

Next Wednesday:

"ASHAMED OF HIS NAME!"

&

"SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Every

Wednesday.



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FATTY WYNN: PROFESSIONAL.

A Splendid, New 27-page long complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. Specially written for this number of "The Gem" Library.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Matter of Opinion.

TOM MERRY, captain of the junior football team at St. Jim's, opened the door of the Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage, and looked in. The occupants of that famous apartment were taking things easy. Jack Blake was kneeling before the fire turning roasting chestnuts, Herries was looking out of the window, Digby was gracefully reclining on the table reading a story-book, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was engaged in the very important occupation of trying on a new necktie.

Tom Merry glared round. "You chaps ready?" he demanded.

Blake yawned.

"Ready?" he repeated. "Ready for what?"

"You silly set of asses!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully.

"Look here—"

"You slacking bounders!" shouted Tom Merry. "Isn't there a match on this afternoon with the New House?"

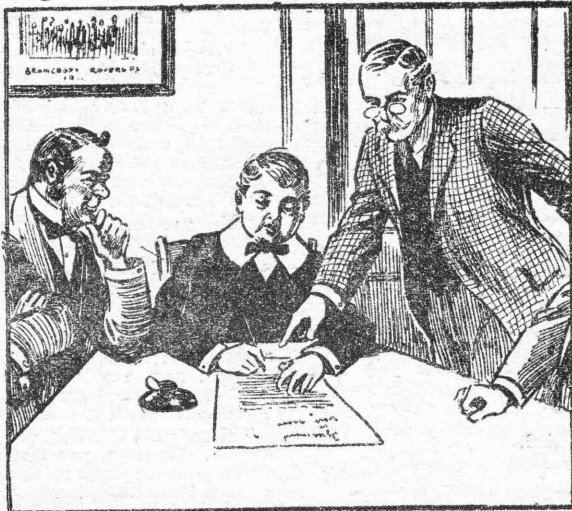
"We know that," said Digby. "There's over half an hour yet."

Tom Merry snorted. "Over half an hour!" he said. "How about practising? You ought to be out on the field punting the giddy ball about. What the dickens are you doing here, lazing your blessed time away?"

Blake rose to his feet.

"Look here, Tom Merry," he said wrathfully, "do you want to go out of this study on your neck? If you come here slanging us you'll find you've come to the wrong shop!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning round from the glass. "I weally must protest, Tom Mewwy!"



Fatty Wynn signed the form. He was now a professional footballer, at a salary of two pounds a week! (See chapter 5.)

"You can protest all you like, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "The fact remains that you're a set of slackers. I expected to find you all ready to go with me to the field. Instead of that you're lolling about here as though you had the whole afternoon to yourselves."

"Oh, dry up!" growled Blake. "If you buzz off, we'll be on the field in a few ticks! Bless if I can see why you're making all this fuss!"

"Your intwusion is entirely unwawwanted, Tom Mewwy!" said D'Arcy severely. "I vegard it as a bweach of good mannaah on your part. If you will wetiah fwom the study we will—"

"Retire from the study be blowed!" said Tom Merry. "If you chaps don't show more interest in footer you'll jolly well have to retire from the team!"

"Look here—"

"You silly fathead—"

"Bai Jove, I —"

Blake & Co. advanced on Tom Merry with warlike looks. "Hold on, kids," grinned the captain of the Shell, "don't act the goat! Can't you realise that the giddy time is going? This match is going to be a jolly stiff one. Fatty Wynn's in ripping form, and we shall have the very dickens of a job to get the leather past him!"

"I know that!" growled Blake. "Fatty Wynn's the best junior goalie St. Jim's has ever had—he's as good as the first eleven goalkeeper, and it's rather a pity he isn't a member of the School House."

"Well, he isn't; and so we've got to show the New House chaps that our forwards are capable of beating even a ripping goalie like Wynn," said Tom Merry. "Buck up, and get into your togs!"

And Tom Merry departed.

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"Come on, kids!" said Blake. "We'd better make a move."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I had no ideah the time was so late. On second thoughts, pewwaps Tom Mewwy was quite wight in comin' to huwwy us up. This match is goin' to be a jolly stiff one, deah boys, and we had bettah be on our mettle."

"On our mettle!" said Herries. "On the field, you mean."

"You uttah ass, Hewwies!"

"Well, you should say what you mean!" growled Herries.

"I uttahly wufuse to say what I mean; or, wathah, I should say—"

"Dry up!" interrupted Blake. "Don't say anything!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, come on!" said Digby, opening the door.

His chums followed him out into the passage, and they were very soon busily changing their clothes in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry, with a football tucked under his arm, had joined Manners and Monty Lowther in the quad. The Terrible Three were all attired in footer clothes, and they looked in splendid form.

"Those Fourth-Form asses coming?" asked Manners.

"Yes, I've just dug them out," replied Tom Merry.

"Good! This'll be a stiff match!" said Monty Lowther. "Figgins & Co. have been crowing all this morning, and I vote we play a jolly fine game and teach them not to count their chickens before they're hatched."

The Terrible Three walked away under the leafless elms, and directed their footsteps towards the playing-fields.

It was a glorious February day, sunny and windless, but with that crisp touch in the atmosphere which made football enjoyable. A good many juniors were on the junior ground when Tom Merry and his chums arrived. Figgins & Co., the leaders of the New House juniors, were already practising.

"Hallo!" said Figgins genially. "All prepared?"

"Prepared for what?" asked Manners.

"Why, the licking you're going to get!" said the long-limbed junior blandly.

"You conceited ass!" said Tom Merry. "You'll have your work cut out to lick the School House, Figgy. I admit that Fatty's a ripping goalie, but he's not impregnable."

"He's not which?" asked Figgins.

"Impregnable, you ass! It's not impossible to get the giddy ball past him!"

"I'm not so sure about that," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Wynn's such a terrific size that he practically lifts up the blessed goal!"

Fatty Wynn snorted angrily.

"Look here, you School House bouncer," he roared, "I'm not going to stand here and be insulted! I'm no bigger than hundreds of other chaps—"

"Peace!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laying a hand on the fat junior's arm. "We don't want to start a House row at a time like this. Monty, you ass, shut up!"

"No harm in speaking the truth!" grinned Lowther.

"Truth be jiggered!" said Figgins. "Why, Fatty can move about between the giddy posts as quickly as any professional goalie! In fact, he's good enough to play in a blessed League match!"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr loyally.

Fatty Wynn frowned.

"I don't believe in it!" he growled.

"Don't believe in what?"

"League footer."

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well, because I jolly well don't!" said Fatty Wynn.

"That's a good reason, anyhow," said Monty Lowther.

"Personally, I reckon League football is fine. Those chaps—the players, I mean—earn their living in about as healthy a way as possible. They're always training—"

"I don't believe in 'em at all," interrupted Wynn stubbornly.

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Manners.

"You can call me what you like," said Fatty Wynn, "but there's no getting away from the facts. They play footer for money—they earn their living by it."

"Well, you don't expect them to do it for nothing, do you?" asked Tom Merry.

"Of course! In a ripping game like footer there oughtn't to be any professionals. It's a game pure and simple, and to accept money for playing it, is—is disgraceful!"

"Rot!" said Tom Merry, "You're off your rocker, Fatty!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Lowther.

"How the dickens are the poor chaps going to live if they don't get paid?" demanded Manners.

"I'm not going to argue about the giddy matter," said Fatty Wynn, looking round warmly; "but I say that any decent chap wouldn't accept a salary for playing footer."

"I'll bet if the Grammar School chaps asked you to play for them you'd do it!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Especially if they offered to pay you for your services!"

"Look here, you rotter!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I'll jolly well—"

"You couldn't resist it," went on Lowther blandly. "The prospect of a gorgeous feed after the match would— Ow! Oh, you fat bouncer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins and Kerr.

Fatty Wynn had become exasperated, and he had lunged out at the humorist of the Shell. Lowther received the blow on his nose, and he staggered back with a yell.

"Now, you silly chump," exclaimed Wynn wrathfully, "perhaps you won't be so blessed ready with your rotten remarks! If you think I'd play footer for money you're jolly well mistaken!"

"You—you burbling idiot!" roared Monty Lowther, holding his nose. "What did you do that for? You New House porpoise, I'll—I'll—"

And Lowther, without wasting further words, rushed at the sturdy New House goalkeeper. In a second the pair were clasped in a tight embrace. The crowd of juniors gathered round were grinning and chuckling.

"Go it, Lowther!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth.

"Pile in, old man!" grinned Bernard Glyn.

"On the ball, Fatty!" shouted Pratt, of the New House.

"Smash him!"

But Tom Merry and Figgins intervened. They did not want a House row just then, and the combatants were separated with considerable violence. They struggled impatiently to get at one another, and continue the fight.

"Lemmegeerat him!" gasped Lowther.

"I'll smash the rotter!" panted Fatty Wynn.

"No you won't!" grinned Figgins. "Don't be an ass, Fatty! This is a footer match, not a prize fight! Calm down and—"

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Jack Blake, coming up with his chum. "Anybody being murdered?"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, I t'rust not!"

"Don't worry, Gussy," chuckled Tom Merry. "It's only a couple of fatheads having a quiet argument! We're all together now, aren't we?"

"Yes, all here," said Figgins.

"Good! We'll get to business."

"There's old Darrel," said Blake. "He's going to referee for me. Buck up, you chaps, and get into your places!"

The juniors walked up the field, and Darrel gave his whistle a preliminary peeep! Monty Lowther, with a glare at Fatty Wynn, took his place. The little argument had not resulted in any serious consequences, but all the juniors who had overheard it were quite convinced as to which view Fatty Wynn held.

CHAPTER 2.

The New House Victory.

DARREL, of the Sixth, had consented to act as referee for the Junior House match, and when the teams were lined up he blew his whistle sharply.

The game commenced.

The New House team seemed to be in splendid form. Within the first minute of play they rushed the ball down the field, and Lorne, the School House custodian, had a busy minute. Figgins made a really splendid shot for goal, but Lorne was ready, and he cleared smartly. The ball fell at Monty Lowther's feet, and he sent it to mid-field, where Tom Merry captured it.

"Now then, School House!" roared the juniors round the ropes.

"Show us what you're made of!"

"Go it!"

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"Down with him!" roared Figgins & Co. with a yell that was heard all over the New House. The enraged goalkeeper shot down the stairs, full into the chest of Mr. Rite if e, who had been attracted to the scene by the terrific din! (See Chapter 19.)

Tom Merry took no notice of the shouts. He dribbled the ball up the field cleverly, and neatly tricked the New House half-backs. Redfern came rushing towards him, and it looked as though Tom Merry would lose the ball. But he passed, in the nick of time, to Blake.

Blake rushed through. He had almost a clear goal before him, and a roar went up from the spectators. Blake steadied himself, and then shot for goal. The ball left his foot like a stone from a catapult, and whizzed straight for the goal.

But Fatty Wynn was quite prepared.

In spite of his bulk he leapt aside nimbly, and fairly flung himself at the oncoming ball. With both fists he punched at it, and it shot out into play.

"Good old Fatty!"

Blake looked rather glum as he trotted back to his place. He had made certain of a goal there, and he was disappointed at the result. Lawrence, of the New House, grinned at him generally.

"Is that how you like 'em done?" he chuckled.

"Oh, rats!" growled Blake. "We'll score soon, I'll bet!"

"Not to-day, my son," grinned Lawrence. "Fatty's in fine form. You'll find yourself wiped up before long."

"More rats!" exclaimed Blake, crossly. "Don't you be so cocky, Lawrence!"

But Lawrence couldn't wait to say any more. The ball had been passed to him, and he rushed off with it. For five

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minutes the play was quiet and uninteresting. The ball remained practically in mid-field the whole time. The spectators began to get impatient, for they had gathered round the ropes in considerable numbers. This match had excited universal interest among the juniors, and even the Third Form had forsaken their own practice match in order to witness the junior elevens.

"Back up!" roared Wally D'Arcy impatiently. "You're jolly slow!"

"Put some giddy life into the game!" shouted Curly Gibson.

The advice was not heard, but, as though in response, the New House team livened up considerably. Figgins neatly trapped the ball from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he streaked down the field like a hare, his long legs covering the ground swiftly. He rushed through the half-backs before they realised the danger, and passed the ball to Owen at exactly the right moment. Owen, without hesitation, steadied himself, and shot for goal.

Lorne was completely baffled, and the ball lodged in the corner of the net.

"Goal!" shrieked the New House juniors.

"Hurrah!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The New House portion of the onlookers yelled themselves hoarse, and caps were flung into the air by their excited owners. The teams lined up again, and the New House boys were elated and eager. Darrel blew his whistle, and the game restarted with a rush.

Before two minutes had passed the School House goal was again in danger, and a corner was secured. Redfern took it, and the ball descended right at the mouth of the goal. For a moment there was a wild scrimmage, in which several juniors were charged over. Then Figgins leapt upwards, and headed the ball into the net.

"Two up for the New House!" exclaimed Pratt, delightedly. "My hat, the New House is showing the other chaps what football is! They haven't got a look in!"

The players lined up again amid a roar of enthusiasm from the spectators.

Tom Merry & Co. took their places for the third time, and their faces were long and glum.

"This won't do," said Tom Merry, seriously. "They're two up, and there's still ten minutes to half-time. We shall never be able to hold our heads up again if we don't make a better show than this."

"Well, we're doing our best!" growled Manners.

The whistle blew and the game restarted. The School House juniors were on their mettle now, and they played up magnificently. Again and again Figgins & Co. forced the play, but they found their opponents to be on the alert. Whatever else happened, the School House juniors determined that there should be no more goals gained by the New House. So, until half-time, they concentrated all their efforts in defending their citadel.

At last the whistle blew, and a cheer rose on the air.

"Bravo, New House!" roared the juniors.

"Oh, well played!"

"The School House are absolutely nowhere," chuckled Figgins, as he walked triumphantly to the pavilion. "My hat, we'll capture two more goals in the next half!"

"Oh, will you?" growled Jack Blake. "You'll have your work cut out, Figgys."

"Nothing easier!" grinned Figgins. "Easier than rolling off a form, really!"

"Bai Jove, Figgay," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I should advise you not to crow so much, deah boy! You may have got two wotten goals, but the match is only half ovah yet."

"Don't you make any mistake, Gussy," said Redfern, coming up. "The game's as good as over, bar shouting. If you think you are going to equalise in the next half, you'll be jolly well disappointed."

"I uttably refuse to discuss the mattah!" said D'Arcy stiffly. "You are a set of swanking boundahs! There is no tellin' what may happen in the next half."

And D'Arcy walked off. He joined a cluster of School House players, and listened to Tom Merry's serious words. The skipper of the School House team was impressing his men with the need of bucking up. There was still a hope that they could pull the game out of the fire, and if they did succeed in doing so, it would be a glorious feather in their caps.

"It's no good looking over the facts," said Tom Merry. "The New House chaps are exceptionally strong to-day, so it's up to us to look alive and capture those giddy goals. Even if we equalise it won't be so bad."

"It'll be jolly fine," growled Lumley-Lumley, "if we can do it."

"Which is jolly doubtful," added Herries.

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"Bai jove, Hewwies, if you wecommence the game in that spivrit, we shall never pull the game out of the fire," said D'Arcy. "We must look upon it that we are goin' to simply wipe the boundahs off the field, and cawwy all before us."

"Sounds all right," growled Herries, "But I'm jolly doubtful, Gussy."

And most of the team were of the same opinion. With the score two goals to nil, there was not much hope of their winning—especially with the New House in such splendid form.

Darrel walked on to the field, and blew his whistle. The second half commenced with a rush. Figgins & Co. were surprised to find that Tom Merry & Co. had bucked up tremendously, and they swept down the field like well-oiled machines. Every boy was in his correct place, and the ball was passed from one to another with a precision which was surprising. The New House backs were bowled over and defeated, and Tom Merry shot for goal.

It was a splendid effort, and should have materialised. But Fatty Wynn seemed to be absolutely impregnable. He met the ball as though it had been merely punted in, and away it sailed up the field.

"Well saved, Fatty!"

"Hard lines, Merry!"

"Jolly hard lines!"

"That was a ripping shot," said Blake, dismally.

"Splendid, deah boy!" agreed D'Arcy. "With Wynn in such wippin' form, howevah, it is weally wathah hopeless twyin' to score."

But, in spite of all their ill-luck, the School House team seemed in no way disheartened. As the second half opened, so it proceeded. Lorne, in the School House goal, found himself obliged to stamp up and down in order to keep warm. The play was practically all in the New House half.

Again and again the New House defence was broken down, and never had Fatty Wynn found himself so busy. Practically every three or four minutes, the ball came shooting towards the net.

But never before had Wynn been in such wonderful form. Hard shots or simple shots, it made no difference to him. He saved every time, and his agility was something to be marvelled at, considering his bulk.

Such a performance had seldom been witnessed before at St. Jim's, and very soon a crowd of Fifth and Sixth Formers were watching. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strolled up just as Digby steadied himself to shoot. The ball left his foot like lightning, shot past Lawrence, and whizzed straight for goal.

"That's a goal, anyhow," said Kildare, to Baker of the Sixth.

"Is it?" said Baker. "By Jove, did you see that?"

Fatty Wynn had flung himself face forwards to the corner of the goal. By a sheer miracle—it seemed—he pushed the ball round the post, and it rolled harmlessly aside. It had been a splendid effort—one which many a professional goalkeeper would have failed in.

"That kid's a marvel!" said Kildare thoughtfully. "I shouldn't like any of the juniors to hear me say it, but I'm pretty sure Wynn's better than the first eleven goalie. For a junior, he's simply a wonder!"

The School House team were by now tired and weary. They had put up a splendid fight, and would, in the ordinary course, have equalised—and perhaps won the game. But, somehow, they could never get the ball into the net.

When the whistle blew, the score still remained two-nil. A tremendous roar rose as the players walked off the field.

"Well," said Figgins, "I must say you bucked up really well, Tom Merry."

"Thanks," said Tom Merry pantingly. "We should have scored again and again if it hadn't have been for Fatty. I

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believe the fat bounder is a giddy wizard! The way he saved was simply marvellous!"

"Bai Jove, it was wotten!" declared D'Arcy. "Aftah all our efforts, too! I weally think, Figgaw, that you ought to withdrow Fatty Wynn from the team."

"Yes, that's very likely, isn't it?" grinned Figgins. "No, Gussy, Fatty Wynn's our giddy mascot, and we couldn't afford to lose him. Why, he's as good as any professional goalkeeper!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Fatty Wynn, coming up, puffing and radiant. "Don't you compare me with a rotten professional, Figgaw! They're jolly fine players, but they haven't got any principles."

The rest of the juniors grinned, and proceeded to the pavilion. It was getting dusk now, and a mist was descending over the playing-fields. Fatty Wynn sat on the bench, regaining his breath. Consequently, he was a little behind the others, who had already donned their overcoats and hats.

"Well," said Wynn, with satisfaction, "I reckon I've earned my giddy tea! My hat, I'm as hungry as a hunter!" "That means that we shall have to lay in a special supply of grub," grinned Figgins. "Still, you deserve it, Fatty! Why, you lazy bounder, ain't you ready?"

"No, my giddy overcoat's over the other side of the field," said Fatty Wynn. "I remember now; I hung it over the fence just before I started the game."

"Well, buzz off and fetch it, you silly ass!" said Kerr, the Scots junior. "You'll catch a giddy cold if you let yourself get cool in those airy togs. We'll rush off to Dame Taggles and lay in a supply of grub."

"Good," said Fatty Wynn. "I shan't be two ticks."

The little crowd of juniors left the pavilion together, and Fatty Wynn parted with them outside. He trotted leisurely across the field to the opposite fence. His overcoat was there, and he quickly donned it.

"My hat!" he murmured to himself. "I feel as if I could eat a couple of blessed teas to-night! It's a jolly lucky thing we're in funds!"

And Fatty Wynn started off across the field at a trot. The lights of the school gleamed in the distance, for by this time darkness was descending in earnest. All the other juniors had by this time left the playing-fields, and Fatty Wynn found himself alone.

But, just as he reached the other side, and was making for the old quad, a dim form loomed up in the dusk. It stood right in Fatty Wynn's path, and the New House junior could see that the figure was that of a man.

CHAPTER 3.

Fatty Wynn Changes His Opinion.

FATTY WYNN paused, wondering who the man could be. Then he walked on again, with the intention of going past without speaking. But the man stood in his path, and laid a hand on Fatty Wynn's shoulder.

"You are Wynn, the New House goalkeeper?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, that's me," said Fatty Wynn. "Who—who the dickens do you happen to be?"

The man smiled. He was a big individual, well-dressed, and he was smoking a cigar. Fatty Wynn regarded him with a certain amount of suspicion, for it was unusual for strangers to walk about at St. Jim's. The man's voice was pleasant and refined.

"I am Mr. Charles Cobb, and I am the managing-director of the Bramcourt Rovers Football Club," said the stranger pleasantly. "I think you will admit, Wynn, that I know something about football."

"Oh, you're a giddy professional johnnie!" said Fatty Wynn coldly.

Mr. Cobb smiled. "Precisely," he said, "I am a professional johnnie! I have had the pleasure of witnessing the football match this afternoon, and I was simply amazed at the really remarkable form you displayed. Without exaggerating, Wynn, I really do not think I have seen a finer goalkeeper than you are—either professional or amateur! The way you defended your goal was simply a revelation to me!"

Fatty Wynn melted. His cold look gave place to one of pride. After all, Wynn was very susceptible to praise, and such praise, from such a man, was indeed worth having. Wynn grinned genially, and stepped closer to his companion.

"I'm glad you think that, Mr. Cobb," he said. "I—I don't exactly fancy myself, you know, but I must say I felt in extra good form this afternoon. Of course," he added hastily, "it wasn't anything extra-special!"

"Oh, yes it was—"

"I—I mean, I always play the same!" said Fatty Wynn, who thought that Mr. Cobb would think that the afternoon's performance was a flash in the pan. "I've made a study of

goalkeeping, you know, and I've played in the first eleven before now."

"I can quite believe it," said Mr. Cobb. "You are altogether too good to be wasted on a junior eleven. Now, I have been thinking, and I have made up my mind to lay a proposition before you."

Fatty Wynn stared. "A proposition?" he repeated. "What's the idea, sir?"

"Just this, Wynn, my boy," said Mr. Cobb. "The Bramcourt Rovers are a fairly strong team, but for this last week or two they have been losing all along the line. I want to make an alteration as soon as possible. You see, Derring, our star goalkeeper, was rather badly crooked three weeks ago, owing to an argument he had with a motor-car. I regret to say that he was knocked about rather badly, and it will be a month or more before he can play again."

"Hard lines!" said Fatty Wynn. "But what's it got to do with me? After all, he's a rotten professional—and I don't believe in playing footer for—"

"Hold on, youngster," interrupted Mr. Cobb, "let me finish! The goalie we have now, is, to speak the truth, not much class. Therefore I have hit upon a plan—a plan which may seem wild to you, but which, I am convinced, will be satisfactory. I want you to sign on as a member of the Bramcourt Rovers Football Team."

Fatty Wynn staggered. "Wh-a-a-t!" he gasped, in amazement.

"I want you to join my team," said Mr. Cobb coolly. "But—but it's unacad-of!" panted Fatty Wynn. "You couldn't have a schoolboy in a professional team! Why, the other players would laugh at me!"

"They could laugh as much as they liked," said the managing-director. "That would make no difference. I want you because you can play real football, and whatever the other men said would make no difference. Will you do as I suggest—will you sign on?"

Fatty Wynn's brain was in a whirl. It struck him that this man was japing him, but he dismissed the idea after a second's thought. Mr. Cobb was very much in earnest; he was obviously a gentleman, and meant every word he said.

Wynn's dislike for professional football was forgotten. The honour of asking him—a junior schoolboy—to play for a big club was very great, and Wynn felt flattered.

He had been very emphatic in his opinion earlier in the afternoon, partly because Tom Merry & Co. were against him, and partly because he had never had experience of professional football. Besides, Wynn had never dreamed that the chance would come his way to play in a really big team. It was a huge honour to keep goal for the first eleven; but to play for a big club like Bramcourt Rovers was a bigger honour still!

"Well?" asked Mr. Cobb, after a few moments. "What do you think of the matter, my boy? Of course, I realise that nothing must be said to your headmaster—but you have Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to yourself, I think?"

"Yes, they're both half-holidays," said Wynn absently.

"Then there will be no difficulty in carrying out my plan," said Mr. Cobb. "Bramcourt is only nine miles from here, and you can easily arrive in time to play. For the next two or three weeks, at least, we are having all home matches on the Saturday afternoons. Do you think you can accept my proposal, my boy?"

"I—I—," stammered Wynn. "I—"

"The club will pay all your fares, of course," went on Mr. Cobb. "In addition, as managing-director, I am in a position to offer you two pounds a week for your services every Saturday. Possibly you will be required to play on an occasional Wednesday, but not often. I am sorry I cannot pay you more than two pounds a week—"

"Two pounds a week!" gasped Fatty Wynn, with visions of gorgeous feeds floating before his eyes. "My only hat! You ain't serious, sir?"

Mr. Cobb smiled.

"I am," he replied quietly. "If you agree to play for the club your salary will be two pounds a week. After seeing you play to-day, I am fully convinced that you will be worth every penny of that sum to the club."

The fat junior stood there, in the dusk, wondering if he was dreaming. He simply couldn't believe that the Bramcourt Football Club would pay him two pounds a week for simply playing every Saturday afternoon.

"Two quid a week!" thought Fatty Wynn longingly. "Great Scott, I could have gorgeous feeds every day, and treat Figgaw and Kerr like giddy lords! And there's the honour, too—to play for the Bramcourt Rovers would be a terrific feather in my cap!"

Then a thought struck Fatty Wynn, and he almost turned pale. How could he possibly accept this proposal when he had positively said that no decent fellow would play football for money? True, he had made that statement when there had been no prospect of his being asked to play for

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money, but it made no difference. Tom Merry & Co. would rag him to death over it.

But two pounds a week!

The prospect of it was exceedingly enticing, and after a few moments' thought Fatty Wynn had completely changed his opinions with regard to professional football. After all, if his services were worth two pounds a week to the club, why shouldn't he accept it? Why should he play for nothing when they were ready and willing to pay him?

He could do the thing on the quiet; go off every Saturday afternoon without telling his chums where he was bound. After the argument it would be simply impossible to tell them, but, because of that, there was no reason to refuse Mr. Cobb's proposal. So Fatty Wynn turned to the managing-director, with his mind made up.

"Look here, Mr. Cobb," he said eagerly, "this is all straight, isn't it? I mean, you're not swanking me?"

"I assure you, my boy, that I am really in earnest," said Mr. Cobb. "Do you accept?"

"Yes," replied Wynn quickly. "I'll do as you want, Mr. Cobb. I'm jolly glad you think I'm worth having! But, of course, you mustn't let the giddy news get out. If the Head got to know of it, he'd be down on me like a shot!"

"I'm quite aware of that, my boy," said the other. "Therefore I shall not mention your name at all. If necessary, you can play under a nom-de-plume, such as Tom Smith, or Jim Brown. Then, when your name appears in the papers, nobody here will realise the truth."

"My hat, that's a ripping idea!"

"But all these matters can be settled to-morrow," said Mr. Cobb, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction. "I shall want you, Wynn, to run over to Bramcourt to-morrow afternoon. You will then be taken before the Board of Directors for purposes of signing on. You'll understand, of course, that as we shall be paying you two pounds weekly, we shall expect you to put in a good deal of practice in your spare time."

"Of course," said Fatty Wynn, "I'll practise every spare minute I've got!"

"Very well!" said Mr. Cobb finally, "there is no necessity for me to remain longer. I happened to be in Rylcombe to-day, and I am extremely glad that I decided to witness this football match. I have found in you, Wynn, a goalkeeper of wonderful ability. In spite of your youth, I am convinced that you will prove yourself equal to playing professional football. And the fact of your being a schoolboy will have the effect of drawing big crowds to our ground—especially if you play up as you have played this afternoon. Good-night, my boy, and be at the club-house at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

And Mr. Cobb shook hands with the stupefied New House junior, and then disappeared into the misty dusk.

CHAPTER 4.

Fatty Wynn is Mysterious.

"WELL, I'm jiggered!"

Fatty Wynn uttered the ejaculation in sheer wonderment. He stood looking after the retreating form of Mr. Cobb—or rather, to be more precise, at the spot where Mr. Cobb had last been visible. It was nearly dark now, and the lights of St. Jim's gleamed out brilliantly.

"My hat, I can't believe it!" murmured the sturdy Welsh junior. "I simply can't believe it! Two quid a week! Two quid a week!"

Fatty Wynn repeated the last few words as a kind of chant, and stood still, staring into the darkness. The evening was cold, but he did not seem to notice it. His sole thoughts were filled with visions of himself attired in the Bramcourt Rovers' colours, manfully defending the home goal.

And then he saw himself being clapped on the back by the other players; and, finally, a scene rose before his eyes where he would return to St. Jim's with two golden sovereigns jingling in his pocket—two sovereigns to be spent on grub!

"Why, I should have been off my rocker if I'd refused!" Fatty Wynn told himself. "I'm jolly sorry I had that argument this afternoon! I could have told Figgy and Kerr about this affair then. But if I do it now, I should never hear the last of it. The giddy news would get about all over the school—perhaps to old Ratty's ears. If he got to hear of it he'd put the kybosh on the scheme properly."

Fatty Wynn shivered, and realised that he was none too warm. So he decided to put the all-important matter out of

his mind for the time-being, and join his chums in the New House.

He quickly made his way to the quad., and passed into the New House. He went straight up to the dormitory, and changed into his ordinary Etons. Then, remembering that he was exceedingly hungry, he descended to Figgins's study. Just as he was about to open the door, Kerr came out.

"Look out!" said Fatty Wynn.

Kerr blundered into the fat junior, and then uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, there you are, you ass!" he said wrathfully. "Where the dickens have you been, Fatty? We've half finished our giddy tea, and we thought you'd got lost in the darkness!"

"Yes, where on earth have you been?" demanded Figgins, as the pair came into the study and the door was closed.

"Oh, upstairs, changing!" said Wynn carelessly.

"All this time?"

"Oh, I haven't been long!"

"You burbling chump!" exclaimed Figgins exasperatedly. "It's half an hour since we came in, and you only went across the field to fetch your giddy overcoat. I suppose you didn't take the journey on your head for a change?"

Fatty Wynn sat down.

"My hat!" he said. "I'm jolly hungry! Glad to see you've got a good supply of grub here. Pass those beef-pies, Figgy!"

Figgins glared.

"Are you going to answer my question?" he roared.

"Your question?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"You—you— Where've you been all this time?" howled Figgins.

"Oh, outside!"

"Did you ever hear such a silly fathead?" said Figgins, breathing hard. "Do you mean to tell us, Fatty, that you've been standing about on the footer-field?"

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"Yes," he replied. "I—I got cooled down a bit, you know. I got jolly warm keeping goal this afternoon, so I thought I— Well, I stopped out on the field for a little while."

Figgins and Kerr stared at their plump chum, then Figgins touched his brow significantly.

"He's off his rocker!" he declared. "Clean dotty! Fancy a chap standing out in the cold mist getting cool! Why, it's about the silliest thing I ever heard. Fatty, you'd better go and see Dr. Short."

"What for?" demanded Wynn. "I'm all right!"

"Oh, are you! I reckon you want a brain specialist!" said Kerr warmly. "You must be ill, Fatty—jolly ill! It's the first time I've ever known you to hang behind when there was a feed waiting for you. You're seriously ill!"

"You silly ass!" mumbled Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full. "I jolly well look ill, don't I?"

"You will look ill soon if you go on at that rate!" grinned Figgins, recovering his good humour. "Well, if you choose to play the giddy ox I can't help it. Only, why on earth you should hang about outside is more than I can imagine."

"Oh, don't bother!" growled Wynn.

And the matter was dropped. Fatty Wynn felt rather relieved, for he did not want his chums to have even a suspicion of the truth. He realised that he must keep his secret well, for if a breath of the truth got to Dr. Holmes's ears it would be all up with the scheme—and good-bye to the two-pounds a week. For, although there was nothing wrong or dishonourable in playing for Bramcourt Rovers, it was not exactly a correct thing for a junior of St. Jim's to do.

Fatty Wynn was quite comfortable in his own mind. He was one of the most upright juniors at St. Jim's, and he would not have taken a hand in anything dishonourable or shady. Acting as goalkeeper for a professional football team was not wrong—it was an honour which Wynn could scarcely realise.

For the managing-director of such an important club as Bramcourt Rovers to come to him and ask him to play was an event which caused the New House custodian to swell with pride. Fatty Wynn was not given to "swank," but he could scarcely help feeling a few inches taller on an occasion such as this.

But he endeavoured to act as usual, and, except for being a little absent-minded, he was successful.

The following morning he was awake long before the rising-bell rang. Without hesitation he hopped out of bed and commenced dressing. Usually he remained between the sheets until the last possible moment, but now things were altered.

He finished dressing and descended to the quadrangle. In a few minutes he was in the gym., alone, going through a course of strenuous exercises. To keep up his splendid form it would be necessary to keep training, and Fatty Wynn fully intended to carry out his part of the bargain. He would practise during every spare minute.

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After half an hour in the gym, he sallied out on to the football-field, and amused himself by kicking a ball about. Presently Reilly of the Fourth came along, and he obligingly assisted the early-riser. Wynn stood in goal, and Reilly soon became expert in taking free-kicks. But only twice did he succeed in getting the ball past the astute goalie.

"My hat, this is warm work!" panted Fatty Wynn at last. "Sure, and ye asked me to kick hard!" grinned Reilly. "It's a wonder ye are, Wynn, darling! How ye can dodge about like that is—"

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed a voice suddenly. Figgins and Kerr came up, and they regarded their chum curiously.

"Hallo, Figgy!" said Wynn carelessly. "Why didn't you call us?" demanded Kerr. "Like your rotten nerve getting up and leaving us in our beds! You fat bouncer, what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Can't I get up early for a change? If I'd called you it would have been no blessed good!"

"That's not the point," said Figgins. "As you got up early you ought to have called us. What are you practising for? The Grammar School match on Saturday?"

"No." "Eh?" exclaimed Figgins, in surprise. "You're not?" "No, I'm not!"

"Then what the dickens are you practising for?" "Rats!" said Wynn crossly, rather resenting this cross-questioning. "Can't I punt a blessed ball about without you silly asses asking a thousand questions? Go and eat coke!"

Figgins and Kerr looked at one another. They were plainly perturbed at this unusual behaviour on their chum's part, and they wondered what had come over him. Their worry increased at breakfast-time, for Fatty Wynn refused to answer any of their questions relating to his early morning practice. Wynn had said he wasn't practising for the Grammar School match. What, then, could he have in his mind?

Figgins and Kerr were considerably worried.

CHAPTER 5.

Fatty Wynn Signs On.

MORNING lessons were rather a bore to Fatty Wynn. His mind was filled with thoughts of his new position, and of his forthcoming journey to Bramcourt. He knew that he would have to miss afternoon lessons—play truant, as it were—but the thought did not perturb him in the least.

It would mean lines, and very probably a caning, but Fatty Wynn was a hardy youngster, and was not at all dismayed at the thought of a caning. The great distinction of being chosen as custodian for the Bramcourt Rovers made all else seem small and unimportant in his eyes. Lessons were a bore which had to be endured with resignation.

As a matter of fact, Fatty Wynn was feeling reckless, and it seemed a very slight thing to him to miss afternoon lessons. He rather looked forward to it, for he was curious to see how the Board of Directors would treat him. By this time every vestige of his prejudice against professional football had vanished, and he now considered that he had been very much mistaken in his views.

The rest of the juniors found him preoccupied and inclined to be snappy, and Figgins and Kerr could see immediately that their chum was labouring under some excitement. They pressed him upon the matter, but all their efforts were useless. They only succeeded in making Wynn cross.

What his secret was, and why he refused to enlighten them, was a matter which worried his chums more than a little.

As soon as dinner was over, Fatty Wynn hurried across to the New House. He donned his overcoat and gloves, and slipped out into the quad, before his chums arrived. Just as he was passing out of the gates he heard a shout. Figgins was calling him.

But Wynn affected to hear nothing, and hurried down Rylcombe Lane. He had timed himself to reach the station to catch the afternoon train, and he did not want to be kept hanging about so that he would lose it.

"Inquisitive bouncers!" he murmured to himself. "Blest if I can understand why Figgy and Kerr are so jolly curious! How the dickens do they know I've got anything on? Anyhow, I sha'n't tell them anything!"

And Fatty Wynn continued his way to the station, feeling elated and contented. He was not in the least worried about his chums. If they liked to worry over him they could, but he wasn't going to worry over them.

He caught the train nicely, and was soon whirling towards Bramcourt—a large town nine miles distant, in the opposite direction to Wayland. He arrived at his destination with plenty of time to spare, and made his way straight to the football ground.

He was surprised and pleased to find it quite a palatial affair. It was a new ground, and a large, strongly-built

pavilion had been erected. It was more in the nature of a grand-stand, for there were seats enough to accommodate many hundreds of persons.

The entrance was not very imposing, but they seemed magnificent enough to Fatty Wynn. The thought that thousands of people would probably pay their sixpences to come and see him play made the plump junior swell with pride.

He took a stroll round the town, then came back to the football ground. The club-house was part of the pavilion, and he marched up to it confidently. The door stood open, and a man lounged in the entrance.

"Is Mr. Cobb here?" inquired Fatty Wynn coolly. "Why, yes," said the man. "Bless my soul, you can't be Master Wynn, the club's new goalkeeper?"

Fatty Wynn nodded, and the man stared.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he ejaculated blankly.

"Anything funny in it?" said Fatty Wynn aggressively. "No, young 'un; but— Well, if it isn't real surprising!" said the man. "If you'll follow me I'll take you to the Board-room. All the directors are here—waiting for your Majesty."

Fatty Wynn did not know it, but the man was one of the Bramcourt team, and he looked upon Wynn's engagement more or less as a joke. But Mr. Cobb was serious enough, and he shook hands heartily with Fatty Wynn as soon as he entered the Board-room. There were eight or nine other gentlemen present, and they looked at Fatty Wynn with rather dubious glances.

"Really, Cobb, the boy is altogether too young to play in our team," protested a middle-aged gentleman, gazing at Fatty Wynn as though he were some queer zoological specimen. "I must raise an objection to—"

"Nonsense, my dear Collins," said Mr. Cobb pleasantly. "If you had seen him play yesterday you would not have made that remark. And, after all, I have only proposed to engage Wynn on trial. If he does not come up to my expectations we can, of course, substitute another man. But I am quite sure Master Wynn will cause you all to open your eyes."

"You give me a chance, sir!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I don't pride myself on being a specially good goalie, but I can easily knock spots off lots of chaps I've seen between the posts!"

"That's the way to talk, my boy!" smiled Mr. Cobb. "Well, you have had ample time to think over the matter in all its aspects. Are you still agreeable to accepting the position?"

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "Nothing I should like better!"

"Very well. All you have to do is to sign this professional registration-form," said Mr. Cobb. "As you are desirous of having your real name withheld, you had, perhaps, better sign simply 'Robert Brown.' After all, it is a mere matter of form, and one name is as good as another."

The form was lying on the table, and Fatty Wynn sat down before it, feeling rather nervous. He took up a pen and signed the name "Robert Brown" on the line Mr. Cobb pointed out. Wynn noticed that the form was filled in, and that the club agreed to pay him the sum of two pounds weekly for his services.

"There!" smiled Mr. Cobb. "You are now, to all intents and purposes, the club's new goalkeeper. It only now remains for us to discuss the matter thoroughly, and arrange for you to play your first match on Saturday."

Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. He had signed on. He was now custodian for the Bramcourt Rovers. It was a position which had never been occupied by a boy since the club's formation.

CHAPTER 6.

Mr. R. Cobb on the Warpath.

MR. COBB looked round the Board-room. "No doubt you are all very much surprised at my action in signing on so youthful a goalkeeper," he said. "I, myself, was a bit chary at first, but after a few minutes' careful thought, I decided that it would be a good step to give Wynn a trial."

"But he's so young," protested one of the directors. "He will be the laughing stock of the town."

"Here, I say!" began Fatty, indignantly, "that's rather stiff—"

Mr. Cobb held up his hand.

"Half a minute, my boy," he smiled, "you must excuse these gentlemen for their incredulity. To be frank, you are not much of a goal-keeper to look at. Nobody would think you capable of playing football at all."

"Thanks!" said Wynn, flushing.

"But appearances are often deceptive," proceeded Mr. Cobb. "I have the interests of the Club at heart, and you may be sure, gentlemen, that I should not engage this

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youngster, unless I was quite convinced of his capabilities. He was only defending the goal against a junior team, certainly, but some of the shots he saved were as swift, and as tricky, as any upon our own ground. Until you have seen him play, I ask you all to hold back your opinions."

"Very well, Cobb," said one of the directors, "we will do as you say. Only I must admit that—" He paused. "But there, I will say nothing at present."

"Good," said Mr. Cobb. "Now, Wynn, we will discuss details. You will draw your two pounds on Saturday, after the match—whether you distinguish yourself or not—but here is a sovereign for your immediate expenses."

"But they don't come to more than three or four bob," said Fatty Wynn.

"Never mind that, my boy," said the managing-director. "You can look upon the surplus as a bonus. I should have made the sum much larger, but you must remember that you are only signing on as a temporary goalkeeper. It would be impossible to retain you permanently, but, until our own goalkeeper is in health, we shall look to you to do your best for the team."

"That's all right, Mr. Cobb," said Fatty Wynn confidently. "I sha'n't let you down!"

"I sincerely trust you won't," replied Mr. Cobb.

For the next twenty minutes the Board of Directors discussed the novel situation, and then Fatty Wynn took his departure. He had been rather anxious before signing on, for it had struck him that the other directors might have strongly opposed Mr. Cobb's plan. But Mr. Cobb was evidently an influential member of the Board, and his decision was accepted as satisfactory.

"Two quid a week!" murmured Fatty Wynn, as he hastened to the station. "My only summer hat! What feeds I can stand in the study! There'll be no need to tell Figgy and Kerr where I've got the tin from. The very fact of my having it ought to make them happy."

He had to wait half an hour for a train, so when he arrived at Rylcombe, it was dusk. He hastened up to St. Jim's, wondering what his punishment would be for missing lessons. He was in no way dismayed—for there was always the thought of the two pounds a week, and the gorgeous feeds to be obtained thereby, to compensate him for a little corporal punishment.

The quad was deserted, and he crossed over to the New House. Most of the juniors were having tea, so the passages were empty. Fatty Wynn opened the door of Figgins's study, and calmly marched in.

Figgins and Kerr were having tea, and they looked up quickly. When Figgins saw who it was, a frown crossed his brow, and he started to his feet.

"Collar him!" he said quickly.

"By jove, rather!" agreed Kerr.

The pair of them advanced upon Fatty Wynn with warlike looks.

"Hold on, no larks!" said Wynn, in alarm. "I've—"

"You've got to go through it, my son!" said Figgins, sulphurously. And the two juniors grabbed hold of Fatty Wynn, and jammed him against the wall. Figgins kicked the door to with a bang, and Fatty Wynn looked at his two chums with considerable alarm.

"What's the idea?" he said. "What the dickens are you acting the goat like this for, Figgy?"

Figgins snorted.

"Acting the goat!" he said wrathfully. "My hat, you're the chap who's been acting the goat! Where've you been this afternoon? Why weren't you at lessons? What have you been doing? In short, what's the giddy game?"

Fatty Wynn wriggled.

"Do you expect me to answer all those questions at once?" he asked sarcastically.

"You can answer 'em how you like," replied Figgins grimly, "but you're jolly well going to do it! You don't leave this study until you've explained your blessed self!"

"Then I sha'n't leave the study at all!"

"What!" roared Figgins, "ain't you going to tell us where you've been?"

"No!"

"You—your boulder!" gasped Kerr. "Do you mean to say you're going to leave us in the dark? You won't tell us where you've been, and why you missed lessons?"

"Do you think I'm going to tell you when you treat me in this rotten way?" shouted Fatty Wynn. "You didn't give me a giddy chance to explain!"

Figgins and Kerr gazed at one another.

"Let him go!" growled Figgins.

Fatty Wynn was released, and he backed away from his chums, and removed his overcoat. For a moment there was silence in the study, then Figgins went back to the table and sat down.

"So you're not going to take us into your secret?" he asked quietly.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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Fatty Wynn looked uncomfortable. While his chums had been angry and warlike, he had been ready to defy them—but now that Figgins had calmed down, he felt that it was not exactly the thing to keep them in the dark.

But there was no help for it. Unless he told the whole story he could say nothing. So Fatty Wynn made up his mind to keep Figgins and Kerr in the dark. But he thought that they were making a lot of fuss over nothing, and he was rather inclined to be resentful.

"Secret?" he repeated. "What secret?"

"Why, the secret of your missing lessons this afternoon," said Figgins. "You must have had some giddy object in view. You wouldn't have missed lessons just for the fun of it."

"How do you know?"

"How do—?" Figgins breathed hard. "You fat duffer! Do you think I'm off my rocker?"

"Well, I wouldn't answer for it!" said Fatty Wynn aggressively.

"Oh, wouldn't you?" exclaimed Figgins, starting to his feet again. "Look here, Fatty, if you don't be jolly careful, you'll find yourself slung out of this study."

"And jolly quick!" added Kerr warmly.

"Who's going to do the throwing bizney?" asked Wynn.

"You'll jolly soon see!" declared the long-limbed junior, wrathfully. "We three have always got on well together, so far, but by the look of things there's going to be a split. You'd better not drive things too far, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"You're off your rocker, Figgy!" he said calmly. "Just because I choose to miss lessons once, that's no reason for you chaps getting wild. Even if I'd made up my mind to tell you, I shouldn't, now that you've taken up this rotten stand."

"Why, you—you cuckoo!" exclaimed Kerr, "it's you who's taken up the rotten stand! Why couldn't you have come to us before you went? Why couldn't you have told us where you were going?"

"Because I didn't want to!" said Fatty Wynn, starting on the provisions.

"Oh, you didn't want to?" said Figgins warmly. "You didn't want to tell your own chums what—?"

The door opened abruptly, and Mr. Ratcliff, the House-master of the New House, stepped into the room. The three juniors looked up quickly, and then all started to their feet. Mr. Ratcliff glared round angrily, and finally, his gaze rested upon Fatty Wynn.

"Wynn!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir?" said Fatty Wynn, rather tentatively.

"How long have you been in?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

"Been in, sir?"

"Don't bandy words with me, sir!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff angrily. "How long is it since you came into the house?"

"Oh, about—about ten minutes, sir," stammered Fatty Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff smiled unpleasantly.

"Indeed!" he said. "About ten minutes. Very well, Wynn, you will follow me at once to my study. Mr. Latham has reported to me that you were not at lessons this afternoon. Unless you can offer a very satisfactory explanation of your absence, I shall be compelled to give you a very severe caning."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will come with me, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a relish.

"N-n-ow, sir?" faltered Fatty Wynn, gazing longingly at the tea-table.

"This very minute, boy!"

Fatty Wynn crossed the study, and followed the House-master out into the passage—Figgins and Kerr looking after him with sympathetic expressions. Whether they were having a row with their chum or not, they were all "up against" the common foe. And Mr. Ratcliff was evidently in one of his most unpleasant moods.

Mr. Ratcliff was an exceedingly sour-tempered gentleman, and inclined to be tyrannical. On more than one occasion, his harsh and drastic treatment had caused something like a riot in the New House. Mr. Ratcliff was generally considered, by the New House juniors, to be a prying beast.

"Poor old Fatty!" said Figgins sympathetically.

"Yes, he's in for it!" said Kerr.

"Well, he's only got himself to blame," went on the long-legged chief of the New House juniors. "I'm blest if I can make him out! He was all right until last night. After that ripping game of footer with the School House, he stopped behind for his giddy overcoat, and didn't come in for half an hour."

"Yes," agreed Kerr, "that seemed to be the commencement of the bizney. He wouldn't tell us where he'd been all that time; and to-day, to make matters more mysterious, he misses afternoon lessons, comes in when we've very nearly

finished tea, and won't say where he's been. Then he gets wild because we want to know."

"I call it rotten!" said Figgins.
"Beastly! We shall have to do something about it," exclaimed the Scots junior determinedly. "I vote we let things rest for a bit, and then see what happens. If Fatty still keeps up his obstinacy, we'll jolly well force him to tell us what the game is."

"If we can," said Figgins. "It strikes me that Fatty wants a good bit of forcing."

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn had followed Mr. Ratcliff to the latter's study. Wynn knew that he was in for a caning, but he was not alarmed. After all, a caning wasn't much, and it would soon be over.

"I don't care a dash!" Wynn thought recklessly. "I'm a giddy member of the Bramcourt Rovers now, and I'm not going to back out just because of a caning or two. There's a couple of quid a week to come, and that'll make up for a good many rows with Ratty."

Fatty Wynn considered himself of some importance. To be sought after by the managing-director of a professional club, and engaged to play for the club, was an honour which had never been bestowed upon a schoolboy before. Wynn, in fact, felt rather regretful that he could not tell his chums about the event.

He entered Mr. Ratcliff's study in a resigned spirit. He had to go through the caning, so he might as well take it cheerfully. But he was determined that he would not reveal a single fact regarding his afternoon's jaunt.

Mr. Ratcliff closed the door, and walked across to his desk. Fatty Wynn watched him as he picked up a cane and swished it through the air with obvious pleasure.

"Vicious beast!" thought Fatty.
Mr. Ratcliff turned to the junior.
"Wynn," he said harshly, "you were not at lessons this afternoon?"

"Wasn't I, sir—I—I mean, yes sir."
"Why were you not in your class-room, Wynn?"

"Why wasn't I, sir?"
Mr. Ratcliff frowned angrily.
"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed. "Answer me at once!"

"I—I went out, sir!" stammered Fatty Wynn, rather awed by Mr. Ratcliff's expression.

"Indeed! And where did you go?"
"To—to Rylcombe, sir," replied Wynn truthfully.
"For what purpose?" asked Mr. Ratcliff. "Was it so important that you could not possibly leave it until this evening?"

"I—I—well, sir, I went this afternoon!" said Fatty Wynn lamely.

"And that is all you have to say?"
"Yes, sir."

"In short, you played truant!" said Mr. Ratcliff tartly.
Fatty Wynn flushed.

"I am sorry you have acted in such a manner, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Evidently you are in need of a lesson, and I shall now proceed to teach you that the afternoon is not the correct time for you to go down to Rylcombe, doubtless to gorge yourself in a disgusting manner on sickly pastry at the confectioner's!"

"I didn't have a single crumb, sir!" protested Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"Do not fabricate, Wynn!"
"I'm not, sir; it's the truth!"

"I do not believe you, Wynn!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly.
"I am of the opinion that you deliberately went to the village for the purpose of eating, and I shall cane you with greater severity because you have chosen to deny the truth!"

Fatty Wynn felt like bursting out into a protest, but he knew from experience that it would be useless. So he set his lips and resigned himself to his fate.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

"I shall give you six strokes, Wynn!"
"Six! My hat, that's pretty stiff, isn't it, sir?" protested Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff did not answer, but whisked the cane through the air with a swish. Then he stepped forward; and we will draw a veil over the painful scene which followed.

CHAPTER 7.

A Rift in the Lute.

"GREAT Scott!" murmured Fatty Wynn ruefully, as he walked down the passage from Mr. Ratcliff's study. "That rotten old tyrant can lay it on! My giddy hands are stinging like the very dickens!"

He tucked them under his arms and made his way to Figgins's study. But, although Fatty Wynn was feeling sore, he was by no means daunted. He had prepared himself for

the licking, so he did not feel it so much. He entered the study, and Figgins and Kerr looked up at him.

"Did he lay it on thick?" asked Kerr sympathetically.
"My hat, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "The old bouncer lammed into me like one o'clock! Six beastly cuts!"

Figgins grinned.
"Feeling sore now, I suppose?" he said.
"Well, it's nothing to grin about, is it?" growled Wynn, sitting down.

"No; but I was thinking that it's about the first time I've really agreed with our old fossil of a Housemaster!" said Figgins blandly.

"What?" ejaculated Wynn. "Do you mean to say you uphold old Ratty?"

"Of course!" said Figgins. "You deserved six cuts for missing lessons this afternoon. If you'd got some explanation to make, it might be different. But you're like a blessed oyster!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Fatty Wynn.
And he continued his interrupted tea without further argument. And for the rest of that evening neither of his chums could get a word out of him respecting his afternoon's absence from St. Jim's.

The following morning Fatty Wynn was up again before rising-bell, and his chums, who had decided to let the matter drop, looked at one another with expressive looks. Why was Wynn putting in so much time on the playing-fields? Previously he had only practised when the rest of the Fourth had practised. Now he was on the playing-fields every spare minute of his time. Figgins and Kerr discussed the matter with Blake & Co. while they were waiting for breakfast in the quad. Of course, the School House juniors were curious regarding Wynn's absence of the previous day, and Fatty Wynn had found himself besieged with questions the previous night. But he had refused to say a word, and his conduct was causing more comment than Fatty Wynn cared for.

"There's something the matter somewhere!" said Figgins, looking worried. "The silly fathead absolutely refused to tell us where he's been—us, his own chums!"

"It's jolly queer!" declared Kerr. "Now, for two mornings in succession he's got up before the rest of the chaps and practised footer. What does it mean? What's the fat cuckoo up to?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"Weally, you know," he said, "it's wathah stwange!"
"Go hon, Gussy!"

"I'm quite sewious, Blake!" said D'Arcy. "There is one point, howevah, which you fellows seem to have ovahlooked. Does it not stwike you—"

"No," said Blake, "not a bit."
"Weally, Blake, I see no reason why you should intewwupt me!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wepeat, does it not stwike you—"

"And I repeat that it doesn't," said Blake.
"You uttah ass!"

"Well, you said—"
"I merely asked if it did not stwike you that—"

"Don't I keep on telling you that nothing's struck me?" exclaimed Blake. "What are you driving at, Gussy? If you'd like something to strike you, I'll oblige with the greatest of pleasure."

D'Arcy stared at Blake freezingly.
"You burblin' duffah!" he exclaimed. "You are delibewately waggin' me, Blake!"

"Wagging you!" repeated Blake. "What do you think you are—a tail?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I uttably wefuse to be wefered to as a tail!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "If you intewwupt me again, Blake, I shall be compelled to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"That's right, Gussy. Go for him!"
"I uttably wefuse to go for him, Figgay! It would simply wuin my twucks if Blake happened to thwow me ovah into the mud!"

"Which would be very probable!" grinned Blake.
"Pway cease this wotting!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have not finished my wemarks yet, owin' to that uttah ass Blake's wude intewwuptsions! I wepeat, has it not stwuck you that it is vewy peculiah Wynn should be engaged upon some secwet biznay or othah, an' be extwaken on footah at the same time? I see no connection wath-ovah between the two."

"Yes, it is a bit rummy!" agreed Figgins thoughtfully. "Fatty seems to be as keen as mustard on football, yet he goes gahivanting about in the afternoon. And the worst of it is, Fatty won't tell us a blessed thing!"

"It's pretty rotten of him!" said Digby.
"I vote we rag him!" said Herries thoughtfully. "Collar the bouncer, and bump him until he gives up his giddy secret! After all, he's only a New House waster, and—"

Figgins and Kerr glared.

"Oh, he's only a New House waster, is he?" said Figgins warmly. "Look here, Herries, we came over here in a peaceful spirit, but if you're looking for trouble, we'll jolly soon oblige you!"

"I only spoke the truth!" said Herries.

"Dry up, you ass!" said Blake. "It's nearly breakfast-time, and we don't want to start the day by wiping up the quad, with Figgins and Kerr!"

"You'd have your work cut out!" said Figgins. "I think you'd be the chaps to wipe up the quad."

"Quite right, we should," said Blake coolly, "with you!"

"You—you—"

"Hallo, what's the rumpus?" inquired Tom Merry, sauntering up with Manners and Monty Lowther. "You Fourth-Form kids having a row so early in the day? I'm blest if you can be trusted by yourselves for ten minutes!"

The Fourth-Formers glared.

"Weally, Tom Mewy—"

"If you're looking for trouble as well," said Blake aggressively, "you'll jolly soon find it! This discussion, when it started, was about Fatty Wynn, but by the look of things it's going to change into a giddy House row!"

"Rits!" said Tom Merry coolly. "Don't get your little rags out! I was going to ask you about Fatty Wynn myself, Figgy. What's the young ass up to?"

"How should I know?" growled Figgins. "I'm just as much in the dark as you are. Fatty won't say a giddy word to us. I shouldn't worry much, only Fatty's not the sort of chap to keep secrets. It's not like him to keep us in the dark."

"In my opinion Fatty's going off his chump!" said Monty Lowther. "It's winter time now, and he seems to be developing a habit of getting up before rising-bell, and kicking a footer about. Did you ever hear anything more fat-headed?"

"Yes," said Blake promptly.

"What's that?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Your blessed talk!" replied Blake. "That's about the most fat-headed thing I've ever heard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you think that's funny?" said Lowther glaring. "Well, it's as funny as your ghastly puns, anyhow!" said Blake.

"It strikes me," said Lowther, "that these Fourth Form kids are getting altogether too cheeky. I reckon it's up to us to take them down a peg."

"We should need a bit of taking down," said Figgins, with a grin. "There are six of us here, Lowther, and only three of you."

Monty Lowther looked at Figgins anxiously.

"Didn't you sleep well, Figgy?" he asked.

"Sleep well? Of course I did!" said Figgins, in surprise.

"Oh, I thought perhaps you were feeling a bit ill!" said Monty Lowther. "You said just now that you could see three of me, and I'm jolly certain there's only one!"

"You blithering chump!" exclaimed Figgins disdainfully. "I said that there are six Fourth Form chaps here, and only three Shell chaps!"

"Then we've got the advantage!" replied Lowther blandly.

"How the dickens do you make that out?" asked Blake.

"Why, three Shell chaps can swipe up half a dozen of you kids any day."

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another excitedly.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Blake. "I'm blest if I'm going to stand here and have this funny fathead swanking about like this! I vote we—"

Clang! Clang!

"I vote we go into breakfast," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. And the Terrible Three strolled into the School House, followed by the wrathful glares of the Fourth-Formers.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally think those New House boundahs are gettin' too big for their beastly boots! But, to return to the original subject, I weally think that I shall have to take Fatty Wynn in hand!"

"You'd have a job!" chuckled Figgins. "Fatty's a pretty heavy lump to handle, and you'd need to be a giddy Hercules!"

"You uttah ass, Figgy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I meant that I should have to give him a sewious talkin' to!"

"Very kind of you, Gussy; but we can give Fatty all the talking to that's necessary," said Kerr. "And I can give you my word, we're going to make him reveal his giddy secret after brekkor. It may be nothing, after all, but we shall feel more comfortable when we know it."

And the Fourth-Formers went in to breakfast. As soon as the meal was over, Figgins and Kerr grasped Fatty Wynn firmly, and marched him across to a deserted corner of the quad.

"What's the idea, Figgy?" protested Fatty Wynn.

"The idea, my son, is that you're going to tell us your deadly secret," said Figgins grimly. "We've had quite enough nonsense, and if you don't tell us where you went yesterday afternoon, we shall jolly well bump you till you do."

"So you might just as well tell us straight away," added Kerr.

"Now look here, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn, a little alarmed, "what's the good of talking rot to me? You speak as if I'd been committing some crime, and that I've got to confess it! Can't a chap go out now without his chums pestering to know where he's been?"

"He can," said Figgins grimly; "but he's not going to. Up till now, Fatty, we three have had no secrets, and I'm jolly certain we're not going to start now. Be a sensible chap and let us into the thing. If it's a jape—"

"It isn't!" said Wynn quickly. "It's—it's a business matter!"

"A business matter?" repeated Figgins. "What the dickens are you doing with business matters at St. Jim's? Is it anything to do with that chap who was seen about the place the day before yesterday, when the House match was on?"

"What chap?" asked Fatty Wynn quickly.

"Some man—smart-looking chap," said Kerr. "Taggles told me that he came in just before the match started. Of course, strangers are admitted to see the school matches, so his name wasn't asked."

Fatty Wynn looked at his chums rather nervously. He realised that the stranger was, of course, Mr. Cobb, and he had no desire for Figgins and Kerr to get at the truth. After his condemnation of professional footballers, he simply couldn't admit that he was now one himself—that he had accepted the post of goalkeeper for the Bramcroft Rovers.

"What should I know about the chap?" he asked sullenly.

"That's what we are trying to get at," said Kerr. "Was this business matter you refer to anything to do with that stranger?"

"No—I mean, I won't tell you!" stammered Fatty Wynn. "Look here, I'm blowed if I'm going to be questioned like a giddy prisoner at the bar! Why can't you mind your own bizney?"

Fatty Wynn was getting somewhat excited. He thought that if the interview was prolonged, his chums would make him give himself away. And the thought made Fatty Wynn incensed.

"I've never known such a couple of inquisitive bounders," he went on, before Figgins or Kerr could speak. "A chap can't do a—little bit of business now without you demanding to know what he's up to! You may be my chums, but there's a limit, you know!"

"There is," said Figgins warmly; "and I reckon you're about the limit, Fatty!"

"He is, and that's a fact!" agreed Kerr, with equal heat. "I always thought Fatty Wynn was a decent chap, but after this, I'm beginning to have doubts. It looks jolly suspicious on the face of it."

"You think I've been playing some rotten games?" demanded Fatty Wynn hotly.

"Yes, I do!" declared Figgins.

"Then you're a couple of beastly rotters!" shouted Fatty Wynn. "The other week you thought the same things about Tom Merry, when he helped old Griggs, the gamekeeper. This time you may find you've made another rotten mistake!"

"That's all very well," said Kerr. "It seems to me, Fatty, that you're bringing up that matter about Tom Merry to make us think you're playing a game of the same kind. Personally, I think—"

"You can think what you like!" snapped Fatty Wynn. "I've done with you! You're a couple of suspicious bounders, and I'm blest if I'm going to tell you a single thing!"

And Fatty Wynn walked away, white with anger. He had not meant to let matters go so far, but his temper had got the better of him.

Figgins and Kerr looked at one another in silence. Both of them were feeling dismayed. They, too, had no idea that Fatty Wynn would have taken their questioning so badly. There was a split in the Co.—a rift in the lute, as it were—and Figgins and Kerr wondered how long it would be before the friendship of the New House Co. was restored.

CHAPTER 8.

Fatty Wynn—Professional.

FATTY WYNN looked somewhat glum throughout the rest of the day. But, when he liked, he could be obstinate. Usually the Falstaff of the New House was one of the most cheerful juniors at St. Jim's, but now everybody could see that there was something on his mind. As a matter of fact, Fatty Wynn was feeling the



"Captain Stump, sir, and Bill Hamkins," said Fitzpatrick, performing the ceremony of introduction with a wave of the hand. Captain Stump nodded genially. "Werry pleased to meet you, sir," he said. "Same 'ere," said Bill Hamkins, still sitting heavily upon Loder's chest. "Any friend of my young friend Fitz is a friend of mine." "Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Prout, "I must be dreaming! This—this cannot be real!" (A diverting incident taken from the splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, which appears in our grand companion paper "The Magnet" Library, this week. The title of the story is "A SON OF THE SEA," by Frank Richards, and every Gemite should make a point of reading it. This week's "Magnet" is now on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.)

responsibility of his position, and the split with his chums had rather dismayed him.

"It's absolutely rotten!" he murmured to himself, as he walked round the dark quad. after tea. "I'm not so jolly certain that I'm glad old Cobb made me the offer! If it's going to mean breaking with Figgy and Kerr— But it won't! After a day or two they'll resign themselves to the thing, and everything'll be all serene again. And when I come home to-morrow with that merry two quid, I'll bring a huge parcel of grub with me. Both Figgy and Kerr are on the rocks just now, and it'll serve as a peace offering."

And Fatty Wynn continued his solitary walk round the dusky quad, feeling more light-hearted. After all, what was there to worry about? The split with his chums was only a temporary one, and matters would soon readjust themselves. And the prospect of playing in a real, professional match, was very enticing to the sturdy young footballer.

There was a match with the Grammar School on the following day, and, under ordinary circumstances, Fatty Wynn would have been extremely eager to take part in it. But now matters were altered. What was a match with Gordon Gay & Co. compared to a real professional match, between two League teams?

Fatty Wynn was very determined, and very eager to show the directors of the club that he could play real football—that he would prove as good a custodian as the man who had met with an accident.

When he went in to supper he was looking as sunny and good-tempered as usual. This was partly owing to the fact that Fatty had just left Dame Taggles's shop, in the corner of the quad. He had drowned his troubles in ginger-beer and pastry. Nevertheless, he succeeded in eating quite as much supper as most of the other juniors.

Figgins and Kerr were at a loss to understand their chum's evident composure. They, themselves, were feeling decidedly gloomy, and it annoyed them to see Fatty Wynn looking as cheerful and as good-tempered as usual.

They did not speak to him, however. The rest of the juniors in the New House were rather surprised to see the famous "Co." on such strained terms.

It was just the same in the dormitory, and just the same the following morning—Figgins and Kerr would have nothing to do with Fatty Wynn. After lessons Tom Merry & Co. captured Fatty Wynn as he walked across the quad.

"You and Figgy don't seem to be getting on well lately," said Tom Merry. "What's up? Trouble in the family?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Fatty Wynn politely.

"Oh, so you're on your dig!" grinned Tom Merry. "Well, I suppose it's nothing to do with me, so I'll get to business. Of course, you're playing in the match against the Grammar School this afternoon?"

"No," said Fatty Wynn, "I'm not!"

"You're not?"

"Not playing?" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS NAME." & "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE." ORDER EARLY.
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"Don't talk rot!" said Manners.
 "I tell you I'm not playing," said Fatty Wynn finally.
 "But, my dear ass, you simply must!" said Tom Merry seriously. "There's not a goalkeeper in the junior school to compare with you, and we're relying on you to defend our goal."

"I'm sorry," said Wynn, "but it can't be did."
 Tom Merry began to get excited.
 "Why not?" he demanded.
 "Well, because I'm not."
 "But you're not ill! You're fit enough!"
 "Of course I am—but I'm not going to play!"
 "Then what on earth have you been practising so much for?" asked Tom Merry warmly. "My hat, we thought you were getting ready for the Grammar School match! You're not kidding us, Fatty? You don't mean to say you're going to leave us in the lurch?"

"Leave you in the lurch, be jiggered!" snapped Fatty Wynn. "I suppose I needn't play unless I like? I'm going out, if you want to know—and you can get somebody else to defend the giddy goal!"

"But the Grammar School's extra strong—"
 "Br-r-r-r! Go and eat coke!"
 And Fatty Wynn walked off, leaving the Terrible Three gazing at one another with rather dismayed expressions.
 "What's up with the silly ass?" said Manners.
 "Blest if I know!" said Tom Merry.
 "He's off his rocker," said Monty Lowther. "I told you that before, only you wouldn't believe me. No sensible chap would go gadding out when there's a match with the Grammar School on."

The captain of the junior football team was considerably worried over Wynn's behaviour, and the juniors were rather sceptical about the result of the forthcoming match. Gordon Gay & Co. were at great strength, and with Fatty Wynn excluded from the St. Jim's team, it looked as though the Grammar School would score a victory.

Fatty Wynn, loyal enough to St. Jim's, felt some qualms as he prepared himself to take the journey to Bramcourt. He did not like deserting his own team in an emergency, but if he stayed at St. Jim's he would have to miss the Bramcourt match—and that was impossible.

He was very much enamoured with his new position, and the distinction of being the only boy professional, probably, in England, had caused him to fancy himself a little. Wynn was usually a very modest junior, but under the present circumstances, he could be excused for placing his own school second in importance to the Bramcourt Rovers.

But his chums knew nothing about his new position, therefore, his conduct was exciting general interest and mystification. When Fatty Wynn had agreed to Mr. Cobb's suggestion, he had had no idea that it would cause so much comment.

With some difficulty he managed to slip out of the gates without being observed. A quarter of an hour later he was standing on the Rylcombe Station platform waiting for his train.

"My hat," he murmured, "I'd no suspicion that all the chaps would watch me as if I were a giddy criminal! Still, I've got away at last, and I don't care a button what the chaps think! I'm going to play for Bramcourt, and I mean to show what I can do!"

The day was remarkably fine, and when Fatty Wynn arrived at the Bramcourt Football Ground, he found that thousands of people were thronging in at the gates, the turnstiles clicking continuously.

Fatty Wynn walked boldly up to the club-house, and almost the first person he met was Mr. Cobb. The managing-director shook hands cordially.

"Ah, here you are, Wynn!" he exclaimed. "How do you feel, my boy?"

"Oh, as fit as anything, sir!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly.

"Not nervous at all?" smiled Mr. Cobb.
 "Well, perhaps just a bit, sir," admitted Wynn; "but that'll soon wear off when I get on the field. Who are we playing, Mr. Cobb?"

"Seafield United," replied the managing-director; "and it's an exceptionally strong team. They've got a particularly clever sharpshooter—Stewart—in the front line, and you'll have to be on your mettle."

"Don't worry," said Fatty Wynn, "I sha'n't let you down."

"Well, there's nothing like having confidence in yourself," smiled Mr. Cobb. "Come, I will introduce you to the teams!"

And Fatty Wynn followed Mr. Cobb along the passage to the dressing-rooms. Both the teams were getting ready for the field, and they looked at Fatty Wynn with open amusement and surprise.

"And is that kid going to defend our goal?" exclaimed Nowell, the Bramcourt skipper.

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"Yes," said Fatty Wynn, "I am. You needn't look at me as if I was a freak. I may be pretty young, but I know what football is."

Nowell smiled.
 "Bravo, young 'un!" he said. "I'll wait till the game's over before I say any more. You seem cool enough, anyhow, and that's a great point in goalkeeping. If you keep your head, I dare say you'll put up quite a fair show."

"Yes, I dare say I shall," said Fatty Wynn calmly.
 Thurston, the Seafield United captain, winked at his men. They had been called into the home dressing-room by Mr. Cobb to become acquainted with Fatty Wynn, and they all looked as pleased as possible.

"I can see we're going to have an easy job to-day, chaps," chuckled Thurston. "If that kid's going to keep goal for Bramcourt, I can see us going home with about ten goals to our credit."

"Oh, can you!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "That's just where you make a mistake! I'm not going to boast, but I'll bet you don't score three goals during the whole game!"

"Why, I'll take five myself, baby-face!" grinned Stewart, the sharpshooter. "By Jove, I shall just enjoy this match! It'll be a new experience to score every time I shoot!"

"You rotten swanker!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I'll keep my eye on you! If your side's going to rely on you to take the goals, I reckon it's got a poor chance!"

"That's one for you, Stewart!" chuckled Thurston.
 "Come on, we'd better get into our togs!"

Ten minutes later the two teams turned out on the field. A roar of cheering and clapping met them, and Fatty Wynn looked round with a cool expression. He was attired in navy-blue knickers and white sweater, and his sturdy figure was shown to advantage. Wynn had feared that he would be nervous, but, to his own surprise, he was feeling as cool and collected as if he was playing on the St. Jim's field.

He took his place between the goalposts.
 "Now then, young 'un, clear out of that!" roared somebody in the crowd.

"Rats!" shouted Fatty Wynn. "I'm the Bramcourt goalie!"

"What?" ejaculated the man in dismay. "Oh, crikey, we shall be let down proper! An' I've got five bob on the game, too!"

"That's all right," said Fatty; "you'll win!"

He was feeling quite in his element now, and rather enjoyed the evident dismay of the spectators. He would show them something before long.

The Bramcourt men sent in a few preliminary shots before the game commenced, and Fatty Wynn gave them an inkling of his form. He did not let the ball enter the net once, and the way he kicked was remarkable.

"By Jove, he shapes well!" remarked Nowell, the captain.

"Well, let's hope he won't let us down too disgracefully," said one of the other men. "Personally, I think it's a ridiculous idea of Cobb's; but he won't be convinced of his folly until the kid's succeeded in letting us down with a crash. This game will just about spoil our chances for the cup-tie."

"I don't say that," replied Nowell. "Wait until half-time before you state any opinions."

But nearly all the footballers were of the same opinion as the one who had spoken to Nowell. They looked glum and uninterested. The backs told themselves that they would have to work like troopers in order to protect their goal.

The Seafield United men, on the other hand, were merry and lighthearted. They were of the opinion that the game would be child's play. Bramcourt was a good team. But with no proper goalkeeper, how could they expect to stand?

The two skippers tossed, and the home team won. A murmur of satisfaction went up from the spectators as they saw Nowell pointing, for there was a fairly strong wind blowing.

The referee blew his whistle, and the teams took their places.

"Pheep!"
 The game commenced.

CHAPTER 9.

Playing the Game.

SEAFIELD UNITED were of the opinion that they had a very easy time before them, and the way they played showed the spectators that they were determined to score a goal, if possible, within the first five minutes of play.

They were all fairly heavy men, and Stewart, at inside-right, was exceptionally fast. There was no doubt that the Seafield men could play, and they swept down the field in splendid style, passing the ball backwards and forwards with the utmost ease.

Fatty Wynn watched them admiringly, his eyes very much on the alert.

"By Jove," he murmured, "they can play! Still, I'll bet they can't send in faster shots than some of Tom Merry's!"

Stewart had the ball. A Bramcourt back came rushing at him with a roar from the spectators. But Stewart was in no way disconcerted. He tricked the back neatly, and steadied himself to shoot. An expression of amusement was on his face, and his foot met the ball with a thud.

It was a splendid shot. It whizzed for the goal fairly high, as swift as a cannon-ball, and a groan almost went up from the spectators as they saw that there was no one there to save except Fatty Wynn.

But the new Bramcourt custodian was on his mettle. He saw the ball coming, gave a stupendous leap into the air, then, with both fists met the ball. It just grazed his hands, and slid easily over the crossbar, and rolled down the net at the back.

Fatty Wynn calmly walked out of the goal, and went round and picked the ball up.

"My hat," he murmured, "that was a stinger!"

For a second there was almost a hush among the thousands of spectators, then they burst into a perfect storm of applause.

"Well saved!"

"Well done, young 'un!"

"Oh, well saved!"

"By gosh, I've never seen anything prettier!" roared a man behind the goal.

"Say, young 'un, if you do like that every time, you won't be far wrong!" exclaimed Nowell, running up to the goal.

"By Jove, the way you saved that was splendid!"

"Oh, that was nothing!" said Fatty Wynn carelessly. "It was a bit fast, but if I don't get any trickier shots than that I sha'n't worry."

Nowell smiled.

The corner-kick was taken; but the ball was carried by the wind behind the goal.

Fatty Wynn took the kick, and the ball sailed right up the field with the wind. It descended almost at the Bramcourt centre-forward's feet, and he trapped it instantly. The next second he was away, darting towards the goal at express speed.

The game, which had threatened to be tame, was turning out to be one of the fastest ever witnessed on the Bramcourt ground. The Bramcourt centre-forward passed neatly to the outside-left, and the latter took a long shot for goal.

It materialised, the Seafeld goalie being caught napping. It was a very tricky shot, curling in just below the crossbar.

"Goal!" roared the spectators.

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Nowell, with sparkling eyes.

"This is splendid!"

One up for the home team, and the game was not seven minutes old!

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Mr. Cobb, who was sitting in the grand-stand with several other directors. "My action in playing young Wynn is justifying itself. The way he saved just now was splendid. And it was through his well-aimed kick just now that we gained this goal!"

"By gad, you're right!" said one of the directors. "Can it be possible that the boy is really worth having?"

"I am of the opinion that Wynn is a better goalkeeper even than our own man," replied Mr. Cobb. "But watch the game, gentlemen! There are some more surprises for us, I imagine!"

The game restarted with the spectators and the Bramcourt players in a good humour. The visitors were looking a trifle surprised. They had not expected the game to go the way it had, and they decided to buck up and show Bramcourt what they could do.

"It was a fluke!" exclaimed Stewart, as he found himself running beside Thurston, the Seafeld captain. "They won't get another goal!"

"Not if we can help it!" replied Thurston.

"I'm going to score in a few minutes," said Stewart.

"That young idiot in goal happened to stop my last shot; but I'll flummox him before long!"

For fifteen minutes the game was almost all in the centre of the field. The teams were very evenly matched, and somehow they did not seem able to make many attempts on the goals. From the spectators' point of view the play was uninteresting. Fatty Wynn, however, was watching eagerly.

Accustomed as he was to junior football, this game was exceptionally interesting to him.

"Well, it doesn't seem such a hard job," he murmured.

"If I don't get more shots fired at me, I shall begin to think it's a jolly slow bizney! One of those Seafeld asses said he was going to score about a dozen goals in the first half, but it doesn't seem—Hallo, he's coming!"

At last the Seafeld forwards had broken through, and they came sweeping down the field with admirable precision. The ball was passed from one to another quickly, and the Bramcourt backs found that they were unable to stop the visitors'

rush. One of them was charged over heavily, and he scrambled up too late to be of any use.

Fatty Wynn danced up and down between the goalposts elatedly.

"Just what I wanted!" he murmured. "My hat, call me baby-face, would they? I'll show 'em, the bounders!"

Wynn had plenty of confidence in himself, and he kept his eyes fastened on the players. The ball was quietly passed to Stewart, who steadied himself to shoot, with an almost clear goal before him. One of the home backs was rushing towards him; but Stewart knew that he had time to take the kick.

"Offside!" yelled somebody in the crowd.

But the referee was of another opinion, and he did not blow the whistle. Stewart kicked, and the ball shot from his foot, and made straight for the centre of the goal. It was a beautifully-directed shot; but again Fatty Wynn was ready.

This time he rushed out to meet the ball, and the sound as it met his fist could be heard all over the field. The ball rebounded, and was flung almost out into midfield. Had Fatty Wynn not acted with the swiftness of lightning, the leather must have inevitably entered the net.

"Bravo!"

"Well played, goalie!"

"Oh, well saved!"

For the rest of the half there were no more goals scored, although several attempts were made at both ends of the field. Fatty Wynn found it unnecessary to exert himself to any great extent. The whistle blew at last; and Nowell, the Bramcourt captain, ran up to Wynn and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You've played up well, youngster!"

"Well, I did my best," said Fatty Wynn.

"And you've taught us not to crow before we know," replied Nowell. "If you defend your goal in the second half as well as you've done this, we sha'n't have much to fear. The Seafeld men will buck up now, and I give you my word you'll have all your work cut out."

"All serene!" said Fatty Wynn coolly. "I shall be ready for 'em!"

It was no idle boast. The junior had every confidence in himself, and he did not hesitate to say so. When the next half of the game commenced the Seafeld United men were all looking grim and determined. They considered themselves to be a particularly hot team, and had looked upon Bramcourt as a particularly easy nut to crack. They had decided, in the interval, to concentrate all their efforts on securing two or more goals. They were, as a matter of fact, over-confident.

And this over-confidence was to receive its reward almost as soon as the second half had commenced. For the Bramcourt forwards rushed through by sheer strength of combination, and almost before the visitors realised it a second goal had been scored.

"Goal!"

The spectators roared themselves hoarse. The home players were elated and jubilant. Thurston spoke to his men seriously as they took their places. He realised that if they did not buck up considerably they would have to return home a badly-beaten team.

So when the game restarted all the Seafeld men were looking set and determined. They had the wind with them now, and it could be seen by everybody that they were making every effort to score. They were undoubtedly a good team; and now that they put their efforts into the game seriously, their play began to make itself felt.

"We must score, Stewart," said Thurston, as the two met.

"We simply must equalise, anyhow."

"We shall, too!" said Stewart confidently. "That kid in the goal won't stand up to us long. The only wonder to me is that we haven't scored before."

The Bramcourt Rovers soon discovered that the visitors were concentrating all their efforts upon the home goal, and so good was their combination that practically the game was in the Bramcourt half.

The play was fast and furious, and the spectators were fairly panting with excitement and interest.

And then commenced the attack on the Bramcourt goal.

Shot after shot rained in with disconcerting swiftness. But Fatty Wynn was prepared every time. He seemed to be playing the game of his life. He darted about, cool and collected, and kicked, punched and headed the ball out with the ease of an experienced professional.

Only once did Seafeld score. It materialised through a corner-kick, and the ball descended right into the mouth of the goal. Fatty Wynn jumped at it desperately, but through no fault of his own, he was a second too late. Thurston headed the ball neatly, and it actually grazed Wynn's hair as it shot into the net.

"Never mind!" said Nowell, with a smile. "I reckon that would have been a goal whoever was in your place."

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"Yes, it was a bit tricky," admitted Fatty Wynn. "I'll bet the bounders don't score again, though!"

The goal had given the visitors fresh heart, and they continued the game with unabated vigour. But although the backs were beaten again and again, Fatty Wynn was always impregnable. He was there every time, and he simply forced the visitors to realise his true worth.

The spectators, too, could see by now that the new goalkeeper, youthful as he was, was a real treasure. Although most of them had been against him at the start, by now they were one and all in his favour. Again and again he was cheered, and Fatty Wynn felt a glow of pride within his breast.

The Bramcourt men, who thought they were going to be "let down," were so elated, that they spurred themselves to further efforts, and within a minute of time a well-directed pass laid the ball at the centre-forward's feet. He took the shot on the second, and the Seafeld custodian was completely beaten. The ball shot past him, and another shout of applause arose from the onlookers.

A few moments later the whistle blew, and cheer after cheer went up.

Three goals to one! And Seafeld had commenced the game with the conviction that it would be the easiest victory of their lives.

Fatty Wynn found himself surrounded by the members of the Bramcourt team.

"By Jove!" exclaimed one of the backs. "You've done wonders, old chap! I thought the defence would rest entirely with us, but it seems as though the tables were turned. You're about the only one who wasn't whacked."

Mr. Cobb came hurrying towards the enthusiastic group. "Upon my word, Brown," he exclaimed, remembering that Fatty Wynn had signed on under an assumed name, "you've exceeded my expectations! I knew you to be a first-class goalkeeper, but if Seafeld had equalised I should have been quite satisfied. As it is, I'm delighted—delighted!"

And Mr. Cobb shook hands with Fatty Wynn vigorously. "I'm glad I've pleased you, sir!" said Fatty Wynn, with a red face. "If you think I'm worth keeping on—"

"Worth it, my boy! Why, I should be extremely sorry to lose you now!" said Mr. Cobb. "But I expect you wish to be getting back? Come with me, and I will talk to you a few moments in my office!"

Fatty Wynn guessed what the talk would be—the handing over of two golden sovereigns—and he followed Mr. Cobb with alacrity. He occupied about two minutes in dressing, and then he hastened to the managing-director's office.

CHAPTER 10.

The Peace Offering.

"H, here you are, Wynn!" exclaimed Mr. Cobb, who sat in the office alone. "I suppose you are anxious to get back to St. Jim's as soon as possible?"

"Yes, sir," replied Fatty Wynn. "There's a train in about a quarter of an hour, I think. I can just catch that nicely if I hurry!"

"Very good, I will not detain you," said Mr. Cobb. "At least, not more than a minute. I have two pounds here, which I have pleasure in handing to you. You have earned every penny of it, my boy, and I hope you intend to keep up to your present form."

"I shall do that right enough," replied Fatty Wynn. "Will you want me here on Wednesday? It's a half-holiday at St. Jim's, you know—"

"No, I shall not want you then," replied Mr. Cobb. "At least, I shall want you, but I'm afraid it would be asking too much. The Rovers are playing away on Wednesday—a journey of fifty miles, so we will have to play the reserve man. You need not come until next Saturday. But I am so pleased with you, Wynn, that I intend to put a paragraph in the local paper concerning you."

"A—a paragraph!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn quickly.

"Yes. Of course, your name has been given to the local reporter, but I want something extra put in the paper—something that will make the townspeople flock to the ground next Saturday."

"But—but the Head might see it!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"That will make no difference. The name I gave you was Robert Brown, and

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I shall not refer to you by your real name," said Mr. Cobb. "Oh, all serene!" said Fatty Wynn, with relief. "Of course, it doesn't matter if you put a giddy false name in!"

A few minutes later Fatty Wynn was hurrying to the station, jingling the two pounds contentedly in his pocket. There were still some few shillings left of the original sovereigns, as well as some pocket-money of Wynn's. So the fat junior was feeling quite rich as he took his seat in the train.

Arriving at Rylcombe he walked down the High Street, and came to a halt outside the tuck-shop. That afternoon he had been a professional footballer, but now he was himself again, and the sight of the familiar tuck-shop made him remember that he was hungry.

He entered, and Mr. Bunn, the proprietor, hurried forward. He knew Fatty Wynn well, and was prepared to supply a large order. Mr. Bunn's expectations were realised, for when Fatty Wynn left he carried with him a huge parcel of tuck.

"My hat!" murmured Fatty Wynn, as he staggered up to St. Jim's with his load. "Figgy and Kerr will open their eyes when they see this lot. I've blued about fifteen bob of the tin already. Still, this is a kind of giddy peace-offering, and they'll be a couple of chumps if they don't fall on my neck!"

It was just past tea-time when Wynn crossed the dusky quadrangle. He was feeling a little nervous, and wondered how his chums would greet him.

The lights of the rival Houses gleamed in the darkness.

The quad. was deserted, and Fatty Wynn entered the New House just as Lumley-Lumley and Reilly emerged from the entrance of the School House. The two Fourth-Formers saw the figure of Fatty Wynn, and wondered where he had been—for the New House junior's peculiar conduct was causing universal comment. Levison and Mellish, the cads of the Fourth, had started an invented story concerning Wynn's absence from St. Jim's, but they had quickly been howled down. The juniors were all pretty well fed up with Levison and Mellish.

In the passage Fatty Wynn met Pratt. Pratt stared at Fatty in surprise.

"Hallo! Where have you been all the afternoon?" he demanded. "And what's that whacking great parcel?"

"Mind your own bizney!" said Wynn, pushing past.

"Jolly touchy, ain't you?" said Pratt.

"Rats!"

Fatty Wynn opened the door of Figgins's study and entered. His two chums were seated at the table, having tea. There were only a few sardines, and half a stale cake, but Figgins and Kerr were making the best of it.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Fatty Wynn cheerfully.

"Oh, you're back, then!" exclaimed Figgins, looking at his chum curiously.

"Yes, and I've brought some grub with me," said Wynn.

"If you chaps haven't finished your tea, you'd better wait a minute, and help me to get through this lot!"

"Is that parcel all grub?" asked Figgins, with open eyes.

"Yes, and all the best!" replied the Falstaff of the New House. "I've just come from Mr. Bunn's, and I've brought meat-pies, doughnuts, cream-puffs, cakes, and—everything that's good."

Figgins and Kerr rose to their feet. "Fatty," said Figgins warmly, "you're just the chap we wanted to see!"

"The very fellow!" agreed Kerr. "Half a minute, I'll give you a hand with your coat. Take that parcel, Figgy, and unpack it."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"There are some sosses, too," said Fatty Wynn. "We'll have them fried."

"My hat, rather!"

In five minutes Figgins's study presented a busy appearance. Fatty Wynn was standing over the fire, turning sausages over in the frying-pan. Figgins and Kerr were laying the table, and spreading it with plate after plate of choicest pastry. There hadn't been a feast of such magnificence in the study for weeks.

Fatty Wynn was feeling contented. His peace-offering had had the desired effect. Both his chums happened to be "on the rocks," and the arrival of such a gorgeous tea had made them forget their differences with Fatty Wynn. As Figgins whispered to Kerr, if Fatty could bring home such

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"It's Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins, excitedly. "Fatty Wynn playing goal for a professional team! But, my hat, I can forgive the fat bonnder anything when I see him playing a game like this!" (See Chapter 18.)

a ripping feed for them, he couldn't be far wrong, whatever was his secret.

Soon Figgins & Co. were sitting down to a royal spread, and on this occasion Figgins and Kerr made every effort to rival Fatty Wynn. They were hungry, and the good things disappeared rapidly. At last even Fatty Wynn had finished.

"Well, it was a jolly good tea, you chaps!" he said.

"Ripping!" agreed Figgins. "And there's still plenty left for another time."

"I—I say!" asked Wynn carelessly. "How did the match go this afternoon?"

"Rotten!" said Kerr.

"Rotten?" repeated Fatty Wynn. "Did the Grammar School win?"

"Of course I should say rotten if we'd won, shouldn't

I?" said Kerr sarcastically. "No, you ass, it was a draw—two goals each."

"Well, that's not so bad," said Fatty.

"It's not so good, either," replied Figgins. "But if we'd had you, Fatty, to keep goal for us, they wouldn't have got the ball past you at all. I suppose it's no good asking where you've been this afternoon?"

"Not a bit."

"You won't tell us?"

"Well, you see," said Fatty Wynn. "I'd rather not. I don't want you chaps to think that I'm keeping a secret from you—"

"Oh, we sha'n't think that!" said Kerr. "Not a bit of it! It's not keeping a secret from us to go out on your own,

time after time, and come back and refuse to say where you've been. Whatever made you think that was a secret?"

Fatty Wynn turned red.
"You ass!" he said. "Are you trying to get at me? Look here, we're chums again now, so the best thing you can do is to ask me no questions—then I sha'n't tell you any whoppers."

"You're a mystery, Fatty!" said Figgins seriously. "A bag of giddy mystery!"

"Like those sossingers we've just eaten," grinned Kerr. "You chump!"

"There's another thing," went on Figgins. "Where did you get the tin from to buy all this grub? We know you haven't had a remittance—"

"Well, I didn't pinch it!" said Fatty Wynn.
"I don't say you did, but— Oh, rats! I shall give up asking you questions!" growled Figgins. "I've never known you like this before, Fatty. You were always a bit of an ass—"

"What?"
"But you never used to be secretive," said Figgins, unperturbed. "Kerr and I have decided to let you go your own giddy way for a bit. But if you don't let us into the wheeze before long, we'll skin you alive, and boil you in oil!"

"Is that all?" inquired Fatty Wynn. "You might end up by shoving me through a mincing machine."

"Well, you jolly well deserve it," growled Kerr. "But I've got an idea why you have been going out so much lately. I noticed that you were extra smart this morning, for one thing."

Fatty Wynn looked up quickly.
"What are you driving at?" he demanded.
"Is she nice?" asked Kerr.

"Eh?"
"What's her name?" proceeded Kerr.
"Her name?" repeated Fatty, in a puzzled tone. "Whose name?"

"Oh yes, you can do the acting bizney as much as you like!" said Kerr. "It doesn't deceive me. Where does she live?"

Fatty Wynn rose to his feet wrathfully.
"You silly cuckoo," he exclaimed. "you're off your rocker! Who the dickens are you talking about?"

"Why, your girl, of course!"
"My—my what?" gasped Fatty Wynn.
"Your young lady," said Kerr calmly. "That's why you've been going out so much lately, isn't it? Anyhow, I believe I've hit on the truth. You can deny it if you like, but I jolly well know the signs. You're in love, my son."

Fatty Wynn turned a beautiful red.
"You ass!" he roared. "You burbling duffer! You frabjous jabberwock!"

"Are you repeating some of the sweet names you call her?" inquired Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Kerr.
"You're a couple of dotty lunatics!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "If you think I've got a girl you're jolly well mistaken. Why—why, do you think I'd miss a footer match for the sake of a girl?"

"There's no telling what a chap in love will do," said Figgins sagely. "He'll even keep the news of it from his own chums. I suppose you're not engaged?"

Fatty Wynn glared speechlessly.
"Because if you are," went on Figgins, "it would be rather awkward. You couldn't possibly get married while you were in the Fourth, and it wouldn't be the thing to ask the girl to wait until—"

"You blithering idiot!" roared Fatty Wynn indignantly. And he went out of the room and slammed the door after him. And as he walked down the passage, a roar of laughter floated out to him from behind the closed door.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.

Arthur Augustus on the "Twack."

FIGGINS and Kerr looked at one another, with grinning faces, as soon as their laugh had spent itself.

"Well, we've made the boulder wild," chuckled Figgins. "I must say, though, that he's done the right thing in standing us this ripping feed! I wonder if that idea of yours is right?"

"Well, it looks a bit queer," said Kerr thoughtfully. "Fatty Wynn flew into a rage quick enough, and he'd naturally got wild over our tumbling to his secret."

"If it was Gussy now, I could understand it," said Figgins. "Gussy's rather prone to falling in love. But Fatty! I didn't think he was a silly ass, like that!"

"Well, I'm glad he hasn't kept up that row we had yesterday," said Kerr. "I vote we let him go his own way during

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next week. If he's the same as usual, we'll let matters remain as they are. Perhaps, after a bit, he'll tell us what he's up to."

"Well, I know what I'm going to do," said Figgins. "I'm going to touch him for something. If he's got tin enough to buy all this grub, he'll have enough to lend me half-a-crown. I'm stony, and there's no chance of a remittance turning up till Monday, anyhow."

And Figgins and Kerr continued their discussion. Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn, indignant at his chums' insinuations, had strolled out into the quad. He had no idea of the storm of comment which was going on in the School House. Blakk & Co., in Study No. 6, had been informed of Fatty Wynn's return by Lumley-Lumley, and after tea they fell to discussing the matter.

Blake was indignant, for he was quite sure that if Fatty Wynn had only stayed at home the match with the Grammar School would have gone very differently.

"It's perfectly rotten of him!" declared Jack Blake. "What does the silly ass mean by going off and deserting his own school? He knows jolly well that he's the best goalie in the Fourth—though he is a New House waster—and it's simply the act of a traitor for him to leave us in the lurch."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his famous monocle into his eye. "I weitewate your wemarks, Blake."

"You do which to 'em?" said Blake.

"You uttah ass! I say I weitewate them!"

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" said Digby. "Bai Jove, Digby, I am surprised at your ignorance!"

exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stiffly. "When I say I weitewate Blake's wemarks, I mean to say that I wepeat them, deah boy. I heartily agree with them."

"Oh! You should speak plainer, then!" growled Digby. "I wegard Fattay Wynn as a wraithah! If he had the honah of the school at heart, he would not wun off when there was such an important footah match on."

"Of course not!"

"That's where the funny part of it comes in," said Herries. "Fatty's always been such an enthusiastic chap about footer. It must be something jolly important to make him miss the match with the Grammar School."

"Yaas, wathah! I am of the opinion that someone ought to fewwet out the twuth," said Arthur Augustus. "As Wynn will not tell us himself, I think it is up to us to find out his giddy secvot."

"But it couldn't be done," said Blake doubtfully.

"Of course it could, Blake, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, I think I will wun acwoss to the New House myself, and force Wynn to weveal the twuth to me!"

"Yes, I can see him doing the revealing act," grinned Blake.

"I see uttably no weason why he shouldn't!" said D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, Figgay and Kerr are wathah inclined to be too blunt. In a mattah of this description, it wequahs a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Then what's the good of you going?" asked Blake blandly.

"Bai Jove, you wottah, do you mean to insinuate that— But it's uttably no use talkin' to you!" said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "I was goin' to ask you to come along to back me up, but I shall now go by myself."

"Poor old Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, what do you mean?"

"You ass!" said Blake. "They'll skin you alive!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be skinned alive!" said D'Arcy.

"Then they'll kill you first," said Digby. "Pway don't wot, Digby!" said D'Arcy severely. "I shall go acwoss to the New House, and I shall go stwaight to Figgay's studay, and wequest Wynn to come out into the quad, with me. Then I shall give him a good talkin' to, and make him tell me the twuth."

"Perhaps you'd like Towser?" suggested Herries. "He's jolly good at tracking people, you know. If Wynn didn't happen to be in his study, you might be able to run him to earth, with my bulldog's assistance."

Arthur Augustus looked at Herries wrathfully.

"You know vewy well, Hewrvies, that I dislike Towshah exceedingly," he said. "Towshah has no wespsect watevah for a fellow's twousahs. Besides, in a mattah of this sort, Towshah would be uttably useless."

D'Arcy walked across to the door.

"You're not going, Gussy?" said Blake.

"Bai Jove, I am!" declared the swell of the School House. "I wegard it as my dutay, deah boy. Wynn must cease this wicidulous goin' out on his own."

"But, my dear kid, you'll get bumped fearfully!"

"Nothin' of the sort, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"I should uttably wefuse to allow myself to be bumped. Nevah feah, I will be back pwesently; and when I return I shall——"

"Come in pieces," grinned Blake.

"You fwabjous duffah!"

And D'Arcy opened the door, and passed out into the passage.

"I say," exclaimed Herries, "shall we let the fathead go? He'll only get ragged by those New House bounders."

"Well, he knows that, doesn't he?" said Blake. "If he's ass enough to go, let him! He'll be more careful next time, if he gets into trouble now."

So Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was allowed to carry out his project unchecked. In the hall he met the Terrible Three. D'Arcy wore his top hat, and as he made for the entrance-hall Tom Merry called after him.

"I say, Gussy, where away?"

"Were you talkin' to me, Tom Mewwy?" said Arthur Augustus, turning round.

"Yes, my son. Where away?"

"Pway don't use such an absurd expression, Tom Mewwy! I am goin' across to the New House to find Wynn, and make him tell me why he didn't play in the match this aftahnoon!"

"You're going across to the New House—alone?" inquired Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll come across in about ten minutes," said Monty Lowther.

"You'll come across?" repeated D'Arcy. "There is uttably no reason for you to come across, Lowthah. I am quite pwepared to deal with the mattah myself. What will you want to come across for?"

"Why, to sweep up the pieces, of course!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"The pieces, Lowthah! Pieces of what?"

"Pieces of you, Gussy," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, I wegard you as a wank fathead!" said Arthur Augustus. "I shall go across to the New House in a peaceful spiwit——"

"And leave it with a whine!" grinned Monty Lowther, unable to resist the chance of a pun, however indifferent.

"Weally, Lowthah, your wotten puns are altogether too dweadful to listen to!" said D'Arcy. "Pway do not detain me furthah!"

And D'Arcy walked out into the quad, with his head erect. He was set upon his object, and he marched into the New House with every intention of carrying out his plan. Fortunately, he met nobody in the passages, and walked straight to Figgins's study. He tapped on the door.

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "What are you doing here, Gussy?"

"I've come to speak to Wynn," replied Arthur Augustus, looking round. "The boundah is not heah!"

"What marvellous eyesight you've got, Gussy!" said Kerr. "But now you're here you may as well stop a few minutes. We should like to have a talk to you."

And Kerr slipped behind D'Arcy, and, closing the door, stood with his back up against it.

"Weally, Kerr, I see no reason why I should wemain," said D'Arcy. "I wish to speak to Wynn, and as he is not heah I will go out and find him."

"Oh, no, Gussy—not just yet!"

"Yaas, deah boys, I weally cannot stop!"

"You weally can, Gussy!" said Figgins, with a twinkle in his eye. "And you're weally going to! What do you mean by walking into the New House as if it belonged to you?"

"I did nothin' of the sort, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Besides, you surely don't imagine that I should weally own a wotten house like this?"

"You cheeky tailor's dummy!" said Figgins indignantly.

"That's settled it! As you came over here peaceably, Gussy, I wasn't sure about ragging you, but as you've chosen to say that the New House isn't worth owning—well, I think we're entitled to teach you a giddy lesson!"

Arthur Augustus looked round in alarm.

"Bai Jove! What do you mean, you wottah!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that you are goin' to wag me?"

"We shall do more than wag you, Gussy!" grinned Kerr. "We shall turn you upside down, smother you with dust, empty the inkpot over your face, and pour jam over those beautiful trousers of yours! At least, we shall do some of 'em!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at Kerr in horror.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "You're not goin' to be such wotten boundahs? I came heah to talk to Wynn——"

"And you promptly run down the New House!" said Figgins. "Well, my dear chap, we're going to prove to you that the New House is the cock-house of St. Jim's—as it always has been, and always will be!"

"Wats!"

"You can say rats all you like," said Figgins. "It won't—— Come in!"

The door opened, and Redfern & Co. looked in.

"Hallo!" grinned Redfern. "What's Gussy doing here?"

"Oh, he's come to get himself into trouble, as usual!" said Figgins. "You're just the chaps we want. Come in and help us to hold the boulder!"

"With pleasure!" said Redfern.

"Nothing we should like better!" grinned Lawrence.

"Always ready to oblige!" said Owen.

The rival "Co." of the New House entered the study, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round in real alarm.

"Bai Jove, don't you lay your beastly hands on me!" he exclaimed. "I came ovah heah in a peaceful spiwit, and it's wotten of you to act in this mannah!"

"Peaceful spirit be blowed, Gussy!" said Redfern. "You know jolly well what would happen to me if I strolled into the School House on my own! Well, we're going to do to you what the School House rotters would do to me!"

"You can't grumble at that, can you?" said Kerr.

"Gwumble at it!" yelled D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, if you do not immediately open that door, I shall wemove my coat and give you all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Administer the fearful thrashing!"

"I certainly shall do so, you wuff boundahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly.

"Collar him!" grinned Figgins. "The silly dummy needs a lesson!"

"If you lay your fingahs on me——"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's protests were useless. In less than a minute he lay outstretched on the floor, with three or four juniors on top of him. Then, in spite of his struggles, his elegant coat and waistcoat were removed.

"What are you goin' to do, you wottahs?" he gasped.

"You'll see, Gussy!" grinned Figgins.

"Bai Jove, my tickah is in that pocket, deah boys—I mean you boundahs!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Pway be vewy careful with it!"

"We sha'n't hurt your giddy ticker, Gussy," said Lawrence.

The coat and waistcoat were quickly turned inside-out, and then D'Arcy was forced into them. He certainly looked very strange with his smart fancy waistcoat and well-cut Eton jacket with the linings outwards.

"Weally, this is perfectly wotten of you!" he protested.

"You are not going to leave me in this feahful state? I came ovah heah on a peaceful mission——"

"And immediately commenced running the New House down!" said Figgins. "It won't do, you know, Gussy, so we're just going to teach you a little lesson. It'll do you all the good in the world. Hand over the string, Kerr."

Some thick string was produced, and very soon D'Arcy's hands were tied behind his back. Then his ankles were bound to one another, with just sufficient space left for him to walk along.

"You'll fancy you're in a hobble-skirt, Gussy!" grinned Owen.

"Bai Jove, you're not goin' to make me go across the quad, like this?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in horror.

"All the fellows will simply shwiek at me!"

"Quite right," said Figgins. "We want you to be shrook at—I mean shrieked at! Come on, chaps! We'll help 'im down the stairs, and launch him from the steps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't we going to smother his face with soot?" inquired Redfern.

"Gweat Scott! I——"

"All right, Gussy, don't worry!" grinned Figgins. "We're not going to do any more to you."

And D'Arcy was firmly grasped and helped out into the passage. Then the chuckling New House juniors assisted him down the stairs and stood him just outside the New House.

"Now then!" grinned Figgins. "You can buzz off, Gussy! Bet you won't get over to the School House in fifteen seconds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, this is feahful!" groaned D'Arcy. "I weally think, Figgay, that you might have the decency to welease me!"

"What, after all the trouble we've had to tie you up? No fear!"

So D'Arcy was compelled to hobble his way across the quad, unaided. He made a very ludicrous spectacle, with his coat and vest turned inside-out, and proceeding along at a very slow and jerky hobble.

"My hat, there's Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake, suddenly appearing on the School House steps. "Why, what the dickens—— Oh, my only Aunt Matilda!"

Blake stared at D'Arcy with a grin of amusement.

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"Bai Jove, Blake, pway welease me, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Wait a tick, Gussy!" chuckled Blake. "I say, chaps, come and cast your optics on the original one and only!"

A crowd of School House juniors crowded on to the steps.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "How do you like the hobble, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wotten wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Come and welease me!"

But Blake and his chums only stood and roared. They had expected that D'Arcy would get ragged, but the method of ragging struck them as very funny. Arthur Augustus cut a very ludicrous spectacle as he hobbled across the quad.

"Better go and cut him free!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

Several juniors ran across to the indignant swell of the School House, and two minutes later he was set free. He straightened himself up and glared round frigidly.

"I weguard you as a set of cacklin' duffahs!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove, this is the last time I shall evah go ovah to the New House on a peaceful and vevy necessawy mission! Fatty Wynn is a young boundah, and I shall make no furthah attempt to discovah his secwet!"

"I shouldn't, Gussy!" grinned Blake. "Life's too short!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round freezingly, then marched into the School House with his aristocratic nose very high in the air.

CHAPTER 12.

The Jape which Didn't Come Off!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY made no further attempts to find out Fatty Wynn's secret, and as the other juniors found it useless questioning the plump New House junior, they finally gave it up as a bad job.

Nobody really suspected that there was anything serious at the bottom of Wynn's strange absence on half-holidays, and the rumour got about that he was in love. Fatty Wynn,

although the situation was somewhat embarrassing, was rather relieved.

After two or three days matters began to run along in their usual groove. By Tuesday Fatty Wynn was on good terms with everybody, and the juniors had almost forgotten the little mystery connected with him.

But Wynn himself had not forgotten that he was a professional goalkeeper, and he kept himself fit and in splendid form. He practised constantly, spending almost all his spare time in the playing-fields. He was eagerly and impatiently awaiting the coming of Saturday, for he longed to be between the posts again, defending the Bramcourt Rovers' citadel.

Figgins and Kerr and the other juniors were rather puzzled at Fatty Wynn's excess of zeal. He had always been keen on football practice, but never before had he displayed such a pronounced desire to be on the footer-field.

As the days passed, Kerr, the keen Scots junior, although he said nothing to Figgins, began to realise that there must be some reason for Fatty Wynn's unusual desire for practice. On several occasions Fatty Wynn refused to go down to the village tuck-shop because he had to practise, and such a state of things was totally opposed to Fatty Wynn's nature. Therefore, Kerr came to the conclusion that there was something behind it all.

What that something was, Kerr decided to find out, although he was not exactly sure how he could set to work.

On the Friday evening Wynn seemed unusually thoughtful. As a matter of fact, he was thinking about the match which was to take place on the following day between Bramcourt Rovers and Lyndon Town.

"Look here!" said Figgins, as the three chums sat in their study having tea. "What do you chaps say to a jape on those School House bounders?"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Kerr.

"I'm on!" said Fatty Wynn readily.

"Good! Those School House fatheads have been crowing a bit too much lately," said Figgins, "and it's time they were taken down a peg or two. An idea struck me this afternoon—"

"Whereabouts?" asked Kerr.

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"Oh, don't rot!" said Figgins. "That's stale now, Kerr, old man!"

"I hope your idea isn't," grinned Kerr.

"It's a jolly good wheeze!" said Figgins. "And if you'll listen without making fatheaded interruptions, I'll tell you what I've got in my napper."

"I can tell you that straight away!" said Fatty Wynn.

"What is it, then?" said Figgins disbelievingly.

"Water!" grinned Fatty Wynn, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins turned red.

"I suppose you think that's funny?" he said sarcastically, glaring at Fatty Wynn.

"Well, just a bit," said Wynn.

"I think it's fatheaded!" said Figgins. "And we're losing time. The idea of mine is up against Tom Merry; but Tom Merry's the chief of the School House bounders, so we shall be striking at the School House generally."

"Quite so!" said Kerr. "But get on with the washing!"

"Well, about ten minutes ago I saw Tom Merry go out of the gates," said Figgins. "He's gone to Rylcombe. I know that because I heard Manners telling him to bring some giddy films for the camera."

"Well?" said Kerr.

"Tom Merry will be back in about a quarter of an hour," went on Figgins. "My wheeze is to jape the bounder as he comes in at the gate. I suppose you've both seen that patent tank arrangement in the quad, which Taggy has been using to disinfect the drains?"

"That hose-pipe affair?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes," replied the long-limbed junior. "The giddy thing's half-full of disinfectant, and the hose is all ready fixed to it. You've only got to work the handle up and down to squirt the blessed stuff out!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Kerr. "You—you mean— Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins grinned.

"That's it!" he said. "Swamp the bounder with disinfectant! I don't suppose it's got a very pleasant taste, but it can't possibly do him any harm. And on a cold night like this it'll be beautiful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on," said Fatty Wynn eagerly, "we'll go and fix the thing up!"

"Right-ho!"

And Figgins & Co. left their study and emerged into the dusky quad. It was very dark in the vicinity of the gate, but they could just see that one gate stood open. Close by the wall of the gymnasium stood a portable tank—one which was mounted on an iron framework with wheels. It was a patent contrivance, and upon working the handle up and down, the fluid within the tank was pumped up and ejected from the nozzle of the hose. At present the tank was partially filled with a mild disinfectant, and the hose was coiled up on the top.

"Jolly funny thing old Taggy didn't shove this thing out of the way!" chuckled Figgins. "Not that he'd have any reason to suspect such well-behaved young gentlemen as us to interfere with it."

As a matter of fact, Taggles, the school porter, had overlooked the matter. He had been called away whilst wheeling the machine round to the back premises, and had forgotten all about it.

In two minutes the hose was uncoiled, and the nozzle end was carried along to the gateway, and firmly jammed in between the bars of the gate which was closed. In the gloom it was practically impossible to see it, and it was pointing directly at the spot where Tom Merry would have to pass.

"My only summer hat," chuckled Fatty Wynn, "Tom Merry'll get it in the neck with a vengeance!"

"Ratier!"

The juniors tested the machine before finally settling down to wait. Figgins worked the handle briskly for a few seconds, and almost immediately a stream of liquid hissed out of the nozzle, and splashed all over the gatepost.

"Good!" murmured Figgins. "It'll be all serene!"

Then the plotters settled down to wait. The quad was deserted, for it was a cold and cheerless night, and the boys were all at tea. Figgins & Co. had left their tea for the especial purpose of perpetrating the jape.

While Fatty Wynn and Figgins remained at the machine, Kerr hovered about the gateway, waiting for Tom Merry to appear. After five minutes standing about in the cold, Kerr suddenly became on the alert.

A dim form could be seen coming up the road from Rylcombe, and Kerr peered forward quickly. In the comparative darkness he could only see an outline, and he did not doubt for a moment that the form was Tom Merry's. It was just about the time he would be expected back, and his footsteps were brisk and loud.

Kerr hurried across to his chums.

"He's coming!" he exclaimed quickly. "Get ready!"

"Right!" said Figgins.

They glued their eyes to the gateway, and the form approached.

"Now!" ejaculated Kerr.

Figgins jerked the handle up and down, and a stream of fluid hissed out of the nozzle. The time had been judged accurately, and the stuff caught the figure exactly under his chin. He staggered back with a fiendish yell, and sat down in the mud.

"Got him!" chuckled Figgins. "Oh, my hat, this is gorgeous!"

Figgins & Co. left the machine and rushed towards the gateway. The figure was just sitting up and spluttering with wrath and dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "How do you like that, you bounder?"

"Just what you wanted!" said Kerr.

"What's the flavour like?" asked Fatty Wynn, with a chuckle.

The figure staggered to its feet.

"You—you— Good gracious, I've never been so grossly treated in all my life!" gasped a well-known voice, now almost incoherent with fury. "How dare you? How dare you behave in this—this outrageous manner?"

Figgins & Co. started back with a gasp of dismay.

"Ratty!" panted Figgins faintly.

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, my only tile!" ejaculated Kerr.

The figure was that of Mr. Ratcliff! In the gloom Kerr had not noticed the difference, mainly because Mr. Ratcliff was wearing, for a change, a cap instead of a hat. The new Housemaster was smothered with the disinfectant and mud, and he was simply raving with fury. He glared at the three dismayed juniors with malicious eyes.

"Please, sir," gasped Figgins, finding his voice, "we—we d—d—didn't know it was y—you, sir! We thought it was a School House c—chap!"

Mr. Ratcliff snarled.

"You young scoundrel!" he roared. "Do not tell lies to me! You deliberately played this joke upon me in the hope that I should not find you out!"

"We're fearfully sorry, sir!" said Kerr quickly. "You must know that we didn't do it deliberately. Why, if we'd thought it was you we shouldn't have rushed towards you—"

"Silence, Kerr!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff furiously. "You three boys have played an unwarrantable trick upon me, and you will all be detained to-morrow afternoon! I will speak to Mr. Lathom, and request him to give you lines to occupy your time!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "You ought to be thankful that I have not gone to Dr. Holmes—"

Fatty Wynn uttered a gasp. Detained all Saturday afternoon. And he was booked to play football at Bramcourt. He simply couldn't possibly back out of it.

"Please, sir," he panted, "I—I can't stay in to-morrow afternoon!"

Mr. Ratcliff glared at Fatty Wynn.

"What did you say, Wynn?" he demanded ominously.

"I s—said I can't possibly stay in!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Indeed, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff harshly, "I am sorry that you cannot see your way to do as I order. Come to my room in half an hour, and then, perhaps, I shall succeed in making you realise that you can, after all, condescend to obey me."

And Mr. Ratcliff strode off towards the New House, fuming with anger. Figgins & Co. gazed at one another with dismayed faces. The glorious jape, which they had prepared so elaborately for Tom Merry, had ended in a ghastly frost.

CHAPTER 13.

Mr. Ratcliff is Defied!

"WELL," said Figgins, "how many did you get?"

Fatty Wynn entered the study, pressing his hands to his sides. Half an hour had elapsed, and Fatty Wynn had just returned from his interview with Mr. Ratcliff.

"Four," he replied—"four terrific ones, the brute!"

"Well, it was your own fault, you dummy!" said Kerr. "What on earth did you want to tell him you couldn't stay in for? It's rotten enough, in all conscience, without having a whacking as well!"

Fatty Wynn looked defiant.

"I sha'n't stay in!" he declared firmly. "I'm going out to-morrow afternoon, chaps. And I'm blest if I'm going to put up with that rotten tyrant's rotten tyranny!"

"What!" exclaimed Figgins, in alarm. "You don't mean to say you're going to defy him?"

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"I am!" declared Fatty Wynn.

"You can't—you simply can't!" exclaimed Figgins. "Why, you'll get birched when you come back! You know what a bouncer Ratty is, and if you openly defy him like that, he'll simply murder you!"

"I'll risk that," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins and Kerr stared at their chum in amazement.

"We jolly well sha'n't let you go!" said Kerr determinedly.

"You jolly well will!" said Wynn, with warmth. "I suppose I can do as I like? I tell you I'm going out to-morrow afternoon, and I'll take the consequences! You two chaps don't seem to have the pluck of a giddy mouse!"

Figgins snorted.

"It's not a question of pluck, you frabjous chump!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Don't you see that if we did a thing like that we should have to pay for it ten times over afterwards? Why, in all probability, he'd gate us for a week, and give us about five thousand limes to do!"

"Rot!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Do you think I'm going to stay in for nothing? The beastly old tyrant knows all the time that we weren't japing him!"

"Of course he does!" said Figgins. "But we can't go to him and say he's telling fibs. That's the rotten part of it! He's got the drop on us!"

"And we've got to submit," added Kerr.

"Well, if you're going to submit, I'm not!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Then you're a babbling lunatic!" said Figgins hotly.

"I've simply got to go out to-morrow afternoon," went on Wynn. "I know it'll mean a fearful row when I come back, but I shall chance that."

Kerr shook his head sadly.

"There's no telling what a chap will do when he's in love," he said.

"Eh?"

"You're potty, Fatty, that's what's the matter with you!" said Kerr. "Who's the giddy maiden? Does she live in Rylcombe, or do you go to Wayland, and take her to the pictures? That would account for your being away on Saturday afternoons, because they have matinees."

Fatty Wynn turned red.

"You silly cuckoo!" he ejaculated. "What are you talking about?"

"Why, your intended!" grinned Kerr.

"If you're going to start that gag again, I'm going," said Fatty Wynn. "Do you think I'd risk being gated for the sake of a girl?"

"My hat, you're not very respectful to her!" chuckled Figgins.

"Oh, rats!" growled Fatty Wynn sullenly.

And he refused to say another word on the matter, although his chums chipped him unmercifully. Figgins and Kerr were looking very glum, for to have their half-holiday taken away was no joke.

Fortunately, there was no match on, so matters were not quite so bad as they might have been.

The following morning Mr. Ratcliff went over to the School House and interviewed little Mr. Lathom. The result was that Figgins & Co. were given Latin translation to do, and the task was not at all likely to enliven their afternoon. To be simply detained was bad enough, but to be forced to write out Latin was sheer torture. Their feelings against Mr. Ratcliff were far from affectionate.

"You're not going to act the giddy ox, are you, Fatty?" asked Figgins gloomily, after dinner.

"No," said Fatty Wynn; "but I'm not going to stay in."

And Fatty Wynn was true to his word. He slipped off within the next quarter of an hour. And when Mr. Ratcliff entered the Fourth Form class-room, he found that only two of his victims were there. He looked round in surprise, a dark frown gathering on his brow.

"Where is Wynn?" he asked harshly.

"I don't know, sir," replied Figgins truthfully.

"Has he not been here?"

"No, sir."

"Indeed!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "This is past all endurance! When a boy defies his Housemaster so flagrantly, it is time to— But when Wynn comes in I will speak to him. Apparently Wynn is becoming one of the worst characters in the school!"

And Mr. Ratcliff fumed out of the room.

Meanwhile Fatty Wynn, his troubles forgotten, was being whirled towards Bramcourt. He arrived in good time for the match, and was every bit as eager, and just as confident as he had been the previous week.

Lyndon Town turned out to be an exceedingly smart team, and although Fatty Wynn played magnificently the game ended in a draw—one-one. But Mr. Cobb was intensely pleased. He and the other directors had fully expected that

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Bramcourt Rovers would badly lose. But, owing to Fatty Wynn's wonderful goalkeeping, he had managed to defend the home goal so well that only once had the ball got through.

Owing to one of the players being slightly injured, the game was delayed somewhat, and it did not end until fifteen minutes past the accustomed time.

Therefore, by the time Fatty Wynn arrived at the station, with his wages jingling in his pocket, he found that his train had gone, and that he could not arrive at St. Jim's until past locking-up—indeed, not until supper was nearly over!

But there was no help for it. He could not possibly walk the distance in less time. So he was forced to walk about Bramcourt—and, incidentally, have a gorgeous feed—until the last train left. Then he boarded it, and soon arrived at Rylcombe. As he walked up to the School he could hardly help feeling certain tremors. On the first occasion he had merely missed lessons, but this was different. He had deliberately defied Mr. Ratcliff.

But Fatty Wynn was not a boy to brood, and he resigned himself to the inevitable.

"After all," he murmured, "the old bouncer can't kill me. I've had a jolly good game at Bramcourt, and a jolly good feed—and now I mustn't grumble if I've got to take a jolly good hiding."

Which was certainly the best way of looking at it.

CHAPTER 14.

Fatty Wynn Catches It.

THERE he is, the ass!" Fatty Wynn had just entered the gates, and Taggles was now locking them up. As the returning junior crossed the quad, two forms had appeared at the door of the New House, and Kerr suddenly started forward, with the exclamation.

"My hat," said Figgins, "so he is!"

They rushed across to Fatty Wynn and grasped him firmly.

"You silly chump!" said Figgins breathlessly. "What the dickens is up, Fatty? We thought you'd got lost."

"Well, I haven't, have I?" said Fatty Wynn cheerfully. "I'm here right enough, my sons, although I'm a bit late."

"A bit late!" repeated Kerr. "Why, it's nearly bedtime! Where the dickens have you been?"

"The same place as I went to before," said Fatty Wynn.

"You ass! Where's that?"

"Ah!"

Figgins and Kerr snorted.

"Look here, Wynn, you're in for a frightful dusting!" said Figgins seriously. "Old Ratty's simply been tearing his hair all this evening. And he's been inquiring about you everywhere. My hat, I shouldn't like to be in your shoes!"

"That's right," said Fatty Wynn, "cheer me up all you can! The news you've just told me is very pleasant, I must say! Why don't you wish me a joyous time?"

"Well, I was only preparing you," said Figgins.

"I've prepared myself, thanks," said Fatty Wynn. "I know jolly well that Ratty will go for me, but I'm not afraid of him. If he gives me a jolly good whacking, I sha'n't worry. He can't kill me, anyhow."

"No," said Kerr; "but he can jolly well make you sore. If I were you, I'd go to his study straight away."

"I'm going to," replied Fatty Wynn. "Perhaps you chaps had better be hanging about outside, so that when I come out you'll be able to lend me a hand. I expect I shall be in a fainting condition."

And with that cheerful remark Fatty Wynn turned and entered the New House. He made his way straight to the study, and removed his coat and cap. Then, preparing himself for the ordeal, he walked to Mr. Ratcliff's study.

In response to his tap Mr. Ratcliff bade him enter. Fatty Wynn did so, and a frown crossed Mr. Ratcliff's face as he saw who his visitor was.

"Ah, Wynn," he said, ominous calm, "so you have returned?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff rose from his desk and faced his visitor.

"You deliberately left the school when I had ordered you to remain in the class-room and translate Latin," he said quietly.

"Yes, sir," said Fatty Wynn meekly.

"Where have you been Wynn—and why have you come home at such an outrageous hour?"

"I—I lost my train, sir!" replied Fatty Wynn desperately. "You see, sir, I meant to be home just after tea, but I lost the train, and there wasn't another one for two hours."

"That is not an answer to my question, Wynn!" said Mr. Ratcliff, in a harsh tone. "Where have you been?"

"I—I went to Bramcourt, sir."

"And why did you go to Bramcourt, Wynn?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.

Fatty Wynn looked round despairingly. Above all things he was truthful, and as Mr. Ratcliff had asked him outright, he could do nothing but tell the truth. But there was no necessity to go into details.

"I—I went to a football match, sir!" he answered, with perfect truth.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned. He naturally thought that Wynn meant that he had gone to witness a match.

"And so you openly defied my orders so that you could witness a low-class professional football match?" he queried. "I am amazed that you should have had the effrontery to come to me and admit it! I am going to thrash you severely, Wynn, and you are extremely lucky, for I have thought better of my former decision to take you before the headmaster and have you flogged."

"Flogged, sir!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn indignantly. "After all, I'm only a bit late for call-over!"

Mr. Ratcliff looked up quickly.

"And one of the prefects always gives us lines for being late," went on Fatty Wynn quickly.

"But you were detained all the afternoon!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh, I didn't think that was fair, sir!" said Fatty Wynn defiantly. "The whole thing was an accident last night, and we shouldn't have dreamed of japing you."

"Silence, boy!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I am of the opinion that you deliberately played the practical joke upon me, and I punished you accordingly. Now, as you have chosen to ignore that punishment, I shall give you a severe caning. And, in addition, you will have to write me out five hundred lines of Latin translation."

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"I—I say, sir!" he said quickly. "I'd rather go before the Head, sir!"

"You impertinent rascal!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "Come over here, and hold out your hand!"

Mr. Ratcliff had no intention of taking the matter before Dr. Holmes. He had been thinking, and he realised that if the Head heard of the matter he would probably agree with Figgins & Co—he would believe their story, that the whole thing had been an accident, and that the afternoon's detention had not been warranted. Therefore, Mr. Ratcliff had decided that he would deal with Fatty Wynn personally.

Without further ado, the Housemaster administered the caning, but he did not lay on the strokes quite so heavily as usual. Mr. Ratcliff did not wish Fatty Wynn to discuss the thrashing much, for if the news of it reached Dr. Holmes's ears, he would probably inquire into the whole matter.

Mr. Ratcliff laid down his cane.

"On second thoughts, Wynn," he said, "as you have owned up readily to your fault, I will reduce the rest of your punishment to two hundred lines. Now go, and be very careful not to defy me again!"

"Th—thank you, sir!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

He left the room, with blank amazement on his face. It was the first time within history that Mr. Ratcliff had reduced a sentence.

"I can't make it out!" murmured Fatty Wynn to himself. "My hat, what's he done it for? I'd expected to get gated for a fortnight."

Figgins and Kerr hurried along the passage.

"Hallo," said Figgins, "you're looking jolly cheerful! Hasn't he half killed you?"

Fatty Wynn told his chums what had happened.

"The artful old boonder!" exclaimed Kerr shrewdly. "He knows it was rottenly unjust to detain us, and he doesn't want the news to get to the Head. He's let you off fairly lightly, so that you won't jaw about it."

They grasped Fatty Wynn and took him along to their study.

"Blow old Ratty!" said Figgins, shutting the door. "We want to know why you've come home so jolly late, Fatty. Look here, we're getting jolly anxious about you!"

"Bosh!"

"It's a fact," said Kerr. "We're worried awfully!"

"Well, you needn't be," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm all right—I'm not up to any disgraceful games with bookmakers and gamblers."

"We know that, you chump!" said Figgins. "We know you well enough, I should think, Fatty, to know that you wouldn't get up to those beastly games. But, all the same, we think that, as your chums, you ought to let us into the giddy secret. For the last time, are you going to tell us?"

"No," said Fatty Wynn firmly. "I—I'd rather not, Figgys!"

"Then look out for trouble!" exclaimed Kerr. "We've had enough of it, Fatty! We're going to turn detectives, and ferret out your secret. We've given you a chance to explain, and you've ignored it."

"Therefore we're going to find out for ourselves," said Figgins.

"You're going to spy on me, I suppose?"

Figgins and Kerr flushed.

"No, it's not spying," said the former, "because we're warning you beforehand. We've warned you, and you can take the consequences."

And Figgins and Kerr looked grim. They had been talking over the matter during Fatty Wynn's absence, and had come to the decision that they would give their fat chum due warning, and then find out for themselves what game he was up to.

"All right," said Wynn, "you can do what you jolly well like!"

"We shall, my son."

"I think it's rotten of you."

"You can think what you like," said Figgins determinedly. "Come to that, we think it's rotten of you to keep us in the dark."

"So we're quits!" exclaimed Kerr.

And the matter was dismissed.

CHAPTER 15.

Money in Plenty.

MONDAY morning dawned fine and clear.

Before the breakfast bell sounded dozens of juniors were in the quad., most of them engaged in punting a football about.

Fatty Wynn strolled out of the New House, looking cheerful. He had risen long before the other juniors, and when Figgins and Kerr came down they were surprised to find that Fatty had succeeded in writing nearly three parts of his lines.

So the fat junior was feeling quite cheerful as he strolled into the quad. He had got out of his troubles, and there was nothing more to worry about until the following Saturday, and meanwhile he had gold and silver in his pocket. Wynn chuckled as he thought of the glorious feeds he could stand his chums out of his salary.

"Hallo, Wynn!" exclaimed Pratt, of the New House. "Ain't you going to tell us your giddy secret?"

"Rats!" said Fatty Wynn, frowning.

He walked away. All the previous day—Sunday—the juniors had bothered him with regard to his mysterious absence on the Saturday afternoon and evening. But Fatty had been as good as his word, and not a junior could arrive at the truth.

Percy Mellish and Ernest Levison, of the School House, had, as usual, put forward many disagreeable solutions to the little mystery, but as nobody listened to their inventions it did not matter.

There was no proof of anything dishonourable in Fatty Wynn's peculiar conduct, so the juniors clung to the idea that Kerr had spread—that Fatty was in love. Wynn was indignant at first, but he soon grew accustomed to the chipping, and took it all in good part.

So long as they thought he was in love, he told himself, they wouldn't guess the real truth.

The Terrible Three bore down upon Fatty Wynn.

"Was it a long one?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"And interesting?" asked Tom Merry.

"Scented, of course?" added Manners.

Fatty Wynn stared.

"Are you chaps off your rockers?" he demanded. "If you are, I'll—"

"My dear chap, we're the most serious-minded, sedate,

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and industrious youths at St. Jim's," replied Monty Lowther gravely.

"Describes us to the letter!" grinned Tom Merry.

"But you haven't answered our polite questions," said Manners.

Fatty Wynn gazed at the Terrible Three in surprise.

"What's the giddy game?" he asked. "What do you mean? Was what long and scented?"

"Why, your letter, of course!"

"Letter?" repeated Wynn.

"Didn't you get a letter this morning?" asked Manners.

"No, you silly asses!"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "Our mistake! We thought you'd had a letter this morning from your best girl."

And the Terrible Three walked on, grinning. Fatty Wynn stared after them with a wrathful face.

"The chumps!" he growled.

"I say, Wynn!" exclaimed Clifton Dane, of the Shell, coming up with Glyn and Kangaroo.

"Well?"

"We want you to give us a lesson," said Kangaroo.

"A lesson?" repeated Fatty Wynn suspiciously.

"Exactly!" said the Cornstalk junior.

"We hear you're the most experienced chap at St. Jim's," said Bernard Glyn.

"Experienced in what?" demanded Wynn. "Has everybody gone dotty this morning?"

"Not that I'm aware of," said Clifton Dane. "We only want a lesson."

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"A lesson in what?" he roared.

Kangaroo chuckled.

"Making love, of course," he explained blandly. "You've had a lot of experience, and we thought the knowledge might come in useful. If one of us wants to spoon—"

Fatty Wynn commenced to remove his coat.

"If you chaps are looking for trouble," he yelled, "I'm ready to satisfy you! You fatheaded bounders, I'll—I'll—"

"You'll—you'll what?" asked Glyn.

"I'll—I'll—"

Clang! Clang!

"You'll buzz in to breaker!" grinned Clifton Dane. "Come on, chaps!"

"Funny fatheads!" said Fatty Wynn disdainfully.

The three Shell fellows hurried in to breakfast, and Wynn was not far behind them.

All day long the juniors chipped him concerning his imaginary sweetheart, and at last Fatty Wynn became so accustomed to it, that he merely grinned at the humorous ones. Nevertheless, underlying the fellows' good-natured banter, there was a genuine feeling of curiosity concerning Fatty Wynn.

But by the following morning other important matters had filled the juniors' minds, and they temporarily forgot Fatty Wynn and his secret.

For some reason Figgins was looking rather glum after morning lessons on Tuesday, and his chums could not help noticing it.

"What's the matter, Figgy?" asked Kerr, as they sat in their study.

"Oh, nothing!" said Figgins.

"Rot!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "You look as if you've lost sixpence and found a shilling—I mean—"

"Well, the fact is," said Figgins, "I've just remembered something. It's my uncle's birthday to-morrow—"

"Major Figgins?" asked Kerr.

"No, my other uncle—Mr. Gandish, of Cliff Lodge, near Clovelly," replied Figgins. "You remember, we spent a day or two there in the summer. Well, it's his birthday to-morrow, and I particularly wanted to buy him a decent present. I'd decided what it should be weeks ago, and—"

"And now you haven't got the tin?" asked Kerr sympathetically.

Figgins nodded.

"That's it!" he replied gloomily. "Of course, it's not really urgent, but I wanted to surprise the old boy. Rotten!"

"How much do you want?"

"A lot more than we can rake together," said Figgins.

"I'm the proud possessor of one-and-six, and you've got about three bob, Kerr, old man. I don't know how much Fatty's got, but I want at least sixteen shillings."

"Phew!" said Kerr. "Can't be did!"

Fatty Wynn looked at his chums thoughtfully.

"Can't be did?" he repeated. "Of course it can."

"How?" demanded Kerr.

"Well, I'll lend Figgy a quid, if he likes," said Fatty Wynn readily.

Figgins and Kerr stared.

"Oh, don't rot, Fatty!" said Figgins impatiently. "You

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ain't a giddy millionaire, are you? You were pretty flush last week, but you blued all your tin on grub!"

"Oh, all right, if you don't want it!"

"You touchy ass! You jolly well know I want it!" said Figgins. "If you've really got the tin, and can lend me a quid, I'll love you for the rest of your life!"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"All right," he said. "Here you are, old son!"

And Wynn produced a handful of money. Figgins and Kerr simply stared at it in sheer astonishment. In Fatty's hand there were two sovereigns and several pieces of silver.

He held out one of the sovereigns.

"Y-you're a brick, Fatty!" gasped Figgins.

"That's all right, Figgy," said Wynn. "Pay me back when you like, you know. No hurry."

"B-but where did you get all that wealth?" asked Kerr quickly.

"Well, I didn't bone it!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Who said you did?"

"If you don't ask questions you won't be told any little fairy tales," said Wynn.

And he walked out of the study. As a matter of fact, he realised that he had been a little incautious in displaying all his money. It would have been better to produce the sovereign alone. Fatty Wynn took his departure so that his chums could not ask awkward questions.

Figgins and Kerr looked at one another in silence for a moment.

"Well," said Kerr, "you've got your tin, Figgy?"

"Yes, and it's jolly decent of Fatty to lend it," said Figgins. "But where—where in the name of all that's rummy did he get that heap of filthy lucre?"

"Ask me another."

"He hasn't had any tips from his people?"

"Not a ha'penny."

"And he hasn't pinched it?"

"Of course not."

"Then where did he get it?" said Figgins.

"How the dickens do I know?" exclaimed Kerr. "Look here, Figgy, there's something jolly mysterious about the whole bizney! Of course, it's all rot about Fatty having a sweetheart. He's up to something else—something he's afraid of telling us."

"Afraid?" said Figgins. "Why should he be afraid?"

"Blessed if I know! But it looks suspicious!" said Kerr shrewdly. "How do we know he doesn't go to Wayland, or somewhere, and—"

"And what?"

"That's the giddy question," said Kerr. "We don't know. We're in the dark. And I vote we keep a sharp eye on him in future. We've warned him that we shall, so he can't call it spying."

Figgins looked thoughtful.

"Yes, it's time we did something," he agreed. "Of course, it's jolly decent of Fatty to lend me this quid; but I should feel a lot more comfy if I knew where he'd got it from. I don't mean to say that he's been up to something fishy; but, hang it all, we've got a right to know what he's doing! He's our chum, and it's perfectly rotten of him to treat us as he's been doing!"

"Beastly!" said Kerr. "I consider we've a perfect right to watch him, follow him wherever he goes, and discover his secret. Until then—until I know the reason for all this mystery—I sha'n't feel comfortable."

"So we'll turn ourselves into a couple of Sexton Blakes and do the giddy detective bizney!" exclaimed Figgins heartily. "It's a good idea, Kerr, old son, and we'll shake hands on it now!"

And Figgins and Kerr solemnly clasped hands.

CHAPTER 16.

Making Plans.

DURING the next day or two Figgins & Co. got on well enough together. The subject of Fatty Wynn's mysterious absences was tabooed, and the three chums went about as though nothing had happened to disturb the harmony of their lives. But, although they were on good terms with one another, there was a certain feeling of restraint which had never existed before.

That feeling would not be removed until Fatty Wynn's secret was revealed.

And Kerr and Figgins meant to discover that secret before many days had passed.

The School House juniors, although curious about Fatty Wynn, soon forgot about the matter in the stress of other everyday affairs.

On the Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday—a match was played between the two Houses, and although the game ended in a draw, Fatty Wynn played a splendid game, showing the fellows that he was still as enthusiastic as ever.

Thursday was wet and miserable, and after tea the Terrible

Three sat in their study reading. Tom Merry was looking at a local paper, published in Bramcourt, and he looked up at his two chums with an abstracted expression.

"I say," he exclaimed, "have you chaps seen this?"

Manners looked up from the "Photograph News."

"Seen what?" he asked.

"This column in the footer page."

"Which column? Explain yourself, ass!" said Manners.

"All right, keep your blessed wool on!" said Tom Merry.

"It's about professional footer—the Bramcourt Rovers."

Monty Lowther looked up.

"Oh, rats!" he said. "Blow professional footer!"

"But, my dear chaps, this is of especial interest!" said Tom Merry. "It's all about Bramcourt's new goalie—a kid named Brown!"

"I don't care if he's named Green!" said Manners. "Dry up, you ass!"

"I sha'n't dry up!" said the captain of the Shell. "I've got an idea, and I want to hear what you think of it. It says in this paper that the new Bramcourt goalie is, simply a wonder—a young chap who's never played professional football before. Just listen a minute, and I'll read it out!"

"Oh, go on then!" growled Manners.

"Get it over!" said Monty Lowther resignedly.

And Tom Merry read aloud the account of "Robert Brown's" marvellous playing. The little article had been written by Mr. Cobb, and he had referred to the new goalkeeper's abilities with glowing terms.

"Sounds all right," said Manners, when Tom Merry had done; "but I'll bet the chap isn't such a good goalie as Fatty Wynn, though he is a New House bouncer."

"But this chap's a professional," said Tom Merry.

"That doesn't matter. Fatty wants some beating."

The Terrible Three did not for a minute connect the new Bramcourt goalkeeper with Fatty Wynn and his mysterious journeys. They were under the impression that Wynn was strongly opposed to professional playing. And the name, "Robert Brown," conveyed nothing to them.

"I should like to see that chap," said Tom Merry. "It's the first time I've heard of a kid playing in a professional team, and I should think it would be interesting."

"When's the next match?" asked Manners.

"On Saturday."

"Well, we've got nothing on for Saturday," said Manners.

"Suppose we run over to Bramcourt on our bikes and see the match, provided it's fine, of course?"

"That's what I was going to suggest," said Tom Merry.

"Rotten idea!" said Monty Lowther.

"Why is it?"

"Well, we don't want to see any beastly professional match!" said Lowther. "It would be heaps better to get up a scratch match on our own."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't seen a professional game for months. It would be rather novel. Besides, I wouldn't go, only there's this new goalie. I'm jolly curious to see if he's as good as Fatty Wynn."

"You ass!" exclaimed Lowther. "Do you think a team like Bramcourt Rovers would play him if he wasn't? I expect it's all swank, anyhow. The chap may be eighteen or nineteen."

"Well, I vote we go and see for ourselves."

"Oh, all right," said Monty Lowther resignedly. "I'll go!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Shall we ask anybody else to come?"

"How about Blake and his lot?" asked Manners. "It would be better to make up a party, you know."

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three left their study, and made their way to the Fourth-Form passage. Tom Merry jammed his foot against the door of Study No. 6, and it flew open.

"You silly ass," exclaimed Blake, from inside, "you'll bust the giddy lock!"

"We've come!" said Lowther pleasantly.

"Good! Now you can go!" replied Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, and surveying the Terrible Three with severe glances. "I regard it as weally bad form to burst into a chap's study in such an abrupt fashion!"

"Buzz off, you Shell bouncers!" said Herries.

"To which we answer 'Rats!'" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "We've come to lay a proposition before you. Will you chaps have anything on on Saturday?"

Blake looked thoughtful.

"I expect so," he replied. "It would be rather cold, you know, walking about without anything on in this weather."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I regard that as funny!" said D'Arcy.

"Weally, Blake, that was a vewy witty wetort!"

"Bosh!" said Monty Lowther warmly. "If I couldn't say anything funnier than that I should shut up altogether. It's stale, anyhow—as stale as—"

"Your own jokes—eh?" grinned Digby.

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

Tom Merry banged the table.

"Peace, my children!" he shouted. "We didn't come here to start a giddy row! We want to know if you've made any arrangements for Saturday afternoon, Blake?"

"Of course we haven't!" growled Blake. "The weather's so jolly uncertain that it's no good making arrangements! What fatheaded idea have you got in your napper?"

"No fatheaded idea at all. Have you seen the local newspaper?"

"Have I seen the which?" asked Blake.

"The Bramcourt paper," answered the captain of the Shell. "There's an account in it of a new goalkeeper—a kid who's playing for the Bramcourt Rovers. I thought it would be rather a good wheeze to run over to Bramcourt and see the match on Saturday."

"It's a rotten professional game!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewvies, I see ho reason why a professional match should be wotten," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am of the opinion that professional football is well worth seeing. I regard Tom Mewwoy's ideal as a good one."

"Bravo, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, will you come?" asked Tom Merry.

"Might as well," said Blake. "There's no match on here, and it would be a bit of a change. But it's nine miles to Bramcourt. How shall we go? Bike it?"

"Of course!"

"Suppose it's wet?" asked Digby.

"Then we sha'n't go."

"Oh, all serene then!" said Jack Blake. "You can rely on us, Tommy. Who else is going?"

"Nobody, that I know of," replied Tom Merry.

"Why shouldn't we ask Figgins & Co.?" said Blake.

"Fatty Wynn would be awfully interested in the game—especially as there's a young chap for a goalie. I vote we ask Figgins & Co. to go with us."

Tom Merry rubbed his curly hair.

"Not a bad idea," he said. "All right, we'll run across to the New House and arrange matters. Fatty Wynn seems all right again now, and it would be rather a neat way of keeping an eye on him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three took their departure, and emerged into the wet and muddy quad. The rain had stopped, but the night was cold and cheerless.

"My hat," said Manners, with a shiver, "we sha'n't go if the giddy weather's like this!"

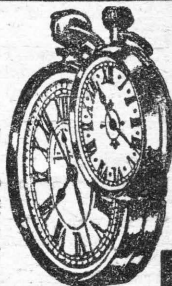
"No fear!" said Lowther.

"I expect it will turn out all right!" exclaimed Tom Merry hopefully. "Anyhow, we'll make all arrangements."

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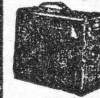
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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS NAME." & "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE." ORDER EARLY.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

By WARREN BELL.

They entered the New House, and met Redfern & Co. on the stairs.

"Hallo, you School House bounders!" said Redfern. "Are you looking for trouble?"

"Because, if so, we're ready to supply an unlimited quantity," added Lawrence.

"Without delay," put in Owen.

"It seems to me that you're the chaps who are looking for trouble," said Tom Merry. "No, my sons, we've come on a peaceful mission—"

"Well, you've walked into a lions' den, anyhow," said Redfern.

"The monkey-house, you mean," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Look here, you—"

"Shut up, Monty, you fathead!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "I just said we'd come on a peaceful mission, and we don't want to start a row at once. Even if we have walked into the monkey-house, you needn't tell 'em so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky rotters!" glared Redfern.

"Oh, don't get your rag out, Reddy!" said Tom Merry. "It's pax, you know, and we've come to see Figgins."

And the Terrible Three passed up the stairs, leaving Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen looking after them rather doubtfully. The School House juniors burst unceremoniously into Figgins's study.

"Look out!" yelled Kerr, in alarm. "School House rotters!"

"It's all right," grinned Tom Merry, "we're not raiding you!"

"I was just going to yell out for help," said Figgins suspiciously. "We'd jolly soon chuck you down the stairs, you know, if you like to undergo the experience."

"We shouldn't, thanks!" said Tom Merry. And he laid his plan before Figgins and Kerr. They looked thoughtful for a moment, and then Figgins nodded.

"All right," he said, "we'll go with you."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'll rout Fatty Wynn out, and see what he says. Where is he, by the way?"

"Oh, in the tuck-shop, I expect!" said Kerr thoughtfully. "But look here, why should we tell Fatty anything about it at all?"

"Why?" repeated Tom Merry. "Because he'd like to come, of course."

"All the more reason we shouldn't tell him," said Kerr. "Fatty's been jolly secretive lately about his half-holidays, and wouldn't tell us where he's been. Why shouldn't we play the same trick on him, and leave him out of it? He'll realise what it's like then."

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Figgins. "It'll be tit for tat, and it might bring the fat bouncer to his senses. Besides, even if we did ask him, he'd probably say he'd got something else on, and couldn't come. We'll take the bull by the horns, as it were, and do him in the eye!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Fatty would have liked to have seen the match; but he'll be all the better for the lesson. We'll all slip off on our bikes, and leave him in the lurch."

"Good!" said Kerr. "Figgy and I had made up our minds to follow Fatty this Saturday, but this wheeze is better still. We'll—"

The door opened suddenly, and Fatty Wynn appeared. He stared at the visitors.

"Hallo, what are you bounders doing here?" he inquired.

"Oh, just making arrangements!" said Tom Merry carelessly.

"Arrangements!" repeated Fatty Wynn. "Arrangements for what?"

"A little outing on Saturday afternoon," said Figgins. "These School House chaps have just suggested it, and Kerr and I have decided to go with 'em."

"Where to?" inquired Fatty.

"Oh, out!" said Figgins, with a wave of his hand.

"Out!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "Out where, you ass?"

"Outside, of course."

"Ain't you going to tell me, you rotters?" said Fatty Wynn, glaring.

"Certainly not!"

"Well, you're a nice lot of chums—I don't think!" exclaimed Wynn indignantly. "Arrange to go out, and won't tell a chap where you're going! Perhaps I should like to come with you."

"Perhaps you would," said Kerr.

"But you're not coming!" added Figgins grimly. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, my buck, and you can buzz off and eat coke!"

Fatty Wynn glared round wrathfully.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "so that's your beastly temper, is it? Just because I haven't told you where I've been to, you're not going to tell me where you're going."

"Nothing very outrageous in that, is there?" said Monty Lowther.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR."
Every Friday.

"I think it's rotten of you!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Even if you asked me to go I jolly well shouldn't now!"

"Well, we're not going to ask you," said Kerr.

"It's just as well!" replied Fatty Wynn. "It happens that I've made arrangements for Saturday myself. You can go where you like, and I'll go where I like. If you think I want to know where the dickens you're going, you're mistaken!"

And Fatty Wynn left the study and slammed the door behind him.

The juniors looked at one another and grinned.

"That's touched him on the raw," chuckled Figgins. "Well, it'll be a lesson to him, and perhaps, in future, he won't be so secretive."

CHAPTER 17.

Tom Merry & Co. Discover the Truth.

CONTRARY to everybody's expectations, Friday was a fine day, although dull; and Saturday dawned bright and cheerful. The sun shone from an almost cloudless sky, and the air was keen and frosty.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Jack Blake, looking out of the dormitory window. "It's simply a ripping-day, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I sincerely trust that the weathah does not change before the afternoon. It would be simply wotten if it came on to wain immediately aftah mornin' lessons!"

"I think we can rely on it's being fine, Gussy," said Blake. "It's frosty, and there isn't a giddy cloud to be seen. If it does rain I shall be jolly surprised."

And Blake proved a true prophet. Throughout the morning the sun shone gloriously; and when, at last, dinner was over, the weather was just as amiable as it had been at breakfast-time.

Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., and Figgins and Kerr were all ready. So as soon as dinner was over they mounted their machines and rode off.

Fatty Wynn watched them go from the study window.

"The bounders!" he murmured to himself. "I wonder where the dickens they're going to? Wayland, I expect, to the giddy picture-palace. Never mind, I'm going to a lot better show than the pictures. And they'll have to pay for their outing—I shall draw two quid."

And Fatty Wynn grinned at the prospect. He would not have been so cheerful had he known his chums' destination.

He set off very soon for the railway-station, and caught his train comfortably.

Meanwhile Tom Merry & Co., and the two New House juniors, were jogging along to Bramcourt on their bicycles. The roads were a bit muddy, but the fineness of the day easily compensated for that.

Suddenly Blake chuckled.

"My hat," he exclaimed, "poor old Fatty was properly diddled!"

"Serve him right," said Kerr. "I'm not a vindictive sort of chap, but you must admit that it had got a bit too thick. Three times the fat bouncer went out, and every time he refused to tell us where he'd been. If we work the same wheeze on him once or twice, he'll realise that it's not exactly the thing."

"Yaas, wathah!" panted D'Arcy. "I wegard Wynn's conduct as vewy wewehensible, and I attempted to point out the ewwah of his ways. Owain, however, to the wotten intahference of the New House boundahs, I was unable to cawwy out my pwoject."

"Naturally," said Figgins, as he pedalled along. "If you think we allow School House interference in our own private matters, Gussy, you're jolly well mistaken! We're quite capable of looking after Fatty, thanks."

"Weally, Figgay, I am not sure of that," said D'Arcy. "The mannah in which you have tweated this mattah—"

"The manner in which I treat you will be jolly painful if you don't dry up!" said Figgins.

"I uttahly wewuse to dwy up!"

"Then look out for squalls," said Figgins.—"I'll biff you into the ditch if you don't keep that blessed tongue of yours quiet!"

"I should uttahly wewuse to be biffed into the wotten ditch!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, it is wathah a pity we allowed these New House boundahs to accompany us."

"How'd us?" ejaculated Kerr. "My hat, I like that!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "We've left St. Jim's now, and it's silly to start a House row. If we did, there'd only be one result."

"Figgins and Kerr would be left behind on the roadside, sore and battered," grinned Monty Lowther. "Still, there's no need to go to this extent so w'e'd drop the matter, and proceed on our way like good little boys."

Figgins and Kerr thought it wisest not to renew the discussion, so the journey was continued in perfect harmony. The ride to Bramcourt was a fairly easy one, for there were no big hills. The party arrived flushed and breathless, and stored their machines at a cycle-shop.

Then they proceeded towards the football-ground. There was still half an hour before the match commenced, so the juniors turned into a tuck-shop, and regaled themselves on pastry and ginger-beer.

After that, feeling comfortable and cheerful, they joined the crowd at the turnstiles, and paid their sixpences. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was for having seats in the grand-stand, but the others unanimously agreed that sixpence was enough to pay to witness a footer match. Besides, they would feel more free-and-easy amongst the crowd.

"Lot of people here," said Tom Merry, as they squashed through.

"Yaas, wathah! Thousands, deah boys!"

"Who are the Rovers playing," asked Herries—"blessed if I know?"

"Haven't you seen the bills?" said Figgins. "It's Bramcourt Rovers versus Beekton. Beekton's a jolly good team, I think."

"Well, I don't care whether they're good or indifferent," said Manners. "I want to see this giddy goalkeeper. If he's really a kid, I shall be surprised."

"Rather?"

"It's swank, I expect."

The juniors found places, fortunately, immediately against the railings at the corner of the field. It was a fairly good position, and one which was not packed with spectators. The bulk of the people preferred to congregate opposite the grand-stand.

Owing to the fineness of the day, there was a record gate. Perhaps, however, many of the people had been attracted there by the glowing accounts of Fatty Wynn's remarkable playing—accounts which had been circulated throughout the town by those people who had seen the previous matches.

"Ere they are!" roared a man close to the juniors. "Give the Rovers a cheer, boys!"

A stream of players trotted out of the grand-stand, and a roar went up from the big crowd. The juniors could see by the colours that they were the Bramcourt team, and they looked at them interestedly. Almost the last player to leave the stand was a short, sturdy youngster—none other than Fatty Wynn. He had not the faintest suspicion that his chums were even at that moment looking at him.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the footballers. Their eyes rested on Fatty Wynn's form, but for the moment they did not recognise him. Then Kerr started a little, and craned his neck forward.

"By jingo, doesn't that chap look like——"

Figgins uttered a sudden yell.

"My only Aunt Mary Jane," he shouted excitedly, and with amazed eyes, "d—do you s—see who that chap is? Great Scott! Well, I'm blessed! Great pip!"

Arthur Augustus turned to Figgins severely.

"Weally, Figgay," he remonstrated, "pway wememhah that you are in a public place! Whatevah are you yellin' like that for? I see no weason——"

"My only summer chapeau!" roared Tom Merry suddenly.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Whatevah——"

"It's—it's——" stuttered Kerr.

"It's—— Great Scott, it's——" gasped Figgins.

"Fatty Wynn!" panted Tom Merry amazedly. "It's Fatty Wynn! It's Fatty Wynn!"

Arthur Augustus looked astonished.

"Bai Jove, have you all gone off your beasty wockahs——"

Monty Lowther grabbed D'Arcy's arm.

"Can't you see?" he yelled. "That chap on the field is Fatty Wynn! He's playing for Bramcourt! He's the giddy new goalkeeper—the chap who's been doing such great things! My only tile, it's—it's stupendous!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and gazed on to the field.

"Gweat Scott!" he exclaimed. "That fat chap is Fatty Wynn! Bai Jove, whatevah can it mean? Weally, I feel in quite a fluttah, deah boys!"

The juniors gazed at one another in sheer amazement, their faces blank and their eyes expressing their thoughts. The people round about them looked on with amused grins; but Tom Merry and his chums could think of nothing else but this stunning discovery—they could not take their eyes off the form of Fatty Wynn.

"I—I can't believe it!" panted Blake.

"It's the runniest thing that ever happened!" gasped Monty Lowther. "And—and Fatty Wynn nearly bashed me in the eye because I upheld professional footer! My hat, what a two-faced bounder for you!"

"Is—is it really him?" asked Herries blankly.

"Of course it is!" said Figgins. "We all recognise him!"

There couldn't be two chaps in the world with a figure exactly like Fatty's! My hat, I feel faint!"

Kerr, the keen Scot, was quite cool, however.

"Of course," he said, "this explains everything. This is where Fatty's been this last two or three Saturdays. He's been playing footer for Bramcourt!"

"Yes, but why couldn't he tell us?" asked Digby.

"Because he'd said that professional footer was rotten," said Kerr shrewdly. "He must have been drawn into playing for Bramcourt—and, of course, after the argument with Monty Lowther, he simply couldn't tell us that he was playing for Bramcourt. It was against all his principles—all his spoken principles, anyhow."

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins, "we'll give the bounder a ragging when we get hold of him!"

"He's a blessed humbug, that's what he is!" said Lowther wrathfully.

"I don't know so much about that," said Kerr loyally. "Wait until we hear all the facts of the case. Anyhow, I reckon it's an honour to have Fatty Wynn—a junior of St. Jim's—playing for such a big team as this!"

"Rather?" agreed Figgins. "Still, I reckon Fatty ought to have let us into the giddy secret. It's all rot for him to say that he was afraid of us ragging him because he'd changed about. Can't a chap alter his opinion?"

"It's as clear as daylight now," said Kerr thoughtfully.

"Fatty must have been delayed by some chap after that match with the Grammar School the other week. And, of course, he came here that afternoon he missed lessons."

"And, my hat," said Figgins, "the bounder must be getting a salary as well! That's where all his giddy tin's come from. No wonder he came here every Saturday—no wonder he defied old Ratty!"

"The artful humbug!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "He might have told us all about it. Still, he's been doing wonders here, according to the paper, and I'm more interested now than ever."

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, suddenly, "there goes the whistle, deah boys!"

D'Arcy was right, and the game started the next moment.

CHAPTER 18,

All Serene!

TOM MERRY & CO. stood against the railings, closely watching the game between the Bramcourt Rovers and Beekton. The latter team was "hot stuff," and the home players had all their work cut out. The Beekton forwards were exceptionally fast, and their trickiness was undoubtedly clever.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, after the first five minutes of play, "this is goin' to be a wippin' game, deah boys! I weally had no ideah that pwofessional footah was so intwestin'. Those Beekton fellows will score jollay soon if Wynn isn't careful!"

"Just look at him!" exclaimed Figgins excitedly. "My hat, Fatty's a ripping goalie! I can forgive the fat bounder anything when I see him playing a game like this!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I've got an ideah! If Wynn loses the match for Bwamcourt, we'll wag him to death aftahwards! But if he wins, we'll forgive him his wotten sins, and tweat him like a hewo!"

"That's not bad, Gussyl!" said Kerr. "Fatty's fate rests on his own head."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors watched the game with intense interest. So far, Fatty Wynn was still unaware of his chums' presence, and he was playing magnificently. Time after time he saved with wonderful skill, and time after time he was cheered by the enthusiastic crowd. Then an incident happened which nearly resulted in a goal for Beekton.

There was a scuffle between the footballers in the Bramcourt half, and suddenly the ball was shot out of the crowd and sent flying to the corner, where it rolled outside the line. Fatty Wynn followed the ball's progress keenly.

Then, as he looked, his eyes grew round. For, immediately behind the railings, close against where the ball had rolled, was the little knot of St. Jim's juniors. In an instant Fatty Wynn recognised Figgins, Kerr, and the others, and his jaw dropped.

"M-my hat!" he ejaculated, in dismay. "Th-they've followed me! They've seen me playing!"

Fatty Wynn remained staring at his chums in consternation, utterly oblivious, for the moment, of the game. One of the Beekton forwards had tried a long shot for goal, and the ball rolled gently towards the net. The home right-back let the ball roll past him as he saw that it would fall into Fatty Wynn's hands.

But Fatty Wynn was too preoccupied to see the ball at all. Suddenly a roar went up.

What to do in Canada.

BY A SUCCESSFUL EMIGRANT.

(Continued from last week.)

Now, my lads, I want you to read carefully, and think well of what I am going to tell you. Your success depends, to a great extent, on the knowledge you possess. But all the knowledge in the world will not make you successful if you do not put it into practice.

A new country like Canada offers unlimited opportunities to the young fellow who has brains and muscle, and is energetic enough to bring them to bear on the task of conquering all difficulties which may arise. Canada does not want idlers. Indeed, the Government has a very effective way of dealing with all such "wasters"—as the idler is aptly termed—by the simple process of sending them back to the land from which they came.

Of all the lands I know of, there is none in which true grit meets with such a splendid reward as it does in the Great North-West.

Of course, there are openings in Ontario, and in Quebec; but they cannot compare with the opportunities which one meets with in the less populated districts. There is always a demand for farm labour. A wage of from thirty-five to forty dollars per month is usual on a farm. This is in addition to board and lodging. Boys are in great demand, but a wage of from fifteen to twenty dollars per month is the usual scale for the inexperienced youngster.

Now, you have landed in Toronto, or Montreal. You have been used to manual labour, and you want to follow it up. Take the advertisement page of any paper, and you will find plenty of openings. Call at any farm, and you will meet with a cordial welcome, and a situation. It is no uncommon thing for farmers to meet the boats, and bid against each other for the services of a strapping young fellow.

Remember this: When you are in Canada, do as the Canadians do. They are sensitive of being taught their own business by a "greenhorn." Keep a still tongue and an open mind. Be ready to learn from those whose experience qualifies them to teach, and success is assured you.

If you have not the money to go West and take up your 160 acres of free land, make up your mind to save. When you have taken up the land, you must cultivate a certain amount within three years. The best thing to do—if you cannot employ labour—is to work on some farm near your own. You can thus keep yourself, and at the same time do the required amount of work on your claim.

This puts me in mind of another point. You will find people in all the cities who have land to dispose of. Some are honest, and a great many are not.

Say you are in possession of a few hundred pounds. You do not wish to tackle an unbroken tract of land, or perhaps you have come out to begin farming on a large scale. You go to one of these landowners, and before you are in his company one half-hour this individual has "weighed you up." He knows just how much money you have in hand, although you have not told him so in as many words. He describes the land for sale in the most glowing terms, and you almost see the millions of dollars rolling in. Be wise. Do not buy land on the mere word of any man. If you do, it is probable that you will find yourself in possession of a piece of property of no value, for one or more of the following reasons:

It may be hundreds of miles from any railway. It may be well wooded, but lack water. And it may have plenty of water, but not enough wood to build a mouse-trap. I am now telling you the result of many bitter experiences which have been brought to my notice.

Go to a reliable land agency. There are many in every city. These are in connection with the Dominion Government, and it is to their interest to be honest in their dealings.

You won't find any hedges or ditches dividing the farms "Out West." The farms extend for miles, and your nearest neighbour may be fifty to seventy miles away. But they are real friends, and when the new-comer is on his farm, he will find that there is a helping hand ready to put up his hut, and in a few hours the jolly, good-natured people are gathered for a "barn-raising," as they call it. You will do as much for someone else, and find joy in it, too.

In conclusion, I would say: Do not leave home in a hurry. Think well, and then act with wisdom.

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 264.
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR."
Every Friday.

(Continued from page 25.)

"Great Scott! Look—"

Fatty Wynn came to himself with a start, and gazed round him as though dazed. What he saw made him jerk sideways like a spring. The leather was rolling straight into the net, and was in fact almost between the posts.

"Look out!" yelled Nowell, the Bramcourt skipper. With a gasp Fatty Wynn flung himself sideways, and kicked at the ball. By sheer luck he managed to save it, and it plunged out into play again. But it had been a narrow shave, and the Bramcourt men looked at Fatty Wynn in astonishment.

"I say, you know," exclaimed Nowell, "that was a near thing. You're not feeling well, are you, Brown?"

"I—I'm all right!" said Fatty Wynn, pulling himself together.

The narrowness of the escape had had the effect of awakening him from his astonishment, and he was soon all attention.

Nevertheless, he could not prevent his thoughts wandering, during the slack moments, to the fact of his chums being among the spectators. He realised that he was in for a warm time when the match was over.

All the same he played a magnificent game. Time after time the visiting team managed to rush through, and Fatty Wynn had all his work cut out. But he was equal to it, and not a single goal was scored against Bramcourt.

By the time the match ended the result was such that the spectators cheered themselves hoarse. Bramcourt Rovers had won by three goals to nil! The enthusiasm was intense, for everyone knew what a splendid team Beckton was. Had it not been for Fatty Wynn's continual efforts the visiting team would have scored again and again.

And, as was only natural, Fatty Wynn's performance had spurred the other members of the Bramcourt team to make extra efforts, and the result was very gratifying.

Mr. Cobb was enthusiastic, and amazed Fatty Wynn by handing him three pounds instead of the usual two.

"You are worth it, my boy!" he exclaimed heartily. "You are worth every penny of it. In future, provided you keep up your form, I shall keep your salary at three pounds a week. Derring, our original goalkeeper, is practically in full health again now, but I shall certainly not play him as long as you are able to come in his stead."

"Thank you, sir!" said Fatty Wynn, feeling intensely gratified. "I'm jolly glad you think I'm doing all right!"

"You're doing splendidly—magnificently!" said Mr. Cobb, with enthusiasm. "It was the best thing I ever did when I saw that match of yours at St. Jim's. Had I not witnessed it I should never have believed that a schoolboy could play such splendid football!"

When Fatty Wynn left he was feeling both elated and nervous. Elated because of the praise which he had just received, and nervous owing to the fact that his chums were waiting for him outside.

He walked out of the grounds rather apprehensively. And the very instant he set foot into the roadway he found himself surrounded.

"Fatty, you deceitful bounder!"

"You blessed humbug!"

"My hat, you've played a ripping game, Fatty!"

"But you're a bounder all the same!"

Fatty Wynn struggled in the grasp of a dozen hands.

He looked round at his chums in astonishment. Instead of being furious with him they were all looking excited and pleased. They wrung his hands and slapped his back with enthusiasm.

"Ain't—ain't you wild with me?" he exclaimed. "Ain't you going to rag me?"

"Bai Jove, wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We were feafully wild with you at first, but the manna in which you have defended the Bwamcourt goal is wippin'! We simply cannot be cwooss with you, deah boy!"

"All the same," said Figgins, "you're a fatheaded clump and a burbling duffer!"

"To say nothing of being a first-class idiot and a frabjous jabberwock!" added Kerr. "In fact, Fatty, to use polite language, you're nothing more nor less than a babbling lunatic!"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther.

"I can quite believe you!" said Blake, grinning.

"What do you mean?" demanded Lowther.

"Well, I'm glad you admit you're a babbling lunatic!" said Blake blandly. "You said 'Here, here!' when—"

"You chump!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, turning red.

"But what do you mean by it, Fatty?" went on Figgins.

"What do you mean by not letting us into your secret? After all, it was nothing dishonourable."

"Who said it was?" demanded Fatty Wynn, feeling more at ease. "But I—I— Well, I didn't like to admit to you chaps I was playing professional football after I'd said such a lot of things against it. I thought you'd rag me so much

that I couldn't keep it up. That's why I was so careful not to let on."

Figgins laughed. "You duffer!" he said. "Can't a chap change his opinion? Personally, I think professional football is jolly fine, and I'm glad to see that you've changed, Fatty. Of course, you're drawing a salary?"

Fatty Wynn grinned. "Rather?" he said. "I've been getting two quid a week!" "Two quid a week!" ejaculated Figgins blankly. "My hat!"

"And I've got three quid this week!" went on Fatty cheerfully. "The manager was so pleased with this match that he raised my salary. Ripping, isn't it?"

"And—and do you mean to say that you've got three quid for playing that one game?" gasped Herries. "My hat, it's wonderful!"

"It's jolly handy!" grinned Fatty Wynn. "Well, I'm awfully glad you're not going to rag me to death! I'll stand you all a terrific feed, if you like!"

Blake turned to the others. "Do we like, chaps?" he asked.

"We do—we do!" grinned Tom Merry. "But I vote we purchase some tuck out of Fatty's money, take it back to St. Jim's, and have the feed there!"

"That's the idea!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I'm willing to spend a quid or more on grub, you know."

"Good!" said Jack Blake. "Fatty, we all forgive you your horrible sins! Still, I'm not at all sure that you oughtn't to be severely bumped for keeping us in the dark all this time."

"Well, you see—"

"I see that the time's going!" put in Tom Merry briskly. "We'd better hurry up and get back to St. Jim's. Then, while we're feeding, Fatty Wynn can tell us all about it. How he got on the job, and all the giddy details."

"I'll bet Fatty won't tell us much while the feed's going on," grinned Figgins. "He'll do it afterwards, perhaps, but not while the feed's in progress."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were all in the best of spirits. Figgins and Kerr were relieved to discover the truth of their chum's unaccountable behaviour, and they were quite ready to forgive Fatty Wynn for having kept them in the dark so long.

But as soon as they had walked away from the vicinity of the football ground, a tall, well-built man emerged from behind one of the buildings. He stood looking after the juniors with a rather bitter expression on his face.

"By thunder!" he murmured. "And that youngster—that kid—has ousted me from my place! I'm now as well as ever I was; and Cobb's had the sauce to tell me that I am to play for the reserves, while that chit of a boy acts as goalkeeper for the First!"

He frowned darkly. "But I won't stand it!" he vowed. "I'll find out who he really is—he's evidently a boy belonging to the same school as those others—and I'll have the matter out with him face to face. If Cobb refuses to dismiss him, I'll go to the school on Monday. By thunder, I'm not going to be treated in this scurvy manner!"

And Derring, the original Bramcourt goalkeeper, set his teeth and walked away, breathing hard. He meant to make mischief, for he was not a man of very amiable disposition, and he had not the interests of the club at heart. He only thought of himself, and that a mere boy had ousted him from his position!

CHAPTER 19.

Trouble in the New House.

BY Monday matters at St. Jim's were running with their accustomed smoothness. Figgins & Co. had become the same inseparable chums as formerly. Fatty Wynn had related all the facts of the case, and his chums had called him many choice names for having kept them in the dark so long.

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. were also in the know, but the rest of the juniors had not been told, for Fatty Wynn did not want the news of his appointment to get all over the school. If the news had leaked out, in all probability the masters would have heard of it, and that would have meant an ending to Fatty Wynn's little scheme.

But matters were soon to reach a head by interference from another quarter.

Figgins & Co. were in their study after tea on Monday, and they were just about to commence their prep, when the New House page put his head in at the door. He announced that a gentleman wished to see them.

"A gentleman?" repeated Figgins puzzled. "What's he like?"

(Continued on page iii. of cover.)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

T. Sullivan, 16, Hanover Street, Windsor, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age about 14.

R. Brummit, Box 196, Western Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English or Scotch reader.

H. R. Hoare, 297, Earnest Avenue, Ville Emard, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age 17 to 18.

F. Syms, 172, Lippincott Street, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English reader, with a view to exchanging stamps.

T. Kelly, 153, President Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria, S. Africa, wishes to correspond with a reader living in England.

Miss R. Athin, Ellesmere, Park Road, Warwickville, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader, living in England, age 16.

J. M. Brown, Wyndham Street, Greta, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England, age about 17.

Miss P. Jacobs, Coronation Street, Pelaw Main, via W. Maitland, New South Wales, wishes to correspond with readers living in the United States.

E. T. Noltie, 2451, Waverley Street, Montreal P.Q., Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in England or Scotland, about 15 years of age.

L. L. Lee, 873, North Bridge Road, Singapore, wishes to correspond with an Irish or Welsh reader.

T. V. Portas, care of P.O. Box 4, Hastings, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age about 17.

Murdock Campbell, 83, Russell Street, Westport, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a Scotch reader, age about 13 or 14.

J. F. Spiers, age 16, 134, Moorhouse Avenue, Christchurch, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a boy reader interested in conjuring or journalism.

V. Rankin, 6, Normanby Street, Windsor, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age 16.

Miss D. Molloy, care of Miss G. Ripper, 22, Melville Street, Hobart, Tasmania, wishes to correspond with an English boy reader, age between 20 and 23.

R. H. W. Colley, 15, Joll Terrace, Mount Lawley, Keith, Western Australia, wishes Miss H. Hodgson, of Sheffield, to forward address, as he, unfortunately, has lost it.

N. C. Brierley, 44, Annandale Street, Annandale, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age 16—17.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

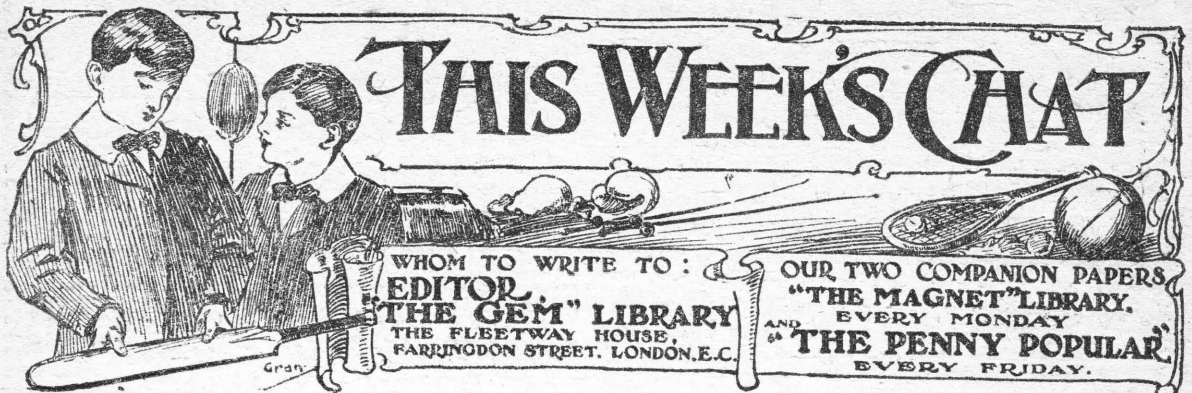
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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS NAME." & "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE." ORDER EARLY.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

By WARREN BELL.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



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OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
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For Next Wednesday.

"ASHAMED OF HIS NAME!"By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

Under the above title next Wednesday's splendid, long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, deals with a boy who is foolish and conceited enough to practise a silly deception upon his schoolfellows. Guy Vavasour lays claim openly to a long line of blue-blooded ancestors, speaks of the "baronial hall" of his family, and is inclined to look down upon those of his Form-fellows who are unable to claim the same distinctions. However, the truth leaks out, as it has a habit of doing, and "Guy Vavasour" comes in for a full measure of ridicule from his despised school-fellows as the junior who was

"ASHAMED OF HIS NAME."**OUR GREAT SCHOOL SERIAL.**

Next week my readers will be treated to something quite exceptionally fine in the way of school stories. At great expense I have managed to secure a magnificent school serial story, entitled,

"SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE,"

by Warren Bell. This gentleman is one of the most famous and popular of living school story writers, with an extensive and peculiar knowledge of English public school life. His wonderful tales of Greyhouse School are read and enjoyed by Britishers of every age and rank all over the world, and in

"SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE,"

we have him at his very best. With this grand new serial, in addition to the long, complete stories of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, your Editor claims for the GEM LIBRARY the foremost place as an

ALL SCHOOL STORY PAPER.

A record run is anticipated on next Wednesday's issue [No. 265], so that all my regular readers are strongly advised to order their copies in advance. Now is the time for my chums to tell their non-Gemite friends about the "All School Story GEM," and so help their Editor and do their friends a good turn at the same time. Don't forget, then,

"SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE,"By **WARREN BELL,****STARTS NEXT WEDNESDAY.****Replies in Brief.**

J. R. (Scotland).—Try Messrs. Gamage, of Holborn, London, E.C.

"Too Small" (Kirton).—Do the following exercise on getting up each morning: With your hands on your hips, slowly draw air into the lungs, raising your body until you are on tiptoe. Then slowly empty your lungs and sink on to your heels. Do this twelve times a day.

C. F. G. P. (West London).—I will consider what you propose.

T. Day (Glasgow).—Very many thanks for verses and letter.
 H. Cordery (Stratford).—You are still young, and have fully another five years to grow.

Mrs. W. A. W. (Kent).—Very many thanks for letter.

L. L. (Hanley).—I do not think there is one at present. Why not start one yourself?

E. E. Burnett (Aberdeen).—Sorry! Cannot supply back numbers required.

H. H. and C. G. and R. T. E. (Worsley).—Thank you for your letter and poem. Sorry I have not space enough to publish the latter.

A. W. Sims (Glos.).—See answer to J. R. (Scotland).

Theo. Page (Newcastle-on-Tyne).—I am afraid you must "wait and see."

"A Loyal Girl Reader" (Hull).—Thanks for your letter. Accept my most heartfelt sympathies with regard to your brother.

Norman Ledbury (Old Swinford).—Refer to our "Back Numbers Department," The Broadway, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

HOW TO BECOME A DIVER.

If you have made up your mind to enter this very interesting but dangerous calling, you should first find out the name and address of some firm—Messrs. Sieb & Gorman, Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.W., are a well-known firm—who make divers' "tackle," and who, in the majority of cases, also employ divers, and make personal application to them. They will either take you on with the idea of employing you yourselves, or else send you with a letter of introduction to a firm who will have use for you.

To this calling there is no term of apprenticeship to serve, the start being made as a diver's assistant, whose duty it is to look after the pumps and any-

thing else that may be necessary whilst the diver is under the water. This position is, as may be imagined, not only a difficult one, but a most responsible one, and smartness and intelligence are required. The pay for this work varies from 25s. to 30s. a week.

As soon as you have a thorough and complete knowledge of not only your own, but the diver's duties, you will be allowed to make short visits down under the water, continuing to stay longer and go deeper each time, until you are used to the pressure. After having obtained a "holding" on the water at any depth and for practically any length of time, you will be promoted to the rank of a diver. To start with, you will be employed at harbours and docks, where the pressure and danger are comparatively slight. For this work you will receive from 3s. to 5s. per hour; and after becoming thoroughly skilled you will probably receive an additional £150 per year, as a retaining fee for your services whenever the company may require them.

A diver employed to recover sunken treasure receives, in addition to his pay, about a tenth of the value of his "haul."

There are no particular qualifications needed in this calling, with the exception of steadiness and excellent health. This is compulsory.

(Next week: "How to Become a Railway Servant.")

THE EDITOR.

Fatty Wynn, Professional.

(Continued from page 27.)

"He's a tall man, Master Figgins," replied the page.

"Shall I bring him up?"

"Perhaps you'd better," replied Figgins doubtfully.

The page departed, and Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"I wonder who the dickens it can be?" said Kerr.

"I'm hanged if I know!" said Figgins. "There's nobody who would want to see us, unless—unless— By Jove!"

"Well?" said Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

"I suppose it wouldn't be Mr. Cobb?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "Mr. Cobb wouldn't come here, surely? He'd have more sense than to—"

The door opened, and the visitor appeared. It was Derring, professional footballer.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, staring at him. "What do you want?"

"I want to talk to Master—Robert Brown!" said Derring abruptly.

Fatty Wynn started.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm Derring, the Bramcourt goalkeeper," replied the man grimly. "By making a few inquiries I've found out who you are, and I've come here to talk matters over."

Figgins & Co. did not like the man's tone, and they stared at him rather resentfully. He came into the room and closed the door, banging his bowler hat down upon the table.

"You're a junior at this school?" he demanded, glaring.

"Suppose I am?" said Fatty Wynn. "What's it to do with you?"

"What's it to do with me?" repeated Derring, raising his voice.

"I'm the proper Bramcourt goalkeeper, and I'm hanged if I'm going to see a confounded young cub like you shove me out of my place! Do me out of an honest living! By thunder, I've never heard of such—"

"And I've never heard of such cheek!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "If you want to make an objection you'd better go to Mr. Cobb."

"I've been to him, and he says that I'm to play in the reserves."

"Well, go and play!" said Figgins warmly.

"I'm not talking to you!" growled Derring darkly. "I've come to this school to talk with this youngster, and I don't want interference from young shavers who aren't old enough to know manners!"

Figgins simply choked.

"You—you—"

"Hold on!" said Fatty Wynn quietly. "I'm not going to see you insulted, Figgy! If this chap doesn't apologise jolly quick he'll be sorry for himself! What does he mean, anyhow, by forcing his way into this study?"

Derring banged his fist on the table.

"I mean that I'm the rightful goalkeeper of the Bramcourt Rovers Club," he shouted, "and I'm not going to be done out of my living by a schoolboy! I've come here to have the matter out—to make you promise to give up this fool's game!"

"Oh, have you!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn hotly. "Well, look here, you'd have done better to come in a less bullying spirit. If you'd asked me properly, I might have considered the matter."

Derring looked round contemptuously.

"Asked you properly!" he sneered. "What do you take me for? Do you think I'm going to ask favours of a young cub like you? I'm going to force you to resign your absurd position! I'm going to make you give up the whole thing! It's my job, and I'm not going to be deliberately done!"

"You scoundrel!" put in Kerr angrily. "It's a lucky thing there aren't many professional footballers of your stamp! If there were they wouldn't be worthy of playing the grand old game!"

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins heatedly.

"You'd better hold your insolent tongues!" said Derring furiously. "I didn't come here to listen to your cheek! If Wynn doesn't consent to resign his position I shall go straight to your headmaster and tell him the facts of the case! And I'll warrant it will end by the young scoundrel getting a birching!"

Fatty Wynn turned pale with wrath.

"Did you call me a young scoundrel?" he asked, between his teeth.

"You're worse than that!" shouted Derring recklessly. "You're a thief—a mean, skulking thief! I was earning my living by playing for the Rovers, and you come along and deliberately step into my place while I was laid up! And now you're taking the money which ought to be mine! You're a thief!"

"You bounder!" roared Fatty Wynn hotly.

"Chuck him out!" shouted Kerr.

"Pitch him down the stairs!" ejaculated Figgins.

Derring laughed harshly.

"Enough of this tomfoolery—" he began.

"Yes, we've had enough of it!" roared Fatty Wynn. "And now we're going to teach you a lesson, you brute! Collar him, chaps!"

"My hat, rather!"

"Down him!"

And Figgins & Co., thoroughly excited and incensed, bore down on Derring. The man backed away in surprise, and uttered an oath.

"You young fools—"

But he was not allowed to say any more. With one accord the three chums threw themselves at the insulting rascal, and before he realised it he was sprawling on his back on the floor.

"Open the door!" panted Figgins.

Derring struggled to rise.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded, beginning to get alarmed. "By thunder, if you—"

"Dry up!" growled Kerr; and the Scots junior gave the man a painful jab in the side.

Fatty Wynn wrenched open the door.

"Now," he gasped, "out with him!"

Derring struggled convulsively.

"You young rascals," he roared, "if you touch me—"

"Oh, sling him out!" ejaculated Figgins disgustedly.

With one accord the three muscular juniors grasped the man. The next second, in spite of his roars and threats, he was dragged along the passage. Figgins & Co. were thoroughly enraged, and they scarcely cared what they did.

They arrived at the head of the stairs, and Derring roared with fury.

"Let me go," he raved—"let me go!"

Dozens of juniors swarmed out of their studies to see what the commotion was about, and they stared in amazement at the sight of Derring being dragged towards the stairs.

"Great Scott, what's the row?"

"Who is it?"

"What's he done?"

"What's the matter, Figgy?"

But Figgins & Co. were too occupied to attend to the numerous inquiries. In spite of Derring's roaring protests, they toppled him over the head of the stairs.

"Down with him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Rather!"

The stairs were not steep, and there were not many. However, the fall down them, although it would break no bones, would undoubtedly make Derring realise that he had acted very unwisely.

With a yell which was heard all over the New House, the footballer shot down the stairs. With a series of bumps and jars he descended, and Figgins & Co. stood at the top glaring down with furious eyes.

Suddenly a harsh voice made itself heard, and the next moment Mr. Ratcliff hurried into the New House. He had evidently been attracted by the unusual din, and he strode into the entrance hall with a black brow.

"Good heavens, what is the meaning of—"

Then Mr. Ratcliff uttered a fiendish yell. He had walked forward to the foot of the stairs, and he arrived just in time to receive Derring full in his chest. The impact was considerable, and the next moment the professional footballer and the master of the New House were sprawling headlong on the floor.

CHAPTER 20.

All's Well that End's Well.

MR. RATCLIFF picked himself up with a brow as black as thunder. Fortunately he had not been hurt much; but his fury had been aroused, and he glared round in a perfect frenzy of rage.

"What is the meaning of this?" he shouted. "Who—who is this man? I am bruised and injured. Good heavens, such a scene as this is without precedent in the New House!"

"Yes, and it needs be!" snarled Derring, struggling to his feet, and glaring at Mr. Ratcliff. "I'm going to have the law on those scamps! I'm going to show 'em that I'm not going to be treated—"

"How dare you!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "Who are you, sir?"

"Never you mind who I am!" exclaimed Derring aggressively. "If I want to go into details I'll speak to the headmaster, not an under-master like you! You get out of the way before you're hurt!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes bulged with anger.

"How dare you?" he bellowed. "Good gracious, I have never been so insulted before! Ah, Figgins, Wynn, and Kerr, do you know anything about this scoundrel?"

Figgins & Co. descended the stairs.

"Yes, sir," replied Fatty Wynn; "we just chucked him downstairs. We didn't know you were coming, sir, and we're awfully sorry if you're hurt."

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

Fatty Wynn, Professional.

(Continued from page 111 of cover.)

Mr. Ratcliff frowned. He realised that the juniors had not been to blame for the little accident; but he was in a rage, and told himself that somebody should suffer for the outrage.

"You threw this man downstairs, Wynn?" he exclaimed harshly.

"Yes, sir."

"You see, sir, he'd insulted us, sir," said Figgins eagerly.

"And we couldn't help ourselves," added Kerr.

"I have never experienced such gross behaviour!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Whatever this man had said you were entirely in the wrong. You should not have thrown him downstairs; and you will all follow me."

"Follow you, sir!" repeated Figgins. "Where to?"

"To the headmaster!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I am going to have the matter cleared up! You, my man, had better come as well; and if you have not a satisfactory explanation of your presence here, you will—"

Derring growled.

"Don't talk so much!" he said. "I want to see the headmaster as much as you do, so lead the way!"

"You impertinent rascal!" snapped the master of the New House. "Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, you will follow me."

"Y—Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff and the professional walked out into the quad, side by side, and Figgins & Co. followed in the rear.

"It's all up now!" murmured Kerr.

"My hat, rather!" said Figgins dismally. "And I was relying on seeing Fatty play other matches at Bramcourt! Think of the three quid a week, too!"

"It's awful!" groaned Wynn. "My hat, I—I feel like biffing that rotter into next week! The sauce of the chap! It's unbearable!"

"Rather! Fancy coming here and—"

Mr. Ratcliff turned.

"Silence!" he commanded sternly.

Figgins & Co. relapsed into silence. They followed their Housemaster across the dusky quad, and very soon they stood outside the Head's study.

Without ceremony Mr. Ratcliff opened the door and walked in, Derring following close on his heels. The juniors brought up the rear.

Dr. Holmes looked up from his desk in surprise, and surveyed his visitors over the tops of his glasses.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, "whatever is the meaning of this—this invasion, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"I have brought these young rascals to you, sir, in order that you might inquire into a very peculiar affair," said Mr. Ratcliff unpleasantly. "Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the Fourth Form, have thrown this man down the stairs, and he collided with me at the bottom, causing me considerable inconvenience."

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"This is very unusual!" he said gravely. "I always regarded you three boys as being incapable of any ruffianly act—"

Figgins & Co. bristled.

"It wasn't ruffianly, sir," protested Figgins. "He insulted us so much that we simply had to hurl him out of the place!"

"Who is he?" asked the Head sternly. "What is he doing at St. Jim's?"

"What am I doing?" exclaimed Derring, bursting out suddenly. "I'm here because I've a right to be here. I'm the goalkeeper of the Bramcourt Rovers, and this young thief has been robbing me of my situation and my salary!"

Dr. Holmes frowned angrily.

"How dare you use such terms with regard to one of my pupils?" he said heatedly. "I would advise you to be careful, sir! Explain yourself in moderate language, or I shall have you turned out!"

Derring calmed down at the sound of the cold voice.

"I'm sorry if I've offended you, sir," he growled. "But how's a man to prevent himself being wild? This young fellow—Wynn, his name is—has been taking my place for three or four weeks in the team, and I'm not going to have any more of it! As the directors of the club have refused to dismiss Wynn, I came to St. Jim's to make him resign!"

The Head looked bewildered.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I—I do not think I understand! Do I understand you to say that Wynn has been playing football for a—club?"

"Yes, sir!" put in Fatty Wynn eagerly. "You see, sir—"

"One moment, Wynn; let this man explain," said the Head.

And Derring told the whole facts of the case—how he had had an accident, and how Fatty Wynn had been given a trial with the Rovers. Dr. Holmes looked amazed when he had finished, and Mr. Ratcliff was smiling unpleasantly.

"I think there is only one thing to be done, sir," he suggested. "Since Wynn has acted in such a disgraceful manner, you can do nothing but forbid him to play for this wretched team any more, and send him home for the rest of the term!"

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"My hat!" he exclaimed blankly. "I—I—"

The Head smiled.

"Do not worry, my boy," he said gently. "I think Mr. Ratcliff has taken a rather severe view of the case. It is certainly unusual for a junior of St. Jim's to play in a professional team, but there is nothing disgraceful in it. On the contrary, I am rather inclined to think that you are deserving of praise!"

Mr. Ratcliff started forward.

"But, my dear sir—"

"Please think a moment, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head. "Is it not wonderful that one of your junior boys should be thought sufficiently clever to play for such a well-known team as Bramcourt? I am proud of you, Wynn; and although the whole thing was irregular, I shall not punish you."

"Th—thank you, sir!" gasped Fatty Wynn, in relief.

"Nevertheless, I cannot allow you to play for Bramcourt any more," said the Head. "You yourself realised that it was not exactly the thing for a pupil of St. Jim's to play professional football, and I am afraid that your visits to Bramcourt will have to come to an end."

"But are you not going to punish Wynn?" asked Mr. Ratcliff quickly.

"Certainly not!" replied Dr. Holmes. "I do not blame Wynn in the least. The offer was made to him, and, being an enthusiastic footballer, he naturally consented. I shall write to Mr. Cobb and explain the whole thing."

"And what about me?" demanded Derring, with a triumphant grin.

"I shall mention to Mr. Cobb your disgraceful behaviour!" said the Head sternly. "And strongly advise the club to get rid of you!—You will leave this house, sir, at once!"

"Well, I've done what I came to do, so I'm satisfied," said Derring. "And if you tell any lies to—old Cobb—"

The Head rose angrily.

"You impertinent rascal!" he shouted. "Leave me immediately!"

And Derring slunk out of the room, realising that he would have done better to use more polite language towards boys and masters.

Mr. Ratcliff was done, for the Head had decided that Fatty Wynn did not deserve any punishment.

"Well, it's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn, as he and his chums crossed the quad. "But, after all, I didn't expect it to last."

"No, that would have been a bit too much," agreed Figgins. "And you've still got some tin left out of last week's salary? The Head's acted like a brick!"

"Rather!" agreed Fatty Wynn. "And old Ratty's acted like a cad! My hat, he was properly done in the eye!"

And Figgins & Co., feeling quite cheerful, went into the House and were soon engaged in explaining the circumstances to an excited crowd of juniors.

On Wednesday morning Fatty Wynn was surprised and delighted to receive a letter from Mr. Cobb. The managing-director of the Bramcourt Rovers Football Club expressed his regret that Fatty Wynn could play no more, and enclosed a cheque for three pounds, as a little recognition of Fatty's splendid efforts on behalf of the club.

Mr. Cobb also said that he had profited by the Head's letter, and that he had dismissed Derring from the club's service. It so happened that another man from the North was available, and so the team was not left in a hole.

That afternoon the St. Jim's juniors played a match with Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School. Fatty Wynn displayed his splendid form to full advantage, and his chums were delighted with him. Not once did he allow the ball to pass him, and the game ended in a magnificent victory for St. Jim's. They scored four goals against the visitors, and the Grammar School had to admit themselves beaten.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not crow over their victory. On the contrary, they treated Gordon Gay & Co. like lords. Fatty Wynn stood a gorgeous feast to the members of both teams, and the day ended up merrily.

And so Fatty Wynn's little secret came to an end, and he paid no more visits to Bramcourt. His career had been short, but the other juniors often discussed the time when the Falstaff of the New House had been known as Fatty Wynn—professional.

THE END.

(A magnificent, long, complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. again next Wednesday, entitled: "Ashamed of His Name," by Martin Clifford. Don't fail to order next week's "GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)