A HERO of WALES!

Great Complete Story of a Welsh Schoolboy's Adventures. By Martin Clifford.

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READ THE GREAT TALE OF DAVID WYNN IN THIS NUMBER.

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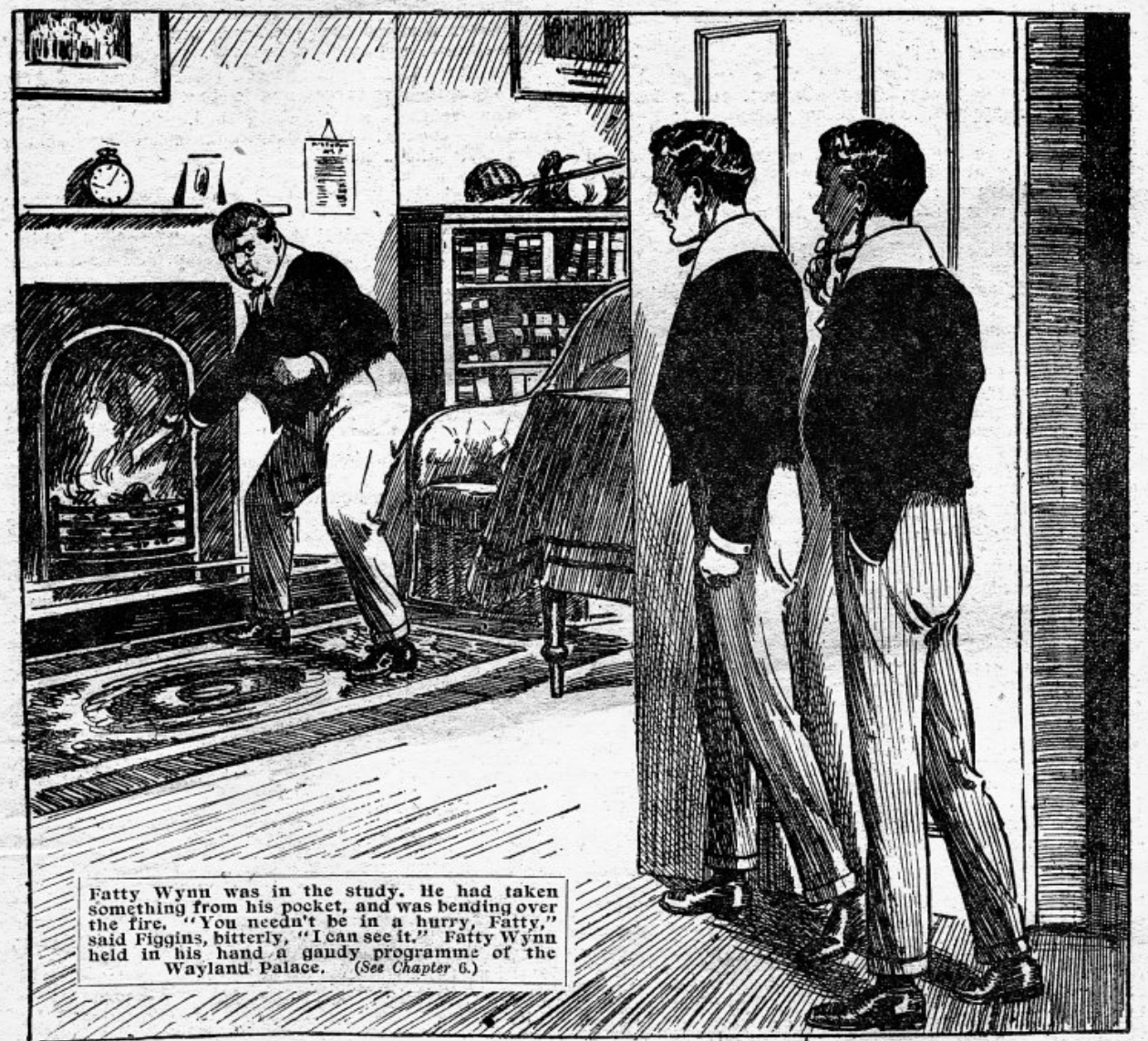
COMPLETE STORIES FOR ALL, AND EVERY STORY A GEM!

A HERO OF WALES!

A Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of St. Jim's, Specially Written for Welsh Readers.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Fatty Wynn was in the study. He had taken something from his pocket, and was bending over the fire. "You needn't be in a hurry, Fatty," said Figgins, bitterly, "I can see it." Fatty Wynn held in his hand a gaudy programme of the Wayland Palace. (See Chapter 6.)

CHAPTER 1.

An Astounding Discovery.

"GERMANS, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form stood rooted to the floor.

He was astounded.

"Huns, bai Jove! In Figgay's study!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

His eyeglass dropped from his eye in his astonishment.

Arthur Augustus had come over from the School House to call on Figgins & Co. in the New House at St. Jim's.

It was quite a friendly call. The cricket match with the Grammar School was coming off shortly, and D'Arcy of the Fourth was very keen on practice. He had come over to coax Fatty Wynn to bowl to him, the Welsh junior being the best bowler in the Lower School.

But as he came sauntering gracefully down the passage to Figgins' study Arthur Augustus suddenly halted, and stood transfixed with amazement.

Someone was talking in the study.

That in itself was not a surprising circumstance. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn, the famous "Co." of the New House, did a good deal of talking in that study.

The surprising circumstance was that the talking was in a strange language.

Next Wednesday:

"TOM MERRY FOR ENGLAND!" SEE PAGE 28.

For this is what smote suddenly upon the startled ears of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy:

"Yn ngwyn oleuni'r goelcerth acw."

It was uttered in a loud, deep voice.

It certainly wasn't English. "Equally certain it wasn't French. Arthur Augustus could only jump to one conclusion.

It was German!

"Tros wefusau Cymro'n marw, Annibyniaeth sydd yn galw," went on the voice.

"Bai Jove!"

There was, so far as Arthur Augustus knew, only one German at St. Jim's, and that was Herr Schneider, the German master. But the voice certainly wasn't Herr Schneider's; and, besides, Gussy had seen the German master in the School House before he came across the quad.

"Am ei dewraf dyn!"

Whether that was the same voice or not Arthur Augustus couldn't say. Probably not, for a German could not be supposed to be talking to himself in Figgins' study.

There must be two of them, of course, or there would be no talking at all. The discovery of Germans in a junior study in the New House at St. Jim's was so surprising that it was no wonder Arthur Augustus stood rooted to the floor.

What could they be doing there?

Evidently no good.

Spies, dodging away from the police, might have dodged into the school to hide. That was possible. Certainly they could not be friends of Figgins & Co. That wasn't possible. Figgins & Co. would not be likely to be entertaining Huns in their study.

Arthur Augustus advanced towards the door of the study with a grim brow. He meant to know what those Germans were doing there.

But he suddenly paused.

Arthur Augustus feared no foe, but he realised that the enemy were two to one—if there were two of them—and it behoved him to get assistance to make sure that the rascals did not escape.

They would have to explain their presence in the school. It was pretty certain that they were there for no good. Arthur Augustus, sagely reflecting, backed away quietly from the door. As he backed away he heard this remark:

"We le goelcerth wen yn fflamio."

"Bai Jove, sounds like swearin', the awful wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Fancy wotten Pwussians comin' into the school in bwoad daylight, and swearin' in Figgay's study!"

The swell of St. Jim's backed away cautiously to the stairs. He wanted to keep his eye on the study door. If the Germans attempted to leave the study he was prepared to rush upon them and seize them, and yell for help. But the study door did not open. From the study all Gussy heard was:

"A thamfodau tan yn bloeddie."

"The howwid wottahs—swearin' like anythin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus, backing away with great caution. "There will be a suwpwise for them soon—Ow! Hah!"

The swell of the Fourth, naturally, could not see with the back of his head, and he had backed into three juniors who were coming upstairs. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell had come over from the School House; they also had designs upon Fatty Wynn as a bowler. They were cheerfully racing upstairs, and naturally they came upon Arthur Augustus rather suddenly.

It would not have mattered if Arthur Augustus had been seeing where he was going. But Nature had gifted him with only two eyes, both in the front of his head. It was not to be expected, therefore, that he should see anybody coming up the stairs.

He backed into the Terrible Three just as they rushed up to the landing.

It was a tremendous collision, for the Shell fellows were going at the speed limit.

Crash!

Bump!

"Help!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus rolled over, clutching out wildly. Tom Merry managed to catch the banisters and hang on. Manners contrived to catch hold of Tom Merry—unfortunately by his hair. Monty Lowther was less lucky. With a series of bumps and wild yells, Lowther went rolling down the stairs, and landed on a mat below.

Arthur Augustus sprawled on the stairs and gasped.

"Ow! Bai Jove! Oh, you duffahs! Gwooooh!"

"Oh, dear! Yow! Leggo my hair, you idiot!"

"Yarooooh!" came from Monty Lowther, as he took his last bump below. "Oh crumbs! Oh, my hat! Yowp!"

Manners changed his grip from Tom Merry's hair to the banisters, and held on, panting.

Tom Merry fixed a glare upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that ought to have turned him to stone on the spot.

"You fearful ass!" he gasped. "You frabjous, burbling cuckoo! What do you mean by backing downstairs like a horse?"

"Hush!"

"What?"

"Hush!"

"I'll hush you!" yelled Tom Merry. "Lay hold of him! Collar him! Bump him on every step, and then chuck him out!"

"Yes, rather," panted Manners.

"Hold on, you duffahs——"

"That's what we're going to do, you fathead!"

"Hold him till I gerrat him!" panted Lowther, collecting himself together at the foot of the stairs. He was surprised to find himself in one piece. Hold him till I slaughter him!"

Lowther came up the stairs three at a time.

A crowd of New House juniors came along the lower passage from the common-room in surprise. They had heard the bumping and the sounds of anguish.

"Hallo! What little game are you bounders playing in our House?" demanded Figgins.

"Cheeky bounders!" said Kerr. "Kick 'em out!"

"It's all right. We're only going to kill Gussy!" panted Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!" gasped Arthur Augustus, wriggling in the ferocious grasp of the Terrible Three. "Hush, I tell you——"

Bump!

"Yawooop! Will you hush? They will escape!" panted Arthur Augustus. "You will give the alarm, you feahful asses!"

In sheer astonishment the Terrible Three paused before the next bump.

"Eh! Who will escape?" demanded Tom Merry.

"The Germans."

"The—the what?"

"The which?" howled Lowther."

"Hush!"

"What the thunder——"

"Hush! They're in Figgay's study!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Who are?" yelled Tom Merry.

"Hush! The Germans!"

CHAPTER 2

Fatty Wynn is Wrathy.

TOM MERRY stared blankly at the swell of the Fourth.

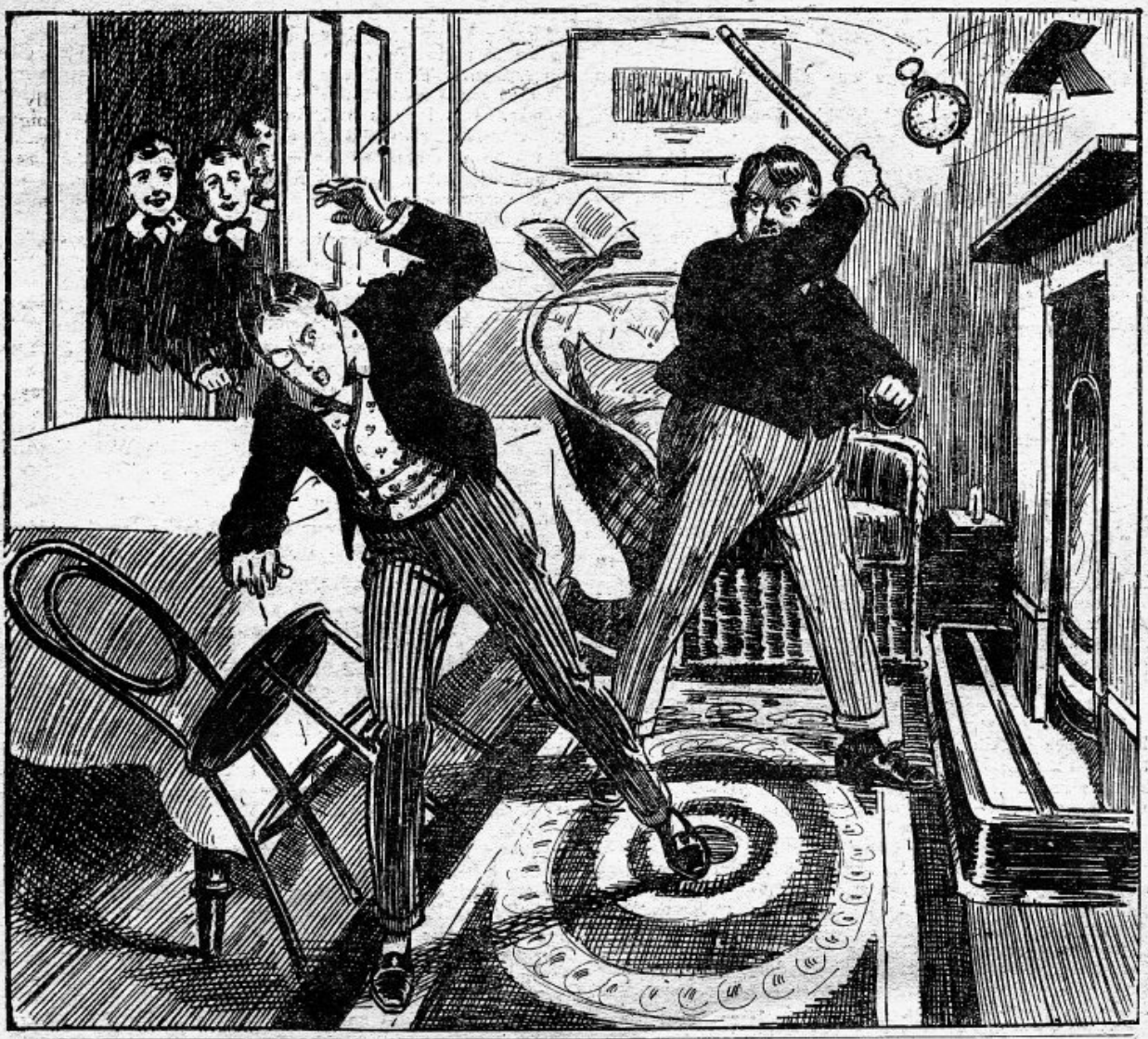
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy evidently was not "rotting."

His face was flushed with excitement, his look was deadly earnest, and he had even forgotten to notice that his clothes were dusty and his tie disarranged.

The Terrible Three were astounded.

As they were not likely to believe that there were any Germans in Figgins' study, they could only conclude that the swell of St. Jim's had taken leave of his senses.

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead significantly.



Fatty Wynn found his voice at last. "I'll scalp him! German, by gad! I'll slaughter him!" Whack! Whack! "Don't know the difference"—crash!—"between Welsh and German!" Whack! Whack! Fortunately, half the blows fell on the furniture, as Arthur Augustus wildly dodged the justly enraged Welsh junior. (*See Chapter 2.*)

"Potty!" said Manners, with a nod.

"Mad as a hatter!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Hush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful duffahs, this is no laughin' mattah! There are two Germans in Figgins' studay, and they were swearin'."

"Figgy, old man, have you got any Germans in your study?" called out Tom Merry.

"Any what?"

"Germans!"

"Is this a joke?" asked Figgins, puzzled.

"Hush!"

"Gussy says there are Germans in your study, swearing," grinned Monty Lowther.

"There's nobody there, unless Wynn's there," said Figgins, coming up the stairs. "What on earth is the ass burbling about?"

"I am not burblin', Figgins. There are Germans in your studay, talkin' in German, and it sounded to me as if they were swearin'."

"My hat!"

"What were they saying?" asked Lowther.

"I could not quite gwasp the meanin'—you know all Germans do not talk alike; I should say they were speakin' with a stwong pwovincial accent," said D'Arcy. "But it was German wight enough. I was comin' away to help me to collah them, when you sillay asses wan into me."

"When you backed into us like a blind horse, you mean, you fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead. Hush! If you alarm them they may escape," said Arthur Augustus. "They must be spies. Wespectable Germans would not sneak in heah and hide themselves in Figgay's studay."

"If there are any blessed Germans in my study, they're going to get their German noses dented," said Figgins warmly. "But there can't be! How could any Germans get into my study, you chump?"

"I wepeat that I heard them talkin'."

"It's impossible!"

"We'll soon see," said Kerr practically.

He started for the study.

Arthur Augustus caught him by the shoulder.

"Pway be careful, Kerr, deah boy. You had bettah let me go ahead. There may be dangah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is not a laughin' mattah. If two disgustin' German spies have hidden themselves in heah, they may have wevolvahs——"

The idea of two German spies with revolvers in Figgins' study made the juniors yell. Arthur Augustus glared at them in wrath.

"Hush, you asses! You awful duffahs! Hush! You

will give the alarm! Pway follah me and don't make a wow."

Arthur Augustus led the way along the passage on tiptoe.

"Fall in and follow me!" chuckled Lowther.

"Follow in your father's footsteps!" grinned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Entering into the spirit of the thing, about a dozen juniors tiptoed after Augustus, in Indian file, down the passage.

But as they neared the study they jumped, for a voice proceeding from the study was quite audible, and it said:

"Cymru fydd fei Cymru fu, yn glodus yn mysg gwledydd."

Arthur Augustus looked round triumphantly at his tiptoeing followers.

"What do you say now, you asses?" he murmured.

To his surprise, Figgins burst into a chuckle and Kerr doubled up with merriment. But the rest of the juniors looked surprised.

"It's some foreign lingo," said Manners.

"Sounds like Wynn's voice to me," said Lowther; "though why Wynn should be talking in German—— But is it German?"

"What are you cacklin' at, Figgins?"

Figgins could not reply; he seemed to be verging on hysterics. Kerr was wiping away tears.

"Those two uttah duffahs are off their wockahs!" said Arthur Augustus. "Follah me, deah boys, and we will capchah the wascals, and make them explain their pwesence heah!"

"But—I say——"

"Wats! You back me up!"

Arthur Augustus had reached the study door. He turned the handle suddenly, threw the door open, and rushed in, with the juniors at his heels.

"Suwwendah, you scoundwels!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Then he almost collapsed.

The scoundrels were not to be seen!

Fatty Wynn was seated at the table in the study, with a book before him. He stared in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, in amazement.

D'Arcy stared at him.

Fatty's mouth was bulging with bull's-eyes, which thickened his voice a little. The sudden irruption into his study had almost caused him to swallow them, and he began to gurgle.

"Where are the Germans, Wynn?" gasped D'Arcy, at last.

"The what?"

"Those wotten Germans!"

"Gone dotty?" asked Wynn, with a stare. "You thumping ass, you jolly nearly made me bolt my bull's-eyes. If you had, I'd have scragged you! What do you mean by rushing into my study like a Prussian Hun? What do all you fellows want?"

"Those Germans!" gasped D'Arcy. "I weally cannot believe, Wynn, that you are unpatwiotic enough to hide German spies heah."

"Eh?"

"But where are they?"

"I say, take hold of him," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "He may be getting violent soon. You can see he's mad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I heard them talkin' heah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"You heard who talking?"

"Germans!"

"When?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

"Just as we came up to the study."

"You—you—you heard Germans talking?" gasped Wynn. "Here? In this study?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I say, you ought to see a doctor!" said Wynn.

"You are pwevawicatin', Wynn!" roared Arthur Augustus. "If you deny that there are any Germans heah, I can only conclude that you are hidin' them. Wynn, I insist upon your tellin' me where you are hidin' those Germans."

Fatty Wynn looked wonderingly at the other juniors. Figgins and Kerr were in the doorway, gasping with merriment. Tom Merry & Co. were looking surprised. It was quite evident that there were no Germans in the study. But it was indubitable that they had heard a voice speaking in a strange language.

"Who was here with you, Wynn?" demanded Arthur Augustus, after a stare round the study in search of the Germans.

"Nobody!"

"I wepeat that I heard someone talkin' German——"

"You may have heard someone talking," said Fatty Wynn, in amazement. "I was talking. I'm learning a song by heart, and I always learn better when I repeat the lines aloud. I've been doing that."

"Bai Jove! A—a German song?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"No, fathead!"

"Then it was not you! It was not English I heard——"

"Well, fathead, this isn't English—it's Welsh!" said Wynn. "I'm mugging up the words of the 'Rhyfelgyrch gwyr Harlech.'"

"The—the—the what?"

"What you call in your one-eyed language the 'Men of Harlech,'" explained Wynn.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, understanding at last—Figgins and Kerr had understood long ago. "Ha, ha, ha! It was Welsh you heard, Gussy, not German."

"Welsh! Bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn jumped up.

His plump face was crimson with rage. He shook a fat fist under the noble nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You—you—you took it for German? You—you—you——"

"I—I—I—bai Jove! I don't know any Welsh, you know," said Arthur Augustus feebly. "I—I certainly thought it was Germans swearin' in German——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn made a bound for a cricket-stump and another bound for Arthur Augustus. Fatty Wynn was, as a rule, the most placable and good-tempered of youths. Hardly anything ever disturbed his serenity.

But to have his beloved and musical Welsh mistaken for German was a little too much. It was more than flesh and blood could be expected to stand—Welsh flesh and blood, at any rate.

Fatty Wynn did not pause to speak. He uttered not a word, either in English or Welsh. The cricket-stump eloquently expressed his feelings. Even the eloquent tongue of Cadwalader could not have expressed Fatty's feelings at that moment so thoroughly as the cricket-stump did.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yawooh! Stoppit—why, you feahful ass—gewwoff——"

Whack! Whack!

"Hold on, Fatty——"

"Don't slaughter our prize idiot——"

"Fatty, old man——"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Fatty Wynn found his voice at last.

"I'll scalp him! German, by gad! I'll slaughter him!" Whack! Whack! "Don't know the difference"—Crash!—between Welsh and German——" Whack! Whack!

Fortunately, half the blows fell on the furniture, as Arthur Augustus wildly dodged the justly-enraged Welsh junior.

But Fatty Wynn was not to be dodged. That insult to the language of the land of his fathers had to be wiped out. Indeed, it really looked as if Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would be wiped out as well as the insult.

Smash! Crash! Whack! Thud!

"Bai Jove! He's mad! Stoppim! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold him!"

The study clock had caught the last whack, and it flew into fragments. Arthur Augustus flew out of the

doorway. After him went Fatty Wynn, raging for gore.

Arthur Augustus had sometimes distinguished himself on the cinder-path. But his performances on the cinder-path were as nothing to his performance in the passage with Fatty Wynn behind him brandishing the stump. He did the passage to the stairs in one second.

He flew down the stairs. As a rule, Arthur Augustus disdained the usual junior method of taking two or three steps at a time. It did not consort with the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere was gone now. Arthur Augustus did the stairs four at a time, and whizzed out of the New House like a stone from a catapult. He vanished from sight—and Fatty Wynn vanished after him—still brandishing the stump.

Tom Merry & Co. could not interfere. They were rolling in the study and the passage, in hysterics.

CHAPTER 3.
Two to Make a Bargain.

"I WEFUSE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement emphatically.

It was tea-time, and the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. had gathered in Study No. 6 in the School House. And Blake had suggested bringing over Figgins & Co. to tea. Supplies being ample, and it being an open secret that Figgins & Co. were short of tin, that hospitable thought had naturally occurred to Blake.

As a rule, Arthur Augustus was hospitality itself.

But on this occasion there was soreness in the noble spirit of Gussy, not to mention soreness in his noble body.

He had been chased up and down the quadrangle and round the gymnasium by the infuriated Fatty Wynn, and really he had barely escaped with his life.

Naturally, he was indignant and wrathy.

"I uttahly wefuse!" he repeated, his voice rising with excitement. "I uttahly decline to sit at the same table with that mad duffah. I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect. I have been vewy neahly bwained. I am goin' to fight Fatty Wynn, not have him to tea. I shall not west till I have given him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Let bygones be bygones!" suggested Tom Merry amicably.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I am achin' in sevewal places. And my personal dig has been uttahly outwaged. I feel that I cut a vewy widiculous figah bein' chased wound and wound by that howlin' ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at. I am goin' to fight Wynn, and thwash him, and I wequest you, Blake, to cawwy ovah my challenge."

"Coffee and pistols for two!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and glared at the grinning juniors.

"I wefuse to listen to this wibald mewwiment!" he shouted. "I wegard this as a sewious mattah!"

"Now, Gussy!" said Blake persuasively.

"I decline to listen to any argument on the subject, Blake. My mind is iwwevovably made up!"

"My idea is," said Tom Merry, "that Gussy owes Fatty an apology."

"Bai Jove! You uttah ass! I was chased wound and wound the quad with a wotten cricket-stump bwandished ovah my nappah!"

"You owe Fatty an apology!" said Tom Merry firmly. "I appeal to all the gentlemen present. You heard him speaking Welsh, and you took it for German. Fatty would have been justified in slaying you on the spot."

"How was I to know that it was Welsh when I do not know any Welsh?"

"You ought to know some Welsh," said Tom Merry severely. "What do you mean by studying French and German, and remaining in dense ignorance of one of the languages of your native country?"

"Bai Jove! But you do not know any Welsh eithah, deah boy!"

"Ahem! Keep to the point," said Tom hastily. "Don't wander from the subject, Gussy. You're always wandering from the point. You insulted Wynn——"

"But I weally did not mean to. I—I thought he was speakin' German——"

"That's where the insult came in. If you had said it for a joke, Wynn might have overlooked it. But you really thought it. That's the deadly insult. You can't expect a Welshman to stand that. Why, it's enough to make the Men of Harlech turn in their graves!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Under the circumstances, the least you can do is to let the matter drop. You have insulted the British language, and you must remember," said Tom Merry sternly, "that Welsh is the original British language, and was spoken in this country before our ancestors came here at all. Fatty Wynn's ancestors were Britons when yours were Germans."

"Germans!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Why, you wottah!"

"You see—— Hallo, keep off, you ass!" shouted Tom Merry, dodging round the table. "What's the matter with you?"

"You feahful wottah, to insinuate that my ancestahs were Germans!"

"So they were. Your ancestral line was made in Germany." Tom Merry made another dodge round the table. "Your family tree is rooted in the Fatherland."

"You fwightful idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at the captain of the Shell across the table.

"Now," said Tom Merry, wagging his forefinger at him, "you see how ratty it makes you to have these things pointed out. If your remote ancestors hadn't come to England along with Hengist and Horsa you would be a Hun to-day."

That was too much for Arthur Augustus. He swooped round the table again. Tom Merry dodged just in time.

"Lemme get at him!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm only giving you this as an illustration," explained Tom Merry across the study table. "You can see now that Fatty was naturally waxy."

"I wegard you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at. Pewwaps upon the whole Fatty had some weason for gettin' his wag out."

"I should think he had," said Tom Merry. "Now, if you'll agree to let the matter drop, I'll withdraw my allegations against your aunt's sisters—I mean your ancestors——"

"I wegard you as an ass, Tom Mewwy. Howevah, pewwaps upon the whole Fatty had a wight to be watty, and I am willin' to let the mattah dwop."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Blake. "Now I'll go and ask the bounders over to tea. We'll get Fatty to sing that blessed Welsh song after tea, and put him in a good temper."

And, leaving his chums preparing the feast in Study No. 6, Jack Blake sauntered out of the School House, and walked over to the rival establishment.

He found Figgins & Co. in their study sitting down to a frugal tea. Funds had been very low with Figgins & Co. of late.

"Hallo!" said Blake cheerily. "We've got a feast of the gods going on in our study, and I've looked in for you chaps."

"Oh, good!"

Fatty Wynn's face brightened up. Fatty was a great trencherman, and he could have cleared the table quite easily, without any help from Figgins and Kerr, and then, like Oliver Twist, asked for more.

"Three kinds of jam," said Blake, watching Fatty's face, "and a cake. Ham and eggs and gammon rashers!"

"Oh!" murmured Fatty Wynn, with a beatific smile.

"And prawns!"

"Oh!" said Wynn again.

"And preserves, and jelly, and a pie!"

"We're on;" said Fatty.

The fat Fourth-Former rose to his feet. Then he suddenly sat down again.

"D'Arcy there, I suppose?" he asked.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Blake reassuringly. "We've calmed Gussy down! We've talked to him like Dutch uncles, and he's going to overlook it, and let bygones be bygones. He's willing to let the matter drop."

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"He may be willing to let the matter drop," he growled. "But I'm not."

Blake stared.

"Eh! You! Why, Gussy's the injured party, isn't he?"

"He looked injured," grinned Figgins.

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"Do you think I'm going to have tea with a silly ass who takes Welsh for German?" he demanded. "No fear!"

"My hat!"

It was an unexpected difficulty. It occurred to Blake that it takes two to make a bargain. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been placated with difficulty. But apparently David Llewellyn Wynn was not to be placated at all.

"Now, Fatty——" murmured Figgins.

"Fatty, old man——" said Kerr.

Another snort.

"I'm not going!"

"Well, my word!" said Blake. "Now, look here, Fatty, Gussy is going to overlook the whole matter——"

"He can overlook it if he likes," snorted Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly well not going to. German! The ass! German! The fathead! Taking Welsh for German! The silly idiot!"

"Fatty——" said Figgins.

Snort!

"Be a good chap, Fatty——"

Snort!

"It's a top-hole feed!" murmured Blake.

Snort!

"And we're sharp set, Fatty," said Kerr.

Snort!

"Now, come on, Fatty——"

"You fellows can go if you like," said Fatty Wynn morosely. "I'm not going to sit down at the same table with a fellow who takes Welsh for German."

Fatty Wynn was immovable. Even the description of that top-hole feed in Study No. 6 did not tempt him—which was very nearly a miracle.

"Look here!" exclaimed Figgins, waxing wroth. "Don't you be a silly ass, Fatty! Do you want us to have tea on a sardine each, when there's the fat of the land over the way waiting for us?"

"You go, then," said Wynn.

"We jolly well will!" said Kerr warmly. "I think you're an ass, Fatty!"

Snort!

"Gussy doesn't know any better——"

Snort!

"Oh, rats!"

And Figgins and Kerr marched off with Blake, leaving Fatty Wynn still snorting.

CHAPTER 4.

Fatty Wynn is Mysterious!

STUDY No. 6 feasted royally, and while they feasted they chuckled. Only upon the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there an expression of severe dignity.

Fatty Wynn's refusal to come to a feed with a fellow who took Welsh for German struck the juniors as funny. But not so Arthur Augustus. He had come down off his lofty perch, as it were, and agreed that there should be peace. And Fatty Wynn had declined to accept the olive-branch. Arthur Augustus was very much upon his noble dignity.

However, Arthur Augustus's noble dignity did not detract from the merriment of the merry party in Study No. 6. Figgins and Kerr, talking of the forthcoming Grammar School match, even forgot Fatty Wynn. But when the feed was over they could not help thinking how Fatty would have enjoyed it.

"The blessed duffer!" said Figgins, when they were leaving the School House. "He has missed a topping treat; and he only had the sardines!"

"And the funds won't run to supper," said Kerr.

"We shall find him repenting," grinned Figgins.

Figgins and Kerr fully expected to find Fatty Wynn in a repentant mood when they came back to their study.

But, as it happened, they did not find him at all.

The study was empty, and the table was bare. Fatty had finished up the frugal supplies, and apparently he had gone out.

"Somebody else asked him to tea, very likely," said Figgins, feeling relieved at the idea. "It was too rotten old Fatty being left out of the feed, though it was his own fault."

When the time came for calling-over, Figgins and Kerr went down, expecting to see Fatty Wynn along with the rest of the Fourth.

But the fat Fourth-Former was not there.

Mr. Ratcliff was taking the House roll, and when he came to the name of Wynn, there was a pause.

"Wynn!" repeated the New House master unpleasantly.

Figgins was tempted to reply "Adsum," for the sake of his chum. But Mr. Ratcliff's steely eye was too keen. It was impossible to play a little trick of that kind on Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster compressed his lips, and marked down Wynn as absent.

Figgins and Kerr left the hall wondering what had become of him. They asked the other fellows if they had seen him. Apparently Fatty had not had tea with any of the Fourth, after all. Redfern had seen him going out of gates about tea-time, and since then he had not been on view.

"Out of gates," said Figgins; "and it's past locking-up!"

"That means a wigging," said Kerr.

Somewhat worried, Figgins and Kerr went to their study to get on with their preparation. The evening was growing old, and Fatty Wynn had not come in. They began to wonder whether he would turn up before bed-time.

Where on earth was Fatty? It was not like Fatty to sulk; he could surely not have gone off by himself in a fit of the sulks. That would not be like the plump, cheery Fatty at all. And even so, why had he not come back?

Where was Fatty?

Figgins and Kerr finished their prep, and came down to the common-room. They hoped to see Fatty Wynn there.

But the fat Fourth-Former was conspicuous by his absence.

"Anybody here seen Fatty?" queried Figgins.

"Anybody here seen Kelly?" grinned Redfern.

"Hasn't he come in?" exclaimed Kerr.

"Haven't seen hide nor hair of him," said Lawrence. "He will have a ragging from Ratty when he does come in."

Figgins and Kerr looked out of the House doorway into the dusky, starlit quad. They were getting anxious about their chum.

A fat figure loomed up through the dusk. Figgins uttered an exclamation of relief. It was the missing junior at last.

"Fatty, old man!"

Fatty Wynn came in. He looked tired, and he had a muffler round his neck.

"I'm late," he remarked.

"You've missed calling-over."

"I know."

"Where on earth have you been?"

"Out, you know," said Fatty Wynn.

"But what on earth did you stay out till this time for?"

"Well, you see——" Fatty paused.

"Well?" asked Figgins and Kerr together, in wonder.

"I'd better report," said Fatty abruptly.

Wynn went into the House, leaving Kerr and Figgins

The prefect gazed at the three juniors in silence for a moment. "What are you doing here, Kerr and Figgins? I needn't ask what Wynn is doing!" "We came to warn Fatty," said Figgins desperately. Monteith shrugged his shoulders. "I might have guessed that. Wynn, get that foolery off, and come with me at once. All three of you will go to the Head." "The sack for three!" said Kerr bitterly. (See Chapter 13.)

looking at one another in a state of considerable astonishment. Secretiveness was the very last trait they would have looked for in Fatty Wynn. But he was secretive now with a vengeance.

"What the blue thunder has he been up to?" ejaculated Figgins.

Kerr shook his head. He gave it up.

Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, pounced on Fatty Wynn as he came in.

"Report to Mr. Ratcliff at once, Wynn!"

"Yes, Monteith."

Fatty strode away to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Ratcliff received him with a severe frown.

"Have you only just come in, Wynn?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what do you mean, Wynn, by staying out after locking-up—until after nine o'clock in the evening?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Probably. But that is no explanation. Where have you been?"

"I went for a walk, sir."

"And you have the unexampled impertinence to return at this hour of the evening!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, taking up a cane. "Hold out your hand, Wynn!"

Swish! Swish!

Mr. Ratcliff pointed to the door with his cane, and Fatty Wynn quietly left the study. Figgins and Kerr found him in the passage, squeezing his plump hands.

"Licked?"

"Wow! Yes."

"Well, you really might have expected it, Wynn, old chap," said Kerr. "Fourth-Formers ain't allowed to come home with the milk in the morning, you know. What have you been up to?"

"Must get some prep done," said Fatty. "I shall have trouble with Lathom in the morning, anyway, I expect."

Fatty Wynn hurried away to the study, and he worked hard till the call came to the dormitory. Figgins and Kerr did not interrupt him. They knew the importance of making at least a show of having worked, to satisfy Mr. Lathom in the Fourth Form-room in the morning. But when the juniors went up to their dormitory Fatty Wynn's chums tackled him.

"My hat! I'm sleepy!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Hungry, you mean," grinned Figgins. "And there's

nothing doing! Nothing left in the study cupboard! Why didn't you come to the feed, you fathead?"

"Oh, blow the feed!"

"It was a topping one," said Figgins; "and now you're simply perishing——"

"I'm not hungry."

Figgins and Kerr jumped.

"N-n-not hungry!" they stammered simultaneously.

"No."

"But you've had nothing since tea, and it was a measly tea you had."

"I had something out."

"You had something out?" said Figgins, in measured tones.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Oh, at a place, you know!" said Fatty Wynn vaguely.

"And suppose you kindly explain how you got something to eat out when we're all stony broke, and this afternoon you had nothing left but a French penny!" exclaimed Figgins warmly. "Been getting a feed for a French penny?"

"Nunno," said Fatty, turning red; "not exactly."

"Then how did you get it?"

"I—I—— Ahem! You see——"

"I don't see! I'm waiting for you to tell me," said Figgins.

"Well, a—a—a chap treated me."

"Oh, a chap treated you, did he? Well, why couldn't you say so before, without turning as red as a turkey-cock?" said the mystified Figgins.

"Oh, bosh!" said Fatty uneasily.

"One of the Grammar School chaps, was it?"

"No, it wasn't."

"Well, who was it?" demanded Figgins sharply. "What are you being so fatheadedly mysterious for? Don't you want to tell us what you've been doing or whom you've met? You needn't if you don't want to."

Monteith came in to put lights out at that point, and the Fourth—the New House portion of the Form—turned in. After the lights were out, and Monteith had gone, Figgins rapped out:

"Well, Fatty?"

Snore!

"You blessed fat oyster, are you asleep already?" exclaimed Kerr.

Snore!

Figgins grunted.

"I don't believe he's asleep! He don't want to tell us! Let him keep his blessed secrets, and go and eat coke! Brrrrrrrrr."

And Figgins settled down to sleep, and in a few minutes Fatty Wynn's diplomatic snore was changed for the genuine article.

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble in the Family.

THERE was a rift in the lute!

All the New House noticed it the next day.

By the following day the School House fellows, too, had observed it.

It was amazing.

A rift in the lute! Trouble in Figgins' study! Discord among the Co.! It was a thing undreamed of! And it had happened!

It was amazing, because Figgins & Co. had always pulled together remarkably well—surprisingly well. Those three cheery youths came from three different kingdoms, and they got on as if they had been born brothers.

Chums, of course, fall out occasionally. There had been trouble sometimes in Study No. 6, even among such staunch chums as Blake and Herries and Dig and D'Arcy. The Terrible Three had fallen out at times. And they had had little troubles with Talbot of the Shell, too. Such things will happen.

But Figgins & Co.!

Big, open-hearted Figgins; Kerr, the cool, quiet Scotsmen, true as steel; and Wynn, the plump, good-natured, good-tempered, serene and cheery Welsh junior; they had been like unto doves in a dovecot.

And now there was a rift in the lute!

It was amazing—almost incredible—but there it was.

Not a quarrel—nothing like that. But the complete confidence that had reigned was gone. And the cheery cordiality of the Co. had naturally followed it.

Fatty Wynn was keeping a secret!

Now, Figgins was the very reverse of curious, and Kerr never minded anybody's business but his own. They were not inquisitive. Where Fatty had been, and what he had been doing, when he missed calling-over on Tuesday evening, they did not care a brass button.

What they cared for was the fact that Fatty was hiding it from them.

He was evidently hiding it.

At each mention of the subject he had "sheered" off it promptly, and not a word of explanation had passed his lips.

And the two juniors could not help feeling hurt at that want of confidence. Why should Fatty Wynn be keeping a secret from them—who had never kept a secret from him?

And that was not all.

For the following day after lessons Fatty Wynn mysteriously disappeared the minute classes were dismissed, and did not return till calling-over. That was a Wednesday, a half-holiday.

From early in the afternoon till evening call-over Fatty Wynn was conspicuous by his absence. Figgins and Kerr, naturally, wanted him to bowl to them at cricket practice. Tom Merry wanted him to turn up, as Fatty was chiefly relied upon for the bowling in the forthcoming Grammar School match.

And he had vanished!

And not a word of explanation came from him when he came in. Not a syllable. He did not offer to explain, and Figgins and Kerr did not ask him a single question. They were growing dignified. If Fatty chose to go off by himself, and not tell a fellow a word about it, let him. That was how they looked at it, but they really expected a voluntary explanation from Fatty. The explanation did not come, and as Figgins and Kerr did not ask any questions, the subject was not even mentioned. Naturally, tea in the study that evening was a somewhat silent and dignified meal; very different from most teas in Figgy's study.

On Thursday there were afternoon lessons, but when the Fourth Form came out Fatty Wynn vanished.

Again he came back just in time for calling-over, and did not mention a word. Not a syllable. Figgins and Kerr were in a state of almost frozen dignity by this time. They spoke to Fatty Wynn with an air of scrupulous politeness. When scrupulous politeness comes in friendship has usually gone out. So the unhappy state of Figgins' study was known by that time to the whole school—to the Lower School, that is. The senior Forms, naturally, were not interested in the proceedings of such insignificant persons as Fourth-Formers.

Tom Merry & Co. were somewhat concerned about it. True, Figgins & Co. were their rivals and deadly foes. But that did not make any difference. They were worried to see this discord among the inseparables.

Tom Merry, too, was directly concerned in the matter. For Fatty Wynn was "chucking" cricket, and Tom was junior cricket captain. If Fatty stayed away from practice much longer he would have a bone to pick with his captain.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was chiefly concerned, Arthur Augustus being celebrated as a peace-maker. Often and often had Gussy chipped into other fellows' rows to pour oil on the troubled waters, generally getting thoroughly "slanged" by both sides; the usual fate of peacemakers.

But Gussy was giving this matter quite a lot of thought. On mature reflection he had fully forgiven Fatty that outbreak with the cricket-stump. A fellow

whose native language had been mistaken for German had a right to get ratty, and Gussy generously admitted it. But though Gussy had forgiven Fatty, Fatty had not quite forgiven Gussy. This made the role of peacemaker a little difficult. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy never shrank from difficulties. So when the Fourth Form came out of their class-room on Friday afternoon the swell of St. Jim's bore down on Figgins & Co. brimming with good intentions.

"Coming down to the cricket, Fatty?" George Figgins was asking.

"Not this time," said Wynn.

Figgins' face set a little. Without a word of explanation Fatty Wynn was making off by himself.

"He doesn't want us," said Figgins, in a low voice, which was a little bitter in spite of himself. "Come on, Kerr!"

Figgins and Kerr went for their bats. Fatty Wynn made for the gates, and Arthur Augustus joined him.

"In a huwwy, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus affably.

"Yes," said Wynn, without turning his head.

"Goin' out?"

"Yes."

"Little walky-walky—what?" asked Arthur Augustus, with undiminished affability. Fatty Wynn's manner was not encouraging, but D'Arcy did not need encouraging. Having decided what to do, he did not need encouragement.

"I'll come with you, deah boy."

Fatty Wynn halted in the gateway.

"You won't!" he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"Buzz off!"

"Weally, Wynn, that is not vewy polite to a chap who offahs to go for a walk with you!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Fatty Wynn gave a snort.

"I've got no politeness to waste on a silly idiot who takes Welsh for German."

"I have weflected on that mattah, Wynn, and I am willin' to tendah an apology, and to ovahlook your exceedingly wuff conduct."

"Ugh!"

"Are you speakin' Welsh now?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

Fatty Wynn glared. He had only given a disdainful grunt. Arthur Augustus was simply going from bad to worse. Many peacemakers do that.

"Fwom one gentleman to anothah an apology sets any mattah wight," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Ugh!"

"I am sowwy to say, Wynn, that I do not undahstand Welsh!"

"You thundering idiot!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I wasn't speaking Welsh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, buzz off, before I mop up the ground with you!" said Fatty.

"I should uttahly wefuse to be mopped up, Wynn!"

"Ugh!"

Fatty Wynn started down the lane. Arthur Augustus hesitated a moment, and then started after him. He gently tapped the plump junior on the shoulder.

"Wynn, deah boy——"

"Hallo! Buzz off!"

"I wish to speak to you vewy particulahly, Wynn!"

"I'm in a hurry!"

"Howevah, I will not detain you long. I have noticed, with weal sowwow, that you are not on the best of terms with your fwiends——"

"Like your cheek!"

"Bai Jove, I could not help noticin' it, Wynn! It is weally vewy noticeable, you know."

"Oh, rats!"

"My ideah," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "was to offah my services to help to set mattahs wight. I shall be vewy pleased to do anythin' I can. Pway confide the whole mattah to me, deah boy!"

"You silly ass!"

"Eh?"

"Go and eat coke!"

Fatty Wynn started off again. Arthur Augustus started after him, this time not with the intentions of a peacemaker—not with peaceful intentions at all. He was wrathy now.

"Wynn, you howwid boundah! I wegard you as a wank wottah," he shouted, "and unless you withdwaw immediately your wude wemarks, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Will you buzz off?" roared Fatty Wynn.

"I wefuse to buzz off! I insist——"

What happened next seemed like an earthquake to Arthur Augustus. His hand was on Fatty Wynn's shoulder, stopping him. The plump junior turned on him like a flash, and Arthur Augustus was grasped and swept off his feet, and pitched bodily into the dry ditch beside the road. The ditch was half-full of ferns and nettles. The ferns did not hurt Arthur Augustus, but the nettles did.

The swell of St. Jim's squirmed in the nettles and roared.

"Oh cwumbs! You howwid beast! Gweat Scott! Ow, I am stung! Yawoooh! Give me a hand out, you disgustin' Hun, and I will thwash you!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled out of the nettles in a state of towering fury. He looked round for Fatty Wynn, to take instant vengeance, but Fatty Wynn had disappeared.

CHAPTER 6.

The Mystery Deepens.

"WHERE'S Wynn?"

Tom Merry asked that question on the junior cricket ground. All the members of the junior eleven were there, excepting Fatty Wynn, as well as a crowd of other youthful cricketers who had come down for practice. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had arrived in a somewhat flustered state, with a red spot on the tip of his aristocratic nose, where a stinging-nettle had done its deadly work.

"Wynn?" said Figgins. "Oh, he's gone out!"

"Gone out," said Tom Merry, with a frown, "and it's the Grammar School match to-morrow! What the dickens does he mean by it?"

"Better ask him!" said Figgins shortly.

"How can I ask him when he's not here, fathead? Why, he's chucked practice nearly all the week!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "The fat bounder knows we depend on him to take wickets to-morrow! Does he want Gordon Gay to beat St. Jim's hollow? The fathead! I've a jolly good mind to drop him out of the eleven!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Fatty Wynn as a beast!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically.

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Figgins warmly. "Do you want an ear to match your nose, you dummy?"

Figgins might be on strained terms with Fatty Wynn, but naturally he was prepared to take up the cudgels for an absent chum. Nobody was entitled to slang his chum but himself.

"I wepeat that the person is a beast! He wolled me in a bed of stingin'-nettles, and wan off befoah I could thwash him! I wepeat, as often as I like, that he is a beast, and I wegard him with uttah despision—I mean contempt!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Chuck it!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "We've come here for cricket practice, not a dog-fight! Order!"

"Weally, Kangawooh——"

"Well, this won't do," said Tom Merry. "I'd chuck Wynn right out of the eleven, only we can't spare him. But I do say it's rotten. What the dickens is the matter with the chap? Where does he go mooching off to by himself like this?"

"Better ask him," said Figgins moodily.

There was a chuckle from Clampe of the Shell, a New House fellow. Figgins bestowed a glare upon Clampe. He did not like Clampe, who was a yellow-complexioned youth, who always had cigarettes in his pockets.

"What's the cackle about?" demanded Figgins. "I know what you want to insinuate—that Fatty's gone somewhere he wouldn't care to tell about. Say it out plain if that's what you mean, and I'll wipe up the ground with you!"

"He hasn't told you, anyway," said Clampe, backing

away a little, "and I know jolly well he was smelling of tobacco when he came in last night."

"That's a lie!" said Figgins, in his painfully plain English.

"Lots of fellows noticed it. Redfern did."

Figgins looked at Redfern of the Fourth, who looked uncomfortable.

"That isn't true, is it, Reddy?" asked Figgins.

Redfern coloured.

"What does it matter?" he said. "Do shut up, Clampe! Let's get on with the cricket. We're wasting time."

Figgins' eyes flashed. Tom Merry and his companions looked startled. It seemed impossible that honest old Fatty could have any shady motive for clearing off by himself, strange as his conduct was. Fatty Wynn was the last fellow who might have been expected to follow in the footsteps of Clampe and Levison and Mellish, and that set.

"That won't do, Reddy!" exclaimed Figgins, his voice rising unconsciously. "If you say that Fatty was smelling of tobacco when he came in——"

Figgins paused.

"You won't call me a liar, I suppose?" said Redfern quietly.

Figgins was mute. He knew that Redfern was the frozen truth itself.

"But was it so?" asked Kerr, in his quiet way.

"Well, it was," said Redfern. "Several chaps remarked on it. But it's nothing against Fatty. He could have picked up that niff in a smoking-carriage on the railway."

"Where's he been on the railway?" sneered Clampe. "Bow-wow to that!"

"He hasn't been smoking," said Kerr. "For one thing, Fatty is stony. We've been broke to the wide in our study for a long time."

"He jolly well isn't stony," said Clampe, with a sneering grin. "He was out from dinner-time till calling-over on Wednesday. He'd have died if he hadn't had at least two or three meals in that time. And you don't get meals for nothing out of doors.

Figgins turned quite pale. It had not even occurred to his simple mind before, but he could not deny the truth of Clampe's remark, ill-natured as it was. Was it within the bounds of possibility that old Fatty was deceiving his chums as to his financial resources? Figgins' study had been barely subsisting, as it were, for nearly a week on a remittance of Kerr's. Fatty Wynn had had letters in that period, but it was understood that there was no cash in them.

Figgins did not reply to Clampe. He turned and walked off the cricket-ground. Tom Merry called after him:

"Figgy, what about practice?"

"I'll come down later," called back Figgins, without turning his head. Kerr quietly followed his chum.

Clampe burst into his disagreeable cackle. He was surprised the next moment to find half a dozen pairs of hands on him.

"Here, hold on! Leggo! Wharrer you at?" roared the aggrieved Clampe.

"Bump him!"

"Oh! Ah! Yah!

Tom Merry & Co. turned to the cricket, leaving Clampe rolling in the grass and roaring. They did not even explain what they had bumped him for. They left him to work that problem out for himself.

Figgins and Kerr walked away in silence. Figgins' face was very dark. He paused under the elms in the quad, and looked at Kerr.

"There's nothing in it, of course," he said.

Kerr shook his head.

"Nothing," he said.

"Good!" said Figgins, much relieved by that opinion from his Scottish chum, upon whose judgment he placed unbounded reliance. "But it's queer, isn't it?"

Kerr nodded.

"What is Fatty keeping it a secret for? Why the dickens did he come home smelling of tobacco? Where is he getting money from?"

"Blessed if I can guess!"

"He must be getting himself into some blessed trouble, Kerr. I—I think it's all rot a chap standing on his dignity, with a pal like Fatty," said Figgins, colouring. "I—I think we'd better speak to him when he comes in, and—and ask him to tell us what he's up to—as a pal, you know."

"I don't think he'll do it."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"I give that up."

"Well, I'm going to see," said Figgins determinedly.

The chums of the New House had a good while to wait. Fatty Wynn came in, just in time to escape being locked out by Taggles. Figgins met him with a determined and somewhat strained cordiality.

"Late for tea," he said, as cheerily as he could. "But we've got something in the study."

"Thanks! I've had tea."

"You—you've had tea?"

"Yes, thanks!"

There was a long pause.

"Fatty," said Figgins at last, "I want you to tell us—Kerr and me—what you are up to!"

Fatty Wynn coloured and looked uneasy.

"We don't believe there's any harm in it," said Kerr. "But we think you ought to tell us, Fatty."

"Harm!" said Fatty. "What harm should there be in it?"

"Some of the fellows noticed that you were whiffing of tobacco when you came in last night," said Figgins. "And, by Jove, so you are now!" Figgins sniffed. "If a prefect spotted that, Fatty, there would be trouble."

"My hat!" said Fatty, with a startled look. "I hadn't noticed it. I shall have to be more careful." He grinned a little. "You duffers don't think I've been smoking, do you? Why, smoking ruins the voice!"

"The voice!" said Kerr.

"I—I mean, it's bad for a chap generally," said Wynn hastily. "Catch me spoiling my wind with smoking! Not such an ass."

"You've been with somebody who smokes," said Figgins.

Fatty Wynn was silent.

"I've asked you to explain, Fatty, old man," said Figgins gently.

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I—I can't, old chap. I would if I could. But I really can't," said Fatty, looking quite distressed. "I know you fellows—I mean, I've been feeling this. I know it looks as if I'm keeping a secret from you. But, you see—— Well, least said soonest mended," said Fatty lamely.

"Will you tell us where you have been getting your money from?"

"Money!" said Fatty, in surprise.

"Yes, money."

"I haven't any money, Figgy."

"You've been living on air, then?"

"Well, no; I—I haven't missed any meals. I couldn't, you know," said Fatty Wynn. "But—— Dash it all, you don't think I'd keep it dark if I had any money, do you? Is that the kind of chap you take me for?"

"Why can't you tell us?"

There was a long pause. Fatty Wynn was evidently debating something in his mind. Before he could speak the bell rang for call-over, and the juniors had to go and answer to their names. As they came out after calling-over, Clampe of the Shell tapped Fatty Wynn on the arm.

"Had a good time?" he queried.

Wynn stared at him.

"I've been out," chuckled Clampe. "I saw you. He, he, he!"

The fat Fourth-Former started violently.

"You saw me?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"He, he! Yes."

"Rot! What were you doing there?"

"Eh! I was walking down Wayland High Street," said Clampe, in surprise.

Figgins and Kerr could not fail to see the relief that came into Fatty Wynn's face. It was quite clear to them that Wynn had feared, for a moment, that the

Our special artist depicts above a Belgian officer's daring leap for life. Driven into a tight corner by Uhlan scouts, his capture appeared certain; but as a desperate resource he put his steed at the German wire entanglements, which the animal effectually cleared. The gallant officer then made his way to the Belgian lines unharmed.

prying Shell fellow had seen him somewhere else—some place less harmless than the High Street of Wayland.

"You silly ass!" said Fatty Wynn. "I didn't see you!"

"No; you were busy talking to your aristocratic-looking friend," chuckled Clampe. "What were you talking? Dutch? I heard you as you passed me, and couldn't make out a word. Is your friend a German?"

Fatty Wynn walked away without replying. Clampe sniggered at the fellows who had paused round them, in surprise and curiosity.

"A regular blighter, the fellow he was with," said Clampe. "Shabby as you like; seedy as anything. Face like a bulldog. Looked seedy, too, all over."

"No business of yours," growled Figgins.

"Well, we're all interested in Wynn's friend," chuckled Clampe. "He gives his old pals the go-by, to go and visit an awful outsider like that chap. Looked as poor as a church mouse, or poorer. I—yah!—let go my nose, Figgins, you rotter."

Figgins and Kerr followed Fatty Wynn to the study, and left Clampe nursing his nose and breathing wrath.

Fatty Wynn was in the study. He had taken something from his pocket, and was bending over the fire.

"You needn't be in a hurry, Fatty," said Figgins bitterly. "I can see it."

Fatty Wynn spun round.

What he held in his hand was a gaudy programme of the Wayland Palace. Figgins and Kerr looked at him almost in consternation There was at Wayland a most respectable modern Empire, where the St. Jim's fellows were allowed to go freely. But the Palace was a little, old-fashioned music-hall, in a low quarter of the town, and strictly "taboo" to all the respectable folk of Wayland. "Blades," like Cutts of the Fifth, were suspected of visiting the place, in strict secrecy, of course, for the fact of a single visit paid to the Palace was more than enough to get a fellow expelled from the school.

Fatty Wynn flushed crimson. He looked open-mouthed at his chums, the programme still in his hand.

Then he turned to the fire, thrust the programme into it, and watched it reduced to ashes.

"The best thing you can do with that, Fatty!" said Kerr.

Fatty did not reply.

Figgins sat down at the table. He did not need to repeat his questions to Fatty Wynn now. It was only too evident where Fatty had been. There was a long, grim silence in the study while Fatty Wynn did his preparation.

It was Fatty Wynn who broke in at last, when work was finished.

"I can't explain to you chaps!" he said haltingly.

"You needn't," said Figgins drily.

Fatty crimsoned again.

"But—but it's not as you seem to think. I'm not a blackguard."

"I never thought you were before," said Figgins.

"You think I'm one now, then?"

"Only blackguards go to that low den in Wayland."

Fatty rose to his feet.

"Cheese it, Figgy," said Kerr, in his quiet way. "Fatty is going to tell us all about it, aren't you, Fatty, old chap?"

"No!" said Fatty Wynn, "I'm not! I'll tell you now why I've kept it a secret—it's because I should be sacked from the school if it came out, and if it came out that you fellows knew, you might be sacked along with me. But if you think I'm a blackguard, you can go on thinking so, and be hanged to you!"

Fatty Wynn strode from the study, and the door closed after him with a slam.

Figgins and Kerr looked at one another.

"Sacked from the school!" said Figgins bitterly. "I should jolly well think so, if it came out that he'd been to that low, drunken den. Has he gone dotty? Of course he'd be sacked, and serve him right—and us, too, if we abetted him."

"That's why he's kept it dark," said Kerr musingly.

"The best thing he could do," said Figgins savagely. "He's been throwing us over to go there with some seedy blackguard we don't know. Who'd have thought it?"

"I can't understand it," said Kerr. "But Fatty is all right. It looks bad—but—but—Fatty is all right. I know that. So do you, Figgy."

Figgins was silent. If Fatty was "all right," as Kerr averred, what did it all mean?

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry Loses His Temper!

TOM MERRY came out of the School House, after dinner on Saturday, with a somewhat grim expression upon his face.

It was the day of the Grammar School match. The St. Jim's junior team was in great form. But Tom had his doubts about Fatty Wynn.

Fatty was so tremendous a bowler that probably his neglect of practice during the past week had not affected his form. He could always be relied upon to take wickets. It was not that that worried Tom Merry. It was the suspicion that perhaps Fatty Wynn had another of his mysterious excursions on for that afternoon. Owing to the absences of the fat Fourth-Former Tom had not had an opportunity of speaking to him lately. He was making an opportunity now.

The champion junior bowler could not possibly be spared from the team. He had cut practice, but he could not be allowed to cut the match—if such an idea was in his mind. It really did not seem possible; but Tom Merry meant to be informed definitely upon that point.

He found Figgins and Kerr chatting outside the New House, but their fat chum was not with them.

"Where's Fatty?" asked Tom, at once.

Figgins jerked his hand towards the House.

"Oh, good!" said Tom, relieved. "I was afraid he might be playing the giddy goat again this afternoon, and going out."

"The fact is——" began Figgins hesitatingly.

"Well, what's the fact?"

"Fatty isn't playing to-day!"

Tom Merry's jaw squared.

"Does he say so?"

"Yes; he asked me to tell you."

"And his reasons?"

"He didn't give any."

"He's fit, isn't he?"

"So far as I know."

Tom Merry stared hard at the two New House juniors. They were both looking very uncomfortable.

"Look here," said Tom, after a pause, "this won't do, you know. We rely on Fatty. He has no right to leave us in the lurch like this. It's not good enough. You fellows grouse about having too many School House chaps in the team, and now——"

"Well, most of the fellows on your side think they can beat the New House hollow," said Figgins, with a sourness that was quite new to him. "Better give 'em the chance now, and see if they can beat Fatty."

"You know we haven't a bowler like Fatty in the School House, excepting Talbot," said Tom sharply. "And even Talbot isn't so good as Fatty. And Talbot can't bowl a match on his own. We want two good bowlers, I suppose. Nobody's ever said that we had a bowler as good as Fatty. This isn't a House matter, either; it's the school that he's leaving in the lurch!"

"Well, you'd better talk it over with him," said Figgins, shrugging his shoulders. "It's no business of mine. I'm not skipper."

"He's your pal——"

"He was!" said Figgins.

Tom Merry's frown faded away.

"Dash it all, Figgy, you're not really rowing with old Fatty, are you?"

"Fatty's found new friends he likes better," said Figgins sourly. "But if you want to talk to him you'll find him in the study—singing."

"Singing!" said Tom.

"Yes; practising a song," said Figgins, with as near an approach to a sneer as Figgins was capable of. "He's always doing that lately—mugging up words or practising his voice. That's more important than winning cricket-matches, I suppose."

"Blessed if I understand," said Tom, puzzled.

"I don't understand, either," said Figgins. "You'd better talk to him yourself. If you can make him see reason, I'd be jolly glad. I've tried."

Tom Merry, greatly perplexed, went into the New House, and up to Figgins' study. He heard the voice of Fatty Wynn as he approached—he was singing in the language which, when he had been talking it, Arthur Augustus had innocently taken for German. But, apparently, Fatty had "mugged up" the words to his satisfaction long ago, for he was singing now, and Tom Merry's face involuntarily cleared as he listened to the clear, musical voice of the Welsh junior. Like most natives of Wales, David Wynn was born with music in his soul. He had often astonished the other juniors by his gift of "perfect pitch"—to Figgins it seemed marvellous that a fellow should be able to name any note that was struck on the piano without looking at the instrument.

Fatty Wynn was singing in Welsh—a language that lends itself to singing. Not a word did Tom Merry understand, but he knew the tune of the "Men of Harlech."

"Yn ngwyn oleuni'r goelcerth acw,
Tros wefusau Cymro'n marw,
Annibyniaeth sydd yn galw,
Am ei dewraf dyn!"

Tom Merry paused till Wynn had finished that rousing chorus, and then marched into the study.

"Ni chaiff gelyn ladd ac ymlid——" Fatty Wynn was going on, but he stopped as Tom Merry came in.

"Well?" said Tom.

"Well?" said Fatty Wynn.

"I've just heard from Figgins that you don't want to play this afternoon."

"It isn't exactly that. I do want to play—I want it badly, but I can't."

"You know how much we want you. Gay and his lot are at the top of their form. You don't want them to beat us."

"You can keep your end up without me."

"Well, I suppose we can," said Tom rather sharply; "the St. Jim's junior eleven don't depend on a single player, so far as that goes. But this is one of our toughest matches—the toughest of all, excepting the match with Greyfriars, and you oughtn't to desert us like this."

"I wouldn't if I could help it," said Wynn, looking distressed. "But—but a chap ain't always his own master."

"You are, I suppose, in that case. You're not detained for the afternoon, by any chance?"

"No, no."

"Then, why can't you play?"

"I've got to go out."

"Got to!" said Tom.

"Well, yes; got to. I—I've got to go. I can't help it. I simply can't play this afternoon," said Wynn. "You know I'd like to. It makes me feel rotten standing out of the team, I can tell you. Put young Hammond in; he's coming on very well with his bowling, and he's a School House chap."

"Never mind that," said Tom. "I can pick up twenty second-rate bowlers, if I like. Look here, Wynn, this isn't playing the game. If there's anything really important, of course, you can cut the match."

"It is important."

Tom Merry paused.

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"I can't do that."

"Don't think I want to pry into your affairs," exclaimed Tom, flushing angrily. "I don't care twopence for them, and you know it. But you've no right to stand out of the team and leave us in the lurch, without giving a good reason. If you've got to go and see a sick relation, or anything of that kind, you can say so, I suppose?"

"It isn't that."

"Then you're going to stand out of the team without giving a shadow of a reason why you're playing this trick on us!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I can't help it."

"I suppose you haven't forgotten that I'm cricket captain?" asked Tom sarcastically. "I call on you to play, as your skipper."

"Well, I can't."

"And you can't give a reason?"

"Only what I've said."

"You've said nothing, except that you can't play. That means you won't. You've got another engagement on for the afternoon, and you've chucked the match because of it."

"Well, yes."

"Well, I'm dashed!" ejaculated Tom Merry, his temper fast rising. "I never heard such cool cheek. Do you think you can play fast and loose with the School team in this way? Look here, you must play. You've led us to depend on you, and you've no right to back out. I've said nothing about your cutting practice. But you can't cut our toughest match like this."

"It can't be helped."

"Can't be helped be blowed. It can be helped, and it's got to be helped. If I left you out of the eleven without giving a reason, the whole blessed New House would be raging for gore. And now you coolly tell me that you've got an engagement, and can't play!" exclaimed Tom, exasperated. "It's too jolly cool. Blow your engagement! You can't cut the match for any engagement."

"It's no good talking," said Fatty Wynn doggedly. "If you knew——"

He paused.

"If I knew what?"

"Nothing."

"I know you've been mystifying everybody lately with some silly secret or other. If your friends like to put up with it, that's their business. But you can't play these tricks on the school eleven." Tom Merry pulled himself in with an effort. He was getting very angry. The thought of the Grammarian team, at the top of its form, coming over, and finding St. Jim's deprived of their best bowler, for no reason whatever, that was enough to make any skipper angry. "Look here, Wynn, old man, don't be an ass. You know what's the right thing to do."

"It can't be helped."

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"You won't play?"

"I can't."

"Then I'll put it plainly. If you stand out of the team this afternoon, you stand out of it for the whole cricket season, so long as I'm captain. You won't catch me depending on you again."

Fatty Wynn drew a deep breath.

"It can't be helped," he said once more.

"That settles it," said Tom.

He left the study without another word, but his eyes glinting under his contracted brows. Fatty Wynn stood rooted to the floor in the study. He gave a deep sigh at last, and left the study with slow steps. A few minutes later he was seen crossing towards the gates.

CHAPTER 8.

Shadowed by Five!

"HERE he comes!"

Clampe of the Shell murmured the words. And Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, and Piggott of the Third, and Crooke of the Shell all chuckled softly.

They were in cover among the trees at a short distance from the gates of St. Jim's. The five young rascals were keeping watch on the gates.

It was Clampe's idea, and the other black sheep were backing him up with great heartiness.

They were indignant. Being themselves black sheep, they naturally had some sympathy for another black sheep, so long as he owned up and took them into his confidence. But for a fellow to indulge in the same little relaxations as themselves, and to keep up an appearance of despising that kind of thing, irritated them keenly. They meant to show up the humbug if they could.

Fatty Wynn had never before shown any inclination towards the ways of Clampe & Co. But that he had fallen from grace now seemed certain. A fellow who "mooched" away by himself on all occasions, and came home smelling of tobacco, and declined to explain where he had been, was evidently up to something that would not bear the light. And Clampe of the Shell, in the kindness of his heart, had offered Fatty Wynn his valuable friendship and a cigarette, welcoming him as "one of the boys," and, to Clampe's unspeakable indignation, Fatty Wynn had pulled his nose and jammed the cigarette down his back. The fat bounder was evidently bent on keeping up appearances, and deceiving even fellows who had found him out, as Clampe wrathfully told his precious pals.

Whereupon the black sheep had schemed a little scheme for "showing up" Fatty Wynn in the most complete manner.

They were in cover, watching for him to come out. If he cut the cricket match, and spent the afternoon away from the school, there could be no doubt that he was "on the randan" again. And the young rascals intended to shadow him, and get full information of where he went and what he did. That information was to be detailed afterwards in the common-rooms of both Houses. Fatty Wynn would be "shown up" then with a vengeance. As Clampe said virtuously, he couldn't stand a hypocrite. The hypocrite was going to be unmasked, if Clampe could manage it.

Fatty Wynn, quite unconscious of the five pairs of eyes fixed upon him, came down the lane with a somewhat moody brow.

Fresh from his interview with the junior cricket captain, Fatty was not feeling cheerful. He did not like missing the match, and he did not like giving the fellows the impression that he was leaving them in the lurch. He walked down the lane with a glum face, thinking of anything but spying eyes.

Clampe & Co. grinned and fell into his track.

Without a glance behind Fatty Wynn tramped on to the stile, and crossed it, and went on by the footpath through the wood.

"Making for Wayland!" murmured Clampe.

"Oh, rather!" said Levison.

"That's where I saw him the other day with some seedy bounder, in the High Street," said Clampe. "This time we'll jolly well see where he goes. Pub, of course."

"You never knew a fellow till you find him out," grinned Mellish. "I must say the bounder has been keeping up jolly good appearances all this time."

"I've always suspected those chaps," said Crooke, shaking his head. "When a fellow keeps up too jolly good appearances, there's always something behind it."

"Generally," said Levison.

"The young cad, though, to try to stuff us with crams, when we know all about him," said Clampe indignantly. "Why couldn't he own up, and have a smoke with a chap? No worse than going to pubs, I suppose."

"Hallo! He's looking back!"

Fatty Wynn, in the leafy footpath through the wood, had paused and looked back. He started a little as he saw the five juniors. He gave them a sharp glance, and went on his way again.

A little further on he quitted the footpath, taking a beaten track through the wood. Clampe and Co. promptly followed the same track.

"He's trying to make out whether we're after him," said Levison shrewdly.

"Well, he can't stop us," said Clampe.

"He may dodge us, though," said Levison. "Look here, you keep on, and I'll clear off, and watch for him on the Wayland road. It's clear enough he's going to Wayland. If he dodges you I'll pick him up again there."

"Good egg!"

Levison disappeared into the wood.

Clampe and Crooke and Mellish and Piggott, grinning, followed closer on Fatty Wynn's track. The fat Fourth-Former had no doubt left now that they were tracking him. He stopped, and waited for them to come up.

They came on slowly.

"Hallo, Wynn! Fancy meeting you here!" said Clampe.

"You've been following me," said Fatty Wynn bluntly.

"Having a little walk, you know," remarked Piggott.

"Well, go on with your walk."

"We'll have a bit of a rest here," remarked Crooke.

The juniors grinned. They intended to rest there as long as Fatty Wynn did. The New New House junior understood that, and his eyes glinted.

"What are you following me for?" he demanded.

"Anything you're afraid of having found out?" grinned Mellish.

"I don't want to be spied on."

"We'll come with you if you like," said Clampe. "We're game for a little razzle. We don't mind a little risk."

"Hear, hear!" said Piggott.

Fatty Wynn frowned.

"I suppose it's no good telling you that you're mistaken, and that I'm not going to play any of your rotten tricks?" he asked.

"Not much!" sniggered Clampe. "We know you, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Fatty Wynn deliberately, "you're not going to follow me any further. You're going back."

"Perhaps you'll make us go back?" suggested Crooke.

"Yes."

"All four of us?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn did not laugh. He pushed back his cuffs in a businesslike manner. Clampe & Co. ceased to chuckle, and looked a little uneasy. Certainly they were four to one, but they were four wasters, not at all in good form, and the sturdy Wynn was in the pink of condition, and he certainly had more pluck than all four of them put together.

The quartette looked a little worried as the Fourth-Former advanced on them with his hands up in a warlike attitude.

"Come on!" said Fatty Wynn coolly.

"Look here——" began Clampe.

"Are you going back?"

"No!" roared Clampe furiously.

"Then look out!"

Without wasting any more time in words, Fatty Wynn rushed to the attack. For very shame's sake the four wasters could not run, though that was what they felt inclined to do. They lined up to face the frontal attack. But Fatty Wynn came down on them like a charging locomotive.

Clampe received his right on the chin, and was hurled bodily into the thicket, where he struggled, entangled and yelling. Mellish and Crooke collared Fatty Wynn, but a jarring upper-cut laid Crooke on his back at the same moment, and Mellish was grasped by the fat Fourth-Former, and hurled upon Clampe, knocking him back into the thicket. Piggott had already taken to his heels.

Fatty Wynn looked at the three sprawling wasters, grinned, and went on his way. It had been an easy victory, in spite of the odds.

Crooke sat up in the grass, holding his chin in both hands and groaning. Clampe and Mellish wriggled out of the thicket in a dishevelled state. They looked at one another furiously.

"Why didn't you collar him, you idiots?"

"Why didn't you down him?"

"Yow! Ow! Why didn't you? Ow!"

"Oh, my nose! You blessed funks——"

"Funk yourself! Yow! All my teeth are loosened! The beast's got a fist like a horse's hoof! Ow!"

Fatty Wynn had disappeared. The unhappy shadowers did not try to pick up the trail again. With many groans over their injuries, they drifted away, and returned disconsolately to St. Jim's. Fatty Wynn, with a smiling face, continued on his way.

CHAPTER 9.

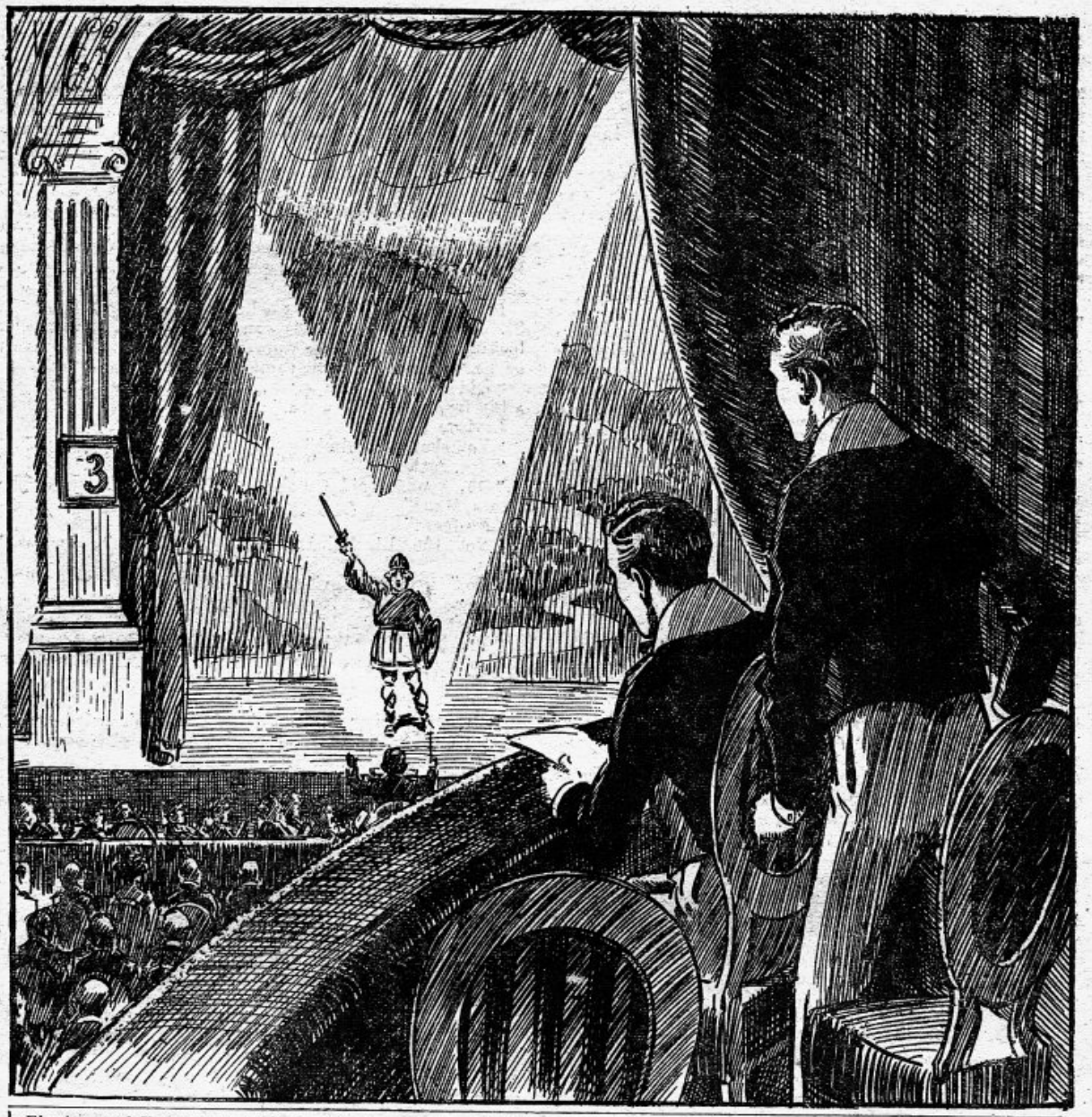
Levison Makes a Discovery.

"EVAN, old chap!"

Levison of the Fourth pricked up his ears.

While the rest of the shadowers had been faring so badly at the hands of Fatty Wynn, Levison of the Fourth had hurried on to the Wayland road. Close by the stile which gave admittance to the high-road Levison had taken cover. That Fatty Wynn was bound for Wayland he had no doubt, and he was sure of picking up the trail again if Clampe & Co. missed it. From his cover in the trees, Levison watched the stile, upon which a somewhat shabby youth was seated.

Remembering Clampe's description of a shabby youth who had met Fatty Wynn a few days before in Wayland,



Figgins and Kerr sat petrified. They gazed at the figure on the stage with stony eyes. A plump, sturdy figure, clad in the national costume of Old Wales, with the fat face made up for the stage—but recognisable by eyes that knew it so well! And if they had not known the face, they would have known the voice. Figgins gasped. "Fatty Wynn!" *(See Chapter 12.)*

Levison wondered whether the boy was there to wait for the Fourth-Former from St. Jim's. He was soon enlightened. Fatty Wynn came hurrying out of the wood, and he greeted the youth on the stile warmly.

Levison grinned as he watched them shake hands.

The lad whom Wynn greeted as "Evan" was a couple of years older than the New House junior—a good-looking lad, but pale as if from recent illness. His clothes were shabby, but very neat and clean. He was of a sturdy build. That he was poor it was easy enough to see, and his appearance contrasted very much with that of the plump junior of St. Jim's.

Levison strained his ears to listen, as the two began to speak; Levison had no scruples about that. He heard what was said, but he did not understand it. For after the first greeting Fatty Wynn and his companion no longer talked in English.

Levison stared at them through the bushes.

He had never heard a word of the language they were speaking, and it astounded him. It wasn't English, and it wasn't French, and it wasn't German. It might have been Italian or Russian, for all Levison knew to the contrary. But after a few minutes of astonished reflection Levison guessed that it was Welsh.

He listened in wonder.

To the ears of one who does not know Welsh, the language has a sound of Spanish, with an admixture of the purest German. Levison listened to the roll of the musical syllables and scowled. It was just his luck, he reflected savagely. He would have spotted the whole business if they had only talked in English. Quite unconsciously, the two Welsh lads were putting the hidden spy on tenterhooks. Levison could hear every word, and he could not understand a single one.

He could only watch and scowl.

Who could the shabby youth be whom Fatty Wynn called "Evan, old chap," and treated in this friendly way? Certainly not a relation, or he would not have shown such signs of poverty. What was Fatty Wynn doing there with that shabby "bounder"? Levison was determined to know, so far as his eyes could serve him, his ears being of little use under the circumstances.

After about five minutes, Fatty Wynn vaulted over the

stile into the road, and the two boys walked on to Wayland.

Levison promptly followed.

Fatty Wynn and the unknown were still talking as they walked on, and Levison found it easy to follow them unseen. In the old High St[illegible] of the market-town, too, there was plenty of cover for the shadower, in the numerous pedestrians in the street.

Wynn and his companion turned into River Street—a shabby thoroughfare that led towards the river and the poorest quarter of the town. Levison kept on the track. But the trail came to a sudden end.

The two Welsh lads passed into a building, and disappeared from sight.

Levison ensconced himself in the doorway of a building opposite, and watched and waited.

The house into which they had gone was a cheap lodging-house, but quite a respectable place. If Fatty Wynn was on the "razzle," as Levison elegantly termed it, that could not be the place chosen.

He was right. In about ten minutes they came out again, and Levison followed on their track once more. Fatty Wynn was carrying a bag now.

They passed the Blackbird—a notorious public-house with a bad reputation—and Levison wondered for a moment whether that was their destination. He had not the slightest doubt that their destination was a place of evil repute.

But they passed on.

On the other side of the street, Levison kept them in sight.

He gave a start as they halted outside a building upon the glass sign of which appeared the words "Wayland Palace."

At night that sign was lighted up, and shone forth as a beacon to all that was disreputable in Wayland. It was a low music-hall, where the entertainment, though relieved by a few good items, was generally of the most questionable character; coarseness vying with vulgarity for the delectation of the patrons.

As it was Saturday afternoon, there was a matinee performance at the Palace, and a crowd was already going in at the doors.

Levison caught his breath.

His blackest suspicions had not gone as far as that. He had suspected that Fatty Wynn was going to some public-house, for a smoke and a game of nap, or something of the kind. But that he was going to that low "dive," into which even Levison himself had never ventured, was astounding.

But it was true.

The two youths stopped at the stage door, and went in.

Levison, on the opposite side of the way, stood rooted to the pavement. He rubbed his eyes with astonishment.

It was not easy to credit his eyes.

Fatty Wynn, with his unknown companion, had gone in at the stage door of the Palace. He was not only a habitue of a place that was severely out of bounds for St. Jim's fellows, but he was evidently on speaking terms with the shady persons who provided the entertainment.

"My only hat!" said Levison at last. "My word! Well, this beats it! This beats the whole band."

There was nothing to be gained by further spying. He hung about for ten minutes or so, but Fatty Wynn did not reappear. He was there for the matinee, there could be no doubt about that.

The cad of the Fourth was tempted to enter the place, and see the matinee for himself, and attempt to spot disgust. "Is that all?"

But though Levison had plenty of nerve, his nerve fell short of that. In the shades of the evening, and muffled up carefully against observation, he might have risked it; but in broad daylight, and in Etons, he dared not.

He walked away slowly, ruminating on what he had discovered.

The spies of the school had set out to follow Fatty Wynn, and to "bowl him out." Levison had bowled him out with a vengeance now. He had only to utter a word of what he had seen, and Fatty Wynn would be expelled in disgrace from the school.

Not that Levison had any intention of "sneaking," and bringing disgrace and ruin to Wynn, his Form-fellow, for whom he had no special dislike. That was not in his mind at all. But it was pleasant to his peculiar nature to feel that he had power in his hands, and it was still more gratifying to feel that he was able to show up the hypocrite. That was one of the fellows who had always looked down on Levison's ways—who had never made any secret of his hearty contempt for the dingy blackguardism of the cad of the Fourth. What were Levison's little peccadilloes—his cigarettes, his little games of nap, his secret visits to the Green Man—in comparison with this? Levison had never been to the Palace, anyway. In comparison, Levison felt quite stainless.

He grinned gleefully as he made his way back to St. Jim's. He found his comrades in the quadrangle, looking considerably the worse for wear. They bore down on Levison at once as he came in, eager for information.

"Did you spot him again?" asked Clampe. "He got away from us in the wood."

Levison nodded.

"You shadowed him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, good!" said Crooke. "Where did he go? The Green Man?"

"No fear!"

"Not the Blackbird?" exclaimed Mellish, in awed tones.

"No," grinned Levison.

"Some blessed tobacconist's?" asked Piggott in "Is that all?"

"Ha, ha! No. What do you think of the Palace?"

The four young rascals stared at Levison.

"The Palace?" said Crooke.

"You bet!"

"You're pulling our leg," said Mellish suspiciously. "He wouldn't go there; he wouldn't be idiot enough. In broad daylight! Come off!"

"He did, all the same," said Levison. "He met another chap, and they went there together. I watched 'em go in."

Clampe drew a deep, deep breath.

"And that's the chap who pulled my nose because I offered him a smoke!" he said, with burning indignation.

"That's the chap!" grinned Levison.

"He might be sacked for it!" muttered Mellish.

"He jolly well would be sacked if it came out," said Levison—"flogged and sacked, and kicked out in disgrace. What a pleasure for Figgins and Kerr! He's keeping this secret from them; I can see that. I fancy he's new to it, too, or he wouldn't be so dashed reckless about it. Of course, nobody from St. Jim's would be likely to be in that quarter of the town, but it was awfully risky. Looks as if he's simply determined to go to the dogs."

"Serve him right if we gave him away!" said Crooke virtuously. "We may be a bit wild at times, but we draw the line at places like that."

"We don't want to get him sacked," said Levison, "and the fellows would scrag us for sneaking, too, though they'd be pretty sick of Wynn if they knew the truth. But we're not going to have any more of his humbug! Let him come 'good little Georgie' with me again, that's all!"

"Let him call me a smoky little cad again!" said Clampe, clenching his fists. "Let him!"

"The awful humbug!" said Piggott. "Looking down on us—calling us blackguards, too! We'll show him!"

And the wasters of St. Jim's, full of virtuous indignation, waited anxiously for Fatty Wynn to come in, so that they could have the pleasure of telling him what they thought of him. But Fatty Wynn did not come in. And Levison & Co., to their great astonishment,

realised that the fat Fourth-former must be staying for the evening performance as well as the matinee.

"He's going it!" said Levison.

And, if the suspicions of the wasters were well-founded, there was no doubt that Fatty Wynn was indeed "going it."

CHAPTER 10.
The Grammar School Match.

TOM MERRY & CO., meanwhile, were keeping their end up against the Grammarian cricket team.

Gordon Gay and his eleven from Rylcombe Grammar School had come over, at the top of their form, with the intention of wiping out their last defeat at the hands of the Saints.

The Grammarians had batted first, and Tom Merry sorely missed his best bowler.

Talbot of the Shell was in great form, and he performed the "hat-trick" amid thunderous cheers from the St. Jim's crowd. But the rest of Tom Merry's bowlers made little impression on the Grammarian wickets.

The score went up, in spite of Talbot's first-rate performance, and in spite of good bowling from Blake and Kerr and Kangaroo in turn. The Grammarians were all down for 70 in the first innings.

The St. Jim's batting side, however, kept their end up well. At the wicket Fatty Wynn was not missed. Hammond of the Fourth had his place in the team, and he was a good bat. The Saints secured 66 for their first innings.

Then the Grammarians batted again, and Fatty Wynn was missed even more sorely. Talbot could not produce any more hat-tricks.

Figgins and Kerr could not help feeling and looking glum. Tom Merry was in an exasperated frame of mind.

All the team, in fact, were annoyed by the absence of the champion bowler. Fatty Wynn was badly wanted, and he was not there. If some all-important reason had called him away it would have been different; his comrades would have taken that patiently. But he had cut the match to go "mooching" off by himself somewhere, for reasons which, as he kept them secret, apparently would not bear the light.

Figgins felt that it reflected on his House. If Fatty had been dropped out of the team the New House juniors would have been up in arms upon the subject at once. He had dropped himself out, and the New House fellows had nothing to say in his defence.

In the second Grammarian innings Gordon Gay's wicket was impregnable; even Talbot assailed it in vain. Gay was first in, and not out, and he knocked up 50 off his own bat, the score coming to a 110. It was a score that the Grammarians had not dreamed of themselves, and it made them gleeful.

There was a pause for tea then, and over tea the remarks of the St. Jim's cricketers were chiefly on the subject of Fatty Wynn, and they were not complimentary.

Figgins and Kerr had nothing to say.

Clampe & Co. came down to watch the last innings, and they watched, grinning. As they never had a chance of playing in the team—Tom Merry having no use for slackers and wasters—they were not disappointed to see the tide of battle going against St. Jim's. And their secret knowledge of the real reason of Fatty Wynn's absence made them chuckle as they heard the remarks of the cricketers.

Tom Merry & Co. put up a big struggle in the last innings. They had a great deal of leeway to make up, and they did their best.

Figgins, when he came to the wicket, played the game of his life. It would have been too bitter to him to see the match lost through the fault of his chum, and Figgins performed almost miracles.

Talbot backed him up manfully at the other end, and their partnership lasted long, amid loud cheers from the crowd, whose hopes were rising again.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had come out for six l.b.w. "Bai Jove, deah boys, we shall pull it off, aftah all. Talbot is playin' up like a Twojan, and Figgins is weally wippin'."

"Hundred!" said Blake, who had contributed twenty towards that hundred. "And there goes Talbot's wicket."

Next man in was clean bowled for a duck's egg, and the next was dismissed for two. Faces grew long again.

"Last man in!"

Kerr was last on the list. The light was going now, and the batsmen had to play against time as well as against the Grammarians. But Kerr was in a determined mood. He played a cautious game to back up Figgins, adopting the policy of "making haste slowly." Figgins was hitting mighty swipes, and though some of his hitting looked reckless, the field did not seem to have any chance. Again the hopes of the St. Jim's crowd rose, as a four from Figgins brought to total of the second innings up to a hundred and ten.

"Four to tie, and five to win!" said Tom Merry, with an anxious glance at the sky, and another at the umpire.

"One more ovah," said Arthur Augustus sagely.

Figgins seemed to be "set" for any number of overs, and Kerr was a tower of strength so far as keeping open the innings was concerned; but there was time for only one more over. Gordon Gay was bowling, and he put his best into it. But Figgins seemed animated by the spirit of a Grace or a Hayward. Away went the ball, and the batsmen ran, and ran, and ran, and ran—and the ball hopped in a second too late. And a rousing cheer from the crowd greeted the tie.

The rest was a walk-over. Figgins wiped the ball away for a run, and then the Saints cheered the victory.

"Jolly close thing," remarked Gordon Gay. "But I'm glad we were able to finish, all the same."

Figgins looked very red, and breathed hard as he came off. But he was in high spirits. He had saved the match, and nobody would be able to put down a defeat to the New House. Fatty Wynn's defection could be forgiven, as his chum had pulled the game out of the fire, after all.

"I congwatulate you, Figgay, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, patting Figgins on the shoulder. "A vewy cweditable innings indeed!"

"Thanks!" grinned Figgins. "Praise frow Gussy is praise indeed. Lemme see, how many centuries did you make, Gussy?"

"I had resolved to make a century, but the umpiah fancied that my leg was in fwont of the wicket," said Arthur Augustus. "Umpiahs get these ideahs into their heads sometimes, you know."

"Well, we've beaten them," said Tom Merry. "That's a comfort. You can tell Wynn that he hasn't lost the match for us, Figgy, when he comes in."

Figgins grunted.

Tom Merry & Co. entertained the Grammarians after the match to a little study celebration, and it was after dark when the Grammarian brake rolled away. Figgins & Co. went back to the New House in a thoughtful mood.

Fatty Wynn had not come in yet.

Clampe of the Shell was chatting in the doorway with Levison and Crooke of the School House. The wasters grinned at the sight of Figgins and Kerr.

"Wynn not come back yet?" asked Clampe.

"Not that I know of," said Figgins shortly.

"Staying for the first house," murmured Crooke.

"He can't stay for the second," said Clampe. "That would make him too late for bed. He will have to cut the second house."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

These cryptic words were expected by the cheerful wasters to provoke inquiry from Figgins and Kerr. They referred, of course, to the entertainment at the Wayland Palace, which was twice nightly.

But Figgins and Kerr did not inquire. They looked contemptuously at the wasters, and passed on into the house. They did not speak till they were in their study.

"It's come out," then said Kerr.

"How on earth did they get on to it?" muttered Figgins. "They never saw that programme of Fatty's. He burnt it here."

"He wouldn't be ass enough to leave one about, I suppose," said Kerr. "One of the cads may have spied on him."

Figgins nodded.

"That's where he's gone, I suppose," he remarked.

"Kerr, old man, suppose Monteith or Sefton should get a whisper of it—especially Sefton! That bully would be glad to catch this study out; he's got a lot up against us. Kerr, fellows have been sacked for less than Fatty's doing."

"I know," said Kerr gloomily. "I can't understand it. Fatty hasn't any taste for blackguardism. I should always have said that he wouldn't be found dead in a place like that low hole. I can't get on to it at all. What reason can he have for going there, Figgy, unless it's a blackguardly reason?"

"None that I can see."

"Somebody must have got hold of him and must be influencing him," said Kerr. "That's all I can think of. But we can't do anything. He knows what we think about it."

Figgins gave a gloomy assent. There was nothing they could do for their wayward chum, and they were feeling sore and angry and apprehensive. For, in spite of Fatty's strange and apparently "rotten" conduct—in spite of the icy terms that now reigned in Figgins' study, the old friendship was not dead—it was only sleeping. And the thought that Fatty would be bowled out and punished filled his old pals with apprehension for him.

He was simply asking for trouble, and if the "chopper" came down, they could not deny that it would come down deservedly; but the thought of disgrace and ruin falling upon their old chum dismayed them utterly.

It was a bitter evening to Figgins and Kerr. Fatty Wynn came in once more just in time for calling-over. He did not speak to his old chums. They did not speak when they met now.

But he asked Redfern how the match had gone. That subject was evidently uppermost in his mind. Redfern gave him a stare, as Wynn asked the question in the junior common-room.

"Remember there was a match—what?" asked Reddy sarcastically. "Well, we won it, no thanks to you. They nearly did us."

"Oh, good!" said Wynn, evidently greatly relieved. "You got on all right without me, after all?"

"Yes, and we can do the same again," said Redfern.

"Oh, rats!"

"Good entertainment?" asked Clampe, coming along, with a chuckle.

There were a crowd of fellows in the common-room, and it was Clampe's opportunity.

Fatty Wynn looked at him.

"Did you speak to me?"

"Yes. I asked you if it was a good entertainment," said Clampe deliberately. "You must have liked it, as you stayed for the first house in the evening as well as the matinee."

"What are you burbling about?" asked Redfern, in wonder.

"Wynn knows!" chuckled Clampe.

"You don't mean to say you've been theatre-going, Wynn?" said Redfern, in disgust. "You haven't been buzzing off to a theatre and cutting cricket for that?"

"I don't mean to say anything," said Fatty Wynn colouring.

"That's too bad," said Clampe, with a giggle. "Us bad boys never go to the Palace; but we should like to know what it's like. You might tell a fellow."

"The Palace!" said Redfern.

"What rot!" said Lawrence.

"That's where Wynn's been!" said Clampe coolly. "Let him deny it if he dares!"

"Tell him he's a liar, Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn did not speak.

"That's the chap who's shocked at a fellow smoking a cigarette," sneered Clampe. "A chap who goes to a drunken dive—place that's been fined before now for rows and disorder. Place where they smoke and booze. No wonder he smells of tobacco when he comes home! and turns up his nose at a chap who smokes cigarettes—the blessed hypocrite!"

"I don't believe he's been to any such place," said Redfern.

"Ask him!"

"Why don't you speak up, Fatty?" exclaimed Owen.

"We shall take your word against that cackling rotter's!"

"Tell him he's a lying Hun, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn turned away without a word.

There was a murmur in the junior common-room. Redfern, in great amazement, called out after the fat Fourth-Former:

"Fatty, you ass! Why don't you tell us it isn't true? You know what the fellows will think?"

"They can think what they like," said Fatty Wynn.

He walked out of the common-room.

He left the New House juniors in a buzz.

CHAPTER 11.

Under a Cloud!

THE next day was Sunday.

That day Fatty Wynn did not absent himself. He did not take the usual walk with Figgins and Kerr—that was all over. Fatty "mooched" about the quad aimlessly by himself. That he felt the estrangement from his old chums was pretty plain; but the sensitive Welsh lad was too proud to make any advances, and Figgins and Kerr had nothing to say.

What could they say?

To assume the old chummy manners, when a gulf had opened between them and their friend, was impossible. Fatty Wynn had found a new friend, and his new friend was leading him into places that a decent boy would never enter, and Wynn had not uttered a word of explanation. Under such circumstances, anything like the old chumminess was impossible.

Figgins and Kerr were by no means models—they had been brought up far from the lines of the estimable Eric. They liked a visit to the Wayland Empire, where the entertainment, if not particularly intellectual, was decent and harmless—they broke bounds every now and then, and they had plenty of faults. But there was a limit—and that limit was fixed. If Fatty had chosen to throw over his new ways, they were willing to receive him with open arms, and welcome him back into the fold, as it were. But they were not willing to pal with a fellow who broke bounds to go to such a place as the Wayland Palace. They cudgelled their brains in vain for any reason Fatty could have for going there, which was not the obvious reason—a taste for dissipation and blackguardism.

They knew why Cutts of the Fifth sometimes went there with great secrecy—it was to smoke, to drink stronger drinks than were good for him; to meet low acquaintances, and hear low talk. Fatty Wynn, certainly, had never shown any sign previously of following in the footsteps of the dandy of the Fifth. But facts spoke for themselves.

His secrecy, at first, had bitterly wounded his chums. But the reason for that secrecy was only too obvious now.

He himself had said that he would be sacked for what he was doing, if it came out. After that, there was nothing to be said.

There were many whispers among the juniors that day and the next. Clampe and Levison and Piggott and Mellish and Crooke, naturally, had been talking.

They did not intend to give the delinquent away to authority; but they had no intention whatever of keeping dark what they had learned, so far as the rest of the Lower School was concerned.

They professed to be indignant. Fatty Wynn had always been down on their little doggish ways—and behold, it had turned out that he was a bigger blackguard than any member of the "smart set" of the school.

So they did not spare him.

As the reputation of the wasters for truthfulness was not high, it only needed a word from Fatty Wynn to dispel the cloud that was gathering. If he had given Clampe & Co. the lie, he would have been believed.

But he did not give them the lie. He said nothing. He appeared to be unconscious of the whispering that was going on, though that was hardly possible.

When he went out after lessons on Monday afternoon

everybody knew where he had gone. He was gone to the "first house" at the Wayland Palace.

It could not be supposed that the fat Fourth-Former, however strong his taste for that kind of entertainment, wanted to see the same performance over and over again. It was clear that he had made acquaintances at the place, and that that was the reason he went.

Levison described the lad he had seen Fatty Wynn meet; and Levison's description was not flattering. Every time Levison described him, in fact, the unknown was a little more dingy and dubious and disreputable, till at last Levison drew a picture of all the vices personified. Levison did not stop there. He obtained a copy of a Wayland paper, in which there appeared an advertisement of the show at the Palace, and found the name of "Evan" in the list of the performers.

"Evan Jones!" said Levison, showing the paper to his precious chums. "That must be the chap! Evan Jones, boy singer, in his selection of songs. Precious songs, you can bet your life. I'd like the Head to hear one of them."

"Sure he called the chap he met Evan?" asked Clampe.

"Quite sure."

"Then that settles it. He's palled on with one of the music-hall chaps, and he goes there to have a high old time behind the scenes," said Clampe. Clampe, naturally, had a very vague idea of what went on "behind the scenes" in a music-hall of any sort; but he had a dim mental picture of frowsy men and women in a state of semi-intoxication, founded chiefly upon ignorance of the facts. "Shouldn't wonder if he gets squiffy."

"It'll all come out soon," said Levison. "He can't keep this up without the prefects getting on to it. There's going to be an awful row soon, and Fatty Wynn's going to get the boot—you mark my words!"

Levison and his friends looked forward to that with complacency; but the fellows who had always been friendly with Fatty Wynn were worried. Tom Merry & Co. heard the talk, naturally, and as Fatty Wynn did not deny the charge, there was only one conclusion they could draw.

They stated publicly, and in measured language, their opinion of Levison and his spying, but that was all they could do.

Fatty Wynn was under a cloud.

That it worried him was evident. He who had always been the cheeriest fellow in the school, as well as the plumpest, grew silent and morose; he who had been the most social of all the juniors had taken to "mooching" by himself, with his hands in his pockets and a glum expression on his face.

He did not come into Figgins' study excepting for his preparation, and that was done in frozen silence. He had taken to having his tea in Hall. On Wednesday afternoon Tom Merry, after a debate with himself, looked for Fatty Wynn, and caught him on the way to the gates. The fat Fourth-Former did not stop, so Tom fell into pace beside him.

"We're playing cricket this afternoon, Fatty," said Tom amicably.

"Hope you'll enjoy it," said Wynn morosely.

"Won't you play?"

"I'm out of the eleven, ain't I?"

"I'll put in again."

Fatty Wynn paused then.

"You told me I shouldn't play again as long as you were captain," he said.

"I know I did. But I want you to play. Come along, old chap!"

Fatty burst into a bitter laugh.

"You've heard all that jaw about me, of course?" he said savagely.

"Well, a chap could hardly help hearing it, unless he was deaf," said Tom.

"Quite so. And having made up your mind that I'm acting the rotten blackguard, and going to the dogs, you're willing to stretch a point to get me out of it, like a brand from the burning—what?"

Tom Merry was silent. As a matter of fact, Fatty Wynn had divined exactly what was in his mind.

"Well," said Wynn, as the captain of the Shell did not reply, "I'm not a beastly blackguard, though you're pleased to believe I am one, and—and Figgy does, too——" Fatty's voice quavered for a moment. "And I don't want to be rescued from vice, because I haven't got any vices—see?" You can go and eat coke."

Fatty tramped on, leaving Tom Merry standing where he was. He tramped angrily out of gates, only to run into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the road. D'Arcy planted himself directly in the fat junior's path, and Fatty had to stop.

"Want to be chucked into the nettles again?" asked Fatty.

"Pway don't be watty, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I'm goin' to speak to you as a fwiend."

"You needn't trouble."

"I insist upon twoublin'. Wynn, old man, I feel it my dutay to speak a word in season," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Fathead!" was Wynn's ungrateful reply.

Arthur Augustus appeared to swallow something with difficulty. Fatty Wynn walked round him and marched on. D'Arcy, not to be eluded, kept pace with him, and Fatty quickened his steps.

"Weally, Wynn, this is vewy sewious, you know," he said gently. "If you do not think of yourself you might think of your fwiends. Can you weconcile it with your conscience, Wynn, to go to that dwunken place?"

"Silly ass!"

"Ahem! What do you want to go for, deah boy?"

"Can't you guess?" said Wynn bitterly. "To have a high old time, of course—to get rolling squiffy and smoke cigars, and talk about gee-gees, and play pitch and toss in the bar."

"Gweat Scott, Wynn!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, with so shocked and horrified a face that Fatty Wynn, in spite of himself, burst into a roar of laughter.

"Oh, you wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, greatly relieved. "You were only wottin'. You should not twy to pull my leg, Wynn, when I am speakin' to you for your own good. Now pway let me persuade you——"

"For goodness' sake, let me alone!"

"I wefuse to let you alone," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I am goin' to pwevent you fwom gettin' yourself sacked!"

Fatty Wynn hurried on, and D'Arcy hurried too. Fatty vaulted over the stile, and Gussy followed. The swell of St. Jim's was determined. But Fatty was determined too. Gussy had no sooner landed over the stile than he found himself collared and whiped back over the stile again, and dropped into the road. Fatty Wynn vanished through the wood, and though Arthur Augustus hunted for him for half an hour he did not find him. In a considerable dusty state, Arthur Augustus walked back to the school, determined to let the obstinate fellow go to the dogs in his own way, and never again to take the trouble of uttering a word in season for the benefit of Fatty Wynn.

CHAPTER 12.

A Sudden Surprise.

"FIGGINS!"

"Yes, Monteith."

"Come into my study, please, and you, too, Kerr," said the head prefect.

Figgins and Kerr were about to go down to the cricket-field, when the head prefect of their House called to them.

Feeling very uneasy, the two juniors followed Monteith into his study.

The prefect was looking very grave. He fixed a searching look upon the chums of the Fourth before he spoke. Figgins and Kerr waited in uneasy silence. They could not help feeling an apprehension that something had come to the prefect's ears concerning Fatty Wynn.

"I want to ask you a question," said Monteith at last. "You are Wynn's study-mates and his chums. I have heard something about him."

"Yes, Monteith," said Figgins dully.

"He seems to be gone out now," said the prefect.

"Yes, he's gone out."

"He's been out by himself a lot lately, I think."

The juniors were silent. The head prefect of the New House was not likely to have noticed that, unless his attention had been specially drawn to it.

"Well?" said Monteith.

"We're not so pally as we were," faltered Figgins. "Fatty often goes on his own now."

"Where does he go?"

"Oh, out somewhere!" said Figgins vaguely.

"But where?"

"I haven't been with him."

Poor Figgins was a bad hand at making evasive replies.

"Well," said the prefect quietly, "I've heard something; it seems that it's been the talk of the House for a week or so, but it's only just come to my ears. Some of the juniors were talking. I heard something by chance, unless they intended me to hear," added Monteith. "It was in the passage a few minutes ago. Now, naturally, it isn't my business to take any notice of a chance word spoken in my hearing, but this is a serious matter. Have you any knowledge of Wynn paying visits to that low, boozy place, the Palace, in Wayland?"

No reply.

Figgins and Kerr could not deny it, since they knew it perfectly well. Denial, too, would not have helped Fatty. Monteith was questioning them as the fellows most likely to know about Fatty's movements, but there were plenty of other sources of information.

This was what Figgins had feared. The matter had been talked of so much among the juniors that it was surprising it had not reached the ears of the prefects before this. Nobody had meant exactly to "sneak," but a topic could not be discussed in the studies, in the passages, the quad, and the common-room, without sooner or later coming to the knowledge of everyone in the school.

Monteith had heard it at last. The only surprising thing was that he had not heard it days ago. It was all up now.

"If you don't answer me," said Monteith quietly, "there's only one thing I can think, Figgins. Surely Wynn is not making a fool of himself—and such a blackguard! He is not that kind of kid."

"He never was," said Figgins miserably.

"Well, I won't ask you anything more," said Monteith, "I can guess pretty easily where he is now, and I have my duty to do. You can clear off!"

Figgins and Kerr left the study with troubled faces. They knew what Monteith was going to do. Knowing that Fatty Wynn was at the Palace, the prefect had his duty to do, and that was to go directly there, and take Wynn away from the place, and report his conduct directly to the Head.

"It's all up, Kerr," muttered Figgins. "If Monteith finds him there, the Head will sack him."

Kerr nodded.

"He mustn't find him there, Figgy," he said, in a low voice. "Unless he's found there, there's no proof; the rest is only tattle and gossip, anyway."

"He's there now," said Figgins. "The matinee begins in half an hour or less."

"Yes, we know he's there, but he needn't be there when Monteith gets there, Figgy. We've got to run some risk."

Figgins made a sign of assent, and they walked out of the New House together. They did not venture to fetch their bicycles, for if Monteith had seen them he would certainly have guessed their errand. They slipped quietly out of the school gates, and they started down the lane at a trot.

It was a risky undertaking for them. They could not warn Fatty Wynn of his danger without entering the same forbidden precincts, and thus sharing the risk that Fatty himself was running.

But they did not hesitate.

Risk or no risk, disgrace or no disgrace, they could not stand by quietly while their old chum was in peril. He was doing wrong, they could not deny that, but he was their old pal, and it was up to them to help him.

Without slackening their pace, they passed along the footpath, and came out on the Wayland road. They knew they were well ahead of Monteith. The prefect would walk over to Wayland, and would probably not arrive till the afternoon performance was well under way. By not losing a moment, Figgins and Kerr hoped to reach the place by the time it started.

A little breathless, the two juniors arrived in Wayland, and made their way at a moderate pace to the shabby street where the Palace was situated. They arrived in time to go in with the afternoon crowd.

There was no sign of Fatty Wynn in the crowd there; but they knew that he was in the building as well as if they had seen him enter. They knew that he had an acquaintance behind the scenes.

Their faces flushed as they took their tickets and passed into the building with the crowd. It was the first time they had found themselves in such company. The seats in the Palace were cheap enough, and Figgins obtained an upper box for a few shillings, from which he would have a view of the stuffy little hall. There he and Kerr esconced themselves, and they kept a watch on the hall as it filled.

But Fatty Wynn was not to be seen in the audience, so far.

The curtain went up, and the first item on the programme was played—a fat man singing a stupid song full of innuendos, which were quite lost on the two juniors, though the more experienced audience gurgled with laughter. Figgins and Kerr were watching the audience, not the stage.

"He isn't here," said Kerr, at last, "and pretty nearly every seat is full."

"Behind the scenes, I suppose," said Figgins. "After all, he can't be coming here every day to see the same rotten show. I should think he would get fed up with it, even if they liked the rot. If he doesn't come out into the audience, Monteith can't spot him. Monteith can't go behind the scenes."

"If he doesn't spot him in the audience, he will wait outside for him, and spot him coming out," said Kerr.

Figgins wrinkled his brows.

"What's to be done, old chap?"

"We must send him a warning somehow. He's here right enough, and we may get a note to him by an attendant."

"Hallo! They're playing something decent now," said Figgins, as the orchestra of four instruments started the music of the "Men of Harlech."

The audience began to yawn and to devote their chief attention to smoking and chattering. What was coming was one of the good items that interposed in the programme for the sake of variety, and by way of contrast, and the habitues of the Palace endured it patiently while they waited for a tango that was to follow.

Figgins and Kerr were still watching the audience, to catch a glimpse of Fatty Wynn if he appeared, and they did not see the singer as he came on the stage. But when the song began, they looked round, astonished to hear that it was sung in Welsh.

"We le goelcerth wen yn fflamio,
A thafodau tan yn bloeddio,
Ar i'r dewrion ddod i daro,
Unwaith et o'n un!
Gan fanllefau tywysogion,
Llais gelynion, trwst orfogion,
A charlamiad y marchogion,
Craig ar graig a gryn!"

Figgins and Kerr sat petrified. They gazed at the figure on the stage with stony eyes. A plump, sturdy figure, clad in the national costume of Old Wales, with the fat face made up for the stage, but recognisable by eyes that knew it so well! And if they did not know the face, they would have known the voice.

Figgins gasped.

"Fatty Wynn!"

CHAPTER 13.
The Chopper Comes Down!

FATTY WYNN!

There was no doubt about it!

The Boy Singer of the programme was the fat Fourth-Former of the New House of St. Jim's.

He did not see the two startled and astonished juniors peering down from the box above. The full, rich voice of the Welsh junior sounded through the little hall, and, in spite of their indifference to the "item," the audience began to pay attention

After the first verse there was a murmur of applause, and the audience—little accustomed as they were to good singing—listened with pleasure to the rest.

Figgins had a programme in his hand, but he had not looked at it. He looked at it now. This was the third item—the number "3" was displayed on both sides of the stage.

"No. 3.—Evan Jones, The Welsh Boy Singer."

"Evan Jones!" muttered Figgins. "That was the name—according to Levison—of Fatty's friend here; but—but it's Fatty himself, Kerr."

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Kerr. "That's Fatty Wynn, right enough. I'd swear to his voice, if not his face. Besides, you know how he's been mugging up the 'Men of Harlech' lately."

Figgins gave a sudden gasp.

"There's Monteith!"

They caught sight of the Sixth-Former suddenly.

Monteith was standing just inside the entrance to the stalls, and his eyes were fixed upon the singer on the stage.

The New House prefect's face was a sufficient indication of his astonishment and of the fact that he recognised Wynn, in spite of his stage costume and make-up.

"All U P!" said Figgins wretchedly. "No good warning him now."

The song finished, and there was applause, and the last verse was encored; and Wynn gave it again, and then retired, perfectly self-possessed. He might have been on the "boards" all his life, to judge by his calm self-possession. He had not seen his chums in the box.

Figgins and Kerr remained silent, thinking. What it all meant they could not imagine. The appearance of Fatty Wynn on the stage had taken them utterly by surprise. But their hearts were lighter now, for it was evident to them that Fatty had come there to sing, and not for the reasons Levison & Co. attributed to him. But the utter recklessness of it amazed them. To come to such a place for bad motives would have been worse, but yet more reasonable; to run such risks merely for the sake of appearing behind the footlights was folly itself. And how had Fatty Wynn been engaged to appear there? How had he made the acquaintance of the Palace people in the first place? What on earth did it all mean? The two juniors felt knocked off their balance. The sight of Dr. Holmes on the stage would hardly have surprised them more.

They looked for Monteith again. The prefect had gone.

"He recognised Fatty!" muttered Figgins.

"He looked like it. But"—Kerr wrinkled his brows in thought—"there's a chance. Fatty was made-up; he didn't look much like old Fatty. There's a bare chance—if we can get him out of the place without being spotted. We can send a message. Got a half-crown?"

Fortunately, a half-crown was forthcoming, and the half-crown bestowed upon an attendant secured the delivery of a note to "Evan Jones." It was to Evan Jones that Figgins directed it, as, of course, the theatre attendants would not know Fatty under his own name.

The two juniors waited eagerly.

In about ten minutes a lad entered the box, and they turned towards him eagerly. But it was not Wynn. The lad was a stranger to him—a good-looking lad, with a pale face that told of illness.

"You are the gentlemen who sent me a note?" he asked, looking at them.

"I—I—— You—— Who are you?" stammered Figgins.

"I am Evan Jones."

"What!"

"Did you not want to see me?" asked Evan, in surprise.

"I—I wanted to see the chap who was singing the 'Men of Harlech' in Welsh," said Figgins. "He's a pal of ours, and we want to speak to him."

The Welsh lad hesitated.

"Oh, you can send him here!" said Figgins. "We're not going to give him away. We're here to warn him. There's a prefect of St. Jim's in the audience, and he's spotted him, and we want to put him on his guard. Are you a friend of his?"

"He has been a kind and generous friend to me," said Evan, with a troubled look. "I—I was afraid trouble might come of it. Is he in danger?"

"He will be expelled from the school if the Head hears of it," said Kerr. "There's a chance that Monteith hasn't recognised him, and he may get clear yet."

"I understand."

Evan Jones left the box hurriedly, and in a few minutes more Fatty Wynn arrived, still in his stage costume, with the make-up on his face. He looked grimly at his old chums.

"Well?" he said.

"Monteith's here," said Figgins.

"He's seen me?"

"Yes; but I'm not sure that he's recognised you. You must——"

"This is the box, sir," said a voice in the passage outside.

Monteith stepped in.

Figgins's voice died away. The prefect gazed at the three juniors in silence for a moment.

"What are you doing here, Kerr and Figgins? I needn't ask what Wynn is doing."

"We came to warn Fatty," said Figgins desperately.

Monteith shrugged his shoulders.

"I might have guessed that. Wynn, get that foolery off, and come with me at once! All three of you will go to the Head!"

"The sack for three!" said Kerr bitterly.

"I—I'm sorry you chaps came," muttered Fatty Wynn miserably. "I—I never thought—— What—what did you come for? What did you care?"

"Get a move on!" said Monteith quietly.

A quarter of an hour later the three juniors left the Palace with the New House prefect. Not a word was spoken during the return to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 14.
"Good Old Fatty!"

DR. HOLMES listened in silence while the New House prefect made his report.

Figgins & Co. stood dumb.

Fatty Wynn's plump face was pale and harassed. The "chopper" had come down upon him with a vengeance, but what troubled him most was that he had dragged his chums down with him.

Outside the study there were anxious juniors in the passage. Tom Merry & Co. had seen the three juniors marched in by the prefect, and they knew that Fatty Wynn had been bowled out at last. It was the "sack" for Fatty, there was no doubt about that, but they were more anxious about Figgins and Kerr.

"Figgay and Kerr are stickin' to him, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sadly. "I pwesume that Monteith found them there with the fat boundah. Looks like it. It will be howwid if they get the choppah, too! That fat duffah ought to be scwagged!"

"He's going to be scragged, you bet!" said Levison of the Fourth. "Some ass has been talking, and it's all come out. He's only got himself to thank."

"He's got you to thank, you miserable cad!" said Tom Merry fiercely. "If you hadn't spied on him this wouldn't have come out!"

"He shouldn't be a blackguard, then!" said Levison sullenly. "If he hadn't put on airs I shouldn't have bowled him out! It serves him right!"

"We'll jollay well scwag Levison for spyin', anyway!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Who's this?"

The juniors stared at the lad who came hurrying down

the passage, followed by Toby, the page, who looked excited. Levison uttered an exclamation.

"That's the chap I saw him with!" he ejaculated. "My hat! What has he come here for?"

"He doesn't look much like your description of him," growled Blake. "He looks decent enough."

It was Evan Jones.

"I tells you, you can't see the 'Ead," Toby was expostulating. "The 'Ead is engaged now, and if you don't stop——"

"Where is your headmaster?" exclaimed Evan, addressing the juniors generally. "I must see him."

"He's busy now," said Tom Merry. "There's his study. But——"

"Is Wynn with him?"

"Yes."

"Has he—has he been punished?"

"He's getting it in the neck now," said Blake; "and if you're the chap who led him into making an ass of himself——"

"He did it for my sake," said Evan. "I must see the Head. He ought not to be punished; he has only been kind and generous."

"You've got something to say to the Head to help him out?" exclaimed Tom Merry, his face brightening up.

"Yes, yes; at least, I hope so."

"Come this way, then."

Tom Merry led the Welsh lad to the door of the Head's study, tapped, and opened it. Evan Jones went in, leaving the door open.

Dr. Holmes glanced at the stranger in surprise. Figgins & Co. stared at him, and Monteith frowned.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Who is this?"

Evan came eagerly forward, his face crimson.

"You are the headmaster, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. But what——"

"Then I must tell you——"

"I cannot see you now," said Dr. Holmes. "Pray retire at once. If you wish to speak to me, I will see you later."

"I must speak, sir. It is about Wynn."

"Oh," said the Head, "you mean that you know something of this disgraceful affair?"

Evan's lip quivered.

"There is nothing disgraceful in it, sir, so far as Wynn is concerned." Outside the half-open study door, the juniors were hanging on Jones's eager words. "David has only been kind to me—too kind for his own good. If you let me explain, you will see that he was not to blame."

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"Wynn has been guilty of frequenting a low and disreputable place, strictly out of bounds for the boys of this school," he said sternly. "He has even appeared on the stage there. There is nothing to be said in his defence. Wynn, who is this boy?"

"Evan Jones, sir," said Wynn. "He's the son of my father's coachman at home."

"Let me explain, sir," said Evan.

"You may speak, but it is useless."

"Wynn has only helped me when I was in distress, sir," said Evan, in a faltering voice. "I am a singer, sir; and it is not my fault that I have to sing in such places as the Palace. I cannot choose. But what I do, sir, look you, you could not find any fault with. I sing the national songs of Wales. They say that I have a voice; and the people like to hear a good song sometimes, even in a programme that is full of nonsense and worse. I had an engagement to appear at the Palace to give a Welsh song in each house and each matinee. But I became ill, and I could not appear. Wynn came to see me in my lodgings in Wayland. My father is Mr. Wynn's coachman, sir, and Mr. Wynn had asked him to see me when I was near the school."

The Head's expression changed a little.

The quiet earnestness of the Welsh lad had made an impression upon him.

"Go on, my boy," said Dr. Holmes quietly.

"Wynn found me ill in my lodgings, sir. He knew that I was poor, and that I could not afford to lose the money for my engagement at the Palace, but I had no choice. He offered to take my place until I was well enough to appear."

"To take your place!" said the Head.

"Yes. Wynn is a better singer than I am, and he could do my turn quite as well as I could. I did not realise at first the risk he would be running in coming to such a place. I am used to such places," said Evan bitterly. "I was very glad to be helped out of my difficulty. The manager was agreeable. He did not want to cut the item, and when he heard Wynn sing he was satisfied. Of course, it is not an important item in the programme; nothing like the tango turn, or the Young-Man-Lodger song."

The Head smiled slightly at the tone of the young singer. He could understand Evan's feelings at having to play second fiddle to the tango turn and the song of the Young-Man-Lodger.

"It was not till later that I understood the risk that Wynn would be running. He did not tell me at first," said Evan. "But—but I was glad he could do me that service, for without my pay from the Palace I could not have paid for my lodging in Wayland, or the doctor's bill. He could only appear in the matinees and the first house. The item had to be cut in the second house, and for that half my fee was docked. But Wynn saved the rest for me. My engagement ends to-day. This matinee was the last time I should have appeared. Wynn has saved me from ruin, and—and now——"

"I did not know all that, of course, sir," said Monteith, as the Welsh lad paused.

Figgins squeezed Fatty Wynn's plump arm.

"You fat bounder! Why didn't you tell us all that?" he whispered.

"I—I hope you will pardon Wynn, sir," went on Evan. "He has only been generous to a fellow who was in distress. He came to the Palace simply to sing. He has done nothing else there. You cannot suspect that he has done anything wrong. Behind the scenes, I suppose, he has heard things it would have been better for him not to hear, but——"

"This certainly gives the matter a different appearance," said the Head quietly. "I accept your statement, Master Jones. You have acted very foolishly, Wynn——"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"But you were prompted by a generous impulse. As this boy is evidently quite respectable, and as he is the son of your father's coachman, you doubtless felt that he had a claim on you."

"We've known each other all our lives, sir," said Fatty Wynn, "and--and it was so jolly to meet somebody to talk Welsh to again. And—and there was no harm in it, sir. I—I meant it to be secret, and—and I didn't even tell my chums, so that they wouldn't get mixed up in it; though they thought badly of me when they found out where I was going——"

"I am not surprised at that," said the Head drily. "You should have asked permission, Wynn——"

"But—but it wouldn't have been given, sir."

"Ahem!" The Head coughed. "No, certainly it would not have been given. However, as you seem to have erred from a generous motive, and perhaps a sense of duty towards a dependent of your family, I shall pardon you——"

"Oh, sir!"

"But you understand that under no circumstances whatever are you to enter that place again."

"Of course, sir. You couldn't think I like a show like that," said Wynn, a little indignantly.

The Head coughed again.

"Master Jones, I am glad that you have come here and made this explanation. I trust you will—ahem!—soon find an opening for your talents in a more delectable quarter. Wynn, I shall pardon you on the understanding that you do nothing of the kind again. As for you, Figgins and Kerr, it appears that you deliberately intended to prevent your prefect from carrying out his duties."

He looked at Monteith.

"I think they acted thoughtlessly, sir," said Monteith. "If you would overlook that, sir——"

"You hear that, Figgins and Kerr? At the request of your prefect, I shall overlook your conduct. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

Figgins & Co. quitted the study promptly, Fatty Wynn putting his arm through that of Evan Jones. To their surprise they found themselves surrounded in the passage by a mob of gleeful juniors, who crowded round Fatty Wynn to thump him on the back.

"You fat boundah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "Why didn't you tell us all about it?"

"You fat spoofer!" said Tom Merry.

"The wottah left us undah a vewy sewious misappwehension. Howevah, you fellahs will wemembah that I told you all along that Wynn was all wight."

"Ha, ha! I don't remember."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You silly ass!" said Figgins to his fat chum. "You ought to have told us—you know that."

"I couldn't tell you," said Fatty Wynn morosely. "The Head's taken it very decently, through Evan coming here. I didn't expect anything of the kind. I expected the chopper, if it came out; and you fellows would have got it, too, if you'd been parties to it. And after you called me a blackguard I jolly well wouldn't tell you, so there!"

"We didn't!" howled Figgins and Kerr simultaneously.

"You jolly well did—or you as good as did," said Fatty Wynn. "I expected you to have a better opinion of a chap you knew."

"How were we to guess, you fat duffer?" said Figgins indignantly. "If you'd told us——"

"You know why I didn't tell you."

"Well, you ass, when you left us in the dark——"

"What the dickens could you expect?" said Kerr warmly.

"But what did you two chaps go to the Palace for, if you're not friends with Wynn any longer?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Echo answers what for!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Don't argue any more, you three blessed chumps! You're all to blame equally for not confiding the whole matter to me, and asking my advice."

"To me, you mean, Tom Mewwy. As a fellah of tact and judgment——"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "may I point out to the company that it is tea-time, that supplies in our study are unusually large, and that we have a guest to look after. Who says tea?"

"Tea!" said the juniors altogether.

And an adjournment was made to Tom Merry's study, Evan Jones—the guess Tom had alluded to—being marched off by Fatty Wynn on one side and Figgins on the other.

Over tea in Tom Merry's study every cloud rolled away, and Figgins & Co. were once more on the old terms—bygones were allowed to be bygones. Fatty Wynn admitted that his mysterious conduct had led to misunderstanding; whereupon Figgins and Kerr admitted that they had been asses to misunderstand him. So the hatchet was buried deep, never to be dug up again. The rift in the lute was mended at last.

Evan Jones was the guest of honour in Tom Merry's study, and the face of the young singer was very bright and happy. After tea Tom Merry & Co. all walked home with him, and shook hands with him all round before they parted.

In Figgins' study that evening three merry voices might have been heard, and, as a matter of fact, were heard. The Inseparables were inseparable once more, and every cloud had vanished, thanks to the clearing up of the mystery of Fatty Wynn.

THE END.

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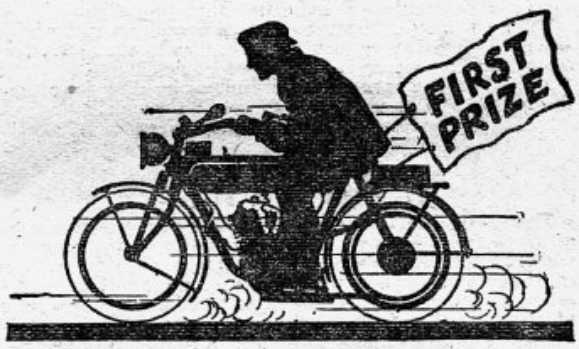

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY.

THE CITY OF FLAME!

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS:

Harold Mackenzie and Jim Holdsworth, while cruising in their yacht, the Isis, in the Red Sea, land on one of the barren Hanish Islands, where they discover information relating to a mysterious City of Flame.

An Arab suddenly appears, and says he is Anubis of Shoa, the country in which is situated the City of Flame. He warns the comrades of awful dangers they will encounter if they attempt to reach the unknown city, and then vanishes.

Harold Mackenzie, Jim Holdsworth, and Bob Sigsbee, an American member of the crew, form themselves into an expedition for discovering the City of Flame, but after reaching the country of Shoa, or Sheba, they are captured by the natives, but, by means of a clever stratagem, escape.

The comrades accidentally discover the secret entrance into the land of Shoa, and eventually reach a deserted expanse of country beyond the Great Barrier—a huge mountain-range which guards the mysterious land.

Sigsbee finds a metal tablet, on which is written, by one Patrick O'Hara—who apparently is a captive of the natives—directions for reaching the Temple of the Sun, and the comrades determine to make this their objective.

Later on they are instrumental in rescuing a girl who had been abandoned amongst fierce crocodiles by the natives, who resent their interference, and a fight ensues.

"The ball has opened," said Jim, as he shot down one of the natives, "and we've got to see it through!"

(Now go on with the Story.)

The White Flag.

The fall of their leader filled the other natives with dismay—at least, for the time being—though it was the manner in which he had been struck down that was the principal cause of their fear. They were too used to fighting, and too accustomed to seeing men killed, to trouble much because one of their number had gone down, although he was their leader. But he had been smitten by a thin flash of fire which had leaped from a tube held by one of their white foes, and to them it savoured of magic.

They knew nothing of the world beyond their own country, into which white men had never before penetrated, with the solitary exception of the Irishman who was a captive in the temple, and they were ignorant of the use of firearms.

But the people of the land of Shoa were great believers in magic.

The six spearmen retreated slowly towards the line of trees, from which three others now emerged and joined them. There was no panic, but they were startled and afraid.

No other shot was fired from the canoe, but Mackenzie and his two comrades were kneeling with their rifles ready, waiting for the next move of their adversaries.

"It is Valmirus, the captain of the queen's guard, that you have killed," murmured the girl, in fear and trembling.

But the man was not dead, for at that moment he moved and attempted to sit up, but fell back again on the ground.

"I didn't aim to kill the chap," observed Sigsbee; "but I reckon he won't be up to any more mischief for a week or two."

The fact that Valmirus was still alive, that the "magic" had not killed him, served to restore the confidence of his followers to some extent. Their courage returned in full when a voice from the depths of the wood called out:

"Do not fear the magic tubes of the white men. It is as easy to kill with a spear—easier, if you close with them so that you can drive your spears into their bodies!"

The speaker did not show himself, but his words had effect. With a loud shout, the natives renewed the attack, hurling their throwing-spears at the occupants of the canoe. Then they rushed forward, brandishing their stabbing-spears. Wind and tide had driven the canoe close in to the bank, where the water was only knee-deep, and the attackers waded in.

But a volley from the rifles of the gallant trio checked the rush, and two of the Shoa men fell. Then, with a shout of fury, the others came on again, and presently a fierce hand-to-hand conflict was raging at the lake edge.

Mackenzie fired another shot, and another of the foe went down. Then he and Jim clubbed their rifles, and hit out right and left. Sigsbee, who did not care to subject his rifle to such rough treatment, for fear of damaging the sights, put it over his shoulder by the sling, snatched up a spear which had fallen from the hand of the first man shot, and put in some good work with that weapon.

He was not very skilled in the use of a spear, but he had great physical strength, and when he made a thrust his opponent was usually put out of action.

Five of the Shoanese were down, and the remaining five were driven back into the wood. Mackenzie and Sigsbee were slightly wounded, but Jim Holdsworth had not received a scratch. But the excitement of the fight had gripped them all, and they followed up the advantage which they had gained. It was the right thing to do.

"Keep 'em on the run!" shouted Mackenzie. "Don't let 'em rally!"

The timber was thick, and night was falling, so under the trees it was almost pitch dark. The consequence was that in the rush and melee Jim lost touch of his comrades, and also lost sight of the native he had been pursuing.

"Hang it!" he muttered. "This is a nuisance. I must make my way back to the canoe."

He had turned to retrace his steps, when he heard a slight rustling among the undergrowth behind him. He swung round sharply, but he was too late. A lithe figure sprang out of the darkness and struck him a savage blow on the head with a short club. Jim staggered back and fell, a red mist swam before his eyes, and then all became a blank.

Another man joined the one who had struck Jim down, and they exchanged a few words in a low tone.

Then they lifted their unconscious captive up, and carried him through the wood to a long, low-pitched hut, with walls of stone and a thatched roof. It was the abode of the Keeper of the Crocodiles, and had served for a time as the prison-house of the girl who was to have been sacrificed to those reptiles.

Jim was lowered down into the chamber which she had occupied. It was beneath the stone floor. The square slab of stone was replaced, and the interior of the hut then had quite an ordinary and innocent appearance. For the slab of stone fitted so closely into its place that it looked exactly similar to all the other squares of stone which formed the flooring.

While this was taking place, Mackenzie and Sigsbee, after skirmishing about among the trees for some little time, also found themselves left without any enemies to fight. Their adversaries had suddenly vanished in the darkness.

"They seem to have had enough," panted Mackenzie, who was out of breath and feeling a bit weak from loss of blood. "I'm not altogether sorry, for I've nearly had enough myself. One of them drove his spear into my shoulder, and I should like to bind the wound up. By the way, how did you get on?"

"Had a bit of my right side chipped out by the point of a spear," replied Sigsbee. "Not much, but it's mighty sore.

It has stopped bleeding. Say, we ought to go and look after the girl, in case these fellows try to get hold of her again."

But they found there was no necessity to do so, for the girl had followed them, fearing to be left alone. She now came forward and joined them, much to their relief.

"Where is the other one," she asked—"your friend?"

They had supposed that Jim was somewhere near at hand, though they could not see him owing to the darkness and the closeness with which the trees of this primeval forest grew together. Hal shouted for him by name.

"Jim! Where are you, Jim?"

There was no answer.

He shouted again, but still there was no answer.

"I hope nothing has happened to him," exclaimed Sigsbee. "We had better make a search."

As the undergrowth had been trodden down in patches here and there during the fight wherever the combatants had met in close encounter, it was next to impossible to pick out any individual tracks. But in this part of the business the girl was able to give some invaluable assistance.

Being anxious to make some return for the risks they had run on her behalf, she aided them in the search, and she had a knowledge of woodcraft which Sigsbee admitted was surprising. She knew some things of which he was entirely ignorant, particularly in connection with certain customs of her countrymen, and the means at their disposal for tricking an enemy.

She had been on her hands and knees, looking for what old backwoodsmen call "sign," when she held up her hand to attract the attention of her two companions.

"Here is the 'magic tube' which belongs to your friend," she said, pointing to Jim's rifle, which was lying on the ground almost hidden by some ferns. She did not venture to touch it.

"That looks bad," said Mackenzie. "Jim wouldn't have let go his rifle so long as he had strength to hold it. But what has become of him?"

The girl was now pointing to tracks on the ground which led deeper into the wood.

"He has been carried away," she added briefly.

"That is about what has happened," agreed the American. "There's the footprints of two men leading away from here—natives. That's easy to tell, because of the broad-soled sandals they wear. But beyond here, where the ferns are flattened out as though someone had been lying on them, there ain't a sign of Jim's footmarks."

Hal Mackenzie's face reflected the anxiety of his mind. He feared the worst had happened to his chum.

"Poor old Jim!" he murmured. "If he has been killed ——"

"They wouldn't have carried him away," interrupted Sigsbee. "Why should they want to carry off a dead man? I reckon these savages don't lay themselves out to bury their enemies. No, sir! Likely he was wounded, and unconscious, and they've made him a prisoner."

"We must rescue him!"

"Sure," replied Sigsbee, "I can follow this trail, but we sha'n't be able to get over the ground quickly. Being so dark in the timber, I shall most time have to bend almost double to see the tracks."

He led the way, the girl following close behind him, and Mackenzie coming last. They were all keenly on the alert in case some lurking enemies should make a surprise attack on them.

They had progressed in this order a little more than half a mile, when they were startled by seeing flames leap up about a hundred yards ahead of them. A closer inspection showed that it was a great pile of dry branches and leaves that had been set fire to, stuff which flamed high and burnt rapidly. Near to it was a mound of loose stones, but no living person was visible.

"What's the game?" muttered Sigsbee, as they all came to a halt.

"That bonfire hasn't lighted itself," said Mackenzie. "But where is the man who lit it? I don't quite see the object of it, unless—— Hallo!"

His exclamation was caused by the sudden appearance over the top of the mount of stones of a white flag, fastened to a stick. That is to say, it was a square of white linen, which served the purpose of a flag.

It was waved to and fro by the man who was showing it, but who remained out of sight himself behind the stones.

"The enemy want to parley," said Mackenzie. "A flag of truce. It's queer that these Shoans, or Shoanese—I don't quite know how to name them—should have the same custom as civilised nations, in this use of a white flag. I suppose it is intended for a sign of peace or surrender, or something of that sort."

"I wouldn't bet on it," replied Sigsbee. "Call out and tell the guy who's doing the flag-wagging to show himself."

Thereupon Mackenzie shouted, in Arabic:

"If you desire to talk with us, come forth so that we can see who you are. We will not harm you, provided you attempt no treachery. But if you do, take heed! For you have seen only a little as yet of the power of our magic tubes."

To their amazement a low and rather mocking laugh greeted Mackenzie's speech. And a voice answered, in English:

"Your magic tubes! Why, you may so describe them to the men of this country, who know nothing of firearms, but you need not speak of magic to me. I know more of what the ignorant call magic than any man of a Western nation."

Then from behind the mound of stones there stepped forth a man wearing a purple robe. He had but one eye, and a scar extended down the whole length of his left cheek. It was not the first time they had seen that malevolent face.

"Anubis of Shoa!" exclaimed Mackenzie.

"Ah, you have not forgotten me, then?" said the fellow, still in the slightly mocking tone.

"I have not," replied Mackenzie sternly. "Nor have I forgotten that you attempted to stab me on board the yacht, when you thought I was asleep. You are not entitled to any consideration at our hands, but I have given my word that you shall come to no harm so long as there is no treachery. Now what have you to say?"

"This first," returned Anubis; "that we hold your comrade, whose name I believe is Holdsworth, a captive. And these are the terms of his release."

The Thwarting of Anubis of Shoa.

"You are getting on too fast, my friend," said Hal Mackenzie. "You are not in a position to dictate terms."

"As your comrade is a prisoner in our hands," Anubis retorted, "it would seem that I am. You need not hope to rescue him, for you would never find him. Therefore, if you wish to see him again alive, you will do well to listen to what I have to say."

Hal Mackenzie clenched his teeth with anger, for he realised that the advantage was on the side of the miscreant in front of him and his compatriots. They held Jim captive, and, whatever the outcome of this conference, the only point to be considered was his safety.

Sigsbee muttered something uncomplimentary.

"Let the blighter have his palaver!" he went on. "He can't get away, anyhow!"

But he had underrated the resourcefulness and cunning of Anubis of Shoa.

"We are listening," called out Harold. "Let us hear your terms."

"They are simple," replied Anubis. "With you there is the girl Zenobia. Deliver her up to us, and we will, in exchange, deliver up your friend to you. Those are my terms. In addition, I give you this advice. If you value your lives, get quickly out of this country, and return to the coast. Your victory over the few men who opposed you this evening is nothing. There are thousands who obey the queen's commands, and it is a law that no strangers shall enter the land."

"Yet we are here!" retorted Harold.

He was going to add "There is also a white man in the Temple of the Sun," but he decided it would be better not to refer to the Irishman.

"Death awaits you if you proceed," said Anubis.

"We have met that gentleman on more than one occasion," observed Sigsbee drily, "and we don't fear him. As for your terms——"

He turned to Harold, and added:

"We're in a muddling kind of fix, partner. But we can't give this girl up to certain death, now that she is in a manner under our protection. Jim himself, if he had a say in the matter, would never agree to such a thing."

It was at this juncture that Zenobia interposed.

"I do not know," she whispered, "what the talk has been about, as you have been speaking in a tongue which is strange to me. But I know where your friend has been taken, and I can lead you to the place."

"That's good enough!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "Tell Mister Anubis he can go to blazes, cap'n!"

"Well, I'll put it differently," replied Harold, laughing. And he called out: "We reject your terms!"

"Then so much the worse for your comrade!" snarled Anubis viciously.

And with that he darted behind the mound of stones.

"The white flag's down!" cried Sigsbee. "We've got to secure that fellow! Don't let him slip away!"

They made a rush forward to the mound, but Anubis had

vanished. For a moment they stood, uncertain how to act. Then there was a bright flash of light in the air. It was caused by the blade of a spear that whizzed between them with an unpleasant "swish," and then stuck quivering in the ground.

"A weapon's always handy!" exclaimed Sigsbee, as he jerked the spear from the earth. "But we'd best scoot for cover, for while we're standing in the light of this fire, I reckon we're making ourselves too conspicuous for our health."

This was good advice, and they hastened to remove themselves from their dangerous position, rejoining Zenobia where she was crouching down behind some bushes.

"We are ready," said Harold to her. "Lead us to this place where our comrade is held a prisoner."

The girl nodded, and started off at once, moving through the undergrowth with the caution and silence of a wild animal. Both Mackenzie and Sigsbee were expert scouts, but they could not equal Zenobia's absolute noiselessness of movement. Occasionally leaves rustled as they brushed against a bush or a dry twig cracked under their feet.

Their progress was necessarily slow, and nearly half an hour had passed before Zenobia stopped, and, raising her arm, pointed to a long, low, stone-built hut, which was just visible through the trees ahead of them.

"That is the place," she whispered. "There is no other near here where he could be hidden. It is where I was shut up for two days before I was taken to the lake. There is a room beneath the floor, and you must raise a square of stone in order to get down into it. It is not easy to find, but it is near the centre of the floor."

After a brief consultation it was decided that the girl should remain concealed near at hand, while Mackenzie and Sigsbee crept forward to reconnoitre. For it was not to be thought of that she should run any unnecessary risks.

So, foot by foot and yard by yard, they crept forward, until they reached the doorway of the hut, which was at the end of the building nearest to them. A lamp of beaten copper, with a flaring wick floating in oil, lit up the interior. No one was inside.

"Will you keep guard at the door, Sigsbee," whispered Mackenzie, "while I try and locate the slab of stone in the floor. That is, the movable slab. If Jim isn't down in the underground chamber—— But I won't think of that. We must hope he is, for it's not likely he can have escaped."

"We've got to make sure, anyway," murmured Sigsbee.

Mackenzie had explored so many ancient ruins in the course of his adventurous wanderings through Egypt that he had become quite an expert in ferreting out secret entrances and exits, and now his knowledge stood him in good stead.

The movable slab of stone was certainly difficult to locate, for every square looked exactly alike, and all fitted so perfectly that there was not the tiniest crack to serve as a guide.

But after about ten minutes' careful search Mackenzie uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. Sigsbee turned, and saw him standing at an oblong opening in the floor. The stone slab had swung downwards on a metal rod.

"Jim," called Mackenzie into the pitch-dark chamber, "are you down there?"

And to his joy there came an answer in his chum's voice, which sounded faint and dazed.

"Is that you, Hal? Yes, I'm here. My wrists are bound, but my legs are free. I can manage to stand up, though I'm a bit dizzy."

Sigsbee now came up to the opening, bringing the lamp with him. They saw that the vault was no more than seven feet in depth. Mackenzie jumped down to Jim's assistance, and was cutting away the thongs from his wrists, when the American called down in a tense whisper:

"Hustle! There's someone coming. Three of those blame natives."

He ran to the door, and not a dozen paces away saw their old enemy Anubis and two other armed natives running towards the hut.

Sigsbee was a man of prompt action, and the first thing he did was to hurl the throwing-spear which he had brought along with him full at the nearest man.

It missed him, for Sigsbee was not accustomed to throwing spears, but it pinned the second man's foot to the ground. The second man was Anubis. He gave a yell of pain, plucked the spear from his foot, and then limped away to cover as fast as he could. Anubis was not a fighting man. His methods were rather those of the assassin. He was a cunning plotter and a treacherous foe.

But the other two, seeing only one man opposed to them, came on with a rush, their stabbing-spears raised ready to strike. Sigsbee knew he would have to be quick on the trigger, for in another second they would be on him. There was no time to bring his rifle to his shoulder. He fired from the hip. One of the natives pitched forward, and fell right at his feet. The other hesitated, stopped, then turned and fled.

By this time Mackenzie and Jim had scrambled up out of the vault.

"Are we too late to join in? Have you driven them off?" cried Hal Mackenzie.

"Sorry I couldn't wait," responded Sigsbee, with a grim laugh, "but I had to get busy. There were three. This one who is laid out at the doorway; Anubis, who went to cover like a rabbit—a lame rabbit—after I'd driven a spear into his foot; and the third man, who decided he'd save himself to 'fight another day.' He's gone, and I don't suppose he's stopped running yet."

"Hadn't we better get back to the canoe?" said Hal Mackenzie. "We've left some ammunition on board, and we don't want to lose that. How do you feel, Jim? If we help you along——"

"I don't need any help," Jim interrupted. "I had a nasty bang on the head, which knocked me out for a bit, but I'm getting over it now. Where's the girl?"

"Not far off. We have to thank her for guiding us to the hut. She guessed that was where they had you bottled up."

"Come along!" urged Sigsbee. "We don't want to hang around this hut any longer."

Zenobia met them near the spot where they had left her, and as there was less need for caution and silence now, they went as quickly as they could through the timber, reaching the lake without seeing or hearing anything of their late adversaries.

The canoe was on the beach, and had not been interfered with, and now they found themselves confronted with a dilemma which they had not given a thought to during the exciting events of the past few hours.

What was to become of the girl?

There were many reasons why she could not possibly accompany them on their perilous journey towards the City of Flame, the chief one being that the city of mystery was the very last place she would wish to go to herself. Yet having rescued her, they felt it was their bounden duty to see her to some place of safety.

Of course they did not let the girl suspect that they were talking about her, and as they were discussing this absorbing question in English, she could not understand what they said. But it was Zenobia herself who settled the matter, when Harold presently asked her if she had any friends whom they could take her to.

"A day's journey on the water," she replied, pointing to the South, in which direction the river wound its course, "there is the home of my people. I can go there now, and for the time I shall be safe."

"We will take you in our canoe," said Jim.

But the girl shook her head.

"My white friends—my brothers," she replied, "I thank you for all you have done for me, and I am grieved that we must part, but it must be. I must go alone. In this land you will always be in danger. You tell me you are going to the City of Flame. It is a city of death for a stranger within its gates. If you are wise you will return the way you came."

"That is impossible," said Jim, remembering the underground river.

"I see that you are determined to go forward," pursued Zenobia. "The queen is hard and cruel, and there are none who can read her mind, or tell beforehand what she may do. It may happen that she will show you favour, or it may be that she will order you to be killed. But she has evil men about her. You are brave, but what are three against hundreds?"

"Not much," admitted Jim. "But we belong to a nation whose men never turn back when they set out to do a thing. We shall take our chance."

"You are different from the men of Shoa," replied the girl, smiling.

There was nothing more to be said on either side, so after learning that Zenobia intended to set out at daybreak, they made a supper of cold buck's meat and plantains—which they had in the canoe—and then set watches for the remainder of the night, one keeping guard while the others slept.

At the first streak of dawn they started the girl on her lonely journey—for she would not permit them to accompany her—and they made her a present of the canoe, for which they had no further use. She was skilled in the handling of such craft, and they stood on the beach watching her till she had crossed the lake, and was turning into a bend of the river. She waved her hand to them, and they waved their hats in response. A minute later she was hidden from their sight.

"Shall we ever see her again?" murmured Jim.

"I wonder!" said Hal Mackenzie.

"Now for the Temple of the Sun!" exclaimed Sigsbee, who was not given to sentiment. "What I wonder is, how many days' journey is it from here?"

The Temple of the Sun.

"Well, this is a mushed-up bit of country, if you like!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "It looks as if a little of all sorts had been tossed down anyhow, and then kinder mixed up with a spoon."

He was standing on the summit of a low hill, Jim and Harold by his side. Below, and in front of them, extending as far as the eyes could reach, was a jumble of hills, valleys, woods, low ridges, and small rivers, all mixed up in the most extraordinary fashion. But nowhere was there any sign of cultivation. Due west of them, across the sky-line, was a mountain range, the centre portion having a considerably higher elevation than the extended sides of the range. This high ridge gleamed a dazzling white under the rays of the morning sun.

"That is the white mountain referred to in the writing of Patrick O'Hara, on which the temple is built," said Jim, regarding the distant range with a sort of fascination. Some fresh adventures were awaiting them there, but of what kind they could not even hazard a guess.

But each had a feeling that they would be such as they had never encountered before. There always is an element of fear in the unknown.

"Our destination!" said Mackenzie. "Afterwards, the Flame City."

Behind them there stretched out a vast, waterless desert, which they had crossed after leaving the Lake of the Crocodiles. The three days' tramp across that desert had been a terrible experience.

They had been heavily-laden for a start, for in addition to their rifles, ammunition, biltong—that is, sundried game flesh—they had also to carry a supply of water in skins. It was not possible to carry more than a two days' ration of the precious liquid, for it would not pack easily in the roughly-made skin-bags. Their water-bottles had been destroyed with the greater part of their equipment, when they made their escape from the Anhara camp. They had suffered during the crossing of that sandy plain—suffered dreadfully. There was not a scrap of shade, not a drop of water, except what they carried, and on the second day that was hardly drinkable.

The merciless tropical sun beat down upon their heads, and the burning sand scorched their feet. Still they pushed on gamely. It was just as well to continue walking, even during the daytime, for if they sat down on the ground to rest they were hotter than when they were on their feet.

On the third day all their water was gone, and then came the torture of thirst. There is surely nothing worse. Their lips were parched, and their tongues were swollen. They could scarcely speak, and, indeed they had no desire to do so. They staggered on, their eyes fixed on the rising ground ahead of them. There lay their hopes of obtaining water.

It was on the evening of that day they came to the edge of the broken country, and, to their joy, a shallow stream. Casting off their packs, and flinging down their rifles, they simply flung themselves into the water, clothes and all, and sucked it through their lips in great gulps.

It put new life into them. Then they stretched themselves out on the warm sand, which soon dried their clothes, and slept soundly for many hours. In the morning, after a breakfast of wild plantains and biltong, they ascended the low hill, where they were now standing, to survey the country ahead of them.

"After that desert," said Jim, "the Flame City doesn't seem so terrible. Anyway, this jumbled-up country which we have to cross to reach the White Mountain is a distinct improvement on the desert. We shall not be short of water, and I should think game would be fairly plentiful. There's any amount of cover."

"I hope it will be," replied Mackenzie, "for I am getting a bit tired of biltong."

"My idea," put in Sigsbee, "is to make a short trek of four or five miles only this morning, camp down in a suitable spot, and then see if we can shoot something for food, or catch some fish in one of the rivers. We deserve a day's rest. We can start fair on the long trail to-morrow, feeling spry and fit. We need to feel fit, for there's no telling how soon we'll be buttin' into trouble again. Likely we'll be meeting some more natives again pretty soon."

This very excellent proposal was agreed to, and before noon they had camped by the side of a pool of clear, sweet water, in the shade of a clump of palms, and after what they had undergone this seemed the height of luxury.

In a stream near by they caught some excellent fish, something like trout, and Mackenzie shot a small buck antelope; so that night they feasted royally, for there were wild plantains in plenty to help the meat down.

They slept well again that night, and started off at daybreak the next morning on the road for the white mountain. There was no direct trail through that broken country, and although they covered nearly twenty miles that day, they had to make so many detours that in a straight line they could not have made more than twelve.

That evening when they camped they were not more than five miles from the foot of the White Mountain, which towered above them, silent, majestic, and mysterious. In the moonlight it had a greenish hue, something like jade, but there were streaks and patches of brown and black, though they were not visible at any great distance.

There was a V-shaped cleft which divided the highest part of the ridge into two broad peaks, and on a wide plateau of rock within this cleft the Temple of the Sun stood clearly defined. It was a massive structure, but it was dwarfed by the mountain peaks. Its solitary tower may have been several hundred feet in circumference, but it looked, from where they now viewed it, like a slender finger pointing to the sky.

"To-morrow," observed Sigsbee, "we shall be fishing around that synagogue, trying to find a way in, so's we can shake hands with Saint Patrick O'Hara."

"I'm bursting with curiosity to see that Irishman," laughed Jim. "The probability is he wouldn't make much of a show as a saint in his own country."

"Likely as not he lived in a mud cabin there," said Sigsbee, "and now that he's got a temple for a dwelling-place he's not contented."

They sat yarning round the camp-fire that evening much later than was their custom, and when at length they decided it was "sleep-time," they arranged for watches to be kept.

Jim had the first watch, and nothing happened during his turn of duty. Hal Mackenzie relieved him, and for the space of an hour nothing took place to disturb his lonely vigil. The fire of wood had burned very low, for there was nothing at hand to replenish it but green thorn-bush.

Then, as he was walking round the outskirts of the little camp, his keen eyes caught sight of a dark figure which moved swiftly from one clump of bushes to another. It was a hundred yards away, and at that distance in the darkness he could not tell whether it was a man or an animal.

Suddenly the silence of the night was broken by the savage roar of a lion. It was such a roar as might have been given by an animal maddened by pain. And it was followed almost immediately by a terrible cry in a human voice. There was terror and despair in that cry.

Mackenzie glanced round to where his comrades had been sleeping. They were both there, and now they were rousing up.

From whom, then, had come that terrible cry?

(Next Wednesday's "GEM" will contain a further thrilling instalment of this stirring yarn. Make certain of obtaining your copy regularly if you haven't already done so, by placing a standing order with your newsagent.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No 382.

RALLY! RALLY!! ENGLAND!!!

FINAL ROUND IN OUR GIGANTIC CONTEST NEXT WEEK.

The fourth and last stage of our Great International Contest will be fought out next week.

As all my readers know, I am endeavouring to ascertain which country in the British Isles is most conspicuous for its loyalty to "The Gem" Library.

Mr. Martin Clifford, at my direction, has written four extra special stories whose merit cannot for one moment be questioned. The stories concerning Kildare of Ireland and Kerr of Scotland met with a gigantic reception, not only in the countries concerned, but in England and Wales.

I am not yet in a position to gauge what is happening with regard to the sale of these superb issues, save that the first story—that dealing with Eric Kildare—has gone like hot cakes in the Emerald Isle. Certain it is that no nation will have a walk-over victory in this great campaign, for each is striving its utmost to get to the top of the tree.

Next Wednesday's story—a yarn which will be admired and esteemed by readers all the world over—is entitled

"TOM MERRY FOR ENGLAND!"
By Martin Clifford,

and no boy of English birth need hesitate to do his very utmost to popularise this sterling tale of school life. I know from experience that Martin Clifford is an author who never fails to please readers of every age and variety of tastes. In his power of creating living characters, his knowledge of the schoolboy mind, and his delightfully humorous touch, he is unequalled save only by his friend and colleague, Frank Richards.

The story booked to appear next week brings popular Tom Merry into the limelight once again. Since the advent of Talbot to St. Jim's, the sunny, good-natured skipper of the Shell has had to take a back seat, to the indignation of a large circle of readers who prefer the old favourites. However, Talbotites and Merryites—each and everyone—cannot fail to be favourably impressed with

"TOM MERRY FOR ENGLAND!"

the finest story of its kind ever published.

Now, boys of England, your chance has come! It lies in your power to prove to the other nations that the circulation of "The Gem" is proportionately greater in your country than in any other. Set the ball rolling to-day by placing substantial orders with your newsagents for

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND ALL ENGLISH NUMBER!

A VERY LOYAL LETTER.

Correspondence on the subject of "The Gem" Library continues to come in thick and fast, and I have pleasure in publishing a letter recently received from an Essex girl chum:

"Essex.

"Dear Editor,—As several letters from different readers have appeared in print on the Chat Page of 'The Gem,' I thought perhaps you might like to publish this one. I do not suppose you need any proof of the fact that 'The Gem' and its companion papers are read and enjoyed quite as much by girls as by boys—perhaps more so. I think the average girl is really more interested and amused by such stories as appear in them than by silly, cheap novelettes, which fill the mind with romantic rubbish, and which do much more harm than good.

"Personally I prefer your papers to almost anything else, and when once I start to read one of the tales I simply cannot leave off till I have devoured it right to the end. I think 'The Gem' is the best of the lot, and I believe I am correct in saying that I am by no means the only one who regards the 'Talbot' yarns as just ripping.

"I was very glad to see that our other Essex chum, who signed himself 'Satisfied,' replied to the grumblers with such a downright, honest 'squasher.' His loyal remarks were appreciated by many other 'Satisfieds,' as well as you, Mr. Editor.

"Although I have very little spare time, yet I always manage to read 'The Gem,' 'The Magnet,' and the 'Dreadnought.' I am still at school, and am 'swotting' for the London Matriculation Examination; but the three papers above-mentioned are always worked in somehow.

With best wishes for their continued success, I am, yours faithfully.

"A GIRL TOMBOY."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"The Looker-On" (Belfast).—I do not think the feature you suggest would be popular with the majority of my readers.

H. Rippon (Peterborough).—Sorry you have met with no success in our Storyette Competition. You must keep pegging away!

James Montgomery (Kirkintilloch).—Thank you for your letter. I am sorry space precludes me from stating the respective ages and heights of the characters you name. Nearly enough, you may take them to be about fifteen years of age, and 5ft. 4in. in height. The last threepenny book to be published dealing with Tom Merry & Co. was "Through Thick and Thin," but the story is now practically unobtainable. The exploits of Sweeney Todd, the "demon barber of Fleet Street," are not, to my mind, suitable for a boy to read, and I have considerable hesitation in recommending them. Try something less lurid.

J. B. (Manchester).—The best junior boxer at St. Jim's is Tom Merry. Thank you for obtaining a new reader.

"A Potteries Gemite" (Stoke-on-Trent).—Calvert's Tooth-Powder, obtainable at all chemists', is to be recommended. Thanks for your appreciative remarks.

A. T. (Tuffnell Park).—Very many thanks for your cheery postcard.

E. R. A. (Willesden).—Glad the story in question met with your approval.

"Sydney" (Barnsley).—I should very much like to put your letter in print, since it would make the "grumblers" look very small; but space is limited, and I must ask you to accept my brief but sincere thanks for your loyalty.

Bugler G. C. (Carlisle).—Thanks for your ripping letter. My best wishes go out to you and your chums in the Border Regiment Band.

C. M. N. (West Kensington).—Sorry to disappoint you, C. M. N., but the first chapter of a story which you were good enough to send along is rather feeble. Besides being of a hackneyed nature, it is so short that I doubt if it would take up three inches of space in print. Try again!

W. E. H. (Brighton).—"Officer and Trooper" had a long innings, and I am sorry I cannot accede to your request. Mr. Beverley Kent has a serial running in "The Boys' Friend" at the present time. You should get a copy.

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A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.

Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

NURSERY RHYMES FOR KULTURED KIDS.

"Baa, baa, Crown Prince!
Isn't war a fag?"
"Yes, sir—yes, sir,
If it wasn't for the swag.
All the way to Paris town with horses and with guns,
And 'stead of folk applauding us, they only call us Huns!"

"Kluck, Kluck!
I've had no luck.
My men can't shoot, and my guns get stuck.
Kluck, Kluck!
I'm giving it the chuck,
And going back to Berlin in a Red Cross truck."

"Little Hun, Little Hun, where have you been?"
"Oh, I've been to Brussels, Aershuyt, and Malines!"
"Little Hun, little Hun, what did you there?"
"I burnt the cathedral and murdered the mayor!"
—Sent in by E. Walker, West Hartlepool.

THE VALUE OF PERSEVERANCE.

There were once two mice who were fond of exploring. One day they both fell into a basin of milk.

After swimming around for a long time, one cried out that he could keep up no longer, and felt that death was approaching. So he gave up, and sank to the bottom.

The other, however, was possessed of more perseverance, and kept on swimming, till in the morning the housemaid found him sitting triumphantly on a pat of butter!—Sent in by M. Bryceson, Lee, S.E.

SOME HUNGER.

George was a very hungry chap. To give him a thorough test, his friends made a wager between themselves that he couldn't eat a lamb.

Consequently, they called to tell him about the wager.

"Be there at eight sharp, George," said one of them.

"I'm sorry," said George, "I can't come at eight, because I've a calf to eat at eight. But I'll come at nine."

"Very well," said his friend, turning towards the door.

"Oh, and by the way, don't tell my missus, or she won't give me any supper!"—Sent in by L. Joseph, Abertillery.

THE BRUTE!

Collector: "It'll cost you seven-and-sixpence for a licence for that dog, ma'am."

Mrs. Moggs: "Seven-and-sixpence, indeed! Why, that's all my husband had to pay for the licence to marry me!"

Mr. Moggs (from within): "Yes; but that animal's worth having."—Sent in by H. S. Jones, Camberwell, S.E.

A WISE YOUTH.

A small boy was being vaccinated, and, on the operation being finished, the doctor prepared to bandage the sore arm, but the boy objected.

"Put it on the other arm, doctor," he pleaded.

"Why, no," said the physician. "I want to put the bandage on your sore arm so that the boys at your school won't knock against it."

"Put it on the other arm, doctor," reiterated the boy. "You don't know the fellows at our school."—Sent in by Dick Weldon, Belfast.

MADE MATTERS WORSE.

Once an American traveller was dining with an English farmer and his family. They had ham—very delicious ham—and soon the farmer's son finished his portion, and passed his plate for more.

"More 'am, father, please," he said.

The father frowned.

"You shouldn't say ''am,' my son. Say ''am.'"

"I did say ''am,'" replied the boy, in an injured tone.

"You said ''am!'" cried the father fiercely. "'' 'Am's' what it should be—not ''am.'"

The farmer's wife thereupon turned to the visitor.

"Excuse their ignorance, sir," she said. "They both think they're saying ''am.'"—Sent in by Bert Nairn, Kilmarnock, Scotland.

THE MILK AND THE COCOANUT.

"Now, Johnny," said the teacher, after a lesson on the cow, "what useful purpose does the cow serve?"

"Please, teacher," replied Johnny, "leather and milk."

"Quite right. Now what do we use milk for?"

"We use it to make butter, cheese, and cream, and to put in cocoanuts."—Sent in by W. Coley, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

"HALLO!"

The telephone-girl had married well, and was stopping at an hotel. Rising at 10 a.m., she rang the bell for the servant.

"Why didn't you wake me up, as I asked you?" she said.

"I did, ma'am," answered the servant; "but when I said 'seven-thirty,' you replied 'Line engaged. I'll ring.'"—Sent in by C. Barton, Rochester, Kent.

JOKES CRACK!

A lodge-keeper employed at an Oldham mill, who is noted for his repartee, met his match the other morning during the following dialogue:

"Is there an opening this morning?" asked a smart-looking lad, as he peered through the window.

"Yes," replied the lodge-keeper, "there is an opening to everything. Look at summer—it opens with a spring. Look at a river—it opens with a spring. Look at a lady's purse—it opens with a spring."

"Ay," said the lad, "that's so. Time flies, but wine vaults; acid drops; sulphur springs; jam rolls; grass slopes; music stands; Niagara falls; moonlight walks; sheep runs; Kent hops and holiday trips; bed spreads; standard weights; rubber tyres; and the organ stops."

"And," said the lodge-keeper, as he drew in his head, "marble busts!"—Sent in by A. Hinde, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

HIS EXCUSE.

Mike was the cook of an Irish regiment.

One day he forgot to wash the pot after being used for the breakfast tea, consequently there were tea-leaves in the soup at breakfast-time.

To clear himself from blame, Mike went round the various messes and said:

"If yez foind taylaves in the soup, av course ye'll know it's mint."—Sent in by Henry Crosthwaite, Bo'ness, Scotland.

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.