

MEET BIG BAT BARSTOW—INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

TEAS
ICES



MISS BERTHA STANDS UP FOR FATTY WYNN!

An unexpected end to a "feed" for Racke and Crooke. (See the grand school story—"Fatty Wynn's Folly!"—inside.)



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

GAN WAGA AND FERRERS LORD!

FOR some time past Gemites have clamoured for a series of stories dealing with the famous characters, Gan Waga & Co., written by that equally famous author, Sidney Drew. Well, as I have repeatedly said in these columns, I am always open to consider any suggestions sent in by my loyal chums. When such suggestions issue from a fairly representative number of my supporters I endeavour to get busy to satisfy them. It might seem a trifle early to speak of the stories to follow the present Bat Barstow series, and yet I am more or less compelled to say something about this strong request for Gan Waga stories, so insistent is the demand. Rest assured, chums, you may look forward to a brilliant series of complete adventure yarns written by only Sidney Drew knows how, featuring the millionaire sportsman, Ferrers Lord, and Gan Waga & Co. How's that? Remember, too, that the first of these stories will follow the conclusion of the present Bat Barstow thrillers!

"THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY."

Attention must be drawn to the fact that two numbers of this famous "Library" are on sale Friday of this week. No. 21 is entitled "The Greyfriars Journalists," and deals with those popular schoolboy characters, Harry Wharton & Co. No. 22—"D'Arcy of St. Jim's"—is, of course, a yarn featuring the one and only Gussy. It shows Martin Clifford in good form, and Gemites would do well to read both of these new volumes. Pop round to your newsagent to-day and give your order for them!

BETTER AND BETTER!

I have received a splendid letter from a Gemite in Scotland who admits that, although he is extra careful in the expenditure of his pocket-money, he would willingly pay double the price for the good old GEM. How's that? I am not suggesting that any of you should pay double, but it really does show the popularity of this paper. My correspondent goes on to say that the GEM gets better and better with every passing week. I cordially agree with him, naturally. But it is a fact that letters these days show general satisfaction with the stories now running in your favourite paper.

MARVELLOUS COLOUR BOOK!

"THE CHILDREN'S COLOUR BOOK OF LANDS AND PEOPLES," Part 1 of which will be on sale on Thursday, February 11th, will be the most wonderful picture-book that has ever been known. When complete it will contain nearly seven hundred full-page colour plates! It will tell the fascinating story of the strange people who live in distant lands—their costumes, their habits, how they fight and hunt, and the strange weapons they use. There will be many hundreds of pictures in this marvellous book, all of which will be from real photographs. As you reach each part it will be just like an actual journey round the world.

The price of the fortnightly parts will be 1/3 only, and orders for Part 1 should be placed without delay.

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"IN THE TOILS!"

By Martin Clifford.

This story for next week shows Dr. Holmes figuring in the limelight—not quite the sort of limelight such an august and respectable gentleman as the Head of the school would desire. Still, he must take his turn in these topping narratives of St. Jim's. Don't miss this yarn.

THE SUPPLEMENT!

As the next story of Tom Merry & Co. is longer than usual, it has been necessary for me to hold over the Supplement. This, I know, won't upset you fellows, for on your own showing you can't have too much of Tom Merry & Co. The issue of the "St. Jim's News," then, originally billed for next week will be included in the programme the week after next.

"THE STOLEN RACEHORSE!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

That's the title of the next Bat Barstow story. It's full of pep right from the word go. Mind you read it. Look out, too, for another "jingle" from the pen of our merry rhymester. Cheerio!

Your Editor.

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You Know A Good Joke? Let's Hear it, Chum.

Delicious Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes
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All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

MANCHESTER WINS TUCK!

STRETCHING A POINT!

The American truth-teller was in form. "Talking of ants," he said, "we've got 'em as big as crabs out West. I've seen 'em fight with long horns, which they use as lances, charging each other like savages." "They don't compare with the ants I saw in the Far East," said an inoffensive individual near by. "The natives have trained them as beasts of burden. One of them would trail a ton load for miles with ease. They worked willingly, but occasionally they turned on their attendants and killed them." But this was drawing the bow a little too far. "I say, old chap," said a shocked voice from the corner, "what sort of ants were they?" "Eleph-ants!" replied the inoffensive individual.—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Frank H. Hewitt, Clifton Vale House, Pendlebury, Manchester.

AND THEN HE WONDERED!

Boss: "Mr. Jones, if you can't keep up with your work better we shall have to look for another man." Mr. Jones: "I'm glad to hear of that, sir. I've been thinking all the time that I was doing the work of two men!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Gregory, 79, Upper Adare Street, Pontycymmer, near Bridgend, South Wales.

AND O'RILEY MEANT IT!

Mr. O'Riley was having his first flight in an aeroplane. The pilot was taking him over London, and when they were about two thousand feet up the plane suddenly nose-dived. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the pilot, as he righted the machine. "I'll bet fifty per cent of the people down there thought we were falling." "Sure," said O'Riley, "and I knew fifty per cent of the people up here thought so, too!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to David Watson, 16, Flemington Street, Springburn, Glasgow.

AND HE SLUMBERED ON!

It was close on closing-time in a city park, and the park-keeper approached a tramp who was sleeping on one of the seats. "Hey, you!" he shouted. "I'm going to close the gates now." "Good on yer, old man!" said the tramp, rubbing his sleepy eyes. "I thought there was a draught somewhere!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Dickson, Jamestown, South Australia.

HER READY EXCUSE!

Mother, entering the drawing-room suddenly, found her small daughter playing on the piano with hands that were far from clean. "Florry," she said sternly, "I've always told you to wash your hands before practising." "Oh, that's all right, mother!" replied the little one. "I'm only using the black keys!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Paul Kane, 150, James's Street, Dublin.

GENEROUS MAC!

Sam: "Do you know, Pat, I gave McTavish a box of cigars for his birthday. And what do you think he's given me in return?" Pat: "Sure, an' I dunno!" Sam: "One out of them!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Leslie W. Allen, 103, Clarence Road, Peterborough.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

A DIFFERENT "FATTY"! It isn't often that David Llewellyn Wynn loses his head—or his appetite. But in this case he loses the foregoing and his heart as well!



FATTY WYNN'S FOLLY!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, with Fatty Wynn of the New House in the limelight.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. Man Missing!

"FATTY! Where's that ass Fatty?"

The voice of George Figgins was like unto the dulcet tones of a megaphone, booming along the Fourth Form corridor in the New House.

"Fatty, you chump! Fatty, you burbling idiot! Where are you?"

Figgins was arrayed in footer garb, and very fresh and fit he looked. The shorts he wore showed his long, lanky legs to the fullest advantage. Kerr, who was with him, was also dressed for football. It was Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a football match was to be played that afternoon between the School House and the New House.

Dinner was over, and it was nearly time for the match.

All the juniors regarded the forthcoming match as one of the highest importance. The keenest competition existed between the two Houses at St. Jim's, and both teams had been kept hard at practice by their respective captains.

Tom Merry & Co., of the School House, were mighty men of valour on the footer field, and they had announced their fixed intention of "wiping up the field" with Figgins & Co. Whereat the mighty Figgins had snorted in deep disdain, and witheringly replied that his team would "knock spots off" their rivals.

The New House team, as a matter of fact, was not quite so strong in the field as the School House eleven, but quite numbered in their ranks the champion goalie of St. Jim's—to wit—Fatty Wynn.

Fatty was a wizard in goal. Despite his great girth and the excess of weight which he carried, no one in all St. Jim's was his equal at keeping goal. Fatty had been showing excellent form, too, these past few days, and Figgins and his merry men were expecting great things of their plump goalie.

Figgins had been keeping an eagle eye on Fatty's diet, in order to see that he did not overgorge himself. Fatty was as great a trencherman as he was a goalie, and the extent of his appetite knew no bounds. This fact rather worried Figgins, because he knew of his fat chum's weakness for pork pies and tarts. Several times of late, in fact, he and Fatty had had high words on the subject of tuck—Fatty at once revolting every time Figgins essayed to cut down his rations at meals or to put a veto on his occasional "snacks" at the tuckshop.

Figgins' face wore a worried look as he glared up and down the passage in search of Fatty Wynn.

He had allowed Fatty to have only one helping of pudding at dinner-time, instead of the usual three, and afterwards had locked the study cupboard, which contained a pork pie upon which Fatty had designs, and hidden the key, so as to make sure of Fatty keeping fit for the match.

Figgins, too, had warned all the fellows in the New House, under pain of instant slaughter, not to allow Fatty to purchase, purloin, or otherwise procure, any tuck or other comestible whatsoever.

He had had a watch set on the tuckshop that day, and issued orders that if Fatty were seen to enter into that realm of plenty, he should be instantly and forthwith ejected.

Figgins was grimly determined to keep his goalie "up to the scratch" for the great match with Tom Merry & Co. He had told Fatty that he could eat as much as he liked after the match, but not before, and that if the New House won, they would stand him the biggest feed on record.

But Fatty had not taken kindly to these edicts. There had been a row at dinner-time over the pudding, and both Figgins and Fatty had been given a hundred lines each by Mr. Ratcliff for squabbling at the table.

Directly after dinner, Fatty Wynn had disappeared. Neither Figgins nor Kerr, his studymates, had set eyes on him since leaving the dining-hall. That was over an hour ago, and the junior skipper of the New House was feeling very anxious.

"I wonder if the fat bounder is hiding in one of the studies?" he said. "Surely he must know it's time to get ready for the match. Fatty! Are you there, you idiot?"

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence came out of their study, all dressed for footer, and Figgins at once accosted them.

"Seen Fatty?" he demanded.

Redfern shook his head.

"Not since dinner-time," he said. "Has he disappeared, then, Figg?"

Figgins snorted.

"The fat chump has hidden himself somewhere! He'll catch it hot if I find that he's been gorging himself. Fatty! Has anybody seen Fatty Wynn?"

Several juniors turned out into the corridor on hearing Figg's melodious tones, but none could give any information concerning Fatty.

Each study was visited in turn by Figgins and Kerr, but no Fatty was forthcoming!

Figgins & Co. descended the stairs in great wrath.

They made inquiries of all and sundry as to the whereabouts of their missing chum, and looked in all likely places. The result was the same in every case—an absolute blank!

"He can't be in the House, then," said Kerr, frowning. "Let's look outside. Perhaps the young fathead is wolfing some grub in the cloisters. He was ravenous, you know, at dinner-time, and was quite wild at not being allowed his usual helping of pudding."

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen grinned, but Figgins' brow was dark and wrathful.

"Come on, then!" he said. "We'll find Fatty, and if he's been feeding against orders, we'll jolly well bump the young cormorant."

Figgins & Co. went out into the quad, and Fatty Wynn was sought for far and wide.

The cloisters were scoured without result, and although the despairing New House juniors searched all over the

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quadrangle, the Close, and the five courts, and in all manner of other places, they found no trace of Fatty.

He seemed to have vanished from human ken altogether! Figgins & Co., after their unfruitful search, stood in a baffled group before the tuckshop.

Figgins was in a state bordering on frenzy.

"Where's Fatty?" he roared. "Doesn't anybody know what has happened to him? Look at the time! Oh, my hat! I—I'll slaughter the fat burler when he does turn up!"

Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Talbot strolled up with Jack Blake & Co., of the Fourth. The School House fellows were in footer rig and looked ready for the fray.

They stared in some surprise at Figgins & Co.

"You chaps are looking pretty blue," said Tom Merry genially. "Worrying over the match, I suppose?"

Snort! from Figgins.

"Pwáy endeavah to cheah up, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in mollifying tones. "The outlook is not vewy pwomisin' for you boundahs, I know, because School House is bound to win—"

"Idiot!" snorted Figgins.

"Bai Jove! Look leah—"

"Fathead! Chump! Burbling cuckoo!" said the incensed Figgy. "For two pins, Gussy, I'd dot you on the boko!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded the New House leader in deep indignation.

"Weally, Figgins, I wese to be chawctwised in those oppwobwious terms!" he exclaimed. "I wegard your last wemark as a thewt—"

"Regard it how you like," said Figgins crossly. "I regard you as a chortling jabberwock!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back the cuffs of his footer jersey.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Figgins, it would be a mattah of gweat wegwet to me to have to pweecipitate hostilities before the match, but unless you withdwaw those wemarks immediately, I shall wegard it my painful duty to administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

Tom Merry & Co. grinned.

"Come off it, Gussy!" said Blake. "We can't have you two silly jossers scrapping now. There's plenty of time for that, on the field. But wherefore the worried look and furrowed brow, Figgins, old scout? Ain't you looking forward to the match?"

"We're jolly well going to put the kybosh on you asses!" snapped Figgins. "It isn't you we're worrying about—it's Fatty Wynn. We can't find him."

"He's probably stuffing himself in some quiet corner," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "You've been keeping him on short commons lately, Figgins, I hear."

"I've been keeping him in condition for the match!" said Figgins, glaring round the quadrangle. "We rely on Fatty in goal, and can't afford to let him go off colour. Oh, dear! Where the thump has he got to?"

"Sure he isn't in the tuckshop?" asked Talbot. "That's usually Fatty's haunt."

"He's not there," said Figgins despairingly. "We've looked everywhere! I'm blessed if I can think where he can have got to! Surely he wouldn't have gone out of gates?"

"I should hardly think so," said Tom Merry. "Fatty knows he's wanted for the match, and he wouldn't be such a young ass as to slope off and leave you chaps in the lurch. Let's all have a good hunt round for him."

The School House fellows joined Figgins & Co. in a renewed search of St. Jim's. Fatty Wynn was looked for everywhere, but still with the same result. No sign of him could be seen!

The juniors at last went about the quadrangle shouting Fatty Wynn's name in stentorian tones. The air at St. Jim's resounded with cries of "Fatty!" and "Wynn!" Figgins & Co. yelled the names to the four winds of heaven until they were blue in the face and hoarse of voice. Yet there was no response. If Wynn were in St. Jim's at all he must have heard the cries, because the juniors between them made enough noise to wake the celebrated seven sleepers.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. gathered together by the footer field and looked at each other with mingled feelings.

Figgins was in despair.

"Where's Fatty?" he moaned. "We want him to keep goal! It's time for the match to commence, and Fatty hasn't turned up! Has anything happened to the young idiot? What the dickens can we do?"

"He must be out of school somewhere," said Tom Merry. "We'll delay the start if you like, Figgy, to give you a chance to find him."

"But—but we can't go raking about the countryside looking for Fatty!" said Figgins frantically. "We'd never get

the match started at that rate. Fatty's got to be found, though. Something must be done!"

Arthur Augustus gave a sudden exclamation.

"Bai Jove! I've got it, deah boys!" he said. "The vewy ideah!"

Figgins turned a haggard face towards the swell of the Fourth.

"You've got an ideah where Fatty is?" he asked.

"No, deah boy; but I've thought of an ideah that will help find him," replied Gussy. "As you say, it's wathah imposs for us to go out huntin' for Wynn outside the school. But we've a little time to spare, and we can wait. Meanwhile, we'll offsh a weward."

"We'll do what?" gasped Figgins.

"Offsh a weward, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "That's what people do in the case of missin' heirs and—and wunaway cwiminals, you know. A weward's the thing! Leave it to me!"

Arthur Augustus hurried into the School House, leaving the others regarding each other in astonishment.

"Gussy must be off his rocker!" gasped Manners.

Tom Merry gave a chuckle.

"I don't know so much," he said. "Gussy's wheeze isn't bad, when you come to think of it. Fatty's missing, isn't he? We're all dressed and ready for the match, and can't go raking outside the gates to find him. But if a reward is offered for Fatty, the other chaps will take an active interest in the proceedings, and it's quite likely that he'll be found in no time."

Figgins drew a deep breath.

"My word!" he said. "I see Gussy's wheeze now! It's a hope, at any rate! Oh dear, though! I wonder where on earth Fatty is?"

Arthur Augustus was not long in making a reappearance. He came dashing out of the School House bearing a large placard. He went over to a tree near the gates and affixed the placard on the trunk in a conspicuous position, with drawing-pins.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. ran over, curious to see what Gussy had put up.

Arthur Augustus stood back, adjusted his monocle, and surveyed the results of his handiwork in great satisfaction. Then he turned as his chums came up, and he said smilingly:

"There you are, deah boys! That ought to bring about weseles—what?"

"My—my word!" said Figgins.

Gussy had scrawled a notice on the placard in bold, glaring characters, and this is how it ran:

"NOTICE!"

"FIVE SHILLINGS REWARD!"

"The sum of Five Shillings Reward will be paid to anyone producing David (Fatty) Wynn in person, or giving information as to his whereabouts, in either manner enabling him to take his place in the inter-House match commencing on the junior ground at 3 p.m. sharp. No application for the above-mentioned reward will be considered unless this condition is fulfilled.

"The presence of Fatty Wynn is urgently required, and the Reward is guaranteed by the undersigned:

"A. A. D'ARCY."

Tom Merry chuckled when he read this notice.

"Good old Gussy!" he said. "That's quite a brain-wave on your part, old scout! Hallo! Here come some likely applicants!"

Wally D'Arcy, the leader of the fag tribe at St. Jim's, and his chums, Curly Gibson, Joe Frayne, and Jameson, came strolling up. They stared at the notice in great surprise.

Wally gave a whistle.

"Whew! Five bob reward offered for finding Fatty Wynn!" he exclaimed. "My only Aunt Jane! I say, Gussy, does the offer hold good if we produce him dead or alive?"

"Weally, Wally, I wegard that wemark as most fwivolous!" said the swell of the Fourth, looking severely at his minor. "We wequire Wynn to play in the match, and he'd be no good to us watevah unless he were alive, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, all serene!" said the hero of the Third cheerfully. "We're on this, kids! Five bob reward for finding Fatty Wynn isn't to be sneezed at—especially in these hard times. Rely on us, Gus!"

Wally & Co. went off, and disappeared out of gates, very eager and determined to earn that reward.

Mellish and Clampe came up and stopped when they saw the notice.

They grinned.

"My hat!" said Mellish. "I say, D'Arcy, this isn't a joke, is it?"

"Wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I am offshwin' five shillin's weward to anyone who can



Fatty Wynn was hurled, dragged, pushed and hustled unceremoniously forward. "Here he is, Gus!" said Wally D'Arcy breathlessly. "We found him sitting on the stile!" "Ooooooh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Lemme go, you lunatics!" "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This has thwown me into quite a fluttah!" (See Chapter 2.)

produce Fatty Wynn in person, or give information that will enable us to secure him in time for the match."

"Right-ho!" said Mellish. "I'll have a look for Fatty. Coming, Clampe? If we find him we'll split the five bob." Clampe was quite willing, and he and Mellish hurried out of gates in search of the missing goalie.

Several other fellows came up, stopped to read the notice, and then went off to earn the five shillings reward.

Within a very short space of time quite a number of enthusiastic amateur detectives had sallied forth, bent on bringing in Fatty Wynn by three o'clock.

Tom Merry & Co. were highly amused, and Figgins & Co. cheered up considerably.

They all went off to the footer ground, to wait and see what results would be forthcoming from Gussy's offer of a reward.

CHAPTER 2.

Many Claimants.

"THREE o'clock!" grunted Redfern.

Figgins cast a despairing look towards the gates. "Three o'clock, and no signs of Fatty yet!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my hat! What the dickens has happened to him?"

Monteith of the Sixth, who had consented to act as referee, came up wearing an impatient look.

"I say, you kids, are you playing the match to-day, or next week?" he inquired sarcastically. "I've been waiting since half-past two, and it's about time you got a move on!"

"But—but Fatty isn't here!" cried Figgins in woeful tones. "We haven't got our goalie! We can't play without Fatty!"

"Oh, bosh!" snapped Monteith. "If Wynn isn't here, you'll have to play a substitute—or scratch the game. I can't wait here all day long!"

Figgins looked round helplessly.

"I—I suppose we'd better start," he said. "Pratt, you go in goal. Oh dear! Fatty deserves to be boiled in oil for letting us down like this!"

"Hard cheese, Figgy!" said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"We'll help you bump Fatty when you find him, if that will be any consolation."

The two teams lined up, Figgins putting one of the reserves to take Pratt's place in the half-back line.

The New House fellows did not look happy. They were cross with Fatty Wynn for absenting himself at a time when his presence at St. Jim's was most needed; but they would have welcomed him with open arms, despite their wrath, if only he appeared to take up his position between the posts!

Pratt was a fairly capable goalie, but he could not hold a candle to Fatty Wynn.

Pheep! went the whistle, and Tom Merry kicked off.

The New House fellows attacked hotly, grimly determined to do or die. Tom Merry & Co., however, were ready for them, and a lively scrum developed in mid-field.

The game had not been in progress for more than a few minutes, however, before there came a howl from the fellows round the ropes.

"Here's Fatty!"

"They've got him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins was in the act of passing to Redfern, who was waiting eagerly for the ball on the right wing, but on hearing that cry he stopped short and let the ball roll away from him.

Blake, who had had an eagle eye on the leather, and was ready to pounce on it, also drew up and gazed towards the gates.

The game stopped, and all eyes were turned towards the lively procession that had entered St. Jim's.

The plump figure of Fatty Wynn of the Fourth was the centre of that procession. He was struggling wildly and yelling at the top of his voice.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. held him on one side; Mellish and Clampe had fastened their grip on him on the other side; Baggy Trimble was dragging Fatty along by his necktie in front, whilst French and Tomlinson minor of the Fourth were pushing him energetically in the rear.

Between them all poor Fatty Wynn was having a very rough time indeed.

"Yarooogh! Wow! Leggo, you rotters!" he bellowed.

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"Wharrar you up to? Ow-wow-ow! Oh crumbs! You're strangling me, Trimble! Ooooooh! Rescue!"

"This way!" roared Wally D'Arcy. "It's gone three, but perhaps we can persuade Gussy to dole out the reward! Kim on, Fatty!"

"Yooooooooop!"

Fatty was whirled across the quadrangle and rushed precipitately on to the footer field in the midst of his many captors. He was in a parlous state by the time he arrived there.

The schoolboy footballers crowded up in astonishment, and Arthur Augustus fell back as Fatty Wynn was hurled, dragged, pushed, shoved, hustled, and yanked unceremoniously forward.

"Here he is, Gus!" said Wally breathlessly.

"Ooooooooooh!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Here he is, D'Arcy!" said Baggy Trimble. "I caught him!"

"Why, you little spoofer! Don't tell whoppers!" exclaimed Wally. "We caught him!"

"Rats!" roared French. "Tomlinson and I saw him first! We caught him!"

"No, you didn't!" shouted Mellish. "Clampe and I were the first! He's ours!"

"Yow-wow-wow-wow!" wailed Fatty Wynn. "Lemme go, you lunatics! What's the game? Ow! Hands off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry & Co.

Fatty Wynn's many captors glared truculently at each other.

They all retained their grasp of Fatty, as if determined to rend him limb from limb rather than part with him before their claims were satisfied.

"Hand over the five bob, Gus!" said Wally. "We've brought home the giddy wanderer. We found him sitting on the stile near the vicar's house, sighing like a giddy owl. We caught him, you know!"

"Yah! The five bob's mine, D'Arcy!" said Baggy Trimble desperately. "I saw Fatty sitting on the stile."

"So did we, and Clampe and I yanked him off it!" hooted Mellish. "I say, D'Arcy; that's our reward!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped French indignantly. "Look here, D'Arcy—"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, looking quite confused. "Weally, deah boys, this has thwown me into a feafuhl fluttah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I reckon it's Fatty who's in the flutter! You chaps had better divide him up, as you all seemed to have pulled him off the stile at once!"

"Yerroogh! Wow! Lemme loose!" moaned Fatty. "Have you all gone potty, or what? These rotters all set about me at once and dragged me back here! What's the idea?"

"Well, you see, old chap, Gussy offered a reward for your capture, on behalf of Figgins," said Blake, with a chuckle.

"Wha-a-at?"

"And all these giddy applicants want the reward!" said Tom Merry. "It seems that they all fell upon you at the same time, Fatty."

Fatty Wynn looked round wrathfully.

"You—you offered a reward for my capture!" he spluttered. "What awful cheek!"

"Why didn't you turn up for footer, then?" roared Figgins indignantly. "Didn't you know you were wanted for the match?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Fatty. "I—I forgot about that!"

His skipper gazed at him with feelings that were too deep for words.

"You forgot about the match!" exclaimed Figgins. "Oh, my only hat! Are you off your rocker, Fatty?"

Fatty looked really abashed.

"Look here, Gussy, what about the reward?" demanded Wally, with great warmth. "We want the tin, and—"

"I claim that five bob!" snorted Baggy Trimble. "Don't you listen to these rotters, D'Arcy—"

"We won't let him go till we've been paid!" roared Mellish. "He's our bag, and—"

"Here, you let Fatty go!" exclaimed Figgins. "We want him to play in the match. I say, Merry, you've no objection to starting the game again, I suppose?"

"None whatever!" grinned the School House skipper. "That is, if Monteith doesn't object."

Monteith did not look at all pleased.

"I've half a mind to clear off and leave you little sweeps to it!" he snapped. "What are you going to do—carry on with the game, or not?"

"We'll start again, Monteith, if you don't mind," said Figgins earnestly. "Our side wasn't complete without Wynn, you know."

"Then hurry up!" said Monteith impatiently.

Fatty was rescued from the reward claimers; Tom Merry

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promising to see into the matter on the conclusion of the match.

Wally D'Arcy & Co., who considered that they were entitled to the money, waxed very wrath, and, on being hustled off the field by Tom Merry & Co., they vented their feelings by bumping Baggy Trimble on the touchline.

Mellish, Clampe, French, and Tomlinson minor walked away, hurling the most uncomplimentary epithets at each other; and the teams stood about the field to wait for Fatty, who dashed away to change into footer garb.

To do Fatty justice, he was not long in changing, and the highly amused crowd round the ropes sent up an encouraging cheer as he came puffing back to the field, looking fatter than ever in his jersey and shorts.

Figgins fixed a penetrating look upon him.

"You frightful ass, Fatty!" he exclaimed. "You burbling blitherer! You haven't been stuffing, have you?"

"Nunno, Figgis! I—I haven't been stuffing!" was the gasping reply.

"Then what did you run away from school for?" demanded Figgins.

"Ahem!"

"You bet your boots he went down to the bunshop to have a feed!" said Owen.

"I haven't had a feed!" said Fatty peevishly. "Honour bright, Figgis!"

"Then what the dickens—"

"Hurry up, there, you kids!" bawled Monteith, who was fast losing his patience. "How much longer are you going to keep me waiting?"

"Get into goal, Fatty!" said Figgins sulphurously. "We'll have this out later!"

Fatty went into goal, and Tom Merry and Figgins tossed again. The latter won, as before; the two teams lined up for the second start; Monteith blew wrathfully upon the whistle, and the game started in real earnest.

CHAPTER 3.

Day-dreaming!

"NOW!" muttered Figgins desperately. "We'll show these School House chaps how to play footer!"

"What-ho!"

The players were soon on the ball like hungry wolves.

Tom Merry & Co. were in really great form, and they went up the field against the wind with a rush. They took the play into New House territory; but Figgins' defence was sound, and they did not get through.

Soon afterwards the New House forwards got going, and Tom Merry & Co. were called upon to defend.

The fellows round the ropes, warmed up to a state of high excitement, shouted encouragement to the teams.

Figgins and Redfern between them made a dashing swoop towards the School House goal; but their attack was foiled, and the game was pushed back to mid-field.

For a long time the struggle was hard and without result. Figgins & Co. attacked hotly, but in vain, and several times the enemy got through their ranks.

At last, by dint of brilliant passing, Talbot got well down the left wing, with the ball spinning at his feet. As Redfern attacked he sent the leather smartly over to Blake, and as the New House halves pounded upon that worthy it came back again to Talbot.

Then away went Talbot with the speed of the wind, and a shout went up from the ropes.

"Look out, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn may have heard, but, like the dying gladiator of old, he heeded not.

He was standing in the goal-mouth, staring, not at the ball, but towards the blue sky above, and there was a most vacant expression on his plump face.

It was an unusual pose for Fatty to be in. In the ordinary way he would have been crouching there in the goal area, watching the ball with the eye of a lynx, his whole being alert for action.

But Fatty, instead of being alert, was most inert.

Down swooped Talbot with the ball at his feet, eluding the New House right-back with supreme cunning.

Figgins almost dropped when he observed Fatty's inattention to the game.

"Look out, Fatty!" he howled. "He's going to shoot! He—"

Biff!

Talbot shot, and the leather went whizzing towards the goal, as straight as a die.

Fatty, however, did not spring out to save it; no plump hands were outstretched to grab the ball, as only Fatty Wynn knew how.

Fatty awoke from his reverie with a start on hearing the

frantic shouts from the New House fellows, but it was too late.

The ball flew over his shoulder with a rush of wind, and an instant later thudded into the net.

There was a roar from the School House fellows.

"Goal! Goal!" "First blood to us!" grinned Tom Merry.

Figgins & Co. gazed speechlessly at their goalie.

Fatty Wynn, with quite a dazed expression, picked up the ball from where it nestled in the net.

"You idiot!" howled Figgins, finding his voice at last. "You—you dundering fathead! What did you let that slip by for?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Fatty.

"Where are your eyes? Where are your brains, eh?" hooted his incensed captain. "Didn't you see the ball coming?"

"Nunno—er—that is to say, Figgy—er—ahem!"

Fatty, with a very red face, tossed out the ball.

The epithets that were hurled at him by the New House fellows on and off the field were hair-raising, to say the least, and Wynn appeared very conscious of his default.

"I—I'm sorry, Figgy!" he stammered. "I was thinking, you know."

"Thinking!" snorted Figgins. "What the thunder have you got to think about, except the game, you fathead?"

"Oh—er—nothing!"

Figgins & Co. looked very wrathful and sore as they lined up again.

Fatty, his plump face the colour of a new chimney-pot, took up his position between the posts, and looked extremely sheepish.

Phoop! The teams were off again, like hounds from the leash.

Tom Merry & Co., determined to follow up their lead, pounded the leather down into the enemy's domain, and Fatty Wynn was called upon again and again to save his citadel.

He was on his mettle now, and he played up in his old brilliant style, fisting, heading, and booting in a manner that evoked cheers, in place of boos, from the New House fellows.

Then, when Fatty had kicked the ball well down into mid-field, Figgins & Co. rallied, and towards the end of the first half the lanky-legged New House skipper rammed in a hurricane shot that had the goalie hopelessly beaten.

The whistle went before Tom Merry & Co. had a chance of retaliating, and the teams left the field for their brief respite in solemn and serious mood.

Figgins gave Fatty Wynn a very expressive look when he saw him standing by the pavilion door, his eyes again staring thoughtfully upward.

"Pull yourself together, Fatty!" exclaimed the New House leader. "What the dickens are you mooning about?"

"Er—was I mooning, Figgy?" asked his plump chum innocently.

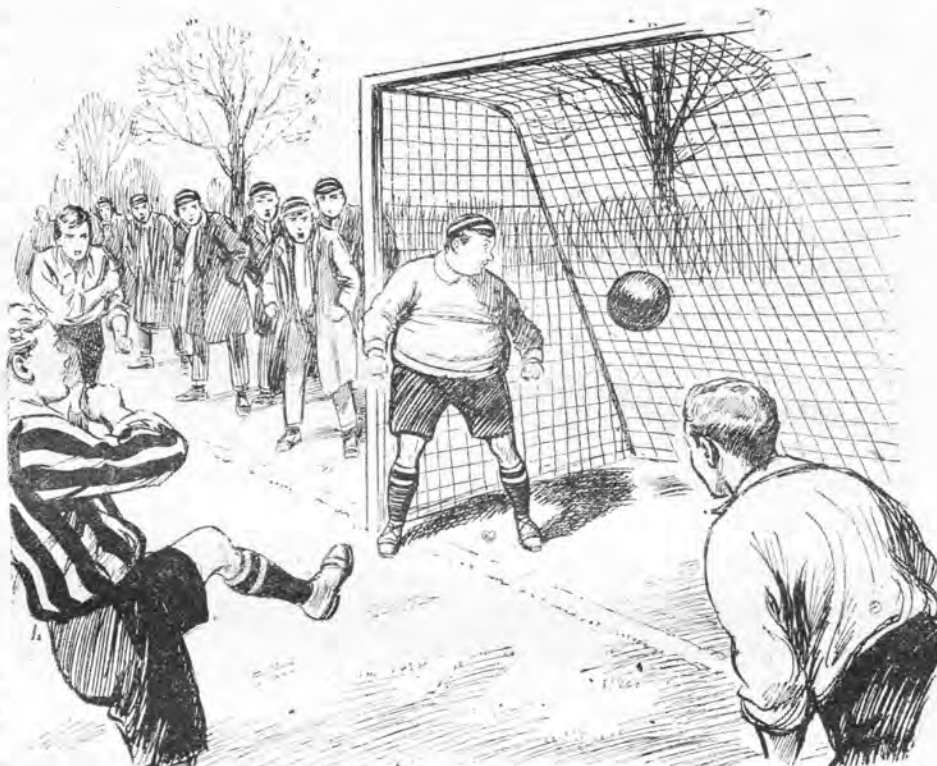
"Yes, you were!" snorted Figgins. "Mooning like a silly boiled owl! What's the idea?"

"Nothing, really, Figgy," replied the Welsh junior hastily. "I—I was thinking, that's all."

"Thinking again!" snapped Figgins. "Fix your mind on the match, that will give you enough to think about. We've got the wind against us in the second half, and there's a strong breeze blowing up. If you don't keep your wits about you, we're done!"

"All right, Figgy!"

Several queer glances were cast at Fatty Wynn during



"Look out, Fatty!" howled Figgins, as Talbot prepared to shoot for goal. "He's——" Biff! The ball went in. Fatty, however, did not spring out to save it. He awoke from his reverie with a start on hearing the frantic shouts from the New House fellows, but it was too late then. (See Chapter 3.)

the interval. That he had something weighing on his mind was most apparent. He stood aloof from the others, and had lapsed again into a reverie when the time came for the resumption.

Redfern clapped him heartily on the back, and Fatty gave quite a jump.

"Ow-ow!" he gasped. "What's the game, you ass?"

"Footer!" said Redfern severely. "This isn't a Cross Word competition, you know, Fatty. Come on. Monteith's waiting."

Fatty was led on to the field, and the teams faced one another once more.

The struggle was resumed with dogged determination on either side. Figgins & Co., with the knowledge that the wind was in their foemen's favour, played up like very Trojans, and the School House fellows were hard put to it to stem their valiant attacks.

Most of the play was kept in mid-field for some time, and nobody gave a thought to what Fatty Wynn was doing.

Fatty, to be precise, was doing nothing—nothing, that is, in the footer line.

With one plump elbow leaning against a goal-post, he was standing there in a state of complete abstraction, whilst his team-mates waged a ding-dong struggle higher up the field.

The loud cry that greeted a significant breakaway by Tom Merry did not even rouse him.

Tom sped forward with the ball, and the New House forwards tore after him. Lawrence charged gamely, but Tom eluded him and spun the leather onward.

He now had a fine opportunity for a long shot at goal, and the School House skipper did not miss it.

Straight from his thudding foot flew the leather, like a shot from a trench mortar. Fatty Wynn could have stopped it easily, but he did not even see the ball.

It whizzed towards him, swift and unerringly, and there was a resounding thud, and a startled yell from Fatty, as the sphere struck him full in the chest.

Biff!

"Yaroooh!" roared Fatty.

So violent was the impact that he staggered backwards, and, losing his balance all of a sudden, he sat down heavily on the turf.

The ball, rebounding from his chest, was instantly seized upon by D'Arcy, who lobbed it into the net whilst Fatty was still sitting down.

"Goal!" howled the School House fellows ecstatically.
 "Bravo, Gussy!"
 "Played, Tom Merry!"
 Figgins and Kerr dashed furiously forward. They grasped Fatty and hauled him to his feet.
 "Ow! Wow-wow!" gasped the New House goalie, struggling. "Leggo!"
 "Look what you've done!" shrieked Figgins wrathfully. "You've let 'em score another goal! You could have saved it easily, if you had tried!"
 "Oh dear! I'm sorry, Figgy—"

"Sorry! I should jolly well think you are sorry! Do you call yourself a goalie?" hooted Figgins. "You were leaning against the post, day-dreaming, and didn't even look at the ball! You let it biff you before you saw it. You—oh, you—you—"

Figgins could say no more. Words failed him.

The other New House fellows said quite a lot, however. Boos and cat-calls were flung at Fatty. Even Tom Merry & Co. looked askance at him.

"What's the matter with him?" said Blake in wonder. "Why, Baggy Trimble could make a better show in goal than that!"

"Yas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm afraid there's somethin' wong with Wynn, deah boys."

The wrath of Figgins & Co. knew no bounds. After that set-back they played up desperately in a gallant endeavour to equalise, but the fates were against them.

Tom Merry & Co. swept down the field again, and the New House team had to take the defensive.

Fatty Wynn had not time for further day-dreaming, for the attackers kept him busy. He pulled off several really brilliant saves, but it was apparent to all that his heart was not in the game.

Time was getting close now, and Figgins & Co. grew desperate.

Redfern and Figgins between them made a valiant bid to take the play back across the centre line, but their success was only short lived.

Manners captured the ball and drove it out to the forwards. Talbot took it up the field. The New House fellows closed in fast, and Talbot went over before a charge, but not before he had passed to Tom Merry, who repassed to Kangaroo. The Cornstalk junior shot for goal, and Fatty Wynn promptly listed the ball out. Tom Merry intercepted it as Figgins sprang forward, and then commenced a hot attack on the New House goal from all sides.

Fatty played up nobly, but he was not proof against the terrific peppering he received. The ball got by him when there were only a few minutes to play, and the hopes of Figgins & Co. sank within them.

"Goal!"
 The remainder of the game was without result, and it finished with the score at 5-1 in favour of the School House.
 Tom Merry & Co.'s partisans cheered the victors to the echo.

Figgins looked very grimly at Fatty Wynn.
 "You awful fathead!" he exclaimed witheringly. "You've let us down badly this afternoon! You simply gave away those first two goals!"

"Let's bump him!" said Pratt indignantly. "It's all Wynn's fault that we lost!"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Owen. "After all the trouble we had in getting him here, too! Why, the fat idiot deserves to be scragged!"

The wrathful New House fellows gathered round Fatty with threatening looks, but Tom Merry & Co. came up, all aglow with pacific smiles.

"Peace, my infants, peace!" said Tom chidingly. "Don't rag poor old Fatty; he's apparently not all there this afternoon. Perhaps it's the dieting he's had lately that's got on his nerves and made him feeble."

"Oh, bosh!" snapped Figgins. "It wouldn't be that, because we promised him the feed of his life if we won this afternoon."

"Well, never mind," said the School House captain. "Fatty shall have a good feed now, and perhaps that will pull him round. We're in funds, and we're going to have a slap-up spread in the study. You chaps will come, of course?"

"Thanks, wa will," said Figgins and Kerr, slightly mollified.

There was no response from Fatty Wynn, and silence from Fatty, after such an invitation, was more astonishing than if he had roared out like a lion.

His chums blinked at him.
 "Didn't you hear that, Fatty?" asked Blake.

"Eh?"

"You're invited in to tea with us. There'll be a fine feed, and it will do you good."

To everyone's amazement Fatty Wynn did not seem in the least impressed.

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"I'm sorry, you chaps, but I—I shan't be able to come," he said.

Figgins jumped.
 "Wha-a-at!" he ejaculated. "You—you won't be able to come, Fatty?"

The Welsh junior shook his head.

"No; thanks all the same, Tom Merry. You chaps can have tea without me."

"Gug-g-great pip!"

Fatty Wynn walked away and crossed the quadrangle to the New House.

His chums were so taken aback by his amazing conduct that they had not the strength in them to follow.

"Well, my only sainted aunt!" gasped Figgins at last. "Did I hear Fatty refuse a feed? Am I dreaming, or what?"

"Fatty must be sickening for something!" said Manners in wonder. "He's actually turned down the offer of a feed! Carry me home to die, somebody!"

Figgins passed a hand dazedly across his brow.

"But—but I can't understand it!" he said in a faint voice. "It isn't like Fatty; it isn't natural! There must be a mistake!"

"Oh, let the silly ass go and eat coke, if he doesn't want our feed!" said Blake. "Perhaps he's sulking because you've been keeping him on low rations lately, Figgins."

Kerr shook his head.

"It isn't like Fatty to sulk," he said quietly. "Besides, he must be more ravenous than ever after the match. I'm blessed if I can make him out a bit!"

"Well, let him go for now," said Tom Merry. "It's a fair knock-out, I know, but you chaps needn't go off your feed because of Fatty. He'll come to his senses later, I expect. This way, Figgy!"

Figgins & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. left the footer ground together.

The New House fellows forgot their defeat in their concern over Fatty's amazing behaviour.

Fatty Wynn, the champion trencherman of St. Jim's, had refused a feed—coldly and callously refused it! It was time for the skies to drop!

And Figgins and Kerr, as they went indoors with Tom Merry & Co., looked in wonder at each other and marvelled at the untoward change in their fat chum.

CHAPTER 4.

Kindred Souls!

FATTY WYNN hurried indoors and went upstairs as if with some set resolve. He did not, as a rule, move very quickly, except when he was keeping goal, but he moved very quickly now. In less than ten minutes he came down again, and the transformation in him was really surprising.

He had changed from footer garb into his best Sunday clothes. He had put on a nice clean collar and a most stunning necktie. His cap was well brushed, and his boots were extra-carefully polished.

Fatty Wynn, in fact, looked quite resplendent.
 He hurried out of the gates, ignoring the surprised remarks of the juniors he passed, and made his way with all speed down the Rylcombe Lane.

At the cross-roads he turned off to the right, until he came to the stile that gave access to the path leading to the vicarage.

He was quite breathless by the time he reached the stile.

Standing by the stile was a plump young lady with a bright colour and bright eyes. She turned those eyes on Fatty as he approached, and he raised his cap rather awkwardly, blushing as he did so.

"G-g-good afternoon, Miss Bertha!" he stammered.

"Good afternoon!" replied the young lady, and she added in a very severe tone: "You're late, Master Wynn."

"I—I'm sorry!" gasped Fatty, with a crimson face. "I forgot to tell you, Miss Bertha, that I had to play footer this afternoon. The game was—ahem!—rather late in starting, but I hurried away directly it was over."

"Oh!" said Miss Bertha, and her severe look vanished. "I'm glad to know that you go in for sports, Master Wynn. You are forgiven, under the circumstances."

Fatty's blush deepened.

"Thank you, Miss Bertha," he said. "Now, what about that feed at the bunshop? I'm jolly hungry after playing footer, I can tell you."

"So am I!" said the plump young lady promptly, and her eyes brightened still more. "Do you know, I haven't eaten a solitary thing all the afternoon, except that pork-pie and those tarts and the pastries and the coconut ice and the chocolate I had in the bunshop when I saw you. And I've been hard at work knitting, too. Awful, isn't it?"

"Horrible!" said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "I know what it

is to be famished. I've been ravenous nearly all this week, in fact. I had a very scrappy sort of dinner to-day, and haven't had anything to eat since. As a matter of fact, I ran off to the bunshop directly after dinner to lay in a solid foundation for the match, you know, but when I got there I found I hadn't any money. And—er—then I saw you—"

"And, like a silly boy, you sat there with your mouth open all the time and watched me eat!" said Miss Bertha coyly. "Oh, you needn't start to protest, Master Wynn, for I saw you. I suppose you thought me frightfully greedy?"

"No fear!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I was admiring you, Miss Bertha, really! I've never seen a girl with such a wonderful appetite. Why, the way you tackled that pork-pie was marvellous. I couldn't have done it better myself. And when you started on that big plate of tarts—well, it was great! You're a wonder, Miss Bertha!"

Fatty's plump companion smiled.

"Well, I do rather pride myself on having a healthy appetite, Master Wynn," she said, "although you're the

Fatty and the plump young lady made their way along the path that led to the village.

Fatty Wynn bore himself very proudly, and he cast several sidelong glances of admiration at his fair companion.

To his mind, the portly Miss Bertha was most adorable. Her form and figure, so closely resembling his own, and her taste and appetite also very similar to his own, made her the embodiment of all that was fascinating in his eyes.

Fatty, in fact, had been completely smitten by the young lady's charms, and his thoughts had been full of her all the afternoon.

Her propensity for eating had caught his eye in the village bunshop, whither he had rushed down from St. Jim's directly after dinner to satisfy the craving of his inner man.

Fatty had first set eyes on Miss Bertha in the bunshop, and he had marvelled to watch her eat. Her gastronomic powers had awakened all the admiration of his heart, and his eye had been captivated by her fine, plump figure.

He had forgotten all about his own hunger in his devotion to the young lady he saw eating in the bunshop. And then



St Jim's Jingles!



No. 23. GEORGE FIGGINS, of the New House.

WHERE would the New House
juniors be
Without their famous
leader?

I fancy they'd be all at sea—
("Hear, hear!" cries every reader).
For Figgins is their guiding star,
Who scintillates more brightly
Than Redfern and the rest, by far;
He holds top place—and rightly!

He leads his comrades in the fray
Against the rival armies;
He's famous on the field of play,
And great his boyish charm is.
In fact, the worthy Figgy boasts
Admirers by the dozen;
Included in these ardent hosts
Is D'Arcy's charming cousin.

His bosom chums are Kerr and
Wynn,
They rank above the others;
And stand erect, through thick and
thin,

A loyal Band of Brothers,
The sun may shine, the winds may
blow,

But, recking not the weather,
The members of this famous "Co."
Will always stand together!



The Leader of the New House.

George Figgins has a manly heart,
He shows no craven weakness;
Nor does he play a humble part,
He has no use for meekness.
Fawning is not in Figgy's way,
Few schoolboys could be bolder;
If he has anything to say
He says it—from the shoulder!

In Mr. Horace Ratcliff's eyes
Figgins is just a juper,
For ever seeking to devise
Some new and daring caper.
Poor Figgy never gets fair play
From that most stern of masters;
Lectures and lickings come his way,
And other sad disasters!

Good luck to Figgy! May he thrive!
Fresh honours ever gaining;
His exploits keep us all alive,
They're vastly entertaining.
He holds a high and honoured place
In Gemites' estimation;
And he'll do nothing to disgrace
His name and generation!

NEXT WEEK:—Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the School House Fourth.

first one who has really appreciated it. The girls at school laugh at me, and my uncle—the Vicar of Rylcombe, you know—says I've got eating diabetes."

"What rot!" said Fatty gallantly. "Some people can't understand one having a good, robust appetite. I've got an appetite, you know, but the chaps at St. Jim's don't take me seriously. I always believe in laying a solid foundation. What did Wellington say after the Battle of Waterloo? He said that the battle was won in the tuck-shop at Eton, and that the men fought on their stomachs!"

"Quite right," said Miss Bertha approvingly. "I'm glad to have met a boy like you, Master Wynn. I think you are a very sensible boy, and I hope we shall be good friends."

"My sword! That's ripping, Miss Bertha!" said Fatty, thrown into a transport of delight by those words. "I hope so, too!"

"We will go along to the bunshop in Rylcombe now, Master Wynn, and you shall take me in to tea, as you promised."

"Rather!" said Fatty eagerly. "I've been looking forward to it all the afternoon, you know. This way, Miss Bertha!"

had come an opportunity to speak to her—to render her a service! She had somehow got wedged between the table and the chair on which she sat, and so had been unable to get up. The waitress had only sniggered from behind the counter, but Fatty had gallantly gone to the assistance of the plump damsel in distress.

Thus he had struck up an acquaintance with Miss Bertha Tupman, the niece of the local vicar. She came from London, she had told him, and was staying at the vicarage for a few weeks.

Fatty Wynn had forgotten all else in his bliss at knowing Miss Bertha, and he had simply lived for six o'clock, when that charming young lady had promised to go to the bunshop to tea with him.

Fatty was usually a very level-headed youth, with no susceptibilities at all, except where tuck was concerned. He had certainly never before fallen a victim to the charms of the fair sex. In fact, Fatty had often been heard to vouchsafe his opinion that all girls were stupid. But Miss Bertha was different. She had fascinated Fatty tremendously, right from the first!

They arrived at length in the village, and Fatty led Miss Bertha straight for the bunshop in the High Street. They sat down at a table in the corner, and the waitress came out to serve them.

Fatty Wynn's face was beaming. This was a moment worth living for!

He had received a remittance from home that morning, and the money had been burning a hole in his pocket ever since.

Had it not been for the strict vigilance of Figgins, all that money would have been spent on tuck by now. Fatty had thought himself very hard done by at first, but now he was grateful to Figgins.

With great politeness and consideration, he consulted Miss Bertha as to what she would like. But Miss Bertha's tastes were very like his own. Fatty Wynn had never met so intelligent a girl. She had a real appreciation of pork-pies, and jam-tarts, doughnuts, cream-puffs, toffee, ginger-bread, and other delectable commodities which Fatty had never discovered in a girl before. And her gifts for putting these things out of sight almost eclipsed Fatty's.

She polished off a plate of tarts at express speed, much to the admiration of Fatty. A pie and some doughnuts and several slices of cake disappeared with equal rapidity. Fatty regarded her with awe and gratification. Miss Bertha was a girl after his own heart.

As she warmed to her work, so to speak, she gave the orders herself, and the waitress, with growing surprise on her face, handed out the things.

Fatty Wynn beamed upon his companion, highly delighted at her delight.

Miss Bertha looked up in the middle of her operations on some cream puffs and gave Fatty a sweet smile.

"This is fine!" she said. "Are you enjoying yourself, Master Wynn?"

"Rather!" said Fatty promptly. "I'm having the time of my life! I think you're ripping, Miss Bertha!"

His companion's plump face again wreathed into a smile, and then she went on with the work of devastation on the cream-puffs.

Fatty and Miss Bertha between them wrought havoc with the stock of good things in the bunshop. The wonderment of the waitress grew and grew, until, during the intervals of waiting on her fat customers, she could only stand and stare at them, expecting them both to burst at any minute.

At last Fatty Wynn laid down his knife and fork and pushed his plate away with a sigh of content.

"That was prime—really prime!" he murmured. "How are you getting on, Miss Bertha?"

"I'm doing splendidly, thank you!" said that young lady brightly. "Try these chocolate biscuits—they're sumptuous!"

"N-no, thanks!" said Fatty, whose face was very red and shiny. "I—I'm full. You carry on, Miss Bertha!"

Miss Bertha did carry on—to the extent of nearly a dozen of the chocolate biscuits. Fatty's admiration of her prowess knew no bounds.

Finally, Miss Bertha sat back, too, and announced that she had had enough.

"I don't think I'd better eat any more now, or I sha'n't be ready for dinner later on," she said. "We have dinner late at the vicarage, you see, and I mustn't spoil myself for the meal."

Even Fatty gasped at that. He had not eaten as much as Miss Bertha, yet he felt quite full up for a long time to come.

He beckoned to the waitress, who had been totting up the bill.

"How much?" he said, reaching into his trousers-pocket with an effort.

"Sixteen-and-fourpence, please, sir," said the waitress.

"Oh crumbs!"

Fatty's look of ecstatic bliss changed to one of dismay. The remittance he had received that morning had been for ten shillings only, and he had but a few odd coppers and a sixpence or two in his pocket besides.

"S-s-sixteen-and-f-f-four?" he gasped. "Oh, my hat!"

It began to dawn on Fatty that entertaining a young lady to tea was apt to be a somewhat expensive business—especially when that young lady had a gargantuan appetite that was more than a match for his own. Fatty had looked forward to the feast, but had not given a thought to the reckoning. The question of paying the piper had not entered his head.

Miss Bertha was putting on her gloves in preparation for departure, and Fatty gave a rather sickly smile as she beamed at him.

"Sixteen-and-fourpence, please," said the waitress.

Fatty groped through his pockets, and brought to light a ten-shilling note, one-and-sixpence in silver, and ninepence in coppers.

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"Er—hum!" he coughed; and then, turning to the waitress, with a very red face and casting a cautious eye in Miss Bertha's direction, he whispered: "I—I say, miss, I've only got twelve-and-three! I can't pay any more now; but if you'll let the rest stand over till I come in again—"

Fatty could say no more, he felt so conscious and humiliated.

He cast furtive glances towards Miss Bertha to see whether she had noticed his dire strait.

But that plump young lady had not seen the bill, nor heard what Fatty had to say.

The waitress smiled.

Fatty Wynn was a regular customer at the bunshop, and she knew him well. She felt sympathetic, and not a little amused at his predicament.

"Thank you, Master Wynn," she said, taking the twelve-and-three pence. "That will be all right."

Fatty breathed again.

"Oh, thanks awfully!" he said, with great depth of fervour, and added in an undertone: "You're a sport, miss! Are you ready, Miss Bertha?"

"Yes, Master Wynn," said the vicar's niece rather heavily. "You are going to walk home with me?"

"Rather!" said Fatty.

He and Miss Bertha left the bunshop, both of them walking a little laboriously. That was not to be wondered at, after the terrific feed they had just partaken of.

But Fatty had regained his good spirits, and he was only too proud of the opportunity to walk home with Miss Bertha.

He took his fair companion down the side turnings of the village so as not to run into any St. Jim's fellows. Not that Fatty was ashamed of being seen with Miss Bertha, but he rather shrank from publicity. He knew that he would be chipped unmercifully at St. Jim's if the news went round that he had been seen escorting a young lady home.

So Fatty Wynn and Miss Bertha went back to the vicarage by a round about route through the fields, and both were quite out of breath by the time they arrived.

"Well, good-bye, Master Wynn," said Miss Bertha, extending a plump hand to Fatty, which he grasped gladly in his own plump palm. "I have enjoyed tea immensely, haven't you?"

"I never enjoyed a feed better!" responded Fatty Wynn gallantly.

"You may see me to-morrow if you like," said Miss Bertha. "Would you like to see me to-morrow?"

"What-ho!" said Fatty promptly.

Miss Bertha told him to wait for her at the stile at half-past five the following day, and then she went indoors, leaving Fatty gazing after her in deeper admiration than ever before.

At length, heaving a deep sigh, he turned and bent his heavy footsteps back to St. Jim's. His outing with the fair Miss Bertha had cost him all his available pocket-money, besides running him into debt, but he felt that it was worth it.

Indeed, as Fatty trudged on through the gathering dusk and made his way back to school, pondering deeply over the charms of Miss Bertha, he felt that he would gladly sacrifice his all, and go through fire and water for her sake.

CHAPTER 5. Fatty Catches It!

"HERE'S the fat idiot!"

"He's come back at last!"

These exclamations greeted Fatty Wynn as he walked in at the gate of St. Jim's. He halted in astonishment, and next minute Figgins and Kerr darted out at him from the shadows of the gateway and fastened strong grips upon him.

"So here you are, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Where have you been, you ass?"

"Leggo!" said Fatty, struggling.

"What do you mean by it, eh? Leaving us as you did, and refusing a tea in Study No. 1!" said Figgins warmly.

"We—ahem!—have forgiven you about the match, Fatty, as we think you were worrying about your grub. Perhaps I was a bit too hard on you, in cutting down your rations. But that's no excuse for you to go off and leave us all the evening. Where have you been?"

Fatty Wynn coughed.

He did not want his chums to know that he had been out with a young lady. He did not relish the chipping that he was bound to receive if he told them about Miss Bertha. They wouldn't understand, of course, and were certain to make fun of him. He decided that it was best, on the whole, to keep everyone at St. Jim's in ignorance as to his friendship with the vicar's niece.

"I've been out," he said lamely.

"Yes, we know you've been out, Fatty," said Kerr. "It doesn't need a giddy Sherlock Holmes to deduce that. But where've you been—that's the question?"

"Oh, only down to the village, you know!" said Fatty evasively.

Kerr looked hard at him.

"Look here, Fatty, you're spoofing about something," he said. "There's more in this than meets the eye. We're your pals, and consequently we feel concerned about you."

"Oh, rats!" growled Fatty. "I've only been to the village to have tea, so how can I be spoofing?"

"Then why couldn't you come with us and have tea with Tom Merry's crowd?" demanded Figgins.

"Er—well, you see, I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"Ahem! Because I wanted to go to Rylcombe instead."

Figgins gave a snort.

"You've got something up your sleeve, Fatty!" he said.

"It isn't like you to behave as mysteriously as this. Where did you get to after dinner?"

"Down to the village, Figgy."

"Bow-wow! Then how is it you were caught sitting on the stile near the vicarage? That isn't the village, is it?" demanded Figgins.

"Er—not exactly," said Fatty. "I walked there from the village, you know. I was only sitting down to—to rest."

Figgins regarded his fat studymate closely.

"My hat! I think you must be going off your rocker, Fatty," he said. "Your giddy behaviour is funny, to say the least. A lot of chaps find you sitting on a stile, a long way from school, when you ought to have been getting ready for the match; then, when you are yanked back to play, you moon about in goal and let the ball knock you over, and then, to cap the lot, you wander off for the rest of the evening, in spite of the fact that you had been invited to a feed, and come back to calmly tell us that you've only been to the village. You haven't been sitting on the stile again by any chance, I suppose?"

"N—no, Figgy."

Kerr shook his head.

"Jolly queer things going on, I must say," he said. "Fatty, it's too bad of you, really. If you have any troubles you ought to confide in your old uncles."

"Oh, what rot!" snorted Fatty. "You're a couple of silly chumps. I'm all right, I tell you. Leggo my arms!"

"We're going to take you up to the study to do your prep," said Figgins, leading his fat chum gently but firmly away. "We can't have you neglecting your work as well as your footer. Ratty isn't so easy-going. He's taking us to-morrow, mind, and he'll scalp you if he finds you've not done your prep."

"All right, Figgy, I'll go," said Fatty. "You needn't make a scene, you know. I'm all right."

"Are you sure?" asked Figgins, peering into his face with a look of deep concern.

"Of course I'm all right, you ass!" roared Fatty indignantly. "I'm not potty!"

"Well, we aren't quite so sure about that," said Figgins. "But, still, we'll give you the benefit of the doubt this time, Fatty, so long as you don't start cutting loose again."

"Br-r-rrrr!"

Fatty accompanied his chums up to the study, and there they set to work on their evening preparation.

The table was strewn with lexicons, Latin grammars, and exercise-books, and soon nothing was heard in the room except the steady scratching of pens over paper.

Figgins, happening to look up later, saw Fatty seated in his chair, gazing at the wallpaper with a look of the most complete abstraction.

"Wake up, Fatty!" he roared.

Fatty jumped.

"Oh, really, Figgy," he said, "you gave me quite a turn!"

"Mooning again?" rapped his lanky-legged leader severely. "What the dickens have you on your mind, you fat ass?"

"Nothing," said Fatty. "I—I'm just going to tackle this rotten ablative absolute."

"You'd better," said Kerr gravely, "or Ratty will be tackling you in the morning."

Fatty took up his pen and set to work quite vigorously.

Figgins and Kerr gave him grim looks, and then proceeded with their own prep.

Silence again reigned, and some little time passed. The genitive and ablative cases in Latin were always sore problems with the Fourth, and Figgins and Kerr were not particularly strong on Latin, so that their attention soon became wholly wrapped up in their tasks.

When Figgins glanced towards Fatty Wynn again he saw that youth chewing the end of his pen, at the same time

staring hard at the paper before him, with his brows wrinkled in thought.

"In a fix, Fatty?" he asked charitably.

"Ye-es," said Fatty in a far-away voice.

"Want any help?"

"Er—lemme see! What rhymes with sublime?" murmured Fatty.

"What?"

"The only words I can think of are crime and grime, and they don't fit in with the sentiment somehow," said Fatty, still in somewhat distant tones.

Figgins and Kerr sat upright in their chairs and stared at each other.

"He—he wants something to rhyme with sublime!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, my hat! That's not in the ablative absolute! Surely he's not messing about with poetry when he ought to be doing Latin?"

"Hark at him!" said Kerr.

Fatty was mumbling to himself.

"Sublime—grime—crime. No, it's no good. What about prime? That's better. It rhymes with sublime nicely. Lemme see! I think you're simply prime. That doesn't sound bad."

Figgins and Kerr exchanged looks of wonderment and alarm.

"Wh—what's the matter with him?" gasped Figgins. "He—he's delirious!"

Kerr tapped his forehead significantly.

"Bats!" he said. "Bats in the belfry! He's got 'em bad!"

Figgins leaned over and clapped his fat study-mate heavily on the shoulder. Fatty came back to earth so suddenly that he gave a jump and kicked the table. The inkpot overbalanced as the table rocked and a flood of best blue-black surged all over Figgins' exercise.

That junior gave a howl that would have done credit to a Hottentot.

"You crass idiot, Fatty! You frabjous chump! You've ruined my exercise!"

Fatty blinked.

"It was your own fault!" he snorted. "You made me jump and knock the table, you fathead!"

"I did it to pull you to your senses, you silly cuckoo!" howled Figgins. "You were sitting there burbling a lot of tommyrot to yourself, and I thought I'd better stop you before you went raving mad. Look at my exercise! Look at it!"

"Well, I can't help it!" mumbled Fatty crossly. "You should have let a chap alone when he was quiet."

Figgins gave Wynn a look that was more expressive than words. He grabbed a sheet of blotting-paper and daubed frantically at his exercise. He managed to soak up a good deal of the ink, but it left a glaring stain that made Figgins glare like a gargoyle every time he looked at it.

"You blitherer!" he snorted, turning to Fatty. "For two pins I'd punch your silly nose! What were you babbling about crime and grime for?"

Fatty went red.

"Oh, nothing!" he said. "Can't you leave a chap alone, anyhow? I'm blessed if I can get on with you nagging! I'm jolly well going up to the box-room. See? Perhaps I shall find a bit of peace and quiet there. I can't get it in my own study. Br-rrr-rrr!"

Fatty gathered up his books and papers and left his study in high dudgeon.

Figgins and Kerr were too exasperated to say him nay, and so Fatty installed himself in the deserted box-room, there to mumble rhymes to "sublime" to his heart's content.

Bed-time arrived, and still Fatty Wynn had not come down. Sefton was rounding up the juniors for bed, and Figgins and Kerr felt that it was up to them to find Fatty and warn him of the time.

So they made their way upstairs to the box-room, but Fatty had gone when they arrived.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "I wonder where the fat chump is now? There'll be a row if he's late for bed!"

They went down again and searched diligently for Fatty, but he was nowhere to be seen. To their dismay, Mr. Ratcliff came along the corridor, looking particularly sour and irascible.

"Sefton, see that Figgins and Kerr go up to their dormitory at once!" he rapped to the prefect. "It is now past the proper time. There are no more juniors absent from the dormitory, I trust?"

"Wynn is missing, sir," replied Sefton. "I've been hunting for him everywhere, but apparently he's not in the House. He must have gone outside."

Mr. Ratcliff's steely eyes glinted, and he compressed his lips in a thin, hard line.

"So Wynn is outside, when he should be undressing for bed!" he snapped. "Very well, Sefton. Figgins and Kerr,

take fifty lines apiece for dawdling. See that they go up to the dormitory at once, Sefton. I will look for Wynn."

Figgins and Kerr went upstairs, trembling for the fate of Fatty.

Mr. Ratcliff opened the hall door and went out into the shadowy, moonlit quad. It was a glorious night, and myriads of stars were shining in the purple firmament above. Such a night was an inspiration to the poetic muse, but Mr. Ratcliff was not in a mood for contemplation of the beauties of the night.

He espied a plump figure walking to and fro under the elm-trees, and thither the Housemaster made his way, his gown whisking in the breeze behind him.

Fatty Wynn did not hear Mr. Ratcliff's approach.

He was walking slowly up and down beneath the elm-trees, gazing earnestly up at the stars.

Mr. Ratcliff, as he approached, heard Fatty murmur something about "twinkling stars" and "Venus," and he snapped his teeth down hard.

"Wynn!" he rapped, striding out into the fat junior's path.

Fatty stopped short and gave a gasp of dismay on seeing the unpopular Housemaster.

"Wynn, how dare you come out here star-gazing, when your proper place is in the dormitory!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Since when have you adopted a liking for astronomy?"

"Ahem!" coughed Fatty. "I—I—I—"

"The study of the stars is a commendable pastime in itself, Wynn; but it does not form a recognised part of the school curriculum," said Mr. Ratcliff, with heavy sarcasm. "Moreover, Wynn, this is bed-time, and you must pursue your astronomical activities during earlier periods of the night. You will kindly follow me to my study."

Fatty's plump visage was the picture of woe as he went back to the New House with Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster took him to his study and gave him four sharp cuts of the cane as a "nightcap." Then he marched Fatty along to the Fourth Form dormitory.

Figgins & Co. had heard them coming, and they were all in bed and looking as good as gold when Mr. Ratcliff and Fatty Wynn arrived.

"Get into bed immediately, Wynn, and do not let me catch you studying the stars again!" said the Housemaster cuttingly. "If you dare leave the House again to-night for such a purpose I shall take you straight to Dr. Holmes. I shall keep a look-out for you, so you will do well to bear my words in mind."

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped the suffering Fatty.

He undressed and clambered into bed. Mr. Ratcliff, with a choleric look round the dormitory, took his departure.

As soon as the Housemaster was out of the way Figgins & Co. all sat up in their beds; candles were lit, and Fatty Wynn became the cynosure of all eyes.

"What's the game, Fatty?" inquired Redfern. "Have you taken to astronomy in your old age?"

"No, I haven't!" snorted Fatty from his bed.

"But Ratty caught you out in the quad studying the stars, didn't he?" demanded Pratt.

"We saw you from the window," said Lawrence.

"Ahem!" coughed Fatty.

Figgins bent a searching gaze upon him in the candle-light.

"Are you off your onion, Fatty, or what?" he exclaimed. "You surely didn't go prowling round the quad, to study the stars, did you?"

"Oh, mind your own bizney!" snapped Fatty. "I want to go to sleep."

"But about this star-gazing stunt of yours, Fatty—" began Owen. But Fatty interrupted him with a roar.

"Shurrup, will you? I'll buzz a boot at the next silly ass who starts jawing!"

"Oh, leave him alone!" said Figgins. "Perhaps if we let him sleep it off he'll be saner in the morning. Put out those lights before Ratty comes back and catches us."

The candles were extinguished, and the juniors dropped off to sleep one by one.

Fatty Wynn, usually the first to succumb to the arms of Morpheus, lay wide awake far into the night. Now and again certain subdued mutterings might have been heard proceeding from his bed, and the words sublime, prime, and chime were oft repeated, until at last Fatty mumbled himself into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER 6.

More Trouble for Fatty.

MR. RATCLIFF gave Fatty Wynn a very stern look as he came into the Fourth Form room next morning.

The whole Form was assembled—School House and New House fellows together—for morning lessons. The

juniors never did look forward to lessons, but to-day, with Mr. Ratcliff taking them for Latin, instead of Mr. Lathem, the prospect was dismal indeed.

They had been animatedly discussing Fatty Wynn and his supposed star-gazing exploit the night previous, and there had been considerable levity in the Form-room, until Baggy Trimble, who was keeping cave at the door, announced the approach of Mr. Ratcliff.

Fatty's face was very red, and his colour mounted still more when he caught Mr. Ratcliff's look, and heard the subdued chuckles of his Form-fellows.

"Silence in class!" rapped Mr. Ratcliff snappily. "Take out your books, boys!"

The Fourth-Formers obeyed in great trepidation, for Mr. Ratcliff was the most short-tempered of all masters. The lesson commenced.

Mr. Ratcliff, as usual, was in a Hun-like mood, and Latin grammar, of all subjects, was the one calculated to make him most testy. The Fourth did not take very kindly to verbs and their declensions, and the mysteries of the ablative absolute never failed to put them hopelessly at sea.

Baggy Trimble and Mellish, the two most backward pupils in the class, came in for a good deal of Mr. Ratcliff's spleen, and while the Housemaster was engaged in a long harangue with them, Fatty Wynn was seen to lapse into a brown study.

Figgins essayed to give him a gentle prod with a ruler, but he dropped the ruler, and was promptly awarded fifty lines for making a noise.

Then Mr. Ratcliff's eagle eyes sought out the day-dreamer. "Wynn!" he rapped out in thunderous tones.

Fatty did not hear. So Mr. Ratcliff fairly shouted to him, and at that the Welsh junior gave a start and looked up.

"Er—hallo! Ahem! Yes, sir?" he said.

"You were not paying attention to the lesson, Wynn!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you indulge in day-dreaming, boy!"

Fatty gasped. Mr. Ratcliff's narrow brow contracted.

"Will you kindly take up your book, Wynn, and go on from the place where Mellish has just left off?" he rapped.

Fatty, with a despairing look at Figgins, picked up his Latin grammar and blinked at it.

"Go on, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff ominously.

"I—I—I—" stammered poor Fatty.

"Go on, Wynn!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"I—I can't, sir!" gasped Fatty in desperation. "I've missed the place."

"Ah! So you have not been paying attention, as I thought!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "You were thinking of something else, I presume?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Your thoughts were not dwelling among the stars, I hope, Wynn?" said Mr. Ratcliff in biting tones, and there was a titter round the class.

The Housemaster silenced it with a look.

Fatty Wynn went red, but he did not reply to Mr. Ratcliff's sarcastic question.

"I wonder whether you were too occupied with your astronomy last night to be able to attend to your preparation?" said the Housemaster viciously. "Will you kindly translate from the beginning of Exercise 18, Wynn?"

Fatty's knees began to knock. He struggled clumsily with the translation, which was full of obscure moods and tenses, and it was soon apparent that he had done little, if any, preparation.

Mr. Ratcliff grasped a stoic ashplant, and his eyes glittered.

"Come out here, Wynn!" he exclaimed. "I must make you realise that I did not set preparation for nothing."

Fatty walked miserably to the front, and received four heavy swishes, laid on with all the force that Mr. Ratcliff could muster.

He returned to his desk with his hands folded under his armpits, moaning.

"Now, Wynn, perhaps you will pay more attention!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff between his teeth. "Mellish, you may continue."

The lesson wore on, and Fatty Wynn took good care that Mr. Ratcliff did not catch him day-dreaming again.

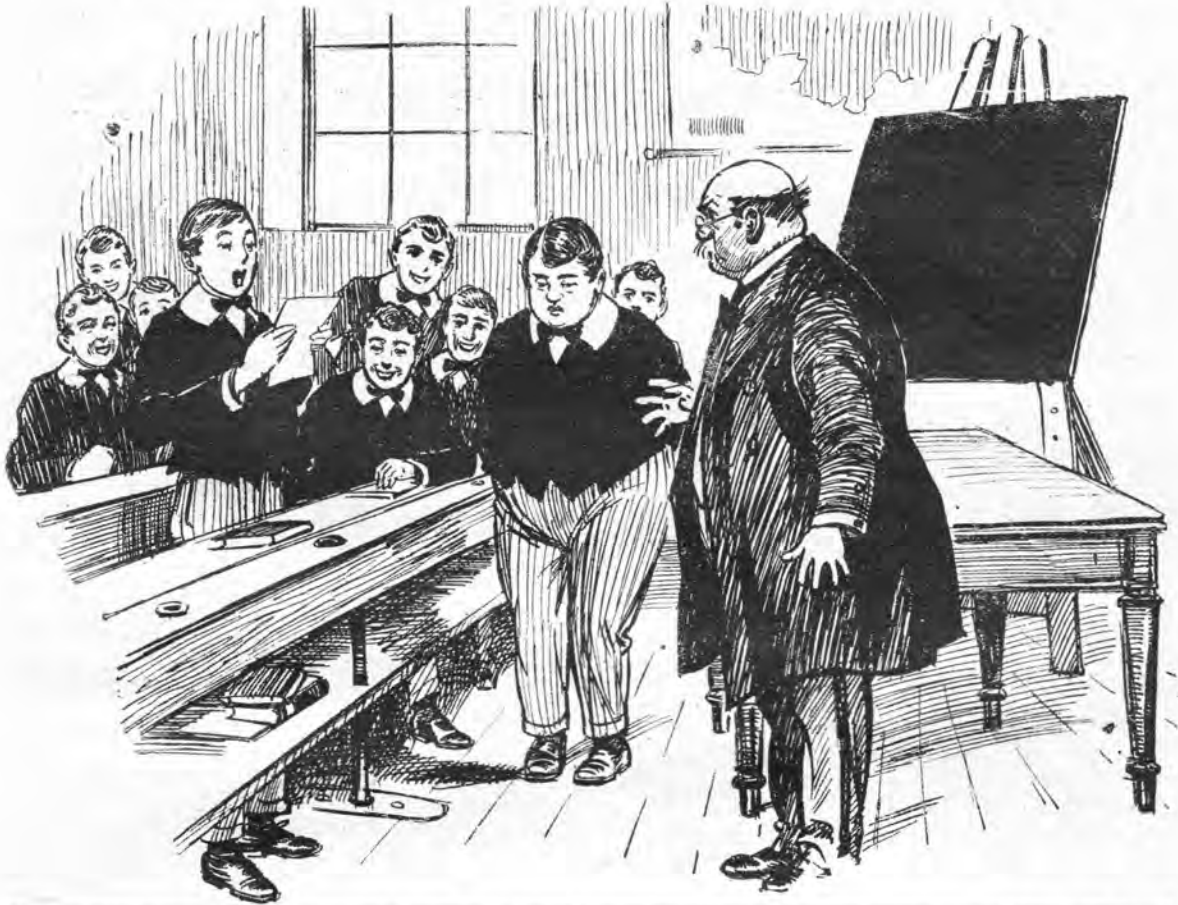
German was the next lesson, and Herr Schneider succeeded Mr. Ratcliff in the Form-room.

The long-suffering Fourth were at once plunged into the intricacies of Schiller. Herr Schneider was not exactly in the best of humour this morning, either, and the juniors felt it incumbent upon them to mind their p's and q's.

Fatty Wynn, much to his Form-fellows' astonishment, allowed himself to lapse into further reveries during German lesson, and several times he was brought up sharply by Herr Schneider.

The Fourth wondered mightily at Fatty's mysterious behaviour.

They could not account for it in the least.



"Read him out to me, Mellish," said Herr Schneider. Mellish wrinkled his brows over the paper, and gradually his face took on a grin. Then he read aloud Fatty Wynn's poem to Miss Bertha. Fatty Wynn's face was the colour of beetroot. "Vat iss dot, Mellish?" exclaimed Herr Schneider. Mellish read out the poem again, and a great yell of laughter went up from the Fourth. "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 6.)

The Herr was chalking out a passage on the blackboard when, happening to turn round suddenly, he espied Fatty Wynn with his head bent over his desk, writing something with a pencil on a scrap of paper.

"Ach!" said Herr Schneider, "Vynn! Vat are you doing?"

Fatty looked up with a start, and he flushed guiltily.

"You vas not paying attentions to der blackboard mit yourself, Vynn!" said the German master. "Instead of looking at me, you write somet'ing on a piece of baper, isn't it? Bring me dat baper!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "I—I say, sir—"

"Do you hear me, Vynn?" exclaimed Herr Schneider, looking very fiercely at Fatty through his spectacles. "Bring me dat baper mit you!"

Fatty, with a very ill will, walked to the front, and handed Herr Schneider the paper on which he had been writing.

The Herr blinked at it in perplexity. Fatty's writing was scarcely legible, and the many alterations and scratchings-out the paper contained rendered it almost undecipherable. It was too much for Herr Schneider, and he handed the paper to Mellish, whose desk was nearest.

"Read him out to me, Mellish," he said.

Mellish wrinkled his brows over the missive, and gradually his face took on a grin. At last he read out the following in a loud voice:

"Oh, Bertha, you are fair to see,
Your sweet form is sublime,
And always when I think of thee
My heart beats overtime!"

"Vat iss dot, Mellish?" exclaimed Herr Schneider. Mellish read out Fatty's rhyme again, and a great yell of laughter went up from the Fourth.

Herr Schneider rapped on the table with his ruler.

"Silence! Silence, boys!" he exclaimed. "Vynn, is dat you put der poetry togadder mit yourself in German lesson—hein?"

Fatty Wynn's face was the colour of beetroot. He could only stand and gasp.

"Iss dere any more of dot poetry pefore, Mellish?" asked Herr Schneider grimly.

"Yes, sir, there's a lot more," grinned Mellish. "There's plenty of slush about Bertha, although a lot of it has been altered. Here's a bit about her eyes being like stars that twinkle up above, enticing me—that's Wynn, of course—to tell my love. That means Wynn's love, I suppose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

Fatty Wynn, losing all restraint, made a grab at the paper in Mellish's hand.

"Gimme that paper!" he shouted. "There's no need for you to make fun of it, you rotter—"

"Silence!" thundered Herr Schneider. "Be quiet mit yourself, Vynn! You vas von stupid boy to write dot silly poetry. Did you compose him all mit yourself—hein?"

"Ahem!" coughed Fatty, who wished fervently that the floor would open and swallow him up. "I—I—I—"

"German lesson vas not der time to make poetry, Vynn," said Herr Schneider grimly. "Mellish, put der baper on der fire."

Mellish did so, amidst the chuckles of the class.

"Now, Vynn, hold out der hand!" said Herr Schneider, taking up a cane. "I yill hit you der smites."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty did not laugh.

He held out his hand with a woebegone countenance. Swish! Swish! Swish! went the cane, and Fatty nearly doubled up.

He returned to his seat, sorrowing. Two severe lickings in a morning was a record for him, and he felt that his lot was indeed a hard one.

He had skimmed his prep and slacked at lessons in order to have a stirring poem ready to lay before Miss Bertha when he met her that evening. Inditing that poem had cost him dear, and, although he had registered a mental vow to suffer anything for the sake of his adored one, Fatty Wynn realised only too vividly that the process was not likely to be a pleasant one!

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 939.

THE St. Jim's News



IF I WERE A POLICEMAN!

By
Our Merry Contributors



CONSTABLE CRUMP!

By
Dick Redfern.



EDITORIAL!

By
Tom Merry.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

I weally cannot imagine myself in the wole of Police-constable D'Arcy! I have no gweat fancy for such a wole, eithaft. Now, if policemen wore shinin' silk toppahs an' smart suits an' spats, they would look vewy dignified an' imposin' when on point duty, an' it would be a pleasuah to belong to the Force. But I should not dream of puttin' a helmet on my noble nappah or donnin' a police uniform in place of my stylish Etons. Pevish the thought, deah boys!

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

I'd like to be a policeman. By all accounts they get jolly well fed. They make friends with all the cooks, and pick up a rabbit-pie here, and a cold chicken there, and an apple-dumpling somewhere else. It's a lovely life! Of course, a policeman gets mixed up in some ugly seraps occasionally, but that wouldn't worry a courageous fighting-man like me! If I were a policeman I should be the burglar's bane and the lawbreaker's terror!

GEORGE FRANCIS KERR:

I am not very keen on becoming a police-constable. I shall fly at higher game than that. If Scotland Yard has a vacancy for a schoolboy sleuth, I shall be pleased to offer my services. I hope one day to become as famous as Sexton Blake or Ferrers Locke, or the latter's brainy assistant, Jack Drake.

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF:

I have not the slightest desire to join the Police Force, but if ever I did it would be a bad day for the criminals and lawbreakers of this land. I should perform my duties with relentless thoroughness, and should be instrumental in bringing many notorious characters to book. The name of Constable Ratcliff would cause the boldest burglar to shudder and the most conscienceless criminal to cringe!

MONTY LOWTHER:

It has always been my great ambition to become a P.C. But in my case the letters stand for Privy Councillor, or—which is perhaps more appropriate to my talents—Principal Comedian!

REGINALD TALBOT:

A constable's calling is quite as honourable as most; but if ever I become a policeman I hope I shall make a smart and efficient one, and not a self-inflated fathead like Crump!

EPHRAIM TAGGLES:

If I was a policeman I'd arrest all the young rips of St. Jim's, and march 'em off to the police-station in a whimpering procession!

Who struts around in pomp and pride
As if he ruled the countryside?
Who simply dare not be defied?

Old Crump!

Who is the motor-driver's bane?
Who lies in wait in Rylcombe Lane
To catch the road-hogs—not in vain?

Old Crump!

Who, when the snow lies deep and white,
Is pelted when he comes in sight
By schoolboys, chuckling with delight?

Old Crump!

Who sometimes calls upon the Head
And makes complaints, with visage red?
Who makes us shake and quake with dread?

Old Crump!

Who chased young Gibson for a mile,
Puffing and blowing all the while,
And then collapsed across a stile?

Old Crump!

Who, one fine day, will win promotion
(Though how, I haven't got a notion),
And thus will cause a big commotion?

Old Crump!

Who bagged a "Burglar Bill" one day,
And, in his triumph, cried "Ooray!"
Then let the rascal get away?

Old Crump!

Who smiles at every village lass,
And stands aside to let them pass?
Who won't admit the law's "a hass"?

Old Crump!

Who, when he sees these rhymes in print,
Will scan them with a savage squint,
Then give the bard a gentle hint?

Old Crump!

But who, for all his funny traits,
Deserves a word or two of praise,
Because he's "straight" in all his ways?

Old Crump!

MINDING HIS OWN BUSINESS.

"You say," said the magistrate, "that P.-c. Crump arrested you while you were quietly minding your own business?"

"Yes, your honour!" was the indignant answer. "He caught me suddenly by the coat-collar, and threatened to strike me with his staff unless I accompanied him to the police-station!"

"You were quietly attending to your own business, making no noise or disturbance of any kind?"

"None whatever, sir."

"It seems strange. What is your business?"

"I'm a burglar, sir!"

THE spectacle of P.-c. Crump, the local limb of the law, walking ponderously across the quad on his way to report some delinquent to the Head, has inspired me to publish a special number dealing with this plump and portly police-constable.

Not that I dislike the old buffer—never let it be said! Rylcombe would be dead without our noble limb of the law, always to hand—when there's nothing doing! Why, he's that sharp he's been known to catch three colds in one week!

The most important individual for miles around, in the opinion of P.-c. Crump, is Crump himself! Even such distinguished people as the Mayor of Wayland, the headmaster of St. Jim's, and the prosperous landowners of Rylcombe cannot hold a candle to Crump. The worthy constable suffers so much from "swelled head" that he really requires an outside in helmets, and he is so inflated with self-conceit that Monty Lowther declares that he will burst one of these days!

The Juniors of St. Jim's have had a good many feuds and skirmishes with "old Crump," as he is familiarly called. He has often threatened to "harrest" us in the name of "the lor," of which he is a representative. But Crump's threats leave us cold. His bark is a jolly sight worse than his bite, and he would not really arrest a fellow unless it was for something fearfully serious.

Somebody says somewhere that "a policeman's life is not a happy one." Certainly Crump's life is not a wildly happy existence. I have been permitted to publish some extracts from his diary, and these will give you some idea of what the worthy constable has to put up with. Like Taggles, the porter, Crump is "worried out of his wits" by the antics of the St. Jim's fellows. In fact, Crump and Taggles often spend an evening together, each pouring out his grievances into the sympathetic ear of the other.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," says Taggles. "All schoolboys oughter be drowned at birth!"

And P.-c. Crump replies, with great gusto: "Ear, 'ear! Them's my sentiments, Ephraim! Pass the ginger-ale!"

But, for all his colossal conceit and self-importance, old Crump isn't such a bad sort. He is held in great respect by the old folks of the village; and as for the youths—well, they laugh at him and poke fun at him, but they would not swop him for any other constable. For P.-c. Crump has become an essential part of Rylcombe. He is as much an institution as the village pump, or the old pillory near the church, or the old-fashioned smithy. Rylcombe will have to dispense with him one of these days when he gets too old to chase errant youngsters down the village street. But may that day be far distant!

TOM MERRY.



The CHRONICLES of CRUMP!

Some "arresting" extracts from the worthy constable's diary.

MONDAY.

Awoke to a fresh week of dooty. I turns out with the lark, and whilst I'm a-wielding the shaving-brush, I says to myself, says I, "It's about time I had a 'case' to take before the local magistrates. I ain't captured no lor-breakers for a long time, and they'll think I'm neglecting my dooty." So I sets out in the hope of securing a victim. But, bless you, there ain't no crime in Rylcombe. The villagers is a slow and sleepy lot. They don't go plugging their neighbours with bullets, or burgling each other's houses, or committing assault and battery on the Law in the person of William Crump! A stodgy lot, that's what they are. I kept my eyes open all day, but I never see a single outrage. The worst crime that has ever been committed in Rylcombe was when a man—a stranger to the village—was caught buying cigarettes after eight in the evening. Of course, I made a public example of him, and he was fined half-a-crown. I also had his finger-prints took, likewise a photograph, for future reference; but this dastardly scoundrel hasn't been seen in the village from that day to this!

TUESDAY.

Another slack day. The young men of Rylcombe seems to have given up ckeing out a precarious livelihood by committing petty crimes. As for the old 'uns—well, they believes in living up to the Eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not be found out!" Leastwise, I can never find them out. They're too cunning and crafty for an honest man like me! The only offence I came across to-day was committed by a young warmint from St. Jim's, who left his scooter unattended outside the sweet-shop. I threatened to arrest him for causing an obstruction, but he simply laughed at me, and he scooted away. Never mind! Perhaps business will be a bit more brisk to-morrow!

WEDNESDAY.

Had a horrible experience this afternoon. I was walking through Rylcombe Woods, when I suddenly come upon a couple of young rascallions having a duel in a clearing of the wood. They was Master Merry and Master Talbot, and there was a crowd of their friends standing around. "Ho!" I says, stern-like. "Wot's all this? Fightin' with swords is strictly prohibited in this country, and you knows it. I harrest yer, in the name of the lor! Come along o' me!" At this, there was a yell of laughter. "Crump, you're a chump!" says Master Merry. "Can't you see that these are wooden property swords, and that we're simply rehearsing a scene from 'The Three Musketeers'?" I realised that I had fairly put my foot

in it, and I walked away with a very red face, and an uncomfortable feeling that I had made a fool of myself. And as I hurried off the woods fairly echoed with laughter. I honestly believe that duel was planned for my special benefit!

THURSDAY.

I had another painful experience to-day. The morning passed without incident, but just after midday I was hovering about near the Green Man when I see a young shaver come round the corner and hand a slip of paper to another young shaver what was standing outside. It was done in such a sly way that I was convinced it was a case of street betting, and that a betting slip had changed hands. Accordingly, I pounces on the two young shavers, and gives them the usual caution, and marches them off to the station. "Well, Crump," says the inspector, "wot 'ave these young fellers been up to—robbin' a bank?" "No, sir," says I. "Street bettin'! I caught one of them in the werry hact of handin' a bettin' slip to his pal." "Ho!" says the inspector. "Search his pockets!" I did so, but I failed to find a betting slip. The only thing I found was a slip of paper bearing the words:

"Best thing of the day—CRUMP!"

A fat and lazy animal, but he is a dead cert for the Spooferm Stakes!"

"Why, Crump," says the inspector, laughing, "they've been a-pullin' of your leg, as ever was!" The two young shavers was discharged; but I shall keep my eye on them, and teach them that they can't pull a policeman's leg with impooinity!

FRIDAY.

I was patrolling me beat this afternoon when along comes Master Cutts of St. Jim's on his motor-bike. He was travelling at about forty miles an hour as the crow flies. I stands in the middle of the road, with me arms and legs akimbo, and I shouts to him:

"Alt! Master Cutts, you're exspeedin' the seed limit!" In my excitement I must have got a bit mixed.

"Stand clear, you fat fool!" shouts Master Cutts. And he swerves to one side to avoid me. There was a big puddle of muddy water in the roadway, and the motor-bike churns it up, and gives me a mud-bath from head to foot.

"Stop!" I splutters. "Which I've took your number, an' I'll 'ave the lor on yer for this 'ere!"

But Master Cutts goes tearing on, and he turns round and throws a kiss at me before he disappears round the corner. Snorting with rage, I tramps back to the station to change my uniform. Then I proceeds to St. Jim's and waits for Master Cutts to come in. When he turns up I marches him into the presence of the headmaster.

"Sir," says I, "this young rascal is guilty on three counts. First, exceedin' the speed limit on 'is motor-bike. Second, failin' to stop when called upon to do so by a hoffer of the lor. Third, assaultin' the aforesaid hoffer by givin' 'im a mud-bath. I calls upon you, sir, to birch 'im black an' blue!"

The headmaster frowns at me. "I shall do nothing of the sort, Crump," says he. "I am aware that Cutts exceeded the speed limit on his machine, but he had my permission to do so. The doctor was wanted to attend an urgent case of illness at this school, and as the telephone was out of order I requested Cutts to ride post-haste to the village. I am sure that he did not intentionally give you a mud-bath, as you call it; and I should not dream of punishing him."

So that was that. And once again I retired hurt, so to speak!

SATURDAY.

In the small hours of this morning I actually caught a burglar. Caught him red-handed, climbing out of the drawing-room window of Rylcombe Manor, with a sack over his shoulder. On seeing me he gives a gasp of alarm and drops the sack. "A fair cop!" he says. "I'll come quiet, constable." I didn't have no handcuffs handy in Rylcombe, but I grips the burglar by the shoulder, and marches him off to the station. "This is great luck!" I says to myself. "I've been wantin' to catch a burglar for months an' months, but the warmints is as eloviose as willer-the-wisps. 'Owsomever, I've caught one at last! This will mean promotion to the rank of sergeant, an' congratulations from the magistrates on havin' made a smart capture!" Just as I was roominatin' on these things, the prisoner suddenly wriggles out of my grasp, and gives me a terrific punch in the chest, bowling me over like a skittle. Then he takes to his heels, and although I scrambles to me feet and gives chase, the burglar gets clear away, drat him!

An unfortunate ending to an unfortunate week.

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Supplement II.

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FATTY WYNN'S FOLLY!

(Continued
from
page 13.)

CHAPTER 7. The Secret Out!

"FATTY'S mashed!" said Figgins wonderingly.
"And now we know!" grinned Jack Blake.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lessons were over, and the juniors of the Fourth were gathered in the corridor outside. There was only one subject for discussion—and the subject was Fatty Wynn.

Fatty's behaviour since yesterday had greatly exercised the minds of all. He had mystified his chums and set the rest of the school wondering. But now the secret was out! The publicity given to Fatty's poem in the Form-room had come as a revelation to the juniors.

Fatty Wynn was in love!
"It's the absolute giddy limit!" said Herries. "Fatty's mashed on a girl named Bertha! Did you ever?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Figgins and Kerr exchanged grins.
"That accounts for him burbling about a rhyme for sublime last night," said Kerr. "He didn't use prime; after all, but fixed on overtime. Always when he thinks of Bertha, his heart beats overtime! Oh, my only hat!"
"The poetry may be a bit crude, but the sentiment's good," grinned Figgins. "Hallo, here's Fatty!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rotund form of Fatty Wynn emerged from the Form-room just then. He was instantly surrounded by his laughing, mischievous Form-fellows.

"What-ho, the giddy love-sick swain!" exclaimed Cardew.
"Have you got any more poetic effusions, Fatty? We should love to hear them. They're worth a guinea a box, old chap!"

"Look here, you bounders—" began Fatty indignantly.
"Who's Bertha?" demanded Blake. "Tell us all about the divine Bertha, Fatty! We're dying to know!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"
"What does it feel like to be in love, Fatty?"
Fatty looked round with a crimson countenance.
"Ring off, you silly asses!" he exclaimed. "I ain't in love!"

"Rats! Now we know what's been making you act so jolly queer lately!" said Lawrence. "You're love-sick, Fatty. You've been mooning about Bertha."

"I haven't!" howled Fatty furiously. "I'm not love-sick, you frabjous idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Tell us another!"
"No wonder you forgot all about footer yesterday!" said Redfern. "You went out to meet Bertha, I suppose? You were caught sitting on a stile, sighing like an owl. You were sighing after Bertha, of course. Fatty, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"
"Look here—"

"His mind was full of Bertha all through the match, too, and that's why he was wool-gathering in goal!" said Owen. "He refused a feed afterwards, didn't he? That shows that Fatty must be absolutely head over heels in love! The poor chap's got it bad, otherwise he wouldn't refuse a feed!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty clenched his fat fists and glared round wrathfully at his hilarious schoolfellows.

"I'm jolly well not going to be made a laughing-stock of!" he hooted. "I'm not in love, I tell you, and I'll wallop the first rotter who says that I am!"

Figgins and Kerr went to either side of him and led him gently away.

"Come on, Fatty, let's go back to our own House," said Figgins. "It must be jolly rotten to be made fun of, just because you're spoons on a fair charmer—"

"Look here, Figg—"
"Oh, come on, old chap!"

Fatty suffered himself to be led away, and all the New House fellows crossed to their own quarters.

They left the fellows in the School House doubled up with mirth.

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Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther of the Shell came trooping along from their Form-room. They stopped to inquire what was on.

The news was imparted to them, and the Terrible Three roared.

"Fatty Wynn mashed! Oh crumbs! What next!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther exploded in a series of cachinnations.
"Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Fatty! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It properly beats the band!" said Manners. "Fancy Fatty falling in love! I thought that stunt was Gussy's copyright."

The swell of the Fourth went red.

"Weally, Mannahs, I wegard you as an uttah ass!" he said witheringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy's weakness for the opposite sex was well-known, and his chums were always chipping him on the subject. But nobody had ever dreamed that Fatty Wynn would fall a victim to Cupid's shaft.

The news spread like wildfire, and soon all St. Jim's was chuckling over it.

Fatty was bombarded with kind inquiries concerning his ladylove. Everyone evinced the keenest desire to know who Bertha was and what she was like. Fatty waxed exceedingly wrathful as the day wore on, until he was in a state bordering on homicide.

The prospect of again seeing Miss Bertha at half-past five cheered him up, however, and he looked forward to his tryst with eagerness.

The question of money weighed somewhat heavily on his mind as five o'clock approached. He managed to borrow seven-and-six from Koumi Rao, and that was sufficient, he thought, to enable him to invite Miss Bertha for a snack at the bunshop.

Fatty set out from St. Jim's at a quarter-past five, having successfully dodged away from Figgins and Kerr. He hummed a merry tune to himself as he hurried down the Rylcombe Lane.

Little suspecting that Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and Clampe were following him, Fatty made his way to the stile.

Aubrey Racke & Co., keeping well in hiding, stalked Fatty to his trysting-place, and then lay low in the bushes to watch and wait.

The young rascals of St. Jim's had been keeping a close watch on Fatty Wynn ever since lessons. Eager to know more of his "love affair," and to find out who the mysterious Bertha was, they had decided to follow his movements as much as possible, in the hope of satisfying their curiosity.

Racke chuckled softly as they crouched together behind the bush.

"We're on the right track, I reckon, you chaps!" he said. "Wynn is evidently waiting for someone, and it's bound to be this giddy Bertha he wrote the poetry about. Hallo! There's someone going towards the stile."

"My hat!" said Mellish. "It must be Bertha! Look at the fat damsel! He, he, he!"

Miss Bertha—for it was she—approached the stile and gave Fatty Wynn one of her sweetest smiles. Fatty raised his cap, and Racke & Co. heard him say, "Good-afternoon, Miss Bertha!"

The hidden watchers drew deep breaths.
"Then, that—that's Bertha!" gasped Racke. "Oh, my only hat!"

"Isn't she a size!" murmured Crooke. "It would be a good afternoon's exercise to walk round her. My word! She and Fatty might be taken for twins!"

"Only, Bertha's the better looking of the two!" said Clampe. "But what a hefty girl! So that's who Fatty Wynn's fallen in love with!"
"He, he, he!"

Fatty Wynn, quite oblivious of Racke & Co.'s presence, escorted Miss Bertha gallantly along the path towards the village.

He had no romantic poems to offer her now—Fatty had quite abandoned that means of betokening his sincere devotion—but he chatted away to her in cheerful tones as they walked along, and felt that he was getting on famously.

Miss Bertha was quite a sprightly conversationalist, too, and as she and Fatty had one sole absorbing topic in common—that of eating—they really did get on famously together.

Racke & Co. stalked them to Rylcombe, chuckling in enjoyment of a huge joke.

"What about a little snack, Miss Bertha?" said Fatty, putting some emphasis on the word "little."

"Rather!" said Miss Bertha promptly. "It's awfully good of you, Master Wynn!"

Fatty drew to a halt outside the station tuckshop, diplomatically keeping away from the bunshop lower down the High Street, where he would not be able to pay off the balance of his score until his next remittance arrived.

"Shall we go in here?" he said. "They sell ripping pastries."

"Very well," said Miss Bertha.

They entered the station tuckshop and sat down.

"We'll—ahem!—have just a slight snack to-day, Miss Bertha," said Fatty. "What about starting off with some ham?"

"Oh, I simply adore ham!" said Miss Bertha, lifting up her eyes and rolling them in ecstasy.

Fatty ordered the ham, and he and Miss Bertha wired in.

The ham soon went, and Fatty ordered some more for his fair guest.

"Won't you have another helping?" asked Miss Bertha. "This is really prime ham, you know."

"I—I know," said Fatty, his mouth watering as he gazed with longing eyes on the ham.

Dearly would he have loved another helping: but funds were limited, and Miss Bertha was only just warming to her appetite, he could see.

So Fatty, realising for the first time what it felt like to make sacrifices for an adored one, heroically resisted the yearning for more ham.

Miss Bertha was polishing off her second helping of ham in an expert manner, when the shop door opened and Racke, Mellish, Crooke, and Clampe strolled in.

Fatty's face went crimson when he saw his schoolfellows. Racke & Co., however, did not appear to be in the least perturbed.

They raised their caps politely to Miss Bertha and took seats at an adjoining table.

They ordered ginger-pops apiece, and sat there gazing with great interest at Miss Bertha.

Fatty Wynn did not feel so much at ease now. He caught the sound of subdued chuckles from Racke & Co., and he fairly writhed.

They were making fun of him and of Miss Bertha! That thought galled Fatty, and the colour of his face deepened to a glowing red as the chuckles of Racke & Co. grew more frequent.

Miss Bertha glanced at the juniors, but did not give them a second thought. All her attention was devoted to the "little snack" to which Fatty Wynn had so kindly invited her.

Pastries, tarts, and doughnuts were demolished by the fair Miss Bertha at express speed. Racke & Co. watched her in growing wonderment. Their chuckles became subdued, and they thrilled to see Miss Bertha as she put away the good things one after another.

Fatty Wynn, even at the top of his form, could not compare with her at tuck-shifting.

Dreadful thoughts harrowed Fatty's mind as Miss Bertha waded cheerfully into the pastries. Seven-and-sixpence was a goodly sum, but it would certainly not pay for the tuck that was disappearing at so fast a speed!

The tuckshop-keeper—a little man with a sharp eye and an acumen for business—was keeping an account with a stub of pencil upon a piece of wrapping paper. Fatty's heart failed him to look towards that paper.

"You're not eating much," said Miss Bertha suddenly.

"Nun-no!" stammered Fatty. "You see—"

"Aren't you hungry?"

"Nun-not very!"

Fatty Wynn, much as his heart craved for the tuck that was about him, dared not eat any more. He knew the station tuckshop-keeper's views on tick. The burning question of the moment was, how was he to pay the bill as it stood, without further adding to its length?

Miss Bertha looked at him reproachfully. Fatty Wynn without his appetite was a fallen hero in her eyes.

"Surely you haven't finished, Master Wynn?" she said. "Come, try these pastries. They're ripping!"

"Oh dear!" said Fatty.

He tried the pastries, but with an aching heart. Miss Bertha was shifting them at a great rate, and Racke & Co., who had got more used to her by now, chuckled deeply.

Fatty Wynn looked haggardly at them.

Racke was the son of a War profiteer, and was always rolling in filthy lucre. But Racke was the quintessence of meanness, and Fatty was not on good terms with him, otherwise he might have approached the cad of the Shell for a loan.

He almost ricked his neck in a desperate effort to catch a glimpse of the tuckshop-keeper's account.

Racke saw this, and his eyes gleamed. He had been watching Fatty, and had divined the reason for his sudden loss of appetite and the lowering of his spirits.

"Wynn's rather short of cash, by the look of things," he chuckled softly to his cronies. "Bertha's going it a bit too strong for him, and he's funky about the bill. What a giddy lark!"

"He, he, he!"

Fatty Wynn gave them an agonised glare.

Miss Bertha was wiring into the meringues now as if

for a wager. Fatty, of course, did not begrudge his fair companion anything—he would gladly have laid the world at her feet—but the thoughts of the bill that was to follow turned him cold.

Racke leaned over his table and whispered to the others. "Let's cut Fatty out with the fair charmer!" he said. "We'll make him look a fool in front of her. Follow my lead!"

Racke arose and went boldly over to the table where Fatty Wynn and Miss Bertha were seated.

"Good afternoon, Wynn!" he said genially. "Excuse us not speaking before; we're rather shy, you know. Please introduce us to Miss Bertha."

"I—I—I—" stammered Fatty, quite taken aback by the sheer cheek of it.

"Jolly glad to meet you, Miss Bertha!" said Racke, bowing politely to Fatty's companion. "I'm Racke, you know. You may have heard Wynn mention me as his greatest pal?"

"No, I haven't," said Miss Bertha rather shortly.

"Well, introduce us, Wynn, old fellow!" said Racke. "Then we'll have a slap-up feed together—what?"

Fatty glared at the intruders in a most unwelcome manner.

He would have told Racke & Co. exactly his opinion of them, but he could not be rude in front of a lady. Fatty had to swallow his wrath and introduce Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and Clampe.

Miss Bertha smiled upon them without the slightest suspicion in the world that Fatty was being made the victim of a heartless hoax.

"Pile in, Miss Bertha! Pile in, you chaps!" said Racke. "We're all jolly together—what? Tarts forward!"

Racke & Co. piled into the tuck at a great rate, and Fatty's trepidation increased.

CHAPTER 8. Miss Bertha to the Rescue!

RACKE kept on heaping the good things upon Miss Bertha—and that young lady never once refused! She ate everything that was put before her. The rotters' brigade made a good meal, too. Poor Fatty dared not let himself go—either at the tuck or at Racke & Co.

He gave the tuckshop keeper a miserable look when paying-up time arrived.

"H-h-h-how much?" he faltered.

"Eighteen-and-sixpence," said the tuckshop keeper.

"Oh, dear! I say, Racke— Here, where are you going?"

Racke & Co. had arisen, and were preparing to leave the shop.

"We're goin' back to St. Jim's now," said Racke cheerfully. "Thanks for the feed, Wynn. We're much obliged."

"Look here, I c-c-can't pay this bill!" roared Fatty Wynn desperately. "I've only got seven-and-six, and—"

"Well, you shouldn't do the grand and take hungry young ladies out to tea," said Racke calmly. "If you must be a lady-killer, Fatty, I should advise you to cultivate a young lady with a smaller appetite. You'll find it less expensive."

"Why, you—you—you—" spluttered Fatty.

There was the clatter of a chair as Miss Bertha sprang to her feet.

With an agility that was astonishing in one of her great girth, she planted herself between Racke & Co. and the door, and stood facing the young rascals with flashing eyes.

"You horrid bouncers!" she cried. "I see, now, that Master Wynn has been tricked! You have been putting upon him all this time!"

"Oh, rats!" said Racke uneasily. "What about yourself, young lady? You've eaten enough to feed a circus!"

Miss Bertha's eyes gleamed.

"How dare you speak like that to me, you impudent fellow!" she cried. "You are a set of wretches! You think you can take advantage of Master Wynn because I'm here, I suppose? Well, I'll just see fair play. Master Wynn hasn't enough money to pay for us all, so we must

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share the expenses. Let me see, there are six of us, and the bill comes to eighteen-and-six. That's three-and-a-penny each!"

Racke & Co. regarded the plump Miss Bertha in a new sort of wonder.

Fatty Wynn, too, was rather taken aback by her warrior-like attitude.

"Now, Master Racke, and you other horrid boys," she rapped, "I want three-and-a-penny from each of you! Pay up!"

"Yes, that's likely!" snorted Racke. "It was Wynn's treat, and—"

"Master Wynn didn't invite you!" retorted Miss Bertha.

"Now, Master Racke, will you pay up?"

"No!" roared Racke. "Get out of my way, please. I want to go—Yaroooogh!"

Racke broke off with a fiendish yell as an iron-like grip fastened on his collar. Crooke sprang forward, but Miss Bertha grasped his neck with her other hand, and she brought their two heads together smartly.

Cr-c-c-r-r-r!

"Yaroooogh!"

"Yah! Ooogh!"

Racke and Crooke struggled to get free, but Miss Bertha retained her grip on their necks, and the more they struggled the more it hurt!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fatty Wynn, cheered up by the sight. "That's the way to treat 'em, Miss Bertha! You're ripping! My word!"

Mellish and Clampe essayed to go to the others' rescue, but Fatty Wynn intervened, and they fell back.

They knew that Fatty could use his fist to great advantage when he wished, and they had no desire to try conclusions with him.

Miss Bertha held on to Racke's and Crooke's respective necks, and the yells from the two luckless fellows rose crescendo.

"Yaroooogh! Wow! Leggo!" howled Racke.

"You'll—ow-wow-wow—scalp me in a minute! Yoooop!" roared Crooke.

"Well, will you pay up your share, or shall I take you out into the High Street and give you a good shaking in public?" demanded Miss Bertha grimly.

To give emphasis to her demand, she whirled Crooke and Racke round to the door. They yelled dismally, unable to rid themselves of her vice-like grip.

"Yow-wowp! Yah!"

"Will you pay up?" said Miss Bertha again.

"Oooogh! Yow! We'll pay—Yow!" gurgled Racke in accents of deepest anguish.

"Shall I take for the four of you out of your pocket, Racke?" asked Fatty Wynn sweetly. "I know where you keep that wallet you're always flashing about at St. Jim's."

"You leave my wallet alone!" roared Racke furiously.

"I—Oh, yow! Yaroooogh! All right. Take it out of there."

Fatty cheerfully extracted Racke's pocket-book, and took therefrom a ten-shilling note.

"You really owe twelve-and-fourpence for the four shares, Racke, but I'll let you off with ten bob," said Fatty. "That works out at half-a-crown each for you four."

"But we haven't had half-a-crown's worth of tuck each!" howled Racke.

"That doesn't matter," grinned Fatty. "You invited yourselves to the feed, and you should have been prepared to stand your whack of the general exes. That's the rule, isn't it?"

"You—you—you—"

"I think you've been let off very lightly!" said Miss Bertha, releasing Racke and Crooke. "I shall pay my share, of course, and that is half of the remainder, Master Wynn—four-and-threepence. There you are!"

Miss Bertha opened her purse and laid four shillings and threepence on the counter. Fatty also produced four-and-threepence, and these two sums, with Racke's ten shillings, completed the bill.

Racke & Co. stamped out of the shop. Racke had projected that little joke on Fatty, only to find it recoil upon himself. True, he had half-a-crown to come from Crooke, Mellish, and Clampe respectively, but whether he would get the money or not was another matter.

Miss Bertha had been perfectly justified in making Racke & Co. pay.

Wynn's admiration of her increased tenfold, and he thought it extremely sporting of her to pay her own share of the feed as well.

He and Miss Bertha left the bunshop together, and almost ran into the arms of Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.

Fatty Wynn blushed to the roots of his hair.

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"I—I say, you chaps," he stammered, "this—this is Miss Bertha, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors raised their caps respectfully, and Miss Bertha smiled sweetly at them.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "So that's the girl Fatty's mashed on. A proper corker, isn't she?"

Fatty Wynn, very red of countenance and awkward in manner, introduced Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of the Fourth.

"There's always room for a bit more—eh, Fatty?" said Blake, breaking an awkward silence. "As a matter of fact, Miss Bertha, we fellows are just going into the tuckshop for a bit of a spread. Would you and Fatty—ahem!—Master Wynn, I mean—would you and Master Wynn care to join us?"

A beatific smile spread over Miss Bertha's plump features. "How ripping of you!" she exclaimed. "I'll come with pleasure. You'll come, too, Master Wynn, won't you?"

"Rather!" said Fatty, cheering up considerably.

Miss Bertha was not in the least bashful in the company of so many boys. Indeed, Fatty was by far the more bashful of the two, and his face wore a perpetual blush, which deepened every time he caught the eye of one of his chums.

Monty Lowther, as soon as they were all in the tuckshop and seated at the tables, heightened Fatty's discomfiture by winking surreptitiously at him.

Tuck was ordered in vast quantities, and the juniors and Miss Bertha wired in.

Both Fatty Wynn and his fair companion did full justice to the spread, and the eyes of Tom Merry & Co. opened wide as they watched the pair shift the good things before them.

It was a jolly party, and all the juniors walked back to the vicarage with Miss Bertha afterwards.

They chuckled at the fat form of Fatty's ladylove disappeared in the little porch, and then turned their footsteps back towards St. Jim's.

Blake thumped Fatty heartily on the back.

Thump!

"Yaroooogh!" roared Fatty.

"You boulder, Fatty!" said Blake. "Fancy getting romantic so early in life! You and Bertha make a good match, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh!" said Fatty. "You chaps needn't make fun of Miss Bertha. I shall jolly well cut up rusty if you start getting at her, so there! She's a ripping girl!"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "You must think a lot of her, Fatty—there's a lot of her to think about, anyway!"

Fatty snorted.

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Lowther?" he said threateningly.

"Well, not exactly," said Monty, after some consideration. "But you needn't get cross, old chap. I, for one, will do all I can to help you win the fair Bertha. Gussy will give you a few tips, too—"

"Weally, Lowthah!"

"And Digby will give you a hand at writing poetry," said Lowther cheerfully. "Dig's hot stuff at writing romantic poems—things that go straight to the heart, you know."

Fatty Wynn breathed hard through his nose.

"I—I won't stand your rotting, you idiot! I'll punch your nose if you say another word!"

"Ring off, Monty!" laughed Tom Merry. "Can't you see Fatty's serious? Leave the poor chap alone!"

The School House fellows chuckled, and no more was said to Fatty concerning Miss Bertha during the walk back to St. Jim's.

But when they got indoors they said quite a lot about Miss Bertha. Fatty Wynn's love affair became the standing joke of the School House, and it was not long before Figgins & Co. knew all about the buxom Bertha and her appetite. And St. Jim's laughed loud and long at poor Fatty's expense!

CHAPTER 9.

Drastic Measures!

THE next day Fatty Wynn was chipped unmercifully about "Big Bertha," as the juniors called her. The idea of Fatty having a ladylove tickled the juniors immensely, and they made the most of the affair.

Fatty, therefore, went about in a perpetual state of belligerency, and many were the fights he fought in defence of his romantic cause.

His schoolfellows regarded Miss Bertha as rather a funny character, and this made Fatty highly indignant. In his eyes she was almost a divinity, and her large bulk and healthy appetite were attributes that called for admiration, not ridicule.

Fatty wrathfully denied being in love, but when he was on his own he really behaved in a love-lorn manner.

Miss Bertha filled his thoughts so much that he actually began to eat less, except at dinner-times, when he always made a hearty meal.

Instead of haunting the tuckshop, as of yore, Fatty would seek the sequestered confines of the cloisters in his leisure moments and walk about with a look of the most profound abstraction. In the Form-room, too, his thoughts would wander far away—always towards the vicarage and Miss Bertha—and on these occasions lines would fall upon him as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa.



Baggy Trimble, finding himself hampered by the skirt, tried to tear it from him. His wig went awry as he raced along at top speed. And after him raced Fatty Wynn. "Stop!" hooted the New House junior wrathfully. "I'm going to wallop you for your cheek, Trimble!" But Trimble, like Balaam's ass, paid no heed. (See Chapter 11.)

Fatty would desert his chums and wander forth from St. Jim's, and often he was seen lurking in the vicinity of the vicarage, gazing eagerly towards the little porch, and sometimes sitting on the stile looking very like a brooding owl.

Fatty was not a wealthy youth, and funds would not run to seeing Miss Bertha very frequently, because every time he and that charming young lady met they would wend their steps, as by some common intuition, towards a tuckshop. And as Fatty and Miss Bertha could eat enough for a large party between them these little expeditions became expensive. True, Miss Bertha usually insisted on standing her share, having the common-sense to realise the state of Fatty's finances, but even then Fatty found his courtship making a heavy drain on his pocket.

Tom Merry & Co. soon began to take a most serious view of the matter. Fatty neglected his footer practice in the most ruthless manner, and as the St. Jim's Junior Eleven had a fixture with Rylcombe Grammar School at a very early date Fatty's apathy was viewed with growing alarm and exasperation.

Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School played a really first-class game of footer, and they were foemen worthy of their steel—Tom Merry & Co. had had many proofs of that. It behoved the St. Jim's fellows, therefore, to prepare their uttermost for the match on the coming Saturday and thus fulfil their determination to score a win for the old school.

Fatty Wynn, on whom they relied to keep goal, grew more and more preoccupied with his contemplations of Miss Bertha's charms, and absented himself from St. Jim's at every opportunity.

Tom Merry & Co. held a footer meeting in the Common-room in the School House, and Figgins & Co. were invited. One of the chief subjects of discussion was Fatty Wynn and his neglect of duty to the team.

It was proposed by Tom Merry, seconded by Figgins, and passed unanimously by all present that Fatty Wynn should be "gated" until after the match and made to stick to practice. The gating meant that he was not to be allowed outside St. Jim's for any purpose, except any that might be approved by the rest of the team, and all undertook to see that this edict was carried out.

Trouble with Fatty ensued, as was only to be expected. He told Tom Merry & Co. to "go and eat coke" when informed that his courtship with Miss Bertha was going to be prorogued for the sake of footer. He made several attempts to get out of gates, and on one or two occasions succeeded. Once, when he dodged out by a subterfuge and his presence

was wanted at practice, Tom Merry & Co. set out in full force and caught him at the stile, talking to Bertha and sharing a large bag of toffee with her.

They forthwith collared Fatty, and, having politely but firmly informed Miss Bertha that they could not, under any circumstances whatever, allow him to remain, yakked him back to St. Jim's, where he was bumped and made to do an extra half-hour in goal.

Fatty received a long talking-to from Figgins and Kerr, afterwards, and this did him the world of good; for the next day he was one of the first to turn out for practice, and he kept at it fairly regularly right up to the day of the match.

But Fatty, despite his good resolves, could not put Miss Bertha out of his mind. Tom Merry and Figgins worried over him. They even tried to coax him, by offering him feeds, to forget his attachment. But Fatty's devotion to Miss Bertha was deep-rooted, and stood proof against such blandishments. Tom Merry & Co. would rather run the risk of putting Fatty off-colour for the match by feeding him than allowing him to let his mind dwell too much on Miss Bertha.

Saturday dawned bright and clear, and there was every prospect of a good match.

Gordon Gay & Co. arrived early, looking cheerful and confident.

"Here we are again, old tulips!" said the Grammarian leader, as he and his merry men marched in at the gates of St. Jim's, where Tom Merry & Co. were awaiting them. "You're prepared for a licking, of course!"

"We'll take it if you can give it to us, dear boy," said Tom Merry, laughing and shaking hands. "This way to the slaughter!"

A number of other Grammarians came in after Gordon Gay & Co., all as keen as the St. Jim's fellows to see the great match.

Tom Merry gave Fatty Wynn a warning dig in the ribs as he passed by the pavilion door. Fatty was standing there, apparently in the midst of a brown study, and he gave a yelp.

"Yooooogh! You silly ass, Merry!"

"Pull yourself together, Fatty!" said Tom Merry severely. "You've got the match to think about now, and we'll scrag you if you let us down. Come on! Kildare's on the field, and it's time to begin."

Grammarians and the home team took the field. Both elevens looked very fit and businesslike, although Fatty

Wynn still wore his abstracted look, even under the ferocious glares of his team-mates. Kildare, who was acting as referee, sniffed the keen breeze, and looked at the youthful footballers appraisingly.

"There's a good wind coming up," he said. "It will be a good game."

The two skippers tossed for choice of ends, and the other fellows watched the fall of the coin breathlessly. "A great deal depended on the result of the toss, for, as Kildare had remarked, a strong wind was coming up, and the team who had to play against it in the second half would be seriously handicapped."

Gordon Gay won, and the Grammarians gave a cheer.

"You kick off," said Gordon Gay.

The whistle went for the start, and round the ground St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians looked on in an excited, eager crowd.

Tom Merry & Co., with the wind now in their favour, followed up the kick-off with a rush, and the forwards soon had possession of the ball. They brought it down the field in fine style, with clever passing, amid encouraging cheers from the crowd.

"Go it!"

"On the ball!"

"Hurrah!"

Gordon Gay & Co. were not insensible to the danger that lurked in their territory. The rearguard were ready for the attack, and right nobly they stemmed it.

Gordon Gay took the leather from Monk in a brilliant pass, and he whisked it away like lightning, thus taking the game past the centre line, and back to the St. Jim's part of the field.

Tom Merry tackled the foeman captain in good style, and all but robbed him of the coveted sphere. But, in the nick of time, Gay whizzed it away to his right-wing man, who promptly carried it off goalwards. He raced like the wind, and Tom Merry & Co., momentarily nonplussed, looked eagerly towards Fatty Wynn.

But Fatty had no eye for the game.

He was again thinking of Miss Bertha, and wondering whether he would be able to get away in time after the match to take her out to tea. He had received a whacking remittance from Wales that morning, and was itching to devote it to the cause that was nearest his heart.

He did not hear Tom Merry & Co.'s warning yells, and awoke with a start to see Jack Wootton shoot in the leather, with practically a clear goal before him.

Fatty tried to gather his rambling wits, but too late.

He made a feeble grab at the ball as it came whizzing in, but missed it by a very wide margin. It was a goal, and the Grammarians lifted up their voices, and made the playing-field and the quadrangle at St. Jim's resound with their cheering.

Tom Merry gave Fatty a look that was eloquent enough of his feelings.

"You idiot, Fatty!" he exclaimed angrily. "You muffed that. You could have saved it easily."

Hisses and groans arose from the St. Jim's fellows round the ropes.

As Tom Merry had said, Fatty could have stopped that goal easily, had he been up to the scratch. Black looks were darted at him by the rest of the team, and Gordon Gay & Co. grinned.

The teams lined up again, and the Grammarians successfully held back the hot attack delivered by Tom Merry & Co., who bore down on them with do-or-die expressions right from the kick-off. Backward and forward went the leather in midfield, and so grimly was the contest waged that for a time it seemed that the ding-dong struggle would never end.

But eventually the whistle went for half-time, with the score at one nil for the visitors, and the teams filed off the field.

Gordon Gay & Co. were looking jubilant, as they had every reason to be. The score stood at 1-0 in their favour, and in the second half they would have the wind on their side.

A strong breeze was now blowing from goal to goal, and the prospect for St. Jim's was not exactly rosy. Fatty Wynn found himself surrounded by an exasperated throng at the pavilion.

He had been guilty of gross neglect of duty, and his school fellows were not slow in telling him so. They told him, too, in terms that were emphatic, to say the least.

"Fatty's right off colour again to-day!" moaned Blake, as he came up to the Terrible Three. "He's got his mind on that fat freak Bertha, of course. I suppose he's got an arrangement to see her later, and it's all he can think about. Our greatest need to-day is a good goalie, and Fatty's letting us down. What on earth can we do, Tommy?"

"Something will have to be done!" said Mauners. "Unless Fatty bucks up in the second half, the game will be a walk-over for the Grammar School."

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Tom Merry, who had been silent and thoughtful for some minutes, suddenly gave a low exclamation. His chums, looking at him, were amazed to see a smile spread over his face.

"My hat! What are you grinning like a Cheshire cat for, Tommy?" demanded Blake gruffly. "I'm blessed if I can see anything to laugh at."

"Listen, kids, for I've just thought of a wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry swiftly. "The game now, to a great extent, depends on Fatty Wynn, that much is fairly evident. We've got the wind against us, the Grammarians are one goal up already, and they look as though they can keep going strong. They mustn't be allowed to score again, and so everything rests with Fatty doing his duty in goal. Fatty's got to be backed up somehow. Words don't seem to have any effect. He means well, but he quickly forgets himself. As you say, Blake, it's Bertha who's at the bottom of it all. Bertha has been Fatty's undoing so far, but it may be possible to make her, in a way, his salvation."

The others looked in wonder at their skipper.

"What are you driving at, Tommy?" asked Blake.

"Simply this," said Tom. "Fatty can be brought to his senses only by one person, and that person is Miss Bertha. He thinks the world of her, and would do anything to shine in her eyes, wouldn't he? For instance, supposing she were here to watch the match, and Fatty knew that she was watching him? Don't you think that would work the giddy oracle? Fatty will play the game of his life, just to show his ladylove what he can do."

"My-yes!" said Blake disconsolately. "That's true enough, Tommy, but what's the use of jawing about it? What hopes have we of getting Bertha here to watch Fatty play?"

"No hopes at all," said Tom Merry with a chuckle, "but there's an alternative. If we can't get Bertha, it may be possible for us to get someone to take her place. We can, for instance, get someone to dress up as Bertha and stand around here to egg Fatty on. See?"

Blake snorted.

"I don't see at all," he said. "Who the dickens can we get to dress up as Bertha? She's no ordinary girl, remember. She's twice the size of anyone here, except Fatty himself."

"What about Baggy Trimble?" said Tom Merry. "You've forgotten your own prize porpoise, Blake. Baggy is an outsize in boys, and he can be dressed up to look like an outsize in girls. He's got just the face and the figure, you know. I think Baggy will just about fill the bill."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake drew a deep, deep breath.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed. "Of course, there's Trimble. If only we can get Baggy dressed up to resemble Miss Bertha—"

"It can be done!" said Tom Merry swiftly. "We've got all the things necessary among our amateur theatrical props. There's plenty of female clobber and a wig or two left from our last comedy—'The Girl with the Flaxen Hair,' you remember. There was a fat girl in the play, and the clothes will come in jolly handy for dressing up Baggy. Of course, we sha'n't have time to work the wheeze ourselves, because of the game, but we can get old Cardew to see to things for us. He's jolly cute, and I think he can be relied on to do the trick. There's Cardew, talking to Lumley-Lumley, and Baggy Trimble isn't far off. Let's put it to Cardew."

Tom Merry & Co. hurried across to Cardew and "put it to him."

Cardew's face broke into a smile, and when Tom finished explaining his idea the smile became a hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a topping wheeze, Merry! Of course I'll work it for you, and I'll start right away. Baggy will be willing, if there's a few bob attached to the job, you can bet your boots. He'll have to be kept a pretty good distance from Fatty, in case the giddy game of spoof is discovered. Fatty's got sharp eyes, you know."

"Rather!" said Tom. "But I leave it entirely in your hands, Cardew. You know what to do."

"All serene!"

A few minutes later Ralph Reekness Cardew was seen to stroll into the School House, arm-in-arm with Baggy Trimble.

Baggy was grinning, and Tom Merry & Co., when they saw him go indoors with Cardew, grinned also.

And they looked forward to the second half with renewed hope and cheerfulness.

CHAPTER 10.

Lost and Won!

THE excitement on the junior ground at St. Jim's was such as had seldom been seen there before, when the time came for resumption.

When Kildare blew his whistle shrilly on the gusty air it found both teams in a mood for "blood."

They formed up to resume the game, and hostilities commenced without more ado directly the whistle went.

Tom Merry & Co., playing in the teeth of a strong breeze, got going in yeoman style. The word had gone round that a deep plot was being hatched to bring "Bertha" to the scene to spur Fatty on to do his best, and the team thereby felt much encouraged.

The excitement was at its height when a very plump female figure was led across to the footer ground by Cardew and Lumley-Lumley, followed by a whole cohort of laughing juniors.

"This way, Miss Bertha!" was the cry.

"Come and see your hero!"

"Make way there for Miss Bertha!"

Fatty Wynn gave a start.

Out of the midst of a reverie which had settled on him now that the play had been transferred to mid-field, that name sounded on his ears like a clarion call to his soul. He took down the field, and saw at the other end, behind the Grammarian goal, a form that thrilled him.

Was it—could it be Miss Bertha, come to St. Jim's to watch him play?

The game was still in hot progress in mid-field.

Tom Merry & Co. had heard the cries, and they saw Cardew & Co. station "Miss Bertha" by the rope behind the Grammarian goal.

Baggy Trimble made up quite passably as the fair Miss Bertha.

Cardew, with a cunning hand, had followed Tom Merry's hasty instructions as to the manner of the make-up, and Fatty Wynn, blinking down from the opposite goal, was deceived.

Baggy Trimble, acting under Cardew's guidance, did not allow Fatty to get a good look at his face.

He waved a handkerchief, however, to the 'St. Jim's' goalie, and at that all Fatty's doubts disappeared.

"Mum-my word!" he muttered breathlessly. "Miss Bertha here! She's going to watch me play! Oh, how ripping!"

Fatty's heart beat pit-a-pat, and a great eagerness to do great things overcame him.

There was a shout from scores of Grammarian throats as their heroes brought down the ball with the wind behind them!

"Go it, Gay!"

"Put her through!"

"Kick, you beggars! Kick!"

Carboy had centred to his skipper, and Gay sent the leather in with a splendid kick.

But Fatty Wynn was all there now!

The ball came in at lightning-like speed, and for a moment it looked like a goal. But there was a thud—a thud that sounded like sweet music to the ears of Tom Merry & Co.—and Fatty's fist hit the leather in full flight. It came whizzing back again, and Tom Merry, was on to it as it dropped. The Grammarian rush had misfired, and the tussle swung back to mid-field.

"Hurrah!" came the cry from the ropes.

"Good old Fatty!"

"Played, Fatty!"

Fatty heard those cries, but what gratified him most of all was the sight of "Miss Bertha's" waving handkerchief. Doubtless she was keeping at the other end of the pitch so that she wouldn't put him "off" his play, he reflected.

Fatty looked hungrily after the ball, but the St. Jim's team had it well in their possession now, and they stuck to it.

The Grammarians scrambled over one another in their eagerness to get the leather, but Tom Merry & Co. were on their mettle. Their passing was classic, their team work a joy to behold.

Kangaroo sent the ball spinning in with a long shot from touch, but it struck the crossbar and backed into the field of play. There was a race to get it—and Figgins won. He dribbled it away from Jack Wootton and scooped it over to Gussy.

D'Arcy was not slow to seize his opportunity. He dribbled the ball a little, worked his way forward, and then shot. His aim was true, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the ball go by the goalie, to the accompaniment of a joyful roar from his schoolfellows.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"We're level now!"

"Hurrah!"

Excitement had reached fever pitch.

Gordon Gay rallied his men.

The whistle went, and the Grammarians made a dashing bid for the enemy's territory. They got through, too, within a very short space of time, and Gordon Gay potted swiftly at goal.

But Fatty Wynn was ready for it, and he cleared in fine style.

"Played, Fatty!"

"Well saved!"

Cheer after cheer rang out for him, and he caught flashing glimpses of the handkerchief waving at him from the

other end. Fatty kept his eye on the game now, however. The Grammarians were on the offensive, and they bombarded him with everything. And Fatty was always on the spot to meet the flying leather.

Bim!

During a lull in the wind one of his mighty clearances sent the ball sailing almost to the centre-line. The eyes of the players were bent upward to the ball, and as it fell there was a scramble.

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

"Take it, Monkey!"

Frank Monk outran Tom Merry and grabbed the ball. But even as he turned Kangaroo raced up and fairly scooped it away. He was away like the wind.

A mighty cheer went up as Kangaroo passed, and Redfern of the New House found himself twenty yards from goal with no one in front, and only the goalie to beat.

"Go it, Reddy!" came the roar.

And Reddy replied with a shot that carried all before it. The goalie gave a leap and tried to seize the leather, but his finger-tips just missed it, and he fell backwards into the net with the ball resting by his side.

A mighty cheer rent the air, and caps were flung high in ecstasy.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Rah! Rah!"

"One up now, St. Jim's!"

Redfern's face was flushed with pleasure as Tom Merry clapped him on the back.

Gordon Gay & Co. exchanged grim glances.

There wasn't long to go now, and they must equalise, if nothing more.

Right from the blow of the whistle they went in to batter down the home defence, but Fatty Wynn was equal to the occasion until the final whistle blew for time.

CHAPTER 11.

Fatty Takes the Cake!

"ST. JIM'S wins!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Fatty!"

Spectators and players swept towards Fatty with the intention of shaking his hand, or slapping him on the back, but Fatty dodged them and ran swiftly along the touchline.

He had one desire, and that was to see Miss Bertha and receive praise from her.

"Hallo, Miss Bertha!" he cried, rushing up to the "young lady" with Cardew & Co. "It's quite a treat to see you here this afternoon! I— Why, wh-what the dickens— Mum-m-m-my hat!"

Fatty fell back in amazement when his eyes lighted on the face of "Miss Bertha."

Now that he was at close quarters, he could see that it wasn't Miss Bertha at all. The features and hair were nothing like hers. What was more, the person before him was obviously "made up." Fatty gazed in wrath at "Miss Bertha," and as he strode forward angrily, that personage gave a howl!

"Wow! Keepimoff! I say, you chaps, don't let Wynn get at me! Rescue! Woogh!"

Fatty started. He recognised that voice. And then swift, sudden realisation dawned upon him.

"Trimble!" he roared. "You—you awful spoofer! You've dressed up as Miss Bertha! You—you—you— Oh, lemme get at him! I'll slaughter him for his cheek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty, wrath and all manner of uncharitableness glinting from his eyes, made a dash at the disguised Baggy. And Baggy Trimble, deeming it better by far to escape the avenger's hands if possible set up a wild yell and streaked away as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

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

The sight of Baggy, dressed as a girl, being chased by Fatty Wynn was really most remarkable. And, as Baggy's skirt worked loose, and his wig went awry, the sight became comical in the extreme.

Everyone howled with laughter until their sides ached.

Baggy Trimble, finding himself hampered by the skirt, tore it from him and flung it away in his desperate flight.

"Stop!" booted Fatty Wynn wrathfully behind him. "I'm going to wallop you for your nerve, Trimble!"

But Trimble, like Balaam's ass, paid no heed.

He tore on for dear life, and made a bee-line for the gates.

The crowd followed, hilarious with mirth.

(Continued on page 28.)

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YOU'RE GOING TO MEET "SMILER"—A LONDON WAIF WHO DOES BAT BARSTOW A GOOD TURN. MORE THAN THAT, YOU'RE GOING TO MEET A CROWD OF BANDITS BENT ON DOING ANYONE AND EVERYONE A BAD TURN. BUT THE "BAT" AND "SMILER" PUT PAID TO THE BANDITS' ACCOUNT IN TRUE K.O. STYLE!



BAT BARSTOW'S PAL!

By

CECIL FANSHAW

A full-o'-pep adventure yarn, featuring "Bat" Barstow, the guy who gets there, and "Smiler" Smith, whose face is as sunny as his stomach is empty.

CHAPTER 1.

The Brick-Slinger!

HANDS in the trouser-pockets of his well-cut lounge suit, Bat Barstow stood flattening his nose against the window of the Bond Street gun shop.

A gun and rifle shop was a magnet to the big man.

Directly he had spotted it he had stopped his fast two-seater and sprung out. The little grey car stood close to the kerbstone behind him, the engine purring gently.

For the moment Bat forgot his car. He was absorbed in rifles.

Rows of black-barrelled shotguns, pistols galore, were in the shop window. Bat hardly glanced at them. His gaze was glued to a .500 bore, double barrel, cordite rifle.

"Now, that's something like!" he muttered. "It would do me A1. A real handy little weapon, that's what it is!"

The huge Bat—his name was Jim really—blinked rapidly through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

He always blinked when he was interested. That was the habit that had earned the big man the name of "Bat" in many strange parts of the earth.

"Just the tool for Africa," he rambled on, noting the plain steel breech, the red rubber butt plate, and the useful pistol-grip. "It would send a buffalo tail-over-horns. It would make the biggest elephant feel mighty sick!"

Bat's thoughts were far away.

His mind travelled back to the green African jungles, to the forests in which

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he had hunted ivory for seven years since the Great War.

But Bat Barstow was called back to earth abruptly.

From down the street came a sudden crash! The tinkling of breaking glass. Followed yells, shouts, and a rush of feet.

Bat swung round. He was just in time to see what happened.

A beak-nosed swarthy man had just thrust his hand through a jagged hole in a jeweller's window. A pal was holding back the crowd with a pistol.

The swarthy one had plainly heaved a brick through the window to set the ball rolling. Now, hugging a tray of diamonds, he was bounding away towards a grey car.

"Bandits!" gasped Bat. "Daylight robbery! Where's my car? I'll—"

A roar of rage burst from Bat Barstow's throat. His fast two-seater had vanished!

Once again he looked down the street, to see that the car into which the diamond-lifters were piling was his own!

"Of all the neck!" bawled Bat. "They pinched my car to pull their burglary! Hang that rifle shop! I wish I hadn't—"

"Hi, taxi! Taxi!"

It was pandemonium. Police whistles shrilled. Motor horns blared. The quiet Bond Street was a scene of chaos.

Sharply a revolver barked three times. There was the whine of bullets overhead. People scattered. The crooks in the Bat's stolen car were firing as they fled.

But bullets meant nothing to the big man who had stood up to charging

elephants. His car had been pinched! What neck!

"Hi, you!" he roared to the scared driver of a taxicab who had pulled up abruptly. "Follow that grey car! Don't lose sight of it! A fiver if you—"

"What's that? The crooks are shootin'? No matter. Hop out, an' I'll drive!"

The taximan hesitated. Then he seemed to gain courage at sight of the Bat's vast frame and grim, sunburnt face.

"Right-ho, gu'n'or!" he yelled. "I'm on. That's yer own car, is it? Mike help them stiff if you cop 'em! Come on!"

Bat swung himself up beside the driver. The latter threw in his clutch, and the taxi bounded forward.

All had happened in very few seconds. Even as the stolen car roared round a corner, Bat in the taxi came rushing in hot pursuit.

The grey car slashed through traffic recklessly, scattering pedestrians in all directions. After it slashed the taxi, Bat leaning forward, his jaw thrust out, his eyes blinking rapidly behind his glasses.

Soon the car in front plunged into a network of side-streets.

Bat ground his teeth. The bandits would slip him!

"They've changed the number!" he gritted. "Before they went brick-slinging! They changed it right behind my back! No one could read that greasy plate they clapped on. And grey cars are common in London. Keep at it, driver!"

The taxi driver kept on. Bat, dodging

in and out, the bandits had managed to slip the main pursuit.

Already police were on other and false trails. Only Bat, knowing his own car, had the real rascals in sight.

It became more difficult. Dusk was falling rapidly. Street lamps shone yellow through the gloom.

At last they were in the East End. In a narrow road of black, towering houses the taxi driver pulled up with a jerk.

"I daren't go no further, guv'nor!" he declared. "Them stiffs may have pals in these parts. 'Tain't safe!"

"But we've almost got 'em!" roared Bat. "Look! They went down that turning—the third on the right. A tanner—"

"Not even for a tanner, guv'nor!" growled the taximan. "I ain't anxious to be laid out a stiff 'un!"

Bat wasted no time. He thrust some money into the driver's hand, jumped out, and took up the chase on foot.

There was just a chance the bandits might be near their lair and pull up. Bat might get news of them from a passer-by.

"The third turnin' on the right!" the big man repeated to himself; then he swung round the corner, to find himself in an ill-lit road, with muddy pavements and slimy cobbles.

All at once Bat stopped short. He was dismayed and angry. He had seen no car. But he suddenly found he couldn't go farther.

"A blind alley!" he snorted. "This sort of complications things. Where the thump did those birds get to? It's a moral certainty they didn't drive through this brick wall I see loomin' before me! Yet I swear they came down here! It's most perplexin'!"

Bat glared around, his knotted fists hanging like tassels at his sides. His grey car, with its bandit crew, seemed to have vanished into thin air.

"I guess," he muttered, "I'll just totter along back and chat with those lads propping up the railings. They may have seen something. And a couple o' bob might open their mouths as well as their eyes. Here's tryin', anyway."

Bat spun on his heel. Then he started back up the dim street with long, swinging strides.

But he kept his eyes peeled as he went. He was looking for some building that might have served as a garage.

Suddenly he thought he found something hopeful. A vast, black wooden shed appeared on his left.

"Sam Mason, launch-builders, and boat-repairers," said Bat, reading dim letters painted on the dingy wall. "Can it be that Sam is other than an honest boat-builder? Is this barn really what it seems? Or is Sam a beak-nosed diamond-snatching black-guard, who's got my car inside?"

Bat eyed the gloomy building. Then he glanced up and down the street.

But he saw only a few dim, slouching figures, street gas-lamps that flickered yellowish, and rows of huddled houses. There seemed no other building capable of holding a car.

"Right!" muttered Bat. "We'll call on Sam. His barn looks plain and homely. But there's no knowing—no knowing at all. All sorts of things might be within, as well as boats. You can't judge cigars by the picture on the box."

Bat crossed over. Very gently he pushed the double doors of the big wooden shed. But they didn't yield. Another and harder shove convinced Bat they were securely locked.

"I might break in," he murmured, "but that would involve noise. Most unlucky that I left my jemmy and other burglarious weapons on the mantelpiece. However," he grinned, "there's more ways of opening an oyster than treading on it. Let's look around for a side-entrance."

Hugging the shadows, the Bat stole along the building. He reached the end, to see down a narrow, walled-in flight of steps.

Bat guessed where he was. He had struck the Thames somewhere in Dock-land.

"Ha, the river!" he exclaimed, sniffing the dank atmosphere. "It seems friend Sam is but an honest builder of water-craft, after all. Drawn blank. No, hang it! I'll have a dekkko, an' make sure."

Cautiously Bat made his way down the slippery steps.

Every nerve in his great body was alert. A big-game hunter, Bat Barstow was always on the look-out for danger.

But the hooting of steamers and the gurgling rush of the river drowned other sounds. Bat heard nothing of the stealthy, swift footfalls coming down behind him.

He was half-way down when things happened. With alarming suddenness a shrill cry of warning rang out piercingly.

"Look ah! guv'nor! Look ah! behind yer! Duck yer 'ead, quick!"

Swiftly Bat ducked. At the same instant he swung round. He let out a shout of wrath and amazement.

For he saw two figures on the steps above him. The nearer he recognised as the swarthy, beak-nosed bandit who had pinched his car. The other was a ragged youth with a cheek cap over one eye and a thin stick in his hand.

Plainly the lad had yelled the warning, and only in the nick of time.

Even as Bat swung, he glimpsed an up-raised club in the bandit's hand. It was already descending. Bat couldn't dodge it. All he could hope for was a broken forearm, as he raised his left to guard, instead of a broken skull.

But the ragged youth acted like greased lightning.

With the deft skill of one used to rough-housing, the kid slipped his stick between the bandit's legs.

Thud! Bump, bump, bump! There was only one raucous shout. That burst from the bandit's throat as

he landed on one of the steps on his head. The rest of his swift journey downwards he made in silence, considerable speed being added by the impact of the Bat's right boot on his trousers.

"End of scene one!" whooped Bat joyfully, and bounded down, his ragged rescuer pattering at his heels.

Then the big man and his rescuer bent over the fallen bandit.

"Crikey, guv'nor!" whispered the kid. "He ain't croaked, has he? He ain't bust his napper?"

"No, son," grinned Bat cheerfully. "I don't think he's bust anything. But he seems considerably bent. I'll straighten him out, and make him comfortable before he comes round."

"Garn, guv'nor!" chuckled the urchin. "Bent! You ain't 'arf a one! 'Ere, I'll give yer a 'and and fixin' him."

In a moment the swarthy bandit was firmly secured. Bat searched his pockets, found a couple of old letters, and threw them out.

"H'm!" he muttered. "I can't make out the addresses. They seem to be places abroad. Mayhap our silent friend has had them some time. But his name's apparently Radskey. He must be a Russian. Yes, the vile scrawl inside looks like Russian writing."

Bat broke off, to turn to the nimble youth who had probably saved his life.

He saw a typical East End sparrow, a sharp-featured kid with thin, almost naked arms, and with bony knees sticking through his ragged pants. The kid looked a real Cockney—cheeky, wiry, and as plucky as a terrier.

"Shake, son," said the Bat gravely, extending a fist like a leg of mutton. "If you hadn't performed your acrobatic stunt at the right moment, by now I should have been in the position of Mr. Radskey."

"Cheese it, guv!" grinned the kid, thrusting his small, grimy paw into the Bat's great hand. "Yer larfin' at me."

"I'm certainly not," was the Bat's grave reply.

"Why, I ain't done nuffin'," the kid sniffed. "I 'appened to see you go down these steps, an' I glimpsed the club-swingin' stiff creepin' after you. So I—"

"So you followed, and put a spoke in his wheel, or rather his leg," chuckled Bat. "Very neat."

The kid thrust back his huge cap and scratched his head. Then he jerked out:

"Who is that bloke, guv'nor? Why did he aim to dot you one? I'm fairly often around this part, but I ain't never clapped eyes on 'im before."

"He's a misguided fellow who pinched my car, son," replied Bat. "Together with certain comrades he boned my two-seater, raided a jeweller's shop, and made a get-away."

"I kept close on his tail, and here he is. But he seems to have concealed my buzz-wagon pretty effectually."

"Gee! He's a flymisy bloke, he is!" whistled the kid.

Bat's mahogany features creased in a grin.

"You're right, young 'un," he laughed. "But his pals seem to have deserted him. We'll leave him to cool on these steps while I search this boat-building barn. It's the only likely-looking building around for a man who wished to hide a stolen car."

"Yer wrong, guv'nor!" chirped the boy. "You won't find nuffin' but boats in there. I know the old chap



Bat's Ragged Rescuer—"SMILER" SMITH.

who runs the place. He's a white-whiskered old cove called Sam Mason."

"Nevertheless," answered Bat, applying his shoulder to a small door he had just noticed, "we'll have a look. I know my car came down this street. I know it didn't leave. And the street's a blind alley. Where's my car if it isn't here?"

The kid couldn't answer that question. He gazed admiringly at the huge Bat gave a hearty shove and the door quivered.

Again the Bat thrust. Behind his shoulder was nearly two hundred pounds of brawn and muscle.

There came a sharp crack. The lock had snapped. In swung the door, creaking on rusty hinges.

CHAPTER 2.

"Smiler" Does His Bit!

THE white eye of Bat's torch cleaved the darkness. It stabbed a ray of light that revealed numbers of boats, a light dinghy or two, and several motor launches.

Bat played his light to and fro.

"Confound it!" he grunted. "Nothing but boats! Boats on the floor, boats in racks. 'Twould seem I've broken into Sam Mason's factory for nix after all!"

"Hallo! What's that?" Some levers clamped to the wall had caught Bat's eye. Before them, on an iron platform, lay parts of marine engines that had been dismantled.

Bat knew nothing about ships' engines. But he thought the levers looked unusual. He strode rapidly up the sloping floor.

Just then, from close behind him, came a stifled groan. It was followed by a light thud.

Round whipped Bat, to see the lad who had saved his life lying prone on the ground.

"Hey, what's up? This won't do! What's the matter?"

As he shot out the words Bat came hastening back. He flashed his torch on the cheeky, sharp-looking Cockney features. For the first time the big man noticed they seemed pale and pinched.

"Hunger!" gritted Bat, his eyes flashing behind his spectacles. "That's the trouble. The poor little beggar doesn't look as if he's had a square meal for a week."

"Well, he'll have one now! Hang my ear! 'Tain't here, anyway. Nothin' but boats!"

Bat stooped to pick the kid up. But, even as he did so, the plucky boy opened his eyes, then scrambled to his feet.

"Found it, guv'nor?" he jerked out. "Yer car, I mean. No? Ah, I thought you wouldn't."

"You were right, son," replied the Bat. "There's nothing but umpteen boats here. Come on; we'd best clear out before some nightwatchman catches us. Feeling right now?"

"Me, guv'nor?" echoed the kid, with a brave smile. "Ho, yus! Right as rine! I just come over queer-like a second. Don't yer fret yerself abaht me!"

"You come along with me," repeated the Bat. "My car hunt can wait. We'll just tote Mr. Ratsky up the steps, turn him over to police, then look for a chop-house. I'm most alarmingly hungry."

"By the way," he added, "what's your name, son?"

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"My name, guv'nor?" echoed the kid. "Oh, 'Erb Smiler!"

"Herbert Smith!" grinned the Bat. "That's a mouthful. I shall call you Smiler. We'd best beat it while the going seems good!"

Bat seized the arm of 'Erb Smiler, otherwise Smiler, and led him towards the small door by which they had entered.

"I blundered somewhat," he muttered, "in smashing that door. Behold, the honest Sam is but a builder of barges after all! I must pay—"

Abruptly Bat broke off. His jaw dropped. His companion, dubbed Smiler, gave a shrill squeak of dismay.

"He's gone, guv'nor!" he cried. "Ratskin's hooked it! Ain't that a go!"

"You're right, Smiler," said Bat grimly. "Our Mr. Ratsky has slung his hook, as you aptly put it. He has evaporated. He must have had friends at hand—"

"Friends as was scared o' facin' you, guv'nor!" cried the sharp-witted Smiler. "They've carted him off. Gosh! Yer car may be hidden close around somewheres all the time. We're on a red-hot scent. What'll yer do abaht it?"

"Nothing yet, Smiler," replied Bat firmly. "Nothing till we've worried a few buns. Food stimulates the old brain. While we champ our teeth we'll hatch out a scheme. Get a move on! Up the steps, sharp now!"

Bat wasn't really hungry. But he knew Smiler was. And the large-hearted, large-fisted man determined to stuff the kid before they did any more bandit-hunting.

They went up the steps from the river cautiously. At the top they halted and peered round the wall.

"Mind yer eye, guv'nor!" whispered Smiler. "Them blokes may be hidin' about wiv sandbags."

"No, it's O.K., Smiler," replied Bat, after a glance round. "The blokes, as you term them, have reckoned discretion the better part of valour. Lead on. Where's the nearest chop-house?"

"Top o' the street," the urchin replied, his eyes shining. "D'yer mean ter s'y yer goin' to stan' me a blow-out afore yer finds yer car?"

"Even so, Smiler," Bat rejoined. "We'll go and feed our faces. That's a more refined expression than blow-out. Your choice of words, my dear Smiler, is more picturesque than elegant."

Smiler chuckled. The urchin didn't follow what Bat was driving at. But he told himself he had met a slap-up toff, and swiftly piloted him to a savoury cookshop.

Once inside they got busy. The amount of food consumed by Smiler made Bat Barstow's eyes open wide.

It was a strange sight. To keep the kid company, the huge, smart-looking Bat devoured plates of tripe and onions and sausages and mash.

"Jupiter!" he muttered. "Will the lad never cease? I can't keep it up much longer. Ah, that's better! He's reached his limit. Feelin' fit, Smiler?"

Smiler's reply was to push aside his plate, with a sigh of content.

"I should say so, guv'nor!" he chirped. "That's the fust decent blow-out—"

"Feed, Smiler, feed!"

"Right-ho, guv'nor! Call it what yer like! Anyway, it's the best blow-out I've had for a week!"

Bat groaned inwardly. He was already forming plans for the lad's future. It was going to be a tough job to improve his manners and customs.

"Well, guv'nor," broke in Smiler, "abaht yer car, now. I've gotter scheme. I knows a lot o' blokes—"

"Gents, Smiler," interrupted Bat—"gents, or guys."

"Oright. I knows a lot of gents round 'ere, guv. They'd give me the tip if they'd seen anythin' of Ratskin an' his pals."

"They wouldn't tell you. Wot price my goin' dahn the street an' making inquiries?"

"Not a bad idea," murmured Bat.

"Red-hot, I calls it," flashed Smiler.

"See here, guv. If the Roosian blokes—er—gents are hangin' abaht, they'll spot you. They'll lie for you. They wouldn't suspect me. I could track 'em down. You keep 'andy."

Bat pondered. The notion seemed all right. Undoubtedly if the huge Bat was seen the ruffians would go to ground.

"O.K., Smiler," he said at length.

"Toddle along. But I'll be at the street corner. If you mark one of the gang make me a signal. And I'll watch out you don't lump trouble, my lad."

Smiler laughed. He was used to trouble.

A few moments later the pair quitted the cookshop. At the top of the blind alley they separated.

Hands in his ragged pant pockets, Smiler strolled off down the ill-lit street. His sharp eyes quested hither and thither for a pal. Bat stood at the street corner, peering cautiously round.

The plan of campaign seemed sound. Only a lad like Smiler could hope to trail the bandits unnoticed.

But neither Bat nor Smiler knew they had been trailed themselves. They didn't know the ruffians weren't let Bat leave the district alive. There was more than the mere stealing of a car and jewellery at stake.

All at once Bat braced his big frame.

He was watching Smiler. Cap over one eye, that smart youth had halted near a gaslamp. He was leisurely peeling a banana, a present from Bat.

"Smiler's spotted something," breathed Bat. "He looks ready to run. That fruit-peelin's just a blind. Jove, what an actor that lad would make! Can he have sighted Ratskin, as he calls him? I'll butt in. No; I'll wait. Best let Smiler play his part out."

In fact, Smiler was puzzled himself. He had just noticed a man crouching in shadow.

"What's the guy at?" the kid asked himself. "Who is he? Are his pals abaht? Are they hopin' my big toff will come along? Gosh, I'll draw 'em abt!"

Smiler started at once. He couldn't see the hidden man's features. But he tried a chance shot.

"I can see yer, Ratskin!" he cried. "Come on abt, you car-pinchin', back-swipin', garlic-eatin' tough! Hooroosh! 'Ere 'e comes!"

The tough did come. He came with a rush. For he and his pals knew where Bat was all the time. They meant to collar Smiler and lure the giant into an ambush.

But Smiler saw only one man. And he swiftly eluded him and started pell-mell towards Bat.

There was an explosive tattoo of feet on the cobbles. The watching Bat grinned and tensed to run in.

"Good, kid!" he breathed. "He's spotted the bandits, an' is drawin' 'em towards me. Who's that one? It's not friend Ratsky. Jove! It's the man who held up the crowd with a pistol!"

"Ob, well done, Smiler! Well done, indeed!"

Bat almost let out a whoop. For Smiler brought off a bit of strategy.

The pursuer was on the kid's heels.

He stretched out a grabbing hand. Swiftly Smiler hurled his banana-skin under the man's feet.

There was a thud and a bang. The pursuer trod on the skin, performed some amazing revolutions, then clumped down, with a yell of rage.

Smiler was out in the middle of the street. He threw up his cap and let fly a volley of insults.

"Andy wiv yer feet, ain't yer, mister?" he hooted. "A bit of a nacro-bat, I don't fink! Any more like you arahn'd? Let 'em all come! Ho, you ain't hurt—"

Smiler's flow of taunts was cut short by a roar from Bat.

"Run, Smiler! This way! Run!"

Even as he bawled Bat charged out. He had seen a figure slinking up behind the capering kid.

Too late! Before Bat covered ten yards the boy was down. The man lying in the road was up again. Both had seized Smiler and bolted off full split.

In hot pursuit thundered the hefty Bat—just as he was meant to do! It all happened quickly. Bat saw the kid—

clever. You 'ave followed too vell. Better for you if you 'ad give up your car as lost! Now, you know too mooch! You an' ze ragged cub both die!"

Bat ground his teeth. He didn't know what the Russian Radsky was driving at. But plainly he and Smiler must have run mighty close to unearthing some big villainy.

"See here, Ratskin," he growled, "I'll make a bargain. You keep my car, in return let this kid go. Take a sportin' chance of holding me. Of course, if I can beat you—"

"Stow that, guv'nor!" broke in the shrill voice of Smiler. "I ain't scared o' these blokes. I ain't goin' to be let go if you ain't. Not 'arf!"

Bat opened his mouth to speak. But one of the gang stepped forward. He was a dark-faced fellow, with a cruel-looking mouth half-hidden by a black moustache.

"Listen, chief!" he snarled to Radsky. "Even eef you zink to bargain wiz great Eenglish gorilla, we ozzers do nod agree. It ees too dangerous. 'E 'as come too close to discoverin' things. 'E must die. Ze ragged boy also."

seized the two prisoners, carried them inside, and dumped them into the boat that was already half-afloat.

Vainly Bat struggled. His vast strength seemed powerless to break the knotted cords.

"Iron!" barked Radsky. "Tie zese pieces of old engines to zem. Zey weel sink ze more quick."

It was done swiftly. Chunks of scrapped engines were fastened to both Bat and Smiler. Next came the thudding of an axe.

A small hole had been chopped in the boat's bottom. Then Bat felt a lurch, heard the lapping of water. The boat was adrift!

It was adrift and filling pretty fast. Bat exerted all his strength, and felt the cords bite his flesh. He was mad with rage. He blamed himself for Smiler's plight.

From the corner of his eye Bat glimpsed Smiler. The bound lad was wriggling violently along the boat's bottom. Then, of a sudden, the gurgling water ceased gushing inboard.

Bat marvelled, but he didn't waste time in idle wonder. He bunched his



The swarthy one had plainly heaved a brick through the window. Now, hugging a tray of diamonds, he was bounding away towards a grey car. "Daylight robbery!" gasped Bat, swinging round. (See page 22.)

nappers vanish down the steps by the boat-shed. On he charged, neared the top of the steps; then something thudded down on his head with stunning force.

The Bat's knees sagged. He swayed, then went down in a heap.

"Sandbagged!" he gasped, and oblivion descended like a black blanket.

Bat wasn't senseless long. His iron frame could stand a lot of battering.

He came round in five minutes, to find himself lying trussed at the bottom of the steps, with the gurgling rush of the river in his ears.

Twisting his head, Bat saw Smiler in the same plight. Then he looked up, to see the hawk-nosed, swarthy face of the Russian bandit. Behind the Russian he saw other dim forms.

"Ah, Radsky—or Ratskin, as my friend Smiler calls you," he drawled, "I see you've collected enough of your gang to make it worth while tackling me! Of course, it doesn't take many men to sandbag a chap from behind. But I admit you've scored. What do you propose doing?"

"Making an end of you quickly!" spat the Russian. "You 'ave been too

"A really gallant speech!" broke in Bat, recognising the fellow. "Just what one would expect from a man who shot at defenceless crowds."

The dark-faced fellow snarled. He bared his teeth and leant forward. Radsky pulled him back.

"Calm yourself, Lubchik!" he snapped. "I vill nod bargain. Both shall die. I do nod forget 'ow ze ragged whelp push a stick through my knees. Ze question is, 'ow shall zey die? Remember, ze police are inquisitive."

The man called Lubchik tugged his black moustache. Then he broke into horrible chuckling.

"Zere are boats in zat shed," he leered. "And our beeg friend 'as already open ze door. Set both adrift in a boat wiz a hole in it—"

"Goot!" barked Radsky, rubbing his hands. "In ten minutes zey vill sink to ze bottom of ze Thames. Look sharp, comrades!"

The comrades—some foreigners, some plainly English toughs—got to work quickly. A couple gagged the bound Bat; another did the same for Smiler. Rembling sounds inside the shed told that the other four were running a boat down to the water. Then rough hands

enormous muscles and strained every sinew.

Meanwhile the drifting boat was being carried along. Bat saw moving stars overhead, got a glimpse of black, tapering masts as they swept past moored vessels.

Came a crack! Bat had burst a cord! Another, and the giant Englishman was wriggling free of his bonds.

Then he was on his knees, to rip his rag from his mouth and to bend over Smiler and wrench out the chunk of wood from between the boy's teeth.

"Steady on, guv'nor!" cried Smiler. "Arf-time! Look out how you shift me! Lemme be!"

"Eh?" Bat barked in surprise.

"Why, the leak, guv'nor!" cried Smiler. "I glimpsed the 'ole them stiffs made wiv the axe. I'm sittin' in it. Look aht, or you'll swamp us!"

A joyous laugh burst from Bat's throat.

"For downright ingenuity and swiftness of execution, Smiler," he chuckled, "you take the—"

Bat broke off with a gasp. From close at hand had blared forth a warning hoot. He jerked round, to see the black

bows of a river steamer looming giganticly above him!

Things happened at racing speed. Someone on the steamer yelled. Again the siren hooted.

There was not a second to lose. The drifting boat was right in the steamer's path.

Bat acted like greased lightning. He gathered Smiler up in his arms, then gave one gigantic bound.

Splash! Up shot a column of white water. Bat and Smiler were in the river, plunging down through cold, black depths.

Bat was a strong swimmer. But he still had an iron bar chained to his right leg! And Smiler was fairly loaded with spare parts and pieces of old engines. It was all Bat could do to struggle to the surface.

As his head burst forth he saw the black hull of the steamer sliding past, and a boil of bubbles that showed where the leaking boat had been.

"Back-water, there!" bawled Bat. "Drop a rope and haul us out!"

A dim-seen man, leaning over the steamer's taffrail, bellowed contemptuously:

"You're all right!" he bawled. "Swim ashore. If you boobos can't handle a boat better'n that you deserve a ducking!"

Bat started to shout that he couldn't swim with a ton of pig-iron attached to his person. But he was cut short by the shrill voice of Smiler.

"You shut yer 'ead, Tom Kyles!" yelled the urchin to the fellow above. "How can a bloke swim wiv irons chained on his feet? Sling a rope aht pronto!"

The man on the steamer gasped, then shouted down:

"Is that 'Erb Smith? How the— Why— All right, we'll hoist you out in a jiffy! Irons chained to his feet! Jumpin' Jack!"

An engine bell rang. The steamer stopped, then backed. A boat was lowered.

In a few minutes both Bat and Smiler were aboard, and two men were hacking at their chains.

The man Smiler had addressed as Tom Kyles shot out a volley of amazed questions. Bat thanked their rescuer, answered as many queries as he thought necessary, then turned to Smiler.

"It's somewhat fortunate for us, son," he said, "that you happened to know Mr. Kyles. A stranger might have thought we were fooling, and left us struggling. You've got useful pals—"

"I should say, guv'nor!" chirped Smiler. "Why, I've got pals everywhere—on half the blinkin' ships that come up the river! How? Why, I've bin knockin' abaht the docks ever since I was knee-high to a jam-pot!"

Bat roared with laughter.

"It's true, sir," broke in Tom Kyles, who seemed to be skipper of the tramp steamer. "We all know this nipper. He's a caution, he is!"

"But what d'you want to do—be put ashore pronto? Can't do it, sir. I'm late already, an' sailin' under contract. But we'll drop you at Gravesend. I'm picking up my mate there."

There was nothing for it. Bat and Smiler had to stay aboard till they reached Gravesend. Then, with renewed thanks to skipper Tom Kyles, they went ashore.

"Wot next, guv'nor?" asked Smiler, shivering in his damp rags as they

halted in a dim-lit street. "Goin' back to bash them Roosians?"

"No, Smiler," said Bat firmly. "They can wait. I'll visit them to-morrow. It's nearly midnight, and we're both soaked. Meanwhile, where d'you live?"

"Me, guv'?" echoed Smiler. "Oh, anywhere. Ain't got no 'ome. Any doostep does for a kip!"

Bat whistled softly.

"Come along, Smiler!" he said, gripping the urchin's arm. "We aren't kipping on doosteps to-night; we're going home. And we're having a change first."

Smiler didn't know where Bat was taking him. He didn't care. By now he would have followed Bat to China and back again.

But Bat soon stopped. He pulled up outside a small clothes-shop and knocked up the angry proprietor.

Followed an altercation. But the sight of a banknote in the Bat's large hand soon smoothed things over. It also provided Smiler with a new suit of clothes.

Five minutes later, when they left the shop, Smiler was quite respectable. Gone were his ragged pants, his broken boots, and apology for a coat.

But they hadn't gone far. Smiler insisted on carrying his disreputable garments under his arm. And he still wore his check cap.

"I'm feelin' quite a toff, guv'nor," he chuckled. "But I ain't partin' wiv my old duds. They'll come in 'andy at times."

"Smiler," said Bat, "you're coming to my flat in Jermyn Street, and you're going to learn to be respectable. Jukes—that's my man—shall take you in hand promptly."

Smiler sniffed audibly. But Bat took no notice. Then they caught a train from Gravesend, reaching London half an hour later.

All the way up Bat wrestled with the problem of turning the tables on Radsy & Co., recovering his car, and finding out the reason for the attempts on his life and Smiler's.

But Bat had formed no plan when at last they reached Jermyn Street. He took Smiler straight up to his flat, where he found his man Jukes waiting up for him.

"Jukes," said Bat, "this is Smiler. Take him to your quarters. He's going to learn to keep my car clean and make himself generally useful. My car is at present—er—detained. But I've no doubt I shall have it back to-morrow."

Jukes, stern-looking, whiskered, and rotund, bowed stiffly. He looked sideways at Smiler, but said nothing.

Smiler, on the contrary, said a heap.

"Blow-my-dickey, guv'!" he protested. "I ain't goin' wiv ole Woe-an'-Whiskers. I'm kippin' dahn in the passage outside yer door. Wot?"

"Smiler!" thundered Bat. "Go! And that quickly!"

Smiler wilted. He accompanied the stern Jukes, but his shrill protests were wafted up the staircase, to be cut off abruptly by the slamming of a door.

CHAPTER 3.

A Double Game!

"HIS gone, sir," Bat gasped.

Emerging from his bathroom at 10 a.m., he found Jukes awaiting him. Jukes looked even more stern and stolid than usual.

"Gone?" cried Bat. "What the deuce d'ye mean? Who's gone?"

"The himp as you brought back last night, sir," replied Jukes. "He's bit out, by way of a drain-pipe. I presooome, I locked him in his room."

"The dickens! Smiler hooked it! Why on earth should he?"

"That's more than I can say, sir," Jukes said coldly. "But, if I may make so bold, I don't 'old wiv pickin' up guttersnipes in the streets. They—"

"That's enough, Jukes," warned Bat. "That kid saved me from a broken arm last night, if not from a broken head. I can't understand his clearing out."

"Nevertheless, sir," stated Jukes, "the himp has cleared out. 'E went off in 'is own rags, leavin' 'e'nd the garments you provided him wiv. Also he left this 'ere."

Jukes gingerly extended a grimy piece of paper. Bat almost snatched it, to unfold it and discover a scrawled message.

"Guv'nor," ran the missive. "You won't never get yore car back wivout me. A toff like you can't go pokin' abart bak streets. But I've gotter lot of pals. I'll tragle yer car and the Roosian blokes—I oughter say gents. Wait till you here from Yores trooly."

"SMILER."

Bat placed the grimy paper in his pocket. His eyes were grim.

"Plucky young nipper," he muttered. "As stout-hearted a ragamuffin as ever slung banana peel on a pavement, or bashed a welsher's top-hat in. By Jove, if Radsy or the other scum hurt that kid, I'll—"

"Beg pardon, sir," broke in Jukes, "you said—"

"I said, Jukes," roared Bat, "that that imp, Smiler, is white all through. But I can't stop to explain. I'm off. My hat an' stick, quick!"

Jukes made a movement towards the articles, but that instant the telephone-bell rang shrilly.

Bat snatched up the receiver.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Yes, Mr. Barstow speaking. Who's that?"

Over the wire came a purring voice that made Bat Barstow start convulsively.

"We've got your young spy!" rasped the voice. "'E vos caught soon after dawn, in ze alley near ze beeg boashed. No, you are right. 'E did not give your name away. No matter 'ow we learnt it. We did learn it."

"My dear Ratskin," broke in Bat earnestly, "if you hurt that lad, I shall give myself the great pleasure of cutting you to pieces with a hippo hide whip. Oh, don't try to fool me. I know your voice, Ratskin. Now, what are you after? Demanding money to—"

"You will learn our demands," replied Radsy's voice, "if you are at the boat-shed of Sam Mason at eleven o'clock sharp. And don't think to warn ze police. You vill be vatched. Eef you do not arrive at ze time stated, alone, your young spy vill be keeled wiv promptness. You escape from ze river some'ow, but your spy vill not escape ze knife!"

Bat slammed down the receiver. Then he whirled about, blinking rapidly. He was a dangerous man now.

"Hat, Jukes!" he barked. "And, yes, that loaded stick. I don't take chances with gents like Radsy. Sam

Mason's boatshed. I thought that was the spot, after all."

Jukes was bewildered. He couldn't grasp a word of his master's speech.

Bat made no attempt to explain. His bowler crammed on his head, his loaded stick in his hand, he quitted his Jermyn Street flat like a raging hurricane.

In three minutes Bat was in the Tube. Half an hour later he emerged in the East End of London, somewhere in Dockland.

It was not too easy to find the blind alley where his grey car had so strangely vanished. But Bat found it. A hunter of big game in African jungles, Bat had noted every twisting street when pursuing in the taxi the day before.

A clock struck eleven as Bat turned into the alley.

Even by day the place looked uninviting, narrow, dirty, with decayed, tumbling houses.

Bat listened. Then, once again, he was at the big, double doors of the huge, black boat-shed.

Bat pushed. This time the doors swung inwards.

For a second the huge man stood blinking. He gripped his stick and strained his eyes in the sudden gloom. He expected a trap.

Then a roar broke from him. He saw Smiler, saw the ragged urchin, gagged and bound, standing on the iron platform near which Bat had before noticed the strange levers.

And beside Smiler stood Radsky with a knife-point at Smiler's throat.

"You foul kidnapper!" bawled Bat, and sprang.

Things happened. Even as Bat leaped in two unseen pistol-butts chopped down.

Smiler was only a bait. Bat was nearly caught—not quite.

His senses were alert. As the assailants leapt from behind the door Bat whirled.

Crack, crack! A couple of lightning back-handers, and Bat dropped both scoundrels quivering. There were more. Bat saw dim figures rushing straight on him, saw glinting steel.

But Bat didn't stop to fight. For Radsky had snatched up Smiler, pressed a lever, and the iron platform was descending!

There came a howl from the Bat. Mad with fury, the huge man scattered the armed assassins like chaff. He saw the black moustache of Lubchik, smote, and saw the ruffian go down.

Bat was through. He charged on, to leap down the hole that gaped where the platform had been.

Crash! Bat landed on his feet.

He was beside Radsky on the platform. And the hawk-nosed villain flung Smiler aside, then darted a knife at Bat's stomach.

Bat dodged. Then his great fist shot



The drifting boat was right in the steamer's path. Bat acted like greased lightning. He gathered up Smiler in his arms, then gave one gigantic bound clear of the sinking boat. (See page 26.)

out, to land on the Russian's car and send him spinning.

The platform had ceased to descend. Radsky was rolling over and over on an earthen floor. Before he could rise Bat was on him, seized his knife, whipped round, and slashed Smiler's bonds.

Then utter amazement held Bat spellbound.

He was in a big underground vault, lit by electric bulbs. And on all sides Bat saw cars—cars of every make and size. He recognised his own two-seater.

He said nothing, but eyed the hole that gaped twelve feet above his head. Down through that hole the stolen cars had been brought on the platform.

"What came down can go up!" exclaimed Bat, and made a leap towards a huge Rolls Royce.

"In, Smiler!" he cried. "Hop in! Those stiffies above may pluck up enough courage to start shootin' down in a shake. Buck up! I've twigged how the lift gadget works!"

Smiler leapt up beside Bat. Then the engine of the Rolls-Royce roared to life. The car slid forward, to come to a standstill on the platform, humming like a dynamo.

From the driver's seat Bat leaned out. He pressed a lever in the wall hard over.

There was a rumbling sound. The lift—for such it was—began to rise at a swift pace.

Seated in the car, with Radsky bound at their feet, Bat and Smiler saw the floor of the boat-shed suddenly appear. They saw feet. Next they saw dim figures.

Then a voice yelled, the voice of Lubchik:

"Zey escape! Shoot!"

There was a tempest of firing. The great shed rang to the reports of pistols. Bullets tore through the car's sides.

But the car was already leaping forward. Directly the platform reached ground-level Bat let her out.

There was a wild scattering of forms, yells, and oaths.

Then the locked shed doors loomed before them.

"Duck, Smiler!" yelled Bat,

Followed a rending crash, a splintering of wood, a screaming of twisted steel. The car lurched.

But Bat saw daylight. He had driven clean through the great doors! The yells behind increased. Came more wild shouts.

Bat spun the wheel. He roared up the alley to stop, five minutes later, at a police-station.

Out nipped the ragged Smiler. Bat seized the limp Radsky, to carry him into the station and dump him before an astounded sergeant.

"A present from Russia, sergeant!" beamed Bat. "You'll find more like this at Sam Mason's boat-shed—if you're quick. You'll also find all the cars that have been pinched in London within the last three months!"

Police-whistles shrilled, bobbies came tumbling out.

Ignoring the excitement, Bat turned to Smiler.

"I admire you, Smiler," he grinned, "for bolting and making an effort to find my car. But how did you let yourself get pinched?"

"A damned traitor sold me, gov!" flared Smiler. "A bloke—er gent—I reckoned a pal gave me away! I'd told 'im all ababt you, too. I'll twist his blinkin' neck one of these 'ere days!"

Bat guffawed. "Never mind, Smiler," he said. "We've beat the gang. Now we'll stroll back and get my own car."

THE END.

(Another thrilling yarn with big Bat Barstow well to the fore next week, chums, entitled: "THE STOLEN RACEHORSE!" By Cecil Fauschay. Don't miss it!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 939.

FATTY WYNN'S FOLLY!

(Continued from page 21.)

Fatty Wynn was gaining on Baggy. The fat boy of the School House reached the gates when Fatty Wynn took a leap and landed on his shoulders.

Crash!
"Yooooooop!" roared Baggy as he smote the cold, hard flagstones.

"Now I've got you, you rotter!" panted Fatty who had landed on top of him.

He commenced to pommel away for all he was worth, and Baggy awoke the echoes with his yells.

"Yaroooh! Yah! Wow! Stoppit! Ow-wow-wow! Help! Murder! Yooop! Ow-wow-ow!" he roared.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Fatty was really incensed, because he considered the joke to be a slur on Miss Bertha. He was sitting astride Baggy in the gateway, and was whacking energetically at him, when two figures came in from the Rylcombe Lane and stopped to gaze on the scene in horror.

One was the vicar of Rylcombe, and the other his niece, Miss Bertha herself!

The plump face of Miss Bertha took on an astounded look when she saw the pair struggling in the gateway.

"Master Wynn!" she cried. "You are fighting a girl—why, no, it isn't a girl, but a boy! Oh dear!"

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the vicar, raising his hands in shocked astonishment. "Boys—boys! This is most unseemly behaviour! Desist, I entreat you!"

Fatty desisted, more out of astonishment than from any other cause.

He jumped up, his face very red, and blinked shamefacedly at Miss Bertha.

"I—I say, Miss Bertha, I—"

"Were you bullying that boy?" exclaimed Miss Bertha severely. "I hope you weren't bullying him, Master Wynn?"

"Nun-no!" gasped Fatty. "I was—or—just teaching him not to play silly tricks, you know. He—he had the awful cheek to dress up as you and—"

"Ooooh! Yah! Wow!" moaned Baggy. "It was only

a joke. Besides, Cardew told me to do it. Ow-wow! I'm hurt! Ooooh!"

Tom Merry came forward, smothering his laughter, and explained as best he could to Miss Bertha.

Fatty Wynn's colour deepened, and Miss Bertha went red, too, but finally she broke into a hearty roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she cried. "I never dreamed I had so much influence over Master Wynn. You are a nice boy, Master Wynn, but rather silly, you know. As a matter of fact, I came to see you this afternoon. Uncle was calling on your headmaster, so I came along with him to say good-bye."

"To s-s-say g-good-bye!" stuttered Fatty, going quite pale.

"Yes," said Miss Bertha. "I am going back to boarding-school on Monday, and so will be leaving for London to-night. I've brought you a nice cake, Master Wynn, as a parting gift. I made it myself! Look!"

Miss Bertha had a little bag with her, and from its depths she brought forth a fine cake.

It looked very rich and tempting, and Fatty's eyes glistened with pleasure.

"That—for me!" he gasped. "Oh, my word! That's ripping of you, Miss Bertha! But—but I'm awfully sorry you're going, you know."

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and even the vicar smiled.

He led Miss Bertha away to the Head's house, and ten minutes later they came out again.

"Well, good-bye, Master Wynn!" said Miss Bertha, extending a plump hand. "I hope you enjoy the cake."

"G-goo-good-bye—" stuttered Wynn.

He looked quite pathetic as he stood at the gates, cake in hand, and watched her plump form longingly until she disappeared from view.

Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, Fatty!" he said. "You're a giddy hero, and you really do take the cake, you know!"

THE END.

.. (Look out for another of Martin Clifford's masterpieces next week, chums, entitled: "IN THE TOILS!" You've all been asking for a yarn featuring Dr. Holmes, the respected Head of St. Jim's well here it is. Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

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