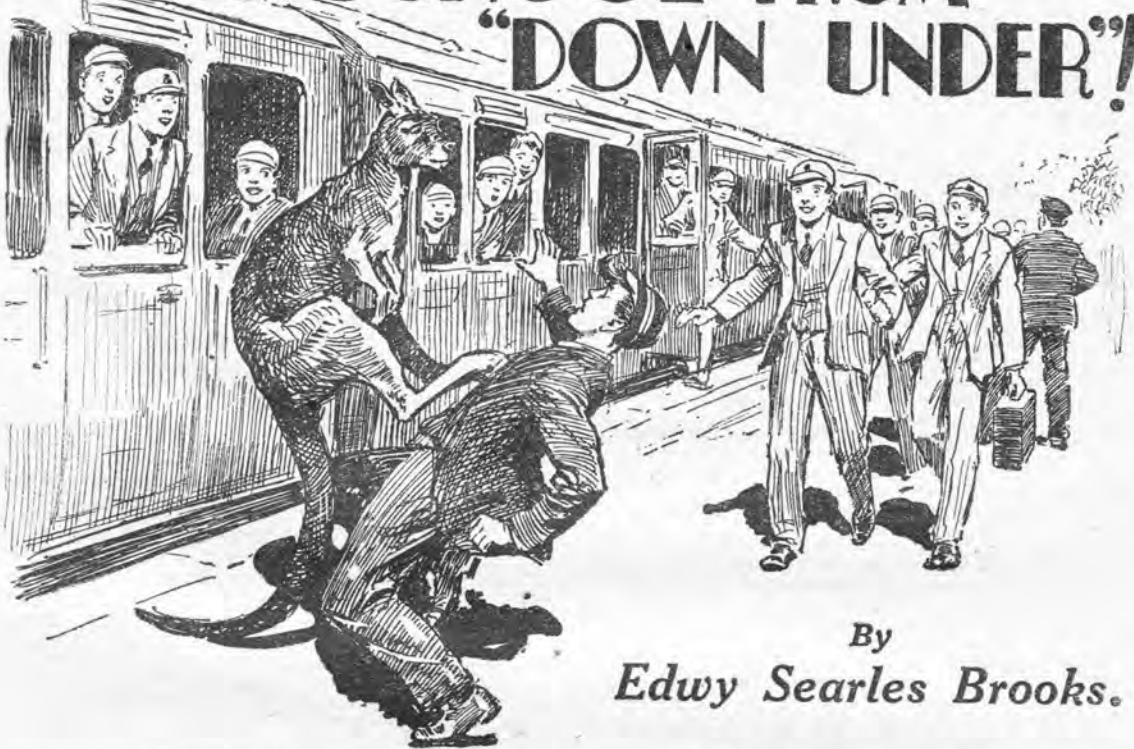
"We've won, my bhoys!" shouted Reilly.

Jack Blake gasped. A small strip of bunting had just been unfurled from the flag-mast. It was light blue in colour, and light blue was the flag in the bows of the Study No. 6 boat.

(Continued on page 23.)

ST. FRANK'S JAPERS JAPED—THE "AUSSIES" GET THE LAST LAUGH!

THE SCHOOL FROM "DOWN UNDER!"



By
Edwy Searles Brooks.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

A contingent of schoolboys from Australia take over temporarily the River House School, near St. Frank's, to continue their studies under Australian masters. The boys have come to England with their parents, who are over for the Test matches. The juniors of St. Frank's challenge the "Aussies" to a cricket match, and win an exciting game by eleven runs. Jim Sayers, one of the Australian boys, fails to turn up for the game. He is an old friend of the St. Frank's Cornstalk, Jerry Dodd. But when Jerry meets him after the match, he is astonished to discover that Sayers is a different fellow altogether.

The Impostor!

NOT Jim Sayers!

Jerry Dodd was more than startled as he stood on the sunny cricket field looking at the well-built Australian boy who was in the company of the Remove cads.

True, it was a year or two since Jerry and his "cobber" had met; but Jim Sayers was smaller, more wiry. But if this boy was not Jim Sayers—then who was he? The name was the same, and he came from New South Wales. No; it couldn't be another Jim Sayers. Jerry Dodd remembered the photograph he had seen in the River House study—the photograph of Bartholomew Easton's homestead. That photo alone proved that this boy was from the Easton Sheep Station.

Amid the chatter of conversation and the laughter which went on around him, Jerry tried to collect his thoughts. He disliked the look of the Australian boy at once; and it was strange that Mr. Rutter, the master, should have been in the supposed Jim's study. There was something wrong somewhere.

Jerry was suddenly struck by the curious fact that he had not revealed to any of his schoolfellows, or any of the Australian boys, that he and Jim Sayers were old friends. It was only by chance that this happened to be so. He had not even mentioned their old friendship to Mr. Rutter. So, to all intents and purposes, he and Jim Sayers were strangers. Just as well, perhaps! For Jerry could now proceed with caution, and he felt that he would need to. He decided that, before he revealed himself, he would find out how the land lay.

He could be guarded in his attitude; yet there was a very

simple test he could apply to the boy who called himself Jim Sayers.

Jerry, smiling easily, strolled forward, and his hand was extended.

"Hallo, Jim, old cobber!" he exclaimed, heartily. "It's quite a time since we saw one another!"

The boy with Forrest & Co. gave a perceptible start, and an uneasy light leapt into his eyes. Jerry Dodd pretended not to see the effect his words had caused. But he knew that the boy, within him, was filled with alarm.

"But—but I don't know you!" stammered Jim Sayers, as he took Jerry's hand. "At least, I mean, I don't remem—"

Jerry laughed.

"Don't remember me?" he interrupted. "That's not much of a compliment! Aren't you from the Easton Sheep Station, near Bathurst, in New South Wales?"

"Yes," said the other, some of the colour draining from his face.

"That's right," said Jerry. "You're the nephew of old Bartholomew Easton?"

"Yes. But I don't see—"

"There aren't two Jims, by any chance?" asked Jerry, with a chuckle.

"Of course not," said the other, his uneasiness increasing. "I don't know what you're talking about. I'm Jim Sayers—"

"And I'm Jerry Dodd," explained Jerry calmly.

This time Sayers jumped. His jaw sagged, and the alarm in his eyes was acute.

"Dodd!" he muttered. "Why, of course—"

"Son of J. W. Dodd, your uncle's neighbour," said Jerry. "And still you don't remember me?" He laughed heartily.

"Well, perhaps you wouldn't, Jim. I know for a fact that we met when we were about five years old, and we had some infants' games together. But that's a long time ago—eh? I dare say we've both changed, although we really are old cobbors."

He noted the quick relief in the Australian boy's eyes. Jerry had told no lie; but he had revealed only half the truth. It was a fact that he and Jim Sayers had played together at the age of five; but it was also a fact that they had gone for many a camping holiday into the bush at holiday times, in later years, when they were both over thirteen. And that wasn't very long ago.

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The boy's relief—when he was led to believe that Jim Sayers and Jerry Dodd had not met since they were five—was proof positive that he was an impostor. He was deliberately taking Jim Sayers' name, and walking in Jim Sayers' shoes. Jerry Dodd had satisfied him that his position was safe, and his ease of manner returned.

"Gee-hunks!" he ejaculated. "So you're that little kid I used to know back in the old days? Say, I can only just dimly remember. Did you come to my uncle's station, or did I visit yours?"

He was lying now—lying deliberately; and, inwardly, Jerry Dodd determined to keep a watch on him, so that he could find out what his game was.

"You're the chap with a whole regiment of sisters, aren't you?" went on the impostor, laughing. "Funny that we should be neighbours, and not meet since we were kids—and then meet out here, in England!"

"Well, our homes in Australia are quite a way apart," said Jerry, smiling.

He nodded, and strolled away. His smile vanished. He was wondering what had happened to the real Jim Sayers! Why had this boy, with the handsome face and the shifty eyes, come to England in Jim's shoes? The very fact that he had so quickly made friends with Forrest & Co. proved that he was not much good.

Jerry strolled towards the pavilion, where Curly Baines and his fellow-cricketers had gone. Nipper was talking to a big crowd of Removites in the field, and there was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Remember, you chaps, these Aussies are our guests," he was saying. "That means pax—while they are on St. Frank's property. There mustn't be any japes."

"But the game's over," argued Handforth. "Why can't we jump on them—just to show them that St. Frank's is top dog?"

"It wouldn't be playing the game," said Nipper. "As guests under our roof, Curly Baines and all his friends must be royally entertained. They're good scouts, and we like them."

His eyes twinkled more than before.

"Still, there's nothing to stop us from japing the Aussies later on," he added, with a chuckle. "And, as a matter of fact, I've thought of a way in which we can do it."

"Later on!" said Handforth eagerly. "Do you mean this evening?"

"Yes."

"Good egg! What shall we do?" asked Handforth. "How about ducking them all into the fountain pool after they've had their feed?"

"Too crude, dear old fellow," said Vivian Travers, shaking his head. "Besides, that would be breaking the unwritten law. We should jump on them while they were still our guests. We've got to wait until they're off the St. Frank's property."

"Exactly," said Nipper. "And here's the idea. When the Aussies go, it'll be deep dusk—and they're certain to take the short cut across the meadows. These chaps are tough sons of the bush! Hard riding stalwarts of the wide open spaces. I think it would be rather rich to see them running for their lives across the meadows—to escape the charge of a fake bull!"

"Tell me more," said Travers happily.

"Absolutely! Trot it out, dear old thing," beamed Archie Glenhorne. "I mean to say, how frightfully juicy! These dashed merchants from the wild and woolly back blocks fleeing from a bull in a peaceful Sussex meadow!"

"And a fake bull at that," grinned Nipper. "Don't you see, it'll make the jape all the funnier, and we'll have the laugh on our Aussie rivals for days. We couldn't work a thing like that in the full daylight—but in the dusk, yes."

"It's all very well to talk," said Handforth, "but how—I mean, where—"

"Remember that old outfit we once made for a comic play?" interrupted Nipper. "It's knocking about somewhere in one of the lumber-rooms. A fearsome-looking bullock's head, with whacking great horns, and everything. The body is in good shape, too, and all we need is a couple of hefty chaps to do the acting. Somebody clever, of course, for the front legs—somebody brilliant. In fact, you, Handy!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Handforth, with a start.

"You'll be the front legs of this terrifying animal."

"Oh, will I?" said Handforth, glaring. "You can jolly well be the front legs yourself!"

"But, my dear chap, I can't bellow like a bull," said Nipper. "You can—we've heard you do it lots of times!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, but look here—"

"Don't argue, Handy," said Nipper, whilst all the other juniors grinned in appreciation. "The part is yours—cut and dried. You can't go wrong. In fact, you've only got to use your natural voice and give a good old bellow, and the Aussies will run for their lives!"

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Others joined in the argument, and Handforth was successfully kidded into accepting the star part. Buster Boots of the Fourth readily consented to take the lesser role of the hind legs.

"All you chaps have got to do is to nip out just before the Aussies leave," said Nipper. "We'll delay them a bit—to give you a chance. You'll find the imitation bull hidden in the ditch at the farther end of the meadow, near the solitary elm-tree."

"How shall we find it there?" asked Handforth. "It's in one of the lumber-rooms!"

"But it won't be," said Nipper. "I'll arrange with somebody to carry it out. Tubbs will do it for sixpence. And he can do it while we're keeping our guests busy—so they won't see anything. So you'll find it there all right, Handy. As soon as you're inside the outfit, move over to the corner of the meadow and lurk."

"Do which?"

"Lurk—in the shadows," said Nipper. "And as soon as the Aussies are in the middle of the meadow, give voice to your best bellow and charge!"

"We'll do the rest," grinned Travers.

"What rest?" asked Handforth. "All you chaps will do is stand by and laugh."

"Don't you believe it," said Nipper. "A thing like this has got to be worked up—or it'll be a failure. You leave it to us, Handy. You and Boots do your part, and we'll do ours."

"Easy—easy, old fellow," murmured Vivian Travers. "Some of our guests strolling up, and we don't want them to get suspicious."

Curly Baines and the other Australian boys joined the St. Frank's juniors, and everybody was happy. As long as the visitors were on St. Frank's ground they were safe. But later on—

Birds of a Feather!

IT was a big occasion. Nipper & Co., earlier in the day, had made big preparations. The Australian boys were honoured guests, and, the cricket match over, they were now taken into the Ancient House and feasted.

Not only the teams sat down to this spread, but crowds of other juniors, too. Many non-players from the Australian school were packed in. Not everybody got a seat, and it was soon discovered that there was insufficient crockery to go round. But who cared? There was plenty to eat, and, at a feed, the "eats" are the only important item.

On the way to the Junior Common-room—which, for the evening, was converted into the banquetting-hall—Curly Baines, who was arm-in-arm with McVittie and Kennedy, ran into Jim Sayers. The smile vanished from the curly-haired Australian skipper's face and he came to a halt.

"Just a minute, Sayers," he said grimly.

"Yes, we want a word with you, Sayers," said McVittie.

"Quite a few words, Sayers," added Kennedy.

"You choose a queer place, and a queer time," retorted Sayers. "I'm sorry, I can't stop. I've got some friends to meet—"

"They can wait," interrupted Baines.

"I hope you don't forget that you're under a friendly roof?" went on Sayers, seeing that it was impossible for him to pass. "We're guests here, Baines, and we don't want any scenes."

"I reckon you know what's coming, then," said Curly, with some indignation. "A thing like this can't wait. Why didn't you turn up for the game?"

"I'm sorry," replied Sayers, with a shrug. "I forgot it."

"Forgot it!" yelled Baines. "Forgot cricket! Forgot that I put you in the team!"

"Oh, chuck it," interrupted Sayers truculently. "What does it matter, anyway? I reckon you fellows give too much time to cricket. I went out to-day, and forgot all about the match. And I guess that's all there is to it."

Baines was so surprised that he allowed Sayers to push his way past. He had expected a word of apology, at least.

"Hi! Hold on, chum!" he called out. "Where are you going now? Aren't you coming to this banquet?"

"I've had a look in—and that's enough for me," replied Sayers unpleasantly. "I've got some English coppers of my own, and I'm going to eat in their study."

"Well, can you beat that?" ejaculated Baines in astonishment.

Jerry Dodd, who was coming along, heard something of the altercation. But he said nothing at the moment. And Curly Baines and his chums were carried by a press of other fellows into the Common-room.

It was already packed; fellows were sitting on the window-sills, and old desks had been brought in as temporary seats, too. There was a loud, cheerful noise going on.

"It's an informal feed, but we want our Aussie coppers to be at home," said Nipper genially. "Welcome to St. Frank's, you chaps from 'down under'!"

"Mighty nice of you," said Curly Baines. "We're glad to be here."

"It seems that you chaps are going to be our neighbours for some time, and I might as well tell you now that the River House School has always been on terms of friendly rivalry with St. Frank's," went on Nipper. "Hal Brewster and his chums—who have gone on a cruise—were a lively lot. You'll have to be pretty good to equal them!"

"Wait until we've settled down," said McVittie, who was a thin, lean youth. "Why, you fellows of the Old Country are half dead. We're going to show you what it means to be alive!"

"Take it easy, chum!" interrupted Curly Baines, grinning. "We can't start anything now. We're the guests of honour."

"Sorry!" grinned McVittie. "I forgot for the moment. Say, chums, you're all right, and we're mighty proud to feed with you!"

There was a good deal of laughing, and then everybody got down to the serious business of eating.

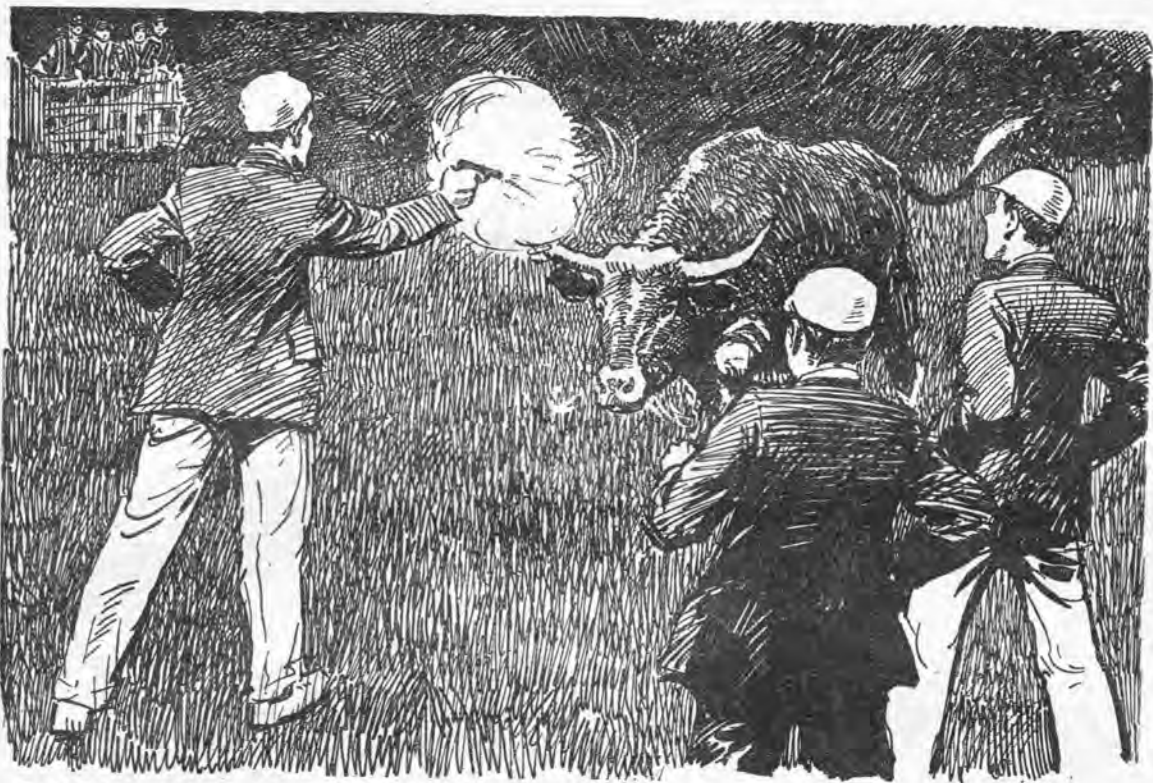
"Why did that fellow Sayers miss the match?" asked Jerry Dodd, during the meal. "Do you know much about him, Baines?"

Jerry could have explained this riddle if he had chosen. But he did not choose. The time was not ripe. It was obvious to him that the impostor was no good at cricket, and for that very reason he had deliberately let the side down, thus making it virtually certain that he would not be asked again. In that way he had got out of playing, and he had not revealed the fact that he was no cricketer.

He would still be able to masquerade as the real Jim Sayers. One game of cricket would have exposed him as a fraud. He had successfully jumped that awkward hurdle. His Australian schoolfellows would believe that, for reasons of his own, he had decided to leave cricket alone whilst in England. All the same, Curly Baines and his friends were talking.

So far, they had no suspicion of the real truth; they could not guess that this boy in their midst was an interloper. He was accompanied by one of the masters from his own school in Sydney. Mr. Rutter belonged to that very school, and if he didn't know Jim Sayers, who did?

During the course of talk round the festive board, Jerry Dodd gathered something of this, and, knowing all he did, Jerry was freshly startled. For it became at once evident to him that Mr. Rutter was "in the know." The Australian



Curly Baines stood his ground calmly as the bull charged straight at him. Then—Crack! Crack! Crack! Three reports rang out sharply as the Australian fired at point-blank range. From a distance the St. Frank's boys watched in horrified silence the outcome of their jape. For the bull was a fake, and in it were Handforth and Euster Boots!

"He's a mystery to me," replied Curly, losing his cheeriness. "I don't like the man. By what I've heard of him, I thought he'd be O.K. But I've seen enough to satisfy me that he's N.G."

"What have you heard of him, then?" asked Jerry.

"Well, most of us Australians knew of Jim Sayers even before we came to England," put in Kennedy. "His name has been in some of the Melbourne and Sydney newspapers this summer. We didn't meet him until a few days ago, when we collected together to come down to this part of the world."

"So none of you really knew him?" asked Jerry.

"Only by repute," said Baines. "Why, all over New South Wales, and particularly in Sydney itself, schoolboys talk of Jim Sayers as a coming Test player! There's no bunkum about it, either. In Australia, Sayers has been playing some marvellous cricket. At his own school they call him the 'Schoolboy Bradman.' As soon as I knew he was with us I booked him at once for our team. He was keen at first, and yet, funnily enough, he refused to turn out for practice."

"And to-day he missed playing in your first match," said Jerry Dodd. "H'm! Maybe he doesn't want to play cricket in England."

schoolmaster was fully aware of the imposture! And by what Jerry had seen of Mr. Rutter, he was a wrong 'un.

"But I'll twig the game sooner or later," Jerry Dodd told himself. "It's my secret as yet, and I'll keep it to myself. I'll just sit tight and watch—and wait!"

Meanwhile, the impostor himself was making merry, after his own inclinations, in Study A, with Forrest & Co.

The meal had been disposed of quickly, and now the door was locked, and the four juniors were sitting round the table playing penny "nap," and they were smoking cigarettes. It was a clear case of one bird finding birds of his own feather.

"You're all right, Sayers," said Bernard Forrest indulgently, during a deal. "I like a fellow who pays up with a smile."

"What does it matter?" said Sayers. "I've got plenty more money. My uncle is a strange old stick, but he supplies me with pots of cash. I guess I've fallen right on my feet in this country."

"I thought you were a great cricketer!" asked Gulliver, with a mocking smile on his thin, unpleasant face.

"Shucks! I've had enough cricket in Australia," replied

Sayers. "I want to forget it while I'm in England! I'm here for a good time—and I mean to have it!"

"It's funny how we get wrong impressions," said Forrest, grinning. "I always thought that you Aussies were open-air fiends—chaps who went in for cricket and other athletics. By gad, it's good to find that some of you are really human!"

Forrest was highly delighted. Very much of an outsider himself, he was always on the look-out for "mugs." So far, Jim Sayers had paid up handsomely. What was more, he had plenty of money. Just the kind of fellow to be on friendly terms with!

"Doing anything on Saturday?" asked Bell. We thought of going over to Helmsford to the races."

"Gosh, that'll suit me!" said Sayers, nodding. "I'd like to see some of your English horse-races. I sometimes go to the track at Sydney, and I reckon things are much the same in England. Maybe we can back some geegees—eh?"

"No fun in going unless we do!" said Forrest. "I can give you a good tip for the two-thirty on Saturday."

"O.K. I'll go," grinned Sayers. "I expect my cobbles are having a cricket match, and I'll be glad to be away. I've seen enough cricket to last me for the rest of this year."

"Well, you're a mystery to me," said Forrest, with a shrug. "Most of our chaps—those who are keen on cricket—remain keen. I was a bit 'gone' on cricket myself earlier this summer, but I got fed-up with it."

"Don't let's talk about the game," said Sayers. "What about Saturday? Shall I meet you fellows at the station? Maybe there's a special race train?"

Forrest laughed.

"I believe there is, but we won't be on it," he replied dryly. "Great Scott! If we were seen on a race 'special' we'd get the sack. I don't know how you do things in Australia, but the beaks here are idiotically strict. Race-courses are absolutely out of bounds."

"Regular old-fashioned, aren't you?" grinned Sayers. "I'll tell you what. I'll hire a car in Bannington, and you chums can meet me there. How's that? I'll pay for the car."

"It's all settled," said Bernard Forrest contentedly.

This fellow was certainly a mug. But Forrest failed to note the cunning, eager light in Sayers' eyes. Forrest & Co. believed that they had caught a real Australian rabbit; they little guessed that he was using them to further his own ends!

The card game went on, and, gradually, Sayers' luck changed. He had lost steadily at first, but now the cards were coming his way, and he had already made good his losses. Soon he had taken nearly a pound from Forrest, and seven or eight shillings from Gulliver and Bell. And the precious cads of the Remove were not looking so happy.

"Gosh! It's the fellows," exclaimed Sayers suddenly, as a sound of tramping feet and laughing came from the corridor. "I'll have to be going."

"Going?" repeated Forrest, looking up. "But we must finish this hand, anyway."

"Can't do it, chum," replied Sayers, who was on his feet. "I've got to hurry away—I must be at the school before the gang gets there. There's a reason."

With a nod he picked up his winnings, unlocked the door, and went.

"The blighter!" ejaculated Gulliver. "I thought we were going to rook him—"

"Dry up, fathead!" interrupted Forrest. "We'll get our own back some other day."

While Sayers was hurrying out into the dusk, the crowd of Australians, escorted by Nipper & Co., made a more leisurely exit. When they reached the tranquil old Triangle of the great school, lights were gleaming in most of the windows, and the shadows were deep on all sides.

"Now's your chance, Handy!" murmured Church, giving Edward Oswald a nudge.

"Eh? Chance for what?"

"To slip away, of course."

"Who's going to slip away?" demanded Handforth. "I wish you wouldn't keep jabbing me—"

"You—you hopeless ass!" hissed Church. "Have you forgotten? You're the front legs of the bull! Here's Boots—waiting for you. Buck up! You've got to get into that dummy, and play your part."

"By George, yes!" said Handforth with a start. "That's right."

Buster Boots linked his arm through Handforth's; and they both slipped off into the dusk without their absence being noticed by any of the Australian boys. Nipper and Pitt and Gresham and Travers and others, in the meantime, kept Curly Baines & Co. fully occupied. They all strolled leisurely to the playing fields. And once the school buildings were left behind, the duskiness of the evening became more marked.

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"Well, chums, you've given us a fine time, and I guess we're glad to know you," said Curly Baines. "We had a good game this afternoon, and a swell time this evening. You'll have to come over to our school one day, so that we can return the compliment."

"It's a date," said Nipper, smiling. "But we're still rivals, Baines, and anything is liable to happen before we become your guests. I hope you Aussies won't forget that St. Frank's is cock-o'-the-walk in these parts!"

"With our Australian school nowhere in the picture, eh?" grinned Curly. "O.K., chum. I can see that it's up to us to make things look different. That's what we're here for. The Old Country's all right, but it needs pepping up—particularly the fellows of this dump you call a school."

"This what?" repeated Nipper ominously.

"Sorry! We're still your guests, aren't we?" grinned Curly. "But I reckon you know what we mean."

They all came to a halt at the gate on the further side of the playing fields. On this side of the gate they were still enjoying the hospitality of St. Frank's. But once on the other side they would be in an open meadow—and that meadow was a wide, dusky open space, apparently empty.

After saying good-night to their hosts, the Australian boys went marching off across the meadow on this short cut to their own school.

And the St. Frank's juniors crowded in the gateway, and along the hedges. They hugged themselves with anticipation.

The truce was over.

Now for the fireworks!

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Bull!

"WHAT'S that?" asked McVittie, coming to a halt.

He spoke in a startled tone, and the other Australian boys, who were talking amongst themselves, became silent. Their watching rivals saw them halt, and they held their breath.

From a dark corner of the meadow, where the shadows were deeper, a shape manifested itself. On the still air of the summer's evening came the thudding of heavy hoofs, and then an awe-inspiring bellow burst forth.

"A bull!" yelled Curly Baines.

They could all see it now—indistinct, vague, menacing in the gloom. It was a big, formidable looking animal, and it was pawing at the ground with its front hoofs, and its head was wickedly lowered.

"I say, you chaps!" came a warning shout in Nipper's voice. "I forgot to tell you! There's a bull in that meadow! Better be careful."

"A bull!" bawled half a dozen of the Australians.

"You'd better run for it," roared Nipper. "Great Scott! Look out! He's charging!"

There was no doubt about it. The bull, evidently disliking the noise, was bent upon investigating. With head down, he came lurching across the meadow—making straight for the Australian boys. And, really, there was something rather terrifying in that charge.

For in the dusk it was difficult, if not impossible, to detect that the thing was a fake. Nipper & Co. were proud of that bull. It wasn't one of your crude imitations, such as they use at a circus; but a fine, massive-looking animal with a full-sized body, and an imposing head with great horns.

"Run—run!" yelled the St. Frank's juniors.

If they expected to see their Australian rivals precipitated into a frantic flight they were disappointed. In spite of the fact that the bull was charging headlong at them, they stood their ground.

"Shucks!" exclaimed Curly Baines. "Best take it calmly, chums! Down under, in Australia, we have our own way of dealing with brutes of this sort! I reckon this bull's asking for trouble."

Somehow, the jape was going wrong. The St. Frank's fellows, ready to shout with laughter, found that there was nothing to laugh at. For the Australians, instead of being scared by the charging bull, remained absolutely firm. And Curly Baines was even advancing to meet the menace. What was more, Curly had whipped something from his hip pocket—and it was something which gave forth a dull gleam.

"Hold it, fellows!" he shouted. "All you've got to do at a time like this is to keep cool."

Nipper & Co. watched, fascinated. Curly Baines stood his ground without turning a hair, and the bull continued to charge straight at him.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Suddenly, without warning, livid spurts of fire burst from the thing in Baines' hand, and the reports rang out sharply on the evening air.



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.

MANY thanks for your two interesting letters, Richard P. Rowe (Skegness). I only hope that you find my St. Frank's yarns as bracing as your famous Skegness air. Glad you liked "The Schemer of St. Frank's." Yes, there will be more of my stories appearing in the "Boys' Friend 4d. Library." You ask me if it would be possible to write a 4d. book "running into the second month"—that is to say, a double-length story. Curiously enough, one of this type will soon be appearing in the "Boys' Friend Library." But the two stories, although more or less connected, are each complete in themselves. More of this later.

The bull lurched sideways as he ran; the hind-legs were the first to go, and they sagged over, and then trailed. One moment later the front legs collapsed, and that precious animal lay still in the long grass of the meadow.

"Well, chums, that's that!" said Curly Baines coolly. "I reckon my aim is as good as ever."

"Is the brute dead?" asked one of the others. "Sure! Dead as mutton," replied Curly. "Well, we'll be going."

An utter, horrified silence had fallen upon the watching St. Frank's boys. Even in that gloom they had seen the unmistakable collapse of the "bull's" hind legs, proving that the unfortunate Buster Boots had been the first to fall. They were horrified. Without warning, this tragedy had come.

"Baines—Baines!" shouted Nipper, leaping over the gate, and running into the meadow.

"It's O.K., chum!" called Baines, with a laugh. "I happened to have a gun on me, and—"

"But you don't understand!" panted Nipper, as he ran. "That bull wasn't what it seemed."

"What's one bull?" said Curly. "Out in Australia we have thousands. We don't waste time on the brutes if they get bad tempered. We just shoot 'em cold. Lucky I had that gun on me."

He waved cheerily, and went on with the other Australian boys, who were laughing. To them, apparently, the shooting of a bull in an English meadow meant nothing.

"They don't understand; they don't realise!" gasped Church, as he ran beside Nipper. "Oh, my goodness! How could we guess they'd do a thing like that?"

"How could we guess that Baines would have a gun on him?" gulped Nipper. "We thought it was going to be funny, and—Handy—Handy!"

Nipper flung himself down beside the "carcase." Church and McClure were with him; the other St. Frank's fellows were running up, sick with fear. Nobody thought of the Australians now. Baines and his chums had gone off. They knew nothing; they had no suspicion of the real tragedy.

"Handy!" almost shrieked Church.

He grasped at the grotesque head, and, with one heave, wrenched it free. Nipper and McClure, with trembling fingers, plucked at the "body." Somchow, they found the section which opened, and tore at it. Then Nipper noticed, with a start, that the "legs" were flabby and empty.

"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper.

A great relief surged through him, but, at the same time, a suspicion took shape in his mind. The legs were empty; and if Handforth and Buster Boots had been killed, the legs would have been very full. One moment's examination was sufficient. The bull's "carcase" was as empty as a shell.

"Why, there's—there's nobody here!" panted McClure, in amazement. "They weren't killed at all!"

While the juniors came crowding round, excited and frightened, Nipper stood back, mopping his heated brow.

"No, they weren't killed, you chaps," he said sadly. "Nobody was killed."

"But—but we saw Baines shoot!" ejaculated Watson. "We saw Handy and Boots fall."

"No, we didn't," said Nipper, more sadly than ever. "We saw the bull fall; but it's a cert that Handy and Boots weren't inside. My sons, if I had a hat on, I would

In case there are other old readers who want to read my St. Frank's stories and who don't know where they are appearing, I'd better mention that "The Schemer of St. Frank's" is a completely new school story, with lots of cricket in it, full length, now on sale appearing in No. 435 of the "Boys' Friend 4d. Library." Any newsagent will supply you. If he hasn't got one in stock, he'll get it within a day or two.

"Names" list—No. 2. Ancient House, Remove. Study E: Archibald Winston Derek, Glenthorne, Alfred Brent. Study F: Jerrold Dodd, Hubert Jarrold, Charlie ("Boomerang") Bangs. Study G: Cecil de Valerie, Duke of Somerton. Study H: Vivian Travers, Sir James Potts, Viscount ("Skeets") Bellton.

In reply to your questions, D. A. Simmons and E. R. Ellis (Bristol), Mr. Horace Pycraft is still at St. Frank's—very much so, in the opinion of the Fourth Form boys! This very unpleasant gentleman, who makes it his business to be as unpleasant as possible on all occasions, lives in the East House. And the East House doesn't think much of it. The full name of St. Frank's is really—St. Francis' College, named after the old monastery which once stood upon the site of the school. Willy Handforth has an extraordinary large assortment of pets, the most prominent being Septimus, the squirrel; Marmaduke, the monkey; Priscilla, the parrot; and Sebastian, the snake.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

take it off to the Aussies. They twiggod our jape somehow, and they turned it against us. And, what's more, they gave us the scare of our lives!"

"Well, upon my Samson!" said Vivian Travers, with an appreciative grin. "We set out to scare them; and they made us think they'd killed two of our chaps. Dear old fellows, we've been dished, diddled, and done!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh came from the distance, and it was echoed and re-echoed. But the St. Frank's fellows were so relieved during the first minute that they bore no animosity. Everyone of them had believed that Curly Baines had shot Handforth and Boots.

"All right, Baines!" shouted Nipper, cupping his hands to his mouth. "This is one up to you, Aussies!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We meant to draw first blood; but you've done it instead," went on Nipper. "All right! It'll be our turn next time."

"Optimist!" came Curly Baines' gleeful shout.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What have you done with our chaps?" roared Church.

"Oh, sorry!" came Baines' voice from the distance.

"You'll find the poor chaps by the river—near the willows. Perhaps I'd better explain that one of our chaps spotted your poor bull while it was being got ready. So some more of our chaps did some planning, and one of them fetched that fake gun from our school. I reckon you can guess the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, we can guess," said Nipper, with a sigh. "My sons, the Aussies turned the tables on us; and they stuck to the rules, too. They did nothing until they were no longer our guests. One of the beggars must have slipped that gun to Baines in the dusk; and the Aussies got to know what was in the wind, too. By Jove, they worked it well! We've got to hand them the honours."

"But even now I don't understand," said Gresham helplessly. "There were chaps in the bull, or it couldn't have been worked. Baines fired straight at it—"

"With blanks," said Nipper. "And the chaps in the bull were Australians. Don't you see? As soon as they collapsed so picturesquely they slithered out of the carcass, and we couldn't see their movements because the other Australians were in the way. Then they all went off together."

"It's a washout!" said Reggie Pitt. "My only sainted aunt! The Aussies are even hotter than we thought. And it's a stain, my sons, that we'll have to wipe out."

But while this comedy had been going on, Jim Sayers had taken an unexpected part in the business. And what he did was done quite unknown to his schoolfellows.

Going home alone—as he had told Forrest & Co.—he unexpectedly came upon Handforth and Boots, just after they had been left by the riverside by the japers.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Sayers, staring at them.

He guessed something of the truth. Handforth and Boots were roughly bound by the ankles and the arms. Handkerchiefs were tied over their mouths so that they could give no outcry, and warn the rest. They were glaring at Sayers, and Handforth, at least, was making weird sounds.

"Want me to set you free—eh?" grinned Jim Sayers.

"Not likely, chums! This looks like a good joke to me, and I might be able to improve on it."

He had noticed some spare rope lying in the grass, and he had seen, too, that a big tree which grew on the river's edge had an overhanging limb. It swept right over the water.

And into Sayers' eyes came a malicious look.

Incidentally let it be said that Handforth was mainly responsible for the "tragedy." Thanks to his loud talking, some Australian boys who had come to the school to meet the rest, had heard him. Thereafter, the counter-plot had been hatched.

Sayers worked quickly. Whipping a loop of rope round Handforth's feet, he slung the other end of the rope far over the overhanging branch. Then, with all his strength, he pulled on the free end of the rope.

"Mum-um-um-um!" came a protesting, muffled gurgle from Handforth.

By his feet he was pulled clear of the river bank. Splash! He went right in, head first. But Sayers was still pulling on the rope, and, within a few moments, after much exertion, he had hauled Handforth clear of the water, and had hitched the rope round a projection of the trunk.

"How's that?" he asked indignantly.

There was no joke about this: it was a dangerous, malicious act. Handforth, head downwards, was only an inch or two above the water. The rope was giving him intense agony as it bit into his ankles. Every movement made him writhe. And if he should remain long in this inverted position the consequences might be really serious.

TOM MERRY & CO.'S REGATTA!

(Continued from page 22.)

The School House Fourth Form had won the race! "Three cheers for Jack Blake!" sang out Figgins heartily enough. All together!"

And the cheers were given by the crews of both boats with all their remaining breath.

Jack Blake & Co. promptly returned them.

"Three of the best!" exclaimed the chief of Study No. 6.

"My hat, wasn't it great, Tom Merry?"

"Ripping!"

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah! I'll wemembah you, dear boy, when we get down to the sea. Hallo, Cousin Ethel!"

"So-long, chums!" said Jim Sayers, with another laugh. "I guess I won't trouble about you," he added, giving Boots a push with his foot. "Maybe you English fools will know, after this, that we Australians are top dogs."

He went off into the dusk; and he hurried himself, too. For he could hear voices and running feet. The St. Frank's fellows, having been told where they could find Handforth and Boots, were coming to the rescue of their school-fellows.

So it seemed that Handforth would soon be all right. Yet—

Handforth was not the kind of fellow to remain still. Helpless as he was he struggled furiously, taking no heed of the agony at his ankles. As he struggled he swayed and swung, and the tree branch creaked and groaned. Buster Boots, who had half an idea what was about to happen, was dumbfounded with horror. For he could do nothing to warn Handforth.

And then—crack!

Handforth's efforts had a dramatic result. As he gave an exceptionally heavy movement the branch broke off cleanly at the trunk, and fell with a great splash into the water.

Handforth fell, too, plunging completely under, to be held under by the entangling mass of the broken branch and its foliage.

The current caught him, and the next moment he was borne out into mid-stream, bound and helpless, and several feet under the surface!

(Will Handforth escape from his terrible predicament? Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment, which provides the answer?)

"Hallo, Arthur!" laughed their girl chum. "I am sorry to have to tell you, you all rowed very badly indeed!"

"Bai Jove! Howevah, I see you are only waggin'!"

"I am doing nothing of the sort."

But the laugh in her pretty eyes showed that Arthur Augustus had been a good deal nearer right than wrong.

"But I cannot possibly stay and talk now," she went on.

"My brother is waiting for me. I shall see you all to-morrow at ten o'clock at the school gates. All of you, mind!"

Tom Merry and Figgins stared.

"I suppose you can come, Tom Merry?" said Cousin Ethel.

"But—but Jack Blake & Co. won—"

"Oh, never mind who won!" exclaimed their girl chum, with a smile. "It was decided ages ago that you were all coming. You'll find the invitations at St. Jim's by now."

It was another of Cousin Ethel's jokes.

And a jolly good joke, too, was the verdict of all!

THE END.



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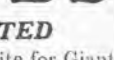
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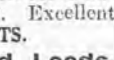
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