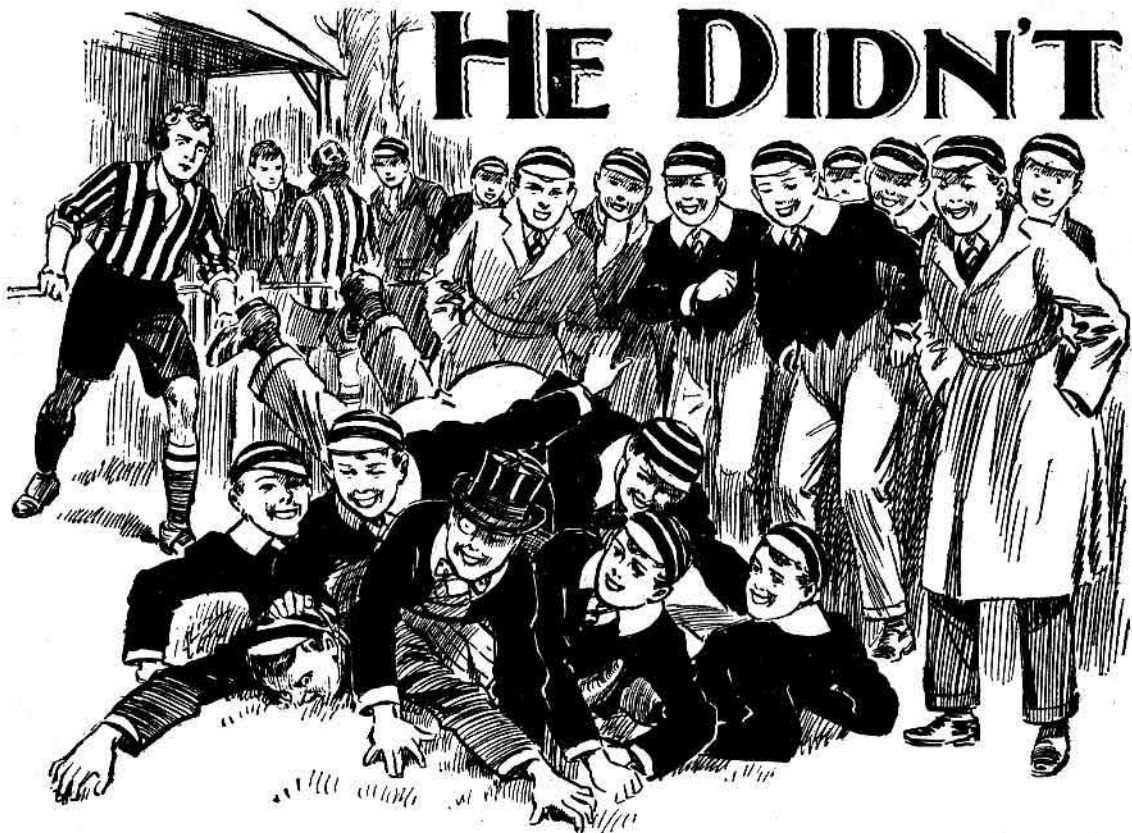


"HE DIDN'T PLAY THE GAME!" Read the Stirring **INSIDE.**  
Long St. Jim's Story

# The **GEM** 2d



*"Let 'em all bome!—  
Says Fatty Wynn."*



# HE DIDN'T

## NOT NICE FOR KNOX'S NOSE!

"Ow!" roared Knox. "You young fiends! Let me get up!" But instead of letting the bullying prefect rise, five or six juniors fell on him, and his nose was driven into the turf.

### CHAPTER 1.

#### From Words to Blows!

**T**OM MERRY, the captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, held up his hand.

"Silence, please!"

"Wats!"

"Now, look here, Gussy—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Silence!" said Tom Merry, thumping his study table. "I haven't asked you chaps to come into my study to talk. I've asked you to come here and—"

"Hear you talk?" suggested Jack Blake of the Fourth Form.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "I tell you it's an important matter, and if we don't get it fixed this evening it will be too late. Now, are you fellows going to listen to me?"

"In the cires—"

"In the cires, shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "We'll give Tom Merry a chance to talk—"

"Weally, Blake—"

Jack Blake pressed a hand upon the chest of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the swell of St. Jim's sat down suddenly in a chair—so suddenly that it took his breath away. He gasped, and Tom Merry took advantage of the pause to go on quickly.

"It's about the match to-morrow. You know that the First Eleven are meeting Southwood United, and it's going to be the biggest match of the season. Southwood United are a half-professional team, and they've got some first-class players—all older than our First Team. It will be the hardest nut the First Eleven have had to crack."

"They won't beat them!" said Blake.

"They're going to try—and I jolly well hope they will, for the honour of St. Jim's. It will be a big feather in our cap if we beat a team like the United," said Tom Merry.

"They're supposed to be almost up to League form; and a

lot of the Fifth and Sixth have been cavilling at Kildare for accepting their challenge to the match."

Blake grunted.

"I know that," he said. "Lot of unsportsmanlike asses! Kildare was quite right."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, recovering his breath and his voice at the same time. "I wegard Kildare's conduct as quite wight and pwopah. Blake, if you do not wemove your hand from my chest and allow me to wise I shall stwike you violently."

"Well, will you promise to keep quiet?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do give a chap a chance to speak!" urged Tom Merry.

"We could have easily carried this wheeze through without giving you Fourth Form chaps a chance at all, but we thought we'd better let you into it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, go ahead!" said Blake suspiciously. "Let's hear the wheeze."

"Kildare's team will have all their work cut out to beat the United," said Tom Merry. "Therefore, I was thinking of suggesting to Kildare a means of strengthening the team."

Blake stared.

"Eh? You're thinking of giving advice to the captain of the school about making up a football eleven?" he ejaculated.

Tom Merry nodded calmly.

"Yes."

"My hat!" said Blake.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took his eyeglass off, polished it, and jammed it into his eye again, and said:

"Gweat Scott!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—grinned a little with satisfaction. They were rather pleased with the effect their scheme had produced upon the Fourth Formers.

"That's the idea," said Monty Lowther, "and I think it's a jolly good one."

"Simply ripping!" said Manners.

"Well, of all the cheek—" said Blake slowly.

—MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF ERIC KILDARE AND GERALD KNOX.

# PLAY the GAME!

By  
MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.

"Of all the nerve!" said Digby.

"Yaas, watah!"

"If you chaps don't want to back us up you can slide out," said Tom Merry loftily. "But we're going to put it plainly to Kildare."

"But what are you going to suggest?" asked Blake, puzzled.

"Playing juniors," said Tom Merry. "Myself, for instance, and say, Fatty Wynn, of the New House."

"Well, you ass!"

"Isn't it a jolly good idea?" demanded Tom Merry. "My idea is that the school eleven ought to be representative of the whole school instead of only the top Forms. And I really think that a little new blood would do the First Eleven good. Darrell's crooked now, you know, and Monteith is off colour. It's just the time for the juniors to claim some of their rights."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Look here, you asses—"

"Bai Jove, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after a few moments' thought, "there is somethin' in Tom Mewwy's ideah! But I think the juniah should be chosen from the Fourth Form."

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three with one voice.

"Gussy's quite right," said Blake warmly. "He thinks that if there's a junior to be played in the school eleven it ought to be me—"

"Weally, Blake, I don't think anythin' of the kind!"

"Eh? You weren't thinking of Figgins, I suppose?"

"Who, then?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I should think you might guess. I hope I am not the kind of fellow to put myself forward in any way, but I certainly think that if a juniah is to be played in the First Eleven, it would be bettah to select the best juniah playah; and, in those cires, I fail to see how I could be left out."

"Well, you fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead—"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, exasperated. "Are you Fourth Form chaps coming with me to Kildare's study to back me up, or are you not?"

"Not!" said the Fourth Formers promptly.

"Then you can buzz off!" grunted Tom Merry. "I suppose I was an ass to expect you to talk sense."

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, run away and play!"

"I wefuse to run away and play!"

"What-ho!" said Blake.

"I hope you're not going to give us the trouble of putting you into the passage?" said Tom Merry, with forced politeness.

"Wats! I should wefuse to be put into the passage—"

"Better try it!" said Blake, with an expression which indicated very clearly that he really considered that the Terrible Three had better not try it.

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"You silly asses—"

"Fatheads!"

"Chumps!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Yah!"

And then, nobody knowing exactly how it started, words were changed for blows, and the Terrible Three and the three Fourth Formers were whirling in a wild conflict.

## CHAPTER 2.

Exit Blake & Co.!

**B**UMP!

Jack Blake, whirled through the doorway by Tom Merry, descended in the passage with a resounding bump, and lay there, gasping.

Bump!

Another form came whirling through the doorway; but

this time it was not a Fourth Former; it was one of the owners of the study—Manners—and he had been hurled forth by Digby. He fell upon Blake, and the two clutched one another, and rolled over the linoleum in wild conflict.

"Ow!"

"Yow-ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Monty Lowther were whirling round the study locked together. Tom Merry closed with Digby, and they staggered through the doorway. Each was determined to "chuck" the other out, and they both succeeded. They came out together, and fell over Blake and Manners, and the four of them rolled over in a yelling heap.

D'Arcy and Lowther remained in the study, struggling wildly. D'Arcy seemed to be getting the advantage, but suddenly his collar-stud snapped.

"Bai Jove! You've bwoken my collah!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"I'll break your silly neck next!" growled Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Out you go!"

"Wefuse me, you ass! You are wumplin' my jacket, and wuinin' my collah! I am willin' to make it pax!"

"Rats!"

"You—you fwightful boundah! Wefuse me at once! If it were not for my clobbah, I would give you a fearful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther was laughing too much to continue the tussle. He released the swell of St. Jim's, and sank into a chair, gasping with mirth.

"You uttah wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dusted his trousers with a cambric handkerchief and tried to get his waistcoat straight. Tom Merry came panting into the study. He had succeeded in disposing of Digby. He stared at D'Arcy as he saw how the swell of St. Jim's was engaged.

"Hallo! Have you left off to tend the wounded before the battle's finished?" he demanded.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it were not for my twousahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus ceased dusting his trousers and clenched his fists. He rushed at Tom Merry, and Tom Merry caught him round the neck, and they waltzed round the study. In a moment more Arthur Augustus was floating gracefully through the doorway.

"Yawwooh!"

"Oh, you ass!" growled Blake. "What are you falling on me for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Groogh!"

"Ow! Rescue!" gasped Manners, who was squirming on the linoleum with Blake and Digby sitting on him.

"Yow! Rescue!"

Tom Merry and Lowther came out of the study at once. At the same moment, Knox, the prefect, came upstairs with a cane in his hand. Knox did not wait to ask any questions. He started operations with the cane.

Lash, lash, lash!

"Ow! Yow!"

"Yawwooh!"

"Ow! Help! Yowp!"

The Terrible Three bolted back into their study, and Tom Merry slammed the door, and three pairs of feet were jammed against it inside. Three Fourth Formers went down the passage at top speed, and Knox was left alone, still brandishing the cane.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, stopping

at the end of the passage, and groping wildly for his eye-glass. "Hold on! It has struck me—"

"The cane has struck us, too, you ass, and it will strike us again if you don't get a move on!" howled Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Run, you ass!"

"I mean, it has struck me that it is not strictly consistent with our personal dig to wun in this way. In the circus—"

Arthur Augustus got no farther. Blake seized him by one arm and Digby by the other, and the swell of St. Jim's was rushed on at top speed, vainly protesting. It was high time, for Knox was giving chase, and he had almost reached them.

The juniors dashed on, and disappeared round a corner, and Knox halted. He felt that it was not in keeping with the dignity of a prefect to chase after Fourth Formers.

Knox returned to the Shell passage and kicked at Tom Merry's door.

"Open this door!" he roared.

There was a gasping chuckle from inside the study. But the door did not open. Knox gave it a resounding lash with his cane that echoed along the passage.

"Open this door!"

Another chuckle.

Knox turned the handle, but the door did not move. It was locked on the inside. The Sixth Former lashed it with his cane again, and then tramped angrily down the passage. With great relief the Terrible Three inside the study heard his departing footsteps die away. Tom Merry rubbed a swollen nose, and Manners sat down and caressed a discoloured eye, and Monty Lowther dabbed a stream of red from the corner of his mouth.

The Terrible Three looked very much the worse for wear, and they felt sore.

"Well, this is a nice go!" gasped Tom Merry at last.

"All your fault!" growled Manners.

"How is it my fault?" demanded Tom Merry.

"You suggested bringing those Fourth Formers into the scheme!" growled Manners.

"Well, you approved of it."

"Oh, don't argue!"

"I believe I've got a loose tooth!" growled Monty Lowther, dabbing his mouth. "It was all your fault, you asses. I was against the whole thing—"

"You never said so—"

"Well, I say so now!" growled Lowther,

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Chuck it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "There's been enough hammering. I believe my nose is going to be double size! Ow!"

"What about going to Kildare?" asked Monty Lowther, after a pause. "Are you going to drop the wheeze?"

"Not much!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I'm going to Kildare. It would have looked better to have some of the Fourth backing us up; but I've no doubt we can make Kildare listen to reason."

And, after cautiously opening the door, to make quite sure that Knox, the prefect, had departed, Tom Merry & Co. quitted the study, and proceeded to indulge in a "wash and brush-up," which they very much needed, to make themselves presentable for a visit to the study of the captain of the school.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Bad News!

**K**ILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, was at tea in his study.

The big, handsome Sixth Former looked very well and fit. There were three other seniors with him, all of the Sixth—Darrell and Rushden of the School House, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House at St. Jim's. The four seniors were talking over the impending match with Southwood United.

The United match was a "big thing" for St. Jim's first.

Kildare, keen and enterprising footballer as he was, was the first to acknowledge that. He would not, of his own accord, have challenged Southwood. The United team was older than the First Eleven at St. Jim's, and in its ranks it included several professional players. The United belonged to the county league, and had hopes of being able, at no distant date, to join the Third Division of the English League. Such a team was, in the nature of things, far above an eleven picked from the best players in the top Form of a Public school.

But they had challenged St. Jim's to a match, and Kildare was not the fellow to refuse a challenge so long as he had any chance at all. With the First Eleven at its very best,

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there was no reason why the Saints should not have a chance.

Then came ill-luck. Darrell, who was the best man in the team after Kildare, twisted his ankle in practice, and was crooked. It was a severe blow to the eleven. Darrell would not be able to play on Wednesday, that was certain. There were plenty of good players in the Sixth and Fifth Forms at St. Jim's from whom Kildare could select a reliable substitute; but there was nobody up to the form of Darrell.

The St. Jim's First Eleven had to make up their minds to meet the enemy with one of their best men left out. But Kildare was not in the least inclined to give up hope.

"It's rotten!" Darrell was saying, as he passed his cup to be refilled. "I'm more sorry than I can say, Kildare."

"It wasn't your fault," said Kildare. "Knox cannoned into you, and you had to go down. It was Knox's fault, if anybody's. But how we're to get a winger like you, old man, is a puzzle."

"It's rotten!" said Darrell again.

The seniors all agreed that it was rotten. But it could not be helped.

"The team's good as it stands, though," said Kildare thoughtfully. He took a fragment of paper from his pocket, with names pencilled on it, and ran over the list. "Lefevre of the Fifth is going into goal—and he's a steady man. He'll keep the leather out as well as anybody."

"Good man!" said Monteith.

"Dodd and Price are good backs; I don't see how we could improve on them."

"Quite right!"

"Baker, North, and Jones are the half-line, and they will hold together well."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then Rushden, Darrell, Kildare, Monteith, and Fan-court," said Kildare musingly. "That was the front line. And we've got to get a man to put in your place, Darrell, and—"

Kildare was interrupted as there was a tap at the door. Knox, the prefect, came in. He nodded to the other seniors, with a slight flush in his cheeks.

"Come in, Knox!" said Kildare. "We were just talking about the eleven—"

"That's what I've come to speak about," said Knox abruptly.

Kildare looked a little surprised.

"Yes," he said.

Knox's flush deepened.

"You haven't decided yet upon an inside-right to replace Darrell?" he said.

"Not yet. We're thinking about Anderson of the Fifth."

"I don't see why the Fifth should be chosen when there are Sixth Formers available," said Knox.

"Well, no," said Kildare slowly; "but—"

"But there is a 'but,'" said Knox, with a sneer. "I know we don't pull very well together, you and I, Kildare, in school matters. We have different ideas about the duties of a prefect. But I don't think personal disagreement ought to be allowed to interfere with football matters."

"I shouldn't let it," said Kildare quietly. "I think all the fellows know me too well to imagine that I should let my private likes and dislikes interfere with selecting a footer team. But that's not the point. I'm going to pass you over—"

"Oh, you've settled that, then?" said Knox unpleasantly.

"Yes. I'm going to pass you over because you're not fit, and because you're not reliable enough for a match of this sort. We want to win specially, to show that an amateur team can hold its own against professionals. If you were more fit I'd be glad to play you; but—well, to be quite plain, Knox, you smoke too much to be fit, and you know it."

"I might have expected you to harp on that old string," said Knox, with a sneer; "but, really, you might find something new, if you must get at me."

"I don't want to get at you. I'm stating facts. You're a prefect, and I don't interfere with your private habits, though I should care a junior for acting as you do. But you can't expect me to play you."

"No, I suppose I can't."

"Besides—" Kildare paused.

"Well," said Knox, with the same sneer upon his thin, unpleasant face, "have you some more reasons to give?"

"Yes, since you ask for them. The way you cannoned Darrell yesterday was clumsy, to say the least of it!" said Kildare abruptly. "I couldn't suspect a St. Jim's fellow of being cad enough to crook one of ourselves to get a place in the team; but if you had Darrell's place you might be suspected of having cannoned him on purpose, Knox."

Knox flushed deeply.

"You mean that you suspect me?" he asked.

"No, I don't. Only it would look bad; and I may as well tell you that some of the fellows do suspect you."



"Kildare, old man," began Tom Merry. "Ow!" He broke off suddenly with a cry as Kildare's strong hand gripped his collar, and he was lifted from the floor. Next moment he was sent spinning out into the passage. Kildare did not approve of Tom's offer to play for the First Eleven!

Knox gritted his teeth.

"I suppose I ought to know better than expect fair play from you," he said. "We don't get on together, and you're going to leave me out. Well, I can't stop you."

Kildare coloured.

"If you're going to talk in that strain, the sooner you get out of my study the better," he said quietly.

Knox gave an angry laugh.

"Oh, I'll get out!" he said. "You're going to keep the match in the hands of your own circle of friends—I know that!"

Kildare half rose, his eyes glinting. Knox made a backward step towards the door. If the captain of St. Jim's had lost his temper it would have gone hard with the prefect. But Kildare was accustomed to keeping a tight hand on his temper; as captain of the school he needed to.

He sat down again quietly.

"You'd better go!" he said.

"Oh, I'll go fast enough!"

Knox quitted the study and slammed the door. The four seniors looked at one another uncomfortably.

"Knox takes it rottenly enough," Rushden remarked.

"You know what I think," said Monteith. "Knox bowled Darrell over on purpose."

"Well, I shall try not to think so," said Kildare. "But he doesn't play in the match—that's settled. Hallo! Come in!"

A knock had come at the door. Toby, the page of the School House, entered with a letter in his hand.

"Letter for you, Master Kildare," he said.

"Thank you, Toby!" said Kildare.

He took the letter, and the pageboy quitted the study. Kildare glanced at the address on the letter.

"It's from my father," he said. "Will you fellows excuse me?"

"All serene!"

Kildare opened the letter and glanced over it. The ruddy colour in his healthy, handsome face paled a little. The seniors looked at him.

"Not bad news, I hope?" said Darrell anxiously.

Kildare did not reply for a moment.

"Yes," he said at last.

"I'm sorry, old chap!"

"My mother's ill," said Kildare in a strained voice. "It's—It's not serious, I think, but the pater thinks I'd better know in case it's necessary for me to go home. He's going to let me have a wire to-morrow if I'm to go."

"My hat!"

"Poor old chap!"

Kildare sat staring at the letter. The other fellows looked at him. They were sorry for Kildare. They knew the deep bond of affection that existed between the kind Irish lady and her son. But they could not be blamed if they were thinking as much of the morrow's match as of Kildare. If the telegram came, what of the match with the United?

"Where is your mater now, Kildare?" asked Darrell, after a long pause.

"Staying at Brighton," said Kildare.

"You can get down there pretty soon, then, in case of any need," said Darrell slowly. "I'm sorry for this, Kildare, old chap."

Kildare nodded. His handsome face was pale and troubled. The seniors exchanged glances and quietly left the study. They felt that the captain of St. Jim's would prefer to be alone just then.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Rivals!

**T**OM MERRY gave one more dab to his face, tossed the sponge down, and began to towel himself. He blinked at his reflection in the glass, and grinned as he saw that his nose had a peculiar sideways effect.

The rough-and-tumble in the Shell study had had disarranging results for the features of several of the participants. Monty Lowther's upper lip felt twice its size, and Manners' eye was discoloured. He snorted as he looked at it in the glass. Manners of the Shell was given to being

very neat and clean and select in his appearance, and a black eye was the last thing in the world that he would have desired to possess. Manners was not pleased.

"Well, you fellows ready?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," growled Monty Lowther.

"I suppose so," grunted Manners.

"Keep a stiff upper lip!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"We've got to see Kildare this evening, or not at all. He's bound to fill up Darrell's place in the team to-night, and the list for the match will be posted up to-morrow morning. Then it will be too late. We couldn't expect him to make an alteration to please us."

"Go on!"

"If you're ready we'll start."

"I'm ready."

The chums of the Shell quitted the dormitory. They came downstairs with very determined expressions. How Kildare would receive their kind offer of assistance in making up the First Eleven they did not know—though perhaps they could guess. But they meant to see the matter through. Juniors had rights as well as seniors, and who was to stand up for them if the juniors themselves did not? Evidently nobody.

The three juniors came into the Sixth Form passage with their heads erect. As they entered the passage to make their way to Kildare's study they almost ran into three other juniors, who had just come into the School House. The newcomers were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House. They stopped at the sight of the Terrible Three and looked at them with grinning faces.

"Been in the wars?" asked Figgins.

"Oh, rats!"

"We're just going to see Kildare," Kerr remarked.

"What on earth do you chaps want to see Kildare for?"

"It's about the vacancy in the team."

The Terrible Three stared at them.

"The vacancy in the team?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes," Figgins nodded. "We've got a ripping idea. It's occurred to me that on an occasion like this the juniors ought to be given a show. Why shouldn't a junior be played in the school team?"

"My only hat!"

"And now Darrell's crooked there's a chance for Kildare to do the right thing without anybody being hurt," said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins warmly. "We've been talking to Blake, and you know jolly well you've got the same idea yourself."

"That's different," said Tom Merry loftily. "We're Shell fellows—almost seniors—"

"Almost idiots, you mean!"

"Look here, Kerr—"

"Bosh!"

"You jolly well get out of this House!" said Manners wrathfully. "What are you New House chaps doing on the respectable side of the quad, anyway?"

"Look here—"

"School House!" bawled Monty Lowther. "New House cads! Line up!"

There was a shout. Juniors ran up from all sides. The old warfare between the two Houses at St. Jim's only slept, and it was ready to break into new life at any moment. A crowd of School House fellows were on the spot in a few seconds.

"New House cads!"

"Kick them out!"

"Look here!" roared Figgins.

"Faith, and we're looking!" chuckled Reilly of the Fourth. "Kick them out!"

"Outside!" roared Kangaroo of the Shell.

"I tell you—"

"Outside!"

"Fathead—"

"Kick them out!"

There was a rush of the School House juniors. In a twinkling Figgins & Co. borne away by the rush, were whirling towards the doorway.

They resisted manfully.

But the numbers were too great. In the midst of a flowing tide of School House juniors, Figgins & Co. were swept downwards.

The Terrible Three looked on without taking any part in the combat. They did not want any more signs of strife to carry into Kildare's study. Figgins & Co., fighting desperately, were swept out upon the School House steps.

"Sock it to them!" shrieked Figgins. "We're going in!"

"Rats!"

"Kick them out!"

"Yah! New House cads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Fatty Wynn rolled down the steps and sat down on the cold ground with a sounding bump. He remained there, gasping for breath, till Kerr rolled down and alighted on him. Figgins, the last of the trio, fought gallantly, but he was hurled down at last, dragging Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn and Reilly down the steps with him. The School House fellows crowded on the steps, yelling with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go home!"

"Yah!"

Figgins & Co. gathered themselves up at the bottom of the steps. For a moment the infuriated Figgins was inclined to charge up the steps and attack. But a score or more of School House fellows were collected there, only too eager for the chance of rolling him down the steps again.

"No go!" said Kerr.

"But we've got to see Kildare!"

"Some other time, fathead! Come on!"

And the three New House juniors limped sorely away, followed by a yell of derision from the School House crowd.

The Terrible Three, in the Sixth Form passage, chuckled. They had got rid of their rivals, and the coast was clear. With serene faces they walked on to Kildare's study, and Tom Merry tapped at the door.

There was no reply.

"Gone out, I suppose," said Manners.

"Kildare was having tea with some other chaps," said Monty Lowther. "I should hardly think he was finished yet."

"We'll soon see."

Tom Merry tapped again, and opened the door of the study. The chums of the Shell looked in, and the next moment they started back with suppressed exclamations.

Kildare was there.

He was alone. There was a letter beside him, and the captain of St. Jim's was leaning forward upon the table, his face buried in his hands.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Thrown Out!

KILDARE did not look up.

He had evidently not heard the Shell fellows.

Tom Merry & Co. stood in the doorway looking at the captain of St. Jim's, not knowing what to do.

It was clear that they had surprised the captain of the school in an awkward moment. What was the matter with Kildare they could not guess. But he was evidently not himself, and he would certainly not be pleased at being intruded upon just then. But to go without speaking—if he saw them going—

"Better bunk!" whispered Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

The Shell fellows were just drawing back when Kildare raised his head. He had heard some slight sound. He started to his feet at once, and the juniors could see that his handsome face was very pale.

"Come in!" he said. "Did you knock?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"I didn't hear you. Do you want anything?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"We—we wanted to speak to you, Kildare," he said, "but—but—"

"Come in, then."

Kildare was quite himself again now. His face was pale, but he was perfectly cool and calm. Whatever was the matter, he did not mean to allude to the subject, or allow it to shake his nerves. His manner was perfectly ordinary, and only the unusual colour in his cheek indicated that he was in any way under the stress of emotion.

"Well, what is it?" asked Kildare, in his old kind tone.

Whatever trouble might be on his mind, the captain of St. Jim's was never likely to forget the courtesy of manner that the fellows liked him so much for.

Tom Merry coughed.

"Ahem!"

"Exactly!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Ahem!"

Kildare looked puzzled.

"Sore throats?" he asked.

The Shell fellows turned red.

"It—isn't that!" stammered Tom Merry.

"Well, would you mind being rather quick in telling me what it is?" suggested Kildare.

"Certainly, Kildare. Ahem! It's about the football match to-morrow."

Kildare started.

"Look here, Merry—"

"You see, Darrell being crooked, we—we thought we might make a suggestion—"

"That's it!" said Manners. "A suggestion, you see."  
 Kildare started, and then laughed.  
 "Oh, you want to suggest somebody for the place?" he asked. "You think you are more likely to make a good selection than the captain of the team?"  
 Tom Merry's colour deepened to crimson.  
 "Not exactly that," he stammered. "I don't mean that, Kildare. But—but you see—"  
 "I'm afraid I don't see," said Kildare, a little testily, "and as I have an important letter to write, I wish you would buck up and explain what you mean, if you mean anything!"  
 "Ahem! You see—"  
 "Well?"  
 "Darrell being crooked, you'll be selecting a new man—"  
 "I know that!"  
 "And we—we thought—"  
 It did not seem quite so easy to say it now that he was face to face with the captain of St. Jim's.  
 "Well," said Kildare patiently, "what did you think, Merry?"  
 "We thought it would be a ripping opportunity of doing the fair thing all round," said Tom Merry.

play juniors in the First Eleven on the occasion of the most difficult match the school has ever undertaken?"  
 "Well, you see—"  
 "We want to strengthen the team—"  
 "Well, I'm not strengthening the team by leaving out good players and putting in poor ones," said Kildare dryly. "You were played in a big match once, Merry, but the present occasion is quite different. Don't be a young ass!"  
 "But you see—"  
 "I'm afraid I've no more time to spare," Kildare remarked. "Will you oblige me by getting out of the study?"  
 The Terrible Three looked at one another.  
 The reception their brilliant idea had met with was certainly discouraging. But they were not in the least inclined to give it up.  
 "Just think it over a bit, Kildare," urged Tom Merry. "The school eleven ought to be representative of the school—and how can that be if there are no juniors in it? You can see for yourself—"  
 Kildare pointed to the door.  
 "Are you going?" he asked.  
 "Ye-es; but—"  
 "Close the door after you."

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Kildare frowned  
 "Does that mean, in the opinion of the Shell, I don't do the fair thing all round now?" he asked.  
 "N-no! Not at all!"  
 "Then what do you mean?"  
 "I think that perhaps you've overlooked our claims," said Tom Merry cautiously.  
 Kildare jumped.  
 "Your claims?"  
 "Yes." It was out now, and Tom Merry felt all the better for it. "That's it, Kildare."  
 "You young ass—"  
 "Hold on a minute. On an occasion like this, we feel that the juniors ought to be represented, and Darrell being crooked, there's a jolly good opportunity. You can shove me in instead of Darrell—"  
 "My hat!"  
 "I'm a jolly good inside-right," said Tom Merry modestly. "If you wanted a good goalie, there's Fatty Wynn of the New House. But if you want an inside-right—well, there's me."  
 "Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther heartily.  
 "What do you say, Kildare?"  
 Kildare pointed to the door.  
 "Get out!" he replied.  
 "But I say—"  
 "You young duffers!" said Kildare, with a laugh of genial amusement. "Do you think I should be likely to

The Terrible Three exchanged rather sickly looks, and backed towards the door. The captain of St. Jim's was even less amenable to reason than they had expected. They had fully anticipated an argument, perhaps an excited one, but to be summarily dismissed in this manner was exceedingly trying.  
 "A lot of other fellows agree with me," Tom Merry said, as a last shot.  
 Kildare nodded.  
 "Yes; there's an old saying that one fool makes many," he said.  
 "Oh! Now look here!"  
 "Shut the door!"  
 "Certainly!" Tom Merry shut the door. "Now, look here, old man—"  
 "I meant with yourselves on the other side of it," said Kildare, laughing in spite of himself. "Are you going out, or shall I have to pitch you out?"  
 "In the circumstances—"  
 Kildare rose to his feet. Manners hastily opened the door, and he and Lowther executed a strategic movement towards the passage. Tom Merry lingered to make a last attempt to bring the captain of St. Jim's to reason.  
 "Kildare, old man— Ow!"  
 The Sixth Former's strong hand descended upon Tom Merry's collar, and he was lifted from the floor, swinging clear in the air.  
 "Ow!" he gurgled. "Groogh! Oh!"  
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Next moment the hero of the Shell went spinning out into the passage. He crashed into Manners and Lowther, and sent them both spinning. The Terrible Three rolled on the floor, yelling.

Kildare's door was shut with a bang.

Tom Merry & Co. picked themselves up ruefully. They were not much hurt; but they were very dusty indeed, and extremely exasperated.

"It's no go!" growled Manners.

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"I said it was a potty idea from the start!" he growled.

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Tom Merry——"

"More rats!"

And thus amiably discoursing the chagrined and dusty heroes of the Shell tramped disconsolately down the passage. Kildare, in his study, laughed. It was like his old laugh. But as his eyes fell again upon the letter on the table his face became grave. He picked up the letter, and held it tightly in his hand.

"The mater!" he whispered aloud. "If—if I could only go to her! But—but I can't desert the fellows on the eve of the biggest match of the season."

The captain of St. Jim's paced the study. He was not thinking now of the morrow's match—of the stern struggle that lay before St. Jim's First Eleven. He was thinking of a kind and loving face, now pale with sickness—a face he had always loved and honoured. His own handsome, healthy face was strangely haggard now. If he had worse news, if there was danger—he shuddered at the thought. How would he be able to stand by his comrades, then? And, if he did so, how was he likely to help them in their fight against heavy odds—with his thoughts elsewhere, and anxiety in his heart?

Kildare groaned aloud.

"I must stand by the fellows; they depend upon me. But—but——"

## CHAPTER 6.

### Tar and Feathers!

"TAH!"

"What?"

"And feathahs!"

"Eh?"

"Tah and feathahs!"

Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries suspended their various occupations to fix their eyes upon the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been seated for some little time in silence in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

He was evidently thinking something over deeply; but Blake and Herries and Digby had been busy with their preparation, and they did not notice his deep abstraction till he broke the silence at last with those incomprehensible ejaculations.

"What are you babbling about?" asked Blake politely.

"Weally, Blake——"

"He's wandering," said Digby soothingly. "It's the shock of having his trousers made dusty. You can't expect Gussy to recover from that in a hurry. He'll begin to babble of green brooks presently."

"Weally, Dig——"

"He'd better not babble here," said Herries. "I've got to get my prep done, or I shall be late in feeding Towser——"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Shut up, ass, and let a chap get his work done!" said Blake crossly. "We shall have Lathom ragging us in the morning."

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "In the cirts, I see only one wesource. This study has been insulted in the most outwagous mannah by Knox. He has chased us about with a cane, uttably wegardless of our personal dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah. I wegard it as impewative to bwing Knox to his senses, and for that weason I haw thought the mattah out. Of course, it's only wight and wopwah to wespect constituted uthowity, and I would be the last fellow in the world to wecommend waggin' a pwefect. But cirts alth cases, you know. Knox has tweated us with gwoss diswespect, and I wegard it as our duty to punish him."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am glad to see that you agwee with me," said D'Arcy, encouraged. "I twust you will back me up in punishin' the uttah cad!"

"Certainly!" said Blake. "Shall we boil him in oil, or strew the hungry churchyard with his bones? Personally, I am not particular which."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't talk out of your hat, Blake! I hawe wesolved that there is only one adequate way of punishin' Knox, and that is by givin' him a dose of tah and feathahs."

"Tar and feathahs?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! It is dwastic, but stwictly mewited, in my opinion," said D'Arcy.

"The brute deserves it, anyway, if it's only for venting his rotten spite on us because Kildare won't have him in the First Eleven," growled Blake.

"My hat—yes!" agreed Digby.

"But you can't tar and feather a prefect," said Blake.

"Pway why not, deah boy?"

"Because he's too big and strong, for one thing, ass!" snapped Blake.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus put up his monocle. In the first flush of hope, the idea of tar-and-feathering a prefect had been very alluring.

But a few moments' reflection convinced the chums of the Fourth that D'Arcy's idea was too ambitious. Such a flagrant breach of the rules would surely be heavily punished by the Head. Knox was a prefect, and, therefore, the Head would be bound to uphold him.

"Wotten!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I'm afwaid Blake is wight, deah boys. The thing's imposs. Hard lines—wotten hard lines!"

Blake snorted.

"I know where there's a tar-pot handy, anyway," said Digby in a brighter tone.

"Let's wisk it, deah boys!" suggested Arthur Augustus enthusiastically.

"What price tar-and-feathering Knox's study property?" said Digby.

Blake leaped to his feet. Arthur Augustus favoured Digby with an approving glance through his monocle. Herries was interested at once.

"The very thing!" said all the chums together.

"Let's——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gussy can go for the tar."

"Weally, Blake——"

"We should enjoy the jape all the better if we saw him carrying the tar-pot across the quad," went on Blake, with a grin. "Buck up, ass! We're in a hurry!"

"You wottah, Blake——"

"But you're a fellow of tact and judgment, aren't you?" said Herries. "Tell him where to find that tar-pot, Dig."

"Taggles has been using one on the woodshed. I saw he had left it there when I passed," said Digby. "Buck up, Gus!"

"I wefuse!"

"I thought he'd make a muck of the idea!" groaned Blake.

Arthur Augustus turned to his chums to administer stern reproof, but words failed him. The idea of carrying a tar-pot across the quad as Blake had suggested was very distressing to the swell of the School House.

"I suppose I shall have to do it myself," went on Blake. "Come on! You three get the feathers while I get the tar."

"Where the dickens shall we get them?" asked Herries and Digby as Blake turned to go.

"My only hat! I hadn't thought of that," said Blake.

Arthur Augustus maintained a dignified calm while the other three tried to think it out.

"Oh, hang it!" said Digby. "I can't think of anything!"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"I shall be pleased to assist you, if Blake will apologise for his wude wemarks."

"Sorry, Gussy!" said Blake promptly.

D'Arcy was too good-natured a fellow to be dissatisfied with such an off-hand apology. In view of the urgent business in hand, he waived all claims to more respect from Blake.

"I wippose to wip open the boundah's bed, deah boys," he said. "While Blake goes for the tar," he added quickly. "There will be plenty of feathers in Knox's bed."

"It's a ripping idea!" said Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling about?" demanded Herries, looking round in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnay!"

"What's funny?" roared Herries. "What are you getting at?"

"The pun, deah boy. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pun! Who's making puns?" demanded Herries.

"Why, you did," said Blake. "Gussy suggested ripping open Knox's bed to get the feathers, and you said it was a ripping idea!"



Herries grunted.  
 "What rot! Do you think I'm taking to making rotten puns, like Monty Lowther?" he demanded.

Blake chuckled.  
 "Right-ho!" he said. "I'll get the tar. I'll get it in a water-can. You fellows buzz off to Knox's study—the brute's gone out with Sefton now, I know—and get the bed open, and I'll bring in the tar."

"Yaas. wathah!"  
 Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, dropping all thoughts of preparation, in spite of the danger of wrath from Mr. Lathom on the morrow, made their way to Knox's study. They reached it, entered without ceremony, and closed the door.

Then they commenced operations. There was no time to waste. The mattress was dragged off the bed in the alcove, and Herries' pocket-knife ripped it open. The contents were dragged out in a heap on the study floor.

D'Arcy surveyed the heap through his monocle with considerable satisfaction.

"Wippin', deah boys!" he remarked.  
 The juniors swung round as the door was quickly opened. But it was only Jack Blake. He hurried into the study, and threw the door shut, and set down a water-can brimming with tar, and unrolled a tar-brush from the newspaper it was wrapped in.

"Bai Jove! That's all wight!"  
 Blake chuckled as he dipped the brush into the tar. Splash, splash, splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Blake was very active with the tar-brush. Tar was smothered on Knox's carpet, on the looking-glass, on the shelves, and the chair and the table. Taggies' tar was quickly exhausted.

"There!" said Blake, swinging the tar-brush. "That's about all I—"

"Ow! Yawooch!"  
 "What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Ow! You uttah ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You have dabbed that wotten bwush on my twousahs. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "It's not a laughin' mattah, you uttah asses! My twousahs are wuined. I—"

"Buzz out the feathers!" said Blake.  
 "Weally, Blake—"  
 "No time to waste! We don't want Knox to come back and catch us here!"

That thought was quite enough to make the juniors hurry. With busy hands they scattered the feathers over the wet tar. It was the work of but a few minutes. They were sorry it was not Knox himself who was undergoing the operation at their hands; but his study property, at all events, was thoroughly tarred. The young rascals surveyed their handiwork with joyous chuckles when it was completed.

"Buzz off!" said Blake. And with cautious steps the juniors "buzzed," leaving the study door wide open to greet Knox upon his return.

CHAPTER 7.  
 Not Nice for Knox!

"H A, ha, ha!"  
 "My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Knox of the Sixth heard the doars of laughter as he came along the passage. He stared as he saw Lefevre and Hodgson of the Fifth outside his study door. The study door was wide open, and the two Fifth Formers were staring in and roaring with laughter. What there might be to laugh at in his study Knox could not imagine, unless the two Fifth Form fellows had been playing some trick there. Knox's eyes glittered at the thought.

He had a special dislike for Lefevre of the Fifth, not because Lefevre had ever offended him in any way, but because the captain of the Fifth was in the St. Jim's First Eleven which was to meet Southwood United on the morrow. Knox flattered himself that, even if he was not up to Darrell's form in the front line, he was equal to anybody in the school at keeping goal.

He had kept goal on several occasions for the First Eleven, but Kildare had chosen to leave him out this time and to put Lefevre between the posts. Knox would have been very glad of an excuse for hammering Lefevre in consequence.

Lefevre and Hodgson turned their heads at the sound of the prefect's rapid footsteps. Knox glared at them as he came breathlessly up.



"You hound!" yelled Knox. "I'll teach you to tar and feather my study!" The infuriated prefect rolled Lefevre over the floor, dabbing his face and smothering his clothes in tar and feathers, but getting himself in a mess in the process. But Knox little knew he was attacking the wrong fellow!

"What's the joke?" he demanded roughly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Look in your study!" roared Lefevre.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox hurried on to the open doorway and looked into his study. For a moment he stood rooted to the floor, petrified by what he saw. The study had changed very much since he had last seen it. Tar and feathers were everywhere. Tar was dabbed on the carpet, and the glass, and the table and chairs, and feathers adhered to the tar.

The aspect of the study would have infuriated the owner if he had been the mildest-tempered fellow in the school. And Knox was not the mildest-tempered fellow in the school—he was very far from that. Knox's temper was about the worst at St. Jim's, and the prefect was not much accustomed to keeping it in control.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lefevre. He did not like the prefect any more than the prefect liked him, and Knox's face amused him at that moment. "My hat, it's funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

It needed only Lefevre's remark to rouse Knox. The Sixth Former, black with fury, turned upon him.

"You hound!" he roared. "I—I—"

"Hold on!" gasped Lefevre. "I— Oh! Yaroooh!"

Knox had grasped him round the neck, and with a swing of his powerful arms, he whirled the Fifth Former into the tarry and feathery study. Lefevre crashed upon the floor, but he had hold of the prefect, and he dragged Knox down with him.

"Hold on!" gasped Lefevre. "What the—"

"You hound!" yelled Knox. "I'll teach you—"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Knox punched the Fifth Former furiously. Lefevre strove in vain to defend himself against the infuriated attack, but he was no match for the prefect. Knox dragged him round the study, dabbing his face and rolling his clothes in the tar and feathers till he was as tarry and feathery as the furniture in the study. But in the process Knox himself became not a little tarry and feathery!

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" roared Lefevre. "Rescue! Yow!" Hodgson rushed into the study. He did not much like the task of tackling the furious prefect at that moment, but he could not abandon his chum to Knox's tender mercies. He tried to drag the prefect off Lefevre.

Knox hit out savagely, and his fist caught Hodgson in the "wind," and the Fifth Former gave a gasp of agony and rolled over helplessly on the floor.

"Grooooooooooh!"

"Ow!" roared Lefevre. "Help!"

Biff, biff! It had flashed into Knox's mind that if Lefevre had a record licking he would not be fit to play on the morrow, and the prefect might have a chance of keeping goal against the United, after all. It needed only that thought to bring out all the brutality of the bully of the Sixth.

Lefevre's wild yells rang along the passage as he struggled in the grasp of the prefect. Knox rolled in the tar with him, and the pair of seniors looked a pretty sight.

There were excited voices and hurried footsteps in the Sixth Form passage. Fellows came running along, and Kildare was the first to reach the study doorway. He gazed on in astonishment. Hodgson was lying gasping painfully on the floor in a pool of tar, and Knox and Lefevre were rolling over, tarry and feathery, and the Sixth Former was punching his victim in a way a tough would have disdained.

Kildare's brow knitted.

"Stop that!" he shouted.

Punch, punch, punch! Knox's blows descended as fast as ever, and the St. Jim's captain dashed into the study, grasped the prefect in his powerful hands, and tore him away from his victim.

"You cowardly cad!" he exclaimed hotly. "How dare you hit a fellow like that!"

Knox staggered to his feet, his face blazing with rage through its patches of tar and feathers.

"Look what he's done to my study!" he yelled.

"Whatever he's done, you've no right to hit him like that."

"I'll—"

"If you touch him again, Knox, I'll send you spinning!" said Kildare in a low, quiet voice. "Help Lefevre up, Rushden."

Rushden helped the Fifth Former to his feet. Lefevre was dazed. His face was bruised, and he could hardly get his breath.

"The rotter!" he muttered. "This—this is because he was left out of the team and I was put in, the rotter!"

"Look how he's treated my study!" howled Knox.

"I didn't!" gasped Lefevre.

"Liar!"

"I tell you—"

"He didn't," panted Hodgson, "and you're a cowardly cad to hit me below the belt, Knox!"

"I came up just as they were chuckling over it!" said Knox, between his teeth.

"Did you do it, Lefevre?"

"No!"

"Who did?"

"I haven't the faintest idea!" gasped Lefevre. "That's what I say, and it's the truth. Hodgy and I were coming along to your study to speak to you about the footer practice, and as Knox's study door was wide open, we couldn't help seeing it. Of course, we laughed. Somebody's been tarring and feathering Knox's study—some junior, I suppose, that he's been bullying. Serve him jolly well right."

Knox's face was a study.

He could see now that he had been too hasty. He jumped to conclusions when he had seen the two Fifth Formers laughing outside the study doorway, but a moment's reflection ought to have convinced him that Fifth Form fellows would not play so wild a trick on the Sixth.

Not that Knox was sorry for the mistake.

Lefevre had been so thoroughly knocked out that on the morrow it was pretty certain he would hardly be fit to take his part in the football match.

Kildare looked at the prefect sternly.

"I suppose you can see that you are mistaken?" he said.

"I—I suppose so," muttered Knox. "But what was I to think? They were standing here, yelling with laughter like a pair of lunatics, and as soon as I saw the state of my study I concluded they had done it."

"You had no right to conclude anything of the sort," said Kildare sharply; "and if the Head were to see Lefevre now you wouldn't remain a prefect another five minutes."

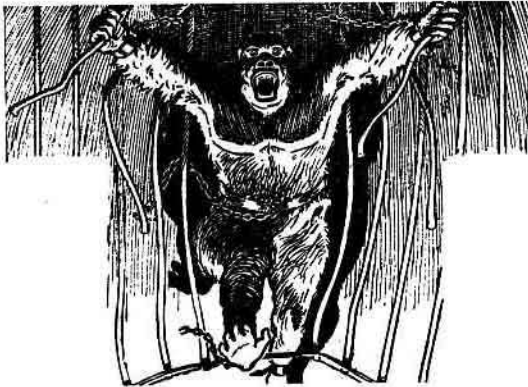
"I'm sorry," muttered Knox.

"That won't help Lefevre."

"I'll find the fellow who did this," said Knox, with a savage look round the study. "I'll make every bone in his body ache. I'll—"

"No, you won't!" said Lefevre. "You've done enough in that line, you cad! You deserve all you've had, and if you touch any of the kids for it, I'll go straight to the Head and show him what you've done to me. I mean that!"

## Look out! The Ape's Escaping!



Terrified screams. . . a theatre in a panic. . . fear-crazed men rushing, scrambling, fighting for their lives . . . and, above all, the blood-chilling roars of a giant ape as it tears down its iron-barred cage as though it were cardboard.

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# The RANGER

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"Look here—"  
 "Nuff said," said Lefevre. "If I were your size, I'd have you in the gym and thrash you, you cad!"

"I—"  
 "Mind, you don't lay a finger on the chap who tarred your study," said Lefevre. "I'll show you up to the Head if you do. And if I find out who it was, I'll have him to tea in my study."

And Lefevre staggered out of the room. The other fellows followed him, and Kildare was left with Knox. The St. Jim's captain's face was as hard as iron. Knox looked at him with a savage sneer.

"Well, have you got anything to say?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Kildare quietly. "You're a cowardly brute, Knox, and you've no right to be a prefect. I can't help suspecting that you've hammered Lefevre like that to have a chance of taking his place to-morrow."

Knox sneered.

"Come to think of it, he won't be much good in goal," he remarked.

"No," said Kildare. "Perhaps not. But you won't go into goal, Knox. I wouldn't let you take his place if there wasn't another man to be found. I'd rather play ten men than put you in the team."

"Look here, Kildare, there's a limit to what I will stand, even from you!" Knox began fiercely.

Kildare gave him a scornful look.

"If you don't like my words, I'm willing to have the gloves on with you any time you like!" he said contemptuously.

Knox made no reply.

Kildare quitted the study, and Knox was left in the room to survey the wreck. Matters had been bad enough when Jack Blake & Co. had left it, but the rough and tumble fight there had made them decidedly worse. Everything in the study was smothered with tar and feathers.

Knox ground his teeth with bitter rage as he looked round him. His hands and face and clothes looked as feathery and tarry as the room he was standing in. And there was no redress, for he knew that Lefevre would keep his word, and he dared not have his hasty brutality brought to the notice of the Head. He had to grin and bear it, or to bear it, at all events, if he did not grin.

"Hang them!" he muttered savagely. "Lefevre won't be able to keep goal to-morrow. I'm jolly sure of that. And Kildare hasn't a decent goalie to put in, unless he takes Baker out of the half-back line, and then he would want a new half. He may have to play me, whether he likes it or not—hang him!"

And somewhat comforted by that reflection, Knox proceeded to clean the tar off himself as well as he could. But it was a long and painful task, and the state of Knox's temper during the process was indescribable. For a long time afterwards it was not safe for a junior to go near Knox, and there were at least four juniors who were very careful indeed not to do so, and those four, needless to say, were the chums of Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 8.

Gussy's Latest!

THE bad news that had come to Kildare was soon known to all St. Jim's, and when he appeared the next morning a good many fellows looked at him curiously.

It was easy to see the marks of grief and anxiety in the anxious face of the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare was waiting on the steps of the School House for the postman long before there was any chance of Blagg arriving. When the fellows spoke to him, their sympathy was apparent in their looks and in their words. There was hardly a fellow in the school who did not feel sorry; but it was true, too, that there was keen anxiety as to the match. If Kildare was called away from St. Jim's just before the United match, there was not a ghost of a chance for St. Jim's; upon that point there could be no doubt whatever.

Unless the worst came to the worst, Kildare would not go; but if he went, the last chance of a victory would go with him.

Kildare knew it.

But even if he did not go—if his mother became worse, if he was alarmed and anxious—what would his play be like? The fellows realised, with deep dismay, that matters might be just as bad if Kildare was off colour.

It was not as if it was an ordinary match. St. Jim's First needed to be at their full strength to have a chance against United at all; and Darrell, the second best man in the

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

PAT'S REWARD.

Pat, being hard-up, determined to pass his favourite cafe on the way to work and forgo his morning coffee. As he approached the cafe, he became somewhat shaky, but, by a big effort, he passed. Then, after going fifty yards, he turned, saying to himself:

"Well done, Pat, me bhoy! Come back and Oi'll treat ye!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Hamilton, 32, Morley Avenue, Fallowfield, Manchester, 4.

SARCASM.

Fat Gent (puffing and blowing): "Why is this station so far from the town?"

Porter: "Dunno, sir—unless it's to have it near the railway lines!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Beresford, 452, Moss Lane East, Rusholme, Manchester.

PROGRESS.

Diner: "There's a piece of rubber tyre in my steak pudding, waiter."

Waiter: "There's no doubt, sir, the motor-car is displacing the horse everywhere!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss K. Flynn, Kiltymbarden, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim, Ireland.

TOMMY'S TASK.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jones to her neighbour, "my boy is progressing very well at his new school. He is learning French and algebra." Then, turning to her son: "Now, Tommy, say good-morning to Mrs. Smith in algebra."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Jennings, 52, Mayfield Road, Chingford, London, E.4.

EVIDENCE.

Magistrate: "So the prisoner took you by the throat and nearly choked you?"

Irishman: "Why, sir, he squeezed my throat so hard I thought he was making cider of my Adam's apple."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Holmes, 2, Belvedere Court, Belvedere Terrace, Brighton.

A DIFFERENCE OF SPELLING.

Lowther: "What is the difference between Noah's Ark and Joan of Arc?"

Manners: "Give it up, Monty."

Lowther: "Noah's Ark was made of wood and Joan of Arc was Maid of Orleans."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Pritchard, Ty-Nant, Argood, Blackwood, Mon.

NO CHICKEN RUN.

Farmer: "Now, my boy, don't let those hens out."

New Hand: "Why, sir? Won't they come home?"

Farmer: "No, they might go home!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Plester, 4, Foundry Place, Daventry, Northants.

COMET COMICALITY.

Son: "Mother, may I go out with the other boys to see the comet when it comes?"

Mother: "Yes; but don't go too close."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Hollis, 21, Court Drive, Sutton, Surrey.

eleven, was already crooked. Lefevre, who was a good goal-keeper, was crooked, too, now, as a matter of fact. The heavy punishment he had received the day before at Knox's hands did not leave him in a state to play a good game.

Misfortunes never come singly. The loss of Darrell and Lefevre, the team might have stood; but if their captain failed them, all was over.

And the St. Jim's eleven realised the unpleasant position they would stand in if they were walked over by United. A defeat would be bad enough, if they put-up a good fight, and were defeated by a narrow margin; but if they were overwhelmed and beaten by some ridiculous total of five or six goals to nil, they would never dare to hold up their heads after it. They would be considered to have "bitten off more than they could chew," and to have been properly put in their place for their cheek. It would be cruelly unjust, in the circumstances, but that was undoubtedly the view that everyone would take of the matter.

Kildare was thinking of this, as well as of his own private troubles, as he stood on the steps waiting for the arrival of the postman that keen, clear winter's morning. Three juniors came out of the School House and paused on the top step, and stood regarding him dubiously. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. They wanted to speak to him—that was very evident—but they hesitated.

Kildare glanced at them, and smiled his usual kind smile. Kildare would always have had a kind heart and a kind smile, especially for fellows younger than himself, if troubles had piled ever so thickly upon him.

The chums of the Shell, encouraged by his smile and his cheery nod, came up.

"We—we want to speak to you, Kildare," said Tom Merry, colouring.

"No more of that nonsense of yesterday, I hope," said the captain of St. Jim's, frowning a little.

Tom Merry shook his head hastily.

"No, no! I—I want to tell you I—I'm sorry we bothered you about it yesterday, Kildare. I—I didn't know then about your having had a letter from home—about your mater being seedy. I wonder you didn't kick us out of the study!"

Kildare smiled.

"It's all right, kids!"

"We're sorry," said Tom Merry.

"All serene."

The Terrible Three moved away, relieved at having got that matter off their consciences. It had troubled them considerably, ever since they had heard of Kildare's bad news from home.

"Not that I've changed my opinion," Tom Merry confided to Manners and Lowther. "But it's no good bothering old Kildare now. He doesn't see the thing the way we do, and we're not going to give him any more trouble than he has at present."

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther, and Manners nodded assent.

The local postman came plodding across the quadrangle with his bag. Kildare came down off the School House steps and walked hastily to meet him.

"Anything for me?" he asked quickly.

Blagg nodded.

"Yes, Master Kildare, there's a letter for you!"

And Blagg sorted it out and handed it to the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare took it quickly, then walked away under the elms to open it. His face was very pale. Was it bad news or better that he was to find in the letter? For a moment he hardly dared to open it, then, with an effort, he tore the envelope wide.

He looked eagerly over the letter within, and a sigh rose to his lips. He crushed the letter in his hand.

"The poor mater!"

It was much the same as the last letter. His mother was no better, and no worse; and if there was bad news during the day, a wire would be sent to call him home.

Kildare put the letter into his pocket, and walked back to the School House. Several of the seniors met him on the steps.

"No change," said Kildare, in reply to Darrell's inquiring look. "Yes, the letter's from home. The mater's just the same."

"You haven't got to go home, then?" asked Rushden.

Kildare shook his head.

"No, if the mater is much worse, dad's going to wire me to-day, and then I can go. So he says here."

"That will be pretty rough on the team," North remarked. Kildare flushed.

"I suppose it will," he said. "I shan't go if I can possibly help it, you may be sure of that. In any case, I shall buzz off home the moment the match is over; but if it can possibly be helped, I shan't cut the match."

"But do you feel fit, old man?" asked Darrell.

Kildare smiled rather wanly.

"I shall play up, at all events," he said.

He went into the School House. Knox, who had been standing on the steps with his hands in his pockets, listening to all that passed, looked after the captain of St. Jim's with a peculiar sneering smile upon his face. Some strange idea seemed to have crossed Knox's mind, which brought that peculiar look to his face and a strange glitter to his eyes.

"It's rough on Kildare!"

That was the general opinion. Many fellows said it was rough on the school, too, but it was certain that Kildare would not abandon his side if he could possibly help it.

The powerful brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was working on that subject. The swell of St. Jim's was looking very thoughtful as he sat at the breakfast-table with the Fourth. When the juniors came out after breakfast, Arthur Augustus broke silence, and acquainted his chums with the thoughts that were stirring in his brain.

"I've thought of somethin', deah boys!" he remarked, "I wathah think I can see the way out of this difficult posish for Kildare."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"You see, Kildare ought not weally to have to play, ever for his school's sake, while his matah is lyin' ill," said D'Arcy. "I feel for him, you know."

"So do we all," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! But I have thought of a way of helpin' him out of his doocid awkward posish, deah boys."

"Well, what's the way?" demanded Blake.

"Suppose a new skippah were selected for the eleven—"

"Oh, bosh!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Darrell's the only chap who could captain anything like Kildare, and Darrell's crooked," said Digby.

"I was not thinkin' of a seniah!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

The juniors stared at him.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake, as his elegant chum's meaning dawned upon him. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause whatevah for wibald laughtah," said the swell of St. Jim's, in his most stately way. "I twust I am not the sort of chap to put myself forward; but, in the circs, I wegard it as only decent to ofah to welieve Kildare of his duties as skippah of the First Eleven. I weally do not see why I could not captain a team against Southwood United."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"You uttah asses!"

Blake laughed till he wept. Three juniors who had come out of the New House—Figgins & Co.—sauntered up and demanded to know the joke. Blake was only too pleased to tell them.

"Oh, Figgy, it's Gussy's latest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, in anticipation.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The very latest!" sobbed Blake. "He's going to offer Kildare to captain the team for him this afternoon against the United!"

"If you are goin' to weceive my wemarks with wibald laughtah, I shall say no more," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Do you chaps know where Kildare is?"

"He went to the prefects' room," said Blake. "I should advise you to leave him alone. For one thing, the poor chap's in trouble."

"But I'm goin' to welieve him of his twouble, deah boy."

"Oh, don't be funny."

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as funny!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "And I decline to continue this discuss with you wottahs!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

The swell of St. Jim's waved his hand disdainfully.

"You have said quite enough, Blake. I wegard you as a wottah! Pway go and eat coke!"

And D'Arcy walked away, with his nose very high in the air.

The chums of the Fourth chuckled softly. "Let's get down to the footer," said Blake. "We shall have to mend D'Arcy when Kildare's done with him. Come on!"

There was already a crowd of juniors on the ground. They all wanted to get some practice done, with the idea of "chucking" play for the afternoon, so that they could watch the match between St. Jim's First and Southwood United.

(Continued on page 14.)

COME IN FOR A CHAT ABOUT OUR SUPER NEW PROGRAMME.



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :  
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**H**ALLO, chums! What a great number next week's GEM will be! I have gone all out to make it the GEM of GEMS, and I have got together a complete new programme of school-adventure yarns, written by easily the best authors of the day, that is unbeatable. This issue will mark a new era in the long history of the Old Paper, not only in regard to the super quality and quantity of its contents, but also for another important change that is taking place.

The "face" of the pages, so familiar to you all, will in future be different. The three-inch-wide columns are being displaced by those of two-inch width, and there will be three columns to the page. This will make for easier reading, and will impose less strain on the eyes. Another great thing, the alteration will enable me to get *more story matter* into the pages; for, in addition to our usual-length complete St. Jim's yarn, there will be the first five-page yarn of our smashing new series of Wild West school adventure, by Frank Richards, and the usual space allotted to the St. Frank's story—which, as you know by now, is a thrilling yarn of adventure in the Arctic, by popular E. S. Brooks. Just think of it! You will have Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, and E. S. Brooks all in one paper at the same time!

Of course, to find all the room for the new five-page yarn without shortening our long story and the serial, it has been necessary to do a little "wangling." "Tom Merry's Weekly" in its original form departs from the centre pages, but the two most popular features are being retained—"Just My Fun," by Monty Lowther, and the St. Jim's and St. Frank's football news. Our other popular features will be there, too.

All this means that you will be getting *better value* all round in the new GEM. I have made a resolution that the Old Paper shall double its large following of loyal readers, and, with this magnificent new programme—and, of course, your help in recommending it to non-readers—I feel very confident that I shall succeed in doing this. Watch out for this great number next Wednesday, and don't forget to spread the good news. And drop me a line and let me know what you think of our new programme.

#### THE SHOCK CUP TEAM.

At a time when League football loses a little of its interest for fans whose teams are not engaged in championship problems, the excitement of the Cup comes along to add a big stimulus to the Soccer season. On Saturday the Third Round of the Football Association Challenge Cup, when the "big noises" of football enter the competition, is due to be played. Sixty-four clubs will be engaged in Cup games, and great interest will be taken in the fate of the smaller clubs who have survived the first two rounds.

The shock Cup team of the season is Yeovil, the Somerset club which competes in the Southern League. They have astonished all footer fans by the ease with which they beat two prominent Third League teams, Crystal Palace and Exeter City. In both games they were drawn to play at home, but their performances, nevertheless, have been surprisingly good.

#### PEN PALS COUPON

12-1-35



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

L. G. Fowle, Orange Street, Paarl, South Africa, wants correspondents in Canada and England; stamps, cricket; age 10-12.

Kenneth Fowle, Orange Street, Paarl, South Africa, wants correspondents in England and Australia; age 14-15; Test cricket, Rugger, etc.

Leonard W. Greaves, 115, Whitworth Road, Rochdale, Lancs, wants pen pals; age 13-16; photographs, films.

Arthur Friedman, 865, Stuart Avenue, Outremont, Montreal, Canada, wants correspondents; age 12-16; stamp collecting.

In the Third Round Yeovil have once again been favoured with a home game, but this time they are meeting doughty First Leaguers in Liverpool. It will be Yeovil's biggest test, but the Somerset club will have to be beaten on their merits. They will not be overawed by their opponents, for they have players of long Cup experience in their ranks who know all the tricks of the game. Well, here's wishing good luck to this season's giant-killers, at any rate!

#### NOT SO NEW.

Most air-minded boys, if asked when the aeroplane was first flown, would say that the famous American airmen, Orville Wright and his brother, Wilbur, were the first men to fly a power-driven machine, which was in 1903. But, according to an authority of the Madras University, they would be wrong. The aeroplane is not such a new invention—over 12,000 years old, in fact! Planes were used in the year 10,000 B.C. in India. Evidence has been discovered to prove it—pictures of planes, shaped like various animals, and capable of carrying many men, have been unearthed!

#### LUCK.

Good fortune can come to one in many ways; but very few people, I should imagine, could boast that luck had come to them through going to sleep. This is what happened to a bootblack in Lisbon. It was his habit to sell sweepstake tickets, and, of course, those he didn't sell he returned before the draw took place, or he would have to pay for them. In a recent sweepstake he had three-quarters of a ticket left to be sold, and it was time for the unsold portion to be returned. But the bootblack went to sleep on the day of the draw, and forgot all about it. Now he is congratulating himself, for the ticket has won a big prize, and the three-quarter share he holds has brought him in three thousand pounds!

#### TAILPIECE.

Son: "Dad, what is meant by a 'figure of speech'?"

Father (cautiously): "Where's your mother?"

Son: "She's downstairs. Why?"

Father: "Well, she's a good example of a figure of speech!"

#### THE EDITOR.

Val Bunce, Kent Cottage, Wattle Street, New Lynn, S.W.3, Auckland, New Zealand, wants correspondents; stamps, books, newspapers, sports; ages 17-18.

Donald MacLagan, Balnabein, Grandtully, P.O. Strathgairn, Perthshire, Scotland, wants a correspondent keen on aeronautics.

J. Goldhill, Janette, Southbourne Crescent, Finchley, London, N.3, wants correspondents overseas; pets, football, archaeology, cigarette cards, films.

Albert E. Kirby, 94, Maplewood Avenue, Toronto 10, Ontario, Canada, wants correspondents; age 17 up; stamps, sports, newspaper exchange.

Oliver Purvis, 28, St. Matthew's Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario, Toronto, Canada, wants to hear from readers of GEM, "Magnet," "Schoolboys' Own Library." Match brand exchange.

Frederick Howland, Las Vegas, 29, Farm Street, Gladesville, N.S.W., Australia, wants pen pals in England, India, Canada, France, U.S.A., and China; stamps, Companion Papers.

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room. Kildare's grip was on the back of his collar, taking in both the collar and the jacket, and Arthur Augustus swung over space.

"Now then, you young ass!"  
 "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "You—you are ch-chokin' me, you know! You are—gwoogh—wumplin' my collah fealfully, you know! Ow! Welcase me at once, you howwid wuffian! I shall uttahn wefuse to ofah to do you a service again! Ow!"

"You cheeky young duffer!" said Kildare.  
 "Ow! Welcase me, you howwid boundah! Oh!"  
 "Certainly!" said Kildare.

He released the swell of St. Jim's suddenly. Arthur Augustus dropped with a bump to the ground. The ground was only a couple of yards below, but Arthur Augustus dropped upon it quite suddenly, and he sat down with considerable violence.

"Ow!" he gasped.  
 "Now buzz off!" said Kildare curtly.  
 D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"Kildare, I wegahd you as an uttah boundah! I now withdawn my xtremely genewous ofah, and I wefuse to captahn the school team undah any condition whatevah!"  
 And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stalked away in high dudgeon, setting his collar straight as he went with one hand, and groping wildly for his eyeglass with the other.

## CHAPTER 10.

### The New Goalkeeper!

"I WANT to speak to you, Kildare!"  
 It was an abrupt and unpleasant voice, and Kildare turned round from the window in the prefects' room, to find Knox at his elbow. Kildare's face clouded over. He had never liked Knox, and he liked him less than ever now. The St. Jim's captain had not been able to suspect Knox of deliberately fouling Darrell to keep the winger out of the match, but what had happened since had convinced even Kildare. Lefevre could not keep goal for the First Eleven, owing to Knox's brutality, and the prefect's motive was quite clear.

There was an uncompromising frown on Kildare's face as he met the eyes of the prefect. Kildare was very patient; but when he was certain that a fellow had been guilty of meanness and foul play, he never took the trouble to conceal his scorn.

"What do you want?" he asked abruptly. "The less I have to say to you, Knox, the better I shall like it."

Knox sneered.  
 "It's about the footer match this afternoon."  
 "That doesn't concern you!"  
 "I hope it does," said Knox. "I hear that Lefevre's name has been scratched."

"That is correct. You know the reason?"  
 "Yes; he is crooked."  
 "And you did it," said Kildare, "and I cannot help thinking that you did it on purpose, to spoil him for the match."

"You've no right to say so!"  
 "I say so because I think so!"  
 "What I was going to say is, who's going to keep goal for the first team?"

"I haven't decided yet."  
 "You know I'm good in goal."  
 "If you were better than the best goalkeeper in a League team you wouldn't keep goal for the team this afternoon!" said Kildare, with a glint in his eyes. "I'm fed-up with you, Knox! You'll never play in a team that I captain! I've tried to stand you, because you're a prefect and because our people are neighbours in Brighton; but now I've seen what an utter cad you are, I don't want to say a word to you. Is that plain enough?"

Knox gritted his teeth.  
 "Yes; that's plain enough!" he said savagely. "You are going to leave me out of the eleven, then?"

"Most decidedly!"  
 "Although you know you haven't a goalie so good?"  
 "There are several just as good, and more honest."  
 "Look here, Kildare!"

Kildare pointed to the door.  
 "You'd better leave me alone," he said. "I can't stand you, Knox! I feel sure that you fouled Darrell on purpose, and I know you hammered Lefevre to make him unfit for the match. When I think of it, I can hardly keep my hands off you! You'd better leave me alone!"

Knox apparently thought so, too. He turned and quitted the room without another word. But his eyes were glittering with a savage light.

Kildare remained staring out of the window gloomily. He was thinking of the match and of the goalkeeper that

was wanted; but he was thinking, too, of the pale face upon the pillows at home, and of the mother that would have been glad to see her son. As soon as the match was over he was going, but—

He resolutely put the matter out of his mind; it was unnering him. He had the match to think of, and the time was growing very short.

The loud shouts from the direction of the playing fields came to his ears:

"Bravo; Wynn!"  
 "Well saved!"

Kildare started a little. He left the prefects' room and the House, and strolled down in the direction of the football ground. The crowd was dense around the junior ground, and seniors as well as juniors were there, looking on at the fine display given by Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth Former was warming to his work. Five or six of the best shots in the Lower Forms were pelting him with balls, and Fatty was saving them all. Tom Merry, Blake, Figgins, Kangaroo, and Reilly were sending in shots in turn, and sometimes together, and Fatty Wynn, active and quick as a cat, saved them all. His fat face was very red, and he was grinning good-humouredly as he tossed out the balls.

Kildare looked on, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

Four balls came whizzing in together, and there was an exclamation from the crowd. It was certain that Fatty would be "done" this time! But he was not done! One ball he fisted out with his left hand, the other he saved with his right hand, another he headed back, and the fourth hit him "amidships."

There was a yell.  
 "Bravo, Fatty!"  
 "Hurrah!"

Kildare came forward. The juniors made way for the captain of the school, and the shooting practice stopped. Kildare signed to Fatty Wynn to come out of the goal.

"You seem to be in good form, kid," he remarked.

"Pretty fair," said Fatty Wynn modestly.

"I wonder if you could stop a ball from me?"

"I don't know. I'll try, if you like."

"Give me the ball, Tom Merry."

"Here you are!"

Fatty Wynn stepped back between the posts. The crowd looked on breathlessly. Kildare was the best marksman that St. Jim's possessed. If Fatty Wynn stopped a ball sent in with all Kildare's skill, he would have established his reputation in the eyes of the captain of the school.

"Go it, Fatty!" said Figgins encouragingly. "You can do it!"

Fatty Wynn nodded, but he did not speak. He was watching Kildare like a cat.

Kildare brought the ball down goalwards, dribbling it neatly, and made a feint of kicking it into the far corner of the net. But Fatty Wynn made no motion.

Kildare changed his feet with lightning speed, and sent the ball in with a quick, low shot.

Fatty Wynn was there.

He threw himself down to the ball, and drove it out with his fat fist, and it curled round the outside of the upright.

There was a terrific yell.

"Well saved, Fatty!"

"Bravo!"

Fatty Wynn rose and grinned serenely. He had saved a most difficult shot, and Figgins rushed into the goal and slapped him wildly on the back.

Kildare smiled.

"That was well done!" he exclaimed. "Would you like to keep goal for the First Eleven this afternoon, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn almost staggered.

"Keep goal—First Eleven!" he murmured.

"Yes."

"You—you—I—you don't mean it?" gasped Fatty Wynn.  
 "I do mean it," said Kildare, with a smile. "If you only keep your nerve, you will do splendidly. Would you like to try?"

"Like!" said Fatty Wynn. "Why, I'd jump at a chance like that with both feet! Oh, I say, that's great!"

"Bravo, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Then you'll be ready at two-thirty!" said Kildare. And the captain of St. Jim's walked away, very well satisfied indeed with his selection of a goalkeeper for the United match.

The juniors looked at one another gleefully. Tom Merry and Blake were as pleased as anybody.

"It's ripping!" said Tom Merry. "It was really my idea, playing a junior in the First Eleven; in fact, I suggested it to Kildare. Only what I thought of was playing me as a forward."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But so long as the Lower School has a man in the team

it's all serene," said Tom Merry, slapping Fatty Wynn on the shoulder. "Bravo, Fatty!"

"Good old porpoise!"  
And a crowd of juniors surrounded the Falstaff of the New House, and lifted him on their shoulders, and bore him away in triumph.

CHAPTER 11.

At the Last Moment!

**L**ONG before the time fixed for the match with the United the ground was crowded. Nearly all St. Jim's meant to see the match, and all other play at the old school was dropped for the afternoon. Seniors and juniors thronged round the field, and there was a good deal of bustling for favourable places among the School House and New House juniors.

Jack Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three stood in a compact group, and resisted all the efforts of New House fellows to dislodge them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice was heard in complaint several times as he received shoves and pushes. More than once the handsome silk hat of the swell of St. Jim's was pushed over his eyes, whether by friends or foes he could not tell.

"I weally wish you fellahs would not shove, you know,"

"I was not makin' a wov. I was uttahn' an exclamation. I feah that the polish on the boots has been injahed—"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake—"

"Rats!"

"Weally!"

"Now then, make room, you kids!" said an unpleasant voice, and Knox came pushing his way roughly forward, followed by Sefton, the New House Sixth Former.

There was a yell of defiance from the juniors. On the crowded footer field the prefect was not likely to be much regarded. It was not an easy matter to bully a crowd of juniors, excited in temper, and wedged together in great numbers.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Yah!"

"Keep off the grass!"

Knox flushed with rage. He shoved his way violently among the juniors, and tripped over a boot, which probably belonged to Monty Lowther. He came down heavily on his knees, and then somebody sat on his shoulders, and he was squashed flat.

"Oh!" he roared. "You young fiends! Let me get up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five or six juniors fell over Knox. The prefect's nose ground deeply into the turf, and he yelled and struggled frantically.

The SECRET WORLD!



E. S. BROOKS' GREAT YARN OF ARCTIC ADVENTURE BEGINS NEXT WEEK!

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said Arthur Augustus, with a glance round through his monocle. "On an occasion like this— Ow!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now, Gussy?"

"Ow!" Some uttah wottah has jerked the stwing of my eyeglass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy. It has thwown me into quite a fluttah!" said the swell of the Fourth indignantly. "I wefuse to be shoved in this mannah!"

"Better get out of the crowd," suggested Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"You can watch the match with a telescope from the roof of the School House!" Monty Lowther suggested thoughtfully.

"Lowtah, you ass! Oh!"

"What's the trouble now?"

"Some uttah wottah has dug his elbows into my wibs!"

"Too bad!" said Monty Lowther. "What do you mean by it, Figgy?"

"Eh? I didn't do it," said Figgins.

"Well, don't do it again, then!" said Lowther severely.

"Gussy's ribs are not to be elbowed in this way. You should remember that Gussy's ribs are descended from a set that came over with the Conqueror."

"Weally, Lowtah, you ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!"

"Great Scott! There he goes again!" said Manners.

"Some fwithful boundah has twodden on my foot!"

"Hurt, old son?" asked Blake.

"No, I'm not hurt, deah boy—"

"Then what on earth are you making a row about?"

demanded Blake indignantly.

Kildare came over from the direction of the pavilion, a frown on his face. The St. Jim's First Eleven were already on the ground, and most of them had come out into the field in their colours.

"Don't make a disturbance there, you youngsters," said the St. Jim's captain.

"We're not, thank you," said Monty Lowther meekly.

"There's a chap here on the ground, and he won't lie still."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrup!" came a stifled voice from underneath the juniors.

Kildare laughed in spite of himself.

"Is that Knox?" he asked. "Let him get up immediately!"

Knox was allowed to crawl out into view. He was looking very dusty and untidy, and his face was crimson with rage. He was inclined to rush savagely at the juniors, but an array of clenched fists and gleaming eyes daunted him. He muttered savagely between his teeth, and scowled at Kildare, and stalked away.

The juniors chuckled softly.

The bully of the Sixth had been defeated; they had got the better of their enemy. Two or three voices yelled after him to inquire whether he was still fond of tar and feathers, and there was a roar of laughter.

Knox ground his teeth as he strode away with Sefton, and the two cads of the Sixth took up their position in a different part of the field. Sefton looked at Knox in some surprise; Knox's eagerness to witness the match was a surprise to the New House senior.

"What the dooce does the match matter to you?" asked Sefton.



"Hang the match!" said Knox.

"Then why waste time here?"

"I want to see the start."

"Why?"

"Oh, I've my reasons!" growled Knox ungraciously.

There was a shout from the crowd. Fatty Wynn had just come out of the pavilion, arrayed in football garb. Very plump and fit the Falstaff of the New House looked. There was no doubt that Fatty Wynn of the Fourth would do credit to the school that day.

The juniors yelled enthusiastically to greet him. For the moment rivalry between the Houses was forgotten, and School House as well as New House cheered Fatty Wynn. He was a junior playing in the First Eleven, and that was enough for Tom Merry & Co. They yelled and waved their caps, and even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy forgot the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, and waved his silk topper in the air.

"Huwway, huwway, deah boy!"

"Bravo, Fatty!"

"Good old porpoise!"

"Bravo!"

Fatty Wynn grinned at his many friends round the ropes. To the junior section of St. Jim's, there was one player on the field that day, and that one was Fatty Wynn. Even the mighty Kildare did not loom so largely in their eyes.

Fatty Wynn rolled over to the edge of the field to chat with the juniors till he was wanted. Figgins slapped him on the shoulder, and Kerr dug him affectionately in the ribs.

"Good old Fatty!" said Figgins. "Feeling all right?"

"Right as rain!" said Fatty cheerfully.

"Mind you don't let them score!" said Kerr.

"Not if I can help it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway play up, for the honah of the juniahs, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We shall have an eye on you, Fatty, deah boy."

"And we'll stand a big feed afterwards, if you don't let them score," said Lowther.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

There was a fresh shout.

"The United!"

The visiting team had arrived.

They came in a motor-coach. The crowd watched them, and gave them a cheer as they met Kildare and his men. Tom Merry looked the United over, and he could not help seeing what a big order the First Eleven had taken on in meeting them.

Southwood United were an older and heavier team, in every way. Their average age was about twenty, and at least four of the team were professional players. The four "pros" were as keen as mustard, and evidently regarded the match with a schoolboy team as somewhat in the light of a joke. Probably the United had taken the match on more in the way of practice than of anything else. On Saturdays they were generally playing matches for which gate-money was charged; but Wednesday was an idle day, and their skipper had filled it up with the fixture with St. Jim's. Wimpole, the United skipper, was not what could be called swanking, but it was easy to see that he regarded the match as practically won already, and the coming play simply as practice.

That was so evident that it put up the backs of the St. Jim's team at once. They were filled with the most intense desire to beat the United, and take them down a peg or two. Hardly a fellow there, in the team or out of it, would not have given half a term's pocket-money to see the visitors licked.

Kildare greeted his visitors politely enough. Wimpole of Southwood glanced over the sturdy set of seniors with an approving eye—he saw that the Saints were in good form. He grinned as he saw Fatty Wynn.

"Excuse me," he remarked. "Is that kid in the team?"

Kildare nodded shortly.

"That's our goalkeeper," he said.

"Great Scott!"

Fatty Wynn heard the exclamation of surprise, and he flushed red. He made no remark; but he grimly resolved that the "kid" who amused the United skipper so much, would show that he knew how to keep goal at all events.

"Fatty will surprise those swanking bounders!" said Figgins confidently.

And all St. Jim's devoutly hoped that he would.

When Southwood United had changed, the rival captains tossed for choice of ends.

A muttered exclamation from Knox made Sefton look at him sharply. Knox's face was dark with passion.

"What's the matter?" asked Sefton, in wonder.

Knox gritted his teeth.

"Nothing! Hang it! Ah!"

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Knox's glance had swept round in the direction of the school gates in the distance.

Sefton followed his glance. A boy in uniform was making his way towards the football ground, and he had a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

Sefton whistled softly.

"A telegram!" he muttered.

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"Yes; for Kildare!"

"You mean you hope it is," said Sefton, with a grin.

"Yes," said Knox, smiling in a very peculiar way; "he's half-expecting one, you know. I hope it is; I've very little doubt of it."

"Kildare! Wire for you!"

Kildare swung round suddenly, his face going pale. He had just won the toss against Southwood when the telegraph boy came on the field.

"For Mr. Kildare!"

Kildare's hand trembled as he took the telegram.

There was a deadly pause. The Southwood players looked surprised; they did not understand, but all the St. Jim's crowd understood very well. The telegram was for Kildare—from Brighton! It meant bad news. Every eye was fixed upon the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare tore the envelope open and looked at the message. The telegram fluttered from his hand to the ground, and with a hoarse cry the captain of St. Jim's staggered back.

## CHAPTER 12.

### For the Sake of the School!

MONTEITH sprang forward and supported the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare, deadly pale, staggered unsteadily, and leaned upon the New House prefect.

"Bad news?" asked Monteith anxiously.

He hardly needed to ask the question. It was pretty clear that the telegram contained bad news.

"It's from the pater," muttered Kildare.

"And your mother—"

"Read it!"

Kildare pulled himself together. Monteith picked up the telegram and read it, several fellows reading it over his shoulder. It was brief.

"Kildare, School House, St. James'. Worse. Come at once.—FATHER."

Monteith clicked his teeth.

There was a deadly silence. The Southwood players were waiting to begin. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, who was refereeing the match, had already put his whistle to his lips, but he lowered it again, and came over to Kildare. Monteith showed the Housemaster the telegram.

Mr. Railton's face became very grave.

"Your mother, Kildare?" he asked.

Kildare nodded without speaking.

"I am sorry! You are going?"

"I—I must!" muttered the St. Jim's captain.

He cast an almost appealing glance round upon the team. They did not meet his eyes.

There was utter dismay in every face. If Kildare left them now, on the very verge of the match, what would happen? The walk-over the Southwooders so confidently expected would certainly become an accomplished fact. St. Jim's would be beaten by a big margin of goals. It would not be their fault, and would not be Kildare's fault; it would only be the roughest and cruellest luck.

"You chaps—what do you say?" muttered Kildare.

They did not reply. The fellows did not like to say what they thought. They wanted Kildare to stay; they wanted him to lead them.

Kildare read it in their faces.

He looked at Mr. Railton. The Housemaster's face was very grave and anxious. He did not know what to advise the St. Jim's captain to do.

"What shall I do, sir?" muttered Kildare.

"I can hardly say, Kildare." Mr. Railton looked at his watch. "For one thing, there is no train from Rylcombe for thirty-five minutes from now. You could at least begin the match, if you like—if you feel fit."

"I should have to leave in a quarter of an hour. That would mean playing the match a man short."

"Yes."

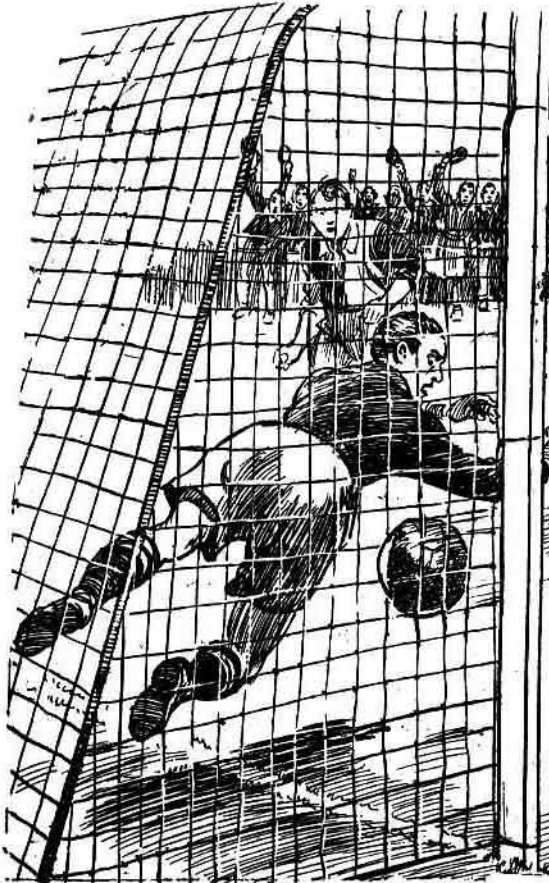
Kildare gritted his teeth. What was he to do? To hesitate to fly to his mother, when she asked for him in the hour of sickness—it seemed impossible! But to abandon his comrades, who relied upon him, at the very last moment, when it was far too late to think of any fresh arrangement—to leave them to defeat and humiliation—how was that possible either?

Monteith fixed an almost beseeching look upon Kildare. Time had been when these two were rivals, when the New House prefect would have been glad of any chance, any accident, that would have given him the captaincy in the place of Kildare. And certainly if Kildare went it was Monteith who would take his place. But that time was past; the only thought in Monteith's mind was to save the match for the school. And without Kildare it would not be saved.

"You—you can't go, Kildare," Monteith muttered at last. "After all, it doesn't say there is danger—it's not so bad as that."  
 "But—"  
 "There's a train at half-past four that catches the express at Wayland," said Monteith. "You could catch that

"Yes, sir!"  
 Kildare straightened up  
 "I'm ready," he said.  
 "Good for you!" muttered Monteith, in great relief.  
 "Something wrong at home?" asked Wimpole, the Southwood captain.  
 Kildare nodded.  
 "Yes, I'm sorry to have kept you fellows waiting like this—"  
 "Oh, that's nothing! Take your time!"  
 "We're ready now."

And the footballers lined up, ten minutes after the time fixed for starting. There was a cheer for Kildare as he took his place in the field. Everybody had seen the telegraph boy arrive, and enough had been heard and passed



With only five minutes to go and the score 1—1 in the big match, Kildare, as he saw an opening, quickly let drive a low shot. The goalie made a desperate effort to save, but it was in vain. The ball hummed into the net! Like thunder came the roar: "Goal!"

immediately after the match. It's a difference of only an hour and a half."

Kildare groaned.  
 An hour and a half, when his mother was asking for him on her sick bed! But he had his duty to do!  
 The more he felt inclined to fly at once to his home the more it was borne in upon his mind that his duty lay with his comrades at St. Jim's.

He must play—for his school's sake!  
 "You could send a wire to say, 'Coming by the four-thirty,'" Monteith suggested. "Don't—don't let me persuade you. But—but we're done for if you go."  
 "That's certain," said Rushden.  
 Kildare set his teeth.  
 "I shall stay," he said.

There was a murmur of relief from the footballers.  
 Kildare took a telegraph-form from the post office lad, and Mr. Railton handed him a pencil. He spread out the form on his knee, and wrote quickly:

"Your wire received. Coming by the four-thirty.—ERIC."

He handed the form to the lad.  
 "Send that as quickly as you can, kid."

from one to another for all the crowd to know what had happened.

"Poor old Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "It's rough on him; but he's going to play, all the same."  
 "Real grit!" said Figgins.  
 "Yaas, wathah!"  
 "Good old Kildare!"  
 But there was one fellow in the crowd who stared at Kildare with glittering eyes, in which rage struggled with incredulity. It was Knox of the Sixth.  
 "He's going to play, after all!" he muttered thickly.  
 "Looks like it," assented Sefton.  
 "It's—it's impossible!" Knox muttered. "The fool—he must go! He can't play after that telegram!"  
 "He seems to think that he can!"  
 Knox clenched his hands.  
 Pheep!

The whistle sounded from Mr. Railton's lips and the ball rolled from the foot of a Southwood player. It was evident that Kildare was going to play now—the match had started. Still Knox seemed to be almost unable to believe his eyes. He stared blankly at the players as the match began.  
 "Hang him!" he muttered.

But Knox's rage and disappointment passed unnoticed. All eyes were upon the field, upon the players who were fighting to uphold the honour of St. Jim's—upon the captain who had crushed down his grief and anxiety at the call of duty, and was facing the enemy with cool and steady determination—for his school's sake!

### CHAPTER 13.

#### The Great Match!

**S**OUTHWOOD UNITED followed up the kick-off with a hard attack, making matters "hum," as Monty Lowther expressed it, from the very start. That they underrated their opponents, and fancied that the task they had in hand was far easier than it really was, was quite evident, and all the St. Jim's crowd fervently hoped that they would soon be undeceived as to the quality of the St. Jim's players.

But the rushing tactics of the United seemed at first to drive all before them. The St. Jim's halves seemed to be nowhere. The Southwood attack bore right through the defence, and the backs were beaten hollow as Wimpole and Hooper, of Southwood, brought the ball down. Hooper had centred finely to Wimpole, and the Southwood captain shot for goal, and a groan trembled on the lips of the St. Jim's crowd. Wimpole was a keen professional, and well known for his shooting powers, and it seemed too much to hope that a junior would succeed in stopping the shot—especially when he was discouraged by seeing his side go to pieces before his eyes.

But there was one face in the crowd that never relaxed in its confidence—the face of Figgins of the Fourth. Figgins watched Fatty Wynn, and waited for him to save. And his faith in his chum was not misplaced.

*So this is what  
Jones minor was  
reading—*



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For Fatty Wynn was "there." A plump fist just got to the ball as it came whizzing in, and out it went again.

But Hooper was on it in a flash—before the backs could get a chance—and he headed it into goal again. But a plump fist again met the ball, and it came out like a pip from an orange. And then Price, the right back, had it, and he swept it up to mid-field with a powerful kick.

There was a roar.

"Well saved, sir!"

"Bravo, Fatty!"

"Good old porpoise!"

Fatty Wynn grinned in the goalmouth. He knew that he had done well, and he intended to keep the ball rolling. The Southwood team were destined to find a surprise packet in Fatty Wynn.

The play went back again into the middle of the field, and there the tussle lasted some time. The Southwood forwards tried to get away with the ball, but they tried in vain. The St. Jim's halves were getting a grip on the game.

And Kildare, who had seemed to be rather dazed by the bad news, pulled himself together. He realised that Fatty Wynn had saved the situation, but he might not be able to save it again. Kildare woke up to the needs of the position, and, resolutely casting all other thoughts out of his mind, he threw himself into the game with all his old keenness.

Then there was a change.

The St. Jim's forwards got away, and the fighting for some time was all in the territory of the United.

"Bravo!" yelled Tom Merry. "Kildare's all right now!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"Go it, Kildare!"

"Bai Jove, Kildare is weally wippin' now!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the match keenly through his monocle. "Wippin', bai Jove! Upon the whole, I'm not weally sowwy that he insisted upon captainin' the team himself! I could not have done bettah than that."

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"On the ball!" yelled Blake. "Shoot! Shoot!"

The St. Jim's forwards had taken the ball right up to the goalmouth now. The Southwood goalie had been strolling about in the goal area, and blowing upon his hands to keep them warm, indicating very plainly by his manner that he did not think that he would have much work to do. But now he woke up to the realisation that the schoolboy team was better than he had anticipated, and that if the goal was to remain intact he would have to save it. And now he was as watchful as a cat.

Whiz! came the leather from Monteith's foot. But the goalie fisted it out, and a back cleared.

"Oh, hard luck!" said D'Arcy, dropping his eyeglass. "I weally hoped that that was going to be a goal, you know."

"They'll come in time," said Tom Merry.

"I twust so."

But the goals seemed a long time coming. There was a long tussle in mid-field, and the ball went constantly into touch.

At last Southwood got away again, and stormed round the home goal. Necks were craned forward to see.

Fatty Wynn was on the watch.

Shots rained in upon him, but never a shot found him wanting.

Foot or fist met the leather every time, and wild yells of enthusiasm rose from the crowd as they watched Fatty's splendid play. The Welsh junior did not hear them. All his attention was on the ball.

Thrice, four times, the ball came in, only to be sent whizzing out; then it came a fifth time, just dropping beneath the crossbar. But Fatty Wynn was ready for it. He leaped into the air; out shot his fist, and the ball dropped to Baker, at half. Baker was tackled immediately by two Southwood players, but he cleared. And now Kildare was on the ball, and the St. Jim's front line broke away in good earnest.

The Southwood half-backs were scattered, and Kildare, Monteith, and Rushden were taking the ball down, passing like clockwork.

Excitement rose to fever-heat in the crowd.

The fellows yelled and gasped and strained their eyes to see. Was the attack to materialise? The Southwood backs were ready. Kildare had the ball. He passed it out to Rushden as the right-back tackled him, and then dashed on, and Rushden let him have it back just in time with a magnificent centre.

"Shoot!"

Thud! Right for the net the ball whizzed, true as a die, and it gave the Southwood goalkeeper no earthly chance.

He threw himself at full length in an effort to save; but it was quite futile—the ball escaped his finger-tips.

It was in the net! Then a yell broke forth that might have been heard a mile from St. Jim's.

"Goal!"  
 "Goal! Hurrah!"  
 "Good old Kildare!"  
 "Goal!"  
 Pheep!

It was the referee's whistle. The first half was over, and it had ended with a goal up for St. Jim's. And the Saints simply shrieked in their delight.

CHAPTER 14.

A Fight to a Finish!

**K**ILDARE looked more himself as the players came on the field for the second half. A yell of cheering greeted him. The face of the St. Jim's captain was steady and composed. His followers looked elated and determined. In spite of the strength against them they had scored. So far, the match was safe—more than safe.

The Southwood players wore grim expressions. The play had been a surprise to them. It dawned upon them that they would have to fight hard if they were not to be beaten, after all, by the schoolboy team.

There was no doubt that they would put up a harder fight in the second half than in the first, and St. Jim's would be hard put to it to keep their lead. And the wind was against St. Jim's now, with the change of ends.

The whistle sounded, and St. Jim's kicked off.  
 "Now look out for fun!" said Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 The juniors were right. The play was fast and furious. St. Jim's felt the strain. The crowd were also feeling the tension. They watched in silence. Only a murmur broke the calm when anything above the ordinary was done. Then all at once the murmur which applauded a minor success of Southwood gradually swelled into a roar.

"Keep 'em out, St. Jim's!"  
 Kildare and his men rose valiantly to the task. But the combination of the visitors was working with the precision of clockwork. If they made a mistake someone righted it instantly, and gradually they bore down on the St. Jim's goal once more.

Kildare battled like a giant. But Southwood were not to be denied.

The St. Jim's crowd themselves could scarce forbear to cheer their brilliant manœuvring. Making for the St. Jim's penalty area, Wimpole and his forwards treated the spectators to as pretty a display of footer as most of them could remember to have seen. The St. Jim's defence were giving way, but they were being beaten on their merits.

"Up, St. Jim's!" came a roar.  
 But Southwood were not to be denied. The St. Jim's backs were beaten, and Wimpole raced down on goal with the ball at his toe. Fatty Wynn waited tensely, watching every movement of the Southwood centre-forward. Then—

Thud!  
 Like a bullet the ball hummed for the top right-hand corner of the net. Fatty Wynn flung himself across the goal, but he was too late. The ball found the corner of the net, and the rigging trembled violently from the force of the shot.

"Goal!"  
 The St. Jim's crowd cheered the goal, though it was against their own side.

The score was level now, but the long effort had been desperate, and the Southwood team showed the effects of it as they kned up again. And Southwood had only equalised, and there remained exactly ten minutes to go.

Fatty Wynn looked a little sore, as he stood breathing hard in his goal. He had not done so well as he had hoped to do; but, after all, nobody had expected him to prevent the visitors from scoring at all. His saves had been wonderful, and he had deserved well of his school, and the school showed that they knew it by the rousing cheers that they gave him.

"Fatty couldn't help that!" said Figgins.  
 Tom Merry smacked him on the shoulder.  
 "Of course he couldn't!" he exclaimed. "He's done wonders, Figgy! My hat! It's been a splendid game! But we must score again!"  
 "Yaas, wathah! We want the odd goal!"  
 "Go it, Kildare!"  
 "On the ball!"

Again the play was fast and furious. Both sides were tired now, but each side battled doggedly for the winning goal.

Five minutes ticked off, and now many eyes were watching the clock in the old tower of St. Jim's.

Five minutes to go!  
 And now came a last determined attack of the Southwood team. Right up to the home goal, in spite of the desperate defence, they brought the leather, and shots rained in on Fatty Wynn.

But the Welsh junior was not found wanting a second time. Whatever United sent in he saved, with his plump face grim and hard, his eyes gleaming.

He seemed all eyes and hands and feet. Five times he saved, while St. Jim's caught their breath, and then a back cleared to mid-field, and Kildare had a chance.

Then St. Jim's roared.  
 "Go it Saints!"  
 The St. Jim's forwards were away, passing cleverly. The Southwood defence was on the run, and the roar round the field grew louder.

The Southwood backs did their best. But the St. Jim's forwards, passing wonderfully, spreadeagled them. Rushden brought the ball well up, and centred to Kildare.

Two of the United were rushing on the captain of St. Jim's, and he had just time to kick. But he was as cool as an iceberg. The goalie was watching him, ready for anything, excepting what he got! Kildare feinted quickly, and then let drive a low shot. The goalie had been deceived, and he sprawled across the goal in a vain effort to stop the low shot; but the ball hummed into the net before he could reach it.

Like thunder came the roar:  
 "Goal!"  
 "Kildare! Kildare!"  
 "A great shot!"  
 "Goal! Goal!"  
 "St. Jim's wins! Hurrah!"  
 St. Jim's had won, for there were but thirty seconds to go. St. Jim's had won—Eric Kildare had saved his side!

The field was blackened with a roaring crowd as soon as the whistle went. Fellows, yelling wildly, surrounded the players, and a crowd seized Kildare, to carry him back to the pavilion. Shoulder-high he was borne off the field, amid frenzied hurrahs!

CHAPTER 15.

A Startling Discovery!

**"B**AI JOVE! We've beaten them!"  
 "St. Jim's wins!"  
 "Hurrah, hurrah!"  
 Southwood was beaten—the schoolboy team had won! Southwood United, the semi-professional team with League aspirations, had been beaten by St. Jim's First! No wonder the fellows roared.  
 Kildare struggled to be set down, and the fellows let him go at last.

Kildare looked little like the victor in a hard-fought and well-won battle. His face was deadly pale, and his eyes dim.


The excitement was over—the reaction had come. He had saved his side. For the sake of his school he had played, and driven every other thought from his mind. But now—now black care was in his heart. What of his mother?

Wild cheers rang and echoed round him while his name was on every lip; there was a groan in the brave heart of the St. Jim's captain.

What of his mother?  
 "Kildare," muttered Monteith anxiously, as he caught sight of the captain's face, "Kildare, old man! You're not well!"

Kildare looked at him dully.  
 "Look after him!" exclaimed Rushden. "He's ill!"  
 "I—I'm all right!"  
 But even as he spoke Kildare swayed and fell.

(Continued on the next page.)



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The strain had been too much.

"Hold him!"

Monteith's strong arm was round the captain of St. Jim's.

"It's all right! Give him room!"

Gently the fellows carried the fainting senior into the dressing-room. Mr. Railton hurried to him at once. Kildare opened his eyes wildly, to find himself lying in the dressing-room, with his head resting on the Housemaster's knee.

"What—what," he muttered, "what has happened?"

"Better, Kildare?" asked Mr. Railton, very softly.

"Yes—yes!" Kildare struggled into a sitting posture. "I—I didn't faint?"

"Yes. It's all right now."

The St. Jim's captain's pale face flushed.

"I—I don't know what made me do it, sir. I'm all right. I—I suppose—"

"I understand," said Mr. Railton softly. "Rest a minute or two, Kildare."

"I must be off!" the St. Jim's captain exclaimed, and he sprang to his feet. He swayed a little, and Mr. Railton held him. But Kildare pulled himself together.

"I—I couldn't help thinking of the mater all the time, sir. I suppose it was that. But I must go now. I must not lose the train."

Darrell came into the dressing-room.

"Kildare? Is he—?"

The senior had a telegram in his hand. Kildare saw it at once, and he held out his hand, his face growing white.

"For me?" he muttered.

"Yes."

"When did it come?"

"This minute. The lad's just arrived."

Kildare trembled.

"Open it for me," he muttered. "Open it, Darrell, and read it out to me. I—I think I couldn't read it myself."

Darrell nodded.

He tore open the telegram and glanced over it quickly. Then his face brightened up wonderfully. Kildare, who was watching him with haggard eyes, brightened, too.

"Darrell—"

"Hurrah!" shouted Darrell. "Good news, old man!"

"Thank Heaven!"

"Listen!" said Darrell, and he read out the message.

"Don't understand your wire. Have not wired you to-day. Mother much better. No cause anxiety now.—FATHER."

Kildare staggered.

"What does it mean?" he exclaimed. "He says he has not wired, and I had his wire just before the match, as you all know!"

"There is some mistake," said Mr. Railton quickly. "But the mistake must have been in the first wire. This is in answer to yours, Kildare, and so must evidently be genuine."

"Yes—yes, that is from my father! But the other—"

"The other was evidently not from your father."

"But—but—"

"Good heavens!" burst out Darrell. "Is it possible anybody would be scoundrel enough to play a trick like that to prevent Kildare from playing?"

Mr. Railton's face was very hard and stern.

"It certainly looks like it," he said.

Kildare sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands. After the terrible strain he had gone through, the relief was almost too much for him. Darrell's eyes met Mr. Railton's.

The same thought was in both minds, now; some unscrupulous trickster had sent the first wire, and it could only have had one object—to prevent Kildare from playing for St. Jim's that day.

"It was a St. Jim's fellow!" said Mr. Railton. "Somebody who knew about Kildare's position."

"It must have been!"

"Good heavens!"

"That can be investigated later," said Mr. Railton. "At present, I should advise you to go home all the same, Kildare, and see your people. Perhaps they may be able to let in some light on the affair."

"You are right, sir."

Kildare rose to his feet. In a very short time he was on the way to the railway station.

When Southwood United drove away in the motor-coach, they departed from St. Jim's a sadder and wiser team. St. Jim's was left in a ferment. For the story of the bogus telegram was repeated far and wide. All St. Jim's knew of it, and all St. Jim's was asking itself one question.

"Who was the rascal who had sent it?"

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## CHAPTER 16.

### Rough Justice!

WHO had sent the telegram? St. Jim's puzzled over the question, from Head to the youngest fag—and, indeed, to Toby, the page, and Taggles, the porter. In the studies and Common-rooms that night, in the masters' rooms in both Houses, the matter was discussed in all its bearings. That a false telegram had been sent to prevent Kildare from playing in a great match, and that it must have been sent by a St. Jim's fellow, the whole school knew. But who was the rascal, and why had he done it?

"The fellow must have been an uttah wottah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But there is another point—the telegram was sent from Bwington! How could a St. Jim's fellow have gone to Bwington to send a telegram without bein' missed?"

"My hat!" said Blake. "I was thinking of Knox. He's cad enough, and he was very wild at being left out of the team. But he was on the ground the whole time—I saw him there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Kerr.

All eyes were turned on Kerr. The juniors were crowding in Tom Merry's study, to a royal feed in celebration of Fatty Wynn's inclusion in the team, and of the splendid assistance he had given St. Jim's First in beating Southwood United. The juniors were all discussing the mystery of the telegram—all excepting Fatty Wynn. Fatty was discussing a steak-and-kidney pie, and he had no attention to bestow just then upon anything else.

"What have you thought of, Kerr?" asked Figgins.

Figgins had great confidence in the judgment of his Scotch chum.

"Something about Knox."

"What is it?"

"His people live at Brighton," said Kerr quietly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Phew!"

"That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!" said Blake, with emphasis. "That settles it! Knox has a relation or a friend at Brighton, and they've done this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors had no further doubt upon the matter. The fellow who had played the trick was an unspeakable cad, and Knox was certainly that. The fellow must have had some connections at Brighton, to be able to get the telegram sent, and Knox had connections at Brighton. The juniors did not want any more evidence.

"But it wouldn't be easy to prove it," Monty Lowther remarked, with a shake of the head.

"It's a mowal certainty he's the culpwit, deah boys, and I considah that we should be justified in waggin' Knox!"

"Hear, hear!"

Fatty Wynn did full justice to the celebration. After it was over, the juniors waited for Kildare to come in. Kildare was late. It was almost bed-time when he returned to St. Jim's. And when he came his handsome face was pale with anger.

"Good news, Kildare?" asked the juniors, with one voice, as they met him in the passage.

"Yes; the mater's all right now, thanks, kids. She had a turn for the better this afternoon—at the same time that I was getting that lying telegram."

"It wasn't a mistake, then, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"No; it was a trick. The people at home know nothing of it."

Kildare nodded to the juniors and walked away. They glanced after him; he did not go to his own study, but to Knox's. Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"He knows!" muttered Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He guesses, at all events," said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't care to be Knox just now."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!"

Kildare knocked at the prefect's study and entered. Knox was in the study with Sefton, and both the seniors rose to their feet as Kildare came in. Knox, as if it were by accident, moved so that the table was between him and Kildare.

Kildare noted the movement, and his lip curled with scorn.

"I want to speak to you, Knox," he said. "You can let Sefton hear what I have to say, or not, as you choose."

Sefton glanced at his friend.

"Don't go!" said Knox. Knox had no desire to be left alone with Kildare just then. He did not like the look upon the face of the captain of St. Jim's.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE GHOST OF HANDFORTH TOWERS IS LAID AT LAST!



# HANDFORTH the Ghost-Hunter!

BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

## Buried Alive!

"ROT!" interrupted Handforth. "I tell you this chest is full of treasure! I can feel it in my bones!" Again they wrenched at the lid, and this time it gave way completely. With a sudden lurch it came back and fell away on its hinges. Handforth gave a shout of triumph.

"Now!" he gasped.

Willy flashed his torch into the interior of the chest.

"Some treasure!" he said, with a grin.

"My only hat!" gurgled Handforth dismally.

For the heavy oaken chest was utterly empty! It was a big disappointment, especially for Handforth, after he had anticipated so much. All the enthusiasm died out of his face.

"It's a swindle!" he snorted.

"How can it be a swindle?" asked Willy.

"Well, it's empty, isn't it?"

"Of course it's empty, and there's no swindle about it. If somebody had told us it was full of gold, and we had bought it, it might be a swindle then. But we had no right to assume that it was full."

"All the same," said Handforth, "it's a fraud. Nothing in it at all—not even a paper, or a button, or—Hallo! Wait a minute, though," he added keenly. "What's this? By George! What's this?"

He bent down over the chest and pulled something out from a crevice at the bottom.

"A coin!" he breathed. "Look at it! Gold, too! A Spanish doubloon, by all the saints. I knew it!"

Willy and Church and McClure examined that coin with great interest.

"He's right!" said Church tensely.

"I believe he is," admitted Willy. "But I don't compliment our worthy ancestor for using such a big purse. Unless—unless—"

"Unless what?"

"That slab of stone at the top had been disturbed," said Willy slowly, a keen light coming into his eyes. "It's some time since we were here, and I'm wondering if that ghost—the one we chased—has calmly been to the crypt here and emptied all the gold out of the chest."

"But what about that—that thing?" asked McClure, pointing to the skeleton.

"You're wrong, Willy—the chest hasn't been disturbed," said Handforth.

"There's nothing to prove it," argued Willy. "That skeleton could have been put back, just as we found it. It's my belief that there's been some fishy business going on—"

"What—what was that?" asked Church abruptly.

"I didn't hear anything."

"Something touched my ear!" growled Church. "I expect it was only a bit of wood, or something falling through that hole—"

Before he could get any further, an unearthly cackle sounded immediately above them. The sound was so unexpected, so menacing, that they all stood there, their muscles rigid. That peal of awful laughter almost froze the blood in their veins. And it was followed by another peal, and a shower of fragments fell through into the crypt.

They looked up, and for a moment they caught a glimpse of a wild, awful face.

"The ghost!" gasped Handforth. "That's the face we saw before—"

"Quick!" shouted Willy, a note of desperate alarm in his voice. "The stone slab! Look! He's—"

Thud!

Before Willy could get any further, the heavy stone slab crashed down into position, and every other sound was drowned. For a moment the four juniors looked at one another with startled, horrified expressions.

"He's bottled us up!" muttered Handforth. "No ghost could have done that!"

"It wasn't a ghost!" shouted Willy desperately. "It was a maniac, by the look of his face. Quick, Ted! Bend down double! Our only chance is to force that slab up before he can wedge it!"

"My goodness!"

"Quick! Quick!"

Handforth needed no urging. This was no time for argument, either. He bent down, and Willy jumped on his back. That slab was only a matter of seven feet high, and Willy could now get a strong purchase. He placed his shoulders against the thing, and heaved with all his strength—so forcibly, in fact, that his major was nearly driven to his knees.

"Hold tight, Ted!" gasped the fag. "It's moving!"

"Help him, Mac!" panted Handforth. "Church, jump on Mac's back! Don't stand there doing nothing!"

"There's only room for me!" said Willy breathlessly.

He heaved again, and Church and McClure helped all they could by steadying their leader. Willy gave a huge push, and the slab rose out of its seating, and for a moment they thought they were going to send it crashing back.

But that cackle of fiendish laughter came to them again.

And the slab was driven down, and was immediately followed by some dull, heavy thuds. And when Willy pushed again it was like putting his back against the side of a house.

He jumped down, perspiring but calm.

"Well, that's done it," he said. "We tried our best, but

we couldn't beat him. No wonder. He had all the advantage."

"But—but——"  
"He's wedged it—shoved a pole, or something, between that slab and one of the beams," said Willy. "Anyhow, we're as helpless as prisoners in a dungeon."

"Dungeon!" said Church huskily. "You—you mean that we can't get out of here?"

"That's impossible!" shouted McClure, with a gulp.

Handforth took a deep breath.  
"I don't know what to think," he muttered. "What can we do? If that slab has been propped down we shall all starve, or die of suffocation. My hat! What a mess I've got you into!"

Willy compressed his lips.  
"We're all to blame," he said quietly. "But you're right about the mess. We didn't tell anybody where we were coming, and there's nothing to show that we're down here." They looked at one another with growing apprehension.

Buried alive! The same thought was in all their minds!

### Hunting the Ghost-Hunters!

"WAKE up, Reggie!"  
Reggie Pitt opened his eyes and blinked.  
"Hallo!" he murmured, sitting up. "That you, Nipper? What's the wheeze? It's still dark——"

"It's not four o'clock yet," murmured Nipper. "In fact, it's only just after half-past three."

"Thanks awfully for waking me out of a beautiful dream!" said Reggie politely. "It may be one of your little habits, but I don't appreciate this sort of joke. In other words, blew you!"

Nipper shook his head.  
"You don't mean that, Reggie," he said. "You know I wouldn't wake you up unless it was something important. I'm worried about Handforth."

"Is that what you call important?"

"Yes."  
"Sorry, but I don't agree!"  
"Handforth & Co. have been gone for over an hour," said the Remove captain quietly. "In point of fact, for an hour and a half. Young Willy went with them, but they haven't come back. I've just been to their bed-rooms, and I know. I don't like it, Reggie. I'm worried."

"H'm! Perhaps you're right," agreed Reggie Pitt. "They went ghost-hunting, didn't they, in the old Towers?"

"Yes; and that place is full of treacherous places," said Nipper. "It was all right when we were there, of course, because we were only allowed to use the habitable quarter. But those idiots have gone exploring. And I'm growing uneasy. Are you game to come out on a rescue hunt?"

"If you think it's important enough."

"I do!"  
"Then I'm your man," said Reggie promptly. "Hunting for the ghost-hunters, as it were. What a pity we didn't go with the chump in the first place."

"Yes, I'm beginning to think that now," said Nipper. "But, to tell you the truth, I didn't suppose for a minute that they would really go. I was sure that Church and McClure would squash the whole thing. But I heard them on the terrace outside, and I saw them start off."

"When was that?"  
"Not long after two, and they're still away," said Nipper. "Dress yourself as quickly as possible, Reg, and we'll hurry off. I'm getting Fullwood, Watson, Archie, and Tregellis West, too."

"Archie!" said Pitt. "Why not let him sleep?"  
"As a matter of fact, I found him awake, and he insists upon coming. Says he's not going to be left out in the cold if any of the Remove chaps are in danger."

Nipper hurried out, and in less than ten minutes the party of juniors were ready. It was rather providential that the thoughtful Nipper had remained awake, and had decided to get up this party. Indeed, that night might have had some very tragic consequences but for Nipper's sagacity.

No time was wasted after they got downstairs.  
"We'll rush off at once," Nipper was saying. "I've got a good torch, and——"

"Just a minute," said Fullwood keenly. "I'm not afraid of haunted houses, but what you really need in a place like that is plenty of light. There's a store cupboard just along here with about six petrol-vapour lamps in it—storm-lanterns, you know. They burn petrol, but you've only got to light them with a match, and they give a terrific light. Incandescent mantles, like gas, you know, only twice as brilliant."

"That's a good idea, Fully," said Nipper. "We'll get 'em!"

It was only the work of a minute to seize one lantern

each, and they were easy enough to carry. And a couple of minutes later they were running off down the drive and heading straight for the old Towers at full speed.

For they were all feeling alarmed now.  
They knew what an impulsive fellow Handforth was. True, Willy was with him, and Willy acted as a brake, but sometimes even Willy's influence was useless.

Nipper and the other juniors knew nothing whatever about the crypt or the sea-chest or the skeleton. Handforth had made a few vague statements regarding a ghost, but nobody had taken much notice of them. They knew what a fellow he was for making a mountain out of a molehill.

So they were really going to the old house without any facts. They simply knew that Handforth & Co. and Willy had gone there, but their knowledge did not extend beyond this bare fact. However, it should be a comparatively simple task to locate them, and hustle them home.

The party arrived, thoroughly warmed up. The run in the moonlight had done them good. Every trace of sleep had been driven out of them, and they were eager to find the missing ones and hear what had delayed them.

"I think they were going in by the side door," said Nipper, as they went round the snow-covered drive. "If it's still locked we shall know——"

He broke off, and looked rather grim.  
"No, here we are," he said, halting in front of the side door. "The key's in the lock, and that proves that they're still inside. Come on; and get those lamps ready at once! Light is what we need here. We're not ghost-hunting—we're Handforth hunting!"

They got into the big hall, and numerous matches were struck. And in less than two minutes the power lamps were dispatching every shadow. The light was brilliant, even more dazzling than electricity. And with six of those powerful lamps going—one for each junior—there was not the slightest fear of feeling eerie. There is nothing like light to dispel fear.

"Handy!" yelled Nipper, as he mounted the landing.

There was no reply.

"Now then—all together!" said Nipper. "One huge shout!"

They all lifted up their voices:

"Handy!"  
Then they waited. But still there was no sound—no acknowledgment of that great shout.

"I don't like it," said Nipper, frowning. "They must be here still—they wouldn't go out and leave the door unlocked, with the key in it. We had better explore the whole house as quickly as we can. And every now and again we'll stop and give a shout."

"That's the wheeze!" said Fullwood. "But wouldn't it be better to go in twos?"

"Yes, it might," agreed Nipper. "Come on, Montie!"  
They separated, agreeing to meet again on the landing, unless they made some discoveries in the meantime. And in that case they were to shout for the others.

The pairs went off in various directions, and now and again they paused and shouted, calling Willy's name and the names of the others. But it made no difference.

They finally returned to the main landing, having drawn a blank.

"They're not here," said Reggie at length. "We've been in every corridor and in almost every room."

"Then we'd better go home," said Fullwood. "In all probability we shall find them there in bed. That would be nice, wouldn't it?"

"They're not in bed; they're still somewhere about this house," declared Nipper.

"You seem pretty sure," said Watson.

"I am sure."

"Why?"

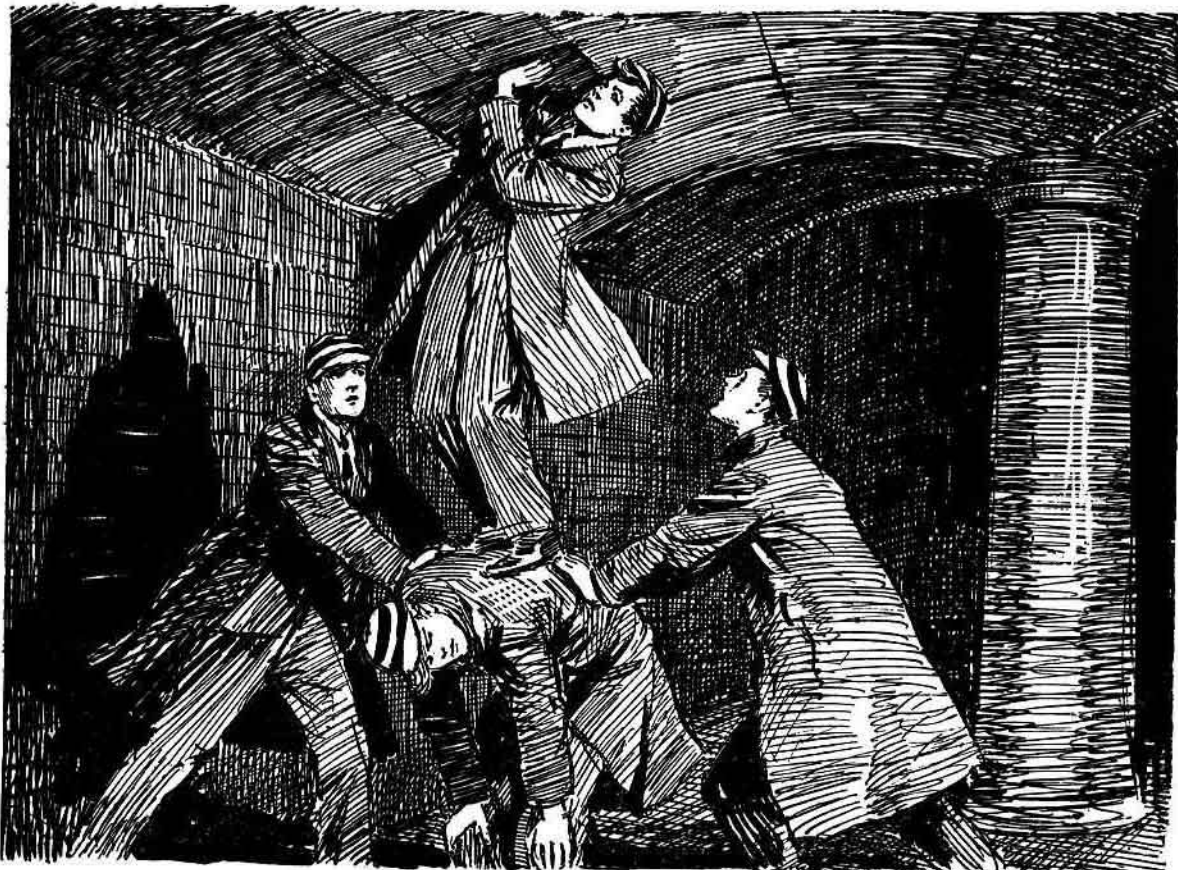
"I don't know, but I've just got a feeling!" replied Nipper. "It's a funny thing, but I know there's something wrong. I've had the same sensation at other times. Do you know, I tried to sleep to-night, but I couldn't. We've got to go on with this search until we find them, or until we find something that will give us a clue."

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne. "I thought we were just coming along, as it were, to yank the laddies back to bed. You don't mean to say, old dear, that there's absolutely something to be alarmed about?"

"I'm alarmed," replied Nipper. "I didn't like to say so before, but I'm windy."

"Ods draughts and breezes!" ejaculated Archie. "Then, laddies, there must be something frightfully wrong. I mean, if this cheery lad shows signs of despair, things are in a dashed queer state."

And the others knew that Archie had hit the nail on the head. Nipper was famed in the Remove for his coolness, and he had saved many a situation in the old school by keeping his head when the other fellows would have acted according to impulse rather than according to their wits.



Standing on his brother's back, Willy heaved with all his strength at the stone slab, and it rose out of its setting a little. But next moment there was a fiendish cackle of laughter, and the slab was driven down again. Unless help came, Handforth & Co. were entombed in the secret crypt!

So when Nipper confessed himself alarmed it was time for the others to feel the same.

**Archie's Discovery!**

**R**ALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD was certainly looking very grave.

"If you'll tell us what to do, Nipper, we'll get busy," he said. "It might be a good idea if you gave us an inkling of your fears. What do you think has happened? You're not afraid of anything—dangerous, are you? You don't think they've had any adventure with a ghost?"

Nipper shook his head.

"They've seen no ghost," he replied. "But a house like this is full of pitfalls. Why, upstairs I came across a passage with a floor that was nearly rotted through. These old houses are death-traps sometimes. I'm going to look into the cellars, if I can find them. Supposing they went down into a cellar, and it was full of fire-damp, as they call it? They would be overcome before they could get out, and—"

"But that would kill them!" gasped Tommy Watson.

"I know—so we mustn't think of it," growled Nipper. "Let's go round again, and this time we'll look out for clues. Keep your eyes skinned, and if you find the slightest trace of anything fishy, sing out!"

So off they went again, now thoroughly aroused by Nipper's grave fears.

And for some little time they searched in vain. No clues came to light. There was nothing to show that Handforth & Co. and Willy had been here at all, except for the fact that they had found the key in the lock. Nipper's fears were not fantastic ones—as, indeed, events had proved. All manner of unfortunate things could have happened to the quartette. But, of all the possibilities, an accident seemed to be the most likely.

It fell to Archie's lot to make the first important discovery.

He and Fullwood were together, and both were carrying their storm lanterns. None of the searchers had felt the

slightest tinge of apprehension, for the lights had given a great feeling of confidence.

"This doesn't seem to be much good to me," Fullwood was saying, as he and Archie found themselves penetrating one of the upper corridors. "We're just going round in circles. We're not getting anywhere, or doing anything. I wish we could get hold of something definite—"

"One moment, laddie. Be good enough to pause," said Archie. "Good gad! What have we here? Ods pieces of eight! A bally doubloon!"

"More likely a piece of lead!" said Fullwood.

Archie had picked something from the floor, and he was examining it closely. Fullwood became interested now, and he took the thing and weighed it in his hand. Then he scratched it with a pin.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "It's gold!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"And I believe you were right—it's a piece of eight, or whatever they used to call those old-time coins," went on Fullwood eagerly. "Hi, Nipper!" he added, raising his voice. "Nipper!"

Not only Nipper, but the other searchers came hurrying up in answer to Fullwood's hail, and they all grew excited as they examined Archie Glenthorne's discovery.

"You found this on the floor here?" asked Nipper.

"At my feet, old chappie!"

"Whereabouts?"

Archie pointed, and Nipper went down on his knees and searched closely. A moment later he uttered a little exclamation, and gingerly picked up another coin of exactly the same sort.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Pitt. "What on earth can it mean? These coins can't have anything to do with the disappearance of those chaps, but—"

"I don't know," interrupted Nipper. "There may be more of them. There's such a lot of dust on the floor, and these coins are so drab, that it was only by chance that one of them was seen. But now we know what to look for, we might find others."

"But I expect they've been here for years—"



"This coin, at all events, was only dropped just recently," interrupted Nipper.

"How the dickens can you tell that?"

"Because the dust is just as thick where the coin lay as everywhere else," replied Nipper keenly. "If it had been here for years, the dust would have been on top of the coin, instead of underneath it."

"By Jove, that's true!"

They were freshly startled by this discovery.

"Golden coins—old doubloons, or guineas," said Nipper thoughtfully. "And here we find them, littered about the dusty floor of this old place. There's something very rummy here, you chaps. And we're not going to have any rest until we find out the truth. Come on, let's make a search for more coins!"

And thereupon the juniors began a systematic search, which was to prove very fortunate for Handforth & Co.

### The Laying of the Ghost!

NIPPER pointed. "There's another!" he said tensely. "You see, there's a trail of these coins! They only appear at intervals, but we've followed them up and down two passages already. If we keep on, we might discover something really important."

"What's the bag?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Thirteen, so far."

"My lucky number!" said Reggie. "That means that we're going to push on, and meet with success. Following this golden trail is an interesting business, but I can't see how it's going to locate Handforth & Co.!"

Nipper looked thoughtful.

"Well, it's the best thing we can do, in the circumstances," he replied. "We've searched the place without finding any trace of them, but we've discovered these coins. They've been moved recently, too."

"I take it that there must have been hundreds of them, and these odd ones have been dropped during the course of shifting them. There's just a chance that Handforth & Co. are involved, and we're in such a position that we can do nothing but carry on and hope for the best. So let's do it!"

This seemed the only course, and the corridor was filled with the brilliant lights as the juniors went over the dusty floor, inch by inch, looking for the stray coins.

But the search was not destined to go on for long.

Something caused Fullwood to glance round. He didn't know what. But he had an uncanny feeling that he was being watched. And he caught his breath in, and gave a sudden shout.

"Look!" he yelled. "There's somebody here!"

"Eh?"

"What's the matter with you, Fullwood, you ass?"

"Good gad!"

They all turned, startled by Fullwood's shout. And for a moment they caught a glimpse of a figure at the far end of the long corridor.

"I saw him looking at us!" gasped Fullwood. "A man, I believe—but the face was awful!"

"Quick!" roared Nipper. "This is our chance!"

They ran frantically, and in their excitement they were so keen to overtake the intruder that all the lamps were left on the floor. They gave chase, with only the moon-light to assist them.

And that strange figure played the same trick as before.

Without warning, it spun round into a side passage, and vanished. Nipper was the first to reach the bend, and as he turned it, he heard a splintering and crashing of wood-work. Then, with a ghastly sound, came a thud from below.

"Good heavens!" breathed Nipper. "He's fallen through the floor!"

A moonbeam was sufficient to show him. About ten yards ahead there was a gaping hole in the floor of the passage. The "ghost," in attempting to lure his pursuers into the trap, had fallen into it himself!

Fullwood and Pitt wanted to push forward, but Nipper held them back.

"No, it's too dangerous!" he said quickly. "Besides, there's no need to take the risk. Let's get a lamp and rush down to the ground floor. The fellow must have killed himself!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Come on—let's go and see!"

The whole incident had not occupied more than a minute, but what a different complexion it had put on the affair! The searchers instinctively felt that the Unknown would be able to throw some light on the disappearance of Handforth & Co.

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So a lamp was brought, and all the juniors hurried down, and began a frantic search for the spot where the stranger had fallen. Nipper had a good sense of direction, but it was some little time before he found the precise spot.

And then, in a stone-paved lower passage, the wreckage was located.

A heap of woodwork lay there, with something in the middle of it. They ran up, one of the juniors holding the lamp high, while Nipper and Reggie Pitt gingerly pulled the debris aside, and revealed the figure of a man.

"Is he dead?" whispered Pitt huskily.

They gently pulled the figure out of his unnatural position, and a groan sounded. A general shout of astonishment and dismay went up.

"Why, it's old Rodd!" said Nipper, in wonder.

Rodd, the general's faithful old butler! The retainer who had been in the Handforth family all his life! Was it possible that he was responsible for the sinister events that had been taking place?

"He's done for!" muttered Fullwood shakily.

"I don't think so," said Nipper. "The fall wasn't so great—and it wouldn't have hurt any of us chaps. But Rodd's an old man, and he's naturally come off rather badly. But I don't think he's dying."

The old man opened his eyes as Nipper was speaking, and looked in front of him with a dazed, bewildered expression on his face. Then he stared round, and groaned.

"Master Edward!" he muttered brokenly.

"He's not here, Rodd," said Nipper. "We thought perhaps you could tell us—"

"The crypt—in the crypt!" breathed the old man.

He spoke dully, and seemed to lapse. His wrinkled old face was weary, but there was no sign of evil there. And Fullwood looked puzzled.

"It's a funny thing!" he murmured. "I could have sworn that wasn't Rodd I saw. It was a face, but a distorted face, with wild eyes—"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Nipper, with a start. "Perhaps he was mad—just temporarily insane! The gov'nor was talking yesterday. He told me not to let any of you fellows know. But Rodd was carried up to his bed-room in a kind of fit, after scaring half the kitchen staff."

"That's it!" said Fullwood, at once. "It was Rodd's face! But he was looking like a maniac—" He broke off as the old man opened his eyes again. "Rodd," he said, "don't you know what's been happening?"

"Ay, young sir!" replied Rodd quietly. "I know. My head's been boiling—it's been on fire! But it's all quiet now; it's better. I'm not so wild, young sirs. And I remember—I seem to have been dreaming, but I know it all!"

"One of you fetch some water!" Nipper said quickly. "There's a terrible gash on the back of the poor old fellow's head, and— Yes, that must be the reason. The fall brought him back to sanity, I expect."

"Ay, Master Nipper, that must be it!" agreed Rodd; who seemed to know everything that was being said, and who thoroughly understood. "The treasure! It was the treasure that did it."

"The treasure!" echoed all of them.

"Ay, young sirs—the treasure!" muttered Rodd. "For months has the master been searching, digging here and digging there—ay, and doing it for a hobby. Seems he has set his heart on finding it. And I tried to rob him," he added brokenly. "I tried to rob the master!"

"Tell us how, Rodd," whispered Nipper. "How did it happen?"

"It was Master Edward—ay, and Master Willy!" said the old man huskily. "That night we played the practical joke on ye all. I was in it, young sirs—I hoped to fool ye." He smiled feebly. "Ay, and we did fool ye, too! Right enough we did!"

"Yes. But what about this treasure?"

"I was in one of the passages that night, ready to make a sound that Master Willy had arranged with me," continued Rodd. "And I got into a wrong corridor, and then I found Master Edward and Master Willy down a hole—down in the crypt! And when I looked I saw the treasure chest. I heard them talking about it."

"Didn't you let them know that you were there?"

The old man passed a hand over his pallid brow.

"I don't seem to remember," he muttered. "But something seemed to go inside my head, young sirs. Maybe it was the sight of that treasure chest. I thought I could keep it for myself. I don't know why—I'm not a man who hankers for money. But there it was—I found myself like a demon. I knew that my eyes were wild, and that my face was like an animal's; but I couldn't alter it; I didn't want to. Ay, I must have been mad!"

"And what did you do then?" asked Nipper.

"I crept away, and when the young gentlemen came up, I followed them. I threw an old piece of sack over me, and maybe they thought I looked kind of queer in the

moonlight. Heaven forgive me, but I wanted to lure them into danger!"

The old man's agony was obvious. And so he told his story. He knew the Towers from cellars to roof, having served his former master here for several years, before going into the bigger mansion. At that time they had both been occupied, it seemed.

And, in his madness, he had used his knowledge of the secret ways in order to harm the very boys he most desired to protect. It is sometimes the way of demented people to do this sort of thing. The sight of that chest had seemed to turn his brain—probably because of the general's months of search.

There was a secret panel in that passage with the rotten floor. And Rodd, rendered as active as a young man by his insanity, had leapt into the hidden cavity, hoping that his pursuers would rush on, and crash through the treacherous floor. But on the last occasion he had forgotten himself—he had run over that flooring before realising his action.

"Ay, but I'm glad!" he concluded. "It's helped me to know the truth. All the gold's in that secret recess. I took it all out of the chest—bagful by bagful—and carried it—"

He broke off, and he tried to struggle to his feet, but fell back, groaning with dire agony.

"My leg—my leg!" he croaked.

"Quick! Help him!" exclaimed Nipper. "I believe his leg's broken—"

"Young sirs—young sirs!" said the old butler, starting up again. "There's Master Edward—ay, and Master Willy and the other two young gentlemen! Heaven forgive me, but I shut them in the crypt! I left them there to suffocate—so that they could never tell of what they had seen!"

**At the Eleventh Hour!**

His listeners were utterly horrified.

"So that's why they disappeared!" shouted Reggie Pitt. "Quick! Can't we rush there—"

"You shut them in the crypt, Rodd!" exclaimed Nipper, touching the old man's arm, as he fell back with closed eyes.

"May I be forgiven, young sir, but I was mad—I didn't know what I was doing!" sobbed Rodd. "Ay, and now it's too late! They'll be dead, I make no doubt!"

"Dead!" they panted.

"'Twas over an hour ago. I shut down the flagstone—"

"But where is this crypt?" asked Nipper tensely. "Quickly, Rodd—quickly! There might still be time! Thank goodness we didn't waste time by carrying him away before hearing his story! If we can only find out where this crypt is—"

"Under the tower, Master Nipper," murmured Rodd. "Under the south tower! That's where you'll find the crypt. Ay, poor boys! Poor young gentlemen! I left them there. But I was a madman then, and I don't seem to know—"

His voice faltered and died away.

"He's swooned!" exclaimed Nipper. "Two of you stop here, and the rest of us'll rush to the south tower. Give Rodd some water, and try to make him a bit easier. But we've got to find Handforth & Co. first!"

"He says they'll be dead!" muttered Fullwood, in alarm. "Quick, laddies!" urged Archie. "I mean to say, dash it, this is no time for wasting the old flow of chat! Tally-ho! Yoicks, and so forth! To the south tower!"

They hurried off, leaving only two juniors behind. Nipper was puzzled as to why he had not located the crypt before in his searchings. But when he got to the south tower, he understood. It was only reached by a narrow passage which led nowhere else. He had forced the door open, and had seen that broken hole in the flooring, but had merely assumed that the place was part of the half-ruined section. He had even shouted, but had got no reply.

But now that Rodd had given definite information, it was a different thing.

"It'll be down here—through this broken floor!" exclaimed Nipper quickly. "The crypt! By Jove, it must be a secret place—something that has never been suspected, perhaps, for centuries. And Handforth, it seems, discovered it by accident, and said nothing to any of us!"

"Let's get down!" shouted Watson.

They soon dropped into the lower chamber, and then they understood. A heavy piece of timber was firmly wedged from the beam above to the stone flag in the flooring. From below, a hundred giants could not have forced it upwards. "Help me!" exclaimed Nipper feverishly.

They forced the timber aside, and then hauled on the iron ring. The stone came up, and their hearts were in their mouths.

"Handy!" gasped Nipper, holding his light over the cavity.

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**Make Sure Of Your GEM!**

"What did I tell you?" came a drowsy voice. "I knew it, Ted! By jingo, fresh air! Fresh—"

"They're alive!" roared Watson. One after the other, they dropped down into the crypt, taking their lights with them. Their great joy was dampened somewhat by the fact that Handforth and Church were only semi-conscious. They were pale, and breathing with great difficulty. McClure and Willy were not quite so affected.

"It's air we need!" muttered McClure. "Let's—let's get outside! Oh, thank Heaven! We thought it was all up with us!"

"But I knew you'd come!" said Willy happily. They were all hoisted out. It was a difficult task, but they could help themselves to a certain extent, although they were weak and dizzy. And then, at last, they were in the corridor, and every window was flung wide open, so that the cold night air could flood in.

Slowly the semi-suffocated juniors came round. As McClure had said, it was nothing but air they needed. And they got plenty of it now—rich air, filled with ozone, straight from the North Sea.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Handforth, at length. "So we're out. We're saved! Who—who told you where we were, Nipper?"

"Rodd!" replied Nipper. "Good old Rodd!" approved Willy.

"But it was Rodd who bolted you down there," said Tommy Watson. "The poor old chap went off his clump, and— But, I say, hadn't we better go and see after him now?"

"That's just where I'm going!" replied Nipper quickly. "Two of you chaps stay here with these others, and bring them down when they can walk—"

"You ass, we can walk now!" said Handforth. "I—I never thought we were going to walk again, though," he added soberly. "And what's all this about Rodd? It's all dotty!"

But later on, when they heard Rodd's story repeated to them by the others, they knew the truth. And by this time Edward Oswald Handforth was practically himself. Uncle Gregory was on the spot, too, to say nothing of Lord Dorrmore, Mr. Nelson Lee, and many of the servants.

There was quite a deal of excitement. Rodd was suffering from a broken leg, but had miraculously escaped any other serious injury. And General Handforth, after he had heard the full story, came to the conclusion that when Rodd recovered he should be put in a little cottage with his wife, and medically attended

regularly, in case of another outbreak. But there was little fear of this, for he was now perfectly sane again.

In that secret recess the hoard of treasure was found—hoops of old golden coins. There were documents, too, among them, and other priceless writings which Handforth's uncle went nearly frantic about. But Edward Oswald Handforth naturally claimed all the credit.

"After all, I found this treasure!" he said, as he talked to a crowd of the boys and girls afterwards. "By George, what a night! First of all, that jape with Irene; then the ball, and then the ghost hunt, and next door to death at the finish! I don't mind a bit of excitement—but why lay it on in lumps?"

## HE DIDN'T PLAY THE GAME!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Very well," said Kildare. "I've been home—"

"Indeed?" said Knox, with a yawn.

"Yes. You know I had a telegram this afternoon, a minute or two before the match, telling me that my mother was worse?"

"I heard the fellows speaking about it."

"You did not send a telegram?"

"I? How could I? I understand that it was sent from Brighton."

"Exactly! Your people live at Brighton. Your young brother is there; I've seen him several times, and I am aware that he is just as mean and cowardly a cad as you are."

Knox flushed.

"This language—"

"You'll get something worse than that soon," said Kildare, between his teeth. "I will tell you what I suspect—what I'm sure of, rather. You sent that telegram through somebody you know at Brighton. You wanted to mess up the United match; you wanted to prevent me from playing. I imagine that you wrote to your brother yesterday, and asked him to do it; that seems to me most likely."

Knox laughed, a husky laugh.

"I should be likely to do that, when I was trying only to-day to get into the team myself," he said. "I shouldn't want my own team to lose, you fool."

"If you wrote to your brother, I suppose you would have wired to him if you had succeeded in getting into the team?" said Kildare. "Exactly how you made your arrangements I don't know, and I don't care; but I am quite assured upon one point—that I owe to you that false telegram and the misery it caused me."

Knox licked his dry lips.

"You'll find it hard to prove that," he muttered thickly. "I shall not try to prove it," said Kildare. "My object isn't to show you up to St. Jim's. You deserve it, but you've been too cunning for me; I can't prove it. But you are not going unpunished, Knox."

The prefect sneered.

"What are you going to do, then?" he exclaimed.

"I'm going to thrash you!" said Kildare, between his teeth.

Handforth spoke lightly—for everybody was feeling happy at the merciful ending to that adventure—which might easily have been so tragic. But those words of Edward Oswald were rather significant, as it happened.

For the St. Frank's party at Handforth Towers—little though they guessed it—were soon to be plunged into a vortex of excitement which would make this Christmas adventure seem tame and insignificant by comparison.

THE END.

(Next week: "THE SECRET WORLD!" Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the opening chapters of this super St. Frank's serial.)

Knox turned deadly pale.

"You are mad!" he said hoarsely. "A fight between the captain of the school and a prefect! I—I won't!" "You can defend yourself or not, as you please," said Kildare, "but you are going to be thrashed! If you interfere, Sefton, I shall call in Darrell to deal with you."

"It's not my business," said Sefton.

He left the study. Knox strode to follow him, but the captain of the school stepped into his way.

"Let me pass!" roared Knox furiously.

Smack!

Kildare's open hand came with a crack like a pistol shot across Knox's face. The prefect reeled blindly back.

"Now will you fight?" said Kildare, gritting his teeth.

Knox made no reply. He clenched his fists hard, and sprang like a tiger at the captain of St. Jim's.

In a moment a desperate fight was in progress. Knox was a powerful fellow, and he either had to fight or be thrashed, and he chose to fight. Desperation lent him a kind of courage. He fought hard, and he needed to.

But he was no match for the captain of St. Jim's. Indignation seemed to have made a giant of Eric Kildare. He was tired from the hard match and the long journey after it, but Knox had no chance. Crashing blows drove him to right and left. Again and again he was knocked down; and at last, when a terrific uppercut sent him crashing upon the carpet, the rascally prefect lay still, gasping, unable to rise.

"Hang you!" he gasped. "I'm done! Hang you!"

Kildare looked down upon him scornfully. The prefect lay helpless at his feet, more soundly thrashed than he had ever been in his life before. Kildare's hands unclenched.

"You've had your punishment," he said. "Take care, Knox—take care in the future!"

He opened the study door, and strode out into the passage. Knox lay upon the carpet, groaning. It was several minutes before the rascally prefect was able to rise to his feet. Kildare strode down the passage, his face bruised—but he did not feel the bruises. But a group of juniors in the passage noticed it, and they grinned with satisfaction.

"Knox has had it!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! And I wathah think that he has had it hot, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was right.

(Next Wednesday: "THE NEW FIRM AT ST. JIM'S!"—a special, ripping story about three "hot-stuff" newcomers who made St. Jim's sit up and take notice!)



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