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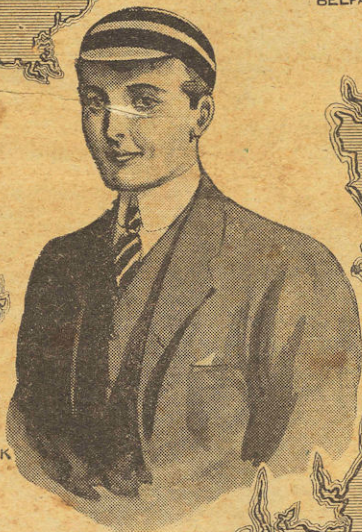


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# KILDARE FOR ST. JIM'S

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"What the dooce—" began Second-Lieutenant Micky Kildare, in wonder. "Oh, my hat!" Crash! crash! Bump! Yell! Tom Merry & Co. had planned to have a surprise all ready for the captain of St. Jim's when he came in. They had succeeded—in a sense. Certainly Kildare was surprised. He was astounded. It was the first time that the captain's study had been a battle-ground for juniors and fags. (See Chapter 1.)

## CHAPTER 1. Caught in the Act!

**K**ILDARE of the Sixth stood at his study window, looking out over the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets, and there was a cloud upon his brow.

Big, handsome Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, generally looked sunny and good-tempered, and frowns upon his brow were rare. But he was frowning now, darkly, and his lips were set in a tight line.

Buried in troubled thought, he did not hear a cautious tap at the door of his study.

The tap was repeated, more loudly, and still Kildare did not heed. He was gazing out at the sunny quadrangle, at the old trees, bright in their spring green, but hardly seeing them. His thoughts were far away.

After the second knock his study door opened. A voice, which might have been recognised as that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, was heard:

Next Wednesday:  
**"A SON OF SCOTLAND!" AND "THE CITY OF FLAME!"**



"It's all wight, deah boys! He's gone out." D'Arcy of the Fourth trotted into the study. After him came Blake and Herries and Digby, also of the Fourth. Then came Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell.

Then Kildare turned round. He was in the alcove of the window, and the juniors did not perceive him for the moment. The silence had convinced them that the study was unoccupied. Seven grinning juniors met Kildare's surprised gaze. All of them were carrying bundles under their arms. Some of them appeared to be in a great state of merriment and high good humour.

"Must have gone out without our seeing him," said Tom Merry. "I've been keeping my eyes open too."

"Yaas, but he's gone," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; "and he can't be back till four o'clock, at the very earliest. Plenty of time, deah boys!"

"He will be surprised when he comes in!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare's grim brow grew grimmer. He stepped out of the window recess, and there was a general startled gasp from Tom Merry & Co. as they beheld him.

"Well?" said Kildare. "What do you want?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Kildare, by gum!"

The seven juniors stared at Kildare: Kildare stared at them. The captain of St. Jim's was frowning more darkly now. He could only conclude that a "rag" had been planned in his study during his absence—only the ragers had arrived while he was still there!

"So you thought I was gone out!" said Kildare.

"Ye-es," stammered Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, you'll be late, Kildare," said D'Arcy.

"The twain gets in at half-past three, you know, and it's a long walk to Wylcombe. Your cousin will be waiting for you at the station."

"What do you know about my cousin?"

"Ahem!"

"We—we heard that you were going to meet your cousin, who's coming to see you, Kildare," murmured Blake, "and—and we—we thought you were gone."

"Yaas, what knocked, you know."

"And what were you going to do in my study while I was gone?" asked Kildare.

"Ahem!"

The juniors looked at one another. Some of them made strategic movements towards the door. Kildare's presence in the study had evidently spoiled the whole scheme, whatever it was.

"Well, I'm waiting for an answer," said Kildare, taking up a cane from the table.

Again the juniors exchanged uncomfortable looks, and they looked still more uncomfortably at the cane.

"I twast you are not watty, Kildare," ventured Arthur Augustus, at last.

"What have you invaded my study for?"

"Ahem!"

"What were you going to do?"

"Ahem!"

"Very well, hold out your hand!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"You first, Tom Merry! You are head of the Shell, and you ought to know better than to play tricks in your head prefect's study," said Kildare sternly.

"It—it wasn't exactly a trick, you know," stammered Tom.

"What was it, then?"

"We were only goin' to surprisise you, Kildare."

"In what way?"

"Ahem!"

"What have you got in those bundles?"

"Ahem!"

"What was the little game, anyway?"

"Ahem!"

"You don't seem to have anything to say for yourselves, you cheezy young rascals," said Kildare. "I give you one more chance. What does this mean?"

"Ahem!"

Kildare made an angry gesture. "Hold out your hand, Merry! Don't waste my time, I've got to get off. Now then!"

Swish!

"Now you, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

Swish!

"Oh, wow! Bai Jove! I am sowwy I come heah now, bai Jove!"

"My object is to make you sorry," said Kildare. "You next, Blake!"

Swish!

There were seven swishes in all. Seven juniors tucked their hands under their arms and mumbled. Kildare pointed to the door with his cane.

"Get out!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Get out!" roared Kildare.

"I protest—legged, Blake, welease my arm at once, you duffah—I must remark, Kildare, that I regard this as—yawoooh!—Blake, you uttah wottah—"

Arthur Augustus disappeared from the study, propelled by Blake and Tom Merry. The door closed on the juniors.

Kildare, frowning, threw his cane on the table. He looked at his watch; it was already a quarter past three! He uttered an exclamation.

"I shall be late, by Jove!"

The captain of St. Jim's picked up his cap and hurried from the study. In the passage seven juniors were squeezing their right hands dolefully. Kildare gave them a frown in passing.

"If there are any tricks in my study while I am gone, I shall know which young rascals to call to account," he said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, when you know I am expecting a visitor."

"Weally, Kildare—"

The big Sixth-Former strode on, and disappeared into the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. rubbed their hands and looked at one another.

"I am changin' my opinion of Kildare," groaned Arthur Augustus. "I have always regarded him as a weally good sort. Now I cannot help wegardin' him as a beast. Wow!"

"We are going to give him a surprisise!" mumbled Lowther. "We've got the surprisise. Yow!"

"What was he so dooced quiet about?" growled Tom Merry. "We knocked twice. I suppose he isn't deaf all of a sudden?"

"He looked worried," remarked Blake. "Regular wrinkle in his noble brow. Perhaps his cousin is going to borrow money of him, or something."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "He certainly looked worried, and he doesn't seem so good-tempered as usual. Fancy suspecting us of ragging his study!"

"Nice boys like us!" groaned Lowther.

"Well, we might rag Knox a study, or Cutts's, but not Kildare's. He really ought to know us better!" said Tom Merry, more in sorrow than in anger. "But we forgive him. The pain's wearing off, and I forgive him."

"That's all vewy well, Tom Mewwy, but I considah—"

And we're going to give him that surprisise all the same."

"Bai Jove!"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "We'll heap coals of fire on his head; but we'll make jolly sure the beast is off the scene first!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And when they had ascertained that the beast was, indeed, well off the scene, Tom Merry & Co. returned to their captain's study to carry out their mysterious purpose, whatever it is.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Coals of Fire.

"LIGHT the fire!"

"You fill the kettle, Gussy!"

"And get those bundles unpacked!"

"And clear the table!"





Kildare controlled his rage, and he flung the fat man back into the arm-chair, and stood over him, his hands clenched, and his eyes glittering. Mr. Spooner sprawled back limply in the chair, gasping for breath. "If you were a younger man, I'd give you the hiding of your life!" said Kildare, his voice trembling with anger. "How dare you make such a proposition to me, you infamous scoundrel?" (See Chapter 8.)

Tom Merry & Co. were quickly busy in Kildare's study. Seven active pairs of hands made light work.

Blake knelt before the grate, and began to build a fire. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scuttled off with the kettle, taking great care to keep it clear of his elegant clobber. Lowther and Manners and Herries began to unpack the parcels, and turn out all sorts of appetising-looking tuck. Digby found a duster, and began to dust the study. Tom Merry proceeded to clear the table of the books and papers and other impedimenta that encumbered it.

It was not a "rag."

But Kildare might be forgiven for not guessing what was the real intention of the juniors; they had diffidently declined to explain when he questioned them.

Kildare was just then an object of especial interest to the juniors of the School House at St. Jim's. The big, handsome captain of the school was always popular in both Houses, but in his own House he was quite an idol. Even juniors, whom a stern sense of duty compelled him to "lick," remained devoted to him.

Tom Merry & Co., indeed, had already forgiven him the licking which he had administered to them under so unfortunate a misapprehension.

Kildare was captain of the school and captain of the

first eleven. The juniors, though naturally more interested in their own matches, kindly condescended to take a deep interest in Kildare's exploits on the cricket-field. The great Lankester match was due on the following Wednesday, and that was a very great occasion. Kildare had been working very hard to get his eleven into top form to meet the Lankester team, and Tom Merry wondered whether that heavy responsibility was the cause of his worried looks. He had nothing to worry about, so far as that was concerned, for the St. Jim's first was at the very top of its form, and though Lankester were a big and famous team, St. Jim's looked forward confidently to the match.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. of the New House had agreed to put off their own game for that special afternoon, when the Lankester match came off, to cheer the first eleven on in the fray, than which there could be no greater honour done to the first eleven.

But it was not on account of Kildare's fame as a cricketer, nor in recognition of his efforts to bring the first eleven up to an unexampled pitch of form, nor even on account of his personal popularity that Tom Merry & Co. were busying themselves in his study now.

Kildare's cousin was toying.

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**NEXT WEEK—2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND IN OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL MATCH!**



The juniors had never seen his cousin, and hardly heard of his existence. But it was a great occasion. For Micky Kildare was joining Kitchener's Army; it was, indeed, possible that he would arrive in khaki. He was coming to see his cousin, the captain of St. Jim's, before he left to join his regiment. Hence the greatness of the occasion. Second-Lieutenant Micky Kildare was to see that the fags of the School House knew how to appreciate patriotism. He would "feed" with Kildare in the study, of course, and, all unknown to Kildare, Tom Merry & Co. had laid a deep scheme to have a stunning feed all ready when they came in.

That was the little game.

As Kildare was to meet his cousin at the station at half-past three—somebody had heard him tell Darrel so—the juniors had supposed that the study would be empty after three o'clock. Unfortunately, Kildare had been still there, and had not heard their preliminary knock, being buried in a deep and gloomy reverie, and, caught in the act as they were, the juniors had not cared to explain their intention. But, as Blake put it, it would be heaping coals of fire on old Kildare's head to carry out the programme all the same.

So they proceeded to carry it out. They calculated that Kildare would get back with his cousin about four o'clock, and instead of finding a scrappy tea ready prepared by his fag, the captain of St. Jim's would find a first-class feed, stood by his loyal followers at their own expense. It was really a great scheme.

Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form looked in while the juniors were busily engaged. Wally whistled in surprise.

"What are you kids doing here?" he demanded.

Tom Merry pointed to the door.

"Outside!" he said briefly.

"What cheek!" said D'Arcy minor indignantly. "I'm Kildare's fag!"

"We're fagging for him this afternoon."

"But I'm going to get his tea."

"We're getting his tea."

"Look here!" roared Wally. "You're not going to fag for Kildare!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" snapped Wally. "Look here, you cheeky bouncers, you can clear off! I'm not having this!"

"Outside!"

"Rats!"

"Chuck him out!" said Tom.

"Hands off!" yelled Wally. "Why, you cheeky rotters—Yah! Leggo! I'll pulverise you! Yarooooh!"

Wally bumped in the passage, and Blake grinned and closed the door on him. Wally's wrathful voice was heard outside for some minutes before he departed.

Tom Merry & Co. went on with their self-imposed task.

Blake soon had the fire going, and the kettle was jammed on it. Lowther unearthed a frying-pan, and proceeded to clean it. Kildare's fag had left it in a somewhat "mucky" condition after the last using.

Tom was clearing the table, taking up books and papers and letters with great care, and arranging them on the desk. Everything was to be found in apple-pie order when old Kildare returned.

Suddenly Tom gave a start.

An open letter lay among the papers he was removing, and as it was upturned to his gaze, and written in a large, sprawling hand, he had read a couple of lines before he knew that it was under his nose.

"I'm in an awful fix, old man, but I'll tell you about it when I see you. It's money, of course."

Tom Merry hastily turned the letter over.

He had not, of course, had the slightest intention of looking at it; his glance had fallen on it by sheer accident as he was gathering up the papers, and the words in the big schoolboy hand were so prominent that they had fairly hit him. But he could have kicked himself for that accident.

He put the letter with the other papers on the desk, and covered it with a book; his cheeks flushed as if he

had been guilty of an underhand action, though he knew that he could not blame himself.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, looking at him.

"I've just seen part of a letter by accident," said Tom Merry, his flush deepening. "Of course, I didn't mean—I don't know—but it's beastly. Kildare oughtn't to leave private letters lying open on his table."

"Well, it can't matter much," said Lowther. "Kildare hasn't any blessed guilty secrets, I suppose? Wasn't a love-letter, was it?"

"No, ass!"

Tom Merry proceeded to lay the cloth. But his face was red, and his brows were knitted. Quite unintentionally, he had become aware of something that he knew Kildare must wish to keep strictly to himself. The words he had so unfortunately seen on the first page of that letter seemed to dance before his eyes.

He could guess that the letter was from Kildare's cousin. And now he could guess the cause of the trouble he had observed in Kildare's face, of that deep and worried thought which had made the captain of St. Jim's stay so late in his study, when he ought to have been on his way to meet Micky's train. That letter had evidently upset Kildare, to the extent that he had forgotten the train he was to meet, and then, in hurrying away, he had forgotten the letter itself, and left it lying upon his table, where it must have been seen by anyone who entered the study by chance. If Wally had carried out his usual fag duties in the study, Wally must have seen it.

It was not the Lanchester match, evidently, that old Kildare was frowning and worrying about. It was the scrape that Micky had got into.

Tom Merry could not help feeling troubled, both because of his concern for old Kildare, and because of the unfortunate way he had become possessed of that unwelcome information.

But it was useless to worry about it, and he tried to dismiss the matter from his mind as he went on with the preparations.

The table was laid, and the good things provided by the funds of the juniors were set out in enticing array. At ten minutes to four Blake began the cooking, and Dig began to make toast. Arthur Augustus was posted at the window, to watch for the captain of St. Jim's.

"I hope he won't be late," growled Blake when four o'clock rang out from the old clock-tower. "These rascals won't improve by waiting. I won't start on the eggs till he's in sight."

"Sister Gus—Sister Gus, do you see anybody coming?" murmured Lowther.

"He is not comin' yet, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus turned his celebrated monocle in the direction of the gates. "Bal Jove, yaas! Buck up with the eggs!"

"Make the tea, Dig."

"Butter the toast!"

"Buck up!"

And in a moment more the study was simply buzzing and humming with activity.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Micky's Scrape.

KILDARE'S brow was knitted as he strode down the leafy lane towards Rylcombe. He went down the lane with his quick, springy stride. He had no time to lose. In that gloomy reverie into which his cousin's letter had plunged him he had forgotten the passage of time. He was half-way to Rylcombe when it occurred to him that he had also forgotten Micky's letter. He had thrown it on to the study table after reading it, and left it there in his hasty departure.

He halted in the lane for a moment with an exclamation. But it was too late to return; his cousin's train was already in, and he did not want to leave Micky Kildare hanging about the station waiting for him.

"Those young rascals won't go into my study again. I imagine," muttered Kildare; "the letter's safe enough. Anyway, I can't go back."

He strode on rapidly to the village. He reached the



station. The local train had come in and gone out again, and he looked round the station in vain for his cousin.

Old Trumble, the porter, touched his hat to the captain of St. Jim's.

"I've got a message for you, Master Kildare."

"Oh, good!" said Kildare, relieved. "My cousin has come?"

"Both gentlemen have gone into the Rylcombe Arms to wait for you, sir," said Trumble. "You'll find 'em in the billiard-room, Master Kildare."

"Both?" said Kildare.

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Trumble!"

Kildare walked out of the station. The Rylcombe Arms was close at hand, and he crossed the road towards the inn. He wondered who his cousin's companion was. He had understood that Micky was coming down to St. Jim's alone.

There was a clink of balls from the billiard-room as Kildare came down the passage to the open door. The captain of St. Jim's paused and looked in.

A slim, handsome young fellow of about twenty, very like Kildare, was playing. Very like Kildare in features, but his face lacked the firmness and decision that might have been seen in Kildare's. A good-natured, easy-going, careless lad he looked, full of high spirits and good humour, and very handsome in his khaki.

A fat man in shirtsleeves stood beside the table watching the shot, resting a cue on his boot. He was evidently Micky Kildare's companion, for there was no one else in the billiard-room, with the exception of the marker.

Kildare looked at the fat gentleman, and his face set a little. The man was dressed loudly, and wore an enormous gold watchchain and a gleaming diamond in his tie. His fat face was very red, his hair, parted in the middle, reeked with pomade, and his manner was pronounced.

Clink!

The ball rolled and touched the red, and whizzed into a corner pocket.

"Brayvo!" said the fat gentleman. "You'll run me out, Micky."

"I'm getting my hand in, Spooner," said the young man, chalking his cue. "Hallo! Is that you, Eric?"

He caught sight of Kildare in the doorway.

Kildare came into the billiard-room.

Micky shook hands with him, and presented his companion. Mr. Spooner extended a fat hand to Kildare, which the captain of St. Jim's could not refuse to take, little as he liked shaking hands with a man like Mr. Spooner. Billiard sharp and sporting man was written all over Mr. Spooner.

"You weren't at the station, Eric," said Lieutenant Kildare. "Spooner proposed a hundred up to fill up time. Do you mind if we finish?"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Kildare.

He stood looking on. He was not surprised to see Micky Kildare run up to ninety-five, leaving Mr. Spooner at sixty, and then to see Mr. Spooner run out on a single break. Micky Kildare paid over a sovereign; the game was evidently for "quids."

A slightly bitter look came over Kildare's face for a moment. His cousin was in debt—in an "awful fix," as he described it—but he could afford to play billiards for sovereigns!

"Well, now we'll come along," remarked Micky. "You've got to get to Lancheater, Spooner."

"Yes; I can get a train here," said Mr. Spooner. "By the way, I think you mentioned that your cousin, Mr. Kildare here, is captain of the team playing Lancheater on Wednesday."

"That is so," said Kildare.

"A big team, Lancheater, for your school eleven," Mr. Spooner remarked, with a very curious look at Kildare.

"We hope to keep our end up," said Kildare shortly.

Mr. Spooner smiled.

"I'm interested in cricket," he remarked.

"Really?" said Kildare.

He was surprised to hear that a man of Mr. Spooner's description was interested in anything so clean and decent as cricket.

"Professionally," explained Mr. Spooner.

"Oh!"

"The war has knocked county cricket pretty well on the head," added Mr. Spooner. "The war is mucking up everything—racing and the rest. But when there ain't big matches, smaller matches will serve a man's turn—what? Suppose I was to ask you, as a friend, Master Kildare, whether you think you can beat Lancheater?"

Micky Kildare was looking very uneasy. He knew well enough that Kildare did not approve of Mr. Spooner, and he was anxious for the interview to be over. But Mr. Spooner was in search of information. To Micky's relief, the captain of St. Jim's replied civilly.

"We hope to beat Lancheater," he said.

"If you'd like to put something on it——" began Mr. Spooner.

"Thank you; I don't bet!"

"No? Matter of taste, I suppose," said Mr. Spooner.

Kildare might have remarked that it was a matter of principle, but politeness forbade, especially as his cousin had just been betting with Mr. Spooner.

"You really think you can beat them?" pursued the bookmaker thoughtfully. "Well, well, if you do, it will be bad for somebody—very bad."

"Do you mean there are bets on the game?" asked Kildare.

"Yes, rather—'eaps."

"Then I shall be glad to hear that the money has been lost," said Kildare deliberately; "anyone who would bet on cricket matches ought to lose his money."

"By George!"

"That kind of thing ought to be put a stop to, unless cricket is to be degraded to the same level as racing."

Mr. Spooner laughed.

"Come on, Eric!" said Micky uneasily. "It's time we got along, and you'd better look after your train, Spooner."

"That's all right," said Mr. Spooner. "Have you heard from Lancheater lately, Master Kildare? I've heard that five of their best men have suddenly cleared off, to go into the Army."

"That's true," said Kildare.

"Then you'll have an easier thing than you expected in the match."

"They've got good men to replace them, I think."

"But it makes it mighty uncertain for fellows who have put their little 'bit on Lancheater," said Mr. Spooner discontentedly. "I really think them fellers might have put off enlisting till after the match, and let a fellow have a run for his money."

Kildare burst into a laugh.

"Perhaps the Germans would be willing to wait while English bookmakers have a run for their money?" he suggested.

"Well, it's 'ard," said Mr. Spooner—"I call it 'ard. Why can't they 'ave conscription, and rope in the work-in-men by the thousand? Then racing and county cricket and such could go on uninterrupted. I don't see why a bookmaker should lose a hundred quid in these 'ard times because of the war. What's wanted in this country is conscription, and no interference with racing."

And, having delivered that valuable opinion, Mr. Spooner put on his coat and took his leave.

Kildare's brow was grim as he left the Rylcombe Arms with his cousin.

"Surely that blackguard isn't a friend of yours, Micky?" he exclaimed, as they took the road to St. Jim's. Micky coloured.

"No, of course not; only an acquaintance," he said.

"He happened to be coming down to Lancheater, so we travelled together. I fancy he will be hard hit over the Lancheater match if your school pulls it off. There's a lot of betting on it, you know, and some knowing dogs seem to have done Spooner brown. Is your team in great form?"

"First-rate."

"Well, I suppose the other party wormed that out, and also got information that some of the Lancheater men were going away before the match," remarked Micky.

"They've led Spooner on to giving them odds. He was willing to back Lancheater at four to one, looking on it as a dead cert; but this new development seems likely



to put him in the cart. If you win, he will be in a hole. I doubt if he could pay up."

"Serve him right," said Kildare. "What right has he to bring his disgraceful racing customs into cricket?"

"You were always a solemn old fogey," said Micky, laughing.

"Look here, Micky; I'm years younger than you are, and it isn't my place to give you advice, but the less you have to do with fellows of that kind the better," said Kildare abruptly. "You can't afford to lose money, for one thing. Your pater can't help you if you get into debt."

"No, worse luck!"

"Then give that chap the go-by."

"I can't."

"Why not, Micky?"

"Because he's the chap I owe money to," said Micky.

Kildare compressed his lips.

"How much?" he asked quietly.

"Fifty pounds."

Kildare's eyes opened wide.

"Fifty pounds!" he exclaimed. "Micky, you can't pay it!"

"I know I can't."

"Have you told your pater?"

"What would he be the good? Where's a poor country parson to get fifty pounds from to give me?"

"But—but what are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

Kildare halted in the lane and looked blankly at his cousin.

"I was going to ask your advice about it," said Micky.

"Spoooner is a good-natured sort of chap. I lost the money to him fair and square, and it's a debt of honour. No good telling me I was a fool to bet—I know being that. But I was certain, and I wanted money, and— and— Oh, what's the good of talking? I've played the giddy goat, and I've got to pay for it. I've got my commission now, and if I get out of this beastly fix I shall be off to the front soon. But I'm under Spoooner's thumb. Unless he gives me time to pay he can ruin me."

"Micky!"

"He's got my written promise to pay," said Micky moodily. "I gave him that. But every red cent I could raise has gone for my equipment. It was a bit of a twist anyway. I was a duffer to bet. I know that. A blackguard, too, if you like. Pile it on!"

"I don't want to pile it on, old chap," said Kildare miserably. "You know what I think about such things, and you know in advance all I could say. But what are you going to do?"

"I think Spoooner will give me time. He seems good-natured—so long as I treat him as a friend," said Micky, with a grimace. "I can't grumble at that, I suppose—a man I'm asking favours of. Of course, he couldn't sue me for a gambling debt. That isn't the question. If he could sue me, it wouldn't be so bad. But a debt of honour has to be paid, or it's disgrace worse than ruin. I couldn't stay in the Army if Spoooner cut up rusty and showed me up—unless I chucked my commission, and changed my name and went in as a private. I could do that."

"There must be some way out of it," said Kildare.

"That's what I want to talk to you about. You've got an awfully long head, kid as you are," said Micky.

"But—if I can't find a way out—it all depends on Spoooner being good-natured. He would have paid up if he had lost. I ought to pay up, and I must pay up. It was a sure thing, too, and I can't understand now how it was that Hook Eye didn't pull it off. He's a good horse—"

"Oh, don't give me any of that, for goodness' sake!" said Kildare.

They walked on in silence to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

Kildare Gets the Surprise.

"D'WAY buck up, deah boys!"

"It's all right now!"

"I can see them comin' in at the gate, you know—Kildare and another chap just like him. Looks wathah a nice kid," said Arthur Augustus. "He is in khaki. It must be the chap."

The juniors all looked out of the study window to see Kildare's cousin. There was no doubt that the young fellow who was crossing the quadrangle with Kildare was the expected Micky—a slim, handsome, upstanding young fellow. They passed in the quad to speak to Mr. Carrington.

"Well, we're all ready," said Tom Merry. "Everything done to a turn. Mountains of toast, eggs and rashers, tongue, ham, cold beef, pickles, two kinds of jam, two kinds of cake, biscuits, cheese!"

"Bwavo!"

"We'll just say a few words to Kildare when he trots in," said Blake, "and then we'll leave him to his conscience."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; it'll show him we don't bear malice," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "We wouldn't have it up against Kildare for a licking, especially when he's worried about—" Tom Merry paused abruptly. That unfortunate sentence in the letter he had seen was in his mind.

"About what?" said Dig.

Tom Merry was saved the trouble of answering. The door of the study was flung suddenly open, and Wally reappeared.

D'Arcy minor was evidently on the war-path. He was Kildare's fag, and he keenly resented that high honour being taken out of his hands.

The Fourth-formers and Shell fellows had taken his place in a really high-handed manner, and had ejected him "on his neck." Naturally Wally was wrathful. He had been gathering his forces. Jameson and Curly Gibson and Frayne and Hobbs and half a dozen other heroes of the Third followed him into the study.

What the fags lacked in size they made up in numbers. And they showed at once that they meant business.

"Outside, you cads!" rapped out Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I'm Kildare's fag! Like your cheek to come here! Outside this minute, or we'll chuck you out!" roared D'Arcy minor.

"You young ass—" began Tom Merry.

"Kick 'em out!" shouted Jameson.

"Pile in, Third!"

"Shut up!" yelled Tom Merry, as the fags rushed to the attack. "Kildare's coming—oh, my hat! You—you—ah! Oh!"

There was no time to explain. Perhaps even the warlike Wally would have deferred his attack if he had been aware that even at that moment Kildare and the distinguished visitor were striding towards the School House. But he wasn't aware of it, and he was on the war-path. There were a dozen fags, and they all piled in at once to eject the interlopers from the study.

"Bat! Jove! Stop it, you young wascals! Kildare will—"

"He'll come in and see—"

"Will you chuck it?"

"I tell you—"

"Give 'em socks!" yelled Wally.

"Hurray!"

Crash! The well-laid table, loaded with so many good things, went over as the struggling juniors bumped into it. There was a terrific crash of crockery-ware and jam-pots. Wally and Jameson had Tom Merry round the neck, and the three of them rolled into the fender together, and the results to the mountain of toast piled in a dish before the fire were ruinous.

"Out with 'em!"

"You young idiots!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Pile in!"

"Yaroooh!"

Crash! crash! bump!

ANSWERS

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"I'm getting my hand in, Spooner," said the young man, chalking his cue. "Hullo! Is that you, Eric?" He caught sight of Kildare in the doorway. Kildare came into the billiard-room. (See Chapter 3.)

The fight raged in a wild and whirling style. Excited juniors rolled among the wreck of the tea-things, among spilt milk and butter and jam. Chairs were overturned, the carpet rucked up, the fender kicked out of place, and the clock descended from the mantelpiece with a smash.

The study looked like a pandemonium when Kildare and his visitor arrived at the open doorway.

The captain of St. Jim's gazed into his study in amazement.

"What the dooce—" began Second-Lieutenant Micky Kildare in wonder.

"Oh, my hat!"

Crash! crash! bump! Yell!

Tom Merry & Co. had planned to have a surprise all ready for the captain of St. Jim's when he came in. They had succeeded—in a sense. Certainly Kildare was surprised. He was astounded. It was the first time that the captain's study had been a battle-ground for juniors and fags.

Kildare stood transfixed for some moments.

Then he strode furiously into the study.

"You young sweeps!" he shouted.

"Kildare, bai Jove!"

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The combat ceased as if by magic at the sound of

Kildare's voice. The combatants drew apart, and scrambled up—dusty, dishevelled, jammy, sticky, buttery. They blinked at Eric Kildare.

"You—you young scoundrels!" gasped Kildare. "How dare you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared his cousin. "Faith, and it's a surprise-party for ye, Eric. Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare, his face set with anger, glared round for a cane. There was a general strategic movement to the door.

"I—I say, Kildare," panted Wally, "it's all right. We—we came here to fag for you, you know, and these cheeky ends—"

"We came heah to fag for you, Kildare, and these impertinent young wascals—"

"Get out!" shouted Kildare. "I'll deal with you later, the lot of you! Clear off at once!"

"But weally, Kildare—"

Blake dragged Arthur Augustus away. The juniors did not need telling twice to clear off. It was not a propitious moment for explaining to Kildare what their really excellent intentions had been.

Kildare looked round his wrecked and dismantled study. Micky stood in the doorway and chuckled. In spite of the troubles he had brought upon himself, Micky seemed a very cheerful young gentleman, and he seemed

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**NEXT WEEK—2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND IN OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL MATCH!**



to see something funny in that surprising welcome to St. Jim's.

"Upon my word, it's too bad!" said Kildare.

"Sure, they're a lively set of beggars ye've got here," said Micky. "What was the row about entirely?"

"I haven't the faintest idea—or why they should choose my study for a battle-ground. Looks as if they've been having a feed here, to judge by the amount of muck on the carpet," said Kildare, angry and mystified. "We can't have tea here. I'll ask Darrel to lend us his study."

Darrel of the Sixth cheerfully lent his study, and Kildare called his fag to get tea. Wally came with a somewhat flustered face.

"I say, Kildare—" he began.

"Don't jaw!" growled Kildare. "Get the tea, and don't talk!"

"But I want to explain," said Wally indignantly. "Your cousin will think we were just scrapping in your study—"

"Faith, and what were you doing?" grinned Lieutenant Kildare.

"Turning those cheeky bounders out!" exclaimed Wally. "I'm Kildare's fag; and those fellows had the cheek to come there to get his tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we started turning them out, of course," said Wally. "I'm afraid there have been some things broken."

"Looked like a few," chuckled Lieutenant Kildare. "Eric, this is the price of popularity. I should let the young beggars off."

Kildare burst into a laugh, in spite of himself.

His study was a wreck; but he understood now that it was because he was a person whom the juniors delighted to honour. Popularity had its drawbacks.

Wally's indignant explanations were cut short, however, and when tea was ready he cleared off, and Kildare and his cousin were left alone. Then the cheery smile faded from Micky's face.

He was there to discuss his situation with his cousin, to see if, by putting their heads together, they could find any way out of the difficulty.

"Something's got to be done," said Kildare. "You can't remain at the mercy of that man. You can't go on knowing that man Spooner, Micky."

"Something—but what?" said Micky.

Kildare wrinkled his brows.

"The only thing is to pay him the money. But your father can't help you."

"He couldn't, if I asked him; and I can't ask him," said the young man moodily. "And I'm not asking you, Eric; I know you've got nothing like such a sum." But Micky's glance lingered for a moment inquiringly on his cousin's face.

Kildare shook his head.

"I might raise three or four," he said.

"By gad!"

Kildare sat with a grim brow. Though he was younger than his cousin by several years, he had the older head of the two. Micky had always been careless and happy-go-lucky, always getting into scrapes, always falling under the influence of worse fellows than himself, and suffering the consequences. This time he appeared to be fairly "lauded."

"But—but if you can't pay the man, Micky—"

"He will wait," said Micky. "He was rather sharp about it till, somehow or other, he toned down when he found that you were my cousin. I don't see why he should, but perhaps it's because he hopes to pick up a pot over the Lanchester match."

"He won't," said Kildare. "We shall beat Lanchester."

"You think so?"

"Yes. As a rule, they're a bigger team, but most of their best men are away at the war now, and they're rather scratch at present. We're at the top of our form. I have hardly a doubt about the game."

"That will make him ratty. The war's hit him hard, like most of the bookies, and he stands to lose over a hundred."

"Serve the brute right for betting on the game!" said Kildare bitterly. "I don't see why it should make him harder on you, Micky. The fact is, he must give you time, as you can't settle. It wouldn't benefit him to ruin you. He will have to give you time, and we shall have to think of some way out of it."

Micky Kildare nodded gloomily. Somehow, almost without thinking about it, he had had faith in his cousin to help him out of the scrape his wilful recklessness had led him into. His cousin was only a schoolboy, but his was the stronger nature of the two, and the weaker nature had instinctively relied upon him.

And he had failed. There was nothing he could do. The handsome face of the young lieutenant was very gloomy now.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Something Like!

"WHAT a wotten muck-up!"

"Oh, rotten!"

"Ghastly sell!"

Tom Merry & Co. had adjourned to tea in Study No. 6. The ghastly failure of the pleasant surprise they had intended for Kildare worried them. They gathered round the hospitable board in Study No. 6 with glum faces.

"And there'll be a row when that chap's gone," remarked Blake.

"Oh, nevah mind the wow! It's the feahful disappointment."

"All the fault of your beastly minor," growled Manners.

"Well, Wally was weally only standin' up for his wights, as Kildare's fag," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It would weally have been bettah to consult Wally about the mattah in the first place."

"Consult a fag in the Third!" snorted Herries.

"Oh, wats!"

There was a tap at the door, and Toby, the page, put his head in. He had a letter in his hand.

"Master Merry 'ere?"

"Here you are," said Tom.

"Letter for you, sir."

Tom Merry took the letter carelessly, and Toby vanished. The letter was stamped with American stamps, and bore the U.S. postmark. Tom Merry threw it on the table.

"You may open your lettah, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't mind us."

"It's from my uncle in the States, I suppose," said Tom.

"Bai Jove! A whackin' tip, vewy likely."

Tom shook his head.

"No."

"Then you needn't trouble to open it," said Monty Lowther. "What does the man mean by writing to you from America unless to send a tip? What the dooce are uncles coming to in these days? In my young days," said Lowther solemnly, "uncles were better brought up than this."

Tom Merry slit the envelope and opened it. A letter came out, and with it a cheque. There was a howl from the juniors as they caught sight of the cheque and the amount written upon it.

"Fifty pounds!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"And you said there wasn't a tip!"

"I withdraw my statement about your uncle, Tommy!" said Lowther. "Mr. Poinsett is living up to the very best avuncular traditions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't for me, fathead," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Do you think my uncle would send me fifty pounds?"

"Well, he's rolling in money, isn't he?" said Lowther.

"And I dare say he knows you've got a lot of pals to help you spend it. I would do my little bit with pleasure. I'd never fail a personal friend at such a time. The claims of friendship before everything."

"Hear, hear," said Manners. "You're making 'a mistake, Tommy. That cheque is for you, all right. I



haven't the slightest doubt about it. Your uncle knows that the price of tuck has gone up owing to the war, and he's handing the money out like a man and a brother. Long live Tommy's uncle!"

"Rats!" said Tom. "I wrote to him for some money, but I never expected him to whack it out like this. I thought it might be ten or twenty quids, perhaps. He's a jolly decent old boy to send fifty. But not a bob of it is for me."

"Then—what—how—which——" said Lowther.  
"You see," said Tom Merry, colouring a little, "my uncle's a millionaire, and when he was in England he told me that if I ever wanted money, over my allowance, I was to ask him for it. Of course I've never asked him. But now I wanted to stand something towards the war funds, you know, and—so I thought I could write to him and ask for something for that. So I wrote, and put it plainly, you know, and told him I'd like to make a contribution to the war funds, and that if he cared to send me a tenner for that purpose I'd be awfully grateful."

"Oh!"  
"And he's sent fifty," said Tom, his eyes glistening. "It's ripping!"

"Read the letter," said Lowther solemnly. "Perhaps there's a whack in it for you, my son; and money is tight in these days—very tight."

Tom Merry read the letter, and then read it again aloud to his chums.

"My dear Nephew,—I was very glad to receive your letter and your request. I enclose a cheque for £50, which I wish you to use, according to your own judgment, in aid of the brave men who are giving their lives for our country. You may write to me afterwards, and tell me how you have used the money, if you like. You have never yet asked me for anything for yourself. Why not?"  
"Your affectionate uncle,  
"J. POINSETT."

"Bai Jove! I regard your uncle as a weal wippah, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall write to my patah, and suggest that he does the vewy same thing."

"It's topping!" said Tom Merry. "But I want you fellows to keep this dark. Not a word about it outside this study."

"Certainly, deah boy—but why?"  
Tom coloured again.

"Well, it would look like swank," he said.  
"Yaas, pewwaps so. Not a single whispah, if you like," agreed Arthur Augustus. "You can get Cawwing-ton to cash the cheque—"

"No; I'll take it to the bank in Wayland," said Tom Merry. "It's drawn on a London bank, so it will take them only a few days to get the money. And you chaps can help me decide how it is to go."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! I'll make up a list of things for you to send to the fellahs at the fwoot, if you like," said D'Arcy. "I've been sendin' things, and I know all about it. And you might stand them an ambulance cah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Weally, you fellahs—"

"Ambulance cars cost four hundred quid, fathead, not fifty," said Tom Merry. "But I've got an idea. There are lots of chaps who would join the Army, you know, only they are afraid of leaving their dependents unprovided for. Suppose we found a chap who wanted to go, but couldn't, because he had a sister or a cousin, or an aunt, that he had to keep—well, fifty quid would go a long way, you know, at say, ten bob a week to eke out the Government allowance—and that would mean another good man for Kitchener, and another nail in the Kaiser's coffin."

"Bai Jove! that is a thumpin' good wheeze."

"Blessed if I know where Tommy gets these ripping ideas from," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Let's go out at once and look for that chap. You bring your telescope, Manners."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
But Tom Merry's idea was fully approved by the conclave of Study No. 6, and it was resolved that it

should be acted upon: And it was quite agreed that Mr. Poinsett's generous cheque could not be better spent than in providing another good man and true for Kitchener's Army.

#### CHAPTER 6.— A Friendly Call.

TOM MERRY & CO. gathered on Big Side the next day to watch the first eleven at practice.

Tom Merry was feeling very cheerful that afternoon. He had cycled over to Wayland and paid in the cheque in the local branch of the London bank it was drawn upon. In a few days he would have fifty pounds in banknotes in his possession. Already the chums of the School House were taking steps to find a recruit. It gave the juniors a very comfortable feeling that they were doing something really useful for their country at a time when it was the duty of every Briton, man and boy, to work his hardest for the common cause.

But just now the matter was dismissed, as their interest was very keen in first eleven cricket.

The Lanchester match was a big affair for St. Jim's—even for the first eleven. The Lanchesters were a tremendous team, who played such elevens as M.C.C. and I. Zingari, and so it was really a cheek for a school senior eleven to take them on at all. The St. Jim's first always gave them a hard tussle when they met them, but it had to be admitted that they had never beaten them yet.

But on this occasion matters were quite different. The ranks of the Lanchester club had been thinned by the call to arms. The best players had gone—they were fighting in the stricken fields of Flanders, driving back the flood of savage invasion. Those who remained, indeed, were mostly in training, but there were enough left to keep the eleven together so far. The Lanchesters had declared that they would play the match as usual, and St. Jim's, of course, were glad to meet them. For once the big team were not in overwhelming superiority, and the schoolboys had the chance of their lives. Indeed, it had lately come to light that their chance was more than even, for there had been a sudden call on the Lanchester men, and several players who had expected to be at home for the match had had to go. It left the eleven a "scratch lot." Under those circumstances, Kildare had chivalrously written offering to scratch the match, as he was not keen to snatch a victory. But Brown, the Lanchester skipper, had told him that they wanted the match all the same. It was up to Kildare to win after that. If St. Jim's could not beat Lanchester in its present depleted state, it was an absurdity to keep on the fixture at all.

But Kildare felt certain of winning, and he was not given to overrating chances. But he kept his men well up to the mark, determined that nothing should be left to chance.

The first eleven were, indeed, at the top of their form, as the juniors gleefully remarked as they watched them at practice.

"Kildare is topping to-day," remarked Talbot of the Shell, who was a good judge. "But he seems rather down in the mouth, doesn't he? Nothing wrong with the team, surely?"

"Bai Jove! they look all right," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Did you see Monteith make that catch? I could not have made that catch bettah myself."

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"I am speakin' quite sensibly, Lowthah. It was a wippin' catch, though Monteith is only a New House boundah."

"Best bowler and field at St. Jim's, and chance it," said Figgins of the New House, with a snort. "Nothing in the School House to equal Monteith in the field. I give in that Kildare's the best bat."

"Jolly well say so," said Blake. "And Darrel's as good a catch as your blessed prefect."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Figgins, you ass—"

"Look here, Blake, you fathead—"

"I say, Darrel—"

"I say, Monteith—"



The argument was growing warm, when there came a diversion. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered a surprised ejaculation.

"Gwast Scott! What is that boundah doin' here?"

The juniors looked round to see the "bounder."

A fat gentleman in somewhat loud check clothes and a bowler hat was strolling on the field, with a cane under his arm, and smoking a big black cigar. The playing-fields at St. Jim's were open to the public, and men interested in cricket often came in to see the matches, and sometimes the practice. But this flashy-looking gentleman was not the kind of visitor that was welcome.

Mr. Spooner—for it was Micky Kildare's undesirable acquaintance—stopped near the group of juniors, and ejected a stream of thick tobacco smoke almost into Arthur Augustus's aristocratic face. Perhaps the expression on that aristocratic face did not please him.

The swell of St. Jim's choked and coughed violently.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Spooner politely. "You don't like smoke?"

"Ow! Gwooo! Certainly not!"

"Sorry! Is this here a match going on?" asked Mr. Spooner, with a nod towards the cricket-ground.

"Not a match," said Tom Merry, "the first eleven are at practice."

"The team that's goin' to play Lanchester on Wednesday?" asked Mr. Spooner.

"Yes—with the red ribbons."

Mr. Spooner looked at the red team with great interest.

"Master Kildare batting?" he remarked.

"Yes; that's our captain."

"Splendid bat!" said Mr. Spooner.

"What-ho!" said Tom, feeling a little more kindly towards the flashy visitor after that remark. "First-rate. He will give Lanchester beans!"

"Beat 'em, p'raps," said Mr. Spooner.

"Not much," perhaps "about it," said Blake.

"Now I s'pose they've often beaten Lanchester, young gentleman?"

"Not so far—but cires are a bit different now. We're pretty certain to pull it off this time."

"I've seen Lanchester at practice to-day," remarked Mr. Spooner.

"How are they shaping?"

"Hardly up to this, I should say, speaking as a man who only knows cricket from looking on."

"Oh, good," said Blake.

"My eye!" said Mr. Spooner, "it will be a feather in the cap of this school to beat Lanchester, and 'ard on the blokes who have put their money on Lanchester, wot with their reputation, and not knowin' that their best men was booked for the front."

"Serve 'em jolly well right!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Anybody who bets on cwicket matches ought to be sewagged!"

Mr. Spooner smiled.

"How well Master Kildare keeps up his wicket," he remarked. "The howling can't touch him—and the bowling's good, too."

"You know something about cricket," said Tom Merry, thawing still more. "Kildare's the best bat in the team, of course. Without him, it would be a bit different when the match comes off."

"Yes," said Mr. Spooner, very slowly and thoughtfully, as he spat absent-mindedly into the grass, just missing D'Arcy's elegant boot. "Yes, I s'pose so! Without Master Kildare it would be very different. Likewise, if he was to score a duck's egg—that would make all the difference in the world, wouldn't it?"

"It would—but it's not likely to happen," said Tom laughing.

"Such things do 'appen," said Mr. Spooner. "I've knowed good players, county players with reputations, score a pair of spectacles afore now. Yes, a duck's egg in each innings. Them things do happen sometimes."

Mr. Spooner continued to watch the cricket practice in thoughtful silence. He was evidently a stickler for the practice went on for another hour, and Mr. Spooner did not move from the spot. He was lighting a cigar when the first eleven knocked off practice and came off the field.

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Then the sporting gentleman moved, and walked towards Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's started as he saw him, and frowned a little. He had met the man in Rylcombe, and, as he was in company with Kildare's cousin, Kildare had had to show him civility. But if Mr. Spooner presumed to continue the acquaintance, he was likely to be brought up very sharply. Kildare did not like betting men, and made no bones about letting his opinion be known.

"'Afternoon!" said Mr. Spooner affably. "I've been watching your cricket, Master Kildare. You'll be playing for your county when you're a little older."

"Thank you," said Kildare coldly.

It went against the grain with the good-natured Irish lad to be cold to anybody, but he simply could not stand Mr. Spooner.

"I called in to see you," said Mr. Spooner. "I had the pleasure of meeting you yesterday."

Kildare paused.

"You have something to say to me?" he asked.

"A little friendly call," said Mr. Spooner. A glance came into Kildare's eyes, and the bookmaker added hastily, "I've got something to say to you about your cousin, too—rather important."

"What is it?"

"You'd like to have it out 'ere?" asked Mr. Spooner, with a glance at the crowded ground.

Kildare bit his lip. Certainly he did not want to have it out there that his cousin was in debt to a bookmaker.

"Come into my study," he said, as civilly as he could.

"Pleased," said Mr. Spooner.

And he sauntered away with Kildare towards the School House.

Many curious eyes followed them. To see that flashy-looking man chatting and strolling with Kildare was a surprise to the St. Jim's fellows.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wealdn't want to cwitcise old Kildare, but I must wemark that he is a weckless ass!"

"No business of ours," said Tom Merry. "Let's get in to tea."

The juniors went towards the School House. As they came in they saw Kildare and his companion halted in the hall. Mr. Carrington, the Housemaster, was there, and his brow was grim.

"Is this gentleman a friend of yours, Kildare?" the Housemaster was asking.

His look expressed grim disapproval. Bookmakers—and such Mr. Spooner evidently was—were not the kind of acquaintance that St. Jim's fellows were allowed to have.

Kildare coloured painfully.

"Mr. Spooner has brought me a message from my cousin, sir," he said.

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Carrington, his brow clearing.

He went into his study.

"Uffy old gent—what?" remarked Mr. Spooner.

"This way," said Kildare.

The bookmaker, not in the slightest degree perturbed by the disapproval he had read in the Housemaster's looks, followed the captain of St. Jim's to his study.

Tom Merry & Co. went on up the stairs. Mr. Spooner was evidently a friend of Micky's, not of Kildare's, and they were glad to know it.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Mr. Spooner Asks a Little Favour.

KILDARE stood in his study, his eyes fixed upon his visitor.

He had asked Mr. Spooner to be seated, and the fat bookmaker sank into the armchair, and crossed one plump leg over another, and bit the end off a new cigar. Kildare did not sit down. He was anxious to be rid of his visitor, and it was as much as he could do to be civil to him.

Very handsome the captain of St. Jim's looked as he stood there in his cricketing flannels, the westerling sun shining in at the study window upon him. But his face was clouded, his eyes troubled.





A youthful despatch-rider was recently called upon to undertake a dangerous mission into the enemy's country, and in crossing a bridge he was "spotted" by a party of Germans. Nothing daunted, the plucky motor-cyclist landed out right and left with his fists, wianing his way successfully through the menacing gang.

He felt instinctively that the visit of Mr. Spooner boded no good either to Micky or to himself.

"You have a message from my cousin, Lieutenant Kildare?" said the captain of St. Jim's at last, as Mr. Spooner seemed too busy with his strong cigar to open the conversation.

"Not exactly."

"I understood you to that effect, and I told Mr. Carrington so when he spoke to me," said Kildare, frowning.

"Interfering old gent—what?"

"You will excuse me, Mr. Spooner, but you must be aware that fellows in this school are not allowed to receive visits from betting men!" said Kildare bluntly.

"Very particular, I must say," remarked Mr. Spooner, utterly unperturbed. "I've got a friend who does business in these parts, name of Banks, who does a little bit sometimes for young gents 'ere. I know that."

"Then it is very secret," said Kildare. "If I knew the names of the fellows you speak of I should report them to the headmaster!"

"You would?"

"Yes; it would be my duty as a prefect."

"As a—a which?" said Mr. Spooner.

Kildare smiled slightly.

"A prefect—a kind of monitor," he said. "But we need not speak of that, as I do not want any information from you. Let us come to business. To be frank, this

visit places me in a very awkward position. It isn't nice to let people here know that my cousin is a betting man."

"Mighty particular 'ere about puttin' a little money on a 'orse" said Mr. Spooner, in surprise. "Why, everybody does it!"

"Not quite everybody, I think," said Kildare. "But never mind that. It happens to be against the rules here."

"You have never put a little bit on a gee-gee yourself, Master Kildare?"

"Certainly not!"

"Nor don't want to?"

"Of course not!"

"Not if a man in the know could put you on to a really good thing—a good tip fair straight from the 'orse's mouth?" hinted Mr. Spooner.

Kildare laughed impatiently.

"No, no, no! I suppose you mean to be obliging, Mr. Spooner, but that isn't in my line at all. Let's come to business."

"Well," said Mr. Spooner, a little sulkily, "about young Micky."

Kildare closed his lips a little. It went against the grain to listen patiently while this sporting "bouncer" referred to his cousin as "young Micky." But Lieutenant Kildare had given the bookmaker the right to familiarity.

"Well!" said the captain of St. Jim's quietly.

"I understand that you know how Micky is fixed?"

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**NEXT WEEK—2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND IN OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL MATCH!**



"With regard to his debt to you, do you mean? Yes; he has told me about it."

"It's fifty quid."

"I know."

"And Lieutenant Micky can't pay seemingly."

"I understood that you were going to give him time to pay you."

"I've done that," said Mr. Spooner. "It's near a fortnight old now. These are 'ard times for a man in my line. Racing isn't what it was before the war. I did badly out of football last season, and, as fur cricket this summer, it's fair off. It's a case of money wanted, young sir."

Kildare did not speak. He might have asked the bookmaker what he was telling him all that for. It was not his debt, and he was sick of hearing about it. Mr. Spooner's manner seemed to imply that Micky had referred him to Kildare.

"Course, I'm ready to go easy with young Micky," said Mr. Spooner. "He's jest got his commission, and he's going out to fight for his King and country. I'm as patriotic as the next man, I 'ope. I s'pose if the Germans got 'ere it would be bad for the bookies as well as for the toffs. I'm willing to go as easy as poss, and under suttin' circumstances I could let Lieutenant Kildare's bit of paper stand over till next winter."

"That would be first-rate!" said Kildare.

"Yes," said Mr. Spooner, with a nod. "He won't 'ave much use for money out there in the trenches, and he would let his pay accumulate, and pay it off easy enough with a few months to do it in—if I could wait, that is."

Kildare kept his patience. It was up to him to conciliate the man if he could, and make things easier for his reckless cousin. Micky's fault was a serious one, and he deserved to suffer for it; but he was, after all, only a lad, and he was going to fight for his King and country. That wiped out everything.

"I've been watching your cricket," said Mr. Spooner, changing the subject with startling suddenness. "It looks as if you'll beat Lanchester, arter all."

"Yes; we hope so," said Kildare. "But, to keep to the point—"

"I'm keepin' to the point, young sir. I'm fixed on that Lanchester match. I've been led astray," said Mr. Spooner dejectedly. "Fellers who was in the know led me on, and I made a book on it. I knew their record, and I reckoned it a cert; and when some of the boys offered me bets on it, of course I booked them fast enough. Why, I'd have put five to one on Lanchester, and I was able to book bets at two and three to one—a dead sure thing—so I thought. But, as it 'appened, they was in the know, and I was out in the cold. So it stands now that I stand to win fifty of the best if Lanchester pulls it off, and I stand to lose a hundred and thirty if you win, Master Kildare."

"I'm sorry," said Kildare politely.

"Yes; but bein' sorry don't 'elp. I can't afford to lose that there money," said Mr. Spooner. "If I lose I shall have a reg-ler twist to pay up. I shall have to dror in money from every quarter where I got any, and Lieutenant Kildare will simply have to pay up on the nail if Lanchester are beaten."

"Oh!" said Kildare.

"That's 'ow it stands," said Mr. Spooner. "I told young Micky that you was able to do me a favour, and that if you did it he could take till next Christmas, if he liked, to settle his little bill. He said that you'd do anything in your power to save him from going on the rocks."

"So I would," said Kildare.

"You see, if I have to come down on him, and he can't pay, or won't pay, it's bad business for him," said Mr. Spooner. "An officer and a gentleman who don't settle up a debt of honour ain't considered as a gentleman any longer, and he can't remain an officer. He would be posted up everywhere as a swindler."

"What?"

"I'm only putting it in plain English," said the bookmaker coolly, as Kildare flushed with anger. "Far be it from me to say that Lieutenant Kildare ain't as honest a young gentleman as you are yourself, sir—as honest as me, Joe Spooner, for that matter. But if he

had won that bet on Hook Eye he would have fingered my money, and he knows it. He lost, and it turns out that he hasn't the money to settle. I s'pose you know how his brother officers would look on that?"

Kildare nodded; he knew well enough.

"He would have to leave the Army, just when his career's beginnin'," said Mr. Spooner. "If he stayed in he would be sent to Coventry by the rest. It would be ruin to him, as you know, to be posted up as a defaulter."

"I know—I know, but he is not that," said Kildare. "He was reckless, thoughtless, and he expected to be able to pay when he made the bet. But he had ill-luck in other directions at the same time, and was left without resources. But it will be of no benefit to you to ruin a fellow who has never hurt you. It would pay you better to wait for your money."

"What's the good of that, if I'm ruined myself?" demanded Mr. Spooner. "A bookie who don't pay up is ruined; he can't make a book again, neither on a race nor a footer nor cricket match. He ain't trusted. I've got my reputation to think of as well as your cousin, Master Kildare. And I tell you straight, if Lanchester loses that match on Wednesday, Lieutenant Kildare has got to pay up on the nail, or he's got to go under along of me."

"Well, I—I can't help it," said Kildare restively. "What's the good of telling me all this, Mr. Spooner? You don't suppose a boy in the Sixth Form has fifty pounds locked up in this desk, do you?"

"Ardly," agreed Mr. Spooner. "But as I said, you can do me a favour and your cousin one at the same time, and then I 'old over Micky's paper as long as he likes. In fact," said Mr. Spooner, in a burst of confidence, "I'll 'and it over to you, sir, and trust to your honour to see it paid when convenient."

Kildare's face brightened a little. If Mr. Spooner did that, certainly Micky was well out of his fearful scrape. Once that paper was in Kildare's hands, with the condition that it was to be paid when convenient, he would see that the condition was kept.

"You can depend on me to do anything I can, Mr. Spooner. I haven't the faintest idea what favour I can do you, but you have only to name it."

"Now you're talking!" said Mr. Spooner, rubbing his fat hands. "Now we've got to business. I would work it for you to bag twenty of the best if you liked, once it's agreed upon."

"I don't want to bag anything, and I don't understand you."

Mr. Spooner chuckled.

"No 'umbug," he remarked. "Of course, you know what I'm getting at?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Kildare impatiently. "If I can do you any service to help my cousin out of his fix I'm ready and willing to do it. But I repeat that I simply cannot imagine how I can be of service to you. What the deuce is there I can do to serve you?"

The bookmaker stared at him.

"Meantersay you don't know?"

"I've said so."

"Either you're a-pullin' of my leg, or you're a very innocent young gent," said Mr. Spooner suspiciously.

"O'ever, I'll tell you, if you want it out plain. Lanchester have got to win the match on Wednesday."

Kildare stared at him.

"They may win," he said, "but it's not likely. Under the circumstances, the advantages happen to be on our side. I expect to win."

"Well, I expect you to lose, and I expect you to make sure of losing. Now do you savvy?"

Kildare looked at him, almost dazedly, for a moment. He understood at last. The bookmaker was asking him to betray the match, and give it away to the opposing team, so that he could win his bets. Kildare stood motionless, the colour surging into his face, his heart throbbing.

"You savvy?" said Mr. Spooner.

Then Kildare burst out.

"You scoundrel! You confounded villain!"

"Wot!"

"You—you hound!"



Kildare made a stride towards the bookmaker. Mr. Spooner started to his feet in alarm. The next moment, to his utter astonishment, he found himself taken by the throat, and shaken like a rat.

## CHAPTER 8.

## Nothing Doing.

"YOU hound! You cur!" Kildare shook the rascal savagely as he shouted the words.

The fat bookmaker simply curled up in the powerful grasp of the captain of St. Jim's. His red face became purple.

"Oh! Ow! Leggo!" he gurgled. "You're choking me, you young villain! Leggo!"  
"You scoundrel!"  
"Elp!"

Kildare controlled his rage, and he flung the fat man back into the armchair, and stood over him, his hands clenched and his eyes glittering.

Mr. Spooner sprawled back limply in the chair, gasping for breath.

"If you were a younger man I'd give you the hiding of your life," said Kildare, his voice trembling with anger. "How dare you make such a proposition to me, you infamous scoundrel?"  
"Grooooh!"

Kildare stepped back, breathing hard. He repented a little that he had laid hands on the man. The wretch was probably only following his business according to his customs. Probably it was the hundredth time he had laid such a scheme for "pulling" a horse or "nobbling" a player. But that he should bring his shameless rascality to St. Jim's was a little too much. Kildare felt his gorge rise at the sight of him. He pointed silently to the door.

Mr. Spooner sat up in the chair, gasping for breath, choking with rage.

"You've laid 'ands on me," he stammered. "All right—all right, young gentleman! We'll see! You're insulted, eh—insulted at me asking you to do wot's done every day in racing and professional football? Shocked, ain't you? Shocked, by gum! You ain't shocked at your precious cousin swindling a honest bookie! Oh, no! That's a 'orse of quite another colour!"

"I don't want any words with you," said Kildare. "You'd better go."

"Oh, I'm goin', as soon as I've got my breath," said Mr. Spooner, snorting; "I'm goin'. I'm goin' straight to Mister Lieutenant Swindler Kildare to ask him for my money, and if he don't pay on the nail I'll 'ave no mercy on him. I'll 'ave him known as a swindler in every club in London!"

Kildare's heart sank. Truly, he had not improved matters for the unfortunate Micky.

"My cousin did not know the kind of favour you came to ask me!" he exclaimed.

The bookmaker sneered.

"What do you think?"

"I don't believe it."

"You can believe what you like. I know wot I'm going to do."

Kildare made an effort.

"I'm sorry I handled you, Mr. Spooner. I ought not to have done that. I can see that you don't understand what a dirty, caddish thing you've asked me. I suppose you're used to that kind of swindling. But you ought to have known better."

"I've asked you what I've asked others, and I ain't never been took by the neck over it yet," sneered Mr. Spooner. "A dirty swindler, am I? And wot's your precious cousin, then, that was going to funder my money if he won, and won't pay me when he loses."

Kildare was silent. There was a difference between reckless improvidence, however culpable, and deliberate swindling. But it was useless to argue with the enraged Mr. Spooner.

The bookmaker set his collar and tie straight. He did not seem in a hurry to go. Infuriated as he was, he had not lost sight of business. If he could bring Kildare

round to his way of thinking he was willing to forgive that ebullition of temper. For the result of the Lancheater match was of great importance to Joe Spooner. If he could corrupt Kildare, and count upon a Lancheater win as a certainty, there was a golden harvest to be reaped. He had only to double and treble his bets, in that case, to make a really good thing out of it.

There was a short silence in the study. Kildare was waiting for the man to go, but he did not want to turn him out. He had made matters bad enough for Micky already. It went against the grain to temporise with such a rascal; but for Micky's sake he would have been glad to send Mr. Spooner away in a good humour.

"S'pose you think it over?" said Mr. Spooner at last. "Tain't such a surprising thing as you seem to think. It's done every day."

Kildare was silent.

He had resolved to keep his temper now, whatever Mr. Spooner might say. The bookmaker misunderstood his silence, and went on eagerly.

"Wot's the importance of this match to you—only a schoolboy match? You want to win, of course, but it ain't a matter of importance to you."

"It isn't that," said Kildare at last. "You don't understand."

"What is it, then?"

"It would be dishonest."

"You mean that the coves that had bet on St. Jim's would lose? They take their chance of that! Bless your little heart, they'd played me the same trick if they needed to and if they had the gumption."

"I'm not thinking of anybody who's betted on the match. They're nothing to me, and they deserve to lose their money."

"Then where does the dishonesty come in? Tain't dishonest, if you come to that. You jest lose your wickets; you don't take any runs; you put on a poor bowler instead of a good one. You lose the match. Well, you've always lost the Lancheater match afore. It won't hurt you once more."

"Can't you see that it would be a dirty, dishonest trick to play?" said Kildare, in wonder more than anger. "Can't you see that if I did as you ask, I should be a scoundrel, and should despise myself for the rest of my life, and all the other fellows would despise me, too, if they knew."

"They needn't know."

"But can't you see that I don't want to deserve their contempt, whether they know or not?"

"That's all splittin' hairs," said Mr. Spooner sullenly.

"I tell you it's done every day."

"Not by decent fellows."

"It would be a good thing for you, too. I'd put ten quid on for you; twenty, if you like—hang it all, fifty, if you give me your word there's no risk!" said Mr. Spooner eagerly. "You won't appear in the matter at all—your simply bag the winnings."

"Steal them, you mean."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Mr. Spooner rudely. "'Ow much racing is done on the square, do you think? And sprinting? And rowing? And everything? This 'ere is a wicked world, young sir, and we've got to look out for ourselves."

Kildare looked at him moodily. Into the clean, wholesome atmosphere of St. Jim's Mr. Spooner seemed to bring a breath from another world—an underworld of darkness, and trickery, and cunning, and baseness. It gave the captain of St. Jim's a feeling almost of physical sickness.

There was a tap at the door, and Langton of the Sixth came in. Langton paused as he saw the visitor, and Kildare did not fail to note the surprise in his face.

"Excuse me, I didn't know you had a caller," said Langton, and he retired at once, wondering.

Kildare made an irritable movement.

"You'd better go, Mr. Spooner. It's no good talking."

The bookmaker rose.

"You refuse to do me that little favour, then?"

"Yes."

"Won't you take a day to think it over?"

"That would be useless."



Mr. Spooner gritted his teeth.

"You give me your word to 'elp me out, and I could bag 'nundreds on that match," he said. "I've got to let that slip. But I can't afford to lose wot I've got at stake already. Mind, if I'm ruined, your cousin goes under along of me!"

"I can't help it."

"I'll tell him who he's got to thank for it," said Mr. Spooner.

He made a movement towards the door at last.

"Mr. Spooner"—Kildare spoke with an effort—"I cannot do as you ask; that is impossible. But it wouldn't be fair to make my cousin suffer for it. You ought to remember that he is going out to fight for Britain. If you carry out your threat he must leave the Army. It means a man out of the fighting-line, when every man is needed there. You ought to think of that."

"Why don't you think of it?" sneered Mr. Spooner.

"'Elp me out of my fix and I'll 'elp your cousin out of his'n. I tell you wot. I'll get your cousin to come and speak to you about it."

"Micky would never dream of asking me to play the rascal."

Mr. Spooner shrugged his shoulders.

"We'll see about that. It's his-neck that's under the chopper, not yours. P'raps you wouldn't be so mighty particular if you was in danger of disgrace and ruin instead of young Micky."

"It would make no difference."

"P'raps—p'raps not. Let it rest till you've seen Micky. He can get leave before Wednesday, and he'll come and see you. I'll 'old my 'and till then."

Kildare was about to make a hot retort, but he checked it. The longer Mr. Spooner held his hand the better.

Without another word the bookmaker left. Kildare flung himself into a chair, his face dark and harassed, when he was alone.

Not for a moment did he think of yielding to the insidious proposition of the bookmaker. That was impossible. The hot, Irish blood boiled in his veins at the thought of a dishonourable action.

But his refusal meant ruin to the reckless Micky.

There was only one way of saving him—raising the money so that he could settle his debt. And that was impossible. Where was fifty pounds to come from? For the want of that sum the young lieutenant was to be covered with disgrace; to be forced to quit the Army; to be deprived of the chance of fighting for his country in the hour of the Empire's terrible need.

That was the worst of it. In the hour of need, when Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, Manxmen, and Colonials were rallying together, all old disputes forgotten, to fight for their common heritage, Kildare had been proud to know that his cousin had donned the khaki, that Old Ireland had sent another son to defend the Empire. One act of reckless folly was to cost the young lieutenant so much!

But think of it as he would, Kildare could see no way out.

He could not sacrifice his own honour to save Micky's; and it was the only way!

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## CHAPTER 9.

### Wally on the War-path.

THERE was civil war in the School House. Civil war in the figurative sense; as a matter of fact, the war was extremely un-civil.

Wally & Co. were on the warpath. The sublime cheek, as Wally regarded it, that Tom Merry & Co. had shown in seeking to fag for Kildare—D'Arcy minor's own inalienable right—was not to be forgotten or forgiven.

The distinguished visitor, the young man in khaki, had arrived, to see Kildare's study turned into a pandemonium, instead of getting the reception that both Tom Merry and Wally had intended for him. Tom Merry & Co. had felt it their duty to teach the Third Form manners after that. Even Arthur Augustus admitted that Wally required instruction in respect to his elders.

The juniors, therefore—strictly from a sense of duty, of course—raided the fags in the Third Form-room, and Wally & Co. were ragged and bumped severely, as a warning to be good little boys on another occasion.

This duty fulfilled, the juniors were willing to allow the matter to drop, especially as Kildare had not put up rusty, as expected, and had, indeed, made no further reference to the matter at all.

But Wally & Co. were not in the least disposed to let it drop. Wally & Co. breathed nothing but vengeance and slaughter.

Excited meetings of the fags were held in the Form-room, in the box-room, and the wood-shed, and in all sorts of odd corners, where their uncommon and unpardonable wrongs were discussed, and warlike speeches were made, and the iniquities and blessed cheek of the Fourth and the Shell were denounced in suitable terms.

Drastic measures followed. While Blake & Co. were at

cricket on Saturday the Third Form raided Study No. 6. The study was simply a wreck when the four juniors came in after cricket. They came in to tea, but there was not much chance of tea then. Everything the study contained had been piled in a heap in the middle of the room, with the study carpet draped on top of the pile. Tea and sugar, and milk and jam, and pickles had been swamped recklessly on the heap, mixed with a generous allowance of soot and ink.

The hand of the Third Form had fallen heavily upon Study No. 6. Naturally, the hand of Study No. 6 fell heavily on the Third in return.

There was another raid on the fag quarters, and, as Wally had called together all his forces ready to resist reprisals, there was a battle royal, in the midst of which the Housemaster arrived upon the scene, and quite tired himself out caning the whole party, and finished by giving them all two hundred lines each.

The Terrible Three, of course, had backed up Study No. 6 in exacting these reprisals. Tom Merry had brought away a swollen nose from the conflict, but he had done great execution among the fags.

So matters remained till Tuesday, when Wally & Co. visited Tom Merry's study in force. They made the mistake of supposing that the Terrible Three had gone down to the cricket. As a matter of fact they had

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(See Page 28)

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AT THE TOP!!!





Crash! "Oh!" came in a gasp from the crowd. It was the crash of his wicket that recalled Kildare to himself. He stared blankly, almost dazedly, at the wrecked wicket. As one in a dream, he heard the bowler's "How's that?"—followed by the umpire's terse—"Out!" (See Chapter 13.)

stayed in to do their lines, and the fags found them at home.

The chums of the Shell put up a stout defence. They barricaded the doorway with the table, and over the barricade kept up a steady fire of ink, ginger-beer and soda-water, and soot-balls—the last-named a fearsome missile composed of soot kneaded up with treacle.

When the noise brought a master up the Shell passage he found the attacking party looking like a set of disreputable chimney-sweeps, and Wally & Co. had to "go through it," with painful results.

After the infliction, they retired to the Form-room to rub their hands and hold a meeting, at which terrific speeches were made, Tom Merry & Co. being alluded to as Huns and Prussians, amid loud cheers.

While the meeting was on the Terrible Three, having finished their lines, went down cheerfully to the cricket-ground.

The civil war was still raging, however. Wally & Co. wanted vengeance, and they wanted it badly.

It was, as Wally declared in a telling speech, a question of standing up for the honour of the Third. They might as well give in to the Kaiser as to the Shell bounders. The Third had had bad luck so far, though they had certainly made Study No. 6 "sit up." But the Terrible Three remained to be dealt with, and Tom Merry especially, as the leader of that obnoxious trio.

"The cheek of it!" said Wally, with breathless indignation. "Fagging for Kildare, you know. Why, the Shell brag that they don't fag for anybody! And then to try to bag my fag-master. My only Aunt Jane! Why, if we put up with this, we might as well haul down the flag, and let the Huns keep Belgium."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the Third.

"And Kildare's threatened not to let me fag for him any more," said Wally, more in sorrow than in anger. "He hasn't made a row about what happened last Wednesday, but he was waxy. It must have made a bad impression on his cousin. His cousin's a ripping chap, too—he's in the Army, you know. Those cheeky Huns have got to be brought to their senses!"

Tom Merry & Co. were the Huns alluded to.

"Bravo!"

"I've got a new wheeze," said Wally. "We'll tackle the Prussian beasts one at a time. That's really a better idea—"

"Safer," remarked Jameson.

"Better," said Wally. "And we'll begin with Tom Merry."

"Hear, hear!"

"Sure, and he's a baste to tackle," said Rourke.

"I suppose we're not afraid of him?"

"Bedad, no. But—"



"We're going to tackle him first," said Wally. "We'll make an example of him. And I've got a dodge."

"Go it, Wally!"

"Kildare's gone out," said Wally. "I saw him start for Rylcombe. Those Shell-fish won't have noticed it; they were in their study. One of you kids cut down to the cricket-ground—"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Oh, don't jaw! You can go, Rourke; you've got an innocent-looking chivvy. Tell Tom Merry he's wanted in Kildare's study."

"But he isn't," said Rourke.

"Yes, he is. We want him," explained Wally. "Kildare's out, so it's quite safe. You see, the rotter won't suspect anything. No good telling him he's wanted in the Third Form-room. He wouldn't come, or if he did, he'd bring a gang of those Huns along with him."

"Ha, ha, ha! Most likely."

"But he'll go to Kildare's study without a suspicion," grinned Wally; "and we'll be waiting for him there."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'll collar him, and we'll have a rope ready and tie him up—"

"My hat!"

"And gag him; bound and gagged, you know, like the chaps in the Wild-West stories," said Wally, warming to the idea.

"Hurrah!"

"Then we'll ink his chivvy—"

"Bravo!"

"And stick him in Kildare's cupboard—"

"What!"

"And leave him there. He's fond of Kildare's study, and rather set on giving Kildare surprises and things. Well, that will be a surprise for Kildare when he looks into his cupboard and finds a Shell-fish there as black as a nigger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags yelled with delight at the idea.

"Buzz off, Rourke! And mind you don't let him smell a rat."

"You rely on me," grinned Rourke. "I'll bag the baste!"

Rourke of the Third cut off, and Wally and half a dozen selected followers proceeded cautiously to Kildare's study. The coast was clear, as they had seen the captain of St. Jim's leave the school gates. Most of the Sixth, too, were down on the cricket-ground at practice; the whole passage was deserted.

The heroes of the Third ensconced themselves in the study, three of them hiding under the table, two behind the curtains of the bed, and two behind the door, so that it would conceal them when it opened. Then they waited, with subdued chuckles. Wally's opinion was that, when all was over, Tom Merry would be fed up with Kildare's study for good. And doubtless Wally was right.

Meanwhile, Rourke of the Third had cut down to Little Side. Tom Merry had been batting, but Lowther was at the wicket now, and Manners was bowling to him, and the captain of the Shell was looking on.

"You're wanted, Tom Merry!" called out Rourke.

Tom looked round.

"Hallo! What's wanted?"

"Kildare's study."

And Rourke sauntered away with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

Tom Merry put down his bat, and walked away to the School House. He was only too willing to obey a summons to Kildare's study. If Kildare sent for him to carry a message or to fag, it showed that the captain of the school had quite forgiven the unfortunate happenings of the previous week.

So Tom Merry looked very cheerful as he came along the Sixth-Form passage in the School House, and tapped at Kildare's door. There was no reply to the knock, but he heard a movement in the study, and opened the door.

"You sent for me, Kildare?" said Tom, as he stepped in.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 390.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND,"

PAPERS: Every Monday.

"THE MAGNET," Every Monday.

"THE DREADNOUGHT," Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," ID, Every Saturday, 2

Then he looked round in surprise. Kildare was not visible. Tom stepped towards the window above to look there. As he did so, the door slammed, and he swung round, to see Wally and Jameson with their backs to the door, grinning.

"Trapped!" said Wally dramatically.

And Joe Frayne chimed in ecstatically:

"'Ear, 'ear!"

## CHAPTER 10. A Prisoner of War.

"DOWN with him!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush of the fags on Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell burst into a laugh, and faced the four Third-Formers, and would probably have sent them to right and left. But he had not seen the three young heroes under the table, and so he was not on the look-out for them.

But as Wally and Frayne and Gibson and Jameson rushed on him, and he faced them, Hobbs clutched at his ankles, and dragged his feet from under him, and Tom Merry came down on the floor with a bump.

It was a regular Rugger tackle, and the captain of the Shell had no chance. He was down on the floor in a twinkling, and then the fags were all over him.

"You young villains!" gasped Tom Merry. "Chuck it!"

"Hurrah! Got the rotter!"

"Squash the beastly Hun!"

"Down with the Shell!"

Wally jumped up, leaving his six faithful comrades to deal with Tom Merry. There were more than enough of them.

"Secure him!" said Wally, in quite the manner of a pirate chief. "Secure him! Bind him hand and foot!"

"You silly young ass!" panted Tom Merry.

"And gag him," said Wally loftily.

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry struggled furiously.

But the fags were determined, and they were too many even for the athletic captain of the Shell. Wally had ordered his followers to secure him, but that was merely to give a dramatic turn to the proceedings. As a matter of fact, it was Wally himself who uncoiled the rope, and proceeded to bind Tom Merry's wrists together. Jameson and Curly Gibson held Tom Merry's hands helplessly, while Wally knotted the rope. Then his ankles were treated in the same manner. Then the Shell fellow was gagged with a handkerchief, Wally considerably using Tom's own handkerchief. A handkerchief borrowed from any of the heroes of the Third would have made the gagging process much more unpleasant, Third-Form handkerchiefs generally having a strong flavour of ink, toffee, and aniseed-balls.

As Tom Merry had not called for help, the gag was really superfluous. But Wally of the Third was not a fellow to do things by halves. He rather fancied himself as a sort of lawless chief ordering prisoners to be bound and gagged.

"That's all right," said D'Arcy minor. "You can let him go now. Put some ink in a saucer, young Jameson, and mix some soot in it. I've got a brush in my pocket. This is where we smile, Tom Merry."

Tom glared at him.

After the directions given by the leader of the Third, he knew what to expect, but he was not able to raise objections. He could neither move nor speak. But objections would not have counted, anyway.

Wally still had several yards of rope left, and he did not want to waste it. So he tied it with big knots round the Shell fellow, till Tom Merry could not move, but it looked as if soon he would not be able to breathe.

"This is only the beginning," said Wally pleasantly. "The other Huns are going through it. We'll teach you not to cheek the Third."

"What-oh!" said Jameson. "We'll keep the Shell bounders in their place. They wanted to give Kildare



a surprise last Wednesday. Well, Tom Merry can give him one to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ink and soot being duly mixed, Wally dipped his brush into it, and bent over Tom Merry. If looks could have withered, D'Arcy minor would have fallen upon the floor of the study in a shrivelled-up condition.

But as it was Wally only grinned.

He drew a series of straight lines down Tom Merry's face, and then a series of cross lines, giving the Shell fellow an appearance as though someone had been playing noughts and crosses upon his features.

Then he squeezed out his brush, and dipped it into red ink, and put a red dot into each of the squares marked off by the black lines.

The aspect of Tom Merry's face was extraordinary. The fags gurgled with suppressed laughter. They would have liked to yell, but they moderated their transports, so to speak, for fear that some prefect might hear them, and look into Kildare's study to see what was going on. That would have interfered seriously with the little game.

"Oh, my hat! Don't he look a coughdrop!" gasped Jameson. "Something like the Wild Man from Borneo! Something like a Red Indian with his war-paint on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep a watch from the window, one of you," said Wally. "We don't want Kildare to drop on us while we're here."

Hobbs took up his post at the window. Wally finished his artistic efforts, and then held up a little pocket mirror for Tom Merry to see his face. Tom Merry could not speak; but his looks were expressive. They spoke volumes.

"That's done," said D'Arcy minor. "Open the cupboard door, Curly. Now, then, lend a hand. This Hun is rather heavy."

Three or four fags lifted Tom Merry from the floor. Tom Merry's glare became positively annihilating; but the heroes of the Third did not mind. The lower part of Kildare's cupboard was stacked with lumber—old rackets, and stumps, and a broken chair, and several boxes, and so forth. Wally packed the lumber back out of the way, and made room for Tom Merry.

The helpless junior was slid in, reposing on the floor among the lumber.

"You're awfully fond of Kildare's study," grinned Wally. "You're going to get fed up on it now—see? When you get tired of resting you can wriggle about till Kildare hears you, when he comes in. You were planning a surprise for him the other day. He will get a surprise when he sees you like this. What do you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorused the fags.

"But I'll tell you what," said Wally generously. "If you're willing to come into the Form-room and beg pardon on your bended knees—your bended knees, mind—we'll let you off with a bumping. Nod your head if you mean yes."

Tom Merry did not nod his head.

"Then good-bye!" said Wally.

There was a chirrup from Hobbs at the window.

"Kildare's come in."

"Phew! Clear off!"

"That chap in khaki is with him," said Hobbs.

"Oh, my hat!"

Wally closed the cupboard door hastily, and ran to the window. Kildare was coming across the quadrangle, and Micky was with him. The fags knew the handsome young Irish lieutenant again at once. They had not been aware that Kildare's cousin was coming down to St. Jim's again. Even as Wally looked from the window Kildare and Micky disappeared into the porch of the School House.

"Hook it!" said Wally breathlessly.

"I—I say, going to leave him here, when there's going to be a visitor in the study?" said Curly dubiously.

"No time now! Hook it! Do you want Kildare to catch you here?" snapped Wally.

Wally led the way from the study at a run, and his followers dashed after him. The fags fled down the passage, and quitted it at one end, as Kildare and Micky entered it at the other.

Tom Merry lay in the cupboard among the lumber in an unenviable frame of mind.

He had heard what the fags said, and he knew that Lieutenant Kildare was coming in. To be seen by the lieutenant in that utterly ridiculous position was a little too much. He could only hope that Kildare would not open the door of the cupboard. Perhaps they would not stay long in the study, and sooner or later his chums would come to look for him. Both Manners and Lowther had heard Rourke's message delivered, and when he did not return to the cricket-ground, they would suspect something.

Tom Merry lay without a sound in the cupboard, only breathing hard. He heard the study door open, and heard the voices of Kildare and his cousin.

"Faith, you look a bit tidier than the last time I came, Eric, my boy," said the lieutenant, in his jovial tones.

Kildare laughed.

"Yes. There hasn't been a rush to fag for me this time. Hallo, you young sweep! What do you want?" he added, as Wally looked in from the passage.

Wally looked as if butter would not melt in his mouth. Certainly from his looks no one would have guessed that less than five minutes ago he had been engaged in a rag in that very room.

"Don't you want me to get tea?" said Wally.

"No; but you can tell Darrel we're here. We're having tea in Darrel's study."

"Oh, all serene!"

Tom Merry was glad to hear it. That meant that Kildare and Micky would not remain long, and his chums would have a chance of coming to the rescue. The Shell fellow lay silent in the cupboard, breathing hard through his nose.

## CHAPTER 11.

### What Tom Merry Knew.

MICKY DARE leaned on the mantelpiece and looked at his cousin, as the captain of St. Jim's closed the door and turned towards him.

"Well, what is it?" asked the young soldier, with a somewhat weary gesture. "I could see by your face when you came to the station that there was something."

"You have seen Spooner since he was here?"

Micky nodded.

"Has he told you what he asked me?"

"He told me he had asked you a favour, and that you had refused," said Micky moodily.

"Did he tell you what it was?"

"No—only that it was a thing you could easily do. Dash it all, Eric, you might oblige the man, for my sake. I owe him fifty pounds, and if you could oblige him, he undertakes to give you my little bill to take charge of—a good proof that he will not use it against me. It isn't every bookie who'd do that. The money needn't be paid till after next Christmas, if you keep the man in a good temper."

Every word that was uttered in the study was clearly audible to the hidden junior in the cupboard.

Tom Merry simply writhed.

Wally & Co. had never thought about that, of course, but they had planted Tom Merry where he could not help hearing what was said in the study, where he had no choice about playing the eavesdropper.

Tom made a great effort to eject the gag from his mouth so that he could call out, choosing rather to be found than to risk hearing more said of Kildare's private affairs. But the fags had done their work only too well. The handkerchief was secured with a length of twine passed round and round his head and knotted, and he could not utter even a murmur.

"That's the only thing against me," Lieutenant Kildare went on gloomily. "I know I was a fool. I know I was an idiot ever to speak to such a man. But it's rather hard that one false step like that should ruin everything. I'm at the beginning of my career. If Spooner chooses he can make me leave the Army. It's a man gone from the colours when every man is needed."

"I know it, Micky," said Kildare wretchedly. "But he hasn't told you what he's asked."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 360.

NEXT WEEK—2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND IN OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL MATCH!



Tom Merry lay quite still now. He had thought of wriggling against the lumber in the cupboard to make a sound that would warn Kildare that someone was there. But he felt that he had heard too much. The bitter humiliation of the lieutenant when he found that his disgraceful secret was known to a schoolboy—he had to disgrace of that. He could imagine Micky's feelings if he ever discovered that Tom Merry had learned this.

They would be called to Darrel's study soon, and they need never know that Tom had heard anything. It would never pass his lips. After all, it was no more than he already knew from that unlucky glimpse of the letter Kildare had left on his table.

He was silent; but it was with bitter, humiliated feelings. It was not pleasant to be driven against his will into eavesdropping.

"Well, what has he asked?" said Lieutenant Kildare irritably. "You've been so glum, he might have asked you to commit a murder. He's told me that if you consent to whatever it is, he'll do as I've said. He says he will hold his hand till after the Lanchester match to give you a chance. He is coming down here to see the match, and I'm coming with him, as my leave extends over to-morrow. I guessed from what he said that it is somehow connected with that cricket match, though I can't guess how."

"He had laid money against St. Jim's."

"Yes, I know that."

"He has asked me to throw the match away."

"What!"

"He will lose more than he can pay, so he says, if we win," said Kildare. "Then he will have to call on you for that fifty, and if you don't pay, he will ruin you. He's willing to let you off if I give away the match—let Lanchester win, and let him win his filthy bets."

"The scoundrel!"

Lieutenant Kildare strode to and fro in the study, his eyes blazing, his hands clenched.

"The hound! The rotten blackguard! He has dared to ask you that? I never guessed—I had no idea. Eric, you believe I had no suspicion of this?"

Kildare drew a deep breath.

"I was quite sure of it, Micky. I knew you would never dream of being a party to his villainy."

"Faith, if he were here, I'd show him!" said Micky, between his teeth. "The thafe of the world! The dirty blaggard he is!" Micky Kildare had a rich accent when he was excited, and it somehow made him seem more boyish than ever. "By thunder, I'll lay my cane about him when I see him ag'in, the thafe!"

Kildare smiled slightly.

"No good doing that, Micky. The brute doesn't know any better. I lost my temper with him, but I was sorry for it afterwards. The wretched blackguard is playing rascally tricks like that every day of his life. He still thinks that I might do it, the miserable blackguard!"

"Oh, the thafe!" said Micky, clenching his hands.

"Sure, when I see him—"

"Don't see him, Micky. Don't provoke him. He can ruin you if he chooses."

"I tell ye I'll kape no terms with him!" exclaimed Micky violently. "Let him ruin me! Sure, it's me own fault intirely. What did I want to mix up with his dirty betting for? Sure, it's not fit I am to be in the Army at all—a gosssoon that can't look after himself better than this!" Then his voice broke a little: "But, sure, if I love the Army, it's ashamed I'll be to show my face in Ould Ireland ag'in!"

Kildare gave a groan.

"You can't leave the Army, Micky. You can't! You're got to go and fight for the old flag. We've got to think of a way somehow."

"There's no way," said Micky gloomily. "Me father can't help me, and, sure, I'd be cut to pieces before I'd ask the ould jentleman! If it was a tenner, I'd ask your pater, Eric, but I haven't the face to ask him for fifty quid. And he wouldn't stand it. I'd have to tell him what it was for, and you know he's down on gambling. Sure, he's helped me with me outfit already. There wasn't much money at Castle Kildare, worse luck, and it was a case of all hands to the mill. It's ruin, that's what it is, and, sure, I've brought it on myself!"

"If I could only do anything, Micky!"

THE GREAT LIBRARY—No. 390

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE DREADNOUGHT," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D.

PAPERS: Every Monday, Every Monday, Every Thursday, Every Friday, Every Saturday, 2

"You can't do anythin', unless, sure, it's to betray ye're friends, and give away the match to plaze that blaggard!"

"You wouldn't think—"

"Think ye ought to do it? Sure, I'd niver spake a word to ye ag'in, Eric Kildare, if ye played such a dirty trick!"

"That's how I thought you'd look at it, Micky. But what is to be done? Spooner is going to leave it till after the match, hoping that I shall carry out his wish. Of course, we may lose," said Kildare, almost hopefully. "If we lose the match Spooner will go easy with you."

"You won't lose it. Ye'll play the game of ye're life!" growled Micky.

"I shall!" said Kildare quietly. "But luck may be against us. Lanchester have always beaten us so far. But, so far as I'm concerned, I shall play up for the school just the same as though Joe Spooner did not exist."

There was a knock at the door of the study, and Darrel of the Sixth looked in, with a cheery smile.

"Tea's ready," he said.

Kildare and his cousin followed the prefect from the study. They had no more to say to one another. Kildare was assured now that Micky wanted him to do the right thing, not that he had had any doubts about it. In spite of his recklessness, the Irish lieutenant was the soul of honour, and he knew it.

The study was left empty, save for Tom Merry. The Shell fellow lay, with crimson cheeks, in the cupboard. He was glad that Kildare had not discovered him; he was glad that the young lieutenant had been spared that terrible humiliation of knowing that his wretched secret was known to a third party. But knowing the secret at all was painful and humiliating to the junior.

He began to struggle with his bonds now, anxious to escape before Kildare should come back into his study. But the fags had done their work only too well. There was no escape for him. Neither did his chums come near the study. They did not guess where he was. Half an hour passed, and Tom Merry was feeling cramped and desperate. Then there was a sound of footsteps passing the study door. He guessed that Micky Kildare was going to catch his train; his visit was brief. Doubtless Kildare would go to the station with him.

Ten minutes passed, and then he heard footsteps in the study. Wally of the Third opened the cupboard door, and looked in with a disgusted expression on his face.

"So Kildare didn't find you!" he snorted. "So rotten Huns have all the luck! Jolly good mind to leave you there till he comes in again; but I suppose you'd be cramped to death by that time. Not that it wouldn't serve you right!" added Wally grudgingly.

However, merciful feelings prevailed, and the scamp of the Third beat over the Shell fellow, and cut through his bonds with his pocket-knife.

"Now you'd better go and wash your face!" grinned Wally. And he scuttled out of the study before Tom Merry could gain his feet. It wasn't quite safe for the hero of the Third to be at close quarters with Tom just then.

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Day of the Match.

"HA, ha, ha!"

"It's a giddy zebra!"

"Where did you get that face?"

"Bai Jove! You weally look wathah funny, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter greeted Tom Merry. A crowd of juniors had come in from the cricket, and Tom had the ill-luck to run into them as he came scotting out of the Sixth Form passage, after escaping from Kildare's study.

Tom Merry did not pause. He scouted upstairs, and made his way to the nearest bath-room. In his distress of mind, caused by what he had heard in the captain's study, he had forgotten the inking of his face; but the howls of laughter from the School House juniors had speedily recalled it to his mind.

He was soon splashing away savagely with soap and



streaming hot water. Lowther and Manners looked into the bath-room, grinning, while he was thus engaged.

"Been on the warpath?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Looking for trouble," murmured Manners, "and finding some?"

"Grooh!" said Tom Merry, through the lather. "You silly duffers! Why didn't you come and find me? Those cheeky fags did this."

"You let the Third handle you like that?" said Lowther.

Tom Merry's only reply to that question was a whizzing cake of soap, which caught Lowther under the chin and bowled him out of the bath-room. Lowther disappeared, with a wrathful yell. Manners judiciously followed him. Tom Merry seemed to be in an unusually excited frame of mind.

But they were waiting for him, with subdued smiles, when he came down the passage, clean and sweet once more.

"Tea's ready," murmured Lowther pacifically.

"Blow tea!"

"Lost your appetite?" said Lowther sympathetically.

"Had too much ink!"

"Look here, you silly ass—"

"We'll scrag those fags," said Lowther. "We can't have 'em handling the Shell like that. Let's go and scrag 'em!"

"Blow the fags! I've no time for fags!"

"Where are you going?" demanded Lowther, as the captain of the Shell strode away down the passage.

"To Wayland, on my bike."

"What on earth for?"

"For my money, fathead! They told me the money would be ready at the bank yesterday. I'm going for it now."

"What's the hurry all of a sudden?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, as a matter of fact—"

"Can't stay jawing! Good-bye!"

"I was going to say—"

"Rats!"

"Oh, all serene!" said Lowther good-humouredly.

"Run on, if you're not interested in the fact that the bank closes at four, and that it's a quarter to five now!"

Tom Merry stopped.

"Oh, I'd forgotten that!"

"Yes; I fancied you had," assented Lowther. "Better come and have tea. The money will do to-morrow. It won't fly away. Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away, but not when they're in a bank. You're money will be safe enough to-morrow morning, unless they bring out a new moratorium overnight. Come and have tea."

"Hang tea!" roared Tom Merry.

"Well, you seem nice and good-tempered, I must say," said Lowther. "I'll scrag the Third for this! I won't have them spoiling your good temper in this way. You ought to be good-tempered if you can't be good-looking! You can't help your face, but you can help your temper. Come and have tea."

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry strode away. Manners and Lowther looked at one another in wonder.

"Seems to have his royal rag out," remarked Lowther.

"Let's go and have tea."

Lowther and Manners proceeded to the study, but their chum joined them there, his face clear, within a few minutes.

"Got over it?" demanded Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed constrainedly.

"It's all right," he said. "I'm sorry I flew out like that, but it's frightfully annoying about the bank being closed. I shall have to cut over in the morning."

"What's the hurry? We haven't found our recruit yet," said Manners. "Tain't easy to find that recruit. Most of the bounders are rolling up, and don't care twopenny about the financial part of the bizney."

"We don't want to find that recruit now," said Tom awkwardly.

"Changed your mind?"

"In a way—yes."

"Going to stand a whacking feed with the tin?"

"No, ass! It's not mine."

"Well, it would save trouble to send it straight to the Tobacco Fund," said Lowther.

"I don't want to save trouble. It isn't that," Tom Merry coloured deeply as he saw the curious gaze of his chums bent on his face. "I've been thinking it over, and—and I've found somebody."

"Found the recruit?"

"Not exactly a recruit, but I've found a way of helping a man in khaki who's in danger of getting the boot unless he gets help."

"Well, that's just the case we were going to look for, or near enough," said Lowther. "That's as good as getting a man for the Army."

"Yes. I—I can't tell you fellows about it, because—because the chap would turn simply green if he knew that anybody knew," said Tom. "I simply can't mention his name. I wish I didn't know it myself. But it's come to my knowledge. The fellow's got into an awful fix, but he's as proud as Punch, and a really first-rate honourable chap, only a bit of a duffer. Mind, you're to keep this dark. Of course, he would refuse the money if I offered it to him."

Lowther and Manners regarded their chum in amazement.

"How in the name of the Kaiser's moustache are you going to work it then?" demanded Lowther. "If he won't take the money, how are you going to give it to him?"

"I've got to wrangle it somehow."

"I see—mysterious donor—patriotic gift—strictly anonymous," grinned Lowther. "Only in this case the name of the generous giver is not to leak out afterwards; you must depart from the rules of the game on that point."

"It's got to be frightfully dark," said Tom. "Simply frightfully. I believe the chap would punch my head if he knew, and if I offered him money he would simply scrag me."

"Well, that's a good reason for keeping anonymous, I must say," remarked Lowther. "Though I don't know that I'd bother about helping a chap who showed his gratitude by scragging me."

"You don't understand the case."

"Admitted. As I haven't the barest idea who or what you're talking about, it's a bit difficult to catch on. However, you needn't blush like a giddy beetroot. I'm not going to ask questions. You'll have to explain to your Yankee uncle, though."

"I can do that without mentioning names."

"Good! Nice, trustful old Johnny won't suspect that you'd blue the quids in riotous living, I suppose?"

"Fathead!" said Tom.

"Well, let's talk about cricket, and see if you can be more polite," said Lowther genially.

Tom Merry laughed, and they talked cricket over tea. Manners and Lowther refrained from asking questions, though they certainly felt very curious. But the Lanchester match, which was to take place on the morrow, was an interesting topic, and it soon drove other matters from their minds.

Tom Merry did not refer to the subject again, excepting to mention to Study No. 6 that he had decided what to do with the money, so that they need not continue their quest for the elusive recruit. And as he told them that he didn't want to mention names, the chums of the Fourth politely did not ask any questions.

Tom Merry was very thoughtful that evening. When Kildare came to the Shell dormitory to see lights out he was looking thoughtful, too, and harassed. Tom Merry knew what was on his mind, and he would have given a good deal to relieve Kildare of his worry. But that was impossible. He could not venture to say a word. Even if Kildare had not been angry and humiliated at the discovery that Tom knew so much he certainly would not have accepted money from him. That was not to be thought of.

But Tom had laid his plans by this time. When Kildare received that little present anonymously he could never suspect that it came from a junior of St. Jim's. He knew nothing, of course, of Mr. Poinsett's cheque sent for his nephew to use for the benefit of the



men in khaki, and so he could never dream that a junior schoolboy could have such a sum in his possession.

The next morning school was dismissed unusually early. The Lanchester team was arriving at eleven, and on that great occasion the Head dismissed the school after second lesson as well as the first eleven.

It was a bright and sunny spring morning, ideal weather for cricket. The first eleven were in great spirits, with the exception of their captain.

Kildare was in a subdued mood that puzzled his comrades.

Few of the St. Jim's fellows had any doubts about the match, though they knew, of course, that Lanchester would give them a hard tussle. They did not see anything for Kildare to worry about. They did not know what Tom Merry knew.

Immediately school was dismissed there was a rush to the cricket-ground, and Big Side was swarmed with seniors and juniors. Figgins & Co. of the New House rushed for the best places, and Study No. 6 rushed to intercept them, and there was the usual scrap. But Tom Merry did not join in it as usual. Tom had wheeled out his bike, and was speeding away towards Wayland Town.

He reached the bank, and a polite official handed him five banknotes for ten pounds each in the most courteous manner—five crisp and rustling tenners. Tom Merry breathed more freely with relief when he felt the rustling notes in his hand. It was so large a sum for a junior in the Shell that he had had a sort of lurking doubt about it till the banknotes were safe in his hand.

He hurried from the bank to the post-office, and there a short letter was written and a registered letter despatched.

Then Tom Merry rode home to St. Jim's in a contented frame of mind.

### CHAPTER 13. Kildare for St. Jim's.

"WELL bowled!"

"Bravo, Darrel!"

The Lanchester match was already going strong, when Tom Merry, having put up his bike, came down to Big Side. All St. Jim's was swarming round the field and other folks, attracted to the scene by the big match. Lanchester were batting first, and a wicket had gone down to Darrel's bowling.

"How goes it?" asked Tom, as he joined Manners and Lowther, wedged in the crowd before the pavilion, ruthlessly elbowing Wally of the Third out of the way, greatly to the wrath of that young gentleman.

"Two down for eight," said Lowther.

"Oh, good!"

"They won't be out before lunch, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus. "They are wathah good, though their best men are not heah. Some of them came ova in khaki, you know, booked for the fwoint in a week or two. Wathah a decent set of chaps, but weally hardly up to our form."

Arthur Augustus might have been captain of the first eleven by the way he made that remark.

Tom Merry fixed his eyes upon Kildare in the field. The captain of St. Jim's was not looking his usual alert and cheery self. But his play was good. Even as Tom glanced at him, Kildare's hand went up, and the ball rested in his palm, and there was a cheer from the Saints.

"Well caught! Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Kildare is in wathah good form," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He seems to weath wathah a wowwied look, but he is playin' all wright. Wait till he starts battin', though!"

But Kildare had no chance of batting yet. The Lanchester innings lasted over lunch. When the cricketers knocked off for that necessary interval, Lanchester were 70 for eight. It was a good score enough, but nothing like what the score would have been for Lanchester's old team. They missed their merry men who were away playing the Great Game, amid the roar of cannon, on the fields of Flanders. But the team, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 380.

scratch as it was, was very good indeed, and St. Jim's had all their work cut out to win.

After lunch Lanchester resumed their innings, and finished for an even hundred.

The crowd had increased in size when St. Jim's went out to bat. Darrel and Monteith opened the innings for St. Jim's.

Brown of Lanchester led his men into the field.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "There comes our old friend the bookie."

Tom Merry compressed his lips as he looked. A man in loud check clothes and a rakish bowler hat was strolling on the field with a black, unlighted cigar between his teeth. It was Mr. Spooner.

The bookmaker came round to the pavilion, where the waiting batsmen were looking on. Kildare did not seem to see him.

Mr. Spooner joined the captain of St. Jim's, and gave him an affable nod, and a steely glitter came into Kildare's eyes. His hand clenched involuntarily. But he unclenched it again. For Micky's sake he could not afford to knock Mr. Spooner down.

"Going strong?" said Mr. Spooner agreeably.

Kildare nodded.

"How's the other side?"

"Hundred for the first innings."

"Going to beat them—wot?"

"Possibly."

Mr. Spooner's affable smile vanished, and a very ugly look came over his red, coarse face.

"There's still time, you know," he said, sinking his voice to a whisper, so that only the captain of St. Jim's could hear him.

Kildare did not seem to hear. He turned his back upon Mr. Spooner, and began to speak to Baker of the New House. Mr. Spooner's eyes glittered, and he shoved his hands deep into his pockets, and stood watching the game.

Mr. Spooner's mind was fully made up. His feelings were bitter. Had Kildare agreed to his suggestion, he could have made a small fortune on the match. But in the state of uncertainty he was in he had not ventured to increase his stakes. But he stood to lose a hundred and thirty pounds if Lanchester lost. It was his own fault, but that made no difference to Mr. Spooner. If St. Jim's lost the match, whether by chance or by intention, he was safe, and he would go easy with Micky Kildare. So long as his money was safe, he would not ask questions—if Kildare chose to affect that he had tried to win, it would not matter to him. That St. Jim's should lose—that was all Mr. Spooner wanted. He was an accommodating gentleman. He was prepared to affect a belief that Kildare hadn't given it away, if that would please Kildare. He didn't mind.

But if Kildare won the match, the chopper would come down on Kildare's cousin. Mr. Spooner would not lose his money unrevenged. If his money were lost, Micky Kildare was lost, too!

He could not believe that the captain of St. Jim's would see his cousin ruined merely for the sake of winning a game of cricket—for that was how Mr. Spooner looked at it, considerations of personal honour not appealing to him at all.

But he was doubtful; and it was in a very unpleasant state of uncertainty that he stood watching the match.

Darrel came out at last, and Kildare went on to bat.

Mr. Spooner watched him grimly. Now was the test! His eyes never left Kildare for an instant.

The first ball to Kildare's wicket was cut away for four, and the crowd roared. The popular captain was beginning well. St. Jim's looked forward to a tremendous innings; it was clear that Kildare was at the top of his form.

Mr. Spooner breathed hard through his prominent nose. Was the captain of St. Jim's merely keeping up appearances at first, or was he playing to win? The bookmaker clenched his fat hands. Let him win—let him—and he should rue it!

As if the burning gaze of the bookmaker made itself felt, Kildare looked up—his eyes caught Mr. Spooner's—he read the grim, threatening glare of the rascal, and a shade came over his handsome face. His thoughts



wandered for the moment—the ball was coming down—but at that moment what Kildare saw was a handsome, distressed face, a young fellow in khaki, disgraced, humiliated, ruined—his cousin Micky—it floated before his mind like a vision—

Crash!

"Oh!" came in a gasp from the crowd.

It was the crash of his wicket that recalled Kildare to himself. He stared blankly, almost dazedly, at the wrecked wicket. As one in a dream, he heard the bowler's "How's that?" followed by the umpire's terse "Out!"

He was out—down for four! He had come on to the pitch prepared to play the game of his life, and he was out for four. He walked off dazedly. There was silence in the crowd. All the fellows knew what Kildare must be feeling like for the moment. But Mr. Spooner was grinning with satisfaction.

His fears were at rest now. Kildare was giving the game away, and that was all he wanted. For that was the conclusion the bookmaker had come to.

"Well done!" he whispered, as Kildare passed him.

He shrank back from the look Kildare gave him. The cricketer's grasp had closed for a moment convulsively on the cane handle of the bat, as if he would fell the grinning, greasy scoundrel at his feet. But he controlled himself, and passed on. Mr. Spooner shrugged his shoulders.

"Cruel luck, old man," said Darrel. "Better in the next innings."

Kildare nodded without speaking.

The fall of their captain's wicket for four runs had damped the spirits of the St. Jim's crowd. The mighty batsman, who had been expected to knock up fifty at least, who might have secured a century, was down for four. The Saints hardly hoped now that St. Jim's would draw level with Lanchester on the first innings.

Their misgivings were well-founded. The batsmen did their best, but the bowling was good, and St. Jim's were all down in their first innings for seventy.

Tom Merry had felt a catch at his heart when Kildare's wicket had gone down so hopelessly. But he would not admit the dark suspicion—his faith in Kildare was too well founded for that. It was a case of nerves, he told himself—knowing how much there was at stake, Kildare had not been himself at that moment. The other fellows had commented on it in wonder. For Kildare had not even hit at the ball—he seemed to have gone to sleep—gone to sleep standing up like a horse, as Figgins of the New House remarked with a sniff.

"Must be off his form, aftah all," was Arthur Augustus's sage verdict. "If he didn't come wound in the second innings, we're done, deah boys."

"Here comes young khaki," remarked Blake.

Lieutenant Kildare joined the captain of St. Jim's while the pitch was being rolled before the Lanchester second innings. Mr. Spooner gave the young lieutenant a genial nod, which Micky did not acknowledge.

"You're in time for the second innings, Mick," said Kildare, forcing a smile. He was feeling despondent just then. His failure in his innings weighed on his mind, he was furious with himself for allowing the bookmaker's look to exercise so much influence upon him. He bitterly resolved that it should be different in the second innings.

"How's the score?" asked Micky.

"Seventy for us, and a hundred for Lanchester, on the first innings."

Micky whistled.

"That isn't what you expected?"

"I had bad luck."

"Eric!"

Kildare flushed.

"It will be different when I go in again, I think," he said. "It was really bad luck, Micky; but I caught that man's eye, and—and—well, it won't happen again. We'll win yet, if we've got it in us."

"Kick him off the place!"

"We don't want a scene, Micky, nor to start him talking. Besides," added Kildare grimly, "I want him to be looking on when we win, if we do win."

Kildare had to go into the field then, and Micky

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remained looking on, keeping a distance from Mr. Spooner. The Lanchester men were batting again.

The runs went up, and the wickets went down, at a fair rate, till Kildare went on to bowl. There were loud cheers when the captain of St. Jim's gave his side the hat trick. Mr. Spooner's face was a study.

"What did the fellow mean by it?" was Mr. Spooner's savage thought of alarm. The fat gentleman's hopes and fears, alternately rising and falling, were really like a see-saw.

Mr. Spooner was not enjoying himself that afternoon. He himself resolved to make somebody suffer for it.

Lanchester fought hard to finish, however, and they took ninety runs for their innings. St. Jim's were left with a hundred-and-twenty to get to tie with Lanchester, and after their first score Lanchester did not think they would get them. And the St. Jim's fellows had very strong doubts. It was pretty clear that it all depended on Kildare. If his innings was what his friends hoped, all was well for the school. But if he failed again—

"Bai Jove! I'm feelin' quite in a fluttah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally wish they would not stop for tea just now."

But they did stop for tea, and the crowd had to contain their impatience. Mr. Spooner was still more anxious than the St. Jim's fellows. He munched a sandwich from his pocket, and refreshed himself from a flask, in a savage and discontented mood.

The St. Jim's second innings came on at last, after what seemed an age to Mr. Spooner and to the eager juniors. The innings again opened with Darrel and Monteith. This time Darrel had bad luck, being caught out in the first over for two. St. Jim's almost groaned.

Darrel was their next best man after Kildare. And Darrel was down for two. It was cruel luck. Was that long-expected victory over Lanchester not to materialise after all?

"Here comes Kildare!" murmured Tom Merry.

Amid breathless expectancy, the captain of St. Jim's walked to the vacant wicket. All eyes were upon him. Was he to fail his side again—or to play up as the school longed to see him play? Mr. Spooner watched him like a hawk; but the captain of St. Jim's had pulled himself well together, and he was impervious to Mr. Spooner's glances now. Micky Kildare watched him with a tense gaze. In Micky's heart there was a hope that Lanchester would win—honourably. If St. Jim's were beaten, he was safe—his act of folly would not have to be paid for at such a bitter price. It did not matter if St. Jim's lost, if they lost fairly. But not even to save his name would Micky have wished Kildare to play his comrades false.

The ball came down, and slithered away from the bat, and the batsmen were running. Four—and Kildare

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and Monteith safe again at the wickets before the leather came in. Again it was a good beginning. But would it last?

"I'm on tentah-hooks, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus plaintively.

But the dear boys did not reply—they did not even hear—they were on tenterhooks too.

Clack! again, and the leather sped—another four! "Hurrah!"

Old Kildare was getting into his stride at last! He was not to fail again!

"Good for a century, you see!" chuckled Blake.

"Well hit, Kildare!"

"Bravo!"

Over after over! Monteith went out, and Baker came in. He fell, and Rushden took his place; then Langton, and then North, and then Webb, and then Lefevre of the Fifth. Wicket after wicket, but no duck's eggs, though the scores were not high. But Kildare was immovable. He saw them in, and he saw them out. And whenever he had the bowling, he was cutting away the ball with his well-known swipes.

Cheers rose, and swelled to a roar. Kildare was set now, the Lancashire bowling could not touch him, and he gave the field no chances.

A hundred runs—fifty of them off Kildare's bat. Eight down for a hundred. Twenty more to get for a tie, and Kildare still batting, with two more wickets to back him up. And the next over gave him ten. Then four runs for Cutts of the Fifth, his partner, and Cutts was clean bowled. A hundred and fourteen—and last man in!

The excitement was breathless now. Mr. Spooner was almost green. Lieutenant Kildare was breathing hard. Kildare of St. Jim's was like a rock.

A single run, stolen by his partner, and Kildare had the batting again. Five more wanted to tie; six to win! And away went the ball for four! There was a roar as the leather came in too late. Blake tossed his cap in the air, not caring where it came down, or, indeed, whether it ever came down at all. Hundred-and-nineteen! One wanted to tie, two to win, and Kildare of the Sixth still batting!

"Good old Kildare!" said Tom Merry.

There was a breathless hush as the last ball went down. Everybody felt instinctively that it would be the last ball. The glistening ball swept through the air, and the leather sailed away. There was a throb in every St. Jim's heart as Brown, of Lancashire, leaped for it; but it was beyond the clutch of the heftiest fieldsmen, sailing away, and the batsmen were running—running for their lives. One—two—and a roar!

"St. Jim's wins! Bravo—bravo!"

"Hurrah! Hip-pip-hurrah!"

Kildare walked off the field amid a roar. But the whirlwind of cheering found no echo in his heart. He left Darrel to do the honours for the Lancashire men, and walked quietly away with Micky. Lieutenant Kildare's face was set and hard. Cheers followed them to the School House—cheers for the cricketer, cheers for the man in khaki. Outside the pavilion Mr. Spooner stood rooted to the ground, his flabby cheeks pale, and an almost murderous light growing in his eyes.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Light at Last.

"T'S all up, Eric!" Lieutenant Kildare spoke quietly as he stood facing Kildare in the captain's study. The flush had died out of Kildare's face, and he was pale. He had done his duty, but his heart was heavy. He could not have done otherwise, but the price that was to be paid for doing the right thing was a heavy one.

"Micky, old man"—Kildare's voice was low and shaken—"I'm sorry. Perhaps, after all, the man would gain nothing by—by going to extremes. Perhaps—"

The lieutenant laughed shortly.

"Did you see his face?"

"I did not look at him."

"I did," said Micky. "It's all up! I've only got myself to thank, and I won't trouble you any more about it, Eric. I've bothered you too much already. I shall

resign my commission immediately, and take the consequences of playing the fool. It can't be helped. After all, I can always go into the ranks. There are better men than I am in the ranks."

"Tap!"

"Here he comes!" said Micky grimly. "I thought he wouldn't go without seeing us, Eric! Let him come!"

"Come in!" said Kildare dully.

But it was not Mr. Spooner; it was Toby, the School House page. He held a registered letter in his hand.

"This is for you, Master Kildare. It came while you was playing, so Mr. Carrington signed for it, and told me to bring it to you arter, sir."

"Thank you, Toby!"

Toby laid the letter on the table and retired. Kildare hardly looked at it. He was in no mood for reading letters just then. But the lieutenant cast his eyes upon the bulky envelope.

"Open your letter, Eric."

"It doesn't matter now."

Micky gave a short, nervous laugh.

"Do you get so many fat registered letters?" he said.

Kildare smiled faintly, and picked up the letter. He had not the faintest idea what was in it or whence it came, and he did not care at that moment. But the thick envelope certainly looked as if it were packed with banknotes. But how could that be possible?

The captain of St. Jim's slit the envelope with his penknife. Somehow his heart beat a little faster. He had written to his father for a tip, certainly, but surely it was impossible that the old gentleman had sent him a large sum. Micky's eyes were on the fat envelope. In his desperate strait, the unhappy young man's heart leaped at a stray of hope.

"Good heavens!"

It was almost a shout from Kildare as he drew a wedge of banknotes from the envelope. Micky gasped.

"Tenners!"

"I—I'm dreaming, I suppose," said Kildare dazedly. "There—there must be some mistake. The paper can't have sent me this."

He separated the folded wedge of notes.

"Five of them! Tenners!" he said. "Of course, it's a mistake. They can't be for me."

"The envelope's addressed to you," said Micky. "'Eric Kildare, School House, St. James's, Sussex.' Not much mistake about that. Registered, too."

"I—I can't understand it."

"Is there a letter?"

"Yes, a sheet; a few lines. Listen."

Kildare read it out, in tones of wonder. The brief letter was written in a backward, sloping hand, evidently to disguise the handwriting.

"Eric Kildare, St. Jim's."

"A friend who has accidentally learned of your cousin's difficulty begs you to accept the enclosed."

That was all.

Kildare and Micky looked at one another blankly.

There was not the faintest clue to the sender. For several minutes there was silence in the study. Micky felt his brain almost reeling. Kildare's eyes were moist. Truly, the friend who had sent those banknotes was a friend in need!

"Well," said Kildare, at last, "it isn't a dream. It knocks me over; but the banknotes are real enough, Micky. Who can have done this?"

"Some chap with plenty of cash," said Micky, with almost a sobbing breath. "Perhaps one of the officers in my regiment. Something may have got about. But no; he'd have sent it to me, I should say. Some friend of yours. Have you let something drop?"

"Not a syllable, not a whisper—not to a soul."

"When it beats me."

Kildare passed his hand over his brow. It seemed like a dream; it seemed that it could not be real. Yet it was real enough. He looked at the banknotes—five crisp, new Bank of England notes, each for ten pounds. They were genuine enough. There was no mistake about it.

"Whoever he is," said Kildare, at last, "he's a splendid chap! How he got to know of this is a mystery. It must



be somebody the bookmaker has talked to—somebody who knows Spooner—for certainly I haven't said a word to a soul. Anyway, whoever he is, he has saved us, Micky. We couldn't send the notes back if we wanted to—and we don't want to. Of course, it's a loan. We must find the chap out somehow, and repay the money when we can get it together. But, meantime—"

"Meantime, some unknown friend has saved my name," said Micky. "Heaven bless him, whoever he is! Sure, I'm out of the scrape at last, and, sure, there won't be another scrape like that, Eric. I've had my lesson, and, plaze the powers, I'll never put me foot in it again!"

He crumpled the notes in his hand. Even now it was hard to believe that it was real. Kildare's face was very bright. His heart was full of gratitude to the unknown friend who had saved his cousin from disgrace. He wondered whom he could be; but he was far from guessing.

"Oh, Micky! You can pay the blackguard now, and you're clear—"

"Hurroo!" The lieutenant in khaki was gay again now, his troubles had dropped from him like a cloak. "Oh, this is ripping, Eric! Bedad, I want to see Spooner now, and the sooner the better entirely."

There was a heavy step in the passage, as if in answer to him. A loud and raucous voice was heard.

"Don't talk to me! I'm going to see him; he's there! He owes me money, the young swindler! Get aside!"

Kildare jerked open the study door. Two or three of the Sixth were barring the way of a red-faced, excited, furious man.

"Let him pass," said Kildare quietly.

"You want to see this merchant?" asked Rushton.

"Yes; let him come in."

Mr. Spooner was allowed to pass. He strode into Kildare's study raging. The captain of St. Jim's closed the door. Mr. Spooner shook a fat fist at him.

"Now I want my money!" he roared. "You've played me for a mug; well, now you can pay for it. That young swindler—"

"Speak quietly, please, or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life, Mr. Spooner!" said Kildare, clenching his hands and making a fierce stride towards the infuriated bookmaker.

"Pay me my money, then." Mr. Spooner lowered his voice involuntarily. "You've taken your way, and now I'll take mine. Pay me my money, or Mister Lieutenant Swindler Kildare will be known all over London as a defaulter and a swindler before night!"

"By gad!" said Micky, with a drawl. "If you repeat those remarks, Mr. Spooner, I'll lay my cane about you till you howl! As for your money, there it is." He tossed the banknotes on the table. "Now I'll thruple you for my little bit of paper."

Mr. Spooner gasped.

He caught up the banknotes and examined them. Then a bitter look came over his face.

"I understand now," he snarled. "You'd raised the money, so you could afford to quarrel with me!"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"My little paper, please!" he said.

With a furious face the bookmaker opened his pocket-book and handed out the paper.

Lieutenant Kildare examined it carefully, nodded, and dropped it into the fire.

"Our business is concluded, Mr. Spooner," he remarked. "Our acquaintance concludes at the same moment. Kindly get out!"

"You—you—you—" Mr. Spooner spluttered.

He had his money, but he was not satisfied. In his present infuriated state of mind he would have chosen rather to have his revenge.

Kildare opened the door again.

"Get out!" he said.

"Hang you!" snarled Mr. Spooner. "Hang you, the pair of you! You managed to raise the money at the last minute, and played me false after all. Hands off!"

But Kildare had had enough of him. He grasped the bookmaker by the shoulders and spun him out of the room. Mr. Spooner went reeling along the passage.

"Now, if you're not off the premises in one minute, I'll kick you from here to the gates!" exclaimed Kildare.

Mr. Spooner did not wait to be kicked. He hurried away, choking with rage, and disappeared.

Kildare stepped back into the study.

"All's well that ends well," he said, with a deep breath.

"And sure it's you that's saved me, Eric: I was right to come to you, after all," said Micky. "Sure, it's ten years younger I feel! Tare and ounds, what's that thumping now?"

They rushed to the window as there was a sudden roar in the quadrangle. They could not help grinning at the sight of Mr. Spooner being chased towards the gates, with a crowd of juniors after him.

Mr. Spooner had raised his voice in the quad, and Tom Merry & Co. had undertaken to subdue it. They were doing so effectively. Mr. Spooner's rakish hat was knocked off, and the juniors were chasing him down to the gates with loud yells. Tom Merry, just behind the panting bookmaker, was helping him along with alternate feet, as if Mr. Spooner were a very fat football, and Tom was dribbling him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lieutenant Kildare roared, as the discomforted Mr. Spooner vanished out of the gates, and Tom Merry hurled his hat after him. "The young omadhauns! Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare laughed too; he could laugh now. Mr. Spooner was gone for good! The shadow had passed from the life of the young lieutenant in khaki.

Tom Merry noted Kildare's face when the captain of St. Jim's came back after seeing his cousin off that evening. Kildare looked as if he were walking on air.

It was very evident that his troubles were over—that the shadow had passed.

And Tom Merry rejoiced inwardly. But not a word passed his lips, even to his best chums. Micky's secret remained a secret, and Lieutenant Kildare never knew to whom he owed deliverance, and the captain of St. Jim's, though he often thought about the matter, never guessed. It was a case of a still tongue showing a wise head, and Tom Merry's silence on that subject was never broken.

But if he had needed any proof that he had done well and wisely, he had when, later, there came the news of Kildare's cousin from the front in Flanders—news of terrible fighting and gallant courage, and of one more Victoria Cross for a gallant son of Old Ireland!

THE END.

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## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Harold Mackenzie and Jim Holdsworth, while cruising in their yacht, the Isis, in the Red Sea, land on one of the barren Hanish Islands.

Harold discovers an old metal tablet in a cave, containing information of the mysterious City of Flame, situated in the unknown country of Shoa, or Sheba. Just afterwards, Jim Holdsworth finds an ancient gold armband, set with a large diamond, when an Arab mysteriously appears.

He calls himself Anubis of Shoa, and demands the tablet and diamond-studded armband as his property. The two comrades refuse to give them up, and, after warning the lads of the awful dangers they will encounter if they try to reach the City of Flame, the man disappears as mysteriously as he had come.

Harold Mackenzie, Jim Holdsworth, and Bob Sigbee, an American member of the crew, form themselves into an expedition for discovering the City of Flame, and, after penetrating for a hundred miles up an unknown river, are surprised one night by the chanting of a band of natives, who endeavour to kill them with throwing-spears. Bob Sigbee replies to this attempt by a shot, the report of which is followed by an appalling cry.

(Now go on with the story).

### Short Shift.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jim Holdsworth. "What did you fire at, Sigbee?" Was it— He paused abruptly, and rubbed his eyes. "My sainted aunt! Natives!"

At the report of the rifle the natives on the bank had flung themselves flat down upon the ground, but now they were rising again by twos and threes. Mackenzie stared at them for a full minute without speaking; then he ejaculated the single word:

"Anharas!"

"Do you mean that's the name of the tribe, cap?" asked Sigbee.

Mackenzie nodded.

"I heard about them once from a lion-hunter who had penetrated into this part of the country," he replied. "He described those strange head-dresses they wear—the bleached skulls of antelopes, with the horns attached. This is the first time I have ever seen any of them."

"What else did your hunter friend tell you about them?" asked Jim Holdsworth.

"Nothing to make me feel glad that we have met them," answered Mackenzie drily. "They captured him, and he said that he considered himself lucky that he managed to escape with his life."

"Wal, I've laid out one of them," observed Sigbee, with satisfaction. "It was the guy who hurled a spear at me. If it was him let out that yell, he was 'most as badly scared as he was hurt. They've opened the ball, and it's up to us to see they dance to our tune."

"We're all right in the boat, anyway," said Holdsworth. "They won't swim out to us, for fear of crocodiles."

"Don't shout till you're out of the wood," said Mackenzie. "I don't like their quietness. Seems as though they've got an unpleasant surprise for us."

They had. Every one of the natives was now standing upright, the firelight glinting on the broad blades of the spears which they carried. Whether they thought that the white men could not deal out death with their strange weapons—for Sigbee had only wounded the man he had hit—

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OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," Every Monday.

"THE MAGNET," Every Monday.

"THE DREADNOUGHT," Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 10, Every Saturday, 2.

or whether they trusted to their superior numbers, was a matter of speculation, but they stood there fully exposed.

For a while they stood in absolute silence, and it was this silence which Mackenzie did not like. It seemed to carry a menace with it. Then suddenly they broke out again into their low, monotonous chant, and almost at the same instant Mackenzie uttered a warning cry.

"Look out!" he exclaimed. "There are more of them coming from the other side!"

He pointed to where some tall rushes screened the entrance to a creek. And from this creek, where it had been hidden from sight, a canoe shot out, propelled by four Anharas with short paddles. There were three others crouching down in the bows of the craft. They were armed, like the rest of the party, with spears.

"We'd better plug 'em, and waste no time about it," advised Sigbee. "They're making straight for us."

"Wait a minute," said Mackenzie, who did not like the idea of firing at the men until he was certain they were going to make an attack.

Then he shouted in Arabic, on the chance that it might be understood.

"Keep away, for we have the power to kill!"

"So have we, white man!" came the answer, not from the canoe, but from a deep, sonorous voice on the bank. The man did not speak in pure Arabic, but in a dialect of it, which, however, Mackenzie could quite easily understand.

"That means we've got to fight," said Mackenzie.

The crack of Sigbee's rifle came on the last word, and one of the natives in the bows of the canoe rolled over on his side. Again the chant of the men on the bank ceased, and the menacing silence followed. But the Anharas no longer remained motionless. Throwing-spears came whizzing through the air. Holdsworth and Mackenzie fired, and then clubbed their rifles as the canoe crashed alongside the whaleboat.

The three adventurers could have beaten off their assailants in the canoe, and perhaps the natives realised this, for one of them promptly cut the whaleboat's anchor-ropes, with the consequence that the current swept the boat right on to the bank, where it jutted out to a point.

The crowd of Anharas on the shore could now take part in the fight; they had been handicapped before, when they could only fling their throwing-spears, for they were just as likely to hit a friend as a foe.

Mackenzie went down, with a spear-thrust in his left shoulder, but Jim Holdsworth and Bob Sigbee fought gamely on, though it was a hopeless fight now.

"I'm done!" exclaimed Jim at length. He was bleeding from several wounds, and had scarcely strength to raise his weapon.

Sigbee was almost in as bad a case. It was the end. They were borne down and overpowered.

"It will be a short shift," panted the American. "Least, ways, I hope so. Because if not, it's likely to mean torture."

### Sigbee's Stratagem.

Apparently it was not to be a "short shift," for their captors bound up their wounds, gave them each a small amount of food and water, then secured their arms behind their backs, and left them, with two spearmen standing guard over them.

Three of the Anharas had been killed in the fight, and several wounded, but this did not seem to trouble the others greatly. Life was evidently held cheaply among them. Their



dead they dropped into the river, and the swift current carried the bodies away. In due course the alligators would deal with them.

"I don't think I want to drink any more water from that stream," muttered Jim Holdsworth, with a slight shudder.

The three were lying on the ground quite close to each other, but they were so weak and exhausted from loss of blood and the pain of their wounds that they felt no inclination to talk. All they wanted to do was to lie still and rest. Fortunately, none of their hurts were serious, but they were exceedingly painful.

About two hours passed, and the majority of the Anharas had stretched themselves out on the ground to sleep. There were two sentries, in addition to the guard over the prisoners.

So far the chief, or leader, of these natives had not come near the captive whites—at least, not since the termination of the fight—but had remained aloof, even from his own followers. He was tall and sinewy, his features were something like a Bedouin Arab, being hawklike, with fierce, keen eyes and a hooked nose. But it was an evil face, cold, cruel, and merciless in expression. He wore a black leopard-skin fastened at his shoulders and hanging down behind him.

His other garment was a coarse, white robe, fastened at the waist by a girdle of some soft metal. He had been reclining near the fire for some time, but when the camp became silent—though the Anharas talked but little, and laughed not at all—he rose to his feet and walked over to the prisoners.

They were all awake; but Mackenzie, having a better knowledge of Arabic than his comrades, did the talking. He did not wait for the chief to address him, but tackled him at once.

"Why is it that we, who came in peace to your land, wishing only to see it, have been treated as though we were enemies seeking your lives?" he demanded.

"You are strangers," was the reply, "and we want no strangers in the land. Therefore you are enemies. In particular, we have been warned to allow no white man to pass the Barrier."

"The Barrier!" echoed Mackenzie. "What is that?"

"In time you will see," answered the chief. "You will be taken thither. It is also the place of sacrifice."

Mackenzie didn't like that last remark, and he did not feel inclined just then to ask any questions about the "place of sacrifice."

Sigsbee, who understood what was said, muttered something under his breath which did not sound like a blessing.

"Has any man of our race ever passed the Barrier?" asked Mackenzie.

The chief hesitated before replying, then he said:

"None!"

"How doesn't seem to be quite sure," observed Sigsbee.

"Your men started the fight," pursued Mackenzie, "for one of them attacked us by throwing a spear while we were resting in our boat. Therefore, as we are not cowards, we defended ourselves. We fought for the honour of our race, which is greater than yours will ever be—"

"Not greater than our nation was in the past," interposed the chief.

"Well, the past is buried," said Mackenzie. "It is the present which interests us now. You overpowered us because you outnumbered us—nine to one. What are you going to do with us?"

The chief smiled in a peculiarly unpleasant manner. It was a dreadful, mirthless smile, which sent a cold shiver through Mackenzie.

"That also you will learn in time," replied the chief. "Have patience. There is still a journey of five days before we reach the place to which we are taking you."

With that he turned and walked slowly away.

"Patience!" growled Sigsbee. "Gee! I like that!"

"Perhaps he is giving wise counsel than he imagines," said Mackenzie.

"Five days!" murmured Jim Holdsworth. "Much may happen in five days."

Much did happen in that period; but, unfortunately, there was nothing which put even a remote chance of escape in their way.

The party of Anharas broke camp, and started on their march inland soon after daybreak on the following morning, being joined by twelve others, which brought their number up to thirty-two.

In addition there were ten or twelve negroes, who appeared to be slaves, for they had taken no part in the fighting, and had to perform all the menial work of the camp.

As on the two first days of the march the white captives were in no condition to walk, they were carried in roughly-made litters, the negroes being the bearers.

But on the third day the chief intimated that they would be carried no further.

"You will walk now," he said; "for your wounds are

healing quickly. And there must be no delay. If you are too slow, the men who guard you will use their spears to lance you."

The country through which they passed on those last three days of the march was of the most part dense forest; but always there was a wide track cutting through the timber, which seemed to have been beaten hard by the tramp of numberless feet. Yet they passed but few men on the road, and they, in every instance, armed patrols of the Anharas tribe.

"This track is an old caravan-route, I suppose," said Jim, as he and Mackenzie tramped side by side.

"Slave-traders, I think," replied his chum. "These fellows still have slaves—those blacks who carried our litters."

"They might be roused up to rebel—"

"I wouldn't put faith in that. They are too crushed and kept under. They haven't a kick left in them."

"That chap Anubis, who happened upon us so mysteriously in the cave on the island," said Jim, "seemed to be about right when he declared that we should never reach the City of Flame; that we should go to our doom. He knew something."

"We're not dead yet," put in Sigsbee, who was marching behind them.

"Do you see any chance of making our escape?" asked Jim, who noted something in the American's tone which sounded hopeful.

"Not yet," was the reply. "Not the ghost of a chance while we're on the march. We must wait till we get to the place they call the Barrier. I've got a sort of a kind of a scheme at the back of my brain, but I can't work it out proper yet. They've brought our rifles and ammunition along, and all the rest of our truck out of the beat. And I guess I can work my wrists free of these things just as soon as I want to."

Their wrists were still fastened behind their backs with thongs of raw hide, but neither Jim nor Mackenzie had deemed it possible that they could free themselves. They had tried each night, but all in vain.

They put great faith in the sailor-hunter, however, for they knew by the yarns they had heard him spin that he had been in some remarkably tight places during the course of his adventurous career. Therefore, they possessed their souls in patience until, on the evening of the fifth day, they reached their last camping-ground, and the Barrier was in front of them.

It was well named. A vast, perpendicular wall of rock stretched away on either hand as far as the eye could see. They were camped on a plateau, bare of trees, grim and sinister-looking. To their left the ground sloped down abruptly to a river, which, so far as they could make out, ended at the rock wall in a wide lake.

"What is beyond the Barrier?" said Jim.

"The City of Flame," was Mackenzie's startling reply; "or else I am quite out of my reckoning as to the direction we have been travelling. That city of mystery is well screened from the outside world, and those Anharas evidently guard the only approach to it."

"Then there must be a way over or through the Barrier?" said Jim.

"That stands to reason," replied Mackenzie; "but whether we shall find it, supposing we have the luck to escape from the Anharas with our lives, is another matter."

"I'm open to bet my bottom dollar that we shall escape," put in Sigsbee confidently; "though I ain't going to bet we'll get through that wall of rock."

Further conversation was put an end to for the present, as now, for the first time since their capture, the three were separated. They were placed fully fifty yards apart from each other, and their legs were now bound as well as their arms.

Of course, they could communicate one with the other by shouting, but that would have to be reserved for an emergency. To carry on too much of it would only serve to rouse the suspicions of the natives, with the result that they would be placed so far apart that they would be unable to communicate with each other at all.

Sigsbee, in his usual daring and reckless manner, certainly did shout out:

"Say, partners, how are you off for ropes? I'm 'most like a neatly-done-up parcel!"

But after that there was silence.

Darkness had fallen, and by the glare of the camp fires the greater part of the plateau was rendered visible.

It was sixty or seventy feet above the level of the river, and extended on one side to the great rock-wall of which it formed a part; that is, it was an immense lip, or projection from it.

On another side, as has already been stated, it was bounded by the river; while on the third side, which swept round in the arc of a circle, there was the jungle.



Near the centre of the plateau were two altar-like excrescences of the natural rock. They were about three feet in height, and smooth on top. Mackenzie found himself wondering whether they had anything to do with the "sacrifices" to which the chief had referred. They bore a grim suggestion of being closely connected with some gruesome rites.

At the far end of the immense platform of rock there was a building oblong in shape, and of moderate size. It was of dressed stone, and built by workmen who thoroughly understood their craft.

It was not clear for what purpose it was used; for although it would have afforded shelter for twice the number of men who were present, not one of the Anharas entered it. It may have been a sacred edifice, though all the stores and the loot of the whale-boat were piled up against one end of it—outside.

That was a matter which Sigbee particularly noted. It would be an advantage to be able to get quickly at the rifles when he came to put his daring scheme into practice.

The silence of the night was broken only by the intermittent howls and cries of wild animals in the forest, and the soft "pad-pad" of the Anhara sentinel's feet. The prisoners slept but little, for the additional thongs round their legs added greatly to their discomfort.

They were glad when the hours of darkness had passed. Daylight was a relief, though day broke with the threat of a coming storm—grey, sullen, and oppressive.

Not an inkling beyond the vague statements already made by the Chief of the Anharas could Harold Mackenzie and his comrades obtain of the fate which was in store for them. No unusual preparations of any sort, such as commonly form the preliminaries of a sacrifice with savage tribes, were being made. That was during the day. But just about sunset there was a stir among their captors, and then the prisoners received enlightenment.

The chief addressed them: "The end is near for you, white strangers," he said, "for you are about to be offered up as a sacrifice to the gods of the Great Beyond." He waved a hand towards the Mountain Barrier. "The altars are ready for you, and the beasts of the forest are ready for you"—the deep, rumbling roar of the lion could be heard in the distance—"and soon you shall be left to them. But you must be left in darkness and silence, or the animals will not come to the feast."

At last they knew the fate which had been mapped out for them. They were to be placed on the altars, bound and helpless as they were, and left there to the mercy of the wild beasts, which, as soon as the fires were extinguished, and the natives had withdrawn to a safe distance, would come stealing out of the forest for their victims.

It was not the first time that a human sacrifice had been offered up on those altars, and beasts of prey do not forget.

"What of your plan now, Sigbee?" called out Jim. "Will it work?"

They had long since found out that the Anharas did not understand a word of English, so they would have no idea what they were talking about.

"I reckon it'll work all right," answered the American. "I'm watching my chance, for I can free my hands now in a brace of shakes! Say, you know they brought that dynamite along from the whale-boat?"

He was referring to a case containing twenty sticks of the explosive which Mackenzie had insisted on bringing with them from the yacht, as it was stuff that "might prove useful in an emergency."

"I know that," replied Jim. "And I've been afraid all along they might blow the whole lot of us up with it."

"I allow I'm going to do the blowing up," pursued Sigbee. "I set big store on dynamite, so long as I can get the handling of it. Don't talk any more now; we don't want 'em nosing around us too much. They're going to do something—kind of war-dance, I reckon. When they get busy on that I'll see my way clear to act."

### A Dash for Liberty.

The American was right. The camp fires had been allowed to die down until but a few glowing embers remained, and by the dull red gleam, which showed up curiously in the intense blackness of the night, the Anharas had formed up in two lines, facing each other, their spears poised in their hands.

Then began a slow, weird dance, carried out in silence, which was infinitely more terrifying than wild and frenzied shouting would have been.

Never, surely, was there such a silent and gloomy race on earth as the Anhara tribe.

One sentry only stood on guard over the prisoners, but THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 380.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE DREADNOUGHT," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D.

PAPERS; Every Monday, Every Thursday, Every Friday, Every Saturday, 12.

soon his attention was fully occupied in watching the dance. This was Sigbee's opportunity. Already he had worked the thongs on his wrists quite loose, and in a few minutes he had his hands free. Then, very cautiously, he curled himself round until he was lying almost doubled up, and began to unfasten the knot of the raw-hide thong about his ankles.

Twice he had to desist, when the sentry happened to glance in his direction, but his efforts were at last crowned with success. His limbs were free. A few minutes he had to spend in chafing the swollen members, in order to restore the circulation; and then, noting that the sentry's attention was again concentrated on the dance—the silent Dance of Death—he crawled over the ground towards the stone building.

The rifles were there. His previous adventures among other wild tribes served him in good stead now. Not the slightest sound did he make. The darkness favoured him. He reached the building unnoticed, and proceeded to fill his pockets with cartridges; also stuffing a number of packages inside his shirt. Then he secured the three rifles. They hampered his movements, but it was necessary they should be brought away.

He could not reach his comrades just then without the certainty of being seen. One glance he gave in their direction, and then disappeared in the darkness.

The Dance of Death was brought to a sudden termination by a loud, warning shout from the sentry. He had discovered that one of the prisoners he was guarding had escaped.

The chief rushed at the unfortunate sentinel, with spear upraised, as though in his rage he meant to kill him on the spot, but he altered his mind at the last moment. The man was simply disarmed, and apparently put under arrest, though he was neither bound nor guarded.

Then the chief issued some sharp orders to the others, and five of the party hurried off, no doubt in search of the American. Not since the fight on the river had the Anharas shown so much excitement.

"Sigbee's got away!" shouted Jim to his chum. "More power to him. My word, it has stirred these fellows up! Like digging a stick into a wasp's-nest. I hope they won't recapture him."

"I hope not, too," replied Mackenzie. "I wonder whether he managed to get hold of a rifle? Here comes the chief, and he's looking precious ugly."

"Your friend has got away," said the Anhara leader; "but it will only mean a different form of death, even if he is not caught. If he has gone into the forest, there are lions and hyenas to tear him in pieces. If he keeps to the open, he will starve. If he seeks safety in the river, death still more terrible awaits him. He is—no better off than you. A brief space longer of life, perhaps—that is all."

He turned, and made a sign to four of his followers who were standing near, and they advanced two of them lifting up Mackenzie, and two raising Jim Holdsworth. They carried them to the two rock altars, on which they placed them. The chief himself saw to it that the thongs about their limbs were properly secured.

"My part is now finished," he said, adding, with a dreadful smile, as he pointed to the jungle: "The dwellers of the forest will do the rest."

The fires were out. Silently the Anharas withdrew from the vicinity of the altars, and took up a position at the end of the plateau near the stone building, where they could see all that happened.

"Watching their victims being devoured by wild beasts seems to be the only form of recreation these brutes of natives indulge in," exclaimed Jim Holdsworth bitterly. "They're worse than the Ancient Romans. Makes me feel like an Early Christian who has been thrown to the lions in the arena, except that the Christians could make some sort of a fight for it. Their limbs were free."

"Sigbee will have to hurry if he is going to help us," muttered Hal Mackenzie. "Listen!"

A long, weird, ravening howl echoed along the edge of the forest, to be answered by another, and yet another. Stealthy forms were gliding through the darkness, and although the helpless captives could not see them from the altars on which they were lying, they could hear them rustling through the undergrowth.

"Hyenas!" muttered Mackenzie, with a shudder.

These foul and cowardly beasts inspired him with a loathing and horror such as no other animal could arouse in him. They would not attack a human being while he was able to move about, but if from any cause he became helpless, then—

But Harold Mackenzie did not let his thoughts dwell on what would happen when the hyenas' instinct told them that their foe could not harm them.

Louder and louder sound the fearsome howls, nearer and nearer steal the beasts. Then the deep roar of a lion breaks



in, silencing the snarling, yapping, and howling of the lower animals.

With ears strained wide in horror, the two victims listened to the terrifying sounds. There was a dreadful pause, a dead and stagnant silence, as though Nature itself was waiting, breathless, for the carrying out of the tragedy.

All at once the silence was broken by the whiplike crack of a rifle, instantly followed by a second shot. Then a sheet of dazzling flame leaped upwards, and the earth was shaken by the crash of a terrific explosion.

Sigsbee had fired the two shots into the case of dynamite! The stone building was rent into a thousand fragments, and a shower of the flying pieces went hurtling in among the crowd of Anharas, who were waiting to see the sacrifice. They saw more than they had bargained for.

Many of them were bowled over like ninpins, and those who were unhurt fled in a panic. And to add to their terror, and as though the explosion had in some way let loose the devastating forces of Nature, the storm, which had been brooding all day, now burst forth in sudden fury.

A wind tore down from the crest of the mighty Barrier, the thunder boomed, echoing and re-echoing against the great wall of rock, and the lightning gleamed in vivid flashes, "Great snakes! This is a full-size racket, and no mistake!"

The American, cool as ever, had stepped out of the surrounding gloom, and was standing between the two altars. "Sigsbee!" cried Jim Holdsworth joyfully. "Well done, old scout!"

The din was so great that they had to shout to make themselves heard. With a big Anhara hunting-knife, which had an eighteen-inch blade, Sigsbee began to cut away Jim Holdsworth's bonds, and while he cut he talked.

"Guess I've stirred these guys up more'n a bit," he chuckled. "I located that dynamite, and plugged it first thing. Those Anharas are scared some, and I reckon they won't stop running till they've put a couple of miles between themselves and the wreckage of their sacred storeroom, or whatever it is. Those heynas, too." Sigsbee laughed. "I just caught sight of one. He was the last, but he meant to catch up the others, for he was sprinting along at about fifty miles an hour."

Having released Jim, he set to work and cut the thongs from Mackenzie's wrists and ankles.

"You'll need to stamp around a bit," he said, "to get the circulation back. After that we'll vamoose. Here's your rifles."

Hal Mackenzie gripped him by the hand. "Thanks!" he said. "But for you Jim and I would never have seen another sunrise."

"You'd do the same for me and, more, if the need came," replied Sigsbee. "It's give and take when we're on a picnic like this, and we've all got to help each other. Now, I don't want to hurry you, but I think it'll be a good thing to get out of this—quick. The Anharas may pluck up enough courage to come back in an hour or two."

"I suppose all the stores were destroyed when that dynamite exploded?" said Mackenzie.

"Every blame thing!" declared Sigsbee. "I was sorry, but it couldn't be helped. When I had the three rifles and a middlin' amount of ammunition stored about me I was loaded up with as much as I could carry. You see, I had to be slick and silent."

"In which direction had we better go?" asked Jim. "Shall we take to the forest?"

"My idea is the river," put in Sigsbee. "I caught a glimpse of a big canoe hauled up on the bank, and I don't think any of the natives went that way."

The rain was now coming down heavily, adding to the blackness of the night, but the occasional gleams of lightning enabled them to see their way. Between the flashes the darkness was so intense that it seemed like some palpable thing hung around them.

Descending the slope, they reached the water's edge. "There's the canoe!" exclaimed Mackenzie.

A flash of lightning had revealed it, not more than a couple of yards away from them. They launched it and scrambled on board.

"I can only fit two paddles," said Jim, who was groping about to find out what the craft contained.

"They'll do," replied Mackenzie. "Shove off!" They gained midstream, and as the current was setting them gently towards the great wall of rock—the Barrier—they paddled easily in that direction.

Indeed, after what they had gone through, they were hardly equal to the exertion of paddling against even a sluggish stream.

"I can't quite make out this current," said Mackenzie,

when they had been paddling for about a quarter of an hour. "It seems to be getting a trifle stronger. Yet I was able to have a good look at the river once this afternoon, and I thought that it ended in the wide lake that washes against the great wall of rock. I could not make out that it continued its course, either to the right or left."

"We're in the lake now," said Jim Holdsworth. "Perhaps we had better paddle to the bank on the far side."

They turned the canoe, and headed in the new direction. But the paddles were short, and they did not make much progress. Moreover, now that the canoe was broadside on to the current, it was carried more swiftly towards the perpendicular wall of rock.

### Through the Barrier.

Jim Holdsworth and Mackenzie with the paddles, aided by Sigsbee, who was using a flat piece of wood as a paddle, exerted all their strength to drive the canoe towards the shore, but their efforts were in vain.

Every minute the current was increasing in force, the waters of the lake seeming to be drawn towards the centre, forming a stream where which seethed and bubbled as it ran. And they could neither stem it nor cross it. Irresistibly the canoe was borne onward.

"There must be an opening in the rock," exclaimed Mackenzie, "and we are being carried into it."

The next moment they saw it. A vivid and prolonged gleam of lightning revealed it to them.

Rising about two or three feet above the surface of the water was what looked like the top part of the arch of a tunnel. Its width was probably about ten feet. Towards this arch the canoe was being drawn with frightful speed.

When the long flash of lightning ended they could not see the opening. Indeed, the darkness was so intense that they could barely make out the wall of rock. Yet they were very close to it now, barely fifty yards away.

"Lie down flat!" yelled Jim Holdsworth. "Quick as you like!"

They all flung themselves down into the bottom of the canoe, and not an instant too soon. The frail craft gave a sickening lurch, it struck the side of the tunnel and swung round, there was a grinding noise, it lurched again, and someone lay on his back on the gunwale. Then it righted itself, and by the feel—they could not see—they seemed to have more breathing space again.

"Gee! Where are we going to now?" muttered Bob Sigsbee.

Mackenzie raised himself cautiously, and lifted a hand up as high as he could reach. He did not touch anything. Then he stretched out his hand, first to the right, then to the left. Again there was only empty space.

"We seem to have got clear of the low entrance to the tunnel," he said, "but I don't think it's safe yet to sit up. If we only had a light!"

The darkness was utter and complete. On the boat flew, drawn by the mighty current, but whether they were now in a vast cavern or being swept through a mere tunnel they could not even guess.

Suddenly Jim Holdsworth uttered an exclamation.

"My tinder-box with flint and steel!" he said. "I still have it! They didn't take it away from me!"

His companions heard the snapping of the flint and steel, and presently a small flame showed in the pall of darkness. The light shone on their faces, giving them a curiously pallid appearance, but it could not penetrate the gloom a yard beyond the boat.

"One candle power," said Mackenzie. "It only serves to make the darkness visible. But keep the light going, old chap. We can see each other's faces, and that's something."

"Keep us cheerful," muttered Sigsbee.

That was all he said at the moment, for some other matter seemed to be holding his attention. He was crouching, with head bent forward in a listening attitude.

"Hist!" He raised a hand. "What's that?" he said, in a tense whisper. "Do you hear the sound? What is it?"

Above the rush of the water through the tunnel another sound was now audible. Not loud at first, but becoming louder each moment, like the rumble of thunder heard faintly in the distance, except that this was continuous.

Sigsbee turned round to his comrades. There was a hopeless look in his eyes such as they had never seen in them before.

*(Another fine instalment of this thrilling tale will appear in next Wednesday's "THE GEM." Make sure of your copy by placing a regular weekly order with your newsagent, it is the only way to avoid disappointment.)*





# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



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## SCOTLAND'S TURN NEXT WEEK !

Our Great International Contest, which will go to prove beyond all question which nation produces the keenest supporters of "The Gem" Library, is going ahead in interesting style. In Ireland to-day enthusiasm will be dominant, and copies of this journal will be bought up wholesale, for my chums of the Emerald Isle are determined to come out on top in this great campaign.

Next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem" Library will especially appeal to my readers in Scotland, who, if they wish to substantiate the remarks of their youthful compatriot, "Scottie," must go all out to buy

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and this yarn contains all the elements of the powerful, well-written story. The outstanding feature of it, of course, is the splendid loyalty and sagacity of George Kerr, the Scottish junior, who faithfully stands by his chum Figgins when the latter is under a cloud, and things look very black against him. Matters right themselves at length, and the ban of miserable suspicion is removed from the head of Figgins, who ever has cause to be grateful to his loyal chum—

### "A SON OF SCOTLAND !"

and a credit to St. Jim's.

Every Highland Gemite should order his copies—I speak in the plural sense advisedly—of next week's issue NOW, for a supreme effort must be made if Scotland is to win the Great International Match. It must be a case of a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together! So come, ye sons of the Thistle, and make every effort of which you are capable to buy up innumerable copies of

### NEXT WEDNESDAY'S SPECIAL SCOTTISH NUMBER.

## THE CONVERSION OF ROBERT CARLTON.

Master Robert Carlton of Manchester, who some time ago was misguided enough to form a League in opposition to "The Gem" Library, now sends me the following letter, which proves that he is doing yeoman service for the old paper:

"Manchester.

"Dear Editor,—I have been hard at it during the last few months, and now have pleasure in informing you that I have secured fifteen new readers for the companion papers.

"I hardly dare to look back upon the time when I was at war with the 'Gem' and 'Magnet.' What a rank outsider I was, to be sure! The correspondent who suggested that I ought to have been boiled in oil was quite correct.

"However, through the generosity of yourself and your readers, I have been amply pardoned, and one of these days you shall hear of another League under my control—a League whose object it shall be to back up your grand papers through thick and thin. I do not feel sufficiently worthy of the task just now.

"Let me say a few words, in conclusion, to any who contemplate forming an Anti-Gem Society. If they do so, they are performing a base and cowardly action, and one which will most assuredly come tumbling about their ears.

"Wishing you every success in your great work, believe me, dear Editor, yours very sincerely,

"ROBERT CARLTON."

Many thanks, Master Carlton! The good work which you are now doing will amply atone for any injury inflicted in the past upon the good old "Gem" Library. I shall be interested to hear about your League when it gets going, for I feel that you are a fellow possessing a great measure of influence. The fact that you have secured so many new readers goes to prove that. Good luck to you!

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Albert Smith (Long Eaton).—Sorry I cannot insert your announcement in THE GEM.

"Two Loyal Gemites" (Liverpool).—Thanks for suggestion. Will bear it in mind.

Evelyn Guernev (Glamorgan).—Many thanks for your letter and loyalty. Redfern and Co. will be in the limelight again shortly.

Kenneth R. Hadley (Swindon).—The Football Association has decided that there shall be no League football next season, except in the event of the war having ended.

"A Young Supporter" (Balham).—You will hear more of the character you mention in due course.

J. C. Byrne (Dublin).—You will see that your suggestion has been put into effect. Best wishes.

Ronald T. Tout (New York).—The youngest fag at St. Jim's is ten years of age. Many thanks for your letter.

"A Schoolboy Admirer" (Glamorgan).—I hope you will write to me again. You strike me as being a very enthusiastic young fellow.

Norton Sutcliffe (Forest Hill).—Thanks for your good wishes, which I cordially reciprocate.

M. L. Wilkin (Banbury).—I quite agree with your remarks about Talbot. It is inconceivable how any boy can dislike this character after the fine uphill battle he has fought.

T. Davies and W. Gould (Stoke-on-Trent).—Sorry, but the feature you mention has closed down.

"An Irish Colleen" (Tipperary).—I am much obliged to you for your fine letter of appreciation.

"A Sincere Girl Gemite."—Your request shall certainly be complied with.

A. E. Partington (Old Ford).—The character you mention has never appeared under an assumed name.

"Floral" (Leytonstone).—Send your spare copies of THE GEM to Miss Doris E. Frodin, Red Cross Hospital, Hampton-in-Arden. They will then be distributed among the wounded soldiers. Best wishes.

"An Editor's Chum" (Wolverhampton).—I read your long letter with interest. Your suggestions are duly noted, and those which are practicable will be acted upon shortly. Many thanks for your loyalty.

Kathleen Wilde (Sheffield).—Very pleased to hear from you. Not a few of my girl chums admire Marie Rivers.

"Hopful" (Wigan).—Thank you for your letter. I will see what can be done in the matter.

"A Grateful Gemite" (Dudley).—Very many thanks for your letter of praise concerning "The Gem" Library and "The Greyfriars Herald." You may rest assured that no effort shall be spared to maintain the present high standing of this journal.

A. McGowan (Peckham).—Storyettes should in all cases be sent in on postcards.

F. C. Smith (Birmingham).—Many thanks for your sensible written letter.

THE EDITOR.



# AMAZING BARGAINS FOR BRITISH BOYS.



**THE WONDERFUL ISSUE NOW ON SALE CONTAINS:**

**"SMYTHE'S LITTLE SWEEP."**

Magnificent New Long Complete School  
tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood.  
By OWEN CONQUEST.

**"POSH POWELL'S PLOT."**

A Rousing New Long Complete Tale of  
Tom Belcher, the Boy Boxer.  
By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

**"THE HIDDEN WORLD."**

A Thrilling New Adventure Story of  
Extraordinary Interest.  
By REGINALD WRAY.

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Grand New Story dealing with Life  
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**A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.**



# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

## WONDERFUL!

A country farmer, having come to London by an excursion train, was walking down Oxford Street filling his pipe with tobacco. He had just replaced his pouch in his pocket, when a boy ran up to him and said:

"Matches, sir?"  
The farmer coolly took a match, lit his pipe, and handed back the box, before the astounded boy could recover himself, and passed on, remarking:

"What a wonderful place Lannon is, to be sure!"—Sent in by Mrs. Ware, Bcdminster, Bristol.

## BREAKING IT GENTLY

"If you please, mamma," said little Albert, "will you kindly lend me a pencil?"

"But I left a pen and ink for you to do your lessons with," replied his mother. "Why don't you use them?"

"Don't you think 'The Boys' Friend' is a good paper, mamma?"

"Yes, dear. But what has that got to do with it?"

"Well, I want to write to the Editor and ask him how to remove ink-stains from a carpet."—Sent in by A. Scott, Botwell, Notts.

## THE CATCH IN IT.

An old farmer had come up to "Lannon" for the first time, and decided to have a look round the National Gallery.

He was delighted to see the notice outside. "Admission Free," but when he attempted to enter there ensued a strenuous struggle with the attendant, who pounced vigorously upon the farmer's umbrella.

"Here, you can't take that in there. You must give it to me."

"Ah!" replied Giles, with native cunning. "Ah! show them were soon catch when the let me in free!"—Sent in by F. Sheldrick, Islington, N.

## A COW WORTH MILKING.

The following advertisement appeared in a country paper some time ago:

"WANTED.—A steady young man to look after garden and to milk a cow who has a good voice and is accustomed to sing in the choir."  
—Sent in by F. G. Duddridge, Bridgewater.

## PRIVILEGED.

The carriage was crowded. Nevertheless, a very corpulent German and his wife pushed their way in.

A young man at once rose to give the lady his seat. The German promptly flopped himself down in it, to the discomfort of the passengers on either side of him, leaving the lady standing.

"See here, sir," remonstrated the young gentleman. "I got up to give the seat to the lady, not to you!"

"Ach! Daf's all right. She's my wife," he responded placidly.

And he kept the seat.—Sent in by Miss E. M. Hargreaves, Clitheroe, Lancs.

## FIRST AID.

The man rushed excitedly into the smoking compartment. "A lady has fainted in the next carriage! Has anybody got any brandy?"

Instantly half a dozen flasks were thrust upon him. Taking the nearest one, he turned the bottle up and took a long pull; then, handing back the flask, said:

"Thank you so much! It always did make me feel ill to see a lady faint."—Sent in by E. G. Brock, Ely, Cambs.

## THE WRONG CLUE.

An Englishman travelling in Russia before the outbreak of war made friends en route with a Frenchman.

On reaching their next stopping-place, the Englishman was agreeably surprised by the Frenchman telling him the latter had entered his name in the hotel visitors' book.

"Very kind of you," he said. "But how did you know my name?"

"Ah, monsieur, I saw it on your trunk."

The Englishman was rather mystified, as there was no name on his portmanteau, so far as he could remember. So he went up to the visitors' book and read:

"Monsieur Warranted Solid Leather."—Sent in by Michael Loftus, Tuam.

## COUNTED OUT.

An Irishman named Pat and a negro had decided to have a rather heated argument in the approved fashion.

A ring was formed by their workmates, and another Irishman agreed to referee. In the first round Pat was badly knocked about, and at last fell to the ground.

The referee commenced to count:

"One—Now, come on, Pat, pull yourself together!"

"Two—Phwat would yer owld nither think if she knew ye were beaten by a nigger?"

"Three—Now, come on, Pat, pull yourself together!"

"Four—Ah, Pat, managed to get up, and hold out the fall."

"In the second round the negro slipped and fell. Before he had hardly touched the ground the referee commenced to count rapidly:

"One—two—three—four—five—twice five's ten! You're out!"—Sent in by W. G. Butcher, Ashford, Kent.

## CAUGHT.

Recently a commercial traveller said to another knight of the road:

"I'll wager anything you like that you can't spell three simple words that I'll give you in thirty seconds."

"I'll take that on." Now, what are they?"

"Well, here goes," said the first, as he pulled out his watch. "London."

"L-o-n-d-o-n."

"Watching."

"W-a-t-c-h-i-n-g."

"Wrong," said the first commercial.

"What! I've spelt the words correctly. I'm certain I'm not—"

"Time's up!" exclaimed the other triumphantly. "Why on earth didn't you spell it last, as I always do?"

Sent in by Mrs. Gilliam, Kilmarnock.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

## THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.