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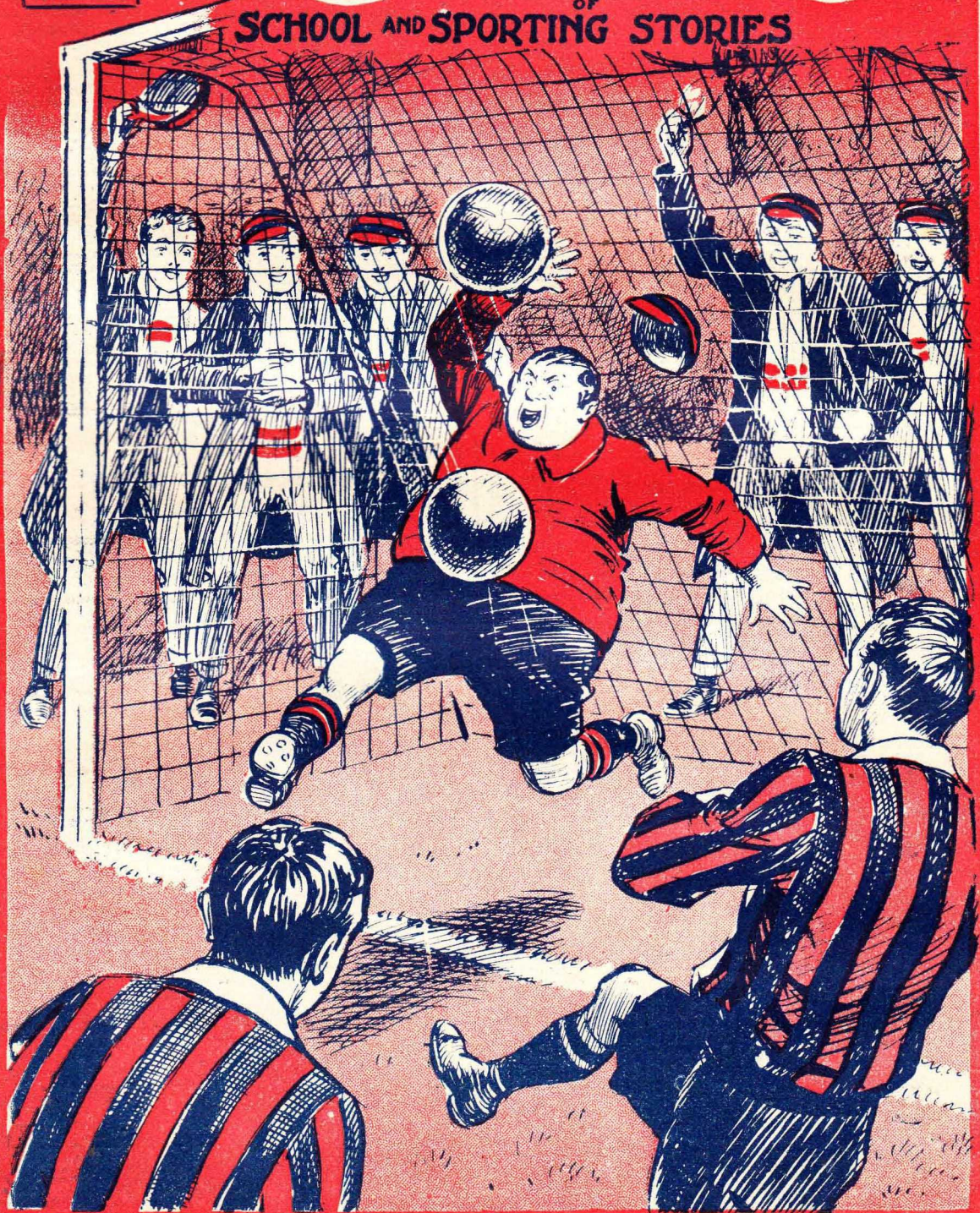
EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 838.
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1926.



BAGGY TRIMBLE ON THE "BAWL!"

(A humorous incident from the long complete school story—"FOOTBALL RIVALS"—within.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

JOKES!

I WOULD like to point out to some of my readers that they must not expect to see their jokes in print the week after they have sent them in. Even where the jokes are accepted they cannot possibly find their way into print for several weeks owing to the fact that we go to press weeks in advance. Moreover, the "yield" from the hundreds of jokes sent in is a trifle in excess of the number we can print in the GEM each week. The winning jokes therefore are filed and used, as far as possible, in the order in which they arrive. Don't run away with the idea that some of the "good ones" are scrapped because we receive too many of them. Not a bit of it! They simply wait their turn, as must, of course, the chaps who send them in. For all you know, chum, your joke might have bagged a prize, so please don't get impatient about it.

A SPECIAL COMPETITION.

You should all know that our splendid Companion Paper, the "Boys' Friend," is offering to its readers each week Two Hand-some Guaranteed Seven-Jewel "Cymrex" Lever Watches and Six Tip-Top Match Footballs for solving a simple picture-puzzle which takes the form of an interesting paragraph about a well-known footballer. If you would like one of these priceless "tickahs," as tussy would call them, or one of the bouncing leathers, then weigh in and secure a copy of the "Boys' Friend" to-day.

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"FATTY WYNN'S FOLLY!"
By Martin Clifford.

A magnificent story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

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HERE'S THE WINNING EFFORT, CHUMS! ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS!

"Hi, my boy!" roared the irate stationer. "What are you doing with them pens? Leave them alone!" "Wot yer mean, leave 'em alone?" ejaculated the country yokel. "You've a card in the winder which says, as plain as can be, 'Steel Pens.' Well, wot am I doing if I ain't?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to H. R. Holmes, 1, Fitzroy Road, Regent's Park, N.W.1.

A "PLANE" FACT!

Two Irish labourers were watching an aeroplane which was flying at a very great height. "Begorra," said Pat, pointing to the plane, "Oh wouldn't like to be up with that!" "And, faith," replied Mike, "I wouldn't loike to be up without it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Winifred A. Prunty, 4, St. Mary Street, Woolwich, S.E.18.

JOEY'S FLIGHT!

A certain generous man met a small lad in his neighbourhood who gave evidence of having just recently emerged from a severe fight. "I am grieved," said the old chap, "to see that you have a black eye, Joey!" "Don't you worry about me, mister," replied Joey, with a smile. "You go home and be sorry for your own little boy—he's got two!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. A. Victor, 12, Morrison Gap Road, Hongkong, China.

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FOOTBALL RIVALS!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

Baggy Trimble Butts In!

I SAY, you chaps—" Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, burst into Study No. 6 in the School House, and uttered that exclamation.

It was not unusual for Baggy to commence a conversation like that. He had been heard to make the same observation before—hundreds of times before. But this evening there was a breathless note in his voice suggesting great excitement.

And Baggy Trimble was excited, tremendously so, especially now as he stood in the study doorway blinking down upon a scene of great activity. In fact, Baggy had never seen Study No. 6 in such a state of bustling turmoil before.

It was astounding, for even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was working like a Trojan, and it was very seldom indeed that the swell of the School House Fourth risked collapse through fatigue.

"Pway give me more elbow woom, deah boys," he was gasping when Baggy arrived. "This w'etched portmanteau is wathah full, and the straps won't meet—"

"Blow your portmanteau!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And blow this suitcase likewise!" panted Jack Blake.

"The dashed thing won't shut! Hurrah! Got it! Phew!" The suitcase in question had closed at last with a loud snap. The combined weights of Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby had brought about the desired result, so at least one of the many bags in Study No. 6 was done with. Oozing excitement from every pore, Baggy Trimble forced his way a step or two farther into the study.

"Look here, you fellows—"

But none of the seven juniors filling Study No. 6 took the slightest notice of Baggy. Really, they had not seen the stout junior. They were far too busy packing.

"Come on, chaps!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Lend Tom Merry a helping hand!"

"Yes, and not before I need it!" choked Tom Merry of the Shell. "I don't believe this footer bag ever will shut!"

"My hat, no!"

"We shall have to borrow another portmanteau!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Oh, my aunt, what's the matter with you, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made an observation like a draw-out wail.

"Pway give me more elbow woom, you duffahs!" he cried. "Can't you see I'm all in a fluttah? In another minute the perspiration will be twicklin' down my face!"

"Well, let it!" said Lowther. "Now, altogether, chaps! On the ball—or rather this bag—for everything's got to be packed to-night, Kildare said. Ready? Go!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hurrah!" cheered Manners. "We've managed it! It's shut at last!"

"Good!" chuckled Digby. "Just one more suitcase with Manners' rotten old camera in it. If we all jump on that with both feet— Here, what the— Oh, my hat, look what's blown in, chaps!"

"Baggy Twimble, bai Jovo!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, taking a breather and screwing his monocle into his eye. "Been heah long, Twimble?"

"Ages—"

"Then you won't be stayin' any longah, I take it?" observed the swell of the School House. "Kindly close the door after you!"

But Baggy showed no signs of leaving or closing doors, or doing anything required of him. Instead, he grabbed Tom Merry by the arm.

"I say, old chap, is it true what they're all saying—"

"Depends," grinned the leader of the Shell.

"I mean, is it true that Colonel Kildare, a relative of our Kildare, is giving a large house party at his place at Dalethorpe?" panted Baggy. "They're all saying it is—"

"Yes, that's right. Anything else for this suitcase?"

"And—and that Kildare has been asked to select ten junior footballers and take them over to the colonel's house to-morrow to play in a county house soccer match?" asked Baggy Trimble, more excited than ever.

"Right again."

"And you and all these other chaps are going and are to stay the night there?" gasped Baggy. "Oh, my hat, it is true, then? What Harry, Noble told me is right—Kildare really is taking ten juniors over to Colonel Kildare's place—"

"Yes, that's so!"

"Then I must see Kildare at once," panted Baggy. "Ever since I've been at St. Jim's, Kildare has been a special pal of mine!"

"What?"

"An extra special pal, Merry!" exclaimed Baggy.

"We've been like brothers in a way—"

"Gweat Scott!"

"And of course, Kildare couldn't find me when he was selecting the ten junior footer men!" panted Baggy.

"When I explain to him that I'm ready to join the party and play in this match—"

"Oh, my aunt—"

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"He'll just jump at the chance of including me in the side," went on the Falstaff of the Fourth. "Of course, I'm really sorry, as it will mean one of you chaps standing down; but naturally old Kildare will care for nothing but getting together the best available team. As I'm available—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can laugh, Lowther—"

"Thanks awfully, old fat man!" chuckled Lowther. "Ho, ho, ho! Baggy saving his team! Baggy the hope of his side! Enough to make a cat chortle, isn't it, Manners?"

But Baggy Trimble refused to listen to any more of this envious chaffing. He just turned his back on the inmates of Study No. 6 and went striding—or rather rolling—away along the Fourth Form corridor.

And as he rolled, Baggy mentally pictured a glorious time at Colonel Kildare's place.

He had seen a photograph of Dalethorpe Manor where the colonel lived, on an occasion when he had visited the study of his "special" chum, Eric Kildare, captain of St. Jim's. True the occasion had not been over pleasant, as Kildare had been compelled to use his ashlant on the plump form of Baggy. Still, the fat junior had glimpsed the photograph.

And ever since he had been longing for a chance of visiting the old-world mansion. He could picture himself having a delicious snack on the veranda. He could imagine himself saving his side in the big match, with crowds of people applauding his brilliant saves under the crossbar, for Baggy Trimble did not lack imagination, whatever else he might lack, and he really fancied his chances as a goal-keeper.

And his chance had come to visit Dalethorpe Manor. Baggy was sure of it. He had only to intimate to his "old chum," Kildare, that he was available to join the party, and surely the St. Jim's skipper would show his gratitude. As he rolled to the end of the Fourth Form corridor, Baggy's thoughts ran happily in those pleasant grooves.

But as the stout and fatuous Baggy neared Kildare's study his nerve cracked a little. He gripped the door-knob, but did not turn it at once. Instead, he tried to rehearse what he had to say.

"Kildare, old chap," he murmured, "you'll be glad to hear that I can come with you to-morrow. Ow! Yoop! Oh-er!"

Baggy's murmured rehearsal came to a sudden termination as someone collided with him in the rear. In fact, Baggy crashed up hard against the door and knocked his nose on one of the panels.

"Oh! Woop! Yah!"

"Ass!" panted Bernard Glyn, the junior who had thudded into him. "Duffer! Out of the way!"

"Oh—ow!"

"Quick's the word!" rapped Bernard Glyn. "Buzz off!"

"Yes, Glyn; but I want to see Kildare—"

"So do I!" flashed the St. Jim's inventor. "Out of the way, ass!"

Before Baggy had collected his scattered thoughts Glyn had swept him aside. Quite by accident it was a violent sweep, so violent that Baggy brought up hard against the corridor wall opposite.

"Wow! Oh dear! Yoop!"

"Sorry," muttered Bernard Glyn.

He knocked on Kildare's door before opening it.

"Kildare, old chap, I—I have some rotten news for you!" he blurted out.

Dead silence followed those words, with Bernard Glyn standing in the doorway of the study, and Eric Kildare, rugged and brawny looking, rising slowly out of his easy-chair.

"Rotten—rotten news, Glyn?"

"Yes; it came over the wireless!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn gravely. "I happened to be in the wireless-room listening in, and 2LO broadcasted one of their urgent messages. Kildare, I'm awfully sorry, but the message was: Will Eric Kildare, of St. Jim's College, Sussex, proceed with all possible speed to his home in Ireland? His mother is seriously ill."

Eric Kildare made no answer, but the book he had been holding slipped from his hand, and his face turned a deathly pale. Then he staggered towards the doorway of his study.

CHAPTER 2.

Bad News for Kildare!

"G LYN, are—are you sure of this?"

Kildare spoke quickly and anxiously, and Bernard Glyn was almost as anxious looking.

"Yes, I am sure, Kildare!" he exclaimed. "I was alone in the wireless-room when the broadcast message

came through. It was repeated twice by the 2LO announcer, so—so there can't have been any mistake!"

"And the message said my—my mother was seriously ill. You are sure of the word 'seriously,' Glyn?"

The Shell junior nodded his head. He was more than sure, for it was that word which had brought him racing to Kildare's study.

"Yes, I am sure, Kildare," he said quietly.

The St. Jim's skipper tightened his lips, then, without another word, he turned on his heel and went striding along the corridor. He was making straight for the Head's room, while Bernard Glyn swung round towards the stairs again.

"Out of the way, Baggy!" he rapped.

"Yes, old top; but—"

"No time to talk!" flashed the schoolboy inventor. "I want to get back to the wireless-room to see if any more news comes through about old Kildare's mater. Out of the way, quick!"

"Oh—wow!" panted Baggy Trimble, as Bernard Glyn roughly swept him aside. "I— What's going to happen about the footer at Dalethorpe Manor, now, old chap?"

But Bernard Glyn had vanished, leaving Baggy standing there blinking rapidly in the corridor. The fat junior remained inactive for a moment, then with a sudden new eagerness he ambled back to Study No. 6, and once again he crashed open the door of that famous apartment.

"I say, you chaps—"

"Oh, gad, it's blown in again, deah boys!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "The one and only Baggy Twimble is back, you fellows!"

"Then boot him out!" snapped Jack Blake, who had just discovered that he had forgotten to pack his footer-boots. "Turf the young burler into the corridor. Bump him, Gussy, if he won't go!"

"Wight-ho, Blake, deah boy!"

With quite a ferocious expression on his usually calm and unruffled features, Arthur Augustus advanced upon the panting Baggy. The swell of the School House was even turning back the cuffs of his coat-sleeves; and when Gussy did that, he generally meant business.

"Baggy, old bean, you've exactly three seconds to wetiah in," he said grimly. "If you are not gone by then, I shall have to go to the twouble of bumpin' you, bai Jove!"

"No, really—"

"You mean 'Yaas, weally,' deah boy—"

In alarm Baggy retreated through the doorway, and he almost shouted out his item of news.

"You don't understand, D'Arcy!" he gasped. "I've come here with some dreadful news—"

"Eh?"

"Shocking news—"

"What?" snapped Jack Blake. "Look here, you spooffing duffer, what cock-and-bull story have you got hold of now?"

Vigorously Baggy Trimble shook his head, but not being in exactly strict training, and having run really rapidly from Kildare's study, he was a little breathless. In fact, he found it difficult to speak at all.

Still, he managed to get out a few words.

"Kildare's mother is dying, you fellows—"

"What!"

"Yes, she is!" panted the imaginative Baggy. "She had to undergo a serious operation or something at a moment's notice, and—and—"

"How do you know?" flashed Tom Merry sharply.

"Kildare has been broadcast for 2LO! If you don't believe me, ask Bernard Glyn. He's up in the wireless-room now, waiting to see if any more news comes through!"

Like lightning Tom Merry jumped to his feet.

It was not that he exactly disbelieved Baggy Trimble, but Baggy was one of those curious youths whose imagination ran away with him.

In consequence, Tom Merry wanted sounder information than any Baggy was likely to give.

"Blake—all you others, wait here!" the Shell leader exclaimed. "I'll find out from Glyn right away what's happened!"

"Yes; that's the idea!"

"We'll weman in the study, deah boy. Wun like anythin'!"

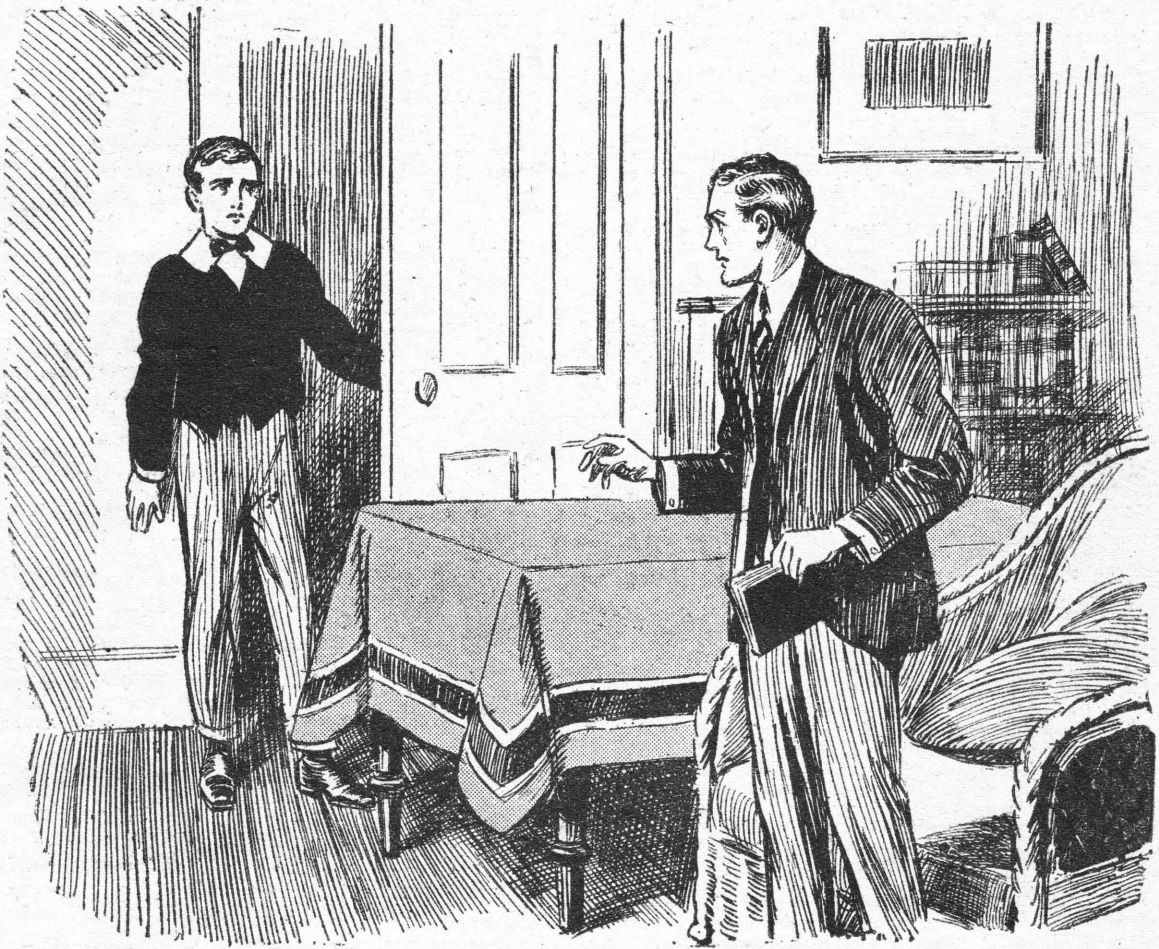
At once Tom Merry flashed off, but he was back in Study No. 6 within a very few minutes, his face grave and alarmed looking.

"Most of what Baggy told us is true, chaps," he said quietly. "Kildare's mater is ill, and the skipper has been broadcast to go to Ireland at once."

"To-night, bai Jove—"

"Yes, Gussy," nodded Tom Merry. "He's with the Head now. Rotten luck, isn't it?"

"Beastly!" agreed Jack Blake. "Is there anything we can do to lend a helping hand? What about looking up the trains and boat, you chaps?"



"Kildare, old chap," said Bernard Glyn haltifgly, "I—I have some rotten news for you!" "Rotten news, Glyn?" said Kildare. "Yes, it came over the wireless!" exclaimed Glyn gravely. "The message from the B.B.C. was: 'Will Eric Kildare of St. Jim's College, Sussex, proceed with all possible speed to his home in Ireland? His mother is seriously ill!'" (See chapter 1.)

"Yes, we can do that," said Herries. "Dig, you bought a new railway timetable the other day. Let's see it."

The timetable was found, and Tom Merry & Co. were all anxious to look up the trains. Then Jack Blake had another suggestion to make.

"What about packing Kildare's suitcase for him?" he exclaimed. "Ten to one he'll be busy trying to cable to Ireland for information. What do you think?"

"Bai Jove, yaas—"

"Then come along, Gussy!" flashed the junior from the broad acres. "Manners—Lowther, what about getting a taxi? I happen to know the Head's private car is out of service."

"Yes, we'll see to the taxi."

"Good egg!"

Together Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus raced off to Kildare's study, and they found the door still open. But Kildare was not there. No one was in the room, but the St. Jim's skipper's suitcase could be seen half-hidden away in a corner.

Jack Blake grabbed at it.

"It's empty, Gussy; so we'll fill it up for him!" he exclaimed. "Bound to find some pyjams and things like that he will want on the journey."

"Yaas, wathah!"

A few short minutes ago the visit to the Manor, the ripping time they would be certain to have as members of Colonel Kildare's house-party, and the prospect of some fine footer had completely filled the juniors' thoughts. They had been quite incapable of thinking of anything else at all.

All that was forgotten now, because Eric Kildare had met with bad luck. His mother was ill, and all that Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus and the rest of their chums were troubling about was lending the St. Jim's skipper a helping hand.

The juniors fairly piled into Kildare's bed-room, and at once Arthur Augustus whipped open a drawer

"Plenty of pyjams here, deah boy!"

"Good! Well, just one suit—"

"Will that be enough, Blake?"

"Of course, you ass!" exclaimed the chief of Study No. 6.

"Some collars as well, handkerchiefs, brush and comb, tooth-brush—anything you can think of, Gussy!"

"Wight-ho!"

Quickly enough the bag was packed, and this time there was no great struggle to get it to shut. Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus had only just thrown in the few things they thought Kildare would need on his long journey.

"Pway shouldah the bag, Blake!" exclaimed Gussy.

"Kildare will be in a teawin' hurwy to get away!"

"Yes, that's the idea!"

Jack Blake shouldered the suitcase and hurried from the room. The next moment there was a violent collision, with the result that a curly-headed junior just a shade taller than Jack Blake was sent staggering against the passage wall.

"Oh—yoop! Of all the burbling duffers—"

"Sorry, Merry!"

"Oh, it's all right, of course!" exclaimed the junior captain of St. Jim's, regaining his feet. "Is—is that Kildare's suitcase?"

"Yes."

"Then it's no good taking it downstairs," said Tom Merry quietly. "Kildare's already gone. Harry Noble saw him shaking hands with the Head."

Jack Blake lowered the suitcase to the passage floor and stared at the Shell junior in dismay.

CHAPTER 3 Just in Time!

"KILDARE gone!" Jack Blake echoed the words blankly. It did not seem possible that the skipper of St. Jim's had had time to slip away from the school in the very few minutes which had elapsed since Bernard Glyn had first received that broadcast message.

And Kildare had left without a single thing, apparently.

"Not—not even a toothbrush, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Fancy havin' to tavel all the way to Ireland without a toothbrush, deah boys!"

"Oh, he can buy one of those, you duffer!" rapped Jack Blake. "My hat, Manners and Lowther must have been real nippy getting that taxi along!"

"Oh, the taxi hadn't arrived!" explained Tom Merry. "According to Kangaroo, Kildare borrowed Darrell's push-bike to take him to the station. Means to leave the bike in the cloak-room for Darrell to collect to-morrow."

"Oh!"

"And—and I haven't the foggiest idea what we're going to do about that visit to Colonel Kildare's," went on the Shell junior. "Kildare never said a word to Harry Noble about it—didn't think, of course, poor chap! What do you think we ought to do, Blake?"

"Try and ring up Colonel Kildare right away, I suppose."

"And explain? Yes, we might try that. Hallo, here's Digby!"

Digby, with Herries just behind him, came racing up the stairs, Digby holding an open timetable in his hand.

"My hat! Is it right Kildare's gone?"

"Yes——"

"To catch the seven o'clock train?"

"I suppose so," nodded Tom Merry. "Yes, it must be the seven o'clock he wanted to catch."

"Then that means he'll catch the first available train at Wayland Junction!" exclaimed Digby, his eyes on the railway timetable. "A connection, as a matter of fact. Chaps, if Kildare takes that train he'll just miss the fast boat-train from London to Holyhead!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake leaned over Dig's shoulder for a glimpse at the timetable. Digby, always rather good at working out trains, ran his finger down the column.

"There it is, chaps—the connection from Wayland to London!" he exclaimed. "It just misses the boat-train!"

"So it does," nodded Tom Merry.

"Yes, now look at this other column," went on Digby.

"If Kildare thinks of waiting at Wayland for a quarter of an hour and so catching the next train up, he'll be in London in good time. Isn't it just rotten, chaps?"

Tom Merry whipped out his watch.

"My hat, ten to one Kildare won't think of that!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if we could phone through to the station and ask the stationmaster to explain to him? Might just do it!"

The Shell junior half turned towards the stairs and glimpsed Monty Lowther and Manners in the lower passage. Both juniors were obviously searching for Kildare, because they had both just looked in his study.

"Hallo, you chaps!" Monty Lowther suddenly shouted. "Is Kildare there? The taxi is at the school gates!"

"Bai Jove——"

"Taxi at the school gates?" cried Tom Merry.

"Hurrah! What could be better? Blake, collar that suitcase again; Dig, bring along the old time-table. We're going to taxi down to the station and have a word with Kildare!"

"Bai Jove, that's the ideah——"

"On the ball, chaps!"

Tom Merry & Co. dashed down the stairs. In the lower passage Baggy Trimble rolled up and joined the party. As they passed the Fourth Form Common-room, Harry Noble and Kerruish dropped into step with them. As a result, ten St. Jim's juniors crowded into and on to that taxi, with Baggy Trimble counting as two as far as displacement was concerned.

But Baggy refused to be left, and the taxi driver, sure of a handsome tip from the affluent Arthur Augustus, overlooked the fact that his vehicle was not licensed as a char-a-banc.

"The station, young gents?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah! And dwive like the dickens!" said Arthur Augustus. "Wace like anythin', deah boy, and if you get there before seven, you can have an extra pound note!"

The taxi-driver wasted no time, and soon his car was fairly eating up the miles. Well before the seven o'clock train was whistled out of Rylcombe Station the St. Jim's juniors were racing on to the platform.

"There's Kildare, bai Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus, his monocle dropping from his eye in his excitement. "In that third-class non-smokah, deah boys!"

"Hurrah! So it is!"

"Altogether, chaps!"

Tom Merry & Co. raced for the train, and Kildare opened the door as he saw them coming. At once Jack Blake tossed the suitcase into the compartment.

"Just a few things Gussy and I packed for you, Kildare!" he exclaimed.

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"I say, that's good of you——"

"And about the trains to London," chipped in Digby. "Don't you catch the connection to this crawler. Just wait at Wayland for the next train, Kildare?"

"Will that make any difference, Digby?"

"All the difference between getting to Holyhead in time for the Irish packet and missing it," panted the Fourth-Former. "I've looked up the trains most carefully."

"Thanks awfully!"

Kildare spoke quietly, his strong, rugged face a good deal set. Then, just as the train was due to start, he thrust a hand out to Tom Merry.

"I can't shake hands with all of you because there isn't time!" he exclaimed. "But about Dalethorpe to-morrow. Merry, select some other junior footballer in my place, and take the full team over to the Manor yourself. Explain to the colonel what has happened to prevent my coming with you, of course."

"Yes, certainly, Kildare."

"The seven-ten train, mind," added the St. Jim's skipper as his own train commenced to move. "Don't miss it, and play for all you are worth in the match."

"Bai Jove, yaas——"

"And don't worry about me," added Kildare. "My mother is usually so very fit! I—I am not really scared at all!"

"Good!"

"Splendid!"

"Absolutely tophole, deah boy!" cried Arthur Augustus. "The vevy best of luck, Kildare. I twust you will find your matah quite wecovahed. Good old Kildare!"

How much of that little speech Eric Kildare heard there is no saying. Certain it is that his train was out of the station before Arthur Augustus had concluded his "few" words.

But that did not matter an atom. Kildare was one of those fellows who would be able to understand why all these juniors had come to see him off, and he would be grateful.

"Good old Kildare, bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "Somehow or othah I have a feelin' that he is goin' to heah good news when he weaches Ireland, deah boys!"

"Yes, so do I!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's hope so, anyway. Hallo, what's the matter with you, Baggy? Trying to pull my arm out of its socket, ass?"

"No, really, old chap——"

"Well, it felt like it, anyway!" grinned the leader of the Shell juniors. "Suppose you buzz off, Baggy, and lose yourself!"

"Yaas, wathah, out of fwriendship to us othahs," persuaded Arthur Augustus. "Just walk into Wylcombe Woods with your eyes shut, then perhaps you'll nevah be found again, deah boy."

But Baggy Trimble refused to listen to Arthur Augustus' kindly suggestions. Instead, he tightened his grip on Tom Merry's arm and tried to draw him aside.

"Merry, old chap, I want to speak to you, about to-morrow's visit to Dalethorpe Manor," he whispered. "It's—it's most important!"

"Eh?"

"In fact, it couldn't be more important," declared Baggy eagerly. "You'll be relieved to hear that it is quite all right about me. I shall be able to make the journey all right!"

"M-my hat——"

"The seven-ten train, I understood Kildare to say," went on Baggy. "You can trust me to be in good time. Harry Noble is kindly going to lend me some football boots——"

"Eh?" gasped the Cornstalk. "Who said so?"

"And if my old friend Gussy will advance me the railway-fare, there is nothing else for any of us to trouble about," beamed Baggy. "Anyway, we can call it all settled!"

"Gweat—gweat Scott!"

"You cheeky rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst out Tom Merry. "Of all the asses, you take the biscuit factory, Baggy. As it's a footer eleven we've been asked to take to Colonel Kildare's place, and not a team of rabbits, I'm afraid you won't be wanted!"

"Oh, I say——"

"In fact, I'm going to ask Kerr of the New House to make up the side!" grinned Tom Merry. "Sorry and all that, but it can't be helped. Come along, chaps!"

The juniors sauntered out of the station, leaving the disappointed Baggy Trimble red in the face with indignation.

"You beasts!" he shouted after the retreating juniors. "After my old friend Kildare had practically said I was to be one of the party, too! All right, Tom Merry!"

"Yes, I know it's all right, Baggy!" shouted back the Shell leader. "On the other hand, if you were coming with us it would be all wrong. Better luck next time, old top!"

What Baggy answered in reply to that was lost in the evening air, for Tom Merry & Co. were out of earshot.

CHAPTER 4. Trouble for Baggy!

"**W**OW! Bai Jove! Lemme go!"

Arthur Augustus came out of dreamland the following morning with a distinct jerk. As a matter of fact, he was unable to help himself, for Jack Blake and Herries had hold of his ankles and Digby and Kerruish his arms, and a moment later the swell of the School House was flat on the dormitory floor.

Standing over him were quite a crowd of juniors, most of them already dressed. Then Arthur Augustus remembered.

"Bai Jove, we have the seven-ten twain to catch, deah boys!" he gasped. "It's already a quartah-past six. Gweat Scott, I shall nevah get dressed in time!"

Certainly it was rather a rush for Gussy, because he was not the type of junior who donned the first necktie to hand and tugged it into position by brute force. What the School House dandy liked was to arrange his neckties in a neat row along the dressing-table and choose carefully and at his leisure. But there was no time for anything like that this morning.

"If you're not ready by the time we start, you get left behind, Gussy," declared Tom Merry, poking his head into the Fourth Form dormitory. "Figgins & Co. are ready waiting, and the taxi will be along any minute now, so put a jerk into it."

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"And don't cackle," interrupted Tom Merry severely. "Cackling never did anybody any good except an old hen. Just time for a spot of brekker, chaps!"

The early breakfast was rather a hasty meal, and for Arthur Augustus a very hasty one indeed, for he only came into the room when the others were leaving.

Still, Gussy managed to gulp down some coffee. Then there was a real rush for the taxi. A short, cheery run down to the station landed the eleven juniors there in good time for their train, and at once bags and football-boots were loaded into the guard's van.

"And we all get into this compartment, old tops," exclaimed Tom Merry. "All the eleven are here, of course?"

"Rather!"

"No doubt about that, Merry," grinned Figgins. "All aboard! Do we change at Wayland, Dig?"

Digby shook his head.

"No; it's a through cross-country run, but we stop at every station. Still, it won't be so dusty!"

As a matter of fact, it was quite an enjoyable run, and the hour and half it took seemed to race away. Almost before Arthur Augustus had had time to don a fresh tie, with the aid of a mirror over the seat, they were stopping at Dalethorpe.

"Straight for the luggage-van, chaps!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Make sure of getting everything out!"

"Yes, that's the idea!"

The St. Jim's juniors dodged in and out of the thin stream of early travellers making for the ticket barrier. Then, quite suddenly, a stern, menacing sort of cry went up.

"Here, my lad, where do you think you're going? Where's your ticket?"

It was the ticket-collector at the barrier who was asking those questions, and instinctively Tom Merry & Co. glanced back. Promptly there came a wail in a voice that was painfully well known at St. Jim's.

"Mum-my ticket? I just gave it up to you——"

"You jolly well didn't!"

"I mean I've lost it!" gasped a very stout and very flustered junior. "That is to say, 'Season!'"

"I'll season yer, young feller-me-lad!"

In blank amazement Tom Merry & Co. stared. They saw the ticket-collector grab a fat junior by the arm. They glimpsed a police-constable striding towards the little scene, then Arthur Augustus found his voice.

"Gweat Scott, it's Baggy Twimble!"

"No——"

"But it is, deah boy! Baggy Twimble about to be awrested for havin' twavelled without a ticket!"

"My hat, so it is!"

"Baggy the bilk!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

In greater amazement than ever Tom Merry & Co. broke into a run, and they reached the barrier just as the ticket-collector was becoming angry.

"Constable, this lad must have travelled under a seat, though he's that fat I don't see how he got under one," the man was exclaiming. "Anyway, he hasn't got a ticket!"

"Yes I have!" gasped Baggy. "That is to say, one of my friends over there took the tickets. Gussy, you have my ticket, haven't you?"

"Gweat—gweat Scott!"

"Don't you remember you said you would take it for me?" gasped the really scared Baggy. "Of course, you may have forgotten, in which case I know you will be only too ready to pay up now."

"My only toppah!" gulped Arthur Augustus. "Of all the uttah nerve!"

"No—no, not at all!" choked Baggy, trying to wriggle free of the ticket-collector's firm grip on his arm. "You quite realise, of course, that I have accidentally left my note-case at the school— Oh, dear, my arm! Really, I have a ticket in one of my pockets!"

"My aunt!" whispered Tom Merry. "I believe that's Colonel Kildare in the car outside!"

"Yes, it is," nodded Jack Blake, looking thunder-clouds at Baggy. "What's to be done, Gussy?"

"Only one thing that I can think of," groaned Arthur Augustus, diving a hand into a pocket. "I shall have to pay the wottah's fare for appearances sake."

At once Baggy's face became wreathed in smiles.

"Thanks awfully, Gussy!" he said cheerfully. "Of course, this cash is merely a loan."

"You—you spoofin' duffah——"

"All the same, it is very kind of you," added Baggy hastily, handing the "borrowed" railway fare to the ticket-collector. "It was careless of me to lose my ticket!"

"Lorst it, did you!" muttered the ticket-collector. "Jus' now you told me you were a 'season.'"

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Baggy sternly. "As a matter of fact, I really ought to report you to the station-master for being cheeky——"

"Oh, law!"

"Yes; and then sue the railway company for damages for defamation of character, or whatever it's called," went on Baggy, waxing quite indignant. "I am sure I could get hundreds of pounds that way. Still, I'll let you off this time, my man, only be careful in future!"

With that last remark Baggy Trimble pushed past the amazed and speechless station official and made straight for the car in which Colonel Kildare was waiting.

A good deal staggered, Tom Merry & Co. followed the stout junior.

"Of all the ghastly nerve!" whispered Tom Merry.

"To— to travel under the seat without a ticket and then to slang the ticket man for not letting him through the barrier!" added Jack Blake. "To jolly well come here when he wasn't asked and wasn't wanted! My hat, Baggy's the limit!"

"The dashed outside edge, bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Gweat Scott, he's tacklin' Colonel Kildare now, and pwobably wanglin' an invitation to the house-party! It weally is wathah too thick, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" agreed that it was too thick, and in a body they hurried towards the car. But Baggy Trimble had not been allowing any grass to grow under his feet.

With a beaming smile he had greeted Colonel Kildare, and was already explaining why Kildare was not present. In fact, Baggy had completely taken the lead this time, and the crowning act of colossal cheek came when he suddenly waved his hand towards Tom Merry & Co.

"These are the juniors who have come over with me, Colonel Kildare," he said cheerfully. "That junior there is Tom Merry, quite a fair footballer, and standing next to him is Jack Blake, who also isn't a bad player—— Oh! Yoop!"

For Tom Merry had stood enough, and had jabbed Baggy Trimble firmly in the small of the back with a football-bag,

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while Manners and Monty Lowther grabbed him by his fat arms.

"Another word and we bump you, Baggy!" breathed Lowther.

"Yes, and jolly hard, too!" whispered Manners. "We mean it, you fat spoofer!"

Baggy lapsed into indignant silence as Tom Merry raised his cap to the colonel.

CHAPTER 5.

At Dalethorpe Manor!

"A H, Merry of the Shell Form, of course!" smiled Colonel Kildare, shaking hands with Tom. "I have heard quite a lot about your football from my cousin Eric."

Tom Merry returned the handgrip, but before he could make any reply the colonel went on speaking in a grave and certainly more puzzled voice.

"But what is this your friend was beginning to tell me, Merry?" he exclaimed, pointing to Baggy Trimble. "Something about Eric's mother being ill?"

"Yes, colonel, a broadcast message—"

"So I gathered," nodded Colonel Kildare, looking more puzzled than ever. "Really, it must have been a very sudden illness indeed, for I had a letter from Mrs. Kildare only this morning. From what she said she seemed to be in the very best of health."

Tom Merry & Co. looked puzzled, too.

"Perhaps—perhaps it was a heart attack," ventured Jack Blake.

The colonel shook his head.

"Mrs. Kildare doesn't suffer from heart trouble at all!" he exclaimed. "Really, it is very extraordinary, and I shall cable from the post-office as we pass it, although I don't for a moment suppose a reply will get through to-day. Mrs. Kildare lives quite in the wilds of Ireland, you know. But pack into the car, boys, and we will do our best to get fresh news of my cousin's aunt!"

Readily enough the St. Jim's juniors commenced to pack into the large seven-seater Napier, and once again Colonel Kildare looked puzzled.

"Why, there are twelve of you, Merry!" he exclaimed. "I specially told Eric I wanted him to bring ten juniors, eleven in all, with himself!"

The St. Jim's juniors could say nothing.

When the party had left St. Jim's it numbered eleven, now they were twelve. They all looked accusingly and indignantly at Baggy Trimble.

And Baggy shrunk back in the back seat, trying to hide himself behind Herries. Not that Herries was having any of that. The awkward situation had been caused by Baggy Trimble turning up uninvited, and it was up to Baggy to explain.

"Go on, own up!" whispered Herries.

"Yes, out with it, you spoofer!"

"Wathah, bai Jove!"

Urged by the other juniors, Baggy had to say something, and his fat face looked very anxious as he said it.

"Really, colonel, there has been some slight mistake," he ventured. "As one of Eric Kildare's closest friends at St. Jim's—"

"Eh?" ejaculated the colonel. "But you are a junior!"

"I mean one of his closest friends amongst the juniors," hastened to correct Baggy. "I distinctly understood him to say that I was to take his place in the party—"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry.

But Baggy was well wound up by now.

"Apparently Tom Merry understood differently and asked Kerr to make the journey," the fat junior went on. "In—in the circumstances, sir, perhaps I had better catch the next train back."

"My aunt, Baggy knows as well as I do there isn't a next train until the afternoon!" breathed Digby. "What a nerve he has!"

There was no doubt, of course, about Baggy Trimble having a "nerve," but this time his cheek paid an excellent dividend. Colonel Kildare just laughed as he slipped the gear-lever through the "gate."

"Well, the more the merrier, boys, and I hope we all have a splendid time!" he exclaimed. "It is my daughter's birthday, you know, and you will find a chum of yours amongst the house-party, I think!"

"A chum, colonel?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, my boy, a girl chum—Miss Ethel Cleveland."

"Oh, good!"

"Cousin Ethel, bai Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus. "What toppin' news, sir! We weally shall be glad to meet cousin Ethel again—eh, Figgay, deah boy?"

And Figgins of the New House nodded, for, of all the St. Jim's juniors, he was, perhaps, cousin Ethel's greatest chum.

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Before anything else was said Colonel Kildare pulled up at the Dalethorpe Post Office, and a cablegram was sent to Mrs. Kildare in Ireland. Then on the colonel and the St. Jim's juniors drove through the delightful Sussex scenery until they came in sight of a magnificent, old-world mansion with grounds surrounding it which looked as large as a public park.

"Dalethorpe Manor," announced the colonel, swerving the car up the carriage-drive. "There, you can see our private football-ground beyond those trees!"

"Yaas, wathah! Doesn't it look toppin', sir!"

"Oh, the ground is all right!" laughed the colonel. "Quite as good as the one Brighton and Hove Albion play on, some people say, and the team you will be playing against this afternoon is good, too!"

"A local side, colonel?" asked Tom Merry.

"No; an eleven my son is bringing over from his training-ship," explained Colonel Kildare. "An extremely good side, I fancy, so you St. Jim's fellows will have to gird up your loins. Ah, my son and his team has arrived, then!"

As Colonel Kildare said the last words, he swung the car round a wide sweep in the carriage-drive, and so came level with a fine terrace built in front of the famous Dalethorpe Manor House.

And on the terrace was quite an army of naval cadets, every bit as fit-looking as Tom Merry & Co., with Jimmy Kildare, the colonel's son, waiting to introduce everybody.

"So these are the St. Jim's lads," Jimmy laughed. "They look chirpy enough now, but I wonder what they'll look like when we've done with them on the footer-field? Glad to meet you, Merry!"

"Ditto, old chap!" laughed Tom.

The next moment a big, rather heavily built man pushed his way through the laughing cadets, but this time it was Colonel Kildare who made the introductions.

"Boys, this is Mr. Morden, one of my house-party!" he exclaimed. "Morden, these are the St. Jim's boys I told you I had invited!"

"I—yes—but—"

The big, heavily built man looked almost startled, but if he were, it was over almost instantly.

"By Jove, quite an army, colonel!" he said. "I was under the impression that it was only your cousin, Eric Kildare, you had invited, and that you were going to make up the rest of the team from village lads!"

"Oh, no!" laughed the colonel. "Kildare was to be the only senior, but he was to choose the rest of the eleven and bring them along. Unfortunately, my cousin was prevented from coming!"

"I see!"

Mr. Morden answered easily enough, and a moment or two later he was completely forgotten because of the pretty, laughing girl who came running swiftly down the terrace steps.

"Cousin Ethel, begad!"

"My hat, yes!"

"Hurrah!"

The St. Jim's juniors doffed their caps and crowded round their girl chum, and, as usual, cousin Ethel had a cheery word for everybody, as she shook hands all round.

While they were all laughing together, another girl joined the cheery throng, younger than cousin Ethel, and apparently satisfied with life in general, judging by her smiling countenance.

"This is Betty Kildare," cousin Ethel introduced. "It is her birthday to-day, so there is to be a big party this evening after the football match."

"Vewy pleased to meet you, Miss Betty," said Arthur Augustus, raising his glossy topper. "We all know Eric Kildare at St. Jim's—"

"Rather!" chipped in Baggy Trimble, who hated being left out in the cold in anything. "Eric Kildare, as a matter of fact, is a special chum of mine—"

"Yes, I have heard him speak of you, Trimble," laughed Betty. "But luncheon will soon be ready, so you must go and find your bed-rooms. I expect you can all do with something to eat?"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Baggy, his eyes glistening. "Come along, you chaps! It's dreadfully bad form to be late for meals when you are guests at a house. Besides, I scarcely had anything to eat at breakfast—"

"No; you look rather pale," laughed cousin Ethel. "Anyway, the gong will be rung in about ten minutes!"

There were servants to show the juniors to their rooms, but Baggy Trimble showed no signs of making a lengthy stay in the room allotted to him. He was so anxious about the lunch-gong that he left out the washing part of his toilet, and contented himself with only brushing his hair.

Then he hurried down the stairs again, and in his eagerness completely lost himself in a veritable maze of passages.

Backwards and forwards hurried Baggy, getting more and more anxious every moment lest he should be late, but he could find no one to direct him. In fact, he had

almost made up his mind to roll up the stairs again, when he glimpsed Mr. Morden going into the telephone-box right at the end of a very long passage.

"Oh, good!" panted Baggy, breaking into a sprint. "Mr. Morden seemed a decent sort, and he'll show me the way. I say, Mr. Morden—"

In his anxiety not to be late, Baggy overlooked the fact that people don't like to be interrupted in the middle of a trunk call they have been waiting for ages. Indeed, the fat junior was thinking of nothing but the possibility of being late, so he had no qualms at all about wrenching open the door of the telephone-box.

"Mr. Morden, sir—"

Quickly Mr. Morden turned and faced the fat junior, his eyes blazing angrily.

"Go away, boy!" he ground out.

"Yes, certainly; but—"

"Go away!"

"Yes, sir; but if you'll just tell me where the dining-room is first—"

Instead of answering directly, Mr. Morden did rather an

Mr. Morden had not struck Baggy again, but he had grabbed him by his arm, and Baggy was always a firm believer in squealing before he was hurt.

Therefore, Baggy Trimble squealed.

"Hel-up! Fire! Murder! Oh, wow!"

At that moment "help" arrived, for it happened that Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus, and Jack Blake came sauntering along the passage.

They all stopped dead at the curious spectacle of Mr. Morden gripping Baggy by the arm. In fact, Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye and let it fall out again through sheer astonishment.

"Bai Jove, what evah is the twouble, deah boys—"

"Rescue, you chaps!" gasped Trimble. "It's—it's Mr. Morden! He's attacking me—"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Morden.

"Wow! You've injured my ear for life. The beast struck me with all his weight and with his fist, too, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"Groogh!" wailed the fat junior. "And all because he was sending a rotten telephone message he didn't want



St Jim's Jingles!



No. 22. GEORGE DARRELL.

THE chosen comrade of Kildare
Is honest, big George Darrell;

Entitled by the Head to wear
A prefect's proud apparel.
The colour of his tie proclaims
His prefectorial status;
He's just and true in all his aims,
His manly ways elate us.

A giant on the field of play,
He wins great admiration;
Against St. Jude's, the other day,
He caused a great sensation,
By scoring, in heroic style,
The goal that won the tussle;
The cheering could be heard a mile—
Bravo, strong man of muscle!

His fame at boxing is immense;
He is a great exponent
Of the fine art of self-defence,
And worries his opponent.
Straight from the shoulder come
his blows
In manner scientific;
Those who receive them on the nose
Declare they are terrific!



An impression of the
popular Sixth Form
prefect.

The inky-fingered fag brigade
Regard him as a hero;
They serve him well, yet are afraid
To fag for Knox, the Nero.
For Knox distributes kicks, not
pence,
And fags obey him blindly;
But Darrell has the sound good
sense
To treat the youngsters kindly.

He is respected and esteemed
By all the boys and masters;
And when the crafty Knox has
schemed
To bring about disasters,
Darrell has nipped it in the bud;
The fine St. Jim's traditions
Must not be trampled in the mud
For Knox's base ambitions.

Bright are the prospects of our
school,
Its progress great and glorious,
So long as it enjoys the rule
Of "men" so meritorious.
Then let us give him "three times
three,"
This strong and sturdy giant!
And may he never cease to be
Supreme and self-reliant!

NEXT WEEK:—GEORGE FIGGINS, Leader of the New House.

extraordinary thing in the circumstances. He streaked out his one free hand and caught Baggy Trimble quite a sounding crack over the head with his palm.

"Ow! Yaroooh! Yoop!"

Baggy sprang back out of distance, clutching one ear with both hands, and Mr. Morden promptly pulled the telephone-box door to with a slam.

He then went on with his telephone message, and within a few seconds was ringing off. Then he came striding out of the telephone-box, his face a picture of wrath.

Baggy Trimble backed away from him, but the fat junior was very indignant.

"I don't see what you wanted to hit me for, Mr. Morden!" he bleated. "I wasn't trying to listen to your message—"

"Eh?"

"Listening to things not meant for my ears is something I never do," went on Baggy. "Of course, I quite understand you didn't want anybody to hear what you were saying—"

"Boy, come here!"

"Oh—wow! Help! If you hit me again, Mr. Morden—yoop!"

anybody to hear. I shall jolly well tell Colonel Kildare, who is an old friend of the Bagley Trimbles—"

The stout junior stopped speaking, partially because Mr. Morden had released his arm, but a good deal because Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed anxious to do the talking.

"Mr. Morden, sir, pway take no notice of Baggy Twimble!" the swell of St. Jim's exclaimed. "No one evah does—"

"Oh, I say, Gussy—"

"He's just a fat duffah," went on Arthur Augustus. "Vewy often indeed I have to bump the young spoofah, an' generally for buttin' in when he isn't wanted."

"D'Arcy, you beast—"

"So I should just ignore the fat wottah, if I were you, Mr. Morden," concluded Arthur Augustus; "and twy to imagine that he means well!"

Instead of answering, Mr. Morden shrugged his shoulders. Then, turning on his heel, he strode away. Baggy Trimble glared after him with indignant, angry little eyes.

"I knew that chap was a rotter directly I saw him," he said. "Shouldn't be at all surprised if he's a card-sharper

or somethin' like that. A man who'd hit a chap of my age with both fists, as well as kick him— Oh crumbs! Hallo! There's the gong!"

And Baggy Trimble rolled away like a fat barrel, trying his hardest to catch up with Figgins, Herries, and Monty Lowther, who were leisurely making their way towards the dining-room.

Arthur Augustus laughed, and so did Jack Blake, but Tom Merry looked a shade puzzled for a moment.

"Funny bizney, Morden slapping Baggy over the head," he said. "Must have a rotten temper, I should think!"

"Oh, Baggy can be vewy twyin' at times, deah boy—"

"Yes; but his fat ear was jolly red where Morden biffed it!"

"Do the fat ear good!" declared Jack Blake. "Serve him right for wangling himself into this house. Come along, chaps!"

The St. Jim's juniors forgot the telephone-box incident as they joined the cheery throng going into the dining-room.

CHAPTER 6.

Rival Goal-Keepers!

TRIMBLE! Trimble!"

It was after lunch, and the St. Jim's footer eleven were on their way to their rooms to change for the match.

Baggy Trimble stopped in his roll along the passage.

"Yes, old chap!"

"About the game this afternoon," went on the junior Shell captain cheerily. "You can act as linesman for us, if you like, if you'll promise to follow the game properly and not sit down every few minutes to scoff toffee!"

"Oh, I say, Merry—"

"Yes; it's for you to say!" grinned the captain of the Shell. "Do you want to act as our linesman?"

And Baggy answered right away, making his reply exceedingly definite.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I have got something else to do this afternoon, and it's a little bit more important than acting as linesman—"

"That's all right, then!"

"A very great deal more important, I may tell you—"

"Good!"

"Yaas, watbah!" nodded Arthur Augustus. "I twust, though, that this vewy important mattah you have to attend to won't give you indigestion, Baggy!"

"Really, D'Arcy, it has nothing to do with eating—"

"Then I weally fail to see how it can have anythin' to do with you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "Mewwy, I vathah fancy we shall have to wush off and change, bai Jove!"

"Rather!"

The juniors "rushed off," leaving Baggy Trimble looking after them.

But for once in a way Baggy did not appear to mind being left behind. In fact, his fat face suggested complete satisfaction, a not altogether unusual expression to appear on Baggy's face either just before or just after a good meal.

But at the moment the satisfied look almost verged upon a triumphant one, and it was quite certain that Baggy Trimble chuckled about when nothing seemed to have happened to warrant a chuckle.

But it was such a distinct chuckle that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, half-way up the staircase, couldn't help commenting on it.

"Somethin' seems to be amusin' Baggy Twimble, deah boys!"

"Oh, he's just found a lump of butter-scotch he left in his pocket last Christmas!" grinned Lowther. "Gold miners chuckle, you know, when they suddenly strike a find!"

"Yaas," murmured Arthur Augustus, glancing back over the balusters. "Perhaps you are right!"

The St. Jim's footballers hurried on and completely forgot Baggy Trimble and his fat chuckles during the process of changing.

In fact, they never thought of him again until Tom Merry had collected his eleven, and led the way to the private football ground.

The cadets were there already, "leg loosening" in front of one of the goals, and all round the ropes there were spectators.

"A wegahul ewowd of them, too!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "We shall have to play up like anythin', deah boys!"

"Oh, we shall play up all right!"

"Yes, and give Jimmy Kildare and his crowd a whack-
ing," said Figgins. "It's up to us to do that, especially with Cousin Ethel watchin'!"

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"Rather!"

In an enthusiastic bunch the St. Jim's juniors broke into a run towards the other goal. As Colonel Kildare had only that moment come on to the ground, there was plenty of time for some shooting in practice, and naturally Fatty Wynn, the St. Jim's junior custodian, broke into a faster trot than the others in order to get under the crossbar.

"All ready, chaps!" he called out. "Slam them in!"

"Yaas, that's the ideah! Tyv an' knoek Fatty Wynn through the net, deah boys—"

As Arthur Augustus gave that advice the ball came to him, and he swung round, meaning to crash in a really rasping shot. But instead though, he just stood there letting the footer roll away from him while he stared through his monocle at what appeared to be a very strange apparition behind the net.

It was a very stout apparition, as it happened, and one that rolled in its walk as if slightly overburdened with weight. But what was even more important, was that the apparition was wearing a red jersey over a St. Jim's football shirt.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, it's Baggy Twimble!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Baggy, in footah clobber!"

That alone was a startling fact, for Baggy Trimble was not given to donning football togs. Indeed, the only pair of football boots he had been known to possess had been given him by an uncle, but Baggy had not kept them long. A little deal with Kerruish, who happened to have a very large box of chocolates at the time, had caused the footer boots to change hands.

And yet here was Baggy now dressed quite correctly to play goal, and calmly taking up his position next to Fatty Wynn under the crossbar. Not knowing whether to laugh or be angry, Tom Merry went striding forward.

"Trimble, you duffer, there was no need to change into footer togs to act as linesman!" he exclaimed.

"Act as linesman?" snorted Trimble. "That beast Morden is going to be linesman for us. Do you mean he has changed into footer togs?"

"No, you duffer; I'm talking about you and to you!" rapped Tom Merry. "If you are not going to act as linesman, what have you togged yourself up like that for?"

"To—to play in the eleven, of course!"

"What?"

"In goal!" continued Baggy Trimble. "Practically the last thing Eric Kildare said to me when we saw him off at the station was that I was to keep goal for the side."

"You—you spoofing duffer—"

"Oh, if you don't believe me, I can only refer you to the colonel," replied Baggy frigidly, as Colonel Kildare came on to the field. "He knows quite well I was selected to play!"

In blank amazement Tom Merry stared from Baggy to the colonel. Just for the moment the captain of the Shell was completely at a loss for something to say, and it was not very often Tom Merry found himself in that difficulty.

Colonel Kildare came right into the goalmouth.

CHAPTER 7.

Baggy Changes His Mind!

YOU boys are all ready, I see, Merry," the colonel exclaimed. "The cadets will be at full strength in a very few minutes. I—Dear me!"

In astonishment Colonel Kildare looked round him, for the spectacle of two players garbed in goalkeeping jerseys puzzled him a good deal. When he had counted Tom Merry's "eleven," he was more puzzled than ever.

"Bless my soul, Merry, you have twelve players on the field!" he exclaimed.

Before Tom Merry could commence to explain, Baggy Trimble butted in quite calmly.

"Yes, sir, there has been some slight mistake," he said affably. "Wynn here, was under the impression he had been selected to play!"

"Bai Jove—"

"At least, I suppose he was under that impression," continued the one and only Baggy. "Anyway, D'Arcy, you heard Kildare distinctly ask me to keep goal—"

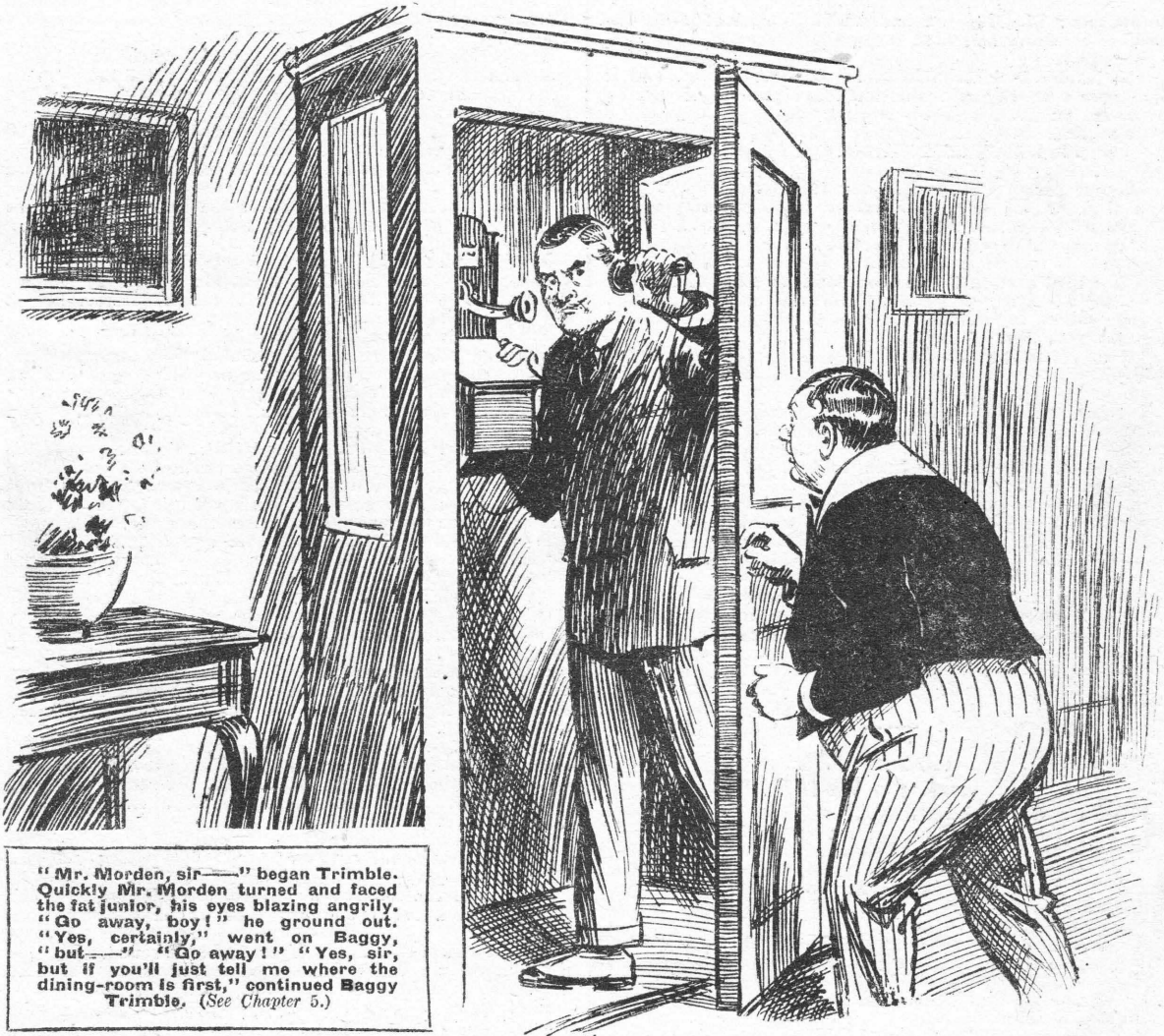
"Bai Jove, I heard nothin' of the sort, you spoofah—"

"Well, you must have seen Eric call me on one side," insisted Baggy Trimble. "Just when the train was starting—"

"I never saw anythin' of the kind—"

"Then you couldn't have been looking, that's all," declared Baggy. "Kildare certainly drew me on one side, and I remember his actual words. 'Trimble, old chap,' he said, 'I specially want you to keep goal this afternoon. It's rather hard luck on Wynn, of course—'"

"Brrr!" breathed Figgins. "I'll burst you, you fat idiot!"



"Mr. Morden, sir—" began Trimble. Quickly Mr. Morden turned and faced the fat junior, his eyes blazing angrily. "Go away, boy!" he ground out. "Yes, certainly," went on Baggy, "but—" "Go away!" "Yes, sir, but if you'll just tell me where the dining-room is first," continued Baggy Trimble. (See Chapter 5.)

"Really, Figgins—" began Trimble, and he edged away hurriedly. Then he appealed to Colonel Kildare.

"You knew I was selected to play, sir?" he asked.

"I— You certainly told me my cousin had asked you to turn out, Trimble—"

"Exactly, sir!" beamed Baggy triumphantly. "That proves it, of course. I hope you are satisfied, Merry!"

That must have been a very optimistic hope on the part of Baggy Trimble, for there was nothing in Tom Merry's face to suggest satisfaction. In fact, the captain of the Shell looked downright furious. For the moment he was at a complete loss how to deal with the affair.

During that moment Colonel Kildare solved the problem in what seemed the fairest manner to him.

"You two boys had better toss up to decide which is to play," he said cheerfully.

"Oh, I say, sir!"

"Well, isn't it the best way, D'Arcy?" urged the colonel. "It seems that Merry picked Wynn to play, and my cousin asked Trimble—"

"Oh, no, sir!" expostulated Arthur Augustus. "Kildare would never be such an uttah ass as to ask Baggy Trimble to play footah."

"But Trimble says he did."

"Yaas, sir; but—but you don't know Baggy as well as we do," went on Gussy. "I wegwet to say that he is subject to tellin' whoppahs, you know."

For a moment there was dead silence. Then Colonel Kildare quite decided the matter by taking a coin from his pocket.

"Soon settle the difficulty," he said with a smile. "Heads Trimble plays, tails Wynn does."

The coin was spun in the air, and Tom Merry & Co. watched it falling to the ground in very acute anxiety, for a great deal depended upon the way that coin fell.

It was almost certain that Tom Merry's eleven would lose the match if they had Baggy Trimble under the bar,

for what Baggy didn't know about footer would fill volumes. In fact, Tom Merry could not remember ever having seen Baggy perform in front of the net, and he was quite certain that he was incapable of putting up a great performance. Baggy Trimble would let the side down badly, of course, if that coin fell to the ground head uppermost.

And it did fall head uppermost!

A whoop of joy from Baggy proclaimed the fact, and the ferocious scowl on Wynn's cheery countenance added proof to it. Then Wynn slipped on his coat and walked gloomily towards the touchline.

"Hard luck, Fatty, deah boy!"

"Yes, it's rotten!"

"Blow Baggy Trimble!" growled Jack Blake, one of the two practice balls coming his way at that moment. "Just because he was reading about Hinton of the Spurs, he thinks he can keep goal. Here, Trimble, try to stop that one."

Always a good shot, Jack Blake fairly slammed the ball in, and, a little startled, Baggy Trimble stretched out his fat hands, but he never touched the ball.

At least, he did not touch it with his hands, but it landed in his chest, and Baggy Trimble staggered back.

"Wow! Yaroooh! Oh dear!"

Whiz!

Figgins of the New House, another very good shot, had slammed in the second practice ball, and again Baggy Trimble "saved," with his plump ribs this time.

"Oh, wow! Stoppit! Yoop!" he roared.

Baggy danced and dodged, but Kerr had slipped into the goalmouth, and was kicking the footballs out just as quickly as Tom Merry and the others were crashing them in.

And all the time Arthur Augustus was urging them on.

"Keep it up, deah boys! Give Baggy plenty of practice. Here's anothah one, Baggy!"

Really, there was little or no need for Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy to tell the fat junior another ball was on its way to the net, for Baggy found out the moment after the swell of St. Jim's had shot.

Boomph!

The leather took Trimble in his fat chest again, and it was more than Baggy could stand, heavyweight though he was. He sat down with a bump, roaring.

"Yaroooh! Stoppit, you rotters! I don't feel well! I— I'm going to faint, I think! Wow!"

Whiz!

Another fine shot crashed in, this time from Digby's foot, and Dig, on his day, was rather good at serving up "raspers." The shot he put in, at any rate, was a rasper, and Baggy, unintentionally, headed it.

Bang! It met his bullet head with a resounding thwack, and he rolled over in his goal on hands and knees.

"Grough! I'm not playing, you rotters!" he gasped. "You—you've injured me for life. I absolutely refuse to play for you, Tom Merry!"

"Right!" snapped Tom, and he beckoned to Fatty Wynn. "Wynn, slip off your coat again, and get between the sticks. Trimble, you can vamoose."

Partially winded, and altogether scared, Baggy acted upon the advice. He rolled unsteadily away towards the touchline, and it is doubtful whether the Aston Villa directorate could have persuaded him to turn out for them that afternoon.

But there was great joy in Tom Merry's team, for with Fatty Wynn back under the bar there would be no passengers in the side. All would be well-trying men, doing their utmost to beat Jimmy Kildare and his brother cadets, and all were eager for the fray to commence.

A minute or two later Tom Merry lost the toss, and Colonel Kildare whistled the rival teams to their places, the St. Jim's juniors facing a somewhat hazy sun.

Almost directly afterwards the whistle went again, and Tom Merry kicked-off.

The game had started!

CHAPTER 8.

Playing to Win!

"OH, well played, St. Jim's!"

The encouraging cheer went up from the spectators in a very wholehearted manner. Excepting Colonel Kildare's guests, all the men and boys round the ropes lived in the tiny neighbouring villages, and, naturally, the type of football they were used to was of the rough-and-ready school.

Hard, energetic soccer, of course, but played by not over-skillful exponents of the great winter game, and on none too level grounds, with the result that the finer points of the game were not very noticeable in the class of football served up in that district.

But this exhibition of the dribbling code was utterly different. Here flashlike and accurate passes, combined with quick individual bursts, were to be seen, and the little crowd enthused automatically.

And in those opening exchanges the St. Jim's junior eleven were very much in the picture.

With Tom Merry leading the front line, and Blake and Lowther on each side of him, the forward play was finely exploited right from the kick-off. In fact, Jack Blake all but sent Tom through with a splendid forward pass in the opening minute of the game.

Not quite, though. With fine judgment, Jimmy Kildare, a tower of strength at centre-half for the cadets, nipped in at the critical moment, and he made no mistake with his clearing kick.

Boomph!

The ball was sailing down the ground in splendid fashion, but again it was Tom Merry's side which supplied the thrills, Reilly gaining possession, and sending Arthur Augustus away on the right wing.

Right nobly did the swell of St. Jim's make use of his chance. He streaked along the touchline at a great pace.

But Arthur Augustus' brand of wing play did not depend alone upon speed. He was always a very dependable man when the time came to centre, and he was right at the top of his form that afternoon, his passes dropping accurately in front of goal.

Finely Jimmy Kildare got his foot to the ball, but Jack Blake charged down the clearing kick, and both juniors were grassed.

The ball was sailing away to the left, when Tom Merry was seen to jump suddenly in the air. Next moment his head was in contact with the ball, and—tap! He had deflected the leather right on to Monty Lowther's foot.

As quickly as possible Monty dashed ahead, neatly beating one of the cadets' backs in his stride. But the other defender was coming across, and Lowther showed splendid restraint in not taking a chance with a shot from a difficult angle.

Instead, the Shell junior flashed the ball in towards his right with a pass that was very well judged, indeed.

"You's, Merry!"

Monty's voice could be heard all over the ground, and like a flash of lightning Tom Merry got his foot to the leather. Next there was a thud, and the cadets' custodian was observed diving sideways.

But he could only get the tips of his fingers to the leather, which was not nearly enough to stop Tom Merry's shot, for the ball simply crashed into the net, bringing first blood for the St. Jim's eleven.

"Well played, you chaps!" panted Jimmy Kildare. "You deserved that one, anyway!"

There could be no doubt about that. On the run of the play so far, St. Jim's certainly deserved to be a goal to the good, but that section of the little crowd who thought the schoolboys were going to run up a cricket score could not have been very sound judges of the game.

But they did think it, as their shouts proclaimed.

"Hurrah! Played, St. Jim's!"

"Keep it up, St. Jim's! You're all over them!"

"Yes, altogether, St. Jim's!"

But it was the cadets' eleven who were all together now, for Jimmy Kildare & Co. were girding up their loins in splendid form.

Right from the restart their forwards were in the picture, and it was only a brilliant tackle on the part of Figgins of the long legs that saved the equaliser being registered straight away.

Even Figgy's great tackle, though, could not clear his lines, and the cadets showed up brilliantly as they swarmed again into the St. Jim's goalmouth. From the touchline came the same encouraging shouts which had urged Tom Merry & Co. on.

"Shoot, Jimmy Kildare!"

"Just one, the cadets!"

"He's through— Oh, hard luck!"

For one of the cadets had flashed past Figgins, and had slammed in a really startling shot as far as speed was concerned.

But there was still Fatty Wynn to be reckoned with, and the junior from Wales was by no means an easy man to beat. He jumped sideways, and a sturdy fist shot out.

Biff!

There was a thud as knuckles made contact with leather, and the ball was sent sailing like a rocket towards mid-field. Fatty Wynn had saved his side!

The cadets' front line were soon at work once more.

With fine, bustling tactics, they forced their way through the St. Jim's half-back line, and a good forward pass defeated Kerr. Just as quickly, the cadets' centre-forward dashed ahead and trapped the ball in his stride. Then, when it seemed almost certain he meant to try a shot, he back-heeled the leather.

That manoeuvre sent the ball rolling quite gently towards Jimmy Kildare, who was racing up at great speed, and Jimmy's eyes sparkled.

He loved taking a shot with a ball that was rolling towards him, and here was his chance. Jimmy Kildare took that chance without a wasted second, and his foot met the leather with a terrific impact.

The next moment something flashed past Figgins, and Fatty Wynn hurled himself towards an upright. But this time Wynn never had any chance of saving, and the crowd showed its appreciation. Jimmy Kildare had equalised with a shot no goalkeeper playing could have kept out.

"Phew! That was a whizzer, Kildare!" grinned Tom Merry, as the rival forwards went back to the centre of the pitch. "Going to serve up any more of those sort?"

"Hope to, old top!"

"Then perhaps it's as well we've got Wynn under the crossbar and not Trimble," laughed the St. Jim's junior captain.

"One all, and the game not much more than a quarter of an hour old. Altogether, chaps!"

Tom Merry had hardly shouted the words when away went the St. Jim's vanguard, a well-placed pass to Arthur Augustus on the wing opening up the attack nicely. Indeed, Gussy's centre almost brought about disaster from the cadets' point of view, for Tom Merry met the transfer by means of a terrific first-time shot.

Whizz!

Only by a few inches did the leather scrape over the bar,

ANSWERS

Every Saturday.....PRICE 2!



Bump, bump! Baggy Trimble's stout person made contact with the muddy football ground with a great concussion. "Yarooooh! O-er! Wow!" bleated the fat junior. "You rotters! Yoooop!" "You must excuse us, colonel," said D'Arcy to Colonel Kildare, "but, weally, it is the only way of gettin' facts out of Twimble!" (See chapter 10.)

and the narrow escape caused Jimmy Kildare & Co. to grid up their loins again.

From the goal kick they crammed on the pace, and Fatty Wynn was called upon once more. But the Falstaff of the New House was not found wanting. His sturdy fist got to the ball, and the St. Jim's citadel was saved from falling.

Much the same thing happened at the other end of the ground, where the cadets' goalie was putting up a very fine game, and the opening half of the match came to an exciting close with the score still one all.

No sooner had the whistle blown for half-time when Baggy Trimble came running on the field, waving a cablegram wildly in the air.

"It's just come, Colonel Kildare!" Baggy panted. "I expect it's from my old friend Eric. Shall I open it, sir?"

"Bai Jove, Twimble!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Of all the fidgetful cheek!"

But there was no need for Gussy to become indignant, for the colonel apparently had not heard Baggy's "friendly" suggestion. Instead, he had taken the cablegram from the stout junior.

He ripped it open, and his face seemed to go blank with astonishment.

"By Jove, this is extraordinary news, boys!" he exclaimed. "It is from my cousin, Eric, but it isn't bad news. Quite the contrary."

"Mrs. Kildare is better, sir?" asked Jack Blake eagerly. "No, for she has never been ill," answered the puzzled colonel. "This cablegram says she is in the very best of health!"

"Oh, splendid!"

"Yes, of course, it is splendid, Merry," nodded the colonel, still puzzling over the cablegram. "I gather Eric sent this

from Belfast, and from the way he has worded it, I imagine he has met his mother there by chance at the home of some relatives we have there, I suppose. Anyway, this cablegram cannot be an answer to mine, of course, for I cabled direct to Mrs. Kildare's house in the country."

"And Mrs. Kildare isn't there?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "How funny the 2 L O people should have made such a mistake."

"But can they have made a mistake?" asked Colonel Kildare grimly. "They are always very careful over urgent broadcast messages, and it is past belief that they could not only be wrong in saying Mrs. Kildare was seriously ill, but also wrong in sending Eric to her home in the country."

"Bai Jove, that's twue—"

"Then what can it mean, sir?" exclaimed Tom Merry blankly. "Who in the world could have wanted to prevent your cousin playing in this match?"

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"No one, I should imagine," he said sternly. "It looks to me very much as if someone at St. Jim's played a very caddish trick both on my cousin and the 2 L O people, that a request was sent to the broadcast company asking them to send out the bogus message!"

"A St. Jim's chap wouldn't do that, sir!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"And against Kildare, too!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "My hat, I don't think we have a chap in the whole school who would play such a jape!"

"No, wathah not!" agreed Arthur Augustus, horrified at the mere thought of such a thing. "I wathah fancy this is the work of some wotten outsiders, who has played the

(Continued on page 16.)



THE St. Jim's News



CURES for COMMON AILMENTS!

Some valuable advice, given free, gratis, and for nothing.

By "Dr." MONTAGUE LOWTHER.

"KANGAROO" (School House).—Sorry to hear that 13 puns have given you a "splitting" headache. There are several cures, but perhaps the most effective will be for you to go and interview the Public Executioner!

"FATTY" (New House).—Judging by the symptoms you describe, I should say you were suffering from a bilious attack. This is the result of under-feeding. The best cure is to take a cross-Channel voyage when the sea is choppy, and to eat plenty of fat pork. The Head is not likely to consent to your taking a Channel trip, but I can supply the pork, all serene. We have a fat pig in the School House named Trimble. If we "cure" him, and serve him up, it will be the means of "curing" you!

"KNOXY" (Sixth Form).—What you are suffering from, dear man, is "swollen head." I prescribe a diet of "humble pie" to reduce the swelling!

"COMIC CUTTS" (Fifth Form).—You say you have noticed a slight downy growth on your upper lip, and you want to know how to get rid of it. Wait till the downy growth becomes perceptible to the naked eye, and then go and see a barber!

"BAGGIBUS" (School House).—You say: "I have contracted a severe inflammation of the right eye." Surely you mean "inflammation"? This was probably caused through spying at keyholes. The best thing you can do is to spy with your left eye in future, and get it inflamed to match! In a further letter you state: "I was rolled down the School House steps yesterday by that beast, Blake, and my back is broken in three places." If that was the case, surely your letter should have been signed "Baggy Trimble's Executors"?

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY (School House).—The best cure for a black eye is a pound of beefsteak—not to be taken internally!

GEORGE HERRIES (School House).—I know a ripping cure for rabies, but you omit to state who has got them—yourself or your dog, Fowser? Let me have this information, and I will advise you what to do. Rabies seems to be a common complaint just now. They've got rabies at Rookwood—at least, they've got one Raby!

WALLY D'ARCY (Third Form).—You can't possibly have contracted "sky-aticca," as you call it, this complaint being peculiar to aviators. The "shooting panes" which you describe may be merely the result of a licking from Selby!

"FIGGY" (New House).—Yours is a serious case, old man. I have suspected all along that you had bats in your belfry, and your letter confirms the painful fact. You can't expect to live, move, and have your being in an asylum like the New House

without going cranky like the rest of the inmates! I know of no cure—unless you would care to come over to the School House and study the habits of sane and normal fellows!



The INVASION!

By MARIE RIVERS
(The School Nurse)

AS I was chatting in the sanny With matron (she's a dear old granny),

A crowd came flocking up the stairs, And burst upon us unawares.

"I've got a pain!" groaned Fatty Wynn.
"And so have I!" moaned Bernard Glyn.
"I've got an ache!" growled Gerald Crooke.
"And I've got aches and pains!" gasped Brooke.

"I've had a bumpin'" panted Racke;
"It seemed to dislocate my back!"
"I've caught a fearful cold!" said Clampe.
"I got my little tootsies damp!"

Two fags had had electric shocks,
And Knox had cuts, and Cutts had knocks.
Even the big and strong Kildare
Was with the patients, I declare!

"Through over-swottin'," said young Frayne.
"I'm queer with water on the brain!"
"Although I'm not a trifle brainy,
I've got the same!" said Mick Mulvaney.

"My voice is nearly gone!" croaked Herries.
"And so has Gussy's, likewise Merry's.
Our throats are sore; they feel on fire.
To go to bed is our desire."

From Trimble came a dismal howl;
From Manners came an anguished growl.
From Kangaroo and Clifton Dane
Came various moans and groans of pain!

I stared in wonder at the group
Of boys with colds and chills and croup.
And as I stared, in trooped some more—
Wilkins and Wildrake, Gunn and Gore!

"My word," I murmured, in dismay,
"The whole school's taken ill to-day!
I fail to see, though I'm no dunce,
Why everybody's ill at once!"

The matron made the matter clear—
"I know why all these boys are here.
The Head is lecturing to-night.
They want to dodge it!"—she was right!

SOMETHING EXTRA SPECIAL!

HARRY WHARTON'S
FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT
IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry

GETTING ill is not cheerful; but when a St. Jim's fellow does have the misfortune to get ill he goes to a cheerful place—the school "sanny." This isolated part of the building used to be about as cheerful as a dungeon-cell. I can remember the time when a fellow would try to cure himself of a bad cold instead of taking it to the sanny. Miss Pinch, the matron, is a kindly old soul, but she is inclined to be over-fussy. She used to give her patients no peace. She would be for ever taking their temperatures, or adjusting their pillows, or sitting by their sick-beds reading Early Victorian novels till the patients went to sleep from sheer boredom. Moreover, Miss Pinch was—and still is—a great believer in gruel. She regards gruel as a sort of universal panacea for all the ills which flesh is heir to. And so, when we went to the sanny in the olden days, we were always sure of a "gruelling" time!

With the arrival of Miss Marie Rivers, the charming school nurse, things have changed for the better in the sanny. Miss Pinch is getting on in years, and she is now merely a supervisor. Miss Marie does all the active work. She has transformed the school sanny from a place of gloom into a bright and cheerful spot. It used to be considered a dire misfortune to get ill. Now it is almost a pleasure!

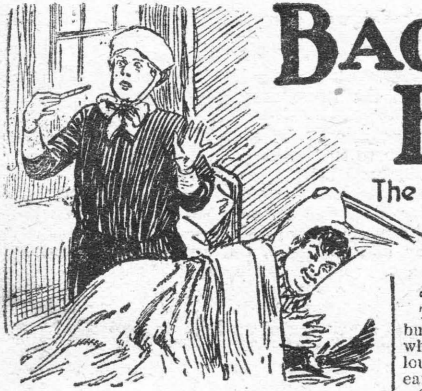
Miss Marie is, of course, a fully qualified nurse, and she has very decided views on how a sanatorium should be run. She believes in keeping a patient's spirits up by making the room gay with flowers, and by studying his comfort in every possible—and reasonable—way. She is no believer in large and watery doses of gruel or in old-fashioned novels. There is now a library of splendid books in the sanny, and it includes all the volumes of "The Holiday Annual." No fellow need ever feel lonely in the school hospital. If his illness is slight, Miss Marie's nursing skill soon banishes it altogether. If his illness is severe, Marie is unremitting in her care and attention. She has been known to sacrifice several nights' sleep for the welfare of her patients.

But Miss Marie, though kindness itself to the genuine cases, has no mercy on malingers. It is useless for Baggy Trimble to feign illness on the eve of a public flogging, with a view to escaping the ordeal.

Miss Marie knows all the well-known tricks, such as sending the temperature up by rubbing the thermometer between the blankets or holding it to the fire. She can also tell a genuinely pale complexion from a chalked one! It would take a very clever malingering to pull the wool over Miss Marie's eyes. Trimble has shammed illness once or twice; but Marie's "cures" have been so drastic that Baggy never visits the sanny now unless he is really out of sorts!

Hats off, then, to Miss Marie Rivers, the shining light of the school "sanny"! May her charming face, pleasing smiles, and soothing "tonics" remain with us for all time!

TOM MERRY.



BAGGY'S BENEFIT!

The Story of a Guilty Conscience

By

ERNEST LEVISON.

TO-NIGHT at eight o'clock. . . .
General Assembly. . . . Trimble

The Head was speaking to Mr. Railton in his study, and a fat figure was crouching outside the door, with his ear glued to the keyhole. It was Baggy Trimble. The fat junior could only hear snatches of the conversation, but the extract quoted above startled him considerably.

There was to be a General Assembly at eight o'clock that evening, and the central figure in the proceedings was to be Trimble.

An assembly in Big Hall generally portended a flogging for somebody, and Baggy Trimble fairly quaked with apprehension. There was no doubt in his mind that he was booked for a public flogging.

The conversation in the Head's study ceased, and Mr. Railton's footsteps could be heard approaching the door. The Paul Pry of the Fourth promptly scuttled away down the corridor.

Baggy was in a state of fright, not to say panic. His hair stood almost on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine. His eyes were wild with terror at the prospect of being hoisted on to the porter's shoulders and flogged before the whole school. It is said that cowards die many times before their deaths, and already Baggy could feel the torturing strokes of the birch and hear its steady, relentless swishing. He gave quite a yelp.

"Yow!"
Out in the quadrangle the fat junior ran through his latest misdeeds. He had quite a catalogue of them on his conscience. But the only serious offence which warranted a public flogging was the purloining of an apple-pie from the school kitchen during the night. Baggy had fondly hoped that his offence would not come to light; but, apparently, he must have left a tell-tale handkerchief, or something of that sort, in the school kitchen, and it had given him away. Doubtless the cook had reported the matter to Mr. Railton, and the Headmaster, in turn, had taken it to the Head. And the flat had gone forth that Trimble was to be flogged in Big Hall.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and a half-holiday. In five hours precisely the Sword of Damocles—or, rather, the Head's birch—would fall, unless—

A sudden brain-wave occurred to Baggy. He felt thankful that he had been forewarned of the fate in store for him. Had he been kept in ignorance till the fateful hour it would have been too late for him to dodge the ordeal.

"I'll go sick!" exclaimed Baggy. "They can't flog a fellow when he's in the sanny. Marie Rivers is off duty this afternoon. That's a stroke of luck. Miss Marie can always tell whether a fellow's really ill or whether he's just shamming. But Miss Pinch, the matron—why, it's the easiest thing in the world to pull the wool over her eyes!"

Baggy Trimble, having made his decision, rolled away in the direction of the sanny. He had got over his fright now, and he was actually chuckling. But when he drew near to his destination he suddenly stopped chuckling, and started to emit the most heartrending groans.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Oooooop! Oh dear!"
Miss Pinch, hovering at the head of the stairs, heard Baggy's noisy ascent. The good lady looked quite startled.

"Bless my soul! What ever is the matter, Trimble?"

"Yaroooooh!" bellowed Baggy. The fat junior was evidently in great pain, but he was not one of the world's heroes who suffer in silence. Baggy suffered very loudly—so loudly, in fact, that the matron's eardrums were endangered.

"Dear me!" murmured Miss Pinch, her kindly face all concern. "Have you been over-eating again, Trimble?"

"Nunno, ma'am! I—I've got something wrong with my lungs. I can hardly breathe." Miss Pinch looked astonished. Trimble's lungs seemed in first-class fettle, judging by his recent bellows.

"Nonsense, Trimble! Your lungs are quite sound."

Trimble gave a sepulchral groan. "I've got galloping consumption, ma'am!" he gasped. "It's galloping so fast that I—I don't think I shall last till night-fall!"

"Rubbish! If you have a pain in your chest, my boy, it is obviously due to indigestion. We will soon ascertain if there is anything seriously wrong. Come into the sick-room, and I will take your temperature."

Baggy followed the matron into the sick-room, and a thermometer was placed in his mouth. Miss Pinch then bustled out of the room, saying she would be back in a moment.

This gave Baggy his opportunity. He placed the thermometer in the fireplace, and left it there before the fire's cheerful blaze. When he heard the matron coming back, he snatched up the instrument and popped it into his mouth again.

"Now," said Miss Pinch, "let me see what your temperature is, Trimble."

She took the thermometer and examined it. Then her face became grave.

"Over a hundred!" she murmured. "Indigestion carries no temperature, so it must be something else that is wrong with you."

"Galloping consumption, ma'am!" said Baggy eagerly.

"No, no! You are far too fat to contract a wasting disease of that kind. I should say you have caught a chill, and there is probably a little congestion. You must get into bed at once."

Trimble's face brightened up, but only for an instant. He looked as unhappy as ever the next moment, and started to groan once more.

"I will keep a close watch on your progress," said Miss Pinch, "and if you are not better by this evening I shall have to send for the doctor."

Groaning and grunting, and occasionally giving a bellow like that of a beast in pain, Baggy Trimble undressed and turned in. The matron made him comfortable, and as soon as she had departed there was a chuckle from beneath the blankets.

"I've worked the oracle!" chortled Baggy. "There will be no public flogging to-night! If I can only manage to stay here for a few days, the Head will forget all about my raid on the kitchen!"

It was very warm and comfortable in bed, but as the afternoon wore on the patient began to feel hungry. When Miss Pinch came in to make up the fire Baggy asked if he might have tea.

The matron shook her head. "You are feverish," she said kindly. "Feverishness invariably accompanies a high temperature. I cannot allow you to have food until the temperature drops."

"Oh crumbs!"
Baggy Trimble was in a quandary. He dared not say that his temperature had dropped, or it would seem that he was quite well again. On the other hand, if he kept up his pretence of having a high temperature, there would be no tea for him.

But the pretence had to be kept up, and it was a tealess afternoon for the young pretender.

Baggy was feeling more hungry and less jappy as the day wore on.

Shortly before eight o'clock Marie Rivers turned up to take duty. Miss Marie gave the plump patient a grim look.

"Have you been deceiving Miss Pinch, Trimble?" she demanded.

"Eh? Certainly not, Miss Marie! I—I'm too jolly ill to think of deceiving anybody at the moment."

"I am convinced, Trimble, that you are malingering," said the school nurse. "I will take your temperature, and if it is normal I shall make you get up at once!"

Trimble glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece and groaned. It was ten minutes to eight. If he were made to get up now he would be just in time for the General Assembly, and Baggy had no wish to be in time for that awful function!

His temperature was taken again, and Miss Marie stood over him.

Presently she took the thermometer and scrutinised it closely.

"Normal!" she said. "I thought so! Up you get!"

"Oh, really, Miss Marie—"

"There is nothing whatever the matter with you, Trimble! You will rise and dress immediately! If you are not dressed by eight o'clock, I shall know how to deal with you!"

So saying, Miss Marie withdrew.

Knowing what a very determined young lady Miss Marie was, Baggy dared not disobey her commands. Very reluctantly he turned out and got into his clothes.

On the stroke of eight the assembly-bell rang, summoning St. Jim's into Big Hall.

Baggy shuddered as he heard the solemn bell. It seemed to be sounding his death-knell.

Miss Marie opened the door. "Hurry up, Trimble," she said, "or you will be late for the assembly!"

Baggy gave a last despairing groan, and wended his way to Big Hall. He rolled in at the tail-end of the throng, and he shivered like a fat table-jelly as he noticed the Head and the masters standing in solemn majesty on the platform. Tagetes, the porter, was there also—a significant sign!

It was a very forlorn Trimble that rolled into his place in the ranks of the Fourth. He guessed that he was "for it," and his guess ripened into a conviction when the Head called upon him to stand out.

Like a condemned man walking to the scaffold, Baggy Trimble progressed towards the platform—the cynosure of all eyes. He was wondering what excuse he could possibly invent to justify the purloining of the apple-pie.

Then, looking up, Baggy saw, to his astonishment and wonder, that the Head was smiling at him. Moreover, there was no sign of a birch-rod.

"My boys," began Dr. Holmes, addressing the silent school, "it will be remembered that, some weeks ago, Trimble was instrumental in frustrating a burglary at this school. A dangerous cracksmen named Dawlish—now in prison—broke into my study with intent to steal, and Trimble surprised him and gave the alarm. I have since discussed the matter with several of the masters, and Mr. Railton suggested that we should show our appreciation of Trimble's conduct in some tangible form. We have therefore decided to present him with a gold watch to commemorate his unique and surprising bravery on the occasion in question."

Baggy Trimble wondered if he was dreaming. The Head's words rang like music in his ears.

But it was no dream. The presentation was duly made, amid loud cheering.

Some of the cheering had a note of irony in it, for it was remembered that Baggy's isolated act of bravery had been due to the influence of a book he had been reading called "Bob Briton's Schooldays." Baggy had merely aped the hero of the book. He was not naturally brave, and in the ordinary way he would have run for his life on catching sight of a cracksmen.

However, Baggy's solitary deed of valour had earned him a reward in the shape of a gold watch. And as he rolled contentedly out of Big Hall with his prize, Baggy reflected that a gold watch was much to be preferred to a public flogging any day!

THE END.

Supplement II.

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"FOOTBALL RIVALS!"

(Continued from page 13.)

w'etched twick for a weason at pwesent unknown to us. I wathah fancy, too—"

But neither the colonel nor Tom Merry & Co. nor anyone else were in the mood to listen to one of Gussy's little speeches. In fact, no one had listened very intently to the opening of it, for Mr. Morden suddenly had something to say.

"Anyway, the matter can quickly be cleared up!" he exclaimed. "I will slip along and phone up to the 2LO people and gain full details of how they came to be asked to broadcast the message."

"Yes, we can do that—"

"I will go at once, colonel," said Mr. Morden. "I shall be back in a very few minutes!"

"Oh, there is no need for you to trouble!" replied the colonel. "You are acting as linesman, and I am just going to restart the game. Trimble, I know, won't mind making inquiries over the telephone."

"Rather not, sir!" flashed Baggy, remembering that there was a lot of fruit on the sideboard in the dining-room, which was on the way to the telephone. "I'll rush off straight-away!"

Mr. Morden bit his lip and turned his back on the colonel and the footballers, and a very few seconds later the game was under way again.

CHAPTER 9.

The Winning Goal!

TREMENDOUSLY relieved at the news that Eric Kildare's mother was quite well, after all, Tom Merry & Co. of the St. Jim's forward line went away from the centre circle in a fine rush.

With well-judged passes to each other the forwards swept through the cadets' halves. Before even it was realised that danger was threatening the goalie was being called upon.

Splendidly the cadet kept the ball out; but he could not get it away very far, and that seemed to give Arthur Augustus a chance.

"Go it, Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's came dashing in from the wing, and no one ever doubted for a moment that he would try a shot if he could get to the ball in time.

But Arthur Augustus had no intention of attempting a shot from such a difficult angle, and the thing he did instead showed that there was real football in the swell of the School House. He just flicked the ball with his foot and tapped it into the centre again with a back pass.

"Yours, Mewwy, deah boy!" he panted.

Bang!

Tom Merry had taken the ball in his stride, and there it was at the back of the net, climbing up to the top as if it were a live thing seeking a way out.

"Goal!"

"Oh, well played, St. Jim's!" exclaimed Colonel Kildare, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that referees do not usually congratulate teams during a match. "A splendid goal!"

But two minutes later the colonel had almost forgotten Tom Merry's noble effort in his admiration of the manner in which the cadets set about equalising. And it was Jimmy Kildare who attracted all the limelight in a really dazzling attack, and it was Jimmy who was in possession in front of goal with a fine chance of registering.

"Shoot, Jimmy!"

"Go through on your own, old chap!"

"Look out for that fat chap in goal!"

Advice simply showered upon Jimmy Kildare, as he plunged ahead, but probably he heard none of it. In fact, all his attention was centred upon Fatty Wynn, for the New House keeper was not the type of custodian to stand still under a crossbar and hope for the best.

Fatty Wynn saw that his two backs were hopelessly beaten, so there was only one thing left to be done—come out of goal with a rush. And Wynn did come out with a rush, waving his arms in the air and doing his utmost to cover up all the goalmouth.

Straight as a die he dashed for the oncoming Jimmy

Kildare, but the cadet was every bit as cool as was the St. Jim's junior.

Boomph!

With a quick glance at the top left-hand corner, Jimmy Kildare let fly. At the same moment Fatty Wynn dived that way.

The best junior goalkeeper to be found at St. Jim's got the tips of his fingers to the ball.

"Saved, sir! Oh, hard luck!"

The cries of approbation changed to cries of sympathy with the goalie, for, although Fatty Wynn had diverted the course of the ball a shade, that shade was not quite enough. To the intense joy of the cadets, the ball scraped into the net at the junction of crossbar and upright.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Jimmy!"

Two all, and about a quarter of an hour to go. That was the state of the game when Tom Merry kicked off again, and at once it was obvious what was to happen—a terrific, ding-dong struggle for the mastery.

At a pace which spoke well for the condition of the rival forward lines the players surged up and down the field. At one moment Tom Merry or Jack Blake would be testing the cadets' custodian, at the next it would be Fatty Wynn who was being called upon. Yet that deciding goal refused to come.

Five minutes before long whistle the score was still equal, with the exchanges more like the final stages of a thrilling Cuptie rather than a friendly match. In fact, Colonel Kildare found himself taking more exercise than he had done for years, for he was literally racing from one goalmouth to the other, and then back again.

Always, though, it seemed that the rival defences were just that tiny but immensely important bit better than the respective attacking forces, and so the spectators began to resign themselves to the prospect of a draw.

Not that they had ceased to encourage their favourites on, though. On the contrary, they were cheering and shouting all the time, and there was something of an ovation when Fatty Wynn saved a "daisy-cutter" at full length.

"Bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus, who was working like a Trojan on the touch-line. "That was a wippin' save!"

"Oh, that was easy!" came the voice of Baggy from among the spectators. "I could have stopped that one with my eyes shut, you know!"

"Yaas, deah boy; but only if it had hit you in the tummay!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Out here, Mewwy, old top!"

Even as the swell of St. Jim's spoke Tom Merry flashed the ball out to the wing, and away went the immaculate Gussy. Showing a clean pair of heels to the half-back opposed to him he raced for the corner-flag, and the inevitable happened. The full-back came streaking out towards the touch-line.

And that was just what Arthur Augustus was playing for. He let the full-back all but reach him, then screwed round. At almost the same instant he lifted the ball right into the goalmouth, and there was another shout from the spectators.

"Heads up, St. Jim's!"

No need for the advice, though, for Tom Merry was already jumping. With splendid judgment he got the centre of his forehead to the ball. The instant following the ball was down on the ground right in front of Jack Blake, who had raced up at top speed.

And Jack Blake never hesitated for an instant. He realised that a chance of a lifetime had come his way, and he took that chance. Without slackening pace even a fraction he took the ball in his stride, and—

Thud!

The ball crashed into the net, and the game was won and lost!

No doubt about that, because Colonel Kildare was whistling loudly, not only for the deciding goal, but for "time" as well; and as the shrill blast died away the voice of Arthur Augustus was heard in the land.

"Well played, Blake, deah boy!"

"Good old Fourth Form!" chuckled Digby.

"And good old Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry. "It was your centre that gave us the goal. But I'm not so sure it isn't rather hard luck on your team, Kildare. A draw would have been a fairer result, I think."

"Rubbish!" said Jimmy Kildare easily. "You got the winning goal, and you jolly well deserved it! I reckon none of my team are going to worry about losing to such a team of sportsmen. Hallo! Here's your comic reserve man eager to tell us what news the 2LO people could give him."

Tom Merry laughed again, for the "comic reserve man" referred to was Baggy Trimble, of course. And Baggy certainly did wear an air of importance, as if he had some very important information indeed to impart. At quite a brisk trot he ambled up to Colonel Kildare

The colonel turned expectantly to him.

CHAPTER 10.
Startling News!

WELL, Trimble, what is the news?" Colonel Kildare asked the question eagerly, but if he expected a quick, concise reply it only went to prove that he did not know Baggy. As a matter of fact, the fat junior was so seldom in the limelight to the present extent, when everybody was staring at him and waiting for him to speak, that he had no intention of shortening the pleasing experience if he could help it. He wasted as much time as he could clearing his throat—and when that was done it can scarcely be said that he supplied really startling information.

"I managed to get through to 2LO, sir," he said; "but I had some slight trouble with the girl at the local exchange—"

"Never mind that part, Trimble—"
"No, sir, I don't mind," said Baggy generously. "Still, I think she ought to be reported as she was rather rude to me—"

"Ass!" breathed Jack Blake through his nose. "Tell the colonel what they said about the Kildare message at 2LO, duffer!"

Baggy Trimble shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "My dear Blake, I am telling the colonel, but if you will insist on interrupting—"

"Go on, you burbler!"
"As I was saying," continued Baggy. "I had this slight trouble with the local exchange young lady—"

But that was as far as Baggy Trimble ever got with his well-thought-out recital, because Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suddenly butted in. And the method of Gussy's butting was rather contrary to his usual patient, peaceful temperament, because it consisted chiefly of clutching the verbose Baggy by the scruff of the neck.

At the same time Arthur Augustus asked for assistance.

"Help me bump the fat duffah, deah boys!" he cried. "Weally, it is the only way of gettin' facts out of Twimble, colonel, so you must excuse us. Othahwise, we are likely to be detained heah for about a week—"

"Bump him, deah boys!" urged Arthur Augustus. "The thing has got to be done, and the soonah the bettah! What did the 2LO people say, Twimble?"

"I—"
Bump, bump!

Baggy's stout person made contact with the muddy football ground with great concussion, for Tom Merry and Jack Blake and Herries were only too ready to lend a helping hand in the good work.

"Yaroooh! O-er! Wow!" bleated Trimble. "You rotters— Yoop! They just said they had a telephone message—"

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooh! I'm trying to tell you, you beasts! They—wow—had a telephone message, and—yah—will inquire as to who sent it, and write to the colonel. That's all, you cads!"

At once hostile hands were removed from Baggy's dishevelled form, and Arthur Augustus apologised again to Colonel Kildare.

"I wathah fancy there is no furthah news, sir," he said politely. "The 2LO people merely had a telephone message, and they are goin' to find out who sent it if they can."

"Bless my soul—yes, I heard that!" said Colonel Kildare, somewhat taken aback. "Is—is that—ahem!—the usual method of urging Trimble to tell a story quickly, D'Arcy?"

"As a mattah of fact, it's the only way, sir," replied Arthur Augustus. "To let him wamble on takes a frightful time, and you nevah get the wight stowey. Far easiah and quickah to bump him at the beginnin' than leave it to the end."

"Dear me, what an extraordinary manner of cross-examining anyone!" exclaimed the colonel, endeavouring not to laugh. "It is very fortunate such methods are not used in the Law Courts. Boys, the orders for the day are quick changes and baths and tea in the hall as soon as you are all ready."

"Yaas, bai Jove! Pway get a move on, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" certainly did get a move on, and, expecting Arthur Augustus, rapid toilettes were performed. But even Gussy seemed quicker than usual changing into ordinary clothes that afternoon, although he was some little time behind the others.

"Pway wait for me, Blake!" he shouted from his bedroom. "I'm practically weady now—"

"Well, come along then!"

"In a mattah of a minute or so—"

"Rats!" chuckled Jack Blake's voice in the passage outside. "We know your minutes, old duffer, and we want our tea. Come on, Dig!"

Away went Jack Blaké & Co., of Study No. 6, and close

upon their heels followed Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell.

"I say, Mewwy, old chap—"

"Can't stop, Gussy!"

"You wottah, I'm nearly weady—"

"Yes, so is tea!" chuckled Tom Merry in the distance.

"See you later, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus ceased struggling with an unwilling tie to shake an angry fist at the retreating voice, and then struggled on again. As a result, he was about five minutes later than any of the others in hurrying towards the broad staircase.

As he reached the staircase he was compelled to stop at the head because Mr. Morden was hurrying up towards him.

"So dweadfully unlucky to pass on the stairs, Mr. Morden," Arthur Augustus explained. "I'm in wathah a huwwy, but it doesn't mattah, of course!"

Mr. Morden laughed.

"In a hurry, eh?" he repeated. "Well, you can pass me now without any ill-luck. Oh, by the way, are you the St. Jim's junior who is so good at photography?"

"Oh, deah no, that's Mannahs of the Shell—"

"And he really is good?"

"Absolutely toppin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"What Mannahs doesn't know about hypo an' pywo and all those messy stuffs, isn't jolly well worth knowin'?"

Mr. Morden laughed again.

"What I am really driving at is, could this boy Manners take a flashlight portrait?" he exclaimed. "I know I have some magnesium powder somewhere, and if he has a camera, and knows how to use it, a portrait of little Betty Kildare in that big, throne-like chair in the hall would please her immensely. Just an idea, of course."

"And a wattin' fine ideah, sir!"

"Think so," said Mr. Morden carelessly. "Well, I shall be going up to my bed-room shortly for my second shave of the day, and if I can find the magnesium powder I'll put it out on the dressing-table. Your friend Manners is very welcome to it if it will be of any use to him."

"Thanks awff'ly, Mr. Morden!"

"Oh, that's all right!" nodded Mr. Morden. "You cut along to your tea now or you will find the muffins and crumpets cold!"

On the contrary, Arthur Augustus found the muffins and the crumpets extremely hot and quite soaked with fresh butter, so there was nothing to regret in that direction.

And when he mentioned the idea of Betty Kildare having her photograph taken it was greeted with enthusiasm.

"A rattling fine notion, Gussy!" cried Manners.

"Yes, ripping!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Blake, old man, I didn't know Gussy had it in him to think of such a top-hole notion."

At that Gussy distinctly glared.

"What uttah wot!" he said severely. "As it happens, this particulah ideah is not weally mine—"

"Well, congrats on having sneaked it!" said Tom Merry indulgently. "Now, don't go and spoil a good piece o' work by cackling. I suppose that's the throne chair over there?"

Colonel Kildare laughed as he nodded.

"It is called a throne chair, but really it was only the place of honour where the barons used to sit in the days when this house was a castle," he explained. "It is very old indeed, of course."

"And I am to have my photograph taken there?" cried Betty Kildare excitedly. "Oh, do let's hurry up and get tea over, then Manners can go and unpack his camera."

They all laughed over that, and if tea was not exactly hurried, there was quite a hustle afterwards on the part of Manners in getting his camera from his suitcase.

"Awfully lucky thing I brought my stand camera instead of the hand one!" he exclaimed to Lowther. "Get much better results, of course!"

"Good!" said Monty. "If you get a really decent photograph we'll have a whip round for a jolly fine frame and present it to the colonel."

"Yes, rather! Suppose you slip along and see if Mr. Morden has found that magnesium powder yet?"

"Right-ho!"

Monty Lowther darted off, but Mr. Morden seemed to have forgotten all about his promise. Still, he appeared sporting enough about it, and although just about to shave, commenced at once to look for the magnesium.

"I know I had it in this suit-case somewhere," he said.

But the powder was not found until half an hour later, and then it was discovered in a pocket of his dressing-gown.

"Anyway, better late than never!" declared Manners, when Lowther brought the magnesium back with him. "I know dinner isn't until half-past seven, and it isn't seven yet. Heaps of time to take the photograph in!"

The two Shell juniors hurried down the stairs, Manners carrying his prized camera. And as they reached the hall—

modernised in these days into a very fine reception-room—they found quite a number of new guests present.

"They are all friends of ours," explained Betty Kildare, hurrying up to join Manners. "They all know about your being such a splendid photographer. Manners, look here!"

Obviously excited, Betty pointed to a magnificent pearl necklace she was wearing.

"They are ever so valuable," she confided; "but I made dad let me wear them just for the photograph. Will they show up well, Manners?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then—then please hurry up," laughed the girl chum. "Now I'm wearing this necklace I feel like a bank manager must feel when everybody but himself is out of the bank and he hears a scratching noise at a back window. I am going to sit in the Throne Chair at once."

"Yes, do," answered Manners, busy rigging up his camera. "Merry, old chap, have you got the fire-shovel to hold the magnesium?"

"Yes; everything has been ready for ages!"

"Good!"

And Manners, shouldering his bulky camera, hurried towards the famous old chair little Betty Kildare was now perched up on, for all the world like a little queen.

In order to lend a helping hand, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby moved back the table on which stood the colonel's fine five-valve radio set, the valves all glowing faintly, ready to receive the seven o'clock news bulletin. Next Monty Lowther emptied the magnesium powder into the fire-shovel Tom Merry was holding.

All was in readiness now for the flashlight photograph.

CHAPTER 11.

Under Cover of Darkness!

NOT a sound was to be heard anywhere. Everybody but Manners and Tom Merry were looking at Betty Kildare, thinking how pretty she was, and what a splendid photograph she would make in that aged chair.

Then Manners gave the signal.

"Now, Merry!"

As quickly as he could, the captain of the Shell ignited the magnesium. It was not quite as easy as he had imagined it would be, but he succeeded in the end. And instantly there was a blinding white glare of light, flashing up suddenly, but lasting only for a fraction of a second. As it died away, Manners' voice rang out in a cheer.

"Splendid, Merry!" he cried. "Couldn't have been a better flash. Just about the right exposure, I think!"

And quickly on top of those words there came another exclamation. The enormous room was plunged suddenly into absolute darkness. The electric light had failed.

It really was rather startling after the brilliant glare of light of a moment ago, but what followed instantly upon the light failure was more than startling, it was dramatic and nerve-racking, for a terrified scream in a girl's voice cut through the darkness.

"The necklace!" came the astounding cry. "Someone has snatched the necklace!"

It was Betty Kildare who was screaming. No one could doubt that, and automatically Tom Merry sprang towards the door.

Vaguely he had some idea of rushing for a light, but at the door he thudded into Colonel Kildare. The colonel was closing the door like lightning.

At the same moment Jack Blake and Digby reached the window and drew back the curtains. An early moon thinned the darkness of the hall a little, but not enough to show anything very distinctly.

But from first to last that room could not have been in darkness for more than a minute, for the electric light came on again as suddenly as it had failed, a vivid blaze of light.

And there, standing away from the chair, was Betty Kildare, both her little hands up to her throat, and the necklace gone!

"It was snatched from me, dad, just as the light went out!" she cried, her face as white as a sheet. "Someone's fingers hurt my throat!"

"Gwreat Scott, I can see the wed marks f'rom heah!" cried Arthur Augustus, in horror. "The uttah wuffian!"

Kerr and Figgins, who were close to the swell of St. Jim's, could also see the marks on Betty's throat.

It was painfully clear that a daring and amazing robbery had taken place, and the scoundrel who had committed it had not troubled about hurting Betty. Those painful-looking marks on her throat was proof of that.

Jimmy Kildare, who saw the marks at the same moment Figgins and Kerr saw them, flushed deeply.

"The scoundrel, whoever he was!" he ground out. "Father, did anyone rush out of the room, do you think?"

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It was a natural sort of question for Jimmy Kildare to ask, and everybody in the room turned excitedly towards the colonel. Then the answer came:

"No one left this room at all!"

"But, weally, sir—"

"No one left by the door. I should have said," corrected Colonel Kildare, speaking very grimly. "I can vouch for that, because I have been standing here ever since Manners took the flashlight photograph!"

Everybody looked more amazed than ever, for the colonel's well-knit form was practically blocking the doorway, and behind him the door was closed. As his words had suggested, it would have been utterly impossible for anyone to have left the hall by the doorway.

"The—the window, then?" suggested Arthur Augustus. "It's a vevy big window, and someone might have washed rapidly—"

"No one left by the window, either!"

It was Jack Blake who was speaking now, and the chief of Study No. 6 was very definite. As proof of his statement he pointed to the casement.

"It is still bolted," he said, "and Digby and I were here almost as soon as Betty called out. I am absolutely certain that no one left by the casement!"

"Gwreat Scott, deah boy, are you sewiously hintin'—"

Arthur Augustus' words broke down on his lips, for it can scarcely be said that Jack Blake was suggesting anything. He had merely made a statement, and that statement, coming on top of what Colonel Kildare had said, could lead to but one conclusion. The scoundrel who had robbed Betty Kildare of the pearl necklace was still in the room!

There could be no getting away from that. The conclusion was obvious, just as it was odious, and everybody looked round in startled amazement.

A thief amongst them! It really was a horrible situation, for who was there in the fairly crowded room one could suspect?

Not Jimmy Kildare; or any of his cheery brother cadets, surely! And surely not Tom Merry & Co. from St. Jim's! No one in their senses could suspect any of the juniors present of such an act.

"But when you come to considah our eldahs pwesent, we are no bettah off," whispered Arthur Augustus to Herries, in a very horrified whisper indeed. "I uttahly wefuse to suspect that kind-looking old vicah of such a thung!"

"Ass!" breathed Herries.

"Nor the doctah," went on the swell of St. Jim's. "He is a vevy old and a vevy charmin' man, and I'm quite sure he wouldn't wob anyone, let alone a girl chum of Betty Kildare's age."

"Don't be a duffer, Gussy!" grunted Digby.

"Weally, Digby, we've just got to suspect someone," insisted Arthur Augustus. "It's absolutely pwoved that the thief is still amongst us, and he must be found, bai Jove!"

"Dry up, D'Arcy!"

Really Arthur Augustus had little or no desire to dry up, being in a decidedly flustered state, only at that moment one of the colonel's guests had a startling suggestion to make.

"Kildare," he rapped, "there is only one thing to be done. We must all submit to a personal search!"

"Good heavens, no!" burst out the colonel. "I could not subject my guests to such an indignity!"

"But we must," answered the other gentleman—the old doctor, as it happened. "At least, I wish it, personally, and I feel sure there are others who entertain the same wish."

"Yes—"

"By all means let there be a search!"

"Take care that no one leaves the room, and then we must find the thief. Certainly there should be a search!"

The colonel's guests were all speaking at once, and they were all saying much the same thing. They wanted to be searched, and they were insisting.

The colonel himself looked dreadfully upset.

"Really, this is very distressing!" he exclaimed. "You are all my personal friends. I would infinitely rather lose the necklace, valuable as it is, than permit any of you to be insulted."

"It isn't an insult, colonel—"

"No; of course not!" exclaimed someone else. "We all wish the search to be made for our own satisfaction!"

There was a chorus of approval at that statement, and Tom Merry found himself looking at the excited throng. One and all seemed genuinely anxious that the search should take place at once, and yet amongst them there surely must be the thief.

Tom Merry was sure of it. They were all sure of it, and yet here was everybody clamouring to be searched. It really was an astounding affair.

Then, quite suddenly, an altogether different voice rang out in the room, perhaps the best-known voice in all England—the announcer from 2LO.

Instinctively Colonel Kildare swung round to his fine set and the large loud speaker, a frown on his face.



There, standing away from the chair, was Betty Kildare, both her hands to her throat—and the necklace gone! "It—it was snatched from me, dad, just as the light went out," she cried, her face as white as a sheet. (See Chapter 11.)

"Switch off the instrument, Jimmy," he said. "I—"
Before Jimmy Kildare had time to move the 2LO announcer was speaking again.

"Before I read to you the first news bulletin, I have been asked to broadcast an urgent appeal," came the distant voice, clearly and distinctly. "If anyone listening is in touch with the Manor House, Dalethorpe, will he or she ask Alfred Morden, believed to be staying there, to proceed at once to London to his home address. His brother has met with a serious street accident. I will repeat that message."

Round swung Colonel Kildare, forgetting for the moment the affair of the necklace.

"Morden, did you hear that?"

The colonel's voice rang out loudly, but there was no answer. Mr. Alfred Morden was not in the room. Then Monty Lowther had something to say.

"Mr. Morden hasn't been here at all, colonel," he cried.

"He is up in his bed-room!"

"In his room?"

"Yes, colonel; changing for dinner," explained Lowther. "I know I detained him a long time looking for that magnesium powder; and he had to shave again, he said."

"I see!" rapped the colonel, turning quickly to Tom Merry. "You slip upstairs, Merry, and give Morden the broadcast message. Tell him the car shall be waiting at the door to take him to the station, and that he has plenty of time in which to catch the seven-thirty train."

"Right, colonel!"

The captain of the Shell twisted round to the door, but he stopped dead with his hand on the knob. He had remembered the amazing disappearance of the pearl necklace again.

"Before I go, colonel, please run through my pockets," he said quietly. "All the others wish to be searched, and it isn't fair that I should be allowed out of the room until I've been searched as well."

"But—but—" began the colonel.

"Colonel, I wish it!"

And Tom Merry started turning out his pockets as rapidly as he could.

CHAPTER 12.

Tom Merry's Discovery!

"MERRY, there is no need for you to trouble!" exclaimed Colonel Kildare. "You were close to me all the time. It would have been utterly impossible for you to have touched the necklace."

But Tom Merry took no notice. Always there had been an obstinate streak in his character, and so he went on turning out his pockets. In a matter of two minutes he had made it perfectly clear that the missing necklace was not in his possession.

Then he opened the door and raced up the stairs.

Quickly enough he reached Mr. Morden's room, tapping at the door anxiously.

"Mr. Morden, are you there?"

"Yes. What is it? I am shaving—"

"Well, I—I've got some bad news for you," answered Tom Merry, finding that the door was locked. "You are to go to London at once, to your home address. Your—your brother has met with a street accident!"

"Good heavens!"

Something clattered to the floor, suggesting that Mr. Morden had let his razor slip from his hand, and a moment later the door was wrenched open.

Next Tom Merry was facing Mr. Morden, whose chin was covered with shaving-soap, and the captain of the Shell could not help noticing that the man seemed very upset.

Quickly Tom Merry explained how the news had come through the ether, and while he was listening Mr. Morden hastily washed the soap from his face. Then rapidly he commenced packing his suitcase, the St. Jim's junior lending a helping hand.

"Only the suitcase was unpacked, thank goodness!" Mr. Morden exclaimed. "I had not even opened my portman-

teau. There—there were no details as to the nature of my brother's accident?"

"No; none at all—"
"And the colonel said there was a train at half-past seven," went on Morden. "Whatever happens, I must catch that train."

Tom Merry nodded sympathetically.
"Oh, you will do that easily!" he exclaimed. "The colonel's car is to be at the door; I think I can hear it being backed out of the garage now."

"Good!"
"And if there is nothing more to go into this suitcase, it is ready for shutting," went on Tom Merry.

"No; there is nothing more!"
"Right; it's shut now," continued Tom Merry. "I will carry the suitcase down the stairs for you, and you can take the portmanteau."

Mr. Morden nodded and led the way from the room at a fast pace. With Tom Merry still behind, they descended the stairs and so had to pass the door of the hall. The door was closed, but the Shell junior couldn't help feeling surprised that Mr. Morden made no attempt to open it.

Instead he hurried past on his way to the front door, but he explained his curious action when the porch was reached.

"Really I ought to have slipped into the hall to say good-bye to the colonel!" he exclaimed. "I—I feel a good deal upset, though."

"Yes; of course—"
"So perhaps you will say good-bye for me?" went on Mr. Morden, handing his portmanteau to the colonel's chauffeur, while Tom Merry put the suitcase into the car. "Explain that I had very little time in which to catch my train."

"Yes; I will explain," said Tom Merry.
"And thanks awfully for lending me a helping hand," concluded Mr. Morden. "I must be going at once. The station, please, as quickly as you can!" he added, turning to the chauffeur.

"Good-bye!" called out Tom Merry. "I hope you will have good luck. Perhaps your brother isn't so very seriously injured after all."

Mr. Morden made no answer, and the big, closed car whirled away in the darkness, making scarcely a sound as she sped round the carriage-sweep.

In silence Tom Merry stood there in the porch, watching the receding red rear lamp, a curious feeling of uneasiness troubling him. He could not think why he was feeling uneasy. Certainly nothing very strange had happened beyond the coincidence that Eric Kildare had been called away from St. Jim's by exactly the same means used to persuade Mr. Morden to leave the Manor House—an urgent broadcast message summoning him to a sick-bed.

"Yet I don't suppose that's very strange, after all," muttered the Shell junior. "There must have been heaps of messages like that broadcast. I suppose it seems funny to me because I haven't heard one for ages."

That seemed to be a likely explanation, and yet Tom Merry was still conscious of a curious uneasiness, and he was frowning a little as he re-entered the house.

"Best go back to the hall and see how that search has got on," he mused. "Oh, but I left the light switched on in Mr. Morden's bed-room. Ought to put that out, I suppose!"

Still thinking about the two urgent messages which had been broadcast, and trying to find out why he felt uneasy, Tom Merry retraced his footsteps up the stairs.

The door of Mr. Morden's room was still open, and, as Tom had expected, the light was full on. Automatically

the captain of the Shell took a step into the room and stretched out his hand towards the electric light switch.

And as he did so, Tom Merry noticed something that struck him as very curious, for there were two switches, one above the other, and the top switch had outside wires connected to it.

"Funny!" muttered the Shell junior. "My hat, it's only painted wire, not properly insulated stuff!"

That certainly was a staggering discovery, for the wire Tom Merry was staring at was not electric light wire at all. It was merely a single strand of painted material such as is used sometimes for an indoor aerial when the receiving set is close to a broadcast station.

And the wire did not go to one of the several electric light bulbs in the room—did not go anywhere near any of them!

"It—it goes to the window instead," said Tom Merry, speaking aloud in his astonishment. "What on earth for, I wonder?"

He crossed to the window and threw up the lower sash. Then he leaned out, and the very first thing to catch his eye was Colonel Kildare's wireless aerial glistening in the moonlight.

Next Tom Merry noticed that the aerial was anchored to a large staple in the outside wall just above the bed-room window, and the junior whistled in blank amazement.

"My only aunt, the wire from the switch runs up to the aerial!" he burst out, speaking aloud again. "It isn't the proper lead-in wire at all, but an extra one. What on earth can it be for?"

Quickly Tom Merry spun round.
He was very puzzled indeed now, and not a little alarmed, for there was something strange in all this. Then, suddenly, he realised what that additional wire was for.

"It's to earth the aerial before any of the signals can get through to the receiving set downstairs!" flashed through his mind. "Anybody switching off in this room could make it impossible for those downstairs to hear a sound on the loud speaker."

Just as Tom Merry arrived at that curious but apparently sound conclusion, Baggy Trimble came rushing up the staircase. That Baggy was hopelessly excited was very clear, but he was so out of breath through running up the stairs that he could scarcely speak for a moment or two.

Then he fairly gulped out some sensational news.
"Merry, I've found the necklace!" he panted. "At least, I've found out how it was stolen!"

"What?"
"Yes, I have, really!" gasped Baggy Trimble. "If you don't believe me, ask the colonel!"

Instead of making any attempt to ask the colonel, Tom Merry grabbed the stout junior by his fat arm. Baggy squealed a little, but he did not try to wrench his arm away. In fact, he seemed very anxious to tell his story directly he had collected enough breath to do so.

CHAPTER 13.

The Colonel's Suspicions!

"**B**AGGY, out with it! What's happened?"
Tom Merry rapped out the question, giving Baggy Trimble a slight shake at the same time.

"I was standing by that chair, Merry—"
"What chair?"

"The Throne Chair, in which Betty Kildare had her photograph taken!" panted the fat junior. "It was just after you'd left the room, and Betty was talking to the colonel."

"Get on with the washing!"

"I am just as quickly as I can," declared Baggy Trimble. "As I said, I was standing by the chair, and just as I noticed something, cousin Ethel saw the same thing—"

"What thing?"

"The trapdoor cut in the panelling behind the chair, of course," declared Baggy Trimble. "My hat, you are slow at understanding things, Merry."

"Go on, ass!"

"Just as I discovered the trapdoor it flashed across my mind what had happened and how the necklace was stolen," said Baggy. "I was just going to point this out when Jack Blake, rather rudely, I thought, butted in."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, explaining how the theft took place, of course," said Baggy Trimble. "Really, Merry, you are awfully dense this evening. I should have thought it was clear to anyone that the thief wasn't in the hall at all, but outside it."

"My—my hat!"
"And, of course, it was the thief who cut that little trapdoor behind the chair," went on Baggy, warming to his

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work of explaining. "Naturally, the scamp waited until the lights failed—"

"Switched 'em off, you mean?"

"Yes, it is possible he did that," admitted Baggy. "We'll say he did switch them off. Well, what was easier than for him to thrust his hands through the trapdoor and snatch the necklace? Mind, there's only a passage at the back of the room, and none of the servants would have noticed anyone standing there—"

But Tom Merry had heard all he wanted to hear, at least, from Baggy Trimble. As an informant Baggy had his weak points, so the captain of the Shell was very anxious to get down to the hall. In fact, he fairly raced down the stairs and found everybody in the big room very excited and talkative.

Of them all Jack Blake was perhaps the calmest, and at once Tom Merry joined his friendly rival of the Fourth Form.

"My hat! Is Trimble's yarn true, Blake?"

"Depends!" said the chief of Study No. 6.

"I mean that he discovered how the theft took place—that there is a trapdoor behind the chair—"

Jack Blake nodded.

"Yes, there is a trapdoor all right, but it was cousin Ethel who discovered it, not Baggy," he answered. "That fat duffer was scoffing fruit at that side table at the time. But come and look at the trapdoor for yourself, Merry!"

Eagerly enough, Tom Merry accepted the invitation, and the small door neatly cut in the old panelling behind the chair was very ingenious. And it was quite true that beyond the miniature door was a passage, dark and very seldom used.

"But some of the fuse boxes are there, all the same," declared Jack Blake. "Here, you can see them from this angle. Merry, old chap, it would have been the easiest thing in the world for anyone to plunge this room into darkness by simply removing one of the fuses."

"Phew! That's true!"

"And then he could have lighted up the room again by returning the fuse to its proper place after he had snatched the necklace," went on Jack Blake. "Nothing easier, I should say!"

"That's so!"

"And the colonel feels sure it's all the work of some clever crook," went on Jack Blake. "He thinks someone has been watching the house for days, perhaps, that he saw through the window that Betty was wearing the pearl necklace when Manners took that flashlight portrait, and at once slipped into the house."

"And snatched the necklace?" nodded Tom Merry. "You think he knew of the trapdoor, old chap?"

"He must have done, of course."

"Yes; but it looks to me like quite a new trapdoor," objected Tom Merry critically. "I should say it has been cut out of the panel very recently."

Jack Blake started.

"My hat, you're right, Merry!" he exclaimed. "You are thinking that one of the servants is the thief? Well, the colonel went just now to summon them all here—"

"I don't know that I was thinking about a servant," said Tom Merry grimly. "They've all been with the colonel for donkey's years. I heard Jimmy Kildare say."

Obviously, from the way Tom Merry was speaking, he had a great deal more to say, but the sudden appearance of the colonel in the hall put a temporary end to the Shell junior's remarks. Behind the colonel was a little army of servants.

"Is everybody still here, please?" Colonel Kildare demanded. "Has Mr. Morden come in?"

"No, sir—"

"But I sent that boy Trimble up to his room to summon him—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Shell captain. "The fat duffer never said a word about that—I mean, Trimble never spoke of Mr. Morden at all, and now Mr. Morden has gone!"

"To catch that seven-thirty train?" flashed the colonel. "This—is an extraordinary coincidence! The theft of the necklace, the cleverly cut trapdoor in that panelling, the broadcast message summoning Mr. Morden to London! I—"

Colonel Kildare stopped speaking abruptly, as if he regretted his last words.

"Really, I oughtn't to have said that!" he exclaimed. "It is altogether unfair in Morden's absence—"

"No—no, sir, it isn't," cried Tom Merry, hurrying to the colonel's side. "At least, I don't think it is, for I—I've got something jolly queer to tell you, colonel!"

And the next moment Tom Merry was explaining quickly and concisely about the aerial switch which had been roughly fitted up in Morden's room, and how a simple movement of that switch would cut out the receiving set in the hall.

The colonel listened as if he failed to grasp the significance of Tom Merry's story.

"A very extraordinary thing, of course, my boy, but I fail to grasp the point you are striving at," he exclaimed. "Why should Morden wish to switch off the receiving set? Isn't it probable that he was merely carrying out some little radio experiment of his own? I know he was very keen on the science."

Tom Merry shook his head violently.

"I—I don't know, of course," he said quickly; "but it seems to me that your wireless set was all ready to receive 2LO. While the photograph was being taken and we were all talking, you would probably have switched it off if the loud-speaker had been working—"

"Yes, I should, of course!"

"Only there was no need to do so, because—because Mr. Morden may have earthed the aerial by means of that switch in his bed-room!"

"By Jove, yes—"

"And—and he waited for the right moment to switch on again!"

"The right moment?"

"Yes, sir, the moment when the seven o'clock news bulletin was due to be broadcast," explained Tom Merry, thrilling a good deal. "It is possible he had arranged with someone in London to ask the broadcast people to send out the urgent summons for him to return to town at seven o'clock, and he may have been desperately anxious for us all to hear that message."

"Merry, I understand; but—"

"But you think I am jumping to conclusions, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "In a way I am, sir, but it seems so funny to me that the radio set down here should be switched on as far as the valves are concerned, and not a sound. And it seems still stranger, sir, that there should be an urgent broadcast calling Mr. Morden away, when last night there was a very similar one summoning your cousin, Erje Kildare, on a fool's errand to Ireland!"

"By Jove, I believe you have solved it, Merry!"

"I think I may be right, sir, in suspecting—"

"No, I am sure you are right!" flashed the colonel. "And for this very simple reason—I happen to know Morden met my cousin Eric on some previous occasion. Merry, I believe Eric knew something against the man; I am almost sure now that Morden caused the false message about Kildare's mother to be broadcast to prevent my cousin coming here to play football, and so make it possible for the theft of that necklace to take place!"

"Gweat Scott! But isn't Mr. Morden a friend of yours, like all these othah people, colonel?" asked Arthur Augustus blankly.

"No—no, nothing of the sort," answered the colonel. "Merely a casual acquaintance, a man I met in town, and who, now I come to think of it, rather forced his company on me. For all I know, the man may be a regular crook!"

"My onlay toppah, and he has gone!" cried the swell of St. Jim's, aghast. "Pwobably he has the pearl necklace with him. Shall I wush to the telephone and wing up the police, sir?"

But Colonel Kildare was already on his way to the telephone-box, Tom Merry & Co. and a good many others following him.

Briskly the colonel spun round the instrument handle and waited. Nothing happened, so Colonel Kildare attempted to ring through to the exchange again. Still silence.

Then Figgins wrenched open the telephone-box door and caught the colonel by the arm.

"Look, sir, the instrument has been tampered with!" the New House junior exclaimed excitedly. "A whole lot of the wire has been cut away!"

Grimly, Colonel Kildare looked down.

As Figgins had said, quite a long length of wire had been bodily removed, and so it was utterly impossible to ring through to the exchange. If Mr. Alfred Morden was the thief who had snatched that necklace, he certainly had made his plans very carefully.

Tom Merry couldn't help thinking of that as they all waited for the colonel to give fresh orders.

CHAPTER 14.

The Last of Alfred Morden I

BEFORE Colonel Kildare could say anything at all, the clock in the passage outside struck the half hour. It was seven-thirty.

"And the train Morden hurried off to catch leaves at seven-thirty!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Colonel, he has already started for London!"

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, shall some of us run down to the town and get the police to meet the train in London and detain Morden?"

next asked Tom Merry. "It won't take us long if we sprint it!"

"No, that is of no use," answered the colonel. "The seventh-train is a slow one, and stops at quite a lot of places. Morden, if he is the thief—and who can doubt it?—will be suspecting some such ruse as you suggest, Merry, and he will be almost certain to leave the train at an intermediate station!"

"Well, sir, the police can be on the first of the stations the train stops at," suggested the Shell junior.

"No time for that," the colonel continued to object. "The Junction is the first station, and that is only a few miles away. In fact, it would be quicker to make for the Junction than to go to the police-station—"

"Then let's do that, sir," flashed Tom Merry. "Let's sprint up for the Junction station at once!"

"By Jove—yes! That is a better plan!" exclaimed the colonel, whipping his watch from his pocket. "With luck, we might get there before the train comes in. About half a dozen of you boys come with me!"

As a matter of fact, there were twenty-three juniors who followed the colonel from the house at a run, the party being made up of the rival football elevens and Baggy Trimble.

Not that the stout and somewhat short-winded Baggy travelled very far with the sprinting party. The first little shop which looked as if it might stock cakes was the finish of Baggy's run, and a mile further across fields and down lanes convinced Colonel Kildare that the passing of years had rendered it very difficult for him to keep up with Tom Merry & Co.

"Carry on, boys," he panted. "I will follow you as quickly as I can. Detain Morden at any costs if you reach the Junction station in time."

"Right, sir!"

In a gasping, breathless bunch they all raced on to the platform just as the London train came rumbling in. And even before the train was at a standstill, Tom Merry glimpsed Mr. Alfred Morden.

Only a momentary glimpse, though, for Morden had put his head through the open window of a first-class compartment and had instantly withdrawn it.

"There he is!"

Tom Merry went racing forward, and behind the Shell junior were all his chums, all ready to back up the junior captain in whatever he decided to do.

And Tom Merry showed no hesitation in making up his mind as to the proper course of action to take.

"Mr. Morden, I must ask you to get out of this train!" he said grimly, wrenching open the compartment door. "It—it is very important!"

"I— Boy, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say," answered Tom Merry more grimly than ever. "Blake—Figgy, take charge of Mr. Morden's portmanteau, because I believe the missing necklace is in there. The suitcase doesn't matter, for I helped to pack that."

"Right, Merry!"

"And heah is a policeman, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle into his eye. "Of course, if Mr. Morden refuses to leave the twain, we had bettah have a few words with the bobbay, bai Jove!"

"Yes, of course!"

But there was no need to summon the station policeman, for Alfred Morden left the train as ordered. That his face was as white as a sheet was fairly conclusive evidence that Tom Merry had not made a mistake.

Yet the man struggled hard to bluff out the situation.

"This is a grave matter for you, Merry!" he exclaimed. "Where is Colonel Kildare? I wish to see him at once!"

That wish was gratified before Tom Merry or any of the others had time to answer, for the colonel was in the act of striding on to the platform. He was a little out of breath, but his face was set and stern.

"You say you wish to see me, Morden?" he rasped. "Please come into that waiting-room over there. You had better come too, Merry! The other boys can remain on the platform."

Whiter than ever and almost shaking with fear, Alfred Morden went into the waiting-room, the colonel following closely upon his heels. Behind walked Tom Merry carrying the portmanteau, and, obeying the signal from Colonel Kildare, the Shell juniors closed the waiting-room door.

Then the colonel turned sharply upon Morden.

"You have something to tell me?" he rapped out. "A confession to make?"

"I—I—"

"You have exactly one minute in which to commence your confession," interrupted the colonel. "If at the end of that time you attempt anything in the nature of a bluff, I shall give you in charge and leave the police to deal with you!"

Morden winced, but there was at least one thing Tom Merry noticed about the man which seemed to be in his

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favour, even if it were only a little thing. He did not whine.

"You've caught me all right, Colonel Kildare," he said.

"The pearl necklace is in that portmanteau."

"And you stole it yourself?"

Morden nodded.

"Yes; I snatched it from your daughter's neck by stretching my arm through the trapdoor I cut in the panelling," he admitted frankly enough.

"Go on!" snapped the colonel. "I want to hear more!"

The thief shrugged his shoulders.

"There is nothing more except that the theft was planned and quite deliberate," he said. "Directly I arrived at your house and heard about the pearls I was after them, and that is why I was anxious your cousin, Eric Kildare, shouldn't come to Dalethorpe to play football."

"You had met my cousin before?"

"Yes; in Ireland," admitted Morden. "He knew something against me—that I had been in trouble with the police. I caused that false broadcast message to be sent out, and so sent Eric Kildare on a fool's errand to Ireland."

"You scoundrel, that was a dastardly thing to do!" roared the colonel. "And you were responsible for the other broadcast message?"

"The one calling me to London? Yes; that was stage-managed, too, to supply me with an excuse to leave your house suddenly when I had the necklace."

"You scoundrel!"

"Oh, it was all simple enough," went on Morden coolly. "I put the idea into D'Arcy's head about your daughter having her portrait taken in the Throne Chair; I suggested to Betty that she should wear the pearl necklace. As I told you just now, I deliberately planned the whole thing, even to the extent of cutting out your wireless set and yet having it ready to switch on for the seven o'clock news bulletin, when I knew the message summoning me to town would be broadcast. I left nothing to chance that I could think of."

The crook was not boasting of his cleverness, Tom Merry was sure of that. He was merely telling his story, and it was still noticeable that the man was not whining. Tom Merry found himself thinking quite a lot about that as he glanced at Colonel Kildare's face. It was very stern and harsh.

Then, abruptly, the colonel broke the silence which had fallen upon them all.

"When I first met you in London, you forced your acquaintance upon me," he said. "Your excuse was, I now remember, that you were with my brigade in France in the Great War. Was that a lie?"

"No; it was true enough."

"You have proof of the statement?"

Morden nodded again.

"Yes; in my portmanteau," he said, opening the bag, and the first thing Tom Merry saw there was the missing necklace.

Then Morden handed the colonel some papers and an Army book, and the older man glanced critically through them. Presently he handed them back to the thief.

"You at least told the truth in this matter," he said curtly. "Morden, because you were out there in France with me in the War years, and for that reason only, I am going to give you a chance. You can go!"

Slowly Morden closed his portmanteau again, while the colonel slipped the pearl necklace into his pocket, and it was not until Alfred Morden was actually leaving the waiting-room that he spoke again. And then it was only to say a few words.

"I sha'n't forget this, sir," he said. "I've had my lesson. It'll be the means of keeping me running straight from now on!"

"I hope so, anyway," snapped the colonel dryly.

Morden made no answer but slipped away, and Colonel Kildare turned to Tom Merry.

"Outside we shall probably find that my car has been sent on to take us back," he exclaimed, "and I for one am very ready for our much delayed dinner. Yes, the car is there, I see, and all your St. Jim's chums just seething to hear the news. Come along, my lad!"

And Tom Merry went, to be surrounded by Jack Blake and Figgins and the immaculate Gussy, and the others, all eager to ask questions.

Then came the journey back to Dalethorpe Manor in a car that was packed as tightly as any sardine-tin could ever be. And finally, one of the cheeriest, happiest evenings Tom Merry & Co. and their new friends, the cadets, had spent for an age.

THE END.

(Look out for a screamingly funny story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "FATTY WYNN'S FOLLY!" By Martin Clifford. You will vote it the best yarn your favourite author has written.)

BAT BARSTOW DIDN'T LOOK WHERE HE WAS GOING, AND A GANG OF SHADY MERCHANTS MADE THE SAME MISTAKE, BUT BAT GOT THE LAST LAUGH OUT OF—

THE FIFTH STEP

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New Long
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ing Go-ahead
Bat—the
chap with
the lego'-
mutton fists.

CHAPTER 1. On the Trail!

BIG Jim Barstow, commonly called "Bat," stared away down the steep, white road through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

He saw an old-world inn, nestling at the foot of a towering, green hill.

Behind the hill the red sun was sinking. And the rugged Cornish scenery looked wilder than ever in the fading light.

"That inn would do!" muttered the Bat, applying the brakes of his fast two-seater. "Just the place for a cup of tea! And they're bound to know where the old boy's house is. B'gosh! Old Timber-toes'll get quite a jolt when he sees me!"

Bat Barstow was touring in Cornwall.

He intended paying a surprise visit to his old friend Admiral Trimble, whom he disrespectfully called Timber-toes. Bat chuckled happily. He knew nothing about the jolt that was coming to himself!

Stones flew from the whizzing wheels. Bat Barstow cut off his engine, and the little car went swishing down the white ribbon of road. Reaching the inn, he pulled up and let fly a deep-toned hail.

"Admiral Trimble's house, sir?" cried the red-faced innkeeper, who came running out. "It's ten miles from here. Follow the road. You'll come to the admiral's lodge-gates on the left. The house, an old stone one, is at the end of a long drive—stands right on the seashore, it do."

"Tea, sir?" added the host cheerfully, in answer to the Bat's query. "Sut-tingly! Will you put your car in the shed at the back? There be rain about."

Bat nodded, tooted his little car round to the shed, ran it in, and scrambled out—a huge figure in grey flannels and a tweed jacket.

In the dim shed he glimpsed another car, big and fast-looking. He blinked as he stared at it.

The habit of blinking had earned Jim Barstow his nickname. Men called the big fellow Bat in many lands east of Suez.

"A perfect ark-on-wheels!" he muttered, eyeing the vehicle. "The last

word in luxury an' what-not! What sort o' birds tour Cornwall in a Rolls-Royce? These roads must play the deuce with their tyres. However, 'tain't my affair."

He spun on his heel, heading back for the front of the inn with gigantic strides.

At a corner of the old, gabled building things happened. Two dim-seen figures, in overcoats and caps, came hurrying round from the opposite direction.

Bump! One of the men, a black-bearded fellow, staggered back, gasping. He thought he had struck a moving tree.

"Awfully sorry, old bird!" grinned Jim Barstow cheerfully. "There ought to be a white line for pedestrians. 'Safety first!' chalked up, and all that sort o' thing, what?"

"Grrrh!" snarled Blackbeard, and joined his friend, and both vanished into the dark shed.

"Always the little gentleman!" laughed the Bat, staring after them through his glasses. "Methinks the beaver bloke had a dash of dago in his make-up. T'other lad looks turf-fish—racecourse tough, in other words. Mostly tough. No manners, either of 'em! Well, well! Such a lordly car, too!"

Smiling good-humouredly, Bat Barstow entered the ancient inn. He quickly forgot the two motorists. But they didn't forget him.

In the dim shed they halted. And Blackbeard rounded abruptly on the other.

"Zunder!" he barked in a foreign accent. "Zat beeg man, who is he? You see him before, Welch?"

The tough-looking Welch fingered his cauliflower ear.

"Nope, boss!" he growled. "I ain't. What's it matter, anyway? He looked a soft, barmy guy for all his meat!"

"Fool!" snarled Blackbeard. "Zat beeg man go to der house of der Admiral Trimble! I 'ear him ask der way! No matter? Blitzen! He may be friend of der admiral!"

"You don't say, guv'ner!" gasped Welch. "Whatago! That big stiff 'ud be a bad 'un to scrap!" he added thoughtfully. "I glimpsed his mitts.

I guess we'd best fix his buzz-wagon instanter."

Blackbeard nodded. Then he and Welch got busy. A few minutes later, in the big Rolls-Royce, they rolled swiftly away from the little old inn. The dusk swallowed them up.

"So-long!" laughed Bat Barstow, witnessing their departure as he emerged from the front door. "I fear you'll hit trouble if you drive like that on these roads. Then the foreign beaver will be most annoyed! He might swear. Shocking!"

Chuckling, Bat Barstow ran his own car out of the shed.

Then, his headlights cleaving a wide path, he also went purring over the hilly road.

For about seven miles the Bat's little car went like a bird. Then it spluttered, knocked, and finally conked out altogether.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Bat, heaving his vast frame out of the driver's seat. "I've never known this flivver behave like that before. But I'd best not stop to admire the view. Old Timber-toes will use nautical language if I blow up at his place about midnight. Just what can the matter be?"

Followed sounds of tinkering. Bat, flashlight in hand, was exploring the insides of his two-seater.

He soon found out what the matter was. Of a sudden, his sun-bronzed face grim, he straightened up.

"Petrol-tank holed!" he muttered. "Clean drilled! The juice has run out!" Then out shot his long arm, and he snatched up a spare can.

"Empty! All of 'em empty! I'm stuck!"

As he forced out the words, big Bat Barstow clenched his powerful fists. He glared into the darkness, blinking rapidly behind his spectacles. But he didn't look soft now. The pose of inanity had dropped from him like a cloak.

"Those fellows at the inn," he rumbled. "The beaver and the other. They must ha' sprung this. They punched a hole in my tank. They couldn't even know where I was going!"

Bat broke off, then added, with a gasp:

"Jehosaphat! They may ha' heard me ask for Timber-toes' house! They're up to some game in which I'm not invited to join. But I shall be there—most decidedly!"

Promptly Bat abandoned his car. With the night-wind fanning his cheeks, he struck straight across bleak, open country.

It was wild, desolate, and dark. And Bat Barstow was a stranger to the district. But he knew he could find the sea, and, according to the innkeeper, the admiral's house stood on the shore.

Bat had only to go about two miles due south-west, he judged, from where he had left his car. It would have been five more to the admiral's house by the road.

Few men can steer a straight course on a dark night. But Bat Barstow could. The young giant had the hunter's instinct. Not for nothing had he hunted elephants in Africa for years.

"What's the game!" he panted as he tore through the night. "Burglary? Not! Old Timber-toes has nothin' worth burglin'. But if they hurt the old chap they'll pay for it!"

Bat raced on.

He was in hard condition. Running like a deer, he pounded up a slope. At the summit a shout of triumph burst from his throat.

Away below he saw white splashes in the darkness—sea-horses tossing their foaming crests. To his ears came the booming thunder of Atlantic combers hammering the iron-bound coast.

"The sea!" he yelled, and the wind whipped the words from his mouth.

Down and down plunged the Bat.

He reached the bottom. Black against the velvet sky he saw the outline of a square house, saw the wind-tossed trees that stood around it.

"That'll be it!" he gasped. "That's old Timber-toes' house! Can I reach it in time to beat those blackguards?"

A high, dim-seen wall loomed up abruptly. But Bat wasted no time looking for a gate. He sprang; his fingers gripped the top. His steel muscles cracking, he hauled himself up, to strain his eyes across a walled-in garden.

"Just in time! Thank Pete!"

Two shadowy figures had caught Bat Barstow's eye. They slunk across a green lawn, to vanish in a clump of fir-trees.

"My friends of the inn!" growled Bat. "The tall one's the dago beaver. Squat lad's the tough." And down he dropped.

The huge Bat landed in a flower-bed. Even as his feet touched earth he jumped off, to go stalking across the lawn with grim, purposeful strides.

It was amazing how fast the big man moved and how silently. He was the hunter who had run his quarry to ground.

In the shadow of the trees Blackbeard and tough Welch were eyeing the house.

Little they guessed who was on their trail!

CHAPTER 2.

The Eavesdropper!

"READY, Welch?" hissed Blackbeard. "Zat long window—you can open him wizout noise?"

"Bet your life, guv'nor!" Welch whispered back. "But where shall we find the goods?"

"In a safe, of course!" snapped the other. "You can open all ze kinds of

safe? Good! Ze admiral may give trouble. But we can deal wiz him, hein? Ze matter is urgent. We must not fail!"

"Trust me, guv!" snarled Welch. "If the old geezer spots us an' gets fresh I'll—"

Welch ended with a gurgling gasp. His eyes bulged.

From out of the blackness a huge hand had gripped his neck like a vice. Vainly he twisted, spluttering and coughing.

"You vile microbe!" purred an icy voice in his ear. "What'll you do to my friend the admiral?"

Round whipped Blackbeard. Dimly he saw the huge figure of Bat Barstow. He saw Welch helpless in an iron grasp. "Zat beeg man!" he gasped through his beard. "Fool, Welch! You did not fix hees car!"

Up flashed Blackbeard's hand.

Bat got the glint of steel. He acted promptly. With one mighty swing he sent Welch hurtling at the foreigner.

"There's your pal, fungus face!" he roared. "Plug him, if you want to plug anyone. Ah, I guessed you weren't shootin' really!"

The Bat was right. Plainly, Blackbeard wanted no noise. There came no cracking report. Yet the foreigner might have shot Bat.

For as he glimpsed Welch's form flying towards him the man dodged nimbly aside, his gun still raised.

Thud!

Welch landed on the turf. He lay gasping, all the breath knocked out of his body. With a bound Bat Barstow pounced on Blackbeard.

"You dago!" he boomed, his deep voice splitting the silence. "I'll teach you to go a-burgling! I'll lift you across the Channel, back where you came from!"

It all happened at racing speed. Blackbeard saw the huge man coming at him, but he didn't move. Lower he crouched. Then a hissing jet seemed to leap from his hand.

Swish! Bat Barstow got it in the mouth. He was aware of a pungent odour, of a burning pain that set his throat on fire.

Hoarse bellows came from the giant, but his rush was stopped. Back he staggered, choking and gurgling.

Blackbeard's trick was an old one, but mighty effective. The stuff he had shot at Bat Barstow was crude ammonia.

For a second or so the big man was helpless. Fighting for breath, he reeled to and fro.

"Up, Welch!" barked the ruffianly foreigner. "Up, dog! Club zis fellow quick! He can do nozzins!"

There came from the gloom a savage grunt. Welch was on his feet. He saw his big adversary helpless, and made to settle him.

But there came an interruption. Of a sudden a long window in the house was yellow with light. Someone had switched it on. Then the window flew open. Black against the light behind him stood a tall, thin man with a pistol in one hand and a torch in the other.

The white eye of the torch played on Blackbeard's face. It also revealed the startled features of the ruffian Welch.

"Beat it, guv'nor!" croaked Welch. "Here's the old guy himself! An' the big stiff's recoverin'! Run!"

Bent low, Welch darted off. There was a smothered oath, then Blackbeard was after him. The darkness swallowed both.

Still choking, Bat tried to follow. He plunged awkwardly some yards, then a crisp voice from behind bade him halt.

"Stop, there!" it cried. "I've got you covered! Take warning! I'll drop you!"

Bat pulled up! He didn't want to be shot, especially by his old friend the admiral, whose voice he had recognised.

He spun on his heel, to see the clean-cut features and white hair of Admiral Trimble. The admiral saw a bronzed young giant, with grey eyes flashing behind spectacles, and a close-clipped moustache above a firm mouth. He lowered his weapon.

"Jim Barstow!" he cried. "My young friend they call the Bat. What the deuce does this mean?"

"It means, admiral," grinned Bat, still coughing from the fumes, "that two lads of the village were out to plunder you. I didn't know you kept treasure-trove here. There," he added sadly, as the humming of a motor came faintly, "I'm afraid they've lit out! Really, admiral, you shouldn't have turned your shooter on me. I might have collared the beaver and his friend. Not but what ammonia in the mouth does make one short-winded."

Admiral Trimble sucked in his breath.

"Ammonia!" he snapped. "The fiends! But I couldn't guess who you were, Jim. I'd no idea you were in England. But you saved me from being robbed—and you've probably saved a thousand lives! It was your voice brought me out. I thought the Count must have brought a gang, who had started quarrelling. Come in, my boy! Tell me what happened."

Bat Barstow, over six feet in his socks, past thirty years of age, was still "my boy" to the old admiral. And, chuckling, he followed his surprised host into a well-furnished library.

Seated in a deep chair, drawing at a good cigar, the Bat told the admiral his story.

He told how since the War he had been hunting in Africa, and how he had come to England for a spell after a bad dose of fever.

"And so you see, sir," he ended, blowing out a blue cloud of smoke, "finding myself in Cornwall, I thought I'd pay you a surprise visit."

"You told me you lived hereabouts when we last met. Where was that? Oh, yes, in Bombay! Well, this afternoon I asked my way here from an inn back yonder. I fear I was indiscreet. The beaver and Mr. Welch must have heard me. They also had planned a surprise visit, it would seem. They hounded my car, so I had to run. Most exhausting!"

Bat laughed shortly and eyed his cigar.

"I'm puzzled, admiral," he admitted. "Why should a foreign gent, who dashes about in a Rolls-Royce, wish to crack your crib? I take it that filthy lucre was not the lure?"

"Yet he was most determined. He had even brought a professional burglar with him, to wit, Mr. Welch. My old brain's buzzing, admiral."

"The beaver, as you call that scoundrel, my boy," replied Admiral Trimble, "was one Count Hofner. I saw him. But he was off too quick. I was expecting him some time. He'll come again."

"My brain's still bewildered, sir," said Bat lazily. "Why does the bold, bad count go a-burgling? Is he hard-up? Is the grand car not his? Did he—er—pinch it? Perish the thought!"

The admiral's reply was to leave the room.

He was gone some minutes. He returned, to place on a table something

that made Bat Barstow sit up with a jerk.

It was an open box, with fiery red gems nestling on white wool inside.

"Rubies!" gasped Bat, blinking through his spectacles. "And what rubies! A king's ransom, as the story-books put it!"

"Exactly!" replied Admiral Trimble crisply. "A king's ransom, Jim! Listen!

"Six months ago I was in Transcandia. You've heard of it? A little State in the Balkans. I'd retired from the Navy, and was shooting bears. I landed into a revolution!"

"An' boned the rubies, admiral?" laughed Bat slyly. "Tut-tut!"

"I did not bone them, my boy," retorted the white-haired admiral. "They were thrust on me by Prince Boris. He knew my camp. He was flying from his burning palace, and brought these stones. Crown jewels they are.

"Well, to cut it short, the prince asked me to take them to England. He said when Transcandia quietened down he would come over and fetch them."

"Quite," nodded Bat. "I'd want to fetch stones like that myself if I owned 'em. They must be worth—"

"The money value hardly counts," struck in the admiral. "The point is that Transcandia is quiet again. Prince Boris is about to be crowned. He must have these jewels—State property. His enemies say he sold them. D'you follow, Jim? If the prince's enemies can seize the stones—"

"They'll make out the prince is a greedy rotter who popped his crown," cut in Bat, cute enough when necessary, "and they'll get a jolly revolution goin' again! I've got you, admiral. I see daylight. The beaver gent, alias Blackbeard, to wit, Count Hofner, means to pinch the rubies an' queer Prince Boris!"

"Exactly!" snapped the admiral. "Count Hofner is the chief revolutionary. If he gets the rubies, he tells the Transcandians that their future king sold them. He'll stir up his friends. There'll be more bloodshed and massacre!"

There was silence a moment in the admiral's library. Then the Bat jerked out:

"Really, admiral, d'you reckon a house in Cornwall a safe place for gems like these? It would seem that a lot hangs on Prince Boris getting them back. I would also seem that Baron—beg his pardon!—Count Hofner—is hot on the scent, aided by Burglar Welch."

"And by others, too!" added the admiral, with a grim smile. "But the rubies are safe here. I've a special burglar-proof arrangement—or, rather, trap. No one can touch these stones without dying unpleasantly—or, rather, they would not be allowed to die; they would be made helpless and uncomfortable. At the last minute I turn off the trap; then the burglars await police. If I am absent when the burglars call, my butler—an old Naval man—can work the trap device for me."

Bat laughed.

"Very nice, admiral. It would seem I hastened here for nothing—nix, as the Yanks say. By all means let Count Hofner arrive with cracksmen to be trapped. The sooner the better, it would seem. May I stay an' see the jolly trap sprung?"

"No, Jim," smiled the admiral. "You can do something for me, though, better than I can do myself.

"Prince Boris reaches London tomorrow, travelling unknown. I was to meet him and bring him here. He trusts no one to fetch the rubies. He

may be watched and kidnapped. That would even be worse than the loss of the rubies."

"You want me to meet him?" queried the Bat, "an' shepherd him down here, as it were?"

"I do," nodded the admiral. "I know he'd be safe with you—a fellow of your size and strength. Your sailing in here was really most lucky for me. I'm not much use in a scrap myself, with my gammy leg. Will you go?"

Bat Barstow lost no time in agreeing. Here was a promise of adventure after his own heart.

Then the admiral went off to replace the stones in his trap-guarded safe. He quickly returned. Then followed an earnest conversation.

"Where do you live in London, my boy?" asked the admiral. "At the Wanderers' Club, Piccadilly? Right. Now, listen! Secrecy is vital. Prince Boris will wire me as soon as he reaches town. He'll tell me where he's staying, wiring in a secret code. I shall wire back, in the same code, that you're meeting him, instead of me—that you'll bring him down here."

"He might smell a rat," objected the Bat. "He might refuse to trust himself to yours truly. Perchance he'd jib at sight of my face! Seriously, admiral, wouldn't it be better for me to hike the stones along with me?"

"It would not!" declared Admiral Trimble. "The danger of having the rubies in London is too great. The prince will come here, receive the stones, then be rowed out to a waiting steamer. From Cornwall he will go straight back to the Balkans.

"And, of course, he'll trust you. My code-wire to him will explain things. As soon as he gets it he'll send a car to your club for you. Go in that car to wherever the prince is staying, meet him, and bring him down."

Bat nodded. It all seemed simple—childishly so. Finally, the admiral showed a photograph of the prince, so that Bat could know him.

"May I have that picture of his royalness?" asked Bat. "It might come in handy. I want to be sure I'm bringing down the right joker!"

Laughing, Admiral Trimble passed the photo over. A little later both went off to bed.

The Bat was in high spirits. He had almost forgotten his deserted car. The next morning he was to be driven to the nearest station by his host, then catch the express for London. He was looking forward to meeting the prince; to outwitting the scoundrel Count Hofner.

But Bat wasn't the only happy one! Count Hofner had overheard nearly all the plans!

True, after squirting ammonia at Bat, the scoundrel had fled with Welch in his Rolls-Royce. But he hadn't gone far. He had crept back afoot, to listen at the ill-fitting window of Admiral Trimble's library.

The count, otherwise Blackbeard, hadn't seen the rubies, didn't know they were in the room, but he had learnt a lot!

CHAPTER 3.

Caught Napping!

"HANG princes!" grumbled Bat Barstow. "Blow the rubies! Here am I, stuck in the club, waiting for a tin-pot prince who doesn't show up! And it's a blazing fine day. I might have run out of town and got some shooting.

"Gosh! This princely bloke mightn't,

cast up for a week. Does old Timber-toes expect me to sit on here waiting for him?"

At the ghastly idea Bat groaned. He glared at his newspaper through his glasses.

For Bat Barstow had sat in the Wanderers' Club all the afternoon, ever since arriving from Cornwall. But there had been no sign of Prince Boris. Bat wondered how long he'd have to wait, and groaned again.

Time passed. The club library was empty, except for Bat, who'd read all the newspapers twice. Outside, dusk was falling. Street lamps were being lit.

At last to the library came a shrill-voiced pageboy.

"Mr. Barstow, sir?"

"Right, son!" cried Bat, leaping up. "Who wants me? Shoot off the news. Have you come to put an end to my fearful boredom?"

The page grinned. He knew Bat, and liked him.

"Car's outside for you, sir!" he piped, and promptly vanished.

So also did Bat Barstow.

The huge man caught up his hat and stick, then quitted the club as fast as possible.

Close to the pavement stood a waiting car. Bat hurried towards it, looked inside, then gave a gasp of satisfaction.

There were two men in the car. Bat recognised one. Dimly he saw a figure in a black overcoat, black felt hat, with thin features and a yellow moustache.

"The Royalty itself!" gasped Bat inwardly. "I know his mug from old Timber-toes' photograph. Right-ho! Hey presto for Cornwall, this side up, with care!"

But Bat didn't shout out that he recognised the prince. Enemies might be lurking around. He merely thrust his face through the car window and announced his presence.

"Jim Barstow," he drawled, his eyes twinkling behind his glasses. "Sometime called Bat. That's me. Where do we go from here? Shall I join you inside, or travel on the roof with the luggage?"

The prince's companion leant forward, a squat little man, with a round, red face.

"You come from ze admiral?" he whispered. "But yes, you must be ze right man, ozzerwise you could not come out of zat club. Come inside.

"Ze prince," he added very softly, "would not travel so far as Cornwall wizout an English friend. Eet ees too dangerous. We are strangers, wiz many enemies. And ze roads are difficult. Come! You can direct ze chauffeur, an' you can defend ze prince if attack is made."

"Thanks," laughed Bat. "You're full of kind suggestions."

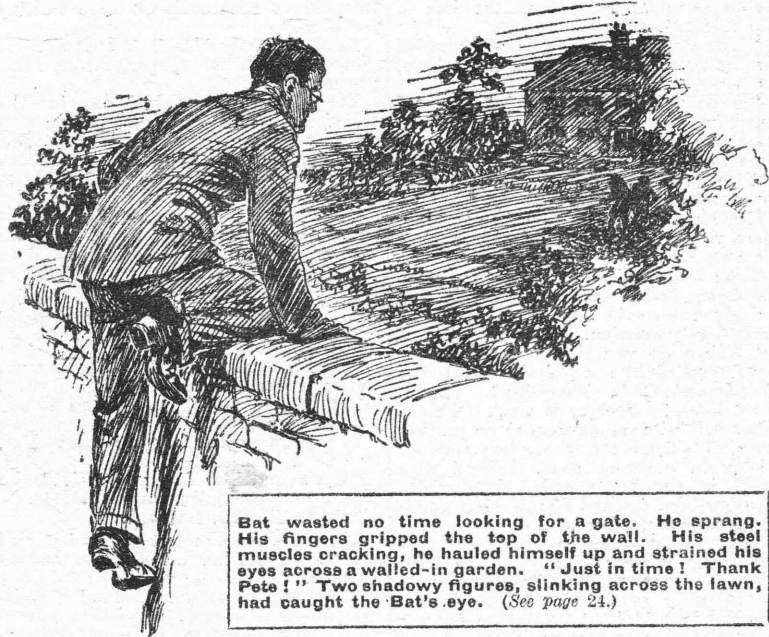
Then he told the driver how to get out of London, and swung his vast frame into the car.

With a warning hoot, the vehicle slid off. Bat, seated between the prince and the other fellow, watched the lights of Piccadilly go streaming past.

"This is going to be tame," he sighed to himself. "And dull, too! This prince fellow hasn't opened his mouth. An' I don't think much of Transcandian manners! No thanks for my weary wait in the club, for my hustle up from Cornwall. Just orders to hop inside an' defend his Royalness! Blow their cheek! Well, I'm doing it for old Timber-toes. He'll be mighty glad to get rid of the rubies."

The car rolled on.

Bat leant back on the leather
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Bat wasted no time looking for a gate. He sprang. His fingers gripped the top of the wall. His steel muscles cracking, he hauled himself up and strained his eyes across a walled-in garden. "Just in time! Thank Pete!" Two shadowy figures, slinking across the lawn, had caught the Bat's eye. (See page 24.)

cushions. He was feeling sleepy. Lazily he eyed the back of the chauffeur through the glass window before him.

But all at once he was wide awake. Where had he seen that broad back, those powerful shoulders? He sucked in his breath, his brain working at lightning speed.

Then something made him turn. He shot a swift glance at the silent prince. He didn't look at the shaven chin or the yellow moustache. He looked at the eyes above—and knew them!

"Hofner, by George!" he roared. "The burglin' baron! Your make-up's good, but—"

Up came Bat's powerful hand, to seize the yellow moustache, and to whip it clean off in one jerk! Came a yell of pain from the bogus prince. But the yell snapped off. Bat had got the ruffian by the throat, to bang his head against the wooden frame.

But Bat had forgotten the other fellow, the disguised count's squat companion. He seemed so puny that Bat had ignored him.

That mistake proved fatal. For Bat felt a sharp prick in his arm, and at once felt dizzy. He knew what had happened. The puny scoundrel had used a hypodermic syringe!

"Doped!" shouted Bat, swinging round. "You poisonous reptile, I'll—"

Then things swam! Dimly Bat Barstow saw the squat man's grinning face, heard a fiendish chuckle from Hofner behind him. He felt himself sliding, his limbs powerless. As from a distance, came the count's gloating voice:

"Vair goot, Feltmann. You vos just in time wiz ze needle. Zis beeg brute almos' stun me. But now he ees feeneesh. He learn not to interfere. We weel t'row heem out far from anywhere. Zen we go for ze rubies."

The squat ruffian, apparently Feltmann, gave a hoarse bark of laughter. And vainly Bat Barstow tried to fight off the powerful drug. He couldn't. His limbs seemed leaden, his great strength was of no avail.

It was plain what had happened. Somehow—Bat couldn't think how—Count Hofner had learnt Admiral Trimble's plan.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 938.

A master of disguise, well acquainted with Prince Boris' features, the count had got himself up like the prince's photo. He had lured Bat into his car.

"Eggscellent, count!" Bat dimly heard Feltmann say. "Zis hugé man would haf give much trouble. He would have met ze prince and taken heem to ze house of ze admiral, perhaps arriving at an unlucky moment.

"Now, all is easy. Ze prince we can find later. Wiz zis beeg brute out of ze way, ze rubies are ours. Eet ees lucky ze prince vos late, and not reach ze club before us. If ze admiral show fight—"

"We settle heem," struck in Hofner, "but not keel! I haf learnt ze admiral has a burglar-trap—vair dangerous. Goot! We force ze distinguished admiral to open ze safe for us. Ha, ha!"

Bat made a mighty effort. He was on the floor of the car now, Hofner kicking his ribs. But he couldn't budge. His brain awl, he felt his senses slipping.

He felt the car stop, heard the door open. Vaguely he recognised another voice—the voice of the cracksman Welch!

So he had been right. He had recognised the broad back and powerful shoulders through the car window. The chauffeur was burglar Welch—also disguised!

Then Bat felt himself seized, to be dragged out—dumped in a ditch like a sack of coals.

The car rolled off. Bat guessed he was miles from anywhere. Even if he hired a fast car he would never catch up the count's gang now!

The rubies would be stolen. There would be red revolution in Transcandia. Worse—far worse—old Admiral Trimble, Bat's friend, would be done to death.

Threatened by revolvers, the admiral would be made to open his trap-guarded safe. Either that or be shot. If he opened it, he would be left to die. The gang wouldn't switch off the device at the last second!

These thoughts tore through Bat's brain like a flaming fire. Then oblivion descended like a black blanket.

CHAPTER 4. The Trap!

BAT sat up with a jerk. He found himself on a moonlit road. Around he saw a windswept moor. Memory returned at once.

"Trapped!" he roared, staggering to his feet. "Fooled like a tenderfoot!"

"Darn the rubies! Dence take all Balkan princes! They don't matter! But old Timber-toes does. The bounders'll kill him. Three armed dagoes against an old chap with one leg! And I bet they blot the butler chap right off!"

Bat swayed on his feet. A less powerful man would have slept sound all night. But the Bat's huge frame had shaken off the dope in half an hour. His iron-hard constitution stood him in good stead.

"Where am I?" he gritted. "B'gosh, I guess on Salisbury Plain! I'm miles from a town! Can't hire a car! No use now if I could!"

"Hallo! What's that?"

A distant thunder reached Bat's ears, growing rapidly louder. Far across the dim plain showed a flashing bar of yellow light. It was streaking madly—the light from the carriages of a racing express.

Bat gasped. Then he searched his pockets. He hadn't been robbed. In a split second he was looking at his watch by his electric torch.

"Seven o'clock!" he gasped. "Then—that—that train is the Cornish Express! By hokey, I'll stop her! I'll beat the gang's car yet!"

His mind made up, Bat plunged away across the plain. He meant to head the express, to stop her. He ran as he'd never run before.

On he tore, stumbling over mounds. His breath sobbed in his lungs. The thunder of flying wheels was getting louder.

"Done it!"

Bat gasped the words as he suddenly saw the gleaming metals. He leapt a wire fence. Now he was on the rails. Far down the shining track he saw headlights glitter. They were coming fast. Now yellow stars, now a blaze of light.

In seconds the train would be on him. But Bat Barstow's brain worked like lightning.

He knew he'd been hurt. His right sleeve was torn. Something warm was trickling down his arm. He had landed on a jagged stone when slung from the motor-car.

"Blood!" gasped Bat. "I'm bleeding. And blood's red. Thank Pete mine ain't the blue kind!"

Even at such a moment Bat laughed. But he also got busy.

He mopped his arm with a handkerchief. In a second the white linen was sticky, saturated, and red. Chuckling grimly, Bat clapped the scarlet rag over the end of his torchlight.

"A danger signal!" he laughed, and started to brandish his rag-ended torch.

On came the train. Would it stop? Would the driver see him?

Now Bat was deafened by the din. A great black locomotive towered almost above him. In rear were the lighted cars.

Bat waved his torch, cut fiery circles with it in the darkness of the night. He raved and howled:

"Stop! Stop!"

The long train was stopping! Came the screech of applied brakes, the grinding of the loco's wheels skidding on the metals.

The hissing steam monster pulled up

right beside Bat. Out leant the driver and bawled inquiringly.

But Bat was giving no answers. He'd done what he wanted to.

"All right!" he bellowed. "Full steam ahead, driver!" and dashed forward, to leap at the handle of a carriage, swing himself up, and hurl himself in on to comfortable cushions.

Came angry shouts. Heads were thrust out all along the train. Followed pounding footfalls. The guard was running along the train, reached Bat's compartment, jumped up, and thrust a red-whiskered face through the open window.

"You did this!" he roared. "You flagged the train!"

"I did, old son," replied Bat Barstow calmly. "I had to! A matter of life an' death!"

The guard took Bat's name and address, threatened awful penalties, then jumped down and restarted the train.

"Splendid!" chuckled Bat. "Non-stop for Penzance! I rather think I'll beat the baron's car. There only remains the little difficulty of getting off at Timber-toes' station!"

On and on roared the Cornish Express!

"Too late!"

The words were forced out between Bat's clenched teeth. The Bat had reached Admiral Trimble's place. He was half-way up the long carriage drive, only to see a stationary car. He knew the car—the one he'd been kidnapped in!

Bat had quitted the express half a mile before running through the admiral's nearest station.

The express should not have stopped! It did! Because Bat yanked the communication-cord and then quietly dropped off.

"Gee! They must ha' hummed along!" muttered Bat. "But they

haven't gone yet. I'm in time to greet them!"

He headed for the dim house at a run.

The house was wrapped in silence. No light showed. Icy fear gripped Bat Barstow's heart.

"Old Timber-toes!" he growled. "Have the blackguards done him in? Are they now rifling his safe? Has he been killed by his own trap—"

Bat broke off. He crouched, listening, by the window of the library. He could hear nothing.

Moonbeams fell on Bat's face. It looked grim, with flashing eyes and jutted jaw. Indeed, the young giant looked a bad man to tackle.

"All's quiet!" he muttered, amazed, then gently pushed the window inwards.

The catch was not fastened; the long window gave, and Bat stepped into a silent, pitch-dark room.

Dead silence! Bat Barstow held his breath. He strained his ears. He knew he was outlined against the brilliant moon, and crept forward, making for the door. Then—

Click! All the lights were flashed on!

Bat gasped. He swung round, to look straight into the muzzles of three revolvers! Above the pistols he saw three faces—the face of Count Hofner—minus black beard or yellow moustache—the round features of Feltmann, and the ugly countenance of burglar Welch!

"Don't move, Mr. Barstow!" purred the sinister count. "Or Bat, I should say. Just put your hands up."

"Cut that talk!" snarled Bat, his eyes blinking rapidly. "Get down to business!"

"Certainly," replied the count. "'Ow you haf come I do not know. It does not matter. But you haf come. Meester Welch look t'rough ze window an' see you on ze lawn. Goot! Vair useful for

us. Ze admiral cannot now open ze safe for us—you shall."

"He's dead!" thundered Bat. "By heavens—"

"Not dead," purred Hofner. "But he tried to shoot Meester Welch, and got hit on ze 'ead. He lie quiet for a long time I t'ink. Ze butler, ees dead I fear. Welch hit him too hard. So you see, Meester Barstow, 'ow fortunate zat you arrive. Ze admiral say where ze safe is, but he refuse to open. Then he get hit 'ard. We are afraid to open ze safe. You can do zat for us!"

"I'll see you to Jericho!" he thundered.

"Contrariwise," smiled Hofner meaningly. "You go to Jericho quick, ef you not open ze safe. You fear ze trap? What ees eet? Ah, who knows?"

Bat thought quickly. He knew the safe was down in the cellars, but he hadn't asked the admiral what the trap was. He guessed it was some electric device. Unlocking the safe would connect the burglar with an electric shock. The burglar would be glued till someone switched off the current.

But Bat thought he could settle the gang on the way down to the cellar. The passage would be narrow.

"All right," he grunted at last, "I'll open it."

"Goot!" purred the count. "No trecks, mind!" And he tossed over keys taken from the admiral, who lay stunned in another room.

Bat caught the keys. Then he swung off, closely followed by three armed men, ready to shoot. The guns were levelled at Bat's back.

Down a wide passage they went. Appeared a narrow door at the end.

"Through there!" snapped Hofner.

Bat swung open the heavy door. By the light from behind him he saw five stone steps, saw a narrow passage with dripping stone walls. The passage led to the cellars beyond.

"Damp!" muttered Bat. "Mighty damp! They must be under the sea. I guess that's right. I can hear waves thundering—"

"On!" barked the count. Bat went on. Down he went, closely followed by the armed ruffians.

One, two, three, four—then as Bat's weight bore down on the fifth step there came a hollow bang from behind. Round whipped the count.

"Ze door ees shut!" he shrieked. "It shut etself. We are trapped!"

Bat, too, swung round, then laughed softly.

But the laughter stopped. To the ears of all came the gurgling swish of falling water. It grew louder. Now it was a roar, coming from the cellars.

All looked along the stone passage below, flashing torches, to see sea-water boiling towards them!

(Continued on page 28.)



The half-drowned scoundrels were fighting up the flooded steps, but only one could come at a time. The first was Welch, and he received an iron fist on his jaw that sent him reeling back. (See page 28.)

THE FIFTH STEP!

(Continued from page 27.)

There was an instant's pandemonium. Hofner screamed, so did Feltmann; burglar Welch let fly hoarse shouts of terror. Then all three tried to reach the door. They fought wildly.

But only Hofner could reach the grim door. He hammered in vain. It was tight shut.

Exhausted, they looked back, to see huge Bat Barstow standing calm, the water green in the torchlight, swirling about his knees.

"You did zis!" screamed Hofner, his eyes bulging.

"Wrong!" snapped the Bat. "D'you think I want to drown? Don't you see, you pack of vermin, that we're all trapped? The fifth step must have sprung the thing." When I trod on it the door banged behind, and from somewhere beyond the cellars the water started—

"Open the door!" croaked Welch. "You're big enough. You great stiff, perhaps—"

Bat bellowed with laughter. Death was at hand, but the situation tickled him. The count's gang was asking him to save them.

"Stop your fooling!" bellowed Welch. "Open the door! Try, anyway, or I'll plug you pronto—"

"Shoot!" laughed Bat. "You worms couldn't open it. If I'm dead—"

He broke off, laughing derisively. The water was at his waist now. The wretches on the steps were up to ankles,

knees, and over, according to which step they occupied.

"For pity's sake, Meester Barstow," groaned Hofner, "try ze door! Your great strength—"

Bat was master of the situation. "I'll try," he said, "if you chuck your arms over."

There was no hesitation. Pistols were thrust into Bat Barstow's hands. Then the huge man swept the ruffians aside.

With his powerful fists he gripped the knob of the handle. He braced himself, his steel sinews bulging and cracking.

Down below the trio held flashlights high and begged Bat to hurry. Hofner was now on tiptoe.

Bat gripped hard; he exerted all his strength, as of five ordinary men; he twisted—twisted and heaved. Then came a crack! The giant had broken the patent spring that held the door in place.

Bang! The door flew wide. Bat Barstow stumbled forward.

Came shouts from behind. The half-drowned scoundrels were fighting up the flooded steps.

But only one could come at a time. The first was Welch, to receive an iron fist on his jaw that sent him reeling back.

There came splashes and oaths. Welch had knocked Hofner and Feltmann headlong. All were fighting for dear life.

"Come up singly," Bat called down. "And come quiet, or you don't come at all, my burghin' pals!"

The reply was another rush, stopped by another swinging smite from Bat.

That instant came footfalls from the library. Bat looked round swiftly, to see Admiral Trimble, his head gashed, staggering forward.

"You, Jim!" gasped the admiral. "Have you got those blackguards down there? Then keep 'em. Shut the door. I can bolt it from this side. I'll switch the water off. They can stand up to their necks till police come an' fetch 'em!"

The admiral hurried off. A moment later Bat, who kept the ruffians down, saw the water had ceased to rise.

"A bit wet?" he called down. "All right, don't worry! Police'll blow along soon, and you'll go to nice dry cells. Meanwhile hunt for the rubies. They're down there somewhere. But you can't take 'em away. I guess the real Prince Boris'll show up to-morrow. He might like 'em."

Bang! Bat banged the door again, banged it on three drenched blackguards who cowered on the steps, and slid the bolt home. Then he turned back, to find both Admiral Trimble and the bulker coming towards him.

"They're camed. Timber-toes—I mean, admiral!" whooped the Bat. "A bit damp, but quite safe. It was a real smart trap, sir—a bit too smart for my liking. I wish you'd mentioned the whole contraption was worked by the fifth step."

"Ah!" "We'd have trod more lightly," grinned the Bat. "An' I might have managed to lay out the gang in the cellars. As it is, every time I go up or down stairs, sir, I shall always jump over the fifth step!"

THE END.

(There will be another thrilling Bat Barstow yarn next week, chums. Look out for "BAT BARSTOW'S PAL!" By Cecil Fanshawe. It's one of the best stories in the series.)

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