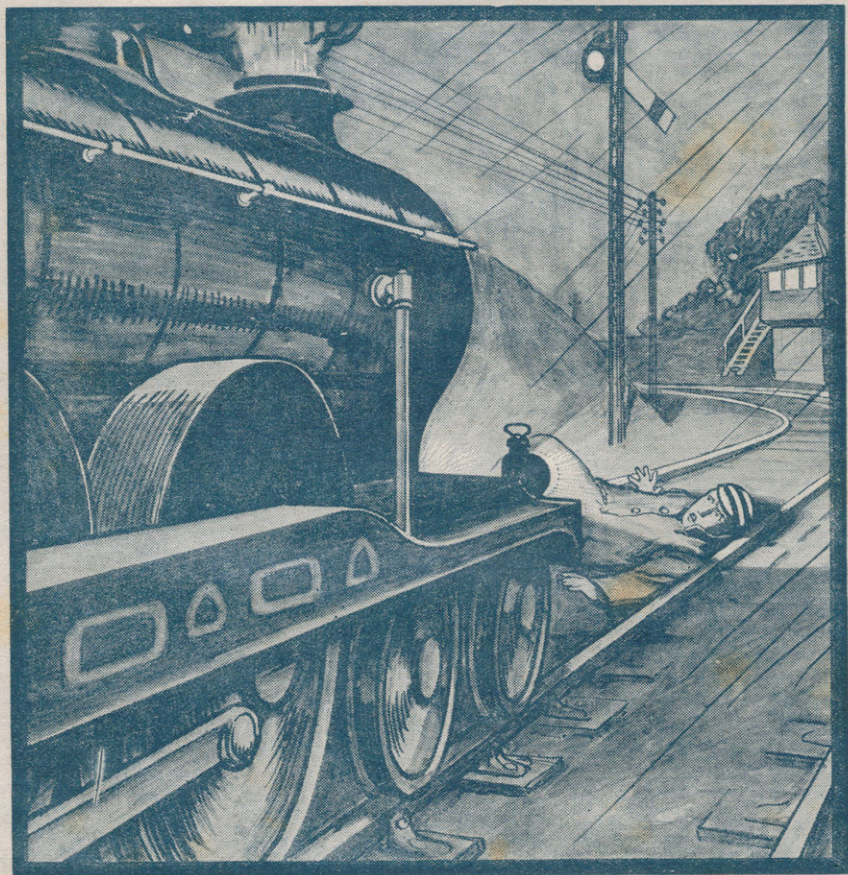


KILDARE OF THE GREAT HEART!



IN DEADLY DANGER!

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A MAGNIFICENT, NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

KILDARE OF THE GREAT HEART!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

When It Was Dark.

"PHEW! What a night!" Kildare of St. Jim's stepped from the train at Wayland Junction, and buttoned his raincoat tightly about his neck.

It was faintly cat and dogs, and blowing great gusts into the bargain. The whole countryside was locked in the grip of a blinding storm.

As Kildare battled his way against the elements into the old-fashioned High Street, the clock of a neighbouring church tolled midnight.

"In another hour," reflected Kildare, "I shall be in bed. And about time, too!"

He had been to Southampton, with the Head's leave, to see a relative off to the Front, and the journey back had been long and tedious. His limbs were cramped, and he felt as if he had been screwed up in a knot for hours together.

"Think I'll strike off across the fields," he muttered. "Confound that beastly train! Why doesn't it run on to Ryelcombe? I should be nearly-home then."

He had felt sleepy and muggy in the crowded carriage; but the keen night wind swept into his face, and freshened and revived him.

The night was dark as pitch, but Kildare knew every inch of his way.

He was skirting the edge of the railway embankment, and peering ahead for the familiar lights of Ryelcombe, when a shadowy figure loomed up in the darkness and cannoned heavily against the captain of St. Jim's.

There was a startled gasp, and an attempt on the part of the unknown person to break away; but Kildare shot out his hand and gripped the other firmly by the shoulder.

"Hang you!" snarled the unknown. "Let me go!"

Kildare peered at the face of his captive, then uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"My hat! Knox!"

"Yes, it's me!" snarled the bullying prefect. "You knew that at the start, but, of course, had to throw your weight about. Let me go, I tell you!"

"Not so fast," said Kildare grimly. "Before I let you go I want a satisfactory explanation of what you're doing here at this time of night."

"Then you won't get it!"

Knox's tone was harsh and excited. It was not difficult to surmise where he had been—to some low-down inn in the neighbourhood.

By his savage manner it seemed likely he had been a heavy loser at cards. It was also probable that he had tasted something stronger than lemonade.

Silence lasted for a full moment. Kildare still maintained a firm grip on Knox's shoulder.

"You refuse to tell me what you're doing out of bounds?" asked the captain of St. Jim's at length.

"Yes!"

"Then I shall regard it as my duty to report you when we get back."

Knox flamed up at this. "You cad!" he hissed. "You rotten spy! You came out to track me down! Only a Hun would do a thing like that!"

"Take care!" warned Kildare, fast losing control of himself.

"Rats! I say again, you're a rotten spy, and—"

Smack! Kildare's disengaged hand struck Knox's cheek.

Knox tore himself away from his assailant's grasp like a wild beast.

The memory of his recent losses at the gaming-table, and the humiliation of being caught in a trap on his way back to St. Jim's, roused him to a state of savage fury.

Turning swiftly, he dived at Kildare's legs, with the object of tripping him up.

The next few moments were nothing if not lively. Kildare would have preferred a good stand-up scrap with bare fists.

But Knox had established a firm grip on Kildare's legs, and there was no choice for the captain of St. Jim's but to wrestle for the mastery.

And then something happened.

The seniors, locked tightly together, rolled on a grassy mound at the extreme edge of the embankment, with Kildare nearest to the danger-zone.

Muttering an imprecation, Knox wrenched himself bodily away by a supreme effort; then his right hand shot out, and gave Kildare a violent shove.

With a gasp of dismay Kildare disappeared over the edge of the embankment, and went hurtling down the green slope on to the metals below.

Very pale, and shaking from head to foot with fear of what he had done, Knox rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I couldn't help it!" he muttered, in a vain attempt to ease his conscience.

"He asked for it, and it's no more than he deserves. But—but supposing he's killed!"

The bare thought of such a possibility was enough to turn Knox's blood to ice. He had not meant to do Kildare grievous bodily harm; he had acted in self-defence. But the grim fact remained that Eric Kildare had been pushed over the embankment's edge, and that it was by Knox's hand.

Knox did not stop to think that Kildare was probably in dire need of help. He could not even muster enough courage to peep over the edge and shout down an inquiry.

He ran from the scene of the encounter as if pursued by a pack of wolves.

CHAPTER 2.

In the Nick of Time.

ERIC KILDARE lay silent and still on the iron way, his white face upturned to the sky.

He was stunned. His fall had been no light one, and although he had been spared serious injury he was in far

too dazed a condition even to crawl out of danger.

For he certainly was in danger—danger of the grimmest. In another few minutes the London mail train was due to pass that spot.

Ten more minutes! And Knox, who might have saved him, was swallowed up in the darkness, leaving Kildare to his fate!

Dazed and almost stupefied though he was, Kildare realised, as he opened his eyes, the extreme gravity of the situation.

He had no means of warning the driver of the mail train of his presence on the metals. A shout would be futile; it would be lost completely in the roaring wind.

But somehow or other he must extricate himself from his awkward plight!

If only he could summon sufficient strength to roll or crawl to the side of the metals, all would be well. But he was weakened by his fall; and the rain, which had drenched him to the skin while he lay half-unconscious, had stiffened him beyond the power of action.

He remained quite still for a full five minutes, hoping vaguely that his strength would return to him in time.

He knew he was not vitally injured; but he was helpless, and in the circumstances, that was just as bad.

Presently there came a distant rumble. Kildare felt the metals vibrate beneath him, and he knew what that meant.

The night train was approaching!

It was high time that he made a supreme effort to avoid the danger. Setting his teeth tightly together, he endeavoured to move, but sank back again with a gasp of pain.

It was useless. The shock and exposure had proved too much for him, and he was "whacked."

The captain of St. Jim's tried to resign himself to his fate; but he could not help letting his mind dwell on the things that were about to be ended for ever. Cricket, football, his loyal chums! A few brief moments, and his lease of life would have expired.

The rumbling was nearer now. It had grown in volume; minutes had been reduced to seconds.

Yet again Kildare strove to free himself from his terrible position, and this time he partially succeeded.

But without rolled over twice, after an almost superhuman effort, he was not yet clear of the line.

"I give it up!" he muttered painfully. "It's all for the best, I suppose. There are thousands of fellows not much older than me facing death in Flanders—Heaven bless 'em!—and I'm not going to whine because the call has come to me!"

He could see the approaching train now as it swung round a curve—the red glow from the engine, the flying sparks. Kildare turned away his eyes to the steep, dark slope of the embankment.

And then he heard his name called, and a tall form came bounding down the slope a few yards further along,

where it was less steep, and hastened towards him.

It was a St. Jim's fellow, Kildare knew, for he caught a glimpse of the cap. He assumed that it was Knox, returning at the eleventh hour to his rescue.

"Go back!" he panted. "You're too late!" "It's no good trying! Go back I say!"

The thundering deafening noise was in his ears, and the whole earth seemed to be undergoing an upheaval.

And then the captain of St. Jim's felt a pair of strong arms encircling him.

The next instant he lay on the green grass at the foot of the slope, and the night train thundered by.

He was safe!
For quite a minute he could not speak; then, aware that his rescuer was by his side, he blurted out:

"Heaven bless you for this, Knox! You've saved my life! But for you, I should have been—why, it isn't Knox at all! It's—Monteith!"

CHAPTER 3.

Thou, Too, Brutus!

IT was a night of surprises.

"It's me, right enough," said Monteith. "By Jove, that was a close call! Another few seconds, and—"

His voice trailed off nervously.

"Look here, Monteith," said Kildare, when he had sufficiently recovered from his amazement to speak again. "I that was ripping of you, old man! I don't want to go into heroes, or be sentimental, but I'll never forget this—never!"

"Tone it down," said Monteith lightly. "There wasn't much danger for me."

"What? You know as well as I do that in another few ticks we should both have been killed! It's no use your trying to make light of it."

Monteith made no reply. He took a flask from the pocket of his overcoat, and put it to Kildare's lips.

"Brandy," he explained. "It'll buck you up."

The captain of St. Jim's took a couple of gulps, and the blood went racing through his veins once more. With Monteith's aid, he was able to walk.

They proceeded in silence for some moments in the direction of St. Jim's. Then Kildare said:

"I guess it's time for explanations." "Just what I was thinking," said Monteith calmly. "What in thunder had you been doing to get stranded on the metals like that?"

Kildare told his story. "I came back from Southampton," he said, "and was walking in from Wayland, when Knox bumped into me. I asked him what he was doing out of bounds, and words led to blows—or, rather, to a sort of wrestling match. I went spinning over the edge of the embankment, and was too dazed to do anything after that."

"He ran away," Kildare's lip curled contemptuously. "That's just the sort of rotten game one might expect him to play."

Monteith nodded. "Knox is a cad and a coward," he said.

Kildare leaned rather heavily on his rescuer's arm. "I draw the line at revenge," he said, "but Knox has kicked right over the traces this time."

"What shall you do?"

"Report him to the Head."

"What grounds?"

"I shall report him," said Kildare deliberately, "for being out of bounds."

Monteith laughed. "There was more of bitterness than mirth in the sound." "Then you'll have to report me, too!" he said. "You seem to forget that I was out of bounds as well."

Kildare looked startled. In the rush of the past few moments, it had not occurred to him that Monteith was also a breaker of bounds. It came as something of a shock to him to realise that Monteith was guilty of the same offence for which he threatened to report Knox.

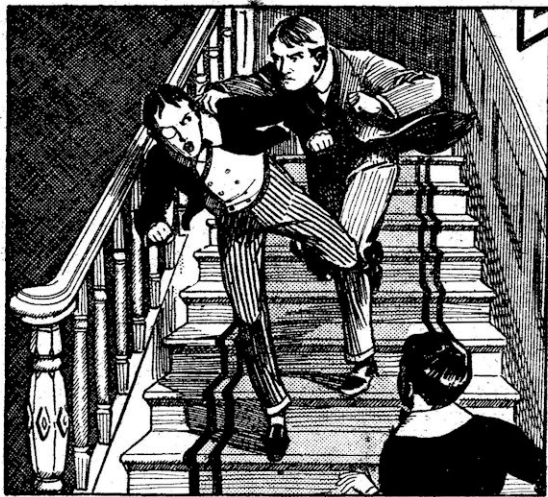
The captain of St. Jim's was stumped for a reply. He turned the question over in his mind, scarcely knowing how to act.

"But—but your case is different," he blurted out, at length. "Knox was

"What's the use of worrying? Are you trying to make up your mind not to report me? If so, I'll spare you the trouble. You can go right ahead and expose me. Don't let that little incident on the railway-line make any difference."

"But—but I don't understand," faltered Kildare. "You've never struck me as being a fellow of the pub-haunting sort, Monteith."

"I've played the fool!" said Monteith bitterly. "This game has been going on longer than you think; but to-night's the last straw. Not only have I lost every giddy penny I possessed, but I'm heavily in debt into the bargain." Kildare's eyes opened wide.



Knox Goes for Quessy!
(See Chapter 4.)

out of bounds for no good. He's probably been smoking and gambling in some Wayland pub. But you wouldn't be out of bounds without good cause."

"I don't know so much," said Monteith. "What would you say if I told you that I'd been on the razzle with Knox?"

"M-m-my hat!"

"I'm afraid that's the case," said Monteith, with a faint smile. "I've fallen away lately, and done those things that I ought not to have done. Somehow or other I got into the grip of Knox. And when you start plunging with a fellow like that, it's not so easy to struggle to the surface again."

"Where have you been?" asked Kildare.

"To the Horse and Dragon in Wayland. I had a bit of a tiff with Knox on the way back—that's why he was walking in front. I heard a scuffle on the top of the embankment, and when I saw Knox scotching for dear life, I guessed something had happened. But I little dreamed it was you whom he'd shoved over the edge. I thought it was one of the village louts."

Kildare nodded, but did not speak.

"Buck up, old man!" said Monteith.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. "How much do you owe?"

"Thirty quid!"

"The captain of St. Jim's gave a start of surprise.

No wonder Monteith seemed so hopeless!

With such a debt hanging like a millstone about his neck, it wasn't likely that he would feel optimistic.

"The crash is bound to come," he went on. "There's a fellow they call the Sniper to whom I owe most of the money. He gives me a fortnight—not a day more. I dare say I could scrape together thirty bob in that time; but I've about as much chance of mustering thirty quid as the Kaiser has of sitting in state in Buckingham Palace!"

Kildare bustled. "You're in the dicken's of a tight corner old chap!" he said. "I wish I could help you!"

"You can help me," said Monteith, "by reporting me to the Head, and getting me kicked out of the school in record time. That will save lots of suspense."

"Oh, rats!" said Kildare. "You're looking on the very blackest side of things. Keep your pecker up, and we'll

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find a way out of this mess somehow. I confess I don't quite see how, at the moment; but there's a fortnight to do something in."

Monteith's heart jumped. Was it possible that, through the agency of Kildare, he might be extricated from his wretched position? The captain of St. Jim's was not wealthy; indeed, it was very doubtful if anyone in the Sixth would have been able to produce thirty pounds to order; but Kildare might be able to suggest ways and means for raising the sum.

"I feel that it's up to me to do what I can," said Kildare. "Dash it all, you saved my life at the risk of your own, and I should feel a worm to leave you in the lurch."

They had reached the school wall now, and Monteith, clambering to the top, gave Kildare a helping hand.

"What are you going to do about Knox?" he asked, as they passed through the silent quadrangle.

"Nothing."

"Because you're afraid of incriminating me, I take it?"

"I suppose so."

Moved by a sudden impulse, Monteith shot out his hand.

"You're one of the very best, Kildare!" he said. "If only you can think of a way out, so far as this gambling debt's concerned, I shall be eternally grateful!"

"That's all right," said Kildare. "Rely on me for my best. Good-night, Monteith!"

"Good-night!"

And the two seniors, who, in the past had been rivals, never exactly chums, felt that each had a better understanding of the other as they went their several ways.

CHAPTER 4.

KNOX'S FOR KNOX.

KNOX of the Sixth awoke next morning in a very bad temper. He knew that Kildare had returned to the school. That was obvious, or there would be a hue-and-cry about his absence.

How had he extricated himself from his terrible position on the railway-line? It was a puzzle to Knox, who forgot all about Monteith for the moment. Whatever had happened, one point was clear. Kildare was back, and he would probably carry out his intention of reporting Knox to the Head.

The thought goaded the cad of the Sixth to fury.

He wished now that he had taken a different line in his conversation with Kildare overnight. He had been light-headed and reckless at the time, but in the cold light of the morning he saw that he had done himself no good.

"He's bound to tell the Head, hang him!" snarled Knox. "Still, I don't suppose that'll mean more than losing my prefectship. My hat! I'll have a jolly good final fling, anyway!"

Monty Lowther of the Shell was the first victim of Knox's wrath.

Monty was descending the stairs by the swift and least harassing method—except to the seat of the trousers—of sliding down the banisters.

As the humorist of the Shell had already shot down from a couple of floors in this way, he had gathered a great deal of impetus, and was unable to apply the brakes, so to speak.

He rounded a sharp corner just as Knox came into view, and his right leg, shooting out suddenly, caught the prefect in the small of the back, causing him to double up.

"Goal!" chuckled Jack Blake, who was following in Monty Lowther's wake. "Good for you, Monty! Let's see if I can score another!"

So saying, Jack Blake jerked out his foot, and Knox got it again—in the shins, this time. He was furious with rage and pain.

He was about to rush down the stairs and take summary vengeance on Blake and Lowther, when the great Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came sliding down with a mighty rush.

In ordinary circumstances Arthur Augustus would have regarded it as *infra dig* to slide down the banisters, thereby endangering the set of his immaculate trousers; but Monty Lowther had dared Gussy to take the plunge. Not wishing to be outdone, Gussy had taken it.

But Knox was forewarned this time, and he meant to check Gussy's head-long career.

Turning swiftly, he caught the swell of St. Jim's in a firm grip, and swung him on to the stairs.

"Got you, you cheeky young cub!" he muttered, between his teeth.

"Wally, Knox! Do not be so ill-bred, I *pway!* Unhand me at once!"

But Knox had no intention of doing anything of the sort. He held on grimly.

"My eyeglass is missin'," continued Arthur Augustus, "an' I am all in a flutah!"

"Buck up, Gussy!" came Monty Lowther's voice from below. "Don't stay there arguing with Knox for the duration of the war."

"I have no choice in the matter, you silly duffah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Knox is detainin' me by brute force!"

"Slike him off, then, idiot!"

"I—can't!"

The swell of St. Jim's wriggled and writhed, but all to no purpose. He was as an infant in the prefect's vice-like grip.

"Lowthah! Blake! Why don't you come to the rescue?" panted Gussy.

But Lowther and Blake had no desire to try conclusions with Knox at that moment. They had scored in the first round, and did not wish to be humiliated at the finish by having their ears boxed.

Had they guessed how few Knox was about to behave, they would have leapt to their chum's assistance in a twinkling. As it was, they remained irrelative at the foot of the stairs.

Meanwhile, Knox established a still firmer grip on his victim, and shook him as a terrier would shake a rat.

"Yow-ow-ow! Don't be so beastly wude an' wough, you cad!" gasped Blake.

Knox made no reply. He was in such a state of fury that mere words were no satisfaction to him.

His long fingers twisted themselves cruelly round Gussy's throat, and the swell of St. Jim's grew almost purple.

Lowther and Blake could not see what was happening, but somebody else could.

Fortunately for Gussy—for Knox's clutch was tightening at every second—Kildare of the Sixth came bounding down the stairs three at a time.

"What the merry dickens!" he exclaimed in amazement. "Knox, you cad, let go at once! You're strangling the kid!"

Headless of the command, Knox held on, and Kildare, scenting the need for immediate action, lashed out fiercely with his left.

The blow took Knox on the temple, and the shock of it made him release his hold of Arthur Augustus as if the latter had been a red-hot poker.

Almost sobbing with relief, the swell

of St. Jim's fell back against the banisters.

As soon as he could sufficiently recover himself, Knox swung round upon his assailant.

He struck out savagely at Kildare, who simply side-stepped, and the blow passed harmlessly by.

"So you want some more—what?" said Kildare. "Very well, then. Here goes!"

And the next moment the stalwart captain of St. Jim's was hitting out right and left with scant ceremony.

Crowds of juniors poured upon the scene. Tom Merry and Manners and Talbot of the Shell, Digby and Herries and Reilly of the Fourth, and many others, appeared on the spot, as if by magic.

Kildare was determined to teach Knox a lesson for his gross ill-treatment of Arthur Augustus.

Knox's blows became feeble and ill-timed; and Kildare grasped his opportunity.

He hit out with all his strength, and Knox collapsed on the stairs. Nor did he make an effort to rise again.

"Beavo!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That was vewy sportin' of you, Kildare!"

"Yes, rather?"

Somebody started to cheer, and the sound was taken up heartily on all sides. There was no doubt that Kildare's victory was immensely popular.

Knox, his brow black with fury, crawled away down the stairs, with the sound of the cheering in his ears.

The juniors standing below stepped promptly to one side, avoiding him as if he had the plague, and Knox was only too glad to seek sanctuary in his study.

"They haven't finished with me yet!" he muttered savagely. "Kildare's got me down now, but I rather fancy I shall have the whiphand of him before another week's out!"

CHAPTER 5.

Straight from the Shoulder.

HALF an hour later Knox rose to his feet.

It wouldn't be a bad idea, he reflected, to go over to the New House and see Monteith, from whom he could ascertain the position with regard to the previous night's adventure.

He had been kept in suspense long enough, if Kildare had reported him, why was there no general assembly called in Big Hall? Knox was tired of being kept on tenterhooks, and he meant to get to the bottom of the affair there and then.

As he stepped out into the quad, he came in for a warm reception.

Tom Merry & Co. were punting a footer about, and the lack of a net was amply atoned for by the arrival of Knox.

Jack Blake held the ball, and he took steady and careful aim.

Whiz!

The sphere struck past Knox's head, missing him by the merest fraction of an inch. It rebounded from the wall, however, and Levison, fastening on to it, drove it hard and clean into the prefect's chest.

Knox staggered back, gasping. The next moment he made a step towards Levison, but Tom Merry & Co. lined up in force, and the cad of the Sixth thought better of it.

"You're not going to treat Levison like you treated Gussy, you cad!" said Tom Merry warmly. "I should advise you to get out of the firing line quick. We're fed up with you!"

"Yes, rather!"

Knox was aware that he had stepped into a hornet's nest, and was wise enough to see that the sooner he got clear the better. Tom Merry & Co. would be only too pleased to hurl themselves upon him if he gave them the slightest provocation.

Muttering, Knox strode on, and was soon safe in the corridors of the New House.

Monteith, with rather a glum expression on his face, was in his study, reading a letter from home.

His father—one of many fathers who had been hard hit by the war—was hinting at cutting down his allowance.

Monteith realised that his people had fallen upon evil times, and any hope he had cherished of obtaining part of the thirty pounds from home was now ruthlessly shattered.

He was not best pleased when Knox strode into the study without knocking.

"Hallo!" he said curtly. "What d'you want?"

"A full history of last night's events," said Knox, leaning against the mantelpiece.

"You can set your mind at rest," said Monteith. "Kildare's not going to report you, if that's what you're driving at?"

Knox drew a deep breath of relief. He had been anticipating serious trouble, and why Kildare should have swerved from his purpose was a mystery. However, Knox was satisfied there was no need to inquire into the why and wherefore.

"Buzz off!" said Monteith sharply. "I'm not in the mood for conversation just now!"

Knox laughed.

"That little debt you ran up at the Horse and Dragon has ruffled your feathers, I can see," he said.

"Little debt!" If you call thirty quid little, I don't! Why, man, it's a small fortune! And how in thunder d'you think I'm going to raise it?"

Knox shrugged his shoulders.

"That's your bizney," he said. "You got into the mess, and it's for you to find a way out. I'd give you a hand if I could, but I'm in debt myself to the tune of five quid, and I must look after number one first. Selfishness is the law of life, you know!"

"Wasn't asking for your help," said Monteith drily. "It would be a thankless sort of job to do that. You'd be a pretty fine specimen to have as a pal—I don't think! You don't care a hang who sinks so long as you swim. It's a case of the weakest going to the wall!"

"Oh, you're a hopeless case!" said Knox. "When you've been on the range as many times as I have, you won't bawl over a debt contracted at cards. Dash it all, man, you can't expect fortune to beam on you all along the line! Keep going a bit longer, and your luck will change!"

"I've heard that tale before," said Monteith. "And while we're on the subject, Knox, I'd like to say that I'm having no more nights out with you. Perhaps my last experience was a good thing for me, in a way. It showed you up in your true colours, and proved to me what a blackguard you are!"

"Here, steady on!" remonstrated Knox.

"This is not a time for mincing words," continued Monteith. "I can't think what you've made me go with you. Why, you haven't a shred of decency about you! A fat lot you care for the welfare of St. Jim's!"

"Hallo!" said Knox. "Turned goodly-gooey all of a sudden!"

"Put it that way if you like. I'm sick to death of you! Don't come over to the New House more than you can

help, for goodness' sake! You contaminate it!"

Knox clenched his hands tightly together, as if he would have liked to hurl himself at the speaker; but he had had enough of fistic combat for one day, and the memory of the thrashing he had received at the hands of Kildare still rankled in his mind.

"I'm blessed if I know what to make of you to-day, Monteith!" he said. "I s'pose you'll come round in time!"

"There's something wrong with your supposer, then! I don't want to have anything more to do with you!"

"How d'you propose raising that thirty quid to pay the Sniper?"

"That's my bizney!"

"You won't drag me into it if there's a row?"

"I'm not a sneak!" said Monteith curtly. "Now get out!"

The New House prefect had risen to his feet, and Knox could read the storm-signals in his face. He wisely decided to quit.

Whatever the future run of events might bring forth, one thing was certain. The cut of the Fourth in his nocturnal escapades to the Horse and Dragon, could no longer look for an ally in James Monteith.

CHAPTER 6.

Turning the Tables.

AS the days advanced, Monteith's position grew decidedly uncomfortable.

He seemed no nearer to getting out of the Sniper's debt and starting with a clean sheet.

Kildare had promised to do what he could, and he was not the fellow to go back on his word.

But supposing, he could do nothing? There would follow more days of miserable suspense, culminating in exposure and perhaps expulsion.

Monteith was the established head of the New House, and in spite of frequent interferences from Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-tempered Housemaster, he had a pretty tolerable time of it. To be suddenly shorn of all his power, to find himself face to face with expulsion—the possibility was hard to face!

And all this just from a night out with Knox!

Kildare was worried, too. He had some regard for Monteith—a regard increased by the incident of a few nights before, and the captain of St. Jim's didn't want to see him sent packing as a result of his escapade.

Monteith was not the only fellow in the Sixth who had so far forgotten himself as to indulge in "little flutters," and it would be a very bad stroke of Fate if he were expelled.

Kildare had given serious thought to the raising of the thirty pounds which would save Monteith; but the more he puzzled over it the less hopeful he became.

The sum was so large that he could not hope to borrow it from his chums. Darrel and Rusden and Langton would willingly have rallied round, and given with a good heart; but it would leave them woefully short for the rest of the term, and Kildare felt that he could not sponge on them to such an extent.

"I'll go for a stroll, and try and think things out," he told himself one evening. The sooner he saw Monteith clear the better, he reflected. Things were growing in a black hour; but it would be with Abbotsford, which usually saw St. Jim's top-dogs, had ended in a crushing defeat for them, mainly because two of their star men—Kildare and Monteith—were off colour.

It was a bright, pleasant evening, and

Kildare struck off towards Wayland by way of the fields.

He did not pause till he came to the top of the embankment which had been the scene of the struggle with Knox. Arrived there, he threw himself down on the same mound, and endeavoured to solve the eternal riddle.

It was while he lay there, engrossed in thought, that he suddenly became aware of the sound of voices, raised in angry discussion.

The sound came from behind a clump of furze close by, and Kildare, his train of thought interrupted, listened idly to what was going on.

"You ought to be in the trenches!" somebody was saying. "A fellow of your weight should be potting Huns instead of loafing about here!"

"Of course!" chimed in another voice. "You're right there, Sniper! A skunk and a slacker—that's what it is! They ought to have combed him out ages ago! I reckon—"

At this juncture the wordy argument ended, and the sound of a scuffle came to Kildare's ears.

The captain of St. Jim's crept stealthily up to the furze-bush to see exactly what was taking place.

"It's jolly queer!" he murmured. "I go for months without a scrap of any sort, and then I seem to be brought bang up against half a dozen! I bet I'm in this before the finish!"

Kildare was right. When he saw that a small but extremely plucky gentleman in a blue serge suit was being attacked by a couple of deedly rough-looking customers, he deemed it his duty, in the interests of fair play, to chip in.

The little man had already been knocked down twice, but had bounded to his feet again in quick time, and leapt into the fray. It was evident that he was no novice in the noble art of self-defence.

"You can keep your distance," he said to Kildare, not unpleasantly. "I can manage these two beauties all right. Jimmy Dale never knows when he's beaten!"

Kildare saw at a glance that the speaker had plenty of science; but science would avail him little against two roughs who insisted on straight from the shoulder. He was determined not to see Mr. Jimmy Dale laid in the dust at his feet.

Clenching his fists, he hurled himself at the Sniper, while Jimmy Dale soon settled the hash of the other ruffian.

Smack! Biff! Thud!

The Sniper was being sniped with a vengeance. Kildare went, at his hammer and tongs, and gave him no respite. Meanwhile, Jimmy Dale sat on the chest of his own victim, and gave the St. Jim's skipper encouragement.

"Beautiful!" he kept saying. "Beautiful! That's a topping straight left of yours, boy! You've got him beaten to a frazzle!"

Kildare could not see this at the moment. Jimmy Dale knew, and any who moved in fighting circles would have known, that the Sniper had shot his bolt. But Kildare, not realising that victory was already his, smote with all his strength, and the Sniper, all the fight knocked out of him, rolled over in the grass, uttering imprecations.

"Curtain!" cried Jimmy Dale. "The entertainment, my merry friend, was a huge success. Thanks awfully for chipping in as you did!"

Kildare laughed rather breathlessly. "That's all right," he said. "What d'you want to do with these bouncers?"

"Let 'em go," said Jimmy Dale lightly. "You won't worry us again."

Only too glad to escape from the scene of their defeat, the Sniper and his

companion slunk away; nor did they venture on another taunt to Jimmy Dale. "What were they getting at you about?" asked Kildare, as he strolled on towards Wayland with his companion. "I heard the Army mentioned once or twice."

"Yes. They were trying to represent me as a slacker. Heavens! I've been through Mons and the two battles of Ypres, and if that's not enough to go on with, I don't know what is. Two months ago they invalidated me out. Of course, those scoundrels couldn't see my badge of discharge in the dark, so they started ragging me."

"Rotters like that," said Kildare, with some heat, "ought to be in the trenches themselves!"

"In a bit of a crock still," said Jimmy Dale. "But it won't be long before I become fairly fit again. Then I shall have to rejoin, I s'pose."

Kildare nodded. "It'll be one more nail in the Kaiser's coffin," he said.

"By the way," said Jimmy Dale, "you're a remarkable clever boxer, you know. You've got the makings of a first-class fighting-man. I wonder you don't tackle the Cockney Kid."

"Never heard of him," said Kildare, without much interest.

"Ye gods! Why, he's a living marvel, or professes to be, at any rate. He's making a tour of the country, and his manager's offering fifty quid to the fellow who can lick him. Of course, he's quite safe in making the offer. Nobody can come near the Cockney Kid, by all accounts. He comes to Wayland next week."

Kildare listened idly to Jimmy Dale's statement; then, with startling suddenness, a dazzling possibility flashed before him.

"I needed money badly, to save another from ruin; and here it was, stretched out before him like a tempting bait."

"My hat!" he exclaimed, swinging round upon Jimmy Dale. "If only I—"

"Well;—
"If only I were in training! I'd go all out for that fifty quid!"

"A few lessons would soon put you in trim," said Jimmy Dale, noting Kildare's stalwart figure with approval. "But—but who would give them to me?"

"I would."
"You!"

"What-ho! I've figured pretty largely in the boxing world, in pre-war days. And, discharged soldier though I am, there's life in the old dog yet. If it's practice you want, my boy, you need look no farther than Jimmy Dale. Here's my address."

And he handed Kildare a card, bearing the words:

"MR. JAMES DALE,
"7, River Street,
"Wayland.
"Boxing and Gymnastic Expert."

"By Jove!" said Kildare. "Your name seems familiar, somehow. Didn't you win the Londale Belt three years ago?"

"That's me."
"Then I should like to shake hands."

They had come to the old High Street by this time, and Kildare's eyes, as he took his farewell of the boxer, were aglow with the light of a new hope.

"When can I come round for my lessons?" he asked.

"You'd better make it every evening this week, at nine. It'll be a bit difficult for you to get away from the school, The Gem Library.—No. 493.

I expect, and I'd make it earlier if I could; but you'll need to have a thorough course of instruction before I'm manager to tackle the Cockney Kid. His manager wouldn't make such a princely offer to the fellow who could beat him unless he reckoned he was safe."

Kildare laughed. "If previous experience counts for anything, I ought to shine," he said. "I've been having a perpetual round of scrapping just lately. It seems as if Nature had made me for a pugilist. If things go on at this rate, I shall be able to tackle Jack Johnson in a week's time!"

Jimmy Dale chuckled. "Well, we'll do our best," he said. "You've got a steep hill to climb, but yours is the spirit that wins."

"And your terms for the tuition—"
"Are nil. I'm not out to line my pockets. It'll more than repay me to see you put the kyboosh on the Cockney Kid."

"You're one of the best!" said Kildare cordially. "Good-night!"
"Good-night!"

And Kildare walked back to St. Jim's with a light heart. The early stars seemed to wrinkle encouragement to him as he strode along, and he felt confident he could give the marvellous boy boxer a good run for his money.

But it was as well for his peace of mind that he did not know how many obstacles were destined to bestrew his path in his efforts to save a fellow-prefect from ruin!

CHAPTER 7.

Knox's Counter-Stroke.

UNDER the genial coaching of Jimmy Dale, Kildare went from strength to strength.

The captain of St. Jim's had always been a good boxer—far better than he himself had realised.

His first visit to Jimmy Dale's house was accomplished successfully, and so was the second; and on each occasion he gave the boxing trainer great satisfaction.

"You're shaping splendidly!" said Jimmy Dale, with enthusiasm. "I wonder you didn't take boxing up seriously before. I like your attack, and your defence is everything that could be desired. You'll be able to stand up to the Cockney Kid for the full twelve rounds, if necessary."

"You flatter me," said Kildare.

"Not a bit of it. If you were a wash-out, and a hopeless case, I shouldn't scruple to tell you so. I never mince my words. Coming along to-morrow night, at nine?"

"Yes; rather!"

When Kildare departed on his third expedition to Jimmy Dale's house, he was blissfully unaware of the fact that he was being watched by at least half a dozen juniors.

Tom Merry & Co., with Crooke, Mellish, and Racke, saw the captain of St. Jim's scale the school wall.

"That's queer," said Monty Lowther. "I can't think what's come over old Kildare lately. He's been letting things rip in a most disgusting way. Look at that match with Abbottsford! It was simply thrown away, owing to Kildare being out of his form."

"It beats me altogether," said Tom Merry, looking puzzled. "Where's he going now, I wonder?"

"To the Green Man, I expect," sneered Racke.

Tom Merry spun round upon the cad of the Shell.

"Don't judge other people's actions by your own, you rotter!" he said.

Racke shrugged his shoulders. "I bet there's some something shady going on," he said. "Fellows don't sneak out of the school after dark unless they're on the sly. I've had my suspicions of Kildare for a long time."

"Same here," said Mellish. "A wolf in sheep's clothing, you know."
"As a matter of fact," said Racke, who seldom lost an opportunity of making himself objectionable to Tom Merry & Co., "this isn't the first time Kildare has broken bounds. He went out last night, and the night before, and wasn't back till midnight in each case."

"Which only proves," said Manners, "that you're a rotten spy!"

Racke ignored the thrust. "If you ask me," he went on, "Kildare's a beastly pub-hunter—nothing more nor less. I've been to pubs myself occasionally, but I've never posed before the other fellows as a giddy plaster saint. Kildare's playing a double game."

"One more word against our worthy skipper, Racke," said Monty Lowther dramatically, "and you'll measure your length on the floor, my son!"

"I tell you, he's a cad and a waster!"

Racke got no further. True to his word, Monty Lowther leapt to the attack, and his fist shot out, catching Racke straight between the eyes.

"That's the first instalment," explained Lowther.

Racke was about to retaliate, when Darrel of the Sixth glanced into the Common-room.

"Be time, you kids," he said briefly.

And the discussion about Kildare was dropped.

Even Tom Merry & Co., however, loyal though they were to their skipper, could not help feeling that something was amiss.

On the face of it, things looked black against Kildare, for if his motives were square and above-board, why should he wish to sink out of the premises like a thief in the night?

Time would show, perhaps, that his actions were honourable; but, meanwhile Racke & Co. were afforded a fine opportunity of slandering the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare himself proceeded into Wayland with a light heart. All the world seemed bright, and he little guessed that his excursions were being talked about.

He felt in better trim than ever that evening. After a turn at the punching-ball, and a few rounds with Jimmy Dale, the latter simply beamed with delight.

"You're well on your way to winning fifty of the best," he told Kildare. "That's my honest opinion."

The captain of St. Jim's started on his walk back to the school in high feather.

Before he had left the lights of Wayland behind him, however, he bumped into a tall figure, which emerged from the side gate of the Horse and Dragon.

"Knox!" he exclaimed, with a start. There was a chuckle from the cad of the Sixth.

"Good-evening!" he said. "Sorry to interrupt you. I s'pose you've been to the Crown. Pity you couldn't have made it to the Horse and Dragon, and kept me company?"

"You cad!" said Kildare. "The Crown," continued Knox, unheeding, "is certainly a very desirable show, and their port is the reddest and strongest in the country. But one wants to get some variety into one's pub-haunting. It wouldn't do to sit in

the same old bar-parlour for the duration of the war."

"I don't understand you," said Kildare. "If you're trying to be funny—"

"I'm not," said Knox. "I'm dead serious."

"You know as well as anybody that I'm not a pob-haunter!"

Knox grunted.

"I'm afraid," he said, "you'll find it rather difficult to prove that."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. When all the fellows know that you break bounds night after night, they won't imagine that you're in the habit of going for innocent rambles."

"You're going to tell them you've seen me in Wayland to-night?"

"Why not? What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. You chose to kick up ructions when you met me out of bounds the other night, so I feel perfectly justified in doing the same. Understand?"

"Look here, Knox," said Kildare desperately. "Don't be a fool! You can do yourself no good by shouting from the house-tops about this."

"You admit you've been to the pub, then?"

"I admit nothing of the sort. I can't explain to you why I'm here. You wouldn't understand. But you can take it from me that I'm not at your low game."

"I'm sorry I can't believe you!"

"Then you're going to spread this tale about the school?"

"If it suits me—yes."

Kildare looked grim.

"If you do," he said, with emphasis, "I'll give you the hiding of your life!"

"Threats won't alter my decision," said Knox. "You showed me no mercy, and I shall show none to you, Hero! I say! Where are you going?"

But Kildare had vanished into the darkness, and the rascal of the Sixth found himself obliged to complete his journey alone.

CHAPTER 8.

Slanderous Tongues.

ERIC KILDARE awoke next morning with the feeling that this was to be one of the most eventful days of his school career.

That evening would see him in the boxing-ring, fighting tooth and nail against the Cockney Kid.

His tuition at the hands of Jimmy Dale was at an end, and Jimmy had expressed himself as being more than delighted at his pupil's progress.

"You're the real thing now," he had told Kildare. "Keep your man on the move all the time, and hustle him off his feet. From what I've seen of the Cockney Kid, he's a fair-weather boxer. So long as things are going well for him, he's in his element; but once he finds himself properly up against it, he won't take long to chuck in his mit. Anyhow, you'll put up a game fight, I know, my son. I hope to be on the spot to act as your second."

These encouraging words came back to Kildare while he dressed, and he was looking very ticked when Monteith encountered him on the stairs.

"What are you doing over here?" asked Kildare good-humouredly. "Get back to your kennel!"

"I came," said Monteith rather wearily, "to see if you'd thought of anything yet to help me out of my fix. The fortnight's nearly up, you know, and I've had a note from the Sniper to say that if the debt isn't promptly

settled he'll come to St. Jim's and explode a bombshell."

Kildare scanned Monteith's face curiously.

The New House prefect bore traces of sleepless nights, and it was evident that he had worried a good deal. Kildare felt sorry for him, and decided that he had better cheer him up without delay.

"Keep your pecker up, Monteith!" he said. "In twelve hours from now I hope to have you well clear of this business."

Monteith's eyes gleamed with hope. "Is that a fact?" he gasped. "You—~~you're~~ not rotting, Kildare?"

"I shouldn't rot about a thing like this, old man. Leave things entirely to me, and I'll do my best to see you through!"

"But how d'you propose to do it?"

"By tackling the Cockney Kid. You've heard of him, I take it? He's performing in Wayland, and there's fifty quid waiting for his conqueror."

"My hat! Do you really think you can lick him, though?" added Monteith dubiously.

"I'll try," said Kildare cheerfully. "One can't do more than his best."

"But you're running a fearful risk!" protested Monteith. "Supposing any of the masters are there, or the fellows?"

"Not much fear of that. The masters don't care for that sort of thing, and most of the fellows have already been. That's why I left it till the third night. I shall box under an assumed name, too, to keep on the safe side."

"It's ripping of you to chance it for me, old man!" said Monteith.

"Not at all! I saved my life, and it's up to me to do what I can in return." Nuff said!

Monteith went back to the New House with a lead lifted from his mind. There was something so calm, confident, and reliable about Kildare that he might well have been excused for imagining that his troubles were over.

Looking a few hours ahead, he could see the boxing-ring, the crowds of spectators, and a brilliant, smashing victory for the captain of St. Jim's, and eventually the payment of the Sniper's debt, which would get him out of that wretched "clutches" for evermore. Upon the whole, the prospect was quite radiant.

Unfortunately, however, the little dialogue on the stairs between Monteith and Kildare had been overheard by Racke of the Shell.

Keeping in the shelter of an adjacent doorway, Racke had listened to every word. He gave a malicious grin, and sauntered across to the New House.

Here he sought out Clampe, who was a fellow after his own heart. Neither of the young rascals was in love with Kildare, and neither would have scrupled to do him an ill turn, if it lay in his power.

"Hallo!" said Clampe, in surprise.

"A real morning call—what?"

"Yes. I've picked up a pretty piece of information which I know you'd like to hear."

"Good! Get it off your chest!"

"Kildare—our good and gallant skipper," said Racke, with a sneer, "is taking up a new occupation. He's going to box for money."

"What?"

"It's a fact. I heard him gassing to Monteith about it just now. He's meeting the Cockney Kid at Wayland Public Hall to-night. There's a fine thing for you! The captain of a public school condescends to scrap with Cockney! No wonder St. Jim's is going to the dogs."

Racke uttered the last remark with the

deliberate intention that it should be heard by Mr. Ratcliff, who was coming along the corridor.

The New House master did hear it, and turned instantly to the two juniors.

"What did you say, Racke?" he rapped out.

"I said it was no wonder St. Jim's was going to the dogs, sir," said Racke stubbornly.

"Why, pray?"

"When the captain of the school gives up games and goes in for prize-fighting—and for money, too—it's a bit thick, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this, sir. Kildare's due to meet an awful little hoodlum called the Cockney Kid at seven o'clock this evening in Wayland Public Hall. If Kildare manages to win, he'll rope in fifty pounds."

Mr. Ratcliff darted a keen glance at the speaker.

"Are you romancing, Racke?"

"Not a bit of it, sir."

"H'm!"

Mr. Ratcliff stroked his chin.

"I will look into this," he said. And he hustled away.

The sour, ill-tempered master of the New House could scarcely conceal his pleasure at having picked up such an interesting bit of information.

He had seldom been able to catch the captain of St. Jim's tripping in the past. Kildare was as straight as a die. But now, it seemed, he was lowering himself for the sake of making money; and Mr. Ratcliff fondly hoped to catch him red-handed.

And Kildare went light-heartedly through the day, little dreaming that his determined efforts to save Monteith from disgrace were in danger of being ruthlessly nipped in the bud.

CHAPTER 9.

An Uphill Game.

"I T can't be true!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly.

"What can't be true, fat-head?" asked Tom Merry.

"Wacke says that Kildare's goin' to fight the Cockney Kid to-night."

"My only aunt!"

The Terrible Three, with Talbot, Jack Blake, and D'Arcy were at tea in Tom Merry's study, and Gusey's news quite bowled them over.

"Racke's rotting, as usual," said Monty Lowther, after a long and breathless silence. "To begin with, Kildare, good boxer though he is, wouldn't stand a dog's chance, and, knowing that, he wouldn't make such a thundering ass of himself in public!"

"That's just what I was thinkin'," said Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther bowed.

"Great minds clashing again," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woally, Lowthah! Pwaw don't disturb my twain of thought. I was about to suggest that we might twamp o'ah to Wayland this evenin', just to make such that there's no twuth in what Wacke says. Then we can bump the boundah for twyin' to pull our legs."

"Not a bad idea," said Tom Merry.

"Personally, I can't think why Racke should go to the trouble of retaining such a yarn, unless there was something in it."

"Why not ask Kildare?" suggested Manners.

"Yes, and be booted out of his study!" growled Jack Blake. "No giddy fear!"

Racke had spread his story throughout the school, but the majority of the fellows ignored it.

Tom Merry & Co., however, felt just a lingering doubt; and they would not be

happy until that doubt was definitely banished from their minds.

The juniors went to Kildare for late passes.

"Where are you going?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

"To see the Cockney Kid," said Tom Merry.

Kildare gave a violent start. He was not expecting anyone from the school to be among the audience, especially as most of the juniors had already seen the Cockney Kid; but it would be mean to refuse them the luxury of a late pass.

He strode to the door, and closed it.

"Look here, you kids!" he said, facing round upon them. "When you go over to Wayland to-night, you'll probably see me there. I'm taking up the Cockney Kid's challenge."

Tom Merry and his chums exchanged glances. Then it was true, after all!

"Whether I shall win or lose," went on Kildare, "I don't know, of course. But whatever happens, I don't want you to chatter about it. You may please yourselves, of course. I've no authority to prevent you from saying what you like. But I shall regard it as a personal favour if you keep mum."

"Rely on us, Kildare," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare handed out the passes, and the juniors left the study.

They were in a state of wild excitement, though they were careful to betray no sign of it to outsiders.

Their skipper was going to fight the Cockney Kid. Verily, it should be well worth their while going into Wayland for that eventful evening!

An hour later, Kildare braced himself up for the supreme ordeal.

"Going on the razzie again?" inquired Knox, who he met in the quad.

Kildare made no reply, but strode on. Time was too precious to stop and wrangle with Knox.

The hall was already pretty well packed when Kildare entered and dropped into a seat.

The exhibition boxing had begun, and in a quarter of an hour the usual clamour would be announced by the Cockney Kid's manager.

Kildare swept his eye over the dense throng of people. Presently he became aware that Tom Merry & Co. were seated in the gallery; but, to his intense relief, he could detect nobody else from the school.

Then a hand suddenly descended upon his shoulder, and somebody dropped into the vacant seat beside him.

Kildare spun round, startled.

"All serene, old son," came the voice of Jimmy Dale. "It's only me! How'd you feel?"

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Kildare, brightening up.

"That's good! What name are you going to box under?"

"Arthur Ireland."

"Topping! There's quite an Emerald Isle touch about that. Here we are! He's just going to chuck the challenge off his chest!"

The manager—a pompous individual in evening dress—repeated his usual call to arms.

"I challenge any gentleman present," he said, "to defeat the Cockney Kid! There is fifty pounds awaiting his victor."

Kildare leapt to his feet.

"I'm game!" he said. And passed down the gangway end up on to the platform.

"What name, sir?" asked the manager.

"Arthur Ireland."

"Very well. Ladies and gentlemen, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 493.

Mr. Arthur Ireland has accepted the challenge! We will now get to business. Have you a second, sir?" he added, turning to Kildare.

Jimmy Dale jumped into the breach with a ruddy, smiling face.

"Now for the fireworks!" he said. "Let's put you in fighting order, my son."

And he assisted Kildare to get ready. The Cockney Kid, with his usual calm composure, stood waiting. Then the referee rapped out his sharp command.

"Time!"

Conscious of a great roaring noise around him, and a desire to alter the shape of the smooch placid countenance of the Cockney Kid, Kildare stepped forward.

"Buck up, old man!" came a voice from the audience.

And Kildare knew that voice as Tom Merry's.

The Cockney Kid led off with his usual hop-skip-and-jump tactics, with the object of playing to the gallery; but when he saw the stuff of which Kildare was made, he changed his plans suddenly, and settled down to a stern attack.

It was a fierce first round.

Kildare took plenty of punishment, but the fortune of war was so well divided, that the captain of St. Jim's had given as good as he had received.

The crowd was delighted. It was to be fought in the most varied novice in the noble art saw that. And pluck, endurance, resource, and tenacity would be required of the fellow who was to emerge victor.

"Am I overdoing it, Jimmy?" asked Kildare, as he was being sponged by his faithful second.

"No, I don't think so. To slacken off now would mean your defeat, and you'd prove disastrous. Put plenty of ginger into it, my boy! You're shaping like a Trojan!"

Acting on this well-meant advice, Kildare went all out when "Time" was called again. His heart was in his work, and he became oblivious to everything save the man's object. He must win! Nothing else mattered, so long as that fifty pounds rested in his pocket before he left the hall that evening.

When the round was over, he judged by the burst of cheers which went up that he had done rather well. The Cockney Kid's manager was looking decidedly glum; and the Kid himself seemed none too chirpy. He realised that he was in danger of his Waterloo.

"Topping!" said Jimmy Dale heartily. "What did I tell you? You're the man for the job! If you keep up that attack nothing in heaven or on earth can save him."

The third round was rendered one of the most eventful of all by two incidents which occurred therein.

The first incident was this. Kildare, failing for the moment to realise how slippery and elusive his opponent was, lashed out fiercely with his left.

In a twinkling, the Cockney Kid had swerved out of the line of fire, with the result that Kildare's clenched fist came with a terrific crash against the top corner of one of the ring-side supports. The pain of it sickened him.

But, ere he had recovered from this set-back, the second incident took place.

There was a sudden commotion in the rear of the hall, and a gentleman in spectacles was seen pushing his way to the front,—despite the protests of the crowd.

"Stop!" he exclaimed. "Stop this brutal combat instantly! I forbid it!"

Kildare, half-dazed with pain though he was, recognised that voice.

It belonged to Mr. Horace Ratcliff!

CHAPTER 10.

The Fighting Spirit.

"ORDER, there!"

"Turn him out!"

"He's a beastly killjoy!"

Mr. Ratcliff had set foot in a hornets' nest.

Had the contest between Kildare and the Cockney Kid been at all tame, the crowd might possibly have let the New House master have his way; but they were worked up to the highest pitch of excitement in connection with the fight, and didn't mean to miss their entertainment at any price.

"Kildare! Come down from that platform at once!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Wot d'yer mean?" growled a man in the audience. "You an' yer Kildare! That's Arthur Ireland, that is—a good a boxer as ever set foot in a ring! An' look ere, mister; jest you take my advice, an' quit. It's never no good fer an' man to pit 'issself agin fives 'undred. I've done it meself, so I knows wot I'm talkin' about!"

This was good enough advice; but Mr. Ratcliff heeded it not. He had not tramped over to Wayland for nothing. To return empty-handed to the school, after congratulating himself that he had fairly cornered Kildare, would be too humiliating.

He lifted up his voice again. It rose this time to a shrill crescendo.

"Desist at once, Kildare! Do you hear me?"

"Dry up!"

"Turn him out!"

The cries were fiercer now, and more unanimous. Mr. Ratcliff seemed booked for an ugly time.

"Why doesn't the silly ass clear out?" muttered a girl nearby. "He'll be torn limb from limb if he stays here."

"Serve him jolly well right, for spying!" growled Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I wondah who put him up to it?"

"It was Racke, you bet," said Manners. "That rotter can't open his mouth without making mischief."

"That's mainly on the warpath," said Monty Lowther. "Whether he gets chucked out on his neck or not, it'll be rotten for Kildare in the long run."

Mr. Ratcliff certainly looked like going out on his neck. As he showed no signs of retreating, the crowd deemed it high time to assist him to the door.

The Housemaster's exit from the hall was rather noisy, hurried than his entry. He came into painful contact with sundry boots and missiles, and, like the Germans on the Western Front, retired in disorder under heavy fire.

By the time he was hustled out on to the flagstones of the High Street, he was a total wreck. His collar and tie were streaming loose; his coat was minus the majority of its buttons; and his gold watchchain had severed its connection with the watch, and like the young lady in the song, was lost and gone for ever.

The next thing he became conscious of was the violent slamming of the doors in his face.

Mr. Ratcliff's intrusion had been a good and a bad thing for Kildare. It was bad for him, because it meant that trouble of a serious nature was in store; it was good for him, because it allowed him a much-needed breather.

The captain of St. Jim's had hurt himself badly. In the sheer joy of battle, however, the pain in his hand and wrist was not quite so acute as it might otherwise have been.

"Get on with the washing," said the referee briskly.

Only half a minute now remained of the interrupted round, and Kildare

contented himself with acting on the defensive.

When he sat down on his second's knee, Jimmy Dale uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"You're hopelessly crooked, my son!" he said. "Look here. You can't go on. It's not right. I'll explain to the referee—"

"No, no!" said Kildare, half-starting to his feet. "I'm all right, Jimmy. Don't worry, there's a good chap. I mean to see this thing through."

With obvious reluctance Jimmy Dale allowed his man to step up for the fourth round.

Had Kildare been knocked out in the next minute by the vigorous and elastic Cockney Kid, there would have been every excuse for him. The sight of Mr. Ratcliff ramping about the hall like a raging lion, had done his nerves no good; and, what was worse, his left wrist was limp and useless.

But, to combat these misfortunes, Kildare's heart and soul were fired by a fierce desire for victory. And very often mental resolve goes further than physical strength.

Kildare got through the fourth round somehow. It was like a nightmare, but his great heart upheld him, and he stuck doggedly to his guns. Once, when he planted his right with smashing force into the Cockney Kid's chest, the crowd cheered him to the echo.

"He's stunning!" said Tom Merry jubilantly. "But why doesn't he use his left?"

"Dunno," said Monty Lowther.

The juniors had not regarded the mishap which had occurred in the previous round as serious.

When Kildare rested on his second's knee again, Jimmy Dale said nothing to him. He saw that Kildare was making his supreme effort, and that mere words, whether of encouragement or distress, would carry no weight.

The next three rounds were fought out in Spartan style. At the conclusion of them it was seen that the Cockney Kid was breathing slowly and heavily. He was in point of fact, on the verge of exhaustion.

Kildare saw this. In the next round, he reflected, he must make his final onslaught, for he himself was not capable of holding out much longer.

"Things are going to happen now, I fancy," observed Monty Lowther.

He was right!

The Cockney Kid came up to the scratch with a rush. Kildare did the same, with the result that they got linked together in frenzied combat.

"Break away there!" came the referee's voice.

Kildare leapt backwards, and paused for a brief second, his head throbbing dizzily.

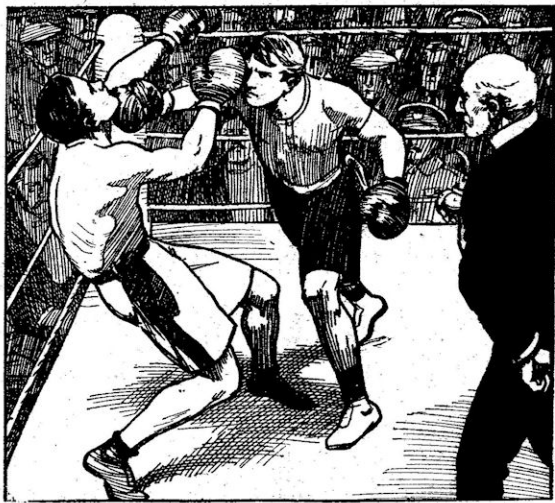
The great moment had come! Was Monty in the audience? he wondered vaguely. If so, the New House prefect must have his heart in his mouth. A wild tumult of hopes and fears must be surging in his breast.

But Monty was not present. He had plenty of courage, but he had not been quite able to brace himself up to go over to Wayland. To see Kildare lose, after days and days of almost unendurable suspense, would break him up altogether. So he had stayed away.

The crowd sat still, as if turned to stone. During that dramatic pause in the fighting there were wild conjectures as to the result.

Could Kildare pull it off?

The captain of St. Jim's determined to stake everything on one mighty blow upon his opponent's chin. He made as if to jab him in the ribs, and the



Kildare's smashing right-hander.
(See Chapter 10.)

Cockney Kid dropped his guard instinctively.

The next instant that smashing right-hander of Kildare's found its billet, and the boy marvel went down in a huddled heap.

"Rouse yourself, fool!" hissed his manager, who was in far from a pleasant temper at this sudden turn of affairs.

The Cockney Kid struggled, sank back, struggled again, and finally gave it up.

"I'm done!" he gasped, adding, as his eyes met the honest, blue ones of his victor: "The best man wins!"

Tom Merry & Co., throwing caution to the winds, bounded on to the platform and thumped Kildare's back in wild ecstasy.

"Moderate your transports, kids!" said a quiet voice. "Time I had a look in."

And Kildare found Jimmy Dale grasping him warmly by the hand.

"Jolly well played!" said Jimmy. "I was right, you see, after all."

"Only just!" laughed Kildare breathlessly. "What matters? A misde is as good as a mile! By gum, it was great! How a fellow can fight right through with a sprained wrist passes all understanding!"

A few minutes later the captain of St. Jim's was handed the fifty pounds in public, to the accompaniment of thunderous cheers. And after that, Jimmy Dale having assisted him in putting on his coat, he left the building by the back exit.

As he peered about him in the street a hand fell upon his shoulder, and the vindictive voice of Mr. Ratcliff exclaimed:

"Ah, Kildare! So I have come upon you at last! You shall pay dearly for this—this disgusting exhibition of prize-fighting. You will return with me to the school at once, and render an ex-

planation—which I think you will find rather difficult—to Dr. Holmes!"

Realising that defiance would only serve to make bad worse, Kildare bowed his head to the inevitable, and went.

CHAPTER 11.

True to the Last!

DR. HOLMES was surprised to receive a late call that evening. He was about to put away his papers and retire for the night, when the sound of footsteps came to his ears, and he waited.

The door was thrown open, and Mr. Ratcliff came in, looking like a gasbag about to burst.

Kildare followed the Housemaster into the study, very pale, but with firm tread and shoulders squared.

The Head glanced inquiringly at both.

"Well, Mr. Ratcliff?" he said.

"I have come, sir," said the New House master, "to report the most unseemly and disgusting conduct of Kildare." From information received—

"There is no need to adopt the language of the police," said the Head dryly.

"Ahem! I—I proceeded into Wayland this evening," said Mr. Ratcliff desperately, "and came upon a most revolting scene, from which I shrank horrified!"

"I trust," said the Head, "you have not been drinking, Kildare?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"He behaved," spluttered Mr. Ratcliff, "in a manner at which even a person under the influence of drink would have drawn the line. In short, he was indulging in a—a prize-fight, for money!"

The Head looked grave. He didn't like the sound of Mr. Ratcliff's story.

"Is that correct, Kildare?" he asked.

"In a sense, yes, sir."

"When were you fighting, and for what amount?"

"I accepted a challenge given by the Cockney Kid, and won fifty pounds sir." Dr. Holmes looked angry.

"Kildare?"

"Didn't think I was doing wrong, sir."

"Didn't think! No, that is the pity of it. Had you stopped to think, you would have realized the stigma you were bringing upon your school by such an action."

"I didn't shame the school, sir. I fought under an assumed name."

"Bless my soul! The affair grows worse and worse!"

"Moreover," cut in Mr. Ratcliff, who could never be silent long, "when ordered to desist from such a bestial exhibition, he took no notice whatever. He has outraged every law of decent conduct."

"No," compelled reluctantly, I must confess to agree with you, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head. "After what has happened, Kildare, I must request you to resign the captaincy. It grieves me to think that you could stoop so low as to compete in the prize-ring for money. I am not empowered to take the fifty pounds from you. You have won the money fairly enough, beyond doubt; but I shall take steps to see that there is no recurrence of this sort of thing!"

Kildare's lip trembled, in spite of himself.

So it meant losing the captaincy! He would rather have had almost any thing happen than that. He had found his duties thankless enough at times, but he was naturally proud of his position. And he had never realized how deep was his liking for it until now. Should he tell the Head about Monteith, and explain that he had put the Cockney Kid to rout solely for the sake of getting his fellow-prefect out of disgrace?

He did this he would clear himself, and the Head, knowing he had acted worthily and honourably, would undoubtedly rescind his punishment.

But it would be bad for Monteith, who would be called upon to explain away his debt—a task which he would scarcely be able to fulfil to the Head's satisfaction.

"No," thought Kildare; "Monteith must be kept out of this, at all costs."

"You have nothing to say, Kildare?" said Dr. Holmes.

"Nothing at all, sir."

"Very well. I have told you what form your punishment is to take. Your authority as the captain of this school ceases forthwith."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes danced with triumph, and he rustled out of the Head's study, feeling like a detective who had pursued his quest to a successful end.

Kildare followed more slowly, and proceeded to bed.

But it was a long, long time before sleep visited his eyes that night. Fate's latest sword-thrust had wounded him sorely.

Next morning after breakfast he strolled over to the New House, and sought out Monteith.

He found the New House prefect engaged in a lively altercation with a man whose face was not unfamiliar.

It was the Sniper.

"Thirty quid down," that gentleman was saying, "or you'll be shown up right now! I've given you quite enough rope!"

Kildare walked calmly up to the table, upon which he deposited a bundle of Treasury notes.

"There you are, you scoundrel!" he said. "Count them, and clear out!"

The Sniper stood thunderstruck. But THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 493.

he was a man who had not lived on his wits twenty years for nothing, and his first impulse was to snatch up the bundle of notes before Kildare had time to change his mind.

"One minute, please!" said the late captain. "I want your receipt for that amount, together with a promise never to molest Monteith again."

The Sniper rather reluctantly wrote out what was necessary.

"And now," said Kildare, "you can take yourself off! I've given you one thrashing, and am feeling a bit too sick to repeat it just now; but if ever you cross my path in future, you'll know what to expect!"

The Sniper made a mental resolve that he would give St. Jim's a wide berth after this. Backing away discreetly, he vanished down the stairs.

Monteith, the perspiration standing out on his brow, turned to Kildare.

"That was a close call!" he said. "The fellow was on the point of exposing me. Kildare, I'm—I'm grateful, believe me! Only I—don't know how to express myself!"

"That's all serene, old chap," said Kildare.

"Fancy your licking the Cockney Kid!" continued Monteith. "It's wonderful!"

"There's a price to pay for it, all the same," said Kildare. "Ratty spotted me."

"What?"

"He's reported me, and I'm skipper of St. Jim's no longer. After what's happened, I must take a back seat. Won't Knox crow?"

Monteith looked dazed.

"But—do you mean to say that, in spite of all this, I'm safe?" he stammered.

"Safe as houses," said Kildare. "It wasn't likely that I was going to give you away."

There was a pause. Monteith looked Kildare squarely in the eyes.

"Look here, old man," he said huskily, "the sacrifice is too great! I can't have you suffer like this. It—it's not cricket!"

"If I were you," said Kildare, "I should lie low and say nothing more about it. You're clear now, and that's all that matters. As for me, I shall worry through somehow. The Head may come round in time."

"On the other hand, he may not," said Monteith. "No, old man. If I sit tight over this bizney, it's going to make things jolly hard for you."

"What shall you do, then?"

"Face the music," said Monteith. "I shall make a clean breast of everything. Hanged if I'm going to let you stand the racket!"

The words were many, and Monteith meant them, too. It was rotten luck, he reflected, that Ratty should have put in his ear at the last moment, and spoil everything; but Kildare must not suffer!

Whatever happened, the Head must know the truth. And Monteith, his mind firmly made up, swung out of the study, leaving Kildare gazing after him in wonder, and reflecting that there was more of the man in Monteith than he had ever suspected.

CHAPTER 12.

The Last Fight of All.

"MONTEITH! Here, old man! I want a word with you!"

The New House prefect was crossing the quad,

when, glancing back over his shoulder, he found himself halted by Knox.

The latter had kept well in the back-

ground of late. He wanted no more lickings from Kildare. But his determination to do the ex-captain an injury had not wavered.

"Can't stop!" said Monteith briefly.

"But you must! I've something awfully important to speak to you about!"

Monteith gave in.

"Come along to my study," said Knox. "We sha'n't be overheard there."

Monteith accompanied the cad of the Sixth to his study. On arrival, Knox handed a cigarette-case to his guest.

"No, thanks!" said Monteith drily.

Knox looked surprised. He had not regarded Monteith's reform as permanent.

"Well, if you won't, you won't!" he said resignedly, lighting a cigarette himself. "Look here. I want to speak to you about Kildare. You've never had much affection for him, I believe?"

"Not a great deal," admitted Monteith.

"Good! Then I know you'll agree to my wheeze. It'll be a good thing for you, too."

"Let's hear it," said Monteith.

Knox cleared his throat.

"Last night," he said, "Kildare ran into the arms of Ratty, after he'd been boxing for that fifty quid. From what I can gather, the Head was in an awful stew about it. He's sacked Kildare from the captaincy!"

"That's so," said Monteith.

He wondered what Knox was driving at.

"I know very well why Kildare wanted that money," Knox went on. "It was to get you out of your scrape—what?"

Monteith nodded.

"Well, that makes things deuced awkward! He'll probably tell the Head the why and wherefore—if he hasn't done so already—and you'll be sent for, and convicted of going on the razzle!"

"Kildare says he hasn't breathed a word to the Head!"

Knox laughed scornfully.

"D'you mean to say you're mug enough to swallow a yarn like that?" he exclaimed. "You can bet your bottom dollar he told the Head everything, if he was given an opening. As I said before, the position's very ugly for you—and for me. I shall be landed on the carpet as well!"

"In that case, what do you intend doing?"

"Ah," said Knox, "that's where we score! I happened to meet Kildare in the streets of Wayland the other night, and we can kid the Head that he was pub-haunting!"

"Can we," by Jove?" muttered Monteith, clenching and unclenching his hands.

"Rather!" continued Knox, failing to observe the storm-clouds that were gathering on his companion's brow.

We can represent that Kildare was the chap who got badly into debt, and that he fought the Cockney Kid in order to be able to get square. It's quite a feasible yarn, and the Head will take it all in for a cert, especially if I bribe the Sniper to back up our statements. I wouldn't go out of my way to do any chap an injury," added Knox piously, "unless I had a special down on him, and Kildare comes under that heading!"

"Go on," said Monteith.

"To wind up," said Knox eagerly, "any suspicion against either or both of us will be washed out, and Kildare will get it in the neck. Those in favour show their hands!" concluded Knox, with a malicious grin.

Monteith had come to the end of his tether. He had known Knox for a spondrel and a blackguard, but had not

cleared him capable of descending to such depths as these.

"Shoot your fist up if you agree to my suggestion!" said Knox humorously. Monteith obeyed, but not quite in the way Knox had intended.

Out shot his left, straight from the shoulder, and Knox was sent reeling into the fireplace.

He picked himself up, dazed and stupefied; and Monteith, whose long-suppressed passion was now overflowing, struck out at him again.

"Come on!" he roared. "Stand up and take your gruel! You've got to have it in any case!"

"Monteith, you're mad!"

"Mad? Yes, I am!" blazed Monteith. "D'you think I could join you in a dirty, despicable scheme like that? Never!"

Knox saw that he had acted far too hastily. He had jumped to the conclusion that Monteith's recent reformation was a mere flash in the pan; but the New House prefect was already engaged in giving the lie to this theory.

Knox made a stand against the hurricane of blows that rained upon him. Whether he faced them or fumbled them, he had to have them.

For three minutes Knox endured heavy punishment; then his courage failed him altogether, and he began to squirm.

"Drop it!" he whined. "I've had enough!"

"That's for me to decide!" panted Monteith.

He drove in his right relentlessly, and Knox descended with a bump and a crash on the floor of the study. All the fight was knocked out of him.

"You'd better understand, Knox," he said, drawing back, "that Kildare's worth to be slandered again! Why, he's worth fifty of such scum as you! Whoever comes off badly over this business, it won't be Kildare. I'm going to tell the Head everything!"

"You fool!" It means instant expulsion," snarled the battered Knox.

"I don't care what it means. It's playing the game, anyway!"

"You'll get me mixed up in it, too, I suppose," groaned Knox. "You'll tell the Head we went on the tazzle together?"

"I shall tell him nothing of the sort. If he makes any discoveries, it won't be through me. Set your mind at rest on that score. I don't think there's anything else I want to say to you except this—never invite me to go on the spree with you again! If you do, I shall give you a plain answer—with my fist!"

And Monteith strode out of the study, slamming the door furiously behind him.

CHAPTER 13.

All Square!

MONTEITH proceeded to the nearest bath-room to remove all traces of the recent combat, and to make himself in a presentable state to meet the Head.

He had not wavered from his resolution. He must do the right thing by Kildare. The deposed captain had been wronged—unfairly, perhaps, but he had been wronged, all the same; and he must be reinstated in his old position, whatever the consequences to Monteith himself.

Reasoning thus, Monteith sponged his heated face, and proceeded to towel himself vigorously. This done, he strode away to meet—as he imagined—his doom.

For it was scarcely likely that the Head would overlook the magnitude of his offence. He might be spared the extreme penalty of expulsion, but he

would no longer be head of his House, or even a prefect.

"Come in!" said the Head, in response to his knock. "Ah! You wish to speak to me, Monteith?"

"Yes, sir."

The senior took his stand in front of the Head's table, pale but resolute.

"It's about Kildare, sir," he went on. "I understand you have taken the captaincy of the school from him because of what happened last night?"

"That is so."

"Well, I—I've come to set things right, sir. I'm responsible for the whole beauty business! Kildare didn't take up that fifty-pound challenge on his own account, sir. It was for me he did it!"

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"I do not understand—" he began.

"I'll tell you the whole story, sir. I'd been going the pace—breaking bounds, and gambling, and all that—and I ran up a debt of thirty pounds at the Horse and Dragon, in Wayland. I told Kildare, and he promised to help me out. This was the only chance he had of doing so. Mr. Ratcliff bowled him out last night, and reported him; and, like the sportsman he is, he didn't tell you that he had been sacrificing himself for the sake of another!"

"This is an amazing confession, Monteith! I did not imagine for one moment that you were guilty of frequenting public-houses!"

"I'm not, sir, as a general rule," replied Monteith truthfully. "But I—I went wrong, and then the crash came. I felt that I couldn't let you go on believing Kildare so far in the wrong!"

There was a long pause. The Head, glancing at the pale face before him, saw that Monteith was sincere.

"I will consider what is best to be done in the matter, Monteith," he said, at length. "But for the fact that your record has hitherto been clean, I should expel you. Before deciding upon your punishment, however, I will see Kildare."

The Head pressed the bell, and the page appeared. He was sent at once in search of the ex-captain.

Within five minutes Kildare appeared.

"Monteith has come to me with a most remarkable story, Kildare," said Dr. Holmes. "He tells me that your appearance in the prize-ring was made solely on his behalf, and without any thought of personal gain. It seems that he has been getting into serious debt, and that you took his burden upon your own shoulders. Is this correct?"

"It is, sir. But Monteith, in his zeal to confess the facts, has left out just one thing."

"And what is that?"

"That he saved my life, under very gallant circumstances, a fortnight ago."

And then Kildare proceeded to give a graphic account of the incident on the railway-embankment.

"I see," said the Head quietly, when Kildare had finished. "That alters the whole complexion of things. I was about to punish Monteith severely, but now that he has done as he should, and the fact that he has come to me with a voluntary confession, I shall let the matter drop entirely."

Monteith's eyes were shining.

"Do you mean to say, sir—" he began.

"That you are acquitted, Monteith? Precisely. I might add that I feel very proud of both of you. Each was anxious to do his best by the other, recking not of the consequences to himself; and that is the spirit for which England has cause to thank heaven to-day. Kildare, you will resume the captaincy, of which I should never have deprived you had I

known these facts in the first instance. That is all."

Kildare, his honest, ruddy face beaming, strode out of the study.

But Monteith lingered behind to make one observation.

It was this:

"You're a—a brick, sir!"

And so the clouds rolled by.

The Sixth Form was roused from the stagnant state into which it had fallen, and Kildare and Monteith became giants of the football field, as of old.

Perhaps two persons were slightly disappointed at the way things had panned out.

Knox would dearly have liked to see Kildare permanently deposed from his position; but Knox didn't count.

The only other person who felt any bitterness on the subject was Mr. Ratcliff, whose efforts to land Kildare into serious disgrace had somehow missed fire.

But Mr. Ratcliff didn't count, either; so happiness in full measure was restored to the mighty men of the Sixth.

And one day a visitor arrived for the captain of St. Jim's.

It was Jimmy Dale—in khaki. He had rejoined his old regiment, and was in a training camp at Winchester, prior to departing once more for the Western Front.

"I must be in at the death, you know," he explained to the delighted Kildare. "There's grim work ahead; but it's the last lap, to say my way of thinking. It is not one of your shallow optimists, but I very much doubt if the hungry Hun can hold out much longer. He prides himself that he's kept the world at bay for three years—but his number's up."

Kildare nodded.

"Jimmy, old sport," he said, "you must stop to tea. Our spreads are less lavish than in the old days, you know—the need for economy has found its way into St. Jim's—but what we lack in grub we'll make up for in good fellowship—what?"

"That's the idea!" said Jimmy Dale heartily.

It was a particularly pleasant spread which took place in Kildare's study that evening; and the captain of St. Jim's did Tom Merry & Co. the very high honour of inviting them.

Monteith of the New House was of the merry party. The old healthy flush had returned to his cheeks, and the disposition which had caused so much misery and misunderstanding in the past was at an end.

And the toast, proposed with great heartiness by Tom Merry of the Shell, was brief, but emphatic.

"Here's to old Kildare, Kildare of the great heart, and long may he reign!"

Kildare, his handsome face flushed and radiant, rose from the seat of honour with a happy smile, overjoyed to realise that the storm-clouds were overpast, and that life at St. Jim's was to pursue the even tenor of its way!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's!—

"HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER!" by

Martin Clifford.)

NOTICES.

Cricket—Matches Wanted by:

HALSBURY JUNIORS.—15.16.—5-mile radius.—G. Juxon, 58, Halsbury Road, Kensington, Liverpool.

ABERDEEN.—15.—2½-mile radius. Also several players wanted.—Bert Carter, 80, Albion Road, Stoke Newington, N. 16.

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EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greyfriars Herald."

BEING KIND TO TAGGLES. By Dick Julian.

"No owicket for me!" Arthur Augustus spoke firmly. Blake and Herries and Digby stared at him.

"Ass!" said Blake, finding nothing else to say.

"Weally, Blake—"
"But we're playing the New House!" shouted Herries. "And we're all in the School House Eleven, chump!"

"I refuse to be called a chump, Hewies," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I am sorry I cannot play this afternoon, as, no doubt, it means wiskin' the match with the New House. But I have a patwotic duty to do."

"A which?" ejaculated Blake.

"A patwotic duty. Pway request Tom Mewwy to play Clive or somebody in my place."

"And what are you going to do?" demanded Blake. "Are you dropping in at Whitehall to explain to them how to run the country in war-time?"

"As a matter of fact, Blake, I considah that I could give them some very good advice at Whitehall. I am not at all satisfied with the way the country is bein' run," said Arthur Augustus, unperturbed. "However, that is not my intention. I am goin' to work on Taggles' potato-ground."

"My hat!"

"Our respected portah has been called away this afternoon," explained Arthur Augustus. "His nephew is goin' back to the Front, and Taggles is goin' to see him off. In fact, he has gone. Taggles was goin' to hoe up his potatoes this afternoon, and I heard him wemarkin' that he weally did not know when he would be able to get that job done aftah all. I am goin' to wathah surpwise Taggles." Arthur Augustus noble face beamed with benevolence. "I am goin' to hoe up his potatoes while he is gone."

"There'll be rather a surprise for you if Taggles comes home and finds you messin' about with his potatoes," grunted Herries.

"Wats! Taggles will be very glad to find his work done for him while he is gone. He does not like work very much."

"Well, that's so," grinned Blake. "Nice way to spend a half-holiday—"

"Patwotic, deah boy."

"But do you know how to hoe up potatoes?" inquired Digby.

"Wats! I suppose anybody can hoe up potatoes?"

"Well, anybody but you," agreed Dig. "I weseuse to weply to that wemark, Dig. I regard it as dispa'wagin'!"

"You fellow rotators!" shouted Tom Merry across the quadrangle.

"We're coming!" Blake and Herries and Dig joined Tom Merry, and they proceeded to the potato-ground. D'Arcy followed them with his eyeglasses, rather regretfully. He wanted to play cricket that sunny afternoon. It was no light sacrifice to stand out of the House match.

But Arthur Augustus had made up his mind. He retired into the School House to change into his oldest clothes. He was willing to sacrifice his half-holiday, but there was no need to sacrifice his elegant elover in addition. He came out again, and went to the tool-shed for a hoe. He paused there, and regarded the assortment of agricultural implements with a thoughtful eye.

What Gussy doesn't know about gardening would have filled immense volumes. But so simple an operation as hoeing up potatoes did not seem difficult, even to his innocent mind.

"I presume I had better take a hoe," he murmured. "I wathah think the work could be done more easily with a garden fork. But as they call it 'hoen' up, I suppose I had better use a hoe. Better to do it in the professional way."

And he picked up a hoe and marched off to work it. He saw Mr. Raitton, our Housemaster, as he headed for the vegetable-garden.

"Ah! You are not playing cricket this afternoon, D'Arcy?" said Mr. Raitton, as he passed.

"The fact is, sir, I am goin' to hoe up Taggles' potatoes for him while he is away this afternoon," confided Arthur Augustus.

"I think Taggles will be wathah pleased, sir."

"I have no doubt he will be," said the Housemaster, with a smile. "A very kind and generous thought, my boy."

Arthur Augustus went on his way, greatly pleased by the Housemaster's commendation. It was all he needed to reconcile him to the sacrifice of cricket for the afternoon.

He arrived on the potato-ground belonging to Taggles, which was some distance from our allotments. It was an extensive piece of ground, and Taggles had put a great deal of work into it. Arthur Augustus looked over it, and sighed a little. He had a good afternoon's work before him if he was going to hoe up all those potatoes.

However, he is an industrious youth, and he picked in.

He drove the hoe into the ground, jerked up a potato-plant bodily, and pitched it aside. Mellish came sauntering by while he was so engaged, and stopped to look on.

"Ha, ha!" roared Mellish. "What a game!"

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"This is not a game, Mellish. I am workin' 'em up. I have some distance from our allotments. It was an extensive piece of ground, and Taggles had put a great deal of work into it. Arthur Augustus looked over it, and sighed a little. He had a good afternoon's work before him if he was going to hoe up all those potatoes."

"I am hoen' them up, Mellish!"

"You're wath' gasped Mellish.

"Yes, I suppose so. There can be only one way of hoen' up potatoes," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I presume that you shove the hoe undah the potato and hoe it up."

Mellish nearly collapsed. Because, you see, that is not the way to hoe up potatoes at all. Hoeng up means the sort of banking up of the rows that has to be done at a certain stage by everybody but Gussy knows!

"Go it!" he gasped. "Go it! Taggles will be pleased!"

"That is my object, Mellish!"

And Arthur Augustus resumed his labours. Mellish staggered away in a state dangerously near hysterics.

From the distant cricket-field Arthur Augustus could hear the shouts of the juniors. But he did not heed.

He kept his attention firmly fixed upon the work in hand.

Row after row of potatoes was hoed up upon the new and original method that seemed to Arthur Augustus the most natural proceeding in the world. It was borne in upon his mind that the garden fork would have been much more useful for the purpose. But he stuck to the hoe. He knew it must be the right implement to use for hoeing up, and he was patient.

It was a warm afternoon, and Arthur Augustus perspired, with a crimson face, as he laboured up and down row after row.

The dusk was falling when he finished.

With great relief he donned his jacket, put the hoe over his shoulder, and quitted the potato-ground, feeling quite like a manly agricultural labourer returning home after a good day's work.

"Hallo! Finished?" asked Blake, meeting him in the quad.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat! You must have worked!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I wathah piled in, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I t'wust you have beaten the New House, deah boy?"

"Five runs," said Tom. "Thanks for standing out, old chap!"

"Hi, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, and he marched away with his hoe.

Then he repaired to the dormitory for a cold bath and a change of clothes. He came downstairs tired, but in a very satisfied mood. The patriotic swell of St. Jim's felt that he deserved well of his country.

"Bai Jove! Taggles!" he ejaculated. Taggles rushed into the School House. He looked wildly excited.

Arthur Augustus was about to speak to him, to tell him of the pleasant surprise awaiting him on the potato-patch. But the porter rushed past him, and knocked at Mr. Raitton's door, and went, gasping, in.

"Bai Jove! Taggy seems excited!" remarked Arthur Augustus, in wonder.

Taggles was excited; there was no doubt about that. He was crimson and gasping as he trudged into Mr. Raitton's study.

The Housemaster jumped up.

"Taggles!" he exclaimed sternly.

"The young rips—young Uns—young sweeps!" stuttered Taggles incoherently.

"Taggles, if you have been drinking—"

"My 'taters!' roared Taggles.

"What?"

"'Taters! 'Taters!" shrieked Taggles.

"All my taters!"

"Calm yourself, Taggles! That is not the way to enter my study," said Mr. Raitton severely. "Has anything happened to your potatoes?"

"The young rips— Oh, lor! It's one of their games!" gasped Taggles. "All my taters up! Oh, crickey! I want 'em flogged, sir, and I want payin' for my 'taters! The ole bloomin'! My heave!"

"Has anyone damaged your potatoes, Taggles?"

"Hev'ry one of 'em rooted up and chucked about the place!" roared Taggles.

"Bibas my soul! The perpetrator of such a trick shall be severely punished!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "But who—?" He paused, and stepped to the door. "D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Step into my study, please!"

"Certainly, sir!"

The swell of St. Jim's came in cheerfully. He had an idea that it was about to receive Taggles' thanks. Taggles, however, did not look very thankful.

The Housemaster fixed his eyes sternly upon the young man.

"Have you played any tricks with Taggles' vegetables, D'Arcy?"

"Twicks! Certainly not, sir!"

"I met you this afternoon in the quadrangle, and you stated that you were going to hoe up the potatoes for Taggles."

"Yaas, sir. Pway don't thank me, Taggles," added Arthur Augustus benevolently. "I am very pleased to help you in the patwotic duty of lookin' aftah vegetables and things. I will hoe up your onions and scarlet-wunnahs for you, if you like, on another half-holiday."

"A M, heave!"

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Raitton. "Taggles declares that his potatoes have been rooted up from the ground, D'Arcy!"

"Not rooted up, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile. "Hoed up, sir."

"Rooted up and ruined!" roared Taggles. "Turned right out of the ground in 'caps of 'em!"

Mr. Raitton started a little.

"D'Arcy, have you ever hoed up potatoes before?"

"O no, sir!"

"Did you go the right way to work?"

"I presume so, sir. It is quite simple."

"What did you do?"

GREYFRIARS AT THE FRONT.

(Quite Imaginary.)

[In response to an invitation in these pages, several readers have written short imaginary accounts of what might happen if our readers were old enough to be at the Front or if our school had been situated near Helms, providing the fellows behaved in the same fashion that they do at school. Personally speaking, however, I imagine that they would rise to the occasion, one and all, like men; and therefore these paragraphs must not be taken too seriously.—E.B.T.]

I.—BUNTER BAGS A BOCHE.

By Bob Cherry.

THE Germans were retreating—"according to plan," of course; only it happened to be our plan instead of theirs.

Private William George Bunter was well in the front of the victorious army. He had seen some Germans running, had taken them for some of our fellows, and thought that he had better follow.

Thus Bunter found himself marching at the head of our victorious columns.

Of course it was a mistake that he was so far ahead, and he was just remarking to Private Harry Wharton that he thought the Headquarters Staff should recall him.

"The Huns will want to capture me," he said. "They know that I am the brains of the British Army. They—"

"Get on!" said Harry. "You will make a lousy shield for half a dozen good men to come up behind."

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Bunter protested, and then stopped.

The Germans were advancing. Our boys need did not care for him, however. Our boys soon drove them back, and it was then found that Bunter was missing.

"Anyone seen Billy?" asked Wharton in concern.

Someone laughed. "I haven't seen him," a fellow explained.

"I saw a cloud of dust receding into the distance just now, though. Perhaps that was Bunter."

And, as a matter of fact, it was Bunter. Not, of course, that Bunter had faked it. He had just remembered a very pressing engagement with a gentleman who was going to cash a postal-order for him.

Now, it so happened that Bunter, being the soul of punctuality, ran very hard, and, by some means, missed our fellows, and went scudding off in the direction of the Huns.

He did not realise this until he saw a chap in front of him jump out of a shell-hole and race away.

Bunter, being short-sighted, followed, thinking that it was the obliging gentleman who was going to cash the postal-order for him.

As for the Hun in front, he continued to run like old boots, naturally imagining that he had a particularly giant hero chasing him. And it was not until he got caught in some barbed wire that he rolled over, and, as soon as comfort would allow him, held up his hands.

"Kamerad!" he shouted.

Bunter, puffing and blowing, came up, and looked at his hands.

"Oh, really!" he shouted. "Where's that money?"

The Hun looked up pleadingly.

"Kamerad!" he said, a little louder.

"Don't want any bad language!" said Bunter severely. "You've cheated me! I expect you've pinched my postal-order, and now you want to swindle me! I'll take you before the court!"

He caught the hold of the Boche, and lugged him out of the barbed wire and marched him back.

And that was how Bunter bagged his Boche.

Look Out for

"THE TRAGEDY OF THE TOPPER!"

In Next Week's Issue.

II.—THE OBEDIENCE OF LONZY.

By Tom Dutton.

THEY are very sarcastic in the Army. And that was why Alonzo Todd, private in the Royal Engineers, was the cause of the corporal and the sorrow of the sergeant.

Sapper Todd always took people at their word. He saw no reason to prevent him eating coke, if the sergeant told him to, until he discovered that his teeth were not up to the job.

And on that particular day Lonzy had been specially annoying to his superiors and elders. Not that he intended it; but he took things too literally.

The Engineers had a little job to do, but could not do it owing to the fire of a concealed machine-gun, which had picked off their numbers every time they ventured into the open. And that in itself was exasperating.

So there was some excuse when the sergeant lost his temper in the wise, said he: "I'll be hanged if I go out there again in the daylight!"

And Lonzy said: "Excellent, sergeant, but don't you mean you'll be shot?"

The sergeant turned round with a withering frown.

"If you want," he said, "is sense! This is no time for joking!"

"I wasn't joking," said Lonzy.

"Go," said the sergeant imperatively, "and chew small shrapnel!"

Lonzy went.

He came back in ten minutes.

"Please, sergeant," he said, "there is no small shrapnel to chew."

There followed an ominous pause. Darkness was closing in, and that was just as well. Lonzy might have had a particularly severe fit if he had seen the sergeant's face.

"Look here, me son!" said Stripes at length. "You're here for use, not to be funny or for ornament. Dashed fine ornament you'd make, I don't think!"

"The how can I be useful?" asked Lonzy meekly.

The sergeant was distinctly heard to say the "Hang me heliotrope!" or something like that.

"Oh, go out and fetch me that machine-gun!" he said. "The Huns would never shoot you. They'd think you were the blessed ambassador of the Eskimos arrove to signify that your little lot had decided to come in on their side."

"Would they really?" asked Lonzy.

A little later it was discovered that he was missing. And after some inquiries had been made, the sergeant began to look concerned.

"I hope," he said, "that that youngster hasn't taken me at my word."

"Another hour passed, and then suddenly someone called out:

"Here comes Todd!"

Lonzy it was—Lonzy with the Hun machine-gun.

"Where on earth did you get that?" demanded the sergeant.

"You told me to get it," said Lonzy meekly. "I hope I did right." I spotted where it was and went straight up. I didn't have time to tell the fellows that I was an Eskimo. They ran as soon as they spotted me near. So I just carried it in."

The sergeant rubbed his eyebrows.

"Oh, jiminy!" he said.

"They must have thought he was leading a blessed division," said Corporal Curruthers, so they were off to bed.

Lonzy always was an obedient sort of chap. But would anyone ever have guessed that he was to become a giddy hero simply through doing as he was told?

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"Hoed them up, sir," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "My own opinion is that a garden fork would be handiah for the purpose, but I did it all with the hoe, sir, in the wopwah mannah. I simply dwove the hoe undah the plank, sir, and hoed it wight out of the ground. I did it vey thoroughly, sir."

"You hoed the potatoes out of the ground?" almost shouted Mr. Railton.

"Certainly, sir, Hoecin' them up, you know."

"My 'taters!' moaned Taggles. "Spiled the lot of 'em! That young varmint will save to pay for them 'taters, sir."

"I am surprised at your callin' me names, Taggles, aftah I have hoed up your potatoes for you!"

"You 'ovrid' young villain!"

"Mr. Railton picked up his cane.

"D'Arcy, I accept your assurance that you intended to do Taggles a service, and failed only from your ignorance of gardening work and crass stupidity—"

"Wha-a-ah!"

"But you must not give your ignorance free play on things so important to the national welfare as vegetables. You will be required to pay Taggles the value of the potatoes you have rooted up, and I shall cane you—"

"Kik-kik-cane me!" stutered Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. Hold out your hand!"

"Bai Jove!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Oh, swubnah! Ywooch! Gwooch!"

"You may go, D'Arcy. The bill for the potatoes will be sent to your father."

"Oh, deah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fairly limped from the writing, wringing his hands.

"Hallo! Liked?" exclaimed Blake.

"Gwooch! Yaas!"

"What have you been doing?" asked Tom Merritt.

"A patwiotic duty!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Isn't it patwiotic to help with vegetable-growin'?"

"I suppose Railton hasn't licked you for that?"

"Yaas, watah! Ow-wow!" Arthur Augustus squeezed his hands under his arms.

"That newswah tiah again has been complaining about my hoecin' up his potatoes—ow! I thought he would be pleased—gwooch! I hoed them up in the most thorough-goin' mannah—wight out of the ground—"

"What?" yelled the three in chorus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwooch! I was goin' to hoe up Taggles' scarlet-wannabs and onions for him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bun, bun, bun!" I shall refuse to lend a hand on Taggles' potato-growin' again undah any cires whatever. I wogard Taggles' gwooch—as an ungrateful beast! What are you laughin' at, you asses?"

But the three did not explain what they were laughing at. They couldn't; they were in hysterics.

THE END.

My Comic Column.

By MONTY LUTHER.

A copper scarcity is threatened. This is what comes of combining out the constabulary.

A dog-hater informs the newspapers that one dog has been passed a dog that consumed enough food for a man. Figgins says that that dog at the same moment was passing a worm who consumed enough food for a man. Figgins proposes abolishing the worm instead of the dog.

The famine in Germany is a little odd, considering that the Huns have bred and mustered on so large a scale. Besides, there's the sand which is common in Prussia. (Must explain again? "Sandwiches"—got it this time?)

Rations in clothes and boots are now proposed. This will please those who have always been in favour of rational dress.

The Austrian attack in the Alps has been stopped by the snow. The Hun generals appear to have decided that it's snow good. However, the attempt must have been an ice experience.

It must not be supposed that the Huns on the Western Front are played out. There is plenty of "go" in them!

JOHNNY GOGGS AT ST. JIM'S.

BY CLIFTON DANE.

GOGGS of Frankingham is the rummiest old stick I ever struck.

Of course, I know that it's usually a stick that strikes you—and serve you jolly well right for putting like that! But if you don't understand what I mean, you are as wooden-headed as Grundy. I can't say more. And if I could I wouldn't. It would be too rough on any child to say that he was wooden-headed than Grundy. Regular old bent of oak, Grundy; but it's a pity they went on to make his alleged dome of thought of the same material!

I ran against Goggs one hot day. He and three chums of his—Blount and Trickett and Waters—were staying at one place, and I was staying at another, a mile or two away. There was a cricket-match. Goggs looked like a duck-begg merchant all over. But there seemed to be some mistake, for the beggar got a century without giving a single chance, and we were licked to the wide.

Goggs and I rather chummy after that. Things happened about which I may tell you another time. All four of those Frankingham fellows are the right sort; but as for Goggs, he is a blessed knock-out!

He looks a bit like Skimmy, and does everything as well as Tom Merry or Talbot, and some things a bit better.

He talks in the politest way imaginable, and he is as full of fun and mischief as a fellow can be.

I was no end pleased when he wrote to me to say that Frankingham broke up a day or two earlier than most of the schools, that he was going down to Brighton to meet his grandmother, but he could not be there quite as soon as Goggs was getting away, and that if he could he would be chummy after that to spend a brief portion of time with me at St. Jim's.

Goggs called his grandmother "he." I thought he meant either "she" or "his" grandmother. But he did not mean either. Goggs' "grandmother" is really a particularly betsy-looking uncle, and no end of a smart detective. The "grandmother" business was an old joke at Frankingham.

Kanzoroo and Glyn knew about Goggs. I had told them. But if anyone else had heard me say anything, they would be pretty sure to have forgotten it by this time.

It was only time to write Goggs that it was all fixed up, and I should be no end pleased to have him. Mr. Railton made no difficulty about it, and there happened to be a vacant bed in the Shel dormitory, as I had been known by what train he was coming I should have met him, of course. But I heard nothing, and so it happened that he met other St. Jim's fellows before he saw me.

Crooke and Mellish were the first he ran against.

He came out of the station, and looked about him in a meditative way. Mellish nudged Crooke.

As Mr. Wells says, you picture Johnny Goggs in his blue goggles—which were a swindle—when he was first met for him to wear them—with his sparrow legs—ever so thin they are, but all muscle and sinew—and the meek smile on his plain face. Even if he had been a bird, he would have had been as good a hand as grandmothers generally are at persuading themselves their offspring's offspring are IT—well, she couldn't have called Goggs beautiful without feeling pious in her conscience.

You may also picture Crooke and Mellish if you like. But I don't think they are worth the trouble; and, anyway, you fellows know all I want to say about Crooke and Mellish—perhaps a bit more.

Those two look Johnny for a very soft proposition in the humanity line. And Crooke was just going to speak to him when he spoke to Crooke.

"Pardon me, but will you have the kindness to inform a stranger to this neighbourhood in which direction St. Jim's lies?" asked Goggs.

"That's the way," said Crooke, nudging Mellish.

Mellish giggled.

Crooke pointed out the wrong way; but Goggs did not thank him.

"They thought he would, of course. How should they doubt it? He looked capable of swallowing anything."

But he turned the right way.

"Hi!" yelled Crooke.

Goggs stopped dead, and peered around him in a puzzled, short-sighted manner.

"Hi, you!" yelled Crooke again.

"Did you address me?" asked Goggs mildly.

The two sweet specimens were hurrying towards him now.

"Of course I did. What d'ye think?" said Crooke rudely.

There is a good deal of the bully in Crooke, and it was aroused by the extremely inoffensive look of Goggs.

"It is not likely that you would waste further politeness upon so humble a person as myself," Goggs replied.

"That sounded like sarcasm; and if there is one thing Crooke hates worse than being decent, it is having anyone sling sarcasm at him."

"Look here, you'd better be careful!" said Crooke.

"Oh, I trust that I am! My dear grandmother has always impressed upon me the necessity of being careful. Do you really think it is going to rain? If so, I will take my raincoat out of my bag. I have a raincoat, you know, though I have been so inadvertent as to leave behind me both my umbrella and my goloshes!"

"It's softer than Skimmy!" whispered Mellish to Crooke.

"That's no language! Do you think I'm going to put up with cheek from a worm like you?" snarled Crooke.

"You may think you're getting at me—"

"Far be it from me!" said Goggs. "Is it possible you imagine I could be cheeky to you?"

He was as meek as ever; but somehow Crooke got the notion that he meant to assert superiority, such as would make it impossible for anything he said to Crooke to be checked, and Crooke didn't like it.

"You asked me, which was the way to St. Jim's," Crooke said, in most unpleasant tones.

"That is correct."

"And I told you the way!"

Crooke pointed out the direction he had indicated.

"But that is incorrect," replied Goggs mildly.

"Oh?"

"Your knowledge of the locality may be limited, but I do not think that is the explanation."

"You said, 'Where does St. Jim's lie?'"

"Those were not the exact terms of my question. But even had they been, I should not have intended to ask you to mistake yourself for St. Jim's!"

Mellish sniggered. He had got on to Goggs' meaning. Crooke hadn't.

"Eh? What do you mean? I am St. Jim's, come to that?"

"The bonder means you lied," whispered Mellish. "He turned you were trying to do him in the eye, so he turned the other way!"

Crooke had lied, of course, and it wouldn't have been very brains of the stranger, suspecting that, to act as though what he had said was true.

But Crooke was very rattled.

"Oh, no!" answered Goggs.

"You're making me out to be one, anyway!"

"Oh, no! I am doing that yourself. And do not think you are a—pre-parator. I know you to be one. To think anyone a—er—pre-parator implies a state of doubt on the subject which has no existence in my case."

Crooke seized Goggs by the collar. My

visitor was burdened by a bag; but even without it he would have looked like the sort of fellow Crooke could afford to treat in that way. If Crooke were not a slacker, he would have hit a beefy specimen.

"Such things happened."

The bag fell to the ground. That was nothing. But it was a good deal to Crooke when Crooke also came to the earth with a very distinct bump.

Lookers-on see most of the game, they say; but Mellish had not the slightest idea how it was done.

"Goggs didn't exert himself," he said afterwards. "He didn't even blow a trumpet. But Crooke went down just like the walls of Jericho!"

"Do for him, Mellish!" howled Crooke.

Some chaps might have hesitated after seeing that. Mellish had no hesitation whatever.

"No jolly fear, Crooke!" he said promptly.

Then, as it seemed from the station platform, a loud bass voice called:

"Crooke! Mellish!"

They did not recognise the voice, but it sounded like a master's.

"We're coming, sir!" sang out Mellish.

Goggs picked up his bag. Crooke and Mellish hurried off sulkily to obey that call.

But there was no one on the platform, and when they got outside again Goggs was a mere speck in the distance.

"My hat, that chap can foot it!" Mellish said.

"He's practically running—running away from me!" growled Crooke.

"Hanged if I see why he needs to!" answered Mellish.

"Yah! Didn't 'e put you down nice?" howled a butcher's boy who had watched the whole affair, and now rode swiftly past on his carriage bike.

Crooke could not get at the boy in blue, so he punched Mellish's head.

And, of course, Mellish spread the yarn as soon as he got back to the school.

II.

"NEW chap?" inquired Grundy awfully.

Gunn grinned, and Wilkins snorted.

Grundy really is rather lacking in observation, though he thinks he was cut out for a detective.

The other two were on to the fact that Goggs wore the colours of another school.

It also occurred to them that a couple of days before the end of term is about the very unlikeliest time for a new fellow to come along.

But Grundy noticed nothing, and nothing occurred to Grundy.

"I am certainly new here," replied Goggs meekly.

"H'm! You look a decent little boulder. What's your name?"

"Goggs—Johnny Goggs, if you please, sir."

"I don't exactly please. As a name I don't cotton to Goggs. Still, after all, it ain't your fault," said Grundy kindly.

"Better cut the Johnny out. That sort of sloop don't go here. And you needn't call me 'sir'."

"Oh! Are you not anyone of importance, then?" returned Goggs innocently. "My sily mistake; I'm always making them."

"I don't cotton to Grundy either. The Shell," answered our prize as majestically.

"Oh, yes, Grundy, of course—Grundy of the Shell!"

"You've heard of me? I'm the chap who was sacked from Kedgeyfe for whopping a prefect!"

"Cheese it, Grundy!" whispered Wilkins. Gunn and Wilkins do try to keep Grundy within bounds, but it's no go.

"Was it in the papers?" asked Goggs, in his meekest and mildest manner.

"No; they kept it out of the papers. It must have been somewhere else you heard of it. I dare say it's been talked about a good

deal. It's the sort of thing that wants doing at some other school. I know of one of our prefects here who wouldn't be any the worse for a whopping," said Grundy dully. "He had dropped on to be Baker a few minutes before."

"Gogs, I have heard it talked of," answered Gogs. "But I never expected to have the honour of zazing you up. Of course—cr—whopping prefects is not the kind of thing that can be done every day; but I have no doubt that the knowledge that you give upon them helps to keep them within limits."

Gogs had heard it talked of—by Grundy. And he had never expected it, and because he had never expected of Grundy till a minute or two before. Gogs don't like lies; but it's easy for a fellow with his talents to take chaps in without telling them. Grundy was no end pleased with him. A fancy he made up his mind on the spot—well, kind of adopt him.

To Grundy, Johnny Gogs was a weakly little chap who wanted taking care of. And Grundy has been called a bully, but he is not anything of the sort at heart, and I am sure that he felt just then a glow of pleasure at the thought of protecting the timid Johnny from trouble and bullies.

"What Form are you booked for? One of the fact Forms, of course. Fourth, perhaps?"

To Grundy an illimitable gulf separates Shell and Fourth. As a Shell fellow myself, I am compelled to admit that this is a difference. But they say that Grundy only in the Shell because he is too trumping big for the Fourth.

"Grundy? Wanted?"
"I'm not here. But it was not me. It was my voice because mine was the only voice at St. Jim's Gogs knew. It seemed to come from the direction of the School House. Grundy went off."

See you again later on, Gogs," he said affably.

"Gunn and Wilkins did not go."
"Look here, you aren't a new chap, and old Gunn. Now I don't desire to blow in at the end of term."

"Do they not? Pardon my ignorance. I have never been at St. Jim's before?"
"I can only give you the inside of it. And you were jolly well spoiling old Grundy, too," Wilkins said.

"I spoiling? The word sounds eminently appropriate, but I resist the idea. Dear me! I'm not sure that my venerated grand-mother was entirely right in her objection to anything bordering upon slang. There are three things—"

"He pursued, and looked so innocent and so sorry for himself that he took in those two as well. And Wilkins and Gunn, though no geniuses, take more taking in than their class."

"What are you doing here, anyhow?" asked Gunn.

"I have come to see my friend Dane."

"Oh! Are you from Canada?"
"Indeed, not. From Little Washout—er—what am I saying? I fear I grow confused. Canada? Is that abroad?"

"Are you sure that you didn't come from Britain, like old Wilkins?"
"I am hardly sure of anything. I have had a long journey, and long journeys are, I find, very disturbing to the intellect. Ah, here is Dane."

It wasn't no business to explain Gogs to other chaps, and I did not mind leaving Gunn and Wilkins puzzled.

"You see visitor Mr. Railton. Before he went into that gentleman's study Gogs carefully removed his word glasses."

"The difference I made in him was extraordinary. He was just like the same fellow. No one with my eyes who had the gaze of those bright blue eyes of his could have taken him to be soft."

Railton was quite pleased with him. I recall that he said—

"I'm going to ask some fellows to tea just to meet you, Gogs," I said when we came away.

"Noble—Kanaroo will call him—and Gogs will be there of course. They're the size of study, and are two of the best. I thought of Merry and Lowther and Manners—oh, and Talbot; and perhaps two or three others."

"I do not know those of whom you speak, Dane, but of course, like the size of study, at St. Jim's, but yourself. But there are three fellows I have met whom I should like to see to ask, if you do not mind. I am unaware of the names of them, but they are the friends of a hero named Grundy, who 'whopped'—his own expression—a prefect at some earlier school, from which he was in consequence removed," replied Gogs.

"Grundy, Gunn, and Wilkins?" I said.

"Gunn and Wilkins were the chaps you were talking to when I came up. Do you really want to see them?"

"I have already said so, Dane. Not, of course, that I would seek to influence your choice if it lies elsewhere."

"That's all right! But do you like Grundy? It occurs to me, because Gogs and Grundy are such totally different types."

"Yes, I think I may say that I like Grundy. And, like a student in my humble way of human nature, Dane, I find Grundy interesting."

"There was nothing about asking Grundy and Gunn to bar them. Tom Merry and the rest might wonder why they were asked; but they don't bar them either."

"They came readily enough. And old Grundy set first to Gogs, and talked to him most of the time. It was certainly a treat for Grundy. Common politeness kept us from sitting on him, as he was a visitor, and engaged in conversation with one who was also a student of the school."

"So Grundy had his chance, and took it. Probably not even Wilkins and Gunn had ever realised before what an out-and-out workaholic chap Grundy was. Certainly he had not. I am not sure that he did then. But it was to be denied that Grundy was some trumpeter."

"Gogs as green as he seems?" whispered Lowther to me. "If so the green barret is simply nowhere in the running with him."

"Oh, he ain't so wicked as that!" I replied. "But if I were you, I wouldn't put it all down to sheer innocence."

"But I was given to understand that our friend Merry is captain of the Form," we heard Gogs say, in a mildly depreciating manner.

"Well—yes, in a sense," replied Grundy. "I haven't much to say against Merry. He means well. But at critical times he needs what I might call a lead. And he ain't deep that I have been able to give him one, nor to take one."

Tom grinned. He can generally take Grundy as a joke.

"The talk turned upon Racke. Grundy turned it. Grundy led the conversation all through the tea, and as it was well-timed the tea was well enjoyed, as well there should be plenty of conversation."

"But the rest of us could have done with a little variety. We had endured Grundy's little variety. To Gogs, new to his charms, he might be priceless, but to us he was a horrible bore."

"Merry ain't firm enough with those chaps—that's my opinion," said Grundy.

"I don't see the reproachful look upon Tom, as who would say—"

"List now to the words of wisdom, and act upon them!"

"Tom only grinned. He knew that Kildare himself could not have lived up to Grundy's notions of firmness, and a mere Form captain would have got himself lynched if he had tried."

"Here's Racke, a war profesters' beastly cub, and seems to be proud of it," went on Grundy. "Look at all there's been in the papers about proffersterring lately! And yet he'll tell you that the same as ever, and Merry lets him?"

"You see, Grundy, I don't happen to be Mr. Lloyd George, or Lord Rhonda, or the Hon. Mr. Kildare," said Tom.

"Bah! That ain't good enough for me!" snorted Grundy. "Not half good enough!"

"And what would you do in Merry's place? Pardon me for asking, Merry," I, of course, cast no reflection upon you," said Gogs.

"Oh, I don't mind it! Follow!" said Tom cheerfully.

"You should jolly well stop it!"

"But how? As I see things, Merry really has no power in the matter of improper war profits."

"You ain't the profits. He can't stop them, of course, but he could stop Racke and Crooke and the rest of them playing the giddy o'!"

"Grundy's thinking—if any—never was too good to be in justice to him, that's a good well to say that he would have said what he did to Racke's face as freely as he criticised Tom Merry in Tom Merry's presence.

"You ain't the profits. He can't stop them, of course, but he could stop Racke and Crooke—I think I have met Crooke; not a pleasant person—play the giddy o'?"

"Gogs said 'giddy o' as if it cost him quite an effort to say it."

"Pub-haunting, smoking—all that sort of thing," replied Grundy.

"Indeed?"
"They were out last night, and everyone jolly well knows where they go?" went on Grundy, frowning severely upon Tom, and even more severely upon Lowther, who will persist in taking Grundy as a huge joke.

"I leave it up to you to hang themselves," growled Kanaroo. "They are safe to do it, only give them 'ope enough!"

"That's all very well for you! You're not contented with the 'arty' started Grundy?"

"I never heard that you were, either," said Kanaroo.

"Well, no; that's true enough," Grundy admitted. "But if I had my rights—And anyway I'm a fellow with the interest of the Form at heart, and I never think giving a lead when it isn't necessary."

"Or when it isn't," murmured Glyn. "Fools rush in where angels—"

"Are you calling me a fool, Lowther?" howled Grundy.

"My dear chap, no! How could you think of an angered Monty in shocked surprise. It was but a quotation."

"Well, if you didn't mean that I'm a fool, you must have meant that I'm an angel. And it tells you emphatically that's wrong?"

"I am in complete agreement with you on that point, Grundy," said Lowther.

"Oh, you're always talking out of the back of your silly head! Look here, I'm going to take a hand in it. I'm jolly well going to let this sort of thing go on—blessed if I do!" roared the great George Alfred, now thoroughly worked up.

"You can't fright Lowther, short of gagging him," remarked Talbot.

"And then he'd make funny sounds through the gag," said Manners.

"The way to win is against me!" moaned Lowther tragically. "Mine own family friends turn upon me, and even Grundy don't really love me!"

"Rot! I ain't talking about you," said Grundy in his largest manner. "You're nothing, Lowther. Nobody in his senses takes any notice of your rot."

"But that does not account for your taking no notice of me," said Lowther.

"Oh, ring off! What I mean to say is this: If those rotters go out again to-night I'll get them. I don't say I'll stop them from going to the dormitories to use, and Crooke's a noisy brute. But I'll after them, and you may bet all you like that I'll get them back without ever seeing the Green Man."

"The green Man?" inquired Gogs. "Is that—er—a public-house?"

"Veg—and a jolly low one!" snarped the great George Alfred.

"Excuse me, Grundy, but would you seriously consider that the adjectives 'jolly' and 'low' can be properly used in conjunction with the name of a public-house?"

"Grundy gave him quite curious looks.

"Never mind about that," he said. "I'm going to attend to those rotters, and I don't mind what you think of it."

"I wouldn't bother if I were you, Grundy," said Tom.

"Yes, you would? You wouldn't bother as you're yourself; but that's quite another pair of feet." said Talbot.

"Then he looked round for applause. For old Grundy that was quite a good repartee.

"He meant what he said, of course. What ever did you have to say that may be—plenty of them, too!—he is in dead earnest about things."

"But we didn't take much notice of it. We had seen a hand in Tom's Form at this time before, and we had no notion of Gogs taking a hand, let alone of all that his taking a hand might mean."

"It was to mean a lot—quite a lot!"
"Do you give credit, Gogs?" asked Tom. "A little, Merry—at least, I try to play. Why?"

"Kildare's getting a scratch team together to play the same sort of game at his House tomorrow, and I dare say he could find a place for you."

"I should like it extremely," said Gogs. "All right, I'll fix it for you," Tom answered.

"It was jolly good of him. But I wondered whether he might not find himself realising that he had got Gogs on the wrong side before he had finished."

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This is not exactly a serial; but there is a good deal to tell about Gogs' visit to St. Jim's, short as it was, and I may have to let Dane carry it on for two or three more instalments yet.]

THE MISSING MARGARINE.

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes.

By PETER TODD.

I WAS returning from the funeral of one of my patients when I met Herlock Sholmes on the steps of our house in Shaker Street.

"Just in time, my dear Jotson!" he exclaimed. "Come!"

"I have not had my lunch, Sholmes," I remarked.

"That is all right, my dear doctor—I have had it," said Sholmes, with one of his rare smiles. "Now, as in the well-known case of Mrs. Hubbard, the cupboard is bare. Did you not lunch with the relatives of your late victim—I should say patient?"

"Unfortunately," I replied sadly, "they did not bury him with him. But—"

"We may dine with the marquis," remarked Herlock Sholmes, "Come!"

He took me playfully by the ear, and lifted me into the waiting taxi. A moment more, and we were speeding through the streets in a westward direction.

"Where are we going, Sholmes?" I asked.

"To Hammersmith Hall, Jotson. I have been called up on the telephone by the Marquis of Hammersmith," explained Sholmes. "A serious case—a robbery at the Hall."

"More family jewels?" I inquired.

"More serious than that, Jotson. The marchioness' supply of margarine has been purloined."

"Good heavens!"

"The ladyship is distracted with the loss," said Sholmes. "The marquis urged me to come at once. There may still be some hope of recovering the plunder. Unless it is revealed, he fears for her ladyship's reason."

The marquis, who is immensely wealthy, could replace the margarine, but for the recent ordinance of the Grease Control Act, which, under Jotson's necessary direction, is now restricted to seven-eighths of a pound every three months. Even to obtain that quantity, Jotson is obliged to wait in the margarine-queue for forty-eight hours. You see that the matter is serious—indeed, tragic."

"And Sholmes was silent."

"My amazing friend did not speak again till we arrived at Hammersmith Hall, and were shown into the library that palatial residence, where the marquis received us.

His ladyship was pale and agitated.

"Thank Heaven you have come, Mr. Sholmes!" he exclaimed, grasping my amazing friend's hand. "You may save me."

"Kindly give me a few details," said Herlock Sholmes. "You may speak quite freely before my friend Dr. Jotson."

"The marquis sat in a seat."

"There is little to tell, Mr. Sholmes. At twelve o'clock, her ladyship returned home with the margarine, exhausted by her long vigil in the queue outside Messrs. Weighen's establishments. She carried the margarine in her attache case—"

"You are sure that the margarine was there when Herlock Sholmes arrived?"

"Absolutely!" Her ladyship brings home the margarine in precisely the same manner. "I was, naturally, anxious upon the subject, and immediately upon her ladyship's arrival I looked at the margarine—I may say that I feasted my eyes upon it. There is no doubt that it was in the attache case. A moment later I was called away to the telephone to receive a message from Mrs. Smythe-Porkins, a friend of the marchioness. When I returned to her ladyship the margarine had vanished!"

"That is the mystery I wish you to solve, Mr. Sholmes. Her ladyship had left the attache case, still containing the margarine, on the dining table a few minutes. She returned, she assures me, in three minutes at the most, and the attache case was still there, but the margarine had disappeared. In these three minutes, Mr. Sholmes, a dastardly thief had purloined the margarine!"

The marquis paused, and wiped his brow with his handkerchief. In spite of his aristocratic reserve and the calm that was the stamp of his noble race, he was almost overcome.

Herlock Sholmes pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"Lead me to the scene of the crime!" he said abruptly.

We followed the marquis to the dining-

room. Upon the vast mahogany table her ladyship's attache case still lay. It needed but a glance to ascertain that it was empty, though several glimmering spots betrayed the recent use of the margarine.

Herlock Sholmes was very busy during the next few minutes.

He examined the polished floor with a microscope, the marquis watching him with hopeful eyes. He then disappeared up the chimney for some time. But when he reappeared, in a somewhat sooty condition, he shook his head.

"For some time he stood in deep thought."

"You have a clue, Mr. Sholmes?" asked the Marquis of Hammersmith at last.

"Herlock Sholmes smiled inscrutably.

"Alions done! It fail beau temps! Passez le sel!" he said, dropping into French, as he often did.

The marquis looked perplexed. He could not follow the workings of the mighty brain of my amazing friend.

"You were called to the telephone by Mrs. Smythe-Porkins and I answered suddenly."

The marquis inclined his head.

"For what purpose?"

"Mrs. Smythe-Porkins proposes to call upon her ladyship this afternoon," explained the marquis. "I doubtless she is aware that we shall be provided with margarine to-day, and purposes to stay to tea."

Sholmes smiled.

"The margarine will be necessary for me to be concealed in the drawing-room when Mrs. Smythe-Porkins calls," her remark.

"As you wish, Mr. Sholmes."

"Not a word to her ladyship," added Herlock Sholmes.

"I am at your orders, Mr. Sholmes, but I do not understand."

"Herlock Sholmes smiled at the House of Lords, you are not expected to understand anything," explained Sholmes.

"Free. It shall be as you desire."

"I shall be most deeply at Sholmes. I could see that my amazing friend was on the track; but, diligently as I had studied his methods, I could not guess what thoughts were passing through his brain."

"You will wait here with his lordship, Jotson," said Sholmes. But—

"As you will, Sholmes. But—"

Herlock Sholmes did not stay to listen. It was evident that, engrossed by the strange mystery, he had completely forgotten that I had not lunched.

II.

I WAITED in the dining-room with the Marquis of Hammersmith for a considerable time. The marquis, nobly as he strove to preserve the wooden impassiveness of his caste, was evidently a prey to deep emotion. He started to his feet in uncontrollable anxiety as Sholmes entered at last.

"Mr. Sholmes," he exclaimed hoarsely, "I can endure the suspense no longer! Have you any fragments, discovered a clue to the missing margarine?"

"Herlock Sholmes smiled.

"Better than that, my dear marquis. I have the very thief of the margarine."

"Mr. Sholmes!"

His lordship staggered, as Sholmes held out a small packet. A hoarse cry left his lips as he frantically examined the contents. "It was the missing margarine!"

"Bless you, Mr. Sholmes!" he said brokenly.

We left his lordship still holding the margarine, gazing at it with ecstatic eyes. I was, as usual, on tenterhooks, and as we stepped into the waiting taxi I could not contain my impatience.

"You amaze me more and more! You have penetrated, in a few hours, this terrible mystery—"

Sholmes yawned.

"I have forgotten, my dear Jotson. The matter was simple."

"But the thief—"

"There was no thief, Jotson. The margarine was left in the Hammersmith Hall. You observed me making my investigations in the dining-room. That the thief had entered by the door or window I knew could not be the case."

"But how—"

"Have you forgotten my methods, my dear Jotson? It was most likely that a thief would enter by the door or the window. On

my usual theory, that the most likely is the least probable, I ruled out the door and window as inadmissible. There remained the chimney. I made a thorough examination of the chimney, and satisfied myself that the thief had not entered by that method of ingress. It was clear, therefore, that the margarine had been purloined, at all, but had been abstracted from the attache case by her ladyship herself."

"Marvelous!"

"Marvelous to you, Jotson, but to a brain like mine, mere child's play," said Sholmes negligently. "It remained to discover her ladyship's motive, and to unearth the hidden marchioness."

"The thief, therefore, that the her ladyship belonged to a fast, bridge-playing set, of which Mrs. Smythe-Porkins was also a member. That the marchioness had abstracted the margarine, intending to consume it all on her own, and deprive the marquis of his fair share, I did not believe—such conduct would have been unworthy of a member of the British aristocracy."

Jotson. I deduced a more deep and desperate motive. For that reason I concealed myself behind a Japanese fan in the drawing-room, and, undisturbed, I watched Mrs. Smythe-Porkins for losses at bridge, handed her the packet of margarine in full settlement. Despairing of raising the money to pay her debts, she had taken the desperate resolution of parting with the family supply of margarine. One more example, my dear Jotson, of the ravages of the bridge-mania among our upper classes."

He paused.

"The rest was simple, Jotson. At the psychological moment, I stepped from behind the Japanese fan, and seized the margarine. Her ladyship fell upon her knees."

I admonished her to confess all to the marquis, who, in the joy of recovering the margarine, was sure to forgive her. She promised to follow my advice. The rest you know, Jotson. If her ladyship tackles the marquis while the first flush of joy at the recovery of the margarine is upon him, softening of effect upon him, I have no doubt that all will be well."

"I could only gaze at my amazing friend in silent admiration."

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The Editor's Chat

For next Wednesday:
"HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER!"
By Martin Clifford.

The brothers Manners are the most prominent figures in this story. Do you remember those capital yarns, "Manners Minor" and "The Right Sort," which dealt with the coming of Reggie Manners to St. Just, and the trouble he caused to his major by his wayward wildness? They were greatly appreciated at the time of their appearance, and I feel sure that they will be equally popular. In them Mr. Clifford shows us Reggie going wrong again, and Harry doing his best for him without thanks.

Grundy's intervention has the worst effect it could have. It leads to no end of trouble, though for that Grundy is not to be blamed.

Harry Manners has not played a principal part in a story for a long time, but he is an old familiar friend to all of us who have followed the yarns faithfully; every bit as good a fellow as Tom Merry or Monty Lowther, but quite different from them.

He is a round man, round man the leader, sunny of temper, but ready enough to be roused by wrong or by tyranny. He talks enough, but he does not talk as much as Lowther, who is a chatterbox. He is Gussy for his tendency to "jabwone solos," has a very distinct tendency that way himself. He has strong feelings, but he hides them under a jesting exterior.

Grundy is a very different sort of character. There is something of the plodder about him, and nothing very specially brilliant. On the whole, one would say that his temper is better than his, but he has heaps of patience with his young brother, at least, and deserves more gratitude than he gets.

YOUR EDITOR,
21-17