

"PLAYING THE GAME!" THE SCHOOL STORY IN A THOUSAND!
STARRING THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S— **INSIDE!**

The **GEM** ^{2d}



*Trapped
in the
Head's
Safe!*

PLAYING the GAME!



Fatty Wynn was the best junior bowler at St. Jim's, but he could make no impression upon Arthur Fitzgerald. With perfect ease and wonderful timing, the cricket coach drove far away every ball that was sent down to him.

CHAPTER 1.

Waiting for the Coach!

QUITE a little crowd of juniors had gathered in the old gateway of St. Jim's. Morning lessons were over, and as a rule the juniors made directly for the cricket field when they were released from the Form-rooms.

But on the present occasion Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—had walked down to the school gates instead and taken up a position there. Tom Merry leaned against the gate, and Manners leaned against the wall, and Monty Lowther stood out in the road with his hands in his pockets. And all three of them were watching the road to Rylcombe.

They were joined in a few minutes by Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth. The three Fourth Formers took up a position in the gateway, and they, too, watched the road. Then came Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, also of the Fourth—and Figgins & Co. also leaned up against the stonework and watched the road.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen joined them after another minute or two, and

not finding anything to lean against, they stood in the road with Lowther.

Tom Merry looked round at the gathering crowd.

"What do you chaps want?" he demanded.

Blake grinned.

"Same as you, I expect," he replied. "We're waiting for the coach."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The news has got out, you see," remarked Monty Lowther. "Here they come!"

Kangaroo and several other Shell fellows came along and added themselves to the crowd. The gateway was wide, but it was pretty well filled by this time. And all the fellows there seemed to be very much interested in watching the long, white high-road that stretched away towards the village of Rylcombe.

"Not coming yet," said Manners.

"The train must be in long ago," said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, we'll wait," said Tom Merry. "I'm curious to see what the coach is like, you know. We don't have a new coach every day."

"Bai Jove! I've been lookin' for you fellows, you know!"

An elegant junior came down towards the crowded gateway. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. Arthur Augustus looked his usual graceful and elegant self, from the tips of his gleaming boots to the crown of his polished silk hat. He jammed an eyeglass into his right eye, and regarded the crowded juniors in the gateway with some surprise.

"I've been lookin' for you," he repeated. "I wondahed where you had all disappeared to, you know. What are you waitin' here for?"

"Waiting for the coach," said Jack Blake.

"The what, deah boy?"

"The coach!"

"What coach?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Monty Lowther blandly. "We're to have a new coach."

D'Arcy looked amazed. He had evidently not heard. The news had only just become known to the other fellows.

"A new coach!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Do you mean a cawwiage, Lowthah?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No, a coach!"

"But what is it for?" asked D'Arcy.

"Has the Head ordahed it?"

"Certainly!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"What has he ordered a coach for?"
"Us!"

"Bai Jove! It's wathah a good ideah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Do you mean that the coach is for the use of the juniors?"

"Yes, entirely. The seniors don't need one."

"I should have pweferred a motah-car, certainly, but I wegard it as a good ideah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "How many horses will the coach have?"

"Ha, ha, ha! There won't be any horses!"

"Bai Jove! Is it a motah, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Then how will it get along?" demanded D'Arcy.

"We don't know till we see it," said Lowther blandly. "That's why we're waiting for the coach, to see how we're likin' to get along with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to compwehend you, Lowthah! I wegard you as an ass!"

There was a shout from Redfern in the road.

"Here he comes!"

"Bai Jove!"

The fellows all crowded to look out. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye and stared out into the road. The ancient-looking vehicle, drawn by an almost equally ancient-looking horse, was rumbling towards St. Jim's. It was the station hack from Rycombe, and a glimpse could be caught of a passenger sitting inside, a handsome and athletic-looking young man with fair hair and a good-humoured expression. But D'Arcy's eyes were fixed upon the old cab.

"Bai Jove! Is that the coach, deah boys?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You uttah asses! That's the old station cab from Wylcombe!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "The coach is inside!"

"What!"

"The coach is inside the cab, ass!"

"Wealls, Lowthah—"

"Fact!" said Blake, grinning.

"But—but—but"—stuttered D'Arcy in astonishment—"how can the coach be inside the cab, deah boys? Do you mean it is a toy coach?"

"Certainly not. It's full size—six feet long, I think, or nearly—"

"But—I don't compwehend!"

The cab halted outside the gates. The door opened, and the athletic young man stepped out, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"Is this St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "Are you Mr. Fitzgerald, the new coach, sir?"

"Exactly!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy almost collapsed.

"The—the new coach!" he gasped.

"You must be wavin' mad, Tom Mewwy. How can a man be a coach?"

"Oh, I forgot to mention that it was a cricket coach we were waiting for!" said Tom Merry blandly.

D'Arcy jumped.

"A cwicket coach! Oh, you feahful ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors of St. Jim's walked in with the new coach, and he chatted to

them pleasantly as they crossed the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. already liked the new coach, who was quite a different coach from the coach Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had expected to see.

There was a rush to show Mr. Fitzgerald the way when the School House was reached. The juniors crowded round him, and the cricket coach would have found it rather difficult to proceed in any direction. He laughed—a merry, ringing laugh that the juniors liked.

"One at a time, please," he said, as the crowd entered the School House. "Or two or three at the most. I shall not need an army."

"Stand back, you fellows—" began Figgins.

"Dry up, Figgy!"

"Look here—"

"Faith, and I think—"

"What is all this noise about?"

It was a very unpleasant voice—that of Mr. Selby. The Third Form master had come out of the Form-room, and he frowned as he found the Hall full of juniors all talking at once.

The voices died away. Mr. Selby always had the effect of casting a chill wherever he went. The Third Form master came through the silenced crowd, and looked at the new arrival.

The smile had died away from Arthur Fitzgerald's face as he looked at the Third Form master. But that was not

"Play the game" is not a motto that Ernest Levison, the cad of St. Jim's, lives up to. But when Levison's life is in danger the man he has tried to wrong does not hesitate to play the game at the expense of his own good name!

to be wondered at. Mr. Selby's sour countenance would have driven the smile from any face.

Mr. Selby fixed his eyes upon the cricket coach.

Then a strange expression came over his face, and he bent his head a little forward as if to take a closer and keener view of the stranger.

His eyes gleamed as he scanned the handsome, sunburnt features.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed.

"Dandy Jim, what are you doing here?"

CHAPTER 2.

An Amazing Accusation!

THERE was a gasp of astonishment from the crowd of juniors.

They did not speak; they looked on with wide eyes and open mouths at the strange scene. The newcomer stood in their midst, his eyes fixed calmly upon Mr. Selby, with a look of slight surprise upon the handsome face.

Mr. Selby evidently recognised him.

But he did not call him by his name.

He stared at the cricket-coach as if the handsome athlete had been a ghost, instead of very solid and substantial flesh and blood.

His amazing question was heard by everyone, and they wondered in bewilderment what it meant.

Why Mr. Selby should address the new cricket coach as Dandy Jim was a

mystery. The name smacked of the stage, or of the criminal classes.

There was a short deep silence.

Mr. Fitzgerald broke it.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I have not the pleasure of knowing you, sir, but you seem to think that you know me!"

Mr. Selby smiled sneeringly.

"My name is Selby," he said.

The newcomer shook his head.

"You do not remember it?" asked the master of the Third.

"I'm sorry to say I do not. But one meets so many people," said the young man easily. "I may have met you, sir—"

"You have certainly met me, Dandy Jim!"

The young man laughed.

"Why do you call me that peculiar name?" he asked. "I must admit that you surprise me very much. My name is Arthur Fitzgerald."

Mr. Selby shrugged his shoulders.

"Your name may be Arthur Fitzgerald," he said, "but among your associates and to the police you are called Dandy Jim."

There was a general exclamation.

"The police!"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked astounded.

"Is this man intoxicated?" he asked.

Mr. Selby turned purple.

"Intoxicated! How dare you!"

"Unless you are intoxicated, you must be mad, I think," said Mr. Fitzgerald calmly.

"I am Arthur Fitzgerald, engaged by Dr. Holmes to coach the juniors of this college in cricket. You have called me by some silly name out of some stage play, and hinted that I am known to the police. I demand an explanation, if you are not, as I said, drunk or mad. If you are sober and sane, you are insulting me."

"Bwawo!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Mr. Selby stared hard at the newcomer as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Do you deny it?"

"Deny what?"

"That you are the cracksman known to the police as Dandy Jim?"

The young man laughed heartily.

"If you will come with me to Dr. Holmes, I have no doubt that he will satisfy you," he said. "It is a great misfortune for me if I bear any personal resemblance to any of your acquaintances among the criminal classes, certainly."

The juniors chuckled.

A dark frown gathered upon Mr. Selby's brow.

"Very well, come to the Head with me," he said. "I will state all I know to Dr. Holmes, and we shall see."

"Most certainly. You are labouring under some ridiculous mistake, but I have no doubt Dr. Holmes will be able to set it right, and then I trust you will have the decency to apologise."

"I shall apologise if I have made a mistake, certainly," said Mr. Selby grimly. "Kindly follow me."

"Thank you!"

And the newcomer followed the master of the Third to the Head's study.

The crowd of juniors watched them go in breathless astonishment.

"Well, if this doesn't beat Banagher!" ejaculated Reilly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Old Selby's off his rocker," said Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form confidently. "But I never expected to see even old Selby jump on a man like that."

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and accuse him of being a giddy burglar. It's too thick!"

"He's an ass," said Tom Merry. "Why, the chap is as good as gold, and as honest as anybody. He's come down here as a cricket coach."

"Selby seems to think he's come for the school silver," grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No chance for anybody to get the school silver since the new safe was put in," remarked Herries of the Fourth. "But what awful rot! As if a burglar would come down in broad daylight calling himself a coach."

"It's piffle, of course."

"Selby is off his rocker."

"Bai Jove! I regard this as utterly wotten of Selby," said Arthur Augustus. "I say, we ought to show Mr. Fitzgerald that we don't take any notice of Selby. Let's wait for him in the passage, and give him a cheer as he comes out."

"Good egg!"

The juniors crowded into the wide passage as near to the Head's study as they could venture to go.

They were feeling very indignant.

Mr. Selby's sour and uncertain temper was known to all—especially to the fags of his own Form—and the juniors were agreed that there never was any telling what he would do next.

But this latest outbreak of the Third Form master was, as Wally declared, altogether too "thick."

"It's jolly queer, though!" said Levison of the Fourth, in a very thoughtful sort of way, and with a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

The juniors turned upon him at once. Levison was not popular. He was the cad of the Fourth, and he generally contrived to make himself disagreeable by taking unpopular views. It was exactly like Levison to oppose himself to the general opinion in this matter.

"What's queer?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! What's queeah, you ass?"

"About this chap!" said Levison obstinately. "I suppose Mr. Selby must have seen this crackman that he's talking about and knows his face. It's queer that Mr. Fitzgerald should be so like him as to be taken for him!"

"Rot! Anybody may resemble anybody else, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lots of cases of mistaken identity," said Figgins, with a shake of the head. "It's not an uncommon thing."

"Well, I think it's queer, all the same!" said Levison, in his obstinate way. "And you all know that there's a lot of stuff at St. Jim's worth stealing. The school silver is worth more than two thousand pounds; and there was a burglar tried to get at it some time back, as you know very well. That's why the Head had that new safe in his study instead of the old-fashioned one that anybody could open."

"Does this chap look like a burglar, ass?"

"He may belong to the swell mob. There are lots of crackmen who don't look like burglars. This may be one of them. I shouldn't wonder if Selby is quite right," said Levison.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Shut up!"

"Rats! I—"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

"I believe that old Selby—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Tom Merry, exasperated.

Many hands seized upon Levison, and

he was promptly bumped. He roared as he smote the floor.

"Ow! Yah! Oh! Leggo!"

Bump, bump!

The cad of the Fourth was bumped along the passage, and rolled out on the school steps. There the exasperated juniors left him to recover his breath, and crowded back into the passage to wait for Mr. Fitzgerald to come out of the Head's study, with the intention of cheering him enthusiastically, to show their confidence of him, and, incidentally, to show Mr. Selby what they thought of him, too!

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Selby's Explanation!

DR. HOLMES was expecting the visitor. He rose to his feet as Mr. Fitzgerald came in, and shook hands with him.

He seemed a little surprised to see Mr. Selby come in along with the young cricketer.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, of course?" said Dr. Holmes. "I am very glad to meet you." The Head was evidently favourably impressed by the handsome, stalwart cricketer. "I have had a very favourable account of you, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I am glad to hear it, sir. I shall try to give you satisfaction," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "You are very kind. But a most extraordinary thing has happened—"

"Indeed?"

"This gentleman—"

"Mr. Selby?" said the Head.

"Yes. Mr. Selby met me as I entered the House, and spoke to me in a very extraordinary manner. I judge from his attire that he is a master here, and for that reason I wish to treat him with respect, if possible. But it is somewhat difficult to do so, as he has made an amazing and insulting accusation against me!"

"I—I am afraid I do not quite understand," said the Head, looking bewildered and mortified. "Do you know Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Selby?"

"Not under that name, sir," said the Third Form master pointedly.

"What?"

"Let Mr. Selby explain, sir," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "The whole matter is so extraordinary that it has led me to suspect this gentleman's sanity!"

"Sir!" said Mr. Selby fiercely.

Dr. Holmes lifted his hand.

"Pray be calm, Mr. Selby! This is most extraordinary! Kindly explain!"

"Certainly, sir! Last year, during a vacation here, I spent a holiday with friends in Surrey. One night there was an attempted burglary, and a man was seized in the house in attempting to escape. He was taken practically red-handed. The safe, which was a very strong one, had been opened in a mysterious way without violence—in a way which the police believe is only possible to a certain criminal who is a master in his profession. I knew little of such things, certainly, but on that occasion I had an opportunity of learning something about them. The police were sent for, and the man who had broken open the safe—the man who had been seized in attempting to escape—was handed over to them. I had every opportunity of seeing him, and he certainly saw me. That was the man!"

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Selby!"

"He escaped from the police as they were taking him away," continued Mr. Selby. "He has never been captured since. I have kept in communication with the Scotland Yard inspector who

was in charge of the case, because I was keenly interested in the matter, and I wished to learn whether the scoundrel was captured. He never was. Little was known about him. He was known to his associates and to the police as Dandy Jim; his real name appears to be a mystery. He has a wonderful gift for cracking safes, and my friend, the inspector, assures me that a score of daring robberies have been traced to his hand in the last few years. The police know his work wherever they see it, but they cannot lay hands on the man. They suspect that when he is not at work at his nefarious profession he keeps up respectable appearances in some other character. I have now discovered what that character is—a cricket coach!" said Mr. Selby bitterly.

Dr. Holmes sank back into his chair. "Impossible!" he gasped.

"It is perfectly true, sir, and perfectly certain."

The Head turned his glance upon the young man. Mr. Fitzgerald was standing with a smile upon his handsome face—a smile that expressed a mingling of amusement and contempt.

"What have you to say, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Only that Mr. Selby is dreaming, sir."

"You deny the charge, of course?"

"Of course!"

"Have you ever seen Mr. Selby before?"

"That is very difficult to say, sir. But certainly Mr. Selby is labouring under a most peculiar delusion when he imagines that he recognises me as a man whom he calls Dandy Jim."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"This is simply extraordinary!" he said. "Of course, Mr. Fitzgerald, you understand that, with a charge like this made against you, it will be necessary for me to make every investigation before you can take up your place here?"

Mr. Fitzgerald nodded.

"Naturally, sir."

"You have no objection?"

"None whatever."

Mr. Selby's lips tightened.

"You have no objection to meeting Inspector Buxton, of Scotland Yard?" he asked.

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed.

"Certainly not. If I were the man you take me to be, I should hardly care to do so, and, indeed, what would prevent me from escaping at the present moment?"

"That is true," said the Head.

Mr. Selby smiled sourly.

"If you remain to face Inspector Buxton I shall believe that you are not the man I suppose you to be," he said.

"Then I shall easily convince you, for I shall remain."

"I shall send Mr. Buxton a wire to-day, sir, and he will come down at once," said Mr. Selby, turning to the Head. "Shall I do so?"

"Most certainly."

The inspector assured me that, once Dandy Jim is in his hands, he has an infallible mode of proving his identity, from information received from one of the scoundrel's former associates now in prison," said Mr. Selby. "I believe that the inspector's arrival will settle the matter."

"Telegraph to him at once, then," said the Head. "Undoubtedly the matter must be settled as quickly as possible."

"But this man, sir—he must not be allowed to escape," said Mr. Selby. "He is undoubtedly the famous crackman, and now he is here—"



A strange expression came over Mr. Selby's face as he met the new cricket coach, and his eyes gleamed as he looked keenly at the handsome, sunburnt face. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Dandy Jim, what are you doing here?" The crowd of juniors stared at the Third Form master in astonishment.

"I do not think you could stop me, Mr. Selby, if I wished to escape," said Mr. Fitzgerald, laughing. "The fact that I have not gone already should convince you that I have no desire to do anything of the sort."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"That seems so to me, Mr. Selby."

"But, sir—" urged the Third Form master.

"I cannot consent to placing any kind of restraint upon this gentleman, sir," said the Head. "I cannot help thinking that you are labouring under a very strange delusion."

"I am perfectly convinced, sir."

"I know that, Mr. Selby, or you would not speak as you do, of course; but I am not convinced. Mr. Fitzgerald will remain quite free to do as he chooses until Mr. Buxton arrives. If Mr. Buxton thinks fit to arrest him on suspicion, I shall have no authority to say anything in the matter. Meanwhile, he will do as he chooses."

"Thank you, sir," said Fitzgerald gratefully. "You will not find your confidence in me misplaced, Dr. Holmes."

"Pray send your telegram at once, Mr. Selby."

The Form-master bit his lip.

"Very well, sir."

And he left the study.

Dr. Holmes looked at the new coach, and there was an expression of great distress upon his kind old face.

"I am very sorry this has happened, Mr. Fitzgerald. Mr. Selby has evidently made a most extraordinary mistake. I cannot believe for one moment that there is anything whatever in the charge he has brought against you."

"Thank you, sir."

"You have come here with the best recommendations," said the Head. "Two of the governors of the school

vouch for you, having known your father at the university. The Rector of Wayland also speaks highly of you, too. Your record is known to your friends, I believe, and it is too much to suspect that all the time you have been leading a double life—as an amateur cricketer in public, and as a professional crackman in secret." The Head smiled at the thought. "It is too absurd."

Arthur Fitzgerald smiled, too.

"It is certainly absurd enough, sir," he said.

"Mr. Selby was probably very much startled on the occasion he refers to, and his memory of faces is doubtless at fault," said Dr. Holmes. "It is a most unpleasant occurrence, and I hope it will not give you an unpleasant impression of St. Jim's."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "I have already made friends with some of the boys, and I shall get on with all of them excellently, I think."

"Very good. You have no objection, of course, to meeting the inspector?"

"Certainly not, sir—not the slightest."

"Then you shall meet him here, in my presence and in Mr. Selby's."

"Very good, sir."

And the Head shook hands with the young man again, and Mr. Fitzgerald left the study. There was a roar in the passage.

"Here he is!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Fitz!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"The juniors certainly seem to have been impressed favourably by Mr. Fitzgerald," he murmured, "and I have great faith in boyish instinct. What a very extraordinary idea for Mr. Selby to have taken into his head! Most extraordinary!"

CHAPTER 4.

Backing Up!

MR. FITZGERALD smiled genially as he walked down the passage between rows of cheering juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. were certainly making it clear that they meant to stand by the new coach.

"Hurrah!"

"We believe in you, sir."

"We know you are all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We all back you up, sir."

Mr. Selby, in his study, heard the shouting, and he gritted his teeth. He consoled himself with the thought that matters would wear a very different complexion when Inspector Buxton arrived from Scotland Yard. He had already sent off a telegram by Toby, the page, and that telegram was a lengthy one. Mr. Selby was usually very careful of his money, but on this occasion he did not spare the extra shilling or so in making himself clear. The telegram was worded in a way that would certainly be sure to bring Inspector Buxton down to St. Jim's by the first available train.

Mr. Selby rubbed his thin hands together with satisfaction as he thought of it. If Mr. Fitzgerald was a crackman who was leading a double life, certainly it was Mr. Selby's duty to denounce him. But he might have felt some compassion for one so young, and so evidently fitted for better things, who had gone to the bad. But there was no compassion in Mr. Selby's breast. There was spiteful animosity, which he called by the pleasanter sound of an unbending sense of rectitude.

But what Mr. Selby was thinking was a matter of not the slightest interest to anybody but Mr. Selby. He was

disregarded. The juniors cheered the new cricket coach loyally, and the noise brought Mr. Railton out of his study, the Housemaster shook hands warmly with the young man.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Fitzgerald," the School House master said warmly. "You do not know me, but I have seen you."

Fitzgerald smiled.

"Indeed! Do you recognise me?"

"Certainly."

"As what, may I ask?"

"As a first-class cricketer," said Mr. Railton. "I saw you play for your county at Lord's last summer, and I was delighted."

"Oh, good," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "That is decidedly better."

Mr. Railton looked puzzled.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"I have already been recognised here," explained Mr. Fitzgerald, smiling. "Mr. Selby recognised me as a cricketer."

"You are joking, I presume?"

"Not at all. Seriously, Mr. Selby declares that he recognises me as a cricketer who broke into a house where he was staying last summer, and narrowly escaped the police."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton in amazement. "Has Mr. Selby taken leave of his senses?"

Fitzgerald laughed.

"I really do not know. Certainly he has denounced me to the Head as a person whom he calls Dandy Jim—rather a taking name that, I must say—and he is writing to Scotland Yard for a detective to come here to identify me."

"What utter nonsense!"

"Yes, it does seem rather peculiar; but doubtless when the inspector has seen me here, Mr. Selby will admit that he was mistaken."

"And apologise, too, I hope," said Mr. Railton warmly. "Step into my study; I should like to have a chat with you before dinner."

"With pleasure."

And the young cricketer entered the Housemaster's study.

The door closed behind him, and there was a buzz of voices.

"Railton knows him, you see," said Jack Blake. "He's played for his county at Lord's. Why, Selby must be simply rocky in the topper."

"Quite wacky, dear boy."

The juniors discussed the strange affair with much interest till dinner. The story was over the whole school in a very short time. So extraordinary an occurrence was naturally a topic in every quarter. In both Houses, seniors and juniors talked of it, and wondered what on earth the master of the Third was thinking of.

No one, with the possible exception of Levison, believed for a moment that there was anything in Mr. Selby's accusation.

The thing was too utterly absurd.

Fellows compared notes on the subject, and told one another all they knew about the man, and all that was known to his credit.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had seen him playing in a county team at Lord's, as Mr. Railton had, and remembered him perfectly well. He knew, too—and other fellows soon knew from him—that the man was well known to two of the governors of St. Jim's.

A relative of the Rector of Wayland who was in the Fifth Form, too, related how the Rector had spoken of Arthur Fitzgerald, and how much he had thought of him.

He was a stranger to Tom Merry & The Gem Library.—No. 1,425.

Co., but during the day it came out that he was quite a well-known man outside the school, and that his name had been much before the public in connection with first-class cricket.

It was really an honour to the school to get such a man for a cricket coach, and the fellows all felt it so.

"It's utter rot," Kildare said to Darrell of the Sixth. "Selby must be completely barmy."

Darrell nodded.

"It's just Selby's crankiness," he said. "He will look an awful ass when the inspector man comes down and laughs at him—as he will do."

"Yes, rather."

That was the opinion of all St. Jim's. New House and School House alike, and all the masters.

Even Mr. Selby himself began to feel a little dubious.

He had been so utterly certain of his ground that he had not had the slightest hesitation in denouncing the supposed cricketer to the Head.

But public opinion was not without weight, even with the hard and obstinate master of the Third.

The whole school was against him, and he knew it, and he felt very uncomfortable at the thought that possibly the whole school might turn out to be in the right, and himself in the wrong.

He became very anxious for the arrival of the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

He had received a wire from Mr. Buxton, announcing that he would come down by the next express, and that he would arrive at St. Jim's soon after six.

With that Mr. Selby had to be content.

But as the day wore on, and Mr. Fitzgerald made no attempt to leave the school, very unpleasant qualms began to assail Mr. Selby. The inspector was coming, and the suspected man knew it. If he was really Dandy Jim the cricketer, why did he not go? If he was the man Mr. Selby believed him to be, how dared he remain to face the Scotland Yard official, who had been hunting unsuccessfully for the redoubtable Dandy Jim for several years, and was as keen as mustard for a chance of capturing him?

Mr. Selby could not answer that question. One thing was certain, inexplicable as it was, Arthur Fitzgerald remained, and he showed no sign of trepidation whatever as the time drew nearer for the arrival of the inspector from Scotland Yard. And the master of the Third had to confess that he did not understand it.

CHAPTER 5.

Something Like Cricket!

TOM MERRY & CO. felt afternoon lessons an infliction that day.

It was a glorious June day, and the soft sunny skies and the green cricket fields seemed to call them to the open air. And they were very keen to see the new arrival, Mr. Arthur Fitzgerald, upon the cricket field.

The talk on the subject of Mr. Fitzgerald, following the amazing scene in the hall, had brought to light all that was known about the cricket coach, and the St. Jim's juniors knew Mr. Fitzgerald's public career almost as well as he knew it himself.

The new coach had been born rich, and he had been practically ruined by his father's death, a bankrupt, at the time the young man left college. He

could certainly have obtained employment as a professional cricketer, but he had always played as an amateur.

Reduced as he was in circumstances, doubtless he had saved enough from the wreck to enable him to supply his modest needs and to keep on playing the game he loved. Probably, in the long run, he had had to take the choice of becoming a professional player, or of taking the chance that was offered him at St. Jim's.

Naturally, the Head was glad to get such a man as a coach for the juniors in preference to that of an ordinary retired professional. Certainly, Mr. Fitzgerald was fitted in every way for the work, and certainly the work would be exacting enough, and the pay slight enough. It was too absurd to suppose that a professional cricketer would take on such a post—unless, indeed, it was simply an excuse for getting into St. Jim's with nefarious views upon the Head's staff.

That was evidently Mr. Selby's suspicion—which was laughed at by all St. Jim's.

And all the fellows were keen to show Mr. Fitzgerald that they had faith in him.

Mr. Linton dismissed the Shell at last, and Tom Merry & Co. came out of the Form-room joyously enough. They swarmed out into the quadrangle with a loud whoop.

"Here we are again!" said Kangaroo. "Who says cricket?"

And there was a roar.

"Cricket!"

"I want to see that chap play," said Tom Merry. "If he's batted for his county at Lord's there must be something in him."

"What ho!"

"Jolly good coach for us to get," said Monty Lowther. "I think we're in luck."

"You bet!" said Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "There's the chap, talking to Mr. Railton outside the pavilion."

Mr. Fitzgerald greeted the juniors with a cheery nod as they came up.

"Doesn't look as if he's afraid of the giddy man from Scotland Yard," murmured Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"You lads ready for practice?" asked Mr. Fitzgerald genially.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll begin," said the coach cheerfully. "I hear that you are very keen on cricket here."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! We always try to play the game, sir."

"Quite a good maxim," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

The stumps were pitched, and the juniors prepared for practice. Some of them pressed Mr. Fitzgerald to give them an exhibition of batting, as he had done at Lord's.

The coach smilingly assented.

"We've got some jolly good bowlers here, sir," said Tom Merry. "Fatty Wynn and Redfern are very hot stuff. I'd like to see you handle their bowling, sir, if you would."

"Trot them along!" said Mr. Fitzgerald good-naturedly.

Fatty Wynn was in the tuckshop, and Figgins and Kerr rushed to drag him out. Redfern was ready, however, and he began to bowl to Mr. Fitzgerald's wicket.

Redfern was a splendid bowler for a junior, but Mr. Fitzgerald dealt easily with him. Redfern sent down ball after ball, of every variety, and the cricket coach sent them all over the field.

Tom Merry & Co. were given a considerable amount of leather-hunting, which they took in very good part. This proof of Mr. Fitzgerald's batting powers delighted them. Redfern refused to take the ball again, at last.

"It's no good," he said. "I might as well bowl against the school wall."

"Yaas, wathah! I couldn't take that wicket myself, deah boy."

"Go hon!" said Redfern.

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Here's Wynn!" shouted Blake. "Come on, Fatty! You've got to take his wicket."

Fatty Wynn grinned as he caught the ball that was tossed to him. Fatty Wynn was the best junior bowler, and he had once played for St. Jim's First Eleven with distinction. But he could make no impression upon Arthur Fitzgerald's wicket. The young man did not seem to exert himself in any way. His movements were almost lazy. But he drove far away every ball that was sent down.

"My hat!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn at last. "It's no good! I can't touch him."

"Ask Langton to try."

"Langton! Langton!"

"Come and bowl, old man."

Langton of the Sixth was going down to the senior ground, but he good-naturedly came at the juniors' call. Langton was the champion senior bowler, and he had a most deadly delivery.

"Would you like me to send you down a few, Mr. Fitzgerald?" he asked. Fitzgerald smiled.

"Certainly!" he said.

And Langton sent him a few—very hot ones, too. Langton threw into it all he knew. But he could make no more impression upon Mr. Fitzgerald's wicket than the juniors had done. He tossed the ball back to Tom Merry at last, with a laugh.

"No go!" he said.

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed genially.

"So much for fun. And now for work," he said.

"Bai Jove! But you're a wondah, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Fitzgerald gravely.

Then the practice began.

Mr. Fitzgerald soon proved that he was not only a good cricketer himself, but that he knew how to impart a great deal of his knowledge to others. He was most decidedly the best coach the St. Jim's juniors had ever had, and they had had several. Cricket was compulsory at St. Jim's, but there were few fellows who ever thought of wishing to avoid it.

Levison was one of the few. He was standing looking on—or, rather, looking at Mr. Fitzgerald—with his hands in his pockets and a sneering smile upon his face, when the coach's glance fell upon him.

Mr. Fitzgerald signed to him.

"You have neither bowled nor batted, I think," he said.

"No," said Levison. He did not say "No, sir," and the omission of the title of respect made Tom Merry's eyes gleam. Mr. Fitzgerald did not seem to notice it.

"Well, well, come on!" he said.

"Don't care about it now, Fitzgerald," said Levison.

Mr. Fitzgerald's eyes gleamed for a moment. But he took no notice of Levison's insolence otherwise. The cad of the Fourth walked away, and as he entered the School House he found himself joined by Tom Merry and Blake.

They took hold of his arms and walked into the House with him.

Levison looked at them in some alarm.

"You were impertinent to Mr. Fitzgerald just now," said Tom Merry.

Levison scowled.

"I suppose there's no need to stand on ceremony with a cricket coach," he said.

"That depends," said Blake. "There are cricket coaches and cricket coaches. Mr. Fitzgerald is a bit out of the ordinary, but, anyway, there's no harm in treating a decent man decently. Do you catch on?"

"No, I don't," growled Levison.

"Leggo!"

"If you can't understand we're going to make you," said Tom Merry grimly.

"You've got to treat Mr. Fitzgerald with proper respect, Levison."

"I shall treat him as I like."

"No, you won't," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You'll treat him as we like! You'll go straight back to Mr. Fitzgerald this minute and tell him you're sorry you were rude, or—"

"Or what?"

"Or you'll come into the gym with me, and I'll give you the licking of your life," said Tom Merry, with gleaming eyes.

Levison looked at him and quailed.

"I—I don't mind speaking to him civilly, if that's all," he muttered.

"We'll hear you do it," said Blake. "Come on!"

And Levison walked back to the cricket field between the two juniors and muttered an apology to Mr. Fitzgerald. He strode away afterwards with his hands driven deep in his pockets and his eyes glinting with rage.

CHAPTER 6.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY threw his bat down in Study No. 6, and looked in a thoughtful way at the three juniors who shared with him that famous apartment in the Fourth Form passage.

Blake and Herries and Digby were getting tea, and as they had come in

very hungry after the cricket they were in a hurry.

Digby lighted the fire, and Herries filled the kettle, and Blake laid the table. Blake paused in the midst of that labour to glare at Arthur Augustus.

"No use here for ornamental effigies," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Lend a hand, my son. Scrape out the jam; there's still some left in the jar, and you can get enough for tea if you try hard."

"In the cires, deah boys—"

"Blow the cires!" said Blake briskly. "I'm hungry!"

"I was thinkin' that in the cires it would be a good ideah to invite Mr. Fitzgerald to tea in the study," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Blake paused.

"Well, that's a jolly good ideah," he remarked. "Only the grub is rather short, and the money's rather tight. I don't know what we can feed him on. The scrapings of a jam jar ain't very gorgeous to offer to a distinguished guest."

"Yaas; and my governah hasn't sent me a tip this week, though I've witten for one," said D'Arcy. "But we can borrow some cash of Tom Mewwy."

"Good egg! Go and dig up Fitzgerald then, while we dig up Tom Merry, and make him shell out," said Blake. "It will be a good idea to have Fitzgerald, if he will come. It will show all the school that we know he's the right sort."

"And it will show old Selby that we don't care twopence for his rubbish," Digby remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps it had bettah be left to me to ask him, as it will weequial to be put delicately."

And Arthur Augustus stepped out of the study.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Here he is, and Tom Mewwy, too."

The chums of Study No. 6 looked out into the passage. Mr. Fitzgerald was coming along the passage with the Terrible Three, who had evidently taken possession of him. The young cricketer

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The MAGNET

was chatting cheerily with the chums of the Shell. Arthur Augustus bowed most graciously to the coach.

"Pway excuse me, Mr. Fitzgerald!" "Certainly!" said Mr. Fitzgerald genially.

"We should be vewy honahed, sir, if you would come to tea in our study," said the swell of St. Jim's, with elaborate courtesy.

Mr. Fitzgerald smiled.

"Thank you very much!" he said. "I am afraid it is impossible, as I have already promised my young friends here."

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as an awful cheek on your part, Tom Mewwy, to bag Mr. Fitzgerald in this way."

Tom Merry laughed.

"First come, first served," he remarked. "We bagged Mr. Fitzgerald on the field, and he's promised us. This is where we score."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"All serene!" said Jack Blake. "We wanted very much to have Mr. Fitzgerald to tea, but we should be equally pleased to come and have tea with him. We'll come."

"Certainly!" said Digby. "As Tom Merry is so pressing, we can't think of refusing."

"You can count on us," said Herries, with a nod.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, chuckling. "Come on, deah boys! We'll all go to tea with Tom Mewwy."

"Well, of all the cheek, I think this takes the giddy biscuit!" said Tom Merry. "But come on, you bounders; the more the merrier!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 joined the Terrible Three, and the seven juniors escorted Mr. Fitzgerald along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry's study was already prepared. Tom Merry had tipped Toby, the page, to prepare it. There was a fire in the grate, and the kettle was singing on the hob, and the table was covered with a clean cloth, procured from goodness knows where by the obliging Toby.

Mr. Fitzgerald was ushered into the study, and made to sit down in the armchair, which he smilingly accepted.

There was something very boyish about Arthur Fitzgerald himself, and he certainly had the gift of getting on with boys. His wonderful cricket had earned their respect, and his pleasant manners and cheery ways earned their personal liking. And all the juniors were eager to show the new coach that they did not attach the slightest importance to the allegations made by the master of the Third.

The Terrible Three, as it happened, most fortunately, were in funds; and while some of the juniors entertained Mr. Fitzgerald with conversation, a couple of them slipped away to the tuck-shop, and returned laden with good things.

"We shan't keep you waiting long, sir," said Monty Lowther. "You see, we do our own cooking in the studies."

Arthur Fitzgerald laughed merrily.

"I can cook, too," he remarked. "It's about twelve or fourteen years since I was a junior with a study of my own, but I haven't forgotten how to cook bacon and tomatoes. Let me try my hand."

"Oh, sir!"

"I'd like to, really," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Then go ahead, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Tom Merry cordially.

And Mr. Fitzgerald went ahead.

It was warm in the study, between the

fire and the June sunshine. Mr. Fitzgerald removed his coat, and took the frying-pan, and did the cooking. Certainly he turned out the bacon and tomatoes and poached eggs in as masterly a manner as Patty Wynn himself could have done.

Tom Merry made the tea, and the cooking being finished, a very cheerful party sat down round the study table.

There certainly was none too much room for so numerous a party; but Mr. Fitzgerald was given plenty of room, and the juniors did the best they could. Some of them sat at the table, and others on boxes, or on the window-seat.

But there were plenty of good things to go round, and that, after all, was the main point.

"Bai Jove, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's simply wipin' havin' you here, sir! We wegard it as an honah."

"The honour is mine," said Mr. Fitzgerald, with a bow. "By Jove! This makes me feel a boy again! I'm jolly glad I came to St. Jim's!"

"It is wipin' for us to have you, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "I must remark that you are a great improvement upon the avewage cricket coach, sir."

"Yes, rather!" said the juniors heartily.

"And you all appear to trust me, even after what you have heard to my discredit to-day," said Mr. Fitzgerald, with a rather queer smile.

"We know that's all rot, sir."

"Of course, it's perfectly plain to every reasonable chap that Mr. Selby was mistaken," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope I shall never do anything to make you lose your faith in me, at all events," said Mr. Fitzgerald, very gravely.

"Oh, we're quite sure of that, sir!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Fitzgerald changed the conversation to cricket—a subject that was naturally of endless interest to the juniors of St. Jim's. They were all keen cricketers, and Mr. Fitzgerald had the whole game at his finger-tips. In his career as a county amateur, too, he had met many of the best known men in first-class cricket, and he could tell anecdotes, to which the juniors listened with such breathless interest that they were almost in danger of neglecting the rashers and the tomatoes.

The time passed away very quickly, and Tom Merry & Co. remembered that feed afterwards as one of the pleasantest they had ever had in the study.

Tea was over, but the talk was running on cheerily when there came a tap at the study door, and Toby, the School House page, put his shock head in.

"Mr. Fitzgerald here?" he asked.

The cricket coach rose.

"I am here" he said.

"Dr. Holmes wishes you to step into his study, sir," said Toby.

"Very well!"

The juniors became suddenly grave; they knew what that meant—the cricket coach was about to face the gentleman from Scotland Yard, who had come down to discover whether he was really Dandy Jim, the cracksman. The fact that he had remained to go through the ordeal seemed to the juniors conclusive proof—if such were needed—that he was not.

They all rose as Mr. Fitzgerald took his leave.

"Thank you very much, my lads!" said Mr. Fitzgerald. "You've given me

a ripping time, and I shall not forget it! Thank you very much!"

And, with a cheery nod, he departed, following the House page to the Head's study.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"True blue, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry. "Selby is simply off his rocker!"

"Wight off, deah boy!"

"Fitz will come out of it with flying colours!" said Blake. "He's a ripping chap, and what he doesn't know about cricket isn't worth knowing! We're going to back him up!"

And all the juniors agreed that they would.

CHAPTER 7.

The Man From Scotland Yard!

"GLAD to see you, inspector—very glad indeed!"

Mr. Selby infused a very unusual warmth into his tone as he greeted the stout, purple-complexioned gentleman from Scotland Yard.

Inspector Buxton had been shown into the Third Form master's study previous to seeing the Head. As he was a personal acquaintance of Mr. Selby the master had a right to chat with him first.

Inspector Buxton disposed his ample form in Mr. Selby's armchair.

"You've lost no time," the Form-master added.

The inspector smiled a fat smile.

"Not likely," he said, "if there's a chance of laying Dandy Jim by the heels! I can hardly believe he's here. But I'd run across the United Kingdom for a chance of laying hands on the rascal!"

"He is, of course, still at large?" said Mr. Selby.

"Certainly! For a long time past there have been no Dandy Jim jobs, and some of us wondered whether he had gone out of the business. My opinion was that he was lying low. Your telegram told me that he was here!" the inspector added briskly. "Where?"

"The man I suspect arrived at St. Jim's to-day."

"Arrived?" repeated the inspector, puzzled.

"We have engaged a new cricket coach for the juniors, and the man who came—calling himself Arthur Fitzgerald—I recognised as the cracksman I have seen."

"Cricket coach! Cool, by jingo!"

"I'm certain of the man. I remember every feature, and especially his fingers—long and slim."

"Quite so. Dandy Jim's fingers were like that. He has a wonderful touch with a safe. He can open a safe in the dark if he chooses. How he does it is a wonder. It's a gift, I suppose—a gift that will get him landed for a long stretch some day. We always know Dandy Jim's work when we see it, but we've never dropped on him. But where is this man you suspect? Is he detained?"

"No. But he is here."

"The inspector started.

"Does he deny it?"

"Entirely."

"And he has remained of his own accord to face it?"

"Yes," admitted Mr. Selby.

"That hardly looks as if he can be the man," said the inspector musingly.

"But if he is Dandy Jim, we can prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Dandy Jim has an old bullet scar on his



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Second (to badly battered boxer):
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Boxer: "But I can scarcely see him."
Second: "Then hit him from memory!"
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MEAT OF ANOTHER SORT.

"Why, dad, this is roast pork!" exclaimed Bobby one evening at dinner, when father had his employer as a guest.
"Of course!" said father. "What of it?"
"Well, you told mother that you were bringing that old mutton-head home for dinner to-night!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Burrows, Ashleigh, Rugby Road, Resolven, near Neath, Glamorgan.

NO DIFFERENCE.

Servant: "Your shaving water, sir!"
New Lodger: "But I am shaved! You brought the water up earlier!"
Servant: "That was not your water, sir; that was your morning cup of tea!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss H. Bentley, Gill Moss, West Derby, Liverpool.

NOTHING TO SING ABOUT.

Medical Officer: "Have you any organic trouble?"
Recruit: "No, sir. I ain't a bit musical!"
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A hatter in a certain town put up this advertisement:
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shoulder, and he can't have got rid of it. An old pal of his gave it away to me, and I've had confirmation of it from other quarters. Dandy Jim kept it a secret, but his intimates saw it, and it's leaked out. If this man is Dandy Jim, the scar will give him away, and once let me be sure of him, and I'll have the darbies on fast enough!"

"I am quite sure of him myself, and the scar will prove it," said Mr. Selby. "He is not the kind of man one would suspect, and I may add that, if he is Dandy Jim, as I believe, he has kept up appearances wonderfully well in public."

"Quite so. We've always been pretty certain that Dandy Jim was leading a double life," said the inspector. "He disappeared so completely that it was pretty certain proof he did not belong to the regular criminal classes. He had associates—or, rather, tools—among them, but he never lived with them. It was always pretty clear that somewhere or other he was living a normal life—on the proceeds of his robberies."

"Possibly that of a county cricketer?" Inspector Buxton pursed his lips.

"Possibly, of course," he assented. "But it sounds rather steep. But I won't deny the possibility. Tell me all you can about this man Fitzgerald."

"He was at a Public school and Oxford; and would have been rich, but his father became a bankrupt, and he left his college suddenly," said Mr. Selby. "So much seems to be well known. Since then he has been a county cricketer."

"What has he lived on?"
"Apparently on whatever he had left from his father's fortune."

"And now, it seems," said the inspector, "he has taken a post as cricket coach in this school?"

"Exactly!"
"Not a very handsome position for a man of his training, and not a particularly handsome salary, I suspect?"

"Quite so."
"But it is a certainty, I suppose, and he has settled down upon it after knocking about for some years. That looks fair and square enough."

"Unless he has come here to crack the school safe."

"What is the value of that to a cracksmen—do you know?"

"The school silver has been valued at over two thousand pounds, and there are other valuables."

"Pshaw!"

"There was an attempt at burglary recently," continued Mr. Selby. "It created great alarm in the school. Since then the Head's old-fashioned safe has been taken away, and a new large safe has been built in the wall of the study—a very powerful one, which would defy the ordinary burglar."

"It wouldn't defy Dandy Jim!" the inspector chuckled. "There isn't a safe in the kingdom he couldn't crack with his eyes shut! I know his work!"

"My belief is that that is what he has come for," said Mr. Selby.

"Quite possible."

"As for his staying to face you, that is sheer effrontery. But as you say that there is an infallible mode of identifying him—"

"Perfectly infallible—absolutely!" said the inspector.

"Then we shall have him."

"Yes, if he is the man."

"You doubt it?"

"Well, yes," confessed the inspector. "Of course, it is possible; but I think the chances are that you have been deceived by a chance resemblance. The man's record seems clear enough."

"But if Dandy Jim had been leading a double life, as you suggested, his public record would be clear. He would purposely be careful to keep it so."

"Yes, that is true."

"And as for his nerve and coolness in facing you, inspector, you have said yourself that he is a remarkably cool hand."

"Quite true."

"I believe he is the man," Mr. Selby repeated, and his lips tightened.

The inspector gave him a quick look from under his eyelids. It was plain enough to him that Mr. Selby had taken a bitter dislike to the young cricketer, and that he wanted it to be proved that Arthur Fitzgerald was Dandy Jim. But the astute Scotland Yard official was not likely to be used as a tool to gratify anyone's private dislikes.

"Well, we shall see," said the inspector, rising. "I am glad, at all events, that you have brought me here, and I thank you. Can I see the man now?"

"Yes. Pray come with me to the Head's study."

Inspector Buxton followed the Form-master.

Dr. Holmes received him courteously, showing very plainly by his manner, however, that he considered the inspector had come down to St. Jim's upon a wild-goose chase.

The inspector was thinking so himself, as a matter of fact; but he intended to put the matter to every test. He was too keenly anxious to get the handcuffs upon the famous cracksmen to let the smallest chances slip by.

"I will send for Mr. Fitzgerald, and you shall see him here, inspector," said Dr. Holmes.

"Thank you, sir."
And Toby was dispatched for the cricket coach.

A few minutes later Mr. Fitzgerald entered the study. He bowed to the three gentlemen as he came in perfectly cool and collected.

Inspector Buxton fixed his eyes upon the young man.

"Dandy Jim," he exclaimed, "or his twin brother!"

CHAPTER 8.

No Scar!

ARTHUR FITZGERALD smiled genially as he heard the words of the inspector.

Mr Buxton moved round a little, placing himself between the cricketer and the door of the study.

Fitzgerald's smile broadened. It was only too evident that at the sight of him the inspector had come round suddenly to Mr. Selby's opinion, and did not mean to run any risks of the young man making a sudden bolt.

Dr. Holmes observed the movement, which was obvious enough, and a troubled frown came over his face.

He glanced quickly at Arthur Fitzgerald. But the cricketer did not look uneasy; he only smiled. The Head was relieved to see that he took the inspector's movement simply as a joke.

"By George!" the inspector muttered. Fitzgerald laughed.

"I take it that you, too, see some resemblance between myself and that unfortunate cracksmen, Dandy Jim, inspector?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the inspector. "You deny that you are Dandy Jim?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Fitzgerald's laugh rang heartily through the study. There was

(Continued on next page.)

nothing forced or unreal about it; it was an outburst of spontaneous merriment. It was infectious, too, and the Head began to smile.

"You see that Mr. Fitzgerald does not look alarmed, inspector," he said.

"Quite so," agreed the inspector. "I hope all this will be cleared up quite satisfactorily, but Mr. Fitzgerald must allow us to make every investigation."

"Most decidedly," said Mr. Fitzgerald readily. "My record is open to inspection; in fact, I believe there are scarcely a couple of days since I was at college in which I have not been seen somewhere, generally on a cricket or football ground. If you read up county cricket and Rugby football for the last few years, you can satisfy yourself as to what I have been doing."

"By day," said the inspector.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I suppose a man could play cricket and Rugby by day, and bungle by night," said Mr. Fitzgerald, laughing. "Excuse me, but it really appeals to me as funny. I did not anticipate anything of this sort when I accepted the post of cricket coach for the Lower Forms at St. Jim's."

"It is very unpleasant," said the Head. "I can only say that I am sorry you should be subjected to this, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Oh, never mind, sir; I really don't object if it will have the result of satisfying Mr. Selby that I am really a very harmless character."

"If you are Dandy Jim, I shall soon know you," said the inspector grimly. "Have you any objection to removing your coat?"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked surprised.

"My coat!" he repeated. "Why do you ask me to remove my coat?"

"Because I wish to identify you. If you are innocent, sir, you will do well to accede to my wishes," said the inspector.

"Pray do as Inspector Buxton asks, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head.

"Very well, sir. I cannot help regarding this as mere fooling, however. I do not see why I should remove my coat. But there it is."

Arthur Fitzgerald stripped off his coat and threw it upon a chair.

"Now your collar," said the inspector.

"I decline to do anything of the sort."

Inspector Buxton's eyes glittered.

"Oh, you decline!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly. This is mere buffoonery."

"Listen to me," said the inspector. "I have a reason, and if you decline to allow me to carry out my investigation I shall put the handcuffs on you, sir, and carry it out without your assent."

Mr. Fitzgerald clenched his hands hard.

"You are insulting," he said.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand pacifically.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he said, "patience! It certainly appears to me, Mr. Buxton, that this is an extraordinary proceeding. If you will have the goodness to explain your object to Mr. Fitzgerald, however, I am sure that he will make no objection to acceding to your wishes."

Mr. Fitzgerald nodded assent to that remark.

"Very well," said the inspector, with his eyes fixed upon the cricketer's face. "Dandy Jim the crackman had a scar from a bullet wound upon his left shoulder. There is a great deal of evidence about it, and it is a certain proof of identity. I wish to see Mr. Fitzgerald's shoulder."

The young man smiled.

"Is that all, inspector?"

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"That is all, sir."

"In that case I have no objection to make. It is merely a waste of time," said the young man. "I certainly have no scar upon my left shoulder."

"We shall see."

"Pray let the inspector make the examination, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Fitzgerald removed his collar and tie, and unfastened the stud of his shirt, and dragged it open over the shoulder. He pulled down the edge of the under-vest, and a clear, hard white skin was revealed. There was certainly no trace of a scar upon it, even to the keen, searching eyes of the inspector.

Mr. Buxton rubbed the skin with his fingers to make sure there was no deception. The pink colour came up through the skin naturally enough; it was evident that there was no disguise there.

Mr. Fitzgerald looked at him with a quizzical smile.

"Are you satisfied, sir?"

Inspector Buxton was silent. He was dumbfounded.

Mr. Fitzgerald allowed his vest and shirt to slip back into their place. The inspector made a gesture.

"The other shoulder, please. Let me see the other shoulder."

Mr. Fitzgerald looked impatient.

"Come, come! This is simply a farce," he exclaimed. "You said the left shoulder, and you have seen the left shoulder. What more do you want?"

"There may have been an error in the information; it may have been the right shoulder," said the inspector, gritting his teeth. "At all events, I don't leave this room till I've seen your right shoulder."

"Pray permit him to do so, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head gently. "I can understand your feelings, but it is wiser to satisfy Mr. Buxton in every possible way."

"Oh, very well, sir," said Arthur Fitzgerald resignedly.

He uncovered the right shoulder. Inspector Buxton scanned it. Mr. Selby made a step forward, and turned his glance upon it. There was no sign of a scar.

"Well?" said the cricketer.

Inspector Buxton stepped back, looking chagrined and disappointed.

"It is all right," he said.

"You are satisfied?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Fitzgerald calmly replaced his collar and tie, and put on his coat. The inspector was looking morose, and Mr. Selby savage. Mr. Buxton's hopes had evidently risen at the sight of Arthur Fitzgerald's face, but they had been dashed to the ground again by his failure to discover the identifying scar.

"You are quite satisfied now, inspector, I presume?" said Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"You no longer have any suspicion of Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"It's hardly possible to suspect him now, sir."

"And you, Mr. Selby?"

The Third Form master bit his lip.

"I must, of course, abide by what Inspector Buxton says," he replied.

"Then the matter is now closed. Mr. Fitzgerald's honour is completely vindicated, as I fully expected all along. I am only sorry that this has happened, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I shall forget all about it, sir," said the young man. "I, too, am very pleased that I have been able to satisfy Mr. Selby."

And he bowed and quitted the study.

Mr. Selby left a few minutes later. He was in such a rage that he could

scarcely control his features. He realised that he had been made to look ridiculous, and he would have given a great deal for the young cricketer to have turned out to be the famous crackman.

Inspector Buxton lingered in the study.

Dr. Holmes glanced at him, and rose. "Your work is finished here," he asked.

"Quite so, sir. It is a case of very remarkable resemblance, and that is all," said Mr. Buxton slowly. "Very few people have seen Dandy Jim, but I am one of the few, and I could have sworn—Do you know whether Mr. Fitzgerald is a twin?"

The Head smiled.

"I happen to know that he is an only son," he replied.

"Floored again!" murmured the inspector with a baffled look. "It is really very extraordinary. Well, good-day, sir! I am sorry to have troubled you."

Inspector Buxton took his leave. Mr. Selby joined him as he put his hat on in the hall. Mr. Selby's face was quite pale.

"All moonshine?" said the inspector grimly.

"Do you really think so, inspector?" asked the Form-master in a low voice.

"It's evident enough. He's not the man."

"Is there not some means of eradicating old scars?" asked the Form-master.

"Not so completely as that. The skin was quite smooth and untouched. There never had been a scar on either shoulder."

Mr. Selby set his teeth.

"Then you believe that he is not the man?"

"I am bound to believe it."

The Form-master's eyes searched his face.

"But you have a lingering doubt, in spite of what you are bound to believe?" he asked.

Mr. Buxton laughed slightly.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "No, I cannot say I have. I am feeling disappointed at not laying my hands on Dandy Jim. That is all."

"Well," said Mr. Selby deliberately, "I have not altered my opinion. I believe that this man is Dandy Jim, and that he has somehow hoodwinked us."

"I am afraid that you allow personal dislikes to influence your judgment, sir," said the inspector, with a shake of the head.

Mr. Selby started and reddened.

"What do you mean, sir? Why should I dislike him?"

The inspector smiled.

"I don't know why you should, but it's pretty clear that you do, sir," he said. "I think that is why you feel as you do. The evidence is all in his favour."

"I believe that he is the crackman," said Mr. Selby deliberately, "and I shall keep my eyes on him, and bring it home to him if I can!"

"I wish you luck, sir. If you really think that, you would certainly be justified in keeping your eyes upon him. And if you should by chance discover anything, remember that a telegram will bring me here instantly."

And Inspector Buxton departed from St. Jim's. Why did he speak those final words? Was it as Mr. Selby had said? Did a doubt still linger in the inspector's mind, in spite of the plainness of evidence? Possibly. In Mr. Selby's mind, at all events, there was not a doubt. The bitter dislike he had taken

to the young cricketer was only intensified by finding that he was in the wrong, and he refused to admit the possibility that he had made a mistake. Henceforth, to Mr. Selby, Arthur Fitzgerald was Dandy Jim the crackman, and it was only a question of time before the master of the Third would catch him napping.

Tom Merry & Co. saw the inspector depart—alone, and they drew their own conclusions from that circumstance. If Mr. Fitzgerald had by any chance turned out to be Dandy Jim, the inspector would certainly not have departed alone. Dandy Jim would have gone with him with handcuffs on his wrists.

The juniors had no doubt; but this proof positive was very satisfactory to them. And the school soon knew all about it. The suspicion against Mr.

Two juniors, who were seated upon an empty trunk, jumped up. Levison slipped his cigarette into his sleeve and Mellish dropped his on the floor. They both looked in dismay at the St. Jim's captain. They were fairly caught.

Kildare looked at them grimly.

"Smoking!" he said.

"Oh!" gasped Mellish.

"Just trying a fag," said Levison, with an air of bravado.

"Indeed! Give me your cigarettes!"

The juniors obeyed.

"Now, all that you have in your pockets."

"I—I haven't any," faltered Mellish.

"But you have, Levison, you young rascal!"

Levison hesitated a moment, and then handed a packet of cheap cigarettes to the Sixth Former.

Kildare broke the cigarettes into little

ground. The two cads of the Fourth followed him sullenly.

Afternoon lessons were over, and the playing fields were swarmed. Mr. Fitzgerald was there with a crowd of juniors, and they were very busy. Arthur Fitzgerald nodded cordially to Kildare. There was a great liking already between the captain of St. Jim's and the former county cricketer.

"Will you look after these two young rotters a bit, Mr. Fitzgerald?" asked Kildare. "They have been dodging cricket practice. I want them kept at the nets a good half-hour."

Mr. Fitzgerald smiled.

"Certainly!" he said.

Kildare went back to the House. Mellish was looking sullen and Levison savage. He had consumed a good many cigarettes in the box-room before the captain of St. Jim's discovered him



Levison roared and wriggled as Mr. Fitzgerald laid on the cricket stump, but he could not escape from the iron grasp of the cricket coach. He had looked for trouble and found it! The juniors had no sympathy to waste on the cad of the Fourth—they yelled with laughter.

Fitzgerald had been the talk of St. Jim's all the afternoon; and Dr. Holmes considered it only just that the clearing of his name from all suspicion should be made equally public.

CHAPTER 9.

A Stump for Levison!

KILDARE paused and frowned. The captain of St. Jim's had just entered one of the upper box-rooms in the School House to look for something he needed, and a smell of cigarette smoke came to his nostrils as he opened the door. It was evident that he had dropped by chance upon some "doggyish" youth who was breaking the strict rule of St. Jim's.

He threw the door wide open and stared into the room

pieces and scattered the fragments over the floor of the box-room.

"Why aren't you at cricket practice?" demanded Kildare.

"I—I forgot," muttered Mellish.

"Don't lie, Mellish! You two are always sneaking out of cricket practice," said Kildare sternly. "Come with me!"

The two juniors followed the captain of St. Jim's downstairs and into his study. There Kildare gave them two cuts each. Levison turned towards the door as the St. Jim's captain laid down his cane.

"Hold on!" said Kildare quietly.

"What do you want?" demanded

Levison savagely.

"Follow me!"

Kildare strode out into the quadrangle, and made his way to the cricket

there, and he was far from feeling in a state for exertion.

"Come, my lads!" said Mr. Fitzgerald kindly. "Here, Levison, take this bat."

Levison put his hands into his pockets.

"Do you hear me, Levison?" said Mr. Fitzgerald quietly.

"I don't want to play cricket!"

"You know perfectly well that practice is compulsory, Levison, and that I have the directions of your school captain."

"I am not going to play!"

"Bai Jove, Levison—"

"Cheese it, Gussy!" said Blako

"Fitz can deal with him."

"But weally—"

"Dry up!"

"You heard your captain's orders."

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said Mr. Fitzgerald. "I shall not allow you to talk nonsense, Levison. Take that bat at once!"

Levison did not move.

"Will you obey me?"

"No, I won't!"

Mr. Fitzgerald set his lips. He made one grasp at Levison and caught him by the shoulder. The cad of the Fourth was swept almost off his feet.

"You're not allowed to touch us, you rotter!" panted Levison. "You know that. You're a cricket coach, and you're paid to be useful to us, you cad."

"Give me a stump, please!" said Mr. Fitzgerald.

Blake handed him a stump.

Mr. Fitzgerald made a knee, laid Levison across it, and gave him a dozen lashes with the stump.

Levison roared and wriggled, but he could not escape from the iron grasp of the cricket coach.

The juniors stood round in a ring, roaring with laughter. They had no sympathy to waste upon the cad of the Fourth. He had looked for trouble, and he had found it, that was all. He had imagined that he could insult the coach with impunity, and he had discovered the mistake.

Mr. Fitzgerald dropped the stump at last and set Levison on his feet. The cad of the Fourth was gasping with rage and pain.

"Will you obey orders now?" asked the cricket coach quietly.

Levison set his teeth.

"No!" he yelled.

"Very well, I shall take you to the Head now!"

And Mr. Fitzgerald took Levison by the collar. Then the cad of the Fourth weakened.

"I—hang you—hang it all, I'll play!" he gasped.

"Take that bat, then!"

Levison took the bat. Mr. Fitzgerald placed him at the wicket and kept him batting. Levison began to bat in a very slovenly way, and the ball knocked down the wicket every time. But that kind of thing was not allowed to continue.

"You can bat better than that, Levison," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"I can't!" snarled Levison. "And I don't want to!"

"You must, however, whether you want to or not. You will bat better than that, or I shall lick you again with a cricket stump."

"You won't dare!" yelled the exasperated cad of the Fourth. "You're not allowed to!"

Mr. Fitzgerald picked up a stump and came towards him.

"Will you do your best?" he asked.

Levison faltered.

"Ye-es."

"Then wire in."

And Levison's batting improved very much from that moment. At the end of half an hour he was allowed to go, and he slouched off the field with Mellish, with a scowling face.

Mellish had taken the cricket quietly, as a necessary evil. He was sullen, but Levison was raging.

"The rotter!" snarled Levison, as they walked away. "The cheeky hound! To dare to lay hands on a St. Jim's fellow! And he's a paid coach!"

Mellish grinned.

"I think the Head would uphold him, as you shirked the cricket," he remarked.

Levison ground his teeth.

"The rotten cad! A rotten cracker, too! A burglar—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said his chum.

"You know he isn't that."

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"I know he is. Selby was right all the time."

"Rats!" said Mellish.

"I'll jolly well prove it, too, somehow," said Levison, taking no notice of his chum's disrespectful interjection. "I know he's a rotter, and I'll fix it on him somehow. He ought to be exposed."

"Bosh!"

"You'll see I'm right when you wake up some morning and find that the Head's safe has been robbed," growled Levison.

Mellish chuckled.

"Yes—when!" he said. "But if the safe isn't robbed till Mr. Fitzgerald robs it, it will be all serene, I think. You're simply dotty about that, Levison, same as old Selby. The whole school's laughing at him now."

"They'll laugh another way when it's proved that he's in the right."

"Oh, rot!"

And Mellish left his chum. Levison went into the School House scowling. A scheme was working in his mind for the discomfiture of the new coach.

During the next few days, Mr. Fitzgerald more than confirmed the good impression he had made upon the juniors of St. Jim's. With hardly more than two or three exceptions, everyone at St. Jim's liked him. He was a splendid cricketer, which went a long way towards winning esteem in a school of enthusiastic cricketers. And his frank and cordial manners made him very popular.

He was willing to take any amount of trouble, and did his work thoroughly and conscientiously.

The Head was very kind to him, indeed, as if to make up specially for the unpleasant experiences of his first few days at the school.

The cricket coach had fallen into his place, and seemed to have become a regular part of the life of the school, and he was evidently quite satisfied with his place and his work.

One day he was called away from school to play in a county match, and the juniors gave him an enthusiastic send-off. It was the last touch that was needed to make him almost idolised. A cricket coach who was called away to play for his county was a kind of coach the fellows could be proud of. And the next day the juniors were able to read in the papers about the score he had made, and there was the hero himself, coaching them at their cricket!

CHAPTER 10.

The Prisoner of the Safe!

A BLAZING June afternoon!

It was Wednesday and a half-holiday. In the blazing weather all St. Jim's was out of doors.

There were three cricket matches in progress on the wide playing fields. The First Eleven were playing a visiting team from Wayland. The School House juniors, captained by Tom Merry, were playing the New House juniors, led by Figgins. And two scratch teams of the Fifth and Sixth were playing another match.

Nearly every fellow at St. Jim's who was not playing was on the ground looking on. Wally & Co. were perched in the branches of an elm tree to watch the play; the cricket pavilion was crowded, and fellows were lying in the grass or sitting in groups, or leaning against the trees.

Outside the school tuckshop in the corner of the old quad, Fatty Wynn and a select party were discussing ginger-pop and jam tarts. The splendid weather had tempted all the masters—

even Mr. Selby of the Third—out of doors, and they were chatting and looking on at the cricket.

The Head himself was watching the First Eleven match.

The Houses of St. Jim's were deserted. In the New House, certainly, Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster, was in his study. Mr. Ratcliff did not like open air or cricket. But in the School House there was simply nobody.

Levison stood on the School House steps and looked away towards the distant cricket field.

A scheme he had long had in his mind was matured now, and Levison was ready to carry it out, and he had only been waiting for an opportunity.

The opportunity had come.

There was no one to observe anything that Levison might do. The cad of the Fourth realised it as he stood there on the steps, looking out.

His face was slightly pale, but there was no hesitation in it. He caught sight of the stalwart form of Arthur Fitzgerald on the cricket field. The cricket coach was acting as umpire in the junior House match.

Levison's eyes gleamed with hatred as he glanced at him. During the last few days Levison's position had been almost intolerable. He was cut by the whole House, and even Mellish declined to be seen speaking to him. Even Mellish, as a rule his tool and humble follower, had lifted up his heel against the cad of the Fourth.

Levison felt that it simply could not last, and the only way he could be saved from what he had brought upon himself was by Arthur Fitzgerald being suspected of being, in reality, the man Mr. Selby had declared him to be—Dandy Jim the crackman.

To do him justice, Levison really believed in Mr. Selby's view. There was no proof—indeed, the proof was all the other way—but Levison was always willing to believe evil of anybody. To the tortuous and distorted mind of the cad of the Fourth, what he was planning to do seemed only a somewhat shady means of getting justice done. And the end would justify the means—that was Levison's idea.

For some time Levison stood there, looking out into the quadrangle and across to the playing fields. Then he turned and sauntered back into the House.

He went down the passage and paused at the door of the Head's study. He knew that it was empty, but he tapped—he was always cautious. There was no reply and he opened the door.

The study was deserted. Levison stepped in and closed the door behind him. The cad of the Fourth knew where the key of the safe was kept. It was kept in a desk, and the desk, of course, was locked. But the lock of the desk was an ordinary one, and presented no great difficulties.

Levison drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and tried one after another upon the desk lock. He had fifteen or sixteen keys, and he was pretty certain that one of them, at least, would open the desk. He was right. At the fifth attempt the lock clicked open, and he raised the lid of the desk.

His eyes gleamed. He peered into the desk, and removed an inkpot from a little socket, and there under it lay the safe key. It was a little, peculiarly twisted key of steel.

Levison's heart beat hard as he picked it up.

He stood for a moment listening. If he should be caught in the Head's study it would go hard with him; but there was really little risk. Everybody was

out of doors that blazing afternoon, and the Head had gone down specially to see the Sixth play. He was not likely to return.

Levison closed the lid of the desk and stepped towards the safe. He inserted the key in the narrow opening, and it turned quite easily.

The heavy door swung open. Levison's heart throbbed.

The safe was open before him, and in the dim interior he caught the glimmer of the heavy masses of silver. In the little compartments, too, there were other valuables of a more portable kind—money, banknotes, and jewellery. To a cracksmen it would have meant a fortune, even if he had merely filled his pockets and left the heavier articles there. Not that Levison intended to become a thief. He intended to hide—perhaps bury in some remote place, or throw into the river—what he abstracted from the safe.

He would relock the door, return the key to its place in the desk, and lock up the desk again.

There would be a trace to show that he had been there.

Not till the Head went to the safe himself would he learn that some of the valuables had been taken away.

Then, as the key would be found in its usual place, the only possible inference would be that the safe lock had been picked.

And that would drive him to one conclusion—that it had been picked by the most skilful of cracksmen—in short, that Dandy Jim was, after all, in the House.

Inspector Buxton would not hesitate to arrest Arthur Fitzgerald then. The proof against him would be absolute.

Levison chuckled aloud at the thought. He stood looking into the safe, debating what he should take. Heavy silver plate he could not take away, but some of the gold plate he could cram into his pockets, and a bundle of banknotes—he could take them easily enough. He might even get an opportunity of leaving the banknotes somewhere in Mr. Fitzgerald's room—that would make the chain of evidence more than irresistible.

The junior stepped into the safe, and, with hands that trembled a little, he selected the most portable of the plunder.

Hardly stopping to examine what the various packages contained, the young rascal crammed package after package into his pockets.

Suddenly he paused.

In the silence of the deserted House a sudden sound had come to his ears—a footstep in the passage.

For a moment Levison's heart ceased to beat.

It might be—most probably it was—only a fellow who had come into the House for something. But it might be the Head coming to his study.

Levison's brain swam at the thought. To be caught there; the safe open; the key in his pocket; a vision danced before his eyes of a crowded Hall, of the sentence of expulsion, of disgrace, and infamy for ever.

There was only one thing to be done, and he did it quickly. He drew the door of the safe shut upon him. There was a sharp click as it locked.

Even if the Head came to the study, he would not suspect that there was someone inside the safe. And Levison had closed his desk. He remembered that the desk lock was a catch, so it would not be found unlocked. There was nothing in the study to excite suspicion.

Levison stood in utter darkness with beating heart.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! What bell never rings? A dumb-bell. Who has the roughest time? The phrenologist feels many a bump! "Yes," said the barber optimistically to Mr. Ratcliff, "I warn you this hair-restorer will run you into something for hair-cuts!" "What was the food of the gods?" asked Reilly. The food of the "gods" (theatre balcony) is usually oranges, old chap. Some of these words are spelt wrong: Bunn, kake, coco, koffee, hamm and eggz. Who was that said they're all wrong? No, the word "and" isn't. A quick one: There are seven cows in a field full of snow. What time is it? Winter time. A gangster has six hot baths per day. He wants to become "hard boiled." Remember, everything

He listened intently.

There was not a sound.

His fears were relieved, and after a few minutes he began to feel for the keyhole. But a sudden misgiving arrested him. The safe door was of thick, solid iron, and he realised that no sound, unless it was very loud, could be heard through it. He might shout in the interior of the safe, and no echo of his voice would penetrate into the study.

A cold perspiration broke out over the whole body of the wretched junior.

If there was anybody in the study, and he opened the safe door, he would betray himself at once. But if he remained here, sooner or later the Head would come in—if he was not there now. His brain swam with the horror of his dilemma. He realised that he would have to take the chance; that he must take the risk of opening the safe door, rather than the certainty of opening it later in the presence of the Head.

After all, probably there was no one in the study. The footstep had probably passed on; probably no one had entered the room. And Levison began to make another discovery. The air in the safe was heavy and oppressive. He realised that there was no ventilation; that if he remained inside the iron trap for an hour, or less, perhaps, he would be suffocated.

He had to risk it.

Hastily, with shaking fingers, he removed the articles he had placed in his pockets. If by cruel ill-luck he was discovered, he must have nothing in his pockets. He might be able to brazen it out, and pretend that he had acted out of curiosity, and keep his real intentions a secret.

Then he felt over the door for the keyhole.

He could not find it.

He remembered the position of the lock. He felt over the bare, hard surface of the iron; he felt far above and far below, where he knew the lock to be.

But he could find no opening.

A sudden terror seized upon him. He reeled against the wall of the safe. There was a deafening crash as some heavy article crashed down.

gets smaller when contracted. Except debts. Tell me, what is the most economical race? Two Scots racing for a suspense. "Where can I go to be alone?" asks a reader. Try an ice-cream parlour in Iceland. I order two dozen oysters, and I leave nine. What time is it? Eight-fifteen. (Ate fifteen.) "Laughing increases good looks," says an authority. You fellows must be a handsome crowd! News: "Britannia's 165 ft. mast stepped." High stepping! Did you hear about the mad musician who put his music in the saucepan because he loved "hot" jazz? And the sleepwalker who made up his mind to cure himself, so he strapped motor-horns on his feet? Hunting story: "Hallo, Jack!" "Hallo, Bill!" "You all right, Jack?" "Yes, Bill!" "Good! Then I've shot a bear!" One of those "dead" shots! Then there was the office-boy who came in and said the doctor had given his grandmother three weeks and four days to live. He had been looking up the fixture lists! "Distance lends enchantment," says the poet. Especially when Lennox is learning the violin. "Did you fish with flies?" asked the camper's friend. "Fish with them?" said the camper. "We fished with 'em, camped with 'em, ate with 'em, and slept with 'em!" Look "fly," chaps!

But Levison did not heed it.

He was frozen with fear.

Slowly, horribly, the dreadful truth forced itself into his mind.

The keyhole of the safe did not penetrate through the door. The lock was in the thickness of the solid iron, the aperture did not come through. There was no opening. On the inside the door presented an unbroken surface of iron and steel. The key was useless. The door, once the spring lock had acted, could be opened only from the outside.

Only from the outside! And the key was in his hand—the only key that could open the safe was inside the safe!

A wild, throbbing cry broke from the unhappy junior.

Already the heavy oppressive air of the confined space was making his head swim. He was sick and dizzy, and breathed with difficulty.

And the door could not be opened.

He was a prisoner in the safe—caught by his own action—shut up beyond the possibility of rescue, even if he were prepared to face discovery. He had brought it upon himself by his mingled cunning and stupidity.

For some minutes the hapless boy leaned there, overcome. Strange lights were dancing before his eyes in the dense gloom, and he knew that he was going to faint. He fought against it. He knew that if he fainted he would never awaken alive. The safe might not be opened for days. It would not be opened unless the Head had occasion to come to it. The air was already failing him.

He was doomed—doomed to death by his own wicked treachery. He was fated to die there—shut up in the safe—and no one would know what had become of him until the safe was opened, and then only his dead body would be found.

He shrieked aloud in terror at the thought, and his shriek rolled back upon him like thunder in the confined space.

Fear of discovery, fear of punishment, vanished from him now. All else was swallowed up in that dreadful fear of death.

He caught up the nearest object to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,425.

his hand, and beat madly upon the iron door.

Crash, crash, crash!

That sound, at all events, would be heard, though even if all St. Jim's heard how were they to open the safe and save him, when the key was locked up in the safe with him? But it was his only hope, and, with throbbing heart and brain, with failing strength, the wretched boy beat, and beat again, the iron door that had shut him in to die!

CHAPTER 11.

In the Shadow of Death!

"WHAT—what is that?"

Dr. Holmes uttered the amazed ejaculation as he entered his study with Mr. Railton. The St. Jim's senior match was ended, and the cricketers were having tea, and the Head and the School House master had come in.

As they entered the study a sound of dull and muffled knocking startled them. The sound was in the study, but the study, save for themselves, was empty.

Dr. Holmes looked round in utter amazement.

"What is that? What can that be?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Railton stepped across towards the safe.

"It is here," he said.

"In the safe?"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but it is impossible!" exclaimed the Head, in bewilderment. "How could anyone be in the safe? It is locked, as you see."

"Listen!"

Knock, knock, knock!

The Head could not doubt his own hearing. The heavy, dull, repeated knocking evidently came from the interior of the iron safe.

"Someone is shut up in the safe," said the Housemaster.

"I—I cannot understand—"

Mr. Railton tapped at the iron door.

"Who is in there?" he called out.

There was no reply, but the dull knocking continued.

"He cannot hear you, whoever he is," said the Head. "The door is too thick; it is of solid steel."

Knock, knock, knock!

"There is no ventilation in the safe, I suppose?" said the School House master.

"None!"

"Then it must be opened at once. Whoever it is will suffocate. Someone has attempted to rob the safe while the House was deserted, and has been shut up in it," said Mr. Railton. "Even a thief cannot be allowed to die, sir. Will you unlock the door, and I will stand ready to receive the scoundrel as he comes out?"

"Very well, Mr. Railton. It is very extraordinary! I did not think that the safe could be picked, and it has evidently not been forced. You can see that there are no signs of violence."

"Where is the key, sir?"

"In my desk. I will get it at once."

The Head unlocked his desk, and felt in the place for the key. Then he looked for it, but turned a startled, scared face upon the Housemaster.

"The key is not here, Mr. Railton!" he faltered.

"Not there?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"No."

"Good heavens!"

"Somebody has discovered where I kept the key, and has evidently con-

trived to unlock my desk and take it," said the Head. "Somehow—Heaven knows how—he has shut himself up in the safe!"

"But if he has the key—"

"The safe does not unlock from inside."

"Good heavens!"

The Housemaster looked dismayed. Evidently it was a thief who was in the safe; but even a thief was a fellow-being, and that dull knocking from the interior of the safe seemed to strike upon the Housemaster's heart.

"You have another key?" he asked.

"No."

"In Heaven's name, then, what is to be done?" asked Mr. Railton, in great agitation. "The man will die there, sir!"

Dr. Holmes clasped his hands helplessly.

"He has brought it upon himself," he muttered. "But it is horrible! There is no way of opening the safe—no way! It is impossible! It would require a powerful charge of dynamite to burst open the door, and that would kill him! What can we do? What can be done?"

Knock, knock, knock!

The knocking was growing fainter now.

Mr. Railton knitted his brows in an effort to think.

"It is not a burglar," he said. "A burglar would know better. Besides, it is impossible to think that a thief could have entered the House, with the school crowded as it is. The House has been deserted, but the quadrangle is swarmed."

"You do not suspect that—"

"Mr. Fitzgerald? It cannot be he. He is uninspiring for the School House juniors at this moment. Dr. Holmes, it is some foolish boy who has played this trick, and he has been shut up in the safe!"

The Housemaster stepped to the door and hurried out. The dreadful possibility that it was a St. Jim's junior who was shut up in the safe almost unnerved him. If it had been a common thief it would have been bad enough, but some foolish, thoughtless boy—it was too horrible!

Mr. Selby had just come in, and Mr. Railton stopped him in the Hall.

"Mr. Selby, will you get the school assembled at once? The cricket must stop! Something terrible has happened!"

Mr. Selby stared at him.

"What—"

"Someone has tampered with the Head's safe, and has been shut up in it!" said Mr. Railton hurriedly.

"I suspect that it is a St. Jim's boy! We must know!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, turning quite pale.

"Get the school assembled, please, and see if anyone is missing, and come to the Head's study and let us know."

"Certainly—certainly!"

Mr. Railton returned to the study.

Knock, knock, knock!

The Head looked at him helplessly.

"What are we to do, Mr. Railton? In Heaven's name, give me some advice!"

Mr. Railton went to the telephone.

"I can ring up Rylcombe, sir, and send for a locksmith."

The Head groaned.

"A locksmith cannot touch that lock! It is impossible to open it! A local locksmith—impossible!"

"It is a chance, sir—a faint chance?"

"Yes, yes! Ring him up by all means!"

Mr. Railton spoke into the telephone. From the iron safe in the corner came intermittent knocking, fainter than before.

Dr. Holmes knocked upon the door of the safe. It was to let the wretched prisoner within know that his appeal was heard—that they were trying to save him. But the Head could do no more than that.

Mr. Railton turned from the receiver.

"The man is absent," he said. "Goodness knows, he would probably have been of little use! Give me the number of the makers! They can send a man down—"

"It will take hours from London!"

"It is the only chance, sir!"

"True, true! I will get the number!"

The Head searched in his desk, and read out the number. Mr. Railton rang



"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Selby, "in that safe there is a boy to death unless the safe can be opened. Listen!" Knock. The cricketeer's face turned pale. "Can you—and will

up immediately, and talked on the telephone for several minutes. Then he hung up the receiver.

"They are sending a man down by the first express, sir, but he cannot get here for three hours, at least!"

"My Heaven! Three hours! In an hour—"

"I know it, sir! Heaven have mercy on this wretched boy!"

"But—but we cannot be sure—"

"We shall soon know."

Mr. Selby entered the study with a grave, pale face. The Third Form master was a hard man, but this terrible occurrence had moved him.

"The school is assembled, sir," he said. "I have called over the names. Many boys are absent—more than twenty—but but all can be accounted for with one exception."

"And that one?"

"Levison of the Fourth. It seems, from what I have been able to learn, that he was on bad terms with the rest of the Form, and nobody would go out with him. The others, who have gone out on an excursion, can be accounted for; but if Levison went out, he told no one, and two or three of the boys say that they saw him quite lately hanging about the House. I am afraid that it is Levison."

"But what—what can he have acted in such a way for?" muttered the Head.

"Why should he tamper with the safe? The foolish boy!"

"I am afraid there is no other con-

clusion, sir!" said Mr. Selby. "It is terrible! But everything points to its being a boy belonging to this school who has entered the safe, and—"

"He is doomed!"

A very strange look came over Mr. Selby's face. He glanced at the Head, and he glanced at the Housemaster, and hesitated.

Mr. Railton gave him a sharp look.

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Selby? If you have any suggestion to make, make it."

"I was thinking, sir. We cannot open that safe—"

"Impossible!"

"There may be one means—"

The Head's pale face flushed with hope.

"Mr. Selby, if there is a chance—quick—what do you mean?"

"We cannot open that safe, sir," said Mr. Selby deliberately. "But if there were a man here skilled in such things—a man who could pick locks—a man famous for his skill as a cracksmen—"

"What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking of Dandy Jim!"

CHAPTER 12.

The Rescuer!

"DANDY JIM!"

The Head and Mr. Railton repeated the name simultaneously.

Mr. Selby nodded.

"I am thinking of Dandy Jim," he repeated. "You know, sir, that I have never wavered in my belief that Mr. Fitzgerald has deceived you—that he is in reality the famous—or, rather, infamous—cracksmen known as Dandy Jim. If he is the man, he can open this safe; if he is not, the wretched boy shut up there is doomed to death!"

"This is mere nonsense!" said Mr. Railton brusquely. "Mr. Fitzgerald's innocence has been proved."

"I think otherwise, sir," said Mr. Selby firmly. "And as a last chance—even if you do not believe me—I call upon you to make the attempt to save this boy's life."

"It is impossible—impossible!"

"Will you put it to the test, sir? Remember, the life of a boy committed to your charge hangs upon your decision!"

"I cannot insult Mr. Fitzgerald by the mere suggestion."

"Mr. Fitzgerald's personal feelings cannot be considered in a question of life or death, sir!" said the Third Form master.

"Nonsense!" broke out Mr. Railton. "Even if Mr. Fitzgerald is the man you take him to be, do you think he will convict himself by admitting he can open the safe?"

"I trust so—for the boy's sake."

"But—but—" stammered the Head.

"I will take the whole responsibility, sir," said

Mr. Selby quietly. "I believe he is the man—I believe he can open a safe! I believe he will do so, criminal as he is, rather than allow a boy to die under his eyes! Dr. Holmes, you cannot refuse to let it be tried! You must answer for it to that boy's parents, sir, if you leave a chance untried!"

Knock, knock, knock!

The dull sound from the safe seemed to emphasise the Form-master's words.

Dr. Holmes looked helplessly at Mr. Railton.

"What shall I do?" he whispered.

"I believe Mr. Selby is wrong, sir. But there is the thousandth part of a chance that he is right," said the Housemaster slowly. "Let that chance be tried."

The Head turned to Mr. Selby.

"Call Mr. Fitzgerald!" he said hoarsely.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Selby touched the bell and Toby came to the study door.

"Desire Mr. Fitzgerald to come here immediately!" said Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir."

The page hurried away with a scared face. All St. Jim's knew what had happened, and the school was in a ferment.

There was silence in the study. Dr. Holmes was pale as death. Mr. Selby was very quiet and very firm, and there was a gleam of anticipated triumph in his eyes. But it would not be just to attribute only satisfaction to the Form-master. He was thinking as much of the wretched boy in the safe as of the coming triumph over the man he suspected.

The clock ticked loudly in the silence.

There was a step in the passage; the stalwart form of the cricket coach appeared at last in the open doorway.

Mr. Fitzgerald was very grave.

He knew like the rest of St. Jim's, what had happened—that someone who had tampered with the safe was shut in it; that there was no escape for the wretched prisoner. His handsome, sun-burnt face was pale.

He came into the study and bowed to the Head.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head, almost inaudibly. "Mr. Selby will explain."

Mr. Selby closed the study door, and fixed his eyes upon the young cricketer.

"I have advised Dr. Holmes to send for you, sir," he said, in a cold, steady voice. "Neither Dr. Holmes nor Mr. Railton takes my view of the case. Mr. Fitzgerald, in that safe there is a boy—shut in to die! No help can come to him; he is doomed to a fearful death unless the safe can be opened! Listen!"

Knock, knock, knock!

Knock, knock!

The young cricketer's face became a shade paler.

"You hear that Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I hear it."

"You know what it means?"

"Yes."

"Unless that door is opened at once—unless that boy is brought into the air—he will die, and we cannot help him."

Mr. Fitzgerald nodded without speaking.

"Very well!" said Mr. Selby quietly. "Can you—and will you—open that safe?"

Arthur Fitzgerald gave a violent start.

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y, shut in to die! No help can come to him; he is doomed to a fearful death unless the safe can be opened! Listen! Knock, knock, knock! You hear that Mr. Fitzgerald? I hear it. You know what it means? Yes. Unless that door is opened at once—unless that boy is brought into the air—he will die, and we cannot help him. Mr. Fitzgerald nodded without speaking. "Very well!" said Mr. Selby quietly. "Can you—and will you—open that safe?" Arthur Fitzgerald gave a violent start.

"I," he exclaimed.

"You!"

"Why should you suppose that I can open the safe?"

Short and sharp came the answer.

"Because I believe, in my soul and conscience, that you are Dandy Jim the crackman!"

Mr. Fitzgerald clenched his hands. For a moment it seemed as if he would spring upon the Third Form master.

Dr. Holmes made a step forward, with raised hand.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, calm yourself! I do not believe, for one moment, that you are the man Mr. Selby believes you to be. That has all been thrashed out and settled. I believe in you, and Mr. Railton believes in you. I have allowed Mr. Selby to make this appeal to you because I would not have the remotest chance left untried. That is all. Understand me, I know you cannot open that safe, and I do not expect you to do so."

"I—I understand, sir."

Knock, knock!

Mr. Selby's eyes were fixed upon the young cricketer's face. That face was growing whiter, strangely haggard.

"Cannot you send to the maker, sir?" asked Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Mr. Railton has telephoned. They cannot get a man here under three hours."

"And in that time the boy will perish," said Mr. Selby coldly. "He will be taken dead from the safe, unless you can save him, and will."

"How dare you suggest that I can save him!" the young man muttered hoarsely. "This is unfair to me; it is cowardly—"

"I believe you can save him!"

"It is false!"

"Enough!" said Dr. Holmes. "Mr. Selby, I could not refuse to allow you to make this appeal to Mr. Fitzgerald. But this has gone far enough. I will not have an honourable man insulted in my presence!"

"Dr. Holmes—"

"Enough, I say! Mr. Fitzgerald, I am ashamed that I permitted this, and I am sorry. You may leave us, sir, and remember that my confidence in you is unshaken."

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Mr. Fitzgerald.

He turned to the door.

Mr. Selby bit his lip hard.

"Let it be left upon your conscience, then, that you abandoned the boy to death!" he said bitterly. "If you are not Dandy Jim, I ask your pardon; but if you are Dandy Jim, you are a murderer! Now go!"

"Silence, Mr. Selby!"

"I have finished, sir! Let him go!"

Mr. Fitzgerald's hand was upon the door. But he turned back with the door unopened. From the safe had come a faint sound again.

Knock, knock!

"Oh, Heaven help me!" murmured the unhappy man. "What can I do?"

"You can do nothing, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head kindly. "I am only sorry you should have been insulted in this way."

But the young man turned back from the door.

His face was white as death, but his eyes were shining.

"It needed only this," he said, in a broken voice. "The past has to be paid for; it is always so! It is worse than death to me, but I cannot let that boy die!"

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He stepped firmly towards the safe. The masters watched him dumbfounded.

"What—what!" muttered the Head, bewildered. "You—you mean—"

"I must have some tools!"

"Man!" shrieked the Head. "What do you mean? Can you open that safe?"

"I can—and will!"

"Then you are—you are—"

Arthur Fitzgerald bowed his head in shame.

"I am Dandy Jim, and I will save that boy's life!"

CHAPTER 13.

The Last of Dandy Jim!

SILENCE, grim as death, reigned in the room.

It was broken only by the sounds made by the crackman, as he worked upon the safe, and by the faint knocking that came from the interior, showing that the wretched boy was still alive.

But the knocking was faint and slow now, with long intervals of silence; death was creeping upon the prisoner of the safe. Minutes now meant everything—minutes, perhaps seconds, told the difference between life and death for Levison. And the man he had sought to injure, the man he had striven to ruin, was working to save him, and in that work sacrificing all that made life dear to him.

Hardly a word was spoken.

Once or twice Dandy Jim muttered something that he required, and it was brought—that was all.

With a face white as death, with the sweat in clots upon his handsome brow, the man worked to save his enemy.

Dr. Holmes sank helplessly into a chair.

His brain was in a whirl.

"Dandy Jim!"

It was true, after all. Arthur Fitzgerald, the college man and county cricketer, the man he would have trusted with his life, was Dandy Jim the crackman, for whom the police of a dozen cities had been hunting for years. The criminal who had led a double life—an honourable career open to the public eye, and a secret career of shame and crime.

Crime and shame and secret guilt! And yet he was working to save the life of one who was nothing to him, and in that act betraying himself to justice, facing the penalty of a life of law-breaking, but playing the game for the sake of another.

They watched him as if fascinated.

If they had wanted proof, more than his word, they had it now. The slim fingers were sure of their work; the skilful crackman was faced with one of the hardest tasks of his life, and he was succeeding.

Knock!

It was the last sound from within the safe.

Silence followed.

And still the door remained fast.

Dandy Jim paused, and passed a hand over his wet brow. Was he baffled? Was even the famous crackman to fail, after all?

The Head made a gesture of appeal.

"One more effort! Save him!"

"I will save him!"

They watched him anxiously.

A cry broke from the Head as the heavy door swung open at last—open. The crackman had succeeded.

A body rolled from the safe as the

door opened. The fainting boy had been huddled against the door.

"Levison!" muttered the Head.

"Heavens! He is dead!"

Dandy Jim stooped over the insensible junior.

"He is not dead!" he said quietly. "He has been overcome, but he is only unconscious. He is not dead; he will not die! But it was very close!"

Mr. Railton raised the insensible boy in his arms and carried him from the study. Outside, the passage was swarming with anxious boys. There was a cry as the Housemaster came out with the junior in his arms.

The door closed again; the interior of the study was shut out from view. But the crowd had had a glimpse of the open safe, of the young man in his shirt-sleeves, with sweating brow.

There was silence in the study. Dandy Jim slowly and mechanically, and breathing hard, put on his coat.

"Now send for the police," he said quietly.

"Oh, Heaven!" muttered the Head. "You—you—Dandy Jim the crackman! I can scarcely believe it now! Then Mr. Selby was right?"

"I knew it!" said Mr. Selby. But there was no triumph in his tone now. He was strangely subdued. "I knew I was not mistaken!"

"It is the finish!" said Dandy Jim. "Everything is finished for me! My first and last attempt to lead an honest life—it is over and done with! Now the prison, and then crime again! I have nothing left but that!"

"Stay! Surely you cannot imagine that I shall hand you over to the police after what you have done?" said the Head huskily. "Whatever you are, whatever you have been, I know you are a brave and noble man! Only a good and brave man would have done as you have done. I know that."

Arthur Fitzgerald smiled bitterly.

"You say that, sir, to a criminal—a crackman—a man the police are hunting for at this moment."

"Yes, I say it! It is true! But, in Heaven's name, man, how did it happen that you are what you are—you, with your chances, with your courage and noble qualities—you, a criminal?" muttered the Head. "What is the meaning of it?"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked at him with grim bitterness in his face.

"I had no chances," he said. "I was brought up to be idle, not to work. My father failed. I was thrown upon my own resources. I was in debt, and I could do nothing but play cricket! What does the story matter? Bad company and temptation; at last, to fall to dishonesty. And once that step was taken, there was no going back. I had expensive tastes—I had been trained to have them—they had to be gratified. What would you have? I do not attempt to excuse myself. Even hunger is no excuse for dishonesty, and I had not even the excuse of hunger."

"It was not so bad as that! But life and leisure and decent society, everything I valued in life, depended upon my having money, and I took it where I could. I found that I had a peculiar gift. I was invaluable to the scoundrels with whom I associated. I was above them in every way, in intellect and education. It was easy for me to rise to the top, and so it came about that the man who in public was known as the county cricketer—a cheery and pleasant companion—became in secret Dandy Jim the crackman! It was gradual,

(Continued on page 28.)



**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! It is not easy to imagine a boy of ten becoming a schoolmaster, or a boy of six being strong enough to "lick" someone five times his own age! Yet these things should not be so impossible if the experiments with a gland treatment tried out on rats should prove just as successful if applied to human beings. The treatment is the discovery of American experts, and their experiments proved beyond doubt that rats born of parents whose glands had had the treatment developed, physically and mentally, twice as quickly as normally. The treatment is applied to the thymus gland, which is at the root of the neck, and which, it is said, has no known function. Apparently, it functions all right when treated with the "elixir." It only remains for the treatment to be administered successfully to a human being, and then, in years to come, age won't mean a thing!

This discovery ought to interest Herbert Skimpole, the brainy, long-winded junior of St. Jim's. A few applications of the treatment might speed him up a bit, too!

"THE SCHEMER OF ST. JIM'S!"

Changing the subject, however, from glands to stories, there is a rare treat for you in next Wednesday's ripping number of the GEM. The St. Jim's yarn brings into the limelight Gerald Crooke, the black sheep of the Shell. By fair means or otherwise, Crooke is determined to get into the School House "eight" to row against the New House. As he's not nearly good enough as an oarsman, he stands no chance in the ordinary way. So it is that Crooke plots for his place—bringing trouble upon Tom Merry with his cunning

scheming. This is a gray yarn that well maintains the high standard of excellence always to be found in Martin Clifford's tales. The wise reader will order his copy in advance.

PALS!

There have been many instances of strange animal friendships—where creatures of different species become the best of pals. But about the strangest friendship is one that was formed a little while ago in Oklahoma City. A road chummed up with a cat! The poor old road had had a lonely time of it, for it had been entombed in the foundations of a house for thirteen years! How it lived is a mystery. But when the toad was released it was given a comfortable home in a box, where it was quite happy. But the cat of the house rather liked that box, too, as a sleeping berth, and didn't mind a bit the presence of the toad. So the two came together, and have now become true chums.

SKILL IN THE SKY!

The skill and presence of mind of a French air force pilot, the other day, saved himself and his companions from the nerve-tingling ordeal of jumping with parachutes for their lives. The plane they were flying in—a big bomber—was at an altitude of 3,500 feet when a small machine came into collision with it, smashing one of the bomber's wings. The crew got ready to jump for it, but the pilot did no such thing.

PEN PALS COUPON

8-6-35



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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Miss Alva Badenach, 3, Queen Street, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants girl correspondents; age 15-18; British Empire, France, China; stamps, hockey, films.

Miss Betty Shaw, 5, Mount View Road, Malvern, Melbourne, Australia, wants girl correspondents; age 10-12.

James Taylor, 113, East Claremont Street, Edinburgh; Spain South Africa, France; stamps, snaps, sports.

Jim Redmond, 76, Darras Road, Gorton, Manchester; overseas; age 12-15; sports, snaps, cigarette cards.

Miss Elsie Cherry, 99, Henslowe Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22, wants girl correspondents; age 16-18.

Leslie Dunn, 7, Beecham Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey; age 12-16; books, cycling, photography; Scotland, India, China, Africa, France, America.

He saw an outside chance of saving himself and the machine. Quickly he emptied the petrol-tank in the sound wing to regain the balance of the bomber. Then he carefully turned the machine about and, by skilful handling of it, piloted it back to the aerodrome, to land without any further damage to the crippled plane. That pilot well deserved the congratulations of his crew and his commanding officer.

A SNAPPY SNACK!

A man in a hurry walked up to a New York snack bar, placed down forty cents, had a full-sized meal, and was gone inside a minute. That's hustle if you like! But, you might say, you prefer not to have indigestion. There's no fear of that, for the rapidity with which the man could dispose of his meal is the result of yet another of Uncle Sam's inventions to save time. You see, what the man had for his meal was a glass of liquid food—raw vegetables and fruits crushed up. A pint of it is quite enough for a hungry person, and it contains all the necessary nourishing vitamins and salts. The vegetables and fruits are crushed by a machine, to which there is a tap attached. You just turn on the tap and there's your meal.

This invention ought to suit Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff, down to the ground. He's always complaining that there's not enough hours in the day for eating!

"THE NEW MASTER AT PACKSADDLE!"

This is the title of Frank Richards' next grand yarn of Western school adventure, and the story is the most exciting so far of the series dealing with the "firing" of Bill Sampson from Packsaddle. The new master, Elias Scadder, takes up his position at the school, but he is far from welcome. There is little doubt that, as far as knowledge goes, Scadder is far superior to Bill. But it needs more than a man of book-learning to handle the rough and tough bunch at Packsaddle!

For more thrills, you will find plenty in the next chapters of "The Secret World!" And all the best laughs of the week are to be had from readers' prize jokes and "Just My Fun."

To conclude on a humorous note, let me tell you our office boy's latest joke. Teacher: "What is a person called who goes on talking when no one is the least bit interested in what he is saying?"

Boy: "Please, sir, do you mean a teacher?"

THE EDITOR.

Miss Alma Howard, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W.1, wants girl correspondents in London and France; age 13-16; commercial, sports, stamps.

George W. Rippington, 4, Meeting Lane, Leicester, Warwickshire; stamps; British Empire, U.S.A.

Jack Morris, 115, Grovehill Road, Beverley, Yorks; Scotland, Ireland; fishing, sports; age 16-17.

John Charles Howard, 49, Benares Road, Plumstead, London, S.E.18; age 9-13.

Miss Joan Renny, 26, Gordon Road, Ealing, London, W.5, wants girl correspondents; age 17-18; overseas; riding, films, sports, autographs.

John Lister, 85, Cambridge Street, Normanton, Yorks, wants members for the International Correspondence Club.

F. Dixey, Hampers, Ltd., Maplestead, Halstead, Essex; age 13-15; painting, match-brands.

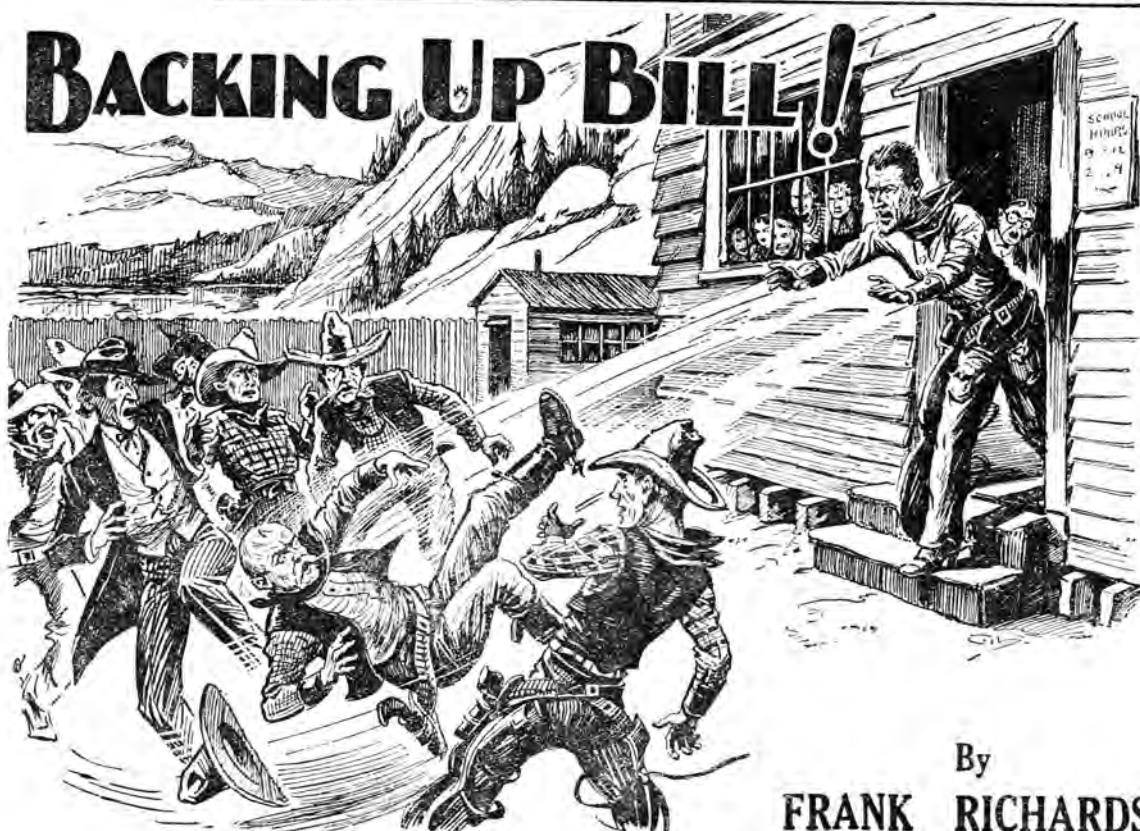
Lim Bian Han, 19, Poole Road, Singapore; stamps, photography.

Fred Richardson, 4th Avenue, Sandgate, Queensland, Australia; Italy, S. America, Pacific Islands.

Miss A. Cunningham, 94, Rathmines Road, Portobello, Dublin, Ireland, wants girl correspondents; British Empire, Russia; age 19-21; sports, journalism, snaps.

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BACKING UP BILL!



By

FRANK RICHARDS.

Gun-play at Packsaddle School!

"TWO-GUN!" exclaimed Slick Poindexter breathlessly. "Two Gun Carson!" muttered Dick Carr.

"I guess that spells trouble!" said Mick Kavanagh.

The Packsaddle bunch had come out of the chuckhouse after breakfast. It was not yet time for the school bell to ring. They were all in the playground when the gunman walked in at the gate.

Every eye was fixed on Two-Gun Carson at once. And then glances swept towards the timber schoolhouse, in expectation of seeing Bill Sampson, headmaster of Packsaddle, come striding out.

"By gum!" muttered Big Steve. "It's sure my popper! I guess Bill is going to get the goods put on him now."

And Steve Carson grinned.

"Aw, can it, you geek!" growled Slick. "I'll say that Bill can handle all the gunmen in Texas, and he won't make more'n one chew of Two-Gun."

Steve sneered.

"You watch out!" he answered.

Two-Gun Carson, after a glance round, came towards the crowd of schoolboys. The poker sharp of Packsaddle was perfectly cool, though his errand to see Bill Sampson that morning was rather like bearding a lion in his den. He called to Big Steve.

"Say, Steve, is Bill Sampson around?"

"I guess he's at chuck in the school-house, popper," answered Steve.

"Put him wise that he's wanted."

"Sure!" grinned Steve.

He cut across to the schoolhouse.

The rest of the bunch stood staring at Two-Gun. The cool, slim, rather

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handsome gunman of Packsaddle waited with his hands resting on his gun-belt. There was rather a thrill in the Packsaddle bunch. They guessed why Two-Gun had come, and they wondered whether there was going to be gun-play in the playground of Packsaddle School.

Gunman and gambler as he was, Two-Gun was a member of the school committee of the cow town. And all the bunch had a shrewd idea that it was Steve's father who had led that committee into "firing" Bill, and appointing a new headmaster in his place. Only Bill had emphatically refused to be "fired"; and the new headmaster, having arrived, had departed again at top speed, with Bill "fanning" him with bullets as he fled. The bunch did not expect Mr. Scadder to horn in again till Bill was gone. But Bill was not gone—and showed no sign of going.

There was a sudden yell from the schoolhouse. Out from the porch came Steve Carson, flying, and an enormous cowman's boot appeared behind him.

Two-Gun knitted his brows. The bunch grinned.

Steve no doubt had failed in respect in announcing to his headmaster that a member of the Packsaddle School Committee had horned in to see him. Anyhow, out he came, with Bill Sampson's boot helping him.

Big Steve yelled and crashed. Bill Sampson glanced round and came striding towards Two-Gun. And the Packsaddle poker sharp, who packed two guns—whence his name—moved his hands a little closer to the butts. Bill, with a grim frown on his bearded face, strode up. He waved the bunch back, dropped his hands into the pockets of his leather crackers, and faced Two-Gun with a grim inquiring stare.

"Shoot!" he said tersely.

"I guess the committee have asked me to mosey along," said Carson. "You sure did get mad with Marshal Lick and Mr. Wash when they horned in to tell you you was fired, Bill—"

"And they ain't honing for no more?" asked Bill.

"Nope!"

"And they sent you to talk turkey to me—you being a gun-slinger," said Bill. "Well, I guess no goldarned gun-slinger ain't going to see me yamoose the ranch out of this here school. Spill what you've got to spill, Mr. Carson—and there's the gate."

"The gate's for you, Bill Sampson!" answered Two-Gun coolly. "I guess you ain't handling this baby like you did the marshal and that fat guy, Wash, and Scadder! Nunk! But I ain't here for trouble—I guess I'm here to put you wise how the matter stands. You're fired—"

"Not the whole lot!" said Bill. "I want to see the guy that's going to fire me."

"Dismissed by the school committee!" said Carson. "Unanimous vote—"

"Got 'em in your pocket, ain't you?" said Bill.

Carson shrugged his slim shoulders.

"What they say, goes!" he answered.

"I guess they was sure surprised, after dismissing their headmaster at this here school, to be told that you wouldn't hit the trail, Bill! You can't get away with that!"

"Mebbe I'll surprise them some more afore I'm through!" said Bill Sampson. "I'm headmaster of this hyer school! That doggoned committee roped me in off'n the Kicking Mule Ranch to run this caboodle, and I'll tell a man that I'm running it! No Marshal Lick, and no Storekeeper, Wash ain't going to fire this infant! Not so's you'd notice it!

—FEATURING THE PALS OF PACKSADDLE AND THEIR COWBOY MASTER.

And no doggoned gun-slinger! Get me?"

"I'm here to give you notice—"

"Notice nothing!" said Bill.

"That you got to get out—"

"Forget it!"

"Or force will be used," said Two-Gun. "I reckon you figure yourself a big chief, Bill, but you can't get away with this. You ain't headmaster of Packsaddle now—Elias Scadder is headmaster! I guess Rancher Dunwoody will take you back into his outfit if you hone to go back to punching cows. You got three months' salary waiting for you at Wash's office, if you call for it. You got to go!"

Bill, hands in pockets, stood looking at him.

The bunch gazed on breathlessly.

Excepting Steve Carson, every fellow at Packsaddle was keen on the side of the headmaster. The bare idea of "firing" Bill roused the deepest indignation in the Packsaddle bunch. With that one exception, the whole bunch stood for Bill.

Nevertheless, it was a peculiar position for the headmaster of Packsaddle to defy the school committee, who certainly had the power to dismiss him so far as the law went. But they did not give a boiled bean for the law at Packsaddle.

If Bill was going to put up a fight for it, all the bunch were behind him. And it appeared that he was!

Bill Sampson spoke at last.

"I got you, Two-Gun! You been arter my scalp ever since I allowed that a gun-slinging gambler of your left oughter be run out of the town on a rail. You got your teeth into me, Two-Gun, and you're a-biting! I'm mentioning that I don't stand for it."

"You going?" asked Two-Gun.

"Not so's you'd notice it."

"You'll be put!"

"Sez you!"

"The marshal and his men will come up here and put you out by force," said Two-Gun. "and I guess if there's gun-play, Bill Sampson, you're more likely than not to go up on a branch."

"You've spilled a mouthful," said Bill. "Now beat it while you're in one piece, you sneaking lobo-wolf of a poker sharp! I guess I give you one minute to get out that gate."

"I guess I'm hanging on here to lend a hand when they put you out on the trail!" said the gunman coolly.

Bill, his hands still in his trousers pockets, made a movement towards him. Instantly Two-Gun Carson whipped out a Colt and had the schoolmaster of Packsaddle covered.

There was a shout from the bunch.

"Stick 'em up, Bill Sampson!" said Two-Gun in a quiet tone of menace. "Stick your paws over your head, old-timer, and walk out of that gate! You pull a gun, and I guess it's you for the long jump."

Bang!

It was not Carson's gun that roared. The report—and the bullet—came from Bill's pocket. Bill Sampson was the best shot in Santanta County, and it was not the first time, by many a one, that he had fired from the pocket. And the Packsaddle bunch, with a gasp, realised that their headmaster had had the gunman covered all the time—as Two-Gun realised too late.

Carson's Colt went with a crash to the ground. His hand hung at his side, numbed by the shock, a strip of skin torn from one finger by the bullet that had crashed on his gun and knocked it from his grasp.

But Carson was a two-gun man! Even as he yelled with the shock and the pain, his left hand grabbed his second gun from his belt.

"Forget it!" snapped Bill.

His hand was out of his pocket now. His smoking revolver looked the gunman in the face in the twinkling of an eye.

Over the levelled gun Bill's eyes were grim. And Carson did not raise his left hand.

"Drop your hardware!" snapped Bill.

The gun clanged on the ground. Carson, with crimson dripping from his cut hand, stood trembling with rage. The schoolmaster of Packsaddle had beaten the two-gun man at gun-play!

"Now quit!" said Bill grimly. "I guess I'm letting you off cheap, you doggoned gun-slinger! You moseyed in here to bulldoze me—why, you ornery piecan, you couldn't bulldoze a gopher! You want to beat it, and beat it pronto! If you ain't out that gate in two jumps I'll sure fan you with bullets like I did that guy Scadder!"

One fierce, vengeful look the gunman gave him, and then he jumped for the gate! Big Steve gritted his teeth, but the rest of the Packsaddle bunch gave a shout of laughter as the gunman ran. Bill, with a grunt, strode back to the schoolhouse. A little later, Tin Tong clanged the school bell, and the bunch went into class with Small Brown.

But all the bunch knew that there would be little in the way of school that

Bill Sampson, the popular headmaster of Packsaddle School, is not lacking in supporters when the marshal and his men arrive on the scene to "sack" him by force!

day! They did not listen to Small Brown—they listened for the beat of horses' hoofs, of the marshal of Packsaddle and his men coming, gun in hand, to enforce the dismissal of the schoolmaster who refused to be "fired." Every guy in the bunch knew that that was going to be an historic day at the cow town school.

Dick Carr's Ride!

"SILENCE in the class!" squealed Small Brown.

He squealed in vain.

Nearly every guy in the bunch was talking or whispering. Had Bill been present no doubt there would have been silence. But Bill Sampson was not in his accustomed place at the high desk.

Bill was in his "office"—doubtless expecting visitors. Visitors were likely to come in the shape of Marshal Lick and his posse. The bunch thrilled with excitement at the thought of it.

Small Brown was supposed to be teaching his class geography. But they were not getting much geographical knowledge from Mr. Brown. Slick Poindexter, with a thoughtful frown on his face, was speaking to Dick Carr and Mick Kavanaugh. Small Brown's squeal passed him unheeded.

"I guess I got the big idea, you uns," muttered Slick. "You can lay a Texas dollar to a Mexican cent that the marshal will be along to-day with his outfit. Where does Bill come in?"

"They won't fire Bill!" said Mick. "I guess that guy Two-Gun won't mosey along with the marshal's crowd, anyhow. He's got his."

"You said it," agreed Slick. "But now Bill's gone off on his ear they'll sure bring enough galoots to handle him. Bill's some scrapper, but a dozen guys will put paid to him."

Dick Carr nodded with a wrinkled brow. In his first days at Packsaddle the tenderfoot had been astonished to see a schoolmaster like Bill. A headmaster in a ten-gallon hat, red shirt, and cowman's boots, who packed a gun, and kept order in the school-room with a cow-whip, had surprised and rather amused the schoolboy from the Old Country. But he had learned to like and respect Bill; and he was on the headmaster's side, tooth and toenail. But the outlook seemed to him doubtful. The town marshal of Packsaddle had force at his command, and he was going to use it—and he had the law on his side, for what that was worth in Santanta County. Dick was indignant—but he was worried and anxious as well.

"What's the big idea, Slick?" he asked. "If it's anything to back up Bill, you've only got to cough it up."

"Bill was a puncher on Kicking Mule afore he started in to ride herd here," said Slick. "He's got friends on Kicking Mule—I'll say the whole outfit would horn in, body and boots, if they knowed that Bill wasn't getting fair play. I reckon they got to be put wise."

Mick's eyes gleamed.

"Slick, old-timer, you've shouted a mouthful!" he said eagerly. "If they knowed on Kicking Mule—"

"They got to know," said Slick, "and they got to know pronto."

"But how?" said Dick Carr.

"You got the fastest pony in Texas," said Poindexter, "and you got on the right side of Barney Bailey, the Kicking Mule foreman, along of helping him round up the brand-blotters what was stealing cows on the ranch. I guess you want to hit Kicking Mule—"

"But we're in class!"

Slick snorted.

"Forget it!" he snapped.

"I mean, Bill wouldn't stand for a fellow cutting class—"

"Bill ain't here, and I guess you don't want to yowl out to him when you go. But if you ain't honing for it, I'll take your pony and ride for Kicking Mule—"

Dick Carr rose to his feet.

"I'm game!" he said.

"Carr! Sit down! Sit down at once!" squealed Small Brown.

Dick did not even answer him. He had no time to waste on Small Brown. He started towards the door on the porch—and paused. Bill's office opened on the porch, and he did not want to meet up with Bill. He was going to get help for Bill Sampson, but any fellow seen breaking herd in lesson-time was certain to be rounded up by Bill's quirt.

Dick turned and cut across to the open window.

"Carr!" gasped Small Brown.

Dick was out of the window the next moment. He dropped to the ground and cut across to the corral.

Swiftly he called his pinto and saddled and bridled him. He was going—and he hoped to go unseen by Bill.

But Bill, though he was not riding herd in the school-room as usual that morning, and though he had plenty of other matters on his mind, was not deaf. The clatter of hoofs in the playground

brought him to his window. He stared at Dick riding for the gate and roared: "Say, you Carr! You breaking herd? Get back to the school-room pronto."

Dick waved his hand and rode for the gate. Bill stayed only to grasp his quirt and rushed out of the house.

The gate was closed. Dick had intended to dismount and open it, but there was no time. Bill was barring his path by now.

He gave his pinto a touch of the spur, and the horse rose to the leap. High over the headmaster and the gate flew the pony, the lash of Bill's quirt just missing the rider.

Clatter! came the hoofs on the sun-baked trail outside the gate. Dick did not pause. Down the trail he went at a gallop.

Bill brandished the quirt over the gate after him.

"Say, you young gink!" he roared, "I'll sure quirt you a whole lot! I'm telling you to pull in! You hear me whisper?"

Dick heard his headmaster "whisper"—that whisper could have been heard from the Rio Frio to the cow town. But he did not heed. He galloped on, and vanished from Bill's angry eyes.

Pep, the pinto, was, as Slick had said, the fastest pony in Texas. And Dick stretched his mount to full speed. It was possible that Bill might ride after him to round him up—also, he wanted to hit Kicking Mule at the earliest possible moment.

Whether Bill pursued him or not, he did not know. He did not sight his headmaster again. Pep, urged on by his rider, fairly flew, his heels seeming hardly to touch the grass as he galloped.

After a mile of rolling prairie vanished under those galloping hoofs. Dick enjoyed the rapid gallop in the wind and sunshine; it was undoubtedly more enjoyable than geography with Small Brown. He passed herds of cows, and Kicking Mule punchers riding herd, but he did not pause till the ranch came in sight.

The gate was open, and Dick dashed in, reining in his pony before the bunk-house. Half a dozen Kicking Mule men stared at Dick.

"Say, you young guy, what you doing out of school?" called out Mesquite Sam.

Dick panted: "Barney Bailey here?" "Yep—chewing the rag with Mr. Dunwoody over at the piazza."

Dick rode to the piazza in the front of the ranch-house. Mr. Dunwoody, the rancher, sat there in a rocking-chair talking to his foreman, who stood by his horse at the steps. Both of them stared at the Packsaddle schoolboy.

Dick swept off his stetson in salute. "Barney!" he gasped.

Barney Bailey gave him a nod and a grin. There had been a time when Barney had trailed the Packsaddle tenderfoot with a quirt. But they had made friends since then.

"Who's this?" asked the rancher.

"It's the young guy who put me wise about the brand-blotters," answered Barney. "Say, what's the rookus, young Carr? What's Bill let you out of the herd for?"

Dick laughed breathlessly. "I'm not let out; I've stampeded, and Bill got after me with a quirt!" he gasped. "Bill's in trouble, Barney, and I've come to tell you. Bill doesn't know, but—"

"What's the trouble?"

"They've fired Bill, and the marshal's coming up with his crowd to put him out of the school!" panted Dick.

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"Jerusalem crickets!" yelled Barney. "Bill fired! I guess them guys in Packsaddle must be plumb loco! Didn't they rope in Bill off'n this hyer ranch to ride herd at the school? This'll be Two-Gun Carson's doing! I'll say that tin-horn gambler has sure got his teeth into Bill!"

"Putting Bill Sampson out of the school!" said the rancher. "I guess Kicking Mule ain't standing for that!" "I'll say nope!" roared Barney.

"I guess if Bill wants to quit, he can come back here and punch cows, and I'll give him the glad hand!" said the rancher. "But Bill's going to have fair play!"

"You said it," rapped Barney, "and this here outfit is going to see that he gets it!"

"Take every man that's around, and ride, Barney!" said the rancher.

And the Kicking Mule foreman did not wait for him to speak twice.

Five minutes later Dick Carr was hitting the trail for Packsaddle again, riding with Barney Bailey and a dozen men of Kicking Mule. Every man in the crowd packed a gun, and faces were grim under stetson hats. Bill's old comrades of the Kicking Mule were standing for Bill; and if Marshal Lick was going to put the Packsaddle headmaster out on the trail that day, Marshal Lick had a tough bone to chew.

An Advance in Force!

STEVE CARSON looked from the school-room window, and grinned. It was close on time for the class to end; but the bell had not rung, and the bunch were still in the school-room.

The cludding of hoofs on the trail floated in at the open windows and caused every heart to beat. The marshal and his men were coming! Slick and Mick hoped that it might be the Kicking Mule crowd; they could not be long now, if they were coming. But the grin on Big Steve's face as he looked out told another tale.

"Silence! Sit down!" squealed Small Brown, unheeded.

Every fellow in the bunch was on his feet now.

"I guess it's Ezra Lick!" grinned Steve. "Say, you guys, I reckon Bill will be put out on the trail—"

"Can it, you skunk!" roared Slick Poindexter, his eyes blazing at the bully of Packsaddle.

"You watch out!" grinned Steve. "Here comes old Lick, with nine or ten guys to back him up, and that dog-goned bull-dozer, Bill Sampson, will sure get his if he kicks up a rookus!"

"You pesky piecan!" shouted Pie Sanders. "Every guy in this bunch is standing for Bill, and don't you forget it! We won't have Scadder!"

"I guess you'll get Scadder, whether you wait him or not!" retorted Steve. "And I'll say I'll be plumb glad to see Bill put on the trail!"

That was enough for the angry bunch. Slick Poindexter led a rush at Steve, and he was collared on all sides. Any fellow who said a word against Bill that day at Packsaddle was asking for it.

"Order!" squealed Small Brown. "Order! I will call Mr. Sampson! Order!"

Steve, yelling, went sprawling along the floor in a dozen pairs of hands. Small Brown waved his pointer—till Slick jerked it from his hand and applied it to the sprawling Steve. It whacked again and again on Big Steve's riding breeches, and Steve's frantic yells rang all over Packsaddle School.

"You pesky polcat!" panted Slick. "That's yours—and that—and that—and that! You want Bill put on the trail, do you, you ornery piecan! I reckon if Bill's put on the trail through your pesky popper pulling the strings, we'll ride you on a rail out of the school soon after!"

"You said it!" roared Mick Kavanagh. "Say, don't keep the guy all to yourself! Give me a chance with this inkpot!"

"Let up, you piecans!" yelled Steve, struggling wildly. "I'll say—Grooooooh! Ooooooh! Woooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the bunch, as Mick got in with the inkpot.

Ink flooded into Steve's mouth as he roared, and he gasped and gurgled horribly.

There was a heavy tramp of feet across the porch. The uproar was bringing Bill to the spot.

The Packsaddle headmaster glared into the school-room, quirt in hand. Marshal Lick and his men were riding in at the gate, opened for them by Hank, the hired man; but Bill did not heed. Bill was still headmaster of Packsaddle School, and he gave his attention to the uproarious bunch.

"Say, what's this jamboree?" roared Bill. "You guys figure that you're going to make whoopee in lesson-time? You figure that I ain't your headmaster no longer, like them galoots along to Packsaddle allow? You want to forget it, you young ginks!"

Bill waded in with the quirt. Steve Carson was released as suddenly as if he had become red-hot.

There was a wild scampering among the desks to escape the whacks of the quirt.

Steve, spluttering ink, rolled on the floor. He gasped and gurgled and spluttered. Every other fellow was dodging the quirt, though not successfully. Poindexter yelled as he got it across his shoulders.

"Let up, Bill, you old guy!" he belated. "We're sure standing for you, you pesky old bonehead!"

"Standing nothing!" shouted Bill. "You got to sit quiet and I'm from Mr. Brown, what's teaching you jobrady!"

There was a trampling of hoofs in the playground, a jingling of spurs and bridles, as the horsemen dismounted. The voice of Ezra Lick, the marshal of Packsaddle, was heard shouting:

"Say, you around, Bill Sampson?"

Bill did not heed or answer. Lessons were not yet over, and he herded the bunch back to their places. It said much for the loyalty of the Packsaddle bunch that they were still as keen as ever on Bill's side after he had finished restoring order in the school-room. They squirmed on the pinewood benches.

Marshal Lick tramped in at the porch. He had his hand very near a gun as he looked into the school-room.

Bill turned towards him. "Beat it!" he roared.

"I guess—"

"I've put you wise afore this, Ezra Lick, that guys ain't allowed to horn into this hyer school while lessons is on!" roared Bill. "If you've come to chew the rag, you wait till the bell goes!"

"I'm telling you—" shouted Ezra Lick.

"Telling nothing! Git!"

"We've brought Scadder—"

"Scadder nothing! You beating it?"

demanding Bill, striding towards the doorway, his eyes gleaming under his stetson hat.

"You doggoned, obstinate old prairie wolf!" yelled the enraged marshal. "I guess we're here to see you put on the trail, and put in Scadder! The school committee—"

"Doggone the school committee!"

"The law—"

"Doggone the law!"

"And you a schoolmaster!" hooted Mr. Lick. "You chew the rag that-a-way—"

"I ain't chewing the rag any in lesson-time! I guess you can spill all you want arter the bell's gone!"

With that Bill made a grasp at the marshal of Packsaddle. Ezra Lick whirled in the air in his powerful hands.

Bill strode through the porch with him, glared at the waiting crowd out-

Bill Sampson's Good-bye!

"GIT!" roared Bill. The bunch, dismissed from school, were generally glad to "get." But on this occasion they lingered round the schoolhouse porch.

Marshal Lick stood there and seven men were with him—his deputies from Packsaddle, grim-faced men who packed guns. Standing back from them was the bony, long-legged Mr. Scadder—the new headmaster of Packsaddle, if the school committee got shut of Bill! Mr. Scadder, in his store clothes and Derby hat, looked rather out of place—and he looked very uneasy and nervous. That new headmaster, with vast stores of book-knowledge, had been imported into Packsaddle as an improvement on the cowpuncher schoolmaster, who had hitherto run the school. Book-knowledge

has come to take your place, and I'll say that he can lay over a doggoned uneducated cowpuncher of your heft! Yep! You hitting the trail?"

"Not a whole lot!" answered Bill. "Chew on it that we're here on business!" warned Mr. Lick. "If you don't hoof it, you'll be put."

"I want to see the guy that's going to put me!" said Bill.

"That the lot?" demanded the Packsaddle marshal.

"You said it!"

Marshal Lick turned to his posse.

"Put that galoot out of that shebang!" he said.

Bill's gun was glinting in the sunshine before the cow town marshal had finished speaking. Steady as a rock in the steady hand of Bill Sampson, it looked the marshal and his crowd in their faces.



With Bill barring his path, Dick had no time to open the gate. He gave his pinto a touch of the spur, and the horse rose to the leap. High over the Packsaddle headmaster—and the gate—jumped the pony! "You young gink!" roared Bill. "I'll sure quirt you a whole lot!"

was useful and valuable in a headmaster—but some other qualities, too, were required to run a rough and tough cow town school—and Mr. Scadder did not look as if he possessed them.

But he was there to take possession—to be installed in the place of the dismissed headmaster. The marshal and his men had come in force, to put it through. It was not through yet, however.

Bill waved a hand at the staring bunch.

"Git!" he repeated. "You young geeks, you figure that you want to stop hot lead? Git, I'm telling you!"

"We're standing for you, Bill!" shouted Slick Poindexter.

"Aw, can it, you young geek!" retorted Bill. "You beat it, pronto, or I'll sure hand you a few with the quirt."

Reluctantly the bunch backed to a distance. But they remained within view, looking on with breathless excitement.

Bill, standing in front of the porch, his thumbs hooked in his gun-belt, faced the marshal and his men. He hardly glanced at Mr. Scadder.

"Now, you Lick!" said Bill, "Lessons is over, and if you got anything to spill, shoot!"

Ezra Lick gave his bruises a final rub, glanced at his posse, and answered:

"You're wise to it that you're fired, Bill. I guess the guys along to Packsaddle honed to let you down easy, but you wouldn't be let. Now you got the boot. Here's Mr. Scadder, a guy what

"Go slow!" said Bill.

"You doggoned geek!" roared Mr. Lick. "You burn powder, and I guess there will be gun-play, and sure—"

"Can it!" interrupted Bill. "If you've come a-shootin, get on with it."

Hands were grasping guns. From a distance the bunch stared on with excited faces and beating hearts. Bill, alone and unaided, was standing up to the crowd that had come to put him out on the trail. Slick Poindexter cast a longing glance towards the gateway. From the prairie trail came a thunder of hoofs, and Slick yelled:

"Glory be! Here comes Kicking Mule!"

Bill Sampson and the Packsaddle crowd turned to stare at the gateway as the crashing hoofs thundered from the trail. Dick Carr, on his pinto, came galloping in, waving his hat.

Fast after him came the Kicking Mule outfit—a dozen men in chaps and stetsons, cracking their quirts, and spurring their broncos.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Bill Sampson. He stared blankly at that unexpected reinforcement.

"I'll say Dick's worked the rifle!" roared Slick Poindexter. "I'll tell a man this is a sight for sore eyes!"

"You said it!" chuckled Mick.

Dick dashed up to the bunch and dismounted.

"We're in time!" he panted.

"Sure!" chuckled Poindexter. "I'll tell all Texas them guys will crawl out at the little end of the horn, and then some."

Barney Bailey and his punchers rode

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side, and hurled the town marshal fairly into their midst.

There was a roar as Ezra Lick crashed, knocking his followers right and left.

"Now wait for the bell!" roared Bill.

"No guy is hornin in here while lessons is on!"

Bill slammed the door in the faces of the marshal's outfit. He turned back into the school-room.

"Mr. Brown—"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!" gasped Small Brown.

"Hit that jobrafy."

Small Brown resumed geography and the bunch gave him attention, under Bill's eyes. Outside the marshal's crowd muttered and murmured—and Ezra Lick rubbed a collection of bruises. But they waited till Tin Tung rang the bell for the end of morning lessons.

up to the schoolhouse with a thunder of hoofs and a cracking of quirts.

The Packsaddle men eyed them grimly. Guns were drawn, and faces were grimly set. The Kicking Mule punchers dropped from their broncos, leaving them to run in the playground. They tramped up to the porch, to stand by Bill.

"Say, how come?" gasped the amazed Bill.

Barney Bailey chuckled.

"I'll say that young geck, Carr, put us wise, Bill," he answered, "and we sure hit the trail hell-for-leather to see you through. I guess you ain't going to be fired from this here school, old-timer—not so's you'd notice it."

"Not by a jugful!" roared Mesquite Sam, brandishing a long-barrelled Colt. "Mr. Dunwoody and all the bunch will be plumb glad to see you back at the ranch, Bill, if you want to quit school-mastering for punching cows again. But if you're holding on, this outfit is going to see you through. And I got a gat what says so!"

Bill nodded slowly.

The Kicking Mule punchers gathered round him, guns in hand, eyes gleaming under shady stetsons. Facing them stood the marshal of Packsaddle and his men—with grim faces, also guns in hand. Mr. Scadder backed farther away. Bullets were no respecters of persons, and all Mr. Scadder's book-knowledge would not have helped him out, if he had been hit by a chunk of lead from a Colt.

Barney Bailey waved his gun at Marshal Lick.

"Beat it, Ezra!" he said. "We ain't honing for trouble with you, or any galoot along to Packsaddle. But we're standing by Bill. Bill's headmaster of this caboodle, and he stays headmaster."

"I guess not!" said Ezra Lick. "I guess I got my dooty to do, and I'll say that my side-kickers will stand for me! And I'll say this, Bill Sampson—I don't figure that you've had right treatment, and I'll allow that the guys along to Packsaddle what have fired you are a bunch of boneheads and cheap skates. But that ain't neither here nor there. And I'll say this—I'm s'prised at you, a schoolmaster, going off on your ear this-a-way, and setting a doggoned bad example to your bunch!"

Bill was silent.

"If there's gun-play—" said Marshal Lick.

"There'll sure be gun-play pronto if you don't beat it!" roared Barney Bailey. "You want to hit the trail—and hit it quick!"

"I'll tell a man I ain't hitting no trail!" said Mr. Lick. "I'm putting Bill on that trail, and sticking that gopher Scadder in the school, according to law!"

"You goldarned piecan, Ezra Lick!" said Bill Sampson. "Here's a dozen good men, every guy packing a gun, what says you ain't! You begin a-shooting and there won't be a grease-spot left of your caboodle!"

"Mebbe!" said the marshal. "Mebbe! But I got my dooty to do, Bill, and this is sure the first time you've stood agin me doing it!"

"You've spilled enough!" snapped Barney Bailey. "Git!"

"Foller me, boys!" said the marshal, and he came steadily on, gun in hand. And his men followed him.

There was a breathless instant. Then Bill Sampson lowered his Colt.

With a sigh the headmaster of Packsaddle drove the revolver back into the holster of his belt.

Bill was angry. He was indignant.

But the marshal's appeal had not been lost on him. Little as he looked the part, Bill was a schoolmaster—and a good one. Was he setting a bad example to the bunch in rebelling against law and order? He was—and he had to chew on it! It was bitter to Bill, but he got it down.

"Pack your guns, you'uns," said Bill quietly.

The punchers stared at him, or, rather, glared.

"Say, you gone loco?" demanded Barney Bailey. "Ain't we here to see you through, and ain't we the guys to chew up that crowd, body and boots?"

"Yep!" said Bill. "And I'll say I'm powerful obliged to you, old-timer, and I guess no guy could have better friends. But I ain't seeing no man's juice spilt agin the law on my account."

"You ain't hitting the trail?" yelled Mesquite Sam.

Bill nodded.

"I'm sure hitting the trail!" he said. "Ezra's spilled a bibful, and I guess he's got the right cow by the ear. Pack your guns, I'm telling you! I guess I'm through with Packsaddle School, and if Mr. Dunwoody will give me a job I'm going back to punching cows."

There was an angry growl from the punchers. But the guns were packed. Bill called to Dick Carr:

"Hyer, you Carr! I guess I ought to give you the quirt for breaking henvi this morning, but I ain't your school-master now. You hit the corral and tote along my cayuse, kid!"

"You're not going, Bill?" panted Dick.

"I guess I'm going as soon as I've packed a grip!" said Bill. "You hump along with that cayuse."

He walked into the schoolhouse.

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by
Charles
Hamilton



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"Bill!"

"Don't go!"

"We're standing for you, old-timer!"

Bill, with his few worldly possessions packed in a bag on his horse, stood holding the reins. The bunch gathered round him with dismayed faces. The rugged, bearded face of the cow town schoolmaster worked. He looked round the playground, the bunkhouse, the chuckhouse—a last look—then his eyes rested on the Packsaddle bunch. There was a lump in Bill's throat. But his voice was steady as he spoke:

"Boys, I guess it's good-bye! I guess I done my best for this bunch, and I sure have quirted you a few, and I'll say you needed it, and then some! Mebbe them guys is right and I ain't no great shakes of a schoolmaster! But I done my best, and I guess this bunch ain't none the worse for it! I'll say it gets my goat to quit, but there ain't no two ways about it. I want to ask you suthin' afore I hit the trail."

He paused a moment.

"Give your noo schoolmaster a chance," he went on. "Stand by Mr. Scadder like you've stood by me, and help him to make good at Packsaddle. That's the whole lot! Good-bye, buddies!"

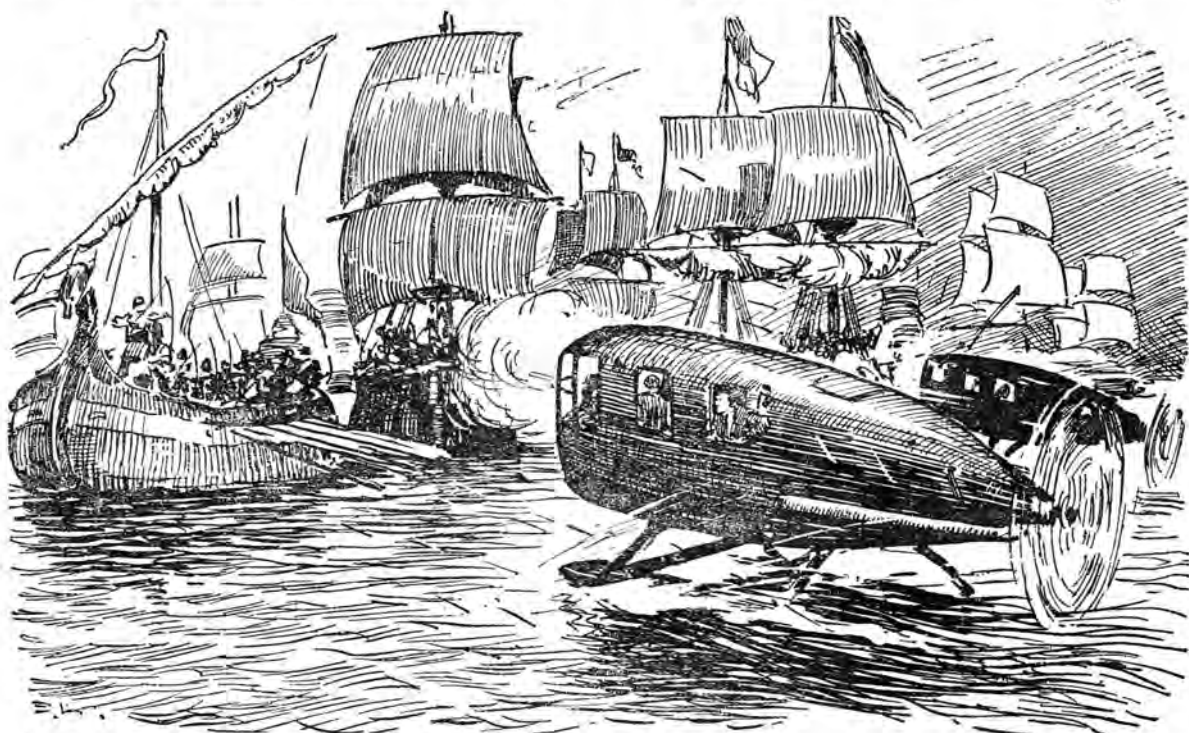
"Good-bye, Bill!"

The bunch stood and watched as Bill Sampson rode away from the school in the midst of the Kicking Mule punchers. They watched, till a fold of the prairie hid the horsemen from their sight. And even then they could hardly believe that they had lost Bill—that Packsaddle School was to see him no more.

(Next week: "THE NEW MASTER AT PACKSADDLE!" You mustn't miss the next great yarn in this exciting series. Order your GEM early.)

WARFARE BREAKS OUT AGAIN IN—

The SECRET WORLD!



Skimming over the water on their light floats, the airship gondolas charged into the vanguard of the Gothland armada. Next moment a shattering volley of bullets was poured into the enemy ships. Small as the Northeastrian "navy" was, it was making things very unpleasant for the enemy hordes!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Over the Ether!

ONCE again the shores of Northeastria are threatened by invaders! Gothland, their enemy country in a secret, almost impenetrable world, are about to launch their second attack.

Fighting for Northeastria are the boys of St. Frank's. Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrmore, and others, who were all stranded in the lost medieval world when their airship crashed. Since that time they have been endeavouring to get in touch with wireless with the outside world, but without success.

Preparations are being made to repulse the Gothlanders, when Handforth, the St. Frank's junior, rushes up to say that the airship wireless operator has received signals from beyond the secret world.

"What!"

"In touch with the outer world!"

"Good gad!"

"It's too good to be true!" exclaimed Nipper.

Everybody was shouting at once, and Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore, after exchanging rapid glances, pushed the juniors aside and closed upon Handforth. Lee was frowning.

"Look here, young man, is it just one of your exaggerations?" he asked. "If you've got hold of a false report—"

"False report be blown!" roared Handforth indignantly. "Sorry, sir!"

he added, with a start. "I—I— Why, I've just come from the wireless-room! I was standing next to Sparks when he got the signals! He's in touch with an American cargo boat in the North Atlantic!"

"What?"

"It's a fact!" said Handforth quickly.

"Did the operator tell you this?" demanded Lee.

"He was so jolly excited, sir, that he shouted it out to everybody," said Handforth, delighted with the sensation he had caused. "I was in one of the cabins, when I heard him yelling."

"So you rushed to the wireless-room?" asked Nipper.

"Rather! And there was Sparks, sitting in front of his instruments, and his face was red with triumph," said Handforth eagerly. "I started speaking, but he waved his hand and roared out that he was in touch with a Yankee tramp. The very words he used, sir."

"I'll go along and verify this," said Nelson Lee firmly. "By James, Dorrie, if this is actually true, it means that we're in touch with the outer world at last!"

His lordship grinned happily.

"The end of our troubles, what?" he asked.

"I wish I could say 'yes,' old man," replied Lee, suddenly becoming grave.

"It will be a splendid thing if we can only send word out that we are safe and well. As for escaping from the isolated little realm, well—"

Lee broke off and shrugged his shoulders.

"I know," said Dorrie. "Somethin' of a problem, eh? Well, let's be thankful for small mercies. We'll dash along and see if Handforth's yarn is true."

There were plenty of horses handy, and within a few moments Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore were galloping off. Both were startled by Handforth's piece of news—and both, rather sceptical. For days the airship's wireless operator had been trying to establish communication with the outer world. But, so far—until to-day, at all events—he had only received confused, unintelligible signals.

The great airship had originally fallen a mile or two from the capital, in a peaceful valley. And there she was still, a mere skeleton of her former self. A great deal of the fabric had gone; large numbers of metal girders had been ripped away, to be used for various purposes, and very little of the original craft was left except the big central cabins amidships, and the navigating department in the forepart.

Here the little wireless-room was situated. Fortunately, none of the delicate electrical instruments had been injured in the crash. The engineers had rigged up a new aerial, one that was calculated to receive and transmit with full efficiency, but something had been wrong. No definite results could be obtained. And Nelson Lee believed that

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perpetual atmospheric disturbances round the outer edge of the great basin were responsible for this negative result. Possibly, too, the volcanoes had a share in the failure.

Lee was so convinced that the wireless was useless that he could hardly see how Handforth's story could be true. He was anxious, therefore, when he approached the wireless-room. Several of the airship's engineers were standing about, looking excited.

"Grand news, sir!" said one, as Lee came up.

"I can hardly believe that the report is true, Gunby," replied Lee.

"It's true enough, sir," said the engineer. "Sparks is nearly dotty in him, and he won't let any of us near him."

Everybody knew the wireless operator as "Sparks," although this, of course, wasn't his real name.

"Gosh, I'm glad you've come, sir!" he said as Nelson Lee entered. "You, too, sir," he added to Dorrie. "We've done it at last! I've just had a chat with an American cargo boat, and now I'm trying to get the old Wanderer. I think we're going to be lucky, too."

"You'd better let Mr. Lee come there," said his lordship.

Sparks was in no way offended, and he got up at once—knowing that Nelson Lee's knowledge was enormously greater than his own. The great detective was tense and expectant as he sat before the delicate instruments.

"What about this cargo boat?" asked Lord Dorrmore.

"It seems that we were all given up for lost a fortnight ago," replied the young wireless man, in a whisper. "Practically every boat on the Seven Seas was instructed to look out for wreckage, and to make reports, in case anything was seen of us. The newspapers have been full of our affairs for days past, and the whole of England is mourning you, sir, and Mr. Lee, and all the young people. Seems to have been a regular sensation."

Dorrie grinned.

"There'll be another now—as soon as they get the news of our adventures into the papers," he remarked. "By glory! What a relief it'll be, too, to the parents of all these youngsters!"

And then the last doubt was set at rest, for Nelson Lee got into direct communication with the Wanderer!

The British Navy Takes a Hand!

IN touch with the Wanderer! There was something magic in that report when it reached the ears of the St. Frank's fellows waiting outside in the open. They had followed Lee and Dorrie post haste. And the news having spread, practically all the boys were present, to say nothing of many of the airship men.

Even Willy & Co. had heard a rumour while shopping, and had just arrived at the wreckage, bringing Church and McClure with them. And every face was alight with eagerness and excitement.

"By George!" said Handforth. "What did I tell you? We're in touch with the Wanderer now, and that means that we shall get all the news. Old Captain Burton was bound to hear everything from England, and he'll pass it along."

Nipper shook his head. "It doesn't much matter about the news on our side," he said. "The most important thing is for us to get our story across, so that your people will be partially relieved from their anxieties."

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"Partially relieved?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Well, they won't be particularly joyful—after they've got over the first relief of knowing that we're alive—to learn that we're all bottled up," replied Nipper.

"Rats!" laughed Handforth. "After mourning us for days and weeks, and now learning that we're alive, they won't worry about us being hemmed in here. Not likely! They'll move heaven and earth to send out rescue-parties!"

"My only hat!" murmured Tommy Watson dreamily. "Rescue-parties!"

"They'll send an airship for us."

"Yes, rather!"

"Two or three airships, perhaps."

"A jolly old fleet—what?"

They were all talking at once, discussing the main possibilities. But Nipper felt compelled to remind them of certain uncomfortable facts. He didn't want them to raise their hopes too high.

"It's a great thing to be in communication with Dorrie's yacht," he said, "and we can be pretty certain that our people at home will make frantic efforts to send help. But you haven't forgotten that terrific battle we had, thirty thousand feet up, have you? This volcanic valley is entirely surrounded by terrible storms, everlasting storms; and if any airship tries to break through the encircling cyclones, it'll be doomed."

"We broke through, didn't we?"

asked De Valerie.

Nipper nodded.

"Yes," he said, with a significant nod at the wreckage.

"H'm! You mean we were smashed up?" asked Val.

"And if any other airship gets into this quiet zone, it'll arrive a crippled hulk, too," said Nipper. "That's the problem we're up against, you chaps. It's glorious to know that we can talk with England, but don't forget the real position."

"Couldn't they send out aeroplanes?" asked Pitt. "Some of those huge cross-Atlantic machines can fight storms that would wreck a dirigible."

Nipper merely shrugged his shoulders. He didn't like to point out that the most violent storm that ever raged round Britain's coast—the worst on record—was only a feeble breeze compared to the vortex of atmospheric disturbances which ringed this tiny Northern world.

Nelson Lee didn't appear for over an hour, and the waiting crowd gave him a great shout. Even if they couldn't see much difference in Lee's expression, none could fail to note the flushed excitement of Lord Dorrmore.

"What's the news, sir?"

"Be a sport, sir, and tell us!"

"Well, there's not much, but what there is sounds good," smiled Nelson Lee. "And there'll probably be other information later, if the wireless continues to function. I've got an idea that this may be only a flash in the pan. Perhaps there's a lull outside, a brief relaxation of the elements."

"No fear, sir! Everything will be all right now!"

"What about our people at home, sir?"

"Captain Burton has sent us a message of joy," replied Nelson Lee. "Dorrie's yacht is still anchored at her base, and it seems that she has been joined by a number of destroyers of the British Navy."

"Hurrah!"

"Now we shan't be long!"

"Don't cheer too soon!" warned Lee.

"For all the help those destroyers can give us, they might as well be up in the

moon. They have recently been scouring the seas, searching for wreckage."

"And it's here all the time!" grinned Handforth.

"Naturally, our messages cut of the ether, after so many days of dead silence, have created a big sensation," continued Lee. "They had given us up as lost long ago."

"Did you tell Captain Burton exactly where we are, sir?"

"I did, and I understand that the British Government is also preparing a fleet of naval seaplanes to scour the Arctic."

"Seaplanes! Hurrah!"

"Ods guesses and surmises!" ejaculated Archie Glenhorne. "A fleet—what? Laddies, didn't I say so?"

"Absolutely!" grinned Pitt.

"This seaplane fleet was being prepared, I believe, as a kind of forlorn hope," said Lee. "The Government was anxious to discover some trace of us, in order to put an end to all suspense. Naturally, the knowledge that we are still alive will make an enormous difference, and the plans may be changed—"

"Won't they send the seaplanes, sir?" asked Church, in dismay.

"I thought it fair to give a warning, after stating the exact position of this oasis, to the effect that no aircraft could ever hope to conquer the storms which rage round us," replied Lee gravely.

"For the moment, nothing more can be done; we must wait until our Government has learned of our plight, and perhaps some official messages will come in later. Until then we must be patient."

"Takin' it all round, my lads, it's findin' our good news!" said Lord Dorrmore cheerfully. "The British Navy is on the job, and I've always found that when the British Navy starts something, it finishes it!"

Irony of Fate!

AND then, just at this joyous moment, when everybody was wildly enthusiastic over the news, came a jar.

A Northestrian officer, galloping up at full speed, brought grave tidings. The man proved to be Wynwed the Jovial, whom the juniors knew well, since he had been in the princess's body-guard. He was now a highly placed officer in one of the many new Northestrian regiments.

"Cheerio, Wynwed!" yelled Handforth, waving a hand.

But Wynwed was far more alarmed than jovial now. He flung himself from his horse, and saluted Nelson Lee.

"'Tis reported that the enemy is astir, my lord!" he said breathlessly. "Beshrew the dogs, but it seemeth another invasion is toward."

"I was expecting this," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "So the information that Handforth obtained yesterday was authentic! Kassker and his men are coming—eh? Well, I fancy we're ready for them!"

"Ready to tickle 'em more than they bargain for!" nodded Dorrie.

Wynwed the Jovial gave a great shout.

"Ay, my lords, ye are right!" he declared. "Northestria is no longer a land of sleepy-heads! I' faith, but I scarce recognise my own country these days. A wondrous transformation; and all due to thee, Lee of the Lionheart! By my soul, we'll keep these rats from overrunning us!"

"Go back to your position, Wynwed, and prepare your men all along your own section," said Nelson Lee swiftly.

"Let the order go down the line that

every man must hold himself ready for the great battle. Kassker the Grim will profit by his last experience, and make a much more determined attack now. Northestria's only chance is to keep the invader out."

Lee and Dorrie hurried off, forgetful of the good news they had recently heard, remembering only that they must fight Northestria's cause for their own safety. It was the irony of fate that this grave information should come at such a moment. For none of the members of the airship party could ignore the fact that they would be the first to die by torture should Kassker prevail.

So, in helping the Northestrians to repel this savage invader, Nelson Lee was doing a double service. He was helping his hosts, and also striving hard to keep his own party intact. For Lee, of course, was in sole charge. It was Lord Dorrimore's party, really, but his lordship was such an irresponsible individual that he couldn't be entrusted with any affairs of gravity.

"The invasion!" said Nipper grimly. "So it's started, eh? Are we going to be out of all this excitement, you chaps?"

"Not likely!" said a dozen voices. "We haven't even got time to think of the news that's just arrived," continued Nipper. "Unless we help the Northestrians to whack old Kassker, we shall be in a fine mess, particularly if the Gothlanders win."

"We shall be in such a mess that the movements of the British Navy will cease to interest us," said Reggie Pitt dryly. "If once we get into Kassker's hands, he'll have our heads chopped off."

"He's more likely to burn us at the stake!" growled Watson.

"Well, chop or steak, it doesn't make

much difference, from our point of view," replied Reggie. "No, I'm not talking about our next meal, but Kassker's next entertainment, if he gets the chance."

"Then you're an ass!" said Handforth coldly.

"That makes a pair of us, then—"

"We're going to smash these Gothlanders to smithereens!" roared Handforth aggressively. "Haven't we seen what they are? Kassker's armies are a mob of murderous, looting, thieving hooligans! It wouldn't surprise me to hear that they're cannibals, too! Are we going to be beaten by a mob like that?"

But before anybody could answer this question, Nelson Lee returned on horseback, and he brought with him a strong company of Northestrian mounted guards. Lee himself was looking a wonderful figure in his glittering chain-mail and helmet. He had fitted himself admirably into this medieval environment.

"What's the idea, sir?" asked Nipper, as the horse guards took up their positions round the airship wreckage.

"The old Titan must be protected at all costs," replied Nelson Lee. "She not only contains valuable stores—machine-gun ammunition, petrol, oil, and so forth—but there is the wireless, too. There is always the chance that Kassker may have spies at work, and—"

"Half a minute, sir!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "I've just got an idea!"

"Cheese it, Handy!"

"Don't bother about your silly ideas now, old man!"

"Rats!" bellowed Handforth, rushing up to Nelson Lee's horse and clinging to the bridle. "Just a minute, sir."

How long will it be before the Gothlanders make their first attack—if they get over to this coast?"

"It will probably be several hours before any battle develops," replied Lee impatiently. "I am sorry, Handforth, but I cannot stay now. I must get back to headquarters—"

"But supposing the invaders land on this bit of coast, sir?"

"In that case, things will be serious," replied Lee.

"And isn't there a strong chance that they will land, sir?" went on Edward Oswald keenly. "They're bound to make for the capital, and Dunstane is only a mile or two away. This section of country is liable to become a battlefield, isn't it, sir?"

"I am afraid it is," said Nelson Lee gravely. "That is one reason why I have brought these guards up—"

"But they won't be able to save the airship if there's fighting, sir," said Handforth. "I don't suppose the beggars will effect a landing, but there's always a chance. Wouldn't it be a lot safer to shift the stores, and the wireless apparatus, and everything else, on to a ship?"

A yell went up from the listening crowd.

"Dry up, Handy, you ass!" panted Church uncomfortably.

"One moment!" said Nelson Lee, a keen light coming into his eyes. "You suggest transferring the stores—petrol, wireless, and so forth—on to a ship, Handforth?"

"That's the idea, sir—that big one!"

said Edward Oswald, nodding.

"You've converted one boat into a kind of cruiser, haven't you? It's got two of the aero-engines fixed to it, and it's about the biggest craft on the lake."

(Continued on the next page.)

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Wouldn't it be a good scheme to slow everything on board, sir?"

"Oh, the ass!" growled De Valerie. "Why the dickens doesn't Mr. Lee choke him off!"

"H'm!" murmured Nipper. "I believe the gov'nor approves of it! Perhaps it isn't such a dotty idea, after all!"

The Headquarters Ship!

HANDFORTH was encouraged to further excited words by Nelson Lee's thoughtful silence.

"Don't you see, sir?" he asked eagerly. "Those rotten Gothlanders are bound to make their biggest attack on Dunstane, and that means terrific fighting all round here. And if this place becomes a battlefield, what then? Supposing the Gothlanders gain the upper hand, even for an hour? They'll bust up this airship at the first chance, and then phut goes our petrol and wireless and everything!"

"By Jove, the chap's right!" muttered Pitt, nodding.

"But with everything on that ship, the Gothlanders won't be able to get near it!" continued Handforth. "See, sir? It's the biggest ship of all, it can travel pretty fast, and it's got machine-guns—"

"I must give you credit, Handforth, for suggesting a very practicable idea," interrupted Nelson Lee keenly. "Yes, I'll give orders to have this scheme executed at once."

"By George!" breathed Handforth. He was so accustomed to having his ideas flouted that Nelson Lee's warm approval rather bowled him over. But he rapidly recovered. Handforth had a way of resuming his normal equilibrium at a moment's notice.

"By George!" he repeated. "So you mean to adopt the wheeze, eh, sir? Well, of course, I don't want to brag, but my ideas are generally—"

"Hopeless, Handforth!" interrupted Lee gently.

"Eh?" gasped Edward Oswald. "Oh, I say—"

"They are generally hopeless, Handforth," repeated Lee. "And that is why I listened so impatiently just now. But this brainwave of yours is one of the exceptions to the rule. It only shows that the dullest brain can sometimes evolve a brilliant idea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I like that!" protested Handforth indignantly.

"Only my joke, young 'un!" laughed Nelson Lee. "The very fact that I am adopting your scheme ought to show you that I value your wits. It will be far better to get all this stuff safely on board the Spitfire before any battle develops."

"Just what I thought, sir," nodded Handy.

"What is more, I shall go one better," declared Lee. "The ship shall become my headquarters—indeed, the headquarters of our entire party. No matter how the battle goes, we can then shift down the coast as we think fit. All our valuable instruments and stores will then be safe, no matter how the invaders progress."

"But will there be time, sir?" asked Nipper quickly.

"It all depends upon how many men are employed in the work," replied Nelson Lee. "I shall order an entire regiment to undertake the task, and I rather fancy that the feat will be accomplished swiftly."

Less than half an hour later, hundreds of men were passing between the

wrecked airship and the lakeshore. For when Nelson Lee decided upon a policy, he lost no time in putting it into execution!

Under Nelson Lee's precise instructions, the stores from the Titan were quickly and effectively transferred to the Spitfire. This latter vessel had been renamed by Dorrie, and her new designation was appropriate; for her aero-engines were not only noisy, but their open exhausts spouted fire as soon as they were put into operation. In addition, she carried two machine-guns, and these instruments of death could spit quite a lot of fire when they chose.

The handling of the wireless staff was undertaken entirely by the airship's engineers, with young Sparks anxiously superintending. But the change-over was safely accomplished, and the aerial was rigged up afresh on two special masts. To the immense relief of Sparks, his apparatus functioned perfectly as soon as he tested it on board the floating headquarters.

It had been a swift and dramatic change.

Everything that was highly prized was now safely beyond all possibility of destruction. Lee did not deceive himself. Kasker the Grim was launching a tremendous attack this time—a threefold assault, if advance information was to be believed. All the Gothland armies were being hurled into the conflict, and it was only reasonable to assume that at least one of Kasker's armies would be successful. And that one might well be the army which threw itself upon the Northeastrian coast in the vicinity of the capital.

The Spitfire was as a fortress, for none of the Gothlander boats could compare with her for speed, and thus she could avoid all dangers. And her machine-guns rendered her impervious to a combined assault.

It was undoubtedly a wise move to have the wireless on board. Nelson Lee himself gave full instructions to his immediate officers. The Northeastrian armies were to operate independently, under their own commanders. These people could now be trusted to defend their own land against the savage invader.

Mr. Wilcox, one of the Titan's officers, was placed in temporary command of the headquarters ship, with orders to steer clear of all warfare, if possible. Nelson Lee took charge of one of the floating gondolas, and Captain Waring was placed at the controls of the other. Lord Dorrinore was more at home in the motor-boat.

These three vessels were setting forth to harass the enemy fleets while they were yet in mid-lake. Lee knew that invaluable service could be done by breaking up the Gothlanders' transports in advance, so that when they landed their men, confusion would be created. The Northeastrian forces could be trusted to make short shrift of the isolated invaders.

As for the St. Frank's fellows, they had their own ideas!

To Do Their Bit!

NIPPER was looking thoughtful.

"Well, everything seems to be going ahead," he remarked.

"And everybody's bustling about and doing his bit—"

"Except us!" remarked Fullwood.

"Exactly!" nodded Nipper grimly.

"Except us! Do you call that right?"

"No fear!"

"Absolutely not, laddie!"

"Where does the Remove come in?"

"We're neglected and forgotten!" said Reggie Pitt sadly.

"We're not going to stand it!" roared Handforth. "Did you notice old Browne? He had the nerve to go out with Captain Waring in that gondola! Stevens, too! If those giddy Fifth Formers can go into battle, why can't we?"

Nipper's eyes were gleaming.

"It strikes me that the gov'nor overlooked us," he said cheerfully. "We can't blame him; he's got such a lot of things on his hands. Well, why shouldn't we go aboard the galley, and have our own smack at the enemy?"

"Hurrah!"

"Why not?"

"She's ready for immediate putting out," continued Nipper. "Her oarsmen are all aboard, and they'll do anything in the world for us. They're former slaves, and we saved them from the pirates. So they'll serve us loyally. Hands up, all those who vote for putting out against the enemy!"

Every hand went up. Some fellows raised both.

"Good men!" said Nipper, grinning.

"Then let's make a move!"

"Hurrah!"

"By George, I must say you've got the right idea, my son!" roared Handforth approvingly. "As a matter of fact, I was just about to suggest the same thing myself—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So I was!" declared Handforth, glaring. "But I thought Mr. Cautious Nipper would start all sorts of objections! He's getting sensible in his old age! Must be the result of my influence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm still cautious, Handy, so you mustn't expect anything spectacular!" chuckled Nipper. "We'll have our smack at the enemy, if there's a chance, but I've got my own policy. My scheme is to stand by in the galley, and then give chase to isolated Gothlander transports after the fleets have been broken up."

"That's a good scheme!" said Fullwood, nodding.

"First rate!" chorused a number of others.

Handforth gave another of his expressive snorts.

"I might have known it!" he said bitterly. "For half a minute I thought that Nipper had learned some sense. But he's just the same as ever—just the same slow-coach! My idea is to dash into the enemy full pelt."

"That would be your idea!" said Church sarcastically. "And how do you suppose we should fare? We haven't got any guns on board the galley, and those Gothlander boats are swarming with archers! We should all get killed!"

Handforth grunted.

"Oh, all right! I'll say no more!" he snapped. "Nipper's the leader—goodness only knows why, but most of you fellows seem to back him up—so I'll dry up!"

And all the St. Frank's crowd thereupon hurried down to the beach, where, some half a mile farther down, the great galley was anchored.

The fellows had already had several breathless adventures aboard this craft. She was a galley after the style of the grim vessels which operated in olden days in the Mediterranean. She was propelled by means of great sweeps, and required a full hundred men to operate the oars, in addition to her navigating officers and crew. This galley had formerly been in the hands of pirates,

and had cruised about the lake, plundering and killing.

At the approach of the St. Frank's fellows, the hundred oarsmen aroused themselves, and many of their faces were looking eager. All these men had been saved from appalling slavery, and they were grateful to their young rescuers. There was scarcely a man there who wouldn't undertake any risk at the order of these youngsters. They were untrained as soldiers, and so they had been left aboard the galley, to serve as a crew, should the vessel be needed.

And she was needed now—not, however, by the order of the commander-in-chief!

Joining in the Fray!

NIPPER and his eager followers were taking matters into their own hands!

As Nipper had said, it was quite probable that Nelson Lee had overlooked them. The great detective had so many responsibilities on his head—so many different operations to control—that he had no time for the boys.

The need for decisive action was, indeed, acute.

Already the horizon was black with the dots which signified the vanguard of the enemy fleets. Kasker the Grim was utilising every ship and every man. Tens of thousands of trained soldiers were being brought across the lake to invade the rich lands of Northestia.

There was something rather epic in those three little motor craft going out to give battle to this imposing armada. But Nelson Lee did not expect to accomplish miracles. The two gondolas and the motor-boat were speedy, and they were armed with machine-guns. At the most, Nelson Lee thought it possible that these methods would create disorganisation. Thus, the invaders would land their hordes in isolated groups, and not according to the settled plan of campaign. The Northestrians would then have a better chance of driving the invaders into the lake.

Nipper pointed as he stood on the beach.

"They're coming!" he said grimly. "Jove, look over there!"

"Thousands of them!" nodded Handforth, with satisfaction.

"Kasker means it this time!" remarked Tommy Watson. "I only hope these Northestrian chaps will be able to keep 'em out! If not, there's going to be a horrible business during the next few days!"

"Let's go and have a jab at 'em, anyhow!" said Handforth impatiently.

The galley was lying a couple of cables' lengths out from the shore, but there were plenty of small boats handy, and the juniors were soon on board. They were greeted with many shouts of eagerness from the oarsmen.

"Look here, you fellows!" shouted Nipper, addressing the former slaves. "The Gothlanders are coming over, and we want to cruise out on the lake, and watch the battle from there. Are you game to stick to the oars?"

"Ay, young lord!" shouted one. "Tis for thee to command!"

"Good!" said Nipper. "I'm not proposing to go into battle, because we're not equipped for hard fighting. But there's just a chance that we shall be useful. And with you fellows at the oars, we're faster than any of the enemy craft."

"Give but the order, young lord!" came a chorus.

Handforth sniffed.

"Not proposing to go into battle!" he

mimicked sarcastically. "Just a chance that we shall be useful! My only hat! Are we girls, or something, that we can only watch? My idea is to smash into the—"

"We know all about your ideas, old man," said Pitt gently. "They're bloodthirsty."

"My ideas are marvellous!" roared Handforth.

"Exactly, my poor old dreamer—"

"Mr. Lee says they are!" hooted Handforth triumphantly. "What about the headquarters ship? Wasn't that my idea? What about shifting all the wireless into safety? Wasn't that my idea?"

"Grab him, and chain him to one of the oars!" interrupted Nipper darkly. "Why should we put up with his noise?"

Half a dozen fellows jumped to obey, but Handforth backed away down the deck.

"All right!" he snapped. "I'll be calm, but only with an effort! It makes me boil to see our chances being frittered away! It makes me go hot all over—"

"That's not surprising, Handy," grinned Pitt. "Anybody who was boiling would naturally be hot all over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, aren't you?" grinned Handforth aggressively. "By George! It makes my blood run cold to think of all—"

"Hallo!" said Fullwood. "He's soon cooled down!"

Handforth turned aside with disgust as a shout of laughter went up. He was amazed—indignant. These fellows didn't seem to realise the urgency of the occasion. Here was the enemy, coming over in a great armada, and they were laughing and joking as though everything was normal.

Nipper was determined that the galley should keep well out of it. Nipper was one of the pluckiest fellows alive, but, fortunately, he did not share Handforth's rashness. And it would have been literally suicide to send that unarmed galley into the heart of that fleet.

Under Nipper's orders, the galley was soon under way, her great oars sweeping regularly in and out of the water, glistening and gleaming. These ex-galley-slaves were masters of their craft!

"This is something like!" remarked Church, as he leaned over the bulwark, staring out over the lake.

"Something like what?" asked Handforth disgustedly.

"Well, I mean—"

"Look where we're heading!" went on Handforth with a discontented growl. "Straight down the lake, skirting the Northestrian coast! If I were at the wheel, I'd go straight out—"

"Impossible!" said McClure. "This galley's got a tiller!"

"What do I care whether it's a tiller or a wheel or a paddle?" snapped Edward Oswald. "If you're going to start quibbling, Arnold McClure, I'll biff you overside. I'm fed-up! Understand? Fed-up to the neck!"

His chums wisely left him alone. Handforth's war-like spirit was so fiery that he never could resign himself to a policy of caution. If he had been left entirely to his own devices during the past few weeks, he would have been dead long since. All the same, nobody could deny that his luck was phenomenal. Where giants feared to tread, Handforth would stroll with utter indifference and come out whole.

The galley maintained its distance from the shore, the oarsmen wielding their great sweeps with skill and

precision. By Nipper's orders, they were causing the galley to cruise easily; and Nipper himself, at the cumbersome tiller, was keeping the vessel on a course down the lake.

"What's the idea?" asked Reggie Pitt curiously.

"Those fleets seem to be thinning out down this way," replied Nipper, nodding out towards the oncoming Gothlanders. "I don't mean to be trapped among a couple of dozen enemy transports! Let's satisfy ourselves by going for an isolated one, if we can catch it. As long as we're doing our bit, we shall all feel comfortable."

"All except Handforth!" snorted Reggie.

"He doesn't count," replied Nipper dryly. "He seems to think this is a picnic, and that we're out for fun. But it's a pretty grim business, and, personally, I'm rather keen on coming out alive, so that I can get back to Old England and St. Frank's."

"And so say all of us!" agreed Pitt fervently.

The Attack Develops!

KASSKER THE GRIM, the overlord of all the Gothlanders, was making his greatest bid for victory.

Every able-bodied man had been pressed into his service, and, indeed, there were thousands of men in the enemy ranks who were far from able-bodied. Kasker's idea was to gain a lightning victory by sheer weight of numbers. His savage myriads would swarm over Northestia and gain the upper hand during the first onslaught. Such was Kasker's scheme.

According to all his information—supplied by numerous spies, who had swarmed in Northestia until Nelson Lee had rounded them up—the subjects of Princess Marcia were sleepy and unprepared. Originally, the invasion would have been easy, and Kasker's first onslaught could never have failed.

But he had learned, then, that these strangers from the outer world had brought about a great change in Northestia. No longer were these people unprepared! But even Kasker did not realise the full extent of the transformation.

He calculated according to his own training experiences. It had taken him many months to get his own armies into shape. Indeed, for years Kasker had been preparing.

So what could these Northestrians do in a mere week or so? Kasker and his generals were contemptuous. True, the Northestrian armies were new and untried, but Kasker was overlooking one vital fact. These men, although freshly trained, although peace-loving people, were about to fight for the salvation of their own country. Their valiant spirit would more than make up for their lack of training.

And the whole manhood of Northestia had arisen to this great call. Up and down the lake, from end to end of the country, the defensive armies were waiting. Many of them were entrenched, for Nelson Lee had instituted a series of defence-works similar to those employed in the most modern warfare. They were methods that Kasker had never heard of.

So this vast armada, as it swept across the lake, did not arouse such consternation as Kasker fondly believed it would. The Northestrians saw, and

they prepared themselves to fight to the last drop of blood.

And the motor-craft were taking a hand, too.

The great gondolas, with their enormously powerful engines and light floats, were skimming over the water under perfect control. And they dashed up, sending volleys of lead broadside into the leading enemy ships. The flights of arrows which came in return were useless, for they all fell short. The machine-guns had the better of the argument every time.

As Lee had hoped, the formation of the fleet was broken. In their efforts to

escape from these harassing foes, the Gothlander craft veered off erratically. There were collisions and other confusing incidents. Fearlessly Lee drove again and again into the heart of the armada, his excessive speed rendering him safe. The motor-boat shot through like a streak of lightning, spitting lead from the machine-gun in a continuous, shattering fusillade.

Nipper had given orders for the galley to go farther out upon the lake, much to Handforth's satisfaction.

"We're safe enough," said Nipper. "All these enemy ships are overloaded with men. Look at them! Low down in

the water, and poked to suffocation! Kassker's sending half his population across, by the look of it. We can steer clear of these tubs with ease."

As time went on the battle developed. The three motor craft kept to their settled policy—that of disorganising the armada. The ships were broken up already, many of them sheering off in all sorts of odd directions. But nothing could disguise the fact that the fleet still continued to progress. The enemy was getting nearer!

(Can the Northeistriams hold the enemy at bay? More thrills next week from this gripping serial.)

PLAYING THE GAME!

(Continued from page 16.)

but inevitable. And I confess, too, that the adventure and the excitement of it all had attractions for me. And the danger—that, too, fascinated me. But I will make no excuses. There are none to be made."

"And—and you were never suspected?"

Dandy Jim smiled grimly.

"Not even by my associates in crime. I was too careful for that. You are thinking of the scar—the scar by which Inspector Buxton was so certain of identifying me?"

Dr. Holmes nodded.

It was not a real scar. It was adopted as a disguise. I allowed it to be seen. I knew I should be betrayed sooner or later, and that scar was painted upon my shoulder to deceive those I worked with, and who would have sold me to the police whenever it suited their purpose. They fancied they saw it by chance—when they betrayed me, that was the information they gave to the police—but it was my safety, and not my undoing. Our worthy inspector from Scotland Yard never suspected that. When I was not the crackman I had no scar, and when I gave up the life—"

"You gave it up?"

"I have said so."

"You did not come here to rob me?"

Arthur Fitzgerald threw up his head proudly.

"No! I came here because I had come to my senses, because I realised that I was wasting my life, and I wanted to reform. I thought I had every opportunity. I had never even been suspected. I had only to drop my secret life, and to live as I had always

supposed to live, and Dandy Jim would be dead for ever, and Arthur Fitzgerald would keep and deserve his place among honest men. That was my object in accepting a post here, and no one can say that I have not done my duty. If I had wanted to crack that safe, I could have done it. You have seen me do it—not for gain, but to ruin myself! That alone should prove to you that I came here an honest man, to play the game on and off the cricket field."

"I do not need proof. I believe you!"

"And now it is ended. All is over. It only remains for me to go and face the world! Fool that I was to imagine that I could escape the past. Every crime has to be paid for—and, indeed, in my heart I knew all the time that some day it must come—that I should have to face the music!"

Dr. Holmes rose.

"Through me, at all events, you will suffer nothing from your noble act of to-day," he said. "You have thrown up everything for duty's sake, for the sake of a boy who was nothing to you—and I cannot forget that. You will leave here a free man, and my assistance you need to lead a new life you shall receive from me. While I live you shall never need a friend."

"Heaven thank you, sir!"

Mr. Selby stepped forward. There was a strange expression upon the Form-master's face. He could not himself understand the feelings that were working in his breast. But that day Mr. Selby was a better man than he had ever been before. He was an honest man, and Dandy Jim was a thief, but Mr. Selby knew that he would never have done what the crackman had done that day. If Mr. Selby had been Dandy Jim, Levison would have perished in the iron safe. Mr. Selby knew it, and the knowledge of it humbled him. He held out his hand to the shame-faced man.

"I am sorry!" he said, in a low voice. "I have done you wrong, Mr. Fitzgerald. From me you have nothing to fear. My lips are sealed. You are a brave man, and I have wronged you. Will you take my hand?"

Mr. Fitzgerald took his hand in silence, and Mr. Selby left the study.

There was a strange look on the young cricketer's face.

"I am free, then?" he said.

"Free!" said Dr. Holmes. "You leave us a free man, and your secret will be kept. But Dandy Jim is dead for ever! That is agreed?"

"I swear to you that nothing shall tempt me again," said Arthur Fitzgerald; "that the solve I made when I gave up my old life I will keep, and I shall play the game like a man! Good-bye, sir; and you shall never be sorry that you were merciful!"

Dr. Holmes held out his hand.

The crackman grasped once, and was gone!

Tom Merry & Co. never knew all, though they suspected much.

Levison could tell nothing. Indeed, the cad of the Fourth had suffered so much from his imprisonment in the safe that he had to leave St. Jim's to be placed under medical care, and even the story of how he came to be imprisoned in the safe was never fully known.

The St. Jim's boys had lost their cricket coach, and they missed him. But, little as they knew of the facts of the case, they knew or suspected enough to make them realise that it was better for him to go. And so St. Jim's knew him no more.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "THE SCHEMER OF ST. JIM'S!" Look out for this gripping yarn of sport and adventure—featuring again all your favourites of St. Jim's.)

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