

"The TREASURE of the DOUVARS!" THRILLING SCHOOL
MYSTERY YARN INSIDE



MARTIN CLIFFORD'S SCHOOL & MYSTERY TALE, INTRODUCING

CHAPTER 1.

Mysterious!

"I SAY, old chap!"
Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, who made that remark, was seated in a chair by the fire in Study No. 2. For a long while he had been sitting quite silent, so that Percy Mellish, who was at the table busy with his prep, had forgotten he was even in the room.

But suddenly Baggy had broken his unusual silence.

"I say, old chap, I—"

Kit Wildrake, the boy from British Columbia, who shared Study No. 2 with Baggy and Mellish, was out, doing his prep with Kerruish & Co., of Study No. 5.

Wildrake was never very keen on the society of his two study-mates. Therefore it was obvious that Baggy's remark was addressed to Mellish.

The sneak of the Fourth glanced up.

He looked round at Baggy rather curiously. Though Baggy and Mellish rubbed along together pretty well in the study, there was no particular friendship between them. Yet Baggy had just addressed Mellish in a voice almost sugary with friendliness.

When Baggy spoke like that it usually meant that he wanted something.

"Well, porpoise?" said Mellish suspiciously.

"I was wondering about something, old chap!" said Baggy, heedless of Mellish's discouraging tone.

"If you were wondering whether I'll lend you a bob, you needn't wonder," said Mellish, with a grin.

"I won't!"

Baggy Trimble was always hard up, and was always trying to remedy that state of affairs out of the pockets of the other St. Jim's juniors.

"Oh, really, Mellish, old chap! It's not that at all. I was simply wondering about something—"

"Well, don't be so jolly mysterious!" exclaimed Mellish, eyeing Baggy curiously. There was something in the fat junior's tone that puzzled him. "What is it?"

"Suppose, old chap, you—you'd found something," said Baggy, blinking at Mellish rather oddly, "something rather valuable, you know. Only suppose, of course! I—"

"What on earth are you burbling about?" ejaculated Mellish, staring at him.

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The Treasure of the Douvres!

"Oh, really, old chap! I'm only supposing—"

"Blessed if I know what you're talking about!"

"It's clear enough, ain't it?" said Baggy peevishly. "I was saying, suppose you'd found something valuable—"

"What sort of a thing?" queried Mellish, in a bewildered way.

"Ahem!" Baggy coughed. "Well, suppose—only suppose, you know—you'd found some jewels, or something like that, and—and you wanted to raise the wind on 'em. See? I was wondering, you know—only wondering, of course—how a chap would do it!"

Mellish laid down his pen.

He was puzzled—very puzzled. That there was some-

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**A Boy in Girl's Clothing!
Amazing Masquerade!
A Fortune at Stake!**



he would be almost sure to keep it, and try to "raise the wind" on it secretly.

Mellish's brain began to work very quickly. He realised that if he showed suspicion, Baggy would shut up like an oyster.

"Well," he said slowly, as if not very interested, "I suppose a chap who'd found something valuable—say, jewels—would have to find some jewel merchant to buy 'em. They mostly hang out in Hatton Garden, I believe—"

"Hatton Garden?" put in Baggy eagerly. "Where's that?"

"In London, ass!"

"Oh!"

Baggy's face had fallen, and Mellish now felt certain that the fat junior had a secret he wished to keep to himself.

"Well," said Baggy disconsolately, "suppose—only suppose, mind you—the chap wasn't able to go to Hatton Garden, or whatever you call it—what'd he do then? That is, supposing he'd got some—h'm—jewels he happened to have found!"

"Well, if he was lucky he might find somebody nearer the schoo—" Mellish corrected himself hastily—"nearer wherever he was, who'd buy them. But, of course, he'd have to go pretty carefully."

"Ye-e-es," nodded Baggy gloomily. "I suppose he would."

thing behind Baggy's supposition, he felt sure. Could it be that Baggy was actually in the position he had suggested—that Baggy had found some article of value, and wanted to turn it into cash, but did not know the best way to go about it?

If so, it was clear enough that Baggy did not intend to admit the fact.

Mellish knew well enough that in Baggy's elastic code of honour—as with his own—findings were keepings! If Baggy had been the lucky finder of something valuable,

He blinked at the fire. Mellish watched him with keen, ferret eyes.

"Oh, well—"

Baggy lumbered to his feet and rolled from the study, with a faint, thoughtful frown on his fat countenance. As the door closed, Percy Mellish drew a deep, excited breath.

"My giddy aunt!" he breathed. "Baggy's found some jewels! Must have! He's got 'em hidden somewhere, and wants to raise the wind on 'em, for a cert! Phew!"

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A cunning gleam came into the eyes of the sneak of the Fourth. He grinned softly.
 "This needs looking into!" muttered Mellish. "If Baggy's made a find, blessed if I see why I shouldn't share the profits! I'll look into this—not half!"

CHAPTER 2.

Baggy Changes His Mind!

"IT'S Baggy!"
 "Hallo, porpoise! Here's something to interest you!"

"Seen the notice, old fat man?"
 Baggy had rolled downstairs to the Hall, where he had found a large and, apparently, rather excited crowd of juniors gathered round the notice-board. At sight of Baggy several of the fellows had glanced at one another and grinned.

Baggy blinked at them suspiciously.
 "What giddy notice?" he growled.
 "Come and have a look!" chuckled Wilkins of the Shell.
 Baggy turned with a suspicious grunt, and pushed his way into the throng, towards the green baize board. There was a notice there, in the Head's handwriting, drawing attention to a letter pinned above it—a letter that bore the address, at the top, of Spalding Hall, the school for girls near Wayland, where Ethel Cleveland & Co., the popular girl chums of many of the St. Jim's juniors, were pupils.

It was addressed to the Head, and signed by Miss Finch, the little Headmistress of Spalding Hall.

The letter stated that a dance was to be held at Miss Finch's establishment on the following Saturday evening, to which she had invited any St. Jim's juniors of the Fourth or Shell who cared to go, with the Head's permission. The Head's notice intimated that he gave permission—hence the delight of the crowd round the board!

A dance at Spalding Hall was always a cheery affair. But Baggy's face, as he read the letter and the notice, took on a sulky scowl.

"You'll be going, of course, Baggy?" queried Talbot of the Shell, with a wink at the crowd.

"Not me!" sniffed Baggy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chorus of chuckles. Baggy glanced round quickly, and went suddenly crimson as he realised that Talbot and the crowd were pulling his leg.

"But think how Miss Marie will be disappointed if you don't go!" urged Bernard Glyn of the Shell solemnly.

"Break her heart, I expect," nodded Ernest Levison of the Fourth equally solemnly.

Baggy's countenance, already crimson, turned almost orange in hue.

For several days now Baggy had had his fat leg pulled continually on the subject of Marie Douvar, of Spalding Hall.

Marie Douvar was a new arrival at Miss Finch's establishment; but she had already struck up a warm friendship with Ethel & Co., and through them with some of the St. Jim's juniors.

From the very first Baggy had been "smitten" with the new Spaldingite, as was well known. It was equally well known that Baggy had failed to find favour in the eyes of the object of his regard. Despite his charming personality—for that he was a regular lady-killer Baggy had no doubt at all—the new Spaldingite had made it very clear that Baggy's attentions were not wanted. She had, in fact, publicly smacked Baggy's face on Little Side at St. Jim's, to the vast amusement of the juniors who had witnessed the incident.

It was true that Miss Douvar had accepted a peace offering from Baggy afterwards in the form of a ring, which was supposedly a cheap imitation of real diamonds, and without any value. But even so Baggy had discovered, to his chagrin, that he was still not wanted.

Wherefore Baggy was sulking hard as far as Spalding Hall was concerned.

"You ought to go to the dance—for Miss Marie's sake, you know," urged Frederick Burkett, the bully of the Shell, with a guffaw.

"Dare say she'll die of a broken heart if you don't," said Crooke, Burkett's chum and study-mate, with a solemn shake of his head.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

Baggy glared at the juniors with a scarlet face.

"Rats!" he roared. "I'm not going! I wouldn't jolly well go if I was paid! I wouldn't go if the girls went down on their knees and begged me to!"

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And with that retort Baggy marched out into the quad. He would not admit even to himself what a bitter blow his failure to make "a hit" with Marie Douvar had been. It was a question of "sour grapes" with Baggy now.

"Hallo! Here's Baggy!"

It was Monty Lowther's cheery voice. Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. had come in at the gates. They had just returned from Spalding Hall, where they had spent a cheery afternoon with Ethel & Co., it being Wednesday—a half-holiday.

"Hallo, old fat man!" exclaimed Tom Merry at sight of Trimble. "I've got something for you!" He held out a small envelope, which Baggy took, in great surprise. It was addressed to himself. "It's from Miss Marie."

"Eh?" gasped Baggy.

Tom Merry had been rather astonished when he had been asked to deliver that note, for he knew well enough that Baggy was not exactly a favourite with the new Spaldingite. But his surprise was as nothing to Baggy's own amazement. The fat junior ripped open the envelope with quivering fingers, looking as though he more than half suspected a joke was being played on him.

"G-great pip!"

Baggy goggled down at the brief missive with wide eyes. There was no doubt that it was genuine enough.

"Dear Trimble" (he read).—"I am afraid I was in rather a hurry the last time I saw you, and never really thanked you properly for the lovely ring. But, as you may know, there is to be a dance here on Saturday, and I do so hope that you will come. I shall be awfully disappointed if you do not."

"Yours sincerely,

"MARIE."

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered Baggy.

Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6 were surveying him rather curiously. They had no wish to pry into Baggy's private affairs, but they could not help wondering why Marie Douvar should have written to him.

In a moment Baggy's sulky countenance had been transformed. He had forgotten he would not go to the dance at any price.

He waved the letter excitedly, almost dancing with glee and triumph. So he had been quite wrong, after all, in thinking that the new Spaldingite did not appreciate his charming personality. She did! Here was the proof.

"It's from her all right!" gasped Baggy. "She—she's written specially to ask me to go to the dance!"

"What?" yelled Blake.

"Gammon!" ejaculated Manners incredulously.

"I tell you she has!" panted Baggy. "You can jolly well read her letter yourself if you don't believe me!"

In his wild excitement Baggy had made rather a rash offer, seeing that the letter contained a reference to the ring he had given its sender—a fact of which none of the juniors were aware, and which Baggy had excellent reasons for not wishing them to know. But, luckily for Baggy, neither Tom Merry & Co. nor Study No. 6 wanted to read his private letter. The offer to do so was enough, in any case, to convince them that Baggy was speaking the truth.

"M-m-y giddy aunt!" breathed Digby.

"Great Bohunkus!" ejaculated Cyrus K. Handcock, the American junior.

"B-bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

The juniors stared after Baggy almost dazedly as the Falstaff of the Fourth rushed away and vanished into the School House, intent upon writing an answer to the invitation at once; then they stared at one another.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Herries. "If that doesn't beat the giddy band!"

"It's amazin', deah boys!"

"We know she can't stand Baggy!" gasped Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shrugged his broad shoulders and laughed. "I suppose she feels sorry for the fat ass," he said quietly. "It's rather decent of her, if you ask me. She's snubbed poor old Baggy so much that she's felt she's being unkind, or something, and so she's making up for it out of kindness."

"I guess that's the size of it," nodded Handcock. "She's sorry for the fat clam."

The chums of the Fourth and Shell strolled on towards the School House.

But had they only known it, there was a very different reason—an amazing one—why the new girl at Spalding Hall wanted to make sure that Baggy Trimble went to the coming dance.

CHAPTER 3.
At Spalding Hall!

LETTER for you, Marie!" Morning classes were just over at Spalding Hall, and a big crowd of cheery, pretty girls was gathered round the letter-rack in the hall, the second post having arrived while they were in their Form-rooms.

Ethel Cleveland, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's charming and popular cousin, had appeared from the direction of the Fifth Form room in company with Doris Levison, the sister of Ernest Levison of St. Jim's, Lady Peggy Brooke, the pretty red-headed Tomboy of Spalding Hall, and their new friend—the Spaldingite who was the object of so much admiration from Baggy Trimble.

"Thanks!"

Mario Douvar—as the new girl was known to the others—took the letter that one of the girls near the rack had held out.

It was addressed in the sprawling, spidery handwriting of Baggy Trimble.

Ethel & Co. strolled out of the big doorway into the quad, Marie Douvar ripping open Baggy's letter, with an odd little smile.

The new Spaldingite laughed.

"Oh, well—I've done it now, Peggy!"

But as a matter of fact, Lady Peggy was wrong. Marie Douvar did want Baggy to come to the dance—for a reason that would have amazed the other three had they known it.

But they would have been still more amazed, as they strolled, chatting and laughing, round the crowded quad, to have known that the new Fifth-Former's name was not really Marie Douvar at all—that in reality Marie Douvar was not the cheery schoolgirl "she" appeared to be, but a disguised schoolboy whose name was Dick Lang!

That staggering fact was one that would have given the



Crash! The two boats came into collision, and there was a wild yell from Mellish as he went flying into the water!

Baggy had taken great pains in writing that letter. There were only about three or four blots on it, and scarcely more than half a dozen smudges. But Baggy's spelling was certainly weird and wonderful.

"Deer Miss Marie,—Thank you for yor leter. It is wunderfool to no that you are kene for me to come to the danse at yor schule on Satterday. I will be there without fale. I am a dab at dansing. Looking forward to seeing you on Saturday, I remain, yor admirer,

"BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

"Well, is he coming?" asked Lady Peggy bluntly. She had recognised Baggy's wonderful writing on the envelope.

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, it beats me why you wanted to write and ask him to," said Lady Peggy, in a candid tone. "It's all very well being kind-hearted, Marie, but there is a limit—and Trimble's just about the limit, if you ask me!"

"I think it was very nice of Marie," put in Ethel.

She could not help feeling a little surprised, nevertheless, that the new arrival in the Fifth, who had shown such marked disinclination for Baggy's company on more than one occasion, should suddenly have been so kind to the fat St. Jim's junior! Ethel herself was always kind to Baggy; but then, Baggy did not pester her with unwanted attentions. He had learnt his lesson with Cousin Ethel long ago!

"He'd never have come if you hadn't written," said Lady Peggy. "You know you don't really want him, either!"

St. Jim's juniors, too, the shock of a lifetime—Baggy more than anyone else!

Dick Lang had been having the "rag" of his life at Miss Finch's establishment for the education of young ladies! Even though he had to work harder in the Fifth Form there than he had expected, he had enjoyed every minute of his masquerade, his naturally cheery nature being undamped even by the dark shadow that had entered his life, and the indirect cause of his present strange role.

It was more than a month now since Dick had bolted from Abbotsford, a school that was an old rival of St. Jim's on the footer-field.

Wrongfully accused of theft, with more than a chance of being sent to a reformatory in consequence, Dick had "done a bunk," as he himself would have put it.

While tramping to London, penniless and half-starved, the fugitive schoolboy had made the acquaintance of a man named Brusiloff—a Russian, who lived at the Moat House, an old moated mansion on the edge of Wayland Moor. It was Dr. Brusiloff who had offered Dick an amazing bargain! If Dick would adopt the guise of a girl, and be sent to Spalding Hall as a new pupil, the Russian had promised to give him a cheque for one hundred pounds—more than enough money to enable the "wanted" youngster to get out of the country and start life afresh in the colonies.

There had been a very particular reason why Dr. Brusiloff had wanted Dick to become a pupil at Spalding Hall!

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CHAPTER 4.

Trailing Trimble!

The Russian—actually a thorough-paced scoundrel—knew that a box of jewels, of almost fabulous worth, was hidden at the school, unknown to anyone else, since the man who had hidden them there was dead. These jewels were the family heirlooms of a noble Russian family named Douvar, the last surviving member of which was a girl named Marie Douvar, whom Dr. Brusiloff and his wife were keeping a prisoner at the Moat House!

The real Marie Douvar had been kidnapped while on her way to Spalding Hall as a new pupil. The Brusiloffs had wanted a substitute, a bogus Marie Douvar, to arrive at the school in order to prevent investigations being started concerning the whereabouts of the real Marie. They had also planned to kill two birds with one stone by using the bogus Marie as a tool who would be in a position to find for them the hidden jewels—gems worth the best part of a million pounds!

Dick had agreed to go to Spalding Hall in the name of Marie Douvar, to look for the jewels, fairly readily. Not only would the hundred pounds offered "save his bacon," as he had termed it, but the disguise of a schoolgirl would enable him to live in safety until the police search for the missing Abbotsford fellow had subsided.

Never for a moment had Dick known that there was anything "shady" about the Brusiloffs. He had believed what he had been told—that the jewels were rightfully the Russian's property. And he had not the faintest idea that the girl under whose name he was at the school was a prisoner in the Moat House!

Madam Brusiloff had trained Dick very carefully for his feminine role, and he had arrived at Spalding Hall without the slightest suspicion being aroused that he was not all he appeared to be. He was a good-looking fellow, astonishingly like the real Marie Douvar, which was the chief reason why he had been offered the part. With his fair "shingled" hair—Madam Brusiloff had made him grow it long, to his disgust, since a wig would have been too easily detected—his brown eyes and naturally delicate complexion, he might well have been a twin-sister to the prisoner at the Moat House! In fact, there was no doubt that Dick made quite an attractive-looking girl—though he himself would never have admitted that fact.

"Why the thoughtful brow, Marie?" asked Lady Peggy, glancing at Dick with a cheery grin, as the four strolled among the groups of Spaldingites under the trees that lined the playing-fields, waiting for the dinner-bell. "Penny for 'em!"

Dick laughed.

"Oh, nothing!"

But it was of Baggy Trimble that he had been thinking.

It was two days ago that Baggy had presented him with the ring that Dick had supposed at the time to be a worthless trinket and had accepted in order to get rid of Baggy. But Dr. Brusiloff, whom Dick had visited soon afterwards at the Moat House, had recognised Baggy's gift as a tremendously valuable diamond ring, and—staggeringly enough—part of the collection of jewels that the Russian had known to be hidden at Spalding Hall!

It was an utter mystery to them both how Baggy had come to have possession of part of the collection of jewels for which Dick had been searching at the school on behalf of Dr. Brusiloff. But Dick had promised Brusiloff to do his best to persuade Baggy to tell him where he had obtained that ring.

That had been the reason why Dick had written to Baggy, urging him to come to the dance. Not that he wanted Baggy's "charming" company at that festive occasion, but so that he would have a chance of getting Baggy alone and "pumping" him.

Baggy's vanity might have had a severe jolt had he known that fact. But he did not know it!

"Wonder where the fat ass did get that blessed ring, anyway?" he asked himself as he strolled along with the others. "Brusiloff swears it's part of the jewellery I've been trying to find! So how on earth did Baggy get it?"

The clang of the dinner-bell broke in on his thoughts. Chattering and laughing, the Spaldingites crowded into the house, making their way to the dining-hall, and Dick Lang dismissed the worrying problem of Baggy and the ring from his mind.

After all, there was no use racking his brains over it now. He could afford to forget Baggy until Saturday, when the fat St. Jim's fellow would be coming over to the dance.

"But on Saturday I'll jolly well find out the truth!" Dick told himself grimly. "I can't let Dr. Brusiloff down, after he's been so ripping to me! It's up to me!"

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"NOW, where's he off to?"

It was Percy Mellish who muttered the words. Mellish had been across to the tuckshop at tea-time on Friday, the day before the dance at Spalding Hall, to which nearly all the Shell and Fourth were going. As he had emerged from the little shop, he had seen the fat figure of Baggy Trimble appear from the School House doorway opposite, and roll quickly down the steps.

There was something almost furtive in Baggy's manner, it seemed to Mellish, as he watched Baggy hurry off towards the playing-fields.

"Something in the wind," Mellish told himself.

For the last couple of days, the sneak of the Fourth had been keeping rather a close eye on Baggy's movements. Mellish was sure that Baggy Trimble had some secret up his fat sleeve, after his curious talk with Baggy in Study No. 2, and he wanted very much to find out what it was.

So far, he had noticed nothing unusual about Baggy, except that the Falstaff of the Fourth had seemed oddly silent and thoughtful lately. But now, as Baggy rolled rapidly towards the playing-fields across the quad, Mellish's eyes gleamed.

There was something more than suspicious, it seemed to him, about the way in which Baggy had glanced round once or twice, as if to make sure that he was not being followed.

Baggy vanished under the trees, and Mellish quickly hurried after him. He strolled with a deliberate air of carelessness from the quad into the playing-fields, and saw Baggy's fat figure rolling down the path to the river. Keeping carefully out of sight in case Baggy should glance round again, Mellish followed.

"Hallo!" muttered Mellish. "He's taking a boat!"

It was unusual enough for Baggy Trimble to take a boat out on the river, he knew. Baggy was not fond of exercise in any shape or form.

Mellish's eyes gleamed excitedly as from the cover of some trees he saw Baggy, with much splashing, row from sight, going up the river. As soon as the fat junior had vanished, Mellish set off from the landing-stage in pursuit in a light skiff.

Round the bend he caught sight of Baggy disappearing round the next twist, and followed on rapidly, slowing down at the curve and paddling cautiously along under cover of the overhanging willows that lined the bank. Again he caught sight of Baggy splashing along unskilfully, vanishing round a further curve of the winding Rhyl.

Baggy was rather a short-sighted individual, and Mellish felt certain enough that by exercising a little caution he could follow Baggy all the way unnoticed to the fat junior's destination—wherever that was.

"He's up to something, all right," breathed Mellish, as he rowed on. "If there's anything in what he was bubbling about those blessed jewels, I'd bet anything he's off to where he's got 'em hidden!"

Baggy's destination was soon clear.

Mellish turned another bend a few hundred yards farther on, and gave a sudden exclamation. He had come in view of one of the little islands that dotted the length of the Rhyl—Mayfly Island, it was named; a small hump of land in midstream, choked with little trees and bushes. Moored under the overhanging foliage in such a way that it was scarcely visible at all, was Baggy's boat!

But of Baggy himself there was no sign. He was clearly on the island hidden among the thick bushes.

Mellish dared not approach any nearer for risk of being seen. He paddled silently into the bank, under some branches that hung low to the water, utterly screening him from anyone on the river. From his cover he peered out, waiting patiently!

"He, he, he!"

Baggy Trimble gave a gloating snigger.

He was crouching among the bushes on the island, by a hole in the earth which he had just dug with a spade that he had hidden beforehand at the island, ready for his visit. From the hole he had lifted an oblong black box.

He raised the lid, with greedily gleaming eyes. A mass of glittering jewels met his gloating gaze.

Though Baggy did not know it, he had in that box some of the most magnificent gems in the world—the famous Douvar heirlooms, that had been smuggled out

of Russia by a man who was now dead, for the girl whom the Brusiloffs were keeping a prisoner at the Moat House; the jewels for which Dick Lang, believing them to be the property of Brusiloff, had been searching in vain at Spalding Hall, where they had been hidden; and which Baggy, finding them by merest chance, had transferred from Spalding Hall to his own secret hiding-place on Mayfly Island!

Baggy plunged his fat fingers into the mass of gems, and handled lovingly diamonds and rubies and huge emeralds, some loose, others set in gold and silver ornaments; brooches and rings, and necklaces and tiaras—glittering and sparkling with a thousand points of dancing light!

Baggy had not the faintest idea how much his secret hoard of treasure was worth actually—had he known, the figure would have staggered him utterly. But he believed the jewels to be worth at least several hundred, if not a few thousand pounds.

"Wish I knew how to turn 'em into cash," he muttered, his face going suddenly rather gloomy.

It was hard luck, Baggy felt—rotten hard luck—to have so much wealth locked up like this, while as regards actual cash he was on the rocks, as usual.

But even Baggy, dull-witted though he was, knew that he had to go very carefully in the matter. Better to lie low for the present, till he had found out how to get rid of his prize, he had decided, regretfully, tantalising though it was to do so.

"Now, I wonder what she'd like?" he muttered.

Baggy, in his excitement at getting the letter from the supposed Marie Douvar asking him to go to the dance at Spalding Hall, had, in a fit of unusual generosity, decided to visit his hoard and select some article of jewellery to give as a present to Marie on the night of the dance. With so much in his possession he could well afford, even Baggy felt, to curry favour with the new Spaldingite by doing so.

His eyes fell on a glittering brooch, set with a big ruby that flamed like blood. Baggy picked it out and gave a mutter of admiration.

"Blessed if I don't give her this," he told himself. "It must be worth a fiver at least, I suppose—but never mind! I've got plenty!"

It would have been a shock to Baggy to have known that the brooch he held in his hand was worth, not a fiver, but several thousand pounds—being an antique Slavonic brooch that had once belonged to an Empress of Russia!

He slipped it into his pocket, shut the box, and dumped it back into the hole, covering it with earth again. Hiding the spade among the bushes, Baggy crept back to the bank, lowered himself cautiously into his boat, and pushed out from the island, turning its nose in the direction of St. Jim's.

He did not know that the watching eyes of Percy Mellish followed his every movement, as he rowed downstream, catching a few crabs with his oar on the way! But Baggy had scarcely vanished round the bend in the river before the sneak of the Fourth had emerged from the concealment of the overhanging branches at the bank, and was pulling swiftly towards the island.

Mellish was out to find out the secret of Mayfly Island there and then!

But he was not in luck's way.

So intent was he upon gaining his objective that he failed to notice a boat come shooting downstream past the island, with Blake & Co. at the oars.

Study No. 6 had paddled up the river for a spell after tea, and were now coming down again in fine style in rather a hurry, since they wanted to get back to the school to settle down to their prep. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was in the stern with the rudder-lines, gave a sudden yell as he saw Mellish's skiff cut out across their bows.

"Bai Jove! Look out—"

But it was too late to avoid the collision.

Crash!

The bows of Blake & Co.'s speeding craft struck Mellish's skiff amidships. There was a wild yell from the sneak of the Fourth as he went flying into the water, head-over-heels!



With Baggy's arms entwined around his neck, Arthur Augustus went sprawling on to the floor of the ball-room!

"Yooooosh! Gug-gug-gugggggg!" Weird and wonderful sounds came from Mellish as he reappeared again, after vanishing completely for a few moments.

"You uttah ass, Mellish!" hooted Arthur Augustus.

"My hat! It's Mellish!" grinned Blake cheerily, as he caught sight of Mellish's gasping countenance in the water. "What's up, Mellish? Playing at being a giddy sardine?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. roared. There was no damage done to their own boat, luckily, and so they could afford to see the funny side of the situation. But Mellish, as he scrambled back into his skiff, after righting it, looking more like a half-drowned rat than anything human, was choking with fury.

"You rotters!" he gasped.

"You ought not to have got in the way, you dummy!" said Arthur Augustus, surveying Mellish through his gleaming monocle as Blake & Co. drifted by. "Bai Jove! You appear to be wathah wet!"

"I'm soaked!" yelled Mellish.

His teeth were chattering, for the waters of the Rhyl were icy cold that evening.

"Well, keep out of the giddy light next time!" chuckled Herries. And Study No. 6, with broad grins, rowed on and vanished at a fast pace down the river.

"Oh, m-my hat!" gasped Mellish miserably. "Oooh! I'm d-d-d-drenched!" he mumbled, with chattering teeth.

He cast a longing look at the island. He would have given a good deal to have visited it just then, to have satisfied his intense curiosity concerning what secret it contained to have drawn Baggy there so mysteriously. But in his present soaked condition, chilled to the bone as he was, it was clear that he would have to put off his visit to the island till some other time.

With a furious mutter, he turned the skiff, half full of water as it was, and rowed as hard as he could downstream.

"I'll jolly well come to-morrow, though," he told himself, his teeth still chattering. "If Baggy's really found some jewels or something, like he was burbling about, I mean to find 'em!"

CHAPTER 5.

Off to the Dance!

"MY giddy aunt!"
Kit Wildrake fairly goggled into Study No. 2.

It was Saturday evening, and Wildrake had come along to his study to get ready for the Spalding Hall dance. He had opened the door and stepped into the room—and come to an abrupt standstill.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Wildrake.

Baggy Trimble was in the study, standing before the mirror with a greasy smirk on his face. Baggy had already changed into evening clothes. An immaculate white tie graced his fat neck, slim, pointed shoes adorned his feet, gleaming lustroously, his waistcoat was the last word in fashion, and his trousers were pressed to a knife-edge crease. It was true, perhaps, that his bags were a trifle tight about the seat, just as it was undoubtedly true that his wing-collar was so tight as to appear to be almost strangling him, and that his waistcoat was such a tight fit that Baggy's podgy figure seemed likely to burst it at any moment. But on the whole Baggy was certainly gorgeous to look upon.

"M-my hat!" breathed Wildrake. "Been robbing a tailor's dummy, or what?"

"Oh, really, Wildrake—"

Baggy turned to his study-mate with a lofty tilt to his snub little nose. He sniffed. It was clear that Baggy considered his appearance was quite perfect and beyond all criticism.

"I like to look smart when I go to a dance," explained Baggy grandly. "Girls like a chap to look well-groomed."

"Well, which?" queried Wildrake, with a grin.

"Well, groomed," repeated Baggy in a lordly way.

"Well, talking of grooming, you do look a bit like an over-fed carthorse," nodded Wildrake. Suddenly he jumped. "Great Scott! I've seen that blessed waistcoat before! Isn't it Gussy's?"

Baggy looked suddenly very guilty.

"Ahem! Maybe it's like one of Gussy's—"

"And those bags!" yelled Wildrake, as the truth dawned on him. "I know they're Gussy's! And those shoes! And that tie!" he added grimly, staring at a glossy topper on the table. "That's Gussy's best topper, I'll bet my giddy boots! You—you fat pirate!"

"Shut up, you ass!" gasped Baggy, looking quite yellow as he shot a scared glance at the door. "Don't let somebody hear you! I—I—I— You see, I—"

Wildrake burst into a laugh. The sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's gorgeous garments buttoned tightly over Baggy's podgy figure was certainly rather funny. The clothes in question had been made for the slim, elegant figure of the swell of St. Jim's, not the Falstaff of the Fourth, and the general effect was rather like that of a balloon bursting from its hangar.

"So you've been raiding Gussy's wardrobe!" ejaculated Wildrake. "Great Scott! You'll get it in the neck when he finds out, you blessed chump!"

"Rats!" growled Baggy uneasily. "If you don't tell him he may never notice. He's got lots of other togs—"

"What do you mean—if I don't tell him?" snorted Wildrake. "Think I'm going to sneak, you fat robber? It's nothing to do with me! But I hope Gussy gives you a jolly good hiding for your blessed cheek, that's all!"

"Oh, rats!"

Baggy picked up the topper, jammed it on to his bullet head, and rolled from the study.

That he was taking a great risk in "borrowing" the swell of St. Jim's best evening clothes he knew well enough. But Baggy was a fellow who seldom bothered to count the consequences of his actions, if they had some immediate advantage. And he was prepared to take the risk, anyhow. At all costs, he intended to impress Miss Marie that evening!

He rolled towards the stairs. But as he reached them he stopped dead with a sudden gasp of dismay.

Arthur Augustus himself was sailing up the stairs!

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Baggy, turning a sickly hue.

He would have turned and bolted, only he felt rooted to the spot. Arthur Augustus paused before him, surveying Baggy through his gleaming eyeglass with some astonishment.

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"Bai Jove! You are looking wathah smart, Twimble!"

"Oh! Y-y-yes!" stuttered Baggy feebly.

"I weally must congratulate you, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus gave him a beaming smile. "I am delighted to see that a wathah slovenly fellow like you has at last begun to take an intelligent intwest in clobber! Your togs are a twifle on the tight side as to cut, deah boy, but they are certainly an amazin' improvement on your usual feahful turn-out!"

Baggy goggled at him. Arthur Augustus beamed back. A sudden grin crept on to Baggy's countenance. He understood!

In the dim light of the passage, Arthur Augustus had failed to recognise his own garments!

"Hem! Y-yes!" gasped Baggy. "I—I thought I looked pretty good, old chap!"

"Pway allow me to adjust your tie, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus graciously. "It is not tied quite as I could advise. Allow me!"

"Sus-sus-certainly!" stammered Baggy.

Arthur Augustus gravely unfastened Baggy's white evening bow—or, rather, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's own evening bow—and retied it with expert fingers.

"That is bettah, Twimble!"

"He, he, he!" There was a sudden explosive chuckle from Baggy. "Thanks, Gussy! Well, so long! He, he, he!"

Baggy rolled away down the stairs, sniggering, leaving Arthur Augustus staring after him in astonishment.

"What evah is Twimble sniggahin' about, I wondah?" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, in a puzzled voice. "Queeah!"

And Arthur Augustus turned, with a bewildered expression on his noble countenance, towards Study No. 6.

The study was empty, Blake, Herries, and Dig not having yet come up to change. Arthur Augustus crossed to the wardrobe and opened the door.

He jumped!

"Gweat Scott!"

Early that afternoon, Arthur Augustus had very carefully brushed and folded his best evening "clobber," and placed it ready for the evening in a special corner of the wardrobe. It was no longer there, and with a startled gasp the swell of St. Jim's realised that he had quite forgotten to lock the cupboard.

"B-bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in utter dismay. "Some feahful boundah has been heah and collahed—"

He broke off, staring out of the window by the wardrobe at a fat figure crossing the quad with a fat waddle towards the gates. Light dawned upon Arthur Augustus—a blinding light! His noble eyes seemed to pop from his head.

With a wild dash he hurled himself at the window and flung up the sash in frantic haste.

Crash!

The lower sash of the window was a little easy in its frame, unluckily. Before the swell of St. Jim's sudden onslaught, it shot up with such violence that the glass could not stand the shock. It broke, and a shower of glass crashed into the quad.

There was a wild yell from below, as Burkett, who happened to be passing beneath, jumped wildly to avoid it.

"You—you silly dummy!" he yelled, shaking a brawny fist at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's excitedly protruding head. "Want to brain me? Idiot! I've a jolly good mind to come up and wallop you!"

But Arthur Augustus was far too intent upon the rapidly disappearing figure of Baggy to pay any heed to Burkett's indignation.

"Twimble!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

Baggy Trimble jumped as if he had been shot. He glanced round over his fat shoulder, with a scared, guilty face.

"Twimble!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "You uttah wottah! You are weawin' my clobber!"

Trimble hurried on.

"Come back, you howwid fat boundah!" The voice of Arthur Augustus had risen to a frantic scream as he saw his most cherished garments—with Baggy inside them—heading for the gates rapidly. "Come back! Do you heah? Bai Jove, I—I—I—"

Baggy quickened his pace. He fairly shot out of the gates, and vanished. Arthur Augustus clutched limply at the window-sill.

His "clobber" had gone! It was impossible to catch Baggy now. And only a few minutes before he had actually helped tie Baggy's tie—his own tie, rather—to increase the smartness of Baggy in those borrowed plumes!

It was heartrending!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a guffaw of laughter from below. Burkett's big, grinning face was staring up.

"So Baggy's been pinching your togs again, Gussy?" chortled Burkett. "Ha, ha, ha! That's jolly funny! Ha, ha, ha! That's rich! I—Oh! My hat! Yaroooooop!"

Arthur Augustus, enraged beyond endurance by these insults added to his injury, had snatched a large bottle of ink from the top of the desk on the other side of the window, and emptied it over the grinning, upturned face of Frederick Burkett. The bully of the Shell broke off his derisive guffaws, and gave a spluttering yell as in a moment his features were transformed into the likeness of a nigger minstrel's.

"Grooooooh!" gasped Burkett, his mouth full of ink, some of which he had swallowed. "Oh! Gug-gug-gggggug! Yoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus slammed down the window. But broken as it was, he could still hear Burkett's gasps and gurgles, and the sound seemed to bring him some slight consolation!

"If Burkett was not such a hefty wottah, I should administah a feahful thwashin', for what he said!" snorted Arthur Augustus. He gazed into the wardrobe with a dismayed look. "I—I—I'll slaughtah that fat cad, Twimble! Oh deah!"

There was nothing for it but to go to the dance in his second-best "clobber," it was evident. That was a good

theoretically a two-seater. But it held six—or eight, with difficulty. At the moment it was managing eight. Monty Lowther was sitting on one of the doors. Digby on the other, and Tom Merry was making himself comfortable amidstships, between the front seat and the dickey, in which Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were ensconced. Manners and Herries were squashing in with Handcock, in front.

"Yaas, heah we are, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus spoke a trifle grimly. He was on the look-out for Baggy Trimble.

The American junior drew the car to a halt, and the chums of the Fourth and Shell piled out—all looking very smart in their white waistcoats and evening ties, and ready to enjoy themselves.

Most of the guests from St. Jim's were walking over to Spalding Hall, since the night was fine. But a few of the more wealthy fellows had hired cars for the occasion—such as Ralph Reckness Cardew, and Koumi Rao, the Indian junior from the New House, who had brought over Figgins & Co. in a hired limousine. The New House fellows were alighting as Tom Merry & Co. and Study No. 6 arrived and parked beside them, in the line of cars at one side of the quad.

"Hallo, you New House asses!" grinned Blake.

"Hallo, School House bounders!" retorted Figgins.

"Come to act as waiters at supper, or what?"

The New House fellows chuckled. Blake glared.

FOOTBALL FEVER AT ST. JIM'S!

The Fight for the Eastwood Cup—

"WON BY A FOUL!"

Read the amazing revelations in next week's Stunning Soccer Story!

deal smarter than the evening clothes that most of the juniors would be wearing. But it was with a sorrowful countenance that the aristocrat of the Fourth began to array himself for Spalding Hall.

There would be trouble for Trimble.

But the swell of St. Jim's had not been the only fellow who had watched Baggy cross the quad that evening in his borrowed plumes with a peculiar interest.

Percy Mellish had watched Baggy leave for Spalding Hall—from the window of a room in the sunny!

Mellish's worst fears had been realised. Thanks to his ducking in the Rhyl on the previous evening, Mellish had woke up that day with a sore throat and watering eyes. In the Fourth Form room that morning his construe had been punctuated with so many gasps and sneezes that Mr. Lathom had insisted that the sneak of the Fourth visited the matron who had promptly consigned him to the sunny, suffering from a bad chill.

Mellish would not as he had intended, visit Mayfly Island that evening, after all! His visit there in search of Baggy's secret would have to wait a day or two, much to his chagrin.

In blissful ignorance of the fact that Mellish was on the trail of his treasure—to say nothing of the sinister Russian of the Moat House—Baggy Trimble rolled along on his way to Spalding Hall without a penny on him, as usual, and with a ruby worth thousands of pounds in a pocket of his borrowed clobber.

CHAPTER 6.

Baggy Asks for It!

"HERE we are!"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. had arrived in the quad at Spalding Hall in Cyrus K. Handcock's glittering yellow car. The American's "auto" was

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Figgins, you silly ass—"

"Come on, you chaps!" grinned Tom cheerily. "No House rows here, for goodness' sake!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

The juniors crossed the quad towards the lighted entrance, and a few minutes later, after having been greeted personally by Miss Finch, were strolling into the ball-room on the look-out for Ethel & Co.

The band had just struck up the first dance, a cheery fox-trot. The crowd of Spaldingites were all looking very pretty and charming in their evening clothes; some of them were already dancing with earlier arrivals from St. Jim's, and the big room made a very pleasant, bright, and lively scene.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and gazed round. But there was no sign of the fat figure of Baggy Trimble.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus and his companions had passed Baggy on the road without seeing him, Baggy having taken the precaution of hiding behind a hedge when he had seen their car in the distance, lest trouble should befall him there and then at the hands of the swell of St. Jim's. So Baggy had not yet arrived.

"There are the girls," exclaimed Manners, nodding towards a group of Spaldingites at the other end of the room, among whom were Ethel and Doris and Lady Peggy and Dick Lang, the ex-inside right of the Abbotsford junior eleven, looking less like the fellow who had once scored goals against St. Jim's than ever in a fashionable evening frock.

For the first time Dick had set out to make himself look as "stunning" as possible, faced as he was with the task of "vamping" Baggy Trimble's secret out of him.

Ethel & Co. caught sight of Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., and Lady Peggy waved in a cheery way. The juniors made their way through the throng towards them.

"Good evenin', deah gals!" murmured Arthur Augustus gracefully. "Bai Jove—you're lookin' charmin'!"

"Flatterer!" retorted Dick, with a grin. There was something about that grin that rather puzzled Arthur Augustus. He would have certainly been astonished had he known the reason for it.

"I mean it, deah gals!" protested Arthur Augustus gallantly. "May I have the pleasuah of this dance, Ethel?"

Arthur Augustus and his pretty cousin joined the crowd on the dance-floor. Blake took charge of Lady Peggy—glad that he had stolen a march on Fatty Wynn, his great rival for Peggy's favours, and Tom Merry turned to Marie Douvar.

"May I have this dance?" he inquired.

"Delighted, sir, she said!" chuckled Dick, with a faint note of amused irony that puzzled Tom for the moment.

Tom Merry was a good dancer, even though he lacked the polished elegance of Arthur Augustus. Dick Lang, too, knew how to dance, and the two took the floor, while Monty Lowther and Doris Levison followed suit.

"Ripping floor, isn't it?" said Tom.

"Rather! I say, how's the footer going?"

"Oh, fine, thanks! There's a big match on next Saturday, by the way. You must come and see it. We're playing Abbotsford—"

There was a queer, almost startled little gasp from his partner. But Dick recovered himself at once.

"I—I'll see about it," said Dick.

He told himself that he dared not risk being seen by the visiting Abbotsford eleven, however, at any price. The chances were that they would fail to recognise him, of course, but there was always the danger that they might. No, he would have to keep clear of St. Jim's on the day of the Abbotsford match!

A fat figure came rolling in at the doorway of the ball-room just then, as they passed near it. Tom heard a quick exclamation from his partner, and saw that someone in the doorway was the cause of it. He glanced round, and the smirking face of Baggy Trimble met his gaze.

Baggy was blinking across towards them. Tom saw his partner smile very charmingly at Baggy, and a faint frown appeared on Tom's face as they passed on.

Tom had wondered several times why Marie Douvar had suddenly appeared to take a liking to the Falstaff of the Fourth. It certainly seemed very strange.

The fox-trot finished, and Tom and Dick joined the rest of their little party in one corner of the room. They had not been chatting for more than a moment or two before Baggy Trimble came rolling up with a painful waddle and an ogling grin on his fleshy features.

Safe at Spalding Hall, Baggy knew that even the wrathful Arthur Augustus would not venture to do or say anything about the little matter of his borrowed clothes.

"Good-evening, girls!" smirked Baggy.

"Good-evening, Trimble!" murmured Dick, very sweetly.

"What about the next dance, Miss Marie?" grinned Baggy.

"Certainly."

Cyrus K. Handcock, who had been about to ask Miss Marie for the next dance himself, swallowed rather hard, as the music struck up again, and Baggy clumsily took hold of his partner for the waltz.

Baggy was always an abominably bad dancer. And at present, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elegant shoes

squashing his fat feet in a way that was becoming agonising, his efforts to show "a light fantastic toe" were worse than ever.

"Ow!" gasped Dick, as one of Baggy's feet landed full on his thin shoe, which offered very little protection. Only armour-plating could have availed against Baggy's heavy tread. "Oooooooh!"

"Sorry!" mumbled Baggy. "You got your foot under mine just then, didn't you?"

"I—I think I must have!" said Dick, with a sickly smile. He was out to keep friendly with Baggy, or he might have told him what he really thought!

"Never mind," grinned Baggy. "A few dances with me, and you'll soon get better at it."

Dick choked. The next moment he suppressed another yell as Baggy's foot again made itself felt—this time with a kick on the ankle that caused Dick to stagger.

"We're getting on fine, eh?" panted Baggy breathlessly, as he charged on.

"Oh, rather!" gasped Dick.

"I say, Miss Marie," he found the Falstaff of the Fourth murmuring in his ear, "I've got a surprise for you! I've brought you a little present!"

"A present?" echoed Dick quickly.

Instantly he thought of Baggy's other present—that ring that Dr. Brusiloff had told Dick was part of the collection of jewellery that had been hidden at Spalding Hall. Could it be another article of jewellery that Baggy wanted to give him? If so, it seemed certain that Baggy, in some mysterious way, had access to the whole collection of treasures, as Dick and Brusiloff suspected.

"Sit out the next dance with me, and I'll give it to you," murmured Baggy, with an ogling look. "Eh?"

Dick nodded, though he felt he would have liked to twist Baggy round and plant a foot very forcibly on his partner's fat figure.

"Good egg!" grinned Baggy. "You know, we're going to be very great pals!" He smirked conceitedly. "Ethel and Lady Peggy and the others won't half be jealous of you, won't they, when they see us sitting out together? He, he, he! If you ask me, Marie, I— Oh! Wow! Yawooooooh!"

Baggy gave a sudden wild yell.

Somehow or other his fat feet had become mixed up under him!

He staggered wildly, and Dick gave a gasp as his partner all but pulled him over. But he escaped dexterously from Baggy's desperate clutch, and Baggy, who was ready to cling to anything at that moment, like a drowning man to a straw, clung to the nearest thing he could find—which happened to be Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been dancing past with Lady Peggy.

"Bai Jove! Oh, cwumbs—"

With Baggy's arms entwined around his neck, Arthur Augustus went sprawling!

"Yawwoop! Oh, Gweat Scott! Gwoooooh!"

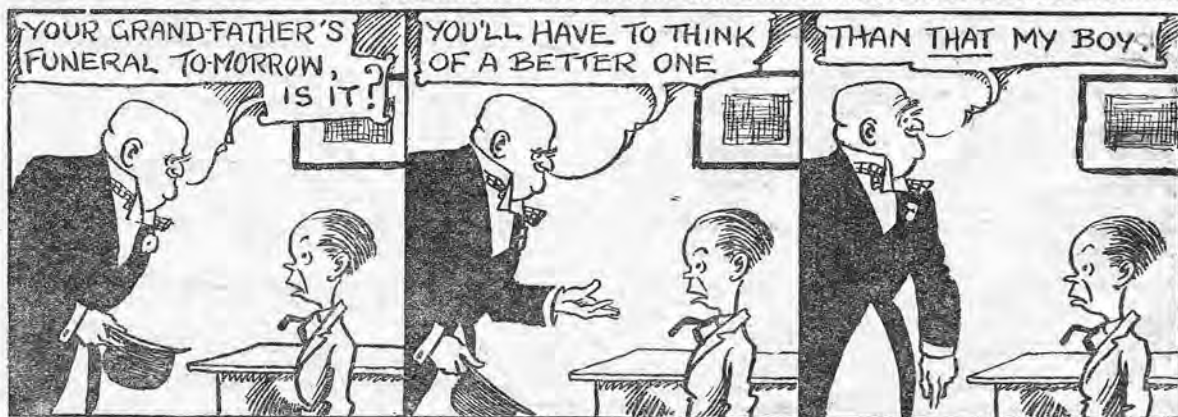
With Baggy sitting dazedly on his back, Arthur Augustus was pinned face down to the dance-floor gasping with astonishment and fury.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter from the St. Jim's juniors, in which most of the Spalding Hall girls joined merrily.

"Ow! Oh! Dwagimoff, somebody!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Gwooooooh!"

Potts, The Office Boy



Dick Lang held out a hand to Baggy, and with a pull dragged the Falstaff of the Fourth off the unhappy swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus sat up feebly. Dick, bursting with laughter, took Baggy quickly by the arm. "Come on," he breathed. "Let's get out of here!"

He had no wish to dance any more with Baggy that evening, if he could possibly avoid it! Baggy's dancing was enough, in five minutes, to last anyone for fifty years! "I—I'm awfully sorry!" panted Baggy. "Can't think how it happened—"

"I expect Gussy got in your way," said Dick, suppressing his mirth. "I think you're a ripping dancer, Trimble! But—ahem—I think I'd like a rest now! So come along."

Arthur Augustus, scrambling up, was just in time to see Baggy rolling out of the ball-room door in company with the new Spaldingite. His monocle jammed into his aristocratic eye, he watched them vanish with feelings too deep for words.

"My hat! That was jolly funny!" grinned Lady Peggy breathlessly. "Ha, ha, ha!" She gave a gurgle of laughter. "You've no idea what a scream you looked, with Baggy sitting on top of you!"

"B-bai Jove! I cannot see anythin' funnay about that, Peggay!" returned Arthur Augustus rather frigidly.

There was a look on the face of the swell of St. Jim's that boded ill for Baggy—more so than ever now, in fact—as Arthur Augustus and the tomboy of Spalding Hall resumed their waltz.

But Baggy was not worrying!

Before the eyes of nearly all the Fourth and Shell, he had taken the popular new girl to sit out! It was a proud moment for the Falstaff of the Fourth.

In a secluded corner of one of the lounges, Dick sat down on a comfortable-looking sofa, and Baggy plopped down beside him. Baggy awarded him a fatuous smile that was intended for a fascinating glance.

"Yes, I've got something for you, you know," he murmured. "What do you think of this?"

He plunged a fat hand into his pocket and produced the ruby brooch.

He failed to see the quick gleam that leapt, queerly, into his companion's face.

"It—ahem—cost a lot of money, you know," said Baggy impressively. "But I'm a generous sort of chap; always was. Big-hearted, like all the Trimble's."

Dick took the brooch from Baggy's hand with fingers that trembled slightly.

There was no doubt left in his mind now. Baggy, in some amazing way, had got possession of the black box containing the treasure! That the ruby brooch was worth some fabulous sum, he realised at once. It was certain that Baggy had never bought it.

"Do you like it?" grinned Baggy.

"It's lovely! I can't thank you enough!"

"Lemme pin it on for you!" leered Baggy.

He took the brooch, and clumsily pinned it on to his companion's frock. His leer widened. He gave a fatuous snigger, and glanced round. They were out of sight of anyone.

"Aren't you going to gimme something in exchange?"

"Great Scott!" thought Dick in dismay. "He wants me to kiss him!"

He had promised Dr. Brusiloff to find out from Baggy

where he had obtained his jewellery. But though he had suffered Baggy's clumsy embrace in the waltz, he drew the line there—even at cost of failing to get the information he wanted.

But before he could speak, Baggy Trimble leaned forward with a sentimental sigh that fairly shook the sofa, and planted two flabby lips on his cheek.

Biff!

That was more than Dick could stand! He hit out, and his open hand caught Baggy under the jaw with a blow that caused the Falstaff of the Fourth's teeth to rattle.

"Yooooooooop!" roared Baggy.

And at that moment the tall figure of Tom Merry appeared in front of them, his face pale with anger.

"You little cad!" he panted hotly.

"Ow! Whoops!"

Baggy gave another yell as Tom's steely fingers closed upon his ear, jerking him off the sofa. The captain of the Shell twisted him round, and planted his dance-shoe well and truly on the seat of Trimble's bags. Baggy shot across the deserted lounge and out by the door like a stone from a catapult.

Tom turned a flaming face to Marie Douvar.

"I'm jolly glad you socked him one," he said quietly. "But I'm ever so sorry that happened. The fat cad—"

Dick had risen to his feet. The humour of the situation—which Tom, of course, could not appreciate—made it necessary for him to stifle a laugh. He dabbed at his cheek with his handkerchief.

"Thanks, Tom," he said in as subdued a voice as he could manage.

"When I get him back to St. Jim's I'll flay him for you!"

"Don't bother!" grinned Dick.

He was thinking quickly. It was clear that this unlucky incident had "put the lid" on any hopes he had had of persuading Baggy to tell him more about the jewellery that the fat junior was producing so mysteriously from somewhere or other!

But, at any rate, he had the ruby brooch in his possession now. The sooner he took it to the Moat House for Dr. Brusiloff to see, the better.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Marie?" asked Tom, with a grim laugh.

"Yes, please! Would you fetch me my wrap from the— the ball-room?" asked Dick quickly. "It's on a chair by the band—a blue one, with white fur—"

"Rather!"

Tom strode off, to return with the wrap. Dick slipped it on, murmured his thanks, and hurried from the lounge.

"Funny!" thought Tom. "She must be going out!"

Dick made his way to the main entrance. There was no one about to see him go out, he was glad to notice. He hurried down the steps into the quad.

A group of motor-drivers were standing, smoking and chatting, in the gloom near the steps. He crossed towards them.

"Will one of you drive me somewhere?" he asked. "I'll pay, of course!"

"Well, miss, I should have to be back here to take Master Cardew and his friends back to St. Jim's afterwards," said one of the men doubtfully. "But—"

"That's all right. I don't want to go far!"

"Oh, very good, miss!"

Grand Finale!



The man turned towards one of the cars and opened the door. Dick climbed quickly in.

"Where do you wish to go, miss?"

"The Moat House!" answered Dick. "You know it, of course?"

A minute later Dick Lang was being driven rapidly along the dark country road outside the gates of Spalding Hall, on his way to the old, moated mansion on the edge of the moor!

CHAPTER 7.

The Letter I

EXCEPT for a single chink of light gleaming out between drawn curtains, the Moat House seemed to be in utter darkness, as the big, hired car drove slowly over the bridge spanning the dark waters of the moat, and drew up before the front door.

But evidently the noise of the car had been heard. Even as the driver jumped down and opened the door for Dick to step out, the big door at the top of the steps swung open, and a blaze of light streamed out. Outlined black against it was the tall figure of Dr. Brusiloff himself.

He peered out with glittering eyes. But at sight of Dick coming up the steps towards him, he gave a soft exclamation that seemed oddly like one of relief, Dick thought.

"You!" ejaculated Brusiloff.

Dick nodded, and stepped into the hall. Brusiloff closed the door.

"You have brought some news?" breathed the Russian.

"Yes."

The man drew in his breath sharply, and his eyes gleamed. He led Dick into a room opening off the hall, where the youngster found Madam Brusiloff gazing rather anxiously across to the door, it seemed, from a chair by the fire. When she saw who the visitor was, that odd look of anxiety died from her face. She laughed softly.

"Dick! So it is you!"

Brusiloff shut the door of the room, and crossed with Dick towards the fire, lighting a cigarette. His sallow face, with its neat, pointed beard, was betraying keen excitement.

"Well!" he said, in his guttural voice. "What have you discovered?"

"Not so much as I'd hoped—but something, anyway!" grinned Dick. "If you ask me, that chap Trimble, of St. Jim's, has found those jewels somehow, and has got 'em hidden somewhere. Look at this!"

He showed the ruby brooch, gleaming blood-red in the light of the fire. He unpinned it, and handed it to the Russian, who snatched it eagerly. Dick heard Brusiloff catch his breath.

"You are right!" he muttered hoarsely. "This is another from the collection I thought was hidden in Spalding Hall! This boy Trimble gave it you, you say?" Dick nodded. "Then there is no more doubt! He has the jewels!"

He glanced across at his wife. Madam Brusiloff's eyes were gleaming. The Russian turned again to Dick.

"We are getting near to the truth, my clever young friend—thanks to you!" he said, in his pleasant tones. "It is quite certain that to this boy Trimble, we must now turn our attentions!"

"Seems so to me," nodded Dick. "But I must be getting back quick, or they'll be wondering where I've gone. There's a dance on at the school, you see. I sneaked out."

"Very good, my young friend!" said Brusiloff purring. "Go back to Spalding Hall, and let no one know where you have been. I will let you know when I have made my plans if I need your help!"

Dick had slipped off the wrap he had been wearing, since the room was very warm. He picked it up, and turned towards the door, past the fire. There was a sudden startled cry from Madam Brusiloff.

A corner of the wrap had caught against the flaming coals! In a moment it was alight.

Dick dropped it with a gasp, as it roared into flame, and Brusiloff, jumping quickly forward, kicked it into the fireplace. It burnt merrily, sending a cloud of smoke up the wide chimney, filling the big grate with pungent, smouldering cloth.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Dick in dismay.

Madam Brusiloff laughed, and shrugged her shoulders.

"That is the last of that!" she said coolly. "Never mind, it cannot be helped. But you cannot go back like that!" she added, with a glance at Dick's flimsy dance frock. "You would catch your death of cold! I will lend you one of my wraps."

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She left the room, to return in a minute or so with a blue evening wrap very similar to the one which had just been destroyed.

"None of your friends at Spalding Hall will notice that it is not the same, I am sure," she said. "We do not want them to ask how it is that you suddenly have a different one!"

Dick put the wrap on, and said good-bye. Brusiloff stood watching from the top of the steps as he went down to the waiting car, jumped in, and drove away.

The Russian went back into the hall. His eyes gleamed as he gazed down gloatingly at the glimmering ruby brooch in his thin fingers.

"The boy has done well!" he muttered. "There can be no doubt that this Trimble, of St. Jim's, has happened to find the Douvar jewels, and now has them in his possession."

"What do you mean to do?" breathed Madam Brusiloff. The Russian gave a fierce laugh.

"Watch this boy Trimble—kidnap him as soon as the chance occurs—and bring him here! Once I have him here, in my power, it should be very easy to force him to speak! Believe me, the Douvar jewels are as good as in my hands at last!"

"Well, that's that!"

Dick Lang gave a mutter of satisfaction as the big car swung out of the gates of the Moat House and turned in the direction of Spalding Hall.

His task was over—for the time being, at any rate. Not until he heard from Brusiloff need he bother any further about the mysterious jewels!

It was chilly, even in the car, and he drew Madam Brusiloff's wrap more tightly round himself. In doing so, his movement caused something to drop to the floor of the car, evidently out of the small pocket on the inner side of the wrap. It was a letter.

Dick leaned down and picked it up.

It was a letter in Dr. Brusiloff's writing, which he knew by sight. The heading at the top of the notepaper was a printed one, the address being that of the Moat House, as he could not help but notice, and the date showed that the letter was one which the Russian had written to Madam Brusiloff during her stay in London with Dick, while she had been training him for his feminine role.

Dick noticed these things because he could not help doing so, and without any interest. But as he opened the wrap to put the letter back in the little pocket, his eyes fell by chance on some words that seemed to leap out to his eye in the lighted interior of the car.

He gave an astonished exclamation.

"She is growing resigned to being kept a prisoner here—"

Those were the startling words that he had inadvertently seen in this letter that Brusiloff had written from the Moat House!

"What on earth—" ejaculated Dick wonderingly.

He was so astonished that he forgot for the moment the scruples that would normally have prevented him reading someone else's letter in any circumstances—even if he had not felt justified in doing so in this case. His startled eyes took in the next sentence:

"You must not forget that young Lang believes the jewels to be my lawful property!"

He read on with amazed eyes—that he was utterly justified in doing so now there was no doubt. But the rest of the letter was simply a query as to his own progress in learning the part in which he was being trained by Madam Brusiloff. He put the letter into the pocket with quivering fingers when he had finished and sat staring dazedly at the dark hedges as they flew past.

They were nearly back at Spalding Hall now.

"She is becoming used to being kept a prisoner," he breathed wonderingly. "Who is? And his wife mustn't forget that I believe the jewels to belong to him. What the dickens can it mean?"

The car was slowing down. It turned in at the gates of Spalding Hall and drew to a standstill.

There was a peculiar look on the face of Dick Lang as he hurried indoors and turned towards the ball-room, from which he could hear the strains of the band, and the cheery talk and laughter of the St. Jim's juniors and the girls of Spalding Hall.

That he had stumbled upon an amazing discovery he realised. That it was anything but a pleasant discovery he also had every reason to believe.

A prisoner at the Moat House—and the jewels not lawfully Brusiloff's! Had he then been an innocent tool whom Dr. Brusiloff had been using for work that was shady, to say the least—possibly criminal?

It looked terribly like it.

On the other hand, there was always the chance that he had put a wrong construction upon the words.

At any rate, he felt he could not condemn Dr. Brusiloff as a scoundrel on the strength of what he had read—words that had never been intended for his eyes.

But he certainly could not let the matter rest where it was. He must find out, somehow or other, if the task in which he had been helping the occupants of the Moat House was a shady one. He must find that out at any cost!

CHAPTER 8.

In a Sinister Power.

"MARIE!"

Miss Peters, the Fifth Form mistress at Spalding Hall, spoke in decidedly acid tones.

It was Tuesday morning, and lessons were in full swing in the Fifth Form room.

"Yes, Miss Peters?" gasped Dick, as he glanced up to find that tall and rather angular lady surveying him grimly through her pince-nez.

"You were not attending to the lesson!" snapped Miss Peters. "You will kindly do me twelve sums from page forty of your arithmetic, and bring them to me this evening."

"Oh crumbs!" thought Dick. "Yes, Miss Peters," he said aloud, however, in suitably subdued tones.

"Hard luck, old thing!" murmured Lady Peggy softly from the next desk.

The lesson proceeded. There was a worried look on Dick's face—and it was not the twelve sums that worried him.

He had had no opportunity since the night of the dance of visiting the Moat House. But feeling that he could not wait to know the truth, he had written on the Sunday evening to Dr. Brusiloff enclosing the letter he had found in the wrap, and admitting that he had read it—justifiably, he considered, in the circumstances. And he had demanded an explanation of it.

The Russian's reply had reached him by the first post that morning. He had read it many times, and he had been reading it again, under his desk, when the Fifth Form mistress had "dropped on" him.

After a while, when Miss Peters was busy at the black-board, Dick slipped the letter out of his book again, and with shadowed eyes read it over once more:

"Dear Lang,—I have received your letter, and the enclosure. Since you now know so much, it is useless, of course, for me to deny that there is a good deal more in the affair of these jewels than you have been told. You ask for an explanation. I decline to give one. You ask if there is someone who is being kept prisoner at this house—I tell you to mind your own business."

"I can tell you, however, that I no longer need any assistance from you in the matter except that you are to remain at Spalding Hall as Marie Douvar until you have my permission to leave there. Not until then shall I give you the promised hundred pounds, so you will do well to do as you are told. Besides the little matter of the hundred pounds, my young friend, I regret to remind you that the police are on the look-out for a certain Dick Lang, of Abbotsford School—a thief whom the authorities will send to a reformatory if they can discover his whereabouts. I trust you understand this little hint!"

"BRUSILOFF."

The threat contained in it was only too plain. If Dick did not keep his mouth shut, and do as he was told, the Russian would betray him to the police.

It was equally clear that, as Dick had more than suspected, the whole business had been a shady one from the start. Unwittingly, he had been aiding Dr. Brusiloff in some nefarious scheme.

"I regret to remind you that the police are on the look-out for a certain Dick Lang, of Abbotsford School—"

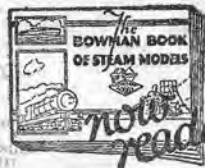
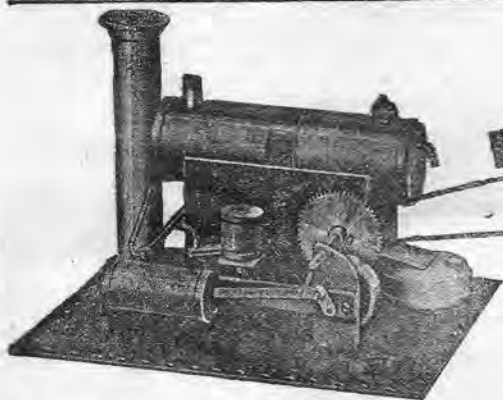
The mocking words echoed in Dick's brain. He slipped the letter away quickly as Miss Peters turned to the class again.

He was helpless—he realised that bitterly—utterly helpless, in face of that threat, to do other than knuckle under.

Whatever sinister work was afoot at the Moat House he would have to remain in ignorance of it and keep silent into the bargain. He was utterly in Brusiloff's power now that the Russian had thrown off his mask of smiling pleasantness and shown his fangs.

Why Brusiloff wanted him to stay on at Spalding Hall he could not imagine, seeing that he had apparently done his work there in tracing the missing jewels to Baggy

(Continued on next page.)



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Trimble of St. Jim's. Dick did not realise even yet that the real Marie Douvar was a prisoner in the Moat House, and that until the Russian had actually got the jewels in his possession he wanted the substitute Marie to be at Spalding Hall to prevent anyone looking for the real Marie.

The clang of the bell broke in on his thoughts. He jumped up with the others, glad to get out. As the Fifth-Formers crowded from their Form-room Ethel Cleveland touched him on the arm.

"There's nothing the matter, is there?" she whispered. Ethel had noticed Dick's worried, anxious look during the lesson.

Dick forced a laugh.

"Nothing, thanks, Ethel." It was not quite true, perhaps, but then he could not confide even in Ethel. "Only that Miss Peters dropped on me."

"We'll help you do those sums in no time, Marie," grinned Lady Peggy. "Miss Peters is short-sighted, and she'll never notice!"

"Rather!" laughed Doris. "Of course we will!"

"That's jolly nice of you!" said Dick, in a cheerful tone.

He went upstairs with his girl chums to the Fifth Form passage, parting from them at the door of Study No. 5, and went on to his own room. He locked the door, and sat down on the bed. Taking out Dr. Brusiloff's cynical letter again, he read it through, with a troubled face, then tossed it into the fire.

With a grim shrug Dick turned and unlocked the door, and left the room, to go along to Study No. 5, and downstairs with Ethel & Co. to dinner.

How long Brusiloff would want him to remain at Spalding Hall he had no idea. But that fact, at any rate, was one he did not mind. With the police wanting him, the longer he could remain in his present disguise the better.

As long as he did nothing to unearth the secrets of Dr. Brusiloff he was safe from the man, he realised. But Dick Lang knew only too well that he was utterly in the Russian's sinister power!

CHAPTER 9.

Mellish is Generous!

"MELLISH, old chap! Lend me a couple of bob!" Baggy Trimble spoke in wheedling tones.

It was early on Wednesday afternoon. Mellish, had come out of the sanatorium that morning, after his bad chill. Baggy had rolled into Study No. 2, to find his study-mate standing by the window, staring out into the quad, apparently deep in thought.

Mellish glanced round quickly. There was rather an odd look on his thin face as he surveyed Baggy Trimble.

"A couple of bob, old chap?" said Mellish, almost eagerly.

Baggy blinked. He had expected a curt refusal in his heart. Mellish's amazing cheeriness staggered him.

Baggy was not used to people answering cheerily when he asked them to lend him a couple of bob!

"Yes, old chap!" he said breathlessly.

"You want to go to the cinema this afternoon—eh?" said Mellish, who knew Baggy's habits. He still seemed to speak with an odd eagerness.

"That's it!" nodded Baggy. "Just a couple of 'ob—"

"What about making it five?" suggested Mellish, his hand going to his pocket. "You'll be able to get a nice tea in Wayland then, after the show."

Baggy jumped. He simply could not believe his ears.

"Eh?" he ejaculated, almost dazedly. "W-w-what did you say?"

"I said, what about making it five bob, old chap!" said Mellish blandly. He produced a couple of gleaming half-crowns. "Catch!"

Baggy was flabbergasted; but he was not too flabbergasted to catch the coins that Mellish tossed to him.

He had seldom been so astonished in his life before.

Not for a moment did it occur to the Falstaff of the Fourth that Mellish's astounding generosity was prompted by the fact that Percy Mellish had some particular reason for wishing to make sure that Baggy was clear of St. Jim's that afternoon!

"I—I say," gasped Baggy, "this is jolly sporting of you, old chap! I'll put the loan down on the account, and settle up as soon as my postal order arrives. I'm expecting a remittance from a titled relative—"

"All right," grinned Mellish, with a dryness that escaped Baggy's notice.

"So-long, old chap!"

"So-long!"

Baggy, still looking a trifle dazed, left the study. But

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he had overcome his astonishment, and there was a broad, satisfied grin on his face as he rolled down the steps a minute later into the quad, and turned in the direction of the gates.

Baggy had not looked so happy since his ill-timed osculation at Spalding Hall on the previous Saturday.

That smack on the jaw, delivered with a strength that had astonished Baggy, since it was, as he imagined, a girl who had delivered it, had been a bitter blow for Baggy, mentally as well as physically!

He had been getting on fine, and then that had happened. Baggy regretted his rash act heartily, when it was too late. He knew that it had "put the kybosh," as he expressed it, on his friendship with the new Spaldingite—the only pupil at Miss Finch's establishment who had ever shown the slightest interest in him.



Baggy had found, to his relief, that Tom Merry had mentioned the incident to no one, evidently for Marie Douvar's sake; But Tom himself had given Baggy a terrific hiding on his return to St. Jim's. And even that had not been worse than Baggy's own humiliation and depression.

It had, in fact, been an unlucky night for Baggy all round; for Arthur Augustus had also given him a terrific hiding over the little matter of his borrowed "clobber!"

But, with five shillings in his pocket, Baggy could forget even the fact of his unrequited admiration for Miss Marie. He had still failed to decide how he could safely turn the jewels hidden on Mayfly Island into cash, and he had been penniless for days, so far as actual coin of the realm was concerned.

It was maddening, but there it was!

He crossed the quad towards the gates, however, with a beaming countenance. Mellish's unexpected and "generous" loan had made all the difference, for that afternoon, at any rate!

At the window of Study No. 2 Percy Mellish stood watching Baggy vanish into the road, with a twisted smile on his thin features.

"Good egg!" he muttered. "With five bob to spend, the fat idiot won't get back here for hours!"

He turned and hurried from the room.

Mellish was off at last for his overdue visit to Mayfly Island!

Thud!

A spadeful of earth fell with a thud on to the grass beside Percy Mellish, as, spade in hand, he dug excitedly.

As the juniors came to a halt, a slim, girlish figure darted out of the room past the woman!



It had not taken him long to get to the island which he had seen Baggy visit so mysteriously some days before. There he had hidden his boat among the overhanging bushes at the water's edge, and begun to explore. Almost the first thing he had found was a rusty spade hidden among some bushes; the next, a spot in the centre of the little island where the earth had evidently been recently disturbed, despite evident clumsy attempts to conceal the fact.

Mellish had got to work with a will, digging out big spadefuls of the loose soil, pausing every now and then to peer into the hole he had made, with excited eyes.

At last his efforts were rewarded.

His spade struck something that was not earth. He went down on his knees, and, with feverish fingers, scraped

the soil aside, revealing the top of what was evidently a black box.

Half a minute later he had dragged it to light, dumped it on the grass—it was amazingly heavy—and was fumbling with the lid.

He raised it at last; a look of dumb wonderment came into the thin face of the sneak of the Fourth.

Glimmering and sparkling with all the colours in the world, the treasure of the Douvres met his eyes!

CHAPTER 10.

Kidnapped!

"PHEW!"

Baggy was puffed!

He had spent the afternoon at the cinema, and had stood himself a magnificent tea on the rest of Mellish's loan afterwards. He was now waddling back to St. Jim's, with a distended look about his waistcoat, over Wayland Moor.

Baggy was never much good at walking. After his huge tea he was finding it an even more difficult task than usual!

"Phew!" gasped Baggy. "Grooogh! Those doughnuts were prime! But I wonder if I ought to have had that last half-dozen, after all?"

He mopped his forehead with a large handkerchief, and rolled on.

The sound of a motor-car coming along the road behind caused him to glance round. A big closed car was coming over the moor.

To his surprise, the car that was overtaking him slowed down, and Baggy found himself staring into the rather unprepossessing face of a dark, thin man with a scarred cheek, who sat beside the driver. Both of them were of foreign appearance.

Baggy, imagining that they wanted to ask the way, halted, and turned eagerly towards the car. With luck, they would give him a lift, after he had directed them.

The man beside the driver jumped out.

Then the Falstaff of the Fourth gave an astonished, terrified squeal.

He found himself looking into the black muzzle of an automatic that was held in the hand of the man with the scar.

"Get in!" ground out the man, swinging open the rear door. "Quick!"

"Ow!" gasped Baggy. "W-w-w-what's up! W-w-why? I—I—I—"

The man with the scar was not, apparently, disposed to argue! He grasped Baggy by the scruff of the neck, and bundled him headfirst into the dark interior of the car, and jumped quickly in after him. Baggy, sitting up with a squeal of terror on the floor, found a cold rim of steel pressed into his neck. The car shot forward down the road and swung round into a side lane.

"Make a sound, and I shoot!" said his captor grimly.

Baggy did not know whether he meant it or not, but he did not intend to try the experiment of finding out. He remained dumb, a quaking heap on the floor of the car, as it sped on down the narrow moorland lane.

He was too low down to see where they were taking him. But after a while they seemed to turn in at a gate, and soon afterwards there was a change in the sound of the tyres as they crossed a short bridge. Then the car drew to a standstill.

Baggy was bundled out. He gazed round with frightened eyes, and gave a squeak of astonishment.

His captors had brought him to the Moat House! He recognised the dark, forbidding-looking pile at once, and the dark water encircling it. But he had not much time to gaze about him. He felt his arm seized, and he was hurried, trembling in every fat limb, up the steps and into the house.

"So! You have him, eh? That is good!"

A soft voice came to his ears as he was bundled across the hall and into a small room at the back of the house. It was a voice that seemed vaguely familiar. Baggy glanced up quickly, and found himself staring into the glittering black eyes of Dr. Brusiloff.

Baggy had met Dr. Brusiloff on one occasion when the fat junior had strayed into the grounds of the Moat House, not knowing that the old building had become tenanted. The Russian had told him on that occasion that the house was being used as a mental home—an explanation which had fooled Baggy into forgetting a suspicion that he had had cause to entertain, that there was queer work afoot at the Moat House!

He goggled at the sawn-faced, bearded Russian in dazed terror.

"Ow!" gasped Baggy. "I—I say, what's the idea?" Brusiloff laughed. It was not a pleasant sound. He signed to his two satellites to go, and Baggy found himself alone, in a closed room, with the sinister-looking foreigner.

"Do not be alarmed, my young friend!" purred Brusiloff. "I have one little thing to ask you—that is all! Answer my question truthfully, and you will come to no harm!" "Oh!" breathed Baggy, with a wild glance at the door. He was utterly bewildered, and certainly terribly scared. "It is this," went on Dr. Brusiloff, and his voice held, suddenly, a menacing ring: "I want to know where you have hidden those jewels that you were so fortunate to find at Spalding Hall!"

Baggy stared at him with such astonishment that for the moment he forgot even to be frightened. To Baggy Trimble, it seemed like black magic that the Russian knew his secret.

"Well?" snarled Brusiloff, suddenly grasping him by the shoulder with a vice-like grip. "I do not want to hurt you—so you had better tell me quickly!"

"The j-jewels?" stammered Baggy. "I dunno what you mean!"

"Tchah!" Brusiloff gave a guttural exclamation. "Tell me, I say! I am going to waste no time on you!"

Baggy, meeting those evil eyes, felt his heart go cold. Almost before he knew it, he was stammering out his secret.

"They're on Mayfly Island!" he almost sobbed. "I—I didn't know they belonged to you! I—I wouldn't have touched them—"

"Mayfly Island? Where is that?"

"Up the Rhy!" moaned Baggy.

"You shall take me there to-night, and show me," purred Brusiloff, his eyes alight with triumph.

"Oh, y-yes, rather!" gasped Baggy. "Ow! Yes!"

His brain was in a whirl. But one thing stood out very clearly in his mind.

All his wonderful dreams of wealth had vanished like smoke!

CHAPTER 11. Night on the River!

BOOM! Far away through the night a distant church clock in Rylcombe village was striking the hour—one o'clock.

A big closed car, driving softly along the narrow road from Rylcombe to the river, came to a standstill at a spot where the road skirted a silent backwater. Two men stepped quickly out of it and peered round.

"There is no one about," muttered the guttural voice of Dr. Brusiloff. "Bring him along."

His companion turned back to the door of the car, and the next moment Baggy Trimble, his hands bound behind him, and his fat face pasty with fear, appeared out of it. Dr. Brusiloff glanced at the man sitting at the wheel.

"Wait for us here, Pavel!"

With Baggy's arm grasped by the steely hand of Dr. Brusiloff's companion, the three set off along the foot-path by the water's edge. In fifty yards or so they came to a spot where a boat was moored to the bank—a boat which Dr. Brusiloff had arranged for earlier that night.

Baggy was forced into the boat, and his captors followed. There was a soft splash of oars in the darkness as the boat crept out from the bank and turned along the backwater to the main river.

"The second island downstream, you say?" muttered the Russian, his eyes glittering down at Baggy, who was sprawling in quaking fear in the bottom of the boat.

"Yes!" gasped Baggy.

The boat came out into the river, and slid down past the first island. Round the next bend, dim in the starlight, the black hump of Mayfly Island came into view.

It did not take long for the man at the oars to pull downstream to it, and nose the prow of the boat into the overgrown bank of the island. Brusiloff jumped out, Baggy was helped out after him, then the second man followed.

"Now—the jewels!" hissed Brusiloff.

"This way!" squeaked Baggy.

With Brusiloff's hand on his shoulder, he plunged into the bushes. But the next moment he gave a yell, and went sprawling forward. There was another yell from near his feet, and the dark figure over which Baggy had stumbled scrambled to its feet. Baggy, sitting up, found himself, to his utter amazement, gazing into the white, terror-stricken face of Percy Mellish.

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"Great pip!" ejaculated Baggy.

Mellish gazed wildly round. Already the steely fingers of Dr. Brusiloff had closed upon his shoulder.

"Who are you?" snarled the Russian.

His glittering eyes shot past Mellish to where a hole in the earth showed, with a spade and a mound of soil beside it. Brusiloff's face had gone oddly set, as a startling suspicion flashed into his mind.

"Who are you?" he snarled again. "Why are you here?"

"I—I—" panted Mellish incoherently. His eyes were on Baggy's bound wrists. "My name's Mellish!" he whimpered. "I got marooned here this afternoon! My boat upset when I jumped into it, and drifted away! I—I can't swim much. I've been here ever since! I fell asleep, and—"

"But the jewels!" rasped Brusiloff hoarsely. "Where are the jewels?" He swung round on Baggy, flinging out a pointing hand towards the hole in the earth. "Is that where you left the jewels hidden?"

"Yes!" mumbled Baggy. "He must have dug them up!"

He glared at Mellish. Though in the circumstances it scarcely mattered to Baggy, he felt oddly indignant that Percy Mellish should have come and unearthed his treasure, as he evidently had! How Mellish had learnt of its whereabouts was just as much a mystery to Baggy as how Dr. Brusiloff had learnt that same fact. But it was quite evident that Mellish had not only discovered his secret, but dug up the jewels.

"You—you skinny rotter!" gasped Baggy. "So that's why you lent me that five bob—to get rid of me this afternoon!"

"That, at any rate, was clear to Baggy now!"

Percy Mellish was paying no attention to Baggy. His eyes were fixed on those of Dr. Brusiloff, in instinctive terror.

"What have you done with the jewels?" hissed the Russian. "Tell me!"

Mellish gulped.

After his hours on the island, during which his more and more infrequent shouts for help had been heard by no one in that lonely spot, it had been the shock of his life to wake up, cold and damp, to find the island peopled with dark shadows—and then to find that one of them was Baggy Trimble, evidently a prisoner in the hands of the sinister pair accompanying him.

He was in no state to ask questions, or to fight to keep his secret to himself.

"There!" he whimpered, flinging out a dark hand at the darkly rippling waters of the river. "That's where the jewels are!"

Dr. Brusiloff gave a queer, choking cry.

"What do you mean, you fool?" He shook Mellish till his teeth chattered in his head. "You mean—they are in the river?"

"Yes!" moaned Mellish. "When I got back to the boat, it upset, as I told you. The box was in the boat, and it sank at once. That's where it is!"

Dr. Brusiloff drew a long, hissing breath between his teeth. There was no doubt that Mellish was telling the truth. The Douvar jewels, for which the Russian had been searching so long, were at the bottom of the dark waters of the River Rhy!

He swung round on his satellite.

"Tie this young fool's hands," he ordered, and the hands of the whimpering sneak of the Fourth were tied behind his back without a word of protest, or any struggle, on his part. "Now bring him along with the other one!"

"But the jewels?" breathed the man.

"They are safe!" said Brusiloff harshly. "We can come for them with drag-nets as soon as possible. But until we have them, these two boys must not escape to tell their story! I shall keep them prisoners at the Moat House—with the girl!"

"I understand," the man nodded, with a grin. "Another delay, doctor—but those jewels are as good as yours this time!"

"I think so, too!" purred Dr. Brusiloff. "Those jewels are heavy—they will lie on the mud where they sank, until I come for them to-morrow! Our long search is ended!"

Five minutes later, the boat was creeping back up the river to the backwater where the car was waiting, oars splashing softly in the darkness.

And in the bottom of the boat, beside Baggy Trimble, lay Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth, white-faced and trembling.

That night the old moated house on the edge of Wayland Moor would shelter two more prisoners within its dark walls, as well as Marie Douvar!

CHAPTER 12.

A Shock for Tom Merry!

"IT'S amazin', deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke with a deep frown upon his noble brow, as he leaned gracefully against the mantelpiece in Study No. 10 of the Shell.

It was tea-time on the following day, and the chums of Study No. 6 had been having tea with Tom Merry & Co. Throughout the meal, one topic had monopolised nearly all the conversation—a topic that was being discussed just then at St. Jim's from the Sixth Form to the fags! The school was seething with excitement. It was the disappearance of Percy Mellish and Baggy Trimble that was the cause of it.

"Utahly amazin'!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "I considah it weally most uttally amazin'—"

"Well, you've told us that about ninety-nine times," groaned Blake. "Give us a rest, Gussy! Of course it's amazing! We know that, ass! What we want to find out is, what's happened to those two? Where are they?"

"I guess that sure is a mystery, buddies," cut in Cyrus K. Handcock laconically. "It sure is! Why, I saw that fat clam coming out of the movies only at tea-time yesterday—and that's the last anybody's seen of him!"

"And Roylance says he saw Mellish crossing the quad not long after dinner—which is the last anybody's seen of him!" exclaimed Manners, with a frown. "Mellish is an outsider, and Baggy is a fat porpoise, but I must say I hope nothing awful has happened, like getting drowned in the Rhyl!"

"Well, there was that loose boat that was found in the rushes near White's Mill!" broke in Tom Merry gravely. "Of course, everybody knows that Baggy and Mellish are the last chaps in the world to go on the river, though, and it's thought that boat just broke loose from where it was hitched up at the boathouse. But you never know!"

"Neither Baggy nor Mellish would go on the river this weather," said Digby, shaking his head.

"I guess not!" agreed Handcock emphatically.

There was a sudden tap on the study door. Tom Merry shouted an invitation, and the door opened, revealing an unexpected figure in the passage.

"Marie!" ejaculated Tom, jumping quickly to his feet.

The visitor from Spalding Hall came into the study, glancing round at the crowd of juniors as if inwardly disappointed at not finding Tom Merry alone. Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and surveyed the juniors' new "girl-chum" with a beaming smile.

"Why, Mawie! Delighted to see you, deah gal!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "We have just been havin' tea, but it won't take a jiffay to boil up the kettle again—"

"I haven't come to tea, thanks," said Dick quietly. He glanced at Tom. "I came over to see you—about something very important—"

"Oh!" Tom looked astonished. Something in his visitor's face puzzled him; a troubled, anxious look. "Nothing the matter, Marie?" he asked anxiously.

"We'd better be getting along, you chaps," said Blake quickly, seeing that the Spaldingite evidently wanted to speak to Tom Merry alone. "So long, Tommy! Thanks for the tea! Hope you'll look in at Study No. 6 in the Fourth, Marie, before you go!"

Blake & Co. left the study, and Manners, Lowther, and Cyrus K. Handcock tactfully made excuses to follow them. Tom Merry closed the door behind his chums and turned.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "Won't you sit down?"

Dick seated himself on the arm of a chair, his eyes on Tom.

"I met Talbot in Wayland at dinner-time to-day," he said quietly. "He told me that Trimble has disappeared."

Tom Merry nodded, after a quick, surprised glance. "Yes. He never came back to the school last night. And Mellish, another chap from Study No. 2, has vanished!"

Dick laughed. It was a toneless, mirthless laugh.

"I believe I know what has happened to Trimble."

"What!" gasped Tom. "How can you know?" He stared at Dick in bewilderment. "Where do you think he is?"

"A prisoner at the Moat House."

Tom Merry stared at him dumbly. Again Dick laughed queerly.

"Oh, I've a good reason to think that," he said, with a shrug. "I'm not talking through my hat. There's a pretty long story behind it all, Tom. I'm going to tell it you—beginning right at the beginning."

Tom crossed to another chair and sat on the arm. That he was bewildered and surprised was obvious enough.

"You know," said Dick. "I thought you'd recognised me that time I arrived at Spalding Hall. Remember?"

"Recognised you?" echoed Tom in a puzzled way.

"Yes. You stared at me like the dickens. And you told me I was like a fellow called Dick Lang, of Abbotsford—"

"Oh! Yes, I remember," nodded Tom, with a smile.

"Well, I am Dick Lang," came the hoarse answer. "And you needn't look at me as if you think I'm off my rocker," he added. "I'm Dick Lang right enough. You see, old horse—"

Tom Merry listened almost dazedly as Dick told his whole story—from his strange bargain with Dr. Brusloff on the night that he and Tom had gone together with the Russian to the Moat House, to the ruby brooch that Baggy Trimble had given him on the night of the dance at Spalding Hall, and the threatening letter that Brusloff had sent him after his suspicions had been aroused.

"Good heavens!" breathed Tom, as Dick finished. He stared at the bogus Marie Douvar as though even yet he could not believe his eyes. "I never guessed for a moment—even though I'd thought at first you were like Dick Lang, of Abbotsford. You fooled me all right. You're the cleverest actor I've ever seen. I don't wonder you got away with it at Spalding Hall!"

His voice was breathless with amazement. It was clear that the discovery of Marie Douvar's real identity had startled Tom Merry even more than what he had learnt about Baggy and the mysterious jewels—for the moment!

"Great Scott!" he muttered, with a sudden broad grin. "I can hardly believe it yet. Even your blessed hair—"

"Yes, I had to grow it long," nodded Dick. "Makes me look an awful ass, I know," he added, colouring. "But a wig would have been spotted for a cert, sooner or later, of course."

"You make a thundering good-looking girl, anyway!" chortled Tom. "I don't wonder Baggy was bowled clean over!"

(Continued on next page.)



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"Oh, chuck it!" growled Dick. He grinned. "I won't say it wasn't the dickens of a rag, of course. But it's getting serious," he went on quickly, his lips tightening into a grim line. "It's too much of a coincidence. Baggy disappearing off the face of the earth, after Brusiloff had just turned his attention to him. I'm certain that the scoundrel's collared Baggy, to force him to tell him where the jewels are. I dunno about Mellish—perhaps he saw Baggy collared, and so got collared as well, to keep him from telling. But Baggy, at any rate, is a prisoner at the Moat House, as sure as eggs are eggs!"

He laughed mirthlessly.

"Of course, the game's up for me, if I butt in, to queer that rotter Brusiloff's pitch. I'll lose my hundred quid, and he'll give me away at once, out of revenge, and tell who I am. That'll mean the police for me, and a reformatory, I suppose." His voice was bitter. "I don't care, though. I'm hanged if I can keep quiet! As soon as I heard that Baggy had vanished, I decided to confide in you and tell you the whole yarn."

Tom Merry paced to and fro across the study, a dark, worried frown on his face. He halted at last in front of Dick.

"It looks as if you've hit the nail on the head about Baggy!" he said grimly. "But it's not certain. We needn't bring the police in yet—till we are sure. I suggest that I and some of the chaps go to the Moat House in force, right now, and find out the truth! If everything's really all right, you can stay on at Spalding Hall in disguise, safe from the police, till the search for you dies down. Then you can clear off when you like. If everything's all wrong, though, and Brusiloff gives you away for having split on him, I'll warn you in time, and you can bolt from Spalding Hall right away!"

Dick shook his head.

"That's decent of you, old chap," he said quietly. "But if you go to the Moat House I'm going with you. I feel it's up to me more than anyone to find out the truth. I should feel a cad to let you chaps run all the risk. I'll go—and if the worst comes to the worst I'll face the music afterwards!" he finished, with a grim laugh.

"But look here, you ass—"

"No good arguing! I'm going with you to the Moat House!"

"All right—if you've made up your mind." There was admiration in Tom's voice. "What about the other chaps? Shall I tell 'em who you really are?"

"May as well, I suppose," nodded Dick.

"I'll fetch 'em. Wait here."

Tom hurried from the study. In five minutes he came back, followed by Manners and Lowther and Handcock, and the four chums of Study No. 6.

The expression on their faces as they gazed at the fellow whom they had believed so long to be a schoolgirl brought a grin to Dick's face, despite the seriousness of the situation.

"Gwreat Scott, Mawie—I mean, Lang!" gasped Arthur D'Arcy faintly. "Whoevah would have thought it, deah gal—I mean, deah boy?"

But there was no time to discuss Dick's amazing masquerade just then.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry grimly.

Two minutes later the St. Jim's juniors and the "girl" whom they knew now to be the "wanted" schoolboy from Abbotsford, were hurrying out of the gates of St. Jim's on their way to the Moat House!

CHAPTER 13.

A Surprise Attack!

CLANG, clang!

Somewhere in the rambling interior of the Moat House the clang of a bell sounded faintly as Dick Lang pulled the big, old-fashioned knob, standing alone at the top of the steps.

Heavy footsteps came to his ears, crossing the hall. The door swung open, and a blaze of artificial light was flung out into the dusk. The big figure of one of Dr. Brusiloff's satellites—a man with strange yellow eyes—stared out.

At sight of Dick he gave a swift exclamation.

"What brings you here?" he snarled.

"I want to see Dr. Brusiloff!"

"He is not in!"

"Then I'll wait for him," said Dick, purposely speaking in a loud tone, and stepped quickly past the man into the lighted hall. "What time do you expect Dr. Brusiloff back?"

If Baggy was a prisoner in any of the rooms opening from the hall, Dick meant to make sure that the Falstaff

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of the Fourth heard his voice, since he would be sure to recognise it, and might be able to give some signal of his presence.

"I do not know," said the man with the yellow eyes. "But listen, Lang—"

He broke off abruptly, and a startled look leapt into his face. Dick gave a quick, excited gasp.

From somewhere along a dark passage that led off the hall he had heard a faint cry.

"Help! Rescue!"

It was the voice of Baggy Trimble, squeaky with eagerness.

Dick drew a deep breath. He had been right. There was no doubt of it now.

A strange look had come into the face of the man beside him. It was clear that he knew Dick had heard that cry. He made a quick movement as if to slam the door to prevent the youngster leaving the house. But Dick was too quick for him.

He sprang forward, and his clenched fist shot out, straight from the shoulder.

It was a blow delivered with a skill and force that would have considerably astonished Miss Finch, the little headmistress of Spalding Hall, had she been able to see her latest pupil just then! It sent the man with the yellow eyes crashing over on to his back with a choking cry.

Dick flung a swift glance over his shoulder at the open doorway, and sent a lusty yell ringing out into the dusk. Almost instantly eight figures came sprinting across the bridge over the moat, from where they had waited, hidden among the trees beyond.

Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6 came racing up the steps—just in time to see Dick, with a second stinging blow, drop the man with the yellow eyes to the floor again as he tried to scramble up. The scoundrel crumpled up and lay still, outstretched on the floor of the hall.

"I guess you've given him a dose of the by-by medicine, O.K.!" chuckled Handcock laconically.

"Truss him up before he comes round again!" exclaimed Dick, rubbing his knuckles. "My hat! That chap's got a chin like a giddy lump of rock!"

"Where's Brusiloff?" breathed Tom Merry.

"Out!" snapped Dick. "But I heard Baggy yell when he heard me—this way!"

Leaving Blake and Herries trussing up the unconscious figure of the man whom Dick had knocked out, the juniors, led by Dick and Tom Merry, raced across the hall to the passage from which the ex-Abbotsford fellow had heard Baggy's cry for help.

Again Baggy's voice, desperate with excitement after the sounds he had heard in the hall of the house, came to the ears of Dick Lang from the other side of a door half-way down the shadowy passage. The little party of rescuers came to a halt outside the door, and Monty Lowther shook the knob. But it was locked.

At the same moment there was a shout from the far end of the passage.

Two dim figures had come into sight, and were gazing at the juniors in utter astonishment. Baggy would have recognised them as the two men who had kidnapped him on Wayland Moor. As Tom Merry caught sight of them, one of the scoundrels whipped out an automatic, and the shattering report of a shot echoed in the passage.

The bullet whined through into the hall harmlessly, after missing Digby's head by a hair's-breadth, and splintered a long mirror on the wall. The man did not get a chance to fire again, however. Cyrus K. Handcock had snatched up a chair that was standing against the wall, and flung it with all his strength. It crashed into the pair of startled ruffians, sending them over on their backs, like ninepins. And before they could struggle up, dazed and breathless, the juniors were on them with a rush.

"Collah the wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"St. Jim's for ever!" panted Manners.

By now, Blake and Digby had joined the others, and eight St. Jim's juniors were more than a match for the two scoundrels. Dishevelled and dismayed, they found themselves in another minute trussed up helplessly on the floor of the passage.

"Good work!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "With luck, that's the lot!"

The juniors turned their attention again to the door, through which Baggy's breathless squeaks and the excited voice of Percy Mellish could be heard issuing.

"Smash it down!" panted Blake.

Tom Merry and Manners charged the door together. Their shoulders crashed against the panels, and it shot open as the lock broke. The juniors poured into the room.

Baggy Trimble and Percy Mellish were there right enough. They greeted their rescuers with excited faces, that were rather white, nevertheless. Tom saw that the

window was guarded by heavy steel shutters, that were fastened with a lock.

"Thank Heaven you've come!" quavered Mellish, with trembling lips. "Brusiloff brought us here—"

"What on earth did he want with you?" cried Herries.

In a few stumbling sentences Mellish explained. In his relief at being rescued he did not seem to realise that he was giving away rather a discreditable story about himself, so far as his attempt to take possession of the jewels was concerned. Neither did Baggy seek to conceal anything of his own part in the affair. The St. Jim's fellows surveyed the precious couple with queer expressions as they began to understand.

"But these jewels!" cried Arthur Augustus, in great bewilderment. "We know they are not weally Brusiloff's—but whose are they? Do eithah of you two know?"

But that was a question which neither Baggy nor Mellish could answer. Mellish, however, gripped Tom Merry's arm in sudden fresh excitement.

"There's someone else kept prisoner here!" he cried. "A girl! We saw her last night! They let her come downstairs at night, when Brusiloff's wife is at the house to guard her. I think—"

"A girl?" cut in Dick Lang swiftly. "A prisoner here?"

In a flash he had remembered what he had read in the letter that had first told him that there was nefarious work going on at the old monted mansion.

"Yes! We saw her ourselves, Miss Marie! A girl rather like you—"

"Where is she?" breathed Dick. There was no need to waste time in explaining to Mellish and Baggy that he was not really a girl, just then.

"Upstairs, I think."

"Come on!" said Dick grimly, with a swift glance at Tom Merry. "We've got to look into this quick, before Brusiloff gets back!"

That there were no other members of the gang in the house just then seemed clear as the juniors raced up the stairs in a body after Dick; Baggy and Mellish following the others, most likely because they were afraid of being left alone. Had there been other men in the Moat House at the moment they would have appeared by now to have found out what was happening, for there had been plenty of noise going on.

As they came out on the top landing a door was flung open opposite the head of the stairs. A foreign-looking woman stared out at them in dazed astonishment.

It was the woman who constituted Marie Douvar's guard. She was rather deaf, or she would have heard the noise in the hall and realised that something was wrong long before.

The juniors came to a halt at the top of the stairs. They scarcely knew how to deal with a woman. But the next moment a slim, girlish figure had darted out past her from the room behind—a fair-haired girl, with pretty brown eyes which were alight with excitement.

"Are you the girl who was being kept a prisoner here?" cried Tom Merry hoarsely.

"Yes!" She gave a little sobbing cry. "I've been here for weeks! My name is Marie Douvar—"

"What?" yelled Dick.

The real Marie Douvar and her unwitting understudy faced one another, the girl's face curious, Dick Lang's incredibly startled.

There was no doubt that they were astonishingly alike with Dick in his present disguise. The Brusiloffs had not chosen Dick for the part for nothing.

The Russian woman had remained a dumb spectator of the scene, evidently utterly at a loss to know what was happening. Tom Merry crossed towards her, and, with an exclamation, she stepped quickly back into the room. Tom could not have wished for anything better. He shut the door and turned the key in the lock.

"Sorry to lock in a lady," he told himself grimly. "But it can't be helped."

There seemed to be no doubt now that the juniors had complete possession of the house for the time being. They had carried it by storm with amazingly little difficulty, thanks to the surprise of their attack.

The real Marie Douvar was gazing round at her rescuers with a trembling smile on her pretty face.

"What does it all mean?" she breathed. "How did you come here? How did you know?"

"We'll explain afterwards," said Dick Lang quietly. "Ours is a pretty long story. What we'd like to know is, how did you come to be kept a prisoner here?"

"I was on my way to Spalding Hall School," she explained in a steady voice. "I was stopped by two men and a woman in a motor-car, and they forced me to get into the car and brought me here. There were some jewels

—a lot of jewels—that belong to my family, to me now, since I'm the last of them. My people were killed, when I was a baby, in the Russian revolution, you see. These jewels were smuggled out of Russia by a man who wanted to bring them to me. I know all this now. They thought I knew all about it, so they captured me to make me tell. I've never seen the jewels, though. But they've kept me a prisoner here ever since, while they've been trying to get hold of them, so that I couldn't tell, of course—"

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom.

He shot a quick glance at Dick Lang. Dick smiled grimly back. They understood everything now.

There was a sudden, breathless ejaculation from Cyrus K. Handcock. The American was near the landing window, and he was staring out now into the dusky garden on the other side of the moat with startled eyes.

"Gee—look!" he panted. "There's an auto coming to the house—"

Tom sprang to the window. Through the dark trees could be seen the glare of a car's approaching headlamps, making for the bridge that crossed the moat.

He drew a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed fiercely. There could be no doubt as to who was in that car.

"Brusiloff!" he breathed.

CHAPTER 14.

The End of the Trail!

DR. BRUSILOFF, a cigarette smouldering in his thin lips, stepped quickly from the car as it stopped by the steps of the entrance door. His companion, a lean, sallow Russian, who had been driving, jumped down from the driving-seat and reached into the dark interior of the car. As he turned from it he was holding in his hands a black oblong box, with a half-obliterated crest on the lid—a box that seemed still wet from an immersion in water.

The Douvar jewels, recovered from the dark waters of the Rhyl, were in the hands of Dr. Brusiloff at last!

"Give me the box!" said Brusiloff, a note of gloating triumph in his voice. He took it, and laughed softly. "It is heavy. It needs to be, my friend, with nearly one million pounds' worth of the most wonderful jewels in all Russia! At least, they will be in Russia soon!"

The man Brusiloff addressed nodded and laughed, and stepped back into the driving-seat, to take the car round to the garage at the back of the house. As the car vanished round the corner of the grim old building, Dr. Brusiloff turned, with a smile on his thin lips, and mounted the steps to the big front door.

He took a key from his pocket, inserting it in the door. He turned it, pushing the door ajar, and slipped the key back into his pocket before thrusting the door wide open with his foot.

He took half a step forward, then froze where he stood as if turned to stone.

Standing facing him in the lighted hall, only a few yards from the threshold he had been about to enter, was a motionless figure, an automatic-locked in steady fingers—an automatic that was covering Brusiloff's heart.

"Hands up. Dr. Brusiloff!" came the steely tones of Tom Merry, as he surveyed the Russian with steady eyes.

There was an incoherent cry from Dr. Brusiloff. It was followed an instant later by a heavy crash as the black box fell from his suddenly nerveless hands.

The crested lid flew open, and in the light that streamed out from the hall a glimmering cascade of flaming jewels, aglitter with a thousand points of blinding colour, was strewn over the steps.

Slowly Dr. Brusiloff raised his lean arms above his head.

His face was working strangely as he stared down at the rock-steady muzzle of the automatic that never wavered from his heart.

"Come along in!" snapped Tom. "And don't try any funny business, or this shooter might go off!"

Brusiloff, not daring to disobey, stepped across the threshold into the hall, his arms still held high. His eyes swept round, and he saw that at one side of the hall was a silent group of grim-faced schoolboys and the two Marie Douvars!

Monty Lowther crossed to the door at a word from Tom and closed it. Manners stepped up to Dr. Brusiloff and ran his hands swiftly over him, extracting, with a muttered exclamation, an ugly-looking automatic from the Russian's coat pocket.

"You can put your arms down now. Dr. Brusiloff," said

(Continued on page 27.)

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CHAPTER 1.

Dick Makes a Start!

"HAD a good day, uncle?" asked Dick Yates.

Sam Schuster, the burly, good-humoured police-sergeant, paused in his eating to grin at his British nephew.

"Oh, so and so, Dick," he replied. "Gee, but it's been hot—too hot for the Bowery toughs to start celebratin'. A gink, soaked to the eyebrows in liquor, and a guy in a Buick sedan, who reckoned he'd a right to all the road, and drove into a truck—that's all the excitement I've had today, and it was plenty! But say, Dick, you've been here a month now. Gettin' homesick, and pining f'r England?"

"No, I'm not," said Dick stoutly. "I'm anxious to get a job."

"Easy, son," said Schuster. "I don't want you to rush things. You're the sort who dashes about plumb full and chokin' with zeal and enthusiasm, and you're sure liable to be pulled up short and get y'r heart knocked out of you with disappointment. Take it steady, Dick. Jest look at me—not that I'm an oil painting! I married your dad's sister, and I ain't regretted it f'r a split second. I been a New York cop f'r a good many years, though I was born and raised in County Galway, and I'm not grouching over a thing, even if I ain't got me a fortune, and never likely to. But I'm the sort o' guy who takes life as it comes, and tries to laugh all the time, whether the breaks are lucky or not."

Dick's aunt called out shrilly from the kitchenette.

"You big stiff, Sam Schuster! Since when did a cop take to preaching? Say your piece, and get on with the grub-stake!"

"Yeah, ma, I'm coming to it," said Schuster. "But a guy did ought to keep an eye on the moralising here and there, ma. Dick, here, sure has an idea there ain't a ghostly chance f'r an ambitious young feller in Old England."

"That's right," agreed Dick. "It looks like that to me. Dad and mother died, leaving me a little money—not a

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lot—and you consented to have me here in New York. I was as keen as mustard on coming because this is a new, young country, with plenty of elbow room, and heaps of chances for anyone who's really trying to make headway."

"Waal," drawled Schuster, "it may be so, and, on the other hand, p'raps not. Guess it's one o' those things you'll have to find the right answer to for yourself. Anyways, I been talking to the captain, who's been taking a look-see down town, and mebbe, if you call on Mister van Duren, the lawyer chap, you'll grab yourself a berth close handy to Wall Street."

"When?" asked Dick eagerly.

"To-morrow morning," said Schuster. "Make it nine sharp, son. Wash behind the ears, trot out the efficiency brain, and the wise-cracks about opportunity banging on the door—and the best of luck, Dick!"

"Rather!" cried Dick. "Trust me!"

The next morning he was out of his bed early, and spent some time preparing himself for the opportunity that was being handed to him. He was keen and eager. He really did believe that there were infinitely more chances of getting on in the United States than in Great Britain. He felt sure that ere long he'd prove it beyond all dispute.

His clothes were without one speck of dust, his shoes polished, his hair neatly smoothed down, and his frank, eager face agleam and shining from the application of much soap. He left Schuster's apartments at eight to make sure of being punctual, and went to the Subway, New York's underground railway.

Dick had had plenty of experience of rush hours at the London Tube stations, but that was nothing compared with the hustling, swarming mass of frenzied humanity that poured into the subway depot, surged on to the platforms, driven, coaxed, shoved, and threatened by uniformed officials, from barrier to barrier, then into the cars, like a herd of stampeding cattle.

The din and apparent confusion were terrific. Men shouted, whistles shrilled, bells jangled, and the long line of crowded cars roared and thundered on its way. When the train came to a sudden jerky stop at his destination, Dick had to fight his way out of the car; but once on

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the platform the great tide of people swept him away and up to the busy street, with the sky-scrapers towering all round him, the blue sky showing overhead, a mere strip between the lofty buildings.

Cars, trucks, motor vehicles of every description roared and raced along the glistening road. On the crowded sidewalks stern-faced men and women sped by, intent only on earning their daily bread. Everything and everybody was, or appeared to be, in a violent hurry.

"This is the place!" Dick muttered to himself. "The land of chances!"

He was thrilled by it all, but when he stared at the great doors of a vast suite of offices he was rather more awed than thrilled. Only for a second did he hesitate, however; then, realising that a faint heart would not, could not, carry him far on the high road to fortune, he entered boldly and discovered that the offices of Mr. van Duren, the solicitor, were on the sixteenth floor!

Dick went up in the elevator, then walked along a corridor, round corners, examining every door, until a brass plate told him that he had arrived. Politely tapping on the panels, he entered, and found himself before a small counter. On the far side of the outer office sat a stenographer, or typist, but she did not appear to be very busy. She tilted her chair back, and gazed at Dick over her shoulder.

"Hallo!" she said carelessly. "Are you wanting anything, or have you made a mistake?"

"This is Mr. van Duren's office?" inquired Dick.

"There's a plate outside," said the girl. "Can't you read?"

"Is Mr. van Duren in?"

The girl let her chair come to rest on all four legs with a bang, rose to her feet, swaggered across to the counter, and studied Dick with languid interest.

"Say, dumb-bell," she exclaimed, "are you after the office-boy's berth?"

"Why—yes," stammered Dick. "If I can please Mr. van Duren—"

"Snap out of that!" retorted the girl. "I'm the person you've gotta please. You'll be working out here with me, therefore, you big boob—"

"I want a word with Mr. van Duren, please," said Dick, a trifle tartly, rather resenting the girl's arrogance. "If he is in—"

"Hold on a bit, sonny, and bottle the haughtiness. It cuts no ice with me! Where d'you come from?"

"London," said Dick.

"London? Where's that?"

"England."

"Hot diggity!" exclaimed the stenographer. "Here's a wow! A live Britisher to work beside Maisie Lawton! Say, that's fierce, ain't it? I've got no complaints about li'l England, but—a foreigner—in here—"

Then the door of the inner office opened, and a big, corpulent, clean-shaven, red-faced man stood framed in the doorway, a cigar protruding from his lips, his beady eyes glittering.

"Now, what?" he rasped. "Got those schedules done, Miss Lawton?"

"Aw, have a heart, Mr. van Duren," said the girl. "I worked like a nigger and two horses yesterday, and now—"

"Cut out the phoney excuses!" snapped Van Duren. "If you worked your type machine like you work your tongue, you'd be worth a pile o' dollars! Who's the little stranger?"

"Pesky Britisher wants a grub-stake," explained Miss Lawton sullenly.

"Oh, yeah, I remember. And you, Miss Lawton—guess you were pumping him for his pedigree back to Julius Caesar before he's hired. Gee, if I really craved for a vain peacock, a cackling parrot, and an inquisitive monkey, sure, I'd phone the Bronx Zoo, pay cash down, and save dollars on which I pay you per week! Get them schedules done, and make it snappy. And you—he glared at Dick, and jerked his close-cropped head

towards the private office—"come right in, and I'll give you the once-over!"

Dick murmured a "Thank you," lifted the counter-flap, opened the low door, and passed into the outer office. The girl stepped up to Mr. van Duren, hands to hips, eyes blazing defiance.

"See here, Mr. van Duren!" she cried nasally. "If you think I come here for next to nothing per week to be wise-cracked by you—"

"Snap out o' that!" growled Van Duren. "Put it in cold storage! I want those schedules by ten prompt! Another word from you, and you're fired!"

He spun round on his heel, and stalked back into his room, jerking his head for Dick to follow him, which he did, closing the door after him, while the stenographer twisted her face into a scowl, and sat down again to her work.

Right from the first, Dick received a jolt to his notions of American downness and efficiency. He had an idea that in New York everything would be sacrificed to utility and progress, but the office of Mr. van Duren was extremely comfortable and elaborate. There was a heavy pile carpet on the floor. In the centre was an expensive and massive glass-topped desk. The chairs were enormous and luxurious armchairs, while over all hung the languorous aroma of costly cigars.

"British, huh?" said Mr. van Duren. "Waal, I don't mind giving you a try-out. Heard about you in a roundabout sort of way, and passed the word back you could toddle round. You've gotta notion there's more chance here than back in England, huh?"

"I'm sure of it, sir," said Dick.

"Waal," drawled Van Duren, "maybe you're right. But speaking from experience, son. I guess it ain't a whole heap of use waitin' f'r opportunity to come knocking at your door. No, sir! And you've got to be hard! Sentiment's no use in business. We're all dollar-hunters here, bo, and the best man takes the pot! Ef you work for me, you've got to be fly and jump to orders. I never did have time for folk who argue first and obey afterwards. You get me?"

"Give me a trial," urged Dick.

"Sure, I will," replied Van Duren. "Jest do as you're told, without question or sentiment, and you'n me'll get along famously. Yeah!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Hold-Up!

DICK sat in the outer office of Van Duren, the solicitor, busily indexing the letter files. He was in a queer state of mind. He made it a



A wad of well-inked blotting-paper sailed swiftly through the air and struck Dick's cheek with a plop!

habit to work hard and earn his money, but he had not been lucky enough to get so much as a glimpse of any of the amazing opportunities that are supposed to abound in New York.

Vaguely, he felt disappointed. The money and accounts were worked out in dollars and cents instead of pounds, shillings and pence. The language used was American, the office was in a sky-scraper. But, for the rest, it was just office life, and very similar to office life in London. Mr. van Duren had his clients, and worked hand in glove with Mr. Alston, the stockbroker in the next suite of offices; but no golden opportunities came Dick's way, although he kept his eyes and ears open all the time.

Van Duren made no secret of the fact that Dick gave every satisfaction, but he never tired of dinning into Dick's ears the fact that one had to be hard in business, and have nothing whatever to do with sentiment. It worried Dick at times.

But as he sat at his table, working steadily and thinking things over, the office-door opened so quietly and slowly that neither Dick nor Maisie Lawton, the stenographer, realised what was happening. Inch by inch the door opened, wider and wider, until the aperture was wide enough to admit a head, the face covered with freckles, the fair hair plastered down with the generous aid of much grease.

The owner of the face wriggled one arm and a shoulder into the room, the hand came up sharply, the fingers flipped, and a wad of well-inked blotting-paper sailed swiftly through the air and struck Dick's cheek with a plop!

"Ow!" cried Dick. "You—"

"Pesky Britisher!" taunted the uninvited visitor. Dick sprang to his feet, flushed with rage, and Miss Lawton gave vent to a faint exclamation of surprise. Then the freckled face disappeared as if by magic, and the door banged.

"Gosh!" cried Dick. "It's time I taught that chap a thing or two!"

He knew it was Danny Malone, office-boy to Alston, the stockbroker, who never tired of japing his British neighbour. At times, Danny did get a bit too saucy, and Dick meant to make his presence felt.

He left his chair with a bound, vaulted the counter, wrenched open the office-door, and rushed out into the corridor. Danny Malone was just speeding round the far corner, evidently out on some business errand, for he gripped a brief-bag in one hand.

Dick raced after him, heedless of the inky splotch on his cheek, intent only on revenge, knowing that unless he made Danny respect his fists his life would be intolerable. But he was a trifle too late. He reached the stairs in time to hear the elevator gates clang, and saw the cage dropping down. He had a brief glimpse of Danny's freckled face grinning up at him, then his tormentor vanished from his sight.

But there were two elevators, and the second cage rose and stopped at that floor. A frail, white-haired old gentleman stepped out, and Dick stepped in.

"Ground floor!" he said to the negro elevator attendant. "And break all records. Sambo! I want to catch Danny Malone and punch his fat head!"

"Yah, golly!" grinned Sambo. "Yo' watch dis chile drop like a stone wid a ton weight on him!"

Clang went the gates, and the elevator shot down so suddenly that Dick gasped and clung to the upholstered seat. Then, at the ground floor, it came to such a sudden stop that Dick felt as if his spine had been jerked up into his head.

"Golly!" guffawed Sambo. "Dat some drop!"

Dick didn't stop to argue about it. The gates were open, and he rushed out and along the corridor. He crossed the vestibule, dived through the swing-doors, and down the wide steps to the street. Danny was barely twenty yards away, strolling along leisurely, ignorant of the fact that Dick was so close on his trail.

But before Dick could reach him, a saloon car came speeding along, and grated to a standstill, a yard ahead of Danny Malone. The door swung open, and a burly man sprang out. Knocking several passers-by aside, he leapt at Danny, felled him with one blow of his fist, and snatched the bag from his nerveless hand!

Aghast, barely conscious of what he was doing, Dick rushed madly to the spot. The robber, as nimble as a cat, turned to get back to the car; but if he was quick in his movements, Dick was a shade quicker. He hurled himself fiercely at the hold-up man, flinging himself forward and downward, arms outstretched. It was as fine a flying tackle as ever was seen in a Rugby match. He grasped the bandit round the knees, and brought him down with a crash on the sidewalk!

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Men shouted hoarsely, feet thudded on the hot paving-stones. Another bandit darted from the car, but Dick hung on to his man like grim death. Dimly, he heard the shrill voice of Danny Malone screaming at him:

"Attaboy! Sock him one f'r me!"

It was all confusion and a medley of arms and legs. Dick was flung bodily across the sidewalk to the gutter, his hold on the robber's legs broken. A scowling man rushed at him. He ducked as the tough's hand came up, gripped something that flashed menacingly in the rays of the sun; and a bullet zipped harmlessly over his head.

Dick dashed forward desperately and brought his clenched fist crashing against the man's jaw. Then something hit his head violently, and he went down heavily, a myriad lights flashing before his eyes. He rolled, squirmed, and lashed out savagely with arms and legs, dimly aware that the saloon car had been driven away. Then, out of the confusion, a gruff voice sounded in his ears.

"Brake down, buddy! You've done a-plenty, and she's all over!"

Strong hands helped him to his feet, and he found himself staring at the grinning face of Sam Schuster, his uncle, looking terribly stalwart in his uniform. There were half a dozen cops present, and they held two tattered men in custody, while Danny Malone, battered but cheerful, stood by, clutching the brief bag.

"Hot diggity!" he exclaimed. "But you're some scrapper, buddy!"

Dick grinned and stepped forward.

"Glad you realise it," he said. "But you'll learn some more after I've pased you for welting me with that inky pad, you—"

"Aw, gee, forget it!" said Danny. "I sure had a notion you Britishers were soft. And you come out and tackle a bunch o' crooks wid bare hands! Guess I owe you something, and after I've finished totting these bonds to the bank you can soak me with ink jest to square things!"

CHAPTER 3.

Fired!

VAN DUREN looked stern as he shot his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other.

"See here!" he snapped. "I'm not saying a word against your grit and sand, and all that, but let me tell you, right now, that you won't get any reward, except a dose of lead in your vest, if you butt into other folks' affairs. If Alston is dumb-bell enough to send valuable securities to the bank by young Danny Malone, he deserves to lose 'em. There was no call for you to butt in a-tall. Don't we pay the cops to corral the crooks? Why should you risk your life to do their work?"

"There wasn't a p'liceman handy," said Dick. "And somebody had to lend Danny a hand."

"Yeah! Waal, I guess you've got to learn, that's all," drawled Van Duren. "Anyway, Alston wants you to go to see him so's he can say he's grateful. Better buzz right now."

"Very good, sir."

Dick went to Alston's office. Danny Malone welcomed him with a grin. Since the adventure with the crooks the two had chummed up and had become bosom pals.

"You're to go right in, buddy," said Danny. "The boss wants to say 'Thank you,' though his temper isn't any easier even if his securities are safe."

"Perhaps he's worried," suggested Dick.

"Maybe, yes," replied Danny, his freckled face clouding. "And maybe, no. Anyway, step inside and don't expect too much. Joe Alston sure is too mean to give himself a shock, so you won't get a fortune."

Dick tapped politely on the panels of the door. Mr. Alston was a spare, lean man, with a cadaverous face. He scowled at Dick, then slowly the scowl became a queer, sneering sort of grin.

"So you're the guy who wiped the sidewalk with that bunch o' toughs and saved my securities, huh? What's the reward to be?" he asked.

"I'm not asking for any reward, sir," replied Dick. "I'm glad I was there to lend Danny a hand."

For a moment the smile on Alston's face twisted into a scowl. Then he was smiling again.

"Oh, yeah!" he said. "You were there all okay, and I'm not likely to forget it in a hurry! But about the reward you're expecting—"

"I don't expect a reward!" retorted Dick, resenting the man's attitude.

"No?" queried Alston. "Guess you Britishers are a funny crowd. But don't tell me you don't hanker after

dollars! Here we are, in the shadow of Wall Street, and we're dollar hunters, every one of us!"

"That's true," said Dick. "I'm as keen as anybody after making money—if it can be done honestly."

"Sure you are," agreed Alston. "Then, listen! Here's an earful that's worth a heap of jack! But what's the use? You're not likely to have any capital to invest."

"I have a little money my mother left me," said Dick.

"How much?"

"Round about two hundred and fifty pounds—say, getting on for a thousand dollars."

"Good!" Alston wetted his lips and rubbed his thin hands together vigorously. "That'll do for a start! Listen! I can let you in on a good thing—the last slice of real estate in Florida—at Plenty Bay, next door to Miami. All you've got to do is to deposit the dollars, and the land is yours, dirt cheap. You hang on for a week or two, a millionaire comes along, fair itching to buy a site for his

notes. I'll make it okay with Van Duren. Better hustle, or you lose out!"

"I'll go now," said Dick.

He fairly ran from Alston's office. An opportunity had come his way at last—a golden opportunity. Some of the largest fortunes in the States, as he knew, had been made out of real estate, and land had jumped in value on the Florida seaboard to higher figures than anywhere else. It was the chance he had been longing for, hoping for.

Danny Malone glanced up sharply as he came out of Mr. Alston's room.

"How much?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Dick. "Never wanted anything. But he's letting me in on a good thing."

"You be careful, buddy," warned Danny. "Listen to a guy who's got the low-down on things in here, and—"

"Can't stop talking to you," retorted Dick. "Banks close early."



Van Duren hurled the paperweight with all his might. Dick ducked and the missile flew harmlessly over his head!

winter palace. You name your own price, and before you can wake up your thousand dollars has become five thousand. Say, can you beat that for a humdinger?"

"Sounds all right!" said Dick, his eyes gleaming.

"It is all right!" blustered Alston. "A solid, gold-plated, genuine opportunity, and you'd be a nit-wit to let it slip through your mitts. Joe Alston always pays for services rendered, and I let you in on this because of what you've done for me. A week ago I wouldn't have wasted my time on such a small deal as a thousand dollars. Those sites were fetching, as virgin land, well timbered and watered, and with frontages to the finest bathing beach in the States—they were selling at five hundred dollars a foot. But this is the last strip—fifty feet frontage—and I make you a present of it for a thousand cash down. It's the chance of a lifetime, and you get it because you've done Joe Alston a good turn. But mind this—you'll have to get the dollars here, in notes, in half an hour, or that land is liable to double in price."

"Won't a cheque do?" asked Dick.

"A cheque isn't money till it's honoured at the bank," said Alston glibly. "Bring notes and clinch the deal."

"But I must get permission from Mr. van Duren to go to my bank."

"Nix on that, son," said Alston. "You buzz after those

He rushed out. Danny was yelling at him.

"Come back! You big boob! Here, buddy—"

But Dick didn't mean to let a good offer slip through his fingers for the sake of a few minutes. He headed for the elevator shaft, travelling fast. Danny started to his feet to pursue him when Alston came from his room.

"Hey, you!" he snapped. "Letters!"

Consequently Dick was able to go on his way to the bank without interference from Danny Malone. But he didn't get far. On the street corner stood Sam Schuster, twirling his baton, his keen eyes missing nothing. He saw Dick and barred the way so unexpectedly that Dick crashed into him.

"Say, why the speed, son?" asked Sam. "You're sure hitting her up something considerable!"

"The banks shut early!" panted Dick. "I've got to draw my thousand dollars, in notes—"

"What for?" asked Schuster, his grip on Dick's arm tightening.

"Mr. Alston—letting me in on the ground floor of a money-making proposition in real estate."

"Why?"

"You're wasting my time!" cried Dick. "I don't want to miss this."

"Is that Alston guy rewarding your downing those toughs?"

"Yes," said Dick. "And I'm nuts on speculating in real estate."

"Speculate nothing!" snapped Schuster. "You're under arrest!"

"What are you getting at?"

"Nix on the back-chat," said Schuster, smiling grimly. "The depot is over the way. March!"

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"You've no right to—"

"No right? Gee, in two minutes you're going to thank me, buddy! Now, come with y'r uncle and believe it's for the best!"

Dick was dumbfounded. It dawned upon him that his uncle knew more than he was prepared to admit out in the street, and had good reasons for acting as he was. In addition, Schuster had a grip on his arm it was impossible to break.

Together they marched into police headquarters, and up to the captain's desk.

"Say, cap," said Schuster, "this is my nephew—the Britisher who corralled the crooks, you'll remember. And Joe Alston is so all-fired anxious to reward him he's going to sell him some real estate!"

"Don't tell me it's Plenty Bay," said the captain.

"What d'you know about Plenty Bay?" asked Dick.

The captain reached for a photograph and handed it to him.

"That's Plenty Bay," he said. "And it's fifty miles from Miami, not next door as Alston says in the prospectus."

Dick saw a picture of utter desolation—nothing but miles and miles of arid sandhills, with not a tree in sight. All his bright hopes were shattered at a blow. His lips were suddenly parched and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. The captain was talking.

"Sam Schuster's one of the best, and I'm sure glad he yanked you in here. Gee, but it's been a near thing for you. Alston would have sold you a sandhill for a thousand dollars, and you'd have seen him no more. We're watching Joe Alston. He's getting ready to do a fade-out. That crook stuff was a frame-up. The securities never belonged to Alston, but to one of his trusting clients. He hired the toughs to hand Danny Malone a crack on the dome and get away with the paper. You get the idea? Alston would have the bonds without being suspected. He'd alter the numbers and sell out."

"One of the arrested men squealed. Alston is scared, and is planning to make himself scarce; but he won't get far. We've checked up on all his business connections, and I fancy we can send him up the river for a stretch. He

was wild with you, I guess, for butting in and spoiling things for him, and he'd have robbed you of your money just to even things up a bit. Aw, get back, son, and the next time a broker won't take a cheque, give him the air."

Dick murmured his thanks, and, sick at heart and miserable, left the headquarters. Sam Schuster was too wise to say anything at that juncture, or to stop his nephew. Dick went back to Van Duren's office, slowly, heavy-hearted. He could see now how nearly he had been hoodwinked. He hadn't the heart to go to see Alston; he wanted to think.

But as he entered the office Van Duren's bell was jangling violently. The stenographer jerked her head at the door of the inner office.

"Gotta guy in there," she said. "Wants you bad! Been ringing for three or four minutes. Better hustle."

Dick went into the solicitor's office. Van Duren was husky with rage. A frail, white-haired old gentleman was carefully penning a cheque.

"Been ringing for hours for you!" raved Van Duren. "Look at the time! Want you to race over to the bank before they shut the doors."

"How much?" asked the old gentleman.

"Ten thousand dollars," said Van Duren. "And I'll fix it with Joe Alston so's you'll be owner of the finest site in Plenty Bay, and you'll be sitting pretty, sir, and liable to clean up to the tune of forty grand any minute. The biggest bonanza, sir, as ever you'll hit up against from one end of Wall Street to the other. Hi, boy, jest dash this cheque to the bank and bring back the notes—"

His voice trailed away into silence. Dick stood there calmly tearing the cheque to fragments. He tossed the pieces into the air, and they dropped on Van Duren's head like confetti.

"Plenty Bay is a desert, fifty miles from Miami!" snapped Dick. "Alston nearly played me for a sucker over that deal, but with luck I wriggled out clear with my dollars intact. But if you think I'll stand by and see daylight robbery going on—"

"Meddler!" roared Van Duren. He snatched up a heavy paperweight and hurled it with all his might. Dick ducked, and the missile sailed over his head, to crash against a picture on the wall.

Then the door was flung open brusquely, and a burly man stood on the threshold, displaying the gleaming star of the law on the lapel of his jacket. Behind him was Schuster, in uniform. Van Duren slumped back in his chair, his face ghastly, the cigar dropping from his lips.

"We've just arrested Joe Alston," said the detective, "for conspiracy to defraud. Know anything about Joe?"

"N-no," stammered Van Duren. "I—I—I only acted as Joe's agent in s-some things."

"Yeah!" agreed the detective. "We've got nothing on you, Van Duren. But I'm warning you. Watch your step—that's all!"

He nodded, winked at Dick, and went out, slamming the door after him. The old gentleman reached for his hat and headed for the door.

"Seems to me I've had a lucky escape, thanks to you, young feller, and the best thing I can do is to leave this den of thieves and go back where I came from."

He went, with his nose in the air. Van Duren glared at Dick.

"I've got it!" he snarled. "You're Schuster's nephew—you're a dirty p'lice spy—"

"I'm not a spy!" cried Dick. "If Alston hadn't tried that phoney hold-up—"

"Anyway, you're fired!" howled Van Duren.

"Thanks for nothing!" retorted Dick. "I wouldn't stay on here for a hundred per week. I'm keen on hunting dollars, but I'll do it honestly."

He went out, closing the door with vigour. On the stairs by the elevator shaft sat Danny Malone looking fed-up with himself.

"Here's a mess," he said. "Alston's gone to Sing Sing, and I'm out of a job. Are you fired?"

"Yes," said Dick. "Looks as though we stirred up things when we fooled those toughs."

"You've hit it, bo!" said Danny. "But, see here, what about hunting dollars together?"

"I'm game!" said Dick. "We'll start right now."

"But it'll be tough," warned Danny. "Van Duren's got influence on Wall Street, and he won't love us after this."

"Scared?" asked Dick.

"Gee, no!" retorted Danny. "Let's go!"

And they headed for the elevator, arm-in-arm.

(Boys, if you follow the daring adventures of Dan and Dick you'll be thrilled no end. Get ready to join up with 'em next week!)

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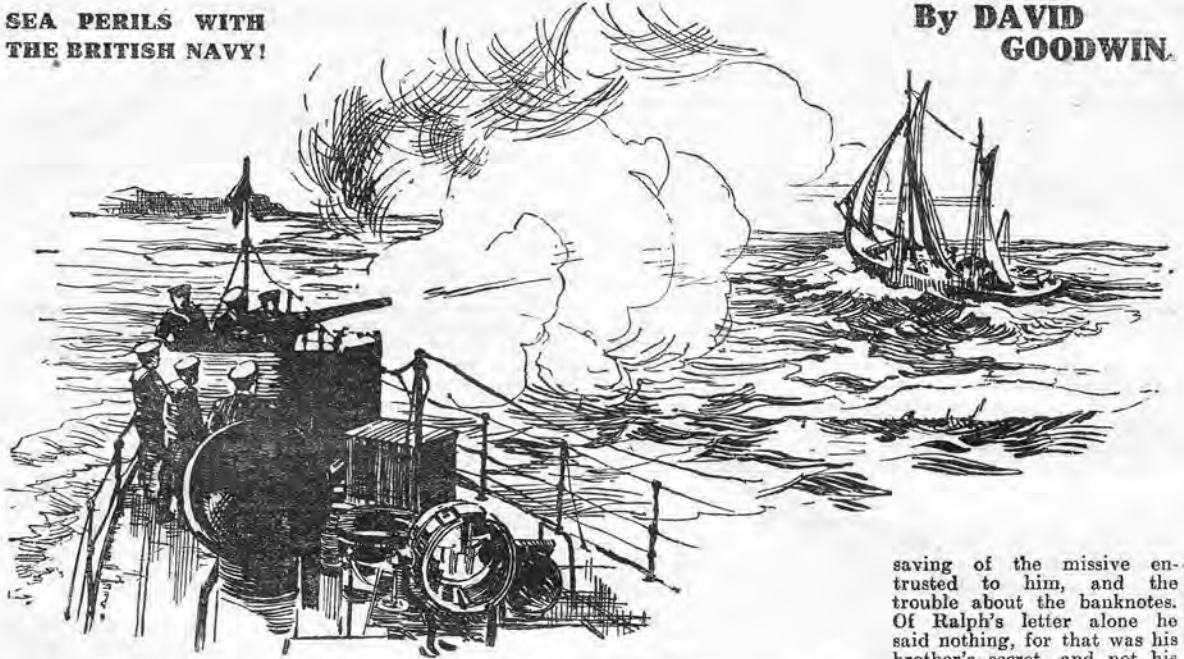
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WHEN the meal was over and the midshipmen, according to custom, fled for their lives when Grimshaw gave the signal, there were some japes of sorts in the school-room, and afterwards Jinks and Ned, finding the night hot and the room stuffy, went on deck.

"Balmy peace isn't a bad thing after such a day as I've had," said Ned, as they leaned on the rail and looked out over the Solent, which was calm as a mirror and powdered with the reflection of a million stars. "I shall be precious glad to be in my humble hammock to-night, instead of the giddy eminence of a berth in that guard-room, even though there's nobody to cut you down there."

"Rather," said Jinks. "I say, who's the fellow who's there now—in the after guard-room, I mean? They say it's Beckett, one of the Marines."

"Quite right!"

"Well, what's he in for? He's taken your place, hasn't he?"

Ned hesitated.

"You can tell me, old chap, can't you?" said Jinks, rather injured. "We're chums, and you know I can keep things to myself. What's all this queer caper you're mixed up in? You might tell a fellow, and perhaps I can give you a leg-up. There can't be any secret about it, if they've got the man."

Ned was willing enough to confide in Jinks, in whose staunchness he thoroughly believed. He reflected that Mr. Elking had said he need not make a mystery of the affair, and Jinks and he saw a lot of each other, and would probably be spending most of their time together.

"All right," said Ned. "I can't tell you much about Beckett, old chap, because he's going to stand his trial, and one oughtn't to say anything against him till it comes on, especially as I shall probably have to be a witness. But I'll tell you my own side of it, as far as the thing's happened to myself."

And as they leaned on the rail, with the tide hissing softly past the battleship's sides, Ned related his adventures since leaving home. He told of the affray in the train, the

THE FIGHTING MIDDY!

(Introductory Chapters on page 26.)

"I shouldn't wonder if I have a pretty hot time before it's over. These spy johnnies have got a down on me, and on my brother Ralph, too."

"What! Those sneaking swabs dare to buck against the British Navy?"

"I'm not the British Navy. I'm a junior snottie, whose brother's got into trouble through no fault of his own."

"What can they do?"

"They've got money and influence, and most of Russia behind 'em, by what I can make out of it," said Ned.

"And it's pretty plain they don't stick at much in the way of stirring up trouble for Britain and her Navy. Those sort of people get fat on other folk's troubles."

"There'll be ructions!" said Jinks gleefully, rubbing his hands. "Now, ructions, Hardy, old chap, are simply the salt of life to me! I thrive on 'em! You and I

are pals, and if they tackle one they'll have to tackle both—eh? I'd like to give you a hand."

"You can bet I'll be glad of your help."

"Shake on that," said Jinks, holding out his hard palm, and they shook. "We'll curl the hair of any spy who has the nerve to tackle a midddy from the Victorious! Hallo, there goes the picket-boat!"

They saw the small steam-launch brought to the gangway quietly, and heard an order given by the Marine captain, and another by the boatswain.

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saving of the missive entrusted to him, and the trouble about the banknotes. Of Ralph's letter alone he said nothing, for that was his brother's secret, and not his own.

Jinks listened intently, without saying a word, and when the yarn was ended he gave a long whistle.

"My suffering Aunt Susan!" he said. "You're a bit of a wonder, Hardy. I've been two years in the Service and seen some rum starts, but this beats my time. Fancy dropping in for a topping jape like that on your first day! And you've actually spotted that beast of a spy?"

"I reckon so. But that wasn't all my doing. I had some help."

"Do you think there'll be any more of it?" said Jinks eagerly.

"They've got the prisoner there? They're taking him ashore!" murmured Ned, watching eagerly.

The thing was done very quietly and without fuss. The midshipmen, looking on from above, saw the ex-private, Beckett—alias Dimitri—put aboard the picket-boat with an armed guard of Marines in charge of him. The Marine captain followed, the vessel left the gangway and steamed swiftly away into the night, heading for Portsmouth. Ned watched her until she disappeared under the loom of the land.

"There, but for the grace of Providence, goes Edwin Travers Hardy," murmured Ned to himself; and in deep gratitude he went down to the gun-room.

On his way he encountered Keppel coming up.

"Hallo, young 'un!" said the senior midshipman. "Got your leave yet? How much have they given you?"

"What leave?" returned Ned, staring.

"The kid is as innocent as a blessed lamb!" said Keppel. "D'you mean to say you haven't asked for leave? After such a giddy dusting as you've had—an' been put under arrest and all—they'll give you what you ask for. I should stick 'em for three weeks at least!"

Ned did not need telling twice. Before he was an hour older he had bearded the commander in his den, and was graciously awarded a fortnight's leave at once. He made up his mind to start for Briars Hall in the morning.

In Full Chase!

NED'S one sorrow was that Jinks could not get leave as well and go home with him. But Jinks had had a full share of leave already in the past four months, and it could not be managed. Accordingly, Ned went home.

For a week he had an excellent time of it, and enjoyed himself thoroughly with trout-rod, ponies, and all the other joys of Briars Hall. His father thought nothing good enough for Ned; yet the grim old salt still refused to hear Ralph's name mentioned, and would listen to neither facts nor theories about the supposed ships, or the cause of his elder son's disgrace. He disbelieved in them all flatly.

That was the fly in Ned's ointment; besides which his father was shut up in his study most of the time, and Ned missed Jinks' society very keenly. At the end of the first week he was longing for the excitement, and even the routine of the Fleet again. To his great joy, his cousin, Harry Rourke, a full lieutenant, who commanded the old fishery protection gunboat *Speedwell*, came down to stay at the Hall for three days.

Rourke was very fond of Ned, and it was like a whiff of the sea to the middy once more to talk with him. Ned poured all his mishaps and adventures into Rourke's ear, and his cousin roared with laughter over them.

"You'll be the death of me, Ned!" he said, wiping his eyes. "You're a chip of the old block, and no mistake!" He spun Ned a round dozen of yarns in return, about the voyages of the *Speedwell*. "I join her to-morrow, at Harwich," he concluded. "I've to go North on rather a queer job—catching fish poachers."

"By gum, I wish I could go, sir!" groaned Ned. "They never send us middies on gunboats. We're always on the big craft, and we miss a lot of the fun you fellows get. You'll have no end of sport. I'd give my head to get to sea again!"

"Well, then, come with me!" cried Rourke. "I'll be glad to have you, young 'un. You can't join my ship as an officer, of course; but I can take you as my guest, and I'll give you a good time. I'll land you up North when your leave's up, and you can go back by train."

Ned jumped at the chance. His father made no objection, and next day the lieutenant and the middy were in the Eastern express for Harwich.

They went on board the *Speedwell*, which, though she was rather an ancient craft, and not much to look at, caught Ned's fancy immensely. There was a grim bulldog look about the short, grey gunboat that appealed to him, and Rourke's crew were a tough-looking company. His second in command was a warrant officer, by name Mr. Pyke. There was a cosy cabin in the stern, and here

Rourke made Ned at home. No sooner were they there than another guest arrived. Lieutenant Stanley Farrell came aboard, greeted Rourke, and Ned was introduced to him.

Farrell commanded the gunboat *Bustard*, and had just come down from North, after having been on the same errand that Rourke was about to enter upon—in fact, the *Speedwell* was to relieve the *Bustard* as fishery protection vessel. Ned saw that the two commanders wanted to have a talk together, so he went on deck.

Lieutenant Farrell, who was looking decidedly worn and worried, dropped into a chair and took a cigarette with fingers that shook visibly.

"That kid going with you?" he said.

"Yes. My cousin. I'm taking him as guest."

"Well, I don't envy either of you," muttered Farrell. "Wish you well out of it."

"Why, Farrell, what's up?" said Rourke, in surprise.

"Oh, nothing! Never mind!"

"Look here!" urged Rourke. "I wish you'd say right out what you're driving at, old chap! You're not sick because I'm taking your place, are you?"

"I was never so glad to be shifted in my life!"

"Well, speak out, then! We're old friends."

Lieutenant Farrell was silent a few moments.

"I had a bit of a shock up North," he said, "and I haven't quite got over it yet."

Rourke waited, hoping to hear more. But Farrell would not open out.

"All I can tell you," he said, "is to look out for those Scandinavian fishermen. Specially the Danes and Swedes!"

"Well, I'm going to. That's what I'm sent for."

"They're obstinate beggars. You steer clear of them, that's what I mean."

"I can't do that. If they come fishing in British waters I've got to chase the confounded nuisances, and nab them! That's what all the row's about."

"I know. But if you have any trouble, don't fire over them—unless you're very sure of your gunners!"

"Never heard such rot as you're talking to-night, in my life!" said Harry Rourke, in a perplexed voice. "Out with it, man, if you've anything to say!"

"I haven't," said Farrell, flushing. "I'm an ass to have said anything at all! If you come across a trawler called the *Skald*—But never mind that. We're such old friends that I felt I ought to give you a hint, though; and, for the same reason, if you should happen to hear of any trouble connected with me when you're up there, I know you won't spread it about. I've had a bit of a shock, as I said, and I think I shall cut the Service."

"What?" cried Harry.

"I'm thinking it over. Shan't do anything in a hurry. Well, it's time for me to get back, and I know you've got to sail at ten. Good-night, old chap, and good luck to you!"

An hour later the old *Speedwell* was snorting her way out of Harwich Harbour, and steaming north past the *Cork Light*; Rourke standing on her bridge and peering thoughtfully into the night.

"Of all the unlikely places for an adventure, I should have reckoned this new station of mine the chief," he said to himself; "but old Stanley's evidently ran across something there that shook him up. He used to have a nerve like iron, and we saw some ugly fighting together in the War—pretty different from chasing fishing-smacks."

Rourke was not a person who troubled his head with guessing at problems, however, and as Farrell had chosen to keep his own counsel, the *Speedwell's* commander thought no more about the matter.

Ned Hardy, however, had noticed how worried Farrell looked.

"The *Bustard's* commander didn't look very happy," he remarked, as he stood beside his cousin on the bridge.

"No," said Rourke. "Something's upset him badly."

He repeated to Ned what Farrell had told him, and Ned agreed that the *Bustard* must have got into trouble somehow. However, such a trifle did not worry the midshipman, who was thoroughly enjoying the run through the North Sea, though the pace was not great.

If ever there was a vessel misnamed it was the *Speedwell*. She had not much more speed than a tramcar, and was very out of date in most ways. Her ancient water-

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

MIDSHIPMAN NED HARDY, son of a line of sea captains, is appointed to the Victorious, the same ship from which his brother Ralph has been cashiered in connection with a robbery. Misfortune, however, soon befalls the new snotty, for a note stolen from the ship's safe is found in his possession. A note from Ralph, however, puts Ned wise to the fact that he has been made the scapegoat of a Russian plot to wreck the British Navy, and that a spy in the service of Moscow is aboard the Victorious successfully impersonating a Marine private named Beckett. Recognising the man as having attacked him while in possession of some important papers, Ned succeeds in establishing his own innocence and bringing his enemy to book. Going below for dinner, Ned is acclaimed by his fellow snotties as the hero of the mess.

(Now read on.)

tube engines, long past their best day, could only drive her at ten knots, and eight was nearer the average.

She was the sort of ship that generally does get such jobs as she was now on her way to perform in out-of-the-way stations.

The Speedwell put into Aberdeen, and reported there to Captain Plowden, of the cruiser Ixion, who gave him some advice about his work on the station. Thereafter, Harry set out to scour the cold northern seas between there and Caithness, with a special eye to one or two spots that he was to watch.

"I shall have three months of this, on and off," said Rourke to Ned on the third day out. "Can't see much sport in it. Seems a pity to be harrying fishermen; they've got to make a living."

"But you don't harry our own chaps, do you, sir?" Ned answered.

"Sometimes we have to, when they poach. But the foreigners are much the worst. These foreign trawlers cause a lot of trouble, fishing in British waters. There's some rich grounds up here, and the authorities have called a close time on some of the fishing waters, where fishermen aren't to trawl for two years, so as to get the fishing on its legs again, because it's been overdone."

"Yes, that's so. Did you hear any talk about it ashore?"

"You hear nothing else. The Scotch fishermen, who are decent, honest chaps, and hard-working, respect the waters that are barred, and give them a chance. But these foreigners don't. They care nothing about our fisheries, and they come nipping in, and sweep a regular haul. They're always poaching in Scottish waters, inside the three-mile limit, too, and stealing fish that ought to go into our ports; and they don't respect our laws."

"It's dirty work, and that's a fact," said Ned. "Those beggars want stopping."

"If any Britisher shoots his trawl in the foreigner's waters, off Iceland or Sweden, he's soon dropped on and chucked into prison; while here the Danish and Swedish trawlers poach tons of fish that our fellows ought to get. As for—I'm dashed!" exclaimed Rourke, breaking off suddenly and staring to leeward. "If that doesn't look like one of them now!"

He pointed ahead, and as the Speedway doubled round the headland in front of her, she came in sight of a big, ketch-rigged smack, not a mile away, with her trawl down.

"By Jove, she's a poacher, right enough!" said Rourke. "Either a Dane or a Swede, by the cut of her. And this is one of the preserved districts, too. The impudent beggar's right in the thick of it!"

"Danish poacher ahead, sir!" sang out Mr. Pyke, the warrant officer, from the bows. "She's seen us. Up comes her trawl! See her crackin' on sail? She means to run for it, sir!"

"By gum! Now for a chase!" said Ned, his eyes shining with excitement. "Surely she can't give us the slip?"

"We'll spoil her little game!" said Rourke. "Full speed ahead!"

The foreign trawler, who had little expected her impudent raid to be interrupted, evidently meant to make a dash for it.

Forward went the Speedwell in full pursuit, and, strange as it may seem, the foreigner for some time more than held her own. There was a spanking breeze, the poacher was a very fast vessel, and the old gunboat lost rather than gained.

Rourke determined not to let her escape him. It was a shameful thing for these fish-pirates to poach on the preserves that the Scotch fishermen respected, and take away fish from British grounds. In any case, he was there to stop them. The trawler, taking no notice of the gunboat's signal ordering her to heave-to, held on her way obstinately.

"Give her a shot across the bows," said Rourke, "but well clear of her."

The port twelve-pounder spoke with a sharp bark, and the shell went singing in front of the smack, to plunk into the sea far beyond.

Still the Dane—for such she was—did not heave-to, and went straight ahead. The breeze dropped slightly, and, in response to great efforts in the engine-room, the gunboat began to overhaul her. But the trawler paid no attention to the signals, hoping the breeze would freshen again.

"I'm hanged if the ruffian shall defy a King's ship like this!" said Rourke. "Give him another shot, closer aboard?"

(It looks as if Ned's in for another thrilling adventure, doesn't it, chums? He is, too, as you'll discover when you read next week's instalment of this gripping Naval serial.)

The Treasure of the Douvars!

(Continued from page 19.)

Tom in pleasant tones. "I'm afraid the game's up." He glanced at the juniors. "Someone had better get out and collect Miss Douvar's jewels for her!"

"O. K.!" nodded Handcock, and he and Blake went out on to the steps.

They came back with the black box crammed with the collected jewellery that had had such strange adventures since the man named Lazaroff had come to Wayland.

"Here you are, Miss Douvar!" grimaced Cyrus K. Handcock, taking the box across to her and placing it by her feet. "These are yours, I guess!"

The girl smiled unsteadily.

"Thank you!" Tom Merry heard her breathe.

Brusloff's face was hideous with baffled rage. He turned flaming eyes on Dick Lang.

"So—you have betrayed me?" He choked strangely.

"You shall pay! I swear you shall pay for this!"

He flung out a trembling finger, pointing full at Dick.

"I will tell you all who that is!" he choked. "Not Marie Douvar—not a girl at all! His name is Dick Lang—"

"Aw, hire a hall!" drawled Handcock. "We know that!"

"You—you know?" stammered Brusloff.

"Yes!" snapped Tom Merry. "We know all about that! And we know, too, that he's innocent of that theft he was accused of at Abbotsford! If you think you're going to see him caught by the police when they come here for you, and sent to a reformatory, you're mistaken, Brusloff!"

Tom glanced at Dick. Never for a moment did the automatic in his hand waver from covering his man.

"Dick, old chap," he said quietly, "it's time you went. We must telephone for the police as soon as possible, and this bound will tell them about you. Now's your chance to clear out. I'm sorry, old chap, but you wanted us to capture him—"

"That's all right," nodded Dick. "I'm not grumbling—I'll stand the music. I'd sooner face the police and tell them who I am myself rather than become a hunted fugitive again!"

There was a breathless cry from Marie Douvar. She stooped swiftly and took a handful of glittering gems from the box of jewels at her feet and held them out to Dick.

"Oh, but you must go!" she breathed. "Take these! You can sell them in London and get safe away—you must! I couldn't bear to think of you being caught after all you have done for me!"

Dick laughed shakily, but shook his head.

"It's ripping of you! But I'll face the music, thanks."

He turned to the telephone that stood on a bracket near, and unhooked the receiver. "I want you to put me through," he said quietly into the mouthpiece, "to the police."

"Dick—" began Tom hoarsely.

But already Dick Lang was through to the police station. "Dick Lang speaking," the others heard him say. "In case you don't happen to recall that name I'll remind you that I'm the chap that's wanted for a theft at Abbotsford School. If you come along to the Moat House you'll find me here. You will also find a bunch of scoundrels who have been keeping a young lady prisoner here for some weeks, and are guilty of a big attempted robbery. Please come along at once."

He hooked up the receiver, and, with a twisted smile, turned to the juniors.

"That's that!" With a sudden laugh he ran a hand through his hair. "I only hope they'll give me a hair cut at the police station—and trousers! I'm just dying for a pair of good old flannel bags!"

"Here they come!"

It was the following Saturday afternoon.

St. Jim's were playing Abbotsford that afternoon at footer, and it was the sight of a big motor-coach approaching the school gates down Rylcombe Lane that had caused Monty Lowther's words.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.—those who were members of the Junior Eleven already changed into footer kit—were standing by the gates, together with Cousin Ethel, Doris Levison and Lady Peggy Brooke. The girls had come over to watch the match.

But it was not of the coming match that they had all

been talking, while waiting for the arrival of the Abbotsford fellows.

They had been talking of the Moat House—and Dick Lang!

The St. Jim's juniors had been staggered enough on learning that the supposed Marie Douvar was a schoolboy in disguise; but the girls of Spalding Hall had had the shock of their lives! So had Miss Finch! But once their amazement was over, and Ethel & Co. had been forced to believe the fact, their astonishment had changed to a deep sympathy for the Abbotsford fellow who, rather than become a hunted fugitive again, had given himself up to the police when the men in blue had arrived post-haste at the moated house that night and arrested Brusiloff and the rest of the gang.

That Brusiloff and his satellites would be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment was certain. The woman who had looked after Marie Douvar would most likely escape with a light sentence for her part in the affair; and Madam Brusiloff, who had gone to London earlier in the week, had so far not been found at all—and it seemed fairly certain that she never would be.

But the fact that the scoundrels at the Moat House were to get their deserts, though it was thoroughly satisfactory to Tom Merry and his friends, was scarcely compensation for the arrest of Dick Lang that same night.

The thought of it had weighed like a heavy load on Tom's mind, and on the minds of the others, including Ethel & Co., as soon as the Spalding Hall girls had learned the facts. Their faces were grim, even now as they watched the approaching motor-coach bearing the Abbotsford players draw swiftly nearer the gates.

"I had a letter from Miss Douvar, by the way, this morning," said Tom abruptly, with clouded brow. "She tells me that she won't be going to Spalding Hall, after all. She's going abroad as soon as her solicitors have sold those jewels for her. She wants to spend the money they raise on helping Russian exiles in France and on the Continent."

"That's wathah wippin' of her," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But then, of course, you could see she was a wippin' girl!"

"But what beats me," put in Lady Peggy, "is that the Marie Douvar we knew was a boy all the time! He was jolly nice, anyway—a real sportsman! It's just frightful, knowing he's going to be sent to a reformatory—"

She broke off as there came a sudden gasping exclamation from Tom Merry.

The motor-coach, crammed with cheery Abbotsford juniors, had come rolling in through the big gateway.

Tom Merry's eyes were fastened on the face of one of the visiting footballers as though he had seen a ghost.

It was Dick Lang.

"Dick!" he yelled. "It's Dick!"

"Great Bohunkus!" stammered Handcock dazedly. "It is!"

The footballers were climbing out, and in another few moments the grinning face of Dick Lang was beaming into Tom Merry's as the captain of the Shell grasped his hand in utter bewilderment. Handcock, Monty Lowther, and Manners, Blake & Co., and Ethel & Co. stared at him dumbly.

Dick was in footer kit, and with his hair cut short again. He chuckled cheerily as he wrung Tom's hand.

"Yes, it's me, all right!" he laughed. "I could have written last night, but I thought I'd give you a little surprise. I'm not in quod, or at a giddy reformatory, after all, you see. The Wayland bobbies didn't seem to know much about me the night they took me along to the police station, and they phoned through to Abbotsford. And what do you think, old hoss—four or five days ago they'd found out who the real thief was who pinched that money. So back I buzzed to Abbotsford, all alive and kicking, and without a stain on my giddy character."

He chuckled again.

"Even Miss Finch isn't doing anything about my pretending to be a girl at her place. I had a letter from her this morning! Isn't she a sport?"

He turned a grinning face to the girls.

"Hallo!" he chuckled. "How are my old school chums?"

Ethel & Co. laughed cheerfully.

"Awfully well, thanks, Marie!" grinned Lady Peggy.

"And jolly sorry you've left Spalding Hall. You were great fun!"

"We shall certainly never forget the time you were one of us Fifth-Formers!" laughed Ethel.

"My hat!" chuckled Dick. "Neither shall I." He turned to Tom. "Remember asking me at the dance to come and watch the Abbotsford match? Crumbs—I'll bet you never thought I'd be playing in it! I jolly well know I didn't!"

Still less, perhaps, had Dick Lang on that occasion guessed that he would be kicking the winning goal for his team in that great match. But he did, scoring the only goal of the game with a brilliant solo run down the field, and a stinging shot that beat Fatty Wynn in goal, utterly a few minutes before the final whistle.

It was a triumph which even the St. Jim's fellows could not begrudge the Abbotsford inside-right—the fellow who had so gamely sacrificed himself in doing what he believed to be right by bringing down justice upon Dr. Brusiloff at the eleventh hour when the scoundrel from the Moat House had at last got hold of the treasure of the Douvars!

THE END.

(Whatever you do chums, don't miss next week's sporting yarn of St. Jim's, entitled: "WON BY A FOUL!" It's a real corker!)

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