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FOILED AT THE FINISH!



MONSIEUR MORNY BATS IN THE GREAT MATCH!

(An Amusing Incident in the Splendid Complete School Story in this issue.)

The Editor's Chat.

Note—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME.

Our next Grand, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's is the story of plot and a counterplot between the rival factions of the School House and New House. There are many amusing incidents, and it is not until the last moment that the New House party find that the honours of the day rest with their opponents. You will thoroughly enjoy

"AT FIGGY'S EXPENSE!"

By Martin Clifford.

The next of Michael Poole's splendid school stories of Dexter & Co. at St. Katie's deals with a new arrival, who is something out of the ordinary run of new boys. This story is quite the best, in my opinion, that Michael Poole has given us so far, and, judging by the great popularity of this new series, it will meet with a great reception. You cannot afford to miss

"THE BOY FROM AUSTRALIA!"

By Michael Poole.

Next week there is another bright, chatty story of Jack Thornton's experiences in Australia. Our special contributor, "Goose," manages to impart a great deal of interesting information about this favoured country—one of the most important of the great British Dominions—in a bright and attractive form. All will be interested in

"A NEW CHUM FROM AUSTRALIA,"

By "Goose."

HELD OVER!

I regret that it has been necessary to "hold over" the contribution of the "new chum's" Australian experiences from this issue of the GEM LIBRARY. Mr. Martin Clifford required extra space in order to do full justice to his splendid story, "Foiled at the Finish," and, as you will see, I have had a hard job to pack it in. Jack Thornton will appear again next week.

Your Editor

Funny
People
From
Funland
Farm!



These are only two of the many jolly characters appearing every Friday in "Little Sparks," which is full of COLOURFUL pictures now, and in like an entirely NEW paper! Take a copy home TODAY!

LITTLE SPARKS

The ALL-PICTURE Paper.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 642.

Foiled at the Finish!

(Continued from Page 20.)

"Vive la France!"

"Hooray!"

Monsieur Morny was beaming as he strutted across the turf, his bat tucked under his arm. He stopped mid-way to bow gracefully in response to the cheers of the onlookers. This convulsed the crowd, and Tom Merry & Co. howled with laughter.

The bowling came to Marcel Bardiot at first, and he savagely hit it to the boundary.

The next delivery he intended should also be a boundary hit, but the ball was smartly fielded by lanky-legged Figgins, who sent the ball to Monty Lowther, who in his turn almost stumped Monsieur Morny.

Then Mossoo faced Levison, and the onlookers waited expectantly.

Levison grinned, and sent down the ball with a rush.

Mossoo raised his bat in the same manner as a golfer does his club, and when the ball was bounding towards his wicket, he slammed at it, and a click denoted that the bat had hit home.

"Hooray!" yelled the crowd.

"Well played, Mossoo!"

The ball went sailing high into the air, and eyes were turned upward. Bardiot, determined to make a single of it, started to run, and he yelled to Mossoo, who was taking a breather after his mighty swipe at the ball. Mossoo ran, and reached the other end. Then he started running again. It was not Bardiot's intention to run back, but he had to, for Figgins was fielding the ball, D'Arcy having almost made a catch, and Mossoo looked like getting stumped.

So Mossoo's hit put the French score up two, and the applause for the gratified French master was tumultuous.

Levison again sent the ball down to Mossoo. This time the excited little Frenchman ran out at it and caught it smack on the thick end of the bat. The hit was made with such force, and it came so unexpectedly, that Mossoo sat down on his bat.

A howl of merriment arose from the spectators.

"Up, Mossoo!"

"Run, man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mossoo leapt to his feet and ran. He passed Bardiot, and reached his crease in a breathless state. He would have run back, but the ball was in.

Bardiot took the fourth ball of the over, and scooped it away for four. The fifth and the sixth balls went for two each.

When Fatty Wynn faced Mossoo, the French score was at 226, compared with 242. This left them another sixteen to make in order to make a draw.

The French fellows looked far from cheerful as they saw Fatty Wynn prepare to bowl to the St. Jim's French master.

Fatty Wynn aimed a deadly ball at Mossoo. Mossoo determined to make a hit, and, to the amazement of all beholders, he hit it. In fact, he hit it backwards, and persisted in making three out of it.

The Frenchmen's score was gradually creeping nearer, and Tom Merry & Co. began to feel anxious again, for Bardiot now took the bowling, and it was had long ago given up hope of ever removing him.

Bardiot scored another boundary to Fatty's first ball, and two from the next, leaving seven more runs to make it a win for his side.

The last ball of the over, however, was such a deadly one that Bardiot had to block it.

Once again Levison faced Mossoo. He sent in a swift delivery, and Mossoo slashed at it. He scooped the ball high into the air, directly over his own head. A roar of laughter arose as this freakish fluke was witnessed. As for Mossoo, he stood there looking at it, waiting for it to come down.

Monty Lowther held out his hands to catch the ball as it descended, but Mossoo, thinking that the ball was about to descend on his own head, gave a jump backwards, cannoned into the wicket, and sat down upon it. The wicket collapsed with a crash, and Monsieur Morny also collapsed.

The field collapsed, too, and so did the spectators—they collapsed with merriment.

A wild, reckless howl of laughter pulsed over the playing-fields. Monsieur Morny, sitting on the three stumps and the bails, blinked round him in bewilderment.

"Mon Dieu!" he gasped. "Is it zat I am out, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, striding forward with Marcel Bardiot to assist Mossoo to his feet. "Yes, you're out, sir! Mustn't sit on your wicket, you know! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cheers and laughter rang out, and the spectators, now that the match was over, crowded upon the field.

The French fellows, who had lost by so few runs, were cheered heartily, and Bardiot, their captain, was "chaired."

If the field with Tom Merry, Levison, and Fatty Wynn.

Gordon Gay was the first to congratulate Tom Merry & Co.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with the fiercest noble pater had recently sent him, had provided a feast fit for the gods in the Rag. Thither went both teams of cricketers, and Mossoo and Gordon Gay & Co. were honoured guests.

It was a scrumptious feed, and Fatty Wynn in particular enjoyed it to the full.

Rousing cheers followed the French team as they drove away to Rylcombe Station in the brakes which had been recalled.

"Hip-hip-hooray!"

"Bravo, Bardiot!"

"Vive la France!"

And, as the brakes rattled away, there came the cry in French:

"Vive St. Jim's!"

And Tom Merry & Co., returning indoors after a most exciting day, chuckled mightily over the events which had preceded the great match, and congratulated themselves for having pulled off a victory over the renowned French team, though not without great difficulty.

As for Gordon Gay & Co., they did not begrudge Tom Merry & Co. their honours. They had thoroughly enjoyed the match, and, though they buried the hatchet for the time being, they still bore in their memories, for future reference, that, in their repeated endeavours to obtain a match with the French schoolboys, they had been foiled at the Finish!

THE END.

(Another grand, long, complete story of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "At Figgy's Expense!" by Martin Clifford. Order yours "Gem" Library in advance.)



FOILED AT THE FINISH!

By . . .

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 1.

The Hat Trick!

"WEADY, deah boys?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, looked in at Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage—the study he shared with his chums, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby.

These latter youths, arrayed, like Gussy, in flannels, were standing in the study, impatient frowns upon their brows.

"Yes, we're ready, you ass!" growled Blake. "We've been waiting half an hour for you. Where the dickens have you been to, you chump?"

"Weally, Blake," protested Gussy warmly, looking severely at his chum through his monocle, "I have been up to the dorm to change into my new cwicketin' twousands. They are a weally wippin' pair of bags, bai Jove! They fit me a treat, don't they, deah boys?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby gave D'Arcy's beautiful nether garments a glare, and, grunting inaudible remarks, they took up their bats and walked from the room. D'Arcy followed them.

"You blessed slacker," said Blake to Gussy, as they walked downstairs and into the quadrangle. "Tom Merry told us to be down at the nets by half-past two. We've got to spend the half-hour hard at cwicket practice, and we can't afford to waste time."

"No, wathah not, deah boy!" said Gussy. "But a fellah must take time to change into his flannels, you know. I'm wathah partic wogardin' my clobber!"

As they approached the playing-fields, Tom Merry & Co., surrounded by a score of flannel-clad cricketers, beckoned to them to hurry.

The reign of football had ended its term, and King Cricket now dominated the hearts of the sportsmen of St. Jim's.

The St. Jim's juniors were keen on all games; at football they were decidedly "hot stuff," and at cricket they excelled. Tom Merry, captain of the Junior Eleven, performed his duties manfully, and, now that the important cricket season had commenced, he was determined that the noble traditions of St. Jim's on the sporting-field should be

upheld, and was keeping his merry men hard at practice.

"Buck up, you slackers!" bawled Tom Merry to the late arrivals, as they ran over to the nets. "We've been waiting for you since half-past two. It's an ideal afternoon for practice, and we mustn't waste time!"

"Sorry," said Blake. "We've been waiting for Gussy. The prize chump has been rigging himself out like a tailor's dummy again!"

"Look heah, Blake—"

"Oh, stop ragging!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "I say, Blake, I've spanking news from Hartley—the place where the French schoolboy cricketers are staying, you know. They are travelling round England, and intended leaving for the Midlands on Saturday. But, in answer to my application for a game with them, Barriot, their captain, has written to say that he'll be pleased to bring his team over to St. Jim's on Saturday afternoon, in order to play us a cricket-match. That's ripping, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Top-hole!" said Blake enthusiastically. "My word, Tommy, we've struck lucky, haven't we? Those Froggies are supposed to be jolly hot stuff, and it's rumoured that they come, they see, and they conquer, like old Julius Caesar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's so!" agreed Tom Merry, grinning. "That's why I wrote to their captain, and asked for a game. I want to see what St. Jim's can do against them. It will be a fine feather in our cap if we can give them a licking—eh—what?"

"What-ho!"

"So, chaps," said the junior captain briskly, "we've got to stick at practice. We've the whole afternoon to ourselves, and we must make the best of it. Fatty, old chap, I want you to try us with some of your famous yorkers!"

Fatty Wynn of the New House, the champion bowler of St. Jim's, grinned. He was there with Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern, his chums of the New House.

Although Fatty was a corpulent youth, he was a leviathan on the sports field, and worth his weight in gold to the Junior Eleven. He picked up the ball,

and strolled on to the newly-rolled pitch before the nets.

"I'm ready," he said. "I'm going to practise a new break, which I reckon will diddle any batsman. Going in, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry strapped on his pads, took up the willow, and took his stand at the wicket. Fatty Wynn stood away from his crease, seemed to lick his lips, tossed the ball, took a little run, and sent down the leather.

Tom Merry, his eyes wide open, managed to stop it. Blake tossed the ball back to Fatty, who grinned good-humouredly.

"Play up, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Tommy's on his guard, but you can break it!"

Fatty grasped the ball, measured his length, his eye on Tom Merry's bat. Then, with a run and a twist, he was rid of the ball, which came down with unerring swiftness towards the wicket.

Tom Merry ran forward to play it, but the ball, just as Tom timed his stroke, nipped neatly away, and crashed into the off stump before Tom's bat came down.

Tom Merry gasped as he heard the balls fall, and a chortle of delight arose from Figgins.

"How's that, umpire?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Try that again, Fatty, will you?"

Fatty tried it again, and this time Tom Merry managed to stop the ball. Fatty had two more tries, and the second shattered the wicket.

"Well, Fatty, that's the limit!" said Tom Merry heartily, as he handed the bat to Monty Lowther. "You're hot stuff, and no mistake. Keep up that form, old son, and we'll put the kybosh on the Froggies properly on Saturday!"

"Heah, heah!"

Monty Lowther was a good, all-round cricketer, but he only survived two balls from Fatty Wynn. Fatty, the champion bowler of the Lower School, seemed to be exceeding himself this season.

Blake succeeded Lowther at the wicket, and stayed five minutes. Kangaroo made a few nice hits, but retired soon with his wicket knocked to smithereens. As one and then another man fell to Fatty

Wynn's deadly bowling, the hopes of Tom Merry rose high.

By this time, other members of the Junior Cricket Club had arrived in their flannels, and Tom Merry picked eleven fellows from among them to comprise a scratch team.

Clifton Dane captained the scratch team, and tossed with Tom Merry. He lost, and sent his men out to field.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo went to the wickets first.

Sidney Clive, who was noted as being a good bowler, took the ball, and faced Kangaroo.

He sent in his first ball with a rush, but Kangaroo scooped it away easily, and 2 runs were scored before Clive again received the ball. Clive tried another swift delivery, and all but caught Kangaroo napping. Once again he tried, and the Cornick scored 1. When Clive faced Tom Merry, more excitement began, for Tom simply slogged the ball all over the field in the next three deliveries.

Ralph Rackness Cardew took the next over, but, cunning bowler though he was, he made no impression on either Tom Merry or Kangaroo.

The St. Jim's Second Eleven played up like Trojans, and it was evident that their form was perfect.

Kangaroo had been caught out by Lawrence of the New House, and Blake had taken his place, when a fat, dapper little figure strode upon the scene.

It was Monsieur Morny, the St. Jim's French master. M. Morny was arrayed in glory, for he wore an immaculate frock-coat, fancy waistcoat, and beautiful trousers, and his patent leather boots vied with his topper in shininess.

"Ye gods!" gasped Monty Lowther, viewing the French master with blinking eyes. "Just look at Mossoo, chaps! He's a thing of beauty and a joy for ever—eh, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew had just sent the ball down to Jack Blake. Blake ran out and swiped at the ball.

With a merry click the leather sailed away, and the eyes of the St. Jim's cricketers followed it.

Bang!

By some weird freak of fate, M. Morny happened to be standing in the path of the whizzing cricket-ball. He did not see it coming until it was almost upon him. Then, with a wild yell, he ducked, and a loud bang arose as the ball cannoned into his lovely topper and sent it spinning into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers, immensely tickled.

M. Morny blinked confusedly round him, and he seemed to gulp when he saw his beautiful topper reposing on the grass, a huge dent in its side, where the hard ball had struck it.

Disby ran forward, picked up the ball, and tossed it to Cardew. Then he picked up Mossoo's topper and held it out to that bewildered gentleman.

"Your topper, Mossoo—" he said innocently. "I'm afraid it's a trifle bent, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the onlookers.

"Mon dieu!" gasped M. Morny, placing a hand upon his heaving waistcoat. "Mon chapeau—eet is ruin! Oh, you veekid garçons—"

"Sorry, sir!" bawled Blake, who was chuckling. "It was quite an accident, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the others, for the expression upon the French master's face was really too funny for words.

"Ceil!" cried M. Morny, going red, as the laughter of the boys struck his ears.

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"You laff me to scorn! Je crois que vous prenez a tache de ma rendre ridicule! Helas! Mon chapeau!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monsieur Morny gazed, with a most lugubrious expression of countenance, upon his battered topper. The others looked at poor Mossoo and shrieked.

"Taisez vous!" cried the excited little Frenchman. "Is it at you pelt me viz ze ball? You did trow him on ze purpose!"

"On ze hat, sir!" murmured Monty Lowther, and there was a shout of laughter.

Monsieur Morny dashed his topper to the ground in a fit of passion, and fairly danced—fortunately, not upon his hat.

"You make me to tear ze hair, you had garçons!" he shrieked. "Mon chapeau, c'est ruine—oh mon Dieu! Je vous donnerai un coup de main, Blake—I will smite you on ze nose!"

"Look here, Mossoo—" began Blake in alarm, as Monsieur made a dash across the pitch towards him. "I didn't mean—it was only an accident! Yarooogh!"

Blake staggered back and crashed into the wicket, which collapsed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "How's that, umpire? You're out, Blake!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Tom Merry, coming up and stifling his laughter. "Blake didn't do it purposely. You—ahem!—happened to get in the way of the ball—"

Mossoo calmed down somewhat, and blinked first at Blake, then at Merry. "Is it zat it was von accident, zen?" he demanded. "Blake, you did not bash ze chapeau on ze purpose?"

"Nunno, sir!" growled Blake, rubbing his nose lugubriously. "You got in the way of the ball, and—"

"Zen it is zat I apologise, Blake," said Mossoo. "Ceil! But mon lovely chapeau! I zink zat you shall not continue wiz ze game, and—"

"Oh, Mossoo!" gasped Tom Merry. "We must keep on with the game! It's cricket, and—"

"But it's not ze cricket to smite mon chapeau," said Monsieur Morny indignantly. "All ze poys will go aray tout de suite!"

"But, sir—"

"Ce n'a fait rien!" said the French master. "Je comprends zat my ruin chapeau was vun accident, but ze accident must not occur vonce more!"

The St. Jim's cricketers looked glumly at each other.

"Look here, Mossoo," said Tom Merry desperately. "We must keep up our play. We've a most important match on Saturday, with a French team and—"

"Eh?"

"We are playing some French fellows who are touring England, sir," explained Tom Merry. "It's only by luck that we've managed to secure a game with them, and we simply must practise, sir, because they are such a strong team!"

"Allons done!" gasped Monsieur Morny, evidently in great surprise.

"You play ze cricket avec les Francais?"

"Comment mais! Is zat ze topper, Merry?"

"That's the truth, sir!" replied Merry eagerly. "The Froggies—ahem!—the French team are coming over here on Saturday to play us, sir. That's why we're practising—to get ready for 'em!"

"Eh, bien!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "Zat is very good! Continue wiz ze practise of ze cricket, mes garçons! It please me very mooch to hear ze news, and I look towards ze match, what you call him, on Saturday. Allez vous en!"

"Oh, thank you, Mossoo!"

Monsieur Morny seemed to have quite recovered his good humour at the news that his pupils were playing a team of his own countrymen on Saturday. Mossoo was quick to lose his temper, but as quick to regain it. And the news that Tom Merry & Co. were playing a French cricket team seemed to completely mollify him.

In fact, as Mossoo stroked off the pitch he fairly beamed. Disregarding his battered topper, he made his way over to the School House, leaving the juniors on the cricket-pitch, chuckling.

"Well, Mossoo's the limit!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "He's all fire and brimstone one minute, and as meek and mild as a baa-lamb the next. Good old Froggie!"

"Thank goodness he didn't stop the game!" said Tom Merry. "Now, then, chaps, let's get on with the washing! I've got to run down to the village for a couple of new bats before tea!"

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

"Play, Blakey!"

Cardew took the ball, the fieldsmen resumed their places, and the scratch match proceeded.

It was in full swing again when the dapper figure of Monsieur Morny reappeared in the quadrangle, resplendent in a new topper.

Mossoo did not venture near the cricket-ground again, but walked straight over to the gates.

From the playing-fields came the merry click of leather meeting willow, and the shouts of the schoolboy cricketers.

The heroes of the Lower School at St. Jim's spent all the afternoon on the cricket-ground, and when the scratch match was over, the Junior Eleven returned to the tuckshop, victors by 82 runs.

And, having regaled themselves with ginger-pop and doughnuts, Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners strolled out of gates and down to Rylcombe, in order to fetch two new bats they had ordered a week ago from the sports outfitters.

They were feeling extremely pleased with themselves, and with the prowess of the Junior Eleven, and they looked forward very eagerly to the great match with the French team on Saturday.

CHAPTER 2.

Caught Napping!

"WE'VE been done in the eye!"

said Gordon Gay.

And by those St. Jim's

chaps, by gum!" growled

Jack Wootton.

Five schoolboys, wearing the Rylcombe Grammar School cap, were strolling up Rylcombe Lane that afternoon. Gordon Gay, the leader of the Grammarians, wore a worried frown. His chums, Wootton major and Wootton minor, Frank Monk, and Mont Blong, also looked a trifle worried.

Gordon Gay smote his left hand with his right fist.

"It's too bad!" he said. "We're not going to be superseded by Tom Merry & Co. They've bargained a match with the travelling French schoolboys, when we wanted to play 'em."

"Why didn't you write to that chap Bardiot beforehand, then?" growled Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay glared at his chum.

"How on earth did I know that those St. Jim's chumps would tumble to the same idea?" he demanded. "Of course, they must have heard of how a team of French schoolboys were touring England, playing cricket with local clubs, but I didn't think they'd have the nerve to



There was a wild yell from Monsieur Morny and he ducked, but just too late. The cricket ball cannoned into his lovely topper with a loud bang and sent it spinning into the air. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers. (See Chapter 1.)

write to the Froggies, asking for a French team would agree, he imagined that Tom Merry & Co. would be ready to tear their hair when they heard that the Grammarians had played a match with the famous French team.

"Well, that's exactly what they have done," said Harry Wootton. "And they've bagged a game, too!" said Jack Wootton.

"And as the Froggies are travelling North on Monday, we sha'n't have a chance of a game at all!" chimed in Frank Monk glumly.

Gordon Gay growled. Much rivalry existed between the heroes of Rylcombe Grammar School and Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. They were sworn foes, and since time immemorial had been on terms of the keenest enmity.

Gordon Gay prided himself on being an astute leader of the Grammar School juniors, and was confident that the Grammar School was far and away the better school of the two. Tom Merry & Co. were equally convinced that St. Jim's was much superior in all things to Rylcombe Grammar School, and therein lay the root of an unflagging warfare. For terms past Tom Merry & Co. and Gordon Gay & Co. waged fierce strife, each intent on "putting the kybosh" on the other, and each having the honour and prestige of his own school religiously at heart.

Gordon Gay had written to Marcel Bardot, the captain of the travelling French team, asking whether it might be arranged for the French fellows to play a cricket match with Rylcombe Grammar School on Saturday. Gordon Gay had congratulated himself, when writing this letter, that he had stolen a march on his St. Jim's rivals, and, confident that the

French team would agree, he imagined that Tom Merry & Co. would be ready to tear their hair when they heard that the Grammarians had played a match with the famous French team.

But when, a day later, Gordon Gay had heard from the French captain to the effect that a match had already been fixed with the St. Jim's Junior Eleven, the hero of Rylcombe Grammar School had received a decided shock. It was gall and wormwood to him to realise that Tom Merry had stolen a march over him, and when he contemplated the situation he felt ready to tear his hair himself.

"Oh, won't the beggars crow over it if the match does come off!" groaned Frank Monk. "We shall have to hide our diminished heads, Gay."

Gordon Gay ramed his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and the light of determination entered his eye.

"If I can possibly help it," he said, "that match between St. Jim's and the Froggies won't come off—if I can work the giddy oracle, we'll play the Froggies instead of Tom Merry & Co."

"But how is it to be worked?" demanded Harry Wootton.

Gordon Gay shook his head, and subsided into the depths of thought.

Together the chums of the Grammar School walked down the lane, contemplating the problem of how to frustrate the match between St. Jim's and the French team, and "bag" the match themselves.

Suddenly Mon. Blong, the French junior, uttered a warning hiss, and stopped.

"Tenez!" he whispered. "I hear ze footsteps on ze road!"

Gordon Gay & Co. stopped to listen. "By hokey, it sounds like Tom Merry and some of his gang!" exclaimed Gordon Gay swiftly. "We're in luck, chaps, if it is. Here, duck into ambush behind those bushes—quick! If Tom Merry & Co. amble along here, we'll cop them on the hop, and, perhaps, try a little persuasion!"

"Oh, good!" Three figures rounded a bend in the lane as the heroes of the Grammar School darted into seclusion behind the bushes.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were returning from Rylcombe. Tom Merry had the bats tucked beneath his arm.

The Terrible Three of the Shell Form at St. Jim's strolled blithely along, blissfully unconscious that enemies were lurking in the bushes beside the lane.

With the stealth of Red Indians, the five Grammar School juniors crept out of concealment, and behind the unsuspecting St. Jim's fellows.

"Yaroooh!" roared Tom Merry, as an arm encircled his throat and dragged him backwards. "What the—Yerrug!"

"Hellup!" gurgled Monty Wootton, who was assailed by the two Woottons.

"Rescue, St. Jim's—Ooooch!"

Manners, with Frank Monk and Mont Blong on top of him, was helpless.

The Terrible Three were taken completely by surprise. In a twinkling they were down and out, reclining at full length on the grassy bank of the lane.

wrote Gordon Gay & Co. sitting upon their chests.

"Got you, my beauties!" chuckled Gordon Gay, smiling a cherub-like smile at Tom Merry. "You didn't expect us so soon, did you?"

"You—you—" gasped Tom Merry, gazing at his captors in breathless wrath. "You rotters, what's the little game?"

"Lemme get up!" bellowed Monty Lowther, struggling beneath the combined weight of the Woottons. "I'll spifficate you, you—you bouncers! I—I—"

"Hush, hush!" said Gordon Gay chidingly. "If he doesn't hush, Jacky, stuff a lump of grass in his mouth, will you?"

"What-ho!" grinned Jack Wootton, pulling a lump of turf from the bank.

Monty Lowther blinked at the turf, and, deeming discretion the better part of valour, he wrathfully subsided.

The vanished St. Jim's juniors gazed at Gordon Gay & Co. with homicidal looks.

"Well, you beggars," said Tom Merry, with an effort to be calm, "what have you captured us for—a rag?"

"Bravo! You've hit the nail on the head first go, Tom Merry!" said Gordon Gay sweetly. "We're going to rag you until you agree to a little proposition I'm going to make to you."

"A proposition?" gasped Tom Merry in wonder. "What on earth are you driving at, you ass?"

Gordon Gay chuckled deeply.

"Hearken unto me, frail children of dust!" he said. "You are playing a cricket match with the famous French schoolboy team on Saturday—is that not so?"

Tom Merry started, and looked in wonder at Gordon Gay.

"Is that not so?" demanded the leader of the Grammarians.

"Yes, we've fixed up a match with the French fellows," replied Tom Merry.

"What's that to do with you, Gay?"

"Lots!" replied Gordon Gay cheerfully. "We want to play the Froggies instead—see?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"It's like your cheek, anyway, to ask a respectable team of cricketers to play you," said Gordon Gay severely. "A team of French poodies is more about

your mark, I should think, Tom Merry."

"Look here, you cheeky rotter—"

began Tom Merry, straggling to get up.

"Now, now!" chided Gordon Gay soothingly, grasping one of the bats which had fallen to the ground, and giving Tom Merry a playful tap on the head. "Don't get excited, I implore thee! I was just stating a howling truth. You can't play cricket for toffee; you know that, Tom Merry, don't you?"

"Rats!" hooted Tom Merry furiously.

"Wait till we meet you on the field, you wasters—we'll show you what St. Jim's can do. Why, we—we'll knock spots off you!"

"Hear, hear!" bawled Monty Lowther and Manners.

Gordon Gay laughed scornfully.

"You are labouring under delusions, old beans!" he said. "Wait till the time comes—that's all! However, that is not the case in point. You've fixed up a match with the Froggies for Saturday, and you've likewise got to back out of it, in our favour! Got that?"

Tom Merry and his fallen chums stared incredulously at Gordon Gay.

"Did you speak?" asked Tom Merry faintly.

"Say it again, Gay!"

"Certainly, old sport!" said Gordon Gay cheerily.

"You've got to scratch that fixture, Tom Merry, so that the Froggies will be free to play us a match! This is the drift of my remarks!"

"Why, you—you cheeky cads!" gasped Tom Merry. "Of all the nerve—"

"We won't do it!" howled Monty Lowther fiercely.

"No fear!" chimed in Manners.

The Grammarians, holding the Terrible Three securely on the grass, chortled mightily.

"You've got to!" said Gordon Gay.

"Look here, Tom Merry, we want the distinction of playing those Froggy cricketers, and there's a great possibility of us licking them. We don't exactly wish to do you out of the match, but the Froggies are only available for Saturday, and therefore the Grammar School, being the first and foremost school in the whole county, must be the ones to play them."

"Rats!" snapped Tom Merry.

"And many of 'em!" burst out

Monty Lowther. "Go and eat coke, you Grammar School wasters! You've got a pretty high opinion of your Home for Moulting Maniacs, haven't you?"

"Now, don't be sneaky!" said Gordon Gay, waddling. "I don't mean to be unkind, you fellows, but you really must be induced to scratch that match with the French team. If you promise to write to Bardiot, and tell him you are sorry you will be unable to fulfil the fixture, Tom Merry, all will be well. If not—well, there are ways and means, you know."

Tom Merry & Co. glowered at Gordon Gay.

"You'll never make me give in, you rotter!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "We've fixed our match with the French fellows, and we're playing it, I reckon. Wild horses won't make us scratch the fixture, so you can do your worst!"

"He can't do much, anyway," said Manners quietly.

Gordon Gay withdrew a pair of pocket scissors from his pocket, and snipped them.

Tom Merry & Co., and the other Grammarians looked at Gay in wonder.

"These scissors will work the giddy crado, think," chuckled the Grammar School leader. "Now, Tom Merry, will you write to Bardiot, to scratch the fixture in our favour?"

"Never!" said Tom Merry resolutely.

"What are you going to do, Gay?"

"Hold his legs tight, Monk!" ordered Gordon Gay.

Greatly wondering, Frank Monk grabbed Tom Merry's legs, and held them, despite Tom's vigorous kicks. Gordon Gay had to render him assistance in holding Tom's legs.

"Now, don't kick, Tommy, or I might hurt you!" said Gordon Gay, bending down and snipping the scissors. "I'm going to cut your trousers off at the knee!"

Tom Merry groaned, and gazed dismally around him. He realised that his position was a most precarious one.

Suddenly, as his gaze wandered towards a clump of bushes up the lane, a ray of hope lit up his countenance.

For three fellows had come into view—one, long and lanky, another short and plump, and the other sturdy. They were Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and George Kerr, the heroes of the New House at St. Jim's.

Figgins & Co. stopped short when they beheld Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther in the toils of the Grammarians. Then Tom Merry let up a great, ringing shout.

"Rescue, St. Jim's! Buck up, Figg!"

Gordon Gay & Co. wheeled round, and gazed with startled eyes at the newcomers.

"Oh, crumbs! That's done it!" gasped Gordon Gay, in dismay. "This is where we slide, chaps!"

"Scoot!" muttered Frank Monk.

The Grammar School juniors jumped up from their captives, and made a bolt up the lane.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were now springing towards them.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, now released, jumped to their feet.

"Nab the rotters before they bunk!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom was pounding up the lane after the fleeing Grammarians, and, having recovered from their astonishment, Figgins & Co. followed suit.

"Yah!" booted Gordon Gay, scrambling over a fence after his chums.

"You've done us in the eye, Tom Merry, but you'll never catch us!" Rats!

The St. Jim's fellows, seeing that pursuit was hopeless, soon gave up the chase. Chortling mightily over the discomfiture

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The Terrible Three were taken completely by surprise. In a twinkling they were down and out, reclining full length on the ground, with Gordon Gay & Co. sitting upon their chests. "Got you, my beauties!" chuckled Gordon Gay. (See Chapter 2.)

of the Grammarians, they strolled away from the scene, and wended their footsteps back to St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, Gordon Gay & Co., with feelings that were unutterable, tramped back towards the Grammar School.

"What a giddy frost!" moaned Frank Monk. "We're dished, diddled, and done properly!"

Gordon Gay smote the air savagely. "We may be for the present, but we sha'n't be," he said. "We'll do the buggars out of that match, and play the Froggies ourselves. Boys, I've got an idea!"

"Go and bury it!" growled Wootton major. "Be-p-r-r! Look at my trucks! I'm fed up!"

Gordon Gay snorted. "Now, don't be discouraged, you bouncers!" he said. "Just listen to my wheeze, and I'm sure you'll think it's top-hole. These Froggie chaps don't know St. Jim's, do they, and if they were shown into the Grammar School by mistake, they'd be none the wiser. Got that?"

Wootton major grunted. "Well?" demanded Frank Monk.

"Well," said Gordon Gay briskly, "we'll manage to divert the French team into our school on Saturday, and get Tom Merry & Co. out of the way. Then we

shall be free to play the Froggies—see?"

"H'm!" said Wootton minor dubiously. "It might be worked, but what about Tom Merry & Co.?"

"Ah!" grinned Gordon Gay. "That's where the real beauty of my wheeze comes in. Mont Blong, old sport, you've got to work off a game of spoof on Tom Merry & Co."

"Moi?" asked the French junior, in surprise. "Qu'est ce que ze spoof, mon ami?"

"Well," said Gordon Gay, "you're a Froggie, Mont Blong, and I want you to impersonate Bardiot, the French captain, you know. Tom Merry's never seen him, and if you call on Tom Merry to-morrow, and impersonate the Froggy cricket captain, he'll be none the wiser."

"Mon Dieu!" gasped Mont Blong, surveying Gay in amazement. "Pourquoi ze impersonation—ze spoof?"

"Why, you're simply got to tell Tom Merry that you will be unable to bring the French team to St. Jim's on Saturday, but say that the match can be played at Hartley, if the St. Jim's Junior Eleven will travel over there—see? There's no need to tell lies—for I hate whoopers! Tom Merry will be sprayed, and on Saturday he and his team will travel over to Hartley, while the Froggies will be travelling here. We'll intercept the

Froggies at Wayland, and bring them to the Grammar School. They'll be none the wiser, and we'll play 'em instead of Tom Merry & Co. Those bouncers will have a series of blue fits, I reckon, when they arrive at Hartley and find the French fellows departed. Ha, ha, ha! If you'll only do the needful, Mont Blong, we'll come out top dogs, after all."

"Eh, bien, mon ami," said Mont Blong, beaming. "I will ze trick work. You can on me rely."

"Bravo, Mont Blong!" said Gordon Gay heartily. "We'll put the kybosh on those St. Jim's bouncers properly on Saturday, and make 'em sing small—eh, what?"

"Rather!" said his chums. And, feeling a trifle more cheerful now that Gordon Gay had propounded another wheeze which seemed likely to work, the Grammarians tramped homeward.

CHAPTER 3.

Information Received!

TAP! Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were sitting in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage after tea next day, discussing the team for the great match on Saturday, when a tap sounded at the door.

"Come in!" bawled Monty Lowther. In response to Monty's call, the study door opened, and a fat, podgy countenance appeared. This countenance was followed by a fat, plump body, and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth stood revealed.

The Terrible Three viewed Baggy with far from welcome looks.

"Skedaddle, porpoise!" snapped Tom Merry. "We're busy!"

But Baggy Trimble, instead of departing in hot haste, came right into the study and closed the door.

He had a deep, knowing look upon his podgy features, and there was an air of mystery about his whole being.

"I've got something to tell you fellows about—" he began.

"Oh, news garnered from somebody's keyhole?" asked Tom Merry. "Run away, Trimble, we don't want to listen!"

Baggy Trimble glowered at the Terrible Three.

"Oh, really, you rotters, if you're going to give me the cold-shoulder like this, I sha'n't tell you the important news," said the fat youth of the Fourth peevishly. "It's jolly important news, I can assure you, Tom Merry. It's about your match with the French fellows on Saturday."

The eyes of the Terrible Three opened wide, and they stared inquiringly at Baggy Trimble.

"About our match on Saturday?" asked Tom Merry. "What are you driving at, Baggy?"

Baggy Trimble sat down in the armchair and winked at the Terrible Three.

"Ah!" said Baggy, wagging a knowing forefinger at Tom Merry. "That's telling, Tom Merry. I wonder if it would be worth my while to tell you?"

A grim expression crossed Tom Merry's sunny brow.

"Oh, I see your dodge, Trimble!" he said. "You've got wind of something, and want us to bribe you for telling us, eh?"

"Really, Tom Merry, that's hardly the way to put it," said Baggy Trimble indignantly. "The news I've gained was gained by great personal risk to myself. If Gordon Gay had spotted me—"

"Gordon Gay!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "So those Grammar School bouncers are up to something else, are they? What is it, Baggy?"

"Make the rotter spout it out!" growled Monty Lowther, reaching for the poker. "A poker will do the trick rippingly, and—"

"Hi! Leggo that poker, you rotter!" yelled Baggy Trimble, in sudden alarm. "Look here, you beasts, isn't it worth a feed if I tell you what I overheard those Grammar School rotters plotting this afternoon?"

"Well," said Tom Merry, considering. "tell us what you know, and we'll reward you afterwards, Trimble, if your news is worth anything."

"Honour bright?" demanded Baggy Trimble.

"Yes," growled Tom Merry. "Now, you fat fraud, what's the secret?"

"It's like this," said Baggy Trimble. "Directly after tea I went out of gates to fetch a cricket-ball Kildare had slogged over the wall. I hunted for it among the bushes at the other side of the lane, and while I was looking, I heard voices. I crept up, and saw Gordon Gay, Monk, those two Woottons, and Monty Blong, the French chap, hiding in a clump of trees. Gordon Gay was daubing Monty Blong's face with grease-paint, to alter his chivvy. Gordon Gay was saying that once Monty Blong had got the other clobber on, the St. Jim's chaps wouldn't know him. The rotters were discussing

some wheeze, and I managed to tumble to it by listening."

"What was the wheeze?" demanded the Terrible Three breathlessly.

"Well, it appears that Monty Blong is disguising himself as that French captain, Bardiok, or whatever his name is, and is coming to see you, Tom Merry."

"Me?" gasped the Shell captain.

"What for?"

"To ask you to bring your team over to Hartley on Saturday," grinned Baggy Trimble. "He's going to make out that the Froggies can't come over here, so the match will have to be played at Hartley. Of course, that's all spoof—it's only the way of your wheeze to get you out of the way on Saturday, so that when the French team arrive the Grammarians can rush them off to their show and play 'em. I heard Gay mention that they'd meet the French fellows at Wayland, and take them to the Grammar School. As they've never been there before, they wouldn't know which was the Grammar School and which was St. Jim's, would they?"

Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths, and looked at each other meaningly as this startling news sank in.

"My only Sunday topper!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "The—deep beggars! What an awful nerve!"

"Gordon Gay's as artful as they make 'em!" said Monty Lowther, grinning.

"Great pip! Fancy us being taken in by Monty Blong, and going over to Hartley on Saturday!"

Tom Merry shuddered at the bare idea.

"He, he, he!" grinned Baggy Trimble.

"What would have happened if I hadn't tumbled to their wheeze, Tom Merry? You'd have been properly sucked in, wouldn't you?"

Tom Merry nodded slowly.

"It's a fact we should have been," he said. "Well, I'm jiggered! That wheeze beats the band, and no mistake! So Monty Blong is coming here, spoofing as Marcel Bardiok, the French captain!"

"That's it!" said Baggy Trimble. "As soon as I heard the wheeze I found the cricket-ball, gave it back to Kildare, and rushed straight up here to tell you. I expect Monty Blong will be here in a minute!"

"Oh!" breathed Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "There's a plum-cake in the cupboard, and some meringues, Baggy. Take 'em, old sport. And, mind, not a word to anybody else about this!"

"No fear!" said Baggy Trimble, darting towards the study cupboard.

He seized the plum-cake and a bag of meringues, and, chucking with great satisfaction, he bore them away.

When the door had closed behind Baggy the Terrible Three glanced at each other and burst into chuckles.

"Well," gasped the captain of the Lower School, "this is where we'll do old Gordon Gay & Co. in the eye again, I reckon. When old Monty Blong shows his chivvy in here, we'll collar him and give him the biggest ragging of his life—ah, what?"

"Rather!" agreed Monty Lowther and Manners with great relish.

Tap!

The Terrible Three started as a tap sounded at the door, and they looked at each other.

CHAPTER 4.
Diddled Again!

"COME in!" said Tom Merry tensely.

The door opened, and a strange personage entered.

He had the unmistakable look of a

young Frenchman, with small features, dark complexion, and black, gleaming eyes. His was a pleasant face, and his eyes seemed to twinkle merrily as they regarded the three chums of the Shell.

He was attired in a suit of tweeds, the trousers of which were rather baggy. His shoes, which were made of patent leather, were high-heeled, and the toes tapered to a point. He was a typical French boy.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the newcomer, and drew deep breaths.

It seemed impossible that this could be Monty Blong, the French junior of Rylcombe Grammar School, in disguise, for there was no visible trace of "make-up" on his face.

The visitor laid a hand upon his heart, and, holding his cap in the other hand, he murmured, low, sweeping bow to the Terrible Three.

"Bon apres midi, messieurs!" he said in perfect, lisping French. "Good afternoon, mes amis. Do I converse viz Monsieur Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry darted a quick look at his chums and strode forward.

"Yes, old scout, I'm Tom Merry," he said grimly; "and these are my chums—Monty Lowther and Manners. Nab the spoofer, chaps!"

With one accord, the Terrible Three fell upon their visitor and bore him to the carpet.

The French fellow uttered a piercing, shrill wail of surprise and pain as those violent hands were laid upon him, and he smote the carpet with such force that nearly all the breath was knocked out of his body.

"Helas!" he shrieked. "Villains vous! Oooohoooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co., planting themselves upon the frail body of their captive. "Caught beautifully, Monty Blong! You didn't know we were up to your little game, did you?"

"Parbleau!" moaned the fallen French fellow, blinking up with startled eyes at the chortling St. Jim's juniors. "Oh, mon Dieu! Vous avez manque a moi! Vous have insulted me! Oooohoooh! Cochons! Chiens!"

"My word!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Hark at his giddy language. Good job we're not very strodg on French—eh, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The luckless fellow on the floor moaned and gasped most heartily. He wriggled and squirmed, but in the grip of Tom Merry & Co. he was helpless.

"Well," said Tom Merry, surveying their prisoner, "we're nabbed the beggar nicely! Now, what shall we do with him?"

"Rag him baldheaded!" said Monty Lowther. "What about tar and feathers?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Too drastic!" he said. "But we might make him pretty, and send him back to his comrades in a mess. We'll give him some treacle on his napper, to start with."

Monty Lowther went to the cupboard, and withdrew a jar of treacle.

The eyes of their prisoner nearly goggled from his head when he saw the treacle. But when Tom Merry ladled it out of the jar, and plastered a godly portion all over his head, the unhappy French boy exploded.

"He, quoi! Cid!" he shrieked. "Tenez! Tenez! Yoooooooh!"

This latter remark he uttered as Monty

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Lowther stuffed a ladle full of treacle into his mouth.

The unfortunate French boy's gasps and gurgles were truly wonderful to listen to. The varying expressions upon his countenance were remarkable to behold.

When the treacle had been distributed over his head and face and down his neck, Monty Lowther raked down some soot from the chimney, and plastered that over the treacle. The effect was gruesome and striking in the extreme. Their victim's face was completely obliterated by the treacle and the soot, which clung to it lovingly.

"Fi! Fi donc! Yahoooooh! Eh, bah! Ferrrrrugh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry & Co.

Bang!
The door was burst open, and a crowd of startled faces peered within, to behold what was happening.

"What the dickens—" gasped Jack Blake, who was there in front, with Gussy and Digby. "My hat, Tom Merry, what on earth are you up to?"

"Just ragging a visitor!" grinned Tom Merry, pouring a bottle of red ink down the gurgling French boy's neck. "This merry joker is Mont Blong, of the Grammar School. He's come over here to spoof us he's Bardiot, the captain of the French cricket team, and reckoned on sprucing us into travelling over to Hartley on Saturday, instead of waiting here for the Froggies. Ha, ha, ha! We tumbled to his little game, and we're giving him rather a warm reception."

"Bai Jove!"

"Great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter rang down the Shell passage as the Shell fellows gazed upon the struggling French fellow in the Terrible Three's grasp.

"Pouah! Helas! Yerrrugh!" gurgled the hapless youth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I reckon he won't be in a hurry to visit us again!" grinned Monty Lowther. "He doesn't seem to relish the taste of treacle and soot, does he?"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Suddenly there was a stir in the passage, and Monsieur Morny, the French master, pushed his way through the crowd of chortling juniors.

Mossoo fell back as, reaching the door of Study No. 10, he gazed within, and beheld the startling apparition of a squirming figure, plastered with treacle and soot, writhing in the grasp of Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners.

"Poy, what is ze mattair?" exclaimed Mossoo, in horror.

The Terrible Three let go of their victim, jumped up in alarm, and blinked at the French master in dismay.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry. "I—I—We—we—"

"You torture ze victim of your spite!" cried Mossoo. "Garcons barbares! Cruel mechants! Qui est ce pauvre garcon? Who is ze poor fellow? A 'pauvre garcon,' came from the 'pauvre garcon,' as he struggled to his feet. "Oh, mon Dieu! Je suis presque tue! I am almost killed! Helas!"

Monsieur Morny's eyes opened wide as he heard these exclamations in his own native tongue. He strode forward and gazed at the hapless youth, who was now gouging soot and treacle from his face.

"Vous etes Francais!" exclaimed Mossoo, in wonderment. "Qui etes vous? M'informez, monsieur!"

"Grooooooh!" groaned the French boy, mopping his face, and blinking

dolorously at Monsieur Morny. Then he gave a jump of surprise, and uttered a wild, excited cry.

"Monsieur Morny! Mon oncle! C'est vous!"

"Monsieur Morny! My uncle! It is you!"

Mossoo rubbed his eyes, and, striding forward, he grasped the French boy by the arms and peered eagerly into his face.

"Mon Dieu!" he gasped. "Mon cher Marcel! My nephew! C'est vous!"

And then, to the amazement of everybody, Monsieur Morny seized the French boy in his arms, and utterly disregarding the soot and treacle on that youth's face, he planted a sequence of gushing kisses upon his cheeks.

"My giddy aunt!" breathed Tom Merry, blinking bewilderedly at the two.

"Is—is that really Marcel Bardiot? Can it be possible we've made some awful mistake? And—and he knows Mossoo!"

"He's calling Morny his uncle!" gasped Monty Lowther, in wonderment.

Monsieur Morny looked round upon the assembly with flashing eyes.

"Who has committed its crime to my nephew Marcel?" he cried. "I am shocked—smitten to ze heart!"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Tom Merry penitently. "We—we didn't know it was Monsieur Bardiot. We—we thought—"

"It's a horrid mistake, Mossoo!" groaned Monty Lowther. "We took Monsieur Bardiot to be a spoofer—I mean, Mont Blong, of Rylcombe Grammar School, whom we expected to come over in disguise."

"Pas possible!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny, regarding his smitten nephew in deep dismay and consternation. "It is zat you speak ze fibs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're not telling whoppers, sir!" cried Tom Merry. "We really imagined Monsieur Bardiot to be somebody else—an enemy of ours!"

"Ze fibs roll from ze tongue like watair from ze cat's back!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "Marcel, tu es malheureux. I will ze rascals punish—"

"Master Merry!"

It was the voice of Toby, the school page; and next minute Toby himself pushed his way through the crowd.

"Master Merry, there's a furrin gent to see you, wot calls himself Mongseer Bardyho—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in the passage.

"My wot!" gasped Tom Merry. "It must be Mont Blong, then, at last. I must be Blake, old man, run down and fetch the beggar up here, will you? Don't let him escape, whatever you do!"

"Right-ho, Tommy!" said Blake; and he and Digby moved away.

Monsieur Morny and his hapless nephew conversed excitedly together in French, whilst the others waited for the visitor to appear.

Soon sounds of turmoil and strife sounded in the passage, and Jack Blake and Digby came in view, dragging a protesting figure between them.

"Kim on, sonny!" said Blake. "You've got to come before the judgment seat, by hokey! Bring him in, Dig!"

"Yoooooooh! Dechargez moi! Parbleu!" shrieked Mont Blong in terror.

The fellows made way for the three, and Blake and Digby bundled the disguised Grammar School junior into Study No. 10.

Both Monsieur Morny and Marcel Bardiot gaped at the newcomer in amazement.

It was apparent that he was disguised, for in the rough-and-tumble with Blake

Mont Blong's wig had become disarranged, and it was now reposing over his left ear.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny, in amazement. "Un autre, Francais! Anuzer vun! Qui est il?"

"This is the spoofer, sir!" said Tom Merry, grasping the discomfited Mont Blong by the scruff of his neck. "See, Mossoo, he is in disguise! He is the Johnny we mistook for your nephew!"

Mont Blong protested strongly in French, and Monsieur Morny and Marcel Bardiot listened to him in wonder.

"Here, talk to us in a lingo we understand properly!" said Tom Merry, shaking Mont Blong. "It's all up, Mont Blong! We've caught you, and you ought to thank your lucky stars you weren't ragged like—like the genuine Bardiot! You've got to explain matters—see!"

Mont Blong calmed down when he became aware of the other French boy, and he stared at the soot and treacle in amazement.

Marcel Bardiot strode forward, and uttered some swift sentences in French.

Mont Blong of the Grammar School opened wide his eyes in surprise at first, and then he chuckled.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he laughed. "Quelle plaisanterie! What a joke! Oh, mon Dieu! C'est tres drôle!"

Tom Merry did not laugh. His face was very grim.

"Look here, Mont Blong," he said, "we mistook Monsieur Bardiot for you, and ragged him. You've got to explain to him, and make it all right for us—see?"

Mont Blong nodded.

"Tout bien!" he said. "Very well, Tom Merry. I see ze joke, and I laf, although I feel ze sorrow zat I succeed I failed, and viz convert viz Monsieur Bardiot, and everyting in ze garden will be lovely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mont Blong then spoke long and earnestly with both Bardiot and Monsieur Morny. It was evident that he was explaining everything.

Tom Merry & Co. watched the French cricket captain eagerly and anxiously, and they felt great relief when they saw the dawning twinkle in his dark eyes.

At last Marcel Bardiot uttered a rippling laugh.

"Eh, bien, mes amis," he said. "It is well, my friends. Monsieur Blanc has everything explained, and I am satisfied. But—helas—I feel very mooch what you call in ze mess. I would cleanse myself."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath of relief. "You are a sport, Monsieur Bardiot! Everything is all right about the match on Saturday!"

"Tout bien!" said Marcel Bardiot, smiling beneath the soot and the treacle.

"Zat is ze subject I visit you to discuss. I also come in search of my uncle, and I have found him. Pour! So long as I a wash obtain, I worry my brain no more!"

"Come viz me, mon cher Marcel," interposed Monsieur Morny. "I will take you to ze wash. Zen I speak to you about la belle France—eh?"

"Bien!" replied Bardiot. "Monsieur Merry, I return to you tout de suite to speak upon ze match."

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

Monsieur Morny took his nephew lovingly by the arm, and led him away. He piloted him upstairs to the bathroom, conversing with him volubly in French.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other and then at Mont Blong.

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The Grammarian was looking anxious. "Well," said Tom Merry, "I reckon we ought to scrag this binder, chaps! But as he made all right with Bardiot and Messoso, we'll let him off lightly. We'll just truss him up, and send him back to Gordon Gay & Co.!"

"Heah, heah!"
"That's the ticket, Tommy!"
Powerless to resist, Mont Blong was seized. His hands were tied behind him, and his wig stuffed down the back of his neck.

Then, in the midst of a surging throng, he was borne downstairs, across the quadrangle, and through the gates.

Out in the Rylcombe lane, Tom Merry & Co. drove in a few minutes' start, and told him to run. They warned him that if they caught him he would be hurled into the ditch.

Needless to say, Mont Blong did not hesitate. He took to his heels and ran, and a roar of laughter re-echoed o'er the breeze as the French schoolboy at last disappeared round a bend in the lane, his hands still tied behind him.

Then Tom Merry & Co. returned indoors, and made their study tidy, in order to receive Marcel Bardiot.

Half an hour later the French skipper entered Study No. 10, now quite clean, and all smiles.

He interviewed the heroes of the Shell for twenty minutes, during which time all arrangements for the match on Saturday were discussed. It was agreed that the French fellows should travel by train to Rylcombe, where Tom Merry & Co. would meet them, and bring them to St. Jim's for the match.

When it was time for Tom Merry & Co. to commence their prep, Monsieur Morny called for his nephew, and bore him away.

Marcel Bardiot took an effusive farewell of Tom Merry & Co., and left them on the best of terms, and promising to see them again on Saturday.

And Tom Merry & Co., settling down to prep, chuckled over the stirring events of the evening, and voted Marcel Bardiot, captain of the French cricketers, a "real sport." They also chortled loud and long over the fact that, once again, Gordon Gay's plans had been thwarted.

CHAPTER 5. Kerr's Wheeze!

"OH, bother!"
Thus spake Tom Merry as he emerged from the railway-station in Rylcombe High Street, early on Saturday morning. He had allowed members of the cricket club the morning off, and the Terrible Three had come down to make sure about the trains.

"What's up, Tommy?" inquired Monty Lowther, who was outside with Manners. "They've altered the blessed timetable!" growled Tom Merry, frowning. "The train Marcel Bardiot arranged to travel over here by will not run. I don't know where to communicate with him, else I'd send a telegram. Ten to one he won't know himself that the trains have been altered. Oh, we're in a hole properly!"

Four figures strolled down the High Street, and bore down on Tom Merry & Co. They were Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth. In response to their inquiries, Tom Merry explained.

"Whew!" whistled Blake. "We sha'n't know what time to expect them!"
"What's to be done, I wonder?" said Digby glumly.

"Bai Jove, deah boys! I've got a toppin' wheeze!" cried Arthur Augustus.
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D'Arcy suddenly. "I received a fivah fivom my patah this mornin', and I suggest you allow me to stand twent for a couple of bwakes to wun ovah to Hartley, and fetch the French team heah!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. stared at Gussy in surprise.
"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "You don't mean it, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy eagerly. "You see, we could travel ovah theah in one bwake, and weserve the othah for the French fellahs. We'd be sure of gettin' them then, and not bothah the walway!"

"That's ripping of you, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry gratefully. "Why, if we have dinner early, we can be at Hartley by half-past one and back again by half-past two. The match will commence at once."

"Oh, good!"
The faces of the St. Jim's juniors brightened, and it was with lighter hearts and cheerful faces that they trooped up the High Street towards the livery stables.

Tom Merry rang the bell, and in response to his ring Mr. Hawker, the livery-master came out.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hawker!" said Tom Merry. "We've come to see if you can lend us a couple of brakes to run over to Hartley this morning about twelve o'clock. It's only seven miles away, and—"

"I'm sorry, Master Merry," said Mr. Hawker, shaking his head; "but my only two brakes were chartered an hour ago by Master Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School."

A chorus of amazed gasps arose.
"Gordon Gay!" gasped Tom Merry, hardly able to believe his ears. "Gordon Gay hired two brakes! What for?"
Hartley, he wants them to take over to Hartley—"

"Wha-a-at?"
Tom Merry & Co. gazed at each other in bewilderment.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What the merry dickens does Gay want to take a couple of brakes over to Hartley for—eh?"

"He's got another game on!" said Jack Blake flatly. "Ten to one, Tommy, he means to kidnap the whole giddy French team!"

"Great Scott!"
Mr. Hawker, of the livery stables, looked curiously at the boys, and, with a few words of regret, he went inside and closed his door.

"Well, that's the giddy limit!" gasped Tom Merry. "Your suggestion is about right, Blake. Gordon Gay has hired those two brakes so that he can get the French team aboard one of 'em, and drive 'em into the Grammar School. Oh, my hat! Hasn't that fellow got a nerve!"

Greatly alarmed at this startling revelation, the chums of the School House turned away, and walked together up the High Street.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the heroes of the New House, emerged from the tuckshop, and went over to the others.

"You chaps look pretty blue, I must say!" exclaimed Figgins. "What's the matter?"

Tom Merry & Co. explained.
"Whew!" whistled Figgins, in consternation. "So Gordon Gay is still on the warpath, is he? He reckons on bagging the Froggies, after all!"

Tom Merry & Co. nodded dully.
"What's to be done in the matter?" asked Manners lugubriously.

George Kerr, the canny Scot of the

Fourth, was thinking deeply, and suddenly a ray of inspiration lit up his features.

"I've got it, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "We'll play a lovely game of spoof on those Grammar School bouncers."

All eyes were turned eagerly towards Kerr, for he was noted for his bright ideas.

"What's the wheeze, old son?" asked Tom Merry.

Kerr chuckled.
"We'll bribe the two drivers of those brakes to let a couple of us take their places!" said Kerr. "I'm a dab at disguises, and so are you, Monty Lowther. We two could dress up as coach-drivers, and drive the brakes over to Hartley for Gordon Gay & Co. When we reach Hartley the Grammarians will be in one brake, of course, and the Froggies will be loaded into the other. Then Gordon Gay will order us to drive to the Grammar School. But Monty and I will do no such thing. We'll drive to St. Jim's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"So you see," said Kerr, his bright eyes twinkling, "we'll have the Grammarians in a cleft stick. We'll capture the whole giddy bunch with hardly any trouble. They'll be foiled properly, and they'll have the satisfaction of watching us play the French team, while they themselves are prisoners!"

"Bravo, Kerr!"
"Ripping idea, by gum!"
"Yaas, wathah!"

Everybody praised Kerr for his bright idea, which seemed an excellent solution to their problem.

"We'll do it!" said Tom Merry heartily. "You're game for the thing, aren't you, Monty?"

"What-ho!" said the humourist of the Shell, with relish.

"All serene then, chaps! We'll have the time of our lives this afternoon," chuckled Tom Merry. "Kerr, will you get into the stable-yard now, and fix things up?"

"Certainly!" replied Kerr. "A few bob will work the trick, I'm thinking."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr went into the rear yard of the livery-stable, and sought out the two men who were to drive the two brakes over to Hartley that afternoon. Kerr used all his arts of persuasion upon them, backed up by pecuniary persuasions, and when he rejoined his chums in the High Street, he was all smiles.

"Everything's settled, chaps," he said. "The two drivers are sports, and agree to let Monty and I take their places just before the brakes start out. All that remains for us to do now is to have some dinner, and dress up for the part-as coachmen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Good old Kerr!"
And, feeling quite jubilant, Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. strolled up Rylcombe High Street, and back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6. Kidnapping the Kidnappers!

A CROWD of fellows were assembled outside Rylcombe Grammar School an hour later, as two empty brakes drove up.

The drivers of those brakes viewed the crowd with glinting eyes, and then a sly wink was exchanged between them.

Kerr and Monty Lowther had dressed up well for their part, and looked coachmen as to the manner born. In fact, Kerr looked quite horsey, and Monty Lowther had the unmistakable air of the stables hanging about him.



"Mon Dieu!" gasped Mooseo. "Mon cher Marcel! My naphew! O'est vous!" To the amazement of the juniors the French master seized the boy in his arms, and, utterly disregarding the soot and treacle on the youth's face, planted a sequence of kisses on his cheeks. (See Chapter 4.)

A rousing cheer arose from the throats of Gordon Gay & Co. as the drivers brought the horses to a standstill.

"Here we are, chaps!" cried Gordon Gay. "Slide into the first brake, and we'll reserve the other for the Froggies!"

"What-ho!" There were fifteen juniors dressed in flannels, ready for cricket. The hearts of the heroes of Rylcombe Grammar School were gay and blithesome as they mounted into the first brake.

Kerr saw to it that he did not have a fellow-passenger on his dickey. Tadpole, of the Fourth, essayed to mount with the driver, but Kerr, in a very gruff voice, told him to keep inside, as the horses were frisky, and it was dangerous on the dickey.

When all the Grammar School juniors selected to travel to Hartley were aboard, Gordon Gay sang out:

"Right away, driver!" And the brakes, driven by Kerr and Monty Lowther, rumbled away down the lane, in the direction of Hartley town, a distance of nearly seven miles.

A merry round of chatter came from the brake. Gordon Gay & Co. were in the best of good spirits. What they would have said had they been aware that the drivers of those brakes were none other than two of their deadliest rivals of St. Jim's, is a matter for conjecture.

Kerr and Monty Lowther chuckled as

they drove their horses at a brisk pace along that quiet country lane.

"Well, chaps," said Gordon Gay, in a tone of voice loud enough for Kerr to hear, "I wonder whether old Bardiot will give in when he sees we've kidnapped his giddy team!"

Kerr pricked up his ears. "I expect he will," observed Frank Monk. "You know, he's a sportsman through and through, and when he sees we've come out top dogs, he's sure to consent. Anyhow, if he doesn't, he won't get to St. Jim's to play—neither will his team."

"Not much!" responded Gordon Gay. "It seems a rotten trick to play on Tom Merry, but, after all, air's fair in love and war, you know. Those beggars defeated us twice—when we captured 'em in the lane, and again when Mont Blong tried to spoof 'em—but I reckon we hold the trump card now. They'd never dream that we kidnapped old Bardiot on his way from St. Jim's to the station!"

Kerr, mounted on the dickey, opened wide his eyes at this news.

"My hat!" he muttered beneath his breath. "So they've kidnapped the giddy captain! Oh, the bounders! Here's a giddy go!"

From the further conversation of the Grammarians in the brake, Kerr gleaned the information that Marcel Bardiot had been waylaid by the Grammarians after his visit to St. Jim's, and consigned to

the Grammar School as a hostage. Gordon Gay had sent a telegram to another member of the French team at Hartley, a telegram supposed to have been sent by Bardiot himself, stating that he was staying at Rylcombe, and giving instructions for the other members of the team to be ready at one o'clock at Hartley Station, to wait for the brakes that would call for them. Gordon Gay's idea was, to prevail on Marcel Bardiot to play the Grammarians in the match with Merry & Co. To this, Bardiot had given his flat refusal. But Gordon Gay & Co. were hoping that, once Bardiot saw the rest of his team at the Grammar School, and the time flying, he would give in, in a sportsman-like spirit, and play the match on the Grammar School grounds.

Kerr's eyes gleamed as he contemplated the situation, and he vowed confusion to Gordon Gay's knavish tricks.

Hartley was reached by half-past one, and the schoolboys in the brakes, searching the outside of Hartley Station, saw a party of cricketers awaiting them.

The French team were a healthy, sturdy assortment of fellows, who appeared to range in ages from about sixteen to eighteen. Some of them were frail and spare, but it was apparent that in their small frames were power and wiriness to be reckoned with.

"Here are the Froggies," announced Gordon Gay, standing up in the brake.

"My word, they're a topping lot of fellows, aren't they? I'll wager a few of them can slog!"

"A rather," said a slim, dark-eyed, handsome French boy detached himself from his companions, and approached Gordon Gay & Co. as they descended from the front brake.

Gordon Gay nudged Mont Blong. "Wade in, Blong, old top!" he said. "You must act as interpreter!"

In his native tongue, Mont Blong explained to Pierre Raspol that Marcel Bardiot was the captain of the French cricketers—the cricketers of Rylcombe Grammar School—had come to fetch them.

Pierre Raspol was satisfied, and, after conversing with his colleagues for a brief space, he and the other French cricketers climbed into the brake of which Monty Lowther was in command.

Gordon Gay & Co. helped them in with their cricket-bags, and then returned to their own brake.

"All serene!" cried Gordon Gay. "Full speed to Rylcombe Grammar School, drivers!"

"Yesir!" said Kerr, in a gruff voice, and then, in an undertone, he muttered: "I don't think!"

The horses were whipped up, the brakes turned round, and rattled up the High Street towards Rylcombe, the Grammar School party, and the team of French cricketers—minus their captain—aboard.

Whilst Gordon Gay & Co. and the French boys had been engaged in conversation, Kerr had confided in Monty Lowther, who was, of course, flabbergasted at the news. Arrangements had already been made for the undoing of Gordon Gay & Co.

Instead of turning up the lane leading to the Grammar School from Rylcombe, the boys and Monty Lowther drove their brakes up the Rylcombe Lane, towards St. Jim's.

A howl of surprise arose when Gordon Gay & Co. as they realised that they were being driven the wrong way.

"Hi! Whoa, you chumps!" hooted Gordon Gay, standing up and waving his arms frantically at the driver. "Where are you going?"

Kerr looked round, and chuckled. "I'm driving you to St. Jim's, old sport!" he said sweetly. "You see, Gordon Gay, you've been spoofed beautifully this journey!"

And Kerr whipped off his false hair and whiskers.

A howl of bitter anguish and dismay arose as the Grammarians beheld the well-known features of George Kerr of the New House at a ringing shout in the lane, and from the bushes on either side there poured forth a whole army of St. Jim's fellows, led by Tom Merry and Jack Blake.

They surrounded the two brakes, which immediately stopped.

Gordon Gay looked desperately round at his comrades.

"Chaps," he hissed, "they've got us in a tight stick properly, but we musn't give in without a fight! Jump out of this blessed brake and wade into 'em!"

"Hooray!"

The St. Jim's fellows were on the alert at once.

The Grammarians poured down from the brake, but no sooner were they down than they were set upon by their enemies.

Gordon Gay's last dash for freedom ended in utter failure. The heroes of St. Jim's piled into them and, struggle though the Grammarians valiantly did, they were overwhelmed.

In less than five minutes they were all THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 642.

streathed upon the grass, with about twenty St. Jim's juniors standing over them, chuckling.

From the other brake came loud cries of amazement and consternation in French.

"So far, so good!" chuckled Kerr. "I say, Tommy, what do you think? These beggars have kidnapped Bardiot, the French captain!"

"Bah Jove!"

Tom Merry blinked down at Gordon Gay in amazement.

"You—you've kidnapped Marcel Bardiot?" he demanded. "Oh, my hat! Gay, you fearful bouncer, where is he?"

"At the Grammar School!" replied Gordon Gay tantalisingly. "But I say, though, Tom Merry, now you've got us, what are you going to do with us?"

"Kag you bald-headed!" said Tom Merry waddling. "We've got some paint and some fearful old clothes here, and we're going to paint your faces, rig you up like scarecrows, tie you in the brake, and drive you into St. Jim's to watch our match with the Frenchies!"

The faces of the Grammarians paled. "Oh, help!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Look here, Merry, let's come to terms! We've got Bardiot a prisoner at our school, and nobody will find him unless I tell where he is. You won't play the Froggies without him, either. Got that?"

"Well," said Gordon Tom Merry, "just you let that ragging idea drop, Tom Merry, and we'll trot out the French captain. We'll come to terms, you know."

Tom Merry dug his hands deep into his trouser-pockets and thought a while. Then he looked at his watch.

"Time's flying," he said. "Now, you bouncer, Gay, I think I'll agree to what you say. If there had been more time, I shouldn't have entertained your suggestion for a moment; for we should have raided your blessed school and unearthed Marcel Bardiot somehow. As it is, we cannot afford to waste valuable time, for the match is booked to commence at half-past two. If we let you go, will you promise, honour bright, to fetch Bardiot over to St. Jim's, and play no more tricks?"

Gordon Gay grinned.

"Yes, old scout, I'll give you my word," he said. "You've been us all along the line, Tom Merry. How on earth you managed to dress Kerr and Lathup as drivers I can't imagine; but, anyhow, you worked the trick, and had it not been for that we should have done you in the eye instead. We're not he chaps to take a licking in a bad spirit, and we realise that, for the present, you St. Jim's fellows have the better of us. It's the fortune of war, I suppose. Now, just you let us go, and we'll fetch Bardiot back to St. Jim's. What if you have no objections, Tom Merry, we'll stop and watch the match. May we?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"By all means!" he said. "So long as you realise you're licked, that's all we care. Jump up, old sport, and produce the merry French captain as soon as possible. My hat, those French fellows are getting impatient! We'd better explain things to 'em."

Mont Blong hurriedly explained matters as best he could to Pierre Raspol, and then the Grammarians made haste back to the Grammar School to release Marcel Bardiot.

Tom Merry & Co. climbed into the brake Gordon Gay & Co. had vacated, and drove to St. Jim's, followed by the excited French cricketers, who were bewildered by these exciting events, and could not in the least understand them.

CHAPTER 7.

The Match!

CROWDS came down to Little Side that afternoon to witness the great cricket match between the St. Jim's Junior Eleven, captained by Tom Merry, and the visiting team of French cricketers.

Marcel Bardiot and his comrades had created a name for themselves during the course of their tour of England, and everybody at St. Jim's looked forward to a great game.

They viewed the French team with interest when they arrived with Tom Merry & Co. in the brakes.

Monsieur Morny dashed across the quadrangle and greeted the French team effusively. He seemed greatly perturbed when he failed to see his nephew with the others, but his fears were allayed when Tom Merry explained that Marcel Bardiot was coming.

The French fellows were made comfortable whilst Tom Merry & Co. dressed for the match.

Kildare and Darrell were acting as umpires, and when they saw the French team in their flannels they gave them approving glances.

"A fine set of fellows," said Kildare critically. "Tom Merry's got a stiff job on to lick them, Jim thinks."

Darrell nodded approvingly.

Monsieur Morny was all bustle and excitement. In his enthusiasm, he started the school by blossoming forth in a suit of spotted flannels, white socks, and shoes.

Mossoo looked a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. The St. Jim's fellows looked at him; some shaded their eyes, and some chuckled at the glorious vision.

The French visitors were in the best of good humour, and quickly made friends with the boys of St. Jim's.

M. Morny nearly fell over himself, to use Monty Lowther's expression, when Marcel Bardiot arrived with Gordon Gay & Co.

Bardiot looked none the worse for his kidnapping experience, and he greeted Tom Merry & Co. cheerily.

"Tom, bien, mes amis!" he said. "Everything is good, my friends. Ze match will commence tout de suite—n'est ce pas?"

The sun shone radiantly overhead as the rival cricketers emerged from the pavilion and sauntered on to the beautifully rolled field. Monsieur Morny seemed to be here, there, and everywhere at once, and simply bubbled over with excitement and enthusiasm.

Tom Merry and Bardiot tossed for innings, and Tom Merry won.

Bardiot sent his men out to field, and Tom elected to bat first, with Talbot as his partner.

The St. Jim's team consisted of Tom Merry (captain), and Blake, D'Arcy, Monty Lowther, Talbot, Levison, and Kangaroo, of the School House, and Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern, of the New House.

All were batsmen on whom Tom Merry could rely, and for bowling nobody could beat Fatty Wynn, whilst Talbot and Levison were fine bowlers, too.

Bardiot himself took the leather for bowling, whilst a small, slim little fellow with very closely cropped black hair took his stand with the ball behind Talbot at the other wicket.

This fellow, named Marcel Bardiot addressed D'Oslong, bowled the first over to Tom Merry.

At the start playing was rather dull, for both batsmen were measuring the worth of the bowlers, whilst the bowlers were careful to find a perfect length.

Tom Merry hit the first ball for 1. Talbot slugged at the second, and discovered that D'Oslong was a trickster,

and his balls tricky. After that Talbot was wary, and the over ended for a total of 5.

Encouraging shouts came from the boundaries, where a whole crowd of fellows were congregated. Gordon Gay & Co. were there, and shouted for the French team. Monsieur Morny, standing outside the pavilion, gesticulated wildly, and showed his unalterable enthusiasm for his countrymen.

Soon Tom Merry got into his stride, as it were, and he found Bardiots' bowling much more to his liking than D'Oslong's.

He squared his shoulders, and played forward, and howls of joy arose from the spectators as he nipped a fast ball to the boundary.

A second time he made the ball reach the boundary, and in a third attempt he was almost caught out by mid-on. However, 3 runs were made, and Talbot again took the bowling.

Talbot was a wary batsman, and watched the bowler. He watched the ball, and judged the break to a nicety. He slapped the first ball into the field for 3, and the next two went for 2 each. D'Oslong seemed to frown as he faced Talbot again. He fixed him with a stern eye, and sent down the ball. There was a sharp crack, and the ball went to cover. Tom Merry and Talbot ran in a single.

Tom Merry took the bowling in the next over, and showed his mastery. St. Jim's chortled with delight as, first 2, then 3, then another 2 were registered on the board. Talbot made a good hit for the boundary; but the French were expert fielders, and Tom Merry was all but run out as the ball came whizzing into the hands of the wicketkeeper and the balls knocked off just as he got his bat into the crease.

Bardiots then handed the leather to another strapping fellow for the next over. This fellow seemed to grin at Tom Merry as he faced him. Tom Merry grinned back, and watched the twist of his wrist as he sent the ball down. Tom timed his stroke, and nipped the ball away for 1. Then Talbot faced this new bowler, who seemed in a very good humour indeed.

But when he failed to make any impression on Talbot, and each ball he sent down was hurried away for the fielders to hunt, the bowler's expression changed. It was apparent that he was grimly determined to get out one of these two obstinate batsmen; but Tom Merry and Talbot simply refused to be caught napping, and the over finished with Tom scoring a boundary, which brought the total up to thirty-six.

St. Jim's were in high feather. Bardiots looked worried, and took the ball from D'Oslong. He faced Talbot determinedly, and shot for the wicket. It went wide, and Talbot, standing with his hands uplifted, chuckled as the ball slid by him.

He swiped at the next ball, and made a couple out of it. Bardiots sent down a "yorker," which Talbot was not quite prepared for. He had a narrow escape of being bowled out. The next ball he scooped away for one, and took a breather at the other wicket whilst Tom Merry faced Bardiots again.

Tom dealt with the next two balls easily, and knocked up four before the over ended.

The St. Jim's fellows at the boundaries were jubilant.

"Play up, Tommy!" came the shout.

"St. Jim's for ever!"

Then came Monsieur Morny's voice.

"He, he, Marcel! Vive la France!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot again took the bowling in the next over, and, by the manner in which he dealt with it, it was evident that

Talbot had come to the wickets determined to stay. Tom Merry backed him up nobly, and between them they wrought havoc with the ball. The French fieldsmen were kept busy, and Marcel Bardiots darted admiring glances at both Tom Merry and Talbot. He was a sportsman through and through, and recognised that, excellent bowling though his men provided, they were not having their chance at their own way.

Talbot's own score had reached thirty, when bad luck overtook him. In an attempt to make three out of a drive into the field, he was run out. A groan arose as Talbot tucked his bat under his arm, and, with a rueful glance at Tom Merry, retired from all the field of glory.

"Never mind, old man!" said Jack Blake, who passed him on the way to the vacated wicket. "I'll show you what I can do!"

Talbot grinned, and sat down on the pavilion steps to watch Blake.

Blake played the first ball forward, and managed a couple. Thinking it easy, he attempted to play the next ball forward, and was horrified to see it nip round his bat and knock the off stump clean out of the turf.

"How's that, umpire?" yelled a Grammarian.

"Out!" said Kidare, looking severely at Blake.

Blake came off the field with a sadder and chastened air. He was the son of the New House, strapped on his pads, and succeeded Blake as Tom Merry's partner.

Redfern was a careful, steady player, and between them he and Tom Merry knocked up another dozen runs. Then there was a mishap in the field.

Tom Merry slammed the leather across the field, and anxious eyes followed the ball, for mid-on was running for it, and it seemed a beautiful catch.

Raspoul was the man, and shouts from his fellow-players encouraged him. But Raspoul, in his eagerness, tripped just as the ball sailed downwards, and when a comrade dashed up, Raspoul's face was twisted with pain, though he held the ball in his hand.

He had kicked his ankle, and had to be assisted from the field.

Marcel Bardiots' face was grim, for he had no reserves with him.

Then a plump figure dashed across the green from the pavilion, and it was seen that Monsieur Morny was arguing with Marcel Bardiots.

"I murmured Monty Lowther to Levison." "I wonder if Mossoo is asking for a game?"

Mossoo was gesticulating wildly, and talking volubly. He seemed wildly excited, and in quite a frenzy.

At last Marcel Bardiots turned to Tom Merry.

"Mon ami," he said, "is it zat you agree to mon oncle to play in ze place of Pierre?"

Tom Merry stifled a laugh as he looked at Mossoo.

"No, certainly!" he said. "Can Mossoo play?"

"Ah, oui, oui, oui!" cried Monsieur Morny, excited. "I can smite ze ball wiz ze bat—c'est aise—it is easy! Comme ça—regardez moi!"

Mossoo grasped a bat from Monty Lowther, and gave a terrific swipe with it in the air, presumably at an imaginary ball. Monty Lowther gave a hop out of the way just in time, or the probability is that Mossoo would have brained him. A howl of laughter arose, and Tom Merry almost choked.

"See! I smite ze ball parfaitement!" cried Mossoo triumphantly. "I score ze goals! I—"

"Pardon, mon cher oncle," interposed

Marcel Bardiots, with a worried look.

"Si vous vous y prenez de cette maniere, vous n'en viendrez jamais a bout—if you go about it in zis way, you will never succeed. Je crois—"

"Assez, mon cher Marcel!" said Mossoo. "I play ze criquet tres-bien, have no fear. It is all settle—eh?"

Marcel Bardiots did not seem to relish the idea of playing his uncle, but he did not like to refuse. So, when the fieldsmen resumed their places, Monsieur Morny took his stand at mid-on, his dutiful nephew having first explained to him the rudiments of the game of cricket.

Tom Merry returned to his wicket, and Figgins joined him. Figgins was a slogger, and a fast runner, and St. Jim's looked forward to some brilliant play between these two mighty men of valour.

In this they were not mistaken. Tom Merry played up like a Trojan, and Figgins excelled himself with the willow.

Monsieur Morny performed his duties in the field in a very comical manner. Every time the ball came near him, he would make a rush at it, and very often he tripped up, and sat down on the turf with a bump that made him groan.

The spectators noted the howls between encouragement for Tom Merry & Co., and cheers for Mossoo's doughty deeds on the field.

Marcel Bardiots recalled D'Oslong to the field, and this wiry little chap tackled Figgins.

He put all he knew into his bowling, and Figgins, for the whole of that over, was worried and cautious.

There were danger-signals in D'Oslong's eye as he sent down delivery after delivery. Tom Merry deemed discretion the better part of valour, and divided his time between blocking the balls, or dealing with them warily. Consequently, scoring slackened down.

Figgins had scored fifteen off his own bat when he met with disaster. He was clean bowled by a left-hander from Marcel Bardiots. Gussy succeeded him.

Gussy grasped his bat, having first jammed his monocle into position, and watched Bardiots. Tom Merry darted at him a warning look.

Gussy, though the most elegant youth at St. Jim's and a dandy, was a thorough sportsman, and this afternoon he was determined to perform mighty deeds of valour. The blood of the D'Arcys coursed through his veins, and he thrilled as a cheer greeted his first score—a couple off a neat backward cut.

Gussy stopped the next ball, but the third he slammed out, and scored a boundary. Tom Merry glanced gratefully at him, and from that moment there was perfect understanding between Tom Merry and D'Arcy.

The two played brilliantly. Gussy recognised that Tom was the better bat and knew the bowling, and he backed Tom up splendidly. The score gradually crept up, until seventy was registered.

Over an hour had passed, and four men were out for seventy runs. Tom Merry was firm and set. Gussy seemed to have found his depth, and was quite confident.

Tom Merry scored ten more. Gussy knocked up five, and was caught out in the slips.

"Hard luck, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, as the swell of St. Jim's retired. "You played like a brick, old chap!"

Kerr of the New House took the wicket, and the hopes of the St. Jim's fellows ran high, for Kerr was a careful, calculating player, who scored slowly, but surely.

For half an hour he and Tom Merry stayed at the wickets, until at last Tom Merry was bowled by D'Oslong.

Marcel Bardiots heaved a sigh of relief.

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as Tom Merry, amid useful shouts, walked to the pavilion. The French captain recognised that a deadly enemy had been got rid of.

Levison joined Kerr at the wickets, and then began a period of slow, steady playing. Levison was a first-class batsman, and worked in perfect harmony with Kerr. Slowly, but surely, the score mounted up, until the century mark was passed.

Levison was on his mettle that afternoon, and he played as never he had played before. Tom Merry's face was wreathed in smiles as, from the pavilion, he watched the Fourth-Former at his play.

Kerr, employing a late cut to meet a scorcher from D'Oslong, missed the leather, and was clean bowled. He groaned ruefully as he went home to the pavilion, and Fatty Wynn took up his bat to succeed him.

Fatty Wynn was more renowned as a bowler than as a batsman, but he could, nevertheless, hold his own before the stumps. And Fatty proved himself an asset to St. Jim's Second Eleven that afternoon, for he backed up Levison right manfully. The Third-Former attending to the scoring-board was kept as busy as the fieldsmen, and by four o'clock 160 runs had totalled to the credit of St. Jim's.

Levison was still well set. He had already scored 50 off his own bat.

Again and again he slogged the ball into the boundary. Leather-hunting was an occupation which he provided ad lib for the French fieldsmen.

"Bravo, Levison!" came in a regular chorus from the boundaries.

Fatty Wynn was a stone-waller, but he did some useful smiting with the willow before point caught him out. Monty Lowther succeeded him, and Monty went to the wicket with a cheerful heart, for he could see that the bowlers had been harassed, and he stood a good chance of doing some useful scoring.

And Monty Lowther went in to win. His play was not brilliant at first. Many a time did he escape from being clean bowled only by the skin of his teeth. He left the scoring to Levison, who seemed to be hard set at that occupation for the rest of the afternoon. But soon Monty found his depth, and he began to hit out. Then, as he afterwards expressed it, he "made the giddy for us." He made the leather fly, at any rate, and the bowlers looked greatly discouraged as the numbers on the scoring-board began to total to 190. Of these, Levison had scored 72, and he was "still going strong" when Monty Lowther came out.

"Last man in!"

Kangaroo took up his bat and strode out to the stumps, determined to do or die.

Marcel Bardiott & Co. seemed more hopeful now that the last lap had come. Kangaroo looked stalwart, but D'Oslong, as he deftly tossed the ball and caught it, thought that Kangaroo could be hoodwinked.

D'Oslong found his mistake out in the first over. Kangaroo played stealthily, and felt the bowling. D'Oslong treated him to every trick he knew, but the stalwart Cornstalk treated them all with the willow.

"Two hundred and twenty!" cried Blake, as their new number was put on the scoring-board. "Bravo, Levison! Fifteen more, and you've got your century!"

Levison set his teeth and caught Bardiott's eye as that youth took a run. Down came the ball, with a break in it. Levison ran out to it, and down came his bat. Everybody thought he had missed at first, but soon:

Click!

And the ball went sailing to the boundary.

"Another eleven, Levison!" chorled Monty Lowther. "You'll do it, old son!"

Levison scored another three, and then Kangaroo scooped out the ball for two. D'Oslong gave Levison a yorker, and Levison, nothing daunted, slapped it to the boundary again.

Next over, which was the last of the innings, was most dramatic.

Levison had four to make before he reached his century.

He made one, then Kangaroo made three.

The spectators were in a high state of tension, and silence prevailed.

Levison missed the next ball, but his subsequent hit helped the score up one.

Kangaroo nipped the next ball away for one.

Then Levison made three.

A roar of cheering greeted the passing of his century.

Kangaroo looked hopefully at the ball as it came whizzing towards him. He darted at it, scooped it, and it went into the slips.

Smack!

The alert French boy in the slips saw his chance, and snatched the ball.

Kangaroo was out, and the St. Jim's innings came to a close.

Levison had totalled his century, with one for luck, and he wasn't out. The total score for St. Jim's was 242.

The old walls of St. Jim's re-echoed the cheering which greeted the two last men as they retired to the pavilion.

"Bravo, Levison!"

"Well played, man!"

"Hooray for St. Jim's!"

And Marcel Bardiott, returning to the pavilion with his men, looked round ruefully, and urged his men in French that was both voluble and earnest.

CHAPTER 8.

A Close Finish!

MARCEL BARDIOTT did not go in first. He sent in two steady batsmen, so that he could watch the bowling closely, and form a judgment when his own turn came to stand before the stumps.

Fatty Wynn, of course, took charge of the bowling. Talbot was his colleague.

Fatty Wynn grasped the ball, and measured his length. He sent down a scorching, and fairly gasped when he heard a click and saw the leather sailing across the field.

"Bravo, Ridout!" came the cry from the French cricketers.

Ridout, the champion bat who made three out of Fatty Wynn's scorching, grinned at Fatty as he reached his crease, and Fatty caught the ball from Kangaroo.

"All right, you beggar!" muttered Fatty under his breath. "When I've finished with this other chap I'll settle with you!"

But Fatty found that the "other chap" needed some finishing.

Fatty sent down a lovely yorker, which would have beaten any batsman but a wizard. The St. Jim's fellows blinked when the fellow smote Fatty's bowler with the willow and made two out of it.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Fatty Wynn, blinking dazedly at the ball. "What on earth's the matter with me this afternoon? I—I'll get that fellow out or I'll—I'll chew this blessed ball!"

Fatty gritted his teeth, took a run, and bombarded the wicket once more. This time there was a crash, and the wicket went flying.

"Oh, good man, Fatty!" breathed Tom Merry. "You did it that time!"

"I meant to!" replied Fatty Wynn, breathing hard through his nose.

His next ball was met by the other fellow's successor, who seemed to believe in stone-walling tactics.

Talbot took the ball for the next over, and the third French fellow scored one off his first delivery.

Fatty Wynn looked grimly at Tom Merry.

"They're hot stuff," he said. "Whew! It's going to be a tussle."

Tom Merry nodded, and watched Talbot.

Talbot bowled to Ridout this time, and Ridout, shaping his shoulders, smacked it beautifully to the boundary. Again and again he sent the leather to the boundary, until Tom Merry & Co. were groaning.

Ridout and his companion realised that Fatty Wynn was a bowler to be wary of, and they preferred Talbot's ball-for-scoring.

At the end of twenty minutes the numbers on the board registered 26. Then Fatty Wynn, fired to indignation by the confident smile on the batsman's face, sent in a yorker that knocked his balls sky-high.

The French fellows looked decidedly glum as their second wicket fell. But they brightened when they saw Bardiott, their captain, put on his pads and station himself at the wicket.

"Oh, crumps!" said Tom Merry to Fatty Wynn. "I've heard a bit about that chap's batting. And that fellow Ridout with him is a jolly marvel with the bat, too. Fatty, old man, you simply must get one of them out!"

Fatty Wynn nodded, a look of grim determination on his plump face.

"I'll have a jolly good try," he said.

The ball he sent to Bardiott really was Fatty's best. It almost shied tears when the French captain hurled it out into the country and made another four runs out of it.

Fatty was now on his mettle. He sent down every ball he knew. But he made absolutely no impression on Bardiott's wicket. A little later he took Ridout's wicket, and then dismissed the three following batsmen in quick succession. But Bardiott still defied him.

Tom Merry took the ball finally, and dismissed Fatty for a breather. For Fatty was becoming exasperated. Tom gripped the ball, and sent it scorching down to Bardiott.

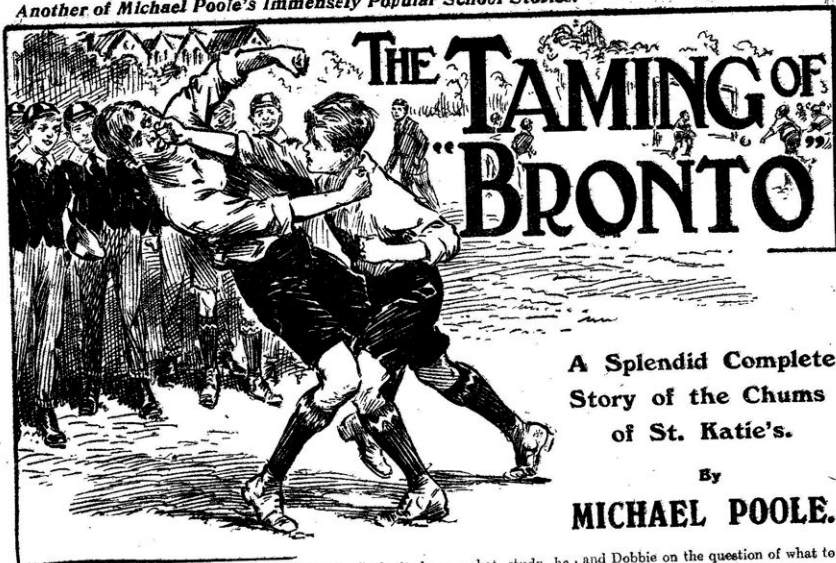
Bardiott knocked it, nearly over-reached himself in getting to it, turned it nicely to leg, and ran a single.

Tom Merry now faced the other Frenchman.

The young St. Jim's captain grasped the ball and spun it as it left his hands. The batsman played forward when he should have employed a late cut, missed, and had the mortification of seeing his wicket in ruins.

(Continued on page 20.)

Another of Michael Poole's Immensely Popular School Stories.



A Splendid Complete
Story of the Chums
of St. Katie's.

By

MICHAEL POOLE.

CHAPTER I.

The Head's Experiment!

HERE was quite a little crowd in the headmaster's study. You could guess by the look on everybody's face that there was something serious afoot.

The Head was supported by Jolly Roger, looking not quite so merry and bright as usual. He understood and appreciated Mr. Bird's difficulty.

Near the Head's table sat Lord Velwood, a governor of the school, and he was smiling with forced cheerfulness. Right opposite the Head sat three people: Mr. and Mrs. James Brontroux and their son, whose name was Aloysius.

It was Aloysius Brontroux who was at the root of all the Head's worry, and the cause of those little lines about Mr. Roger Blunt's eyes.

Mrs. Brontroux was a sister of Lord Velwood. Her husband had so much money that they lived just where they liked. Sometimes they were in America, and sometimes in England, and in between-times they simply travelled about—with Aloysius!

So far, Aloysius had never been to school, but he had had quite a number of tutors. He was now over sixteen years of age—a tall, blotchy-faced youth, with a perpetual sneer on his face.

Lord Velwood had told the Head that he had been spoiled, and, after seeing him, Mr. Bird said quite definitely that he didn't want to undertake the job of unspoilng him. But Lord Velwood had pressed him, and begged him to take the lad as a personal favour. His mother was ruining him, and he was growing up to be an unpleasant nuisance to everybody.

Finally, Mr. Bird had agreed, and today they had all turned up, armed with everything that Aloysius required, and prepared to leave him on the premises.

"Oh, he'll be quite happy here!" Mr. Bird said, for the tenth time, in answer to Mrs. Brontroux's questions. "Ah! I shall have to put him in your Form, Mr.

Blunt! I don't know what study he can go in."

Neither did Mr. Blunt. He kept looking at the new scholar, and the more he looked at him, the more certain he felt that there was trouble ahead for both himself and Aloysius Brontroux!

"If you could arrange for him to be with that very nice little boy I once saw," Lord Velwood suggested. "I'm sure they would get on well together. Dexter, I think you said his name was, Mr. Blunt?"

"Dexter!" For a moment the Head was prepared to pour out his scorn on the very suggestion, but before he could speak further, he saw the sudden gleam which came into Roger's eye, and observed the new life which touched his smile.

"Yes, sir," said Roger swiftly and simply beamed volumes on the Head.

"Dexter would make an admirable companion for our new pupil! I quite agree with Lord Velwood's suggestion. Why not let Aloysius Brontroux go in Dexter's study for a time—until other arrangements can be made. We could then see—"

"He—he isn't a rough boy?" asked Mrs. Brontroux.

"We might send for Dexter, sir," suggested Mr. Blunt.

You would have thought he was the gentlest, kindest, most considerate man who ever breathed if you'd heard him say that. The Head was looking at him in a puzzled sort of way, but very slowly the little frown on his face died away, and he, too, began to smile.

"Yes! I think Dexter would make an excellent companion for your son, Mrs. Brontroux! I'll send for him at once!"

He pressed a bell-push, and a few moments later the school porter was on his way to discover the whereabouts of Dexter of the Transitus.

As it happened, Dexter was in his study, and was just in the middle of an interesting discussion with Bill Strong

and Dobbie on the question of what to do this afternoon.

"Me?" Dexter demanded, when the porter delivered his message. "The Head wants me? But why? Are you sure—I mean—what's he want me for?"

"He told me to bring Dexter of the Transitus to his study," the porter reported loftily. "You are Dexter, aren't you? They are waiting for you now. Mr. Blunt said I was to hurry."

Dexter straightened himself out, brushed his hair, looked carefully to see that his tie was straight, and made valiant efforts to recall anything he had done to raise the Head's ire in the past few days.

"It's a mistake, Bill!" he said. "He can't want me for the high jump this time! And Jolly Roger's with him, too! Oh, my hat! Do I look a good little boy? Nice clean face and all that, Bill?"

Bill Strong regarded him carefully.

"You'll do 'Kid'!" he pronounced sadly. "Good luck!"

Outside the door of the beak's room the Kid composed his features. A gentle, apologetic tap, and he entered.

As he stood just inside the room, even Jolly Roger's smile took on a gentler touch. Anything more pathetically innocent and sweetly good than Richard Dexter it would be hard to imagine.

"Ah, Dexter!" The Head spoke kindly, and the Kid blinked. "I wanted to see you, Dexter!"

"Yes, sir," said the Kid, and felt that Lord Velwood's eyes were watching him. He also realised that two or three other pairs of eyes were fixed on him, and he caught the faint whisper of a voice which said:

"What a sweet boy! I'm sure you'll be friends with him, Aloysius!"

"Ah, Dexter, I want you to meet a new school-fellow who is coming to join you in the Transitus Form," the Head said, and the Kid recognised his voice as the one he used on Speech Days. "His parents are very anxious that he

should be friends with some nice, quiet boys—who will—ah!—explain the little details of our daily round and customs. You will, I am sure, do all you can to make your new companion happy and comfortable. For the time he will be with you and Strong and Dobbin, in your study, and I feel confident— Ah!

In a dazed dream, the Kid found himself shaking hands with Mrs. Brontroux and with Mr. Brontroux. Everybody was smiling upon him, and the tall weedy-looking youth was sniggering as he took Dexter's hand.

"Shucks! Guess he's got his work cut out to teach me!" said Aloysius. "How old is it?"

"S-sh! Aloysius!" his mother begged. "I'm sure you'll be very good friends with Dexter, and I'm quite sure he won't behave roughly with you, will you, Dexter?"

She beamed upon Dickie, and at that moment the Kid began to come out of his dream. He felt Roger's eye upon him and somehow he felt that Roger understood what a shock this sort of thing was to him, but that he expected him to bear up.

"I am never rough, Mrs. Brontroux," the Kid said quietly.

"Sha-ah! Cut it out, ma!" Aloysius interposed. "Fancy that trying to hurt me! Dope! I tickles me!"

He grinned at everybody in the room. The Kid blinked, but he could feel Jolly Roger stiffening himself up, and could see the Head's mouth go into a straight line, while Lord Velwood bit his lip.

Before the next few minutes were over, everyone in the room grew a little uncomfortable about Aloysius. He said one or two things to Richard Dexter, which were intended to be funny, and even the Head would have forgiven the Kid if he had made some cutting retort. But Dexter didn't. In some way he took his cue from Jolly Roger, though he was feeling a little bit sick about the way things were turning out. Fancy being saddled with this hopeless specimen in their study! What would Bill Strong say?

Just as Aloysius was saying good-bye, for the fifth time, to his parents, Jolly Roger spoke gently to the Kid.

"It won't be for long, Dexter," he said, very quietly and without any particular expression in his voice. "We are putting him in your study for a time, because—he wants teaching, and—ah!—improving! Be firm, but not too strenuous, Dexter!"

"No, sir!" said the Kid. "I understand, sir!"

And presently the Kid went out, accompanied by Aloysius Brontroux, still sniggering. A little later, Lord Velwood took Mr. and Mrs. Brontroux away. For the twentieth time the governor agreed with Mrs. Brontroux that Dexter was a very sweet and quiet little boy.

Mr. Brontroux said nothing. He had been secretly hoping that Mr. Bird would have brought along a fair-sized giant for his boy's companion. But Lord Velwood had winked at him, and he gathered that Dexter wasn't really quite so meek and girlish as he appeared. Lord Velwood had seen Richard Dexter before, and was hopeful.

After they had gone, Mr. Bird looked at Jolly Roger.

"I'm sorry, Blunt," he said. "I didn't want the boy, but Velwood was so anxious, and one has to do favours at times."

"A queer youth!" Roger agreed.

"But I think we can leave him to Dexter and his friends!"

"Yes, yes!" the Head smiled. "Really, the boy Dexter interests me! I'm quite sure Mrs. Brontroux regards

him as a quiet, sweet child. I felt quite pleased with the manner in which he spoke. One would never imagine him as a rebellious spirit. But it's an experiment, Blunt! One must experiment in cases of this kind!"

"Quite!" said Roger. "You will leave it to me to keep a watchful eye over them? Very good, sir!"

CHAPTER 2.

Brontroux Sees Stars!

DEXTER, of course, knew nothing of the Beak's conversation with Jolly Roger. He only knew that wonders had happened, and that he was evidently expected to tame and train this youth in the way he should go at Katie's.

"What's your full name?" he asked, when they were well away from the Head's room. "Aloysius Brontroux? My hat! Try and forget the Aloysius. Lose it! You'll feel better then. Why didn't they call you the Brontroux right away? Ever heard of the animal? A wild, untamed monster it was, just like you! We'll call you Brontroux right away. It suits you. Come along, Brontroux!"

"Shucks! You tickle me!" said Aloysius Brontroux; but he spoke less confidently, having already perceived the change in the Kid. "I guess I'll do just what I like here. Just you grip that idea. Aloysius Brontroux isn't going to be toned down by any of the children you've got in this establishment. Sha-ah!"

The Kid smiled at him, kindly and gently.

"You'll get over all that, Brontroux," he told him. "You mustn't say 'Shucks!' and 'Sha-ah!' I don't like it. But here we are. Step inside and meet the kind companions who are going to tame the wild and savage Brontroux!"

He opened the door of the study and gave the Brontroux a gentle push. Bill Strong and Dobbie, waiting anxiously for news, looked up swiftly.

The Kid had closed the door, and stood with his back against it. Brontroux was further inside the room, looking about the walls with a slightly puzzled but very superior air.

"Bill," said the Kid. "Dobbie, I have bad news for you. No longer are we alone. Here is a specimen of the wild and noble Brontroux, surnamed, for fun, Aloysius Brontroux, the savagest little animal that ever trod the primeval forest. He's ours, Bill! We've got to pet him and feed him and be a father to him. The Beak hands him to me, and he says, 'Richard,' he says, 'don't be too rough with it. Treat it kindly. Let Strong play with it, and teach it, a few quiet games; and let Dobbie—"

"No, but what is the giddy idea?" Strong begged. "Mean to say, Kid, we can't have it in here?"

"Got to, my son!" retorted the Kid, and turned kindly to the Brontroux. "Sit down, little fellow! Make yourself at home! But let me introduce you. This noble-looking creature is Bill Strong, who is very kind and gentle if you don't pull his tail, but is a savage beast when roused. And this is Dobbie, the one and only Dobbie, who could even photograph you and make you look elegant. We're all in the Transitus; and Jolly Roger, the kind-looking gentleman you saw in the Head's study, is our Form-master. You'll get used to him in time, but he'll probably break your heart before then. Anything else you want to know, just ask me. I've promised to look after you, and I will. You'll grow to love me in time, Brontroux!"

The Brontroux smiled, but there was no trace of a new boy's nervousness in his manner. Already Bill Strong felt sure that he wouldn't like him.

"Well," the Brontroux drawled, "I guess I'll enjoy myself here, after all. But I'd like to warn you right now not to play any of those funny tricks I've read about, not on me! Aloysius Brontroux don't stand for any fooling! Grip that, and you'll get on all right with me. I'm just putting you wise. You got me?"

He pointed his finger at Bill Strong, and Bill gasped. He'd never met anything like this before, and he looked to the Kid for guidance.

"It talks like a gramophone," said Dobbie sadly.

"We'll teach him presently," said the Kid kindly. "Get up, Brontroux, and we'll show you all the sights. I won't let you run wild. I'm going to be a sort of big brother to you, Brontroux."

The Kid meant it, too. Deep down in his heart was a little feeling of pride which he wouldn't have dared to mention even to Bill Strong. The Head had sent for the Kid and put the Brontroux in his care, and the Kid meant to show them what he could do.

Actually, it would have gone a good deal harder with Aloysius Brontroux if the Kid hadn't been his friend. Within the first three days everybody in the Transitus, and a good many fellows outside, had, and he gripped the Brontroux all right. And Aloysius found that all his little dreams about putting people wise and doing just what he liked simply didn't count.

Hitherto he had always been the first person to be considered. At Katie's he was the last. You couldn't argue about it, and his attempts to impress others with his importance failed miserably. Even the kids laughed at him and pretended to stroke him.

"Poor little Brontroux!" said Dennis of the Prep. "Did it ever 'cos they took his little sweeties from him? Did it want to go home?"

That was one of the stock jokes among the kids, because the Brontroux really had made an ass of himself when his sweeties were commandeered in prep one night.

And the Brontroux was helpless against them. He lunged out wildly, and probably got tripped up. Older fellows looked at him curiously, and smiled. Masters treated him very gently, as though he were a child, and this angered the Brontroux still more.

Of course, it was largely his own fault, but partly it was because he'd never had a chance. During his first fortnight the one fellow who really stuck to him was the Kid, and the Brontroux began to hate him!

It came to a head one day. The Brontroux had been trying to play football, not because he wanted to, but because several fellows had insisted on it. He made a mess of the business, but that was only to be expected at first.

The Brontroux, however, was not going to stick it. He marched off the field in disgust, and Dicky Dexter went after him. So did one or two others.

"Come on, Brontroux!" the Kid told him. "Don't get so miserable about things. You've got to come back and go on with the game!"

"Sha-sh!" said the Brontroux. "You clear!"

"Brontroux," said the Kid, "I'm looking after you! You're my one we pet, and I've got to train you properly. You come back—now!"

He laid his hand on the Brontroux's arm and tried to pull him back. Suddenly the Brontroux swung round. He was furi-

ous with temper, and probably scarcely knew what he was doing. But he caught Dexter across the face with his clenched fist, and the Kid reeled.

"Don't do that, Bron-to!" he said sharply. "You come back! Come on!" Just for an instant the Bron-to let himself go. He took Dickie utterly by surprise, and three fierce blows stung his face before the Kid could jump out of reach.

"Stop that, Bron-to!" he commanded again. "I'm not going to hit you, unless—"

A little crowd had gathered. They were surprised to see how calmly the Kid was taking it all, and, just for the fun of the thing, yelled encouragement to the Bron-to.

"Go on, Bron-to! Good old Bron-to!" they cried. And the Kid, his face very red, went up again to the Bron-to.

"Are you coming to play football?" he asked; and even Jolly Roger couldn't have put more bitterness into his voice. "Come along!"

"I'll show you!" said the Bron-to, and once again his arm swung round and hit the Kid on the side of the head.

"Right!" said the Kid. "You've asked for it, Bron-to! I'm going to lick you!" he said, and stood up! Put your fists up!

Now as a boxer, Dickie Dexter had about the same reputation as he had in the football field. When he really roused himself he was a little wonder. Too often, unfortunately, he wanted to fool about.

But to-day it was different. The Bron-to found himself being pushed forward, and realised that he was expected to hit Dexter again. He struck out.

The fight began. It lasted about thirty seconds, all told, but in that time Aloysius Bron-trox's views underwent a swift change. He felt something like a steam-hammer hit him on the face, and as he reeled back he tried to hit Dexter again.

The Kid was like a spring jack-in-the-box. He jumped round the Bron-to, jerked out his arms with every ounce of weight he possessed, and took a savage delight in it. At the end of twenty-eight seconds Bron-trox was waving his arms about feebly and foolishly, and Dexter sent in his last blow.

The Bron-to was on the ground. Somewhere, far off it seemed, voices were talking about him.

"Poor little Bron-to! It was a knock-out! You did it very nicely, Kid! He'll do what you tell him in future. Come on, Bron-to! Get up!"

They pulled the Bron-to to his feet, still gasping for air. The first person he really saw through his swollen eyes was Dexter, and he was already putting his arm through the Bron-to's.

"Come on, old son!" the Kid was saying, quite cheerfully. "We'll get indoors before anyone comes along to inquire. Sorry I had to lick you; but what did you want to hit me for?"

"You—you'll be sorry for this!" the Bron-to gasped. "Let me go! Oh, I'll make you pay!"

"Jolly Roger!" Dobbie whispered sharply, and they saw Mr. Blunt coming directly towards them.

The crowd made a sudden attempt to appear interested in the football.

But Roger's eagle eye had already seen everything. He knew that a fight had taken place, and that Dexter and Bron-trox were the combatants.

Did he make a bee-line for them? No! Not likely! The moment he realised the exact situation Jolly Roger stopped, and gazed anxiously towards the Sixth ground as though trying to see someone

there, then swiftly turned, and walked rapidly away from his own Form.

Bill Strong and Dobbie laid hands on the Bron-to, and hurried him back to the school. Upstairs they treated him scientifically, and paid no heed to all that he said.

"You'll feel better presently, Bron-to!" they assured him. "It's all for your own good, you know. The Kid wouldn't hurt a fly; but he's made up his mind to look after you, and you'll have to be tamed. You ought to understand that, Bron-to!"

They told him kindly and gently; but the Bron-to answered never a word. To himself he was swearing all manner of terrible things which should happen to Dexter—and to others.

CHAPTER 3.

What Jolly Roger Knew!

IT'S all very well to decide on doing terrible things. The trouble is to get them done.

The Bron-to wanted to torture the Kid—wanted to bring him low, and have him grovelling at his feet. He wanted everybody in the school to know about it, too, and to understand that Aloysius Bron-trox was that sort.

He thought of various plans, but none was any use. His first idea of telling Mr. Roger Blunt was actually put into practice. It was an utter failure.

Jolly Roger merely listened in surprise to his story of how Dexter had attacked him, and caused all these bruises on his face.

"Didn't you hit him back?" Roger asked; and the Bron-to tried to explain that he couldn't.

"But he's such a little chap," said Roger. "However, I'll tell you what I should do, Bron-trox. I should take a course of lessons from Belcher in the gym. Get used to boxing. Think thoroughly—very thoroughly, mind you. Then, at the end of say six months, just ask Dexter to have a few rounds with you in the gym. That's the best plan."

The Bron-to made no reply. This wasn't his idea at all.

"Oh! And, Bron-trox," Jolly Roger went on, "there's just one little point I'd like to mention. Of course, always come to me when you think I can give you any advice. I'm always anxious to advise any boy in the school. But—of course, you don't quite understand it yet, only we never encourage tale-telling. No sneaking! You'll learn what I mean in time."

Somehow, it became known that the Bron-to had been to Roger and sneaked. It was the Bron-to's own fault, because he let it out. During the next week he was continually reminded of it.

Kids would creep up to him and gently punch him. "Run and tell Jolly Roger I hit you!" they jeered. Older fellows changed their attitude of good-natured amusement to smiling contempt.

But the Kid stuck to the Bron-to. Strong and Dobbie tried to support him by telling the Bron-to what a good thing it was for him that Dickie Dexter was looking after him.

The Bron-to changed during that week. His superiority, his boastfulness, his sneering smile all fell from him. He became a melancholy sort of spectacle.

Jolly Roger saw it. There really wasn't much Roger didn't see, but he said nothing about it. You see, he knew that Bron-trox had to get right down to the state where he knew he was just nobody.

It was naturally a miserable sort of business for the Bron-to, but he would be all the better for it later. Only he wanted watching during this period.

The Kid, of course, didn't understand this so well as Roger did, and he thought

the poor old Bron-to was losing all his spirit, and that this was because he'd been rather too stern with him. So he watched the Bron-to, too.

"You'll be quite a nice young fellow when I've finished with you, Bron-to," the Kid told him, just to encourage him. "That was quite a nice black eye I gave you, wasn't it? You can still see traces of it yet! What were you doing up in the dorm just now?"

"Mind your own business!" returned the Bron-to, but flushed a little, and the Kid felt curious.

He missed the Bron-to again a little later on, and went off to hunt for him. Once again he found him in the dormitory, and he was doing something with a haversack he had, but he pushed it away quickly when the Kid came in.

It was no use Dickie Dexter talking to him. The Bron-to turned really sulky that afternoon, and it was quite a pathetic sight to see the Kid hanging on to the bigger fellow, and trying to make him cheerful.

"I wish they'd take the Bron-to out of our study—and the Form, too," Dobbie remarked to Bill Strong. "The Kid hasn't been the same since that silly case came. Can't understand why the Beak ever took a chap like that on. He ought to be in a kindergarten for mother's little pets!"

They were very sick about it, and they told the Kid so; but he still clung to the Bron-to.

Even at night he watched his pet into bed, and if other fellows started to tackle the Bron-to too much, they had to face the Kid as well.

In some way, on this particular Wednesday night the Kid felt uneasy. The Bron-to had made one or two queer remarks about "getting level" with the Kid, and it puzzled him.

He lay awake for what seemed hours, and was just about to drop gently off to sleep, when he fancied he heard a sound. Peering about the room, he could dimly discern a figure moving cautiously towards the door.

Here it was in a stronger light, and the Kid recognised it. It was the Bron-to, fully dressed, and with a haversack over his shoulder.

Inside three minutes the Kid was also up, and partially dressed. Downstairs he went, and, reaching the hall, discovered that the big bolts had been drawn.

Without thinking of anything but the unpleasant problem which had come into his mind, the Kid opened the door and went out. Right ahead of him he could see the dark outline of the Bron-to making for the playing-fields.

"He's running away!" the Kid gasped to himself. "Oh, my hat! I've overdone it with him—over-trained the poor old Bron-to! I've got to get him back!"

He caught him up just as the Bron-to was turning into the little copse which skirted one side of the fields. It was a dramatic moment, for the Kid meant to take no risks. He just jumped on to the Bron-to and brought him to the ground.

"You can imagine that the Bron-to had something of a shock. As a matter of fact, he was in a blue funk: the whole time, and this sudden attack took away the last tiny vestige of his courage.

His idea had seemed quite a sound one in the daytime. He meant to run away, and keep out of the road of everyone for a day or so, until his uncle, Lord Welwood, and his parents, and everybody else, had got really frightened. Then Aloysius Bron-trox would turn up at his uncle's house, and tell them a pitiful story of how he'd been ill-treated, with

special stress on the Kid's share in the game.

That would get Dexter and a lot of other people into trouble, so Aloysius thought.

But it was different when he began to wander across the playing-fields. Supposing he lost his way? Supposing his uncle wasn't at home? Or supposing they insisted that he would have to go back?

Just at that juncture came the swift attack, and Aloysius didn't suppose anything more.

It gave him some comfort to realise it wasn't an armed desperado. Somehow, he felt glad it was only Dickie Dexter.

"You're bolting?" the Kid was saying. "Running away?" It won't do. Don't be a funk, Bronto!"

"I want to go," Bronto answered. "I'm going to tell my uncle. He'll make a row about it."

Dexter laughed. "Don't you believe it, Bronto," he said, and began to drape on his imagination.

"Why, it was your uncle who so head keen on your coming here because you were getting out of hand and making a nuisance of yourself."

The Kid was a great deal nearer the truth than he guessed, and the Bronto getting over the shock, began to realise things. After a little more talk, he gave in.

"You won't tell anybody—you'll promise to keep it a secret!" he asked Dexter before finally yielding.

"Word of honour!" said Dexter. "I won't tell a living soul! You come back to the dorm with me, and we'll get to bed. You've got to play the game, old son! You'll be all right in a week or two. There's heaps of fun going at Katie's. I'll show you!"

They went back towards the big entrance through which the Bronto had made his escape. Just as they mounted the steps the door opened, and another figure loomed before them.

"Ah! Dexter! Bronto! I see!" It was Jolly Roger himself!

"Where have you two been?" he demanded icily. "I found that you were missing. Whose fault is this, Dexter?"

"Mine, sir," said the Kid. "I—that is, Bronto—wanted—I said I'd show him where we used to go. You know, sir, before the bars were put to the windows."

"Ah!" said Roger. "Very good! Return to the dormitory at once. I will see you both at 12.30 to-morrow. I shall inquire into this carefully!"

Upstairs in the dormitory two or three fellows were awake. They wanted to know what the giddy little game was, and Bill Strong saw the haversack over Bronto's shoulder. He also observed that the Bronto was fully dressed, and the Kid still had pyjamas under his coat and trousers.

"It's all right, Bill," the Kid explained. "I was just showing the Bronto round, and old Roger's caught us! Me for the high jump to-morrow!"

The Bronto said nothing. He was still a little dazed by it all, and anyhow, the Kid took on the job of explaining everything. But he spoke to the Kid about it in the morning.

"I wish I'd done!" he said miserably. "It'll all come out now, and then—What have I got to tell him?"

"Nothing!" said the Kid cheerfully. "You just leave it to me! I said I'd get you out of it, and you leave it to me!"

Together they faced Jolly Roger at 12.30.

"Have you any explanation to offer, Dexter?" Jolly Roger asked icily. "Will you kindly tell me just what your purpose was last night?"

"I—I wanted to show the Bronto—I mean Brontrux—the old place, sir," the Kid said. "I—I was my fault, sir. I told Brontrux that no one would ever know."

"What!" said Roger, and looked at Brontrux. "You are a new boy, Brontrux, but you must understand that it is a most serious offence for a boy to leave his dormitory at night. I regret that I have not told you that before, though you ought to have known. It was particularly desired by your parents and your uncle that you should obey every rule of the school. They begged me to insist upon that. However, you were misled on this occasion by Dexter. You may go!"

As Brontrux went from the room, he heard Jolly Roger addressing the Kid.

"Now, Dexter! I will attend to you! There is no excuse for you. Have you any explanation to offer?"

"No, sir," said Dexter, and then the Bronto closed the door.

The sound of the closing door seemed to have set Roger's fury. He walked up the room, then came back and faced Dexter again. To his surprise the Kid gasped that the glare had gone from Roger's eyes, and a twinkle had come in its place.

"Well, Dexter," said Roger cheerfully, "now that we are alone, perhaps you can tell me more fully. Did you really take Brontrux out last night?"

"I—I was all my fault, sir," Dexter answered.

"Ah!" Roger sat down on the end of the form and looked at the Kid with trying intensity. "You are quite a clever boy at times, Dexter, but you will make that foolish mistake of imagining that a master goes about with his eyes tightly closed. Have I not explained to you, Dexter, that my ambition is to know the exact weight of each boy's brain in the Transitus, so that it is like an open book to me? I can frequently tell not only what you are thinking at the moment, but what you will be thinking about even before you yourself have thought about it. I am now carrying out an interesting experiment—Ah, here is Mr. Steed!"

He rose as Mr. Steed entered the room, and went to him. For a few moments Roger spoke quietly with Sammy. Then Mr. Steed went out, and Roger returned to Dexter.

It was a very doubtful experiment, Dexter. Roger went on. "I want you to stay with me here for a time. Let us observe together whether our young friend Brontrux, without being asked or urged to come to us, will return. It may not happen, Dexter—or it may happen later on! But we will wait awhile."

In Bill Strong's study there was a little pow-wow going on. Brontrux had returned and told them what happened. Slowly the Bronto gathered from Bill and Dobbie that this would be the end of the Kid. He'd really gone too far. What on earth had he been playing at last night?

"You're sure he did ask you to go out with him?" Bill was saying, when the door opened, and Mr. Steed came inside. He looked very serious.

"All Dexter's things are here?" he asked. "You had better collect them, Strong. I'm afraid he won't be returning. You see, he not only broke a very stringent rule himself, but led another

boy into wrong-doing. Mr. Blunt cannot overlook that. He is with Mr. Blunt now."

"He—They aren't expelling Dexter because of last night?" Bronto gasped, and quite forgot to say "sir."

"I'm afraid so," said Mr. Steed. "That is, unless we can find some excuse, and that is scarcely likely. He admits that—"

"But he didn't!" the Bronto blurted out. "I'm going to tell them. They don't understand. He said I needn't say anything, but it isn't fair. I mean—I don't stand for this sort of thing, anyhow! I'm sick of this old school, maybe, but I've got some sand—yes, I have, Strong! You don't think so! But I'll show you! I'm going!"

The Bronto charged for the door, and was through it and away before even Mr. Steed could stop him. As a matter of fact, Sammy didn't try to prevent him, and when he had gone he simply beamed upon Strong and Dobbie.

"Mr. Blunt is really a remarkable man, boys," he said gently. "You needn't trouble to collect Dexter's things, Strong. It will be quite all right!"

And, beaming upon them again, he passed out.

Dexter was still standing in front of Jolly Roger, listening patiently to a light lecture, in particular, and wondering what on earth this new game of Roger's could be, when the door was suddenly opened. The Bronto only pulled up when he was right in front of Jolly Roger.

"It's all wrong!" he gasped. "Dexter didn't take me out last night. I was trying to make a get-away. Didn't want to stay, but he came and brought me back. Said he'd never tell, and it would be all right. You can't expel him! It's not fair!"

"No, sir," said Roger calmly, and smiled at the amazed Dexter. "So you weren't to blame last night, Dexter? Very well! You may go! Think over our talk together, Dexter! Consider it carefully, my boy. Now I should like to talk with you for a time, Bronto!"

Dexter went out—in a dream. He was still more perplexed when Bill Strong told him what had happened in the study. By the time they had grasped all that, the Bronto came in.

He was smiling feebly, but he began to talk as soon as he came in.

"Roger knew all about last night," he said meekly. "Only frightening you, Dexter, and wanted to give me a chance to be a man, he says. He—he says I've got the makings of one, and what you said, Dexter, about being all right in a week or two. He said we could all go into the town this afternoon, and I could stand the racket for a decent feed—if you chaps will come? Just to celebrate—you know what I mean. Roger says I'm learning how to play the game, and Dexter's shown me!"

"Good egg!" said Bill Strong gladly. "Right-ho, Bronto! We're coming! Three cheers for Jolly Roger! I tell you, he's a real gilt-edged wonder, old Roger is! He knows everything!"

"He does!" said the Kid, and still went on wondering.

And that's how Aloysius Brontrux, otherwise the Bronto, was famed at Katie's!

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(Continued from page 14.)

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"Last man in!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "And he's old Mossos—good old Mossos!"

"Go it, Mossos!" yelled the St. Jim's fellows, as they saw Monsieur Morny strapping on his pads, preparatory to going to the wicket.

(Concluded on page 11, of cover.)

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